

Combating occupational disease

Australian workers' exposure to disease-causing hazards

Fleur Champion de Crespigny PhD | E-mail: fleur.decrespigny@safeworkaustralia.gov.au



safe work australia

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au

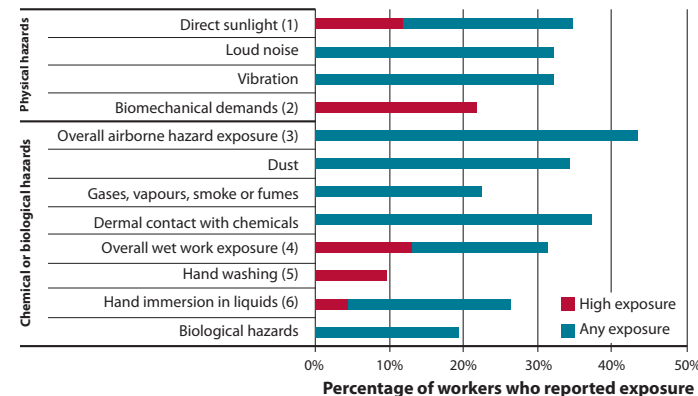
Policy implications

of a national hazard exposure survey

- Young workers are more likely to report exposure to hazards than older workers
- Small workplaces generally have poorer control provisions than larger workplaces
- Relatively small proportions of workers report training is provided about hazards and their health consequences
 - Survey findings have led to:
 - consideration of regulation for vibration exposure
 - consideration of policy and regulatory options for dermal exposure to chemicals and wet work
 - development of new codes of practice for blood borne pathogens and guidance for biological hazards

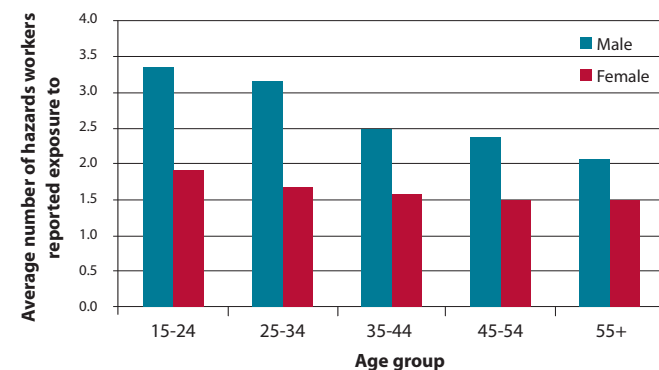


Individual hazard exposure



- (1) High exposure = exposed > 4 h per day
- (2) High exposure = composite exposure score in top 25th percentile
- (3) Overall exposure = exposure to Dust and/or Gases, vapours, smoke or fumes
- (4) Any overall exposure = high exposure to hand washing and/or any hand immersion in liquids; High overall exposure = high hand washing and/or high immersion in liquids
- (5) High exposure = hand washing > 20 times per day
- (6) High exposure = hands immersed > 2h per day

Multiple hazard exposure



Key statistics

for priority industries*

- 81% of workers reported exposure to at least one hazard
- 32% of workers reported exposure to four or more hazards
- 61% of workers reported exposure to at least one physical hazard⁽¹⁾
- 74% of workers reported exposure to at least one chemical⁽²⁾, biological or wet work hazard⁽³⁾

(1) noise, vibration, high exposure to direct sunlight or biomechanical demands,
(2) dermal chemicals or overall exposure to airborne dusts, gases, vapours, smoke or fumes,
(3) high overall exposure to wet work

* Manufacturing, Agriculture, forestry & fishing, Construction, Transport & storage, Health & community services



Rationale

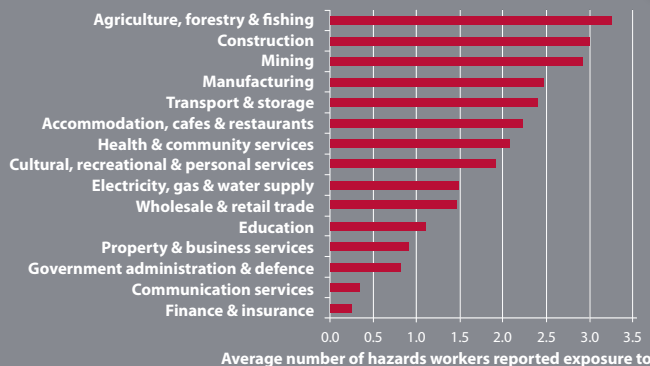
for national hazard exposure research

- Occupational disease data are not always useful for developing work health and safety policy
- Collection of hazard exposure data enables policy makers to identify groups of workers with potentially risky or unexpected hazard exposures
- Policy can be shaped to target the groups of workers most at risk of developing occupational diseases in the future
- Data can be used to monitor exposure prevalence over time and may contribute to estimates of the work contribution to the overall burden of disease



Image supplied courtesy of Queensland Health

Multiple hazard exposure by industry



About the survey...

- The National Hazard Exposure Worker Surveillance (NHEWS) survey was conducted in 2008
- 4500 workers from around Australia were surveyed by telephone about their exposure to eight occupational hazards associated with occupational disease
- Workers were also asked about the provision of controls for these hazards
- Demographic and employment information were collected from each worker

More information...

Detailed reports on the NHEWS study and each occupational hazard can be found on the Safe Work Australia website