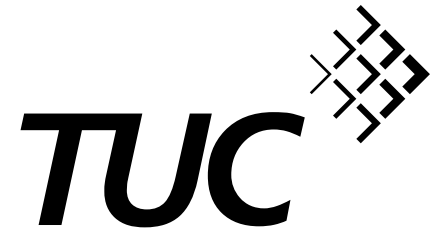


Trades Union Congress



trade union trends

# focus on health and safety

trade union trends survey 04/03  
TUC biennial survey of safety reps 2004



## **Contents**

- 1 Section one  
introduction**
- 3 Section two  
executive summary**
- 7 Section three  
hazards at work**
- 21 Section four  
stress and overwork**
- 27 Section five  
managing health and safety**
- 33 Section six  
rights for safety reps**
- 39 Section seven  
enforcement**
- 43 Section eight  
conclusions and recommendations**

## **acknowledgements**

The TUC would like to acknowledge:

- the trade union health and safety representatives who responded to the Safety Reps Survey 2004;
- the Labour Research Department for processing the completed questionnaires;
- Peter Kirby who wrote this report.

## Section one

# introduction

This is the fifth biennial TUC health and safety representatives' survey. The survey is designed to provide the TUC and individual unions with information about who safety reps are, and their experiences and needs. The TUC and individual unions use the information to do more to help safety reps and to ensure that safety reps' views and experiences are better reflected in public policy debates and the work of the Health and Safety Commission. Four thousand, five hundred and twenty one trade union health and safety representatives responded to the questionnaire online or by post during the late spring and summer 2004.

Some of the main characteristics about the safety reps who responded to questions about themselves include:

- just over one quarter are women (27%);
- seventy three per cent describe themselves as white and 2% describe themselves as black and ethnic minority; Afro Caribbean; African; or Asian. Twenty four per cent did not indicate their ethnic background;
- around one in seven (14%) are under the age of 35 years old; one in three (33%) are between 36 – 45 years old; and the largest group of respondents (around one in two - 48%) are in the age range between 46 -60 years old; one in twenty (5%) are over sixty years of age;
- six out of ten (61%) work in the public sector; with the largest groups coming from Local Government (9%); Central Government (11%) Education (12%); and Health Services (13%). The largest groups in the private sector come from Manufacturing (20%); and Transport and Communications (11%);
- one in five (21%) are based in workplaces with less than 50 workers. One out of six (17%) are based in workplaces with between 50-100 workers;
- more than eight out of ten responding (81%) have been working as safety reps for over one year, with over one in three (36%) working as safety reps for over 5 years;
- one half of those responding (49%) are union stewards as well as union safety reps, leaving the other half (51%) acting as specialised safety reps;
- respondents come from all over Britain, with the largest groups from the South East including London (20%); the Midlands (16%); Scotland (15%);

## introduction

and the North West (13%);

- seven out of ten (70%) responded by filling in a paper questionnaire and three out of ten (30%) responded online;
- most have access to the web either at home (68% compared with 56% in 2002) or at work (61% compared with 28% in 2002). Four out of ten (41% compared with 9% in 2002) have access at both home and work.

It was the first time that online returns could be made and 30% submitted online survey responses. Those making more use of online returns are:

- from workplaces with over 1000 workers (42%);
- from Energy & Water (46%); Local Government (39%); Leisure Services (38%) and Transport & Communications (38%);
- from London (40%); the South West (38%); and the North West (36%);
- in the 36 – 45 age bracket (35%);
- men (34%) compared with women (21%).

## Section two

# executive summary

### **Key findings**

Key findings from the responses to the TUC 2004 survey reveal that:

- overwork or stress remains the main hazard of concern to workers, with over half of the safety reps responding (58%) identifying it;
- as in previous years, stress or overwork is still the major concern across most sectors. It is rated as the main hazard of concern in ten out of the fourteen sectors. The Banking, Finance and Insurance sector is by far the worst (83%) for overwork or stress;
- stress or overwork is the overwhelming concern in all sizes of undertakings, appearing to be more of a concern in workplaces with over 1000 workers (63%). Overall, the most stressed out parts of Britain are South West England and Scotland;
- musculoskeletal disorders are still a major problem in the workplace and seem to be getting worse. Repetitive strain injuries (40%) and back strains (35%) are placed second and third respectively in the main hazards of concern. In addition, another 13% identified handling heavy loads as a main concern;
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) drops from the third main concern in 2002 to the fourth main concern in 2004. One in three respondents (32%) cites it as a major issue;
- the top four hazards mentioned above have headed all the TUC biennial surveys since 1996;
- slips, trips and falls on the same level (28%) have moved up from the seventh main concern in 2002 to the fifth main concern in 2004;
- four out of every five safety reps (79%) identifying overwork or stress in their workplaces identify workloads as a factor. Around one half of the safety reps also cite change and cuts in staff;
- over half of the safety reps (53%) say that their employers have conducted adequate risk assessments. But in the Education sector, 11% of safety reps said that risk assessments had not been done, a further 18% did not know and 6% said risk assessments had not been recorded;
- where there are risk assessments in existence, less than three out of ten safety reps (29%) are happy with their involvement in drawing them up. Almost half the safety reps (44%) are not involved at all;

## executive summary

- the percentage of safety reps reporting that their employer provides occupational health services stands at 83%, a similar figure to 2002. But it seems that occupational health services are again more preoccupied with sickness monitoring, first aid, health surveillance, pre-employment screening and disciplinary assessments. And still limited in relation to the provision of preventive services;
- six out of ten safety reps have done a TUC/Union Stage 1 course, and one in three have done a TUC/Union Stage 2 course. The two main reasons given by those who had been unable to access training are being too busy at work, and management refusal;
- one in five of the safety reps are never automatically consulted about health and safety matters;
- one in two safety reps conducts three or more inspections per year;
- more experienced safety reps spend more time on health and safety matters than their less experienced counterparts;
- almost two out of ten workplaces (17%) do not have a joint management – union health and safety committee;
- four out of ten (39%) safety reps say that as far as they know a health and safety inspector has *never* inspected their workplace;
- where a health and safety inspector has visited a workplace, 38% say that they or other safety reps were *not* spoken to by the inspector and 26% did not know;
- according to safety reps, seven out of ten employers make some health and safety improvements or better comply with the law because of the *possibility* of an inspector's visit;
- legal enforcement notices have a wide impact upon employers' practices. Six out of ten (61%) employers comply with the notice and also are stimulated to review other practices in the company in different departments and/or work activities;
- only four out of ten employers (42%) are involving safety reps in planning changes following the receipt of an inspector's enforcement notice;
- an increasing percentage of safety reps have access to the web either at home (68%) or at work (61%). Four out of ten (41%) have access at both home and work;
- just under half of safety reps (49%) double up as shop stewards.



## Conclusions

The main conclusions that the TUC draws from this survey are:

- Employers are failing to tackle the main occupational health challenges. Stress is the key issue within most workplaces, with the main causes being overload and staff cuts. In addition, musculoskeletal disorders are still a major problem in the workplace and seem to be getting worse.
- By and large the issues identified by safety representatives as being their main concerns are those within the HSC priority programme.
- There has been no improvement in the number of employers offering an occupational health service, and where they do, it is more concerned with sickness monitoring than prevention.
- Although there has been a slight improvement in the number of employers conducting adequate risk assessments the figures are still abysmal, given that this is a legal duty. The public sector, which has higher rates on stress, is worst.
- Employers are not consulting safety representatives on risk assessments.
- Many safety representatives are having difficulty getting time off for training from their employer.
- There has been no improvement in the proportion of safety representatives who are women, under 35, are black or from an ethnic minority.
- Despite a lack of consultation and difficulties in getting time off, the overwhelming majority of safety representatives are inspecting their workplace at least once a year, and half had conducted three or more inspections.
- Visits by the HSE or Local Authority enforcement officers and even the possibility of a visit, have an effect in changing the safety culture within an organisation.
- Many inspectors are not initiating contact with safety representatives when they visit a workplace where there is a safety representative.

## Recommendations

The TUC recommends that:

- The HSC, TUC and trade unions continue to address those areas within the priority programme, in particular stress and musculoskeletal disorders.
- The HSC must look at reviewing the Safety Representatives and Safety

## executive summary

Committees Regulations to ensure that safety representatives are consulted about risk assessments. They should also enforce the current regulations concerning general consultation with safety representatives.

- Visits by HSE and Local Authority inspectors should be seen as being one of the most effective methods of improving the health and safety culture within the workplace. But the enforcement authorities must ensure that inspectors liaise fully with safety representatives, and where they do not exist ensure that the employer is consulting with the workforce.
- The current regulations and guidance on training of safety representatives need to be reviewed and strengthened.
- The TUC and trade unions should seek to ensure that they encourage members from those groups under-represented at present, to become safety representatives.

## Section three

# hazards at work

### main hazards

Safety reps were asked to identify up to five of the main hazards of concern to workers at their workplace. *Table 1* shows the responses and compares them with the responses in 1998, 2000 and 2002. The top four hazards have headed all the previous TUC biennial survey results.

As in previous TUC surveys of safety reps, overwork or stress is still by far the most frequently identified main hazard of concern. In 2004, overwork or stress was identified by a slightly larger percentage of safety reps (58%), compared with 56% in 2002.

Musculoskeletal disorders are still a major problem in the workplace and seem to be getting worse. The 2004 survey shows that repetitive strain injuries (40%) and back strains (35%) are placed second and third respectively in the main hazards of concern. Concerns about repetitive strain injuries (RSI) have increased by 3% from 37% in 2002. Back strains have moved up from fourth to the third main hazard of concern and the percentage identifying them has increased by 4% from 31% in 2002. In addition, another 13% identified handling heavy loads as a main concern.

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) drops from the third main concern in 2002 to the fourth main concern in 2004. One in three respondents (32%) cites it as a major issue, which is slightly less than the figure in 2002 (34%). However, repetitive strain injuries, backache and stress can all be associated with DSE work, so the problem may be greater than the figure of 32% shows.

Slips, trips and falls on the same level (28%) have moved up from the seventh main concern in 2002 to the fifth main concern in 2004. In addition, slips, trips and falls from a height are identified by 7% in 2004. One of the traditional causes of injury in the workplace is still a major concern to workers.

Other key features of the responses about hazards in the 2004 survey are:

- concerns about working alone (27%) have moved up to the sixth main concern, although the percentage is the same as the 2002 and 1998 surveys;

## hazards at work

- long hours of work (25%) is the seventh main hazard of concern in the current survey, which is the same position as the 2000 survey. However, less safety reps are identifying it compared with 2002 and 2000 (29%);
- violence and threats are identified by 22% in 2004 and is the eighth main hazard of concern. This shows a drop since 2002 when 28% identified the problem;
- chemicals or solvents (21%); high temperatures (19%) showing a 4% rise since 2002; noise (17%); dusts (15%); and machinery hazards (13%) still feature as major issues. The percentage identifying bullying has increased from 10% in 2002 to 12% in 2004;
- transport at work concerns some workers with 6% identifying workplace transport accidents and 6% identifying road traffic accidents.

**Table 1: the main hazards of concern to workers**

Hazard	% cited in 2004	2002	2000	1998
Overwork or stress	58%	56%	66%	77%
Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI)	40%	37%	41%	37%
Back strains	35%	31%	44%	44%
Display Screen Equipment	32%	34%	36%	48%
Slips, trips, falls on the level	28%	28%	32%	<i>Not listed in 1998</i>
Working alone	27%	27%	32%	28%
Long hours of work	25%	29%	29%	25%
Violence and threats	22%	30%	28%	28%
Chemicals or solvents	21%	20%	24%	33%
High Temperatures	19%	15%	20%	27%
Noise	17%	20%	25%	30%
Dusts	15%	17%	21%	19%
Machinery hazards	13%	14%	22%	24%
Handling heavy loads	13%	11%	26%	<i>Not listed in 1998</i>
Bullying	12%	10%	17%	<i>Not listed in 1998</i>
Infections	7%	8%	10%	15%
Low temperatures	7%	8%	11%	16%
Slips, trips, falls from a height	7%	5%	9%	<i>Not listed in 1998</i>
Dermatitis/skin rashes	6%	5%	11%	12%
Workplace transport accidents	6%	8%	<i>Not listed in 2000 and 1998</i>	
Road traffic accidents	6%	4%	<i>Not listed in 2000 and 1998</i>	
Asbestos	5%	4%	5%	5%
Vibration	3%	3%	5%	4%
Passive smoking	3%	2%	<i>Not listed in 2000 and 1998</i>	
Asthma	2%	3%	4%	4%

*Note: percentages for 2004 exclude respondents who ticked more than five main hazards.*

### hazards by sector

Comparison in general terms between the public and the private sectors show similar results for problems associated with repetitive strain injuries, back strains and long hours. But there are some marked differences between some of the major concerns reflecting the different nature of work and the workplace.

examples of hazards	public	private
Overwork or stress	64%	48%
Display screen equipment	37%	24%
Violence and threats	31%	7%
Working alone	30%	22%
Infections	11%	2%
Bullying	15%	6%
Slips, trips & falls on the level	24%	36%
Noise	9%	30%
Chemicals or solvents	14%	32%
Dusts	10%	23%
Machinery	7%	22%
Workplace transport accidents	4%	10%

*Table 2* provides more detailed analysis of specific economic sectors comparing the five major concerns of workers in each one. As in previous years, the figures demonstrate that stress or overwork is still the major concern across most sectors. It appears amongst the top five concerns in all fourteen sectors and is rated as the main hazard of concern in ten of them. Repetitive strain injuries appear amongst the top five concerns in 11 out of 14 sectors, increasing from 8 sectors in 2002. Back strains appear amongst the top five concerns in 8 out of 14 sectors. This shows that musculoskeletal disorders are still a major problem in many sectors. Slips, trips and falls on the same level appear amongst the top five concerns in 9 out of 14 sectors and display screen equipment in 8 out of 14.

**Table 2: the 5 main hazards of concern to workers by sector**

Sector	1 <sup>st</sup> Concern	2 <sup>nd</sup> Concern	3 <sup>rd</sup> Concern	4 <sup>th</sup> Concern	5 <sup>th</sup> Concern
Agriculture & Fishing	Stress (46%)	RSI (42%)	Working alone (39%)	Back strains (35%)	Chemicals (31%)
Health Services	Stress (60%)	Back strains (59%)	Working alone (52%)	RSI (46%)	Violence (34%)
Distribution & Hotels	Back strains (56%)	Stress (46%)	Slips & trips on level (43%)	Heavy loads (41%)	Long hours (34%)
Banking, Finance, Insurance	Stress (83%)	RSI (68%)	DSE (64%)	High temp (36%)	Long hours (26%)
Voluntary Sector	Stress (65%)	Lone Working (49%)	RSI (43%)	Back strains (38%)	DSE (38%)
Education	Stress (72%)	Violence (30%)	Long hours (28%)	DSE (24%)	Slips & trips on level (23%)
Manufacturing	Chemicals (44%)	RSI (43%)	Noise (42%)	Stress (38%)	Slips & trips on level (36%)
Energy & Water	Stress (58%)	Slips & trips on level (44%)	Lone working (40%)	DSE (38%)	RSI (34%)
Leisure Services	Stress (57%)	Long hours (46%)	Slips & trips level (41%)	DSE (38%)	Back strains (35%)
Construction	Back strains (46%)	RSI (35%)	Stress (31%)	Dusts (30%)	Slips & trips height (30%)
Local Govt.	Stress (69%)	DSE (46%)	Violence (42%)	RSI (40%)	Lone working (39%)
Central Govt.	DSE (75%)	Stress (71%)	RSI (67%)	Violence (35%)	High temp (30%)
Transport & Communications	Stress (56%)	Slips & trips (42%)	Long hours (40%)	Back strains (38%)	RSI (31%)
Other Services	Stress (58%)	RSI (44%)	DSE (39%)	Back strains (31%)	Slips & trips on level (30%)

*Note: percentages exclude respondents who ticked more than five main hazards.*

With the exception of Central Government, Manufacturing, Construction, and Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants, overwork or stress is the main concern in ten of the fourteen sectors. Other key points to emerge are listed below.

## hazards at work

### **Agriculture and fishing**

In 2004, RSI is ranked second (42%) behind stress (46%). Working alone (39%) is again one of the top five hazards of concern in agriculture and fishing. Back strains (35%) moves into the top five concerns in place of Display Screen Equipment. Chemicals or solvents (31%) have appeared in the top five concerns for this sector in every TUC biennial survey. Agriculture and fishing is the worst sector for asthma (4%).

### **Health services**

Health Services is the worst sector for back strains (59%); working alone (52%) and infections (25%). Two hazards show the highest percentage recorded in Health Services since the TUC started conducting biennial surveys:

- over one in two (52%) now identify working alone as a main hazard of concern;
- nearly one in two (46%) identify repetitive strain injuries.

Violence and threats have moved out of the top five concerns and show the lowest percentage (34%) since the TUC started biennial surveys.

### **Distribution, hotels and restaurants**

This is the worst sector for handling heavy loads (41%), workplace transport (20%) and low temperatures (20%). It is also the second worst sector for back strains (56%), slips, trips and falls on the level (43%) and road traffic accidents (18%). Back strains (56%) remain the major concern for safety reps and handling heavy loads (41%) has moved back into the top five concerns. The percentage identifying stress (46%) has increased by 8% since 2002. Long hours of work are cited by over one in three safety reps (34%).



### **Banking, finance and insurance**

Banking, Finance and Insurance is by far the worst for overwork or stress (83%), which has been the main hazard of concern in the sector in all previous TUC biennial surveys. It is again the worst sector for repetitive strain injuries (68%), showing least two out of three identify it as a main hazard of concern, which is the same as all previous TUC biennial surveys. High temperatures appear in the top five concerns for the first time since 1998. It is the worst sector for high temperatures and this problem is identified by a much larger percentage (36%) than 2002 (23%). It is also the worst sector for bullying (21%). It is the second worst sector for display screen equipment (64%). Long hours (26%) are again in the top five as they were in the 2000 and 2002 surveys.

### **Voluntary sector**

Stress (65%) is still the main concern in the Voluntary sector. But working alone (49%) has returned as the second main concern this year, the same as in the 2000 survey. It is the second worst sector for concerns about working alone. Musculoskeletal disorders (43% RSI and 38% back strains) appear amongst the top five concerns. Concerns about DSE have diminished as a main hazard of concern from 50% in 2002 to 38% in 2004 and concerns about violence and threats have diminished from 38% in 2002 to 27% in 2004.

### **Education**

Education is second only to Banking, Finance and Insurance in the identification of overwork or stress (72%) as a major concern. Violence and threats (30%) is the second main concern and is identified more frequently than the average for all sectors. Long hours (28%), DSE (24%) and slips, trips and falls on the level (23%) appear again in the top five concerns as they did in the 2002 survey. It is the second worst sector (along with Central & Local Government) for concerns about bullying (19%). It is the third worst sector for concerns about infection (11%).

### **Manufacturing**

As in the 2002 survey, the Manufacturing sector is again the worst for concerns about chemicals or solvents (44%), noise (42%), dusts (35%) and machinery (34%). In addition, it has become the worst sector for dermatitis/skin rashes (14%). Chemicals and noise have appeared in the top five concerns in each

## hazards at work

TUC biennial survey. RSI (43%) is the second highest concern and stress (38%) appears in the top five for the first time since 1998. Over one in five safety reps in manufacturing (23%) identify high temperatures as a main hazard of concern.

### **Energy and water**

Stress (58%) is still the main concern in the Energy and Water sector. Slips, trips and falls on the level (44%) are bigger concerns for workers in Energy and Water, than in any other sector. The hazards connected with working alone (40%) have returned to the third main item of concern, after being fifth in 2002. RSI (34%) appears in the top five concerns for the first time. It is the second worst sector for concerns about chemicals or solvents (32%), asbestos (16%), and vibration (8%).

### **Leisure services**

Stress (57%) is still the main concern in this sector. The problem of long hours of work (46%) is increasing, making it the second main concern in the sector and the worst sector overall. Back strains (35%) are again amongst the top five concerns as they have been in every TUC biennial survey. Slips, trips and falls on the level (41%) and DSE (38%) return to the top five concerns. The problem of handling heavy loads (30%) has increased by 9% since 2002.

### **Construction**

The main concern in Construction is back strains (46%) with repetitive strain injuries second (35%). This shows the continuing problem with musculoskeletal disorders in the industry. It is the first time that RSI has featured amongst the top five concerns. However, noise has dropped out of the top five for the first time since the TUC began its biennial surveys. Overwork or stress (31%) becomes one of the top five concerns again, increasing by 16% since 2002. Construction is the worst sector for concerns about slips, trips and falls from a height (28%) and about asbestos (18%). It is the second worst sector for dusts (30%), noise (28%), and dermatitis/skin rashes (6%).

### **Local government**

The top five concerns in Local Government are the same in 2004 as they were in 2002. Stress (69%), DSE (46%) and violence (42%) have all appeared

amongst the top five concerns for this sector in every TUC biennial survey. There are increasing concerns about overwork or stress (69%) which is 11% higher than 2002, and RSI (40%) which is 7% higher than 2002. Local government is the worst sector for violence and threats (42%) and is the second worst sector (along with Central Government and Education) for concerns about bullying (19%). It is the third worst sector for concerns about working alone (39%).

### **Central government**

DSE (75%), stress (71%), RSI (67%) and violence (35%) have all appeared amongst the top five concerns for this sector in every TUC biennial survey. For the first time, DSE has replaced stress as the number one concern for safety reps and workers in Central Government. In addition, it is the worst sector for concerns about DSE. It is the second worst sector for:

- RSI (67%), reverting to the high levels of concern shown in 2000;
- violence and threats (35%);
- high temperatures (30%), which has entered the top five concerns for the first time; and
- bullying (19%) - along with Local Government and Education.

### **Transport and communications**

Stress (56%), slips, trips and falls on the level (42%), long hours (40%) and back strains (38%) have all appeared amongst the top five concerns for this sector in each TUC biennial survey. The totals for slips, trips and falls on the level and from heights when they are combined, have increased from 2002 and continue to be a major problem (58%). RSI (31%) appears amongst the top five concerns for the first time. Transport and Communications is the worst sector for road traffic accidents (21%). It is the second worst sector for long hours of work (40%), concerns about workplace transport (20%), and slips, trips and falls from a height (16%).

### **Other services**

Stress, RSI, DSE, slips, trips and falls and back strains have been the top five concerns in all TUC biennial surveys.

## hazards at work

### hazards and workplace size

Table 3 shows the five major health and safety concerns of the safety reps, according to how many people work at the workplace.

**Table 3: main hazards at work and workplace size**

Number of workers	1 <sup>st</sup> Concern	2 <sup>nd</sup> Concern	3 <sup>rd</sup> Concern	4 <sup>th</sup> Concern	5 <sup>th</sup> Concern
Under 50	Stress (59%)	Back strains (36%)	Lone working (33%)	RSI (31%)	Long hours (26%)
50-100	Stress (55%)	RSI (39%)	Back strain (34%)	DSE (31%)	Slips & trips (26%)
Over 100	Stress (55%)	RSI (41%)	Back strains (35%)	Slips & trips (29%)	DSE (29%)
Over 200	Stress (58%)	RSI (44%)	DSE (37%)	Back strains (36%)	Slips & trips (32%)
Over 1000	Stress (63%)	RSI (47%)	DSE (38%)	Slips & trips (34%)	Back strains (32%)

*Note: percentages exclude respondents who ticked more than five main hazards.*

Table 4 compares some of the hazards identified by safety reps according to the size of their workplace.

**Table 4: comparison of some different hazards by workplace size**

Hazard	Under 50	50-100	Over 100	Over 200	Over 1000
Chemicals	(14%)	(21%)	(23%)	(24%)	(21%)
Noise	(12%)	(18%)	(22%)	(21%)	(13%)
Dusts	(12%)	(19%)	(19%)	(16%)	(11%)
Slips & trips on level	(21%)	(26%)	(29%)	(32%)	(34%)
DSE	(24%)	(31%)	(29%)	(37%)	(38%)
RSI	(31%)	(39%)	(41%)	(44%)	(47%)
Back strains	(36%)	(34%)	(35%)	(36%)	(32%)
Lone working	(33%)	(29%)	(23%)	(24%)	(29%)
Violence	(24%)	(22%)	(25%)	(18%)	(23%)
Bullying	(11%)	(10%)	(13%)	(11%)	(14%)

*Note: percentages exclude respondents who ticked more than five main hazards.*

Some of the key features from Table 3 and Table 4 include:

- stress or overwork is again the overwhelming concern in all sizes of undertakings, appearing to be more of a concern in workplaces with over

1000 workers (63%);

- musculoskeletal disorders (RSI and back strains), are a main concern in all sizes of workplace. The problem of RSI gets progressively worse as the number of workers increases. Thirty one per cent of safety reps in workplaces with under 50 workers consider it as a main problem, and 47% view it as a main problem in workplaces with over 1000 workers;
- concerns about display screen equipment get worse as the number of workers increases, rising from 24% in workplaces with under 50 workers to 40% in workplaces with over 1000 workers;
- slips and trips on the level has moved into the top five concerns for all workplaces with over 50 workers;
- as in the TUC 2002 survey, working alone concerns safety reps more in workplaces with under 50 workers (33%);
- safety reps are more concerned about noise, chemicals and dusts in workplaces with over 100 and over 200 workers;
- slips, trips and falls on the level are more of a concern in larger workplaces, 200 - 1000 workers (32%) and over 1000 workers (34%);
- again bullying is a bigger problem in workplaces with more than 1000 workers (14%).

### hazards by region/country

Table 5 shows each hazard and the region (or country) in Great Britain where concerns are the highest and second highest.

**Table 5: main hazards by region/country**

Hazard	Worst area	2 <sup>nd</sup> worst area	National concern
Overwork or stress	South West 62.9%	Scotland 62.4%	58%
Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI)	North West 45.0%	Wales 44.7%	40%
Back strains	Northern 50.2%	East Anglia 39.1%	35%
Display Screen Equipment	London 45.5%	South West 39.1%	32%
Slips, trips, falls on the level	Wales 32.1%	Midlands 31.5%	28%
Working alone	South East 31.0%	South West 29.4%	27%
Long hours of work	London 37.4%	Yorkshire 29.4%	25%
Violence and threats	Scotland 26.7%	London 25.9%	22%
Chemicals or solvents	North West 27.6%	Wales 26.8%	21%
High temperatures	London 23.9%	Yorkshire 23.3%	19%
Noise	Wales 22.6%	Yorkshire 20.1%	17%

## hazards at work

Dusts	Yorkshire 20.7%	North West 17.9%	15%
Machinery hazards	Wales 23.2%	Yorkshire 15.9%	13%
Handling heavy loads	Northern 20.2%	Wales 18.9%	13%
Bullying	London 19.2%	Scotland 13.5%	12%
Infections	Scotland 10.7%	South East 7.4%	7%
Low temperatures	Scotland 10.5%	East Anglia 9.3%	7%
Slips, trips, falls from a height	Yorkshire 9.1%	South East 8.8%	7%
Workplace transport accidents	Northern 8.2%	South West 8.0%	6%
Dermatitis/skin rashes	Northern 7.8%	Midlands 7.3%	6%
Road traffic accidents	East Anglia 9.3%	South East 7.6%	6%
Asbestos	Wales 6.8%	Scotland 5.8%	5%
Vibration	Northern 4.3%	Midlands 3.6%	3%
Passive smoking	South West 3.7%	South East 3.3%	3%
Asthma	London 2.7%	Scotland 2.1%	2%

*Note: percentages exclude respondents who ticked more than five main hazards.*

Some of the key features that stand out from *Table 5* include:

- the Northern region (including Cumbria) is again the worst for handling heavy loads (20%); and is now also the worst for back strains (50%); dermatitis/skin rashes (8%); workplace transport accidents (8%); and vibration (4%);
- like the two previous TUC surveys, Scotland is again the worst for low temperatures (10%). In addition, it is now the worst for violence (27%); and infections (11%). It is the second worst for overwork or stress (62%) bullying (14%); and asthma (2.1%);
- Wales is the worst for slips, trips and falls on the level (32%); machinery hazards (23%); noise (23%); and asbestos (7%);
- the Midlands region is the second worst for slips, trips and falls on the level (32%); dermatitis/skin rashes (7%); and vibration (4%);
- the North West region is the worst for RSI (45%); and chemicals or solvents (28%). It is the second worst for dusts (18%);
- the South East is the worst region for working alone (31%). It is the second worst for slips, trips and falls from a height (9%); and road traffic accidents (8%);
- East Anglia is the worst for road traffic accidents (9%). It is the second worst for back strains (39%); and low temperatures (9%);
- as in the 2002 and 2000 surveys, London is the worst region for hazards

from display screen equipment (46%); and long hours of work (37%). It is now also the worst for high temperatures (24%); bullying (19%); and asthma (3%);

- Yorkshire and Humberside is again the worst for dusts (21%) and now the worst for slips, trips and falls from a height (9%). It is the second worst for long hours of work (29%); high temperatures (23%); noise (20%); and machinery hazards (16%);
- the South West is the worst for overwork or stress (63%); and passive smoking (4%). It is the second worst for display screen equipment (39%); working alone (29%); and workplace transport accidents (8%).

There is a considerable degree of consistency amongst the main hazards identified in the regional/country analysis shown in *Table 6*:

- the main concern for each region/country (with the exception of the Northern region) is overwork or stress;
- repetitive strain injuries feature in the top five concerns for each region/country, and the percentages identifying RSI are all higher than 2002;
- back strains feature in the top five in every country/region;
- display screen equipment is identified in the top five concerns in five English regions, and Scotland and Wales;
- slips, trips, & falls on the level are identified in the top five concerns in six English regions, and Wales;
- long hours of work is amongst the top five concerns in the Yorkshire and Humberside, the South East and London.

## hazards at work

**Table 6: main hazards of concern by region/country**

Region/ country	1 <sup>st</sup> Concern	2 <sup>nd</sup> Concern	3 <sup>rd</sup> Concern	4 <sup>th</sup> Concern	5 <sup>th</sup> Concern
Scotland	Stress (62%)	Back strains (32%)	RSI (29%)	Violence (27%)	DSE (26%)
Wales	Stress (50%)	RSI (45%)	Back strains (35%)	DSE (34%)	Slips/trips (32%)
Northern	Back strains (50%)	Stress (49%)	RSI (42%)	Slips/trips (29%)	Lone working (27%)
North West	Stress (59%)	RSI (45%)	DSE (36%)	Back strains (33%)	Slips/trips (30%)
Yorkshire	Stress (52%)	RSI (42%)	Back strains (35%)	Slips/trips (31%)	Long hours (29%)
Midlands	Stress (56%)	RSI (40%)	Back strains (35%)	Slips/trips (32%)	Lone working (28%)
South West	Stress (63%)	RSI (44%)	DSE (39%)	Slips/trips (31%)	Back strains (29%)
South East	Stress (61%)	RSI (41%)	DSE (37%)	Back strains (36%)	Long hours (29%)
East Anglia	Stress (56%)	RSI (44%)	Back strains (39%)	DSE (31%)	Slips/trips (28%)
London	Stress (60%)	DSE (46%)	RSI (42%)	Long hours (37%)	Back strains (28%)

*Note: percentages exclude respondents who ticked more than five main hazards.*



## Section four

# stress and overwork

As in all previous TUC biennial surveys, by far the most common concern of safety reps is overwork or stress. The percentage citing stress has slightly increased to 58% in the 2004 TUC survey from 56% in the 2002 survey. The problem is significant, with over one out of two safety reps citing it as a main hazard of concern to workers. Overwork or stress accounts is 18% higher than the next most frequently cited hazard, repetitive strain injuries (40%).

The picture is similar for all different sizes of workplace, different regions/countries and most economic sectors:

- in all sizes of workplace, the percentage citing stress or overwork is over 50%, and where there are over 1000 workers the percentage rises to 63%;
- overwork or stress is more of a concern in the public sector (64%), than in the private sector (48%) and this represents an increase in both sectors since 2002;
- in ten out of fourteen economic sectors, stress or overwork is the top complaint of workers. And in ten of these fourteen sectors, the percentage citing stress is consistently over 50% and goes as high as 83%;
- in all English regions, Scotland and Wales, the percentage citing stress is over 49%, going as high as 63% in South West England.

In order to find out more about what is causing overwork or stress, the TUC survey asked safety reps identifying overwork or stress as a major problem, to state which issues were a problem at their workplaces. The 2004 survey listed the same potential causes of overwork or stress for safety reps to identify as those in the 2002 survey. *Table 7* shows a comparison of the results for 2004, 2002, 2000 and 1998. There is an analysis underneath *Table 7* of the results relating to each of the potential causes of overwork or stress.

**Table 7: Factors linked to overwork or stress**

Factor	Problem issues 2004 survey	Problem issues 2002 survey	Problem issues 2000 survey	Problem issues 1998 survey
Workloads	79%	80%	74%	60%
Cuts in staff	49%	50%	53%	60%
Change	47%	52%	44%	no equivalent

## stress and overwork

Long hours	37%	41%	39%	28%
Bullying	27%	28%	30%	21%
Shiftwork	22%	22%	30%	22%
Cramped working conditions	17%	19%	16%	14%
Redundancies	14%	12%	17%	15%
Sex or racial harassment	3%	4%	6%	5%

### Workloads

In the 2004 survey, workloads are again top of the list of problems linked with overwork or stress. The problem of workloads is far greater than it was in 1998. In 2004, four out of every five safety reps (79%) identifying overwork or stress in their workplaces, consider that workloads are a problem.

Compared to the private sector (73%), the problem of workloads is greater in the public sector (83%) and the voluntary sector (77%). For individual sectors, workloads are a particular problem identified by safety reps in:

- Education (88%);
- Central Government (85%);
- Health Services, Local Government and Banking, Finance and Insurance (all 83%).

Safety reps in all sizes of workplace identified workloads as a major problem, but the worst are workplaces with between 100-200 workers (84%).

Workloads are a particular problem in South West England where 86% identified them as an issue related to stress.

### Cuts in staff

Staff cuts have gone up from third to second place as a main problem related to stress. Staff cuts are identified by half the safety reps (49%) in the 2004 survey, showing similar results to those in the 2002 and 2000 surveys. They are identified more often in the private sector (53%) than in the public.

For individual sectors, as in 2000, cuts in staff are a particular problem identified by safety reps in:

- Central Government (69%); and

- Banking, Finance and Insurance (59%).

Staff cuts are more of a concern to safety reps in:

- workplaces with between 100 - 200 workers (51%) and over 1000 workers (55%); and in
- London (57%) and the South East (54%).

### **Change**

Change was identified by 47% of safety reps in 2004, falling from 52% in the 2002 survey. This was sufficient to move 'Change' into third place, as a problem linked to overwork or stress. It was identified more often in the public (51%) and voluntary sectors (54%) rather than the private (39%).

For individual sectors, change is a particular problem identified by safety reps in:

- Central Government (66%); and
- the Voluntary sector (63%).

Safety reps in all sizes of workplace identified change as a problem, with the highest concentration in workplaces with between 100-200 workers (49%) and over 1000 workers (51%). The worst regions identifying change are North West England (52%) and South West England (50%).

### **Long hours**

The problem of long hours (37%) linked to overwork or stress has decreased by 4% since the 2002 survey, but is still 9% higher than the 1998 survey. Long hours are identified more often in the private sector (41%) and voluntary sector (44%) than in the public.

For individual sectors, long hours linked to overwork or stress are above average in:

- Distribution, hotels and restaurants (61%);
- Leisure services (57%);
- Transport and Communications (52%);

## stress and overwork

- the Voluntary sector (46%).

Long hours of work linked to overwork or stress appear to be of most concern to safety reps in workplaces:

- with between 200 - 1000 workers (40%); and in
- London (45%) and the South East (41%).

### **Bullying**

According to safety reps in the 2004 survey, the problem of bullying at work linked to overwork or stress still seems to be a significant problem. The number of safety reps identifying it is just over one in four (27%). Bullying linked to stress is identified more often in the public sector (30%) and voluntary sector (29%) than in the private (20%).

Bullying is seen as an increasing problem since 2002 by safety reps in:

- Central Government (40% increasing from 37%);
- Local Government (37% increasing from 33%)

As shown in the TUC surveys in 2002 and 2000, bullying appears to be more of a problem as the size of the workplace increases. Thirty four per cent of safety reps from workplaces with over 1000 workers identified it as an issue linked to stress, compared with 18% in workplaces with fewer than 50 workers.

Bullying as an issue linked to stress is a particular problem in London (36%) and Wales (33%).

### **Shiftwork**

Shiftwork is identified by 22% in the 2004 survey, the same as in 2002.

Shiftwork is identified more often in the private sector (34%) than in the public.

Three individual sectors which identified shiftwork linked to overwork or stress in 2002, do so again in 2004:

- Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants (48% - increasing from 34% in 2002);
- Transport and Communications (43%);
- Manufacturing (41%).

As in 2002, shiftwork is of most concern to safety reps in workplaces with between 200 and 1000 workers (28%). Wales (26%) and South East England (26%) appear to be the worst for this problem linked to stress.

### **Cramped working conditions**

The percentage of safety reps identifying cramped working conditions is 17%, and is worse in the public sector (22%) than the private. In 2004, the percentage of safety reps mentioning cramped working conditions, linked to overwork or stress is the highest in:

- Construction (29%);
- Health services (28%);
- Local government (24%);
- the Voluntary sector (22%).

The results for cramped working conditions are worst for workplaces with over 1000 workers and are consistent for Wales, Scotland and English regions.

### **Redundancies**

Redundancies as a problem linked to overwork or stress increased from 12% in 2002, to 14% in 2004. The problem is particularly marked in the private sector:

- Agriculture and Fishing (42%)
- Manufacturing (32%); and
- Energy and Water (19%).

Redundancies are a particular problem in workplaces with over 1000 workers (19%). This compares with 9% in workplaces with fewer than 50 workers. London (23%) and North West England (17%) appear to be the worst for this problem linked to stress.

### **Sex or racial harassment**

The percentage of safety reps mentioning sex or racial harassment linked to overwork or stress declined to 3% in 2004, compared with 6% in 2000. The percentage of safety reps mentioning sex or racial harassment is higher in the Voluntary sector (8%) and Central Government (6%). Sex or racial harassment

## stress and overwork

appears to be more of a problem as the size of the workplace increases. Five per cent of safety reps from workplaces with over 1000 workers identified it as an issue linked to stress, compared with 1% in workplaces with fewer than 50 workers.

## Section five

# managing health and safety

Safety reps were questioned about the way that health and safety was managed in their workplace. As in previous surveys, the main focus of the questions was related to health and safety policies, written risk assessments and occupational health services.

### **Safety policies**

Ninety two per cent of employers have met the legal requirement to produce a written health and safety policy, which is similar to the figure from the 2002 survey (91%). According to the safety reps in the 2004 survey:

- the best individual sectors for the production of policies are Energy & Water (96%) and Central Government (95%). The worst sector is Agriculture and Fishing (86%);
- the best areas for the production of policies are Wales (94%); North West and South West England (both 94%);
- workplaces with under 50 workers are the worst (89%), compared with the largest (95%).

### **Risk assessments**

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and various other regulations, employers are obliged to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks. Where there are five or more workers, they should record the significant findings.

### **Adequate risk assessments**

In 2004, safety reps report a slight increase in the ability of their employers to conduct risk assessments – the key building block of good risk management. Over half of the safety reps responding to this question said that their employers had conducted adequate risk assessments (53% compared to 50% in 2002).

Further analysis shows that:

## managing health and safety

- generally, the private sector (57%) is better than the public sector (51%);
- the best individual sectors are Energy and Water (68%) and Banking, Finance and Insurance (66%);
- as in 2002, the sectors that are well below average for the production of adequate risk assessments include Local Government (42%) and Education (43%);
- South West England is the best (59%) for adequate risk assessments, with London again the worst (40%);
- workplaces with 100-200 workers (55%) are slightly better than other sizes of workplace.

### **Inadequate risk assessments**

According to safety reps responding to this question, 29% of employers have done risk assessments that are considered inadequate, which represents the same percentage as the 2002 and 2000 surveys. Other key points to emerge about inadequate risk assessments include:

- Local Government (38%) is the worst individual sector for inadequate risk assessments. It is amongst the worst for the third biennial survey running. Leisure Services (34%), also features this year;
- the worst region for inadequate risk assessments is London again with 39%, representing a 6% rise since 2002;
- like the three previous TUC biennial surveys, there appears to be more dissatisfaction with the way that risk assessments are done in larger workplaces. Twenty per cent of safety reps in workplaces with less than 50 workers consider the assessments inadequate, whereas 34% of safety reps in workplaces with over 1000 workers are of the same view. However, in smaller workplaces with less than 50 workers, 13% did not know whether formal risk assessments had been carried out, compared with only 5% in larger workplaces.

### **Risk assessments not done, not recorded or not known**

The situation regarding risk assessments not being done at all, has improved slightly since 2002. Eight per cent (compared with 10% in 2002) of safety reps responding to this question said that employers had not done risk assessments



at all. Again, 7% did not know whether they had been done and 2% said that they were not recorded.

On further analysis:

- in Education, 11% of safety reps said that risk assessments had not been done, a further 18% did not know and 6% said risk assessments had not been recorded;
- in the Health Services 14% of safety reps said that risk assessments had not been carried out, and in Local Government, 13% said the same;
- in Leisure Services, 15% of safety reps said that risk assessments had not been done; and
- in the Voluntary sector, 13% of safety reps said that risk assessments had not been done.

Like the last two TUC biennial surveys, London (14%) is the worst area for risk assessments not being carried out, and Scotland (14%) for safety reps not knowing whether risk assessments have been carried out. Again, 13% of safety reps in workplaces with under 50 workers did not know whether risk assessments had been carried out.

### **Safety reps' involvement in the risk assessment process**

Safety reps and their members have a wealth of experience and a detailed knowledge of the workplace and the jobs that are being done. Despite this, their involvement in the risk assessment process continues to be unsatisfactory.

Overall, less than three out of ten safety reps (29%) responding to this question are satisfied with their involvement in drawing up the risk assessment. Almost half the safety reps (44%) are not involved at all. Twenty seven per cent are involved, but not enough in drawing up risk assessments. These figures are very similar to those produced in previous TUC biennial surveys, so the situation is not getting better.

### **Employer provision of occupational health services**

The percentage of employers providing occupational health services stands at 83%, a similar figure to 2002. Fifty four per cent of the occupational health services are provided in house and 29% are external providers. However, the 2004 TUC survey again shows that access to occupational health services can

vary depending on the size of the workplace, and the individual sector. *Table 8* and *Table 9* show the breakdown by size of workplace and sector. The figures from the 2002 and 2000 surveys are included for comparative purposes. The survey shows that:

- provision of occupational health services is still below average but improving in the Voluntary Sector (74%) and Education (71%);
- Health Services (98%), Energy and Water (95%), and Local Government (92%) are still the three best sectors for provision;
- Agriculture and Fishing is the worst sector (63%); along with Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants (68%);
- Scotland is the worst for the provision of occupational health services (77%), and South West England the best (90%);
- workers in small workplaces are still worse off. Seventy seven per cent have access to occupational health services where there are less than 100 workers, compared with 95% where there are more than 1000 workers.

**Table 8: provision of occupational health services by workplace size**

Number of workers	Occupational Health Services provided		
	2004	2002	2000
Under 50	77%	75%	65%
50-100	77%	78%	70%
Over 100	84%	84%	70%
Over 200	89%	91%	79%
Over 1000	95%	97%	92%

**Table 9: provision of occupational health services by sector**

Sector	Occupational Health Services provided		
	2004	2002	2000
Agriculture & Fishing	63%	78%	64%
Health Services	98%	98%	96%
Distribution & Hotels	68%	73%	67%
Banking, Finance, Insurance	85%	85%	59%
Voluntary Sector	74%	67%	35%
Education	71%	60%	48%

Manufacturing	88%	90%	83%
Energy & Water	95%	96%	95%
Leisure Services	75%	82%	69%
Construction	72%	71%	69%
Local Government	92%	91%	78%
Central Government	88%	91%	65%
Transport & Communications	83%	88%	76%
Other Services	78%	82%	71%

**The role of occupational health services**

The responses shown in *Table 10* suggest that:

- occupational health services are still limited in relation to the provision of preventive services. The key focus should be the prevention of workplace health and safety risks, particularly through contributions to the risk assessment process. Yet preventive services, as in 2002 and 2000, are fifth in the list of services provided, still only just ahead of disciplinary assessments;
- overall the services provided are improving since 2002. Despite this, occupational health services are still more preoccupied with sickness monitoring, first aid, health surveillance, pre-employment screening and disciplinary assessments;
- sickness monitoring (61%) tops the list of services provided for the first time since the TUC began biennial safety rep surveys;
- there has been growth in access to rehabilitation since the last survey in 2002, going up to 33% from 24%;
- occupational health services still only provide records for safety reps in around one out of ten workplaces (11%).

## managing health and safety

**Table 10: occupational health services provided**

<b>Service provided</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>1998</b>
Sickness monitoring	61%	51%	61%	41%
First aid	60%	54%	71%	49%
Health surveillance	53%	41%	51%	40%
Pre-employment medical screening	46%	39%	48%	35%
Advice on prevention	34%	28%	34%	25%
Access to rehabilitation	33%	24%	23%	13%
Disciplinary assessments	32%	25%	30%	16%
Treatment	25%	19%	26%	22%
Records which safety reps are given	11%	10%	15%	9%

*Note: percentages do not total 100% because reps could tick any relevant services*

## Section six

# rights for safety reps

Safety reps have rights under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, plus additional consultation rights added because of European legislation. The 2004 survey asked safety reps a number of questions about some of their current rights.

### **Training**

Employers must allow safety reps to attend training during their working hours and without loss of pay. The Approved Code of Practice to the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 goes on to outline that this training, approved by the TUC or independent unions, should take place as soon as possible after a safety rep's appointment. The Code of Practice then describes further training that is required.

TUC Education, through the network of Trade Union Studies Centres in Colleges of Further Education and the WEA, provides a full range of accredited health and safety courses. In addition, some unions run their own approved training, including induction training. Some unions provide joint training with employers. In addition, some employers may provide training, usually to deal with specific matters relating to the safety rep's workplace.

*Table 11* shows that since the 2002 survey, there has been:

- a slight decrease of 3% in the percentage of safety reps who have participated in a TUC or trade union Stage 1 course;
- an 8% increase in the percentage of safety reps who have participated in other TUC/union health and safety courses;
- a four per cent increase in the percentage of experienced safety reps participating in the one year TUC Access Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety.

## rights for safety reps

**Table 11: training received**

Health & safety training received	2004	2002	2000	1998
TUC/Union Stage 1	60%	63%	73%	56%
TUC/Union Stage 2	34%	34%	33%	25%
Own union introductory course	31%	30%	33%	30%
Other TUC/Union courses	25%	17%	20%	19%
Course provided by employer	20%	17%	21%	19%
Joint union-employer course	7%	8%	10%	8%
TUC Certificate in OH&S	10%	6%	6%	n/a

*Note: percentages do not total 100% because reps could tick any course attended*

*Table 12* shows the training that safety reps have undertaken by how long they have been in post. Key points include:

- the percentage of safety reps in post for less than a year, who have participated in a TUC/Union Stage 1, has declined again from 55% in 2002 to 49% in 2004;
- one out of every three safety reps who have been in post for over one year have *not* participated in the essential TUC/Union Stage 1 course;
- as in the 2002 and 2000 TUC surveys, only one in three safety reps (35%) in post for 1-5 years, and just less than one in two safety reps (48%) in post for over 5 years, have attended a TUC/Union Stage 2 course. Substantial numbers of safety reps are missing out on crucial Stage 2 training;
- the percentage of less experienced safety reps participating in other TUC/Union courses is increasing;
- one in six (16%) safety reps who have been in post for over five years have attended the TUC Access Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety.

**Table 12: training received by term as a safety rep**

(Figures in brackets refer to the results in the 2002 survey)

Health & safety training received	Under 1 year	1-5 years	Over 5 years
TUC/Union Stage 1	49% (55%)	62% (64%)	66% (68%)
TUC/Union Stage 2	10% (9%)	35% (32%)	48% (48%)
Own union introductory course	22% (18%)	31% (28%)	36% (38%)
Other TUC/Union courses	9% (7%)	24% (14%)	36% (26%)
Course provided by employer	8% (9%)	19% (16%)	29% (24%)
Joint union-employer course	3% (1%)	5% (7%)	13% (14%)
TUC Certificate in OH&S	2% (1%)	10% (5%)	16% (9%)

*Note: Figures do not total 100% because reps could tick all training courses attended.*

Despite legal rights to time off for training, many safety reps responding to the 2004 survey had been unable to access training on occasions. *According to those who had been unable to access training, it was because* (2002 figures in brackets):

- they were too busy at work 30% (44%);
- management refused time off 38% (23%);
- the course was not the right time in the day/week 15% (16%);
- they were prevented from attending by family responsibilities 17% (16%).

Management refusing time off has now replaced safety reps being too busy at work as the main reason.

### **Consultation in “good time”**

Safety reps have a number of rights that entitle them to be consulted by the employer. *Table 13* shows what those safety reps who answered this question said about these rights. The figures are very similar to those recorded in the 2000 and 2002 surveys. It remains disturbing that of those that answered this question, over one in five (21%) are never automatically consulted. And even when safety reps take the trouble to ask to be consulted, only just over one third (38%) are frequently consulted thereafter.

**Table 13: management consultation with safety reps**

(The figures in brackets refer to the results from 2002)

Consultation	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Automatically	30% (30%)	48% (49%)	21% (21%)
When you ask	38% (38%)	55% (56%)	7% (6%)

The results of the 2004 survey when analysed on a sectoral basis show that:

- Energy and Water is the best sector for frequent automatic consultation (47%) and for frequent, automatic consultation and occasional, automatic consultation combined (91%);
- the worst sectors for never being automatically consulted are Banking, Finance and Insurance (37%); Construction (33%) and Leisure Services (32%). Even when safety reps ask to be consulted in Construction, 12% of employers still never consult them;
- the best sector for frequent automatic consultation after being asked is Central Government (49%). Even when safety reps ask to be consulted in the Voluntary Sector, 26% of employers still never consult them.

Twenty four per cent of safety reps in workplaces with under 100 workers are never consulted automatically, and 10% even when they ask.

### Inspections

Safety representatives have the right to inspect the workplace, if they have given notice to the employer in writing. They can inspect every three months or more frequently by agreement with the employer. For those safety reps who answered a question (numerically) about the number of times they inspected their workplace in the last 12 months, the 2004 survey shows:

- one in four (28%) had conducted one inspection;
- one in five (22%) had conducted two inspections;
- one in three (34%) had conducted 3-4 inspections;
- around one in six (16%) had conducted more than four inspections.



### **Time spent on safety rep duties**

Safety reps are entitled to reasonable time without loss of pay to carry out their functions. However, previous research has shown that the biggest obstacle facing safety reps in doing their job is the lack of time and facilities.

In the 2004 survey, safety reps were again asked how much time they had spent in the previous week specifically on health and safety matters. Those that responded to this question indicated how many hours that they had spent on their safety rep duties. The results are very similar to the 2002 survey results and show that in the previous week:

- just over half (54%) had spent up to 1 hour;
- just over one in three (34%) had spent between one and five hours;
- seven per cent had spent between five and ten hours;
- six per cent had spent over ten hours.

More experienced safety reps spend more time on health and safety matters. Of those safety reps with more than five years experience, 10% spent over 10 hours in the previous week compared with 6% overall.

### **Joint union - management safety committees**

The situation regarding joint safety committees remains similar to previous TUC biennial surveys. The results of the 2004 survey show that a safety committee exists in eight out of ten workplaces (83%), although in 14% of cases the committee rarely meets. Almost two out of ten (17%) workplaces do not have a safety committee.

As in the 2002 and 2000 surveys, individual sectors that are better than average include:

- Energy and Water (96%, with 7% of those rarely meeting);
- Manufacturing (94%, with 12% of those rarely meeting); and
- Health Services (90%, with 13% of those rarely meeting).

Sectors that are again worse than average include:

- Banking, Finance and Insurance, where 60% have a safety committee (with

## rights for safety reps

12% rarely meeting). However, the proportion having a joint safety committee in this sector has improved back to its level in 2000;

- Education, where 65% have a safety committee (with 16% rarely meeting);
- The Voluntary sector, where 65% have a safety committee (with 10% rarely meeting).

Wales and South East England (87%) have the best percentage for those with a safety committee. The situation is worst in Scotland (71%) where three out of ten (29%) do not have a safety committee.

## Section seven

# enforcement

For the first time in 2004, a number of new questions were asked about HSE or EHO visits. The results are shown in the two new sections below: ‘Inspectors and Safety Reps’; and ‘Improvements and enforcement action’.

### **HSE and EHO inspections**

The results regarding inspections of workplaces by the enforcing agencies are similar to previous TUC biennial surveys. The results from safety reps responding to questions about enforcement are:

- nearly four out of ten (39%) safety reps say that as far as they know a health and safety inspector has *never* inspected their workplace;
- three out of ten (31%) of safety reps say that their workplace has received a visit in the last year;
- twenty per cent of safety reps say that their workplace has received a visit between one and three years ago; and
- eleven per cent of safety reps say that their workplace has received a visit over three years ago.

There was more inspection activity in the last 12 months in Energy and Water (47%) and Manufacturing (49%). The worst sectors for never being inspected, as far as the safety reps know, are Central Government (70%) and Banking, Finance and Insurance (61%).

As has been identified in previous TUC biennial surveys, the larger the workplace, the more likely it is to have been inspected in the last 12 months with:

- 36% of workplaces between 200 – 1000 workers having received a visit; and
- 40% of workplaces where there are over 1000 workers having received a visit, compared with 24% of workplaces with less than 100 workers.

Workplaces with under 50 workers have *never* been inspected, as far as the safety reps know, in 51% of cases. The best place for inspections in the last 12 months is Wales (40%). The worst region for never being inspected, as far as the safety reps know, is again London (49%).

### Inspectors and safety reps

Just over one in three safety reps (39%) knew in advance about the most recent visit by a health and safety inspector. In 2004, safety reps were asked whether an inspector spoke to them or other safety reps. Of those safety reps that responded:

- 36% said that they or other safety reps were spoken to by the inspector;
- 38% said that they or other safety reps were *not* spoken to by the inspector; and
- 26% did not know.

### Improvements and enforcement action

Safety reps were asked in 2004 about whether their employers made improvements because of the possibility of a visit or upon hearing about action taken against other employers. The results from safety reps responding are shown in *Table 14* and *Table 15* and suggest that:

- nearly seven out of ten (69%) employers make some health and safety improvements or better comply with the law because of the possibility of an inspector's visit. One in five (21%) make '*a lot*' of improvements;
- one in four (27%) make some health and safety improvements to health and safety after hearing about notices or prosecutions related to another employer. The actual figure may well be higher, as nearly one in two (45%) safety reps did not know the impact on employers.

**Table 14: improvements because of the possibility of a visit**

Not at all	16%
A little	23%
Somewhat	25%
A lot	21%
Don't know	15%

**Table 15: improvements after hearing about notice or prosecution**

Yes	27%
No	28%
Don't know	45%

Safety reps were then asked in the 2004 survey if their employer had ever received an enforcement notice:

- 20% said yes;
- 29% said no; and
- 51% did not know.

Those safety reps that replied that their employer had received an enforcement notice were then asked two further questions. The responses shown in *Table 16* and *Table 17* below suggest that:

- only four out of ten employers (42%) are involving safety reps in planning changes following the receipt of an enforcement notice. This is despite legal obligations upon employers to consult safety reps under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977;
- notices have a wide impact upon employers' practices. Six out of ten (61%) employers comply with the notice and also are stimulated to review other practices in the company in different departments and/or work activities.

**Table 16:  
involvement of safety reps in taking steps to comply with a notice**

Heard about it after changes were made	18%
Heard about changes planned but no safety reps involved in planning	40%
Safety rep (s) involved in planning after receipt of notice	42%

## enforcement

**Table 17: employer's response to a legal enforcement notice**

Minimum to comply	30%
Comply and review other practices elsewhere	61%
Implement best practice, effect short term in one activity/area	10%
Implement best practice, effect longer term in one activity/area	13%

*Note: percentages do not total 100% because reps could tick any that applied*

## Section eight

# conclusions and recommendations

(Hugh Robertson, TUC Senior Health and Safety Officer)

This survey will help inform the TUC and unions about the kind of issues that affect health and safety representatives in the workplace. The information we obtain helps us develop policies on health and safety, prioritise issues, and push for action from the HSC and the Government.

### **Conclusions**

It is clear that the existing regulations on consultation are not working. Overall only 30% of safety representatives are consulted automatically by their employer on a frequent basis. In addition there has been little improvement in the involvement of safety representatives in risk assessments, with only 29% satisfied with their involvement. Although there has been a slight improvement in the number of employers conducting adequate risk assessments, the figure is still just over half.

As worker involvement and risk assessment are the two cornerstones of any successful health and safety management system clearly more needs to be done.

The TUC is very disappointed that there has been no change in the make up of safety representatives and much more must be done to recruit more women, black and ethnic minority workers and young people as safety representatives if they are going to be representative of the workforce. The TUC will be launching a campaign next year aimed at increasing the number of safety representatives and helping existing ones to be even more effective.

This year, for the first time ever we looked at the effect of enforcement activities. The results showed that visits by inspectors, or even the possibility of a visit by an inspector have an effect on the safety culture within a workplace. Legal enforcement notices were also shown to be very effective with around two thirds of employers not only complying, but also reviewing their practices across the workplace.

## conclusions and recommendations

Unfortunately visits by inspectors are still too rare and even when inspectors do visit, the majority are still not taking the opportunity to speak to the safety representative.

The main conclusions that the TUC draws from this survey are:

- Employers are failing to tackle the main occupational health challenges. Stress is the key issue within most workplaces, with the main causes being overload and staff cuts. In addition, musculoskeletal disorders are still a major problem in the workplace and seem to be getting worse.
- By and large the issues identified by safety representatives as being their main concerns are those within the HSC priority programme.
- There has been no improvement in the number of employers offering an occupational health service, and where they do, it is more concerned with sickness monitoring than prevention.
- Although there has been a slight improvement in the number of employers conducting adequate risk assessments the figures are still abysmal, given that this is a legal duty. The public sector, which has higher rates on stress, is worst.
- Employers are not consulting safety representatives on risk assessments.
- Many safety representatives are having difficulty getting time off for training from their employer.
- There has been no improvement in the proportion of safety representatives who are women, under 35, are black or from an ethnic minority.
- Despite a lack of consultation and difficulties in getting time off, the overwhelming majority of safety representatives are inspecting their workplace at least once a year, and half had conducted three or more inspections.
- Visits by the HSE or Local Authority enforcement officers and even the possibility of a visit, have an effect in changing the safety culture within an organisation.
- Many inspectors are not initiating contact with safety representatives when they visit a workplace where there is a safety representative.



### **Recommendations**

The TUC recommends that:

- The HSC, TUC and trade unions continue to address those areas within the priority programme, in particular stress and musculoskeletal disorders.
- The HSC must look at reviewing the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations to ensure that safety representatives are consulted about risk assessments. They should also enforce the current regulations concerning general consultation with safety representatives.
- Visits by HSE and Local Authority inspectors should be seen as being one of the most effective methods of improving the health and safety culture within the workplace. But the enforcement authorities must ensure that inspectors liaise fully with safety representatives, and where they do not exist ensure that the employer is consulting with the workforce.
- The current regulations and guidance on training of safety representatives need to be reviewed and strengthened.
- The TUC and trade unions should seek to ensure that they encourage members from those groups under-represented at present, to become safety representatives.





**Trades Union Congress**



Congress House  
Great Russell Street  
London WC1B 3LS  
telephone 020 7636 4030  
fax 020 7636 0632  
[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

contact:  
[healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@tuc.org.uk)



BRITISH STANDARD