



National Referral Mechanism, preliminary findings

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Introduction – context

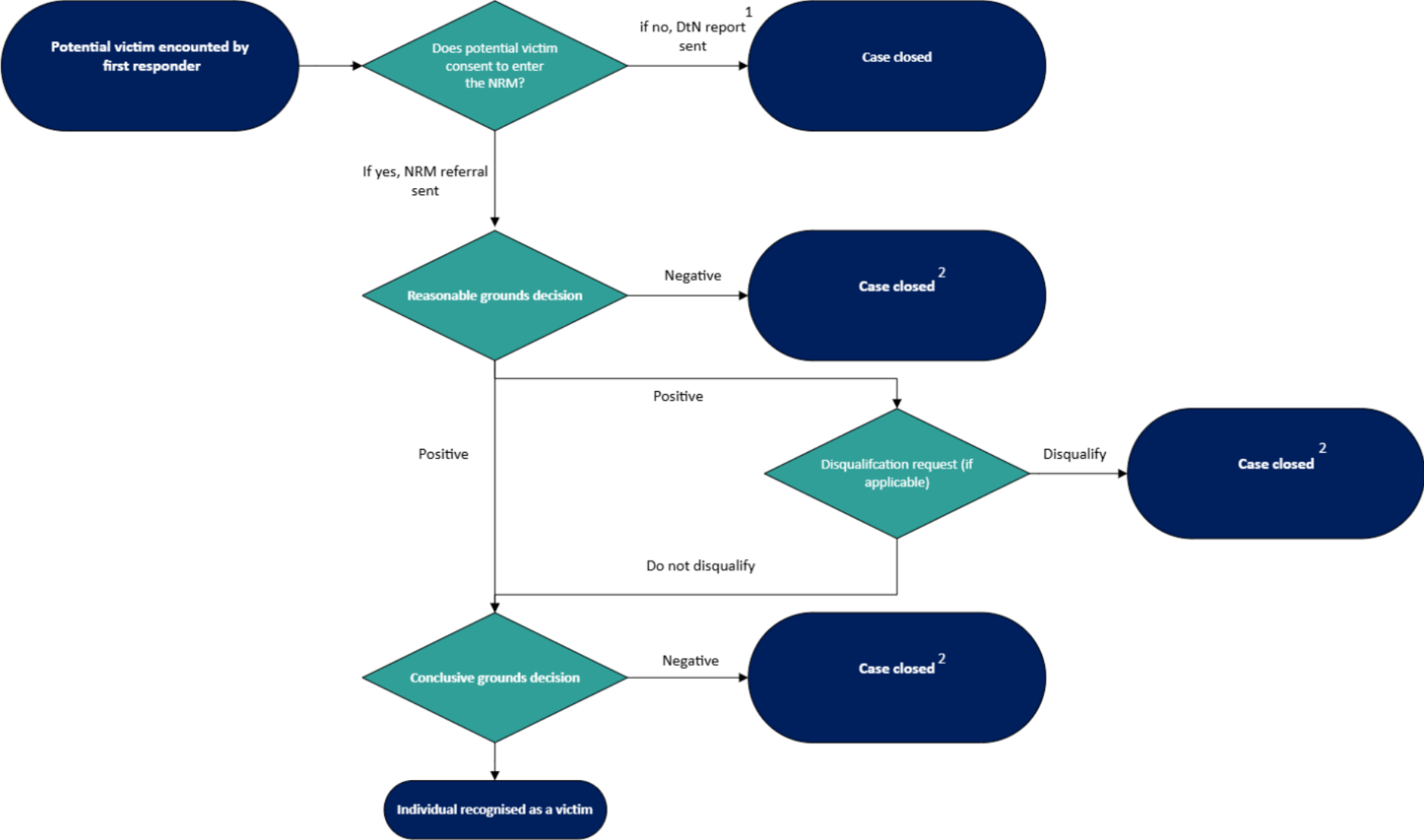
- The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is **a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.**
- Modern slavery = umbrella term: human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, etc.
- 19,125 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office in 2024, representing a 13% increase compared to the preceding year (16,990)
- The HO publishes quarterly bulletins, available [here](#).
- Raw data taken from the live management information system are available to download. The data are held by the UK Data Service, and are “safeguarded”.

Introduction – National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process

- First responder organisations (statutory or non-statutory)
- **Two-stage decision-making process** for identifying potential victims of modern slavery.
 - The Reasonable Grounds (RG) decision
 - Positive = enter NRM, access to support
 - Negative = do not enter NRM
 - The Conclusive Grounds(CG) decision
 - Positive = confirmed victim, additional support
 - Negative = short term support
- Decision making bodies (home office)
 - Single Competent Authority (SCA)
 - Immigration enforcement competent authority (IECA)



Figure 2: Victim identification flowchart (simplified)



Source: Home Office

Why this data is important

- London specific picture
 - HO bulletins do not include location
 - The Met hold London-specific info, not publicly available
- Understanding journey of migrants through NRM
 - Decision making migrants v. UK nationals
 - Intersection of immigration policy/MS policy
- = Evidence base for GLA advocacy points on MS
 - Immigration enforcement v victim-first approach
 - NRM at emergency levels in London
 - Possibility for further investigation as to why inequalities exist

Data details

- This presentation summarises preliminary findings from analysis of the following dataset:

Home Office, Modern Slavery Research & Analysis. (2026). National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify Statistics, 2014-2025. [data collection]. 20th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 8910, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8910-20>

- Findings are derived from Q1 2021 to Q4 2025. New data are added quarterly.
- **Nationality** - based on information provided by the first responder on referral (can be updated)
 - “UK” includes those who specified UK as their sole nationality, and those who specified UK as part of dual nationality e.g. “Syrian UK”, “UK Zimbabwean” and “Unknown UK”.
 - “Non-UK” includes all those without UK specified as part of nationality – can be single or dual.
- **Location** – based on police force sent NRM for investigation. Choice of police force is based on several criteria including location of exploitation and victim's address at time of referral
 - "London" includes referrals sent to the Metropolitan Police and City of London police.

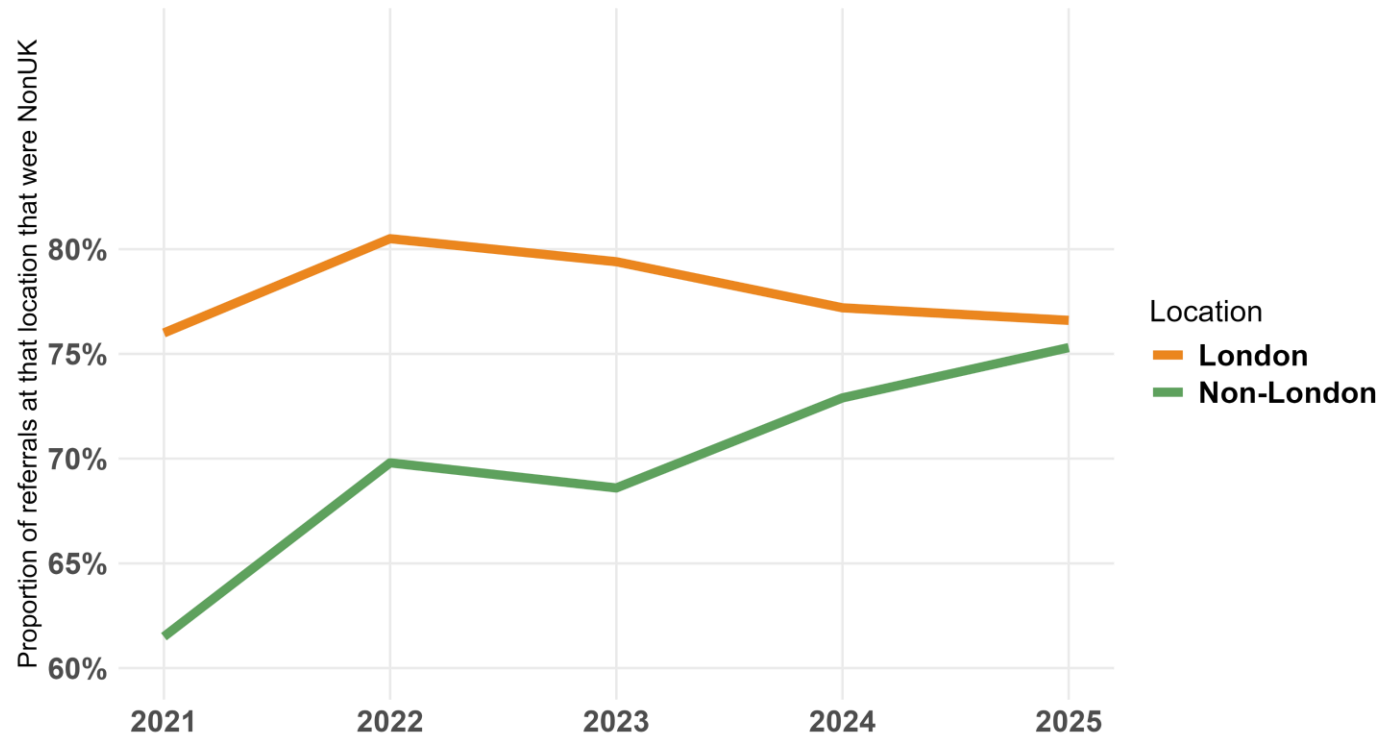
Proportion of London-based NRM referrals that are non-UK nationals

A majority of London NRM referrals are migrants.

Between 2021 and 2025, 78% of 24,090 referrals made to a London police force were for those of non-UK nationality. This is a higher proportion than for rest of UK (71% of 65,000 referrals).

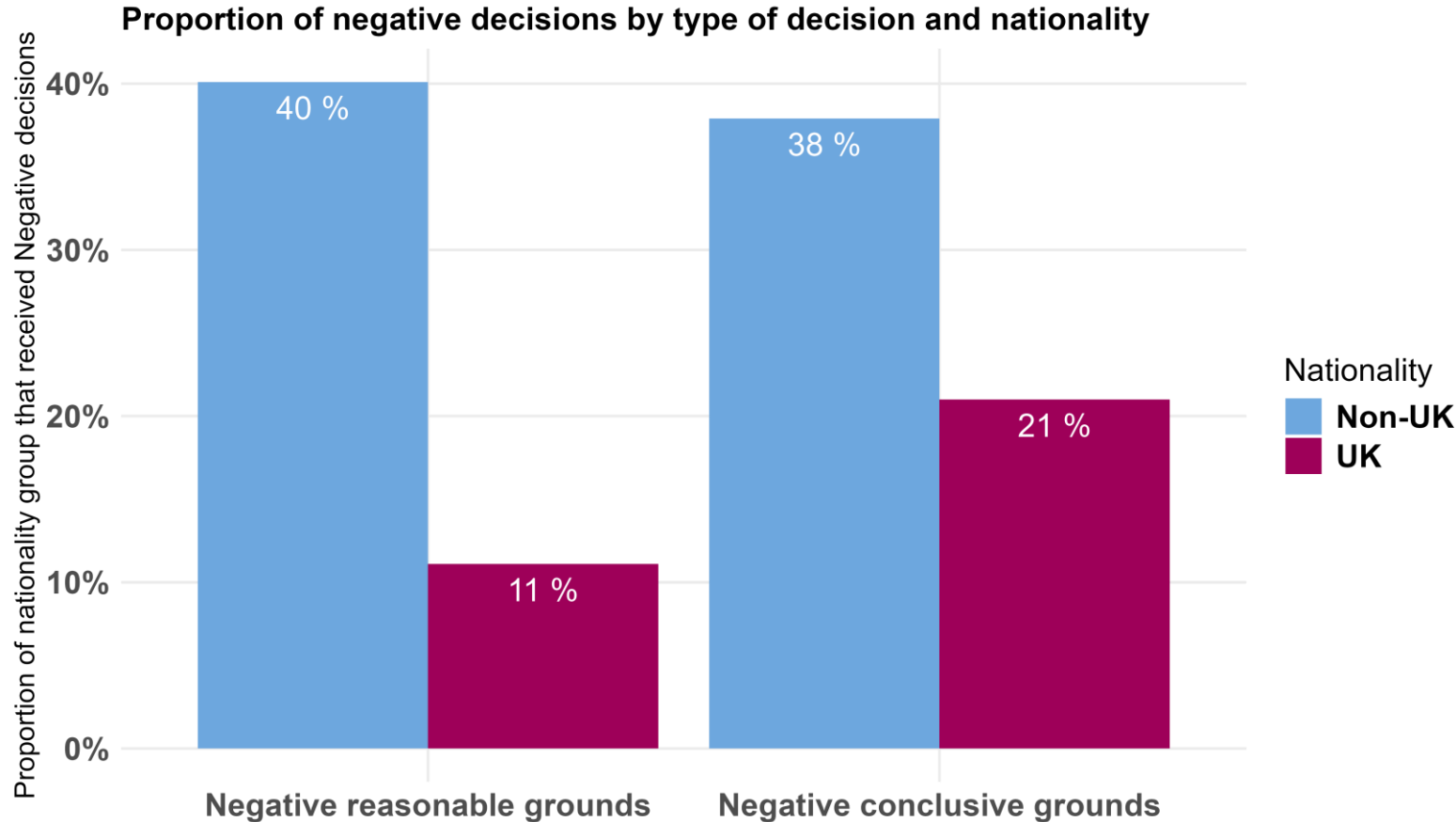
For London, % non-UK nationality has consistently been >75% while for the rest of UK the proportion has been increasing towards this level.

Non-UK referrals by location, 2021 - 2025



Data source: Home Office, Chart: GLA

Proportion of negative decisions for non-UK nationals compared to UK nationals



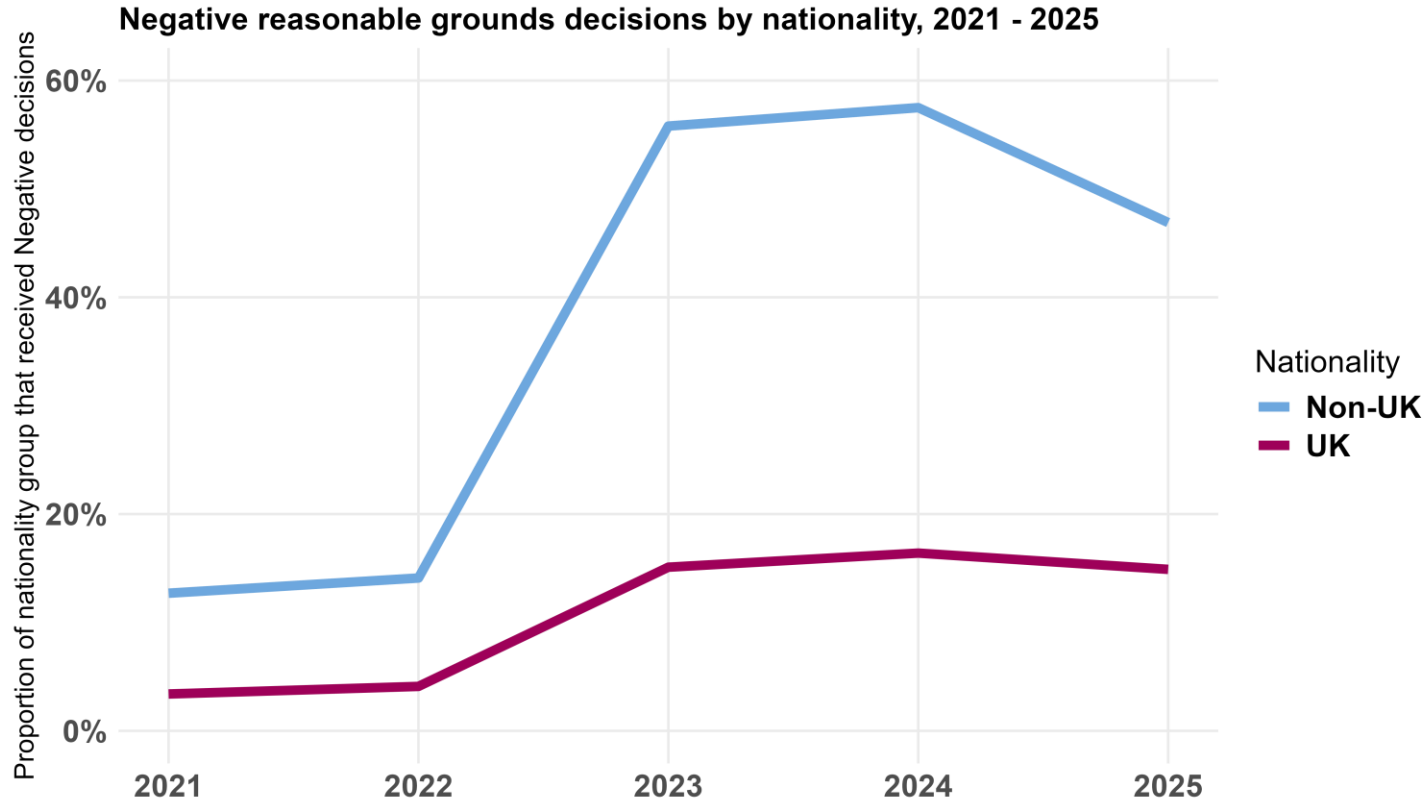
Data source: Home Office, Chart: GLA

Unequal decision outcomes by nationality for both RG (large difference) and CG

- Proportion of negative decisions much higher for those of non-UK nationality compared to UK
- Difference between rates of negative decisions for non-UK and UK less for 'conclusive grounds' decisions than for 'reasonable grounds' decisions

*Number of decisions 2021 – 2025:
87,400 RG of which 63,570 Non-UK (73%)
61,950 CG of which 41,920 Non-UK (68%)*

Proportion of NRG decisions for Non-UK nationals as compared to UK nationals, trends over time

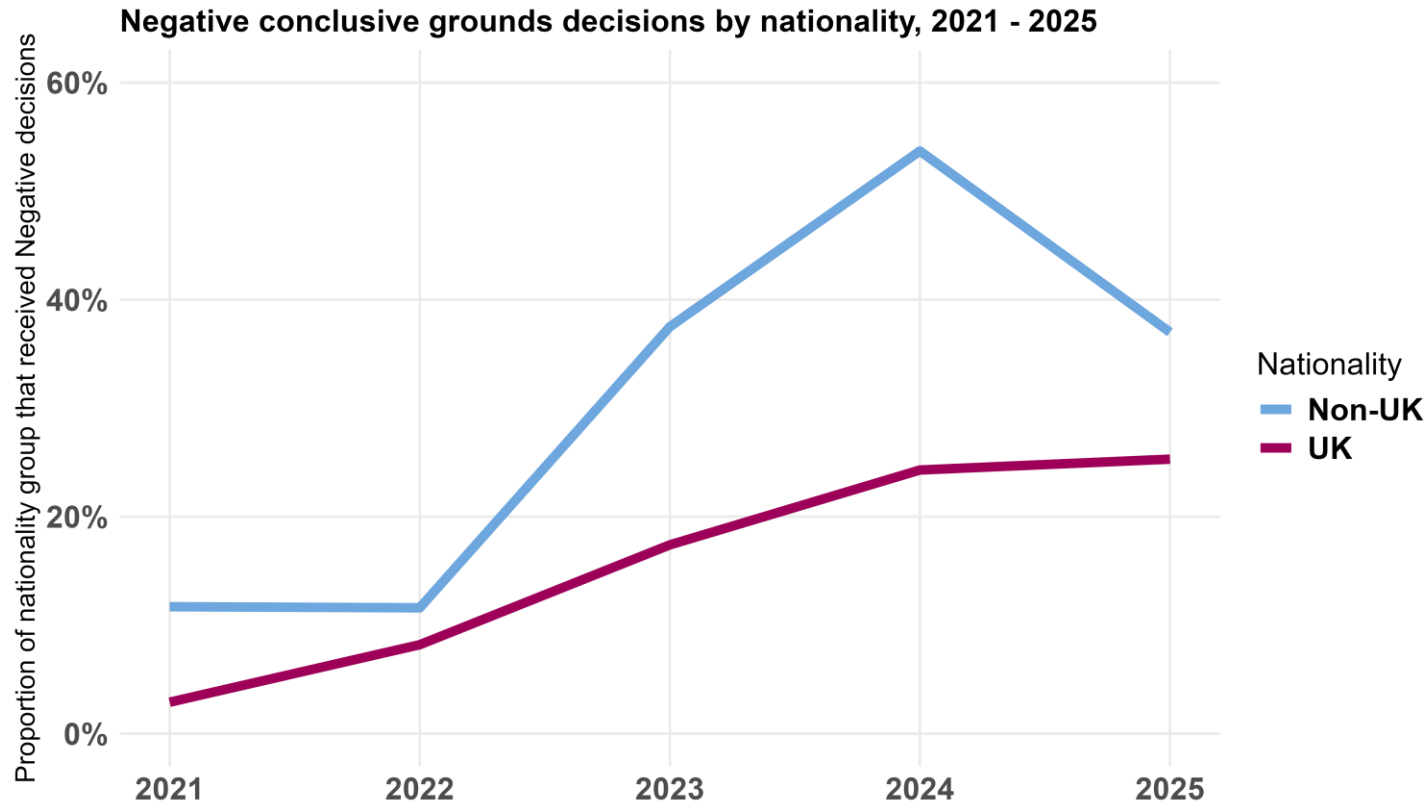


Data source: Home Office, Chart: GLA

Negative reasonable grounds decisions have greatly increased since 2022 especially for Non-UK group

- 2023: **Nationality & Borders Act** impact on decision making -> change in threshold
- Greater impact for those of Non-UK nationality

Proportion of NCG decisions for non-UK nationals compared to UK nationals, trends over time

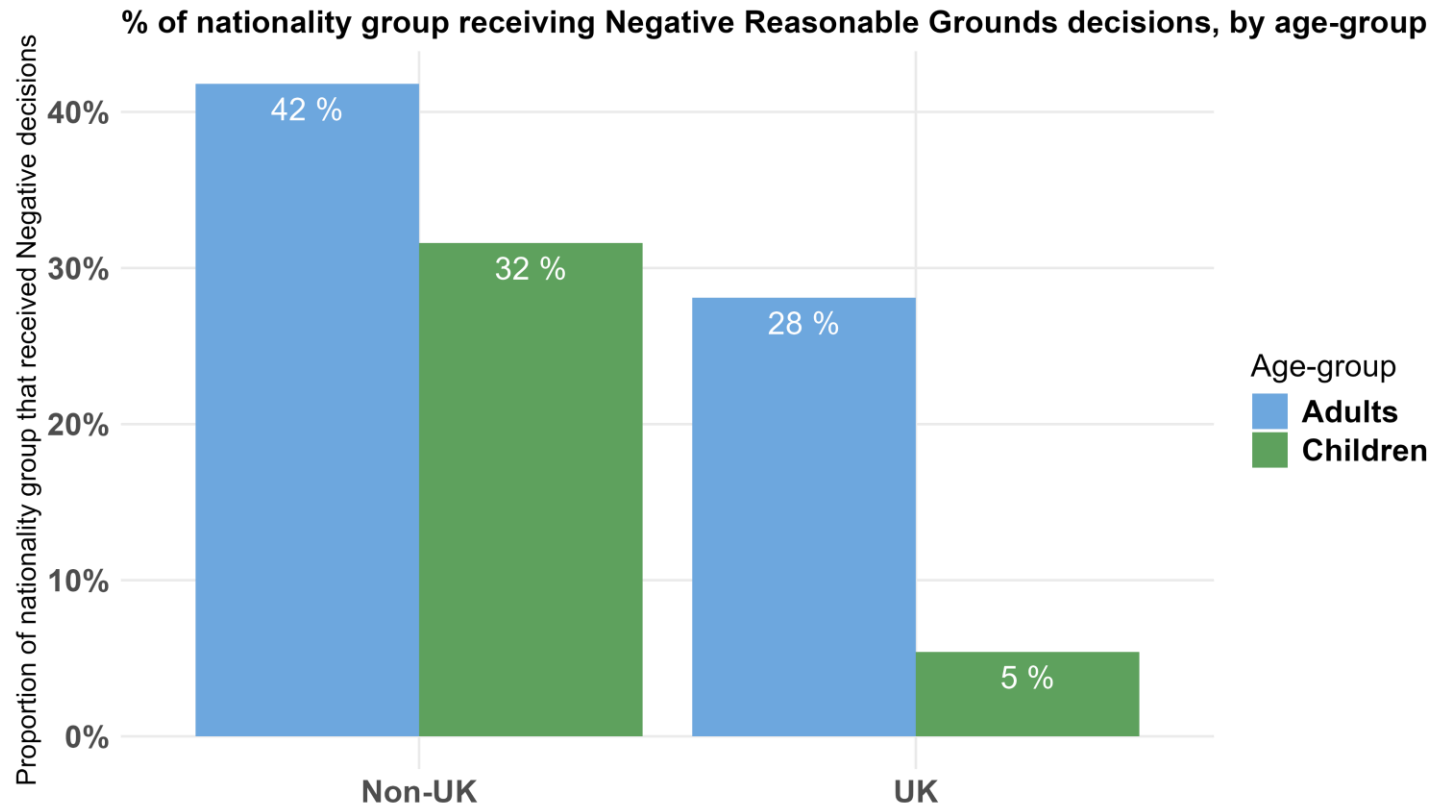


Data source: Home Office, Chart: GLA

Negative conclusive grounds decisions have also increased since 2022

- Increasing proportions of negative decisions since 2022 (for Non-UK group the trend appears to have reversed last year)
- But the recent Home Office bulletin doesn't mention change in threshold for decisions (unlike for RG)

NRG – Proportion of negative decisions for non-UK nationals compared to UK nationals, by age groups



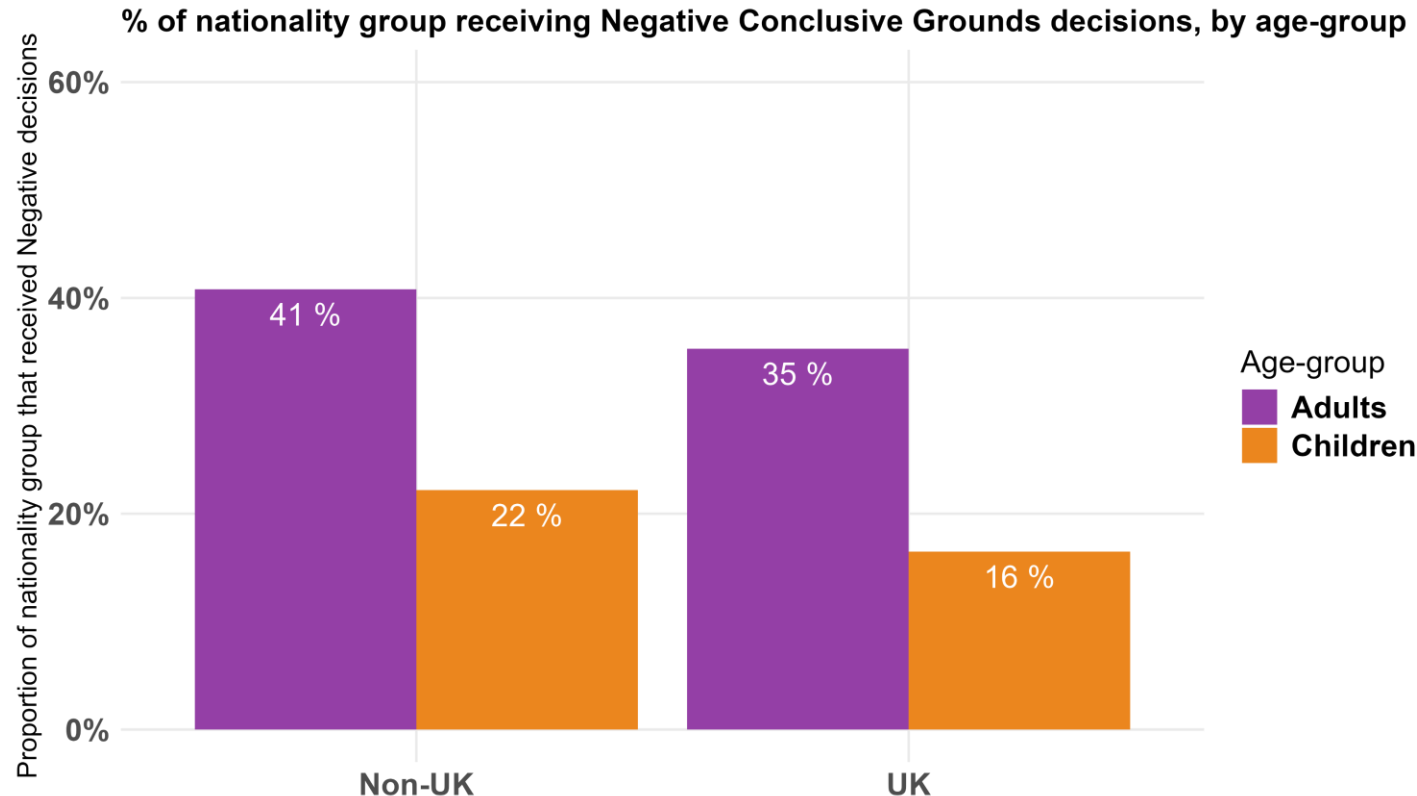
Data source: Home Office, Chart: GLA

Negative reasonable grounds (NRG) decisions: Unequal decision outcomes by nationality for children (large difference) and adults

- For those of non-UK nationality, rate of NRG decisions was similar for children and adults
- For those of UK nationality, rate of NRG decisions much lower for children than for adults

Number of RG decisions 2021 – 2025: 87,330 of which 59,090 for adults (68%)

NCG – Proportion of negative decisions for non-UK nationals compared to UK nationals, by age groups



Data source: Home Office, Chart: GLA

Negative conclusive grounds (NCG) decisions: Unequal decision outcomes by nationality for children and adults

- For both nationality groups, the rate of NCG decisions for children was around half that of adults
- This contrasts with NRG, where difference in rates between adults and children differed for nationality groups

Number of CG decisions 2021 – 2025: 61,930 of which 40,100 for adults (65%)

Further reading – NRM analytics

- [ECPAT](#) – explores levels of negative decisions for children based on not meeting the definition of MS
- [3 briefing series](#) by MSPEC & IOM
 - Reasons behind increase in negative CG decisions
 - Reconsideration request outcomes
 - Geographies of trafficking in UK
- [HTF](#): London modern slavery leads network
 - London/borough specific overview



For questions and further analysis, email:

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