



focus on health and safety

**trade union trends survey
TUC biennial survey of safety reps 2016**



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executive summary

This is the 11th biennial TUC safety representatives' survey. It is designed to provide the TUC and its affiliated trade unions with valuable information to help shape safety campaigning and organisation in the period ahead.

Key findings

Hazards

The five most frequently cited hazards of main concern in 2016 were stress, bullying/harassment, overwork, back strains and long hours at work. The first four are the same as in 2014 but long hours has replaced slips, trips and falls on the level in fifth place.

Stress – stands out more than ever as the chief health and safety concern, identified as a top-five hazard by 70% of safety representatives in the survey.

- as ever, stress is the main hazard of concern, but 2016 saw a higher proportion of respondents cite it as one of their top five concerns than in any previous TUC safety representatives' survey;
- concern over stress remains higher in the public sector than the private sector, has become more widespread in both sectors;
- concern about stress is especially prevalent – and rising - in central government (93% citing it as a top-five concern), education (89%) and health services (82%); and
- it is still the most common concern in all sizes of workplaces and in every region/country of the UK.

Bullying/harassment - concern over this hazard has been creeping up for some years, and now almost half (48%) of safety representatives put it in their top five (compared with 46% in 2014).

The rise over the last two years has all taken place in the public sector, cited by 53% of safety representatives there compared with 43% in the private sector.

Bullying/harassment is a particular problem in leisure services, where it is the top concern, and in central government and education. It is more of a problem in larger workplaces (with 200 or more employees) than smaller ones.

Overwork – this has become a more common top-five concern, with 40% of respondents citing it in 2016, compared with 36% in 2014.

It is more widespread in the public sector (46% citing it) than the private sector (33%), and is a particularly big problem in education. The linked problem of **long hours**, on the other hand, is more prevalent in the private sector (35% citing it compared with 29% in the public sector).

One of the biggest changes has been in concern over **violence and threats**, with 24% of safety representatives citing it in 2016 compared with 19% in 2014.

On a more positive note, concern over **handling heavy loads** has retreated from 19% two years ago to 13% in 2016.

Managing health and safety

Four in 10 safety representatives (80%) say their employer has conducted formal risk assessments – slightly fewer than in 2014 (83%).

The decline stems from a fall in the private sector, but safety representatives in that sector were still slightly more likely than those in the public sector to have experienced formal risk assessments.

In education, just 61% said risk assessments had been carried out, whereas in manufacturing the figure was 93%.

Even where risk assessments are carried out, one in five of them are thought by safety reps to be inadequate. Fewer than half (47%) of *all respondents* in the survey felt their employer had conducted adequate risk assessments.

Particularly poor industries in this respect are leisure services, other services, education and distribution, hotels and catering.

The involvement of safety representatives in risk assessments seems to have deteriorated – just 22% said they were satisfied compared with 28% in 2014 and 41% were not involved at all (compared with 33%).

As in 2014, 92% of safety representatives say their employer provides an occupational health service, with another small shift away from in-house services towards external provision.

Only 50% of the respondents from the hazardous construction sector said their employer provided such services.

There has been a fall in access to rehabilitation and in the provision of advice on prevention since 2014.

Safety representatives' rights

There has been a small increase in the proportion of safety representatives attending TUC/union stage I and stage II training since 2014, but a decline in most other forms

of training. For those who have been in post for less than a year, conversely, there has been a fall-off in the number attending basic courses, but more have attended stage II training.

One in six of all safety representatives in the survey say management has at some time refused them time off for training, and a similar proportion say they have been too busy at work to attend.

Twenty-eight per cent are *never* automatically consulted by their employer over health, safety and welfare matters – up from 22% saying that in 2014. Only one in five are frequently automatically consulted.

Enforcement

The 2016 survey indicates that inspections by health and safety enforcement agencies remain low, with 46% of safety representatives saying their workplace has never, as far as they know, been inspected by a health and safety inspector (compared with 47% in 2014).

The picture has changed very little since 2014, with just a slight tendency for safety representatives to report longer periods since the last inspection of their workplace. And only 24% said there had been an inspection within the last 12 months.

Manufacturing is the only sector in which a majority (57%) of safety representatives said there had been an inspection in the last 12 months.

In the hazardous area of construction, only one of the six safety representatives responding (17%) said there had been an inspection in the past year and three said had never been one, as far as they knew.

In London and Yorkshire & Humberside more than half of respondents (51%) said they had never known their workplace to be inspected.

Just 37% of respondents were aware of the most recent inspector's visit before it took place, and even fewer, 28%, said a safety representative had spoken with the inspector on that visit.

One in six said their employers had at some point received a legal enforcement notice, about the same as in 2014, but employers seem less likely to engage with safety representatives in making the necessary improvements.

About a quarter of safety representatives whose employers had received a notice only heard about the notice after the necessary changes had been made, about the same as in 2014.

But almost half (46%) said that, despite hearing about planned changes, safety representatives had not been involved in planning them - far more than in 2014, when the figure was 36%. There was a corresponding decline in the proportion saying at least one safety representative had been involved – from 39% in 2014 to 30% in 2016.

Section one

introduction

The survey

This is the 11th biennial TUC survey of safety representatives¹. The report is analysed by senior TUC policy officials and union health and safety specialists in order to understand the changing experience of safety representatives at work and to help provide more support. They also use the survey to inform public policy debates and in work with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The TUC wants union safety representatives and safety committees to discuss and use the report to help with their ongoing work.

A total of 1,039 safety representatives responded to the questionnaire either on paper or online in the period March-July 2016, compared with 1,716 in the 2014 survey. Despite the lower response this time, there were enough responses to provide much information about the profile of safety representatives, the work they do to improve safety and the help (or otherwise) they get in this from employers and enforcement agencies.

Profile of safety representatives

Twenty-eight per cent of the safety representatives responding were women – a slightly higher proportion than in 2014, when the figure was 26%.

Ninety-six per cent described themselves as White (“White British” or “White – other”), compared with 95% in 2012. Two per cent described themselves as one of the following: “Asian or Asian British”, “Black or Black British”, or “Chinese”. This compares with 3% in 2014, the difference being in a reduction in those saying they were Asian or Asian British from 2% to 1%. Another 1% said they were “mixed race”, as in 2014.

A slightly higher proportion of respondents were under the age of 45 than was the case in 2014 – 29% compared with 26% - while a lower proportion were aged 46-60 (60% compared with 65%). The percentage of those aged 60+ rose slightly from 9% to 11%.

Table A: Age profile of respondents

Age group	2016	2014
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¹ The 2014 was mistakenly referred to as the 11th survey in the series – it was in fact the 10th.

16-35	9%	8%
36-45	20%	18%
46-60	60%	65%
60+	11%	9%

There was a change compared with 2014 in the profile of respondents in terms of economic sector they are employed in, with the pattern more closely resembling the picture of 2012.

In 2016, 61% of respondents work for organisations in the public sector. This compares with 56% in 2014 and 63% in 2012. Meanwhile the private sector accounted for 37% of respondents in 2016, compared with 41% in 2014 and 35% in 2012. In the current year, 2% of respondents work in the not-for-profit/voluntary sector (in 2014 it was 3% and in 2012 it was 2%).

The largest group of safety representatives by industry work in transport and communications (20%). “Other services” accounts for 17%, education for 14% (compared with just 9% in 2014), and local and central government each account for 11%. There was a decline in the proportion from manufacturing, which accounts for 7% of respondents in 2016, compared with 9% in 2014.

A quarter of survey respondents (25%) work in workplaces with less than 100 workers, while another 26% work in workplaces with 1,000 or more workers (up from 22% in 2012). Overall a majority (59%) work in workplaces with over 200 workers, the same as in 2014.

Fifteen per cent of safety representatives responding said they had been doing the job for less than a year. Forty-four per cent had been in the role for over five years and 42% for between one and five years. This profile is virtually unchanged from that of two years ago.

A little over half (52%) of those who responded were also union stewards, slightly less than the 54% saying that in 2014, while just under half (48%) were only safety representatives.

Safety representatives responded from all regions/countries of the UK. The largest group of respondents came from the Midlands (16%) with the South East and South and North West each accounting for 13%. The South West and Scotland each provided 11% of respondents, while Northern Ireland safety reps, who were included in the survey for the second time, accounted for 1%, as in 2014. (Due to the very small sample from Northern Ireland, comparative analysis relating to this group is unreliable.)

Ninety six per cent of safety representatives have access to the internet at home (95% in 2014) and 81% have access at work (80% in 2012).

Despite the slight rise in the percentage of safety representatives with internet access, there was a sharp fall in the proportion responding to this survey online (as opposed to on paper). Just 73% responded online in 2016, compared with 88% in 2014 and 83% in 2012.

Safety representatives in the public sector were substantially more likely than those in the private sector to respond online (79% compared with 61%). This marks a reversal of the position in previous surveys in this series, in which private sector respondents were more likely to respond online.

The industrial sectors where respondents were most likely to respond online were education (91% did so), health services (90%) and local government (87%).

Regionally, representatives in the Northern region and in London were the most likely to respond online (81% in both cases), while those in the North West were the least likely to do so (52%).

Women were more likely than men to respond online (74% compared with 69%).

Section two

hazards at work

Main hazards

Safety representatives were asked to identify the main hazards of concern to workers at their workplace, and then to identify the top five in order of importance. All those mentioned as being in respondent's top five were aggregated to provide a table of "top-five hazards" across all survey respondents, which could be compared with those of previous years (see table 1).

Table 1: The main hazards of concern to workers

	2016	2014
Stress	70%	67%
Bullying/harassment	48%	46%
Overwork	40%	36%
Back strains	32%	33%
Long hours of work	30%	26%
Slips, trips, falls on the level	28%	32%
Repetitive strain injuries	26%	27%
Violence and threats	24%	19%
Display screen equipment	21%	22%
Working alone	18%	19%
High temperatures	16%	17%
Handling heavy loads	13%	19%
Low temperatures	12%	11%
Noise	11%	9%
Asbestos	10%	10%
Dusts	9%	10%
Road traffic accidents	7%	8%
Chemicals or solvents	6%	9%

Cramped conditions	6%	7%
Slips, trips, falls from a height	6%	8%
Infections	5%	5%
Machinery hazards	5%	6%
Workplace transport accidents	5%	6%
Vibration	4%	3%
Dermatitis/skin rashes	3%	4%
Passive smoking	2%	2%
Asthma	1%	2%

The five most frequently cited top-five hazards were stress, bullying/harassment, overwork, back strains and long hours of work. Slips, trips and falls on a level and repetitive strain injuries (RSI) were in sixth and seventh place respectively. These seven most frequently cited top-five hazards were the same seven as in 2014, but long hours of work jumped from seventh position in 2014 to fifth in 2016.

There have also been changes to the frequency with which these key concerns are cited by safety representatives.

Stress – always the most widespread concern – was cited by an even higher proportion of safety representatives – 70% - this time than two years ago, when 67% did so. In fact the proportion was higher than in any previous TUC safety representatives' survey.

The percentage of safety representatives concerned about **bullying/harassment** has now risen to almost half, with 48% citing it as a top-five concern compared with 46% 2014 and 41% in 2012.

Concern about **overwork** has jumped by four percentage points in the last two years, with 40% citing it as a top-five concern in 2016 compared with 36% in 2014. The percentage had already risen from 33% in 2012. The linked problem of **long hours of work** has also been growing rapidly over the last few years. This time around 30% of representatives cited it as a top-five concern – up from 26% in 2014 and 21% in 2012.

On a slightly more positive note, the proportion citing **slips, trips and falls on the level** has receded slightly – to 28% in 2016 from 32% two years earlier.

And concern over **back strains** is virtually unchanged – at 32% this year compared with 33% in 2014.

The hazard which has seen the largest percentage point expansion as a top-five concern is **violence and threats**. The proportion of safety representatives saying this was one of their main concerns rocketed from 19% in 2014 to 24% just two years later.

On the plus side there was a substantial fall in the proportion citing **handling heavy loads** as a top-five concern, from 19% two years ago to just 13% in 2016.

Hazards by sector

Clearly concern over individual hazards varies according to economic and industrial sector, with some hazards more prevalent in certain sectors and industries. Table 2 separates the results into public and private sectors, still concentrating on safety representatives' top five concerns.

Table 2: Hazards by public/private sectors

	Public	Private
Stress	78%	63%
Bullying/harassment	53%	43%
Overwork	46%	33%
Violence and threats	30%	16%
Long hours of work	29%	35%
Back strains	28%	39%
Repetitive strain injuries	27%	24%
Display screen equipment	26%	13%
Slips, trips, falls on the level	24%	33%
High temperatures	18%	13%
Working alone	18%	17%
Handling heavy loads	12%	16%
Low temperatures	11%	13%
Asbestos	9%	9%
Dusts	7%	13%
Noise	7%	17%
Cramped conditions	6%	6%
Road traffic accidents	6%	9%
Chemicals or solvents	5%	8%
Infections	5%	3%
Workplace transport accidents	4%	7%

Machinery hazards	3%	8%
Slips, trips, falls from a height	3%	9%
Vibration	3%	6%
Dermatitis/skin rashes	2%	3%
Passive smoking	2%	3%
Asthma	1%	1%

There are some marked differences between the public and private sectors, most notably the level of concern over stress. While it is the most widespread concern in both sectors, it is more frequently cited as a top-five concern in the public sector (78% of representatives citing it) than in the private sector (63%).

In fact, the public sector uniformly has higher rates of concern than the private sector over “psycho-social hazards” – including stress but also bullying/harassment and violence and threats.

There has been a widening gap in concern about violence and threats between the two sectors over the last two years. This is because there has been a substantial rise in concern in the public sector, where 30% of safety representatives noted it as a top-five concern, compared with 22% in 2014.

Overwork is another concern that is more widespread in the public sector, with 46% citing it in their top five hazards compared with 33% in the private sector. However, long hours is more of a concern in the private sector (35% citing it compared with 29% in the public sector).

Concerns about display screen equipment is much more widespread in the public sector, where 26% of safety representatives included it in their top five hazard concerns compared with half as many (13%) in the private sector.

The hazards with which respondents have the highest concerns in the private sector include: back strains, highlighted as a top-five concern by 39% of safety representatives in the private sector compared with 28% in the public sector; noise (17% private sector, 7% public sector); and slips, trips and falls on the level (33% private, 24% public). On this last hazard, however, the gap between private and public sectors has narrowed since 2014 (when the proportions were 44% private, 24% public) due to an apparent improvement in the private sector.

A further breakdown also reveals different concerns between safety representatives in different industries. Table 3 lists the top-five hazards for 14 industrial sectors.

Table 3: the five main hazards of concern by sector (%)

Sector (number of reps responding to the question)	1st concern	2nd concern	3rd concern	4th concern	5th concern
Agriculture & fishing (8)	RSI 63%	Slips level, stress, both 50%	DSE, back strains, violence, working alone, all 38%		
Banking, insurance and finance (10)	Stress 70%	DSE 60%	RSI, bullying/harassment, both 40%	Back strains, overwork, both 30%	
Central government (106)	Stress 93%	Bullying/harassment 61%	DSE 56%	RSI 52%	Overwork 47%
Construction (6)	Slips level, long hours, both 50%	Back strains, machinery, overwork, road accidents, slips height, bullying/harassment, stress, all 33%			
Distribution and hotels (39)	Back strains 74%	Heavy loads, stress, both 49%	Slips level 41%	RSI 38%	
Education (134)	Stress 89%	Overwork 66%	Bullying/harassment 62%	Long hours 50%	DSE 22%
Energy and water (32)	Stress 72%	Slips level 47%	Long hours, overwork, both 31%	Back strains, slips height, both 28%	
Health services (78)	Stress 82%	Bullying/harassment 51%	Overwork 50%	Back strains 41%	Long hours, violence, both 38%
Leisure services (15)	Bullying/harassment 80%	Stress 60%	Back strains, slips level, long hours, all 40%		
Local government (108)	Stress 72%	Bullying/harassment 54%	Violence 47%	Overwork 42%	Back strains 30%

Manufacturing (69)	Stress 51%	RSI 42%	Back strains 41%	Chemicals 38%	Slips level 35%
Transport and communications (193)	Stress 63%	Long hours, bullying/harassment, both 42%	Slips level 38%	Back strains 34%	
Voluntary sector (7)	Violence, stress, both 57%	Long hours, overwork, working alone, bullying/harassment, all 43%			
Other services (167)	Stress 66%	Bullying/harassment 51%	Back strains 37%	Overwork 36%	Slips level 35%

Agriculture and fishing

RSI is now the number one most widespread concern in this sector, reported by 63% of its safety representatives. It has replaced overwork at the top of the list. Meanwhile slips, trips and falls on the level and stress are each cited as top-five concerns by half of safety representatives in this sector. Violence has entered the most common list of concerns in this sector for the first time.

Banking, insurance and finance

While the proportion of safety representatives in this sector citing stress as a top-five concern is not quite as high as in 2014 (70% compared with 82%), it is still clearly a significant problem and their number one issue. The percentage citing bullying/harassment as a top five concern this time declined dramatically (40% did so compared with 73% in 2014), but more cited DSE as a serious worry than did two years ago.

Central government

Concern over stress was already alarmingly widespread in central government in 2014 (87% citing it), and the situation has become even worse, with 93% of safety representatives citing it as a major concern. Concern about the number two hazard (bullying/harassment) is also up – from 58% in 2014 to 61% this year. In fact the proportion of representatives reporting the five most widespread hazards in the sector has gone up in every case. The five areas remain the same, though RSI has overtaken concern about overwork in fourth place.

Construction

Slips, trips and falls on the level and long hours are the key concerns for this industry, having not appeared in the top five in 2014. (However, the small number of respondents from this sector means comparisons are unreliable.)

Distribution and hotels

Back strains stand out as the most widespread area of concern in this sector, with 74% of representatives putting it in their top five, up from 62% in 2014. Presumably related to this is the second most common concern, heavy loads (along with stress), which was also cited by more respondents this year than in 2014. Slips, trips and falls on the level were also in the top five, though cited by fewer respondents than in 2014 (41% compared with 56%). RSI is now on this list, which it wasn't before.

Education

The top four most widespread concerns in this sector are the same as in 2014 – stress, overwork, bullying/harassment and long hours. But in each case they are cited as top-five concerns by a higher proportion of safety representatives. Concern over long hours, in particular, is now cited by 50%, compared with 22% two years ago. The fifth most common concern is DSE, replacing high temperatures in the list.

Energy and water

Stress the stand-out concern in this sector now more than ever before, cited as a top-five concern by 72% of representatives compared with 65% in 2014. Concern over DSE has dropped out of the most widespread five, but that list now includes overwork and slips, trips and falls from a height, which it didn't two years ago.

Health services

Stress seems to be casting an ever-longer shadow over this sector, with another increase in representatives citing it as a top-five concern, up from 78% in 2014 to 82% this year. The number citing back strains is down, from 51% to 41%, but more cited long hours (38% compared with 32%). Violence is a new addition to the five most widespread concerns in the health services, knocking RSI out of the list.

Leisure services

The leisure sector has a new number one demon for 2016 – bullying/harassment – which didn't even feature in the five most widespread concern two years ago. Now a

shocking 80% of representatives put it in their list of top-five concerns. In second place is stress, up to 60% this year compared with 47% in 2014. These two psychosocial concerns have now overtaken the more physical hazards, such as slips, trips and falls on the level, in the list.

Local government

Concern over stress, bullying/harassment and violence have all increased considerably in this sector compared with 2014. The sharpest rise is in the proportion of representatives citing violence in their top five list of concerns – up from 26% two years ago to 47% this year.

Manufacturing

Concern over dusts is a new entry in this sector in 2016, while the proportion putting RSI in their top five concerns is also up sharply, from 33% in 2014 to 42% this year. But the most widespread concern is still stress, with the numbers citing it slightly higher than in 2014.

Transport and communications

The main concerns in this sector, and the proportion of respondents who have cited them, are little changed since 2014, with stress still the most widespread concern. More representatives are concerned about long hours (42% compared with 33% in 2014), pushing this concern from number five into the number two spot. Concern over back strains has dropped down from 40% to 34%.

Voluntary sector

It would appear that violence has become a more widespread concern in 2016 and overwork less widespread, but the numbers responding from this sector are too small for reliable comparisons.

Other services

Concern over this sector's number one hazard – stress – has increased this year, with 66% of representatives citing it as a top-five concern compared with 60% in 2014. Concern over the other four common hazards remains roughly the same as two years ago, apart from a decline in the proportion concerned over slips, trips and falls on the level.

Hazards and workplace size

Table 4 shows the five major health and safety concerns identified by safety representatives according to the number of people in their workplaces.

Table 4: Most common top-five concerns in workplaces of different sizes

Number of workers (number of responses in group)	1st concern	2nd concern	3rd concern	4th concern	5th concern
Under 50 (117)	Stress 66%	Bullying/harassment 41%	Overwork 38%	Slips level, long hours, violence, all 27%	
50-99 (121)	Stress 75%	Bullying/harassment 46%	Overwork 39%	Back strains 34%	Slips level 32%
100-199 (159)	Stress 64%	Bullying/harassment 42%	Overwork 40%	Back strains 37%	Long hours 36%
200-999 (322)	Stress 74%	Bullying/harassment 51%	Overwork 41%	Back strains 34%	Slips level 31%
1,000 or more (249)	Stress 73%	Bullying/harassment 55%	Overwork 41%	Long hours 36%	RSI 29%

As before, stress is the most common concern in all sizes of workplace. Since 2014, it has become more widespread in certain-sized workplaces, most notably in those with 50-99 workers, where 75% of representatives cited it as a top-five concern compared with 62% two years ago.

Bullying and harassment is the second most widespread concern in all sizes of workplace as it was two years ago. Although it has slightly receded in workplaces with 100-199 workers, it has increased in spread in all other workplaces, especially in both categories with under 100 employees.

Table 5 looks at how the most common hazards – listed by more than 20% of safety representatives overall - vary in prevalence according to size of workplace.

Table 5: most common hazards overall by workplace size

	Under 50 employees	50-99 employees	100-199 employees	200-999 employees	1,000 or more employees
Stress	66%	75%	64%	74%	73%
Bullying/harassment	41%	46%	42%	74%	73%
Overwork	38%	39%	40%	41%	41%
Back strains	31%	34%	37%	34%	25%
Long hours of work	27%	30%	36%	26%	36%
Slips, trips, falls on the level	27%	32%	30%	31%	21%
Repetitive strain injuries	11%	4%	26%	39%	29%
Violence and threats	27%	31%	15%	24%	25%
Display screen equipment	15%	21%	18%	22%	22%

Concern over both stress and bullying and harassment tends to be more widespread in workplaces with over 200 employees than those with less than that number. But this year's increase in reporting of stress in sites with 50-99 staff has rather interrupted that pattern.

RSI seems to be less of a problem in workplace of under 100 employees than larger ones, but concern over the other main hazards does not show a clear pattern in relation to workplace size.

Concern over violence and threats is slightly higher in workplaces of under 100 employees than in larger ones.

Hazards by region/country

Table 6 sets out which regions are the worst/second worst for each of the main hazards of concern. It shows that some regions/countries feature negatively in multiple areas.

Table 6: Regions/countries reporting most concern for each main hazard

Top-five concern	Worst area	2nd worst area	% cited nationally
Stress	South West 81%	Northern Ireland* 78%	70%

Bullying/harassment	Northern Ireland* 67%	East Anglia 56%	48%
Overwork	London 52%	East Anglia 49%	40%
Back strains	East Anglia 44%	North West 41%	32%
Long hours of work	London 38%	Northern, South East, 37%	30%
Slips, trips, falls on the level	Northern Ireland* 44%	Yorkshire & Humberside 38%	28%
Repetitive strain injuries	Northern Ireland* 33%	North West 32%	26%
Violence and threats	London 31%	South West 30%	24%
Display screen equipment	South West 30%	South East 28%	21%
Working alone	East Anglia 26%	South West 24%	18%
High temperatures	Wales 25%	South East 21%	16%
Handling heavy loads	East Anglia, Yorkshire & Humberside, 18%	13%	
Low temperatures	Yorkshire & Humberside 21%	Midlands, London, 14%	12%
Noise	London 15%	North West 14%	11%
Asbestos	Northern Ireland* 33%	Wales 15%	10%
Dusts	Wales, London, 13%	9%	
Road traffic accidents	South East 12%	Midlands 10%	7%
Chemicals or solvents	Scotland, North West, 12%	6%	
Cramped conditions	South East, Northern Ireland*, 11%	6%	
Slips, trips, falls from a height	Scotland 9%	South West 7%	6%
Infections	Yorkshire & Humberside 8%	Northern 7%	5%
Machinery hazards	Northern Ireland* 11%	Wales 10%	5%
Workplace transport accidents	South East 10%	Midlands, London, 6%	5%
Vibration	Northern Ireland* 11%	Wales 7%	4%
Dermatitis/skin rashes	North West, South West, London, 4%	3%	

Passive smoking	London 6%	Northern 4%	2%
Asthma	Yorkshire & Humberside 3%	North West 2%	1%

*Due to the very small sample size from Northern Ireland, comparative analysis relating to this groups is unreliable.

London is the region/country that appears most frequently in the table, being the first or second-worst region/country for nine of the 27 hazards listed. It is worst for overwork, long hours, violence, noise and passive smoking and joint worst for dusts and dermatitis. It is second worst for low temperatures and joint second worst for workplace transport accidents.

Northern Ireland features in the table second most frequently, being worst or second worst for eight hazards, but the small sample size (nine respondents) means percentage-based comparisons are unreliable. Next come three regions featuring six times in the table – South East and South, North West and South West.

Table 7: Main hazards of concern by region/country

Region/country	1 st concern	2 nd concern	3 rd concern	4 th concern	5 th concern
East Anglia	Stress 64%	Bullying/harassment 56%	Overwork 49%	Back strains 44%	Long hours 36%
London	Stress 74%	Bullying/harassment 53%	Overwork 52%	Long hours 38%	RSI, violence, 31%
Midlands	Stress 73%	Bullying/harassment 52%	Overwork 42%	Back strains 33%	Long hours 31%
North West	Stress 66%	Back strains 41%	Bullying/harassment 40%	Slips level, overwork, 35%	
Northern	Stress 71%	Bullying/harassment 47%	Overwork 40%	Long hours 37%	Back strains 31%
Northern Ireland	Stress 78%	Bullying/harassment 67%	Slips level, overwork, 44%	Asbestos, long hours, RSI, 33%	
Scotland	Stress 74%	Bullying/harassment 54%	Overwork 39%	RSI 28%	Back strains, slips level, 27%
South East and South	Stress 67%	Bullying/harassment 46%	Overwork 38%	Long hours 37%	Slips level 33%
South West	Stress 81%	Bullying/harassment 51%	Overwork 43%	DSE, violence, 30%	

Wales	Stress 75%	Bullying/harassment 54%	Overwork 44%	Long hours 28%	Back strains 26%
Yorkshire & Humberside	Stress 67%	Bullying/harassment 44%	Back strains 39%	Slips level 38%	Overwork 29%

There is a remarkable uniformity in the main five concerns of each region/country, with stress the most widespread concern everywhere. Stress is followed by bullying/harassment in all 11 regions/countries except the North West, where it has been overtaken as the second most widespread concern by back strains, putting it in third place.

Overwork is the third concern in nine regions/countries, with the North West and Yorkshire & Humberside being the exceptions. The other most widespread concerns are back strains and long hours (featuring in seven regions/countries each) and slips, trips and falls on the level (featuring in five).

Other concerns featuring several times in the table are RSI and violence, while Northern Ireland's most common concerns include asbestos and the South West's list includes DSE.

Although there is considerable consistency across the UK, there are variations in the breadth of concern in different regions/countries. For example, although stress tops the list everywhere, it is of more widespread concern in the South West (81% citing it) than in East Anglia (64%).

Concern over bullying/harassment is of concern to a larger proportion of safety representatives in Northern Ireland (67%) and East Anglia (56%) than those in the North West (40%). And 52% of those in London are concerned about overwork compared with just 29% in Yorkshire & Humberside.

Regional patterns have also changed somewhat since 2014. Concern over stress, for example, has retreated in the North West (66% reporting it compared with 71%), but has widened in eight regions/countries: East Anglia (64% compared with 59%), Midlands (73% compared with 71%), the North (78% compared 67%), Northern Ireland (78% compared with 65%), Scotland (74% compared with 66%), South East and South (67% compared with 62%), the South West (81% compared with 75%), Wales (75% compared with 70%).

There are also different trends on bullying/harassment in different regions. Concern has shifted slightly up or down in seven regions, but has increased substantially in East Anglia (56% citing in 2016 compared with 41% in 2014) and in the three smaller countries of the UK: Northern Ireland (67% citing it compared to 45%), Scotland (54% compared to 41%) and Wales (54% compared with 43%).

Section three

managing health and safety

As well as questions about the main hazards at work, safety representatives were asked about the way health and safety is managed in their workplace. In particular, the TUC asked about health and safety policies, risk assessments and occupational health services.

Health and safety policies

More than nine out of 10 safety representatives (93%) said that their employer had a written health and safety policy – the same proportion as in 2014. There was no real difference between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors on this, but workplaces with more than 200 employees were slightly more likely than those with less than that to have policies.

The distribution, hotels and restaurants sector and other services were the least compliant sectors in this area, with just 87% of safety representatives in these sectors saying there were policies. (Agriculture and fishing and the voluntary sector were also low but the numbers of respondents in these sectors were too small for analysis.)

The most compliant region/country was the North, where 100% of respondents said their employer had a policy, followed by Scotland and the South West, where the figure was 96% in each case. The least compliant place was Northern Ireland, where the proportion with policies was just 56%.

Risk assessments

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and other regulations, employers have a duty to make “suitable and sufficient” assessments of the risks. Where there are five or more workers, they should also record the significant findings.

Risk assessments conducted

The Health and Safety Executive has said that the ability of employers to conduct risk assessments is the key building block of good risk management. However, a slightly lower proportion (80%) of safety representatives said their employer had carried out formal risk assessments this year than in 2014 (83%). Ten per cent said they had not carried them out and another 10% did not know.

Of those saying risk assessments had been carried out, 93% said the assessments were recorded and only a small proportion (1%) said they were not. However, 6% did not know whether they were recorded. These figures were more or less the same as in 2014.

The overall fall in the percentage of respondents saying their employer had conducted risk assessments was largely down to a decline in the private sector, where just 82% said they had compared with 87% two years ago. However, those in the private sector were still slightly more likely than those in the public sector to have seen them (82% compared with 79%).

The likelihood of formal risk assessments taking place does not vary substantially by size of workplace, but those with 100-199 stood out as being less likely than others to have experienced them.

The conducting of risk assessments varies considerably across industries. The worst one appears to be the education sector, where just 61% said they had been carried out – far fewer than in 2014, when 73% said they had. Other poor industries were leisure services (70%), other services (71%) and the voluntary sector (71%).

The sector with the highest level of compliance was manufacturing, where 97% of respondents said formal risk assessments had been carried out – rather better than the 92% reported in 2014. Other relatively good levels of compliance were in central government (91%), transport and communications (89%) and agriculture and fishing (88%).

There was little regional variation in the level of compliance on formal risk assessments. The South West displayed the highest level, with 86% of safety representatives saying their employer had carried them out, while the lowest levels were in East Anglia (69%) and Northern Ireland (68%). East Anglia had been the best performer in 2014, when the figure was 88%.

Adequacy of risk assessments

While most employers have conducted risk assessments, in those cases where they did only 62% of the safety representative considered the assessments to be adequate (the same as in 2014). One fifth (21%) said they were not adequate while 17% did not know whether they were adequate.

This means that less than half of all respondents to the survey (47%) felt confident that their employer had conducted risk assessments that were adequate. There was no difference between the public and private sectors - 49% in each case of all respondents from that sector saying their employer had conducted adequate risk assessments - but the situation in the not-for-profit sector was rather better, with 62% saying it.

The stand-out worst industry in this area was leisure services, where only one of the 10 respondents in that sector (10%) said their employer had conducted a risk

assessment that was adequate. Other poor industries were other services (41% of respondents), education (39%) and distribution, hotels and catering (39%).

Looking across the region/countries, the worst areas were London, where just 32% of respondents said their employer had carried out risk assessments that were adequate, and Northern Ireland, where the figure was 33%. The best was Scotland, though even there the figure was only 60%.

Safety reps' involvement in the risk assessment process

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 require that employers consult with recognised trade union safety representatives on health, safety and welfare matters.

However, many safety representatives still find the risk assessment process unsatisfactory in terms of their own involvement:

- just 22% said they were satisfied with their involvement in drawing up risk assessments;
- 37% said they were involved, but not enough; and
- a massive 41% said they were not involved at all.

The position seems to be considerably worse than the already poor position in 2014. At that time, 28% were satisfied with their involvement in drawing up risk assessments and just 33% said they were not involved at all.

Employer provision of occupational health services

Occupational health schemes give access to a range of professional advice and services to employees, and 92% of safety representatives said that their employers provide some sort of occupational health service - the same proportion as in 2014.

The balance between in-house and external provision continues to inch towards external provision, with 53% of safety representatives now saying their employer provides that type of service, and 39% providing an in-house service. The figures in 2014 were 50% external and 40% in-house.

Public sector employers are more likely to provide occupational health services than private sector ones (94% do so, compared to 88%). And they are also more likely to provide the service via an external provider, 57% of all representatives in the public sector saying their employer provided OH services in this way compared with 46% of all those in the private sector. In the not-for-profit sector the balance was even further towards external provision (62%).

Employees' access to occupational health services varies according to workplace size and industrial sector. These differences are set out in tables 8 and 9.

Table 8: Provision of occupational health services by workplace size

Number of workers	2016	2014	2012
Under 50	84%	84%	82%
50-99	88%	90%	87%
100-199	90%	85%	86%
200-999	93%	92%	92%
1,000 or more	96%	97%	97%

The larger the workplace, the more likely is the employer to provide an occupational health service, with 96% of workplaces with over 1,000 employees providing one compared with 84% of those with under 50 staff.

Table 9: Provision of occupational health services by sector

Sector	2016	2014	2012
Agriculture & fishing	100%	100%	82%
Energy and water	97%	94%	95%
Health services	96%	97%	96%
Local govt.	96%	95%	96%
Central govt	95%	97%	96%
Manufacturing	93%	94%	95%
Transport and communications	93%	92%	95%
Leisure services	90%	80%	100%
Education	88%	85%	82%
Other services	87%	86%	84%
Voluntary sector	86%	75%	100%
Distribution and hotels	82%	80%	77%
Banking, insurance and finance	80%	73%	91%
Construction	50%	86%	93%

Table 9 shows how levels of occupational health service provision vary according to industrial sector. At the top end there appears to be 100% coverage in the agriculture sector (though this is based on only eight replies from the sector) and 97% in energy and water. The worst coverage – shockingly - is in construction where 50% had such provision (though again this is based on only six replies from this sector).

Levels of occupational health service provision do not vary massively by region/country. The area with the lowest coverage – at 87% - is Scotland while that with the highest coverage (97%) is Wales. Employers in Wales are more likely than others to provide the services in-house than others, 53% doing so while just 44% use an external provider.

Table 10 shows how frequently different types of occupational health service are provided.

Table 10: Types of occupational health services provided

Service provided	2016	2014	2012
Sickness monitoring	64%	68%	71%
Health surveillance	54%	56%	54%
Access to rehabilitation	45%	49%	46%
Disciplinary assessments	43%	45%	50%
First aid	42%	46%	54%
Pre-employment medical screening	40%	40%	43%
Advice on prevention	38%	41%	46%
Treatment	22%	23%	25%
Records which safety reps are given	10%	12%	14%

Note: percentages do not total 100% because respondents could tick any relevant services provided.

The most common service is sickness monitoring (provided in 64% of cases). However, this has retreated back slightly from its 2014 level (of 68%), as has the provision of disciplinary assessments (45% to 43%).

Less positive is the decline in access to rehabilitation, from 49% in 2014 to 45%, and in the provision of advice on prevention, from 41% to 38%.

Section four

rights of safety representatives

Despite the attacks on health and safety protections in recent years, safety representatives still have wide-ranging rights and powers under the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 and other subsequent health and safety legislation. The TUC survey asked safety representatives about the extent to which they have been able to exercise these rights and powers.

Training

Employers must permit safety representatives to attend training during working time without loss of pay. The Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) to the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 states that this training, approved by the TUC or independent unions, should take place as soon as possible after the safety representative has been appointed. The ACOP also allows for further training as necessary.

Unionlearn, the TUC's learning and training wing, provides a range of courses through the network of trade union studies centres in further and higher education colleges and through the Workers' Education Association (WEA). Individual unions also provide their own approved training courses for induction and a range of safety matters. In addition, some employers provide training on specific issues.

The 2016 TUC survey asked safety representatives about the range of training they had received. The responses are set out in Table 11.

Table 11: Training received

Health and safety training received	2016	2014	2012
TUC/Union Stage 1	76%	73%	74%
TUC/Union Stage 2	47%	46%	46%
Own union introductory course	28%	32%	32%
Other TUC/union courses	20%	21%	20%
Course provided by employer	14%	18%	19%

Joint union-employer course	6%	10%	7%
TUC Diploma/Certificate in OSH	18%	18%	17%

Note: percentages do not total 100% because respondents could tick any relevant courses attended.

The most common form of training received is the Stage I and II courses provided by the TUC and individual unions. Three in four safety representatives have attended the stage I course and 47% the Stage II course.

These figures are slightly up on 2014 levels, but for most other training the figures are down. A lower proportion of survey respondents than last time received training from their own unions or from their employers.

Training and experience

The TUC survey also examines the training received by safety representatives with different levels of experience in the role. Table 12 sets out the training received in 2016 and 2014 by safety representatives who have been in the role for different lengths of time.

Table 12: Training received by term as safety representative

	Under 1 year	1-5 years	Over 5 years
TUC/Union Stage I course	67% (68%)	76% (76%)	78% (73%)
Other TUC/Union Stage II course	13% (9%)	43% (46%)	61% (73%)
Own union introductory /basic course	25% (26%)	27% (28%)	31% (36%)
Other TUC/Union course	13% (9%)	16% (15%)	27% (29%)
Course provided by employer	8% (4%)	9% (13%)	19% (27%)
Joint union-employer course	4% (4%)	4% (5%)	8% (16%)
TUC Certificate in Occupational Safety and Health	3% (3%)	14% (13%)	26% (27%)

Note: percentages do not total 100% as respondents could tick as many as applied. Figures in brackets indicate the results from the 2014 survey.

There has been a slight decline in the proportion of new safety representatives – those who have been in post for less than a year – to attend TUC or their own union’s basic level course. But on the other hand more of them than before have attended a Stage II course than had in 2014. In addition, more have attended an employer-provided course than previously.

The pattern for safety representatives who have been in post for over five years has deteriorated somewhat over the last two years. Although a higher proportion of the current cohort of experienced reps has been through TUC/Union Stage I course, a lower proportion has been through any other sort of training.

Time off for training

The regulations and subsequent court cases have established the right of safety representatives to time off for training. However, 31% of those responding to the 2016 survey say there have been times when they have been unable to attend training courses.

The most common reason cited is being “too busy at work”, listed by 19% of all safety representatives in the survey. But 18% say they have been unable to take up courses because management has actually refused permission to take time off.

Eight per cent of safety representatives say that family responsibilities prevented them from taking time off to take up training, while the same proportion said the course was not at the right time of the day or week. Less than 1% said were “prevented by lack of access or barriers to disability”.

Consultation in “good time”

Safety representatives have the right to be consulted on health, safety and welfare matters by their employer. The TUC 2016 survey asked about consultation in two different situations: first, under normal conditions when consultation ought to be automatic, and secondly, when safety representatives ask or make requests. The responses to these questions are contained in Table 13.

Table 13: Management consultation with safety representatives

Consultation	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Automatically	22% (28%)	50% (50%)	28% (22%)

When you ask

38% (36%)

55% (57%)

7% (8%)

Note: Figures in brackets refer to the results of the 2014 survey

In the first situation, only 22% of safety representatives say they are frequently automatically consulted – substantially fewer than two years ago. A correspondingly larger proportion than previously said they are *never* automatically consulted in good time. There is little change in the situations where safety representatives ask or make requests.

Further analysis of these figures reveals the worst performing industries to be other services, where 37% of safety representatives say they are never automatically consulted, and health services, where 36% say that.

Regional analysis indicates that the North West is best for automatic consultation and the Midlands for consultation on request. Representatives in Yorkshire and Humberside fare worst on both counts.

Inspections

The right to inspect the workplace is one of the most crucial rights safety representatives have to identify hazards and highlight action to be undertaken by management. The ACOP states that safety representatives can inspect every three months, or more frequently by agreement, as long as they notify the employer in writing.

As in previous surveys, the 2014 survey found a huge variation in the frequency of safety representative inspections in the last 12 months:

- 20% had conducted one inspection;
- 14% had conducted two inspections;
- 28% had conducted three or four inspections; and
- 15% had conducted five or more inspections.

In addition, 22% said they had conducted no inspections in the last 12 months. Two years ago the figure was 21%.

While a lower proportion had conducted five or more inspections than in 2014 (15% compared with 19%), a slightly higher proportion had conducted three or four (28% compared with 25%).

Further analysis reveals that more experienced representatives tend to carry out more frequent inspections. More than half (51%) of those with over five years' experience carried out three or more inspections in the last 12 months compared with 42% of those with one to five years' experience and 26% of those in the post for less than a year. These figures are virtually unchanged since 2014.

Time spent on safety representatives' duties

Getting time off for training is not the only problem safety representatives face. It extends to time off for functions in the workplace, including for investigations, inspections, gathering information from members on hazards and meeting management. Previous TUC and academic research has identified the lack of time and facilities as serious impediments to safety representatives carrying out their functions.

In addition the last few years has seen some employers clamping down on facilities time for representatives in general, so it is useful to see if this has impacted on safety representatives.

The 2016 TUC survey asked respondents to quantify how much time they had spent on health and safety matters in the previous week. The results showed that:

- half (52%) had spent an hour or less;
- a third (35%) had spent between one and five hours;
- 7% had spent between five and 10 hours; and
- 6% had spent over 10 hours.

These figures reveal a slight but unwelcome increase in the proportion spending less than an hour, at 52% compared with 50% in 2014. However, this is partially offset by a rise in the small numbers spending between five and 10 hours (from 7% to 9%).

Again, the more experienced representatives tend to spend longer on their health and safety functions. One in six representatives with more than five years' experience (17%) spent over five hours a week on this work compared with 11% of those with one to five years' experience. This divide has been narrowing in the last few years.

Joint union-management committees

The work of safety committees has been identified as a key factor in making safety representatives' work effective. However, one in five of safety representatives (20%) said that their employer had not set up a joint committee (compared with 19% in 2014).

Larger workplaces – those with at least 200 employees – are much more likely to have a safety committee than those with fewer than 200. For example, 90% of workplaces with 1,000 or more have one, at least on paper, but only 70% of those with 100-199 workers do so.

Even where there is a committee, in one in five cases the committee rarely meets. This means that, overall, less than two in three workplaces covered by the survey (64%) have a union-management safety committee that meets fairly regularly, despite having safety representatives on the premises.

Table 14: Proportion with safety committees meeting regularly

Number of workers	
Under 50	49%
50-99	55%
100-199	54%
200-999	64%
1,000 or more	75%
<i>Overall</i>	<i>64%</i>

The industrial sectors most likely to have safety committees meeting regularly in 2016 are energy and water (81%), manufacturing (78%), the health services (76%) and central government (73%). Those least likely to do so are the voluntary sector (43%), other services (41%) and construction (33%).

Respondents in the South West were the most likely to have safety committees that meet regularly (73%) while those in East Anglia were the least likely to (49%).

Section five

enforcement

The survey asked about visits by health and safety inspectors, be they HSE inspectors, Environmental Health Officers or other relevant safety inspectors (such as from the Railways Inspectorate).

The responses indicated that there was only minor change in the periods since respondents' workplaces had last been inspected compared with 2014 responses, with just a slight tendency for them to report longer periods since the last inspection.

- 46% of safety representatives said that their workplace had never, as far as they knew, been inspected by a health and safety inspector (compared with 47%);
- 14% said the last inspection was over three years ago (compared with 13%);
- 16% said it was between one and three years ago (compared with 15%); and
- Only 24% said their workplace had been inspected within the last 12 months (compared with 25%).

Manufacturing is the only sector in which a majority (57%) of safety representatives said there had been an inspection in the last 12 months.

In the hazardous construction sector, only one of the six safety representatives in the survey (17%) said there had been an inspection in the past year and three said their workplace had never been inspected, as far as they knew. Table 15 shows the figures for each industry.

Table 15: most recent inspection by industry

Sector	Last 12 months	Never
Manufacturing	57%	13%
Energy and water	38%	34%
Distribution and hotels	36%	33%
Health services	33%	39%
Agriculture & fishing	25%	50%
Other services	24%	37%
Education	20%	46%

Construction	17%	50%
Transport and communications	17%	51%
Local govt.	15%	45%
Voluntary sector	14%	29%
Banking, insurance and finance	10%	50%
Leisure services	10%	50%
Central government	9%	67%

The very largest workplaces (of 1,000 or more employees) are, not surprisingly, the most likely to have been visited in the past year (26% had been) and those with under 50 the least likely (14%).

The regions most likely to have seen an inspection in the last 12 months were Wales and Scotland (31% saying they had in each case). The regions least likely to were Northern Ireland (11%) and the South East and South (18%). The regions most likely to have never seen an inspection were London and Yorkshire & Humberside (51% saying this in each case).

Inspectors and safety representatives

Contact between safety representatives and inspectors continues to decline. Only 37% were aware of the most recent visit before it took place compared with 38% in 2014.

And in terms of discussions during the visit, only 28% said they or another safety representative had spoken with the inspector on their most recent visit compared with 30% in 2014.

Improvements and enforcement action

The survey asked safety representatives about whether their employers had made improvements to health and safety management - either because of the possibility of a visit by inspectors, or because of enforcement action taken against other employers, such as a notice or prosecution.

Table 16 indicates the extent to which safety representatives feel employers have made health and safety improvements because of the possibility of an inspection. The results suggest little change since 2014, except that slightly more respondents feel their employers have made no improvements at all (22% say this compared with 19%). Around half feel that some improvements have been made.

Table 16: Improvements because of the possibility of a visit

	2016	2014	2012
Not at all	22%	19%	26%
A little	19%	16%	18%
Somewhat	16%	20%	15%
A lot	17%	16%	20%
Don't know	26%	29%	22%

The survey also asked safety representatives whether their employer had, in the last two years, made improvements to health and safety after hearing about an enforcement notice or prosecution of *another* company (see table 17).

Table 17: Improvements after hearing about a notice or prosecution

	2016	2014	2012
Yes	22%	23%	27%
No	31%	29%	26%
Don't know	47%	48%	47%

Just over one in five said their employers have made improvements because of this situation. However, almost half did not know whether they had.

The survey went on to ask safety representatives about actual notices served. Only one in six safety representatives (18%) said their employers have at some point received a legal enforcement notice – suggesting little change from 2014, when the figure was 19%.

This group were asked about their employer's response to the most recent enforcement notice.

First they were asked whether safety representatives were involved in taking steps to make improvements to comply with the notice (see table 18).

Table 18: Involvement of safety reps in taking steps to comply with a notice

	2016	2014	2012
Heard about it after the changes were made	24%	25%	22%

Heard about the changes planned but no safety reps involved in planning	46%	36%	36%
Safety rep(s) involved in planning after receipt of notice	30%	39%	42%

The responses indicate a substantial decline in the degree to which employers involve safety representatives in making improvements following a legal enforcement notice.

As previously, about a quarter of safety representatives whose employers had received a notice only heard about the notice after the necessary changes had been made.

However, almost half (46%) of respondents to this question said that, although they had heard about planned changes, safety representatives had not been involved in planning them. This was far higher than in 2014, when the figure was 36%. There was a corresponding decline in the proportion saying at least one safety representative had been involved – from 39% in 2014 to 30% in 2016.

Secondly safety representatives were asked about the extent of their employer's response to the notice (see table 19).

Table 19: Employers' response to a legal enforcement notice

	2016	2014	2012
Comply and review other practices elsewhere	20%	15%	47%
Implement best practice, effect longer term in one active/area	14%	15%	12%
Implement best practice, effect short term in one activity/area	33%	35%	17%
Minimum to comply	34%	35%	30%

Only one in five safety representatives picked out the most comprehensive of the presented employer responses to legal enforcement notices - that their employer had complied with the notice and also reviewed other practices in the organisation.

This was a small improvement in since 2014, when only 15% selected this employer response. Nevertheless, this response is still substantially less common than it was four years ago, when 47% of respondents selected this option.

Section six

conclusions

The main purpose of the biennial survey is to help the TUC and its affiliated trade unions to better understand the hazards and problems faced by union safety representatives. This information should help unions and the TUC to improve the support they provide for safety representatives in workplaces, as well as to prioritise strategically in national political work with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the government.

This section summarises the findings from the survey in context and suggests ways the TUC, unions, the HSE and the Government can act to develop health and safety work.

Hazards

Stress remains the top concern for union health and safety representatives across all sectors and industries, with over three quarters of respondents citing it as a concern in the public sector. Once again it is a particularly significant issue within central government, with it's the prevalence of concerns increasing even more since 2014 to an unprecedented 92% of respondents. Education and health have also cited higher than average levels of stress amongst the workforce, again demonstrating the impact and human cost of spending cuts in the public sector. This policy of austerity has increased people's workloads, making them harder to manage, and added undue anxiety around job security.

The public sector has also seen an increase in bullying/harassment, with over half now citing it as a concern. Strikingly, it is now the highest concern in leisure services, which had never previously included it in any top five hazards. It is also highly prevalent in central government and education, although education also cites overwork as its second most prevalent hazard after stress. As before, the problem of long hours is more common in the private sector, with a slight increase from two years ago. The issue of overwork has increased overall across sectors and industries, to 40% of respondents citing it as a hazard.

Stress is a more prevalent workplace hazard in organisations of 50-99 employees where stress is recorded by 75% of respondents, whereas organisations with under 50 staff or 100-199 staff report comparatively lower incidences of stress. Very large organisations, with 1,000 or more workers, report higher incidences of bullying/harassment, long hours and RSI than smaller organisations. There has been, unfortunately, an increase in concern over violence and threats, up by 5% in the last two years.

These findings show that workplace hazards are still all too prevalent across sectors and industries. In particular, the TUC is concerned with the increase in reports of stress, bullying/harassment and violence and threats in the workplace, and will continue its campaigning to ensure they are prevented.

Managing health and safety

Risk assessments have been carried out in the majority of workplaces, although at a slightly lower level than in 2014. Although on average 80% of health and safety representatives have confirmed their employers have conducted a risk assessment, this proportion can differ significantly between industries: 93% in manufacturing, down to 61% in education. Even where risk assessments are carried out, less than half of respondents thought that the risk assessment was carried out adequately.

It seems many union health and safety representatives are not being fully consulted – if at all consulted – over risk assessments and the amount of representatives that have been involved is even lower than in previous years, with 41% of respondents indicating that they were not involved in the process at all. Just over one fifth believed that their involvement was adequate or useful.

A good number of workplaces have some kind of occupational health coverage for employees, but again the average (92%) does not sufficiently highlight the discrepancies between workplaces- only half of hazardous construction workplaces are covered by occupational health providers. There has been a slight increase in workplaces favouring external provision over in-house. However the coverage and type of occupational health provision does not indicate the level of the service, with some only monitoring staff sickness as opposed to focusing on overall staff wellbeing and prioritising prevention.

Rights of health and safety representatives

There has been a welcome but small increase in health and safety representatives attending the TUC/union 1 health and safety training over the last two years. However there remains the issue of health and safety representatives not being able to attend training (about 1 in 6 of respondents). The most common reasons for this are managers actively not allowing representatives to take time off work, and/or they are too busy. The onus is on the employer to organise cover or make alternative arrangements whilst the workplace health and safety representative attends training, or the opportunity to increase knowledge and skills around health and safety will be lost in that workplace. It is also a requirement for employers to allow union representatives to take time off work to enable them to carry out their union duties adequately.

Many union health and safety representatives have experienced a deterioration in communication from their employer when it comes to health, safety and wellbeing

changes in the workplace. In many instances, employers are not asking the representatives to help them to implement recommended changes to the workplace, and one quarter have reported that employers told them about changes after they had already taken place. 2016 has also seen a decline in safety representatives reporting that they have been consulted in planning workplace changes to health and safety too.

When it comes to employers including unions in health, safety and welfare matters, one quarter of the representatives are never automatically consulted. This is an increase from previous years, and employers should do more to ensure consultation with the health and safety representatives is prioritised as they are a fundamental source of knowledge and information about the health and safety issues particular to that workplace. However there is also a role for the HSE in ensuring that employers fulfil their legal responsibilities.

Enforcement

Once again a worryingly high proportion of respondents have said that, to their knowledge, their workplace has never been inspected by a health and safety enforcement agency, and the proportion is unchanged from 2014. On average, about a quarter of respondents stated that there has not been an inspection at their workplace in the past 12 months, although, again, there are notable discrepancies between industries, with hazardous construction reported to have had no inspections by half of the respondents from that industry.

Even amongst the workplace that received an inspection from health and safety enforcement, only just over one quarter of the union health and safety representatives were able to speak to an inspector directly, despite all inspectors being expected to contact any health and safety representatives.

The TUC continues to raise its concerns about the government's health and safety policies and to what extent useful inspections and enforcement, where necessary, is taking place in UK workplaces. The continued reduction in regular, proactive inspections will make the monitoring and subsequent improvement of workplace health and safety even more difficult to manage.



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