



## Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

# Top 10 facts from the latest statistics (June 2020) on refugees and people seeking asylum

taken from the REFUGEE COUNCIL BRIEFING

In summary in the year ending June 2020:

- **32,423** asylum applications were made
- **53%** of applications were granted asylum or protection at the initial decision stage
- **38,576** cases were awaiting an initial decision for more than 6 months

## 1. People seeking asylum make up a tiny proportion of new arrivals in Britain

There were **32,423** asylum applications made in the UK in the year ending June 2020, similar numbers to the previous year. **However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic saw the number of asylum applications made during April-June 2020 fall by 40%** compared to the previous year, suggesting that many people struggled to access the UK asylum system as a result of restrictions introduced due to Covid-19.

The number of asylum applications equates to a tiny fraction of non-EEA nationals arriving in the UK. In the year ending June 2020, the top five nationalities of people seeking asylum were **Iran, Albania, Iraq, Eritrea and Pakistan**.

## 2. Not everyone gets a grant of protection the first time their case is looked at

The proportion of asylum appeals allowed in the year to June 2020 was **45%**, up from 42% the previous year.

The quality of decision making is often poor, with many refugees having to rely on the courts to award protection following an appeal of the Government's initial decision. The appeals process can be complex and lengthy, with people seeking asylum having to wait months for their appeals to be heard.

## 3. Refusals are often overturned on appeal

The proportion of asylum appeals allowed in the year to December 2019 was **44%**, a slight increase on the previous year.

## 4. Asylum cases often take years to be resolved

Thousands of people have to wait years for a final decision on their claim, meaning they are left in limbo and unable to plan for their futures.

At the end of June 2020, **54,073** people were waiting for an outcome on their initial claim for asylum. Of these, **38,756 (72%)** have been waiting for more than 6 months, an increase of 57% from this time last year. Whilst there has been a steady rise in this backlog for the last few years, the impact of Covid-19 on the decision making process has exacerbated this further.

The total number of unresolved cases, including those waiting for initial decisions, those waiting for an appeal outcome and those which are on hold, has been continuously increasing from 55,000 in 2014 to 100,612 at the end of June 2019, (the latest data set available) Each one of these cases represents a person anxiously awaiting news of their fate.

## 5. People seeking asylum receive little financial support and are not allowed to work

At the end of June 2020, **56,570\*** people seeking asylum were being supported by the Government (including those supported under Section 95, Section 4 and Section 98 of the Immigration Act 1999). This figure has risen continuously since 2012.

Part of this increase will be due to the impact of Covid-19, with an increase in the number of people entering asylum accommodation coupled with a pause on cessations of support and evictions in place from the end of March to August 2020.

People seeking asylum are banned from working and are provided with just over **£5** per day from the Government to cover the costs of their basic necessities. Could you live on just **£5** per day?

#### **6. People seeking asylum can be detained indefinitely**

The UK Government has the power to detain people who are here seeking refuge. Sometimes this even includes children. There is no maximum time limit in place for people held in detention, meaning people are held indefinitely.

The latest statistics show that there were **698** people in detention in an immigration removal centre as at 30 June 2020; among them were **292** people seeking asylum. This equates to a **60%** reduction from the previous year. This is largely due to the impact of Covid-19 and the decision by the Home Office to reduce the number of people in detention during the pandemic. reflected by the fact that there were **20,097** occurrences of people being released back into the community.

Despite a Government promise in 2010 to end the practice of detaining children, there were **41** occurrences of children entering immigration detention by the end of June 2020. There were 32 occurrences of children who left detention being released, rendering their detention not only futile but harmful.

#### **7. Unaccompanied children face an uncertain future**

It is not just adults and families who come to the UK in search of safety; unaccompanied children, some as young as under 14 years old, also seek Britain's protection.

In the last 12 months, there were **2,868** applications from unaccompanied children, **20%** fewer than the previous year; accounting for **9%** of total asylum applications.

Of the children who arrived in Britain alone and under their own steam, **46%** were granted asylum in the year to June 2020.

A further **137** of unaccompanied children were granted short term leave to remain which expires after 2.5 years, leaving them uncertain and anxious about their futures.

The top country of origin for applications from unaccompanied children from September 2019 to June 2020 was Eritrea.

The latest statistics also show that all **480** unaccompanied children have been brought from elsewhere in Europe under section 67 of the 2016 Act (commonly known as 'the Dubs amendment').

#### **8. Newly granted refugees often face destitution and homelessness**

The moment someone receives a positive decision on their asylum claim should be one of celebration and relief, an end to instability, and the start of a bright future where they are able to establish new lives in the UK. Instead, many newly-recognised refugees experience homelessness and/or destitution, right at this point.

The Home Office provides accommodation on a no-choice basis and subsistence support of around **£5** per day for people seeking asylum if they would otherwise be destitute. But once they are awarded status, this support stops after just **28-days**. Faced with a cliff edge and no support to find new housing, open a bank account, and secure income, among other activities needed before being evicted, many refugees are at significant risk of homelessness and/or destitution.

#### **9. Resettlement programmes provide a lifeline for a fraction of those in need**

Just **1%** of the world's refugees will ever be resettled anywhere, which means many refugees face a long, uncertain wait to hear if they will ever be able to rebuild their lives in safety.

Over 13.3 million people have been forcibly displaced from Syria since the start of the conflict, of whom more than 6.6 million are refugees.

In September 2015, the then Prime Minister David Cameron promised to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 – just over 4,000 a year. The number of people resettled under this scheme in Britain now stands at **19,768** since it began.

The government has now committed to resettling another 5,000 refugees from 2020-21 through a new single, consolidated scheme.

Resettlement arrivals to the UK were temporarily suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions in March 2020 and the latest stats show that as a result of this, **no refugees were resettled during the three month period April-June 2020.**

The UK Government also resettles refugees through two other programmes. In the year ending June 2020, just **396** refugees from conflict zones across the world were resettled in Britain via the Gateway Protection Programme. **201** refugees were resettled via the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme in the same time period.

## **10. Refugees face huge challenges in reuniting with their separated family**

War and persecution often divides refugees from their families but there are few straightforward, legal ways for refugees to safely join loved ones in Britain.

One of the few safe and regular routes for refugees to join their loved ones in the UK is via refugee family reunion visas. In the year ending June 2020, **6,320** family reunion visas were issued to partners and children of those granted asylum or humanitarian protection in the UK, a **7%** increase compared to the previous year. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that **only 131 visas were granted between April & June 2020, 94% lower than the previous quarter** (pre Covid-19). We also know that many people who were issued family reunion visas since the pandemic hit have been unable to travel to the UK and remain separated.

The Family Reunion rules are incredibly restrictive. Only spouses and dependent children are eligible to apply for family reunion visas. People who have been granted protection in the UK may be alone, distraught and worried about the safety of their family who may still be in danger. Even unaccompanied children are not allowed to apply for their parents to join them in the UK. That is why we are campaigning to bring #FamiliesTogether.

Another way which refugees could be allowed to travel to the UK safely is through the Mandate scheme. This enables refugees in other countries to join their families in Britain. Sadly, this route is rarely used by the Government with only **7** refugees arriving via the scheme in the twelve months ending March 2020.