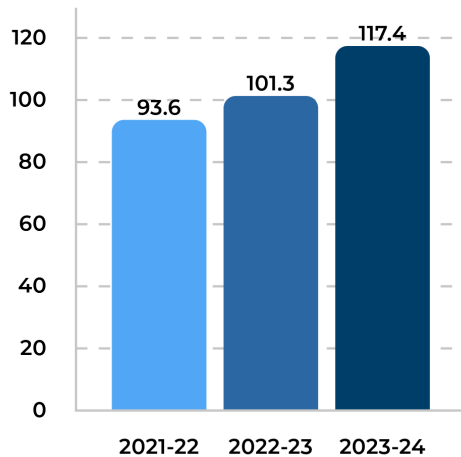


# INTRODUCTION TO IMMIGRATION DETENTION

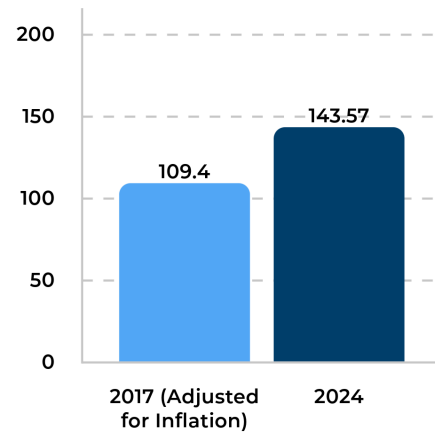
## BRIEFING 5: HOW MUCH DOES IMMIGRATION DETENTION COST THE PUBLIC?



In addition to the cost to the wellbeing of those detained, government expenditure on detention is significant. The Home Office reports that, in the last three financial years,<sup>1</sup> the costs of goods and services in relation to immigration detention are as follows:



Detention Costs (Goods & Services) in £ millions



Cost of detention per person, per day (£)<sup>2,3</sup>

This change in spending has not led to improvement in conditions; instead, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons noted that the outcomes during the most recent inspection of an Immigration Removal Centre (IRC) “were the worst that HM Inspectorate of Prisons has found in its IRC inspections.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the departmental costs, significant compensation payouts for unlawful detention have been made each year:

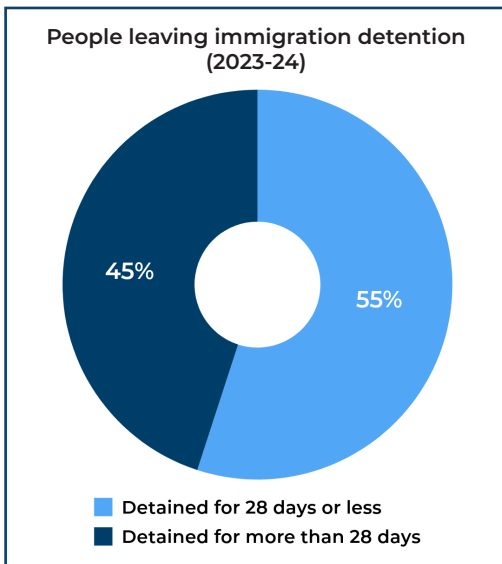


## HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE RELEASED FROM DETENTION WITHOUT BEING DEPORTED?

The Home Office recognises a number of legitimate grounds for people to remain in the UK and/or challenge their detention. These can be pursued while a person is in the community, in detention or in prison. A Home Office analysis noted that “In most instances the person is released for the issue to be considered outside of detention”.<sup>5</sup>

This raises the question of why such legal avenues to remaining in the UK are not exhausted before the Home Office detains a person and attempts to remove them.

Most people entering immigration detention are released on immigration bail. In the year ending June 2024, 52% of people leaving detention did so as a result of receiving immigration bail (9,841 out of 18,968).



> 75 of those people had been detained for more than a year  
 > 5 people had been detained for three years or more

In addition to unnecessarily lengthy stays prior to bail being granted, there are often significant delays to release even after people have been approved for immigration bail. In most cases, this is attributable to problems identifying appropriate bail accommodation.

For example, the 2022 HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report on Brook House IRC noted:

***“The person detained the longest at Brook House had been there for 16 months and we found five cases where people had been held in different places of detention for over 1,000 days (...) a lack of bail accommodation contributed to lengthy detention.”<sup>6</sup>***

Section 12 of the Illegal Migration Act, which is currently in force, allows for a person’s detention to be extended for as long as the Home Secretary considers reasonably necessary to arrange their release. This means that individuals can be held for significant periods even after the Home Office agrees that they cannot be removed from the UK within a reasonable time.

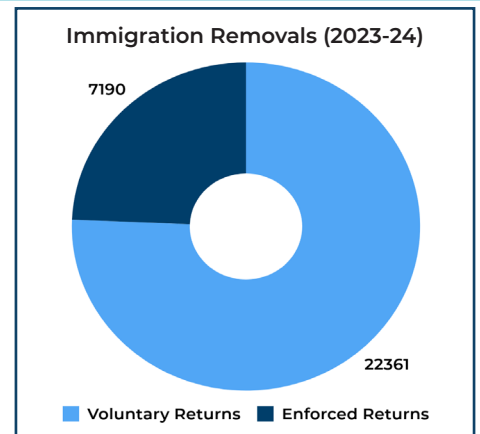
## HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE REMOVED FROM THE UK?

In the year ending June 2024, only 24% (6,973) of people ‘returned’ were removed directly from immigration detention.

In a July 2024 report HM Chief Inspector of Prisons stated in response to the low rate of enforced removal of people in detention:

***“It begs the question of why so much tax-payer money was being spent keeping them locked up.”<sup>7</sup>***

Further information on the harm caused by immigration detention can be found in Briefing 2 in this series, **Harm in Immigration Detention**.



## HOW MUCH DOES DETENTION AND REMOVAL COST AFFECTED FAMILIES?

A significant number of people facing deportation have partners and children in the UK, including children who are British citizens. Research carried out in 2022 by the lived experience network, Families for Justice, estimated that the forced deportation of a family member could cost a family as much as £48,137 in one year. This includes lost family income, legal fees, childcare costs and financial support of the person after deportation. A member of Families for Justice explained:

***“Since the deportation, money is really tight. I used to work full time on a decent salary. Now I am classed as a single parent with four dependants to look after. I have looked for work but it’s very difficult to find jobs that fit my needs. I can’t afford any childcare. I have to rely on food banks sometimes and the food vouchers that are given by the school. I have little to no hope that things will change in the foreseeable future.”<sup>8</sup>***

1. Home Office - Annual Report and Accounts (2023-24), P243

2. Home Office - Border Force transparency data: Q1 2024

3. The Migration Observatory, Oxford University - Briefing: Immigration Detention in the UK (November 2022)

4. HM Inspectorate of Prisons - Report on an Unannounced Inspection of Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre, February 2024

5. Home Office - Issues Raised by People Facing Return in Immigration Detention (July 2021)

6. HM Inspectorate of Prisons - Report on an unannounced inspection of Brook House Immigration Removal Centre (30 May-16 June 2022)

7. HM Inspectorate of Prisons - Report on an unannounced inspection of Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre (12-29 February 2024)

8. Families for Justice & Detention Action - Separated Families: Unjust Deportations and the Families Left Behind (2022)