



HM Prison and Probation Service COVID-19 Experimental Statistics for staff

Data to 31 July 2020

Ministry of Justice

Published 20 August 2020

Introduction

This statistics release provides monthly data on COVID-19 amongst staff in HMPPS in England and Wales.

It provides information on:

- Deaths among all HMPPS staff where COVID-19 is the suspected cause.
- Confirmed COVID-19 cases in HMPPS staff (i.e. positive tests).
- HMPPS staff absent due to COVID-19 sickness

Tables 1 and 2 in this release cover the period from the beginning of March 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak to Friday 31 July 2020. Table 3 provides a picture of COVID-19 sickness over time as at four snapshot dates from 30 April 2020 to 31 July 2020. These are experimental statistics aimed at providing an idea of the level of COVID sickness absence, this data is currently under review and once complete we will include this COVID sickness in our core publication Average Working Days Lost reporting.

Key findings

The key findings in this release are:

- There have been **16** deaths since the start of the pandemic among HMPPS staff where COVID-19 was the suspected cause. **9** staff members were non-directly employed and **7** were directly employed. There have been no COVID-19 suspected deaths of staff since the week ending 3 May 2020.
- **1,153** HMPPS staff have tested positive for COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. Of which, **965** are directly employed staff from Prisons and Youth Custody Service. The number of new confirmed cases has increased by fewer than 90 each month since 29 May 2020.
- **208** staff were absent due to COVID-19 sickness on 31 July 2020.

Background

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 Prison 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. Publishing this data aims to bring transparency to the impact of the virus on HMPPS service users and staff.

A bulletin containing service user data related to COVID-19 has been published in the official statistics report '[HM Prison and Probation Service COVID-19 statistics](#)'. This contains data on COVID-19 suspected deaths, confirmed cases and early releases among service users.

1. Deaths

HMPPS has taken measures to limit the spread of the virus and to protect staff and service users. However, prisons and probation, like all other sectors in the England in Wales have experienced deaths due to COVID-19.

Deaths reported are those where COVID-19 is suspected to be either a contributory factor or a cause of death. In the period to 31 July 2020, there had been a total of 16 deaths among HMPPS staff suspected to be due to COVID-19. This includes 7 directly employed staff and 9 non-directly employed staff. Of the directly employed staff, 5 of these were staff from Prisons and Youth Custody Service and 2 were members of the National Probation Service. There have been no COVID-19 suspected deaths of staff since the week ending 3 May 2020. Staff members have been identified as directly employed if they have been flagged as directly employed within the dataset and the staff member worked in a prison, an Approved Premises, or was part of the National Probation Service.

These numbers are too small to make an inference regarding ethnicity disparity.

Data relating to the deaths of prison and probation officers can be found in the Office for National Statistics release, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) related deaths by occupation](#), and non-COVID related staff deaths have been previously published in the [HMPPS Workforce Statistics](#).

2. Positive cases

Since March there has been antigen [swab tests] for both prisoners and staff (or members of their households) who are symptomatic, which can confirm if they currently have COVID-19.

This data is self-reported with staff members notifying their manager of a positive test result.

In the period up to 31 July 2020, a total of 1,153 staff have tested positive for COVID-19. 188 of these positive test results were for non-directly employed staff and 965 were directly employed. In the month ending 31 July 2020 there were 27 new confirmed cases.

Staff confirmed cases were initially reported to the media using a separate data collection. These data were under-reported and so, for consistency and accuracy, data from the more detailed prisoner and staff reporting process has been used throughout table 2.

Staff members are recorded as directly employed in this table if they are included in the HQ, National Probation Service or Approved Premises data collection. Staff members recorded in the data collection from both public and private prisons are recorded as directly employed if they have been flagged as directly employed within the dataset.

3. Sickness absences

These figures refer to the total number of staff recorded as not working due to sickness absence for suspected COVID-19 on the last working day of the month. This does not necessarily reflect the number of symptomatic staff members; if a staff member was still able to work from home despite being symptomatic they would not be captured in these figures. Staff sickness is reported by the manager and hence the reliability of this data depends on this information being reported accurately.

Of the four dates published from April to July, the highest number of staff absent due to COVID-19 sickness was recorded on 30 April 2020, where 987 staff were absent. 824 of these staff were directly employed and of these 768 were staff from Prisons and Youth Custody Service. As at 31st July, there was a total of 208 staff absent due to COVID-19 sickness, a decrease of 779 cases (or 79%) since 30 April 2020. This trend reflects the broader fall in COVID cases seen in the country.

These figures include all members of staff who are not marked as working from home and where the absence category selected is '1. Sickness Absence - Respiratory System Epidemic/Pandemic'. If an invalid absence option has been assigned to a staff member then that individual has not been included in these figures. We are working to identify how many of these invalid data points should be included within the sickness absence category but this is likely to be a small number.

As in table 2, staff members are recorded as directly employed in this table if they are included in the HQ, National Probation Service or Approved Premises data collection. Staff members recorded in the data collection from both public and private prisons are recorded as directly employed if they have been flagged as directly employed within the dataset.

Data Quality

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. Much of the data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic has been done at pace, with recording practices evolving as we understand more about the requirements and conditions we are facing. In order to present the timeliest information, the data presented in this report have not been subjected to the usual standard of quality assurance associated with official statistics.

Data on ethnicity of staff for the confirmed cases and staff absences was not directly collected. Staff employee number was used to link the data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic to our internal records on ethnicity. Therefore, there may be some inaccuracies in this data as it relies on the manual input of employee number.

For transparency we are providing an ethnicity breakdown for each of the three tables. However, investigation into underlying drivers will happen once the information has been

fully assured. For example, analysis has not been conducted into whether geographical location of prisons is driving any disparities we are experiencing.

Data is not reported over the weekends, hence the last available data point in May is 29th rather than 31st. This has been used in tables 2 and 3.

The staff members recorded under 'HMPPS HQ and Area Services' in tables 2 and 3 (and hence totals) likely do not include all HQ and area staff. We are currently working to understand the size of the undercount; however, this is likely to be small, with only 10% of workforce staff being HQ and Area Services.

Contact points

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

Tel: 020 3334 3536

Email: newsdesk@justice.gov.uk

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to:

Lucy Cuppleditch

Email: statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk

General enquiries about the statistical work of the Ministry of Justice can be e-mailed to: statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from: <http://statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system>

© Crown copyright

Produced by the Ministry of Justice

Alternative formats are available on request from statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk.