

Public performance target: removing more failed asylum seekers than new anticipated unfounded applications

- For 2006, 18,235 failed asylum seekers, including dependents, were removed¹ compared with an estimated 17,780 applicants, including dependents, who it is predicted will fail to be granted refugee status or other leave. For the year the public performance target has been exceeded by 3% (450).
- During Q4 2006 (October to December), 4,085 failed asylum seekers, including dependants, were removed compared with an estimated 4,560 applicants in Q4, including dependants, who it is predicted will fail to be granted refugee status or other leave. This represents an increase on the performance of the previous quarter, reflecting increased removals and decreased unfounded applicants. The public performance target was not met by 10% (480) for Q4 2006. This compares with Q1 (January to March) where the public performance target was exceeded by 16% (710), Q2 2006 (April to June) where the public performance target was exceeded by 26% (1,095) and Q3 2006 (July to September) where the public performance target was not met by 19% (875).

Period	Applications (including dependants)	Percentage predicted to prove to be unfounded	Number (including dependants) predicted to be unfounded	Removals (including dependants) ²		Performance (removals / predicted unfounded applications)
				Total	Number (out of total) who left the UK without informing the Immigration Authorities	
Q1 2004	10,730	74%	7,910	4,090	-	52%
Q2 2004	9,305	77%	7,135	3,790	-	53%
Q3 2004	10,485	76%	7,980	3,595	-	45%
Q4 2004	10,100	76%	7,660	3,435	-	45%
2004 Total	40,625	76%	30,690	14,915	-	49%
Q1 2005	8,370	75%	6,265	3,485	15	56%
Q2 2005	7,270	73%	5,305	3,765	110	71%
Q3 2005	7,805	71%	5,545	4,225	195	76%
Q4 2005	7,395	68%	5,010	4,210	145	84%
2005 Total	30,840	72%	22,125	15,685	465	71%
Q1 2006	7,530	58%	4,375	5,085	325	116%
Q2 2006 ³	6,380	65%	4,155	5,250	310	126%
Q3 2006 ³	7,105	66%	4,690	3,815	450	81%
Q4 2006	6,835	67%	4,560	4,085	320	90%
2006 Total	27,850	64%	17,780	18,235	1,405	103%
<i>Latest 3 months:</i>						
October 06	2,515	66%	1,680	1,260	90	75%
November 06	2,410	67%	1,600	1,435	115	90%
December 06	1,910	66%	1,280	1,390	120	109%

¹ Includes persons departing voluntarily after enforcement action had been initiated against them, persons leaving under Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes run by the International Organisation for Migration, and those who it is established have left the UK without informing the immigration authorities.

² Figures for 2006 removals have been revised as part of an on-going data cleansing exercise. See paragraph 21 of the technical note for further details.

³ Q2 2006 and Q3 2006 has been revised using updated data which results in the percentage predicted to be unfounded increasing from 63% to 66% and 63% to 67% respectively. See paragraph 21 of the technical note for further details.

Basis of calculation of target

The target calculation is based on a comparison, for a given period, of:

- a) the number of unsuccessful asylum seekers (including dependants) removed with
- b) the number of new applicants (including dependants) who it is predicted will fail to be granted refugee status or other leave, after the cases have gone through the initial decision and appeal process (first two tiers), based on recent rates for grants at initial decision, the proportion of those refused that appeal, and the proportion allowed at appeal.

All figures are rounded to the nearest 5. Some totals may not sum due to rounding.

Further details are given in the attached technical note.

Technical note: Calculating performance against the Tipping the Balance target

Introduction

1. The Tipping the Balance target states that the number of failed asylum applicants removed each month exceeds the number of new asylum applicants who, it is predicted, will not be granted leave to remain in the UK, as a result of their asylum application.
2. In order to measure progress, a methodology has been developed to predict the proportion of new asylum applicants that will fail to be granted any form of leave (refugee or other status), up to and including the 2nd appeal tier. The method uses historical data to calculate the percentage of arriving asylum applicants that are predicted to go on to fail to be granted leave. The methodology is being kept under review with further work being undertaken, including on calculating the proportion of withdrawals, assessing whether a bias adjustment is needed for appeal determinations and assessing whether improved predictions would arise from using cohort-specific data⁴.
3. This technical note describes:
 - what constitutes an unfounded application;
 - the calculations used to estimate the proportion of applications that are predicted to be unfounded;
 - what constitutes a removal of a failed asylum seeker;
 - assumptions used in the calculations;
 - success criteria;
 - ongoing reporting against the target;
 - reliability of the asylum statistics;
 - comparisons of predicted number of applications estimated to be unfounded with actual figures.
 - revision of figures

Definition of an unfounded asylum application

4. For the purpose of measuring this target, an unfounded asylum application⁵ is one that subsequently results in an applicant having no status in the United Kingdom, e.g. refugee status, Humanitarian Protection (HP) or Discretionary Leave (DL). It includes any dependants of that person. The definition includes applicants (and their dependants) who:
 - have withdrawn their application for asylum⁶ or
 - are refused asylum and do not appeal against their refusal or
 - are refused asylum and who have no in country right of appeal against their refusal (NSA⁷ and Third Country cases⁸) or
 - are refused asylum and submit an appeal and that appeal is not allowed and is not withdrawn by the Home Office⁹.

³ See Home Office Statistical Bulletin 14/06, Asylum Statistics, United Kingdom, 2005, for an example of cohort-specific analyses.

⁴ Annex B illustrates the stages at which asylum application can become unfounded.

⁶ Not all withdrawals necessarily lead to individuals becoming potentially removable. Since some withdrawals are known to result in removals and are included in the removals totals, all such cases are included in the prediction of numbers becoming unfounded, as well as (where appropriate) in removals totals.

⁷ Non-suspensive appeal cases: i.e. removal is not suspended pending appeal.

⁸ A Third Country case is an application for asylum from a person who can be returned to a safe third country. A safe third country is not the applicant's country of origin. It is one where we are satisfied a person will be neither persecuted nor subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and one which would not remove a person in breach of the principles of the UN Refugee Convention or the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

⁹ Where the appeal determination is recorded as 'withdrawn by Home Office' it is assumed that the case has been conceded by the Home Office.

This does not include applicants (and their dependants) who are granted any form of leave in whatever category regardless of whether their asylum application was refused at initial decision (e.g, those who are unaccompanied minors granted discretionary leave).

Calculation used to estimate the proportion of applications that are predicted to be unfounded

5. The predicted number of unfounded applications in, say, December 2006 is based on:
 - a) the published number of applications in December 2006, including dependants;
 - b) the predicted proportion that will fail to be granted refugee status or other leave, after the cases have gone through the initial decision and appeal process (first two tiers), based on historical data¹⁰ (an example calculation is provided in Annex A).

Definition of a removal of a failed asylum seeker

6. All removals, including dependants, where the person being removed, or at least one member of the family being removed, has at some point during their time in the United Kingdom submitted an application for asylum. This includes:
 - Third Country cases where the application for asylum is not accepted;
 - voluntary returns and voluntary assisted returns;
 - enforced removals;
 - those who it is established have left the United Kingdom without informing the immigration authorities (e.g. detected at UK embarkation controls or identified as having left the UK when they apply for entry clearance at a British Mission overseas).
7. IND has developed operational systems for identifying persons in the last category.
8. To aid with interpretation of trends, the numbers where it is established the person has left the United Kingdom without informing the immigration authorities are presented separately.

Assumptions used in the calculations, and their justifications

9. The predicted proportion that will fail to be granted refugee status varies over time depending on trends in the proportions, by nationality, that are successful at initial decision or at 1st or 2nd appeal tier. Annex B illustrates the stages at which an asylum application can become unfounded.
10. For initial decisions on applications in December 2006 (say) the calculations make a number of assumptions, which are outlined below.
 - a) Cross-sectional data for the period April to September 2006 can be used as the basis for predicting the proportion of applications in December 2006 that will prove to be unfounded.¹¹ The period of April to September 2006 has been selected as recent data should be most representative of December 2006 performance. This six-month period will permit more accurate estimates than June to December 2006 as it allows for late-reported cases to be submitted. A six-month period was chosen in order to reflect averages over a sufficiently long period so that the assumptions are sufficiently robust and stable and the impact of seasonal (or other) differences is reduced. Historical calculations for earlier application periods use the most recent six-month period. Further details are in Annex C.
 - b) The calculations have been performed separately for the “top twenty”¹² nationalities and for all other nationalities grouped together so that subsequent changes in the distribution of applications by nationality can be accommodated. In particular, unfounded rates vary considerably by country,

¹⁰ Predicted proportions for unfounded applications are used because of the time taken from initial application to final decision. A majority of the final decisions are made within nine months but a proportion can take longer, and hence an estimate is required for recent months' intake.

¹¹ For cross-sectional data analysis, ratios are based on the stage reached (decisions, for example) in a fixed period. This differs from cohort analysis whereby ratios are based on the path of a fixed group of applicants from their initial application to the end of the asylum process.

¹² Outside these top 20 intake generating nationalities, numbers of applications per nationality are insufficient to make separate calculations.

as does the volume intake, and so the mix of nationalities can have an impact on the unfounded rate.

- c) The proportion of applications withdrawn prior to initial decision is 3%. This is based on analysis of outcomes, where available, for applications made in the first half of 2005 (January to June). Withdrawal data tend to get revised and, in addition, recent months are thought to have been affected by the Family ILR exercise¹³. Therefore, in preference to the April to September 2006 period, alternative more stable and robust data, more relevant to new applications being made in December 2006, have been used for this assumption.¹⁴
 - d) To be consistent with the published asylum application figures, where an applicant makes more than one application for asylum, only the first will be included: all subsequent applications will be excluded.
11. In the cross-sectional data on decisions for April to September 2006, used to estimate the proportion and number unfounded, there are an atypically high proportion of applications that have taken a long time to decide. The latter have a low proportion that are unfounded, which results in the percent unfounded understating the probability of any particular application being unfounded. Hence, to address this bias, one needs to compare the unfounded percent among the determinations in April to September 2006 with a version of that percentage which removes the possible over-representation of decisions that have taken a long time to reach.
 12. To accommodate these effects, the proportion of initial decisions in April to September 2006 has been re-weighted for each nationality group to reflect the distribution of the time taken from application to an initial decision in the January to June 2003 cohort. Similar calculations have been made for earlier periods.
 13. For cases that subsequently go through the appeal process, the calculations are based on data for a cohort of refusals to estimate the proportion of refusals for which an appeal is received, and a cohort of first tier appeal determinations to estimate the proportions of first tier appeals that had the appeal allowed at either the first or second tier. As it can take up to nine months for an appeal to be received and determined, the calculations for December 2006 use the cohort of refusals in January to June 2006 and the cohort of first tier appeal determinations in January to June 2006. Again the calculations have been performed separately for the "top 20" nationalities and for all other nationalities grouped together. Details of the cohorts used for earlier periods are given in Annex C.
 14. The number of cases subject to Judicial Review is proportionally small, and omitting these does not affect the robustness of the calculation.

Success criteria

15. The target will have been achieved if:
 - *the number of failed asylum seekers (including dependants) removed in a particular month exceeds*
 - *the number of applicants (including dependants) in that month who it is predicted will fail to be granted refugee status or other leave, after the cases have gone through the initial decision and appeal process (first two tiers).*

Ongoing reporting of progress against the target

16. Progress against this target has been published quarterly since May 2006. Now that we have been reporting in this way for the last four quarters this process is being reviewed, with a view to ensuring that the best arrangements are in place to reflect future performance year on year.

¹³ The Family ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain) Exercise, announced by the Home Secretary on 24 October 2003, allows certain asylum-seeking families who have been in the UK for four or more years to stay. To qualify, the main applicant of the family unit must have applied for asylum before 2 October 2000 and must have had at least one dependant aged under 18 (other than a spouse) in the UK on 2 October 2000 or 24 October 2003.

¹⁴ In due course the approach to calculating the 'Withdrawal' data will be updated to the most appropriate methodology – see paragraph 2 in the Introduction.

Reliability of the asylum statistics

17. The asylum statistics were assessed by the National Audit Office (May 2004) as “generally reliable”.¹⁵

Comparisons of predicted number of applications estimated to be unfounded with actual figures

18. Cross-sectional analyses of initial decisions have formed the basis of the calculations of the predicted number and proportion that subsequently prove to be unfounded. Any cohort-based approach is likely to add further complexity to the approach adopted and, in addition, two specific issues were identified that led to the continued adoption of the cross-sectional approach.
- (a) The size of the backlogs, where a decision is awaited. For initial decisions this grows from 145 for applications in Q1 2004 to 310 in Q1 2005 and 510 in Q4 2005.
 - (b) The distribution of decision outcomes varies with the length of time from initial application. This suggests that the modelling required for recent cohorts, particularly for the most recent three monthly 2006 cohorts will be very complex and needs to take account of the length of time since initial application. Given the size of the backlogs, and the fact that the distribution of backlogs will differ (e.g. for the 2006 cohorts the backlog will be mainly among initial decisions) the resultant estimates of the number/proportion unfounded will potentially be imprecise and/or subject to biases.

Despite these difficulties we will continue to work on this approach to understand the sensitivities of the outputs to these changes in data used for the calculations.

19. This is less of a problem for the 2004 and early 2005 cohorts, where the backlogs awaiting a decision are proportionally very small. A comparison of the predicted and actual numbers that were unfounded for each of the quarters in 2004 and the first quarter of 2005 are given below. It suggests that for this period the prediction methodology described in this note over estimates the number and proportion of unfounded applications

Period	Applications	Number unfounded				
		Predicted		Cohort analysis		
		No.	%	No.	%	Backlog ¹⁶
Q1 2004	10,730	7,910	74%	7,670	71%	200
Q2 2004	9,305	7,135	77%	6,975	75%	160
Q3 2004	10,485	7,980	76%	7,590	72%	285
Q4 2004	10,100	7,660	76%	7,065	70%	295
Q1 2005	8,370	6,265	75%	5,645	67%	395
Q2 2005	7,270	5,305	73%	4,710	65%	455

Revision of figures

20. The Q2 2006 and Q3 2006 appeal figures were updated using data for Jan 2006 – Jun 2006 (as opposed to Oct 2005 - Mar 2006) as enough time has lapsed to allow late reported cases to be submitted. For the same reason Q3 2006 initial decisions were updated using data for Apr - Sep 2006 (as opposed to Jan - Jun 2006).
21. Other figures revised for the 2006 period are due to late entered data, removing duplicate cases and an on-going data cleansing exercise carried out on removal records. Further revisions of these figures will occur in 2007.

¹⁵ “Asylum and migration: a review of Home Office statistics” <http://www.nao.org.uk/pn/03-04/0304625.htm>.

ANNEX A: Method for predicting the percentage of applicants that will fail to be granted refugee status or other leave, after the cases have gone through the initial decision and appeal process (first two tiers)

1. The prediction method is illustrated below, for applications in December 2006, from nationals of Eritrea.
2. Total initial decisions in April – September 2006, including dependants and withdrawals prior to initial decision in January - June 2005.

	Initial decisions ¹	% of total ²
Granted asylum	265	27
Granted HP/DL or ELR	35	4
Refused	650	66
Withdrawn	5	3
Total	955	100

¹Provisional figures. Source: CID database as at 15 January 2007.

²Percentages have been re-weighted, see paragraph 11 on page 4.

3. Based on these data, **69%** of applicants are not granted status up to and including initial decision, and become potentially removable.
4. It is necessary to take account of those who appeal and have appeals allowed, as follows.
 - Of applications refused in January 2006 – June 2006, 56% appealed, by 15 January 2007.
 - Out of 470 first tier appeal determinations in January 2006 – June 2006, 60% had appeals allowed, at either the first or second tier.

Appeal Stage	Appeal determinations in Jan 06-Jun 06(470)
a) First tier – allowed or withdrawn by Home Office	245
b) Second tier – allowed for appellant	50
c) Second tier – allowed for Home Office	15
Allowed = a + b - c	280
Allowed as a percentage (280/470)	60%

- Combining these figures gives:
 - $66\% \times 56\% \times 60\% = 22\%$ of all applications that are refused and are then successful at appeal (or conceded by Home Office).
- The overall percentage of applicants predicted to be unfounded is then **69% - 22% = 47%**.

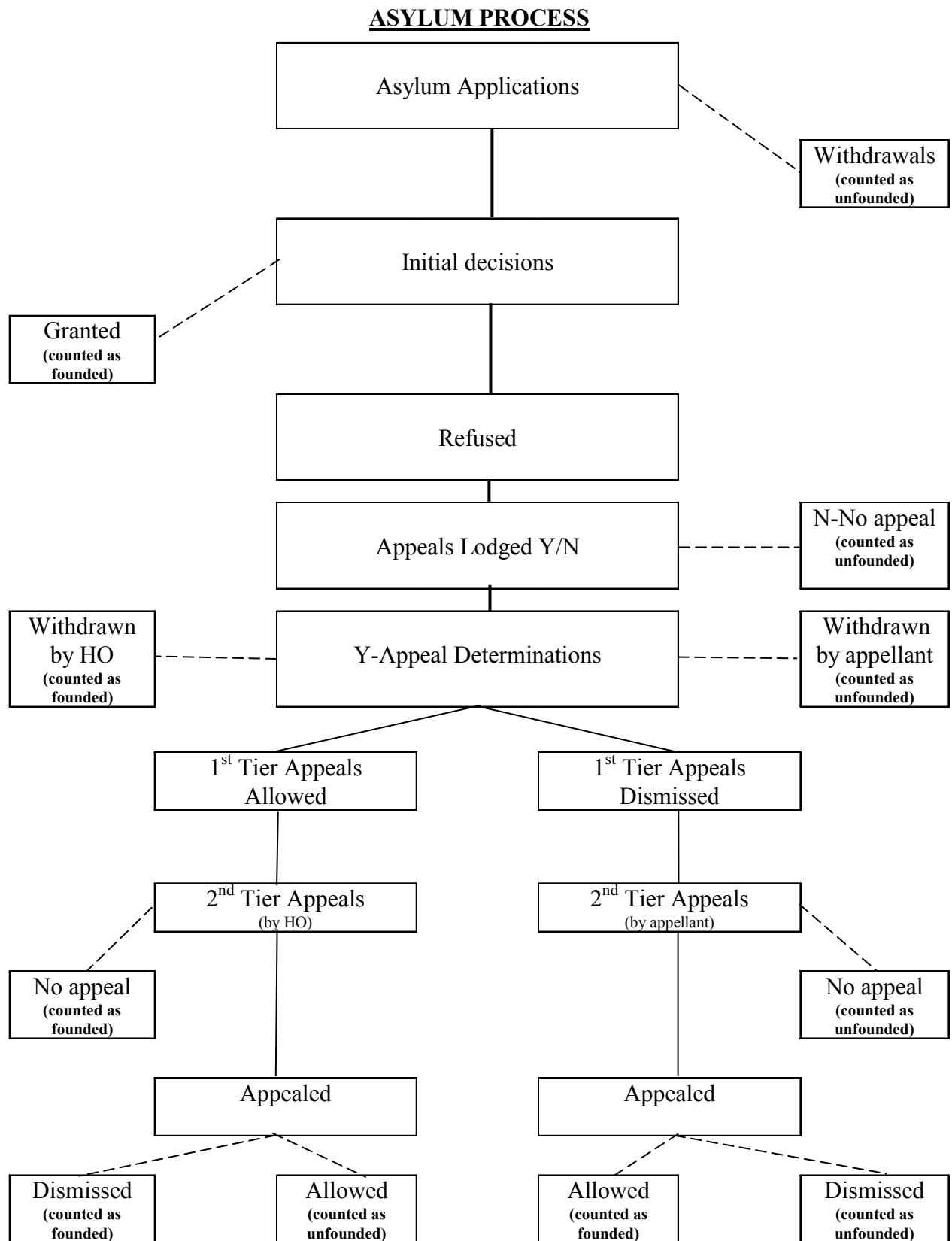
Notes

All data above produced by Immigration Research and Statistics Service, part of Research, Development and Statistics in the Home Office.

Data are provisional and rounded to nearest 5. Data may not sum to totals shown because of rounding.

¹⁶ Backlog figures include applicants awaiting decision at the initial stage and the first/second tier of appeal.

ANNEX B: The stages at which an asylum application can become unfounded¹⁷



¹⁷ This diagram relates to the calculation method used in this note. Hence, Judicial Reviews and appeals to the European Court of Human Rights are not shown

ANNEX C: Summary of periods used in calculations

Reporting date	Period of data for initial decisions	Period of data for % that appeal and appeal determinations ¹
Q4 2006	Apr - Sep 2006	Jan 2006-Jun 2006
Q3 2006	Apr - Sep 2006 ²	Jan 2006-Jun 2006 ²
Q2 2006	Jan-Jun 2006	Jan 2006-Jun 2006 ²
Q1 2006	Oct 2005-Mar 2006	Oct 2005-Mar 2006
Q4 2005	Jul-Dec 2005	Jul-Dec 2005
Q3 2005	Apr-Sep 2005	Apr-Sep 2005
Q2 2005	Jan-Jun 2005	Jan-Jun 2005
Q1 2005	Oct 2004-Mar 2005	Oct 2004-Mar 2005
Q4 2004	Jul-Dec 2004	Jul-Dec 2004
Q3 2004	Apr-Sep 2004	Apr-Sep 2004
Q2 2004	Jan-Jun 2004	Jan-Jun 2004
Q1 2004	Oct 2003-Mar 2004	Oct 2003-Mar 2004

¹ Based on data for a cohort of refusals to estimate the proportion of refusals for which an appeal is received, and a cohort of first tier appeal determinations to estimate the proportions of first tier appeals that had the appeal allowed at either the first or second tier.

² Q3 2006 initial decisions and Q2 and Q3 2006 appeal figures were updated using data for Apr-Sep 2006 and Jan 2006-Jun 2006 respectively as enough time has lapsed to allow late reported cases to be submitted.