European Comparisons

Summary of UK Performance

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Summary


Health and safety systems differ across Europe in recording, reporting and enforcement. The European statistical office (Eurostat) publishes data in as standardised a form as possible. Data available on Eurostat shows that UK performance is favourable compared to other EU countries, with relatively low rates of work-related fatalities, injuries and ill health.

- Standardised rates of fatal injury across the EU-15 and GB/UK show a downward trend over the period 1998-2011. The EU-15 comprises Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK (up to 2010 fatal injury data provided for the UK covered Great Britain only) (Eurostat, ESAW, 2011).

- The UK consistently has one of the lowest rates of fatal injury across the EU. In 2011 the standardised rate was 0.74 per 100 000 workers*, which compares favourably with other large economies such as France (2.74 per 100 000 workers), Germany (0.94 per 100 000 workers), Italy (1.5 per 100 000 workers) and Spain (2.16 per 100 000 workers) (Eurostat, ESAW, 2011).

- In 2007, 1.8% of UK workers reported an injury occurring at work that resulted in sick leave. Compared to other large economies, this was similar to Germany (1.9%), lower than Italy (2.3%), Spain (3.1%) and the EU-27 average (2.2%), and higher than Poland (1.0%) (Eurostat, EU LFS, 2007).

- In 2007, 2.9% of UK workers reported a work-related illness resulting in sick leave. This is lower than Germany (3.9%), Spain (4.2%), Poland (11.8%) and the overall EU-27 rate (5.5%) (Eurostat, EU LFS, 2007).

*The overall GB rate of fatal injuries published by HSE for 2011/12 was 0.58 per 100 000 workers; the standardised rate published by Eurostat accounts for variation in industry composition across EU countries.

Figure 1 – Standardised incidence rates (per 100 000 workers) of fatal injuries at work in GB/UK and the EU, 1998-2011 (Eurostat)

Notes:
From 2008, the rate of fatal injuries was calculated using updated industry data so the series differs slightly from this point on.

Data for UK/GB: for the years 1998-2010 rates are based on GB data only, for 2011 rates are based on UK data (including Northern Ireland).

1The latest fatality data provided by Eurostat for 2008 and 2010 seem inconsistent with previous HSE data; as a result, rates for these years have not been updated.
Injuries at work in the EU

Fatal injuries at work

- The 2011 UK standardised rate of 0.74 per 100,000 workers\(^2\) is considerably lower than that of many EU member states, including other large economies such as France (2.74 per 100,000), Germany (0.94 per 100,000), Italy (1.5 per 100,000) and Spain (2.16 per 100,000).
- Rates are based on fatalities occurring across 12 sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and construction. The transport sector is excluded.
- Road traffic accidents should not be included in these rates. When reviewing rates for individual countries it should be kept in mind that removal of road traffic accidents may not always be complete.

Figure 2 - Standardised incidence rates (per 100,000 workers) of fatal injury at work, excluding road traffic accidents and accidents on board transport in the course of work for 2011 (Eurostat)

Self-reported work-related injuries

- Figure 3 demonstrates the proportion of workers in the EU that have taken time off work due to a work-related injury.
- 1.8% of UK workers report taking time off work due to a work-related injury. Compared to other large economies, the UK rate is similar to Germany (1.9%), lower than Italy (2.3%), Spain (3.1%) and the EU-27 average (2.2%), and higher than Poland (1.0%).
- This data is taken from the 2007 Labour Force Survey (LFS), which gives the most comparable data on work-related injuries across the EU. These injuries may not have been officially reported because they are based on workers own definitions of an injury at work.

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\(^2\) The overall GB rate of fatal injuries published by HSE for 2011/12 was 0.58 per 100,000 workers; the standardised rate published by Eurostat accounts for variation in industry composition across EU countries.
Work-related ill health in the EU

Figure 4 displays the rate of workers in the EU that have taken time off work due to work-related ill health.

- 2.9% of UK workers report taking time off work due to one or more work-related health problem. The UK rate is lower than many other European countries, including the EU-27 average (5.5%), Germany (3.9%), Spain (4.2%) and Poland (11.8%).

- European ill health data is taken from the 2007 Labour Force Survey (LFS), which is based on workers’ own ideas of work-related health problems. Therefore, the survey may not match official definitions in any country.
Health and Safety Practice in the EU

- European surveys reveal that the majority of UK workers are confident that their job does not put their health or safety at risk. Additionally, UK businesses are more likely to have a health and safety policy, and to follow this up with formal risk assessment, compared to other EU countries.

- According to the 2010 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), 18% of UK workers believe that their job risks their health and safety. This is one of the lowest proportions in the EU, and is favourable in comparisons to the EU-27 rate of around 24%.

- Italy (18%) and Germany (19%) have similar rates to the UK. However, more workers in France (25%) and Spain (33%) believe that their health and safety is at risk because of their job.

Figure 5 - Do you think your health or safety is at risk because of your work? (%) (EWCS 2010)

Managers in the UK businesses interviewed as part of the European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) in 2009 were more likely to have documented health and safety policy, and more likely to undertake regular health and safety checks, than businesses in many other EU countries.

- Managers in businesses with more than 10 employees, and in all sectors apart from agriculture, were interviewed for the ESENER survey in 2009. Interviews covered specific questions about psychosocial risks such as stress and violence, as well as general health and safety management.

- The chart below demonstrates that around 98% of UK businesses have a health and safety policy. Although closely followed by a number of other EU countries such as Spain (97%) and Bulgaria (95%), this percentage is higher than all other EU countries measured. Comparably, Greece (38%) has the lowest percentage of businesses with a health and safety policy in place.
Around 97% of UK workplaces surveyed undertake regular health and safety checks. This is more than most EU countries including Spain (95%), Germany (78%) and France (65%). However, with 99% of workplaces undertaking health and safety checks, Italy performs slightly better than the UK.

These results exclude businesses with fewer than 10 employees, and those in the agricultural sector.

Figure 7 - Are workplaces in your establishment regularly checked for safety and health as part of a risk assessment or similar measure? (%) (ESENER 2009)
Appendix

Data Sources

Data tables are available at: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/index.htm#europeancomparisons or follow the links below for more details.

Data on fatal injuries published by Eurostat

The latest data on fatal injuries is for 2011 and is available on the Eurostat database:

The fatal injury data used in this report comes under the folder ‘Population and social conditions’ and is in the sub-folder of ‘health’

The table used is under the sub-folder ‘Health and safety at work’, under a further sub-folder ‘Accidents at work (ESAW, 2008 onwards) (hsw_acc_work) and under an additional sub-folder ‘Main indicators (hsw_mi)’

The table is: ‘Accidents at work by sex and age, excluding road traffic accidents and accidents on board of any mean of transport in the course of work (NACE Rev. 2, A, C-N excluding H) (hsw_mi03)’

For further details on the scope and coverage of the fatality data, please see the metadata provided by Eurostat: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY&SDDS/EN/hsw_acc_work_esms.htm

European fatal injury data for 2012 should be published on the Eurostat website in 2015.

Labour Force Survey data on non-fatal injuries and ill health

The latest data from the EU LFS is available from the Eurostat database:

The folder containing the data is: ‘Population and social conditions’

The data is stored under the subfolder ‘Health and safety at work (hsw)’ and a further sub-folder of ‘Work-related accidents, health problems and hazardous exposure – LFS (2007)(hsw_apex)’

Data on work-related injuries is in the additional subfolder ‘Accidents at work (hsw_ac)’ and is derived from the following tables: ‘Persons reporting an accident at work in the past 12 months by sex, age and education - % (hsw_ac1)’ and ‘Persons reporting that their most recent accidental injury at work or in the course of work resulted in sick leave in the past 12 months, by sex, age and education - % (hsw_ac2)’

Data on ill health is in the sub-folder ‘Work-related health problems (hsw_pb)’

This data is derived from the following tables: ‘Persons reporting one or more work-related health problems in the past 12 months, by sex, age and education - % (hsw_pb1)’ and ‘Persons reporting that their most serious work-related health problem resulted in sick leave in the past 12 months, by sex, age and education - % (hsw_pb2)’

For further details on the scope and coverage of the Labour Force Survey data on injuries and ill health please see the metadata: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY&SDDS/EN/hsw_apex_esms.htm

Data from the LFS ad hoc module on injuries at work and work-related health problems dates back to 2007. This module ran again in 2013 and the new data will be available from the Eurostat website by June 2015.

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)

The latest EWCS ran in 2010. For more details, please visit the EWCS homepage on the Eurofound website: www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/ewcs/

To view the data, use the mapping tool: http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/smt/ewcs/results.htm

The data used in this report (on whether workers think their health and safety is at risk because of their work) is under the ‘Health and Wellbeing’ link on the left hand side.

The next EWCS survey has been provisionally planned for 2015.

European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)

The European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) ran in 2009 and surveyed businesses across the EU with more than 10 employees in all sectors apart from agriculture. For more background on the survey, and to view the results please visit the mapping tool on the website of the European Agency for Safety and Health at https://osha.europa.eu/sub/esener/en/front-page

Data for the next ESENER survey will be collected in 2014 and should be available by 2015.