



# Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to December 2021 Assaults and Self-harm to September 2021

## Main Points

**Number of deaths increased from the previous 12-month period**



In the 12 months to December 2021, there were 371 deaths in prison custody, an **increase** of 17% from 318 deaths the previous 12 months. Of these, 86 deaths were self-inflicted, a 28% **increase** from the 67 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months.

In the most recent quarter there were 84 deaths, a 29% **increase** from 65 deaths in the previous quarter.

**The rate of self-harm incidents decreased in male establishments from the previous 12-month period but increased in female establishments**



There were 52,726 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to September 2021, **down** 11% from the previous 12 months, comprising **decreases** of 12% in male establishments and 5% in female establishments.



Over the same period, the *rate* of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, which takes account of the reduction in the prison population between this and the previous year, **decreased** 9% in male establishments but **increased** 5% in female establishments.

In the most recent quarter, there were 13,612 self-harm incidents, **down** 3% on the previous quarter, comprising of a 1% **decrease** in male establishments and a 10% **decrease** in female establishments.

**The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased**



There were 11,236 individuals who self-harmed in the 12 months to September 2021, **down** 10% from the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual **stayed stable** at 4.7 in both the 12 months to September 2021 and the previous year.

**Assaults decreased from the previous 12-month period**



There were 20,049 assault incidents in the 12 months to September 2021, **down** 18% from the 12 months to September 2020. In the most recent quarter, assaults **increased** by 9% to 5,569 incidents.

**Assaults on staff decreased from the previous 12-month period**



There were 7,780 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2021, **down** 8% from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults **increased** by 5% to 2,110 incidents.

**The number of serious assaults decreased  
10% of all assaults were serious**



In the 12 months to September 2021, there were 2,042 serious assault incidents, a **decrease** of 25% from the previous 12 months. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults **decreased** by 31% to 1,352 in the 12 months to September 2021. Serious assaults on staff also **decreased**, by 12% to 719.

## Statistician's comment

In the 12 months to September 2021 we have seen falls in the number of self-harm and assault incidents, and in the 12 months to December 2021 we have seen an increase in the number of deaths. Statistics for these periods relate to the exceptional period during the Covid-19 pandemic, including reduced activity within the Criminal Justice System 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). Comparisons of these statistics with earlier periods will reflect the impact of Covid-19 as well as underlying trends.

Deaths have increased by 17% to 371 deaths in the year to December 2021. This has been driven by deaths related to Covid-19. Deaths in the latest quarter increased by 29% to 84, but remained much lower than the peak of 154 in the January to March 2021 quarter. Only 17 were suspected to be due to Covid-19, up from 7 in the previous quarter, but lower than 65 in the January to March 2021 quarter. There were 86 self-inflicted deaths in the latest year, an increase from 67 in the previous year.

The number of self-harm incidents has fallen in the 12 months to September 2021, by 11%, comprising decreases of 12% in male establishments and 5% in female establishments. This partially reflects a fall in the prison population over the same period, with fewer receptions of sentenced offenders following reduced court activity in response to Covid-19 (as set out in Offender management statistics quarterly: April to June 2021). With the fall in the prison population taken into account, the rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners decreased by 9% in male establishments but increased by 5% in female establishments in the 12 months to September 2021.

The number of assault incidents fell by 18% in the 12 months to September 2021, including a 25% fall in serious assaults. In addition to reflecting the reduced prison population, this is expected to be influenced by the reduced contact included in prison regimes to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection. Taking the fall in the population into account, assault rates decreased in both male and female establishments, by 19% and 6% respectively.

## 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.<sup>1</sup> This release provides statistics on deaths of prisoners to the end of December 2021, 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 September 2021. The latest 12-month data reflects a full year since the outbreak of Covid-19, when Covid-19 restrictions were introduced in prisons to limit and control the spread of the virus. These restrictions included the implementation of effective isolation of prisoners, reverse cohorting of new entrants to custody, and shielding of vulnerable prisoners. 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. See Further Information at the end of this bulletin on the managing and running of prisons during the pandemic.

<sup>1</sup> Data on deaths is published three months ahead of self-harm and assaults. Therefore, the deaths annual publication and tables are published alongside the Safety in Custody quarterly update to September publication.

The total prison population has fallen since the first quarter of 2020, falling more so for certain population groups<sup>2</sup>. As at 30 September 2021, the total prison population was around 4,200 or 5% smaller than at the end of March 2020<sup>3</sup>. The female population has reduced by 12%, whereas the male population has reduced by 5%.

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 occurring<sup>4</sup>. 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics).

### Youth estate

These statistics include incidents that occurred in the youth estate. However, readers should be aware of the ‘**Safety in the children and young people secure estate**’ statistics bulletin. This provides quarterly statistics on assault and self-harm incidents, and deaths for children and young people in the secure estate. It is being published simultaneously to this Safety in Custody quarterly bulletin at the following link:

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

For continuity in the Safety in Custody data series, incidents in the youth estate and associated tables are included in this Safety in Custody bulletin, but readers are referred to ‘Safety in the children and young people secure estate’ for commentary.

Historically Safety in Custody statistics for the youth estate use 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 include all incidents occurring in dedicated under-18 Young Offender Institutions (even if they’re aged over 17)<sup>5</sup>. However, Safety in Custody statistics also includes all incidents in other establishments involving young people aged 15 to 17. Furthermore, ‘Safety in the children and young people secure estate’ statistics also includes 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. For continuity and to align with the definition of the youth estate used in ‘Safety in the children and young people secure estate’, tables in this publication currently present data for the latest year(s) using both the historic methodology of Safety in Custody and also the methodology of the youth publication<sup>6</sup>. **Figures showing the number of incidents within the youth estate will be removed from the Safety in Custody publication from the July 2022 release.**

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>. Latest data for the year to September 2021 is published in Offender Management Statistics Bulletin, England and Wales Quarterly: January to March 2021.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2020>

<sup>4</sup> 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 the reduction in population.

<sup>5</sup> These are Cookham Wood, Werrington and Wetherby.

<sup>6</sup> Assaults are presented based on both methodologies from April 2018 and self-harm incidents are presented based on both methodologies from April 2019.

## Annual deaths tables

The deaths data tool which is published quarterly has been expanded to include age of the prisoner. The deaths data tool has therefore become the most up-to-date source for information on deaths by age, and the tables giving an age breakdown have therefore been removed from the annual deaths tables<sup>7</sup>.

In addition, three tables on the classification of deaths have been consolidated into Table 1.1, which now includes a breakdown by gender and death rates due to 'Other' causes. This will reduce duplication and make the presentation of this data more consistent with the Summary death statistics (Table 2) in the other quarterly Safety in Custody publications<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Tables 1.3, 1.6 and 1.15 from the historic annual deaths tables included breakdowns of deaths by age now available from the tool, and have been removed from the annual deaths tables from this release.

<sup>8</sup> Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.5 from the historic annual deaths tables included breakdowns of deaths by classification and gender, and have been removed from the annual deaths tables from this release. Table 1.1 in the new list of tables includes a detailed breakdown by gender and classification

# 1 Deaths: 12 months ending December 2021

## Number of deaths increased from the previous 12-month period

In the 12 months to December 2021, there were 371 deaths in prison custody, an **increase** of 17% from 318 deaths in the previous 12 months which corresponds with deaths related to Covid-19. There were 86 self-inflicted deaths, an **increase** of 28% from 67 in the previous 12 months.

In the most recent quarter there were 84 deaths, a 29 **increase** from 65 deaths in the previous quarter.

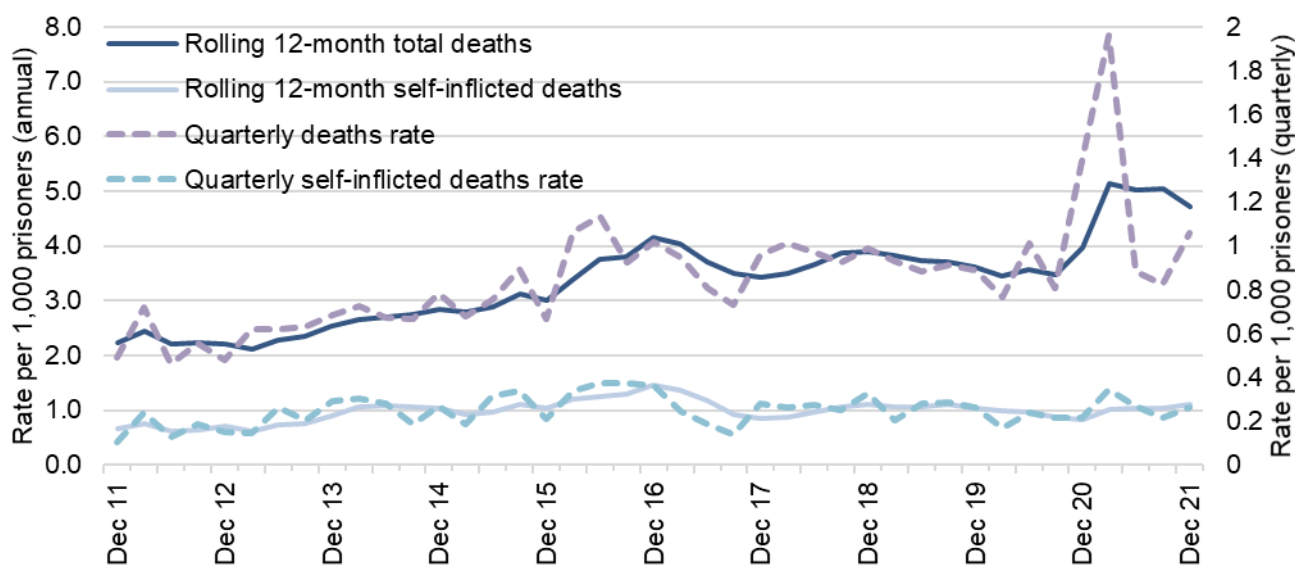
## The number of deaths related to Covid-19 increased slightly in the most recent quarter

In the most recent quarter (October to December 2021), there were 17 deaths (20% of total deaths) that were suspected to be due to Covid-19, an **increase** from 7 deaths (11% of total deaths) in the previous quarter.

In the same period, there were 18 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, an **increase** from 9 in the previous quarter.

There were 21 self-inflicted deaths in the most recent quarter, 4 more than in the previous quarter.

**Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending December 2011 to 12 months ending December 2021, with quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to December 2021, there were 371 deaths in prison custody (a rate of 4.7 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase from 318 deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 4.0 per 1,000 prisoners). Long-term trends and more detail are presented in the annual tables that accompany this release<sup>9</sup>.

Over the same period, there were 250 deaths due to natural causes (a rate of 3.2 per 1,000 prisoners), a 13% increase from 222 deaths (a rate of 2.8 per 1,000 prisoners) in the previous 12 months. This increase of 28 in deaths due to natural causes in the 12 months to December 2021 reflects deaths from Covid-19 (with further information on these below).

<sup>9</sup> Data on deaths are published three months ahead of assaults and self-harm, therefore, the annual publication Deaths in prison custody for 1978 to 2021 is published in the Safety in Custody quarterly update to September 2021

There were 86 apparent self-inflicted deaths in the 12 months to December 2021, an increase of 28% from 67 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months. The rate of self-inflicted deaths increased from 0.8 per 1,000 prisoners in the previous 12 months to 1.1 in the latest 12 months.

There were 34 deaths recorded as 'Other' in the 12 months to December 2021, 30 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 84 deaths, a 29% increase from 65 deaths in the previous quarter. There were 21 self-inflicted deaths in the final quarter of 2021, an increase from 17 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 December 2021, 177 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 177 deaths, 150 are suspected to be due to Covid-19. The remaining 27 deaths are believed to be due to other causes although the prisoner had tested positive for Covid-19.

In the latest quarter (October to December 2021), a higher proportion of deaths were related to Covid-19 than in previous quarter. In this quarter, 21% of all deaths were of prisoners who had died within 28 days of a positive test for Covid-19, up from 14% of all deaths in the previous quarter, but below a peak of 47% in January to March 2021. Similarly, deaths suspected to have been due to Covid-19 made up 20% of all deaths in the latest quarter, up from 11% in the previous quarter, but below a peak of 42% 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>.

# Key findings from deaths annual tables and deaths data tool

## Gender

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**The overwhelming majority of deaths in custody in 2021 (98%) occurred in the male estate, a finding that has been consistent over time.**

There were 6 deaths in the female estate, down from 7 in 2020, accounting for around 2% of the total deaths. As a result, cross-tabulations of characteristics with gender (e.g. ethnicity by gender) are not presented below because the numbers of deaths in the female estate are too small for meaningful analysis.

There were 86 self-inflicted deaths in 2021, all of which occurred in the male estate.

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## Age

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**Prisoners aged 70 and over were more likely to die in custody compared to any other age group, with 66.1 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.**

Out of 110 deaths amongst this age group, 109 were classified as natural causes and 1 is awaiting further information. Those aged over 50 accounted for 88% of all natural cause deaths in 2021.

**Prisoners in the 50-59 and 40-49 age categories had the highest rates of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners.**

Prisoners aged 50 to 59 had the highest rate of self-inflicted deaths (1.7 per 1,000 prisoners) followed by those aged 40 to 49 (1.5 per 1,000 prisoners).

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## Ethnicity

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**The rate of self-inflicted deaths in 2021 was higher amongst White prisoners (1.3 per 1,000 prisoners) than prisoners of all other ethnic groups combined (0.5 per 1,000 prisoners)**

The rate of self-inflicted deaths increased from 1.0 in 2020 to 1.3 in 2021 for White prisoners, and stayed level for prisoners of all other ethnic groups combined.

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## Nationality

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**UK nationals were more likely than foreign nationals to suffer a self-inflicted death in 2021, with rates of 1.1 and 0.9 per 1,000 prisoners, respectively.**

Self-inflicted deaths among foreign nationals accounted for 12% of all self-inflicted deaths, while UK nationals accounted for 88%.

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## Time in custody

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**In 2021, 18 self-inflicted deaths (21%) occurred within the first 30 days of custody and 30 (35%) occurred within the first 30 days in the current prison.**

There were 18 self-inflicted deaths within the first 30 days of custody (21% of all self-inflicted deaths), of which 9 occurred within the first week in custody (10%).

In 2021 when including prisoners who have moved, 30 self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days in the current prison (35%), of which 15 occurred within the first week (17%).

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### *Sentence length and type*

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#### **Prisoners who were on remand (2.5 per 1,000 prisoners) had the highest rate of self-inflicted deaths, an increase from a rate of 1.7 in 2020.**

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was 2.5 for prisoners on remand (an increase from 1.7 in 2020) and 0.8 for sentenced prisoners (an increase from 0.7 in 2020).

For sentenced prisoners, the rate was highest for those serving indeterminate sentences (1.8 per 1,000 prisoners), followed by those serving life (1.3 per 1,000 prisoners) and determinate sentences (0.8 per 1,000 prisoners). For prisoners who were serving a determinate sentence, those who were sentenced to less than 6 months had the highest rate, at 2.0 self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners.

In 2021, 37% of all self-inflicted deaths were by prisoners on remand, an increase from 28% of all self-inflicted deaths in 2020

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### *Offence*

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#### **In 2021, 41% 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 (41%) and miscellaneous crimes against society (19%) accounted for the majority of self-inflicted deaths.

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was 1.5 for prisoners serving sentences for offences of violence against the person (an increase from 1.2 in 2020), and 5.7 for prisoners serving sentences for miscellaneous crimes against society (an increase from 1.4 in 2020),

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### *Method of self-inflicted death*

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#### **Hanging remains the most common method of self-inflicted death in 2021, accounting for 83% of all incidents.**

Of the 76 self-inflicted deaths with method of hanging or self-strangulation in 2021, bedding remains the most commonly used ligature type with 82% of incidents using this. The most commonly used ligature point remains the window, accounting for 37% of all self-inflicted hanging or self-strangulation deaths in 2021, while the second highest used ligature point was bed, accounting for 18%.

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## 2 Self-harm: 12 months to September 2021

**The rate of self-harm incidents decreased in the male estate from the previous 12-month period but increased in the female estate**

There were 52,726 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to September 2021, **down** 11% from the previous 12 months (a 12% **decrease** in male establishments and a 5% **decrease** in female establishments). Taking into account of the fall in the prison average population since the start of 2020, the rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners **decreased** 9% in male establishments but **increased** 5% in female establishments in the 12 months to September 2021.

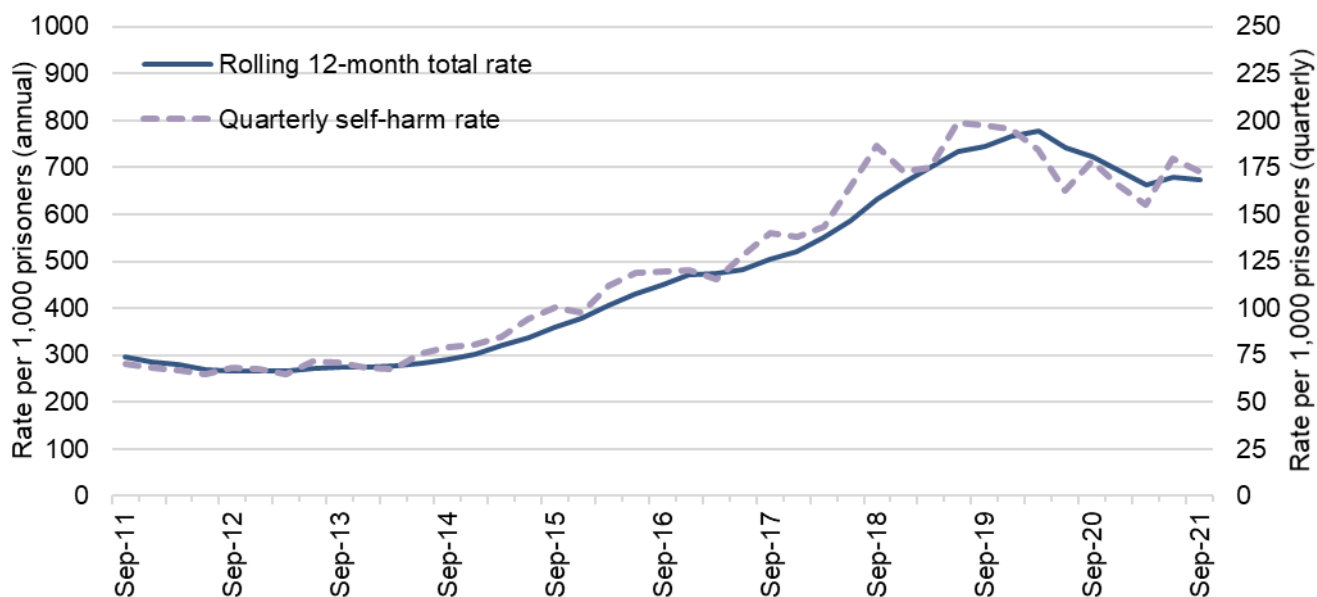
In the most recent quarter there were 13,612 self-harm incidents, **down** 3% on the previous quarter (a 1% **decrease** in male establishments and a 10% **decrease** in female establishments).

**The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased 10% in the latest year.**

There were 11,236 individuals who self-harmed in the 12 months to September 2021, a 10% **decrease** from 12,529 in the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual **stayed stable** at 4.7 in the 12 months to September 2021 and the previous year.

Statistics for the 12 months to September 2021 relate to the exceptional period since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restricted regimes prisons put in place in order to safely manage the risks of infection during the pandemic (see Further Information at the end of this bulletin). This affects the comparability of the statistics with earlier periods.

**Figure 2: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending September 2011 to 12 months ending September 2021, with quarterly rates**



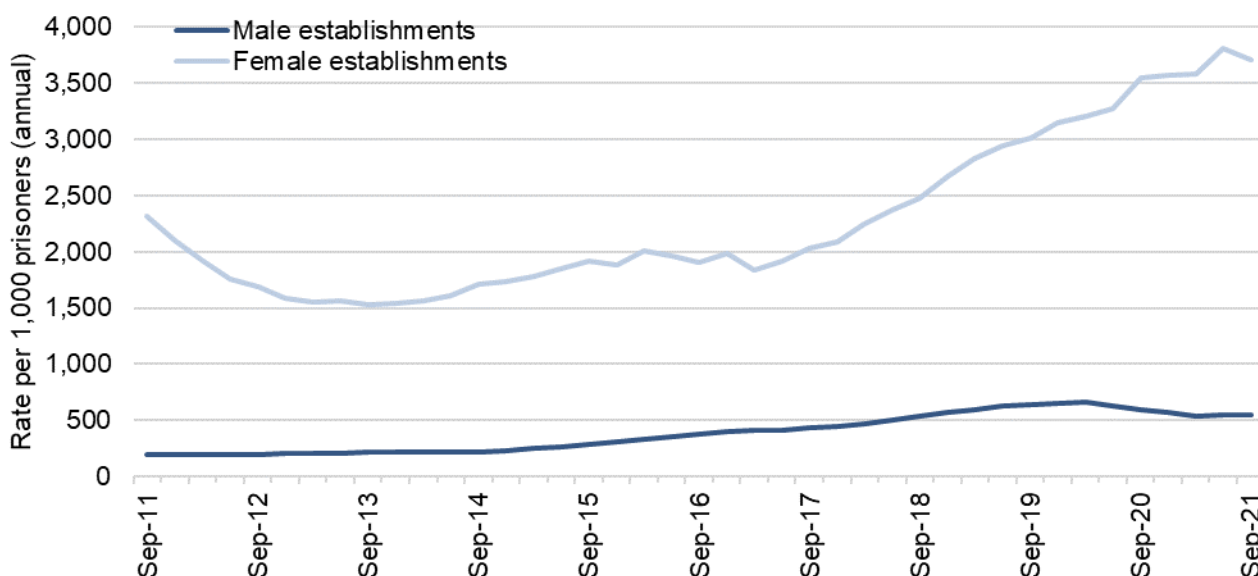
In the 12 months to September 2021, there were 52,726 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 673 per 1,000 prisoners), down 11% from the previous 12 months. On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to September 2021 decreased by 3% from the previous quarter, from 14,008 to 13,612 incidents.

The number of individuals who self-harmed decreased by 10% to 11,236 in the latest 12 months (a rate of 143 individuals per 1,000 prisoners), from 12,529 in the previous 12 months. The number of incidents per self-harming individual stayed stable at 4.7 in the latest 12 months and in the previous year, although 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 2020 did so more than once.

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance decreased by 6% to 2,672 in the 12 months to September 2021 and decreased by 6% in the latest quarter to 662 incidents. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance increased slightly from 4.8% in the 12 months to September 2020 to 5.1% in the latest 12 months.

**Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2011 to 12 months ending September 2021**



Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender. The number of incidents in male establishments decreased by 12% from 46,490 in the 12 months to September 2020 to 40,934 in the 12 months to September 2021. The number of incidents in the female estate decreased 5% from 12,428 in the previous 12 months to 11,792.

On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to September 2021 decreased by 1% in male establishments compared with the previous three months and decreased by 10% in female establishments.

The rate of incidents, which takes population size into account, was 545 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in the male estate in the 12 months to September 2021, down 9% from 596 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in the 12 months to September 2020. The rate of incidents per 1,000 prisoners in female establishments was far higher, and increased by 5%, from 3,553 in the previous 12 months to 3,713 in the latest 12 months.

The number of incidents per individual who self-harmed in female establishments was more than twice that in male establishments and increased in the latest year. In the 12 months to September 2021, there were 10.4 incidents of self-harm per self-harming female compared with 9.9 the previous 12 months, while for males it stayed stable at 4.1 incidents per self-harming individual compared to the previous 12 months.

The proportion of incidents that required hospitalisation was higher in male establishments (5.8% compared to 2.4% in female establishments). Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance decreased in male establishments by 5%, from 2,512 in the 12 months to September 2020 to 2,387 in the 12 months to September 2021, and decreased by 14% to 285 in female establishments in the latest 12 months.

## Assaults: 12 months to September 2021

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

In the 12 months to September 2021, there were 20,049 assault incidents, a 18% **decrease** from the previous 12 months. Of these 2,042 were serious assaults, **down** by 25%. Rates of assault and serious assault per 1,000 prisoners **decreased** to a lesser extent, by 15% and 21% respectively.

Assaults **increased** by 9% in the latest quarter to 5,569 incidents while the number of serious assaults **increased** by 11% to 564 incidents.

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

The rate of assault in male establishments **decreased** by 15% from the previous 12 months, while the rate in female establishments **increased** by 3%. Assault rates for the 12 months to September 2021 were higher in female establishments (327 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) than in male establishments (253 incidents per 1,000 prisoners).

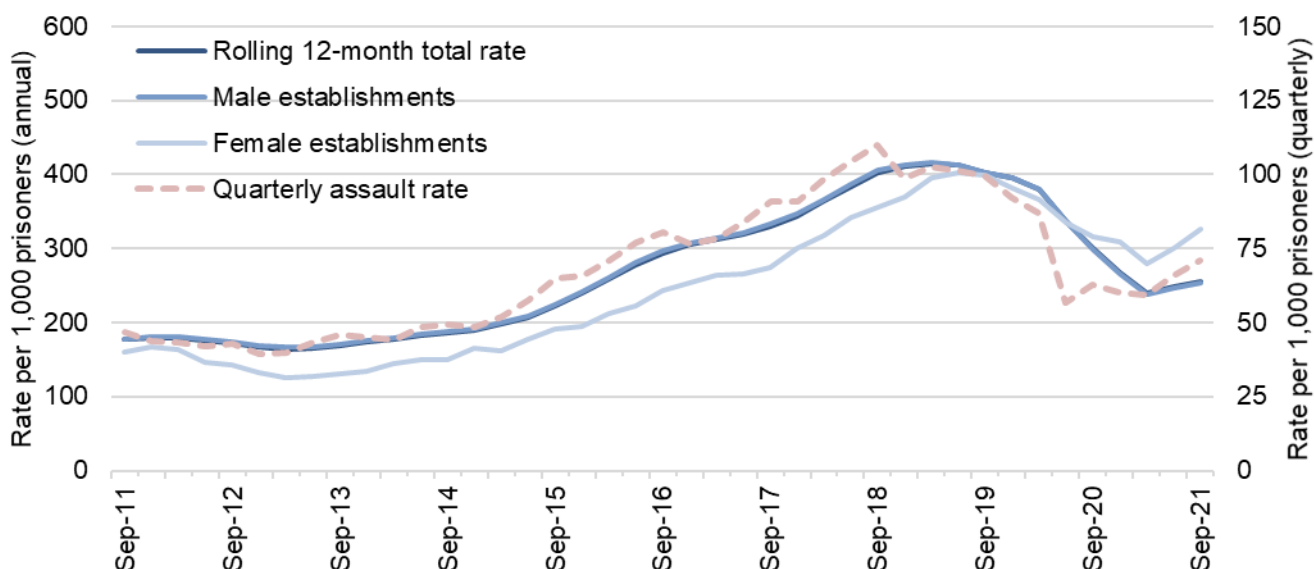
### Assaults on staff decreased from the previous 12-month period

There were 7,780 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2021, an 8% **decrease** from the previous 12 months. The rate of assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners **decreased** to a lesser extent, by 5%. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff **increased** by 5% to 2,110 incidents.

The rate of assault on staff **decreased** by 6% in male establishments but **increased** by 12% in female establishments compared with the previous 12 months.

Statistics for the 12 months to September 2021 relate to the exceptional period since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restricted regimes prisons put in place in order to safely manage the risks of infection during the pandemic (see Further Information at the end of this bulletin). This affects the comparability of the statistics with earlier periods.

**Figure 4: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2011 to 12 months ending September 2021, with quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to September 2021, assault incidents decreased by 18% to 20,049, a rate of 256 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. This represents a decrease in the rate of assault per 1,000 prisoners (which takes into account the decrease in the prison population over the period) of a lesser extent, 15%. In the latest quarter, there were 5,569 assaults, an increase of 9% from the

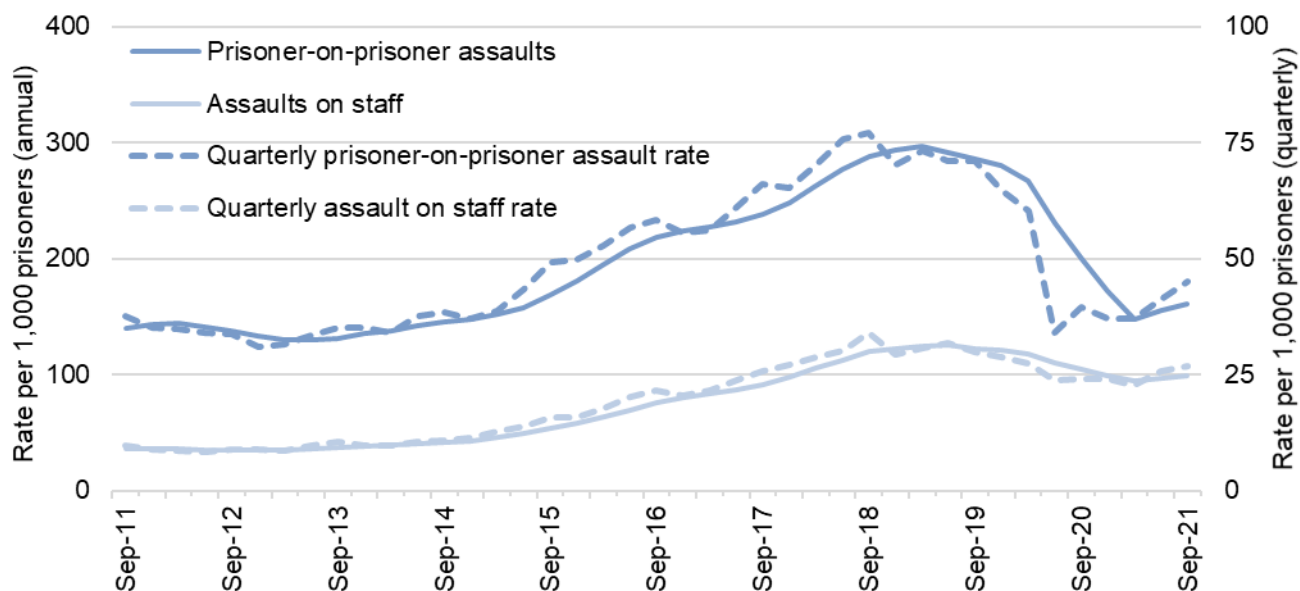
previous quarter, although this remains lower than the peak of 9,111 in the July to September 2018 quarter, influenced by a considerable decrease in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic associated with changes in prison regimes and activity in the criminal justice system.

The number of incidents in male establishments decreased by 19% from 23,337 to 19,012 in the 12 months to September 2021. The rate of assaults decreased to a lesser extent over this period, by 15%, to 253 per 1,000 prisoners.

The number of incidents in female establishments decreased by 6% from 1,107 to 1,037 incidents in the 12 months to September 2021. However, the rate of assault increased over this period, by 3%, to 327 per 1,000 prisoners. Assault rates have remained higher in female establishments than in male establishments, extending the difference seen in the 12 months to September 2020, after previously being higher in male establishments up to the 12 months to September 2019.

In the latest quarter, the number of assaults in male establishments increased by 8% to 5,254, and the number of assaults in female establishments increased by 21% to 315.

**Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending September 2011 to 12 months ending September 2021, with quarterly rates**



There were 12,579 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults<sup>10</sup> in the 12 months to September 2021 (a rate of 161 per 1,000 prisoners). This is a decrease of 23% from the 16,279 assaults in the previous 12 months. The rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assault per 1,000 prisoners decreased to a lesser extent, by 20%. In the latest quarter, there were 3,541 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 10% increase from 3,222 in the previous quarter.

There were 7,780 assaults on staff<sup>11</sup> in the 12 months to September 2021 (a rate of 99 per 1,000 prisoners). This is an 8% decrease from the 8,492 in the previous 12 months. The rate of prisoner-on-staff assault per 1,000 prisoners decreased to a lesser extent, by 5%. In the latest quarter, there were 2,110 assaults on staff, a 5% increase from 2,001 incidents in the previous quarter.

<sup>10</sup> This figure includes any prisoner-on-prisoner assaults where there may also have been an assault on staff.

<sup>11</sup> There was a change in how staff assaults have been recorded from April 2017, this has simplified how incidents involving staff are identified, however it is possible this has increased the recording of incidents. Please see the Guide to Safety in Custody statistics for further information

The proportion of assaults on staff increased to 39% of all incidents in the 12 months to September 2021, from 35% in the previous 12 months, having steadily increased from 20% in the 12 months to September 2012.

In male establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 23% to 12,113 incidents (161 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners), and the rate decreased to a lesser extent, by 20% in the 12 months to September 2021. Assaults on staff decreased by 9% to 7,202 incidents (96 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners), and the rate decreased by 6% compared to the previous 12 months.

In female establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 15% to 466 incidents (147 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners), and the rate decreased by 6% in the 12 months to September 2021. Assaults on staff increased by 2% to 578 incidents (182 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) compared to the previous 12 months, and the rate increased by 12%.

In the 12 months to September 2021, the proportion of assaults that were on staff was higher in female establishments (56%) than in male establishments (38%).

## Serious assaults

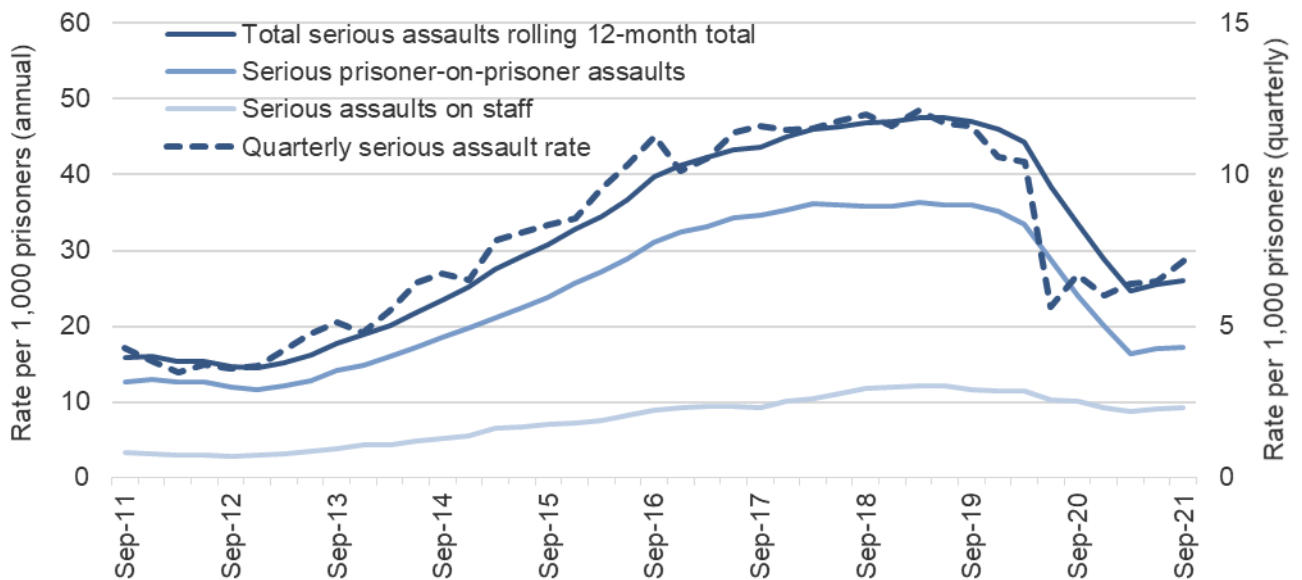
Of the 20,049 assault incidents, 2,042 (10%) were serious.

In the 12 months to September 2021, there were 2,042 serious assault incidents, a 25% **decrease** from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assault **decreased** to a lesser extent, by 21% (taking account of decreases in population size over the period).

Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults **decreased** by 31% to 1,352 in the 12 months to September 2021, and serious assaults on staff **decreased** by 12% to 719.

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 September 2011 to 12 months ending September 2021**



In the 12 months to September 2021, there were 2,042 serious assaults (a rate of 26 per 1,000 prisoners), a 25% decrease from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assault decreased to lesser extent, by 21%. In the latest quarter, there were 564 serious assaults, an 11% increase from the previous quarter. In the latest 12 months, 10% of assaults were serious assaults.

There were 1,352 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 17 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2021, a decrease of 31% from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assault decreased to a slightly lesser extent, by 29%. In the latest quarter, there were 370 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, an 8% increase from 344 incidents in the previous quarter.

There were 719 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 9 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2021, a decrease of 12% from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious prisoner-on-staff assault also decreased, by 10%. In the latest quarter, the number of serious prisoner-on-staff assaults increased by 18% to 204 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 tenet of HMPPS's prison strategy, building on Public Health England (PHE) and Public Health Wales (PHW) advice and learning developed in managing an early outbreak of the virus, 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.

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**

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## **Next update: April 2022**

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