

6 MYTHS ABOUT ASYLUM SEEKERS & REFUGEES

BUSTED





The United Kingdom has a diverse population, with people from all over the world bringing prosperity, innovation and vibrancy to our society.

However, many refugees and asylum seekers experience prejudice, hate and hostility amidst their plight for safety, often fuelled by misconceptions.

An asylum seeker is someone awaiting legal recognition as a refugee in another country as a result of fleeing their country to escape persecution and human rights violations.

Seeking asylum is a fundamental human right, entitling everyone to seek refuge in another nation.

A refugee is someone who flees their country due to severe human rights violations and persecution, seeking safety elsewhere as their government fails to protect them and now has legal documents stating their right not to be sent back to their country of origin. They are entitled to international protection.

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1

Asylum seekers & refugees are illegal immigrants

Seeking asylum is a legal process and therefore it is not illegal to be an asylum seeker (Refugee Action).

Anyone has the right to apply for asylum in any country signed up to the 1951 Convention under International Law, and therefore have the right to stay in that country until their claim has been assessed. Even if an individual is refused asylum, it still doesn't mean that person is "illegal", it simply means that they haven't been able to meet the strict criteria needed to grant refugee status (Refugee Council).

If an individual is successful in receiving refugee status, they can legally work, study, and claim benefit support in the UK, in the same way any British National can (Citizens advice).

**"You can't plan your future."
- Nottingham refugee**

2

Asylum seekers & refugees are living in luxury hotels

Asylum seekers and refugees do not get any choice in what kind of accommodation they receive or where in the UK they live (UK Gov).

Seeking asylum can be a frightening experience and life is often uncertain, with many feeling trapped in their accommodation whilst their application is being processed; a very long and complex process. There have been concerns raised about the living standards of some accommodation, which only adds to the trauma and negative impact on mental health that already comes with seeking asylum or refugee status.

For example, former RAF base Wethersfield accommodation which was found to keep asylum seekers in poor conditions leading to suicide attempts (Big Issue).

The Bibby Stockholm barge housing asylum seekers was referred to as a “floating prison”, leading to the suspected suicide of one individual (Big Issue).



3

Asylum seekers & refugees are prioritised for social housing

Asylum seekers are not entitled to social housing. They are placed in Home Office accommodation while their asylum claim is considered. As asylum seekers are not entitled to work, they therefore cannot earn money to pay for private accommodation [UK Gov].

Asylum accommodation is often poor and unsuitable, including shared housing or hostels [Shelter].

There is no law or Government policy that puts refugees ahead of British Nationals in securing social or council housing because of their identity.

Once an individual receives refugee status, asylum seeker support is withdrawn by the government and they are removed from their temporary accommodation within 30 days, with as little as 7 days' notice [Citizens Advice].

This pushes many refugees into homelessness; with no income or savings it is difficult to afford a deposit for accommodation [Centre for Homelessness].



4

Asylum seekers are mostly young, single men

The UK system does not prioritise or experience an over-representation of men. In fact, in 2020, around 43% of individuals seeking asylum in the UK were women and children (Red Cross).

It is not only adults that seek help. As of March 2023, there were 7,290 unaccompanied children seeking asylum in England (Department for Education). Many families get separated due to persecution and war, and unaccompanied children are not allowed to apply for their parents to join them in the UK (Refugee Council).



5

Asylum seekers & refugees are taking over the UK population

Asylum seekers make up a very small amount of new arrivals into the UK (Refugee Council), not even 1% of the population (United Nations).

More than 110 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, 74% hosted by low-income countries; 69% only cross one border, into neighbouring countries (UNHCR).

The UK comes 20th in Europe in the rank of asylum applications per head of population (Refugee Council), meaning we take a much lower number of asylum seekers than other countries.



6

It costs too much to help asylum seekers & refugees

The Government meets only the basic needs of asylum seekers, with many having to rely on foodbanks and donations of clothes and household items such as bedding and toiletries (Shelter).

As of June 2024, each asylum seeker is given only £49.18 a week to live on, or £8.86 if the accommodation provides food (Shelter).

Costs aside, the UK has legal obligations to give help and support to asylum seekers under the European Convention on Human Rights and 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act (Home Office).

**“Maybe they are breathing,
but they are not living.”
- Nottingham refugee**