

COUNTRY FACTSHEET | JULY 2024

Main developments
in migration and
international
protection, including
latest statistics

SWEDEN 2023



OVERARCHING AND CROSS-CUTTING CHANGES

The Swedish government that took office on 18 October 2022 established a number of planned measures in 2023 to adjust the Swedish migration management system to the minimum level of standards required under European Union (EU) law. Some of the regulations include stricter conditions for family reunification, transit centres where applicants stay throughout the asylum procedure, stricter requirements to acquire Swedish citizenship, a reduced quota in the resettlement programme (from 5 000 to 900) and further incentives for voluntary return.



LEGAL MIGRATION

In February 2023, an ongoing [Inquiry](#) on labour migration was given new direction and a new focus to strengthen control measures and analyse how the legislative framework could be developed to raise the salary threshold for work permits so as to reduce low-skilled labour migration.

In October 2023, the Swedish Migration Agency presented a [report](#) to the government, in response to the instruction to take action to reduce misuse of residence permits for studies.



KEY POINTS

In 2023, Sweden implemented measures on labour migration, including raising the salary threshold for work permits to reduce low-skilled labour migration.

In 2023, the Swedish government tasked a Commission of Inquiry with proposing a revision of the objective of the Swedish integration policy.

In 2023, the Swedish government undertook several measures to make return more effective.

On 1 December 2023, new regulations raised the age limit from 18 to 21 years for instances when a residence permit on grounds of personal ties can be denied.



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

On 1 December 2023, new regulations entered into force for residence permits on humanitarian grounds. The provision allowing residence permits to be granted on grounds of particularly distressing circumstances was removed from the Swedish Aliens Act.

The Migration Court of Appeal **ruled** that the principle of family unity does not entail any separate right to refugee status when a new examination has been granted under Chapter 12, Section 19 of the Aliens Act for a third-country national who is a family member of a refugee but who has no such reasons of their own.

The Swedish Migration Agency published a **revised legal position** on quality requirements for public assistance to tighten quality requirements at the Agency.

The Swedish Migration Agency published a new position on applicants for international protection's right to assistance.

Changes in legislation entered into force to align Swedish legislation with the (minimum) requirements in EU law. Pertaining to the Aliens Act, Chapter 5:

- Paragraph 3 (residence permits for family members who have a reasonable prospect of being granted a permanent residence permit),
- Paragraph 3d (family members of refugees now have to apply for family reunification within three months of the decision to resettle),
- Paragraph 6 (amendment on national legislation on granting international protection on humanitarian grounds),
- Paragraph 17a (residence permits may be refused if one of the spouses or common law spouses is under the age of 21).

The government introduced policy changes in relation to the resettlement programme. The quota was reduced from 5 000 to 900 yearly transfers in 2023. The emergency quota was also reduced, from 500 to 50 transfers, earmarked for people of special interest to Sweden.



TEMPORARY PROTECTION AND OTHER MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S WAR OF AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

The scope of people eligible for protection under the Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55/EC) was widened through a **legal amendment** that came into force in December 2023. An adjustment of a previous provision,

the amendment provided temporary protection to all foreigners who fled the war in Ukraine and who were in Sweden legally on 22 December 2023.

The government assigned the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) to continue to provide information on the Swedish labour market. Beneficiaries of temporary protection (BoTP) are given information, including advice and support on applying for work and assessing their skills. The PES is also tasked with making it easier for employers to employ BoTP.

The government allocated SEK 100 million (€ 8 601 215.89) to municipalities to provide Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) language courses to BoTP. As of 1 June 2023, municipalities are allowed, but not obliged, to offer this language education to BoTP. The objective was to provide support in relation to assessment questions on the right to assistance for asylum seekers under the Reception of Asylum Seekers Act (*Lagen om mottagande av asylsökande, LMA*), in connection with enforcement of decision on rejections and expulsions.



UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

No significant developments to report in 2023.



INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS

In 2023, the Swedish government tasked a Commission of Inquiry with proposing a revision of the objective of Swedish integration policy. The revision sought to emphasise individuals' responsibilities in the integration process.

In October 2023, the government introduced increased **opportunities for unemployed people** with poor Swedish language skills to strengthen their position in the labour market through education. Participants in the PES's Job and Development Guarantee Programme can now study within the SFI for one year and then continue within municipal adult education for another year, while maintaining their activity support. The Swedish government also adopted a regulation for a state grant for adult vocational education in growing regions where major businesses are established.

In December 2023, the government appointed a Committee of Inquiry to amend the rules on civic orientation for newly arrived migrants. The Inquiry is assigned to propose changes towards mandatory civic orientation, establishing a national curriculum with an increased focus on fundamental values of Swedish society, and a knowledge test. The government also appointed an Inquiry to propose either a new curriculum in basic Swedish or a revision of the current curriculum in Swedish as a second language. Within the current

curriculum, migrant pupils struggle in school and are at risk of failing their exams. This Inquiry was appointed to provide migrant pupils with better opportunities by enhancing their chances of integrating and obtaining a higher level of proficiency in the Swedish language and more generally. This will help them to graduate, become attractive to prospective employers, enter the workforce and become self-sufficient. The Inquiry will include an assessment of the impact of the native language programme on integration, language development, language learning, and the school results of migrant pupils.

In December 2023, the government appointed a Committee of Inquiry to review qualifications for social security benefits and financial assistance. It is to create a system requiring people coming to Sweden as newly arrived migrants and non-citizens (including third-country nationals) already living in Sweden to qualify for benefits and financial aid.



CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

The government appointed an Inquiry tasked with submitting proposals for more stringent requirements for Swedish citizenship. According to the government, this Inquiry is an important step towards strengthening Swedish citizenship and promoting integration.



BORDERS, VISA AND SCHENGEN

New national legislation on increased police authorisation in areas near the Swedish border came into force on 1 August 2023. The new law allows body searches, checks on foreigners, vehicle searches and camera surveillance in areas near the Swedish border.

During 2023, the Swedish Police Authority prepared digital chip authentication. They also underwent staff training and preparations at border crossing points. New border control buses were purchased to support the border control process. Swedish police can now register new decisions and re-entry bans directly in the Schengen Information System (SIS).



IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Detecting and tackling irregular migration was a priority in 2023 and the government implemented measures to reduce the number of migrants with no legal status. In August 2023, it adopted supplementary terms of reference for the Inquiry on reinforcing return operations initiated in 2022: amendments on internal border control, increased use of biometrics, extended or abolished limitation periods for a decision on removal, renewal of a re-entry ban, and extended exchange of information between authorities to strengthen the enforcement of a removal order or create impediments to irregular stay.

Efforts to develop partnerships with priority third countries were enhanced through increased outreach and a whole-of-government approach. The purpose is to improve cooperation on migration with third countries, particularly on return and reintegration.



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

The government initiated the drafting of a new [action plan for 2024-2026](#). The process was launched through six dedicated roundtables with civil society organisations (CSOs), academia and public authorities in spring and autumn 2023.

On 3 August 2023, the government appointed an Inquiry on strengthened long-term governance of the work against gender-based violence and honour-based violence and oppression. This includes issues of prostitution and trafficking in human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

During 2023, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (GEA) provided training to increase relevant authorities' knowledge of trafficking in human beings. It launched a [website](#) to act as a knowledge hub on prostitution and trafficking in human beings, and produced a [brochure](#) for professionals on the activities of the national coordination team. In addition, it released a number of publications and support materials to increase other government agencies' competence and knowledge of trafficking in human beings.

In 2023, the GEA engaged in close dialogue with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on reports on return and reintegration. The two organisations, together with regional coordinators, produced new information on the [Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme](#) for victims of trafficking in human beings and prostitution.

During the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU from January to June 2023, it was a government priority to highlight its work to combat the demand for labour that fosters trafficking in human beings. On 29-30 March 2023, the Swedish Presidency hosted a conference on prevention models to address the demand that fosters trafficking for sexual purposes, for forced labour, and trafficking in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The conference gathered experts from Member States, international organisations, civil society and survivors.

In February 2023, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) published an updated edition of its [handbook](#) for embassies and diplomatic missions on preventing, identifying, and assisting victims of trafficking in human beings. In addition, the Swedish Migration Agency carried out extensive education to improve the ability of its staff to identify victims of trafficking when dealing with visas, international students, and family reunification cases. Approximately 650 case officers completed the training.

On 7-8 December 2023, the GEA and the CBSS organised the European Forum against Human Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation in Stockholm.

RETURN AND READMISSION

The Swedish government undertook a number of measures to make return more effective. For example, it adopted supplementary terms of reference for the Inquiry on reinforcing returns. The Inquiry will focus on different aspects of return and internal alien controls, including improving information exchange between public authorities and municipalities. The results of the Inquiry will be presented in 2024. It also reinforced the budget for responsible authorities, together with an enhanced mandate to collaborate. Better collaboration with third countries was also an important priority.

The Swedish Police Authority, in cooperation with the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (the authority responsible for transportation), increased the number of national return operations (NROs) and joint return operations (JROs) (to destinations such as Nigeria and Uzbekistan). Developments at national level will increase participation and organisation of JROs in 2024. For example, operations to new destinations will be tested at the beginning of 2024.

The government tasked the Swedish Migration Agency with setting up [return centres](#) to house asylum seekers whose applications have been refused. In these centres, the Agency will work to motivate voluntary return, providing advice, guidance and practical support. In December 2023, the Agency presented a [report](#) to the government on progress during the year.

The government appointed an Inquiry to review the entire regulatory framework on [detention in the Aliens Act](#), with a view to making it more modern and appropriate. The purpose is to increase returns and ensure that authorities can enforce expulsion orders.

In 2023, there was a change in the dynamic in cooperation on non-voluntary return with Iraq, with growing numbers of Iraqi individuals applying for reintegration support. The Swedish Migration Agency doubled reintegration support through the Joint Reintegration Services (JRS) (from € 2 500 to € 5 000) for voluntary returnees to Iraq, for a limited period of time.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In December, the government adopted the policy document, [Development Assistance For A New Era: Freedom, empowerment and sustainable growth](#). Setting out a reform agenda for Swedish development assistance, it includes the thematic priorities of stronger synergies between development assistance and migration policy.

The new appropriation directions issued at the end of December 2023 for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Swedish Migration Agency require international development aid to address migration more specifically, as well as complementing Swedish national migration interests.

The Swedish Migration Agency was granted an initial SEK 25 million (€ 2 150 303.97) from the international development aid budget for 2024 to assist third countries with their migration management challenges, among other things.

STATISTICAL ANNEX

The statistical annex available on the next pages complements the Country Factsheet and provides an overview of the latest available statistics for Sweden on aspects of migration and international protection. It was prepared by Eurostat and it is organised in ten thematic sections, including legal residence, temporary protection, asylum, unaccompanied minors, integration, irregular migration, return and visas. The dashboard-like layout of the annex allows comparability across countries as well as simultaneous visualisation of different indicators.

The data presented in the annex regard third-country nationals, which means persons who are not EU citizens, including stateless persons. The data cover the period 2020-2023. Since 2023 data were not available at the time of publication for certain datasets, in these cases the

period 2020-2022 is covered. Exceptionally, the monthly data on temporary protection covers the period until March 2024. **The data were extracted during April–May 2024. The manuscript was completed in May 2024.** The Eurostat website is constantly updated. Therefore, it is likely that more recent data will have become available since. An online data code available under each figure can be used to directly access the latest data on [Eurostat's website](#).

For some indicators, data are rounded at the source. Due to this, in some cases, the sum of percentages or of individual values might not add up to 100 or to the total value.

A 'How to read the statistical annex' guide, describing each individual chart and providing links to the data sources, is available [here](#).



LEGAL MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

Third-country nationals, 1 January 2020–2023

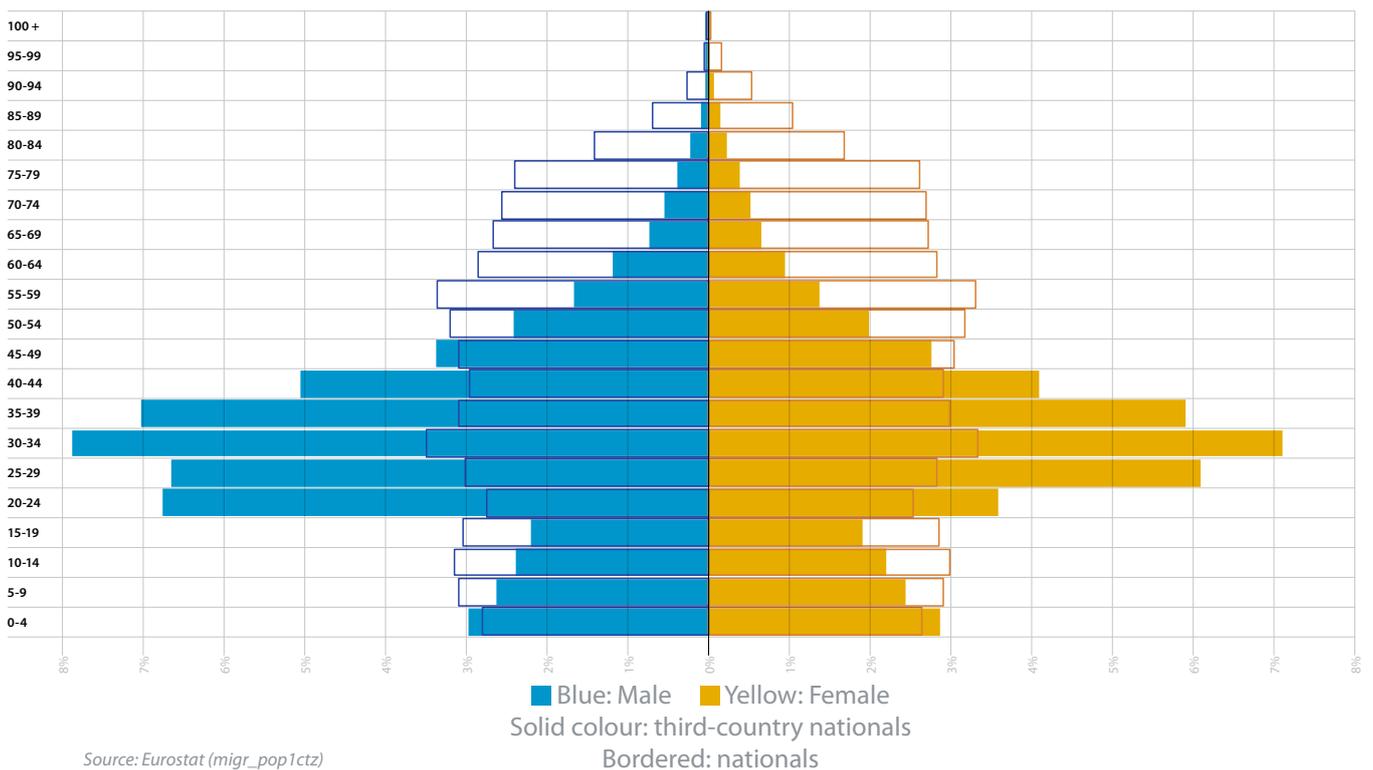
Share of the total population in % (and the absolute number)



Source: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)

Age structure of nationals and third-country nationals, 1 January 2023

%



Source: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)

First residence permits issued to third-country nationals, 2020–2022

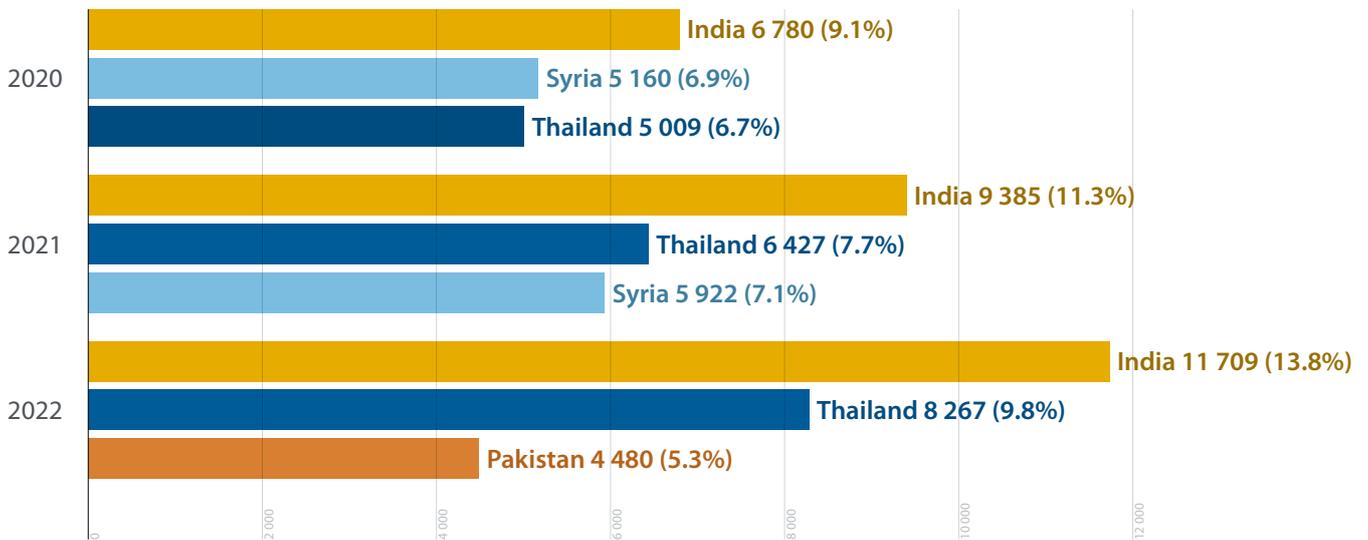
Number per 1 000 people (and the absolute number)



Source: Eurostat (migr_resfirst, migr_pop1ctz and migr_respop)

Top 3 countries whose citizens received first residence permits, 2020–2022

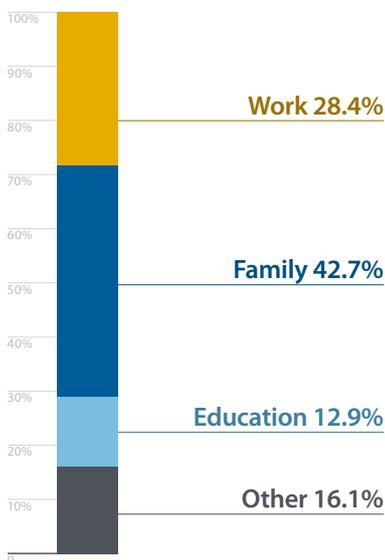
Absolute number (and the share in total number)



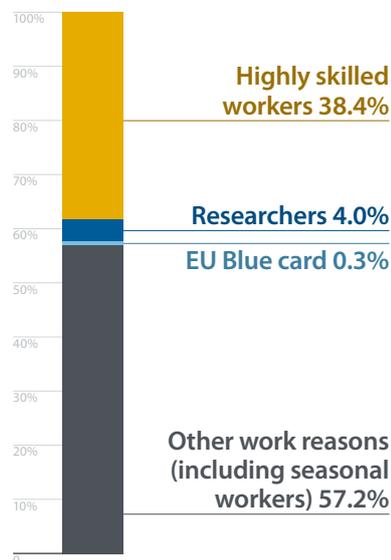
Source: Eurostat (migr_resfirst)

First residence permits issued, distribution by reason or type, 2022

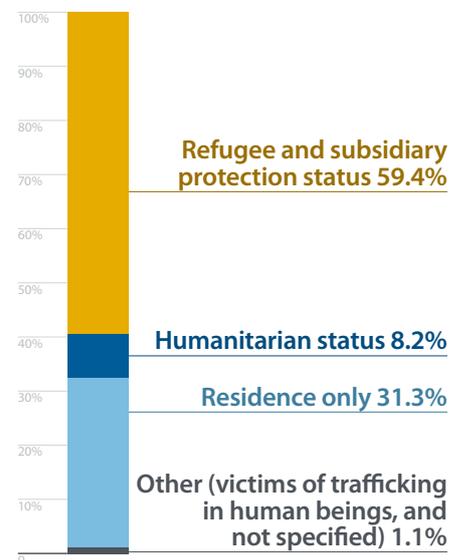
All permits, by reason, %



Work reason, by type, %



Other reason, by detailed reason, %



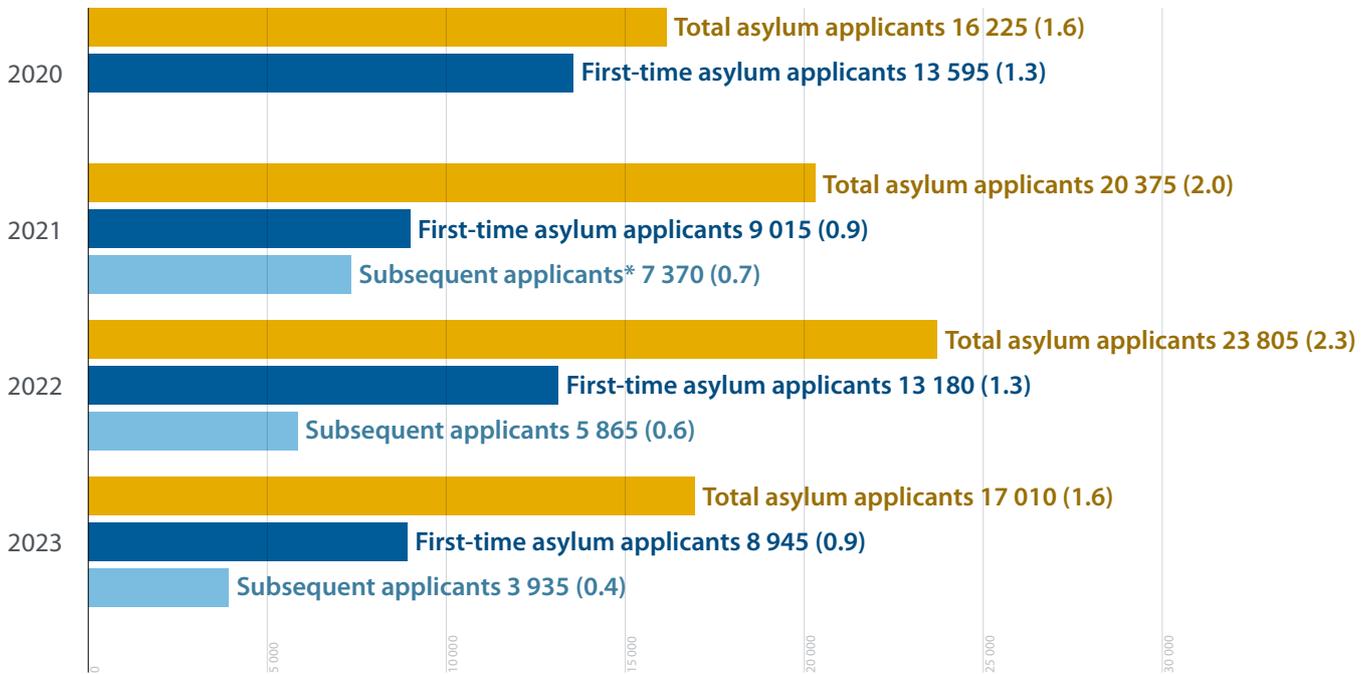
Source: Eurostat (migr_resfirst, migr_resfpc, migr_resocc and migr_resoth)



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

Asylum applicants by type of application, 2020–2023

Absolute number (and the number per 1 000 people)

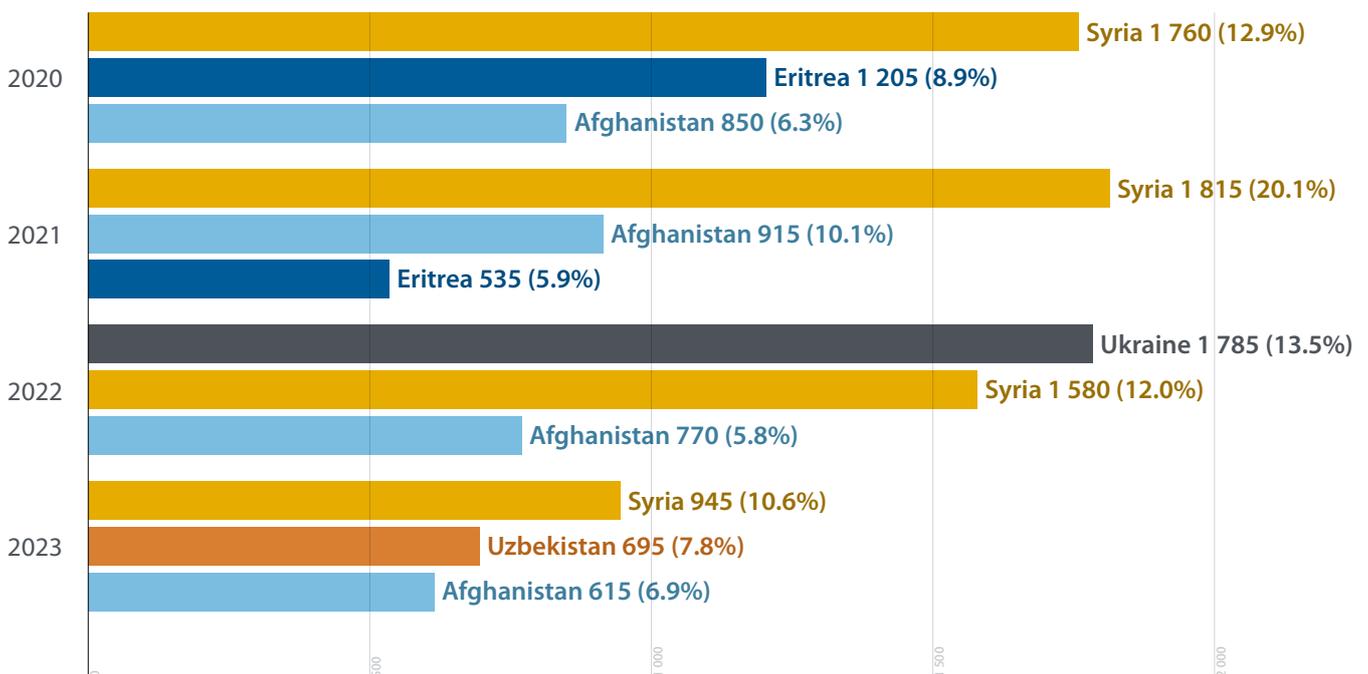


* Data collection from 2021.

Source: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza, migr_pop1ctz and migr_asyapp1mp)

Top 3 countries of citizenship – first-time asylum applicants, 2020–2023

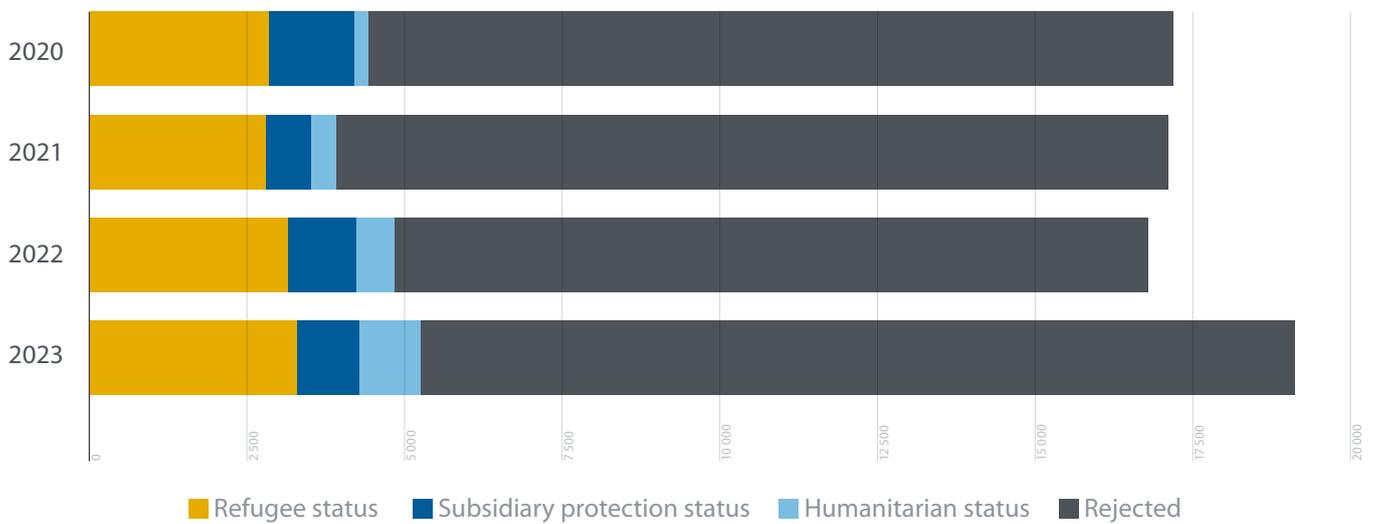
Absolute number (and the share in total number of first-time applicants)



Source: Eurostat (migr_asyappctza)

First instance asylum decisions by outcome, 2020–2023

Absolute number (and the share of the total)

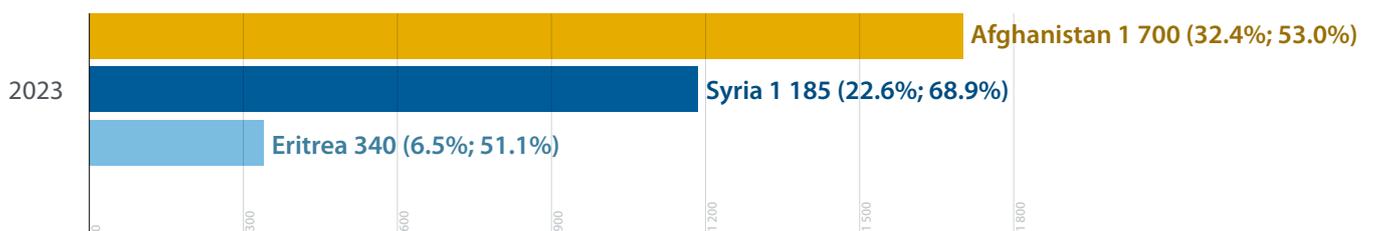


Year	Refugee status number (share of total)	Subsidiary protection status number (share of total)	Humanitarian status number (share of total)	Rejected number (share of total)
2020	2 830 (16.4%)	1 365 (7.9%)	230 (1.3%)	12 790 (74.3%)
2021	2 795 (16.3%)	715 (4.2%)	395 (2.3%)	13 245 (77.2%)
2022	3 145 (18.7%)	1 080 (6.4%)	620 (3.7%)	11 970 (71.2%)
2023	3 285 (17.1%)	990 (5.2%)	980 (5.1%)	13 900 (72.6%)

Source: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta and migr_asydec1pc)

Top 3 countries of citizenship granted positive asylum decisions at first instance, 2023

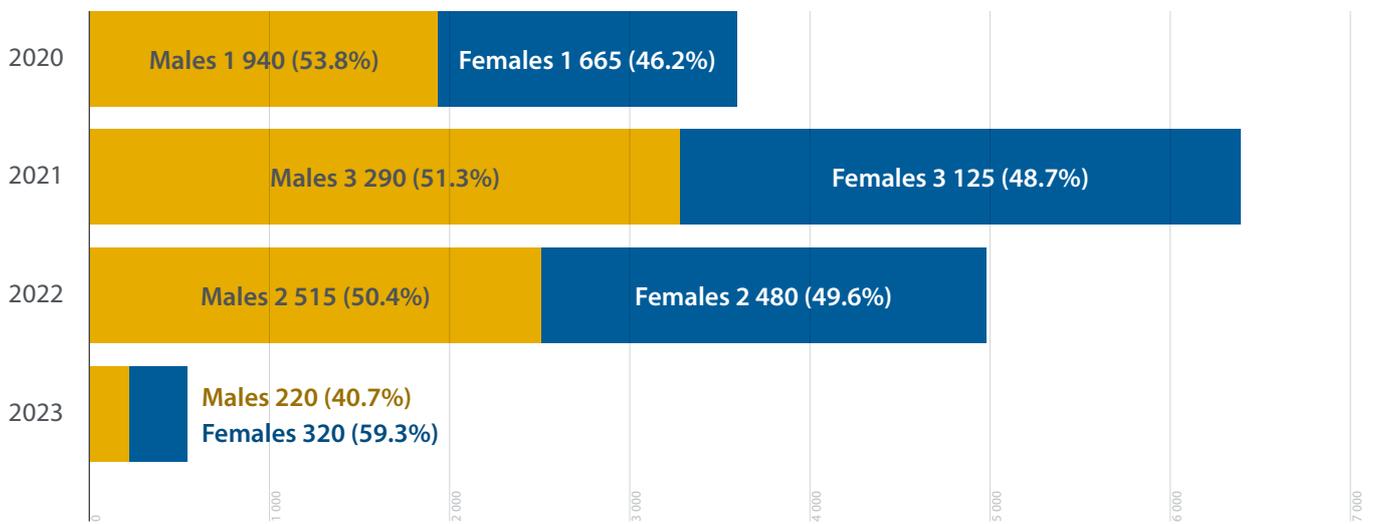
Absolute number (and the share in total positive decisions; and the recognition rate)



Source: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta)

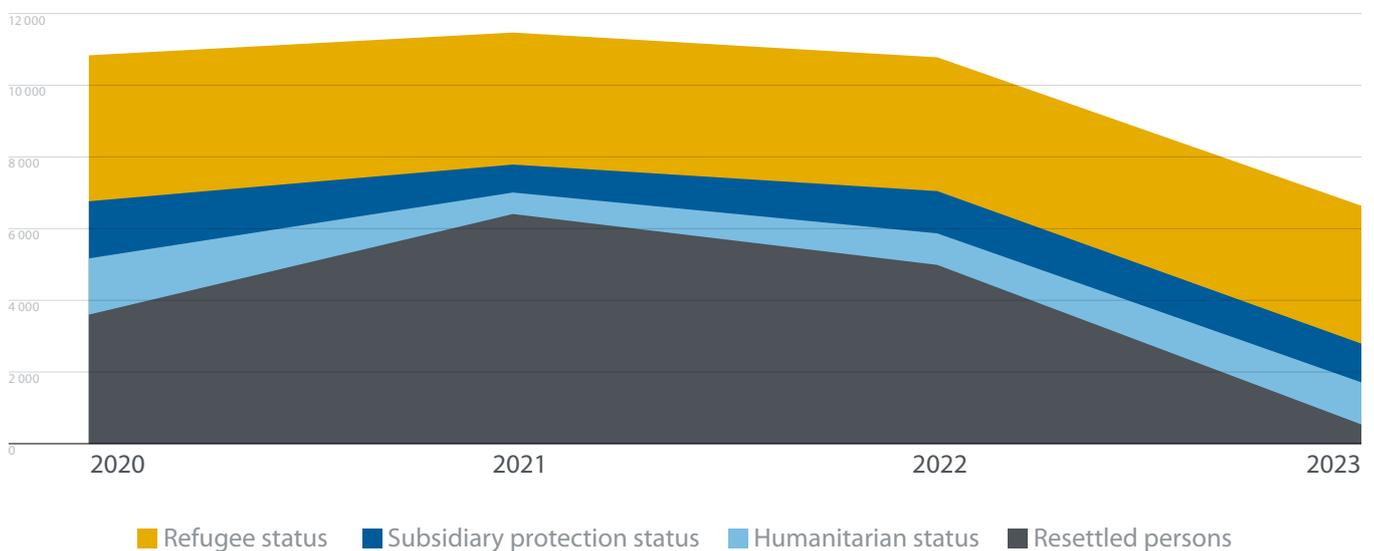
Resettled third-country nationals by sex, 2020–2023

Absolute number (and the share of total resettled third-country nationals)



Source: Eurostat (migr_asyresa)

Number of positive decisions for third-country nationals, by outcome, 2020–2023



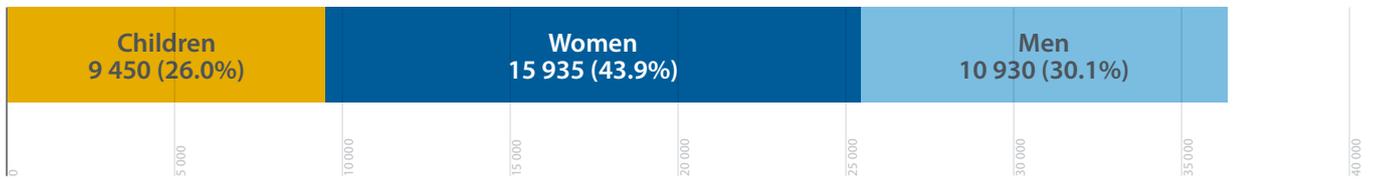
Year	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection status	Humanitarian status	Resettled persons
2020	4 075	1 595	1 570	3 605
2021	3 685	780	600	6 415
2022	3 735	1 180	880	4 995
2023	3 850	1 080	1 175	540

Source: Eurostat (migr_asydcfsta, migr_asydcfina and migr_asyresa)

TEMPORARY PROTECTION

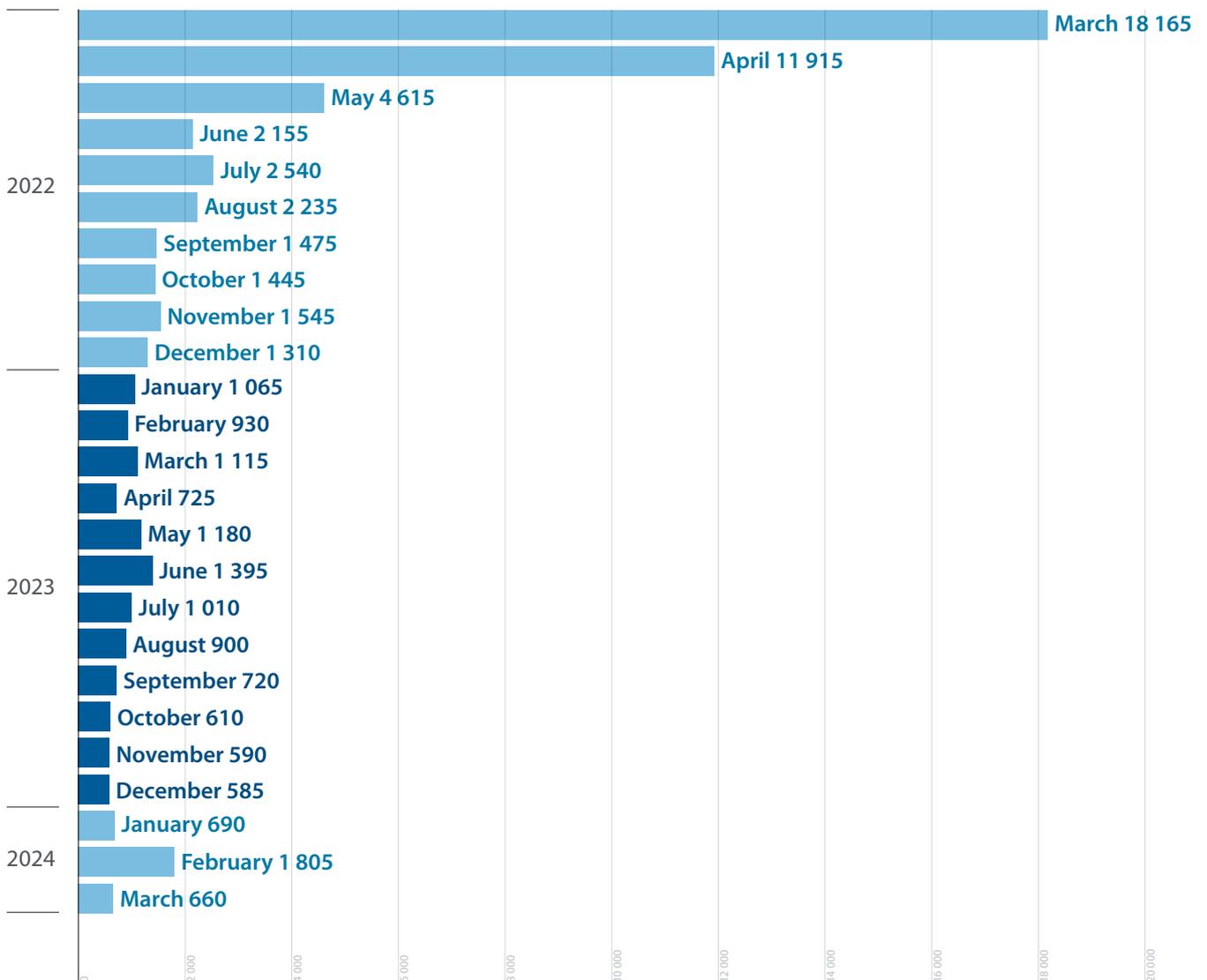
Beneficiaries of temporary protection by age and sex at the end of March 2024

Absolute number (and the share of the total)



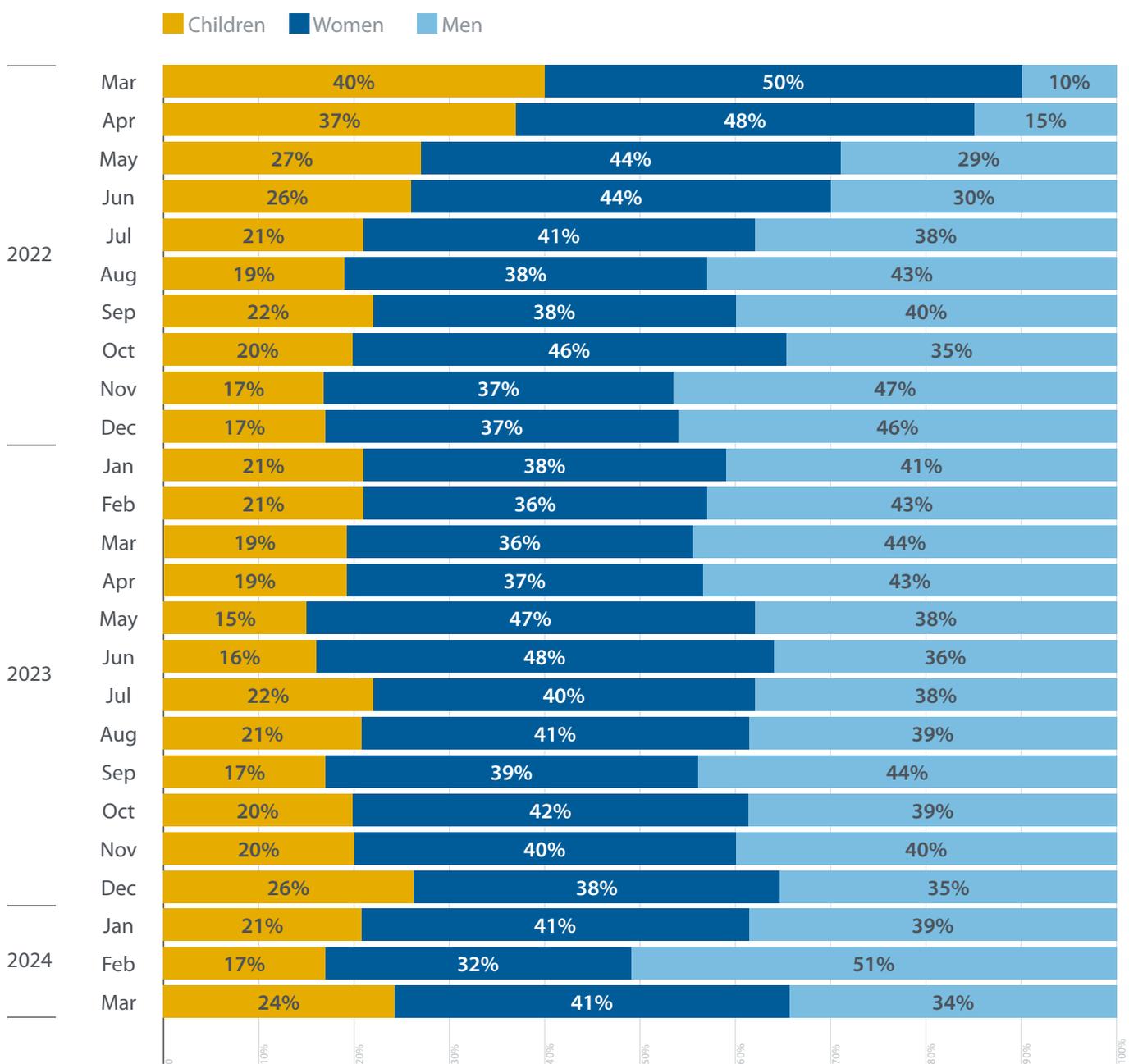
Source: Eurostat (migr_asytpsm)

Number of decisions providing temporary protection to people displaced from Ukraine due to Russia's invasion, March 2022–March 2024



Source: Eurostat (migr_asytpfm)

Distribution by age and sex of decisions providing temporary protection to people displaced from Ukraine due to Russia's invasion, March 2022–March 2024



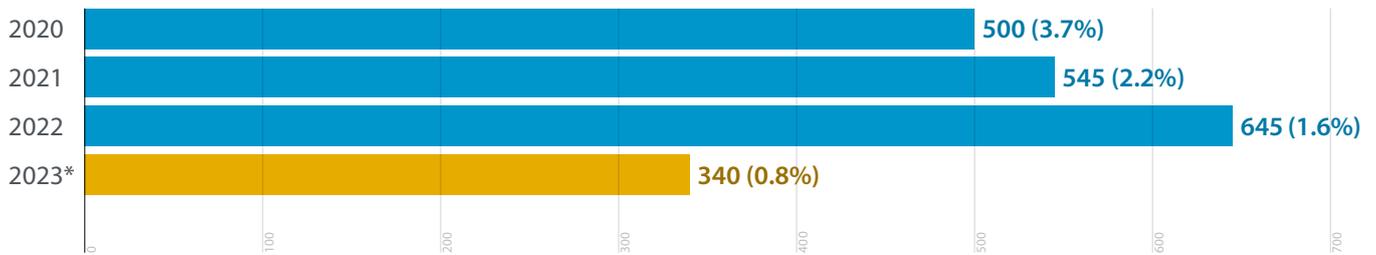
Source: Eurostat (migr_asytprm)



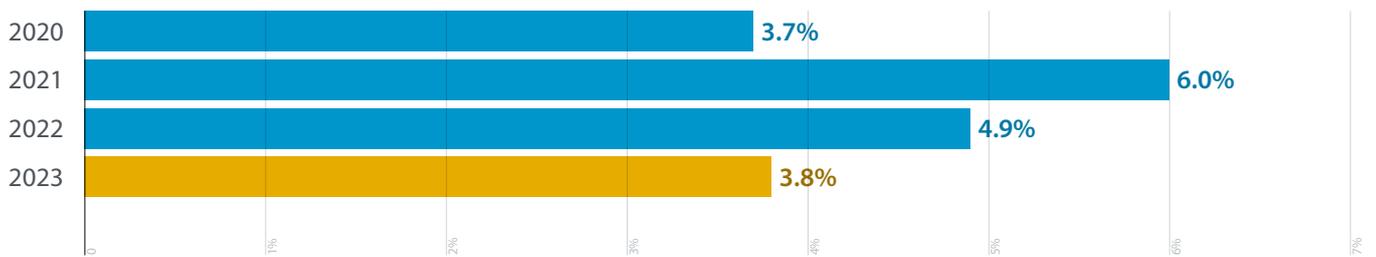
UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Unaccompanied minors applying for asylum, 2020–2023

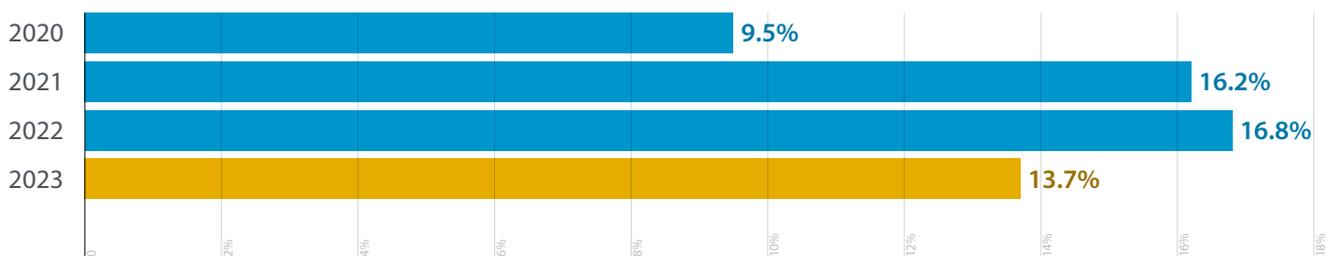
Number (and the share in total number of unaccompanied minors in the EU)



Share of all first-time asylum applicants



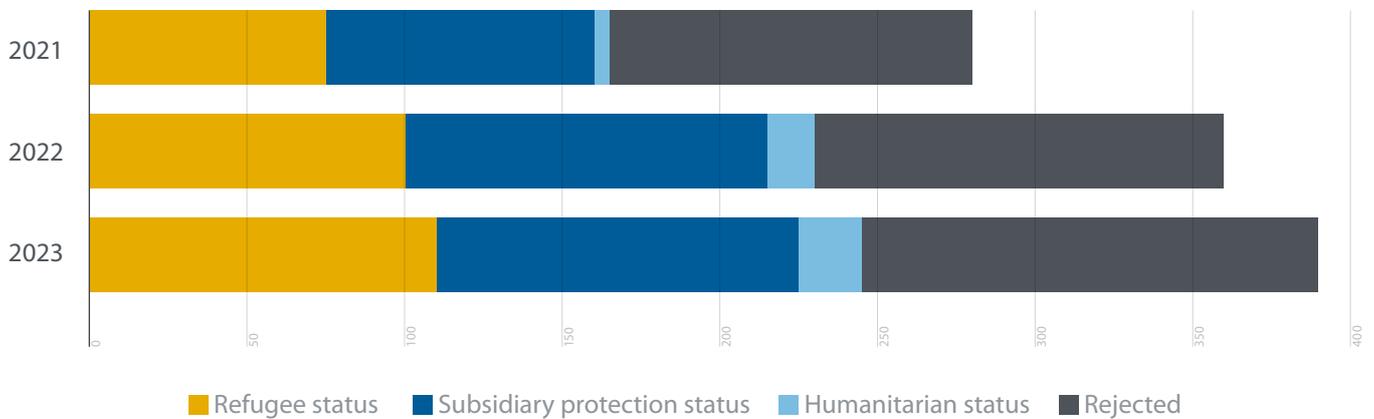
Share of all first-time asylum applicants aged less than 18 years



* The total number of unaccompanied minors in the EU used to calculate the share includes 2022 data for Cyprus.
Source: Eurostat (migr_asyunaa and migr_asyappctza)

First instance asylum decisions on applications lodged by unaccompanied minors by outcome, 2021-2023

Absolute number (and the share of the total)



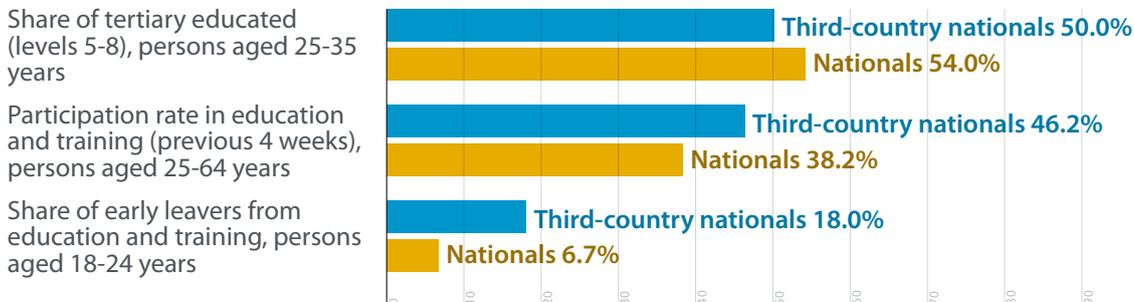
Year	Refugee status number (share of total)	Subsidiary protection status number (share of total)	Humanitarian status number (share of total)	Rejected number (share of total)
2021	75 (26.8%)	85 (30.4%)	5 (1.8%)	115 (41.1%)
2022	100 (27.8%)	115 (31.9%)	15 (4.2%)	130 (36.1%)
2023	110 (28.6%)	115 (29.9%)	20 (5.2%)	145 (37.7%)

Source: Eurostat (migr_asyumdca)

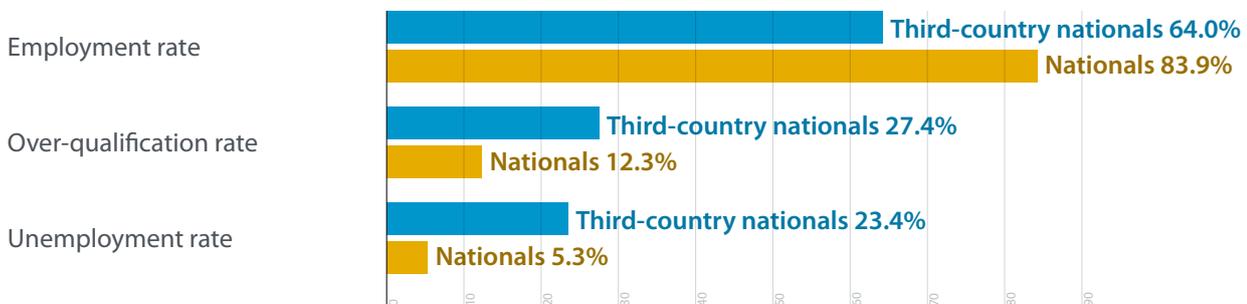
INTEGRATION

Integration indicators, 2022 or 2023

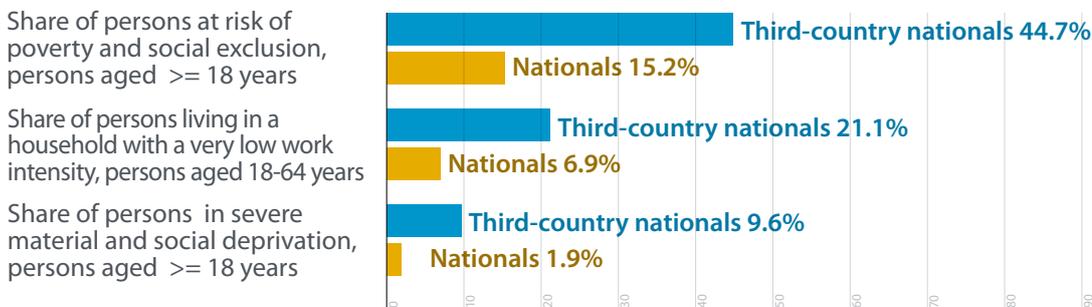
Education, 2023



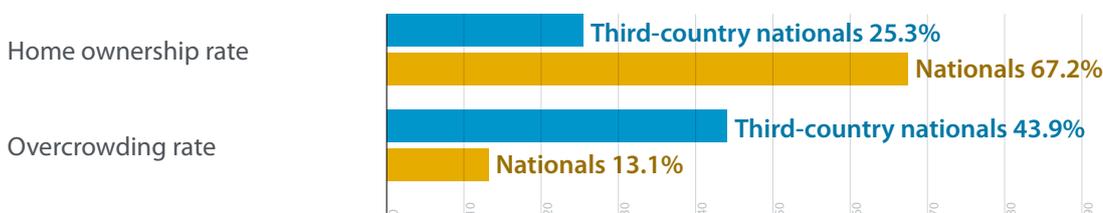
Labour market, persons aged 20-64 years, 2023



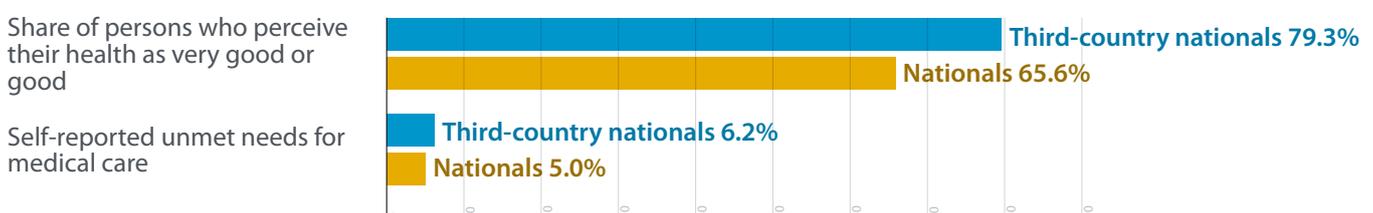
Social inclusion, 2023



Housing, persons aged ≥ 18 years, 2022



Health, persons aged ≥ 16 years, 2022

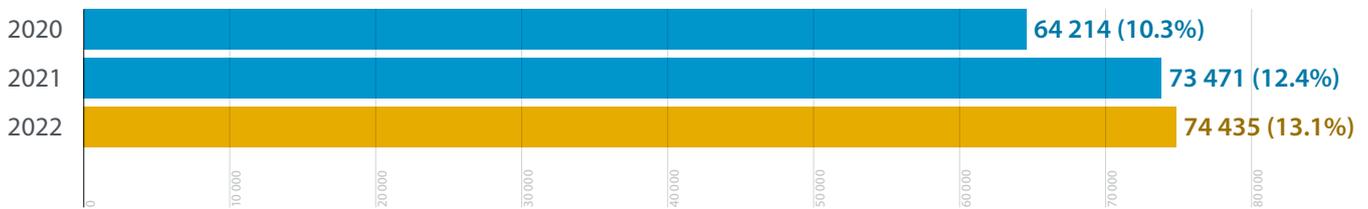




CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

Third-country nationals who acquired citizenship, 2020–2022

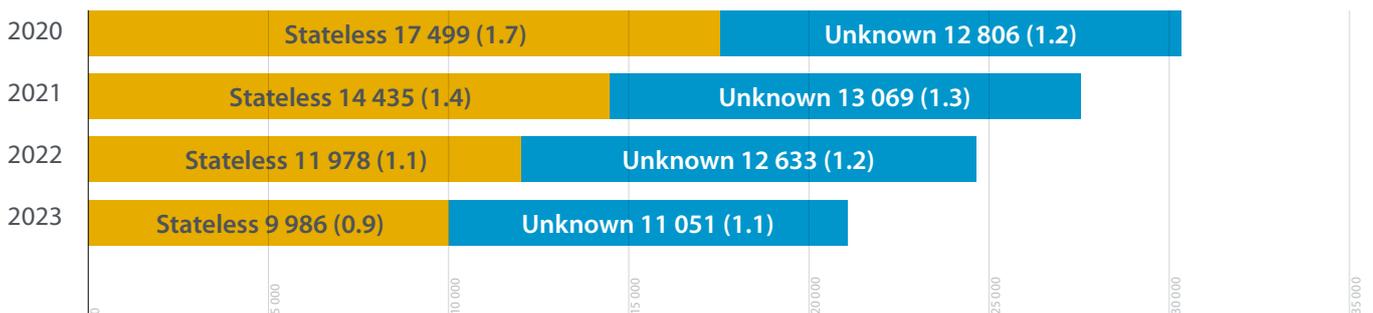
Absolute number (and share of total third-country nationals in the country)



Source: Eurostat (migr_acq and migr_pop1ctz)

Stateless persons and persons with unknown citizenship, 2020–2023

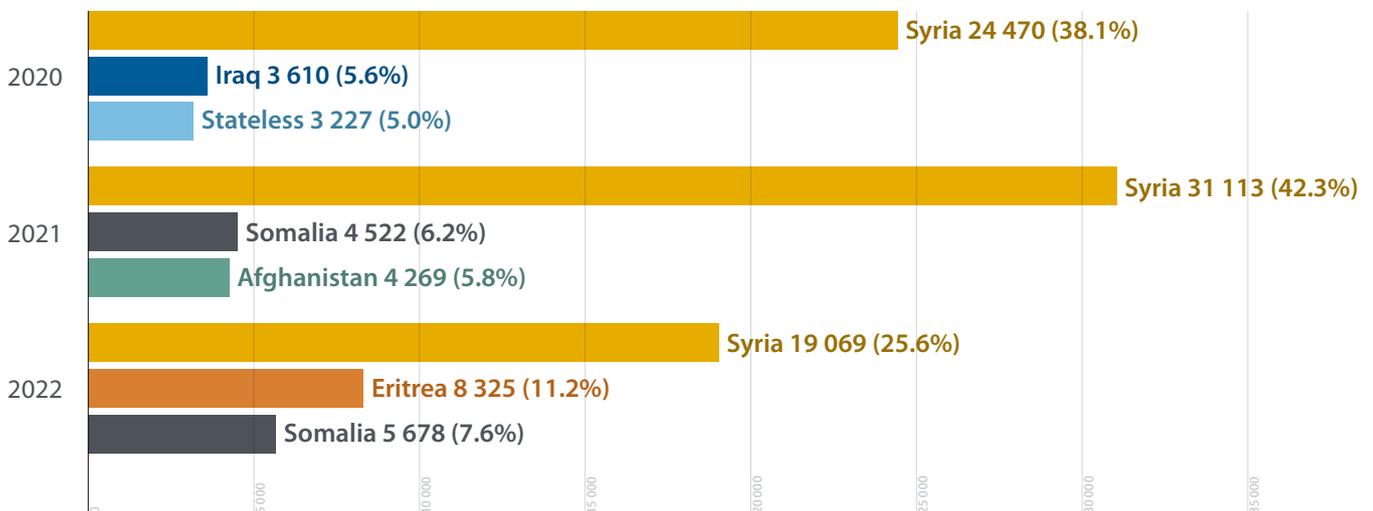
Absolute number (and the number per 1 000 people)



Source: Eurostat (migr_pop1ctz)

Top 3 countries of previous non-EU citizenships of persons acquiring citizenship, 2020–2022

Absolute number (and the share of all acquisitions by third-country nationals)



Source: Eurostat (migr_acq)

BORDERS, SCHENGEN AND VISAS

Schengen uniform short-stay visas issued, 2020–2023

Absolute number (and the share of all uniform short-stay visas issued within the Schengen Area)

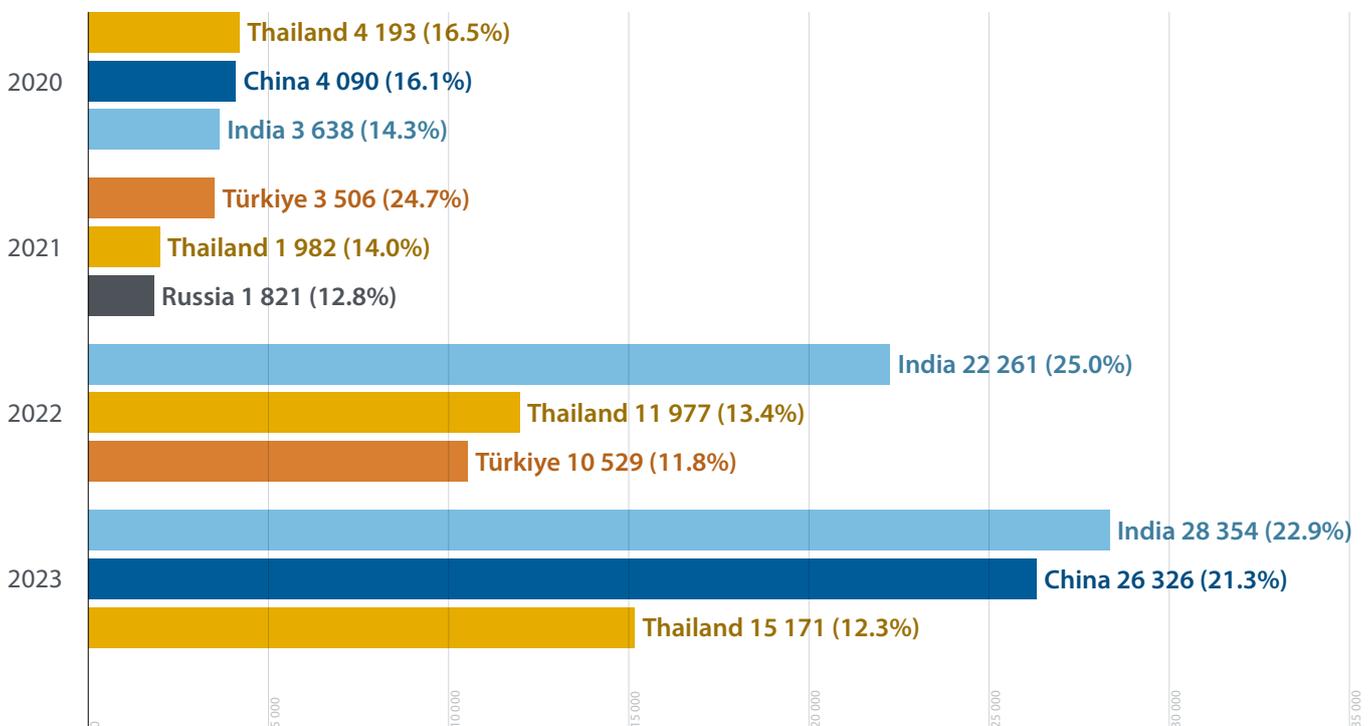


Note: Uniform short-stay visas (C visas) entitle the holder to stay in the territories of all Schengen States for up to 90 days within a 180-day period. Such visas may be issued for the purpose of a single entry or multiple entries.

Source: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs

Three consulate countries in which the most Schengen uniform short-stay visas were issued, 2020–2023

Number of uniform short-stay visas issued (and the share of all uniform short-stay visas issued in consulate countries)



Note: the consulate country might not be the same as the country of citizenship of the visa applicant.

Source: Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs

IRREGULAR MIGRATION

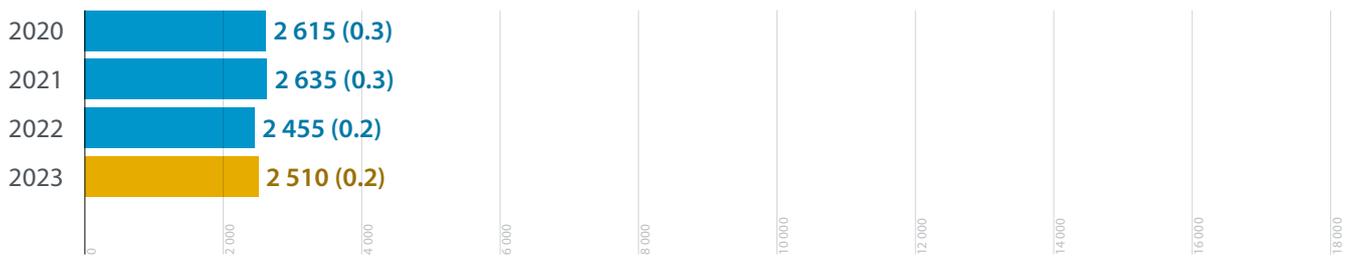
Third-country nationals subject to immigration law enforcement, 2020–2023

Absolute number (and the number per 1 000 people)

Persons refused entry



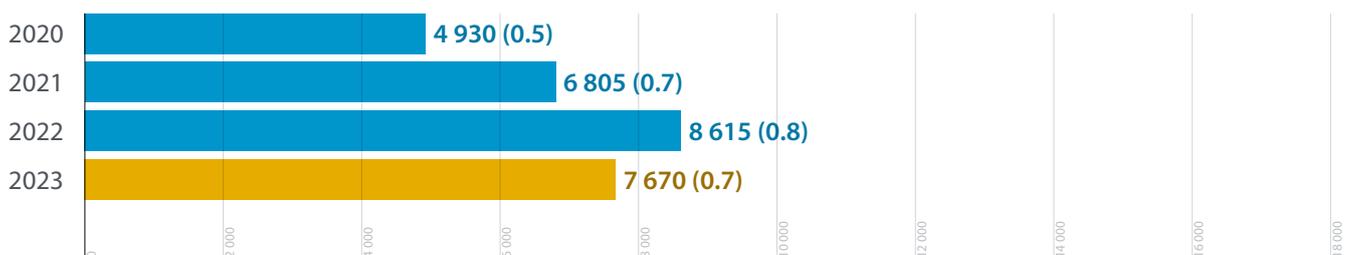
Persons found to be illegally present



Persons ordered to leave



Persons returned to a third country



Source: Eurostat (migr_eirfs, migr_eipre, migr_eiord, migr_eirtn, demo_gind and migr_eilpop)

Top 3 countries of citizenship of third-country nationals subject to immigration law enforcement, 2023

Absolute numbers (and the shares in the respective totals)

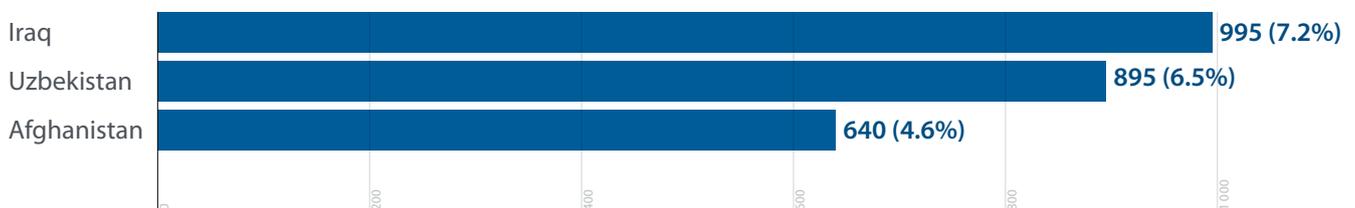
Persons refused entry



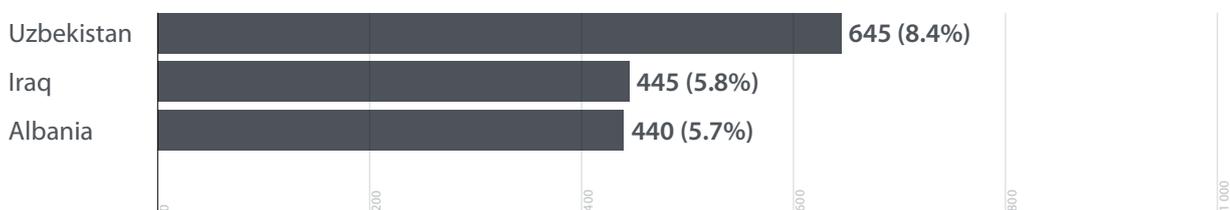
Persons found to be illegally present



Persons ordered to leave



Persons returned to a third country



Source: Eurostat (*migr_eirfs*, *migr_eipre*, *migr_eiord* and *migr_eirtn*)



TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

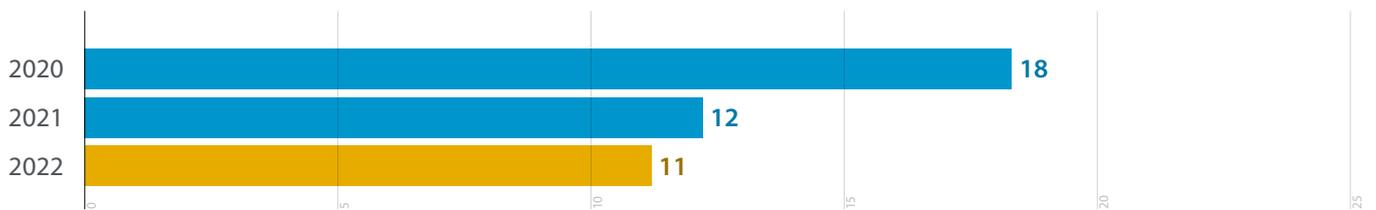
Number of third-country nationals victims of trafficking in human beings, 2020-2022



Note: 2020-2022, data not available.

Source: Eurostat (crim_thb_vctz)

Number of first residence permits issued to victims of trafficking in human beings, 2020-2022

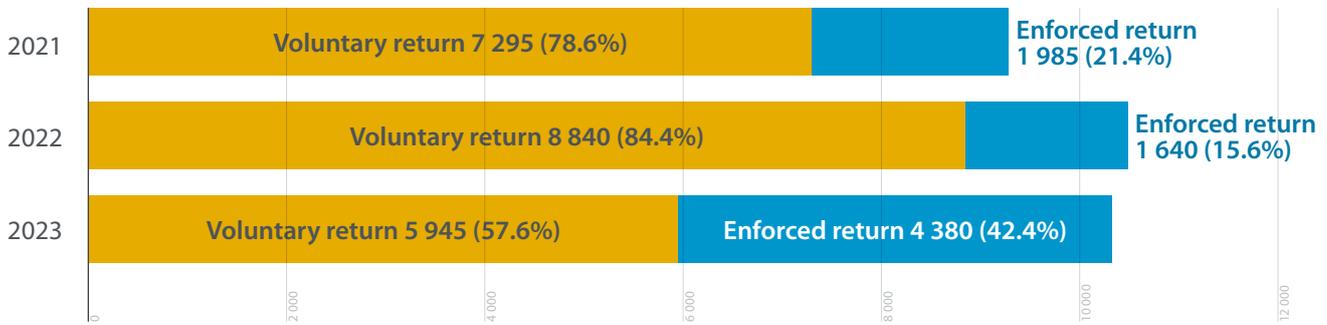


Source: Eurostat (migr_resoth)

RETURN AND READMISSION

Third-country nationals who left the territory, by type of return, 2021–2023

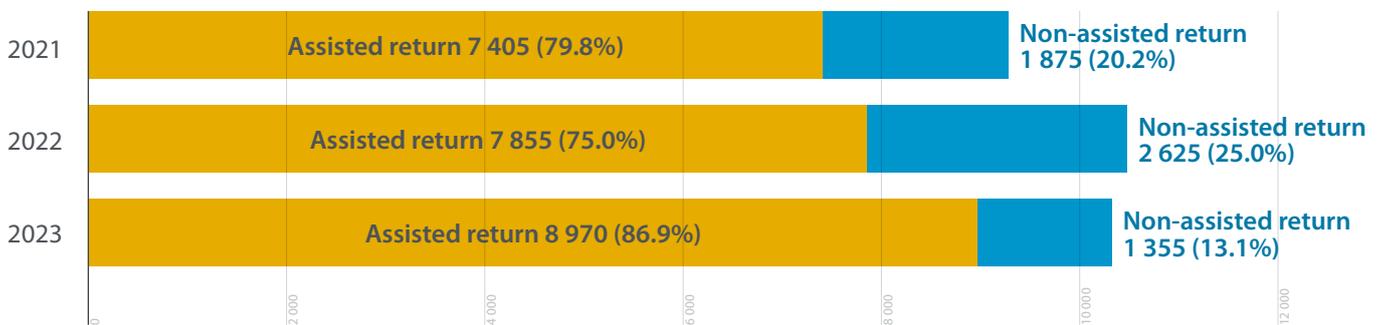
Absolute number (and the share of the total)



Source: Eurostat (migr_eirtn1)

Third-country nationals who left the territory, by type of assistance received, 2021–2023

Absolute number (and the share of the total)



Source: Eurostat (migr_eirtn1)