

# COMPENDIUM OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS AUSTRALIA 2005–06

June 2008



**Australian Government**

**Australian Safety and Compensation Council**



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Compensation Council**

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Compensation Statistics  
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# Foreword

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The role of the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) is to lead and coordinate national efforts to improve occupational health and safety (OHS) and workers' compensation arrangements. The ASCC also declares national standards and codes of practice for OHS and provides policy advice to the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council on OHS and workers' compensation arrangements.

This publication is the fifteenth in the Compendium series. While the Compendium is restricted to the analysis of accepted workers' compensation claims, it nevertheless provides a good indicator of Australia's OHS performance in 2005–06 and allows trends in OHS performance over the last decade to be analysed. Data are presented by key variables such as industry, occupation, age and gender with supporting information on the circumstances surrounding work-related injury and disease occurrences. The data in this report were compiled according to the concepts and definitions set out in the *National Data Set for Compensation-based Statistics* (NDS).

The Compendium series complements the NDS-based statistics released annually under the *Comparative Performance Monitoring* (CPM) project. The CPM reports present information on the incidence and frequency of work-related injuries, disease and fatalities in each jurisdiction. These reports are available at [workplace.gov.au/cpm](http://workplace.gov.au/cpm)

Additional NDS-based information may be obtained from the online statistics database NOSI. This is a web-based interactive statistics database which users can interrogate to provide a variety of reports to their own design. The database can be found at the ASCC website [ascc.gov.au](http://ascc.gov.au). Reports using other sources of national OHS statistics are available at [ascc.gov.au/ascc/aboutus/publications/](http://ascc.gov.au/ascc/aboutus/publications/)

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1. The letter 'p' following the year indicates that the data is preliminary



# Summary of findings

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## Part A: Summary of serious claims, 2005–06p

Preliminary data show there were 139 630 serious workers' compensation claims in 2005–06p. A majority of these claims (70%) involved injury or poisoning (98 360 claims) and the remaining 30% were disease-related (41 270). The overall incidence rate of compensated injury or disease in 2005–06p was 16 claims per 1000 employees: comprising 11 injury and poisoning claims and 4.6 disease claims per 1000 employees.

Men accounted for 68% of all serious claims, 69% of injury and poisoning claims and 64% of disease claims. The overall male incidence rate was almost twice that of females: 20 claims per 1000 male employees compared with 11 claims per 1000 female employees.

Incidence rates increased progressively with age from 9 claims per 1000 employees for the 15–19 years age group to 19 claims per 1000 employees for the 60–64 years age group.

Four industries had incidence rates of serious claims 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 25 and 29 claims per 1000 employees).

The occupation group with the highest incidence rate of serious claims was Labourers and related workers (45 claims per 1000 employees). Intermediate production and transport workers were second highest with 33 claims per 1000 employees.

Manual handling (*Body Stressing*) was the cause of 41% of all serious claims: these included *Muscular 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.

The most common injury leading to a serious claim was *Sprains and strains of joints and adjacent muscles*, accounting for 40% of all serious claims. The next most common injuries were *Fractures* and *Open wound not involving traumatic amputation* (both representing 8% of all claims).

The most common diseases resulting in serious claims were *Dorsopathies — disorders of spinal vertebrae* (8% of all claims); *Disorders of muscle, tendons and other soft tissues* (7% of all claims); and *Mental disorders* (5% of all claims).

The *Back* was the most common location of an injury or disease that led to a serious claim, representing almost one-quarter (24%) of all serious claims. Other common bodily locations were *Hands*; *Shoulder*; and *Knee* — 13%, 9% and 8% of all claims respectively.

*Non-powered handtools, appliances and equipment* was the most common breakdown agency, representing 26% of all serious claims. The second most common breakdown agency was *Environmental agencies*, accounting for 16% of claims (this category includes such factors as steps and stairways, floor conditions, weather and ground conditions).

## Part B: Compensated fatalities, 2005–06p

Preliminary data show that in 2005–06p there were 231 compensated work-related fatalities. This is equivalent to an incidence rate of 2.6 compensated fatalities per 100 000 employees. Of these, 214 were male employees (93%) and 17 were female employees (7%). Injuries were the cause of 184 fatalities (80%) and disease the cause of 47 fatalities (20%).

The largest number of compensated fatalities was recorded in the Transport and storage industry with 41 fatalities — including 28 in Road freight transport. This was followed by the Construction industry with 33 fatalities — including 10 in Non-building construction. The Manufacturing (28 fatalities) and Property and business services industries (27 fatalities) had the third and fourth largest number of fatalities.

The Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry recorded the highest fatality incidence rate of 13 fatalities per 100 000 employees. This was followed by the Transport and storage and Mining industries: both with a rate of 10 fatalities per 100 000 employees.

Looking at fatalities by occupation, Intermediate production and transport workers accounted for 29% of compensated fatalities in 2005–06p (68 fatalities — approximately half of these fatalities (35) were of Truck drivers). This was followed by Labourers and related workers (45 fatalities — 19% of all compensated fatalities) and Tradespersons and related workers (44 fatalities — 19% of all compensated fatalities).

The most common mechanism for compensated fatalities, responsible for 83 fatalities (36% of all compensated fatalities), was *Vehicle accidents*. The next most common mechanism, the cause of 25 fatalities (11%), was *Being hit by moving objects*. *Being hit by falling objects* accounted for 18 fatalities (8%) while 16 fatalities (7%) were caused by *Falls from a height*.

## Part C: Trends over time, 1997–98 to 2004–05

The number of serious claims decreased from 153 030 claims in 1997–98 to 146 465 claims in 2004–05 — an overall reduction of 4.3%. The incidence rate of serious claims fell correspondingly, from 21 serious claims per 1000 employees in 1997–98 to 17 in 2004–05. Similarly, the frequency rate, measured in serious claims per million hours worked by employees fell from 12 to 10 over the same period.

Over the period 1997–98 to 2004–05, the number of serious claims for female employees increased by 11%, while for male employees, the number fell by 10%. Consequently, the proportion of all serious claims where the employee was female increased from 28% in 1997–98 to 33% in 2004–05. Nonetheless, the female incidence rate fell over the period from 13 to 12 claims per 1000 employees as a result of the 30% growth in the estimated number of female employees in the Australian workforce (from 3.3 to 4.3 million).

Reflecting Australia's ageing labour force, over the eight-year period the distribution of claims shifted towards the older age groups: the proportion of claims for employees aged 45 years or more increased from 33% in 1997–98 to 39% in 2004–05.

All five industries in 2004–05 with incidence rates of serious claims notably higher than the national figure of 17 claims per 1000 employees have improved their rate over the period 1997–98 to 2004–05. The Mining industry made the greatest improvement: reducing its incidence rate by 45% (from 44 claims per 1000 employees in 1997–98 to 24 claims per 1000 employees in 2004–05). The other four industries were, in rank order, Construction (with a 27% decrease in rates); Transport and storage (a 20% decrease); Agriculture, forestry and fishing (a 19% decrease); and Manufacturing (an 18% decrease). Education was the only industry to experience a slight overall increase in incidence rate over the eight-year period.