



Protecting women and girls in the asylum procedure

The information presented in this fact sheet is extracted from the [EASO Asylum Report 2021](#). Direct link to the section: <https://www.easo.europa.eu/easo-asylum-report-2021/53-protecting-women-and-girls>

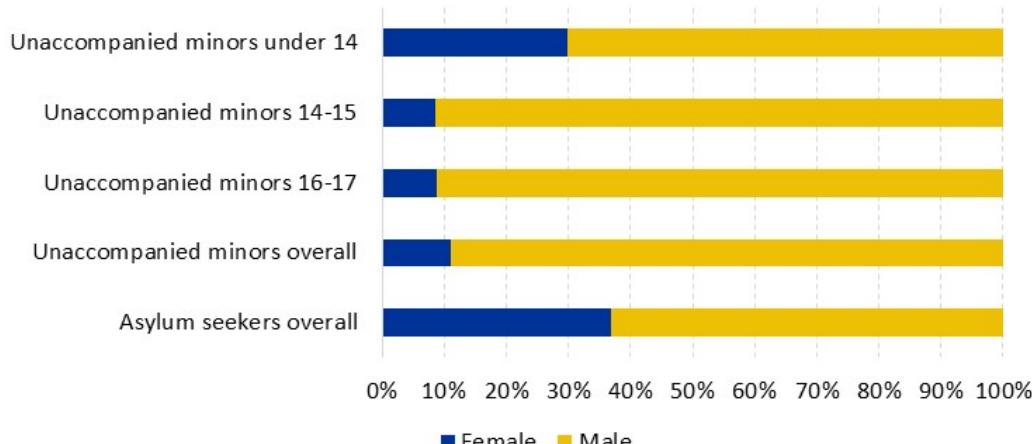
Women and girls are particularly at risk when seeking international protection. They can face discrimination, violence and additional obstacles because of their gender – during their journey, at reception centres and even in integrating into the host society and finding employment. They are at increased risk of falling victim to domestic violence, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), forced marriage and human trafficking.

Data at a glance

Some sub-Saharan African countries account for relatively high shares of female applicants who are minors. In 2020, one-half or more of all unaccompanied minor applicants from Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire were girls. High shares of girls among all minor applicants were also noted from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, to a lesser extent, Eritrea and Somalia.

Among the total number of unaccompanied minor applicants, the share of girls was the highest in the youngest age group, accounting for almost one-third of applications from children under 14 years of age.

Figure 1: Gender ratio for unaccompanied minors by age group, 2020



Source: Eurostat [[migr_asyappctza](#)] as of 28 April 2021.

The recognition rates for first-time asylum applications lodged by women (50%) were higher than for men (37%) in 2020. This difference was larger in 2019 (50% compared to 33%). However, the data available do not indicate which applications lodged by men or women were part of family groups.

Recognition rates at second or higher instances were also higher for asylum applications lodged by women (35% in 2020), compared to 27% for men.



Key developments extracted from the EASO Asylum Report 2021

- To help Member States establish safeguards for women and girls, in 2020 the Council of Europe published practical advice and information on gender-based violence and on how to provide a gender-sensitive interpretation in reception and asylum procedures.¹
- In February 2021, the **Irish** government published a White Paper which proposed a new model of support and reception to applicants for international protection.² The IPAS is working with specialised service providers to roll out a training programme to staff who are involved in the care of applicants with special needs, focusing on victims of sexual and gender-based violence, victims of trafficking, and victims of torture and trauma.

Gender-based violence

- In 2020, some EU+ countries implemented new measures to better manage applicants who have suffered sexual or gender-based violence. In **Slovenia**, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the police and the Ministry of Justice – together with 11 NGOs and UNHCR – signed a new protocol on prevention and action in cases of sexual and gender-based violence in international protection proceedings. Addressing victims requires special mechanisms that complement the existing national system in order to provide adequate protection and assistance.³
- The United Nations Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls noted a number of positive developments in **Greece** to provide support to refugee women, but it considered that some women were unable to report violence due to untrained staff at police stations, despite Law No 45/31 of 2018 giving undocumented persons the right to report gender-based violence without a fear of removal. In addition, a lack of interpretation services at hospitals impeded the provision of adequate medical care for female victims of violence.⁴

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

- In **France**, the CNDA ruled that Somali girls who have not been subjected to FGM/C – but ran the risk if returned – constitute a particular social group in need of protection. The court found that OPFRA had only briefly heard a girl's father, not the mother, even though she could testify that the practice was undertaken in her family. The CNDA reiterated that FGM/C is almost universally practiced throughout Somalia without a significant decline in the practice, and girls at risk if returned therefore constitute a particular social group in need of protection from FGM/C.

- In **Iceland**, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal in which a father complained that the determining authority and the district court did not correctly assess the situation of his two minor girls who would face the risk of FGM/C and rape if returned to their home country. In civil cases, the burden of proof lies with the applicant and the court stated that the applicants had not provided evidence of a risk.
- The Danish Refugee Council observed administrative and procedural deficiencies in **Greece** which hindered access to a medical examination to prove an applicant was a victim of FGM/C and victims did not have recourse to a medical certificate confirming that the practice had occurred.⁵

Human trafficking

- European courts addressed cases of human trafficking in 2020. The high court referred back a case of a Nigerian woman who was trafficked to **Ireland**, stating that the IPAT did not adequately assess the applicant's personal circumstances as a victim of sexual exploitation and the role of her family as actors of persecution.
- In **Cyprus**, GRETA observed a significant increase in the number of applicants for international protection, both men and women from mostly Nigeria or Cameroon, who have been detected as presumed victims of trafficking at the Kokkinotrimithia reception centre. They reported an increase in the number of girls and young women from Syria who arrived unaccompanied in the northern part of Cyprus claiming to join their 'husbands'. No special reception conditions are provided to this profile of applicants. They are usually provided with a small allowance and must find accommodation on their own, potentially exposing them to risks of sexual and other forms of exploitation. Noting that the slow asylum procedure provided traffickers with an opportunity to exploit applicants, GRETA urged the Cypriot authorities to provide assistance and safe accommodation adapted to the specific needs of victims and develop a programme for long-term support and integration.

Reception facilities

- **French** National Plan for the Reception of Asylum Applicants and the integration of refugees for 2021-2023 set as a milestone the "early detection and reinforcing support of vulnerabilities".⁶ The plan foresees the creation of additional places in reception facilities, among which are 300 places for women at risk and 200 places for LGBTI applicants.
- The **Czech** Organization for Aid to Refugees and the Forum for Human Rights reported in their joint input that women, men and families were not separated within the reception facility and they received reports about several incidents, including one of sexual assault.⁷ The Ministry of the Interior stated that incidents reported by NGOs were not caused by the lack of separation of men and women, as this measure was maintained, but by tensions in quarantine.
- Several developments concerned reception conditions for vulnerable applicants in **Spain**, which experienced a high number of arrivals in 2020. While travel restrictions hindered the possibility of transfers between reception facilities,⁸ the Spanish Ombudsperson called on the ministry on two occasions to transfer children, single women, families with children and other applicants with vulnerabilities (for example with health conditions and therefore at a heightened risk of COVID-19) to the mainland. The Ombudsperson underlined that children and single women were especially at risk of sexual or other forms of violence in facilities like in Melilla, where the occupation rate was high.^{9, 10}

Integration

- The **French** Minister responsible for citizenship issued a circular to define priorities for the integration of newly-arrived migrants and beneficiaries of international protection for 2021.¹¹ The circular confirmed that the focus remained on integration through employment, with special attention given to the employment of women and to an early assessment of skills and knowledge of newly-arrived foreigners.
- The **Danish** Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI) observed many inequalities in the integration process of refugee women.¹² The agency published a new information package for social workers in local authorities on providing specialised employment support to refugee and migrant women. Women's labour market integration has been a priority in recent years, as data from 2019 showed that 19% of refugee women were working after 3 years of arrival, compared to 60% of refugee men.¹³
- A new study conducted by an NGO analysed refugees' access to education and educational attainment in **Denmark**.¹⁴ The report noted that women refugees are more likely to get into higher education than men, who rather opt for vocational education.¹⁵
- The **German** Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) continued their yearly survey, which has been administered since 2016 to a group of refugees who arrived between 2013 and 2016.¹⁶ The findings indicated a significant difference in the employment of men and women, with 57% of the men being employed, compared to 29% of the women.¹⁷

Detention

- The CPT called for immediate action in **Malta** to transfer vulnerable people to open detention centres, to stop the detention of women and children, and to renovate the detention facilities to provide an adequate environment.¹⁸

Resettlement

- Similar to 2019, the ratio of men and women who were resettled in 2020 was more or less equal, with 48% of resettled persons being female. With regard to the most common citizenships of origin, females accounted for over one-third of all Eritreans (36%) and three-fifths of all Somalis who were resettled in EU+ countries.

To search for more developments by topic, country or year, consult the [EASO National Asylum Developments Database](#).

To read more case law related to asylum, consult the [EASO Case Law Database](#).

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https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/EASO_Asylum_Report_Accompanying_Resources

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Please see the [Bibliography for the EASO Asylum Report 2021](#) for the full list of over 1,000 references.

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