

## THERE ARE A LOT OF RISKY BEHAVIOURS IN THE WORKPLACE

The survey results also show that a range of risky behaviours occur in the workplace. Workers were more likely than employers to say most of these risky behaviours occurred “from time to time” or “a lot”.

Overall, employers tended to have a more positive view about workplace health and safety than workers did.

% SAYING FROM “TIME TO TIME OR A LOT”	WORKERS	EMPLOYERS	PERCENTAGE POINT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORKERS’ AND EMPLOYERS’ RESPONSES
Work when they are overtired	57	23	34
Work when they are sick or injured	50	23	27
Make a mistake by being careless/not having their mind on the job	43	37	6
Take a risk or shortcut on purpose (eg to save time)	42	21	21
Make a mistake from being under pressure by the boss to get the job done	36	23	13
Make a mistake because they have been working too long or too hard without a break	31	10	21
Get put at risk by working in conditions when work should have been stopped(eg bad weather, not enough people on the job)	31	11	20
Get put at risk from not having proper supervision	25	5	20
Do a risky job that they don’t have the right skills for	20	6	14
Get put at risk because our processes or ways we are told to do things are not safe	20	4	16
Get put at risk by a machinery or equipment fault or breakdown	20	15	5
Work when hungover or stoned	18	5	13
Get put at risk by something outside of their control (eg a freak accident)	15	4	11

**Table 5:** Risky behaviour workers and employers say workers are involved in at work  
Source: 2014 Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviours Survey – construction sector.

## MORE TO COME

This factsheet provides some key information about the construction sector. More information will be presented at the workshop.

**References**

Department of Labour. (2011). *Construction sector action plan 2010-2013*. (Plan prepared with ACC and Construction Safety Council). Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (2014). *New Zealand sectors report 2013: Construction*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (2015). *3rd National construction pipeline fact sheet – 2015*. (Prepared for MBIE by BRANZ and Pacificon NZ Ltd). Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Nielsen. (2015). *Health and safety attitudes and behaviours in the New Zealand workforce: A survey of workers and employers. 2014 baseline survey. Construction report*. (A report to WorkSafe New Zealand). Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

**Data sources**

SWIFT database – includes ACC work-related claims data and fatalities/serious injuries reported to WorkSafe. Note: figures shown here may differ from those on WorkSafe’s website which only include fatalities/serious injuries reported to WorkSafe under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.

Airborne exposure related fatalities are estimated using 2010 data. Accident related fatalities are an average of combined WorkSafe and ACC reported fatalities in the construction sector from 2008 to 2014 (excludes bystanders and volunteers).

Statistics New Zealand - figures on employment are sourced from various data sources on Statistics New Zealand’s website.

# CONSTRUCTION IN NEW ZEALAND



The construction sector is a key driver of economic growth in New Zealand. It is the fifth largest sector in the New Zealand economy. It is a \$30 billion plus industry (measured by annual revenues), generating around 6% of GDP (6.3% of GDP, nominal, in 2010). One in 12 jobs is in construction, with almost 194,000 people (193,562 as at June 2014) employed in the sector.

Construction is a very diverse sector. There are four main sub-sectors that have very different characteristics:

- > **residential builders** (building houses and apartments, carrying out alterations, additions or renovations to houses, or organising or managing these activities)
- > **commercial builders** (building structures, such as motels, hospitals, office buildings, industrial buildings and other such commercial buildings)
- > **construction services** (the trades, for example, electricians, plumbers, concreters, carpet layers, plasterers, joiners)
- > **heavy and civil engineering** (large infrastructure projects, such as roads, dams, tunnels, and telecommunication and electricity networks).

The construction sector is labour-intensive. Small businesses predominate; 87% of businesses employ nine or fewer workers. The residential and construction services subsectors in particular are dominated by many small businesses, as well as self-employed contractors. Over half of construction workers and businesses are in the construction services sub-sector.

The construction sector is growing:

- > there were over 9,500 (9,561) more construction businesses in 2012 than in 2002, driven by growth

	CIVIL	COMMERCIAL	RESIDENTIAL	SPECIALIST TRADES
<b>Injury Rate*</b>	17.6	17.0	22.9	19.3
<b>Severe Injuries†</b>	740	216	801	1764
<b>Percentage of Injuries</b>	21%	6%	23%	50%

\* Average Annual Severe Injury Rate per 1000 in Employment: 2008-2014

† Average Annual Severe Injuries: 2008 - 2014

in construction services and residential construction

- > the employed workforce was 30% larger in 2012 compared with 2002, with employment growth mainly in construction services and heavy and civil engineering. Canterbury is seeing strong employment growth driven by the rebuild, while employment in Auckland is relatively flat (2003-2013).

The value of building and construction is forecast to reach unprecedented levels, largely driven by Auckland residential construction. The forecast spend on all construction for the three years to the end of 2017 is \$106 billion.

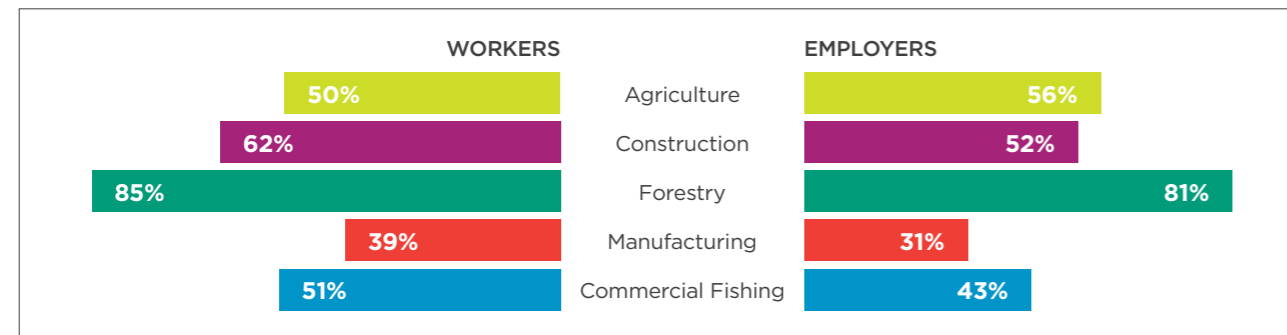
The construction workforce is predominantly male (over 8 out of 10 workers are male). It has a younger profile than other high-risk sectors and a higher proportion of Māori workers than average. A higher proportion of people employed in construction have lower or no qualifications compared with the New Zealand average. Government commentators note the need for basic training in numeracy and literacy, as well as in business management.

The industry is subject to significant demand cycles, making investment in firm expansion and the recruitment and retention of skilled staff difficult.

Productivity in the construction sector is low, compared with other sectors; the construction sector generated \$34.28 per hour worked in 2010, \$14 less than the New Zealand average. The construction industry and Government have identified productivity growth as a priority and have established the Building and Construction Sector Productivity Partnership to develop practical proposals to address productivity issues.

## WORKING IN CONSTRUCTION – VIEWS ABOUT RISK

WorkSafe New Zealand classes construction as a high-risk sector. This view is shared by 6 out of 10 workers and 5 out of 10 employers, as a recent survey shows. These figures are noticeably lower than those for forestry.



**Figure 1:** Perceived risk of getting hurt in their industry compared with other industries. The figures show the proportion considering the risk of getting seriously hurt in their industry is higher/much higher than in other industries. Source: 2014 Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviours Survey – construction sector.

Employers and workers in the larger businesses (20 or more employees) were more likely to see their industry as high risk than those in smaller businesses (1-19 employees). Around 8 out of 10 employers in larger businesses said their industry was riskier than other industries, while only 4 out of 10 employers in small businesses said this. The corresponding figures for workers were 7 out of 10 and 6 out of 10.

While many employers and workers acknowledge that working in construction is a risk, only 2 out of 10 workers thought there was at least a moderate risk that they or a workmate could get seriously injured in their workplace in the following 12 months and only 1 in 10 employers (8%) perceived some risk of serious injury in their business in the following 12 months.

## WORKING IN CONSTRUCTION – FATALITIES

Working in construction is risky.

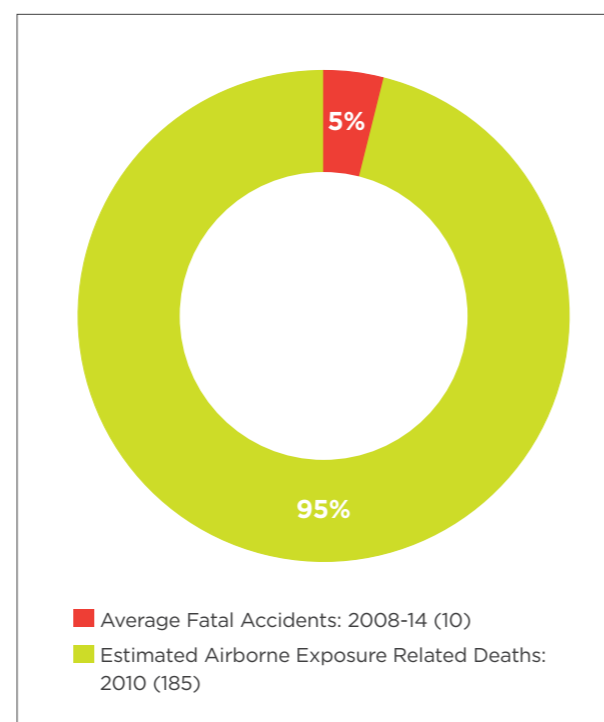
Exposure to dusts (64%), and asbestos (23%) and other airborne substances, including silica, caused an estimated 185 deaths and 731 hospitalisations in 2010.

There were 68 fatal accidents between 2008 and 2014 in the construction sector – an average of almost 10 a year.

Deaths from occupational diseases linked to airborne exposures are estimated to have been almost 20 times higher than deaths from accidents (based on 2010 figures).

Vehicle-related accidents (49%) were the main cause of fatalities in construction. The majority of these accidents occurred on worksites (70%), while a smaller proportion (21%) was road traffic accidents.

Falling from height (18%) and being hit by falling objects (10%) were the other two main causes of fatal accidents. Falls were mainly through internal openings in buildings and skylights.



**Figure 2:** Causes of Death in Construction Accident vs Occupational Disease. Source: SWIFT and Navigatus Consulting

## WORKING IN CONSTRUCTION – SEVERE INJURIES

There were three main causes for severe injuries (injuries leading to more than a week away from work) in the construction sector between 2008 and 2014. Some key facts are listed (table 1).

These types of injuries resulted in workers having between 21 and 34 weeks off work.

Injuries from lifting, carrying and straining are high cost (table 2).

Injuries to the lower back and spine were the most common type of injury, with over 8,000 claims (excludes injuries at other sites or when site is not known).

Lower back and shoulder injuries together accounted for 30% of costs.

Ear injuries (mainly noise-related hearing loss) had the highest average cost.

Injuries are most common among residential builders and those working in the trades.

INJURY MECHANISM	PERCENTAGE/NUMBER OF SEVERE INJURIES	AVERAGE DAYS OFF WORK	KEY FACTORS
Body Stressing	39% (8,066)	166	Often lifting - shoulder and back injuries common
Fall from height	15% (3,055)	236	Ladders and stepladders (40%) and roofs (16%) were commonly noted
Falls, Trips, and Slips	13% (2,899)	144	Stairs/steps, holes, stepladders, and worksite clutter pose risks

**Table 1:** Severe injuries in the construction sector – 2008 to 2014. Source: SWIFT (Adjusted injury ACC data – not official ACC statistics).

MAJOR INJURY SITES	ACTIVE COST	ACTIVE CLAIMS	AVERAGE COST PER ACTIVE CLAIM
Lower back/spine	\$18.1 m	8,154	\$2,224
Shoulder (incl clavicle/ blade)	\$13.5 m	5,978	\$2,260
Knee	\$6.5 m	2,610	\$2,479
Ear	\$7.9 m	2,333	\$3,395
Others	\$42.3 m	17,799	\$2,375
Not known	\$10.9 m	3,310	\$3,288
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$99.2 M</b>	<b>40,185</b>	<b>\$2,468</b>

**Table 2:** Major injury sites by active cost, active claims and average cost (average, 2008-2014). Active claims are those with a payment in the year (accident could have occurred before this time).

## CHALLENGES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Workloads in construction are entering a period of unprecedented highs, driven by the Canterbury rebuild, along with the demand for housing and infrastructure in Auckland and remedial work relating to the weather-tightness issue (MBIE, 2014, p 24).

These pressures potentially increase the risks to health and safety. For Canterbury, the *Health and Safety Attitudes and Behaviours Survey* indicates that employers in the construction sector had a greater focus on health and safety than employers in Auckland and other areas. Workers in Canterbury tended to have more positive perceptions of their bosses' concern about health and safety. In comparison, workers in Auckland tended to be less positive about their bosses.

## DO THE STATISTICS PAINT THE FULL PICTURE?

The recent survey of workers and employers suggests that a serious level of under-reporting of harms and accidents. When asked how often hazards, near misses and accidents were reported to bosses/supervisors only 2 out of 10 workers and around 3 out of 10 employers in the construction sector said they believed this happened "all the time".

Further, only 28% of employers said that serious harm incidents in their businesses had been reported to WorkSafe (or previously MBIE – this figure is based on the incidents over the past 12 months that employers could recall and only includes those employers who indicated they had experienced one or more serious harm incidents in their business over the past 12 months).