

Population and the economy past exam question

5. Study figure 5, which shows the Origins and Destinations of Refugees in 1998.

a. Describe and suggest reasons for the patterns shown . (10)

A refugee is "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 their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return"

The patterns shows on figure 5 are that the most refugees are from Afghanistan which had 2,633 thousand and Iraq which had around 500 thousand refugees in 1998.

The countries of origin which had the least number of refugees were China and the Yugoslavian Federation which both had around 100 thousand.

Reasons for the high numbers of refugees in Iraq are the Iran–Iraq War from 1980 to 1988 , the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the first Gulf War and subsequent conflicts . This war and political unrest which has taken place in Iraq has meant that many civilians have had to leave their homes in search of a safe place to leave for fear of persecution.

Afghanistan has also had a history of wars and political unrest which has caused it to have high numbers of refugees. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 through the early 1990's caused more than six million refugees.

Figure 5 also shows the top destinations of refugees, Iran has the highest numbers of refugees (nearly 2000 thousand).

This is because when there are wars or political problems in a country people generally go to close by countries to seek asylum . This is because they may not have the money to travel long distances and it is easier to go to neighbouring countries. Also neighbouring countries are usually quite accepting of immigrants from close by countries.

Iran borders both Iraq and Afghanistan so as a result of the Persian Gulf War (1990–91) Iran provided asylum for 1,400,000 Iraqi refugees .Also the Afghan War (1978–92) caused more than six million refugees to flee to the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran.

b. Examine the costs and benefits to countries that accept refugees and asylum seekers. (15)

There are many costs and benefits that refugees and asylum seekers provide for the countries they go to.

Until a request for refuge has been accepted, the person is referred to as an asylum seeker. Only after the recognition of the asylum seeker's protection needs, he or she is officially referred to as a refugee and has refugee status, which carries certain rights and obligations according to the legislation of the receiving country. The determination of whether a person is a refugee or not, is decided by certain government agencies within the country. This means that a country which accepts refugees needs to employ people to determine their status and house them. This process can be long and expensive for the government. In total 103,080 men, women and children applied for asylum in the UK in 2002. The Home Office estimated that it spent around £1.7 billion in 2002-3 on immigration costs.

The asylum application can take months to process and refugees are not allowed to work and are refused benefits and accommodation. Some have little alternative but to enter the world of illegal employment. This means that crime is increased causing problems for the police service and the asylum seeker authorities.

Another cost for countries that accept refugees and asylum seekers for example the UK is that once they have asylum seeker status they can claim benefits like any other UK citizen. This means that more social housing will be needed as well as more health care facilities. This can lead to overcrowding of basic services. Also many asylum seeker's first language is not English so translation costs English lessons have to be paid for.

The Iranian Government has said that the half-million refugees who have temporary visas or who are here illegally will be forced to move to camps on the border in April. From there, the Government says, they will be "encouraged to return" to Afghanistan. "We no longer have the money to help the refugees," said Ahmad Husseini, director of the Bureau of Foreign Nationals at the Interior Ministry. "They have cost us \$2 million a day in direct assistance and subsidies. Accepting millions of refugees into our country has brought us no benefit, only damage and loss of security. Starting this spring, they will have to leave the country."

However there are also benefits of countries accepting refugees and asylum seekers. Many asylum seekers have skills that are required and they can work and in turn benefit the national economy.

Also many refugees and asylum seekers are willing to do jobs that the majority of the local population do not want to do for example cleaning and manual labour. In addition they are willing to work for less money so companies want to employ them as their profits will be increased. This in turn

will again benefit the economy if businesses are doing well. In 1999-2000 the home office estimated that refugees and asylum seekers contributed 2.5 billion to the economy.

Another benefit for countries accepting refugees and asylum seekers is that their cultures are enriched and become more diverse.

Most countries which accept refugees and asylum seekers have quota which limits the amount which can enter each year. Countries have to balance the costs and benefits of having asylum seekers and refugees. I think that the benefits outweigh the costs.