



Ministry
of Justice



Safety in Custody Statistics England and Wales Update to March 2013

Ministry of Justice
Statistics bulletin

25 July 2013

Contents

Introduction	- 4 -
Key findings	- 7 -
Deaths in custody	- 8 -
Self-harm	- 14 -
Assaults	- 17 -
References.....	- 20 -
List of tables and figures	- 21 -
Data Sources and Data Quality	- 23 -
Explanatory notes	- 23 -
Contact points	- 24 -

Introduction

Safety in custody statistics cover deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody in England and Wales. This publication updates statistics up to the end of March 2013. Supplementary tables, providing more in depth statistics on deaths, self-harm and assaults on a calendar year basis, are also available alongside this table and can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody.

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

In interpreting the statistics contained within this bulletin, users are recommended to read with it the accompanying 'Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics'¹ that includes technical and background information on the production of these statistics, and more information on data quality.

When considering particular statistics, readers should note the following:

- Risk of death, self-harm or assaults is distributed unevenly around the prison estate. Age, gender and time in custody, and random variation, explain many of the differences between prisons and particular risk groups.
- In prisons, as in the community, self-harm is often covert and assaults may go unreported. In prison custody, however, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. Recording of self-harm and assault incidents in prison custody has improved over the years but it remains the case that they cannot be counted with absolute accuracy.

Although this publication concerns statistics, the incidents described in this report are, by their nature, tragic and distressing to the prisoners, their families and staff.

From time to time, events in prison custody and developments within and outside NOMS have changed the way safety in prisons is viewed and managed. Some have resulted in changes to the way offenders are managed. Others have affected the way statistics are collected and reported. The accompanying guide includes a timeline summarising some of the key events and developments that have affected safety in prison custody and supporting statistics. These help with interpretation of longer term trends.

Changes and revisions in this publication

Some deaths classified as "awaiting further information" in the last publication have now been classified and these affect statistics in all death tables. Details of the reclassifications are given in the "others" section in the chapter covering deaths in custody.

¹ Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody

Users and uses of these Statistics

The cost of deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody, in both human and financial terms is high. This report adds to the body of learning in this area and supports work to prevent such tragedies in future. The contents support a wide range of operational and strategic decisions including:

- Management of risk;
- Deployment of staff (identification of high risk periods and locations etc.);
- Design of prison cells (identification and reduction of ligature points);
- Assessment of changes in sentencing and other policies affecting prisoners.

The statistics included in this publication are used extensively and meet 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 prison population; assess policy impacts (e.g. changes to managing vulnerable prisoners)
MPs and House of Lords	Statistics are used to answer parliamentary questions – approximately 100 are answered each year
Policy teams	Statistics are used to inform policy development, to monitor impact of changes over time and to model future changes and their impact on the system
Agencies responsible for offender management	Current and historical robust 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
Journalists	Used as a compendium of robust data on safety in custody so that an accurate and coherent story can be told on the safety of the prison environment.
Voluntary sector	Data are used to monitor trends of the safety and wellbeing of prisoners, to reuse the data in their own briefing and research papers and to inform policy work and responses to consultations.
General public	Data are used to respond to ad-hoc requests and requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. Recent requests include number of deaths, self-harm and assaults in prisons.

NOMS regularly receives requests for statistics for more recent, or different, date periods than those covered in published statistics. In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, NOMS is generally unable to release statistics for periods beyond those published in Official Statistics publications.

Related publications

This bulletin is published alongside two inter-related bulletins:

Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin²: 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 Quarterly³: This provides proven re-offending figures for offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court, received a caution, reprimand, warning or tested positive for opiates or cocaine.

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.

Release Schedule

This bulletin was published on 25 July 2013 and includes statistics for the 12 month periods to end of March 2013. As this is equivalent to the National Offender Management Service's accounting year throughout the report the 12 months to March 2013 will be referred to as 2012/13.

The next publication of Safety in Custody statistics is scheduled to be published on 31 October 2013 and will cover 12 month periods to end of July 2013. Statistics in the bulletin are provisional and will be reviewed in the next annual publication.

² Offender Management Statistics www.gov.uk/government/publications/offender-management-statistics-quarterly--2

³ Proven Reoffending Statistics www.gov.uk/government/publications/proven-re-offending--2

Key findings

Table 1: Safety in Custody Summary Statistics, England and Wales

	12 months ending									
	-Mar 04	-Mar 05	-Mar 06	-Mar 07	-Mar 08	-Mar 09	-Mar 10	-Mar 11	-Mar 12	-Mar 13
Total deaths	187	197	167	161	188	163	180	184	211	182
Self-inflicted	94	87	74	72	85	64	59	54	66	51
Natural Causes	86	101	87	85	98	94	117	114	134	112
Homicide	1	2	3	0	1	3	0	2	1	2
Other ¹	6	7	3	4	4	2	4	14	10	17
Self-harm incidents²	-	20,448	23,964	23,636	22,462	25,847	24,964	26,285	24,253	22,687
Males	-	9,849	10,639	12,357	11,309	12,686	13,780	14,769	16,202	16,370
Females	-	10,599	13,325	11,279	11,153	13,161	11,184	11,516	8,051	6,317
Assault incidents	12,052	13,025	14,832	14,780	15,644	15,775	14,916	14,473	15,577	14,052
Males	11,205	12,163	13,683	13,673	14,625	14,927	14,281	13,785	14,888	13,542
Females	847	862	1,149	1,107	1,019	848	635	688	689	510

1. 'Other' deaths include accidental and other difficult to classify deaths including those for which further information is awaited. A minority of the most recent two years figures are expected to be reclassified as natural causes.

2. A new system for monitoring self-harm was introduced in December 2002. As a result, recording of self-harm improved throughout 2003. 12 month periods that include parts of 2003 and earlier years are therefore under-reported by modern standards and have been omitted from this table.

- In 2012/13 there were 182 deaths in prison custody, including 51 self-inflicted deaths. The number of natural cause deaths and self-inflicted deaths were down on the previous year. The number and rate of self-inflicted deaths have been on a downward trend over the last 10 years; in contrast, the number of natural cause deaths has increase over recent years due to an ageing population.
- Overall self-harm has seen a year-on-year decline but there are differing trends for male and female self-harm. Incidence of male self-harm has been gradually increasing over the last 10 years, although the rate of male individuals self-harming has stabilised at around 70 males per 1,000 prisoners over recent years. In 2012 the number of males self-harming more than 20 times outnumbered females for the first time since the current recording system began.
- In contrast, incidence of female self-harm has fallen by 45 per cent over the last two years largely driven by a reduction in the number of repetitive self-harmers. The rate of female prisoners self-harming has fallen from 312 females self-harming per 1,000 prisoners ten years ago to 264 females self-harming in 2012/13. Despite these falls incidence of female self-harm still accounts for a disproportionate amount of self-harm in prison custody.
- At 164 assaults per 1,000 prisoners the rate of assaults, including fights, in 2012/13 was the lowest since 2003/04. Younger people are more likely to be involved in assault incidents in prison custody and the lower rate is partly a result of younger people making up a smaller proportion of the prison population.

1 Deaths in custody

In 2012/13 there were 182 deaths in prison custody – 29 fewer deaths than the previous year (a fall of 14 per cent). These deaths provisionally comprise of:

- **51 apparent self-inflicted deaths**, down from 66 in the previous year (23 per cent lower);
- **112 deaths due to natural causes**, down from 134 in the previous year (16 per cent);
- **2 apparent homicides**, up from 1 in the previous year;
- **17 other deaths**, 16 of which have yet to be classified awaiting further information. At this stage last year there were 9 deaths awaiting further information, of which 5 have since been reclassified¹.

A death in prison custody is defined as ‘any death of a person in prison custody arising from an incident in or, on rare occasions, immediately prior to prison custody’.

All deaths in prison custody are subject to a police investigation and a coroner’s inquest. Once the inquest has been concluded, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman’s office publish a detailed ‘Fatal Incident Report’⁴ on the death. Until this time, for administrative and statistical purposes NOMS classify deaths by *apparent* cause of death.

Annual supplementary tables published alongside this bulletin⁵ show that the key population factors in determining risk of death in custody are:

- Age: Older prisoners are more likely to die of natural causes. Self-inflicted death risk varies with age peaking amongst prisoners in their 30s;
- Time in custody: Self-inflicted deaths are more likely in the early stages of custody;
- Gender: Female prisoners are less likely to die in custody.

Table 2: Deaths in Custody Summary Statistics, England and Wales

	12 months ending									
	-Mar 04	-Mar 05	-Mar 06	-Mar 07	-Mar 08	-Mar 09	-Mar 10	-Mar 11	-Mar 12	-Mar 13
								(p)	(p)	(p)
DEATHS										
Deaths in prison custody¹	187	197	167	161	188	163	180	184	211	182
Self-inflicted	94	87	74	72	85	64	59	54	66	51
Natural Causes	86	101	87	85	98	94	117	114	134	112
Homicide	1	2	3	0	1	3	0	2	1	2
Other ²	6	7	3	4	4	2	4	14	10	17
<i>of which</i>										
Other/Non-natural	6	7	3	4	4	2	4	11	6	1
Awaiting further information	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	4	16
Deaths per 1,000 prisoners	2.5	2.6	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.1
Self-inflicted	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.8	0.6
Natural Causes	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.3
Number of deaths by gender										
Male	174	179	160	155	180	158	174	176	207	176
Female	13	18	7	6	8	5	6	8	4	6

Due to the large number of deaths yet to be classified it is likely that some of these deaths will be reclassified as natural cause deaths when sufficient information becomes

⁴ Prisons and Probation Ombudsman: Fatal Incident Reports www.ppo.gov.uk/prison-investigations.html

⁵ Deaths in Custody: Deaths tables at www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody

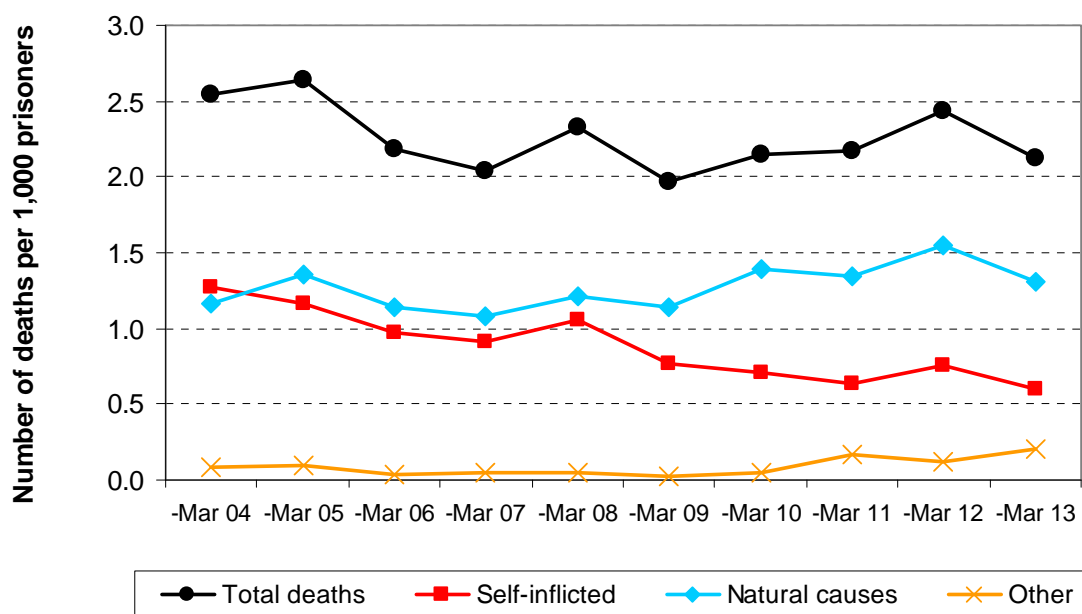
available, and some may be reclassified as self-inflicted. For this reason all figures for the last three years are provisional.

1.1 Overall mortality

There has been 29 fewer deaths in 2012/13 than in the previous year. Broadly over the last four years the number of deaths in prison custody has been stable, although 2011/12 departed from this trend with a highest level of deaths in recent years.

Figure 1 shows that the death rate in the last eight years has varied between 2.0 and 2.4 deaths per 1,000 prisoners. It also shows that whilst the historical rate for self-inflicted and natural cause deaths were broadly in line they have followed different trends since 2007/08.

Figure 1: Deaths per 1,000 prisoners by apparent cause, England and Wales



1.2 Self-inflicted deaths

- The number and rate of self-inflicted deaths are on a declining trend over the longer term
- **51 self-inflicted deaths** in 2012/13, 15 (23 per cent) fewer than 2011/12.
- The **rate of self-inflicted deaths, at 0.6 per 1,000 prisoners**, is amongst the lowest rate in the last 30 years.
- No deaths on the first day of custody since 2008
- Nine-in-ten self-inflicted deaths occur from hanging

Self-inflicted deaths are any death of a person who has apparently taken his or her own life irrespective of intent. This not only includes suicides but also accidental deaths as a result of the person's own actions. This classification is used because it is not always known whether a person intended to commit suicide.

With 15 fewer deaths in 2012/13 than in 2011/12 the number of self-inflicted deaths has fallen quite substantially over the year. The number of deaths is subject to some year-on-year volatility and it is best to consider trend over the longer term. Over the longer term the number of deaths has been declining, falling from 94 deaths in 2003/04 to 51 deaths in 2012/13.

Considering the death rate over the longer term will take into account any changes into the size of the prison population which may exaggerate or mask under-lying trends in self-inflicted deaths. Table 2 and figure 1 show that since 2003/04 the rate of self-inflicted deaths has more than halved from 1.3 deaths per 1,000 prisoners to 0.6 deaths per 1,000 prisoners in 2012/13.

Annual tables

On an annual calendar year basis supplementary tables are published providing more insights into self-inflicted deaths. These tables include personal characteristics, time in prison, sentence type, method of death, ligatures used and ligature points.

These tables show:

- that there have now been no self-inflicted deaths on the day of arrival in prison⁶ since 2008. The numbers on the first and second full days also remain low, averaging less than one per quarter. This results from suicide prevention policies specifically targeting the early stages of custody.
- From 1989 to 2003, self-inflicted deaths were consistently higher than those due to natural causes⁷. Up to the 1980s, natural causes routinely accounted for the majority of deaths in prison custody. In the late 1980s, self-inflicted deaths started to increase. 'Care in the community' is sometimes cited⁸ as a reason for the increase as it is believed to have led to an increase in the proportions of prisoners with mental illness. The proportions of mentally ill in the prison population are not measured routinely so the actual change over time is unknown. The increase in numbers of self-inflicted deaths from the late 1980s is likely to be due to a combination of factors because it started before the impact of the 1989 White Paper 'Caring for People: *Community Care in the next Decade and Beyond*' could have taken full effect.
- Around nine-in-ten self-inflicted deaths occur from hanging, with bedding the most common ligature. The most common ligature point is the window, although despite the small increase in hangings the number of hangings using the window as a ligature point fell in 2012 (18 compared with 25 in 2011).
- Self-inflicted deaths occurred at 40 of the 134 establishments managed by the National Offender Management Service in 2012 with the number of self-inflicted deaths ranging between one and four at any single establishment with a self-inflicted death.

1.3 Natural cause deaths

Natural cause deaths include any death of a person as a result of a naturally occurring disease process.

⁶ Safety in Custody Deaths: Table 1.7 www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody

⁷ Safety in Custody: Deaths Table 1.2

⁸ Mental Health of Prisoners (HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2007)
www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/thematic-reports-and-research-publications/mental_health-rps.pdf

- **112 natural cause deaths in 2012/13**, 22 (16 per cent) fewer than 2011/12;
- **1.3 natural cause deaths per 1,000 prisoners** in 2012/13, down from 1.5 natural cause deaths per 1,000 prisoners in 2011/12

The number of natural cause deaths in 2012/13 is likely to increase as a result of some of the 16 deaths awaiting further information being reclassified as natural cause deaths when further information is received.

At this stage last year there were:

- 9 deaths awaiting further information for the 12 months to March 2012;
 - of these, 5 have now been re-classified with 4 of them re-classified to being a natural cause death.

The uncertainty on these figures will not be entirely removed until after inquest.

As the prison population ages⁹ the number of natural cause deaths has also increased. Over the last four years the number of natural cause deaths has been consistently above 100 deaths per year. Despite the increase in prisoners aged 60 and over, the last four years the rate of natural cause deaths has remained relatively stable at around 1.3 deaths per 1,000 prisoners.

1.4 Homicides

Homicides include any death of a person at the hands of another. This includes murder and manslaughter cases. As with self-inflicted deaths, the classification system does not make any judgement about intent.

- **2 apparent homicides in 2012/13** compared with 1 in 2011/12;
- Homicides are relatively rare accounting for less than one per cent of all deaths in prison custody.

- Since 2000 there have been 18 apparent homicides in English and Welsh prisons.
- In recent years, the number of homicides has varied between zero and three in any single year.
- In comparison between 1990 and 1999 there were 26 homicides.

The reduction in homicides since 2000 compared with the previous ten years coincides with the introduction of a cell-sharing risk assessment in 2002. This assessment aims to assess that before prisoners share cells that they are not a risk to their cell companion(s).

1.5 Other deaths

'Other' deaths include any death of a person whose death cannot easily be classified as natural causes, self-inflicted or homicide. The category includes accidents and cases where the cause of death is unknown even after all of the investigations have been concluded.

There were **17 other deaths in 2012/13** (9 per cent of all deaths). This number is not directly comparable with earlier years as some of the deaths in this category are likely to be reclassified as natural cause deaths following inquest. However, as a guide, at March 2012 there were 14 other deaths.

⁹ Offender management statistics, www.gov.uk/government/publications/offender-management-statistics-quarterly--2

The numbers in this category have increased in recent years due to a number of cases that have proved difficult to classify.

- By July 2012, for the 12 months to March 2012 there were nine deaths awaiting further information, of which four remain. Of the five that have been reclassified, four were reclassified to natural causes and one to other non-natural.

The majority of deaths for which information is awaited beyond three months are expected to be classified as either 'other/non-natural' or natural causes.

Some of the cases in the aggregated 'other' category appear to be drug related but there is insufficient information to classify any to be self-inflicted. The uncertainty will not be entirely removed until after inquest.

1.6 Comparison of deaths in prison with those in the general population

The prison population is very different from the general population: 95 per cent of the prison population are male, there are no prisoners aged under 15 and relatively few are over 60. 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).

Figure 2: Annual Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for prison population

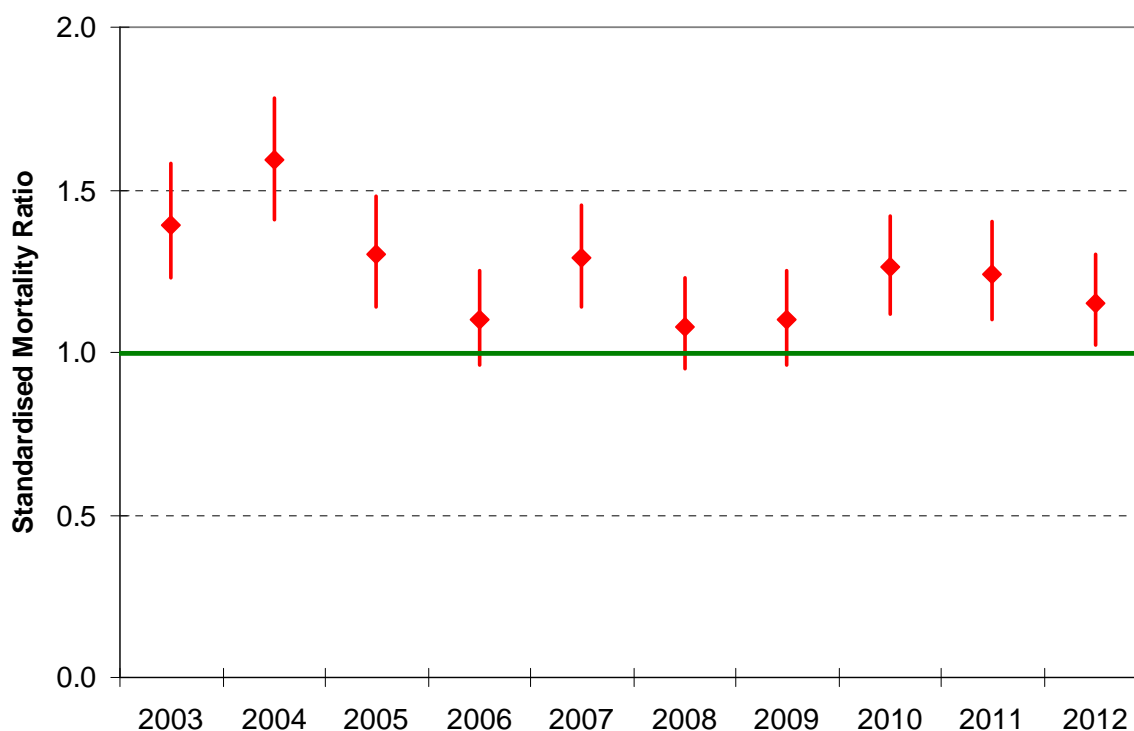


Figure 2 is based on annual data and shows the Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for the prison population and its 95 per cent confidence interval. It compares overall deaths with those of the general population of England and Wales taking into account differences in age and gender. If the minimum of the SMR confidence level of the SMR is above one, then this indicates that the mortality rate of the prison population is significantly higher than that of the

general population. In seven out of the last ten years, prison mortality has been significantly higher than that of the general population.

The chart is updated annually on a calendar year basis when the underlying data become available.

2 Self-harm

- Overall, self-harm in prison custody falls year-on-year but with differing trends for males and females;
- **22,687 recorded incidents** in 2012/13, compared with 24,253 in the previous year – a fall of six per cent (table 3);
- **264 incidents per 1,000 prisoners** in 2012/13, down from 280 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2011/12 (a fall of six per cent);
- **6,772 recorded individuals** – down three per cent on 2011/12.
- On average, **3.4 self-harm incidents per prisoner** who self-harms.

Self-harm in prison custody is defined as, “any act where a prisoner deliberately harms themselves irrespective of the method, intent or severity of any injury.” Those who self-harm often do so covertly. In the community, such self-harm will often go undetected. In prisons, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted although there will still be incidents that are not detected.

Annual statistics suggest the key factors determining the risk of self-harm in custody are:

- Age: Younger prisoners are more likely to self-harm than older prisoners¹⁰;
- Time in custody: A disproportionate amount of self-harm occurs in the early stages of custody¹¹.

Table 3: Self-harm in Custody Summary Statistics, England and Wales

	12 months to								
	-Mar 05	-Mar 06	-Mar 07	-Mar 08	-Mar 09	-Mar 10	-Mar 11	-Mar 12	-Mar 13
SELF-HARM									
Self-harm incidents	20,448	23,964	23,636	22,462	25,847	24,964	26,285	24,253	22,687
Males	9,849	10,639	12,357	11,309	12,686	13,780	14,769	16,202	16,370
Females	10,599	13,325	11,279	11,153	13,161	11,184	11,516	8,051	6,317
Self-harm individuals¹	5,475	5,910	6,292	6,283	6,667	7,218	6,786	6,992	6,772
Males	4,100	4,392	4,844	4,811	5,165	5,635	5,478	5,728	5,694
Females	1,375	1,518	1,448	1,472	1,502	1,583	1,308	1,264	1,078
Self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners	274	314	299	278	312	297	310	280	264
Males	140	148	166	148	162	173	183	196	200
Females	2,407	2,973	2,544	2,536	3,006	2,624	2,723	1,924	1,547
Self-harm individuals per 1,000 prisoners¹	73	77	80	78	80	86	80	81	79
Males	58	61	65	63	66	71	68	69	70
Females	312	339	327	335	343	371	309	302	264
Self-harm incidents per individual	3.7	4.1	3.8	3.6	3.9	3.5	3.9	3.5	3.4
Males	2.4	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.9
Females	7.7	8.8	7.8	7.6	8.8	7.1	8.8	6.4	5.9
Hospital Attendances	1,082	1,266	1,202	1,299	1,325	1,293	1,404	1,544	1,546
Males	856	1,023	998	1,115	1,119	1,115	1,245	1,382	1,397
Females	226	243	204	184	206	178	159	162	149

In the last two years self-harm has fallen to 22,687 incidents in 2012/13, driven by a large fall in the level of female of self-harm. This has reversed the increasing trend over the last

¹⁰ Safety in Custody: Self-harm Table 2.4

¹¹ Safety in Custody: Self-harm Table 2.5 www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody

decade, with the number of self-harm incidents reaching a peak in 2009/10 of over 26,000 incidents.

The changes in the overall level of self-harm have been driven by changes in the female prison population who account for a disproportionate amount of self-harm incidents within prisons. This masks a differing trend among male prisoners and as self-harm in custody differs between males and females it is better to consider the populations separately.

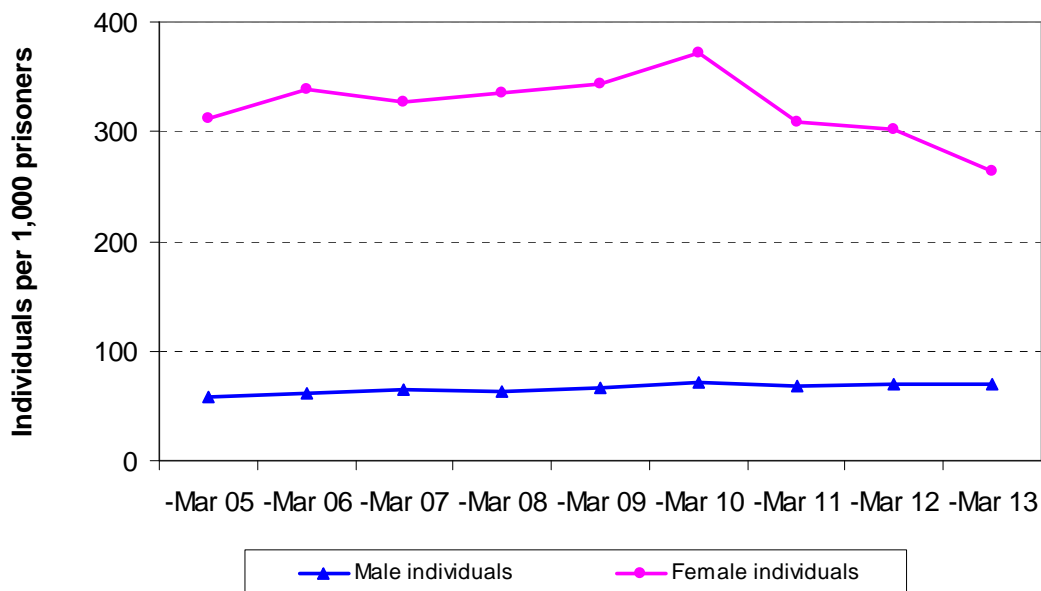
2.1 Male self-harm

- The rate of male self-harm continues to rise and has increased to 200 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2012/13 compared with 196 in 2011/12.
- Over the last 10 years male self-harm rates have increased by 43 per cent from 140 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2003/04
- 70 male prisoners per 1,000 prisoners are known to have self-harmed in 2012/13 – up from 69 male prisoners per 1,000 a year earlier.
- Of those male prisoners who self-harm, they commit, on average, 2.9 self-harm incidents in 2012/13, up from 2.8 incidents in 2011/12

The change in the prison population over time drives the number of self-harm incidents so to determine long term trends it is better to consider the changes in rates of self-harm over time.

The rate of male self-harm increased from 58 males per 1,000 prisoners to 71 males per 1,000 prisoners between 2004/05 and 2009/10. Since then the rate of increase has largely levelled off with only small year-on-year increases.

Figure 3: Self-harming individuals per 1,000 prisoners by gender, England and Wales



However, although the rate of individuals self-harming has levelled off over the last four years, the average number of self-harming acts those males commit on average has

increased. Prior to 2010/11 male prisoners committed 2.4 self-harm incidents on average. Over the last three years that has increased to 2.9 incidents per male on average. The reasons for this are currently unclear.

2.2 Female self-harm

- With 6,317 incidents in the last year female self-harm has fallen by 22 per cent in the last year (around 8,000 incidents in 11/12) and 45 per cent in the last two years (around 11,500 incidents in 2010/11);
- The rate of female self-harm has fallen to 264 females per 1,000 prisoners from 302 in 11/12;
- Female prisoners who self-harm, committed, on average, 5.9 self-harm incidents in 12/13, down from 6.4 incidents in 11/12

In contrast to the trends of self-harm in male prisoners, all measures of self-harm among female prisoners continue to fall. This can be partly attributed to a decreasing female prison population but is largely due to a reduction in the number of females who repetitively self-harm.

Figure 3 shows that the rate of self-harm among female prisoners has fallen over the last three years. Despite these large falls in female self-harm over recent years females still account for a disproportionate amount of self-harm in prison custody. In 2012/13 they accounted for:

- 28 per cent of incidents but only 5 per cent of the prison population.
- The rate of females self-harming, at 264 females per 1,000 prisoners, is significantly higher than the 70 males per 1,000 prisoners who self-harm.

In 2012, for the first time since the current recording system for self-harm started in 2003, there were more male prisoners than female prisoners who had self-harmed 20 times or more.

3 Assaults

- **14,052 assault incidents in 2012/13**, down from 15,577 incidents in the previous year (a fall of ten per cent);
- The **rate of assaults, at 164 incidents per 1,000 prisoners**, is the lowest since 2003/04;
- **2,957 assaults on staff in 2012/13**, down from 3,157 incidents in 2011/12 (a fall of six per cent);
- The **rate of assaults on staff, at 34 incidents per 1,000 prisoners**, is amongst the lowest since 2000.

Assaults in prison custody cover a wide range of violent incidents including fights between prisoners. NOMS does not use the Home Office counting rule definitions of Actual Bodily Harm (ABH), Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH), affray etc. and figures cannot be compared directly.

Assaults are dominated by what happens in the male prison estate which accounts for 95 per cent of the prison population.

The key population factors determining the risk of involvement in assaults are:

- Age: Younger prisoners are more likely to assault and be victims than older prisoners;¹²
- Time in custody: After the initial induction period, a disproportionate amount of assaults occurs in the early stages of custody.¹³

Table 4: Assault incidents Summary Statistics, England and Wales

	12 months ending									
	-Mar 04	-Mar 05	-Mar 06	-Mar 07	-Mar 08	-Mar 09	-Mar 10	-Mar 11	-Mar 12	-Mar 13
ASSAULTS										
Assault incidents	12,052	13,025	14,832	14,780	15,644	15,775	14,916	14,473	15,577	14,052
Male establishments	11,205	12,163	13,683	13,673	14,625	14,927	14,281	13,785	14,888	13,542
Female establishments	847	862	1,149	1,107	1,019	848	635	688	689	510
Assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners	164	174	194	187	193	190	178	170	180	164
Male establishments	162	173	190	183	191	190	179	171	181	166
Female establishments	190	196	256	250	232	194	149	163	165	125
Serious assaults	1,219	1,219	1,402	1,448	1,481	1,443	1,367	1,358	1,332	1,297
Male establishments	1,150	1,137	1,337	1,390	1,439	1,395	1,334	1,312	1,287	1,271
Female establishments	69	82	65	58	42	48	33	46	45	26
Assaults on Staff	3,003	3,280	3,582	3,393	3,247	3,191	3,027	2,857	3,157	2,957
Male establishments	2,686	2,966	3,110	2,917	2,820	2,868	2,813	2,618	2,933	2,780
Female establishments	317	314	472	476	427	323	214	239	224	177
Assault on staff per 1,000 prisoners	41	44	47	43	40	39	36	34	36	34
Male establishments	39	42	43	39	37	37	35	32	36	34
Female establishments	71	71	105	107	97	74	50	57	54	43
Serious assaults on staff	288	271	290	284	278	282	289	293	260	267
Male establishments	267	244	267	263	260	263	276	273	244	258
Female establishments	21	27	23	21	18	19	13	20	16	9

Gender refers to the type of establishment. Although predominantly the gender of the people involved in the assault will be the same as the type of establishment, in a small number of cases - typically assaults on staff - the gender may be different to the establishment type.

¹² Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.3

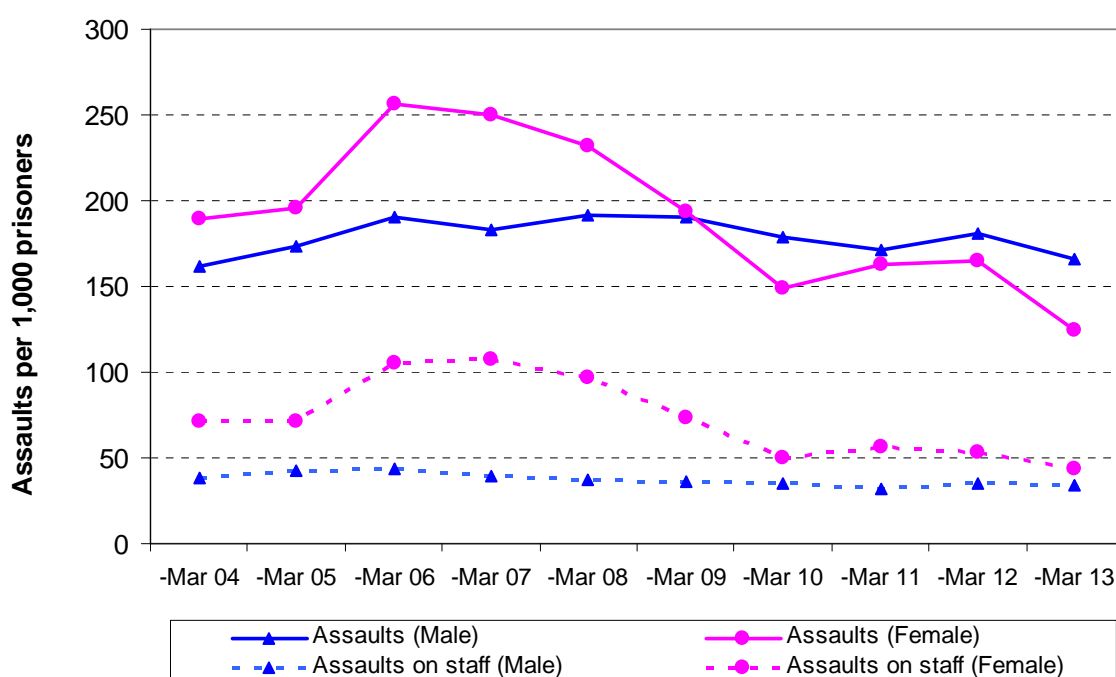
¹³ Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.4 www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody

3.1 All Assaults

The number of assaults in prison custody, and the assault rate per 1,000 prisoners, have both fallen sharply over the last year. This reverses the rise in 2011/12 and returns to a falling trend over the medium term.

Assault incidents reached a peak in 2008/09 with 15,775 incidents and have been on a downward trend since then, albeit with a departure from this trend in 2011/12. A major event during 2011/12 was the public disorder in August 2011 which resulted in a higher prison population. Although there is some evidence to suggest that at selected prisons the number of assaults increased as a result, it does not fully account for the large increase.

Figure 4: Total assaults and assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners by gender, England and Wales



With 95 per cent of assaults occurring in the male estate the rate of assaults overall is heavily biased towards the rate of assaults in the male estate. The rate of assaults has fallen in recent years from a high of 193 in 2007/08 to 164 in 2012/13. This is the lowest rate since 2003/04 when it was also 164 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.

In the female estate the rate of assaults has shown much more variation. It rose sharply in 2005/06 to 256 incidents per 1,000 prisoners before falling back to 150 incidents per 1,000 prisoners by 2009/10. After a small increase in recent years, there has been a relatively large fall in 2012/13 to 125 incidents per 1,000 prisoners (see figure 4), halving the rate of assaults in female establishments in the last seven years.

- Serious assaults reached a peak in 2007/08 (1,481 incidents) and have been falling steadily since.
- With 1,297 serious assaults in 2012/13, the number of serious assault incidents is now at its lowest level since 2004/05.

3.2 Assaults on staff

In 2012/13 there were **2,957 assaults on staff** – down 200 (six per cent) on the previous year. In 2003/04 they accounted for around one-in-four assault incidents but for the last six years this has reduced to around one-in-five assault incidents in prison custody.

As with the overall rate, the rates of incidents involving assaults on staff are dominated by what happens in the male prison estate. Rates in the male prison estate have been between 32 and 36 incidents per 1,000 prisoners for the last four years, while over the same period the figure for the female estate has been between 57 and 43 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. Assault rates in the female prison estate show a stronger downward trend over the longer term.

References

HM Inspectorate of Prisons

- Prison and YOI inspections (www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi)

Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) on Deaths in Custody

- Deaths in state custody (iapdeathsincustody.independent.gov.uk/)

Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)

- Deaths in Custody Study (www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/deathscustodystudy.aspx)
- Deaths following police contact (www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/reports_polcustody.aspx)

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO)

- Fatal Incident reports (www.ppo.gov.uk/investigating-fatal-accidents.html)
- Annual reports (www.ppo.gov.uk/annual-reports.html)

World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Diseases (ICD)

- ICD 10 (apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2010/en)

Ministry of Justice/NOMS

- Prison and Probation Statistics (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/series/prisons-and-probation-statistics)
- Prison Service Orders (www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psos)
- Prison Service Instructions (www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis)

List of tables and figures

This is a list of quarterly and annual Safety in Custody Statistics tables and figures. Tables 1 to 4 and figures 1 to 4 are included in this publication. The remaining tables are available from the website¹⁴. All tables refer to incidents in prison custody in England and Wales.

	Table description	Period
	Safety in Custody – Summary tables	
Table 1	Safety in custody summary statistics	Apr 03 - Mar 13
Table 2	Deaths in custody summary statistics	Apr 03 - Mar 13
Table 3	Self-harm summary statistics	Apr 04 – Mar 13
Table 4	Assaults summary statistics	Apr 03 - Mar 13
Table 5	Deaths in prison custody by apparent cause by quarter	Jan 00 – Mar 13
Table 6	Self-harm incidents by quarter	Oct 05 – Mar 13
Table 7	Assault incidents by quarter	Jan 03 – Mar 13
	Safety in Custody – Figures	
Figure 1	Deaths per 1,000 prisoners by apparent cause	Apr 03 – Mar 13
Figure 2	Annual Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for prison population	2002 - 2012
Figure 3	Self-harm individuals per 1,000 prisoners	Apr 04 – Mar 13
Figure 4	Assaults per 1,000 prisoners – total and on staff	Apr 03 – Mar 13
	Deaths tables	
Table 1.1	Annual deaths in prison custody and rates by apparent cause	1978 - 2012
Table 1.2	Annual deaths in prison custody by apparent cause and gender	1978 - 2012
Table 1.3	Annual deaths in prison custody by apparent cause and age band	1978 - 2012
Table 1.4	Annual deaths arising from incidents in prison custody but occurring elsewhere	1999 - 2012
Table 1.5	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by gender	1978 - 2012
Table 1.6	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by age	1978 - 2012
Table 1.7	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by time in custody and current prison	1999 - 2012
Table 1.8	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by type of custody	1999 - 2012
Table 1.9	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by ethnicity	1999 - 2012
Table 1.10	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by nationality type	1999 - 2012
Table 1.11	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by sentence type	1999 - 2012
Table 1.12	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by method	1999 - 2012
Table 1.13	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody: Ligatures used in hanging/self-strangulation	1999 - 2012
Table 1.14	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody: Ligation points used in fatal hangings	1999 - 2012
Table 1.15	Annual natural cause deaths in prison custody by age group	2001 - 2012
Table 1.16	Annual self-inflicted deaths by establishment	1978 - 2012
Table 1.17	Annual natural cause deaths by establishment	1978 - 2012
Table 1.18	Annual deaths by establishment	1978 - 2012
Table 1.19	Dates of opening/closing and major re-roles of prisons	2001 - 2012

¹⁴ Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody>

Self-harm tables

Table 2.1	Annual self-harm summary	2004 - 2012
Table 2.2	Annual self-harm incidents by method	2004 - 2012
Table 2.3	Annual self-harm incidents by age group	2004 - 2012
Table 2.4	Annual individuals self-harming by age group	2004 - 2012
Table 2.5	Annual self-harm incidents by time in current prison	2004 - 2012
Table 2.6	Annual self-harm incidents by type of custody	2004 - 2012
Table 2.7	Annual self-harm incidents by ethnicity	2004 - 2012
Table 2.8	Annual self-harm incidents by nationality type	2004 - 2012
Table 2.9	Individuals self-harming by nationality type	2004 - 2012
Table 2.10	Annual self-harm incidents by location	2004 - 2012
Table 2.11	Annual self-harm incidents by type of hospital attendances	2004 - 2012
Table 2.12	Annual self-harm frequency	2004 - 2012
Table 2.13	Annual self-harm incidents by establishment	2004 - 2012
Table 2.14	Dates of prisons opening/closing and major re-roles of prisons	2001 - 2012

Assaults tables

Table 3.1	Annual prison assault summary statistics	2002 - 2012
Table 3.2	Annual assault incidents and prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by gender	2000 - 2012
Table 3.3	Annual assault incidents and prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by age	2000 - 2012
Table 3.4	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by time in current prison	2000 - 2012
Table 3.5	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by type of custody	2004 - 2012
Table 3.6	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by ethnicity	2000 - 2012
Table 3.7	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by nationality type	2000 - 2012
Table 3.8	Annual assault incidents by assailant / victim type	2000 - 2012
Table 3.9	Annual sexual assault incidents by assailant / victim type	2000 - 2012
Table 3.10	Annual assault incidents involving weapons	2000 - 2012
Table 3.11	Annual assaults on staff	2000 - 2012
Table 3.12	Annual assault incidents by type of injury	2000 - 2012
Table 3.13	Annual assault related hospital attendances / treatment for concussion/internal injuries	2000 - 2012
Table 3.14	Annual assaults and prisoner on prisoner assaults by establishment	2000 - 2012
Table 3.15	Annual assaults on staff and on prison officers by establishment	2000 - 2012
Table 3.16	Dates of prisons opening/closing and major re-roles of prisons	2001 - 2012

Data Sources and Data Quality

The data presented in this publication are drawn from the NOMS Deaths in Custody Database and NOMS Incident Reporting System.

Information relating to deaths in prison custody is closely scrutinised and the data is considered to be of high quality. Classifications of deaths however, are not finalised until after inquest. As inquests may not be concluded until some years after a death, tables dependent on classifications should be treated as provisional. Changes do not generally affect reported trends.

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 practicable, they should be regarded as approximate and not necessarily accurate to the last whole number shown in the tables. Where figures in the tables have been rounded to the nearest whole number, the rounded components do not always add to the totals, which are calculated and rounded independently.

Self-harm and assault incidents in custody are more likely to be detected and counted than those occurring in the community. However, some incidents in custody will remain undetected and therefore go unreported.

For a more detailed discussion about data sources and data quality see the 'Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics'¹⁵

Explanatory notes

The statistics in this bulletin relate to deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody in England and Wales to the period ending March 2013.

Symbols and conventions

The following symbols have been used throughout the tables in this bulletin:

..	not available
0	nil or less than half the final digit shown
-	not applicable
(p)	Provisional data
(r)	Revised data

¹⁵ Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics which can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody

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General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from
www.statistics.gov.uk

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

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice

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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