

Children in migration - asylum applicants

Statistics Explained

Data extracted 10 April 2025
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Highlights

" 234 670 first-time asylum applicants were aged less than 18 years old, representing 25.7% of the total number of first-time asylum applicants recorded in the EU in 2024. "

" Syrians (22.9%) and Afghans (12.4%) were by far the most represented citizenships of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years old in the EU in 2024. "

" In 2024, unaccompanied minors accounted for 15.9% of the total number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years old. "

" The percentage of positive decisions on asylum applications was higher for minors than for adults over the period from 2014 to 2024. "

Among all migrants, minors are a particularly vulnerable group requiring special care. Based on available [asylum](#) data, this article focuses on developments over the period from 2014 to 2024 of one of the main components of the [immigration](#) of minors in the [European Union](#) (EU) and in [EFTA](#) countries: the number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years old.

Main trends in 2024

In 2024, the total number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years old in the EU was 234 670 persons (Figure 1). When comparing this figure with the total EU population aged less than 18, it corresponds to 2.9 minor first-time asylum applicants per 1 000 minor residents in the EU.

Figure 1 also shows that 127 140 minors received protection status in 2024 while the asylum applications of 19 280 minors were rejected in the final instance. At the end of 2024, 268 680 minors were awaiting a decision on their asylum application in the EU.

Figure 2 provides some insights into the characteristics of minor first-time asylum applicants for the year 2024: persons aged less than 18 years old accounted for 25.7% of the total number of first-time asylum applicants in the EU, the majority were male (57.3%) and 15.9% of them were unaccompanied minors.

Figure 2

Development from 2014 to 2024

Figure 3 shows that the number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years old rose until the peak of the “migration crisis” in 2016. From 2016 onwards, a downward trend was observed with a minimum value in 2020 (the drop observed in 2020 may be mostly explained by the COVID-19 outbreak and the related introduction of movement restrictions and border closures). The number of minor first-time asylum applicants increased again from 2021 until 2023. In 2024, the number decreased and amounted to 234 670 first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years old.

Over the period from 2014 to 2024, 2.4 million minors lodged an asylum application in the EU.

Figure 3 When looking at the breakdown by [EU countries](#) (Figure 4), the main destination in the EU for first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years old over the period from 2014 to 2024 was Germany (44.7%) followed by France (11.4%), Spain and Austria (each 6.3%). In 2024, Germany (35.9%) and France (17.4%) remained the 2 main destinations for minor first-time asylum applicants, followed by Spain (12.7%).

The comparison of the breakdowns by EU country observed over the period from 2014 to 2024 and in 2024 shows significant increase in the shares recorded in Spain and France, and significant declines in Hungary, Sweden and, to a greater extent, in Germany.

Figure 4 Figure 5 shows the number of minor first-time asylum applicants relative to the population aged less than 18 years old. The circle markers show the highest (maximum) value of the ratio of the number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 relative to the population aged less than 18 years for any year from 2014 to 2024; the lowest (minimum) value is indicated by the cross markers. The distance between these 2 markers (shown by the vertical line) indicates the range observed over the whole period. The differences between the maximum and minimum values recorded between 2014 and 2024 were largest in Sweden, Hungary, Austria, Germany and Greece.

Figure 5 Figure 5 also includes a square for the average from 2014 to 2024. The highest average ratios, at least 2 times as high as the EU average (2.7 per 1 000 persons), were recorded in Austria, Greece, Germany, Cyprus, Sweden and Luxembourg. By contrast, the lowest average ratios were observed in Estonia, Portugal, Czechia and Slovakia; in all of these, the national average was less than one tenth of the EU average.

Citizenship of minor first-time asylum applicants

In 2024, Syrians and Afghans were the most represented citizenships of minor first-time asylum applicants in the EU (Figure 6). They were followed by citizens of Venezuela, Türkiye and Colombia. The share of these 5 citizenships represented more than half of the total of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years in 2024.

Figure 6 Figure 7 shows the development of the number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 by main geographical area. The peaks recorded for Asia in 2015 and 2016 illustrate the “migration crisis”. In 2015, the maximum number of first-time asylum seekers with European (non-EU) citizenship was also observed. After these peaks, the Asian and European curves were characterised by a downward trend until 2020, an increase between 2021 and 2023, and again a decrease in 2024.

As for Africa, a regular upward trend was visible until 2017, before starting to fluctuate over the next 4 years. From 2021 onward, the trend began to rise once again.

Finally, the number of minor first-time asylum seekers who were citizens of an American country increased significantly between 2016 and 2019, followed by a decline in 2020 and 2021. Beginning in 2022, the American curve again demonstrated an upward trend.

Figure 7

Minor first-time asylum applicants by sex

Figure 8 shows the development of the share of males in the total number of first-time applicants aged less than 18. Over the whole period, the share of males for minor first-time applicants was significantly higher than 50%, with a minimum of 54.1% observed in 2019 and a maximum of 64.2% in 2015, whereas the average value over the period from 2014 to 2024 was equal to 58.0%.

Figure 8

Share of minors in the total number of first-time applicants

As can be seen in Figure 9, the share of minors in the total number of first-time asylum applicants was not stable over time, ranging between 24.3% and 32.3%. One of the main features is that the share of minors increased during the “migration crisis” and remained over 30% until 2021. In 2024, the share of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 in the total number of first-time asylum applicants was 25.7%.

Figure 9Figure 10 shows the share of minors in the total number of first-time asylum applicants by EU country in 2024. In 12 countries the share was above the EU average, with the highest values observed in Austria (55.2%), Hungary (40.0%) and Germany (36.7%). In contrast, in 15 countries the share was below the EU average, with the lowest values observed in Slovenia (4.6%), Estonia (7.1%) and Italy (8.1%).

Figure 10

Unaccompanied minor first-time asylum applicants

At EU level, the share of unaccompanied minor first-time asylum applicants in the total number of first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years old was on average 15.1% over the period from 2014 to 2024, with a maximum value of 24.5% recorded in 2015 and a minimum value of 7.5% in 2019 (Figure 11). Once again, the highest value was recorded during the “migration crisis”, but the share of unaccompanied minors dropped quickly just after this period, before increasing up to 19.2% in 2022.

Figure 11When looking at the share of unaccompanied minors in the EU countries in 2024, the highest values can be found in Bulgaria (65.0%), Slovenia (55.6%), the Netherlands (50.1%), Hungary (44.4%) and Cyprus (39.0%).

Figure 12Figure 13 shows the 10 main countries of citizenship with the highest number of unaccompanied minors applying for asylum for the first time in one of the EU countries in 2024.

The most represented citizenships of unaccompanied minor first-time asylum applicants in the EU in 2024 were Syrians and Afghans.

Figure 13

Decisions on asylum application for minors

Figure 14 shows that the ratio between the total number of positive decisions and the total number of decisions either at first instance or on appeal was higher over the period 2014 to 2024 for minor first-time asylum applicants than for adult first-time asylum applicants. This difference was more significant for first instance decisions than for decisions taken in appeal. It means that the first instance acceptance rate for minors was 1.4 times higher than for adults, while for the final decisions on appeal, the acceptance rate for minors was 1.2 times higher than for adults.

Figure 14Figure 15 indicates that the asylum procedure is faster for minors than for adults, since the share of minors in the total number of pending applications is always lower than the share of minors in the total number of

first-time asylum applicants. Between 2014 and 2024, the difference between the 2 shares was not constant, and it reached its lowest in 2015 at the beginning of the migration crisis, reflecting the pressure at that time on the asylum systems in the EU.

Figure 15

Decisions granting temporary protection to minors fleeing Ukraine

On 4 March 2022, the European Council unanimously adopted an implementing decision introducing [temporary protection](#) for people fleeing Ukraine as a consequence of Russia's invasion.

On 31 December 2024, based on available data, about 1.3 million minors (non-EU citizens), who had fled Ukraine as a consequence of the Russian invasion in 2022, were under temporary protection in the EU. Poland reported a total of 449 200 minors who benefitted from decisions granting temporary protection. Germany (326 070 beneficiaries) and Czechia (95 750) were the other EU countries with the highest total numbers of minor beneficiaries of temporary protection (Figure 16).

Poland (45.3%) recorded the highest share of minors in the total number of non-EU citizens benefitting from decisions granting temporary protection on 31 December 2024, followed by Belgium (30.9%), Italy (30.7%), Lithuania (30.4%) and Croatia (30.3%). At EU level, the share was 31.2%.

Figure 16 Detailed analysis of temporary protection statistics can be consulted in the more comprehensive monthly [Statistics Explained article](#).

Data sources

Asylum statistics

Since 2008 data have been provided to Eurostat under the provisions of Article 4 of the [Regulation \(EC\) No 862/2007](#); most of the statistics presented in this article were collected within this regulatory framework. Data are provided to Eurostat with a monthly, quarterly or annual frequency, and are based on administrative sources. They are supplied to Eurostat by statistical authorities, home office ministries/ministries of the interior or related immigration agencies in the EU countries.

Methodological notes

1) Limitations on data availability affecting the information presented in this article:

- 2024: data on first-time asylum applicants, estimation due to missing data for Portugal for December 2024.
- 2014-2020: total number of unaccompanied minors was used in the calculations.
- 2021-2024: data refer to unaccompanied minor first-time asylum applicants, however, due to derogations, the complete data are not available for France, Cyprus and Poland and instead, in case of missing data, the total number of unaccompanied minors was used.

Data on temporary protection

- France: In most cases, minors can stay in France without a permit. Therefore, minors are generally not included in statistics on temporary protection.
- Hungary: data on temporary protection broken down by age group are not available.

2) Member State data refer to the number of persons applying for asylum for the first time in that Member State. Persons may however apply for international protection in more than one Member State in a given reference year. Consequently, the EU total may include such multiple applications.

Values are rounded to the nearest 5.

Context

In recent years, the number of minors arriving in the European Union, many of whom are unaccompanied, has increased substantially, particularly in 2015 and 2016.

Protecting minors is first and foremost about upholding European values of respect for human rights, dignity and solidarity, regardless of status and at all stages of migration. The European Union, together with its Member States and with the support of the relevant EU agencies (European Border and Coast Guard Agency; European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)), has been active on this front for many years. The existing EU policies and legislation provide a solid framework for the protection of the rights of the minors who migrate, covering all aspects including reception conditions, the treatment of their applications and integration.

The European Union is fully committed to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for a world in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation, has his/her rights protected and access to quality education and healthcare. The 2015 Valletta Summit¹ political declaration and its Action Plan calls for the prevention of and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings (with a specific focus on women and minors).

The [EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child](#) renew the EU's commitment to promote and protect the indivisibility of the rights of the child in its relations with third countries, including countries of origin or transit. In this context, the Council reaffirmed the need to protect all refugee and minor migrants, regardless of their status, and give primary consideration at all times to the best interests of the child, including unaccompanied minors and those separated from their families, in full compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

Within the [European Commission](#), the [Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs](#) is responsible for immigration policy, whereas the [Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers](#) is in charge of [child policy](#). All relevant legal acts and information regarding the EU's immigration policy can be accessed on the [European Commission's website](#). Readers interested in the recent development of the global immigration policy in the European Union are also invited to consult the [pact on migration and asylum](#) which was adopted by the European Parliament in April 2024 and by the Council in May 2024, and which provides a comprehensive approach that delivers a common European response to migration.

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http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Article_name

Notes

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¹ https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf

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