# Asylum seeker numbers in Britain surge with some councils hit six hundred fold



Three quarters of Britain's councils have experienced a staggering 100 per cent increase in the rate of asylum seekers over the past decade, with some areas witnessing explosive growth. Notably, one council has seen a 600-fold increase since 2014, underlining a significant shift in the landscape of asylum accommodation in the UK. Government statistics indicate that, on average, for every 10,000 residents in Northumberland, nearly 21 are now seeking asylum—a dramatic rise from just one recorded in 2014.

An analysis reveals that by the end of 2024, approximately 110,000 asylum seekers were being hosted across the United Kingdom, equivalent to the population of towns such as Cheltenham or Worthing. The rising number of small boat crossings has contributed significantly to this increase, with the daily costs of housing asylum seekers tripling to approximately £4.2 million. Currently, around 40,000 individuals are being accommodated in hotels, a situation that has drawn scrutiny from various quarters.

Despite the overwhelming numbers, the distribution of asylum seekers remains uneven. A concerning report indicates that 59 out of 361 councils are accommodating none at all. This lack of equitable allocation has led to mounting tensions in communities that do bear the burden of an influx. Hillingdon, a borough in West London, has emerged as the UK's hotspot for asylum seekers, reflecting a broader trend whereby certain cities and regions shoulder much heavier loads than others.

The Home Office's dispersal policy aims to spread asylum seekers across the country, but critics argue that the implementation of this policy leaves much to be desired. Many local authorities express concern over the pressures placed on housing and public services, a sentiment echoed in areas such as Hartlepool and Coventry, where residents have noted rising strains on healthcare and educational facilities. Furthermore, the recent by-election in Runcorn, where Reform UK barely defeated Labour, was marked by promises from both parties to close facilities accommodating asylum seekers. This reflect's the growing public discontent regarding the presence of asylum seekers in their locales.

Financial considerations surrounding the accommodation of asylum seekers are staggering. The National Audit Office has revealed that taxpayer costs for asylum accommodation are projected to reach £15 billion over the next decade, significantly higher than initial estimates. Current contracts for accommodation, managed by suppliers including Clearsprings Ready Homes and Serco, have come under fire due to inefficiencies and escalating costs. By the end of 2023, the number of asylum seekers housed in contingency accommodation, such as hotels, stood at 41,000, with a significant proportion remaining in dispersed housing.

Public services are grappling to cope with the increased demand, and voices like that of Robert Bate from the Centre for Migration Control highlight a growing sense of injustice among local communities. Bate remarked that these changes are transforming once peaceful neighbourhoods, complicating the quality of life for long-standing residents while straining public services. Many communities feel that they are having to absorb the consequences of national policy decisions without adequate support.

Moreover, recent statistics reveal that 2024 has set a record for asylum claims, with over 108,000 migrants applying for asylum during the year. This is an 18 per cent increase from 2023 and highlights the sustained pressure on the immigration system. Although half of these applicants faced rejection at the initial stage, the flow of claims remains relentless, mainly driven by irregular arrivals via small boats across the English Channel.

Despite attempts by the Home Office to streamline and resolve the backlog in asylum applications, ongoing challenges persist. The department currently has over 124,000 individuals awaiting a decision on their claims. Although some improvement has been noted—a 6 per cent decrease in pending cases from the previous quarter—the situation highlights the pressing need for reform.

As the Home Office grapples with these considerable challenges, it must navigate the complex landscape of public sentiment, financial implications, and legal frameworks, all of which complicate the path towards an equitable and functional asylum system.

### Reference Map

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## Bibliography

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* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2024/how-many-people-claim-asylum-in-the-uk> - In 2024, the UK saw a record 108,138 asylum claims, marking an 18% increase from 2023 and surpassing the previous peak of 103,081 in 2002. This surge is largely attributed to a rise in irregular arrivals via small boats. The data highlights the UK's ongoing challenges in managing asylum applications and underscores the need for effective policy responses to address this growing trend.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2024/how-many-cases-are-in-the-uk-asylum-system--2> - As of December 2024, there were 124,802 individuals awaiting an initial decision on their asylum applications in the UK, a 6% decrease from the previous quarter. Of those receiving support, 34% were housed in hotels, 63% in other accommodations, and 3% received subsistence support only. The data provides insight into the distribution and status of asylum seekers within the UK's immigration system.
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