

**date:** Monday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003  
**embargo:** 00.01 Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2003

news from



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## 10 things you need to know about asylum...but probably don't

A culture of ignorance and prejudice amongst the general public about asylum is worsened by a lack of objective and easily accessible information about the subject. The Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) is publishing a fact file on asylum in the UK today (Thursday).

The fact file aims to debunk myths about where people seeking asylum come from, why they leave their countries of origin, why they come to the UK and whether the UK receives more than its 'fair share' of people seeking protection. It also pulls together existing statistical information about the numbers of asylum seekers in the UK and Europe, the effectiveness of the procedures for determining claims and the cost of the asylum system.

Ten facts from the new ippr publication:

1. In the first part of 2003 more than half of all people seeking asylum in the UK came from countries in which there is documented conflict and human rights abuse
2. Nearly three quarters of the world's refugees can actually be found in the developing world
3. If all the people seeking asylum who had ever come to the UK were allowed to stay there would be 1.57 refugees per £1million GDP
4. Last year the Home Office found one in every three people seeking asylum to be in need of protection and granted either refugee status or humanitarian leave. A further one in five of those who appealed were allowed to stay in the UK
5. The UK detains more people for longer periods than any other comparable country in Europe
6. As a result of changes to Home Office procedures, nearly two thirds of all people seeking asylum receive an initial decision on their claim within two months
7. The Government has reduced the backlog of people seeking asylum awaiting a decision from nearly 120,000 at the end of 1999 to just over 40,000 at the end of 2002
8. Three out of every five people seeking asylum provided accommodation by the Government are dispersed to Yorkshire, the North West and the West Midlands
9. People seeking asylum receive limited welfare benefits and are not allowed to work whilst they are awaiting a decision. Recent changes mean that some asylum seekers

The Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) is the UK's leading independent centre-left think tank. Its purpose is to contribute to a better public understanding of social, economic and political questions through research, discussion and publication.

receive no financial support whilst their claims are decided

10. It is impossible to work out how much asylum costs the UK because disaggregated data on information relating to all aspects of the process is not routinely collected

**Heaven Crawley** Director of the Migration and Equalities programme at ippr said:

“The public has real concerns about the impact of asylum on their communities. To date the Government has responded to these concerns largely by introducing legislation to curb abuse of the system and to deter asylum seekers from arriving. This approach has increased concerns about the extent to which the asylum process is being abused and has not increased public understanding of why people come in the first place or what happens to them when they arrive. Despite the fact that nearly one in every two asylum seekers is eventually allowed to remain legally, asylum seekers are treated with hostility whilst their claims are being decided. This has worrying implications for social relations in the communities in which recognized refugees eventually settle.

“In the interest of community relations as well as to ensure that an appropriately humanitarian welcome is provided to those who genuinely need our protection, the Government needs to engage the public in a more informed and even-handed debate about asylum issues.”

**Notes to Editors:**

- *Asylum in the UK: A Fact File* is available on the ippr website or from the ippr media office (journalists only)
- ippr will also be releasing fact files on labour migration and migrant integration over the coming months

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