



# Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to June 2019 Assaults and Self-harm to March 2019

## Main Points

<p><b>Number of deaths decreased from the previous 12 month period</b></p>		<p>In the 12 months to June 2019, there were 309 deaths in prison custody, a decrease from 311 deaths the previous year. Of these, 86 deaths were self-inflicted, up from 81 the previous year.</p>
<p><b>Self-harm incidents continue to rise, reaching new record high</b></p>		<p>Self-harm incidents reached a record high of 57,968 incidents in the 12 months to March 2019, up 24% from the previous 12 months. In the most recent quarter, self-harm incidents increased by 1% to 14,415 incidents.</p>
<p><b>The number of individuals self-harming increased</b></p>		<p>The number of individuals self-harming increased by 6% in the 12 months to March 2019, to 12,539, and the number of self-harm incidents per individual increased by 15% from 4.0 to 4.6.</p>
<p><b>Assaults continue to rise, reaching record highs</b></p>		<p>There was a record high of 34,425 assault incidents in the 12 months to March 2019, up 11% from the previous year. In the most recent quarter, assaults increased by 4% to 8,445 incidents.</p>
<p><b>Assaults on staff continue to rise, reaching record highs</b></p>		<p>There were 10,311 assaults on staff in the 12 months to March 2019, up 15% from the previous year, and a record high figure. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff increased by 4% to 2,525 incidents.</p>
<p><b>Of the 34,425 assault incidents, 3,949 (11%) were serious</b></p>		<p>In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 3,949 serious assault incidents, up 1% from the previous year. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 2% to 3,017 in the 12 months to March 2019, whereas serious assaults on staff increased by 12% to 1,002.</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 a 15-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](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics)<sup>1</sup>*

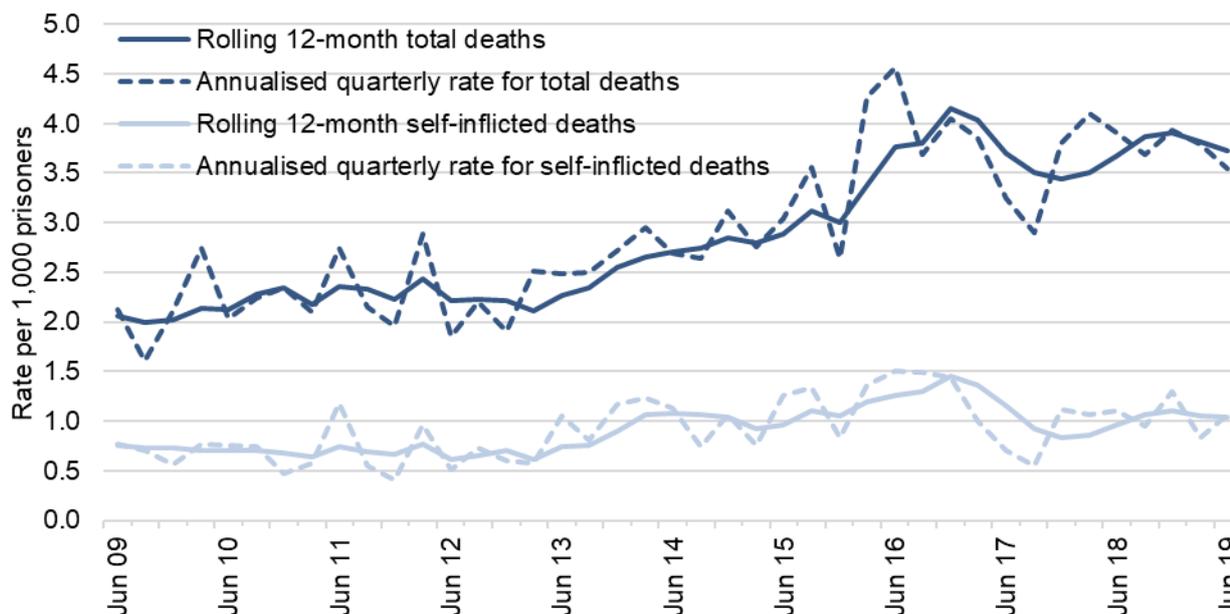
<sup>1</sup> Data on deaths is published three months ahead of self-harm and assaults. Therefore, the deaths annual publication and tables are published alongside the year ending September Safety in Custody publication.

# 1 Deaths: 12 months ending June 2019

## Number of deaths continues to fall

In the 12 months to June 2019, there were 309 deaths in prison custody, a decrease from 311 deaths the previous year. Of these, 86 deaths were self-inflicted, up from 81 the previous year.

**Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending June 2009 to 12 months ending June 2019, with annualised quarterly rates<sup>2</sup>**



In the 12 months to June 2019, there were 309 deaths in prison custody (a rate of 3.7 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease from 311 deaths in the previous year. The most recent quarter saw the number of deaths decrease to 73, down from 77 in the three months to March 2019. 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>3</sup>.

There were 86 apparent self-inflicted deaths in the latest year (a rate of 1.0 per 1,000 prisoners), up 6% from 81 the previous year, and 165 deaths due to natural causes (a rate of 2.0 per 1,000 prisoners), a 6% decrease from 176 deaths the previous year.

There were 55 deaths recorded as 'other' in the 12 months to June 2019, 50 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 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 some categories will be revised upwards once classifications have been finalised.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Data on deaths are published three months ahead of Assaults and self-harm, therefore, the Deaths in prison custody 2018 annual publication is published in the Safety in Custody year ending September 2018 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/787136/safety-in-custody-Deaths-dec-18.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/787136/safety-in-custody-Deaths-dec-18.ods)

## 2 Self-harm: 12 months to March 2019

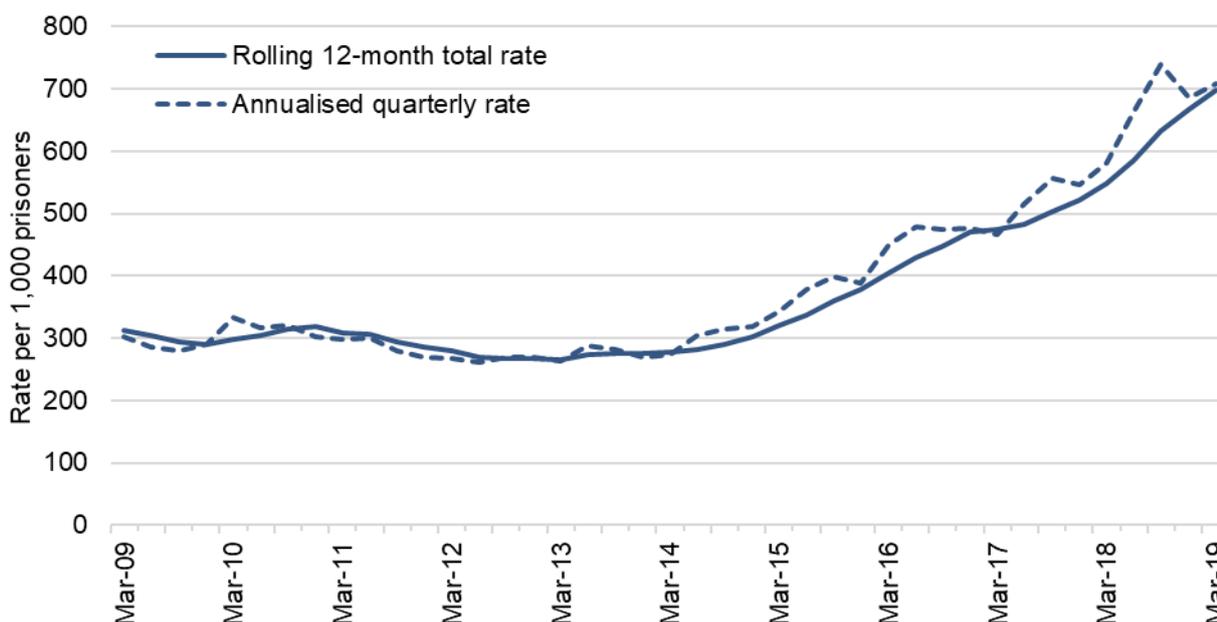
### Self-harm incidents continue to rise, reaching new record high.

In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 57,968 incidents, up 24% from the previous year, and a new record high. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents increased by 1% to 14,415, although remained lower than the July to September 2018 peak.

### The number of individuals self-harming increased.

The number of individuals self-harming increased by 6% in the 12 months to March 2019, to 12,539, and the number of self-harm incidents per individual increased by 15% from 4.0 to 4.6.

**Figure 2: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending March 2009 to 12 months ending March 2019, with annualised quarterly rates<sup>4</sup>**



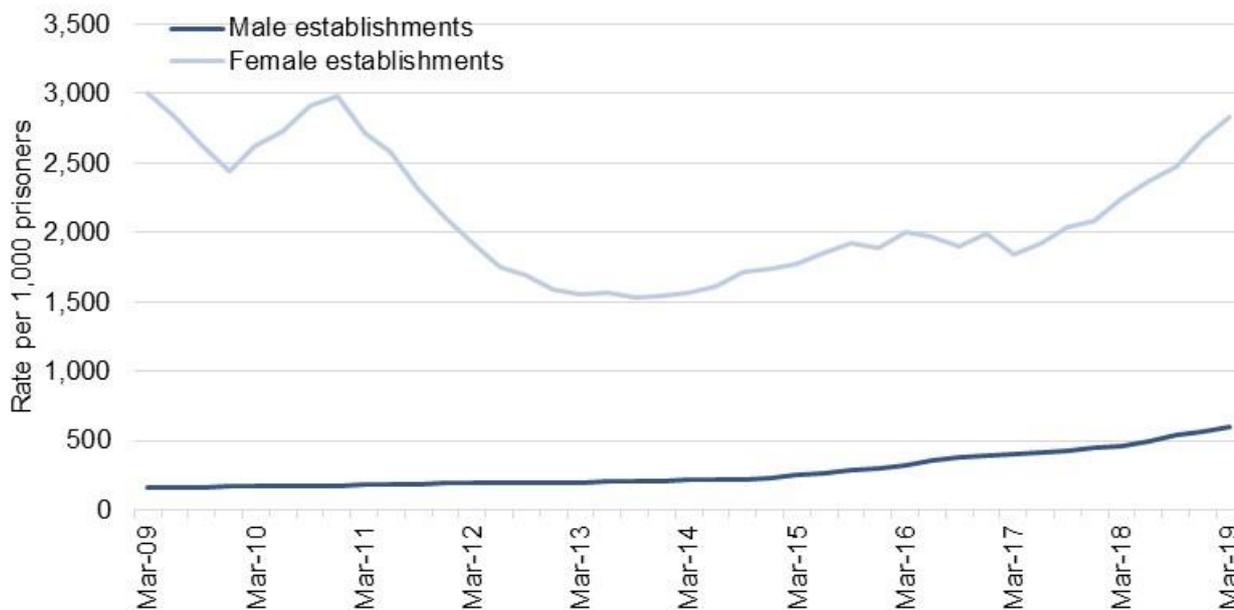
In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 57,968 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 699 per 1,000 prisoners), up 24% from the previous year. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to March 2019 increased to 14,415 (up 1% on the previous quarter), although remained lower than the July to September 2018 peak (15,462 incidents).

The number of individuals self-harming increased by 6% in the latest year, to a highest recorded figure of 12,539 individuals (a rate of 151 individuals per 1,000 prisoners). The number of incidents per self-harming individual increased by 15%, from 4.0 in the previous 12 months to 4.6 in the latest year, although a small number of prolific self-harmers have a disproportionate impact on this figure. The majority of those who self-harm in prison do so only once a year. Additional detail on this can be found in the annual self-harm tables.

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 5% to 3,261 in the latest year, although this figure decreased by 10% in the latest quarter, falling to 776 incidents. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance also decreased in the previous 12 months, from 6.6% to 5.6%.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

**Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending March 2009 to 12 months ending March 2019**



Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender, with a rate of 596 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in male establishments (with incidents up 24% from the previous year) compared to a rate of 2,828 per 1,000 prisoners in female establishments (an increase of 22% in the number of incidents from the previous year). In the 12 months to March 2019, the number of self-harm incidents per self-harming male increased from 3.6 in the previous year to 4.2, while self-harm prolificacy among females increased from 7.3 in the previous year to 8.9 incidents per self-harming individual.

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance have increased in male establishments by 4% to 3,026, and increased by 34% to 235 in female establishments. While self-harmers in female establishments were twice as prolific as those in male establishments, the proportion of incidents that required hospitalisation was higher in male establishments (6.4% compared to 2.2% in female establishments).

In youth estates, there was a 30% increase in self-harm incidents (from 597 in the previous year to 777 in the latest year) and a 32% increase in the self-harm rate per 1,000 prisoners (from 856 in the previous year to 1,130 in the latest year), although there was a decrease in the proportion requiring hospital attendance (from 6.7% in the previous year to 4.1% in the latest year).

### 3 Assaults: 12 months to March 2019

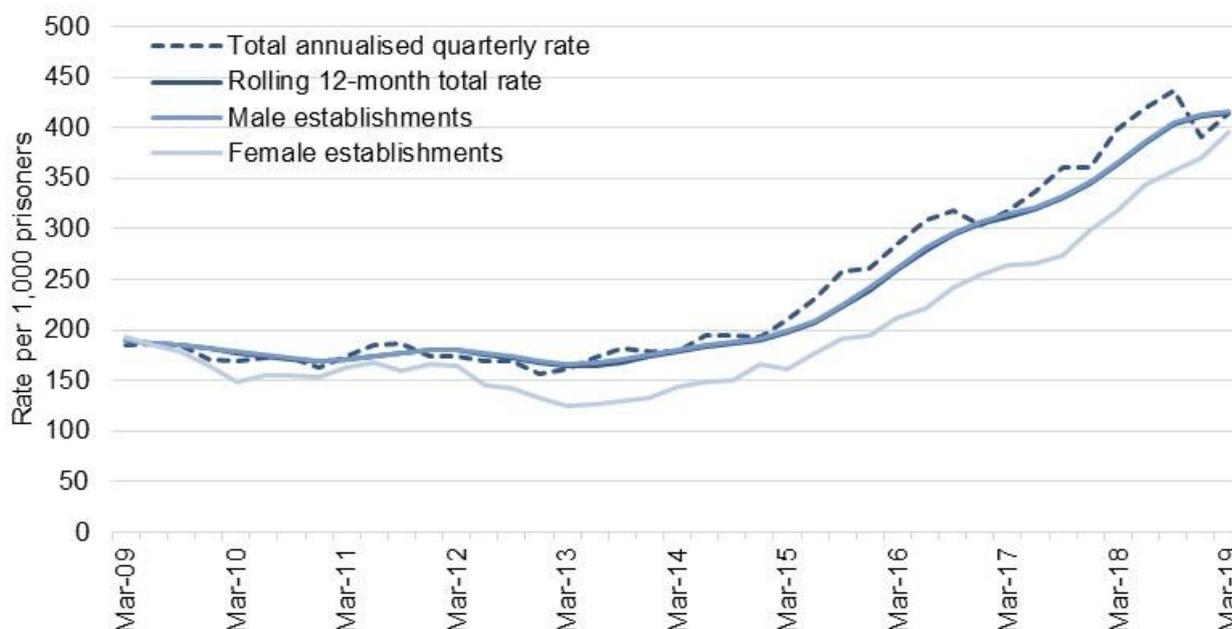
#### Assaults and serious assaults continue to rise, reaching record highs.

In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 34,425 assault incidents, an 11% increase from the previous year. Assaults increased by 4% in the latest quarter to 8,445 incidents, although remained below the peak in the July to September 2018 quarter.

#### The proportion of assaults on staff continue to rise.

There were 10,311 assaults on staff in the 12 months to March 2019, up 15% from the previous year, and a record high figure. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff increased by 4% to 2,525 incidents.

**Figure 4: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending March 2009 to 12 months ending March 2019, with annualised quarterly rates<sup>5</sup>**

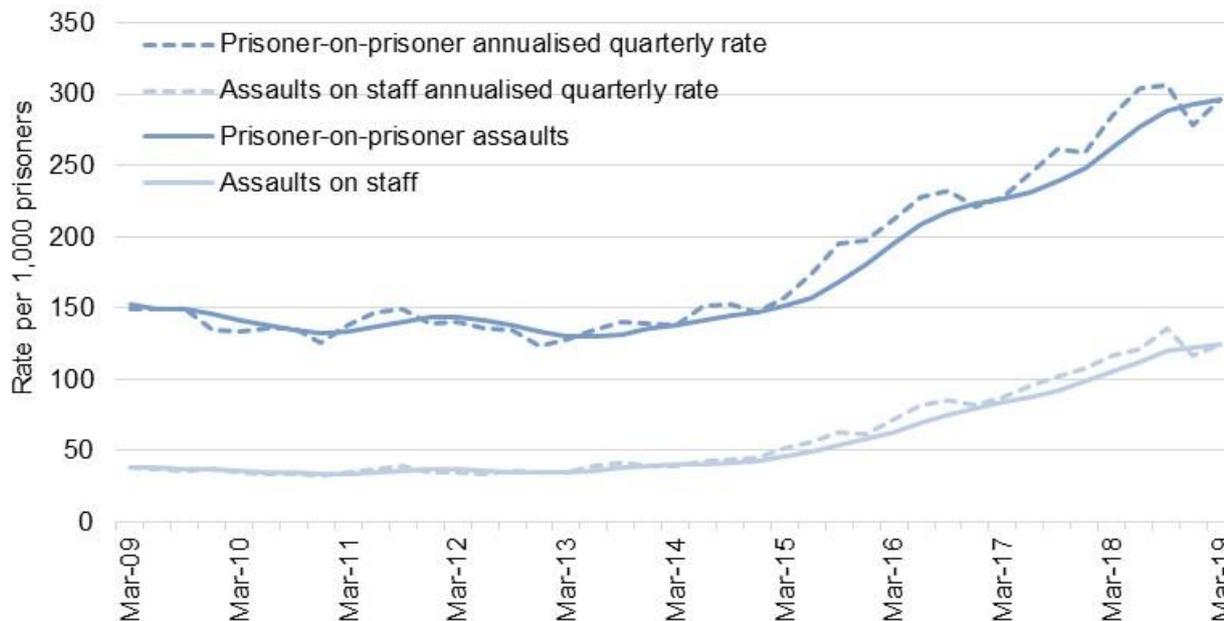


In the 12 months to March 2019, assault incidents increased by 11% to a new record high of 34,425, a rate of 415 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. In the latest quarter, there were 8,445 assaults, an increase of 4% from the previous quarter, although this figure remains below the peak of 9,126 in the July to September 2018 quarter.

The number of incidents in male establishments increased by 11% from 29,768 to 32,908 in the 12 months to March 2019, and the number of incidents in female establishments increased by 21% from 1,257 to 1,517 incidents. The number of assaults in female establishments reached a record high of 414 incidents in the latest quarter. Assault rates were higher in male establishments (416 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) than female establishments (396 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) in the latest 12 months.

<sup>5</sup> 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

**Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending March 2009 to 12 months ending March 2019, with annualised quarterly rates**



There were 24,541 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults<sup>6</sup> in the 12 months to March 2019 (a rate of 296 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 10% from the previous year, and a new record high. The latest quarter saw a 4% increase in prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (to 6,018 incidents), although the figure was below the peak of 6,410 incidents in the July to September 2018 quarter.

There were 10,311 assaults on staff in the 12 months to March 2019 (a rate of 124 per 1,000 prisoners), up 15% from the previous year. This is the highest level in the time series. In the latest quarter there was a 4% increase in assaults on staff (to 2,525 incidents), although this was lower than the peak in the July to September 2018 quarter (2,837 incidents). 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<sup>7</sup>.

The proportion of assaults on staff increased to 30% of all incidents in the 12 months to March 2019, an increase from 29% in the previous 12 months, and a steady increase from 20% between 2008 and 2011.

In male establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 10% to 23,618 incidents (299 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners), and assaults on staff increased by 13% to 9,710 incidents (123 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2019.

In female establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 7% to 923 incidents (241 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners), and assaults on staff increased by 52% to 601 incidents (157 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2019.

The proportion of assaults on staff in female establishments (40%) was higher than the proportion in male establishments (30%) in the 12 months to March 2019. Assault rates on staff have historically been higher in female establishments, and the increase in female assaults on staff in the latest year see a higher rate in female establishments again, after a higher rate in male establishments in the previous year.

<sup>6</sup> This figure includes any prisoner-on-prisoner assaults where there may also have been an assault on staff.

<sup>7</sup> Please see the Guide to Safety in Custody statistics for further information

### 3.1 Serious assaults

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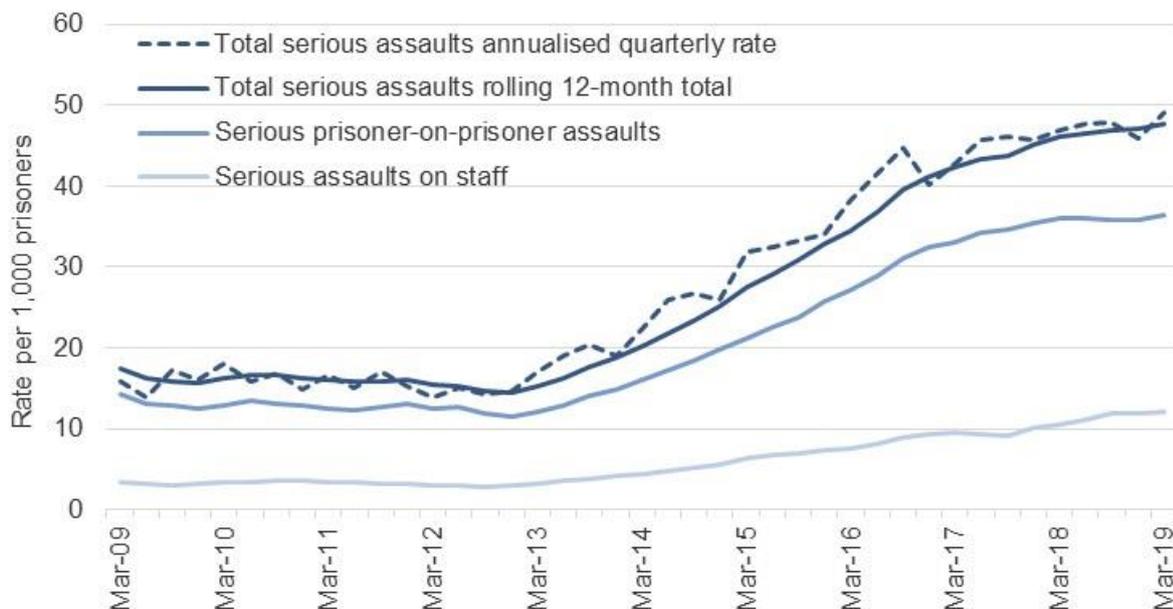
#### Of the 34,425 assault incidents, 3,949 (11%) were serious

In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 3,949 serious assault incidents, up 1% from the previous year. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 2% to 3,017 in the 12 months to March 2019, whereas serious assaults on staff increased by 12% to 1,002.

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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 March 2009 to 12 months ending March 2019, with annualised quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 3,949 serious assaults (a rate of 48 per 1,000 prisoners), a 1% increase from the previous year. In the latest quarter, there were 1,000 serious assaults, up 4% from the previous quarter. In the latest year, 11% of assaults were serious assaults, down from 13% the previous year.

There were 3,017 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 36 per 1,000 prisoners) in the latest year, a decrease of 2% from the previous year. In the latest quarter, the number of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 10% (to 791 incidents).

There were 1,002 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 12 per 1,000 prisoners) in the latest year, an increase of 12% from the previous year, and the highest in the time series, although figures for the latest quarter showed an 11% decrease (to 227 incidents).

In youth estates, there was an 18% increase in assaults (to 2,331 incidents, the highest in the timeseries), a 39% increase in serious assaults (to 111 incidents), and a 47% increase in serious assaults on staff (to 50 incidents, the highest in the timeseries) in the latest year.

## 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.
- 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.

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**URL:** [www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics)

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