
Sanctuary seeking communities and harmful rhetoric

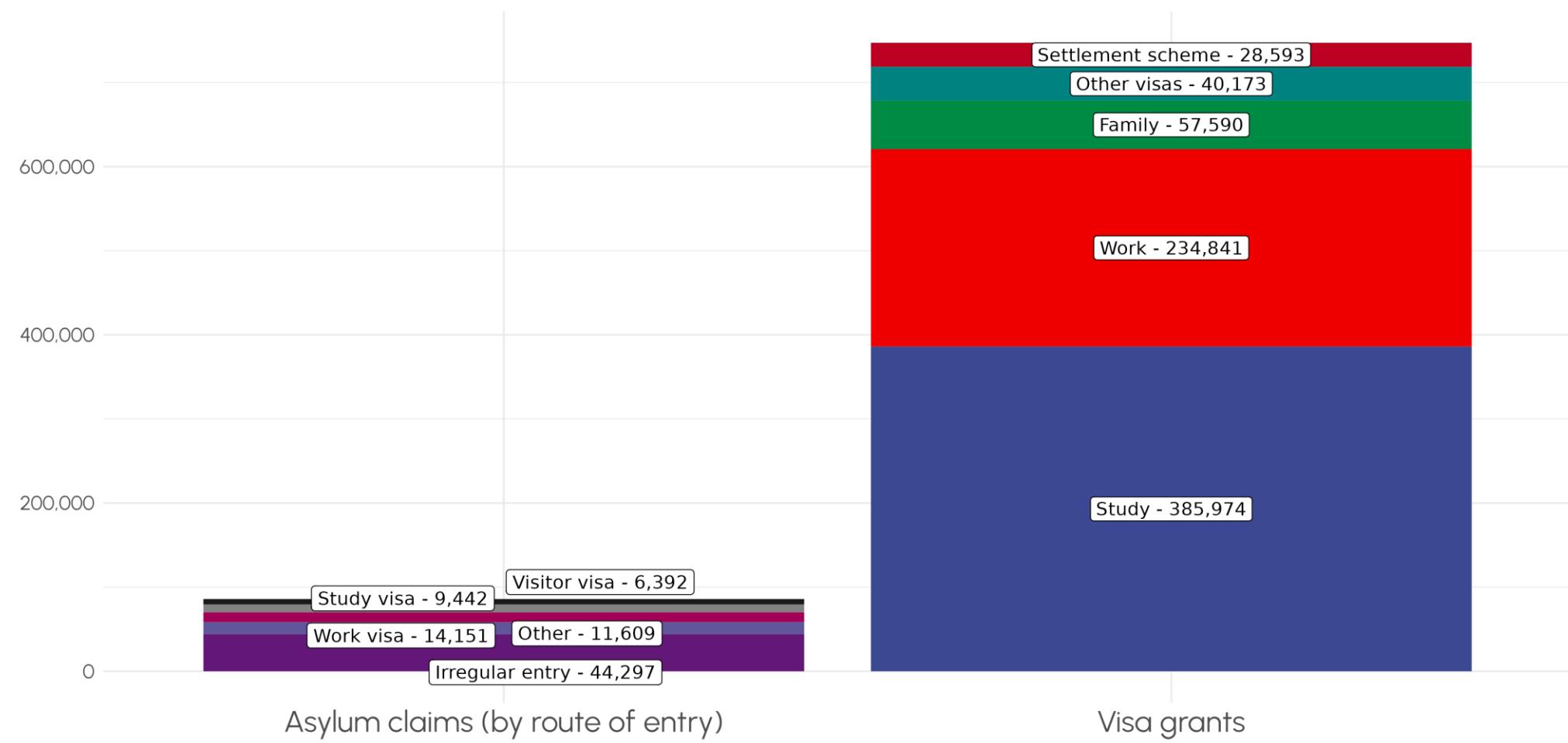
Delivered by Grampian Regional Equality Council

Outline

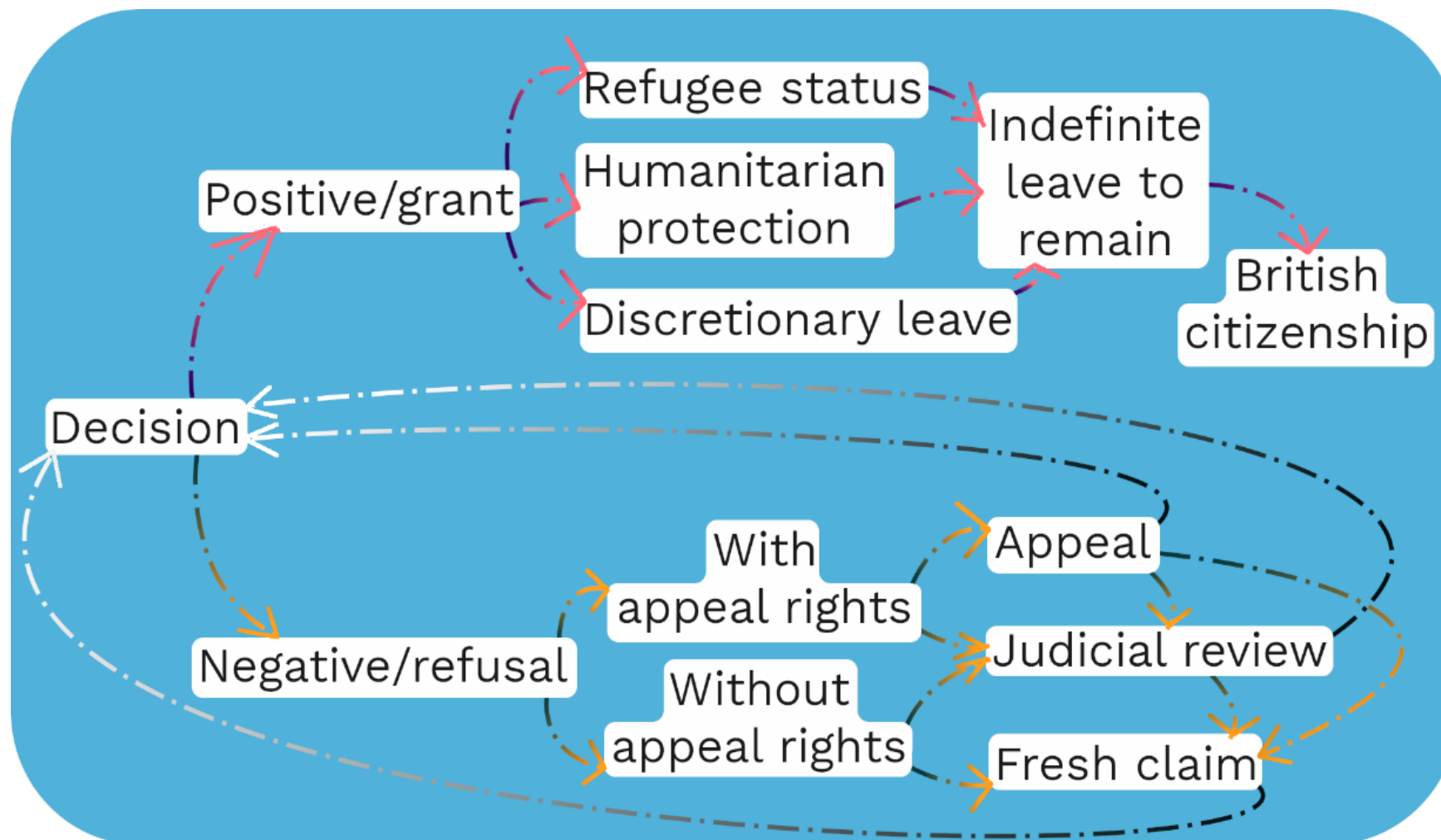
- Immigration in the UK
- What is asylum support?
- What is mis-, dis-, and malinformation
- How it affects immigrant and ethnic minority communities
- Training and support

Immigration in the UK

How many people came to the UK in the past year?
(Jul 2025 - Jun 2026)



Immigration in the UK, cont.



Asylum support

- The Home Office *may* provide support for people claiming asylum who would otherwise become destitute:
 - Accommodation (no choice basis)
 - £9.95 per week if catered
 - £49.18 per week if not catered
- After being granted refugee status:
 - 28-42 day 'move on' period
 - Present to local authority for housing support
 - Apply for work and benefits

Mis/dis/malinformation

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Misinformation

Wrong, but shared without intent to harm. It often feels like common sense.

Disinformation

False, and spread deliberately. Often to scapegoat a group and shift blame.

Malinformation

True information used in a misleading or harmful way. Context stripped out.

Effects on communities

- Anti-immigrant sentiment doesn't just affect immigrants
- People who are visibly 'different' get targeted or experience shifts in their community
- Housing crisis, NHS waiting lists, community tensions are not caused by immigrants – these are systemic issues that affect us all

Training and support

- GREC offers training to suit client needs, such as cultural awareness, unconscious bias, equalities compliance, and working with interpreters
- No Recourse North East Partnership offers training on NRPF condition, asylum, and other bespoke topics
- There will be services in your area offering training – equalities is more than a tick-box exercise
- People with living and lived experience should be at the core of how services work

PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM IN NORTH EAST SCOTLAND: FACTS, NOT MYTHS

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

ARE MIGRANTS IN HOTELS HERE ILLEGALLY?

No. Everyone in Home Office hotels is there under Asylum Support, meaning they have made a legal claim for protection. Seeking asylum is a legal right protected by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. To qualify, a person must show a real risk of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social group. People can only claim asylum once they are in the UK. Safe resettlement routes are extremely limited, forcing many to arrive by dangerous journeys. The UK asylum system provides this protection, but it is strictly controlled and complex, often leaving people waiting for long periods with very limited rights.

(Sources: UNHCR 1951 Refugee Convention; JK Home Office 2025; House of Commons Library, Asylum Statistics 2025)

People seeking safety predominantly come from war-torn countries. These conflicts are tied to global systems of war, oil, and arms in which the UK plays a substantial role. Climate change multiplies risks, as extreme weather events displace millions. Deep inequalities, rooted in poverty and colonial legacies mean the most vulnerable suffer the most. These forces push people across borders in search of safety and protection.

(Sources: UNHCR, Global Trends Report 2024; UNESCO, Social and Human Sciences Report on Inequality and Development, 2023)

IS THE NORTH EAST FLOODED BY PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM?

As of June 2026, 6,853 people were seeking asylum in Scotland, a country of over 5.55m – just 0.14% of the population or about 1 in every 725. In the North East, with around 589,000 residents, only 936 people received asylum support – 0.16% of the total population, or roughly 1 in 625. Home Office asylum accommodation is allocated on a no-choice basis in all but exceptional circumstances. People seeking asylum often face long waits, sometimes years, for a decision on their claim; over 25% of people, as we speak, have been waiting over 12 months for an initial decision on their claim. This system is characterised by poor decision-making; appeals against initial decisions made by the Home Office have increased by 700% in the 2020s, with around 50% granted in the same period.

(Source: Home Office, Immigration System Statistics 2026)

At the end of 2025, 120m people had been forced from their homes worldwide. Roughly two-thirds of them remained displaced in-country; around 9 million crossed borders to seek asylum. Of that 120m, far less than 1% will end up in the UK. Of the world's refugees, 65% are hosted in countries neighbouring their own, and 68% are hosted by low-and-middle-income countries like Iran, Uganda and Pakistan. Compared to European peers, the UK receives fewer asylum claims per person than average.

(Sources: UNHCR, Global Trends 2025; Home Office, Immigration System Statistics 2026)

ARE PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM LINKED TO HIGHER CRIME?

There is no reliable public evidence related to criminality for people seeking asylum, as immigration status is not routinely recorded in the relevant procedures. Where data does exist, it is focused on the nationality of perpetrators. UK-wide evidence does not show that migrants are disproportionately represented in crime overall. People seeking asylum may face increased risks of trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation, forced criminality, harassment and abuse, especially in a system where poverty and isolation are designed into the system. Any claims linking asylum, nationality, and crime are based on inaccurate or incomplete "data".

(Sources: Migration Observatory; Scottish Government; UNHCR & British Red Cross)

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is not an imported problem. In 2026, leading women's rights and migrant organisations warned that linking VAWG with migration reinforces harmful myths, fuels division and distracts from the real causes of gender-based violence. Scottish research found that over 90% of rape and sexual assault victims knew their attacker. Migrant women seeking asylum often face additional barriers to safety, support and justice in large part due to the design of the UK's immigration system.

(Source: End Violence Against Women Coalition et al, Not in Our Name, 2026, BBC Scotland, reporting University of Glasgow research, 2018)

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