

## Asylum in the UK: Quick Fact Sheet

### UK Asylum Claims

#### **The UK receives fewer asylum claims than most other European countries.**

- In 2022, the UK received 74,751 asylum applications.<sup>1</sup> France received 137,510.<sup>2</sup>
- For asylum applications per head of population, the UK ranks **20<sup>th</sup>** in Europe.<sup>3</sup>
- Globally, the majority of refugees are hosted by developing countries.

#### **Currently, most people claiming asylum are recognised as refugees**

- In 2022, 75% of decisions made by the Home Office on asylum claims were grants of asylum or humanitarian protection.
- 4 in 10 people who crossed the channel in small boats to claim asylum came from just five countries – Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Eritrea and Sudan. Three of those nationalities currently have asylum grant rates of 98% and the other two are 86% and 82%.<sup>4</sup>
- In 2022, overall the top five countries of origin of people seeking asylum were Albania, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria.<sup>3</sup>
- Nearly half of those initially refused asylum by the Home Office are granted on appeal to the courts: 44% in 2022, and 51 in 2021.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Home Office decision-making is intentionally hostile**

- People are recognised as refugees despite a well-established culture of disbelief and refusal in the Home Office, which came to light during the ‘Windrush’ scandal and resulted in British citizens born in Commonwealth countries being detained and removed.<sup>5</sup>
- JRS UK works with people refused asylum and made destitute. Many spend years struggling for recognition, unable to work or access any support, only to eventually be recognised as having been refugees all along.
- In the year ending March 2022, the average home office staff member made approximately 2 decisions per month. In 2016, it was approximately 8.<sup>6</sup> That’s a fall of 75%.

### Refugees and Reaching Sanctuary

- Most refugees have no choice in how they travel. There is no such thing as an asylum visa, and people forcibly displaced from their homes often can’t get to embassies, so people seeking asylum either have to cross borders informally, or travel on unrelated visas, if they can get them. Many people seeking asylum arrive by plane, though the government does not routinely publish statistics on modes of arrival (outside of small boats). Under proposed new laws, they would still be punished for doing this.
- Non-penalisation of refugees who arrive irregularly is a central aim of the 1951 Refugee Convention, set up in the aftermath of the Second World War.<sup>7</sup> The Refugee Convention does not state that refugees must claim asylum in the first safe country they come to and permits refugees to cross borders irregularly to claim asylum. These principles were enshrined in the Convention in recognition of the realities of forced displacement.

## Life in the UK Asylum System

- People waiting for a decision on their asylum claims are normally not allowed to work and cannot access mainstream benefits. They therefore have to rely on government asylum support – which can mean being housed in Napier Barracks. The government wants to make places like Napier the new normal for asylum accommodation.
- People on asylum support receive £45 per week if they are placed in self-catered accommodation.<sup>8</sup> This must cover all basic needs. They receive £9.10 per week if they are placed in accommodation with “full board”, such as Napier. This must cover the cost of clothes, travel, phone credit and, for women, sanitary products.
- People seeking asylum, like everyone subject to immigration control, can be indefinitely detained in prison-like conditions. The decision to detain them is an administrative one, made by a civil servant, and does not go before a judge.

## More Information

- The Refugee Council has published “Top facts from the latest statistics on refugees and people seeking asylum” here: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/top-10-facts-about-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/>
- JRS UK’s publications, including briefings and reports on different aspects of the asylum system, can be found here: <https://www.jrsuk.net/publications/>
- JRS UK’s latest report, *Napier barracks: the inhumane reality*, is available here: <https://www.jrsuk.net/napier-report/>

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## Document References

<sup>1</sup> Home Office, Immigration Statistics year ending December 2022:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2022>

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat Data Browser: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr\\_asyappctza/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/migr_asyappctza/default/table?lang=en)

<sup>3</sup> Refugee Council Briefing: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/top-10-facts-about-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/>

<sup>4</sup> Refugee Council Analysis: <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/majority-of-people-on-small-boats-crossing-channel-last-year-are-refugees-new-analysis-shows/>.

<sup>5</sup> For more detail about the culture of disbelief in the asylum system, see Freedom from Torture, “Lessons not learned: the failures of asylum decision-making in the UK” (2019).

<sup>6</sup> According to analysis from the Migration Observatory, available here: [The UK’s asylum backlog - Migration Observatory - The Migration Observatory \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/publication/the-uk-s-asylum-backlog)

<sup>7</sup> Dr Cathryn Costello, “Article 31 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees”, UNHCR Legal and Protection Policy Research Series (July 2007), p.5.

<sup>8</sup> [Asylum support: What you'll get - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-support-what-youll-get)