



# Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to December 2022 Assaults and Self-harm to September 2022

## Main Points

**Number of deaths decreased from the previous 12-month period**



In the 12 months to December 2022, there were 301 deaths in prison custody, a **decrease** of 19% from 371 deaths the previous 12 months. Of these, 74 deaths were self-inflicted, a **decrease** from the 88 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months.

In the most recent quarter there were 78 deaths, a 7% **decrease** from 84 deaths in the previous quarter.

**The rate of self-harm incidents increased in female establishments but decreased slightly in male establishments from the previous 12-month period**



There were 54,761 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to September 2022, **up** 5% from the previous 12 months, comprising **increases** of 1% in male establishments and 18% in female establishments.



Over the same period, the *rate* of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, which takes account of the increase in the prison population between this and the previous year, **decreased** 1% in male establishments but **increased** 16% in female establishments.

In the most recent quarter, there were 15,230 self-harm incidents, **up** 17% on the previous quarter, comprising **increases** of 8% in male establishments and 42% in female establishments.

**The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased slightly**



There were 11,069 individuals who self-harmed in the 12 months to September 2022, **down** 0.6% from the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual **increased** from 4.7 in the 12 months to September 2021 to 4.9 in the 12 months to September 2022.

**Assaults increased from the previous 12-month period**



There were 20,872 assault incidents in the 12 months to September 2022, **up** 11% from the 12 months to September 2021. In the most recent quarter, assaults were **up** 5% to 5,590 incidents.

**Assaults on staff were almost unchanged from the previous 12-month period**



There were 7,356 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2022, **almost unchanged** from the 12 months to September 2021 (0.3% decrease). In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff **increased** by 7% to 1,900 incidents.

**The number of serious assaults increased 11% of all assaults were serious**



In the 12 months to September 2022, there were 2,341 serious assault incidents, an **increase** of 21% from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults **increased** by 29% to 1,660, and serious assaults on staff **increased** 6% to 721 in the 12 months to September 2022.

## Statistician's comment

In the 12 months to September 2022, we have seen increases in the number of assault incidents (11% increase) and self-harm incidents (5% increase) compared with the previous year, with self-harm increasing 1% in male establishments and 18% in female establishments. In the 12 months to December 2022, we have seen a decrease in the number of deaths (19% decrease). Both assaults and self-harm incidents remain lower than pre-pandemic levels, and comparisons of these statistics with earlier periods will reflect the impact of Covid-19 as well as underlying trends.

Deaths have decreased by 19% to 301 deaths in the 12 months to December 2022. This has been driven by a decrease in the number of deaths related to Covid-19. There were 78 deaths in the latest quarter, much lower than the peak of 153 in the January to March 2021 quarter. Only 2 were suspected to be due to Covid-19, down from 5 in the previous quarter and much lower than 60 in the January to March 2021 quarter. There were 74 self-inflicted deaths in the latest year, a decrease from 88 in the previous year.

The rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners increased 3% in the 12 months to September 2022, comprising a 1% decrease in male establishments and a 16% increase in female establishments. The rate reflected a 5% increase in self-harm incidents in the 12 months to September 2022, and a small increase in the prison population in both male and female establishments over the same period (as set out in *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly*<sup>1</sup>).

There continue to be considerable differences in self-harm trends by gender. In male establishments the average number of incidents among those who self-harmed remained broadly stable, increasing slightly from 4.0 to 4.1. In contrast, in female establishments, there was a large increase in the average number of incidents among those who self-harmed from 10.4 to 12.7, continuing a trend seen for the last six years.

The rate of assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners increased 8% in the 12 months to September 2022, and the rate of serious assaults increased 18% over the same period. The rate of assaults was 60% higher in female establishments than in male establishments and saw a greater increase in the latest 12 months, increasing by 25% compared to an increase of 7% in male establishments. However, the proportion of assaults in female establishments that were serious was lower, at 6% compared with 12% in male establishments.

The rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased 15% in the 12 months to September 2022, and the rate of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased 26%. The rate of assaults on staff decreased 2% but the rate of serious assaults on staff increased 3%. This is influenced by the reduced contact included in prison regimes to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection at different periods since March 2020, and an exit from the National Framework in May 2022.

## Background

Safety in custody statistics cover deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody in England and Wales, with figures in the summary tables in the quarterly publications presented on a 12-month rolling basis over an 11-year time series.<sup>2</sup> This release provides statistics on deaths of prisoners to the end of December 2022, and deaths from Covid-19 have been presented in the section below.

The release also provides statistics on assaults and self-harm up to the end of September 2022. The latest 12-month data reflects a second year of Covid-19 restrictions being implemented within prisons to limit and control the spread of the virus, and an exit from the National

<sup>1</sup> Data on population statistics are published in the *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly* publication <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>.

<sup>2</sup> Data on deaths is published three months ahead of self-harm and assaults. Therefore, the deaths annual publication and tables are published alongside the Safety in Custody quarterly update to September publication.

Framework in May 2022. These restrictions included the implementation of effective isolation of prisoners to reduce the spread of Covid-19, reverse cohorting of new entrants to custody, and shielding of vulnerable prisoners. During this period, we have seen progression of establishments to different levels of the National Framework for managing Covid with most establishments reaching Stage 2 or 1 before the Omicron outbreak in December 2021. See Further Information at the end of this bulletin on the managing and running of prisons during the pandemic.

The total prison population has fallen since the first quarter of 2020, more so for certain population groups<sup>3</sup>. As at 31 December 2022, the total prison population was around 1,200 or 1% smaller than at the end of March 2020. The female population has reduced by 14%, whereas the male population has reduced by 1%. However, the latest monthly prison population has increased 5% from its lowest level in April 2021.

These changes in population should be borne in mind when interpreting changes in the numbers of incidents over the past year. In the context of substantial population change, rates per 1,000 prisoners more accurately describe changes in the likelihood of incidents occurring<sup>4</sup>. Data on deaths, self-harm and assaults are routinely presented as rates of incidents per 1,000 prisoners (as well as numbers) for all prisoners and the male and female estates. Additional commentary is offered where these rates indicate different trends to the numbers of incidents.

Supplementary annual tables, providing more in-depth statistics on a calendar year basis, underlying data files with pivot tables providing lower-level granularity, and a technical guidance document are also available alongside this bulletin, at [www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics).

### **Youth estate and changes in methodology in Safety in Custody**

These statistics exclude incidents that occurred in the youth estate that were previously included within this publication. Readers should be aware of the '**Safety in the children and young people secure estate**' statistics bulletin which is published simultaneously to this Safety in Custody quarterly bulletin. This provides quarterly statistics on assault and self-harm incidents for children and young people in the secure estate, and is published at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/safety-in-the-youth-secure-estate-bulletin>

Figures for the number of self-harm and assault incidents occurring within the youth estate were removed from the published Safety in Custody statistics from the July 2022 release, please see that publication for more details. **The figures in this publication exclude incidents occurring within the youth estate from April 2018 onwards for assaults, and from April 2019 onwards for self-harm.** It has not been possible to identify such incidents occurring in the youth estate before these dates and so create a longer consistent time-series. This is because figures for incidents occurring within the youth estate for assaults up to March 2018 and for self-harm up to March 2019 were collected via manual returns. This has led to a discontinuity in the time series for assaults and self-harm. The Safety in Custody time series includes deaths in the youth estate, with the last recorded death being in 2019.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>. Quarterly population data to March 2022 is published in Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, England and Wales Quarterly.

<sup>4</sup> The comparability over the year of other measures that are based on self-harming individuals (such as the number of incidents per self-harming individual, or the proportion of incidents requiring hospital attendance) are not affected by changes in population size.

## Annual deaths tables

The deaths data tool which is published quarterly has been expanded to include ethnicity of the prisoner. The deaths data tool has therefore become the most up-to-date source for information on deaths by ethnicity, and the table giving an ethnicity breakdown has therefore been removed from the annual deaths tables<sup>5</sup>.

Experimental Statistics on drug-related deaths in prison custody from 2008 to 2019 are published as an additional report<sup>6</sup> in parallel with Safety in Custody. These statistics were led by the Office for National Statistics, based on HMPPS prison deaths data linked to more detailed ONS records on cause of death.

<sup>5</sup> Table 1.5 from the historic annual deaths tables included breakdowns of deaths by ethnicity now available from the tool, and has been removed from the annual deaths tables for this release.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/drugrelateddeathsandsuicideinprisoncustodyinenglandandwales2008to2019>

# 1 Deaths: 12 months ending December 2022

## Number of deaths decreased from the previous 12-month period

In the 12 months to December 2022, there were 301 deaths in prison custody, a **decrease** of 19% from 371 deaths in the previous 12 months which reflects a reduction in the number of deaths related to Covid-19. There were 74 self-inflicted deaths, a **decrease** of 16% from 88 in the previous 12 months.

In the most recent quarter there were 78 deaths, a 7% **decrease** from 84 deaths in the previous quarter.

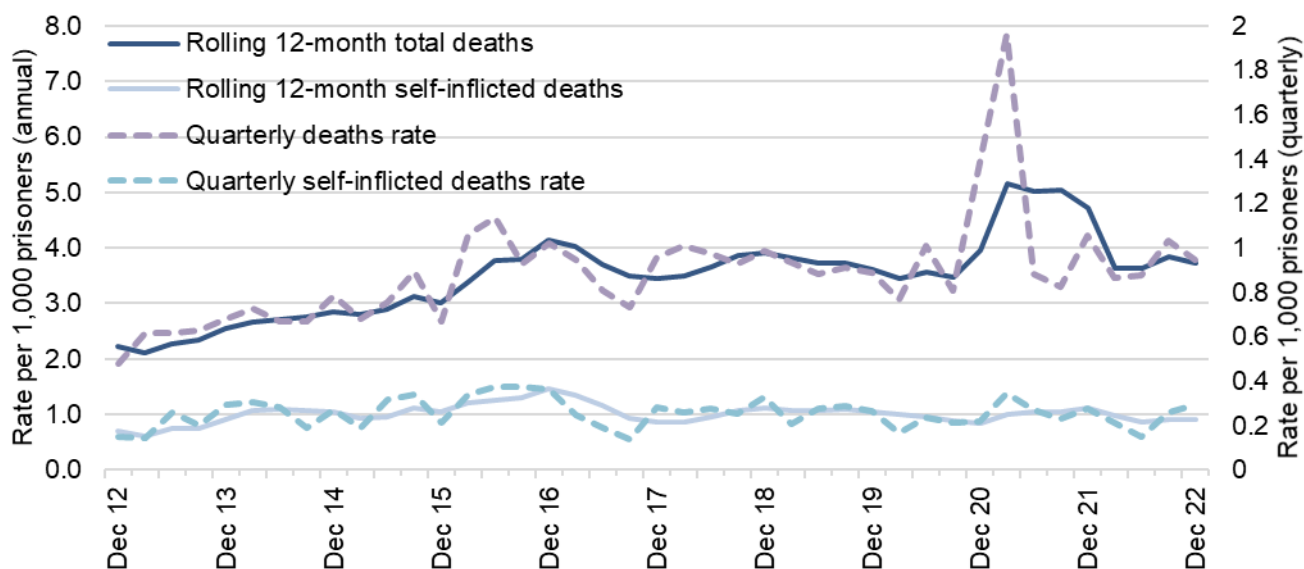
## The number of deaths due to Covid-19 decreased in the most recent quarter, although the number of deaths related to Covid-19 remained unchanged

In the most recent quarter (October to December 2022), there were 2 deaths (3% of total deaths) that were suspected to be due to Covid-19, a **decrease** from 5 deaths (6% of total deaths) in the previous quarter.

In the same period, there were 7 deaths (9% of total deaths) within 28 days of having a positive Covid-19 test or where there was a clinical assessment that Covid-19 was a contributory factor, **unchanged** from 7 deaths (8% of all deaths) in the previous quarter.

There were 24 self-inflicted deaths in the most recent quarter, up from 21 in the previous quarter.

**Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending December 2012 to 12 months ending December 2022, with quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to December 2022, there were 301 deaths in prison custody (a rate of 3.7 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease from 371 deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 4.7 per 1,000 prisoners). Long-term trends and more detail are presented in the annual tables that accompany this release<sup>7</sup>.

Over the same period, there were 187 deaths due to natural causes (a rate of 2.3 per 1,000 prisoners), a 29% decrease from 262 deaths (a rate of 3.3 per 1,000 prisoners) in the previous 12 months. This decrease of 75 in deaths due to natural causes in the 12 months to December 2022

<sup>7</sup> Data on deaths are published three months ahead of assaults and self-harm, therefore, the annual publication Deaths in prison custody for 1978 to 2022 is published in the Safety in Custody quarterly update to December 2021

reflects the fact that there were a large number of deaths from Covid-19 in the previous year (with further information on these below).

There were 74 apparent self-inflicted deaths in the 12 months to December 2022 (a rate of 0.9 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease of 16% from 88 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 1.1 per 1,000 prisoners).

There were 39 deaths recorded as 'Other' in the 12 months to December 2022, 33 of which are 'awaiting further information' prior to being classified. In some cases, the results of the toxicology and post-mortem tests are inconclusive, meaning classification cannot be arrived at until inquest (which can be a considerable time after the death). As a result, the number of deaths in the individual categories is not directly comparable with earlier years: it is likely that numbers in some categories will be revised upwards once classifications have been finalised.

In the most recent quarter there were 78 deaths, a 7% decrease from 84 deaths in the previous quarter. There were 24 self-inflicted deaths in the latest quarter, an increase from 21 in the previous quarter. However, quarterly death figures should be considered with caution due to greater volatility and the potential for seasonal effects.

### Deaths from Covid-19

From the start of the pandemic in March 2020 to the end of December 2022, 215 prisoners have died within 28 days of having a positive Covid-19 test or where there was a clinical assessment that Covid-19 was a contributory factor in their deaths regardless of the cause of death. Of these 215 deaths, 159 are suspected to be due to Covid-19<sup>8</sup>. The remaining 56 deaths are believed to be due to other causes although the prisoner had tested positive for Covid-19.

In the latest quarter (October to December 2022), a slightly larger proportion of deaths were related to Covid-19 than in the previous quarter. In this quarter, 9% of all deaths were of prisoners who had died within 28 days of a positive test for Covid-19, up from 8% of all deaths in the previous quarter but below a peak of 47% in January to March 2021. Deaths suspected to have been due to Covid-19 made up 3% of all deaths in the latest quarter, down from 6% in the previous quarter and below a peak of 39% in January to March 2021.

As with all deaths in prison custody, each case will be investigated by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman and subject to an inquest to determine the official cause of death and where necessary this data will be updated.

The most up to date data on deaths suspected to be due to Covid-19 can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-prison-and-probation-service-covid-19-statistics-monthly>.

<sup>8</sup> Data on the number of COVID-19 deaths are occasionally revised due to updated coroners data

# Key findings from deaths annual tables and deaths data tool

## *Gender*

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**The overwhelming majority of deaths in custody in 2022 (97%) occurred in the male estate, a finding that has been consistent over time.**

There were 8 deaths in the female estate, up from 6 in 2021, accounting for around 3% of the total deaths. As a result, cross-tabulations of characteristics with gender (e.g. ethnicity by gender) are not presented below because the numbers of deaths in the female estate are too small for meaningful analysis.

There were 74 self-inflicted deaths in 2022, 69 of which occurred in the male estate (down from 87 in 2021) and 5 in the female estate (up from 1 in 2021).

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## *Age*

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**Prisoners aged 70 and over were more likely to die in custody compared to any other age group, with 51.5 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.**

Out of 91 deaths amongst this age group, 90 were classified as natural causes and 1 is awaiting further information. Those aged over 50 accounted for 87% of all natural cause deaths in 2022.

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**Prisoners aged 50 to 59 had the highest rates of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners.**

The rate of self-inflicted deaths was highest for prisoners aged 50 to 59 (1.8 per 1,000 prisoners) and 40 to 49 (1.3 per 1,000 prisoners). The rate for prisoners aged 30 to 39 was much lower at 0.9 per 1,000 prisoners, despite this age group having the highest number of self-inflicted deaths, reflecting the higher prison population for this age group. Self-inflicted deaths make up a larger proportion of their deaths for younger age groups, reflecting their lower rates of death from natural causes.

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## *Ethnicity*

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**The rate of self-inflicted deaths in 2022 was higher amongst White prisoners than prisoners of all other ethnic groups combined**

The rate of self-inflicted deaths decreased from 1.3 in 2021 to 1.1 in 2022 for White prisoners, and from 0.6 in 2021 to 0.5 in 2022 for prisoners of all other ethnic groups combined.

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## *Nationality*

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**UK nationals and foreign nationals had the same rate of self-inflicted deaths in 2022 (0.9 per 1,000 prisoners).**

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was 0.9 for both UK nationals and foreign nationals in 2022, decreases from 1.1 for UK nationals and 1.0 for foreign nationals in 2021.

Self-inflicted deaths among foreign nationals accounted for 12% of all self-inflicted deaths, while UK nationals accounted for 88%.

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## *Time in custody*

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**In 2022, 20% of self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days of custody.**

There were 15 self-inflicted deaths within the first 30 days of custody (20% of all self-inflicted deaths), of which 6 occurred within the first week in custody (8%).

In 2022, when including prisoners who have been transferred between prisons, 21 self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days in the current prison (28%), of which 10 occurred within the first week (14%).

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*Sentence length and type*

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**Prisoners who were on remand had a higher rate of self-inflicted deaths than sentenced prisoners.**

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was 1.9 for prisoners on remand (a decrease from 2.6 in 2021) and 0.7 for sentenced prisoners (a decrease from 0.8 in 2021).

In 2022, 35% of all self-inflicted deaths were by prisoners on remand, a decrease from 38% of all self-inflicted deaths in 2021.

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*Offence*

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**In 2022, 42% of self-inflicted deaths were by prisoners charged or sentenced to offences of violence against the person.**

Prisoners who were serving sentences for offences of violence against the person (42%) and robbery (14%) accounted for the majority of self-inflicted deaths.

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was 1.3 for prisoners serving sentences for offences of violence against the person (a decrease from 1.6 in 2021), and 1.5 for prisoners serving sentences for robbery offences (an increase from 0.9 in 2020).

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*Method of self-inflicted death*

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**Hanging remains the most common method of self-inflicted death in 2022, accounting for 82% of all incidents.**

Of the 63 self-inflicted deaths with method of hanging or self-strangulation in 2022, bedding remains the most commonly used ligature type (accounting for 70% of these incidents). The window remains the most commonly used ligature point (accounting for 37% of these incidents), followed by the bed (22% of these incidents).

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## 2 Self-harm: 12 months to September 2022

The rate of self-harm incidents decreased slightly in the male estate from the previous 12-month period but increased in the female estate

There were 54,761 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to September 2022, a 5% **increase** from the previous 12 months (a 1% **increase** in male establishments and an 18% **increase** in female establishments). Over the same period the rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners **decreased** by 1% in male establishments and **increased** by 16% in female establishments.

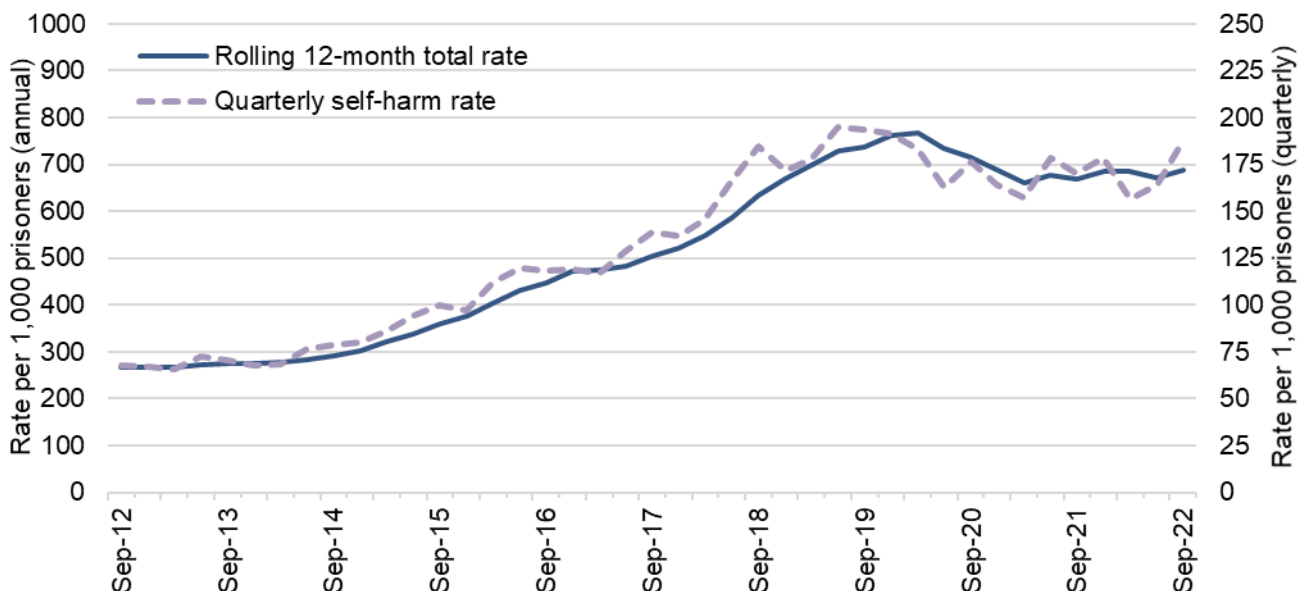
In the most recent quarter there were 15,230 self-harm incidents, **up** 17% on the previous quarter (**increases** of 8% in male establishments and 42% in female establishments).

The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased 0.6% in the latest year.

There were 11,069 individuals who self-harmed in the 12 months to September 2022, a 0.6% **decrease** from 11,131 in the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual **increased** from 4.7 in the 12 months to September 2021 to 4.9 in the 12 months to September 2022.

Statistics for the 12 months to September 2022 relate to the second 12-month period since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the restricted regimes prisons put in place in order to safely manage the risks of infection during the pandemic. We have also seen an exit from the National Framework in May 2022, so some of the figures within the latest 12 months cover the period since the exit (see Further Information at the end of this bulletin). This affects the comparability of the statistics with earlier periods.

**Figure 2: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending September 2012 to 12 months ending September 2022, with quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to September 2022, there were 54,761 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 687 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 5% from 52,191 in the previous 12 months. The rate of incidents in the latest 12 months was 3% higher than in the previous 12 months.

On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to September 2022 increased by 17% from the previous quarter, from 13,052 to 15,230 incidents.

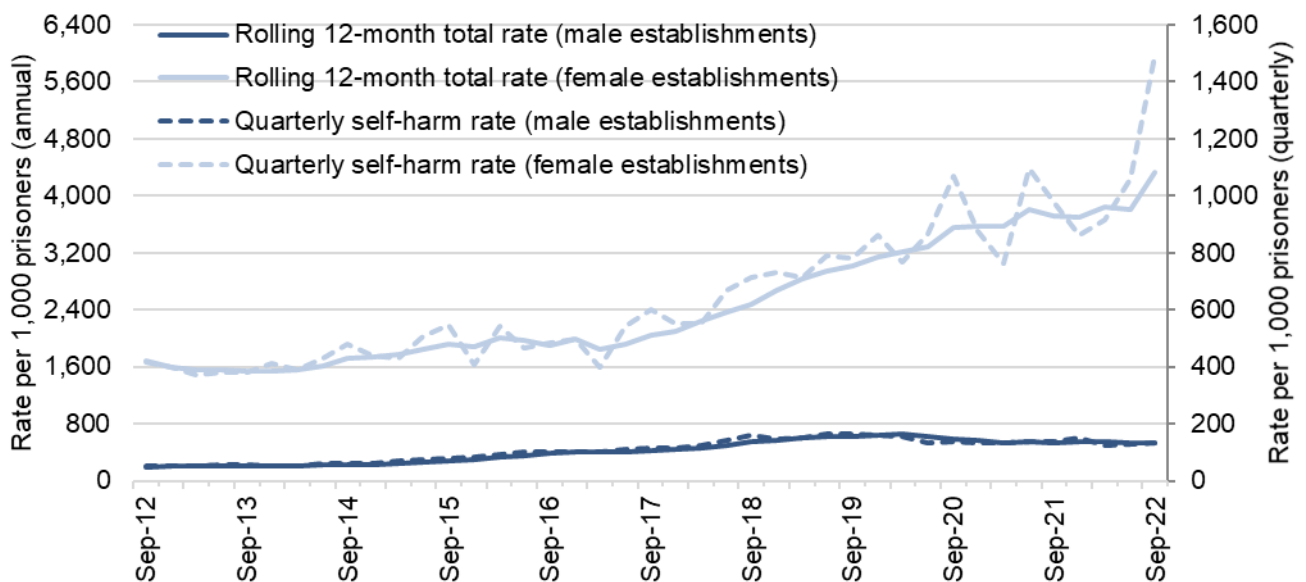
The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased by 0.6% to 11,069 in the latest 12 months (a rate of 139 individuals per 1,000 prisoners), from 11,131 in the previous 12 months. The rate, or proportion, of prisoners self-harming in the latest 12 months was 3% lower than in the previous 12 months. The number of incidents per self-harming individual in the latest 12 months was 4.9, an increase from 4.7 in the previous year. A small number of individuals who prolifically self-harm have a disproportionate impact on this figure: just over a half (52%) of prisoners who self-harmed in 2021 did so more than once.

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 5% to 2,768 in the 12 months to September 2022 and increased by 4% in the latest quarter to 725 incidents. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance was decreasing in the years before the pandemic, but remained unchanged at 5.1% of incidents in the latest 12 months.

Self-harm levels differ considerably by gender. Although the number of incidents in the female estate is smaller than in the male estate, the rate of self-harm per 1,000 prisoners is much higher. In the 12 months to September 2022, there were 40,837 incidents in the male estate compared with 13,924 in the female estate. However, the rate of self-harm was eight times higher in the female estate, with 4,327 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners and 534 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners.

The number of incidents per individual who self-harmed in female establishments was three times that in male establishments: in the 12 months to September 2022 there were 12.7 incidents of self-harm per self-harming female compared with 4.1 incidents per self-harming male. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance was higher in male establishments (6.2%, compared to 1.8% in female establishments in the latest year).

**Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2012 to 12 months ending September 2022**



The number of self-harm incidents increased by 1% in the latest year in male establishments and by 18% in the female estate. The rate of incidents, which takes population size into account, decreased by 1% in the male estate, but increased by 16% in female establishments.

On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to September 2022 increased by 8% in male establishments and 42% in female establishments compared with the previous three months. The number of incidents peaked at 4,807 in female establishments in the latest quarter.

As Figure 3 shows, over the last decade there has been more variation in the quarterly rate of self-harm in the female estate than in the male estate. This may in part reflect the impact of more prolific self-harming in the female estate. Fluctuations in the quarterly rates of self-harm in the female estate have been wider since the start of the pandemic, with the peak in the most recent quarter.

There also continues to be considerable differences in self-harm trends by gender. In the 12 months to September 2022, there were 12.7 incidents of self-harm per self-harming female, an increase from 10.4 in the previous 12 months. The proportion of females self-harming in the latest 12 months was 4% lower than in the previous 12 months, at 341 individuals per 1,000 prisoners; the increase in self-harm in the female estate has been driven by the increase in incidents per self-harming individual. In the male estate, there were 4.1 incidents per self-harming individual, broadly similar to 4.0 in the previous 12 months. Over the same period, the proportion of prisoners self-harming in male establishments decreased by 3%, to 130 individuals per 1,000 prisoners.

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased in male establishments by 7%, to 2,523 in the 12 months to September 2022, and the proportion of incidents requiring hospital attendance increased from 5.8% in the previous 12 months to 6.2% in the latest 12 months. In the female estate 245 self-harm incidents required hospital attendance, a 14% decrease from the previous year. The proportion of incidents in the female estate requiring hospital attendance was 1.8% in the 12 months to September 2022, down from 2.4% in the previous 12 months.

### 3 Assaults: 12 months to September 2022

#### Assaults and serious assaults increased from the previous 12-month period.

In the 12 months to September 2022, there were 20,872 assault incidents, an 11% **increase** from the previous 12 months. Of these 2,341 were serious assaults, **up** 21%. Rates of assault and serious assault per 1,000 prisoners **increased** 8% and 18% respectively in the latest 12 months.

Assaults **increased** 5% in the latest quarter to 5,590 incidents while the number of serious assaults **increased** by 4% to 651 incidents.

#### The rate of assault per 1,000 prisoners was higher in female than male establishments.

The rate of assault in male establishments **increased** by 7% from the previous 12 months, while the rate in female establishments **increased** by 25%. Assault rates for the 12 months to September 2022 were higher in female establishments (409 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) than in male establishments (256 incidents per 1,000 prisoners).

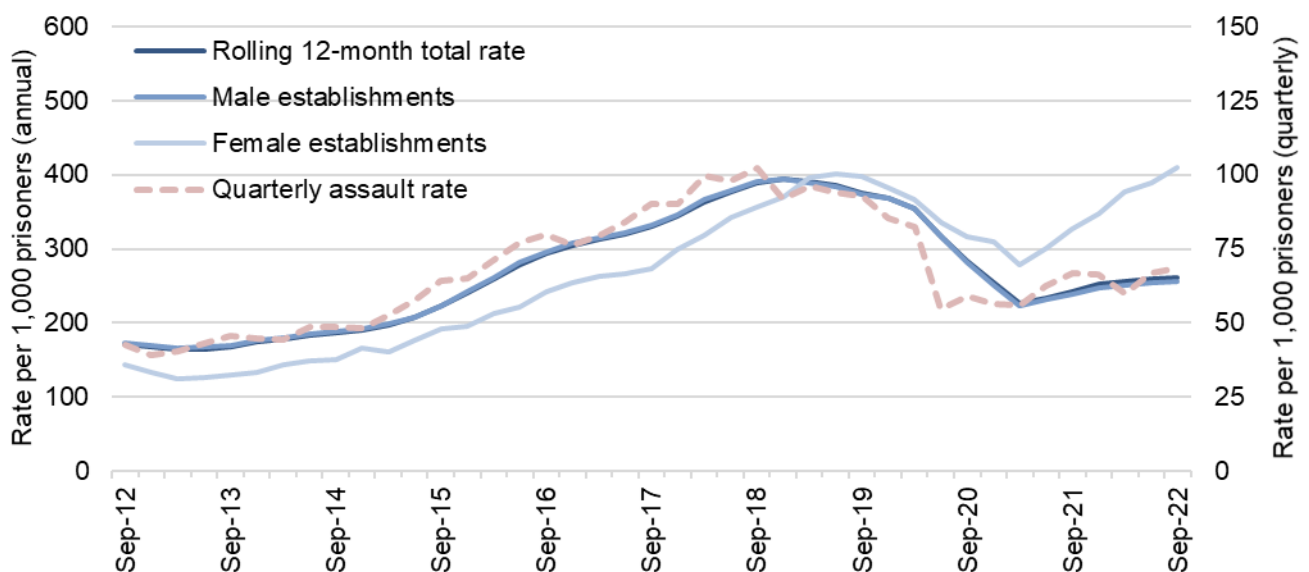
#### Assaults on staff were almost unchanged from the previous 12-month period (0.3% decrease).

There were 7,356 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2022, **almost unchanged** from the previous 12 months (0.3% decrease). In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff **increased** by 7% to 1,900 incidents.

The rate of assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners **decreased** by 2%, comprising a decrease of 4% in male establishments and an increase of 12% in female establishments compared with the previous 12 months.

Statistics for the 12 months to September 2022 relate to the second 12-month period since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restricted regimes prisons put in place in order to safely manage the risks of infection during the pandemic. We have also seen an exit from the National Framework in May 2022 (see Further Information at the end of this bulletin). This affects the comparability of the statistics with earlier periods.

**Figure 4: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2012 to 12 months ending September 2022, with quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to September 2022, assault incidents increased by 11% to 20,872 (a rate of 262 incidents per 1,000 prisoners). The rate of assaults in the latest 12 months was 8% higher than in the previous 12 months.

In the latest quarter there were 5,590 assaults, up 5% from the previous quarter. The number of assaults and the quarterly rate remain lower than their peak in the July to September 2018 quarter. This reflects that quarterly numbers and rates of assaults were already falling before the outbreak of the Covid-19 as well as the considerable decrease in the early stages of the pandemic (April to June 2020) associated with changes in prison regimes and activity in the criminal justice system.

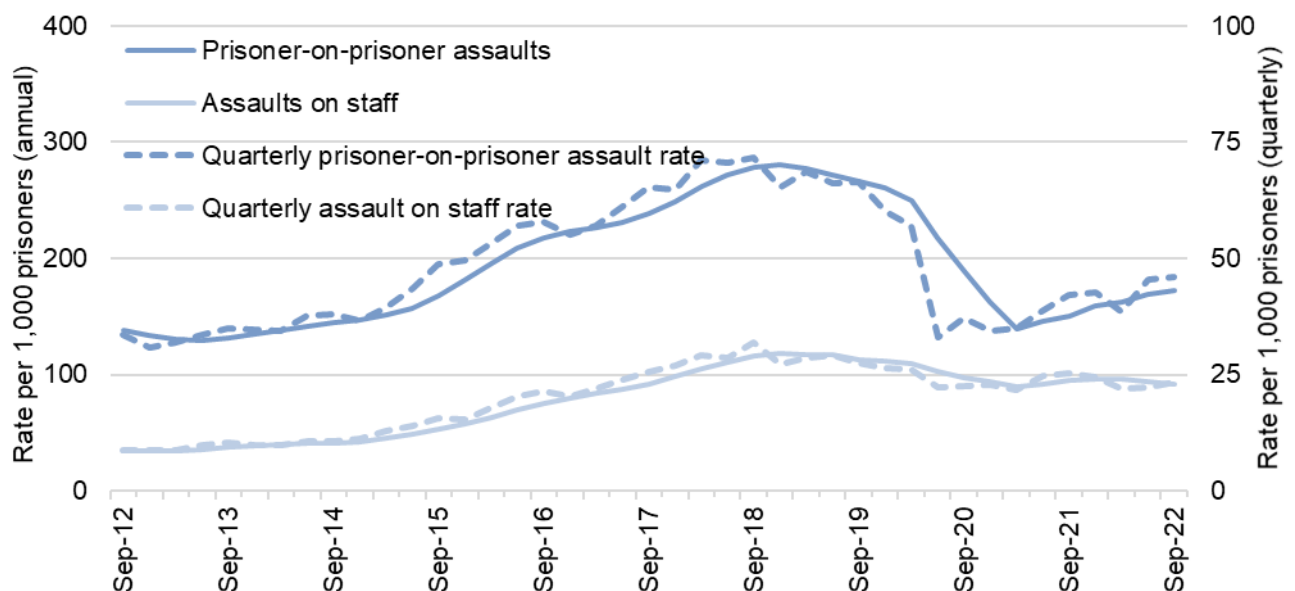
The number of incidents in male establishments increased by 10% from 17,815 to 19,555 in the 12 months to September 2022 (a rate of 256 per 1,000 prisoners). The rate of assaults in male establishments in the latest 12 months was 7% higher than in the previous 12 months.

The number of incidents in female establishments increased by 27% from 1,038 to 1,317 incidents in the 12 months to September 2022 (a rate of 409 per 1,000 prisoners). The rate of assaults in female establishments in the latest 12 months was 25% higher than in the previous 12 months.

Assault rates have been higher in female establishments than in male establishments since the 12 months to September 2018, with the difference extending each year, after previously being higher in male establishments.

In the latest quarter, the number of assaults in male establishments increased 4% from 5,012 to 5,211, while the number of assaults in female establishments increased 23% from 307 to 379.

**Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending September 2012 to 12 months ending September 2022, with quarterly rates**



There were 13,788 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults<sup>9</sup> in the 12 months to September 2022 (a rate of 173 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 17% from the 11,748 assaults in the previous 12 months. The rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the latest 12 months was 15% higher than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 3,750 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 4% increase from 3,612 in the previous quarter.

<sup>9</sup> This figure includes any prisoner-on-prisoner assaults where there may also have been an assault on staff.

There were 7,356 assaults on staff<sup>10</sup> in the 12 months to September 2022 (a rate of 92 per 1,000 prisoners), almost unchanged (0.3% decrease) from the 7,376 assaults in the previous 12 months. The rate of assaults on staff in the latest 12 months was 2% lower than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 1,900 assaults on staff, a 7% increase from 1,780 incidents in the previous quarter.

The proportion of assaults on staff<sup>11</sup> decreased to 35% of all incidents in the 12 months to September 2022, from 39% in the previous 12 months, having steadily increased prior to that from 20% in the 12 months to September 2012.

In male establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 16% to 13,119 incidents (172 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2022, and the rate increased 14%. Assaults on staff decreased 1% to 6,701 incidents (88 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners), with the rate decreasing 4%.

In female establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 43% to 669 incidents (with the rate also increasing by 41% to 208 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) and assaults on staff increased 13% to 655 incidents (the rate increasing by 12% to 204 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners), compared to the previous 12 months. The rate of assaults on staff has been steadily increasing from a rate of 44 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners in the 12 months to September 2014.

In the 12 months to September 2022, the proportion of assaults that were on staff remained higher in female establishments (50%) than in male establishments (34%).

<sup>10</sup> There was a change in how staff assaults have been recorded from April 2017, this has simplified how incidents involving staff are identified, however it is possible this has increased the recording of incidents. Please see the Guide to Safety in Custody statistics for further information

<sup>11</sup> Some assault incidents may be recorded as both a prisoner-on-prisoner assault and an assault on staff, so the sum of the two categories may exceed the total number of assaults

## Serious assaults

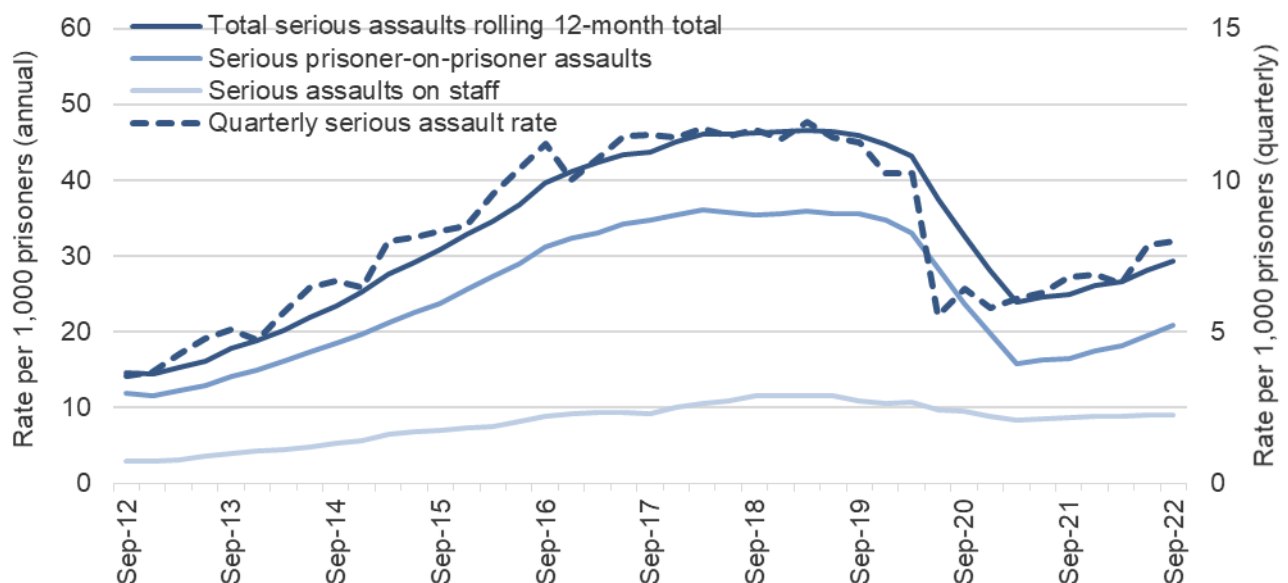
**Of the 20,872 assault incidents, 2,341 (11%) were serious.**

In the 12 months to September 2022, there were 2,341 serious assault incidents, a 21% **increase** from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assault **increased** by 18% over the period.

Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults **increased** by 29% to 1,660, and serious assaults on staff increased by 6% to 721 in the 12 months to September 2022.

Serious assaults are those which fall into one or more of the following categories: a sexual assault; requires detention in outside hospital as an in-patient; requires medical treatment for concussion or internal injuries; or incurs any of the following injuries: a fracture, scald or burn, stabbing, crushing, extensive or multiple bruising, black eye, broken nose, lost or broken tooth, cuts requiring suturing, bites, temporary or permanent blindness.

**Figure 6: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total serious assaults, serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, and serious assaults on staff, 12 months ending September 2012 to 12 months ending September 2022**



In the latest 12 months, 11% of assaults were serious assaults. The proportion of all assaults that were serious was higher in male establishments (12%) than in female establishments (6%).

In the 12 months to September 2022, there were 2,341 serious assaults (a rate of 29 per 1,000 prisoners), a 21% increase from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assaults in the latest 12 months was 18% higher than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 651 serious assaults, a 4% increase from the previous quarter.

There were 1,660 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 21 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2022, a 29% increase from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the latest 12 months was 26% higher than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 464 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 2% increase from 457 incidents in the previous quarter.

There were 721 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 9 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2022, a 6% increase from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assaults on

staff in the latest 12 months was 3% higher than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, the number of serious prisoner-on-staff assaults increased by 8% to 198 incidents.



## Further Information

### Covid-19

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been keen public and Parliamentary interest in how the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) are managing the running of prisons and the probation system to limit the spread of the virus while maintaining the core functions of these vital parts of the justice system. The core tenets of HMPPS's prison strategy, building on Public Health England (PHE) and Public Health Wales (PHW) advice and learning developed in managing an early outbreak of the virus, included the implementation of effective isolation, reverse cohorting of new entrants to custody, and shielding of vulnerable prisoners. During this period, we have seen progression of establishments to different levels of the National Framework for managing Covid with most establishments reaching Stage 2 or 1 before the Omicron outbreak in December 2021. We have also seen an exiting of the framework in May 2022 and a move to Living with Covid: [Living with Covid-19: prisons and youth custody settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/living-with-covid-19-prisons-and-youth-custody-settings).

The latest Covid-19 figures are published monthly on the MOJ website via the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-prison-and-probation-service-covid-19-statistics-monthly>

### Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- A technical guide providing further information on how the data are collected and processed, as well as information on the revisions policy and legislation relevant to sentencing trends and background on the functioning of the criminal justice system.
- A set of summary tables for the latest quarter, and annual tables up to the latest calendar year.
- Underlying data files with pivot tables, giving lower level granularity.

### National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's (UKSA) regulatory arm. The UKSA considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.



It is the Ministry of Justice's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected for National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the UKSA promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. As part of our continual review and prioritisation, we welcome user feedback on existing outputs including content, breadth, frequency and methodology. Please send any comments you have on this publication including suggestions for further developments or reductions in content.

## **Future publications**

Our statisticians regularly review the content of publications. Development of new and improved statistical outputs is usually dependent on reallocating existing resources. As part of our continual review and prioritisation, we welcome user feedback on existing outputs including content, breadth, frequency and methodology. Please send any comments you have on this publication including suggestions for further developments or reductions in content.

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## **Next update: April 2023**

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