

Warm Welcome?

Understanding public attitudes to asylum seekers in Scotland

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About the author

Miranda Lewis heads ippr's People and Policy team. The team has three strands of work: examining public attitudes and behaviour, working on the participation agenda, and developing new methods of public involvement in decision-making. Miranda has written extensively on various aspects of public attitudes to policy issues, and has also carried out research projects in developing countries. She is the author of ippr's book *Asylum: Understanding Public Attitudes* (2005).

Abbreviations and definitions

ABC1	Upper to lower middle classes
C2DE	Skilled working class to those at the lowest levels of subsistence
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BNP	British National Party
IND	Immigration and Nationality Directorate
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
PCC	Press Complaints Commission

Executive summary

Asylum seekers have been dispersed to Scotland since 2000¹. There are now approximately 5,500 asylum seekers living in the country, the vast majority concentrated in a few areas of Glasgow. As cases are decided, the number of refugees living in Scotland is also increasing. Media focus on the Dungavel Removal Centre in South Lanarkshire, forced removals, and the murder of an asylum seeker in Sighthill, Glasgow, in 2001 have heightened the profile of asylum seekers in Scotland. Ensuring that the public understands what is happening (and why) is essential if these new communities are to integrate effectively and contribute to Scottish life.

Following similar research in England and Wales, the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) set out to find out what people in Scotland think about asylum seekers and refugees, and to establish what informs these opinions. Much of the debate about public attitudes to immigration in Scotland has assumed that there is a more positive situation than in England. Polling evidence supports this theory, however there is no work that has focused specifically on asylum seekers rather than migrants in general.

ippr conducted focus groups in Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow to establish what people living in these areas think about asylum seekers. We carried out a total of 13 focus groups across the research areas, with a range of participants from different backgrounds. Each focus group brought together eight people from similar backgrounds. Structuring the groups in this way enables us to analyse the relative importance of different factors, including area, social background, age, economic status, gender and ethnicity. We also carried out a mapping exercise to establish what has happened in each area in relation to asylum, and met with key stakeholders to discuss their views on public attitudes and asylum seekers.

Main findings

There is greater tolerance to asylum seekers in Scotland than in England. Many people are supportive of the principle of asylum, and feel that people fleeing persecution should be offered sanctuary. There is a commonly expressed view that 'genuine asylum seekers' are welcome, but that the 'chancers' spoil it for them, by giving all asylum seekers a bad name.

However, this largely positive picture hides a more worrying set of views. Most people we interviewed in Glasgow were extremely hostile towards asylum seekers. Young people in all three research areas were quite intolerant of asylum seekers, and felt comfortable expressing a considerable degree of prejudice.

The perceived impacts of asylum seekers on the economy and employment opportunities are a particular concern to people living in Scotland. Many people, particularly younger people and those from social classes C2DE, feel that asylum seekers are a threat to jobs, and are concerned about their impact on public services, particularly housing. Asylum seekers are thought to be both coming to Scotland specifically to find work, and targeting the UK for its benefits system. As this suggests, asylum seekers are commonly confused with other minority groups, particularly the increasing numbers of migrants from EU accession countries.

For some people, particularly older people living in Glasgow, asylum seekers are strongly associated with unwelcome social and demographic change. Asylum seekers and other minorities are widely perceived to receive preferential treatment from the authorities. They are blamed for dominant social problems, and 'asylum seeker' has become a catch-all term for any non-white person. The issue of asylum is indivisible in public debate from race and immigration more generally.

Factors underpinning these attitudes

Lack of information: There is general confusion about the issue of asylum. Very few people understand the differences between asylum seekers and other migrants, or settled black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The numbers of asylum seekers in Scotland and the benefits they receive are greatly

1. The UK Government's dispersal programme, under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, came into force in April 2000. The programme aims to move asylum seekers from areas of the south east that have relatively high numbers of asylum seekers and refugees, such as Dover and London, into other areas.

exaggerated. However, while misinformation and myth can support prejudice, they are not the main causes of it. Even very tolerant people know very few facts. This is partly because asylum is described as a ‘taboo’ subject and one that it is difficult to discuss. Getting accurate information into the public domain is an important way of countering misinformation, but cannot be relied upon to change attitudes alone.

The media: The media has some influence on attitudes. Although people are extremely distrustful of the UK press’s treatment of asylum, negative views are imbued with the language of the tabloids. Many people say the only stories they can recall seeing in the Scottish press were about Sighthill. There has been much more positive coverage since then, but fewer people say they are aware of it. However, it is likely to have contributed to the largely more tolerant and better-informed debate than in England.

Political discourse: Strong political leadership from the Scottish Executive has made a difference, particularly in relation to broader issues of immigration. The Fresh Talent Initiative² and One Scotland campaign³ have helped the public to understand the positive impacts of migration. Most people are aware that Scotland is under-populated, and are more supportive of migration than their counterparts in England. However, these positive messages are, to some extent, undermined by the debate coming out of Westminster. Many people are very wary of the Labour Government’s approach to asylum, and feel let down by it.

Meaningful contact: The most positive attitudes are found among people who personally know asylum seekers or refugees. The most negative are found among people who live near to dispersal areas, but not near enough to know people living in them. Increasing levels of meaningful contact is an important strategy to tackle hostility.

Racism: Racism underpins some of the debates about asylum. Hostility to asylum seekers is socially fairly acceptable, and can rapidly spill over into hostility towards other minority groups. People from BME communities feel that the debate over asylum is increasing racism.

Initial dispersal: The initial dispersal process still affects views. Many people living in Glasgow perceive asylum seekers to have been dropped onto the city, with little preparation or consultation. Integration efforts with communities living next to or among asylum seekers are working, and prejudice is declining among these communities. However, groups who have had little contact with asylum seekers are still hostile.

Ways forward

Peoples’ attitudes are formed by a complex mix of personal circumstances, values and the external environment. Challenging them requires action at every level, from the very local to the national. There is plenty of good practice to build on in Scotland, which is, in part, responsible for the general, more tolerant debate.

However, immigration policy is not a devolved issue, making attempts to move debates, in some respects, more difficult. ippr’s research found that hostility is increased by a lack of faith in the UK Government to address the issue. While this is outside the Scottish-specific focus of this report, it is vital that the national policy framework enables regional and local interventions to be effective. Chapter 6 lists recommendations for different levels of government, the media, business and the voluntary sector.

The priorities are to:

- tackle hostility in Glasgow, by building on and widening successful integration work, and by moving beyond the continuing public focus on Sighthill
- focus on young people and children, particularly those in tertiary education, to challenge hostile attitudes
- ensure that challenging racism sits alongside attempts to change attitudes to asylum seekers, but not to waste resources by focusing on the hard core minority of people who will never accept asylum seekers

2. The Scottish Executive’s Fresh Talent initiative was set up to counter Scotland’s falling population. Formally introduced in February 2004, the initiative aims to encourage people from the EU and beyond to live, work and study in Scotland.

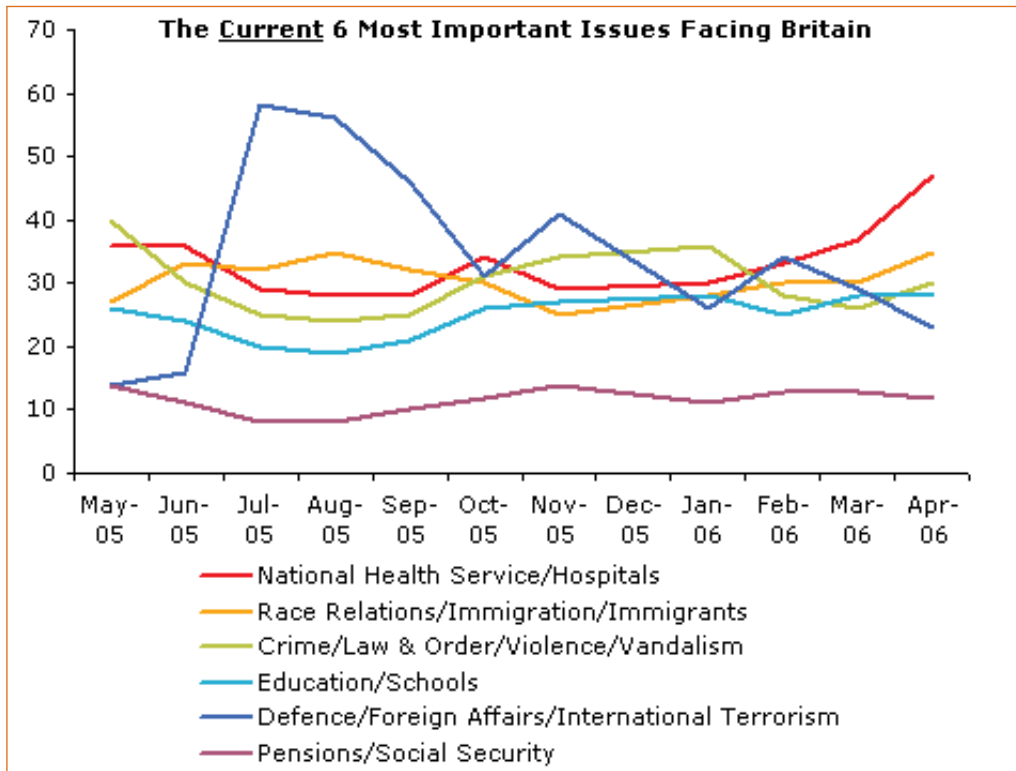
3. One Scotland is the Scottish Executive’s campaign designed to tackle racism in Scotland. It is supported by the One Workplace Equal Rights project that tackles racism in the workplace.

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- continue work to ensure that the Scottish media gives fair and balanced coverage of asylum issues
 - continue the multi-agency working that is a strength of the Scottish context, for example by putting out information endorsed by as many agencies as possible
 - increase the accurate information in the public domain, through accessible websites and leaflets
 - challenge concerns about the impacts of asylum seekers on employment and the economy, for example by including low-skilled workers in the Fresh Talent initiative
 - ensure that the One Scotland campaign includes facts about asylum
 - ensure that schools have the resources they need to teach asylum issues.

1. Introduction

Asylum seekers have been dispersed to Scotland since 2000⁴. There are now approximately 5,500 asylum seekers living in Scotland, the vast majority concentrated in a few areas of Glasgow. As cases are decided, the number of refugees living in Scotland is also increasing. Media focus on the Dungavel Removal Centre in South Lanarkshire, forced removals, and the murder of an asylum seeker in Sighthill, Glasgow, in 2001 have heightened the profile of asylum seekers in Scotland. Ensuring that the public understands what is happening (and why) is essential if these new communities are to integrate effectively and contribute to Scottish life.

Figure 1.1 The current six most important issues facing Britain



Source: MORI 2006 www.mori.com/polls/trends/issues12.shtml

At a national level, asylum and immigration continue to dominate the public debate. Figure 1.1 shows that, in April 2006, race and immigration were ranked the second most important issues facing the UK. While this may have been skewed by the media focus on the BNP prior to the local elections in England, these issues have remained in the top five areas of public concern for the last few years, despite recent reductions in the numbers of asylum applications (Lewis 2005). Previous research by ippr found that perceptions about the impacts of asylum seekers greatly outweigh any actual impacts (Lewis 2005).

Following similar research in England and Wales, ippr set out to find out what people in Scotland think about asylum seekers and refugees, and to establish what informs these opinions. Much of the debate about public attitudes in Scotland has assumed that there is a more positive situation than in England.⁵ Polling evidence supports this theory, however there is no work that has focused specifically on asylum seekers rather than migrants in general. ippr wanted to explore whether people in Scotland are more tolerant and, if so, why.

4. The UK Government's dispersal programme, under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, came into force in April 2000. The programme aims to move asylum seekers from areas of the south east that have relatively high numbers of asylum seekers and refugees, such as Dover and London, into other areas.

5. We do not provide a direct comparison of attitudes in England and Scotland, as ippr's research in each country was conducted 18 months apart. In that time, the general election campaign focused heavily upon asylum issues. The samples, therefore, cannot be compared effectively, other than to provide overarching findings.

How and why might attitudes in Scotland differ?

There are several reasons why attitudes in Scotland might differ from those in England. Our previous research found that there is no one factor that accounts for high levels of hostility. Political discourse, media debate, the local environment, and the numbers of migrants living locally all play a part in forming attitudes, alongside an individual's sense of vulnerability to job and cultural insecurity, and their personal values.

Many of these factors are quite different in Scotland. For example, the language coming out of the Scottish Executive has been more positive than that from Westminster, particularly in relation to economic migrants. The Scottish media has recently been painting a relatively positive picture of asylum seekers, in comparison to continuing media hostility in much of the UK-wide press. And Scotland's experience of migration is quite different to that of many places in England. A strong sense of national identity and pride may also increase tolerance, as people do not fear their culture will be damaged (Lewis 2005).

At the same time, attitudes to asylum seekers in Scotland are also formed by political and media debates in the UK, and in the context of a devolved administration with limited responsibility for asylum policy.

Box 1.1 Polling evidence: Scottish views on immigration

Polling data on attitudes to migration in Scotland tends to show that there are more moderate views among Scots than among people living south of the border. However, evidence is contradictory in places, and there has been no specific focus upon asylum.

A YouGov/Mail on Sunday survey in February 2005 found that, while immigration and asylum were the most important political issues for people living in England and Wales (over 50 per cent of respondents indicating this issue in their top three), they were only cited by 36 per cent of Scottish respondents, after health, and law and order.

- In the same poll, only 14 per cent of Scottish respondents said that immigration mattered most in their daily lives, compared to the UK average of 23 per cent. A higher proportion of Scottish respondents (seven per cent) felt that the Government's policies on immigration were too tough, but 67 per cent felt that they were not tough enough (compared to a UK average of 78 per cent). They were less inclined to favour a Conservative party handling of the immigration issue.
- A higher proportion of Scottish respondents (33 per cent) agreed that migration was needed to fill jobs that British people would not do, and 59 per cent (compared to 75 per cent in the north of England) disagreed.
- However, 21 per cent of Scottish respondents thought that no immigrants should be allowed into the UK, which is the same as the UK average (although twice as many as the UK average thought the number should be unlimited).

A MORI/Oxfam poll in November 2004 found that 51 per cent of Scottish adults do not think that media reporting of asylum issues is accurate and fair, compared to 27 per cent who do.

- The poll found that 93 per cent of Scots form their understanding of asylum issues from media sources (TV, radio and newspapers), with 88 per cent citing these as the most important information sources. Fourteen per cent get information from their friends and families.
- The words that people associate most closely with asylum seekers are 'desperate', 'foreigners', 'persecuted' and 'problem'.
- Forty-six per cent agree or tend to agree that the number of asylum seekers living in Scotland is a problem, but 65 per cent agree or tend to agree that Scotland should offer a safe haven to people fleeing war or persecution.
- Eighty-three per cent agree or tend to agree that asylum seekers should work in order to support themselves, and only 28 per cent thought they made a positive contribution to Scotland.

Research into sectarianism conducted for Glasgow City Council found that 45 per cent of people would be concerned if asylum seekers moved next door (NFO Social Research 2003).

Methodology

ippr wanted to establish what underpins public attitudes to asylum seekers in Scotland. There is some polling evidence already. However, while polling data provides a useful picture of what people think, it is less good at explaining why people hold particular views.⁶ The polling data also focuses upon race and immigration, rather than specifically upon asylum seekers. We therefore conducted qualitative research to provide a deeper understanding of what informs public attitudes to asylum seekers.

The research took place in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. These areas were picked as they have very different experiences of migration and, in particular, the numbers of asylum seekers living there. We undertook mapping exercises in each area, examining census data, local press activity and NASS data. This was to establish the numbers of asylum seekers in each area and to build up a picture of key local events. In Glasgow, we also met key stakeholders to discuss their views of public attitudes.

We conducted focus groups, as this methodology has the advantage of allowing researchers to gain an insight into how groups collectively form opinions, negotiate differences and take up positions. We carried out a total of 13 focus groups across the research areas, with a range of participants from different backgrounds. Each focus group brought together eight people from similar backgrounds. This helps participants feel comfortable about speaking out. Structuring the groups in this way also allowed us to analyse the relative importance of different factors, including social background, age, economic status, gender and ethnicity. The different groups were:

- Social classes ABC1 (upper and middle class) aged 25-50.
- Social classes C2DE (working class) aged 25-50.
- Social classes ABC1 (upper and middle class) aged 51 or over.
- Social classes C2DE (working class) aged 51 or over.
- People from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds (recruited to report the largest ethnic groups in each area).⁷
- Young people aged 17-19.
- One group aged 25-60 of people living in specific postcode areas in Glasgow (near or among dispersal areas).

Groups lasted for one and a half hours. Participants were recruited by an accredited market research agency, and paid a small incentive to attend. The groups were moderated by a trained member of ippr staff, and another member of ippr staff took notes. The groups were recorded to check the accuracy of notes and quotes. Discussions were standardised to allow analysis across groups.

Participants were not told what the discussion would be about when they were recruited. In the focus groups, people were asked to describe their feelings about living in the area, before being introduced to the main discussion topic. This allowed people time to discuss a reasonably neutral topic and gain confidence in the group before talking about the more sensitive subject of asylum. It also let ippr place their comments about asylum seekers in the context of their views about the area they live in.

After the initial research phase, ippr held a round table seminar in Glasgow under the Chatham House Rule⁸. This provided an opportunity to discuss the implications of the research and to explore recommendations.⁹

The relatively limited sample means that the qualitative data needs to be interpreted with care. In particular, it should be noted that we were unable to conduct work in rural areas, where it is anecdotally suggested that there are concerns about asylum seekers, despite the very small numbers living outside

6. For a fuller discussion of polling on immigration see Lewis (2005).

7. People from BME groups are over-represented in relation to the overall population. This was to ensure that we heard these views. It was also important to understand how BME groups view the issue of race relations, as these are increasingly being used to justify tough positions on asylum.

8. The Chatham House Rule states that participants in a meeting are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor those of any other participant, can be revealed.

9. A list of seminar attendees is given in Annex I.

urban areas in Scotland. However, we hope that the recommendations outlined in the final chapter will be relevant to areas not covered by the primary research.

Structure of the report

The report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 sets out our findings about what people think about asylum issues, analysed by research area and social group. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on specific areas of concern raised in the focus groups, the economy and social change respectively. Chapter 5 analyses what underpins these concerns, and Chapter 6 sets out some conclusions and ways forward.

Note about quotes

All the quotes, unless otherwise stated, were recorded from the research conducted by ippr for this report.

2. What people think

As a civilised and democratic country, I think that we should be providing asylum, but they have to be asylum seekers. (Man, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

People in Scotland are more welcoming to asylum seekers than those living in other parts of the UK. Most research participants expressed a tolerant view about asylum seekers. There was general support for the principle of asylum, and for Scotland's role in providing sanctuary. Many people associated asylum seekers with flight and persecution. Outside Glasgow, this was not an issue that aroused much concern.

Asylum seekers are trying to get away from persecution and we should welcome them. In Britain, the general view is negative. To be quite honest I think it's the media that does that. (Man, C2DE, 25-50, Edinburgh)

The recent removal raids (where asylum seekers whose applications have failed are forcibly removed) came up in most group discussions, and may have influenced this largely tolerant view. Participants felt that removal raids are unjust. Many cited the case of a Kosovan family under threat of deportation, and used it as an example of tolerance and good integration in Scotland. However, this view about removals is contradictory as it sits alongside a strong belief that only 'genuine' cases should remain. The Dungavel Removal Centre was also frequently discussed. Many people were uncomfortable with the practice of detaining asylum seekers, particularly children.

There's certainly a lot of ethnic folk coming over, and maybe it's refugees who shouldn't really be here. I don't know their personal circumstances, but there are certainly bad elements here. (Man, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

People acknowledged that they did not know much about asylum, and discussions were characterised by considerable confusion (discussed further in Chapter 5). Most participants assumed that there are far greater numbers of asylum seekers in Scotland than the figures suggest. Participants were unclear about the distinctions between different groups of migrants, and often also between settled ethnic minority communities and recent migrants, particularly the growing numbers of people from EU accession countries. 'Asylum seeker' was frequently used as a general term to describe anyone of non-white origin.

I think it is quite a taboo subject. Public services provision and income for asylum seekers is a taboo among Scottish people. (Woman, BME group, Edinburgh)

This was the first time most people had discussed asylum. Several described the subject as being 'taboo' and difficult to bring up in everyday life. In most instances, this stemmed from uncertainty about the correct language to use, or from a fear of being thought politically incorrect. For other people, the issue simply seemed too remote to warrant discussion. While most people were aware that asylum seekers are being dispersed to Scotland, in general this is seen as a 'Glasgow problem', and thought of as being quite specifically contained within Sighthill.

There are genuine asylum seekers, but let's not forget that there are those who come here with an agenda or those who have some criminal mentality. To be honest, I really can see it from the point of view of those that don't like asylum seekers because they give themselves a really bad reputation. (Man, BME group, Dundee)

This overall tolerance masks considerable hostility among particular groups. In particular, geographic location makes a significant difference to peoples' views. The majority of people living in Glasgow expressed hostility towards asylum seekers, in contrast to most people living in Edinburgh and Dundee, who were much less concerned. Outside Glasgow, it was clearly not an issue people discussed much. Social class, age and ethnic background do affect an individual's views, but are less clearly correlated to particular attitudes.

As long as they're genuine asylum seekers, I don't see a problem with it. (Young man, Glasgow)

They say they're asylum seekers, but they're just looking for a better life. (Young man, Glasgow)

The way I thought was that these people must be pretty desperate if it was better to come to this country to live in a hovel, in the cold and rain. For those that are genuine it must be really grim and we should feel sympathetic towards them, but it's because of all the hangers on. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

As some of these quotes illustrate, participants drew clear distinctions between 'genuine' asylum seekers, deemed to be a small minority, and other migrants. Participants assumed that, while some people are in

genuine fear of their lives when they leave their home country, the vast majority come to the UK to seek employment or benefits. This was often expressed as frustration with the 'chancers' who ruin it for others by giving all asylum seekers a bad reputation.

Why do they come here? They have to go through two or three countries before they get here, so why do they pick on Britain instead of stopping in France or Spain? (Man, C2DE, 51+, Dundee)

I think a lot of people go through other countries to get here. They want to get to Britain. (Woman, C2DE, 25-50, Edinburgh)

This resentment was exacerbated by a fairly widespread belief that Great Britain takes in more asylum seekers than other European countries, and that asylum seekers deliberately target this country as being 'soft'. This is not unique to Scotland. In 2003, respondents to a poll estimated that 23 per cent of the world's refugees come to the UK, 10 times the actual amount (MORI 2003).¹⁰

How attitudes vary by area

Glasgow

People living in Glasgow were generally very hostile to asylum seekers. Four out of five groups brought up asylum or migration as a problem in the city, before the topic was introduced by the moderator. They felt threatened by what they perceived to be large numbers of people seeking asylum in the city. Estimates of the numbers of asylum seekers living in Glasgow ranged from 50,000 to 100,000, compared to the actual figure of around 5,500. Asylum and race quickly became conflated in discussions, and there was little distinction made between recently arrived migrants and Glasgow's settled ethnic minority communities. Social problems, such as drugs and unemployment, were blamed upon asylum seekers, and, by extension, upon any non-white community.

There were significant differences of opinion between the participants who lived next to asylum seekers (represented by one group drawn from specific postcodes in or next to dispersal areas) and those who had no contact with asylum seekers. Those living among or next to asylum seekers were overwhelmingly more positive than those who had little opportunity to come into contact with them. This was most marked among the participants who actually knew an individual asylum seeker, or an asylum-seeking family well (discussed further in Chapter 5).

Polling evidence supports ippr's findings that people living in Glasgow are largely hostile to asylum seekers. In 2003, 47 per cent of people living in Glasgow said that there was a great deal of prejudice against asylum seekers, with 38 per cent thinking that there is some prejudice. This compares to 27 per cent saying that there is a great deal of prejudice against Blacks and Asians, and 52 per cent thinking that there is some prejudice (NFO Social Research 2003).

There are 5,450 asylum seekers living in NASS accommodation in Glasgow. This translates to around 15 per cent of all asylum seekers housed in the UK. Together with the 45 asylum seekers living on NASS subsistence-only support, asylum seekers make up just less than one per cent of the total population in Glasgow.

Most asylum seekers are housed in three areas of the city – North Glasgow: Cowlands (16 per cent), Barlornock (14 per cent), Garngad (eight per cent); South Glasgow: Pollokshaws (12 per cent); and West Glasgow: Scotstoun (eight per cent).

There were 329 asylum seekers supported by other agencies than NASS in 2003, and 41 of these were unaccompanied minors under the age of 18. Asylum seekers in Glasgow come from 54 different countries; the largest group (13 per cent of the total) are Turkish, followed by Iranians, Pakistanis, Iraqis and Somalis.¹¹

10. At the end of 2003, Britain hosted around 270,000 refugees, about 2.8 per cent of the world's 9.7 million, and 0.4 per cent of the British population. Britain ranked ninth in Europe in terms of asylum applications per capita (UNHCR 2004)

11. All figures in these sections are from the Scottish Census 2001, Home Office Asylum Statistics, Quarter 3, 2005, and www.asylumscotland.org.uk

Edinburgh

Most people in Edinburgh were unconcerned about asylum seekers. They felt there were very few asylum seekers in Edinburgh, and were largely not worried about any impacts upon the city as the result of the presence of asylum seekers. They tended to think of asylum as an issue really only of relevance to Glasgow and, further afield, to London. They readily believed that people living in Glasgow would be hostile to asylum seekers. There were some hostile views expressed, particularly from young people.

Their views reflect the reality in Edinburgh, where there are very few asylum seekers. Seventy-four asylum seekers in Edinburgh are in receipt of NASS subsistence-only support, and there is no NASS accommodation in the city.

Dundee

The views in Dundee were very similar to Edinburgh. People were generally uninterested and unconcerned by the issues, except in so far as they relate to Glasgow.

There is no NASS accommodation in the Dundee area. There are 45 people living on NASS subsistence-only support in Scotland, outside Edinburgh and Glasgow.

How attitudes vary according to individual characteristics

Alongside the situation in which an individual lives, and the level of contact they have with asylum seekers (explored further in Chapters 3 and 4), their views on asylum are also shaped by attributes such as their age, social background and personal values. In Scotland, we found these factors to be less important than where an individual lives. In other words, the influence of living in Glasgow is greater than that of age, ethnicity or social class.

Age

Age has some impact on attitudes. Both the younger and older groups were more likely to express negative attitudes towards asylum seekers than participants in the other groups. The younger groups tended to have fairly polarised views, with participants split between those feeling very welcoming towards asylum seekers and those expressing considerable hostility. In particular, young people were likely to express fears that asylum seekers reduce employment opportunities. Older people were more likely to express fears in terms of a perceived decline in public services and shared cultural values, and to associate asylum seekers with negative social change.

Research into the impact of age on attitudes suggests that there are clear links between an individual's age and his or her views on a given subject. This is because age captures cohort effects (for example older people may be less likely to have contact with people of different ethnic backgrounds to themselves). Age also reflects someone's position in his or her economic life cycle, which may make them feel vulnerable on particular issues (Saggar and Drean 2001, Rethon and Heath 2003).

Young people who had attended an ethnically mixed school were likely to refer to these experiences as having had a positive impact upon their views about migration in general. Similarly, people with school-age children felt that they learnt a lot from their children about different cultures, either because their children had friends from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, or through information they brought home from religious education or citizenship classes. Given the general conflation of asylum with race, this is an important way of increasing tolerance.

Tertiary education can increase hostility among young people. Several white participants attending university spoke about an informal, but strong, segregation on racial and religious lines, apparent on campus. Among white participants, the assumption was often that this was because minority groups did not want to mix. This finding echoes polling data that has found that the greatest increase in hostility towards migrants in the last decade is among those with a university degree (McLaren and Johnson 2004). More research into why this is the case would be illuminating.

Social class

Social class had some impact upon attitudes towards asylum seekers. It was mainly apparent in how vulnerable individuals felt about employment and access to public services (explored in detail in Chapter 3). In particular, young people and people from social classes C2DE feared resource competition. People in

the ABC1 groups frequently assumed that there would be greater resentment among working-class groups, and attributed negative views to them.

Other research has suggested that negative attitudes to migration are more likely to be found among those most directly affected by competition over employment or public resources (Dustmann and Preston 2003). Different socio-economic groups will have separate concerns about these two issues. People worried about employment, particularly the sorts of low-skilled jobs that are perceived to be under threat from immigration, are likely to fear that wages will be reduced or employment opportunities diminished. People concerned about public resources may also be contributing to public services through taxation, and express fears about inappropriate use of the welfare system (Fetzer 2000).

Ethnic background

In Scotland, people are more understanding of my culture than in England. I felt this when I have been many times to London. (Man, BME group, Dundee)

[Glasgow] is so multicultural, a melting pot and it's so friendly. (Man, BME group, Glasgow)

My sister lives in Australia, and it is only now becoming apparent that she is not Scottish [from the attitudes of people living in Australia. My family] were able to integrate well here. (Woman, BME group, Edinburgh)

All three BME groups said that they felt Scotland is generally more welcoming and less racist than England (discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5). Participants welcomed the increasingly multicultural nature of the cities in which they live. People from BME communities held much the same views in this respect as their white counterparts. Geographic location was more important than other factors, so the BME group in Glasgow expressed considerable hostility towards asylum seekers, while the groups in Edinburgh and Dundee were significantly more sympathetic. However, attitudes did differ in some important respects from other groups.

Sometimes when people raise issues on asylum seekers, the comments make you feel labelled as well because you are not white. (Man, BME group, Edinburgh)

Sometimes they can cause problems and it can affect my history here and I think some people have not got a clear picture [...] the moment I say I am Persian, they think I am a refugee, and I'm, like, 'No' (Woman, BME group, Glasgow)

The group in Glasgow felt that the debate about asylum seekers had increased racism, and made them more vulnerable. Some expressed resentment that asylum seekers undermined the status quo. Others felt that recently arrived migrants receive greater levels of support than groups that arrived decades before. This increased resentment and concern about the perceived impacts of asylum seekers.

I think criminals get a better life than asylum seekers could ever do. Asylum seekers get held up, interrogated; they get put in lowest housing, live in poverty and get really isolated. You get killers who get a new life for killing a kid [...] I don't trust the Government at all for any services they provide asylum seekers. (Woman, BME group, Edinburgh)

At the same time, most participants in the BME groups expressed an understanding of the experience of migration, and many displayed considerable empathy with asylum seekers. Where concerns were expressed they tended to focus upon economic concerns, rather than issues about cultural change or race. This echoes other research findings, in which the greater economic vulnerability of BME groups causes resentment toward migrants. This produces contradictory results, as people with cultural and ethnic ties to migrant communities are often supportive of open immigration policies (Fetzer 2000).

Personal values

An individual's views on race, identity and social justice inevitably inform their views about asylum seekers. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Where someone is racist, their views on asylum are informed by that world view. Quite extreme hostility to asylum seekers was expressed by some people, and these views quickly spilled over into discussion about other minority groups.

3. Understanding attitudes: the economy and employment

I think a lot of the stories you hear get people's backs up. It's bad enough that we have to put up with people who come from here who don't work and get benefits, and we're out there working and paying our taxes and what do we get? Nothing. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

Where concerns about asylum exist in Scotland, they are fuelled by fears about the impact of asylum seekers upon the economy and employment. The conflation of asylum seekers with different groups of migrants, in particular economic migrants, means that their impact upon employment and the economy is poorly understood. In particular, very few people are aware that asylum seekers are not allowed to work.

Employment

[They come] because of the benefits system, free skills, free health, free housing. It's easy in comparison to other countries. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

The Fresh Talent initiative, which has focused upon highly skilled migrants, has certainly influenced the debate positively. Most participants were aware that Scotland needs migrant labour, and associated asylum seekers with skilled jobs such as health staff and academics. However, there was less consensus and more fear about the presence of less skilled migrants.

A lot more doctors come from abroad, I think they are trying to bring in doctors from abroad that are a wee bit cheaper than the ones educated here. They haven't really got a bedside manner. (Woman, BME group, Glasgow)

There's more jobs in Glasgow than people to fill them, but people who come from Glasgow and live in Glasgow don't want to do the jobs that need to be done. That's why we get labour in from overseas. They could all get a job tomorrow. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

Some people thought that asylum seekers come to the UK expressly to access better jobs. There were mixed views about this, again influenced by the confusion between asylum seekers and economic migrants. Some participants felt that migrants do the jobs that Scottish people are unwilling to do, and, in particular, that they fill poorly paid jobs. Many participants also pointed out that migrants fill important public sector roles, particularly in the NHS. This may have been influenced by the highly publicised arrival of some Polish dentists at the time of the focus groups, as well as the recent influx of migrants from EU accession states.

How come they've all got businesses? (Woman, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

They are buying properties and buying shops; they are taking jobs from us as well. (Young woman, Dundee)

However, others felt that asylum seekers take valuable jobs and contribute to unemployment. Young people and people in social classes C2DE felt this most strongly, probably because they are they most likely to be afraid of job competition. Research in 2003 found that this view is not uncommon – 20 per cent of people thought that people from ethnic minority groups take away jobs from other people in Scotland (Bromley and Curtice 2003).

You get a lot of people complaining who are quite ignorant and saying they are taking our jobs who probably haven't worked for years. They should be getting jobs themselves. (Woman, C2DE, 25-50, Edinburgh)

I don't have a problem with anyone coming to the UK as long as they are not sponging from the Government and are contributing. There [are] a lot of people out there who don't want to work and try to live off the state, so if people coming from other countries want to contribute and work then why not? (Man, C2DE 25-50, Edinburgh)

I would rather have five hundred asylum seekers living in Dundee who are going to take up employment and pay their taxes rather than five hundred Dundonians living off the state. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

Both views are underpinned by quite specific opinions about employment. There is a widely held view that there is a group of people, mainly deemed to be young and working class, who are happy to live off the state and who are too lazy to work. People expressed resentment about this, and pride in their own capacity to support themselves. This was particularly apparent in the older working-class groups.

Therefore, any discussion about the perceived unwillingness of asylum seekers to work was quickly qualified by mention of this group.

[Asylum seekers] go to cities like Birmingham and you find them sitting in the streets in groups; they don't work, they're not interested in finding work. (Man, BME group, Dundee)

People are sponging off the state. As far as I am concerned, there are jobs for people if they want. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

Another common view was that asylum seekers 'scrounge' and do not contribute towards the economy. Asylum seekers are perceived to be unwilling to work. People with this view were likely to think that the main reason asylum seekers come to the UK is to access the benefits system.

Mostly foreign kids come in, there are lots of kids, you get Polish kids; you can't get Dundee kids to work in those jobs. (Woman, C2DE, 51+, Dundee)

People from Europe are really hard-working. You can leave them working on their own. (Man, BME group, Edinburgh)

Participants clearly considered the work ethic to be important. This was highlighted by a second commonly expressed view, in which migrants were frequently described admiringly as 'hard workers'. In many cases, this seemed to stem from respect for the small businesses run by people from the Indian and Pakistani communities. There was also some admiration for the workers from EU accession countries, who are deemed to work hard. These quotes illustrate the confusion between different groups of migrants.

If they're not allowed to work, then they are a drain on the country. They come here and the state has to look after them. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

If you thought that people were coming to our country to live off benefits you'd be against it, but if you thought they came here to contribute you'd feel differently. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50 Dundee)

These fears are fuelled by myths about the benefits that asylum seekers are entitled to, and misinformation about employment. Very few people were aware that asylum seekers are not allowed to work while their case is being heard. Once this was explained by the moderator, most participants expressed surprise. Many thought this was a poor policy, leading to greater resentment among the settled community, and more difficulty for asylum seekers in integrating. They felt that Scotland was losing out on potentially valuable skills. The well-publicised work undertaken by the Bridges Programmes in Glasgow, which arranges work-shadowing for asylum seekers and refugees in sectors such as health and construction, may have also contributed to a perception that asylum seekers bring skills.¹²

Public services

I have mixed views – we have poverty in the UK and we have deprivation, we should be addressing that, and I don't think we are very good at recognising we have those problems, but, at the same time, I have sympathy for some of these people because of the situation they found themselves in and had to come here. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

There's a nursery right across the road from me, and the lasses are struggling to get their kids in, but I guarantee 80 per cent are big black ones, seven feet tall, and after around a month, six weeks, they're driving up, so they must get motors as well. (Woman, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

The amount of money that the Government spends on bringing these people into the country, it's terrible. I'm sorry to say that charity begins at home. (Woman, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

These concerns over employment sit within a wider set of fears about the impact of asylum seekers on the economy. Again this was fuelled by confusion over what services asylum seekers are entitled to (discussed further in Chapter 5). While most participants felt that people genuinely fleeing persecution should be supported, a minority felt that the numbers should be kept to an absolute minimum. They argued that public services are not sufficiently good to warrant spending money on asylum seekers. Essentially this sprang from a strong view that 'charity begins at home'. This group of people resented having the money they spend on taxes directed towards asylum seekers.

12. www.bridgesprogrammes.org.uk

I hear from certain parts of the world like Africa, people would come here to get operations. It does happen but, to what extent, I don't know. (Man, C2DE, 25-50, Edinburgh)

The health service was associated strongly in people's minds with migration. Many participants felt that migration had benefited the health service, through the staff working in the NHS. However, some drew a distinction between migrants arriving a few decades ago and more recent arrivals, who are perceived to be more of a drain upon resources. Others commented on health tourism.

They are getting council houses that we can't get, getting paid money to live on that we don't get. (Young man, Dundee)

Box 3.1 Local economic factors and variations in attitudes*

How people feel about the place they live influences their views towards asylum seekers. Where people feel positive about where they live, and think there are opportunities for them there, they are less likely to feel concerned about asylum seekers. Attitudes towards asylum seekers are strongly correlated with local-level differences in employment and the economy.

Dundee

Dundee has relatively low claimant unemployment, at 3.8 per cent. Around 20 per cent of those of working age are employed in a professional role. The city's population is gradually ageing, and the city experienced net outward migration in 2002. Of the 16-74 population, 34.2 per cent have no qualifications, and 17.5 per cent have higher qualification, percentages which are higher and lower respectively than the Scottish averages.

Despite these perhaps slightly gloomy figures, the people we met felt upbeat about Dundee's prospects. They felt that Dundee has an undeservedly bad reputation. Almost all valued the city's friendliness and proximity to the countryside. Most participants felt that Dundee's prospects were improving. They admired the city centre and dockside regeneration, and pointed to the science park and universities as evidence of the city's prosperity. Public services were perceived to be reasonable. Taken together, the picture was of a place people enjoyed living in, and felt was developing successfully.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh has the lowest unemployment of the three cities. Just three per cent of its population is classified as economically inactive. It has a relatively low percentage of people with no qualifications: 22.9 per cent of those aged 16-74, while 33 per cent of its population are employed in a professional capacity. However, these figures hide considerable inequality. Edinburgh is a very affluent city, but, despite its increasing average earnings, one in five children grows up with income support as the main or only family income. Homelessness in Edinburgh is 25 per cent higher than the Scottish average.

The research participants were generally positive about life in Edinburgh, and proud of the city. They felt that, generally, public services were acceptable, although there was some concern about education. Unsurprisingly, the young people we met were worried about house prices and homelessness, and the issues were linked in some people's minds with asylum seekers.

Glasgow

At eight per cent, Glasgow has a higher proportion of economically inactive people than the other two cities, which rises to 12 per cent, 15 per cent and 28 per cent for those of Chinese, Indian and Pakistani, and South Asian descent, respectively. Of the 16-74 year olds, 40.7 per cent have no academic qualifications, much higher than the Scottish, English and Welsh averages. The economic situation has improved over the past few years, but residents still suffer from low wages, poor health and high crime rates. Glasgow City Council is tackling these problems, notably through targeted regeneration. Council-owned housing has decreased by 42 per cent between 1991 and 2003, due to the transfer of housing stock and the right to buy.

These social problems are strongly associated with asylum seekers by residents. Asylum seekers are blamed for poor public services, and lack of jobs and housing. People in Glasgow were much more negative about their city than people living in Edinburgh and Dundee. While they appreciated some improvements, for many these have come at an unacceptable cost of loss of community and rapid social change. Asylum seekers have become scapegoats for these problems.

** All statistics are from the Scottish Census 2001, which, for reasons of timescale, does not fully reflect the impact of dispersal or EU accession upon Glasgow's population.*

All the flats are getting filled with them, and no one bothers. (Young man, Glasgow)

They got private land, five-bedroomed houses, they were given a car: these are the stories we hear. I am not sure if there is any truth in that. (Woman, C2DE, 25-50, Edinburgh)

A minority of people also expressed concerns about the impact of asylum seekers upon housing. Asylum seekers are perceived to receive preferential housing treatment, in particular to gain access to larger houses and to go to the front of the housing queue. People concerned about housing tended to be those potentially most affected by a social housing shortage: young people trying to get onto the housing ladder, and older people concerned that their adult children would have to move away to get housed.

Relative deprivation

They get their money too easily. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Dundee)

They think it's the land of milk and honey. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Dundee)

A set of complex views on entitlement and the social contract underpins much of the discussion about access to employment and public services. ippr's previous research (Lewis 2005) found that people link asylum seekers and other migrants to negative social change. This was also the case in Scotland, albeit for a minority of people. Asylum seekers are perceived to gain unfair access to goods and services. Resentment occurs because they are perceived not to have contributed to the welfare system that supports them. Evidence suggests that there is some support for asylum seekers and refugees being treated less well than other groups in relation to public services.

They perceive it to be a better life here, they want to do better for themselves and better for their families. You get free housing, state benefits, free schooling and I suspect in their countries they don't have those luxuries, but I think they probably perceive it to be an easier life than it actually is for them. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

In 2003, 30 per cent of people interviewed in Glasgow thought that there were circumstances in which asylum seekers and refugees should be treated differently (NFO Social Research). More recently, 21 per cent of people say that asylum seekers and refugees should not be entitled to unemployment benefit, and 17 per cent think they should not be entitled to free health care (Sefton 2006).

There's a suspicion that a lot of them are not genuine asylum seekers, that's the distinction, about five per cent are genuine but the rest of them are over for a millionaire's lifestyle compared to where they came from. (Man, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

These attitudes are explained by the theory of relative deprivation. This refers to 'a feeling of injustice when others receive more than they "should" in relation to their efforts, their needs, their rank etc, whether such a difference is based upon a real difference or an assumed one' (Hernes and Knudsen 1992). When people then receive a benefit that they are perceived not to deserve, for example if they receive welfare support without working for it, then others react negatively (Fetzer 2000). As described above, many people in Scotland express a strongly held opinion that a certain group of people (by no means just asylum seekers) are unwilling to work. They are therefore not deemed to deserve their benefits. This attitude affects how asylum seekers are perceived.

I think that's what gets to people, you see it, you see that your own kids can't get a house and they've been on the waiting list for years, and these people come in and get it, well that's how it looks anyway. (Woman, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

These attitudes are affected by a strong sense among some members of the white population that white people are treated less fairly than minority groups. This view is expressed through discussion of services in which it is assumed that minority groups, including asylum seekers, automatically receive preferential treatment, often as the result of 'political correctness'. Other research echoes this – in 2003, 18 per cent of people interviewed in Scotland thought that attempts to give equal opportunities to people from BME communities had 'gone too far' (Bromley and Curtice 2003). It also comes through in attitudes towards racism, where there is a strong sense of unfairness – white people are thought to be discriminated against in a system that favours minority groups (discussed further in the next chapter).

4. Understanding attitudes: culture and integration

The second set of concerns about asylum seekers revolve around culture and identity. For the vast majority of participants, these were less significant than the perceived economic impacts described in the previous chapter. The received wisdom is that people living in Scotland tend to be more welcoming as the result of a strong national identity, which they do not feel to be under threat from migration.

Our research found some evidence for this view. While people in Scotland did tend to be tolerant and welcoming of migrants (this was also the view of the BME groups we met), it seemed that this was generally the result of feeling unthreatened by cultural change in the same way as other parts of the UK. In part, this stemmed from a sense that Scotland is under-populated in comparison to other places in the UK.

Box 4.1 Local demographics and attitudes*

Compared to many major cities in England, the three research areas have relatively low numbers of people from BME communities. For example, Birmingham's population is now around a third minority ethnic. A recent change in Scotland has been the relatively high number of migrant workers coming from EU accession states, whom the public frequently confuses with asylum seekers.

Dundee

Out of the three cities, Dundee has the highest proportion of residents born in the UK (95.1 per cent) and lowest percentage born outside the EU (3.42 per cent). Dundee's population is 96 per cent white. The remaining four per cent is made up of a mixture of Chinese, Pakistani and other South Asian groups. Foreign students at the university also contribute to Dundee's minority communities.

Participants in Dundee largely had positive attitudes towards minorities, and the BME group felt that it was a tolerant place in which to live. The only group that displayed some prejudice were the 17- to 19-year-olds. Some members of this group felt that minority groups are given too many advantages.

There is not much impact in Dundee because there isn't much influx of asylum seekers, I don't think we have seen anything like what you seen in Glasgow. (Man, BME group, Dundee)

Edinburgh

Edinburgh has a very similar ethnic make-up to Dundee. However, more of Edinburgh's citizens were born outside the UK. Around 5.57 per cent of the city's population was born outside the EU.

Attitudes were also similar to Dundee, with most of the research participants expressing very positive views about minorities who were commonly agreed to be well integrated.

We have welcomed the ethnic population, but by and large they have been high achievers either economically or educationally. (Man, ABC1, 51+, Edinburgh)

There is a tremendous mix, this is the unique thing about Edinburgh. (Man, ABC1, 51+, Edinburgh)

Glasgow

There is a slightly higher percentage of ethnic minority groups living in Glasgow. Of the city's inhabitants, 94.5 per cent describe themselves as white. The remaining 5.5 per cent is mixed, with Pakistani and South Asian groups making up 3.4 per cent. The white community has declined in absolute numbers from 585,321 in 1991 to 546,359 in 2001.

When's it going to stop? How many more can we take in? They're going to do a census of Scotland, and there's going to be at least one fifth of them ethnic [...] we're outnumbered. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

Glasgow's minority communities are concentrated in specific areas of the city, with, for example, the Pakistani community constituting 40 per cent of all residents in Pollokshields. ippr's previous research found that poor integration across a city contributes towards hostility to asylum seekers, and this also appears to be the case in Glasgow. Many of the participants explicitly referred to 'asylum seekers' living in Pollokshields, which generally referred to the Pakistani community. Where BME communities are not well integrated, attitudes to asylum seekers among the wider public are more negative.

** All figures from 2001 Scottish Census. This does not fully reflect the impact of migrants from EU accession countries.*

This is also due to a well-communicated political message about the need for Scotland to attract migrants to fill jobs. Where people felt positive about the area in which they live, they tended not to feel as concerned about the presence of asylum seekers or minority groups.

There are also distinct demographic differences to England, which inform attitudes to minority communities. The greatest prejudice in England is apparent in predominantly white areas that are relatively near to areas with large BME communities (Lewis 2005). Other than in Glasgow, this is not a common situation in Scotland. The English experience shows that integration can overcome hostility. For example, in London, where communities are very mixed at ward level, reported levels of prejudice are relatively low (Stonewall 2003). The challenge is how to tackle prejudice in places where there are either very few minority communities, or where there are segregated communities living side by side.

However, some participants did feel threatened by the presence of minority groups. The people who tended to feel this way were living in Glasgow, where minority groups are more visible. The discussions about race tended to be part of a larger debate about what it means to be Scottish. In some respects, this links to fears over the pace of change. Unwelcome social change was linked to asylum seekers, and minority groups are blamed for a wealth of social problems.

Integration

If you want to be part of my culture, you have to fit in. The fact they are in my country and don't speak my language, why are you here? (Young man, Glasgow)

You must be able to speak the language. I'm definitely not a racist. You wouldn't have heard that twenty, thirty years ago. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

They all speak in English until they're talking about you, and then they will talk in a different tongue and sneer, and talk some complete jungle nonsense. (Young man, Glasgow)

Many participants in Glasgow expressed concerns about the degree of integration between minority communities and the white settled population. They felt that the groups lived side by side, often with little meaningful contact. Some felt that this was a deliberate attempt at separation by minority communities. They tended to distinguish between recent migrants who 'do not make the effort' and people who migrated a few decades ago. Feelings of resentment were exacerbated where individuals or groups did not speak English. In some cases, this was interpreted as a deliberate refusal to integrate, or as a means of insulting someone.

I'm not a bigot or a racist, but they're turning us into racists, we're the minority now. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

Maybe not in my lifetime, but maybe in my grandson's lifetime, or his son's or his son's, this place will not be called Scotland anymore. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

Some expressed quite extreme and racist views about how Scotland is becoming unrecognisable as a direct result of migration. Several participants stated that the asylum debate had made them more racist.

It's not the colour of anything, but I was reading in the paper the other day that they were building toilets to suit the Muslims, not us. (Woman, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

I don't mind any asylum seekers coming if their lives are in genuine danger, but, when it comes to the cultural thing, the Islamic thing, if they come here they need to live by our rules. Muslims will take over the world. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Dundee)

The presence of Muslims was of particular concern for many participants, especially in Glasgow. They worried about the risk of terrorism, and expressed resentment that Muslim communities do not 'live by our rules'.

It's not really them, it's more like a system failure. [The local authority] put them into the worst estates in Glasgow, where the BNP have candidates. It's hard for them to integrate if they are all in one place. (Man, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

Outside Glasgow, groups tended to feel that minority communities were well integrated. This was also the perspective of the BME groups, including people from Glasgow, who, as noted above, felt that Scotland was a more welcoming and tolerant place to live than other areas in the UK. Although some people from

the BME groups, particularly the group in Glasgow, did have concerns about asylum seekers, these were expressed exclusively in terms of economic impacts rather than cultural change.

[My son] just accepts, he's the boy with the brown face and he's the boy with the yellow face. It's nice and it's good. Maybe we all need classes. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

There was a positive focus on the role education can play in promoting integration. Parents, in particular, felt that their children benefited from learning about, and in some cases mixing with, other cultures. Some also felt that they learnt about other cultures from their children.

Box 4.2 Integration in Glasgow

The Scottish Executive has interpreted integration more widely than the Home Office, which limits integration activities to refugees. Government-funded activities in Scotland, therefore, also include work with asylum seekers. This is carried out through the Scottish Refugee Integration (SRIF) Forum Action Plan.*

There is a considerable amount of work going on to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees are well integrated into Scottish life. These activities range from the very local and small scale, to much wider campaigns, such as the Scottish Executive's One Scotland campaign. Some examples of work are:

- Framework for Dialogue Project – forums across Glasgow where asylum seekers and refugees can influence social policy and develop a refugee position on how to tackle racism.
- Local community networks, which provide 'drop in' services, English language tuition and cross-cultural events.
- The Home Office/Scottish Refugee Council Sunrise programme, which assigns refugees a caseworker who helps them settle into life in Scotland on a practical level.
- Positive Action in Housing, which provides bail addresses for Dungavel detainees, with a separately run Detainee Visitors Scheme.
- Scottish Refugee Council's campaigning and positive images work, which includes co-ordinating Refugee Week Scotland, film projects, public speaking and media training for asylum seekers and refugees.
- English for Doctors' Programme, the Bridges Projects, Glasgow Overseas Professionals into Practice (GOPIP), Refugees Into Teaching in Scotland (RITeS) and the Refugees' Doctors programme, all of which help refugee nurses, doctors, teachers and other professionals learn English, retrain, and gain work-shadowing placements in order to find a job. In 2003, 36 refugee doctors joined the NHS in Glasgow.
- Positive Images Network supported by Oxfam and funded by the Atlas EQUAL partnership, which aims to promote a positive image of asylum seekers in the press by making sure journalists are better informed, with an award for accurate reporting.
- British Red Cross' bi-monthly newsletter, which provides advice and information to asylum seekers.
- The Village Story Telling Centre, which allows refugees to (re)discover traditional storytelling and to learn creative writing skills.
- The Bridges Projects, which arrange work-shadowing for asylum seekers and refugees.
- The North Glasgow International Festival, organised by Strathclyde Police and Glasgow City Council.
- The ATLAS Equal partnership led by Glasgow City Council match funds many of these projects (www.atlas-scotland.co.uk)

*www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/10/15562/11735

Double standards

I don't want to be racist against them, but when they come to our country it should be the other way round. For example, you're not allowed to do a lot of things because that might upset people, but they should be integrating into our culture. It's like I should be being very sympathetic about their culture before ours. If I was going to the US, I would be moulding into their culture. (Man, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

If we went to their countries it would be expected for us to obey their rules. (Woman, C2DE, 51+, Dundee)

Anger about perceived double standards, described in the previous chapter, also underpins many of these concerns. Some participants felt that official attitudes to racism are hypocritical. They complained that

government institutions overreact to reports of racism against minority groups, while racism against white groups is played down. Stories about asylum seekers and other migrants receiving short prison sentences contributed to these concerns.

If you saw one of them groping a girl and you go up and deck them, you'd get put in jail for four or five years for hitting an Asian man. (Young man, Glasgow)

The coloured boys are cheeky and they don't get done for racist things, but as soon as a white boy says 'you "whatever"' he gets done for racism and taken to the courts. (Woman, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

People with this view tended to live in Glasgow. However, these attitudes surfaced in all groups, and, in particular, were expressed by young people.

Crime

It is not only always because of the media, sometimes it is because of some of the extremists, for example, who were asylum seekers in the UK and act negatively. I have some dark or bad ideas generally about asylum seekers, because I hear from other people that a lot of people who say they are asylum seekers are not really. (Man, BME group, Dundee)

Participants strongly associated asylum seekers with increasing crime. In particular, several people assumed that East Europeans were asylum seekers and responsible for trafficking women and selling drugs. This increased concerns about the perceived numbers of asylum seekers in Glasgow. Participants expressed fears over increased and visible drug use, particularly among young people, and associated this increase with the rise in numbers of asylum seekers.

5. What influences attitudes?

ippr set out to establish what underpins these attitudes to asylum seekers. Our previous research in England and Wales established that no one factor underpins attitudes to asylum seekers. A complex set of circumstances and messages influences an individual's views. As described in Chapter 2, attributes such as age, ethnicity and social background may influence someone's views. These interact with other, external factors to produce an attitude. This chapter explores the extent of the influence of different factors.

Lack of information

I was thinking that I know very little about it. If you go to America you need a green card to work. Is there a time limit for how long they can come? Do they need a card of some sort? This is just something I haven't thought about. (Woman, ABC1, 51+, Edinburgh)

I'm a bit ignorant, and ignorance can make you a bit wary, or for some people it can be the start of a barrier. If I have more information I would know more about why they're here, what they're running away from, what their aspirations are. (Man, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

Lack of information in itself does not cause hostility. People with more tolerant views tended to be no better informed than those who resented the presence of asylum seekers. However, misinformation and myths provide a breeding ground for prejudice. Some participants became more welcoming towards asylum seekers as they were provided with more information, particularly when they were told that asylum seekers cannot work. But information needs to be treated with care, for some people with the most entrenched views will change their attitude very little, and one asylum seeker living locally may be one too many.

I don't know who economic migrants are, and who are illegal migrants and refugees. (Man, ABC1, 51+, Edinburgh)

Refugees tend to be people who have been more affected en masse, whereas asylum seekers are individuals that maybe because of their own circumstances have chosen to come. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

Nearly all participants had limited knowledge about asylum seekers. In particular, there was considerable confusion between asylum seekers and other groups of migrants. For example, asylum seekers were often seen as less acceptable than refugees, who were commonly understood to be a group of people forced to leave their country. Most participants were honest about the fact that they are not very knowledgeable about the issues. A commonly expressed sentiment was 'I don't know as much as I should'.

I would say after tonight I will look out for things, but before tonight I wouldn't be interested. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Dundee)

Many felt that they do not know the truth about what is happening, and several expressed a desire for more information (although this should not be overstated – those outside Glasgow tended to enjoy the discussions, but not to be avid for more detail).

The term 'asylum seeker' was frequently used to describe any person of non-white origin. This helped to inform views that Scotland is hosting far more asylum seekers than is actually the case. Even those outside Glasgow assumed that there are far more asylum seekers in the city than there are. This linked to a fairly widespread view that asylum seekers and other migrants have large families. A common term used was 'overrun'. Many participants assumed that the UK takes an unfair proportion of the world's asylum seekers, and questioned why people travel across Europe rather than stopping in the first port of entry. They thought that the term 'illegal immigrant' refers to the way that someone enters the UK.

I would rather see them go to France. It seems a bit dodgy to go past all these other really developed countries with good economies and jump on a train and come here and expect to stay here. (Young man, Dundee)

A common perception was that asylum seekers come to Scotland to gain employment, or, more often, to gain benefits. Asylum seekers were often described as 'scroungers', coming to live off the state. The benefits asylum seekers receive were greatly exaggerated.

Every second shop in the high street there is an asylum seeker or a foreigner who owns them. (Young woman, Dundee)

This links to the feeling of double standards described in the previous chapter, in which any minority group is often assumed to be in receipt of better benefits and advantages than the white majority. Asylum seekers are thought to get better, larger houses and are believed to go to the front of the housing queue. They are also widely believed to cause crime, and people fear an increase in terrorism as a result of the presence of asylum seekers. However, myths about what asylum seekers receive are far less widespread than in the places in which we conducted research in England.

Is there a difference between refugees and asylum seekers? We don't really have a clue. We are one of the richest countries in the world, so it shouldn't really be a problem. (Young man, Edinburgh)

Now I just feel kind of sorry for the poor people who can't get out. I'm starting to go, 'no worry about the people who are here but what about the ones that can't get out'. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

Alongside this was a considerable sympathy for the principle of asylum. Many participants described asylum seekers as fleeing from persecution, and almost all thought that the British Government has a duty to provide protection. The problem is that people do not have a context in which to place the numbers of asylum seekers or the services they receive.

I've got a friend who works in immigration and she says 'You don't know the lengths they'll go to, you really don't, they'll do anything they like and they'll say that their mother was killed.' (Woman, BME group, Glasgow)

In the absence of much information about asylum seekers, personal anecdotes are extremely powerful. These contribute heavily to myths, and are difficult for others to challenge, particularly when the story is believed to have come from someone in authority. For example, one woman in Glasgow told a story about how a friend of hers apparently knocked an asylum seeker off his bike when she was driving. The story went that he is now suing the friend. Allegedly the insurance company told her that this happens frequently, and asylum seekers routinely cycle into traffic in order to seek compensation.¹³ Although others in the group doubted this story, they found it hard to dispute, as the woman strongly believed what her friend had told her.

The role of the media

I just know what I pick up from newspapers; you tend to get some extreme views. (Woman, ABC1, 51+, Edinburgh)

Most participants said that they found out about asylum seekers from the media. This is in striking contrast to the research in England where the vast majority of people said they found out about asylum issues from 'what they see around them', even in areas where there were very few asylum seekers – perhaps because of the higher numbers of people from BME communities in many areas of England. Many people in Scotland mentioned the BBC and the tabloid press as sources of information. Polling corroborates this, with 93 per cent of Scots saying that they form their understanding of asylum issues from media sources (MORI/Oxfam 2004).

The only time I hear about them in the paper is negative, like when they are claiming benefit, or there was one about a bouncer being attacked a few years ago. It's all negative, you know there isn't a lot of emphasis put on [for example] the dwindling population. (Man, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

The UK-wide print media was largely distrusted. Participants felt that all newspapers display bias in their reporting of asylum issues, and singled out the tabloid press as being particularly guilty of this. At the same time, much of the negative language people used about asylum seekers had strong overtones of the tabloid press.

Criticism of the Scottish tabloid media for exacerbating tensions in the run up to the Sighthill murder does seem to have had an impact, and the Scottish media appears to be more sympathetic to the plight of asylum seekers and refugees than the English tabloid press.¹⁴ For example, where tabloids south of the border recently attacked the Government for giving taxpayers' money to failed asylum seekers wishing to

13. It seems most unlikely that this is the case – this story is included to illustrate the power of anecdote, rather than to imply that ippr thinks that it is based on fact.

14. We conducted an internet search for all articles related to asylum and refugees in the last five years, in the main Scottish media.

return home voluntarily, the coverage in Scotland talked of helping people return home in a dignified manner.

The *Scotsman's* coverage of cultural events about refugees also attempted to dispel myths about 'bogus asylum seekers'. There are many articles that display compassion for refugees and highlight the desperate plights of their lives, both in coming to Scotland and living there. Often, personal interviews are used to humanise and increase the emotion of the story. Unlike England, there has been much discussion of the positive impact that refugees and asylum seekers alike can bring to Glasgow and, indeed, Scotland. When money is mentioned, it is likely that the positives are stated, for example integration, rather than portrayals of a burden on the public purse. These positive examples of Scottish media coverage are likely to reflect the work done by the Positive Images Network in the media, which has worked to ensure that Scottish journalists have accurate information about asylum seekers and refugees.

However, the story about the Scottish media is not uniformly positive. Even the liberal-leaning press uses the association of asylum seeking and criminal behaviour, which is widely employed in England (although they do not always headline with it). Research conducted by Oxfam in 2004 into how asylum issues are covered in the Scottish press found that few papers provided a context for the stories they wrote. It also criticises elements of the Scottish press for being overly reliant on spokespeople from a single political party or right-wing think-tanks. Interestingly, coverage was more positive when it dealt with Scottish-specific stories than UK-wide issues (Oxfam 2006).

Participants were more trusting of the local and regional media, which they felt reflected a more balanced view. However, few people could recall seeing much about asylum seekers other than striking examples, such as removal raids. These were mentioned by most people, partly, perhaps, because they were recent. Many people's views were still informed by stories from 2001, suggesting that these were more powerful than the stories being currently run. This may reflect the fact that, at the time, there were a lot of front-page stories, as opposed to the more positive but less visible stories apparent at the moment.

Box 5.1 Some recent Scottish media stories on asylum seekers

'Asylum seeker is Young Scot of the Year' – *The Herald* (14 February 2006)

'Two Columbian drugs barons ... arrived in Britain as asylum seekers in 1990, claiming to flee persecution' – in story 'UK's first 1bn drug gang jailed', *The Scotsman* (6 January 2006)

'Two held after passport dodge' – *Daily Record* (2 January 2006)

'There is no excuse for tearing a loving and law-abiding father away from his family, and forcing British citizens to emigrate to stay with him verges on barbaric' – in story 'John's only crime was to have fallen in love', *Evening News* (13 January 2006)

'The asylum scandal deepens: One family's desperate plight' (front page) – *Sunday Herald* (25 October 2005)

'A lot of Scots have helped me and now I want to pay them back' – A look at the benefits of dispersal programme on its five year anniversary – *Evening Times* (30 April 2005)

'Worries about young asylum seekers on their own' – *The Herald* (8 March 2005)

'Most asylum seekers come to the UK because their lives are in danger' – *Sunday Herald* (13 June 2004)

'I want to be part of Scotland's economy' – *Scottish Herald* (13 June 2004)

'Bosses urged to give asylum seekers a job' – *Evening Times* (30 March 2004)

'Exhibition highlights plight of asylum seekers' – *The Scotsman* (12 May 2003)

Coverage of Michael Winterbottom's *In this World* – a fictional record of two young Afghan refugees' harrowing journey from Peshawar to London (entitled 'Truth is a refuge') – *The Scotsman* (5 December 2002)

'Across the globe, the cataclysmic events which force people to leave their homelands are poignantly reflected in the personal and collective stories captured by these photos', in story 'Refugees in the frame', an article on 'Asylum Images' photography exhibition at the Scottish Parliament – *The Scotsman* (6 January 2002)

'Stowaway children found dead on a plane' and other tragedies of journeys to the UK – *Evening News* (5 December 2002)

Participants also trusted the broadcast media, particularly the national and Scottish BBC news. However, few could remember any relevant stories they had seen.

The direct impact of media debate on public attitudes is unclear. It is hard to assess the impact because people tend to choose a newspaper that reflects their views (Greenslade 2005, McLaren and Johnson 2004). ippr's previous research found that the media does impact on the public debate, but largely through spreading myths and misinformation, rather than direct influence.

It is same as anything with the media, bad news is good news, I think they won't tell you about the dozens of families that are possibly here and have been here for some time and got a nice life and their children are at school, they don't want to tell you that. (Woman, ABC1, 51+, Edinburgh)

Other research has found that the media influences public attitudes in a number of different ways (Valentine and McDonald 2004). The media frames the debate and sets free particular terms, stories and material that may be used to justify prejudice. Although the media is widely distrusted, statistics and examples rapidly gain currency and are considered to be accurate and independent. Some research (Buchanan *et al* 2003) has found that the national press is guilty of:

- significantly confusing the terminology about asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants
- using provocative terminology, including meaningless terms such as 'asylum cheat'
- relying on government officials as well as organisations such as Migration Watch UK as sources for news reports and opinion pieces
- presenting inaccurate, misleading or, at best, de-contextualised statistical information
- providing images largely dominated by the stereotype of the 'threatening young male'.

Valentine and McDonald (2004) also suggest that the media encourages latent feelings of anger and disgust, and a sense of powerlessness among 'white majority people' that there is nothing to be done about the issues that concern them.

Political parties

We lose everything, we lose everybody, the immigration bureau lose immigrants, they can't trace them. The system is not perfect and I feel heart sorry for the families but there are also thousands of people coming in here that just simply disappear and are never seen again. (Man, ABC1, 51+, Edinburgh)

Messages from central government play an important role in setting the context in which information about local issues is interpreted (Bauer *et al* 2001, Saggar and Drear 2001). McLaren and Johnson (2004) conclude that the current political discourse around asylum best explains the increase in negative attitudes. ippr's previous research found that government discourse and tough talking on migration fuelled public anxiety about the effectiveness of immigration controls and about the willingness of the Government to respond to concerns. Many people also expressed frustration that the asylum system seems to make it harder for the 'genuine' cases.

If the Government don't tell us, we can make it up. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

[The Government] can manipulate figures; they have done for years. (Man, C2DE, 25-50, Edinburgh)

Asylum is such a political issue, so you sort of think that figures can be slightly bent. (Man, C2DE, 25-50, Edinburgh)

The Government in Westminster is widely distrusted on asylum by people living in Scotland. Although this sits within wider issues of distrust of government, there are specific public concerns about asylum. Participants felt that the Labour Party, and Tony Blair, in particular, have not been honest about the issue. Some feel that this is deliberate, while others have the impression that the true scale of the 'problem' is being hidden because the Government does not know the actual figures.

It is the only guideline you have to go by, so you have to give them the benefit of the doubt that they are giving you the true figures because there is no other way you will get other figures. (Woman, ABC1, 51+, Edinburgh)

You have to regulate it, but Scotland is under-populated. (Young man, Edinburgh)

Some of them who've been clearly persecuted, there are loads in the world, they've seen their family executed in front of them, they escape and get away here and we say to them you can't work, go and stay in the Red Road flats, and everyone's going 'look at him, he's got a TV'. (Man, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

However, these problems have, to some extent, been counteracted by strong political leadership on migration from the Scottish Executive, which is more trusted on this issue, and positive discourse from opposition parties. Positive leadership on the wider issue of migration appears to have made a difference to how many people view asylum seekers. However, there remains a public perception that the initial dispersal was badly managed, and only carried out so that Glasgow City Council could access regeneration funding.

Meaningful contact with people from other ethnic backgrounds

ippr's previous research found that the level of meaningful contact an individual has with people from different ethnic backgrounds to themselves is strongly correlated with views on asylum. People with few or no personal relationships with minority ethnic communities are more likely to express overtly negative or racist views about asylum seekers.

They keep themselves to themselves, they don't mix with the community, they definitely don't mix, it's like a ghetto. (Man, C2DE, 51+, Glasgow)

Research in England has found that the greatest opposition to multiculturalism comes in areas where there are either very few minority groups or very little contact between groups (MORI 2003, Lewis 2005). The situation in Scotland is different to the extent that people living in areas with fewer minority groups tended to be more tolerant. This may be explained by more successful integration policies. The other key difference is demographic – the greatest hostility in England is found in predominantly white areas that are close to areas with large numbers of minority groups. This situation simply does not exist in Scotland to the same extent.

I would want asylum seekers themselves to tell me their experiences. They are real people and on a face-to-face level you can trust them the most, you can then make up your own mind. (Man 25-50, ABC1, Dundee)

In many places in Scotland, there are relatively few opportunities for individuals to meet someone from a different ethnic background to themselves. This meant that the effect of meaningful contact was only noticeably strong when people actually knew asylum seekers. Participants in the focus group we conducted in Glasgow with people living next to and within dispersal areas were considerably more positive about asylum seekers than people in any of the other groups in Glasgow. People felt less threatened by asylum seekers, and tended to be positive about their presence. This was particularly the case with people who knew asylum seekers well.

Contact theory focuses on the distribution of immigrants in a particular area, and on what kind of contact exists between individuals (Fetzer 2000). The theory distinguishes between 'true acquaintance' (for example, going to dinner in someone's home) and superficial or 'casual contact' (such as meeting someone in a shop). The first type of contact tends to decrease overall prejudice, while the second is more likely to increase it. Research into prejudice also shows that negative individual encounters tend to produce powerful negative generalisations, but positive encounters do not work in the same way (Valentine and McDonald 2004).

Poor initial dispersal process

Some of the negativity in Glasgow seems attributable to the initial dispersal process. People, particularly those living in areas where they hadn't seen the benefits of regeneration associated with asylum seekers, felt that they had been landed with a set of problems. Phrases such as 'dumped on' and 'without asking us' were common, and illustrate how many people feel that local communities simply were not consulted. It appears that this problem has been overcome to some extent in areas where asylum seekers actually live, through integration activity and day-to-day contact. However, this has not happened as effectively in other areas of the city.

Some stakeholders interviewed during the course of the research pointed to problems other than the lack of preparation of host communities. For example, leave to remain grants had not been prepared for, and there had been little analysis of the differences between Scottish and English law. Currently, there are issues with

people staying on after their application has been refused. While this did not come up specifically in the research, it is likely to influence concerns over crime. Equally, although many participants were sympathetic to asylum seekers in the Dungavel Removal Centre, ippr's previous research found that the use of detention centres increased the perception that asylum seekers are criminals.

Racism

I just think that they're letting too many people into the country, and I sometimes wonder what colour I am, but I'm no bigot. (Woman, C2DE, 51+ Glasgow)

While there were relatively few examples of extreme racism expressed in the focus groups (certainly in comparison to the English research), the impact of racism and prejudice cannot be overlooked. In all three areas, participants confused asylum seekers with visible minority groups. There was often an assumption that any non-white person was an asylum seeker. This conflation between asylum seekers and other minority groups happened across all ages, areas and social classes. This meant that discussions were rarely confined to asylum seekers; participants almost always brought up issues linked to race and immigration as well.

I think people think there's a lot of asylum seekers, because you drive through an area and you hardly see a white face. (Woman, ABC1, 25-50, Glasgow)

I don't even know what they are, I thought they were just Pakis. (Young woman, Glasgow)

This conflation is dangerous as it increases the perception that there are very large numbers of asylum seekers. It also means that hostility towards asylum seekers can rapidly spill over into hostility towards other groups. To some extent this may reflect an awareness that, while outright racism is largely socially unacceptable, prejudice against asylum seekers does not attract social sanctions.

Racism is certainly prevalent, if not common, in Scotland. Racist incidents continue to rise year on year. There were 3,801 racist incidents recorded by the Scottish Police forces in 2003-04, compared to 3,593 the previous year (Scottish Executive, figures on website¹⁵). In 2003, 27 per cent of people said that, 'taking all things into account', people from minority ethnic groups had 'nothing at all' or 'not much' in common with people from white backgrounds (Bromley and Curtice 2003). Other research has also found evidence of racism in Glasgow, for example 79 per cent of people interviewed by NFO in 2003 said that there was either a great deal or some prejudice against black and Asian people (NFO Social Research 2003). Certainly a minority of participants in ippr's research explicitly said that they had become more racist as a result of the presence of asylum seekers.

15. www.onescotland.com/onescotland/osmc_display_leveldown.jsp?pContentID=27&p_applic=CCC&p_service=Content.show&

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

Public attitudes to asylum seekers in Scotland are more tolerant than in England. Asylum and immigration are seen as relatively unthreatening. Many people are supportive of the principle of asylum, and believe that Scotland, and Great Britain, have a duty to offer sanctuary. Most are proud of Scotland's reputation for tolerance and welcome.

However, there is no room for complacency. Many people living in Glasgow are extremely worried about the presence of asylum seekers, and express considerable hostility about their presence. Young people are also often hostile to asylum seekers.

The debate about asylum in Scotland is influenced by events south of the border, in particular by the UK media and policy discourse. The local elections in England were tainted by the BNP's gains, and the subsequent focus on race relations. The fact that there is a generally more positive debate in Scotland shows that there is political space for manoeuvre. There is plenty of good practice to build on in Scotland, which is in part responsible for the general more tolerant debate. The positive discourse from the Scottish Executive and well co-ordinated multi-agency approach apparent in Scotland have contributed. Many participants in this research noted that Scotland needs migrants to fill jobs, echoing the Executive's work on this.

While very few participants noted the Scottish media as a source of information (or, when they did, tended to refer to stories about the initial dispersal process), the fact that the regional and local media debate has largely been positive in the last four years has, at least, decreased the number of myths around. Even when people cannot recall particular stories, they will have been seen and noted, even if at a subconscious level (Lewis 2005). It is likely that the tone of the Scottish media has been influenced by the work done by Oxfam, the Scottish Refugee Council, the NUJ and Amnesty International in producing an information booklet for journalists, and the work of the Positive Images Network. At a local level, where asylum seekers and settled communities have had a chance to get to know one another, work on integration is going well.

Concern about asylum is felt most acutely by the socially vulnerable. In particular, fears about the impacts of asylum seekers upon employment opportunities and the economy are vividly expressed. Although these concerns are based upon perceptions rather than actual impacts, they are strongly held and reflect the reality of social deprivation. Attempts to address hostility to asylum seekers must therefore sit alongside a commitment to reducing social inequality and exclusion.

Asylum seekers and other minorities are widely perceived to receive preferential treatment from the authorities. This is deeply divisive, and inevitably causes tensions. Clearly, some interventions (such as language support) need to be specifically targeted at asylum-seeking communities. However, it may be more helpful, in many cases, to place work in the context of the community cohesion agenda and to think in terms of area-based initiatives.

'Asylum seeker' has become shorthand for any ethnic minority, meaning that hostility can easily spill over from one group to the next. Expressing prejudice towards asylum seekers is reasonably socially acceptable, and some attitudes to asylum seekers are influenced by racism. To some extent, it appears that hostility to asylum seekers is a legitimate form of racism, and BME communities fear the asylum debate increases racism. Tackling attitudes to asylum seekers, therefore, needs to sit alongside long-term attempts to address racism in Scotland.

The greatest hostility is found in areas near to places with large minority ethnic communities, where people have neither the comfort of distance nor the reassurance of meaningful contact either with people from different ethnic backgrounds to themselves or with asylum seekers. This is the most powerful way that others come to accept asylum seekers. In Scotland, the opportunities are relatively limited. However, these could be increased, particularly in Glasgow.

The initial dispersal process still affects views, particularly of the groups who have had little contact with asylum seekers to counteract the myths and media misinformation prevalent at that time. Many people living in Glasgow resentfully perceive asylum seekers to have simply been dropped onto the city, with little preparation or consultation. It is important to move beyond discussion of Sighthill, and to focus on the positives about how integration is currently happening.

Hostility is not caused by lack of information. However, prejudice is increased by the highly exaggerated myths circulating about asylum seekers. Even basic facts, such as benefit rights, are not known. Politicians and the media are largely distrusted to tell the truth about asylum, particularly politicians in Westminster and the national press. This provides a fertile space for myth and rumour to grow; where prejudice exists, these heighten it. Getting accurate information into the public domain is an important way of countering misinformation, but cannot be relied upon to change attitudes alone.

Information needs to be treated with care, as it can be used to warp the debate. For example, someone with extreme levels of prejudice might think one asylum seeker is too many in an area. A more challenging problem is how to get information to those who say they are uninterested in the issue, but who, nonetheless, have strong views.

In communicating asylum issues, our research suggests that appealing to the principle of sanctuary and stressing the persecution suffered by asylum seekers is effective.¹⁶ Giving host communities more detail about where people have come from and why is important. However, care must be taken not to create another category of 'undeserving' migrants onto whom prejudice can fall. Rehabilitating the concept of asylum is important, but must not come at the price of further confusion among the public.

The challenge is to remove genuine social concerns from the lens of asylum through which they are interpreted. Information should focus upon these areas in order to reassure people, and should be targeted at those most vulnerable (and, therefore, most concerned) about resource competition in employment, services and housing. Unless there is a commitment from policymakers to tackle inequality and deprivation, it is unlikely that prejudice about asylum seekers and other migrants will completely disappear.

Particular groups are more likely to be hostile towards asylum seekers. We recommend focusing upon these groups, in the first instance, for targeted interventions. This does not imply that overarching campaigns, such as One Scotland, should not be continued. At the same time, the time and resources needed to focus on the small number of highly prejudiced people are probably not warranted, as they are unlikely to change their views.

Therefore interventions should focus on:

- Glasgow
- Young people and children
- People living near to, but not among, asylum seekers.

ippr hopes that this research usefully contributes to the body of knowledge about public attitudes to asylum seekers in Scotland. Inevitably, it has thrown up other questions, which further research needs to address. Research into the attitudes of young people towards asylum seekers and other minorities would help to identify why there is increasing hostility among this group.

We focused on urban areas in the research, as historically these have been the places with the greatest numbers of asylum seekers, as well as larger migration flows. Increasingly, however, migrant workers are also based in rural areas. Research conducted in rural areas where there are high numbers of migrant workers would help to identify flash points in community cohesion, as well as any latent hostility towards asylum seekers.

Recommendations

People's attitudes are formed by a complex mix of personal circumstances, values and the external environment. Challenging them requires action at every level, from the very local to the national. Immigration policy is not a devolved issue, making attempts to move debates on, in some respects, more difficult. ippr's research found that hostility is increased by a lack of faith in the UK Government to address the issue. While this is outside the Scottish-specific focus of this report, it is vital that the national policy framework enables regional and local interventions to be effective. We, therefore, make specific recommendations to central government, as well as Scottish institutions.

16. ippr is currently undertaking research into how best to communicate asylum issues, funded by Barrow Cadbury, Oxfam UK and the Scottish Refugee Council.

The Scottish Executive should:

- continue to support asylum seekers to volunteer in community projects or to undertake voluntary work while their cases are being heard
- include greater detail about asylum seekers and refugees in the One Scotland campaign, and stress Scotland's role as a provider of sanctuary
- make accessible information about asylum seekers available on its website, including facts and definitions
- begin to discuss low-skilled jobs in the Fresh Talent initiative, and use it to fund refugee adaptation courses
- include more facts on asylum as part of the One Scotland campaign
- ensure that front-line staff in contact with the public have the correct information to counteract myths
- continue to work to integrate asylum seekers as well as refugees
- openly refute inaccuracies in Scottish media reports of asylum issues
- continue to provide political leadership with strong statements on the rights of asylum seekers
- include specific questions about attitudes to asylum seekers as part of the One Scotland campaign monitoring
- support efforts to enable asylum seekers to integrate by continuing to offer English lessons where appropriate
- support the production of jointly produced and agreed information materials, from voluntary sector organisations and local authorities
- ensure that the 1951 Convention on Refugees is covered in the national curricula in an appropriate context, and monitor its implementation.

Local authorities should:

- ensure that front-line staff in housing offices and customer service centres have the information they need to counteract myths
- ensure that obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act are met by promoting good race relations
- make accessible information about asylum seekers available on their websites, including facts and definitions
- develop an overarching communications strategy about migration within their area
- build on good practice in activities to prepare host communities.

In addition, Glasgow City Council should:

- provide opportunities for people to get involved in more-informed debates about asylum, for example through deliberative forums
- use opportunities, such as housing newsletters, to counter myths
- recognise that the greatest prejudice exists in areas adjacent to those with large ethnic minority communities or asylum-seeking communities, and target these areas specifically for integration and information initiatives – building on the good practice of existing intervention work
- support asylum seekers to volunteer in community projects or to undertake voluntary work while their cases are being determined
- consult with refugee community organisations on developing race equality schemes and monitoring the impact of particular policies on asylum seekers and refugees
- support museums and libraries to act as welcome centres, where asylum seekers and other new arrivals can access information and meet local people, and also continue existing refugee work and arts projects.

Businesses operating in Scotland should:

- recognise the impacts of migrant labour upon wider public attitudes, and take responsibility for challenging negative attitudes
- work with the Scottish Executive and other agencies to provide a coherent account of the need for migrant labour in Scotland
- work with agencies such as the Bridges Projects to provide work-shadowing opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees
- discuss why they are hiring foreign labour openly within the local community, through employee networks, union membership and the local press
- provide support to their staff to learn English
- ensure that any front-line staff have access to accurate information about asylum seekers, to counter misinformation.

Scottish Trades Union Congress should:

- ensure that all union representatives are briefed about asylum issues – for example, see UNISON’s work on this: www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/refugee.html (accessed June 2006)
- ensure that front-line staff in housing offices and customer service centres have the information they need to counteract myths.

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) should:

- encourage local authorities to develop and provide effective mechanisms for sharing information with local people about asylum issues
- encourage local authorities to share good practice about integrating asylum seekers and challenging prejudice
- encourage local authorities to learn from Glasgow City Council’s good work and experience in local integration strategies.

Refugee-assisting voluntary sector agencies should:

- widen the scope of integration work to include surrounding areas of asylum dispersal sites
- link refugee and asylum seeker organisations with schools and museums
- encourage members to challenge inaccurate media reporting of asylum issues using established tools, such as the Press Complaints Commission, the Fair Play report (Oxfam 2004) and the Positive Images Network
- make links with faith-based communities and religious establishments, to provide resources to be used by their members
- continue to support refugees and asylum seekers, particularly young refugees to tell their own stories in the media with an emphasis on targeting the local media and new media
- continue to challenge political rhetoric and inaccuracies
- support asylum seeker and refugee voices in the policy debate
- actively encourage government bodies to implement the recommendations in this report.

Religious bodies should:

- establish links between different faith groups, and make joint statements about the rights of asylum seekers and refugees
- support the voices of asylum seekers and refugees to be heard, through religious ceremonies and via community links
- continue to make strong statements about the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

Schools and education authorities should:

- use materials, such as those provided by voluntary sector organisations and developed in other areas, to challenge racism and to discuss the experience of migration
- actively implement curriculum requirements to cover asylum and refugee issues
- treat prejudice against asylum-seeking pupils as racism
- actively work with local refugee organisations to provide 'real life' stories.

Print and broadcast media should:

- abide by the guidelines set by the Press Complaints Commission
- actively check facts and openly correct inaccuracies when they occur
- use resources, such as the one produced by the Scottish Refugee Council, Oxfam, the NUJ and Amnesty, to ensure that terms being used are accurate and do not reinforce myths (www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp/resources/downloads/Fair_Play_guide_for_journalists.pdf)
- contact asylum and refugee organisations to ensure balanced coverage, and to facilitate interviews with asylum seekers and refugees to ensure their views are heard
- permit journalists to adhere to the NUJ code of conduct
- use the guide from Mediawise to ensure that terms are appropriate (www.mediawise.org.uk)
- include personal stories from asylum seekers and refugees, and make sure that stories give as balanced a view as possible, for example by covering the positive contributions they make to Scottish life.

UK Government should:

- openly discuss and affirm the UK's international obligations to asylum seekers and refugees, while making sure that the asylum system works effectively
- openly refute inaccuracies in media reports of asylum issues
- provide political leadership, with strong statements on the rights of asylum seekers
- support efforts to prevent asylum seekers becoming isolated while their cases are being considered by offering English lessons where appropriate.

The National Asylum Support Service (NASS) should:

- avoid national dispersal arrangements that exacerbate integration problems, such as placing asylum seekers in very deprived areas
- strive to gain a balance between placing asylum seekers densely in particular areas, and their need to mix with other asylum seekers
- share good practice on holding discussions with local communities with different parts of NASS
- provide more-structured arrival support when asylum seekers are dispersed to a new area, for example by providing introductions to local communities
- ensure that national information on asylum seekers is shared with consortia and local agencies to inform service planning
- work with local authorities to ensure that 'host' communities receive some benefit from accepting asylum seekers, to counter perceptions that asylum seekers get favourable treatment.

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Annex I: Attendees at a seminar held under Chatham House Rules on 4 May 2006 to discuss the research conclusions and recommendations

Nelu Balaj	Scottish Churches
Rosemary Burnett	Amnesty International
Gary Christie	Scottish Refugee Council
Barbara Clark	Visit Scotland
Dawn Corbett	Glasgow City Council
Sally Daghlian	Scottish Refugee Council
Kirsty Davidson	Scottish Refugee Council
Barry Dryden	NASS Scotland
Lula Durante	ippr
Simon Hodgson	Scottish Refugee Council
Lesley Irving	Scottish Executive
Miranda Lewis	ippr
Neil McArthur	Immigration Advisory Service
Dr Richard McCready	Justice and Peace Group Scotland
Derek Mitchell	COSLA
Angela O'Hagan	Oxfam GB
Liz Speake	Association of Scottish Colleges
Phil Taylor	Home Office
Val Thomson	Strathclyde Police
Elisabeth Welsh	Home Office