

# MYTH-BUSTING

## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

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### What are the facts about Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the U.K.?

#### Here's the myth-busting truth

Myths around migration are common and it is difficult to navigate where misconceptions end and facts begin. If you are looking for clarity, you are in the right place.

Below you will find some of the most common myths around migration and corresponding facts based on validated data.



For more information  
please contact your  
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## 'ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES ARE JUST TWO TERMS REFERRING TO SCROUNGERS ARRIVING IN THE U.K., AREN'T THEY?'

Well, no:

**An asylum-seeker** is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.

**A refugee** is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there. The risks to their safety and life were so great that they felt they had no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country because their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection.



## 'ARE ALL ASYLUM SEEKERS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS?'

In fact, no:

Everyone can seek asylum, but you would not like to walk in those shoes.

- We can all migrate, move from one place to another. However, it is the reason beyond migration that makes a huge difference. We move from one place to another in search of a better life, for work, for education, for love, for a sense of adventure. And if we are lucky enough, we travel back to visit family and friends back home, from time to time.
- 27 million people, of which 40% are children, are forced to migrate because home to them has become the most dangerous place on earth. Migration here is not a lifestyle choice, it is the only option between life and death. Asylum seekers and refugees, people who are forced to migrate, cannot go back to their country of origin. Most family members and friends are scattered around the world as they sought refuge from war, famine, and persecution.
- The protection of the refugee must then be seen in the broader context of the protection of human rights.

- Refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict, or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.
- They often have had to flee with little more than the clothes on their back, leaving behind homes, possessions, jobs and loved ones.
- Refugees are defined and protected in international law. The [1951 Refugee Convention](#) is a key legal document and defines a refugee as:

*“someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”*

[Learn more about refugees.](#)

## ‘WHY ARE THEY ALL COMING TO THE U.K. WHEN WE ARE A SMALL ISLAND AFTER ALL?’

Well, as a matter of fact, 85% of Refugees are hosted in developing countries:

- 73% hosted in neighbouring countries:

<b>TURKEY</b>	<b>COLOMBIA</b>	<b>PAKISTAN</b>	<b>UGANDA</b>	<b>GERMANY</b>
3.6M	1.8M	1.4M	1.4M	1.5M

- The U.K. is home to approx. 1% of the 29.6 million refugees, and forcibly **displaced people across the world**. The U.K. offered protection – in the form of asylum, humanitarian protection, alternative forms of leave and resettlement – to 16,952 people in year ending June 2020.

## ‘ASYLUM SEEKERS COME FROM SAFE COUNTRIES, ANYWAY, DON’T THEY?’

Well, no...68% of refugees come from just 5 countries, none of which you can safely live in:

<b>SYRIA</b>	<b>VENEZUELA</b>	<b>AFGHANISTAN</b>	<b>SOUTH SUDAN</b>	<b>MYANMAR</b>
6.6M	3.7M	2.7M	2.2M	1.5M

- **40% of refugees across the world are children**



## 'ISN'T IT TRUE THAT PEOPLE WHO SEEK ASYLUM IN THE U.K. ARE UNQUALIFIED AND COME HERE TO SCROUNGE FROM OUR WELFARE STATE?'

Well, here are the facts:

- [About 1,200 medically qualified refugees](#) are recorded on the British Medical Association's database.
- Almost all asylum seekers are not allowed to work and are forced to rely on state support – this can be as little as £5 a day to live on
- Most asylum seekers are living in poverty and experience poor health and hunger. Many families are not able to pay for the basics such as clothing, powdered milk, and nappies
- Asylum seeking women who are destitute are vulnerable to violence in the U.K..

## 'WHY DON'T THEY SEEK ASYLUM IN ANOTHER COUNTRY BEFORE COMING TO THE U.K.?'

There is nothing in international law to say that refugees must claim asylum in the first country they reach. A European regulation allows a country such as the U.K. to return an adult asylum seeker to the first European country they reached. This means that countries on the edge of Europe have responsibility for a lot more asylum seekers than others. Some of the countries through which people travel to get to Europe are unsafe for some. Many have not signed the Refugee Convention, meaning that people who remain there will not get international protection and be able to rebuild their lives.



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## 'ISN'T IT JUST TOO EASY TO SEEK ASYLUM IN THE U.K., AND THAT'S WHY PEOPLE ARE FLOODING IN?'

- Contrary to general misconception, the U.K. offered protection – in the form of asylum, humanitarian protection, alternative forms of leave and resettlement – to 16,952 people in year ending June 2020, 8% lower than the previous year. This included 3,560 people provided protection under resettlement schemes, mainly Syrian nationals.
- 53% of decisions made in the year ending June 2020 resulted in a grant of asylum or other form of protection
- Since 2005 most people recognised as refugees are only given permission to stay in the U.K. for five years. This makes it difficult for them to make decisions about their future, to find work and make definite plans for their life in the U.K..

## 'ANYWAY, DOESN'T THE EU REFUGEE CHARTER END WITH BREXIT ON 1 JANUARY 2021?'

In fact, not. The convention the U.K. follows is a UN one. The United Nations Refugee Agency issues the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are still the key legal documents, which assert that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This is now considered a rule of customary international law.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) serves as the 'guardian' of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. According to the legislation, States are expected to cooperate with us in ensuring that the rights of refugees are respected and protected. More information and documents can be found here: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/1951-refugee-convention.html>

## 'DON'T ALL ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES GET LARGE HANDOUTS FROM THE STATE?'

No.

- People seeking asylum are often living on Home Office support equivalent to just over £5 per day.
- Most asylum seekers are not allowed to work in the U.K.
- Refugees can work, and often contribute significantly to the U.K. economy



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## WHY DO THEY ALL COME TO KENT AND LIVE IN 5 STARS HOTELS?'

This is an uninformed misconception: Destitute adults asylum applicants who have been accepted as eligible for support from U.K. Visas and Immigration (UKVI) are housed in regions throughout the U.K., **away from London and the south east of England, on a 'no choice' basis**. Areas used for dispersal include Glasgow, Birmingham and Manchester. It means that adults will only transit through Kent. Due to Coronavirus measures, new arrivals on our coastline are housed in Kent, usually in military barracks, before dispersal once it is safe to do so and accommodations are made available.

## KENT ACTS AS CORPORATE PARENT FOR UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN AND HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD.

The responsibility for the support and accommodation of asylum children who apply for asylum are below the age of 18 who arrive in the U.K. without close adult family members falls to local authorities under the Children Act 1989.

## 'WHY ARE PEOPLE CROSSING THE CHANNEL?'

An inquiry into Channel crossings, migration, and asylum-seeking routes through the EU is examining the reasons behind the growth in migrants crossing the English Channel in small boats. By looking at the role of criminal gangs in facilitating the growth of this form of desperate immigration and the response of U.K. and French authorities, the enquiry seeks to [support safe routes to asylum](#).

## 'I WOULD NEVER SEND MY CHILD OFF TO A JOURNEY INTO THE UNKNOWN. HOW CAN MOTHERS DO THAT? CERTAINLY, THEY DO NOT VALUE LIFE AS WE DO.'

In our recent past, fear that German bombing would cause civilian deaths prompted the government to evacuate children, mothers with infants and the infirm from British towns and cities during the Second World War. [Evacuation](#) was voluntary, but the fear of bombing, the closure of many urban schools and the organised transportation of school groups helped persuade families to send their children away to live with strangers.

Unfortunately, nowadays mothers from all around the world have no other choice but sending their children off in a desperate attempt to save their lives.