

Regional Asylum Activism Briefing

Telling the Truth about Asylum!

With immigration and asylum likely to remain a hot topic this year, we've put together **some useful statistics and 6 key facts on asylum and refugee issues** to make sure you can tell the truth about asylum in the upcoming debate!

1. Useful Statistics

There were **19.5 million refugees** worldwide at the end of 2014. There are **currently more refugees globally than at any time since WWII**, according to the UNHCR (UN High Commission for Refugees).

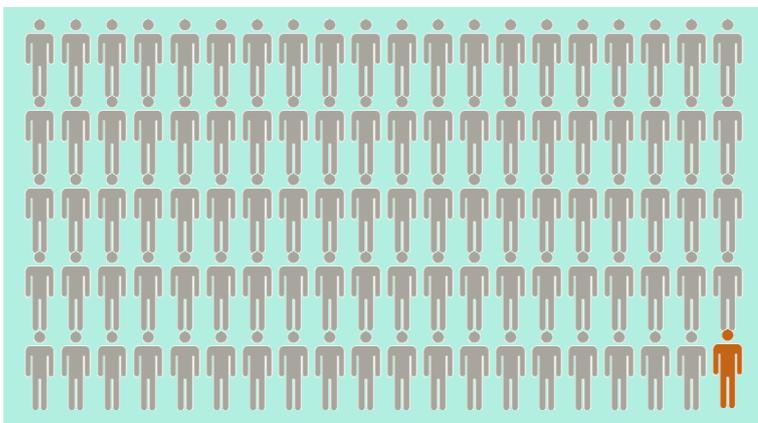
In 2014 alone, 8.3 million people were forced to flee: the highest annual increase on record.

An average of 42,500 men, women and children became refugees, asylum seekers or were displaced in their own countries every day last year, and one in every 122 people on the planet were either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum.

More than half of the world's refugees are children (51%); the highest figure in over a decade.

Source: [UNHCR 2014 Global Trends Report](#)

Putting that in perspective:



Refugees, pending asylum cases and stateless persons make up less than 1% of the UK population.

Despite the growing number of refugees globally, the number of people finding safety in Britain remains low.

At the end of 2014, refugees, pending asylum cases and stateless persons made up just 0.24% of the UK population.

There were [25,771 applications](#) for asylum made in the UK in the year ending June 2015.

In the same year, the largest number of applications for asylum came from nationals of Eritrea (3,568) followed by Pakistan (2,302) and Syria (2,204).

By the end of 2014, the UK was hosting just 0.6% of the world's refugees, and a whopping 86% were hosted in developing countries.

In reality, the vast majority of refugees stay in their region of displacement. [Turkey](#) now hosts the highest number of refugees globally, with over 2 million Syrian refugees by October 2015.

2. People seeking asylum have particular protection needs...

Someone who seeks asylum in the UK is asking for protection under well-established international law (the [1951 Refugee Convention](#) and its Protocols). They have to prove that they have a well-founded fear of persecution (for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion) in their country of origin and that their home-state cannot protect them. They are legally allowed to reside in the UK whilst waiting for a decision on their claim for protection (their asylum application). If they are accepted, they are granted refugee status.

Refugees who arrive via resettlement programmes have their refugee status recognised by the UK government before arriving in the UK.

3. We Do Not Take More Asylum Seekers Than The Rest of Europe!

Historically, the UK has only accepted between 2-3% of the world's refugees, though this has dipped to [just 0.6% of the world's refugees in 2014](#). Refugees, pending asylum cases and stateless persons make up just 0.24% of the UK's population. 86% of the world's refugees are currently hosted by countries such as Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon, which neighbour key conflict zones. The UNHCR reports that there were over 1 million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon alone at the start of 2015.

By June 2015, [Britain received just 4% of all asylum claims made in the EU over the last year](#). **Germany, Sweden, France, Hungary, Italy and Austria** all receive significantly more applications than we do. Together, Germany and Sweden receive almost half of all applications made in the EU. **More people arrived in Greece in July 2015 alone than have claimed asylum in Britain all year.**

4. People Seeking Asylum Do Not Live in Luxury Whilst Waiting for A Decision on Their Application!

Most people waiting for a decision on their asylum application are not permitted to work. A very small number are able to apply for permission to work if they've been waiting over 12 months for an initial decision on their claim. However, this is limited to certain professions on the 'shortage occupation list' so in practice the vast majority cannot work. This means that unless they have their own funds – and many have used these getting to safety – the majority of people seeking asylum have no choice but to rely on Home Office support (Section 95) whilst they wait for a decision on their claim.

People relying on asylum support have to **live on as little as £5.28 a day to cover all their essential living needs**, including food, toiletries, clothes, travel to immigration reporting centres, and any phone calls to legal representatives. This is the equivalent to just 52% of mainstream income support. They are also given accommodation on a no-choice basis in towns and cities across the country, often in hard-to-let properties in deprived communities.

Want to find out more? Check out our briefings on [raising asylum support rates](#).

5. There Is No Such Thing As A Bogus Asylum Seeker!

Everyone has the right to claim asylum in a place outside of their country of origin if they fear persecution. The definition of what it is to be a refugee is incredibly narrow and hasn't changed since 1951. When somebody is refused asylum, it does not mean that they are not genuinely in fear for their safety, but that their experience doesn't meet the high threshold required by the Geneva Convention on Refugees.

Home Office decision making can be unreliable and there are often administrative delays in the UK asylum system. On average, [a quarter of appeals against Home Office Decisions to refuse asylum are successful](#), suggesting serious flaws in the way decisions are made. The [Home Affairs Select Committee](#)

identified a pervasive “**culture of disbelief**” within the Home Office towards people seeking asylum in the UK. The evidence that is asked for may be thousands of miles away and access to legal advice is limited. All this means many people reach the end of the asylum process without their protection needs being recognised.

If a person’s asylum claim is refused, they lose their Home Office support and accommodation altogether as they are, in theory, expected to leave the UK. In practice, it is not this simple. Take this example: the Home Office refused asylum to many thousands of Zimbabweans between 2002 and 2011, but did not return them to Zimbabwe because it was not safe to do so. Destitution forces those who have come here to seek protection to rely on charities, faith groups, family or friends for food and shelter or face the indignity and fear of life on the streets.

To date, 13 Local Councils (Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Kirklees, Liverpool, Manchester, Coventry, Glasgow, Bristol, Leicester, Oxford, Swansea & Cambridge) have passed motions or resolutions “deploring Government policies that force “all rights expired” asylum seekers into destitution while they continue to fight for a safe haven from persecution” (Liverpool Asylum Seekers motion, 18th September 2013).

Is your City Council not on that list? Check out our [resources](#) on passing motions against destitution on our website.

6. The UK Is Much More Welcoming Than You Think!

Asylum, and immigration more generally, are hotly debated topics in the UK. If you only looked at newspaper headlines over the last decade or so, you’d be forgiven for thinking that the general public thinks negatively about asylum seekers and refugees.

However, the UK has a proud history of protecting refugees, from providing a safe haven for Jewish refugees during the Second World War to providing sanctuary to people fleeing the conflict in Kosovo.

Refugees have been integrated into the fabric of British society for decades. For example, 49 refugees in the UK have won the Nobel Prize for science, while fish and chips, the Mini and Marks and Spencer’s were all introduced to the UK by refugees. **A culture of welcome is as much a part of our history as it is of our future.**

[82% of British people](#) believe that **protecting the most vulnerable is a core British value** and [79% of young people](#) are “**proud of Britain’s tradition of protecting refugees**”.

There has recently been a huge outpouring of support for refugees from British people in response to the **global refugee crisis and Syrian conflict**. In September 2015 over 150,000 people took to the streets of London and many rallies and demonstrations took place in towns and cities up and down the country declaring Refugees Welcome! A petition calling for the UK to ‘Accept more asylum seekers and increase support for refugee migrants in the UK’ has nearly half a million signatures.

There are thousands of people across the UK offering practical support to those seeking protection, ensuring that they are welcomed into our communities and are able to settle and integrate.

But we could be doing much more to welcome refugees!

For the latest call to action, **Get in touch with your local Activism Co-ordinator** or visit our website at www.regionalasylumactivism.org!

For further information, please check out our website: www.regionalasylumactivism.org

Or contact your Local Regional Asylum Activism Co-ordinator

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