



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

### Main Points

<p><b>Number of deaths decreased from the previous 12 month period</b></p>		<p>In the 12 months to September 2020, there were 282 deaths in prison custody, a decrease of 8% from 308 deaths the previous 12 months. Of these, 70 deaths were self-inflicted, a 23% decrease from the 91 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months.</p>
<p><b>Self-harm incidents have increased in the female estate from the previous 12-month period</b></p>		<p>There were 61,153 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to June 2020, up 1% from the previous 12 months, comprising a 0.4% decrease in male establishments and a 6% increase in female establishments.</p>
<p><b>The number of individuals self-harming remained steady</b></p>		<p>In the most recent quarter there were 13,017 self-harm incidents, down 15% on the previous quarter, comprising a 19% decrease in male establishments and a 1% increase in female establishments.</p> <p>The number of individuals self-harming remained steady at 12,736 in the 12 months to June 2020. The number of self-harm incidents per individual remained unchanged at 4.8.</p>
<p><b>Assaults decreased from the previous 12-month period</b></p>		<p>There were 27,742 assault incidents in the 12 months to June 2020, down 19% from the 12 months to June 2019. In the most recent quarter, assaults decreased by 37% to 4,550 incidents.</p>
<p><b>Assaults on staff have decreased</b></p>		<p>There were 9,056 assaults on staff in the 12 months to June 2020, down 13% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff decreased by 17% to 1,896 incidents.</p>
<p><b>The number of serious assaults on staff decreased</b> <b>11% of all assaults were serious</b></p>		<p>In the 12 months to June 2020, there were 3,170 serious assault incidents, a decrease of 19% from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 21% to 2,370 in the 12 months to June 2020. Serious assaults on staff also decreased, by 16% to 849.</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>

<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.

This release provides statistics on deaths of prisoners to the end of September 2020, and deaths from COVID-19 have been presented in the section below.

The release also provides statistics on assaults and self-harm up to the end of June 2020. This includes the period from March 2020 when COVID-19 restrictions were introduced in prisons to limit and control the spread of the virus. These restrictions included the implementation of effective isolation of prisoners, reverse cohorting of new entrants to custody, and shielding of vulnerable prisoners.

See Further Information at the end of this bulletin on the managing and running of prisons during the pandemic.

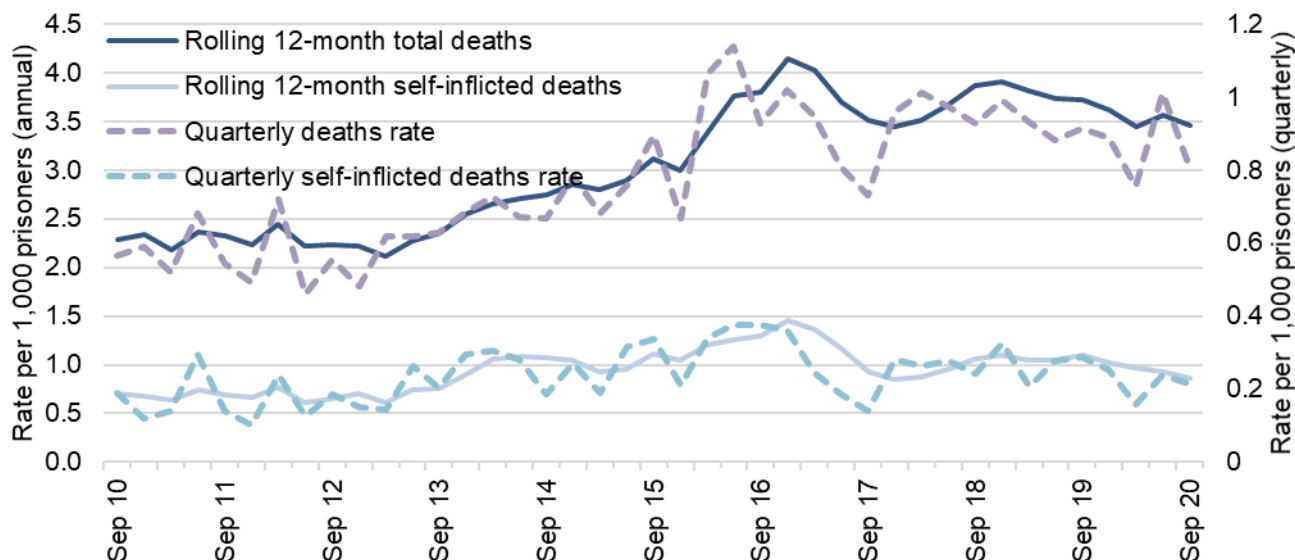
Supplementary annual tables, providing more in-depth statistics on a calendar year basis, underlying data files with pivot tables providing lower level granularity, and a guidance technical document are also available alongside this bulletin, at [www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics).

# 1 Deaths: 12 months ending September 2020

## Number of deaths continues to fall

In the 12 months to September 2020, there were 282 deaths in prison custody, a decrease of 8% from 308 deaths in the previous 12 months. Of these, 70 deaths were self-inflicted, a decrease of 23% from 91 in the previous 12 months.

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



In the 12 months to September 2020, there were 282 deaths in prison custody (a rate of 3.5 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease from 308 deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 3.7 per 1,000 prisoners). The most recent quarter saw the number of deaths decrease to 64, a decrease of 21% from 81 in the three months to June 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 70 apparent self-inflicted deaths in the 12 months to September 2020 (a rate of 0.9 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease of 23% from 91 self-inflicted deaths (a rate of 1.1 per 1,000 prisoners) in the previous 12 months. Also, there were 174 deaths due to natural causes (a rate of 2.1 per 1,000 prisoners), a 4% increase from 168 deaths in the previous 12 months.

There were 36 deaths recorded as 'Other' in the 12 months to September 2020, 27 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 annual publication Deaths in prison custody for 1978 to 2019 was 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 September 2020, 26 prisoners have died having tested positive for COVID-19 or where there was a clinical assessment that COVID-19 was a contributory factor in their deaths. These deaths occurred before July 2020. There were no additional such deaths in the latest quarter, between July 2020 and September 2020.

Of these 26 deaths, 23 are suspected to be due to COVID-19.

The remaining 3 deaths are believed to be due to other causes although the prisoner had tested positive for COVID-19. Two were classified as from natural causes and there is one for which we are awaiting further information before it is classified.

As with all deaths in prison custody, each case will be investigated by the Prisons 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:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-prison-and-probation-service-covid-19-statistics-monthly](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-prison-and-probation-service-covid-19-statistics-monthly).

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

**Self-harm incidents continue to rise, increasing by 1% in the latest year, the increase being in the female estate.**

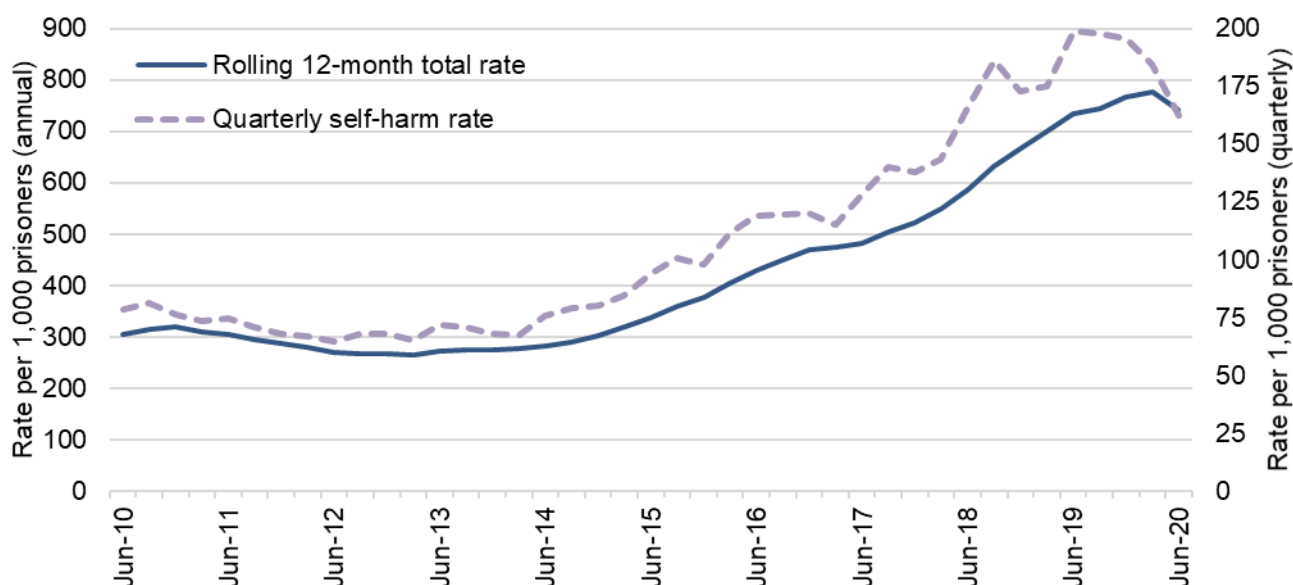
There were 61,153 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to June 2020, up 1% from the previous 12 months (a 0.4% decrease in male establishments and a 6% increase in female establishments). In the most recent quarter there were 13,017 self-harm incidents, down 15% on the previous quarter (a 19% decrease in male establishments and a 1% increase in female establishments).

**The number of individuals self-harming decreased slightly.**

The number of individuals self-harming remained steady at 12,736 in the 12 months to June 2020, having decreased slightly from 12,757 in the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual remained unchanged at 4.8.

Statistics for the 12 months to June, and particularly those for the April to June quarter, relate to the exceptional period since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restricted regimes prisons put in place in order to safely manage the risks of infection during the pandemic (see Further Information at the end of this bulletin). This affects the comparability of the statistics with earlier periods.

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



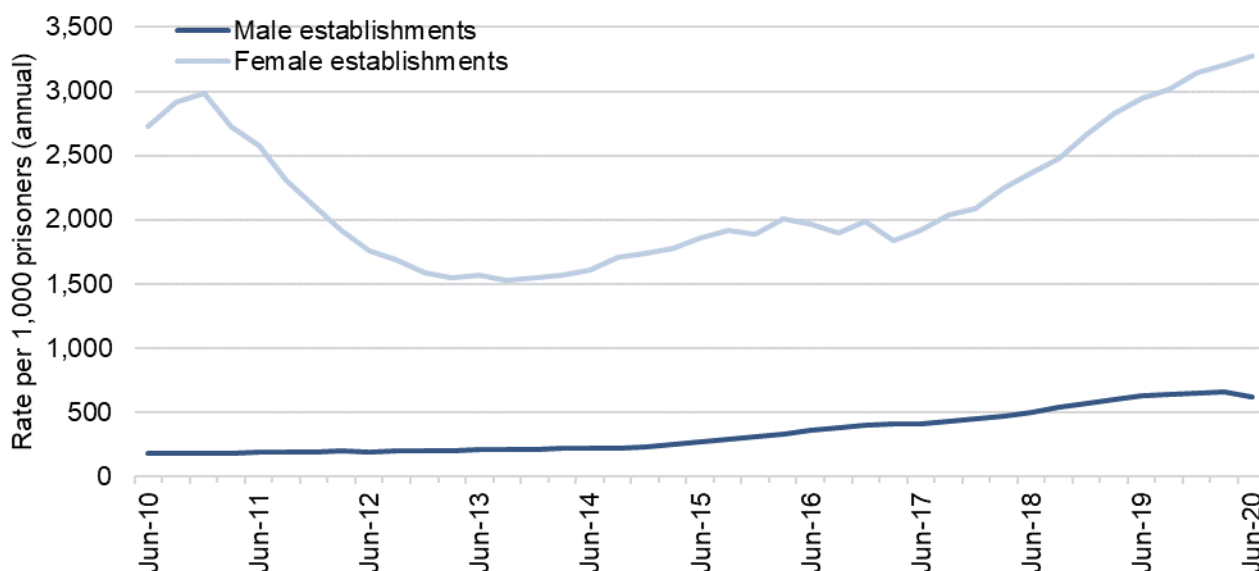
In the 12 months to June 2020, there were 61,153 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 741 per 1,000 prisoners), up 1% from the previous 12 months, and the highest recorded figure. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to June 2020 decreased by 15% from the previous quarter, from 15,390 to 13,017 incidents.

The number of individuals self-harming remained steady at 12,736 in the latest 12 months (a rate of 154 individuals per 1,000 prisoners), having decreased slightly from 12,757 in the previous 12 months. The number of incidents per self-harming individual remained unchanged at 4.8 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<sup>3</sup>.

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance decreased by 11% to 3,013 in the 12 months to June 2020, and decreased by 22% in the latest quarter to 552 incidents. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance decreased from 5.6% in the 12 months to June 2019 to 4.9% in the latest 12 months.

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



Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender. The number of incidents in male establishments decreased slightly from 49,440 in the 12 months to June 2019 to 49,223 in the 12 months to June 2020. The number of incidents in the female estate increased 6% from 11,228 in the previous 12 months to 11,930. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to June 2020 decreased by 19% in male establishments compared with the previous three months and increased by 1% in female establishments.

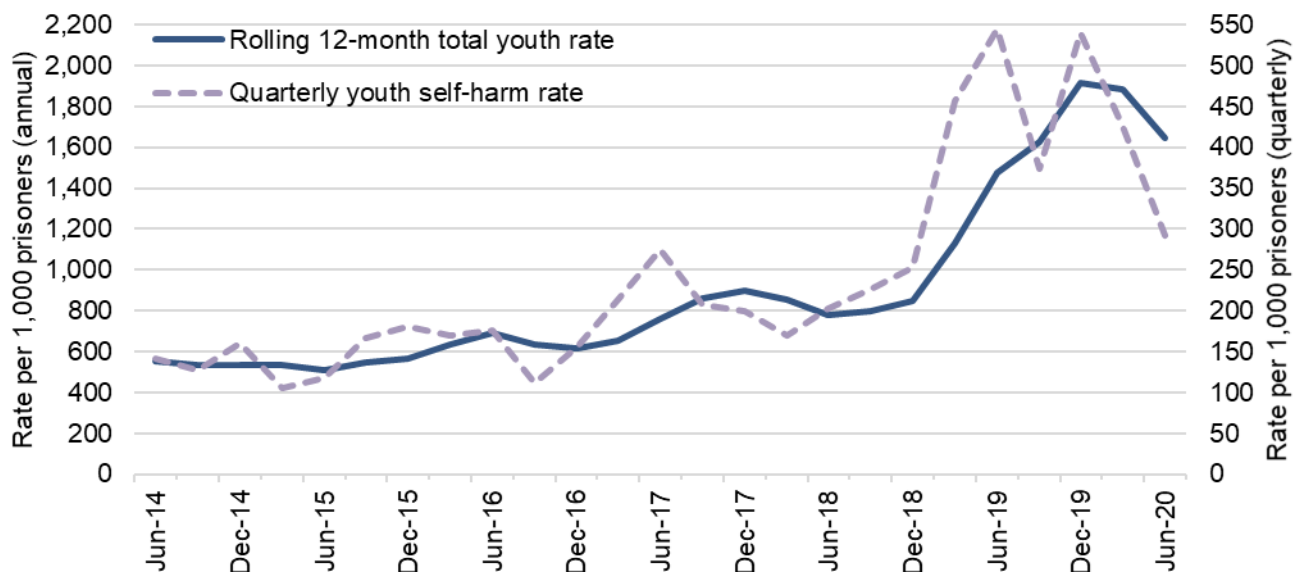
The rate of incidents, which takes population size into account, was 624 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in the male estate in the 12 months to June 2019, similar to the rate of 626 per 1,000 prisoners in the previous 12 months. The rate of incidents in female establishments was far higher, and increased by 11%, from 2,947 in the previous 12 months to 3,273 in the latest 12 months.

In the 12 months to June 2020, the number of self-harm incidents per self-harming male remained unchanged at 4.3 compared with the previous 12 months, while for females it increased from 9.2 incidents per self-harming individual to 9.4.

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance decreased in male establishments by 13%, from 3,138 in the 12 months to June 2019 to 2,732 in the 12 months to June 2020, and increased by 11% to 281 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 (9.4 incidents per self-harming individual, compared to 4.3 in male establishments), although the proportion of incidents that required hospitalisation was higher in male establishments (5.6% compared to 2.4% in female establishments).

<sup>3</sup> Annual self-harm statistics published in the Safety in Custody quarterly update to December 2019 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/893374/safety-in-custody-q4-2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/893374/safety-in-custody-q4-2019.pdf)

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



In youth estate<sup>4</sup>, there was a 2% decrease in self-harm incidents from 992 in the 12 months to June 2019 to 975 in the 12 months to June 2020, but a 12% increase in the rate of self-harm over the same period from 1,473 to 1,643 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.

In the latest quarter there were 154 self-harm incidents, a 42% decrease from 264 incidents in the previous quarter, and a 57% decrease from the same quarter the previous year (April to June 2019).

The proportion of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance decreased in the youth estate from 5.5% in the 12 months to June 2019 to 1.3% in the 12 months to June 2020, the lowest in the time series.

<sup>4</sup> Youth estate includes 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 June 2020

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

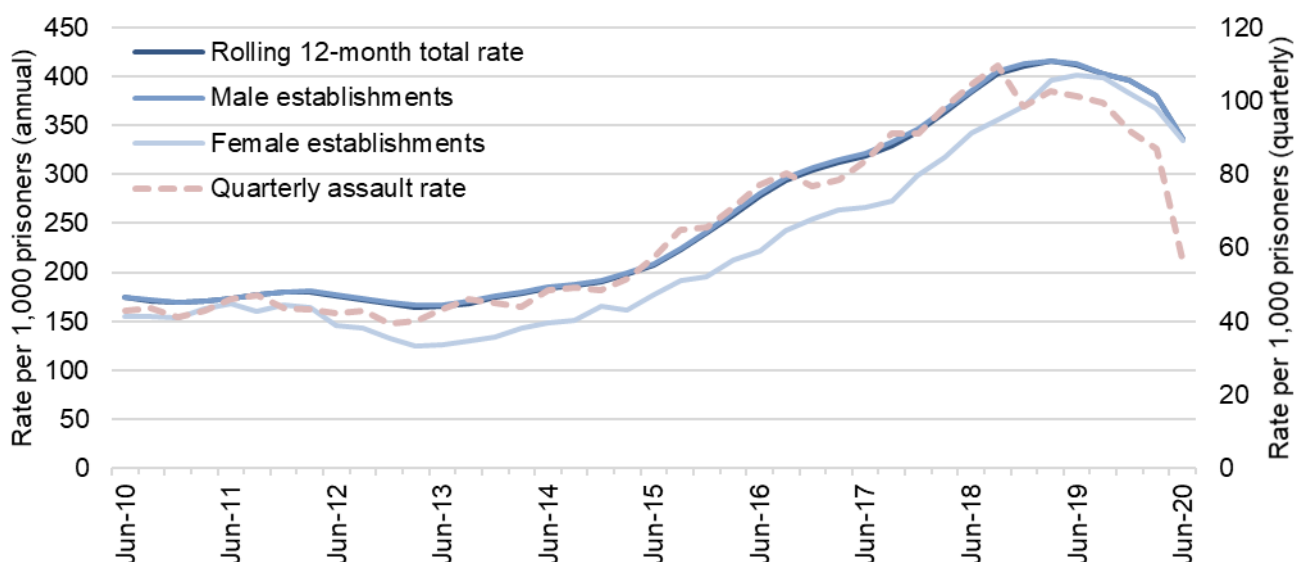
In the 12 months to June 2020, there were 27,742 assault incidents, a 19% decrease from the previous 12 months. Of these 3,170 were serious assaults, down by 19%. Assaults decreased by 37% in the latest quarter to 4,550 incidents, and the number of serious assaults decreased by 47% to 456 incidents.

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

There were 9,056 assaults on staff in the 12 months to June 2020, a 13% decrease from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff decreased by 17% to 1,896 incidents.

Statistics for the 12 months to June, and particularly those for the April to June quarter, relate to the exceptional period since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restricted regimes prisons put in place in order to safely manage the risks of infection during the pandemic (see Further Information). This affects the comparability of the statistics with earlier periods.

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



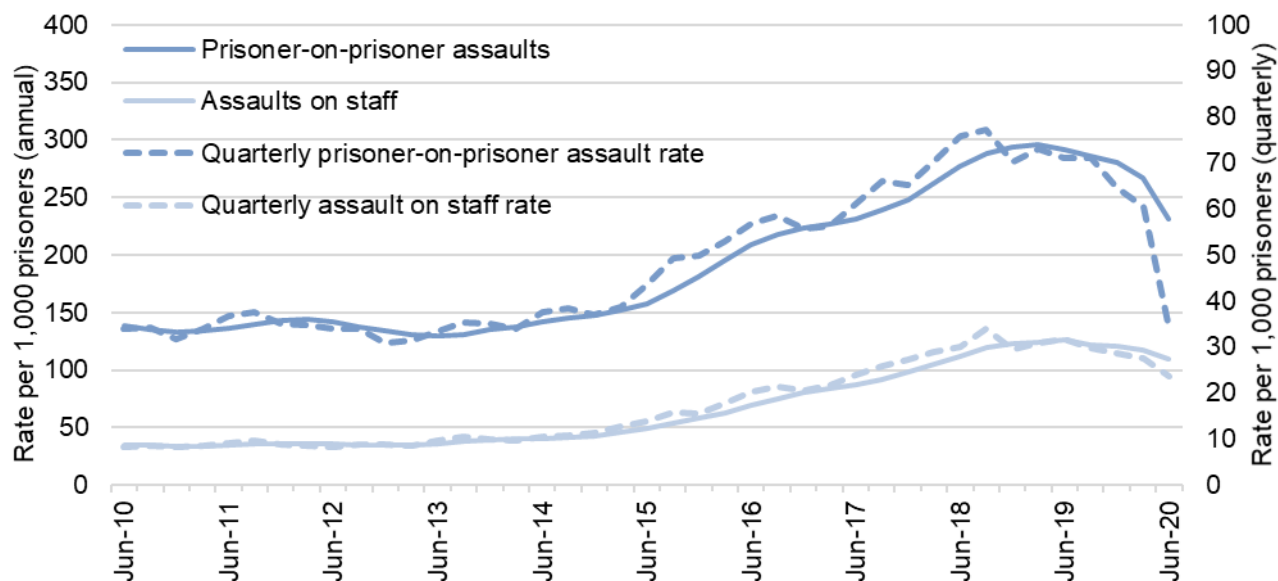
In the 12 months to June 2020, assault incidents decreased by 19% to 27,742, a rate of 336 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. In the latest quarter, there were 4,550 assaults, a decrease of 37% from the previous quarter. The quarterly figure reached a peak of 9,111 in the July to September 2018 quarter. It has continued on a downward trend since then, decreasing in each of the last 5 quarters, with the sharpest fall in the latest quarter.

The number of incidents in male establishments decreased by 19% from 32,598 to 26,521 in the 12 months to June 2020. The number of incidents in female establishments decreased by 20% from 1,530 to 1,221 incidents in the same period.

In the latest quarter, the number of assaults in male establishments decreased by 37% to 4,349, and the number of assaults in female establishments decreased by 41% to 201. Assault rates were similar in both male establishments (336 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) and female establishments (335 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 June 2010 to 12 months ending June 2020, with quarterly rates**



There were 19,053 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults<sup>5</sup> in the 12 months to June 2020 (a rate of 231 per 1,000 prisoners). This is a decrease of 21% from the 24,145 assaults in the previous 12 months which was the highest level in the time series. In the latest quarter, there were 2,711 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 46% decrease from 5,032 in the previous quarter.

There were 9,056 assaults on staff<sup>6</sup> in the 12 months to June 2020 (a rate of 110 per 1,000 prisoners). This is a 13% decrease from the 10,431 assaults in the previous 12 months which was the highest level in the time series. In the latest quarter there was a 17% decrease in assaults on staff to 1,896 incidents.

The proportion of assaults on staff increased to 33% of all incidents in the 12 months to June 2020, from 31% in the previous 12 months, having steadily increased from 20% in the 12 months to June 2012.

In male establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 21% to 18,408 incidents (233 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners), and assaults on staff decreased by 14% to 8,469 incidents (107 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners) in the 12 months to June 2020 compared to the previous 12 months.

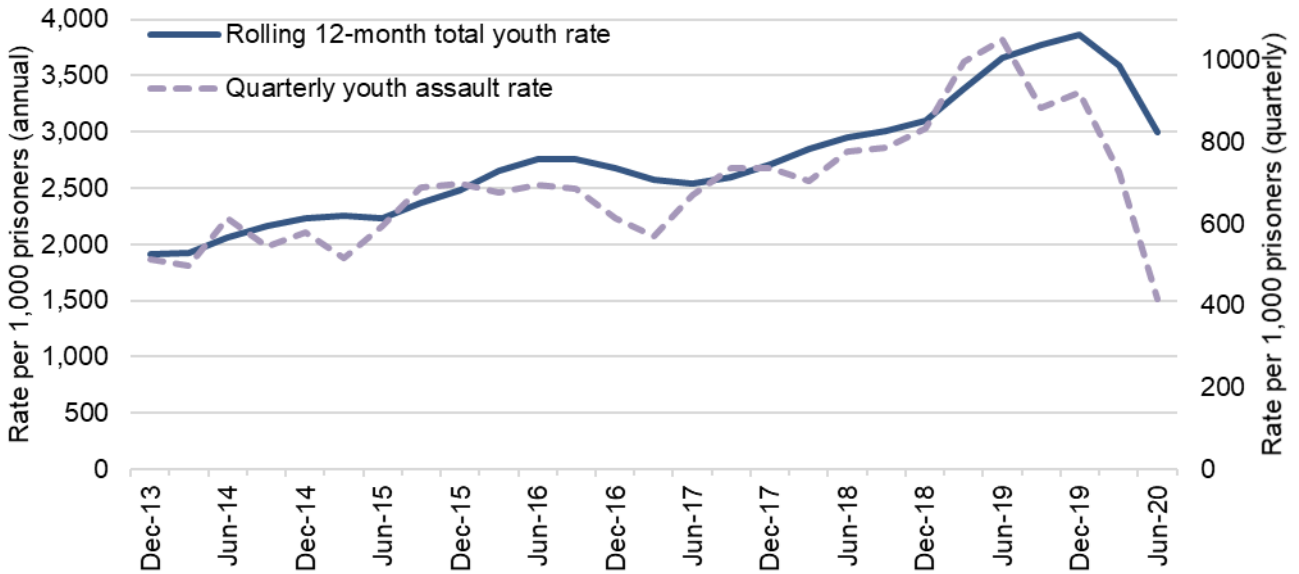
In female establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 29% to 645 incidents (177 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners), and assaults on staff decreased by 6% to 587 incidents (161 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) in the 12 months to June 2020 compared to the previous 12 months.

The proportion of assaults on staff in female establishments (48%) was higher than the proportion in male establishments (32%) in the 12 months to June 2020. Assault rates on staff have historically been higher in female establishments than male establishments.

<sup>5</sup> This figure includes any prisoner-on-prisoner assaults where there may also have been an assault on staff.

<sup>6</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 December 2013 to 12 months ending June 2020, with quarterly rates**



In youth estate, the number of assaults decreased by 28% from 2,465 in the 12 months to June 2019 to 1,775 in the 12 months to June 2020, and the assault rate decreased by 18% across the same period, from 3,661 per 1,000 prisoners in the previous 12 months to 2,992 per 1,000 in the latest 12 months.

In the latest quarter there were 220 assault incidents, a 51% decrease from 452 incidents in the previous quarter, and a 68% decrease from the same quarter the previous year (April to June 2019).

Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 32% in the youth estate, from 1,780 in the previous 12 months to 1,202 in the 12 months to June 2020. Prisoner on staff assaults decreased by 18%, from 773 in the previous 12 months to 636 in the 12 months to June 2020.

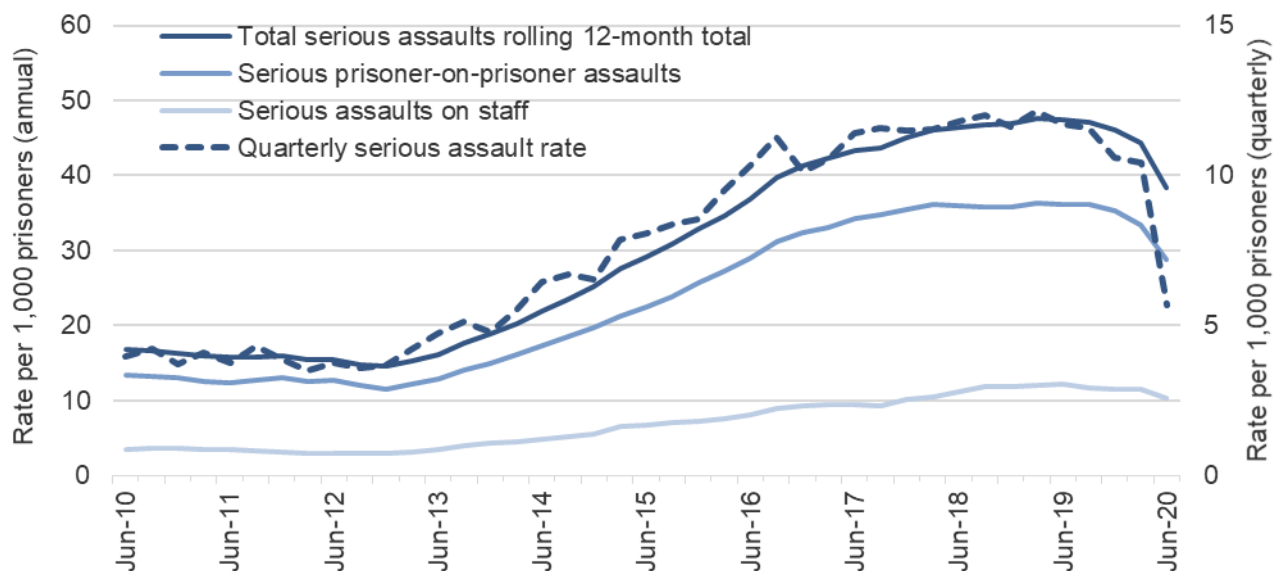
## Serious assaults

**Of the 27,742 assault incidents, 3,170 (11%) were serious.**

In the 12 months to June 2020, there were 3,170 serious assault incidents, a 19% decrease from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 21% to 2,370 in the 12 months to June 2020, and serious assaults on staff decreased by 16% to 849.

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 June 2010 to 12 months ending June 2020**



In the 12 months to June 2020, there were 3,170 serious assaults (a rate of 38 per 1,000 prisoners), a 19% decrease from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 456 serious assaults, a 47% decrease from the previous quarter. In the latest 12 months, 11% of assaults were serious assaults.

There were 2,370 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 29 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to June 2020, a decrease of 21% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 306 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 53% decrease from 653 incidents in the previous quarter.

There were 849 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 10 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to June 2020, a decrease of 16% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, the number of serious prisoner-on-staff assaults decreased by 32% to 156 incidents.

In youth estate, there was an 18% decrease in serious assaults from 116 in the 12 months to June 2019 to 95 in the 12 months to June 2020. There was also a 31% decrease in serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults across the same period, from 62 to 43, and a 3% decrease in serious assaults on staff, from 60 in the previous 12 months to 58 in the 12 months to June 2020.

## Further Information

### Covid-19

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been keen public and Parliamentary interest in how the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) are managing the running of prisons and the probation system to limit the spread of the virus while maintaining the core functions of these vital parts of the justice system. The core tenet of HMPPS's prison strategy, building on Public Health England (PHE) and Public Health Wales (PHW) advice and learning developed in managing an early outbreak of the virus, is the implementation of effective isolation, reverse cohorting of new entrants to custody, and shielding of vulnerable prisoners. In addition, HMPPS have reduced the movement of prisoners and staff between prisons to prevent the "seeding and feeding" of infection, and have restricted regimes to prevent social contact in custody.

The latest COVID figures are published monthly on the MOJ website via the following link:

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-prison-and-probation-service-covid-19-statistics-monthly](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-prison-and-probation-service-covid-19-statistics-monthly)

### 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**

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**Next update: January 2021**

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

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