

Myth Buster

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THEY ALL WANT TO COME TO BRITAIN

No, they just want to be safe

People fleeing danger in their own country simply want safety. In fact, 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 their destination country. Those with some choice may come to the UK because they have friends or family here.

A Home Office report concluded that there was absolutely no evidence to suggest that asylum seekers had a detailed knowledge of the UK welfare benefits system.

(Understanding decision-making of asylum seekers, UK Home Office report)

About Myth Buster

Much of what is printed in the media and elsewhere about migration is simply untrue. Here are some facts that might make you see things differently.

WHY DON'T ASYLUM SEEKERS WORK?

Simple – the law won't let them

Many asylum seekers are skilled and want to work and contribute, but the law prevents this until their asylum claim has been decided, which can take many months.

BRITAIN IS A SOFT TOUCH

Not true

Think about how asylum really feels. People fleeing their own country are usually very frightened, often leaving everything they know because their own and their families' lives are in danger.

So asylum is never an easy option, and on reaching a place of refuge in the UK, all asylum seekers are:

- fingerprinted (even children)
- photographed
- security checked
- issued with ID cards

All must

- report at regular intervals to immigration reporting centres

THE NORTH EAST IS 'FLOODED' WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS

Not true and here's the evidence

The North East of England has a population of about 2.6 million people. There are fewer than 2,000 asylum seekers here; they represent less than 0.08% of the total population of the region. At the time of writing, official statistics show that migration to the UK is in decline.

At the end of April 2011 there were 1913 asylum seekers in our region, with around a third living in Newcastle and a third in Tees Valley.

1. Newcastle	577
2. Middlesbrough	523
3. Stockton-on-Tees	380
4. Sunderland	127
5. Gateshead	94
6. South Tyneside	86
7. Hartlepool	79
8. North Tyneside	37
9. Darlington	6
10. Redcar and Cleveland	4

(Numbers of individuals supported by the Home Office. Source: NESMP Management Information April 2011)

THEY TAKE OUR HOMES

Not true

Asylum seekers are not put on housing waiting lists; they're housed under a separate system and can't choose where they live. The Home Office allocate UK arrivals to accommodation which will usually be a specialist hostel or a hard-to-let empty property.

THEY COME HERE FOR A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE


On £5 a day?

People seeking asylum do so for humanitarian, not economic reasons. Imagine living in the UK on £36.62 per week - just over £5 per day. That's what a typical asylum seeker gets to live on - roughly 30% below the poverty line.

ASYLUM SEEKERS MEAN HIGHER COUNCIL TAX

Absolutely not

Asylum seekers are looked after by central government, not local councils. No money from Council Tax is spent on housing asylum seekers. There's no evidence that areas with higher asylum seeking or migrant populations have correspondingly high council tax rates.



THEY'RE HERE ILLEGALLY

No. We all have a right to asylum

International law states that anyone has the right to apply for asylum in another country and remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim. There is no such thing as an 'illegal' or 'bogus' asylum seeker.

The burden is on the person seeking asylum to prove and evidence "a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion"

(1951 UN Convention on Refugees)


The UK asylum system offers this protection but is strictly controlled and complex.

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This Myth Buster was produced by the North East Strategic Migration Partnership.

To find out more about migration and what we do, please visit our website

www.nesmp.org.uk



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SO, WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY...

Asylum Seeker

Someone who is fleeing persecution in their homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised the legal right to apply for asylum.

Refugee

Someone whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country having proved they would face persecution in their home country. Refugees have the same rights as permanent residents of the UK.

Migrant (Worker)

A person who moves from one country to another for the primary purpose of work or study, whether permanently or temporarily.

THE UK TAKES MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF MIGRANTS

The UK experience of international migration is not remarkable when set in a global context

We operate in a global economy where people will migrate to and from areas responding to the supply and demand needs of the labour market.

Not only has the UK's immigration grown in line with world migration, but the UK has a smaller proportion of immigrants and lower rates of net immigration than the US, Canada, Australia and several large European countries.

Less than 3% of the world's migrants live in the UK compared with 5% in Germany and 20% in the US.

(Finney and Simpson, 'Sleepwalking to Segregation?' Challenging myths about race and migration 2009)

WHAT DO MIGRANT WORKERS CONTRIBUTE TO THE UK ECONOMY?

Much MORE than you might think

In the last year, migrants paid 37% more in taxes than was spent on the public services that they received.

Migrant workers pay income tax and National Insurance contributions. According to the Home Office, migrants and refugees made a net contribution of about £3 billion to the UK economy – that's worth 1p on income tax.

The UK has an ageing population as a result of declining birth rates and the fact that people are living longer. Migrant workers are needed to ensure that there is a sufficient workforce to fill available jobs and pay the taxes that will fund pensions in the future.

(Britain's Immigrants: an economic profile IPPR)

THEY'RE TAKING JOBS THAT LOCAL WORKERS COULD DO

Not true

In general, migrant workers move to areas where there are vacancies, and often they are filling vacancies where there are skills shortages.

Under the new 'points based' system put in place by the UK Border Agency, migrants from outside the EU are only permitted to take jobs where there are recognised skill shortages in the UK and where they can prove before they enter the UK that they have qualifications, skills and abilities and are sponsored by an employer.

The region has a long history of recruiting workers from abroad, and as many as one in four businesses depend on migrant workers to stay in business.

(UKBA; IPPR)

MIGRANTS ARE GIVEN PREFERENTIAL ACCESS TO SOCIAL HOUSING

It's just not true

Recent research commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found no evidence of migrants being given preferential access to social housing.

Apparent pressure on housing is caused by changing household structures (the trend for smaller household numbers and larger houses) rather than population growth through immigration.

MIGRANT WORKERS ARE DRAINING THE REGION'S PUBLIC SERVICES

No - Quite the opposite!

Migrants are more likely to be young, healthy and well qualified, and contribute more to the tax and benefits system than they receive.

Far from acting as a drain on public services, new migrants help to deliver vital services in areas such as social care, education, construction, and particularly in the health service.

THEY'RE ONLY HERE FOR THE BENEFITS...

No... Migrants are less likely to claim welfare benefits and to live in social housing than people born in the UK

National Insurance data shows that migrant workers overwhelmingly come to the UK to work, not to claim benefits.

Migrant workers are often highly educated people – more than a third left full time education after the age of 21 – twice as many as in the UK population. Despite higher education and skill levels, their wages are substantially lower than UK born workers.

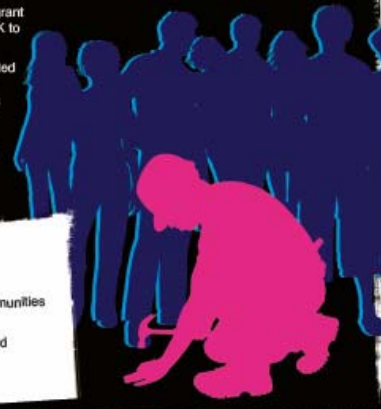
(DWP 2009)

MIGRANTS BRING CRIME TO OUR STREETS

There's no evidence

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) say that offending rates among migrant communities are in line with the general population.

But migrants are more likely to be victims of crime, suffering harassment in the community and discrimination in the work place.



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