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focus on health and safety

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TUC biennial survey of safety reps 2006

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Section one

introduction

This is the sixth biennial TUC health and safety representatives' survey. The survey is designed to provide the TUC and individual trade 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. Three thousand, three hundred and thirty nine trade union health and safety representatives responded to the questionnaire online or by post during the late spring and summer 2006.

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

- three out of ten (30%) are women, a slight increase on 2004 (27%);
- seventy five per cent describe themselves as white and 3.5% describe themselves as black and ethnic minority; Afro Caribbean; African; or Asian. This is a slight increase on 2004 when the figure was 2%. Twenty per cent did not indicate their ethnic background;
- around one in seven (13%) are under the age of 35 years old; three out of ten (29%) are between 36 – 45 years old; and the largest group of respondents (over one in two – 53%) are in the age range between 46 – 60 years old; one in twenty (5%) are over sixty years of age.
- two out of three (67%) work in the public sector; with the largest groups coming from Central Government (18%, which is 7% more than 2004); Local Government (12%); Education (11%); and Health Services (10%). The largest groups in the private sector come from Manufacturing (16%); and Transport and Communications (10%);
- over one in three respondents (37%) work in workplaces with less than 100 workers;
- eight out of ten responding (80%) have been working as safety reps for over one year, with one in three (35%) working as safety reps for over 5 years;
- one half of those responding (51%) are union stewards as well as union safety reps, leaving the other half (49%) acting as specialised safety reps;
- respondents come from all over Britain, with the largest groups from Scotland (16%); the Midlands (15%); and the North West (13%);
- safety representatives' access to the web continues to grow rapidly. Most have access to the web either at home (77% in 2006, compared with 68% in

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2004 and 56% in 2002); or at work (73% in 2006, compared with 61% in 2004 and 28% in 2002). Over one out of two (56% in 2006, compared with 41% in 2004 and just 9% in 2002) have access at both home and work;

- there was an increase in the number of online responses from 30% in 2004 to one in three (33%) in 2006. Those making more use of online returns are: from workplaces with over 1000 workers (41%); from Agriculture (67%) and Energy & Water (51%); from the North West (41%); and in the 36 - 45 age bracket (38%). One in three men (35%) and one in four women (25%) replied online.

Section two

executive summary

Key findings

Key findings from the responses to the TUC 2006 survey reveal that:

- as in previous TUC surveys of safety reps, overwork or stress is still by far the most frequently identified main hazard of concern, and the problem seems to be getting worse. Overwork or stress was identified by six out of ten (61%) safety representatives which is a larger percentage than 2004 (58%) and 2002 (56%);
- stress or overwork is still the major concern across most sectors. It appears amongst the top five concerns in 13 out of 14 sectors and is rated as the main hazard of concern in 11 of them. The Central Government sector is the worst sector for overwork or stress (80%);
- stress or overwork is again the overwhelming concern in all sizes of undertakings, appearing to be much more of a concern in workplaces with over 1000 workers (67%). The most stressed out part of Britain is London (67%);
- three out of every four safety representatives (76%) identifying overwork or stress in their workplaces, consider that workloads are a problem. Staff cuts (57%) are also an increasing problem for those identifying stress;
- musculoskeletal disorders are still a major problem in the workplace, but there are some encouraging signs. Repetitive strain injuries (38%) and back strains (28%) are placed second and fourth respectively in the main hazards of concern. However, since 2004 concerns about RSI have decreased by 2% and concerns about back strains have dropped by 7%;
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) is the third main concern moving up from the fourth main concern in 2004. Over one in three respondents (36%) cites it as a major issue, which is more than 2004 (32%) and 2002 (34%);
- the top four hazards mentioned above have been the same in all previous TUC biennial surveys;
- slips, trips and falls on the same level (27%) remain as the fifth main concern. In addition, slips, trips and falls from a height are identified by 7%;
- high temperatures (26%) has moved up to the seventh main concern, a rise of 11% since the 2002 survey;
- working alone (27%); violence and threats (25%) and long hours of work (24%) still continue to be concerns for one in four safety representatives. The problem of bullying is still increasing (15%);

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- safety reps again report a slight increase in the ability of their employers to conduct risk assessments. Fifty six per cent of the safety reps say that their employers had conducted adequate risk assessments (a six per cent increase since 2002);
- less than three out of ten safety reps (28%) are satisfied with their involvement in drawing up the risk assessment; whilst almost half (44%) are not involved at all;
- whilst the percentage of employers providing occupational health services has increased to 86%, an increasing number is provided by external providers;
- occupational health services are more preoccupied with sickness monitoring, first aid, health surveillance, pre-employment screening and disciplinary assessments rather than prevention. Preventive services, are seventh in the list of services provided, now behind disciplinary assessments for the first time since the TUC biennial surveys started ten years ago;
- the percentages of safety reps who have attended TUC/Union Stage 1; Stage 2 and the TUC Occupational Health and Safety Certificate have all increased;
- safety representatives who have been unable to access training cite the main reasons as being too busy at work, and management refusal;
- over one in five safety representatives (22%) are never automatically consulted by their employers about health and safety matters. And even when they take the trouble to ask to be consulted, only just over one third (37%) are frequently consulted thereafter;
- over half of all safety representatives (51%) conducts three or more inspections per year;
- one in three (34%) safety representatives had spent between 1 – 5 hours on health and safety in the previous week. Twelve per cent had spent more than 5 hours;
- a large percentage of workplaces have a joint management – union health and safety committee (84%), although in 15% of cases the committee rarely meets;
- over four out of ten (46%) safety representatives say that as far as they know a health and safety inspector has never inspected their workplace. This is 7% worse than 2004 and the worst result since TUC biennial surveys began;
- where a health and safety inspector has visited a workplace, only one in three (34%) said that they or other safety representatives were spoken to by the inspector; 39% said that they or other safety representatives were not spoken to by the inspector; and 27% did not know;
- only four out of ten employers (41%) are involving safety representatives in planning changes following the receipt of an enforcement notice;

- safety representatives' access to the web continues to grow rapidly. Most have access to the web either at home (77%); or at work (73%). Over one out of two (56%) have access at both home and work;
- there has been a slight improvement in the proportion of safety representatives who are women, are black and ethnic minority workers;
- over one in three respondents to the 2006 survey (37%) work in workplaces with less than 100 workers.

Recommendations

Hazards

The TUC recommends that:

- The HSC, HSE, the TUC and affiliated trade unions, and employers continue to vigorously address those areas within the priority programme, in particular stress and musculoskeletal disorders;
- Employers must be encouraged to take the problem of stress more seriously. There should be more use and enforcement of existing laws and HSE stress management standards;
- Employers should remove the barriers that are preventing some safety representatives from attending TUC and trade union courses. For example, TUC Education has recently updated its courses on stress and musculoskeletal disorders and participation by safety representatives in these updated courses is essential.

Safety representatives

The TUC recommends that:

- In the forthcoming debate about worker involvement and safety representatives' rights, the HSC takes full account of safety representatives' experiences that have been summarised in this survey. In particular: addressing employers' failure to consult generally, and more specifically about risk assessments; and the difficulty that safety representatives experience in obtaining time off for health and safety training and performing their role;
- The current regulations and guidance on training of safety representatives need to be reviewed and strengthened;
- Existing laws regarding consultation should be fully enforced and any new laws should strengthen safety representatives' rights and employers' duties;
- In the interim, employers should implement existing laws regarding consultation and remove the barriers that are preventing some safety representatives from exercising their role and attending TUC and trade union health and safety courses;
- The TUC and trade union campaign for extended rights for safety reps

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(roving safety reps; provisional improvement notices; rights to stop the job) should continue;

- The TUC and trade unions should seek to ensure that they encourage members from those groups under-represented at present, to become safety representatives. Recently developed TUC Organising for Health and Safety resources will help to achieve this goal on TUC/trade union training courses.

Managing health and safety

The TUC recommends that:

- Employers must be encouraged to take risk assessments more seriously by rigorous enforcement of existing laws;
- Any new laws on worker involvement must ensure that employers are obliged to consult safety representatives about risk assessments;
- There should be continued government initiatives on occupational health (HSC; DWP; and DoH) in co-operation with the TUC and affiliates;
- TUC and trade unions continue to campaign for worker and safety representative involvement in occupational health services, so that the focus can be placed upon prevention of occupational illnesses rather than sickness monitoring, health surveillance and disciplinary assessments.

Enforcement

The TUC recommends that:

- 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 a workplace;
- Government, HSC and HSE must reverse the recent reduction in workplace safety inspections by enforcement authorities;
- Enforcement authorities must ensure that when inspectors visit a workplace that they liaise fully with safety representatives;
- Existing laws should be enforced regarding consultation with safety representatives on the introduction of new measures in the workplace (in this case meeting the requirements of enforcement notices).

Section three

hazards at work

main hazards

Safety representatives 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 2002 and 2004. The top four hazards have been the same in all previous TUC biennial surveys.

As in previous TUC surveys of safety representatives, overwork or stress is still by far the most frequently identified main hazard of concern, and the problem seems to be getting worse. In 2006, overwork or stress was identified by six out of ten (61%) safety representatives which is a larger percentage than 2004 (58%) and 2002 (56%).

As in previous surveys, musculoskeletal disorders are still a major problem in the workplace, but the 2006 survey shows some encouraging signs. The 2006 survey shows that repetitive strain injuries (38%) and back strains (28%) are placed second and fourth respectively in the main hazards of concern. However, concerns about repetitive strain injuries (RSI) have decreased by 2% from 40% in 2004. Back strains have dropped from third to the fourth main hazard of concern and the percentage identifying them has decreased by 7% from 35% in 2004. But 13% still identify handling heavy loads as a concern.

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) is the third main concern in 2006 moving up from the fourth main concern in 2004. Over one in three respondents (36%) cites it as a major issue, which is more than 2004 (32%) and 2002 (34%).

One of the traditional causes of injury in the workplace is still a major concern to workers. Slips, trips and falls on the same level (27%) remain as the fifth main concern in 2006, the same as 2004. In addition, slips, trips and falls from a height are again identified by 7% in 2006.

Other key features of the responses about hazards in the 2006 survey are:

- concern about working alone (27%) is again the sixth main concern;
- high temperatures (26%) has moved up to the seventh main concern, a rise of 11% since the 2002 survey;
- concern about violence and threats is still the eighth main hazard of concern and is identified by 25% in 2006. This has increased from 22% in 2004;
- one in four safety representatives (24%) identifies long hours of work, a similar position to the 2004 survey;
- the percentage identifying bullying has increased again from 12% in 2004 to

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15% in 2006;

- the percentages of safety representatives identifying the following hazards continues to fall in each biennial survey: noise (16% - a fall of 4% since 2002); chemicals or solvents (14% - a fall of 7% since 2004); dusts (11% - a fall of 4% since 2004, and 6% since 2002); and machinery hazards (9% - a fall of 4% since 2004, and 5% since 2002);
- transport and 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 2006	2004	2002
Overwork or stress	61%	58%	56%
Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI)	38%	40%	37%
Display Screen Equipment	36%	32%	34%
Back strains	28%	35%	31%
Slips, trips, falls on the level	27%	28%	28%
Working alone	27%	27%	27%
High Temperatures	26%	19%	15%
Violence and threats	25%	22%	30%
Long hours of work	24%	25%	29%
Noise	16%	17%	20%
Bullying	15%	12%	10%
Chemicals or solvents	14%	21%	20%
Handling heavy loads	13%	13%	11%
Dusts	11%	15%	17%
Machinery hazards	9%	13%	14%
Low temperatures	8%	7%	8%
Slips, trips, falls from a height	7%	7%	5%
Infections	6%	7%	8%
Workplace transport accidents	6%	6%	8%
Road traffic accidents	6%	6%	4%
Dermatitis/skin rashes	4%	6%	5%
Asbestos	4%	5%	4%
Vibration	3%	3%	3%
Passive smoking	2%	3%	2%
Asthma	1%	2%	3%

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

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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, high temperatures and long hours. But there are some marked differences between some of the major concerns reflecting the different nature of work and the workplace, and the management of health and safety.

Examples of hazards	Public	Private
Overwork or stress	68%	46%
Display screen equipment	41%	23%
Violence and threats	32%	10%
Working alone	28%	22%
Bullying	18%	8%
Infections	8%	2%
Slips, trips & falls on the level	22%	37%
Slips, trips & falls from a height	4%	13%
Noise	9%	32%
Chemicals or solvents	9%	25%
Dusts	7%	19%
Machinery	5%	19%
Handling heavy loads	11%	18%
Workplace transport accidents	4%	12%

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 13 out of 14 sectors and is rated as the main hazard of concern in 11 of them. Repetitive strain injuries appear amongst the top five concerns in 9 out of 14 sectors; back strains appear amongst the top five concerns in 7 out of 14 sectors; showing that musculoskeletal disorders are still a major problem in many sectors. Slips, trips and falls on the level appear amongst the top five concerns in 8 out of 14 sectors and display screen equipment in 7 out of 14.

Key points to emerge from each sector are identified on the next page.

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

Sector	1 st concern	2 nd concern	3 rd concern	4 th concern	5 th concern
Agriculture & Fishing	Stress (26%)	Working alone (24%)	Long hours (18%)	Back strains (18%)	Chemicals (16%)
Health Services	Stress (71%)	Working alone (55%)	Back strains (53%)	Violence (37%)	RSI (30%)
Distribution & Hotels	Back strains (52%)	Slips & trips on level (48%)	RSI (46%)	Heavy loads (46%)	Stress (37%)
Banking, Finance, Insurance	Stress (76%)	DSE (67%)	RSI (64%)	Slips & trips on level (27%)	Long hours (24%)
Voluntary Sector	Stress (68%)	DSE (64%)	RSI (41%)	Violence (41%)	Back strains (27%)
Education	Stress (72%)	Long hours (30%)	High temp (28%)	Violence (27%)	DSE (25%)
Manufacturing	Noise (45%)	Chemicals (40%)	RSI (40%)	Stress (37%)	Slips & trips on level (34%)
Energy & Water	Stress (59%)	Slips & trips on level (51%)	DSE (37%)	Lone working (34%)	RSI (25%)
Leisure Services	Stress (61%)	Long hours (52%)	Back strains (42%)	Noise (36%)	Slips & trips on level (29%)
Construction	Dusts (41%)	Slips & trips on level (38%)	Noise (32%)	Heavy loads (32%)	Lone working (30%)
Local Govt.	Stress (64%)	DSE (50%)	Violence (43%)	RSI (37%)	Lone working (36%)
Central Govt.	Stress (80%)	DSE (73%)	RSI (64%)	Violence (35%)	High temp (34%)
Transport & Communications	Stress (54%)	Slips & trips on level (39%)	Long hours (37%)	Lone working (32%)	Back strains (32%)
Other Services	Stress (62%)	RSI (41%)	DSE (33%)	Slips & trips on level (32%)	Back strains (29%)

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

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Agriculture and Fishing

In 2006, responses from safety representatives in agriculture and fishing were quite evenly spread amongst many hazards. Working alone (24%) is ranked second behind stress (26%). Long hours (18%) moves into the top five concerns in place of RSI. Chemicals or solvents (16%) have appeared in the top five concerns for this sector in every TUC biennial survey.

Health Services

The top five concerns in Health Services are the same in 2006 as they were in 2004, with the main concern of safety representatives being overwork or stress (71%). As in 2004, Health Services is the worst sector overall for working alone (55%); back strains (53%); and infections (23%). Concerns about working alone (55%) are at the highest in Health Services since the TUC started conducting biennial surveys. Violence and threats remain a problem for over one out of three.

Distribution & Hotels and Restaurants

Musculoskeletal disorders appear to be a particular problem in Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants. Like 2004, this is the worst sector for handling heavy loads (46%), and second worst for back strains (52%). In addition, RSI has entered the top five concerns (46%). It is also the worst sector for workplace transport (32%) and second worst for low temperatures (16%). It is also the second worst sector for slips, trips and falls on the level (48%) and road traffic accidents (16%). The percentage identifying stress (37%) has decreased by 9% since 2004.

Banking, Finance and Insurance

Banking, Finance and Insurance (along with Central Government), is again the worst sector for repetitive strain injuries (64%), with two out of three identifying it as a main hazard of concern. It is the second worst sector for overwork or stress (76%), which has been the main hazard of concern in all previous TUC biennial surveys. It is also the second worst sector for display screen equipment (67%) and long hours (24%) are again in the top five. The four hazards above have appeared in the top five concerns since the 2000 TUC survey.

Voluntary sector

Stress (68%) is still the main concern in the Voluntary sector and violence and threats (41%) have returned to the top five concerns. Musculoskeletal disorders (41% RSI and 27% back strains) appear amongst the top five concerns. Concerns about DSE as a main hazard of concern have increased from 38% in 2004 to 64% in 2006. It is the worst sector for concerns about bullying (27%) and passive smoking (9%).

Education

Education is the third worst sector for overwork or stress (72%) as a major concern. This has been the top concern in Education for all previous biennial surveys. Violence and threats (27%) appear in the top five concerns as they have in TUC biennial surveys since 2000. Long hours (30%) and DSE (25%) appear again in the top five concerns as they did in previous surveys. High temperatures (28%) appear for the first time in the top five concerns. It is the second worst sector for concerns about infections (12%). Bullying continues to be a problem for one out five (20%).

Manufacturing

As in the 2002 and 2004 surveys, the Manufacturing sector is the worst for concerns about noise (45%), chemicals or solvents (40%) and machinery (29%). As in 2004, it is the worst sector for dermatitis/skin rashes (12%). It is the second worst sector for dusts (30%). Chemicals and noise have appeared in the top five concerns in each TUC biennial survey. RSI (40%) is the third highest concern and as in 2004, stress (37%) appears in the top five. Concerns about high temperatures have increased from 23% in 2004 to 29% in 2006. One out of three (34%) identifies slips, trips and falls on the level.

Energy and Water

Stress (59%) remains as the top concern in 2006 in the Energy and Water sector as it has since the 2000 survey. Slips, trips and falls on the level (51%) are getting worse and are bigger concerns for workers in Energy and Water, than in any other sector. Like stress, the hazards connected with DSE (37%) and working alone (34%) have appeared in the top five concerns for the sector in every TUC biennial survey. As in 2004, RSI (25%) appears in the top five concerns again. It is the worst sector for concerns about asbestos (12%), and second worst for slips, trips and falls (17%) from a height.

Leisure Services

The problem of long hours of work (52%) is increasing, making it the second main concern in the sector and the worst sector overall. Stress (61%) is still the main concern in this sector. Back strains (42%) are amongst the top five concerns as they have been in every TUC biennial survey. Noise (36%) returns to become one of the top five concerns again, as it was in 2002. It is the worst sector for concerns about low temperature (19%), and the second worst for noise (36%), chemicals (26%) and asbestos (10%).

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Construction

Dusts (41%) become the main hazard of concern for the first time since the TUC biennial surveys began. The major problem of slips and trips shows clearly in the 2006 survey with slips, trips and falls on the level (38%) in the top five concerns. Construction is also the worst sector for concerns about slips, trips and falls from a height (22%). Noise (32%) and working alone (30%) appear again in the top five concerns after a gap in 2004. Back strains (24%) move out of the top five concerns for the first time. However, heavy loads are a concern for one out of three (32%). Construction is the worst sector for concerns about vibration (27%) and asthma (3%). It is the second worst sector for machinery hazards (16%) and dermatitis/skin rashes (8%).

Local Government

The top five concerns in Local Government are the same in 2006 as they were in 2004 and 2002. Stress (64%), DSE (50%) and violence and threats (43%) have all appeared amongst the top five concerns for this sector in every TUC biennial survey. Local government is again the worst sector for violence and threats (43%) and is the second worst sector for concerns about working alone (36%). It is the third worst sector for bullying (21%).

Central Government

Overwork or stress (80%), DSE (73%), RSI (64%) and violence (35%) have all appeared amongst the top five concerns in Central Government in every TUC biennial survey. Stress (80%) is the number one concern for safety representatives and workers and has increased by 9% since 2004. Central Government is the worst sector for overwork or stress, concerns about DSE (73%), RSI (64%) and high temperatures (34%). It is the second worst sector for bullying (23%).

Transport and Communications

Stress (54%), slips, trips and falls on the level (39%), long hours (37%) and back strains (32%) have all appeared amongst the top five concerns for this sector in each TUC biennial survey. Working alone (32%) appears amongst the top five concerns for the first time since the 2000 survey. Transport and Communications is the worst sector for road traffic accidents (18%). It is the second worst sector for long hours of work (37%) and concerns about workplace transport (20%).

Other services

Stress, RSI, DSE, slips, trips and falls and back strains have been the top five concerns in all TUC biennial surveys, including this latest 2006 survey.

Hazards and workplace size

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

Table 3: Main hazards at work and workplace size

Number of workers	1st concern	2nd concern	3rd concern	4th concern	5th concern
Under 50	Stress (58%)	Lone working (29%)	Violence (28%)	RSI (28%)	DSE (27%)
50-100	Stress (59%)	DSE (36%)	RSI (32%)	High temp (29%)	Violence (29%)
Over 100	Stress (63%)	RSI (43%)	DSE (39%)	Violence (29%)	High temp (28%)
Over 200	Stress (61%)	RSI (44%)	DSE (40%)	Back strains (28%)	Slips & trips (28%)
Over 1000	Stress (67%)	RSI (39%)	DSE (37%)	Slips & trips (35%)	Lone working (31%)

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
Noise	(11%)	(15%)	(19%)	(20%)	(15%)
Slips & trips on level	(21%)	(24%)	(27%)	(28%)	(35%)
DSE	(27%)	(36%)	(39%)	(40%)	(37%)
RSI	(28%)	(32%)	(43%)	(44%)	(39%)
Lone working	(29%)	(28%)	(23%)	(23%)	(31%)
Violence	(28%)	(29%)	(29%)	(21%)	(24%)
Bullying	(12%)	(12%)	(12%)	(17%)	(22%)

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 much more of a concern in workplaces with over 1000 workers (67%);
- the problem of RSI is a concern in all sizes of workplace. Concerns are worst in workplaces with 100-200 workers (43%) and 200-1000 workers (44%);
- the problem of display screen equipment is a concern in all sizes of workplace. Concerns are worst in workplaces with 100-200 workers (39%) and 200-1000 workers (40%);
- slips and trips on the level is in the top five concerns in larger workplaces with particular problems in workplaces with over 1000 workers (35%);

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- working alone concerns safety reps more in workplaces with under 50 workers (29%) and those in workplaces with over 1000 workers (33%);
- violence or threats is of more concern to safety representatives in workplaces with under 200 workers;
- safety representatives are more concerned about noise in workplaces with over 100 workers (19%) and over 200 workers (20%);
- infections concern safety reps most in workplaces with less than 50 workers (11%);
- the problem of bullying is getting a bigger problem in larger workplaces, particularly in those with more than 1000 workers (22% compared with 14% in 2004).

Hazards by region/country

Table 5 shows each hazard of main concern 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 nd worst area	National concern
Overwork or stress	London 66.7%	North West 65.1%	61%
Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI)	Yorks&Humbs 44.6%	East Anglia 44.4%	38%
Display Screen Equipment	London 42.7%	South West 40.2%	36%
Back strains	East Anglia 37.5%	South East 30.9%	28%
Slips, trips, falls on the level	Wales 36.6%	Yorks&Humbs 31.9%	27%
Working alone	South East 30.6%	East Anglia 29.9%	27%
High Temperatures	Yorks&Humbs 30.9%	London 30.5%	26%
Violence and threats	London 33.7%	South East 28.8%	25%
Long hours of work	London 30.9%	Scotland 25.1%	24%
Noise	Wales 29.5%	Yorks&Humbs 20.6%	16%
Bullying	London 19.5%	South East 17.5%	15%
Chemicals or solvents	Wales 26.8%	Northern 19.1%	14%
Handling heavy loads	Northern 19.7%	East Anglia 17.4%	13%
Dusts	Yorks&Humbs 15.2%	Midlands 12.7%	11%
Machinery hazards	Wales 14.3%	Yorks&Humbs 12.3%	9%
Low temperatures	Northern 12.6%	London 11.4%	8%
Slips, trips, falls from a height	East Anglia 11.1%	Northern 9.3%	7%
Infections	Scotland 9.3%	South East 8.4%	6%
Workplace transport accidents	North West 9.2%	East Anglia 7.6%	6%
Road traffic accidents	East Anglia 10.4%	North West 8.6%	6%
Dermatitis/skin rashes	East Anglia 5.6%	North West 5.1%	4%
Asbestos	South East 4.4%	Scotland 3.8%	4%
Vibration	Northern 5.5%	Yorks&Humbs 4.4%	3%
Passive smoking	East Anglia 4.2%	Wales 2.7%	2%
Asthma	London 2.4%	Yorks&Humbs 1.5%	1%

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

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

- London is the worst area for concerns about overwork or stress (67%); display screen equipment (43%); violence and threats (34%); long hours of work (31%); bullying (20%); and asthma (2%). It is the second worst for high temperatures (31%); and low temperatures (11%).
- Yorkshire and Humberside is the worst for concerns about repetitive strain injuries (45%); high temperatures (31%); and dusts (15.2%). It is the second worst for slips, trips & falls on the level (32%); noise (21%); machinery hazards (12%); and vibration (4%);
- East Anglia is the worst for concerns about back strains (38%); slips, trips and falls from a height (11%); road traffic accidents (10%); dermatitis and skin rashes (6%); and passive smoking (4%). It is the second worst for repetitive strain injuries (44%); working alone (30%); handling heavy loads (17%); and workplace transport accidents (8%);
- Wales is the worst for concerns about slips, trips and falls on the level (37%); noise (30%); chemicals or solvents (27%); and machinery hazards (14%);
- the South East is the worst for concerns about working alone (31%); and asbestos (4%). It is the second worst for back strains (31%); violence and threats (29%); bullying (18%); and infections (8%);
- the Northern region (including Cumbria) is the worst for concerns about handling heavy loads (20%); low temperatures (13%); and vibration (6%). It is the second worst for chemicals or solvents (19%); and slips, trips and falls from a height (9%);
- Scotland is the worst for concerns about infections (9%) and second worst for long hours of work (25%) and asbestos (4%);
- the North West is the worst for concerns about workplace transport accidents (9%). It is the second worst for stress (65%); road traffic accidents (9%); and dermatitis/skin rashes (5%);
- the South West is the second worst for concerns about display screen equipment (40%); and is the third worst for repetitive strain injuries (43%); and chemicals or solvents (18%);
- along with the South West, the Midlands is the second worst for concerns about display screen equipment (40%); it is the second worst for dusts (13%) and is the third worst for machinery hazards (11%).

hazards at work

Table 6: Main hazards of concern by region/country

Region/country	1 st concern	2 nd concern	3 rd concern	4 th concern	5 th concern
Scotland	Stress (62%)	RSI (27%)	Violence (26%)	Long hours (25%)	DSE (24%)
Wales	Stress (55%)	Slips/trips* (37%)	RSI (36%)	Noise (30%)	DSE (30%)
Northern	Stress (56%)	RSI (40%)	DSE (35%)	Back strains (31%)	Slips/trips* (27%)
North West	Stress (65%)	RSI (41%)	DSE (39%)	Slips/trips* (28%)	High temp (26%)
Yorkshire	Stress (55%)	RSI (45%)	DSE (38%)	Slips/trips* (32%)	High temp (31%)
Midlands	Stress (61%)	DSE (40%)	RSI (37%)	Back strains (30%)	W'king alone (29%)
South West	Stress (62%)	RSI (43%)	DSE (40%)	Back strains (31%)	Slips/trips* (31%)
South East	Stress (64%)	DSE (38%)	RSI (33%)	Working alone (31%)	Back strains (31%)
East Anglia	Stress (54%)	RSI (44%)	Back strains (38%)	Slips/trips* (32%)	DSE (30%)
London	Stress (67%)	DSE (43%)	RSI (42%)	Violence (34%)	Long hours (31%)

Note:

- percentages exclude respondents who ticked more than five main hazards.
- * slips, trips and falls on the level

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 is overwork or stress. Since 2004 concerns about stress have got worse in every region/country except Scotland, the South West and East Anglia;
- repetitive strain injuries and display screen equipment feature in the top five concerns for each region/country;
- slips, trips & falls on the level are identified in the top five concerns in five English regions, and Wales;
- back strains are identified in the top five concerns in five English regions;
- high temperatures have entered the top five concerns in Yorkshire and Humberside and the North West;
- long hours and violence/threats are identified in the top five concerns in Scotland and London.

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. In 2006, the percentage citing stress has increased again to 61%, compared to 58% in the 2004 TUC survey and 56% in the 2002 survey. The problem is significant, with six out of ten safety representatives citing it as a main hazard of concern to workers. Overwork or stress is 23% higher than the next most frequently cited hazard, repetitive strain injuries (38%).

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 at least 58%, and where there are over 1000 workers the percentage rises to 67%;
- overwork or stress is more of a concern in the public sector (68%), than in the private sector (46%) and the problem is getting progressively worse in the public sector since 2002;
- in 11 out of 14 economic sectors, stress or overwork is the top concern of safety representatives and it appears amongst the top five concerns in 13 out of 14 sectors;
- in Scotland and Wales, and all English regions the percentage citing stress is over 54%, going as high as 67% in London.

In order to find out more about what is causing overwork or stress, the TUC survey asked safety representatives identifying overwork or stress as a major problem, to state which issues were a problem at their workplaces. The 2006 survey listed the same potential causes of overwork or stress for safety representatives to identify as those in the 2004 survey. *Table 7* shows a comparison of the results for 2006, 2004, and 2000. There is an analysis underneath *Table 7* of the results relating to each of the potential causes of overwork or stress.

stress and overwork

Table 7: Factors linked to overwork or stress

Factor	Problem issues 2006 survey	Problem issues 2004 survey	Problem issues 2002 survey
Workloads	76%	79%	80%
Cuts in staff	57%	49%	50%
Change	53%	47%	52%
Long hours	34%	37%	41%
Bullying	33%	27%	28%
Shiftwork	21%	22%	22%
Redundancies	20%	14%	12%
Cramped working conditions	16%	17%	19%
Sex or racial harassment	3%	3%	4%

Workloads

In the 2006 survey, workloads are again top of the list of problems linked with overwork or stress. The problem of workloads has declined slightly since 2004. In 2006, three out of every four safety representatives (76%) identifying overwork or stress in their workplaces, consider that workloads are a problem.

Compared to the private sector (68%), the problem of workloads is greater in the public sector (79%) and the voluntary sector (74%). For individual sectors, workloads are a particular problem identified by safety representatives in:

- Banking, Finance and Insurance (88%);
- Education (87%);
- Central Government (81%).

Safety representatives in all sizes of workplace identified workloads as a problem linked with overwork or stress, but the worst are workplaces with over 1000 workers (80%). Workloads linked to stress are a particular problem in Scotland (83%) and South West England (60%).

Cuts in staff

Staff cuts are again in second place as a main problem related to stress. Staff cuts are identified by over half the safety reps (57%) in the 2006 survey, showing an increase upon the 2004 (49%) and 2002 (50%) surveys. Staff cuts are an increasing problem in the public sector (60%).

For individual sectors, cuts in staff are a particular problem identified by safety representatives in:

- Central Government (79% - representing a 10% increase since 2004); and
- Health Services (66% - representing a 22% increase since 2004).

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

- workplaces with over 1000 workers (63% - representing an 8% increase since 2004); and in
- London (69% - representing a 12% increase since 2004) and the South East (66% - representing a 12% increase since 2004)

Change

Change was identified by 53% of safety representatives in 2006, rising from 47% in the 2004 survey. It was identified more in the public (57%) and voluntary sectors (62%) rather than the private (39%).

For individual sectors, change is a particular problem identified by safety representatives in Central Government (72% - representing a 6% increase since 2004)

Safety representatives in workplaces with between 100 and 200 workers identified change (59%) as a particular problem linked to stress. The worst region for change is South West England (62% - representing a 12% increase since 2004).

Long hours

The problem of long hours (34%) linked to overwork or stress has decreased by 3% since the 2004 survey and by 7% since the 2002 survey. Long hours are again identified more often in the private sector (41%).

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

- Leisure services (68% - up by 11%);
- Construction (67%).

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

- with over 1000 workers (41%); and in
- London (42%) and East Anglia (39%).

Bullying

According to safety representatives in the 2006 survey, the problem of bullying at work linked to overwork or stress is increasing as a significant problem. The number of safety reps identifying it has now risen to one in three (33%).

Bullying linked to stress is identified more often in the public sector (35% - a 5% increase since 2004) and the voluntary sector (43% - a 14% increase since 2004).

stress and overwork

Bullying is increasing as a problem linked to stress in Central Government (43% - rising from 40% in 2004). In Agriculture and Fishing, 69% thought that bullying was a problem linked to stress.

As shown in previous TUC surveys, bullying appears to be more of a problem as the size of the workplace increases. Forty nine per cent of safety representatives from workplaces with over 1000 workers identified it as an issue linked to stress. This has risen by 15% since 2004.

Bullying as an issue linked to stress is a particular problem in London (42%) and Yorkshire (40%).

Shiftwork

Shiftwork is identified by 21% in the 2006 survey, a similar result to previous surveys. Shiftwork is identified more often in the private sector (39%) than in the public.

Two individual sectors which have previously identified shiftwork linked to overwork or stress, do so again in 2006 and the problem seems to be growing:

- Transport and Communications (63% - increasing from 43% in 2004);
- Manufacturing (46% - increasing from 41% in 2004).

Shiftwork is now of most concern to safety representatives in workplaces with over 1000 workers (26%). As in 2004, Wales (26%) is again the worst for this problem linked to stress.

Redundancies

Redundancies are of increasing concern as a problem linked to stress and have now overtaken cramped working conditions. Concern about redundancies has increased from 12% in 2002, to 14% in 2004, to 20% in 2006. The problem is particularly marked in the Voluntary sector (28%), compared with the public and private sectors. Although over one out of four (28%) safety representatives in Manufacturing considers redundancies as a problem linked to stress.

Redundancies are a particular problem in workplaces with over 1000 workers (27%). This compares with 11% in workplaces with fewer than 50 workers. The Midlands (26%) and London (24%) appear to be the worst regions for this problem linked to stress.

Cramped working conditions

The percentage of safety representatives identifying cramped working conditions is 16%. In 2006, the percentage of safety representatives mentioning cramped working conditions, linked to overwork or stress is the highest in Construction (33%) and the Health Service (24%).

The results for cramped working conditions are worst for workplaces with over 1000 workers (22%) and are worst in London (23%).

Sex or racial harassment

The percentage of safety representatives mentioning sex or racial harassment linked to overwork or stress stayed at 3% in 2006. The percentage of safety representatives mentioning sex or racial harassment is again higher in the Voluntary sector (8%). Sex or racial harassment appears to be more of a problem as the size of the workplace increases. Five per cent of safety representatives from workplaces with over 1000 workers and between 200 and 1000 workers identified it as an issue linked to stress.

Section five

managing health and safety

Safety representatives 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

Of those that responded in 2006, 93% of employers have met the legal requirement to produce a written health and safety policy, which is similar to previous surveys. The results across individual economic sectors and sizes of workplace were all quite similar to each other. The best area for the production of policies is South West England (96%) and the worst are Wales (89%) and London (89%).

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 2006, safety representatives again 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 representatives responding to this question said that their employers had conducted adequate risk assessments (56% in 2006, compared to 53% in 2004 and 50% in 2002).

Further analysis shows that:

- generally, the private sector (59%) is better than the public sector (55%), and the voluntary sector (46%);
- the best individual sectors are Agriculture and Fishing (82%); Energy and Water (68%) and Central Government (62%);
- as in 2004 and 2002, the sector that is well below average for the production of adequate risk assessments is Education (43%). Local Government has improved from 42% in 2004 to 52% in 2006;
- Yorkshire is the best (66%) for adequate risk assessments, with London again the worst (47%);

- workplaces with 50 – 100 workers (58%) and under 50 workers (58%) are slightly better than other sizes of workplace.

Inadequate risk assessments

According to safety representatives responding to this question, 27% of employers have done risk assessments that are considered inadequate, which represents an improvement of 2% upon the last three surveys. Other key points to emerge about inadequate risk assessments include:

- Transport and Communications (33%) and Banking, Finance and Insurance (33%) are the worst individual sectors for inadequate risk assessments. Local Government which had been amongst the worst for the last three biennial surveys has improved in 2006 (30%);
- the worst region for inadequate risk assessments is London again with 31%;
- like the four previous TUC biennial surveys, there appears to be more dissatisfaction with the way that risk assessments are done in larger workplaces. Twenty one per cent of safety representatives in workplaces with less than 50 workers consider the assessments inadequate, whereas 31% of safety representatives in workplaces with over 100, 200 and 1000 workers are of the same view. However, in smaller workplaces with less than 50 workers, 10% 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 (7%), has again improved slightly since 2004 (8%). Again, 7% did not know whether they had been done and 2% said that they were not recorded.

On further analysis:

- the Education sector fares badly again here, 11% of safety representatives said that risk assessments had not been done, and a further 21% did not know;
- in Local Government, 11% of safety representatives said that risk assessments had not been carried out and 15% said the same in the Voluntary sector.

Like the last three TUC biennial surveys, London (11%) is the worst area for risk assessments not being carried out, and Scotland (15%) for safety representatives not knowing whether risk assessments have been carried out. Ten per cent of safety representatives 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 representatives and their members have a wealth of experience and a detailed knowledge of the workplace and the jobs that are being done. They

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should be consulted by their employer on health and safety matters. Despite this, their involvement in the risk assessment process continues to be most unsatisfactory. Overall:

- less than three out of ten safety representatives (28%) responding to this question are satisfied with their involvement in drawing up the risk assessment;
- yet again, almost half the safety representatives (44%) are not involved at all;
- a further 27% 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 86%, a slight improvement on figures in 2004 and 2002. But an increasing number is provided by external providers:

- forty eight per cent (a reduction of 6% compared with 2004) of the occupational health services are provided in house;
- thirty eight per cent are provided by external providers (an increase on 9% in 2004).

However, the 2006 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 2004 and 2002 surveys are included for comparative purposes. The survey shows that:

- provision of occupational health services is the poorest in Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants (77%), but the situation is improving;
- Health Services (97%), Energy and Water (97%), and Local Government (92%) are still the three best sectors for provision;
- overall, the provision of occupational health services in Scotland, Wales and the English regions is broadly comparable (between 85% - 91%), although Scotland is the lowest for in house provision (44%);
- workers in small workplaces are still worse off than larger workplaces, but the situation is improving. In 2006, 83% have access to occupational health services where there are less than 50 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		
	2006	2004	2002
Under 50	83%	77%	75%
50-100	84%	77%	78%
Over 100	87%	84%	84%
Over 200	90%	89%	91%
Over 1000	95%	95%	97%

Table 9: Provision of occupational health services by sector

Sector	Occupational Health Services provided		
	2006	2004	2002
Agriculture & Fishing	83%	63%	78%
Health Services	97%	98%	98%
Distribution & Hotels	77%	68%	73%
Banking, Finance, Insurance	78%	85%	85%
Voluntary Sector	80%	74%	67%
Education	79%	71%	60%
Manufacturing	90%	88%	90%
Energy & Water	97%	95%	96%
Leisure Services	80%	75%	82%
Construction	79%	72%	71%
Local Government	92%	92%	91%
Central Government	90%	88%	91%
Transport & Communications	86%	83%	88%
Other Services	85%	78%	82%

The role of occupational health services

The responses shown in *Table 10* suggest that:

- preventive services, are seventh in the list of services provided, now behind disciplinary assessments for the first time since the TUC biennial surveys started ten years ago. Occupational health services are still very limited in relation to the provision of preventive services;
- occupational health services are more preoccupied with sickness monitoring, first aid, health surveillance, pre-employment screening and disciplinary assessments rather than prevention;
- sickness monitoring (63%) again tops the list of ‘services’ provided in 2006, as it did in 2004;
- the provision of disciplinary assessments is steadily rising from 25% in 2002 to 36% in 2006;

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- there has again been growth in access to rehabilitation, going up to 35% in 2006, from 33% in 2004 and 24% in 2002;
- occupational health services still only provide records for safety representatives in around one out of ten workplaces (11%).

Table 10: Occupational health services provided

Service provided	2006	2004	2002
Sickness monitoring	63%	61%	51%
First aid	55%	60%	54%
Health surveillance	52%	53%	41%
Pre-employment medical screening	44%	46%	39%
Disciplinary assessments	36%	32%	25%
Access to rehabilitation	35%	33%	24%
Advice on prevention	34%	34%	28%
Treatment	23%	25%	19%
Records which safety reps are given	11%	11%	10%

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

Section six

rights for safety representatives

Safety representatives have rights under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, plus additional consultation rights added because of European legislation. The 2006 survey asked safety representatives a number of questions about some of their current rights.

Training

Employers must allow safety representatives 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 representative'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 trade unions run their own approved training, including induction training. Some trade unions provide joint training with employers. In addition, some employers may provide training, usually to deal with specific matters.

Table 11 shows in 2006:

- the percentage of safety representatives who have participated in a TUC or trade union Stage 1 course has increased by 4% since 2004. Two out of every three (64%) responding had attended this course;
- an increase of 3% since 2004 in the percentage of safety representatives who have participated in a TUC or trade union Stage 2 course. Over one out of every three (37%) safety representatives responding had attended this course;
- around three in ten (29%) had attended their own trade union's introductory courses, the same as previous years;
- a 10% decrease since 2004 in the percentage of safety representatives who have participated in other TUC/union health and safety courses;
- attendance at joint union – employer courses are still in the minority (6%);
- a two per cent increase in the percentage of experienced safety representatives participating in the advanced TUC Access Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety. The percentage has doubled since 2002.

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Table 11: Training received

Health & Safety training received	2006	2004	2002
TUC/Union Stage 1	64%	60%	63%
TUC/Union Stage 2	37%	34%	34%
Own union introductory course	29%	31%	30%
Other TUC/Union courses	15%	25%	17%
Course provided by employer	18%	20%	17%
Joint union-employer course	6%	7%	8%
TUC Certificate in OH&S	12%	10%	6%

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

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

- the percentage of safety representatives in post for less than a year, who have participated in a TUC/Union Stage 1, has increased from 49% in 2004 to 55% in 2006;
- still there are one out of every three safety representatives who have been in post for over one year have not participated in the essential TUC/Union Stage 1 course;
- as in previous TUC surveys, around one in three safety representatives (38%) in post for 1-5 years, and one in two safety representatives (50%) in post for over 5 years, have attended a TUC/Union Stage 2 course. Substantial numbers of safety representatives are missing out on crucial Stage 2 training;
- one in five (19%) safety representatives 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 representative

(Figures in brackets refer to the results in the 2004 survey)

Health & Safety training received	Under 1 year	1-5 years	Over 5 years
TUC/Union Stage 1	55% (49%)	65% (62%)	68% (66%)
TUC/Union Stage 2	15% (10%)	38% (35%)	50% (48%)
Own union introductory course	19% (22%)	29% (31%)	36% (36%)
Other TUC/Union courses	5% (9%)	13% (24%)	25% (36%)
Course provided by employer	10% (8%)	14% (19%)	28% (29%)
Joint union-employer course	3% (3%)	4% (5%)	11% (13%)
TUC Certificate in OH&S	3% (2%)	12% (10%)	19% (16%)

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

Despite legal rights to time off for training, many safety representatives responding to the 2006 survey had been unable to access training on occasions.

According to those who had been unable to access training, it was because (2004 figures in brackets):

- they were too busy at work 39% (30%);
- management refused time off 25% (38%);
- the course was not the right time in the day/week 15% (15%);
- they were prevented from attending by family responsibilities 21% (17%).

‘Being too busy at work’ (39%) has replaced ‘management refusing time off (25%) as the main reason for inability to attend.

Consultation in “good time”

Safety representatives have a number of rights that entitle them to be consulted by the employer. *Table 13* shows what those safety representatives who answered this question said about these rights. The figures are very similar to those recorded in the previous surveys. It is still disturbing that of those that answered this question, over one in five (22%) are never automatically consulted. And even when safety representatives take the trouble to ask to be consulted, only just over one third (37%) are frequently consulted thereafter.

Table 13: Management consultation with safety reps

(The figures in brackets refer to the results from 2004)

Consultation	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Automatically	29% (30%)	49% (48%)	22% (21%)
When you ask	37% (38%)	56% (55%)	7% (7%)

The results of the 2006 survey when analysed further show that:

- Yorkshire and Humberside is the best region for frequent, automatic consultation (31%) and occasional (56%), automatic consultation combined (87%);
- the South East is the worst region for safety representatives never being automatically consulted (27%);
- workplaces with under 50 workers are the best size of workplace for frequent automatic consultation (31%). But workplaces with 50-100 workers are the worst for safety representatives never being consulted automatically (24%);
- Energy and Water is again the best sector for frequent, automatic consultation and occasional, automatic consultation combined (89%);
- the worst sectors for never being automatically consulted are Agriculture (39%); Banking, Finance and Insurance (29% - an 8% improvement on 2004); and Education (28%);
- even when safety representatives ask to be consulted in Banking, Finance

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and Insurance, 19% of employers still never consult them, but 50% of employers do consult frequently after being asked.

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 representatives who answered the question numerically about the number of times they inspected their workplace in the last 12 months, the 2006 survey shows very similar results to those in 2004:

- one in four (28%) had conducted one inspection;
- one in five (21%) had conducted two inspections;
- one in three (35%) had conducted 3-4 inspections;
- around one in six (16%) had conducted more than four inspections.

Time spent on safety representative's duties

Safety representatives 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 representatives in doing their job is the lack of time and facilities.

In the 2006 survey, safety representatives 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. The results are very similar to previous survey results and show that in the previous week:

- just over half (53%) had spent up to 1 hour;
- 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 representatives 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 2006 survey show that a safety committee exists in eight out of ten workplaces (84%), although in 15% of cases the committee rarely meets. Almost two out of ten (16%) workplaces do not have a safety committee.

As in previous surveys, individual sectors that are better than average include:

- Energy and Water (92%, with 9% of those rarely meeting);
- Manufacturing (92%, with 13% of those rarely meeting);

Banking, Finance and Insurance has improved its position regarding the percentage of safety committees (82% compared with 60% in 2004). But the sector that is much worse than average again is Education, where 63% have a safety committee (with 18% rarely meeting);

North West England (90%) and Wales (87%) have the best percentage for those with a safety committee. The situation is again 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 same questions were asked again in 2006. The results are shown in the two additional sections below: 'Inspectors and Safety representatives'; and 'Improvements and enforcement action'.

HSE and EHO inspections

According to safety representatives, the situation regarding inspectors 'never visiting' and 'visiting within the last 12 months' is getting worse. The results from safety representatives responding to questions about enforcement are:

- over four out of ten (46%) safety representatives say that as far as they know a health and safety inspector has never inspected their workplace;
- less than three out of ten (27%) of safety representatives say that their workplace has received a visit in the last year. This is the smallest percentage since 1998;
- seventeen per cent of safety representatives say that their workplace has received a visit between one and three years ago; and
- ten per cent of safety representatives say that their workplace has received a visit over three years ago.

There was more inspection activity in the last 12 months in Manufacturing (50%) and Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants (45%). The worst sectors for never being inspected, as far as the safety representatives know, is again Central Government (72%).

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:

- 31% (4% less than 2004) of workplaces between 200 – 1000 workers having received a visit; and
- 35% (5% less than 2004) of workplaces where there are over 1000 workers having received a visit, compared with 19% (5% less than 2004) of workplaces with less than 50 workers.

Workplaces with under 50 workers have never been inspected, as far as the safety representatives know, is 58% (7% worse than 2004) of cases. The best place for inspections in the last 12 months is again Wales (39%). The worst region for never being inspected, as far as the safety representatives know, is again London (58%, which is 9% worse than 2004).

Inspectors and safety representatives

Just over one in three safety representatives (38%) knew in advance about the most recent visit by a health and safety inspector. In 2006, safety representatives were asked whether an inspector spoke to them or any other safety representative. Of those safety representatives that responded:

- 34% (36% in 2004) said that they or other safety representatives were spoken to by the inspector;
- 39% (38% in 2004) said that they or other safety representatives were not spoken to by the inspector; and
- 27% did not know.

Improvements and enforcement action

Safety representatives were asked in 2006 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 representatives responding are shown in *Table 14* and *Table 15* and suggest that:

- the number of employers making some health and safety improvements or better complying with the law because of the possibility of an inspector's visit has fallen since 2004 from nearly seven out of ten (69%) to less than six out of ten (55%);
- more than one in five (22% compared with 16% in 2004) say that their employer has not improved health and safety or compliance at all. Less than one in five (18%) make 'a lot' of improvements;
- less than one in four (23% compared with 27% in 2004) make some health and safety improvements to health and safety after hearing about notices or prosecutions related to another employer. However again, nearly one in two (45%) safety representatives did not know the impact on employers.

Table 14: Improvements because of the possibility of a visit

	2006	2004
Not at all	22%	16%
A little	22%	23%
Somewhat	15%	25%
A lot	18%	21%
Don't know	23%	15%

enforcement

Table 15: Improvements after hearing about notice or prosecution

	2006	2004
Yes	23%	27%
No	32%	28%
Don't know	45%	45%

Safety representatives were then asked in the 2006 survey if their employer had ever received an enforcement notice:

- 19% (20% in 2004) said yes;
- 31% (29% in 2004) said no; and
- 50% (51% in 2004) did not know.

Those safety representatives 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:

- again only four out of ten employers (41%) are involving safety representatives 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;
- one in three employers (34%) only do the minimum to comply with a notice;
- over four out of ten (43%) 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

	2006	2004
Heard about it after changes were made	21%	18%
Heard about changes planned but no safety reps involved in planning	38%	40%
Safety rep(s) involved in planning after receipt of notice	41%	42%

Table 17: Employer's response to a legal enforcement notice

	2006	2004
Minimum to comply	34%	30%
Comply and review other practices elsewhere	43%	61%
Implement best practice, effect short term in one activity/area	11%	10%
Implement best practice, effect longer term in one activity/area	12%	13%

Section eight

conclusions and recommendations

This survey will help inform the TUC and affiliated trade unions about the kind of hazards and organisational problems that affect health and safety representatives in the workplace. The information we obtain helps us develop policies on health, safety and welfare, prioritise issues according to the needs of health and safety representatives, and press for action from the HSC, HSE, Government and employers.

Hazards

The top five concerns of safety representatives are by and large the issues within the current HSC priority programme.

Concerns about overwork or stress continue to grow with the problem being at its worst in the public sector and workplaces with over 1,000 workers. Workloads and cuts in staff are still the main factors linked to stress, with concerns about bullying increasing. Clearly, employers are still failing to meet the occupational health challenges that are presented by stress.

Whilst musculoskeletal disorders remain a significant problem, overall there have been encouraging signs of a slight improvement since 2004. However, there are still high levels of concern about back strains in the Health Service. In addition, the high levels of concern about RSI in Banking, Finance and Insurance and Central Government show that there is still a lot more preventive work required in particular sectors. The use of display screen equipment and the high levels of concerns about it in Banking and Central Government provides pointers for this preventive work.

Slips, trips and falls are still a particular problem in a number of industries including Energy and Water, Construction, Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants.

Around one in four safety representatives have concerns about working alone (an increasing problem in Health Services in particular); high temperatures (an increasing problem); violence and threats (an increasing problem particularly in smaller workplaces) and long hours of work. Nearly one in two safety representatives have concerns about noise in manufacturing despite the implementation of the new Noise at Work Regulations. Bullying is of increasing concern in workplaces with over 1000 workers.

London is the worst area for concerns about overwork or stress; display screen equipment; violence and threats; long hours of work; and bullying.

conclusions and recommendations

The TUC recommends that:

- the HSC, HSE, the TUC and affiliated trade unions, and employers continue to vigorously address those areas within the priority programme, in particular stress and musculoskeletal disorders;
- Employers must be encouraged to take the problem of stress more seriously. There should be more use and enforcement of existing laws and HSE stress management standards;
- Employers should remove the barriers that are preventing some safety representatives from attending TUC and trade union courses. For example, TUC Education has recently updated its courses on stress and musculoskeletal disorders and participation by safety representatives in these updated courses is essential.

Safety representatives

The HSC has recently consulted about Improving Worker Involvement (CD207). When the results of the consultation become known, there will be a further debate about the rights of safety representatives. The findings in the TUC 2006 survey will give the TUC a good opportunity to ensure that the experiences of trade union health and safety representatives are taken into account in the forthcoming debate.

It is clear that the existing regulations on consultation are not working. Overall only 29% of safety representatives are consulted automatically by their employer on a frequent basis. Over one in five safety representatives are never automatically consulted by their employer. Even when safety representatives take the trouble to ask to be consulted, only just over one third (37%) are frequently consulted thereafter. There has to be better compliance by employers with their duties to consult safety representatives. And there has to be far more and better enforcement by the enforcement authorities.

The involvement of safety representatives in the risk assessment process continues to be most unsatisfactory. Overall less than three out of ten safety representatives are satisfied with their involvement in drawing up the risk assessment. Nearly one out of two are not involved by employers at all. These figures are very similar to those produced in previous TUC biennial surveys, so the situation is not getting better and has to be addressed in any new regulations emanating from the consultation process.

Previous research has shown that the biggest obstacle facing safety representatives in doing their job is the lack of time and facilities. One out of two safety representatives had spent up to just one hour on health and safety in the previous week. Safety representatives could contribute a lot more if they were actively encouraged and given more time to perform their functions by employers. Again compliance and enforcement are key issues.

Despite legal rights to time off for training, many safety representatives responding to the 2006 survey had been unable to access training on occasions primarily due to being too busy at work or because management refused time off.

The situation regarding joint safety committees remains similar to previous TUC biennial surveys. The results of the 2006 survey show that a safety committee exists in eight out of ten workplaces (84%), although in 15% of cases the committee rarely meets. The sector that is much worse than average is again Education, where 63% have a joint safety committee (with 18% rarely meeting).

There has been a very slight improvement in the proportion of safety representatives who are women, are black and ethnic minority workers. But the TUC is disappointed that there has been so little 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 recommends that:

- In the forthcoming debate about worker involvement safety representatives' rights, the HSC takes full account of safety representatives' experiences that have been summarised in this survey. In particular: addressing employers' failure to consult generally and more specifically about risk assessments; and the difficulty that safety representatives experience in obtaining time off for health and safety training and performing their role;
- The current regulations and guidance on training of safety representatives need to be reviewed and strengthened;
- Existing laws regarding consultation should be fully enforced and any new laws strengthen safety representatives' rights and employers' duties;
- In the interim, employers should implement existing laws regarding consultation and remove the barriers that are preventing some safety representatives from exercising their role adequately and attending TUC and trade union health and safety courses;
- The TUC and trade union campaign for extended rights for safety representatives (roving safety reps; provisional improvement notices; rights to stop the job) should continue;
- The TUC and trade unions should seek to ensure that they encourage members from those groups under-represented at present, to become safety representatives. Recently developed TUC Organising for Health and Safety resources can be used on TUC/trades union training courses, to help achieve this goal.

conclusions and recommendations

Managing health and safety

Safety representatives again report a slight increase in the ability of their employers to conduct risk assessments with just over half of the safety representatives saying that their employers had conducted adequate risk assessments. But one in four risk assessments are considered inadequate. Again, there appears to be more dissatisfaction with the way that risk assessments are done in large workplaces. As risk assessment is one of the main cornerstones of any successful health and safety management system clearly more needs to be done.

The Education sector fares badly again. With 11% of safety representatives saying that risk assessments had not been done at all and a further 20% did not know.

As has already been explained above, employers are not consulting safety representatives as they should on risk assessments, with around one in two safety representatives not consulted at all.

The percentage of employers providing occupational health services has improved slightly, but an increasing number are provided by external providers. Workers in small workplaces are still worse off than larger workplaces.

However, occupational health services are still more preoccupied with sickness monitoring, first aid, health surveillance, pre-employment screening and disciplinary assessments rather than prevention. Preventive services are seventh in the list of services provided, now behind disciplinary assessments for the first time since the TUC biennial surveys started ten years ago. Occupational health services are still very limited in relation to the provision of preventive services. In addition, very few safety representatives are provided with any occupational health records.

The TUC recommends that:

- Employers must be encouraged to take the problem of risk assessments more seriously by rigorous enforcement of existing laws;
- Any new laws on worker involvement must ensure that employers are obliged to consult safety representatives about risk assessments;
- There should be continued government initiatives on occupational health (HSC; DWP; and DoH) in co-operation with the TUC and affiliates;
- TUC and trade unions continue to campaign for worker involvement in occupational health services, so that the focus can be placed upon prevention of occupational illnesses rather than sickness monitoring, health surveillance and disciplinary assessments.

Enforcement

According to safety representatives, the situation regarding inspectors 'never visiting' and 'visiting within the last 12 months' is getting worse. Over four out of ten (46%) safety representatives say that as far as they know a health and safety inspector has never inspected their workplace. This is 7% worse than 2004 and the worst result since TUC biennial surveys began. In addition, less than three out of ten (27%) say that their workplace has received a visit in the last year. This is the smallest percentage since 1998. These results demonstrate why the TUC and trade unions have been campaigning about the significant decline in the level of enforcement activity over recent years.

Only one in three said that they or other safety representatives were spoken to by the inspector when they visited. Visits by inspectors are becoming more rare and even when inspectors do visit, it appears that the majority are still not taking the opportunity to speak to the safety representative.

For the second time ever the TUC survey looked at the effect of enforcement activities. The results showed the possibility of a visit by an inspector is having less effect on the safety culture within a workplace. This could be due to employer knowledge that they are less likely to be visited now. Legal enforcement notices were shown to be effective with four out of ten employers not only complying, but also reviewing their practices across the workplace. But only four out of ten employers are involving safety representatives in planning changes following the receipt of an enforcement notice.

The TUC recommends that:

- 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;
- Government, HSC and HSE must reverse the recent reduction in workplace safety inspections by enforcing bodies;
- Enforcement authorities must ensure that inspectors liaise fully with safety representatives;
- Existing laws should be enforced regarding consultation with safety representatives on the introduction of new measures in the workplace (in this case meeting the requirements of enforcement notices).



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