



accidents don't have to happen

The Skills Commission

Project overview and aims

Matilda Smith, Research Manager



What are the UK's skills issues in our workplaces?

- OSH capability declining across non-specialist roles
- Fragmented training and upskilling pathways
- Hybrid working limiting skills diffusion
- Emerging risks outpacing competencies
- Industry mobility reducing ROI on skills investment



Purpose and objectives

- Identify critical OSH skills gaps across UK industries
- Promote best practice via Commissioner-led roundtables
- Develop national-level strategic recommendations
- Strengthen long-term workforce resilience
- Launch findings publicly (June 2026)



How it will work

- 1 Commissioner leading each discussion
- Diverse sector representation
- 5 themed roundtables
 - Recruitment of competent people
 - Retention of competent people
 - Consultation and worker representation
 - Wellbeing, culture and psychological safety
 - Technology in OSH





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Accidents: A global crisis - and a preventable one

Key findings from RoSPA's Global Accident Report

Matilda Smith, Research Manager



Why this matters

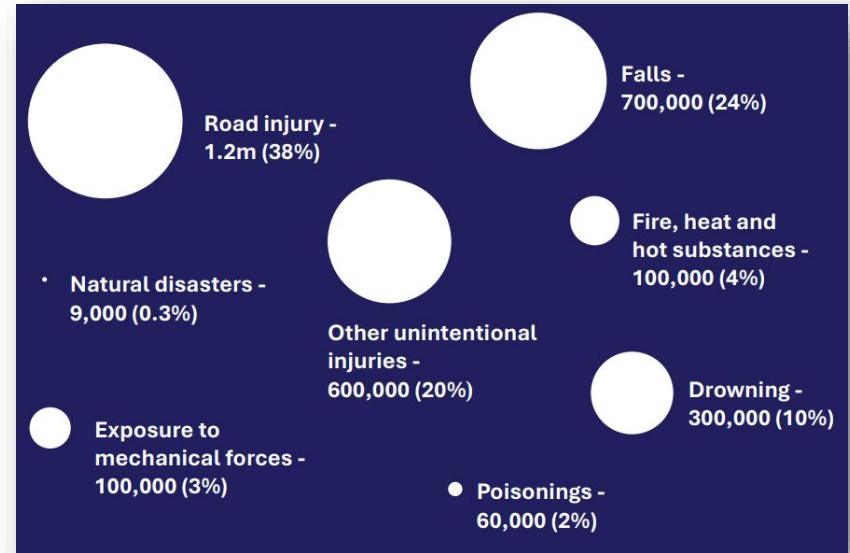
Accidents are not random events:

- Accidents are predictable and preventable
- Yet they remain one of the world's global cause of death
- Lower- and middle- income countries face the heaviest burdens



The scale of the problem

- The sixth leading cause of death globally
- 3.1 million deaths per year
- Over 8,000 deaths per day
- 1 in 20 deaths worldwide



Inequality at the heart of the crisis

Where you live affects your risk

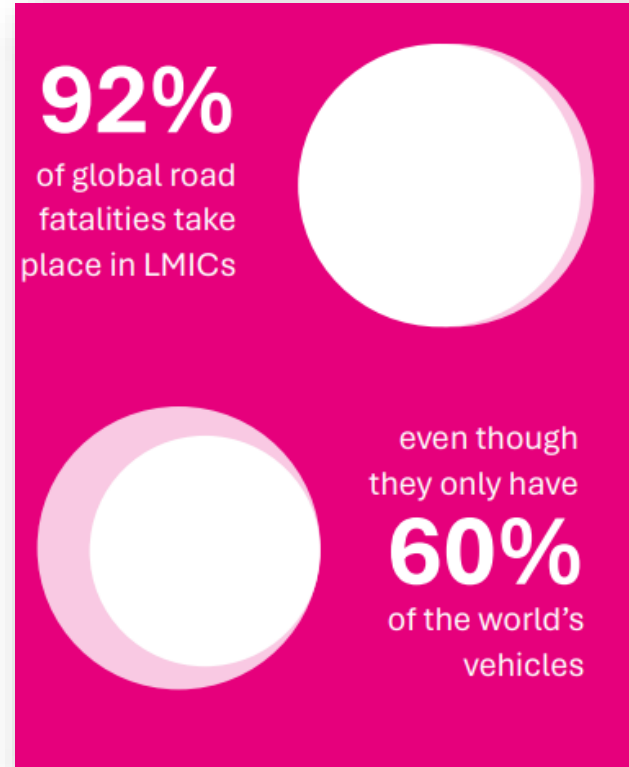
- Lower- and middle-income countries carry the heaviest burden of injuries and deaths
- Infrastructure, enforcement and resources vary widely
- Accidents, in turn, feed more inequality



Road traffic collisions

The single biggest contributor

- 1.2 million deaths every year
- 92% of road deaths in low- and middle-income countries
- Despite having only 60% of the world's vehicles



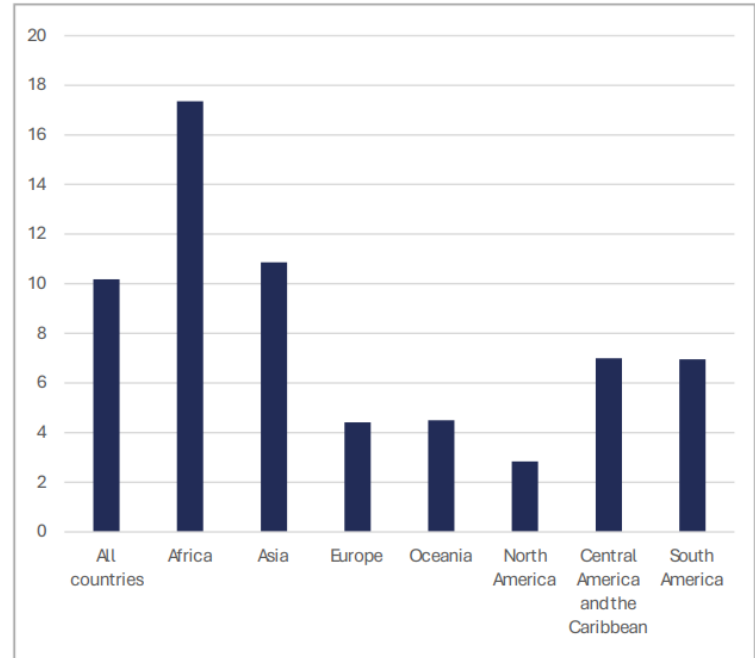
Workplace accidents

- 330,000 workplace deaths annually
- 94% occur in low- and middle-income countries
- In 2021, 45% occurred within the agricultural sector, 32% in the service sector and 23% in the industrial sector
- Adjusted for population size, rate is 18 per 100,000 workers in agriculture, 10 per 100,000 for industry, and 6 per 100,000 for the service sector
 - Workers are three times as likely to die working in the agricultural sector than the service sector



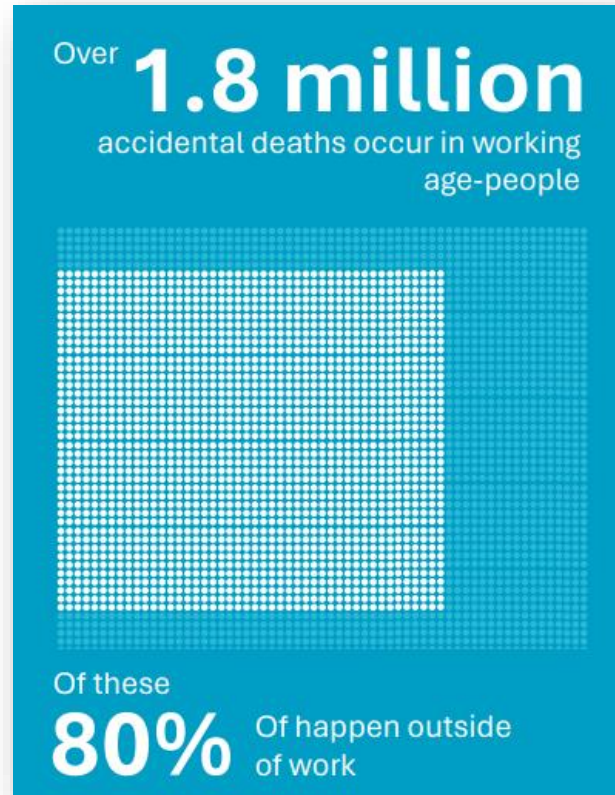
Workplace accidents

- Lower- and middle-income workers are four times more likely to die at their workplace than high-income workers (rate of 12 per 100,000 compared to 3)
- Workers are almost three times more likely to die of a workplace accident in Asia than in Europe, and nearly four times more likely in Africa



Young people and working-age adults

- 1.8 million accidental deaths among people aged 15–69
- 80% occur outside the workplace
- Road injuries are the leading cause of death for people in this age group



Other accidents

- 700,000 people die from falls (24% of all accidental deaths)
 - Also lead to more than 37 million hospital admissions
- 236,000 drowning deaths annually
 - Over 90% of these deaths occur in lower- and middle-income countries, with more than half concentrated in the Western Pacific and South-East Asia.
- 100,000 people died from fire, heat and hot substances



The data gap

What we don't know is part of the problem:

- One in five accidental deaths were classified as “other unintentional injuries”
- Underreporting common, especially in lower-income countries

One in five

accidents was categorised only as unintentional injuries



Climate change is increasing risks

- Flooding increasing exposure to drowning
- 73 million more people projected in flood plains by 2100
- Extreme heat and fires along with extreme weather events worsening injury risk



Why prevention matters

Human and economic costs:

- Lives lost, families affected, communities destabilised
- Lost productivity and long-term disability
- Accidents reinforce cycles of inequality



What happens next?

- Using findings to influence policy
- Supporting international collaboration
- Engaging business, NGOs and governments
- Building a stronger global evidence base



Thank you for watching

Any questions?



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