



## Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to June 2020 Assaults and Self-harm to March 2020

### Main Points

<p><b>Number of deaths decreased from last year</b></p>		<p>In the 12 months to June 2020, there were 294 deaths in prison custody, a decrease of 5% from 309 deaths the previous 12 months. Of these, 76 deaths were self-inflicted, a 13% decrease from the 87 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months.</p>
<p><b>Self-harm incidents continue to rise</b> <b>The number of individuals self-harming increased</b></p>		<p>Self-harm incidents reached a record high of 64,552 incidents in the 12 months to March 2020, up 11% from the previous 12 months. In the most recent quarter there were 15,390 self-harm incidents, down 6% on the previous quarter.</p> <p>The number of individuals self-harming increased by 5% in the 12 months to March 2020, to 13,180, and the number of self-harm incidents per individual increased by 7% from 4.6 to 4.9.</p>
<p><b>Assaults decreased from the previous 12-month period</b></p>		<p>There were 31,568 assault incidents in the 12 months to March 2020, down 8% from the 12 months to March 2019. In the most recent quarter, assaults decreased by 5% to 7,245 incidents.</p>
<p><b>Assaults on staff have decreased</b></p>		<p>There were 9,784 assaults on staff in the 12 months to March 2020, down 5% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff decreased by 4% to 2,290 incidents.</p>
<p><b>The number of serious assaults on staff decreased</b> <b>12% of all assaults were serious</b></p>		<p>In the 12 months to March 2020, there were 3,681 serious assault incidents, a decrease of 7% from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 8% to 2,782 in the 12 months to March 2020. Similarly, serious assaults on staff decreased by 5% to 953.</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 the summary tables in the quarterly publications presented on a 12-month rolling basis over an 11-year time series.<sup>1</sup>

This release covers assaults and self-harm to March 2020 and therefore does not cover the majority of the **COVID-19 outbreak**. This will be analysed in the next release. The release covers deaths of prisoners up until June 2020 and deaths from COVID-19 have been analysed below.

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)

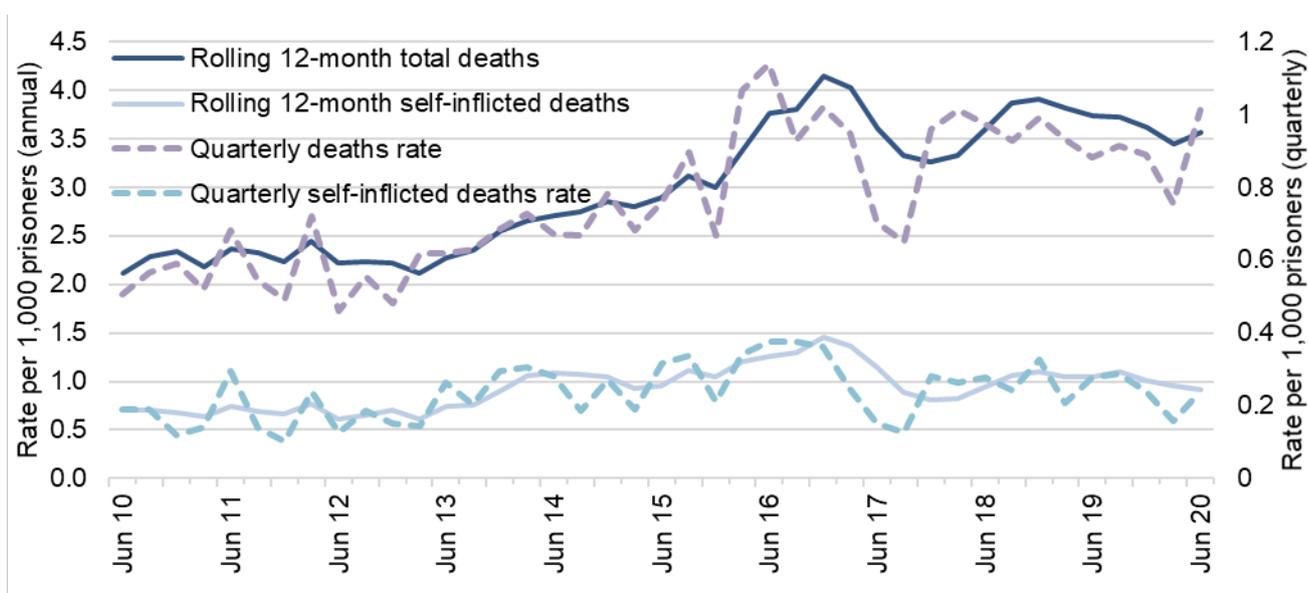
<sup>1</sup> Data on deaths is published three months ahead of self-harm and assaults. Therefore, the deaths annual publication and tables are published alongside the Safety in Custody quarterly update to September publication.

# 1 Deaths: 12 months ending June 2020

## Number of deaths continues to fall

In the 12 months to June 2020, there were 294 deaths in prison custody, a decrease of 5% from 309 deaths the previous 12 months. Of these, 76 deaths were self-inflicted, a decrease of 13% from 87 the previous 12 months.

**Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending June 2010 to 12 months ending June 2020, with quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to June 2020, there were 294 deaths in prison custody (a rate of 3.6 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease from 309 deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 3.7 per 1,000 prisoners). The most recent quarter saw the number of deaths increase to 81, an increase of 29% from 63 in the three months to March 2020. Further information on deaths from COVID-19 is below. 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 the annual tables<sup>2</sup>.

There were 76 apparent self-inflicted deaths in the 12 months to June 2020 (a rate of 0.9 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease of 13% from 87 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months. Also, there were 179 deaths due to natural causes (a rate of 2.2 per 1,000 prisoners), a 7% increase from 168 deaths the previous 12 months.

There were 37 deaths recorded as 'Other' in the 12 months to June 2020, 28 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.

<sup>2</sup> Data on deaths are published three months ahead of Assaults and self-harm, therefore, the Deaths in prison custody 2019 annual publication is published in the Safety in Custody quarterly update to September 2019 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/861738/deaths-prison-custody-1978-2019.xlsx](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/861738/deaths-prison-custody-1978-2019.xlsx)

## Deaths from COVID-19

From March 2020 to the end of June 2020 26 prisoners have died having tested positive for where there was a clinical assessment that COVID-19 was a contributory factor in their deaths. Of these, 23 deaths are suspected to be due to COVID-19 and 3 deaths are believed to be due to other causes, although the prisoner had tested positive for COVID-19. For one death we are awaiting further information before we classify the death, the other deaths have been classified as natural causes. As with all deaths in prison custody, each case will be investigated by the Prison 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/statistics/hm-prison-and-probation-service-covid-19-statistics>

## 2 Self-harm: 12 months to March 2020

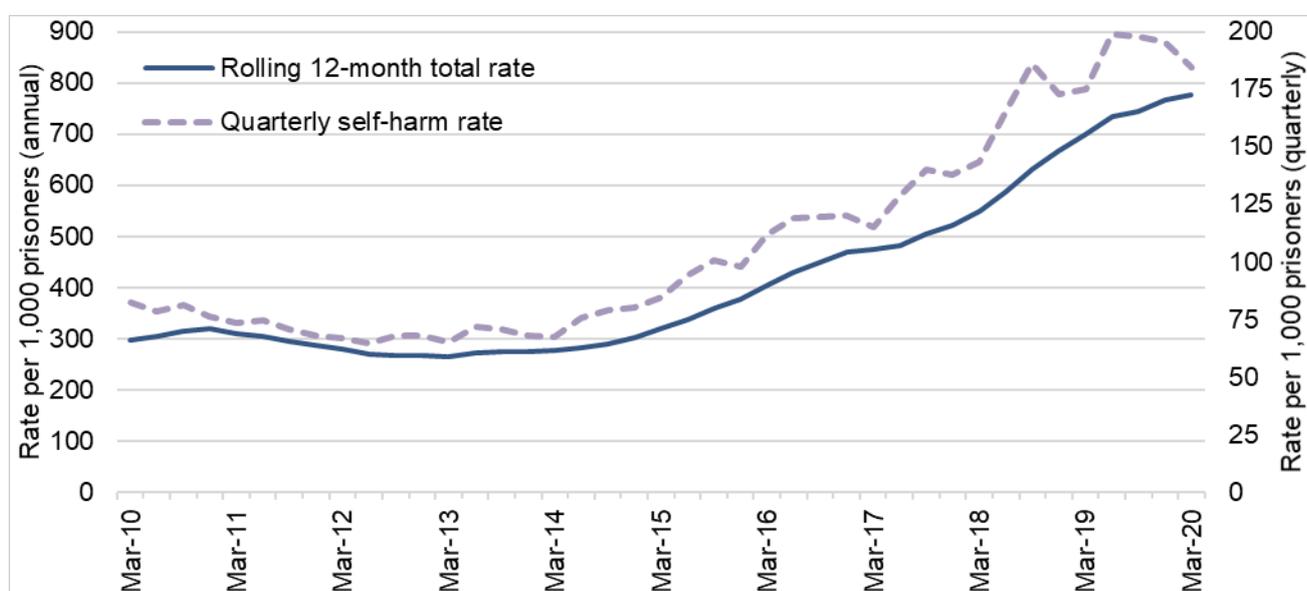
### Self-harm incidents continue to rise.

In the 12 months to March 2020, there were 64,552 incidents, up 11% from the previous 12 months, and a new record high. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents decreased by 6% from the previous quarter, to 15,390.

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

The number of individuals self-harming increased by 5% in the 12 months to March 2020, to 13,180, and the number of self-harm incidents per individual increased by 7% from 4.6 to 4.9.

**Figure 2: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending March 2010 to 12 months ending March 2020, with quarterly rates**

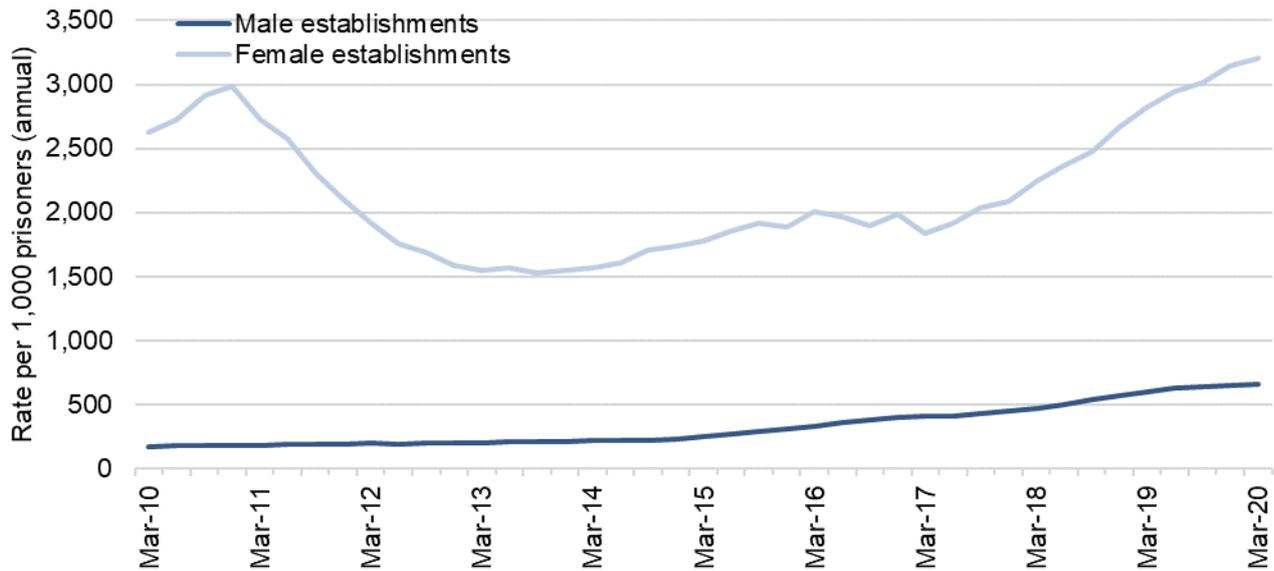


In the 12 months to March 2020, there were 64,552 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 777 per 1,000 prisoners), up 11% from the previous 12 months, and the highest recorded figure. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to March 2020 decreased by 6% from the previous quarter (from 16,296 to 15,390 incidents).

The number of individuals self-harming increased by 5% in the latest 12 months, to the highest recorded figure of 13,180 individuals (a rate of 159 individuals per 1,000 prisoners). The number of incidents per self-harming individual increased by 7%, from 4.6 in the previous 12 months to 4.9 in the latest 12 months, although a small number of prolific self-harmers have a disproportionate impact on this figure. Just over a half (53%) of prisoners who self-harmed in 2019 did so more than once.

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 5% to 3,429 in the 12 months to March 2020, however it decreased by 17% in the latest quarter (712 incidents). The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance decreased in the previous 12 months, from 5.6% to 5.3%.

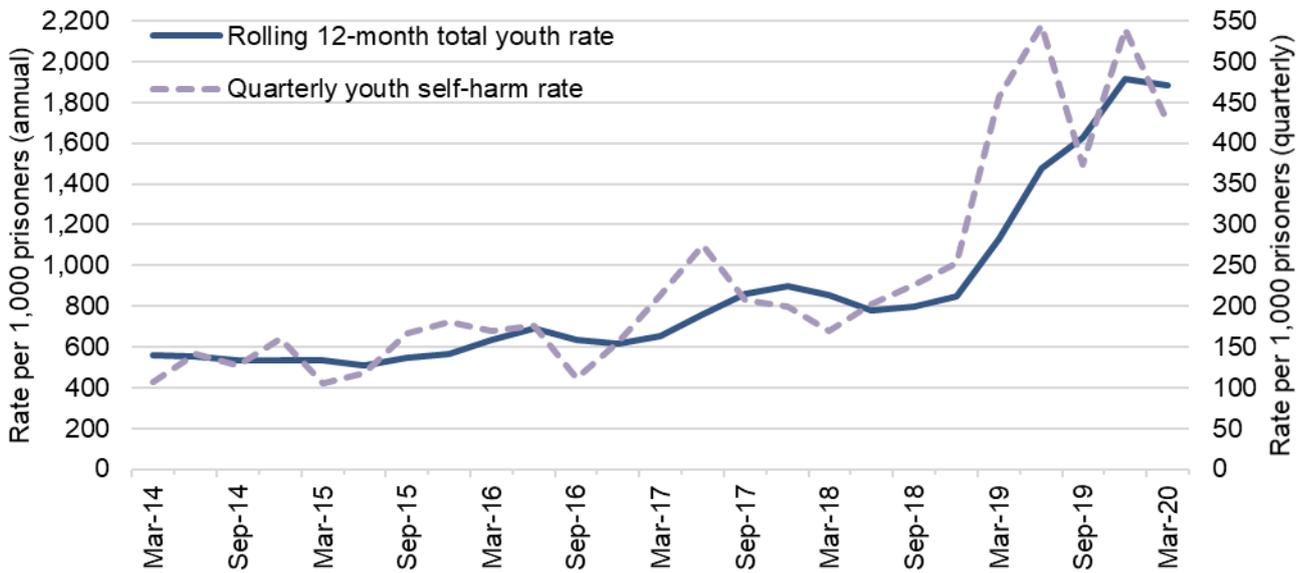
**Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending March 2010 to 12 months ending March 2020**



Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender, with a rate of 661 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in male establishments in the 12 months to March 2020 (with incidents up 11% from the previous 12 months) compared to a rate of 3,207 per 1,000 prisoners in female establishments (an increase of 11% in the number of incidents from the previous 12 months). In the 12 months to March 2020, the number of self-harm incidents per self-harming male increased from 4.2 in the previous 12 months to 4.4, while self-harm prolificacy among females increased from 8.9 in the previous 12 months to 9.5 incidents per self-harming individual.

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance have increased in male establishments by 4%, from 3,028 in the 12 months to March 2019 to 3,134 in the 12 months to March 2020, and increased by 26% to 295 in female establishments in the latest 12 months. Self-harmers in female establishments were more than twice as prolific as those in male establishments in the latest 12 months (9.5 incidents per self-harming individual, compared to 4.4 in male establishments), although the proportion of incidents that required hospitalisation was higher in male establishments (6.0% compared to 2.4% in female establishments).

**Figure 4: 12 month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by youth offenders, 12 months ending March 2014 to 12 months ending March 2020, with quarterly rates**



In youth estate<sup>3</sup>, there was an 51% increase in self-harm incidents in the 12 months to March 2020 compared to the previous 12 months (from 779 in the previous 12 months to 1,178 in the most recent 12 months) and a 66% increase in the self-harm rate per 1,000 prisoners in the 12 months to March 2020 compared to the previous 12 months (from 1,133 in the previous 12 months to 1,885 in the most recent 12 months).

In the latest quarter there were 264 self-harm incidents, an 18% decrease from 322 incidents in the previous quarter, and a 15% decrease from the same quarter the previous year (January to March 2019).

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance have decreased in youth estates from 4.1% in the previous 12 months to 3.0% in the 12 months to March 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Youth estates include all 15 to 18-year olds in Young Offender Institutes, and all 15 to 17-year olds in Youth Prisons.

### 3 Assaults: 12 months to March 2020

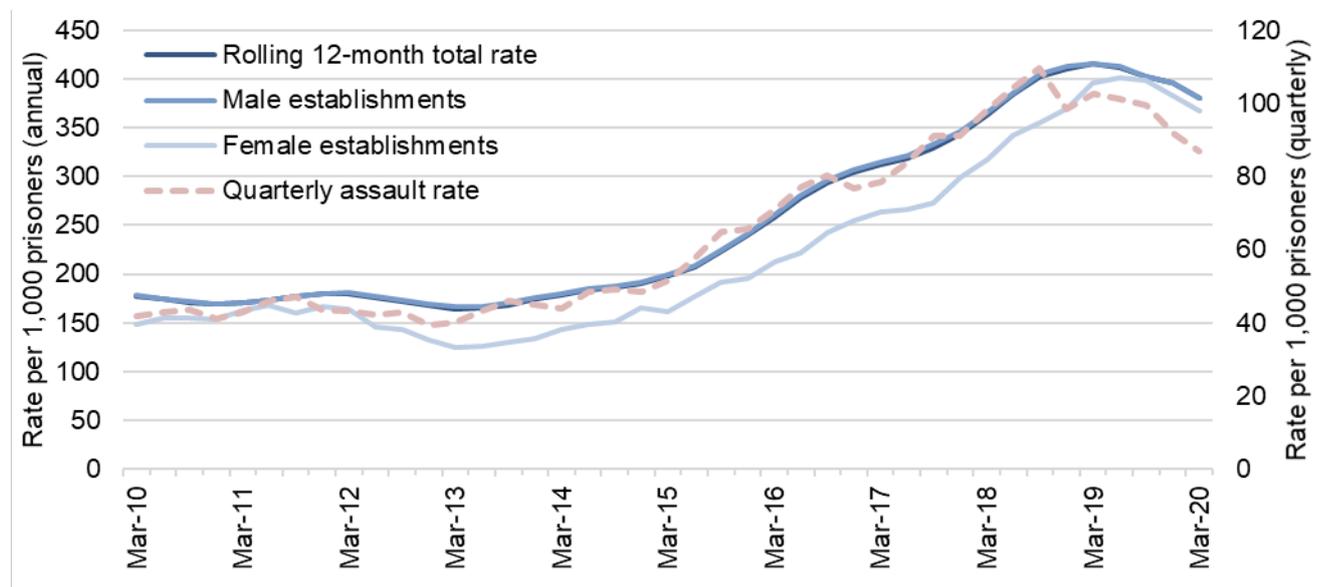
#### Assaults and serious assaults decreased from the previous 12-month period.

In the 12 months to March 2020, there were 31,568 assault incidents, an 8% decrease from the previous 12 months. Of these 3,681 were serious assaults, down by 7%. Assaults decreased by 5% in the latest quarter to 7,245 incidents, and the number of serious assaults decreased by 1% to 868 incidents.

#### Assaults on staff decreased from the previous 12-month period.

There were 9,784 assaults on staff in the 12 months to March 2020, a 5% decrease from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff decreased by 4% to 2,290 incidents.

**Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending March 2010 to 12 months ending March 2020, with quarterly rates**

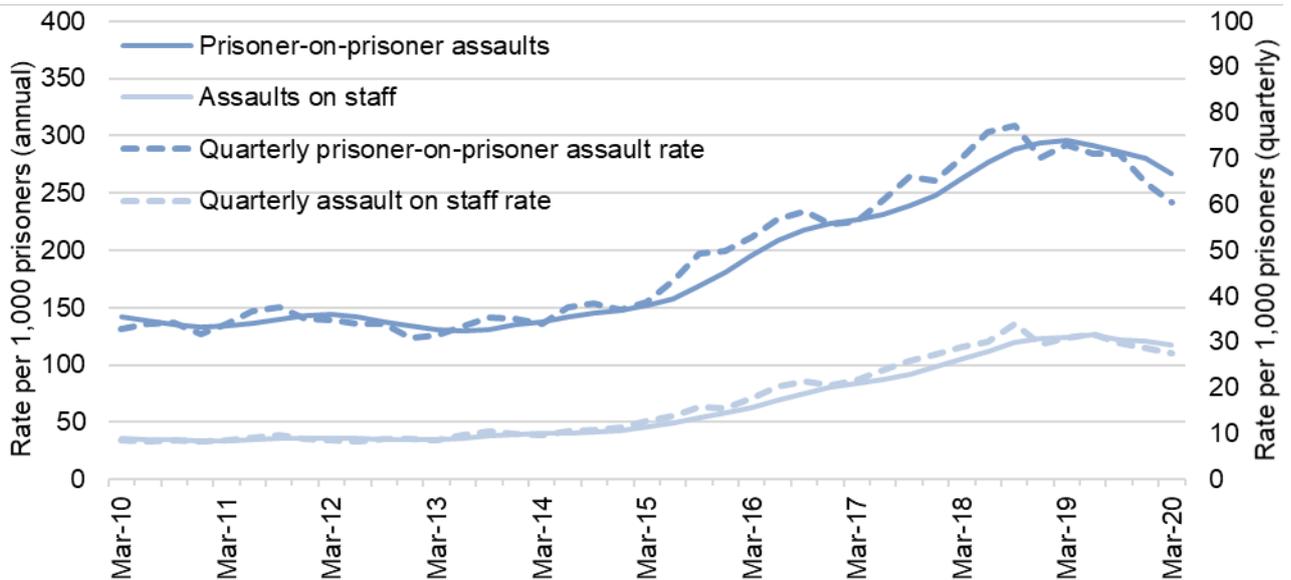


In the 12 months to March 2020, assault incidents decreased by 8% to 31,568, a rate of 380 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. In the latest quarter, there were 7,245 assaults, decrease of 5% from the previous quarter. The quarterly figure reached a peak of 9,111 in the July to September 2018 quarter.

The number of incidents in male establishments decreased by 8% from 32,923 to 30,189 in the 12 months to March 2020. The number of incidents in female establishments decreased by 9% from 1,515 to 1,379 incidents in the same period.

In the latest quarter, the number of assaults in male establishments decreased by 6% to 6,903, and the number of assaults in female establishments increased by 5% to 342. Assault rates were higher in male establishments (380 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) than female establishments (367 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) in the latest 12 months.

**Figure 6: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending March 2010 to 12 months ending March 2020, with quarterly rates**



There were 22,210 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults<sup>4</sup> in the 12 months to March 2020 (a rate of 267 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease of 10%. In the latest quarter, there were 5,032 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 7% decrease from 5,389 in the previous quarter.

There were 9,784 assaults on staff<sup>5</sup> in the 12 months to March 2020 (a rate of 118 per 1,000 prisoners). This is a 5% decrease from the 10,315 assaults in the previous 12 months, which was the highest level in the time series. In the latest quarter there was a 4% decrease in assaults on staff (to 2,290 incidents), remaining lower than the peak in the July to September 2018 quarter (2,827 incidents).

The proportion of assaults on staff increased to 31% of all incidents in the 12 months to March 2020, from 30% in the previous 12 months, having steadily increased from 20% in 2011.

In male establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 9% to 21,435 incidents (270 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners), and assaults on staff decreased by 6% to 9,168 incidents (116 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2020 compared to the previous 12 months.

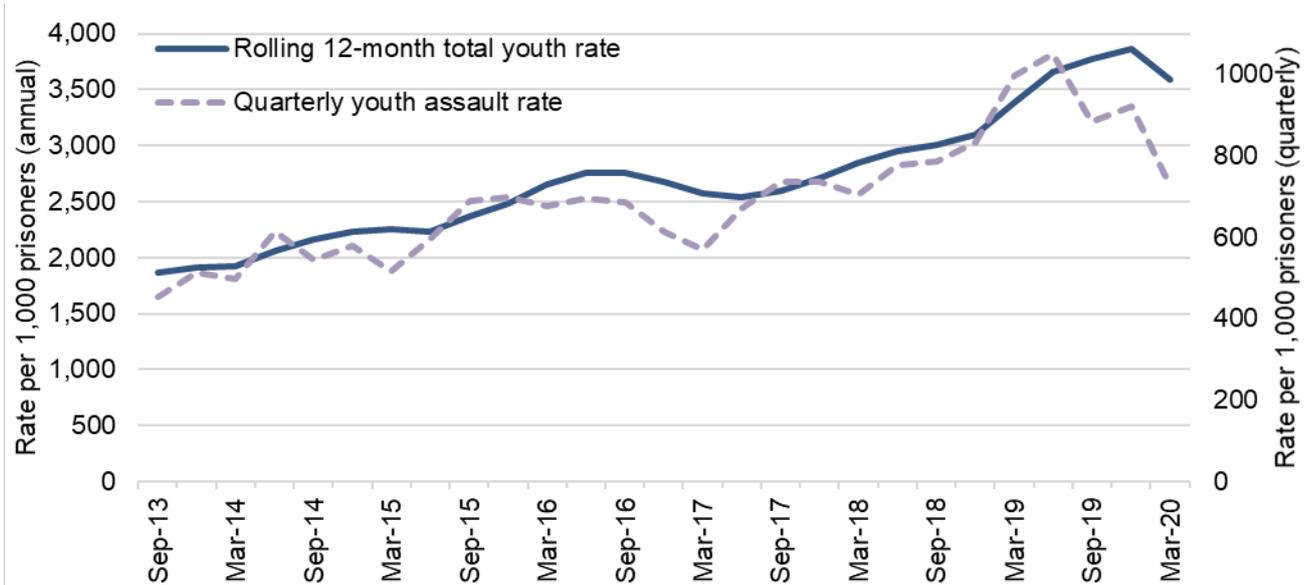
In female establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 16% to 775 incidents (206 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners), and assaults on staff increased by 3% to 616 incidents (164 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2020 compared to the previous 12 months.

The proportion of assaults on staff in female establishments (45%) was higher than the proportion in male establishments (30%) in the 12 months to March 2020. Assault rates on staff have historically been higher in female establishments, and saw a larger increase in female establishments than male establishments in the 12 months to March 2020 compared to the previous 12 months.

<sup>4</sup> This figure includes any prisoner-on-prisoner assaults where there may also have been an assault on staff.

<sup>5</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

**Figure 7: 12 month rolling rate of assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners by youth offenders, 12 months ending September 2013 to 12 months ending March 2020, with quarterly rates**



In youth estates, there was a 4% decrease in assaults in the 12 months to March 2020 compared to the previous 12 months (from 2,331 in the previous 12 months to 2,242 in the most recent 12 months) and a 6% increase in the assault rate per 1,000 prisoners in the 12 months to March 2020 compared to the previous 12 months (from 3,390 in the previous 12 months to 3,588 in the most recent 12 months).

In the latest quarter there were 452 assault incidents, an 18% decrease from 548 incidents in the previous quarter, and a 34% decrease from the same quarter the previous year (January to March 2019).

Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 10% in the youth estate, from 1,752 in the previous 12 months to 1,575 in the 12 months to March 2020. Prisoner on staff assaults increased by 15%, from 658 in the previous 12 months to 754 in the 12 months to March 2020.

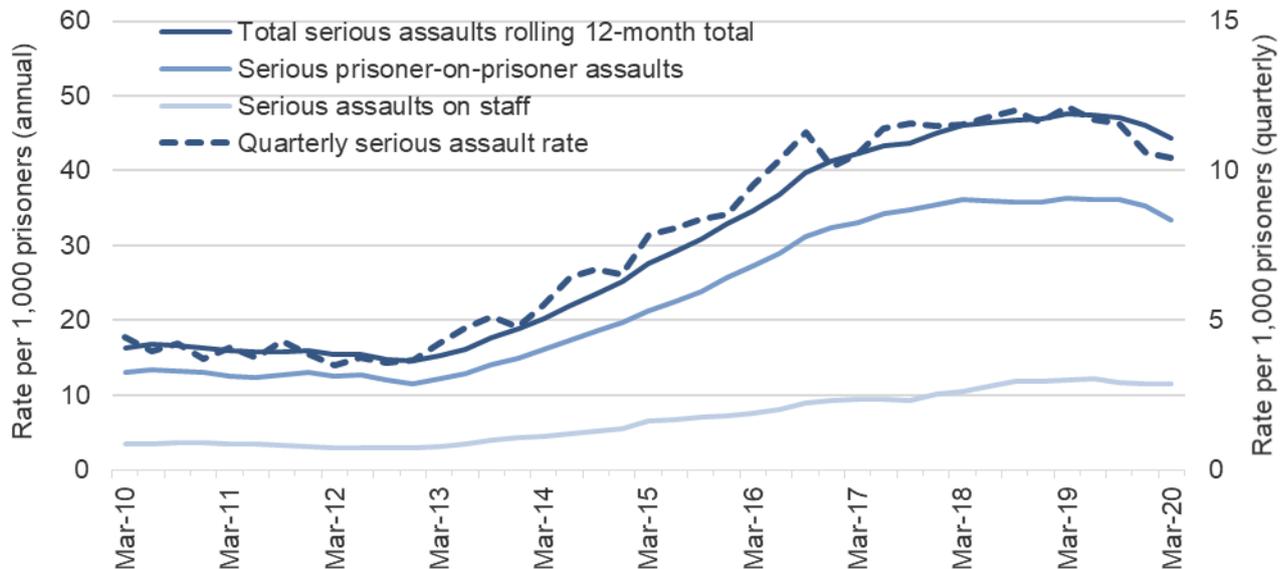
## Serious assaults

**Of the 31,568 assault incidents, 3,681 (12%) were serious.**

In the 12 months to March 2020, there were 3,681 serious assault incidents, a 7% decrease from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 8% to 2,782 in the 12 months to March 2020, whereas serious assaults on staff decreased by 5% to 953.

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 8: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total serious assaults, serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, and serious assaults on staff, 12 months ending March 2010 to 12 months ending March 2020**



In the 12 months to March 2020, there were 3,681 serious assaults (a rate of 44 per 1,000 prisoners), a 7% decrease from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 868 serious assaults, a 1% decrease from the previous quarter. In the latest 12 months, 12% of assaults were serious assaults, a slight increase from 11% in the previous 12 months.

There were 2,782 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 33 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2020, a decrease of 8% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 653 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, compared to 655 incidents in the previous quarter.

There were 953 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 11 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2020, a decrease of 5% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, the number of serious prisoner-on-staff assaults decreased by 5% (to 228 incidents).

In youth estates, there was a 4% increase in serious assaults, from 112 in the previous 12 months to 117 in the 12 months to March 2020. There was also a 43% increase in serious assaults on staff, from 51 in the previous 12 months to 73 (the highest in the timeseries) in the 12 months to March 2020.

## 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.

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.

### Contact

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

Tel: 020 3334 3536

Email: [newsdesk@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:newsdesk@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to:

**Lucy Cuppleditch**

Prison and Probation Analytical Services

Ministry of Justice

102 Petty France

London

SW1H 9AJ

Email: [statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

**Next update: October 2020**

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

© Crown copyright

Produced by the Ministry of Justice.

Alternative formats are available on request from [statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk)