



National Audit Office

OVERVIEW

Home Office

Departmental Overview 2022-23

We are the UK's independent public spending watchdog

October 2023

What this guide is about

This guide has been produced to support the Home Affairs Committee in its examination of the Home Office's spending and performance. It summarises the key information and insights that can be gained from our examinations of the Home Office and related bodies in the sector in England and the Home Office's Annual Report and Accounts. The Home Office spends some £25 billion each year to keep UK citizens safe and our borders secure by reducing crime; tackling terrorism; enabling the legitimate movement of people and goods to support economic prosperity; and tackling illegal migration.

The guide covers:

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

How we have prepared this guide

The information in this guide draws on the findings and recommendations from our financial audit and value-for-money programme of 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 the 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 [National Audit Office \(NAO\) website](#).



This report updates our previous overview, [Home Office Departmental financial overview 2020-21](#), published in October 2021

More information about central government accounting and reporting

You may also be interested in our interactive guide to [Good practice in annual reporting](#) (February 2023) which sets out good-practice principles for annual reporting and provides illustrative examples taken from public sector organisations who are leading the way in this area.

Departmental Overview 2022-23

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About the National Audit Office

The National Audit Office (NAO) is the UK's independent public spending watchdog. We scrutinise public spending for Parliament and are independent of government and the civil service. We help Parliament hold government to account and we use our insights to help people who manage and govern public bodies improve public services.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Gareth Davies, is an Officer of the House of Commons and leads the NAO. We audit the financial accounts of departments and other public bodies. We also examine and report on the value for money of how public money has been spent.

In 2022, the NAO's work led to a positive financial impact through reduced costs, improved service delivery, or other benefits to citizens, of £572 million.

If you would like to know more about the NAO's work on the Home Office, or are interested in the NAO's work and support for Parliament more widely, please contact:

Parliament@nao.org.uk
020 7798 7665



Part One – Overview

About the Home Office

The Home Office states that its primary mission is to keep UK citizens safe and the UK border secure. Its 2021-22 Outcome Delivery Plan, published in July 2021, set four priority outcomes:

1

Reduce crime

Working with the police, the Home Office aims to reduce crime rates including those related to homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime, in part by recruiting an additional 20,000 police officers through the Police Uplift programme. It is also investing in programmes to tackle drug supply and seeking to reduce violence against women and girls.

2

Reduce the risk of terrorism to the UK and UK interests overseas

The Home Office counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, aims to reduce the risk from terrorism. It comprises four strands:

- Prevent – to stop people becoming terrorists
- Pursue – to stop attacks happening
- Protect – to reduce vulnerability to attack
- Prepare – to save lives and aid recovery in the event of an attack

3

Enable the legitimate movement of people and goods to support economic prosperity

Through the future border and immigration system programme and the points-based immigration system, the Home Office aims to ensure a smooth process for people who enter the country legitimately. In addition, it has invested in data and technology infrastructure at the border to prevent the illegal import of controlled or illegal items, such as class A drugs.

4

Tackle illegal migration, remove those with no right to be in the UK and protect the vulnerable

The Home Office aims to protect the vulnerable; prevent illegal migration and asylum abuse; and reinforce a strong and secure border. It aims to target and disrupt organised criminals who facilitate illegal migration and reform the asylum system to improve decision-making while offering protection via resettlement.

pNote

1 The Home Office told us that it has updated its Outcome Delivery Plan for 2023-24, and that this broadened the scope of its terrorism objective. In line with other government departments, it has not published the updated plan.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of *Home Office Outcome Delivery Plan 2021-2022*

Part One – Overview

How the Home Office is structured

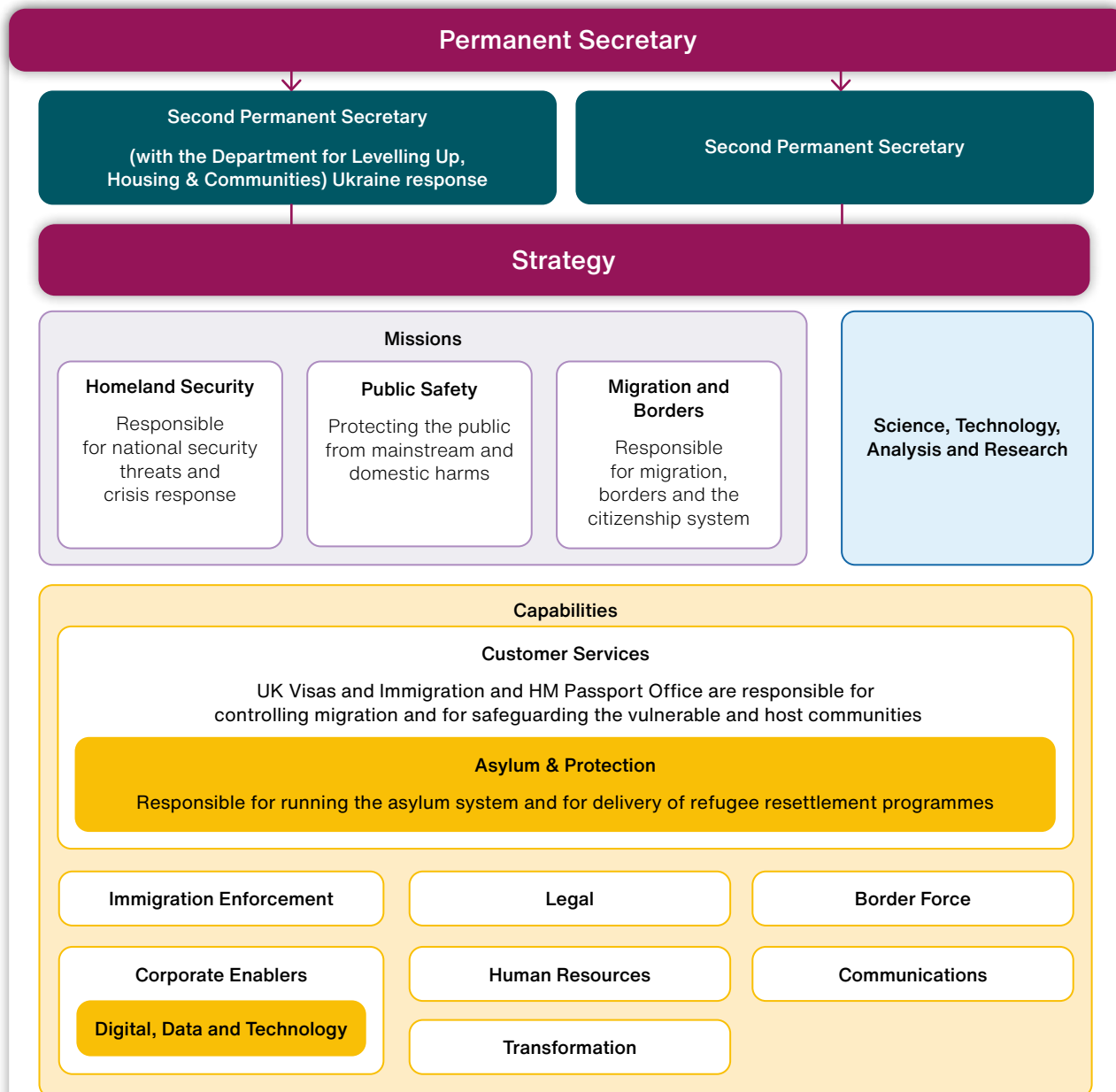
In April 2021, in response to the 2018 *Windrush Lessons Learned Review by Wendy Williams* and wider civil service modernisation, the Home Office started a transformation programme called ‘One Home Office’. It aimed to create clearer roles and responsibilities, a shared sense of priorities, an increased focus on service delivery and a more inclusive organisation. The transformation programme was previously managed by a dedicated team but is now embedded into operations.

As part of the transformation, the Home Office created a new structure with three ‘missions’ and five ‘capabilities’. The 2022-23 annual report sets out a revised structure with eight capabilities (see Figure) but also notes that the structure has changed again since March 2023.

The ‘missions’ lead the delivery of the Home Office’s priority outcomes. These are supported by:

- the ‘Delivery Group (Strategy)’, which was set up in 2022-23 to set the Home Office’s strategy; and
- the ‘Science, Technology, Analysis and Research’ (STAR) team, which “draws together the whole business, to help inform, deliver and make sense of cross-cutting activity, and to ensure [the Home Office is] pulling together in pursuit of shared objectives”.

The work of the missions is underpinned by ‘capabilities’, which help the Home Office deliver services. For example, the ‘Corporate Enablers’ capability includes services such as finance, commercial and estates.



Part Two – Spending and financial management

Where the Home Office spends its money

In 2022-23, the Home Office spent **£24.6 billion** and received income of **£5.4 billion**

In 2022-23, the Home Office spent a net **£1.6 billion** more than the previous year. Its total spend increased by **£2.5 billion (12%)** and total income increased by **£0.9 billion (20%)**. The Public Safety Group spend includes the main police grant of **£9.2 billion**.

The largest increases in spend and income were:

- the Asylum and Protection Group spent **£4.6 billion**, an increase of **£2 billion (78%)** due to the rising costs of supporting people seeking asylum (page 23); and
- income from 'Customer Services' of **£4.5 billion**, an increase of **£1 billion (35%)** relating to fees from visas (page 20) and passport applications (page 21).

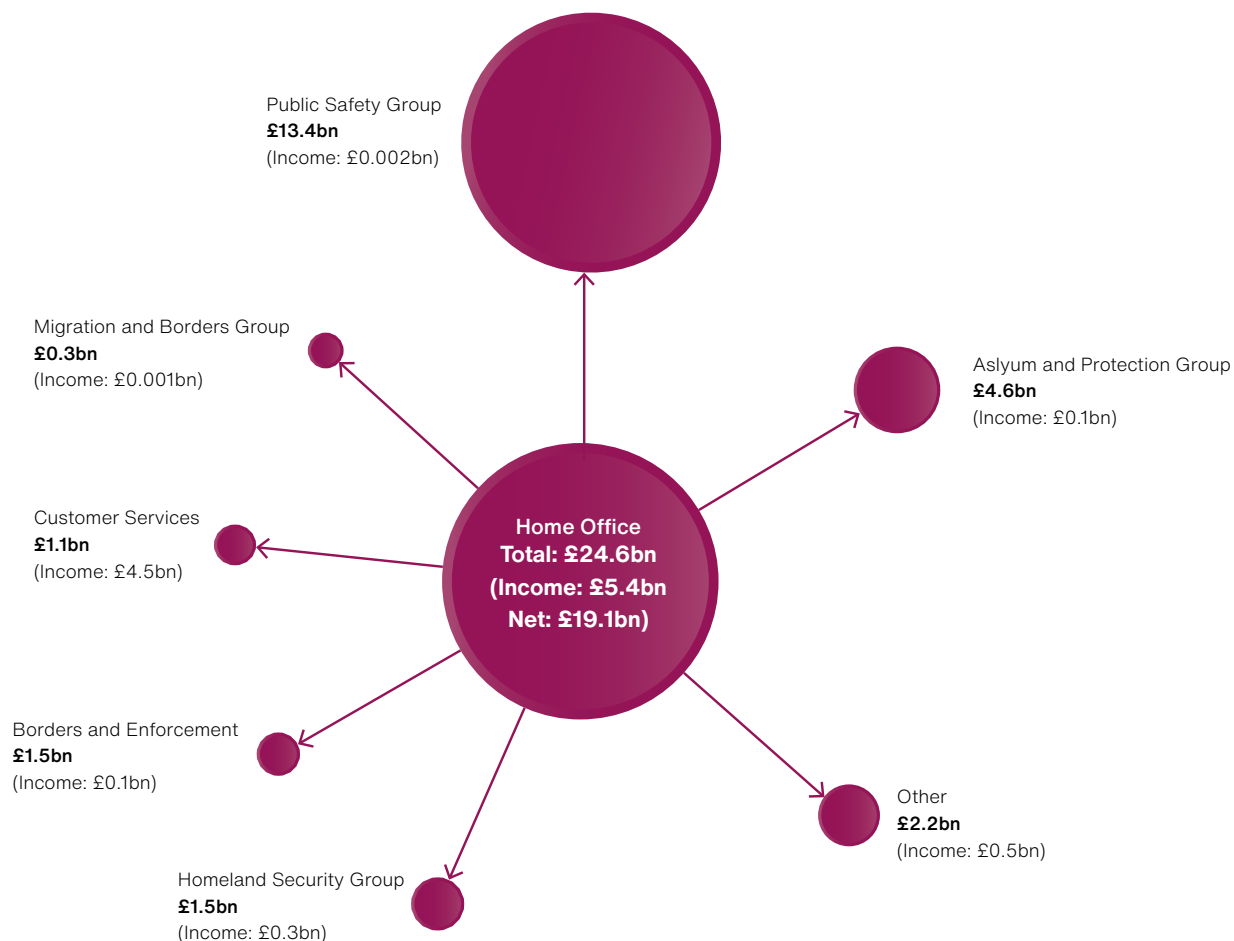
To help the Home Office manage its higher-than-expected costs, Parliament voted additional funding of more than **£3 billion** in the Supplementary Estimates. This included:

- £0.7 billion** to implement the asylum measures set out by the former Prime Minister on 14 April 2022;
- £1.6 billion** to alleviate pressures within the asylum system (page 23); and
- £0.7 billion** to support the Afghanistan Resettlement Schemes.



£4.6 billion

the Asylum and Protection Group spent **£4.6 billion**, an increase of **£2 billion (78%)** due to the rising costs of supporting people seeking asylum.



Notes

- Shows revenue expenditure from the Home Office departmental group which includes the core Department and six arm's-length bodies.
- 'Other' includes: 'Corporate Enablers', 'Digital, Data and Technology', 'Delivery Group', 'Science, Technology, Analysis and Research', 'Legal Advisors' and 'Communications'.
- Figures are shown to the nearest **£0.1 billion** so may not sum.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of note two of Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23*

Part Two – Spending and financial management

Risks identified in the C&AG's audit

The Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) gave an unqualified opinion on the financial statements of the Home Office for the year ended 31 March 2023. This means that the accounts give a true and fair view of the Home Office's affairs; have been properly prepared in accordance with the Government Resources and Accounts Act 2000; that total spending has not exceeded amounts voted by Parliament; and that the income and expenditure recorded have been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament.

The accounts were published on 19 September 2023, after Parliament's summer recess and later than originally planned. The delay resulted from increased audit testing to respond to the implementation of new accounting and auditing standards, additional risks identified due to the Home Office's proximity to its Parliamentary Supply control limits, and the preparedness of the Home Office to respond to these. The main risks identified in our audit are set out here.

Risks identified in the C&AG's audit of the Home Office's financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2023

Presumed risk of management override of controls	Key observations
<p>The Home Office has controls designed to ensure its financial statements are produced correctly. We assessed that the risk of management override of such controls was significant to the audit – particularly as the Home Office's resource expenditure was forecast to be close to its Parliamentary Supply control total.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We identified several errors relating to the understatement of expenditure. ● After further testing, we concluded that management's estimates had not introduced bias into the financial statements.
Implementation of IFRS 16 (lease accounting)	Key observations
<p>The Home Office adopted International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) 16 on 1 April 2022, resulting in the recognition of right-of-use assets with a value of £656 million and lease liabilities of £711 million. We identified a completeness risk that the Home Office had not reported all assets meeting the IFRS 16 criteria.¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our audit testing identified errors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● inappropriate judgements relating to the treatment of leases; ● failure to include several leases within the calculation of lease liability; and ● issues relating to Border Force overseas staff accommodation leases and car parks, land, masts and tenancy-at-will leases. ● To address these errors, and other minor errors, the Home Office made adjustments to the lease liability and associated asset balances. Following the adjustments, we concluded that IFRS 16 had been implemented appropriately.
Asset clearing account and impairments	Key observations
<p>Within the Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) and intangible assets balances, some assets are accounted for through an 'asset clearing account'. We found that this account included £750 million of expenditure which the Home Office had not reviewed to ascertain how items should be classified, or whether items were appropriately recorded as capital expenditure. This resulted in risks to the classification of assets between the tangible and intangible asset categories, and to depreciation calculations.</p> <p>Additionally, the Home Office has several programmes, including the Emergency Services Network programme, where assets are developed over several years, resulting in material assets under construction balances. We identified a risk that the value of these assets could have been too high and that the assets should have been subject to impairment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We found that errors in application of asset standards meant capital expenditure was overstated – either because of incorrect capitalisation or incorrect allocation between resource and capital expenditure budgets. ● We also identified classification errors between PPE and intangible assets. ● The Home Office made adjustments, leading us to conclude that the PPE and intangibles balances were materially complete and correct and that appropriate impairment had been applied.
Financial commitments	Key observations
<p>The Home Office initially recognised a significant 'financial commitments' balance (£13,621 million) at 31 March 2023. Given that this balance was material in the current year, and given the size of the balance in the previous year (£11,695 million), we considered this disclosure to be significant to the financial statements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We found that 95% of contracts in the financial commitments listing were cancellable (<i>The Government Financial Reporting Manual</i> states that financial commitments arise from contracts that are non-cancellable). As a result, the listing of financial commitments was not appropriately prepared and required restatement, as did the prior year comparatives. ● Following adjustments of the listing to remove cancellable commitments, we concluded that the financial commitments balance was materially correct.

Note

¹ IFRS 16 requires judgement in applying recognition and measurement criteria.

Part Three – People

Home Office staff

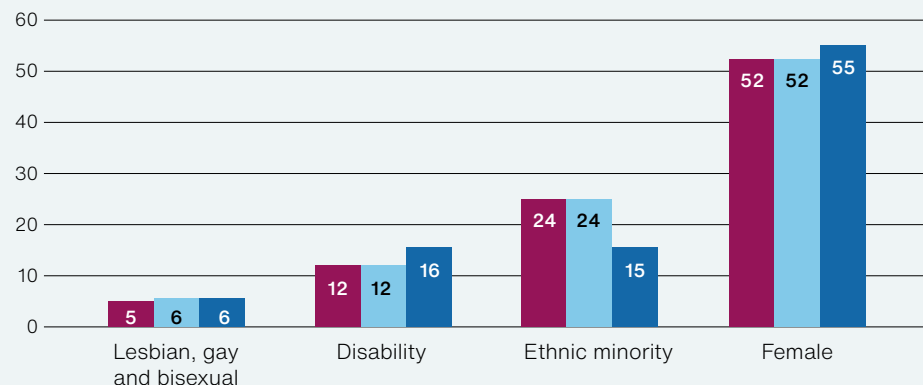
In 2022-23, the Home Office employed – in the core department – an average of 44,522 staff (full-time equivalent), spending £2.2 billion (including wages and salaries, social security costs and pension contributions). In 2022-23, five of the Home Office’s 15-person executive leadership team left, and were replaced. The Home Office also appointed a new Second Permanent Secretary in April 2023.

The Home Office has set eight workforce diversity targets, setting less ambitious targets for diversity of senior civil servants than for all staff. It met six of these, missing its ‘Lesbian, gay and bisexual’ target (all staff) by one percentage point and its ‘ethnic minority’ target (senior civil servants) by two percentage points.

Diversity and inclusion in the Home Office

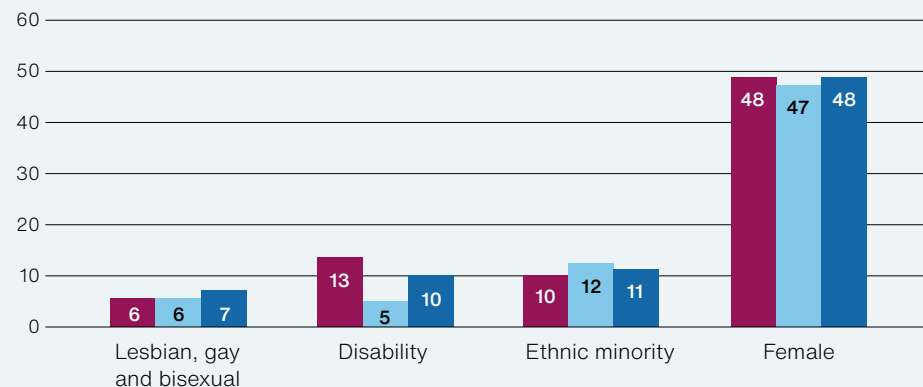
All staff 2023

Percentage of staff (%)



Senior civil service staff 2023

Percentage of staff (%)



■ Home Office ■ Home Office target ■ Civil service

Home Office employed
44,522
staff (full-time equivalent),
spending £2.2 billion

52%
female

12%
people with disabilities







24%
ethnic minorities

Notes

- 1 Data show only those disclosing their personal information. The Home Office’s recording systems only allow people to identify as ‘Heterosexual/Straight’ or ‘Lesbian, gay and bisexual’ (LGB). Civil service data show those recording their sexual orientation as lesbian, gay, bisexual or ‘other’ (LGB0).
- 2 The Home Office derived its targets in 2018 by setting them equal to either the UK’s economically active population or to the current Home Office representation, whichever was higher at the time.

Part Three – People

Annual civil service people survey

	Result in 2021 (%)	Result in 2022 (%)	Change (percentage points)	Civil service mean in 2022 (%)	Gap between civil service and Home Office score (percentage points)
 Employee engagement index	57	57	● 0	61	4
 My team	79	80	▲ +1	82	2
 Organisational objective and purpose	79	79	● 0	81	2
 Inclusion and fair treatment	75	77	▲ +2	79	2
 My manager	70	74	▲ +4	76	2
 My work	72	73	▲ +1	75	2
 Resources and workload	70	72	▲ +2	72	0
 Learning and development	55	56	▲ +1	56	0
 Leadership and managing change	46	46	● 0	49	3
 Pay and benefits	30	24	▼ -6	29	5

The civil service's annual people survey looks at civil servants' attitudes to, and experience of, working in government departments. The survey asks staff about topics including pay and leadership and their views of their department's organisational objective and purpose. The most recent survey was carried out between 22 September and 31 October 2022.

The Home Office's results showed lower engagement than the wider civil service, with worse scores in around 90% of the 100+ categories recorded. Its overall employee engagement was 57%, whereas the civil service benchmark (mean) was 61%. Of the first 10 categories, the Home Office results show an improvement on 2021 in six categories. 'Pay and benefits' has seen a decrease of six percentage points. However, compared to the wider civil service, the Home Office performed worse in eight of the 10 categories.

Note

1 The 2022 questionnaire was administered across 102 civil service organisations. Civil servants were asked to answer a set of attitudinal questions on a five-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The answers were used to calculate the employee engagement index and percentage scores for nine survey themes. Five survey questions were used to calculate the employee engagement index: 'I am proud when I tell others I am part of [my organisation]'; 'I would recommend [my organisation] as a great place to work'; 'I feel a strong personal attachment to [my organisation]'; '[my organisation] inspires me to do the best in my job'; and '[my organisation] motivates me to help it achieve its objectives'.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of *Civil Service People survey results* for the years 2021 and 2022

Part Four – Major programmes

Accounting officer assessment of major programmes

Guidance set out by HM Treasury states that accounting officers **must approve projects or programmes which form part of the Government’s Major Projects Portfolio. Our 2016 report, [Accountability to Parliament for taxpayers’ money](#), encouraged accounting officers to provide positive assurance, before key decisions, that programmes complied with the four accounting officer standards: regularity, propriety, feasibility and value for money. In response, the government committed to making available a summary of key points from the accounting officer assessment of major programmes.**

Accounting officer assessments are a critical part of HM Treasury’s controls and processes. Our 2022 report, [Accounting officer assessments: improving decision-making and transparency over government’s major programmes](#), evaluated the extent to which the assessments support good decision-making.

The Home Office published two assessments in the first 10 months of 2023, both concluding that the relevant programme conformed to the four standards.

Programme	Accounting officer summary	Home Office assessment
Home Office Biometrics (HOB) programme	The HOB programme is replacing and enhancing databases of biometric data, such as fingerprints, facial images and DNA, used by border security, law enforcement and the criminal justice system. It will provide services which establish a distinct, digitised, and verifiable identity from an individual’s biometric data that can then, subject to permission, be reused across the Home Office, its partner agencies in the UK and internationally.	There were challenges and delays with one of the key contracts, and with loading data into a new system. A procurement for a new supplier was under way.
International Law Enforcement Alerts Platform (I-LEAP) programme	<p>The I-LEAP programme will provide a new digital alerting platform to allow police and Border Force officers in the UK to share data with their equivalents in partner countries, enabling increased opportunities at the national border or within country to identify persons and objects of interest to law enforcement agencies. Before EU Exit, the UK was able to access data through the Schengen II System.</p> <p>The programme’s first phase will provide access to the FIND (Fixed INTERPOL Network Database) system. The first phase is being rolled out nationally and is already in use by some police forces.</p> <p>The second phase will expand the I-LEAP service to provide reciprocal access to other countries, initially focusing on a potential multilateral solution with the EU.</p>	The programme was adequately resourced and had established structured delivery controls, including a detailed delivery plan. There remained risks with the second phase because the EU was consulting on a new legal framework for non-EU countries to access security-related information.

Source: Home Office accounting officer assessments, January–October 2023

Part Four – Major programmes

Law enforcement and counter-terrorism programmes

The Home Office is responsible for eight major programmes pertaining to law enforcement and counter-terrorism. The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) reports delivery confidence assessments (DCAs) in its annual report. DCAs consider the likelihood of each project delivering its objectives to time and cost. They are assessments provided by the IPA or by the Home Office if the IPA has not undertaken a review in the last six months. The IPA's March 2023 annual report rated the Police Uplift (page 15) and Suspicious Activity

Reports Reform programmes as 'green', four programmes 'amber', and the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) (page 13) was rated 'red'.

Common challenges included unexpected complexity and overoptimism on the timetable for replacing legacy systems and the difficulties of meeting the expectations of a range of law enforcement stakeholders.

Delivery confidence assessments for Home Office major programmes relating to law enforcement and counter-terrorism, March 2021 to March 2023

Programme	What it involves	Date of latest accounting officer assessment	Delivery Confidence Assessment ¹		
			March 2021	March 2022	March 2023
Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme	Replacing the critical mobile communication system for all emergency services in England, Scotland and Wales with a new Emergency Services Network	October 2021	Amber/Red (In doubt)	Amber (Feasible)	Red (Unachievable)
Fraud and Cyber Crime Reporting and Analysis Service	Replacing the Action Fraud system that allows the public to report fraud and cybercrime	September 2022		Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)
Home Office Biometrics Programme	Replacing databases of biometric data, such as fingerprints, facial images and DNA, used by border security, law enforcement and the criminal justice system	March 2023	Amber/Red (In doubt)	Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)
International Law Enforcement Alerts Platform	New alerting digital platform for police and border officers in the UK, and their equivalents in partner countries, to identify persons and objects of interest to law enforcement agencies	February 2023		Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)
National Law Enforcement Data Programme	Replacing the Police National Computer, the main police database of criminal records	September 2022	Red (Unachievable)	Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)
Radiological Nuclear Change Programme (Note 4)	Maintaining and improving the UK's security against terrorist attacks using radiological or nuclear devices	Not published due to sensitivities		Exempt	Exempt
Police Uplift Programme	Supporting the 43 police forces across England and Wales to recruit 20,000 additional police officers by March 2023	September 2022	Amber/Green (Probable)	Amber (Feasible)	Green (highly likely)
Suspicious Activity Reports Reform	Improving the reporting of suspicious activity relating to money laundering and terrorist financing, to support policing and help respond to economic crime	May 2022	Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)	Green (highly likely)

Notes

- 1 Delivery confidence assessments are provided by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) or by the Home Office if the IPA has not undertaken a review in the last six months. They consider the likelihood of each project delivering its objectives to time and cost.^p
- 2 Unrated programmes were not part of the Government Major Projects Portfolio in that year.
- 3 From 2021-22, the IPA no longer awards 'Amber/Green' or 'Amber/Red' ratings.
- 4 The Radiological Nuclear Change Programme was previously known as the Nuclear Security Portfolio.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office accounting officer assessments and Infrastructure and Projects Authority, *Annual Report on Major Projects 2022-23*

Part Four – Major programmes

Borders and migration programmes

The Home Office is responsible for seven major programmes pertaining to borders and migration. The Cerberus programme was rated ‘red’ and all others were ‘amber’.

Common challenges included controlling the scope of transformation programmes and the need to build capacity or skills within the Home Office.

Delivery confidence assessments for Home Office major programmes relating to borders and migration, March 2021 to March 2023

Programme	What it involves	Date of latest accounting officer assessment	Delivery Confidence Assessment ¹		
			March 2021	March 2022	March 2023
Cerberus	New data analytics systems to help Border Force conduct analytics and targeting activities	September 2022	Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)	Red (Unachievable)
Digital Services at the Border	Replacing legacy systems to help Border Force to identify persons of interest at the border	September 2022	Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)
Future Border and Immigration System Programme	Transformation of the UK’s immigration system, including new pre-travel checks and digital visas	September 2022	Amber/Red (In doubt)	Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)
Future Suppliers Services	Re-procurement of application centres for UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)	September 2022	Amber/Red (In doubt)	Amber (Feasible)	Amber (Feasible)
HM Passport Office Transformation	Modernisation of the passport office, including digitising and greater automation of the application process	September 2022	Amber/Red (In doubt)	Red (Unachievable)	Amber (Feasible)
Immigration Platform Technologies	Replacing legacy caseworking systems used by UKVI	September 2022	Amber/Red (In doubt)	Red (Unachievable)	Amber (Feasible)
Sovereign Borders	Creating a new system for immigration and asylum that aims to be fairer, deters illegal entry, and makes it easier to remove people	No assessment published		Exempt	Amber (Feasible)

Notes

- 1 Delivery confidence assessments are provided by the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) or by the Home Office if the IPA has not undertaken a review in the last six months. They consider the likelihood of each project delivering its objectives to time and cost.
- 2 Unrated programmes were not part of the Government Major Projects Portfolio in that year.
- 3 From 2021-22, the IPA no longer awards ‘Amber/Green’ or ‘Amber/Red’ ratings.

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office accounting officer assessments and Infrastructure and Projects Authority, *Annual Report on Major Projects 2022-23*

Part Four – Major programmes

The Emergency Services Network



In 2015, the Home Office contracted with suppliers to provide a new communication network (Emergency Services Network, ESN) to replace its existing Airwave network. All 108 police, fire and ambulance services across England, Scotland and Wales use Airwave, a critical network that enables them to communicate between the field and control rooms. The Home Office intended ESN to fully replace Airwave, cost less and provide emergency services with access to modern mobile data.

Our March 2023 report *Progress with delivering the Emergency Services Network*, concluded that the Home Office was a long way from having a functioning network to replace Airwave. From 2015 to March 2023, the Home Office spent £2 billion on ESN; £2.9 billion running and maintaining Airwave; and £380 million on commercial mobile services. The Home Office reported a ‘constructive loss’ – where spending under a contract proved less useful than envisioned – of £135 million relating to ESN in its 2022-23 accounts. Delays create a significant cost for the emergency services who must pay to fund ESN and to maintain Airwave for longer.

In 2015, the Home Office awarded the main contracts to provide ESN to Motorola, who provided software and systems for ESN and run the Airwave network, and to EE, who provide network infrastructure for ESN.

In April 2021, as the Home Office considered that Motorola’s Airwave profits were excessive and disincentivised it from completing its ESN contract, it wrote to the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA):

- In April 2023, the CMA concluded that a price cap should be imposed on the Airwave network, which could save the Home Office and emergency services a significant amount.
- Motorola has appealed against the CMA’s findings and the appeal was heard by the Competition Appeals Tribunal in August 2023. The price cap is suspended pending the outcome of this appeal.

To remove the risk that it would be forced to sell Airwave, in November 2021, Motorola told the Home Office that it may not extend its involvement in ESN beyond December 2024. In 2022, the Home Office began to find a replacement and agreed to end Motorola’s contract early. It began engaging with the market in October 2022 and expects to award a contract in mid-2024.

- Its May 2023 [contract notice](#) states that the new contract will run until 31 December 2031 (excluding a potential two-year extension) and could cost an estimated £895 million in total.
- Other elements of the programme have been delayed until the Home Office finds a new user services provider.

The Home Office also plans to award EE a new contract for network infrastructure, without competition, extending the role of EE in the programme.

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

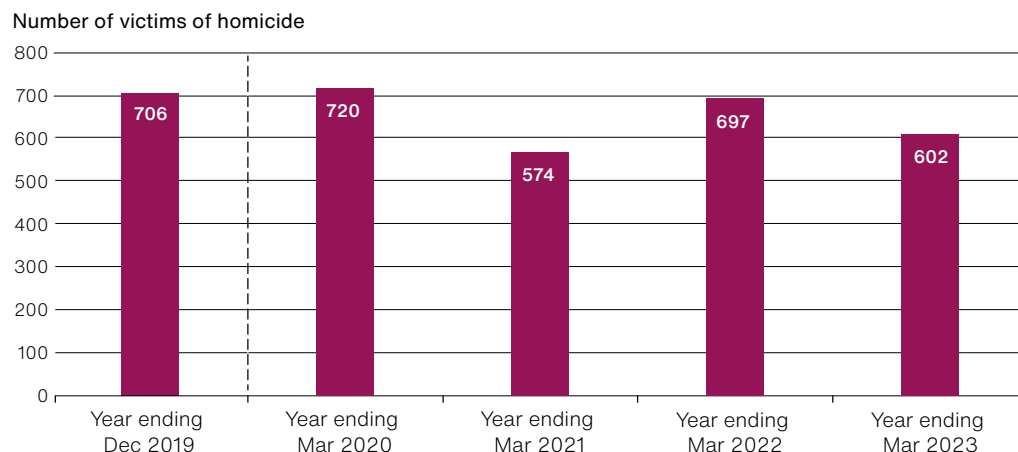
Reducing crime

Performance metrics

The Home Office aims to reduce crime rates including those related to homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime. It has increased the capacity of law enforcement through the Police Uplift programme and is implementing a range of other initiatives to tackle the causes of crime. The Home Office is also committed to tackling violence against women and girls through the Domestic Abuse Act. Its performance metrics include the:

- level of specific crimes.** The number of homicide victims is 15% lower in the year to March 2023 (602 homicides) than the 706 homicides in the year to December 2019 – which the Home Office uses as a baseline. The numbers of drug-related homicides increased from 336 in the year to March 2020 to 360 in the year to March 2022. Serious violence, as measured by hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object among under-25s in England and Wales, fell 25% from 1,923 in the year to December 2019, to 1,436 in the year to March 2023. Incidents of neighbourhood crime (personal robbery, theft from the person, domestic burglary and vehicle crime) fell from 2.0 million to 1.5 million;

Victims of homicide in England and Wales in the year ending December 2019 to the year ending March 2023

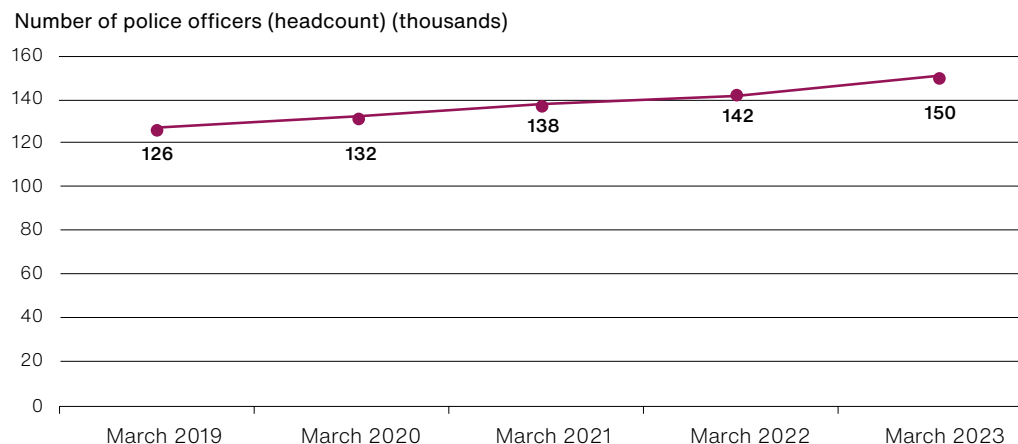


Source: Office for National Statistics, *Police recorded crime from the Home Office, 2019–2023*

The Home Office has four priority outcomes: reduce crime; reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK and UK interests overseas; enable the legitimate movement of people and goods to support economic prosperity; and tackle illegal migration, removing those with no right to be here and protecting the vulnerable.

- level of overall crime.** The Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey, *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2023*, found that total crime in the year ending March 2023 was 15% lower than in the year ending March 2020 (23% lower excluding fraud and computer misuse). These data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales have temporarily had their National Statistics status suspended while the ONS assesses data quality since the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- the number of police officers.** Through its Police Uplift programme (page 15), the Home Office recruited more than 20,000 additional officers between 2019 and 2023, increasing total police numbers from an adjusted baseline of 128,433 to 149,566 police officers in March 2023.

Number of police officers in England and Wales, March 2019 to March 2023



Note

1 The Home Office established a baseline of 128,433 police officers as the starting position against which its Police Uplift programme would be measured. It did this by adjusting the March 2019 headcount for locally funded recruitment activity that forces were already planning for 2019-20, and agreeing subsequent adjustment requests by police forces.

Source: Home Office, *Police workforce, England and Wales, 2019–2022*

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

Reducing crime

Increasing the number of police officers

The Police Uplift programme was launched in 2019 to respond to increases in recorded crime and a “seriously stretched” police workforce. The £3.6 billion programme aimed to recruit 20,000 additional police officers by March 2023. In April 2023, the Home Office announced it had surpassed its target.

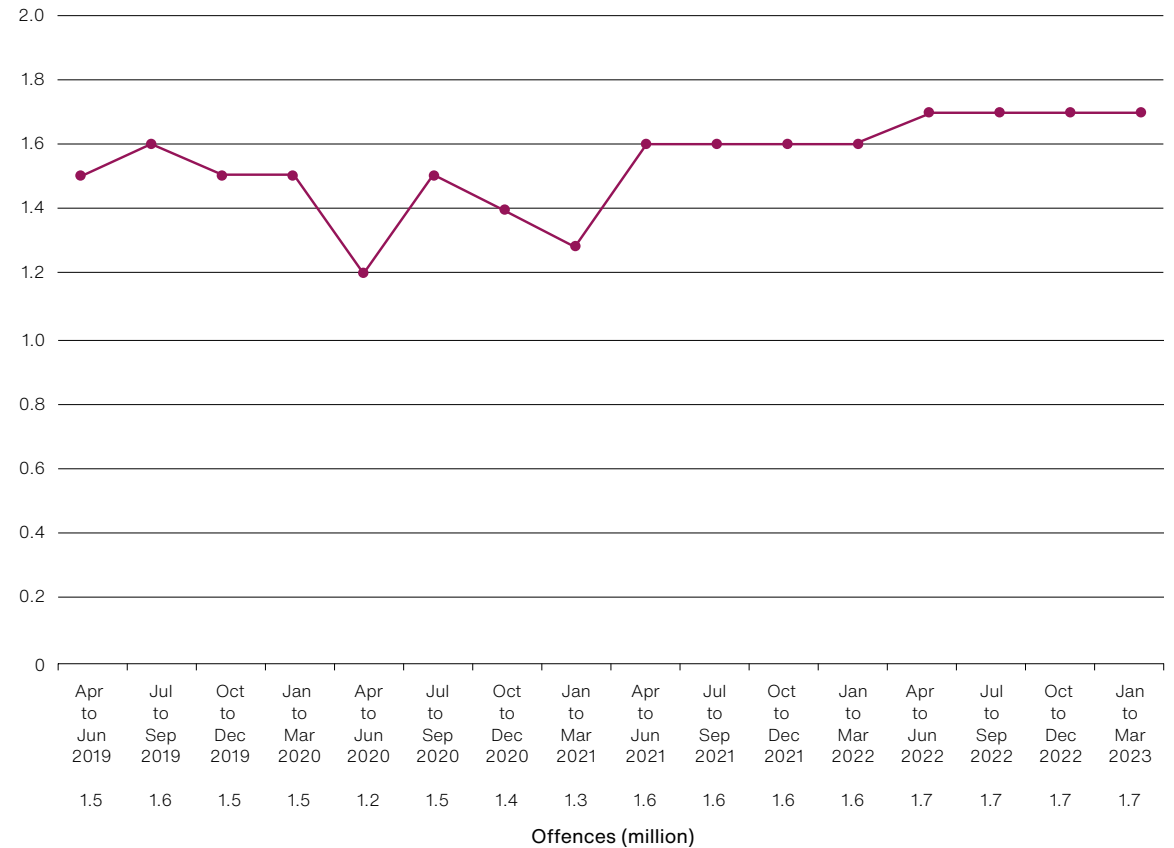
Our March 2022 report, *The Police Uplift Programme*, concluded that, while the programme had benefited from tightly defined objectives, strong support and effective joint working, it would not by itself achieve the Home Office’s desired outcomes of reducing crime and improving public confidence in police. We raised a number of challenges that needed to be met to secure value for money, including:

- the need to manage the organisational impact of such large-scale recruitment – to increase the workforce by 20,000 while replacing officers who have left, forces recruited a total of 46,504 officers, diluting the experience of the police;
- that the Home Office had poor data on the demands facing policing and used an outdated and discredited funding formula to allocate the new officers to police forces; and
- the tensions between the need to recruit quickly and the effort required to improve diversity – the Home Office expected the programme would help forces to become more representative of the communities they serve. Police diversity has increased slowly. The percentage of female police officers increased from 32% (31 March 2019) to 36% (31 March 2023), and the percentage from an ethnic minority increased from 7% to 8% over the same period. The percentages of female and ethnic minority police officers are higher than any year since the year ending 31 March 2003, the earliest for which the Home Office has comparable data. However, [Baroness Casey’s March 2023 review of the Metropolitan Police](#) concluded that “the Police Uplift Programme has been a missed opportunity to improve the diversity and skills base of [the Met’s] workforce”.

Despite the success in increasing police numbers, the police face challenges. In 2023, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services’ report, *State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2022* found that policing was “experiencing one of their biggest crises in living memory”. This was a result of high-profile incidents where police officers committed serious offences and wider factors, such as low charge rates and the withdrawal from neighbourhood policing.

Police recorded crime in England and Wales by quarter, April 2019 to March 2023

Number of recorded offences per quarter (million)



Source: National Audit Office analysis of Office for National Statistics, *Police recorded crime from the Home Office*; March 2021 and March 2023 releases

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

Reducing crime

National strategies for fraud and drugs

The Home Office is leading the government's response against fraud and illegal drugs. We have examined both areas in recent reports

Fraud is a significant and growing problem and tackling it requires coordinated action from government, bodies across the public and private sectors and the public. Our November 2022 report, *Progress combating fraud*, examined the Home Office's approach to leading the response to tackle fraud. It found that:

- in the year ending June 2022, fraud accounted for 41% of all crime committed against individuals but the number of fraud offences resulting in a charge or summons is 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*. The strategy sets out government's aim to cut fraud by 10% from 2019 levels.



41%

In the year ending June 2022, fraud accounted for 41% of all crime committed against individuals but the number of fraud offences resulting in a charge or summons is falling.

The Home Office is also responsible for UK drug legislation and UK borders. It hosts the cross-government Joint Combating Drugs Unit, which is leading implementation of the government's drugs strategy, *From harm to hope*, which was published in December 2021. Our October 2023 report, *Reducing the harm from illegal drugs*, on early progress in implementing this strategy found that:

- the government has established new structures and committed additional funding of £0.9 billion, providing a new focus on efforts to tackle the harms from illegal drugs. The bulk of the funding has been allocated to improving treatment and recovery services;
- the strategy has not yet led to a fundamental shift in approaches to disrupting supply and improving treatment and recovery;
- progress so far has been mixed, but the closure of county lines (note 1) increased by 15% compared with the previous year and more than 1,200 new alcohol and drug workers were recruited in 2022-23; and
- the government does not have a good understanding of how to reduce the demand for illegal drugs.

We concluded that the measures implemented in the first three years of the strategy will not address all of the barriers to achieving a long-term reduction in drug use, deaths and related crime. The issues are complex and will require a sustained long-term response. The government will only achieve value for money if it builds on the initial momentum of the new strategy and develops a longer-term, funded plan that delivers a joined-up, holistic response.

Note

- 1 County lines is the name given to drug dealing where organised criminal groups use phone lines to move and supply drugs, usually from cities into smaller towns and rural areas.

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

Reducing the risk from terrorism

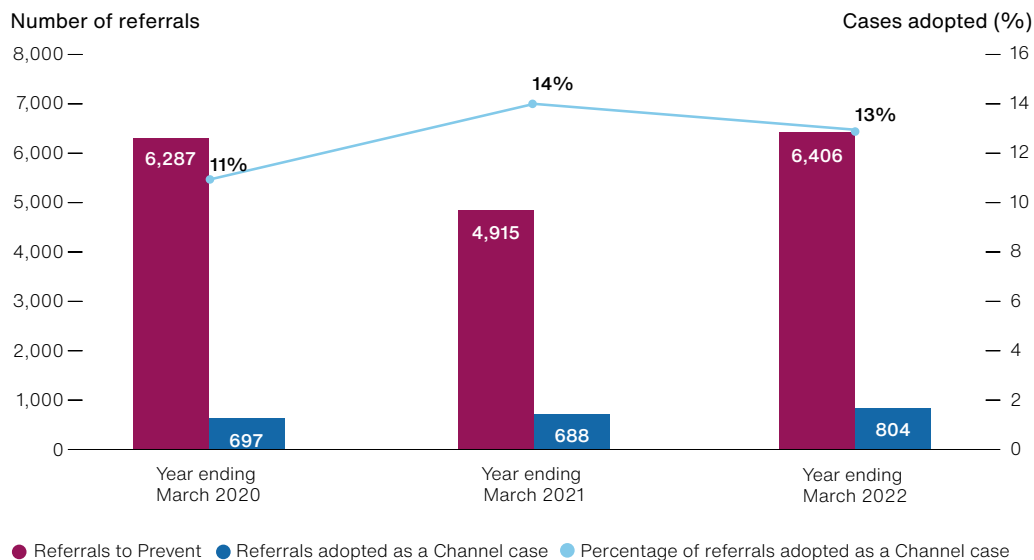
Performance metrics

The *national threat level* from terrorism was reduced to ‘Substantial’ (a terrorist attack is ‘likely’) in February 2022, before which it was ‘Severe’ (an attack is ‘highly likely’). The threat level from Northern Ireland-related terrorism in Northern Ireland has remained at ‘Severe’ since March 2023.

The Home Office refreshed its *Counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST)* in July 2023, which comprises the four strands of Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare.

Individuals who are referred to the Prevent programme over concerns about their potential radicalisation may be considered by a ‘Channel panel’ to determine the extent of their vulnerability. After discussion with the Channel panel, cases can be ‘adopted’ and people receive support and monitoring.

Referrals to Prevent adopted by a Channel panel in England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to March 2022

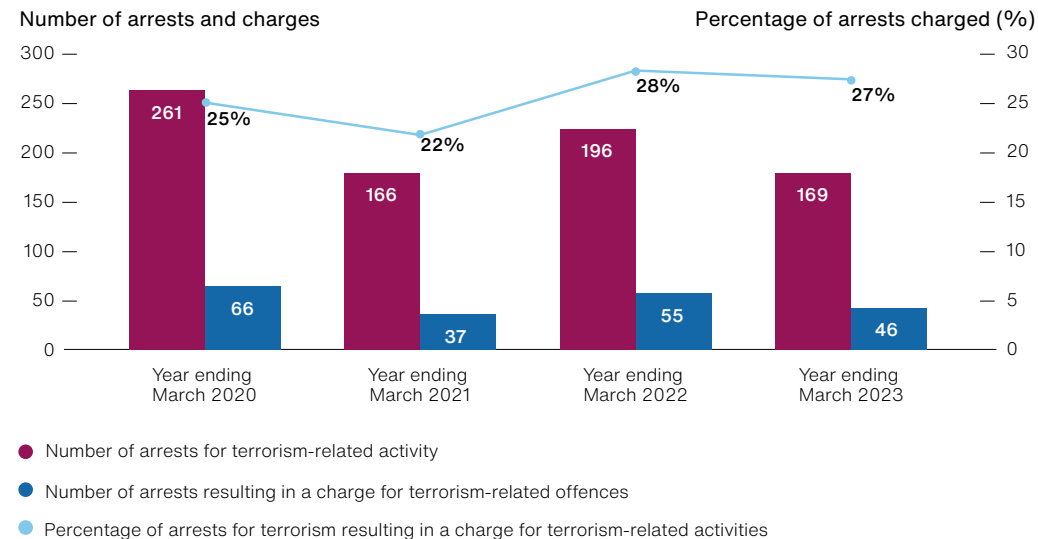


Source: Home Office, *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent programme, 2020–2023*

The number of referrals to Prevent was highest in the year ended March 2022. The percentage of cases ‘adopted’ by the Channel panel has remained between 11% and 14% since 2020. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not yet available.

The number of arrests for terrorism-related activity decreased from 196 in 2021-22 to 169 in 2022-23. The proportion of arrests resulting in a terrorism-related charge was 27% in 2022-23, down from 28% in the previous year. This is lower than in 2019-20, which saw 261 arrests and 35% resulting in a charge.

Number of arrests and charges for terrorism-related activity in Great Britain, year ending March 2020 to March 2023



Source: Home Office, *Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation: Arrests, outcomes, and stop and search Great Britain, 2020–2023*

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

Reducing the risk from terrorism

The Counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST)

In 2022-23, Home Office's Homeland Security Group spent £1.5 billion. Funding for counter-terrorism policing, including the Counter Terrorism Operations Centre, was more than £1 billion in 2022-23, and will be maintained for 2023-24. The Home Office also made £25 million of new funding available to provide protective security at mosques and Muslim faith schools, and £14 million to fund protective security measures at Jewish establishments.

The Counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST)

The Home Office published a new UK *Counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST)*, in July 2023. Its aim is to reduce the risk from terrorism to the UK, its citizens and interests overseas, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence.

The CONTEST strategy includes the introduction of 'Martyn's Law' to improve security at public venues. The draft Bill, published on 2 May 2023, would, if agreed, place a requirement on those responsible for certain premises and events to consider the threat from terrorism and implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures.

Shawcross independent review

An independent review of the Prevent workstream by William Shawcross CVO, *Independent Review of Prevent*, was published in February 2023. The review contained 34 recommendations and found that:

- there is a need to set one standard and have consistent application in its approach to every ideology. This would entail a better understanding of the various ideologies that relate to radicalisation, increased expertise and a robust due diligence process when deciding with whom it partners and funds; and
- Prevent should encourage public confidence by creating processes for responding robustly to disinformation about the programme and encourage public trust by improving transparency and establishing better oversight. It was not clear where valid complaints and concerns about Prevent should be raised, nor was there an independent process that could examine and rebut false claims disseminated by bad faith actors.

The Home Office accepted the Shawcross recommendations and committed to:

- redefining its guidance to clearly specify the need to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism and ensure mandatory training on ideology for all Prevent staff and the frontline sectors;
- moving to a regional delivery model directly overseen by the Home Office; and
- improving transparency and establishing better oversight of how Prevent is implemented. This includes publishing more granular data on referrals; creating a new standards and compliance unit; and strengthening ministerial oversight.

It expects to implement most of the recommendations by February 2024.

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

Enabling legitimate migration

Performance metrics

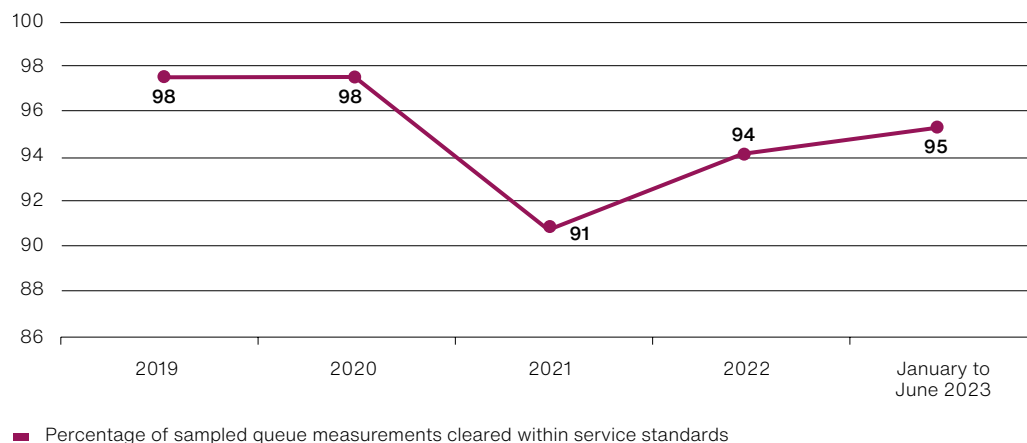
The Home Office service standards are to clear 95% of European Economic Area (EEA) passengers entering the UK through border control within 25 minutes and 95% of non-EEA passengers in 45 minutes.

In 2022, 94% of passengers were cleared within standards – an improvement on 2021 (91%) but still below target.

In the first six months of 2023, 95% of passengers were cleared within standards, continuing the improvement seen in 2022.

Clearance of passengers at the UK border within service standards, January 2019 to June 2023

Percentage of passengers cleared within service standards (%)



Note

1 Only two quarters of data are available for 2023.

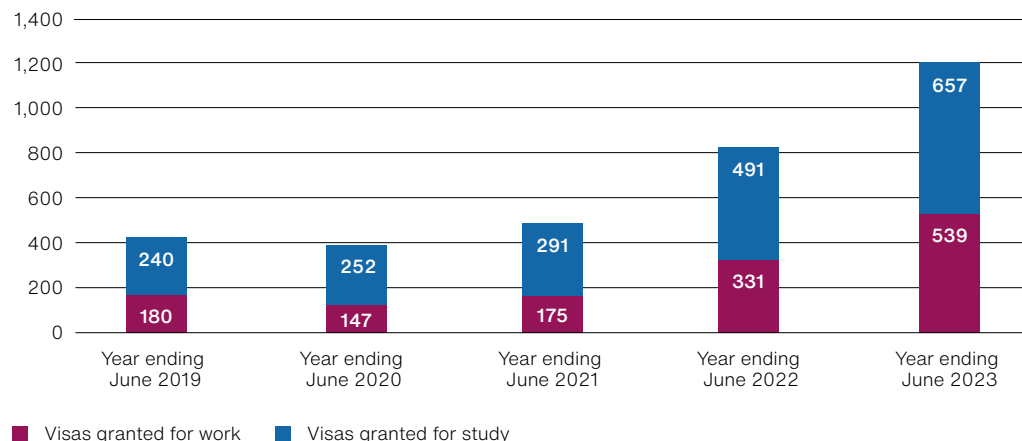
Source: Home Office, *Border Force transparency data: Q2 2023*

The number of visas granted by the Home Office for either work or study purposes (rather than, for example, for short-term tourism or visits to family) have increased consistently since 2019, to almost 1.2 million in the year ended June 2023.

The largest increase has been in visas granted for work purposes, which has increased by 63% since the year ended June 2022. Visas for study increased by 34% in the same period.

Visas granted for work and study, year ending June 2019 to June 2023

Number of visas granted (thousands)



Source: Home Office, *How many people come to the UK each year (including visitors)?, 2019–2023*

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

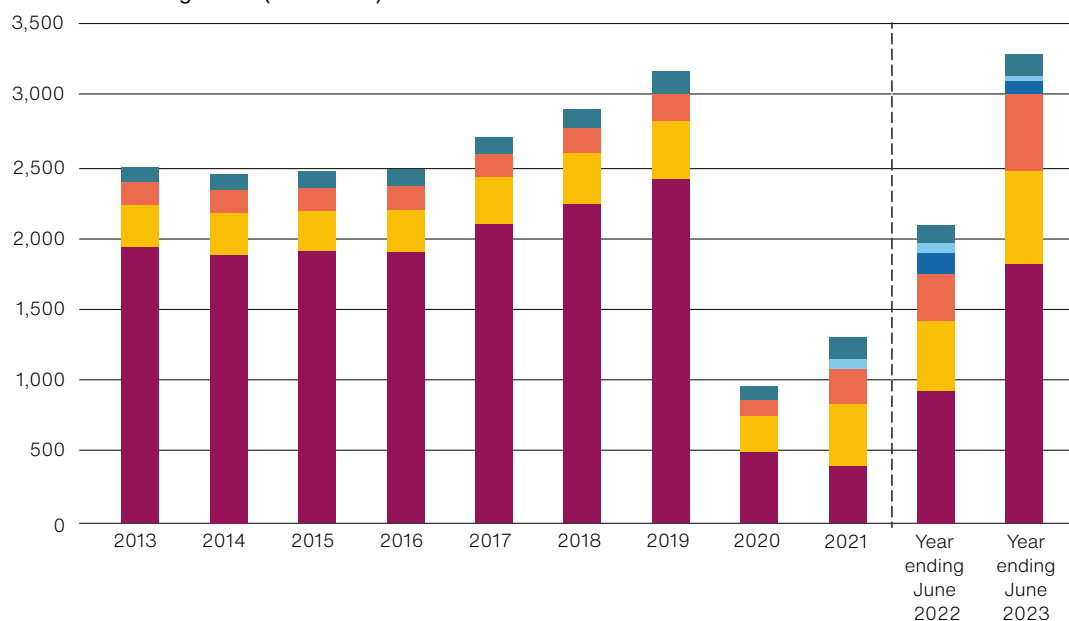
Enabling legitimate migration

Visas for people to travel to the UK

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) is responsible for issuing UK visas. In 2022-23, UKVI received visa fees totalling £2.2 billion, equivalent to 214% of its costs, exceeding its target of 202%. The £1.2 billion surplus was used to fund other Home Office activities.

Visas granted to applicants outside the UK, 2013 to year ending June 2023

Number of visas granted (thousands)



Other visas	107	109	116	118	117	132	161	96	148	121	148
British National (Overseas) visas	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	76	76	37
Ukraine schemes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	144	90
Work visas	155	167	166	164	165	176	193	115	239	331	539
Study visas	296	294	273	294	330	355	404	250	435	491	657
Visitor visas	1,939	1,879	1,914	1,903	2,096	2,240	2,413	501	402	926	1,815
Total visas granted	2,496	2,449	2,468	2,479	2,708	2,902	3,172	962	1,300	2,087	3,287

Source: National Audit Office analysis of Home Office, *Entry clearance visas granted outside the UK*, June 2023

Following the COVID-19 pandemic the number of visas issued to people not already in the UK fell by 70% in 2020, and remained below the 2019 level in the year ending June 2022. Average visa processing times have increased from around 25 days in 2019 to more than 50 days at the end of 2022.

The increase reflects:

- **new types of visas**, including immigration routes for people from Ukraine in 2022 and ‘British National (Overseas)’ status holders from Hong Kong from 2021. Our October 2023 *Investigation into the Homes for Ukraine Scheme*, found that, to process visas faster, at one point, the Home Office had moved just over 400 of its staff processing other visa types onto Ukraine schemes as well as bringing in staff from other government departments; and
- **changing rules**. Some EU citizens coming to the UK for work now need a visa. This creates additional work for the Home Office.

The data do not include applications to the EU Settlement Scheme, which allows people from the EU, European Economic Area or Switzerland who were already resident in the UK at 11pm on 31 December 2020 to apply for UK immigration status. The Home Office estimates that from 7.4 million applications, 6.2 million people applied to the scheme, and of these, 5.6 million had been granted a status by 30 June 2023. The deadline for applying was 30 June 2021, but late applications may be possible in some circumstances.

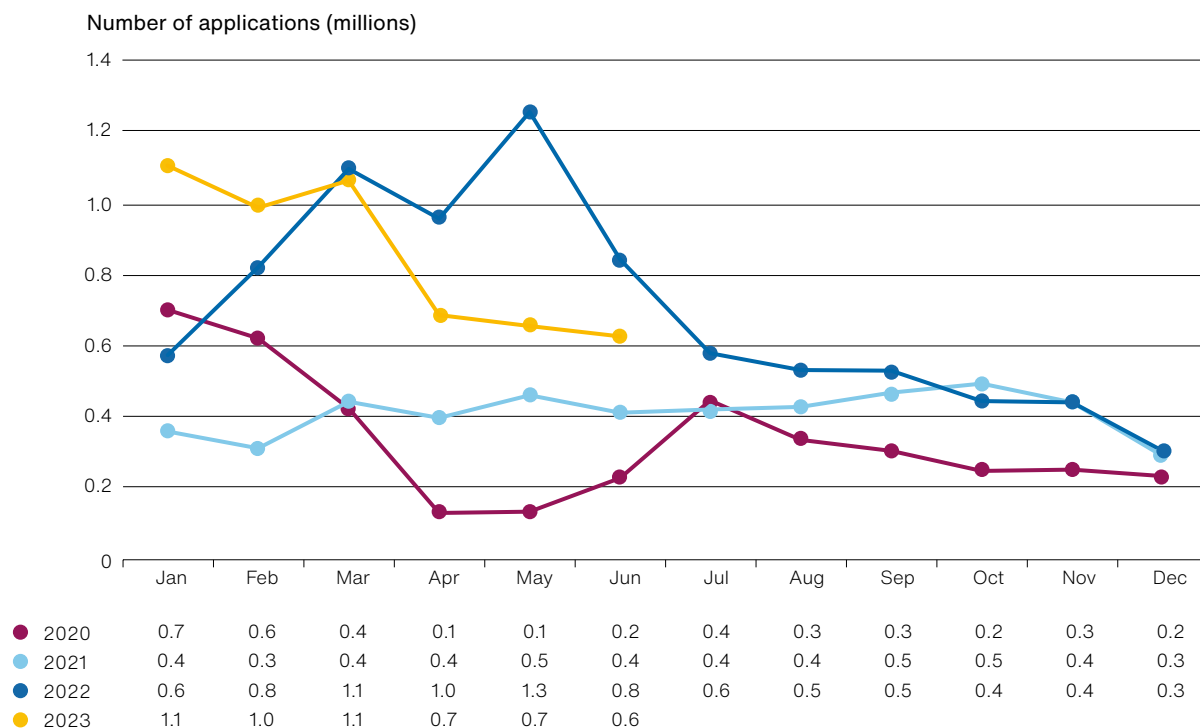
Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

Enabling legitimate migration

Passports

HM Passport Office (HMPO) is part of the Home Office. Its mission is “to issue passports to citizens of the United Kingdom on behalf of the Crown” as a means of securing UK borders.

UK passport applications by month, January 2020 to June 2023



Source: Home Office, HM Passport Office transparency data Q2 2023

Our December 2022 *Investigation into the performance of HM Passport Office* looked into HMPO’s response to the surge in demand for passports following the removal of travel restrictions introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. It found that while the majority of customers received a good service, a significant number did not.

Our report recommended that HMPO:

- **Manage customers and their expectations**
 - In April 2021, HMPO advised the public to allow up to 10 weeks for new passports to be processed.
 - The following year, seven million applications were made between January 2022 and September 2022, an increase of 95% over the same period in 2021.
 - By the end of September 2022, some 360,000 customers (5%) experienced waits longer than 10 weeks, and the average time taken to process passports was 12 days for straightforward applications and 29 days for non-straightforward ones.
- **Integrate workforce and demand planning**
 - In order to rebuild capacity and improve the application process, the Home Office increased passport office staff by more than 1,200 between April 2021 and the summer of 2022.
- **Improve management information**
 - The Home Office’s 2022-23 accounts state that it processes more than 99% of standard applications within 10 weeks, and the average processing time in 2022 was 16 days. The Home Office is yet to publish data on the average time to process passports after December 2022.

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

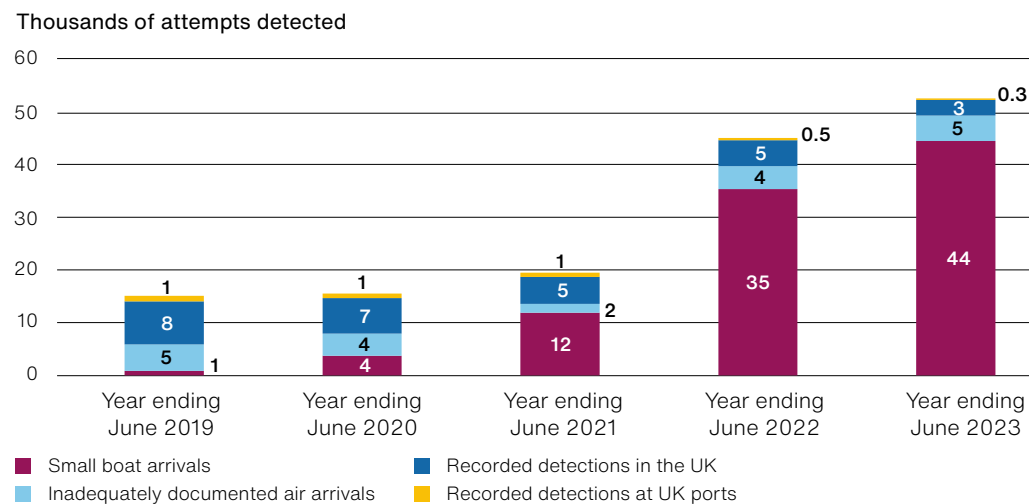
Tackling illegal migration

Performance metrics

The Home Office aims to prevent illegal migration. It seeks to stop people entering the country through irregular routes; has committed to reform the asylum system; and seeks to help 'protected individuals' via its resettlement work. Its performance metrics include:

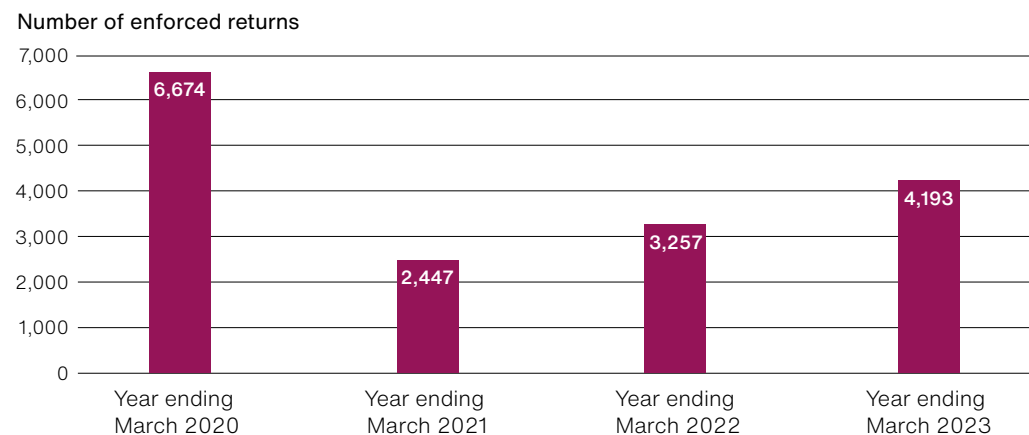
- attempts to enter the UK irregularly.** These have increased year-on-year – there were 52,530 recorded instances where people entered the UK irregularly in the year ending 30 June 2023, more than three times the number recorded in the year ending 30 June 2019 (15,101). Small boat arrivals now make up the bulk of these attempts – with 44,460 attempts in the year ending 30 June 2023 compared with 880 attempts in the year ending 30 June 2019;
- detecting irregular arrivals in the UK.** Detections in the UK and at UK ports decreased from 5,349 in the year ending 30 June 2022 to 3,266 in the year ending 30 June 2023; and
- enforced returns.** In the year ending 31 March 2023, enforced returns from the UK had increased by 29% compared with the year ending 31 March 2022, rising above 4,000 people per year. Enforced returns include people who arrived regularly, such as foreign national offenders.

Detected attempts to enter the UK irregularly, year ending June 2019 to June 2023



Source: Home Office, *Irregular migration to the UK, year ending June 2023*

Enforced returns from the UK, year ending March 2020 to March 2023



Source: Home Office, *Immigration system statistics, Returns detailed data tables, June 2023*

Part Five – Home Office priority outcomes

Tackling illegal migration

Responding to small boat arrivals

The Home Office is responsible for preventing people entering the country through irregular routes. Its priority is stopping arrivals by small boats.

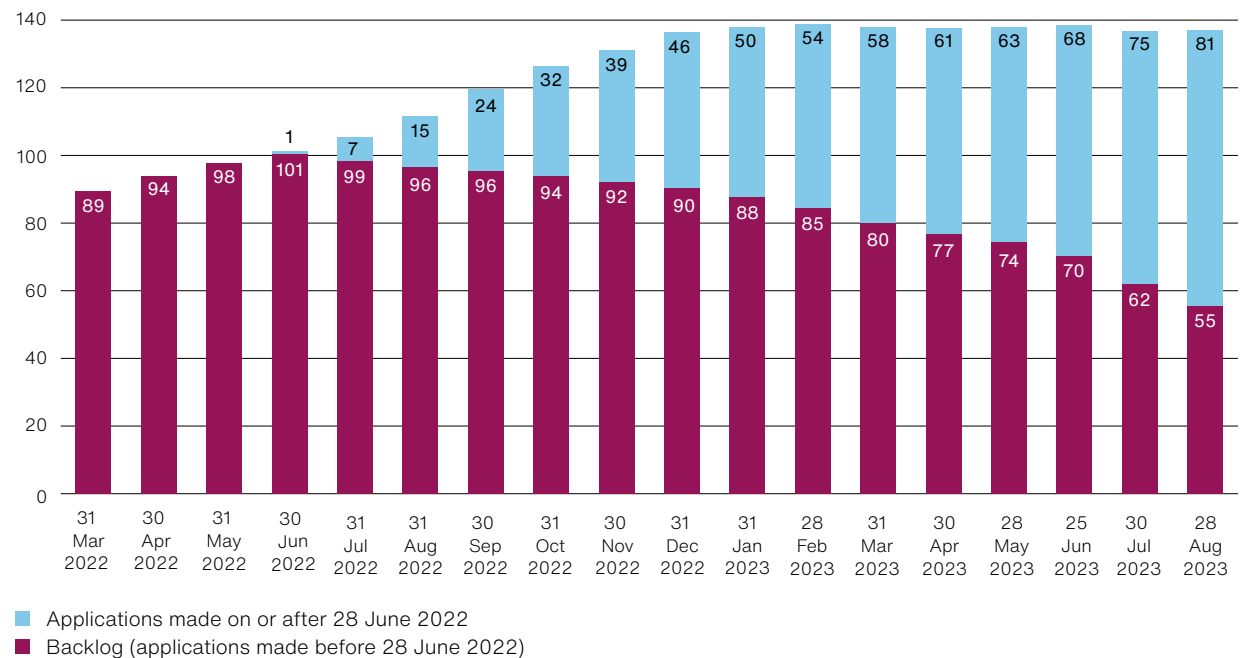
August 2022 saw the highest number of small boat arrivals (8,574) in a month since the small boats data recording began in 2018. Home Office showed that 90% of people arriving on small boats claim asylum (or were a dependant on an asylum application). At the end of June 2023, 96% of asylum seekers in receipt of support were in accommodation because they would otherwise be destitute. In 2022-23, the Home Office spent some £3.6 billion supporting asylum seekers including £2.7 billion on accommodation. The Home Office expects its asylum and protection transformation programme to reduce costs by:

- making asylum decisions faster.** The Prime Minister made a statement on irregular migration on 13 December 2022, saying: “We expect to abolish the backlog of initial asylum decisions [where applications were made before 28 June 2022] by the end of next year.” The Home Office has nearly doubled the number of asylum decisions made each week, but as of 28 August 2023, 55,000 cases where the application was made before 28 June 2022 were still open; and
- increasing its supply of dispersal accommodation, to reduce its reliance on costly hotels.** The Home Office’s annual report states that it spends some £8 million per day on hotels. To reduce its use of hotels, it aimed to find an additional 350 beds a week between April 2023 and March 2025, but in the year to the end of April 2023 it only found an average of 48 additional beds a week. The Home Office has introduced, or plans to introduce, new types of accommodation including large-scale centres and barges. The NAO is conducting an investigation into [asylum accommodation](#), which will provide further information on these initiatives.

Our June 2023 report, [The asylum and protection transformation programme](#), found that to achieve value for money, the Home Office needs to better coordinate and manage the impacts of the full range of changes it is implementing.

Asylum applications awaiting an initial decision, March 2022 to August 2023

Applications awaiting an initial decision (thousands)



Source: Home Office, *Statistics relating to the Illegal Migration Act: data tables to August 2023*

Part Five – Priority outcomes

Tackling illegal migration

The Illegal Migration Act

The *Illegal Migration Act 2023* (the Act) became law in July 2023 and requires the Home Office to detain and remove people arriving through irregular routes to safe third countries and introduce a cap on the number of people that can arrive through safe and legal routes.

The UK will need to make agreements with other countries to implement the Act. The Home Office announced a Migration and Economic Development Partnership agreement with Rwanda in April 2022, but this was challenged in the UK courts. On 29 May 2023, the Court of Appeal *ruled* that, in principle, relocating asylum seekers to a safe third country to process their claims is in line with the Refugee Convention. However, it found that there are deficiencies in the asylum system in Rwanda which mean there remains a risk that individuals relocated to Rwanda could be returned to their home country despite having a need for protection. This means that the Home Office cannot currently send people to Rwanda. The Home Office is appealing this ruling.

By March 2023, the UK had paid the Government of Rwanda £140 million as part of the Migration and Economic Development Partnership agreement:

- £120 million as part of a new ‘Economic Transformation and Integration Fund’ to support the economic development and growth of Rwanda; and
- an advance payment of £20 million for future asylum and operational costs such as caseworkers, legal advice, translators, accommodation, food, healthcare and support.

Implementing the Act will require the Home Office to increase its capacity to:

- **detain people in appropriate secure accommodation until they are removed.** The University of Oxford’s migration observatory *estimated* that the Home Office had the capacity to detain 2,245 people as of 2022, and the Home Office’s 2022-23 accounts report that it held 1,159 people in immigration detention at the end of December 2022 (including those detained under immigration powers in prison). On 19 September 2023, the *Brook House Inquiry Report* made 33 recommendations to ensure that the purpose of immigration detention is properly reflected and maintained in centres at which individuals are detained prior to their removal from the UK; and
- **carry out enforced removals.** In the year ending 31 March 2023, there were 4,193 enforced returns, 37% fewer than the year ending 31 March 2020 (6,674). The Home Office’s accounts report that removals have been declining since 2012, with the most recent decrease related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced space in the detention estate due to social distancing and also increasingly late legal challenges.

In September 2023, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact’s report, *Update on ODA eligibility of funding for refugees in the UK*, found that implementing the Act will impact the UK’s commitment to spend 0.5% of Gross National Income on official development assistance (ODA). Previously, under international aid rules, some of the costs of supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the first year after their arrival in the UK were counted as ODA, but this may no longer be possible since ODA-eligible activities must not include denial of freedom of movement, detention or involuntary removal.

Part Six – Environmental targets

Environmental targets

In June 2022, the Climate Change Committee published its annual assessment of the UK’s *Progress in reducing emissions*, which included recommendations for the Home Office to publish a net zero carbon strategy, and to meet its *Greening Government Commitments* (GGC) targets. GGC targets require departments to reduce emissions from their central property estate and business travel, but do not include other emissions, such as the asylum estate or wider supply chain.

The Home Office has yet to publish a net zero carbon strategy but has created a ‘green strategy’ and shared this with its staff. This includes a new digital sustainability strategy to reduce the Home Office’s “digital heap”, the build-up of redundant data and information that can have a significant carbon impact”. Several of the Home Office’s major programmes to replace legacy systems are delayed (pages 11 and 12).

The Home Office's accounts report that it is on track to meet most of its GGC targets.

The Home Office’s progress against the Greening Government Commitments, 2021-22 to 2022-23

Requirement by March 2025 (against 2017-18 baseline)	2021-22 performance (%)	2022-23 performance (%)	Performance exceeds 2025 target?	Performance improved compared with 2021-22?
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 44%	48	47	Yes	No
Reduce direct greenhouse gas emissions by 25%	47	61	Yes	No
Meet government fleet commitment for 25% of car fleet to be ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV) by 31 December 2022, and for 100% of the car and van fleet to be fully zero emissions at the tailpipe by 31 December 2027	36 (as at 31 December 2021)	Plug-in hybrid (ULEV): 36; Full electric: 3 (full fleet, not just cars)	Partially	Yes
Reduce the emissions from domestic business flights by at least 30% (based on kilometres travelled)	72	11	No	No
Reduce overall waste by 15%	43	47	Yes	Yes
Reduce paper use by 50%	73	68	Yes	No
Recycle more than 70% of waste	66	62	No	No
Send less than 5% of waste to landfill	6	8	No	No
Reduce water consumption by at least 8%	12	31	Yes	Yes

■ No ■ Yes

Source: Home Office, *Annual Report and Accounts, 2021-22 and 2022-23*

Climate change will also have wider implications for the Home Office, for example in its impact on the movement of refugees. In 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) *said*: “Displacement linked to climate change is not a future hypothetical – it’s a current reality”.