



## **‘Everything is after sentencing’: The experiences of remand prisoners**

A key findings paper by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

March 2026

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# Introduction

Court delays mean that prisoners are waiting an unacceptably long time for their trials. This has led to a dramatic increase in the number of prisoners stuck on remand or waiting to be sentenced, and has contributed to the ongoing capacity crisis in prisons.

Many remand prisoners are held in crumbling, inner-city Victorian jails where conditions are some of the poorest in the estate. Suicide is more common among this group and in our surveys 67% say they have mental health difficulties.

In many of the prisons named in this report, remand prisoners comprised a large proportion of their population, yet we found too little being done to help this particularly vulnerable group. Men and women described a lack of support in contacting family members when they first came into prison, and not enough was done for those being released from court.

This report highlights some areas where prisons have begun to address the difficulties faced by these prisoners, but with the growth in this population now endemic, the prison service and individual jails must think more strategically about how they support men and women held on remand.

**Charlie Taylor**

Chief Inspector of Prisons

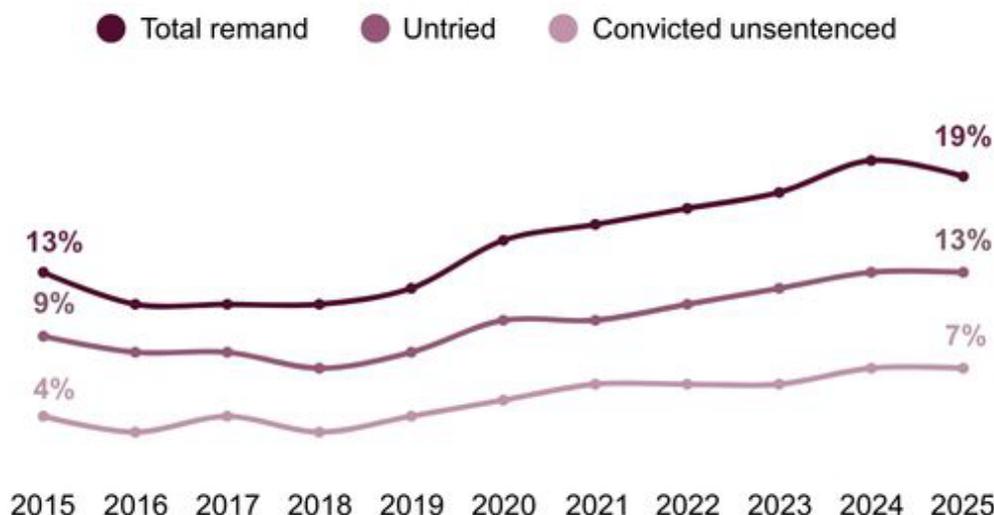
March 2026

## Section 1 Background

- 1.1 Most people in prison have been convicted of a crime and have been sentenced to serve a period in custody. However, this does not apply to all prisoners. A growing number and proportion of prisoners are on remand.
- 1.2 There are two distinct cohorts of remand prisoners: those awaiting trial and those waiting to be sentenced.
- 1.3 In December 2025 16,520 adult prisoners were on remand, representing 19% of the total prison population. Of this group, 10,835 prisoners were untried and 5,685 were convicted unsentenced.
- 1.4 Prisoners are remanded to jail from court. Despite being a major contributing factor to current population pressures, ongoing court backlogs mean it is unlikely that the remand population will reduce significantly in the near future.

**Figure 1: The rising remand population – data for 31 December each year**

Note: percentages may not add up to due to rounding.



Source: Offender Management Statistics

- 1.5 The Prison Rules 1999 sets out how remand prisoners should be treated, with particular requirements for those who have not yet been convicted of any crime. PSO 4600 'Unconvicted, Unsented and Civil Prisoners' outlines the practical operational requirements, in particular that governors must make sure that unconvicted prisoners are allowed all reasonable facilities to help with key matters such as bail, preparing for trial and preserving their accommodation and employment. They are also entitled to other rights and privileges, including being held separately from convicted prisoners, not working unless they choose to and receiving as many visits as they wish, within reasonable limits.

- 1.6 However, considerable discretion is afforded to governors, with the guidance stating that ‘these special privileges are not absolute and can be tempered by consideration of security, operational need and practical considerations’.
- 1.7 After prisoners are convicted, nearly all of the above entitlements and privileges cease. Convicted unsentenced prisoners are not therefore entitled to the same privileges as unconvicted prisoners.
- 1.8 It is well established that particular risks are associated with both cohorts of remand prisoners, including psychological strain and uncertainty from awaiting trial or sentencing. Safety in custody statistics show there is also a higher rate of self-inflicted deaths among remand prisoners than those who are sentenced (1.8 per 1,000 compared with 0.8 per 1,000).
- 1.9 In 2012 HMI Prisons undertook a thematic review about remand prisoners – ‘Remand Prisoners: A thematic review’ – concluding that too often they received less help and support than sentenced prisoners. The report stated:

‘The specific circumstances and needs of remanded prisoners need to be much more clearly and consistently recognised, both in policy and operational practice, so that they are held in custody for the shortest time possible and while there given at least the same support as convicted and sentenced prisoners.’

- 1.10 Our inspection findings since then suggest there has been little progress in provision for remand prisoners, while at the same time the overall number and proportion of remand prisoners have continued to increase. Our annual reports have highlighted uneven provision for those on remand, and our survey data reveals differences in how sentenced and remand prisoners experience prison. We have reported on problems, including the omission of remand prisoners from contracted resettlement services in 2021, which meant many could not access vital support, for example with accommodation or employment on release.
- 1.11 To examine the outcomes for remand prisoners in more detail, we carried out a review of 12 inspection reports on reception prisons published between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. We also completed an analysis of our prisoner survey findings for the same period, which included statistical analyses of responses to closed questions and a thematic analysis of the comments made in open questions.

In our prisoner survey we ask the question ‘Are you currently serving a sentence?’. Prisoners who responded ‘No – on remand or awaiting sentencing’, are referred to as ‘remand’ prisoners in this report. All of our survey outputs, including for inspections included in this report, continue to refer to this group as ‘unsentenced’. Prisoners who responded ‘Yes’, or ‘Yes – on recall’ are referred to as ‘sentenced’.

## Section 2 The number and profile of remand prisoners

### The changing prison population

2.1 Reception prisons hold a large proportion of remand prisoners. In the reception prisons inspected, three-quarters had remand populations of over 50%.

**Table 1: The number and percentage of remand prisoners at reception prison inspections (reports published 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025)**

Population statistics generated at the start of HMI Prisons inspections.

Prison	Population at time of inspection	Total remand prisoners (untried and convicted unsentenced)	Percentage of population
Belmarsh	719	425	59%
Cardiff	743	386	52%
Chelmsford	711	484	68%
Durham	985	732	74%
Forest Bank	1,464	815	56%
Hull	957	450	47%
Lewes	590	312	53%
Nottingham	929	529	57%
Peterborough (Men's)	916	423	46%
Wandsworth	1,513	930	61%
Winchester	626	380	61%
Styal*	390	133	34%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,543</b>	<b>5,999</b>	<b>57%</b>

\* Styal was the only women's prison in the sample.

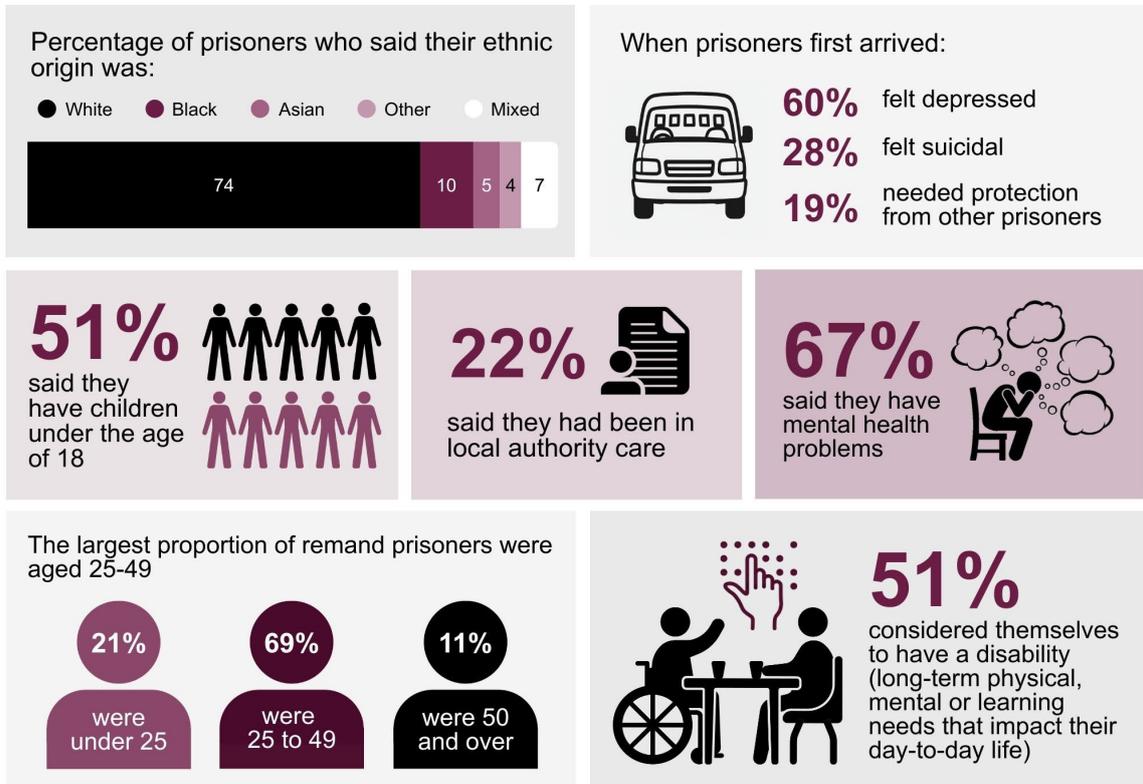
Source: Prison NOMIS

2.2 In some prisons, the increase in remand prisoners in recent years had been significant. For example, at our inspection of Durham in November 2021 we identified that almost two-thirds of the population were on remand, but when we returned in May 2024 this cohort had increased to just under three-quarters of the population (74%). Similarly, at Chelmsford, the remand prisoner population had risen from 60% at our inspection in August 2021 to 68% in May 2024.

2.3 Analysis of our survey data reveals the high prevalence of need among remand prisoners, including in relation to mental health, having a disability and having children under the age of 18.

**Figure 2: Remand prisoners**

Men’s and women’s reception prisons, HMI Prisons inspection reports published April 2024 to March 2025.



Source: HMI Prisons inspection survey

## Section 3 Outcomes for remand prisoners

- 3.1 Although we expect prisons to provide relevant information and support to remand prisoners, we found there were often gaps in what these prisoners received.
- 3.2 Leaders had not always developed a strategy to manage a higher number of remand prisoners. At our inspection of Wandsworth, we found that support was poor despite these prisoners making up more than half the population, and at Chelmsford, staff were having to manage an increased number of admissions and transfers without any additional resource. At Forest Bank, leaders had not been ambitious in their efforts to engage, motivate and meet the needs of the growing number of men on remand.

### A lack of early days support

- 3.3 The first few days in prison are some of the most important for identifying and addressing prisoners' needs. However, we found that remand prisoners did not always receive enough support. Almost half told us they did not receive enough information during their induction – one said they would have liked specific information about what was available for remand prisoners.

“Prison should explain incentive in clear chart in introduction book and differentiate for remand/sentenced.”

Prisoner survey, Styal, December 2024

- 3.4 Our survey showed that remand prisoners were less likely than sentenced prisoners to be able to access their personal property in the first few days in prison (35% compared with 45%).
- 3.5 Remand prisoners who reported feeling depressed when they first arrived in prison were also less likely than sentenced prisoners to be helped with this by a member of staff, a particular concern given the known safety risks associated with this cohort, including a higher rate of self-inflicted death. Only 19% of remand prisoners had approved numbers added to their telephone (PIN) account within 24 hours. This was low given the importance of keeping in touch with families and friends in the early days, particularly for mental health.

### Mixed access to bail and legal information

- 3.6 In general, we found that prisoners on remand had reasonable access to bail information. At Forest Bank each remanded prisoner was met by a bail officer, who offered help on how to apply for bail. Although this was also the case at Peterborough men's prison, the officer's time was

split between the men's and women's site, so time for this work was limited.

3.7 At the time of our inspections, not all of the reception prisons could provide this information to their remand population: when we inspected Wandsworth, bail information was not available to prisoners and at Lewes there was no provision at all. We found that a large increase in the remand population had caused a backlog of bail applications at Durham, which was leading to potentially lengthier stays for prisoners.

3.8 Libraries were generally well stocked with up-to-date legal texts for prisoners to use and at most sites there was enough legal visit provision to meet demand. At Cardiff, prisoners could access secure laptops to review their cases. However, at Lewes, demand for legal visits was so high that prisoners were waiting up to six weeks for a visit.

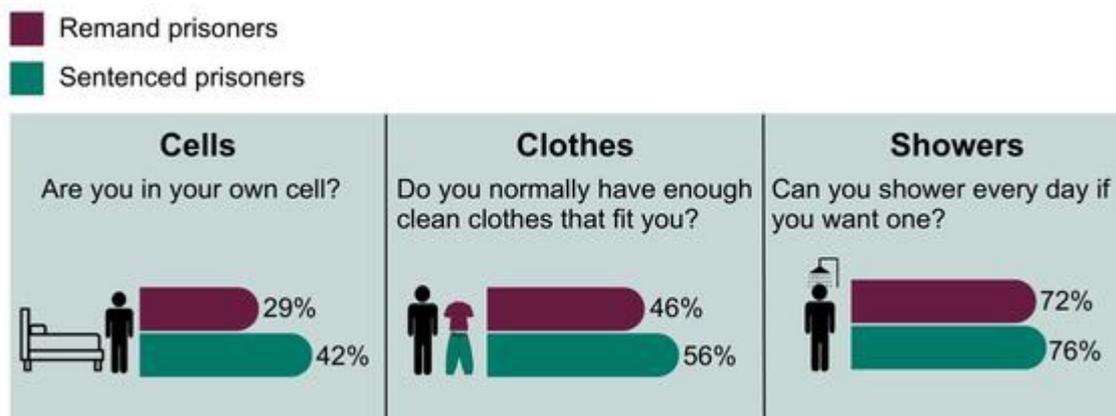
### Little integration into prison life and culture

3.9 Our survey findings highlighted several areas where daily life for remand prisoners was significantly poorer than for those serving a sentence. For example, fewer remand prisoners had their own cell and they often had to share a space designed for one. They were less likely to be able to have a shower every day and were more likely to say they did not have enough clean clothes that fitted them, which may have caused particular concern if they had an upcoming court appearance.

3.10 A large proportion of prisoners on remand are located on first night or induction wings. There is a high turnover of prisoners on these wings, making it difficult to provide appropriate clothing, shoes, appliances and furnishings to everyone. Prolonged stays on these wings were likely to contribute to more negative experiences for remand prisoners.

**Figure 3: Remand prisoners had more negative experiences with elements of prison life on the wing**

Men's and women's reception prisons, HMI Prisons inspection reports published April 2024 to March 2025.



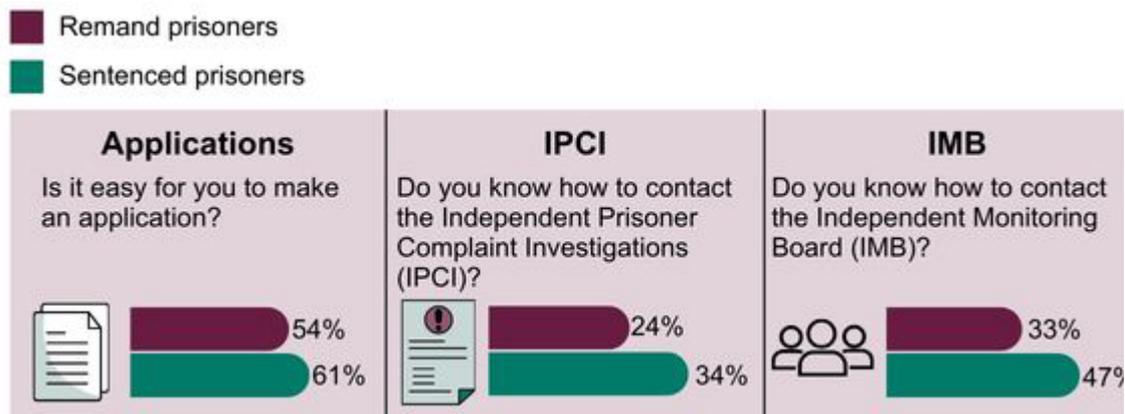
Source: HMI Prisons inspection survey

3.11 Remand prisoners were also less likely than sentenced prisoners to get regular support sessions from a named prison officer known as a key

worker (57% compared with 66%), which meant some missed out on more individualised support. Perhaps unsurprisingly, remand prisoners also found it more difficult to make an application and were less likely to know how to contact independent organisations such as the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) and the Independent Prisoner Complaint Investigations (IPCI).

**Figure 4: Remand prisoners found it harder to raise applications or concerns with independent organisations**

Men’s and women’s reception prisons, HMI Prisons inspection reports published April 2024 to March 2025.



Source: HMI Prisons inspection survey

3.12 These findings highlight that remand prisoners were not as integrated into the life and culture of prison as sentenced prisoners and typically had less access to resources and information. Prisons provided more to their sentenced prisoners, which led to frustrations among the remand population.

“I am on remand and [...] I don’t receive letters, legal or personal, emails or responses to apps.”

Prisoner survey, Lewes, February 2024

## Problems accessing health care

3.13 Remand prisoners’ access to health care was not always good enough. According to our surveys, those who had a disability or mental health problem were less likely to have been supported with this than sentenced prisoners. It was also harder for them to see a nurse in prison and, at Cardiff, it was difficult for them to see a substance misuse worker. However, at Lewes, dental staff were working flexibly to meet the demands of the high turnover of remand prisoners.

**Figure 5: Support for remand prisoners who reported being disabled or having mental health problems was lacking**

Men’s and women’s reception prisons, HMI Prisons inspection reports published April 2024 to March 2025.



Source: HMI Prisons inspection survey

- 3.14 Remand prisoners told us about their frustration with prison health care services, including a lack of mental health support and problems accessing prescribed medication.

“I think people with mental health ‘need extra support’. Maybe a special wing to get them medicated. I’ve been suicidal on this remand [...] It took four months of medication [...] It could have been better quicker on a mental health wing.”

Prisoner survey, Lewes, February 2024

“I have been on remand for two years in this prison and none of the staff care about my mental health. I have told them I need help with mental health but nothing happens. Health care in this jail is shocking and needs to be fixed.”

Prisoner survey, Nottingham, May 2024

### Limited time out of cell and in activity

- 3.15 We expect prisons to consider the needs of their population when developing a curriculum and work programme for prisoners. While unconvicted prisoners on remand are not required to work, they can choose to do so.
- 3.16 At some prisons we found positive work to reflect an increased remand population. For example, the senior leadership team at Durham had a

well-defined strategy which considered the very high proportion of remanded prisoners. When these prisoners arrived at the jail, their education needs were evaluated to make sure they got the right support.

- 3.17 At Chelmsford, leaders had developed a curriculum that provided for the significant number of remand prisoners, meeting the needs of most of the prison population based on the employment needs in the area. Positively, 73% of remand prisoners who had been involved in education at the jail said it would help them on release – a higher proportion than those who had been sentenced.
- 3.18 However, time out of cell for remand prisoners was not always good enough. According to our survey, they had less time out of cell: 63% told us they spent less than two hours out of their cell at the weekend, compared with 56% of sentenced prisoners. Remand prisoners were also less likely to know what the unlock times were at the prison than sentenced prisoners (78% compared with 83%), which again highlighted their lack of integration into prison life.
- 3.19 Remand prisoners were often not engaged in purposeful activity; at Belmarsh, they were less likely to have ever done a prison job than sentenced prisoners. These prisoners did not always feel that there was enough on offer for them, and when they did have a prison job, they thought wages were too low.

“[There are] no worthwhile courses for remand prisoners.”

Prisoner survey, Hull, June 2024

“More courses and op[ortunitie]s for remand prisoners.”

Prisoner survey, Styal, December 2024

“Wages are very low for B cat prisoners (remand jobs) that I’ve been to. Please increase the wages for education and work.”

Prisoner survey, Chelmsford, January 2024

## Poor access to visits

- 3.20 Some prisons did not have enough social visit slots for prisoners to receive the number to which they were entitled. At one, the number of visits available had not returned to pre-COVID levels and those on remand could not receive their full allowance, which caused some frustration. However, Forest Bank had increased its visits provision for

remand prisoners since our previous inspection, and was now able to offer these prisoners their full entitlement.

[Q20.3 What would you most like to see changed here?]

“Better family ties (more visits) as they are not giving us the government set guidelines on visits on permanently two a month even for remand prisoners.”

Prisoner survey, Nottingham, May 2024

- 3.21 Remand prisoners also reported in our survey that they were less likely to be encouraged by staff to keep in touch with their family and friends than prisoners who were sentenced (25% compared with 32%). Some told us they would like more support in contacting their family and friends, suggesting a lack of focus from prisons in making sure this contact happened regularly. This was often particularly relevant when people first arrived in prison, when simply contacting friends and family to let them know they were in prison could be challenging.

“Need more help and support with contact with our kids.”

Prisoner survey, Cardiff, January 2024

“I would like that when being arrested at least during the first month there would be a possibility to contact close family members to notify about the arrest.”

Prisoner survey, Chelmsford, January 2024

## Limited interventions

- 3.22 Some prisons had practical help, interventions and courses for their remand population, but in general there was little available across the sites. At Belmarsh, most interventions were only available to sentenced prisoners and at Hull, while remand prisoners were offered support to manage their finances and address their debt, they were offered little else. Remand prisoners were excluded from finance, benefits and debt support at Nottingham, which was rated positively by sentenced prisoners. Unsurprisingly, remand prisoners told us they wanted better access to these interventions and courses.

“No opportunities for remand prisoners, even when expecting high sentence, everything is after sentencing.”

Prisoner survey, Styal, December 2024

## A lack of resettlement and pre-release support

3.23 We expect that the resettlement needs of prisoners on remand are met:

### HM Inspectorate of Prisons, ‘Expectations’

Remanded prisoners have access to the full range of resettlement help, including advice and information about bail.

- 3.24 In previous reports, including ‘The quality of work undertaken with women: A joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Prisons’, published in May 2024, we have highlighted the lack of support available to remand prisoners in key areas such as maintaining tenancies, informing employers and managing debts while awaiting trial or sentencing. Without the necessary support, this period can be highly disruptive, not only to those on remand (a proportion of whom will go on to be found to be not guilty), but also their families. At worst, a period on remand can introduce a series of new risks for individuals. For example, someone may leave prison having been found not guilty, but having lost their previous employment or their home.
- 3.25 Analysis for this findings paper found that resettlement support is not good enough for remand prisoners, with their needs not reliably identified or met. This group were often excluded from key probation contracts and although the contracts have now been updated, progress in meeting their needs has been much too slow. The prisons included in this paper were not always helping prisoners to resolve issues in the community, including housing and financial support. At some the support was available but was only offered to sentenced prisoners. Remand prisoners were also unable to open a bank account and, at some sites, could not obtain a form of ID.
- 3.26 Current HMPPS guidance dictates that prisoners are only allocated a prison offender manager (POM) once sentenced. This means that remand prisoners do not get any regular contact from this knowledgeable staff group to keep them updated and informed. Remand prisoners at Chelmsford described feeling invisible and others told us they wanted more or better access to the offender management unit (OMU). A few OMUs had partially adapted to this challenge, for instance allocating a POM to the most complex or high risk remand prisoners. However, most continued to only allocate to sentenced prisoners while performing the high volume of critical tasks required in a busy reception prison.

- 3.27 We found some positive work being done at Styal. Leaders had increased resources to manage a recent increase in remand women and were offering creative support to reduce reoffending. It was also encouraging that at Durham, weekly POM clinics had been introduced on each residential wing to increase access to OMU staff. Managers at Durham also assessed the needs of their remand population effectively to make sure appropriate support was available.
- 3.28 Our survey showed that significantly fewer remand prisoners who expected to be released in the next three months were being helped to prepare for their release than sentenced prisoners (23% compared with 56%). They were also less likely to say they were receiving support in specific areas before release.

**Figure 6: Remand prisoners were receiving less resettlement support than sentenced prisoners, if they needed it**

Men's and women's reception prisons, HMI Prisons inspection reports published April 2024 – March 2025.



Source: HMI Prisons inspection survey

- 3.29 At Belmarsh the pre-release team, which assessed resettlement needs and referred prisoners to relevant providers, had vacancies and could not assess the needs of remand prisoners. However, recruitment to the team was ongoing and there was a plan to gradually reintroduce assessment of these prisoners once staffing levels increased.
- 3.30 Accommodation outcomes for remand prisoners are not included in HMPPS accommodation data so their whereabouts on release is unknown.

## Appendix I Methodology

This findings paper draws on evidence from 12 inspections of reception prisons published during the annual reporting period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. As part of HM Inspectorate of Prisons' evidence base a representative survey of prisoners is carried out at the start of each inspection. The questionnaire includes structured questions which facilitate quantitative analysis, enabling a comparison of groups within the sample, and open questions at the end which allow prisoners to express in their own words what they find most positive and negative about the prison.

Analysis was conducted on 1,911 responses from a total of 12 reception prisons (11 holding men and one holding women). In our prisoner survey we ask the question 'Are you currently serving a sentence?'. A comparative analysis was conducted comparing the responses of prisoners who responded 'No – on remand or awaiting sentencing' with those who responded 'Yes', or 'Yes – on recall', and differences tested for statistical significance. In this report we refer to these groups as 'remand prisoners' and 'sentenced prisoners'. However, all of our survey outputs, including for inspections included in this report, continue to refer to these groups as 'unsentenced' and 'sentenced' prisoners.

Throughout the report we only refer to comparisons between the two groups when these are statistically significant. The significance level is set at 0.01, which means that there is only a 1% chance that the difference in results is due to chance.

Thematic analysis of the prisoner responses to the open questions at the end of the questionnaire was also conducted. All relevant comments were systematically reviewed by a researcher, and themes identified.

This project was conducted in line with HM Inspectorate of Prisons' ethical principles for research activities: 'Ethical principles for research – HM Inspectorate of Prisons' ([www.hmiprisons.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk](http://www.hmiprisons.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk)).

## Appendix II References

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