

HSE releases annual workplace fatality figures for 2020/21

Provisional data released today shows that a total of 142 workers were killed at work in Great Britain in 2020/21, an increase of 29 from the previous year, though the number of deaths in 2019/20 (113) was low compared to other recent years.

In statistical terms the number of fatalities has remained broadly level in recent years – the average annual number of workers killed at work over the five years 2016/17-2020/21 is 136.

Over the past 20 years there has been a long-term reduction in the number of workplace fatalities, demonstrating that Great Britain is one of the safest places to work in the world.

[The figures released by the Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) relate to workplace incidents. They do not include deaths arising from occupational exposure to disease, including Covid-19.

HSE's Chief Executive, Sarah Albon, said: "Whilst the working world in which we now live has created new health challenges for workers and for those who have a duty towards them, safety must also remain a priority. Whilst the picture has improved considerably over the longer term and Great Britain is one of the safest places to work in the world, every loss of life is a tragedy, we are committed to ensuring that workplaces are as safe as they can be and that employers are held to account and take their obligations seriously."

The three most common causes of fatal injuries continue to be workers falling from height (35), being struck by a moving vehicle (25) and being struck by a moving object (17), accounting for more than half of fatalities in 2020/21.

These figures also continue to highlight the risks to older workers with around 30 per cent of fatal injuries in 2020/21 involving workers aged 60 or over, even though such workers only make up around 11 per cent of the workforce.

In addition, members of the public continue to be killed in connection with work-related incidents. In 2020/21, 60 members of the public were killed as a result of a work-related incident.

The figures for Mesothelioma, which is a cancer contracted through past exposure to asbestos and is one of the few work-related diseases where deaths can be counted directly, show 2,369 people died in Great Britain in 2019. This is seven per cent lower than the average of 2,540 deaths over the previous seven years.

Current mesothelioma deaths largely reflect occupational asbestos exposures that occurred before the 1980s. The figure for 2019 is consistent with

projections that a reduction in total annual deaths would start to become apparent at this point. However, it is still not certain how quickly annual deaths will decline.

A fuller assessment of work-related ill-health and injuries, drawing on HSE's full range of data sources, will be provided as part of the annual Health and Safety Statistics release on 16 December 2021.

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.
2. The figures released today of both fatal injuries and mesothelioma deaths make up part of a long running series enabling both short and long-term comparisons of change. Putting the number of fatal injuries in context of previous years' data is difficult given the disruption to the economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the government response, which have had a significant effect on the UK labour market. Many businesses ceased operating or changed their working practices, while government interventions have allowed for the furloughing of workers. The number of workplace deaths in 2020/21 should be seen in the context of these challenges in the labour market.
3. The fatal injury statistics are based on deaths from work-related incidents. They do not include deaths from occupational diseases or diseases arising from certain occupational exposures (including COVID-19). RIDDOR reports involving Covid fatalities are available [here](#). The number of COVID-19 death reports are not directly comparable with the number of fatal injuries published today.
4. Agriculture, forestry and fishing continues to account for a large share of the annual worker fatality count – 34 in 2020/21, up from the record low of 21 seen in 2019/20. It has the highest rate of fatal injury of all the main industry sectors, with the annual average rate over the last five years around 20 times as high as the all industry rate.
5. The waste and recycling sector, a relatively small sector in terms of employment, accounted for three worker deaths in 2020/21. While this is the lowest number of deaths in this sector in each of the last five years, numbers are small and subject to year-on-year fluctuation. This sector has one of the highest rates of fatal injury to workers (around 17 times as high as the five-year-average all industry rate).
6. The construction sector accounted for the largest share of fatal injuries to workers in 2020/21 – 39. The annual average rate of fatal injury over the last five years in construction is around four times as high as the average across all industries, but considerably less than the rate in both agriculture; and waste and recycling.
7. Work-related fatal injuries: [Fatal injuries in Great Britain \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
8. Mesothelioma: [Mesothelioma statistics for Great Britain, 2020 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
9. Latest HSE press releases: Latest press releases – [HSE Media Centre](#)

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