

SELECTED SUMMARY OF BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS REPORT ON WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IN 2001

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San Diego, CA March 5, 2003

Overview

On September 25, 2002, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its annual report, *The National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries in 2001*, reporting on fatal workplace injuries. According to the report and supplementary information:

- ◆ Workplace homicides were down from 2000. They had been up 4% the previous year.³
- ◆ Workplace homicides **decreased** by 6%, from 677 in 2000 to 639 in 2001.
- ◆ Retail homicides **decreased** by 10% from 310 in 2000 to 280 in 2001.
- ◆ Grocery store homicides, which include convenience stores, **decreased** by 17%, from 111 homicides in 2000 to 92 in 2001.
- ◆ The number of *robbery homicides* in the workplace **decreased** by 17% from 291 in 2000 to 241 in 2001.
- ◆ There has been a 41% **decrease** in workplace homicides since 1994, when the number was at an all time high of 1,080.
- ◆ Retail homicides have **decreased** by 47% since 1994, from 530 to 280.
- ◆ Grocery store homicides have **decreased** by 53% from a high of 196 in 1994 to 92 in 2001.
- ◆ Homicides **decreased** in the *workplace* in 2001 by 6%, but **increased** elsewhere by 2.5% according to the FBI figures.

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³ The percentages used here excluded the fatalities from September 11th, which killed 2,886 workers.

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 decreased from 2000 to 2001 by 6%. Retail trade homicides also decreased by 10%. Within retail trade, grocery store homicides decreased by 17%. Over the past year, workplace homicides decreased for grocery stores, and taxicabs. In 2001 the number of homicides at eating/drinking establishments increased by 2%, and gas/service stations increased by 14%.

Table 1: Workplace Homicides in Selected Industries

Industry	2000	2001	Percentage Change
Total workplace homicides	677	639	-6
Retail trade	310	280	-10
Grocery stores (includes convenience stores)	111	92	-17
Eating/drinking establishments	91	93	+2
Gas/service stations	14	16	+14
Taxicab	42	33	-21

Motive

As in years past, robbery was the primary motive for homicides in the workplace. Robbery accounted for 37% of all homicides in 2001, down from 43% in 2000. 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

There were 5,900 workers killed on the job in 2001, down 1% from 2000, but the rate was the same. There were more people killed in the construction industry than any other industry. Transportation was the leading cause of deaths on the job, however. Work related homicides (639) fell to their lowest levels since the census began in 1992. The record high was 1,080 in 1994. Homicides increased sharply (31%), however, in service occupations in 2001.

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 and the number of fatalities in the year 2001. The rate of death in the mining industry is the highest at roughly 15 times the rate of retail trade. The construction industry accounted for the largest number of fatalities in 2001 with 1,225 deaths, while retail had approximately half that number at 537.

Industry	Fatality Rate - 2001 (per 100,000 employees)	Number of Fatalities - 2001
Mining	30.0	170
Agriculture	22.8	740
Construction	13.3	1225
Transportation	11.2	911
Wholesale Trade	4.3	220
Manufacturing	3.2	599
Government	3.1	630
Retail Trade	2.4	537
Services	1.9	767
Finance	1.0	86

Nature of the Fatalities

The total number of fatalities in retail trade, not just those from homicide, decreased by 10% from 2000 to 2001. There were 594 fatalities in 2000 and 537 in 2001. 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 537 deaths in retail trade in 2001, 280 were homicides. Of all the homicides in the workplace, 51% 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 2001. 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 5,429 fatalities for men and 471 for women. Transportation incidents were the leading cause of death for both males (23%) and females (29%) in 2001. The second leading cause of death on the job for men was falls (14%). Of women killed on the job, the second leading cause of death was homicide at 27%. In 2001, men accounted for 80% of the victims of homicides, and

women accounted for 20%. There were 513 men and 126 women murdered on the job in 2001.

Author's Conclusion

*The number of workplace fatalities declined by less than 1% from 2000 to 2001, and the number of job-related **homicides** also decreased by 6%. Service related industries saw the largest increase in homicides. Factors which could 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.

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 2001*, and the BJS News Release, as well as supplementary homicide data provided by BLS to the author in correspondence.