

# **Needs and vulnerability assessment of asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants in Swansea**

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**October 2024**

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## Executive Summary

This study, conducted between August 16th and 28th 2024, assessed the needs of asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants (ASR) in Swansea. Commissioned by the Swansea Asylum Seekers Support (SASS) Board of Trustees, the research employed a participatory approach, surveying 54 ASR individuals to understand their lived experiences and priorities. The findings reveal significant and interconnected challenges across various domains.

A substantial majority of respondents (70.4%) expressed concern about insufficient food, highlighting widespread food insecurity. This was further exacerbated by limited dietary diversity and frequent consumption of fewer than two meals per day, posing serious nutritional risks. Financial constraints, a lack of culturally appropriate foods, and limited access to food assistance emerged as significant barriers. Healthcare access proved another critical concern.

A substantial proportion (64.5%) reported health challenges, yet a significant number (40%) lacked access to necessary care due to long waiting times, complex system navigation, financial limitations, lack of legal status, language barriers etc.

Housing conditions were frequently substandard, with nearly 40% of respondents reporting poor conditions, including dampness, infestations, and inadequate space. Temporary accommodation was prevalent, underscoring the need for sustainable housing options.

Unemployment was another prevalent issue, affecting over 90% of respondents. Barriers to employment included legal restrictions, language barriers, limited job opportunities, lack of recognition of prior qualifications amongst others.

Education opportunities were also limited for a significant portion of the ASR population. Over one-third reported exclusion from educational opportunities.

Furthermore, despite many ASR having pressing legal needs, over a third lacked adequate legal representation, due to language barriers, high legal costs, long waiting lists, and a lack of information.

ASRs reported the need for necessities like clothing, footwear, cleaning supplies, toiletries, bedding, and kitchen utensils. However, more than 50% could not access them due to financial constraints, transport difficulties, a lack of information on resources, language barriers, and lengthy wait times for donations.

Transport proved to be a significant barrier, with many relying on walking due to high costs, limited options, and infrequent services.

Over two-thirds of respondents lacked access to sports and recreational opportunities, citing financial limitations, transport issues, lack of information, family obligations, health concerns, and time constraints as key barriers.

Overall, legal aid, education, healthcare, food security, transport and employment were consistently identified as critical priorities by the respondents.

These findings underscore the interconnected nature of these issues and the urgent need for a comprehensive and holistic support system addressing the multifaceted needs of the ASR population in Swansea.

## 1.Introduction

The UK has long been a destination for asylum seekers and refugees fleeing conflict, persecution, and human rights abuses in their home countries. With geopolitical instability and ongoing humanitarian crises in various regions, the number of individuals seeking refuge in the UK has increased significantly over the past decades<sup>1</sup>. The annual number of asylum applications to the UK peaked in 2002 at 84,132. After that the number fell sharply to reach a twenty-year low point of 17,916 in 2010. It rose steadily throughout the 2010s, then rapidly from 2021 onwards to reach 81,130 applications in 2022, the highest annual number since 2002<sup>2</sup>.

Over the past decade, the demographic composition of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK has undergone significant changes. Historically, the UK has received individuals fleeing conflicts from regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans. More recently, there has been a notable increase in arrivals from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan and Eritrea that are experiencing acute humanitarian crises and political turmoil. This shift has introduced a more diverse array of cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds among asylum seekers and refugees.

The demographic profile has also changed in terms of age and family composition. There are a growing number of unaccompanied minors and women with children, which present unique challenges and require tailored support services. Additionally, the educational and professional backgrounds of asylum seekers and refugees vary widely, necessitating diverse approaches to integration and support.

The legislative environment surrounding asylum seekers and refugees in the UK has seen several significant changes, reflecting broader political and social dynamics. Key legislative developments include, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, Nationality, Immigration and

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<sup>1</sup> Asylum statistics, House of Commons

<sup>2</sup> Commons Library Research Briefing, 10 September 2024

Asylum Act 2002, Immigration Act 2014 and 2016, Nationality and Borders Act 2022 and the Illegal Migration Act 2024. These legislative changes have created a more complex and often restrictive environment for asylum seekers and refugees, affecting their ability to access essential services and secure their legal status.

The provision of statutory services for asylum seekers and refugees has also evolved, with significant implications for this vulnerable population. The dispersal policy, which relocates asylum seekers to various parts of the UK, has often resulted in placing individuals in areas with limited support infrastructure. Access to healthcare services has been limited by legislative changes that require proof of legal status and the introduction of charges for certain treatments. This has exacerbated health inequalities among asylum seekers and refugees. There have been efforts to improve access to education and employment through various integration programs. However, barriers such as language proficiency, recognition of qualifications, and legal restrictions on work eligibility remain significant challenges. Cuts to legal aid and support services have reduced the availability of professional assistance for asylum seekers navigating the complex asylum process, impacting their ability to secure protection and integration. The shifting demographics, evolving legislative landscape, and changes in service provision have introduced new and complex challenges while exacerbating existing ones.

Given the dynamic nature of asylum seekers and refugee demographics, legislative environment, and service provision, it is imperative to continuously assess and understand their needs.

## **2. Justification**

Swansea is a city of sanctuary for an estimated 800-900 asylum seekers and a significant refugee and a small undocumented migrant population. Over the past 20 years, Swansea Asylum Seekers Support (SASS) has provided support to this vulnerable population. However, shifting migratory trends and changes in migration policies and widespread shrinking statutory service provision together with altered demographics and needs of the population have all affected displaced people in the UK. To continue providing support, it is imperative to understand the evolving and often complex needs of those we serve. Therefore, a thorough and updated needs assessment is essential. Conscious of this crucial need, this assessment was commissioned by the Board of Trustees of SASS.

This needs and vulnerability assessment aims to gather comprehensive data directly from asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants to identify their most pressing needs and vulnerabilities. By engaging with our beneficiaries in this participatory manner, we seek to ensure that their voices are heard and that our support strategies are informed by their lived experiences.

The insights gained from this assessment will enable us to tailor our services more accurately, prioritise resource allocation, and advocate more effectively for the rights and needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

### 3. Materials and Methods

The survey was conducted between 16<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of August 2024. Utilizing a Google Form, a comprehensive questionnaire was administered by trained enumerators to evaluate the health, education, employment, legal, housing, food, transport, personal and household essentials, sports and recreation needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

SASS is committed to taking a trauma-informed approach to all its evaluation and research work,<sup>3</sup> recognising that all SASS people will have experienced trauma prior to coming to SASS and that the asylum system itself is a cause of further trauma. The survey tool was designed to maximise informed choice and control, gaining informed consent both at the start of the survey and again at the beginning of each survey topic. Community languages were used by peer data collectors, using Google translate function and/or peer interpreters. Peer data collectors were also key in ensuring we employed a relationship-focused approach. All surveys were carried out face to face in the safety of the SASS drop-in environment. Care was taken to ensure as far as possible that survey questions did not have the potential to retraumatise people and the tool promoted resilience by building in a signposting process where need was identified. Nevertheless, we recognise that many needs identified arose due to systemic causes or lack of capacity in support agencies meaning that there will be no signposting option; many of the needs will therefore remain unmet.

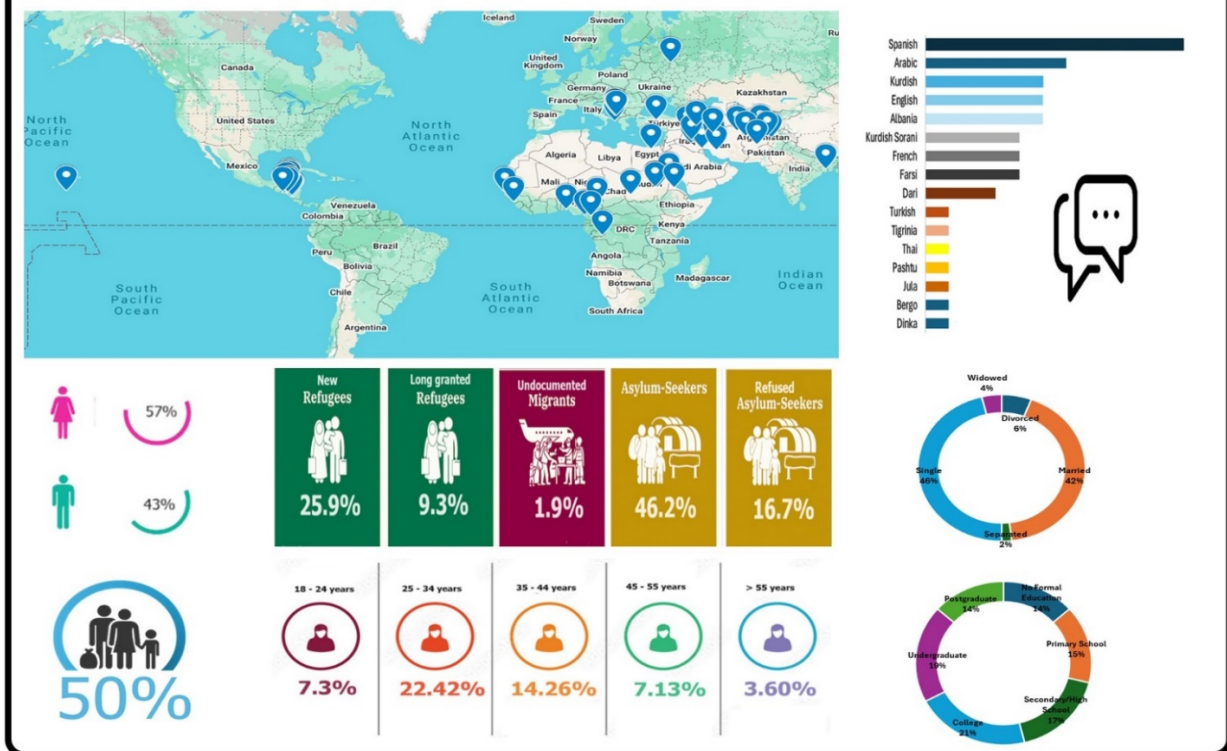
A total of 54 participants, representing approximately 33% of the ASR population who attend an average drop-in session at SASS. They were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the survey. A socio-demographic description of the respondents is provided in Box 1. Most respondents originated from conflict-ridden regions, including areas in the Greater Middle East<sup>4</sup>, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region, as well as countries experiencing widespread violence in Central and South America. Over half (57%) of the respondents were women and a significant majority (62.8%) of respondents identified as asylum seekers or refused asylum seekers. Half of the respondents were part of families seeking sanctuary in the UK. In terms of age distribution, over a quarter (36.86%) of the participants fell within the 25 to 44-year age range, indicating a relatively young population with the need and capacity to be economically active.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://traumaframeworkcymru.com/> - page 11, 5 Practice Principles

<sup>4</sup> "Greater Middle East" is a political term coined by the second Bush administration, to denote various countries, pertaining to the Muslim world, specifically Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. Various Central Asian countries are sometimes also included.

### BOX 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the survey respondents



## 4. Findings of the Assessment

### 4.1 Food and nutrition

Food insecurity is a significant concern among the surveyed population. The data reveals alarming levels of worry regarding food sufficiency, with a combined 70.4% of respondents (55.6% sometimes, 11.1% often, and 3.7% always) expressing concerns about not having enough food to eat (Figure 1).

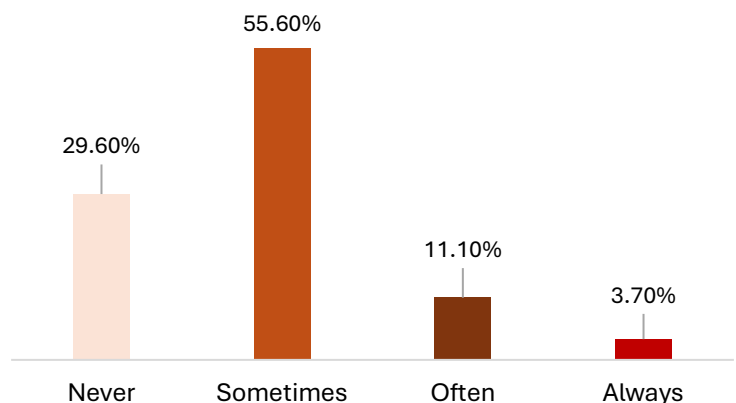


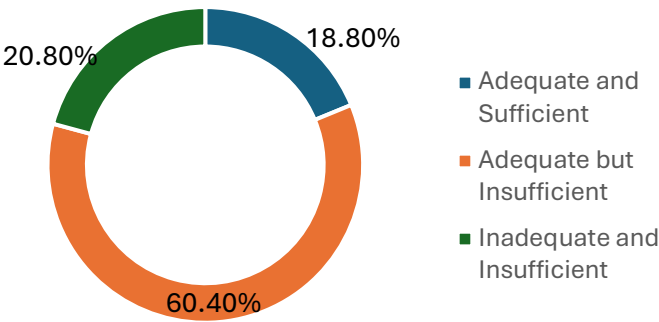
Figure 1: Concerns about having enough food to eat

While nearly one-fifth (18.8%) reported adequate and sufficient food access, a substantial majority experience some level of food insecurity (Figure 2). Specifically, 60.4% described their food access as adequate but insufficient, suggesting they have access to food but not enough to meet their nutritional needs, while 20.8% face inadequate and insufficient food access, indicating both limited access and insufficient quantities.

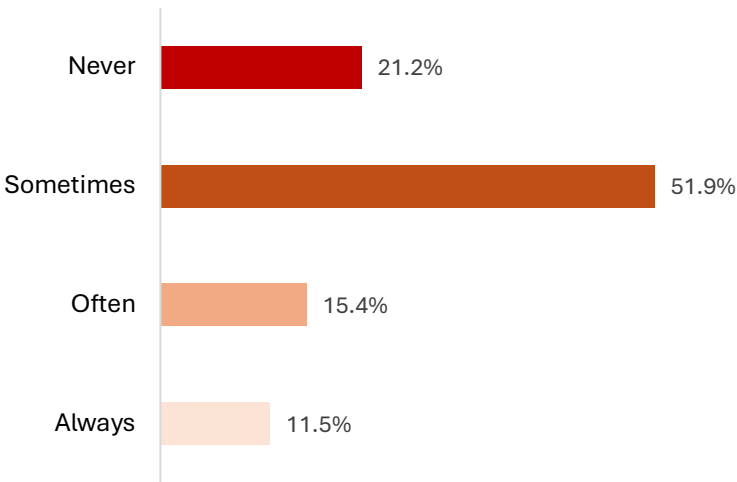
As shown in Figure 3, this widespread food insecurity is further compounded by a lack of dietary diversity.

Almost three-quarters (73.1%) of respondents reported never or only sometimes consuming a balanced diet consisting of fruit, vegetables, protein and grains. This indicates potential micronutrient deficiencies and raises concerns about long-term health outcomes. The problem is exacerbated by almost 6 in 10 respondents consuming two or fewer meals per day, further highlighting the insufficient intake of necessary nutrients.

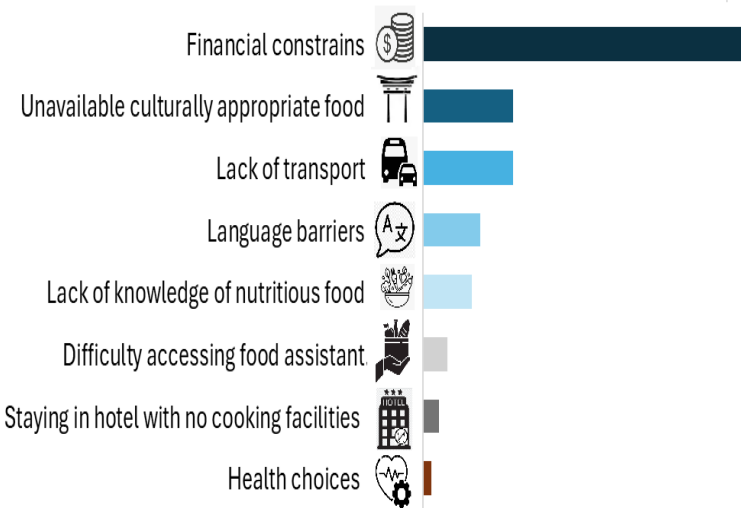
The primary obstacles to adequate food access and consumption include financial constraints, the unavailability of culturally appropriate foods, transportation challenges, language barriers, insufficient knowledge about nutritious foods, and limited access to food assistance, among other factors (Figure 4).



**Figure 2:** Concerns about food adequacy and sufficiency



**Figure 3:** Respondents consumption of balanced diet



**Figure 4:** Barriers to adequate food access and consumption

## **Box 2: Gender and vulnerability perspective to food access and dietary intake.**

Women reported higher levels of food-related worry and inadequate access to food, as well as unbalanced diets, compared to men. This is especially concerning because a far higher proportion of women respondents had dependent children to feed (83%, compared to just 25% of male respondents).

Notable disparities were observed among migrant groups. Asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers were more likely to experience food insecurity and unbalanced diets, with asylum seekers and new refugees being the most affected in terms of dietary imbalance.

Even though these differences were not statistically significant, it points to potential disparities in food security and dietary balance for women, asylum seekers and new refugees. Targeted interventions to address these vulnerable groups' higher levels of food-related worry can further ensure equitable access and nutritional well-being for all.

## **Box 3: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations.**

### **Key implications of the findings**

- High levels of food insecurity, with potential negative health outcomes, including malnutrition, increased susceptibility to illness and chronic health diseases.
- Lack of dietary diversity which raises concerns about micronutrient deficiencies and long-term health consequences such as anaemia, weakened immune function, and developmental issues for children.
- The existence of structural challenges which disproportionately affect vulnerable populations and perpetuate food insecurity and poverty.

### **Proposed Recommendations**

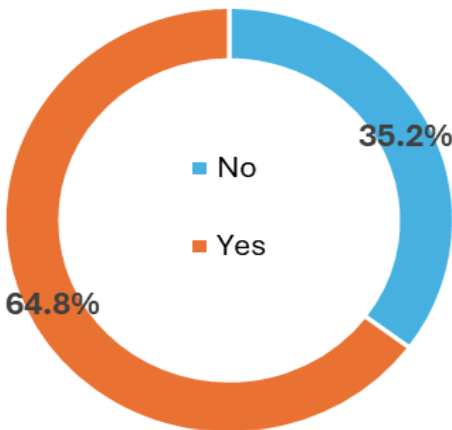
- Increase the availability and accessibility of food assistance initiatives, such as food banks, community kitchens, and subsidised food programmes, to support those in need.
- Implement educational initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of a balanced diet and how to achieve it within budget constraints.
- Provide multilingual resources and outreach programmes to educate individuals about available food assistance services and nutritional information

## 4.2 Health status and services

A significant proportion of respondents (64.5%) reported experiencing health challenges, either personally or within their families (Figure 5).

This highlights a substantial need for healthcare services within the community. However, a notable gap in service provision was identified, with approximately 40% of those with health difficulties indicating that they do not have access to the care they require.

For individuals with health conditions, accessing healthcare services is often a daunting task. One of the primary challenges they face is the long waiting times for National Health Service (NHS) appointments. Furthermore, many individuals struggle to navigate the complex healthcare landscape due to a lack of information about available services. Financial constraints also pose a significant barrier to accessing healthcare services. Moreover, those with no legal status face significant barriers to accessing NHS services. Language barriers also hinder access to healthcare services, as individuals who do not speak English struggle to communicate their needs. In addition, transport difficulties and challenges of registering with a General Practitioner (GP) were also cited as challenges.



**Figure 5:** Proportion of respondents experiencing health challenges



**Box 4: Gender and vulnerability perspectives to health status and services.**

A notable disparity was observed in the prevalence of health challenges, with a higher proportion of women reporting adverse health experiences compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, an examination of the barriers to accessing health services revealed that women were disproportionately affected by these obstacles relative to men.

In addition, among subgroups of forcibly displaced individuals, asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers, and those recently granted refugee status reported a higher incidence of health challenges compared to other groups within this population.

## Box 5: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations.

### Key implications of the findings

- Significant proportion of the ASRs experience health challenges;
- Most with health difficulties do not have access to the care they require, particularly those with no legal status, exacerbating existing health inequities;
- Multiple barriers hinder access to healthcare services for individuals with health conditions.

### Proposed Recommendations

- Develop clear and accessible information about available healthcare services, including language support.
- Implement patient advocate programmes to help individuals navigate the complex healthcare landscape.

## 4.3 Housing

Most asylum seekers and refugees (ASR) were residing in temporary accommodations, such as NASS-provided housing or hotels, with a smaller proportion living in private rental properties or experiencing homelessness. Nearly 40% of ASRs reported living in substandard housing conditions, while approximately one-third described their housing as neither poor nor good, categorizing it as fair (Figure 7). Among those reporting poor housing conditions, common issues included dampness (21.4%), poor ventilation (21.4%), infestations (14.3%), inadequate living space (14.3%), poor accessibility (14.3%), and antisocial behaviour from neighbours (14.3%) (Figure 8).

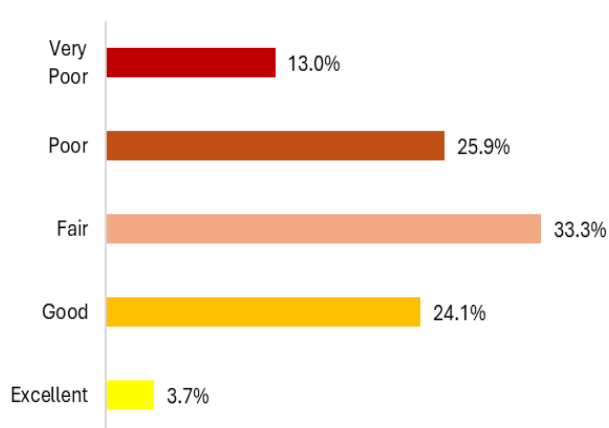


Figure 7: Quality of the housing

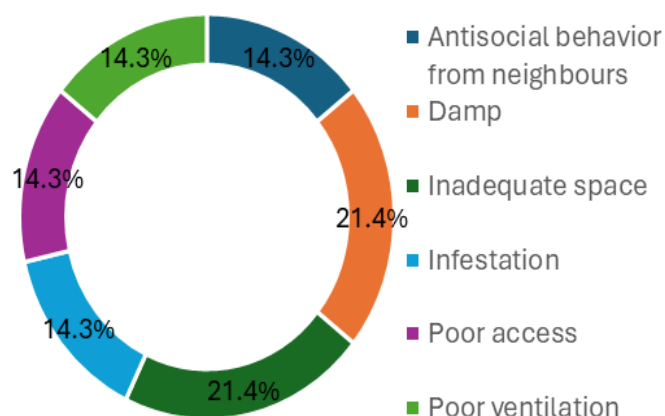


Figure 8: Housing conditions

Furthermore, one in three ASR indicated that their current accommodation was unsuitable for their household's needs, particularly in terms of space, privacy, and accessibility (Figure 9). In

addition, while health services, schools, and places of worship were generally accessible, most accommodation was reported to be located far from the city centre and recreational or sports facilities (Figure 10).

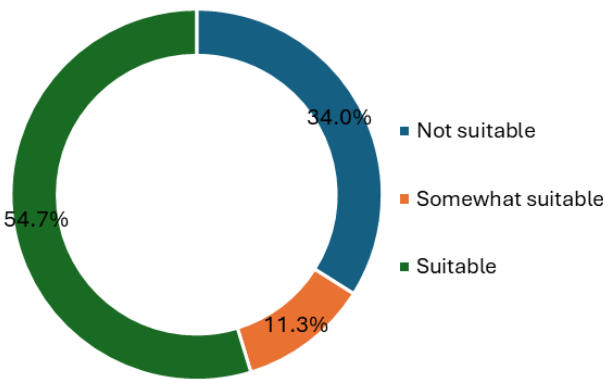


Figure 9: Suitability of housing

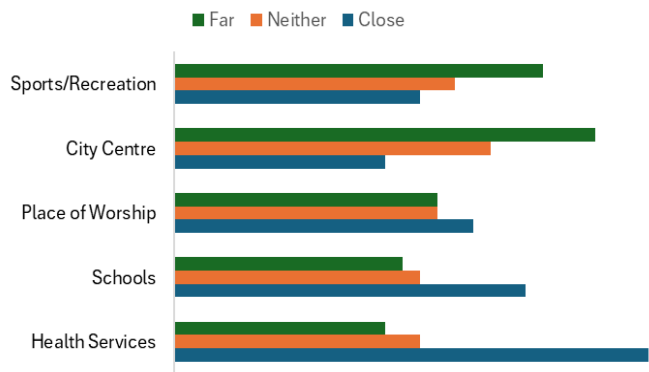


Figure 10: Proximity to essential services

**Box 6: Gender and vulnerability perspectives to housing and services.**

A significant disparity in housing quality exists across various demographic groups. A greater proportion of men, relative to women, reported residing in sub-standard housing. Similarly, refused asylum seekers and newly recognised refugees were among the groups of forcibly displaced individuals most likely to experience poor living conditions.

**Box 7: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations.**

**Key implications of the findings**

- Substandard housing conditions, such as dampness, poor ventilation, and infestations, directly impact the physical health of ASRs, leading to respiratory problems, allergies, and other health issues.
- The location of accommodation far from the city centre, essential services and with limited access to recreational and sports facilities restricts opportunities for social interaction and community integration for ASRs.

**Proposed Recommendations**

- People Support workers should assist ASRs to engage with housing services to ensure housing maintenance and upgrades to ensure that accommodation meets acceptable living standards.
- Bus tickets should be provided for families who live far away from essential services.

## 4.4 Employment

More than 90% of asylum seekers and refugees (ASR) are currently unemployed, as illustrated in Figure 11. Among those who are unemployed, primary challenges include legal restrictions (50%), language barriers (24.1%), limited job opportunities (18.5%), non-recognition of previous qualifications and experience (16.7%), lack of relevant skills and qualifications (11.1%), health issues (9.3%), and family responsibilities (9.3%), as shown in Figure 12.

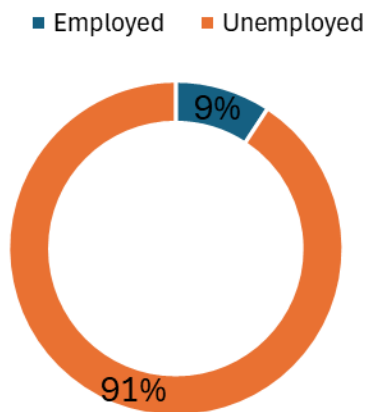


Figure 11: Employment status of ASR



Figure 12: Barriers to employment

Furthermore, nearly two-thirds (63%) of ASR have not received assistance in finding employment. Those who have received support have primarily done so through charities, community organizations, and government agencies (Figure 13). The high rate of unemployment among ASR highlights significant systemic barriers that prevent their successful integration into the labour market.

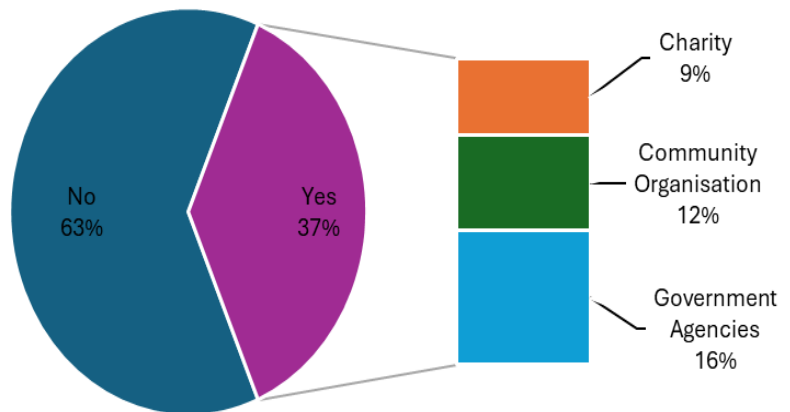


Figure 13: Support with finding employment

**Box 8: Gender and vulnerability perspectives to employment.**

No significant variation in employment status was observed across gender or legal status groups. However, a higher proportion of women compared to men reported not receiving assistance in finding employment. Additionally, a lack of employment support was commonly cited among undocumented migrants, long-term refugees, and refused asylum seekers.

## Box 9: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations.

### Key implications of the findings

- Unemployment rates are high among asylum seekers and refugees
- Legal restrictions, non-recognition of previous qualifications and experience, language barriers, skills mismatch etc constitute major barriers to employment for ASRs
- There are significant gaps in support services to find employment

### Proposed Recommendations

- Advocate for policy changes that facilitate quicker access to work permits and reduce legal restrictions for ASR
- Develop and expand programmes that improve ASR access to services that assess and recognise foreign qualifications and expertise.

## 4.5 Education

There is a concerning disparity in access to education for asylum seekers and refugees, with slightly over one-third currently excluded from educational opportunities. (Figure 14).

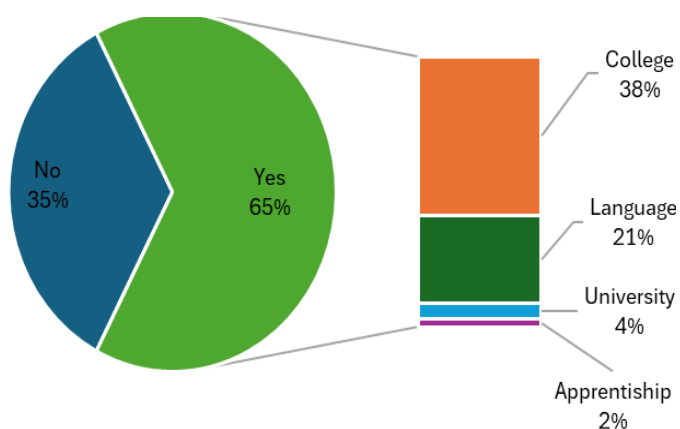


Figure 14: Educational status of ASR

For those who are enrolled, the study indicates a concentration in college-level and language courses, while university and apprenticeship programmes remain significantly underrepresented. This pattern suggests a potential channelling effect, where asylum seekers and refugees may face barriers to accessing diverse educational pathways, limiting their future opportunities.

Figure 15 highlights the multifaceted challenges faced by those outside the education system.

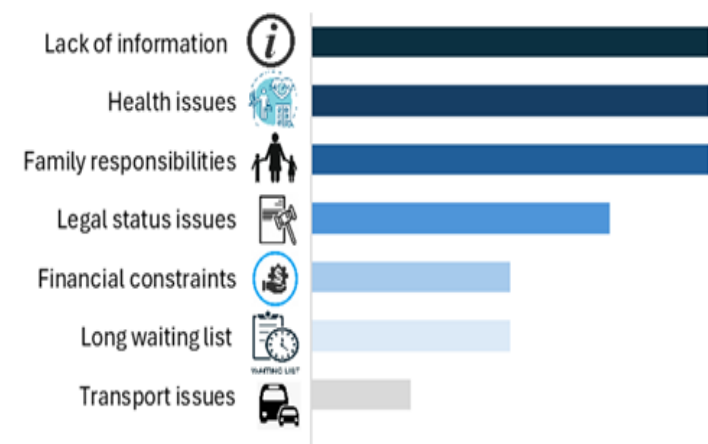


Figure 15: Barriers to education for ASR

Lack of information, coupled with health issues and family responsibilities, represent significant personal barriers. Simultaneously, legal status issues and financial constraints point to systemic obstacles that disproportionately affect this vulnerable population. Long waiting lists and transport difficulties further compound these challenges, creating a complex web of barriers that limit access to education.

Nearly 40% of asylum-seeking and refugee (ASR) children face significant challenges regarding educational integration.

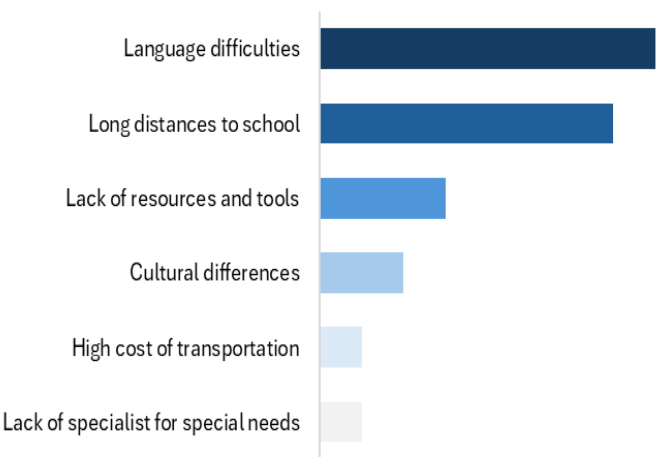


Figure 16: Challenges faced by ASR children in school

As shown in Figure 16, these difficulties are multifaceted, encompassing language barriers, logistical challenges such as distance to school and high transport costs, resource limitations, including a lack of school supplies and specialised support for children with special educational needs. Furthermore, cultural differences present an additional layer of complexity, potentially leading to feelings of isolation or misunderstanding within the school environment.

**Box 10: Gender and vulnerability perspectives to education.**

Educational participation reveals a gender disparity, with a higher proportion of women enrolled in educational programs compared to men. Furthermore, asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants are significantly underrepresented in educational opportunities compared to refugees (new or long granted). This disparity highlights the need for further investigation into the factors contributing to these educational participation gaps.

## Box 11: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations.

### Key implications of the findings

- The significant proportion of asylum seekers and refugees not in education and under-representation in universities limits their opportunities for social and economic integration
- Personal challenges such as lack of information, health issues, and family responsibilities hinder educational participation while systemic obstacles including legal status issues amongst other exacerbate these difficulties.
- Multifaceted challenges faced by ASR children impede their educational integration and progress.

### Proposed Recommendations

- Develop multilingual information resources to address the lack of information about educational opportunities and support services.
- Provide ASRs with resources on educational opportunities including funding and scholarships.
- Provide bus tickets to children covering long distances to and from schools

## 4.6 Legal support and representation

A significant majority of asylum seekers and refugees (85.2%) face pressing legal needs, encompassing crucial areas such as asylum applications, housing rights, appeals against decisions, applications for work permits and travel documents, family reunification, and access to Universal Credit (Figure 17).

Alarmingly, almost a third (30.1%) of those with pressing legal needs lack legal representation (Figure 18). This lack of access to legal support has serious implications, potentially leading to wrongful denials of asylum claims, inadequate access to essential services, and prolonged periods of uncertainty and hardship.

Several factors contribute to this gap in legal representation, including language barriers, the high cost of legal services, and long waiting lists for appointments create significant obstacles. Additionally, a lack of information about available services, geographical distance to legal aid providers,

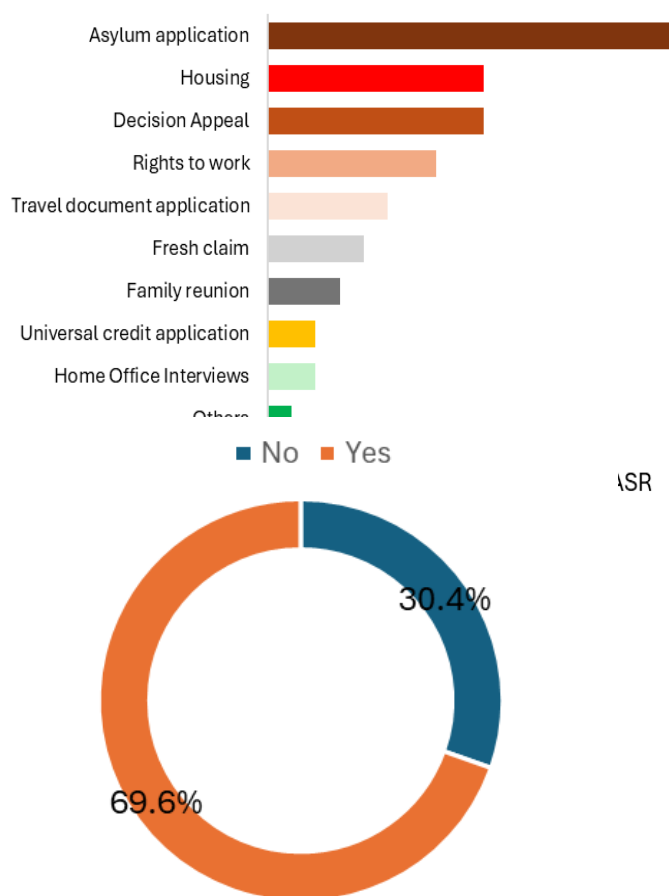
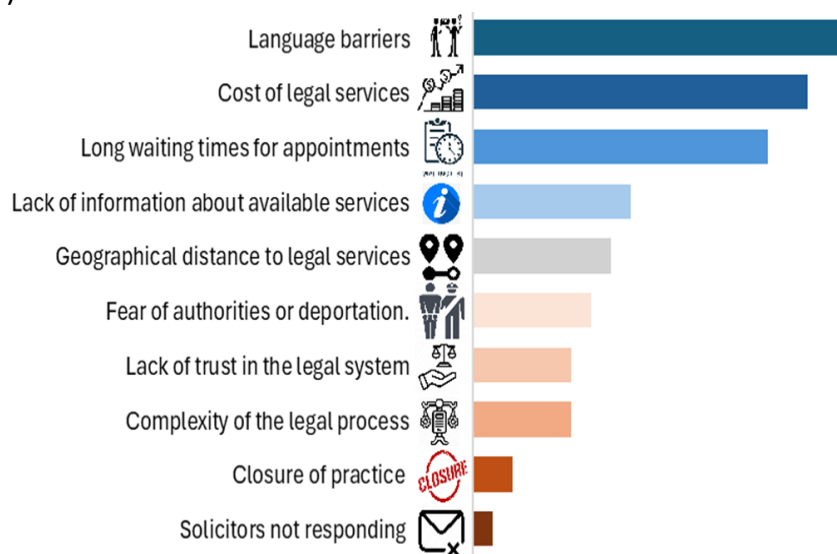


Figure 18: Legal representation of ASR

and a distrust of the legal system stemming from fears of deportation further compound the issue (Figure 19).



**Figure 19:** Barriers to legal services for ASR

### Box 12: Gender and vulnerability perspectives to legal representation.

There were variations in access to legal support based on both gender and immigration status. A higher proportion of men lacked legal representation compared to women. Furthermore, a significant portion of undocumented migrants and long-granted refugees reported a lack of legal representation, a pattern that contrasts with the experiences of asylum seekers, newly granted refugees, and refused asylum seekers.

### Box 13: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations.

#### Key implications of the findings

- High prevalence of pressing legal needs across various areas, including asylum applications, interviews, appeals, work permits, travel documents, family reunification, and access to social services.
- A significant number of ASRs with pressing legal needs lack legal representation, heightening the risk of having their claims wrongfully denied or inadequate access to social services
- Multiple barriers to accessing legal support, including language barriers, cost of legal services, long waiting lists, lack of information, geographical distance to providers, distrust of the legal system, etc.

#### Proposed Recommendations

- Expand the legal support programme for Home Office interviews
- Develop targeted campaigns to inform asylum seekers and refugees about available legal services in multiple languages.
- Develop the language ambassadors' programme to increase the availability of qualified interpreters for legal support and proceedings.
- Develop links with the legal aid clinic of Swansea University to improve legal representation for ASRs
- Advocate for policies that protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees and ensure access to justice

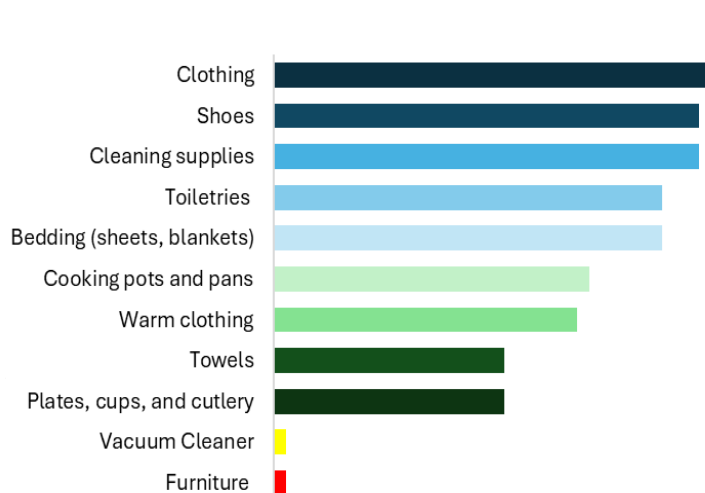


Figure 20: Household essential needs of ASR

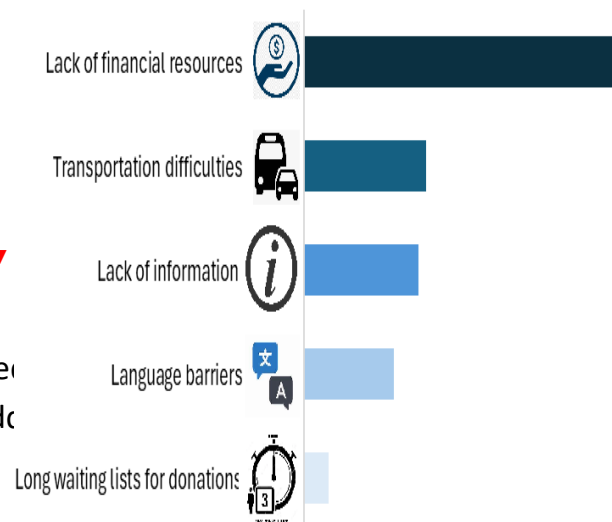


Figure 21: Barriers to access household essential items

## 4.7 Personal and Household Essentials (clothes, shoes, bedding and kitchen utensils)

A significant portion of respondents reported a need for basic household essentials, including clothing, footwear, cleaning supplies, toiletries, bedding, cooking and kitchen utensils and warm clothing (Figure 20). More than 51% of asylum cannot easily access these items. Their major challenges include lack of financial resources, transport difficulties, lack of information of where to get these items, language barriers while at the shops and long waiting list for donations (Figure 21).

### Box 14: Gender and vulnerability perspectives to access to household essential items.

A higher proportion of men than women reported lacking access to essential household items. Additionally, refused asylum seekers and asylum seekers were more likely to be without access to these items compared to refugees.

### Box 15: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations.

#### Key implications of the findings

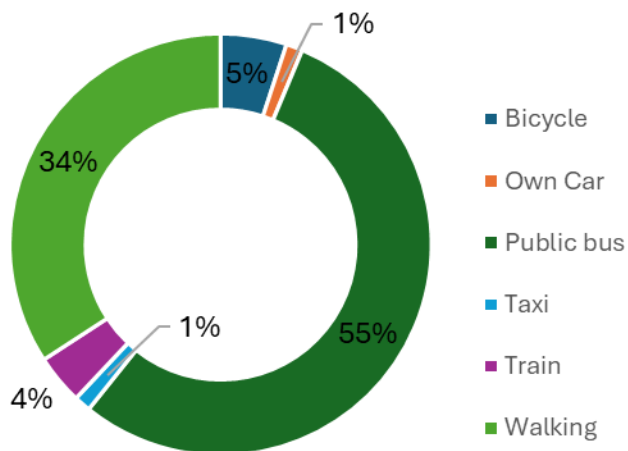
- Significant need for basic household essentials, including clothing, footwear, toiletries, bedding, cooking utensils, and warm clothing.
- Barriers to accessing essentials include financial hardship, transportation difficulties, lack of information, language barriers, etc.

#### Proposed Recommendations

- Provide direct financial aid or vouchers specifically designated for essential household items
- Expand donation drives to ensure a consistent supply of diverse goods
- Develop multilingual resource guides and signage at relevant locations.

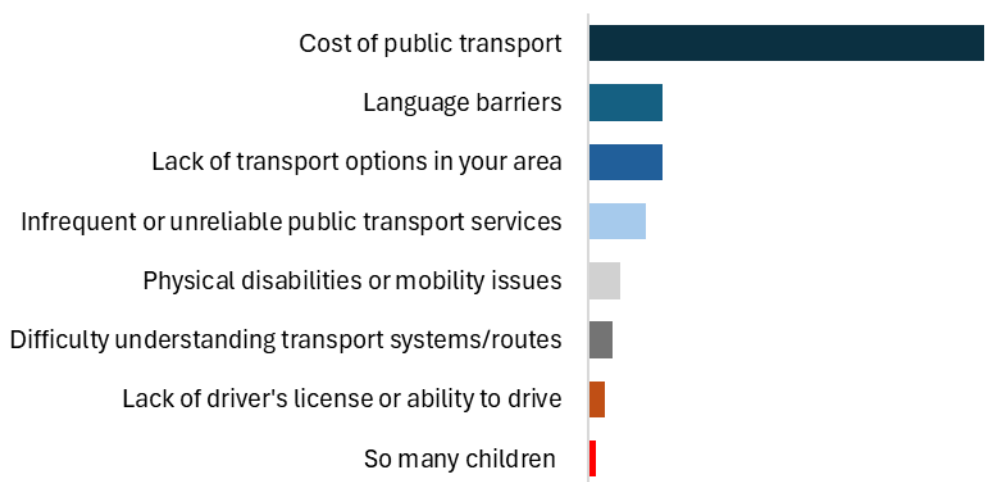
## 4.8 Transport

While most asylum seekers primarily utilised public buses for transport, a significant proportion (34%) reported walking as their main mode of travel (Figure 22).



**Figure 22:** Principal modes of transportation

The primary challenges to transport for asylum seekers and refugees include the high cost of transport, language barriers, limited transport options in their areas, infrequent or unreliable public transport services, and disability-related issues, among others highlight the need for more affordable, accessible, and reliable transport solutions (Figure 23)



**Figure 23:** Transport challenges for ASR

### Box 16: Gender and vulnerability perspectives on transport.

A greater number of men than women reported walking as their primary mode of transport. Additionally, this form of transport was most prevalent among individuals whose asylum claims had been denied compared to other groups. Moreover, the high cost of transport was identified as a more significant barrier for men than for women, and it was also a greater obstacle for asylum seekers and those whose asylum claims had been denied compared to refugees.

### Box 17: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations for access to transport

#### Key implications of the findings

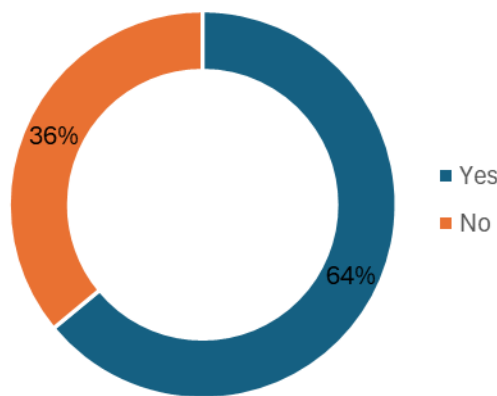
- While the majority of ASR reported using public buses, walking was equally a principal method of transport.
- High cost was the most significant barrier to transport.

#### Proposed Recommendations

- Provide bus tickets to the most vulnerable, particularly for essential activities
- Signpost ASRs to other transport support provided by other charities
- Liaise with other community members and organisations to provide bicycles to some vulnerable ASRs.

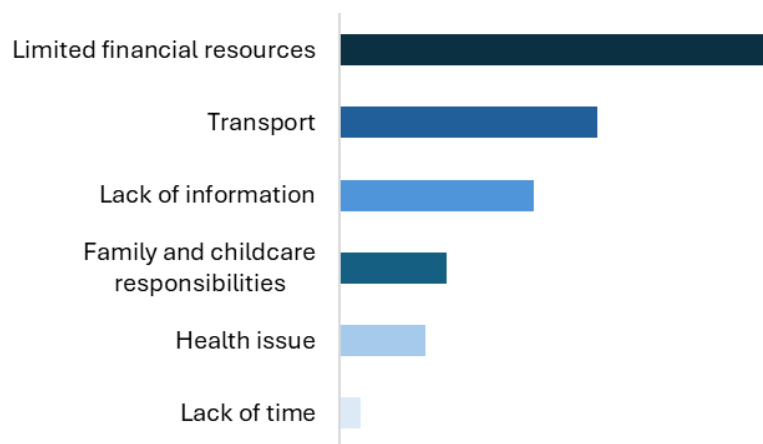
## 4.9 Sports and Recreation

Over two-thirds of asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants lack access to sports and recreational opportunities (Figure 24).



**Figure 24:** Access to sports and recreation opportunities

The primary barriers for these populations include limited financial resources, inadequate transport to and from activities, insufficient information about available opportunities and childcare obligations, health concerns, and a general lack of time (Figure 25).



**Figure 25:** Barriers to sports and recreation opportunities

### **Box 18: Gender and vulnerability perspectives on sports and recreation.**

A greater proportion of women than men identified a lack of financial resources as a barrier to accessing sports and recreation facilities. This financial constraint was also the primary obstacle for refused asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees, more so than for any other group.

### **Box 19: Key finding, implications and proposed recommendations for access to sports and recreation activities.**

#### **Key implications of the findings**

- A majority of ASRs do not have access to sports and recreation opportunities.
- Limited financial resources were the principal barrier to these opportunities.

#### **Proposed Recommendations**

- Organise more recreation and sports activities for ASRs.
- Subsidise access to sports and recreation facilities.

## 4.9 Needs Ranking

As illustrated in Figure 26, asylum seekers and refugees identified legal aid, education, healthcare, food, transport and employment as among their most critical needs. This underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by these populations and highlights the importance of addressing these areas to effectively support their integration and well-being.

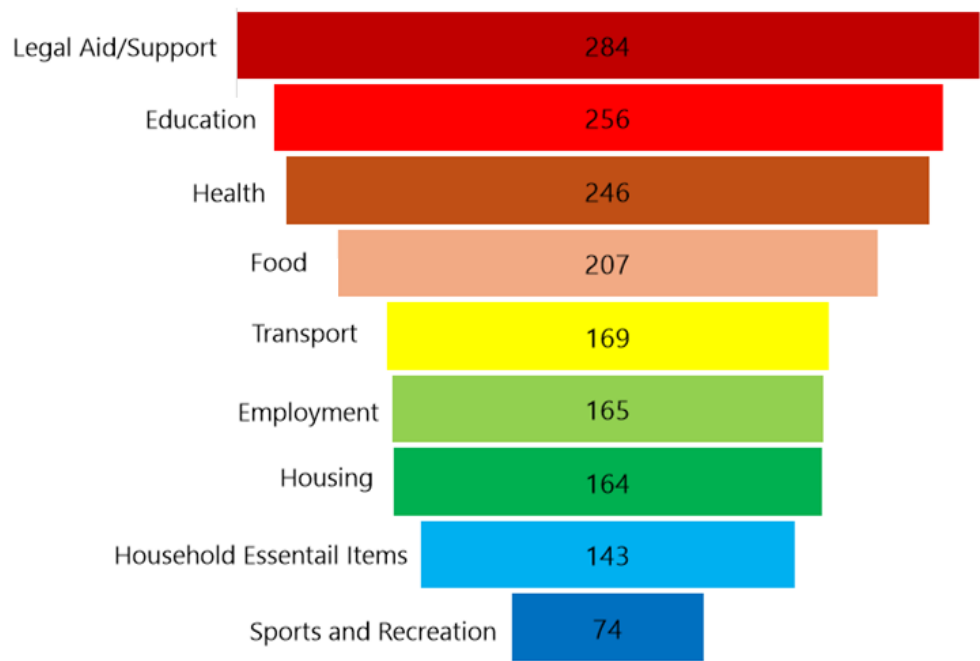


Figure 26: Needs ranking by ASR

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study, commissioned by the Board of Trustees of Swansea Asylum Seekers Support (SASS), presents a comprehensive needs assessment of the asylum seeker, refugee, and undocumented migrant (ASR) population in Swansea. The findings, gathered between August 16th and 28th, 2024, using a participatory approach involving 54 respondents, reveals a complex and multifaceted crisis affecting the lives of these vulnerable individuals.

The study unequivocally demonstrates the pervasiveness of food insecurity among the ASR population. The alarmingly high proportion (70.4%) expressing concerns about food sufficiency highlights the immediate and critical need for increased access to food banks and robust food assistance programmes tailored to the specific dietary needs and cultural preferences of the population. The data also underscores the profound impact of limited dietary diversity (73.1%), and the frequent consumption of two or fewer meals per day, on long-term health outcomes. This underscores the need for interventions that address not just the immediate lack of food but the underlying nutritional deficiencies and the promotion of healthy eating habits.

The study further highlights a significant gap in access to healthcare services. A substantial proportion (64.5%) reported experiencing health challenges, yet a concerning 40% indicated a lack of access to the required care. The study equally identified significant barriers to healthcare, including long waiting times for NHS appointments, complex navigation of the system, financial constraints, lack of legal status, language barriers, and difficulties in registering with a General Practitioner. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach—from streamlined access to healthcare, translation services, and financial assistance, to targeted outreach and awareness campaigns to improve understanding of the healthcare system's complexities among the ASR population.

The findings regarding housing highlight the critical need for more suitable and accessible accommodation. The prevalence of substandard housing conditions (nearly 40%) and unsuitable living situations (33%) emphasise the urgent need for improved housing provision, along with addressing the long-term housing needs of the population. While temporary accommodation is vital, they must offer adequate living conditions, particularly regarding space, privacy, accessibility, and proximity to essential services. The study also reveals the need for interventions that tackle the systemic issues related to housing affordability and suitability, and the importance of providing support for navigating the often bureaucratic and challenging housing processes.

The high unemployment rate (over 90%) among the ASR population exposes significant systemic barriers preventing their successful integration into the labour market. Legal restrictions, language barriers, limited job opportunities, non-recognition of prior qualifications, lack of relevant skills, health issues, and family responsibilities are among the significant obstacles identified.

Addressing this requires a multi-pronged approach, including targeted employment support programmes, language training, vocational training and initiatives that facilitate the recognition of prior learning and skills. Furthermore, advocating for policy changes that ease legal restrictions for employment and offer opportunities for skills development is crucial.

The study also reveals significant challenges in education and legal support. The underrepresentation of asylum seekers and refugees in diverse educational programmes, coupled with the significant barriers faced by those outside the system, underscores the need for targeted education support and accessible pathways to education.

Similarly, the overwhelming need for legal support (85.2% reporting pressing legal needs) and the lack of legal representation (30.1%) highlight the crucial importance of expanding legal aid services specifically designed to address the legal complexities faced by the ASR population. This includes ensuring adequate translation services, reducing waiting times, and making legal aid more accessible and affordable.

Furthermore, the study highlights the crucial need for basic resources, including clothing, footwear, cleaning supplies, toiletries, bedding, and kitchen utensils. The significant proportion needing these items (51%) emphasises the immediate need for community support programmes and initiatives to provide these essentials.

Additionally, the prevalence of challenges related to transport—high costs, limited options, infrequent/unreliable services, and language barriers—underscores the need for improved public transport infrastructure and accessible transportation options tailored to their specific needs.

In spite of these considerable needs, gaps and challenges, most asylum seekers and refugees find Swansea a City of Sanctuary generally full of friendly, kind and helpful people wherever they go.