

COMPENDIUM OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS AUSTRALIA 2004–05

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Australian Government

Australian Safety and Compensation Council

Summary of findings

Part A: Summary of new claims, 2004–05p

The preliminary number of new work-related compensation claims (involving one week or more absence from work) reported in Australia for 2004–05p was 140 655, including 214 compensated fatalities. Of these claims, 68% (95 830 claims) were for male employees. Male employees accounted for 70% of injury and poisoning claims and 64% of disease claims.

Based on frequency rates, male employees were 1.4 times more likely than female employees to have an accepted claim (11 claims for men per million hours worked by men compared with 8 claims for women per million hours worked by women). Male employees were 1.5 times more likely than female employees to have an injury or poisoning claim, and they were 1.2 times more likely to have a disease claim.

In 2004–05p the national incidence rate was 17 claims per 1000 employees: comprising 12 injury and poisoning claims per 1000 employees and 4.4 disease claims per 1000 employees.

Five industries had incidence rates substantially above the national rate of 17 claims per 1000 employees. These were Manufacturing; Transport and storage; Construction; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; and Mining (ranging between 26 and 32 claims per 1000 employees). Finance and insurance (4 claims per 1000 employees) had a substantially lower rate than any other industry.

Looking at occupation groups, Labourers and related workers had the highest incidence rate in 2004–05p, 48 claims per 1000 employees — nearly three times the national rate. Intermediate production and transport workers and Tradespersons and related workers had rates close to double the national rate (34 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 (4 claims per 1000 employees).

Manual-handling mechanisms accounted for 43% of all new claims, including *Muscular stress while lifting, carrying or putting down objects* (19% of all new 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 new claims.

At the broad breakdown agency classification level one-quarter of new claims in 2004–05p 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* (8% and 5% of all claims respectively). The second most common breakdown agency specified at the broad classification level was *Environmental agencies* (15% of all claims). These claims were split 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.

Part B: Compensated fatalities, 2004–05p

Preliminary data show that in 2004–05p there were 214 compensated work-related fatality claims. This is equivalent to an incidence rate of 2.5 compensated fatalities per 100 000 Australian employees. Of the 214 claims, 203 were male employees (95%) and 11 were female employees (5%). This is the lowest proportion of female fatalities in any year since the national database was established in 1996–97.

In 2004–05p, the highest number of compensated fatalities in any industry, 43, was recorded within the Transport and storage industry and accounted for 20% of all fatalities: nearly three-quarters (31) of these fatalities were concentrated in the Road transport sub-division. The second highest number of fatalities, 30, was recorded within the Manufacturing industry, followed by the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry (29 fatalities) and the Construction industry (25 fatalities).

However, when the number of fatalities is expressed as a rate per employee, the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry recorded the highest rate of 16 fatalities per 100 000 employees. This was followed by the Transport and storage industry with 11 fatalities per 100 000 employees. While the 5 fatalities recorded in the Mining industry was comparatively low, the industry recorded the third highest rate of 6 fatalities per 100 000 mining employees.

Examining major occupation groups, Intermediate production and transport workers accounted for 73 fatalities: just over one-third (34%) of all compensated fatalities in 2004–05p. This group also recorded the highest incidence and frequency rates: both about four times the respective rates for all fatality claims. Within the Intermediate production and transport workers group, just over three-quarters (77%) of the fatalities were recorded in the sub-category Road and rail transport drivers.

The second highest number of fatalities, 40, was recorded by Labourers and related workers: representing 19% of all compensated fatalities. This group includes factory, mining, construction and agricultural labourers (9 fatalities were identified as farm-hands): 17 of the 40 fatalities were not coded to a detailed occupation group.

Part C: Trends over time, 1996–97 to 2003–04

Because the most recent year of data, 2004–05, is preliminary, time series comparison is made to revised data for 2003–04. Comparing the number of accepted claims lodged in 1996–97 (164 910) with the number lodged in 2003–04 (144 025) shows an overall decrease of 13% in the number of claims over the period: and this occurred while the number of employees was estimated to have increased from 7.3 million to 8.4 million over the period. These shifts led to a steady decrease in the overall incidence rate of workers' compensation claims: from 23 claims per 1000 employees in 1996–97 to 17 in 2003–04. Similarly, the frequency rate, measured in claims per million hours worked by employees, has fallen from 13 to 10 over the same period.

Although the number of claims involving *injuries and musculoskeletal disease* have decreased (from 143 270 claims in 1996–97 to 122 865 in 2003–04), the number of claims involving disease (excluding *musculoskeletal disease*) has increased in recent years: rising from a minimum of 16 770 claims in 1999–2000 to 21 160 in 2003–04. This increase in the number of disease claims is reflected in slightly increased disease-related incidence and frequency rates in 2003–04.

Over the period 1996–97 to 2003–04 the number of compensated claims decreased in nearly all industries. Claims made by employees in the Manufacturing industry, the group with the most claims overall, decreased by 29% — resulting in 12 275 fewer claims in 2003–04 than in 1996–97. The Mining industry, which had the highest incidence rate in 1996–97, has made the greatest improvement: reducing its incidence rate by 47% (from 51 claims per 1000 employees in 1996–97 to 27 claims per 1000 employees in 2003–04). The two main exceptions to the general pattern of improvement were the Education and the Property and business services industries. Claims within these two industries increased by 32% and 24% respectively over the period. Education was also the only industry to experience a slight overall increase in incidence rate over the eight-year period: from 9.7 claims per 1000 employees in 1996–97 to a peak of 11.0 in 2002–03, before decreasing slightly to 10.9 in 2003–04.