

COMPENDIUM OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS AUSTRALIA 2006–07

March 2009



Australian Government

Australian Safety and Compensation Council

Disclaimer

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations through the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) provides the information given in this document to improve public access to information about occupational health and safety. The vision of the ASCC is Australian workplaces free from injury and disease. Its mission is to lead and coordinate national efforts to prevent workplace death, injury and disease in Australia.

The information provided in this document can only assist you in the most general way. This document does not replace any statutory requirements under any relevant State and Territory legislation. The ASCC accepts no liability arising from the use of or reliance on the material contained on this document, which is provided on the basis that the ASCC is not thereby engaged in rendering professional advice. Before relying on the material, users should carefully make their own assessment as to its accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance for their purposes, and should obtain any appropriate professional advice relevant to their particular circumstances. To the extent that the material in this document includes views or recommendations of third parties, such views or recommendations do not necessarily reflect the views of the ASCC or the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations nor do they indicate a commitment to a particular course of action.

© Commonwealth of Australia 2009

ISBN 978-0-642-32741-3

This work is copyright. You may download, display, print and reproduce this material in unaltered form only (retaining this notice) for your personal, non-commercial use or use within your organisation. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to Commonwealth Copyright Administration, Attorney-General's Department, Robert Garran Offices, National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 or posted at <http://www.ag.gov.au/cca>

Part A

Serious claims, 2006–07p

The preliminary data for 2006–07 shows there were 132 055 claims accepted for workers' compensation data involving a serious injury. Serious claims are those lodged in the reference year and accepted by the date the data are extracted and involve either a death; a permanent incapacity; or a temporary incapacity requiring an absence from work of one working week or more.

This number of claims equates to 14 claims per 1000 employees or 9 claims per million hours worked. However, as these data are preliminary (denoted throughout this publication by the letter 'p'), they are subject to change as more claims are accepted or amended by the jurisdictions at a later date. Consequently, 2006–07p data understate the number of claims that will eventually be accepted for that year and for this reason are not included in the time series comparisons shown in this publication. The validity of the distributional characteristics of these data shown in this chapter are not significantly affected by this understatement.

Serious claims by gender

Table 1 shows that of the 132 055 serious claims lodged during 2006–07p, 68% were from male employees and 32% from female employees. These proportions have changed little in recent years. (See Part B Trends over time).

Table 1 Serious claims: number, percentage of total, incidence rate and frequency rate by gender, 2006–07p

	Number of claims	% of claims	Incidence rate ^(a)	Frequency rate ^(b)
Females	42 240	32%	9.6	7.0
Males	89 815	68%	18.4	9.9
Total	132 055	100%	14.2	8.8

(a) Calculated as a rate per 1000 employees.

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

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 twice as likely as female employees to have a claim (18 claims for men per 1000 male employees compared with 9 claims for women per 1000 female employees).

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 (8 males to every female); Mining (7 males to every female); Manufacturing and Transport and storage (both with an employee gender ratio of 3 males to every female).

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 2006–07p 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 (10 claims per million hours worked by men compared with 7 claims per million hours worked by women).

Serious claims by age

Table 2 shows that claims were spread fairly evenly across the age groups in 2006–07p. Only 5% of serious claims involved employees aged less than 20 years, and a further 6% involved employees aged 60 years or older. Since claims made by male employees constitute three-quarters of all serious claims, the pattern by age for male employees drives the pattern for all claims. However, the pattern of claims lodged by female employees is different, with lower proportions in the younger age groups and the highest proportion (17% of female claims) recorded by the 45–49 years age group.

Table 2 Serious claims: number, percentage of total, incidence rate and frequency rate by age and gender, 2006–07p

Age group	No. of claims			Percentage of total			Incidence rate ^(a)	Frequency rate ^(b)
	Females	Males	Total	Female	Male	Total		
15–19 years	1 820	4 730	6 550	4	5	5	9.0	9.2
20–24 years	3 445	9 460	12 910	8	11	10	11.6	7.5
25–29 years	3 440	9 235	12 670	8	10	10	11.9	6.9
30–34 years	3 540	10 305	13 845	8	11	10	13.5	7.8
35–39 years	4 530	10 985	15 520	11	12	12	14.6	8.5
40–44 years	5 835	10 985	16 820	14	12	13	15.7	9.1
45–49 years	7 090	10 840	17 930	17	12	14	16.5	9.5
50–54 years	6 400	9 490	15 890	15	11	12	17.3	10.1
55–59 years	4 130	7 900	12 030	10	9	9	17.2	10.4
60–64 years	1 605	4 470	6 080	4	5	5	17.2	11.1
65 years & over	385	1 340	1 720	1	1	1	12.3	9.0
Total	42 240	89 815	132 055	100	100	100	14.2	8.8

(a) Calculated as a rate per 1000 employees.

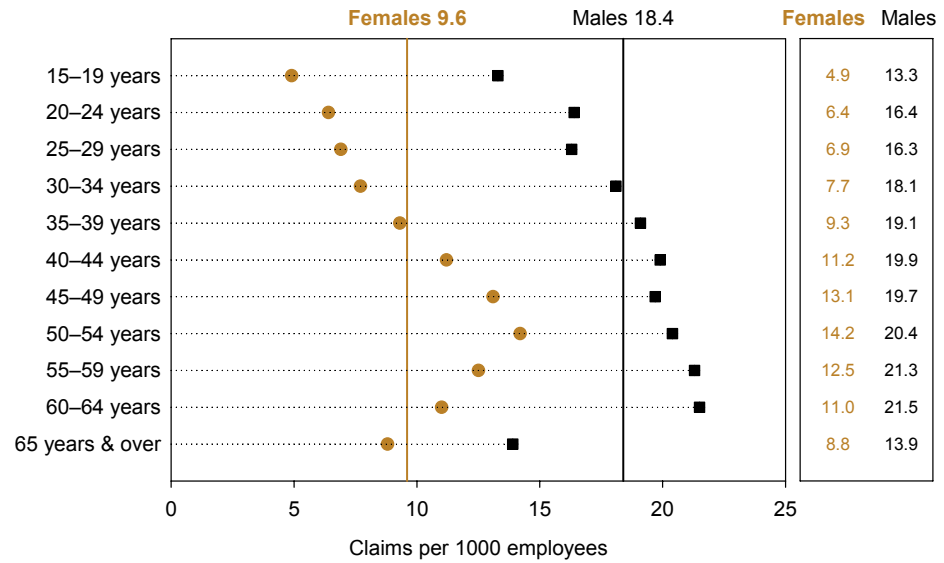
(b) Calculated as a rate per million hours worked.

Incidence rates

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. Table 2 indicates that incidence rates increased progressively with age from 15–19 years (9 claims per 1000 employees) until 50–54 years (17 claims per 1000 employees). It then remained stable before dropping for employees aged 65 years and over (12 claims per 1000 employees). Employees in all age groups between 35 years and 64 years recorded incidence rates above the national rate of 14 claims per 1000 employees.

Figure 1 shows the incidence rates for male and female employees in 2006–07p 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 1 Serious claims: incidence rate by gender and age, 2006–07p

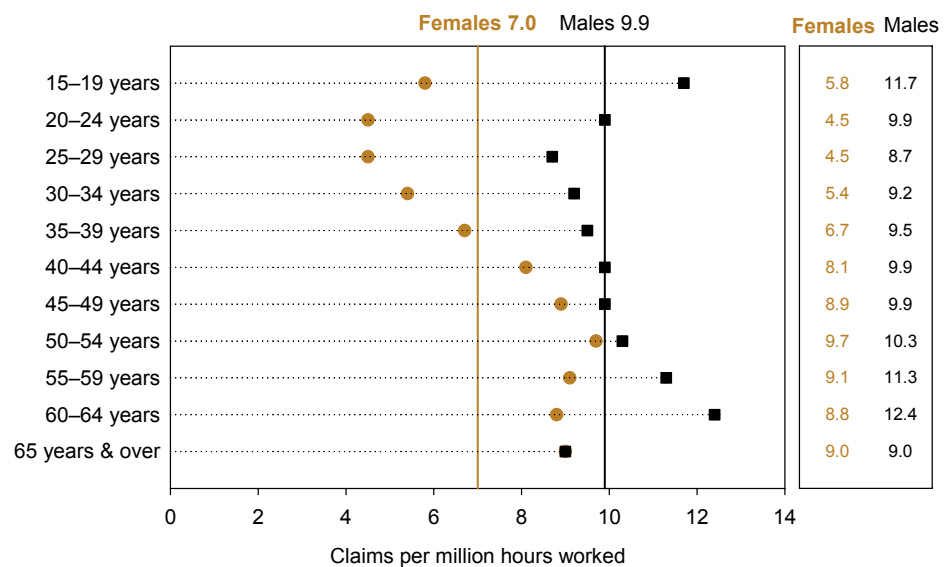


Frequency rates

In contrast to the large range of incidence rates across age groups, there was substantially less variation in frequency rates across age groups (Table 2). This indicates that, on a ‘per hour’ basis, there is not a large difference in the frequency of workers’ compensation claims due to the age of the employee.

Figure 2 shows the frequency rates for male and female employees in 2006–07p by age group. The rate for male employees exceeded the rate for female employees in all age groups, although differences were small for the 45–49 and 50–54 years age groups. 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 (12 and 10 claims per million hours worked respectively). However, while the incidence rate for 15–19 year old men was the lowest of all males, when the part time nature of work for this group was taken into account via frequency rates, their frequency rate (12 claims per million hours worked) and thus risk of injury is second only to 60–64 males.

Figure 2 Serious claims: frequency rate by gender and age, 2006–07p



Serious claims by industry

Table 3 shows that just over half of all claims (53%) involved four industries: Manufacturing (26 695 claims, or 20% of all claims); Health and community services (16 030 claims, 12%); Construction (14 130 claims, 11%); and Retail trade (12 495 claims, 9%). However the pattern for male and female employees is quite different. For female employees, 30% of claims were reported in the Health and community services industry with a further 13% in Retail trade and 10% in Education. For male employees, the highest proportions of claims were recorded in the Manufacturing industry (25%), the Construction industry (15%) and the Transport and storage industry (11%).

Table 3 Serious claims: number of claims by industry and gender, 2006–07p

Industry	No. of claims			Percentage of claims		
	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total
Manufacturing	3 890	22 805	26 695	9	25	20
Health & community services	12 740	3 285	16 030	30	4	12
Construction	320	13 810	14 130	1	15	11
Retail trade	5 620	6 875	12 495	13	8	9
Transport & storage	1 060	9 710	10 765	3	11	8
Property & business services	2 925	6 035	8 955	7	7	7
Wholesale trade	1 180	5 485	6 665	3	6	5
Education	4 255	2 175	6 430	10	2	5
Accommodation, cafes & restaurants	3 305	2 965	6 270	8	3	5
Personal & other services	1 565	3 725	5 290	4	4	4
Government administration & defence	2 050	3 105	5 155	5	3	4
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	920	3 705	4 625	2	4	4
Cultural & recreational services	990	1 560	2 550	2	2	2
Mining	105	2 340	2 445	0	3	2
Communication services	300	885	1 185	1	1	1
Finance & insurance	860	300	1 160	2	0	1
Electricity, gas & water supply	50	700	750	0	1	1
Total^(a)	42 240	89 815	132 055	100	100	100

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

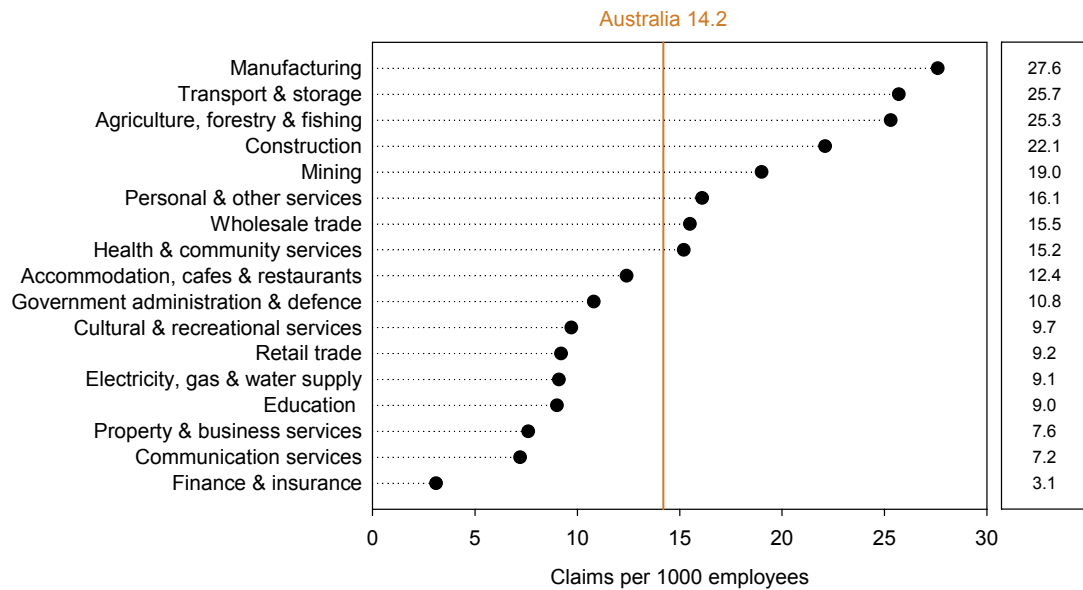
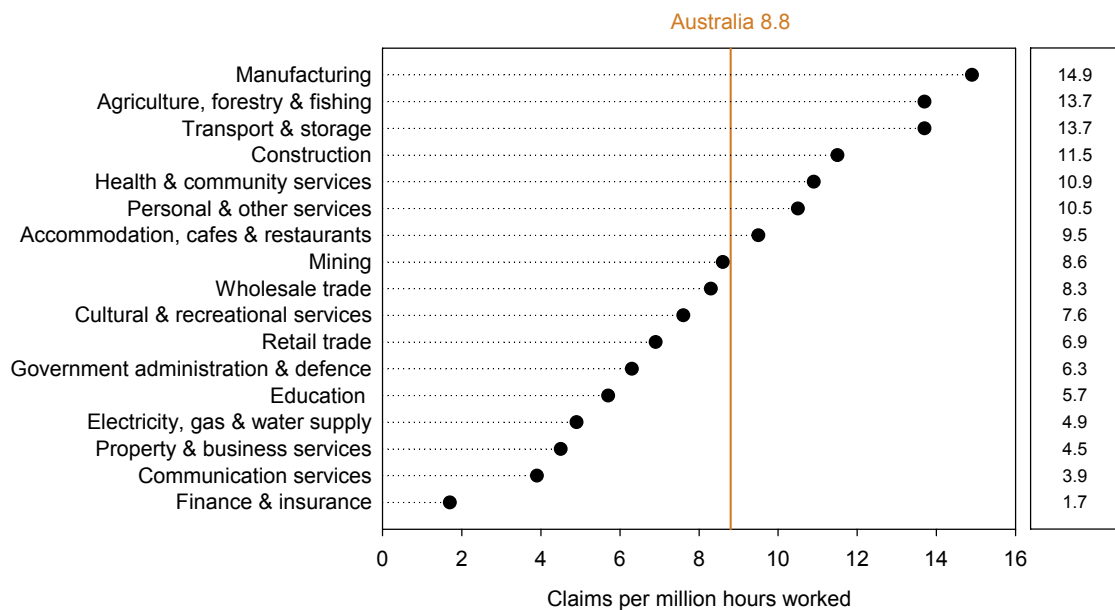
Incidence rates

Figure 3 shows that in 2006–07p, five industries had incidence rates substantially above the national rate of 14 claims per 1000 employees. These were Manufacturing; Transport and storage; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Construction and Mining (ranging between 19 and 28 claims per 1000 employees). More information on these industries is available in Part D Priority Industry Profiles. Finance and insurance (3 claims per 1000 employees) had a substantially lower incidence rate than any other industry.

Frequency rates

When rates are calculated using hours worked the same industries continue to record rates well above the national rate of 9 claims per million hours worked except for the Mining industry which recorded a frequency rate just below the national rate reflecting the longer hours of work in this industry compared to many other industries. The Accommodation, cafes and restaurant industry moved the other way, with incidence rates below the national average but frequency rates above the average reflecting the shorter hours of work per employee. Due to the different patterns of work, frequency rates are considered the better measure for comparison purposes.

Figure 4 shows that the Manufacturing; Transport and storage; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; and Construction industries had the highest frequency rates ranging from 12 claims per million hours worked to 15. Similar to incidence rates, the Finance and insurance industry (2 claims per million hours worked) had the lowest rate of all industries.

Figure 3 Serious claims: incidence rate by industry, 2006–07p**Figure 4 Serious claims: frequency rate by industry, 2006–07p**

Serious claims by occupation

Table 4 shows that approximately one-quarter of all serious claims were made by employees working as Labourers and related workers (31 095 claims). Tradespersons and related workers accounted for a further 21% of all claims and Intermediate production and transport workers, a further 18% of all claims.

As claims from male employees accounted for two-thirds of all serious claims, the pattern for male employees is similar to the total proportions. However the pattern for female employees is different with the largest proportion of claims coming from employees working as Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers (27%) followed by Labourers and related workers (20%) and Professionals (18%).

Table 4 Serious claims: number of claims by occupation and gender, 2006–07p

Occupation	No. of claims			Percentage of claims		
	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total
Labourers & related workers	8 305	22 790	31 095	20	25	24
Tradespersons & related workers	1 970	25 275	27 250	5	28	21
Intermediate production & transport workers	1 995	21 785	23 780	5	24	18
Intermediate clerical, sales & service workers	11 445	4 340	15 785	27	5	12
Professionals	7 750	4 750	12 500	18	5	9
Elementary clerical, sales & service workers	5 210	3 725	8 930	12	4	7
Associate professionals	3 930	4 920	8 845	9	5	7
Managers & administrators	965	2 025	2 990	2	2	2
Advanced clerical & service workers	670	205	875	2	0	1
Total serious claims	42 240	89 815	132 055	100	100	100

Incidence rates

Figure 5 shows that in 2006–07p, Labourers and related workers had the highest rate, 39 claims per 1000 employees — nearly three times the national rate of 14 claims per 1000 employees. Intermediate production and transport workers and Tradespersons and related workers had rates double the national rate (29 and 28 claims per 1000 employees respectively). All other occupation groups had rates below the national rate, with the lowest rate recorded by Advanced clerical and service workers (3 claims per 1000 employees).

Figure 5 Serious claims: incidence rate by occupation, 2006–07p

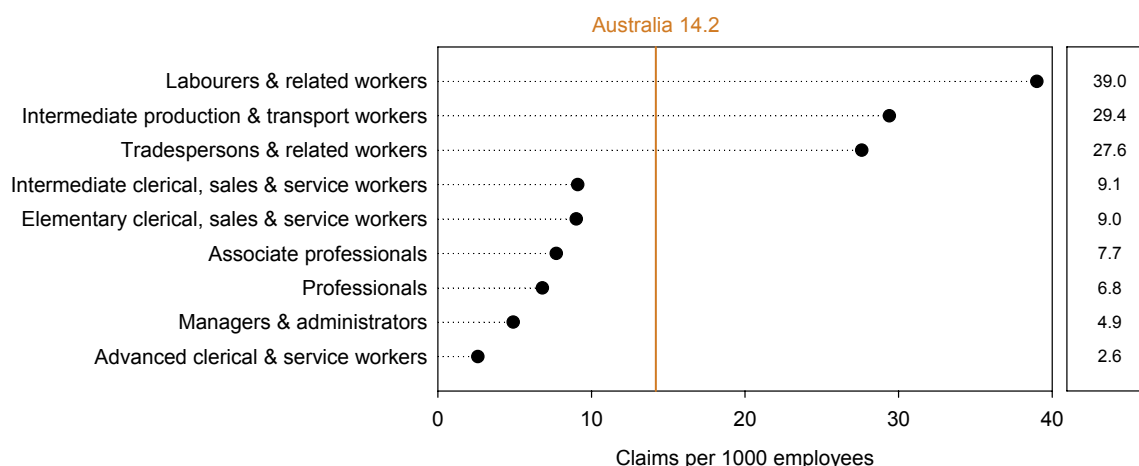


Table 5 shows the occupation sub-categories with the ten highest incidence rates in 2006–07p. Together, these sub-categories accounted for 28% of all serious claims. The highest incidence rate (63 claims per 1000 employees) occurred among Process workers: more than four times the national rate. Process workers accounted for 1.5% of all employees and 18% of Labourers and related workers. The next highest incidence rates occurred among Fabrication engineering tradespersons (45 claims per 1000 employees) and Structural construction tradespersons (36), accounting for 0.9% and 1.2% of employees respectively. Both of these sub-categories are part of the Tradespersons and related workers group. Of the occupation sub-categories with the ten highest incidence rates, Road and rail transport drivers represented the greatest proportion of employees, 2.8% and recorded the fourth highest incidence rate (35 claims per 1000 employees).

Frequency rates

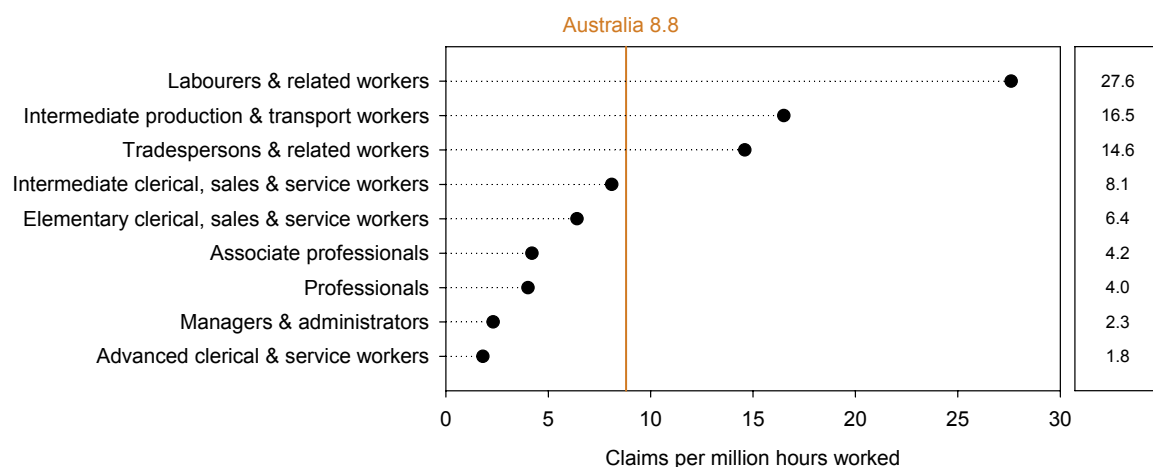
Figure 6 shows that in 2006–07p, the frequency rate pattern was quite similar to that displayed in the graph of incidence rates by occupation (Figure 5). This similarity between the two measures — per 1000 employees and per million hours worked — indicates that at this broad level of aggregation, differences in hours worked between occupation groups are small.

Table 5 Serious claims: occupation sub-categories^(a) with the highest incidence rates, 2006–07p

Occupation sub-category	Number of claims	% of all claims	Incidence rate ^(b)
Process workers	8 860	6.7%	62.5
Fabrication engineering tradespersons	3 615	2.7%	45.3
Structural construction tradespersons	3 915	3.0%	36.0
Road & rail transport drivers	9 255	7.0%	35.4
Mining, construction & related labourers	3 830	2.9%	35.0
Agricultural & horticultural labourers	3 020	2.3%	31.5
Wood tradespersons	695	0.5%	30.6
Police officers	1 525	1.2%	30.3
Intermediate mining & construction workers	1 595	1.2%	28.0
Welfare associate professionals	610	0.5%	28.0

(a) Compiled at the 3rd level of the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO), 2nd Edition. Occupations limited to those involving more than 500 serious claims, 'Miscellaneous' categories are excluded. Occupations for which the estimate of employees had a relative standard error exceeding 25% are excluded. (b) Calculated as a rate per 1000 employees.

Figure 6 also shows that Labourers and related workers had the highest frequency rate, 28 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 (16 and 15 claims per million hours worked respectively). All other occupation groups had rates below the national rate, with Advanced clerical and service workers having the lowest rate (2 claims per million hours worked).

Figure 6 Serious claims: frequency rate by occupation, 2006–07p

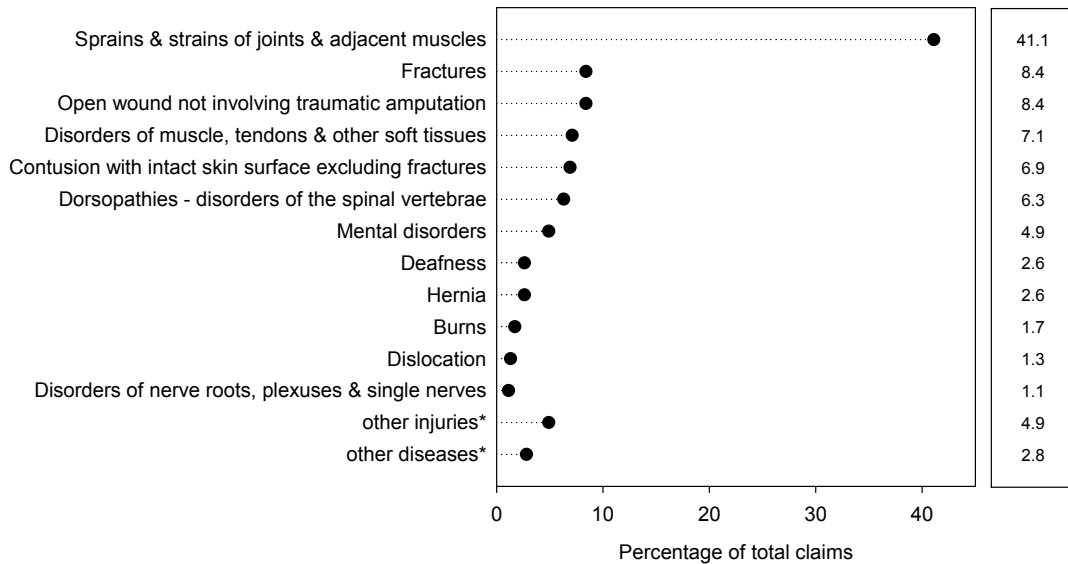
Serious claims by the nature of injury or disease

The *Nature of injury or disease* classification is used to categorise the most serious injury or disease sustained by the employee. Injury claims include poisoning incidents, which comprise 0.2% of all claims. In 2006–07p, there were 95 910 claims for injury, accounting for 73% of all serious claims, and 36 145 claims for disease. However, the work-related disease figures shown in this publication may not be an accurate count of the full extent of work-related disease, as for a variety of reasons some diseases may 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 the disease and prior workplace exposure.

Figure 7 shows that claims for *Sprains and strains of joints and adjacent muscles* predominated, accounting for 41% of all serious claims. The next most common categories of injury-related claims were *Fractures* and *Open wound not involving traumatic amputation* (both accounting for 8% of serious claims).

The most common diseases involved in claims were *Disorders of muscle, tendons and other soft tissues* (7% of serious claims); *Dorsopathies — disorders of spinal vertebrae* (6% of all serious claims); *Mental disorders* (5% of serious claims); and *Deafness* and *Hernia* (both with 3% of serious claims).

Figure 7 Serious claims: percentage of claims by nature of injury or disease, 2006–07p



* These groupings are not formal *Nature of injury or disease* classifications. They include logical groupings of injuries and diseases that individually accounted for less than 1% of claims. For example, other injuries includes *Superficial injury*, *Multiple injuries* and *Other and unspecified injuries* and other diseases includes *Contact dermatitis* and *Other diseases of skin and subcutaneous tissue*.

Table 6 shows that in 2006–07p there were 10.3 injury claims and 3.9 disease claims per 1000 employees or 6.4 injury claims per million hours worked and 2.4 disease claims per million hours worked per million hours worked. Male employees accounted for 69% of injury claims (66 610 claims) and 64% of disease claims (23 205 claims). In terms of incidence rates, male employees were twice as likely to have an injury claim and were 1.6 times more likely to have a disease claim than female employees. Frequency rate data shows a similar pattern with male employees 1.5 times more likely to have an injury claim and 1.2 times more likely to have a disease claim than female employees.

Table 6 Serious claims: nature of injury or disease by gender, 2006–07p

Nature / Gender	Number of claims	% of claims	Incidence rate ^(a)	Frequency rate ^(b)
Injury claims	95 910	100.0%	10.3	6.4
Male	66 610	69.5%	13.6	7.4
Female	29 300	30.5%	6.7	4.9
Disease claims	36 145	100.0%	3.9	2.4
Male	23 205	64.2%	4.8	2.6
Female	12 940	35.8%	3.0	2.1

(a) Calculated as a rate per 1000 employees.

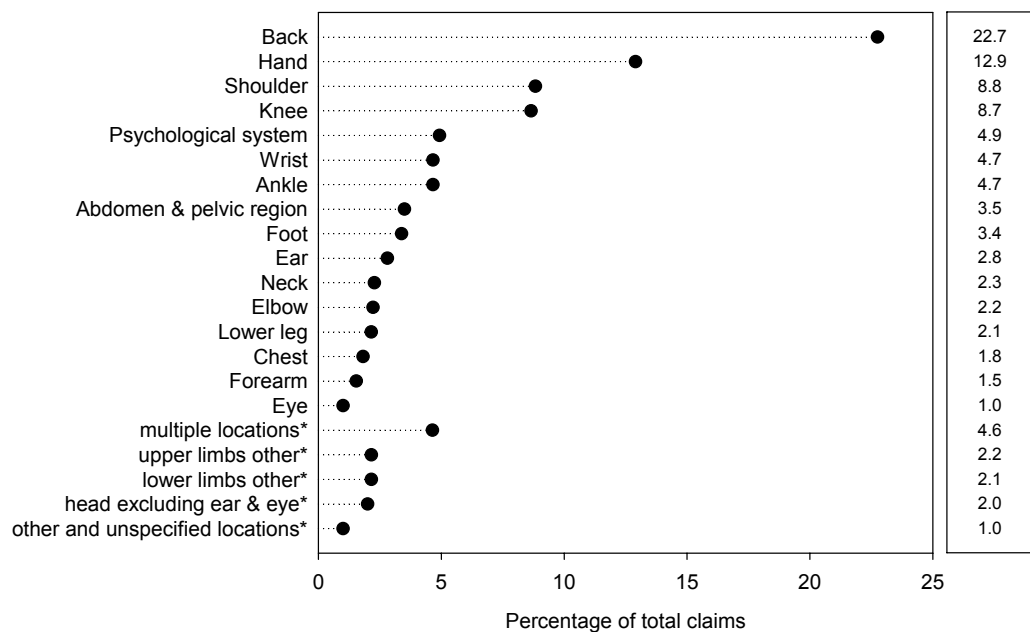
(b) Calculated as a rate per million hours worked.

Serious claims by bodily location of injury or disease

The *Bodily location of injury or disease* 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* (32% of all serious claims) and *Trunk* (28% of all serious claims).

Figure 8 shows the percentage distribution of serious claims in 2006–07p 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 (23%) of all serious claims (among these claims 72% involved a problem in the lower back). The next most common bodily locations were *Hand*, *Shoulder*, and *Knee* — 13%, 9%, and 9% 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 8 Serious claims: percentage of claims by bodily location of injury or disease, 2006–07p



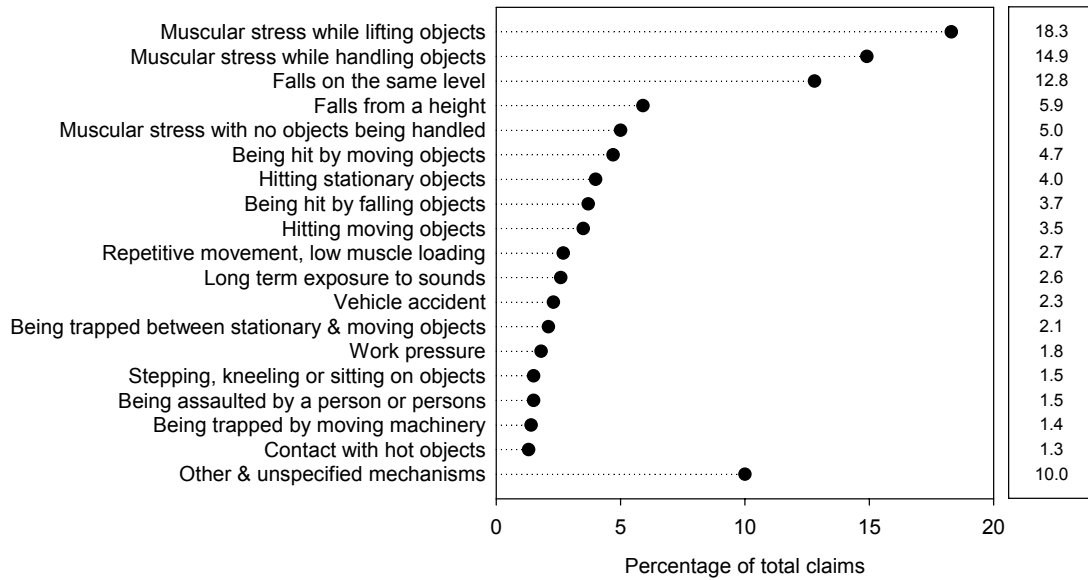
* These categories are not formal *Bodily location of injury or disease* classifications. They are logical groupings of locations that individually accounted for less than 1% of claims.

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 2006–07p, these four mechanisms together accounted for 84% of all serious claims. Each of these mechanisms has been the subject of a feature article in earlier publications.

Figure 9 shows the percentage distribution of serious claims in 2006–07p across mechanisms classified at a finer level of detail. Manual-handling mechanisms accounted for 41% of all serious claims. Within this group *Muscular stress while lifting, carrying or putting down objects* accounted for 18% of all serious claims and *Muscular stress while handling objects, other than lifting, carrying or putting down* a further 15%. The most common mechanism not related to manual handling was *Falls on the same level*, accounting for 13% of all serious claims.

Figure 9 Serious claims: percentage of claims by mechanism of injury or disease, 2006–07p



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. Figure 10 shows that at the broad classification level, 26% of serious claims in 2006–07 involved *Non-powered handtools, appliances and equipment*. Out of these claims, the two most common sub-groups were *Fastening, packing and packaging equipment* and *Furniture and fittings*, accounting for 9% and 6% of serious 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-group level between *Indoor environment* and *Outdoor environment* with 7% and 8% of serious claims respectively. These sub-agencies include such factors as steps and stairways, floor conditions, weather and ground conditions.

Figure 10 Serious claims: percentage of claims by breakdown agency of injury or disease, 2006–07p

