

country asylum. because they are unable to return home. political reasons. He applied for asylum fleeing the police back home.

**asylum seeker, asylum seeker** is a person who is trying to enter a foreign country. Fewer than 7% of asylum seekers are accepted.

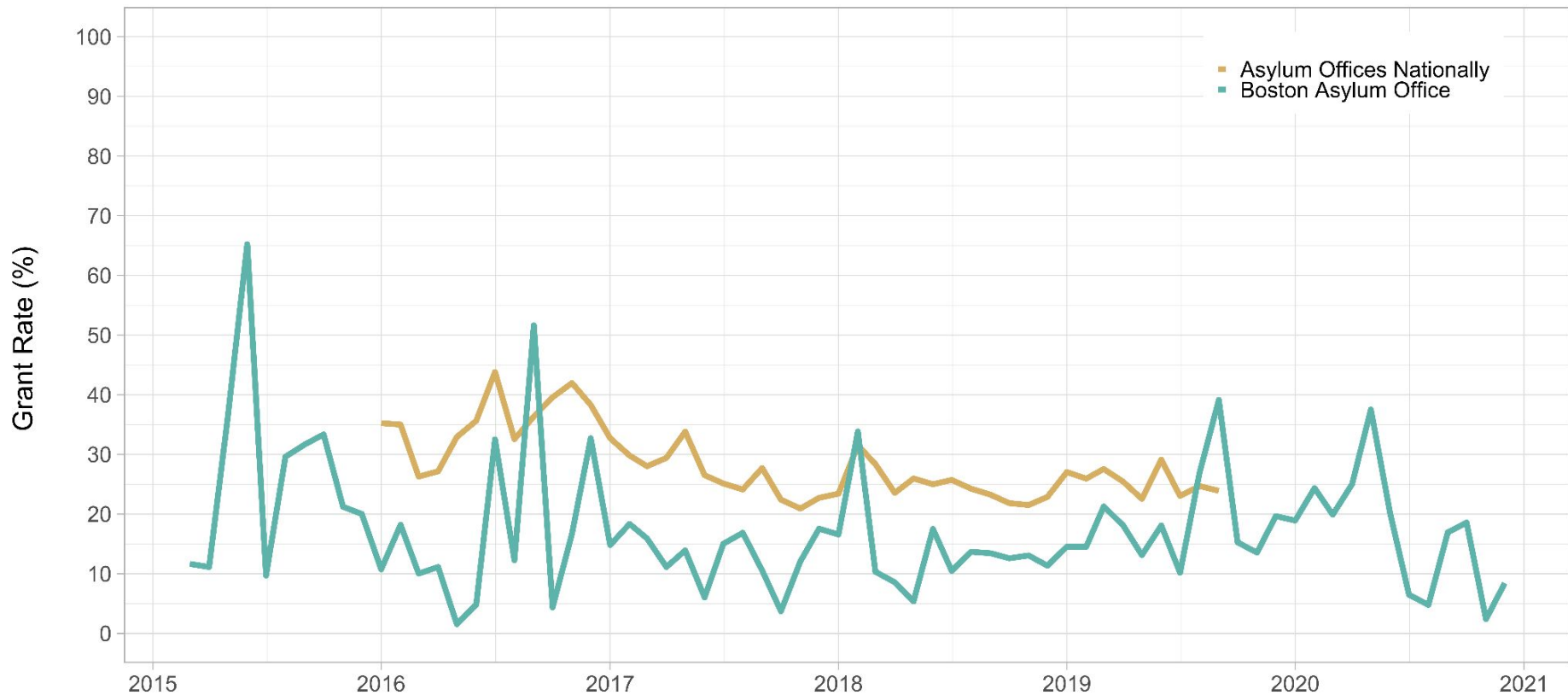
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## **Lives in Limbo:** How the Boston Asylum Office Fails Asylum Seekers

# Methods

- Interviews
  - Asylees (78)
  - Immigration attorneys (19)
  - Former asylum officers & supervisory asylum officers (5)
- Analysis of asylum application databases
  - 25,634 applications filed with Boston Asylum Office
  - 105,235 applications filed with Newark Asylum Office
- Review of 6,121 pages released through litigation of FOIA request

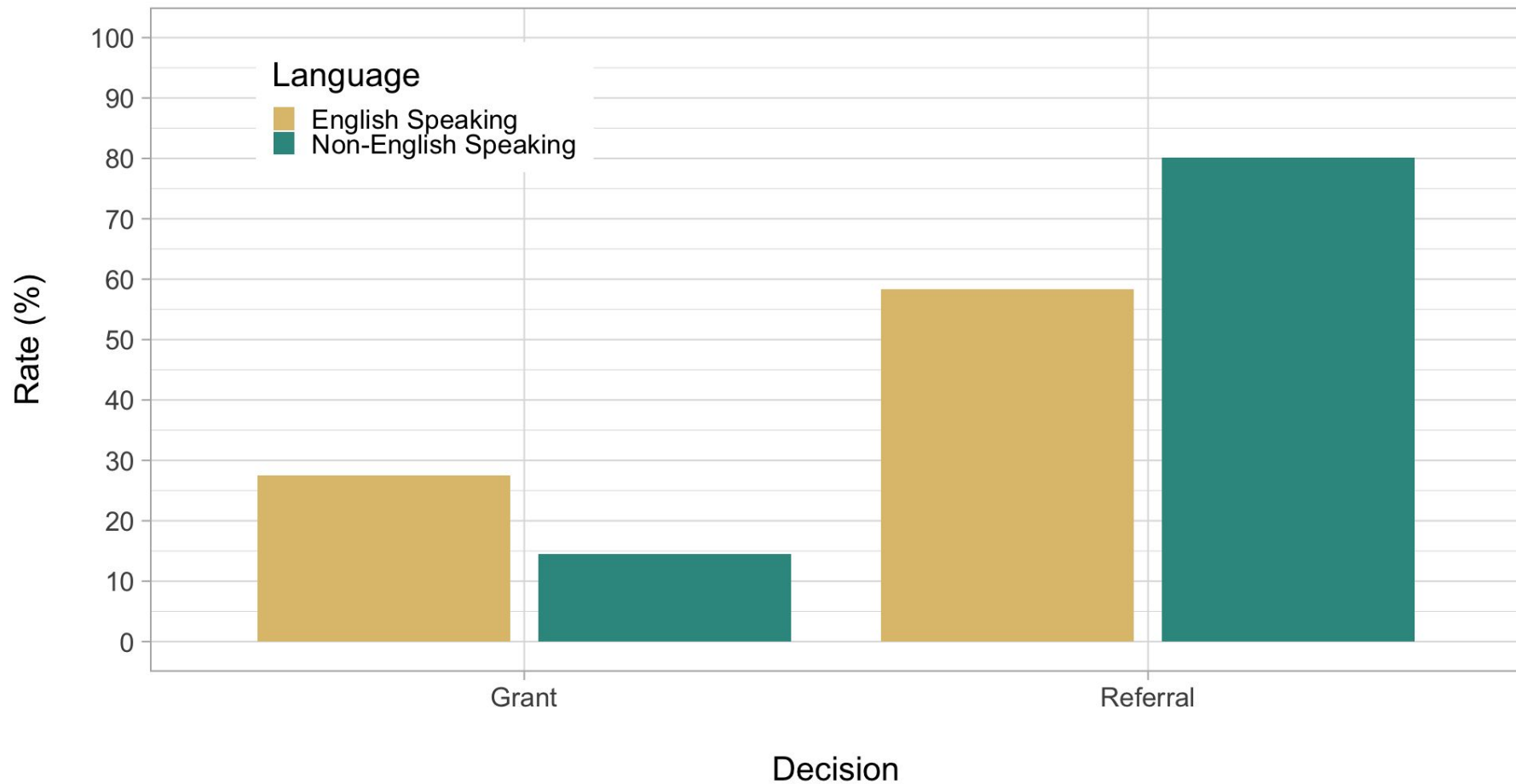
Figure 1: Boston Asylum Office Grant Rate is Continuously Below National Average



**Table 2: Grant and Referral Rates by Asylum Seeker's Country of Citizenship**

Country of Citizenship	Boston Asylum Office		Newark Asylum Office	
	Total Decisions	Grant Rate	Total Decisions	Grant Rate
Angola	253	2%	75	17%
Democratic Republic of Congo	163	4%	141	33%
El Salvador	1539	13%	4386	25%
Rwanda	86	20%	17	35%
Uganda	469	21%	87	38%
Burundi	53	26%	24	83%
Syria	32	34%	221	67%
Egypt	151	44%	1593	72%
Cameroon	64	48%	217	44%
Afghanistan	17	59%	32	50%
Turkey	167	59%	1666	86%
Iran	29	69%	71	58%

Figure 2: English Speakers Fare Better Than Non-English Speakers



# Summary of Findings

The Boston Asylum Office is dominated by a culture of suspicion and distrust toward asylum seekers

Pressures from time constraints and caseloads incentivize asylum officers to cut corners

Burnout and compassion fatigue negatively affect how asylum officers approach asylum cases

Asylum officers place an inordinate focus on credibility and immaterials details to find inconsistencies that lead to denials or referrals

# Key Recommendations

1. The U.S. Government Accountability Office should investigate the Boston Asylum Office and replace asylum officers and supervisory asylum officers who demonstrate bias or lack of cultural literacy.
2. Ensure a neutral and non-adversarial asylum decision-making process by mitigating the outsized control that supervisory asylum officers have over asylum officer decision making.
3. Increase transparency in asylum office interviews by creating audio recordings of the asylum interviews and making the recordings readily available to applicants and attorneys.

# Key Recommendations

4. Limit asylum officers' adjudication requirements to one asylum interview per day, which would provide asylum officers with additional time to more thoroughly complete their job duties and comply with the due process requirements of federal and international law.
5. Implement rigorous hiring standards that focus on hiring asylum officers and supervisory asylum officers with language skills and cultural literacy and, once hired, provide asylum officers with support through mentorships and employee wellness programs.
6. Improve trainings by focusing on implicit bias and racism, particularly on how implicit biases operate and how to mitigate bias.



# Since Publishing the Report

- Press Release & Media Response
- Lawmakers calling for an investigation
- Our report as a model to investigate other offices

