

STATELESSNESS IN NORWAY

10 FACTS with recommendations from UNHCR

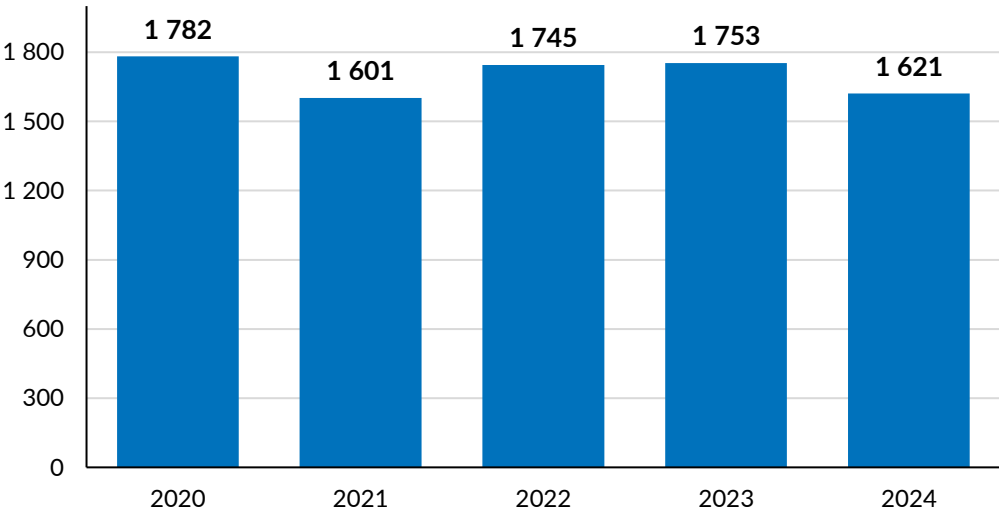
FACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

1. Statelessness in Norway mainly occurs in the migratory context. By the end of 2024, Norway had a stateless population of 1,621 individuals, of which 95 were born in Norway.
2. Norwegian legislation does not contain a definition of a stateless person. During the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2019 Norway committed to consider incorporating a definition of a stateless person into the Norwegian Nationality Law. As such a definition has not yet been introduced, [UNHCR recommends that the definition of a stateless person set out in Article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons be incorporated in national legislation to strengthen the interpretation and application of the definition in law and in practice. This recommendation was also made during the Universal Periodic Review for Norway in 2024.](#)
3. Norway currently lacks a centralized procedure to determine statelessness. Stateless determination is therefore addressed within other procedures, such as during the asylum process. [UNHCR continues to recommend that Norway establishes a statelessness determination procedure with adapted standard and burden of proof, reflecting the inherent difficulties for a person to prove their statelessness. UNHCR also recommends that proactive identification procedures with efficient referral mechanisms between authorities are put in place.](#)
4. Stateless persons' experiences with Norwegian judicial and administrative processes have mostly been in relation to an asylum application or another type of residence permit. While many stateless people are also refugees, there are also persons who are not refugees. [UNHCR recommends that persons recognized as stateless be granted a specific residence permit, to allow them to have access to the rights guaranteed by the 1954 Convention.](#)
5. Legislative changes concerning requirements for permanent residence were introduced in 2021 in the Immigration Act, increasing the required residency period to five years for certain foreigners before being eligible for citizenship. This has created legal uncertainty around the residence period required for naturalization of stateless persons who are granted international protection. This legal uncertainty was addressed in Instruction AI-2/2025, clarifying that the practice should favour the reduced residence period of three years for stateless persons. [UNHCR recommends that Norway aligns the Citizenship and Immigration Acts through legislative reform to ensure legal clarity and consistent application of residency requirements for stateless persons beyond the scope of ministerial instructions, which are only binding on the first instance immigration authorities.](#)
6. Instruction G-08/2016 clarifies the criteria for acquisition of Norwegian nationality for persons born stateless in Norway, including the alleviation of certain residency requirements. While instructions are useful to guide practice, they are not codified in law and lack the same enforceability across all levels of decision-making instances and Norwegian courts. [UNHCR recommends that the criteria outlined in Instruction G-08/2016 is incorporated into the Norwegian Citizenship Act.](#)
7. Following Norway's recognition of Palestine as a state on 28 May 2024, Instruction AI-3/2024 was issued to clarify that Palestinians with certain identity documents may no longer be considered stateless in applications for Norwegian citizenship. Under Article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons statelessness must be assessed according to whether an individual is considered a national by any State under the operation of its law, not on the basis of state recognition or administrative registration. [UNHCR recommends that Norway revises instruction A-3/2024 to ensure compliance with Norway's international obligations under the 1954 Convention.](#)
8. Despite efforts undertaken to reduce the number of stateless persons in Norway, 327 children and young people (0-17 years old) were recorded as stateless by the end of 2024 (of which 95 children born in Norway). Moreover, stateless children born in Norway must apply for and fulfil certain conditions for Norwegian citizenship. Children over 15 years old are in addition required to present proof of no criminal record when applying for citizenship. [UNHCR recommends undertaking an analysis of the circumstances behind the high number of children recorded as stateless. To further avoid childhood statelessness, UNHCR recommends that children born stateless in Norway be allowed to acquire nationality automatically.](#)
9. Currently, 25 countries deny women the right to pass their nationality to their children on an equal basis with men. Children born in Norway to mothers who are nationals of one of these countries, and whose fathers are stateless or unknown, are sometimes registered as having the same nationality as their mothers. As they may not be able to acquire their mother's nationality, [UNHCR recommends improving the Norwegian National Register's Handbook on population registration to correctly address the registration of children who are stateless to ensure they can enjoy the rights to which they are entitled.](#)
10. Between 2017 and 2021, Norway and UNHCR jointly committed to end statelessness through a national strategy aligned with the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness, which ran from 2014-2024. While key goals were set, such as improved identification, data collection, and safeguards for children, several remain unfulfilled, as reflected in the above facts and recommendations. As a new member of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness (launched in October 2024), [UNHCR recommends that Norway conduct a comprehensive review of progress and relaunch a multi-stakeholder national action plan to close remaining gaps.](#)

STATISTICAL TRENDS: 2020 – 2024 ¹

¹ In UNHCR’s reporting, the category “Stateless” excludes individuals whose nationality is recorded as “Unknown” in data reported by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and Statistics Norway.

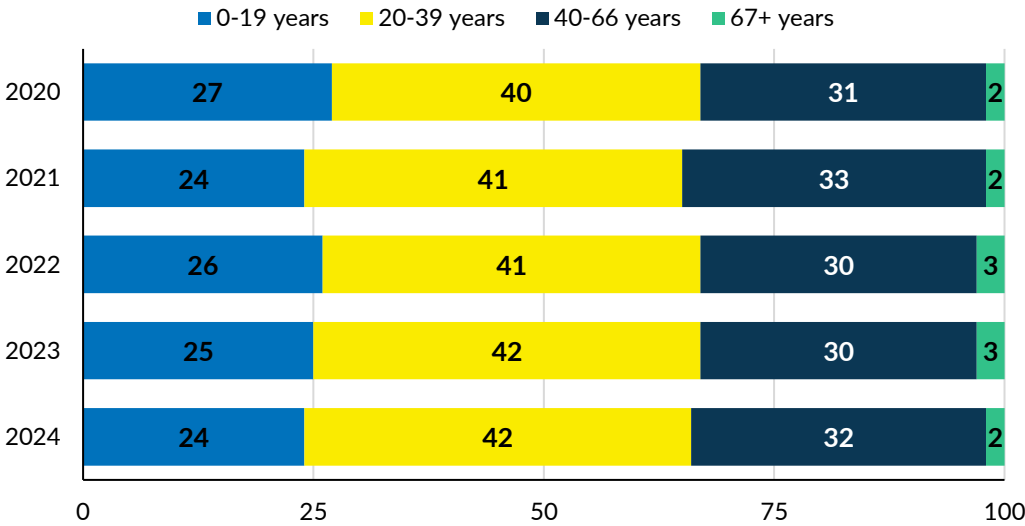
Figure 1 Stateless population in Norway



Note:
Data for 2020-2024 is based on combined figures from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), Immigration Appeals Board (UNE), and Statistics Norway to include stateless asylum-seekers.

Sources:
- UNHCR Global Trends reports
- Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)
- Immigration Appeals Board (UNE)
- Statistics Norway

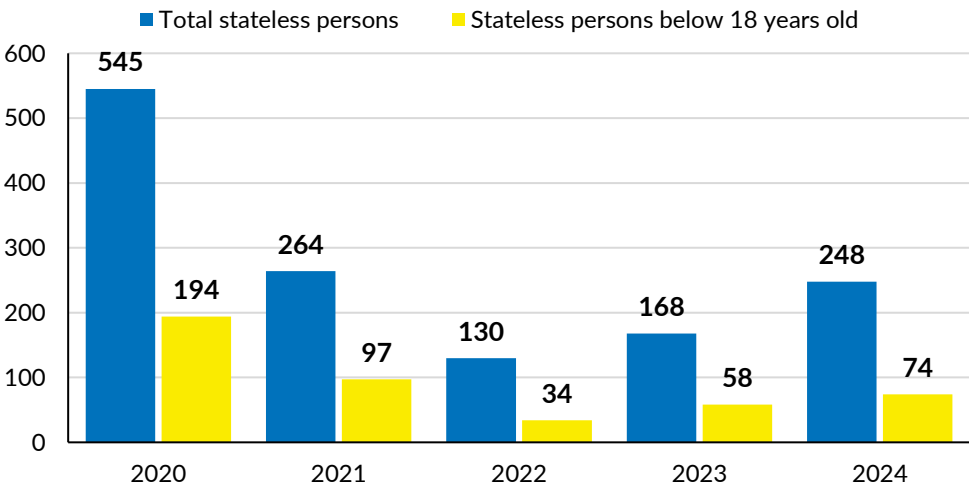
Figure 2 Stateless population in Norway by age (percentage)



Note:
Contrary to Figure 1 above, Figure 2 does not include stateless asylum-seekers due to lack of information on the demographic composition of this group.

Sources:
- Statistics Norway

Figure 3 Stateless persons in Norway who have acquired citizenship



Note:
The number of stateless persons acquiring Norwegian citizenship has fluctuated since 2020, with a notable peak that year followed by a decline and gradual increase again in 2023-2024.

Source:
- Statistics Norway