

Safety in Custody 2009

England and Wales

Ministry of Justice
Statistics bulletin

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Introduction

Safety in custody statistics cover deaths, self-harm and assaults among prisoners in custody. This publication contains statistics relating to self-harm 2004 to 2009 and assaults in prison custody 2000 to 2009 in England and Wales. Figures for deaths in custody for the same period (2000 to 2009) were published in the first Safety in custody statistics bulletin on 11 February 2010. From next year we will publish all three areas together at the same time.

This bulletin has been produced by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). NOMS monitors deaths, self-harm and assaults in prisons and has a range of related measures to help monitor overall safety.

Although this publication concerns statistics, the incidents described in this report are, by their nature, tragic and distressing to the prisoners, their families and the staff who look after them. The National Offender Management Service remains committed to managing self-harm and reducing violence in prison custody.

When considering particular statistics readers should note the following:

- Incidence of self-harm or assault is unevenly distributed around the prison estate. This bulletin presents the figures broken down by key factors including age, gender and time in custody. These, 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.

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 on a day to day basis. Others have affected the way statistics are collected and reported. The timeline in Appendix A summarises some of key events and developments since 2000 which have affected safety in prison custody and supporting statistics. The list is not comprehensive but does give an indication of the major factors affecting safety.

Summary

This publication comments on trends relating to self-harm and assaults up to the end of 2009. The underlying trends for each are assessed on changes to average annual rates.

The prison population increased by just under 1,000 between June 2008 and June 2009. However, both self-harm incidents and assault incidents fell between 2008 and 2009. This follows peaks in both series in 2008.

Self-harm incidents per thousand of the prison population decreased from 305 to 290 from 2008 to 2009. The number of individuals self-harming increased between 2008 and 2009 from 6,458 to 6,977. There is however a marked difference between male and female prisoners: around 7 per cent of male prisoners self-harm compared to over a third of female prisoners.

The number of assault incidents per thousand of the population decreased from 195 to 180 between 2008 and 2009. In 2009, 1,319 of 15,180 total assault incidents or 9% were classified as serious. There were 2,873 assaults on staff (19% of all assault incidents).

Table 1: Summary statistics

	England and Wales									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Prison Population¹	64,602	66,301	70,778	73,038	74,657	75,979	78,127	80,216	82,572	83,559
Self-harm incidents²					19,694	23,781	23,400	23,001	25,234	24,114
Individuals self-harming					5,384	5,761	5,904	6,112	6,458	6,977
Assault incidents³	9,440	10,719	11,562	11,876	12,613	14,411	15,057	15,272	15,959	15,180
Annual average incidents per 1,000 prisoners										
Self-harm incidents	-	-	-	-	265	315	300	285	305	290
Assault incidents³	145	160	165	165	170	190	195	190	195	180
Annual average incidents per 100,000 prisoners										
Self-harm incidents	-	-	-	-	26,500	31,500	30,000	28,500	30,500	29,000
Assault incidents³	14,500	16,000	16,500	16,500	17,000	19,000	19,500	19,000	19,500	18,000

(1) As published in Offender Management and Caseload Statistics 2009.

(2) Self-harm statistics are derived from the NOMS incident reporting system. A new system for monitoring self-harm was introduced in December 2002 and as a result recording improved throughout 2003. Statistics collected before 2004 are not comparable with more recent figures.

(3) Assault statistics are derived from the NOMS incident reporting system. For more information on offences and punishments see Chapter 8, Offender Management Caseload Statistics.

Data Sources and Quality

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems. Care is taken when processing and analysing returns but the detail is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system. Although shown to the last case, the figures may not be accurate to that level.

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.” In the community, self-harm is common but often covert. In prisons, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. The system for recording these incidents was implemented in December 2002 and relatively complete data is available from 2004 onwards.

Key self-harm statistics are summarised in Tables 1 and 2. Although the number of self-harm incidents is provided, this particular measure, in isolation, is not a good indicator of underlying trend as a small number of individuals account for a large proportion of self-harm incidents.

- In 2009, a total of 6,977 individual prisoners were recorded as having self-harmed.
- Self harm incidents per 1,000 prisoners decreased from 305 to 290 incidents (30,500 to 29,000 incidents per 100,000 prisoners) from 2008 to 2009 (see table 1).
- The number of individuals self-harming per 1,000 prisoners increased from 78 to 84 (7,800 to 8,350 per 100,000 prisoners) from 2008 to 2009.
- Female prisoners who self-harm do so more frequently than male prisoners. There are over 3 times the number of females self-harming per 1,000 prisoners compared to males (365 females compared to 68 males).
- In 2009, an average of 7 incidents for each female prisoner self-harming compared to 3 incidents for each male self-harming (see website, “Statistical tables: self-harm,” Table 1).

Table 2: Self harm summary statistics

	England and Wales					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Prison Population¹	74,657	75,979	78,127	80,216	82,572	83,559
Male	70,209	71,512	73,680	75,842	78,158	79,277
Female	4,448	4,467	4,447	4,374	4,414	4,283
Self-harm incidents^{2,3}	19,694	23,781	23,400	23,001	25,234	24,114
Male	9,923	10,605	12,023	11,633	12,221	13,688
Female	9,771	13,176	11,377	11,368	13,013	10,426
Individuals self-harming^{2,4}	5,384	5,761	5,904	6,112	6,458	6,977
Male	4,038	4,288	4,506	4,695	4,954	5,403
Female	1,346	1,473	1,398	1,417	1,504	1,574
Annual average for individuals self-harming per 1,000 prisoners						
Individuals self-harming	72.0	76.0	75.5	76.0	78.0	83.5
Male	57.5	60.0	61.0	62.0	63.5	68.0
Female	305.0	330.0	315.0	325.0	340.0	365.0
Annual average for individuals self-harming per 100,000 prisoners						
Individuals self-harming	7,200	7,600	7,550	7,600	7,800	8,350
Male	5,750	6,000	6,100	6,200	6,350	6,800
Female	30,500	33,000	31,500	32,500	34,000	36,500

(1) As published in Offender Management and Caseload Statistics 2009.

(2) A new system for monitoring self harm was introduced in December 2002 and as a result recording of self harm improved throughout 2003. Numbers before 2004 have therefore not been included as they are not directly comparable with later figures.

(3) In prisons, as in the community, it is not possible to count self harm incidents with absolute accuracy. In prison custody, however, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. Care needs to be taken when comparing figures shown here with other sources where data may be less complete.

(4) The numbers of different individuals are based on prison number and main age bands. An individual who was in prison custody on two occasions during a year but with two different numbers or age bands would be counted twice if he/she had self harmed at least once on each occasion.

Data Sources and Quality

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems. Care is taken when processing and analysing the returns but the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system. Although the figures are shown to the last individual the figures may not be accurate to that level.

In 2009, 5,509 incidents of self-harming occurred among the 15 to 20-year-old age group. This represents 23% of all incidents during that year. Analysis of the data by gender shows that incidents among those aged 15 to 20 account for 24% male self-harm incidents and 22% female self-harm incidents.

Table 3: Self harm incidents by age group

England and Wales		Number of self-harm incidents					
Age group	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
MALES AND FEMALES^{1,2}							
All Ages	19,694	23,781	23,400	23,001	25,234	24,114	
15-17 year olds	1,028	1,178	960	1,061	1,428	1,069	
18 - 20	3,659	5,005	4,943	4,541	4,970	4,440	
21-24	4,079	4,294	4,077	4,835	5,501	4,444	
25-29	3,390	4,230	4,280	3,936	3,811	4,097	
30-39	4,013	5,088	5,049	4,432	5,506	5,031	
40-49	1,183	1,860	2,407	2,292	2,103	2,362	
50-59	178	204	254	243	366	613	
60 and over	30	39	23	80	74	84	
Not recorded	2,134	1,883	1,407	1,581	1,475	1,974	
MALES							
All Ages	9,923	10,605	12,023	11,633	12,221	13,688	
15-17 year olds	460	589	671	488	742	754	
18 - 20	1,584	1,800	2,094	2,005	1,981	2,496	
21-24	1,663	1,731	1,988	2,106	2,226	2,328	
25-29	1,734	1,706	2,083	1,982	2,026	2,211	
30-39	2,417	2,472	2,889	2,706	2,741	2,966	
40-49	622	804	877	992	1,159	1,354	
50-59	104	152	203	143	192	269	
60 and over	27	17	21	70	55	64	
Not recorded	1,312	1,334	1,197	1,141	1,099	1,246	
FEMALES							
All Ages	9,771	13,176	11,377	11,368	13,013	10,426	
15-17 year olds	568	589	289	573	686	315	
18 - 20	2,075	3,205	2,849	2,536	2,989	1,944	
21-24	2,416	2,563	2,089	2,729	3,275	2,116	
25-29	1,656	2,524	2,197	1,954	1,785	1,886	
30-39	1,596	2,616	2,160	1,726	2,765	2,065	
40-49	561	1,056	1,530	1,300	944	1,008	
50-59	74	52	51	100	174	344	
60 and over	3	22	2	10	19	20	
Not recorded	822	549	210	440	376	728	

(1) A new system for monitoring self harm was introduced in December 2002 and as a result recording of self harm improved throughout 2003. Numbers before 2004 have therefore not been included as they are not directly comparable with later figures.

(2) In prisons, as in the community, it is not possible to count self harm incidents with absolute accuracy. In prison custody, however, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. Care needs to be taken when comparing figures shown here with other sources where data may be less complete.

Data Sources and Quality

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems. Care is taken when processing and analysing the returns but the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system. Although the figures are shown to the last individual the figures may not be accurate to that level.

Table 4 shows the numbers of self-harm incidents by time in current prison.

In 2009, 6,242 or 26% of self-harm incidents occurred within the first month of arriving in a prison.

Table 4: Self-harm incidents by time in current prison

	England and Wales					
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Time in current prison						
On day of arrival	427	407	613	587	543	634
1 to 2 days	696	732	741	759	757	699
3 days to 1 week	1,400	1,573	1,445	1,433	1,418	1,360
1 week to 1 month	3,695	4,114	4,398	3,754	4,081	3,549
1 month to 3 months	4,752	5,792	5,924	5,465	5,953	5,062
3 months to 6 months	2,966	3,680	3,674	3,757	4,375	3,650
6 months to 1 year	1,793	2,891	2,763	2,569	2,770	2,841
Over 1 year	1,798	2,676	2,416	3,081	3,851	4,204
Missing details	2,167	1,916	1,426	1,596	1,486	2,115
Total self-harm incidents	19,694	23,781	23,400	23,001	25,234	24,114
Time in current prison: males						
On day of arrival	338	300	458	451	426	472
1 to 2 days	458	453	452	456	435	391
3 days to 1 week	812	854	815	748	727	725
1 week to 1 month	1,752	1,771	2,188	1,884	1,912	1,838
1 month to 3 months	2,142	2,146	2,736	2,461	2,581	2,657
3 months to 6 months	1,304	1,360	1,601	1,534	1,804	1,884
6 months to 1 year	862	1,189	1,246	1,319	1,370	1,671
Over 1 year	932	1,187	1,317	1,634	1,864	2,673
Missing details	1,323	1,345	1,210	1,146	1,102	1,377
Total male self-harm incidents	9,923	10,605	12,023	11,633	12,221	13,688
Time in current prison: females						
On day of arrival	89	107	155	136	117	162
1 to 2 days	238	279	289	303	322	308
3 days to 1 week	588	719	630	685	691	635
1 week to 1 month	1,943	2,343	2,210	1,870	2,169	1,711
1 month to 3 months	2,610	3,646	3,188	3,004	3,372	2,405
3 months to 6 months	1,662	2,320	2,073	2,223	2,571	1,766
6 months to 1 year	931	1,702	1,517	1,250	1,400	1,170
Over 1 year	866	1,489	1,099	1,447	1,987	1,531
Missing details	844	571	216	450	384	738
Total female self-harm incidents	9,771	13,176	11,377	11,368	13,013	10,426

(1) A new system for monitoring self harm was introduced in December 2002 and as a result recording of self harm improved throughout 2003. Numbers before 2004 have therefore not been included as they are not directly comparable with later figures.

(2) In prisons, as in the community, it is not possible to count self harm incidents with absolute accuracy. In prison custody, however, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. Care needs to be taken when comparing figures shown here with other sources where data may be less complete.

Data Sources and Quality

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Assaults

In 2009, 1,319 of 15,180 total assault incidents or 9% were classified as serious (see definition under Appendix B: Data Sources and Quality). 1,283 of these incidents occurred in male establishments; 36 of these incidents occurred in female establishments.

In 2009, 2,873 or 19% of total assaults were on staff. 2,628 or 18% of total male assaults were on staff of which 255 or 10% were classified as serious. 245 or 35% of total female assaults were on staff of which 12 or 5% were classified as serious.

Table 5: Assault summary statistics

	England and Wales									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Prison Population¹	64,602	66,301	70,778	73,038	74,657	75,979	78,127	80,216	82,572	83,559
Males	61,252	62,561	66,479	68,613	70,209	71,512	73,680	75,842	78,158	79,277
Females	3,350	3,740	4,299	4,425	4,448	4,467	4,447	4,374	4,414	4,283
Assault incidents^{2,3}	9,440	10,719	11,562	11,876	12,613	14,411	15,057	15,272	15,959	15,180
Male establishments	8,881	10,085	10,814	11,068	11,752	13,323	13,895	14,268	15,054	14,475
Female establishments	559	634	748	808	861	1,088	1,162	1,004	905	705
Annual average assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners										
Assault incidents	145	160	165	165	170	190	195	190	195	180
Male establishments	145	160	165	160	165	185	190	190	195	185
Female establishments	165	170	175	185	195	245	260	230	205	165
Annual average assault incidents per 100,000 prisoners										
Assault incidents	14,500	16,000	16,500	16,500	17,000	19,000	19,500	19,000	19,500	18,000
Male establishments	14,500	16,000	16,500	16,000	16,500	18,500	19,000	19,000	19,500	18,500
Female establishments	16,500	17,000	17,500	18,500	19,500	24,500	26,000	23,000	20,500	16,500
Serious Assaults	795	796	956	1,160	1,220	1,372	1,404	1,485	1,491	1,319
Male establishments	748	756	917	1,095	1,137	1,306	1,344	1,435	1,448	1,283
Female establishments	47	40	39	65	83	66	60	50	43	36
Assaults on staff	2,192	2,700	2,851	2,893	3,204	3,502	3,530	3,273	3,211	2,873
Male establishments	1,944	2,412	2,553	2,592	2,895	3,067	3,006	2,863	2,859	2,628
Female establishments	248	288	298	301	309	435	524	410	352	245
Serious assaults on staff	173	181	196	267	272	299	279	285	283	267
Male establishments	161	169	188	247	246	277	254	266	264	255
Female establishments	12	12	8	20	26	22	25	19	19	12

(1) As published in Offender Management and Caseload Statistics 2009.

(2) Reported incidents before 2000 are not directly comparable with later figures and have therefore been excluded. Although figures for 2000 to 2002 have been included they are under-reported by modern standards. It is now expected that all assaults, including fights, should be reported whether or not there was an injury. As this was not the case in the past care needs to be taken when interpreting changes over the years.

(3) In prisons, as in the community, it is not possible to count assault incidents with absolute accuracy. In prison custody, however, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. Care needs to be taken when comparing figures shown here with other sources where data may be less complete.

Data Sources and Quality

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems. Care is taken when processing and analysing returns but the detail is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system. Although shown to the last case, the figures may not be accurate to that level.

Table 6 divides the data into prisoner assailants, fighters and victims. The prisoner assailants and prisoner victims categories arise from assault incidents where there are clearly identified assailants and victims. The prisoner fighter category arises from assault incidents where there is no clear victim. The roles are determined by local investigation of the incident.

The proportion of people involved in assault incidents decreases with age. Analysing the data by prisoner role, in 2009 those aged 15 to 20 years old accounted for 53% of total prisoner assailants, 63% of total prisoner fighters, and 43% of total prisoner victims. These percentages decrease with each successive 10-year age bracket.

Table 6: Assault incidents by role and age

	England and Wales									
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Prisoner assailants	4,891	5,223	5,097	4,994	5,161	6,464	6,799	6,535	7,170	6,908
15-17	986	1,192	1,087	810	891	1,431	1,620	1,491	1,866	1,748
18-20	1,580	1,527	1,394	1,307	1,271	1,591	1,775	1,641	1,753	1,921
21-25	734	834	895	978	994	1,130	1,047	1,082	1,161	1,070
26-29	713	712	670	777	899	904	948	990	1,012	862
30-39	698	773	836	884	857	1,039	986	882	916	861
40-49	156	133	175	186	201	305	314	360	368	357
50-59	18	41	30	37	32	41	83	67	73	69
60 and over	4	9	10	13	16	22	26	22	21	19
Unknown	2	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1
Prisoner fighters	6,104	6,978	7,556	7,718	7,666	9,556	10,447	11,386	11,627	11,217
15-17	1,882	2,461	2,329	2,213	2,052	3,264	3,654	4,045	4,248	3,184
18-20	2,332	2,419	2,836	2,637	2,463	3,065	3,184	3,564	3,617	3,907
21-25	726	781	924	1,113	1,146	1,162	1,290	1,318	1,369	1,483
26-29	534	580	640	736	894	919	1,009	1,103	1,033	1,180
30-39	518	615	685	815	885	924	997	989	994	1,051
40-49	94	104	119	180	207	191	270	317	309	362
50-59	11	16	21	17	15	24	35	40	36	37
60 and over	7	2	2	7	4	7	8	10	21	12
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Prisoner victims	3,937	3,918	4,281	4,158	4,270	5,298	5,631	5,783	6,424	5,895
15-17	709	762	706	519	518	926	966	999	1,242	994
18-20	1,208	1,082	1,043	958	937	1,199	1,235	1,248	1,475	1,568
21-25	601	651	745	802	805	857	977	1,017	1,049	1,002
26-29	566	560	701	710	757	891	907	947	1,023	870
30-39	627	660	824	879	904	1,037	1,069	1,084	1,072	972
40-49	164	156	189	217	254	315	364	392	457	374
50-59	53	33	54	55	77	55	85	74	80	90
60 and over	9	14	19	18	18	18	28	22	26	25
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

(1) Reported incidents before 2000 and prisoner involvements arising from them are not directly comparable with later figures and have therefore been excluded. Although figures for 2000 to 2002 have been included they are under-reported by modern standards. It is now expected that all assaults, including fights, should be reported whether or not there was an injury. Fights were less frequently reported in the past and therefore care needs to be taken when interpreting changes over the years.

(2) The unknown category used here refers to identified prisoners whose ages were not recorded on the system at the time of the incident. They can arise when new prisoners are being escorted to prison for the first time and there has been insufficient time to enter all of the prisoner's details. The circumstances are such that fights with other prisoners or being a victim of an assault by another prisoner is less likely. The unknown age category does NOT refer to unknown assailants.

Data Sources and Quality

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems. Care is taken when processing and analysing the returns but the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system, and so although shown to the last case, the figures may not be accurate to that level.

Appendix A

Timeline

2000

- March: Zahid Mubarek murdered by racially motivated cell mate at HM Young Offenders Institution Feltham

2002

- December: New self-harm monitoring form introduced
- New Cell Sharing Risk Assessment (CSRA) form introduced

2003

- January: Prison Service Order (PSO) 2700, "Suicide and Self Harm Prevention" launched

2004

- Joint Commission on Human Rights publishes, "Report on Deaths in Custody"
- April: Apparent homicide of Shahid Aziz – Leeds
- May: PSO 2750, "Violence Reduction Strategy" launched

2006

- New at risk prisoner care planning system, "Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork" (ACCT) launched
- Home Office and Department of Health create Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody
- Zahid Mubarek inquiry finishes

2007

- Prison staff issued with cut down tools
- March: Baroness Jean Corston publishes, a "Review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice system"
- October: PSO 2700 revised
- December: Lord Carter publishes, "Proposals for the efficient and sustainable use of custody in England and Wales"

2008

- March: Robert Fulton publishes, "Independent review of the Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody"

2009

- January: Review of NOMS Violence Reduction Strategy commenced
- March: Lord Harris appointed of Chair of newly-formed Independent Advisory Council on Deaths in Custody

Appendix B

Data Sources and Quality

Although care is taken when processing and analysing the returns, the detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system such as the Incident Reporting System and NOMIS which was rolled out in 2009. 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.

Self-harm Information

Detailed information on each self-harm incident in prison custody comes from the NOMS incident reporting system (IRS) and more recently NOMIS (the new prison IT system). Such information began to be collected in the early 1990s. The focus then was on reporting serious incidents but the range of data has expanded to include all self-harm incidents whether or not an injury was sustained.

The current self-harm monitoring system started in December 2002 but because recording of self-harm improved throughout 2003 the data used in this report is 2004 to 2009.

In prisons, as in the community, it is not possible to count self-harm incidents with absolute accuracy. In prison custody, however, such incidents are more likely to be detected and counted. Care needs to be taken when comparing NOMS self-harm statistics with other sources where data may be less complete.

Assaults information

An assault is classified as serious if:

- it is a sexual assault
- it results in detention in outside hospital as an in-patient
- it requires medical treatment for concussion or internal injuries
- the injury is a fracture, scald or burn, stabbing, crushing, extensive or multiple bruising, black eye, broken nose, lost or broken tooth, cuts requiring suturing, bites or temporary or permanent blindness.

Information on assaults comes from the NOMS incident reporting system, IIS and NOMIS. Detailed recording of information on each assault incident began in the mid 1990s. The early focus was on serious incidents. Fights between prisoners (assault incidents where there was no clear assailant and victim), were reported less often.

All assault incidents, including fights, are now reported irrespective of whether an injury was sustained. Due to changes in categorisation of data, information prior to 2000 is not directly comparable with that collected later.

Contact points for further information

The current edition of this publication and more detailed spreadsheets are available for download at www.justice.gov.uk/publications/safer-custody.htm

The previous news release on deaths 1996 – 2009 dated 1 January 2010 can be found at www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease010110a.htm .

Future reports will be published on an annual basis.

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

Tel: 020 3334 3536

Other enquiries about these statistics should be directed to:

Performance Management Group
Ministry of Justice
3rd Floor Abell House
John Islip Street
London
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