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Asylum: Myths and Facts

Myth: Most asylum seekers are 'bogus'

Fact: In 31% of initial decisions in 2002, the Home Office granted applicants refugee status or ruled that it was unsafe for them to return to their country of origin. Taking into account successful appeals and cases where the Home Office overturned its own initial decisions, up to 51% of applicants that year were finally successful.

The claim that most refugees are not genuine fails to recognise that the top countries of origin for those seeking asylum, namely Iraq, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Somalia and Sri Lanka, are torn by ethnic conflict, war, and oppressive regimes.

Myth: Britain is a 'soft touch' for asylum seekers

Fact: The streets of Britain are not paved with gold for arriving refugees. Asylum seekers are not allowed to claim mainstream welfare benefits. If they are destitute, the only option for some is to apply for support with the National Asylum Support Service (NASS). NASS support is very basic. A single adult has to survive on £37.77 a week - 30% below the poverty line.

A recent Home Office study found no evidence to suggest that asylum seekers had a detailed knowledge of the UK's asylum policies. The main reasons that people seek asylum in Britain are their country's historic or colonial links with the UK, the presence of family and friends and the fact that English is the prime global language (Home Office research study July 2002)



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Myth: Asylum seekers are responsible for much of Britain's crime

Fact: A report published by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) recently confirmed that there is no evidence for a higher rate of criminality among refugees and asylum seekers. In fact, according to ACPO, asylum seekers are more likely to become victims of crime. There have been countless attacks on asylum seekers around Britain, including the murders of an asylum seeker in Glasgow in 2001 and in Sunderland in 2002. The murder in Glasgow prompted the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to condemn the British media for provoking racial hatred.

Myth: Asylum seekers are draining NHS resources

Fact: Like other residents and visitors to the UK, asylum seekers are entitled to NHS services. But in no way do they drain resources to the detriment of UK citizens. In fact immigrants are the backbone of the NHS. According the Greater London Authority, 23% of doctors and 47% of nurses working within the NHS were born outside the UK.

Myth: Refugees are a burden to taxpayers

Fact: Asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants have made an enormous contribution to the economic and cultural life of the UK. Refugees bring with them a wealth of skills and experience. Even the Home Office has recognised this and made a commitment, through its Integration Unit, to put such skills to good use.

Migrants, including refugees, are far from being a burden on UK taxpayers. On the contrary, in 1999-2000, they made a net fiscal contribution of approximately £2.5 billion, worth 1p on income tax. Research carried out by Personnel Today in November 2001 found that nine out of ten employers want to take on refugees to meet skills shortages, but do not due to ignorance of the law and confusing Home Office paperwork.

Asylum seekers are demonised for draining the state when they are discouraged from being independent because they are legally prevented from working.

Myth: Britain is the top destination for asylum seekers

Fact: Even within the EU, the UK ranked 10th in 2001 in number of asylum applications compared to the country's population. The world's poorest countries both produce and bear responsibility for most refugees. During 1992-2001, 86% of the world's estimated 12 million refugees originated in developing countries, while such countries provided asylum to 72%. In comparison with countries like Canada, the UK is no 'soft touch'. In 2001, Canada granted protection to 97% of Afghan asylum applicants, while the UK granted only 19%. Somali applicants had a 92% success rate in Canada, while in the UK it was only 34%.

An analysis by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees showed that the

major reason for lodging applications in a particular country is the presence of an established community there. In January to June 2000, of all applications in Europe, 96% of people from Mali sought asylum in France, 60% of Albanians applied in Belgium, 48% of Nigerians applied in Ireland and 45% of Sri Lankans applied in the UK.

Useful websites

[Refugee Council](#)

The largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. Contains myths and facts, publications and other information.

www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

[Scottish Refugee Council](#)

This Scottish charity provides advice, information and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland.

www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

[Guardian Unlimited](#)

An investigation into asylum and immigration in Britain.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/Refugees_in_Britain/0,2759,180745,00.html

[BBC Online's Road to Refuge](#)

A special report on the world's refugee crisis containing in-depth interviews investigating why people are forced to leave their homes.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/world/2001/road_to_refuge/default.stm

[Home Office Asylum statistics](#)

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration1.html

[Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#)

www.hmsa.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/20020041.htm

[National Coalition of Anti-Deportation campaigns \(NCADC\)](#)

www.ncadc.org.uk

[The European Council on Refugees and Exile \(ECRE\)](#)

An organisation established in 1973 to promote a humane asylum policy in Europe.

www.ecre.org

[Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants](#)

JCWI is an independent national organisation working for justice in immigration, nationality, and refugee law and policy.

www.jcwi.org.uk

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