



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Scotland: A Skills and Aspirations Audit

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**REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SCOTLAND:
A SKILLS AND ASPIRATIONS AUDIT**

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Scottish Executive and Scottish Refugee Council

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

This study was developed and conducted by the Scottish Executive in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC). The aim of the project was to audit the skills and aspirations of refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland. The study was conducted in parallel with a study commissioned by the Home Office to audit refugee skills across the UK.

2. BACKGROUND

The background from which this work emerged is varied. It includes, for example, the commitment of the Scottish Executive to welcome and promote diversity in Scottish culture and society. It also includes the implications of current demographic trends (a falling and ageing population combined with a continuing out-migration of younger people and skilled people). In this context the Scottish Executive has highlighted a need to encourage more people to choose to live and work in Scotland and recognises that refugees (and potentially asylum seekers) have much to contribute to Scotland's economic and social development.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Taking its cue from earlier studies, the Skills Audit was developed partly in response to the negative public discourse that pervades about asylum seekers and refugees, the reasons why they seek refuge in the UK and the commonly held perception that they place an economic "burden" (Robinson in Robinson et al 2003: 173-177) on the country. It therefore sought to gain an insight into what refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland can (or would like to) contribute to the country.

The overall aim of the research was to audit the kinds of skills, qualifications and aspirations that refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland have. The research aimed to explore the educational experiences and qualifications of refugees and asylum seekers; their work experience both in their countries of origin and here in the UK (i.e. to gain an insight into the kinds of employment that asylum seekers and refugees had held in their country of origin and to compare it with their current occupations here in Scotland); their language skills and their needs and aspirations for the future.

Specific questions included:

- What kinds of skills and qualifications do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland have?
- What aspirations do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland hold?
- What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers face when attempting to access further education and training?
- What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers (with permission to work) face when attempting to find employment?
- How can we best use the information about refugees' and asylum seekers' skills, qualifications and aspirations to help counter the negative perceptions that many people hold?

4. RESEARCH METHODS

A semi-structured questionnaire was completed by 523 refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow and Edinburgh, with the assistance of 3 social researchers and of interpreters where necessary. Due to the method by which we accessed our sample, this study cannot be interpreted as strictly representative of the refugee and asylum seeker community.

5. MAIN FINDINGS

What kinds of skills and qualifications do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland have?

- The findings indicate that refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland are, for the most part, well qualified and possess a broad range of technical and professional skills which could potentially be utilised by the Scottish labour market.
- The skills and experience respondents had gained and developed in employment before coming to the UK were varied. They included highly specialised skills in areas of medicine (for example, surgical skills and skills in midwifery, obstetrics and gynaecology), law and engineering.
- Respondents also indicated that they had management experience, had worked in social and economic development, had trades skills (such as carpentry and building) and IT experience.
- The Audit identified 90 languages spoken with varying degrees of proficiency by respondents.
- Sixteen per cent of respondents indicated that they could speak English “fluently” with a further third indicating that they could speak English “fairly well”.
- Just over 95% of respondents indicated that they had experienced some kind of formal education.
- Over 55% of respondents indicated that they had completed a college education (or an equivalent) where they had studied subjects such as languages, business, mathematics, and IT.
- Approximately 21% of respondents indicated that they had completed university level education where they had studied subjects such as Business, Medicine, Social Sciences, Education and Law.

What aspirations do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland hold?

- The data suggests that respondents had high levels of motivation to live and work in Scotland and to participate in Scottish social, economic and cultural life.
- The vast majority of respondents (88%) said they would like to remain in Scotland.
- The majority of respondents (72%) indicated a desire to improve their English language and literacy skills and two-thirds of respondents (just over 66%) indicated that they would like to access further training.
- Access to employment was identified as pivotal to the process of settlement and integration by both refugees and asylum seekers. Many expressed a desire to provide for themselves and to positively contribute to Scottish society and disliked being reliant on state benefits.
- Over a third of respondents said that they would like to find any kind of work and a larger proportion (approximately 58%) said they would like to find work that matched their skills and experience.
- For asylum seekers, the priority was to receive a positive decision on their asylum claim.
- Significant numbers of respondents also said they would like to volunteer (34%) and/or do work experience placements (46%) to improve their skills and experience.

What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers face when attempting to access further education and training?

- Lack of proficiency in English language and literacy was perceived by refugees and asylum seekers as a key barrier to obtaining employment in the UK. It may also impact

upon respondents' capacity to access mainstream training and volunteering or work placement opportunities.

- The majority of refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the Audit (72%) had been able to access English language training in Scotland.
- Lack of full refugee status was also raised as a barrier to accessing mainstream training courses.
- Childcare issues may be a further barrier, particularly for single parents.

What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers (with the right to work) face when attempting to find employment?

- Ten of the 147 refugee respondents and 20 of the 218 asylum seeker respondents who *potentially* had permission to work¹ were either self-employed or in paid employment in Scotland.
- Those who were employed were in posts that were not commensurate with their skills.
- The key barriers to finding employment were identified as a lack of eligibility, a lack of proficiency in English language and difficulties in accessing training, proving qualifications and accessing appropriate conversion courses.
- The majority of respondents (31%) said they were not working because they did not have a work permit.
- Just under 25% of respondents specifically indicated that they felt improved skills in English language and/or literacy would significantly improve their employment prospects or help them access their preferred employment.
- Approximately 21% of respondents who had completed secondary school education, 28% of those who had completed college (or an equivalent) level of education and 11% of those who had completed some kind of university education actually had their certification with them in Scotland.
- Thirty-six per cent of respondents felt that training, including university study would significantly improve their employment prospects or help them access their preferred employment.
- Just over 7% indicated specific training needs in order to gain locally recognised certificates in various areas including engineering, plumbing, computer training and training as an electrician.
- Fifty-one respondents (almost 10%) felt they needed more information about jobs.

How can we best use the information about refugees' and asylum seekers' skills, qualifications and aspirations to help counter the negative perceptions that many people hold?

- The public discourse that circulates about refugees and asylum seekers rarely focuses on their skills, qualifications, aspirations and what they can (or would like to) contribute to the region or country in which they have sought refuge.
- This Audit indicates that many asylum seekers are very keen to put their skills to good use in Scotland and are frustrated by their inability to do so.
- The information gathered by the Audit challenges a number of negative popular misconceptions of asylum seekers and refugees including that asylum seekers and

¹ All those who indicated that they had claimed asylum before the end of 2001 (218) should have been eligible to apply for permission to work in the UK after 6 months residency in the country (under the legal concession that was ended on 23rd July 2002). However, only 20 of the asylum seekers who responded to this Audit specifically indicated that they had permission to work.

refugees are poorly qualified, that they are economic migrants taking jobs away from local people or that they only come to the UK because of the housing and benefit system.

- The information contained in the Audit can usefully inform Key Actions (15-20) in the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum Action Plan, relevant to ‘Positive Images, Community Development and the Media.’ Additionally, the responses suggest that the implementation of Key Actions (51-57) relevant to ‘Enterprise, Lifelong Learning, Employment and Training, will impact positively on the opportunities and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland.

6. IMPLICATIONS

The responses to the questionnaire suggest that refugees and asylum seekers have a wealth of skills and qualifications and high levels of motivation. However, a very small percentage of refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the Audit (and who *may* have been eligible to work) had been able to access paid employment in Scotland. Given that large numbers of respondents had been waiting some time for a decision on their asylum claim, there may be a risk that refugees’ and asylum seekers’ motivations may lessen over time, their skills may become outdated and they could become increasingly socially isolated and less easily integrated into the labour market.

The key agencies that may need to take note of this work include DWP (Jobcentre Plus, New Deal) Scottish Enterprise, Careers Scotland, local authorities, Scottish universities, colleges of further education, the Scottish Executive’s Lifelong Learning Department and the Fresh Talent Project, Chambers of Commerce, employer organisations, trade unions and the Scottish Refugee Council.

SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Scotland is home to approximately 10% of those asylum seekers supported in National Asylum Support Service (NASS) accommodation in the UK (Heath et al, 2003: 53). There are currently an estimated 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland, mainly in Glasgow. Refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland represent over 50 different nationalities but come mainly from Turkey, Somalia, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Scottish Refugee Council Online, 2003). The current national dispersal policy was introduced under the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. NASS was set up within the Home Office to implement the dispersal system and to co-ordinate the provision of financial support and accommodation to all asylum seekers arriving in the UK after April 2000. NASS retain responsibility for asylum seekers arriving after this date, until a decision is reached on their claim. Asylum seekers arriving in London and the southeast of England are now routinely dispersed on a no-choice basis to other areas of England, Scotland and Wales.

The decision to conduct a “skill and aspirations audit” for refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland was influenced by the work of a number of organisations and Government departments. In 2001 both the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Home Office began the process of designing a brief and a methodology in order to conduct an audit of refugees’ skills both at a local and a national level. The Scottish Executive initially intended to participate in the Home Office study and extract information relevant to the Scottish context. The Home Office study however, was directed at refugees and did not include asylum seekers. Given that a high proportion of those asylum seekers living in Scotland are granted refugee status (or exceptional or indefinite leave to remain)², it was decided that it would be more constructive to audit the skills and aspirations of both refugees and asylum seekers.³ In this way, we could try to build a picture of the skills and aspirations of potential as well as existing refugees.

A number of organisations have conducted skills audits for refugees and asylum seekers and these studies provide the context and a background to this study. The public discourse that circulates about refugees and asylum seekers rarely focuses on their skills, qualifications, aspirations and what they can (or would like to) contribute to the region or country in which they have sought refuge. Taking our cue from NIACE (Aldridge and Waddington 2002), the Home Office and an audit conducted by the Refugee Women’s Association (RWA) looking at the skills of women refugee doctors, nurses and teachers in London (Dumper 2002), the Scottish Executive in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council (SRC), designed a project that attempted to obtain as much detail as possible about the skills and aspirations of refugees and asylum seekers who are currently living in Scotland, in order to ascertain potential and actual participation in Scottish economic and social life.

² Recent figures suggest that over 80% of asylum seekers in Glasgow have received a positive decision on their case [Scottish Refugee Council 2003].

³ From 1st April 2003, after the fieldwork for this project was complete, Exceptional Leave was no longer granted. Humanitarian Protection (HP) or Discretionary Leave (DL) may now be granted to those unsuccessful asylum seekers who have a need for international protection or have other compelling reasons for not being removed (see <http://194.203.40.90/default.asp?PageId=3802>).

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of the research was to audit the kinds of skills, qualifications and aspirations that refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland have. The research aimed to explore the educational experiences and qualifications of refugees and asylum seekers; their work experience both in their countries of origin and here in the UK (i.e. to gain an insight into the kinds of employment that asylum seekers and refugees had held in their country of origin and to compare it with their current occupations here in Scotland); their language skills and their needs and aspirations for the future.

Finally, the study wanted to get some indication as to whether respondents planned to stay in Scotland, and in what capacity they would aspire to remain here.

The specific objectives of the Audit therefore, were to address the following questions:

- What kinds of skills and qualifications do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland have?
- What aspirations do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland hold?
- What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers face when attempting to access further education and training?
- What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers (with the right to work) face when attempting to find employment?
- How can we best use the information about refugees' and asylum seekers' skills, qualifications and aspirations to help counter the negative perceptions that many people hold?

The terms “refugees” and “asylum seekers” have *not* been used interchangeably in this report as the regulations that they are subject to and their legal status are different. By targeting both refugees and asylum seekers, however, we wanted to try to get some indication of both the differences and similarities of their experiences and needs with reference to their educational and work histories as well as their aspirations and hopes for the future. We do, however, combine the refugee, Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) and Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) categories in this report as they are all subject to broadly similar rules and regulations with reference to education and employment (see Appendix 3).

1.3 SCOTTISH CONTEXT

The Scottish Executive recognises that refugees (and potentially asylum seekers) have much to contribute to Scotland's economic and social development. The Executive has also highlighted a need to encourage more people to choose to live and work in Scotland, for example, *A Smart, Successful Scotland: Ambitions for the Enterprise Networks* (2001). This report identified a set of challenges, including a need for in-migration, in that current demographic trends (falling population and continuing migration of skilled people from Scotland) do not contribute favourably to economic development. It suggested that these could be addressed by not only drawing on the global networks of Scots who live outside Scotland, but to also “*encourage others new to Scotland to consider a future living and working here.*”⁴

A number of other initiatives have been introduced in Scotland in an effort to encourage and support people from outside Scotland to live and work in the country. Some of these have relevance in terms of encouraging and supporting the successful settlement and integration of

⁴ See Scottish Executive Online ‘Fresh Talent’ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/?pageID=417>

refugees into Scottish society in the long-term. Examples of these initiatives are summarised below.

Fresh Talent

The Executive is actively encouraging people to consider coming to live and work in Scotland as well as supporting efforts to retain those already living in Scotland who wish to begin, or to further, their careers here. In February 2003, the First Minister, Jack McConnell, made reference to the importance of attracting more people to Scotland to help both the economic performance of the country and add to the diversity of the population. He stated:

“Scotland has a long tradition of welcoming new people, just as huge numbers of Scots have been made welcome in other countries across the world, in which they have settled and thrived” and that “(W)e are determined to continue and further improve on this tradition. Scotland must be seen as a safe, welcoming place, wherever new residents come from.”⁵

Futureskills Scotland

Futureskills Scotland is part of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Launched in November 2002, it aims to help employers, policy-makers and others to make decisions using labour market intelligence. The organisation tries to do this through providing robust and reliable information, based on analysis of the Scottish labour market. The Employers Skills Survey 2002, the largest skills survey commissioned in Scotland, showed that while skills shortages were uncommon, there were 12,000 vacancies which were not being filled because applicants lacked the necessary skills, qualifications or experience for the job. Iain Gray, the then Minister for Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning said the following of the survey and its significance for the organisation’s work:

“Now, for the first time, we have reliable, up to date and relevant information about the state of the labour market in Scotland. The next step is to begin acting upon this powerful data. Planning now for the skills of the future can ensure that we develop exactly the type of long term, sustainable growth in the economy that our enterprise strategy Smart, Successful Scotland sets out to achieve.”⁶

The information gathered by this Audit can contribute to this work by pointing to the wealth of skills and qualifications held by refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland and helping to identify a group of people who may be able to address these skills and labour shortages.

One Scotland. Many Cultures

The “One Scotland. Many Cultures” campaign was launched in 2002 and continues to raise awareness and challenge racist attitudes and behaviour and to highlight the negative impact racism has on individuals and communities. The campaign highlights the positive features of diversity as well as tackling negative behaviour in line with the Executive’s commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all. Research commissioned by the Executive in 2001 indicated that many people in Scotland believed that they had racist attitudes, but also showed that the majority of Scots want to live in a friendly and welcoming country. Studies have shown that asylum seekers in the UK are more likely to encounter hostility than other

⁵ See Scottish Executive Online ‘Fresh Talent’ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/?pageID=417>

⁶ See Futureskills Scotland

<http://www.futureskillsscotland.org.uk/web/site/News&Events/News/Launchnews.asp>

parts of the minority ethnic population. An independent anti-racism survey conducted in November 2002 found that 24% of Scots thought that it was justifiable to verbally attack asylum seekers who receive housing and benefits in Scotland.⁷ The “One Scotland. Many Cultures” campaign recognises the particular importance of raising awareness about the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, who they are, and the reasons why they come to the country.

Scottish Refugee Integration Forum

The Scottish Refugee Integration Forum (SRIF) was established in January 2002. The Forum was chaired by Margaret Curran MSP (then Minister for Social Justice, now Minister for Communities), and was set up by the Scottish Executive to bring together statutory and voluntary agencies in Scotland in order to more effectively support refugees. The Forum worked in parallel with the National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF) which was established to take forward *Full and Equal Citizens: A Strategy for the Integration of Refugees into the United Kingdom* published by the Home Office at the beginning of 2001.⁸ The Forum has also been expected to: consider all matters necessary to assist refugees to integrate into life in Scotland; infuse a Scottish perspective into the work of the National Refugee Integration Forum, and the development of the UK Government’s *Full and Equal Citizens* strategy; collect and disseminate examples of good practice from around the country; and to play a key role in promoting positive images of refugees as members of society. In February 2003 the Forum published its *Action Plan*; a document which sets out its aims and priorities in enabling the successful integration of refugees in Scotland. A progress report on the first 6 months of implementation of the Action Plan was published in August 2003.⁹

This Audit has addressed some of the recommendations of the SRIF Action Plan by providing insight and information relevant to the following key actions:

- Key Action 54: There should be more progress on recognising the qualifications and/or experience of asylum seekers and refugees and on providing conversion courses and competence testing where appropriate.
- Key Action 57: There is a need to identify and target barriers preventing asylum seekers and refugees from moving into employment (SRIF, 2003: 18-19).

1.4 REFUGEE SKILLS AND ASPIRATIONS

Further background to this study includes a Home Office study published in 1995 (Carey-Wood et al) which provided a benchmark for unemployment rates amongst refugee men and women and found that unemployment amongst refugee women stood at 48% and at 59% for refugee men. Other studies suggest that unemployment and under-employment amongst refugee men and women could be as high as 75-80% (Shiferaw and Hagos, 2002).

Previous skills audits have identified a number of common barriers experienced by refugees and asylum seekers trying to access work and education. These include:

⁷ See ‘One Scotland. Many Cultures’ <http://www.onescotland.com>

⁸ See http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/filestore/Refugee_Integration.pdf

⁹ See SRIF Action Plan, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/society/rfap.pdf>

- Due to their circumstances, refugees and asylum seekers are often unable to provide documentation relevant to their skills and qualifications (7% of the NIACE interviewees had their certificates with them);
 - A lack of good English language skills are sometimes a barrier to accessing training and/or employment;
 - Good language skills are needed for some areas of employment, but not all;
 - Due to their status, asylum seekers are often not eligible for training;
 - Due to confusion over legal status, employers are often wary of offering employment to refugees and asylum seekers;
 - Available courses are not necessarily appropriate to level of need or skill (particularly with reference to English Language);
 - Places are not always available on courses;
 - Information about courses is difficult to access;
 - Information about education and employment in the UK is difficult to find;
 - Cost of accessing education/courses – fees, books, transport;
 - Childcare issues;
 - Qualifications not recognised in the UK;
 - Lack of UK based work experience;
 - Discrimination.
- (see, Aldridge and Waddington 2002: 15-17; Dumper, 2002: 20-27)

Most of these issues and themes have also emerged from the responses to the questionnaire for the Skills Audit in Scotland and will be explored in the following sections.

1.5 SUMMARY OF METHODS

A semi-structured questionnaire was designed and developed within the Scottish Executive and in consultation with staff from the SRC. In order to maximise returns, the questionnaire was delivered and facilitated by one full-time and two part-time temporary contract social researchers. The questionnaire was conducted primarily in the SRC Glasgow offices with refugees and asylum seekers using their services, but was also conducted in colleges, careers guidance centres and other drop-in services run by churches and community centres around Glasgow. A smaller number of questionnaires were delivered to service users in Edinburgh. In total, 523 questionnaires were completed.

The researchers assisted the respondents to complete the questionnaire by explaining the questions to them if they did not understand and, where necessary, arranged for the respondent to return to the SRC offices at another date when an interpreter would be available to facilitate completion. By providing an interpreter for those respondents who would be unable to complete the questionnaire on their own, we ensured that as many people as possible would be able to participate. Unlike the NIACE and the RWA skills audits, we did not intend to interview the respondents, so it was important that they were helped to complete the questionnaires as fully, and with as much detail as possible.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Appendix Two for a more detailed account of the project's methodology.

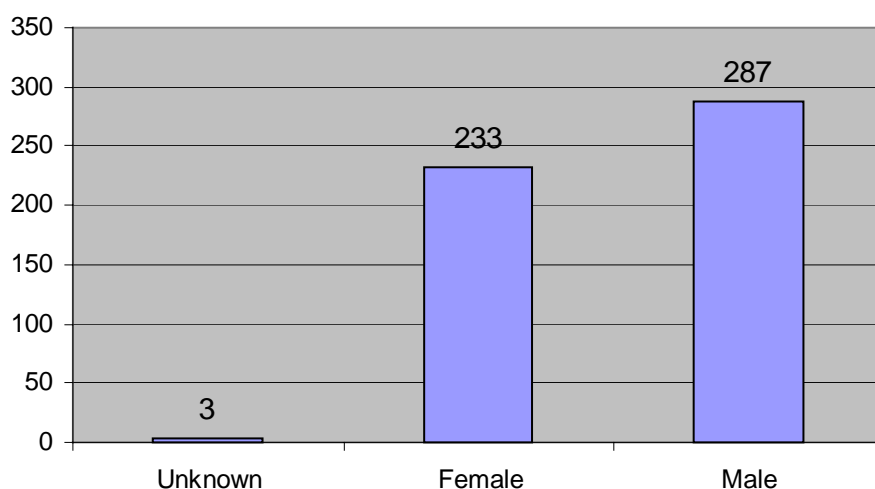
SECTION TWO THE RESPONSES

2.1 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Sex

Out of the 523 respondents to the questionnaire, 287 (54.9%) were men and 233 (44.6%) were women (Figure 2.1). This represents a fairly even gender balance (and is replicated across both refugees and asylum seekers). Nonetheless, male respondents do outnumber female respondents in this sample.

Figure 2.1 Sex



Immigration Status

Approximately 70% (368) of respondents were asylum seekers. Most of the remaining sample had been granted status such as “refugee” status, ELR or ILR. Six respondents had had their asylum claims rejected and were in the process of appeal (Figure 2.2).

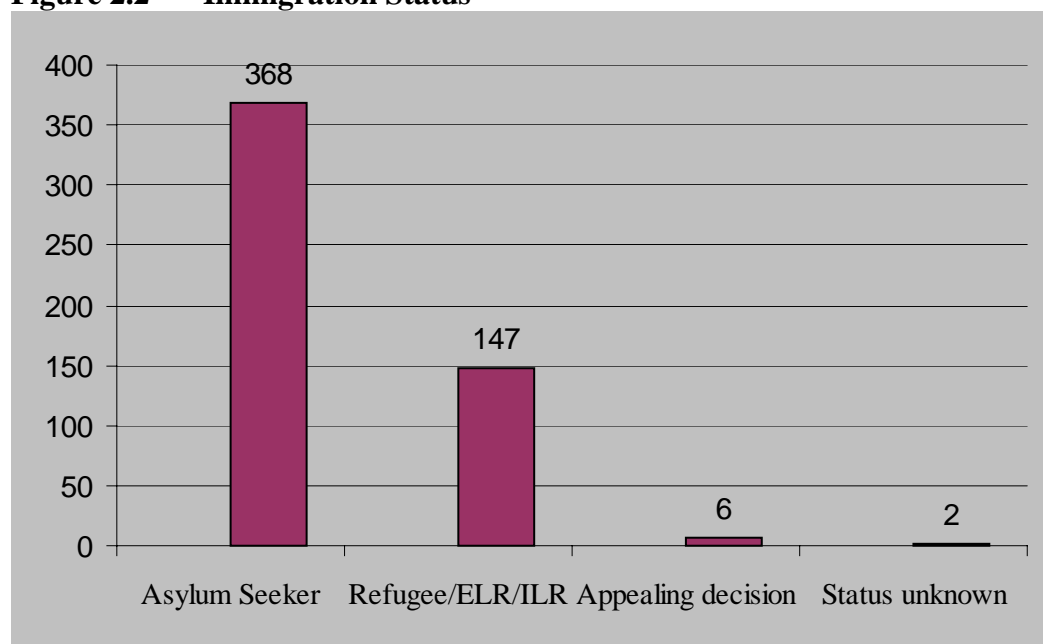
Twenty-seven per cent of respondents (143) had first claimed asylum in the UK during or prior to 2000 (Table 2.1) and had therefore been resident in the UK for at least 3 years. Of these, 105 were asylum seekers and 37 had been granted refugee status, ELR or ILR.

Table 2.1 Average date respondents first came to the UK to claim asylum

	Status Unknown	Asylum Seeker	Refugee/ELR/ILR	Number	Percent
Date Unknown	0	5	0	5	1.0
1999 and before	0	23	10	33	6.3
2000	1	82	27	110	21.0
Jan-June 2001	3	51	35	89	17.2
July-December 2001	2	57	18	77	14.7
Jan-June 2002	0	42	13	55	10.7
July-December 2002	0	69	37	106	20.3
Jan-April 2003	0	39	7	46	8.8
Total	6	368	147	521	100.0

All those with refugee status, ELR or ILR (147) will have been legally entitled to work. Those asylum seekers who had applied for asylum in the UK 6 months prior to July 2002 will have been entitled to apply for permission to work under the legal concession which was ended on July 23rd 2002. According to the data, 198 (approximately 54%) of the asylum seeker respondents had arrived in the UK during or prior to December 2001. (Table 2.1). Therefore, while only 20 asylum seeker respondents specifically indicated that they had the right to work, this figure may have been higher.

Figure 2.2 Immigration Status



Age

The majority of respondents fell into the 25-34 (43.2%) and the 35-44 (30%) age brackets. Although respondents of any age may have some years of economic activity ahead of them, the age profile indicates that a considerable proportion of refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the Audit have a significant number of years of economic activity ahead of them. Just over 8% of respondents were over 45 years of age and 18% were aged 17-24. The age profile of both men and women was broadly similar with only a noticeable difference in the older age bracket (45 and over) where men were proportionally more prevalent.

Nationality

The respondents came from a total of 52 countries (Table 2.2). The largest group of respondents indicated that they originally came from Iran (71), Iraq (47), Afghanistan (40), Democratic Republic of Congo (39), Pakistan (39), Turkey (39), Sri Lanka (34), Somalia (28), Zimbabwe (25), Sudan (21), Burundi (16), Algeria (15), Kosovo (14) and Albania (12). Given that the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers from some countries is very small, we have combined some countries into geographic “regions” for ease of reference and to protect confidentiality.¹¹ The largest groups of refugees and asylum seekers are originally from the

¹¹ The regions are: South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka); South East Europe (Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey); North Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Libya); Southern Africa (Angola, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe); South America (Argentina, Chile, Colombia);

Middle East and South Asia with smaller numbers originating from the Baltic States, West Africa, South and Central America and Asia.

Figure 2.3 Age Distribution of Respondents

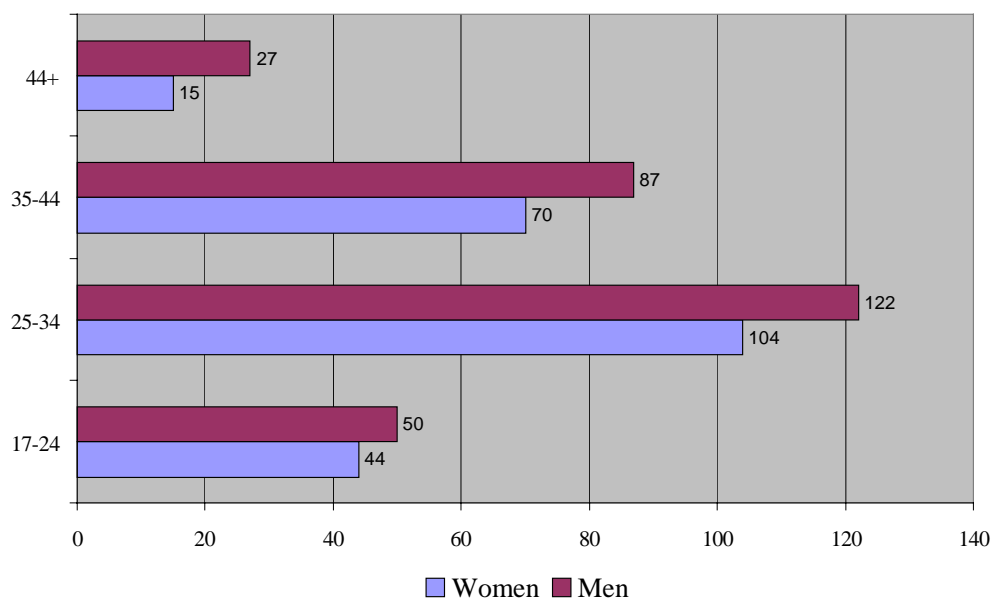


Table 2.2 Nationality

	Number	Percent
Commonwealth of Independent States	21	4.0
Central Africa	56	10.7
East Africa	63	12.0
Middle East	127	24.3
South Asia	122	23.3
South East Europe	70	13.4
North Africa	17	3.3
Southern Africa	29	5.5
Other*	18	3.4
Total	523	99.9

* includes unknown, Asia, Baltic States, South America, Central America and West Africa

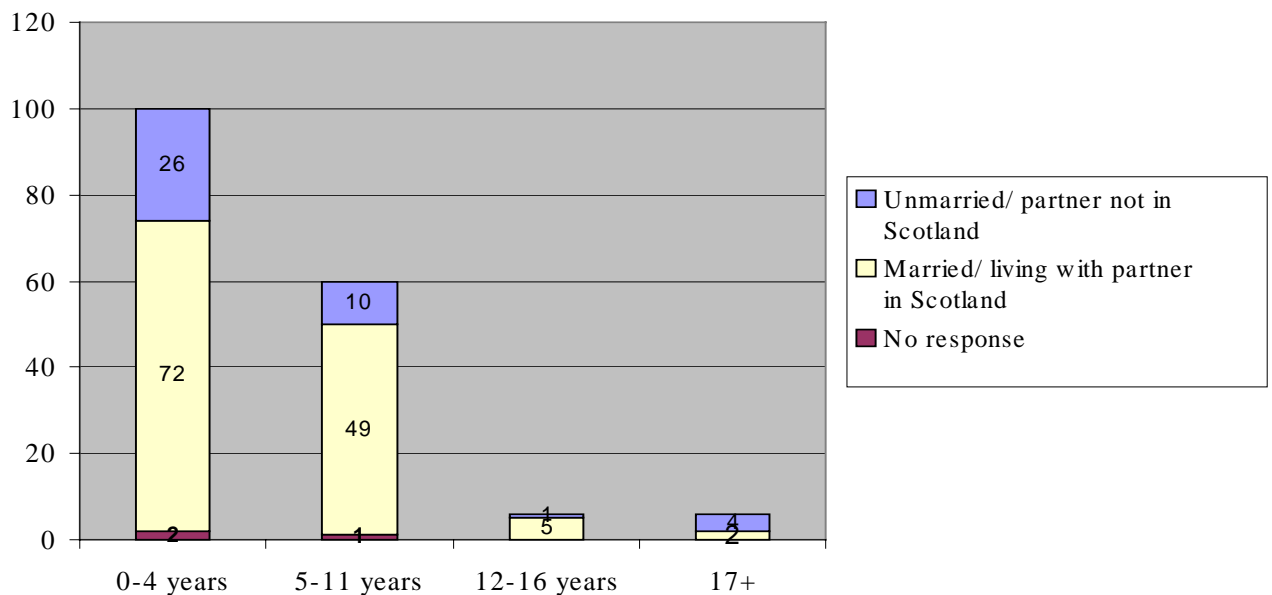
Family Status

Over half the respondents (290) indicated that they were living with their partner in Scotland and over half indicated that they had children who were also living with them. Approximately 92% of those respondents who had children with them in Scotland (296) had children aged 11

Commonwealth of Independent States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Ukraine); Central Africa (Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda); Asia (China); East Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda); West Africa (Guinea, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Sierra Leone); Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, Syria); Baltic States (Estonia, Lithuania).

or under. Nearly three quarters of women respondents indicated that they had children living with them in Scotland, as compared to 42.2% of male respondents. Of the 173 female respondents with children living with them in Scotland, 40 (23.2%) indicated that they were living in Scotland *without* a partner, 130 (75.5%) indicated that their partner lived with them in Scotland and 3 (2%) did not respond. Of the 40 women with children in Scotland who were *not* living with a partner, 90% (36) had children aged 11 and under (Figure 2.4). Eight of those 124 men who had children, indicated that they were living *without* a partner in Scotland.

Figure 2.4 Women Refugees and Asylum Seekers with Children in Scotland



2.2 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND ATTAINMENT

In this section of the questionnaire, we asked people if they had attended, or attended and completed the 4 levels of education which best correlated with the system here in the UK (primary, secondary, college and university). We were interested in getting as broad a sense as possible of people’s educational experience and therefore asked respondents about their formal educational experiences in terms of both attendance *and* completion (Figure 2.5). As many refugees and asylum seekers may have had to cut their studies short for a variety of reasons, we felt it was important to acknowledge to what level people had attended formal education, in addition to what level they had completed it.

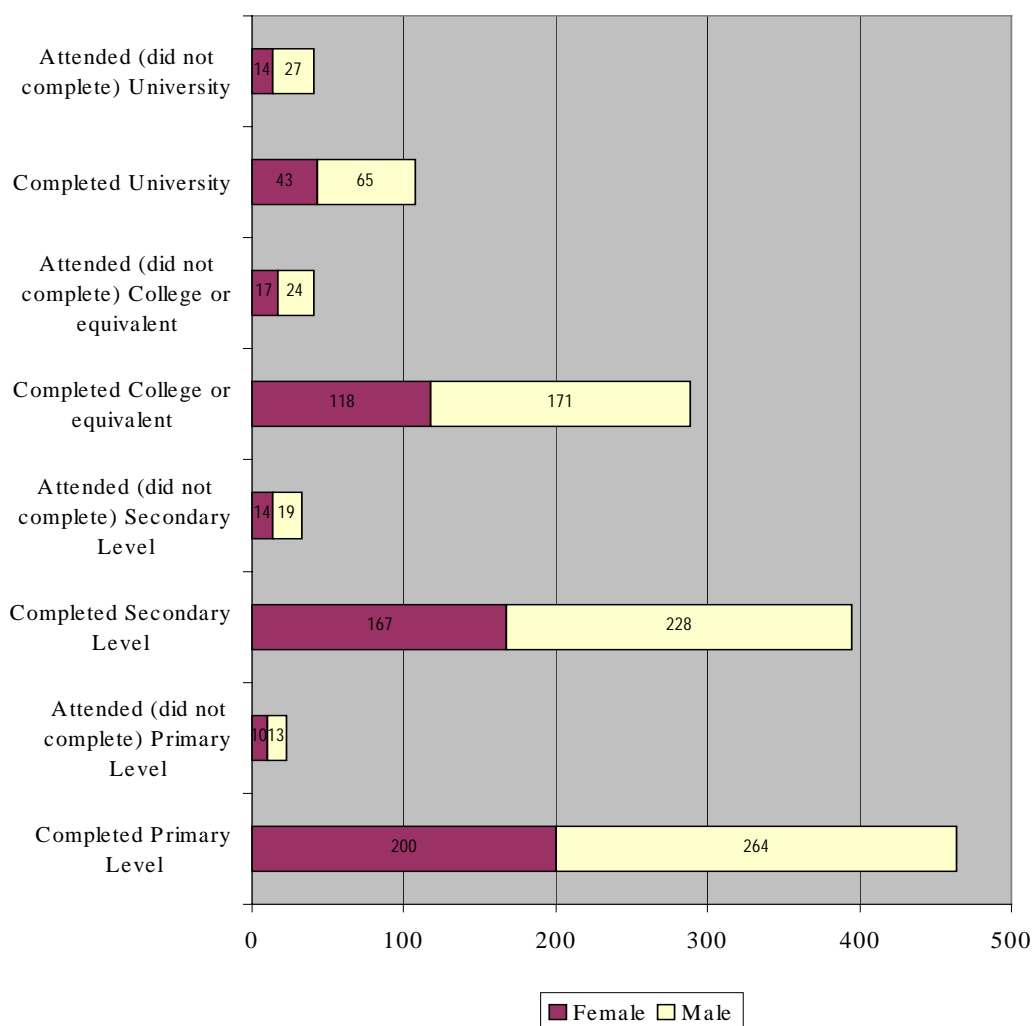
We also tried to get a sense of equivalence in terms of refugees’ and asylum seekers’ educational experience, asking what certificates respondents had left school and college with. It has been difficult, however, to “translate” what these certificates might represent in the Scottish context. Just under half of the respondents provided no information regarding whether or not they had received any certificates and/or qualifications at secondary level (many respondents only completing the section where they held the highest qualifications). Those that did respond to the question indicated that they had a variety of qualifications which cut across secondary and college levels ranging from “O” levels and “A” levels to baccalaureate, diplomas and teaching qualifications. For example, just under 20% (103) respondents said that they had qualifications that may have an equivalence to Scottish Standard Grades and Highers such as “O” levels/GCSEs, between 5-7% of respondents (25-

36) indicated that they had qualifications that may have an equivalence to Scottish Advanced higher or “A” levels. Over 22% (118) of respondents said that they had other certificates that could potentially allow them to access higher education but did not have their certificates with them in Scotland.

No Education / No Response

The numbers of those respondents who did not answer this question or who indicated that they had no formal education were very small, 4.8% (25) of the 523 respondents. Some respondents only ticked their highest levels of education, leaving questions relating to lower levels of educational attainment blank, hence the numbers of those who attended and completed some levels of education may in fact be higher than the figures represented here.

Figure 2.5 Level of Education Attended/ Completed

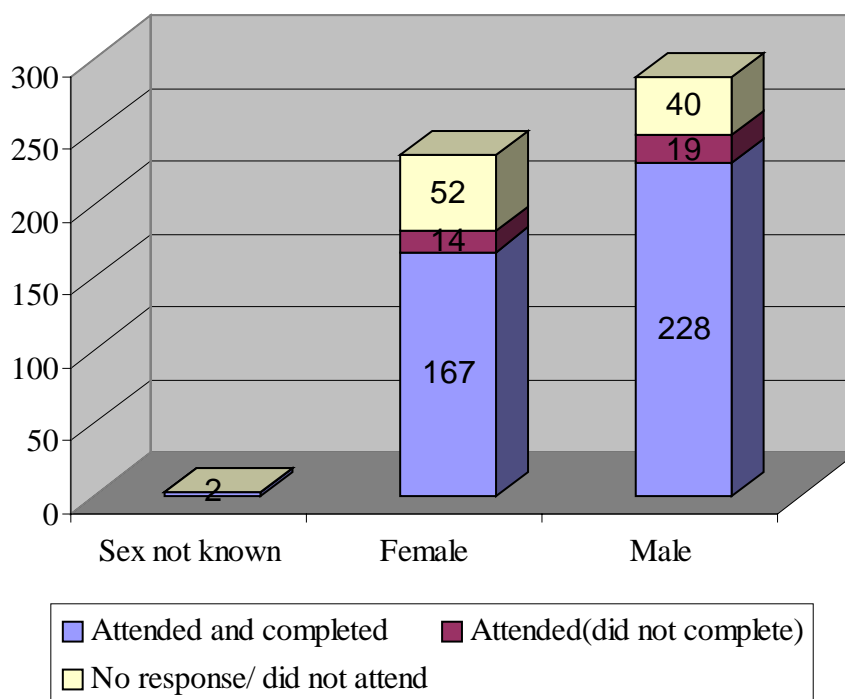


Secondary Level (or Equivalent) Education

Approximately 80% of the respondents said that they had attended and completed secondary level (or equivalent) education, and a further 6.5% of respondents said that they had attended secondary level education but had *not* been able to complete their studies. Male refugees and

asylum seekers were slightly more likely to have attended and completed their secondary education than were women refugees and asylum seekers (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 Secondary Education (or Equivalent)



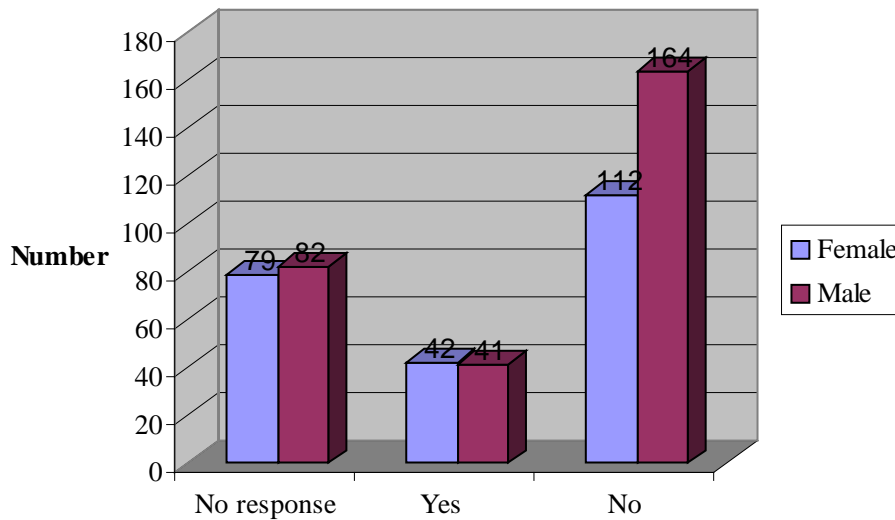
Certification

Just over 68% of respondents indicated positively that they had gained certificates or qualifications from their secondary education experience, though just over 20% of respondents provided no information here, so the figure may be higher. More men (71.1%) than women (64.8%) had gained qualifications.

Just over 21% (84) of those respondents who had completed secondary level education indicated that they actually had their certification with them in Scotland which, of course, has implications for trying to verify educational and employment suitability. Given the circumstances in which many refugees and asylum seekers have had to leave their country of origin, this lack of certification is not surprising:

“Coming from a war torn country, obviously I was running to save my life, let alone picking up certificates” (female asylum seeker, Somalia).

Figure 2.7 Respondents with Secondary Level Certificates in Scotland



College Education

Over 63% (332) of respondents said that they had attended some kind of college education (or equivalent) and just over 55% (291) indicated that they had attended *and completed* a college level of education. Women were less likely to have attended and completed college level education than were men, though the attendance and completion rate for women refugees and asylum seekers still stood at over 50% (almost 60% for men). The majority of those respondents who provided us with information about their length of study indicated that they had been at college for between one and 4 years.

Subjects studied

In terms of the kinds of subjects that respondents had studied at college, those who provided information indicated that their college education was very varied (Table 2.3). Respondents were provided with space to enter up to 4 subjects and the subject descriptions are their own. Respondents indicated that they had studied a broad range of subject areas from English Language and Maths to Accounting and Art.

Certification

Approximately 38% (199) of respondents said that they had left college (or equivalent) with some form of certification or qualification, although, again, men were more likely to have gained certification than women (approximately 40% of men and 35% of women). As with secondary level education, respondents were unlikely to have this certification with them in Scotland. Approximately 28% (81) of those respondents who had completed college (or equivalent) level education indicated that they had their certificates with them.

Table 2.3 Subject(s) / College Level Education

Subject	Number	Percentage of subjects studied
Allied to Medicine	12	2.6
Agriculture	5	1.1
Architecture/Building	11	2.4
Business and Administration	51	11.0
Creative Arts	22	4.8
Education and Leisure	17	3.7
Engineering and Technology	28	6.1
Humanities	27	5.9
Information Technology	42	9.1
Languages ¹²	95	20.6
Law	2	0.4
Mass Communication	3	0.6
Mathematical Sciences	36	7.8
Physical Sciences	56	12.1
Social Sciences	45	9.7
Other (inc. catering and security)	10	2.2
Total number of subjects studied by respondents	462	100.1

University Education

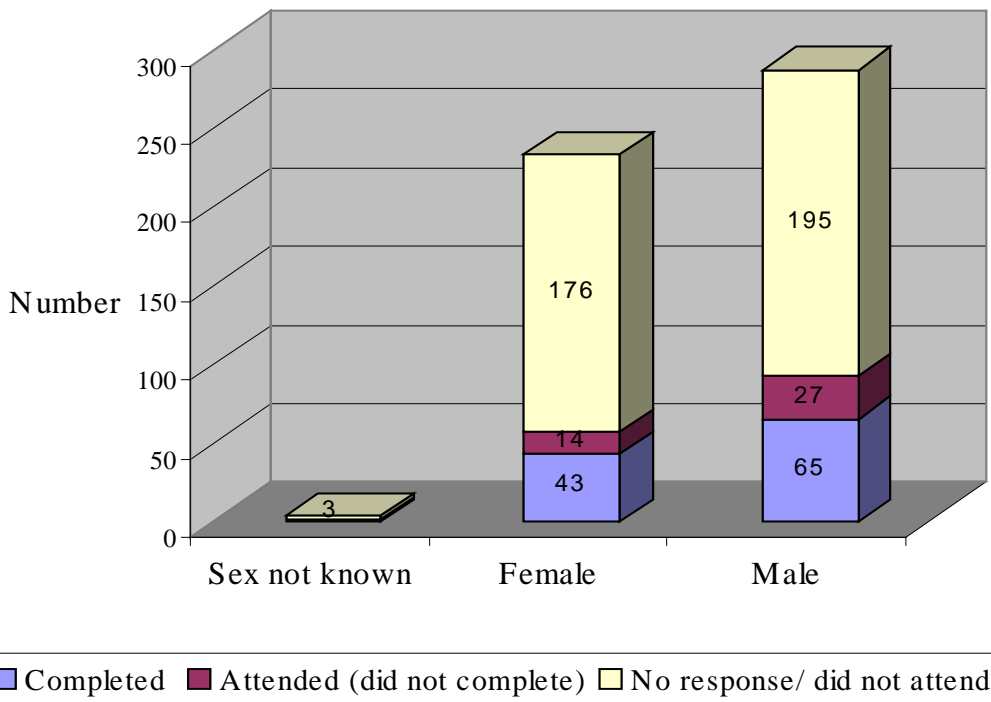
In this section we were trying to ascertain the numbers of people who not only have a first degree, but who would also have a Masters and/or a PhD. The information gathered was somewhat sketchy due to the non-completion of some sections. Nonetheless, the information we do have would seem to indicate that a significant proportion of the refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland are educated to degree level.

Although 28% of all respondents said that they had attended a university course, approximately 21% (109) of respondents said they had attended *and completed* some kind of university education (Figure 2.8). Depending on whether they were able to complete their university education, respondents indicated that they had spent between one and 7 years studying at various universities around the world (for example, at the University of Kabul and the University of Cairo).

Thirty-six refugees and asylum seekers said that they had gone on to study a second degree, from which 24 had graduated. Seven people had enrolled for a third degree, from which 6 had graduated. Four respondents indicated that they had PhDs

¹² Languages include English language, other languages and literature.

Figure 2.8 University Education



Subjects

In terms of subjects studied at university, respondents' degree courses covered arts, sciences, humanities, medicine, etc. The most popular degree subjects (Table 2.4) were social sciences, law, medicine, other science subjects, engineering and finance. At postgraduate level, respondents indicated that they had studied very specialised subjects such as gynaecology and obstetrics and bio-organic chemistry.

Certification

Approximately 21% of respondents indicated positively that they had graduated from university, although, as with college and secondary level education, the vast majority of respondents did not have their certificates with them in Scotland. Only 11% (12) of respondents who had completed university education indicated that they had their certificates (or copies) with them in Scotland. However, this figure may be higher due to high levels of non completion in this section. This, of course, has implications for both the individual's and potential employer's need for verification.

Table 2.4 Subjects of degree courses (undergraduate and postgraduate)

	Number
Agriculture	6
Arts	6
Biological Sciences	13
Business & Accounting	19
Chemical Sciences	9
Education	8
Engineering	10
IT/Computing	6
Languages	3
Law	15
Maths	5
Medicine	22
Social Sciences	22
Theology/Religious Studies	2
Total	146

Access to further education in the UK

The experience of attending college or studying was mentioned positively by a number of respondents. At least 27 respondents indicated in the questionnaire that they were studying or had studied subjects other than English at colleges or universities in the UK. These primarily included courses in computer skills and other vocational courses such as pipe-fitting and plumbing but also included one or two respondents who were undertaking university courses.

A number of respondents stated that they were either not allowed, or that there were insufficient resources for them to access further or full-time educational opportunities. Some respondents also suggested that asylum seeker and ELR status was a barrier in that it inhibited the ability of the respondent to enrol on anything but short courses.¹³

“the eligibility criteria doesn’t allow people with Exceptional Leave to Remain to access higher education as soon as they would like to” (female refugee, DRC).

“I am not allowed to do any work or do full-time studies, because of my status. Given a chance, I would like to improve on my skills by going to college or university for further studies” (female asylum seeker, Rwanda).

¹³ All refugees and asylum seekers are eligible to access further and higher education, providing they meet the entrance requirements for the course, can pay for the course fees and support themselves financially. While those with full refugee status are automatically eligible for student support (loans and grants), those with ILR or ELR (but not refugee status), or who have been granted Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave to Remain under the new legislation, have to have been resident in the UK for three years or more to qualify. They also have to be able to demonstrate future long term residence in the UK prior to being accepted onto educational programmes longer than one year. Asylum seekers are not eligible for Student Support, Access Funds or Hardship loans and usually have to pay overseas student fees (Refugee Council Online 2003).

*“I feel bored because I have a lot of time. I’m not allowed to study full-time or to work”
(male asylum seeker, Egypt).*

2.3 SKILLS

In this section of the report we outline the language, literacy and other skills asylum seekers and refugees indicated that they had, in addition to their professional and trade skills gained through employment. We felt it was important to try and get a sense of the full range of the skills that asylum seekers and refugees had, and therefore asked about their involvement in clubs and voluntary organisations outside of paid employment.

Language and literacy skills

Due to the nature of this project, the assessment of language and literacy skills in terms of fluency has been left to the respondents themselves, using the descriptors “fluently”, “fairly well”, “a little bit” and “not at all.” It is possible, therefore, that some respondents may have over or under-estimated their language and literacy skills.¹⁴ Nonetheless the information that the Audit was able to gather gives some indication of the number of languages spoken and the levels of language and literacy fluency of the refugees and asylum seekers in each of these.

Languages spoken

The total number of languages spoken (at any level) by the respondents was 90. In terms of first languages spoken by the respondents, there were 46. The most prevalent first languages spoken by refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the study included, Farsi (71), Arabic (53), Kurdish (54), French (35), Albanian (24), Russian (23), Tamil (23) and English (20).

The language skills of respondents varied with approximately 25% of respondents speaking one language, just over 42% speaking 2 and just over 20% speaking 3 (fluently or fairly well). Generally, the respondents indicated that their linguistic skills were very good, with over 10% indicating that they could speak 4 or more languages either fluently or very well. Male respondents were more likely to indicate that they were multi-lingual than female respondents.

Approximately 86% of respondents said they could read fluently and 82% said they could write fluently in their first language. Men’s reading and writing ability in their first language was also slightly better than women’s.

English Language and Literacy Skills

The responses to questions about language and literacy skills with reference to English provide a rough indicator for language and literacy proficiency. Although a very small number of respondents declared that they could not speak English at all (4%), almost half the respondents (approximately 46%) indicated that they could speak “a little bit” of English (Figure 2.9). This, clearly, will have repercussions for those refugees and asylum seekers (with permission to work) when attempting to gain access to the labour market or further educational opportunities.

¹⁴ Staff from the SRC have suggested that refugees and asylum seekers tend to significantly *under*-estimate their verbal language skills. However, they also suggest that refugees and asylum seekers may have greater difficulty with writing in English which has implications for their ability to complete application forms for employment or training opportunities.

Respondents were more likely to indicate a level of fluency in reading and writing in English than they were to indicate that they had fluency in speaking English. This could be due to a greater level of confidence amongst respondents in terms of reading and writing as opposed to speaking. A marginally higher percentage of women (approximately 17%) indicated they could speak English fluently compared with men (approximately 16% see Figure 2.10) and a slightly higher percentage of men than women could not speak any English at all (Figure 2.11). This pattern was replicated with regard to reading and writing ability in English, with a slightly higher percentage of women than men indicating fluency in both. More men (8.7% of men) than women (6.9% of women) indicated that they could not write in English at all (Figure 2.11).

Of those who indicated they could speak English fluently (85 respondents), 40% said that they could speak a second language fluently or fairly well. Almost 33% said that they could speak a third language fluently or fairly well and 20% said that they were fluent in a fourth language or could speak it fairly well.

Figure 2.9 Levels of English Language and Literacy

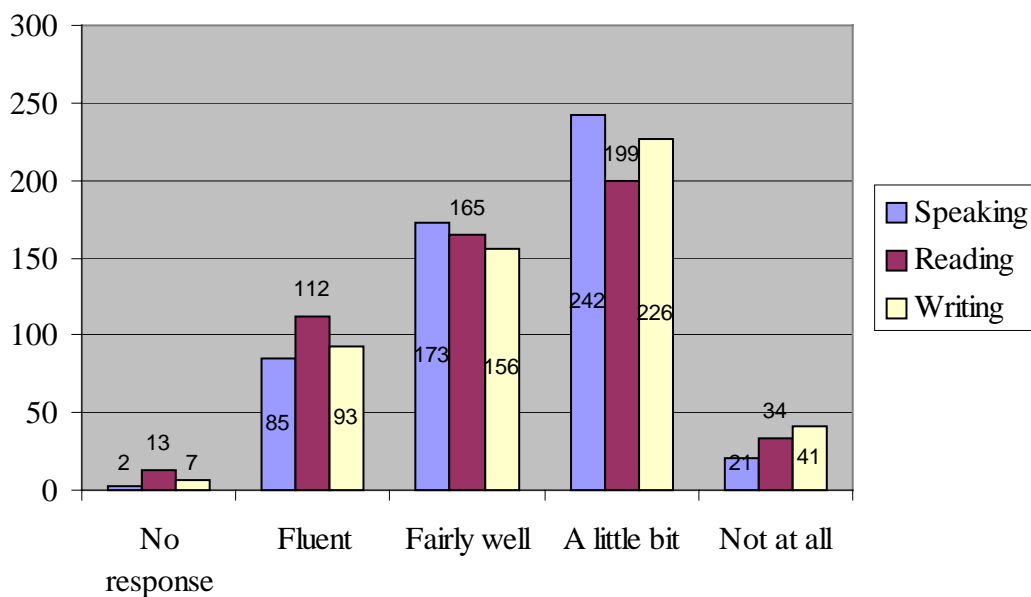


Figure 2.10 Fluent in English Language

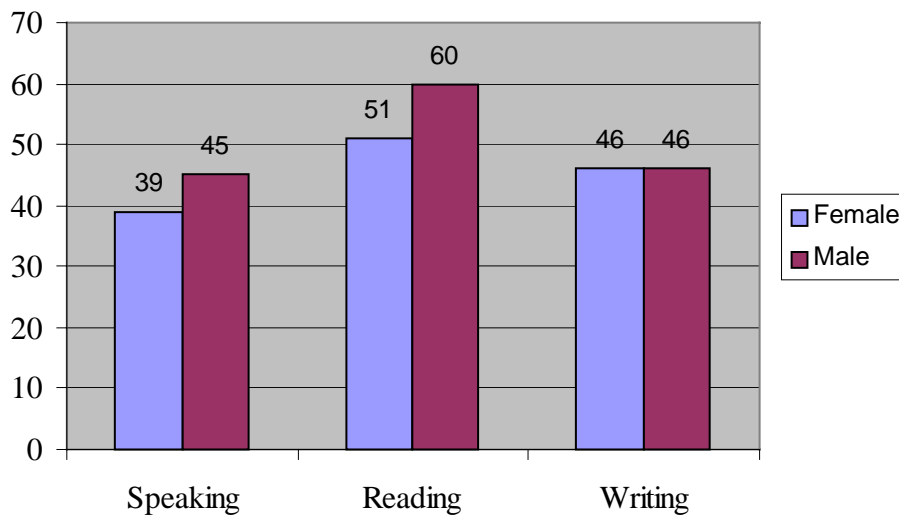
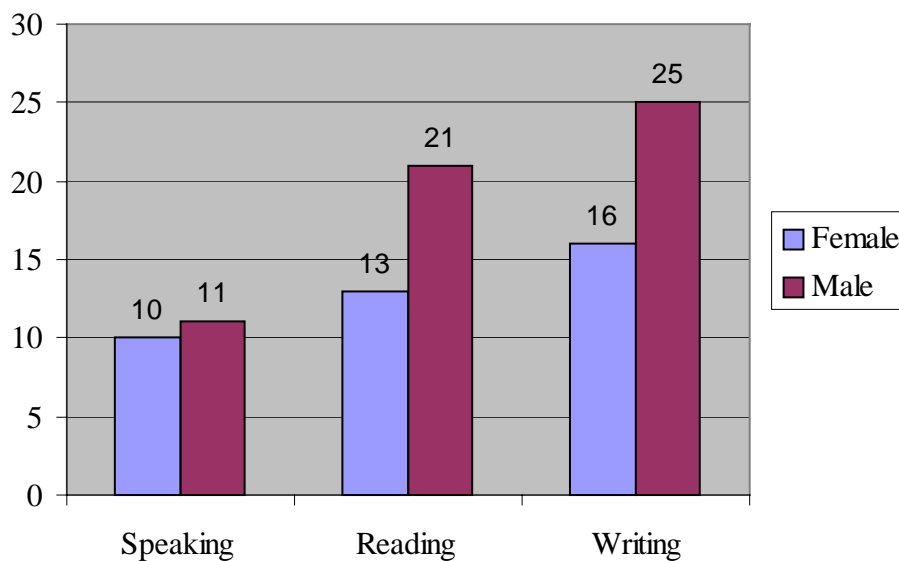


Figure 2.11 No English Language or Literacy Skills



Access to English language training

Women were slightly more likely than men to have received any English language training in their country of origin which may account for women being proportionally more likely than men to indicate better levels of fluency and literacy in English. For the most part, English language training took the form of lessons at school, though some refugees and asylum seekers said that they had private language tuition and, as some refugees and asylum seekers are from English speaking countries, English is their first language.

The majority (72%) of refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the Audit had accessed English language training in Scotland (Table 2.5). Women were more likely than men to have accessed English language training and this difference was not down to, for example, more women than men having Refugee, ELR or ILR status. The experience of

attending English language training in Scotland was mentioned positively by a number of respondents who specifically referenced how much they enjoyed the process of learning English. This often related to opportunities for meeting other people and making friends, as well as specific mention of appreciation of support from teachers.

“I am happy being a student at Anniesland College. I am meeting people and it makes me feel great whenever we share ideas” (male refugee, Burundi).

“For the moment, I am learning English and I think it is improving. I think it will help me to find a job” (female refugee, Burundi).

“I like going to college and learning English so I will be able to start at the university and do another course at the college” (female asylum seeker, DRC).

“Anniesland College is fantastic” (female refugee, Iraq).

However, some respondents indicated that they had either been unable, or had chosen not to access English Language training. The biggest reason given for *not* accessing English language training was that the language skills of the individual respondent were already good. This was the case for approximately 9% of women compared to 7% of men.

Eight women indicated that they had not attended English language training due to childcare issues and this was also the case for one man. Other reasons included a lack of information, being on the waiting list for an available place, transportation, and health problems.

The responses to the Audit suggest that access to English language training and support is generally good, but that there are still some people who, for a variety of reasons, have not been able to take advantage of the English language training. However, as this study did target large numbers of asylum seekers who were studying English language in Glasgow colleges, and was unable to access those refugees and asylum seekers who were possibly more isolated, this may not be a representative picture. Further research may be necessary to ascertain whether this level of access is normal so as to obtain more detailed information about who is accessing English language training, who is not and the reasons why this might be so.

Table 2.5

Respondents who have received English language training since arrival in Scotland

	Sex Unknown	Female	Male	Total	Percent
No response	1	3	5	9	1.72
Yes	1	175 (75.1%)	202 (70.4%)	378	72.27
No	1	55 (23.6%)	80 (27.8%)	136	26.0
Total	3	233	287	523	100.0

Other skills

As the NIACE skills audit had done, we felt that it was important to try and get a sense of the full range of skills that refugees and asylum seekers have. With this in mind, we asked them about the experiences and skills that they may have developed in their leisure time. We wanted to know about respondents’ skills including, for example, sports, music, campaigning

or other organisational/administrative skills that they had developed outside of their paid employment which may nonetheless, have a currency in the UK job market.

Given the backgrounds and experiences of respondents that had given rise to their claim for asylum in the UK and their dispersal or residence in Scotland, this question had to be asked with a degree of sensitivity. The activities of respondents outside of paid employment may have been a key reason for their need to leave their country and claim asylum in the UK, particularly if they had been members of political or religious groups.

Of those refugees and asylum seekers who responded to this question, 37.5% indicated that they had been (or were currently) involved with a group, club or association. Of those respondents who provided us with further information, the most popular kinds of clubs were political associations, sports clubs, social clubs, religious groups and NGO organisations (Table 2.6). These respondents indicated that, from their experiences in these groups, they had been able to develop a broad range of organisational and administrative skills including communication skills, skills in campaigning and advocacy, fundraising and IT.

In addition, respondents indicated that their involvement in these groups had helped them to resolve issues in their communities, learn more about their rights and entitlements and to “*make friends and live a more fulfilling life*” (female asylum seeker, Burundi). One respondent referenced his appreciation of the experience of voluntary training in his own skill area.

Table 2.6 Groups, clubs or associations (condensed)

	Number	Percent
No information provided	332	63.5
Multiple	26	5.0
Music group	6	1.1
Political group	37	7.1
Religious group	23	4.4
Sports club	40	7.6
Social club	33	6.3
Social Organisation (NGO)	22	4.2
Other	4	0.8
Total	523	100.0

2.4 EMPLOYMENT

Until 2002, asylum seekers were not permitted to work during the first 6 months of their stay in the UK. After 6 months the primary applicant was entitled to apply to the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) of the Home Office for permission to work (dependants of the primary applicant were not, however, allowed to work until the primary applicant received a positive decision on his/her claim). This concession was ended on 23 July 2002. As such, those who currently have permission to work are allowed to continue working and those who had already applied for permission to work, but have not yet received a decision, will also be dealt with under the previous policy (Refugee Council Online 2003). Those who have been granted refugee status, ELR or ILR, have the same employment rights as other residents in the European Union.

Employment History (Outside the UK)

The skills and experience respondents had gained and developed in employment before coming to the UK to claim asylum were hugely varied. They included highly specialised skills in areas of medicine (for example, surgical skills and skills in midwifery, obstetrics and gynaecology), law and engineering. In addition, respondents indicated that they had a wealth of management expertise, agricultural, social and economic development, trades skills (such as carpentry and building) and IT experience.

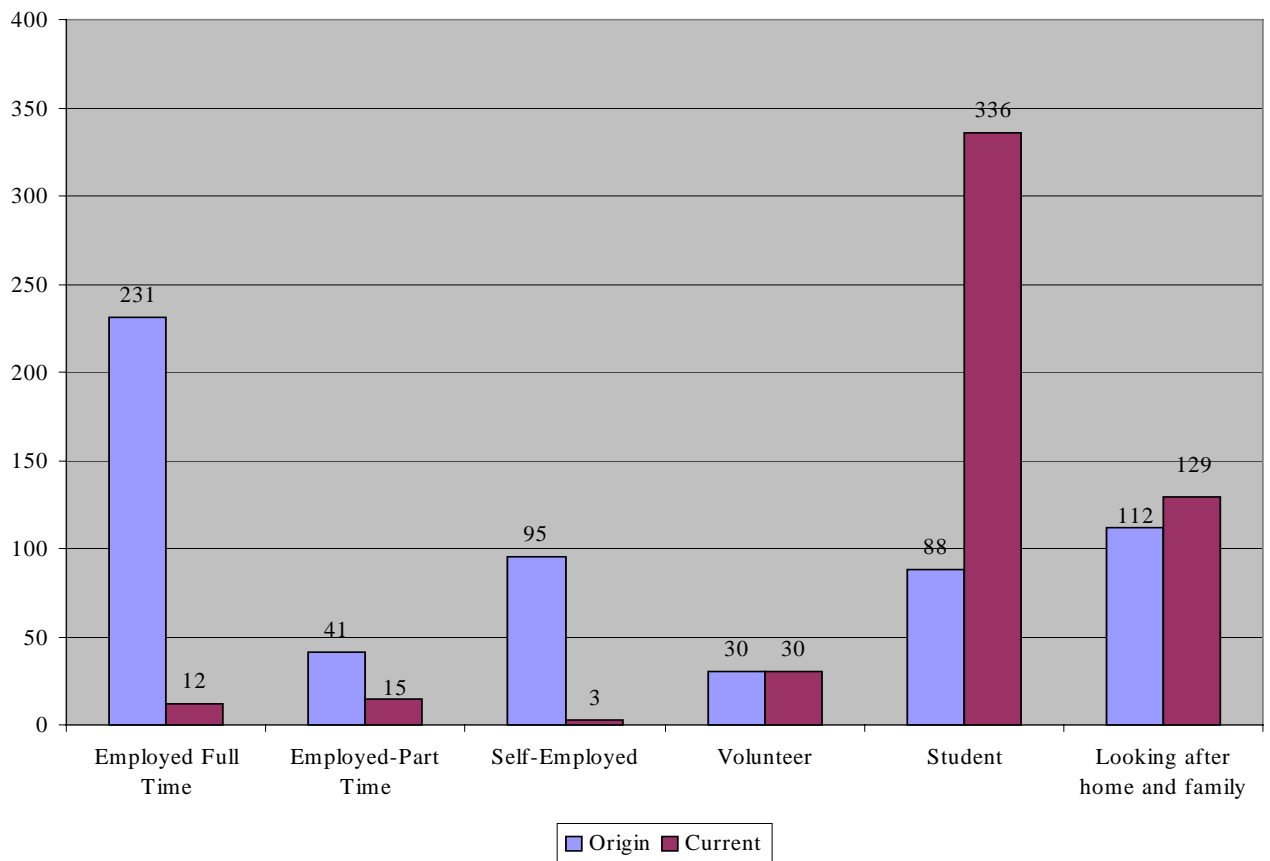
Fifty-two per cent (272) of respondents said they were in paid employment in their country of origin and a further approximately 18% (41) said they were self-employed. Of these, 85% (231) said they were in full-time paid employment and 15% said they were in part-time paid employment before coming to the UK (Figure 2.12). Women (approximately 32% overall) were significantly less likely than men (54%) to have been in full-time paid employment and significantly more likely to indicate that they were unemployed (or not in paid employment) prior to coming to the UK (over 50% of women compared with just over 15% of men). Respondents were given the option of indicating multiple occupations. Figure 2.13 therefore represents those people who are/were both working in the family home *and* who are/were students *and* who are/were volunteering, etc.

What we do not know are the factors that impacted on people's employment status before coming to the UK. However, some respondents indicated specific reasons for their unemployment including that they were studying, were full-time home-makers, working as a volunteer or were unable to work due to other reasons (including prohibition from employment and imprisonment).

"I had 2 textile factories and a successful business company in Iran but my Government had frozen everything" (male asylum seeker, Iran).

Levels of part-time employment were fairly even across male (8%) and female (7.7%) respondents. Men were much more likely than women to be self-employed.

Figure 2.12 Employment Status in Country of Origin and in the UK



The employment histories of the respondents were broad and many people had a varied career history which included a secondary occupation. The kinds of work that respondents had been doing before coming to the UK ranged from a number of jobs in the trade and service industries, teaching in schools or universities, being a salesperson, being a medical professional, managing staff in factories and other businesses, working on farms and working in offices as administrators and secretaries (Table 2.7). The jobs that respondents held also followed fairly typical gendered lines in that women were more likely to be teachers in schools and men were more likely to be managers or doctors. Nonetheless, the respondents indicated that they had a very broad range of skills, experiences and positions of responsibility in employment in their countries of origin, which the vast majority have been unable to utilise in the UK.

Table 2.7 Profession

Profession	Female	Male	Sex Unknown	Total	Percent
No Information Provided	126 (54.1%)	52 (18.1%)	0	178	34.0
Accountant	7 (3.0%)	3 (1.0%)	0	10	1.9
Administrative Work	12 (5.2%)	6 (2.1%)	0	18	3.4
Agriculture	5 (2.1%)	17 (5.9%)	0	22	4.2
Artist/Artisan	0	7 (2.4%)	0	7	1.3
Business	7 (3.0%)	39 (13.6%)	1	47	9.0
Cleric	0	2 (0.7%)	0	2	0.3
Doctor	0	9 (3.1%)	0	9	1.7
Engineering	1 (0.4%)	5 (1.7%)	0	6	1.1
Fashion & Textiles	6 (2.6%)	5 (1.7%)	0	11	2.1
Finance	1 (0.4%)	3 (1.0%)	0	4	0.8
Health & Social Services¹⁵	5 (2.1%)	4 (1.4%)	1	10	1.9
Information Technology	2 (0.9%)	5 (1.7%)	0	7	1.3
Legal	1 (0.4%)	6 (2.1%)	0	7	1.3
Nurse	11 (4.7%)	6 (2.1%)	0	17	3.3
Nursery Assistant	4 (1.7%)	0	0	4	0.8
Pharmacist	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.7%)	0	3	0.6
Politician/Political Worker	0	4 (1.4%)	0	4	0.8
Sales & Marketing	7 (3.0%)	21 (7.3%)	0	28	5.4
Security¹⁶	0	14 (4.9%)	0	14	2.7
Service Industries¹⁷	6 (2.6%)	13 (4.5%)	1	20	3.8
Sports	0	4 (1.4%)	0	4	0.8
Trade¹⁸	3 (1.3%)	44 (15.3%)	0	47	9.0
Teacher	27 (11.6%)	9 (3.1%)	0	36	6.9
University Lecturer	0	5 (1.7%)	0	5	1.0
Other	1 (0.4%)	2 (0.7%)	0	3	0.6
Total	233 (100%)	287 (100%)	3	523	100.0

Employment History (in the UK)

The fieldworkers reported that the employment history section of the questionnaire provoked a great deal of frustration and anger for asylum seekers who are currently prohibited from seeking paid work, and who have encountered barriers to accessing voluntary work or work experience. A number of asylum seekers stated that they were unhappy at being forced to sit in their accommodation with nothing to do whilst a decision was made about their status. For refugees, the issues about accessing employment are different, in that they have the right to

¹⁵ Health and social services includes NGO workers and public sector workers in health, care and social work, excluding doctors and nurses.

¹⁶ Security includes army officers, police, security workers and custom & immigration officials.

¹⁷ Services include chefs, domestic workers, drivers / delivery persons, hairdressers, waiting and hotel staff

¹⁸ Tradespersons include builders, decorators, electricians, joiners, manual workers, mechanics, plumbers, surveyors, manufacturers and technicians

work, but face a number of barriers to doing so (for example, language skills, lack of certification, etc).

Numbers in paid employment

Overall, 30 (5.7%) of the 523 refugees and asylum seekers who responded to the Audit indicated they were in employment in the UK. Of these, 12 indicated that they were in full-time paid employment (Figure 2.14) with a further 15 indicating that they were in part-time paid employment and 3 respondents declared self-employment. The vast majority (80%) of those in paid employment were male.

Amongst the 147 refugee respondents to this Skills Audit (this includes those respondents who had been granted ILR or ELR), we found that 10 (6.8%) were in employment. Five were currently in full-time employment, a further 4 were in part-time employment and one was self-employed. The Audit does not tell us how many of the 368 asylum seeker respondents had been granted permission to work. However, 218 of these indicated that they had first come to the UK to claim asylum before the end of 2001 (Table 2.1) and could therefore have been eligible to apply for permission to work before the concession was ended in July 2002. The number of asylum seekers who were eligible to work in the UK *could* have been as many as 218, but it also may have been much lower. Of these 218 asylum seekers, 7 were in full-time employment, 11 in part-time employment and 2 declared self-employment.¹⁹ Therefore, of the combined respondents with refugee status, ELR, ILR and asylum seekers who *may* have had permission to work (365 overall), 8.2% were either in paid employment or self-employed.

Again, it is important to note that this survey targeted refugees and asylum seekers who were accessing SRC services and English Language Training. While this may have excluded those who are *not* accessing employment, training or support services, it may also have excluded those refugees who were in full time employment and who may be less likely therefore, to be attending English Language classes or to be using SRC services. There may be refugees and asylum seekers (with the right to work) who have successfully accessed employment appropriate to their skills, experience and level of qualification, but this was not the common experience of those who participated in the survey. Previous research in this area suggests however, that there is a low-level of labour market participation amongst refugees in the UK (Bloch 2002).²⁰

The majority of those refugees (and some of those asylum seekers) who indicated that they were currently working in Scotland felt that their current occupation was not in keeping with the skills and qualifications that they possessed. Of those who responded with details to the questions relating to their employment in the UK, most had been in post for less than a year. Posts tended to be focussed in the service industries (cafés, take-away restaurants, shops, etc) with some voluntary sector work. Most of the jobs undertaken by refugees and asylum seekers had no “on the job” training.

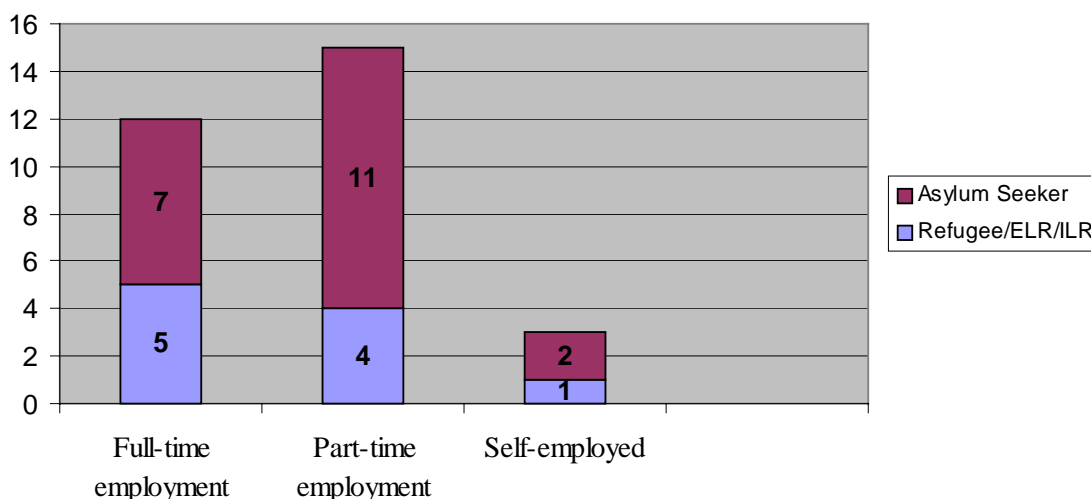
¹⁹ There may have been a degree of non-disclosure about work experience in the UK, either because the individual was working illegally or because s/he believed s/he may be breaking regulations. It is possible that levels of employment amongst asylum seekers could be a little higher, probably low paid and in the service industries, but we are not in a position to comment in any more detail.

²⁰ One potentially useful follow-up project to this Audit would be to try to access those refugees who have successfully found employment in Scotland, and to identify the factors that may have *enabled* them to work either in their area of expertise or in another area.

Of those respondents who indicated that they were currently working - one university level qualified respondent indicated that he was in full-time paid employment with 6 university level educated respondents indicating that they were in part-time paid employment.

Of the 12 respondents who indicated they were in full-time paid employment in Scotland, 4 had run small businesses prior to coming to the UK, 2 had been sales people, a further 2 were manual workers, one was a teacher and one a secretary. The 15 respondents who indicated that they were currently in part-time paid employment had similarly worked in a wide variety of jobs prior to coming to the UK, including a nurse, a civil engineer, taxi driver and a shopkeeper. Only one respondent had previously worked in the catering industry (as a chef), and the single respondent who had worked in a shop had been the owner of it.

Figure 2.13 Numbers in Paid Employment/Status



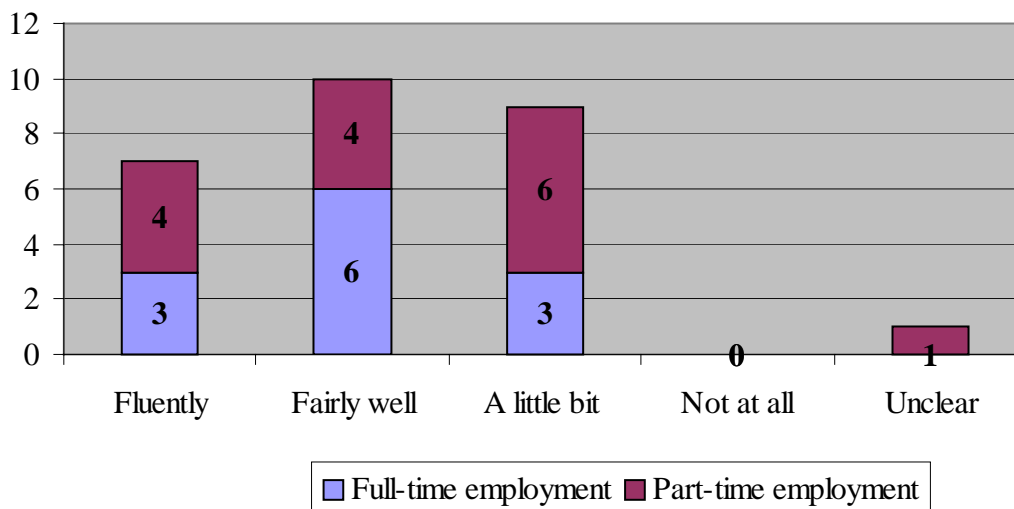
Length of Employment

Of those who were currently employed, the majority (26) had been working for one year or less. Nineteen respondents indicated that they were in temporary posts and a further 14 indicated they were permanent staff. As there were thirty respondents who indicated that they were currently in full or part-time work or were self-employed, these figures may include people who were not in paid employment but were working as volunteers (30 respondents). Fourteen of those respondents currently in paid employment or working as a volunteer indicated that they had received “on the job” training, compared with 29 who had not.

Relationship of English language skills to employment

Of the 12 respondents who had been able to obtain full-time employment in the UK, 3 could speak English “fluently”, 6 “fairly well” and 3 “a little bit” (Figure 2.14). Of the 15 respondents who had been able to obtain part-time employment, one person’s English language ability was unclear, but 4 could speak English “fluently”, 4 “fairly well” and a further 6 “a little bit”.

Figure 2.14 Levels of English Language: Respondents in Paid Employment



Because the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers (with permission to work) who participated in the Audit and indicated that they were in paid employment are low, it is impossible for us to come to any conclusions about the relationship between language and employment. The correlation between fluency in English language and access to jobs is also dependant on a number of other factors including the type of job refugees are applying for and the level of English required for the job. For example, refugee doctors and teachers are required to achieve a certain level of proficiency as judged through the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) in order to be eligible for practice in their profession in the UK. Refugees may fail the test due to other factors such as a strong regional accent despite having a high level of proficiency in the English language.²¹ Additionally, there is a risk that those refugees and asylum seekers (with the right to work) who are proficient in spoken English, but are less fluent in their written English, may not make it to the interview stage of the recruitment process. Equally, those who are proficient in reading and writing but are less fluent in spoken English may find it difficult to negotiate the interview stage.

The Audit did not specifically ask how satisfied respondents were with the English language training they had received. However, previous studies indicate that refugees and asylum seekers are often attending ESOL courses (English for Speakers of Other Languages) in the hope of improving their employment prospects, but do not always find them designed to address these needs (Aldridge and Waddington 2002: 22; Bloch 2002: 65). The authors of the NIACE skills audit report therefore recommend that “ESOL courses should be designed so as to integrate the needs of portfolio preparation and specialised vocational vocabulary and literacy, which are relevant to employment, qualifications and skills requirements” (Aldridge and Waddington 2002: 22). This would suggest that a distinction needs to be made between the provision of basic English language teaching and more specific needs for vocational English language teaching that prepares refugees for work in particular sectors such as construction or IT. A successful example of this specialist vocational English language teaching is the ‘English for Doctors Programme’ taught at Anniesland College in Glasgow.

²¹ SRC, personal communication.

Satisfaction with Current Occupation

“My job is local and I have been recognised as a good worker and have recently had a pay rise” (male asylum seeker, Pakistan).

Seven of those respondents in employment at the time of the survey stated that their job was “ok” or they enjoyed it, and an equal number said that they would like a different job more relevant to their skills and experiences. As with English language training and voluntary work, respondents who expressed satisfaction with their current job indicated that they particularly appreciated the opportunity to meet people.

“I like the work because you meet a lot of different people with different backgrounds. I dislike the working time which is till late in the night” (male refugee, Kosovo).

For those small numbers of people who were working, there were issues however, relating to the temporary or part-time nature of the work, the job being far away, late working hours, being asked to work on days off and suffering health problems as a result of work. Facing discrimination when searching for work and feeling unhappy about the perceived lack of support in their search for work were also mentioned.

“It is far away and not full-time. I would like to get a full-time and appropriate job for my qualifications - not a very high level but covering my educational field at least, to progress” (male refugee, Iraq).

“When you’re doing packing work you have to bend strangely so it’s very hard and your back aches. Everything is ok - everyone is good” (male asylum seeker, Burundi).

Some of those in employment also expressed dissatisfaction with the nature of their current employment, and a desire to work in an area which was more relevant to, and commensurate with their skills and qualifications.

“I would prefer to work in a field that is more relevant to my skills and qualifications” (female asylum seeker, Iran).

A few respondents also implied that a further barrier to finding employment commensurate with their skills and qualifications was the fact that many employers choose to employ illegal workers for less than the minimum wage.

“Because I don’t want to work illegally and organisations don’t want to employ legal workers because we cost more. Illegal workers will work for less” (male asylum seeker, Iran).

“It’s very important to work because if you’re unemployed and looking for benefits it’s shame – I feel humiliation. In my opinion, it’s better to have permission to work than disobey the law and work illegally” (female asylum seeker, Azerbaijan)

Without the legal right to work, some asylum seekers are thought to undertake illegal work, some of it dangerous (Hughes cited in *Community Care* 2003: 2), thereby also putting their physical health at risk. It has been suggested more generally that asylum seekers are already highly vulnerable to poverty and homelessness (GLA 2001: 25) and that this may be a further barrier to accessing employment for those who are entitled to work. For example, the GLA

cites a case in which an asylum seeker who had been offered a job conditional on taking a short training course was unable to do so because he could not afford the fare to travel to the course (ibid: 47).

Barriers to applying specialist skills in the UK

This was not a direct question in the Audit but some respondents with specialist skills, particularly doctors and teachers, indicated that they would like to practice in the UK but were unable to do so for various reasons, including lack of permission to work and English language proficiency.

Of the 9 doctors who participated in the Audit, 5 were asylum seekers and the other 4 indicated that they had refugee status, ELR or ILR. All the doctors bar one (who indicated s/he would like to return to her/his country of origin) indicated that they wished to remain in Scotland and all of the doctors indicated that they would like to find a job that matched their skills and qualifications.

“I am happy in Scotland. But I am annoyed because I don’t do anything - all I do is read and read in English to try to be able to talk to people here. Here I have few friends and nothing to do. I used to work 12 hours a day in a hospital” (male asylum seeker, Guinea).

All of the doctors indicated that they would like some help with their language skills, including those who had indicated that they felt they were fluent in spoken English. The doctors, who expressed high levels of motivation to practice, also indicated a desire to work in a voluntary or work placement capacity, as well as obtain further training. For those doctors who are currently asylum seekers the primary issue was to be granted permission to work.

Four of the doctors indicated that they were currently doing some voluntary work, but that this was not linked in any capacity to health or medical work. Although we can only approximate time spent in the UK as an asylum-seeker or refugee from the self-declared responses, the information we have seems to indicate that, although some of the doctors are relatively new arrivals (March 2003, December 2002, September 2002 and July 2002), other medically trained refugees and asylum seekers had been in the UK and *unable to use their medical skills and expertise* for well over 2-3 years at the time of questionnaire completion (July 2000, May 2000, April 2000, August 1999 and August 1998).

Of the 36 teachers, 27 were asylum seekers and 9 were refugees or had ELR or ILR status. Although one respondent had come to the UK to claim asylum as early as 1997, the rest of the respondents had been here for varying lengths of time since May 2000. Ten had been in Scotland from between May and December 2000, 14 from between January and November 2001, 9 from between January and December 2002, and 2 came to Scotland in 2003.

There are a number of reasons as to why it may be inappropriate or difficult for a refugee to apply his or her teaching skills in the UK, including the expense of re-qualifying and a lack of knowledge about how to qualify to practice in the UK and of their entitlements to support to do so. In addition, the costs of travel, childcare and up-to-date course books may prove to be

barriers.²² One respondent also suggested that *“the trade union teaching board is very closed, difficult to penetrate”* (female refugee, DRC).

Even if their teaching qualifications are comparable to those in the UK, refugees may not have their certificates with them nor be able to provide references.²³ Many refugees have fled from politically unstable countries and many have been subject to torture and persecution. It is likely, therefore, that they will be unable to trace work colleagues to provide references and that they may have been unable to work in their own countries for anything up to a number of years. Moreover, the trauma suffered by refugees may in itself be a barrier to their ability to return to teaching. Those refugees who are able to work as teachers in the UK may have to adjust to cultural differences in, for example, the style and methods of teaching and disciplining children as well as confronting differences in the educational system itself.²⁴

Not Working

Approximately 120 refugees and asylum seekers referenced not working and the inability to work as issues that made them unhappy and over 40 referenced their frustration at having nothing to do, wasting time and their skills, feeling bored and lazy and being unable to contribute through work to Scottish society.

“Would like to have decision as soon as possible and then be able to work. Would be grateful for this – not to have to live on benefits. If I didn’t have political reason to come I would have stayed in Iran because I had a good life and situation there” (male asylum seeker, Iran).

“I’m unemployed doing nothing. I don’t want to sit at home. I want to go out and earn money. I am a responsible, respectable man and I can support myself if they let me” (male asylum seeker, Angola).

“I am not feeling well because I am not allowed to do anything. This is like wasting life and I wish to be a good citizen for this country through working and serving people” (male asylum seeker, Zimbabwe).

Work and social integration

Access to work for refugees and asylum seekers was identified by respondents to this Audit (and by respondents to the other Audits that we have referenced) as pivotal to the process of settlement and integration. Many of those asylum seekers who were not permitted to work indicated that the inability to find appropriate, or indeed any type of work had implications for their well-being, particularly their mental health, and for their ability to integrate in Scottish society. Some respondents felt that the boredom and frustration of being unable to work was contributing to increased isolation and depression, reduced confidence and low self esteem.

²² See, http://www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release.jsp?releaseid=1525

²³ Refugees and those granted ELR are eligible for educational grants and loans provided their documents clearly state that they have been granted refugee status under the 1951 Convention for Refugees. However, those granted ILR are subject to international fees for undergraduate and postgraduate study until they have been resident for 3 years or more in the UK. Asylum seekers are ineligible for educational grants and loans (SRC, personal communication). All refugee teachers have to register with the General Teaching Council (GTC) which currently costs £40.

²⁴ SRC, personal communication.

“As an asylum seeker I am very stuck - the Home Office don’t give me a work permit so I’m only at home and going to a few courses. I don’t have many relatives here and can get depressed” (female asylum seeker, Pakistan).

“I am not feeling well because I am not allowed to do anything” (female asylum seeker, Iran).

“I am not working at the moment. I believe that when I start work I will gain more confidence, experience and learn the culture of the people in Scotland” (female asylum seeker, Rwanda).

Refugees have been found to be at high risk of social isolation and depression, particularly in dispersal areas (Ager et al. 2002; Wren and Boyle, 2002). It has also been suggested that the confidence gained from work, combined with an opportunity to meet local people in the workplace could encourage long-term settlement of refugees and asylum seekers and promote community cohesion (Ahmad quoted in Community Care 2003).

A recent research project which examined the relationship between work and health for migrants in 3 European countries (Italy, Sweden and Britain) found there was a relationship between poor health and de-skilling for migrants (Wren and Boyle, 2002). The report’s authors describe deskilling as a process where qualifications and skills that have been obtained through education or employment are either not recognized or not used after migration. This results in “downward occupational mobility and potential loss of skills” (2002: 40). With reference to refugees and asylum seekers, deskilling can have a profound impact on health (physical and mental) as non-participation in the labour market can lead to welfare dependency, poverty and longer-term social-exclusion. This has implications for the successful integration of refugees (and potential refugees) into Scottish and UK society.

Finally, being unable to work could particularly affect those with specialist occupations, such as health professionals, who need to keep their skills up to date (Refugee Council Briefing 2002).

2.5 ASPIRATIONS AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

For many of the refugees and asylum seekers who participated in this study, the main aspiration was to receive a positive decision on their asylum claim and to access appropriate employment and training so that they could begin to contribute to Scottish society. Many respondents referenced wanting to work so that they could pay taxes, national insurance and consolidate their settlement here. In addition to the positive experiences people referenced and the opportunities they were keen to explore, a number of respondents also highlighted negative experiences which presented barriers to their feeling settled and integrated in the UK.

Living in Scotland

The vast majority of respondents (88%) said that they would like to remain in Scotland and 6% (32) indicated that they would prefer to move to England. A very small number of respondents indicated that they wanted to move abroad. We have no way of knowing of course, whether those respondents who expressed a desire to stay in Scotland will in fact do so.

People also made positive comments about being in Scotland: saying that they liked living here and about enjoyed the freedom they experienced in Scotland, or were grateful that they were now living in a safe place.

“I am happy because I am here and don’t have any problems” (male asylum seeker, DRC).

“I am happy that I am here because I have escaped death and torture and come to a safe place. If I am given the privilege to be of value to the country and the community I will really appreciate that” (male asylum seeker, Zimbabwe).

“I like learning English. I like Scotland. I like Scottish people” (female asylum seeker, Sri Lanka).

“I love Scotland and Scottish people – very friendly. Really would like to do anything, any job to help Scotland and Scottish people. I would like to volunteer, to do something active in the community” (male asylum seeker, Sudan).

Some respondents, although keen to stay in Scotland, did not like the area they were currently living in (due primarily to their experience of racist abuse).

“I like college and that I was able to register to train to work in the NHS. I don’t like that I have been racially abused. I don’t like that my flat is dirty” (male asylum seeker, Iraq).

“Scotland has some kind and lovely people but unfortunately I’m not living in a very nice place” (male asylum seeker, Iran).

Although asylum seekers who get permission to remain may wish to continue to live in Scotland, pressures of accessing work, location of family members and of appropriate minority ethnic communities and facilities may in fact, pull many people to move to cities in England such as London, Manchester or Birmingham (Joly et al. 1997). As we outlined in the introduction to this Audit, policy makers and some Scottish employers are keen to attract “fresh talent” to the country and keen that Scotland is seen and experienced as a welcoming and liberal country to live and work in. If Scotland wishes to retain the skills and experiences of this highly motivated group of people, it will need to consider strategies for encouraging refugees to remain in Scotland rather than move elsewhere in the UK.

Integration

It is recognised that integration is a term open to interpretation.²⁵ Those who specifically referenced the term did so in the context of expressing a desire to learn more about the way of life in Scotland and to interact with a wider community. Again, being unable to work was felt to be a barrier to achieving social integration.

“To know about way of life here and know language. To know how things are done here. Would like to integrate to wider community” (male asylum seeker, Somalia).

²⁵ The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) define integration as “a dynamic...two-way[and] long-term process...relating both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the host country as well as to refugees’ own perception of acceptance by and membership in the host society” (ECRE 1999 cited in Ager and Strang 2003).

“Know more about the way of life here. Learn more English. Integrate more and mingle with society” (male asylum seeker, Somalia).

“Not being allowed to work – just staying at home alone makes it very difficult to interact with society” (female asylum seeker, Zimbabwe).

Respondents also indicated that they were unfamiliar with local systems and support structures and needed help to access the relevant information.

“I think it would be a great help to know where to go and find information about how to get what I’m looking for” (female asylum seeker, Iran).

The need for more information and support on accessing jobs has been frequently cited by refugees and asylum seekers in other research studies (Tait 2003: 16-21) and was raised by a number of respondents to this Audit. Fifty-one respondents (almost 10%) specifically indicated that they needed more information about jobs.

“The system is different in Iraq and the UK, making it hard to find a job without help” (male refugee, Iraq).

There were those who felt that they were receiving adequate support to participate in Scottish economic and social life and expressed contentment with their situation.

“I’m improving my English and I’m on the New Deal at the Job Centre looking for a good job. I’m here with my family. I’m happy” (male refugee, Iran).

Security

A number of respondents expressed a desire to integrate into Scottish society but, for many, this was felt to be largely dependant on receiving a positive decision on their claim. Many respondents indicated that they could not begin to feel truly settled and integrated into Scottish society until they secured refugee, ILR or ELR status (under the previous legislation – now Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave to Remain) and, with it, the legal entitlement to work.

“I cannot plan my life without the knowledge of when my status will be determined by the Home Office” (male asylum seeker, Zimbabwe).

“Would like immigration to speak to me and sort things out. Feel stuck at the moment. Want to be like everybody else – working and paying tax regularly” (male asylum seeker, Libya).

“Happy to live in Scotland but not allowed to work and have no clear status. It’s like you came from prison to another prison. Like you are locked up, tied up. The headache of not knowing what will happen has put me in a corner. I feel like I’m useless” (male asylum seeker, Sudan).

Negative Experiences

In addition to the many positive aspects of living in Scotland that respondents identified, there were a number of negative issues raised which related predominantly to unemployment and permission to work. Some respondents also used the questionnaire as an opportunity to raise issues about experiencing harassment in their local area.

Racism and Harassment

Five people specifically mentioned having experienced racist abuse or assault and 14 others mentioned problems with their housing, area or neighbours:

“Living in Glasgow’s high-rise flats with junkie neighbours, drug dealers and drug addicts and racist people is very horrible” (male asylum seeker, Pakistan).

“Some Scottish people are nice, some neighbours are not - knocking on doors and running away, leaving rubbish outside the door” (female asylum seeker, Iraq).

“My sisters and I, we were on several occasions victims of assault by Scottish youngsters. That is why we do not feel in a safe place” (female asylum seeker, DRC).

But the predominant concern in the context of a questionnaire investigating skills, qualifications and experiences, was access to work.

Access to Employment

Many asylum seekers took the opportunity to voice their frustrations and concerns about being denied the opportunity to work as outlined earlier in the report. Seventy-one asylum seekers referred to the need to obtain the permission to work that came with refugee status.

“Getting a permit to work - to help myself and other people” (male asylum seeker, Pakistan).

“Just give me a work permit because I’ve been here for one year and two months without it” (male asylum seeker, Cameroon).

“Permission to work - after I get that I will be happy with my family here” (male asylum seeker, Afghanistan).

Anxiety and depression

Many of the respondents expressed feelings of anxiety or depression due to the uncertainty about their claims, the situation in their home country and their area or housing they were currently living in. In the wider context, anxiety about asylum claims and frustration about having had to wait and live with uncertainty for long periods without being able to plan for the future were also mentioned by many people, as highlighted earlier. People also expressed anxiety about their family or the situation in their country. Others specifically stated that they were depressed.

“I don’t have a decision on my case - I feel depressed and nervous” (male asylum seeker, Iran).

“I don’t have papers. I don’t have a house. I can’t work. My future is uncertain” (male asylum seeker, Algeria).

“Would like to study and complete medicine or join social work organisation. Not happy because (I) sit idle all day, thinking about what’s happening in our country. Want to forget my country and serve this country because it provided me with asylum” (female asylum seeker, Algeria).

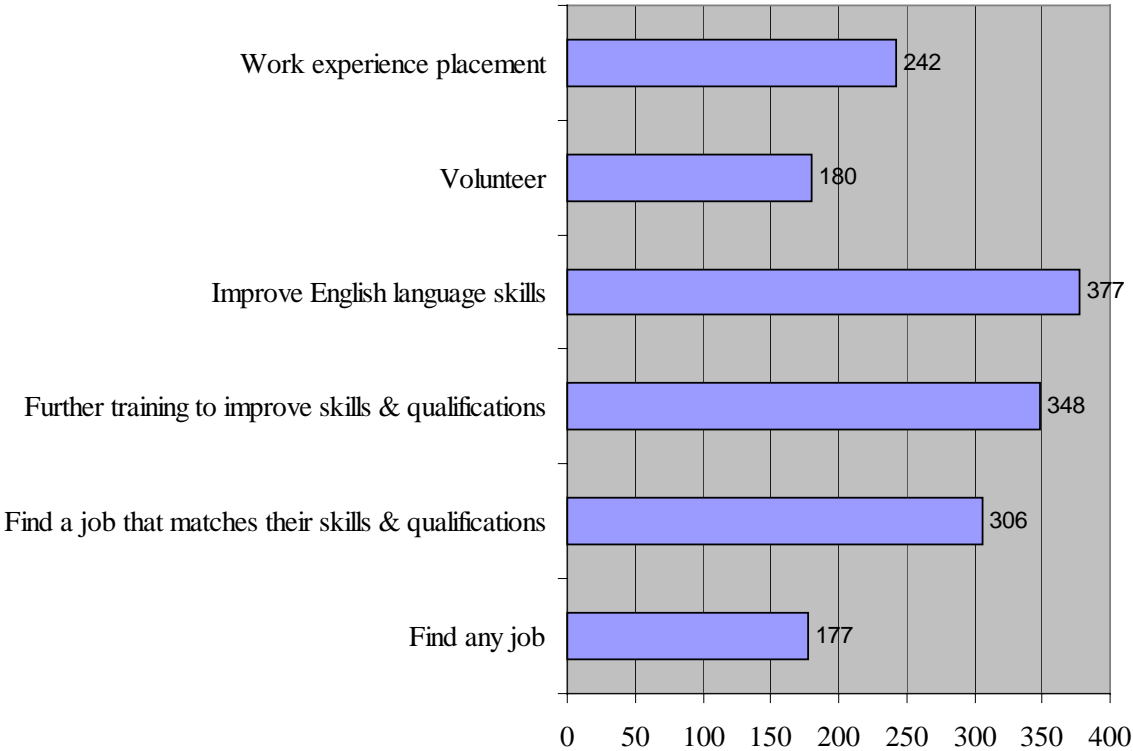
“I want to have activities to keep from getting depressed” (male asylum seeker, Iran).

Future Opportunities

Whether or not they were unemployed or unsatisfied with their current occupation, the vast majority of respondents were keen to improve their skills and qualifications, and to obtain further work experience in order to help them to find a job. Respondents also expressed a desire to obtain further training, to improve their English language skills and to volunteer. The responses represented in Figure 2.15 are based on multiple responses as respondents were allowed to tick more than one box in this section of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire also provided space in which refugees and asylum seekers could expand further on firstly, what factors they felt would be most beneficial to them being able to access employment in Scotland and secondly, about anything relating to living and working that they felt was important.

Figure 2.15 What Respondents Would Like To Do Next



Improving English Language Skills

Seventy-two percent of respondents said they would like to improve their English language skills when asked what they would like to do next. One hundred and thirty one refugees and

asylum seekers also identified this as the single most significant thing that they felt would improve their employment prospects and/or their ability to find work in Scotland.

“I think I need to improve my language skills and I’d like to improve my qualifications... I think I must go to university for different training in my skills. I hope I can find a job that’s equal to my experience” (female asylum seeker, Iran).

“I think English classes improve my employment prospects and improve my ability to get the job I would like to do in Scotland. I would like to be a teacher” (female asylum seeker, Iran).

“I would like to improve my English skills and get a training course and to find a good and suitable job for me so that I can serve the Scottish community” (male refugee, Iraq).

Accessing further training

When asked what they would like to do next, a significant number (66.5%) of refugees and asylum seekers expressed a desire to obtain further training in order to improve their skills and qualifications. In response to the question “what do you think would significantly improve your employment prospects and/or your ability to get the job you would like to do in Scotland?” 36% (190) of respondents identified a need for further training including university study. Of these, 92 indicated a need for college training or were non-specific about the type of training, 20 expressed a need for IT and computing skills and 21 indicated a need for undergraduate and postgraduate university education. Thirty-nine of those who identified a need for further training or university study indicated specific training needs in order to gain locally recognised certificates in various areas including medicine, engineering, plumbing, training as an electrician and to gain an HGV driving license.

“I want to work as a doctor - I need medical English training and training about the health system here - I am used to a different system” (male asylum seeker, Guinea).

Volunteering and work experience

Significant numbers of respondents also said they would like to volunteer (34.4%) and/or do work experience placements (46.3%) to improve their skills and experience. All these responses relating to language training, further education, volunteering and work placements would suggest that levels of motivation amongst refugees and asylum seekers are very high and that this motivation constitutes a resource in itself.

“Education is the key and socialisation is the bridging stone in any society. Hence I would like to get education that is equivalent to natives and work with them together as one family” (male refugee, Burundi).

Non-discrimination

Other refugees and asylum seekers seemed somewhat bewildered by their experiences and were not entirely clear about what they thought the key issues might be, but indicated nonetheless that they felt that they were the victims of discrimination due to their nationality, and expressed a desire to be treated equally to UK citizens.

“I know there are many jobs everywhere in the job centres - any place, but my problem is NI number and reference and CV and my education and my nationality. I feel always I’m alone and foreign” (male asylum seeker, Palestine).

“... (T)o be not Algerian! People’s attitudes a big problem and getting worse” (male asylum seeker, Algeria).

SECTION THREE KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

At the start of this report we set out a number of questions that we hoped the Skills and Aspirations Audit would help us to begin to address:

1. What kinds of skills and qualifications do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland have?
2. What aspirations do refugees and asylum seekers hold?
3. What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers face when attempting to access further education and training?
4. What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers (with the right to work) face when attempting to find employment?
5. How can we best use the information about refugees' and asylum seekers' skills, qualifications and aspirations to help counter the negative perceptions that many people hold?

This section summarises the key findings from the Audit in relation to each of the above 5 questions in turn. It then goes on to consider key issues from the findings, and their implications. The key issues cross-cut the findings from the various data sets.

3.1 KEY FINDINGS

What kinds of skills and qualifications do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland have?

Refugees and asylum seekers have a great deal to contribute to the Scottish labour market and to Scottish society in general. As identified in earlier national and regional skills audits and related reports (see for example Bloch 2002: 2; Tait 2003: 10), the findings from this Audit similarly indicate that refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland are, for the most part, well qualified and possess a broad range of skills and experiences.

Educational experience and attainment

More than 75% of respondents had completed secondary school (or equivalent) education, over 55% had completed college (or an equivalent) education and approximately 21% of respondents had completed a course at a university. At least 24 people had second degrees and at least 6 had third degrees. Four respondents indicated that they had PhDs.

Respondents had studied a broad range of subjects at college and university, both generalist and specialist, including languages, business, accounting, mathematics, social sciences, law and medicine.

Language and literacy skills

Just over 42% of respondents spoke at least 2 languages and just over 20% spoke 3 (fluently or fairly well). Generally, the respondents indicated that their linguistic skills were good, with over 10% indicating that they could speak 4 or more languages either fluently or very well.

Forty per cent of those respondents who indicated they could speak English fluently (85 respondents) also indicated that they could speak a second language fluently or fairly well,

Almost 33% could speak a third language fluently or fairly well and 20% indicated they were fluent in a fourth language or could speak it fairly well.

Respondents indicated greater fluency in reading and writing English than in speaking English. Nonetheless, 16% of respondents indicated that they were fluent in speaking English, 21% indicated they had fluent reading skills and 17.5% said they could write fluently in English. A higher percentage indicated that they had “fairly good” English language and literacy skills.

Other skills

Respondents had also been able to develop a broad range of skills through their experience gained outside of employment, through their involvement in groups, clubs and associations. Over 37% of respondents indicated that they had been involved in associations (primarily political), sports and social clubs, religious groups and NGO organisations through which they had developed organisational and administrative skills including communication skills, skills in campaigning and advocacy, fundraising and IT.

Employment

Respondents indicated that they possessed a broad range of skills, and had experience in various positions of responsibility in their jobs prior to coming to the UK. Their experience of paid employment in the UK (or lack of it) was not commensurate with the skills and experience they had brought with them. This is similar to the findings recorded in other skills audits.²⁶

Fifty-two per cent (272) of respondents said they were in paid employment in their country of origin and a further approximately 18% (41) said they were self-employed. Of these, 85% (231) said they were in full-time paid employment and 15% said they were in part-time paid employment before coming to the UK.

Those in paid employment in their country of origin had worked in a diverse range of professions: primarily in the trade industries (9%) as mechanics, manual workers and plumbers; in business (9%); and as teachers (almost 7%). In addition, a significant number of respondents had been engaged in other highly skilled professional jobs including as nurses, doctors and as engineers.

What aspirations do refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland hold?

The data suggests that, although it had not been their choice to leave their home country and settle in the UK, respondents were grateful for the opportunity to seek safety in Scotland and had high levels of motivation to participate in Scottish society.

²⁶ Of the 400 refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the DWP survey, 42% were working before coming to Britain. The survey sample comprised equal numbers of men and women. In the NIACE survey, this percentage was significantly higher (80%) although this may in part be attributable to the disproportionate number of male asylum seekers (101) interviewed compared with the number of female asylum seekers (20). Nonetheless, in both surveys, respondents indicated that they had worked in diverse areas of employment prior to coming to the UK, including a number of those professional jobs identified here.

Settling in Scotland

The vast majority of respondents (88%) said that they would like to remain in Scotland (although some did not like the areas in which they were currently living due, primarily, to their experience of racist abuse).

Integration

Many respondents also expressed a desire to learn more about Scotland and how society functioned in order to begin the process of settlement and integration. Respondents also indicated that they were unfamiliar with local systems and support structures and wanted help to access the relevant information.

Security

The priority for most asylum seekers was to receive a positive decision on their claim. Many expressed a liking for Scotland and its people, and a desire to stay, but felt that they could not begin to feel settled and integrated into Scottish society until they secured refugee status and were legally entitled to work.

Racism and Harassment

Five people specifically mentioned having experienced racist abuse or assault and 14 others mentioned problems with their housing, area or neighbours.

Access to employment

Access to employment was identified as pivotal to the process of settlement and integration by both refugees and asylum seekers. Many expressed a desire to provide for themselves and to positively contribute to Scottish society, and disliked being reliant on state benefits.

Seventy-one asylum seekers referred specifically to the need to obtain the permission to work that came with refugee status. Approximately 120 refugees and asylum seekers also referenced not working and the inability to work as issues that made them unhappy and over 40 referenced their frustration at having nothing to do, wasting time and their skills, feeling bored and lazy and at being unable to contribute through work to Scottish society.

The majority of those refugees (and some asylum seekers) who were currently working in Scotland felt that their current occupation was not in keeping with the skills and qualifications that they possessed.

When asked what they would like to do next from a list of multiple choice options (find any job; find a job that matches skills and qualifications; obtain further training to improve skills and qualifications; improve (if necessary) English language skills (ESOL); volunteer to work in a local voluntary organisation; obtain a work experience placement with a local company or organisation; other), over a third of respondents indicated that they would like to find any job although a larger proportion (58.5%) said they would like to find work that matched their skills and experience. Given a choice between finding any job and finding a job that matched their skills and experience, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents would prefer to find a job in keeping with skills and experience. Further, given that so many of the respondents do not have permission to work, it may also be the case that respondents without a work permit saw little point in choosing either of the two options.

Anxiety and depression

Many respondents indicated that being unable to work was causing them to lose confidence and lower their self esteem. Some respondents indicated that this was a significant contributing factor to their ill health, particularly their mental health.

Many of the respondents also expressed feelings of anxiety or depression due to the uncertainty about their claims, the situation in their home country and their area or housing they were currently living in. In the wider context, anxiety about asylum claims and frustration about having had to wait and live with uncertainty for long periods, without being able to plan for the future were also mentioned by many people. People also expressed anxiety about their family or the situation in their country. Others specifically stated that they were depressed.

Improving English language skills

Seventy-two percent of respondents said they would like to improve their English language skills when asked what they would like to do next. One hundred and thirty one refugees and asylum seekers also identified this as the single most significant thing that they felt would improve their employment prospects and/or their ability to find work in Scotland.

Accessing further training

Two-thirds of respondents (66.5%) indicated that they would like to access further training. Twenty-one respondents said that they felt university study at undergraduate and postgraduate level would significantly improve their employment prospects or help them to get their preferred job.

Volunteering and work experience

Significant numbers of respondents also said that they would like to volunteer (34.4%) and/or do work experience placements (46.3%) to improve their skills and experience.

Non-Discrimination

Lastly, some respondents felt that they had been victims of discrimination due to their nationality and wished to be treated equally to other UK citizens.

What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers face when attempting to access further education and training?

The majority of respondents who needed it had been able to access English language training. However, respondents encountered more difficulties in accessing further education due to their status.

Access to English Language Training

The majority (72%) of refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the Audit had accessed English language training in Scotland. However, this may not be a true reflection of the reality for most asylum seekers and refugees due to the fact that this study targeted large numbers of asylum seekers who were studying English language in Glasgow colleges at the time. Further research may be necessary to ascertain whether this level of access is normal so as to obtain more detailed information about who is accessing English language training, who is not and the reasons why this might be so.

Eight women and one male respondent indicated that they had not attended English language training due to childcare issues. Other reasons related to a lack of information, being on the waiting list for an available place, transportation, and health problems.

Language issues may also impact upon respondents' capacity to access mainstream training and volunteering or work placement opportunities. Just over 46% of respondents indicated that they could speak only a little bit of English and 4% indicated that they could not speak any English at all.

Access to further education

At least 27 respondents indicated that they were studying or had studied subjects other than English at colleges or universities in the UK. However, a number of respondents stated that they were either not allowed, or that there were insufficient resources for them to access further or full-time educational opportunities. Some respondents also suggested that asylum seeker and ELR status was a barrier in that it inhibited the ability of the respondent to enrol on anything but short courses.

What kinds of barriers and difficulties do refugees and asylum seekers face when attempting to find employment?

Overall, 30 (5.7%) of the 523 refugees and asylum seekers who responded to the Audit indicated they were in employment in the UK. Of these, 12 said they were in full-time paid employment, 15 said they were in part-time paid employment and 3 respondents said they were self employed. The key barriers to finding employment were identified as a lack of eligibility due to their status, a lack of proficiency in English language, and difficulties in accessing training, proving qualifications and accessing appropriate conversion courses.

Of the 27 respondents who were currently in full-time or part-time paid employment in Scotland, most worked in the service industries (cafés, take-away restaurants, shops, etc) with some undertaking voluntary sector work. The majority of those in paid employment in Scotland had been in much more skilled jobs prior to coming to the UK.

Legal Status

Of the 523 respondents to the Audit, 147 had refugee status, ILR or ELR and were therefore entitled to work. A further 218 asylum seeker respondents *may* have been eligible to work in the UK.

Of the combined respondents with refugee status, ELR/ILR and asylum seekers who *may* have had permission to work (365 overall), 8.2% said they were either in paid employment or self-employed. Just under 7% (10) of those with refugee status, ELR or ILR said they were in paid employment or self-employed (5 said they were in full-time paid employment, 4 said they were in part-time paid employment and one said he was self-employed). Based on a potential 218 asylum seekers having permission to work, 9% of these said they were in paid employment (7 said they were in full time employment, 11 said they were in part-time employment and 2 said they were self employed). Given the scope of the Audit, we cannot make any assumptions about applications for permission to work by asylum seekers. Some of the respondents may have not been principal applicants for asylum and therefore not eligible to apply for permission to work, others may have applied and been denied permission, whilst others may have experienced delays through their solicitors and subsequently missed the deadline.

Relationship of English language skills to employment

Because the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers (with permission to work) who participated in the Audit and indicated that they were in paid employment were so low, it is impossible for us to come to any conclusions about the relationship between language and access to employment.

Nonetheless, approximately 25% of respondents specifically indicated that they felt improved skills in English language and/or literacy would significantly improve their employment prospects or help them access their preferred employment.

Lack of certification

Only 21% of respondents who had completed secondary school education, approximately 28% of those who had completed college (or an equivalent) level of education and 11% of those who had completed some kind of university education actually had their certification with them in Scotland. This clearly has implications for verifying educational and employment suitability.

Incomplete education

Due to a number of factors including political instability in their country, many refugees and asylum seekers were not able to complete their studies at secondary level (approximately 6.5%), college (almost 8%) and university (approximately 8%).

Training and further education

Thirty-six per cent of respondents felt that training, including university study would significantly improve their employment prospects or help them access their preferred employment. Thirty-nine of these indicated specific training needs in order to gain locally recognised certificates in various areas including engineering, plumbing, training as an electrician and to gain an HGV driving license.

Local knowledge

Fifty-one respondents (almost 10%) said that they needed more information about jobs.

Childcare

Approximately 23% of female respondents and 6% of male respondents with children living with them in Scotland were living *without* their partners. Childcare issues may have implications for these refugees and asylum seekers in terms of their ability to access educational opportunities and/or employment.

How can we best use the information about refugees' and asylum seekers' skills, qualifications and aspirations to help counter the negative perceptions that many people hold?

The public discourse that circulates about refugees and asylum seekers rarely focuses on their skills, qualifications, aspirations and what they can (or would like to) contribute to the region or country in which they have sought refuge.

Generally, the public perception of refugees and asylum seekers is not always positive. Asylum seekers and refugees often encounter prejudice and hostility based on misconceptions and misunderstandings about their experiences and current status. Asylum

seekers are often portrayed in the media and popular opinion as poorly qualified economic migrants who are only in the UK to take advantage of the benefits systems. What the responses to the Audit indicate is that many asylum seekers are very keen to put their skills to good use in Scotland and are frustrated by their inability to do so.

The responses from the Audit challenge a number of negative popular misconceptions of asylum seekers and refugees including the following:

Asylum seekers and refugees are poorly qualified

Respondents were for the most part well qualified and had a diverse range of skills to potentially contribute to the Scottish labour market. In many cases they are disadvantaged by not having their certificates with them in Scotland, by the fact that their qualifications are not recognised or are difficult to validate in the UK, or by a lack of English language proficiency.

Asylum seekers are economic migrants

Most of the people who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they had left behind paid employment in their country of origin as well as their homes and families. In many cases they indicated that they had occupied well paid professional jobs and were financially worse off since coming to the UK.

They come to the UK because of the housing and benefit system

This Audit has found (as have other studies) that asylum seekers would much prefer to support themselves through work than to receive state benefits. It also shows that asylum seekers and refugees are highly motivated to contribute to the local economy and to participate in Scottish society. Furthermore, a recent Home Office study suggests that asylum seekers have little or no knowledge about the UK housing or benefit system and in many cases it is paid agents and not the asylum seekers who choose which country to seek asylum in (Robinson and Segrott 2002).

Scotland has no capacity to accept new citizens

Scotland is currently experiencing demographic change, an ageing population, fewer children being born and migration of young Scottish people to other parts of the UK. Scotland does have the capacity to accept new citizens and the Fresh Talent initiative specifically encourages people from “outside” Scotland to come here and settle and work.

They are taking our jobs

Although our sample is not representative of the asylum seeker and refugee communities in Scotland, the very small numbers of those in full or part-time paid employment would suggest that the opportunities for successfully entering the labour market are limited. Just over 8% (30) of those respondents who *could* have had permission to work (365 in total) were in paid employment and only 12 of these were in full-time employment.

The information contained in the Audit can usefully inform Key Actions (15-20) in the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum Action Plan, relevant to ‘Positive Images, Community Development and the Media.’ Additionally, the responses suggest that the implementation of Key Actions (51-57) relevant to ‘Enterprise, Lifelong Learning, Employment and Training, will impact positively on the opportunities and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland.

3.2 KEY ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Skills and Education

As in the literature, the findings indicate that refugees tend to be drawn from the most educated groups in their country of origin (Bloch, 2000b cited in Bloch 2002: 9; Tait, 2003).

However, very few of the respondents were in paid employment in the UK and, of those who were, their jobs were not commensurate with their pre-migration skills, experience and qualifications. Again this reflects a pattern commonly identified in the literature (Bloch, 2000b cited in Bloch 2002).

Given the large numbers of respondents who said that they do not have their certification with them in Scotland, being able to prove that they have the necessary skills and qualifications will be an issue. It may also be impossible for many refugees and asylum seekers to trace previous employers to provide references. Furthermore, even where refugees and asylum seekers *do* have their certificates with them in Scotland, their qualifications may not be recognised by the relevant authorities in this country. The need to find ways to recognise the skills and qualifications of asylum seekers and refugees living in Scotland is stated in the SRIF Action Plan which recommends that:

Key Action 54: There should be more progress on recognising the **qualifications and/or experience of asylum seekers and refugees on providing conversion courses and competence testing where appropriate**. This should proceed on two levels: first, through funding to assist the Scottish Qualifications Authority, other awarding bodies, professional bodies and sector skills councils to find ways of recognising qualifications and/ or experience, and secondly, through the development of appropriate provision within colleges and universities (with the use of pilot projects in the first instance where appropriate" (SRIF, 2003: 18-19).

Many of the respondents indicated that they were multilingual in addition to being able to speak English fluently or fairly well. This suggests that, with appropriate training, asylum seekers and refugees could make suitable candidates for providing interpreting and/or advocacy services on behalf of others who are less proficient in English language and for whom this is a barrier to their participation in Scottish society. (If this were on a voluntary basis, asylum seekers without the right to work would also be eligible to do so).

English Language Proficiency

The UK government recognises how important it is for refugees to have the opportunity to learn or improve their English language skills. This is essential if they are to compete in a dynamic job market and integrate in new communities (Home Office 2000: 5).

The majority (72%) of refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the Audit had accessed English language training in Scotland. However, conclusions as to the accessibility of English language training and support cannot be drawn from the data as the study targeted large numbers of asylum seekers who were studying English language at the time of the survey. Further research may be necessary to ascertain whether this level of access to English language training is normal so as to obtain more detailed information about who is accessing English language training and who is not.

Although those who were unable to access English language training were in the minority, this group may again be under-represented due to the fact that the study targeted large numbers of asylum seekers who were currently in English language classes. Further research may be necessary to assess whether childcare is a barrier to accessing English language training for many asylum seekers and for women in particular. In recognition of this potential barrier for parents to accessing ESOL training, the SRIF action plan states that:

Key Action 52: Prior to the agreement of a national strategy [for ESOL], there is an urgent need for **adequate resources to be made available to support the provision of English language tuition** (both on a stand-alone basis and in conjunction with vocational courses for those asylum seekers and refugees who require it, to allow them to integrate as quickly as possible. Given the current zero growth in overall funding for further education, this will require the Scottish Executive to provide additional monies to colleges to support this work. The increased resources will be required not only in teaching, but also in support services and childcare (SRIF, 2003: 18-19).

The Scottish Executive is in the process of commissioning some research work to map the demand for and the provision of ESOL teaching in Scotland and investigate linked issues with ESOL in the current climate. This work will be undertaken with an eye to Key Action 51:

The Scottish Executive should take the lead (working with all interested parties) in the development of a **national strategy for ESOL**, building on the recently published adult literacy strategy. While this work is being undertaken, the Scottish Executive should consider the use of pathfinder resources to test a range of alternative approaches to current provision (SRIF, 2003: 18-19).

Lack of proficiency in English language and literacy is perceived by refugees and asylum seekers (with the right to work) as a key barrier to obtaining employment in the UK. This supports the literature which repeatedly highlights that the lack of adequate English language skills is the single most serious barrier to finding employment for refugees and asylum seekers with the right to work (Tait 2003: 19). A distinction needs to be made between the provision of basic English language teaching and more specific needs for vocational English language teaching that prepares refugees for work in particular sectors such as construction or IT. A successful example of this specialist vocational English language teaching is the 'English for Doctors Programme' taught at Anniesland College in Glasgow. Lack of English language proficiency may also have implications for refugees' and asylum seekers' ability to access further education.

Training Needs

A large number of respondents to this survey highlighted their need for training and further education in order to access employment.

The correlation between proficiency in English, access to training and employment prospects is inconclusive from the data and more research may be needed to ascertain this. However, the data suggests that the link is not directly causal and a number of factors including the type of job refugees are applying for, the transferability of their qualifications to the local context, and the level of English required for the job need to be taken into account. The SRIF action plan recommends that:

Key Action 55: Service providers should **audit existing adult literacy, work experience, New Deal and other employment and training programmes** to ensure that these are meeting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Where necessary, programmes should be customised or new provision developed, to meet these needs.

Local knowledge

Lack of information or understanding of how to find employment in the UK, of how to navigate their way through the recruitment process, or of their rights and entitlements to support to do so, may constitute further barriers to accessing employment for refugees and asylum seekers. Again, the SRIF action plan highlights the need to provide adequate information to refugees and asylum seekers in relation not only to employment, but also to education and training issues:

Key Action 56: There is a need for **comprehensive information to be provided on education, lifelong learning and training issues** to both asylum seekers and refugees, and intermediaries, particularly relating to eligibility, funding support, fee levels and the appropriateness of the provision. This provision should supplement, rather than duplicate information available from, for example, Careers Scotland (SRIF, 2003: 18-19).

Finding legal employment even in relatively low paid industries such as catering may be difficult for refugees and asylum seekers with the right to work due to the competition from those workers who are illegally employed for less money.

Understanding local systems may be as important to those refugees and asylum seekers with permission to work for accessing jobs as is proficiency in English language and literacy. In some cases, schemes to help refugees into work (work shadowing or work placements for example) may be a more targeted and effective way of improving refugees' employment opportunities and another route through which refugees and asylum seekers could learn English "on the job."²⁷

Racism and discrimination

There may also be issues about racism and discrimination that need to be addressed. However, despite referring to their experiences of racism and harassment in their local area, few people referred to this directly in relation to employment. We did not, however, ask a direct question about racism and discrimination in the labour market. Further, although respondents may not have identified this as an issue, this does not mean, of course, that respondents have not experienced racism or discrimination on account of their ethnicity or refugee status. Other studies suggest that refugees often perceive racial prejudice as a significant obstacle to employment. However, there is currently insufficient evidence to judge whether employers are discriminating against refugees due to their "race" or status.

Employers identify confusion over permission to work documentation, the public image of refugees and the lack of familiarity and comparability of qualifications and work experience as key issues affecting employment of refugees (Tait 2003: 20). The need to clarify the legal entitlements of refugees and asylum seekers is prioritised in the SRIF Action Plan as key to the process of identifying and targeting the barriers for asylum seekers and refugees in accessing employment:

²⁷ Personal communication, Scottish Refugee Council

Key Action 57: There is a need to **identify and target barriers preventing asylum seekers and refugees moving into employment**. It is suggested that Scottish Enterprise, working with the Scottish Executive, the Department of Work and Pensions and business groups, should undertake a piece of research to both identify the barriers which currently exist, and solutions which will address these. In the meantime, the Group has identified two priority actions. The first is that the Scottish Executive should make representations to the Home Office to seek a resolution to the identified problem of the provision of documentation which unequivocally establishes the right of an asylum seeker or refugee to work. The second is that the Scottish Executive, working with Scottish Enterprise and business group such as Scottish Chambers of Commerce, should provide employers in both public and private sector with clear guidance on the legal position in relation to the employment of asylum seekers and refugees. This guidance should also stress the business and wider benefits of employing asylum seekers and refugees.

The responses to the questionnaire suggest that refugees and asylum seekers have a wealth of skills and qualifications and high levels of motivation. However, a very small percentage of refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the Audit (and *may* have been eligible to work) had been able to access paid employment in Scotland.

“Employment is a key area for refugees who are building their new lives in the UK. People who are not able to gain employment will become increasingly socially excluded. Ensuring refugees have the opportunity to reach their full potential is in all our best interests” (Home Office 2000: 7).

The long-term effects of refugee unemployment have been highlighted by the Home Office and in other research studies which suggest that prolonged and enforced exclusion of refugees from the labour market may negatively affect the process of integration (Tait 2003: 15). Given that significant numbers of respondents had been waiting some time for a decision on their asylum claim, there may be a risk that refugees’ and asylum seekers’ motivations may lessen over time, their skills may become outdated and they could become increasingly isolated and less easily integrated into the labour market.

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APPENDIX ONE THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Scottish Executive working in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council would like to take this opportunity to find out some information about your education, skills, qualifications and hopes and plans for the future.

We would be very grateful if you could complete this questionnaire today and return it to one of the staff members working in the centre. By completing this questionnaire we hope that you will be able to help us to assess and plan appropriate and useful services and assistance.

Evidence suggests that many refugees and asylum seekers have difficulty finding employment in the UK. We would like to find out more about your skills, experience and qualifications in the hope that we can develop ways to enable you to fulfil your potential and use the skills you have. This will help you to contribute positively to your local communities and help you look forward to a positive future here in Scotland.

As well as finding out more about what you can do and what you would like to do, we would also like to be able to identify any problems or barriers that you encounter when trying to find work in Scotland.

This questionnaire is **entirely confidential** so you do not have to give us your name.

Please answer each question using the space provided and with as much detail as you can.

General information

Questionnaire Number: Date:

Interpreter/Interviewer:

.....

1. Are you: Female W Male S W

2. Please indicate which of the following reflects your current status:

Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/>	W	Exceptional leave to remain	<input type="checkbox"/>	W
Indefinite leave to remain	<input type="checkbox"/>	W	Asylum seeker (awaiting decision)	<input type="checkbox"/>	W

3. Could you please tell us how old you are?

17 – 24 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	W	25 – 34 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	W
35 – 44 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	W	45 years and over	<input type="checkbox"/>	W

4. Could you please tell us your country of origin? (for example, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc).

.....

5. Are you married or living with a partner who is living here in Scotland?

Yes W No W

6. Do you have any children who are living with you here in Scotland?

Yes W No W

If yes, how old are they?

Age	How many?	Age	How many?
0 – 4 years		12 – 16 years	
5 – 11 years		17+	

7. When did you first come to the UK to claim asylum?

(for example, July 2000)

8. When did you start living in Scotland?

(for example, February 2002)

Your Education and Qualifications

Please could you tell us about your educational experience?

9. Which of the following (or an equivalent) best describes your educational experience? Please tick **ALL** that apply and then complete the relevant sections. If you have attended **and** completed a particular level of education, please tick both columns. If you attended a level of education but **did not** complete your course, please only tick the column marked “attended”. If you haven’t attended school, college, university (or equivalent), please move on to question 13a.

	Attended	Completed
Don’t know		
Primary – (basic education)		
Secondary – (advanced education)		
Further – (college level education)		
Higher – (university level education)		

School Education

10a. Could you please tell us which country you went to school in (secondary level)?

.....

10b. How long and when did you study there? (for example, 6 years, 1981-1987)

.....

10c. Did you obtain any certificates and/or qualifications?

Yes W No W

10d. Please can you tell us what certificates and/or qualifications you left school with?

.....
.....

.....

10e. Do you have your certificates (or copies) with you in Scotland?

Yes W No W

College Education

11a. If you have attended a college of further education (or equivalent), could you please tell us the name and location of the college (for example, City College, Manchester, UK)

.....

11b. How long and when did you study there? (for example, 2 years, 1987-1989)

.....

11c. What subject(s) and/or courses did you study?

1: 2:

3: 4:

11d. Did you obtain any certificates or qualifications?

Yes W No W

11e. Please can you tell us what certificates or qualifications you left college (or equivalent) with?

.....
.....

11f. Do you have your certificates (or copies) with you in Scotland?

Yes W No W

University Education

12a. Where did you study for your first degree (BA, BSc, etc)? *(for example, University of Glasgow).*

.....

12b. How long and when did you study there? *(for example, 4 years, 1989-1993)*

.....

12c. What degree course(s) did you study? *(for example, BSc in Biology)*

.....
.

12d. Did you graduate? Yes W No W

12e. Where did you study for your second degree (Masters, Mphil, Diploma, etc)? *(for example, University of Glasgow).*

.....

12f. How long and when did you study there? *(for example, 4 years, 1989-1993)*

.....

12g. What degree course(s) did you study? *(for example, Masters in Biological Studies)*

.....
.

12h. Did you graduate? Yes W No W

12i. Where did you study for your **third** degree (PhD)? (*for example, University of Glasgow*).

.....

12j. How long and when did you study there? (*for example, 4 years, 1989-1993*)

.....

12k. What degree course(s) did you study? (*for example, PhD in Biology*)

.....

12l. Did you graduate? Yes W No W

12m. Do you have your certificates (or copies) with you in Scotland?

Yes W No W

Your Language Skills

13. Please could tell us about the language(s) that you are able to speak, read and write.

13a. Please could you tell us which language you speak mainly? (*i.e. which language would you use at home?*)

.....

13b. Can you read in this language?

Yes – fluently	W
Yes – fairly well	W
Yes – a little bit	W
No – not at all	W

13c. Can you write in this language?

Yes – fluently	W
Yes – fairly well	W
Yes – a little bit	W
No – not at all	W

14. Could you please tell us about your English language skills?

14a. Can you speak English? 14b. Can you read English? 14c. Can you write in English?

Yes – fluently	W	Yes – fluently	W	Yes – fluently	W
Yes – fairly well	W	Yes – fairly well	W	Yes – fairly well	W

Yes – a little bit	W	Yes – a little bit	W	Yes – a little bit	W
No – not at all	W	No – not at all	W	No – not at all	W

15a. Did you receive any English language training in your country of origin?

Yes W No W

15b. Could you please tell us about this training? (lessons at school, with the British Council, etc?)

.....

16a. Have you received any English language training since you arrived in Scotland?

Yes W No W

16b. If you have not attended any English language training at all, could you please tell us why? (For example, your language skills are already good and you do not need further training; transport costs; childcare; availability of courses/ places; difficulty accessing information about available courses.)

.....

.....

17. Could you please tell us about any other languages that you can speak, read or write:

17a.(please specify language)

Can you speak ?		Can you read ?		Can you write in ?	
Yes – fluently	W	Yes – fluently	W	Yes – fluently	W
Yes – fairly well	W	Yes – fairly well	W	Yes – fairly well	W
Yes – a little bit	W	Yes – a little bit	W	Yes – a little bit	W
No – not at all	W	No – not at all	W	No – not at all	W

17b.(please specify language)

Can you speak ?		Can you read ?		Can you write in ?	
Yes – fluently	W	Yes – fluently	W	Yes – fluently	W
Yes – fairly well	W	Yes – fairly well	W	Yes – fairly well	W
Yes – a little bit	W	Yes – a little bit	W	Yes – a little bit	W
No – not at all	W	No – not at all	W	No – not at all	W

17c.(please specify language)

Can you speak	Can you read	Can you write in
Yes – fluently W	Yes – fluently W	Yes – fluently W
Yes – fairly well W	Yes – fairly well W	Yes – fairly well W
Yes – a little bit W	Yes – a little bit W	Yes – a little bit W
No – not at all W	No – not at all W	No – not at all W

Your Employment History and Other Skills

Please could you tell us about your main occupation or activity before you came to the UK? Please could you tick **ALL** that apply:

- | | YES |
|---|-----|
| 18a. Were you unemployed? (<i>looking for work but unable to find work</i>) | W |
| 18b. Were you in full-time paid employment? | W |
| 18c. Were you in part-time paid employment? | W |
| 18d. Were you self-employed? | W |
| 18e. Did you work for a family business? | W |
| 18f. Were you working as a volunteer? | W |

If you were unemployed and not working as a volunteer, please indicate which of the following best describes your previous occupation:

- | | YES |
|--|-----|
| 18g. Were you a student? | W |
| 18h. Were you looking after home and family? | W |
| 18i. Were you not working for a specific reason?
(<i>i.e. health problems or a disability, you were prevented from working, etc</i>). | W |
| 18j. Other | W |

If you have ticked yes to 18g, 18h, 18i and/or 18j, please elaborate and then move on to question 21:

.....
.....

19a. If you were in paid employment or working as a volunteer, what was your main job or occupation (*for example, job title*)?

.....

19b. Who did you work for? (*for example, the name of the company, organisation, etc*)

.....

19c. How long did you do this job? (*for example, from July 1993 to September 1997*)

From:

To:

19d. Could you please briefly describe what you did in this job? *(i.e. what skills and responsibility did you have? Were you responsible for managing any staff members? Did you develop any technical, management or other skills?)*

.....
.....

19e. Did you receive any training whilst in this job? *(i.e. further qualifications, apprenticeships?)*

Yes W No W

19f. If yes, please tell us about the subject area, the level of training and whether or not you obtained any certification.

.....
.....

20a. Did you have another job at the same time? *(two jobs at once)*

Yes W No W

20b. What was your secondary job or occupation *(for example, job title)?*

.....
.....

21. In the space below, could you please tell us briefly about any previous jobs or occupations that you have had before you came to the UK?

.....
.....

22. Could you please tell us about your main activities (employment or other) since you arrived in the UK?

Please could you tick **ALL** that apply:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| | YES |
| 22a. Are you unemployed? (<i>looking for work but unable to find work</i>) | W |
| 22b. Are you in full-time paid employment? | W |
| 22c. Are you in part-time paid employment? | W |
| 22d. Are you self-employed? | W |
| 22e. Do you work for a family business? | W |
| 22f. Are you working as a volunteer? | W |

If you are unemployed and not working as a volunteer, please indicate which of the following best describes your current occupation:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| | YES |
| 22g. Are you a student? | W |
| 22h. Are you looking after home and family? | W |
| 22i. Are you not working for a specific reason?
(<i>i.e. health problems or a disability</i>). | W |
| 22j. Other | W |

If you have ticked yes to 22g, 22h, 22i, and/or 22j, please elaborate and then move on to question 25:

.....

.....

23a. If you are currently employed or are working as a volunteer please could you tell us about your main job or occupation (*i.e. please tell us your job title*)?

.....

23b. Who do you work for? (*for example, the name of the company, organisation, etc.*)

.....

23c. How long have you done this job? (*for example, from July 1993 to September 1997*)

From: To:

23d. Is this a temporary job or a permanent job?

Temporary W Permanent W

23e. Could you please briefly describe what you do in this job? (*i.e. what skills and responsibility do you have? Are you responsible for managing any staff members? Are you developing any technical, management or other skills?*)

.....
.....
.....

23f. Are you receiving any training whilst in this job? (i.e. further qualifications, apprenticeships?)

Yes W No W

23g. If yes, please tell us about the subject area, the level of training and whether or not you will obtain any certification.

.....
.....
.....

24a. Do you have another job as well as this job? (two jobs at once)

Yes W No W

24b. If yes, what is your secondary job or occupation? (for example, job title)

.....

25. In the space below, could you please tell us briefly about any previous jobs or occupations that you have had in the UK?

.....
.....

26a. Do you (or have you) belonged to or participated in any groups, clubs or associations either here in the UK or in your country of origin? (For example, a sports club, a charity, an environmental or political group, a women's group, a music society?)

Yes W No W *If no, please go to question 27a*

26b. Please could you tell us what kind of group, club or association you have belonged (or currently belong) to?

.....
.....
26c. Please could you tell us about any skills or expertise that being a member of this group, club or association has given you? (for example, play a musical instrument, play a sport, organisational skills, campaigning and advocacy skills, etc...?).

.....
.....
Aspirations and hopes for the future

We would like to find out about how you feel about living in Scotland, and your present or most recent occupations whilst you have been in the UK. We would also like to find out about any other skills you have and we would also like to know about your hopes for the future.

27a. Are you happy with your present or most recent job or occupation, i.e. what you're doing at the moment?

Yes W No W

27b. What do you like or dislike about your present (or most recent) job or occupation?

.....
.....
28. If you are currently working (unpaid or paid), could you please tell us if you think that the work is appropriate for your skills and qualifications (this is not a question about how much you do or do not earn):

I think that this job is:

- 28a. at a much lower level than my skills and my qualifications** W
- 28b. at a slightly lower level than my skills and my qualifications** W
- 28c. it matches my skills and my qualifications** W
- 28d. at slightly higher level than my skills and my qualifications** W
- 28e. at a much higher level than my skills and my qualifications** W

29. If you have been unable to find a job that matches your skills and qualifications, could you please tell us what you think has prevented this from happening? (For example, you may have no copies of your certificates or qualifications; you may think you need to improve your language skills; you may not have been able to access further training; childcare; transport costs; discrimination, etc.)

.....
30. What would you like to do next? Please tick ALL that apply:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 30a. Find any job | W |
| 30b. Find a job that matches your skills and qualifications | W |
| 30c. Obtain further training to improve your skills and qualifications | W |
| 30d. Improve (if necessary) your English language skills (ESOL) | W |
| 30e. Volunteer to work in a local voluntary organisation | W |
| 30f. Obtain a work experience placement with a local company or organisation | W |
| 30g. Other (please elaborate in the space below) | W |
-

31a. Would you like to continue to stay in Scotland for the foreseeable future?

Yes W No W

31b. If NO, please can you tell us where you would like to go? (For example, another city in the UK? Another country?).

.....

32. What do you think would significantly improve your employment prospects and/or your ability to get the job you would like to do in Scotland?

.....

.....

.....

33. If you would like to tell us about anything else regarding living and working in Scotland, please tell us briefly in the space below.

.....

.....

.....

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

APPENDIX TWO METHODOLOGY

2.1 OUTLINE OF FIELDWORK PROCESS

The questionnaire delivery took place primarily in the SRC offices in Glasgow and respondents were accessed by drawing on those clients who used SRC services such as the One Stop Shop and various weekly advice drop-ins. The research team also travelled to colleges, careers guidance centres and other drop-in services run by churches and community centres around Glasgow. The gender balance in the research team enabled the fieldworkers to access women only resource centres and drop-ins also. A smaller number of questionnaires were delivered to service users in Edinburgh in the offices of the SRC and the Asylum Seeker's Response Unit, Edinburgh City Council (44 of the 523 questionnaires were completed in Edinburgh).

Depending on the context, the language skills and preference of the respondent, the questionnaire was administered via one of the following methods: through one-to-one, (where necessary with the help of an interpreter) or self-completed in groups with the researcher's support. Interpretation in Arabic, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Somali and Swahili was available on 9 of the research days in the SRC office in Glasgow. It took between 20 minutes and one hour to complete each questionnaire.

In colleges, contact was made first with the English Language Teaching units and then with individual class teachers who introduced the researchers to the refugees and asylum seekers in their classes. If all (or almost all) the students in a class were asylum seekers or refugees, teachers sometimes suggested doing the questionnaire in groups as part of the lesson, or making arrangements to regroup students across classes. In other cases small groups were asked if they would come out of the main class to complete the questionnaire. Most students were happy to participate although a few chose not to and a few had completed it already. College teachers were very helpful in giving support and assistance.

In drop-ins, the researchers made arrangements to visit during the weekly sessions. There tended to be more women than men in these settings. Arrangements were also made with other organisations, including the Asylum Seekers Response Unit in Edinburgh and Meridian, Glasgow North and the Gorbals Initiative, who kindly arranged for the researchers to meet their clients, both individually and in small groups. The outside agencies contacted showed considerable interest in the research.

Invitations to participate in the Audit were also mailed to all the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) clients in Edinburgh and to around fifty of those involved in the Framework for Dialogue project with the SRC in Glasgow. Invitation letters were also given out to over a hundred people attending a particular Framework for Dialogue event in Glasgow. The responses from these mailings were low, but the people accessed via this method were more likely to have been in Scotland for longer.

The research team were concerned to target a broad sample of respondents through different access points. However, it has not been possible to make the sample representative due to the lack of knowledge and comprehensive baseline data for refugees and asylum seekers living in Scotland. The sample includes people from a wide range of nationalities, although some nationalities are better represented than others, and has a fairly even gender balance.

However, a significantly higher proportion of those responding to the questionnaires were still in the process of claiming asylum than had already been granted leave to remain (refugee status, Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) or Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR)). The fact that questionnaires were delivered within working hours also limited the possibility of accessing people who were currently in employment. Further, by accessing people who were in colleges or using SRC services, we will have also been unable to access those refugees and asylum seekers who do not attend a college or visit the SRC. All questionnaires were delivered to people who were accessing refugee specific services.

2.2 MAINSTREAMING EQUALITY - WOMEN REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Scottish Executive's Equality Strategy promotes the concept of mainstreaming equality. This means that any future work undertaken should consider equality issues in design and practice. The Social Justice (Equalities) Research team is currently working on measures to facilitate social researchers at the Scottish Executive to mainstream equality considerations into the design and process of research. With this in mind, we felt it was important that measures to target and pick up the skills and qualifications of women refugees and asylum seekers were written into this project.

As previously referenced, the primary applicants of asylum seeking families who arrived in the country before July 2002 were entitled to apply for permission to work once they had been in the country for 6 months. Under this rule, dependants of the primary applicant were not allowed to work until the family had received a positive decision on its asylum claim. Because the principal applicant for asylum tends to be male, this has further implications for female partners. Women asylum seekers who arrived prior to July 2002 and are still awaiting a decision on their family's application, are not entitled to access work and/or training if they are not primary applicants. This means that whilst they wait for their partner's claim to be determined, their skills and qualifications continue to be unused and their possible training needs unmet. Further, men and women may use services in different ways depending on their individual situations. Had women not been purposefully targeted for inclusion in this Audit, it may have run a risk of missing out their skills, qualifications and aspirations.

The Mayor of London, in association with the Refugee Women's Association (RWA), recognised the specific issues faced by women refugees and asylum seekers in 2002 and commissioned a skills audit that was targeted at women refugees who had teaching, nursing and medical skills. Being mindful of the Scottish Executive's commitment to mainstreaming equality, and having been further alerted by this report to the need to target women for inclusion, it was decided at a very early stage in the project that measures should be taken to ensure that women refugees and asylum seekers were properly represented. By targeting women's drop-in centres and ensuring that women fieldworkers were available when appropriate, the Skills Audit managed to ensure that women constituted almost half of the participants.

2.3 RESPONSES IN THE FIELD

The research team found that the delivery of the questionnaire was sometimes challenging as many of the respondents who *did not* have permission to work, became frustrated and upset when the researchers asked questions about work in the UK and hopes for the future.

In the more formal office settings, there was sometimes a concern that the questionnaire delivery was giving people the impression that they *should be* working and, as such, respondents indicated that they would like to work even if they had previously indicated otherwise. This tendency for the respondent to tell the researcher what they thought s/he wanted to hear about work will have impacted to some extent on the reliability of the responses. We would hope however, that this tendency would have a minimal impact on the data.

A few people responded angrily to being questioned about work in the UK or what kinds of work they would like to do. Their anger was based in their circumstances and they emphasised that they did not come to this country for work, they came because they were forced to flee their own country.

2.4 RESEARCH TEAM'S EVALUATION ON FIELDWORK PROCESS

People responded to the research setting in differing ways. Responses differed according to whether questionnaires were delivered and facilitated by the researchers or whether they were self-completed. Although the questionnaires were usually completed more comprehensively when a researcher was giving guidance, respondent's comments were often freer in the self-completed questionnaires.

Some respondents appreciated the opportunity provided by the research project to share their experiences of work and education and reacted positively to the research. A few refugees and asylum seekers came to the SRC offices especially to complete the questionnaire, including a few who had travelled into Edinburgh from Fife. Others had agreed to make a special trip to the offices of the other organisations that assisted the research team.

Most respondents, however, responded neither positively or negatively to the research. The questionnaire often became part of an English class in the colleges, or part of another session in a Drop-In. Within the SRC offices in Glasgow, the field researchers felt that it was difficult to counter a sense of people feeling obliged to complete the questionnaire. They had usually come in to access other services and were asked whether they were happy to complete the questionnaire either whilst waiting to be seen by a caseworker or afterwards. This highlighted important ethical issues regarding consent in settings where there are external factors that can encourage a sense of obligation. These concerns were particularly prominent in the SRC offices in Glasgow.

It is impossible to get an accurate impression, but the field researchers felt that it was likely that some information was withheld by respondents, particularly with regards to working in the UK. Despite assurances of anonymity, the links to the SRC and the Scottish Executive inevitably gave an "official" face to the project, which did not easily foster trust and openness. In the context of a wider discourse both in political and media arenas concerning "bogus" asylum seekers and the confusions with economic migrants, this is perhaps unsurprising. The role of repeated questioning through the legal process of claiming asylum may also contribute to a general mistrust of questioning.

When conducting interviews through interpreters, there were instances when the interpreter attempted to guide responses from his or her own assumptions. This was particularly apparent in some cases when men were providing an interpretation service for women. In one instance, when the questionnaire had been conducted in English (but a few questions were then

clarified by an interpreter), the research team found that the respondent chose to disclose *less* information through an interpreter.

- *For further studies it may be worth exploring ways in which to access those people who have been in the country for longer and who have been given status in order to better understand the factors that have facilitated access to educational and employment opportunities.*
- *A longitudinal study may be useful in order to more clearly understand the barriers encountered by refugees in terms of getting into work after permission to work has been granted.*

APPENDIX THREE

A SUMMARY OF LEGAL STATUS AND ENTITLEMENTS

Refugee

Under the UN Convention of 1951, the term refugee refers to a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself [sic] of the protection of that country.”

In the UK, those who are recognised as refugees under the Convention are granted “Indefinite Leave to Remain” (ILR) in the country. Many people are deemed to fall outside this definition of a refugee however and were in the past granted “Exceptional Leave to Remain” (ELR) in the country for a limited period. This has now been replaced by “Humanitarian Protection” or “Discretionary Leave.” For the purposes of this report however, we refer to all those interviewed either as asylum seekers or refugees and do not distinguish between those with ELR/ILR except where relevant to the discussion.

Asylum Seekers

Before determination of their status, those people who seek refuge under the UN convention outside their country of nationality, are referred to as asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers arriving in the country after July 2002 are not allowed to work. They were previously allowed to apply for permission to work if they had been waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for 6 months or more. This concession was ended on 23rd July 2002. Those asylum seekers who were granted permission to work prior to July 2002 retain this right.

Asylum seekers are supported by the National Asylum Support Service and are not eligible for mainstream benefits, student support or hardship funds. They are, however, eligible for a fee waiver relating to Further Education, part-time and full-time ESOL courses, and may be eligible for help with travel costs and books (Scottish Refugee Council 2003).

Refugee status with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)

Refugees granted indefinite leave to remain have been recognised as meeting the definition of a refugee under the UN Convention by the government and have been granted permission to stay in the UK permanently.

They have equal rights to work and study as other UK citizens and are subject to course fees at the same rates as home students. Those with ILR are eligible for student support and hardship funds.

Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR)

ELR was a discretionary status granted by the Home Office up until 1st April 2003 when it was replaced by “Humanitarian Protection” or “Discretionary Leave.” It was granted to those applicants who fell outside the strict definition of a refugee under the UN Convention but still faced danger if they were to return home. ELR was granted for 12 months initially and was usually, but not always, extended to 4 years in total. Those granted ELR could apply for ILR after 4 years in the country.

Refugees granted ELR before April 2003 have the right to work in the UK and are eligible to attend higher education, subject to course fees at the same rates as UK students. They are also eligible for student support and hardship funds after 3 years residency in the UK.

Humanitarian Protection

Since April 2003 people who fail to qualify for ILR, but who can demonstrate that they need protection, are granted Humanitarian Protection. They will normally be given leave to remain in the UK for 3 years, during which time they are entitled to mainstream welfare benefits and are allowed to work. The same rules apply to people granted ELR with regards to studying.

Discretionary Leave

Since April 2003 Discretionary Leave is granted where applicants do not qualify for refugee status or Humanitarian Protection, but whom the government would not seek to remove due to legal or medical reasons. Those granted Discretionary Leave also have full access to mainstream welfare, employment and study during the period of discretion (normally 3 years).

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