

Key Work Health and Safety Statistics, Australia





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Key work health and safety statistics

- In 2006–07, there were 134 105 workers' compensation claims for serious¹ work-related injuries or illnesses. This equates to an incidence rate of 14.1 serious claims per 1000 employees.
- Preliminary data for 2007–08 show there were 131 110 serious workers' compensation claims, which equates to 13.5 serious claims per 1000 employees. While the claim numbers are expected to rise around 3%, the indications are that there has been an improvement from the previous year.
- Male employees experienced twice the rate of serious injury or disease compared with female employees.
- Incidence rates of serious workers' compensation claims increase with employee age.
- The highest incidence rates were recorded by Labourers & related workers, nearly three times the rate for all occupations.
- The Transport & storage industry recorded the highest incidence rate of all industries, nearly twice the rate for all industries.
- A typical serious workers' compensation claim involves nearly four weeks absence from work.
- Around one-quarter of serious claims require 12 or more weeks off work.
- Around one-quarter of serious claims involved the use of nonpowered handtools or equipment.
- Around one-quarter of serious claims involved an injury to the back.
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Work Related Injury Survey showed 64 out of every 1000 workers experienced an injury or illness in the workplace in 2005–06. However, half of these incidents involved less than one day or one shift absent from work.
- Work related injury and illnesses were estimated to cost \$57.5 billion in the 2005–06 financial year. This represented 5.9% of GDP.

¹ Serious claims involve a death, a permanent incapacity or a temporary incapacity requiring an absence from work of one working week or more

National OHS Strategy 2002–2012

Injury and musculoskeletal claims

Target: 40% reduction in the incidence of work-related injury by 30 June 2012 with an interim target of 20% by 2006–07.

Result: There was an 18% decrease in the injury incidence rate up to 2007–08. This is still below the interim target of 20% that was to be met by 2006–07. A greater rate of reduction is required to meet the 2012 target (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Incidence of serious claims: achieved versus reduction required to meet target



Fatalities

Target: 20% reduction in the incidence of compensated work-related fatalities by 30 June 2012 with an interim target of 10% by 2006–07.

Result: The interim target was achieved in 2006–07 and a 17% decrease has been recorded up to 2007–08. Figure 2 shows that as long as this improvement is maintained the 2012 target is achievable.





Aspirational target

Target: Australia to have the lowest work-related traumatic injury fatality rate in the world by 2009.

Result: While Australia has one of the fastest falling fatality rates among the best performing countries world wide, it has remained in 7th place (Figure 3). Australia is unlikely to meet this aspirational goal.

Figure 3 Comparison of Australia's work-related injury fatality rate with the best performing countries



Industry

Construction) had incidence rates substantially above the all industries rate of 13.5 serious claims per In 2007–08, four industries (Transport & storage; Agriculture, forestry & fishing; Manufacturing; and 1000 employees (Figure 4). These industries, with the addition of the Health & community services industry, were identified as priority industries under the National OHS Strategy 2002–2012.



Figure 4 Incidence rates of serious claims by industry, 2007–08p

Types of workers' compensation claims

- In 2007–08, injury or poisoning accounted for 74% of serious workers' compensation claims, with disease claims accounting for the balance. However, the number of disease claims is likely to be underestimated due to difficulties associated with linking the disease to workplace exposure. .
- The most common work-related injuries were sprains and strains (43% of all serious claims).



Figure 5 Serious claims: percentage by nature of injury or disease, 2007–08p

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mechanisms of work-related injury or illness responsible for 76% of serious workers' compensation body, were identified as priority mechanisms in the National OHS Strategy 2002-2012. There was ittle change in the proportion of claims due to these mechanisms of injury or illness in the last six claims in 2007–08 (Figure 6). These mechanisms, together with Hitting objects with part of the Body stressing, Falls, Slips & trips of a person and Being hit by a moving object were the years.





Work-related fatalities

- Preliminary data for 2007–08 shows there were 232 accepted workers' compensation claims for work-related deaths, down from the 260 recorded for 2006–07.
- Four in five compensated fatalities were due to injury (187 in 2007–08), with the remainder due to disease.
- However, workers' compensation data does not include fatalities where there are no dependants to lodge a claim or where the worker was self-employed. Therefore, workers' compensation data underestimates the actual number of work-related fatalities.
- The Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities report combines information on fatalities from a number of sources. The 2006–07 report showed there were 295 worker fatalities, 93 commuting fatalities and 65 bystanders killed as a result of someone else's work activity.
- Table 1 shows that the highest number of worker fatalities and the highest incidence of injury fatality occurred in the Transport & storage industry, followed by the Agriculture, forestry & fishing industry.
- The Notified Fatalities Statistical Report for 2008–09 showed that notifications of worker fatalities increased only marginally: from 149 in 2006–07 to 151 in 2008–09. This report does not include all deaths involving road accidents or criminal activity, hence the lower number of fatalities in comparison to the Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities report. However, this minor increase over the two years following the data contained in the Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities report may indicate there will be little change in the total number of worker fatalities over the same period. Caution with the interpretation of these data, however, should be used due to the small numbers involved.

Industry	Number	Incidence Rate
Transport & storage	74	15.7
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	45	12.6
Mining	13	9.6
Construction	52	5.6
Personal & other services	15	3.8
Cultural & recreational services	10	3.6
Manufacturing	23	2.2
Government administration & defence	11	2.0
Property & business services	14	1.1
Retail trade	14	0.9
Other industries	24	0.7
All industries	295	2.8

Table 1 Worker fatalities: number and incidence rate (fatalities per 100 000 workers), 2006–07

Source: Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities, 2006–07

- The total number of work-related disease fatalities has been conservatively estimated to be at least 2000 deaths per year².
- In 2007, there were 551 registered deaths attributed to mesothelioma: an increase on the 486 deaths registered in 2006. It has been estimated that the numbers will not peak until after 2010³.

² Kerr *et al.* 1996. Best Estimate of the Magnitude of Health Effects of Occupational Exposure to Hazardous Substances, Worksafe Australia Developmental Grant Final Report, April 1996.

³ *Clements et al.* 2007. Actuarial projections for mesothelioma: an epidemiological perspective. Presented to the Actuaries of Australia XIth Accident Compensation Seminar.

Occupational disease indicators

- Safe Work Australia has identified eight priority occupational disease groups to receive attention. These disease groups have been chosen because they have a high attribution to the work environment.
- Workers' compensation data are complemented, where possible, by information from the other sources⁴ to better identify occupational disease trends.
- Table 2 presents the trends in the incidence of occupational disease between 2000–01 and 2006–07. Decreasing trends were observed for five of the eight priority disease groups. Noiseinduced hearing loss; Respiratory diseases and Occupational cancers did not display a clear overall trend of increase or decrease.

Trend over time	Occupational Disease
¥	Musculoskeletal disorders
¥	Mental disorders
→	Noise-induced hearing loss
¥	Infectious and parasitic diseases
``	Respiratory diseases
Ψ	Contact dermatitis
¥	Cardiovascular diseases
``	Occupational cancers

Table 2. Occupational disease indicators: trend from 2000–01 to 2006–07

⁴ National Hospital Morbidity Database, National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, National Cancer Statistics Clearing House

Mesothelioma

- Data on the number of new cases of mesothelioma are collected nationally by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).
- The number of new cases of mesothelioma increased from 156 in 1982 to a peak of 649 in 2003. The number of new cases in 2006 was 570. However, it is too early to tell whether the falls recorded since 2004 will continue, with most experts predicting that the incidence of mesothelioma will not peak until after 2010.
- The age standardised rate of new cases of mesothelioma has increased from 1.1 new cases per 100 000 population in 1983 to 2.7 in 2006.
- The majority (80–90%) of mesothelioma cases involve males.



Figure 7 The number of new cases of mesothelioma by sex and year of diagnosis

Year of diagnosis

Jurisdictional comparison

 The lowest incidence rate of serious workers' compensation claims was recorded in 2006–07 by the Australian Government (Figure 8) with Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia, recording the highest rates. The preliminary data for 2007–08 show a similar pattern.



Long term claims are those involving 12 or more weeks of compensation. The lowest rate of long term claims in 2006–07 was recorded by the Australian Government. The highest rates were recorded by South Australia and Queensland (Figure 9). Preliminary data for 2007–08 should be used with caution as they are likely to increase as claims already lodged are accepted by the jurisdictions.



Figure 9 Incidence of long term claims: jurisdiction by year

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Premium rates

- The standardised average premium rate⁵ in Australia has decreased 30%, from 2.25% in 2003-04 to 1.59% of payroll in 2007–08.
- Standardised premium rates across the jurisdictions range from 1.09% of payroll in Queensland to 2.84% in South Australia (Figure 10).



Figure 10 Standardised premium rates by jurisdiction, 2006–07 Australia 1 59

Source: CPM 11th Edition

⁵ Standardisation takes into account differences in remuneration, employer excess and journey claim coverage. Figures include self-insurers.

Sources

All workers' compensation statistics regarding claims have been sourced from the National Dataset for Compensation-based Statistics (NDS). An on-line database is available at http://nosi.ascc.gov.au/

Safe Work Australia produces an annual comprehensive statistical bulletin, the *Compendium of Workers' Compensation Statistics, Australia,* available on the Safe Work Australia website at www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au from which many of the national statistics in this booklet can found.

Safe Work Australia also produces a number of publications on fatalities. Apart from the Compendium mentioned above, reports on *Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities* and *Notified Fatalities Statistical Report* can be found on the Safe Work Australia website.

Jurisdictional data, workers' compensation scheme data and more information on progress towards the *National OHS Strategy 2002–2012* targets is available in the *Comparative Performance Monitoring* (CPM) report available at www.deewr.gov.au/WorkplaceRelations/WRMC/ Pages/Reports.aspx

Information on occupational disease can be found in the publication, *Occupational Disease Indicators 2008.*

Information on Mesothelioma can be found in the publication *Mesothelioma in Australia*.

Information on the cost of occupational injury and disease can be found in the report *The Cost of Work-related Injury and Illness for Australian Employers, Workers and the Community.*

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