

Busted

6 myths about
Refugees and
Asylum Seekers

Great Britain is one of the most diverse countries, with people from all over the world bringing innovation, prosperity and vibrancy to our society. However, every year thousands of people suffer prejudice because of misconceptions regarding their identity, beliefs or economic status. Our myth busting guides aim to challenge common misconceptions and negative stereotypes towards minority communities, in order to create awareness and promote better understanding.

Hate crimes and incidents have surged nationally following the result of the EU referendum in 2016. If left unchallenged, these crimes can tear communities apart, leaving scars that may take years to heal. This resource aims to counter the common assumptions made about refugees and asylum seekers, whose resilience, hard work and humanity get overlooked in today's turbulent media and politics.

1. The terms *refugee* and *asylum seeker* mean the same thing

The two terms are very different. According to the Refugee Council, an *asylum seeker* is a person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded. Asylum seekers are those unable to seek protection in their home country and fear persecution due to their race, religion, nationality or political opinion. In Britain, a person is officially a *refugee* when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the government.

In the UK, the process of claiming asylum is very complex and can take a very long time. Additionally, refugees are allowed to stay in the UK for only five years, which makes their future uncertain.

2. Syrian refugees are given preferential treatment when it comes to social housing

Since the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011 and subsequent civil war, **5 million Syrians** have been displaced and driven out of their country- the UK has taken in just over **8000** of Syrian refugees.

On their arrival, it may seem that the Syrian families seeking asylum in the UK are housed at a faster rate than a British citizen who has been waiting in the long queues of social housing. But the reality is that Syrian refugees are housed through an entirely different scheme known as NASS. [National Asylum Support Service]. The average taxpayer contribution to NASS is **£5 per year**- that is just over **1p a day**. The accommodation allocated to refugees are often '*hard to let*' properties, where other people do not want to live.

3. Asylum seekers are here to claim benefits

The reality is that the majority of asylum seekers are not allowed to work in the UK and are forced to rely on financial support from the government, which can be as little as **£5 a day** to live on. Asylum seekers do not come to Great Britain to claim benefits, and most of them are unaware of the benefit system and expect no financial help. Many choose the UK over other countries because they speak the language or have family here.

According to research by the Refugee Council, **many asylum seekers are in fact are not entitled to any financial support and end up homeless or living in extreme poverty.** Many suffer from hunger, poor health and often cannot afford basic necessities such as clothing, powdered milk and nappies.

4. The UK takes in more refugees and asylum seekers than any other country

Without a doubt, we are facing **the largest refugee crisis since World War II**, with over **65 million** people displaced worldwide.

However, the **UK houses less than 1%** of the world's refugees (168,978). **Turkey** is home to the most refugees (**2.9 million**), followed by **Pakistan (1.4 million)** and **Lebanon (1 million)**. **86% of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries**, not Western nations (such as the US, the UK or France).

It is important to note that **55% of all refugees and asylum seekers originate from three counties: South Sudan, Afghanistan and Syria**.

The top 10 countries that people have fled all have an ongoing conflict and a poor human rights track record. Refugees and asylum seekers do not choose to leave their homes, they are forced to and it is usually their last resort. In fact, according to the UN **82% of the Syrian refugees hope to return home when it is safe to do so**.

5. Refugees and asylum seekers are unskilled workers

Historically, refugees and asylum seekers have made huge contributions to public services and the economy. For example, **in the UK, there are over 1,200 medically qualified refugees** recorded on the British Medical Association's database. The NHS also estimates that while training a new doctor costs between £200,000 and £250,000, supporting a refugee doctor to practice in the UK only costs about £25,000.

We have a refugee to thank for setting up UK retail giant Marks and Spencer. Michael Marks, a Jewish child from Belarus, came to Leeds in 1882 to escape the Tsarist regime of the Russian Empire.

6. Refugees from the Middle East are likely to be ISIS supporters

Those fleeing Middle Eastern countries such as Syria or Iraq are victims and not sympathisers of the so called Islamic State. **The leaders of ISIS have repeatedly condemned those leaving areas under their control.** Recent research led by the Danish Institute for International Studies concluded that **European citizens, not refugees, are behind most terrorist attacks in Europe.**

To add to this, a 2015 United Nations report found that **there is no evidence that migration leads to increased terrorist activity but implementing anti- refugee policies can create conditions that foster terrorism.**



Communities Inc is a Nottingham based social enterprise working with issues relating to community cohesion. We are passionate about building stronger communities by tackling inequalities faced by the most disadvantaged groups.

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