

# Don't believe the lies about asylum seekers

**MYTH:** Asylum seekers are “scroungers” who live off the state

**FACT:** More than half of nurses recruited to the NHS come from overseas. Many refugees are professionals such as doctors and teachers who are in short supply. The costs of the asylum system are far outweighed by the £2.5 billion that the Home Office says migrants contribute to the economy. And much of the cost is policing, and support for asylum seekers who are not allowed to work.

**MYTH:** Britain takes more asylum seekers than other countries

**FACT:** Pakistan and Iran alone host almost one-third of the world's 12 million refugees. Poor countries such as Tanzania and Guinea take more refugees than Britain. Within Europe, Britain comes tenth in terms of asylum applications per head of population.

**MYTH:** They get the best housing

**FACT:** Asylum seekers are forcibly dispersed to some of the worst estates in the country. A property developer in Liverpool admitted blocks of flats used to house asylum seekers were “not fit for human beings”.

**MYTH:** Asylum seekers are bogus and here for a free ride

**FACT:** Most come from countries that abuse human rights. When the situation improves, people are much less likely to seek asylum. Almost no-one from Zimbabwe claimed asylum before 1999. But in 2002, almost 10% of asylum claims were from Zimbabwe nationals. War-torn Bosnia,

Croatia and Kosovo produced large numbers of asylum seekers in the 1990s. But in the three years to 2003, there were fewer than 250 from all three countries combined. Asylum seekers cannot be illegal. The UN Convention on Human Rights guarantees the right to flee using false papers if necessary.

**MYTH:** The UK is a soft touch

**FACT:** United Nations figures show the UK detains more asylum seekers than other European countries. The UK is the only European state that detains children. It has stopped people getting out of Zimbabwe to Britain despite accepting it is not safe for those who have fled persecution to return. It is returning Somalis to a country still beset by violent civil strife.

**MYTH:** Refugees bring disease

**FACT:** The British Medical Association found asylum seekers do not bring TB into Britain. Just like an increasing number of UK citizens, those asylum seekers who had contracted TB did so as a result of severe overcrowding and poverty.

**MYTH:** Asylum seekers get large cash hand-outs from the state

**FACT:** Hundreds of asylum seekers have been refused financial assistance and are homeless. What cash they do receive is worth just 70% of basic income support – less than £40 per week.

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