



Ministry
of Justice



Safety in Custody Statistics England and Wales Update to December 2013

Ministry of Justice
Statistics bulletin

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Introduction

Safety in custody statistics cover deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody in England and Wales. This publication updates statistics up to the end of December 2013. Supplementary tables, providing more in depth statistics on deaths, self-harm and assaults on a calendar year basis, are also available alongside this table and can be found at www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics.

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

In interpreting the statistics contained within this bulletin, users are recommended to read with it the accompanying 'Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics'¹ that includes technical and background information on the production of these statistics, and more information on data quality.

When considering particular statistics, readers should note the following:

- Risk of death, self-harm or assaults is distributed unevenly around the prison estate. Age, gender and time in custody, and random variation, explain many of the differences between prisons and particular risk groups.
- In prisons, as in the community, self-harm is often covert and assaults may go unreported. In prison custody, however, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. Recording of self-harm and assault incidents in prison custody has improved over the years but it remains the case that they cannot be counted with absolute accuracy.

Although this publication concerns statistics, the incidents described in this report are, by their nature, tragic and distressing to the prisoners, their families and staff.

From time to time, events in prison custody and developments within and outside NOMS have changed the way safety in prisons is viewed and managed. Some have resulted in changes to the way offenders are managed. Others have affected the way statistics are collected and reported. The accompanying guide includes a timeline summarising some of the key events and developments that have affected safety in prison custody and supporting statistics. These help with interpretation of longer term trends.

¹ Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

Additions to timeline

Additions to the time include the prison closures during 2013, and changes to the prison environment, including changes to the Incentives, Earnings and Privileges (IEP) scheme and the introduction of Fair and Sustainable and Benchmarking.

Interpreting annual establishment tables

This publication updates the accompanying annual supplementary tables to include 2013. Included in these annual tables are figures for individual prisons, Youth Offender Institutes and NOMS run Immigration Removal Centres for deaths, self-harm and assault incidents. As described in this report, gender, age and other factors such as the size and composition of the prison population, can affect the number of deaths, self-harm or assault incidents that occur in a particular establishment. Therefore, careful interpretation is needed of the incident level tables. A prison with a higher number of incidents than another prison may not necessarily be less safe prison as they may hold different numbers of prisoners.

Examples of the caution needed to be taken in interpreting year-on-year changes for individuals prisons are provided below:

Ashfield has seen a large reduction in the number of assault incidents in 2013 compared with 2012. This is due to the prison changing function from a Youth Offender Institute to a specialised Sex Offender prison during 2013.

The number of assault and self-harm incidents at Oakwood and Thameside increased from 2012 to 2013. The number of incidents at these prisons between 2013 and 2012 cannot be compared directly because the prisons were in an opening phase during this period. Oakwood opened in late April 2012 and was increasing its prison population throughout 2012 and in early 2013. Therefore Oakwood's figures for 2012 represent only a partial year of operation and a much smaller population than in 2013.

Changes and revisions in this publication

Deaths: One death in 1994 has been reclassified from a self-inflicted death to homicide as a result of new information and a prisoner being convicted of murder. Following a quality assurance exercise on all available data an additional death has been included in years 2005, 2008 and 2010. In all cases, the death was of natural causes.

Self-harm and assaults: Revisions have been made to the time-in (Tables 2.5 and 3.4) and status (tables 2.6 and 3.5) tables:

- Tables 2.5 and 3.4 for time in current prisons have been amended after it was discovered that following the move in administrative systems the entry in to prison date was incorrectly delivered in the data extract instead of the date in to current prison. A new methodology has been developed to overcome this data feed problem and figures since 2008 have been amended. This has resulted in the number of unknown cases increasing but it is anticipated that the numbers will reduce in future years.
- The status tables have changed after a processing error was discovered in how the coding frame was labelled. The main change resulting from this correction is the majority of those previously recorded in convicted unsentenced will now appear under Remand untried. This affects tables 2.6 and 3.5 only.

Users and uses of these Statistics

The cost of deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody, in both human and financial terms is high. This report adds to the body of learning in this area and supports work to

prevent such tragedies in future. The contents support a wide range of operational and strategic decisions including:

- Management of risk;
- Deployment of staff (identification of high risk periods and locations etc.);
- Design of prison cells (identification and reduction of ligature points);
- Assessment of changes in sentencing and other policies affecting prisoners.

The statistics included in this publication are used extensively and meet a broad spectrum of user needs as shown below.

User	Summary of main statistical needs
MOJ Ministers	Use the statistics to monitor the safety and wellbeing of the prison population; assess policy impacts (e.g. changes to managing vulnerable prisoners)
MPs and House of Lords	Statistics are used to answer parliamentary questions – approximately 50 are answered each year
Policy teams	Statistics are used to inform policy development, to monitor impact of changes over time and to model future changes and their impact on the system
Agencies responsible for offender management	Current and historical robust administrative data are used to support performance management information at national and local levels to complement their understanding of the current picture and trends over time
Academia, students and businesses	Used as a source of statistics for research purposes and to support lectures, presentations and conferences
Journalists	Used as a compendium of robust data on safety in custody so that an accurate and coherent story can be told on the safety of the prison environment.
Voluntary sector	Data are used to monitor trends of the safety and wellbeing of prisoners, to reuse the data in their own briefing and research papers and to inform policy work and responses to consultations.
General public	Data are used to respond to ad-hoc requests and requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. Recent requests include number of deaths, self-harm and assaults in prisons.

NOMS regularly receives requests for statistics for more recent, or different, date periods than those covered in published statistics. In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, NOMS is generally unable to release statistics for periods beyond those published in Official Statistics publications.

Related publications

This bulletin is published alongside two inter-related bulletins:

Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin²: This provides key statistics relating to offenders who are in prison or under Probation Service supervision. It covers flows into these services (receptions into prison or probation starts) and flows out (discharges from prison or probation terminations) as well as the caseload of both services at specific points in time.

² Offender Management Statistics www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly

Proven Re-offending Statistics Quarterly³: This provides proven re-offending figures for offenders who were released from custody, received a non-custodial conviction at court, received a caution, reprimand, warning or tested positive for opiates or cocaine.

Taken together, these publications present users with a more coherent overview of offender management, re-offending among both adults and young people and the safety of offenders whilst in prison custody.

Release Schedule

This bulletin was published on 24 April 2014 and includes statistics for calendar years up to 2013.

The next publication of Safety in Custody statistics is scheduled to be published on 31 July 2014, covering 12-month periods to end of March 2014.

³ Proven Reoffending Statistics www.gov.uk/government/collections/proven-reoffending-statistics

Key findings

Table 1: Safety in Custody Summary Statistics, England and Wales

	12 months ending									
	Dec 04	Dec 05	Dec 06	Dec 07	Dec 08	Dec 09	Dec 10	Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13
Total deaths	208	175	153	185	166	169	198	192	192	215
Self-inflicted	96	78	66	92	61	61	58	57	60	74
Natural Causes	101	89	83	88	99	104	126	122	121	123
Homicide	2	3	0	1	3	0	1	2	0	4
Other ¹	9	5	4	4	3	4	13	11	11	14
Self-harm incidents²	-	23,781	23,400	23,000	25,234	24,184	26,979	24,648	23,158	23,183
Males	-	10,420	11,899	11,592	12,219	13,706	14,347	15,829	16,567	17,213
Females	-	13,361	11,501	11,408	13,015	10,478	12,632	8,819	6,591	5,970
Assault incidents	12,616	14,413	15,057	15,272	15,959	15,180	14,335	15,440	14,511	14,125
Male establishments	11,753	13,324	13,895	14,267	15,054	14,475	13,682	14,742	13,961	13,637
Female establishments	863	1,089	1,162	1,005	905	705	653	698	550	488

1. 'Other' deaths include accidental and other difficult to classify deaths including those for which further information is awaited. A minority of the most recent two years figures are expected to be reclassified as natural causes.

2. A new system for monitoring self-harm was introduced in December 2002. As a result, recording of self-harm improved throughout 2003. 12 month periods that include parts of 2003 and earlier years are therefore under-reported by modern standards and have been omitted from this table.

- Deaths in prison custody increased to 215 in 2013 – the highest number of deaths recorded in prison custody in any calendar year – from 198 in 2012. The death rate in 2013 increased to 2.55 deaths per 1,000 prisoners compared with 2.23 in 2012. This increase comes from a period of relative stability in the death rate in prisons. Self-inflicted deaths increased to 74 in 2013 from 60 in 2012. This is the highest number of self-inflicted deaths since 2007. The rate of self-inflicted deaths was 0.9 deaths per 1,000 prisoners up from 0.7 deaths per 1,000 in 2012.
- Sharp falls in female self-harm incidents have driven down the overall number of self-harm incidents over the last three years, despite incidence of male self-harm increasing. The number of incidents of self-harm by female prisoners has fallen by over 50% since 2010 from 12,632 incidents to 5,970 incidents.
- In contrast, incidents of male self-harm have seen year-on-year increases over the same period increasing from 14,347 incidents to 17,213 incidents. Despite these differences in trends, females still account for a disproportionate amount of self-harm in prison custody.
- The number of incidents of recorded assaults (including fights) in prison custody has returned to a falling trend over the medium term; falling to 14,125 in the 12 months to December 2013 compared with 15,959 in December 2008. However, the falls occur amongst prisoners aged under 21 which have reduced by over 2,500 incidents since 2008. In contrast assaults amongst adult prisoners (aged 21 and over) have increased by around 1,500 incidents over the same time period.
- The number of assaults on staff has increased to 3,148 incidents from 2,987 in 2012, but similar to the number of assaults on staff in 2011. The number of serious assaults on staff has increased to 356 incidents from 260 in the previous year.

1 Deaths in custody

In 2013 there were 215 deaths in prison custody – an increase of 23 from the previous year. These deaths comprise of:

- **74 apparent self-inflicted deaths**, up from 60 in the previous year (23% increase);
- **123 deaths due to natural causes**, up from 121 in the previous year (2%);
- **4 apparent homicides**, up from 0 in the previous year;
- **14 other deaths**, all of which are yet to be classified awaiting further information. At this stage last year there were 11 deaths awaiting further information, of which 2 have since been reclassified.

A death in prison custody is defined as ‘any death of a person in prison custody arising from an incident in or, on rare occasions, immediately prior to prison custody’.

All deaths in prison custody are subject to a police investigation and a coroner’s inquest. Once the inquest has been concluded, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman’s office publish a detailed ‘Fatal Incident Report’⁴ on the death. Until this time, for administrative and statistical purposes NOMS classify deaths by *apparent* cause of death.

Annual supplementary tables published alongside this bulletin⁵ show that the key population factors in determining risk of death in custody are:

- Age: Older prisoners are more likely to die of natural causes. Self-inflicted death risk varies with age peaking amongst prisoners in their 30s;
- Time in custody: Self-inflicted deaths are more likely in the early stages of custody;
- Gender: Female prisoners are less likely to die in custody.

Table 2: Deaths in Custody Summary Statistics, England and Wales

	12 months ending									
	Dec 04	Dec 05	Dec 06	Dec 07	Dec 08	Dec 09	Dec 10	Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13
DEATHS										
Deaths in prison custody¹	208	175	153	185	166	169	198	192	192	215
Self-inflicted	96	78	66	92	61	61	58	57	60	74
Natural Causes	101	89	83	88	99	104	126	122	121	123
Homicide	2	3	0	1	3	0	1	2	0	4
Other ²	9	5	4	4	3	4	13	11	11	14
<i>of which</i>										
<i>Other/Non-natural</i>	9	5	4	4	3	4	11	9	2	0
<i>Awaiting further information</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	9	14
Deaths per 1,000 prisoners	2.8	2.3	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.6
Self-inflicted	1.3	1.0	0.8	1.1	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.9
Natural Causes	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.5
Deaths by Gender										
Male	188	168	147	177	161	162	190	187	188	209
Female	20	7	6	8	5	7	8	5	4	6

1. All classifications of deaths remain provisional until confirmed at inquest.

2. A minority of the most recent two years figures for ‘other’ deaths are expected to be re-classified as natural causes

As there are a number of deaths yet to be classified it is likely that some of these deaths will be reclassified as natural cause deaths when sufficient information becomes available, and

⁴ Prisons and Probation Ombudsman: Fatal Incident Reports www.ppo.gov.uk/prison-investigations.html

⁵ Deaths in Custody: Deaths tables at www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

some may be reclassified as self-inflicted. For this reason all figures for the last three years are provisional.

1.1 Overall mortality

There were 215 deaths in prison custody in 2013; 23 more than a year earlier (figure 1). This is the highest number in a calendar year.

Figure 1: Number of deaths in prison custody, 2001 to 2013

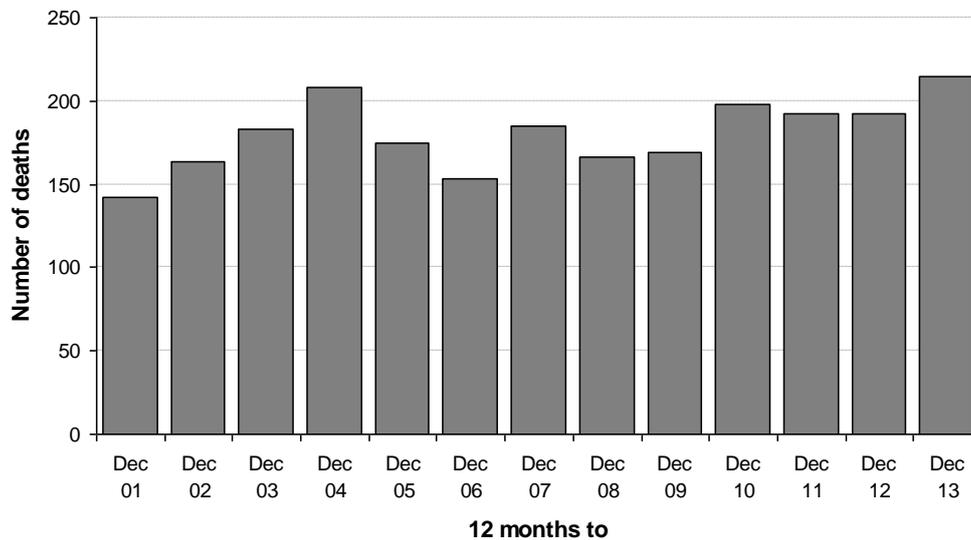
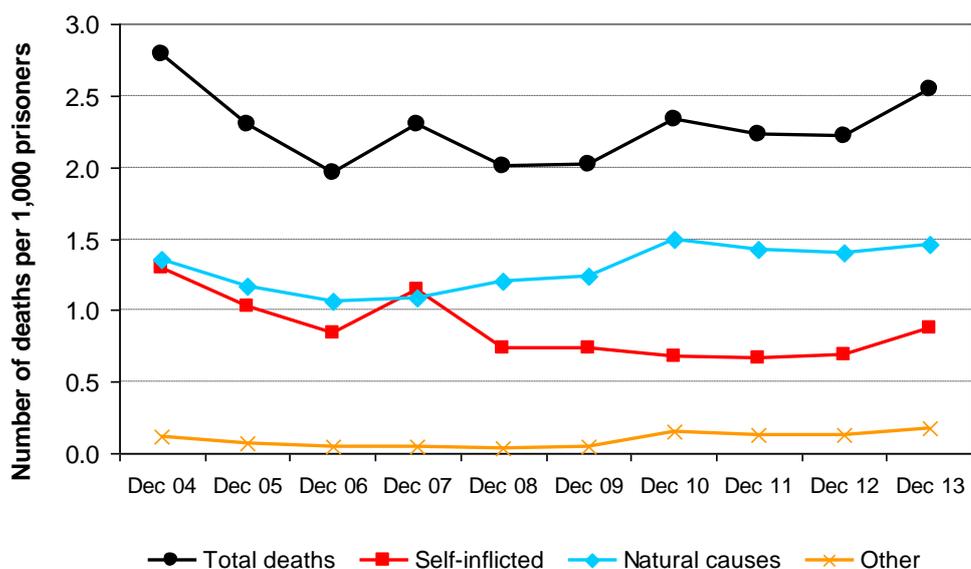


Figure 2 shows an increase in the death rate in 2013 to 2.55 deaths per 1,000 prisoners compared with 2.23 in 2012. This increase comes from a period of relatively stability in the death rate in prisons, although there were some fluctuations between years reflecting the natural variation that occurs with the frequency of deaths. The highest rate per 1,000 prisoners was 2.79 in 2004.

Figure 2: Deaths per 1,000 prisoners by apparent cause, England and Wales



1.2 Self-inflicted deaths

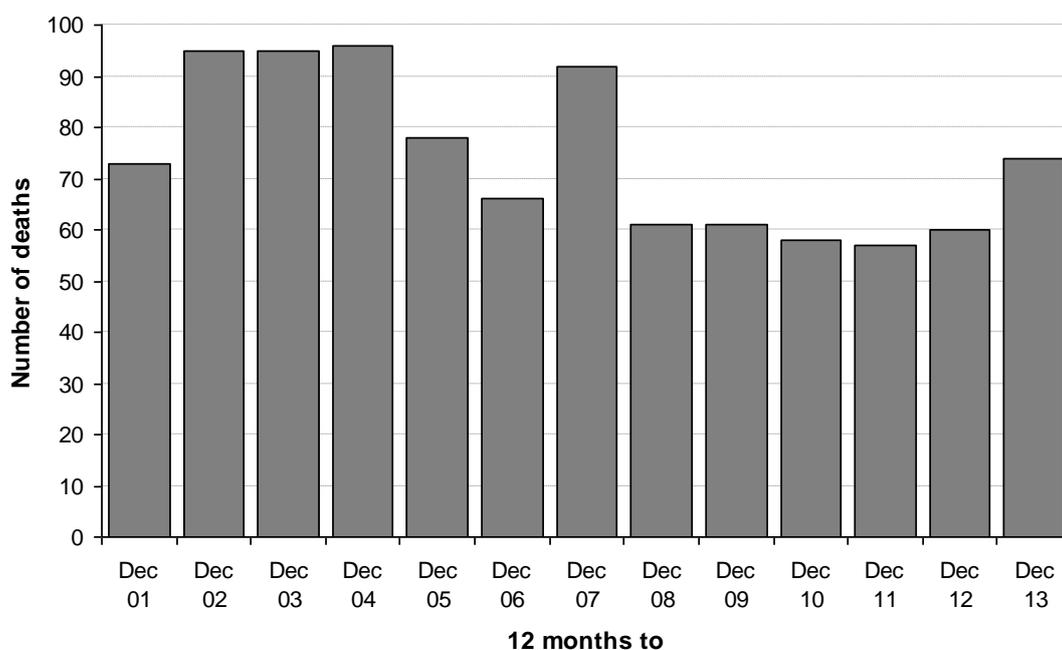
- **74 self-inflicted deaths** in 2013, 14 (23%) more than in the same period in 2012.
- The **rate of self-inflicted deaths increased to 0.9 per 1,000 prisoners**, from 0.7 in 2012.
- First death on 1st day in custody since 2008
- Nine-in-ten self-inflicted deaths occur from hanging

Self-inflicted deaths are any death of a person who has apparently taken his or her own life irrespective of intent. This not only includes suicides but also accidental deaths as a result of the person's own actions. This classification is used because it is not always known whether a person intended to commit suicide.

The number of self-inflicted deaths increased by 14 to 74 deaths in 2013. This increase has occurred after a period of relatively stability and is the highest number in a calendar year since 2007. As figure 3 shows an increase in a single year does not necessarily reflect a change in trend, with the number of self-inflicted deaths in 2008 falling back to trend. The highest number of self-inflicted deaths in a calendar year was in 2004 when there were 96 self-inflicted deaths.

The fall in the number of self-inflicted deaths from 2007 may be the result of a number of initiatives designed to reduce suicides in prison custody since. These include every prison officer being issued with a tool to enable them to cut down a prisoner attempting suicide as swiftly as possible, the introduction of safer cells which minimise the number of points to which a prisoner could attach a ligature and the introduction of Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) plans which develop a plan for managing prisoners at risk of suicide or self-harm dependent on the prisoner's needs.

Figure 3: Number of apparent self-inflicted deaths in prison custody, 12 months December 2001 to December 2013



The rate of self-inflicted deaths has increased to 0.9 deaths per 1,000 prisoners from 0.7 in 2012 (figure 1). The rate of self-inflicted deaths was consistently above 1 death per 1,000

prisoners between 1993 and 2005, peaking at 1.4 deaths per 1,000 prisoners in 1999 (table 1.1 in the deaths supplementary tables).

Annual tables

This edition of the Safety in Custody statistical bulletin updates the supplementary tables that provide more insights of the incidents described in this publication to include 2013. These tables include personal characteristics, time in prison, sentence type, method of death, ligatures used and ligature points.

Age and gender

Most self-inflicted deaths in prison custody are of male prisoners (72 male, 2 female in 2013). The increase in the number of self-inflicted deaths in 2013 is reflected entirely in the male estate, which increased to 72 deaths from 59 in the 2012. There were 2 self-inflicted deaths by female prisoners in 2013 which is consistent with recent years. Since 2008, the number of self-inflicted deaths by females in a year has ranged between 1 and 3. Between 2000 and 2008 the number of self-inflicted deaths by females averaged 8 a year, peaking at 14 in 2003.

Self-inflicted deaths in prison custody occur most often in males aged 30-39, with 18 in 2013, although the numbers in this age group have reduced from the numbers seen between 2002 and 2007 where there were between 24 and 30 deaths in each year.

The largest increase for any age group was for 25 to 30 year olds where the number of self-inflicted deaths increased to 14 from 6. There were no self-inflicted deaths of 15-17 year olds in Youth Offender Institutes (YOIs) in 2013.

In February 2014, the Government commissioned an independent review into the deaths of 18-24 year olds in custody to take into account deaths since 1st April 2007.⁶ Between the 1st April 2007 and 31 December 2013 there were 99 deaths in custody of 18-24 year olds, of which 84 were self-inflicted. In 2013, the number of self-inflicted deaths of 18-24 year olds increased to 12 from 9 in 2012. Since 2007, the number of self-inflicted deaths in this age group has ranged between 9 and 15.

Time in custody

In 2013, there was an increase in the proportion of self-inflicted deaths occurring in the early stages of custody. 38% (28) of self-inflicted deaths in 2013 occurred within the first 30 days of the prisoner arriving in to custody of the prison service. Although this was an increase from 2012 where 15% of deaths occurred in the first 30 days of custody, the proportion of self-inflicted deaths in the first 30 days in 2012 was exceptionally low. Between 2008 and 2011, the proportion of self-inflicted deaths occurring in the first 30 days of prison service custody was between 25% and 32%.

There was 1 self-inflicted death of a prisoner on their day of arrival in to prison custody in 2013 – the first since 2008. 9 deaths occurred with the first 2 full days of prison service custody. There were 14 self-inflicted deaths occurring between 8 and 30 days in prison service custody, which is the highest figure since 2005.

Ethnicity and nationality

In 2013, 65 self-inflicted deaths were of prisoners of White ethnicity, 8 Black ethnicity, 6 of Asian ethnicity and 2 of Mixed ethnicity. There is no significant change in the proportion of self-inflicted deaths between the ethnic groups.

⁶ www.justice.gov.uk/about/deaths-in-custody-independent-review

65 of the 74 self-inflicted deaths were of UK Nationals, 6 were of a nationality within the EEA, and 3 of a non-EEA country. This compares with 56 self-inflicted deaths of a UK National in 2012, 2 of an EEA country and 2 of a non-EEA country.

Methods and ligatures

Most self-inflicted deaths occur by hanging, with 9 in every 10 occurring this way. In 2013, this method occurred in 65 of the 74 self-inflicted deaths. 3 self-inflicted deaths were as a result of the prisoner causing a fatal cut to themselves, and 2 were as a result of arson. Other methods in 2013 were self-strangulation, suffocation, overdose and falling (all 1 each).

Of the 66 deaths using a ligature (65 hanging and 1 self-strangulation) in 2013, the most common item used for a ligature was bedding with 46 of the deaths using this item. The proportion of self-inflicted deaths using this item for a ligature is consistent with recent years. Other items used were belt (4), clothing (5), shoelace (6) and 5 deaths using other uncategorised form of ligature.

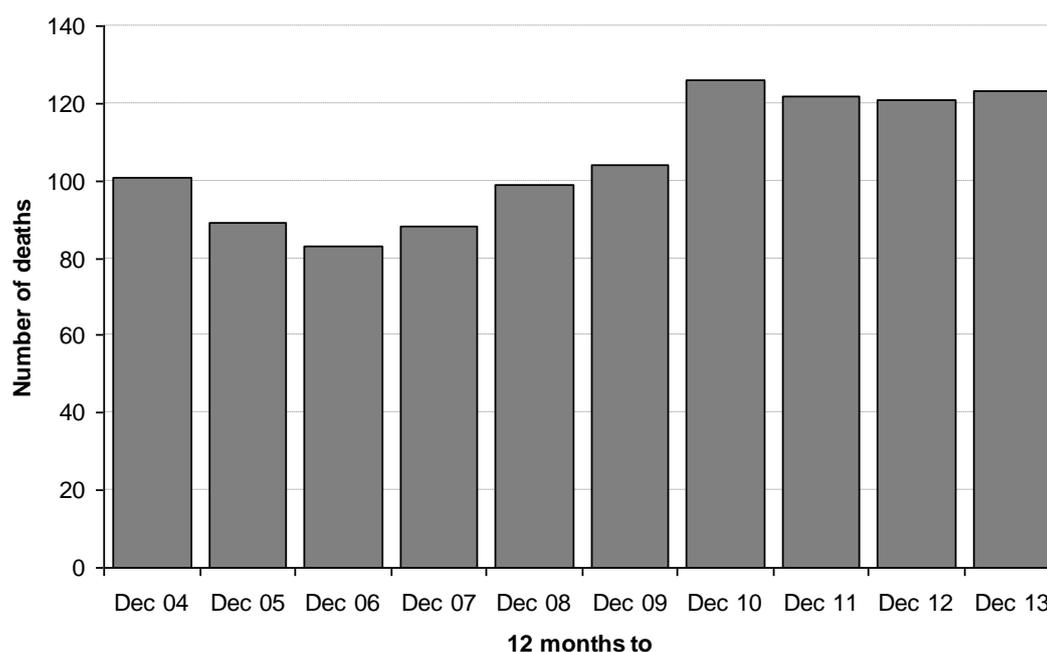
The window area is the most common point to which ligatures were attached with 23 self-inflicted deaths using this ligature point in 2013. This is 35% of self-inflicted deaths, similar to 2012, but lower than in any year between 1999 and 2011 where the window accounted for the ligature point in around half or more of self-inflicted deaths. More self-inflicted deaths used the bed as a ligature point in 2013 than in any year since 2000, with 18 self-inflicted deaths recorded as using this ligature point. Between 2007 and 2012, the range of self-inflicted deaths using the bed as a ligature point ranged between 7 and 13.

1.3 Natural cause deaths

Natural cause deaths include any death of a person as a result of a naturally occurring disease process.

- **123 natural cause deaths in 2013**, 2 (2%) more than in the same 12 months in 2012;
- **1.5 natural cause deaths per 1,000 prisoners** in 2013, up from 1.4 natural cause deaths per 1,000 prisoners in 2012.

Figure 4: Number of apparent natural cause deaths in prison custody, 12 months December 2004 to December 2013



There are 123 natural cause deaths currently recorded for 2013, 2 more than in 2012. It is likely that some of the 14 deaths currently recorded as awaiting further information will be changed to natural cause deaths when further information becomes available.

At this stage last year there were:

- 11 deaths awaiting further information for the 12 months to December 2012;
 - of these, 2 have now been re-classified; both to natural causes.

The uncertainty on these figures will not be entirely removed until after inquest.

Over the last four years, the number of natural cause deaths has remained around 120 deaths per year following a period of year on year increases.

As the prison population ages⁷ the number of natural cause deaths of older prisoners has also increased, with 70 of the 123 natural cause deaths (57%) being of prisoners aged 60 and over. The trend over recent years has seen an increase in the proportion of natural cause deaths of prisoners aged 60 and over from around 38% in 2007.⁸

⁷ Offender Management Statistics www.gov.uk/government/collections/offender-management-statistics-quarterly

⁸ Table 3.15, , Safety in Custody update to December 2013 Assault supplementary tables, www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

Despite the increase in prisoners aged 60 and over, the rate of natural cause deaths has remained relatively stable at around 1.5 deaths per 1,000 prisoners over the last 4 years which shows a reduction in natural cause deaths of prisoners aged under 60 over the same period.

1.4 Homicides

Homicides include any death of a person at the hands of another. This includes murder and manslaughter cases. As with self-inflicted deaths, the classification system does not make any judgement about intent.

- **4 apparent homicides in 2013** compared with none in 2012;
- Homicides are relatively rare accounting for less than 1% of all deaths in prison custody.

The 4 homicides in 2013 were the most in a single year since 1998.

Since 2004, there have been 18 apparent homicides in prisons up to the end of December 2013.

In comparison between 1990 and 1999, there were 26 homicides.

Cell-sharing risk assessments were introduced in 2002 with the aim of reducing the risk of placing prisoners in cells where they may cause harm to their cell companion.

1.5 Other deaths

'Other' deaths include any death of a person whose death cannot easily be classified as natural causes, self-inflicted or homicide. The category includes accidents and cases where the cause of death is unknown even after all of the investigations have been concluded.

There were **14 other deaths in 2013** (6.5% of all deaths). This number is not directly comparable with earlier years as some of the deaths in this category are likely to be reclassified as natural cause deaths following inquest. However, as a guide, at December 2012 there were 11 other deaths.

The numbers in this category have increased in recent years due to a number of cases that have proved difficult to classify.

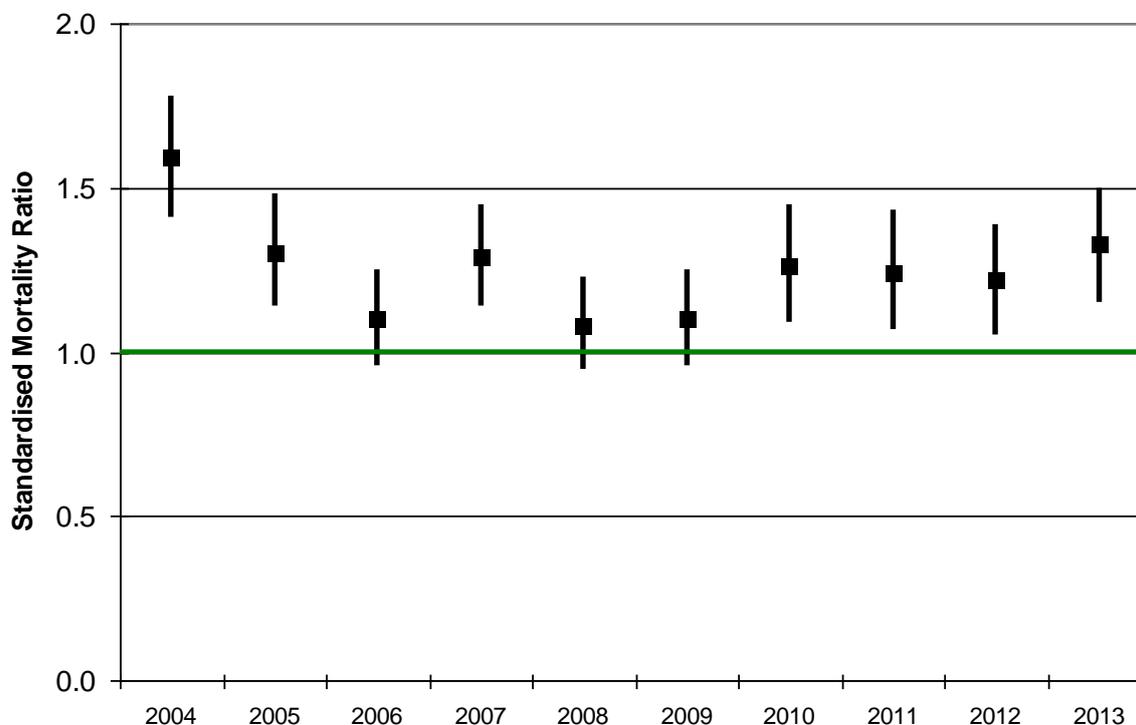
- At publication of the 2012, statistics there were 11 deaths awaiting further information, of which 9 remain. Both reclassifications are to natural causes.

The majority of deaths for which information is awaited beyond three months are expected to be classified as either 'other/non-natural' or natural causes.

Some of the cases in the aggregated 'other' category appear to be drug related but there is insufficient information to classify any to be self-inflicted. The uncertainty will not be entirely removed until after inquest.

1.6 Comparison of deaths in prison with those in the general population

Figure 5: Annual Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for prison population



The prison population is very different from the general population: 95% of the prison population are male, there are no prisoners aged under 15 and relatively few are over 60. As a result, rates of deaths in prison custody cannot be compared directly with those for the general population. One technique used for comparing mortality rates for different populations is known as the Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR).

Figure 5 is based on annual data and shows the Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for the prison population and its 95% confidence interval. It compares overall deaths with those of the general population of England and Wales taking into account differences in age and gender. If the minimum of the SMR confidence level of the SMR is above 1, then this indicates that the mortality rate of the prison population is significantly higher than that of the general population. In 2013, the SMR for the prison population was significantly higher than the general population with a ratio of 1.33 with a lower bound 95% confidence interval of 1.15 and an upper bound of 1.50. In seven out of the last ten years, prison mortality has been significantly higher than that of the general population. The increase in the ratio in 2013 compared with 2012 is not significant.

The chart is updated annually on a calendar year basis when the underlying data become available.

2 Self-harm

- Overall, the number of incidents of self-harm in prison custody is broadly unchanged in 2013 from a year earlier but with differing trends for males and females;
- **23,183 recorded incidents** in 2013, compared with 23,158 in the previous year (table 3);
- **275 incidents per 1,000 prisoners** in 2013, an increase from 267 in the previous year;
- **6,823 recorded individuals** – unchanged on the previous year.
- On average, **3.4 self-harm incidents per prisoner** who self-harms.

Self-harm in prison custody is defined as, “any act where a prisoner deliberately harms themselves irrespective of the method, intent or severity of any injury.” Those who self-harm often do so covertly. In the community, such self-harm will often go undetected. In prisons, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted although there will still be incidents that are not detected.

Annual statistics suggest the key factors determining the risk of self-harm in custody are:

- Age: Younger prisoners are more likely to self-harm than older prisoners⁹;
- Time in custody: A disproportionate amount of self-harm occurs in the early stages of custody¹⁰.
- Gender: Females are more likely to self-harm than males.

Table 3: Self-harm in Custody Summary Statistics, England and Wales

	12 months to								
	Dec 05	Dec 06	Dec 07	Dec 08	Dec 09	Dec 10	Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13
SELF-HARM									
Self-harm incidents	23,781	23,400	23,000	25,234	24,184	26,979	24,648	23,158	23,183
Males	10,420	11,899	11,592	12,219	13,706	14,347	15,829	16,567	17,213
Females	13,361	11,501	11,408	13,015	10,478	12,632	8,819	6,591	5,970
Self-harm individuals¹	5,837	6,090	6,296	6,586	7,149	6,767	6,907	6,821	6,823
Males	4,348	4,652	4,847	5,058	5,535	5,418	5,606	5,703	5,786
Females	1,489	1,438	1,449	1,528	1,614	1,349	1,301	1,118	1,037
Self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners	313	299	286	305	289	318	287	267	275
Males	146	161	153	156	173	178	194	201	214
Females	2,991	2,586	2,608	2,949	2,447	2,982	2,106	1,587	1,530
Self-harm individuals per 1,000 prisoners¹	77	78	78	80	86	80	80	79	81
Males	61	63	64	65	70	67	69	69	72
Females	333	323	331	346	377	318	311	269	266
Self-harm incidents per individual	4.1	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.4	4.0	3.6	3.4	3.4
Males	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.0
Females	9.0	8.0	7.9	8.5	6.5	9.4	6.8	5.9	5.8
Hospital Attendances	1,219	1,214	1,290	1,290	1,304	1,369	1,533	1,547	1,594
Males	985	1,001	1,104	1,083	1,131	1,193	1,375	1,391	1,475
Females	234	213	186	207	173	176	158	156	119

1. Numbers of individuals should be treated as approximate as the details of prisoners are not always recorded against each self-harm incident.

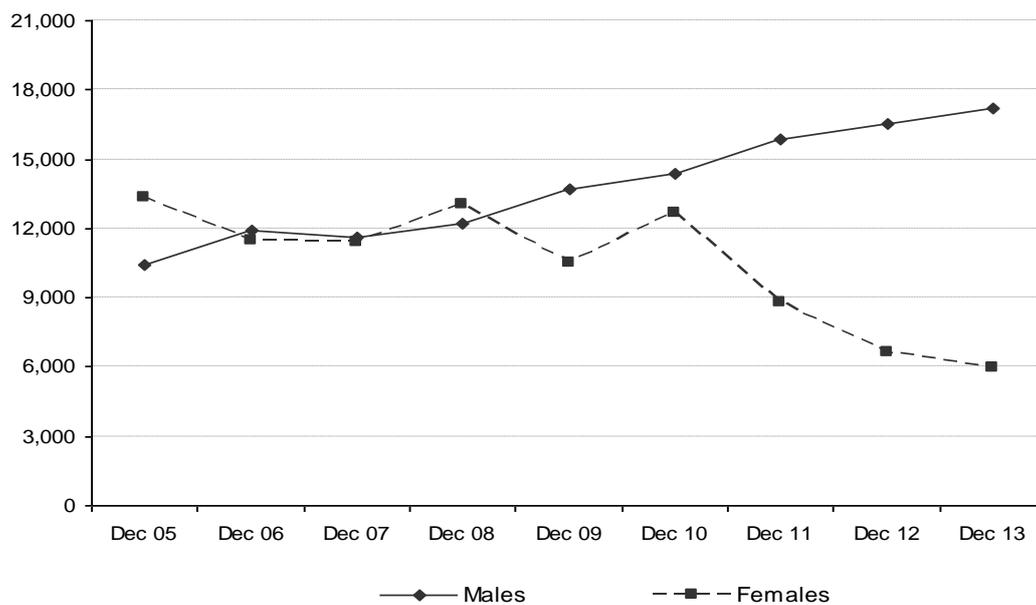
⁹ Safety in Custody: Self-harm Table 2.4

¹⁰ Safety in Custody: Self-harm Table 2.5 www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

In the last three years, self-harm has fallen to 23,183 incidents in 2013 from 26,979 incidents in 2010. Whilst the number of incidents is falling, the number of reported individuals self-harming has seen a much smaller fall over the last three years. This implies that individuals that do self-harm, do so fewer times.

The changes in the overall level of self-harm have been driven by changes in the female prison population who account for a disproportionate amount of self-harm incidents within prisons. As figure 6 shows, this masks a differing trend among male prisoners and as self-harm in custody differs between males and females it is better to consider the populations separately.

Figure 6: Number of self-harm incidents in prison custody by gender



2.1 Male self-harm

- 17,213 incidents of self-harm by male prisoners in 2013, up from 16,567 incidents (4%) in the previous year.
- The rate of male self-harm continues to rise and has increased to 214 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2013 compared with 201 in the previous 12 months.
- Since December 2005 male self-harm rates have increased by 47% from 146 incidents per 1,000 prisoners to 214 in the 12 months to December 2013.
- 72 male prisoners per 1,000 prisoners are recorded to have self-harmed in 2013 – up from 69 male prisoners per 1,000 a year earlier.
- Of those male prisoners who self-harm, they carry out, on average, 3.0 self-harm incidents in 2013, up from 2.9 incidents in the previous year.

The change in the prison population over time drives the number of self-harm incidents so to determine long-term trends it is better to consider the changes in rates of self-harm over time.

The rate of male individuals self-harming increased from 61 males per 1,000 prisoners to 72 males per 1,000 prisoners between 2005 and 2010. Since then the rate of increase has been more gradual.

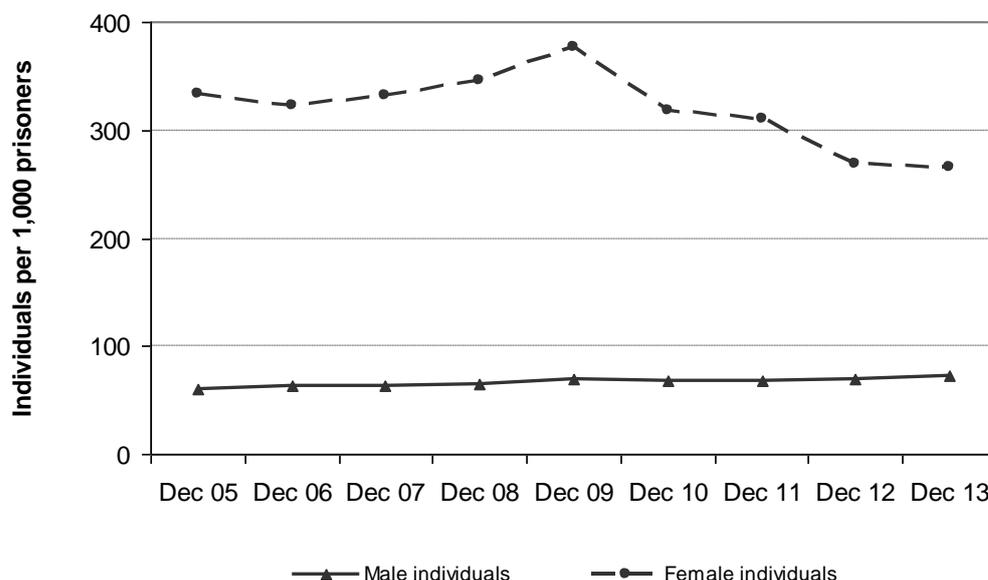
However, although the rate of individuals self-harming has levelled off over the last four years, the average number of self-harming acts those males commit on average has increased. In 2010, male prisoners carried out 2.6 self-harm incidents on average. Over the last three years that has increased to 3.0 incidents per male who self-harms on average.

2.2 Female self-harm

- 5,970 incidents of self-harm by female prisoners in the 12 months to the end of December 2013, down from 6,591 incidents in the previous 12 months – a fall of 9% in the last year and 47% in the last three years;
- The rate of female self-harm in the 12 months to the end of December 2013 was 266 females per 1,000 prisoners up by 3 from the previous 12 months;
- Female prisoners who self-harm, were responsible for 5.8 self-harm incidents on average in the 12 months to the end of December 2013, down from 5.9 incidents in the previous 12 months.

In contrast to the trends of self-harm in male prisoners, the number and rate of incidents of female self-harm continue to fall. However, figure 7 shows that the rate of females who self-harm is unchanged in the 12 months to end of December 2013 compared with the previous 12 months after two years of large falls.

Figure 7: Self-harming individuals per 1,000 prisoners by gender, England and Wales



Despite the large falls in female self-harm over recent years, females still account for a disproportionate amount of self-harm in prison custody. In the 12 months to the end of December 2013, they accounted for:

- 26% of incidents but only 5% of the prison population.
- The rate of females self-harming, at 266 females per 1,000 prisoners, is significantly higher than the 72 males per 1,000 prisoners who self-harm.

Annual tables

Method (Table 2.2)

The most common method of self-harm is by cutting or scratching which, in 2013, accounts for 64% of self-harm incidents. It accounts for 66% of male self-harm incidents and 61% of female self-harm incidents. Self-strangulation accounts for 25% of self-harm incidents by females but only 6% of incidents by male prisoners. Male prisoners self-harm by overdose, self-poisoning or swallowing more than female prisoners, with this method accounting for 10% of self-harm incidents by males but only 3% of self-harm incidents by females.

Age (Table 2.3)

Self-harm incidents are predominantly committed by age groups between 18 and 39 with little difference between genders.

3 Assaults (including fights)

- **14,125 assault incidents in 2013**, down from 14,511 incidents in 2012 (a fall of 3%).
- The **rate of assaults is 167 incidents per 1,000 prisoners**, down from 167 incidents in 2012.
- **3,148 assaults on staff in 2013**, up from 2,987 incidents in 2012 (an increase of 5%).
- The **rate of assaults on staff, at 37 incidents per 1,000 prisoners**.
- **Serious assaults have increased to 1,575 incidents in 2013** from 1,255 in 2012 (an increase of 25%).
- **Serious assaults on staff have increased to 356 incidents in 2013** from 260 in 2012.

Assaults in prison custody cover a wide range of violent incidents including fights between prisoners. NOMS does not use the Home Office counting rule definitions of Actual Bodily Harm (ABH), Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH), affray etc. and figures cannot be compared directly.

Table 4: Assault incidents Summary Statistics, England and Wales

	12 months ending									
	Dec 04	Dec 05	Dec 06	Dec 07	Dec 08	Dec 09	Dec 10	Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13
ASSAULTS										
Assault incidents	12,616	14,413	15,057	15,272	15,959	15,180	14,335	15,440	14,511	14,125
Male establishments	11,753	13,324	13,895	14,267	15,054	14,475	13,682	14,742	13,961	13,637
Female establishments	863	1,089	1,162	1,005	905	705	653	698	550	488
Assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners	169	190	193	190	193	182	169	180	168	167
Male establishments	167	186	189	188	192	183	170	180	169	169
Female establishments	194	244	261	230	205	165	154	167	132	125
Serious assaults	1,220	1,372	1,404	1,485	1,491	1,317	1,385	1,374	1,255	1,575
Male establishments	1,137	1,306	1,344	1,435	1,448	1,281	1,341	1,327	1,227	1,541
Female establishments	83	66	60	50	43	36	44	47	28	34
Assaults on Staff	3,204	3,502	3,530	3,279	3,219	3,080	2,848	3,132	2,987	3,148
Male establishments	2,895	3,067	3,006	2,869	2,867	2,828	2,629	2,901	2,801	2,997
Female establishments	309	435	524	410	352	252	219	231	186	151
Assault on staff per 1,000 prisoners	43	46	45	41	39	37	34	36	34	37
Male establishments	41	43	41	38	37	36	33	35	34	37
Female establishments	69	97	118	94	80	59	52	55	45	39
Serious assaults on staff	272	299	279	285	284	269	302	273	260	356
Male establishments	246	277	254	266	265	257	283	254	252	348
Female establishments	26	22	25	19	19	12	19	19	8	8

Gender refers to the type of establishment. Although predominantly the gender of the people involved in the assault will be the same as the type of establishment, in a small number of cases - typically assaults on staff - the gender may be different to the establishment type.

Assaults are dominated by what happens in the male prison estate, which accounts for 95% of the prison population.

The key population factors determining the risk of involvement in assaults are:

- Age: Younger prisoners are more likely to assault and be victims than older prisoners;¹¹
- Time in custody: After the initial induction period, a disproportionate amount of assaults occurs in the early stages of custody.¹²

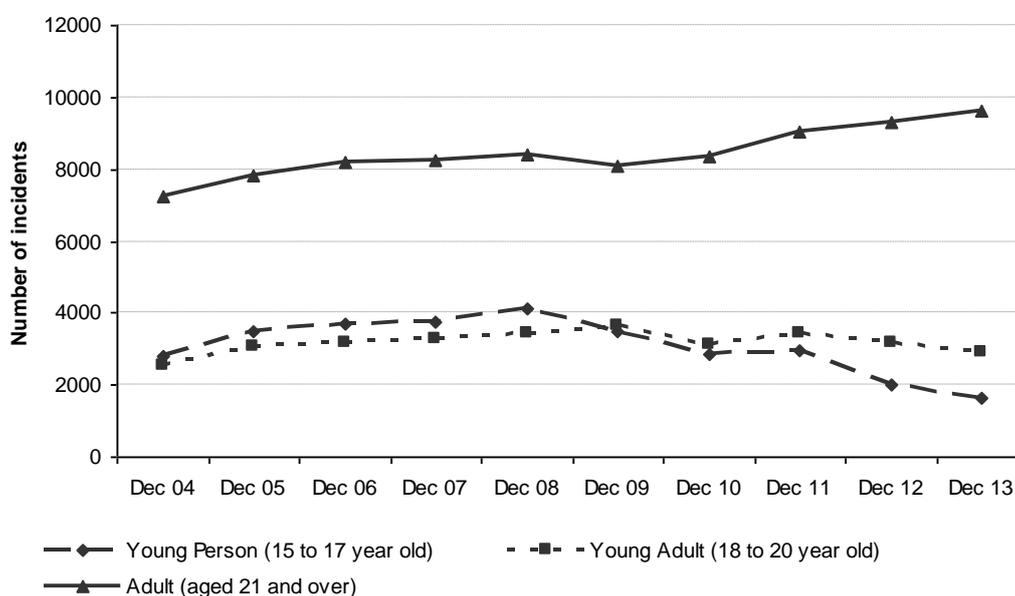
¹¹ Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.3

3.1 All Assaults

The number of recorded assault incidents has fallen to 14,125 incidents in 2013 from 14,511 incidents in 2012. Assault incidents have been on a downward trend since 2008 (except in 2011) when they peaked at 15,959 incidents.

Although the overall number of assault incidents has fallen in recent years, figure 8 shows that this has been primarily driven by falls in the parts of the prison estate holding under 21 year olds. Over the last 5 years, the number of assault incidents for 15 to 17 year olds has fallen by 1,857 incidents and for 18 to 20 year olds by 736 incidents. These falls are partly due to the falling prison population for these younger age groups. For the adult prison population, the number of assault incidents has increased by 1,539 over the same time period.

Figure 8: Number of assault incidents by age group of youngest prisoner involved in incident

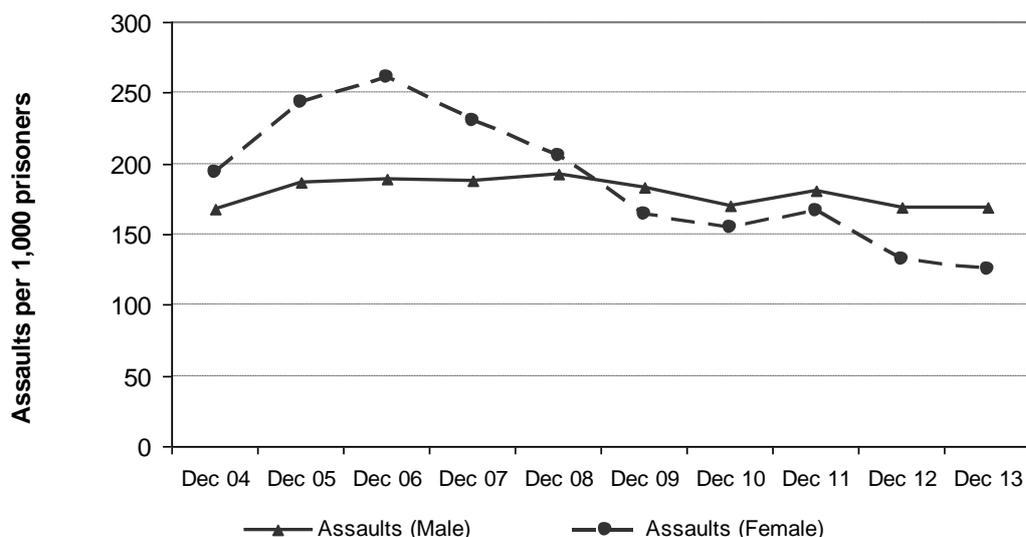


With 96% of assaults occurring in the male estate the rate of assaults overall is heavily biased towards the rate of assaults in the male estate. The rate of assaults for male prisoners has fallen in recent years from a high of 192 in 2008 to 169 in 2013.

In the female estate, the rate of assaults has shown much more variation. It rose in 2006 to 261 incidents per 1,000 prisoners but has fallen to 125 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2013 (see figure 9), halving the rate of assaults in female establishments in the last seven years.

¹² Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.4 www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

Figure 9: Total assaults per 1,000 prisoners by gender, England and Wales



Annual tables

Age

Assaults and fights occur most frequently in the younger age groups. Annual tables published alongside this bulletin show that in 2013, 61% of prisoner assailants and 66% of fighters were aged 24 and under.

Ethnicity (table 3.6)

There has been no change in the ethnicity distribution of assailants, fighters and victims with 57% of assailants and 58% of fighters being of white ethnicity. 25% of assailants and fighters are of black ethnicity, with Asians accounting for 8% of assailants and 7% of fighters.

Weapons (table 3.10)

The number of incidents involving a weapon has increased to 2,278, 16% of all assault incidents. The most frequent type of weapon was a blunt instrument (362 incidents) followed by a knife/blade (311). The number of knife/blade incidents has increased from 246 in 2012. These incidents mostly involve a makeshift knife. Spitting has also increased from 32 incidents in 2012 to 140 incidents in 2013. This is most likely to be a change in reporting practices.

Serious assaults¹³ increased in 2013 to 1,575 incidents from 1,255 incidents in the previous year – an increase of 25%. The number of serious assaults had previously peaked at 1,491 incidents in 2008, falling to a low of 1,255 incidents by 2012. As with all incidents, there is volatility in the time series of serious assault incidents, although there has been a general quarter on quarter upward trend since the beginning of 2012. The number of serious assaults increased from 314 incidents in the final quarter of 2012 to a peak of 422 incidents in the July to September quarter before falling to 404 incidents in the final quarter of 2013.

¹³ For the definition of serious assaults see the Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics. www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

Serious assaults are those that are sexual assaults or result in serious injuries, hospital admittance as an in-patient or treatment for concussion. The annual tables published alongside this bulletin provide more details on these components of serious assaults.

Sexual assaults (table 3.9)

In 2013, there was an increase in reported sexual assaults to 169 incidents from 113 in 2012. This increase was entirely in the male estate, which accounted for 165 of the 169 assaults, and predominantly involving prisoner on prisoner assaults.

Injuries (table 3.12)

Table 3.12 presents information on injuries. The most serious injury occurring in each incident is recorded.

The number of incidents resulting in serious injuries has increased to 1,184 from 960 incidents last year and similar to levels in 2007 and 2008. The most common type of serious injury received is cuts requiring sutures (359 incidents), followed by black eye (177 incidents) and fracture (152 incidents). The number of incidents resulting in scald or burn has increased to 121 incidents from 66 incidents.

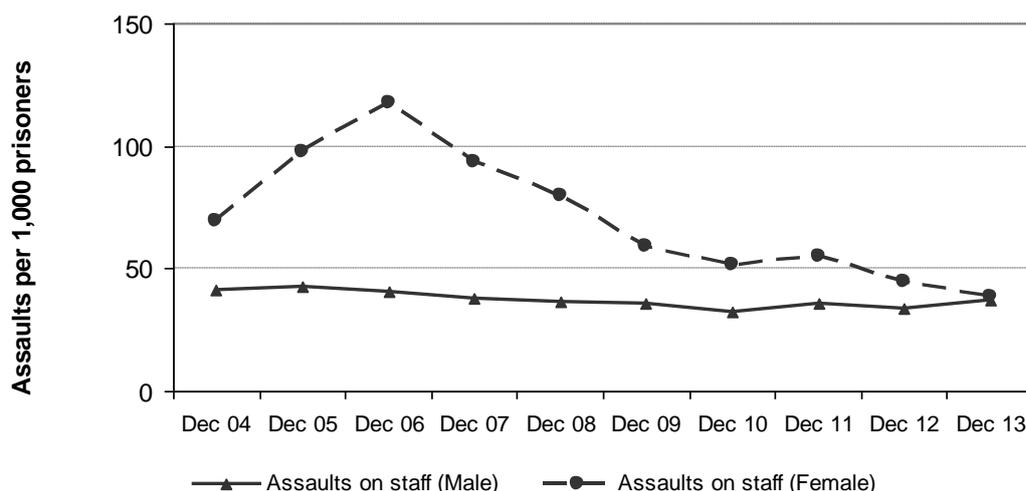
Hospital attendance (table 3.13)

The number of assault incidents requiring hospital attendance as an in-patient has increased to 246 incidents from 211, representing 1.7% of all assault incidents. The number of incidents resulting in treatment for concussion or internal injuries increased to 356 incidents from 315 incidents, representing 2.5% of all assault incidents.

3.2 Assaults on staff

In 2013, there were 3,148 assaults on staff – up 5% on the previous year. The number of assaults on staff peaked at 3,530 incidents in 2006 and has fluctuated between 2,850 and 3,150 incidents over the last 5 years.

Figure 10: Total assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners by gender, England and Wales



As with the overall rate, the rates of incidents involving assaults on staff are dominated by what happens in the male prison estate. In 2013, the rate of assaults on staff increased to 37 incidents per 1,000 prisoners from 34 in the previous year. There were more assaults on

staff per 1,000 prisoners between 2004 and 2007 when the rate exceed 40 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.

As with all types of incident, there is volatility in the number of serious assaults on staff between short time periods. There were 356 serious assaults on staff in 2013 – an increase of 96 incidents on the previous year. This figure is the highest number of serious assaults on staff recorded since current recorded practices began in 2003. Quarterly data shows that the number of serious assaults on staff steadily increased during 2012 from 60 incidents in the first quarter of 2012 to 69 incidents in the first quarter of 2013. From the April to June 2013 quarter there was then an increase to 96 incidents per quarter where it has stabilised for the remaining 2 quarters of the year.¹⁴

¹⁴ Table 7, Safety in Custody statistics, update to December 2013 summary tables
www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

References

HM Inspectorate of Prisons

- Prison and YOI inspections (www.justice.gov.uk/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmi-prisons/prison-and-yoi)

Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) on Deaths in Custody

- Deaths in state custody (<http://iapdeathsincustody.independent.gov.uk/>)

Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)

- Deaths in Custody Study (www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/deathscustodystudy.aspx)
- Deaths following police contact (www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/reports_polcustody.aspx)

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO)

- Fatal Incident reports (www.ppo.gov.uk/investigating-fatal-accidents.html)
- Annual reports (www.ppo.gov.uk/annual-reports.html)

World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Diseases (ICD)

- ICD 10 (<http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2010/en>)

Ministry of Justice/NOMS

- Prison and Probation Statistics (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/about/statistics)
- Prison Service Orders (www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psos)
- Prison Service Instructions (www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis)

List of tables and figures

This is a list of quarterly and annual Safety in Custody Statistics tables and figures. Tables 1 to 4 and figures 1 to 4 are included in this publication. The remaining tables are available from the website¹⁵. All tables refer to incidents in prison custody in England and Wales.

	Table description	Period
Safety in Custody – Summary tables		
Table 1	Safety in custody summary statistics	Apr 03 - Dec 13
Table 2	Deaths in custody summary statistics	Apr 03 - Dec 13
Table 3	Self-harm summary statistics	Apr 04 – Dec 13
Table 4	Assaults summary statistics	Apr 03 - Dec 13
Table 5	Deaths in prison custody by apparent cause by quarter	Jan 00 – Dec 13
Table 6	Self-harm incidents by quarter	Oct 05 – Dec 13
Table 7	Assault incidents by quarter	Jan 03 – Dec 13
Safety in Custody – Figures		
Figure 1	Number of deaths in prison custody	Dec 01 – Dec 13
Figure 2	Deaths per 1,000 prisoners by apparent cause	Dec 04 – Dec 13
Figure 3	Number of apparent self-inflicted deaths in prison custody	Dec 01 – Dec 13
Figure 4	Number of apparent natural cause deaths in prison custody	Dec 01 – Dec 13
Figure 5	Annual Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for prison population	2004 - 2013
Figure 6	Number of self-harm incidents by gender	Dec 05 – Dec 13
Figure 7	Self-harm individuals per 1,000 prisoners	Dec 05 – Dec 13
Figure 8	Number of assault incidents by age group of youngest prisoner	Dec 04 – Dec 13
Figure 9	Assaults per 1,000 prisoners – total	Dec 04 – Dec 13
Figure 4	Assaults per 1,000 prisoners – on staff	Dec 04 – Dec 13
Deaths tables		
Table 1.1	Annual deaths in prison custody and rates by apparent cause	1978 - 2013
Table 1.2	Annual deaths in prison custody by apparent cause and gender	1978 - 2013
Table 1.3	Annual deaths in prison custody by apparent cause and age band	1978 - 2013
Table 1.4	Annual deaths arising from incidents in prison custody but occurring elsewhere	1999 - 2013
Table 1.5	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by gender	1978 - 2013
Table 1.6	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by age	1978 - 2013
Table 1.7	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by time in custody and current prison	1999 - 2013
Table 1.8	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by type of custody	1999 - 2013
Table 1.9	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by ethnicity	1999 - 2013
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Table 1.12	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by method	1999 - 2013
Table 1.13	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody: Ligatures used in hanging/self-strangulation	1999 - 2013
Table 1.14	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody: Ligature points used in fatal hangings	1999 - 2013
Table 1.15	Annual natural cause deaths in prison custody by age group	2001 - 2013
Table 1.16	Annual self-inflicted deaths by establishment	1978 - 2013

¹⁵ Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.2 www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

Table 1.17	Annual natural cause deaths by establishment	1978 - 2013
Table 1.18	Annual deaths by establishment	1978 - 2013
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Table 2.5	Annual self-harm incidents by time in current prison	2004 - 2013
Table 2.6	Annual self-harm incidents by type of custody	2004 - 2013
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Table 2.11	Annual self-harm incidents by type of hospital attendances	2004 - 2013
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Table 3.6	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by ethnicity	2000 - 2013
Table 3.7	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by nationality type	2000 - 2013
Table 3.8	Annual assault incidents by assailant / victim type	2000 - 2013
Table 3.9	Annual sexual assault incidents by assailant / victim type	2000 - 2013
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Table 3.13	Annual assault related hospital attendances / treatment for concussion/internal injuries	2000 - 2013
Table 3.14	Annual assaults by establishment	2000 - 2013
Table 3.15	Annual assaults on staff and on prison officers by establishment	2000 - 2013
Table 3.16	Annual prisoner on prisoner assaults by establishment	2000 - 2013
Table 3.17	Dates of prisons opening/closing and major re-roles of prisons	2001 - 2013

Data Sources and Data Quality

The data presented in this publication are drawn from the NOMS Deaths in Custody Database and NOMS Incident Reporting System.

Information relating to deaths in prison custody is closely scrutinised and the data is considered to be of high quality. Classifications of deaths however, are not finalised until after inquest. As inquests may not be concluded until some years after a death, tables dependent on classifications should be treated as provisional. Changes do not generally affect reported trends.

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the information collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system. While the figures shown have been checked as far as practicable, they should be regarded as approximate and not necessarily accurate to the last whole number shown in the tables. Where figures in the tables have been rounded to the nearest whole number, the rounded components do not always add to the totals, which are calculated and rounded independently.

Self-harm and assault incidents in custody are more likely to be detected and counted than those occurring in the community. However, some incidents in custody will remain undetected and therefore go unreported.

For a more detailed discussion about data sources and data quality see the 'Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics'¹⁶

Explanatory notes

The statistics in this bulletin relate to deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody in England and Wales.

Symbols and conventions

The following symbols have been used throughout the tables in this bulletin:

..	not available
0	nil or less than half the final digit shown
-	not applicable
(p)	Provisional data
(r)	Revised data

¹⁶ Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics which can be found at www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics

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General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from www.statistics.gov.uk

Ministry of Justice publishes data relating to offender management in England and Wales. Equivalent statistics for Scotland and Northern Ireland can be found at:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice

www.sps.gov.uk/FreedomofInformation/PrisonerDeaths.aspx

www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications.htm

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

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