

10 years of British asylum

Some interesting facts.

Over the last decade there has been a massive reduction in the number of asylum seekers arriving in the UK. Since the year 2000 the number has dropped by two thirds. In the year 2000 there were eighty thousand asylum applications in the UK, in 2008 there were fewer than twenty six thousand. (1)

The two largest groups of refugees in the world are from Iraq and Afghanistan. Both these countries suffer problems that stem from the wars being waged there that Britain has direct responsibility for. In 2009 the largest groups of asylum seekers in the UK came from Afghanistan, with 3,500 Afghans making asylum claims. (2)

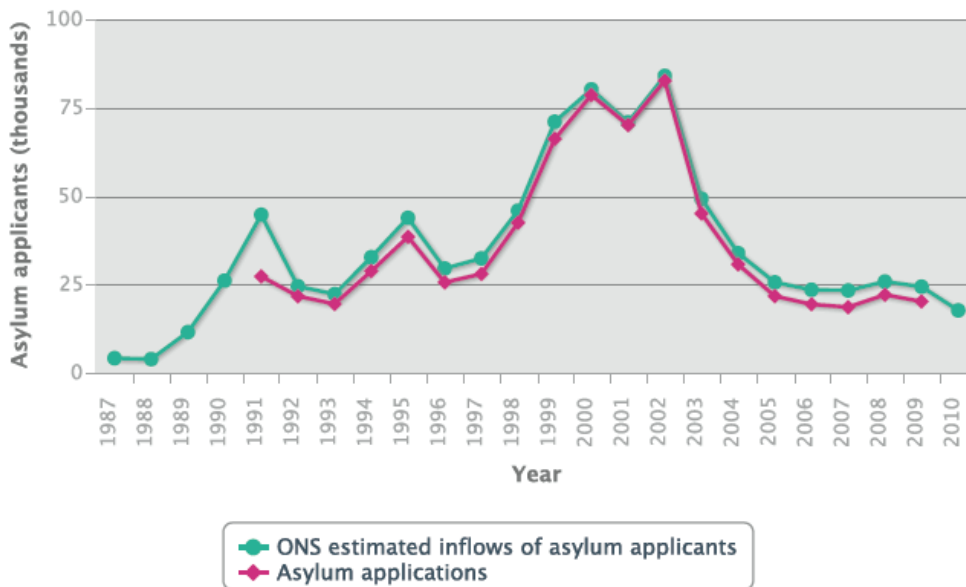
When hundreds of French police raided the illegal camps in Calais in September 2009 in an effort to close them down they found only 278 people living in the camps. Half of them were under the age of 18 years old. Most of the young men were from Afghanistan and were trying to re-unite with relatives in the UK. (3)

The UK ranks only fourth out of the industrialised countries of the world for the number of those taking asylum seekers. The US, France and Canada all take more than Britain. Per head of population, Britain is 13th in the list of industrialised countries taking asylum seekers. Cyprus, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Greece, Belgium and Luxembourg, all take larger numbers per head of population than the UK. (2)

Two thirds of asylum seekers did not choose to come to the UK. Most discovered they were coming to Britain only after they had left their own country. The decision was made by an agent. Of those who do choose the UK, many come from countries that are former British colonies or had been under British administration.(4)

Asylum applications and estimated inflows, 1987–2010

Chart provided by www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk



Source : Office of National Statistics. Long-Term International Migration (LTIM). Home Office

Asylum applications (excluding dependents) rose from 4,256 in 1987 to a peak of 84,130 in 2002, and then declined to 17,790 in 2010. Despite the increase from 1987 to 2003, they have played a declining role in overall migration since 2004, as part of a trend across Europe. Asylum applications increased from 4,256 in 1987 to 84,130 in 2003, before falling to 25,710 in 2005. After little change until 2009, applications declined to 17,790 in 2010. These numbers include only “main applicants,” excluding “dependants” (family members accompanying the principal person making the application). (5)

Asylum applicants and their dependents comprised an estimated 8% of net migration in 2009, down from 49% in 2002. Dependents arriving in the UK after the initial decision on the main applicant are counted in entry statistics as dependents, but are not distinguished as dependents of asylum-seekers or refugees. (5)

The majority of initial Asylum applications were refused in each year since 1994. In 2010, 75% of initial decisions were refused. Among the 2004-2009 cohorts, 74% of rejected applicants lodged appeals, with a success rate of 23%. Over the decade of the 2000s, successful appeals ranged from 17% to 23% of total appeals. (5)

The majority of asylum seekers are men, while their dependents are mostly children, with some adult women. Demographic data show that main applicants are predominantly male adults from conflict-ridden nations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, although a large share came from Europe in the early 2000s, due to conflicts in areas such as Kosovo. In 2009, asylum applicants (excluding dependents) were 67% male and 33% female. A majority of applicants aged 50 or older were female, but males comprised at least 57% of every other age range. Children and young adult main applicants were especially likely to be male. (5)

As recently as 2000, the UK received more than 20,000 asylum seekers from Europe, more than from Africa or the Middle East, including thousands from Serbia and Montenegro and thousands more from 2004 EU Accession states. Resolution of crises as well as EU enlargement seemed to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers in the UK; European asylum seekers in the UK accounted for only 3025 cases in 2004 and 735 by 2009. (5)

In 2010 the UK received 0.37 asylum applicants per 1000 people in its population, below the European average (0.54 for EU plus Norway and Switzerland). Trends in asylum applications in the UK have mirrored Europe-wide trends, but more sharply. The peak years saw a UK increase not only in the number of applicants but also in its share of Europe's total asylum claims. These peaked across Europe at the same time as in the UK, reaching 466,000 to 483,100 between 1999 and 2002. Claims declined sharply over the next three years, but more steeply in the UK than in the rest of Europe. The UK's share of Europe's asylum claims therefore has declined as well, from approximately 20% at its 4-year peak (1999-2002) down to 11%-13% between 2004 and 2009. (5)

In 2010 the leading sources of asylum applicants in the UK were Iran, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The number and share coming from Iraq and Somalia have decreased since high points in 2002 for Iraq (14,570 applicants, 17% of that year's total) and 1999 for Somalia (7,495, 11% of total). Iraq dropped out of the top ten while Somalia ranked ninth. (5)

Information on rejected asylum applicants and whether or not they leave the country is a critical weakness in existing data sources. Some rejected applicants depart by government removal or various voluntary departures schemes for which data are available. Others might either depart without notifying authorities or remain in the UK as part of the irregular migrant population. (5)

References:

1. Home Office Statistical Bulletin August 2009 'Control of Immigration Statistics UK 2008' H.O. Research Development and Statistics Directorate 25 September 2001 'Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 2000'
2. UNHCR 23 March 2010 'Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries 2009'
3. The Guardian Tuesday 22 September 2009
4. Refugee Council, Heaven Crawley January 2010 'Chance or choice? Understanding why asylum seekers come to the UK'
5. BRIEFING -Migration to the UK: Asylum - AUTHOR: Dr Scott Blinder. PUBLISHED: 23/03/2011 www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk