

COMPENDIUM OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS AUSTRALIA 2005–06

June 2008



Australian Government
Australian Safety and Compensation Council

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ISBN 978-0-642-32821-2

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Part A

Summary of serious claims, 2005–06p

The preliminary number of work-related serious compensation claims reported in Australia for 2005–06p was 139 630. Of these claims, 231 were compensated fatalities. For more information on compensated fatalities see Part B.

Data shown for 2005–06p are preliminary (denoted throughout this publication by the letter ‘p’) and subject to change as more claims are accepted or amended by the jurisdictions at a later date. Consequently, 2005–06p data understate the number of claims that will eventually be accepted for that year. However, the validity of the distributional characteristics of the 2005–06p data is unlikely to be significantly affected by this understatement.

In this edition of the Compendium the term “serious” claim is introduced to summarise the standard publication scope used by the ASCC for workers’ compensation data. The scope has not changed, just the terminology, “serious” claims replaces the previously used qualifier of “claims involving one or more weeks lost from work” which was not comprehensive since the scope also includes claims involving fatality and permanent incapacity. Serious claims are those lodged in the reference year and accepted. These claims involve either a death; a permanent incapacity; or a temporary incapacity with an absence from work of one working week or more (common law claims are included).

Serious claims by gender and nature of claim

Table 1 shows the number and proportion of serious workers’ compensation claims reported for 2005–06p by the employee’s gender and the nature of the claim (i.e. a claim for injury or poisoning or a claim for disease). On this basis, there were 98 360 claims for injury or poisoning and 41 270 claims for disease.

Table 1 Serious claims: number, percentage of total, incidence rate and frequency rate by gender and nature of claim, 2005–06p

	Males	Females	Total
Number of claims			
All claims	94 795	44 835	139 630
Injury & poisoning claims	68 255	30 105	98 360
Disease claims	26 540	14 730	41 270
Per cent of total claims			
All claims	67.9	32.1	100
Injury & poisoning claims	69.4	30.6	100
Disease claims	64.3	35.7	100
Incidence rate (per 1000 employees)			
All claims	20.1	10.5	15.6
Injury & poisoning claims	14.5	7.1	11.0
Disease claims	5.6	3.5	4.6
Frequency rate (per million hours worked)			
All claims	10.7	7.6	9.4
Injury & poisoning claims	7.7	5.1	6.6
Disease claims	3.0	2.5	2.8

The reader should note that workers' compensation data are not an ideal measure of the extent of work-related disease since, for a variety of reasons, many diseases do not result in a compensation claim. In particular, the long latency period of many diseases means that it is not always possible to conclusively establish a relationship between a disease and prior workplace exposure.

Of the 139 630 serious claims reported during 2005–06p, 68% (94 795 claims) were for male employees. Male employees accounted for 69% of injury and poisoning claims (68 255 claims) and 64% of disease claims (26 540 claims).

Incidence rates

Differences in the number of serious claims for male and female employees reflect underlying differences in both work safety outcomes and labour force participation for men and women. The incidence rate — measured here as the number of serious claims per 1000 employees — takes into account differences in labour force participation, and can be used to compare the relative likelihood of work-related injury or disease between men and women.

Table 1 shows that after taking into account differences in labour force participation, male employees were about twice as likely as female employees to have a claim (20 claims for men per 1000 male employees compared with 11 claims for women per 1000 female employees) — males were twice as likely to have an injury or poisoning claim and were 1.6 times more likely to have a disease claim.

The overall higher incidence rates of serious claims among male employees can primarily be attributed to the predominance of male employees in the more hazardous industries such as Construction (7 males to every 1 female); Mining (6 males to every 1 female); Manufacturing; Transport and storage and Agriculture, forestry and fishing (all three with a employee gender ratio of 3 males to every 1 female).

For men and women combined, there were 16 claims per 1000 employees in 2005–06p: comprising 11 injury and poisoning claims and 4.6 disease claims per 1000 employees.

Frequency rates

Another way to examine differences in workplace injury or disease between different groups of employees — such as men and women — is to use frequency rates. This measure relates the number of serious claims reported among a given group of employees to the total time they spent working. This negates differences in the proportion of part-time employees between one group and another.

Table 1 shows that in 2005–06p frequency rates differed less between male and female employees than did incidence rates. This reflects the higher level of part-time work among women than among men. Using this measure, male employees were 1.4 times more likely than female employees to have a claim (11 claims for men per million hours worked by men compared with 8 claims for women per million hours worked by women) — and they were 1.5 times more likely to have an injury or poisoning claim and were 1.2 times more likely to have a disease claim.

For men and women combined, there were 9.4 claims per million hours worked, comprising 6.6 injury and poisoning claims per million hours worked and 2.8 disease claims per million hours worked.

Serious claims by age

Table 2 Serious claims: number, percentage of total, incidence rate and frequency rate by age, 2005–06p

Age group	No. of claims	%	Incidence rate ^(a)	Frequency rate ^(b)
15–19 years	6 580	4.7	9.2	9.3
20–24 years	13 455	9.6	12.4	8.0
25–29 years	13 600	9.7	13.4	7.6
30–34 years	15 575	11.2	14.9	8.6
35–39 years	16 555	11.9	16.5	9.5
40–44 years	18 735	13.4	17.5	10.1
45–49 years	18 970	13.6	18.3	10.4
50–54 years	16 200	11.6	18.2	10.5
55–59 years	12 230	8.8	18.2	10.8
60–64 years	5 955	4.3	18.7	11.8
65 years & over	1 720	1.2	13.6	9.8
Total claims	139 630	100.0	15.6	9.4

(a) Calculated as a rate per 1000 employees.

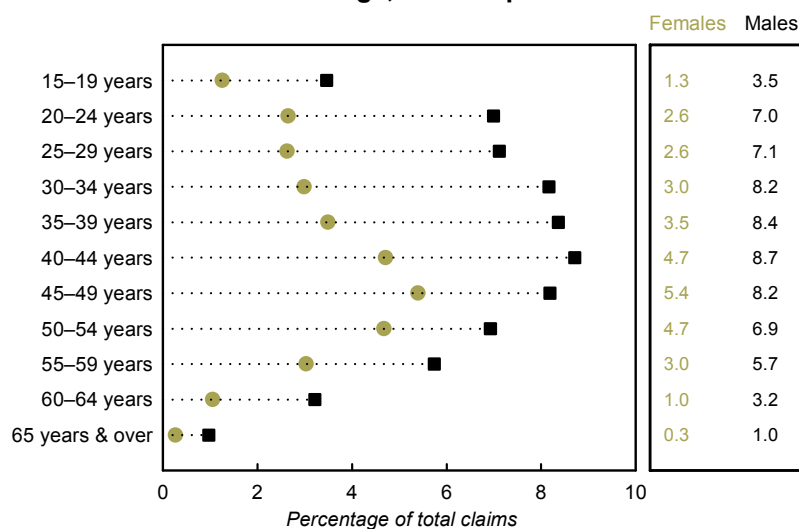
(b) Calculated as a rate per million hours worked.

Table 2 shows the number and proportion of serious workers' compensation claims reported for 2005–06p by the age of the employee. Table 2 also shows incidence rates and frequency rates to take into account differences between age groups in total number of employees and total employee hours spent at work.

Slightly more than one-quarter of all claims (27%) involved employees aged 40–49 years. Only 5% of serious claims involved employees aged less than 20 years, and 5% involved employees aged 60 years or older.

Figure 1a shows the age distribution of serious claims separately for men and women. For men, the share of total claims generally increased with age up to a peak at 40–44 years. Similarly, for women, the share generally increased with age up to a peak at 45–49 years. Claims for men exceeded claims for women in all age groups.

Figure 1a Serious claims: percentage of claims by gender and age, 2005–06p

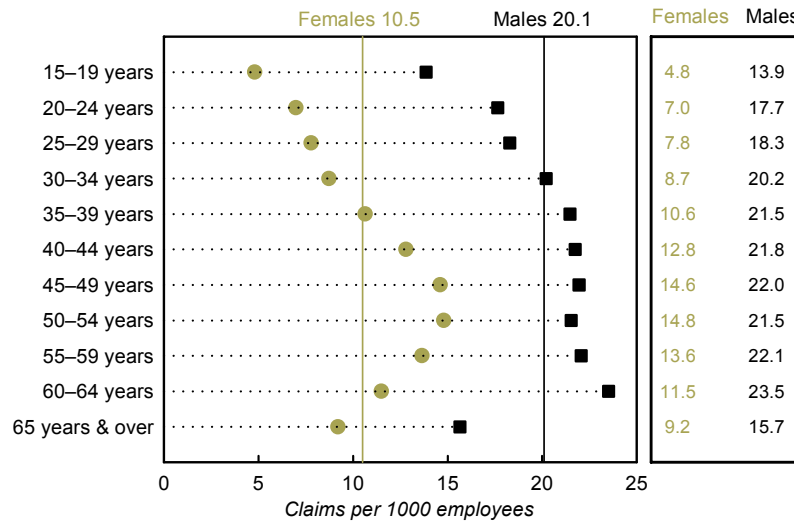


Incidence rates

Table 2 indicates that incidence rates increased progressively with age from 15–19 years (9 claims per 1000 employees) until 60–64 years (19 claims per 1000 employees). Employees in all age groups between 35 years and 64 years recorded incidence rates above the national rate of 16 claims per 1000 employees.

Figure 1b shows the incidence rates for male and female employees in 2005–06p by age group. The rate for men substantially exceeded the rate for women in all age groups. For both men and women the incidence rate generally increased with age: up to a peak at 60–64 years of age for men and 50–54 years for women.

Figure 1b Serious claims: incidence rate by gender and age, 2005–06p

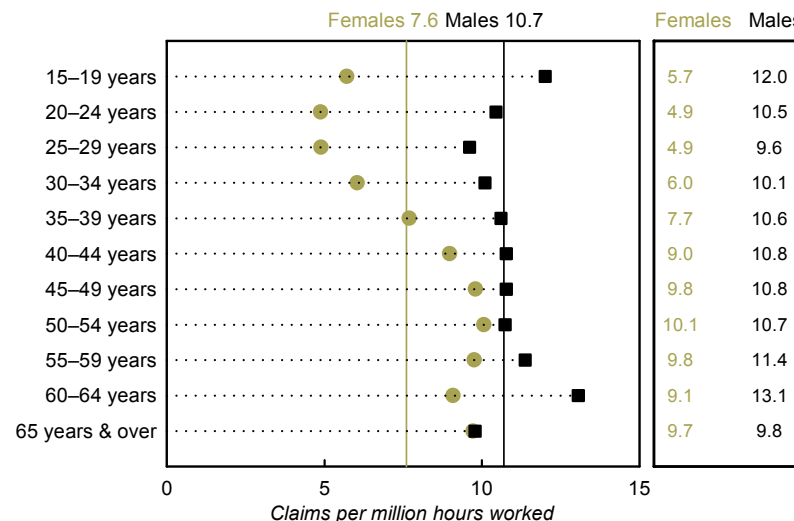


Frequency rates

Table 2 shows that whereas incidence rates were much lower for young employees than for most older employees (those less than 65 years of age), there was substantially less difference between the frequency rates for the young and those for older employees. This reflects the higher level of part-time work among younger employees than among older employees.

Figure 1c shows the frequency rates for male and female employees in 2005–06p by age group. The rate for male employees exceeded the rate for female employees in all age groups, although differences were small for ages between 45 and 54 years. In common with the pattern of incidence rates across age groups, the highest frequency rates occurred among men aged 60–64 years and women aged 50–54 years (13 and 10 claims per million hours worked respectively).

Figure 1c Serious claims: frequency rate by gender and age, 2005–06p



Serious claims by industry

Table 3a Serious claims: number of claims by industry, 2005–06p

Industry	Number of claims			%
	Non-fatal	Fatal ^(a)	Total	
Manufacturing	27 620	28	27 645	19.8
Health & community services	17 585	4	17 590	12.6
Construction	14 370	33	14 400	10.3
Retail trade	13 045	13	13 060	9.4
Transport & storage	11 450	41	11 490	8.2
Property & business services	10 120	27	10 150	7.3
Education	7 165	4	7 170	5.1
Wholesale trade	7 055	5	7 060	5.1
Accommodation, cafes & restaurants	6 435	4	6 440	4.6
Personal & other services	5 950	7	5 960	4.3
Government administration & defence	5 595	7	5 605	4.0
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	4 690	23	4 715	3.4
Cultural & recreational services	2 750	2	2 750	2.0
Mining	2 270	12	2 280	1.6
Communication services	1 305	3	1 305	0.9
Finance & insurance	1 265	2	1 270	0.9
Electricity, gas & water supply	725	8	730	0.5
Total claims	139 395	231^(b)	139 630	100.0

(a) The number of fatalities is not rounded.

(b) Includes claims for which Industry was not stated.

Table 3a shows the number and percentage of serious claims reported in each industry for 2005–06p. Just over half of all claims (52%) involved four industries: Manufacturing (27 645 claims, or 20% of all claims); Health and community services (17 590 claims, 13%); Construction (14 400 claims, 10%); and Retail trade (13 060 claims, 9%).

The highest number of compensated fatalities occurred among employees in the Transport and storage industry (41). Other industries with a relatively high number of compensated fatalities were Construction (33); Manufacturing (28); Property and business services (27); Agriculture, forestry and fishing (23); and Mining (12).

Incidence rates

Figure 2a compares incidence rates between industries for serious claims in 2005–06p. Four industries had incidence rates substantially above the national rate of 16 claims per 1000 employees. These were Manufacturing; Transport and storage; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; and Construction (ranging between

Figure 2a Serious claims: incidence rate by industry, 2005–06p

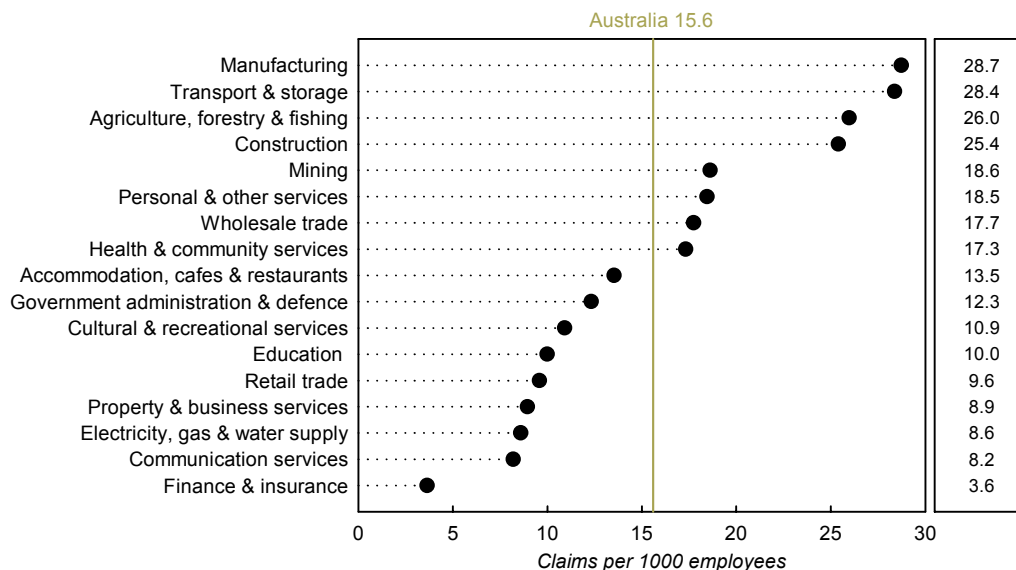


Table 3b Serious claims: industry sub-categories with the ten highest incidence rates, 2005–06p

Industry sub-category ^(a)	Incidence rate ^(b)	No. of claims	% of all claims
Sheet metal product manufacturing	129	920	0.7
Meat & meat product manufacturing	67	3 360	2.4
Cement, lime, plaster & concrete product manufacturing	63	790	0.6
Non-building construction	56	2 660	1.9
Structural metal product manufacturing	54	1 525	1.1
Fabricated metal product manufacturing	49	1 745	1.2
Services to water transport	48	685	0.5
Services to road transport	43	215	0.2
Services to agriculture	42	695	0.5
Flour mill & cereal food manufacturing	39	320	0.2

(a) Compiled at the 3rd level of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC). Industries shown are limited to those involving more than 200 serious claims, "Other" categories were also excluded. Industry not stated categories in the estimates of employees have been prorated. Industries for which the estimate of employees had a relative standard error exceeding 25% were excluded.
 (b) Calculated as a rate per 1000 employees.

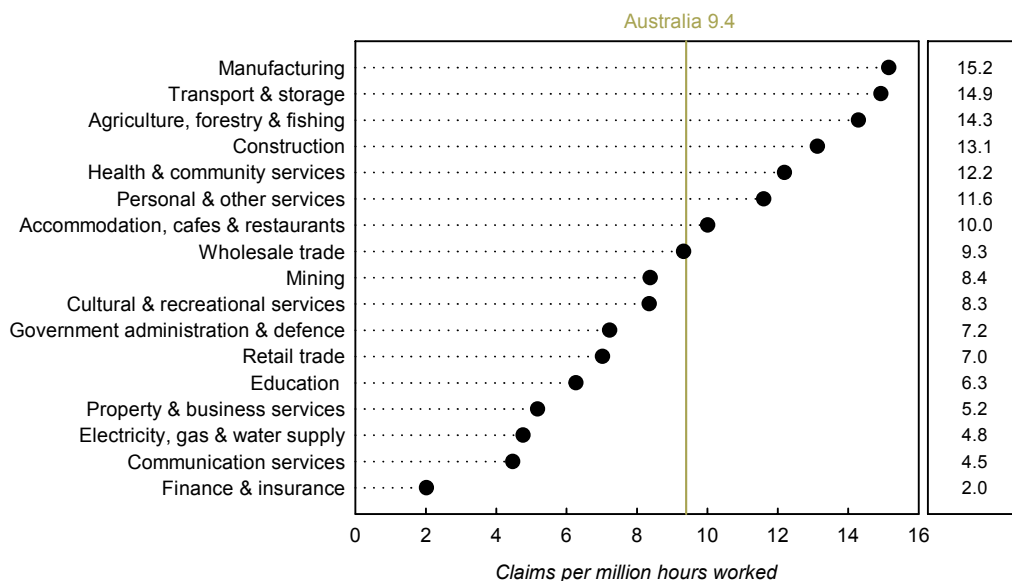
25 and 29 claims per 1000 employees). The 2005–06 preliminary rate for Mining, 19 claims per 1000 employees, is a notable decrease on the figure for 2004–05 of 24 claims per 1000 employees (see Table 10a, p.29): this is the result of a small decrease in serious claims in the industry and a 23% increase in the estimate of Mining employees. Finance and insurance (4 claims per 1000 employees) had a substantially lower incidence rate than any other industry.

Table 3b shows the industry sub-categories with the ten highest incidence rates in 2005–06p. Together, these sub-categories accounted for 9% of all serious claims. The highest incidence rate (129 claims per 1000 employees) occurred within Sheet metal product manufacturing: a rate 8 times the national rate. The next highest incidence rates occurred within Meat and meat product manufacturing (67), and Cement, lime, plaster and concrete product manufacturing (63).

Frequency rates

Figure 2b compares frequency rates between industries for serious claims in 2005–06p. Industries with frequency rates well above the national rate of 9 claims per million hours worked were Manufacturing; Transport and storage; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; and Construction (ranging between 13 and 15 claims per million hours worked). Finance and insurance (2 claims per million hours worked) had a substantially lower rate than any other industry.

Figure 2b Serious claims: frequency rate by industry, 2005–06p



Serious claims by occupation

Table 4a shows the number and percentage of serious claims reported in each occupation category for 2005–06p. One-quarter of all serious claims were made by employees working as Labourers and related workers (34 515 claims). Tradespersons and related workers and Intermediate production and transport workers together accounted for a further 37% of all claims. Advanced clerical and service workers had the least claims of any occupation category (1 140, or 1% of all serious claims).

Three occupation groups accounted for 68% of all compensated fatalities in 2005–06p. These were Intermediate production and transport workers (68 fatalities); Labourers and related workers (45 fatalities); and Tradespersons and related workers (44 fatalities).

Table 4a Serious claims: number of claims by occupation, 2005–06p

Occupation	Number of claims			%
	Non-fatal	Fatal ^(a)	Total	
Labourers & related workers	34 470	45	34 515	24.7
Tradespersons & related workers	27 435	44	27 475	19.7
Intermediate production & transport workers	24 140	68	24 210	17.3
Intermediate clerical, sales & service workers	17 270	8	17 275	12.4
Professionals	12 480	25	12 505	9.0
Associate professionals	9 875	18	9 895	7.1
Elementary clerical, sales & service workers	9 685	6	9 690	6.9
Managers & administrators	2 910	14	2 920	2.1
Advanced clerical & service workers	1 135	3	1 140	0.8
Total claims	139 395	231	139 630	100.0

(a) The number of fatalities is not rounded.

Incidence rates

Figure 3a compares incidence rates between occupation categories for claims in 2005–06p. Labourers and related workers had the highest rate, 45 claims per 1000 employees — nearly three times the national rate of 16 claims per 1000 employees. Intermediate production and transport workers and Tradespersons and related workers had rates close to double the national rate (33 and 29 claims per 1000 employees respectively). All other occupation groups had rates below the national rate, with the lowest rate being for Advanced clerical and service workers (3 claims per 1000 employees).

Figure 3a Serious claims: incidence rate by occupation, 2005–06p

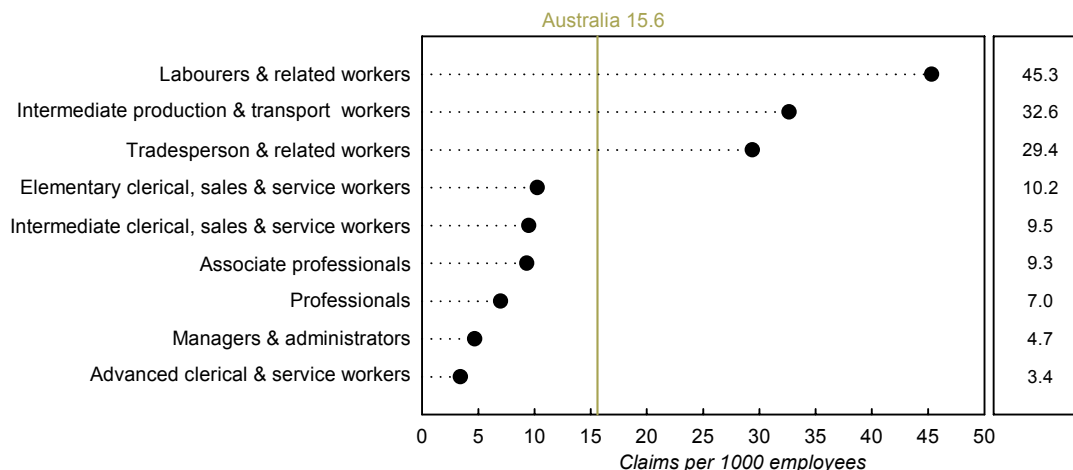


Table 4b shows the occupation sub-categories with the ten highest incidence rates in 2005–06p. Together, these sub-categories accounted for 6% of all serious claims. The highest incidence rate (104 claims per 1000 employees) occurred among Mining support workers and driller’s assistants: slightly more than six times the national rate. The next highest incidence rates occurred among Meat and fish process workers (101); Food trades assistants (100); and Sheetmetal tradespersons (94).

Table 4b Serious claims: occupation sub-categories with the ten highest incidence rates, 2005–06p

Occupation sub-category ^(a)	Incidence rate ^(b)	No. of claims	% of all claims
Mining support workers & driller’s assistants	104	390	0.3
Meat & fish process workers	101	2 175	1.6
Food trades assistants	100	385	0.3
Sheetmetal tradespersons	94	620	0.4
Seafarers & fishing hands	92	280	0.2
Train drivers & assistants	80	675	0.5
Engineering production process workers	78	1 500	1.1
Wood products factory hands	78	805	0.6
Ambulance officers & paramedics	73	750	0.5
Fire fighters	69	600	0.4

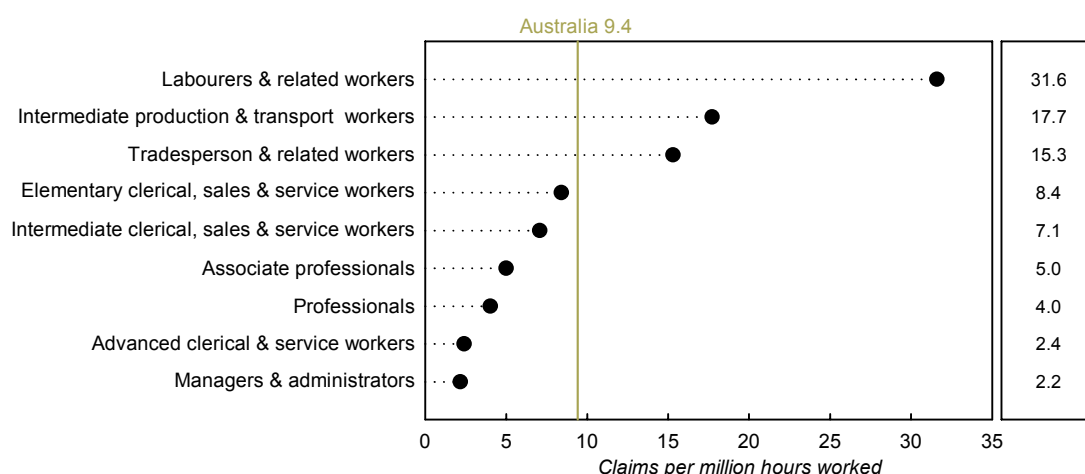
(a) Compiled at the 4th level of the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO). Occupations shown are limited to those involving more than 200 serious claims, “Other” categories were also excluded. Occupations for which the estimate of employees had a relative standard error exceeding 25% were excluded.

(b) Calculated as a rate per 1000 employees.

Frequency rates

Figure 3b compares frequency rates between occupation categories for claims in 2005–06p. Labourers and related workers had the highest rate, 32 claims per million hours worked — more than three times the national rate of 9 claims per million hours worked. This rate was considerably higher than the rates for the second and third-ranking occupation groups: Intermediate production and transport workers and Tradespersons and related workers (18 and 15 claims per million hours worked respectively). All other occupation groups had rates below the national rate, with Managers and administrators having the lowest rate (2 claims per 1000 employees). The frequency rate pattern is quite similar to that displayed in the graph of incidence rates by occupation (Figure 3a). This similarity between the two measures — per 1000 employees and per million hours worked — indicates that at this broad level of aggregation differences in hours worked between occupation groups are small.

Figure 3b Serious claims: frequency rate by occupation, 2005–06p



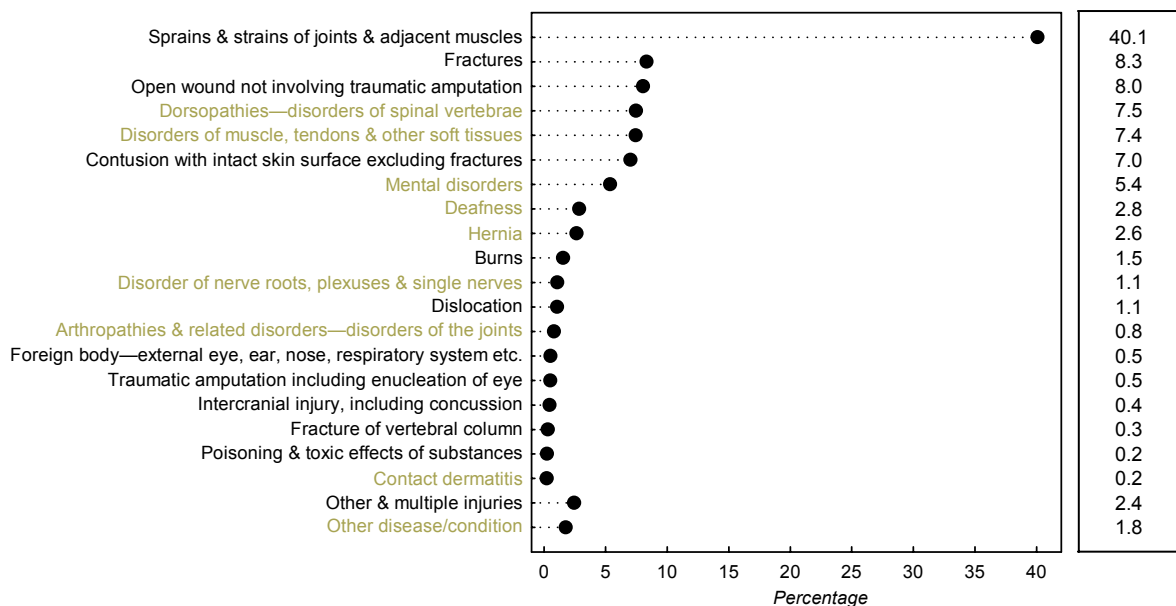
Serious claims by the nature of injury or disease

The Nature of injury or disease classification is used to categorise the most serious injury or disease sustained by the employee. Figure 4 shows the percentage distribution of serious claims in 2005–06p across these categories. Injury-related categories are shown in black and disease-related categories are shown in colour.

Injury-related claims accounted for 70% of all serious claims in 2005–06p. Of these, *Sprains and strains of joints and adjacent muscles* predominated, accounting for 40% of all serious claims. The next most common categories of injury-related claims were *Fractures* and *Open wound not involving traumatic amputation* (both representing 8% of all claims).

Disease-related claims accounted for 30% of all serious claims in 2005–06p. The most common diseases involved in claims were *Dorsopathies — disorders of spinal vertebrae* (8% of all serious claims); *Disorders of muscle, tendons and other soft tissues* (7% of all claims); *Mental disorders* (5% of all claims); *Deafness* (3% of all claims); and *Hernia* (3% of all claims).

Figure 4 Serious claims: percentage of claims by nature of injury or disease^(a), 2005–06p



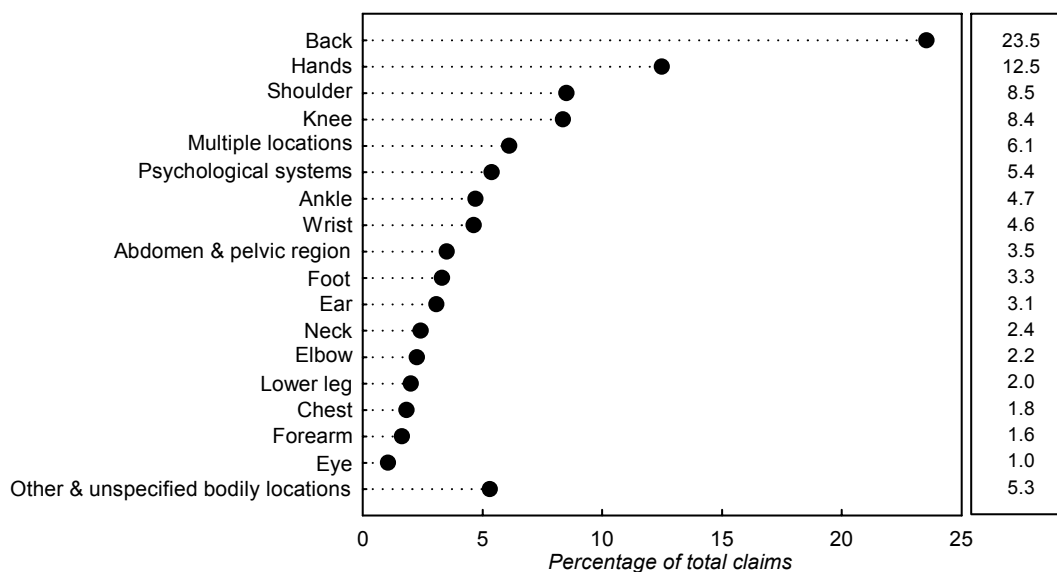
(a) Disease-related categories are shown in colour.

Serious claims by bodily location of injury or disease

The Bodily location classification is used to identify the part of the body affected by the most serious injury or disease. At the broadest level of the classification, the most common bodily locations were *Upper Limbs* (31% of all serious claims) and *Trunk* (29% of all serious claims).

Figure 5 shows the percentage distribution of serious claims in 2005–06p across bodily locations classified at a finer level of detail. The *Back* was the most common location of injury or disease, representing almost one-quarter (24%) of all serious claims (among these claims 74% involved a problem in the lower back). The next most common bodily locations were *Hands*, *Shoulder*, and *Knee* — 13%, 9%, and 8% of all claims respectively. The non-physical category *Psychological systems* was specified for 5% of all claims: this category covers conditions such as nervous breakdown, anxiety and depression.

Figure 5 Serious claims: percentage of claims by bodily location of injury or disease, 2005–06p

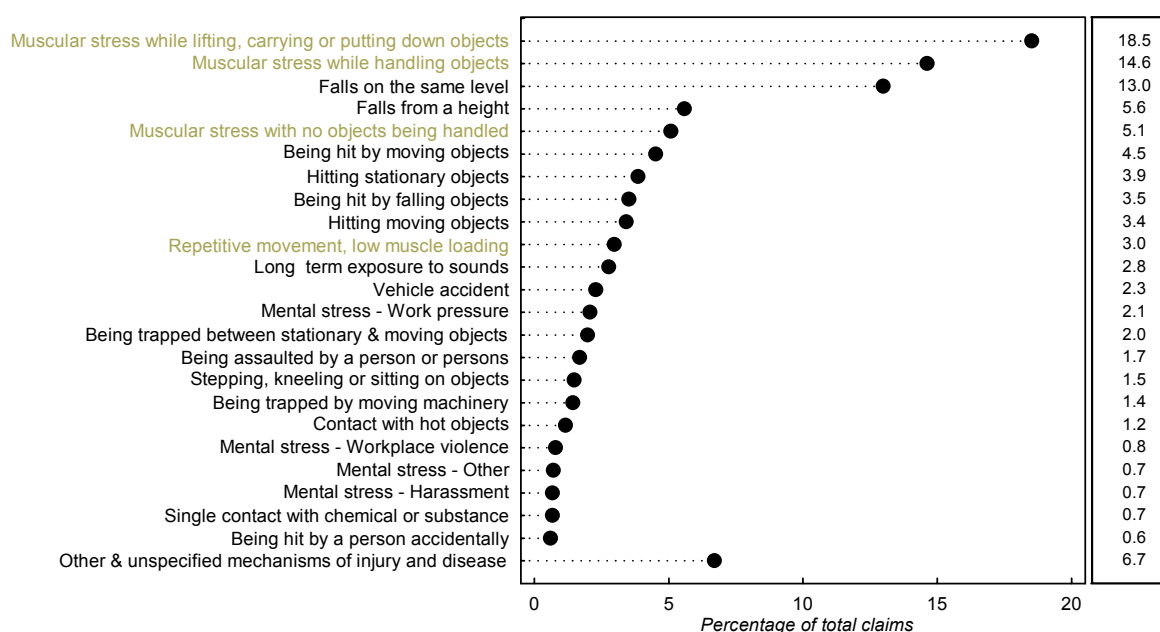


Serious claims by mechanism of injury or disease

The Mechanism of injury or disease classification is used to describe the action, exposure or event that was the direct cause of the most serious injury or disease. The National OHS Strategy 2002–2012 led to the identification of four mechanisms that, because of their prevalence, should be monitored closely. These mechanisms are *Body stressing* (also referred to as Manual handling); *Falls, trips and slips of a person*; *Hitting objects with a part of the body*; and *Being hit by moving objects*. In 2005–06p, these four mechanisms together accounted for 83% of all serious claims and 34% of all compensated fatalities. Each of these mechanisms has been the subject of a feature article in earlier Compendiums.

Figure 6 shows the percentage distribution of serious claims in 2005–06p across mechanisms classified at a finer level of detail. Manual-handling mechanisms (shown in colour) accounted for 41% of all serious claims, including *Muscular*

Figure 6 Serious claims: percentage of claims by mechanism of injury or disease^(a), 2005–06p



(a) Manual-handling (body stressing) mechanisms are shown in colour.

stress while lifting, carrying or putting down objects (19% of all serious claims) and Muscular stress while handling objects, other than lifting, carrying or putting down (15%). The most common mechanism not related to manual handling was Falls on the same level, accounting for 13% of all serious claims.

Serious claims by breakdown agency of injury or disease

Breakdown agency refers to the object, substance or circumstance principally involved in, or most closely associated with, the point at which things started to go wrong, and which ultimately led to the most serious injury or disease. At the broad classification level (see Figure 7), 26% of serious claims in 2005–06p involved *Non-powered handtools, appliances and equipment*. For these claims, the two most common sub-categories were *Fastening, packing and packaging equipment* and *Furniture and fittings* (9% and 5% of all claims respectively).

The second most common breakdown agency specified at the broad classification level was *Environmental agencies* (16% of all claims). These claims were split almost equally at the sub-category level between *Indoor environment* and the *Outdoor environment*. These sub-agencies include such factors as steps and stairways, floor conditions, weather and ground conditions.

Figure 7 Serious claims: percentage of claims by breakdown agency of injury or disease, 2005–06p

