West London Welcome
REFUGEE & MIGRANT CENTRE

Fact-checking Migration and Asylum

In 2025 we have seen and heard an increasing amount of misinformation and disinformation about refugees, migrants and people seeking asylum in the UK. Here are some common myths we'd like to bust…

People should enter the UK legally if they want to seek asylum here.

1

No human is illegal - by international law it is a right to seek asylum in any country. There are virtually no safe routes for people to get here, leaving no option but to make the terrifying channel crossing.

There are virtually no safe routes for people seeking asylum to travel to the UK - the vast majority of refugee resettlement schemes are closed and the few existing pathways are highly restricted, so only a very small number of people can come formally. It is almost impossible for most people in the Global South to apply for visas to come here, and people must be physically in the UK to make a claim for asylum - they cannot claim from outside the UK. This means most people wanting to seek asylum enter the UK without permission, because there is no other way of getting here in order to claim asylum. There is nothing in the 1951 Refugee Convention that stipulates the route you should take; we are an island, and if all safe routes to come here are cut off, those who have good reason to claim asylum in the UK have no choice but to face the terrifying Channel crossing. There is no such thing as an 'illegal' person seeking asylum - under international law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in any country. Source: International Rescue Committee

Asylum seekers get everything for free when they come to the UK.

2

People seeking asylum are banned from working or receiving state benefits. They receive just £49.18/wk to cover all food, toileteries, clothes and travel

People seeking asylum are banned from working or receiving state benefits and do not receive accommodation unless they have less than £50 in cash or deposit. This means they're forced to rely on the government for somewhere to live, otherwise they'd be on the streets. Once accommodated in hotels, they receive just £9.95 a week on a cash card along with three small, airplane-style meals a day served in plastic containers. If they're housed somewhere with access to a kitchen, they're given £49.18 a week to cover their food, toiletries, clothes and travel. They're not given free phones or iPads. Source: UK Parliament

It's only men coming to the UK to seek asylum.

3

41% of claims were made by women and children

This is false. Adult men accounted for 59% of total asylum claims in the year ending March 2025; 41% of claims were made by women and children. Source: Gov.uk

Asylum seekers are all trying to come to the UK rather than staying in France or the first country they reach.

4

Less than 1% of the world's refugees live in the UK – most stay in neighbouring countries. France receives many more claims than Britain.

Less than 1% of the world's refugees live in the UK. Most people seeking asylum stay in the first country they arrive in, with 70% living in neighbouring countries to their country of origin. Many people do stay in France, who receive a much larger number of asylum claims than Britain – in 2024, France received approximately 157,850 asylum claims, significantly more than the UK's 108,138 claims. The UK is ranked 17th per capita in Europe, with fewer asylum applications per head of population than many other European nations. People who continue on to the UK often have family ties, language connections, or professional links to the country. Sources: International Rescue Committee and the UK Government

People crossing the Channel aren't genuine refugees

5

Two-thirds of people who cross the Channel are granted asylum – most come from war-torn countries like Afghanistan, Sudan, and Syria.

In 2022, two-thirds of the people who crossed the Channel were granted asylum. Of these successful applicants, half came from just five countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Eritrea, Sudan, and Syria - all countries with war and notorious human rights violations. People seeking asylum from these countries have amongst the highest rate of successful claims. Source: International Rescue Committee

6

Immigration keeps rising because there are millions of people coming to the UK by small boat

Net migration is falling. Small boat arrivals account for less than 5% of total migration to the UK.

Immigration in the UK has been falling over the past year, not rising. Net migration fell by half in 2024, and recent rule changes mean it is expected to fall further, mostly due to a decrease in health and care visas. Most migrants are students or workers. In the year to June 2025, small boats made up less than 5% of Home Office visas granted and arrivals detected - around 43,000 people. Source: Guardian

7

Migrants are making the UK's housing crisis and economy worse.

The housing crisis is caused by decades of underinvestment, not by immigration.

The housing crisis is not due to migration. Research shows that the housing crisis is due to an historic lack of new affordable homes being built and lack of investment in housing by successive governments over decades. Meanwhile, higher net migration has been shown to lead to lower economic deficits and debt, since migrants tend to be of prime working age and work both low-paid and high-paid jobs. According to some policy experts, cutting migration may increase the UK's budget deficit, damage the economy and may worsen the housing crisis.
Source: John Perry, policy advisor at the Chartered Institute of Housing

8

Migrants are only coming here to live off benefits.

Over 83% of people receiving Universal Credit are British or Irish – asylum seekers can't claim benefits at all.

Of the 8 million people receiving Universal Credit in the UK as of June 2025, 83.6% were British and Irish nationals. Only around 1.5% of claimants were refugees, and 0.7% had arrived in the UK via safe routes such as those for Ukrainians and Afghans. People seeking asylum cannot claim benefits. Source: BBC

9

Migrants are more likely to commit crimes than British people.

Research shows no link between higher immigration and higher crime rates.

A 2023 study found no evidence of a relationship between an increase in immigration and the rise of any kind of crime in 30 countries, including the UK. Source: Does more immigration lead to more violent and property crimes? A case study of 30 selected OECD countries

Charities supporting refugees think the use of asylum hotels is a good idea

10

Charities think asylum hotels are unsuitable and costly: people are stuck in cramped rooms while contractors profit.

Our perspective as a refugee charity is that asylum hotels are unsuitable places for anyone to live long-term. They aren't places of luxury - multiple people share very small rooms for months or years, usually with no kitchen. Migrants are not responsible for the cost of the asylum system. This cost is a result of the policies of successive governments, first deliberately delaying decision making on claims - the backlog of people awaiting an asylum decision more than tripled between 2020-2023 - and then entering into poorly negotiated contracts with private contractors who have consequently made large profits for inadequately delivered services. People should be housed within communities in a way that is fairly and affordably organised around the country, not in hotels.
Source: Institute for Public Policy Research

Refugees and migrants are a burden on the NHS.

11

One in six NHS workers is a foreign national – our health service depends on migrants.

Fact: The NHS itself depends heavily on migrant workers – around 1 in 6 NHS staff is a foreign national. Source: Migration Advisory Committee Report 2023

West London Welcome is a community centre run for and with refugees, migrants, people seeking asylum, and other locals.

We work together with local people to provide a safe, positive experience of community to reduce isolation, build inclusion and confidence, and challenge injustice.

We believe all people should live in dignity. We don't believe our community members should be defined by their immigration statuses. We're proud to be a local community at the forefront of supporting those experiencing profound life challenges related to refuge and migration.

Scan here or share this link to read some real stories from our community members

www.westlondonwelcome.com