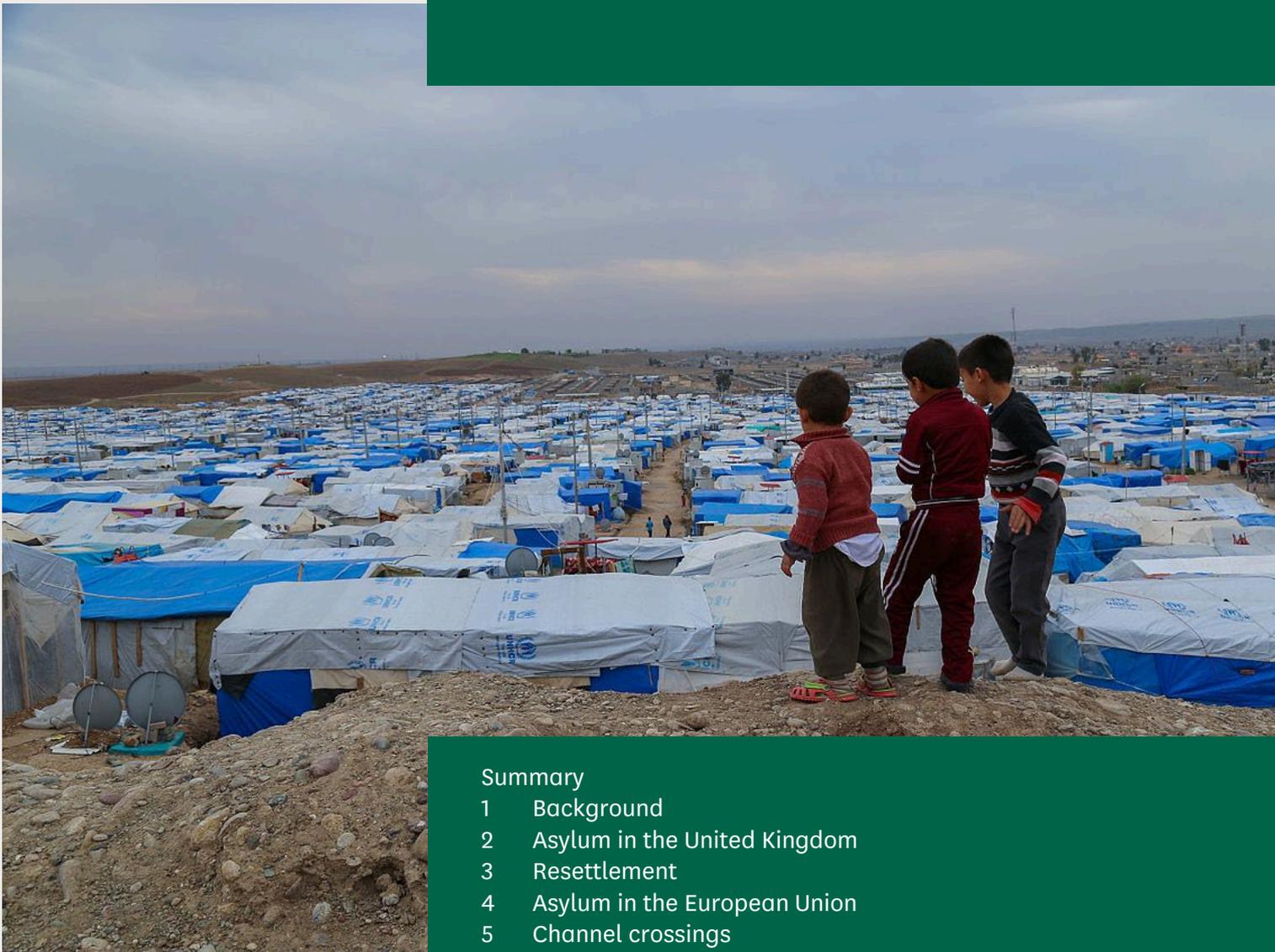


By Georgina Sturge

24 May 2024

# Asylum statistics



## Summary

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## Summary

Asylum is protection given by a country to someone fleeing from persecution in their own country. An **asylum seeker** is someone who has applied for asylum and is awaiting a decision on whether they will be granted **refugee** status.

An asylum applicant who does not qualify for refugee status may still be granted leave to remain in the UK for humanitarian or other reasons. An asylum seeker whose application is refused at initial decision may appeal the decision through an appeal process and, if successful, may be granted leave to remain.

- In 2023, 67,337 applications for asylum were made in the UK, which related to 84,425 individuals (more than one applicant can be included in a single application).
- The annual number of asylum applications to the UK peaked in 2002 at 84,132. After that the number fell sharply to reach a twenty-year low point of 17,916 in 2010. It rose steadily throughout the 2010s, then rapidly from 2021 onwards to reach 81,130 applications in 2022, the highest annual number since 2002.
- Not all asylum applications are successful. In 2023, 33% were refused at initial decision (not counting withdrawals). The annual refusal rate was highest in 2004 (88%) and lowest in recent times in 2022 (24%).
- When an application is refused at initial decision, it may be appealed. Between 2004 to 2021, around three-quarters of applicants refused asylum at initial decision lodged an appeal and almost one third of those appeals were allowed.
- In 2023, the most common origin region of asylum seekers was Asia and the most common single nationality was Afghan. In previous recent years, the Middle East was the most common origin region, with Syrian and Iranian the most common nationalities.
- As of June 2023, the total 'work in progress' asylum caseload consisted of 215,500 cases. Of these, 138,000 cases were awaiting an initial decision, 5,100 were awaiting the outcome of an appeal, and approximately 41,200 cases were subject to removal action.
- The total asylum caseload has more than doubled in size since 2014, driven both by applicants waiting longer for an initial decision and a

growth in the number of people subject to removal action following a negative decision.

- The Covid-19 pandemic reduced the number of asylum seekers arriving by air routes in 2020 and 2021. However, during this time the number of people arriving in small boats across the Channel (most of whom applied for asylum) rose substantially. The number of small boat arrivals rose again in 2022 despite the re-opening of other travel routes.
- In 2022, there were around 13 asylum applications for every 10,000 people living in the UK. Across the EU27 there were 22 asylum applications for every 10,000 people. The UK was therefore below the average among EU countries for asylum applications per head of population, ranking 19<sup>th</sup> among EU27 countries plus the UK on this measure.

In addition to the asylum process, the UK operates various routes for people seeking humanitarian protection to be granted status outside of the UK and then, in some cases, assisted in travelling to the UK.

- Between 2014 and March 2024, 57,000 people were **resettled** or relocated to the UK through various schemes. Around 20,000 of these were Syrians resettled between 2014 and 2020. Since 2021, 25,000 people from Afghanistan have been resettled or relocated to the UK through various schemes.
- In 2022, two new routes were introduced for Ukrainians. As of May 2024, around 207,000 people have arrived under these routes. This flow was much larger in scale than any other single forced migration flow to the UK in recent history. The number of Ukrainian refugees who arrived in the UK in 2022 was equivalent to the number of people granted refuge in the UK from all origins, in total, between 2014 and 2021.
- In 2023, asylum seekers and refugees made up around 11% of immigrants to the UK. If including the British National (Overseas) scheme in the category of humanitarian routes, up to 14% of immigration in that year would fall into that category.

---

# 1 Background

## 1.1 What is asylum?

Asylum is protection given by a country to someone fleeing from persecution in their own country. According to Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who:

... owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country;<sup>1</sup>

As a signatory to the Convention, the UK grants asylum to those who meet these criteria. The UK also adheres to the European Convention on Human Rights, which prevents the UK from sending someone to a country where there is a real risk they may be exposed to torture, or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

The UK can also grant other forms of humanitarian protection to people who the Home Office decides need protection but who do not meet the criteria for refugee status. Prior to 2003, such people were granted exceptional leave to remain (ELR) and from 2004 onwards this was replaced with humanitarian protection (HP) or discretionary leave (DL).

In this briefing, humanitarian protection is used as a catch-all term for asylum and these other forms of leave, unless specified otherwise.

## 1.2 Who is an asylum seeker?

An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for asylum and is awaiting a decision on whether they will be granted refugee status. An asylum applicant who does not qualify for refugee status may still be granted leave to remain in the UK for humanitarian or other reasons. An asylum seeker whose application is refused at initial decision may appeal the decision through an appeals process. Asylum applicants initially refused refugee status may be granted leave to remain following an appeal.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, [United Nations Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees](#), Article 1. The UK signed the Refugee Convention in 1954 and the Protocol in 1967.

## 1.3 What percentage of migrants are asylum seekers?

A long-term international migrant is someone who changes their country of usual residence for a period of at least a year.

The latest annual estimate of the overall level of immigration is for 2023, when around 1,218,000 people are believed to have migrated to the UK.<sup>2</sup>

In this estimate the Office for National Statistics included preliminary estimates of the number of asylum applicants, Ukrainian arrivals and resettled persons. More recent figures are now available, via the Home Office's immigration statistics.

Adding in these more recent figures, as well as family reunion figures, brings the total immigration estimate for that year to around 1,264,000 people.

Of these, around 84,000 were asylum seekers, 42,000 were Ukrainians arriving under the bespoke schemes, 4,000 were resettled or relocated to the UK and 10,000 were granted refugee family reunion visas.

Altogether this suggests that around **11% of immigration was accounted for by asylum seekers and refugees** (around 141,000 individuals in total).<sup>3</sup>

The British National (Overseas) route is sometimes referred to as a humanitarian scheme, although **BN(O)** visa holders do not have the status of refugees. Including the 36,000 BN(O) visa holders estimated to have arrived in that year would mean that **up to 14% of immigration** (around 177,000 individuals) consisted of people arriving under 'humanitarian' routes.

## 1.4 Sources of asylum statistics

Statistics on asylum seekers and refugees in the UK are published by the Home Office in their quarterly immigration statistics.<sup>4</sup> These statistics contain data on the number of people applying for asylum and the outcomes of asylum applications.

Home Office statistics distinguish between the number of main applicants for asylum, which represents the asylum caseload, and the number of main

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<sup>2</sup> ONS, [Long-term international immigration, emigration and net migration flows, provisional](#), 23 May 2024

<sup>3</sup> There are several reasons for which this is a very rough estimate: firstly, not all asylum applicants arrived in the UK in the same year in which they make their application; secondly, the figures for Ukrainian and BN(O) arrivals are estimates and the family reunion figure is for visas issued, which may not represent the number of actual arrivals.

<sup>4</sup> Home Office, [Immigration statistics quarterly release](#)

applicants and dependants, which represents the number of people covered by asylum applications.

Statistics on asylum seekers and refugees in European Union countries are published in the Home Office bulletin and by the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) in two annual reports: *Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries* and *Global Trends*.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.5 What about resettled refugees?

Resettled people are granted refugee status or another form of humanitarian protection by the UK while abroad and then brought to live in the UK.

The UK has, historically, introduced specific resettlement schemes in response to humanitarian crises. From 2014 onwards, the UK began resettling Syrians under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), with the aim of resettling 20,000 by 2020.

Given the scale of the VPRS (and other resettlement schemes currently in place), resettled people made up 21% (around one in five) of those granted refuge in the UK between 2014 and 2020. In 2021, around 17,000 Afghans were relocated to the UK, making up over half (51%) of those granted refuge in the UK in that year.

Statistics on resettled people are usually presented separately to statistics on the UK's in-country asylum process.

## 1.6 Ukrainian refugees

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched military action in Ukraine, which developed into a full-scale assault on the country through 2022 and beyond. As of May 2024, 5.9 million Ukrainian refugees were recorded across Europe.

The UK established two new routes for Ukrainian refugees to come to the UK: the Sponsorship Scheme ('Homes for Ukraine') and the Family Scheme. Later in 2022 it established the Ukraine Extension Scheme, to grant residence extensions to Ukrainians on any visa expiring while it remains unsafe to return to Ukraine.

The Home Office publishes [weekly figures](#) on applications, visas issued and arrivals under these schemes. It also publishes a quarterly summary of this data, along with information on Ukrainians arriving via other immigration routes, in its [Immigration system statistics](#) quarterly bulletin.

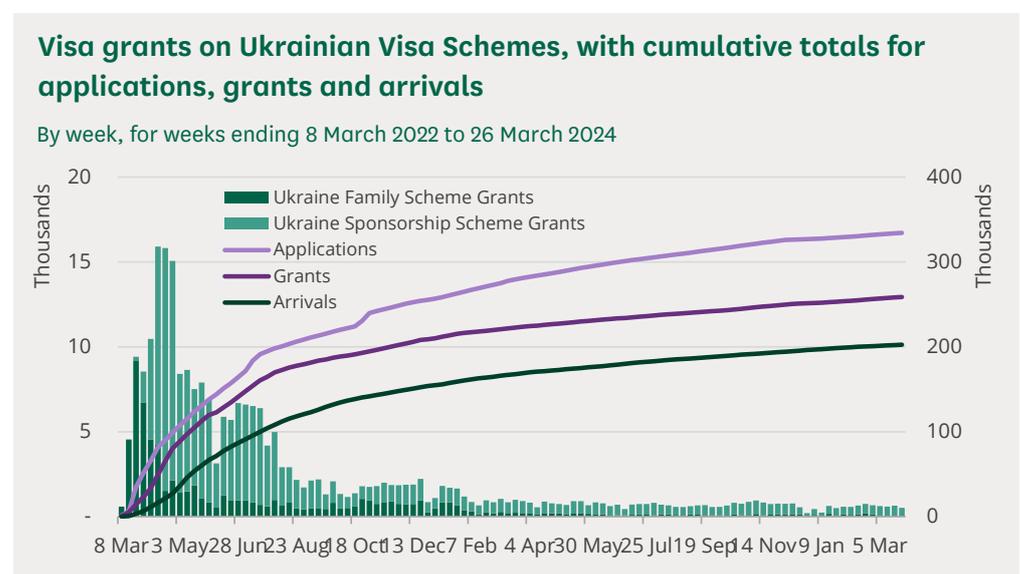
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<sup>5</sup> The latest editions are [Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries 2014](#) and [Global Trends 2022](#).

The scale of the influx of refugees from Ukraine to the UK is unprecedented. **In 2022, 210,000 visas were granted and 154,600 individuals arrived** under the two new visa schemes. This was the largest single group of refugees to arrive in the UK in its history.

The chart below summarises the data on the operation of the schemes throughout 2022 and March 2024. As of 21 May 2024, 337,900 applications had been received, 258,000 visas had been issued, and 206,500 people had arrived.

The gap between applications and grants is made up of applications which are still awaiting a conclusion (around 2,200, as of May 2024), withdrawn applications (around 40,200) and refused applications (around 37,700). The refusal rate for all applications that have been decided, excluding those withdrawn, was around 13%.



Source: Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), tables UVS\_01 to UVS\_03.

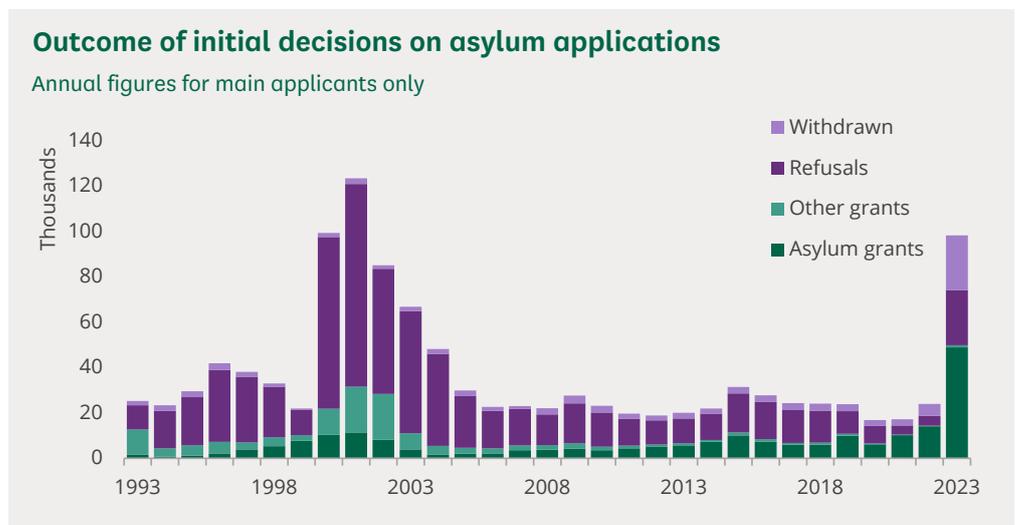
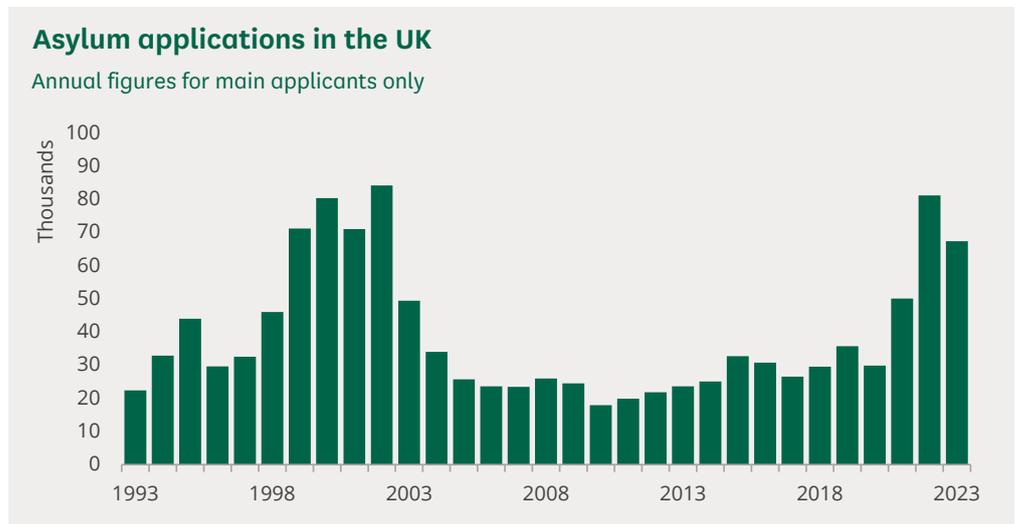
As of May 2024, there had been around 29,000 applications received and 32,900 grants issued under the Ukraine Extension Scheme.

Ukrainians arriving under these schemes are not included in the Home Office's asylum statistics, which are the main focus of this briefing. Although Ukrainians arriving under these schemes are often referred to as refugees, they do not have the legal status of refugees in the way that people do if they are granted asylum in the UK or through a refugee resettlement scheme. They derive their right to live and work in the UK from the conditions of the visa schemes.

## 2 Asylum in the United Kingdom

### 2.1 Asylum applications and initial decisions

The number of asylum applications to the UK peaked in 2002 at 84,132. After that the number fell sharply to reach a twenty-year low point of 17,916 in 2010, before rising slowly to reach 32,733 in 2015. The number fell, then rose again and then dipped during the first year of the pandemic (2020). It then rose to 81,130 in 2022, the highest number since 2002. These trends are illustrated in the charts below. In 2023, there were 67,337 asylum applications, relating to 84,425 individuals.



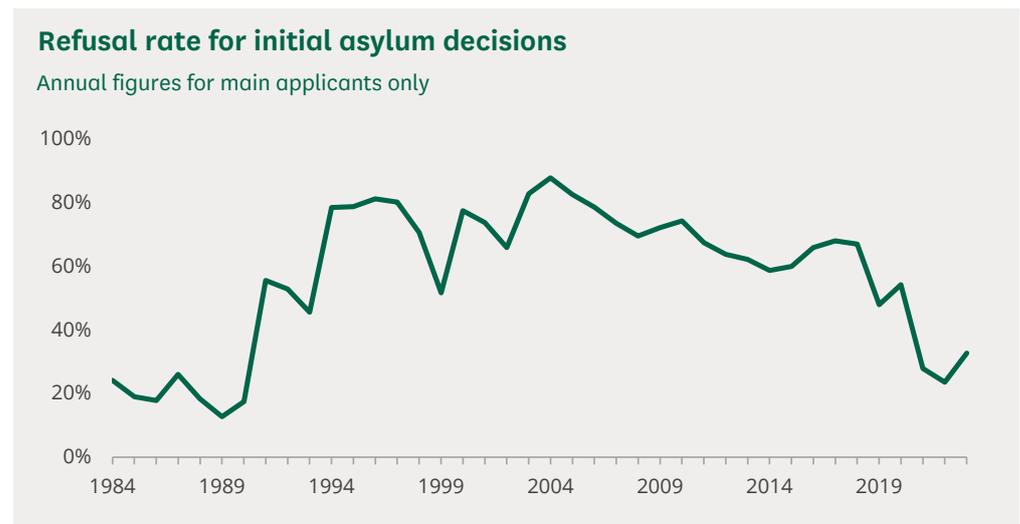
Notes: 1. Figures are for main applicants only. 2. Initial decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period. 3. Some people refused asylum at initial decision may be granted leave to remain following an appeal. 4. The data shown in these charts is set out in Appendix Table at the end of this briefing.

Source: [Home Office Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), tables Asy\_D01 and Asy\_D02

The first chart shows the number of applications for asylum by main applicants in each year from 1993 to 2023. The second shows the number of initial decisions during the same period, broken down into asylum grants, other grants, and refusals.

While the number of applications rose substantially in 2021 and 2022, the number of decisions being made stayed relatively static. Decision-making was affected by the pandemic, among other factors. Around 14,300 initial decisions were made in 2020 and 14,500 in 2021, the lowest annual totals since 1991. The number of initial decisions rose considerably in 2023, to the highest level since 2003.

The chart below shows the proportion of applications that were refused at initial decision for decisions made in each year from 1984 to 2022. The percentage of main applicants refused at initial decision reached its highest point at 88% in 2004. After that the percentage fell to 59% in 2014, before increasing and then falling again to 48% in 2019 – the lowest annual rate at that point since 1993. In 2021 and 2022 the rate was much lower, at 28% and 24% in those years, respectively.



Notes: 1. Figures are for main applicants only. 2. Initial decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period. 3. Some people refused asylum at initial decision may be granted leave to remain following an appeal.

Source: Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), table Asy\_D02

The **latest data on asylum applications and decisions** is for January to March 2024. In that quarter, 19,395 people applied for asylum, which was more than in the equivalent quarter in 2023 (17,101) and in 2022 (17,652).<sup>6</sup> From January to March 2024, 23,630 asylum seekers received an initial decision (not counting withdrawn applications) which was more than in the same quarter in 2023 (5,959) but fewer than between October and December 2023 (49,094).

<sup>6</sup> Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024, table Asy\\_D01](#)

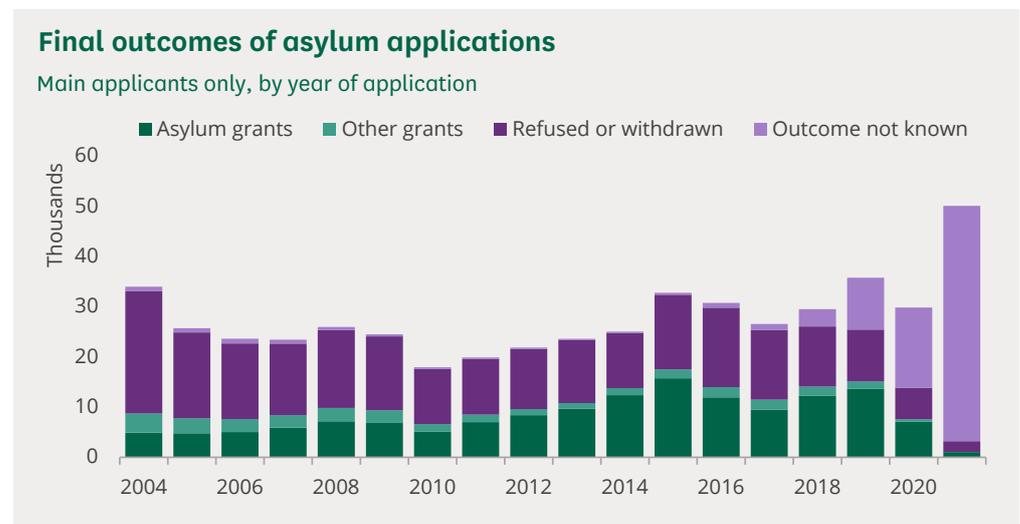
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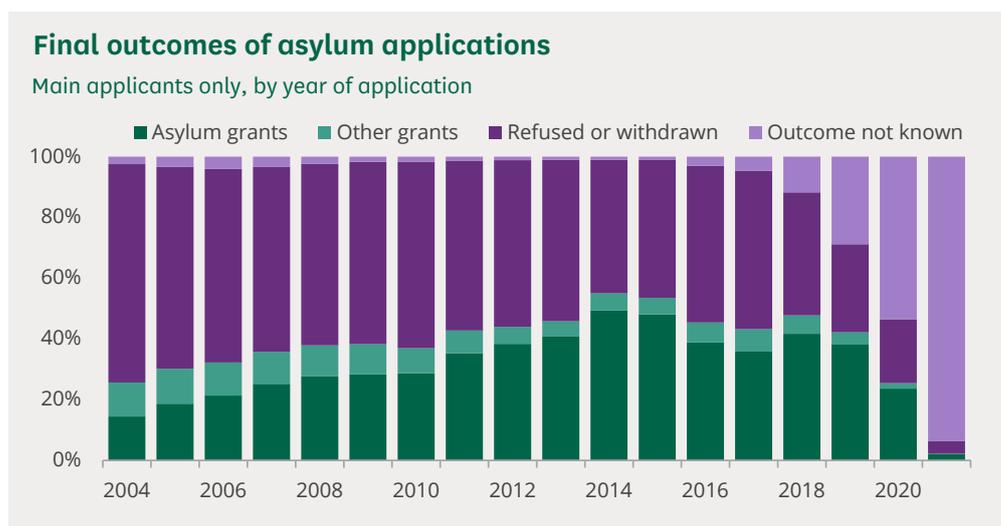
## Final outcomes of asylum applications

Because some asylum applicants who are initially refused asylum can appeal, the number of applicants granted leave to remain at initial decision does not reflect the number who are ultimately successful. For this reason, the Home Office publishes data on the final outcomes of asylum applications, which shows the outcomes for cohorts of asylum seekers applying in each year. Because it can take longer than a year for an asylum case to reach its final outcome, this data lags behind the data on initial decisions.

The table below shows the final outcomes for main applicants applying for asylum in each year from 2004 to 2021. This includes cases where the final outcome is not yet known (there are more of these cases in the most recent years). The data is illustrated in the charts below, the first of which shows the number of main applicants for asylum in each year by final outcome, while the second shows the percentage of all cases with a known outcome that were either asylum grants, other grants, or were refused or withdrawn.

The percentage of cases with a known outcome which were refused or withdrawn fell from 74% in 2004 to its lowest point of 41% in 2019. As of June 2022 (the latest data available), around 6% of applications lodged in 2021 had a known outcome and, of these, 66% had been refused.





Source: Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), table Asy\_D04

Notes: 1. Figures are for main applicants only. 2. Year relates to the period in which the application was made. 3. Excludes cases which were successful after appeal to the Upper Tribunal of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber.

### Final outcomes of asylum applications made in each year

As of June 2023

Year	Number					As % of known outcomes		
	Main applicants	Asylum grants	Other grants	Refused or withdrawn	Outcome not known	Asylum grants	Other grants	Refused or withdrawn
2004	33,960	4,907	3,813	24,403	837	15%	12%	74%
2005	25,712	4,801	2,958	17,097	856	19%	12%	69%
2006	23,608	5,043	2,574	15,036	955	22%	11%	66%
2007	23,431	5,903	2,478	14,251	799	26%	11%	63%
2008	25,932	7,180	2,643	15,497	612	28%	10%	61%
2009	24,487	6,943	2,435	14,691	418	29%	10%	61%
2010	17,916	5,147	1,470	10,998	301	29%	8%	62%
2011	19,865	7,007	1,489	11,112	257	36%	8%	57%
2012	21,843	8,381	1,222	11,980	260	39%	6%	56%
2013	23,584	9,656	1,146	12,520	262	41%	5%	54%
2014	25,033	12,377	1,393	10,995	268	50%	6%	44%
2015	32,733	15,742	1,776	14,841	374	49%	5%	46%
2016	30,747	11,944	2,016	15,839	948	40%	7%	53%
2017	26,547	9,508	1,967	13,847	1,225	38%	8%	55%
2018	29,504	12,302	1,784	11,953	3,465	47%	7%	46%
2019	35,737	13,622	1,463	10,347	10,305	54%	6%	41%
2020	29,815	7,054	530	6,284	15,947	51%	4%	45%
2021	50,042	1,050	37	2,141	46,814	33%	1%	66%

Source: Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), table Asy\_D04

## 2.3

### Asylum appeals

Home Office data on the outcomes of asylum applications also shows the number of main applicants for asylum in each year that are refused at initial decision and go on to appeal.

The table below shows the number of main applicants for asylum in each year from 2004 to 2021, the number of these that were refused at initial decision, the number of those refused that appealed, and the number given each outcome, where the outcome is known.

In the period from 2004 to 2021, around three-quarters (76%) of main applicants refused asylum at initial decision lodged an appeal and just under one third (30%) of those appeals were allowed.

Appeal outcomes of asylum applications made in each year									
As of June 2023									
Year	Main applicants	Initially refused asylum, HP or DL	Appeals lodged	Appeal outcomes				Appeals lodged as % of refused	Allowed as % of appeal outcomes
				Appeals allowed	Appeals dismissed	Appeals withdrawn	Appeal outcome not known		
2004	33,960	27,273	21,284	3,950	16,507	766	61	78%	19%
2005	25,712	19,243	14,277	3,032	10,599	523	123	74%	21%
2006	23,608	16,473	11,589	2,567	8,416	497	109	70%	22%
2007	23,431	14,932	10,660	2,292	7,583	415	370	71%	22%
2008	25,932	15,207	12,184	3,168	8,237	507	272	80%	27%
2009	24,487	15,450	13,254	4,000	8,582	509	163	86%	31%
2010	17,916	11,597	9,324	2,500	6,240	445	139	80%	27%
2011	19,865	11,556	9,189	2,529	5,906	629	125	80%	28%
2012	21,843	12,132	9,057	2,712	5,595	627	123	75%	30%
2013	23,584	13,023	9,801	3,121	6,071	532	77	75%	32%
2014	25,033	12,693	10,204	4,044	5,557	497	106	80%	40%
2015	32,733	17,633	14,497	6,202	7,394	828	73	82%	43%
2016	30,747	17,792	14,104	5,858	7,616	582	48	79%	42%
2017	26,547	14,882	11,499	4,798	5,990	626	85	77%	42%
2018	29,504	11,620	8,354	3,414	4,138	585	217	72%	42%
2019	35,737	8,555	5,164	1,896	2,224	558	486	60%	41%
2020	29,815	4,972	1,020	278	332	148	262	21%	37%
2021	50,042	353	73	9	30	6	28	21%	20%

Source: Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), table Asy\_D04

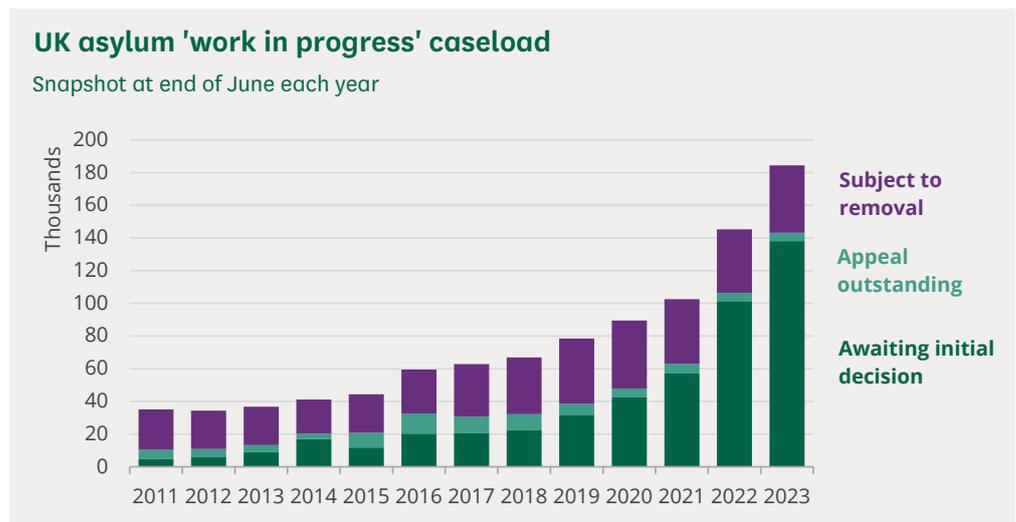
## 2.4

### The total asylum caseload

One way of understanding the full scale of the asylum caseload is to look at the Home Office's asylum 'work in progress' statistics. These are published once a year in its [Migration Transparency](#) statistics collection.<sup>7</sup> As of June 2023, there were 215,500 cases in the system. This was the highest since the series began (in 2011) and nearly three times the size it had been in 2014.

As the chart below illustrates, there are three primary components of the caseload: people awaiting an initial decision, people who have appealed an initial refusal and are awaiting a decision on this, and people who have been refused asylum and are subject to removal action.

<sup>7</sup> The work in progress statistics can be found in table ASY\_03 of 'Immigration & Protection data'.



**Source:** Home Office, [Migration transparency data](#), Immigration and protection data: Q2 2023, table ASY\_03  
**Notes:** 'Post decision' and 'On hold' are not shown here because they are only recorded from 2014 onwards.

The largest category within the caseload is applicants awaiting an initial decision. The most recent statistics show that there were 138,100 people in this category as of June 2023.

The number of refused asylum seekers subject to removal action has been growing since 2014 and consisted of 41,200 people as of June 2023.

## 2.5

### Where do asylum seekers come from?

In 2021, 42% were nationals of Middle Eastern countries, which was the highest proportion (and number) of asylum seekers from this origin ever recorded in the UK. This was the result of a large number of applicants from Iran, Iraq, and Syria. The next largest regional groupings of nationalities were African (23%), Asian (19%) and European (13%).<sup>8</sup> Around 4% of main applicants were from countries in the Americas, Oceania, and other parts of the world.

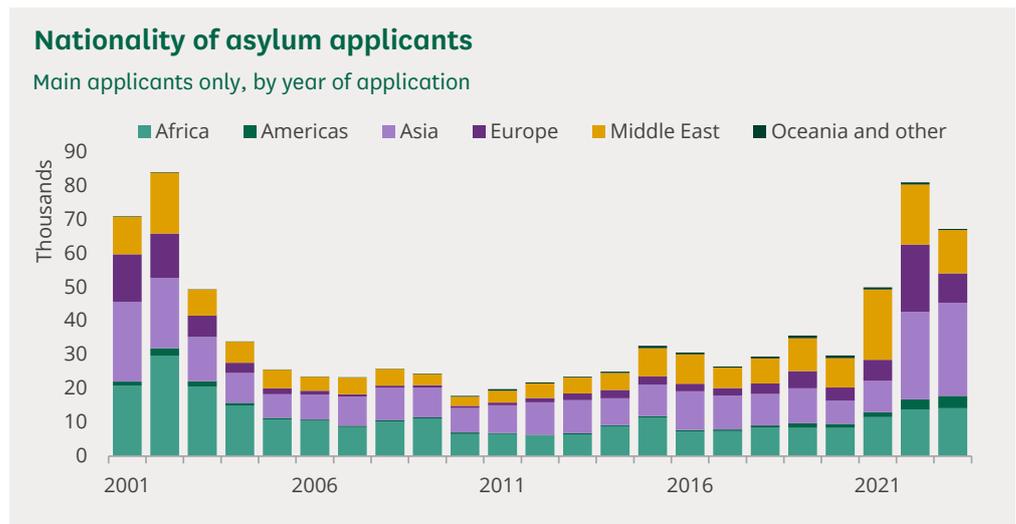
The picture by 2023 was different, with 41% of asylum seekers being of Asian nationalities and 21% being nationals of African countries. Nationals of Middle Eastern and European countries made up 19% and 13% of the total, respectively.

The chart below shows the broad nationalities of main applicants for asylum in each year from 2001 to 2023.

The largest in 2023 were Afghan (9,300), Iranian (7,400), Pakistani (5,300), Indian (5,300) and Bangladeshi (4,300).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Afghanistan is included in figures for Asia, while Iran is included in the Middle East.

<sup>9</sup> These figures represent main applicants who applied through the in-country asylum system only.



Notes: 1. Figures are for main applicants only.

Source: Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), table Asy\_D01

## 2.6

### Grants of refugee status by nationality

Grants of refugee status or another form of humanitarian leave to remain by nationality follow a slightly different pattern to applications. This is partly due to a time lag between applications and decisions and partly because acceptance rates are higher for some nationalities than others, in particular years.

While most grants of refuge have historically come via the UK's in-country asylum process, others have come via resettlement schemes or ad hoc humanitarian routes.

A notable flow in recent years has been 20,300 Syrians resettled via the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) between 2014 and 2020. Smaller numbers of people from other nationalities are also resettled each year under the UK's resettlement schemes, which are described in more detail in section 3.

Between 2021 and 2023, around 25,000 Afghans were relocated to the UK in advance of and during the withdrawal of UK forces from Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> In 2022, around 146,000 Ukrainians came to the UK (as of November) under two new routes created for individuals escaping the conflict.

In 2022, two new routes were introduced for Ukrainians, through which around 197,000 people had arrived, as of December 2023.<sup>11</sup> This flow was much larger in scale than any other single forced migration flow to the UK in recent history. The number of Ukrainian refugees who arrived in the UK in 2022

<sup>10</sup> Home Office, [Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data](#), 23 May 2024

<sup>11</sup> Home Office and UK Visas and Immigration, [Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data](#), 21 May 2024 edition.

was around the same as the number of people granted refuge in the UK from all origins, in total, between 2014 and 2021.

The diagram overleaf is a stylised representation of the number of grants of status, by nationality, in each year between 1989 and 2022. The chart flows horizontally from left to right, with an individual 'stream' for each nationality. Not all nationalities are shown; only those with high numbers of grants. Ukrainians cannot be shown on the chart because the volume of that flow is so much larger than any of the others.

# Which countries do refugees come to the UK from?

This chart shows the number of grants of asylum or other forms of humanitarian protection, by refugees' country of origin, in each year since 1989. The height of each 'stream' represents the number of grants of asylum to that nationality in a given year. In each year, the streams are ranked from top to bottom, by number of grants. Not all nationalities are shown.

Conflict in Sri Lanka, beginning in the early 1980s, led to 15,000 asylum seekers and their dependents being granted asylum in the UK, mainly between 1991-93 and 1999-2002.

2001 saw the most grants through the UK's in-country asylum system (31,600) up until that point, mainly to people from Afghanistan, Somalia, and Iraq. This peak was surpassed in 2023 (49,900 asylum grants and 4,400 people resettled).

Iranians began seeking asylum abroad following the 1979 Revolution and the ensuing political and cultural changes. The present flow (around 1,300 grants per year since 2010) is motivated by similar factors.

Following the Russian invasion, 155,000 **Ukrainians** arrived in the UK in 2022 under two bespoke schemes, and a further 42,000 in 2023. This 'wave' is not shown because the chart would need to be more than three times this size.

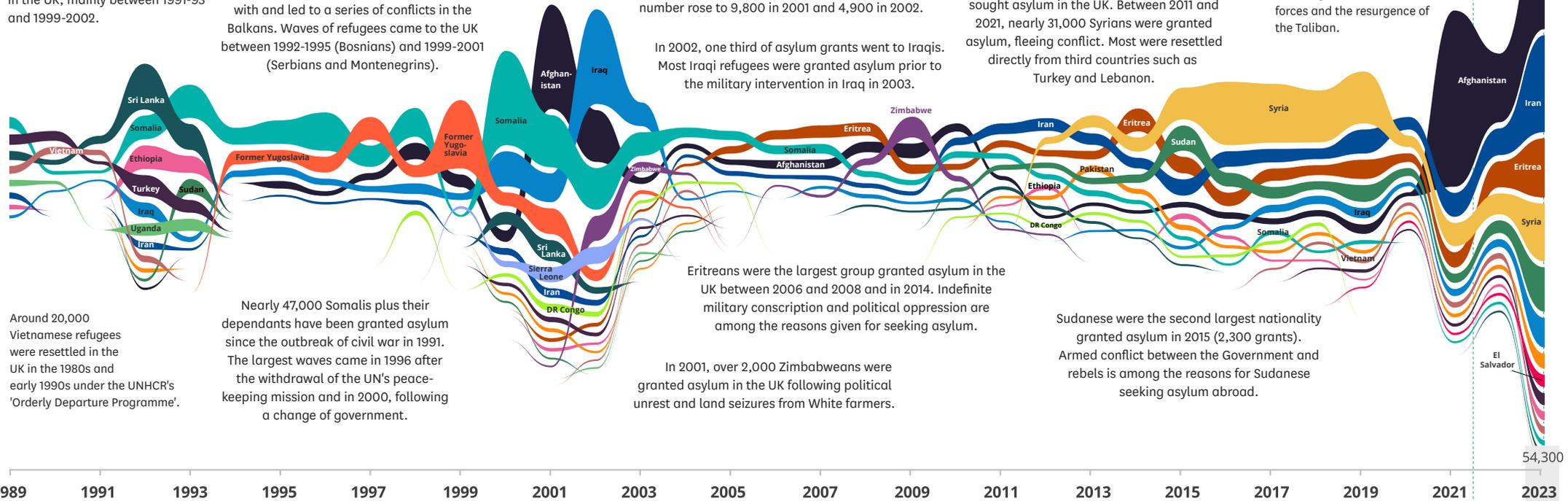
The break-up of Yugoslavia in 1992 coincided with and led to a series of conflicts in the Balkans. Waves of refugees came to the UK between 1992-1995 (Bosnians) and 1999-2001 (Serbians and Montenegrins).

Between 1995 and 2000, the UK granted asylum to 5,600 Afghans. With the escalation of conflict, this number rose to 9,800 in 2001 and 4,900 in 2002.

In 2002, one third of asylum grants went to Iraqis. Most Iraqi refugees were granted asylum prior to the military intervention in Iraq in 2003.

Prior to 2011, virtually no one from Syria sought asylum in the UK. Between 2011 and 2021, nearly 31,000 Syrians were granted asylum, fleeing conflict. Most were resettled directly from third countries such as Turkey and Lebanon.

Around 23,000 Afghans were evacuated and relocated to the UK in 2021 and 2022, following the withdrawal of allied forces and the resurgence of the Taliban.



Around 20,000 Vietnamese refugees were resettled in the UK in the 1980s and early 1990s under the UNHCR's 'Orderly Departure Programme'.

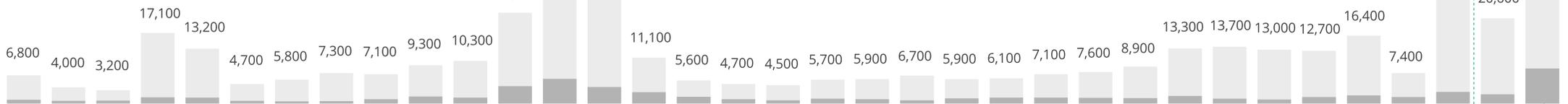
Nearly 47,000 Somalis plus their dependants have been granted asylum since the outbreak of civil war in 1991. The largest waves came in 1996 after the withdrawal of the UN's peace-keeping mission and in 2000, following a change of government.

Eritreans were the largest group granted asylum in the UK between 2006 and 2008 and in 2014. Indefinite military conscription and political oppression are among the reasons given for seeking asylum.

In 2001, over 2,000 Zimbabweans were granted asylum in the UK following political unrest and land seizures from White farmers.

Sudanese were the second largest nationality granted asylum in 2015 (2,300 grants). Armed conflict between the Government and rebels is among the reasons for Sudanese seeking asylum abroad.

These bars show the total number of grants per year. The darker bar shows grants to people from countries other than those in the chart above.

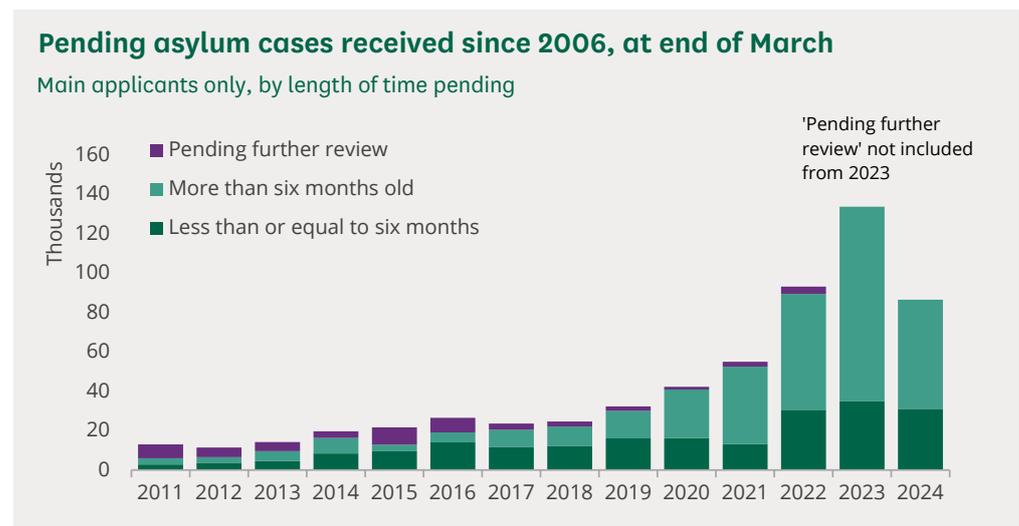


## 2.7

## How long do asylum applications take?

There are different measures of the time it takes to process asylum applications and the backlog of cases that has built up. Two measures that have been the focus of attention in recent years are the number of asylum applications awaiting an initial decision and the number of cases awaiting conclusion. Since 2001 the attention shifted from the former to the latter, as a backlog of cases awaiting an initial decision in 2001 became a backlog of cases awaiting conclusion in 2006.

In June 2010, the Home Office introduced a new time series for measuring the backlog of asylum applications, based on the UK Border Agency (UKBA) administrative database. This new series counts the number of applications for asylum lodged since 1 April 2006 which are still under consideration at the end of each quarter. It includes cases pending an initial decision (whether for more or less than six months) and those pending further judicial appeal, but excludes those who have lodged a judicial review.



Notes: 1. Figures are for main applicants only. 2. 'Pending' cases are those asylum applications, including fresh claims, lodged since 1 April 2006 which are still under consideration at the end of the reference period. Source: Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), table Asy\_D03

According to the new series, 86,000 cases were pending an initial decision, as of March 2024. This was around four times as many as there had been in March 2018 (roughly 23,000) but was down from the much higher number of 134,000 at the end of March 2023.

## 2.8 How many dependents accompany asylum seekers?

In 2023, 17,100 dependants accompanied or subsequently joined the 67,400 main applications who made asylum claims. This was down from around 18,800 dependents and 81,100 main applicants in 2022.

In 2023, there was one dependent for roughly every four main asylum applicants. This was fewer dependents per main applicants than in 2021, when there was roughly one dependent for every 6 applicants.

## 2.9 Where do asylum seekers live?

The only data available on the location of asylum seekers is for those who are receiving government support. Data is available by region and Local Authority.

These figures capture asylum seekers who are being supported by the state under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (Sections 4, 95, and 98):

- Section 95 support is a weekly stipend which is means-tested, so it is not received by asylum seekers who have sufficient means of their own.
- Section 98 is a temporary and similar form of assistance provided while a person's Section 95 application is being assessed.
- Section 4 support is provided to asylum seekers who have received a refusal at initial decision but would otherwise be destitute while they await an appeal or removal.

Most of these supported asylum seekers are also provided with accommodation. The asylum seeker is not given a choice as to location and the Home Office's policy is to disperse them around the country.

At the end of March 2024:

- There were 100,900 supported asylum seekers being housed in the UK, of whom 56,000 were living in dispersal accommodation and 40,100 in initial or contingency accommodation (which can include hotels).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), table Asy\_D11. This also includes a small number receiving Section 4 support, which is available to refused asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute.

- The North East had the highest number of asylum seekers relative to its population (26 for every 10,000 inhabitants), most of whom were living in dispersal accommodation. The North West had a similar proportion of 25 asylum seekers per 10,000 inhabitants.
- London had a high ratio of asylum seekers to population (23 per 10,000) due to the presence of a large number of asylum seekers in hotels. Before hotel use became common from 2019 onwards, comparatively few asylum seekers were housed in London.
- The South East had the lowest relative number (7 for every 10,000 inhabitants).
- Glasgow was the local authority with the most housed asylum seekers (4,300 or 67 per 10,000 residents), followed by Birmingham (2,800 or 24 per 10,000), and Hillingdon (2,400), which also had the highest number per population (77 per 10,000). Glasgow had the second highest number of asylum seekers relative to its population (67 per 10,000 inhabitants).
- 39 of 361 lower-tier local authorities listed (11%) contained no supported asylum seekers at all.

The full list of supported asylum seekers by region and local authority can be found in the online Annex (an Excel file).

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## 3 Resettlement

### 3.1 What is resettlement?

The previous section dealt with applications for asylum by people already in the UK. The UK can also grant asylum or other forms of humanitarian protection to people living outside the UK, who are then resettled to the UK.

Resettlement to the UK operates through different schemes, rather than one overarching system:

- UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) (2021 – present)
- Community Sponsorship (2021 – present)
- Mandate Resettlement Scheme (1995 – present).
- The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (2021 – present) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (2022 - present)

Between 2014 and March 2021, three additional resettlement schemes operated:

- Gateway Protection Programme (GPP) (2004- 2021)
- Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) (2014 – 2021)
- Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) (2016 – 2021).

The UKRS and Community Sponsorship schemes are open to refugees in all parts of the world. The Mandate Scheme is for recognised refugees, anywhere in the world, who have a close family member in the UK willing to accommodate them.

The VPRS was specifically for Syrian nationals and the VCRS was for children from the Middle East and North Africa.

## 3.2

### How many people are resettled to the UK?

Between 2014 and March 2024, around 30,000 people have been resettled to the UK under the schemes listed above (excluding the Afghan schemes, which are discussed separately at the end of this section). During the same period, around 210,000 people were granted asylum or another form of humanitarian leave to remain through the UK's in-country asylum process.<sup>13</sup>

Of those resettled since 2014, excluding Afghans, the majority (20,300 people) came through the VPRS. The VCRS resettled 1,800 people during this time. Over half (54%) of all those resettled since 2014 were children.

The GPP and Mandate schemes have been in operation for longer: since 2004 and 2008, respectively. To date, the GPP has resettled 9,900 individuals (an average of 585 per year) and the Mandate scheme, 470 (an average of 28 per year).

Historically, the UK's policy on resettlement has been to introduce specific resettlement schemes in response to particular humanitarian crises. The Refugee Council offers a summary of previous resettlement schemes in the UK:

“The UK has also received refugees through specific programmes in response to emergency situations, including 42,000 Ugandan Asians expelled from Uganda from 1972-74, 22,500 Vietnamese displaced persons from 1979-92, over 2,500 Bosnians in the early 1990s, and over 4,000 Kosovars in 1999.”

Refugee Council (2004) [Resettling to the UK: The Gateway Protection Programme](#)

The VPRS target was to resettle 20,000 Syrians by 2020 and this target was met if we include resettlements in 2020 itself. The VCRS target was 3,000 people from the Middle East and North Africa, including children and their families by 2020.<sup>14</sup> At the end of 2020, 1,800 people had been resettled under the VCRS.

### Calais clearance: the ‘Dubs amendment’

As at the end of January 2018, “over 220” unaccompanied children had been resettled from elsewhere in Europe under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (the ‘Dubs amendment’). As at January 2018, had been resettled.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#) Asy\_D02 (initial decisions) and Asy\_D04 (appeals). Includes main applicants and dependants.

<sup>14</sup> [HC169822](#), 06 September 2018

<sup>15</sup> See, for example [HC208393](#), 21 January 2019.

Between October 2016 and the end of 2018, the UK resettled a further 549 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who had family in the UK from elsewhere in the EU in response to the clearance of camps around Calais.<sup>16</sup>

## Resettlement from Afghanistan (2021-)

Coinciding with the UK's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, the UK government established the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme to resettle Afghan nationals previously employed by the British in Afghanistan.

Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, the UK established a separate Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) to resettle vulnerable people at risk of persecution.

The ACRS officially opened in January 2022, although most eligible individuals were already evacuated to the UK in 2021.<sup>17</sup>

As of the end of March 2024, 27,200 people had been granted indefinite leave to remain under the Afghanistan schemes, consisting of:

- 15,600 under ARAP, and
- 11,600 under the ACRS.<sup>18</sup>

A further 17 people are recorded as having been resettled or relocated from Afghanistan during this period via unspecified routes.

In 2021, people resettled or relocated from Afghanistan via humanitarian routes made up around half (50%) of those granted humanitarian protection in the UK that year.

Including Afghans in the overall resettlement figures, resettled people made up around 22% of the people granted refuge in the UK between 2014 and 2023.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See [HC198760](#), 12 December 2018

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, statement from the Minister for Afghan Resettlement in HC Deb vol 706 col 185 "The first to be resettled under the new ACRS will be those already evacuated and in the UK, who include women's rights activists, journalists and prosecutors, as well as the Afghan families of British nationals."

<sup>18</sup> Home Office, Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), table Asy\_D02

<sup>19</sup> Excluding Ukrainians who came under the new schemes established in 2022.

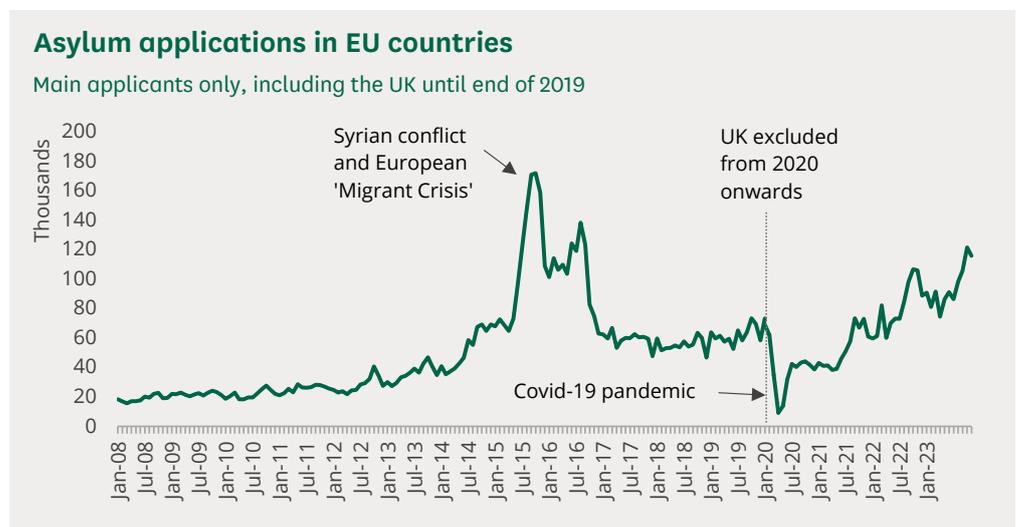
## 4 Asylum in the European Union

### 4.1 Asylum applications in EU countries

The number of asylum applications in EU countries has increased during the last five years. This increase has been partly, but not wholly, driven by the refugee crisis arising from the Syrian civil war.

The below chart shows the number of people applying for asylum in EU countries in each month from January 2009 to June 2023. These figures include both main applicants and dependents.

It is important to note that Ukrainian refugees are not represented here. Most who fled war in Ukraine in 2022 did not apply for asylum via the usual in-country asylum process in their destination but were granted [temporary protection](#) under an EU directive adopted in March 2022. According to UNHCR, 6.0 million Ukrainians have registered for temporary protection or a similar scheme in Europe.<sup>20</sup>



**Notes:** 1. Figures are for main applicants and dependants. 2. Figures on asylum applications in Croatia are included from January 2013; however, the numbers are small (see table below).

**Source:** Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex: monthly data [[migr\\_asyappctzm](#)]

The total number of people applying for asylum in EU countries has been increasing over time, albeit with some notable spikes and dips.

<sup>20</sup> UNHCR, [Refugee Data Portal: Ukraine Refugee Situation](#), accessed September 2023.

Asylum applications in EU countries reached their highest level in October 2015 at 172,000, falling to 101,000 in January 2016. They increased again to 138,000 in August 2016 before falling to a low of 9,400 in April 2020 (during the pandemic). Note that the UK has not been included in the figures since January 2020.

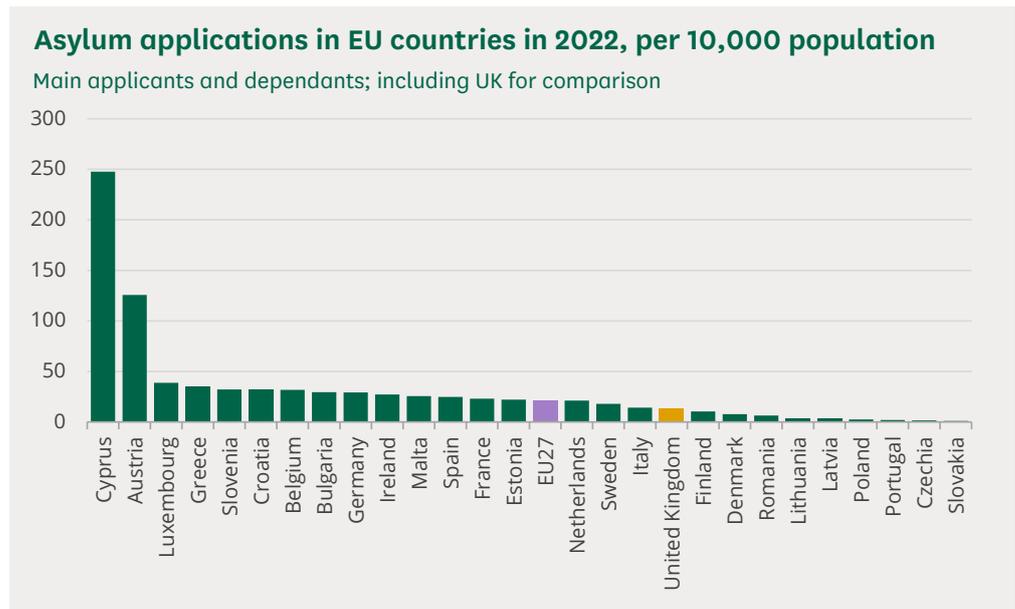
The table below shows the number of asylum applications received in European Union countries up to the end of 2022. Total asylum applications in EU28 countries stood at 1.32 million in 2015 and fell to 669,000 in 2018 before rising again to 965,600 in 2022.

In 2022, Germany received the largest number of asylum applicants among EU countries (243,800), followed by France (156,500), Spain (117,900), Austria (112,200), and Italy (84,300). Together, these top five countries received two thirds of all asylum applications in the EU27.

<b>Asylum applications in EU countries</b>						
EU27 countries and UK, annual figures for main applicants and dependents						
Country	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Austria	24,700	13,700	12,900	14,800	39,900	112,200
Belgium	18,300	22,500	27,500	16,700	25,000	36,700
Bulgaria	3,700	2,500	2,200	3,500	11,000	20,400
Croatia	1,000	800	1,400	1,600	2,900	12,900
Cyprus	4,600	7,800	13,700	7,500	13,700	22,200
Czech Republic	1,400	1,700	1,900	1,200	1,400	1,700
Denmark	3,200	3,600	2,700	1,500	2,100	4,600
Estonia	200	100	100	100	100	2,900
Finland	5,000	4,500	4,500	3,200	2,500	5,800
France	99,300	137,700	151,100	93,200	120,700	156,500
Germany	222,600	184,200	165,600	122,000	190,500	243,800
Greece	58,700	67,000	77,300	40,600	28,400	37,400
Hungary	3,400	700	500	100	0	0
Ireland	2,900	3,700	4,800	1,600	2,700	13,700
Italy	128,900	60,000	43,800	26,900	53,600	84,300
Latvia	400	200	200	200	600	600
Lithuania	500	400	600	300	3,900	1,000
Luxembourg	2,400	2,300	2,300	1,300	1,400	2,500
Malta	1,800	2,100	4,100	2,500	1,600	1,300
Netherlands	18,200	24,000	25,200	15,300	26,500	37,000
Poland	5,000	4,100	4,100	2,800	7,800	9,800
Portugal	1,800	1,300	1,800	1,000	1,500	2,100
Romania	4,800	2,100	2,600	6,200	9,600	12,400
Slovakia	200	200	200	300	400	500
Slovenia	1,500	2,900	3,800	3,600	5,300	6,800
Spain	36,600	54,100	117,800	88,500	65,300	117,900
Sweden	26,300	21,600	26,300	16,200	14,000	18,600
United Kingdom	34,800	38,800	46,100	.	.	.
EU27	677,500	625,600	698,800	472,400	632,400	965,665
EU28	735,000	669,000	740,300	.	.	.

**Source:** Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)]

**Notes:** 1. Figures are for main applicants and dependants.



Notes: 1. Figures are for main applicants and dependants. 2. Population is for 1 Jan 2021.

Source: Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)], Population by age and sex [[demo\\_pjan](#)]

The chart above shows the number of asylum applications per 10,000 population in EU countries and the UK in 2021. During this period Cyprus had the largest number of asylum applications per 10,000 people (248), followed by Austria (126), Luxembourg (39), Greece (35) and Slovenia (32).

In 2022, there were around 13 asylum applicants for every 10,000 people resident in the UK, according to the Eurostat statistics. Across the EU27 there were 22 asylum applications for every 10,000 people.

## 4.2 From where do asylum seekers come to the EU?

The table below shows the ten largest groups of foreign nationals applying for asylum in EU countries in 2021. The largest groups were nationals of Syria (136,065), Afghanistan (124,925), Turkey (52,740), Venezuela (50,730), and Colombia (43,020).

Asylum applications by nationality					
EU27 countries, 2022					
Nationality	Number	As % of all applications	Continued...	Number	As % of all applications
Syria	136,065	14.1%	India	26,480	2.7%
Afghanistan	124,925	12.9%	Tunisia	21,690	2.2%
Turkey	52,740	5.5%	Morocco	21,645	2.2%
Venezuela	50,730	5.3%	Nigeria	18,490	1.9%
Colombia	43,020	4.5%	Russia	18,445	1.9%
Pakistan	37,685	3.9%	Somalia	17,780	1.8%
Bangladesh	33,805	3.5%	Egypt	15,555	1.6%
Iraq	29,830	3.1%	Iran	13,475	1.4%
Georgia	28,390	2.9%	DR Congo	13,430	1.4%
Ukraine	26,715	2.8%	Albania	13,100	1.4%
			All applications	965,665	100.0%

**Source:** Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)]

**Notes:** 1. Figures are for main applicants and dependants.

2. Figures are rounded to the nearest five.

The top ten countries of nationality for asylum applicants in the EU accounted for 58% of all asylum applications in 2020.

## 4.3

### Grants of asylum in EU countries

The table below shows first instance decisions on asylum applications in EU countries in 2021, including the number of grants and refusals. Here, grants include all positive decisions on asylum applications, not just those granted refugee status.

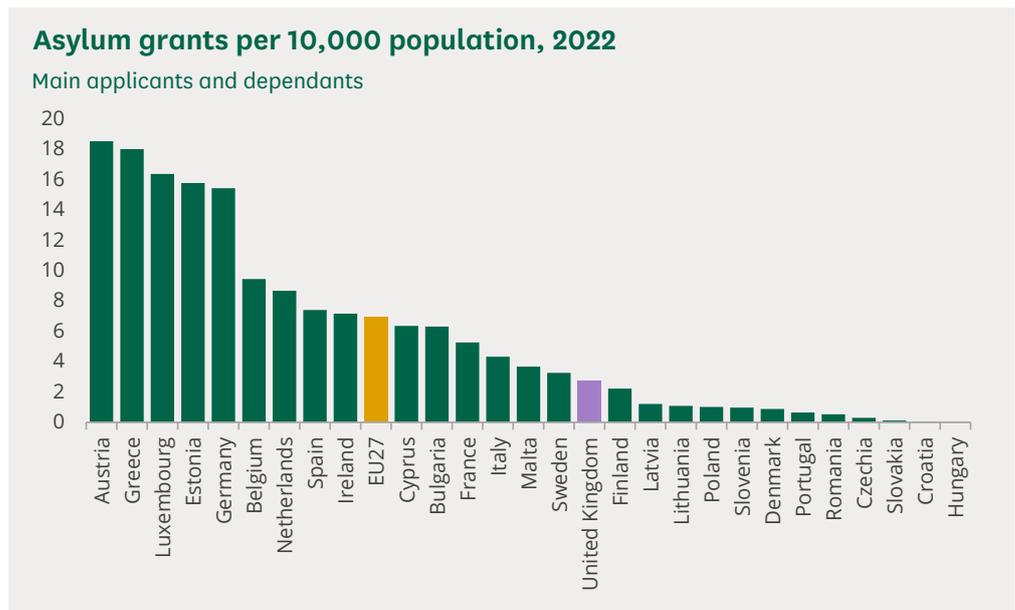
In 2022, Germany granted the largest number of positive asylum decisions among EU countries (128,460), followed by France (35,675) and Spain (35,125). The UK granted asylum or another form of humanitarian protection to 18,185 people, not including resettled persons.

## First instance decisions on asylum applications

EU27 countries and the UK, 2022

Country	Grants	Refusals	Total
Austria	16,560	22,440	39,000
Belgium	10,920	13,105	24,025
Bulgaria	4,370	445	4,815
Croatia	20	80	100
Cyprus	570	8,425	8,995
Czechia	325	775	1,100
Denmark	515	470	985
Estonia	2,100	90	2,195
Finland	1,235	1,365	2,595
France	35,675	93,980	129,655
Germany	128,460	69,075	197,540
Greece	19,245	19,405	38,645
Hungary	30	5	35
Ireland	3,590	880	4,470
Italy	25,680	27,385	53,060
Latvia	230	165	400
Lithuania	305	435	740
Luxembourg	1,040	270	1,310
Malta	190	1,075	1,270
Netherlands	15,180	2,220	17,400
Poland	3,870	1,320	5,190
Portugal	675	195	865
Romania	1,025	3,045	4,070
Slovakia	70	75	150
Slovenia	205	140	345
Spain	35,125	48,260	83,385
Sweden	3,395	6,615	10,010
United Kingdom	18,185	5,685	23,870
EU27	310,605	321,745	632,350

**Source:** Eurostat, First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex: quarterly data [[migr\\_asydcfstq](#)]. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5.



**Notes:** 1. Figures are for main applicants and dependants. 2. First instance decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made during the same period.

**Source:** Eurostat, First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex: quarterly data [[migr\\_asydcfstq](#)]

The chart above shows the number of positive asylum decisions granted at first instance per 10,000 population in EU countries in 2022. During this period Austria granted the largest number of positive first instance asylum decisions per 10,000 people (19) and Hungary the fewest (0.03).

In 2022, the UK granted around three positive asylum decisions at first instance for every 10,000 people. Across the EU27 there were 7 such grants for every 10,000 people.

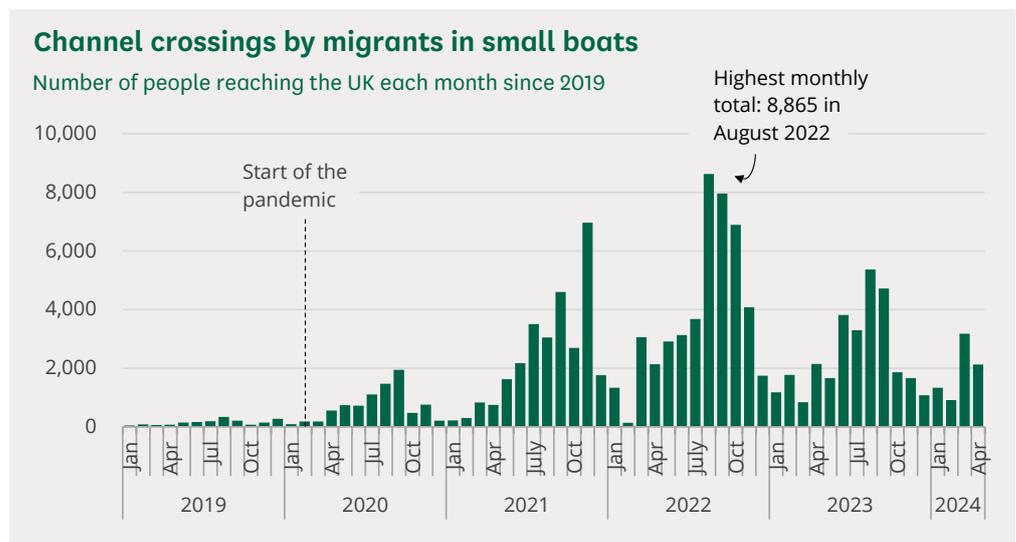
## 5 Channel crossings

The phenomenon of people crossing the Channel in small boats was first detected at a significant scale in 2018. The number of people entering the UK in this manner rose in each year until 2022 and then fell in 2023.

The total number of people recorded as having entered the UK in small boats was,

- 299 in 2018,
- 1,843 in 2019,
- 8,466 in 2020,
- 28,526 in 2021,
- 45,774 in 2022,
- 29,437 in 2023, and
- 9,681 so far in 2024 (to 16 May).<sup>21</sup>

The chart below shows the monthly number of individuals who have crossed in small boats.



Home Office, [Irregular migration statistics quarterly](#) (March 2024); Home Office and Border Force, [Migrants detected crossing the English Channel in small boats](#), updated to 16 May.

Notes: The April 2024 figure is taken from the daily counts by the Home Office and Border Force and may be subject to revision.

The majority, but not all, of those detected crossing in small boats have applied for asylum. Information published by the Home Office indicates that:

- 93% of people who arrived in small boats between 2018 and the end of 2023 have applied for asylum (as of March 2024).

<sup>21</sup> Home Office, [Irregular migration statistics quarterly](#): March 2024

- The proportion applying for asylum in the year ending March 2024 was higher, at around 99%.
- Between 2018 and 2023, 104,800 small boat arrivals applied for asylum, accounting for 29% of all asylum applicants during that period.
- 16% of small boats arrivals who claimed asylum between 2018 and March 2023 and 95% of those who claimed asylum in the year ending March 2024 were still awaiting an initial decision, as of March 2024.
- 72% of small boat arrivals since 2018 who had received an initial decision on their application had been granted asylum or another form of humanitarian protection. This excludes applications which were withdrawn.

The Home Office [has stated](#) that,

“Cases where the applicant arrived irregularly since 7 March 2023 fall under the criteria for the Illegal Migration Act. Since 20 July 2023, when the Illegal Migration Bill received royal assent and became the Illegal Migration Act, there have been no grants of asylum to anyone who arrived by small boat on or after this date.”

Of the 112,433 people that arrived in the UK on small boats between 1 January 2018 and 31 December 2023, 10% (10,728 people) were referred to the National Referral Mechanism, the process for identifying potential victims of modern slavery. Most of these individuals (10,084 or 94%) had also made an application for asylum in the UK.

## Appendix: Data table

### Asylum applications and initial decisions, Main applicants

1984-2023

	Applications	Initial decisions*	Grants			Refusals	Withdrawn
			Total grants	Asylum grants	Other grants		
1984	2,905	1,431	1,084	453	631	347	175
1985	4,389	2,635	2,133	574	1,559	502	201
1986	4,266	2,983	2,450	348	2,102	533	164
1987	4,256	2,432	1,797	266	1,531	635	200
1988	3,998	2,702	2,206	628	1,578	496	281
1989	11,640	6,955	6,070	2,210	3,860	890	350
1990	26,205	4,025	3,320	920	2,400	705	370
1991	44,840	6,075	2,695	505	2,190	3,380	745
1992	24,605	34,900	16,440	1,115	15,325	18,465	1,540
1993	22,370	23,405	12,715	1,590	11,125	10,690	1,925
1994	32,831	20,988	4,487	827	3,660	16,501	2,391
1995	43,963	27,006	5,705	1,294	4,411	21,301	2,564
1996	29,642	38,962	7,293	2,239	5,054	31,669	2,926
1997	32,502	36,044	7,100	3,986	3,114	28,944	2,065
1998	46,014	31,571	9,255	5,346	3,909	22,316	1,469
1999	71,158	21,307	10,283	7,816	2,467	11,024	732
2000	80,315	97,547	21,868	10,373	11,495	75,679	1,721
2001	71,027	120,949	31,641	11,449	20,192	89,308	2,399
2002	84,132	83,540	28,408	8,272	20,136	55,132	1,492
2003	49,407	64,941	11,074	4,002	7,072	53,867	1,837
2004	33,960	46,021	5,558	1,721	3,837	40,463	2,204
2005	25,712	27,393	4,739	2,063	2,676	22,654	2,546
2006	23,608	20,930	4,480	2,226	2,254	16,462	1,780
2007	23,431	21,775	5,740	3,657	2,083	16,033	1,235
2008	25,932	19,398	5,898	3,820	2,078	13,505	2,751
2009	24,487	24,287	6,743	4,282	2,461	17,545	3,344
2010	17,916	20,264	5,198	3,579	1,619	15,066	2,891
2011	19,865	17,382	5,651	4,393	1,258	11,731	2,419
2012	21,843	16,774	6,059	5,223	836	10,715	2,142
2013	23,584	17,665	6,664	5,789	875	11,001	2,414
2014	25,033	19,783	8,151	7,334	817	11,632	2,262
2015	32,733	28,623	11,422	10,085	1,337	17,201	2,830
2016	30,747	24,895	8,465	7,324	1,141	16,430	2,907
2017	26,547	21,269	6,779	6,103	676	14,490	3,092
2018	29,504	21,084	6,931	6,139	792	14,153	3,088
2019	35,737	20,766	10,796	10,038	758	9,970	3,113
2020	29,815	14,304	6,538	6,233	305	7,766	2,569
2021	50,042	14,532	10,468	10,281	187	4,064	2,686
2022	81,130	18,811	14,370	14,168	202	4,441	5,255
2023	67,337	74,172	49,862	48,927	935	24,310	24,027

**Notes to Table:**

1. Figures are for main applicants only. 2. Other grants include humanitarian protection, discretionary leave, and grants under family and private life rules, which relate to the introduction of a new approach to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, from 9 July 2012; Leave Outside the Rules, which was introduced for those refused asylum from 1 April 2013; and UASC leave, which was introduced for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children refused asylum but eligible for temporary leave from 1 April 2013. From April 2003, exceptional leave to remain was replaced with humanitarian protection and discretionary leave. 3. Figures from 1989 to 1993 are rounded to the nearest five and may not sum due to independent rounding. 4. Initial decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period. 5. Some people refused asylum at initial decision may be granted leave to remain following an appeal.

**Source:** Home Office, [Immigration Statistics, year ending March 2024](#), tables Asy\_D01 and Asy\_D02

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