

Issues



in Labor Statistics

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Women Experience Fewer Job-related Injuries and Deaths than Men

Women incurred less than one-tenth of the job-related fatal injuries and about one-third of the nonfatal injuries and illnesses that required time off to recuperate in 1992-96. During this period women accounted for just under 50 percent of the Nation's workforce.

One explanation for this large discrepancy is that women are employed in relatively less dangerous jobs such as teaching or service occupations. Few women work in the construction trades or in other high-risk jobs where work is generally performed outdoors. But if more women enter high-risk occupations their risk of injury or death may increase.

Fatal injuries

Of the 32,000 job-related fatalities that occurred during the period 1992-96, slightly over 2,500 (8 percent) occurred to women. Two-thirds of these work injury deaths were attributed to homicides and highway incidents. (See table.)

Homicides. Women accounted for 20 percent of all job-related homicides in 1992-96. Most homicide victims were shot; but women were strangled or beaten to death relatively more often than men. Two-thirds of the homicides occurred in the retail and service industries.

About one-third of the women who were murdered on the job worked in sales occupations either as a cashier, supervisor, proprietor, or clerk. Robbery was the primary motive for these fatal assaults.

More than 25 percent of the female victims of job-related homicides were assaulted by people they knew (co-

workers, clients, spouses, or friends). About 16 percent of female homicides resulted from domestic disputes that spilled over into the workplace.

Highway vehicle crashes. Job-related highway incidents claimed the lives of 650 women during 1992-96, a little over 2 percent of all fatalities during the period. Health care and social service workers accounted for almost 20 percent of these deaths—about the same number as motor vehicle operators, such as truck and bus drivers and driver-sales workers.

Other incidents resulting in fatalities. About 15 percent of the fatal injuries to women resulted from other transportation-related incidents, such as aircraft crashes or being struck by a vehicle.

Falls accounted for 5 percent of the job-related fatalities among women, compared with 11 percent for men.

Another 5 percent of female workers' fatalities resulted from contact with objects and equipment, such as being crushed in running machinery or struck by a falling object. Exposure to harmful substances or environments, such as

electrocutions, drownings, and the inhalation of chemicals, accounted for 4 percent of the fatalities among women workers. Two percent of the women killed at work were victims of fire and explosions.

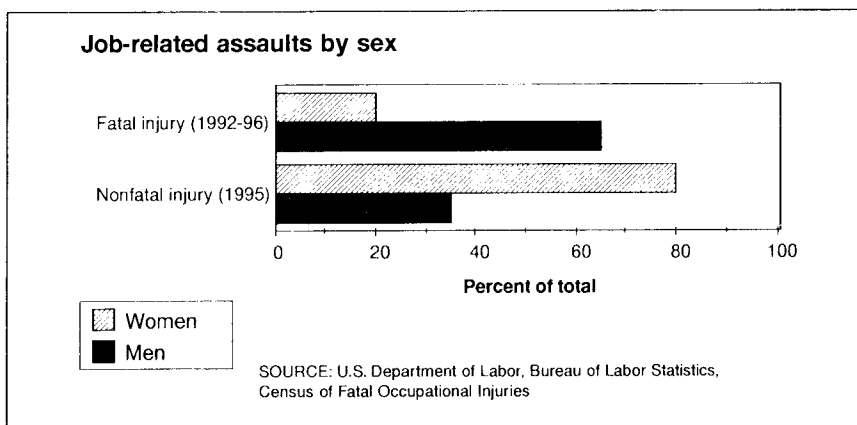
Comparing occupational fatality rates.

Besides incurring fewer fatal work injuries than men, women have much lower fatality rates than men. Employed women had a fatality rate of less than 1 fatal injury per 100,000 in 1996, compared with employed men who had 8 fatal work injuries per 100,000 for the same period of time.

Nonfatal injuries and illnesses

Women incurred slightly over a third of the 2 million cases of work-related injuries and illnesses resulting in days away from work that occurred among private sector wage and salary workers in 1995.

Sprains and strains among women accounted for 45 percent of their job-related injury and illness cases, compared to 42 percent among men.



Women accounted for more cases than men of carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, respiratory system diseases, infectious and parasitic diseases, and disorders resulting from anxiety or stress.

Almost half of the female workers' injuries and illnesses resulted from bodily reaction or exertion, such as overexertion in lifting or pushing and repetitive grasping of handtools. Falls, primarily on the same level, and contact with objects (such as being struck by falling objects, striking against objects, or getting caught in running equipment) each accounted for about 20 percent of the job-related injuries among women.

Women were more likely to be assaulted than men and accounted for about 65 percent of the nearly 23,000 reported assault-related injuries. The manner in which women were assaulted varied. About 70 percent resulted in days away from work and occurred in the service industries such as nursing homes, social services, and hospitals. Another 20 percent occurred in retail industries—the most vulnerable workers being female stock handlers who incurred about 25 percent of these assaults.

For additional information
For additional information on this

material, see Guy A. Toscano, Janice A. Windau, and Andrew Knestaut, "Work Injuries and Illnesses Occurring to Women," *Compensation and Working Conditions*, Summer 1998. General and technical information is available on the Bureau's Internet site at <http://stats.bls.gov/oshhome.htm>, or via e-mail at cfoistaff@bls.gov

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Job related fatalities by event or exposure, 1992-96

| Event or exposure | Women | | Men | |
|----------------------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Total | 2,506 | 100 | 29,061 | 100 |
| Homicides | 973 | 39 | 4,173 | 14 |
| Highway crashes | 650 | 26 | 5,764 | 20 |
| Struck by vehicle | 156 | 6 | 1,683 | 6 |
| Falls | 137 | 5 | 3,081 | 11 |
| Aircraft crashes | 128 | 5 | 1,536 | 5 |
| Contact with objects | 125 | 5 | 4,862 | 17 |
| Harmful exposures | 102 | 4 | 2,868 | 10 |
| Other | 235 | 9 | 5,094 | 18 |

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1992-96

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