

YOUR FREE SOCIOLOGY REVIEW UPDATE

# The Calais 'Jungle'



What is it? Who lives there?

Why should we be concerned about it?

**Joan Garrod** investigates

**T**he Calais 'Jungle' is an area of approximately 1.5 square miles of scrubland to the north of Calais, near the port and Eurotunnel entrance. It is currently home to around 10,000 asylum-seekers and refugees. They live in squalid conditions in makeshift accommodation, and there is no electricity or plumbing.

## From refugee centre to illegal settlement

The area was opened in 1999 as the Sangatte refugee centre. Sangatte was closed 2 years later by Nicolas Sarkozy, then minister of the interior. However, people

continued to arrive. Amid growing concerns in France and elsewhere about levels of immigration, half the camp was levelled in May 2016, though numbers continued to grow. Britain and France have declared the Jungle an 'illicit migrant settlement', rather than a refugee camp, so there are no UN relief organisations there. The only help comes from donations and volunteer aid-workers.

## Unaccompanied children

While the actual number of people in the Jungle is disputed, what is accepted is that it is home to many unaccompanied children, some as young as 8. It is estimated that there are more than 1,000 such children in the camp — an increase of about 50% since August 2016, with more arriving every day.



Immigration is likely to be a key issue in next spring's French presidential election campaigns (as it was in the UK's referendum on EU membership), so politicians are keen to be seen taking a hard stance on the matter. President Hollande announced that the camp will be demolished by the end of 2016. Adults and families will be offered places in one of 164 centres to be opened throughout France, but nothing is being offered to unaccompanied children, who will be left to fend for themselves.

## Where do they come from, and why Calais?

The majority of those in the Jungle have fled war-torn countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. They represent a small proportion of the 65 million people worldwide who have been displaced from their homes by war — the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War. They travel to Calais in the hope that they will gain entry to the UK. Adults and children risk their lives every night trying to cross the Channel.

There is a widely held belief that the UK is a more generous and welcoming destination than France, reinforced by the increasingly violent confrontations between migrants and French police. Many children have a legal right to settle in the UK as they have relatives here, but the verification process is slow.



The Jungle is home to more than 1,000 unaccompanied children

Despite David Cameron's promise that Britain would accept 3,000 unaccompanied minors, aid-workers see little progress and fear that people will continue to take risks to try to reach the UK.

## Questions

- 1 Explain the difference between 'push' and 'pull' factors in immigration, and identify both 'push' and 'pull' factors in the arrival of refugees in Calais.
- 2 Suggest some reasons why immigration has become an important political issue in many countries, especially in Western Europe.
- 3 Why should those seeking to come to the UK believe that they would get a better life here than elsewhere?
- 4 Should Western governments have a duty to protect and care for unaccompanied minors? How might this be funded?
- 5 How might the concept of 'globalisation' be helpful in discussing the crisis in Calais?
- 6 Suggest some advantages and disadvantages of dispersing adults and families to 'reception camps' throughout France.

## Weblinks to follow up

A *Guardian* report on the planned demolition of the Jungle: [www.tinyurl.com/z3ben6x](http://www.tinyurl.com/z3ben6x)

The *International Business Times* reports on provisions for unaccompanied children currently living in the camp: [www.tinyurl.com/hrmm2yg](http://www.tinyurl.com/hrmm2yg)

*Time* magazine tells the story of Sameer, an Afghan boy who escaped the Taliban and wants to live in the UK: [www.tinyurl.com/huv6h42](http://www.tinyurl.com/huv6h42)

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