

Analysis of deaths in custody in England and Wales 2016

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1. Key points

- There were 354 deaths in prison in 2016, including three homicides. This compares to 257 deaths in 2015 and 8 homicides. In 2016¹, there were 204 deaths by natural causes, 120 deaths by suicide and three homicides. 27 deaths are currently classified as 'other'. This includes 18 deaths classified as 'awaiting further information' and nine deaths classified as 'non-natural/other'.
- 332 men and 22 women died in prison in 2016.
- There were 120 deaths by suicide in prisons in 2016, the highest annual number since records began in 1978. This figure may rise when the outstanding AFI deaths are re-classified. There were 90 deaths by suicide in 2015 and 89 in 2014.
- There were three apparent homicides in prison reported in the media in 2016. There were eight apparent homicides in 2015, the highest number of homicides on record since 1978, where there were five homicides. There were three homicides in 2014 and four in 2013, which was the highest figure in over a decade.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 ²
Natural Causes	83	89	99	104	126	122	123	131	145	147	204
Self-inflicted	66	91	61	61	58	58	61	76	89	90	120
Homicide	0	1	3	0	1	2	0	4	3	8	3
Other (non-natural or AFI)	4	4	3	4	13	10	8	4	6	12	27
Total deaths	153	185	166	169	198	192	192	215	243	257	354
Average Population	78,127	80,216	82,572	83,560	84,725	86,000	86,737	84,331	84,250	85,753	84,640

¹ See MoJ safety in custody statistics 27 April 2017 at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/safety-in-custody-quarterly-update-to-december-2016--2 Some deaths have been reclassified.

² *ibid*

2. Analysis of all deaths in custody.

- There were 354 deaths in custody in 2016, including three homicides. This compares to 257 deaths in 2015
- 332 men and 22 women died in prison in 2016
- 45 of the prisoners who died (13 per cent) were on remand. 33 of the deaths on remand were self-inflicted.
- 22 women died in prison in 2016. 12 of the women died by suicide and five died of natural causes. Five deaths were classified as other, including three awaiting further information and two non-natural deaths.
- Six people aged 20 and under died in prison in 2016. Five deaths were classified as self-inflicted and one was awaiting further information
- 16 people aged 24 and under died in prison in 2016. 12 of these deaths were self-inflicted.

Prison size

Size of prison	No. of prisons	No. of prisons with deaths	% of prisons where deaths occurred	No. of deaths	% of total deaths	% of total population	Difference
1-400	21	9	43%	15	4%	7%	-3
401-800	53	40	75%	151	43%	36%	7
1-800	74	49	66%	166	47%	43%	4
801-1200	27	25	93%	96	27%	32%	-5
1200-2000	16	16	100%	91	26%	25%	1
801-2000	43	41	95%	187	53%	57%	-4
10 largest ³	10	10	100%	49	14%	17%	-3
15 largest ⁴	15	15	100%	87	25%	24%	1
20 largest ⁵	20	20	100%	111	31%	31%	0
25 largest ⁶	25	25	100%	129	36%	37%	-1

Deaths are more likely to occur in larger prisons.

³ Oakwood, Parc, Wandsworth, Forest Bank, Northumberland, Highpoint, Peterborough, Wormwood Scrubs, Hewell, Pentonville

⁴ As above plus Elmley, Liverpool, Thameside Littlehey and Leeds

⁵ As above plus Holme House, Wymott, Doncaster, Manchester and Dovegate

⁶ As above plus Altcourse, Risley, Bullingdon, Swaleside and Isle of Wight

Overcrowding

Rate of overcrowding ⁷	No. deaths occurred	% of deaths occurred	% of population held	Difference
Top 10 ⁸ over CNA	46	13%	10%	3
Top 15 ⁹ over CNA	68	19%	15%	4
Top 20 over ¹⁰ CNA	85	24%	20%	4
Top 25 ¹¹ over CNA	106	30%	24%	6

Deaths are more likely to occur in overcrowded prisons.

Sentence status

Status	Number of deaths	% of deaths	No. in population (30/12/2016) ¹²	% in population (30/12/2016)	Difference
Remand	46	13%	9,251	11%	+2
Sentenced	270	76%	73,588	87%	-11
Recalled ¹³	34	10%	6,570	8%	+2
Not stated/ not known	4	*	*	*	
Total			84,307		

Prisoners on remand and prisoners who have been recalled to prison are disproportionately more likely to die in prison.

Age

Age	Number of deaths	% of deaths	No. in population	% in population	Difference
Under 18	0	*	600	1%	
18 - 20	6	2%	4,357	5%	-3
21 - 24	10	3%	10,464	12%	-9
25 - 29	33	9%	15,361	18%	-9
30 - 39	62	18%	25,374	30%	-12
40 - 49	54	15%	15,183	18%	-3
50 - 59	61	17%	8,386	10%	+7
60 and over	128	36%	4,582	5%	+31

As expected, older prisoners account for a disproportionate number of deaths in custody. The oldest person to die in prison in 2016 was aged 92 years

⁷ CNA: Certified normal accommodation, the Ministry of Justice's own measure of uncrowded capacity

⁸ Leeds, Wandsworth, Swansea, Lincoln, Durham, Exeter, Preston, Doncaster, Leicester, Altcourse

⁹ As above, plus Winchester, Cardiff, Hull, Usk and Nottingham

¹⁰ All above plus Pentonville, Bedford, Brixton, Forest Bank and Chelmsford

¹¹ All above plus Bristol, Birmingham, Thameside, ISIS and Huntercombe

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/offender-management-statistics-quarterly-December-2016>

¹³ Recalled prisoners will also be sentenced

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of deaths	% of deaths	% in population	Difference
Asian	12	3%	8%	-5
Black	17	5%	12%	-7
Mixed	7	2%	4%	-2
White	313	90%	74%	16
other	2	*	*	*

White prisoners account for a disproportionate number of the deaths in custody

3. Analysis of deaths by natural causes

- 204 people died of natural causes in prison in 2016¹⁴. It is likely that this figure will rise as the majority of unclassified deaths are usually later re-classified as natural causes.
- The vast majority of deaths by natural causes occur amongst prisoners over 60 years old. However, of those who died by natural causes 7% were under 40 years old. The youngest prisoner to die of natural causes was aged 24 years old. The oldest prisoner to die was aged 92.

Sentence status

Status	Number of deaths ¹⁵	% of deaths	No. in population (30/12/2016)	% in population (30/12/2016)	Difference
Remand	9	5%	9,251	11%	-6
Sentenced	174	86%	73,588	87%	-1
Recalled ¹⁶	18	10%	6,570	8%	2

The majority of prisoners who died of natural causes had been sentenced. A disproportionate number of deaths occurred among recalled prisoners.

Age	Number of deaths ¹⁷	% of deaths	No. in population	% in population	Difference
15 - 17	0	*	600	1%	-1
18 - 20	0	*	4,357	5%	-5
21 - 24	1	1%	10,464	12%	-11
25 - 29	2	1%	15,361	18%	-17
30 - 39	10	5%	25,374	30%	-25
40 - 49	19	10%	15,183	18%	-8
50 - 59	42	21%	8,386	10%	11
60 and over	123	62%	4,582	5%	57

¹⁴ MoJ Safety in custody statistics, published 27 April 2017. Some deaths have been reclassified.

¹⁵ As of 28 January 2017. Some deaths have since been reclassified.

¹⁶ Recalled prisoners are also sentenced

¹⁷ As of January 2017.

As expected, the majority of prisoners who died of natural causes were aged 50 and over.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of deaths	% of deaths	% in population	Difference
Asian	0	0%	8%	-8
Black	7	4%	12%	-8
Mixed	2	*	4%	-4%
White	188	95%	73%	22%
Other	0	0	1%	-1
Not known/not stated	0	0	1%	-1

Prisons with highest number of deaths by natural causes

Prison Name	Type	Region	Operated by	Total	Natural	Self-inflicted	AFI
Littlehey	Male	East	HMPS	10	10	-	-
Wakefield	Male	High Security	HMPS	11	11	-	
Exeter	Male	South West	HMPS	13	9	4	
Wymott	Male	North West	HMPS	7	6	-	1
Norwich	Male	East	HMPS	7	7	-	-

4. Analysis of deaths by suicide

- 120 people died by suicide in prison in 2016¹⁸. This was the highest number of suicides in a year since current recording practices began in 1978. The previous highest was 96 deaths by suicide in 2004. There were 90 deaths by suicide in 2015 and 89 in 2014.
- 12 of those who died by suicide were held in female prisons. This is the highest annual total of deaths of women by suicide since 2003 when there were 14 deaths.
- The deaths of two transgender prisoners were reported in the media in 2016.
- Prisoners on remand were most at risk. Those on remand make up 11 per cent of the population yet account for 33 (28 per cent) of self-inflicted deaths.
- 50 of the people who died by suicide were on an ACCT
- 12 people aged 24 and under died by suicide in 2016. The youngest person to die by suicide was 18 years old.
- Thirteen people died by suicide after being recalled to prison in 2016
- On average, there were ten suicides a month in prison in 2016.

¹⁸ MoJ safety in custody statistics April 2017. One death has been reclassified as self-inflicted.

Age

Age	Number of SI deaths	% of deaths	No. in population	% in population	Difference
15 - 17	0	0	829 ¹⁹	1%	-1
18 - 20	5	4%	4,357	5%	-1
21 - 24	7	6%	10,464	12%	-6
25 - 29	28	23%	15,361	18%	5
30 - 39	38	32%	25,374	30%	2
40 - 49	27	22%	15,183	18%	4
50 - 59	13	12%	8,386	10%	2
60 and over	2	2%	4,582	5%	-3
Total	120				

Status

Status ²⁰	Number of deaths	% of deaths	No. in population (31/12/2016)	% in population (31/12/2016)	Difference
Remand	33	28%	9,251	11%	17%
Sentenced	85	71%	73,588	87%	-16
Recalled	13	11%	6,570	8%	+3
Other	1	*			

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of deaths	% of deaths	% in population	Difference
Asian	8	7%	8%	-1
Black	7	6%	12%	-6
Mixed	3	3%	4%	-1
White	101	84%	73%	11
Other	0	0	1%	-1
Not known/not stated	1	*	2%	*

White prisoners were disproportionately more likely to die by suicide.

¹⁹ Youth Custody data at www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-custody-data

²⁰ Recalled prisoners will also be sentenced.

Overcrowding

Rate of overcrowding	No. deaths occurred	% of deaths occurred	% of population held	Difference
Top 10 ²¹ over CNA	22	18%	10%	8
Top 15 ²² over CNA	28	23%	14%	9
Top 20 over ²³ CNA	32	27%	21%	6
Top 25 ²⁴ over CNA	40	33%	25%	8

People were disproportionately more likely to die by suicide in overcrowded prisons.

By month

Month	Number of deaths by suicide
January	11
February	8
March	10
April	10
May	10
June	12
July	10
August	11
September	10
October	10
November	12
December	6

On average, there were ten deaths by suicide a month. The highest number of deaths in a single month was 12, in June and November 2016.

Prisons with highest number of deaths by suicide

Prison Name	Type	Region	Operated by	Total	Natural	Self-inflicted	Homicide	AF I
Woodhill	Male	High Security	HMPS	12	4	7	0	1
Bristol	Male	South West	HMPS	7	-	5	0	1
Bedford	Male	East	HMPS	4	-	4	0	
Humber	Male	N East and Yorks	HMPS	5	-	4	0	1
Leeds	Male	N East and Yorks	HMPS	8	4	4	0	
Manchester	Male	High	HMPS	8	4	4	0	

²¹ Leeds, Wandsworth, Swansea, Lincoln, Durham, Exeter, Preston, Doncaster, Leicester, Altcourse

²² All above, plus Winchester, Cardiff, Hull, Usk and Nottingham

²³ All above plus Pentonville, Bedford, Brixton, Forest Bank and Chelmsford

²⁴ All above plus Bristol, Birmingham, Thameside, ISIS and Huntercombe

		Security						
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All prisons in which suicides occurred

Prison	Number of self-inflicted deaths 2016
TOTAL	120
Altcourse	2
Bedford	4
Belmarsh	1
Birmingham	1
Bristol	5
Bullingdon	1
Cardiff	1
Channings wood	2
Chelmsford	3
Deerbolt	1
Doncaster	2
Drakehall	1
Durham	1
Eastwood Park	3
Elmley	1
Exeter	4
Featherstone	1
Forest Bank	1
Foston Hall	2
Garth	2
Gartree	1
Glen Parva	1
Guys Marsh	1
Haverigg	1
Hewell	1
Hindley	1
Holloway	1
Holme House	2
Hull	2
Humber	4
Huntercombe	1
Isis	1
Leeds	4
Leicester	1
Lewes	1
Lincoln	2
Lindholme	2
Liverpool	3
Low Newton	1
Lowdham Grange	2

Manchester	4
Moorland	3
Mount	1
Newhall	3
Northumberland	3
Nottingham	2
Oakwood	1
Parc	3
Pentonville	3
Peterborough	1
Portland	1
Preston	1
Risley	1
Styal	1
Swaleside	1
Swansea	3
Wandsworth	2
Wayland	3
Whitemoor	1
Winchester	1
Woodhill	7
Wormwood Scrubs	2

5. Other deaths

- 27 deaths were classified as other in 2016. The MoJ clarify that 'other' is an amalgamation of deaths classified as 'other/non-natural deaths' and deaths 'awaiting further information'. The deaths of five women were classified as other in 2016; three awaiting further information and two non-natural deaths.

6. Deaths by homicide

There were three apparent homicides in prison reported in the media in 2016.

Name	Prison	DOD	Age	Gender	Status	Offence	Detail of death
Madala Washington	Coldingley	01.04.2016	25	Male	Sentenced 9 years	Conspirary to supply drugs	<p>Madala Washington died after being stabbed. A 23 year old man was arrested on suspicion of murder. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/inmate-knifed-to-death-inside-surrey-prison-a6964071.html</p> <p>A former prisoner Jahzeel Lewis was found not guilty of murder in February 2017. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-surrey-38829657</p>
Sidonio Teixeira	Long Lartin	20.06.2016	56	Male	Life sentence	Murder	<p>A prisoner in his 60s was arrested by West Mercia police on suspicion of murder. Another life sentence prisoner was being questioned. http://news.sky.com/story/1714807/prisoner-beaten-to-death-at-long-lartin-prison</p>
Jamal Mahmud	Pentonville	18.10.2016	21	Male	Not known	Weapon offences	<p>Jamal Mahmud was allegedly stabbed in Pentonville prison. Three prisoners were charged with his murder http://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/third-man-charged-over-muder-of-pentonville-prisoner-jamal-mahmoud-a3429506.html</p>

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