

“The government says we resettle more refugees than any other country in Europe.”

Well, possibly. But it's critically important to understand that:

- Resettlement is a government programme which selects people – they can't choose to be resettled. So resettlement doesn't include people who come independently. Each year from 2016 to 2021, the UK accepted 5,000 Syrians to be resettled. However, Germany took over 1 million Syrian refugees in one year – but they arrived independently, rather than being resettled.
- In January 2021, the UK government scrapped its targets for resettlement, demonstrating a lack of commitment to the scheme. In August 2021, it bowed to public pressure and agreed to resettle 20,000 Afghans over 5 years.
- Resettlement only benefits a tiny number of people. In 2019, only 0.23% of the world refugees were resettled (63,000 people worldwide out of 24.5 *million* on the waiting list), out of a total of 79.5 million refugees in the world.

Got a question about refugees?

We'd be very happy to talk to you and try to answer it. Please get in touch!

All statistics in this leaflet are from the UN, the EU or gov.uk Printed in August 2021.

LET'S LOOK AT THE FACTS ABOUT REFUGEES

“Isn't Britain full? We can't take any more refugees.”

Britain has one of the lowest numbers of refugees in Europe. Just 0.2% of our population are refugees. As a percentage of their populations:

- Sweden has 12 times more than us
- Austria has 8 times more than us
- Germany has 7 times more than us
- France has 4 times more than us.

“They should be turned back if they use illegal routes.”

Under the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention (which the UK helped to draft and which we signed up to), refugees can travel by any method they like – including by boat – as long as they claim asylum on arrival. There is no such thing in international law as an 'illegal route', whatever the UK government may say.

“They should claim asylum in the first country they come to.”

Again, under the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention, refugees are not required to stay and seek asylum in the first safe country they arrive in. So although the government often says they should, it's simply not true.

Also, it's impossible for a very small number of countries to accept all of the refugees fleeing a neighbouring war (for example, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon in the case of the Syrian war). Those countries would simply collapse.

There are many reasons why refugees might try to travel to the UK; they may speak some English (perhaps due to our colonial history in the country they're from), or perhaps they already have family here.



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“There’s more and more of them every year.”

Wrong. The number of people claiming asylum in the UK has been dropping significantly:

2002	84,000 applications
2020	29,456 applications

“Why must we take them all?”

We don’t. In 2019, almost half of all UK asylum claims (48%) were refused. Plus, we have the worst record in Europe for refusing people who legitimately should have been granted asylum. Many of the 48% whose asylum claims are refused go on to appeal the decision in the courts, and in around half of those cases, a judge decides that the Home Office was wrong, so asylum is granted in the end anyway. It’s a terrible waste of the courts’ time and of public money. It would be better to make the right decision in the first place.

Some asylum-seekers in the UK wait up to 20 years for a decision on their asylum claim. Life is very hard during the waiting period, and many become destitute.

“They just come here for a better life.”

Absolutely not. Refugees are not economic migrants, and they have special protection in international law. When applying for asylum in the UK, they must prove that their lives are at risk from war, conflict or persecution. Most would much rather have stayed at home, and many were probably financially better off there.

“Why do they all want to come to Britain?”

They don’t. In 2019, the UK received just 6.2% of all of the EU’s asylum applications. (Due to COVID, 2019 data is more meaningful than 2020 data).

As for the number of refugees per head of population, Britain is #30 in the world. Per capita, the top 10 countries hosting refugees are:

#1	Palestine
#2	Jordan
#3	Lebanon
#4	Turkey
#5	Uganda
#6	Syria
#7	Chad
#8	Sweden
#9	Sudan
#10	South Sudan

The vast majority of refugees – 85% – are hosted by the developing world.

“Why don’t they stay in their own part of the world?”

Most do. Compare the fact that refugees make up 0.2% of the UK population with:

Palestine	44.9% of the population
Jordan	27.4% of the population
Lebanon	20% of the population
Turkey	4.4% of the population
Uganda	3.3% of the population

In real numbers, Turkey continues to host the most refugees, at 3,652,362.

“Why are they all young men?”

They aren’t. But there are good reasons why you might see photos of Syrian or Afghan refugees, for example, appearing to show a high proportion of young men:

- In the case of Afghans, many were pre-approved for evacuation because of the work they did in support of Western military or diplomatic missions. That work meant they were more likely to be young men.
- in countries like Syria, young men are being conscripted into the army, so they flee to avoid that. They know they will be expected to kill their fellow citizens.
- Others already serving in the military in a civil war may have defected (and defection means a death sentence).
- Men may try to go ahead to test the route and secure a place of safety before bringing their families to join them.
- Some are just young, as-yet unmarried men who are able to be highly mobile – culturally, women from many countries are often less mobile and independent.

“Why don’t Syrians and Afghans stay and fight, like we did in WW2?”

Because they’re caught up in a civil war – where people are at risk from their own government. On the other hand, in WW2, Britain was at war with other countries. This rallied everyone together, and people could trust each other and the government.

“How can they be refugees if they have smartphones and nice trainers?”

Why does being a refugee mean you are poor? Absolutely anyone can be affected by war: rich or poor, and many refugees had decent jobs back home. They had nice clothes, including trainers (whether genuine brands or knock-offs).

In June 2021, there were more than 3 *billion* smartphone users in the world – so just under half of the world’s population have a smartphone. And if you already have one, why on earth would you leave it behind if you had to flee? A refugee’s phone is a vital link to their family and friends. It has maps and access to Google search. Of course they’d take it with them.

“Asylum-seekers just come over here and take our jobs.”

Not true, because asylum-seekers are not allowed to work in the UK! Even though they’d much rather have the dignity of work, and even though they often have skills which our economy badly needs.

“Asylum-seekers get big handouts from the state.”

Well, they do get an allowance of a paltry £5.66 a day (£39.63 per week) – but only because we don’t allow them to work! That amount must cover food, clothing, transport, toiletries, bills, and over-the-counter medicines. If we allowed asylum-seekers to work, they’d pump £42.4 million straight into the UK economy every year through income tax.