

Historical picture

Trends in work-related injuries and ill health since the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 1974

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Summary

The information in this document relates to Health and Safety statistics for 2010/11. The document can be found at: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/history/index.htm.

British industry has changed substantially since the introduction of the HSWA in 1974 and data shows there have been large reductions in work-related injury and ill health.

Between 1974 and 2011:

- Fatal injuries to employees have fallen by 82%.
- Reported non-fatal injuries have fallen by 76%.
 - Research commissioned by HSE suggests about half of the reduction in non-fatal injuries relates to changing employment patterns and occupations.
- Deaths from asbestos-related diseases continue to increase but cases occurring now arise mainly from exposure to asbestos 30-40 years ago.
- There was a decrease in the total number of cases of work-related illness and specifically musculoskeletal disorders.
- There was an increase in the total number of cases of stress, depression and anxiety although it is likely that awareness and attitudes to work-related stress changed in the 1990s which will have affected reporting.

Earliest and latest data on injuries and ill health since the introduction of the HSWA

Summary description	Year	
	Earliest	Latest
Workplace injury (2010/11 data adjusted to align with 1974 reporting requirements)	1974	2010/11
Fatal injuries to employees	651	116
Rate of fatal injury per 100 000 employees	2.9	0.5
Reported non-fatal injuries to employees	336 701	80 479
Occupational diseases	1974	2009
Deaths from pneumoconiosis	453	149
Deaths from asbestosis	25	189
Deaths from mesothelioma	243	2 321
Rate of self-reported work-related illness (2010/11 data adjusted to align with 1990 survey definitions where possible)	1990	2010/11
Overall rate per 100 000 employed	5 940	3 820
Rate of Musculoskeletal disorders per 100 000 employed	2 750	1 690
Rate of stress and related conditions per 100 000 employed	820	1 330

Notes

1. Workplace injuries: in 1974 reported figures were limited to production and some service sectors. Comparable figures for 2011 exclude reported injuries in the public administration, education, and health and social work sectors.
2. Mesothelioma is an asbestos-related cancer. The rise was driven by increasing asbestos usage up to the mid 1960s; the effect of subsequent reductions in asbestos usage are starting to be seen in the fall in the numbers of male deaths from this cancer in younger age groups.
3. Estimates of self-reported work-related illness are based on results from the Labour Force Survey. They have been adjusted such that the coverage is approximately consistent (e.g. limited to people who worked in the last 12 months in England and Wales only), and even then are still affected by factors such as differences in survey design and level of information collected.

Fatal injuries

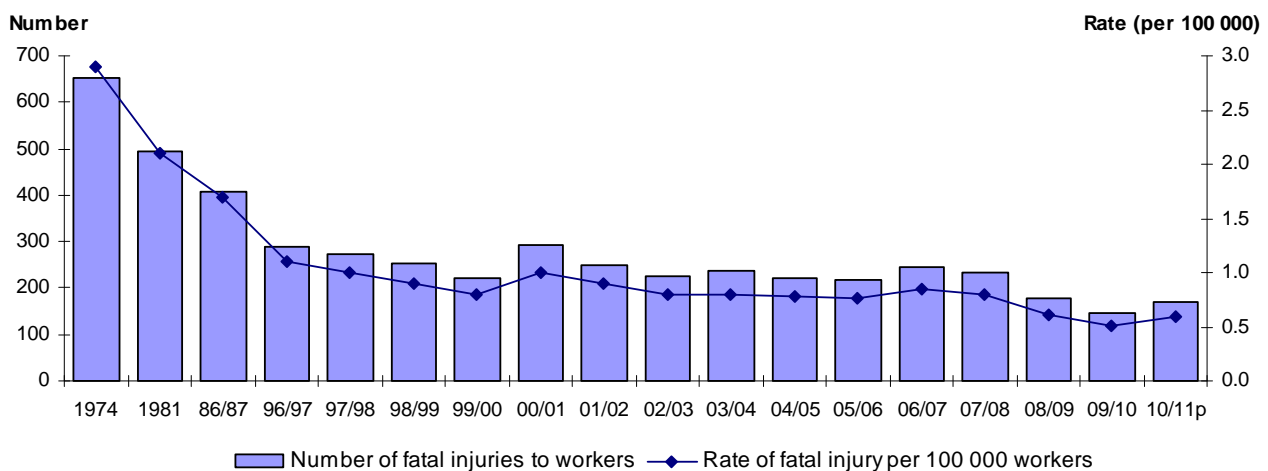
Workers

In 1974 there were 651 fatal injuries to employees. At this time the HSWA in the main covered only those employed in production and some service industries (and excluded public administration, education, and health and social work sectors). In the same types of industry there were 116 fatal injuries to employees in the provisional year 2010/11. This is a decrease of 82% from figures in 1974.

There were 120 fatal injuries to employees recorded in all industries in 2010/11. Including self-employed deaths the number of fatal injuries to workers in 2010/11 is 171.

The rate of fatal injury has decreased by 83% over this period, from 2.9 in 1974 to 0.5 per 100 000 employees in 2010/11. The rate of fatal injury per 100 000 workers is 0.6.

Figure 1: Number and rate of fatal injury to workers 1974, 1981, 1986/87, 1996/97 – 2010/11p



See www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/history/histfatals.xls for the data featured in Figure 1.

Members of the public

The requirement to report injuries to members of the public was introduced under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) 1980. Although figures start from 1981 and show 71 fatal injuries a comparison cannot be made with later reports made under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR 95). This is because RIDDOR introduced a further requirement to report fatal injuries due to acts of suicide or trespass on railway systems, which dramatically increased the number of reports made.

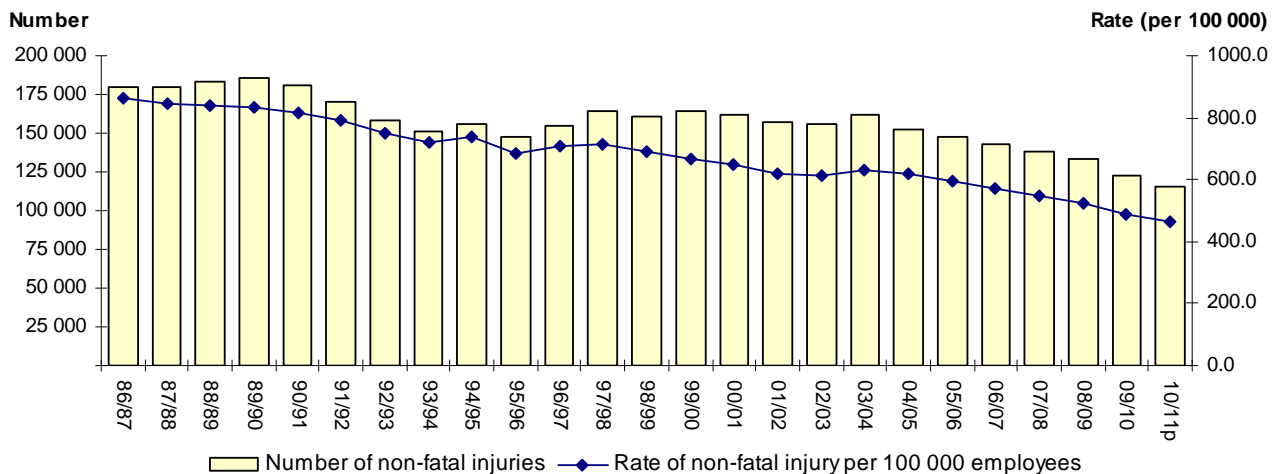
Reported non-fatal injuries

Despite the expansion and diversification of Britain's workforce since 1974 there have been substantial decreases in the number and rate of reported injuries. Research suggests that only a quarter to a half of the reduction over the last 25 years can be attributed to a shift in employment away from manufacturing and heavy industry to lower risk service industries. See www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr386.pdf for more information.

In 1974 there were 336 701 accidents reported that 'involved more than three days absence from work'. This figure covers the same production and service industries as the figure for fatal injuries. They suffer from under-reporting as today's figures do but to an unknown extent. A direct comparison of the same industries in the provisional year 2010/11 shows 80 479 reported non-fatal injuries (major injury plus over-3-day injury), a fall of 76% from figures recorded in 1974.

With the introduction of over-3-day injuries under RIDDOR in 1986/87 it is also useful to make comparison from the start of RIDDOR and now. In 1986/87 there were 179 706 reported non-fatal injuries in all industries, in 2010/11 this figure was 80 479, a reduction across the period of 55%. The rate of non-fatal injuries fell by 46%, from 860.2 per 100 000 employees in 1986/87 to 462.1 in 2010/11.

Figure 2: Number and rate of non-fatal injury to employees 1986/87 – 2010/11p



See www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/history/histnonfatals.xls for the data featured in Figure 2.

A historical series of statistics of reported injuries within main industrial sectors in Great Britain is available in the following tables.

- See www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/history/histinj for workplace injury numbers.
- See www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/history/histrates for workplace injury rates.

Ill health

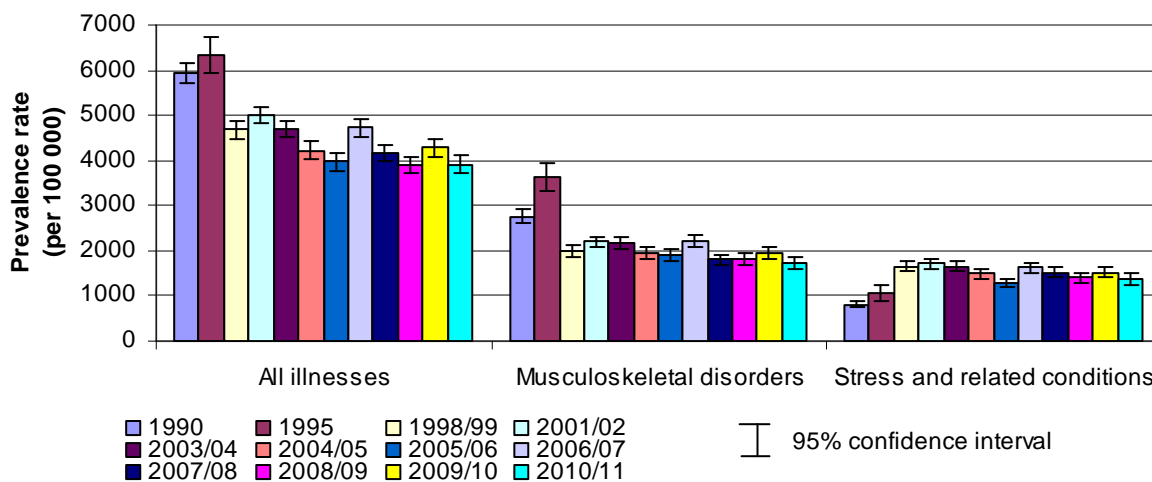
Comparisons between HSE's ten surveys of self-reported work-related illness (SWI) have to be based on a restricted coverage (e.g. those working in the last 12 months in England and Wales), and even then are affected by differences in survey design.

These comparisons suggest that over the long term, the overall prevalence (total cases) rate of self-reported work-related illness has fallen since 1990. In 1990 and 1995 the estimated rates were similar (not statistically significantly different). The rates from 2004/05 to 2010/11 have been of a similar order or statistically significantly lower than those in all preceding surveys since 1990, with the exception of an unusually high rate in 2006/07 which was more in line with the rates prior to 2004/05.

The estimated prevalence rate of stress and related (mainly heart) conditions increased during the 1990s, then appeared to level off between 1998/99 and 2004/05, at around double the level of 1990, but has fluctuated since.

For musculoskeletal disorders, these comparisons suggest that over the long term the estimated prevalence rate has fallen since 1990. As for self-reported work-related illness overall, rates have been of a similar order between 2004/05 and 2010/11 with the exception of a higher rate in 2006/07 and 2009/10.

Figure 3: Comparison of estimated prevalence rates of self-reported work-related illness, for people working in the last 12 months in England and Wales, 1990 to 2010/11



See www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/history/histill.xls for historic ill-health data.

Change in reporting legislation for workplace injuries

Since 1974 three changes of reporting regulations have occurred and the legislation has catered for reporting of injuries as a result of work activity across employees, self-employed persons and members of the public. The sources of safety statistics for the years 1974 to present are as follows:

- Calendar years (January to December) 1974 to 1980; reports made under various pieces of legislation, but chiefly the 1961 Factories Act.
- Calendar years (January to December) 1981 to 1985; reports made under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR).
- Planning years (April to March) 1986/87 to 1995/96; reports made under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR 85).
- Planning years (April to March) 1996/97 to present; reports made under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR 95).
- RIDDOR 95 also replaced the Railways (Notice of Accidents) Order 1986, and certain provisions of the Offshore Installations (Inspectors and Casualties) Regulations 1973 and the Submarine Pipelines (Inspectors etc) Regulations 1977. Certain provisions of the Regulation of Railways Act 1871 and the Transport and Works Act 1992 were also repealed or amended.
- Since 1 April 2006, enforcement of safety on railways has been the responsibility of the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), who continue to provide HSE with notifications reported under RIDDOR since that date. Prior to this date, enforcement was the responsibility of HSE's Railways Inspectorate.

Injury statistics for 1996/97 onwards cannot be compared with those for previous years due to the introduction of RIDDOR 95 – see www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1995/3163 for full details of the legislation. Under the revised reporting requirements:

- The term 'accident' includes acts of violence at work, and acts of suicide or trespass on railways or other transport system.
- The list of reportable major injuries includes a wider range of fractures and amputations as well as certain dislocations.
- In most circumstances, the criterion for reporting a non-fatal injury to a member of the public is if the person is taken from the site of the accident to a hospital - rather than if their injury is on the list of reportable major injuries.

See www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/index.htm for a range of information about RIDDOR, including reporting requirements and the methods by which employers can report accidents and ill health at work.

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