

Did you know?

- The UK was home to less than 2% of the world's refugees in 2009.
- Most refugees from war zones or areas of civil unrest flee to neighbouring countries, often the poorest in the world.
- In 2009, Pakistan hosted the largest number of refugees, just under 1.8 million.
- In the early 18th century Irish people were seasonal migrants on the coast of Newfoundland, working the fisheries in the summer and returning home in the autumn.
- At least 70 million people throughout the world are thought to have Irish ancestry.
- In the 1970s and 1980s more people left here than came here to live, only since 2004 did immigration exceed emigration.
- In the year up to June 2009, around 23,500 people came to live in Northern Ireland and around 21,400 people left NI to live elsewhere.
- The highest percentage of newcomers from Central and Eastern Europe living here recently was in the Dungannon local government district (8%).

EMBRACE NI

Building a Welcoming Community

EMBRACE is a group of Christians drawn from different denominations, working together to promote a positive response to people seeking asylum, migrant workers and people from minority ethnic backgrounds in N Ireland. EMBRACE seeks to reflect gospel values, and equip the Church to fulfil its call to welcome the stranger, by providing information, training, and resource materials, and acting as a channel to assist those in need.

EMBRACE On the Street raises awareness of migrant destitution and facilitates practical help for individual people. Homelessness charities make specific requests for goods such as clothing and bedding, and EMBRACE organises collections through a rota of churches.

EMBRACE Emergency Fund is used to provide vital emergency assistance to destitute foreign nationals and people seeking asylum, where no other means of support, either statutory or charitable is available.

Thinking of Joining Us?

If you are not already a member of EMBRACE, please consider joining us. Subscriptions are £10.00 annually per person and £20.00 for groups. Please write to us at the address below.

Making a Donation?

If you would like to make a donation towards our work please send a cheque, payable to EMBRACE. Your support is greatly appreciated.

For more information contact us:

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WHO'S WHO? WHO'S HERE? 2011

This project was supported by funding from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM); Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Racial Justice; and the Churches.

Office of the
**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk



Society here is changing and many local people are confused as to who the newcomers are and why they are here. This leaflet hopes to answer some common questions.

People Seeking Asylum & Refugees

Q Who is an asylum seeker?

A A person who is looking for a safe place outside her/his own country. People seek asylum if they fear persecution in their own country because of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, social group or political opinion.

Q What is our obligation to people seeking asylum?

A The UK signed the 1951 UN Convention Relating to Refugees and has agreed to allow people who enter the country to apply for asylum here. They have a legal right to be here while their application is considered. Equally, anyone from this country may seek asylum in any other country that has signed the convention.

Q Who is a refugee?

A Someone who applies for asylum and is successful in being granted refugee status. 'Refugee' is also sometimes used as a general term for all people who have been displaced from their own countries by persecution, war and civil unrest.

Q Do many people come here to seek asylum?

A No. In 2010 only 185 people with 93 dependents applied for sanctuary through the Belfast support service. A small number may also have applied to the UK Border Agency directly and are living on their savings. Many applications are unsuccessful. Past estimates suggest that there are only around 2000 refugees living in N Ireland.

Q Do people seeking asylum come here because of our benefits system?

A Recent research shows that most people who escape to the UK have no knowledge of our benefits system. The allowance for a single person whose asylum application is being considered is £35.52 per week, plus accommodation support.

Q Do they beg in the streets?

A It is unlikely that anyone you see begging is seeking asylum; however, some people lose all their benefits if their applications for sanctuary fail. If they cannot return home they are forced to rely on charity.

For more detailed information see

www.embraceni.org/category/information/asylum/

Migrants

Q Who is a migrant worker?

A Someone who leaves his/her country to seek work elsewhere. The term is usually applied to people who do not plan to remain permanently in another country. If a person from Lisburn goes to Canada or Dublin to work for the summer, he or she is a migrant worker.

Q Who is an economic migrant?

A An 'economic migrant' is similar to a 'migrant worker'. The term is sometimes used in a negative way.

Q Who is an immigrant?

A All people coming into the country to work are immigrants, but the word is usually applied to people who intend to settle and integrate here. People who are born here are not 'immigrants'. Many minority-ethnic groups have been here for generations.

Migrant Workers

Q Who is entitled to work here?

A This depends on their country of origin

- People from the **European Economic Area (EEA)** do not need permission to come here and work. In the same way, anyone with a British or Irish passport can go freely to Spain and Germany, for example, to seek work. (The EEA includes the European Union States plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.)
- From May 2011 people from the countries that joined the EU in 2004, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia (the **A8 countries**) no longer have to register to work here. Like other EEA nationals they need to prove that they are 'habitually resident' here before they become eligible for the same benefits as local people.
- Although free to come here, people from Romania and Bulgaria (the **A2 countries**), can usually only work as self-employed or with advance permission as skilled workers. A few work for 6-month periods on the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme.
- The immigration system favours people from Europe. The coalition Government has put a cap on the total number of migrant workers coming here from outside the EEA. Employers must register as sponsors in order to employ people from countries such as the Philippines and India on **Work Permits** and demonstrate that the posts cannot be filled by the domestic labour force.
- Some **Foreign Students** may work part time.
- Some temporary staff such as diplomats and representatives of foreign firms are **Permit-Free Workers**.

Q How many people work here without proper papers?

A Nobody is sure but one Home Office estimate was around 2000; many enter the country legally but overstay work permits or visitors' visas.

Q Why is there so much migration today?

A There has always been migration. People migrate for different reasons. Anyone from N Ireland is likely to have relatives abroad because people left here in the hope of improving their lives. People come here now because declining birth rates in industrial countries have meant that less young people have been joining the work force. There is also greater ease of communication and international transport is cheaper and more readily available.

Q How many migrants have come here?

A We only have estimates. In 2009 there were around 39,000 workers from the A8 countries living here. The Labour Force Survey suggests that there were 80,000 people, born outside the UK and Ireland, living in N Ireland in 2010; just 4.5% of the population. The economic recession has reduced the numbers coming here.

Q Do we really need migrant workers?

A Migrant workers tend to come here because they hear of job vacancies. We have had skills gaps and labour shortages, especially in hospitals and nursing homes, food processing, farming, IT and service industries.

Q Do they cost us money?

A There are costs because of increased pressure on medical, education and housing services, but migrant workers pay tax and national insurance like everyone else. They contribute to the local economy by paying rent and buying food, clothing and other necessities.

Q What about jobs for local people?

A Incomers usually fill jobs that local people do not do or cannot do. Unemployment was at its lowest when inward migration was at its height.

EMBRACE is grateful to the Refugee and Migrant Project of the Irish Bishop's Conference for devising the concept of this leaflet. Their *Who's Who* leaflet for the Irish Republic is available from www.catholicbishops.ie/images/stories/cco_publications/refugees/who%20who%200910.pdf