

Migrant Myth Buster

Fact Sheet

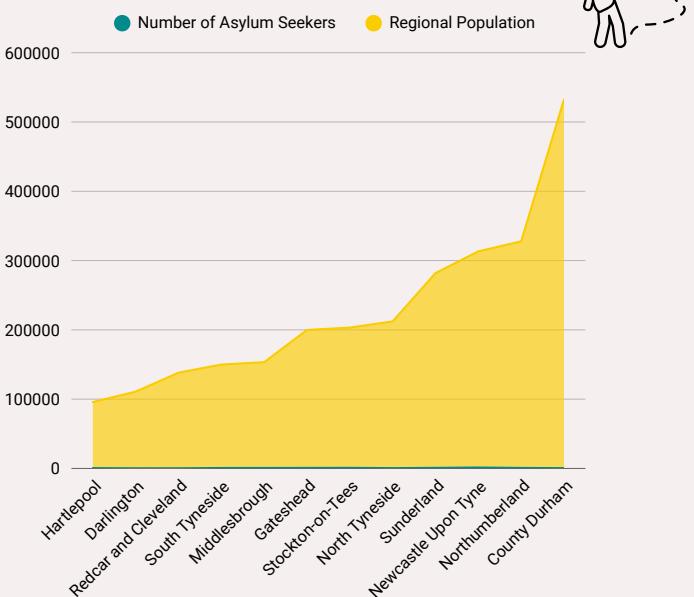
Much of what is printed in the media and elsewhere about migration is simply untrue. This document will take common asylum myths and look at the facts behind them; they might make you see things differently.

What does it mean when we say...

Asylum Seeker: Someone who is fleeing persecution in their home country. They've arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities there, and are using their legal right to apply for asylum. If their application for asylum is successful they will be considered a refugee.

Refugee: Someone who has been forced to flee their home due to war, violence or persecution. Those granted refugee status are able to access benefits, live, and work in the UK; many are granted 5 years leave to remain with the option to apply for further leave afterward. Refugees will often be unable to vote, work in certain roles, or apply for a UK passport unless they apply for British Citizenship, which cannot be done unless they meet specific requirements.

Migrant: Someone who has left their home and moved either within their own country or across international borders, either temporarily or permanently. This can be for a range of different reasons, including family or work. There is no legal definition of a migrant so this term can be used to describe different groups, such as asylum seekers and refugees.



The graph above shows a regional comparison of the number of asylum seekers to the general population in the NE. The teal line that runs across the bottom of the graph indicates the number of asylum seekers in comparison.

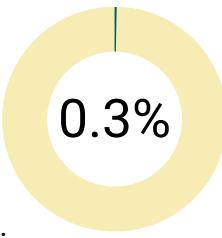
'The UK takes more than its fair share of migrants': Not compared to other western countries!

It is estimated that there are 82 million people forcibly displaced worldwide. 86% of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries, with Iran having the largest population of refugees world-wide, (3.8 million). In the EU in 2021, Germany was the largest recipient of asylum applications (334,000), followed by France (167,000) and Spain (162,000). To compare, the UK had 44,190 asylum applications, which is the 17th highest in Europe when calculated against the population. At the end of 2024 the UK had 448,000 refugees, making up 0.7% of the overall population.

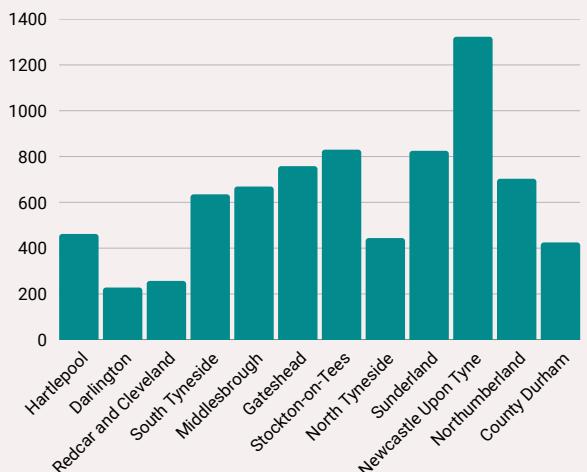


'The North East is 'flooded' with asylum seekers': Is it really? The figures might surprise you! The North East has a population of **2.7 million** people, at the end of December 2024, there were less than **7,600** asylum seekers here; representing less than 0.3% of the region.

This is what 0.3% visually looks like, the small teal line represents the number of asylum seekers in the North East, compared to the yellow circle as the regional population.



The graph below shows the number of asylum seekers per local authority. While this may seem a lot at first glance, the areas that have the highest numbers are still less than 0.6% of the area's population.



People fleeing danger in their own country simply want safety. In fact, it is the poorest countries in the world, often those bordering war and crisis zones, which accept the largest number of refugees. Most asylum seekers do not choose their destination country. Those with some choice may come to the UK because they have friends or family here or because they can speak English.

'Asylum seekers don't want to work and won't contribute to the economy': The law won't let them! Lots of asylum seekers are skilled and want to work. But the law says they're not allowed to work until their asylum claim has been decided. This can take many months.

In rare cases, if they're still waiting for a decision after 12 months, they can apply for jobs through the immigration salary list. These are jobs where UK-based employers face a shortage of suitable labour and migration is considered a sensible response to that shortage. Aside from these very specific jobs, asylum seekers do not have permission to work.

Once their claim has been decided, many refugees contribute a lot to the country's economic success.



Fact: The UK's asylum system often forces people into destitution. People waiting for their asylum claim are commonly not allowed to work and they are given just £49.18 a week to cover essential living like food, clothing and toiletries.



'Migrants drain our public resources': No - quite the opposite! The Office of Budget Responsibility projected that the average migrant, who moves to this country at the age of 25 and lives until 80, will contribute £341,000 to public finances over the course of their lives - more than the average British citizen.



'They're only here for the benefits': Migrants are actually less likely to claim Welfare Benefits than UK born individuals. People seeking asylum do not come to the UK to claim benefits. Most know nothing about welfare benefits before they arrive and had no expectation that they would receive financial support. Many are living in poverty, experiencing poor health and hunger, unable to pay for basics such as clothing and nappies.

'They're taking our jobs': Not true! The idea that migrants "take" jobs from UK workers is a widely circulated myth, with research consistently showing that immigration has no significant negative impact on employment or wages. Migrant workers often fill jobs that UK-born workers are unwilling or unable to do. Without migrants our public services would not be able to function. More than 17% of all NHS staff are from overseas, rising to 27% for nurses, the lifeblood of the NHS. Migrants are disproportionately likely to work in the care sector and without them we would be faced with mass labour shortages.

It is not just the health and care sectors that rely on migrants. Across the UK, businesses large and small rely on foreign-born talent. From hospitality and farming to technology and law, migrants are a crucial composite of the UK labour force, making up 21%, a 5% higher share than their proportion of the UK population. With the number of British born people that are economically inactive increasing post-Covid, immigrants will be imperative for economic growth. The Institute of Directors (IoD) members agree that migration allows businesses to be more productive, leading to higher employment and a boosted UK economy. 71% of members agreed UK businesses cannot find all the skills they need in the UK workforce to compete globally.



'All migrants are given preferential access to social housing': It is just not true; While things may differ between local authorities many determine priority according to the need. While some migrant groups may be more likely to have the characteristics required to gain priority for social housing, on average, migrants were slightly underrepresented among social renters at the time of the 2021 Census of England and Wales. They are also less likely to receive housing than people born in the UK due to many councils now having 'local connection' rules. It has also been found that migrants are less likely to live in social housing than UK born individuals and they are less likely to live in affordable rented housing and have access to help to buy schemes.

'Migrants bring crime to our streets': There is no evidence for this! Misleading information from search engines and social media has led people in the UK to believe incorrect information regarding crimes committed by asylum seekers. Figures are often misquoted or unreliable sourced, and as a result people have misinformed perceptions about immigration and crime. A survey of 1,000 people guessed that 34% of prisoners are immigrants. In reality this statistic is 12%, which reflects the percentage of migrants in the population. In fact, various studies have found that neither asylum seekers or other types of migrants could be linked with significant changes in violent crime and one study found that there could be a link between waves of immigration and **falling** crime rates.



Did you know every person in the world has the legal right to seek asylum?

Under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in another country, and to stay there until the authorities have made a decision about their claim. There's no such thing as an 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seeker.

Asylum seekers must give evidence of 'a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.' The UK offers protection to asylum seekers, but the process is complex and is strictly controlled.

'What do migrant workers contribute to the UK economy': Much more than you might think.

Refugees contribute significantly to their host communities. They start businesses, pay taxes, and enrich local economies. How we treat refugees reflects our values as a society.

A report from the Commission on the Integration of Refugees found that the UK economy could receive net benefits of £1.2 billion in five years if employment support and English-language for refugees were quickly implemented. The Office for Budget Responsibility in 2024 also published a report which found that the higher the level of migration, the less borrowing and debt the UK would be in by the end of the forecast period of 2028-29.

