



Manufacturing

Overview

Manufacturing has made marginal progress in the past year, and has a big job to improve its health and safety performance. The fact it has a lot of formal health and safety practices but still lags behind other priority sectors in many areas suggests 'box ticking' rather than a meaningful approach to workplace safety.

Despite so many formal health and safety practices (nearly nine in 10 businesses have at least one such practice), manufacturing workers are more likely to report serious accidents than any other sector, and more likely to report near misses than any other sector except forestry.

A quarter of workers also believe there is a high risk they will be seriously injured at work – higher than any other priority sector.

On the plus side, the sector performs well tackling workplace noise. (It has the highest incidence of temporary or permanent hearing loss.) Nearly all employers and employees report taking at least one step to protect against loud noise.

Employers and employees' views diverge more than in any of the other priority sectors, principally because employers do not consider work pressures, risks, near misses and serious accidents exist to nearly the same extent as workers do.

Worker involvement in health and safety matters is largely unchanged from 2014. Workers are generally much less positive than employers on this subject (notable exception: 85% of workers say they always tell co-workers if they see them not acting safely – the highest proportion of the priority sectors).

Manufacturing workers feel the least safe of all priority sector workers. Just 43% feel very safe at work. (The range in other sectors is from 53% to 57%.)

Nearly a quarter of workers feel there is a high risk someone will be seriously hurt in the next 12 months (compared with 15% among other priority-sector workers). Just 5% of employers hold this view.

Pluses

Employers and employees are quite positive on three key measures of:



worker engagement (involvement in decisions, reporting hazards, near misses and accidents, and open discussion of risks)



work environment (working together, encouraging new ideas, and supporting stopping work over a potential hazard)



two-way communication (encouraging others to speak up, telling co-workers they are working unsafely, and sharing information and updates).

Employers are more positive on all three scores, especially work environment.

Minuses

Manufacturing workers are the most likely to say work pressures affect health and safety. In particular:

34% say working too long or hard without a break sometimes or often leads to mistakes.

39% report taking risks or shortcuts to save time.

44% report being too busy to pay attention to health and safety.

By contrast:

7% of employers say staff work too long or hard without a break.

14% of employers say staff take risks or shortcuts to save time.

20% of employers say staff forget health and safety because they are too busy.

Nearly a fifth of workers had suffered serious harm in the past year.

Employers have a considerably more positive view of health and safety than employees. For example:

91% say they would totally support workers suggesting work stop because of a possible hazard or risk (employees: 60%).

82% say they always explain how they have considered employees' views (employees: 49%).

ONLY 7% attribute workers' mistakes to working too long or hard without a break (employees: 34%).

ONLY 5% agree their workers face a high risk of serious injury in the next 12 months (employees: 24%).

Training

Two in 10 workers have never received any health and safety training, and three in 10 employers have never sought health and safety training.

Formal practices

Despite the sector having more formal health and safety practices than any other except forestry, the number of workers who say these practices do not exist rose from 6% in 2016 to 11% in 2017 – a rise of 83%. (Employers did not report any change.)

Priorities

Employers say health and safety is their top consideration. Employees rank it second after having a regular income.

Mixed feelings

Some workers have mixed views about health and safety:

NEARLY 4 in 5 workers say they keep an eye out for hazards, but half say it is unrealistic to follow every rule.

3 in 10 say they follow the rules only so they don't get into trouble.

4 in 10 say they find it easy to forget health and safety when they're busy.

Positive and risky behaviour

Seven in 10 workers report taking such steps as wearing protective equipment, fitting safety devices to machinery, acting immediately after identifying a potential hazard, and checking and maintaining machinery. However, 53% say they work when overtired, 51% say they work when sick or injured, 49% say carelessness is the cause of mistakes they make, and 40% say they make mistakes because they are under pressure to get the job done.

Serious accidents, harms and near misses

17% of workers (and 24% of employers) reported serious harm or a serious accident in the previous 12 months – the highest of any priority sector.

32% of workers (and 34% of employers) reported a serious near miss in the previous 12 months – the second highest of any priority sector after forestry.

- Workers are most likely to report hearing loss, cuts or wounds requiring stitches, breathing problems and eye injuries – in that order.
- Employers are most likely to report cuts or wounds requiring stitches, eye injuries, crushing injuries and burns – in that order.