















28 September 2023

# Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia

2023



# There are still too many serious injuries, fatalities and illnesses arising from work.

Over the past ten years, there have been more than 1,850 traumatic injury fatalities in Australian workplaces, and over 1,140,000 workers have made a serious workers' compensation claim involving more than one week of working time lost. That's around one in every twelve workers.

All workers have the right to a healthy and safe working environment, however work-related injuries and illnesses can occur in any industry or occupation, and the impacts are felt by us all – workers, their families and the community.

Findings from Safe Work Australia's research, Safer, healthier, wealthier, show that in the absence of work-related injuries and illnesses on average each year Australia's economy would be \$28.6 billion larger, 185,500 additional full-time equivalent jobs would be created, and workers across all occupations and skill levels would benefit from an average wage rise of 1.3%.

The findings from the latest Key Work Health and Safety Statistics 2023 show that:

- Body stressing, Falls, slips and trips, and Being hit by moving objects are the cause of most work-related injuries in Australia,
- Vehicle incidents and Being hit by moving objects continue to account for most fatalities, and
- Work-related mental health conditions are rising, with time off work in these cases more than four times longer than for other injuries.















### Work-related injury fatalities

Safe Work Australia compiles the Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities dataset which provides national statistics on all workers and bystanders fatally injured at work.

This data draws on a range of information sources, including:

- initial reporting of fatalities in the media or on relevant authority websites such as police, road authorities and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau
- notifications to Safe Work Australia from the jurisdictional authorities, and
- the National Coronial Information System which provides confidential access to coroners', police and other investigative reports.

Work-related fatalities resulting from diseases, natural causes and suicides are excluded. Further explanatory notes on the data can be found in the <u>About our datasets</u> page of the interactive data website.

This report provides statistics about people who die from an injury sustained in the course of a work activity (worker fatalities) in Australian territories or territorial seas.

#### 195

Worker fatalities

1.4

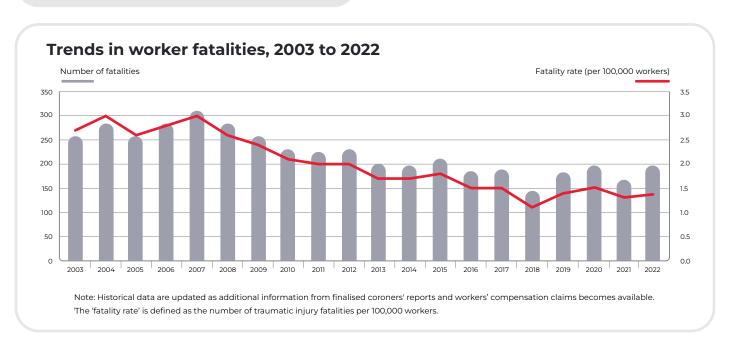
deaths per 100,000 workers<sup>i</sup> •

30%

decrease in fatality rate since 2012

In 2022, there were 195 worker fatalities due to traumatic injuries sustained in the course of a work-related activity. Overall, the number and rate of fatalities has been trending downward since 2007, however it has been relatively static over the recent years.

- Over the past 5 years (2018 to 2022), the average fatality rate was 1.4 fatalities per 100,000 workers and an average of 180 workers died per year.
- There has been an increase in the number and rate of fatalities since the previous year (13% increase from 172 fatalities in 2021; 8% increase from 1.3 fatalities per 100,000 workers in 2021).
- The lowest recorded fatality rate of 1.1 fatalities per 100,000 workers was recorded in 2018.

















#### Work-related fatalities – Demographics

#### Worker Fatalities by Sex, 2022



Fatality rate (per 100,000 workers)

The vast majority of workers killed from work-related activities are men (93%; 181 fatalities in 2022).

Men also have a higher fatality rate than women (2.5 fatalities per 100,000 workers).

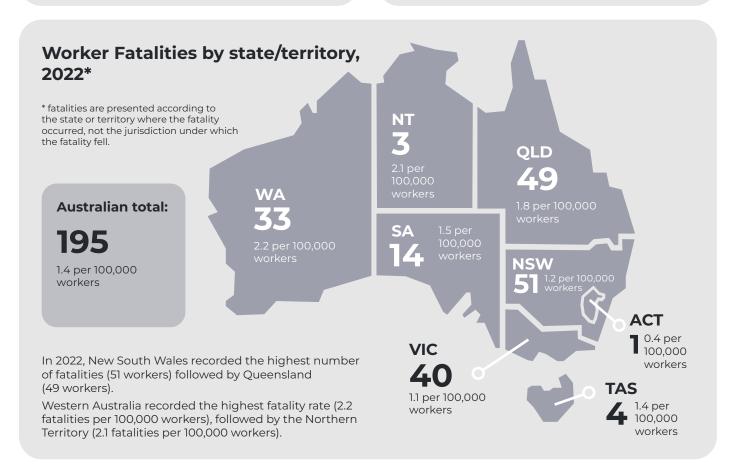
### Worker Fatalities by Age group, 2022

Age Group	Fatalities	Fatality rate (per 100,000 workers)
Under 25	16	0.8
25-34	28	0.9
35-44	30	1.0
45-54	36	1.3
55-64	44	2.2
65 and over	41	6.2

In 2022, workers aged 45 and over accounted for almost two thirds (62%) of all worker fatalities recorded.

Workers aged 65 and over had the highest fatality rate at 6.2 fatalities per 100,000 workers (more than 4 times the overall worker fatality rate of 1.4 fatalities per 100,000 workers).

Younger workers aged under 25 years old had the lowest fatality rate (0.8 fatalities per 100,000 workers), closely followed by those aged 25-34 (0.9 fatalities per 100,000 workers).











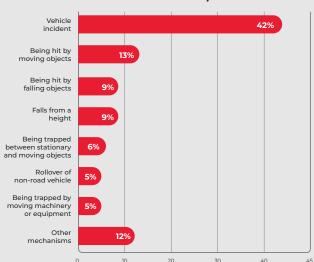






### Work-related fatalities – Mechanism

### Worker Fatalities by most common Mechanism of incident, 2022



The mechanism of incident refers to the overall action, exposure or event that describes the circumstances that resulted in a worker fatality.

Vehicle incidents (81 workers; 42%) and Being hit by moving objects (26 workers; 13%) accounted for more than half (55%) of all worker fatalities in 2022.

Vehicle incident includes incidents where an occupant of a vehicle is killed following a collision with another vehicle or a stationary object. Vehicles include not only road vehicles such as cars and trucks, but also machines such as aircraft, boats, loaders, tractors and quad bikes.

Being hit by moving objects includes fatalities involving workers on foot being hit by vehicles, as well as being hit by other moving equipment or objects.

#### Worker Fatalities by Mechanism, 2022

Mechanism of incident	Fatalities (count)	Fatalities (%)
Vehicle incident	81	42%
Being hit by moving objects	26	13%
Being hit by falling objects	17	9%
Falls from a height	17	9%
Being trapped between stationary and moving objects	11	6%
Rollover of non-road vehicle	10	5%
Being trapped by moving machinery or equipment	10	5%
Other mechanisms	23	12%

#### **Data Spotlight: Vehicles**

Vehicles and work-related fatalities continue to be closely related.

In the case of 72% (141) of worker fatalities in 2022, at least one vehicle was directly involved in the incident. This has slightly increased since 2021, where 68% (117) of worker fatalities involved at least one vehicle.

Of those fatalities, 41% (58) involved at least one truck in 2022. This has decreased since 2021, where 53% (62) of these fatalities involved at least one truck.

There are significantly more worker fatalities resulting from single vehicle incidents than multiple vehicle incidents, with 77% (108) of vehicle-involved worker fatalities stemming from single vehicle incidents.















# Work-related fatalities – Occupation



Machinery Operators and Drivers

8.4

fatalities per 100,000 workers.



Labourers

2.9

fatalities per 100,000 workers.



Managers

1.8

fatalities per 100,000 workers.

#### Worker Fatalities by Occupation, 2022

Occupation	Fatalities (count)	Fatalities (rate)
Machinery operators and drivers	74	8.4
Labourers	34	2.9
Managers	32	1.8
Technicians and trades workers	28	1.5
Professionals	16	0.5
Community and personal service workers	9	0.6
Clerical and administrative workers	2	0.1
Sales workers	0	0

In 2022, Machinery Operators and Drivers accounted for the highest proportion of worker fatalities (38%). They also recorded the highest fatality rate at 8.4 fatalities per 100,000 workers. This is much higher than the other occupations, which recorded fatality rates less than 3 fatalities per 100,000 workers.





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Stay informed – use **Our Data. Your Stories.** – to find and explore WHS data relevant to your industry and workplace. Your research might help prevent serious injuries in your workplace.

data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au













# Work-related fatalities – Industry



Agriculture, forestry and fishing

14.7

fatalities per 100,000 workers.



Transport, postal and warehousing

9.5

fatalities per 100,000 workers.



Electricity, gas, water and waste services

3.0

fatalities per 100,000 workers.

### Worker Fatalities by Industry of employer, 2022

Industry of employer	Fatalities (count)	Fatalities (rate)
Transport, postal and warehousing	67	9.5
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	44	14.7
Construction	27	2.2
Public administration and safety	11	1.2
Manufacturing	10	1.2
Mining	7	2.4
Administrative and support services	6	1.4
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	5	3.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	3	0.2
Other services	3	0.6
Wholesale trade	3	0.8
Accommodation and food services	3	0.3
Health care and social assistance	2	0.1
Education and training	2	0.2
Retail trade	1	0.1
Information media and telecommunications	1	0.5
Arts and recreation services	0	0.0
Financial and insurance services	0	0.0
Rental, hiring and real estate services	0	0.0

In 2022, 71% of worker fatalities occurred in three industries. Transport, postal and warehousing fatalities accounted for 34% (67 fatalities), followed by fatalities in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry (22%; 44 fatalities) and Construction industry (14%; 27 fatalities).

The Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry recorded the highest fatality rate (14.7 fatalities per 100,000 workers), followed by the Transport, postal and warehousing industry (9.5 fatalities per 100,000 workers).

















### Work-related injury and illness

Safe Work Australia compiles national workers' compensation statistics using data obtained from workers' compensation authorities in each state, territory and the Commonwealth government.

These data are collated into the National Data Set for Compensation-based Statistics (NDS), which is Safe Work Australia's primary source of information on work-related injuries and diseases. See <u>About our datasets</u> for more information.

In 2021-22, Australian Bureau of Statistics Work-related injuries survey data showed that 497,300 of the 14.1 million people who had worked during the last 12 months (or 3.5% of the working population) experienced a work-related injury or illness, down from 4.2% in 2017-18 and 6.4% in 2005-06.

The ABS advised caution in analysing the incidence of work-related injuries over the 2021-22 reference period, as the reduced level of economic activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to a lower likelihood of experiencing a work-related injury.

127,800

serious claims (count)

10.3

Incidence rate<sup>ii</sup> (serious claims per 1,000 workers)

6.5

Frequency rate<sup>iii</sup> (serious claims per 1,000,000 hours worked)

8.0 weeks

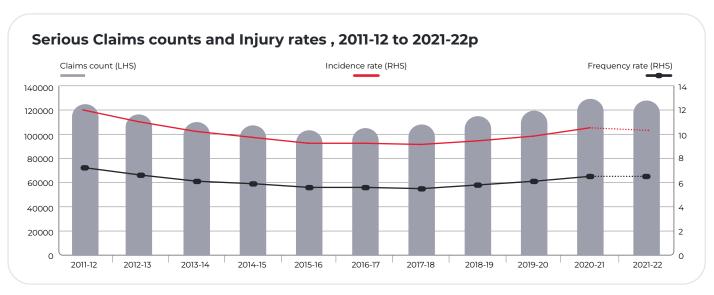
Median time lost

\$15,743

Median compensation paid

These findings are reflected in Safe Work Australia's NDS data. From 2020-21 to 2021-22p, whilst the number of serious claims has fallen slightly, by 1,400 (or 1.1%), there was a large increase in COVID-19 serious claims, up by 9,100 over the year.

Compared with ten years ago (2011-12), the number of serious claims has increased marginally by 3,000, or 2.4%. When accounting for changes in hours worked, the claims frequency rate fell 9.7%, to 6.5 in 2020-21.



#### Note:

Data in this report refers to serious claims (that is, claims that involve one working week of time off work or more). Data for 2021-22 are preliminary (denoted by a 'p') and subject to revision in future years as further claims are finalised.

In September 2023, Safe Work Australia implemented improvements to the estimates of the working population used to calculate injury rates from the National Dataset for Workers' Compensation Statistics (NDS). As a result of these changes, a break in series occurs for work-related injury frequency and incidence rates using the NDS from 2021-22 onwards, reflected as a dotted line. Safe Work Australia advises caution when interpreting time series changes for rates calculated from the NDS spanning the period before and after this change.

There are significant differences in the number of hours worked by different groups of workers and workers at different points in time. The claims frequency rate accounts for these differences and allows more accurate comparisons between different groups of workers and over time.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>ii</sup>The 'claims frequency rate' is defined as the number of serious claims per million hours worked, using estimates of the working population covered under workers' compensation schemes.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm iii}$  The 'claims incidence rate' is defined as the number of serious claims per thousand workers.







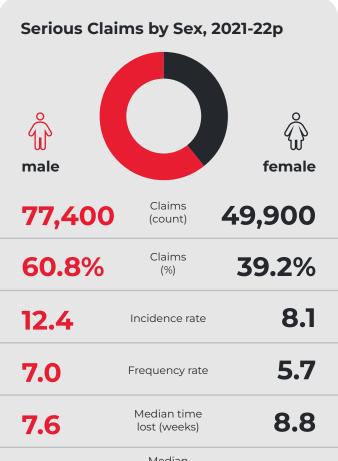








#### Work-related injury and illness -**Demographics**



\$16,476

Median paid (\$)

compensation \$14,604

The majority (60.8%) of serious claims were made by men, with men also experiencing a higher claims frequency rate (7.0) compared with women (5.7).

· In other words, when accounting for the different patterns of hours worked, men are 22.8% more likely to make a serious workers' compensation claim than women.

There are also notable differences in the type of Work-related injury and disease suffered by men and women, as indicated by the compensation paid and time lost associated with serious claims for workers of each sex.

- Claims for women have a higher median time lost (8.8 weeks) than claims for men (7.6 weeks).
- However, claims for men have a higher median compensation paid (\$16,476) than claims for women (\$14,604).
- This is due to the nature of injury and disease experienced, the types of jobs that women and men are more likely to work in, and differences in pay.

#### Serious Claims by Age group, 2021-22p

Age Group	Claims (count)	Frequency rate	Incidence rate
Under 25	16,700	6.8	8.3
25-34	27,300	5.6	9.3
35-44	25,500	5.4	9.1
45-54	29,300	6.9	12.0
55-64	24,500	8.6	14.0
65 and over	4,500	7.5	10.0

Taking into account the hours worked by different groups of workers, the serious claims frequency rate was highest for those aged 55-64 years in 2021-22p (8.6 claims per million hours worked), followed by workers aged 65 and over (7.5).

In 2021-22p, the lowest frequency rate was among workers aged 34-44 years (5.4 claims per million hours worked), followed by those aged 25-34 years (5.6).

Younger workers aged under 25 years old are slightly more likely (6.8 claims per million hours worked) than average to make a serious workers' compensation claim.

Age group with highest claim rate

55-64

8.6 serious claims per million hours worked

Age group with lowest claim rate

35-44

5.4 serious claims per million hours worked







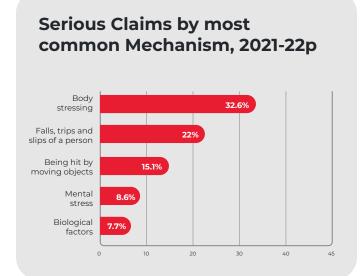








# Work-related injury and illness – Claims by Mechanism



**Body Stressing** 

32.6%

of serious claims

Falls, slips and trips of a person

22.0%

of serious claims

Being hit by moving objects

15.1%

of serious claims

#### Serious Claims by Mechanism and Sex, 2021-22p

	Ma	les	Fema	ales	Tot	tal
Mechanism of incident	Claims (count)	Claims (%)	Claims (count)	Claims (%)	Claims (count)	Claims (%)
Body stressing	25,600	33.1%	15,900	31.9%	41,600	32.6%
Falls, trips and slips of a person	16,200	21.0%	11,900	23.8%	28,100	22.0%
Being hit by moving objects	13,200	17.0%	6,000	12.1%	19,300	15.1%
Mental stress	4,700	6.0%	6,200	12.5%	10,900	8.5%
Biological factors	5,000	6.5%	4,600	9.2%	9,900	7.7%
Hitting objects with a part of the body	6,500	8.4%	2,000	4.0%	8,500	6.6%
Vehicle incidents and other	4,600	5.9%	2,100	4.3%	6,700	5.3%
Heat, electricity and other environmental factors	900	1.2%	600	1.2%	1,600	1.2%
Chemicals and other substances	600	0.8%	400	0.9%	1,100	0.8%
Sound and pressure	100	0.1%	< 100	0.1%	100	0.1%

Men made more than twice as many serious workers' compensation claims for Being hit by moving objects and Vehicle incidents and other as women, and three times as many claims for Hitting objects with a part of the body.

By contrast, serious workers' compensation claims for Mental stress for women were more than twice as high (12.5%) as that for men (6.0%).













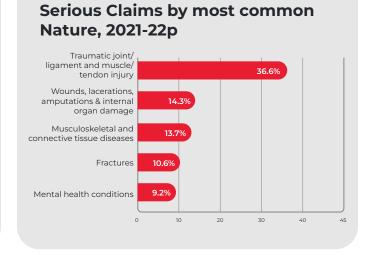


# Work-related injury and illness – Claims by Nature





Diseases and conditions are accounting for an increasing proportion of serious claims over time, with their share increasing from 26.0% to 34.0% over the past 10 years.



Traumatic joint/ligament and muscle/tendon injury

**36.6**%

of serious claims

Wounds, lacerations, amputations and internal organ damage

14.3%

of serious claims

Musculoskeletal and connective tissue diseases

13.7%

of serious claims

#### Serious Claims by Nature and Sex, 2021-22p

	Males		Females		Total	
Nature Major group	Claims (count)	Claims (%)	Claims (count)	Claims (%)	Claims (count)	Claims (%)
Traumatic joint/ligament and muscle/tendon injury	28,400	36.7%	18,300	36.7%	46,800	36.6%
Wounds, lacerations, amputations and internal organ damage	13,600	17.6%	4,600	9.3%	18,300	14.3%
Musculoskeletal and connective tissue diseases	9,900	12.7%	7,600	15.3%	17,500	13.7%
Fractures	8,900	11.5%	4,700	9.3%	13,600	10.6%
Mental health conditions	5,000	6.5%	6,700	13.4%	11,700	9.2%
Infectious and parasitic diseases	4,900	6.4%	4,500	9.0%	9,700	7.6%
Digestive system diseases	1,700	2.2%	100	0.2%	1,800	1.4%
Burns	1,100	1.4%	600	1.2%	1,700	1.4%
Nervous system and sense organ diseases	600	0.8%	500	1.1%	1,100	0.9%
Intracranial injuries	600	0.7%	500	1.0%	1,100	0.8%
Skin and subcutaneous tissue diseases	200	0.3%	200	0.4%	400	0.3%
Respiratory system diseases	100	0.1%	100	0.3%	200	0.2%
Injury to nerves and spinal cord	100	0.1%	<100	0.1%	100	0.1%
Circulatory system diseases	100	0.1%	<100	0.1%	100	0.1%
Neoplasms (cancer)	<100	0.1%	<100	0.0%	100	0.0%
Other claims, injuries, and diseases	2,200	2.8%	1,300	2.7%	3,500	2.7%

















#### Work-related injury and illness – Mental health serious claims

Mental health conditions accounted for 9.2% or 11,700 serious claims in 2021-22p. While this was a slight decline on 2020-21, it remains substantially higher than 10 years ago. Mental health conditions accounted for

#### 1 in 11

serious workers' compensation claims in 2021-22p.

11,700

serious claims (count) 9.2%

serious claims (%)

34.2

Median time lost (weeks)

\$58,615

Median compensation paid (\$)

Over the 10 years to 2021-22p:

The proportion of claims for Mental health conditions has increased from 6.5% in 2011-12 to 9.2% in 2021-22p.

This has been driven by growth in the number of serious claims each year for Mental health conditions of 3,500 claims, or a 43.3%, increase over the period.

 This represents the largest growth in the number of claims each year for a Nature of injury/illness Major group observed over the period. Workplace mental health conditions are one of the costliest forms of workplace injury. They lead to significantly more time off work and higher compensation paid when compared to physical injuries and diseases.

- The median time lost from Mental health condition claims in 2020-21 (34.2 working weeks) was more than four times the median time lost across all claims (8.0).
- The median compensation paid for Mental health condition claims in 2020-21 (\$58,615) was close to four times the median compensation paid across all claims (\$15,743).

















#### Work-related injury and illness – COVID-19 Serious Claims

9,500

serious claims (count)

52.6%

Male share (%)

47.4%

Female share (%)

### Serious Claims by Age group, 2021-22p

Age Group	Share of claims
Under 25	14.2%
25-34	25.4%
35-44	24.4%
45-54	21.4%
55-64	12.5%
65 and over	2.1%

In 2021-22, the reference period for this data, significant COVID-19 outbreak events occurred including the 'Delta' and 'Omicron' waves. Hence, the latest claims data show a significant spike in COVID-19 serious claims as compared to the previous year (up by more than 9,100 claims).

These data should be interpreted with caution. Some jurisdictions established presumptive rights for employees of prescribed occupations who contracted COVID-19. The occupations covered by these arrangements differed across jurisdictions.

- Serious workers' compensation claims due to COVID-19 made up 7.5% of the total number of serious claims during the 2021-22p financial year.
- In 2021-22p, the highest proportion of COVID-19 serious claims was observed in the Public administration and safety industry (25.6%), followed by Health care and social assistance (20.7%) and Education and training (13.8%)

### COVID-19 Serious Claims by Industry, 2021-22p

Division	Claims (count)	Claims (%)
Public administration and safety	2,400	25.6%
Health care and social assistance	2,000	20.7%
Education and training	1,300	13.8%
Retail trade	1,000	11.0%
Transport, postal and warehousing	800	7.9%
Accommodation and food services	700	7.2%
Arts and recreation services	400	3.9%
Construction	400	3.7%
Manufacturing	100	1.5%
Information media and telecommunications	100	1.3%
Wholesale trade	100	0.9%
Professional, scientific and technical services	100	0.6%
Mining	100	0.5%
Other services	< 100	0.4%
Administrative and support services	< 100	0.3%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	< 100	0.2%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	< 100	0.2%
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	< 100	0.1%
Financial and insurance services	< 100	0.1%







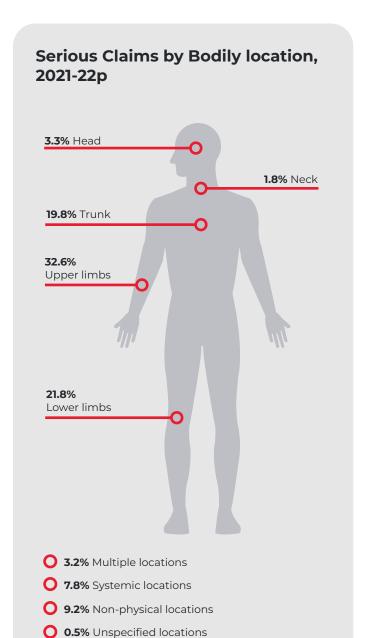








# Work-related injury and illness – Claims by Bodily location



### Serious Claims by Bodily location, 2021-22p

Major group	Claims (count)	Claims (%)
Head	4,200	3.3%
Neck	2,300	1.8%
Trunk	25,300	19.8%
Upper limbs	41,700	32.6%
Lower limbs	27,900	21.8%
Multiple locations	4,100	3.2%
Systemic locations	9,900	7.8%
Non-physical locations	11,700	9.2%
Unspecified locations	600	0.5%







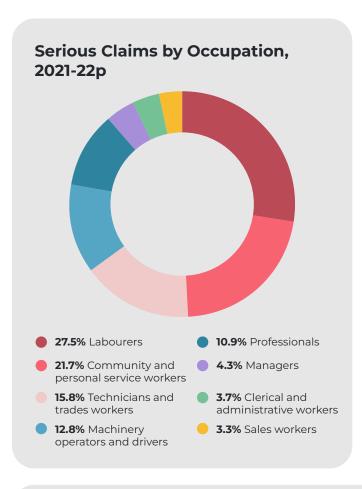








# Work-related injury and illness – Claims by Occupation





Labourers

34,900

serious claims



Community and personal service workers

27,500

serious claims



Technicians and trades workers

20,000

serious claims

**BL** 

Machinery operators and drivers

16,200

serious claims

#### Serious Claims by Occupation 2021-22p

Major group	Claims (count)	Claims (%)	Frequency rate	Incidence rate
Labourers	34,900	27.5%	24.8	33.4
Community and personal service workers	27,500	21.7%	15.6	19.5
Machinery operators and drivers	16,200	12.8%	11.5	21.2
Technicians and trades workers	20,000	15.8%	7.4	13.3
Sales workers	4,200	3.3%	3.1	3.9
Professionals	13,900	10.9%	2.5	4.2
Clerical and administrative workers	4,800	3.7%	1.8	2.7
Managers	5,400	4.3%	1.8	3.5

The Serious claims frequency rate was highest for persons employed as Labourers (24.8 claims per million hours worked), followed by Community and personal service workers (15.6), Machinery operators and drivers (11.5), and Technicians and trades workers (7.4). Frequency rates in the remaining four occupational groups were markedly lower by comparison, all with less than four serious claims per million hours worked.

The occupations which accounted for the most serious claims in 2021-22p were Labourers (34,900), Community and personal service workers (27,500), Technicians and trades workers (20,000), and Machinery operators and drivers (16,200).

 Together these four occupational groups accounted for over three quarters (77.7%) of serious claims in 2021-22p, despite representing only 38.2% of workers.













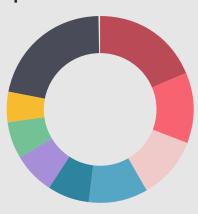
Claims Claims Fregency Incidence





# Work-related injury and illness – Claims by Industry

### Serious Claims by Industry, 2021-22p



- **18.9%** Health care and social assistance
- **12.2%** Construction
- **10.8%** Manufacturing
- 10.1% Public admin and safety
- **21.6%** All other industries

The Serious claims frequency rate was highest for persons employed in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry (10.9 serious claims per million hours worked), followed by Construction (9.8), and Public administration and safety (9.8).

 These three industries accounted for 25.3% of serious claims in 2021-22p despite representing only 14.6% of workers.



Health care and social assistance

24,100

serious claims



Construction

7.4% Transport, postal

and warehousing

**7.2%** Retail trade

6.4% Education and training5.4% Accommodation

and food services

15,600

serious claims



Manufacturing

13,800

serious claims



Public administration and safety

12,800

serious claims

#### Serious Claims by Industry 2021-22p

	Division	Claims (count)	Claims (%)	Freqency II	ncidence rate
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3,900	3.0%	10.9	20.8
	Construction	15,600	12.2%	9.8	18.6
	Public administration and safety	12,800	10.1%	9.8	16.5
	Arts and recreation services	2,500	2.0%	9.7	12.3
	Transport, postal and warehousing	9,500	7.4%	9.3	16.5
	Manufacturing	13,800	10.8%	9.3	16.9
	Health care and social assistance	24,100	18.9%	8.8	12.5
	Wholesale trade	4,700	3.7%	7.8	14.0
	Accommodation and food services	6,900	5.4%	6.9	7.9
	Mining	2,700	2.2%	6.5	13.7
	Retail trade	9,200	7.2%	5.4	7.2
	Electricity, gas, water and waste services	1,300	1.0%	5.3	10.1
	Education and training	8,100	6.4%	4.9	7.4
	Other services	3,300	2.6%	4.9	7.9
	Administrative and support services	5,000	3.9%	3.9	6.5
	Rental, hiring and real estate services	1,200	0.9%	3.3	5.9
	Information media and tele- communications	600	0.5%	1.9	3.3
	Professional, scientific and technical services	2,000	1.5%	1.0	1.8
	Financial and insurance services	500	0.4%	0.6	1.0

The industries which accounted for the most serious claims in 2021-22p were Health care and social assistance (24,100), Construction (15,600), Manufacturing (13,800), Public administration and safety (12,800), and Transport, postal and warehousing (9,500).















#### **Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup>Claims counts in detailed tables may not sum to overall reported total as some records have 'other' or missing values for descriptive variables.
- "'Mental health claims' are defined as claims codded to the Nature of injury/diseases Major group 'Mental health conditions'.
- "COVID-19 claims are defined as claims where the Nature of injury/disease was coded as 855 'Novel coronavirus (COVID-19)'.