

Max Wilkinson MP
Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Home Affairs
House of Commons
(via email)

27 November 2025

Dear Mr Wilkinson,

Thank you for your letter of 24 October regarding an article by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP published in The Sun, titled 'The truth is that migrants come to Britain because they believe we are most generous country in Europe'.¹

You expressed that the Secretary of State describing the UK as the "destination of choice" for people "looking for the best place to become a refugee" may be read by some to mean that more refugees come to the UK than to any other European country.

It is difficult to determine whether her statements are testable. Phrases such as "destination of choice" and "most generous country" are vague, and could refer to various kinds of evidence or subjective judgements. Instead we have highlighted some of the available data that may be of interest to your concerns.

The Home Office published research in May 2025 which concluded that decision-making by asylum seekers in their journeys to the UK is complicated; because their choices "are ultimately constrained by various factors determined by context, time, and rapidly shifting evolving circumstances", their decisions and destination preferences "can change across the migratory journey, often in unpredictable ways."²

You asked us to look at the publicly available data and where the UK stands in relation to other European countries on the number of arrivals to the UK. The Home Office publishes accredited official statistics on How many people claim asylum in the UK³ as part of its quarterly Immigration system statistics⁴.

¹ [The truth is that migrants come to Britain because they believe we are most generous country in Europe](#) – The Sun, 22 October 2025

² [Asylum seeker decision-making in journeys to the United Kingdom \(2022\)](#), Home Office, 22 May 2025

³ [How many people claim asylum in the UK?](#), Home Office, updated 27 November 2025

⁴ [Immigration system statistics quarterly release](#), Home Office, update 27 November 2025

The latest publicly available data shows that compared with other European countries, the UK received the fifth largest number of asylum seekers in the year ending June 2025 (109,142).

Table 2: The number of people claiming asylum in the UK and the top 4 countries in the EU+, year ending June 2025

Country of claim	Total number of people claiming (proportion of total claims in the EU+ and UK)	Top nationality claiming asylum (percentage of total for that country)
Germany	190,125 (19%)	Syria (29%)
France	158,525 (16%)	Ukraine (9%)
Spain	155,915 (15%)	Venezuela (50%)
Italy	137,270 (13%)	Bangladesh (21%)
United Kingdom	109,142 (11%)	Pakistan (10%)

Source: Eurostat Asylum statistics and Asylum claims and initial decisions – Asy_D01

The House of Commons Library has also recently published a research briefing on asylum statistics⁵ that you may find useful.

While the UK Statistics Authority cannot comment on political statements, we encourage those speaking on behalf of government to consider how a typical person is likely to understand what they say. Being clear on definitions and the evidence underpinning any such statements can help maintain public confidence in statistics and the organisations that produce them.

Thank you again for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



Penny Young
Deputy Chair

⁵ [Asylum statistics](#), House of Commons Library, 1 September 2025