

Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE Additional Estimates 2013-2014

Agency - Safe Work Australia

Department of Employment Question No. EM0149_14

Senator Cameron asked on 27 February 2014, Hansard page 35

Question

SWA - Trend data for death and injury rates

Senator CAMERON: Can you provide the committee with the most accurate and up-to-date trend data for the past 10 years on death and injury rates in all industries, including bystander deaths and injuries, with particular reference to comparison of all industries with the building and construction industry. Ms Grey: Yes, we can, but it only goes back to 2003. Senator CAMERON: Obviously whatever you have available would be very helpful, thank you. What are the factors that you see are contributing to the downward trend? Ms Grey: Overall? Senator CAMERON: In the building and construction industry. Ms Grey: Building and construction is recognised as a priority industry under both the national strategy, which concluded in 2012, and the Australian strategy, which commenced in 2012. It goes until 2022. Given that is a priority industry, the jurisdictions put particular effort into working with that industry to improve rates. That is a clear reason. Senator CAMERON: You can provide me on notice, if you like, what you see the detailed factors are. Ms Grey: It is obviously a multifactorial situation. It would be very difficult to pinpoint for such small numbers the reasons why performance is improving, because performance is improving across the board. We can certainly provide you with the information that we publish. But we do not necessarily go into the specific factors.

Answer

Trend data on death and injury rates by industry for workers and bystanders

The tables and figures below provide the latest and most accurate published data on injury-fatalities of workers and bystanders and serious workers' compensation claims made by Australian employees, split by industry.

Work-related fatalities data

These data are sourced from the Traumatic Injury Fatalities (TIF) collection. The TIF collection only includes information on fatalities caused by a traumatic injury and it excludes fatalities caused by disease, suicide, or those deemed to be a result of natural causes (e.g. heart attack). A report is produced annually based on these data and more information can be found at: <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/statistics/work-related-fatalities/pages/workrelatedtraumaticinjuryfatalities>.

Fatality rates can be calculated for workers using labour force denominators (number of workers) but they cannot be calculated for bystanders as there is no suitable denominator information available.

Figure 1 shows the trend in worker fatality rates over time by industry for a selection of industries with high numbers and rates of fatalities in Australia. The rate for all industries is also presented for reference.

FIGURE 1: Worker fatality rates over time by selected industries in Australia, 2003-2012

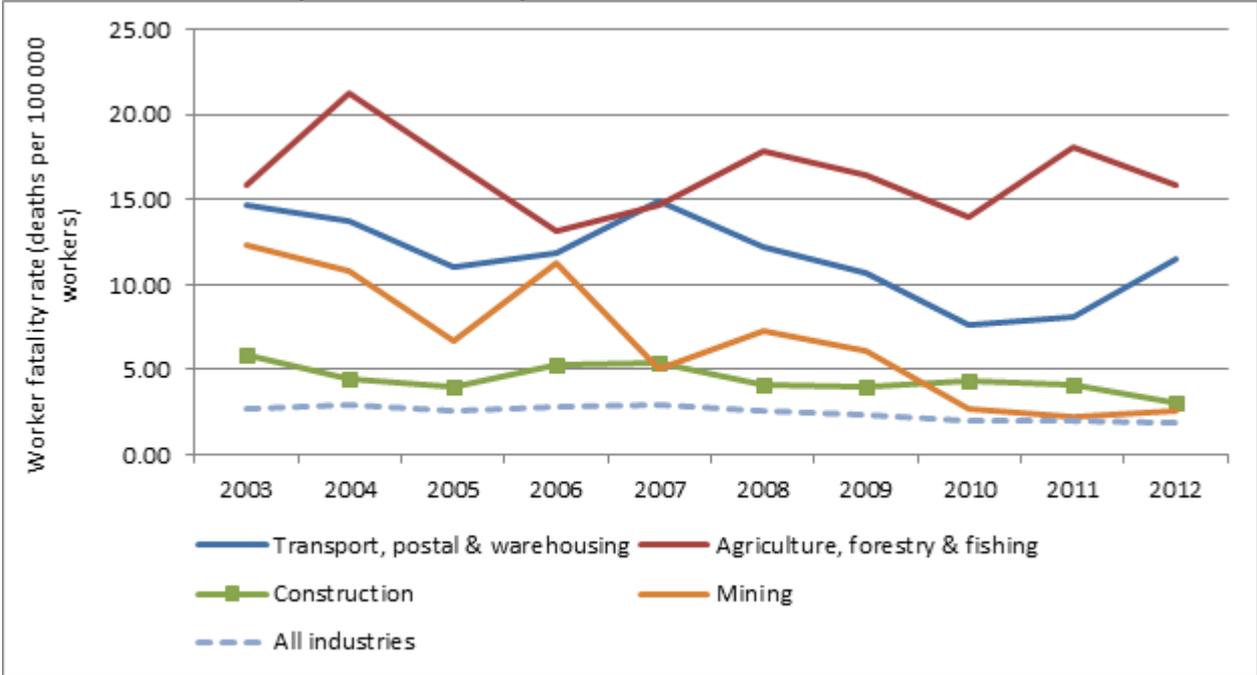


Table 1 presents the number and rate of fatalities of workers by industry in Australia between 2003 and 2012. Preliminary data for 2013 indicate a continuing fall in the number and rate of fatalities in the Construction industry.

TABLE 1: Number and rate of worker fatalities by industry of employer 2003 to 2013

YEAR	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Industry of employer	Number of fatalities									
Transport, postal & warehousing	69	67	55	60	81	70	63	44	47	65
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	58	76	61	46	52	64	60	52	59	53
Construction	44	36	34	48	51	41	40	44	42	30
Manufacturing	19	23	23	29	24	29	22	21	22	18
Public administration & safety	9	11	13	12	12	4	11	6	10	8
Mining	11	11	8	15	7	12	10	5	5	7
Retail trade	7	5	6	10	16	6	6	6	1	6
Professional, scientific & technical services	2	5	2	6	7	5	4	3	2	6
Administrative & support services	3	9	13	9	11	10	10	12	8	5
Wholesale trade	5	11	9	8	9	12	4	9	4	5
Electricity, gas, water & waste services	4	8	6	9	4	4	4	1	2	5
Arts & recreation services	3	5	6	5	9	3	1	5	6	4
Education & training	2	1	2	8	5	2	2	2	2	4
Health care & social assistance	2	3	3	2	0	2	6	4	2	2
Information media & telecommunications	2	1	1	1	3	0	1	3	3	2
Other services	4	7	9	5	4	8	4	0	4	1
Rental, hiring & real estate services	3	2	6	4	10	4	2	4	0	1
Accommodation & food services	5	4	0	8	6	1	3	2	1	1
Financial & insurance services	1	0	0	1	0	3	3	0	1	0
All industries	254	285	257	286	311	280	256	223	221	223
	Fatality rate (deaths per 100 000 workers)									
Transport, postal & warehousing	14.64	13.77	10.99	11.82	14.96	12.24	10.68	7.63	8.06	11.54
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	15.85	21.28	17.17	13.11	14.74	17.85	16.47	14.02	18.05	15.91
Construction	5.84	4.50	3.98	5.25	5.36	4.11	4.02	4.33	4.07	3.00
Manufacturing	1.82	2.19	2.23	2.84	2.31	2.74	2.17	2.11	2.28	1.87
Public administration & safety	1.42	1.70	1.96	1.77	1.73	0.57	1.51	0.80	1.29	1.05
Mining	12.35	10.82	6.67	11.32	5.07	7.25	6.10	2.66	2.25	2.64
Retail trade	0.62	0.45	0.51	0.85	1.32	0.49	0.49	0.50	0.08	0.49
Professional, scientific & technical services	0.32	0.79	0.29	0.81	0.93	0.63	0.50	0.35	0.23	0.66
Administrative & support services	0.86	2.63	3.65	2.54	3.07	2.90	2.79	3.09	1.99	1.25
Wholesale trade	1.32	2.87	2.41	2.02	2.30	2.94	0.97	2.16	0.96	1.22
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	4.34	8.72	5.96	8.41	3.77	3.22	2.97	0.70	1.32	3.29
Arts & recreation services	2.05	3.20	3.46	2.82	4.62	1.58	0.49	2.60	2.84	1.89
Education & training	0.28	0.14	0.28	1.07	0.65	0.25	0.24	0.23	0.23	0.45
Health care & social assistance	0.22	0.31	0.30	0.19	0.00	0.18	0.50	0.32	0.15	0.15
Information media & telecommunications	0.89	0.45	0.42	0.41	1.23	0.00	0.45	1.40	1.43	0.88
Other services	0.94	1.67	2.20	1.19	0.89	1.74	0.90	0.00	0.89	0.22
Rental, hiring & real estate services	1.77	1.13	3.34	2.04	4.97	1.95	1.08	2.06	0.00	0.47
Accommodation & food services	0.77	0.60	0.00	1.20	0.85	0.14	0.41	0.27	0.13	0.13
Financial & insurance services	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.26	0.00	0.74	0.75	0.00	0.24	0.00
All industries	2.67	2.95	2.57	2.78	2.93	2.57	2.33	1.99	1.94	1.93

Bystander fatalities are presented in Table 2. Only the number of bystander fatalities can be determined. Bystander fatalities are coded by location of death, which reflects, where possible, the industry of the workplace in which the bystander was fatally injured. However, most bystander fatalities occur on public roads, so there is no relevant industry classification.

Safe Work Australia does not collect data on members of the public (bystanders) who are non-fatally injured or made ill by someone else's work because bystanders are not covered by workers' compensation schemes. As far as Safe Work Australia is aware there is no Australian source of information on non-fatal injuries to bystanders received as a result of someone else's work activities.

TABLE 2: Number of Bystander fatalities by location of death, 2003 to 2012

Location of death	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Public road/area	44	40	53	43	52	34	31	34	33	53	417
Construction		2	1			4		1	1	1	10
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	7	7	2	6	8	5	5	6	2	2	50
Health care & social assistance			2	2	2		2	3	14	2	27
Arts & recreation services	1	2	4	2	4		6	1	1	1	22
Retail trade	1	3		1	2	1		2		3	13
Accommodation & food services	1	1	1			2			2	1	8
Transport, postal & warehousing		3			1	2					6
Education & training		1	1	2	1						5
Manufacturing	1	2	2								5
Public administration & safety						1			2		3
Electricity, gas, water & waste services		1		1		1					3
Mining		1		1							2
Other services							1				1
Private residence					1		1		2		4
Unknown		1									1
Grand Total	55	64	66	58	71	50	46	47	57	63	577

Work-related injuries data

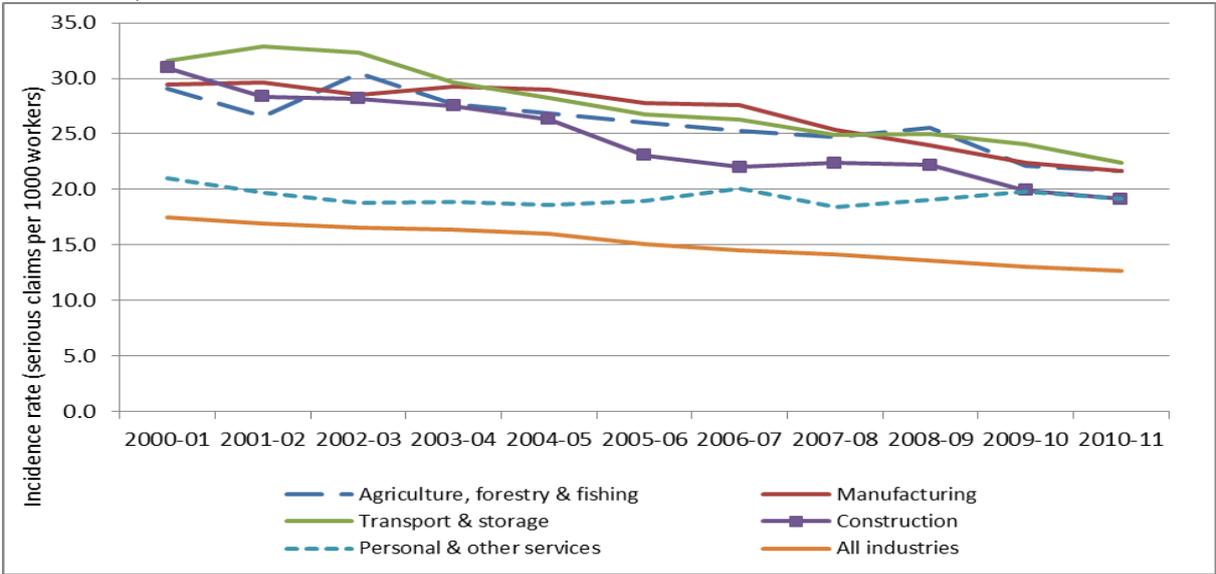
These data are sourced from the National Data Set for Compensation-based Statistics (NDS) and they relate only to those employees covered by workers' compensation schemes. Self-employed people are not usually covered by workers' compensation. In 2011–12, 73 per cent of workers in the Construction industry were covered by workers' compensation schemes. The NDS does not contain any information relating to members of the public/bystanders injured or made ill by someone else's work activity.

The data presented in Table 3 show the number and incidence rate of serious workers' compensation claims by industry from 2000–01 to 2011–12. The 2011–12 data are preliminary (as denoted by the *p*) and are likely to rise as claim determinations are finalised. The percentage change over time has been calculated between 2000–01 and 2010–11. Serious claims include fatalities, permanent incapacities and temporary incapacities that result in at least one working weeks' time lost from work. The data include claims for work-related diseases.

The data presented here for serious claims (including the percentage changes) are different to those used to measure progress under the National OHS Strategy (2002-2012). The National OHS Strategy is measured using NDS data that are restricted to serious injury and

Figure 2 shows the trend in serious claim rates over time by industry for the five industries with the highest rates of serious claims in Australia. The rate for all industries is also presented for reference.

FIGURE 2: Rates of serious claims over time for the industries with the five highest serious claim rates in Australia, 2000-01 to 2010-11



Factors contributing to the downward trend in work-related fatalities and serious workers' compensation claims in the Construction industry

The fall in work-related fatalities and serious injuries in the Construction industry is greater than the fall observed across Australian industries as a whole. This suggests that initiatives undertaken within this industry have had an impact on work health and safety outcomes.

The Construction industry was identified as a priority industry under the National OHS Strategy (2002-2012) and was the target of considerable work at a national and jurisdiction level. Industry and worker groups also embraced the strategy and worked hard to reduce the high rates of death and injury in this industry.

The improvement in fatality and injury rates is likely due to a wide range of factors. It is (and would be from a research and statistical sense) almost impossible to pin down the precise cause(s) of improvement. Factors that are likely to have made a contribution over the last decade include improvements at the workplace level such as the level of consultation with workers and the use of new technology as well as increased attention from regulators, the introduction of new laws, regulations or codes and wider economic and societal factors such as economic downturns or the skill level of workers.

Examples of some specific high level initiatives undertaken relating to the Construction industry over the last decade include the introduction of new national standards for construction work, plant and licensing of people performing high risk work, new national codes of practice for prevention of falls in general construction and in housing, induction for construction work, tilt up and pre-cast concrete and the management and control of asbestos in the workplace. There has also been a campaign by regulators on the prevention of falls in Construction.

A review of the National OHS Strategy can be found at <http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/about/publications/pages/triennial-review-ohs-strategy>. This report includes a summary of activity under the areas requiring national action and the national priorities, including work done in the Construction industry.