

*Data extracted on 12 March 2019. Data on applications by unaccompanied minors and final decisions will be added mid-April 2019.*

*Planned article update: March 2020 and late April 2020 (parts on applications by unaccompanied minors and final decisions).*

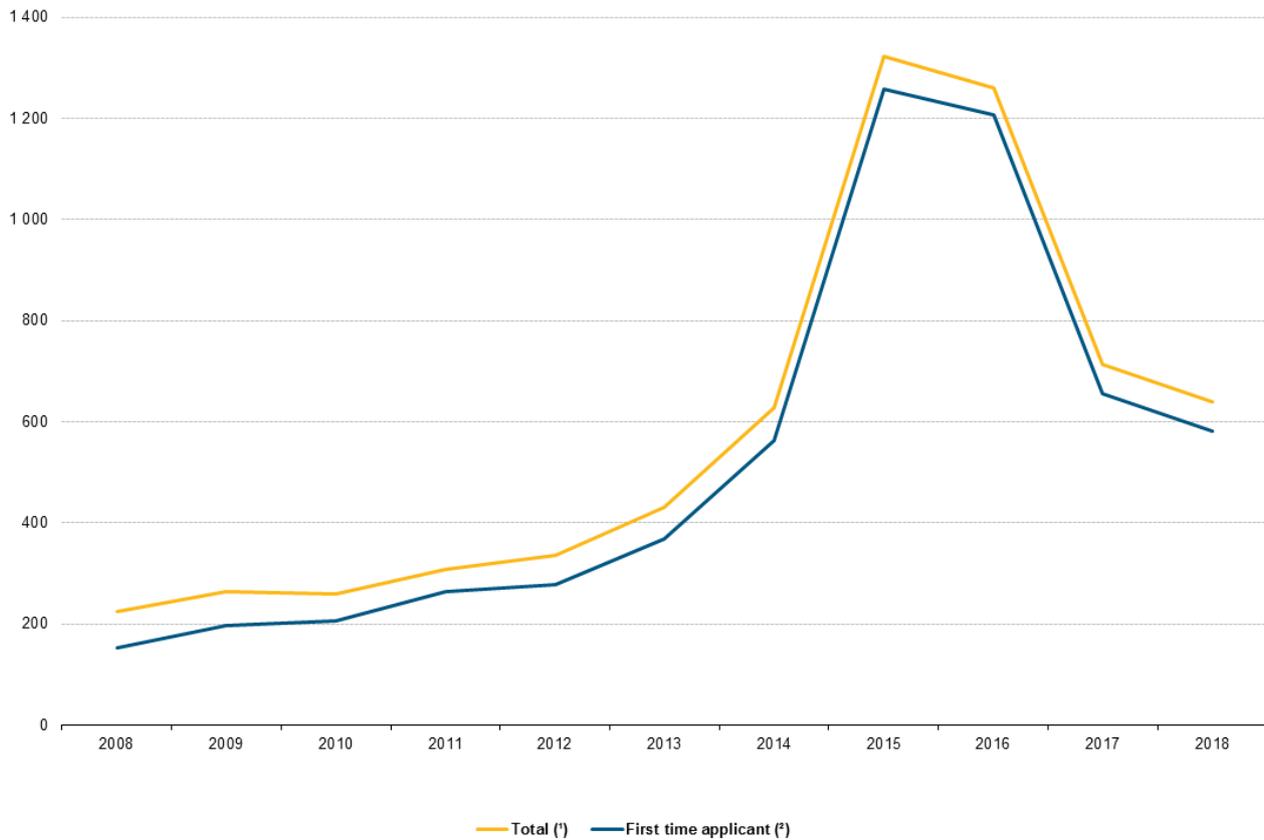
This article describes recent developments in relation to numbers of [asylum applicants](#) and decisions on [asylum applications](#) in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) . Asylum is a form of international protection given by a state on its territory. It is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection in his/her country of citizenship and/or residence, in particular for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.

## Number of asylum applicants: drop in 2018

Having peaked in 1992 (672 thousand applications in the [EU-15](#) ) when the EU Member States received many asylum applicants from former Yugoslavia and again in 2001 (424 thousand applications in the [EU-27](#) ), the number of asylum applications within the EU-27 fell to just below 200 thousand by 2006.

Focusing just on applications from citizens of non-member countries (see Figure 1), there was a gradual increase in the number of asylum applications within the EU-27 and later the [EU-28](#) through to 2012, after which the number of asylum seekers rose at a more rapid pace, with 431 thousand applications in 2013, 627 thousand in 2014 and around 1.3 million in both 2015 and 2016. As such, the number of asylum applications within the EU-28 in 2015 and 2016 was approximately double the number recorded within the EU-15 during the previous relative peak of 1992. In 2018, 638 thousand asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the European Union (EU), down by 10 % compared with 2017 (712 thousand) and just over half the number recorded in 2016, when nearly 1.3 million asylum applicants were registered. This figure is comparable to the level recorded in 2014, before the peaks of 2015 and 2016.

**Asylum applications (non-EU) in the EU-28 Member States, 2008–2018**  
(thousands)



(\*) 2008 - 2014: Croatia not available.  
 (†) 2008: Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Finland not available. 2009: Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Finland not available. 2010: Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Luxembourg, Hungary, Austria, Romania and Finland not available. 2011: Croatia, Hungary, Austria and Finland not available. 2012: Croatia, Hungary and Austria not available. 2013: Austria not available.  
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_asyappctza)



**Figure 1: Asylum applications(non-EU) in the EU-28 Member States, 2008–2018(thousands)**Source: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza)

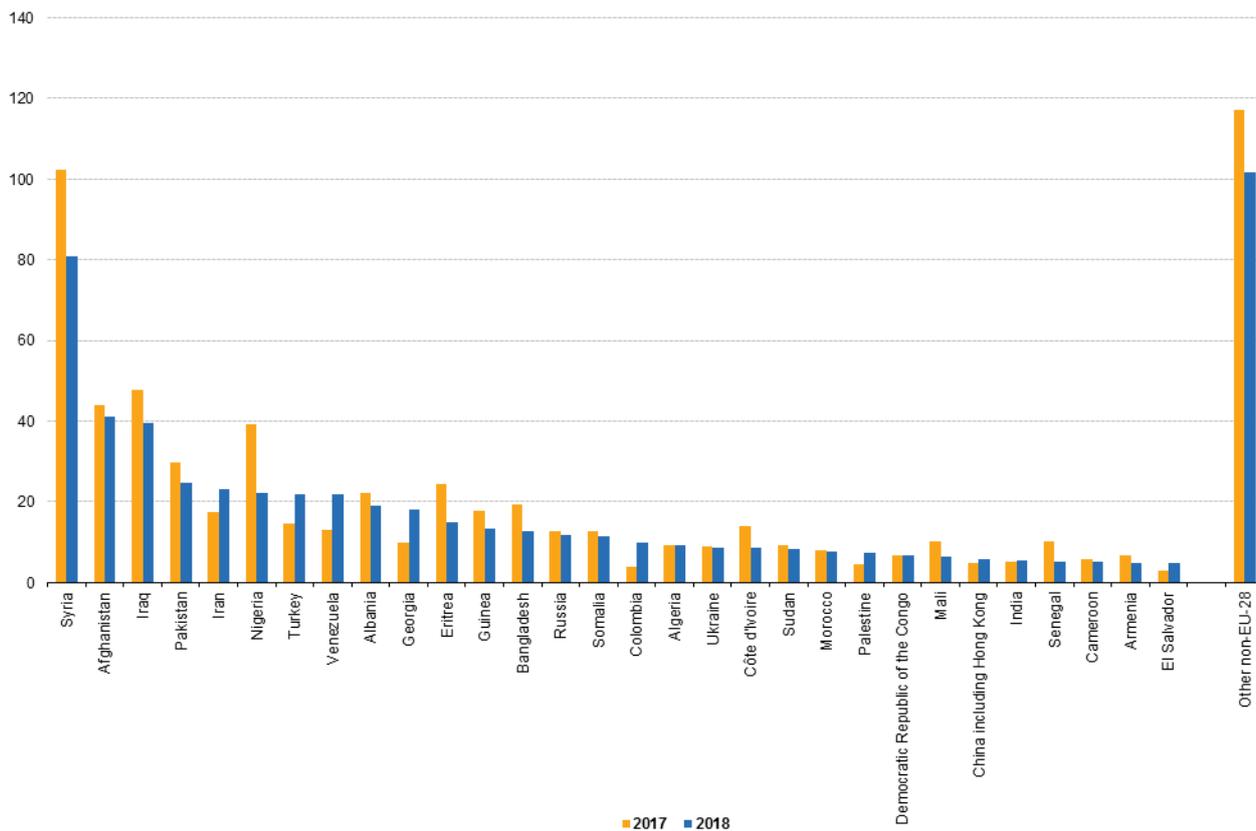
**First-time applicants: 581 thousand in 2018**

The number of **first time asylum applicants** in the EU-28<sup>1</sup>in 2018 was 581 thousand, which was 57 thousand (9 %) less than the total number of applicants. A first-time applicant for international protection is a person who lodged an application for asylum for the first time in a given EU Member State and therefore excludes repeat applicants (in that Member State) and so more accurately reflects the number of newly arrived persons applying for international protection in the reporting Member State.

This latest figure for 2018 marked a decrease of 74 thousand first-time applicants across the EU-28 in comparison with the year before, as the number of first-time applicants fell from 655 thousand in 2017 to 581 thousand in 2018. This followed on from a considerable decrease of 551 thousand first-time applicants between 2016 and 2017. The main contributions to the decrease were lower numbers of applicants from Syria and Nigeria, (see Figure 2).

<sup>1</sup>The EU total is calculated as an aggregation of Member States data. 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.

**Countries of origin of (non-EU) asylum seekers in the EU-28 Member States, 2017 and 2018**  
(thousands of first time applicants)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_asyappctza)



**Figure 2: Countries of citizenship of (non-EU) asylum seekers in the EU-28 Member States, 2017 and 2018**(thousands of first time applicants)Source: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza)

### Citizenship of first-time applicants: largest shares from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq

Syria was the main country of citizenship of asylum seekers in the EU Member States in 2018, a position it has held each year since 2013. In 2018, the number of Syrian first-time asylum applicants in the EU-28 fell to 81 thousand from 102 thousand in 2017, while the share of Syrians in the EU-28 total dropped from 15.6 % to 13.9 %. Syrian was the main citizenship of asylum seekers in eight EU Member States.

Afghanis accounted for 7.1 % of the total number of first-time asylum applicants and Iraqis for 6.8 %, while Pakistanis and Iranians for 4.3 % and 4.0 % respectively.

Among the most numerous groups of citizenship of first-time asylum applicants in the EU-28 in 2018, the largest relative increases compared with 2017 were recorded for Venezuelans (share up 1.8 percentage points), Georgians (up 1.6 percentage points), Turks (up 1.5 percentage points), Iranians (up 1.3 percentage points) and Colombians (up 1.1 percentage points). The largest relative fall in the number of applicants, among the most common countries of citizenship for asylum seekers in 2018 (except for Syria), was recorded for Nigerians (down 2.2 percentage points) and Eritreans (down 1.2 percentage points)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>For the purpose of this analysis only the top 30 countries of citizenship in terms of the number of applicants for asylum were considered.

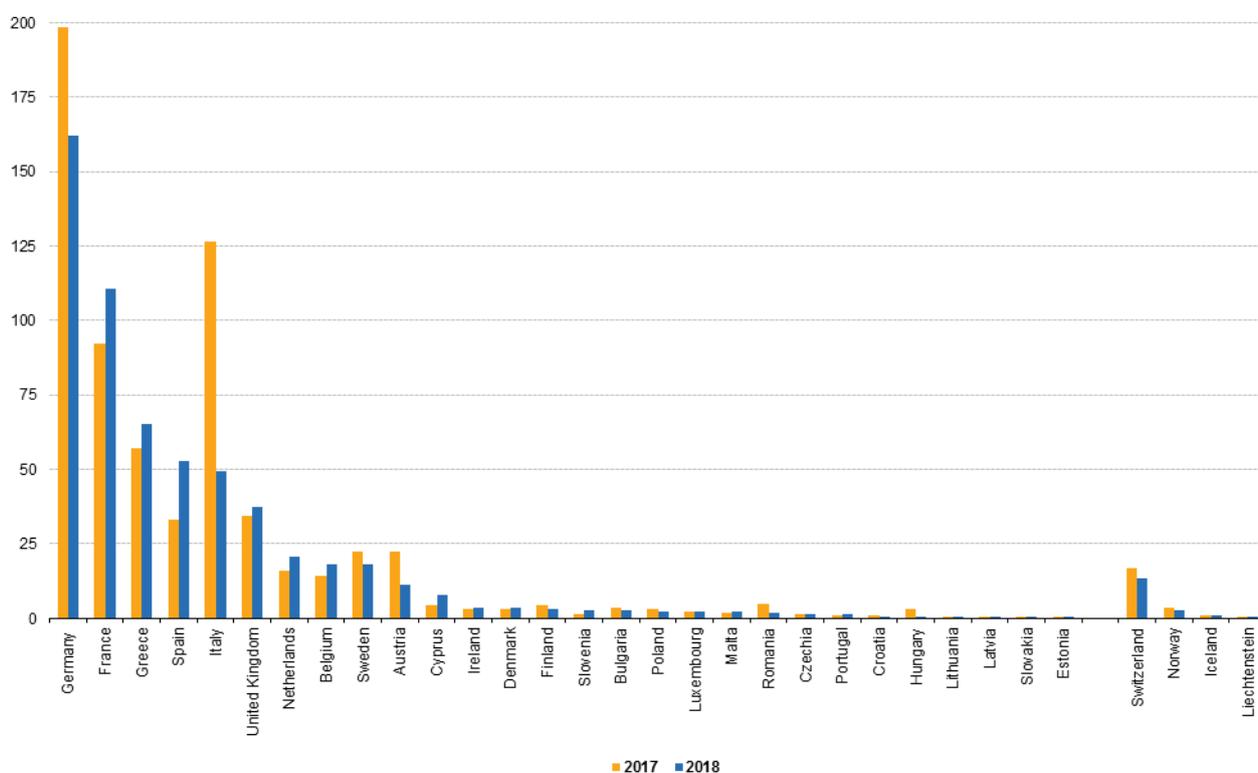
## Main countries of destination: Germany, France and Greece

With 162 thousand applicants registered in 2018, Germany accounted for 28 % of all first-time applicants in the EU Member States. It was followed by France (110 thousand, or 19 %), Greece (65 thousand, or 11 %), Spain (53 thousand, or 9 %), Italy (49 thousand, or 8 %) and the United Kingdom (37 thousand, or 6 %).

Among Member States with more than 5 000 first-time asylum seekers in 2018, the number of first time applicants, rose most compared with the previous year in Cyprus (+70 %, or 3 thousand more first-time asylum seekers in 2018 than in 2017) and Spain (+60 %, or 20 thousand more), ahead of Belgium (+29 %, or 4 thousand more), the Netherlands (+27 %, or 4 thousand more), France (+20 %, or 19 thousand more) and Greece (+14 %, or 8 thousand more). In contrast, the largest relative decreases were recorded in Italy (-61 %, or 77 thousand fewer), Austria (-49 %, or 11 thousand fewer), Sweden (-19 %, or 4 thousand fewer) and Germany (-18 %, or 36 thousand fewer), (see Figure 3).

**Number of (non-EU) asylum seekers in the EU and EFTA Member States, 2017 and 2018**

(thousands of first time applicants)



Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_asyappctza)

eurostat

**Figure 3: Number of (non-EU) asylum seekers in the EU and EFTA Member States, 2017 and 2018 (thousands of first time applicants)** Source: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza)

Table 1 provides an overview of the five largest groups of first-time asylum applicants (by citizenship) in each of the EU Member States. Syrians accounted for the largest number of applicants in 8 of the 28 EU Member States, including 44 thousand applicants in Germany (the highest number of applicants from a single country to one of the EU Member States in 2018) and 13 thousand in Greece. Some 19 thousand Venezuelans applied for protection in Spain, while 16 thousand Iraqi applicants were recorded in Germany and almost 10 thousand in Greece. Afghanis accounted for 12 thousand applicants in Greece, 10 thousand in France. Other Member States with high number of applicants of a single citizenship in 2018 were: Germany with 11 thousand applicants from Iran, 10 thousand from Nigeria and 10 thousand from Turkey, Spain with 8 thousand from Colombia and France

with 8 thousand from Albania.

### Five main citizenships of (non-EU) asylum applicants, 2018

(number of first time applicants, rounded figures)

Belgium		Bulgaria		Czechia		Denmark	
Syria	2 770	Afghanistan	1 065	Ukraine	280	Eritrea	675
Palestine	2 420	Iraq	620	Cuba	145	Syria	600
Afghanistan	1 045	Syria	495	Georgia	140	Georgia	405
Guinea	1 000	Pakistan	160	Armenia	100	Iran	195
Iraq	895	Iran	35	Uzbekistan	90	Morocco	175
Other	10 000	Other	90	Other	600	Other	1 415
Germany		Estonia		Ireland		Greece	
Syria	44 165	Ukraine	15	Albania	460	Syria	13 145
Iraq	16 330	Russia	10	Georgia	450	Afghanistan	11 820
Iran	10 855	Egypt	10	Syria	330	Iraq	9 640
Nigeria	10 170	Pakistan	10	Zimbabwe	280	Pakistan	7 185
Turkey	10 160	Bangladesh	5	Nigeria	250	Turkey	4 820
Other	70 205	Other	40	Other	1 895	Other	18 365
Spain		France		Croatia		Italy	
Venezuela	19 070	Afghanistan	10 205	Afghanistan	170	Pakistan	7 315
Colombia	8 465	Albania	8 280	Iran	120	Nigeria	5 140
Syria	2 725	Georgia	6 750	Syria	80	Bangladesh	4 160
Honduras	2 400	Guinea	6 625	Algeria	65	Ukraine	2 485
El Salvador	2 240	Ivory Coast	5 280	Iraq	55	Senegal	2 445
Other	17 830	Other	73 350	Other	190	Other	27 615
Cyprus		Latvia		Lithuania		Luxembourg	
Syria	1 970	Russia	50	Tajikistan	120	Eritrea	410
India	870	Iraq	20	Russia	50	Syria	280
Bangladesh	615	Azerbaijan	15	Iraq	35	Iraq	185
Pakistan	580	Egypt	10	Azerbaijan	25	Afghanistan	180
Cameroon	500	Vietnam	10	Turkey	20	Georgia	135
Other	3 080	Other	75	Other	135	Other	1 030
Hungary		Malta		Netherlands		Austria	
Afghanistan	270	Syria	455	Syria	2 960	Syria	3 275
Iraq	215	Somalia	310	Iran	1 870	Afghanistan	1 735
Syria	50	Libya	305	Eritrea	1 410	Iran	1 040
Iran	30	Sudan	170	Turkey	1 300	Russia	670
Pakistan	20	Bangladesh	150	Algeria	1 270	Iraq	635
Other	45	Other	640	Other	11 655	Other	4 035
Poland		Portugal		Romania		Slovenia	
Russia	1 600	Angola	225	Iraq	970	Pakistan	775
Ukraine	225	Ukraine	135	Syria	350	Algeria	470
Iraq	65	Democratic Republic of the Congo	130	Iran	140	Afghanistan	455
Turkey	55	Guinea	70	Bangladesh	80	Morocco	170
Afghanistan	40	Pakistan	50	Turkey	65	Iran	160
Other	425	Other	625	Other	340	Other	765
Slovakia		Finland		Sweden		United Kingdom	
Afghanistan	30	Iraq	565	Syria	2 615	Iran	3 955
Yemen	20	Russia	455	Iran	1 095	Iraq	3 595
Azerbaijan	15	Turkey	285	Iraq	1 065	Pakistan	2 575
Iran	15	Iran	230	Georgia	1 040	Albania	2 370
Iraq	15	Somalia	155	Eritrea	750	Eritrea	2 195
Other	55	Other	1 260	Other	11 505	Other	22 595
Iceland		Liechtenstein		Norway		Switzerland	
Iraq	110	Serbia	25	Turkey	770	Eritrea	2 495
Albania	90	Georgia	25	Syria	415	Syria	1 195
Somalia	50	Belarus	20	Eritrea	220	Afghanistan	1 125
Afghanistan	45	North Macedonia	10	Iran	110	Turkey	925
Pakistan	40	Ukraine	10	Iraq	95	Georgia	805
Other	390	Other	55	Other	920	Other	6 920

Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_asyappctza)

eurostat 

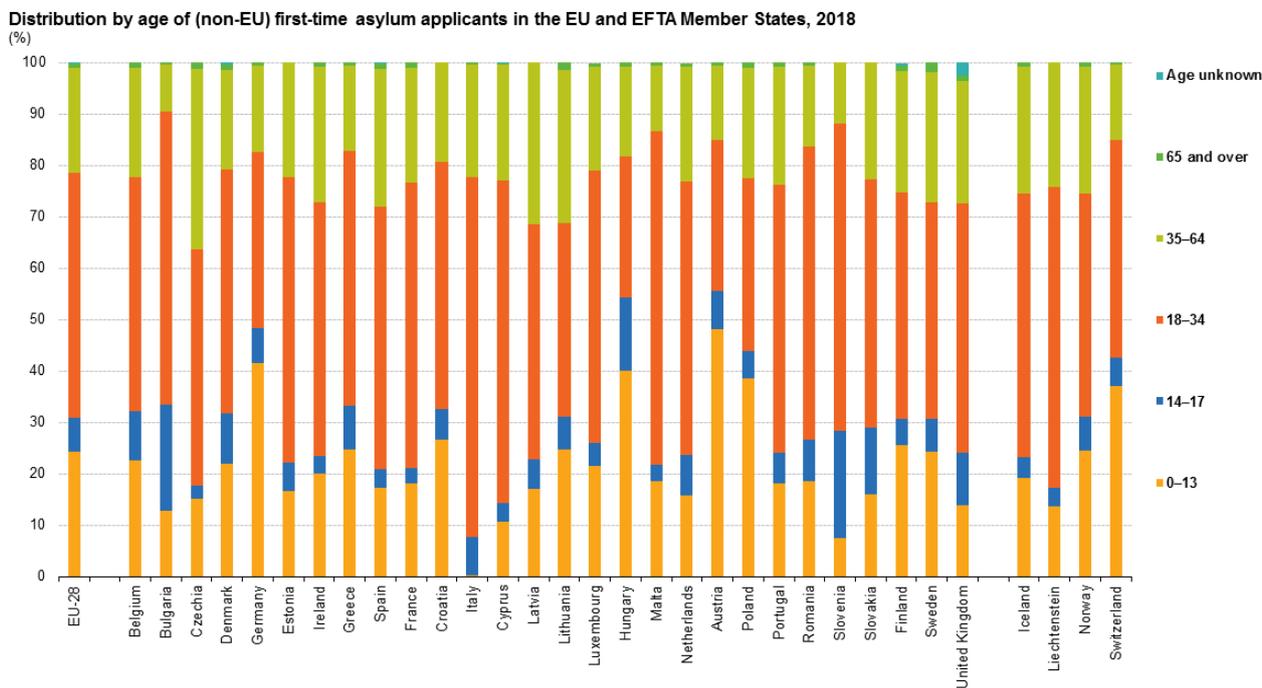
Table 1: Five main citizenships of (non-EU) asylum applicants, 2018 (number of first time applicants, rounded figures) Source: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza)

## Age and gender of first-time applicants

Almost four in five (79 %) of the first-time asylum seekers in the EU-28 in 2018 were less than 35 years old (see Figure 4); those in the age range 18–34 years accounted for slightly less than half (48 %) of the total number of applicants, while nearly one third (31 %) of the total number of first-time applicants were minors aged less than 18 years.

This age distribution of asylum applicants was common in almost all of the EU Member States, with the

largest share of applicants being those aged 18–34. However, there were a few exceptions to this pattern: Hungary, Austria, Germany and Poland reported a higher proportion of asylum applicants less than 18 years old (at least 44 %).



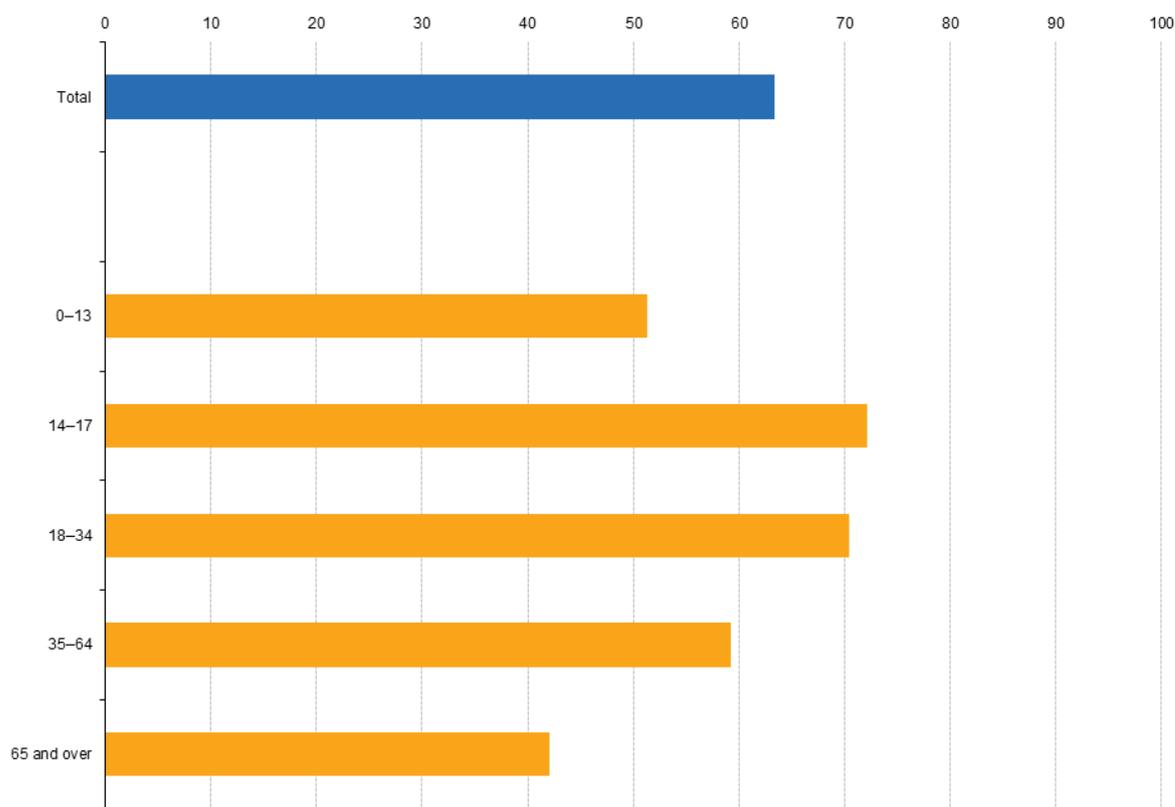
Note: due to the use of rounded figures in these calculations the sum of all age groups does not always equal 100 %.  
Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_asyappctza)



**Figure 4: Distribution by age of (non-EU) first time asylum applicants in the EU and EFTA Member States, 2018(%)**Source: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza)

The distribution of first-time asylum applicants by sex shows that more men than women were seeking asylum. Among the youngest age group (0–13 years), males accounted for 51 % of the total number of applicants in 2018. There was a greater degree of gender inequality for asylum applicants who were 14–17 or 18–34 years old, where 72 % and 70 %, respectively, of first-time applicants were male, with this share dropping back to 59 % for the age group 35–64. Across the EU-28, female applicants outnumbered male applicants in 2018 for asylum applicants aged 65 and over, although this group was relatively small, accounting for just 0.7 % (0.4 % females and 0.3 % males) of the total number of first-time applicants.

**Share of male (non-EU) first time asylum applicants in the EU-28 Member States, by age group, 2018 (%)**



Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_asyappctza)

eurostat 

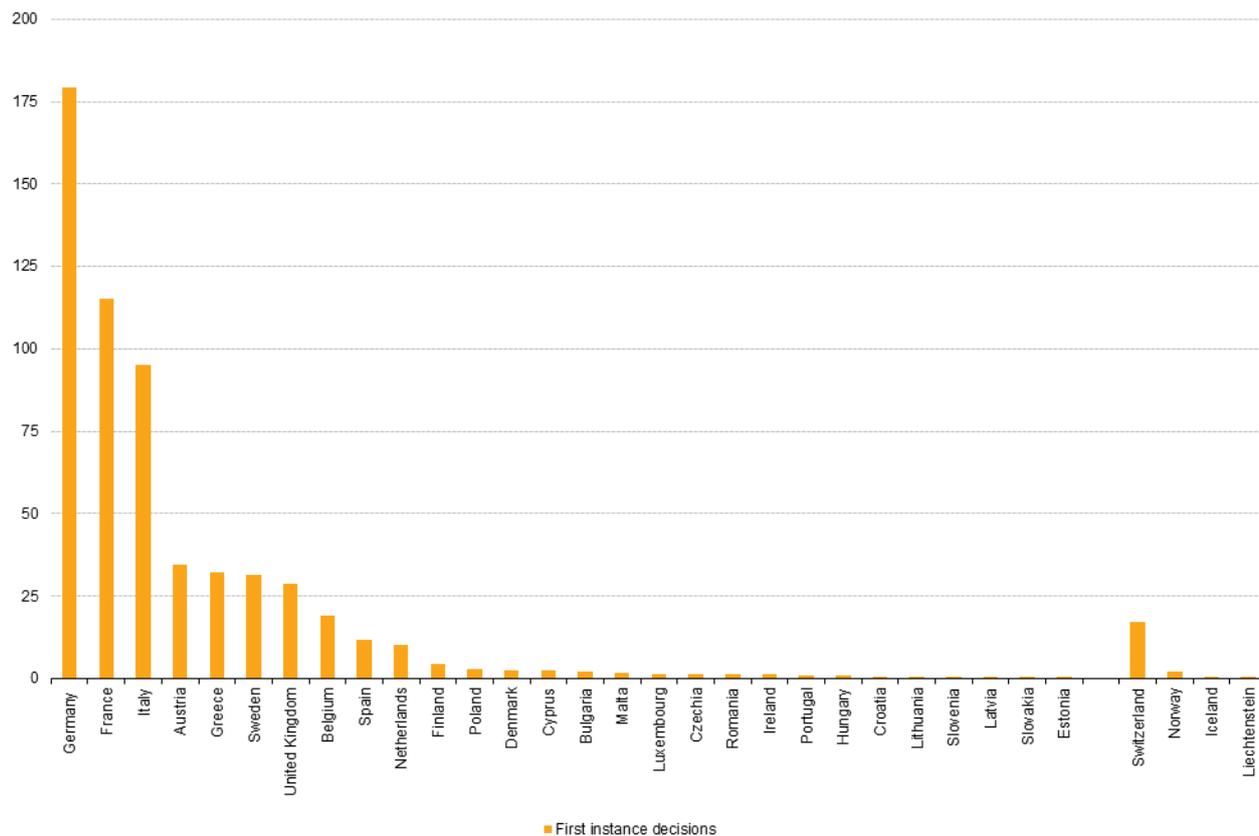
**Figure 5: Share of male (non-EU) first time asylum applicants in the EU-28 Member States, by age group, 2018(%)**Source: Eurostat (migr\_asyappctza)

### First instance decisions on asylum applications

Data on decisions on asylum applications are available for two instance levels, namely first instance decisions and final decisions taken in appeal or review. Data on final decisions taken in appeal or review will be available in April 2019 and will be added to this analysis at that time.

In 2018, 582 thousand first instance decisions were issued in the all EU Member States, down by 40 % compared with 2017 (962 thousand). By far the largest number of decisions was issued in Germany (see Figure 6), constituting nearly one third (31 %) of the total first instance decisions in the EU-28 in 2018.

**Number of first instance decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2018**  
(thousands)



Source: Eurostat (online data codes: migr\_asydcfsta)

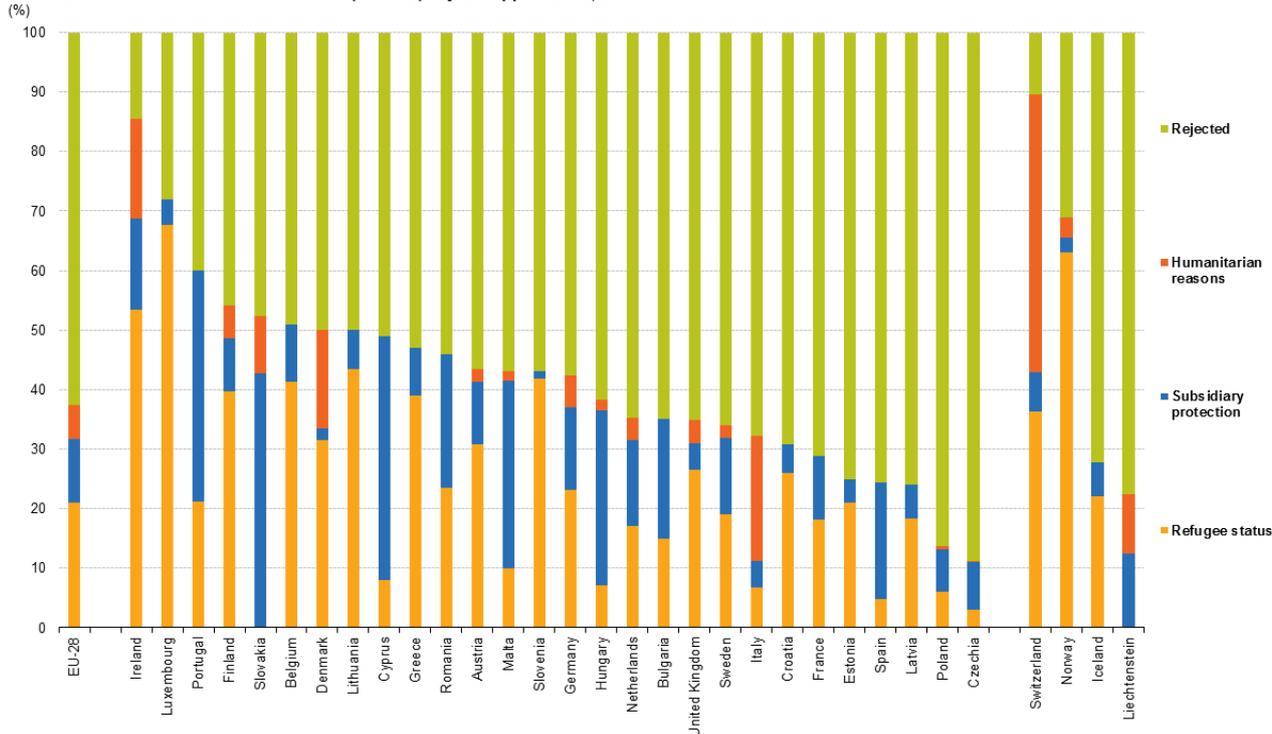


**Figure 6: Number of first instance decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2018(thousands)**Source: Eurostat (migr\_asydcfsta) and (migr\_asydcfina)

Figure 7 provides an analysis of the outcome of first instance decisions. Though [refugee](#) and [subsidiary protection status](#) are defined by EU law, [humanitarian reasons](#) are specific to national legislation and are not applicable in some of the EU Member States.

In 2018, 37 % of EU-28 first instance asylum decisions resulted in positive outcomes, that is grants of refugee or subsidiary protection status, or an authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons (see Figure 7). For first instance decisions, some 56 % of all positive decisions in the EU-28 in 2018 resulted in grants of refugee status.

Distribution of first instance decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2018



Note: calculation is based on exact figures (not rounded).  
 For disclosure control reasons small numbers in some cases have been combined in other categories.  
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_asycdfsta)



Figure 7: Distribution of first instance decisions on (non-EU) asylum applications, 2018(%)Source: Eurostat (migr\_asycdfsta)

A total of 122 thousand persons were granted refugee status in the EU-28 in 2018 at first instance, 63 thousand were given subsidiary protection status, and 33 thousand were given authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons.

The highest shares of positive first instance asylum decisions in 2018 were recorded in Ireland (86 %) and Luxembourg (72 %). Conversely, France, Estonia, Spain, Latvia, Poland and Czechia each recorded first instance rejection rates between 71 % (France) and 89 % (Czechia).

## Source data for tables and graphs

- Asylum statistics: tables and figures

## Data sources

Eurostat produces statistics on a range of issues relating to international migration. Between 1986 and 2007, data on asylum was collected on the basis of a gentlemen’s agreement. Since 2008 data have been provided to Eurostat under the provisions of Article 4 of Regulation (EC) 862/2007 ; most of the statistics presented in this article were collected within this regulatory framework.

Data are provided to Eurostat with a monthly frequency (for asylum application statistics), quarterly frequency (for first instance decisions) or annual frequency (for final decisions based on appeal or review, resettlement and unaccompanied minors). The statistics are based on administrative sources and are supplied to Eurostat by statistical authorities, home office ministries/ministries of the interior or related immigration agencies in the EU Member States.

Two different categories of persons should be taken into account when analysing asylum statistics. The first includes asylum seekers who have lodged a claim (asylum application) and whose claim is under consideration by a relevant authority. The second is composed of persons who have been recognised, after consideration, as refugees, or have been granted another kind of international protection ( [subsidiary protection](#) ), or were granted protection on the basis of the national law related to international protection ( [authorisations to stay for humanitarian reasons](#) ), or were rejected from having any form of protection.

Since the entry into force of Regulation (EC) 862/2007, statistics on asylum decisions have become available for different stages of the asylum procedure. [First instance decisions](#) are decisions granted by the respective authority acting as a first instance of the administrative/judicial asylum procedure in the receiving country. In contrast, [final decisions in appeal or review](#) relate to decisions granted at the final instance of administrative/judicial asylum procedure and which result from an appeal lodged by an asylum seeker rejected in the preceding stage. Since asylum procedures and the number/levels of decision making bodies differ among the EU Member States, the true final instance may be, according to the national legislation and administrative procedures, a decision of the highest national court. However, the applied methodology defines that final decisions should refer to what is effectively a final decision in the vast majority of cases: in other words, once all normal routes of appeal have been exhausted and there is no possibility to appeal on the substance of the decision but only on procedural grounds.

## Context

The 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees (as amended by the 1967 New York Protocol) has, for around 70 years, defined who is a refugee, and laid down a common approach towards refugees that has been one of the cornerstones for the development of a common asylum system within the EU. Since 1999, the EU has worked towards creating a common European asylum regime in accordance with the Geneva Convention and other applicable international instruments.

The Hague programme was adopted by heads of state and government on 5 November 2004. It puts forward the idea of a [common European asylum system \(CEAS\)](#) , in particular, it raises the challenge to establish common procedures and uniform status for those granted asylum or subsidiary protection. The [European Commission](#) 's [policy plan on asylum](#) (COM(2008) 360 final) was presented in June 2008 which included three pillars to underpin the development of the CEAS:

- bringing more harmonisation to standards of protection by further aligning the EU Member States' asylum legislation;
- effective and well-supported practical cooperation;
- increased solidarity and sense of responsibility among EU Member States, and between the EU and non-member countries.

With this in mind, in 2009 the European Commission made a proposal to establish a [European Asylum Support Office \(EASO\)](#) . The EASO supports EU Member States in their efforts to implement a more consistent and fair asylum policy. It also provides technical and operational support to Member States facing particular pressures (in other words, those Member States receiving large numbers of asylum applicants). The EASO became fully operational in June 2011 and has worked to increase its capacity, activity and influence, working with the European Commission and the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) .

In May 2010, the European Commission presented an [action plan for unaccompanied minors](#) (COM(2010) 213 final), who are regarded as the most exposed and vulnerable victims of migration. This plan aims to set-up a coordinated approach and commits all EU Member States to grant high standards of reception, protection and integration for unaccompanied minors. As a complement to this action plan, the [European Migration Network](#) has produced a comprehensive [EU study on reception policies, as well as return and integration arrangements for unaccompanied minors](#) .

A number of directives in this area have been developed. The four main legal instruments on asylum — all of which are currently subject to proposals for replacement or recasting — are:

- the [Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU](#) on standards for the qualification of non-EU nationals and stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection;

- the [Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU](#) on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection;
- the [Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU](#) laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection;
- the [Dublin Regulation \(EU\) 604/2013](#) establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the EU Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national (national of a non-member country) or stateless person.

EU operational and financial support has been instrumental in helping Member States to address the migration challenge. In particular, the European Commission offers Member States continued financial support under the [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund \(AMIF\)](#). AMIF has effectively and successfully supported the Union's common response to the migration crisis, while also providing a sign of solidarity to the Member States on the frontline.

In April 2016, the European Commission adopted a [Communication \( COM\(2016\) 197 final \)](#) launching the process for a reform of the CEAS. This included options for a fair and sustainable system for allocating asylum applicants among EU Member States, a further harmonisation of asylum procedures and standards to create a level playing field across the EU and thereby reduce pull factors inducing irregular secondary movements, and a strengthening of the mandate of the EASO.

In May 2016, the European Commission presented a [first package of reforms](#) , including proposals for establishing a sustainable and fair Dublin system ( [COM\(2016\) 270 final](#) ), reinforcing the Eurodac system ( [COM\(2016\) 272 final](#) ) and establishing a European Agency for Asylum ( [COM\(2016\) 271 final](#) ).

In July 2016, the European Commission put forward a [second set of proposals](#) related to the reform of the CEAS, for example to establish a resettlement framework for the EU ( [COM\(2016\) 468 final](#) ) and a common procedure for international protection ( [COM\(2016\) 467 final](#) ) as well as a recast of the legislation on the standards for the reception of applicants for international protection ( [COM\(2016\) 465 final](#) ).

In March 2019, the European Commission [reported](#) on the progress made over the past 4 years and set out the measures still required to address immediate and future migration challenges ( [COM/2019/126 final](#) ).

## Other articles

- [Asylum quarterly report](#)
- [Dublin statistics on countries responsible for asylum application](#)
- [Enforcement of immigration legislation statistics](#)
- [Residence permits - statistics on first permits issued during the year](#)
- [Migration and migrant population statistics](#)
- [Migrant integration statistics](#)
- [Population and population change statistics](#)
- [Population statistics at regional level](#)

## Data visualisations

- [Asylum statistics](#)

## Publications

- [All publications on asylum and managed migration](#)
- [All publications on migrant integration](#)

## Main tables

- [Asylum and managed migration \(t\\_migr\)](#) , see:

Asylum and first time asylum applicants - monthly data (rounded) (tps00189)

Persons subject of asylum applications pending at the end of the month - monthly data (tps00190)

Asylum and first time asylum applicants - annual aggregated data (rounded) (tps00191)

First instance decisions on asylum applications by type of decision - annual aggregated data (tps00192)

Final decisions on asylum applications - annual data (tps00193)

Asylum applicants considered to be unaccompanied minors - annual data (tps00194)

## Database

- [Asylum and managed migration \(migr\)](#) , see:

Asylum and Dublin statistics (migr\_asy)

Applications (migr\_asyapp)

Decisions on applications and resettlement (migr\_asydec)

'Dublin' statistics (migr\_dub)

## Dedicated section

- [Asylum and managed migration](#)

## Methodology

- [Applications](#) (ESMS metadata file — migr\_asyapp\_esms)
- [Decisions on applications and resettlement](#) (ESMS metadata file — migr\_asydec\_esms)
- ['Dublin' statistics](#) (ESMS metadata file — migr\_dub\_esms)

## External links

- [European Commission — DG Migration and Home Affairs — Common European asylum system](#)
- [European Asylum Support Office — EASO](#)
- [European Migration Network — EMN](#)
- [UNHCR — Statistics and operational data](#)

View this article online at [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics)