

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS IN EUROPE: A STATISTICAL SUMMARY

- In general, accurate data on unaccompanied minors (UAMs), also known as separated children, are difficult to obtain. First, only a limited number of asylum countries provide these statistics. Second, information provided by the asylum applicant on his or her age as well as on the absence of family members might not be very reliable. Third, definitions and recording practices for UAMs vary from one country to the other. In brief, the data presented here should be regarded as indicative only.
- During 1999, some 13,600 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in the 15 European countries listed in Table 1, 5.3% of the total number of asylum applicants. In 1998, this proportion was very similar (5.8%). A significant variation exists in the proportion of UAMs between asylum countries, ranging from less than 1% in Bulgaria and Spain to 13% in the Netherlands.
- In the 15 countries listed in Table 1, the number of UAMs applying for asylum rose from 11,871 in 1998 to 13,607 in 1999, an increase of 15%. During the same period, the total number of applications in these countries rose by 25%.
- The share of Netherlands in the number of UAMs in the 15 countries listed in Table 1 was 37% in 1999, more than double its share in the total number of asylum applications (15%). In the United Kingdom (UK), the share in total asylum applications (28%) was similar to the share in the number of UAMs (25%), whereas Switzerland received relatively few UAMs (12%) compared to its share in the total number of applications (18%). Since 1996, the annual number of UAMs applying for asylum in the UK has quintupled (from 623 to 3,349), whereas in Netherlands the figure tripled (from 1,562 to 5,009) (see chart on page 2).
- The data available by nationality indicate that the proportion of UAMs differs significantly between nationalities (Table 2). Thus, whereas for some nationalities, UAMs constitute a small proportion of all applicants, for other nationalities the proportion of UAMs may be 20% or more. In the Netherlands, UAMs constituted more than 50% in some major asylum-seeker nationalities.
- Significant differences also exist in the share of UAMs of the **same** nationality between asylum countries. For instance, 64% of all Chinese asylum applicants in the Netherlands were UAMs in 1999, compared to only 6.3% in the UK.
- Governments of a number of major asylum countries, including Austria, France and Germany could not provide comparable data. NGOs estimate, however, that 700-1,000 UAMs arrived in Austria during 1999. In France, 133 UAMs registered with the authorities during 1999, whereas some 247 UAMs, who arrived during 1999 and before, were awaiting an asylum decision. The number of UAMs currently staying in Germany is estimated at some 5,000 to 10,000.

Table 1. Total number of asylum applications lodged by unaccompanied minors, Europe¹						
Country of asylum	1998			1999		
	UAMs	Total	%	UAMs	Total	%
Bulgaria	..	830	..	12	1,330	0.9
Belgium	1,488	21,960	6.8	1,706	35,780	4.8
Czech Republic ²	56	4,140	1.4	336	7,285	4.6
Denmark ³	96	5,700	1.7	102	6,470	1.6
Finland	137	1,270	10.8	..	3,110	..
Hungary	209	7,118	2.9	620	11,499	5.4
Netherlands	3,504	44,393	7.9	5,009	39,300	12.7
Norway ⁴	361	8,374	4.3	543	10,160	5.3
Poland	298	3,370	8.8	49	2,955	1.7
Portugal	19	340	5.6	11	270	4.1
Romania ⁵	*	1,240	..	*	1,670	..
Spain	34	6,574	0.5	47	8,405	0.6
Sweden	295	12,844	2.3	246	11,230	2.2
Switzerland	2,337	41,302	5.7	1,577	46,070	3.4
United Kingdom	3,037	46,015	6.6	3,349	71,145	4.7
Total	11,871	205,470	5.8	13,607	256,679	5.3

Notes
Source: Governments, compiled by UNHCR.
Data are provisional and subject to change.
An asterisk indicates that the value is between 1 and 4.
¹ Countries for which data on unaccompanied minors (UAMs)/separated children were available.
² UAMs 1998 extrapolated by UNHCR based on last three months.
³ UAMs 1999 extrapolated by UNHCR based on first 10 months.
⁴ UAMs 1999 extrapolated by UNHCR based on first 10 1/2 months.
⁵ UAMs data as reported by UNHCR.

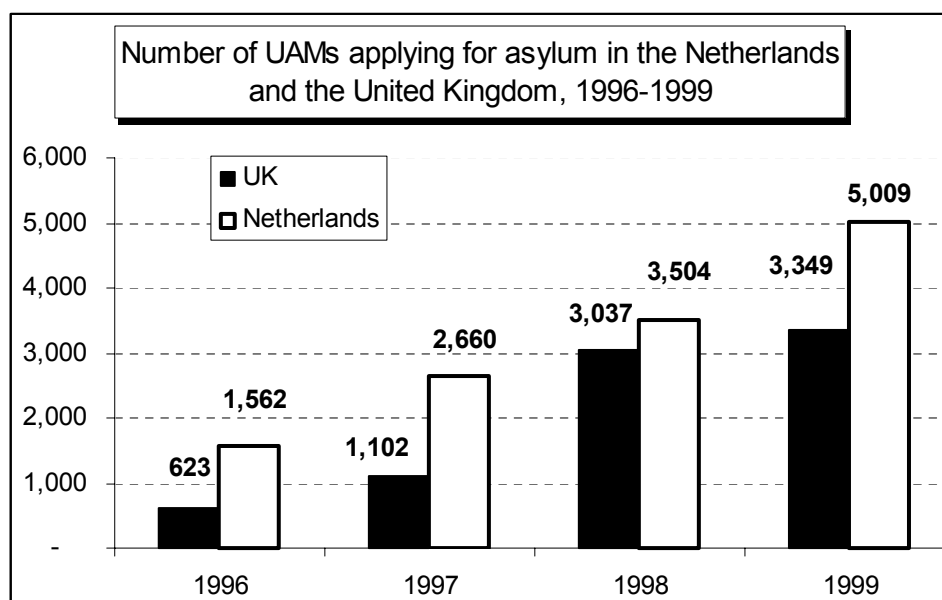


Table 2.							
Main nationalities of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum during 1999							
Belgium				Czech Republic			
Origin	UAMs ¹	Total	%	Origin	UAMs	Total	%
Yugoslavia, FR	532	13,070	4.1	Afghanistan	149	2,312	6.4
Rwanda	323	1,010	32.0	Sri Lanka	51	900	5.7
Sierra Leone	170	450	37.8	India	26	887	2.9
DRC	155	1,400	11.1	Bangladesh	25	145	17.2
Guinea	98	340	28.8	China	17
Russian Fed.	87	1,380	6.3	Yugoslavia, FR	10	622	1.6
Burundi	73	280	26.1	Algeria	9	105	8.6
Romania	58	1,700	3.4	Iraq	9	346	2.6
Albania	40	1,010	4.0	Pakistan	9	223	4.0
Angola	39	240	16.3	Turkey	6	108	5.6
Other	364	14,900	2.4	Other	25	1,637	1.5
Total	1,939	35,780	5.4	Total	336	7,285	4.6
Netherlands				Poland			
Origin	UAMs	Total	%	Origin	UAMs	Total	%
China	793	1,247	63.6	Afghanistan	20	555	3.6
Angola	758	1,585	47.8	Sri Lanka	7	88	8.0
Sierra Leone	529	1,280	41.3	Yugoslavia, FR	7	140	5.0
Somalia	496	2,731	18.2	Armenia	5	868	0.6
Guinea	380	526	72.2	Mongolia	*	161	..
Iraq	335	3,703	9.0	Pakistan	*	52	..
Afghanistan	215	4,400	4.9	Azerbaijan	*	45	..
Sudan	195	1,696	11.5	Bulgaria	*	185	..
Togo	119	181	65.7	Togo	*	*	..
Yugoslavia, FR	79	3,692	2.1	FYR Macedonia	*	6	..
Other	1,110	18,259	6.1	Other	*	855	..
Total	5,009	39,300	12.7	Total	49	2,955	1.7
Switzerland				United Kingdom			
Origin	UAMs	Total	%	Origin	UAMs	Total	%
Yugoslavia, FR	657	28,913	2.3	Yugoslavia, FR	1,534	14,180	10.8
Albania	239	1,386	17.2	Afghanistan	213	3,975	5.4
Sierra Leone	144	756	19.0	Somalia	189	7,495	2.5
Somalia	62	517	12.0	China	166	2,625	6.3
Guinea	59	388	15.2	Sri Lanka	127	5,130	2.5
Guinea-Bissau	41	282	14.5	Albania	126
Iraq	35	1,658	2.1	Turkey	116	2,850	4.1
Sri Lanka	32	1,487	2.2	Eritrea	93
Angola	29	545	5.3	Romania	86	1,985	4.3
DRC	22	523	4.2	Sierra Leone	65	1,125	5.8
Other	257	9,615	2.7	Other	634	31,780	2.0
Total	1,577	46,070	3.4	Total	3,349	71,145	4.7
Notes							
Source: Governments, compiled by UNHCR.							
Data are provisional and subject to change.							
An asterisk indicates that the value is between 1 and 4.							
¹ The difference in the total number of UAMs for Belgium in Table 1 and 2 is due to the fact that the figure in Table 1 indicates the most precise Government estimate, but that such estimates are not provided by nationality. The figure in Table 2 includes some UAMs with parents.							