

Key Work Health and Safety Statistics, Australia



safe work australia

2012

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Key work health and safety statistics

- In 2008–09, there were 133 485 workers' compensation claims for serious¹ work-related injuries or illnesses. This equates to an incidence rate of 13.5 serious claims per 1000 employees.
- Preliminary data for 2009–10 show there were 127 620 serious workers' compensation claims, which equates to 12.6 serious claims per 1000 employees. While the final number of accepted claims for this year is likely to be around 3% higher, this will still represent an improvement from 2008–09.
- Male employees experienced nearly twice the rate of serious injury or disease compared with female employees.
- Incidence rates of serious workers' compensation claims increase with employee age.
- The highest incidence rates were recorded by Labourers & related workers, over double the rate for all occupations.
- The Transport & storage, Manufacturing and Agriculture, forestry & Fishing industries recorded the highest incidence rates of all industries, all with nearly twice the rate for all industries.
- A typical serious workers' compensation claim involves four weeks absence from work.
- One-quarter of serious claims required 12 or more weeks off work.
- One in five serious claims involved an injury to the back.
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Work Related Injury Survey* showed 53 out of every 1000 workers experienced an injury or illness in the workplace in 2009–10. However, half of these incidents involved less than one day or shift absent from work.
- In 2009–10, 216 workers died due to an injury incurred at work. This equates to 1.9 deaths per 100 000 workers.
- Work related injury and illness were estimated to cost \$60.6 billion in the 2008–09 financial year. This represented 4.8% of GDP.

¹ Serious claims involve a death, a permanent incapacity or a temporary incapacity requiring an absence from work of one working week or more

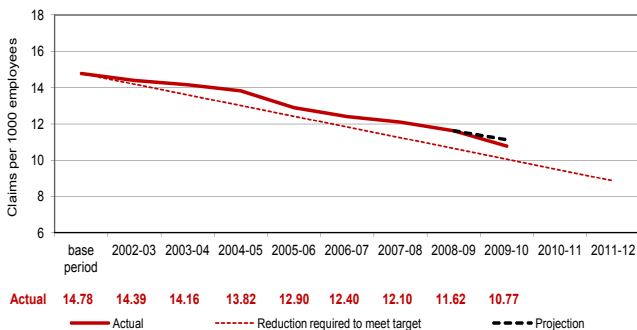
National OHS Strategy 2002–2012

Injury and musculoskeletal claims

Target: 40% reduction in the incidence of work-related injury by 30 June 2012 with 20% improvement required to meet the 2006–07 interim target.

Result: There was a 25% decrease in the injury incidence rate up to 2009–10 (Figure 1). A much greater rate of improvement is required to meet the 2012 target.

Figure 1 Incidence of serious claims: achieved versus reduction required to meet target

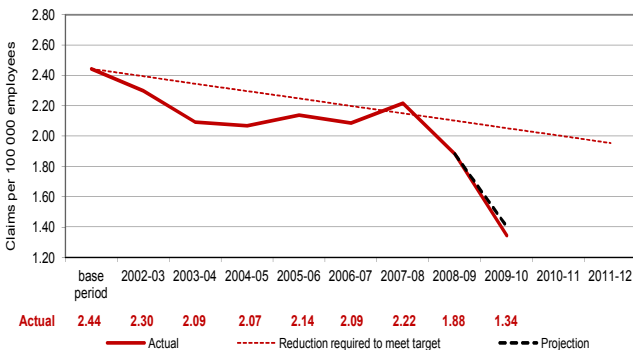


Fatalities

Target: 20% reduction in the incidence of compensated work-related fatalities by 30 June 2012 with 10% improvement required to meet the 2006–07 interim target.

Result: A 42% decrease was recorded up to 2009–10 which is twice the desired result. However, as Figure 2 shows, the volatility in this measure means that consistent improvement is still required to ensure the 2012 target is achieved.

Figure 2 Incidence of fatalities: achieved versus reduction required to meet target

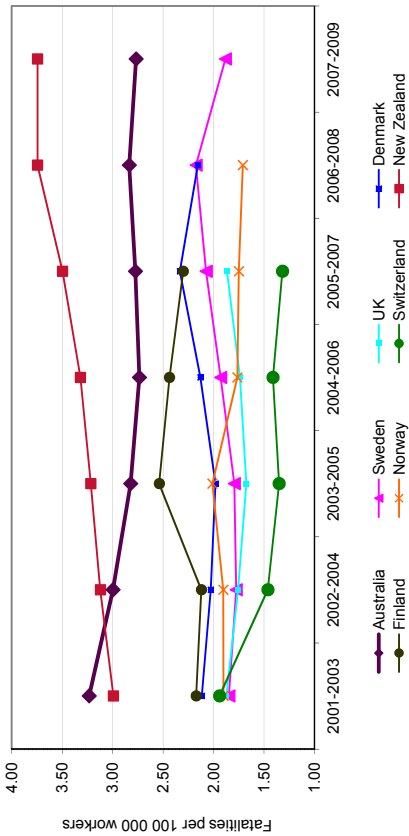


Aspirational target

Target: Australia to have the lowest work-related traumatic injury fatality rate in the world by 2009.

Result: While the gap between Australia and the better performing countries has reduced, Australia remains in seventh place and did not meet this aspirational goal.

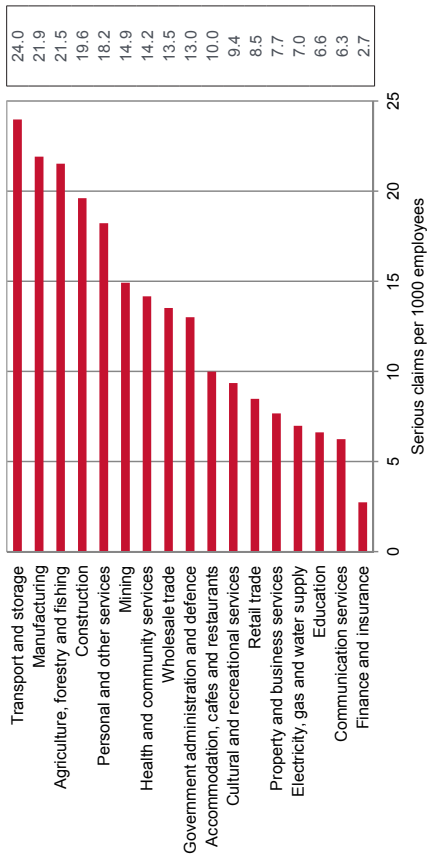
Figure 3 Comparison of Australia's work-related injury fatality rate with the best performing countries



Industry

- In 2009–10, four industries (Agriculture, forestry & fishing; Transport & storage; Manufacturing and Construction) had incidence rates substantially above the all industries rate of 12.6 serious claims per 1000 employees (Figure 4). These industries, with the addition of the Health & community services industry, were identified as priority industries under the *National OHS Strategy 2002–2012*.

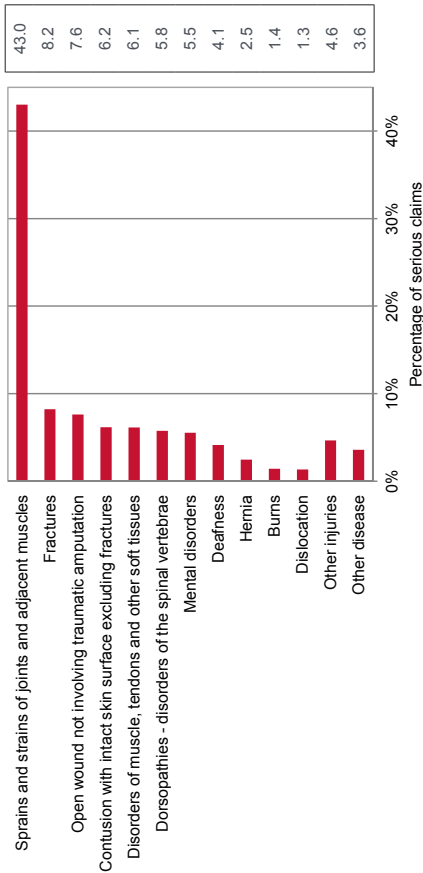
Figure 4 Incidence rates of serious claims by industry, 2009–10p



Types of workers' compensation claims

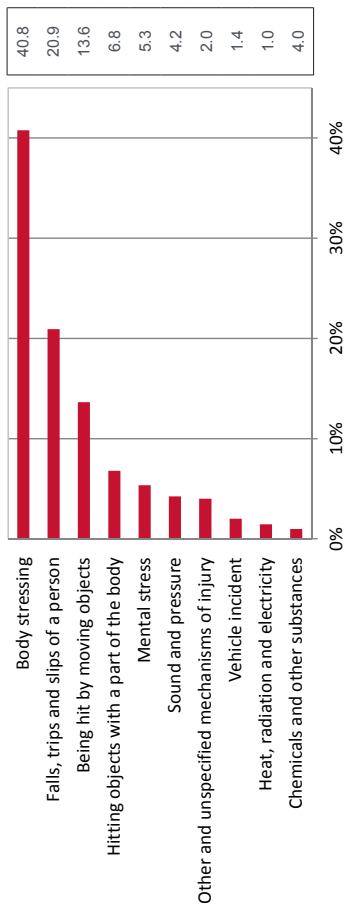
- In 2009–10, injury or poisoning accounted for 72% of serious workers' compensation claims, with disease claims accounting for the balance. However, the number of disease claims is likely to be underestimated due to difficulties associated with linking the disease to workplace exposure.
- The most common work-related injuries were sprains and strains (43% of all serious claims).

Figure 5 Serious claims: percentage by nature of injury or disease, 2009–10p



- *Body stressing, Falls, trips & slips of a person and Being hit by a moving object* were the mechanisms of work-related injury or illness responsible for 75% of serious workers' compensation claims in 2009–10 (Figure 6). These mechanisms, together with *Hitting objects with part of the body*, were identified as priority mechanisms in the *National OHS Strategy 2002–2012*. There has been little change in the proportion of claims due to these mechanisms since the Strategy began.

Figure 6 Serious claims: Percentage by mechanism of injury/disease, 2009–10p



Work-related fatalities

- Preliminary data for 2009–10 shows there were 194 accepted workers' compensation claims for work-related deaths, down from the 254 recorded for 2008–09.
- Two thirds of compensated fatalities were due to injury (134 in 2009–10), with the remainder due to disease.
- However, workers' compensation data do not include fatalities where there are no dependants to lodge a claim or where the worker was self-employed. Therefore, workers' compensation data underestimate the total number of work-related fatalities.
- The *Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities* report combines information on fatalities from a number of sources. The 2009–10 report showed there were 216 worker fatalities, 79 commuting fatalities and 42 bystanders killed as a result of someone else's work activity. This is the lowest number of work-related fatalities since the series began in 2003–04.
- Table 1 shows that the Transport, postal & warehousing industry had the highest number of fatalities in 2009–10 (51 deaths) with the Agriculture, forestry & fishing industry recording the highest fatality rate (11.4 deaths per 100 000 workers).
- More recent data on work-related fatalities can be found in the *Notified Fatalities Statistical Report* for 2010–11. This report only includes those deaths notified to work health and safety authorities and generally does not include work-related deaths due to traffic incidents on public roads. This report shows that the number of notifiable worker fatalities fell from a series high of 151 in 2008–09 to a series low of 111 in 2009–10, but then increased slightly in 2010–11 to 120 fatalities.

Based on these data it is expected that when the *Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities* figures are compiled for the 2010–11 period they will also show an increase. However, because of the more comprehensive methodology used when compiling this report, the figures for 2010–11 will differ from those presented in the *Notified Fatalities Statistical Report*.

Table 1 Worker fatalities: number and fatality rate (fatalities per 100 000 workers), 2009–10

Industry	Number	Fatality Rate
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	42	11.4
Transport, postal & warehousing	51	8.8
Construction	39	3.9
Mining	6	3.5
Rental, hiring & real estate services	5	2.7
Administrative & support services	9	2.4
Manufacturing	24	2.4
Electricity, gas, water & waste services	3	2.3
Wholesale trade	6	1.4
Arts & recreation services	2	1.0
Public administration & safety	5	0.7
Retail trade	8	0.7
Health care & social assistance	6	0.5
Other industries	9	0.2
All industries	216	1.9

Source: *Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities, 2009–10*

- The total number of work-related disease fatalities has been conservatively estimated to be at least 2000 deaths per year².
- In 2007, there were 551 registered deaths attributed to mesothelioma: an increase on the 486 deaths registered in 2006. It has been estimated that the numbers will not peak until after 2014³.

² Kerr *et al.* 1996. Best Estimate of the Magnitude of Health Effects of Occupational Exposure to Hazardous Substances, Worksafe Australia Developmental Grant Final Report, April 1996.

³ Clements *et al.* 2007. Actuarial projections for mesothelioma: an epidemiological perspective. Presented to the Actuaries of Australia XIth Accident Compensation Seminar.

Occupational disease indicators

- Safe Work Australia has identified eight priority occupational disease groups to receive attention. These disease groups have been chosen because they have a high attribution to the work environment.
- Workers' compensation data are complemented, where possible, by information from the other sources⁴ to better identify occupational disease trends.
- Table 2 presents the trends in the incidence of occupational disease between 2000–01 and 2008–09. Decreasing trends were observed for five of the eight priority disease groups. Noise-induced hearing loss; Respiratory diseases and Occupational cancers did not display a clear overall trend of increase or decrease.

Table 2 Occupational disease indicators: trend from 2000–01 to 2008–09

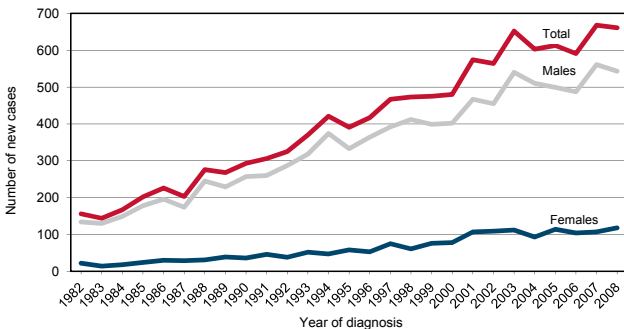
Trend over time	Occupational Disease
↓	Musculoskeletal disorders
↓	Mental disorders
→	Noise-induced hearing loss
↓	Infectious and parasitic diseases
→	Respiratory diseases
↓	Contact dermatitis
↓	Cardiovascular diseases
→	Occupational cancers

⁴ National Hospital Morbidity Database, National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, National Cancer Statistics Clearing House

Mesothelioma

- Data on the number of new cases of mesothelioma are collected nationally by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).
- The number of new cases of mesothelioma diagnosed increased from 156 in 1982 to a peak of 668 in 2007. In 2008, 661 cases were diagnosed. Based on a number of projections, the incidence of mesothelioma is not expected to peak until after 2014.
- The age standardised rate of new cases of mesothelioma has increased from 1.1 new cases per 100 000 population in 1983 to 2.9 in 2008.
- The majority (80–90%) of mesothelioma cases involve males.

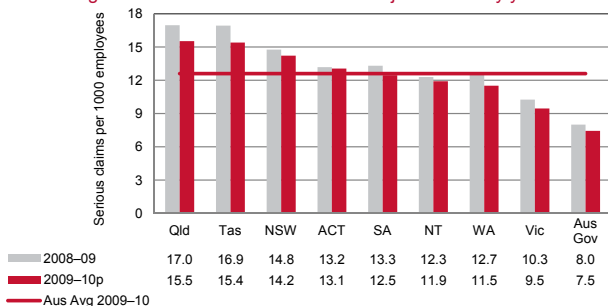
Figure 7 The number of new cases of mesothelioma by sex and year of diagnosis, 1982 to 2008



Jurisdictional comparison

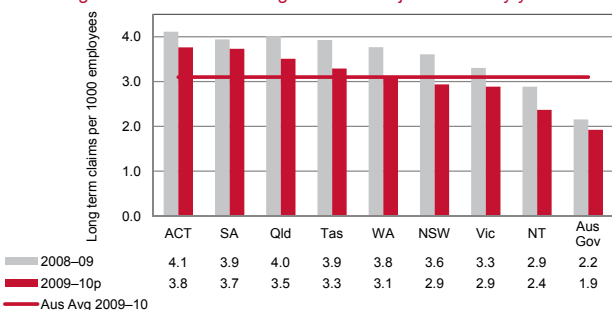
- In 2008–09 the lowest incidence rate of serious workers' compensation claims was recorded by the Australian Government (Figure 8) with Queensland and Tasmania recording the highest rates. The preliminary data for 2009–10 show a similar pattern.

Figure 8 Incidence of serious claims: jurisdiction by year



- Long term claims are those involving 12 or more weeks of compensation. The lowest rate of long term claims in 2008–09 was recorded by the Australian Capital Territory (Figure 9). Preliminary data for 2009–10 should be used with caution as they are likely to increase as claims already lodged are accepted by the jurisdictions.

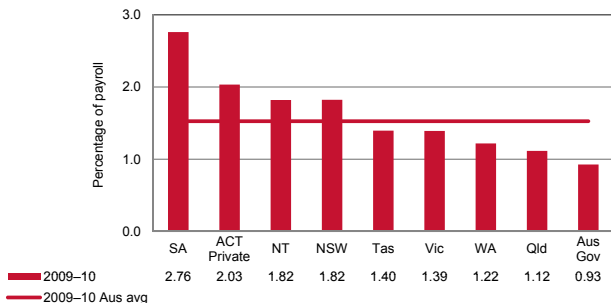
Figure 9 Incidence of long term claims: jurisdiction by year



Premium rates

- The standardised average premium rate⁵ in Australia has decreased 29%, from 2.15% of payroll in 2004-05 to 1.53% in 2009-10.
- Standardised premium rates across the jurisdictions range from 0.93% of payroll in Australian Government to 2.76% in South Australia

Figure 10 Standardised premium rates by jurisdiction, 2009-10



⁵ Standardisation takes into account differences in remuneration, employer excess and journey claim coverage. Figures include self-insurers.

Sources

All workers' compensation statistics regarding claims have been sourced from the National Dataset for Compensation-based Statistics (NDS).

Safe Work Australia produces an annual comprehensive statistical bulletin, the *Compendium of Workers' Compensation Statistics, Australia*, in which many of the national statistics in this booklet can be found. Additional information on fatalities can be found in the reports *Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities* and *Notified Fatalities Statistical Report*.

Jurisdictional data, workers' compensation scheme data and more information on progress towards the *National OHS Strategy 2002–2012* targets is available in the *Comparative Performance Monitoring (CPM)* report.

Information on occupational disease can be found in the publication, *Occupational Disease Indicators*.

Information on Mesothelioma can be found in the publication *Mesothelioma in Australia*.

Information on the cost of occupational injury and disease can be found in the report *The Cost of Work-related Injury and Illness for Australian Employers, Workers and the Community*.

All of these reports can be found on the Safe Work Australia website at www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au.

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