

Refugee Council analysis of asylum appeal statistics

New figures released show the number of asylum appeals waiting to be processed in the courts has increased by nearly 500% over the last two years. Statistics from the first-tier tribunal report show that at the end of 2024 there were 41,987 asylum appeals in the court's backlog, up from 7,173 at the start of 2023. This is a rise of 34,814 (485%).

In the last three months of 2024, figures show there were 12,183 appeals lodged by people who had their asylum claims rejected, which followed steps taken by the new Government as it arrived in office in July 2024 to restart asylum decision making. The total number of appeals lodged in 2024 increased by 71% on the year before.[1]

These new statistics show that, without urgent action, the Government could be trading one crisis with another, where the pressures and costs caused by the backlog of asylum decisions are moved to a different part of the system.

The Refugee Council has undertaken further analysis of statistics published by the Home Office at the end of February 2025 which showed that as of 31 December 2024 there were 38,079 people being accommodated in hotels by the Home Office[2], and estimated that if those numbers were to remain the same throughout 2025, the hotel bill could reach nearly £1.5bn [3]. Reducing the number of people in hotels by 3,000 people each month would halve the cost of hotels during 2025.

The charity says the key to preventing the appeals backlog from escalating and ending the use of hotels is to make sure initial asylum decisions are correct. It warns that in the necessary effort to increase the number of decisions made on people asylum applications and clear the backlog, there have been serious concerns raised regarding the quality of decisions, as new caseworkers were hired and initial interviews shortened.

There has also been an increase in the number of claims being refused due to legislation that was introduced by the previous government making it harder for refugees to have their claim accepted. The charity says this also includes a significant reduction in the number of asylum application claims from Afghans that are granted. For several years, nearly all Afghan claims have been accepted by the Home Office. In the second half of 2024 only 4 in 10 were. [4] Given the barriers to removing Afghans and the ongoing concerns about the safety of their country, many are likely to appeal. Afghans make up the highest nationality accommodated in hotels, as well as being the highest nationality arriving by small boats for each of the last two years.

There were also more than 7,000 Syrians waiting for an initial decision on their asylum claim at the end of 2024.[5] However, the Home Office continues to have an indefinite pause on the processing of all Syrian claims, despite recent violence in Syria.

The Refugee Council is calling for the Government to:

- Review all appeals within the Home Office so that errors can be corrected without the need for the tribunal to process the appeal.
- Revert to the previous standard of proof for asylum claims.
- Where there are clear barriers to being able to remove someone, the Government should also consider granting temporary leave so that people can support themselves.
- Restart decision making on Syrian asylum claims.

- Commit to ending the use of hotels by the end of 2025 and trigger the break clause in the asylum accommodation contracts next year moving to delivery by local authorities.

Notes to editors:

1. Ministry of Justice, Tribunal Statistics Quarterly: October to December 2024
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunals-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2024> Tables FIA_1 and FIA_4
2. Home Office, Immigration system statistics year ending December 2024, Asylum and Resettlement – Asylum seekers in receipt of support, table Asy_D09
3. In July 2024, the Home Office estimated that the average cost of accommodating someone in a hotel was £105 per night. See The Illegal Migration Act 2023 (Amendment) Regulations 2024 impact assessment
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukia/2024/119/pdfs/ukia_20240119_en.pdf.
Accommodating 38,079 people would cost an average of £3.99m per day, or £1,459,377,675 for a year.
4. Home Office, Immigration system statistics year ending December 2024, Asylum and Resettlement - Applications, Initial decisions, and Resettlement, table Asy_D02
5. Home Office, Immigration system statistics year ending December 2024, Asylum and Resettlement - Asylum applications awaiting a decision, table Asy_D03