

COMPENDIUM OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS AUSTRALIA 2002–03

JANUARY 2006



Australian Government

**Department of Employment and
Workplace Relations**

Office of the Australian Safety and
Compensation Council

Part B

Compensated fatalities, 2002–03p

Preliminary data show that in 2002–03, 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. The compensated fatality claims discussed in this section are limited to those that occurred in the workplace. Fatalities related to journeys to or from work are not included in this analysis. However, as an indicator, in 2002–03p an additional 53 compensated fatalities (40 males and 13 females) occurred on journeys to or from work.

Compensated fatalities by gender

The preliminary data for 2002–03p show that work-related compensated fatalities mainly involved males. Of the 211 claims, 192 were male employees (91%), and 19 were female employees (9%): a balance that has not changed significantly over the period 1996–97 to 2002–03p.

The highest number of compensated male fatalities (46) occurred in the *Transport and storage* industry. This was followed by the *Construction* industry (36 male fatalities) and the *Agriculture, forestry and fishing* industry (20 male fatalities). The highest number of female compensated fatalities occurred among employees in the *Government administration and defence* industry (3 female fatalities).

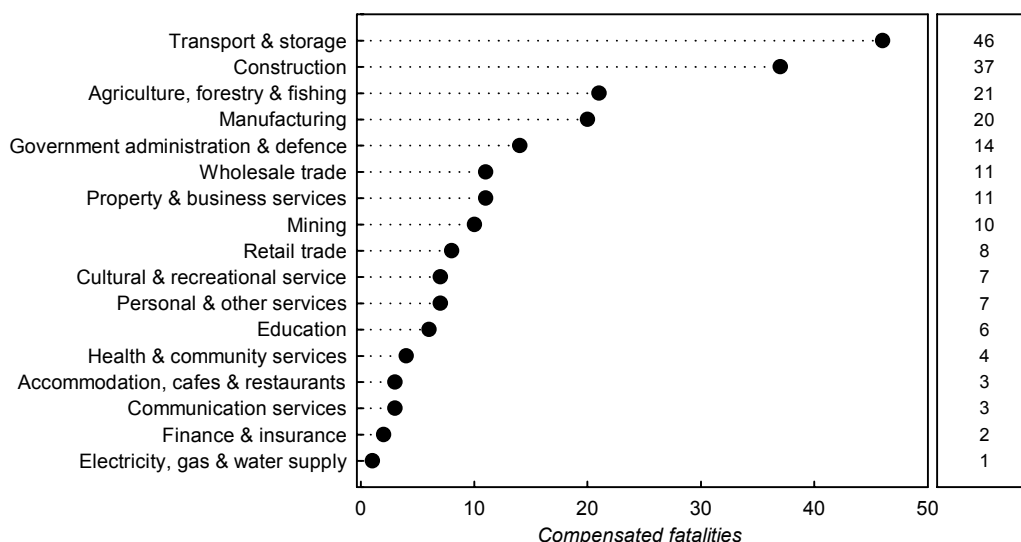
Just over half of the males (52%) who sustained a fatal work-related injury or disease were employed either as *Intermediate production and transport workers* (58 fatality claims), or as *Labourers and related workers* (42 fatalities). Relatively high numbers of female fatalities occurred in two occupation groups; there were 4 female fatalities among both *Tradespersons and related workers* and *Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers*.

The most common nature of injury or disease recorded against male fatalities, accounting for 52 fatalities, was *Multiple injuries*. This category is used when no principal injury could be identified as the cause of death. The second most common nature for males was *Ischaemic heart disease*, accounting for 18 fatalities. For females, the most common nature of injury or disease was also *Multiple injuries*, with 6 fatalities; followed by *Intracranial injury including concussion* (2 fatalities), and *Effects of weather, exposure, air pressure and other external causes, not elsewhere classified* (also 2 fatalities).

Compensated fatalities by industry

Figure 2 shows the number of compensated fatalities in each industry in Australia in 2002–03p. Of the 211 compensated fatalities in 2002–03p, nearly one-quarter (46 fatalities) 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).

Figure 2 Number of compensated fatalities by industry, 2002–03p

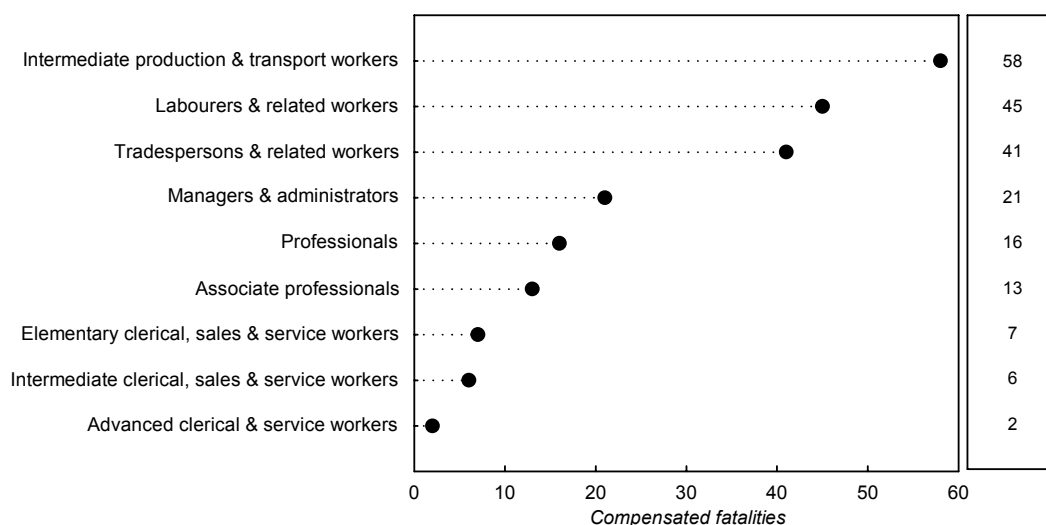


Fatalities in the two most common industries were concentrated in particular sub-divisions. Nearly two-thirds (28 fatalities) of the 46 fatalities that were recorded in the *Transport and storage* industry occurred in the *Road transport* industry sub-division. Similarly, of the 37 fatalities in the *Construction* industry, just over two-thirds (26 fatalities) occurred in the *Construction trade services* sub-division (a category primarily related to the building trades, such as tiling, electrical or plumbing services etc.).

Compensated fatalities by occupation

Figure 3 shows the number of compensated fatality claims recorded in each major occupation group. *Intermediate production and transport workers* accounted for 28% of compensated fatalities in 2002–03p (58 fatalities). Within this group, just under half the fatalities (47%) were recorded in the sub-classification *Road and rail transport drivers*. The second highest number of fatalities, 45, was recorded among *Labourers and related workers*, and represented 20% of compensated fatalities. This occupation group includes factory process workers and cleaners.

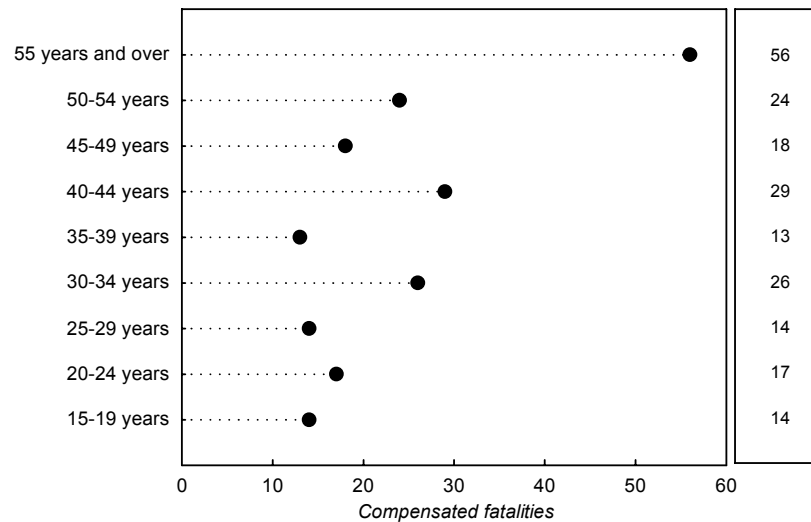
Figure 3 Number of compensated fatalities by occupation, 2002–03p



Compensated fatalities by age

Figure 4a shows the age distribution of the 211 compensated fatalities recorded in 2003–03p. The most common age recorded for the deceased employees was 55 years and over, representing just over one-quarter (27%) of all compensated fatalities. Conversely, the least common age recorded was 15–19 years, representing 7% of compensated fatalities.

Figure 4a Number of compensated fatalities by age group, 2002–03p



Higher numbers of disease-related fatalities are expected in the older age groups compared with the younger age groups because of older employees' greater length of exposure to work-related conditions and the long latency period of some work-related diseases. While fatalities from disease (excluding musculoskeletal disease) accounted for 31% of the 211 compensated fatalities in 2002–03p, nearly half (48%) of the 56 fatalities among employees aged 55 years and over were disease-related (excluding musculoskeletal disease).

Incidence rate

Figure 4b shows the incidence rate (fatalities per 100 000 employees) by age group. The pattern displayed shows the rate decreasing slightly with age in the younger age groups, fluctuating in the middle age groups, and rising appreciably in the oldest age group. The range extended from 1.3 fatalities per 100 000 among employees aged 35–39 years, up to 6.7 among employees aged 55 years and over.

Figure 4b Incidence rate of compensated fatalities by age group, 2002–03p

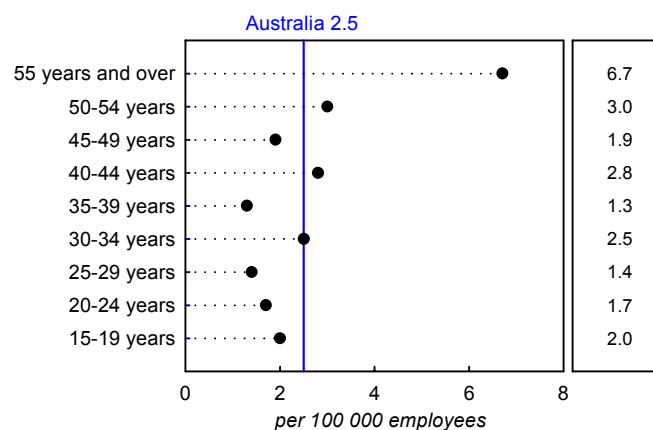
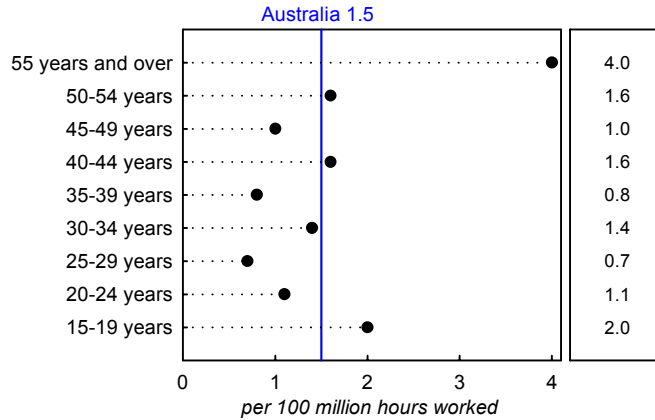


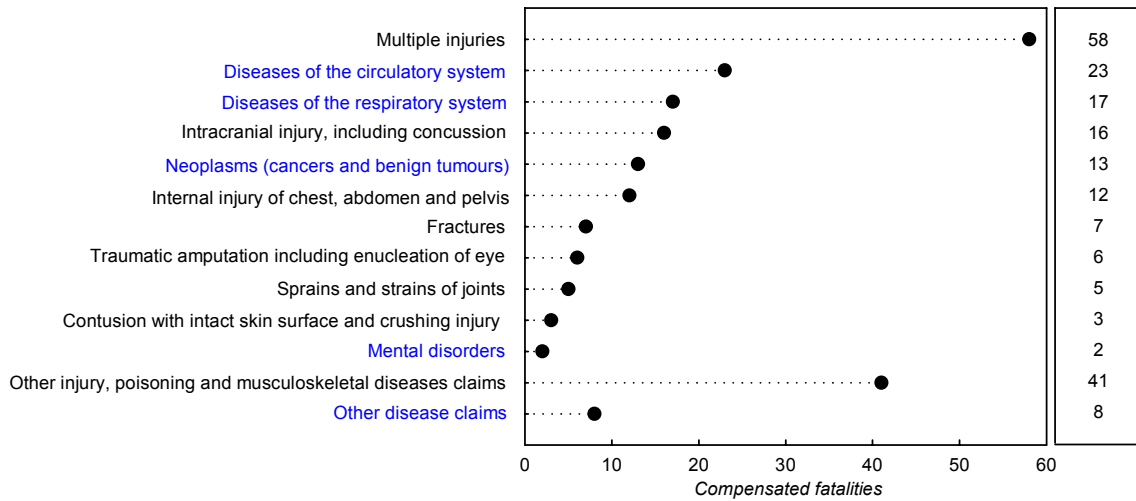
Figure 4c Frequency rate of compensated fatalities by age group, 2002–03p



Frequency rate Figure 4c shows the frequency rate (fatalities per 100 million hours worked) by age group. As was the case for the incidence rate, the graph reveals a decrease in frequency rate from the youngest age group up to the age of 25–29 years. The rate fluctuated in the middle years, before rising to 1.6 for employees aged 50–54 years and then 4.0 for those aged 55 years and over.

Compensated fatalities by nature of injury or disease

Figure 5 Number of compensated fatalities by nature of injury or disease^(a), 2002–03p



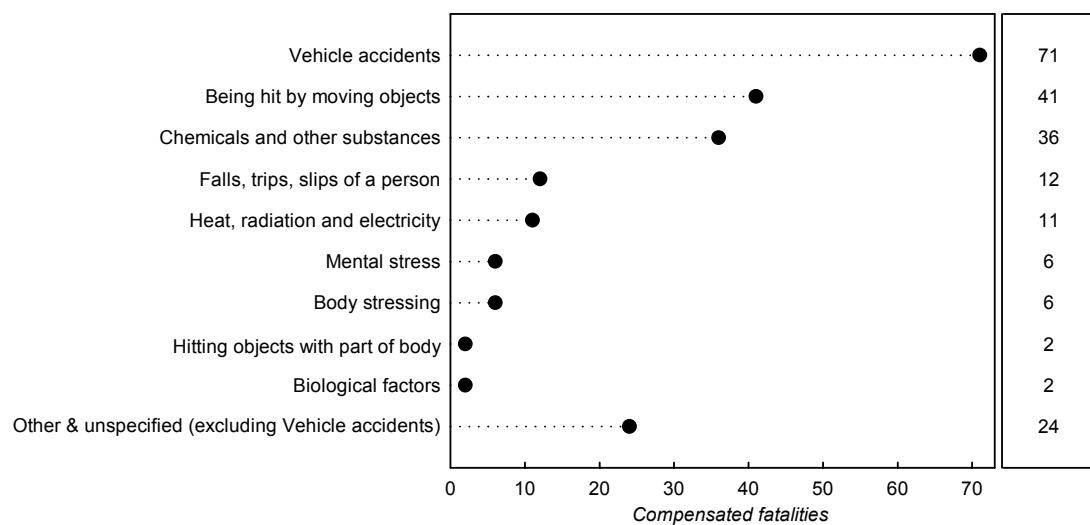
(a) Injury, poisoning and musculoskeletal disease categories are shown in black and Disease categories in blue.

Figure 5 shows the number of compensated fatalities by the nature of the injury or disease sustained by the deceased employee. Overall, of the 211 compensated fatalities, 148 (70%) were attributed to injury (including musculoskeletal diseases) and 63 (30%) were attributed to diseases (excluding musculoskeletal diseases). *Multiple injuries*, with 58 fatalities, was the most common category, accounting for just over one-quarter of all compensated fatality claims in 2002–03p. The second most common category, with 23 fatalities, was *Diseases of the circulatory system*, representing 11% of fatalities (of these 18 were attributed to *Ischaemic heart disease*). Of the 17 fatalities attributed to *Diseases of the respiratory system*, 14 were due to *Asbestosis*. Of the 13 fatalities attributed to *Neoplasms (cancers and benign tumours)*, 11 were due to *Mesothelioma*.

Compensated fatalities by mechanism of injury or disease

The number of fatalities by the mechanism of the most serious injury or disease is shown in Figure 6. The mechanism classification is used to identify the action, exposure or event that caused the injury or disease. The most common mechanism for compensated fatalities, accounting for 34% of claims (71 fatalities), was *Vehicle accidents*. *Being hit by moving objects* (41 fatalities), accounted for 19% of compensated fatalities. *Chemicals and other substances* was the mechanism for 17% of fatalities, most of which (31 out of 36 fatalities) were attributed to *Long term contact with chemicals or substances*. *Falls, trips and slips of a person* accounted for 6% of compensated fatality claims, and *Mental stress*, 3%. The most common nature of injury or disease for those fatalities that were caused by *Mental stress* was *Diseases of the circulatory system*, such as *Ischaemic heart disease*.

Figure 6 Number of compensated fatalities by mechanism of injury or disease, 2002–03p



Compensated fatalities by breakdown agency

The breakdown agency refers to the object, substance or circumstance that was 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. Figure 7 shows the number of compensated fatalities by the breakdown agency of the most serious injury or disease.

The most common breakdown agency for compensated fatality claims in 2002–03p was *Mobile plant and transport*. These 84 fatalities represented 40% of compensated fatality claims. Of these claims, 65 involved *Road transport*, mostly comprising *Trucks, semi-trailers, lorries* (33 fatalities) and *Cars, station wagons, vans, utilities* (27 fatalities). A further 20% of claims (43 fatalities) involved *Materials and substances*: of these claims, 30 involved *Non-metallic minerals and substances* which includes the sub-category, *Asbestos*. The 13% of compensated fatalities involving *Other and unspecified agencies* (27 fatalities)

demonstrate that the breakdown agency involved in the fatality cannot always be identified, especially for diseases that take a long time to develop (17 of these fatalities (63%) were disease-related — excluding musculoskeletal diseases).

Figure 7 Number of compensated fatalities by agency of injury or disease, 2002–03p

