



Ministry  
of Justice



# **Safety in Custody Statistics England and Wales Update to December 2012**

Ministry of Justice  
Statistics bulletin

25 April 2013



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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 2012. Supplementary tables, providing more in depth statistics on deaths, self-harm and assaults, have also been published alongside this table and can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody).

We are pleased to announce that in March 2013 the UK Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National 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'<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody)

### **Changes and revisions in this publication**

Following an annual review of unclassified deaths there have been changes to all supplementary tables on deaths. Details of the reclassifications are given in the “others” section in the chapter covering deaths in custody.

Annual quality assurance processes have identified that for some assault incidents in 2011 details of prisoners and their involvement in the assaults was missing in the production of previously published statistics. This missing data has now been included and statistics for 2011 have been revised in all tables involving roles and individuals.

Annual quality assurance has also resulted in the identification of one death from 2007 for which the outcome of a criminal investigation changed the classification from homicide to “other”. This has now been reclassified within the published statistics.

### **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 100 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 Bulletin<sup>2</sup>***: 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.

***Proven Re-offending Statistics Quarterly<sup>3</sup>***: 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 in the 12 months ending June 2011.

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 25 April 2013 and includes statistics for calendar years 2003 to 2012. The annual supplementary tables have also been updated to 2012.

The next publication of Safety in Custody statistics is scheduled to be published on 25 July 2013 and will cover 12 month periods to end of March 2013. Statistics in the bulletin remain provisional and will be reviewed in the next annual publication.

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<sup>2</sup> Offender Management Statistics [www.gov.uk/government/publications/offender-management-statistics-quarterly--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/offender-management-statistics-quarterly--2)

<sup>3</sup> Proven Reoffending Statistics [www.gov.uk/government/publications/proven-re-offending--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proven-re-offending--2)

## Key findings

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

	12 months ending									
	-Dec 03	-Dec 04	-Dec 05	-Dec 06	-Dec 07	-Dec 08	-Dec 09	-Dec 10	-Dec 11	-Dec 12
<b>Total deaths</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>192</b>
Self-inflicted	95	96	78	66	92	61	61	58	57	60
Natural Causes	86	101	88	83	89	98	105	125	121	119
Homicide	1	2	3	0	2	3	0	1	2	0
Other <sup>1</sup>	1	9	5	4	2	3	3	13	12	13
<b>Self-harm incidents<sup>2</sup></b>	-	-	<b>23,781</b>	<b>23,400</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>25,234</b>	<b>24,184</b>	<b>26,979</b>	<b>24,648</b>	<b>23,158</b>
Males	-	-	10,420	11,899	11,592	12,219	13,706	14,347	15,829	16,567
Females	-	-	13,361	11,501	11,408	13,015	10,478	12,632	8,819	6,591
<b>Assault incidents</b>	<b>11,877</b>	<b>12,616</b>	<b>14,413</b>	<b>15,057</b>	<b>15,272</b>	<b>15,959</b>	<b>15,180</b>	<b>14,335</b>	<b>15,440</b>	<b>14,511</b>
Males	11,110	11,753	13,324	13,895	14,267	15,054	14,475	13,682	14,742	13,961
Females	767	863	1,089	1,162	1,005	905	705	653	698	550

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

During 2012, there were 192 deaths in prison custody (see tables 1 and 2) – the same number of deaths in prison custody as 2011. This comprises of:

- 60 deaths provisionally classified as being apparent self-inflicted – caused by a person's own actions irrespective of intent – up three (five per cent) on 2011 and the first increase in self-inflicted deaths since 2007;
- 119 deaths from natural causes – down two (two per cent) on 2011;
- no homicides;
- 13 other deaths, which include non-natural deaths and deaths with insufficient information to classify – up one from 2011.

Annual numbers of deaths are volatile and rises or falls from one year to the next are not a good indicator of underlying trend.

- The mortality rate was 2.2 deaths per 1,000 prisoners; unchanged from 2011;
- Self-inflicted death rates have fallen from 1.3 deaths per 1,000 prisoners in 2003 to 0.7 deaths per 1,000 in 2012.

## **Self-harm**

During 2012 (see table 1 and 3), there were:

- 23,158 recorded self-harm incidents, compared with 24,648 incidents in the previous 12 months – a fall of six per cent;
- 6,761 individuals who self-harmed, compared with 6,907 individuals in the previous 12 months – a fall of one per cent;
- The rate of female individuals who self-harmed fell by 15 per cent to 264 individuals per 1,000 prisoners in 2012 from 311 in 2011.

For males in prison custody:

- The rate of male self-harm has continues to rise and has increased to 201 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2012 compared with 194 in 2011.
- Over the medium term male self-harm rates have increased by 31 per cent from 153 per 1,000 prisoners in 2007.

In contrast female self-harm

- Incidence of self-harm among females in custody fell to 6,591 incidents in 2012, compared with 8,819 in 2011 – a fall of 25 per cent - and the number of incidents of self-harm committed by females in custody has almost halved (down 48 per cent) in the last two years.
- The rate of self-harm for females was 264 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2012, down from 377 in 2009.

Annual figures show:

- Numbers of female prisoners self-harming more than 20 times during a year fell to 67 in 2012 from 126 in 2010 compared with an increase for males to 69 from 53 over the same period – the first time male repetitive self-harmers outnumber females;

## **Assaults**

In 2012 (Tables 1 and 4) there were:

- 14,511 assault incidents, compared with 15,088 in the previous 12 months – a fall of two per cent;
- 170 assaults per 1,000 prisoners, compared with 177 in the previous 12 months – a fall of four per cent;
- 2,992 assaults on staff (20 per cent of all assault incidents) compared with 3,053 in the previous 12 months – a fall of two per cent;
- 34 assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners, compared with 36 in the previous 12 months – a fall of six per cent;
- 252 serious assault incidents involving an assault on staff, compared with 281 in the previous 12 months.

Overall assault rates are dominated by what happens in the male prison estate which accounts for some 95 per cent of the prison population.

- Overall assault rates since 2003 have ranged between 163 and 195 per 1,000 prisoners;



- Until 2009, assault rates in the female prison estate tended to be higher than in the male prison estate. Rates in the female prison estate have been lower for the last four 12 month periods.

## Deaths in custody

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’<sup>4</sup> 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 bulletin<sup>5</sup> 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 03	-Dec 04	-Dec 05	-Dec 06	-Dec 07	-Dec 08	-Dec 09	-Dec 10	-Dec 11	-Dec 12
<b>DEATHS</b>										
<b>Deaths in prison custody<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>183</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>192</b>
Self-inflicted	95	96	78	66	92	61	61	58	57	60
Natural Causes	86	101	88	83	89	98	105	125	121	119
Homicide	1	2	3	0	1	3	0	1	2	0
Other <sup>2</sup>	1	9	5	4	3	3	3	13	12	13
<i>of which</i>										
<i>Other/Non-natural</i>	1	9	5	4	3	3	3	11	7	2
<i>Awaiting further information</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	11
<b>Deaths per 1,000 prisoners</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>
Self-inflicted	1.3	1.3	1.0	0.8	1.1	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Natural Causes	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.4

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

### Overall mortality

During 2012, there were **192 deaths in prison custody** (see tables 1 and 2) – the same number of deaths in prison custody as 2011. This comprises of:

- **60 deaths provisionally classified as being apparent self-inflicted** – caused by a person’s own actions irrespective of intent – up 3 (five per cent) on 2011 and the first increase in self-inflicted deaths since 2007;
- **119 deaths from natural causes** – down 2 (two per cent) on 2011;
- **no homicides**, compared with 2 in 2011;
- **13 other deaths**, which include non-natural deaths and deaths with insufficient information to classify (seven per cent of all deaths).
- **2.2 deaths per 1,000 prisoners.**

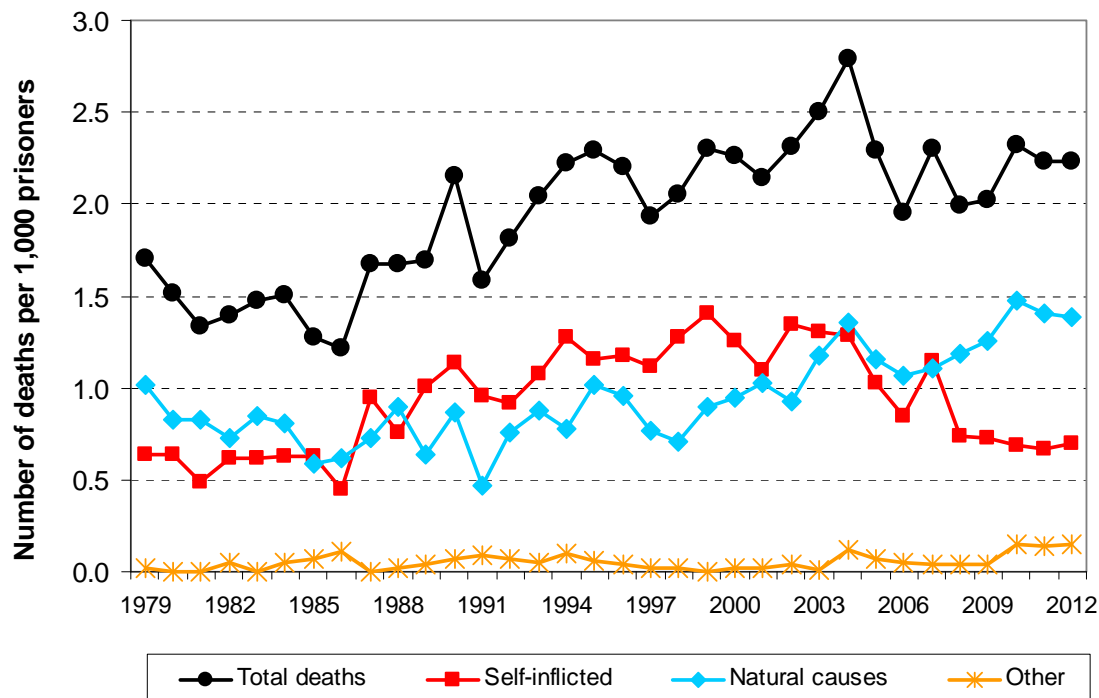
Caution should be taken when interpreting increases and decreases in numbers between years. Statistics on deaths in prison custody are largely driven by the composition and size

<sup>4</sup> Prisons and Probation Ombudsman: Fatal Incident Reports [www.ppo.gov.uk/prison-investigations.html](http://www.ppo.gov.uk/prison-investigations.html)

<sup>5</sup> Deaths in Custody: Deaths tables at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody)

of the prison population. For example, in recent years the prison population has increased with an increasing male to female prisoner ratio.

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



### Self-inflicted deaths

*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.

#### Key facts

- **60 self-inflicted deaths in 2012**, an increase of three on 2011 and included one female;
- **Number of self-inflicted deaths have remained relatively stable since 2008** compared with historical changes;
- The **rate of self-inflicted deaths remains unchanged at 0.7 deaths per 1,000 prisoners** and has remained unchanged since 2008.

The small increase in the number of self-inflicted deaths in 2012 should be seen in the context of the highs of over 90 deaths in the early 2000s. As the number of deaths is driven in part by the size of the prison population the rate is a better indicator of changing trends in deaths within prisons. Figure 1 shows the rate of self inflicted deaths is relatively stable in the context of the history of self-inflicted deaths.

Suicide prevention policies have specifically targeted the early stages of custody. There have now been no self-inflicted deaths on the day of arrival in prison<sup>6</sup> since 2008. The numbers on the first and second full days also remain low, averaging less than one per quarter.

From 1989 to 2003, self-inflicted deaths were consistently higher than those due to natural causes<sup>7</sup>. Up to the 1980s, natural causes routinely accounted for the majority of deaths in prison custody. In the late 1980s, self-inflicted deaths started to increase. 'Care in the community' is sometimes cited<sup>8</sup> as a reason for the increase as it is believed to have led to an increase in the proportions of prisoners with mental illness. The proportions of mentally ill in the prison population are not measured routinely so the actual change over time is unknown. The increase in numbers of self-inflicted deaths from the late 1980s is likely to be due to a combination of factors because it started before the impact of the 1989 White Paper 'Caring for People: *Community Care in the next Decade and Beyond*' could have taken full effect.

Tables 1.6 to 1.14 of the annual supplementary tables provide more detail on self-inflicted deaths including personal characteristics, time in prison, sentence type, method of death, ligatures used and ligature points. These tables show:

- Around nine-in-ten self-inflicted deaths occur from hanging, with bedding the most common ligature. The most common ligature point is the window, although despite the small increase in hangings the number of hangings using the window as a ligature point fell in 2012 (18 compared with 25 in 2011).
- Self-inflicted deaths occurred at 40 of the 134 establishments managed by the National Offender Management Service in 2012 with the number of self-inflicted deaths ranging between one and four at any single establishment with a self-inflicted death.

## Natural cause deaths

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

The **119 natural cause deaths in 2012** was down two on 2011. The deaths in 2012 comprised **116 males and three females**.

A minority of the most recent deaths currently classified as 'other' in this report are likely to be classified as natural causes once more information becomes available. As a result, figures for the most recent two years are likely to be under-reported compared with earlier figures. If, for example, five of the eighteen deaths are eventually reclassified as natural causes, then the numbers and rates in this report would be under-reported by some four per cent. The uncertainty on these figures will not be entirely removed until after inquest.

At **1.4 deaths per 1,000 prisoners** the rate of natural cause deaths remains historically high, although has stabilised in the last three years following a consistent upward trend since 1997.

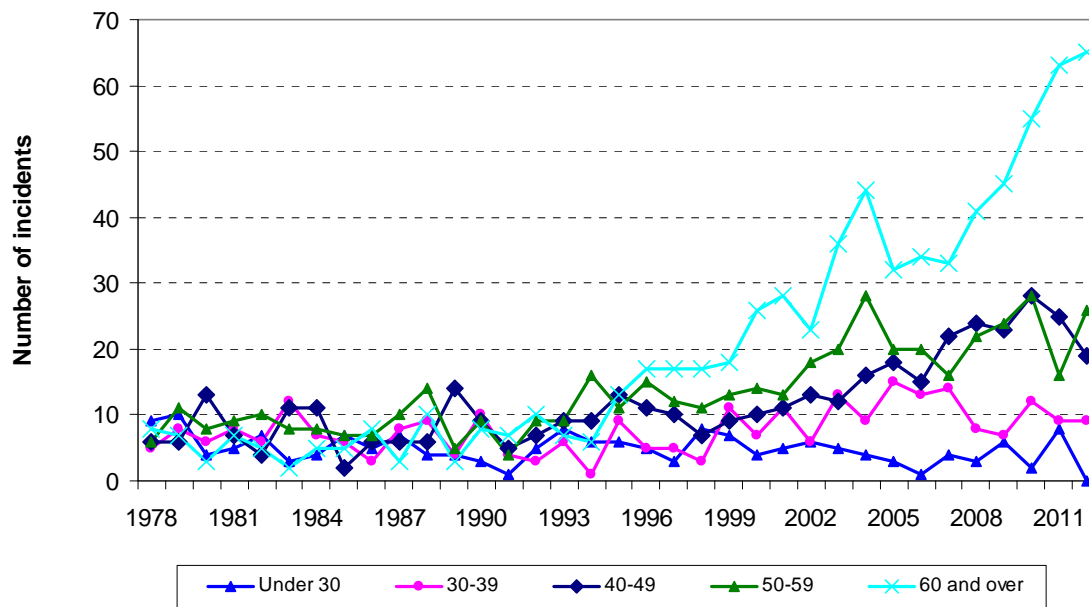
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<sup>6</sup> Safety in Custody Deaths: Table 1.7 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody)

<sup>7</sup> Safety in Custody: Deaths Table 1.2

<sup>8</sup> Mental Health of Prisoners (HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2007)  
[www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/thematic-reports-and-research-publications/mental\\_health-rps.pdf](http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/inspectorate-reports/hmipris/thematic-reports-and-research-publications/mental_health-rps.pdf)

**Figure 2: Number of natural cause deaths by age, England and Wales**



As would be expected the increase in natural cause deaths has been borne by older prisoners with a sharp increase in the number of natural cause deaths of prisoners aged 60 and over (figure 2).

### Homicides

*Homicides include any death of a person at the hands of another. This includes murder and manslaughter cases.*

There were **no apparent homicides in 2012**; the first year since 2009 that there were no homicides in prison custody. Homicides are relatively rare accounting for less than one per cent of all deaths in prison custody.

Between 2000 and 2012 there were 16 homicides in English and Welsh prisons and, in recent years, the number of homicides usually varies between zero and two in any single year. In comparison between 1990 and 1999 there were 26 homicides. The reduction in homicides since 2000 compared with the previous ten years coincides with the introduction of a cell-sharing risk assessment in 2002. This assessment aims to assess that before prisoners share cells that they are not a risk to their cell companion.

Since the last publication annual quality assurance routines have identification one death from 2007 for which the outcome of a criminal investigation changed the classification from homicide to “other”.

## 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 **13 other deaths in 2012** (seven per cent of all deaths). This number is not directly comparable with earlier years as a small number of deaths in this category are likely to be reclassified as natural cause deaths following inquest.

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

- In July 2012, we reported that there were twelve 'unclassified' deaths in 2011. At the time this report was being prepared, five remained. Of the seven that were provisionally classified, five were 'other/non-natural' and two were 'natural causes';
- At the same time we also reported that there were five 'unclassified' deaths in 2010. At the time this report was being prepared, two remained. Of the three that were provisionally classified, all were 'other/non-natural'.

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.

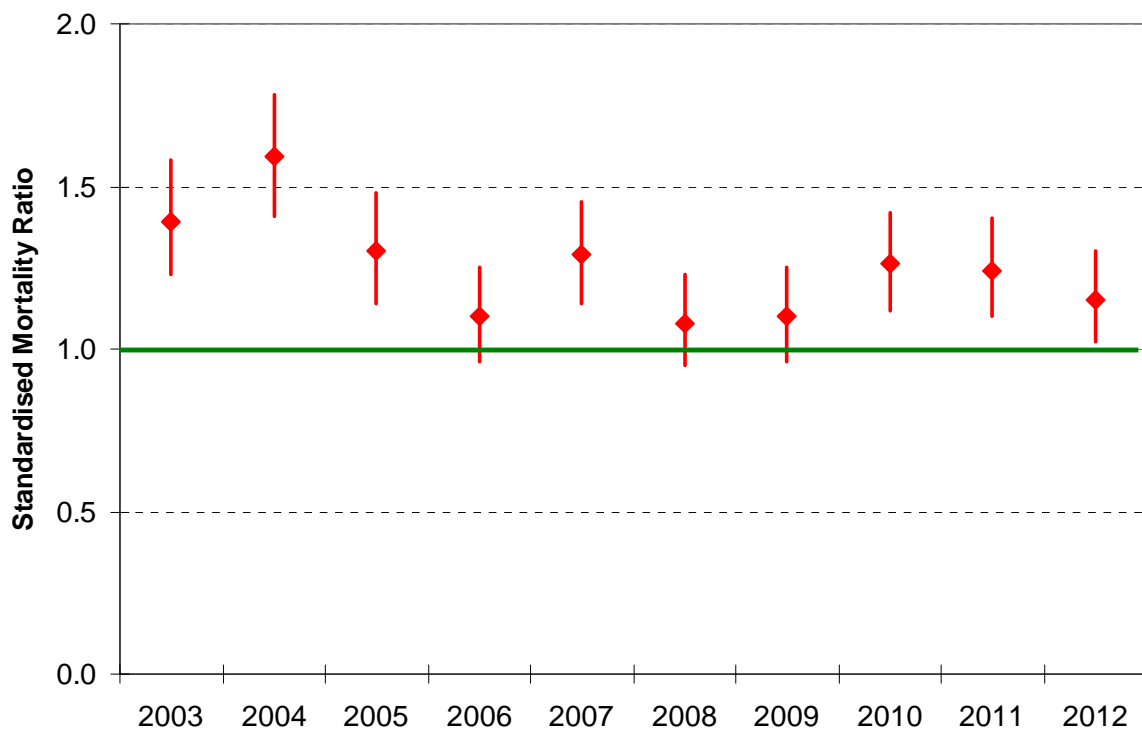
As with homicides, 'other' deaths are best considered over long periods.

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

The prison population is very different from the general population: 95 per cent 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 2 is based on annual data and shows the Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for the prison population and its 95 per cent 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 is above one, then this indicates that the mortality rate of the prison population is significantly higher than that of the general population. In seven out of the last ten years, prison mortality has been significantly higher than that of the general population.

**Figure 3: Annual Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for prison population**



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

## Self-harm

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.

The key factors determining the risk of self-harm in custody are:

- Age: Younger prisoners are more likely to self-harm than older prisoners<sup>9</sup>;
- Gender: Female prisoners self-harm more frequently than males;
- Time in custody: A disproportionate amount of self-harm occurs in the early stages of custody<sup>10</sup>.

**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
<b>SELF-HARM</b>								
<b>Self-harm incidents</b>	<b>23,781</b>	<b>23,400</b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>25,234</b>	<b>24,184</b>	<b>26,979</b>	<b>24,648</b>	<b>23,158</b>
Males	10,420	11,899	11,592	12,219	13,706	14,347	15,829	16,567
Females	13,361	11,501	11,408	13,015	10,478	12,632	8,819	6,591
<b>Self-harm individuals<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>5,837</b>	<b>6,090</b>	<b>6,296</b>	<b>6,586</b>	<b>7,149</b>	<b>6,767</b>	<b>6,907</b>	<b>6,761</b>
Males	4,348	4,652	4,847	5,058	5,535	5,418	5,606	5,667
Females	1,489	1,438	1,449	1,528	1,614	1,349	1,301	1,094
<b>Self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>267</b>
Males	146	161	153	156	173	178	194	201
Females	2,991	2,586	2,608	2,949	2,447	2,982	2,108	1,589
<b>Self-harm individuals per 1,000 prisoners<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>77</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>78</b>
Males	61	63	64	65	70	67	69	69
Females	333	323	331	346	377	318	311	264
<b>Self-harm incidents per individual</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Males	2.4	2.6	2.4	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.9
Females	9.0	8.0	7.9	8.5	6.5	9.4	6.8	6.0
<b>Hospital Attendances</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>1,214</b>	<b>1,290</b>	<b>1,290</b>	<b>1,304</b>	<b>1,369</b>	<b>1,533</b>	<b>1,547</b>
Males	985	1,001	1,104	1,083	1,131	1,193	1,375	1,391
Females	234	213	186	207	173	176	158	156

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

Incidence of self-harm continues to fall with

- **23,158 recorded incidents** in 2012, compared with 24,648 in the previous year – a fall of six per cent (table 3);
- **6,761 recorded individuals** – down two per cent on 2011.

The difference between the fall in the number of incidents and the fall in the number of individuals suggests that there were fewer repetitive self-harmers in 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Safety in Custody: Self-harm Table 2.4

<sup>10</sup> Safety in Custody: Self-harm Table 2.5 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody)



There are contrasting trends between male and female self-harm with self-harm among males in custody less common but increasing, and self-harm more common with females in custody but decreasing.

For males in prison custody:

- The rate of male self-harm has continues to rise and has increased to 201 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2012 compared with 194 in 2011.
- Over the medium term male self-harm rates have increased by 31 per cent from 153 per 1,000 prisoners in 2007.

In contrast female self-harm

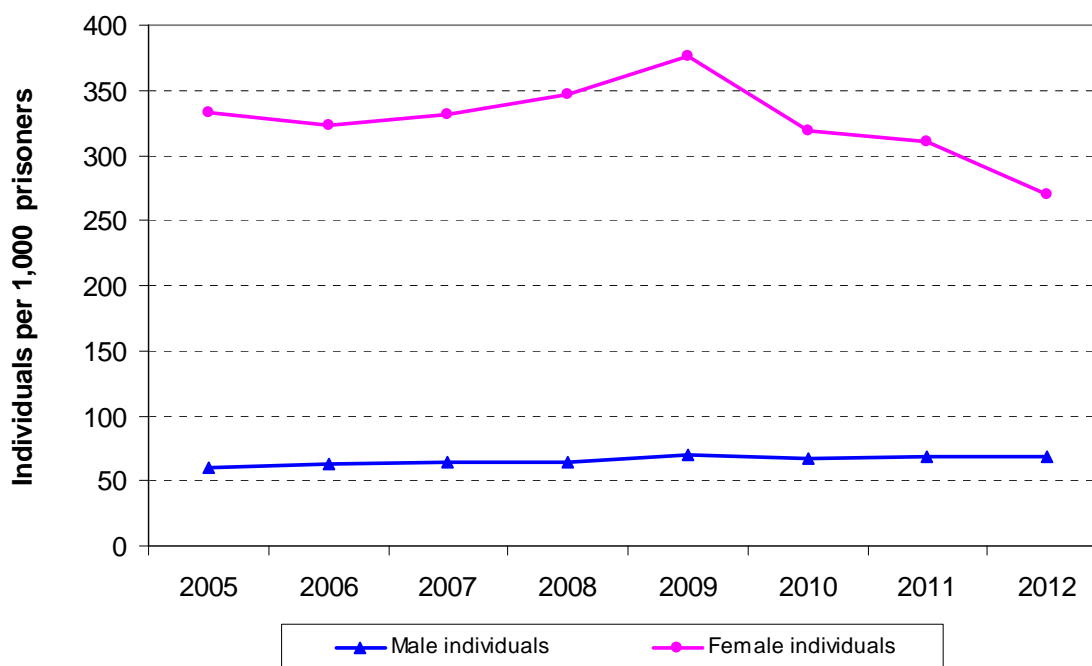
- Incidence of self-harm among females in custody fell to 6,591 incidents in 2012, compared with 8,819 in 2011 – a fall of 25 per cent - and the number of incidents of self-harm committed by females in custody has almost halved (down 48 per cent) in the last two years.
- the rate of self-harm for females was 264 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2012, down from 377 in 2009.

The fall in the number of female self-harm incidents is partly driven by slightly fewer females in the prison population. However, there has also been a significant reduction in the number of repetitive female self-harmers held in prison custody with 67 women committing over 20 self-harm incidents in 2012 compared with 126 women in 2010. For the first time, in 2012 there were more males committing 20 or more self-harm incidents than females.

Despite these falls the rate of self-harm in female prisons remains significantly higher than the rate of self-harm in male prisons (table 2).

Until 2006, the female population accounted for more than half of all self-harm incidents in prison custody. That is no longer the case. In 2012 females accounted for 28 per cent of all self-harm incidents. Figure 4 shows that while the rate of male individuals self-harming has remained fairly constant, the rate for females has fallen.

**Figure 4: Self-harming individuals per 1,000 prisoners by gender, England and Wales**



Improvements in the management of self-harm may have contributed to the fall in female self-harm but, given the differences between male and female self-harm, it seems likely that the overall health needs of the population have changed.

Although self-harm incidents in prison custody are relatively common, it remains the case that the majority of prisoners do not self-harm. Of the prisoners who did self-harm in 2012, 43 per cent of females and 58 per cent of males did so once, while six per cent of females and one per cent of males did so more than 20 times.

Although the proportions of prisoners who self-harm more than 20 times during a year are relatively small, they do account for a disproportionate amount of self-harm incidents. Since 2004, individuals self-harming more than 20 times in the year have accounted for between 33 per cent and 46 per cent of all self-harm incidents.

The early days of arriving in a prison are the highest risk times for self-harm with the incidence reducing over time. In 2011, approximately 23 per cent of self-harm incidents occurred within the first month of arriving in a prison. This proportion has been reducing in recent years down from 42 per cent in 2004.<sup>11</sup> The reduction is, in part, due to the reduction in the female population but also prisoners being in custody for longer.

<sup>11</sup> Safety in Custody Self-harm table 2.15 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody)

## Assaults

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.

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;<sup>12</sup>
- Time in custody: After the initial induction period, a disproportionate amount of assaults occurs in the early stages of custody.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 4: Assault incidents Summary Statistics, England and Wales**

	12 months ending									
	-Dec 03	-Dec 04	-Dec 05	-Dec 06	-Dec 07	-Dec 08	-Dec 09	-Dec 10	-Dec 11	-Dec 12
<b>ASSAULTS</b>										
<b>Assault incidents</b>	<b>11,877</b>	<b>12,616</b>	<b>14,413</b>	<b>15,057</b>	<b>15,272</b>	<b>15,959</b>	<b>15,180</b>	<b>14,335</b>	<b>15,440</b>	<b>14,511</b>
Male establishments	11,110	11,753	13,324	13,895	14,267	15,054	14,475	13,682	14,742	13,961
Female establishments	767	863	1,089	1,162	1,005	905	705	653	698	550
<b>Assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>168</b>
Male establishments	162	167	186	189	188	192	183	170	180	169
Female establishments	173	194	244	261	230	205	165	154	167	133
<b>Serious assaults</b>	<b>1,160</b>	<b>1,220</b>	<b>1,372</b>	<b>1,404</b>	<b>1,485</b>	<b>1,491</b>	<b>1,317</b>	<b>1,385</b>	<b>1,374</b>	<b>1,255</b>
Male establishments	1,098	1,137	1,306	1,344	1,435	1,448	1,281	1,341	1,327	1,227
Female establishments	62	83	66	60	50	43	36	44	47	28
<b>Assaults on Staff</b>	<b>2,893</b>	<b>3,204</b>	<b>3,502</b>	<b>3,530</b>	<b>3,279</b>	<b>3,219</b>	<b>3,080</b>	<b>2,848</b>	<b>3,132</b>	<b>2,987</b>
Male establishments	2,605	2,895	3,067	3,006	2,869	2,867	2,828	2,629	2,901	2,801
Female establishments	288	309	435	524	410	352	252	219	231	186
<b>Assault on staff per 1,000 prisoners</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>
Male establishments	38	41	43	41	38	37	36	33	35	34
Female establishments	65	69	97	118	94	80	59	52	55	45
<b>Serious assaults on staff</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>260</b>
Male establishments	248	246	277	254	266	265	257	283	254	252
Female establishments	19	26	22	25	19	19	12	19	19	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.

There were **14,511 assault incidents recorded in 2012**, down six per cent from 2011. The **assault rate fell to 168 assaults per 1,000 prisoners**, compared with 180 in 2011 – the lowest assault rate since 2003.

Of the recorded assaults in 2012 there were:

- **2,987 assaults on staff** (21 per cent of all assault incidents) compared with 3,132 in the previous 12 months – a fall of five per cent;
- **34 assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners**, compared with 36 in the previous 12 months – a fall of six per cent;
- **260 serious assault incidents involving an assault on staff**, compared with 273 in the previous 12 months – down five per cent.

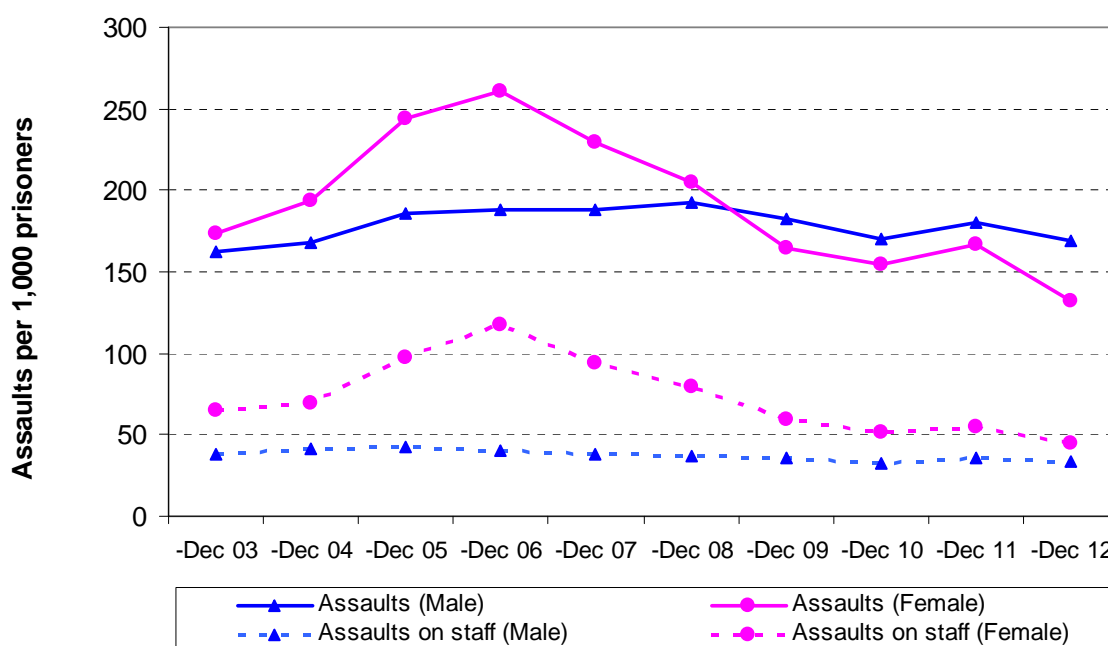
<sup>12</sup> Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.3

<sup>13</sup> Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.4 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody)

Overall assault rates are dominated by what happens in the male prison estate which accounts for some 95 per cent of the prison population. Assault rates in the male prison estate have levelled while those in the female prison estate have fallen (see figure 5).

- Overall assault rates since 2003 have ranged between 163 and 193 per 1,000 prisoners;
- Until 2009, assault rates in the female prison estate tended to be higher than in the male prison estate. Rates in the female prison estate have been lower for the last four years.

**Figure 5: Total assaults and 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. Rates in the male prison estate have been around 35 incidents per 1,000 prisoners for the last four years, while over the same period the figure for the female estate fell from 59 incidents per 1,000 prisoners in 2009 to 45 per 1,000 in 2012. Assault rates in the female prison estate show a stronger downward trend over the longer term, although there was a brief departure from this trend during 2011.

Supplementary tables 3.1 to 3.15 provide further analysis of assault incidents including personal characteristics, role in the assault, injuries, sentence and type of custody and by prison establishment.

The role of individual prisoners in assault incidents cannot always be distinguished. In some incidents, it is clear which prisoners are assailants and which are victims while in other incidents the roles are blurred. In the latter cases, those involved may be identified as 'fighters'. The roles are determined by local investigation of the incident.

Age is a key factor in assaults. The lower number of assaults in 2012 is driven almost entirely by fewer assaults and fights involving prisoners aged 20 years and under. The number of assailants in the 15-17 and 18-20 age groups fell by 12 and 6 per cent respectively and the number of fighters by 18 and 13 per cent. Despite these falls 44 per cent of all assailants and 54 per cent of all fighters were aged 20 or under in 2012.

## References

HM Inspectorate of Prisons

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

Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) on Deaths in Custody

- Deaths in state custody ([iapdeathsincustody.independent.gov.uk/](http://iapdeathsincustody.independent.gov.uk/))

Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)

- Deaths in Custody Study ([www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/deathscustodystudy.aspx](http://www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/deathscustodystudy.aspx))
- Deaths following police contact ([www.ipcc.gov.uk/en/Pages/reports\\_polcustody.aspx](http://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](http://www.ppo.gov.uk/investigating-fatal-accidents.html))
- Annual reports ([www.ppo.gov.uk/annual-reports.html](http://www.ppo.gov.uk/annual-reports.html))

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

- ICD 10 ([apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2010/en](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/series/prisons-and-probation-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-justice/series/prisons-and-probation-statistics))
- Prison Service Orders ([www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psos](http://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psos))
- Prison Service Instructions ([www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psis](http://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 website<sup>14</sup>. All tables refer to incidents in prison custody in England and Wales.

	<b>Table description</b>	<b>Period</b>
<b>Safety in Custody – Summary tables</b>		
Table 1	Safety in custody summary statistics	Jan 03 - Dec 12
Table 2	Deaths in custody summary statistics	Jan 03 - Dec 12
Table 3	Self-harm summary statistics	Oct 05 - Dec 12
Table 4	Assaults summary statistics	Jan 03 - Dec 12
Table 5	Deaths in prison custody by apparent cause by quarter	Jan 00 - Dec 12
Table 6	Self-harm incidents by quarter	Oct 05 - Dec 12
Table 7	Assault incidents by quarter	Jan 03 - Dec 12
<b>Safety in Custody – Figures</b>		
Figure 1	Deaths per 1,000 prisoners by apparent cause	1979 - 2012
Figure 2	Natural Cause deaths by age group	1985 - 2012
Figure 3	Annual Standardised Mortality Ratio (SMR) for prison population	2002 - 2012
Figure 4	Self-harm individuals per 1,000 prisoners	Jan 03 - Dec 12
Figure 5	Assaults per 1,000 prisoners – total and on staff	Jan 03 - Dec 12
<b>Deaths tables</b>		
Table 1.1	Annual deaths in prison custody and rates by apparent cause	1978 - 2012
Table 1.2	Annual deaths in prison custody by apparent cause and gender	1978 - 2012
Table 1.3	Annual deaths in prison custody by apparent cause and age band	1978 - 2012
Table 1.4	Annual deaths arising from incidents in prison custody but occurring elsewhere	1999 - 2012
Table 1.5	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by gender	1978 - 2012
Table 1.6	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by age	1978 - 2012
Table 1.7	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by time in custody and current prison	1999 - 2012
Table 1.8	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by type of custody	1999 - 2012
Table 1.9	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by ethnicity	1999 - 2012
Table 1.10	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by nationality type	1999 - 2012
Table 1.11	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by sentence type	1999 - 2012
Table 1.12	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody by method	1999 - 2012
Table 1.13	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody: Ligatures used in hanging/self-strangulation	1999 - 2012
Table 1.14	Annual self-inflicted deaths in prison custody: Ligation points used in fatal hangings	1999 - 2012
Table 1.15	Annual natural cause deaths in prison custody by age group	2001 - 2012
Table 1.16	Annual self-inflicted deaths by establishment	1978 - 2012
Table 1.17	Annual natural cause deaths by establishment	1978 - 2012
Table 1.18	Annual deaths by establishment	1978 - 2012
Table 1.19	Dates of opening/closing and major re-roles of prisons	2001 - 2012

<sup>14</sup> Safety in Custody: Assaults table 3.2 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody)

### **Self-harm tables**

Table 2.1	Annual self-harm summary	2004 - 2012
Table 2.2	Annual self-harm incidents by method	2004 - 2012
Table 2.3	Annual self-harm incidents by age group	2004 - 2012
Table 2.4	Annual individuals self-harming by age group	2004 - 2012
Table 2.5	Annual self-harm incidents by time in current prison	2004 - 2012
Table 2.6	Annual self-harm incidents by type of custody	2004 - 2012
Table 2.7	Annual self-harm incidents by ethnicity	2004 - 2012
Table 2.8	Annual self-harm incidents by nationality type	2004 - 2012
Table 2.9	Individuals self-harming by nationality type	2004 - 2012
Table 2.10	Annual self-harm incidents by location	2004 - 2012
Table 2.11	Annual self-harm incidents by type of hospital attendances	2004 - 2012
Table 2.12	Annual self-harm frequency	2004 - 2012
Table 2.13	Annual self-harm incidents by establishment	2004 - 2012
Table 2.14	Dates of prisons opening/closing and major re-roles of prisons	2001 - 2012

### **Assaults tables**

Table 3.1	Annual prison assault summary statistics	2002 - 2012
Table 3.2	Annual assault incidents and prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by gender	2000 - 2012
Table 3.3	Annual assault incidents and prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by age	2000 - 2012
Table 3.4	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by time in current prison	2000 - 2012
Table 3.5	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by type of custody	2004 - 2012
Table 3.6	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by ethnicity	2000 - 2012
Table 3.7	Annual prisoner assailants, victims and fighters by nationality type	2000 - 2012
Table 3.8	Annual assault incidents by assailant / victim type	2000 - 2012
Table 3.9	Annual sexual assault incidents by assailant / victim type	2000 - 2012
Table 3.10	Annual assault incidents involving weapons	2000 - 2012
Table 3.11	Annual assaults on staff	2000 - 2012
Table 3.12	Annual assault incidents by type of injury	2000 - 2012
Table 3.13	Annual assault related hospital attendances / treatment for concussion/internal injuries	2000 - 2012
Table 3.14	Annual assaults and prisoner on prisoner assaults by establishment	2000 - 2012
Table 3.15	Annual assaults on staff and on prison officers by establishment	2000 - 2012
Table 3.16	Dates of prisons opening/closing and major re-roles of prisons	2001 - 2012



## 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'<sup>15</sup>

## Explanatory notes

The statistics in this bulletin relate to deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody in England and Wales to the period ending December 2012.

### 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

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<sup>15</sup> Guide to Safety in Custody Statistics which can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-in-custody)

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<mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk>

General information about the official statistics system of the UK is available from

[www.statistics.gov.uk](http://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](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice)

[www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications.htm](http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/statistics-research/stats-research-publications.htm)

Alternative formats are available on request from [statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk)

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