# Asylum claims in UK hit record 108,000 amid Channel crossings and systemic crises abroad



The recent surge in asylum claims in Britain has unveiled a complex interplay of factors driving record numbers, as revealed by recent statistics. In 2024, the UK saw an unprecedented 108,000 applications for asylum, reflecting an 18% increase from the previous year and surpassing previous highs documented in the early 2000s. This rise can largely be attributed to the ongoing crisis involving small boats crossing the English Channel, with 32% of applications recorded from individuals arriving this way.

Countries experiencing significant increases in asylum claims include those enduring systemic issues and human rights violations. Notably, claims from Tajikistan saw a staggering 200-fold increase in just two decades, rising from a mere single application in 2004 to 380 in 2024. This steep rise highlights the perception of Britain as a "soft touch" for asylum seekers, a sentiment echoed by experts such as Robert Bates from the Centre for Migration Control. He characterised the existing system as chaotic and expensive, suggesting that to restore order, future asylum applications should be frozen and deportations ramped up for those who entered the country illegally.

Our analysis also shines a light on the five leading countries of origin for asylum seekers in the UK: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, and Syria, which collectively accounted for 38% of total applications last year. These nations are grappling with severe socio-political turmoil, making their citizens more likely to seek refuge elsewhere. For instance, the Iranian claim rate surged notably following the protests triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022, an event that stoked widespread discontent against the government.

Importantly, the asylum process is not only an entry point for new arrivals; individuals already residing in the UK for years can also apply. This complexity adds layers to the debate surrounding immigration policy, with critics and proponents divided on the appropriateness of current measures.

The situation is exacerbated by a stark backlog in the asylum system. As of December 2024, around 91,000 cases were awaiting initial decisions—31% lower than the peak in 2022, yet still considerably high. The rising number of refusals (with only 47% of initial decisions resulting in grants of protection) has led to an unprecedented five-fold increase in asylum appeals awaiting hearings. This mounting pressure has strained the appeals system, which now requires immediate governmental intervention to avert further crisis.

The discourse around asylum seekers has become increasingly charged, with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak recently asserting the need to “take back control of our borders,” a pronouncement aimed at countering the perceived threat from opposition parties. Keir Starmer, leader of the Labour Party, has also voiced concerns about mass immigration creating an "island of strangers," reflecting broader anxieties among the British public about cultural and societal cohesion.

Locally, communities have felt the strain of the growing number of asylum seekers, with some councils reporting stark increases in accommodation needs. For instance, one council is now housing 600 times more asylum seekers than it did a decade ago, leading to significant concerns regarding resources and local services. Amid rising tensions, residents in various towns across the UK have raised alarms about the impact on public services such as housing, healthcare, and schools, revealing a growing discontent that policymakers must address.

Overall, the current landscape of asylum claims in Britain illustrates not only the challenges faced by individuals seeking refuge from persecution but also the broader societal implications that these trends carry. As the government grapples with a system under pressure, the conversation around immigration and reform continues to evolve, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that considers humanitarian principles alongside the logistical realities of integration and resource management.

In this context, the response from the UK government will heavily influence not just the future of the asylum process, but also the broader narrative around immigration in a rapidly changing socio-political climate.

### Reference Map:

1. [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14706491/countries-asylum-claims-soft-touch-Britain-rocketed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
2. [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2024/how-many-people-claim-asylum-in-the-uk)
3. [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2024/summary-of-latest-statistics)
4. [[4]](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/stay-informed/articles/surge-to-clear-asylum-decisions-backlog-means-appeals-system-struggling-to-cope/)
5. [[5]](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/stay-informed/explainers/top-facts-from-the-latest-statistics-on-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/)
6. [[6]](https://www.iranintl.com/en/202502272489)
7. [[7]](https://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/the-uks-asylum-backlog/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14706491/countries-asylum-claims-soft-touch-Britain-rocketed.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <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 recorded 108,138 asylum claims, marking an 18% increase from 2023 and surpassing the previous peak of 103,081 in 2002. This surge is attributed to various factors, including the rise in small boat arrivals across the English Channel. The data also indicates that 32% of asylum seekers in 2024 arrived via small boats, highlighting the growing challenges in managing irregular migration.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-system-statistics-year-ending-december-2024/summary-of-latest-statistics> - The UK's asylum system faced significant challenges in 2024, with 91,000 cases awaiting initial decisions by year's end. This backlog, while 31% lower than the peak in 2022, remains high by historical standards. The data also reveals that 47% of initial decisions were grants of protection, a decrease from 67% in 2023, indicating a tightening of asylum criteria.
4. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/stay-informed/articles/surge-to-clear-asylum-decisions-backlog-means-appeals-system-struggling-to-cope/> - The Refugee Council reports a five-fold increase in asylum appeals awaiting hearings, rising from 7,173 at the start of 2023 to 41,987 by December 2024. This surge is linked to a significant rise in Home Office refusals and highlights the strain on the appeals system, emphasizing the need for immediate government intervention to address the backlog.
5. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/stay-informed/explainers/top-facts-from-the-latest-statistics-on-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/> - In 2024, the UK saw 84,231 asylum applications, a 16% increase from 2023. The top five countries of origin were Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Bangladesh, and Syria. Notably, 47% of initial decisions resulted in grants of protection, a decrease from 67% in 2023, reflecting stricter asylum policies.
6. <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202502272489> - Iranian nationals ranked third in asylum claims in the UK in 2024, with 8,099 applications. This surge is attributed to increased migration pressures following nationwide protests and state repression in Iran, particularly after the death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022.
7. <https://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/the-uks-asylum-backlog/> - As of December 2024, the UK's asylum backlog stood at around 91,000 applications, 31% lower than the peak in 2022 but still high by historical standards. The backlog's decline slowed in 2024, with a significant increase in asylum appeals, indicating ongoing challenges in the asylum processing system.