

Migrant Myth Busters

Much of what is printed in the media and elsewhere about migration is simply untrue. This document takes common myths and looks 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, and are using their legal right to apply for asylum. Everyone has the legal right to seek asylum. There is no such thing as an 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seeker. Asylum seekers must give evidence of 'a well-founded fear of being prosecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.' If their application for asylum is successful, they will be considered to be a refugee.

Refugee: Someone who has been forced to flee their home due to war, violence or persecution. People granted refugee status can access benefits, as well as live and work in the UK. Many are granted five years leave to remain, with the option to apply for further leave to remain afterwards. Refugees often cannot 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 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 UK takes more than its fair share of asylum seekers'

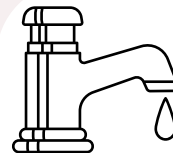
Not compared to other western countries!

In 2021 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 had 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's population.



'Migrants drain our public resources'

No - quite the opposite!

The Office of Budget Responsibility estimates 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. That's more than a British Citizen contributes on average.



'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. As a result, they have no expectation that they will receive financial support.

People fleeing danger in their own country simply want safety. 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 where they end up. 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 don'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. If asylum seekers have to wait more than a year for a decision, they may be able to apply for certain jobs. However, these jobs are restricted to areas, where UK employers struggle to find staff.



'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. A survey of 1,000 people said 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 nor other types of migrants could be linked to significant changes in violent crime. One study found that there could be a link between waves of immigration and **falling** crime rates.



'They're taking our jobs'

Not true!

Research frequently shows that immigration doesn't have a significant 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 come from overseas and 27% of nurses are migrants. Migrants are a crucial part of the UK labour force. They make up 21%, a 5% higher share than the UK population.



'All migrants are given preferential access to social housing'

It is just not true!

Migrants are less likely to get social housing than people born in the UK. This is due to many councils now having 'local connection' rules. Migrants are less likely to live in social housing, less likely to live in affordable rented homes or have access to help to buy schemes than people born here.



'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. In 2024, the Office for Budget Responsibility published a report. It 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.



Scan the QR code below to find out more on The North East Migration Partnership website:



The UK's asylum system often forces people into poverty. People waiting for their asylum claim to be decided are commonly not allowed to work. They are given just £49.18 a week to pay for essential like living expenses like food, clothing and toiletries.

