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Foreign Nationals in UK Prisons for Sexual and Violent Offences at Record High

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New figures from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) reveal that the number of foreign nationals imprisoned in England and Wales for violent and sexual crimes has reached record levels, placing increased pressure on the UK's prison system and public finances.

As of June, 1,731 foreign nationals were serving sentences for sexual offences—a near 10 per cent increase over the previous year. MoJ data also showed that foreign citizens are being jailed for sex crimes at nearly three times the rate of British nationals. Albanians make up the largest group among foreign sex offenders, with 1,193 individuals currently behind bars.

Violent offences committed by foreign nationals have also risen significantly. The number of foreign prisoners serving time for violent crimes now stands at 3,250, nearly double the rate of British offenders, and marks the highest figure in more than a decade. Syrians saw the largest year-on-year rise in imprisonment rates, with a 46 per cent increase.

Overall, foreign nationals now account for 12 per cent of the total prison population in England and Wales, totalling 10,772 out of 87,334 inmates.

An analysis conducted by the Conservative Party estimates that more than £360 million is spent annually to house foreign criminals in English and Welsh prisons. The cost of detaining a single inmate exceeds £54,000 per year, meaning that the income tax paid by an average British household over a lifetime could fund the incarceration of ten foreign offenders for one year.

In addition to rising numbers, the MoJ recorded a seven per cent increase in assaults on prison staff, with 10,568 incidents documented over the past year—another record high. Between June 2024 and June 2025, seven homicides occurred in UK prisons, far above the usual annual range of zero to three.

Commenting on the figures, Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp said that each pound spent housing a foreign criminal diverts funds from essential public services, including policing and road maintenance. He criticised what he described as a failure to act swiftly on removals.

The MoJ confirmed that over 5,000 foreign offenders were deported last year and stated that new legal measures are being implemented to enable faster removals of foreign prisoners.

As public concern grows, political figures have called for broader national discussions around the relationship between crime and immigration, alongside reform to deportation protocols and sentencing policies.