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Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Rob England

BBC

(by email)

14 December 2023

Dear Mr England

**Withdrawn Asylum Applications**

Thank you for contacting us. We have looked into your concern.

The Home Office has confirmed that the total number of withdrawn asylum cases is correct but recognises that there may be an error where withdrawn asylum applications may not have been correctly classified into the two potential sub-classifications of withdrawal. The Home Office has included a note about this alongside the statistics while it continues to investigate the extent of the impact. While we recognise that this potential data quality issue may be disappointing to some users, and the Home Office could have made this issue more prominent for users, we are satisfied that the Home Office has plans in place to ensure this is resolved for future publications.

We would also like to clarify the definitions of the two types of withdrawn asylum applications. An application is described as a ‘non-substantiated withdrawal’ if the applicant fails to cooperate with the process to examine and decide the asylum claim within a reasonable time period. This is the group referred to in the BBC article you shared with us and discussed at the Home Affairs Select Committee, and which has been described as ‘missing’. By contrast, where the applicant actively chooses to withdraw the application, this is classified as ‘other withdrawals’.

The 17,316 figure is the total of both types of withdrawn asylum applications. This figure therefore includes those classified as other withdrawals. As these applications are withdrawn by the applicant, it would be incorrect to describe these applicants as missing because once their application has been withdrawn, they are expected to either leave the country or have an alternative agreement to stay. The error within the data, therefore, means that it is not at present publicly reported how many applicants would fall into the category described as ‘missing’ - that is, the number of applications that are classified as non-substantiated withdrawals.

We will continue to engage with the Home Office to ensure this issue is resolved as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Ed Humpherson's signature

Ed Humpherson  
Director General for Regulation