

HSE publishes annual work-related ill-health, injury and enforcement statistics for 2020/21

Today, Thursday 16 December 2021, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published statistics that cover work-related ill health, non-fatal workplace injuries and enforcement action taken by HSE, in the 2020/21 period.

- 1.7 million workers suffering from a work-related illness, around half of which were stress, depression or anxiety

Two new estimates have been developed to measure the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic;

- 93,000 workers self-reported catching COVID-19 at work; 52,000 of these worked in the human health and social work sector
- 645,000 workers reported that their work-related illness was caused or made worse by the coronavirus pandemic; 70 per cent of these were cases of stress, depression or anxiety.

The pandemic has affected certain data collection and impacted on assessment of trends, therefore there is no new data on working days lost and the associated economic cost for 2021.

It is not known whether some of the people reporting a coronavirus-related ill health condition would have developed and reported an ill health condition if pre-pandemic working practices had continued. It is therefore not possible to assess the scale of work-related ill health independent of the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

HSE's Chief Executive, Sarah Albon, commented:

"These annual statistics are important to give us a clear picture of the health and safety risks faced by workers in the Great Britain and help to inform the measures HSE, employers, policy-makers and workers themselves need to take to ensure everyone can go home from work safe and well.

"The 12-month period in question coincides with the first national lockdown and the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic. There have been significant impacts on the labour market, which is reflected in our reporting.

"We worked differently too in responding to the challenges posed by the pandemic, advising across Government, helping to shape guidance for businesses and implementing our Covid Spot Check programme to ensure workplaces were kept as safe as possible."

Of the 1.7 million workers who suffered from a work-related illness (new or long standing) in 2020/21, 800,000 were stress, depression or anxiety, and 28% were musculoskeletal disorders (500,000 workers).

Sarah Albon continued:

“The latest figures on work-related stress reinforce our previous concerns around the scale of this issue in workplaces. Just last month we announced our new Working Minds campaign, in partnership with a number of key organisations, to help employers make recognising the signs of work-related stress routine.

“HSE continues to act as a proportionate and enabling regulator taking the most appropriate actions to achieve the best and quickest result. However, where employers fall short of expected standards, HSE will not hesitate to hold those responsible to account.”

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. <http://www.hse.gov.uk>.
2. HSE’s statistics on work-related ill health, non-fatal injuries and enforcement are available here [Health and safety statistics \(hse.gov.uk\)](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics).
3. Because of the discontinuity presented by furlough and other impacts on data collection, no statistics on working days lost and the associated economic costs are included in this year’s statistics. HSE is publishing a technical note which explains this impact and why it is felt better to omit these statistics rather than present an inaccurate picture <https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/coronavirus/covid-19.pdf>.
4. HSE is adopting two new measures to understand the contribution of the coronavirus pandemic to work-related ill health. These will estimate:
 5. COVID-19 due to exposure to coronavirus at work as reported by workers
 6. Other work-related illness caused or made worse by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, as reported by workers, for example, changes in working conditions caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

This data is gathered from self-reporting by workers. Reports of fatalities from COVID-19 under RIDDOR are not covered in these statistics but are published monthly

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/coronavirus/management-information.htm>. To note, any disparity between self-reports and formal reports is broadly consistent with historic patterns of reporting.

5. A total of 185 cases were prosecuted in 2020/21 by HSE or, in Scotland, referred to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service for prosecution, and resulted in a conviction, down from 325 the previous year. This could be attributed to disruption in the court system during this period. The amount taken in fines fell to £26.9 million in 2020/21, although the average fine per case issued was higher compared to

2019/20. Due to COVID-19 the number of enforcement notices issued by Local Authorities is not available for 2020/21. However, HSE issued 2,929 enforcement notices in 2020/21, a decrease of 58% from the previous year.

6. Further information on annual fatal injury statistics released in July can be found at [Statistics – Work-related fatal injuries in Great Britain \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/fatal-injuries).