



## Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to March 2019 Assaults and Self-harm to December 2018

**Number of deaths have increased compared to the previous 12 month period.**



In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 317 deaths in prison custody, up 18 from the previous year. Of these, 87 deaths were self-inflicted, up 14 from the previous year.

**Self-harm incidents rose to 55,598 in 2018, a new record high, but decreased in the latest quarter.**



Self-harm incidents reached a record high of 55,598 incidents in 2018, a 25% increase from 2017. The number of incidents between October and December decreased by 7% to 14,313 since the previous quarter.

**Incidents requiring hospital attendance rose to a record high of 3,214 in 2018, although the proportion of incidents requiring hospital attendance has decreased.**



The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 5% on the previous year to 3,214 while the proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance decreased by 1.1 percentage point to 5.8%.

**Assault incidents increased to 34,223, a record high level in 2018, but decreased in the latest quarter.**



Annual assault incidents reached a record high of 34,223 incidents in 2018, a 16% increase from 2017. Assaults in the October to December 2018 quarter decreased to 8,150, a decrease of 11% from the previous quarter, but a 5% increase on the same quarter of the previous year.

**The proportion of assaults on staff continue to rise.**



The proportion of assaults on staff increased to 30% of all incidents in 2018, an increase from 29% in 2017, and a steady increase from 20% between 2008 and 2011. The proportion of assaults on staff (38%) in female establishments in 2018 was higher than in male establishments (29%).

**Of the 34,223 assault incidents in 2018, 3,918 (11%) were serious.**



In the 12 months to December 2018, there were 3,918 serious assault incidents, up 2% from the previous year. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 1% since the previous year (to 2,987), and serious assaults on staff increased by 15% (to 995) in the same period. Serious assaults (by 4%), serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (by 5%), and serious assaults on staff decreased in the last quarter (by 4%).

*Safety in custody statistics cover deaths, self-harm and assaults in prison custody in England and Wales, with figures in quarterly summary tables presented on a 12-month rolling basis. The figures also include Immigration Removal Centres operated by HMPPS. Supplementary annual tables, providing more in-depth statistics and lower level granularity on self-harm and assaults on a calendar year basis, and a guidance document can be found alongside this bulletin at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics><sup>1</sup>.*

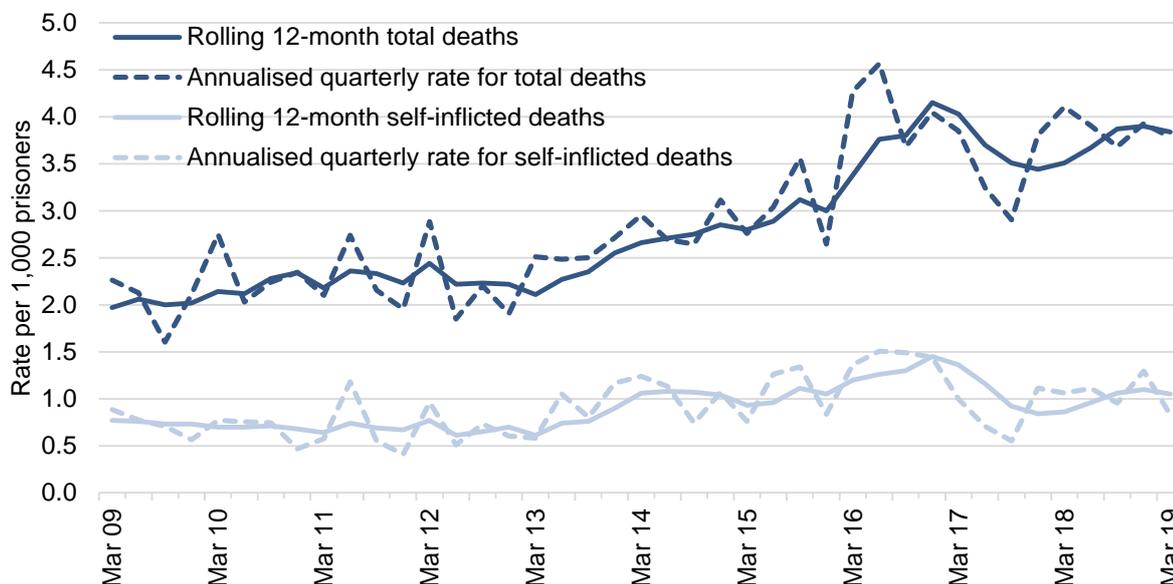
<sup>1</sup> Data on deaths is published three months ahead of self-harm and assaults. Therefore, the deaths annual publication and tables are published alongside the year ending September Safety in Custody publication.

# 1 Deaths: 12 months ending March 2019

**Number of deaths have increased compared to the previous 12 month period.**

In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 317 deaths in prison custody, up 18 from the previous year. Of these, 87 deaths were self-inflicted, up 14 from the previous year.

**Figure 1: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of deaths per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending March 2009 to 12 months ending March 2019, with annualised quarterly rates<sup>2</sup>**



In the 12 months to March 2019, there were 317 deaths in prison custody, an increase of 6% from 299 in the previous year, at a rate of 3.8 deaths per 1,000 prisoners. The most recent quarter saw the number of deaths decrease to 77, down 5 from the three months to December 2018. Quarterly death figures should be considered with caution due to greater volatility and the potential for seasonal effects. Long-term trends and further breakdowns are available in the annual tables from the safety in custody quarter three publication<sup>3</sup>.

There were 87 apparent self-inflicted deaths, up 19% from 73 in the previous year, to a rate of 1.1 instances per 1,000 prisoners in the 12 months to March 2019. Within the female estate, there were 4 self-inflicted deaths at a rate of 1.0 per 1,000 prisoners during this period, up from 1 self-inflicted death in the previous 12 months.

There were 3 apparent homicides, down from 5 incidents in the previous year. Homicides in prison custody remain relatively rare, accounting for around 1% of all deaths over the last ten years. There were 164 deaths due to natural causes, a decrease of 11% from 184 in the previous year. Natural-cause deaths were at a rate of 2.0 per 1,000 prisoners.

There were 63 deaths recorded as 'other' in the 12 months to March 2019, 52 of which are 'awaiting further information' prior to being classified. In some cases, the results of the toxicology and post-mortem tests are inconclusive, meaning classification cannot be arrived at until inquest (which can be a considerable time after the death), while other cases remain awaiting results at the time of publication. As a result, the number of deaths in the individual categories is not directly comparable with earlier years; it is likely that the figures in some categories will be revised upwards once classifications have been finalised.

<sup>2</sup> The annualised quarterly rate is an estimate of the annual rate calculated from data in one quarter and also taking into account the number of days in that quarter.

<sup>3</sup> Data on deaths are published three months ahead of Assaults and self-harm, therefore, the Deaths in prison custody 2018 annual publication is published in the Safety in Custody year ending September 2018  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/787136/safety-in-custody-Deaths-dec-18.ods](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/787136/safety-in-custody-Deaths-dec-18.ods)

## 2 Self-harm: 12 months to December 2018

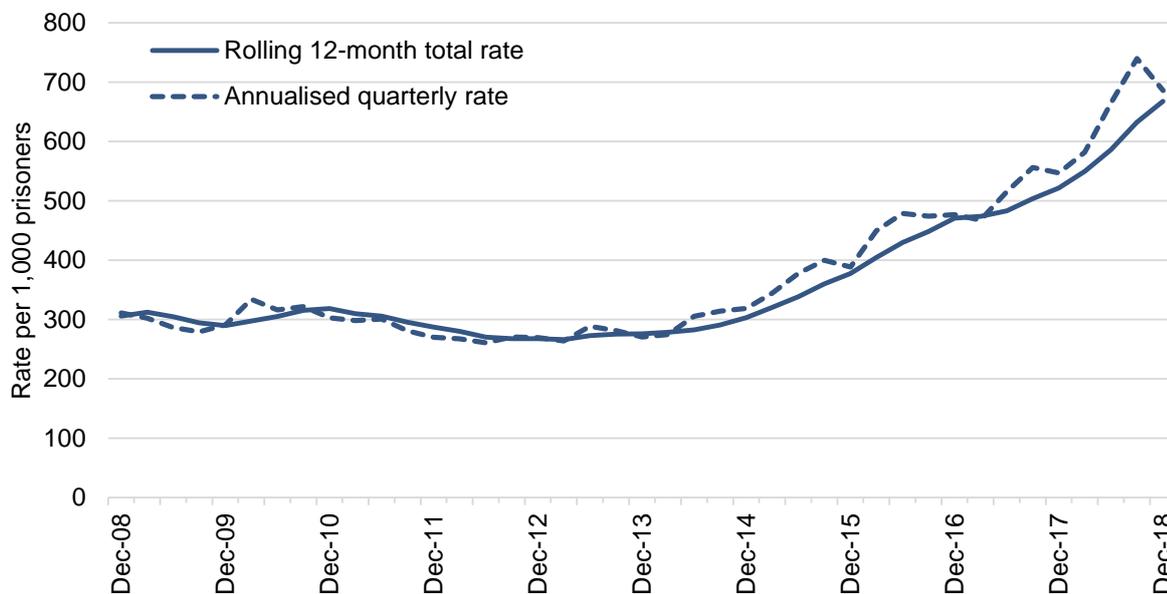
**Self-harm incidents rose to 55,598 in 2018, a new record high, but decreased in the latest quarter.**

Self-harm incidents reached a record high of 55,598 incidents in 2018, a 25% increase from 2017. The number of incidents between October and December decreased by 7% to 14,313 since the previous quarter.

**Incidents requiring hospital attendance rose to a record high of 3,214 in 2018, although the proportion of incidents requiring hospital attendance has decreased.**

The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 5% on the previous year to 3,214 while the proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance decreased by 1.1 percentage point to 5.8%.

**Figure 2: 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners, 12 months ending December 2008 to 12 months ending December 2018, with annualised quarterly rates<sup>4</sup>**



In the 12 months to December 2018, there were 55,598 reported incidents of self-harm (a rate of 667 per 1,000 prisoners), up 25% on the previous year. The number of self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased by 5% on the previous year to 3,214 while the proportion of incidents that required hospital attendance decreased by 1.1 percentage point to 5.8%. The number of self-harm incidents in 2018 is the highest in the time series and increasing at a faster rate than those requiring hospital treatment, resulting in the proportion of incidents requiring hospital attendance to decrease.

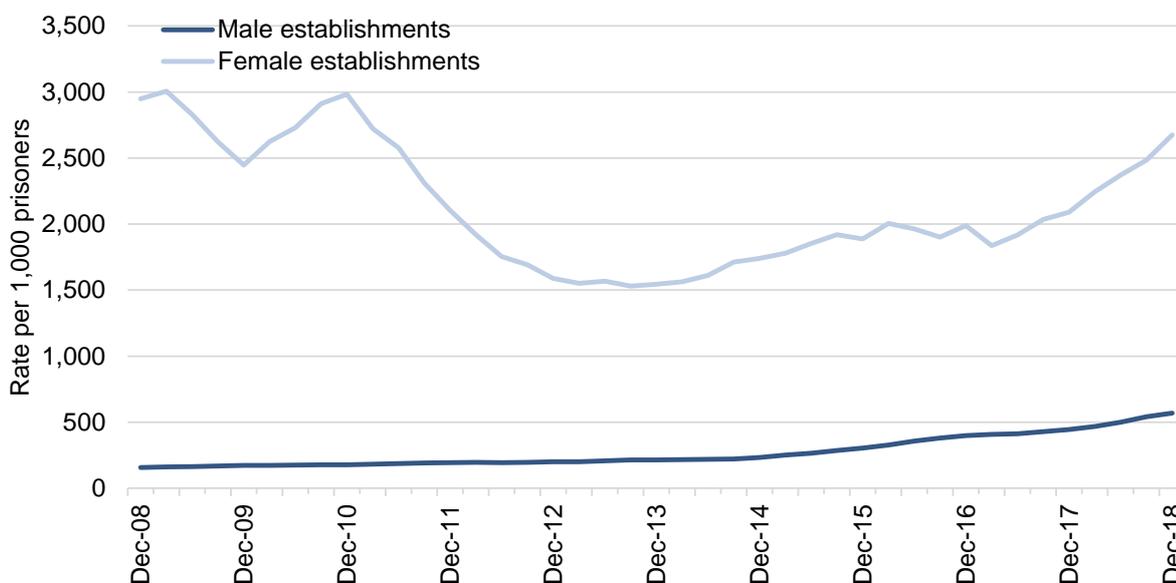
The number of prisoners who self-harmed in the 12 months to December 2018 was 12,570 (a rate of 151 prisoners per 1,000), an 8% increase from the previous year. Those that self-harmed did so, on average, 4.4 times, although a small number of prolific self-harmers have a disproportionate impact on this figure. The majority of those who self-harm in prison do so only once a year (49% in the year ending December 2018). Additional detail on this can be found in the annual self-harm tables.

<sup>4</sup> The annualised quarterly rate is an estimate of the annual rate calculated from data in one quarter and also taking into account the number of days in that quarter.

The number of self-harm incidents decreased by 7% to 14,313 in October and December 2018, from a previous peak of 15,462 incidents in the last quarter (July to September 2018). However, the number of incidents in the latest quarter was 21% higher than the same quarter in 2017.

The number of incidents requiring hospital attendance between October and December decreased by 10% to 782 from July to September. Hospital attendances also peaked in the July to September quarter.

**Figure 3: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of self-harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners by gender of establishment, 12 months ending December 2008 to 12 months ending December 2018**



Self-harm trends differ considerably by gender, with a rate of 570 incidents per 1,000 in male establishments (with incidents up 25% on the previous year) compared to a rate of 2,675 per 1,000 in female establishments (an increase of 24% in the number of incidents from the previous year). In the 12 months to December 2018, the number of self-harm incidents per self-harming prisoner was 4.0 for males, and 8.3 for females, increases from 3.5 and 7.0 respectively in 2017.

Self-harm incidents requiring hospital attendance increased from the previous year in male establishments by 3% to 2,984, and in female establishments by 28% to 230 incidents. While self-harmers in female establishments were twice as prolific as those in male establishments, the proportion of incidents that required hospitalisation was more than three times higher in male establishments (6.6% compared to 2.2% in female establishments).

## **Key Points from Self-Harm Annual tables**

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### **The most common method for self-harm in prison was cutting/scratching, 54% females and 68% males self-harmed by cutting**

This was an increase of 27% for males and 12% for females in the most recent year. Hanging and self-strangulation both increased by over 35% for males since 2017. Hanging decreased by 7% for females in the previous year, although self-strangulation rose by 32%.

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### **Consistently, prisoners in male establishments who are in prison between 31 days and 3 months were the most likely to self-harm.**

Prisoners in both male and female establishments had the majority of self-harm incidents when they had been in custody between 31 days and 3 months, however for the first time in 2018, the majority of self-harm incidents occurred when prisoners had been in their current prison for over one year.

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### 3 Assaults: 12 months to December 2018

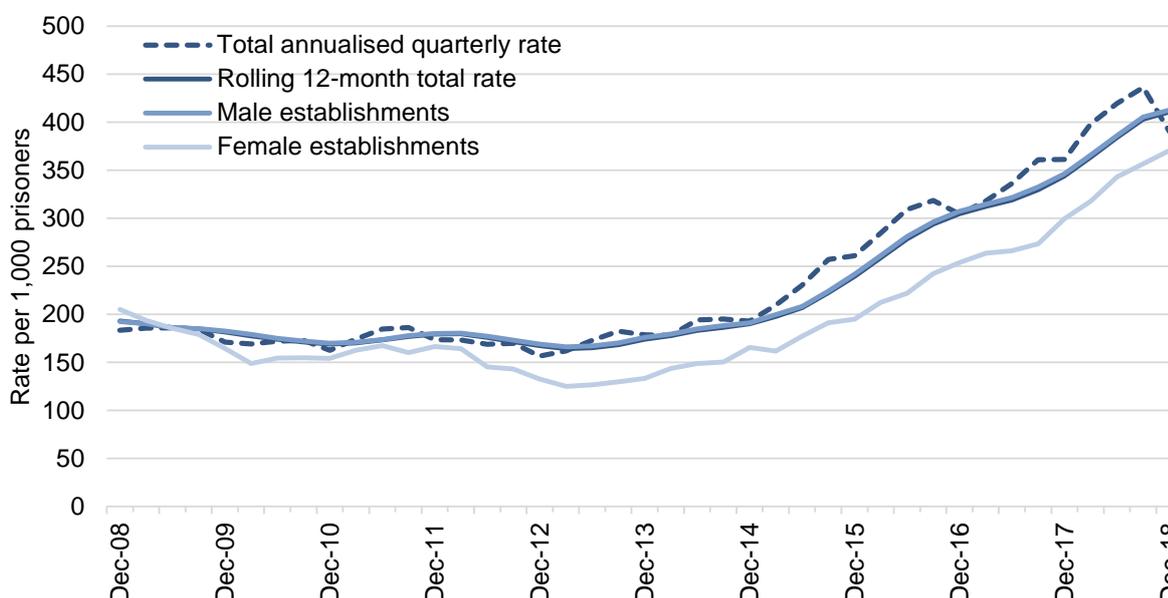
Assault incidents increased to 34,223, a record high level in 2018, but decreased in the latest quarter.

Annual assault incidents reached a record high of 34,223 incidents in 2018, a 16% increase from 2017. Assaults in the October to December 2018 quarter decreased to 8,150, a decrease of 11% from the previous quarter, but a 5% increase on the same quarter of the previous year.

The proportion of assaults on staff continue to rise.

The proportion of assaults on staff increased to 30% of all incidents in 2018, an increase from 29% in 2017, and a steady increase from 20% between 2008 and 2011. The proportion of assaults on staff (38%) in female establishments in 2018 was higher than in male establishments (29%).

Figure 4: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total assaults by gender of establishment, 12 months ending December 2008 to 12 months ending December 2018, with annualised quarterly rates<sup>5</sup>



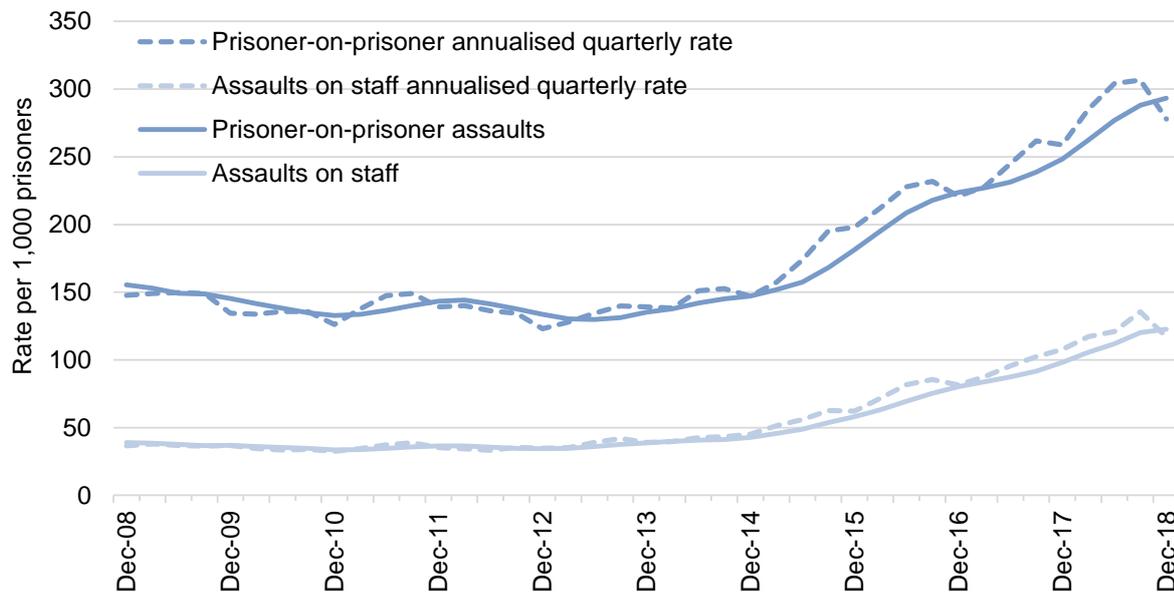
In the 12 months to December 2018, assault incidents increased by 16% to a new record high of 34,223, a rate of 411 incidents per 1,000 prisoners.

The number of incidents in male establishments increased by 16% from 28,285 to 32,797 between 2017 and 2018, and the number of incidents in female establishments increased by 20% from 1,190 to 1,426 incidents.

In the latest quarter, there were 8,150 assaults, an 11% decrease from the three months to September 2018, but 5% higher than the same quarter of 2017.

<sup>5</sup> The annualised quarterly rate is an estimate of the annual rate calculated from data in one quarter and also taking into account the number of days in that quarter.

**Figure 5: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff, 12 months ending December 2008 to 12 months ending December 2018, with annualised quarterly rates**



There were 24,424 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in 2018 (a rate of 293 per 1,000 prisoners), an increase of 15% from 2017, to a new record high.

There were 10,213 assaults on staff in the 12 months to December 2018 (a rate of 123 per 1,000 prisoners), up 21% from the previous year. This is the highest level in the time series. The proportion of assaults on staff increased to 30% of all incidents in 2018, an increase from 29% in 2017, and a steady increase from 20% between 2008 and 2011.

Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in male establishments rose by 15% to 23,538 incidents from the previous year, and assaults on staff in male establishments rose by 20% in the same period, to 9,665 incidents.

Female prisoner-on-prisoner assaults<sup>6</sup> increased by 10% in 2018, to 886 incidents, and assaults on staff in female establishments increased 48% to 548 incidents. The proportion of assaults on staff (38%) in female establishments was higher than in male establishments (29%).

The latest quarter saw 5,803 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, a decrease of 9% from the previous quarter, and 25% decrease from the same quarter in the previous year. In the latest quarter, there were 2,439 staff assaults, a decrease of 14% on the previous quarter, but a 5% increase on the number of staff assaults on the same quarter in the previous year. There was a change in how staff assaults have been recorded. This has simplified how incidents involving staff are identified, however it is possible this has increased the recording of incidents<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> This figure includes any prisoner on prisoner assault where there may also have also been an assault on staff.

<sup>7</sup> Please see the Guide to Safety in Custody statistics for further information

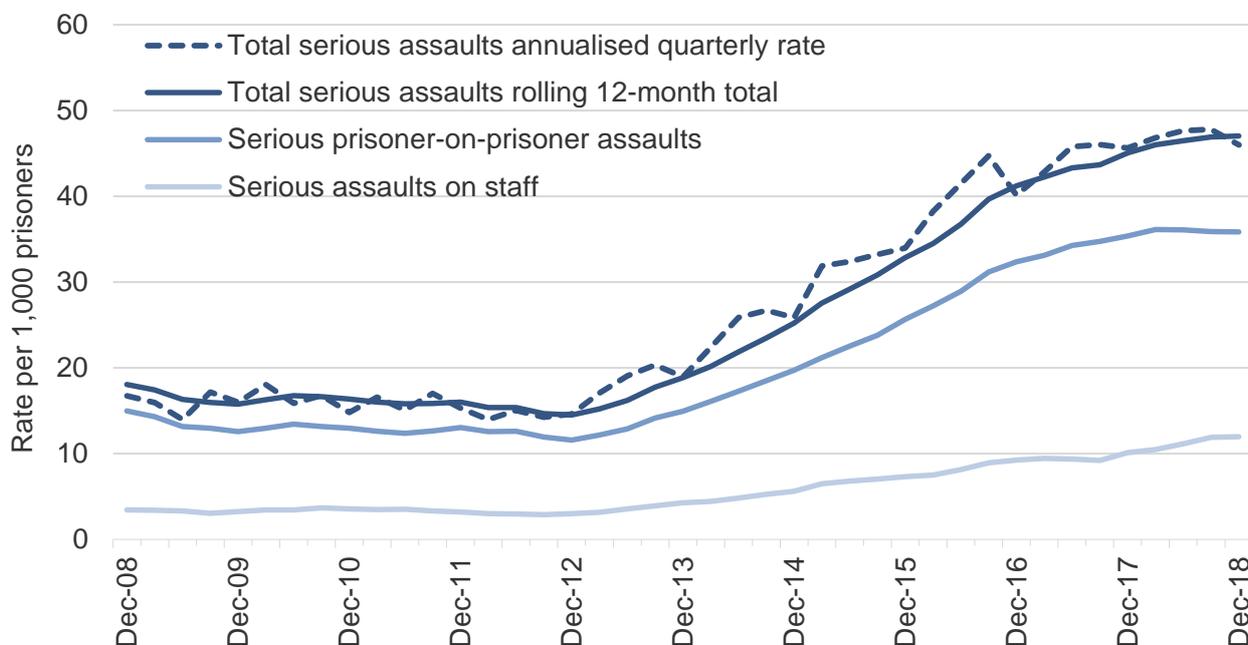
### 3.1 Serious assaults

**Of the 34,223 assault incidents in 2018, 3,918 (11%) were serious.**

In the 12 months to December 2018, there were 3,918 serious assault incidents, up 2% from the previous year. Serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 1% since the previous year (to 2,987), and serious assaults on staff increased by 15% (to 995) in the same period. Serious assaults (by 4%), serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (by 5%), and serious assaults on staff decreased in the last quarter (by 4%).

Serious assaults are those which fall into one or more of the following categories: a sexual assault; requires detention in outside hospital as an in-patient; requires medical treatment for concussion or internal injuries; or incurs any of the following injuries: a fracture, scald or burn, stabbing, crushing, extensive or multiple bruising, black eye, broken nose, lost or broken tooth, cuts requiring suturing, bites, temporary or permanent blindness.

**Figure 6: Quarterly 12-month rolling rate of total serious assaults, serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, and serious assaults on staff, 12 months ending December 2008 to 12 months ending December 2018, with annualised quarterly rates**



In the 12 months to December 2018, there were 3,918 serious assaults (a rate of 47 per 1,000 prisoners), up 2% from the previous year. Of these, 2,987 (76%) were serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (a rate of 36 per 1,000 prisoners). Over the same period, there were 995 serious assaults on staff (a rate of 12 per 1,000 prisoners), up 15% from 2017. The number of serious assaults on staff in 2018 was highest in the time series, whereas serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults decreased by 1% since 2017 (a previous peak).

In the latest quarter, there were 960 serious assaults, a 4% decrease from the previous quarter, and 2% decrease from the same quarter in the previous year. There were 753 serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults (75%), and 257 serious assaults on staff in October to December 2018, decreases of 5% and 4% respectively from the previous quarter, and decreases of 3% and 1% respectively from the same quarter of the previous year.

## **Key Points from Assaults Annual tables**

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**Prisoners aged 30- 39 had the highest proportion of assailants (25%), fighters (21%) and victims (28%) in 2018<sup>8</sup>.**

The number of assailants aged 30-39 had increased by 26% since the previous year, to 5,254 incidents. The number of fighters aged 30-39 increased by 7% to 2,966 and the number of victims aged 30-39 increased 12% to 4,040.

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**The number of incidents involving prisoners who had been in prison over one year has seen the biggest increase across all roles.**

The number of assault incidents involving prisoners who had been in custody for 31 days to 3 months had smaller changes from the previous year for assailants (3% increase to 5,199 incidents), fighters (3% decrease to 3,642 incidents) and victims (1% decrease to 3,591 incidents), whereas prisoners who had been in prison over one year has increased for assailants (69% increase to 3,522), fighters (46% increase to 2,131) and victims (60% increase to 2,127).

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<sup>8</sup> Assailants and victim refer to assault incidents in which there is a clear aggressor and victim. Fighters refer to assault incidents in which there is no clear aggressor or victim. Such cases arise from offences of affray.

## Further Information

### Accompanying files

As well as this bulletin, the following products are published as part of this release:

- A technical guide providing further information on how the data are collected and processed, as well as information on the revisions policy and legislation relevant to sentencing trends and background on the functioning of the criminal justice system.
- A set of summary tables for the latest quarter, and annual tables up to the latest calendar year.

### National Statistics status

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.



All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's (UKSA) regulatory arm. The UKSA considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is the Ministry of Justice's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected for National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the UKSA promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

### Contact

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

Tel: 020 3334 3536

Email: [newsdesk@justice.gov.uk](mailto:newsdesk@justice.gov.uk)

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to:

**Lucy Cuppleditch**

Prison and Probation Analytical Services

Ministry of Justice

102 Petty France

London

SW1H 9AJ

Email: [statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk](mailto:statistics.enquiries@justice.gov.uk)

**Next annual update: 30 April 2020, quarterly provisional updates will be published in July, October and January.**

**URL:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/safety-in-custody-statistics>

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