

# ***IMMIGRATION RAIDS***

## ***AN ANATOMY OF RACIST INTIMIDATION***





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# **FOREWORD**

**MONISH BHATIA AND JON BURNETT**

Each day, up and down Britain, people are subjected to immigration raids in their homes, at their workplaces, their weddings, on public transport, and even places of worship. These raids take place in restaurants, factories, businesses, care homes, scrap yards, beauty parlours (to list a few). Raids target those in the gig economy such as delivery riders, whose mode of transport is their place of work. They target people asleep at home in their beds, early in the morning so they – and sometimes their children – are disorientated and processed with speed. Immigration raids are a key part of the ongoing, relentless drive to transform the UK into a very hostile environment for racialised communities. Yet while their use is championed by government after government – and while embedded journalists and political figures sometimes travel with immigration enforcement teams and triumphantly publicise images of people being herded into vans as raids take place – their day-to-day use is shrouded in secrecy.

This groundbreaking report provides an anatomy of raids. It meticulously documents how raids operate, how they are enforced and who they target. It explores immigration raids as a form of coercive State power, operating in conjunction with attempts to transform increasing aspects of day-to-day life into frontiers of border control. The ‘intelligence’ informing raids comes from many sources, including tip-offs from the members of the public and institutions such as health services, educational establishments and local authorities. For a long time, Britain has used weaponised destitution, using penury as policy, as a means to try and force people to leave. And immigration raids operate alongside this.

Against this backdrop, immigration raids work as a vehicle through which increased powers to criminalise, detect, arrest, and remove are actualised – as well as attacks on legal rights and protections available to those subject to immigration control. But as this report clearly demonstrates, the logics of raids cannot be understood through their stated functions. For they are utilised as a mechanism to create State-sanctioned fear. They are utilised as part of attempts to disrupt and intimidate communities. They are utilised to turn neighbour against neighbour. They are utilised to legitimise the idea that they need to exist. This report makes it loud and clear that raids are part State violence and part political theatre.

This report contributes to the urgently necessary task of analysing the contemporary moment. For a long time, immigration control has operated as a frontier of enhanced and morphing State power: of sorting and processing, of allocating and denying access to rights, of extraction, of punishment, of confinement and of surveillance. It has operated as a means to enforce and maintain a vastly unequal, racial order. However, this report shows us that as much as raids are used as part of attempts to sever solidarity within and between communities, this is not complete. Because up and down the country, communities are also strongly forging anti-racist solidarities predicated on the bravery and vision to build futures where the forms of order which raids are an extension of are dismantled.

This report contributes to this emancipatory vision, and it demands to be read.

# INTRODUCTION

Immigration Enforcement raids are an opaque mechanism of the Hostile Environment. The parameters and powers under which they operate is a form of State power and an extension of racist border controls. As this report was being finalised, the new Government announced it had directed Immigration Enforcement to intensify their operations over the summer of 2024. Writing in right-wing newspaper, The Sun, new Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said the operations would have “a focus on employers who are fuelling the trade of criminal gangs by exploiting and facilitating illegal working here in the UK – including in car washes and in the beauty sector.” Following this announcement, the Government published a [press release](#) declaring a new ‘drive’ in raids and returns. These policies are part of a trend of successive government announcements to increase raids and intensify the Hostile Environment.

Immigration Enforcement raids target particular nationalities because they are seen as easily removable. Raids are ‘justified’ by the State by fabricating their importance in targeting those living in Britain without permission, and through [claims](#) about people “abusing” the system and “taking away the scarce resources” that “rightfully” belong to British citizens. Moreover, Immigration Enforcement operations seek to gain consent for their violent actions by constructing migration as a ‘crime’ and a form of harm. Immigration raids are presented as necessary through an official narrative of controlling borders and “protecting” the nation.

While political leaders champion the use of raids, they are often secretive in their operation and there is a distinct lack of scrutiny around them. It is unclear what information or evidence is used to inform raids in addition to which other bodies (such as local council environmental or health services) Immigration Enforcement acts in partnership with when conducting visits. Through Freedom of Information requests, and analysis of Government information and existing anti-raids resources, we have found the number of people arrested as a result of raids is increasing, as well as the amount of revenue generated for the Home Office from civil penalties.

This report dissects the secretive and opaque nature of Immigration Enforcement’s intelligence gathering, guidance on multi-agency operations and police cooperation. In addition, we have found that Immigration Enforcement visits disproportionately impact specific racialised communities. Resembling a form of State kidnapping, the purpose of raids is to exclude, divide and control communities while inflicting fear on migrants.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Immigration Enforcement raids are a form of racist State kidnapping and an extension of **colonial divide and rule tactics**
- Between **January 2022** and **September 2023**, **19,895** immigration raids were conducted. While this was fewer than previous pre-COVID years, the nationalities most affected stayed the same and formed a higher proportion of total raids
- **South Asian** nationals made up **29%** of those targeted by immigration raids. **Indian** nationals formed the largest group affected by raids at **14%**
- Immigration raids tend to happen in city centres, reflecting the greater proportion of raids happening on businesses instead of in homes. In certain cities, like Birmingham and London, however, immigration raids tend to happen in areas where there are the most racialised people
- The highest number of immigration raids in 2022 and 2023 occurred in **Belfast** around the harbour (**1,277**), followed by **Stranraer (1,102)** and **Birkenhead (485)**, around the docks. These are all areas covered by **Operation Gull**, the joint border policing exercise between police and immigration services in the UK and Ireland
- The proportion of people arrested as a result of immigration raids has increased in 2023. Since March 2023, **more than half** of people present at an immigration raid have been arrested
- The proportion of people deported following an immigration raid **increased in Spring 2023**, from less than **10% to 15-20%**
- The value of penalties for working without the required migration documentation increased from an average of **£4,600,000** between **January 2022** and **June 2023** to **£8,400,000** between July and December 2023. These fines are disproportionately in the Midlands and East of England

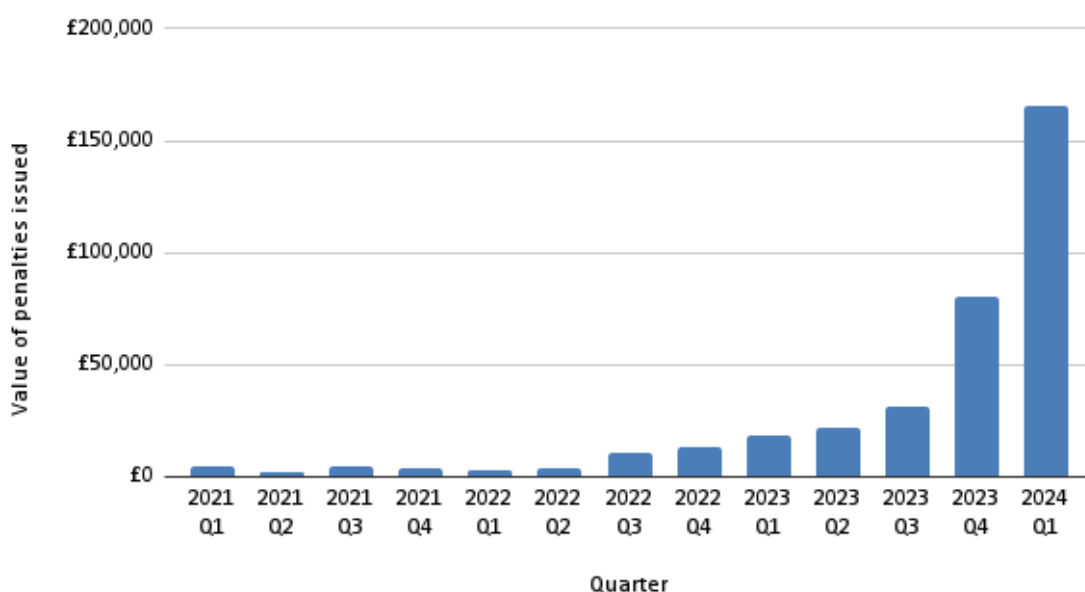
# THE HOME OFFICE AND IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

Following former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's pledge to increase raids targeting people without permission to work in early 2023, immigration raids increased substantially. By January 2024, they had increased by **68%**, and **5,000** people were arrested in 2023.

In 2023, the Home Office established the UK's first cross-Governmental ministerial taskforce on immigration enforcement and recruited 200 new enforcement staff as part of Sunak's pledge. There are 19 Immigration Compliance and Enforcement teams (ICE) across the country. They work with the public and alongside police, HM Revenue & Customs, local authorities and other local partners. Their purpose is to track down undocumented migrants and people who are told they are not allowed to work by the Home Office.

Immigration raids are also a lucrative income stream for the Home Office. In 2023 alone, it issued **1,610 civil penalties** amounting to **£28.4 million** relating to employing people without permission to work, and **£8.1 million** in the first quarter of 2024. These figures are lower for landlords renting to those without permission to rent which totalled **£151,480** for **155 civil penalties**. However, in just the first quarter of 2024 the value has already totalled **£165,680** for **62 penalties**. In August 2023, the Home Office announced that civil penalties for employers found to be employing workers without permission to work are to triple. The announcement signified the biggest rise in civil penalties since 2014, rising from £15,000 to £45,000 per worker and up to £60,000 for repeat breaches. This came into effect in February 2024.

Value of penalties issued by Quarter: Q1 2021 - Q1 2024



Immigration Enforcement data: Q1 2024

# METHODOLOGY

We submitted a number of FOI (Freedom of Information) requests to the Home Office, local authorities, police and transport police regarding immigration raids. The outcomes of successful FOIs are detailed below, including the number of raids, arrests and deportations, the nationalities of people affected by raids and the locations that raids have occurred in between January 2022 and September 2023. Although immigration raids have been part of the immigration enforcement landscape for a very long time, the focus on this time period was to try and explore the 'work' of raids using the most recent data available, and after raids picked up following the dip during COVID-19 lockdowns. For the location data, we created a heatmap using [GIS software](#), which visually sets out the geographical distribution of immigration enforcement across the UK. This report previously included references to specific postcode prefixes, however following the racist rioting and the targeting of hotels housing people seeking asylum in August 2024, we have removed this due to safety concerns.

We also had a significant number of FOIs refused. These largely focused on the intelligence behind raids, including how many come from public hotlines or data-sharing with the public sector, such as the NHS or Department for Work and Pensions. They also covered the operation of raids, for example the number that were joint operations with police, health and safety inspectors or the local council, as well as the number that occurred at residences, at workplaces, places of worship and on public transport. Local authorities and police forces\* also refused to give us details of meetings with Immigration Enforcement.

The reasons we were given for refusal were either the data not being held (in the case of local authorities and police forces), the data being too expensive to find, and the information being not in the public interest to disclose. Of significance was the complete lack of data held by educational institutions, such as Ofsted and the Office for Students. This raises safeguarding issues for international students, and questions of why the data isn't held, particularly due to the number of students who are threatened with deportation, and a number of whom the Migrants' Rights Network has supported. Therefore, our findings correlate with other research demonstrating how the [powerful shield](#) themselves from critical scrutiny.

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

The number of immigration raids increased by **68%** from September 2022 to September 2023. Almost constantly since March 2023, more than half of people present at an immigration raid have been arrested. The arrest rate peaked at **64.24%** in April 2023 and has only fallen below **50%** twice - to **47.31%** and **47.83%** in May and August 2023, respectively. This is a significant increase: before August 2022, the percentage of people arrested following an immigration raid was largely between 25% and 30%.

\*We contacted the GLA, Manchester City Council, Birmingham City Council, Coventry City Council, Swansea Council, Glasgow City Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Oxford City Council, Luton Borough Council, Nottingham City Council, Leicester City Council, the Metropolitan Police, Greater Manchester Police, West Midlands Police, South Wales Police, Police Scotland, Thames Valley Police, Bedfordshire Police, Nottinghamshire Police, Leicestershire Police, and the British Transport Police

A similar pattern can be found in deportation rates, which started to increase from September 2022 and saw a greater rise in March and April 2023. From January to August 2022, the median deportation rate following an immigration raid was 6.26%. Between September 2022 and February 2023, this increased to **9.17%**. The largest increase in deportation rates following an immigration raid rose to **14.83% in March 2023** and **19.95% in April 2023**.

The sizable increases in both arrest rates and deportation rates followed the Nationality and Border Act 2022 coming into effect in July 2022 and the 'Illegal Migration Act 2023, which was introduced in March 2023 and enacted in July that same year. This timing reinforces the function of immigration raids as a fear mechanism and as 'political theatre'. These two pieces of legislation created new immigration offences for which people might be arrested, increased punishments for existing offences, expanded powers for Immigration Enforcement (and other agencies) and sought to reduce legal protections for migrants in conflict with the law.

The increase in the number of raids and the percentages of people arrested and deported as a result is therefore self-reinforcing and self-serving: the more powers provided to criminalise people and political focus on doing so results in more people being criminalised, and therefore serves to "prove" that immigration is a "problem" and that increased immigration raids are increasingly necessary. At the same time, raids are further utilised to make targeted communities more fearful, and operate alongside aspects of the Hostile Environment. This makes it difficult or impossible to live in the UK impacting the ability to access healthcare provisions, labour markets, housing and other services. The aim is to make people leave "voluntarily", or "self-deport".

## NATIONALITY

Despite Asian nationals and people of Asian heritage making up only 9.3% of the population, they made up **50%** of the people targeted in the **19,895** immigration raids that occurred between **January 2022** and **September 2023**. Out of around **37,000** people directly affected by these raids, **South Asians have overwhelmingly been the largest group targeted**. **29%** of people targeted by immigration raids in this period were **South Asian** nationals, **14%** of which were **Indian**, the largest national group affected. **Pakistani** and **Bangladeshi** nationals were also overrepresented, both forming **5%** of the nationalities of people targeted by raids.

**Central and Eastern Europeans** were the next largest group targeted at **21%**, with **Albanian (8%)** and **Romanian (7%)** nationals the next most targeted groups behind Indian nationals. **Middle Eastern** nationals were the third largest regional grouping at **12%**, with the largest nationalities within that category being **Iranian** and **Iraqi (both 4%)**. **Kurds** from Iran and Iraq have also been a big focus, alongside Albanians, of small boat Channel crossings from the EU.

**British** nationals also made up a significant proportion of those targeted at **10%**, the second highest nationality of people checked during immigration raids. While this is a decrease from previous years, where British people were the most frequently "encountered\*" nationality and around **one fifth** of those affected between **2012** and **2019**, the predominance of British citizens being caught up in immigration raids casts doubt upon the efficacy of the intelligence used versus the influence of racial profiling.

\*The Home Office defines an "encounter" as "any individual who is encountered during an enforcement or compliance visit and spoken to in order to determine their immigration status." This therefore includes those who are arrested as well as those who are spoken to or whose legal status is checked without further action during an immigration raid. These interactions are recorded as "encounters".



The nationalities most targeted in immigration raids have broadly stayed the same since 2018. This is despite the fact that the number of raids that took place and the number of people who were targeted by them were significantly lower than January 2018 to September 2019 (there were around 7,000 fewer raids and 32,000 fewer people impacted). The top ten nationalities remained almost entirely the same, albeit in a different order, as evident below.

Nationality (Jan 2018 - Sept 2019)	Total	Percentage
Britain	14,703	21%
Romania	5,630	8%
India	5,131	7%
Pakistan	4,818	7%
China	4,118	6%
Bangladesh	3,986	6%
Albania	3,986	6%
Italy	1,827	3%
Portugal	1,607	2%
Brazil	1,560	2%

Nationality (Jan 2022 - Sept 2023)	Total	Percentage
India	5,237	14%
Britain	3,546	10%
Albania	2,952	8%
Romania	2,453	7%
Bangladesh	1,963	5%
Pakistan	1,918	5%
Brazil	1,823	5%
China	1,548	4%
Iran	1,522	4%
Iraq	1,499	4%

The number of people targeted in raids from some of these nationalities has changed very little, meaning that immigration raids are increasingly targeting a small group of specific nationalities. For example, in **2018-19 5,131 people** affected by raids were **Indian nationals**, making them **7.4%** of all nationalities impacted by raids. In **2022-23**, however, their share of nationalities affected by immigration raids almost **doubled to 14%**, despite only **106 more Indian nationals** being affected. Therefore, this could suggest that these nationalities are being particularly targeted. The growth in deportations deals with specific countries, like India in 2021, may have contributed to this, where other nationalities in the top ten targeted by raids, such as Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, have seen numbers fall.

## LOCATION

Immigration raids often take place either in city centres on businesses, in areas with significant racialised populations, or in significant areas for migration routes. This does not mean that immigration raid figures necessarily directly correlate to the number of undocumented migrants in that area, due to the spurious nature of 'intelligence' and the areas of focus for enforcement operations.

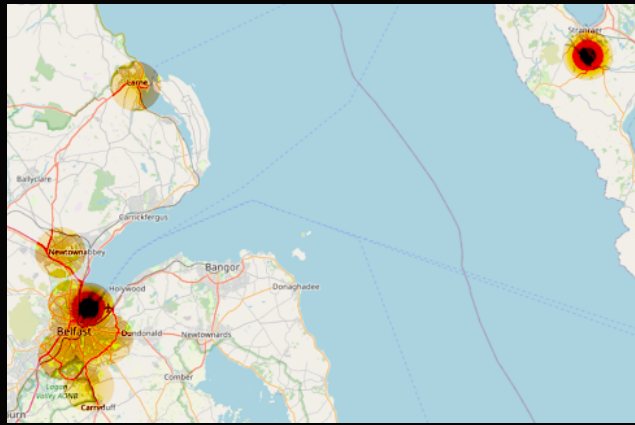


Map of where immigration raids have occurred in London, 1 Jan 22-30 Sept 2023

In London and Birmingham, in particular, the incidence of raids in areas with higher racialised populations is clear: in London (shown on the map on the right), Harlesden (110), (North) Kensington, Croydon (268) and Leytonstone (110), and in Birmingham, Smethwick (120) and around Fiveways (56). These areas have higher Black (both African and African-Caribbean), South Asian and (for Kensington only) West Asian populations than the UK average.

- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/ethnic-group/ethnic-group-tb-6a/asian-asian-british-or-asian-welsh?msqa=E02001900>;
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/ethnic-group/ethnic-group-tb-6a/asian-asian-british-or-asian-welsh?msqa=E00171491>;
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/ethnic-group/ethnic-group-tb-6a/asian-asian-british-or-asian-welsh?msqa=E09000008>;
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/ethnic-group/ethnic-group-tb-6a/black-black-british-black-welsh-caribbean-or-african?msqa=E02000123>;
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000020/>
- 2017-2019 data is our own

The greatest number of raids occurred in **Belfast** (shown in dark on the right) - **1,879** between January 2022 and September 2023. The vast majority of these (**1,277**) occurred in the postcode(s) that cover the harbour\*. The second largest number of raids occurred in **Stranraer, Scotland** (**1,102**) where we are aware that some migrants go after travelling from the North of Ireland. This is followed by **Birkenhead** on the Wirral (on the left, lower), with 485 raids which were concentrated around the docks. This is another area where people travel from Ireland, particularly from the North, to Britain land by boat.



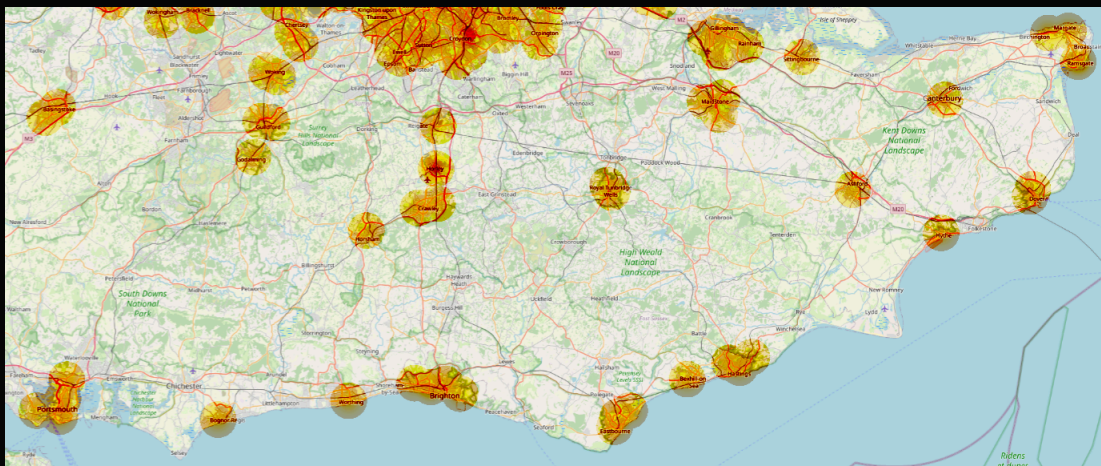
Map of where immigration raids occurred in Belfast and Stranraer, 1 Jan 22-30 Sept 2023

This could be explained by **Operation Gull**. Operation Gull is a joint exercise between Irish and British police and immigration services which targets UK domestic travel to and from Northern Ireland in order to identify undocumented migrants. It covers public raids on domestic travel routes that Immigration Enforcement believes are used by undocumented migrants. It involves searches on buses, trains, cars, ferries and planes. The air and sea ports and surrounding areas across the Irish Sea in the North of Ireland, South West Scotland and North West England are therefore key targets for this operation, as reflected in our raids mapping, with Belfast, Stranraer and Birkenhead being the top three locations respectively for immigration raids. This practice has been criticised due to concerns that individuals are being targeted on the grounds of ethnicity or nationality alongside doubts about the legal basis of the operation.



Map of where immigration raids occurred in Birkenhead, 1 Jan 22-30 Sept 2023

There are also a number of raids recorded along the South-East Coast of England (see below), including where people crossing the Channel in small boats usually land. Some of these locations align with the locations of border surveillance towers, such as in Dover and Hastings.



Map of where immigration raids happened in South-East England, Jan 22-30 Sept 2023

\*We have taken out references to specific postcode prefixes following the racist rioting and the targeting of hotels housing asylum seekers in August 2024.

The locations where immigration raids are concentrated have changed since 2018-19. While the greatest number of raids still took place in Belfast at over 1,000, not a single other postcode had 300 or more raids take place. In comparison, in 2022-23 the second, third and fourth most raided postcodes had **1,102** raids (Stranraer), **485** raids (Birkenhead), and **483** raids (Crumlin) taking place, respectively.

Part of this may be due to specific Immigration Enforcement operations - for example, it appears that Operation Gull, which is focused on detecting undocumented migrants travelling to and from the North of Ireland and Britain, or a similar Operation may have been expanded in England, as Birkenhead, which is a common port for sea travel from Belfast, had raids around the harbour increase by 44 times since 2018-19. We will conduct further research into this specific area.

There was a significant decrease in raids in specific areas, mainly Glasgow, particularly the Govanhill area, where there is a large migrant and racialised population, and East London, which dominated the top twenty locations in 2018-19. In contrast, the raids data from 2022-23 suggests that raids have become much more wide spread in terms of broad geography, and raids have been more concentrated in some areas. One such area is Stoke-on-Trent, where raids in the centre and south of the city almost tripled.

There is a likelihood that active anti-raids networks and unaffiliated successful community mobilisations in areas like Glasgow and East London, have had an impact on the reduction of raids in these areas. Peckham, with an active anti-raids network and a history of community anti-raids mobilisation, for example, saw **six times fewer** raids in 2022-23 than 2018-19, compared to Doncaster, which doesn't have a comparable anti-raids presence and where raids in one part of the city **more than tripled**.

For street operations, Immigration Enforcement considers the results of previous raids conducted at the same location in the decision to conduct an action, suggesting that an anti-raids mobilisation could deter them. Planning assessments also flag the likelihood of attempts by community members to obstruct raids, successful or otherwise, and the reputational damage that can cause through media coverage as "red risk." This means that the raid requires higher authorisation and the risk to be weighed against mitigation measures and "business imperative", which can result in a raid not taking place.

However, the intelligence involved in conducting raids is opaque and complex and can vary based on the type of raid (i.e. residential, street, work place), as is expanded upon in the following section.

# ANATOMY OF RAIDS

Dissecting the structure of raids is an arguably difficult task. Generally, the operations follow a similar pattern from intelligence gathering and picking targets to carrying out the enforcement activity and its aftermath. Raids on workplaces span a range of targets from small business to factories or multiple premises which can involve numerous ICE teams and other agencies.

However, there are differences in the nature of operations and lack of clarity around the intelligence that is used to inform the raids. As Corporate Watch has documented, these operations are secretive and rely largely on low-grade intelligence such as ‘tip-offs’, including fabricated reports from rival businesses or gossip.

## INTELLIGENCE GATHERING AND DATA-SHARING

The Home Office has an online reporting tool that allows people to report suspected undocumented people including those without permission to work. They are asked to categorise the suspected immigration offence as one of the below:

- Bogus Marriage
- Fake or false document
- Helping people to stay to enter or stay in the UK illegally
- Human Trafficking
- Lied on application
- No permission to stay in the UK
- Smuggling
- Other

According to a National Audit Office report into Immigration Enforcement, the Home Office receives over **60,000** pieces of intelligence each year, mostly from members of the public. Immigration Intelligence teams assess these against ‘national priorities’ and the ‘potential risk of harm’, which are then passed onto ICE. For example, there is an immigration or “border crime” hotline which the public can call if they think someone is living or working in the UK without permission. It has also been reported that MPs have ‘tipped off’ Immigration Enforcement about their constituents: in 2018, it was reported that cross-party MPs called the Immigration Enforcement hotline 68 times in one year.

As people who are subject to immigration criminalisation measures are banned from accessing many services, including benefits and free secondary, non-emergency healthcare, other Government departments also provide a significant source of intelligence for immigration raids. The Home Office has data-sharing agreements in place with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), among others.



Following the Windrush Scandal and legal challenges, data-sharing with the Home Office decreased or stopped, but new agreements have since been put into place. One area of this is the proposed NHS Patient Reference Number, which would revive Home Office surveillance of migrants seeking secondary healthcare for the purposes of immigration enforcement. Another is the data-sharing agreement with the financial sector, which restarted in April 2023. Banks and building societies are required to carry out checks against data shared by the Home Office from the immigration database on a quarterly basis. Affected individuals are then reported back to the Home Office for immigration enforcement measures.

However, because most immigration raids take place as a result of “tip-offs,” this data-sharing is not really “effective” in identifying and deporting undocumented migrants. Data-sharing therefore acts primarily as a surveillance mechanism for migrants and a deterrent to migrants accessing essential services.

## ***PRE-VISIT RESEARCH, CHECKS AND SURVEILLANCE***

Enforcement Planning Assessments Guidance tells Immigration Enforcement officers details of the preparatory gathering of intelligence that must take place before an operational visit or operation. This guidance states how enforcement operations are planned, assessed, tasked and authorised as well as setting out what preparation is necessary before an operation.

According to the guidance, pre-visit checks ensure that:

- Officers identify the correct premises and to ensure that the right address is named on the warrant
- Check information relating to suspected immigration offenders and people liable to detention to ascertain that no barriers to removal exist and that the person sought does not have any legal basis of stay that would prevent removal if encountered and arrested or detained
- Identify any warning signals or potential risks that could impact on an arrest team visit, potentially endangering the officers involved, the subject of the visit and any third parties: this information enables the officer in charge (OIC) to evaluate the potential risk associated with the visit and, as part of the risk assessment process, put into place measures to reduce this risk to an acceptable level
- Identify any personal circumstances or special needs the subject may have that may need to be considered as part of the risk assessment process, such as the existence of a previously unknown European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA) partner, children or that the subject is on medication

Findings are recorded on PRONTO. PRONTO is the most widely deployed mobile policing solution in the UK which integrates with national and local systems, and “optimising information management in operational Policing, getting intelligence to the point of need, enabling efficiencies in the back-office and optimal workflow into partner agencies and the criminal justice system.” This is supplied by Motorola Solutions UK Limited and is part of their ‘Pronto Digital Policing’ product. The PRONTO brochure states that ‘customers’ (in this case, police) can benefit from a range of applications including “access to the Biometric Services Gateway.”

Once this step is conducted, the guidance states that when a decision is made to conduct a raid, the officer must ensure that they have “exhausted all reasonable avenues for determining the immigration status of those people known or believed to be at the premises.”

While the guidance states Immigration Enforcement officers must consider whether a planned activity may result in unlawful discrimination that is in breach of the public sector equalities duty (PSED) which includes an explanation of protected characteristics including age, disability, gender, religion or race as set out in the Equality Act 2010, under the Act (and as mentioned in the Enforcements Planning Assessments guidance) there are exemptions and there may be grounds to apply for ministerial authority to proceed with an activity:

- **“The race exemption (Equality Act schedule 3, part 4, paragraph 17):** This provides that it is not unlawful for a relevant person to discriminate against another on grounds of nationality or ethnic or national origins in carrying out immigration functions, if it is by virtue of the Immigration Acts, or an enactment made under them, which would include the Immigration Rules, or if there has been an authorisation signed by the Minister which permits this. Discrimination on grounds of Colour is always unlawful.”
- **“The exemption (Equality Act schedule 18 paragraph 2):** For immigration and nationality functions there is an exemption from the duty to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity on the grounds of race (though this exemption does not apply to Colour), religion or belief and age.”

As it is unclear how officials conducting the pre-visit checks determine the immigration status from surveillance at the premises, it cannot be ruled out that racial profiling constitutes a substantial part of these checks.

For example, in 2019, the Migrants’ Rights Network was contacted by a factory owner in London. The individual’s business was raided by ICE in June 2019 and was presented with a warrant for a named person who had never worked on their premises, and was unknown to the business owner. At no point did ICE explain the reason they were on the premises, and the owner was not asked to sign any paperwork to agree to the operation.

## RISK

In the Risk Assessment portion of the Enforcement Planning Assessment, different levels of risks are set out according to Green, Amber and Red risk.

### A. Amber

- Circumstances where the numbers of officers deployed may attract local media interest or provoke adverse community reaction

### B. ‘Significant’ or Red risk

Significant or red risk includes:

- Risk to life and limb – whether to members of the public or those conducting the operation
- Risk of damaging community confidence or cohesion – significant damage in this context would include:
- high potential reputational and / or political risk – there is good reason to believe that the operation will attract unusually high media attention and / or the operation, although necessary and proportionate, may be misrepresented, the operation may be perceived, or represented, as being illegal or departing from published policy

- there is good cause to believe that significant attempts may be made to obstruct the operation, prevent the lawful operation taking place and / or to incite community tension

Reference to “significant attempts may be made to obstruct the operation” implies that the presence of anti-raids and community resistance factors into ICE risk assessments.

## ***MULTI-AGENCY OPERATIONS***

Immigration Enforcement sometimes accompany visits to businesses or residential premises led by other agencies. Cross-agency operations mean agencies can use a range of powers and approaches during raids. These teams were established in 2008, and through them a “watch list” of “immigration offenders” is reproduced for the purpose of facilitating immigration enforcement.

Government guidance states that ICE teams need a legal basis to enter the premises (unless an immigration officer has reason to believe that any premises is being used for the sale of alcohol or provision of late-night refreshment, the officer may enter without a warrant in order to establish if an offence is being committed under any Immigration Acts in connection with licensable activities). However, the guidance also states that if there is “suspicion that immigration offenders” may be present, but there is insufficient intelligence to obtain a search warrant for arrest purposes, the legal basis of entry may be by obtaining the informed consent of the premises’ occupier.

In July 2023, we sent an FOI to the Home Office to confirm reports that Immigration Enforcement visits are, or were going to be, carried out in joint capacity with local councils based on environmental and health and safety concerns. The Home Office confirmed that: “Where there is intelligence of abuse of the Immigration Rules, Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) Teams conduct enforcement visits. Some of this activity includes working in conjunction with other partners, including local authorities, who will identify any environmental and/or health and safety concerns.”

## ***POLICE COOPERATION***

Immigration Compliance and Enforcement (ICE) teams frequently work with the police. These are known as ‘mixed team operations’, where non-arrest trained officers are present for so-called intelligence gathering and “make maximum use of resources”. These can operate in one of three ways:

1. **Arrest team:** comprised of all arrest-trained immigration officers or a mixture of arrest-trained immigration officers and police officers
2. **Mixed team:** a mixture of arrest-trained, non-arrest trained and police officers
3. **Non-arrest team:** non-arrest trained officers and police officers only. The operation would be police-led with the police taking “primacy on any public order or breach of the peace situations”

The Enforcement Planning Assessments guidance tells Immigration Enforcement officers how to request police assistance for operational visits. This is done through an operation notification form (ONF) which was devised to standardise enforcement visit documentation and has been introduced to all ICE teams outside of the Metropolitan Police (MET) area. In the MET area, checks and notification for operations are conducted by the Central London Research Unit (CLRU). However, it has been difficult to obtain any evidence or background on the CLRU.

The ONF has numerous purposes including:

- Request local police assistance for an enforcement visit
- Gather all the intelligence held by the police forces regarding the subjects and the addresses they plan to visit
- The local police commander to carry out an equalities and community impact assessment (ECIA) of the proposed visit
- Immigration Enforcement to notify police of the result of the visit using the intelligence feedback report
- The local police commander to carry out an equalities and community impact assessment (ECIA) of the proposed visit
- Immigration Enforcement to notify police of the result of the visit using the intelligence feedback report
- Immigration Enforcement to notify the police of a planned enforcement visit where no additional local police assistance is required

Before conducting a visit or requesting police assistance, Immigration Enforcement teams must consult the intelligence unit and obtain authorisation from a chief immigration officer (CIO) or above. For arrest team visits, the authorising officer must be arrest trained.

However, despite setting out how the ONF must be completed, in which timeline and by whom, the end of the 'Requesting Police Assistance' section states the following: "It must be remembered that the police ONF checks do not constitute an authorisation for ICE team visits to proceed, but form part of the ICE team risk assessment for the visit. Therefore, visits can be conducted if police fail to complete and return the ONF, provided the ICE team:

- contacts their local police intelligence unit by telephone for any markers on their data systems, such as Police National Computer (PNC), Police National Database (PND), or other local databases against:
  - named suspects
  - address to be visited
  - any adverse information or community tensions
- where no issues are identified, visits can proceed as planned
- where an issue is raised, for example a warning marker, refer to the duty CIO or silver command to consider whether to proceed considering new information
- updates the comments box on the police and reporting notebook organiser (PRONTO) tasking page, to record all additional checks and decisions made following non-return of ONF"

Successive policy announcements by the Government to increase raids as part of Hostile Environment policies raises questions around how this impacts the number of 'intelligence' acted upon in addition to the amount of pre-visit checks that are conducted. Ultimately, if raids are increasing in line with increasingly hostile anti-migrant rhetoric (for example, "stopping the boats" or cutting net migration), then it is important to interrogate how this translates to intelligence analysis, and if pre-visit checks and surveillance are being conducted 'thoroughly'.



# ***RACIST INTIMIDATION: RAIDS ARE A FEAR MECHANISM***

The function of raids is not only to exclude, but it is also to disrupt the lives of migrants, their families, businesses and communities, and to impose a form of terror. As previous research has demonstrated, these enforcement practices produce heightened fear, insecurity, and social isolation and exclusion. Raids can induce anxiety, depression and mental health breakdowns with significant, long-term effects. In some cases, people have died during the raids.

The previous Government stated that it would use “every available power” to support law enforcement activity, and to identify and reduce people without permission to work in the UK whilst ensuring that only those eligible can work, receive benefits or access public services. However, it is arguable that removals are not necessarily the end goal of raids, but they are rather meant to humiliate, racially subjugate and inflict harm on the “Other”, specifically migrants and/or racialised people. Raids can also be viewed as a cruel form of punishment that is inflicted by an agency outside of the criminal system. Combined with the lack of scrutiny and opaque nature of raids, it is incredibly difficult to challenge them.

As such, immigration raids have been depicted as a form of State-enabled kidnapping. Framing immigration raids as a form of kidnapping is not a new concept, and as has been suggested elsewhere repurposing the term is essential in order to demonstrate how States capture and exert control over migrants. Specifically, the capture, seizure, confinement, and detention equate to State practices of bordering that ought to be recognised as kidnapping. There is a degree of (fearful) resignation to authority, so as to avoid confrontation and harm. In 2020, a report emerged alleging that immigration officials have used coercive tactics to gain access to people’s homes without having or showing a warrant. The law allows them to enter the premises only if the occupant gives “informed consent”; however, many individuals lack the knowledge and awareness of rights and are unable to refuse or challenge due to risk getting into further trouble.

Migrants’ movements are controlled and disrupted through a whole range of bordering tactics. These include (but are not limited to) pushbacks at land and sea borders, and redirecting migrants to dangerous routes that expose them to the increased risk of injuries and death in transit. For those who manage to cross the border, and are in-country, they are subjected to threats of detention and deportation. There is another aspect the State uses which is not sufficiently reflected upon: kidnapping. Kidnapping migrants is a tool of border enforcement. By moving beyond the narrowly legalistic, criminological perspective (which associates kidnapping with strictly non-state activities) kidnapping can be deployed as a state tactic of domination and “repurpose” the term kidnapping to analyse how State powers capture and exert control over migrant movement.

Using this understanding of kidnapping, the fear (of the unknown), along with elements of forcible entry, coercion, taking away the means of contact with the outside world, relocation and traumatising – are all part of immigration raids, and reinforce the notion the State uses kidnapping.

Immigration Enforcement is presented to the public as necessary through the official narrative of controlling borders and protecting the nation. However, it must be viewed as kidnapping of migrants from the community and as the exertion of dominance and control. Raids are also a continuation of colonial 'divide and rule' tactics by inflicting harm and racist violence.

Divide and rule is a colonial tactic that fosters social tensions between different groups. In colonial British territories, the tactic was used to create social tension and hostility between different groups of the native population. A key element of these divide and rule policies was teaching the various native communities to view each other as a 'threat' to their own livelihood or even life. Colonisers often hired only one native group as police officers, which encouraged the non-chosen population to view the other native group as its enemy, thus obscuring the colonial structure that oppressed them. Similarly, immigration raids as a mechanism of the Hostile Environment are a continuation of divide and rule: Immigration Enforcement operations are designed to inflict violence and harm, and to destroy the social fabric through fermenting divisions. Immigration raids create an atmosphere of distrust amongst communities creating an environment where they react to a perceived 'threat' or 'Other', and are inclined to report them to the Home Office.

## ***RESISTING RAIDS***

Glasgow's Kenmure Street anti-raids action can provide a good blueprint of how raids can be resisted. On 13 May 2021, two Sikh men of Indian origin living on Kenmure Street in Glasgow were taken from their home and detained by the Home Office in a van on the street for alleged 'immigration violations'. They had lived in Scotland for ten years but hadn't yet been granted leave to remain. The timing of the raid came under scrutiny as it was conducted on the dawn of Eid in a diverse neighbourhood with a high concentration of Muslim residents.

In an act of community resistance, neighbours surrounded the vehicle and stopped it from moving via a sit-in protest for eight hours. Within a few hours, hundreds of locals, and people from across the city gathered in protest of the raids and chanted: "These are our neighbours. Let them go." The individuals were eventually released and the day was dubbed the "Battle of Kenmure Street".

***"IT WAS THE VICTORY AT KENMURE STREET IN GLASGOW THAT INSPIRED THE ANTI-RAIDS NETWORKS THAT LED TO THIS MOMENT. PEOPLE ARE STANDING UP AND RESISTING WHAT THIS RACIST GOVERNMENT IS DOING TO OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS – AND TO REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS ALIKE." – BENNY HUNTER***

The success of the community-led resistance inspired a similar anti-raids action in June 2022 in Peckham where protestors successfully blocked the removal of a man by Immigration Enforcement. After an anti-raids callout on social media where 200 people turned out to oppose the raid, the man was released on bail after a five-hour stand-off during which police tried unsuccessfully to beat their way past protesters.

However, the political landscape has drastically shifted over the last two years. An anti-raids action on 2nd May 2024 (also in Peckham) against removals to the Bibby Stockholm barge was met by a heavy police presence and resulted in 45 arrests. People seeking asylum who were due to be removed had all challenged the decision to move them but some didn't hear back or were rejected. Despite a large police presence, protesters were able to surround the coach to stop it from leaving. Nonetheless, this event marks a more hard-line approach by police and Immigration Enforcement towards community-based resistance and solidarity.

Anti-Raids Network guidance: Community-based anti-raids networks across towns and cities in the UK have suggested the following for those resisting raids

- Protect the person being removed and make sure you know your rights
- Make sure people know that they do not have to answer questions and can leave
- If they do want to leave, walk away with them
- Film immigration officers and police. If someone is being detained, check with them first, or only film the officers.
- Interact with the officers. Ask why these specific people are being questioned.

Spread the word: Tell people around you what's happening, call your friends, contact your local anti-raids group

# CONCLUSION

Raids are an extension of colonial 'divide and rule tactics'. They inflict a huge amount of suffering, implement borders in day-to-day life and turn neighbours against each other. Our research demonstrates not only the intimidatory nature of raids, but that they are specifically used to intimidate racialised and migrant communities.

Championed publicly by political figures, in practice raids operate under a veil of secrecy - a secrecy that is reinforced by State agencies shielding themselves from scrutiny. Frequently used as 'fishing' expeditions, raids reproduce racial discrimination. They work to sever solidarity between communities, and reproduce the idea that more raids are always necessary. Raids take apart communities, based frequently on spurious intelligence, and operate as theatre, but with very real implications.

That is why we must send a clear message to the State that we are watching the raids and holding them to account, but we can't do this alone. Specific nationalities are being targeted, and this is likely to increase and worsen with new and emerging bilateral agreements with countries, such as Bangladesh. This will be an important area to understand the impact such agreements have on future immigration raids in our communities. We must have more diligence, and protect and safeguard our communities. So, we are inviting everyone to report and log immigration raids in your areas. This will serve as a tool to log immigration raids in your local area and we will soon be publishing a map tool alongside this.

As politicians signal that raids are likely to increase, it is vital we stand up and send a clear message to the State: **our communities do not consent to raids**. We demand not only an end to raids, but also to the Hostile Environment that inflicts fear on communities including surveillance, and right to work and rent checks.

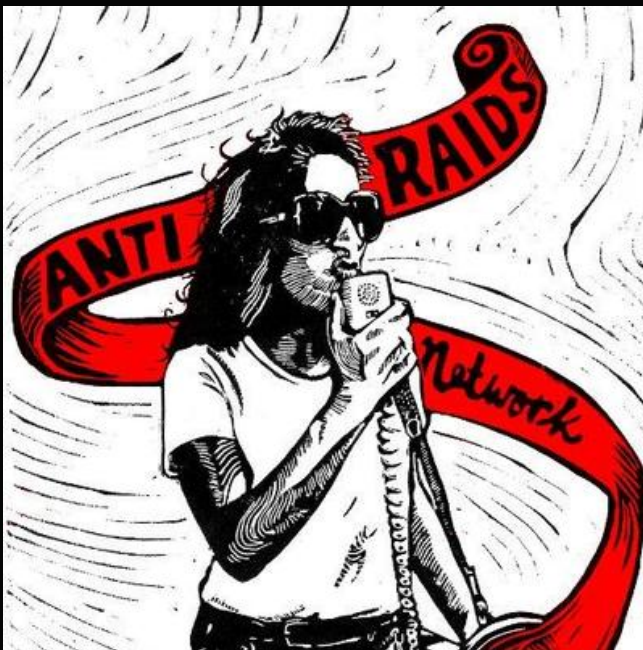


Image source: Network23

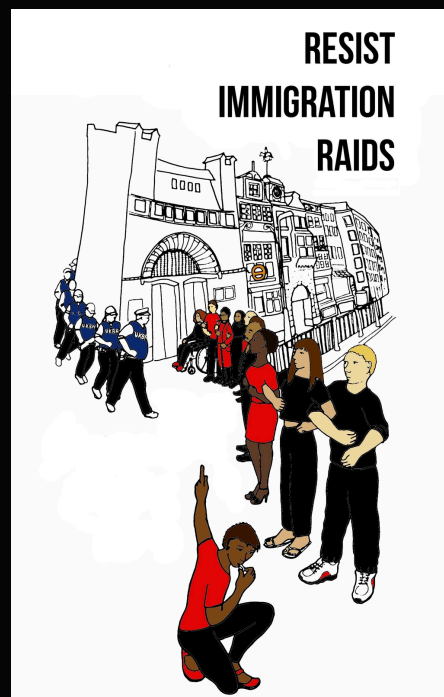


Image source: Network23

# ***FURTHER READING***

- IMMIGRATION RAIDS AND RACIST STATE VIOLENCE, Monish Bhatia and Jon Burnett
- In the teeth of the machine: workfare, immigration enforcement and the regulation of 'surplus labour'. Jon Burnett
- Kidnapping migrants as a tactic of border enforcement - Martina Tazzioli, Nicholas De Genova, 2020.