

Accident and Ill-Health Statistics in the UK
2014/2015

Expert Comments provided by Zaheer Osman,
Senior Ergonomist



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- Annually 1.2 million people suffer from work related ill health in the UK that they thought was caused or made worse by work
- 2014/2015 28.2 million working days lost:
 - 23.3 million due to work related ill health (accounts for 83%)
 - 4.1 million due to work place injury (accounts for 17%)

Expert comment: General safety risks are usually more tangible to enable efficient risk management strategies (e.g. a dangerous machine, this can have safety mechanisms put in place to eliminate the risk quite easily). As a country we are good at dealing with work place injuries, with only 17% of working days being lost to the 'injury' category. Ill-health on the other hand is much more difficult to deal with as it is not usually an 'immediate' and 'clear' risk. Ill-health can occur over a period of time and can be multifactorial in nature; this is where the majority of days (83%) are lost in the UK (e.g. back problems, upper limb problems, stress, depression and anxiety).

- Stress, depression and anxiety (Stress) - 9.5 million working days lost (23 days per case)
- Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) – 9.9 million working days lost (17 days per case)

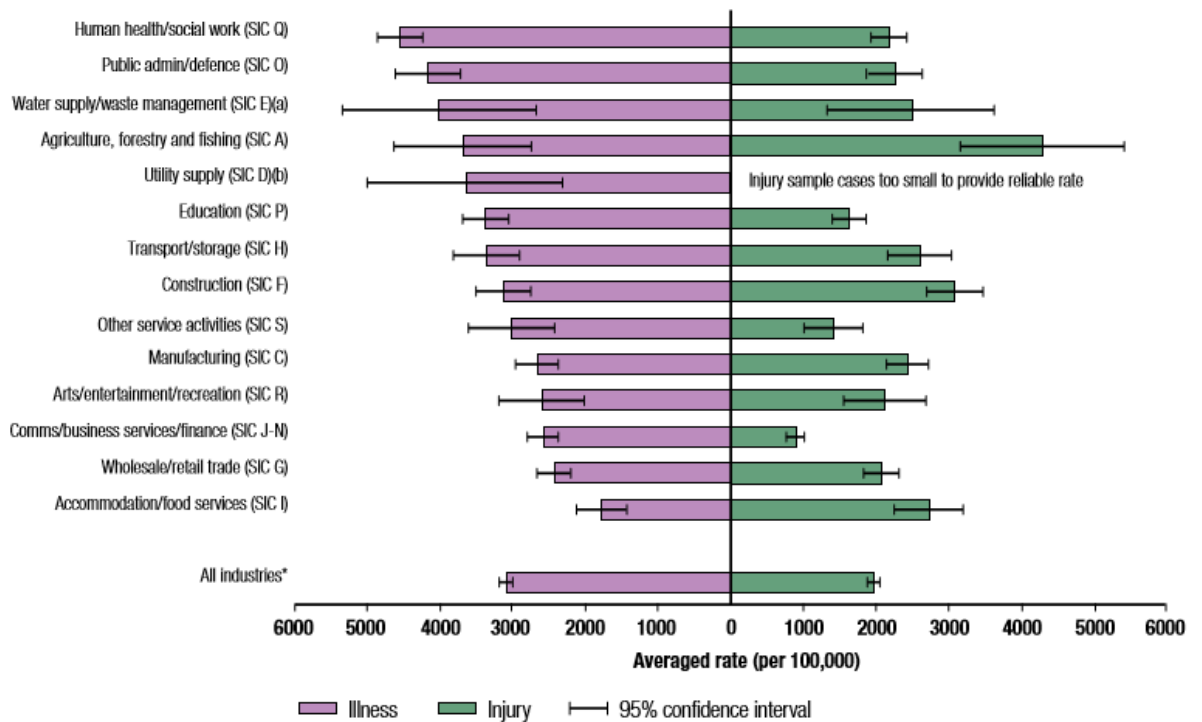
Expert comment: Stress and musculoskeletal disorders (back problems, upper limb problems etc.) are therefore the largest contributors to the number of working days lost in the UK. More working days per case were lost due to stress, depression, and anxiety compared to MSDs; but MSDs accounted for the most common type of work related illness.

The average annual absence cost per employee is £554 (CIPD Absence Management Report 2015). "People in the UK have the longest working hours in the EU. And they are the second highest in the developing world after the US. And, when you consider that American workers get an average of 10 days holiday per year [public holidays in addition to annual leave], this means we're actually working longer hours each week than they are." (Cooper 2015)

- Work place injuries and ill-health cost society 14.3 billion per year (in 2013/2014)
£9.4 billion from ill health and £4.9 billion from injury

Expert comment: The above figures do not take into account the cost of presenteeism. Presenteeism can be defined as the reduced productivity at work due to ill health problems or other events that distract one from full productivity. Research has shown that presenteeism can cost between 2 – 7.5 times as much as the cost of absenteeism and more recent studies show this can be even greater.

Estimated rates of total cases of self-reported work-related illness and non-fatal injury, by industry, for people working in the last 12 months, three-year average#



Source: Health and Safety Executive (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/hssh1415.pdf>) results of the Labour Force Survey.

Expert Comment: Ill health rates are significantly higher for public admin/defence and human/health and social work industry sectors. This demonstrates the fact that people can be working in industry sectors that are perceived to be relatively safe from an injury perspective but ill-health risks are significant.

In conclusion ill-health risks need to be taken seriously as statistics show that they are having the greatest impact on the well-being of UK employees. Investment to assess and reduce the prevalence of, musculoskeletal disorders, stress, depression and anxiety is justified and is sure to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of employees. Absenteeism and presenteeism must be understood by organisations to ensure they understand the risks to their employees and are able to take steps to reduce those risks.

References:

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