



What are the current restrictions on people seeking asylum who want to work?

People seeking asylum in the UK are effectively prohibited from working. They can only apply to the Home Office for permission to work if they have been waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for over **twelve months** and only for jobs that are on the Government's [Shortage Occupation List](#) (this is an incredibly restrictive list that includes jobs such as classical ballet dancer and geophysicist).

How many people seeking asylum have been given permission to work under the current policy?

The Home Office does not collect this data. However, coalition members work with people seeking asylum right across the country and such cases are extremely rare.

What changes are the Lift the Ban Coalition campaigning for?

The Lift the Ban coalition is calling for the right to work for people seeking asylum, and their adult dependants, after **six months** of having lodged an asylum claim or further submission, unconstrained by the Shortage Occupation List.

Who supports this campaign?

The call for reform has enjoyed widespread support. The Lift the Ban coalition is now made up of over 240 organisations, made up of organisations representing people seeking asylum, but also businesses, trade unions, faith groups, and think tanks from across the political spectrum.

It also has a significant amount of political support. The right to work for people seeking asylum is backed by all major opposition parties, and has also enjoyed significant backbench Conservative support.

Why after six months?

Calling for permission to be granted after six months neutralises one of the Government's main arguments against the policy – which is that granting people seeking asylum the right to work could encourage unfounded claims from economic migrants looking for easy access to work. That argument is undermined when a six month restriction is introduced because all clearly unfounded applications should be refused by the Home Office within its six month target for deciding straightforward claims.

In addition, most European countries have some sort of time restriction before people seeking asylum can start working, and very few allow for work from the day an asylum claim is made. It is very unlikely that the UK would move from one of the most restrictive policies in Europe to one of the most generous. This position is a compromise to give us the best chance possible of achieving success.

Why does the UK not allow people seeking asylum to work?



The reasons given by the current Government for not restoring the right to work are different to those given when the right to work was first taken away in 2002. The then Labour Government argued that faster asylum decision-making times would make granting permission to work 'increasingly irrelevant'. However, this has not been borne out, and today, over 61% of asylum decisions take over six months to resolve, with many taking years.

The current Government instead argues primarily that granting people seeking asylum could act as a 'pull factor', in which more people would try to claim asylum in the UK purely to access the UK labour market.

Is this credible? Would changing the rules act as a 'pull factor' for immigration?

No. There is no evidence that introducing the right to work would create a 'pull factor'. In fact, [a review of 29 academic papers](#) found that there was no correlation between right to work and where people seeking asylum chose to seek protection. Instead, research shows that people are more likely to flee to countries where they have family or friends, speak the same language and believe the country respects human rights.

Would everyone seeking asylum be expected to look for employment?

No. Granting the right to work must not mean an obligation to work for people seeking asylum. For many, looking for employment will not be a realistic option while they are also pursuing their asylum claim and work may not be appropriate for those who have suffered significant trauma from their experiences prior to coming to the UK.

How did you reach the figure for the estimated savings?

We looked at the number of people waiting over six months on their initial asylum decision. We calculated that if 50% were to work earning the national average wage, then the Government would receive £73.1 million per year in tax and national insurance contributions. Added to this the amount that would no longer be needed for financial support – the savings on providing no cash subsistence support would be £24.7 million per year.

In our survey, 94% of people said they wanted to work if they had the right to do so. We also know that this population is well-qualified for a variety of jobs – with 37% having a university degree, which is similar to the UK population at 42%. We believe 50% of people working is realistic.