

Partnership on Health And Safety in Scotland

Health and Safety statistics update for Scotland (agenda item 7)

Issue:

1. To update members on the latest published information on health and safety statistics for in Scotland.

Background:

2. The **2005/06p fatal injury** statistics for GB, Scotland, Wales, England and English Regions were published on 17th August 2006.

3. The detail is available via HSE's website:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/index.htm>. Headline figures for Scotland are:

- Fatal injuries to all workers (employees and the self-employed) decreased to 32 from 37 the previous year; with the rate falling from 1.4 to 1.3 per 100,000 workers
- The number of employee fatalities fell from 33 to 23 and the equivalent rate from 1.4 to 1.0
- Of employee fatalities, 8 were in construction, 7 in agriculture, 6 in manufacturing and 10 in the services sector
- 14 members of the public were fatally injured – mainly in the care homes sector

4. Although the figures are slightly better than last year, it has to be remembered that for Scotland, Wales and the English regions the figures are quite small and therefore subject to considerable fluctuation year on year.

5. It is accepted that work to address the higher rates of fatality in Scotland (and to a lesser extent Wales) compared to England, and therefore GB as a whole, need to be based on an analysis of the underlying reasons. There is no evidence to suggest, for example, that Scottish workers, individually, are at greater risk, nor that Scotland's workplaces are inherently more dangerous.

6. As mentioned, the number of fatal injuries in Scotland fluctuates from year to year. For example, the figure in 2004/05 was unusually high, at 36 (and included 9 fatalities in a single incident in a plastics factory), whereas in 2003/04 it had been unusually low, at 15.

7. Over the 3 years to 2004/05, the number of fatal injuries rose in Scotland while it fell in Great Britain as a whole. However, looking at a longer time period and averaging out the effects of individual years' figures, the numbers have fallen in both Scotland and GB. This is illustrated by:

Fatal injuries to employees (excluding Railways and Offshore)

(3-year averages)	Scotland	GB
1996/97-98/99	27	197
2002/03-04/05	23	164
% change	-15%	-17%

8. In addition, Scotland's generally higher rates of fatal and major injuries are shown by research to be almost fully explained by the different mix of industries, occupations and other workforce characteristics between the countries and regions of GB. Separate research has looked at the construction industry, where many injuries occur, and found that higher rates in Scotland reflect the differing nature of construction employment here, with a higher share of manual work.

9. The higher rates seen in Scotland for fatal and major injuries are not observed for some other aspects of occupational health and safety. Looking at over-3-day injuries (not classified as 'major' but still leading to absence from work for 4 or more days), and also self-reported ill health, the Scottish rates have generally been lower than those for GB as a whole.

10. By way of background, links to the key research articles relating to the so-called 'Scottish Anomaly', along with brief summaries of their relevant findings can be found at Annex 1.

11. Also recently published, is a more detailed analysis of the **Self-reported work-related illness in 2004/05**: results from the Labour Force Survey. The headline results were published last year. The publication provides quite a bit of new comparative data on self-reported rates of various types of ill health. The lower rates of self-reported ill health overall in Scotland in recent years (mentioned above) were similar to GB in 2004/05.

12. One finding worth mentioning is that in Scotland the estimated prevalence of self-reported stress, depression or anxiety (caused or made worse by work) was statistically significantly higher in 2004/05 than previous years. For Wales and the English regions the prevalence rate does not seem to have increased.

13. More detail can be found via:
www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/ohsb0506.htm

Action:

14. The committee is invited to note and comment on this update.

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The so-called 'Scottish Anomaly'

An analysis of temporal and national Variations in reported workplace injury rates (Institute for Employment Research, 2000):

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/archive/ier.pdf>

most (94%) of country/regional variation reflects economic cycle and structural differences;
in Scotland, the rate is boosted by industrial and occupational structure but lowered by its (relatively high) educational level.

Trends and context to rates of workplace injury (Institute for Employment Research, 2005):

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr386.htm>

country/regional variation is explained by personal, establishment and job-related characteristics (especially occupation);
for both Strathclyde and the rest of Scotland, these effects raise the relative risk by around 5-10%.

An analysis of the significant causes of fatal and major injuries in construction in Scotland (BOMEL/GCU/IER, 2006):

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr443.htm>

the most important factor is occupational mix within the construction sector (Scotland being more 'manual' than the rest of GB);
decomposition of the Scotland/GB difference suggests that most (85%) is due to the concentration of construction employment in high-risk occupations.