



Work-related Accidents in the EU - the Statistical Picture (1998-1999)

The European Week for Safety and Health at Work 2001 is targeting the human and financial costs of work-related accidents. Under the slogan 'Success is no accident', the campaign is stressing the economic as well as the human need to cut occupational accident rates in a bid to encourage more organisations to sharpen their safety and health practices.

This factsheet presents recently released statistics from Eurostat that reveal that work-related accidents remain at stubbornly high levels.

- During 1998, there were 4.7 million occupational accidents leading to more than three days' absence from work. This represents a fall in the incidence rate of 0.4% to 4 089 accidents per 100 000 people. Initial estimates for 1999 suggested the rate was on the rise again and would approach the level of 1996 (4 229). However, this would still represent a substantial improvement on the 1994 rate (4 539). The total number of accidents, including those which did not involve absence from work, amounted to 7.4 million, equivalent to 6 380 per 100 000.
- The incidence of accident-related deaths at work fell by 3% to 5.0 per 100 000 people. Overall, 5 476 people were killed at work. A further 3 100 fatal accidents occurred between home and work. Of this total of nearly 8 600 work-related deaths, 59% were due to road or transport accidents.

Fishing is the most dangerous economic activity

- The fishing sector had the highest incidence of accidents: 2.43 times the EU occupational average. Other high-risk sectors included construction (1.41 times the EU average), health and social welfare (1.34) and agriculture (1.32).



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SME rates remain high

- In companies employing 10-49 people, the incidence of accidents leading to three or more days' absence from work was 1.26 times the average. The highest rates were recorded in transport (1.43 times the average of the branch) and construction and manufacturing (1.2).
- Similar rates were found in companies employing 1-9 people, with manufacturing, construction and transport again leading the field (1.1-1.3 times the branch averages).

Newly-employed and young are most vulnerable

- People employed for less than two years were 1.2 to 1.3 times more likely to have an accident than the average worker, irrespective of whether they had a temporary or permanent contract. In some sectors the figure was much higher. Staff in hotels and restaurants

who had been permanently employed for less than two years were 47% more likely to have an accident, relative to their industry average. People temporarily employed in construction were 65% more likely to have an accident than other workers in their sector.

- The risk of an accident for people aged between 18 and 24 was 1.4 times the average.
- People working night shifts of at least 20 hours a week were 1.4-1.5 times more likely to have an accident.

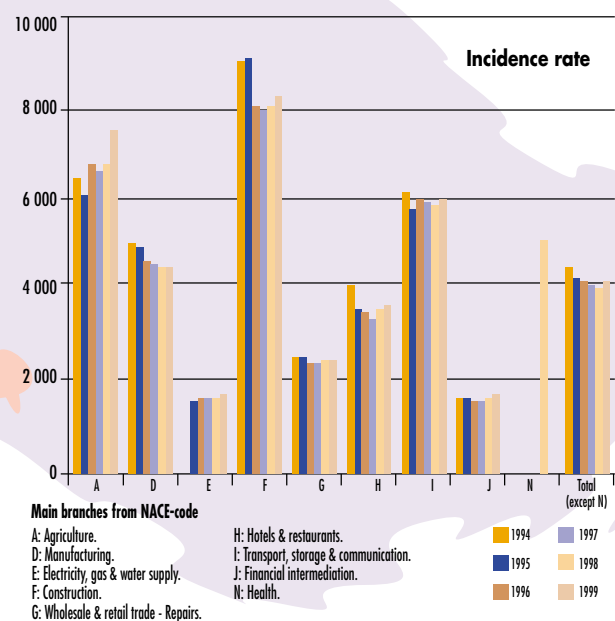
Work-related health problems

- In 1998 and 1999, some 7.7 million people suffered from work-related health problems each year, other than accidental injuries. For health problems linked to the main job currently held, the work-related health problems prevalence rate is 5 372 cases a year per 100 000 employees. The prevalence increased with age, rising to 7 150 for the 55-64 age group.
- 53% of cases involved musculoskeletal disorders. These were most common in the health and social welfare sector (1.6 times the average), followed by construction and transport.
- 18% of cases were related to stress, depression or anxiety, 26% among cases leading to two or more weeks' absence from work during the year. In education and the health and social welfare sector, the incidence of these problems was twice the average.
- Lung disorders affected 0.6 million people. The incidence in mining was twice the average.

Social and economic costs

- Due to accidents at work, around 5% of people were forced to change their job or place of work or reduce their working hours. 0.2% stopped working permanently.
- Between 1998 and 1999, it is estimated that work-related accidents cost the EU 150 million working days per year. A further 350 million days were lost through work-related health problems. Together, the total 'bill' was 500 million days per year.

Number of accidents at work with more than 3 days absence per 100 000 workers - by economic activity-EU15 - (source: ESAW)



Accidents at work with more than 3 days' absence from work

| NACE rev1 Section (branch) Subsection or division (sector) | (Economic activity) Persons in employment 1998 (1 000) | Number | | Incidence rate (number per 100 000 persons in employment) | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------|------------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|---------|--------|--------|
| | | 1998 | 1999* | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999* | Trend % | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 94-98 | 96-98 | 98-99* |
| Total - all branches of activity | 136 150 | 4 678 586 | 4 850 120* | 4 539 | 4 266 | 4 229 | 4 106 | 4 089 | 4 206* | -9,9% | -3,3% | 2,9%* |
| of which (when specified): | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Men | | | | 5 960 | 5 534 | 5 458 | 5 291 | 5 268 | : | -11,6% | -3,5% | . |
| Women | | | | 1 936 | 1 864 | 1 924 | 1 865 | 1 890 | : | -2,4% | -1,8% | . |
| 18-24 years | | | | | | 5 751 | 5 613 | 5 725 | : | | -0,5% | . |
| 25-34 years | | | | | | 4 390 | 4 210 | 4 179 | : | | -4,8% | . |
| 35-44 years | | | | : | : | 3 766 | 3 696 | 3 678 | : | | -2,3% | . |
| 45-54 years | | | | : | : | 3 558 | 3 548 | 3 543 | : | | -0,4% | . |
| 55-64 years | | | | : | : | 4 063 | 3 671 | 3 602 | : | | -11,4% | . |
| A Agriculture, hunting and forestry | 5 092 | 345 766 | 373 340* | 6 496 | 6 123 | 6 771 | 6 647 | 6 790 | 7 510* | 4,5% | 0,3% | 10,6%* |
| D Manufacturing | 30 156 | 1 354 762 | 1 369 376* | 5 071 | 4 962 | 4 660 | 4 607 | 4 492 | 4 546* | -11,4% | -3,6% | 1,2%* |
| F Construction | 10 375 | 830 873 | 883 045* | 9 014 | 9 080 | 8 023 | 7 963 | 8 008 | 8 261* | -11,2% | -0,2% | 3,2%* |
| I Transport, storage and communication | 7 509 | 440 143 | 461 309* | 6 139 | 5 790 | 6 018 | 5 937 | 5 862 | 5 999* | -4,5% | -2,6% | 2,3%* |
| N Health and social work (estimated from the ad hoc module in the 1999 Community Labour Force Survey) | | | | | | | | | 5 100 | | | |

* : Provisional estimation from 1998 ESAW data and national evolutions 1998-1999 for non-harmonised national data.

Fatal accidents at work

| NACE rev1 Section (branch) Subsection or division (sector) | (Economic activity) Persons in employment 1998 (1 000) | Number | | Incidence rate (number per 100 000 persons in employment) | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--------|-------|---|------|------|------|------|------|---------|-------|--|
| | | 1998 | 1999* | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | Trend % | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | 94-98 | 96-98 | |
| Total - all branches of activity | 136 150 | 5 476 | : | 6,09 | 5,9 | 5,18 | 5,22 | 5,03 | : | -17,5% | -3,0% | |
| of which (when specified): | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Men | | | | : | : | 7,70 | 7,70 | 7,40 | : | . | -3,8% | |
| Women | | | | : | : | 0,76 | 0,82 | 0,84 | : | . | 11,6% | |
| 18-24 years | | | | : | : | 3,88 | 3,71 | 3,60 | : | . | -7,3% | |
| 25-34 years | | | | : | : | 4,10 | 3,94 | 3,85 | : | . | -6,2% | |
| 35-44 years | | | | : | : | 4,58 | 4,87 | 4,60 | : | . | 0,5% | |
| 45-54 years | | | | : | : | 6,28 | 6,00 | 6,12 | : | . | -2,5% | |
| 55-64 years | | | | : | : | 8,31 | 8,94 | 8,06 | : | . | -3,0% | |
| A Agriculture, hunting and forestry | 5 092 | 631 | : | 14,0 | 13,8 | 12,9 | 12,6 | 12,4 | : | -11,4% | -3,9% | |
| D Manufacturing | 30 156 | 1 101 | : | 4,6 | 4,2 | 3,9 | 4,0 | 3,7 | : | -19,6% | -5,1% | |
| F Construction | 10 375 | 1 330 | : | 14,7 | 14,8 | 13,3 | 13,1 | 12,8 | : | -12,9% | -3,8% | |
| I Transport, storage and communication | 7 509 | 883 | : | 13,7 | 13,7 | 12,0 | 12,1 | 11,8 | : | -13,9% | -1,7% | |

References:

Eurostat - Statistics in focus - Population and social conditions - N° 16/2001 - "Accidents at work in the EU 1998-1999" - catalogue N° KS-NK-01-016-EN-C
Eurostat - Statistics in focus - Population and social conditions - N° 17/2001 - "Work-related health problems in the EU 1998-1999" - catalogue N° KS-NK-01-017-EN-C

Sources and methodological notes:

European Statistics on Accidents at Work (ESAW) – Eurostat.

Under the ESAW project all cases of accidents leading to an absence of more than three calendar days are included in the data. An accident at work is defined as a "discrete occurrence in the course of work, which leads to physical or mental harm." This includes cases of acute poisoning and wilful acts of other persons but excludes self-inflicted injuries and accidents on the way to and from work (commuting accidents). "In course of work" means whilst engaged in an occupational activity or during the time spent at work. This includes cases of road traffic accidents in the course of work. A fatal accident is defined as an accident, which leads to the death of a victim within one year (after the day) of the accident. Depending on the reporting procedure in Member States (insurance or non-insurance based systems) the reporting levels for accidents at work differ. In general, the reporting levels are very high in the insurance based systems and considered to be about

100%. The non-insurance based system has only a medium reporting level usually ranging from 30 to 50 %, on average, for all branches of economic activity taken together. The data from the two sources, insurance based or non-insurance based data corrected according to the reporting level, are not strictly comparable.

Ad hoc module on health and safety at work in the 1999 Community Labour Force Survey – Eurostat.

The Community Labour Force Survey is conducted annually. It covers a representative sample of the entire population living in private households. The 1999 ad hoc module on health and safety at work involved interviews with more than 500 000 people in 11 Member States.

Getting more information

'Preventing work-related accidents' is the theme for the European Week for Safety and Health at Work being run by the Member States during October 2001. More information on accident prevention is available on the Week's dedicated website at <http://osha.eu.int/ew2001/>. The Agency site links to Member State sites where national legislation and guidance can be found: <http://osha.eu.int>.

Eurostat is the Statistical Office of the European Communities. It publishes official harmonised statistics on the European Union and the euro zone. Further information is available on Eurostat's website at: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/>.