



Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to June 2022 Assaults and Self-harm to March 2022

Main Points

Number of deaths decreased from the previous 12-month period



In the 12 months to June 2022, there were 288 deaths in prison custody, a **decrease** of 27% from 395 deaths the previous 12 months. Of these, 66 deaths were self-inflicted, a 20% **decrease** from the 82 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months.

In the most recent quarter there were 70 deaths, almost **unchanged** from 69 deaths in the previous quarter.

The number and rate of self-harm incidents increased in both male and female establishments from the previous 12-month period



There were 53,754 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to March 2022, **up** 4% from the previous 12 months, comprising **increases** of 3% in male establishments and 7% in female establishments.

Over the same period, the *rates* of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners increased by similar amounts taking account of the size of the prison population, which has changed relatively little over the period. They **increased** by 3% in male establishments and by 7% in female establishments.

In the most recent quarter, there were 12,253 self-harm incidents, **down** 14% on the previous quarter, comprising of an 18% **decrease** in male establishments and a 3% **increase** in female establishments.

The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased



There were 11,079 individuals who self-harmed in the 12 months to March 2022, **down** 3% from the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual **increased** from 4.5 in the 12 months to March 2021 to 4.9 in the 12 months to March 2022.

Assaults increased from the previous 12-month period



There were 20,077 assault incidents in the 12 months to March 2022, **up** 13% from the 12 months to March 2021. In the most recent quarter, assaults were **down** 11% to 4,688 incidents.

Assaults on staff increased from the previous 12-month period



There were 7,599 assaults on staff in the 12 months to March 2022, **up** 8% from the 12 months to March 2021. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff **decreased** by 12% to 1,720 incidents.

The number of serious assaults increased
10% of all assaults were serious



In the 12 months to March 2022, there were 2,086 serious assault incidents, an **increase** of 11% from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults **increased** by 14% to 1,420, and serious assaults on staff **increased** 8% to 699 in the 12 months to March 2022.

Statistician's comment

Since the period covered by the data on self-harm and assaults in this Safety in Custody Bulletin is for the 12 months to March 2022, we have reflected on the changes seen since the 12 months leading to the start of the pandemic, two years earlier, with additional commentary. We consider the 12 months to March 2020 to be pre-pandemic, although some pandemic impacts were already being seen in prisons in March 2020. This is also the first set of published Safety in Custody statistics to exclude incidents occurring within the youth estate: for further details see the *Youth estate and changes in methodology in Safety in Custody* section below.

Compared with the previous year, in the 12 months to March 2022 we have seen increases in the number of self-harm and assault incidents, and in the 12 months to June 2022 we have seen a decrease in the number of deaths including self-inflicted deaths. Despite their increases, rates of assaults and self-harm remain lower than the pre-pandemic figures for the 12 months to March 2020.

Deaths have decreased by 27% to 288 deaths in the year to June 2022. This has been driven by a decrease in the number of deaths related to Covid-19. There were 70 deaths in the latest quarter, much lower than the peak of 153 in the January to March 2021 quarter. Only 1 was suspected to be due to Covid-19, down from 8 in the previous quarter, and much lower than 60 in the January to March 2021 quarter. There were 66 self-inflicted deaths in the latest year, a decrease from 82 in the previous year and the lowest since the year to June 2013.

The rate of self-harm incidents has increased in the 12 months to March 2022, by 4%, comprising increases of 3% in male establishments and 7% in female establishments compared with the previous year (similar increases were seen in the volumes of incidents, reflecting that the average prison population was similar across 2020/21 and 2021/22, as set out in *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly*).

Reflecting on the changes seen since the 12 months to 2020 and the start of the pandemic, there have been considerable differences in trends by gender. In male establishments the rate of self-harm was 16% lower in the 12 months ending March 2022 compared with two years earlier. This was associated with an 11% decrease in the proportion of prisoners who self-harmed and a small decrease in the average number of incidents among those who self-harmed from 4.4 to 4.2. In contrast, in female establishments, the rate of self-harm incidents in the 12 months ending March 2022 was 20% higher than it was in the 12 months to March 2020. This was associated with a 3% increase in the proportion of prisoners who self-harmed and also an increase in the average number of incidents among those who self-harmed from 9.5 to 11.1.

Although the rates of assaults and serious assaults have increased in the latest 12 months to March 2022, by 13% and 12% respectively, they remain considerably lower than they were at the start of the pandemic. The rate of assaults in the latest 12 months was 28% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020, and the rate of serious assaults was 37% lower. For all assaults, this reflects that quarterly rates had been falling before the pandemic and then decreased substantially in the early stages of the pandemic.

The rate of assaults was 50% higher in female establishments than in male establishments in the 12 months to March 2022 and saw a greater increase in the latest 12 months, increasing by 35% compared to an increase of 12% male establishments. However, the proportion of assaults in female establishments that were serious was much lower at 4% compared with 11% in male establishments.

The rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults was 35% lower in the 12 months to March 2022 than it was two years earlier, and the rate of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults was 45% lower. The rate of assaults on staff had also decreased but to a lesser extent: the rate of staff assaults was 11% lower compared to two years earlier and the rate of serious assaults on staff was 18% lower.

Background

Safety in custody statistics cover deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody 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.¹ This release provides statistics on deaths of prisoners to the end of June 2022, 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 March 2022. The latest 12-month data reflects a second full year of Covid-19 restrictions being implemented within 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. During this period we have seen progression of establishments to different levels of the National Framework for managing Covid with most establishments reaching Stage 2 or 1 before the Omicron outbreak in December 2021. See Further Information at the end of this bulletin on the managing and running of prisons during the pandemic.

The total prison population has fallen since the first quarter of 2020, falling more so for certain population groups². As at 31 March 2022, the total prison population was around 3,200 or 4% smaller than at the end of March 2020. The female population has reduced by 11%, whereas the male population has reduced by 4%. However, the latest monthly prison population has increased 2% from its lowest level in April 2021.

These changes in population should be borne in mind when interpreting changes in the numbers of incidents over the past year. In the context of substantial population change, rates per 1,000 prisoners more accurately describe changes in the likelihood of incidents occurring³. Data on deaths, self-harm and assaults are routinely presented as rates of incidents per 1,000 prisoners (as well as numbers) for all prisoners and the male and female estates. Additional commentary is offered where these rates indicate different trends to the numbers of incidents.

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 technical guidance document are also available alongside this bulletin, at www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics.

Youth estate and changes in methodology in Safety in Custody

These statistics exclude incidents that occurred in the youth estate that were previously included within this publication. Readers should be aware of the '**Safety in the children and young people secure estate**' statistics bulletin which is published simultaneously to this Safety in Custody quarterly bulletin. This provides quarterly statistics on assault and self-harm incidents for children and young people in the secure estate, and is published at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/announcements/safety-in-the-youth-secure-estate-bulletin>

Historically Safety in Custody statistics for the youth estate used an age-based definition for youth incidents, whereas the 'Safety in the children and young people secure estate' statistics are based on the accommodation type. Both methodologies included all incidents occurring in

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 Safety in Custody quarterly update to September publication.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>. Quarterly population data to March 2022 is published in Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, England and Wales Quarterly.

³ The comparability over the year of other measures that are based on self-harming individuals (such as the number of incidents per self-harming individual, or the proportion of incidents requiring hospital attendance) are not affected by changes in population size.

dedicated under-18 Young Offender Institutions (even if they're aged over 17)⁴. However, Safety in Custody statistics also included all incidents in other establishments involving young people aged 15 to 17. Furthermore, 'Safety in the children and young people secure estate' statistics also include all incidents within the youth estate at Parc Young People's Unit and the under 18 part of Feltham as well as other custody settings holding under 18s previously not covered by Safety in Custody.

This is the first set of published Safety in Custody statistics to exclude self-harm and assault incidents occurring within the youth estate. **The figures in this publication exclude incidents occurring within the youth estate from April 2018 onwards for assaults, and from April 2019 onwards for self-harm.** It has not been possible to identify such incidents occurring in the youth estate before these dates and so create a longer consistent time-series. This is because figures for incidents occurring within the youth estate for assaults up to March 2018 and for self-harm up to March 2019 were collected via manual returns. This has led to a discontinuity in the time series for assaults and self-harm. The Safety in Custody time series includes deaths in the youth estate, with the last recorded death being in 2019.

Although the youth population is small relative to whole prison population, there are notably higher rates of violence and a higher rate of self-harm. The exclusion of incidents in the youth estate has therefore led to small differences in the series. The impact of the change from the old to the current methodology was presented for transparency in the summary tables and summarised in this section of the last quarterly bulletin⁵.

Quarterly self-harm and assaults rates

Quarterly rates are presented in charts and indicate variations in the rates of self-harm or assaults within the year. These quarterly rates are now also included in the quarterly self-harm and assaults tables. These rates per 1,000 prisoners are based on the number of incidents within each quarter and the average prison population at the end of each month within the quarter in which the incidents occurred.

⁴ These are Cookham Wood, Werrington and Wetherby.

⁵ Summary tables presented data for self-harm and assaults under both methodologies (from the update to March 2020) and the impact of the change was summarised in the update to December 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-december-2021>. The comparison was not made for deaths since the numbers of deaths are volatile from year to year, with one recorded death in the youth estate in 2019.

1 Deaths: 12 months ending June 2022

Number of deaths decreased from the previous 12-month period

In the 12 months to June 2022, there were 288 deaths in prison custody, a **decrease** of 27% from 395 deaths in the previous 12 months which reflects a reduction in the number of deaths related to Covid-19. There were 66 self-inflicted deaths, a **decrease** of 20% from 82 in the previous 12 months.

In the most recent quarter there were 70 deaths, compared with 69 deaths in the previous quarter.

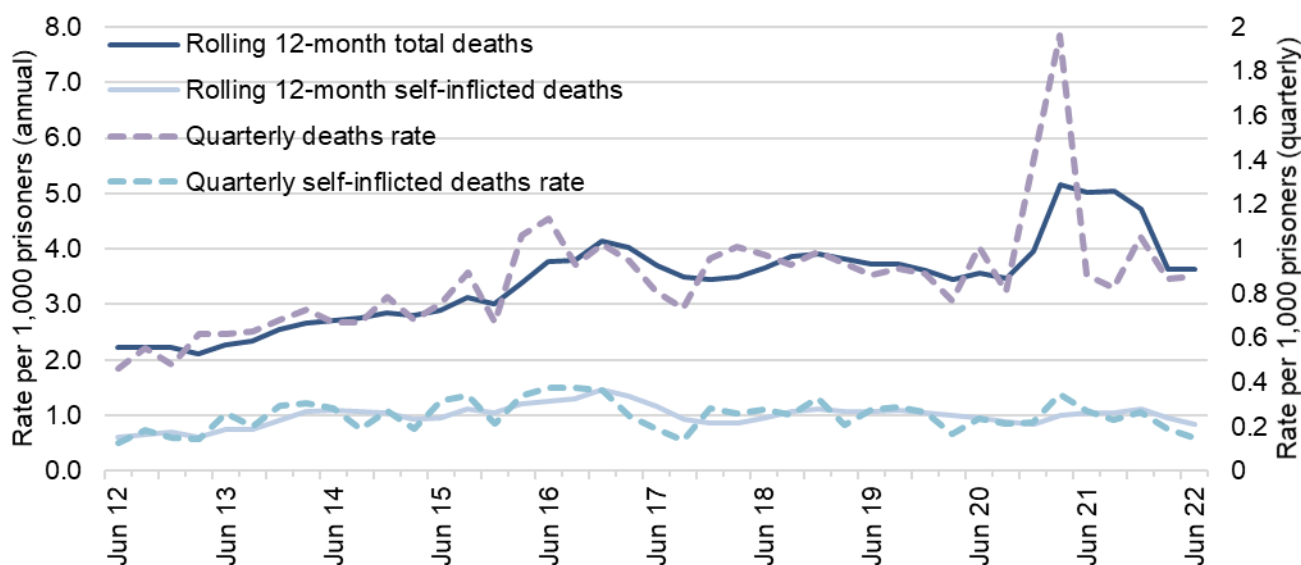
The number of deaths related to Covid-19 decreased in the most recent quarter

In the most recent quarter (April to June 2022), there was 1 death (1% of total deaths) that was suspected to be due to Covid-19, a **decrease** from 8 deaths (12% of total deaths) in the previous quarter.

In the same period, there were 8 deaths within 28 days of having a positive Covid-19 test or where there was a clinical assessment that Covid-19 was a contributory factor, a **decrease** from 15 in the previous quarter.

There were 12 self-inflicted deaths in the most recent quarter, down from 15 in the previous quarter.

Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending June 2012 to 12 months ending June 2022, with quarterly rates



In the 12 months to June 2022, there were 288 deaths in prison custody (a rate of 3.6 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease from 395 deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 5.0 per 1,000 prisoners). Long-term trends and more detail are presented in the annual tables⁶.

Over the same period, there were 189 deaths due to natural causes (a rate of 2.4 per 1,000 prisoners), a 33% decrease from 280 deaths (a rate of 3.6 per 1,000 prisoners) in the previous 12 months. This decrease of 91 in deaths due to natural causes in the 12 months to June 2022 reflects the fact that there were a large number of deaths from Covid-19 in the previous year (with further information on these below).

⁶ Data on deaths are published three months ahead of assaults and self-harm, therefore, the annual publication Deaths in prison custody for 1978 to 2021 is published in the Safety in Custody quarterly update to September 2021

There were 66 apparent self-inflicted deaths in the 12 months to June 2022 (a rate of 0.8 per 1,000 prisoners), a decrease of 20% from 82 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 1.0 per 1,000 prisoners).

There were 32 deaths recorded as 'Other' in the 12 months to June 2022, 31 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.

In the most recent quarter there were 70 deaths, compared with 69 deaths in the previous quarter. There were 12 self-inflicted deaths in the latest quarter, a decrease from 15 in the previous quarter. However, quarterly death figures should be considered with caution due to greater volatility and the potential for seasonal effects.

Deaths from Covid-19

From the start of the pandemic in March 2020 to the end of June 2022, 200 prisoners have died within 28 days of having a positive Covid-19 test or where there was a clinical assessment that Covid-19 was a contributory factor in their deaths regardless of the cause of death. Of these 200 deaths, 151 are suspected to be due to Covid-19⁷. The remaining 49 deaths are believed to be due to other causes although the prisoner had tested positive for Covid-19.

In the latest quarter (April to June 2022), a smaller proportion of deaths were related to Covid-19 than in the previous quarter. In this quarter, 11% of all deaths were of prisoners who had died within 28 days of a positive test for Covid-19, down from 22% of all deaths in the previous quarter and below a peak of 47% in January to March 2021. Deaths suspected to have been due to Covid-19 made up 1% of all deaths in the latest quarter, down from 12% in the previous quarter and below a peak of 39% in January to March 2021.

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:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hm-prison-and-probation-service-covid-19-statistics-monthly>.

⁷ Data on the number of COVID-19 deaths are occasionally revised due to updated coroners data

2 Self-harm: 12 months to March 2022

The rate of self-harm incidents increased in both the male and female estate from the previous 12-month period but the increase was greater in the female estate

There were 53,754 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to March 2022, **up** 4% from the previous 12 months (a 3% **increase** in male establishments and a 7% **increase** in female establishments). Over the same period the rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners **increased** by 3% in male establishments and by 7% in female establishments.

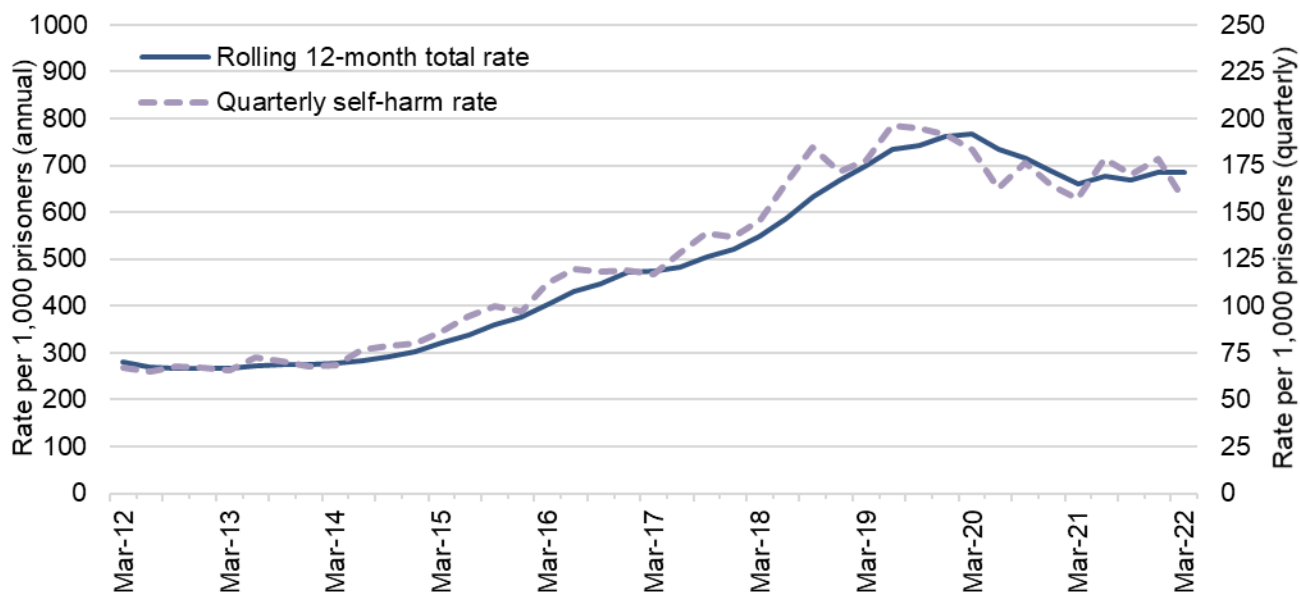
In the most recent quarter there were 12,253 self-harm incidents, **down** 14% on the previous quarter (an 18% **decrease** in male establishments and a 3% **increase** in female establishments).

The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased 3% in the latest year.

There were 11,079 individuals who self-harmed in the 12 months to March 2022, a 3% **decrease** from 11,401 in the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual **increased** from 4.5 in the 12 months to March 2021 to 4.9 in the 12 months to March 2022.

Statistics for the 12 months to March 2022 relate to the second 12-month period since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 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 March 2012 to 12 months ending March 2022, with quarterly rates



In the 12 months to March 2022, there were 53,754 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 684 per 1,000 prisoners), up 4% from 51,846 in the previous 12 months but down 15% from 63,336 in the 12 months to March 2020 pre-pandemic. The rate of incidents in the latest 12 months was 4% higher than in the previous 12 months and was 11% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020.

On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to March 2022 decreased by 14% from the previous quarter, from 14,227 to 12,253 incidents.

The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased by 3% to 11,079 in the latest 12 months (a rate of 141 individuals per 1,000 prisoners), from 11,401 in the previous 12 months, and was 15% lower than the 12,987 individuals in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The rate, or

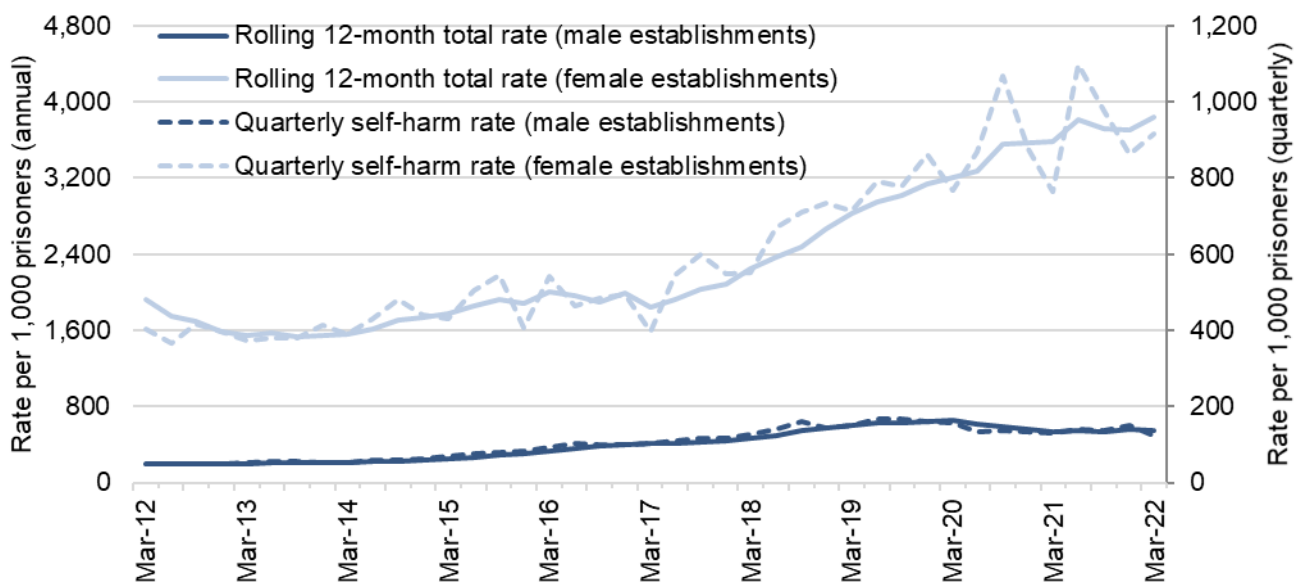
proportion, of prisoners self-harming in the latest 12 months was 3% lower than in the previous 12 months and was 10% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020. The number of incidents per self-harming individual in the latest 12 months was 4.9, having increased from 4.5 in the previous year to match the pre-pandemic peak in the 12 months to March 2020. A small number of prolific self-harmers have a disproportionate impact on this figure: just over a half (52%) of prisoners who self-harmed in 2021 did so more than once.

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 5% to 2,691 in the 12 months to March 2022 but decreased by 3% in the latest quarter to 662 incidents. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance was decreasing in the years before the pandemic and decreased further in the first year of the pandemic. It remained relatively steady in the latest 12 months (increasing slightly from 4.9% to 5.0% of incidents) and remains lower than the 5.4% of incidents in the 12 months to March 2020.

Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender. Although the number of incidents in the female estate is smaller than in the male estate, the rate of self-harm per 1,000 prisoners is much higher. In the 12 months to March 2022, there were 41,420 incidents in the male estate compared with 12,334 in the female estate. However, the rate of self-harm was seven times higher in the female estate, with 3,846 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners and 550 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners.

The number of incidents per individual who self-harmed in female establishments was more than twice that in male establishments: in the 12 months to March 2022 there were 11.1 incidents of self-harm per self-harming female compared with 4.2 incidents per self-harming male. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance was higher in male establishments (5.9%, compared to 1.9% in female establishments in the latest year).

Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending March 2012 to 12 months ending March 2022



The number and rate of self-harm incidents both increased by 3% in male establishments and by 7% in the female estate in the latest 12 months. The rate in female establishments had increased by 20% since the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. For male establishments the rate was 16% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020.

On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to March 2022 decreased by 18% in male establishments compared with the previous three months but increased by 3% in female establishments.

As Figure 3 shows, over the last decade there has been more variation in the quarterly rate of self-harm in the female estate than in the male estate. This may in part reflect the impact of more prolific self-harming in the female estate. Fluctuations in the quarterly rates of self-harm in the female estate have been wider since the start of the pandemic, with the peak in the 3rd quarter of 2020 following a period of increased regime restrictions in response to Covid.

The number of incidents per individual who self-harmed increased in the latest year for both the male and female estates. In the 12 months to March 2022, there were 11.1 incidents of self-harm per self-harming female compared with 9.7 in the previous 12 months and 9.5 in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The proportion of females self-harming in the latest 12 months was 6% lower than in the previous 12 months, at 348 individuals per 1,000 prisoners, although this remains 3% higher than in the 12 months to March 2020. In the male estate, there were 4.2 incidents per self-harming individual compared with 3.9 in the previous 12 months, but this is still lower than the 4.4 incidents per individuals in the 12 months to March 2020. Over the same period, the proportion of prisoners self-harming in male establishments decreased by 3%, to 132 individuals per 1,000 prisoners, and this remains 11% lower than in the 12 months to 2020.

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased in male establishments by 10%, to 2,456 in the 12 months to March 2022. The proportion of incidents in the male estate requiring hospital attendance was 5.9% in the 12 months to March 2022, up from 5.5% in the previous 12 months but at a similar level to the 12 months to March 2020 (6.0%). In the female estate 235 self-harm incidents required hospital attendance, a 29% decrease from the previous year. The proportion of incidents in the female estate requiring hospital attendance was 1.9% in the 12 months to March 2022, down from 2.9% in the previous 12 months and 2.4% in the 12 months to March 2020.

3 Assaults: 12 months to March 2022

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

In the 12 months to March 2022, there were 20,077 assault incidents, a 13% **increase** from the previous 12 months. Of these 2,086 were serious assaults, **up** 11%. Rates of assault and serious assault per 1,000 prisoners both **increased** 13% in the latest 12 months.

Assaults **decreased** 11% in the latest quarter to 4,688 incidents while the number of serious assaults **decreased** by 6% to 516 incidents.

The rate of assault per 1,000 prisoners was higher in female than male establishments.

The rate of assault in male establishments **increased** by 12% from the previous 12 months, while the rate in female establishments **increased** by 35%. Assault rates for the 12 months to March 2022 were higher in female establishments (377 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) than in male establishments (250 incidents per 1,000 prisoners).

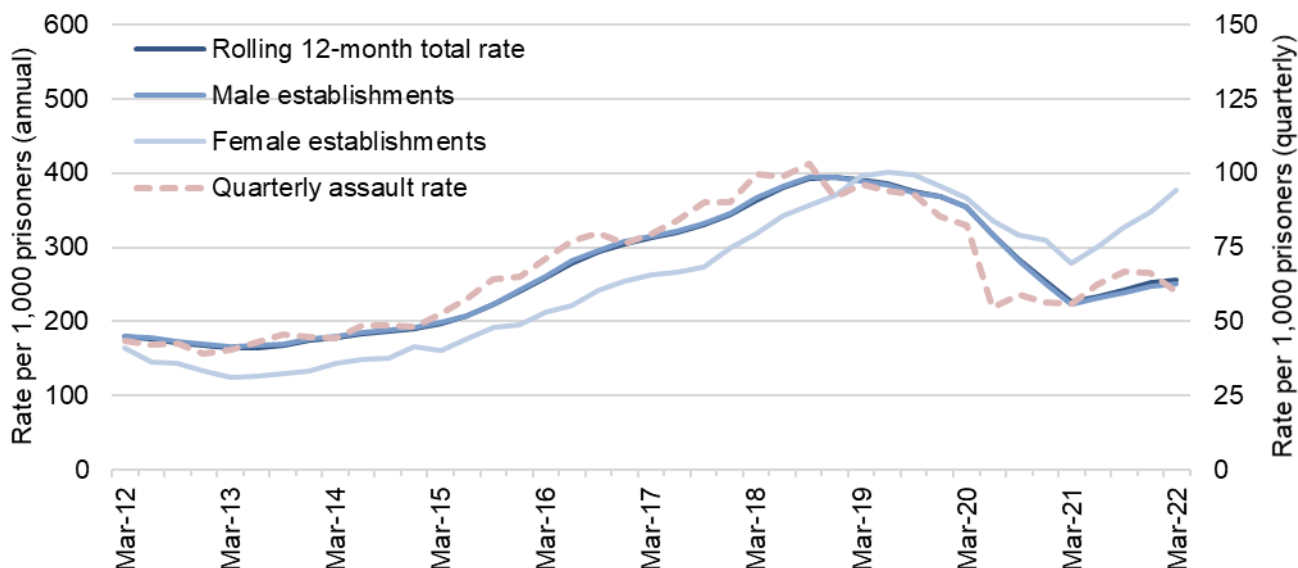
Assaults on staff increased from the previous 12-month period

There were 7,599 assaults on staff in the 12 months to March 2022, **up** 8% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff **decreased** by 12% to 1,720 incidents.

The rate of assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners **increased** by 9%, comprising increases of 7% in male establishments and 27% in female establishments compared with the previous 12 months.

Statistics for the 12 months to March 2022 relate to the second 12-month 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 4: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending March 2012 to 12 months ending March 2022, with quarterly rates



In the 12 months to March 2022, assault incidents increased by 13% to 20,077 (a rate of 256 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) but remained almost a third (32%) lower than the 29,315 in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The rate of assaults in the latest 12 months was 13% higher than in the previous 12 months and 28% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020.

In the latest quarter there were 4,688 assaults, down 11% from the previous quarter. The number of assaults and the quarterly rate remain lower than their peak in the July to September 2018 quarter. This reflects that quarterly numbers and rates of assaults were already falling before the outbreak of the Covid-19 as well as the considerable decrease in the early stages of the pandemic (April to June 2020) associated with changes in prison regimes and activity in the criminal justice system.

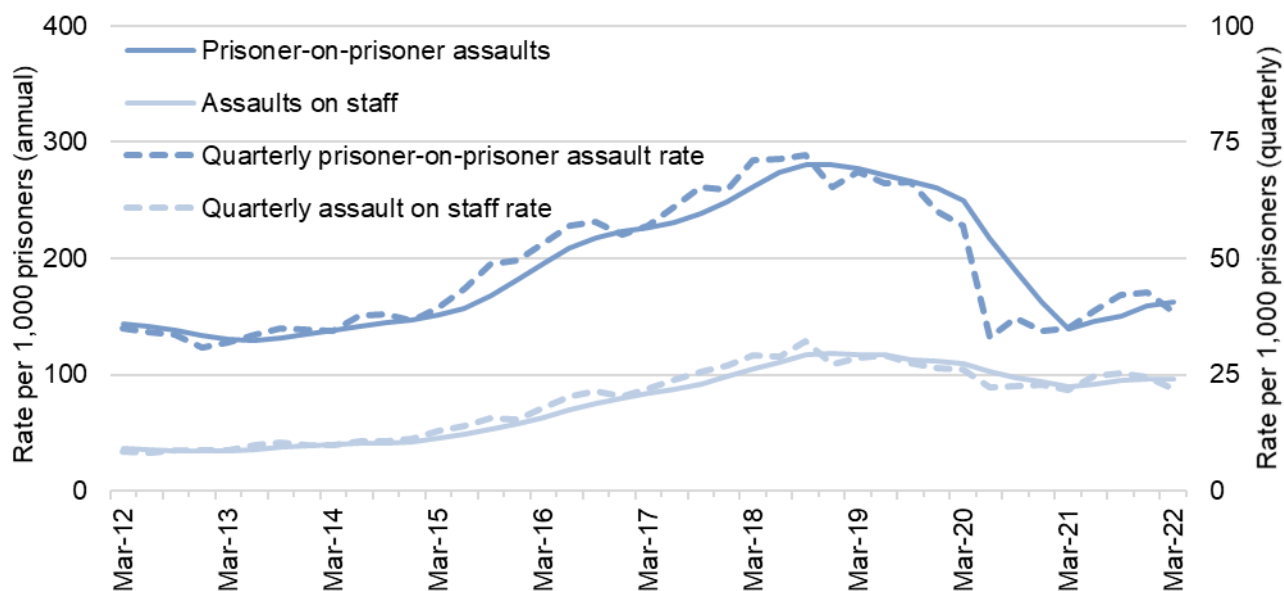
The number of incidents in male establishments increased by 12% from 16,865 to 18,869 in the 12 months to March 2022 (a rate of 250 per 1,000 prisoners) but were 32% lower than the 27,937 incidents in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The rate of assaults in male establishments in the latest 12 months was 12% higher than in the previous 12 months but 30% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020.

The number of incidents in female establishments increased by 34% from 899 to 1,208 incidents in the 12 months to March 2022 (a rate of 377 per 1,000 prisoners) but remained 12% lower than the 1,378 incidents in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The rate of assaults in female establishments in the latest 12 months was 35% higher than in the previous 12 months (the rate being much lower in the first 12 months of the pandemic) and is now 3% higher than in the 12 months to March 2020.

Assault rates have been higher in female establishments than in male establishments since the 12 months to March 2019, with the difference extending each year, after previously being higher in male establishments.

In the latest quarter, the number of assaults in male establishments decreased 11% from 4,947 to 4,386, while the number of assaults in female establishments decreased 8% from 329 to 302.

Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending March 2012 to 12 months ending March 2022, with quarterly rates



There were 12,773 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults⁸ in the 12 months to March 2022 (a rate of 163 per 1,000 prisoners). This is an increase of 16% from the 10,977 assaults in the previous 12 months but 38% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the latest 12 months was 16% higher than in the previous 12 months but it remains 35% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020. In the latest quarter, there were 3,023 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, an 11% decrease from 3,403 in the previous quarter.

⁸ This figure includes any prisoner-on-prisoner assaults where there may also have been an assault on staff.

There were 7,599 assaults on staff⁹ in the 12 months to March 2022 (a rate of 97 per 1,000 prisoners). This is an increase of 8% from the 7,011 assaults in the previous 12 months but is 16% lower than the 9,020 assaults in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The rate of assaults on staff in the latest 12 months was 9% higher than in the previous 12 months but it remains 11% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020. In the latest quarter, there were 1,720 assaults on staff, a 12% decrease from 1,957 incidents in the previous quarter.

Although the proportion of all assaults that were on staff in the 12 months to March 2022 decreased slightly to 38%, from 39% in the previous 12 months, it remains at a higher level than in the 12 months to March 2020 (having previously steadily increased from 20% in the 12 months to March 2012).

In male establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 15% to 12,207 incidents (162 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners) and assaults on staff increased 7% to 6,946 incidents (92 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2022 (with the respective rates increasing by the same amount).

In female establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 47% to 566 incidents (with the rate also increasing by 47% to 176 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) and assaults on staff increased 26% to 653 incidents (the rate increasing by 27% to 204 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) compared to the previous 12 months.

In the 12 months to March 2022, the proportion of assaults that were on staff remained higher in female establishments (54%) than in male establishments (37%).

⁹ 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

Serious assaults

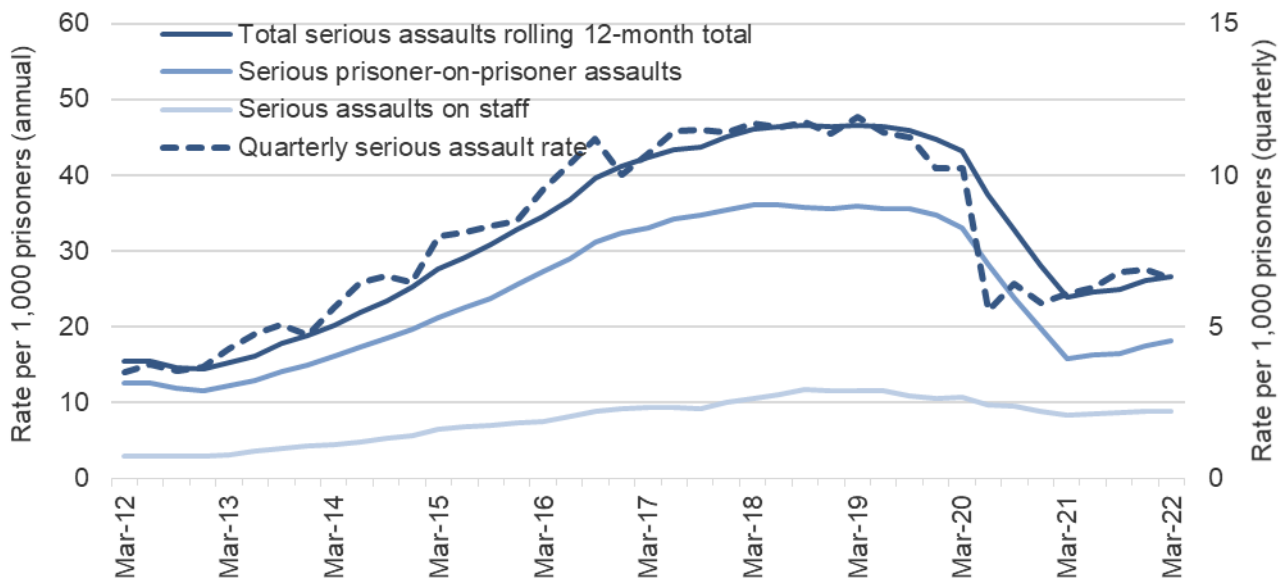
Of the 20,077 assault incidents, 2,086 (10%) were serious.

In the 12 months to March 2022, there were 2,086 serious assault incidents, an 11% **increase** from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assault **increased** by 13% over the period.

Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults **increased** by 14% to 1,420, and serious assaults on staff increased by 8% to 699 in the 12 months to March 2022.

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 6: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total serious assaults, serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, and serious assaults on staff, 12 months ending March 2012 to 12 months ending March 2022



In the latest 12 months, 10% of assaults were serious assaults. The proportion of all assaults that were serious was higher in male establishments (11%) than in female establishments (4%).

In the 12 months to March 2022, there were 2,086 serious assaults (a rate of 27 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 11% from the previous 12 months but 41% lower than the 3,562 incidents in the 12 months to March, pre-pandemic. The rate of serious assaults in the latest 12 months was 12% higher than in the previous 12 months but 37% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020. In the latest quarter, there were 516 serious assaults, a 6% decrease from the previous quarter.

There were 1,420 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 18 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2022, a 14% increase from the previous 12 months although remaining 48% lower than the 2,730 incidents in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The rate of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the latest 12 months was 14% higher than in the previous 12 months but 45% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020. In the latest quarter, there were 357 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 7% decrease from 382 incidents in the previous quarter.

There were 699 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 9 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to March 2022, an 8% increase from the previous 12 months, but 20% lower than the 878 incidents in the 12 months to March 2020, pre-pandemic. The rate of serious assaults on staff in the latest 12 months was 8% higher than in the previous 12 months but 18% lower than in the 12 months to March 2020. In the latest quarter, the number of serious prisoner-on-staff assaults decreased by 3% to 167 incidents.

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 tenets 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, included the implementation of effective isolation, reverse cohorting of new entrants to custody, and shielding of vulnerable prisoners. During this period we have seen progression of establishments to different levels of the National Framework for managing Covid with most establishments reaching Stage 2 or 1 before the Omicron outbreak in December 2021.

The latest Covid-19 figures are published monthly on the MOJ website via the following link:

<https://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.



Future publications

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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URL: www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

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