

## Asylum in the UK

### What is the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker?

#### What are refugees?

A refugee is a person who:

*'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country'*

#### Article 1, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

#### What is an asylum seeker?

An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for asylum and is **waiting for a decision** as to whether or not they are a refugee. In other words, in the UK an asylum seeker is someone who has asked the Government for refugee status and is waiting to hear the outcome of their application.

#### Does the UK have more asylum seekers than most countries?

In 2012, with an estimated 70,400 new asylum claims, the **U.S.A.** was the number one destination for new asylum-seekers, accounting for around eight per-cent of all individual applications worldwide. The next top receiving countries were **Germany** (64,500), **South Africa** (61,500), **France** (55,100) and **Sweden** (43,900).

(Source: [UNHCR 2012 Global Trends Report](#))

By comparison, the **United Kingdom** received 23,499 new applications for asylum in the year ending June 2013.

(Source: [Home Office, Immigration Statistics April–June 2013, Asylum table as 01. \(1\)](#))



Ethiopian refugees in Brighton. © UNHCR

## Where do asylum seekers in the UK come from?

The top ten countries of origin are as follows: Pakistan (3,524), Iran (2,758), Sri Lanka (1,843), Syria (1,358), Bangladesh (1,165), India (1,141), Albania (1,098), Afghanistan (1,063), Nigeria (1,012) and Eritrea (831).

(Source: [Home Office, Immigration Statistics April–June 2013, Asylum table as 01 q](#))

## What is a bogus asylum seeker?

There is **no such thing** as a bogus asylum seeker or an illegal asylum seeker. Everybody has a right to seek asylum in another country. People who don't qualify for protection as refugees will not receive refugee status and may be deported, but just because someone doesn't receive refugee status doesn't mean they are a bogus asylum seeker.

*“Let us remember that a bogus asylum-seeker is not equivalent to a criminal; and that an unsuccessful asylum application is not equivalent to a bogus one.” - Kofi Annan*

## How many refugees are there in the UK?

As of the beginning of 2012, the population of refugees, pending asylum cases and stateless persons made up just **0.27% of the population**. That's 149,765 refugees, 18,916 pending asylum cases and 205 stateless persons.

The vast majority of refugees stay in their region of displacement, meaning over **four fifths** (80%) of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries. **Pakistan** holds the highest number of refugees at 1.6 million.

(Source: [UNHCR 2012 Global Trends Report](#))

## What benefits do asylum seekers receive in the UK?

The majority of asylum seekers **do not have the right to work** in the United Kingdom and so must rely on state support. Housing is provided, but asylum seekers cannot choose where it is, and it is often 'hard to let' properties which Council tenants do not



A resettled refugee family in Brighton. © UNHCR

want to live in. Cash support is available, and is currently set at £36.62 per person, per week, which works out as **£5.23 a day** for food, sanitation and clothing.

(Source: [Home Office](#))

### What about detention?

In the UK, **thousands** of asylum seekers are held in immigration detention centres each year. Under the **Detained Fast Track (DFT)**, asylum seekers are detained for the duration of their application and appeal. As a principle, UNHCR opposes the detention of people seeking asylum, and calls for the use of alternatives wherever possible.

In 2012, of **21,843** main applicants for asylum, **11.4% (2,482)** applicants were detained under DFT. In 2011, 10.7% of asylum claims were accepted onto DFT.

In 2012, **222 children** were detained in immigration removal centres, with **156** being **under the age of 11**.

(Source: [Home Office Immigration Statistics April - June 2013](#))

### What is subsidiary or humanitarian protection?

Subsidiary protection can be given to people who do not meet the 1951 Convention's legal definition of a refugee but are still in need of international protection. Across the EU, the Qualification Directive provides subsidiary protection for those facing the following threats if returned to their country: (1) the death penalty or execution; (2) torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or (3) threats from an international or internal armed conflict. The UK uses the legal term humanitarian protection to meet this Directive, and in 2012 granted **88 people humanitarian protection**. A further **751 applicants were given 'discretionary leave to remain'**, a form of temporary permission which is unlikely to be more than three years.

(Source: [Home Office Immigration Statistics April - June 2013](#))



An Afghan boy looking to seek asylum in the UK © UNHCR