



Ministry
of Justice

Deaths of Offenders in the Community 2016/17 Annual Statistics Bulletin

England and Wales

Ministry of Justice
Statistics bulletin

26th October 2017

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Introduction

The Deaths of Offenders in the Community statistics bulletin covers the deaths of offenders in England and Wales that occurred while they were under probation supervision because they were:

- serving their court order sentences in the community (including [community orders](#), [suspended sentence orders](#)); or
- on [post-release supervision](#) after completing a custodial sentence.

These figures refer to deaths of offenders occurring in the general public, with the exception of the small number of cases occurring to those residing in [approved premises](#), which are also included in this publication.

Offenders under supervision in the community (other than, to an extent, those occurring in approved premises) are not in the care of HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) in the way they are when in custody. The main responsibilities of offender managers in the community are to assess, supervise and rehabilitate offenders. While they can encourage offenders to address issues affecting the offenders' health and wellbeing, their ability to manage these issues is limited. As a result, the level of responsibility and accountability of the probation service for the health and well-being of offenders is substantially different from that of the prison service in relation to deaths in custody.

Statistics on deaths occurring in custody are published separately in the Safety in Custody Bulletin¹. These two sets of figures cannot be compared meaningfully.

Missing returns and adjustment to number of deaths

For the 2016/17 data collection, Humberside, Lincolnshire & North Yorkshire CRC and Norfolk & Suffolk CRC did not submit returns. These two CRCs recorded 37 deaths in 2015/16 and 38 deaths in 2014/15. Where applicable, adjusted figures are used for earlier years to provide a like-for-like comparison with 2016/17, by removing deaths from these two CRCs from earlier years' totals.

Release Schedule

This bulletin was published on 26 October 2017, and includes statistics covering financial year periods from 2010/11 to 2016/17. The earliest period for which data are held across probation is 2010/11. As such, the data presented in this publication represent the complete available time series.

Financial year figures are collected on an annual basis during August and September of each year, and collated for publication during October. The next release of Deaths of Offenders in the Community statistics, to include figures for the financial year 2017/18, is scheduled for 25 October 2018.

¹ Safety in Custody Statistics: www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

Main Points

The number of deaths in the community continues to rise



In 2016/17, there were 748 deaths of offenders in the community, up 7% from 2015/16 when adjusted for the missing returns from two Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs).

There were 233 self-inflicted deaths, down 9% from the previous year. During this period natural-cause deaths increased by 10% to 258 and apparent homicides increased from 22 to 33 deaths in 2016/17.

Deaths during post-release continue to rise



There were 372 deaths during post-release supervision, up 28% from the previous year. This accounts for the overall increase of deaths of offenders in the community on the previous year. This increase corresponds with the introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) on 1 February 2015, and the subsequent increase in the number of offenders on post-release supervision since.

Natural-cause deaths account for the majority of deaths in NPS. In contrast self-inflicted deaths account for the majority of deaths in CRCs

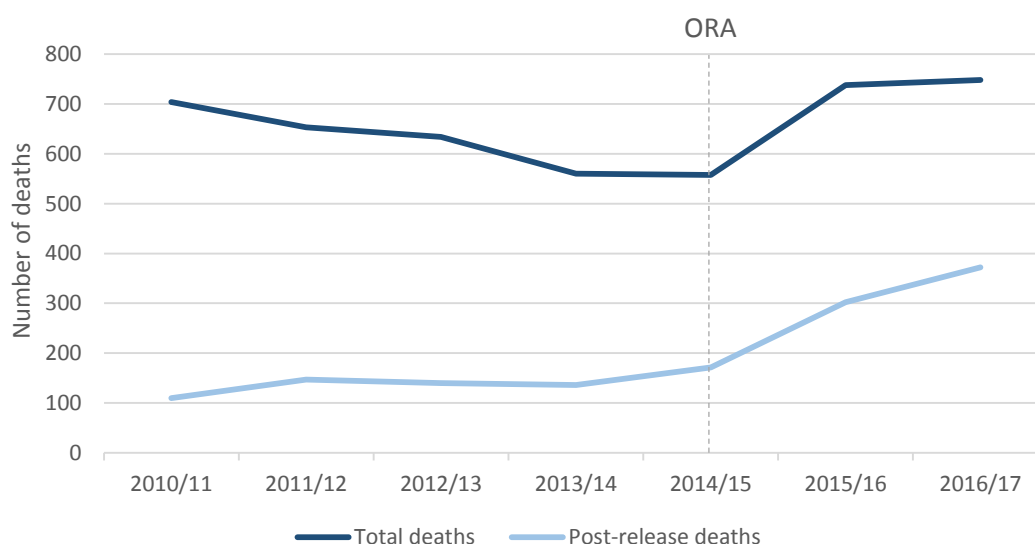
Natural-cause was the predominant classification of deaths in the National Probation Service (44%), while self-inflicted predominated in the Community Rehabilitation Companies (34%). There are notable differences in the distribution of age at the time of death between the National Probation Service (NPS) and CRCs. A larger proportion of deaths in the NPS occurred in the 50-65 years and over 65 years age categories, while the largest number of deaths in CRCs occurred among those aged between 36 and 45 years.

Commentary

There were 748 deaths of offenders in the community in 2016/17, the highest in the time series despite missing information from two [Community Rehabilitation Companies](#) (CRCs). This is an increase of 7% (47 deaths) from 701 deaths in the previous year, after adjusting 2015/16 figures to account for the two missing data returns. From here on and where applicable, figures shown for earlier years will be adjusted by removing deaths from the two CRCs so as to provide like-for-like comparisons with 2016/17 figures.

The increase in deaths in the community is due to the rise in number of offenders who died under post-release supervision, while deaths of other offenders have been falling. There was an increase of 82 deaths (28%) during post-release supervision compared to 2015/16. The proportion of deaths in the community that occurred during post-release supervision has increased from 16% in 2010/11 to 50% in 2016/17.

Figure 1: Death of offenders in the community and deaths occurring during post-release supervision, England and Wales¹



(1) 2016/17 is missing 2 returns, so the figures are not directly comparable to earlier periods.

The introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) on 1 February 2015 caused an increase in the number of offenders on post-release supervision. Caution should be used when comparing periods prior to and after the introduction of ORA.

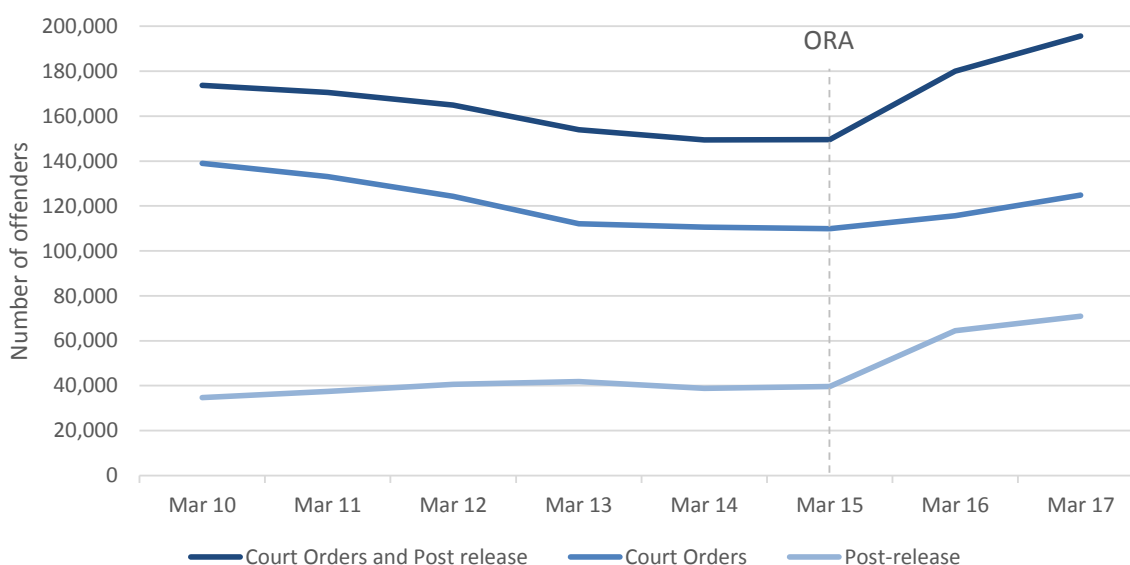
The number of offenders who died in the community while on probation supervision decreased year on year between 2010/11 and 2013/14, from 704 to 560 deaths (a fall of 20%). The figure remained relatively stable in 2014/15 with 558 deaths, followed by a notable increase to 738 in 2015/16. This was largely driven by deaths of offenders under post-release supervision, which increased from 171 in 2014/15 to 302 in 2015/16 (a 77% increase). The increase is partly explained by the introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) on 1 February 2015, which resulted in a substantial increase in the number of offenders on post-release supervision, from 39,669 as at 31 March 2015 to 64,441 as at 31 March 2016² (an increase of 62%).

² Caseload of offenders under post-release supervision from the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly: www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly

Under ORA, all offenders given custodial sentences are now subject to a minimum of 12 months' supervision in the community upon release from prison. This consists of a period spent on [licence](#), and, depending on the length of custodial sentence, a period on [post-sentence supervision](#). Previously, only adults sentenced to over 12 months in custody and all young offenders were subject to statutory supervision.

As seen in Figures 1 and 2, the trend in the deaths of offenders in the community follows a similar pattern to the overall caseload of offenders supervised in the community at the end of each financial year, as published in the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly³. The combined caseload of all court orders (including community orders and suspended sentence orders) and post-release supervision, showed an increase of 9% from 180,050 as at 31 March 2016 to 195,695 as at 31 March 2017. The increase in caseload is driven almost equally by increases of court orders and post-release supervision, 8% and 10% respectively. This is in contrast to deaths of offender in the community, where offenders on post-release accounted for the overall increase in deaths but deaths of other offenders fell.

Figure 2: Number of offenders supervised by the probation service at the end period by type, England Wales



Some caution should be used when considering caseload figures, as offenders may appear both within the caseload figures of court orders and post-release supervision, resulting in potential double-counting. The introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) on 1 February 2015 caused an increase in the number of offenders on post-release supervision. Caution should be used when comparing periods prior to and after the introduction of ORA.

In 2016/17, there was a 16% increase in deaths of offenders in the community supervised by the [National Probation Service](#) (NPS) and a 2% increase in those supervised by CRCs compared with 2015/16. Prior to this, the NPS and CRCs had seen relatively similar increases in deaths between 2014/15 and 2015/16 of 35% and 31% respectively.

Some caution should be used when considering caseload figures in conjunction with deaths. Offenders may appear both within the caseload figures of court orders (including community orders and suspended sentence orders) and post-release supervision. Furthermore, published caseload figures are snapshots of moments in time, which may not fully represent

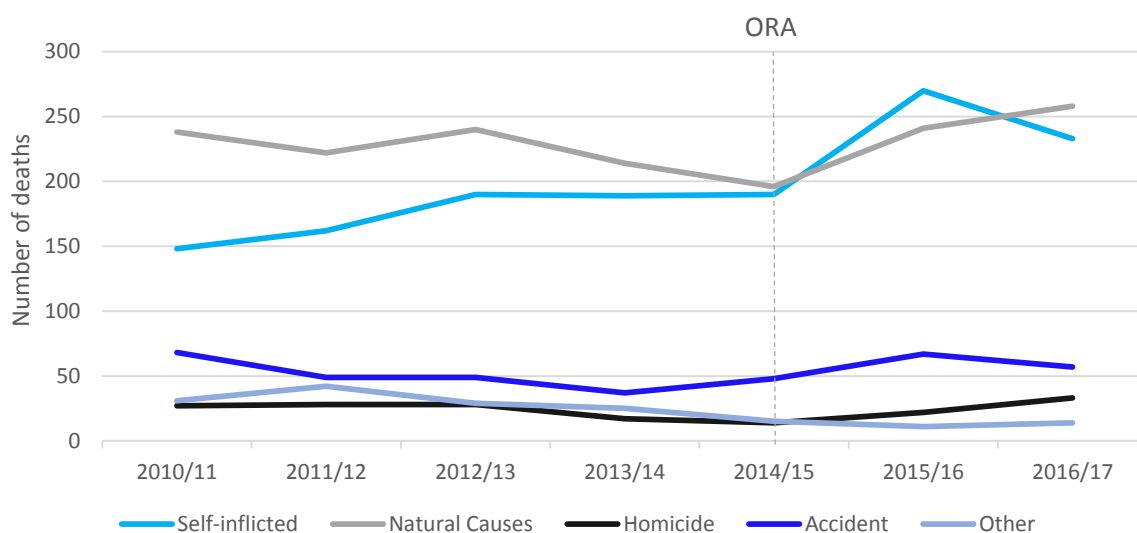
³ Probation caseload statistics are published in the Offender management statistics quarterly at www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly

the overall caseload during the 12-month periods for which deaths are presented in this publication. Accordingly, rates of deaths have not been calculated, and comparisons of trends in caseload to trends in deaths of offenders in the community should be seen as indicative. However, these changes to overall probation caseload figures can be viewed as context to the corresponding changes in deaths across the time series. The overall trends of probation caseload and the number of deaths of offenders in the community are similar.

Apparent cause of death

Across the time series, deaths that were natural or self-inflicted accounted for around two thirds of all deaths in the community. The number of natural-cause deaths has been higher than self-inflicted, but the difference narrowed between 2010/11 and 2014/15. In the following year, self-inflicted deaths surpassed natural causes, which was the only year that this happened.

Figure 3: Death of offenders in the community by apparent cause, England and Wales¹



(1) 2016/17 is missing 2 returns. Caution should be used when comparing with earlier periods.

The introduction of the Offender Rehabilitation Act (ORA) on 1 February 2015 caused an increase in the number of offenders on post-release supervision. Caution should be used when comparing periods prior to and after the introduction of ORA.

There were 258 natural-cause deaths in 2016/17, a 10% increase when compared with adjusted figures for 2015/16. Deaths due to natural causes accounted for around a third of all deaths in the community across the time series, although natural-cause deaths accounted for a higher proportion of all deaths of offenders supervised by NPS (44% in 2016/17) compared to CRCs (29% in 2016/17). This difference may be explained partly by the age of offenders at the time of their death. For 2016/17, around 39% of offenders supervised by NPS were aged 50 or over when they died. Offenders in this age group are more likely to die of natural causes than any other reason. In contrast, only 20% of offenders supervised by the CRCs were aged 50 or over when they died.

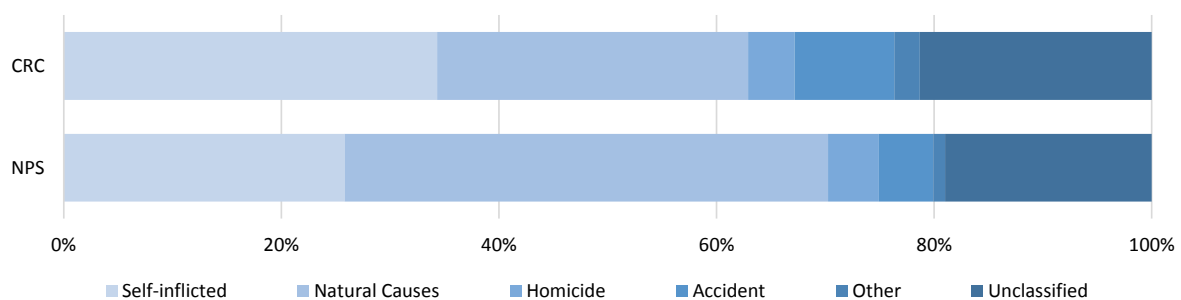
There were 233 self-inflicted deaths in 2016/17, a decrease of 9% from 2015/16 and this accounted for 31% of all deaths. This reverses the recent trend where the proportion of

deaths that were self-inflicted had gradually increased year on year, from 21% in 2010/11 to 37% in 2015/16 – the only year to record more self-inflicted deaths than those due to natural causes.

In 2016/17, the proportion of self-inflicted deaths in the NPS was lower than the proportion of deaths due to natural causes. The opposite is true of the CRCs, where self-inflicted deaths accounted for a higher proportion of deaths than natural causes. This is only partly explained by the different age distributions of the supervised offenders. When comparing on a like-for-like basis, CRCs had a drop in the number of self-inflicted deaths compared to the previous year, whereas the NPS saw an increase.

As seen in Figure 4, self-inflicted death was the predominant classification of deaths in the CRCs in 2016/17, while natural-cause deaths predominate in the NPS.

Figure 4: Relative distribution of deaths by classification in NPS and CRCs, 2016/17



Caution should be used when comparing percentages of apparent cause of death for CRCs and NPS due to the high proportion of deaths that are as yet unclassified.

There were 33 apparent homicides in 2016/17, 13 in NPS and 20 in CRCs. While this is the highest in the time series, it accounted for only 4% of all deaths, and is broadly consistent with previous years.

Gender

In 2016/17, 40% of male and 19% of female offenders who died in the community were under the supervision of the NPS. There were 649 male deaths, accounting for 87% of all deaths, with 36% due to natural causes and 30% for self-inflicted. This is in contrast to females where the main cause of death was self-inflicted (41%) and natural causes accounted for 25%. At the time of death, 29% of males were aged 50 or over compared to 17% for females. This age group is more likely to die of natural causes, which partly explains the higher proportion of natural-cause deaths amongst males.

For males, 2015/16 was the only year in the time series to have higher numbers of self-inflicted deaths than natural causes. In both of the last two years, females have recorded more self-inflicted deaths than those due to natural causes.

Post-release supervision

There were 372 deaths of offenders under post-release supervision in the community after a custodial sentence in 2016/17, representing 50% of all deaths of offenders in the community. Although in absolute terms these were similar between NPS and CRCs (180 and 192 deaths respectively), in relative terms deaths under post-release supervision represented 41% of all deaths in the community while supervised by CRCs, but 65% of all deaths while supervised

by the NPS. The sizeable increase in deaths since 2014/15, corresponds with the introduction of ORA.

The relative distributions of classifications of deaths under post-release supervision in NPS and CRCs are broadly similar to those seen in deaths of offenders in the community overall in 2016/17. These distributions remained relatively similar across the time series. Natural-cause deaths predominate for those supervised by NPS, and self-inflicted death was the most prevalent classification in CRCs between 2014/15 and 2016/17.

Approved Premises

Approved Premises (formerly known as probation/bail hostels) provide accommodation for offenders on post-release supervision (released from prison on licence) and those directed by the courts to live there as a condition of their court order. Staff provide supervision, support and ensure that residents comply with conditions of their licence or court order. Some of the deaths while resident in Approved Premises occurred away from the premises.

There were 13 deaths of offenders with residence in Approved Premises in 2016/17. Deaths of offenders residing in Approved Premises accounted for 2% of all deaths of offenders in the community in general across the time series, ranging from 9 to 15 deaths a year since 2010/11. The majority of deaths of offenders residing in Approved Premises across the time series were male, while females accounted for three deaths. Due to the greater volatility due to low numbers, comparisons across time would not be meaningful.

List of tables and figures

This is a list of annual Deaths of Offenders in the Community Statistics tables and figures. Figures 1 to 4 are included in this document. The summary tables are available from the website⁴. All tables refer to incidents occurring to offenders in the community in England and Wales and for 2010/11 to 2015/16 unless stated otherwise.

Table description	
Deaths of Offenders in the Community – Summary tables	
Table 1	Deaths of offenders in the community by gender and apparent cause
Table 2	Deaths of offenders in the community by gender and age band
Table 3	Deaths of offenders in the community by gender and ethnic group
Table 4	Deaths of offenders during post-release supervision in the community after a custodial sentence, by gender and apparent cause
Table 5	Deaths of offenders in the community by CRC, 2014/15 and 2016/17
Table 6	Deaths of offenders in the community by NPS Division, 2014/15 and 2016/17
Table 7	Deaths of offenders in the community by Probation Trust, 2010/11 to 2013/14
Table 8	Deaths of offenders in the community residing in Approved premises by apparent cause
Deaths of Offenders in the Community – Figures	
Figure 1	Death of offenders in the community and deaths occurring during post-release supervision
Figure 2	Number of offenders supervised by the probation service at the end period by type
Figure 3	Death of offenders in the community by apparent cause
Figure 4	Relative distribution of deaths by classification in NPS and CRCs, 2016/17

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/collections/death-of-offenders-in-the-community

Glossary

Approved premises	Approved premises (formerly known as probation and bail hostels) accommodate offenders released from prison on licence, offenders directed to live there as part of their sentence (such as a requirement of a community order) and those directed to live there by the courts as a condition of bail. Their purpose is to provide an enhanced level of residential supervision in the community, as well as a supportive and structured environment.
Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC)	A series of organisations established on 1 June 2014, responsible for the delivery of offender management to medium and lower-risk offenders in the community.
Community order	Replaced all pre-Criminal Justice Act community sentences for adults. Under this order, a number of possible requirements must be added, such as supervision, unpaid work and drug treatment.
Community sentence	This places the offender under the supervision of the probation service and there will be a range of requirements that must be completed.
Licence	The period in which a prisoner is released from prison to serve the remainder of their sentence in the community. Offenders subject to post-release licence are required to adhere to specific conditions as part of their licence. Conditions for offenders released from determinate sentences are set by the governor/controller (on behalf of the Secretary of State) from the releasing prison for determinate sentences. Where the sentence is indeterminate, licence conditions are set by the Parole Board.
National Probation Service (NPS)	An organisation established on 1 June 2014, responsible for the delivery of offender management to higher risk offenders in the community.
Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014 (ORA)	An Act passed by parliament that made changes to the legislative framework to support various reforms including ensuring offenders released from custodial sentences of over 1 day will be subject to a minimum of 12 months' supervision in the community, and making available a new 'Rehabilitation Activity Requirement' as part of a community order or suspended sentence order.
Post-release supervision	Offenders released from prisons after completing their custodial sentence are subject to supervision in the community. This consists of a period spent on licence, and, depending on the length of custodial sentence, a period on post-sentence supervision. Prior to the Offender Rehabilitation Act, the supervision period comprised only the licence period.

Post-sentence supervision

Provisions in the Offender Rehabilitation Act created a new supervision period to be served by offenders released from custodial sentences of more than 1 day but less than 2 years. The supervision period follows the licence period, and tops up the licence so that the total period under supervision in the community is 12 months. For example, an offender subject to a licence period of 4 months would then be subject to a supervision period of 8 months. The purpose of the post-sentence supervision period is the rehabilitation of the offender. As with licence conditions, requirements under the supervision period are imposed by the Secretary of State.

Probation trusts

Probation trusts were organisations who managed the delivery of probation services to offenders prior to implementation of the Offender Rehabilitation Act. Probation trusts ceased to exist on 31 May 2014

Suspended sentence order

A court may give an offender a 'suspended' prison sentence if the time they would otherwise spend in prison is under 12 months. The offender then serves their sentence in the community and must comply with conditions set out in the order made by the court. These conditions can last for up to two years. If the offender breaks these conditions, or commits another offence, they will usually have to serve the original sentence in prison in addition to the sentence they get for any new offence.

Categorisation of deaths

Each death has been classified as one of the following apparent causes, as allocated at the time of reporting based on information held and reported by the probation provider (NPS, CRC or Probation Trust) to HMPPS:

Accident	Any death of a person arising from external causes, accidental overdose/poisoning and deaths where taking a drug contributed to a death but not in fatal amounts.
Homicide	Any death of a person at the hands of another (includes murder and manslaughter).
Natural causes	Any death of a person as a result of a naturally occurring disease process.
Other	Any death of a person whose death cannot easily be classified as natural causes, self-inflicted, accident or homicide. The cause of death may never be known even after all of the necessary investigations have taken place.
Self-inflicted	Any death of a person who has apparently taken his or her own life irrespective of intent.
Unclassified	Any death where there is insufficient information to make a judgement about the cause at the time of reporting.

Data sources and data quality

The data presented in this publication are drawn from manual returns collected annually from each National Probation Service (NPS) Division and each Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), and each Probation Trust prior to 2014/15. These returns but may not capture all offenders that died during supervision in the community. The death of an offender may only come to light when they are informed by third parties such as the police, the medical profession or friends and family of the deceased.

Death classification figures in this bulletin are based on reports received by probation staff and their interpretation of these reports. These, in many cases, may not be the confirmed cause of death, but represent the apparent cause of death at the time deaths were reported to HMPPS. Because HMPPS' responsibility for the majority of these figures is predominantly in relation to the termination of the court order or post-release supervision, further information pertaining to the death that may influence subjective assessments of the apparent cause of death may not be subsequently reported to HMPPS. Therefore, while apparent cause of deaths in this bulletin reflects the classification made at the time of reporting, it may not reflect the final classification of deaths after inquest. Such reclassifications would not be expected to have a notable effect on reported trends.

Furthermore, at the time of reporting, probation staff may not have sufficient information regarding the circumstances of the death to assign an apparent cause. The results of any investigations or inquests following the death are not always circulated back to the probation providers. As such, a number of deaths remain unclassified each year, and many of these are unlikely to be subsequently updated. Accordingly, caution is advised when comparing deaths in individual categories across time.

As part of the Transforming Rehabilitation reform programme, [Probation Trusts](#) were replaced in June 2014 by the National Probation Service (NPS), which manages the most high-risk offenders across seven divisions; and 21 Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), who manage medium and low-risk offenders. There may be possible underreporting from the period during the transition. Figures for 2014/15 would include some deaths that occurred when the Probation Trusts existed but were reported by the NPS or CRCs that had been allocated responsibility for these offenders prior to their deaths.

Data on deaths of residents staying in Approved Premises may include those directed to reside there as part of their bail conditions. Where known, deaths of residents released on bail have been removed from the figures. Some deaths in Approved Premises occur away from the premises, as such it should not be inferred that all of such deaths were either directly supervised or occurring on the premises themselves.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the information collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. While the figures shown have been checked as far as possible, they should be regarded as approximate and not necessarily accurate to the last whole number shown in the tables.

Users and uses of these statistics

The statistics included in this publication have a wide range of uses, and this report adds to the body of learning in this area. It supports work to help identify possible means to reduce the risk of such tragedies occurring in future, meeting a broad spectrum of user needs as shown below:

User	Summary of main statistical needs
MOJ Ministers	Use the statistics to monitor the safety and wellbeing of the offenders in the community; and to assess policy impacts (e.g. changes to managing vulnerable offenders)
MPs and House of Lords	Statistics may be used to answer parliamentary questions
Monitoring and Accountability	E.g. Justice Select Committee. Deaths of Offenders in the Community may be used as a primary data source for monitoring and for public accountability.
Policy teams	Statistics are used to inform policy development, to monitor impact of changes over time and to consider future changes and their impact on the system
Agencies responsible for offender management	Current and historical administrative data are used to support performance management information at national and local levels to complement their understanding of the current picture and trends over time
Academia, students and businesses	Used as a source of statistics for research purposes and to support lectures, presentations and conferences
Trade Unions	Used as a source of statistics to inform the work of the unions in relation to the probation service.
Journalists	Used as a compendium of data on deaths of offenders in the community so that an accurate and coherent story can be told on rehabilitation and events occurring to offenders in the community
Voluntary sector	Data may be used to monitor trends of the safety and wellbeing of offenders, to reuse the data in their own briefing and research papers and to inform policy work and responses to consultations.
General public	Data may be used to respond to ad-hoc requests made under the Freedom of Information Act.

HMPPS regularly receives requests for statistics for more recent date periods than those covered in published statistics. In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, HMPPS is unable to release figures for periods in advance of those published in Official Statistics publications. Furthermore, the figures appearing in this publication are received by HMPPS in annual returns during August and September of each year, meaning the publication date is the earliest that collated figures for the financial year are held and available for internal use also, meaning these figures are the most timely available held data.

Related publications

This bulletin is published alongside other inter-related bulletins:

*Safety in Custody Statistics Quarterly Bulletin*⁵: This covers deaths, assaults and self-harm occurring in prison custody. Although death in custody statistics are published on the same day as deaths of offenders in the community, attempts to compare these figures would not be meaningful and such comparisons should not be made.

*Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin*⁶: This provides key statistics relating to offenders who are in prison or under Probation Service supervision. It covers flows into these services (receptions into prison or probation starts) and flows out (discharges from prison or probation terminations) as well as the caseload of both services at specific points in time.

*Proven Re-offending Statistics Quarterly*⁷: This provides proven re-offending figures for offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court, received a caution or received a reprimand or warning.

*Community Performance Management Information release*⁸: A quarterly release of performance management information for the National Probation Service (NPS), Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs).

*Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) annual report*⁹: Presents statistics on the number of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) eligible offenders in England and Wales, and information related to these offenders.

Taken together, these publications present users with a more coherent overview of offender management, re-offending among both adults and young people and the safety of offenders whilst in prison custody.

⁵ www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly

⁷ www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-performance-quarterly-management-information-release

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/collections/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-annual-reports

Contact points

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General enquiries about the statistical work of the Ministry of Justice can be e-mailed to: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from <http://statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system>

The Ministry of Justice publishes data relating to offender management in England and Wales. Equivalent statistics for Scotland and Northern Ireland can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice>

<http://www.sps.gov.uk/FreedomofInformation/PrisonerDeaths.aspx>

<http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications.htm>

Alternative formats are available on request from statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

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