



Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to December 2019 Assaults and Self-harm to September 2019

Main Points

<p>Number of deaths decreased from last year</p>		<p>In the 12 months to December 2019, there were 300 deaths in prison custody, a decrease of 8% from 325 deaths the previous 12 months. Of these, 84 deaths were self-inflicted, a 9% decrease from the 92 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months.</p>
<p>Self-harm incidents continue to rise The number of individuals self-harming increased</p>		<p>Self-harm incidents reached a record high of 61,461 incidents in the 12 months to September 2019, up 16% from the previous 12 months. In the most recent quarter there were 16,329 self-harm incidents, the same level as the previous quarter.</p> <p>The number of individuals self-harming increased by 2% in the 12 months to September 2019, to 12,740, and the number of self-harm incidents per individual increased by 14% from 4.2 to 4.8.</p>
<p>Assaults decreased from the previous 12-month period</p>		<p>There were 33,222 assault incidents in the 12 months to September 2019, down 2% from the 12 months to September 2018. In the most recent quarter, assaults decreased by 2% to 8,221 incidents.</p>
<p>Assaults on staff have stayed at the same level</p>		<p>There were 10,059 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2019, which is at the same level as the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff decreased by 6% to 2,462 incidents.</p>
<p>The number of serious assaults on staff decreased 12% of all assault incidents were serious</p>		<p>In the 12 months to September 2019, there were 3,895 serious assault incidents, a decrease of 1% from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 1% to 2,988 in the 12 months to September 2019. Similarly, serious assaults on staff decreased by 3% to 966.</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. 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-statistics¹

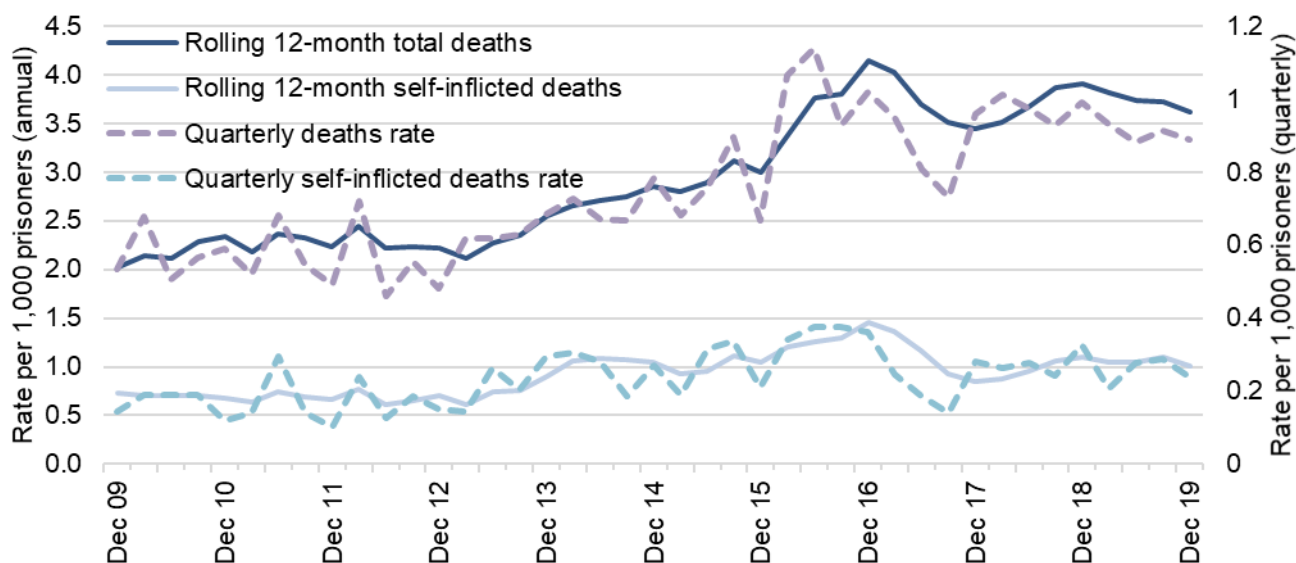
¹ Data on deaths is published three months ahead of self-harm and assaults. Therefore, the deaths annual publication and tables are published alongside the year ending September Safety in Custody publication.

1 Deaths: 12 months ending December 2019

Number of deaths continues to fall

In the 12 months to December 2019, there were 300 deaths in prison custody, a decrease of 8% from 325 deaths the previous 12 months. Of these, 84 deaths were self-inflicted, a decrease of 9% from 92 the previous 12 months.

Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending December 2009 to 12 months ending December 2019, with quarterly rates



In the 12 months to December 2019, there were 300 deaths in prison custody (a rate of 3.6 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease from 325 deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 3.9 per 1,000 prisoners). The most recent quarter saw the number of deaths decrease to 74, down from 76 in the three months to September 2019. Quarterly death figures should be considered with caution due to greater volatility and the potential for seasonal effects. Long-term trends and more detail are presented in annual tables².

There were 84 apparent self-inflicted deaths in the 12 months to December 2019 (a rate of 1.0 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease from 92 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months. Also, there were 165 deaths due to natural causes (a rate of 2.0 per 1,000 prisoners), a 3% decrease from 170 deaths the previous 12 months.

There were 48 deaths recorded as 'Other' in the 12 months to December 2019, 41 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.

² 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 year ending September 2019 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/787136/safety-in-custody-Deaths-dec-19.ods

Self-harm: 12 months to September 2019

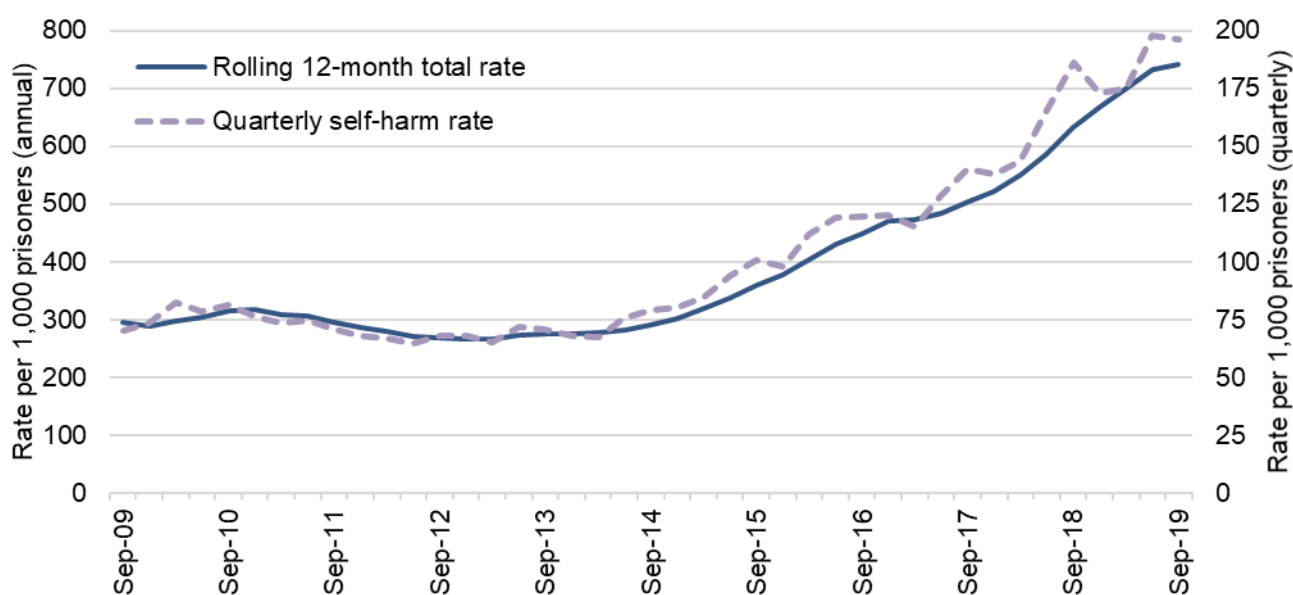
Self-harm incidents continue to rise.

In the 12 months to September 2019, there were 61,461 incidents, up 16% from the previous 12 months, and a new record high. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents were 16,329 which is at the same level as the previous quarter.

The number of individuals self-harming increased.

The number of individuals self-harming increased by 2% in the 12 months to September 2019, to 12,740, and the number of self-harm incidents per individual increased by 14% from 4.2 to 4.8.

Figure 2: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending September 2009 to 12 months ending September 2019, with quarterly rates

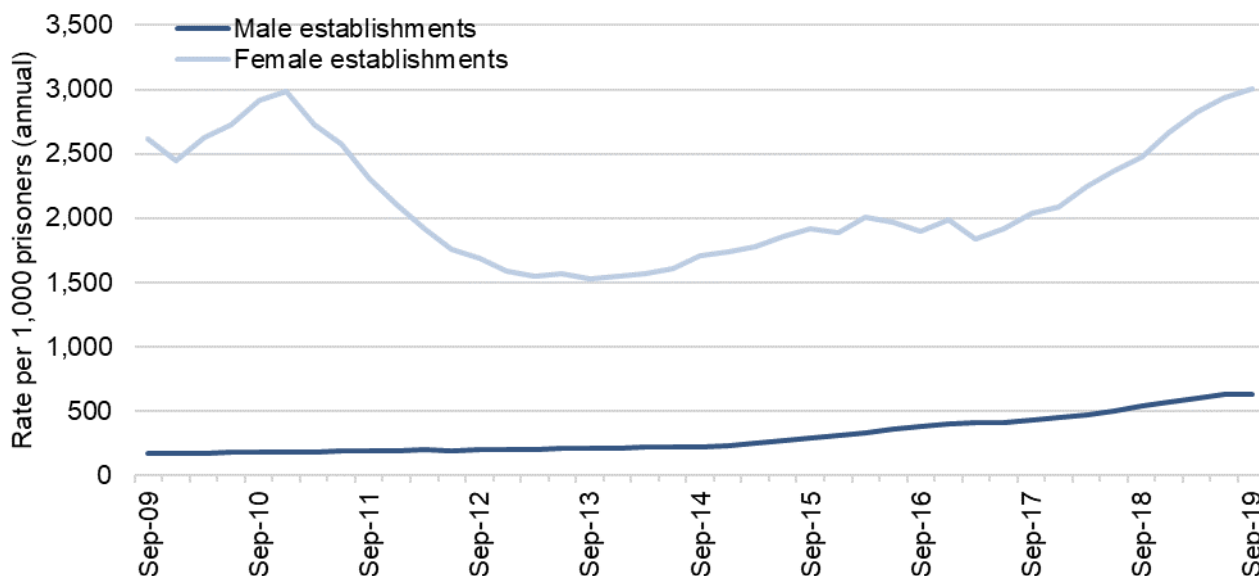


In the 12 months to September 2019, there were 61,461 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 742 per 1,000 prisoners), up 16% from the previous 12 months. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to September 2019 stayed at the same level as the previous quarter (going from 16,342 to 16,329 incidents).

The number of individuals self-harming increased by 2% in the latest 12 months, to the highest recorded figure of 12,740 individuals (a rate of 154 individuals per 1,000 prisoners). The number of incidents per self-harming individual increased by 14%, from 4.2 in the previous 12 months to 4.8 in the latest 12 months, although a small number of prolific self-harmers have a disproportionate impact on this figure. The majority of those who self-harm in prison do so only once. Additional detail on this can be found in the annual self-harm tables published in April 2019.

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 7% to 3,416 in the 12 months to September 2019, however it decreased by 7% in the latest quarter (893 incidents). The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance decreased in the previous 12 months, from 6.0% to 5.6%.

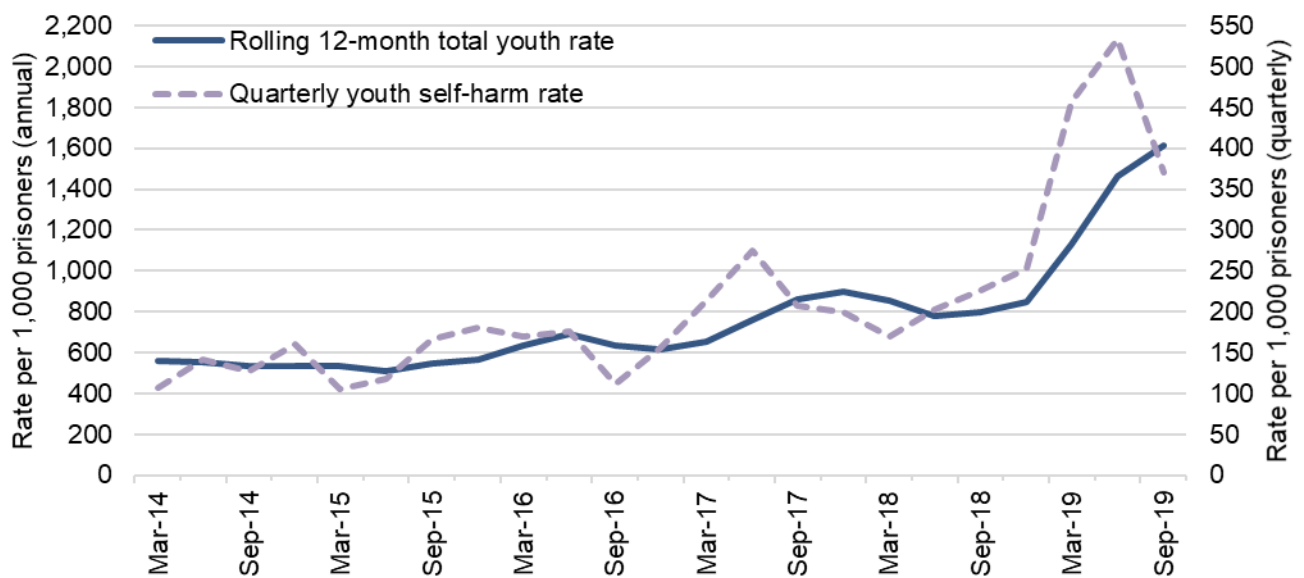
Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2009 to 12 months ending September 2019



Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender, with a rate of 633 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in male establishments in the 12 months to September 2019 (with incidents up 15% from the previous 12 months) compared to a rate of 3,007 per 1,000 prisoners in female establishments (an increase of 18% in the number of incidents from the previous 12 months). In the 12 months to September 2019, the number of self-harm incidents per self-harming male increased from 3.9 in the previous 12 months to 4.3, while self-harm prolificacy among females increased from 7.8 in the previous 12 months to 9.4 incidents per self-harming individual.

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance have increased in male establishments by 6%, from 2,983 in the 12 months to September 2018 to 3,169 in the 12 months to September 2019, and increased by 19% to 247 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 almost three times higher in male establishments (6.3% compared to 2.2% 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 September 2019, with quarterly rates



In youth estate³, there was an 93% increase in self-harm incidents in the 12 months to September 2019 compared to the previous 12 months (from 551 in the previous 12 months to 1,062 in the most recent 12 months) and an 103% increase in the self-harm rate per 1,000 prisoners in the 12 months to September 2019 compared to the previous 12 months (from 797 in the previous 12 months to 1,614 in the most recent 12 months).

In the latest quarter there were 150 self-harm incidents, a 57% decrease from 350 incidents in the previous quarter, and a 4% decrease from the same quarter the previous year (July to September 2018).

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance have increased in youth estates from 2.5% in the previous 12 months to 4.8% in the 12 months to September 2019.

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

2 Assaults: 12 months to September 2019

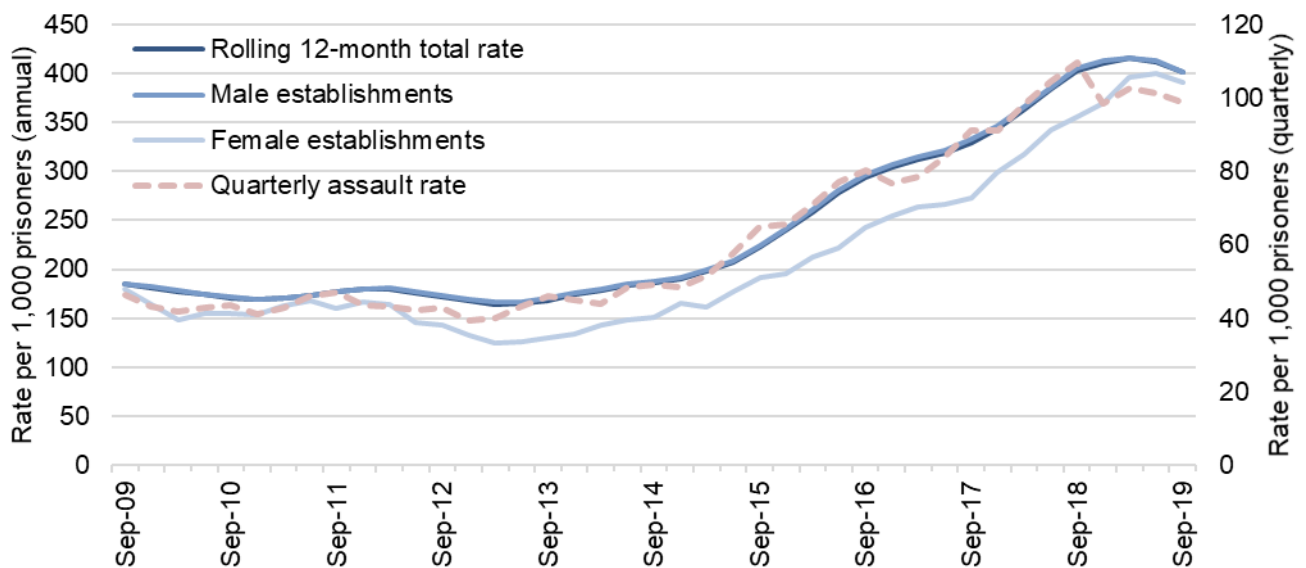
Assaults and serious assaults decreased from the previous 12-month period.

In the 12 months to September 2019, there were 33,222 assault incidents, a 2% decrease from the previous 12 months. Assaults decreased by 2% in the latest quarter to 8,221 incidents.

Assaults on staff stay at the same level as the previous 12-month period.

There were 10,059 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2019, the same as the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff decreased by 6% to 2,462 incidents.

Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2009 to 12 months ending September 2019, with quarterly rates

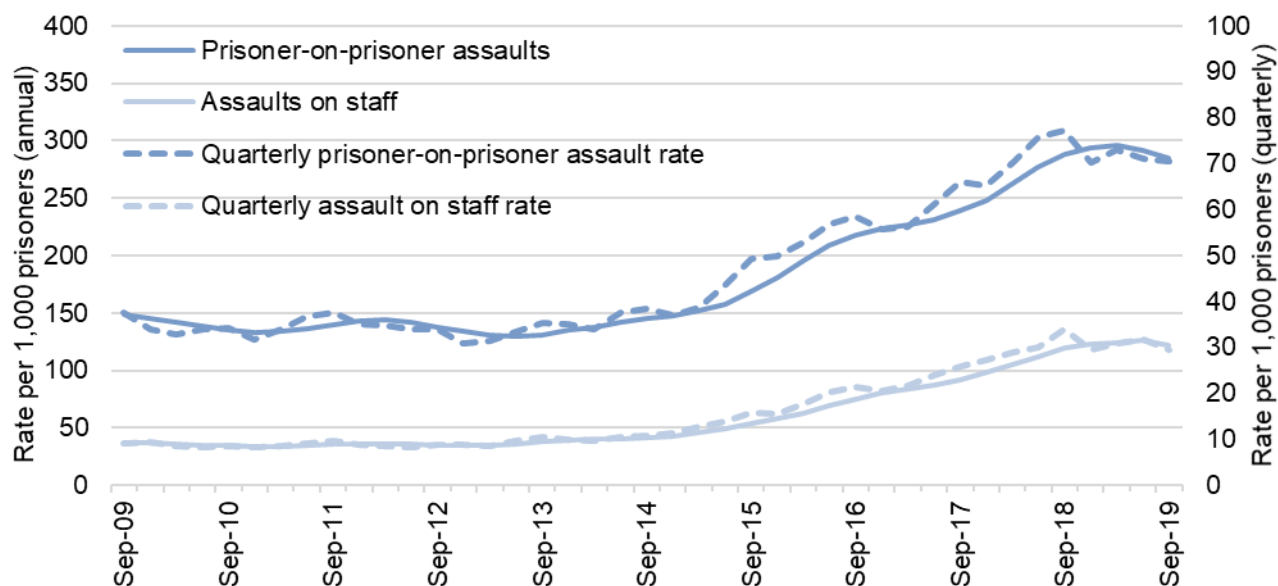


In the 12 months to September 2019, assault incidents decreased by 2% to 33,222, a rate of 401 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. In the latest quarter, there were 8,221 assaults, decrease of 2% from the previous quarter. The quarterly figure reached a peak of 9,111 in the July to September 2018 quarter.

The number of incidents in male establishments decreased by 2% from 32,442 to 31,732 in the 12 months to September 2019. The number of incidents in female establishments increased by 7% from 1,387 to 1,490 incidents in the same period.

In the latest quarter, the number of assaults in male establishments decreased by 1% to 7,892, and the number of assaults in female establishments decreased by 7% to 329. Assault rates were higher in male establishments (402 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) than female establishments (391 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 September 2009 to 12 months ending September 2019, with quarterly rates



There were 23,592 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults⁴ in the 12 months to September 2019 (a rate of 285 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease of 3%. The latest quarter prisoner-on-prisoner assaults stayed at the same level as the previous quarter (slightly increased from 5,862 to 5,866 incidents).

There were 10,059 assaults on staff⁵ in the 12 months to September 2019 (a rate of 121 per 1,000 prisoners), which is at the same level as the previous 12 months that was the highest level in the time series. In the latest quarter there was a 6% decrease in assaults on staff (to 2,462 incidents), remaining lower than the peak in the July to September 2018 quarter (2,827 incidents).

The proportion of assaults on staff remained unchanged at 30% of all incidents in the 12 months to September 2019 from the previous 12 months. However, this was the first time since 2012 where the percentage was not higher from the previous 12 months.

In male establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 3% to 22,717 incidents (287 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners), and assaults on staff decreased by 2% to 9,433 incidents (119 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2019 compared to the previous 12 months.

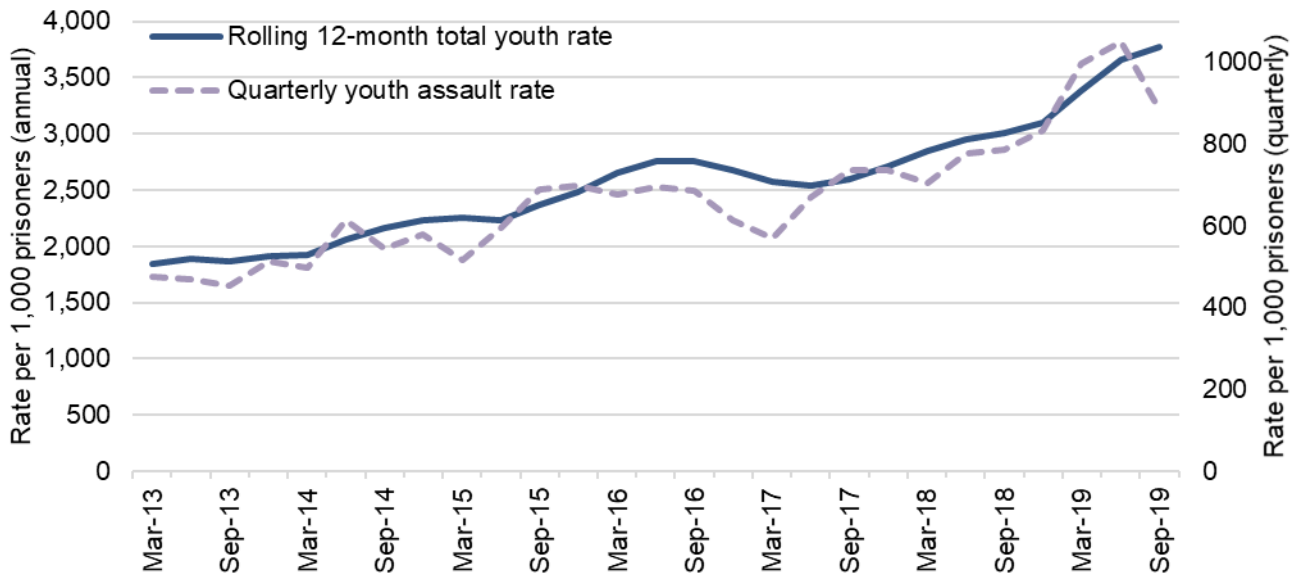
In female establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 2% to 875 incidents (230 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners), and assaults on staff increased by 24% to 626 incidents (164 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2019 compared to the previous 12 months.

The proportion of assaults on staff in female establishments (42%) was higher than the proportion in male establishments (30%) in the 12 months to September 2019. 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 September 2019 compared to the previous 12 months.

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

⁵ 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 March 2013 to 12 months ending September 2019, with quarterly rates



In youth estates, there was a 19% increase in assaults in the 12 months to September 2019 compared to the previous 12 months (from 2,076 in the previous 12 months to 2,478 in the most recent 12 months) and a 25% increase in the assault rate per 1,000 prisoners in the 12 months to September 2019 compared to the previous 12 months (from 3,004 in the previous 12 months to 3,767 in the most recent 12 months).

In the latest quarter there were 554 assault incidents, a 19% decrease from 688 incidents in the previous quarter, and a 2% increase from the same quarter the previous year (July to September 2018).

Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 8% in the youth estate, from 1,632 in the previous 12 months to 1,764 in the 12 months to September 2019. Prisoner on staff assaults increased by 52%, from 526 in the previous 12 months to 799 in the 12 months to September 2019.

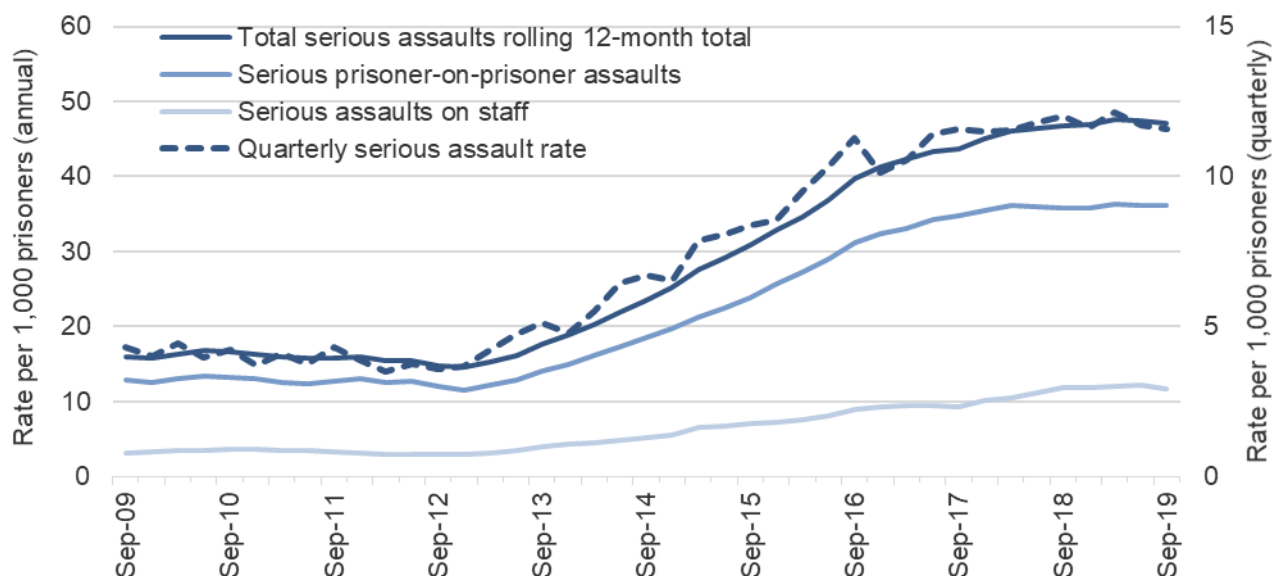
Serious assaults

Of the 33,222 assault incidents, 3,895 (12%) were serious.

In the 12 months to September 2019, there were 3,895 serious assault incidents, a 1% decrease from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 1% to 2,988 in the 12 months to September 2019, whereas serious assaults on staff decreased by 3% to 966.

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 September 2009 to 12 months ending September 2019



In the 12 months to September 2019, there were 3,895 serious assaults (a rate of 47 per 1,000 prisoners), a 1% decrease from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 964 serious assaults, which is at the same level as the previous quarter. In the latest 12 months, 12% of assaults were serious assaults, the same percentage as the previous 12 months.

There were 2,988 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 36 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2019, a decrease of 1% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, the number of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 6% (to 757 incidents).

There were 966 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 12 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2019, a decrease of 3% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, the number of serious prisoner-on-staff assaults decreased by 14% (to 224 incidents).

In youth estates, there was a 54% increase in serious assaults, from 81 in the previous 12 months to 125 in the 12 months to September 2019. There was also a 112% increase in serious assaults on staff, from 34 in the previous 12 months to 72 (the highest in the timeseries) in the 12 months to September 2019.

Key findings from deaths annual tables

Gender

The majority of deaths in custody in 2019 (97%) occurred in the male estate, a finding that has been consistent over time.

There were 8 deaths in the female estate, down from 11 in 2018, accounting for around 3% of the total deaths. As a result, the cross-tabulations of characteristics with gender (e.g. age by gender, ethnicity by gender, etc.) are not presented below because they would be statistically meaningless and potentially misleading.

Age

Prisoners aged 60 and over were more likely to die in custody compared to any other age group, with 21.90 incidents per 1,000 prisoners, with the number of deaths in this age group to be at the same level as in 2018.

Out of 112 deaths amongst this age group, 108 were classified as natural causes and 1 was self-inflicted. Those aged over 50 accounted for 87% of all natural cause deaths in 2019, and the age group with the majority of all natural cause deaths were aged 60 or over (65%).

Self-inflicted deaths remains the most frequent among those aged 30 to 39 in 2019, accounting for 36% of all incidents.

Prisoners aged 50 – 59 had the highest rate of self-inflicted deaths, at a rate of 1.51 per 1,000 prisoners, and the number of self-inflicted deaths decreased for age groups 30 and above between 2018 and 2019.

Ethnicity

The rate of self-inflicted deaths in 2019 was higher amongst White prisoners (1.23 per 1,000 prisoners) than BAME prisoners (0.45 per 1,000 prisoners)

The rate of self-inflicted deaths decreased from 1.29 in 2018 for White prisoners, and from 0.64 for BAME prisoners

Nationality

UK nationals were more likely than foreign nationals, to suffer a self-inflicted death in 2019, with rates of 1.05 and 0.77 per 1,000 prisoners, respectively.

Self-inflicted deaths among foreign nationals accounted for 8% of all self-inflicted deaths, while UK nationals accounted for 92%.

Time in custody

The first few days in custody are particularly high-risk in terms of self-inflicted deaths. In 2019, 16 (19%) of all self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days of custody, of which, 9 (56%) occurred within the first week.

The first few days in custody after moving between prisons show a similar risk. In 2019 when including prisoners who have moved, 24 (29%) self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days in the current prison, of which 13 (54%) occurred within the first week.

Sentence length and type

The largest proportion of self-inflicted deaths in 2019 were prisoners serving a determinate sentence (62%), the rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners serving a determinate sentence was 0.94.

For prisoners who were serving a determinate sentence, those who were sentenced to more than 6 months to less than 12 months had the highest rate, at 3.44 self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners.

Prisoners who were on remand (2.46 per 1,000 prisoners) had a higher rate of self-inflicted deaths than those serving life (1.03 per 1,000 prisoners), determinate sentences (0.94 per 1,000 prisoners) and indeterminate sentences (0.44 per 1,000 prisoners).

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners who were convicted unsentenced decreased from 4.70 in 2018 to 0.62 in 2019.

Offence

In 2019, 26% of self-inflicted deaths were by prisoners charged or sentenced to offences of violence against the person.

Prisoners who were serving sentences for offences of violence against the person (26%), sexual offences (19%), robbery (10%) and theft (20%) accounted for the majority (75%) of self-inflicted deaths.

Method of self-inflicted death

Hanging remains the most common method of self-inflicted death for both males and females in 2019, accounting for over 85% of all incidents.

Of the 72 self-inflicted deaths with method of hanging or self-strangulation in 2019, bedding remains the most commonly used ligature type with 72% of incidents using this. The most commonly used ligature point remains the window, accounting for 32% of all self-inflicted hanging or self-strangulation deaths in 2019, while the second highest used ligature point was bed, accounting for 19%.

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.

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