

SELECTED SUMMARY OF BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS REPORT ON WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IN 2000

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Overview

On August 14, 2001, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its annual report, *The National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2000*, reporting on fatal workplace injuries. According to the report and supplementary information:

- ◆ Workplace homicides **increased** for the first time in six years.
- ◆ Workplace homicides **increased** by 4%, from 651 in 1999 to 677 in 2000.
- ◆ Retail homicides **increased** by 17% from 264 in 1999 to 310 in 2000.
- ◆ Grocery store homicides, which include convenience stores, **increased** by 42%, from 78 homicides in 1999 to 111 in 2000.
- ◆ The number of *robbery homicides* in the workplace **increased** by 14% from 255 in 1999 to 291 in 2000.
- ◆ There has, however, been a 37% **decrease** in workplace homicides since 1994, when the number was at an all time high of 1,080.
- ◆ Retail homicides have **decreased** by 42% since 1994, from 530 to 310.
- ◆ Grocery store homicides have **decreased** by 43% from a high of 196 in 1994 to 111 in 2000.
- ◆ Homicides **increased** at a greater rate in the workplace in 2000 than overall, where they remained essentially the same from 1999 to 2000.

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Workplace Homicides in Selected Industries

Table 1 shows the number of workplace homicides in selected industries with changes over the past year. Total workplace homicide increased from 1999 to 2000 by 4%. Retail trade homicides increased at a greater rate of 17%. Within retail trade, grocery store homicides increased by a greater 42%. Over the past year, workplace homicides decreased for eating/drinking establishments, gas/service stations, and taxicabs. The number of murders at eating/drinking establishments decreased by 4%. Gas/service station and taxicab homicides both decreased by 18%.

Table 1: Workplace Homicides in Selected Industries

Industry	1999	2000	Percentage Change
Total workplace homicides	651	677	+4
Retail trade	264	310	+17
Grocery stores (includes convenience stores)	78	111	+42
Eating/drinking establishments	95	91	-4
Gas/service stations	17	14	-18
Taxicab	51	42	-18

Motive

As in years past, robbery was the primary motive for homicides in the workplace. Robbery accounted for 43% of all homicides. Violence by co-workers and customers or clients was a distant second. Motive was not always able to be determined from the source documents, so this statistic is based on the number of cases where motive could be ascertained.

Workplace Deaths Overall

Transportation incidents continued to be the leading cause by far of death in the workplace in 2000, followed by contact with objects. Assaults and violent acts are the third leading cause. In 2000, 43% of all fatal work injuries were the result of transportation incidents (2,571). Contact with objects accounted for 17% of all workplace fatalities at 1,005 incidents. Violent acts accounted for 16% of the fatalities with 929 cases. Of these, 677 (11%) were due to homicide.

Industry Differences

Retail trade has more homicides than other industries, but it is not more dangerous overall for fatalities. The industries with larger numbers of fatalities relative to their employment are shown below, rank ordered, with the most dangerous industry listed first, followed by the rates of death per 100,000 employees in the year 2000. The rate of death in the mining industry, for example, is 10 times that of retail trade. The construction industry accounted for the largest number of fatalities in 2000 with 1,154 deaths, while retail had approximately half that number at 594.

1. Mining (30.0)
2. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing (20.9)
3. Construction (12.9)
4. Transportation and public utilities (11.8)
5. Wholesale trade (4.3)
6. Manufacturing (3.3)
7. Government (2.8)
8. Retail Trade (2.7)
9. Services (2.0)
10. Finance (0.9)

Nature of the Fatalities

The total number of fatalities in retail trade, not just those from homicide, also increased by 16% from 1999 to 2000. There were 513 fatalities in 1999 and 594 in 2000. If a *retail* worker is killed on the job, however, it is more likely to be from homicide than any other cause. About one-half of the deaths of retail workers (52%) on the job are due to homicide, and robbery is the primary motive. Of the 594 deaths in the retail trade in the year 2000, 310 were homicides. Of all the homicides in the workplace, 46% are in retail. Industries with a large number of homicides are typically those that engage in cash transactions or have valuables on hand

Males/Females

Males make up 54% of the workplace, and women make up 46%. Men, however, accounted for 92% of the workplace deaths, and women for only 8% in 2000. Far more men than women die on the job—more than ten times as many—because men are in the more dangerous occupations. There were 5,467 fatalities for men and 448 for women. Transportation incidents were the leading cause of death for both males (43%) and females (45%) in 2000. The second leading cause of death on the job for men was contact with objects

(18%). Of women killed on the job, the second leading cause of death was violence at 34%. In 2000, men accounted for 80% of the victims of homicides, and women accounted for 20%. There were 543 men and 134 women murdered on the job in 2000.

Conclusion

The number of workplace fatalities declined by 2% from 1999 to 2000, but the number of job-related **homicides** increased for the first time in six years. The increase in workplace homicides may be a precursor with regard to homicide increasing overall in the United States. Factors which are likely to contribute to an increase in homicide in the future include these:

- ∇ More people in the crime-committing age group of 18 to 24 years of age
- ∇ The large number of people being released from prison
- ∇ The decline in the economy
- ∇ The impact of the terrorism events of 2001.

One reason given for the decrease in homicide in retail trade in previous years has been the strategy to reduce violent events that has been in place for over two decades in certain retail settings, particularly convenience stores. That strategy incorporates the validated crime-reducing measures of good cash control; limiting escape routes; maintaining good visibility throughout the store; adequate lighting inside and outside stores; and training employees in safety and anti-violence measures. It may be time to redouble those efforts.

Data Collection Methods

The BLS CFOI data for workplace injuries utilizes a combination of data-gathering techniques. The BLS relies on death certificates, worker's compensation reports and claims, reports to regulatory agencies, medical examiner reports, police reports and news reports. The report above is extrapolated by the author from the BLS CFOI report entitled: *The National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2000*, and the BJS News Release, as well as supplementary homicide data provided by BLS to the author in correspondence.