



Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to December 2018 Assaults and Self-harm to September 2018

Main Points

<p>Number of deaths increased compared to the previous 12 month period</p>		<p>There were 325 deaths in prison custody in the 12 months to December 2018, up 10% from the previous year. Of these, 4 were homicides, up from 3 incidents in the previous year. There were 92 self-inflicted deaths, up from 70 in the previous year, 3 of which occurred in the female estate, compared to 2 incidents in the previous 12 months.</p>
<p>Self-harm incidents continue to rise, reaching new record high</p>		<p>In the 12 months to September 2018, there were 52,814 incidents, a 23% increase from the previous year, and a new record high. Incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 4% to 3,179, the highest figure in the time series. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents is up 12% at 15,316.</p>
<p>Assaults and serious assaults continue to rise, reaching record highs</p>		<p>In the 12 months to September 2018, there were 33,803 assault incidents, up 20% from the previous year. Of these, 3,949 (12%) were serious, up 6% from the previous year. Both of these figures are the highest in the time series. Similarly, quarterly assault incidents increased by 5% to 9,082 incidents.</p>
<p>Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults continue to rise, reaching record highs</p>		<p>There were 24,138 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the 12 months to September 2018, up 18% from the previous year. Of these, 3,019 (13%) were serious assaults, an increase of 2% in the number of serious incidents from the previous year. Both figures are record highs. Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults saw an increase of 1% in the latest quarter, with 6,373 incidents.</p>
<p>Assaults on staff continue to rise, reaching record highs</p>		<p>There were 10,085 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2018, up 29% from the previous year. There has been a change in how these incidents are recorded since April 2017 which may have contributed to the increase. See the guide for more information. Of these, 997 (10%) were serious assaults on staff, up 27% from the previous year. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff increased by 12% to a new record high of 2,820 incidents.</p>

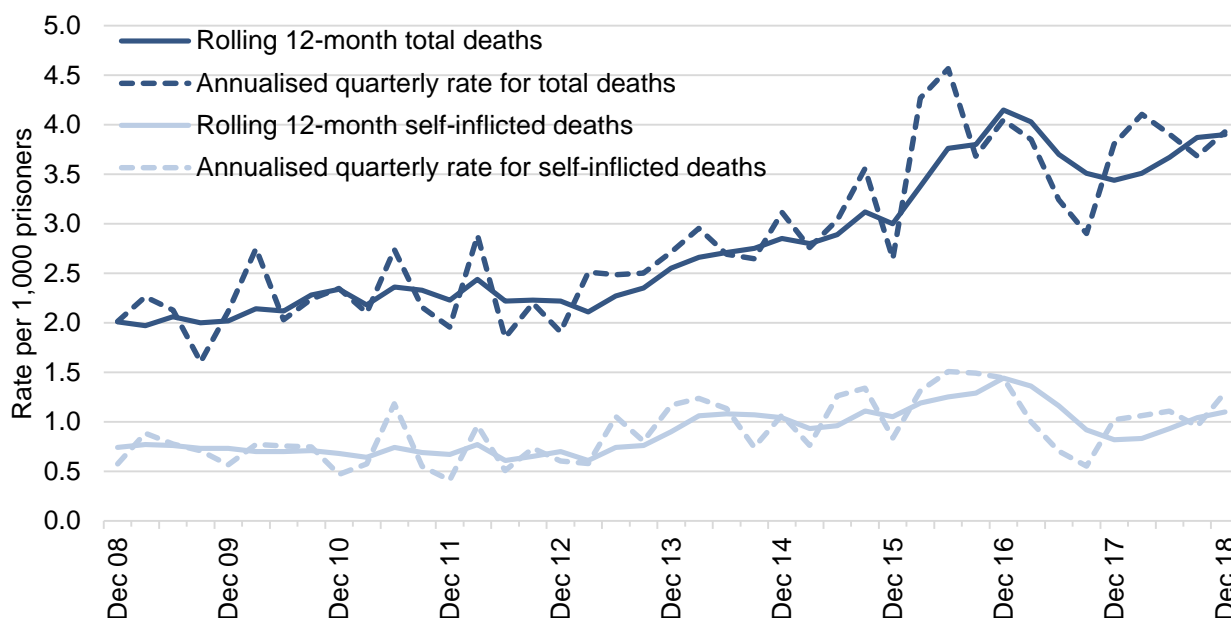
Safety in custody statistics cover deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody and HMPPS Immigration Removal Centres in England and Wales, with figures in quarterly summary tables presented on a 12-month rolling basis over an 11-year time series. Supplementary annual tables, providing more in-depth statistics on a calendar year basis, underlying data files with pivot tables providing lower level granularity, and a guidance technical document are also available alongside this bulletin, at www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics.

1 Deaths: 12 months ending December 2018

Number of deaths increased compared to the previous 12 month period.

In the 12 months to December 2018, there were 325 deaths in prison custody, up 30 from the previous year. Of these, 92 deaths were self-inflicted, up 22 from the previous year.

Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending December 2008 to 12 months ending December 2018, with annualised quarterly rates¹



In 2018, there were 325 deaths in prison custody, an increase of 10% from 295 in the previous year, at a rate of 3.9 deaths per 1,000 prisoners. The most recent quarter saw the number of deaths rise to 82, an increase of 5 from the previous quarter. 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.

There were 92 apparent self-inflicted deaths, up 31% from 70 in the previous year. On a rate basis this is 1.1 per 1,000 prisoners in 2018. Within the female estate, there were 3 self-inflicted deaths at a rate of 0.8 per 1,000 prisoners during this period, compared to 2 self-inflicted deaths in the previous year.

There were 4 apparent homicides, up from 3 incidents 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 162 deaths due to natural causes, a decrease of 15% from 191 in the previous year. Natural-cause deaths were at a rate of 1.9 per 1,000 prisoners.

There were 67 deaths recorded as 'other' in 2018, 54 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), while other cases remain awaiting results at the time of publication. There has been a high number of deaths awaiting further classification in this period which makes comparison difficult.

¹ The annualised quarterly rate is an estimate of the annual rate calculated from data in one quarter and also taking into account the number of days in that quarter.

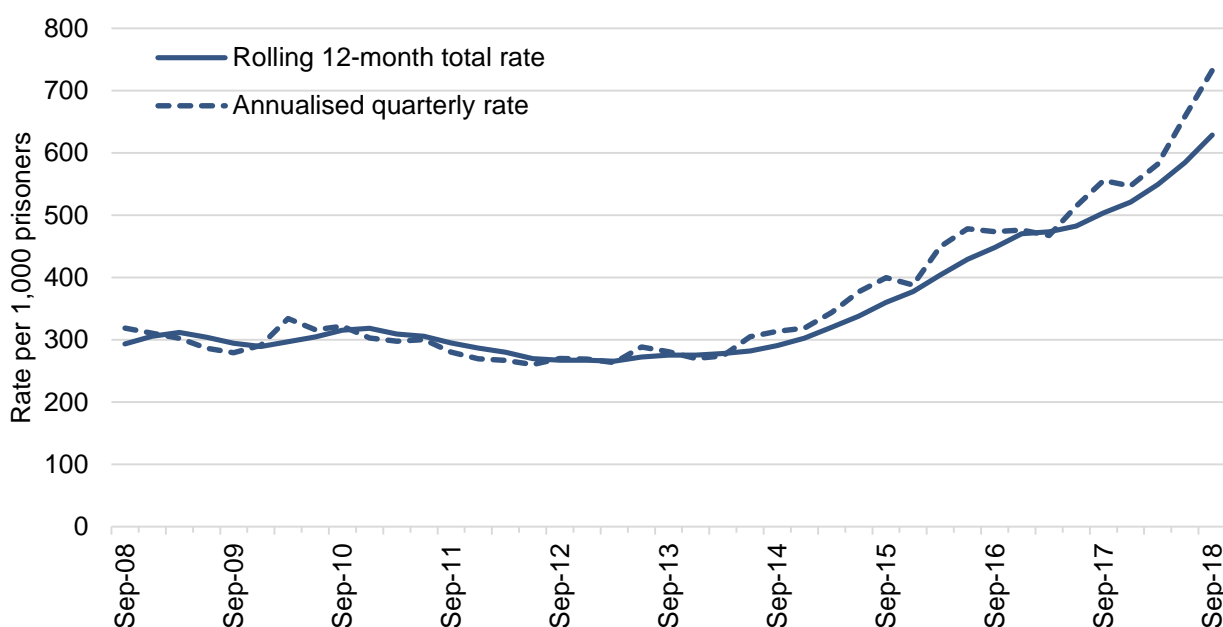
As a result, the number of deaths in the individual categories is not directly comparable with earlier years; it is likely that the figures in some categories will be revised upwards once classifications have been finalised.

2 Self-harm: 12 months to September 2018

Self-harm incidents continue to rise, reaching record highs

In the 12 months to September 2018, there were 52,814 incidents, a 23% increase from the previous year, and a new record high. Incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 4% to 3,179, the highest figure in the time series. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents is up 12% at 15,316.

Figure 2: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending September 2008 to 12 months ending September 2018, with annualised quarterly rates

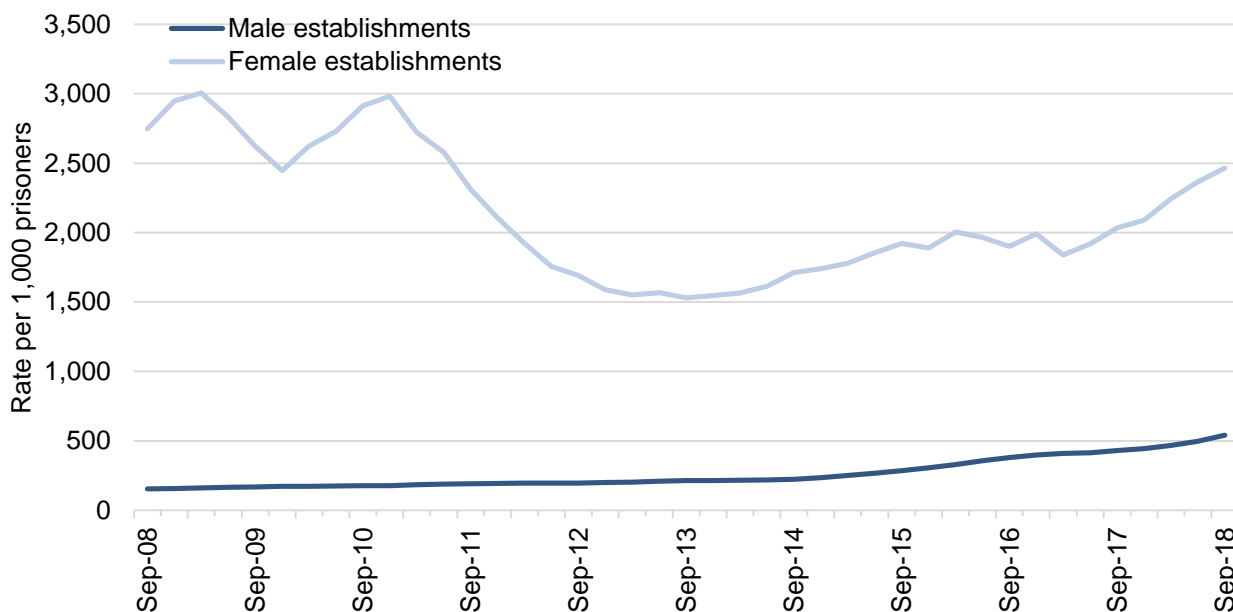


In the 12 months to September 2018, there were 52,814 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 629 per 1,000 prisoners), up 23% from the previous year. The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 4% to 3,179. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance decreased by 1.1 percentage point to 6.0%.

On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to September 2018 increased to 15,316 (up 12% from the previous quarter), 859 (6%) of which required hospital attendance (up 3% from the previous quarter)

The number of prisoners who self-harmed in the 12 months to September 2018 was 12,467 (a rate of 148 prisoners per 1,000), up 10% from the previous year, and the highest figure in the time series. Those that self-harmed did so, on average, 4.2 times, although a small number of prolific self-harmers have a disproportionate impact on this figure.

Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2008 to 12 months ending September 2018



Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender, with a rate of 540 incidents per 1,000 in male establishments (with incidents up 23% from the previous year) compared to a rate of 2,465 incidents per 1,000 in female establishments (an increase of 20% in the number of incidents from the previous year). In the 12 months to September 2018, the number of self-harm incidents per self-harming male increased from 3.5 in the previous year to 3.8, while self-harm prolificacy among females increased from 7.0 in the previous year to 7.8 incidents per self-harming individual.

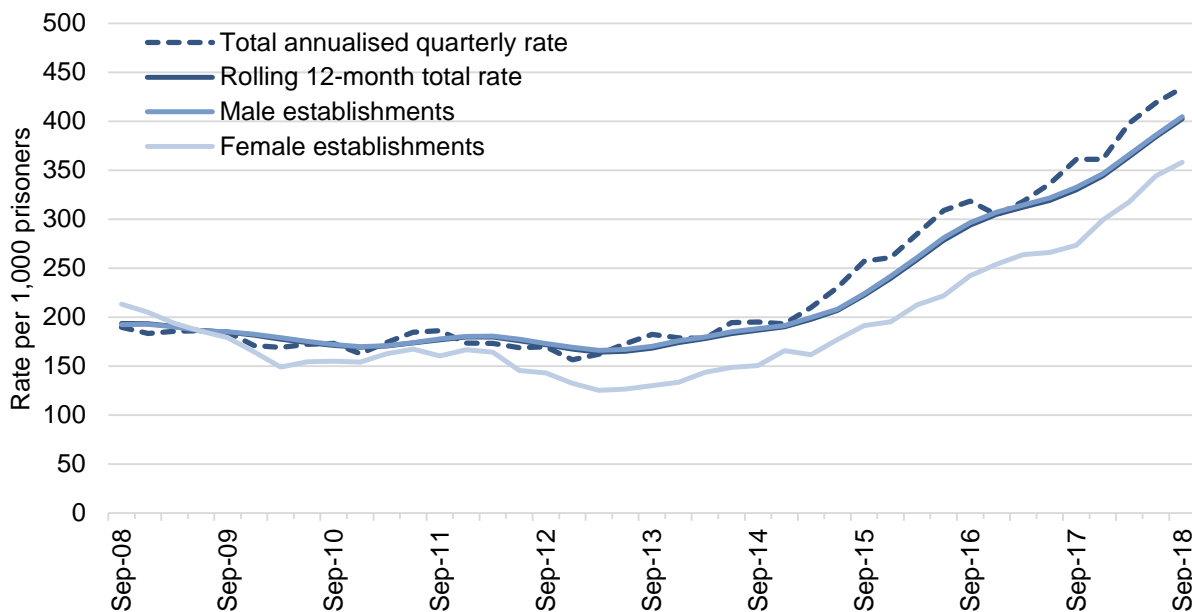
Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased in male establishments by 4% to 2,971, and increased in female establishments by 4% to 208. While self-harmers in female establishments were, on average, involved in twice as many incidents as those in male establishments, the proportion of incidents that required hospitalisation was higher in male establishments, at 6.9% compared to 2.2% in female establishments. The need for hospitalisation is not a straightforward indicator of the severity of the self-harm incident because it is affected by the type of injury suffered and the availability of medical services at the prison.

3 Assaults: 12 months to September 2018

Assaults and serious assaults continue to rise, reaching record highs

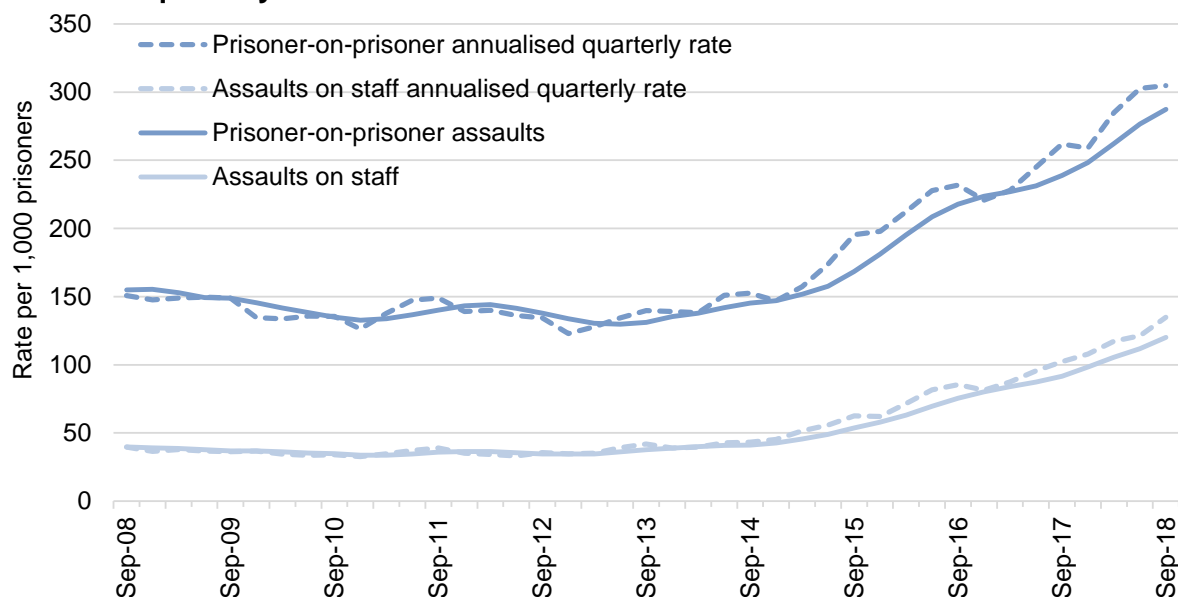
In the 12 months to September 2018, there were 33,803 assault incidents, up 20% from the previous year. Of these, 3,949 were serious, up 6% from the previous year. Both of these figures are the highest in the time series. Similarly, quarterly assault rate increased by 5% to 9,082 incidents.

Figure 4: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2008 to 12 months ending September 2018, with annualised quarterly rates



In the 12 months to September 2018, there were 33,803 assault incidents (a rate of 403 per 1,000 prisoners), up 20% from the previous year, and a new record high. In the latest quarter, there were 9,082 assaults, up 5% from the three months to June 2018.

Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending September 2008 to 12 months ending September 2018, with annualised quarterly rates



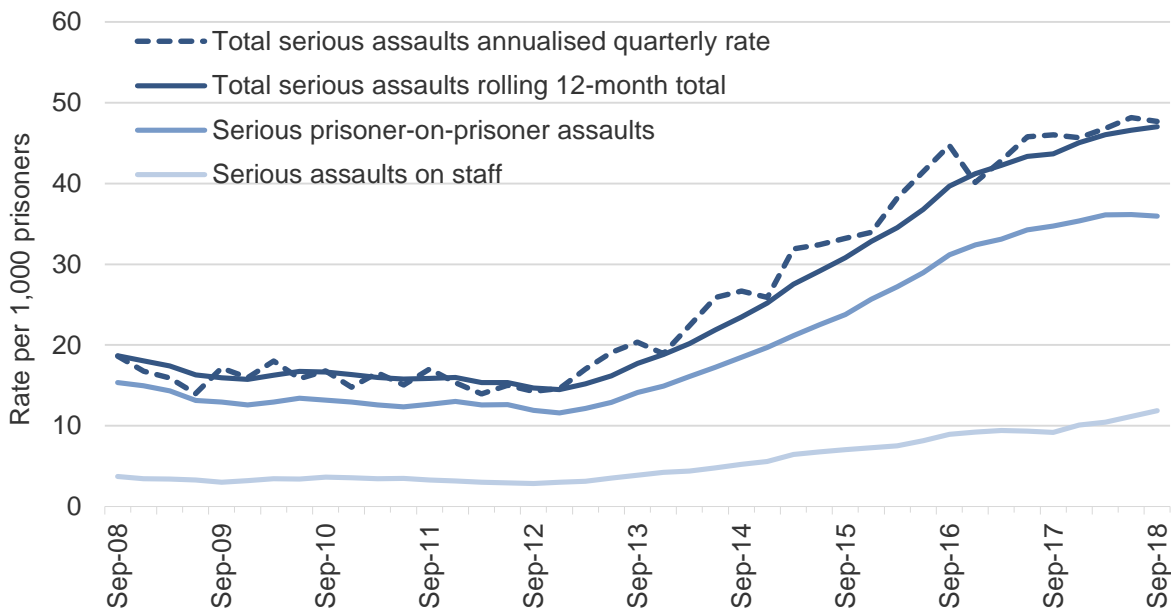
There were 24,138 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the 12 months to September 2018 (a rate of 287 per 1,000 prisoners), up 18% from the previous year, and a new record high. The latest quarter saw 6,373 incidents, an increase of 1% from the previous quarter.

There were 10,085 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2018 (a rate of 120 per 1,000 prisoners), up 29% from the previous year. This is the highest level in the time series. In the latest quarter, assaults on staff increased by 12% to a new record high of 2,820 incidents. There was a change in how assaults on staff have been recorded since April 2017 which simplified how incidents involving staff are identified, however it is possible this has increased the recording of incidents.

3.1 Serious assaults

Serious assaults are those which fall into one or more of the following categories: a sexual assault; an assault which 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 2008 to 12 months ending September 2018, with annualised quarterly rates



In the 12 months to September 2018, there were 3,949 serious assaults, up 6% from the previous year. Of these, 3,019 (or 76%) were serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, an increase of 2% in the number of incidents from the previous year. Over the same period, there were 997 serious assaults on staff, up 27% from the previous period. All of these figures are the highest in the respective time series.

In the latest quarter, there were 997 serious assaults, no change from the three months to June 2018. Of these, 754 (or 76%) were serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, and 260 (26%) were serious assaults on staff (the same as the previous quarter).

4 Key findings from deaths annual tables

Gender

The majority of deaths in custody in 2018 (97%) occurred in the male estate, a finding that has been consistent over time.

There were 11 deaths in the female estate, up from 8 in 2017, accounting for around 3% of the total deaths. As a result, the cross-tabulations of characteristics with gender (e.g. age by gender, ethnicity by gender, etc.) are not presented below because they would be statistically meaningless and potentially misleading.

Age

Prisoners aged 60 and over were more likely to die in custody compared to any other age group, with 22.16 incidents per 1,000 prisoners, despite a 15% decrease in the number of deaths in this age group from 2017.

Out of 111 deaths amongst this age group, 104 were classified as natural causes and 6 were self-inflicted. Those aged over 50 accounted for 86% of all natural cause deaths in 2018, and the age group with the majority of all natural cause deaths were aged 60 or over (64%).

Self-inflicted deaths remains the most frequent among those aged 30 to 39 in 2018, accounting for 38% of all incidents.

Prisoners aged 50 – 59 had the highest rate of self-inflicted deaths, at a rate of 1.63 per 1,000 prisoners, and the rate (and number) of self-inflicted deaths increased for age groups 25 and above between 2017 and 2018.

Ethnicity

The rate of self-inflicted deaths in 2018 was higher amongst White prisoners (1.29 per 1,000 prisoners) than BAME prisoners (0.64 per 1,000 prisoners)

The rate of self-inflicted deaths increased from 0.96 in 2017 for White prisoners, and from 0.44 for BAME prisoners

Nationality

UK nationals were more likely than foreign nationals, to suffer a self-inflicted death in 2018, with rates of 1.14 and 0.88 per 1,000 prisoners, respectively.

Self-inflicted deaths among foreign nationals accounted for 9% of all self-inflicted deaths, while UK nationals accounted for 91%.

Time in custody

The first few days in custody are particularly high-risk in terms of self-inflicted deaths. In 2018, 21 (23%) of all self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days of custody, of which, 9 (43%) occurred within the first week.

The first few days in custody after moving between prisons show a similar risk. In 2018 when including prisoners who have moved, 28 (30%) self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days in the current prison, of which 13 (46%) occurred within the first week.

Sentence length and type

The largest proportion of self-inflicted deaths in 2018 were prisoners serving a determinate sentence (57%), the rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners serving a determinate sentence was 0.93.

For prisoners who were serving a determinate sentence, those who were sentenced to 6 months or less had the highest rate, at 2.61 self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners serving 6 months or less.

Prisoners who were in custody serving indeterminate sentences (1.82 per 1,000 prisoners), life (1.12 per 1,000 prisoners), or were on remand (2.91 per 1,000 prisoners) had a higher rate of self-inflicted deaths than all determinate sentences (0.93 per 1,000 prisoners)

Prisoners who were convicted unsentenced had the highest rate of self-inflicted deaths of all sentence types, at 4.70 per 1,000 convicted unsentenced prisoners.

Offence

In 2018, 35% 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 (35%), sexual offences (13%), robbery (12%) and theft (12%) accounted for the majority (72%) of self-inflicted deaths.

Method of self-inflicted death

Hanging remains the most common method of self-inflicted death for both males and females in 2018, accounting for over 86% of all incidents.

Of the 79 self-inflicted deaths with method of hanging or self-strangulation in 2018, bedding remains the most commonly used ligature type with 76% of incidents using this. The most commonly used ligature point remains the window, accounting for 38% of all self-inflicted hanging or self-strangulation deaths in 2018, while the second highest used ligature point was bed, accounting for 25%.

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 up to the latest calendar year.

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.

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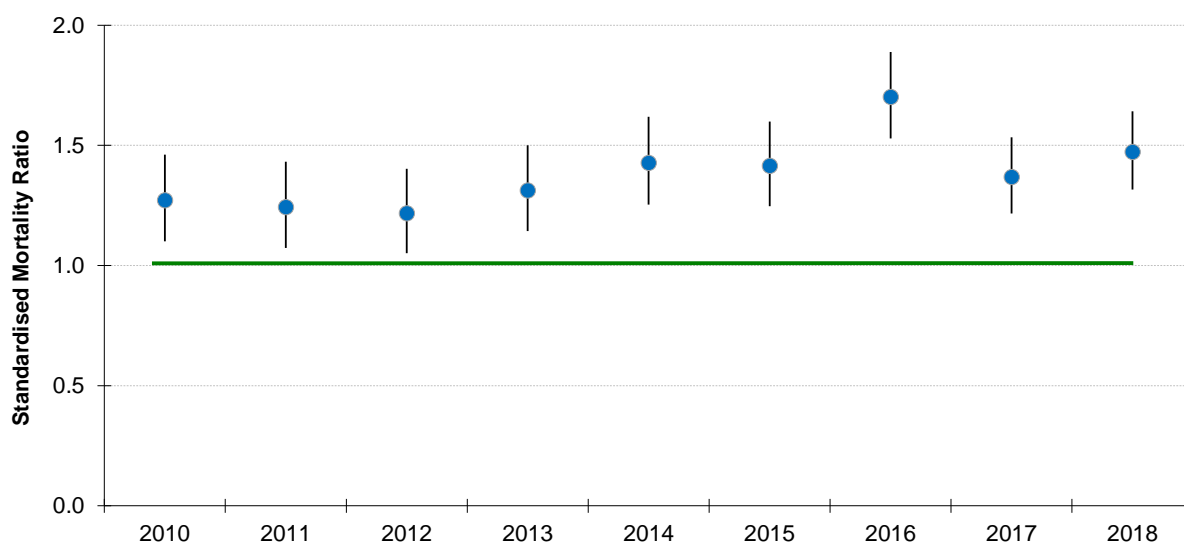
Annex A - Comparison of deaths in custody with the general population

Annex A is updated annually on a calendar year basis when the underlying general population data² become available from the Office of National Statistics, coinciding with the annual release of deaths in custody data.

The prison population is very different from the general population: around 95% of the prison population are male, there are no prisoners aged under 15, and relatively few are over 60, compared to the general population. As a result, rates of deaths in prison custody cannot be compared directly with those for the general population. One technique used for comparing mortality rates for different populations is known as the Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR).

The SMR provides a means of making like for like comparisons of the death rate in prison custody to that of the general population of England and Wales, by adjusting for age distribution and gender. Figure A1 below presents the SMR of the prison population, compared to the expected level from the general population. Where the likelihood of death is the same as would be expected based on the general population, the SMR would have a value of 1 (depicted by the green line - a ratio of 1:1). Due to the adjustments, there is a margin of error around the SMR estimates, depicted on the graph as the range of values by lines around the point estimates, within which there is 95% confidence the true value falls (CI).

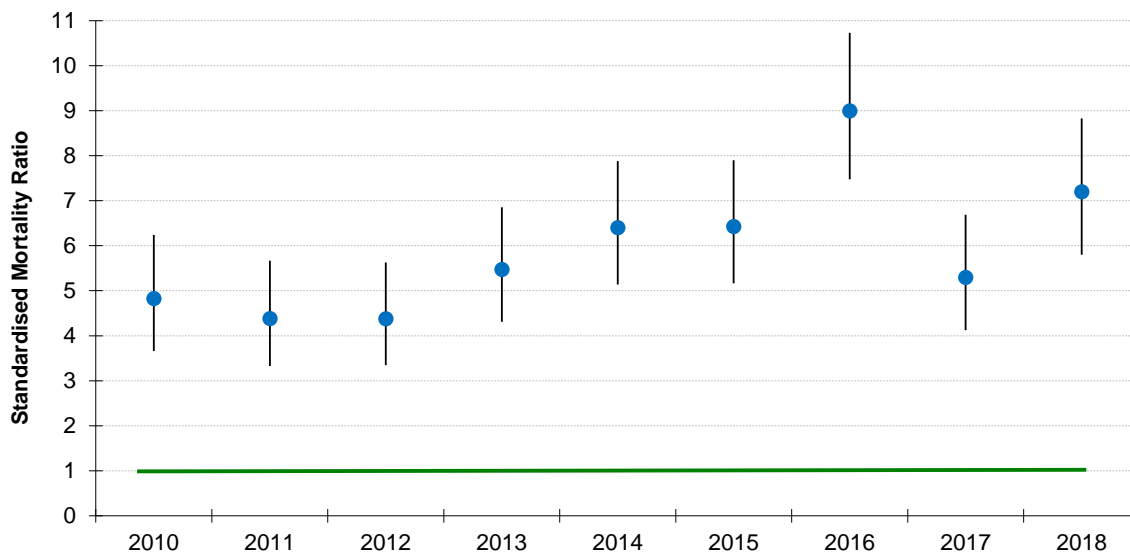
Figure A1: Annual Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for prison population, relative to general population (adjusted for age and gender), 2010 to 2018, England and Wales



In 2018, the SMR for deaths in prison was 1.47 (CI: 1.32 – 1.64). This means that prison mortality was 47% more likely than within the general population, with the true population difference between 32% and 64%. Across the time series, the likelihood of prison mortality has been significantly higher than in the general population.

² Death figures for the general population, as used in SMR calculations, are derived from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Mortality Statistics at the following link <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/deathregistrationssummarytablesenglandandwalesdeathsbyingleyearofagetables> and national population figures come from the Population Projections Statistics at the following link: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/mid2017>

Figure A2: Annual Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for self-inflicted deaths in the prison population relative to suicide in the general population (adjusted for age and gender), 2010 to 2018, England and Wales



The Standardised Mortality Ratio in figure A2 above compares the rate of self-inflicted deaths in prison custody with the rate of suicide in the general population³, adjusting for age and gender. This ratio gives an indication how much greater the likelihood is of this kind of death in prison custody, compared to the wider population, on a more comparable basis. HMPPS does not attribute intent behind self-inflicted deaths, and as such custody figures may include unintended deaths at one’s own hand in addition to suicides. These cannot be isolated from suicides. However, the ONS definition of suicide, as used for general population figures, includes “injury/poisoning of undetermined intent”. As such, the definitions are closely aligned.

Across the time series, there has been a considerably higher likelihood of self-inflicted death in prison in relation to the likelihood of suicide in the general population. Since 2012 the ratio has been widening in the likelihood of self-inflicted death of offenders in custody and the likelihood of suicide among the general population. In 2018, the SMR for self-inflicted deaths in prison was 7.20 (CI 5.80 – 8.80). This means that prison self-inflicted mortality was over six times more likely (620%) than self-inflicted mortality relative to the general population, with the true population difference between 480% and 783%. It is important to note that while the SMR accounts for certain risk factors that are overrepresented in the prison population (specifically, age and gender), it ignores others, where reliable data are not available (e.g. a history of mental health issues or substance abuse). As such, it does not provide a definitive answer to the increase in the risk of mortality associated with prison custody.

3

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/datasets/suicideintheunitedkingdomreferencetables>