

WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY 2021 FATAL OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES 2019

Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) 50 years ago, promising every worker the right to a safe job. Unions, worker advocates, and other allies have fought hard to make that promise a reality—winning protections that have made jobs safer and saved lives. We still, however, have work to do. Each year, thousands of workers are killed, and millions more suffer injury or illness because of inadequate employer protections and needless exposure to workplace hazards, some of which go unreported.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) tracks reported worker injuries and illnesses and details the findings in a summary report every year called the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII) and the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI). The most recently published data findings from the BLS reports are detailed below.¹

There were 5,333 fatal work injuries recorded in the United States in 2019, a 2 percent increase from the 5,250 in 2018.

The fatal work injury rate was 3.5 fatalities per 100,000 full-time equivalents (FTE) workers, which was the rate reported in 2018.

Key findings:

- ✓ The 5,333 fatal occupational injuries in 2019 represent the largest annual number since 2007.
- ✓ A worker died every 99 minutes from a work-related injury in 2019.
- ✓ Fatalities among workers age 55 and over increased 8 percent from 1,863 in 2018 to 2,005 in 2019, which is the largest number ever recorded for this age group.
- ✓ Hispanic or Latino worker fatalities were up 13 percent to 1,088 in 2019—a series high since 1992.
- ✓ Workplace deaths due to suicides (307) and unintentional overdoses (313) increased slightly in 2019.
- ✓ Fatalities in the private construction industry increased 5 percent to 1,061—the largest total since 2007.
- ✓ Driver/sales workers and truck drivers incurred 1,005 fatal occupational injuries, the highest since this series began in 2003.

Worker demographics:

- ✓ In 2019, workers age 55 and over accounted for 38 percent of all workplace fatalities. In 1992, workers age 55 and over accounted for 20 percent.
- ✓ Hispanic or Latino workers made up 20 percent of fatal occupational injuries in 2019 and 9 percent in 1992.

¹ Due to the collection and analysis required, the BLS statistics on injuries and illnesses for a given year are always released two years later.

- ✓ A total of 28 states had more fatal injuries in 2019 than in 2018, while 21 states had fewer. Alabama and the District of Columbia had the same number as 2018.

Fatal event or exposure:

- ✓ Transportation incidents increased 2 percent in 2019 to 2,122 cases, the most cases since this series began in 2011.
- ✓ Events involving transportation incidents continued to account for the largest share of fatalities.
- ✓ Falls, slips, and trips increased 11 percent in 2019 to 880.
- ✓ Exposure to harmful substances or environments led to the deaths of 642 workers in 2019, the highest figure since the series began in 2011.
- ✓ Unintentional overdoses due to nonmedical use of drugs or alcohol increased for the seventh consecutive year to 313 in 2019.
- ✓ Fatalities due to fires and explosions decreased 14 percent to 99 in 2019.

Occupation:

- ✓ Nearly 1 out of every 5 fatally injured workers was employed as a driver/sales worker or truck driver.
- ✓ Grounds maintenance workers had 229 fatalities in 2019—the largest number since the series began in 2003.
- ✓ Fatal occupational injuries among law enforcement workers fell 24 percent between 2018 and 2019 (from 127 to 97).
- ✓ Construction and extraction occupations increased by 6 percent in 2019 to 1,066—the highest figure since 2007.
- ✓ Fishing and hunting workers had a fatal injury rate of 145.0 fatal work injuries per 100,000 FTEs in 2019.
- ✓ Resident military fatalities decreased by 21 percent to 65 in 2019.