



## Data analysis of unaccompanied minors in 2023

*The information presented in this fact sheet complements the information on asylum applications as presented in the [Asylum Report 2024](#).*

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Data from Eurostat (extracted on 31 May 2024) are used in this fact sheet. Data on asylum applications, which are published in the Asylum Report 2024, are based on the EUAA's Early Warning and Preparedness System (EPS) data exchange. EPS data shared with the EUAA are provisional and unvalidated, and therefore may differ from validated data submitted to Eurostat at a later date, according to Regulation (EU) 2020/851 amending Regulation (EC) 862/2007.

According to Eurostat Technical Guidelines, all applicants for international protection who are considered by the responsible national authority to be unaccompanied minors are counted as such. The age of an applicant refers to their age as accepted by the national authority, which may have been determined through an age assessment procedure. Applications by unaccompanied minors present additional challenges given the more extensive asylum procedures and special reception conditions that they require.





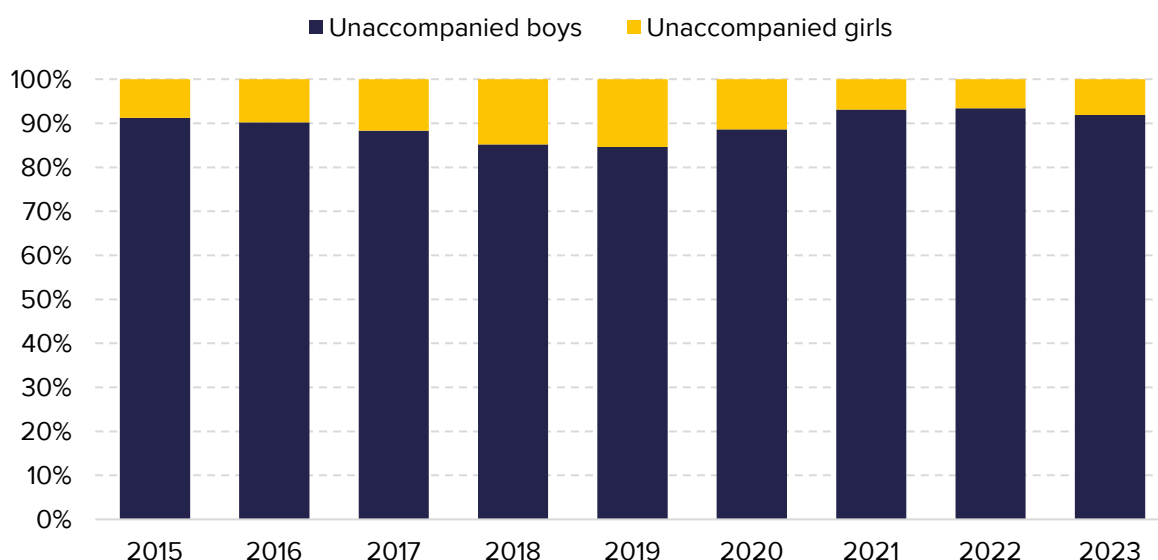
## Applications for international protection by unaccompanied minors by age and sex<sup>1</sup>

In 2023, unaccompanied minors lodged 43,000 applications for international protection in EU+ countries,<sup>2</sup> which was the most since 2016. As in previous years, more unaccompanied boys than girls sought asylum. In fact, more than 9 in 10 unaccompanied minors were male, with their share remaining stable compared to 2022 and 2021 (see *Figure 1*).



### Unaccompanied boys continued to seek asylum much more frequently than girls

**Figure 1. Share of asylum applications lodged by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries by sex, 2015–2023**



Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.

The distribution of applicants by age group was similar to previous years. In 2023, youth aged 16-17 years accounted for more than two-thirds of all unaccompanied minor applicants, while slightly over one-fifth were aged 14-15 years. Less than one-tenth were younger than 14 years.

Boys represented the vast majority in each age group. In fact, boys aged 16-17 years were the largest group of applicants, accounting for 64% of the total number of applications lodged by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries. They were followed by boys aged 14-15 (21% of the

<sup>1</sup> For 0.02% of asylum applications, the sex of the unaccompanied minor was unknown. For 0.06% of asylum applications, the age of the unaccompanied minor was unknown. Unknowns have been excluded from this analysis.

<sup>2</sup> For this factsheet, EU+ countries refers to the EU-27 countries plus Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The citizenship totals are based on the sum of all citizenships excluding those from EU-27 countries.

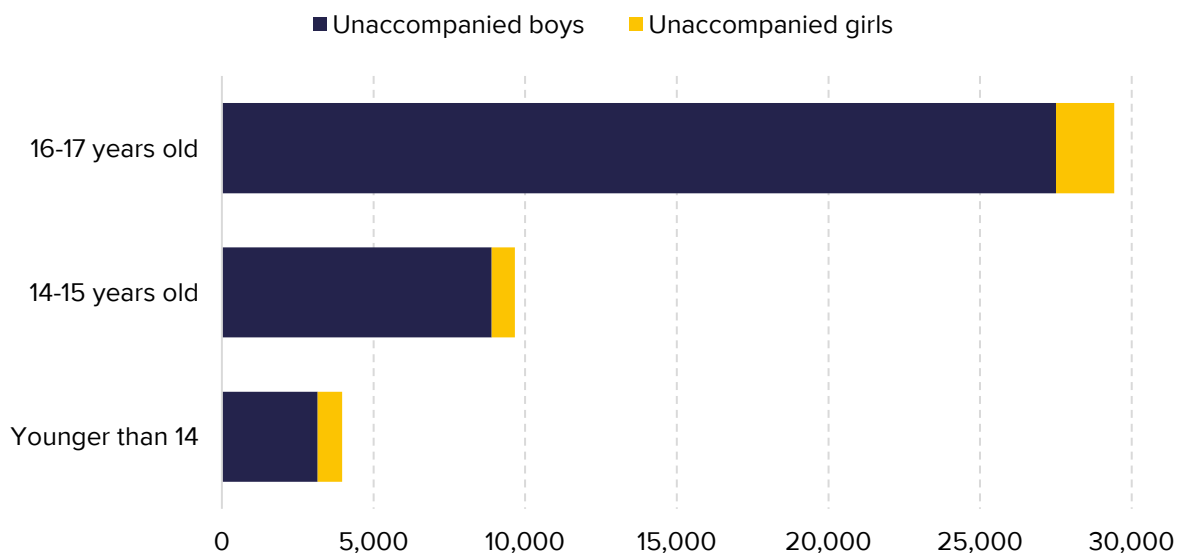
total) and boys younger than 14 (7%). The share of girls younger than 14 years and aged 14-15 years was very low (around 2% each), while there were slightly more girls (4%) aged 16-17 years (see *Figure 2*).

Two in every 10 applications lodged by unaccompanied minors younger than 14 were lodged by girls. The proportion of applications lodged by girls in comparison to boys for the two other age groups was lower, accounting for less than 1 in every 10.



## Most unaccompanied minors were boys aged 16-17 years

**Figure 2. Asylum applications lodged by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries by sex and age, 2023**



Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.

### 1. Data on sex and age by nationality

The overall sex and age patterns in EU+ countries were shaped by, and consistent across, some of the largest groups of asylum seekers, including nationals from Syria, Afghanistan and Türkiye (in descending order of the number of applications lodged). Most unaccompanied minors from these three countries were 16-17-year-old boys, with unaccompanied girls accounting for less than 1 in every 10 applicants (see *Figure 3*).

For most nationalities, unaccompanied boys lodged the vast majority of applications.<sup>3</sup> Yet, there were some variations. Notably, unaccompanied girls accounted for over one-third of applicants from Somalia and Russia, around one-quarter of applicants from Iraq and Sierra Leone, and one-fifth of applicants from Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia. Whereas most unaccompanied girls from Somalia, Eritrea and Guinea were aged 14-17 years, most unaccompanied girls from Iraq were younger than 14.

<sup>3</sup> Only citizenships with at least 100 asylum applications lodged by unaccompanied minors in 2023 were considered.

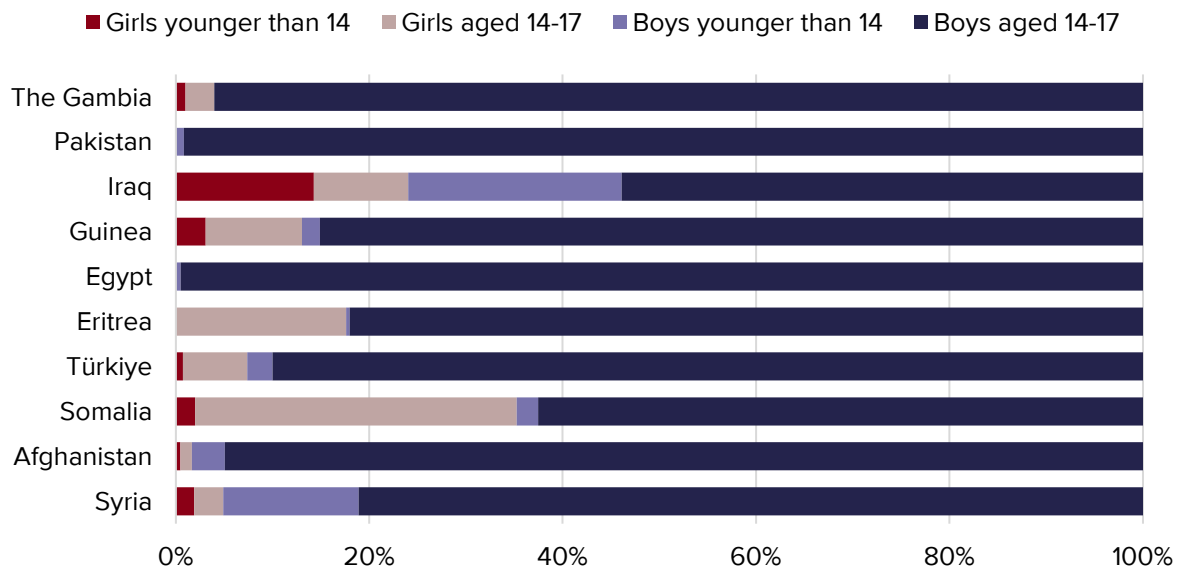
Furthermore, there were slightly more unaccompanied girls than unaccompanied boys from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (120 compared to 105, respectively). The number of unaccompanied boys and girls from Ukraine was almost on par.

In contrast, there were no unaccompanied girls from Egypt, Pakistan, Morocco, Sudan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Benin and Burkina Faso (in descending order of the number of applications lodged).



### Among Syrians, Afghans and Turks, girls accounted for fewer than 1 in every 10 unaccompanied minors

**Figure 3. Share of girls and boys for the Top 10 nationalities of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in EU+ countries, 2023**



Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.

The share of unaccompanied girls remained stable from the previous year for most nationalities. There were, however, a few exceptions. The share of unaccompanied Somali girls rose by 5 percentage points to 35% in 2023, which was due to a decrease in the number of unaccompanied Somali boys seeking asylum. Applications by Iraqi unaccompanied minors (770) rose by 86% from 2022 overall, and their share of female applicants rose by 11 percentage points to 24%.

Conversely, as the number of applications lodged by unaccompanied Guinean boys more than tripled in 2023, unaccompanied Guinean girls, who accounted for one-quarter of all Guinean unaccompanied minors in 2022, lodged slightly more than 1 in every 10 applications in 2023. Similarly, applications by Ivorian unaccompanied minors (300) nearly doubled from 2022, primarily due to more boys seeking asylum. As a result, the share of unaccompanied Ivorian girls decreased by 19 percentage points to 20% in 2023.

## 2. Decisions at first instance and recognition rates

In 2023, asylum authorities issued about 19,000 first instance decisions to unaccompanied minors, which represented an increase by almost one-half from 2022. The largest increases were recorded for unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan and Syria, and at lower levels, Eritrea and Türkiye. In contrast, fewer decisions were issued to Somalis, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (see *Figure 4*).

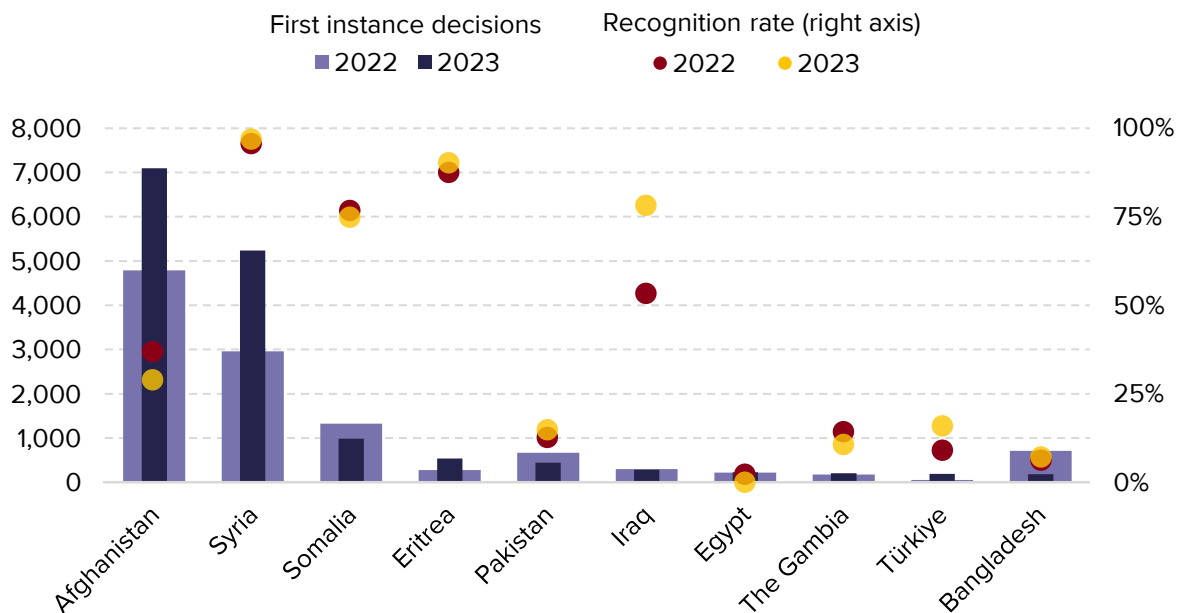
The outcome of decisions varied significantly across different nationalities. Refugee status and subsidiary protection were granted to almost all Syrian unaccompanied minors (97%). In contrast, only a small minority of positive decisions were issued to minors from Bangladesh (7%) and none to minors from Egypt (0%).

Compared to 2022, the recognition rate rose notably for unaccompanied minors from Iraq (78%, +25 percentage points) and decreased slightly for unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan (29%, -8 percentage points) (see *Figure 4*).



### Notably more decisions were issued to unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan and Syria compared to 2022

**Figure 4. First instance decisions issued to unaccompanied minors and respective recognition rates by Top 10 nationalities, 2022-2023**



**Note:** The recognition rate is calculated as the proportion of first instance decisions granting EU-regulated types of protection.

Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.

In many cases, recognition rates for unaccompanied minors mirrored the overall recognition rates<sup>4</sup> for the same country of origin. Notable exceptions included unaccompanied minors from Somalia and Iraq, for whom recognition rates were considerably higher than the overall rate. In contrast, unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan were granted refugee status or subsidiary protection less frequently than overall applicants from this group on account of a higher share receiving national forms of protection (one-half of all unaccompanied minors). However, almost every unaccompanied girl from Afghanistan received refugee status across EU+ countries.

Five EU+ countries jointly issued over three-quarters of all first instance decisions on applications lodged by unaccompanied minors in 2023: Germany (31%), Switzerland (16%), the Netherlands (10%), Belgium and Greece (9% each).

Within the top countries, Germany nearly doubled the number of first instance decisions issued to unaccompanied minors from 2022. The increases were mainly driven by many more decisions issued to the two main groups of unaccompanied children, namely Syrians (3,200 decisions) and Afghans (2,300 decisions), nearly tripling and rising by over one-half, respectively. In both cases, most decisions concerned unaccompanied boys aged 14-17.

In terms of the outcome, nearly two-thirds of first instance decisions issued to unaccompanied minors in Germany granted EU-regulated forms of protections, including refugee status and subsidiary protection, predominantly the latter (see *Figure 5*). Meanwhile, the share of rejections and decisions granting humanitarian status declined slightly from 2022.

Switzerland issued the second-highest number of first instance decisions to unaccompanied minors in 2023, up by 89% from the previous year. This increase was driven almost solely by more decisions being issued to Afghan unaccompanied minors. In fact, 9 in every 10 decisions issued by Switzerland related to this nationality and almost all of them granted humanitarian status under Swiss law.

The Netherlands issued the third-highest number of first instance decisions to unaccompanied minors, up by 29% from 2022. This increase was due to more decisions being issued to unaccompanied minors from Syria and Eritrea (the top two nationalities), who accounted for more than one-half and over one-fifth of decisions issued in the Netherlands, respectively. For both, most decisions were positive, mainly granting subsidiary protection.

There was a significant increase in Belgium, where the number of first instance decisions issued to unaccompanied minors nearly doubled from 2022. Nearly three-quarters of these decisions were issued to Afghans, while decisions for Syrians accounted for about one-tenth. For both nationalities, the number of decisions more than doubled from the previous year, leading to the overall increase. Whereas for Syrians most decisions granted refugee status, for Afghans about 2 in every 3 decisions were negative and the remainder granted refugee status.

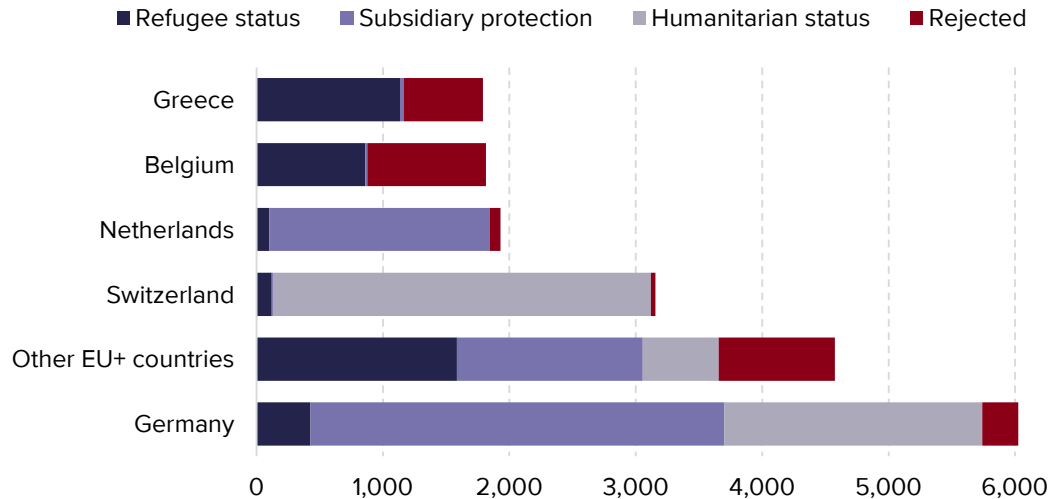
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<sup>4</sup> The overall recognition rate is calculated as the proportion of first instance decisions granting EU-regulated types of protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection), which includes first instance decisions granted to unaccompanied minors.



## Germany issued almost one-quarter of all decisions to unaccompanied minors

**Figure 5. Outcome of first instance decisions issued to unaccompanied minors by Top 5 EU+ country, 2023**



Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.

In contrast, the number of first instance decisions issued to unaccompanied minors by Greek asylum authorities decreased by nearly one-fifth from 2022. This was driven by the fact that the top nationalities in 2022 were granted fewer decisions in 2023, namely Somalis, Pakistanis, Egyptians and Bangladeshis (in descending order). Meanwhile, Iraqis and Palestinians received notably more decisions. Despite the overall decrease, slightly more decisions were issued to unaccompanied minors younger than 14 years and unaccompanied girls aged 14-17. Overall, 65% of all first instance decisions issued to unaccompanied minors in Greece granted EU-regulated forms of protection. This represented a significant increase from the previous year (+45%).

Turning to final decisions issued in appeal or review on applications by unaccompanied minors (1,300) in 2023, these decreased by around one-fifth from the previous year. This was driven by fewer decisions issued by Greece (590), which in fact issued 45% of all second or higher instance decisions to unaccompanied minors, mostly to minors from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Egypt (260, 95 and 80, respectively, and all of them rejections).

In contrast, Belgium, Austria and Sweden (in descending order) issued more decisions at second and higher instances compared to 2022. Whereas Belgium granted a somewhat even level of refugee status and rejections, Austria granted mostly refugee status and Sweden rejected most appeals.

### 3. Withdrawn applications

An asylum application can be explicitly or implicitly withdrawn for various reasons before a final decision has been issued, regardless of whether an application is pending at first or higher instances.

In 2023, about 12,000 applications were withdrawn by unaccompanied minors in 21 EU+ countries which reported data. This represented a decrease by 37% from 2022, whereas withdrawn applications by all applicants in the EU+ decreased by around one-tenth. As in previous years, applications were predominantly withdrawn by one particular group, with unaccompanied boys aged 14-17 accounting for 92% of withdrawals.

Nearly all withdrawals were implicit, suggesting that the unaccompanied minors did not notify the authority of their intention to withdraw the application. It is possible that an asylum applicant implicitly withdraws their application from one EU+ country to apply again elsewhere, thus indicating secondary movements towards other EU+ countries.

The overall decrease in withdrawn applications by unaccompanied minors was driven by a drop in Austria (4,800 or -7,000 from 2022), the country with the most withdrawn applications. At somewhat lower levels, several other EU+ countries recorded fewer withdrawals in 2023 compared to 2022, including Greece, Romania and Slovenia. However, notable exceptions comprised Bulgaria, where withdrawals increased to the most on record (3,900),<sup>5</sup> as well as Switzerland and Belgium, where withdrawals more than doubled albeit at much lower levels.

Afghan unaccompanied children accounted for nearly one-half of all withdrawals by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries. They withdrew around 5,300 applications in 2023 compared to over 13,000 in 2022, largely in Austria (where 55% of all applications were withdrawn by Afghan unaccompanied minors). In contrast, there were more applications withdrawn by this nationality in Bulgaria (32% of all applications were withdrawn by Afghan unaccompanied minors) (see *Figure 6*).

The second-highest number of withdrawals by unaccompanied minors was by Syrian nationals, accounting for over one-quarter of all withdrawals by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries. This increased by over four-fifths from the previous year. Most withdrawals took place in Bulgaria, where they quadrupled, followed at some distance by Austria, Greece and Romania.

Withdrawals by unaccompanied minors from Egypt, Morocco and Türkiye also increased significantly from 2022 and were the third, fourth and fifth highest out of all nationalities. They accounted for 6%, 4% and 2% of all withdrawals by unaccompanied minors, respectively. In contrast, numbers for Pakistanis and Tunisians dropped by over two-thirds from 2022, when they were the third and fifth highest of all nationalities.

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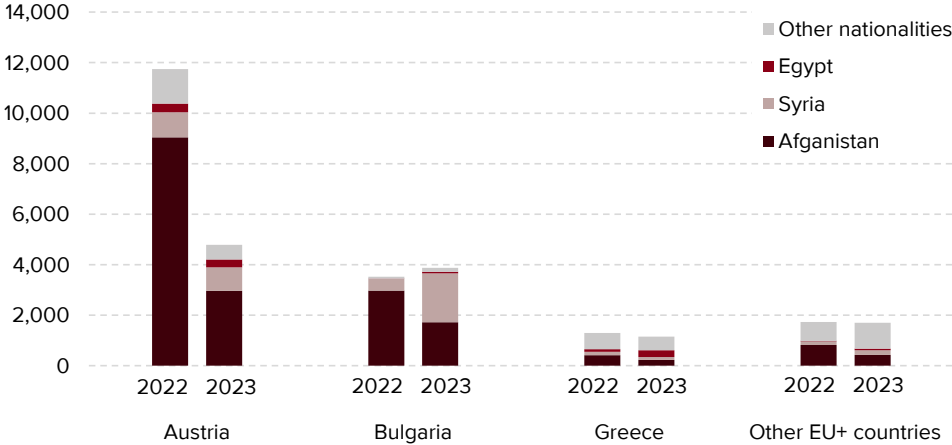
<sup>5</sup> Data on withdrawn applications for Bulgaria are available since 2021.





**Sharp decrease in withdrawals of asylum applications in Austria by unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan**

**Figure 6. EU+ countries with the most withdrawals by citizenship of the unaccompanied minor applicant, 2023 compared to 2022**



Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.

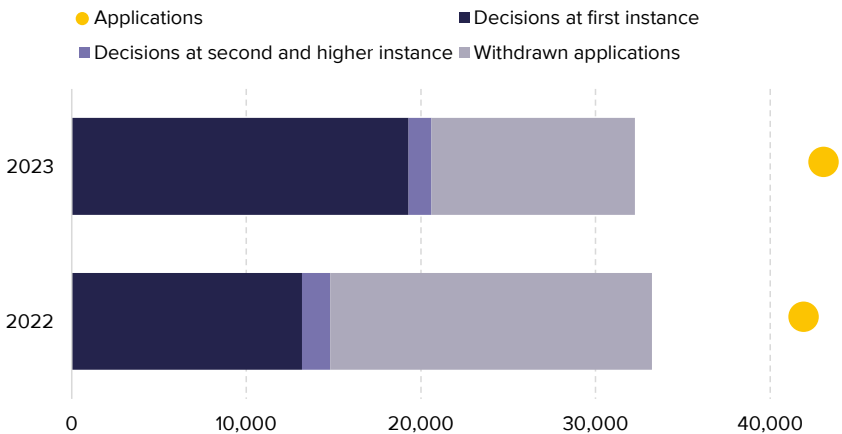
**4. Pending cases**

The high level of asylum applications lodged by unaccompanied minors outweighed case closures, with a decrease in withdrawn applications and despite the significant increase in decisions at first instance (see Figure 7). As a result, there were around 33,000 cases awaiting a decision at all instances at the end of 2023. This represented an increase by nearly one-quarter from the end of 2022.



**More applications than case closures resulted in a large caseload of applications by unaccompanied minors**

**Figure 7. Applications by unaccompanied minors: lodged, withdrawn at any instance and closed with a decision at first and second or higher instance, 2023 compared to 2022**



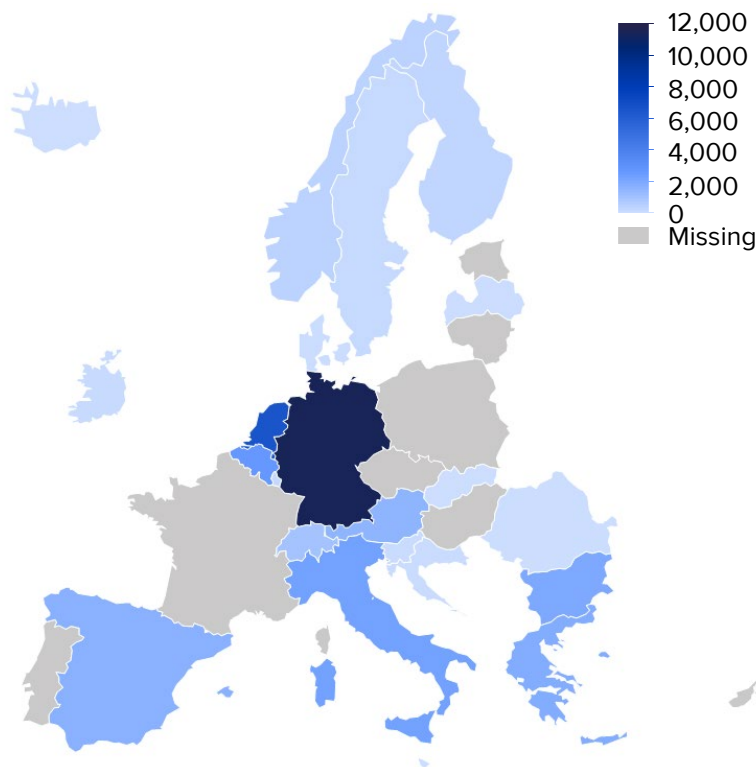
Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.

Increases occurred in most EU+ countries, albeit to different extents. In Germany, the country with the most pending cases related to unaccompanied minors, such cases more than doubled. Following at some distance, in the Netherlands, the number of unaccompanied minors awaiting a decision at the end of 2023 rose by nearly three-quarters from the end of 2022. Together, these top two countries accounted for more than one-half of all pending cases of unaccompanied minors, with Germany alone accounting for over one-third. At somewhat lower levels, cases awaiting a decision also rose considerably in Spain. Conversely, pending cases decreased by around one-quarter in Belgium, Bulgaria and Greece, and dropped by over two-fifths in Austria (see *Figure 8*).



### Most cases by unaccompanied minors were pending in Germany and the Netherlands

**Figure 8. Pending cases of unaccompanied minors by EU+ country, end of 2023**



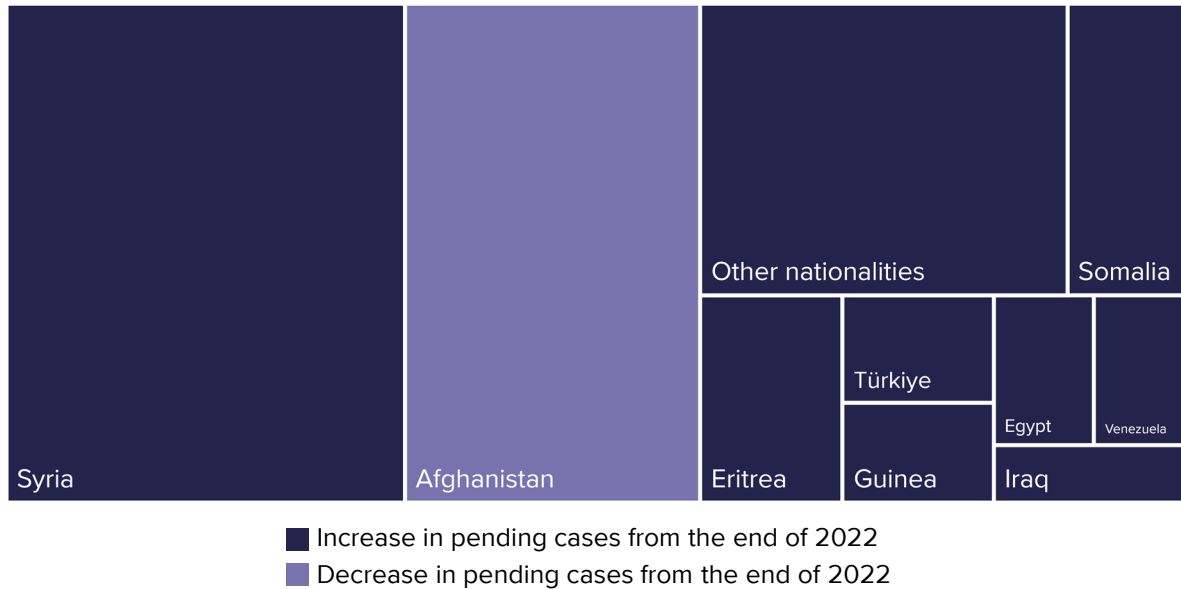
**Note:** Data on pending cases for unaccompanied minors were not available for EU+ countries marked in grey.  
 Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.

Over one-third of all pending cases of unaccompanied minors at the end of 2023 related to children from Syria and one-quarter from Afghanistan. While there were more Syrian unaccompanied minors awaiting a decision compared to a year earlier (11,000, +44%), there were slightly fewer Afghans (8,200, -11%). Caseloads for unaccompanied minors were also relatively high for Somalis (1,900) and Eritreans (1,600), each accounting for 5-6% of all unaccompanied minors awaiting a decision (see *Figure 9*). Overall, around 8 in every 10 pending cases belonged to unaccompanied boys aged 14-17.



## Nearly 6 in every 10 unaccompanied minors awaiting a decision were from Syria or Afghanistan

Figure 9. Pending cases of unaccompanied minors by nationality, end of 2023



Source: Eurostat [[migr\\_asyappctza](#)] as of 31 May 2024.



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