

# COMPENDIUM OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS AUSTRALIA 2006–07

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Australian Government

Australian Safety and Compensation Council

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# Summary of findings

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## Part A: Summary of serious claims, 2006–07p

Preliminary data show there were 132 055 serious workers' compensation claims in 2006–07, which equates to 14 claims per 1000 employees or 9 claims per million hours worked.

### Gender

Men accounted for 68% of all serious claims with incidence rates for male employees almost twice that of females: 18 claims per 1000 male employees compared with 10 claims per 1000 female employees.

### Age

In 2006–07, incidence rates increased progressively with age. There were 9 claims per 1000 employees aged 15–19 years, which increased to 17 claims per 1000 employees aged 60–64 years.

### Industry

The Manufacturing, Transport and storage, Agriculture, forestry and fishing, and Construction industries had incidence rates substantially above the national rate of 14 claims per 1000 employees. Rates for these industries ranged between 22 and 28 claims per 1000 employees.

### Occupation

The occupational group with the highest incidence rate of serious claims was Labourers and related workers (39 claims per 1000 employees). Intermediate production and transport workers had the second highest rate with 29 claims per 1000 employees.

### Nature of injury or disease

The majority (73%) of the serious claims involved injury or poisoning (95 910 claims) and the remaining 27% (36 145 claims) were disease related. The most common injury leading to a serious claim was *Sprains and strains of joints and adjacent muscles*, which accounted for 41% of all serious claims. *Fractures* and *Open wounds not involving traumatic amputation* were the next most common injuries, accounting for 8% of all serious claims each.

The most common diseases resulting in serious claims were *Disorders of muscle, tendons and other soft tissues* (7% of all serious claims), *Dorsopathies – disorders of spinal vertebrae* (6% of all serious claims) and *Mental disorders* (5% of all serious claims).

### Location of injury or disease

Almost one-quarter (23%) of all serious claims involved the *Back*. Other common bodily locations were *Hand* (13% of all claims), *Shoulder* (9% of all claims) and *Knee* (9% of all claims).

### Mechanism of injury or disease

Manual handling mechanisms (*Body stressing*) were the cause of 41% of all serious claims. These included *Muscular stress while lifting objects* (18% of all claims) and *Muscular stress while handling objects* (15% of all claims). The most common mechanism that was not related to manual handling was *Falls on the same level*, which accounted for 13% of all serious claims.

### Agency of injury or disease

*Non-powered handtools, appliances and equipment* was the most common breakdown agency leading to an injury or illness, representing 26% of all serious claims. The second most common breakdown agency was *Environmental agencies*, which accounted for 16% of all serious claims. Included in this category are factors such as steps and stairways, floor conditions and weather and ground conditions.

## Part B: Trends over time, 2000–01 to 2005–06

Over the period 2000–01 to 2005–06, the number of serious claims decreased 6% from 144 740 claims to 136 575. Due to large increases in employment, incidence rates fell 16%, from 18 serious claims per 1000 employees in 2000–01 to 15 in 2005–06 and frequency rates fell 14% from 11 serious claims per million hours worked to 9. Falls in incidence rates by age mirrored the 16% fall in incidence rates over the six year period except for the 60–64 years age group which recorded a 29% fall. There has been little change over this period in the proportion of serious claims lodged by male employees compared to female employees (67% and 32% respectively).

All industries recorded falls in incidence rates over the period, though the Wholesale trade industry only recorded a 1% fall. The Electricity, gas and water supply industry recorded the greatest percentage improvement, a 43% fall, followed by the Mining industry with a 36% fall.

### Payments and time lost

While the median time lost from work had recorded some increases over this period, in 2005–06 it returned to the level it was in 2000–01, 3.8 working weeks. In 2005–06 median time lost for male employees was 3.4 working weeks and for female employees 4.4 working weeks. This difference between claims lodged by males and females has remained relatively constant over the six years.

In contrast to median time lost, median payments for male and female employees were similar in 2005–06 (\$6100 and \$6000 respectively), with the higher time lost for female employees offsetting lower wages to result in a similar median payment amount to male employees. The median payment for serious claims rose 15% from \$5300 to \$6100 over the six year period.

The Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry recorded the highest time lost from work of 4.6 working weeks in 2005–06 but due to the lower salaries in this industry, it recorded one of the lowest median payment amounts (\$5100 in 2005–06 compared to the all claims median of \$6100). The highest median payments were recorded in the Mining industry (\$10 400 in 2005–06).

## Part C: Compensated fatalities

Preliminary data show that in 2006–07 there were 236 compensated fatalities. This is equivalent to an incidence rate of 2.5 fatalities per 100 000 employees. Of these, 215 (91%) were male employees. Over the period from 2000–01 and 2005–06, the number of fatalities fell 21% from 320 to 254. Over the same period, incidence rates fell by 29% from 4.0 fatalities per 100 000 employees to 2.8.

### Industry

The Construction industry recorded the highest number of fatalities in 2006–07p, 50 fatalities, followed by the Transport and storage industry with 45 fatalities (of which 31 were in Road freight transport). The Transport and storage industry also recorded the highest fatality incidence rate in 2006–07p (11 fatalities per 100 000 employees). This was followed by the Construction and Agriculture, forestry and fishing industries: both with a rate of 8 fatalities per 100 000 employees.

### Occupation

Intermediate production and transport workers accounted for 30% (71 fatalities) of the fatalities in 2006–07p — almost two thirds of these fatalities (45) were of Truck drivers. This was followed by Tradespersons and related workers with 53 fatalities and Labourers and related workers with 45 fatalities.

### Mechanism of injury or disease

A third of the fatalities in 2006–07p (81 deaths) were due to *Vehicle accident* followed by 33 deaths due to *Long term contact with chemicals or substances*, 19 due to *Being hit by moving objects* and 18 due to *Being hit by falling objects*.