



National Audit Office

An Overview of the
Home Office
for the new Parliament 2023-24

October 2024

OVERVIEW

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1 Introduction to the National Audit Office

Welcome to our Overview of the Home Office 2023-24, part of our series of Overviews for the new Parliament, covering government departments and cross-cutting issues.

The National Audit Office is the UK's independent public spending watchdog and is responsible for scrutinising public spending for Parliament. We audit the financial accounts of all departments, executive agencies, arm's-length bodies, some companies and charities, and other public bodies. We also examine and report on the value for money of how public money has been spent.

The NAO is independent of government and the civil service. The NAO's wide remit and unique access rights enables us to investigate whether taxpayers' money is being spent in line with Parliament's intention and to respond to concerns where value for money may be at risk.

We support all Members of Parliament to hold government to account and we use our insights to help those who manage and govern public bodies improve public services. In 2023, the NAO's work led to a positive financial impact through reduced costs, improved service delivery, or other benefits to citizens, of £1.59 billion.

We are funded by, and accountable to, Parliament. As an Officer of the House of Commons, I am committed to ensuring that we support you and your staff in your work as a Member of Parliament, and your scrutiny of public spending and performance.

Our dedicated Parliamentary team can offer you support and put you in touch with our experts on subjects of interest to you and your constituents. If you would like more information about our work, or to arrange a briefing with me or one of my teams, please contact our Parliamentary Relations team at parliament@nao.org.uk.



Gareth Davies

COMPTROLLER & AUDITOR GENERAL
NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE

Gareth Davies was appointed Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) in June 2019. He was appointed by the Monarch, following the approval of the House of Commons.

The C&AG has statutory authority to examine and to report directly to Parliament on whether government departments and other public sector bodies have spent taxpayers' money in the way Parliament intended. The C&AG and his staff are totally independent of government.

Gareth is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. He is a non-executive Board member of the INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI), which supports Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in developing countries to sustainably enhance their performance and capacity.

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2 How the NAO can help you as a Member of Parliament

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How we support Parliament

We produce reports:

- on the annual accounts of government departments and their agencies;
- on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which government has spent public money; and
- to establish the facts where there are concerns about public spending issues.

We do not question government policy objectives. We look at how government has spent money delivering those policies and if that money has been used in the best way to achieve the intended outcome.

What we can offer

Through our website or our Parliamentary Relations team, MPs, peers and staff can:

- request a personal briefing on areas of our work that are of interest to them;
- sign up to receive embargoed copies of our reports on subjects of interest;
- make general queries about public spending, or raise concerns with us about value for money; and
- request advice on understanding and scrutinising departments' annual reports and accounts.

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- **Reports:** Reviews of public spending and how well government is delivering.
- **Insights:** Learning and best practice to help people across government and the wider public sector.
- **Overviews:** Factual overviews of government departments, sectors and services.
- **Work in progress:** Our schedule of future publications.
- **Briefings:** Background information and factual analysis to support Select Committees.

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- Via our Parliamentary email inbox: parliament@nao.org.uk.



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Reporting to Parliament on the value for money of how public money has been spent and what has been achieved



Sending you embargoed copies of our reports before they are available to the public



Providing briefings to you or a member of your team on our work



Providing advice and training on examining government departments' annual reports and accounts



Giving evidence to Select Committees



Our fortnightly newsletter with our latest reports and new work



You can write to us with any queries or concerns about the misuse of public money or behaviour in public bodies we audit

3 About this Overview

This report has been produced to provide an introduction to the Home Office and the NAO's examination of its spending and performance.

It is intended to support the Home Affairs Committee and Members across the House in their examinations of the Home Office.

It summarises the key information and insights that can be gained from our work on the Home Office and related bodies in the sector in England and from the Home Office's Annual Report and Accounts. The Home Office spent nearly **£28 billion last year** in pursuit of its objectives to keep UK citizens safe and our borders secure by reducing crime, strengthening homeland security, enabling the legitimate movement of people and goods, and tackling illegal migration.

The report includes:

- how the Home Office is structured, where it spends its money and information about its people;
- risks identified in the C&AG's audit;
- the Home Office's key priority outcomes;
- information on the Home Office's major programmes;
- challenges facing the Home Office this Parliament; and
- where to find more information about the Home Office.

This Overview updates our previous publication, [Home Office Departmental Overview 2022-23](#), published in October 2023.

How we have prepared this report

The information in this report draws on the findings and recommendations from our financial audit and value for money work, and from publicly available sources, including the annual report and accounts of the Home Office and its bodies.

We have cited these sources throughout the guide to enable readers to seek further information if required. Where analysis has been taken directly from our value-for-money or other reports, details of our

audit approach can be found in the Appendix of each report, including any evaluative criteria and the evidence base used.

Other analysis in the guide has been directly drawn from publicly available data and includes the relevant source as well as any appropriate notes to help the reader understand our analysis.

Other relevant publications

More information about our work on the Home Office, as well as information about our other recent and upcoming reports can be found on the [NAO website](#).



4 About the Home Office

The Home Office states that its vision is for a “safe, fair and prosperous” UK. Its performance and activities are detailed in the latest [Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024](#), published on 30 July 2024.

Priority outcome	Summary of the Home Office’s description of achievements in 2023-24	
1 Reduce crime	The Home Office aims to enhance public safety by supporting the police, with serious violence reducing by 25% and neighbourhood crime by 24% for the year ending September 2023, relative to the year ending December 2019 (see sections 15 and 16). Since April 2022, the Home Office closed more than 2,500 county lines to tackle the supply of drugs. In 2023, the Home Office reported progress in implementing the Anti-Social Behaviour Plan and took steps to improve the police response to violence against women and girls, for example by increasing the number of adult rape cases referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).	The number of adult rape cases referred by the police to the CPS between October and December 2023 increased by 210% compared with the 2019 quarterly average, when the Rape Review was published. In December 2023, the Home Office published a new Serious and Organised Crime strategy that set out the government’s aim to reduce serious and organised crime.
2 Strengthen homeland security	To reduce national security risks to the UK, the Home Office developed new strategies, including the Cross-Government Counter-Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST 2023) and Fraud Strategy, which set out the government’s aim to cut fraud by 10% from 2019 levels (see section 16). The Home Office reported a reduction of 13% in fraud for the year ending September 2023, compared with the year ending December 2019.	The Home Office also delivered changes to key legislation with the National Security Act 2023 and introduced reforms following the independent review of Prevent, the national programme aimed at stopping individuals from becoming involved in terrorism or extremist ideologies. The Home Office completed 30 of the 34 recommendations in full. It also enhanced its capabilities and infrastructure through the Counter Terrorism Operations Centre, which will be fully operational by 2025.
3 Legal migration and the border	In 2023, the Home Office met its performance targets with 95% of passengers crossing the border within the service level agreement, despite a significant increase in travellers (see section 13).	Through the Home Office’s Future Border and Immigration System Programme, it expanded the Electronic Travel Authorisation scheme to new countries. In 2023, the Border Force prevented £527 million in lost revenue from duty on alcohol and tobacco products, a 14% increase from 2022.
4 Tackle illegal migration, remove those with no right to be here, and protect the vulnerable	The Home Office increased its efforts to reduce the number of people arriving via small boats and strengthened its collaboration with France to tackle small boats, supported by around £475 million of UK funding, approximately £120 million in 2023-24. In 2023, the Home Office said it made changes to improve productivity and tripled the number of asylum applications it processed (see section 11).	The Home Office fully closed 109 hotels to house people seeking asylum (see section 12). Immigration Enforcement increased the number of visits to combat illegal working by 50%, and made 6,393 enforced returns and 19,253 voluntary returns, an increase of 66% and 76% from 2022 respectively.

Note

1 Since publishing the Outcome Delivery Plan 2021 to 2022, the Home Office told us it has revised its outcome titles. The outcome titles included here are taken from the Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024*, published in July 2024.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office, *Outcome Delivery Plan, 2021 to 2022* and Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024*

5 How the Home Office is structured

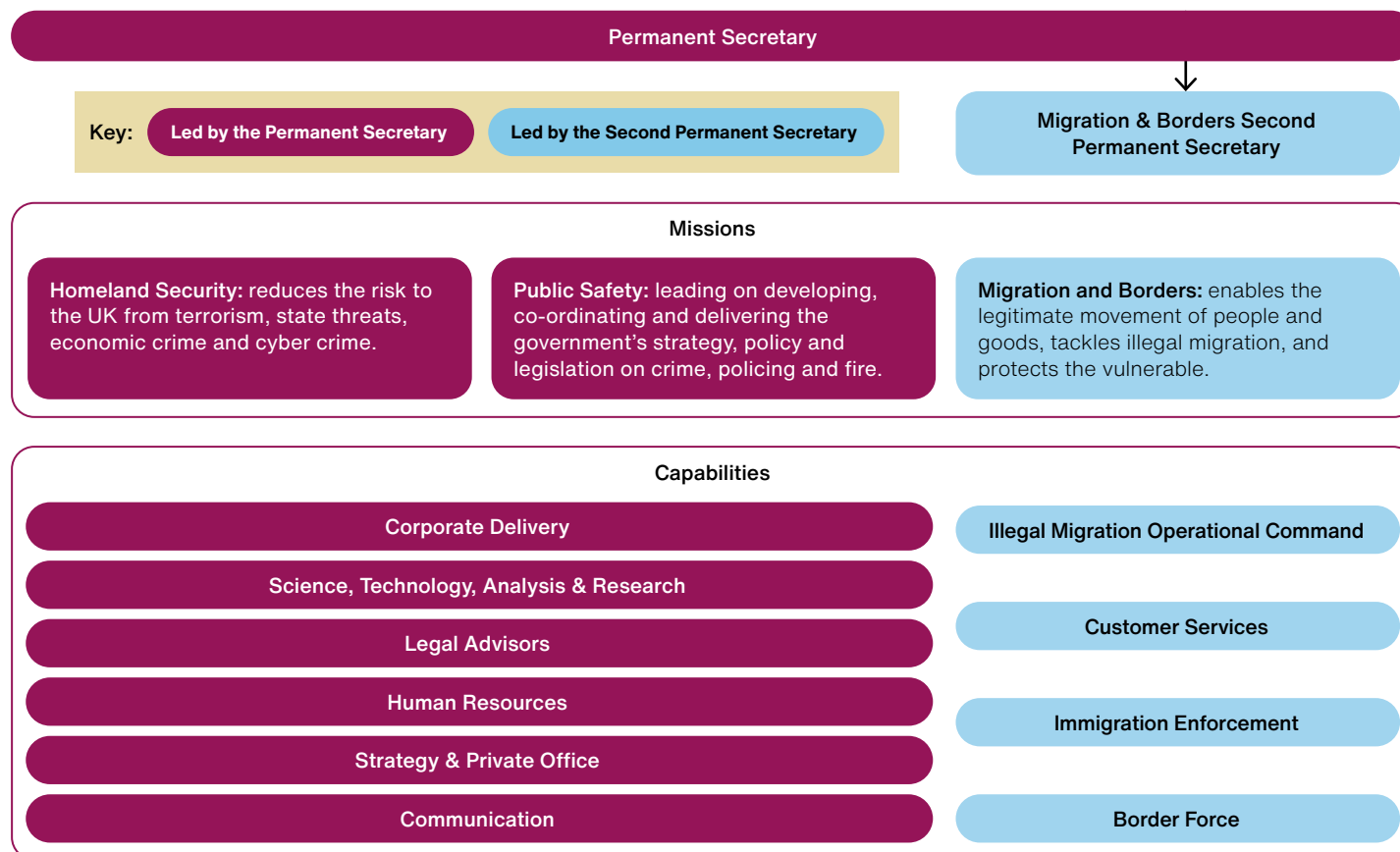
In April 2021, in response to the [2018 Windrush Lessons Learned Review by Wendy Williams](#), and wider civil service modernisation, the Home Office started a transformation programme called 'One Home Office'. It aimed to create clearer roles and responsibilities, a shared sense of priorities, an increased focus on service delivery and a more inclusive organisation. At the end of 2023-24, the Home Office had three 'Missions' – groups that are responsible for leading the delivery of its priority outcomes – underpinned by 10 'Capabilities' teams that help the Home Office deliver services. The three Missions are as follows:

- **Public Safety Mission:** Leads on developing, co-ordinating and delivering the government's strategy, policy and legislation on crime, policing and fire.
- **Homeland Security Mission:** Reduces the risk to the UK from terrorism, state threats, economic crime and cyber crime.
- **Migration and Borders Mission:** Enables the legitimate movement of people and goods, tackles illegal migration and protects the vulnerable.

The Home Office's structure has changed again since the end of March 2024. These changes include the dissolution of the Illegal Migration Operational Command and the introduction of the new Border Security Command, announced by the Home Secretary in July 2024 (see sections 14 and 19).

Home Office structure as of March 2024

As of March 2024, the Home Office had three groups responsible for leading the delivery of its priority outcomes ('Missions') and 10 teams that help the Home Office deliver services ('Capabilities')



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024*

6 Where the Home Office spends its money

In 2023-24, the Home Office spent a net £2.8 billion more than the previous year. Its total spending increased by £3.2 billion (13%) and total income increased by £0.4 billion (7%).

The largest increases in spending and income were:

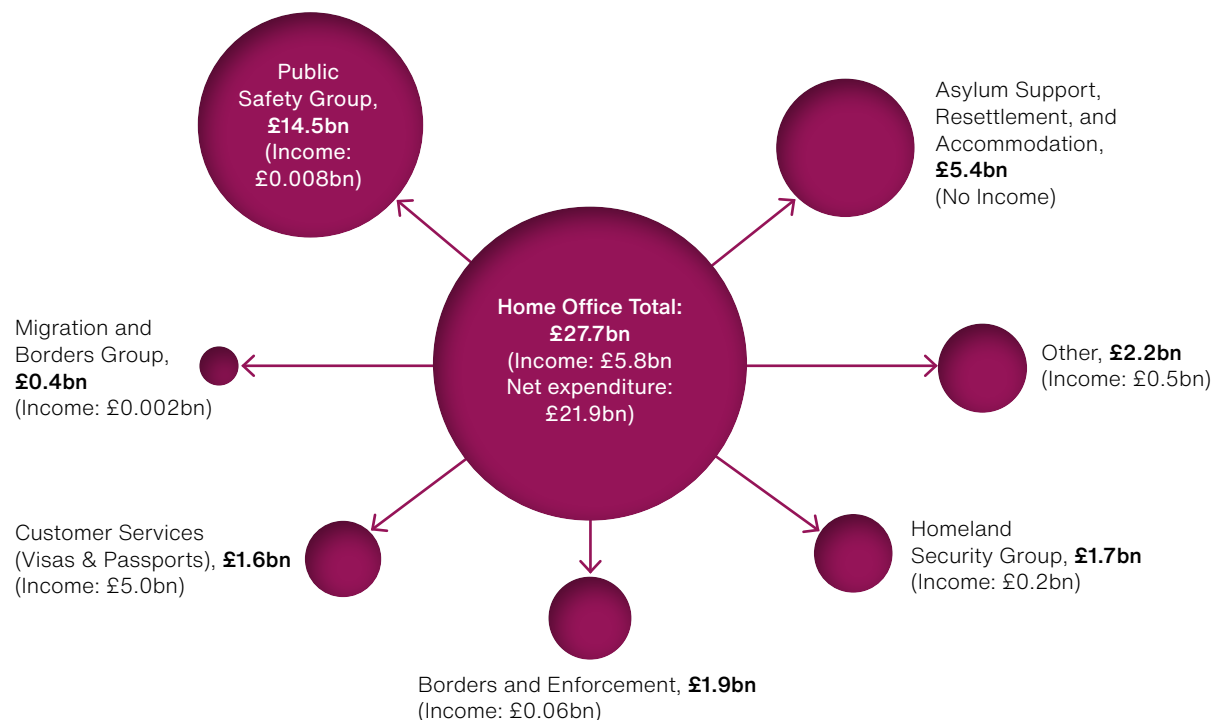
The Asylum Support, Resettlement and Accommodation group, which spent £5.4 billion, £1.1 billion (26%) more than in 2022-23. This was due to the Home Office using hotels as contingency accommodation which increased asylum support costs.

The Public Safety Group, which spent £14.5 billion, £1.1 billion (8%) more than 2022-23. This was, in part due to additional police and fire pension costs in that year and national policing priorities.

Income from 'Customer Services' of £5 billion, an increase of £0.5 billion (10%) relating to fees from visas and passport applications.

Home Office departmental group gross expenditure, 2023-24

In 2023-24, the Home Office spent £27.7 billion and received income of £5.8 billion



Notes

- This figure includes income and expenditure for the Home Office departmental group, which includes the core Department and six arm's-length bodies.
- 'Other' includes: 'Illegal Migration Operational Command', 'Corporate & Delivery', 'Science, Technology, Analysis and Research', 'Legal Advisors', 'Human Resources', 'Strategy and Private Office' and 'Communications'.
- The Public Safety Group spend includes the main police grant of £9.2 billion.
- Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Note Two of Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024*

7 Spending patterns within the Home Office

The Home Office required additional funding of **£5.3 billion during 2023-24. This was to meet additional asylum support costs, and additional costs for policing and Border and Enforcement.**

Home Office spend on asylum support in 2023-24

In 2023-24, the Home Office spent £4.7 billion on asylum support, of which £3 billion was spent on housing people seeking asylum in hotels – an average of £8 million per day. This is compared to a total of £3.6 billion spent on asylum support in 2022-23, of which £2.2 billion was spent on hotels.

The Spending Review settlement in 2021 was recognised as insufficient to support those currently in the asylum system. HM Treasury agreed to additional funds of £1.5 billion as part of the 2024-25 Main Estimate. In the Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24, the Home Office had an approved budget of £2 billion for asylum support and resettlement for 2024-25, which is £3.4 billion less than it spent in 2023-24. This budget is being reviewed in the forthcoming autumn Spending Review, and as in recent years, the Home Office may also request additional funding from Parliament through the Supplementary Estimates process.

Future funding pressures

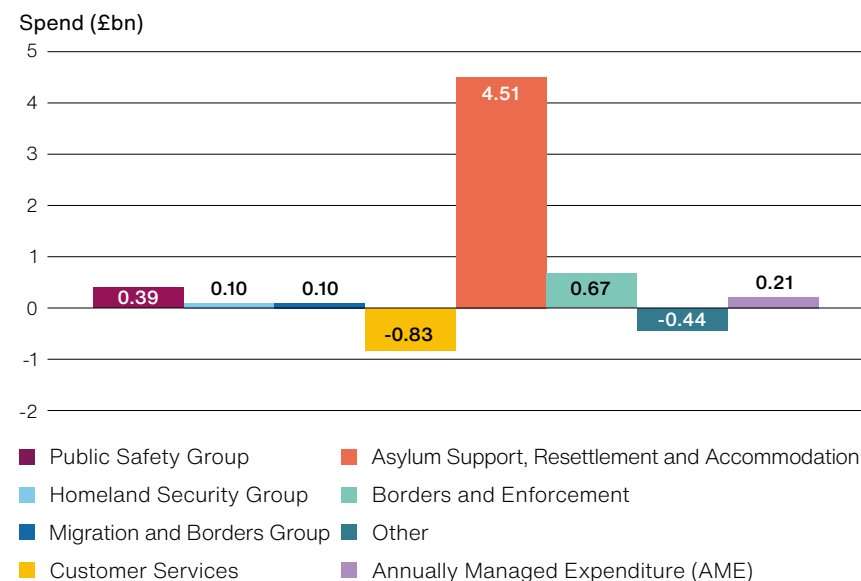
The Home Office faces significant funding pressures in 2024-25. Its approved net resource funding from Parliament of £18.8 billion is unlikely to be sufficient to meet in-year costs. It also faces upward pressures on the police grants from pay awards and increased pension costs.

£4.5 billion

The Asylum Support, Resettlement and Accommodation Group spent **£4.5 billion more** than its original plan due to the Home Office using hotels as contingency accommodation, which has driven a significant increase in asylum support costs.

Home Office spend by business area in 2023-24 compared to original plans

The Home Office spent around £4.5 billion more on asylum support than forecasted in 2023-24



Notes

- Data are comparing the 2023-24 outturn with the 2023-24 original plans, as seen in the Annual Reports and Accounts.
- 'Other' includes 'Strategy', 'Science, Technology, Analysis, Research and Strategy', 'Strategic Operations for illegal migration', 'Corporate & Delivery', 'Digital, Data, Technology', 'Legal', 'Communications', 'Arm's-length bodies (Net)', and 'Departmental Unallocated Provision (DUP)'.
- Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) is any spend that is unpredictable or not easily controlled by the Home Office.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Annex B of Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024*

8 Significant risks identified in the C&AG's audit of the Home Office's 2023-24 financial statements

The Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) gave an unqualified opinion on the financial statements of the Home Office for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Significant risks	Key observations
<p>The Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda</p> <p>During 2023-24, the Home Office paid £100 million to the Government of Rwanda as part of the Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP). In view of questions about regularity of expenditure and the level of public interest in this policy, any disclosures in its respect in the 2023-24 annual report and accounts would be of particular significance.</p>	<p>We were satisfied that expenditure on this policy was regular.¹ The current government has confirmed that it will terminate the partnership with Rwanda and any spend to date on the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda may be treated as a constructive loss.² The Home Office will confirm the value of any loss in its 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts. To date the Home Office has paid a total of £290 million directly to the Government of Rwanda.</p>
<p>Asset Clearing Account</p> <p>The Home Office initially records individual items of capital spend in an 'Asset Clearing Account' before this spend is reviewed and recognised as a non-current asset if meeting the criteria for capitalisation. At year-end, the Home Office also calculates an estimate of depreciation to be applied to the Asset Clearing Account. This estimation process increases the risk associated with the resulting numbers in the financial statements.</p>	<p>The closing balance on the Asset Clearing Account at 31 March 2024 was £695 million (£694 million at 31 March 2023).</p> <p>Audit testing in this area did not identify any material misstatements.</p>
<p>Accounting for accruals</p> <p>The value of the Home Office's year-end accruals increased substantially between 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2024, from £2,533 million to £3,439 million, driven by large increases in fire and police service pensions accruals and delays in local authorities reclaiming asylum-related costs from the Home Office. We considered there was a heightened audit risk around accruals because of the additional complexities around estimating pension liabilities and because, in prior audits, the Home Office struggled to provide sufficient appropriate evidence to support some accruals.</p>	<p>Our audit testing in this area did not identify any material misstatements.</p>

Notes

- 1 Regularity, as defined in the HM Treasury guidance *Managing Public Money* is "compliant with relevant legislation and wider legal practices".
- 2 *Managing Public Money* defines a constructive loss as a loss where the procurement action itself caused the loss, for example where an item was correctly ordered but was no longer required due to a change in policy.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024*

9 Home Office staffing

Changes in Home Office staffing

In 2023-24, the Home Office spent £2.8 billion on wages and salaries, social security costs and pension contributions for around 50,900 staff (full-time equivalent) in the core department and non-departmental public bodies.^{1,2} This is approximately a 14% change in staff from 2022-23 due to:

- an increase of 800 staff in 'Illegal Migration Operational Command' to support the implementation of the Illegal Migration Act;
- increases of more than 1,800 staff in Border Force and Immigration Enforcement;
- an increase of 6,700 people in Customer Services (Visas and Passports), which includes temporary staff and retaining agency staff to manage an increased workload due to the volume and complexity of immigration cases; and
- a decrease of more than 3,600 staff in Asylum Support, Resettlement and Accommodation.

In 2023-24, five members of the Home Office's 14-person executive leadership team left and were replaced. The Home Office also appointed a new Second Permanent Secretary in April 2023.

1 The Home Office's non-departmental public bodies are: Disclosure and Barring Service; Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority; Independent Office for Police Conduct; Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner; and Security Industry Authority.

2 The data used is of the average number of full-time equivalent persons employed by the Home Office in 2023-24, which includes permanently employed staff and 'others', for example consultants.

Section 9: Home Office staffing *continued*

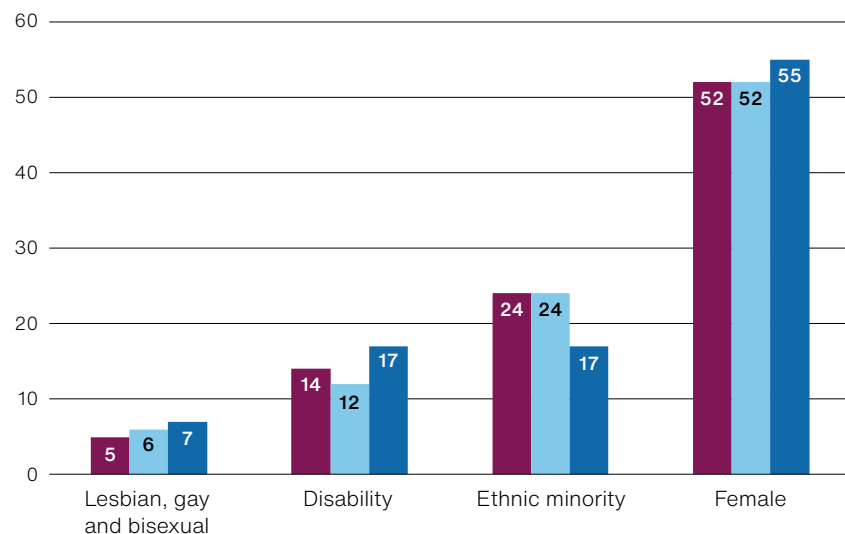
Diversity and inclusion

The Home Office has eight diversity targets. It set diversity and inclusion targets across four categories, including for senior civil servants. It met seven of these but missed its ethnicity target for senior civil servants.

Diversity and inclusion at the Home Office: all staff

The Home Office set diversity and inclusion targets across four categories and met all but one of its targets

Percentage of all staff (%)

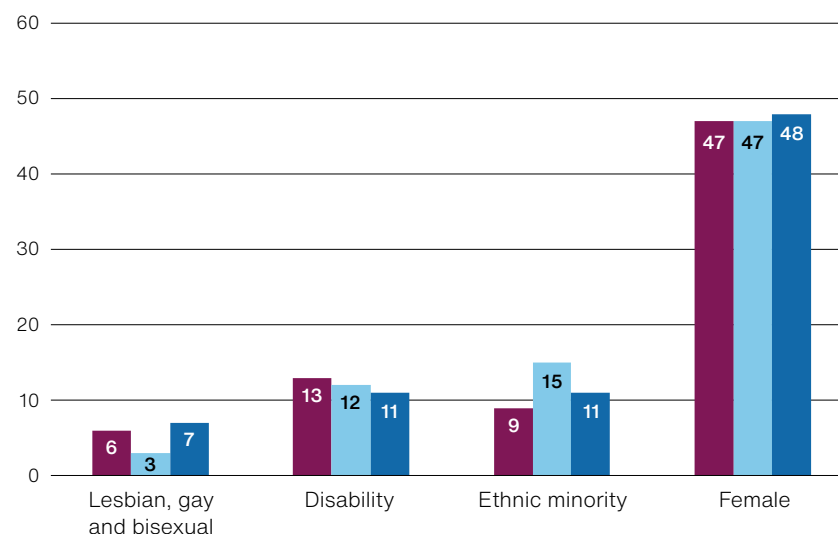


■ Home Office ■ Home Office target ■ Civil Service average

Diversity and inclusion at the Home Office: senior civil servants

The Home Office set diversity and inclusion targets for senior civil servants and met all but one of its targets

Percentage of senior civil servants (%)



- Notes**
- The data outlined above are based on current paid civil servants at end of March 2024.
 - The percentages are calculated using an internal Home Office survey using positive statements only. The options of 'not surveyed' and 'prefer not to say' have not been included.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts 2023 to 2024* and Cabinet Office, *Statistical bulletin – Civil Service Statistics: 2024*

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National Audit Office summary of the risks identified by the Home Office in 2023-24, focusing on those rated 'high' or 'critical'.¹

Risk area	Short description of risk	Key controls and mitigating activities 2023-24	Risk level 2022-23	Risk level 2023-24
Existing risks				
Threat to life in accommodation and in the border process	People accommodated in the system, or those attempting to arrive in the UK, can cause serious harm to themselves or others.	Upstream intervention work with international partners to inform deterrence, detection and intervention. Reduce risk of overcrowding in hotels.	Critical	High
Data breaches and critical IT system failures	IT system errors compromising data and the migration and borders system.	Contingency measures to mitigate the risks and decommissioning vulnerable systems.	High	High
Workforce sustainability and failure to transform	The Home Office fails to attract a diverse workforce that can respond to the demands of a changing world.	Increase deployment of apprenticeship-based learning and qualifications to improve workforce resilience.	Critical	High
Illegal Migration Act (IMA)	The implementation of the IMA will not lead to a deterrence effect and thus fail to stop the small boat arrivals.	Risk appetite statement to policy challenges. Legal risks considered within regular advice to the Accounting Officer.	High	Critical
Health & safety and fire	Approach to health and safety, and fire management systems may be inadequate.	Test the Required Safe Egress Time in all buildings. New incident/accident system has been launched.	High	High
Immigration detention capacity and volatility	Increased utilisation of immigration detention leads to unrest and harm to staff, contractors or residents.	Increase custodial staff numbers. Improvements to security and intelligence provision.	Critical	High
New risks in 2023-24				
The impact of artificial intelligence (AI)	The Home Office fails to safely and responsibly adopt AI-enabled technology.	Support an embedded and aligned approach to support AI adoption across the Home Office team and partners.		Critical
Criminal Justice System (CJS)	The CJS is unable to align priorities and deliver for victims.	Work with CJS partners to support effective operation of the CJS in light of current capacity challenges.		High
Disruption at the border	System outages and reduced capabilities at the border.	Implement robust contingency plans to mitigate the risk.		High

Note

¹ We have grouped risks of similar themes for presentational purposes; these may not directly match those in the Annual Report and Accounts.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of principal risks to the Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts, 2022 to 2023* and *2023 to 2024*

11 Asylum: managing the backlog

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The Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda

In April 2022, the Home Office announced the Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP) with the Government of Rwanda as a measure to deter small boat crossings. Under the agreement the UK government provided development funding to Rwanda and would meet the processing and integration costs for each relocated person. The partnership fell under the former government's third country asylum processing provisions, under which individuals who claimed asylum in the UK could have their claim declared inadmissible if they had previously been in, or had another connection to, a safe third country where they had or could have claimed asylum. In these circumstances they could be returned to that country or removed to another safe third country willing to receive them. In July 2023, the Illegal Migration Act was introduced, placing a duty on the then Secretary of State to remove adults who arrived in the UK via various irregular routes.

In March 2024, our [*Investigation into the costs of the UK-Rwanda partnership*](#) set out that under the partnership the Home Office would pay a minimum of £370 million to the Rwandan Government and then further amounts depending on the number of people relocated. As at February 2024, the Home Office had paid £240 million to Rwanda, with a further payment of £50 million planned for April 2024.

On 22 July 2024, the Home Secretary announced that she had informed the Rwandan Government that the UK would be ending the partnership.

Asylum application backlog

The government has promised to resume processing asylum decisions for those previously considered as inadmissible. Under the former government, the Home Office was not processing cases for people who had arrived after 7 March 2023 (as these cases were subject to provisions under the Illegal Migration Act 2023). By the end of June 2024, there were about 86,000 outstanding asylum claims awaiting an initial decision.

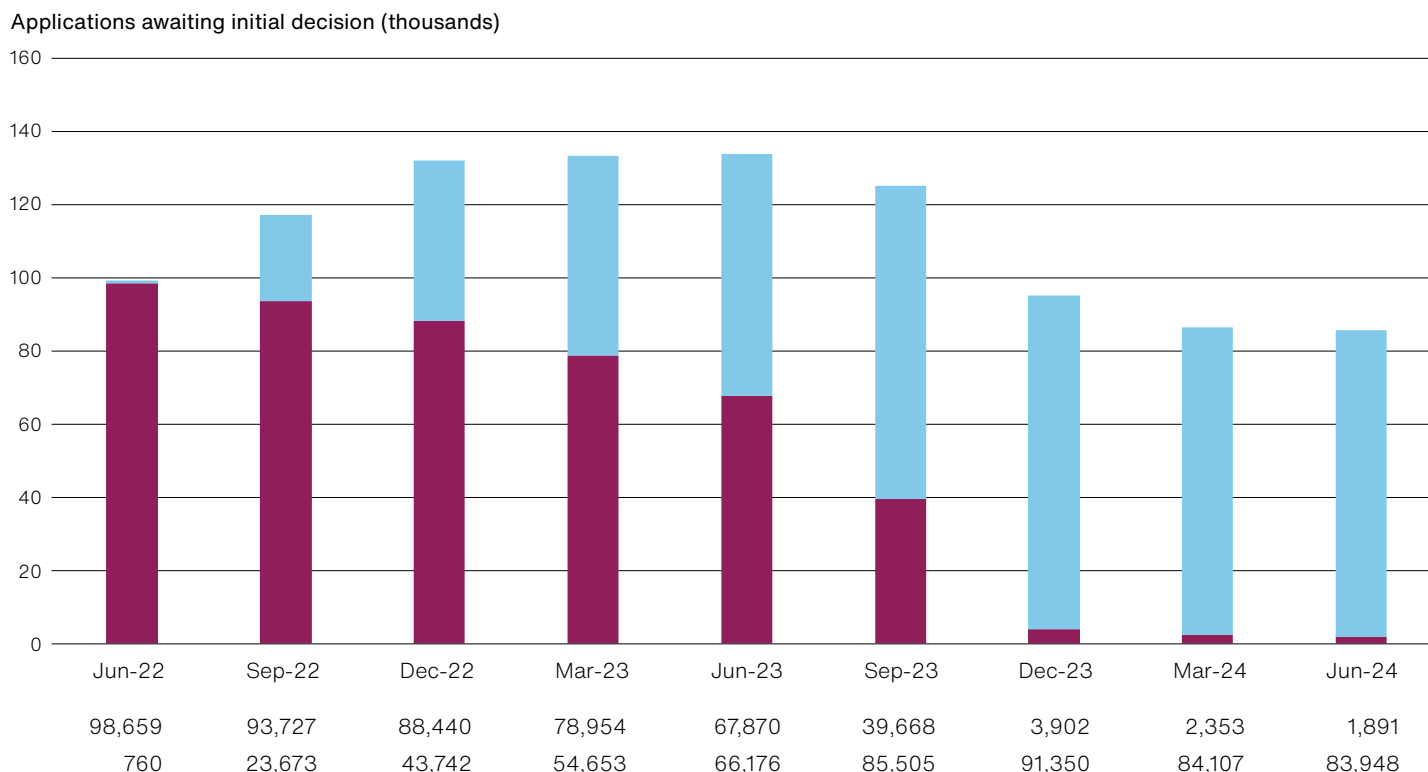


Section 11:

Asylum: managing the backlog *continued*

Asylum applications awaiting an initial decision June 2022 to June 2024

By June 2024, there were nearly 86,000 asylum claims awaiting an initial decision



Note

1 Pre-NABA asylum cases refer to applications made before 28 June 2022 when the Nationality and Borders Act (NABA) 2022 passed. Applications made on or after 28 June 2022 count as post-NABA cases, and included those that may be deemed inadmissible in the UK.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office immigration system statistics

12 Asylum: ending the use of hotels

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The Home Office supports destitute people seeking asylum while it makes a decision on their asylum claim. In 2023-24, the Home Office spent £4.7 billion on asylum support, including £3 billion on hotels. This is compared with £3.6 billion on asylum support and £2.2 billion on hotels in 2022-23. The Home Office intended to reduce the use of hotels and reduce costs to the taxpayer, by opening large sites, increasing room-sharing and increasing dispersal accommodation.

Developing large sites

The Home Office proceeded with four large sites: the Bibby Stockholm Barge in Portland, Dorset; former RAF bases at Wethersfield, Essex and Scampton, Lincolnshire; and student accommodation in Huddersfield. By the end of March 2024, only Wethersfield and the Bibby Stockholm were accommodating people. The Home Office expected that the other two sites would start to accommodate people from April 2024 (Scampton) and May 2024 (Huddersfield), but, in September 2024, the Home Office announced it no longer planned to use the site at Scampton and has made no further announcements regarding Huddersfield. In July 2024 the Home Office announced that the contract for the Bibby Stockholm would not be renewed past January 2025.

Our March 2024 [Investigation into asylum accommodation](#) report found that, in rapidly progressing plans to establish large sites, the Home Office had incurred nugatory spending and increased risks. We concluded that, collectively, the four sites would cost more than the alternative of using hotels.

Reducing hotel use

The Home Office announced that by the end of March 2024, it had stopped using 109 hotels and had reduced the number of people accommodated in hotels from a maximum of 56,000 in September 2023 to around 36,000 by March 2024.

Our July 2024 report, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), set out the wider pressures local areas are facing in light of increasing demand for asylum accommodation.

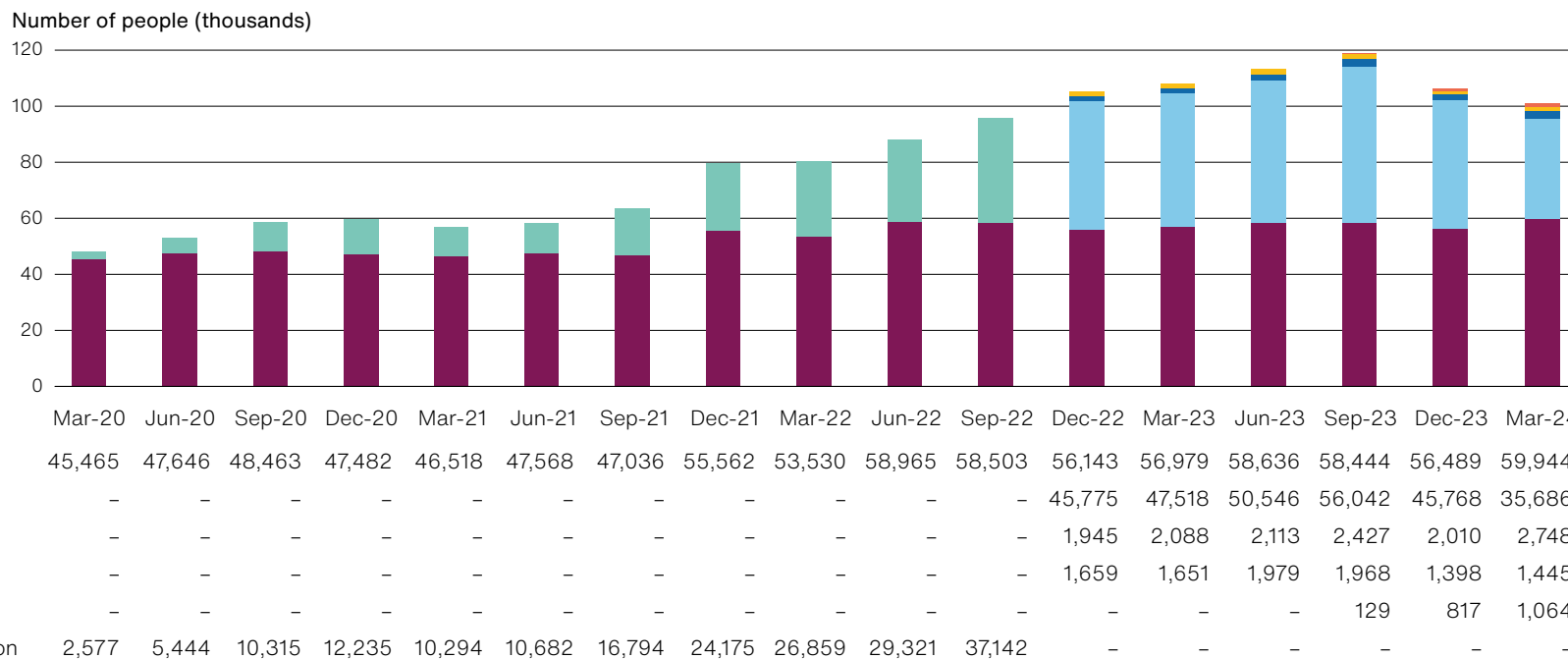


Section 12:

Asylum: ending the use of hotels *continued*

Number of people living in different types of Home Office accommodation, March 2020 to March 2024

By the end of March 2024, 59,944 people seeking asylum were in dispersal accommodation and 35,686 were in hotels



Notes

- 1 Before 31 December 2022, data for people accommodated while their initial asylum claim was assessed did not distinguish between those in initial accommodation and those in contingency accommodation.
- 2 'Initial accommodation' is where the Home Office takes people seeking asylum while it assesses their claim for support.
- 3 'Contingency accommodation' usually consists of hotels and is used when there is not enough dispersal accommodation available. The published statistics do not define what accommodation is included in 'other contingency'.
- 4 'Other accommodation' was first included in the published data in September 2023. The Home Office describes this as "a variety of sites procured as an alternative to the continued use of hotels".
- 5 'Dispersal accommodation' usually consists of flats and houses and is often where people stay while their asylum claim is processed.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office immigration system statistics

Moving through border security

In 2023, the Home Office reported it had met its targets of clearing 95% of European Economic Area (EEA) passengers entering the UK through border control within 25 minutes and 95% of non-EEA passengers in 45 minutes. In the first quarter of 2024 it reported it had exceeded its target, clearing 98%. Border technology has experienced a number of issues, including nationwide failure of e-gates in May 2024.

We most recently reported on the management of the UK border in our May 2024 report, [The UK border: Implementing an effective trade border](#).

Processing visas

The number of visas the Home Office grants for work or study purposes has increased since 2020 to almost 1.2 million in the year ending March 2024.

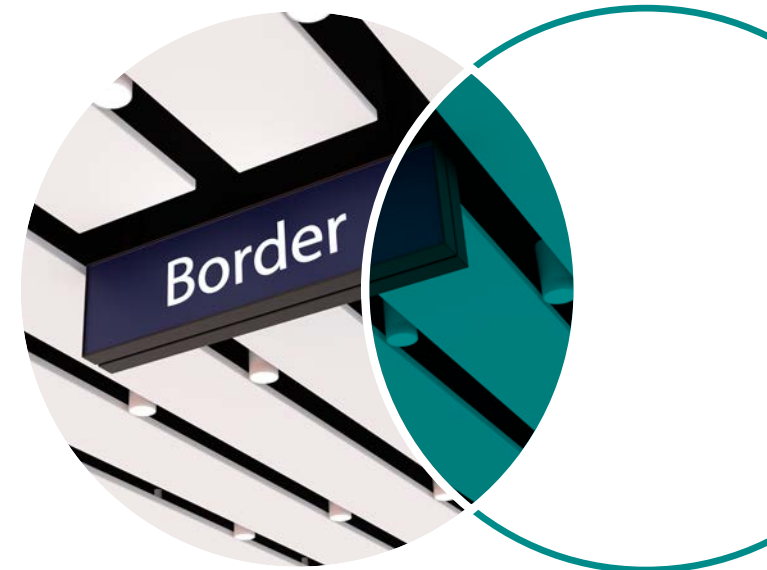
In April 2024 the Home Office changed the rules for family and work visas by:

- removing social care workers' rights to bring dependents;
- increasing the baseline minimum salary for sponsored skilled workers;
- reducing the list of jobs for which individuals can be sponsored for skilled worker visas at a reduced minimum salary;
- increasing the minimum income to sponsor someone for a spouse/partner visa; and
- reviewing the graduate visa system.

Provisional numbers suggest that applications for skilled worker and health and social care worker visas between April and July 2024 have dropped by 51% compared with the same period in 2023. We are currently undertaking an audit of the Home Office's management of skilled worker visas, due to publish in spring 2025.

Processing passports

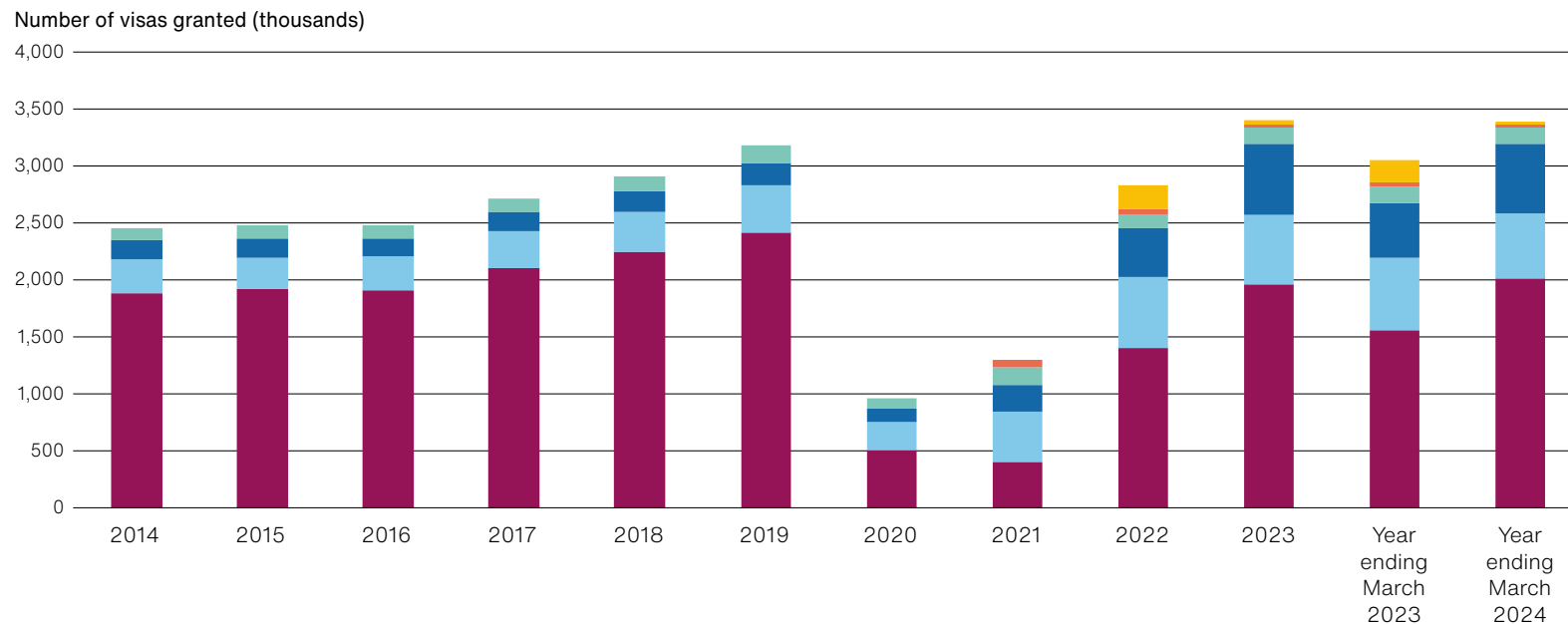
Our December 2022 [Investigation into the performance of HM Passport Office](#) (HMPO) looked into HMPO's response to the surge in demand for passports. HMPO has subsequently improved its customer contacts, built capacity to better manage demand and continued its digital transformation. As a result, customer experience has improved and HMPO has saved money by reducing "failure demand".



Section 13: Migration *continued*

The number of entry visas granted by type of visa from 2014 to the year ending March 2024

By March 2024, 562,000 study visas were granted by the Home Office, compared with 630,000 in March 2023



■ Visitor visas	1,879,000	1,914,000	1,903,000	2,096,000	2,240,000	2,413,000	501,000	402,000	1,396,000	1,957,000	1,552,000	2,012,000
■ Study visas	294,000	273,000	294,000	330,000	355,000	404,000	250,000	435,000	624,000	606,000	630,000	562,000
■ Work visas	167,000	166,000	164,000	165,000	176,000	193,000	115,000	239,000	422,000	616,000	487,000	605,000
■ Other visas (including family and dependents)	109,000	116,000	118,000	117,000	132,000	161,000	96,000	148,000	119,000	149,000	135,000	146,000
■ British National (Overseas) visas	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	76,000	54,000	28,000	47,000	26,000
■ Ukraine schemes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	210,000	42,000	197,000	33,000

Notes

- 1 The years are presented as calendars years except for the years ending March 2023 and March 2024 as this is how the data are published.
- 2 The British National (Overseas) visa route opened in January 2021, and the Ukraine visa schemes launched in March 2022.

14 Asylum and migration: future challenges

Controlling irregular migration

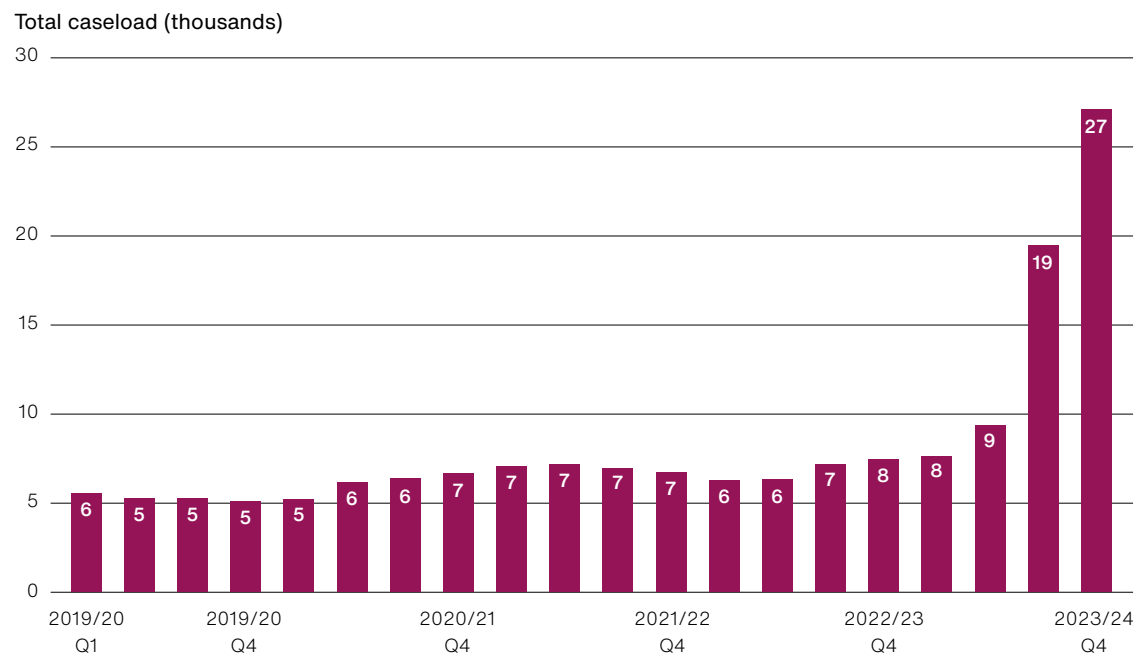
In July 2024, the Home Secretary outlined the following plans:

- **A new Border Security Command:** Bringing together the work of the Border Force, the National Crime Agency, the small boats operational command and intelligence and security officers, aimed at stopping the smuggling gangs facilitating the small boat crossings.
- **Returns Transformation Programme:** Replacing the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda with a programme to return individuals with no legal right to stay in the UK, to their home country.
- **Resume processing asylum decisions:** By the end of June 2024 there were around 86,000 outstanding asylum claims awaiting an initial decision, which will now be considered.

Asylum appeals

The number of appeals against asylum decisions has increased, increasing the caseload for HM Courts and Tribunals Services (see Figure). As of March 2024, the number of appeals in the first-tier tribunal chamber stood at 27,133 compared with 7,510 at March 2023.

Caseload of appeals against asylum decisions in the first-tier tribunal, April 2019 to March 2024



Notes

- 1 Tribunals have two-tier structure. The first-tier tribunal hears first instance appeals, primarily (but not exclusively) against certain decisions made by government departments or other public bodies.
- 2 Appeals against asylum and protection decisions includes asylum decisions and revocation of protection.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Ministry of Justice, *Quarterly Tribunal Statistics, June 2024 release*

Section 14:

Asylum and migration: future challenges *continued*

Impact of Home Office spend on Official Development Assistance (ODA)

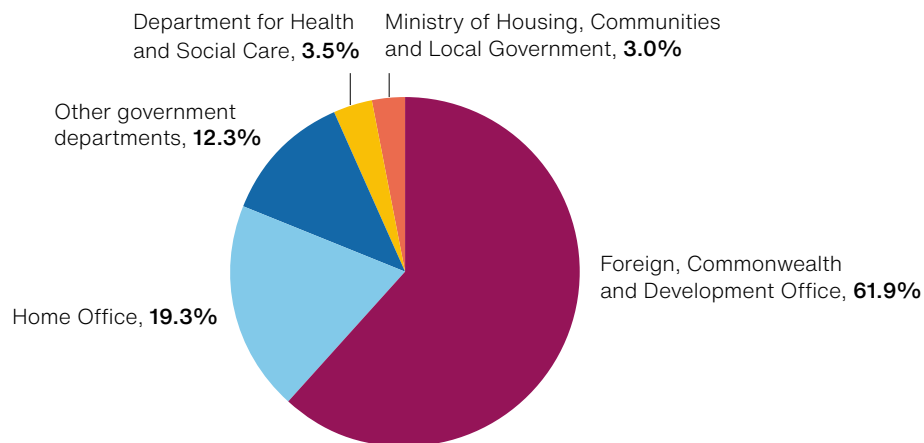
In 2023, around 28% (£4.3 billion) of the total ODA budget was spent on in-donor refugee costs (money spent supporting refugees within the donor country) (see Figure).

The Home Office is the highest non-Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office spender of ODA. It spent nearly £3 billion of ODA in 2023 (19% of the total ODA spend). Most of the Home Office's ODA spend was on supporting people seeking asylum in the UK.

Our June 2023 report, [The asylum and protection transformation programme](#), concluded that the more the government spends on in-donor refugee costs, the less is available to support development overseas.

The proportion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) spent across government in 2023

The Home Office was the highest non-Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office spender of ODA in 2023, spending 19% of the total ODA budget



Note

1 Official Development Assistance is defined as government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, *Statistics on International Development: final UK ODA spend 2023*

15 Reducing crime

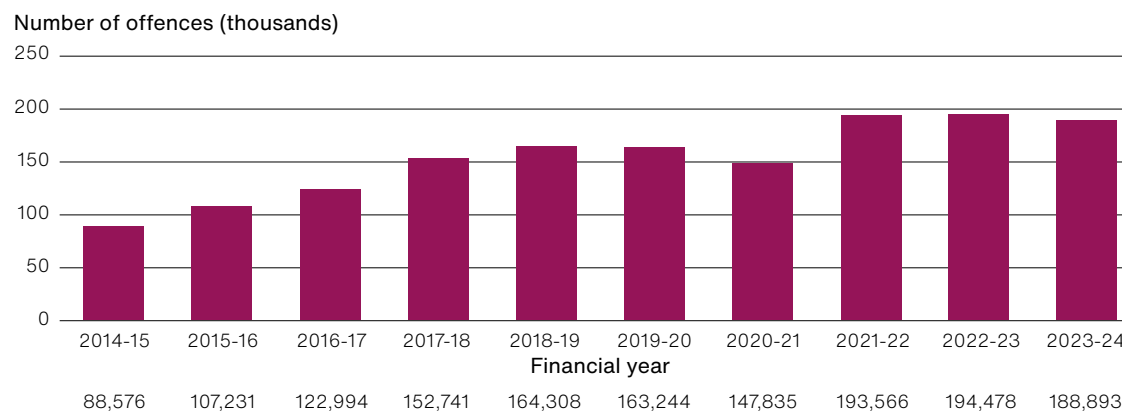
The Home Office has committed to reduce the number of victims of crime, improve neighbourhood safety and reduce crime overall. It has sought to do this by focusing on reducing serious violence and homicide, exposing hidden harms such as domestic abuse and pursuing its perpetrators, and building law enforcement’s ability to tackle fraud and online crime. The Home Office has renewed its focus on tackling violence against women and girls and domestic abuse and placed greater emphasis on reducing knife crime.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates that, in the year ending March 2022, 2.3% of adults (3.3% of women and 1.2% of men) were victims of sexual assault, equating to some 1.1 million adults. Only a small proportion of these offences are reported to and recorded by the police (see Figure) with around 189,000 being recorded in 2023-24.

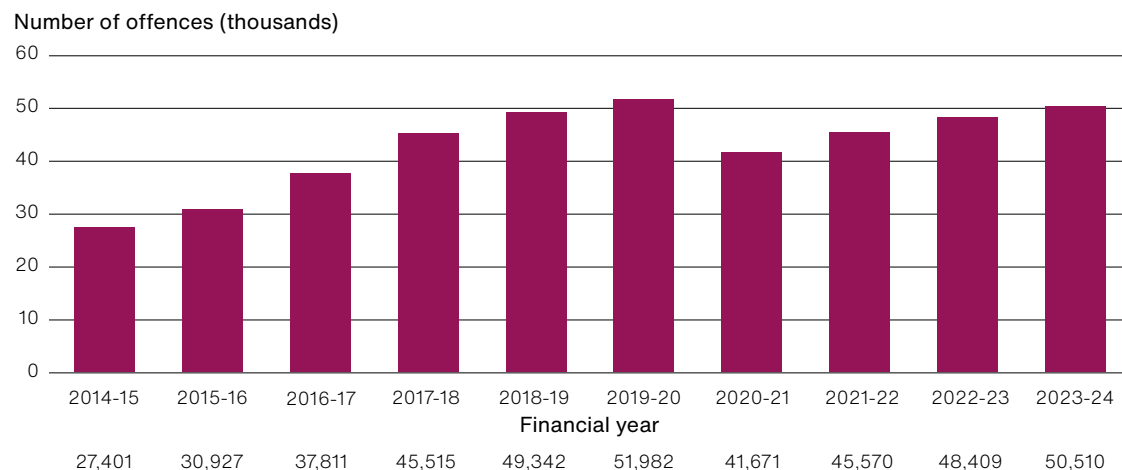
The Home Office 2023-24 Annual Report and Accounts noted a 25% decrease since the year ending December 2019 in the number of hospital admissions resulting from assault with a sharp object. But, between 2014-15 and 2019-20, violent offences involving knives increased by 90%. The COVID-19 pandemic saw these offences decrease in 2020-21, but by 2023-24 the number of offences had almost returned to 2019-20 levels.

There were 244 homicides involving a sharp instrument in 2022-23 compared with 186 in 2014-15, an increase of 31%. Total homicides across the same period increased from 504 to 590, an increase of 17%.

Police-recorded sexual offences in England and Wales 2014-15 to 2023-24



Police-recorded violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument in England and Wales, 2014-15 to 2023-24



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Office for National Statistics data

16 Working across government to reduce crime

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Illegal drugs cause significant harm to individuals, families and communities. In 2021, nearly 3,000 people in England died because of drug misuse, and thousands more suffered complex health problems. Around three million people in England and Wales report using illegal drugs each year at a cost to society of approximately £20 billion a year. The drugs trade generates significant levels of violence, and drugs are linked to around half of all homicides in England and Wales. The Home Office leads on UK drug legislation, UK borders and organised crime, policing, and crime reduction in England and Wales.

Our October 2023 report, [Reducing the harm from illegal drugs](#), reported on early progress in implementing the government's 2021 drugs strategy. It found that:

- the government established new structures and committed additional funding of £0.9 billion, providing a new focus on tackling the harms from illegal drugs;
- the strategy had not yet led to a fundamental shift in approaches to disrupting supply and improving treatment and recovery; and
- the government did not yet have the evidence to know how to reduce the demand for drugs.

We concluded that the measures implemented in the first three years of the strategy would not address all the barriers to a long-term reduction in drug use, deaths and crime. The issues require a sustained long-term response. The government would only achieve value for money if it built on the momentum of the new strategy and developed a longer-term funded plan that delivers a holistic response.

Our November 2022 report, [Progress combating fraud](#), examined the Home Office's approach to leading the response to tackle fraud. We concluded that fraud was a significant and growing problem, and tackling it required co-ordinated action from government, bodies across the public and private sectors, and the public. We found that:

- in the year ending June 2022, fraud accounted for 41% of all Crime Survey in England and Wales (CSEW) recorded crime committed against individuals but the number of fraud offences resulting in a charge or summons was falling;
- there were still significant gaps in the Home Office's understanding of the threat from fraud; and
- while the Home Office had taken limited actions to improve its response to fraud since our last report in 2017, it was not yet leading an effective cross-government approach.

Following our report, the government published a new [Fraud Strategy: Stopping scams and protecting the public](#). This set out the government's aim to cut fraud by 10% from 2019 levels. Estimates from the CSEW year ending March 2024 suggest that there were 3.2 million incidents of fraud in 2023-24, a reduction of 10% on the previous year. In the same period, police-recorded fraud was reported to be 7% higher (1.2 million offences) compared with the year ending March 2023. This may represent an increased awareness and willingness to report fraud rather than an absolute increase in fraud incidents.

17 Reducing crime: future challenges

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Safer Streets

The new government has introduced the Safer Streets mission. In its [election manifesto](#), the government set out plans to:

- crack down on antisocial behaviour with more neighbourhood police;
- introduce tough new penalties for offenders;
- get knives off the streets;
- tackle violence against women and girls; and
- prevent crime and give young people the best start in life.

The director general for the government's Safer Streets mission will be based in the Home Office.

The government has set out an ambition to halve serious violence, including violence against women and girls, within a decade as part of its five key missions. The government hopes to see an increase in reporting of violence against women and girls by raising public confidence in the police. Key stakeholders have highlighted inherent challenges associated with measuring progress, due to these types of crime being vastly underreported. In July 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council described violence against women and girls in England and Wales as an epidemic.

Reform of police funding

The police funding formula (also known as the police allocation formula) is used by the Home Office to determine the share of overall central government funding each police force receives. In 2015 the Home Office acknowledged that the formula was "more and more detached from the real demands on policing". The government committed to reviewing the funding formula before the next general election but failed to complete this work before July 2024.

In our March 2022 report on the [Police Uplift Programme](#), we found that the decision to use the outdated formula meant that the distribution of additional officers may not align with current or future demands on policing. This was reinforced by HM Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services in his 2024 annual [report](#) on the state of policing, which stated that "the way police funding is distributed between forces isn't fit for purpose and needs to be revised" and that "fixing the funding formula is one of the most obvious and worthwhile changes the Government could make to policing".



18 Overview of Home Office major programmes

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Our February 2024 lessons learned report on [Delivering value from government investment in major projects](#) set out seven key lessons departments need to consider to ensure they are delivering value for money from their major projects. Many of these are directly relevant to Home Office programmes on which we have reported:

- Start from the strategic objectives you want to achieve and the value you want to add – in our March 2022 report on the [Police Uplift Programme](#) we noted that the tightly scoped objectives helped maintain a focus on delivery. However, in the June 2023 report on [The asylum and protection transformation programme](#), we found that the Home Office prioritised reducing the backlog and hotel use above its other objectives.
- Consider the full range of activities that will be required to deliver value, including funding – we noted the number of challenges created by recruiting 20,000 police officers in a short time frame, and that the Home Office needs to understand the wider impact of changes to the asylum system.

The latest Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) [report on major projects](#) from 2022-23 listed 15 major programmes for which the Home Office was responsible. The Home Office had the joint-sixth highest number of projects of any department and the IPA reported it as the seventh largest department by total whole life cost (£25.9bn). The IPA publishes its delivery confidence assessment which is the assessed likelihood of a project delivering to time and cost if risks are left unaddressed.

For the Home Office, as at March 2023:³

- two projects were classified Red;
- 10 were classified Amber; and
- two were classified Green.⁴

One of the projects classified Red is the [Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme](#), on which we reported in 2023. We concluded that the Home Office was a long way from having a functioning network to replace the existing emergency services communication system, Airwave. In 2015 the Home Office awarded the main contracts to Motorola, to

provide the software and systems, and to EE, to provide network infrastructure. In October 2021 the Competition & Markets Authority opened a market investigation, concluding that a price cap should be imposed on the Airwave network, which is also owned by Motorola. Motorola is appealing against this decision and the UK Court of Appeal is due to consider its appeal in November 2024. In March 2024 the Home Office extended the contract with Motorola for the Airwave system, under the price capped rates, to the end of December 2029. Motorola has also challenged the contract extension and a high court hearing on this is expected to begin on 22 April 2025. The Home Office extended its contract with EE to 2032 without competing it, stating that “no reasonable alternative... exists”. We have previously reported on the importance of competition in public procurement in the July 2023 report on [Competition in public procurement: lessons learned](#).

³ The Nuclear Security Portfolio is exempt under Section 24 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (National Security).

⁴ The IPA ratings are as follows: Red – Successful delivery of the project/programme appears to be unachievable. There are major issues which at this stage do not appear to be manageable or resolvable. The project/programme may need rebaselining and/or overall viability re-assessed. Amber – Successful delivery appears feasible but significant issues already exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage and, if addressed promptly, should not present a cost/schedule overrun. Green – Successful delivery of the project/programme to time, cost and quality appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery.

19 Things to look out for

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Safer Streets

Police Uplift

The new government has pledged to recruit 13,000 new neighbourhood police officers. Our March 2022 report identifies lessons from the Police Uplift Programme, launched in 2019, which recruited 20,000 new police officers in England and Wales by March 2023 (see sections 15 to 17).

Relevant work: National Audit Office, [The Police Uplift Programme](#), March 2022.

Upcoming report – Tackling violence against women and girls

The report will focus on the implementation of the 2021 Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls strategy and the 2022 Domestic Abuse Plan. It will examine how the Home Office has applied lessons learnt from previous work; the efficacy of governance and accountability structures; financial management and oversight mechanisms and the approach to evaluation (see sections 15 and 17).

Scheduled publication: Winter 2024/25

Reforming the asylum system

Resuming the processing of asylum decisions

The government has promised to resume processing asylum decisions for those previously inadmissible, with the aim of clearing the backlog, following the decision to cancel the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda (see sections 11 and 14).

Asylum accommodation

The government aims to end the housing of people seeking asylum in hotels. Our recent report into homelessness demonstrates the risks associated with processing asylum applications at speed. Our report found that a shortage of available housing, along with high housing prices is making it increasingly difficult for local authorities to find homes for people who need them (see section 12).

Relevant work: National Audit Office, [The effectiveness of government in tackling homelessness](#), July 2024.

Relevant work: National Audit Office, [Investigation into asylum accommodation](#), March 2024.

Controlling migration

Upcoming report – Immigration: Skilled Worker visas

The report will focus on whether the Home Office has been effective in its approach to managing the skilled worker visa route, focusing on changes made since January 2021. It will take a deep dive into specific sectors – including the health and social care sector (see section 13).

Scheduled publication: Spring 2025

Returns Transformation Programme

The government has announced plans to replace the Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda with a Returns Transformation Programme (see sections 11 and 14).

Border Security Command

The government has announced plans to tackle the gangs responsible for people-smuggling through the introduction of a new Border Security Command (see section 14).

20 More information about our work on the Home Office

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Investigation into the Homes for Ukraine scheme

October 2023

This report investigated progress being made delivering the Homes for Ukraine scheme, which was established in March 2022.

Key findings:

- As of September 2023, the government had provided £2.1 billion of funding for the scheme and the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities continued to fund new arrivals and sponsors.
- Since March 2022, 131,000 Ukrainians had arrived in the UK through the scheme.
- The first people to arrive under the scheme will see their visas expire in spring 2025, and it was not yet clear whether the Home Office intended to extend visas.

The UK border: Implementing an effective trade border

May 2024

Following the UK's decision to leave the European Union (EU), this report investigated the impact and cost of new trade arrangements and examined whether the government was on course to implement an efficient and effective trade border.

Key findings:

- The government estimated that it would spend at least £4.7 billion to implement new border arrangements relating to EU exit and improve the performance of the border.
- The UK has faced increased biosecurity risk because of the phased approach to introducing full import controls.

Reducing the harm from illegal drugs

October 2023

This report examined the implementation of the government's 10-year drug strategy, published in December 2021, which aimed to reduce drug use and drug-related crime, and save lives by lowering the supply and demand for drugs.

Key findings:

- The strategy had not yet led to a fundamental shift in departments' approaches or begun to address the complex causes of illegal drug use.
- The government did not yet have the evidence to know how to reduce the demand for drugs.

The asylum and protection transformation programme

June 2023

This report examined the Home Office's progress in delivering the asylum and protection transformation programme.

Key findings:

- The Home Office was increasing the number of asylum caseworkers but only around one-fifth of those deciding claims were fully trained and working independently.
- The Home Office was failing to secure enough accommodation to end the use of hotels for people seeking asylum.