

# COMPENDIUM OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS AUSTRALIA 2002–03

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**Australian Government**

**Department of Employment and  
Workplace Relations**

Office of the Australian Safety and  
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# Executive summary

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## Part A: Trends over time, 1996–97 to 2002–03p

Workers' compensation data suggest that Australian workplaces have become safer over the seven year period 1996–97 to 2002–03p.

The number of compensated fatalities decreased by 47% — from 398 in 1996–97 to 211 in 2002–03p. Two-thirds of this decrease was due to a reduction in injury-related fatalities, rather than disease-related fatalities, although both decreased over the period.

The total number of compensated claims made in Australia resulting in one week or more absence from work, decreased by 18% — from 164 545 in 1996–97 to 134 480 in 2002–03p. This decrease in the number of claims has seen the incidence rate fall from 23 claims per 1 000 employees in 1996–97 to 16 in 2002–03p. Similarly, the frequency rate, measured in claims per million hours worked by employees, has fallen from 13 to 9.5.

The decrease in the number of compensated claims over the seven-year period was shared across nearly all industries. The greatest decrease in the number of claims over this period was 59% among employees in the *Electricity, Gas & Water supply* industry. Claims made by employees in the *Manufacturing* industry, the group with the most claims overall, decreased by 33% — resulting in 13 700 fewer claims in 2002–03p than in 1996–97.

Time lost from work by employees on compensated claims increased over the seven-year period: from a median of 2.6 weeks in 1996–97 to 3.6 weeks in 2001–02. Preliminary data for time lost are particularly subject to change when first updated so this comparison has been made to 2001–02 rather than 2002–03p.

The *Finance and Insurance* industry had the highest median cost (\$6 300) per claim in 2002–03p. For all other years from 1996–97 the *Mining* industry had the highest median cost. This reflects the relatively high salaries in the industry, since *Mining* has consistently had a relatively low median time lost from work. This ranking may shift when the preliminary data are revised. Employees in the *Accommodation, cafes and restaurants* industry had the lowest median cost for compensated claims over the seven-year period (\$2 900 in 2002–03p), possibly related to the relatively lower salaries in that industry and the high level of part-time employees.

## Part B: Compensated fatalities in 2002–03p

Preliminary data show that in 2002–03p, there were 211 compensated work-related fatality claims. This is equivalent to an incidence rate of 2.5 compensated fatalities per 100 000 Australian employees. Of these fatalities, 192 were male employees (91%), and 19 were female employees (9%). Nearly one-quarter of the fatalities (46) were recorded among employees in the *Transport and storage* industry. The second highest proportion of 18% was recorded among employees in *Construction* (37 fatalities), followed by *Agriculture, forestry and fishing* (21 fatalities) and the *Manufacturing* industry (20 fatalities).

## Part C: Summary of new claims in 2002–03p

The preliminary number of new work-related compensation claims reported in Australia for 2002–03p was 134 480.

Almost one-quarter of claims (24%) reported in 2002–03p were attributed to *Non-powered handtools, appliances and equipment*. Within this category, the two most common sub-categories were *Fastening, packing and packaging equipment* (8% of all claims) and *Furniture and fittings* (5% of all claims).

Employees in the *Manufacturing* industry had the highest number of claims, 28 070, or 21% of all claims. The next three industries ranked on the number of claims were *Health and community services* (15 965 claims, or 12% of all claims); *Retail Trade* (12 820 claims, or 10% of all claims) and *Construction* (12 580 claims, or 9% of all claims). These four industries together represented just over half of all claims.

The *Transport and storage* industry, with 15.8 claims per million hours worked, had the highest frequency rate. It was followed by *Agriculture, forestry and fishing* (15.5 claims per million hours worked), *Manufacturing* (14.1 claims per million hours worked) and *Construction* (14 claims per million hours worked). These four industries were well above the national frequency rate of 9.5 claims per million hours worked.

Just over one-quarter (27%) of all new claims (36 100 claims) were made by employees in the *Labourers and related workers* occupation category. *Tradespersons and related workers* accounted for 19% of claims (25 175 claims) and *Intermediate production and transport workers* 17% (22 865 claims). *Advanced clerical and service workers* had the least number of claims of any occupation group (1 310, or 1% of all new claims).

The number of claims made in 2002–03p increased with age up to a peak among employees in the 40–44 years age group, who made 18 670 claims (accounting for 14% of all compensated claims). The number of claims then decreased with age, dropping to 15 990 claims (11% of compensated claims) among employees aged 55 years and over.