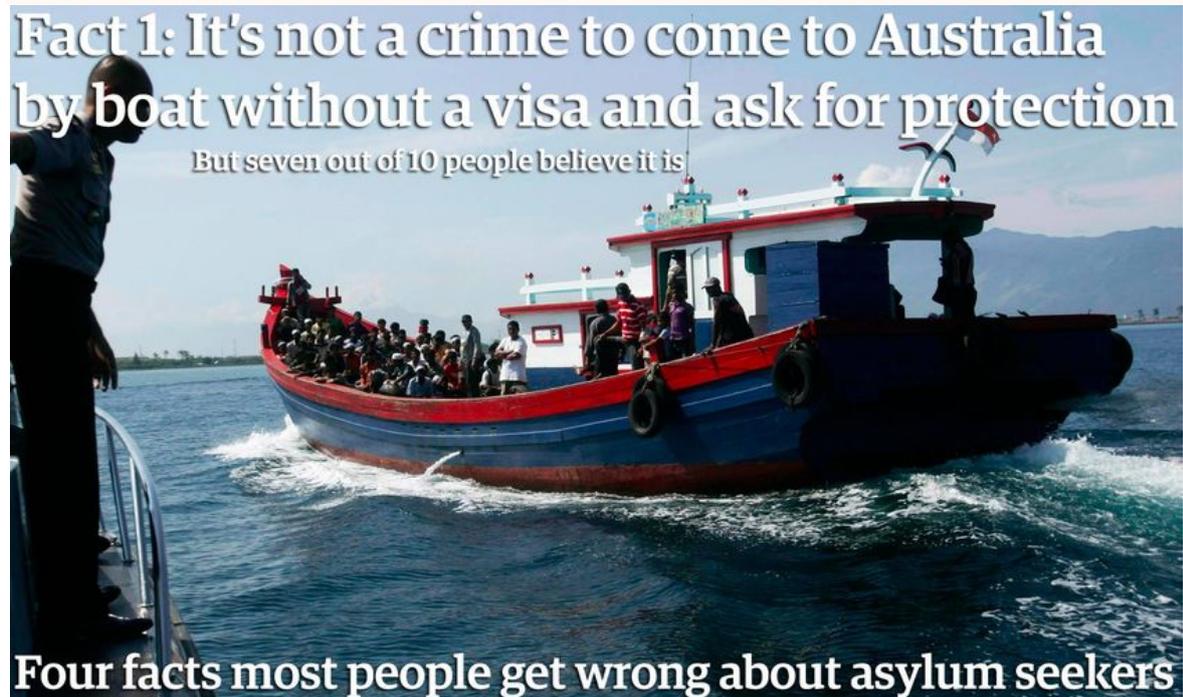


## Refugee Facts

*“They flee, simply because they want to live.”*



### **Fact 1: It's not a crime to come to Australia by boat without a visa and ask for protection**

But we found seven out of 10 people believe it is.

The truth is that it is not a crime to arrive here by boat without a valid visa and ask for protection. In our experience – in almost 100 years working with people affected by migration – those who do so often feel it is their only chance of finding a place where they'll be safe from persecution.

Nor is it illegal to flee persecution, to cross borders without documents or passports in order to seek asylum – people have been doing it for centuries. Everyone has the right to seek asylum from persecution, which is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Human rights are basic freedoms and protections that everyone's entitled to.

### **Fact 2: There's no official queue for people coming to Australia seeking a safe place to live**

But six out of 10 people think there is.

The United Nations process of resettling refugees in other safe countries doesn't operate like a queue. It's not a matter of lining up, waiting for your number to come up – this is not the supermarket deli counter. The resettlement system operates as a discretionary process, based on changing criteria. It's more like a lottery than it is like a queue.

If this mythical global queue did actually exist, based on the number of refugees there are in the world, people joining the end might wait 170 years to get to the front.

### **Fact 3: Only 1% of the world's refugees is likely to be given safe haven in any given year**

Our survey found six in 10 people don't know that.

Only a small group of countries offer resettlement through the UN system. Need consistently far exceeds supply and in any given year about 1% of the world's refugees is likely to be granted safe haven in another country – in fact the UN says fewer than 1% of refugees will ever get a resettlement place.

### **Fact 4: There are almost 18 million refugees and asylum seekers in the world**

According to the most recent statistics there are 16.7 million refugees and 1.2 million asylum seekers worldwide, most of whom are currently living in developing countries such as Pakistan and Iran.

But we found close to one-third of people reckon there's 80 million, more than four times as many as there actually are. And almost another quarter of people think there are 9 million, half the actual figure.

These four undeniable facts can help give context to any discussion on refugees and asylum – they provide scale and parameters for debate. It matters, because if some of these myths were dispelled we believe we would have a more compassionate, understanding, welcoming and stronger Australia.

We know from our decades and decades of experience working with vulnerable migrants that the vast majority of asylum seekers and refugees flee to escape persecution, torture and death – dangers inflicted on them because of their race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinions.

Some have seen their closest relatives and friends murdered, and their homes and villages burnt to the ground. They've suffered torture and their bodies, like their minds, are covered in scars that will never disappear. They are survivors. They come from all walks of life, rich and poor. They flee, simply, because they want to live.

This year for Refugee Week (14 to 20 June) we are taking on some of the myths and misconceptions that ultimately serve no one. The next time you find yourself in the midst of this debate if you don't recall anything else at least remember these four basic truths.

*\*Thanks to The Refugee Council of Australia and the United Nations High Commissioner for [Refugees](#) for the statistics and data referred to here.*