



Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to December 2023 Assaults and Self-harm to September 2023

Main Points

Number of deaths increased from the previous 12-month period



In the 12 months to December 2023, there were 311 deaths in prison custody, an **increase** of 3% from 301 deaths in the previous 12 months. Of these, 93 deaths were self-inflicted, a 22% **increase** from the 76 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months.

In the most recent quarter, there were 85 deaths, a 13% **increase** from 75 deaths in the previous quarter.

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



In the 12 months to September 2023, the rate of self-harm was 805 incidents per 1,000 prisoners (67,773 incidents), **up** 17% from the 12 months to September 2022, comprising of an 11% **increase** in male establishments and a 38% **increase** in female establishments.

In the most recent quarter, self-harm incidents were **up** 5% to 18,686 (comprising a 10% increase in male establishments and a 6% decrease in female establishments), and the rate was **up** 2% (a 6% increase in male establishments and a 12% decrease in female establishments).

The number of individuals who self-harmed increased



There were 12,292 individuals who self-harmed in the 12 months to September 2023, **up** 11% from the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual **increased** from 5.0 in the 12 months to September 2022 to 5.5 in the 12 months to September 2023.

The rate of assaults increased from the previous 12-month period



In the 12 months to September 2023, the rate of assaults was 300 assaults per 1,000 prisoners (25,223 assaults), **up** 14% from the 12 months to September 2022. In the most recent quarter, assaults were **up** 11% to 7,268 incidents and the assault rate was **up** 7% to 83 assaults per 1,000 prisoners.

The rate of assaults on staff increased from the previous 12-month period



In the 12 months to September 2023, the rate of assaults on staff was 101 assaults per 1,000 prisoners (8,516 assaults on staff), **up** 10% from the 12 months to September 2022. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff **increased** by 13% to 2,506 incidents.

The rate of serious assaults increased 11% of all assaults were serious



In the 12 months to September 2023, the rate of serious assaults was 34 serious assaults per 1,000 prisoners (2,837 serious assaults), **up** 14% from the 12 months to September 2022. The rate of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults **increased** 19% to 25 per 1,000 prisoners (2,100 incidents), and the rate of serious assaults on staff remained **unchanged** at 9 per 1,000 prisoners (765 incidents) in the 12 months to September 2023.

If you are a journalist covering a suicide-related issue, please follow the Samaritans' [Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide](#) because of the potentially damaging consequences of irresponsible reporting.

If you are struggling to cope, please call Samaritans for free on 116 123 (UK and the Republic of Ireland) or contact other sources of support, such as those listed on the NHS help for suicidal thoughts webpage. Support is available around the clock, every day of the year, providing a safe place for you, whoever you are and however you are feeling.

Statistician's comment

In the 12 months to December 2023, we have seen a slight increase in the number of deaths (3% increase). In the 12 months to September 2023, we have seen increases in the number of assault incidents (21% increase) and self-harm incidents (24% increase) compared with the previous year, with self-harm now higher than pre-pandemic levels. Incidents of self-harm and assaults have increased in both male and female establishments over the past 12 months, with self-harm and assaults in female establishments reaching their highest level in the time series¹. Comparisons of these statistics with earlier periods will reflect the impact of Covid-19 restrictions as well as underlying trends.

The number of deaths has increased to 311 in the 12 months to December 2023. There were 85 deaths in the latest quarter, up from 75 the previous quarter. There were 93 self-inflicted deaths in the latest year, an increase from 76 in the previous year.

There was a 17% increase in the rate² of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners in the 12 months to September 2023, with the rate now peaking at 805 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. However, there continue to be notable differences in self-harm trends by gender, with the differences increasing substantially in the latest 12 months. The rate in female establishments has increased by 38% to a new peak (5,988 per 1,000 prisoners), compared to a smaller increase of 11% in male establishments (591 per 1,000 prisoners). The rate is now ten times higher in female establishments. This was driven by an increase in the average number of incidents among those who self-harmed in female establishments, from 12.7 to 16.8, an acceleration in the increasing trend in average number of incidents seen for the last seven years. By comparison, the average number of incidents among those who self-harmed in male establishments increased from 4.1 to 4.3.

The rate of assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners increased 14% in the 12 months to September 2023, and the rate of serious assaults increased 14% over the same period. The rate of assaults was 67% higher in female establishments than in male establishments and saw a greater increase in the latest 12 months. In female establishments the rate increased by 19% to a peak of 488 per 1,000 prisoners, compared to an increase of 14% in male establishments (292 per 1,000 prisoners). However, the proportion of assaults in female establishments that were serious remains lower, at 7% compared with 12% in male establishments.

¹ The time series for assault incidents starts in 2000, and self-harm incidents starts in 2004.

² Rates reflect the changes in the number of incidents, as well as the changes in prison population over time. More information can be found in the accompanying guide. Data on population statistics are published in the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly publication <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>.

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 series³. This release provides statistics on deaths of prisoners to the end of December 2023, and statistics on assaults and self-harm up to the end of September 2023.

The latest 12-month data reflects the first full year since the exit from the National Framework in May 2022, following the period 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 to reduce the spread of Covid-19, reverse cohorting of new prisoners into custody, and shielding of vulnerable prisoners. During this period, we saw the progression of establishments to different levels of the National Framework for managing Covid. This affects the comparability of statistics in recent years, due to the differing level of restrictions.

The total prison population fell in the period following the first quarter of 2020, more so for certain population groups, but started to increase again in the second quarter of 2021 and as at 31 December 2023 is now higher than pre-Covid levels⁴. As at 31 December 2023, the total prison population was around 4,500 or 5% higher than at the end of March 2020. The female population has reduced by 2%, whereas the male population has increased by 6%. There has been a large increase in the prison population during 2023, with the population as at 31 December 2023 being around 5,700 or 7% higher than at the end of December 2022 (7% higher in male establishments and 14% higher in female establishments).

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 occurring⁵. 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 for the male and female estates.

In order to make the best use of capacity across the estate in the light of recent increases in the prison population during 2023, young people have routinely been retained in the Youth Custody Service (YCS) estate until their 19th birthday (rather than transferring to an adult prison on or soon after their 18th birthday, as previously occurred in most cases).

This means the age demographic in the young people's estate, but also in adult prisons, has been slightly different in the most recent few months, compared to previous years.

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.

³ 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.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly>. Quarterly population data to September 2023 is published in Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, England and Wales Quarterly.

⁵ 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.

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>

Figures for the number of self-harm and assault incidents occurring within the youth estate were removed from the published Safety in Custody statistics from the July 2022 release, please see that publication for more details. **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.

1 Deaths: 12 months ending December 2023

Number of deaths increased from the previous 12-month period

In the 12 months to December 2023, there were 311 deaths in prison custody, an **increase** of 3% from 301 deaths in the previous 12 months.

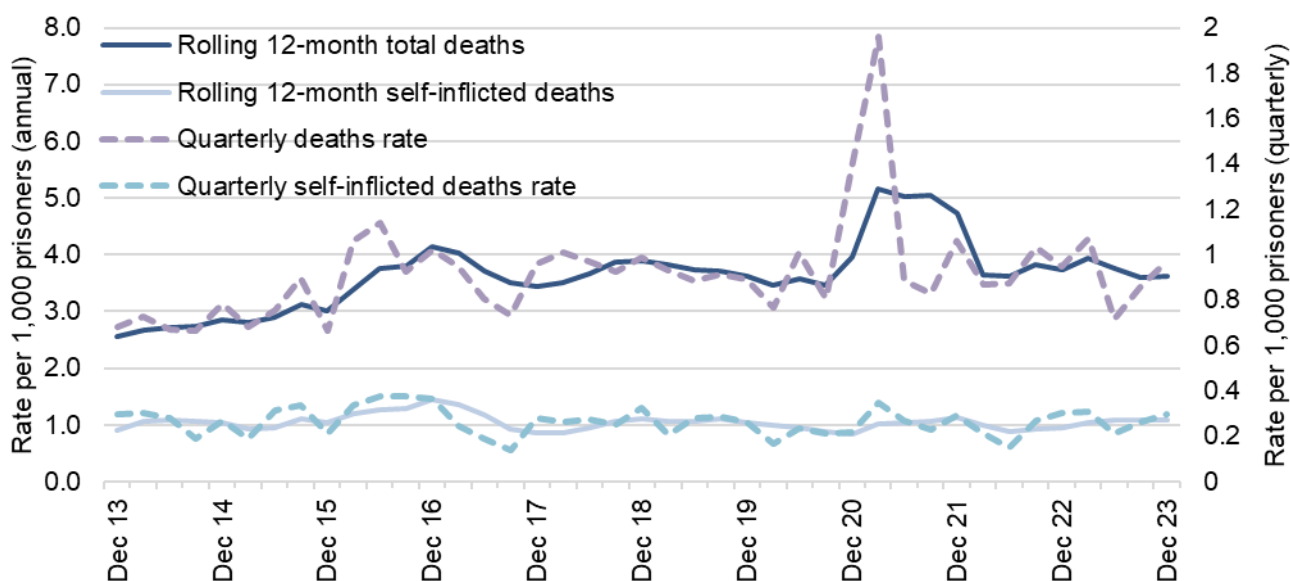
In the most recent quarter there were 85 deaths, a 13% **increase** from 75 deaths in the previous quarter.

Number of self-inflicted deaths increased from the previous 12-month period

In the 12 months to December 2023, there were 93 self-inflicted deaths, an **increase** of 22% from 76 in the previous 12 months.

There were 26 self-inflicted deaths in the most recent quarter, a 13% **increase** from 23 in the previous quarter.

Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending December 2013 to 12 months ending December 2023, with quarterly rates



In the 12 months to December 2023, there were 311 deaths in prison custody (a rate of 3.6 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase from 301 deaths in the previous 12 months (a rate of 3.7 per 1,000 prisoners). Long-term trends and more detail are presented in the annual tables⁶.

Over the same period, there were 179 deaths due to natural causes (a rate of 2.1 per 1,000 prisoners), a 10% decrease from 199 deaths (a rate of 2.5 per 1,000 prisoners) in the previous 12 months. The current rate is a return to pre-COVID levels, where a rate of 2.1 was last reported in the 12 months to December 2019.

There were 93 apparent self-inflicted deaths in the 12 months to December 2023 (a rate of 1.1 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 22% from 76 self-inflicted deaths in the previous 12 months

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 2023 is published in this Safety in Custody quarterly update to September 2023

(a rate of 0.9 per 1,000 prisoners). The rate of self-inflicted deaths has remained broadly stable at around 1 per 1,000 prisoners since the 12 months to December 2017.

There were 37 deaths recorded as 'Other' in the 12 months to December 2023, 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 Coroner's inquest takes place (which can be a considerable time after the death). As a result, the number and rate of deaths in the individual categories are 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 85 deaths, a 13% increase from 75 deaths in the previous quarter. There were 26 self-inflicted deaths in the latest quarter, a 13% increase from 23 in the previous quarter. However, quarterly death figures should be considered with caution due to greater volatility and the potential for seasonal effects⁷.

⁷ Seasonal effects refer to variation in timeseries data that occur at regular intervals (typically intervals shorter than a year e.g. monthly or quarterly).

Key findings from deaths annual tables and deaths data tool

Gender

The overwhelming majority of deaths in custody in 2023 (97%) occurred in the male estate, a finding that has been consistent over time.

There were 9 deaths in the female estate, up from 8 in 2022, accounting for around 3% 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 93 self-inflicted deaths in 2023, 90 of which occurred in the male estate (up from 71 in 2022) and 3 in the female estate (down from 5 in 2022).

Age

Prisoners aged 70 and over were more likely to die in custody compared to any other age group, with 44.7 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.

Out of 86 deaths amongst this age group, 82 were classified as natural causes, 3 were classified as self-inflicted and 1 is awaiting further information. Those aged over 50 accounted for 87% of all natural cause deaths in 2023.

Prisoners aged 70 and over had the highest rates of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners.

The rate of self-inflicted deaths was highest for prisoners aged 70 and over (1.6 per 1,000 prisoners) and 40 to 49 (1.4 per 1,000 prisoners) in 2023. The rates for these age groups were 0 and 1.3 respectively in 2022. The number of self-inflicted deaths in the 70 and over age group peaked at 3 this year, however it has the highest rate due to the small prison population in that age group.

The rate for prisoners aged 30 to 39 was lower at 1.0 per 1,000 prisoners, despite this age group having the highest number of self-inflicted deaths with 30, reflecting the higher prison population for this age group. Self-inflicted deaths make up a larger proportion of the deaths for younger age groups, reflecting the lower rates of death from natural causes.

Ethnicity

The rate of self-inflicted deaths in 2023 was the same amongst White prisoners as prisoners of all other ethnic groups combined

The rate of self-inflicted deaths stayed the same between 2022 to 2023 at 1.1 for White prisoners but increased from 0.5 in 2022 to 1.1 in 2023 for prisoners of all other ethnic groups combined. The rise in all other ethnic groups is driven primarily by the Black or Black British ethnic group where the rate increased from 0.1 in 2022 to 1.3 in 2023.

Nationality

UK nationals had a much lower rate of self-inflicted deaths than foreign nationals 2023 (1.0 per 1,000 prisoners compared to 2.0).

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was 1.0 for UK nationals and 2.0 for foreign nationals in 2023, increases from 0.9 for both UK nationals and foreign nationals in 2022. Prior to 2023, in recent years the rate of self-inflicted deaths had been similar among

UK and foreign nationals.

Self-inflicted deaths among foreign nationals accounted for 23% of all self-inflicted deaths in 2023, up from 12% in 2022.

Time in custody

In 2023, 17% of self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days of custody.

There were 16 self-inflicted deaths within the first 30 days of custody (17% of all self-inflicted deaths), of which 7 occurred within the first week in custody (8%).

In 2023, when including prisoners who have been transferred between prisons, 24 self-inflicted deaths occurred within the first 30 days in the current prison (26%), of which 11 occurred within the first week (12%).

Sentence type

Prisoners who were on remand continue to have a higher rate of self-inflicted deaths than sentenced prisoners.

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was 1.8 for prisoners on remand (a decrease from 2.0 in 2022) and 0.9 for sentenced prisoners (an increase from 0.7 in 2022).

In 2023, 30% of all self-inflicted deaths were by prisoners on remand, a decrease from 36% of all self-inflicted deaths in 2022.

Offence

In 2023, 32% 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 (32%), miscellaneous crimes against society (15%), and sexual offences (14%) accounted for the majority of self-inflicted deaths.

The rate of self-inflicted deaths per 1,000 prisoners was 1.1 for prisoners serving sentences for offences of violence against the person (a decrease from 1.3 in 2022), 4.3 for prisoners serving sentences for miscellaneous crimes against society (an increase from 2.5 in 2022), and 0.9 for prisoners serving sentences for sexual offences (an increase from 0.5 in 2022).

Method of self-inflicted death

Hanging remains the most common method of self-inflicted death in 2023, accounting for 80% of all incidents.

Of the 80 self-inflicted deaths with method of hanging or self-strangulation in 2023, bedding remains the most commonly used ligature type (accounting for 61% of these incidents). The window remains the most commonly used ligature point (accounting for 28% of these incidents), followed by the bed (19% of these incidents).

2 Self-harm: 12 months to September 2023

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

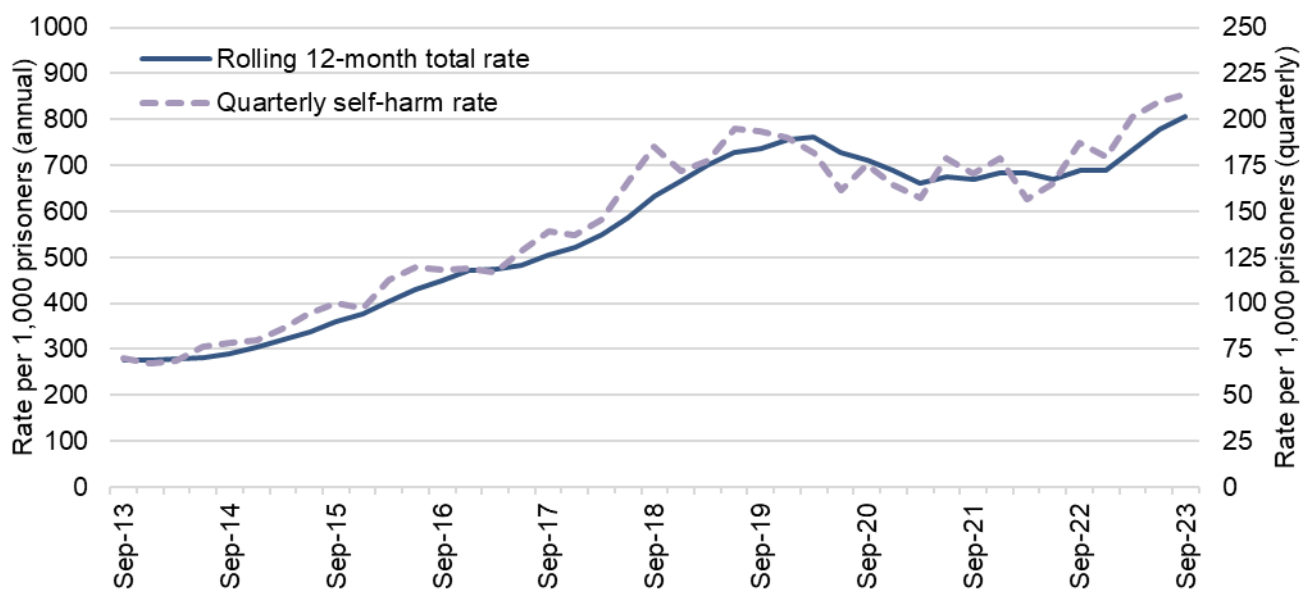
There were 67,773 self-harm incidents in the 12 months to September 2023, a 24% **increase** from the previous 12 months (a 17% **increase** in male establishments and a 43% **increase** in female establishments). Over the same period the rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners **increased** by 11% in male establishments and by 38% in female establishments.

In the most recent quarter, there were 18,686 self-harm incidents, **up** 5% on the previous quarter (a 10% **increase** in male establishments but a 6% **decrease** in female establishments).

The number of individuals who self-harmed increased 11% in the latest year.

There were 12,292 individuals who self-harmed in the 12 months to September 2023, an 11% **increase** from 11,076 in the previous 12 months. The number of self-harm incidents per individual **increased** from 5.0 in the 12 months to September 2022 to 5.5 in the 12 months to September 2023.

Figure 2: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending September 2013 to 12 months ending September 2023, with quarterly rates



In the 12 months to September 2023, there were 67,773 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 805 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 24% from 54,842 in the previous 12 months. The rate of incidents in the latest 12 months increased 17% from the previous 12 months to the highest level in the time series⁸.

On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to September 2023 increased by 5% from the previous quarter, from 17,730 to a new peak of 18,686 incidents. Additionally, the rate of incidents of self-harm in the three months to September 2023 increased by 2% from the previous quarter, from 210 to a new peak of 214 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.

The number of individuals who self-harmed increased by 11% to 12,292 in the latest 12 months (a rate of 146 individuals per 1,000 prisoners), from 11,076 in the previous 12 months. The rate,

⁸ The time series for assault incidents starts in 2000, and self-harm incidents starts in 2004.

or proportion, of prisoners self-harming in the latest 12 months was 5% higher than in the previous 12 months. The number of incidents per self-harming individual in the latest 12 months reached a new peak of 5.5, an increase from 5.0 in the previous year. A small number of individuals who prolifically self-harm have a disproportionate impact on this figure: just over a half (51%) of prisoners who self-harmed in 2022 did so more than once.

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance⁹ increased by 13% to 3,114 in the 12 months to September 2023 and increased by 2% in the latest quarter to 890 incidents. The proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance has decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 4.6% in the 12 months to September 2023.

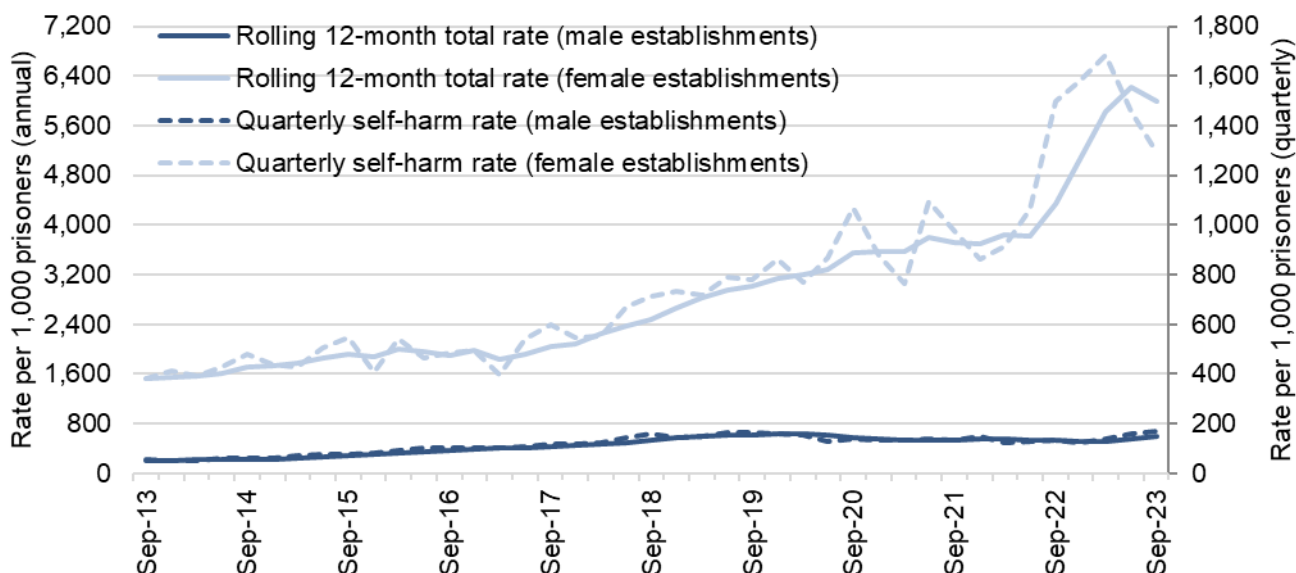
Self-harm levels differ considerably by gender. Although the number of incidents in the female estate is smaller than in the male estate, the rate of self-harm per 1,000 prisoners is much higher. In the 12 months to September 2023, there were 47,778 incidents in the male estate compared with 19,995 in the female estate, representing a 17% increase in male establishments and a 43% increase in female establishments compared to the previous year. However, the rate of self-harm in the female estate (5,988 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) was over ten times higher than in the male estate (591 incidents per 1,000 prisoners), following an 11% increase in male establishments and a 38% increase in female establishments. The number of incidents and rate of self-harm in the female estate are now at the highest level in the time series.

The number of incidents per individual who self-harmed in female establishments was almost four times that in male establishments. In the 12 months to September 2023 there was a new peak of 16.8 incidents of self-harm per self-harming female, a considerable increase from 12.7 in the previous 12 months, compared with 4.3 incidents per self-harming male, an increase from 4.1 in the previous 12 months.

The proportion of females self-harming in the latest 12 months was 4% higher than in the previous 12 months, at 357 individuals per 1,000 prisoners. The increase in self-harm in the female estate has been predominantly driven by the substantial increase in incidents per self-harming individual, alongside a smaller increase of 8% in the number of females self-harming. Over the same period, the proportion of prisoners self-harming in male establishments increased by 5%, to 137 individuals per 1,000 prisoners. The increase in self-harm in the male estate is driven by both an increase in the rate of individuals self-harming (5% increase to 137 per 1,000 prisoners), and by an increase in the number of self-harm incidents per individual (5% increase to 4.3 incidents per individual).

Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2013 to 12 months ending September 2023

⁹ An incident of self-harm requiring hospitalisation does not only reflect the seriousness of the incident. This also depends on the healthcare facilities at the establishment, which vary across the estate.



Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased in male establishments by 9%, to 2,743 in the 12 months to September 2023, but the proportion of incidents requiring hospital attendance decreased from 6.2% in the previous 12 months to 5.7% in the latest 12 months. In the female estate 371 self-harm incidents required hospital attendance, a 51% increase from 245 incidents the previous year. However, the proportion of incidents in the female estate requiring hospital attendance was 1.9% in the 12 months to September 2023, up slightly from 1.8% in the previous 12 months, reflecting that the considerable increase in self-harm incidents in the female estate has been predominantly in incidents not requiring hospital treatment.

On a quarterly basis, the number of incidents in the three months to September 2023 increased by 10% in male establishments and decreased 6% in female establishments compared with the previous three months. The rate increased 6% in male establishments and decreased 12% in female establishments over the same period.

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 the small number of individuals who engage in prolific self-harming being greater 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.

3 Assaults: 12 months to September 2023

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

In the 12 months to September 2023, there were 25,223 assault incidents, a 21% **increase** from the previous 12 months. Of these, 2,837 were serious assaults, **up** 21%. Rates of assault and serious assault both **increased** by 14%, to 300 and 34 incidents per 1,000 prisoners respectively in the latest 12 months.

Assaults **increased** 11% in the latest quarter to 7,268 incidents while the number of serious assaults **increased** by 3% to 790 incidents.

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

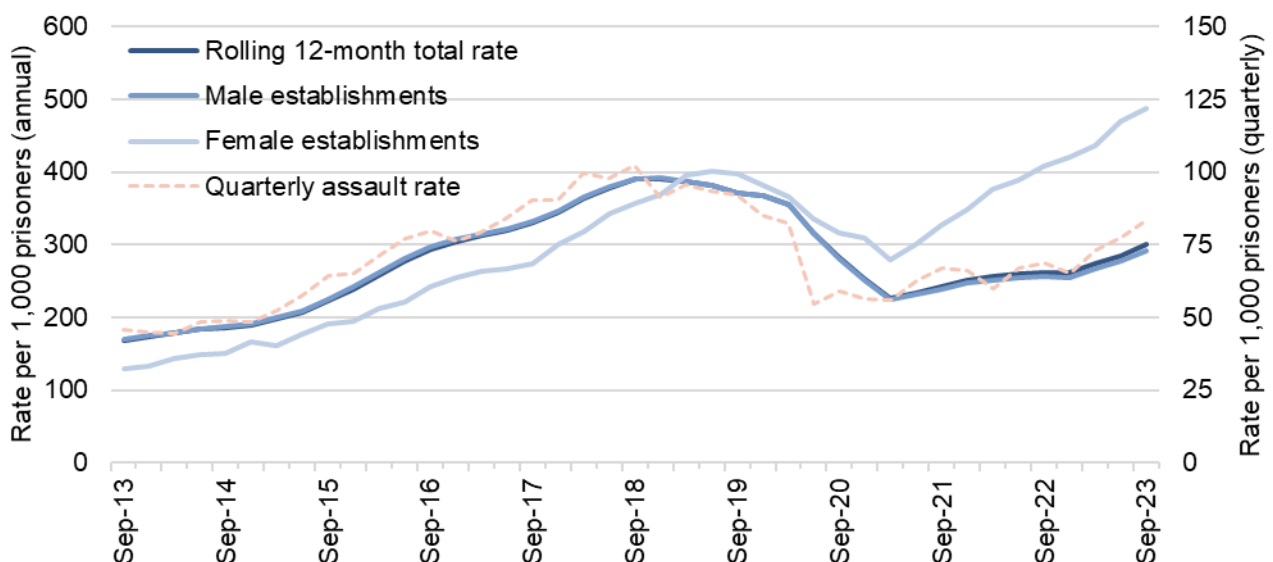
The rate of assault in male establishments **increased** by 14% from the previous 12 months, while the rate in female establishments **increased** by 19%. Assault rates for the 12 months to September 2023 remained higher in female establishments (488 incidents per 1,000 prisoners) than in male establishments (292 incidents per 1,000 prisoners).

Assaults on staff increased from the previous 12-month period.

There were 8,516 assaults on staff in the 12 months to September 2023, a 16% **increase** from the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter the number of assaults on staff **increased** by 13% to 2,506 incidents.

In the latest 12 months, the rate of assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners **increased** by 10% to 101 incidents per 1,000 prisoners. During this period, the rate in male establishments **increased** by 9% to 96 assaults per 1,000 prisoners and **increased** by 15% to 235 assaults per 1,000 prisoners in female establishments.

Figure 4: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending September 2013 to 12 months ending September 2023, with quarterly rates



In the 12 months to September 2023, assault incidents increased by 21% to 25,223 (a rate of 300 incidents per 1,000 prisoners). The rate of assaults in the latest 12 months was 14% higher than in the previous 12 months.

In the latest quarter there were 7,268 assaults, up 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 pandemic, 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.

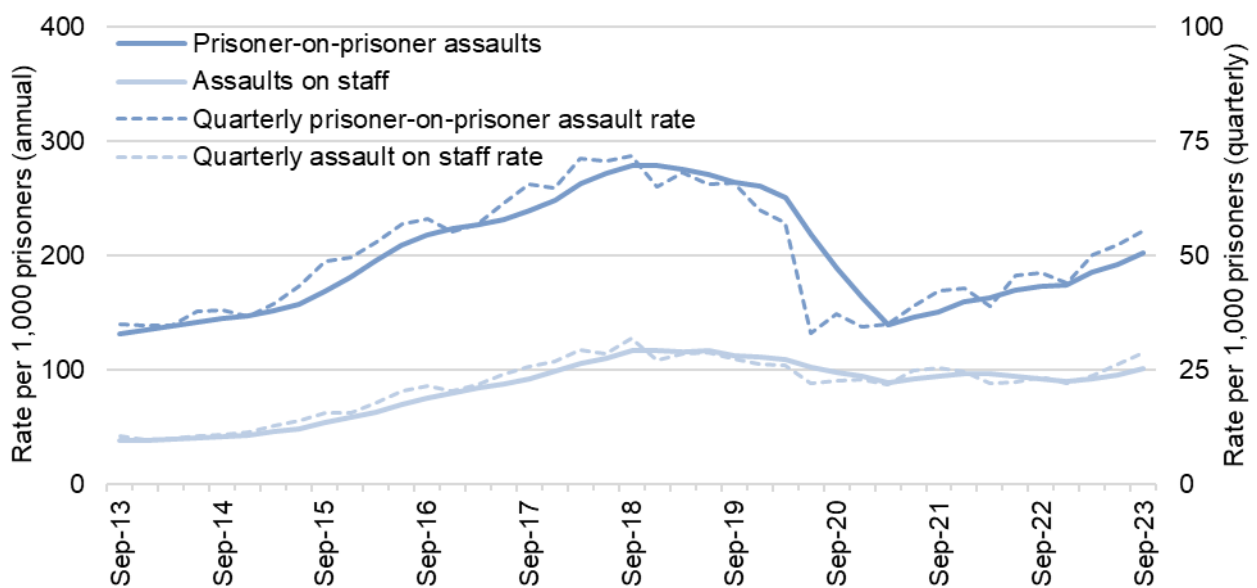
The number of incidents in male establishments increased by 21% from 19,578 to 23,593 in the 12 months to September 2023 (a rate of 292 per 1,000 prisoners). The rate of assaults in male establishments in the latest 12 months was 14% higher than in the previous 12 months.

The number of incidents in female establishments increased by 24% from 1,316 to 1,630 incidents in the 12 months to September 2023 (a rate of 488 per 1,000 prisoners). The rate of assaults in female establishments in the latest 12 months was 19% higher than in the previous 12 months, it is now at its highest level in the time series¹⁰. The rate in female establishments is higher than it was pre-pandemic (488 compared to 398 in the 12 months to September 2019) while the rate in male establishments remains lower than pre-pandemic (292 compared to 374 in the 12 months to September 2019).

Assault rates have been higher in female establishments than in male establishments since the 12 months to September 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 increased 11% from 6,128 to 6,789, and the number of assaults in female establishments increased by 11% from 431 to 479. During this period the rate of assaults increased by 7% to 83 assaults per 1,000 prisoners, comprising a 7% increase in male establishments (81 assaults per 1,000 prisoners) and 5% increase in female establishments (135 assaults per 1,000 prisoners).

Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending September 2013 to 12 months ending September 2023, with quarterly rates



¹⁰ The time series for assault incidents starts in 2000, and self-harm incidents starts in 2004.

There were 16,995 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults¹¹ in the 12 months to September 2023 (a rate of 202 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 23% from the 13,803 assaults in the previous 12 months. The rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the latest 12 months was 17% higher than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 4,829 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 9% increase from 4,438 in the previous quarter.

There were 8,516 assaults on staff¹² in the 12 months to September 2023 (a rate of 101 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 16% from the 7,352 assaults in the previous 12 months. The rate of assaults on staff in the latest 12 months was 10% higher than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 2,506 assaults on staff, a 13% increase from 2,222 incidents in the previous quarter.

The proportion of assaults on staff¹³ decreased slightly to 34% of all incidents in the 12 months to September 2023, from 35% in the previous 12 months, having previously steadily increased from 22% in the 12 months to September 2013 to a peak of 39% in the year to September 2021. In the 12 months to September 2023, the proportion of assaults that were on staff remained higher in female establishments (48%) than in male establishments (33%).

In male establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 23% to 16,138 incidents (200 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2023, and the rate increased 16%. Assaults on staff increased 15% to 7,731 incidents, and the rate increased by 9% to 96 incidents per 1,000 male prisoners.

In female establishments, prisoner-on-prisoner assaults increased by 28% to 857 incidents (257 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2023, and the rate increased by 24%. Assaults on staff increased by 20% to 785 incidents (235 incidents per 1,000 female prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2023, and the rate increased by 15%. In the 12 months to September 2023, the rates of both prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff in female establishments reached a new peak.

¹¹ This figure includes any prisoner-on-prisoner assaults where there may also have been an assault on staff.

¹² 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

¹³ Some assault incidents may be recorded as both a prisoner-on-prisoner assault and an assault on staff, so the sum of the two categories may exceed the total number of assaults

Serious assaults

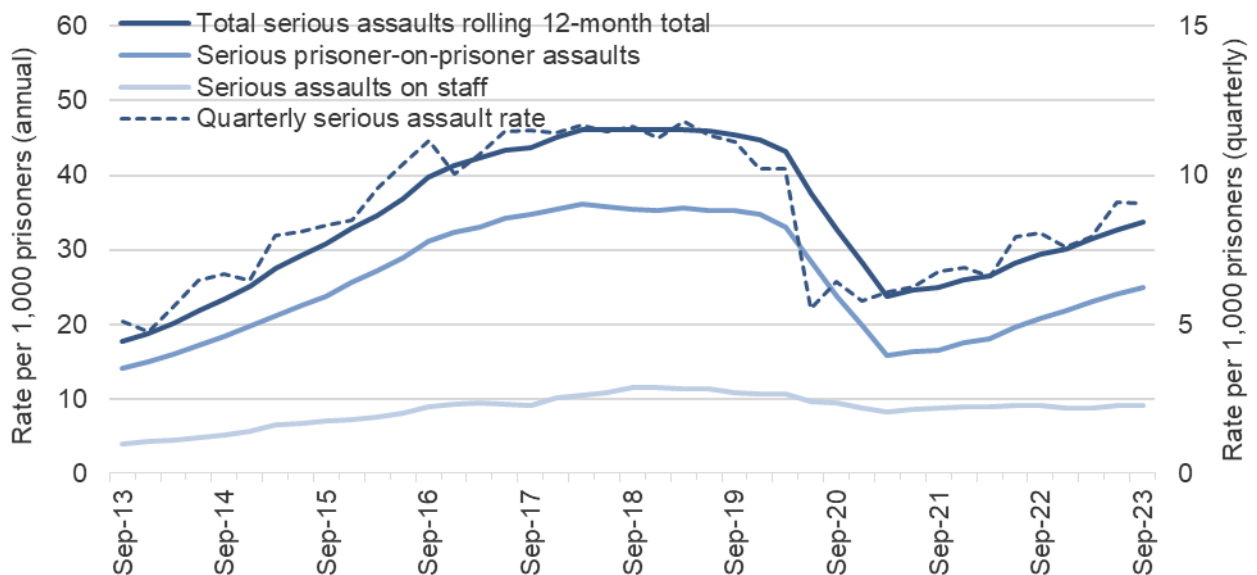
Of the 25,223 assault incidents, 2,837 (11%) were serious.

In the 12 months to September 2023, there were 2,837 serious assault incidents, a 21% **increase** from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assaults **increased** by 14% over the period.

Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults **increased** by 26% to 2,100, and serious assaults on staff increased by 6% to 765 in the 12 months to September 2023.

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 2013 to 12 months ending September 2023



In the latest 12 months, 11% of assaults were serious assaults. This is the same as the 12 months to September 2022 and has remained broadly consistent throughout the time series. The proportion of all assaults that were serious remained higher in male establishments (12%) than in female establishments (7%).

In the 12 months to September 2023, there were 2,837 serious assaults (a rate of 34 per 1,000 prisoners), a 21% increase from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assaults in the latest 12 months was 14% higher than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 790 serious assaults, a 3% increase from the previous quarter.

There were 2,100 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 25 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2023, a 26% increase from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in the latest 12 months was 19% higher than in the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, there were 580 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a 2% increase from the previous quarter.

In the 12 months to September 2023, the rate of serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults remains higher in the male estate (a rate of 25 per 1,000 prisoners) compared to the female estate (22 per 1,000 prisoners). However, this is the closest they have been in the time series¹⁴ and represents an increase on the previous 12 months of 18% in the male estate and 80% in the female estate.

There were 765 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 9 per 1,000 prisoners) in the 12 months to September 2023, a 6% increase from the previous 12 months. The rate of serious assaults on staff in the latest 12 months remained unchanged compared with the previous 12 months. In the latest quarter, the number of serious assaults on staff remained unchanged at 217 incidents.

¹⁴ The time series for assault incidents starts in 2000, and self-harm incidents starts in 2004.

Further Information

National Statistics status

National Statistics are [accredited official statistics](#)¹⁵ that 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.



These accredited official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in March 2013. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'.

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.

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.

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.

¹⁵ Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

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Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly, using the details above, with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

Next update: April 2024

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

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