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## E Claims for Mental Stress

This appendix details the characteristics of claims data related to mental stress as reported by Safe Work Australia.

### **Industry breakdown of mental stress claims**

The highest rate of mental stress claims per 100 000 employees recorded in 2007-08 were in Personal and other services, followed by Education and Health and community services (table E.1).

Relatively low rates of mental stress claims were recorded in traditional male employee dominated industries such as Agriculture, forestry and fishing, Construction and Mining, with shares of total mental stress claims of around 1 per cent or less respectively. These industries also recorded very low shares of total bullying/harassment claims of around 1 per cent or less. In contrast Manufacturing, which also has a high proportion of male employees, accounted for 5.2 per cent of all mental stress claims and 8.7 per cent of bullying/harassment claims. This industry accounted for 9.9 per cent of all employment at this time (ABS 2010).

It is possible that men are more reluctant to report incidents of bullying/harassment than women for a number of reasons such as cultural factors or fear of retribution in the workplace. As a consequence, the figures for some industries such as Manufacturing and Construction may not reflect the actual incidence of bullying.

Some industries are overrepresented in accepted mental stress claims. For example, Health and community services accounted for 21.6 per cent of newly accepted mental stress claims recorded in 2007-08 and 24.0 per cent of bullying/harassment claims. However, this industry accounted for only around 10 per cent of all employment (ABS 2010). Similarly Education accounted for 19.4 per cent of all mental stress claims and 17.1 per cent of bullying/harassment claims in 2007-08 but only 7.4 per cent of total employment (ABS 2010).

**Table E.1 Rate of accepted mental stress claims by industry<sup>a</sup>**

2007-08p

|                                    | <i>Exposure to traumatic event</i> | <i>Exposure to workplace or occupational violence</i> | <i>Workplace harassment &amp; bullying</i> | <i>Work pressure</i> | <i>Other</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Agriculture, forestry & fishing    | np                                 | np  | 5.1  | np                   | np           | 12           |
| Mining                             | 4.3                                | np  | np   | 7.9                  | np           | 17.3         |
| Manufacturing                      | 2.1                                | 3.2   | 12.2                                       | 7.7                  | 5.2          | 30.6         |
| Electricity, gas & water           | np                                 | np  | 5.8  | 22                   | np           | 31.2         |
| Construction                       | 2.3                                | 1.5   | 2.6  | 4.8                  | 1.7          | 13           |
| Wholesale trade                    | np                                 | 3.6   | 11.4                                       | 13.1                 | 6.9          | 36.2         |
| Retail trade                       | 1.9                                | 8.9   | 5.5  | 7.2                  | 2.6          | 26.1         |
| Accommodation, cafes & restaurants | 2.1                                | 22.1  | 8.9  | 10.4                 | 3.4          | 46.7         |
| Transport & storage                | 23.3                               | 18.9  | 10.6                                       | 14.5                 | 18.2         | 85.7         |
| Communication services             | np                                 | 5.8   | 6.4  | 5.2                  | np           | 19.1         |
| Finance & insurance                | 2.6                                | 10.2  | 13.2                                       | 19.5                 | 4.2          | 50.2         |
| Property & business services       | 1.5                                | 5.4   | 10.7                                       | 12.6                 | 4.5          | 35           |
| Government admin & defence         | 2.6                                | 9.7   | 28.4                                       | 35.6                 | 11.3         | 87.8         |
| Education                          | 1                                  | 32.4  | 30.8                                       | 67.3                 | 12.4         | 143.8        |
| Health & community services        | 7                                  | 19.9  | 31.1                                       | 40.6                 | 16.9         | 116          |
| Cultural & recreational services   | np                                 | 9.2   | 7  | 10.2                 | 6.9          | 34.8         |
| Personal & other services          | 13.1                               | 20.9  | 30.2                                       | 69.7                 | 58.3         | 192.8        |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>3.8</b>                         | <b>11.7</b>   | <b>14.7</b>                                | <b>21.6</b>          | <b>9</b>     | <b>61</b>    |

p preliminary data. np are cells with fewer than 5 claims where information has been suppressed and hence not provided. As a result of suppression of some cells totals do not sum to 100 per cent in some jurisdictions. Total also includes a small number claims for attempted suicide. <sup>a</sup> Rates per 100 000 employees.

Source: Data provided by Safe Work Australia with permission from state and territory governments.

### *Gender and occupational breakdown of people lodging mental stress claims*

Women accounted for: almost two thirds of the accepted harassment claims made in 2003-04 and 2004-05 combined, 60 per cent of work pressure claims, close to 60 per cent of accepted claims related to exposure to workplace or occupational violence and 40 per cent of claims for exposure to traumatic events (ASCC 2007c).

For women, the highest frequency rate of workers' compensation mental stress claims were recorded (in order of highest frequency) by nurse managers, police officers, welfare associate professionals, social workers, welfare and community officers and various types of teachers (special education, vocational education and secondary school). For men, among the highest frequency rate of workers' compensation mental stress claims were train drivers and assistants, prison officers, police officers, welfare associate professionals and teachers (primary and secondary school) (ASCC 2007c, p. 74).

People in these occupation groups are more likely to work in industries such as Health and community services, Education and Government administration and defence as shown in table E.1). These findings are consistent with the Community and Public Sector Union's (CPSU) comment that psychosocial hazards are more prevalent in the occupations of child protection, corrective services, probation and parole/community corrections; public housing and the sheriff's office (sub. DR19).

#### *Trends in rate of claims for work pressure*

The rate of accepted claims due to work pressure have declined markedly in the five years to 2007-08 in jurisdictions such as the Commonwealth, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT Government (table E.2).

**Table E.2 Trends in rate of accepted claims for work pressure by jurisdiction<sup>a</sup>**  
2003-04 to 2007-08<sup>p</sup>

|         | <i>Cwlth</i> | <i>NSW</i> | <i>Vic</i> | <i>Qld</i> | <i>SA</i> | <i>WA</i> | <i>Tas</i> | <i>NT</i> | <i>ACT<br/>priv.</i> | <i>ACT<br/>Govt</i> | <i>Aus</i> |
|---------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------------------|---------------------|------------|
| 2002-03 | 71.3         | 25.5       | 32.3       | 46.7       | 48.5      | 13.9      | 70.8       | 33.2      | 10.6                 | 207.8               | 34         |
| 2003-04 | 89.1         | 36.1       | 29.5       | 39.6       | 49.5      | 17.8      | 69.3       | 33.4      | 22                   | 195.1               | 36.7       |
| 2004-05 | 79.6         | 36.9       | 27.5       | 34.9       | 43.7      | 16.6      | 63.3       | 38.1      | 14.5                 | 102.7               | 34.3       |
| 2005-06 | 67.8         | 26.4       | 26.9       | 28.2       | 42        | 13.2      | 73.9       | 31.9      | 6.9                  | 146.5               | 29         |
| 2006-07 | 54.7         | 26.4       | 22.9       | 23.4       | 46.1      | 14.6      | 76.3       | 16.9      | 4.1                  | 122.7               | 26.9       |
| 2007-08 | 22.1         | 22.4       | 18.2       | 21.1       | 29.1      | 11.8      | 76.2       | 15        | 11.9                 | 103.7               | 21.6       |

<sup>p</sup> preliminary data. <sup>a</sup> Rates per 100 000 employees.

Source: Data provided by Safe Work Australia with permission from state and territory governments.

Claims for work pressure include claims for disorders from work responsibilities and workloads along with claims for interpersonal conflicts and workplace performance or promotion issues. Claims for disorders from work responsibilities and workloads are close to jurisdictional definitions of factors which contribute to fatigue. However claims for interpersonal conflicts and workplace performance or promotion issues are beyond jurisdictional definitions of psychosocial hazards.

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Tasmania was the only jurisdiction to experience an increase in the rate of claims due to work pressure over this period. Despite these falls, claims due to work pressure account for a large proportion of claims for mental stress claims in many jurisdictions (see table 11.3 in Chapter 11). The ACT Government and Tasmania recorded the highest rates of claims for work pressure in 2007-08 (table E.2).