

## Work injuries statistics for Canada

*The following is a Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) "reusable" – a document prepared in anticipation of questions received by the Inquiries Service.*

### 1982-1986

Every year since 1982 there have been about half a million disabling and fatal injury claims compensated by Workers' Compensation Boards (WCBs) in Canada. The direct and indirect costs of these injuries were estimated at \$13.5 billion in 1985. On average, 54 out of 1,000 paid employees received compensation for work injuries in Canada each year between 1982 and 1986.

### Injury rates by industry

The forestry, construction and manufacturing industries in Canada have consistently had the highest rates of disabling (time-loss) work injuries over the five year period and these rates have been rising steadily from 1982 to 1986. The six industrial groups with the highest work injury rates are listed in Table 1. Work injury rates in agriculture, fishing and trapping, and community, business and personal services and other industries not listed here may be artificially low because not all workers in these industries are covered by compensation.

### Fatality rates

The provincial WCBs in Canada keep track of people who die of work-related injuries and diseases in different ways. So it is not known for sure exactly how many job-related deaths occur in Canada each year. From 1982 to 1986, the rate of work-related fatalities, measured by the acceptance of compensation board claims, has been decreasing overall in Canada, from 10.8 per 100,000 employed in 1982 to 7.7 in 1986. (See Table 2)

The drop in the fatality rate from 1982 to 1983 may reflect the effect of the 1981-82 economic recession, since the rate of disabling work injuries and fatalities is apparently affected by the level of economic production, among other factors.

In most provinces, the work-related fatality rate has gradually been decreasing or remaining at a steady rate over the five year period. This is how the rates look across the country, with the exception of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, for which there are unconfirmed employment data: (See Table 3)

### Most common types of disabling accidents and injuries

The most common work-related accident claim accepted for compensation was "overexertion" from "lifting, pulling, pushing, carrying or throwing objects" – 27% of the total number of accepted compensation claims are described in this way. The resulting injury in most cases was a back injury.

The second largest number of workplace accidents – 19% of the total – are described as "being struck by a falling object". Another 15% of accidents at work were "falls from scaffolds, ladders or vehicles", and "falls on stairs, floors or walkways".

The type of injury suffered by workers depends to a great extent on the type of occupational tasks they perform. Exertion injuries (sprains, strains, hernias and ruptures) accounted for 40% of all injuries, but fully 62% of injuries in medicine and health occupations, and 50% in clerical work, and in transport equipment operations. In forestry, logging, mining and quarrying occupations, 33% of all injuries were the impact type (concussions, dislocations and fractures) while this type of injury accounted for only 22% of injuries in all occupations combined.

Back injuries accounted for 42% of all injuries in hospitals and related health-care institutions. For all industries combined, back injuries accounted for only 27% of all injuries. Other parts of the body most often injured were the hand (22%), followed by the foot and leg (19%), and the head (9%).

### How injury rates differ for men and women

An average of 77 of 1,000 Canadian male workers were injured annually from 1982 to 1986, whereas only 23 out of 1,000 female workers were injured. The male/female difference in work injury rates can be partly explained by the concentration of men in jobs in certain industries such as forestry, construction, manufacturing and agriculture, which are known to have higher risks of disabling injuries than other industries.

For men in Canada, the highest rate of work injury was found in forestry and logging occupations (198 per 1,000), while machining occupations showed the highest rate of work injury for women (113 per 1,000).

**The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety** was founded by an Act of Parliament in 1978. Its purpose is "to promote the fundamental right of Canadians to a healthy and safe working environment..."

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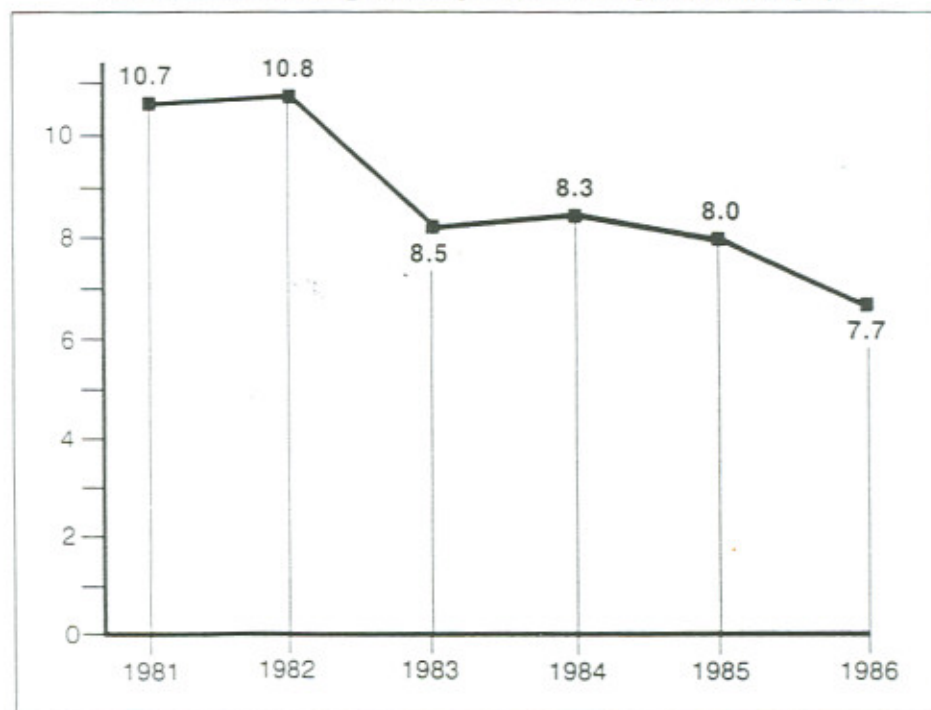
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**Table 1 – Disabling Work Injury Rates per 1,000 Employed**

|  | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| Average of All Industries                          | 51   | 50   | 53   | 56   | 57   |
| Forestry   | 153  | 156  | 160  | 144  | 161  |
| Construction                                       | 116  | 109  | 11   | 124  | 123  |
| Manufacturing                                      | 85   | 85   | 91   | 101  | 104  |
| Mines, Quarries and Oil Wells                      | 73   | 71   | 68   | 71   | 60   |
| Transportation, Communication, and Other Utilities | 54   | 53   | 56   | 58   | 64   |
| Fishing and Trapping                               | 59   | 50   | 52   | 58   | 65   |

**Table 2 – National Rates of Fatality Claims Accepted by WCBs  
Provincial Totals Averaged and Expressed as a Rate per 100,000 Employed**



**Table 3 – Provincial Rates of Fatality Claims Accepted by WCBs  
Averaged over Years (1982–1986) and Expressed as a Rate per 100,000 Employed**

|                  |      |                      |      |
|------------------|------|----------------------|------|
| British Columbia | 15.2 | Québec               | 8.0  |
| Alberta          | 12.2 | Newfoundland         | 26.4 |
| Saskatchewan     | 14.0 | New Brunswick        | 9.0  |
| Manitoba         | 8.0  | Prince Edward Island | 7.6  |
| Ontario          | 5.0  | Nova Scotia          | 17.9 |