



## Safety in Custody Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales, Deaths in prison custody to June 2017, Assaults and Self-Harm to March 2017

### Main Points

**Deaths see first year-on-year decrease since March 2013**



There were 316 deaths in prison custody in the 12 months to June 2017, down from 322 in the previous year. Two of these were homicides, down from 5. There were 97 self-inflicted deaths, down 10, 6 of which were in the female estate.

**Quarterly self-harm has stabilised at historical highs**



Self-harm reached a record high of 40,414 incidents in the 12 months to March 2017, up 5,749 (17%) from the previous year. After four consecutive quarters of record high numbers, however, the last quarter saw a quarter-on-quarter drop by 409 incidents (4%). The number of incidents requiring hospital attendance rose by 13% to 2,771.

**Assaults and serious assaults continue to rise, reaching record highs**



Assaults have continued to increase, reaching a record high of 26,643 incidents in the 12 months to March 2017, up 4,461 (20%) from the previous year. Of these, 3,606 (or 14%) were serious assaults, up 22% from the previous year. In the most recent quarter, there was a 2% increase in assault incidents.

**After a dip last quarter, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults continue to rise**



There were 19,361 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, up 2,630 (16%) from the previous year. Of these, 2,825 (15%) were serious, up 21% from the previous year. Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults saw a 1% increase in the latest quarter.

**Assaults on staff increasing to record high in latest year and quarter**



There were 7,159 assaults on staff, up 1,750 (32%) from the previous year. Serious assaults on staff have trebled since 2013, reaching 805 in the 12 months to March 2017, up 25% on the previous period. Assaults on staff increased by 5% in the latest quarter, reaching a new quarterly record high.

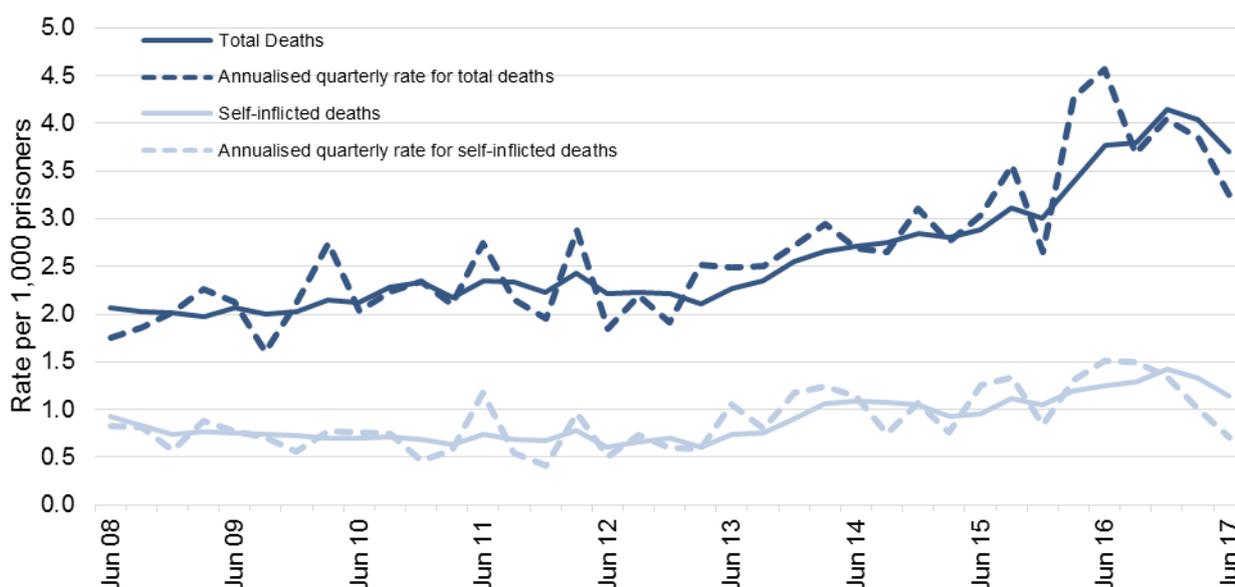
Safety in custody statistics cover deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody in England and Wales, with figures in quarterly summary tables presented on a 12-month rolling basis over a 10-year time series. Supplementary annual tables, providing more in-depth statistics on deaths, self-harm and assaults on a calendar year basis, underlying data files with pivot tables providing lower level granularity, and a guidance technical document are also available alongside this bulletin, and can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics>

# 1 Deaths

## Deaths see first year-on-year decrease since March 2013

In the 12 months to June 2017, there were 316 deaths in prison custody, down 6 from the previous year. Of these, 97 deaths were self-inflicted, down 10 from the previous year.

**Figure 1: Rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending June 2008 to 12 months ending June 2017, with annualised quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to June 2017 there were **316** deaths in prison custody, a decrease of **2%** compared to the previous year, at a rate of **3.7** deaths per 1,000 prisoners. The most recent quarter saw the lowest number of total deaths since the three months to December 2015. Quarterly death figures should be considered with caution due to greater volatility and the potential for seasonal effects. Long-term trends and more detail are presented in annual tables<sup>1</sup>.

There were **97** apparent self-inflicted deaths, down 9% on the previous year. On a rate basis this is **1.1** per 1,000 prisoners. Within the female estate, there were 6 self-inflicted deaths at a rate of 1.5 per 1,000 prisoners. There were **2** apparent homicides, down from 5 in the previous year. Homicides in prison custody remain relatively rare, accounting for around 1% of all deaths over the last ten years.

There were **189** deaths due to natural causes, the same as the previous year. Natural-cause deaths were at a rate of **2.2** per 1,000 prisoners.

There were **28** deaths recorded as 'other' in the 12 months to June 2017, **25** of which are 'awaiting further information' prior to being classified. Some of the deaths were inconclusive after toxicology and post-mortem, meaning classification cannot be arrived at until inquest (which can be a considerable time after the death), while others remain awaiting results at the time of publication. There has been a particularly high number of deaths awaiting further classification in this period. As a result, the number of deaths in the individual categories is not directly comparable with earlier years: it is likely that numbers in each category will be revised upwards once classifications have been finalised.

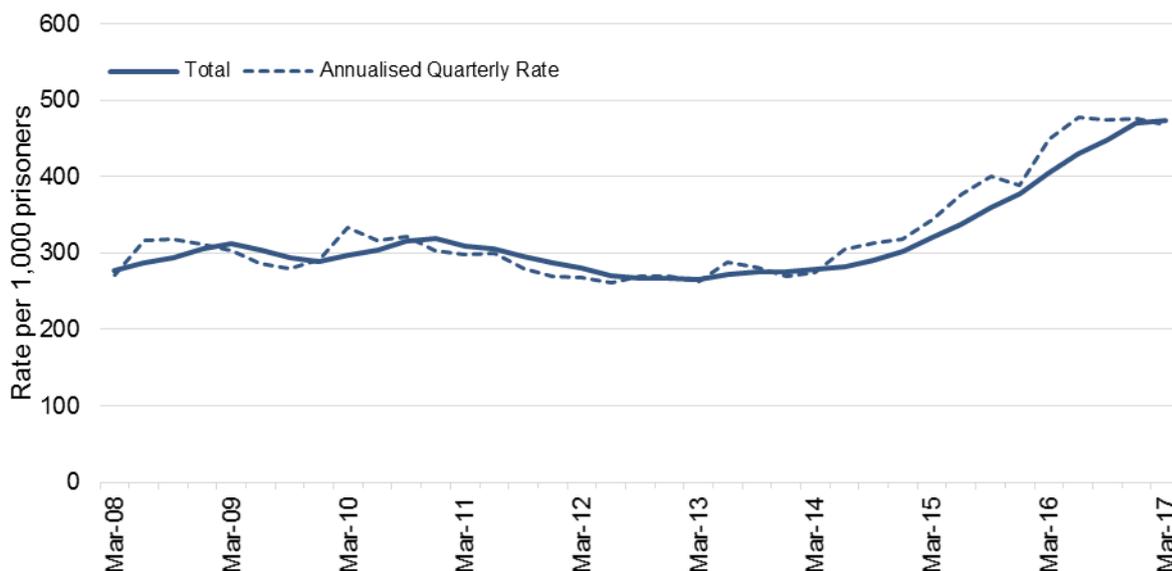
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics>

## 2 Self-harm

### Quarterly self-harm has stabilised at historical highs

Self-harm has reached a record high of 40,414 incidents, up 5,749 from the previous year, and has been stable at historical highs for the past five quarters. Incidents requiring hospital attendance also reached a record high of 2,771.

**Figure 2: Rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending March 2008 to 12 months ending March 2017, with annualised quarterly rates**

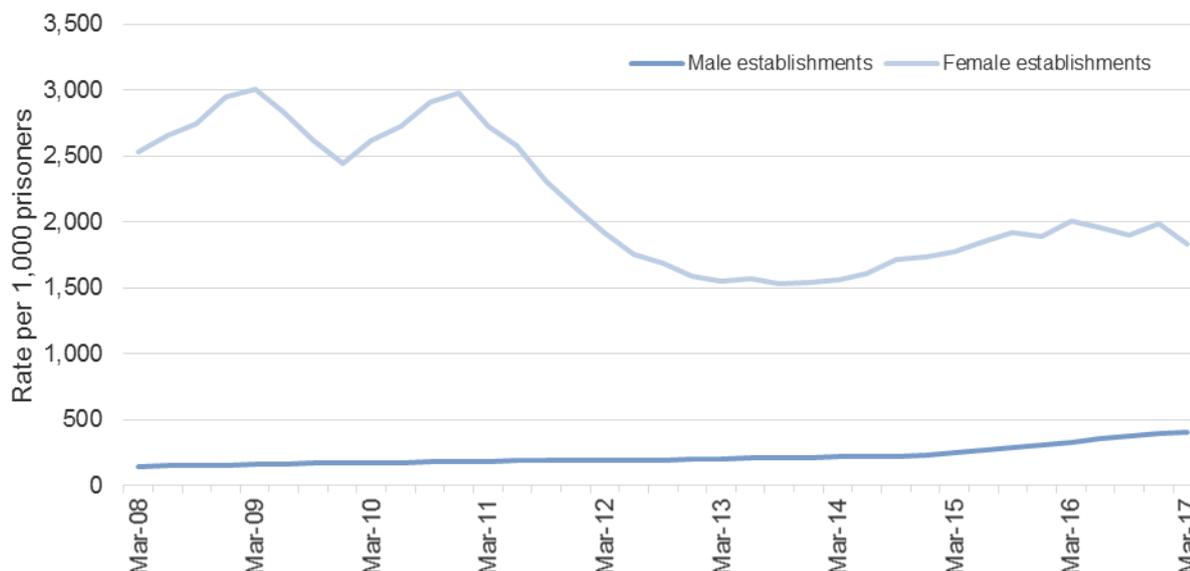


In the 12 months to March 2017, there were **40,414** reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of **474** per 1,000 prisoners), up 17% on the previous year. The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 13% on the previous year to **2,771** while the proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance remains broadly similar at 6.9%. The number of self-harm incidents and those requiring hospital attendance are both the highest in the time series.

The quarterly rate of incidents increased between March 2014 and June 2016, before stabilising for the last five quarters at the historical high. In the most recent quarter, from January to March 2017, self-harm levels have decreased slightly, with **9,837** incidents (down 4% quarter on quarter), **701** of which required hospital attendance.

The number of prisoners who self-harmed in the 12 months to March 2017 was **11,010** (a rate of **129** prisoners per 1,000), up 10% from the previous year. Those that self-harmed did so, on average, **3.7** times, although a relatively small number of prolific self-harmers have a disproportionate impact on this figure.

**Figure 3: Rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending March 2008 to 12 months ending March 2017**



Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender, with a rate of **409** incidents per 1,000 in male establishments (with incidents up 24% on the previous year) compared to a rate of **1,835** per 1,000 in female establishments (a reduction of 8% in number of incidents from the previous year). After five years of stability in the prolificacy of self-harm among males, there has been an increase from 3.0 to 3.4 incidents per self-harming male in the most recent period. In contrast, self-harm prolificacy among females has fallen from 6.7 to 6.2 incidents per self-harming female.

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased from the previous year in male establishments by 14% to **2,616**, while female establishments saw a decrease of 1% to **155** incidents. The proportion of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance remained relatively stable at 6.9% to March 2017, compared to 7.1% in the previous year. The slight decrease is due to the fact that the total number of self-harm incidents rose at a higher rate than the number of incidents requiring hospital attendance.

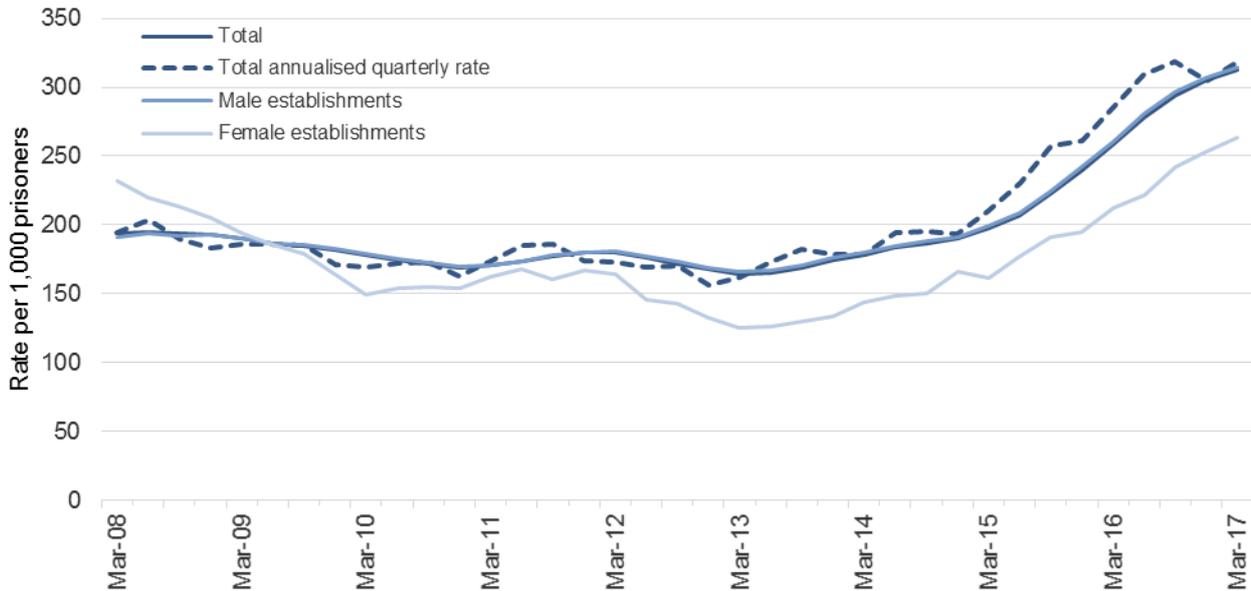
While self-harmers in female establishments were roughly twice as prolific as those in male establishments, self-harmers in male establishments had slightly less than four times the proportion of self-harm incidents that require hospitalisation (7.9% in male establishments compared to 2.2% in female establishments).

### 3 Assaults

#### Assaults and serious assaults continue to rise, reaching record highs

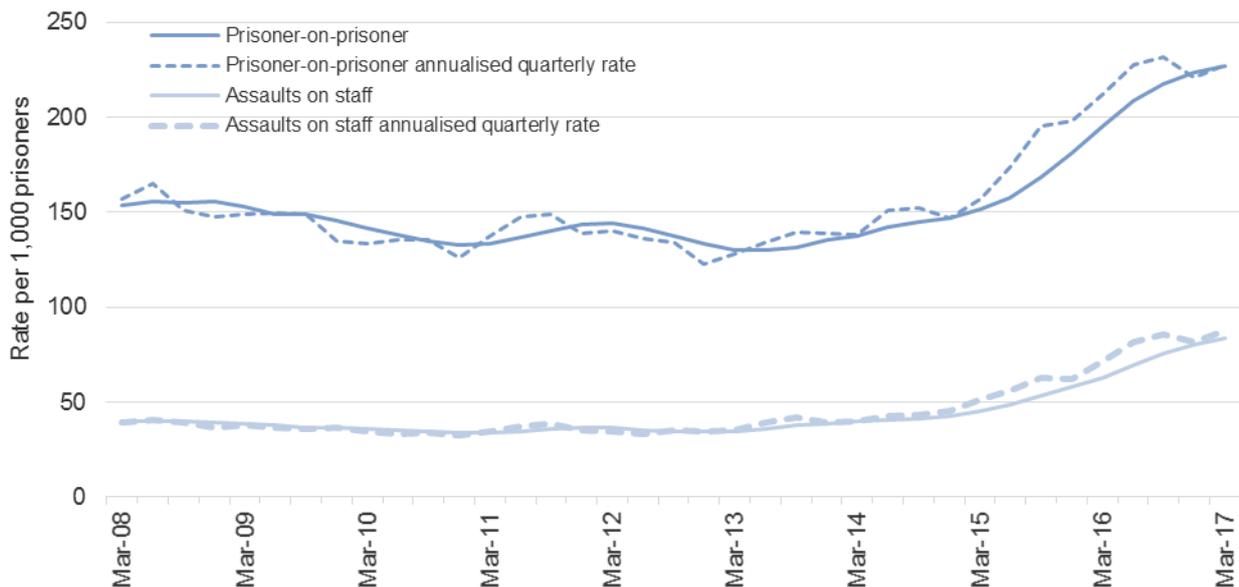
Assaults have continued to increase, reaching a record high of 26,643 assault incidents in the 12 months to March 2017, up 4,461 (20%) from the previous year. Of these, 3,606 were serious assaults, up 22% from the previous year.

**Figure 4: Rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending March 2008 to 12 months ending March 2017, with annualised quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to March 2017, there were **26,643** assault incidents (a rate of **312** incidents per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 20% on the previous year, and the highest level in the time series. Of these, **3,606** were serious assaults, up 22% on the previous year. Since the 12 months to March 2013, serious assaults have almost trebled.

**Figure 5: Rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending March 2008 to 12 months ending March 2017, with annualised quarterly rates**



There were **19,361** prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the 12 months to March 2017 (a rate of **227** per 1,000 prisoners), up 16% on the previous year. Of these, **2,825** were serious assaults, up 21% on the previous year.

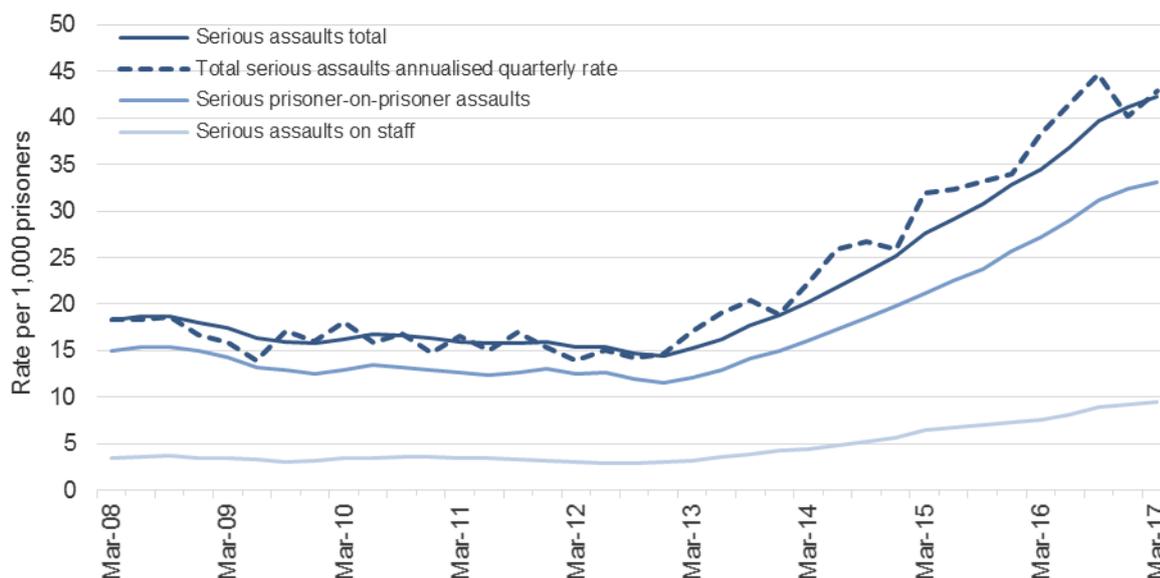
There were **7,159** assaults on staff in the 12 months to March 2017 (a rate of **84** per 1,000 prisoners), up 32% on the previous year. Of these, **805** were serious assaults, up 25% on the previous year.

The most recent quarter saw an increase in all types of assaults compared to the three-month period from October to December 2016, which had the first drop in incident numbers since 2014. Quarterly assaults on staff increased by 5%, reaching a new quarterly record high. Total assaults increased by 2%, and prisoner-on-prisoner incidents, by 1%.

### 3.1 Serious assaults

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: Rate of serious assaults total, serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, and serious assaults on staff, 12 months ending March 2008 to 12 months ending March 2017, with annualised quarterly rates**



After a prolonged period of stability in the time series, there has been a clear upward trend since December 2012 in serious assault incidents of all types. The number of serious assaults and serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults are more than 2.7 times higher than in the 12 months to March 2013, while serious assaults on staff have trebled.

In the latest quarter there has been a 5% increase in total serious assaults compared to the three months to December 2016. Serious assaults on staff increased by 7% over this period, and serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults saw a 4% rise. All types of serious assault remain below their record level in the three months to September 2016.

## **No change to the definition of serious assaults**

In the last publication, 27 April 2017, we announced that HMPPS were considering expanding the definition of serious assaults incidents to include the throwing of urine or excrement and spitting. Following a review, it has been decided that, to ensure a consistent approach, the National Statistics will continue to report incidents on the same basis as previously. Assault incidents involving spitting and throwing of urine and excrement will continue to be reported in the annual statistics as types of weapons used in assault incidents.

## Further Information

### 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 for 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 Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority 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 Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

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**URL:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics>

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