Health and Safety Statistics in the United Kingdom compared with European countries, 2021

Data up to 2020
Annual statistics
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Summary

- Standardised rates of fatal injury across the EU-15 and GB/UK show a downward trend over the period 1994-2018. 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, 2018)*

- The UK consistently has one of the lowest rates of fatal injury across Europe; in 2018 the standardised rate was 0.61 per 100,000 employees\(^1\). Compared to other large European economies, the 2018 UK fatal injury rate was a similar order as Germany (0.55 per 100,000 employees) and lower than France (3.07 per 100,000 employees), Italy (1.04 per 100,000 employees) and Spain (1.49 per 100,000 employees) *(Eurostat, ESAW, 2018)*

- In 2013, 1.4% of UK workers reported an injury occurring at work that resulted in sick leave. This compares with other large economies as follows: Spain (1.8%), Italy (1.8%), France (3.1%) and Poland (0.7%) *(Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013)*

- In 2013, 1.9% of UK workers reported taking time off work due to one or more work-related health problems. This compares with other large economies as follows: Spain (2.8%), Italy (1.9%), France (5.4%), Germany (3.8%) and Poland (7.7%) *(Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013)*

- 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 European countries.

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\(^1\) The overall GB rate of fatal injuries published by HSE for 2018/19 was 0.39 per 100,000 employees, the standardised rate published by Eurostat accounts for variation in industry composition across EU countries.
Figure 1 - Standardised incidence rates (per 100,000 employees) of fatal injuries at work in GB/UK and the EU, 1995-2018 (Eurostat, ESAW, 2018)

Notes to Figure 1
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 1999-2010 rates are based on GB data only, for 2011 onwards rates are based on UK data (including Northern Ireland).
Background

The information in this document relates to health and safety statistics released in 2021, corresponding to the latest available data for the year shown. The data below come from a variety of sources and they relate to the latest available time periods as indicated.

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’s historical performance is favourable compared to many EU countries, with relatively low rates of work-related fatalities, injuries and ill health. The data from 2012 onwards include injuries for Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland, forming rates for the United Kingdom (UK), whereas data up until 2011 are based on GB data only.

The EU-15 consists of the European nations that made up the Union as of April 2004. For statistical purposes we considered these nations the closest in comparison to the UK in terms of industries within the workforce. The EU-28 represents the number of members of the union as of July 2013, this will change as newer data becomes available. Data from European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) in this document relates to 2019, so referring to ‘EU-27 2020’. This means their figures show the United Kingdom as ‘outside’ the EU, and we have shown ESENER data for non-EU countries suffixed by *.
Injuries at work across European countries

Fatal injuries at work

- The 2018 UK standardised rate of fatal injury was 0.61 per 100,000 employees, which is lower than that of many EU member states. Compared to other large European economies, in 2018 the UK fatal injury rate was a similar order as Germany (0.55 per 100,000 employees) and lower than France (3.07 per 100,000 employees), Italy (1.04 per 100,000 employees) and Spain (1.49 per 100,000 employees).

- Similarly, the UK three-year average rate for 2015-2017 (0.52 per 100,000 employees) compares favourably with member states. (Data available)

- Standardised rates are based on fatalities occurring across 12 sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing and construction (see Appendix for further details on the standardisation process).

- Work-related road traffic accidents are excluded from these rates, as some member states like the UK exclude coverage. Hence the transport sector more generally is also excluded by Eurostat. However when reviewing rates for individual countries, it should be kept in mind that removal of road traffic accidents may not always be complete.

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2 The overall GB rate of fatal injuries published by HSE for 2018/19 was 0.39 per 100,000 employees, the standardised rate published by Eurostat accounts for variation in industry composition across EU countries. See appendix for further details on the standardisation process.
Figure 2 - Standardised incidence rates (per 100,000 employees) of fatal injury at work for 2018, excluding road traffic accidents and accidents on board transport in the course of work (Eurostat, ESAW, 2018)
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.

- 1.4% of UK workers report taking time off due to a work-related injury. This compares with other large economies as follows: Spain (1.8%), Italy (1.8%), France (3.1%) and Poland (0.7%). This data is taken from the 2013 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.

Figure 3 – Percentage of workers who had an injury resulting in sick leave over the last 12 months (LFS, 2013)

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3 Due to methodological problems the EU LFS injury data contains no data for Germany or the Netherlands; as such an EU average figure has also not been produced.
Work-related ill health in European countries

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

- 1.9% of UK workers report taking time off work due to one or more work-related health problems. This compares with other large economies as follows: Spain (2.8%), Italy (1.9%), France (5.4%), Germany (3.8%) and Poland (7.7%).

European ill health data is taken from the 2013 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.

Figure 4 – Percentage of workers with one or more work-related ill health problems resulting in sick leave (LFS, 2013)
Health and Safety Practice in European countries

- According to the 2015 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 compares with the EU-28 rate of around 23%.

- By contrast other comparable economies report the following proportion of workers who believe their job risks their health and safety: Spain (36%), Italy (13%), France (34%) and Germany (18%). According to the EWCS, differences in levels reported between countries may reflect, among other things, awareness about topics, objective differences, differences in the economic structure of employment and differences in legislation and preventive measures.

Figure 5 - Percentage of workers who think their health or safety is at risk because of their work? (%) (EWCS, 2015)

Managers in the UK businesses interviewed as part of the European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) in 2019 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 European countries.

- Establishments with at least 5 employees, and in all activity sectors, were interviewed for the ESENER survey in 2019. 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 97% of UK businesses have a document explaining health and safety responsibilities and procedures, in line with several other European countries. The "EU-27 2020" average was 91%.

**Figure 6 - Percentage of businesses that provide a document explaining responsibilities and procedures on health and safety available to people working in the establishment (ESENER, 2019)**
• Around 90% of UK workplaces surveyed undertake regular health and safety risk assessments. This is more than most European countries and compares with the EU average of 77%.

**Figure 7- Percentage of establishments that regularly carry out workplace risk assessments (ESENER, 2019)**

![Graph showing percentage of establishments that regularly carry out workplace risk assessments across EU countries.](image)

• Around three quarters of UK workplace risk assessments are carried out by internal staff as opposed to external providers. This compares to an average of less than 42% across the "EU-27 2020". Ahead of the UK are Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, and Norway, while Spain and Slovenia (10%) are at the lower end of the scale.

• The UK is also better placed than many in Europe for having an action plan to prevent work-related stress, at 71% of establishments. This compares to the EU average of 35%.
Figure 8 - Percentage of establishments with an action plan to prevent work-related stress (ESENER, 2019)
Appendix

Data sources
Data tables are available or follow the links below for more details.

Data on fatal injuries published by Eurostat
The latest data on fatal injuries is for 2018 and is available on the Eurostat database. 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)’.

Standardisation of EU fatality rates
Taken at face value, the number of annual workplace deaths does vary country-by-country. Even when differing employment levels between countries are taken into account (that is, some countries simply have more workers than others), the corresponding injury rates can still vary between countries. One reason for the differences in rates between countries, is that the type of work is inherently more (or less) risky in one country compared to another.

For example, when comparing industrial employment structure with the EU average, some countries might employ relatively more workers within inherently higher-risk sectors like agriculture or construction; this could have the effect of increasing the fatality rate for that country. In other words, we would ‘expect’ more deaths in such countries. The standardisation process would therefore have the effect of reducing the fatality rate for those countries. Conversely countries with relatively more workers in low-risk sectors (compared to all-EU), would have the effect of increasing the fatality rates for those countries.

The European Commission recognise this, so Eurostat (the statistical arm of the EC) produce these standardised rates of fatal injury for all member states.

Labour Force Survey data on non-fatal injuries and ill health
Due to methodological problems the EU LFS injury data contains no data for Germany and the Netherlands, therefore an EU average figure has also not been produced. Eurostat is currently working to address this problem and some data for these countries, as well as an EU average, may be available in the future. For ill health data there is no data available for the Netherlands; however, an EU average is available.

The latest data from the EU LFS is available from the Eurostat database.
The folder containing the data is: ‘Population and social conditions’ and is in the sub-folder of ‘health’.

The data is stored under the subfolder ‘Health and safety at work (hsw)’ and a further sub-folder of ‘Accidents at work and other work-related health problems (source LFS) (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 by sex, age and educational attainment (hsw_ac1)’ and ‘Persons reporting an accident at work resulting in sick leave by sex, age and educational attainment (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 a work-related health problem by sex, age and educational attainment (hsw_pb1) ’ and ‘Persons reporting a work-related health problem resulting in sick leave by sex, age and educational attainment (hsw_pb2)’.

**European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)**
The latest EWCS at a detailed member state level ran in 2015. For more details please visit the [EWCS Eurofound website](https://www.eufound.eu).

**European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)**
The most recent European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) ran in 2019 and surveyed businesses across the EU with at least 5 employees in all sectors. For more background on the survey, and to view the results please visit the interactive tool of the European Agency for Safety and Health at [European Agency for Safety and Health](https://www.eufound.eu).
National Statistics

National Statistics status means that statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. They are produced in compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and awarded National Statistics status following assessment and compliance checks by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). The last compliance check of these statistics was in 2013.

It is Health and Safety Executive’s responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected by National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the OSR promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored. Details of OSR reviews undertaken on these statistics, quality improvements, and other information noting revisions, interpretation, user consultation and use of these statistics is available from www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about.htm

An account of how the figures are used for statistical purposes can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/sources.htm.

For information regarding the quality guidelines used for statistics within HSE see www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about/quality-guidelines.htm

A revisions policy and log can be seen at www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about/revisions/ Additional data tables can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/.

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Journalists/media enquiries only: www.hse.gov.uk/contact/contact.htm
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