



HMI PRISONS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23: FAQs

This document provides more information about issues covered by the annual report which we are often asked about by journalists. For any other questions, please email media@hmiprisons.gov.uk

What data does the report draw on?

The annual report draws on data and findings from reports published between April 2022 and March 2023. This includes the views of:

- 6,746 prisoners from completed prisoner surveys during this period
- 4,221 prison staff working in adult prisons from completed staff surveys
- 229 detainees held in immigration removal centres from completed detainee surveys.

A full list of inspection reports and reports from independent reviews of progress is included in the report in Appendix. The report also draws on findings from eight thematic reviews published in this period which include:

- *The experiences of adult black male prisoners and black prison staff*
- *The experience of immigration detainees in prisons*
- *Children in Custody 2021–22*
- *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the criminal justice system – a progress report* (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection)
- *Twenty years on, is MAPPA achieving its objectives?* (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection).
- *A thematic review of outcomes for girls in custody* (jointly with HMI Probation, Ofsted, CQC and Care Inspectorate Wales).

- *A joint thematic inspection of Offender Management in Custody – pre-release* (jointly with HMI Probation).
- *Weekends in prison* (report finalised in March 2023, published in April 2023).

What is the inspectorate most concerned about?

- The single greatest concern highlighted in the report is the failure of prisons to return to pre-pandemic levels of purposeful activity.
- Out of 37 men's prison inspection scores during 2022-23, only one prison was rated good for purposeful activity. The remaining 36 were rated insufficiently good or poor.
- This is particularly concerning in Category C prisons where men may spend many years, and whose primary role is meant to be training and resettlement, providing men with the skills they need to secure employment on release and so reduce their risk of reoffending.
- While purposeful activity was particularly poor in men's prisons, women and children also continued to spend far too long locked in their cells, particularly at weekends.
- In the men's estate, in addition to the lack of purposeful activity, we were concerned that levels of violence remain too high and there is too little work to encourage good behaviour.
- In women's prisons, we were very concerned by rising self-harm and the number of acutely mentally unwell women being held in prison who should have been in a hospital to which transfers were taking far too long.
- In young offender institutions, the levels of violence were far too high and most institutions were relying on keep-aparts and separation to manage conflict between individuals and groups. This had far-reaching effects on the regime, even creating additional conflict rather than resolving it.

What does the report say about staffing?

- The report notes that major staff shortfalls continued to have a devastating effect on the delivery of good outcomes for prisoners. The staffing challenge was not confined to frontline officers but extended across all services, including health, education and offender management.

- Recruitment and retention problems were broadly attributable to the current employment climate and market forces, but evidence from inspections also indicated other factors, including a negative prison culture, lack of management support and unmet expectations about the nature of prison work.
- The report also highlights concerns about levels of violence against prison staff, which have increased, and the lack of support that operational prison staff receive in their highly pressured roles.
- Our staff survey found: 23% of all staff said they met a manager or mentor only once a year or less; 25% said their morale at work was low and a further 15% that it was very low.

What does the report say about prison populations and overcrowding?

- HMI Prisons is not involved in sentencing policy, we are interested in the outcomes for detention and detainees.
- Many of our inspection reports in 2022-23 noted overcrowding, particularly in men's reception prisons where we were concerned to find men sharing cramped cells designed for one person which were often in very poor condition.
- The knock-on effect of overcrowding, particularly when combined with staffing pressures, is often a reduced regime with men spending longer locked in their cells instead of taking part in purposeful activity such education, training or work that would support them in finding employment on release and so reduce their risk of reoffending.
- Spending too long confined to small cells can also have a negative effect on prisoner's physical and mental health with reduced access to fresh air, exercise and human company.
- Our thematic review of weekends in prison, when staffing is leanest, found that many men and women continued to spend almost the entire weekend locked in their cell, with vulnerable prisoners in crisis forced to suffer in silence behind locked doors.

What does the report say about IPP prisoners?

- The report makes no detailed analysis of the particular needs or challenges of prisoners serving indeterminate sentences for public protection.
- It does note that those prisoners serving long or indeterminate sentences were often unable to access programmes that enabled them to reduce their risk and so progress in their sentence plans. Aside from this group of men being in particular need of such interventions for public protection, feeling unable to make progress towards any kind of goal can seriously affect mental health and overall well-being.

What does the report say about remand prisoners?

- Offender management statistics show that the remand population has grown by 50% since the COVID-19 pandemic, rising from 9,708 in December 2019 to 14,591 in March 2023.
- This increase was most clearly seen in reception prisons inspected by HMI Prisons – for instance, the proportion of prisoners on remand or convicted but unsentenced was 30% in Lewes, 55% in Exeter, and 68% in Pentonville.
- In Forest Bank, where 44% of prisoners were on remand or were convicted but unsentenced, the prison was unable to accommodate the prisoners who were remanded and prisoners were routinely transferred to prisons many miles away.
- We frequently reported on the disadvantages faced by prisoners on remand, particularly since the new unification of probation services contracts.
- Newly remanded prisoners were lucky if they got help with tenancy arrangements or debt and in our thematic work, we came across some particularly concerning cases where women had been unable to make suitable arrangements before going into prison and had been burgled or had their identities stolen while they were on remand.

What does the report say about the illegal migration bill?

- The report does not comment on the illegal migration bill.
- At HMI Prisons we focus on the outcomes of detention based on the findings of our independent inspections of places of detention. The criteria that we

use for our inspections are called expectations, which are based on international human rights standards. You can read the expectations for immigration here: Immigration detention Expectations (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

- Should the Bill gain Royal Assent HMI Prisons will inspect how its application affects the conditions and treatment of detainees.

What does the report say about race?

- The report notes that work to promote fair treatment of prisoners from different groups had been slow to resume following COVID-19 restrictions.
- The management of discrimination complaints was inconsistent, with responses often late or not addressing the issues raised. In some prisons, allegations of discrimination were not recorded as such and instead dealt with as general complaints, masking the true scale of the issues.
- We saw positive practice at prisons including The Mount, where an external organisation had been facilitating consultation with black and minority ethnic prisoners; Bedford displayed equality data to help address concerns about unequal treatment; and Wayland had designed cultural awareness training for staff.
- The report also highlights the findings of 'Thematic review: the experiences of black adult male prisoners and staff' published in December 2022.
- This reported that divisions between black prisoners and white prison staff are entrenched throughout the prison service.
- While inspectors found evidence of direct, explicit racism, black prisoners and black prison staff told us that subtle and insidious racism affected them more and that this was widespread and persistent. The review, based on interviews with 100 black male prisoners, 27 black prison staff, 17 senior managers and 39 other prison staff, found that disproportionality, such as in the use of force, and ineffective systems aimed at addressing discrimination were persistent issues that negatively impacted on black prisoners' experiences of custody.