

# Health and Safety statistics in the United Kingdom, 2019

## Comparison with the European Union

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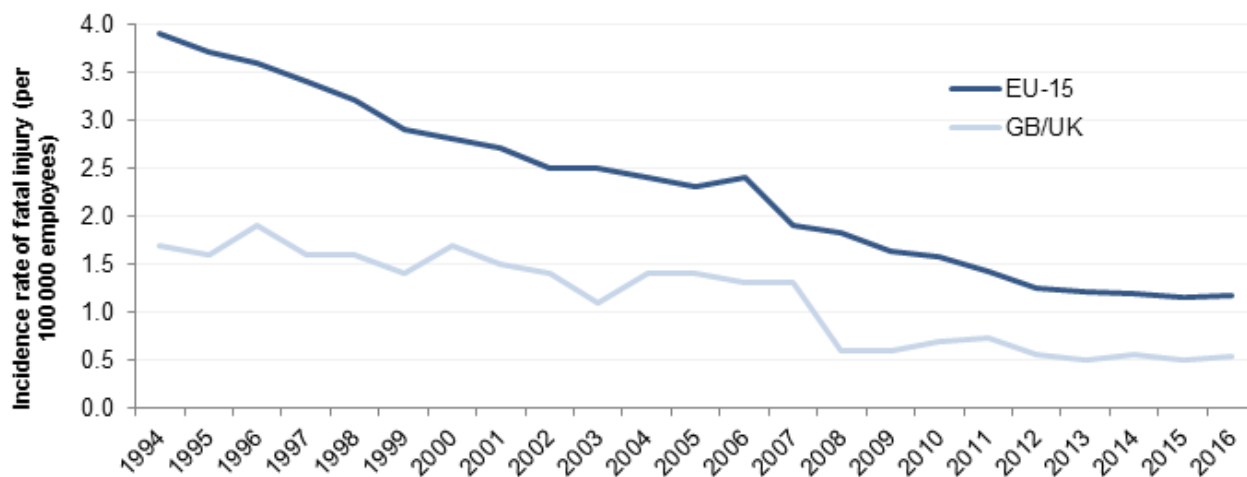
# Summary

This document can be found at: [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/european/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/european/).

- Standardised rates of fatal injury across the EU-15 and GB/UK show a downward trend over the period 1994-2016. The EU-15 comprises Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK (up to 2010 fatal injury data provided for the UK covered Great Britain only) (Eurostat, ESAW, 2016).
- The UK consistently has one of the lowest rates of fatal injury across the EU. In 2016 the standardised rate was 0.53 per 100,000 employees\*, which compares favourably with other large economies such as France (3.32 per 100,000 employees), Germany (0.63 per 100,000 employees), Italy (0.91 per 100,000 employees) and Spain (1.53 per 100,000 employees) (Eurostat, ESAW, 2016).
- In 2013, 1.4% of UK workers reported an injury occurring at work that resulted in sick leave. Compared to other large economies, this was lower than Spain (1.8%), Italy (1.8%) and France (3.1%) and higher than Poland (0.7%) (Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013).
- In 2013, 1.9% of UK workers reported taking time off work due to one or more work-related health problems. The UK rate is similar to that of Italy (1.9%) and lower than many other European countries, including Spain (2.8%), Germany (3.8%) France (5.4%) and Poland (7.7%) (Eurostat, EU LFS, 2013).
- European surveys reveal that the majority of UK workers are confident that their job does not put their health or safety at risk. Additionally, UK businesses are more likely to have a health and safety policy, and to follow this up with formal risk assessment, compared to other EU countries.

\*The overall GB rate of fatal injuries published by HSE for 2016/17 was 0.37 per 100,000 employees; the standardised rate published by Eurostat accounts for variation in industry composition across EU countries.

**Figure 1 – Standardised incidence rates (per 100,000 employees) of fatal injuries at work in GB/UK and the EU, 1994-2016 (Eurostat, ESAW, 2016)**



## Notes:

From 2008, the rate of fatal injuries was calculated using updated industry data so the series differs slightly from this point on.

Data for UK/GB: for the years 1999-2010 rates are based on GB data only, for 2011 onwards rates are based on UK data (including Northern Ireland).

# Background

The information in this document relates to health and safety statistics released in 2019, corresponding to the latest available data for the year shown. The data below come from a variety of sources and they relate to the latest available time periods as indicated.

Health and safety systems differ across Europe in recording, reporting and enforcement. The European statistical office (Eurostat) publishes data in as standardised a form as possible. Data available on Eurostat shows that UKs historical performance is favourable compared to other EU countries, with relatively low rates of work-related fatalities, injuries and ill health.

The data from 2012 onwards include injuries for Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland, forming rates for the United Kingdom (UK), whereas data up until 2011 are based on GB data only.

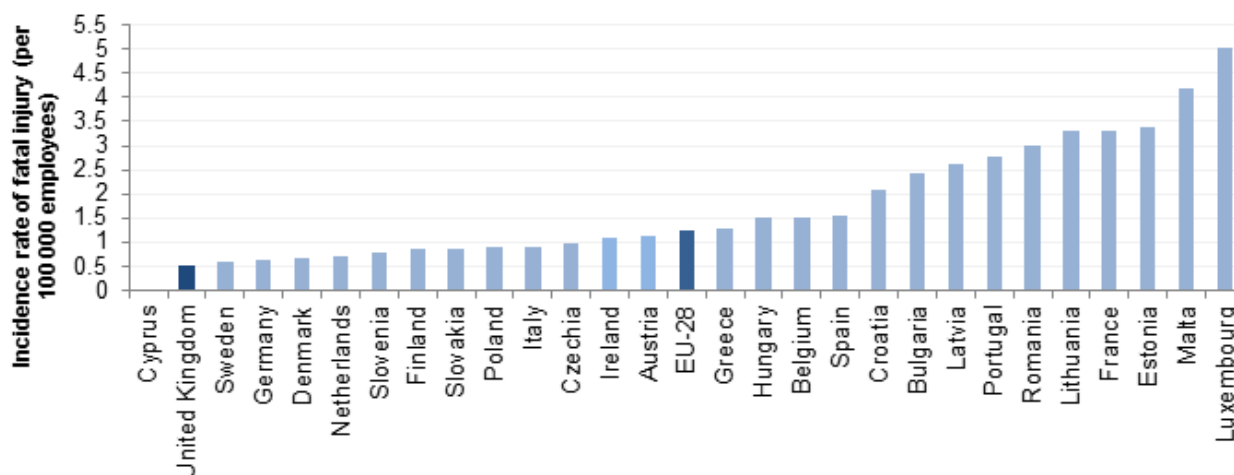
The EU-15 consists of the European nations that made up the Union as of April 2004. For statistical purposes we considered these nations the closest in comparison to the UK in terms of industries within the workforce. The EU-28 is the current number of members of the union as of July 2013. When Eurostat perform studies such as the LFS they work with this current composite.

## Injuries at work in the EU

### Fatal injuries at work

- The 2016 UK standardised rate of 0.53 per 100,000 employees<sup>1</sup> is lower than that of many EU member states, including other large economies such as France (3.32 per 100,000 employees), Germany (0.63 per 100,000 employees), Italy (0.91 per 100,000 employees) and Spain (1.53 per 100,000 employees).
- Similarly, the UK three-year average rate for 2013-2015 (0.52 per 100,000 employees) was also the lowest of all EU member states. (For more details see [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/european/table1.xlsx](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/european/table1.xlsx)).
- Standardised<sup>1</sup> rates are based on fatalities occurring across 12 sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and construction (see Appendix for further details on the standardisation process).
- Work-related road traffic accidents are excluded from these rates, as some member states like the UK exclude coverage. Hence the transport sector more generally is also excluded by Eurostat. However when reviewing rates for individual countries, it should be kept in mind that removal of road traffic accidents may not always be complete.

**Figure 2 - Standardised incidence rates (per 100,000 employees) of fatal injury at work for 2016, excluding road traffic accidents and accidents on board transport in the course of work (Eurostat, ESAW, 2016)**



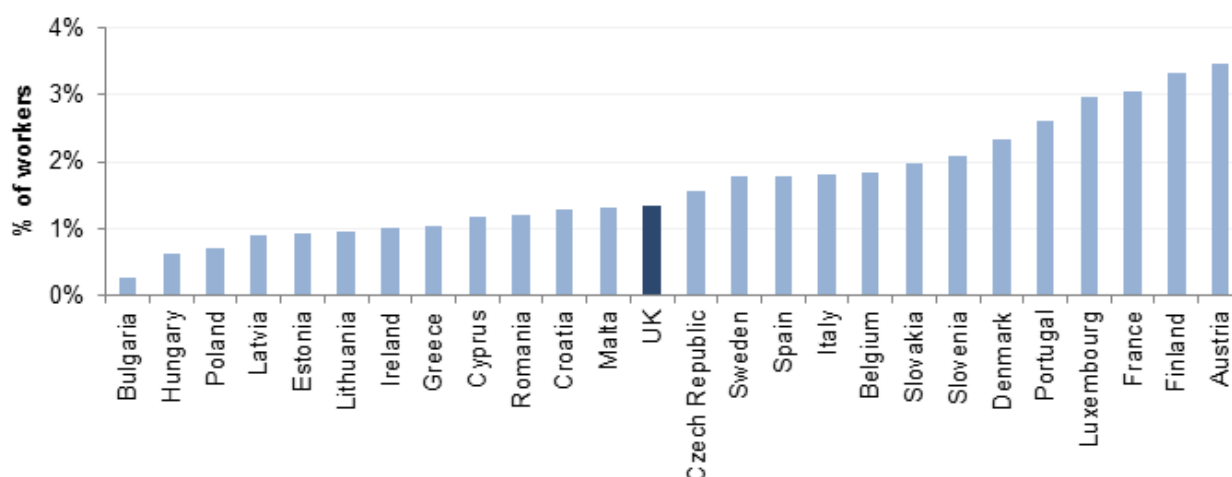
<sup>1</sup> The overall GB rate of fatal injuries published by HSE for 2016/17 was 0.37 per 100,000 employees; the standardised rate published by Eurostat accounts for variation in industry composition across EU countries. See appendix for further details on the standardisation process.

## Self-reported work-related injuries

Figure 3 demonstrates the proportion of workers in the EU that have taken time off work due to a work-related injury<sup>2</sup>.

- 1.4% of UK workers report taking time off work due to a work-related injury. Compared to other large economies, the UK rate is lower than Spain (1.8%), Italy (1.8%) and France (3.1%), and higher than Poland (0.7%). This data is taken from the 2013 Labour Force Survey (LFS), which gives the most comparable data on work-related injuries across the EU. These injuries may not have been officially reported because they are based on workers own definitions of an injury at work.

**Figure 3 – Percentage of workers who had an injury resulting in sick leave over the last 12 months (LFS, 2013)**

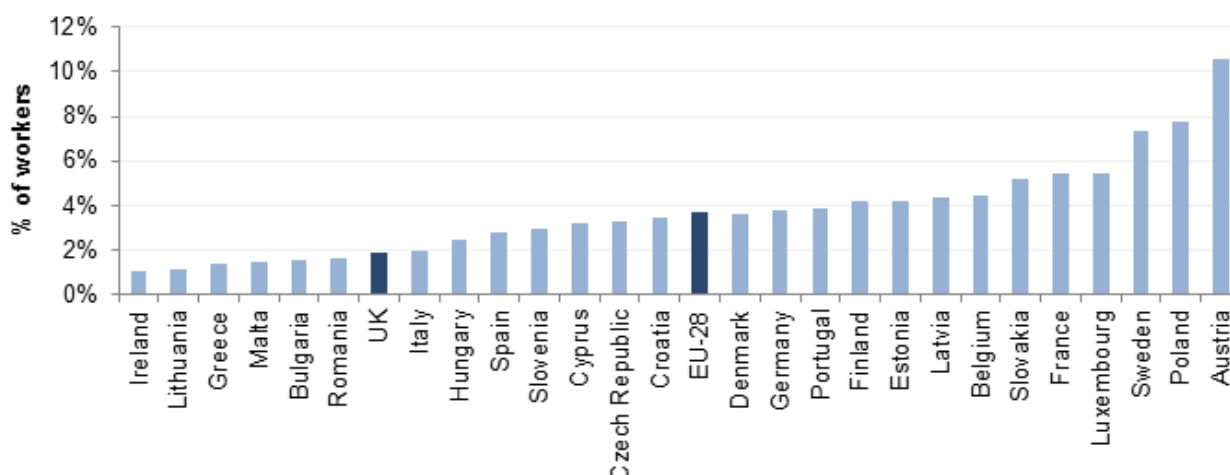


## Work-related ill health in the EU

Figure 4 displays the rate of workers in the EU that have taken time off work due to work-related ill health.

- 1.9% of UK workers report taking time off work due to one or more work-related health problem. The UK rate is similar to that of Italy (1.9%) and lower than many other European countries, including Spain (2.8%), Germany (3.8%), France (5.4%) and Poland (7.7%).
- European ill health data is taken from the 2013 Labour Force Survey (LFS), which is based on workers' own ideas of work-related health problems. Therefore, the survey may not match official definitions in any country.

**Figure 4 - Percentage of workers with one or more work-related health problem resulting in sick leave (LFS, 2013)**

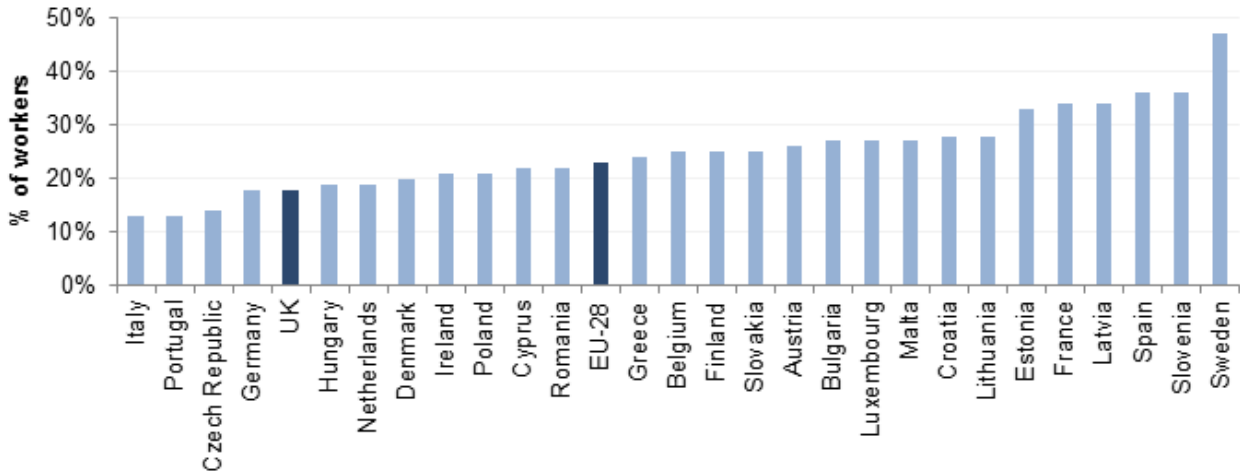


<sup>2</sup> Due to methodological problems the EU LFS injury data contains no data for Germany or the Netherlands; as such an EU average figure has also not been produced.

# Health and Safety Practice in the EU

- According to the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), 18% of UK workers believe that their job risks their health and safety. This is one of the lowest proportions in the EU, and is favourable in comparisons to the EU-28 rate of around 23%.
- Italy (13%) has lower rates than the UK while Germany (18%) has similar rates. However, more workers in France (34%) and Spain (36%) believe that their health and safety is at risk because of their job. According to EWCS, differences in levels reported between countries among other things, may reflect awareness about topics, objective differences, differences in the economic structure of employment, and differences in legislation and preventive measures.

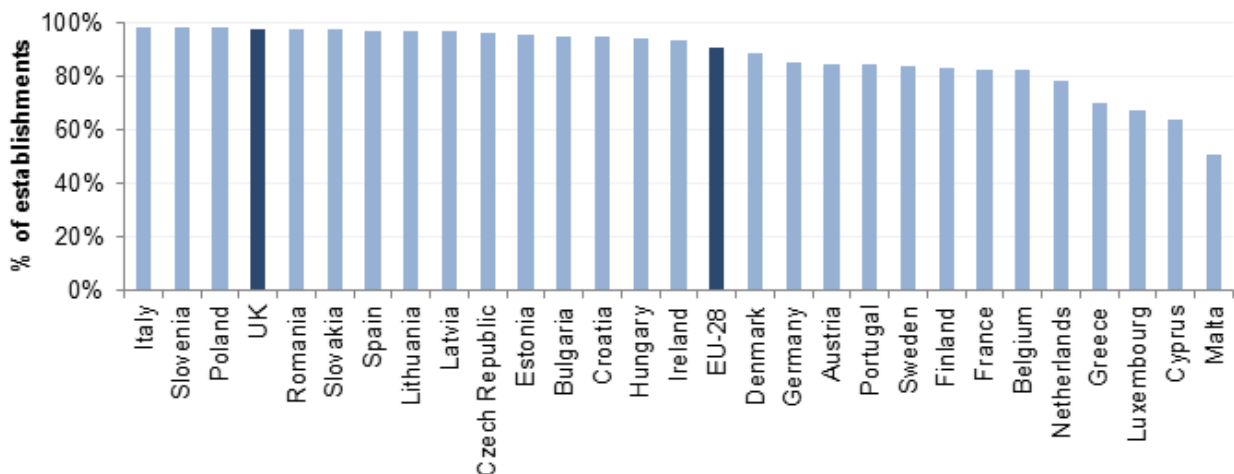
**Figure 5 - Percentage of workers who think their health or safety is at risk because of their work? (%) (EWCS, 2015)**



Managers in the UK businesses interviewed as part of the European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) in 2014 were more likely to have documented health and safety policy, and more likely to undertake regular health and safety checks, than businesses in many other EU countries.

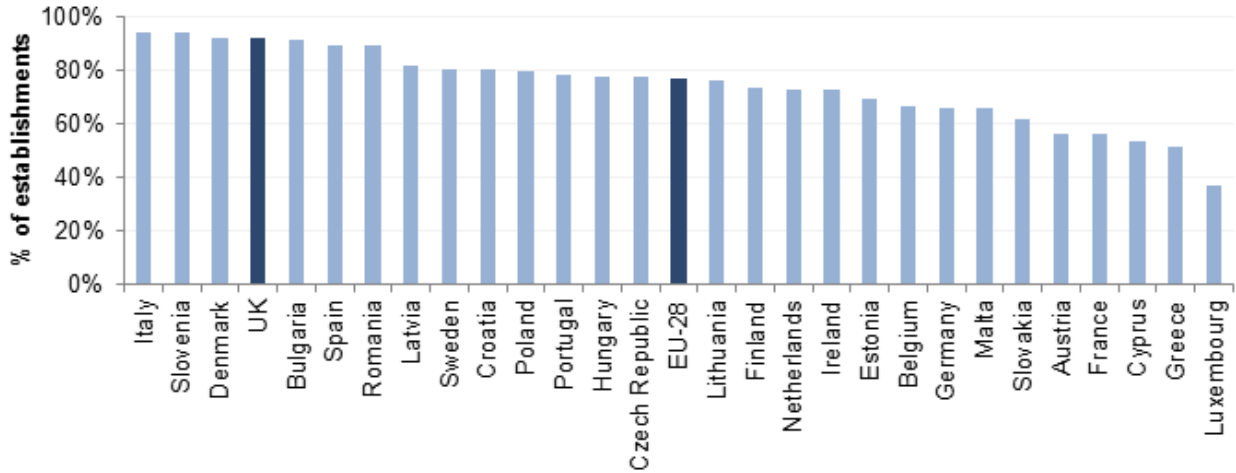
- Establishments with at least 5 employees, and in all activity sectors, were interviewed for the ESENER survey in 2014. Interviews covered specific questions about psychosocial risks such as stress and violence, as well as general health and safety management.
- The chart below demonstrates that around 98% of UK businesses have a document explaining health and safety responsibilities and procedures. This is at the top end of all European countries, alongside Italy and Slovenia, and closely followed by Spain (97%). The EU average was found to be 91%, and at the lowest end were Cyprus (64%) and Malta (51%).

**Figure 6 – Percentage of businesses that provide a document explaining responsibilities and procedures on health and safety available to the people working in the establishment. (ESENER, 2014)**



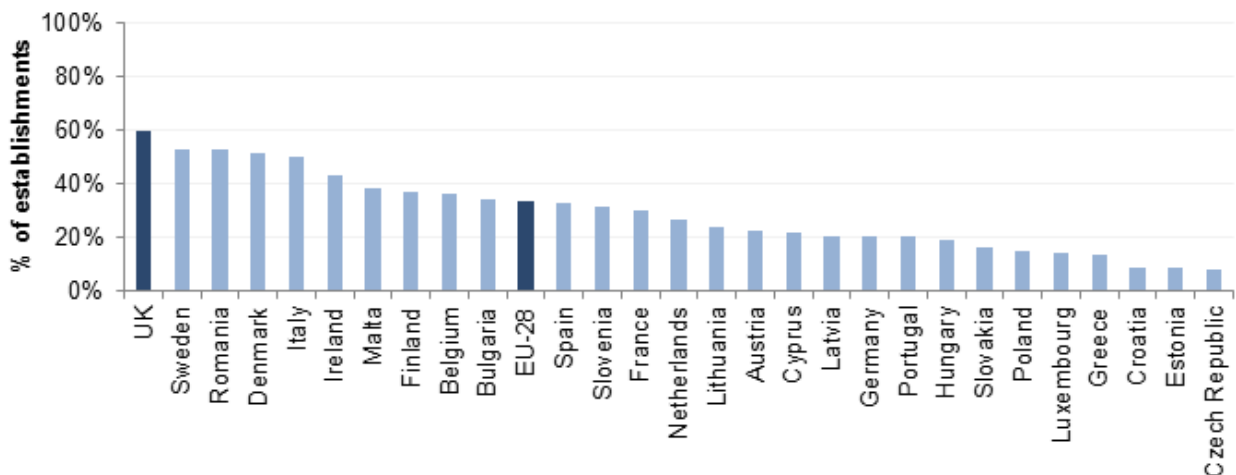
- Around 92% of UK workplaces surveyed undertake regular health and safety risk assessments. This is more than most EU countries including Spain (90%), Germany (66%) and France (56%). However, with 95% of workplaces undertaking health and safety checks, Italy performs slightly better than the UK.

**Figure 7 – Percentage of establishments that regularly carry out workplace risk assessments. (ESENER, 2014)**



- Three quarters of UK workplace risk assessments are carried out by internal staff as opposed to external providers. This compares to an average of less than 50% across the EU28. Ahead of the UK are Sweden and Denmark at 83%, while Spain, Croatia (both on 12%) and Slovenia (7%) are at the bottom end of the scale.
- The UK is also better placed than many in Europe for having an action plan to prevent work-related stress, at 60%. This compares positively to other large economies such as Italy (at 50%), France (30%) and Germany (20%).

**Figure 8: Percentage of establishments that regularly carry out workplace risk assessments. (ESENER, 2014)**



# Appendix

## Data Sources

Data tables are available at: [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/index.htm#europeancomparisons](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/index.htm#europeancomparisons) or follow the links below for more details.

### **Data on fatal injuries published by Eurostat**

The latest data on fatal injuries is for 2016 and is available on the Eurostat database: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

The table is: 'Accidents at work by sex and age, excluding road traffic accidents and accidents on board of any mean of transport in the course of work (NACE Rev. 2, A, C-N excluding H) (hsw\_mi03)'

Standardisation of EU fatality rates:

Taken at face value, the number of annual workplace deaths does vary country-by-country. Even when differing employment levels between countries are taken into account (that is, some countries simply have more workers than others), the corresponding injury rates can still vary between countries. One reason for the differences in rates between countries, is that the type of work is inherently more (or less) risky in one country compared to another.

For example, when comparing industrial employment structure with the EU average, some countries might employ *relatively* more workers within inherently higher-risk sectors like agriculture or construction; this could have the effect of increasing the fatality rate for that country. In other words we would 'expect' more deaths in such countries. The standardisation process would therefore have the effect of reducing the fatality rate for those countries. Conversely countries with *relatively* more workers in low-risk sectors (compared to all-EU), would have the effect of increasing the fatality rates for those countries.

The European Commission recognise this, so Eurostat (the statistical arm of the EC) produce these standardised rates of fatal injury for all member states.

### **Labour Force Survey data on non-fatal injuries and ill health**

Due to methodological problems the EU LFS injury data contains no data for Germany and the Netherlands; as such an EU average figure has also not been produced. Eurostat is currently working to address this problem and some data for these countries, as well as an EU average, may be available in the future. For ill health data there is no data available for the Netherlands; however, an EU average is available.

The latest data from the EU LFS is available from the Eurostat database:

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

The folder containing the data is: 'Population and social conditions' and is in the sub-folder of 'health'.

The data is stored under the subfolder 'Health and safety at work (hsw)' and a further sub-folder of 'Accidents at work and other work-related health problems (source LFS) (hsw\_apex)'

Data on work-related injuries is in the additional subfolder 'Accidents at work (hsw\_ac)' and is derived from the following tables: 'Persons reporting an accident at work by sex, age and educational attainment (hsw\_ac1)' and 'Persons reporting an accident at work resulting in sick leave by sex, age and educational attainment (hsw\_ac2)'.

Data on ill health is in the sub-folder 'Work-related health problems (hsw\_pb)'

This data is derived from the following tables: 'Persons reporting a work-related health problem by sex, age and educational attainment (hsw\_pb1)' and 'Persons reporting a work-related health problem resulting in sick leave by sex, age and educational attainment (hsw\_pb2)'.

### ***European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)***

The latest EWCS at a detailed member state level ran in 2015. For more details please visit the EWCS homepage on the Eurofound website:

[www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-working-conditions-surveys](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/european-working-conditions-surveys)

### ***European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)***

The European Survey of New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) ran in 2014 and surveyed businesses across the EU with at least 5 employees in all sectors. For more background on the survey, and to view the results please visit the mapping tool on the website of the European Agency for Safety and Health at

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/surveys-and-statistics-osh/esener/2014>



## National Statistics

National Statistics status means that statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. They are produced in compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and awarded National Statistics status following assessment and compliance checks by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). The last compliance check of these statistics was in 2013.

It is Health and Safety Executive's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected by National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the OSR promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored. Details of OSR reviews undertaken on these statistics, quality improvements, and other information noting revisions, interpretation, user consultation and use of these statistics is available from [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about.htm)

An account of how the figures are used for statistical purposes can be found at [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/sources.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/sources.htm).

For information regarding the quality guidelines used for statistics within HSE see [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about/quality-guidelines.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about/quality-guidelines.htm)

A revisions policy and log can be seen at [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about/revisions/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/about/revisions/)

Additional data tables can be found at [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/).

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