

Analysis of Work-related Injury and Illness 2001 - 2014

Health Sector

A plain
English guide



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Sectoral Analysis No. 1: Health Sector
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About this report

This report is a summary of the longer document named in the title above. It focuses on the **Health** sector findings of earlier reports that examined work-related injury and illness across the economy as a whole.

All injuries and illnesses reported by workers are included regardless of whether or not they were absent from work, as many people continue to work while sick or injured.

Why is this report necessary?

The rate of work-related injury and illness per 1,000 workers in this sector fluctuated over the period. There were increases during the period 2003 to 2006, followed by a fall in rates from 2006 to 2010. Rates began to rise again in 2011, 2012 and 2013, especially for illness.

It is important, therefore, to examine and analyse these trends and patterns in the sector with a view to improving worker health and wellbeing.

How was this report completed, and what research information does it cover?

We used information from the Central Statistics Office's (CSO) Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) to inform this report. Specifically, we used information gathered in the annual special module on work-related accidents and illnesses. The module is restricted to those who are employed at the time of the survey, or who are not currently employed but had worked during the 12-month reference period.

For example, in 2015, in the case of injuries, respondents were asked:

'How many, if any, injuries did you incur at work (excluding commuting) during the period January 2014 to December 2014?'

For illnesses, the following question was asked:

'How many, if any, illnesses or disabilities have you experienced during the 12 months January 2014 to December 2014, that you believe were caused or made worse by your work?'

Respondents were also asked how many days they had taken off work as a result of these injuries or illnesses.

The QNHS is carried out in private households and the responses are unconnected to any workplace reporting.

Using the survey information, we analysed it and applied it to the sector under the following headings:

- Worker and job characteristics and risk of injury
- Work-related illness in the health sector
- Days lost due to illness and injury
- Inspections

The findings for each section are presented below.

Worker and job characteristics and risk of injury

In this section, we examined the relationship between the risks of injury among health workers and a range of factors such as personal and job characteristics – for example, gender, age, nationality, job composition and so on.

The significant findings were:

- Workers aged under 25 years have the highest injury risk (3.9%), a risk significantly higher than that for those aged between 55 and 64 years (2.0%).
- Contract type is significant – self employed professionals have a lower injury rate (1.5%) than employees (2.7%).
- Those working fewer than 30 hours a week had the highest injury risk (3.7%), which is significantly higher than the risk for those working more than 40 hours per week (2.2%).
- The risk of injury for workers with less than six months' experience in the job is more than three times greater than for workers who have five or more years' experience.

Work-related illness in the health sector

In this section, we examined the association between illness and time period (the boom years 2001 – 2007; recession years 2008 – 2011; and recovery years 2012 – 2014), together with the characteristics of those working in the health sector and their job structure.

Over the period 2002 to 2014, the main illness experienced by workers in the health sector was due to musculoskeletal disorders, at 46%, a similar level experienced by workers across all sectors, at 47%. Stress, anxiety and depression were also more prevalent among health workers, at 22%, compared to 16% overall.

The significant findings were:

- The main illness experienced by workers in the health sector was due to musculoskeletal disorders, at 46%.
- Stress, anxiety and depression were also more prevalent among health workers at a rate of 22%, compared to 16% across all other sectors combined.
- The rate of work-related illness was significantly higher in the boom period (4.0%) compared to the recession period (2.8%).
- Those working shifts or night hours had a significantly higher risk of illness at 4.2%, compared to 2.9% for those with normal working days.
- Self-employed workers had a lower risk of illness (2.4%) than employees (3.5%).
- Those working fewer than 30 hours a week had a significantly greater risk of illness (6%) than those working more than 30 hours (30 – 39 hours was 3.6%; 40 – 49 hours was 3.3%; 50+ hours was 2.1%).
- The risk of illness for workers with less than six months' experience of the job is almost three times greater than for workers who have five or more years' experience.

Days lost due to illness and injury

In this section, we examined the information in terms of two timeframes – the boom years of 2001 – 2007 and the recession and recovery years of 2008 – 2014. The main findings are as follows:

- The annual number of days lost due to injury in the health sector rose by almost 50% in the recession and recovery years, making it the sector with the highest rate during that period. This is up from fourth place in the boom years.

- The number of days lost to illness was also up in the recession and recovery years. Again, this sector had the highest rate for that period. This is up from third place in the boom years.

Inspections

In this section, we examined the impact of health and safety inspections in relation to the rates of injury and illness. The main conclusions were as follows:

- The inspection rate in this sector is low compared to the rates in other sectors.
- The inspection rate peaked in 2010 with two inspections per 1,000 health sector workers.
- Higher inspection rates are associated with reduced rates of illness, but not injury.

Where can I get more information?

You can get the full version of this document on the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) website www.esri.ie

Also, you can download the following documents:

Trends and patterns in occupational health and safety in Ireland. (2015)

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders and stress, anxiety and depression in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS 2002–2013.

These are ESRI publications and are available on their website at www.esri.ie/publications/

You can also access plain English summaries of these publications on the Health and Safety Authority's website at: www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications

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