Back injuries

250 back injuries which occurred while in paid work were recorded by QISPP in 1996. Health services had the highest proportion of injuries (20%) of any industry and nursing was the occupation group with the most injuries, representing 10% of the total sample.

A total of 79 occupations were represented in the data. Figure 1 shows the occupations most frequently nominated. Occupation was not provided in 34 cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number of Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurses - RN</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers - other</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storemen/women</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Assistants</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck Drivers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambulance Officers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boilermakers/ welding trades</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle mechanics</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Industries represented included health services (20.4%), retail trade (10.8%), transport (8.4%), food, beverage, accommodation, restaurants (8%) and construction (7.6%).

While only 2.8% of the injuries resulted in hospitalisation, 40% required follow-up attention.

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Injuries to children under five

QISPP recorded 2365 injuries to children aged less than five during 1996. 12.6% of the injuries resulted in hospital admission. The injuries most commonly occurred in the home (82%) and the most frequent cause was falls (42.3%).

LOCATION - home
The most frequent locations for the 1939 injuries occurring at home, were living/dining areas, followed by yard or garden, bedroom and kitchen.

5% of the injuries involved stairs.

29.4% of the injuries happened outside and accounted for 40% of the (at home) admissions.

LOCATION - other
Injuries occurring in locations other than the home included:
- school /
  - public administration areas 104
    (39% involved play equipment)
  - recreation areas 102
    (36% involved play equipment)
  - trade or service areas 77
  - street or highway 56
  - sport/athletics area 12
  - hospital /medical facility 9

EXTERNAL CAUSE
One thousand of the injuries (42.3%) were the result of a fall and accounted for 50.3% of all admissions.

Falls most frequently occurred on the same level or from a height of less than one metre (82.5%).

10.5% of injuries were caused by being struck by an object or person.

8.6% were the result of ingestions or poisonings of which approximately half were medications.

There were 109 injuries (4.6%) involving transport of which 54% were pedal cyclists and 34.8% were motor vehicle passengers.

Figure 2 Children 0-4, % external cause of injury
Injuries to children under five

Of the 97 (4.1%) burns, 52.6% were scalds.

3.8% of injuries were from a cutting or piercing object.

There were 15 immersions which included two deaths and five admissions.

The 40 dog-related injuries (1.7%) resulted in 12 admissions.

**BODY PART**
The majority of injuries were to the head (45%) and upper limbs (35.2%) (Figure 3).

**ACTIVITY**
Children were most frequently playing (57.5%) when the injuries occurred.

**NATURE OF INJURY**
Almost one-quarter of the injuries were lacerations or cuts (22.6%) while there were 295 fractures and 253 contusions (Figure 4).

Of the 164 cases of concussion or intracranial injury, 79.3% were the result of a fall.

![Figure 3 Children 0-4, 1996, injuries by body part](image)

![Figure 4 Children 0-4, 1996, by nature of injury](image)
Back injuries at work

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Sixty percent of those injured were males, while the age group with the highest proportion of injuries (19%) was 25 to 29 years (Figure 6).

26.4% of the injuries occurred while lifting or carrying. In 67% of cases the activity being undertaken was not specified.

The most frequent specified external cause of the injuries was falls (15%). A further 8% involved transport (motor vehicle driver or passenger or pedestrian), while 3.2% of injuries resulted from being struck by a person or object and a further 3.2% involved machinery in operation.

More than three-quarters of the injuries were to the lower back (Figure 5), with the most common injury being lower back strain (56.4%).

![Pie chart showing body part distribution of back injuries, with 78% for lower back, 13.6% for thoracic, and 8.4% for cervical.]

The following table shows distribution by nature of injury.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Injury</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sprain or strain</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contusion</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fracture</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nerve or spinal cord injury</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other includes bites, crushing, superficial and unspecified injuries and no injury detected (0.8%).