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National Statistics

# Asylum claims on the basis of sexual orientation 2020

Updated 26 August 2021

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2021/asylum-claims-on-the-basis-of-sexual-orientation-2020>

All statistics published in this section relate to the number of asylum claims made where sexual orientation formed part of the basis of the claim. The data cover claims with a lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) element, but do not cover other forms of sexual or gender identity.

These statistics are released as Experimental Statistics. Further information on 'Experimental Statistics' can be found in the Office for National Statistics [Guide to Experimental Statistics](https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/methodologytopicsandstatisticalconcepts/guidetoexperimentalstatistics) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/methodologytopicsandstatisticalconcepts/guidetoexperimentalstatistics>). Additional information about the limitations of these statistics can be found in the 'about the statistics' section below.

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a global pandemic. A range of restrictions were implemented in many parts of the world, and the first UK lockdown measures were announced on 23 March 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the UK immigration system, both in terms of restricting migrant movements to and from the UK and the impact on operational capacity.

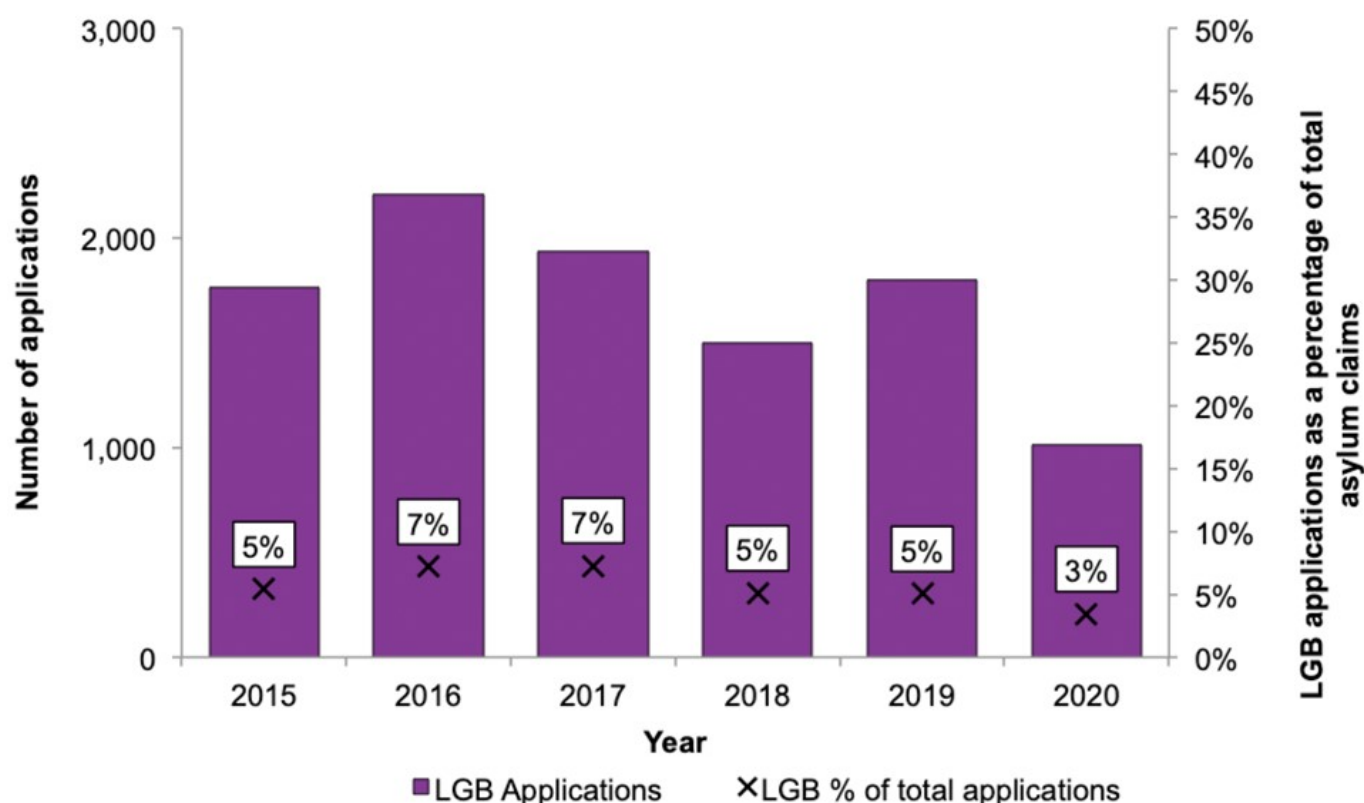
The year-on-year comparisons that follow will include impacts resulting from the restrictions put in place during this period of the pandemic.

## 1. Asylum applications with a sexual orientation element

Data in this section refer to asylum applications from main applicants made in 2020.

There were 1,012 asylum applications lodged in the UK in 2020, where sexual orientation formed part of the basis for the claim (LGB asylum applications), representing 3% of all asylum applications. This was 44% fewer than the previous year. Total asylum applications also decreased (by 17%) over the same period. The number of asylum applications in general have fallen since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected migrants' movements globally. Other factors such as data recording and the likelihood of asylum seekers to explicitly mention sexual orientation will also impact the number of recorded LGB applications.

**Figure 1: Asylum applications lodged in the UK where sexual orientation formed part of the basis for the claim, 2015 to 2020**



**Source:** [EXPERIMENTAL STATISTICS: Asylum claims on the basis of sexual orientation -Table SOC\\_01](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods)

([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods)) and [Asylum applications, initial decisions and resettlement – Asy\\_D01](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011720/asylum-applications-datasets-jun-2021.xlsx) ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011720/asylum-applications-datasets-jun-2021.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011720/asylum-applications-datasets-jun-2021.xlsx))

### Notes:

1. Main applicants only.

Figure 1 shows that the number of asylum applications that had a sexual orientation element has fluctuated in recent years but in 2020 was around half the level in 2016 (1,012 compared to 2,212). The proportion of asylum applications that these LGB related claims account for has also reduced (from 7% in both 2016 and 2017 to 3% in 2020).

Pakistani nationals accounted for the largest number of LGB asylum applications in each of the last six years, and accounted for 14% of all LGB applications in 2020 (144 applications). All of the top 5 nationalities applying for asylum on the basis of sexual orientation saw a reduction in applications in 2020, with LGB asylum applications from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Nigerian nationals falling by half compared to the previous year. This fall in the number of applications from 2019 to 2020 can be explained in part by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

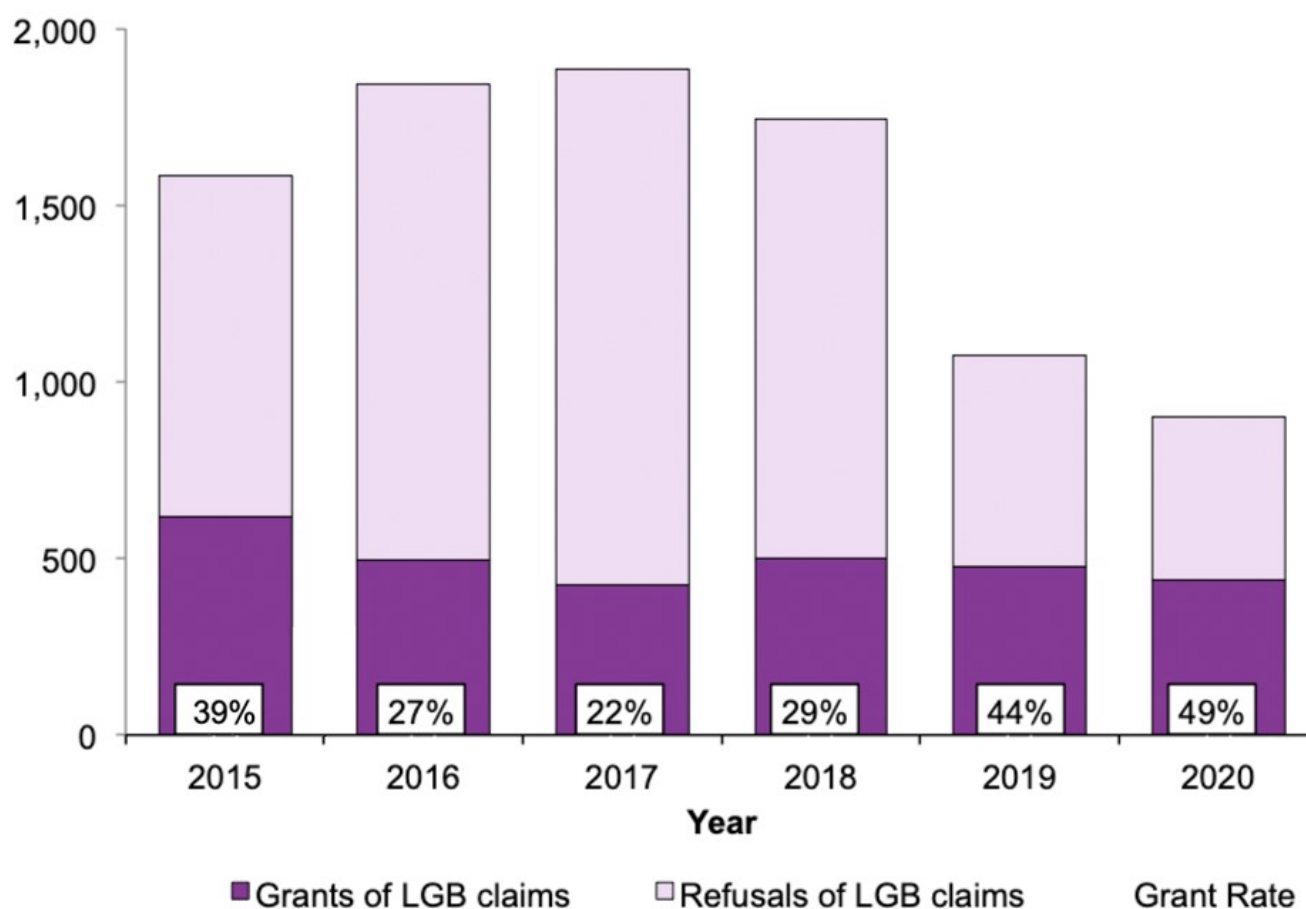
For most nationalities, LGB asylum applications account for a small proportion of total asylum applications. Uganda is a notable exception to this. Although the total number of asylum applications are relatively small (64 applications in 2020), half of all applications received from Ugandan nationals (50%) are applications with an LGB element to the claim. On the other hand, Albanians have a similar number of LGB applications, but these only make up 2% of all asylum applications from Albanians.

## 2. Initial Decisions

Data in this section refer to initial decisions made on asylum applications in the calendar year 2020. Decisions may relate to an application made in an earlier year, and therefore are not directly comparable with applications over the same period.

There were 440 grants of asylum or an alternative form of leave to main applicants where sexual orientation formed part of the basis for their asylum claim in 2020. This was 7% fewer than the previous year, although the grant rate decreased slightly (from 46% to 44%). Not all of these will necessarily have been granted protection on the basis of the sexual orientation element of the claim.

**Figure 2: Initial decisions on asylum applications lodged in the UK where sexual orientation formed part of the basis for the claim, and the grant rates on such applications, 2015 to 2020**



**Source:** [EXPERIMENTAL STATISTICS: Asylum claims on the basis of sexual orientation-Table SOC\\_01 and Table SOC\\_02](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods) ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods))

### Notes:

1. Main applicants only.
2. Grant rate is the proportion of initial decisions which resulted in a grant of protection or other leave. Grant rate is based on year of initial decision and is not directly comparable to applications, which are based on the date the asylum application was made. Grant rate shown in the white boxes.

Figure 2 shows that since a peak of 1,887 LGB initial decisions in 2017, the numbers of decisions where there was a sexual orientation element to the claim have been falling – reaching 900 in 2020. This may partly reflect the fall in total LGB applications over this period. The number of refusals follow a similar trend to total decisions, peaking in 2017 with 1,464 refusals, decreasing to 461 in 2020.

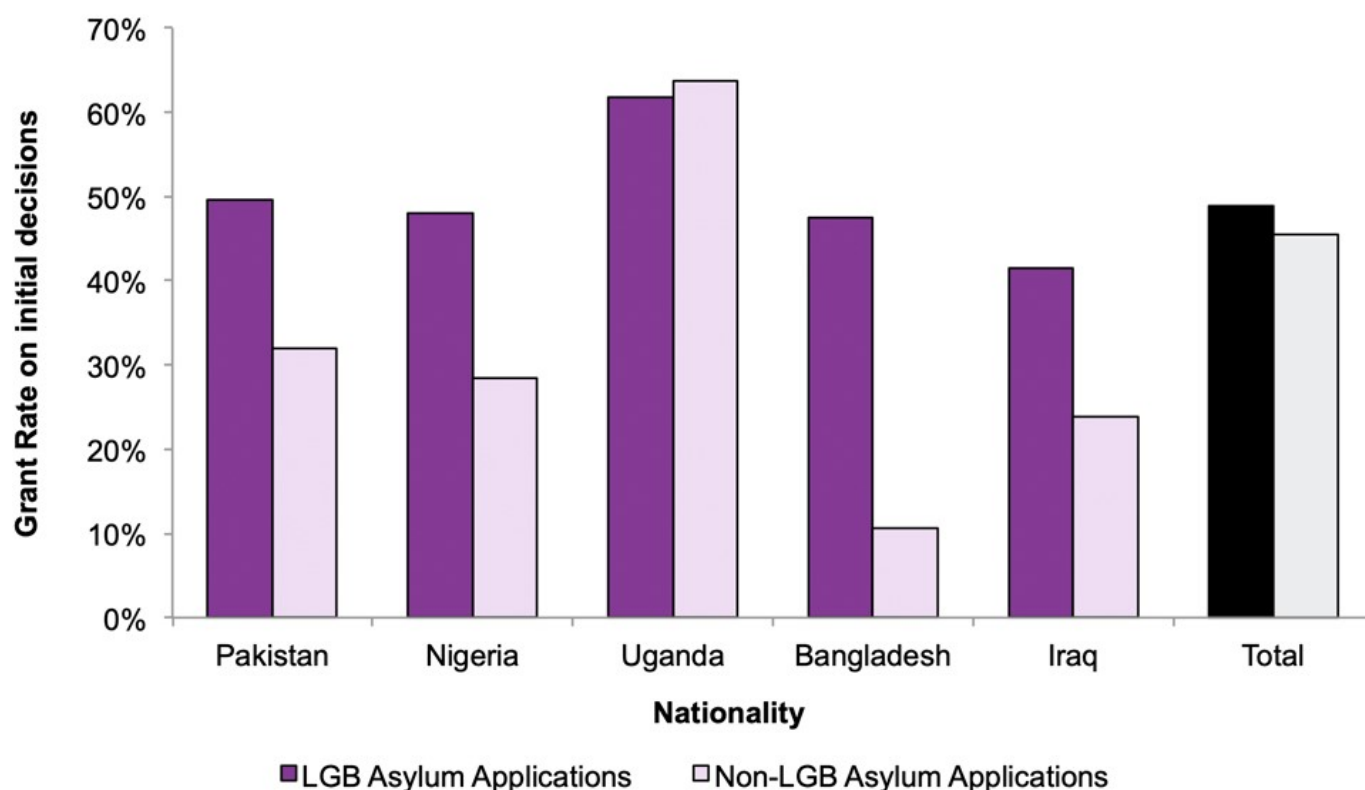
The grant rate decreased between 2015 and 2017, from 39% to 22%, however since 2017 the grant rate has increased, and almost

half (49%) of LGB asylum applications were granted at initial decision in 2020. The recent increase in grant rate for LGB applications to some extent reflects an increase in overall grant rate in all asylum decisions over the last couple of years. The overall grant rate can vary for a number of reasons, including the protection needs of those who claim asylum in the UK, along with changes in operational or policy decisions.

Previously, the grant rate for LGB asylum applications had been lower than the grant rate for non-LGB asylum applications. However, has this changed in the latest year, with the LGB asylum application grant rate (49%) being slightly higher than the non-LGB asylum applications grant rate (45%) in 2020.

Overall, the grant rate for LGB claims does not differ greatly from the overall grant rate for non-LGB asylum applications, and other aspects of the application can be more influential factors than any sexual orientation element to the application.

**Figure 3: Grant rates at initial decision<sup>1</sup> on asylum claims where sexual orientation formed part of the basis for the claim, by nationality<sup>2</sup>, 2020**



**Source:** [EXPERIMENTAL STATISTICS: Asylum claims on the basis of sexual orientation -Table SOC\\_02](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods)

([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods))

#### Notes:

1. Main applicants only.
2. Nationalities are those with at least 50 initial decisions made on asylum claims with a sexual orientation basis over the period.

Figure 3 shows that the asylum grant rates for LGB vary by nationality. Nationalities who more commonly claim asylum on the basis of sexual orientation typically see higher grant rates for LGB applications than for non-LGB applications. In 2020, Ugandan nationals had a grant rate of 62% for LGB claims and 64% for non-LGB applications, whereas Bangladeshi nationals had a much bigger difference between the grant rates for LGB asylum applications (47%) and non-LGB asylum applications (11%).

### 3. Appeals

Data in this section on appeals received refer to appeals from main applicants which were lodged in the calendar year 2020. Data on determinations of appeals refer to appeal decisions which were made in the calendar year 2020 and may relate to an appeal lodged in a prior year. Therefore, data on appeals determined are not directly comparable with appeals received over the same period.

There were 378 appeals relating to asylum applications where sexual orientation formed part of the basis for the claims lodged in the UK, representing 8% of all asylum appeals lodged in the year 2020.

There were 33% fewer appeals lodged relating to LGB asylum applications in the last year (378 in 2020 compared to 565 in 2019). The fall in appeals may be linked to the fall in the number of LGB asylum applications refused at initial decision over the same period (from 598 to 460). Prior to 2018, the number of appeals had increased, but this is likely to reflect, in part, improvements from

caseworkers in the use of the sexual orientation identifier following its wider introduction in 2015. As some cases can take a long time to reach the appeals stage, some of the appeals may relate to claims made in earlier years when the flag was not widely used.

In 2020, less than half (47%) of appeals determined relating to LGB asylum applications were allowed (granted). This was the same as the appeal success rate for non-LGB asylum applications. However, reflecting the pattern observed for grant rates at initial decision, the nationalities who commonly claim asylum on the basis of sexual orientation typically had a higher appeal success rate for LGB-related asylum claims compared to the success rate for non-LGB claims.

#### 4. About the statistics

Applicants are not required to disclose their sexual orientation when applying for asylum. Some individuals may have less reason to mention sexual orientation when making a claim because it may not be a significant factor in their seeking asylum. Such nationalities would be undercounted in these statistics. These statistics also reflect the claims made by asylum applicants and do not reflect a confirmed sexual orientation of the applicant.

The data give information on asylum claims, initial decisions, and appeals where sexual orientation was raised as part of the basis for the claim at some stage prior to reaching a final outcome. The sexual orientation element could be raised at any stage of the process (for example, as part of the asylum case, appeal, or as part of other casework), and may form either the sole basis, or one of multiple grounds for the claim. It may or may not have been accepted as a valid part of the claim, so the data do not necessarily reflect the reason for an initial decision or appeal outcome.

Like other data derived from administrative data, these numbers are correct as at the time of data extraction and may be updated in subsequent statistics releases.

Data on sexual orientation were not routinely recorded in a reportable format prior to 2015. This means that sexual orientation claims raised before 2015 that had an initial decision in 2015 or later may not be counted in the initial decisions data (unless the flag was raised in 2015 or later). Similarly, an appeal relating to an application raised prior to 2015 may not be included in the data if the sexual orientation element was raised before 2015. Therefore, the number of initial decisions and appeals will be an undercount. This will affect earlier years to a greater extent than more recent years, so trends over time should be interpreted with caution.

Caseworkers use of the sexual orientation flag is likely to have improved in recent years. However, users should exercise caution when making comparisons over time, as the data could be impacted by recording practices.

Changes in the number of applications, decisions and appeals will be impacted by a range of factors, including the recording practices of decision-makers on caseworking systems. Further, if applications where LGB is mentioned by the applicant or appellant at some point in the process have dropped, then subsequent LGB-related outcomes are likely to drop too. The way cases are prioritised can also impact the number of decisions made on particular cases over a particular period of time. For example, if a greater number of historic cases (prior to when the LGB flag was widely used) are resolved, the statistics are likely to show fewer LGB cases.

The statistics show:

- the number of asylum claims where sexual orientation was raised as a basis, or part of the basis, of the claim
- the initial decision of claims where sexual orientation was raised as part of the claim
- the number of appeals received for asylum cases where sexual orientation was raised as part of the claim
- the outcome of appeals for asylum cases where sexual orientation was raised as part of the claim

The statistics do not show:

- whether sexual orientation was the sole basis for the asylum claim
- whether sexual orientation was raised as the basis of the asylum claim at the time the claim was made, or whether it was raised at a later stage (such as at appeal)
- whether the sexual orientation element of the claim has any bearing on the outcome. For example, a claim may be based on multiple factors. The outcome of the claim may or may not be due to the sexual orientation element
- The number of asylum claimants who define themselves as LGB; having an identifier that an asylum case is based on sexual orientation does not indicate that a claimant has any particular sexual orientation; it also does not signify whether that aspect of the claim has been accepted; sexual orientation as a basis of claim could be due to imputed assertions or association rather than a defining characteristic of the claimant
- whether the sexual orientation element of the claim had any bearing on the appeal being lodged, or the outcome of the appeal
- any individuals at risk of persecution due, in part or in full, to a sexual orientation component who have been granted protection through other routes, such as resettlement routes

#### 5. Data tables

Data referred to here can be found in the following tables:

- [Asylum tables \(https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets)
- [Asylum claims on the basis of sexual orientation tables \(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011646/asylum-sexual-orientation-dec-2020-tables.ods)

#### 6. Experimental Statistics

These statistics are designated as '[Experimental Statistics \(https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/methodologytopicsandstatisticalconcepts/guidetoexperimentalstatistics#what-are-experimental-statistics\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/methodologytopicsandstatisticalconcepts/guidetoexperimentalstatistics#what-are-experimental-statistics)'. Although the statistics in their current form have undergone a strict quality assurance process, the limitations are well understood (and outlined above) and improved guidance provided to caseworkers who record the information leads us to believe the data are robust, these statistics remain under review.

The Home Office is planning to introduce a new asylum caseworking system. This may affect the information reported in this section. Therefore, the information reporting in the LGB section will remain experimental until these developments are fully understood.

### **We welcome your feedback**

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See section 7 of the '[About this release \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2021/about-this-release\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-june-2021/about-this-release)' section for more details.

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