HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY

BRIEFING PAPER

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Health and Safety Statistics

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Inside:

Contents

1. Summary

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publishes statistics on health and safety in Great Britain.

In 2017/18 there were:

- 144 fatal injuries
- 71,000 non-fatal injuries
- 1.4 million cases of work-related illness
- Stress, depression and anxiety is the most common type of work-related illness, accounting for 44% of work-related ill health and 57% of working days lost in 2017/18, with women particularly highly affected by this ill health type
- 30.7 million working days lost as a result of work-related ill health or injury

The major factors of difference in health and safety risk are the industry in which a person works, and whether they are self-employed.

Sectors with higher rates of fatal injury are construction, agriculture, waste disposal and recycling, and offshore fishing.

Sectors with higher ill health rates are utility supply, health and social work, public administration, defence, and education.

The self-employed are more than twice as likely as employees to suffer fatal injury.

In 2016/17, injuries and new cases of ill health in workers resulting from current working conditions cost the economy an estimated £15 billion.

The UK has fewer fatal accidents at work than most other European countries.

2. Definition and background

The first provision made in Britain to monitor health and safety at work was Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate, appointed in the Factory Act 1833. This body was responsible for the investigation of deaths, injuries and ill health through work until the 1970s.

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 established the Health and Safety Commission to research, inform, advise and regulate industry.

The Health and Safety Executive was formed the following year, in 1975, to enforce health and safety law, a duty shared with Local Authorities.

In 2008 the Health and Safety Commission and Health and Safety Executive merged to form one organisation: the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). A timeline of the history of the Health and Safety Executive and its predecessors can be found here.

The Health and Safety Executive publishes statistics from a number of sources, notably the Labour Force Survey and Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR), which collects comprehensive accounts of workplace accidents and occupational illness.

Offshore industries and particularly dangerous work environments and have their own dedicated sources of health and safety statistics.

The Offshore Safety Directive Regulator is responsible for implementing the requirements of the EU Directive on the safety of offshore oil and gas operation.

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch, part of the Department for Transport, compiles figures on accidents involving fishing vessels and fishermen.

3. Death and injuries

In 2017/18:

- 144 workers were fatally injured at work, a rate of 0.45 fatalities per 100,000 workers
- 555,000 non-fatal injuries to workers according to self-reported estimates
- 71,000 non-fatal injuries to employees reported by employers, a rate of 263 per 100,000 employees
- Of these injuries, the most common kinds of accident were caused by slips and trips (31%), handling, lifting or carrying (21%), and being struck by moving objects (10%)
- The self-employed are more than twice as likely to suffer fatal injury as an employee. The rate of fatal injury for employees was 0.37, while that for the self-employed was 0.84.

The following HSE chart shows the rate of fatal injuries to workers (both employed and self-employed) in Great Britain since 1981.

Over the past 30 years there has been a steady fall in the rate of fatal injury. In 1996/7 there were a total of 287[1] fatalities at work; in 2017/18 there were 144. This fall reflects changes in occupations and safety practices.

- Fatal injuries are predominately to male workers. In 2017/18 138 (96%) if all worker fatalities were to male workers, a similar proportion to earlier years

[1] HSE, *Reported fatal and non-fatal injuries in Great Britain from 1974*, Source RIDDOR

- Nearly 40% of fatal injuries in 2017/18 were to workers aged 60 and over, even though such workers made up only around 10% of the workforce. This proportion has been steadily increasing in recent years

- The fatal injury rate for the self-employed is more than double that for employees

HSE look at longer-term trends in work-related ill health and workplace injury in Historical picture statistics in Great Britain, 2018. It observes how over the course of the twentieth century deaths at work to employees fell from 4,400 to around 200, further reducing since the year 2000 to a total of 100 in the latest year (plus 44 self-employed workers). It comments:

> This reduction is in part due to changes in the industry composition over the period (a shift away from mining, manufacturing and other heavy industry to lower risk service industries). A comparison of fatal injury numbers between 1974 (when the Health and Safety at Work Act was introduced) and 2017/18, adjusting to allow for the difference in industry coverage of the reporting requirements between these years, suggests that fatal injury numbers to employees have fallen by around 85% over this period.

4. Illness

In 2017/18:

- 1.4 million workers were suffering from an illness they believed was caused or made worse by their current or past work
- Over 500,000 of these were new conditions which started during 2017/18
- More than 70% of the new work-related conditions were either musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) or stress, depression or anxiety
- Stress, depression and anxiety is the most common type of work-related illness, accounting for 44% of work-related ill health and 57% of working days lost in 2017/18, with women particularly highly affected by this ill health type [2]
- A further 800,000 former workers (who last worked over 12 months earlier) were suffering from an illness which was caused or made worse by their past work.

Rates of total cases and new cases of self-reported work-related illness showed a general downward trend from 2001/02 to around 2011/12, since when the rate has been broadly flat.[3]

The rate for musculoskeletal disorders continues a long-term downward trend, while the rate for stress, depression or anxiety, while broadly flat for more than a decade, has shown signs of increasing in recent years. Industries with higher than average rates of stress, depression or anxiety are education, health and social work activities.[4] This chart shows the estimated prevalence of self-reported illness caused by work, and is subject to a 95% confidence interval.

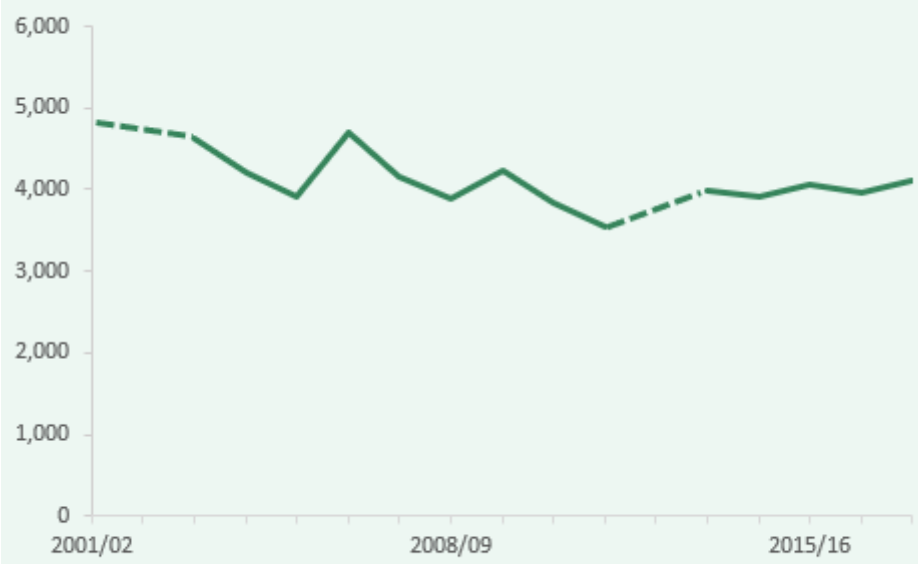
[2] HSE, *Work-related stress depression or anxiety statistics in Great Britain,* 2018 "In the three year period 2015/16-2017/18 the average prevalence rate for work-related stress, depression or anxiety for males was 1,370 cases and 1,950 cases for females per 100,000 workers." p 7

[3] HSE, *Work-related ill health and occupational disease in Great Britain,* 2018

[4] HSE, *Health and Safety Summary Statistics 2018*, 2018

Work-related ill health per 100,000 workers - new and long-standing

2001/02 - 2017/18



Source: Labour Force Survey

Note: No ill health data was collected in 2002/03 and 2012/13, represented by the dashed line

5. Fatal diseases

Apart from asbestos-related disease, the trend in fatal diseases caused by work is generally downwards.[5]

There are around 12,000 deaths each year from occupational lung disease and cancer estimated to have been caused by past exposure to chemicals and dust at work. More than half of these deaths were caused by past exposure to asbestos.

Most of these diseases take many years to develop and so current deaths are the result of past workplace conditions.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), caused by dust, gases, vapours and fumes, is estimated to be the single largest cause of deaths due to work-related diseases, at around 4,000 per year.

In 2016, 2,595 people died from mesothelioma, a type of cancer associated with exposure to asbestos.

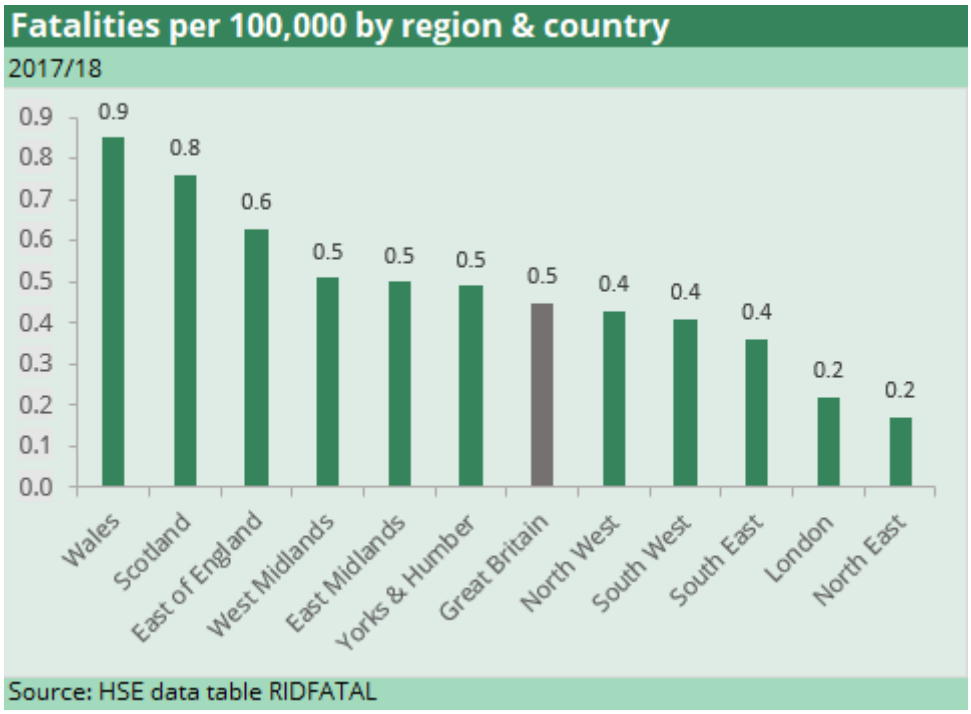
Other causes of occupational cancer are exposure to silica, diesel engine exhaust, and mineral oils.

There were 3,910 new Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB) cases in 2017, of which 92% were diseases associated with past asbestos exposure. [6]

[5] http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/respiratory-diseases.htm
[6] HSE, Occupational Lung Disease in Great Britain, 2018, p 6

6. Region and country

The main driver of differences in health and safety risk is not the geographic area in which someone works. Any apparent difference between regions and countries is likely to be strongly affected by the industry mix in the economy of those regions and countries.[7]



Scotland and Wales have proportionally fewer workers in low-risk industries compared with England, and in London and the South East there is a higher proportion of workers in low-risk industries than across the rest of the country.

The number of fatal injuries (as opposed to the rate of injury detailed above) in 2017/18 was highest in the East of England (18) and Scotland (17) and lowest in London (12) and the North East (2).

[7] HSE, Countries and regions, 2017/18

Fatalities at work by region & country

2017/18

	Fatalities	Rate (per 100,000)
Wales	12	0.9
Scotland	17	0.8
East of England	18	0.6
West Midlands	14	0.5
East Midlands	11	0.5
Yorks & Humber	13	0.5
North West	15	0.4
South West	12	0.4
South East	16	0.4
London	12	0.2
North East	2	0.2
Great Britain	144	0.5

Source: HSE data table RIDFATAL

Workers in the Midlands and Wales experience more non-fatal injuries than the national average, London and the South of England fewer than the national average.

Non-fatal injuries at work by region & country

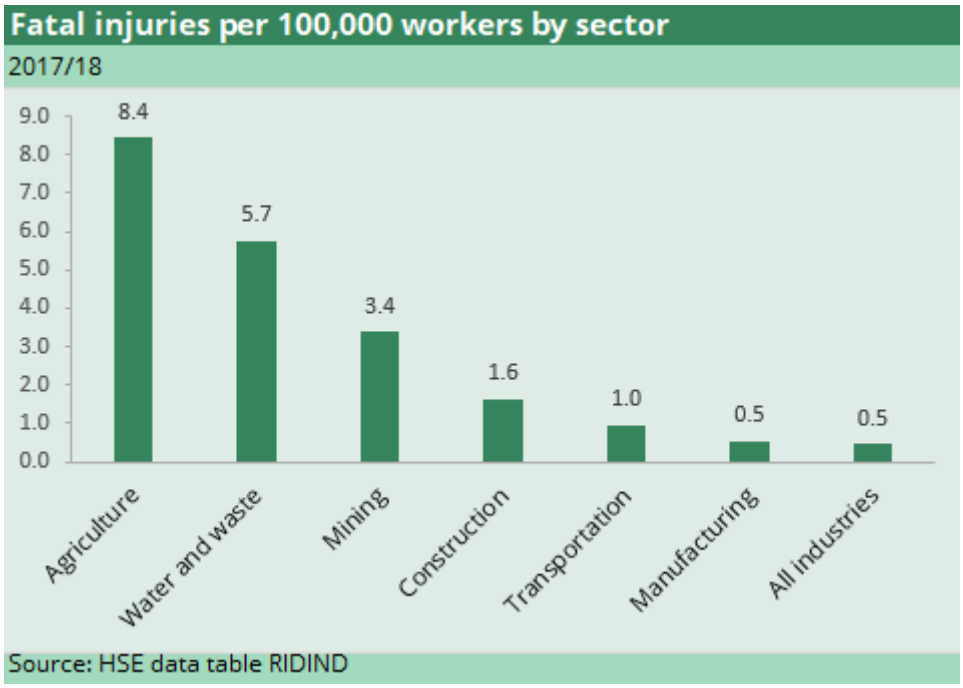
2017/18

	Fatalities	Rate (per 100,000)
East Midlands	6,100	324
Wales	3,720	311
West Midlands	6,925	299
Yorks & Humber	6,488	288
East of England	6,676	281
North East	2,899	281
North West	8,416	280
Scotland	6,439	276
South West	5,916	251
South East	8,275	226
London	8,307	191
Great Britain	71,062	263

Source: HSE data table RIDNONFATAL

7. Sector

In terms of fatal accidents per 100,000 employees, the most dangerous sectors to work in are agriculture, and water and waste, particularly the waste and recycling division of that sector. In terms of the number of fatalities, the construction sector is the most dangerous industry, as it has the highest absolute count, both for 2017/18 and as an annual average for 2013/14 – 2017/18 in this sector.[8]



- In 2017/18 there were 29 fatalities in agriculture. This equates to a rate of 8.4 per 100,000, over twice the rate for mining
- There were 13 fatalities in the water and waste industries, of which 12 were in the waste and recycling division (sub-sector). This is equivalent to a rate of 10.3 per 100,000 workers for the waste and recycling sub-sector, higher than agriculture, and more than double the national average for all industries
- Industry sectors with higher ill health rates are education, human health and social work activities, and public administration and defence. Women suffer higher rates of stress, depression and anxiety. [9]

8 HSE, *Workplace fatal injuries in Great Britain 2018*, 2018
9 HSE, *Work-related ill health and occupational disease in Great Britain*, 2018

Fatalities at work by sector

2017/18

	Fatalities	Rate
Construction	38	1.6
Agriculture	29	8.4
Transportation	15	1.0
Manufacturing	15	0.5
Water and waste	13	5.7
Mining	4	3.4
All industries	144	0.5

Source: HSE data table RIDIND

Rate is per 100,000 workers

Fatalities = employees and self-employed

8. Offshore industries

The two major offshore industries are fishing and energy supply. These are particularly dangerous work environments and have their own dedicated sources of health and safety statistics.

Oil and gas

In July 2015, HSE and the Department of Energy and Climate Change created the Offshore Safety Directive Regulator which is responsible for implementing the requirements of the EU Directive on the safety of offshore oil and gas operations.

In 2017:

- There were no fatalities. Since 2008 there have been a total of six fatalities.
- There were 19 specified injuries, a rate of 64 per 100,000 workers. Numbers and rates have fluctuated in previous years.[10]

Fishing

Figures on accidents involving fishing vessels and fishermen are compiled by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch, part of the Department for Transport. [11]

In 2017:

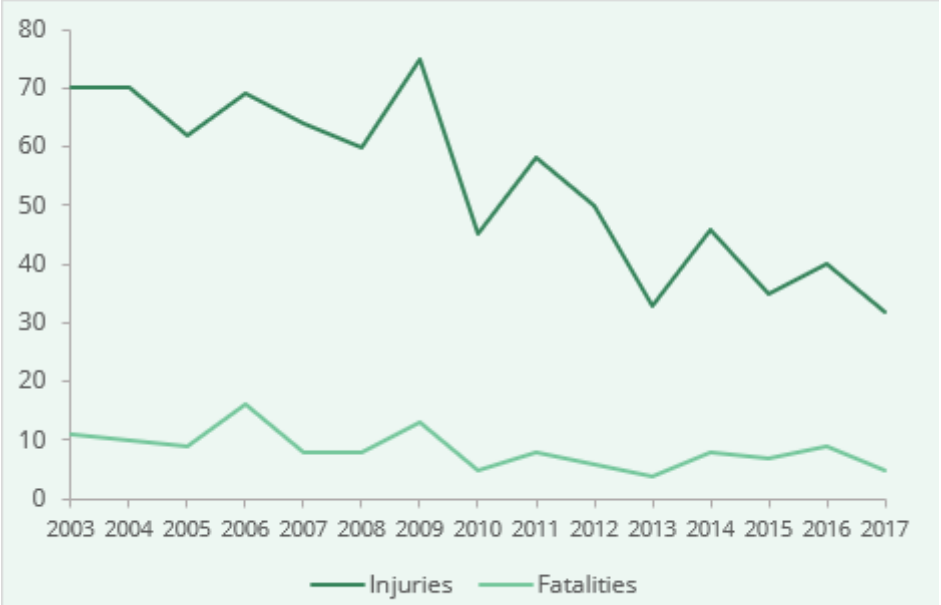
- There were 5 fatalities on fishing vessels, the lowest number since 2013.
- There were 32 injuries on UK fishing vessels, the lowest of the decade.

There were an estimated 11,692 fishermen in 2017, down 9 per cent since 2007.

[10] HSE, *Offshore Statistics & Regulatory Activity Report 2017*, August 2018
[11] Marine Management Organisation, *UK Sea Fisheries Annual Statistics 2017*, 2018

Injuries and fatalities involving UK fishing vessels

2003-17



Source: Marine Accident Investigation, Branch UK sea fisheries statistics 2014 & 2017

Over recent years, the number of fatalities and injuries in the offshore fishing industry has declined, although the profile has not been smooth.

Number of accidents and fatalities involving UK fishing vessels

	Fatalities	Injuries
2003	11	70
2004	10	70
2005	9	62
2006	16	69
2007	8	64
2008	8	60
2009	13	75
2010	5	45
2011	8	58
2012	6	50
2013	4	33
2014	8	46
2015	7	35
2016	9	40
2017	5	32

Source: Marine Accident Investigation Branch UK sea fisheries statistics 2014 & 2017

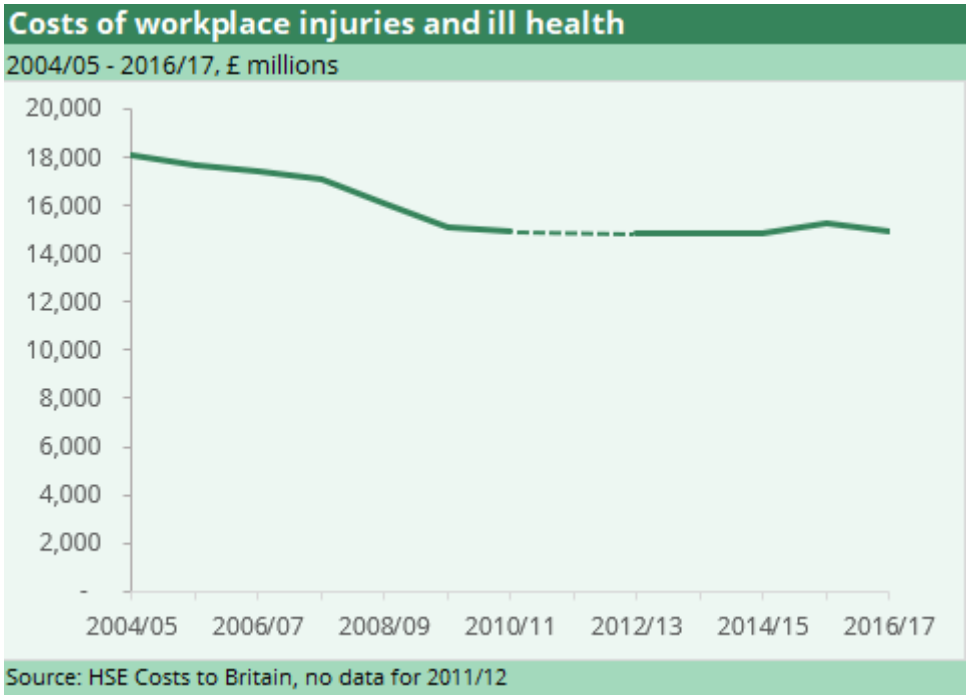
9. Economic cost of injuries and ill health at work

The total costs of workplace self-reported injuries and ill health in 2016/17 was **£15.0 billion**.[12]

- New cases of workplace illness cost £9.7 billion
- Workplace injury (including fatalities) cost £5.2 billion

Just over half of this total cost fell on individuals, while the rest was carried by employers and government/taxpayers.

Total costs showed a downward trend between 2004/05 and 2009/10. This fall was driven by a reduction in the number of workplace injuries. Since then, the annual cost has been broadly level.



In terms of working days lost:

The total number of working days lost has generally followed a downward trend since 2000-02, but shows signs of levelling off in recent years.

- Time taken off work due to a case of work-related ill health (18 days) is on average greater than the time taken off due to a workplace injury (8 days)

- An estimated 16,000 workers withdraw permanently from the labour market annually as a result of a workplace injury or work-related ill health

[12] HSE, *Health and safety at work summary statistics for Great Britain 2018*, p8, 2018

- New cases of work-related ill health by severity category, annual average 2015/16 – 2017/18, are 251,000 with 7 or more days off work and 277,000 with up to 6 days off work

- Between 2004/05 and 2009/10 the estimated total cost fell by 17% (from £18.1 billion in 2004/05 to £15.1billion in 2009/10). The annual cost has since been broadly level (£15.0 billion in 2016/17) [13]

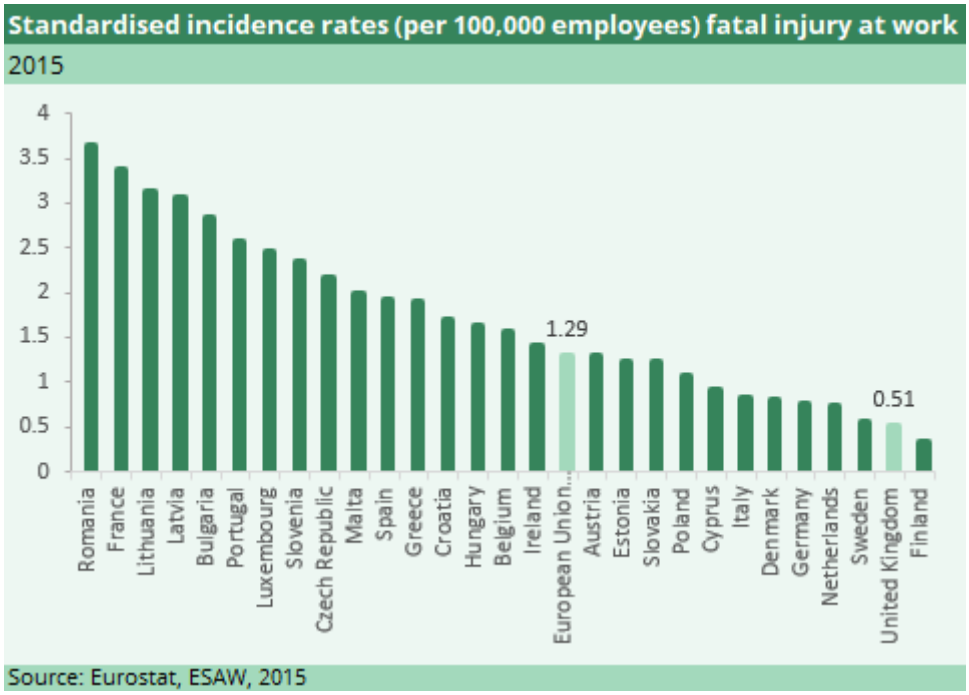
[13] HSE, *Costs to Britain of workplace fatalities and self-reported injuries and ill health, 2016/17*, 2018

10. International comparisons

Health and safety systems in other countries differ in recording, reporting and enforcement, but Eurostat publishes nations' data in as standardised a form as possible, enabling comparison across the EU.[14]

Overall in 2015, the UK had the lowest fatal accident at work rate of all other EU countries with the exception of Finland.

The UK reported 0.5 fatal accidents at work per 100,000 workers in 2015. This contrasts with a rate of 3.62 in France and the EU average rate of 1.3.



[14] HSE, *European Comparisons*, 2018, Data table EU Comp 1

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