

Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses

**A Safer Tomorrow:
New Jersey's Success
in Reducing Workplace
Injuries**



Office of Research
and Information

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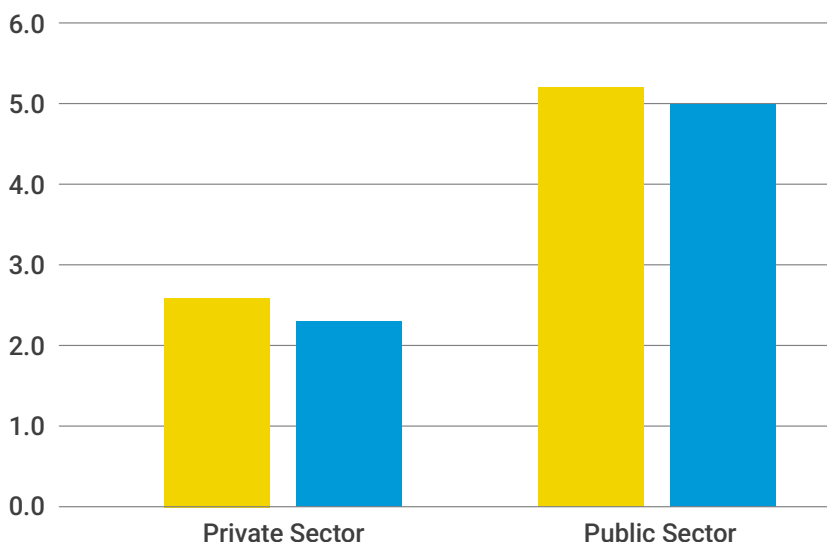
A Safer Tomorrow: New Jersey's Success in Reducing Workplace Injuries

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 established standards for workplace safety and created a framework for the government to monitor occupational hazards. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics has conducted the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII) since 1972 through a cooperative agreement with the states. As part of this effort, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJLWD) surveys public and private employers throughout the state, contributing valuable insight into workplace safety and health.

Workplace safety is critically important as it directly impacts the productivity of businesses and the economic stability of communities. Maintaining a safe work environment reduces the risk of injuries and illnesses, which in turn lowers medical expenses, minimizes downtime, and enhances employee morale. Furthermore, effective safety practices contribute positively to a company's reputation and financial performance by fostering a culture of care and responsibility.

The SOII program is a key component in providing essential data and insights to support these initiatives as it tracks workplace incidents across industries and occupations, documenting not only their frequency but also their characteristics and impact on workers. This comprehensive data collection enables meaningful comparisons between industries and reveals safety trends over time. Government agencies and industry leaders rely on these insights to shape safety policies, while researchers leverage the findings to develop more effective preventive measures. Through this systematic monitoring and analysis, the SOII data serves as a vital tool in the ongoing effort to create safer workplaces and reduce occupational hazards.

NJ Incidence Rates* of Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses by Private and Public Sector, 2017 vs 2023

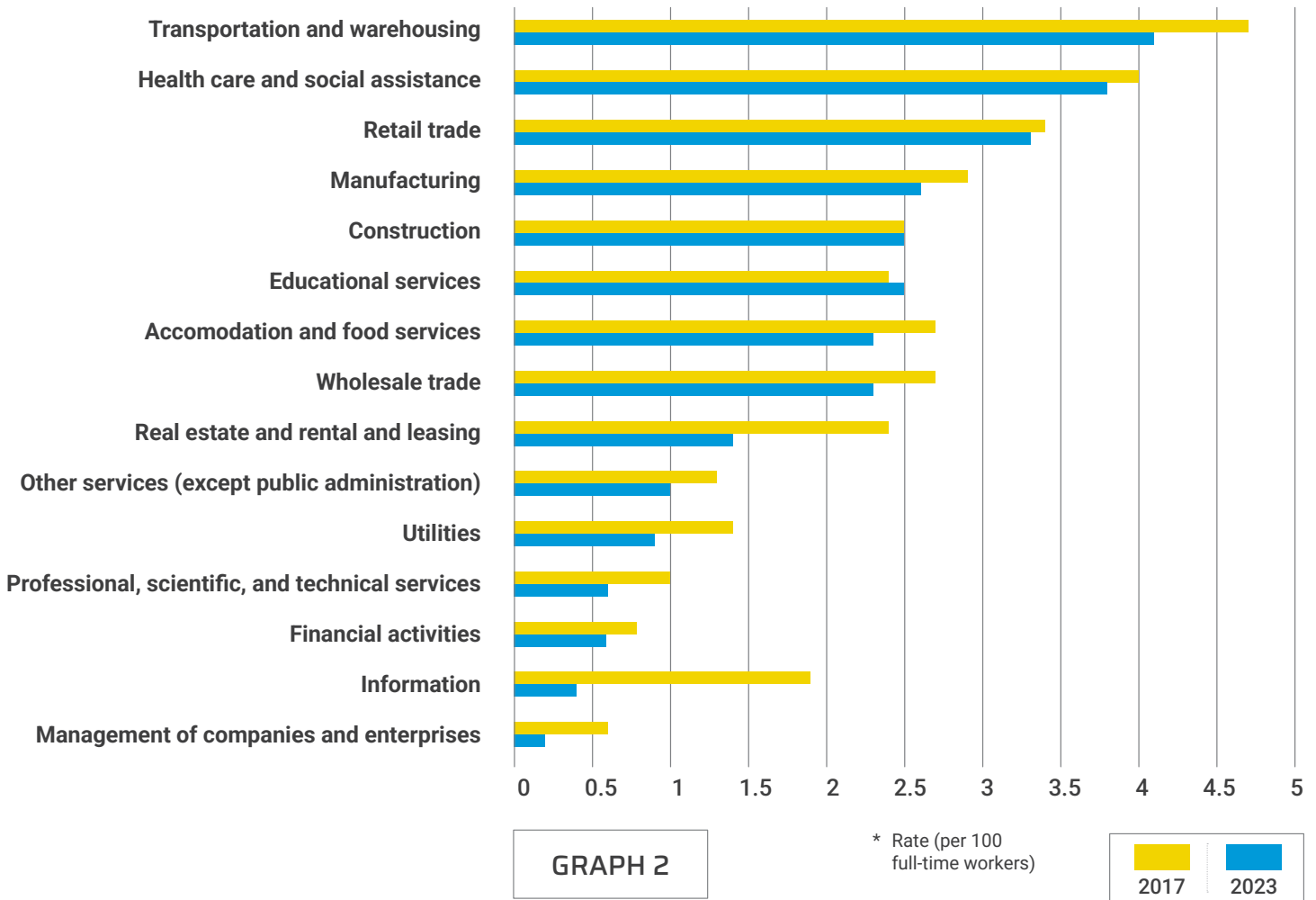


GRAPH 1

* Rate (per 100 full-time workers)

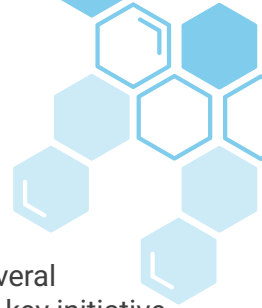


**NJ Incidence Rates* of
Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses
by Private Sector, 2017 vs 2023**



The first graph illustrates a decrease in nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses across New Jersey's private and public sectors from 2017 to 2023. Meanwhile, the second graph provides a detailed breakdown of incidence rates within major industries in the private sector of New Jersey.

The data collected through the SOII program reinforces the NJDOL's mission of "protecting our workforce." While the SOII does not provide explanations for the underlying causes of the data, it highlights opportunities for improvement and identifies potential areas of concern. In the most recent publication for 2023, NJ SOII estimated approximately 87,300 nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses across all industries, including state and local government, occurring at a rate of 2.6 cases per 100 full-time equivalent workers. In the private sector, New Jersey employers reported about 66,800 nonfatal cases at a rate of 2.3 cases per 100 full-time equivalent workers, whereas the public sector, encompassing state and local government employers, reported around 20,500 nonfatal cases, with a rate of 5.0 cases per 100 full-time equivalent workers. In 2017, the SOII reported approximately 92,200 nonfatal cases across all industries at a rate of 2.9 cases per 100 full-time equivalent workers, with private industry reporting 71,700 nonfatal cases at a rate of 2.6 and the public sector reporting 20,500 nonfatal cases at a rate of 5.2.





NJDOL's Division of Public Safety and Occupational Safety and Health (PSOSH) has introduced several initiatives to help reduce the incidence rates among both private and public sector employers. One key initiative is the Occupational Safety and Health On-Site Consultation Program, which provides private sector employers with free on-site evaluations focused on workplace health and safety. This program helps employers identify potential hazards, conduct health and safety training sessions, and strengthen their occupational safety and health management systems—all without facing citations or penalties. By assisting employers in recognizing and addressing workplace hazards, the program supports efforts to reduce incidence rates and lower insurance costs. Designed primarily for small businesses with fewer than 250 employees, this consultation program operates independently of OSHA's inspection process, ensuring a collaborative approach to workplace safety improvement.

Another initiative is the Occupational Safety Training Program, a no-cost service where training consultants gather information on the employer's workplace operation and procedures to create customized training programs aimed to *"teach both employees and employers how to maintain a work environment free of recognized safety and health hazards"*. (NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2013)ⁱ

The New Jersey Office of Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) enforces the OSHA approved New Jersey Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (NJPEOSH) Act by conducting proactive general inspections and investigating complaints, accidents, fatalities and allegations of safety/health related retaliation in the public sector. The NJPEOSH Act, State Standards and Procedural Standards provide for the development and enforcement of occupational safety and health regulations for public employees throughout the State. NJPEOSH efforts are showcased through their most recently published safety alerts, which are educational publications created in response to significant complaints, accidents, or fatality investigations. These alerts focus on specific safety and health issues in the public sector and offer guidance to both public employers and employees.

For example, Public Employee Alert #32 addresses the prevention of eye injuries among firefighters, emphasizing the need for appropriate eye protection beyond the use of standard helmet visors (2020). Similarly Public Employee Safety & Health Bulletin #33 highlights the risks involved in tree care and removal activities (2020). Public Employee Alert #35 is dedicated to mitigating incidents involving tractor and mower operations (2022). Additionally, Public Employee Alerts #37 and #38 emphasize safeguarding lifeguards from surfboat-related incidents and lightning exposure, respectively (2023). Collectively, these notices reinforce the importance of compliance with PEOSH regulations and standards.

On a national level, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) plays a critical role in enforcing safety policies and providing resources to enhance workplace safety in the private sector. Compliance Assistance Specialists in OSHA's Regional and Area Offices offer outreach to a variety of groups free of charge, including small businesses, trade and professional associations, union locals, and community and faith-based groups. These specialists provide general information about OSHA's compliance assistance resources and help employers comply with OSHA standards. The specialists are available for seminars, workshops, and speaking events, and they promote OSHA's cooperative programs, such as the Voluntary Protection Programs, the Strategic Partnership Program, and the Alliance Program. Additionally, OSHA sets enforcement policies, conducts targeted inspection programs, and responds to fatalities, catastrophes, and complaints (OSHA, n.d.).



As NJDOL, BLS, and OSHA continue their partnership, their combined efforts have driven meaningful advancements in workplace safety. The proactive initiatives of the NJDOL, in alignment with OSHA's national programs, reflect a shared commitment to minimizing workplace hazards and preventing injuries. Targeted safety alerts, as mentioned above, demonstrate a focused approach to addressing specific risks, from tree care operations to firefighter safety. This focus would not be possible without the valuable information provided by the SOII program and NJDOL's continued efforts. As New Jersey continues to prioritize the health and safety of its workforce, the data mentioned not only reflect past achievements but also inspires confidence in the state's ability to create an even safer tomorrow.

References

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Technical Note: The data in this report is from the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII) report, Survey years 2017 and 2023. More about the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses can be found on our website at <https://www.nj.gov/labor/safetyandhealth/resources-support/survey-occupational-injuries-illness/>.

The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development's (NJDOL) Office of Research and Information is the singular solution for labor market data needs, combining the power of data and marketing materials to deliver evidence-based research. Our team of local and industry specialists provide information that highlights key New Jersey economic status, such as employment, wages, occupation, workplace safety, and labor force.

