

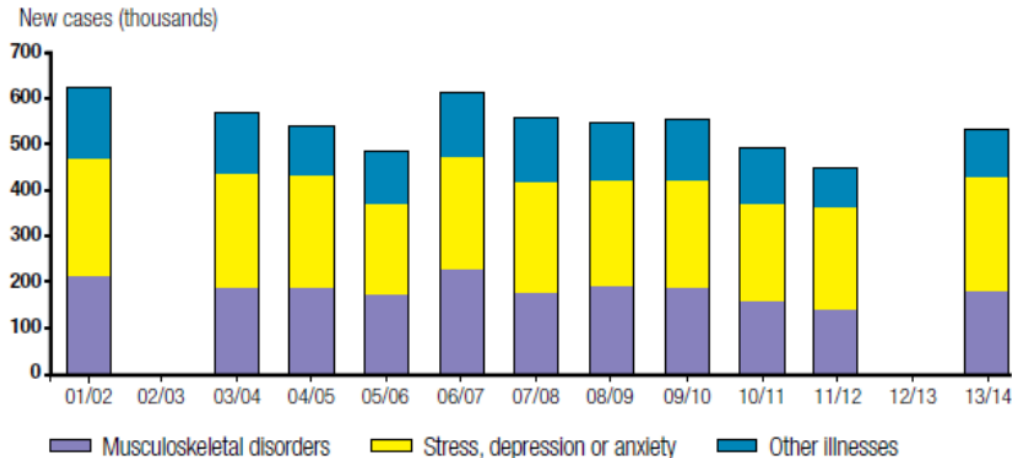
2. The picture across all industry sectors

How much of a problem is work-related ill health in Great Britain?

- 2.1 Latest data published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) shows that in Great Britain (GB) in 2013/14, an estimated 1.2 million people who had worked in the last 12 months and a further 0.8 million former workers, suffered from ill health which they thought was work-related. Lost time resulting from work-related ill health was around five times greater than for workplace injuries: 23.5 million days lost due to work-related ill health in 2013/14 (83%) compared with 4.7 million days for workplace injury (17%). Of the working days lost due to ill health, work-related stress (11.3 million days) and musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) (8.3 million days) accounted for the large majority. Cases of stress, anxiety or depression averaged 23 days absence in 2013/14, compared with 16 days for MSDs.
- 2.2 Since 2009/10 new cases of work-related ill health continued to fall, reaching a low in 2011/12. Comparable data is not available for 2012/13, but 2013/14 saw the number of ill health cases increase back to the level seen in 2009/10.

Figure 1 - Estimated new cases of self-reported work-related illness amongst people who worked in the last 12 months

Note: 95% confidence interval on average +/- 7% on the total



Source: HSE Health and Safety Statistics Annual Report for Great Britain 2013/14⁴

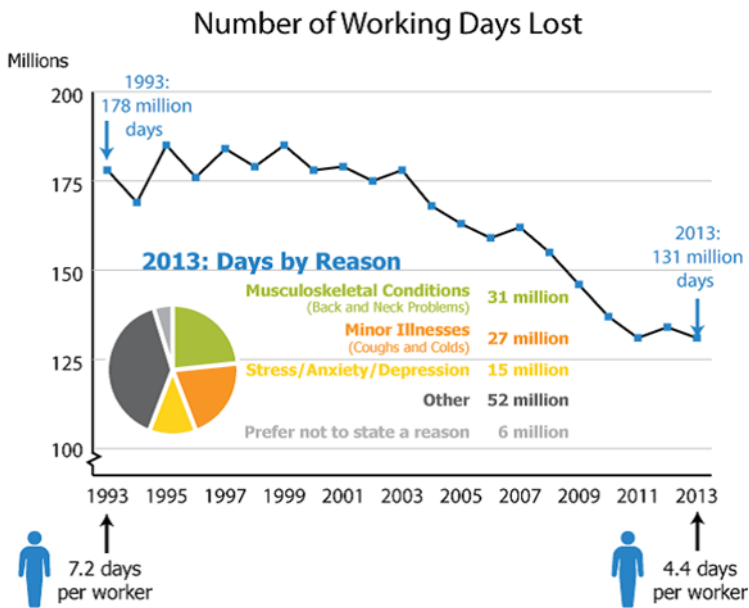
- 2.3 National data on total sickness absence, rather than just work-related ill health absence, can provide useful additional context. The 2014 Office for National Statistics (ONS) report on sickness in the labour market⁵ estimates 131 million days lost due to total sickness absence in 2013. Almost a quarter of the working days lost (30.6 million) were as a result of musculoskeletal conditions, with stress, anxiety or depression accounting for over 10% (15.2 million). The ONS absence estimates are

⁴ HSE health & safety statistics annual report 2013/14: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/index.htm>

⁵ ONS sickness absence report 2014: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/sickness-absence-in-the-labour-market/2014/rpt---sickness-absence-in-the-labour-market.html>

not directly comparable with HSE’s working days lost statistics due to differences in coverage, information collected, and methodology used to produce measures.

Figure 2 - Trends in total sickness absence 1993-2013



Source: ONS 2014 Sickness Absence in the labour market⁵

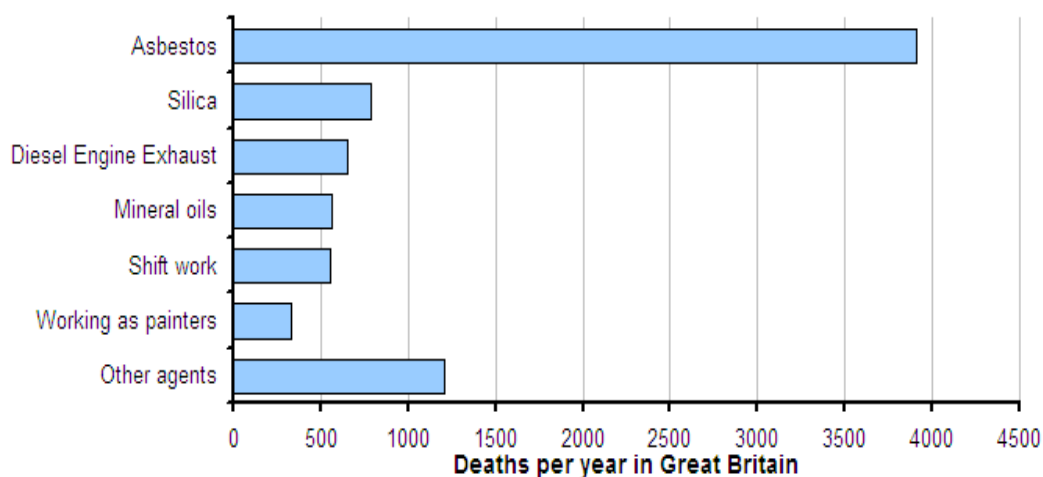
HSE research on occupational cancer

2.4 In 2012 HSE published new independent research⁶, led by Dr Lesley Rushton of Imperial College London, into the burden of occupational cancer in GB caused by past workplace exposures. Based on this research, HSE estimates there are around 13,500 new cases of cancer caused by work every year and more than 8,000 deaths across all industry sectors. This research⁷ looks at the contribution from a range of carcinogens. It estimates almost 4,000 cancer deaths per year from past occupational exposure to asbestos, almost 800 cancer deaths per year from occupational silica exposures, and around 650 deaths per year from workplace exposures to diesel engine exhaust emissions (DEEE).

⁶ HSE cancer burden research: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr800.htm>.

⁷ HSE cancer burden research by cause: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/cancer/index.htm

Figure 3 - Estimated occupational cancer deaths by cause in Great Britain, 2005



Source: HSE: www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/cancer/index.htm

What are the costs of work-related ill health in Great Britain?

- 2.5 Reducing the economic costs to society of ill health among the working population has been a key part of the government agenda over the past 10 years, with a particular focus on better systems for managing sickness absence. The government's 'Improving health and work: changing lives' report⁸ estimated the total cost to society of working-age ill health at around £100 billion every year. The 2013 Confederation of British Industry (CBI) absence and workplace health survey⁹ which looks only at the direct costs to employers of sickness absence, estimated sickness absence costs at more than £14 billion in 2012, with an average cost for each absent employee of £975 per year.
- 2.6 HSE estimates the cost of work-related illness (rather than total sickness absence) from current working conditions to be £8.6 billion in 2012/13¹⁰. This excludes the work-related health conditions such as cancer, caused by historic working conditions. It comprises financial (or direct) costs such as those associated with lost productivity or healthcare, and a monetary value (non-financial cost) given to individuals' pain, grief and suffering. Almost a quarter of the total illness cost (£2 billion) fell to employers.

⁸ Improving health and work: changing lives' report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-health-and-work-changing-lives>

⁹ CBI 2013 absence survey report: <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2013/07/work-absence-at-record-low-but-still-costs-economy-%C2%A314bn-a-year-cbi-pfizer-survey/>

¹⁰ HSE cost data: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/cost.htm>