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MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Management without theatre.



KPIS

INJURY RATES: HOW A SAFETY NUMBER IS MADE

Why 200,000 hours, what OSHA counts as a case, US rates by industry for 2024, why a small site's rate jumps, what Europe's rates and a survey of health practitioners say the number hides, and a card.

4.8 recordable injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers in US warehousing and storage in 2024, about twice the 2.3 of all private industry.

BLS, 2026

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NO. 87 · KPIS

In this issue

Almost every site reports a safety rate, and the rate often decides whether a month counts as good. Few people who read it know how it is made: what counts as a case, which hours go below the line, and why the same site can show three different numbers.

In the US the rate is cases times 200,000, divided by hours worked: cases per 100 full-time workers. OSHA's rule decides what is a case, and the line runs through the treatment. In 2024 the rate was 2.3 for all private industry and 8.0 for couriers. The ILO's frequency rate counts per million hours, Eurostat per 100,000 people employed, and Eurostat warns that very low national rates may reflect under-reporting. On a small site a single case can double the rate. A card helps read the number with its base.

Stiven Janaqi EDITOR · STIVEN CATALYST

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HOW TO READ THIS ISSUE

Figure
Every figure has its source and year at the foot of its page.

Our reading
Where the editor interprets rather than the research, it says so.

Practice
The steps and the card are proposals to try, not research results.

COVER STORY

Cases, hours and 200,000

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics gives the formula in one line: recordable injuries and illnesses, times 200,000, divided by the hours all employees worked. The 200,000 is 100 employees working 40 hours a week for 50 weeks, so the rate reads as cases per 100 full-time workers in a year.

THE BLS WORKED EXAMPLE, A FICTITIOUS MANUFACTURER

Employees	200, who worked 400,000 hours in the year
All recordable cases	7: 7 × 200,000 ÷ 400,000 = 3.5
Days away, restriction or transfer	3 of them: 3 × 200,000 ÷ 400,000 = 1.5

The company is the BLS's own invention, to show the method.

Hours worked means hours actually worked: paid vacation, sick leave and holidays are left out. Where the hours are not recorded, the BLS allows an estimate from scheduled hours or from 8 hours per working day.

OUR READING

The rate is a fraction. It moves when the cases change, and also when the hours do.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025

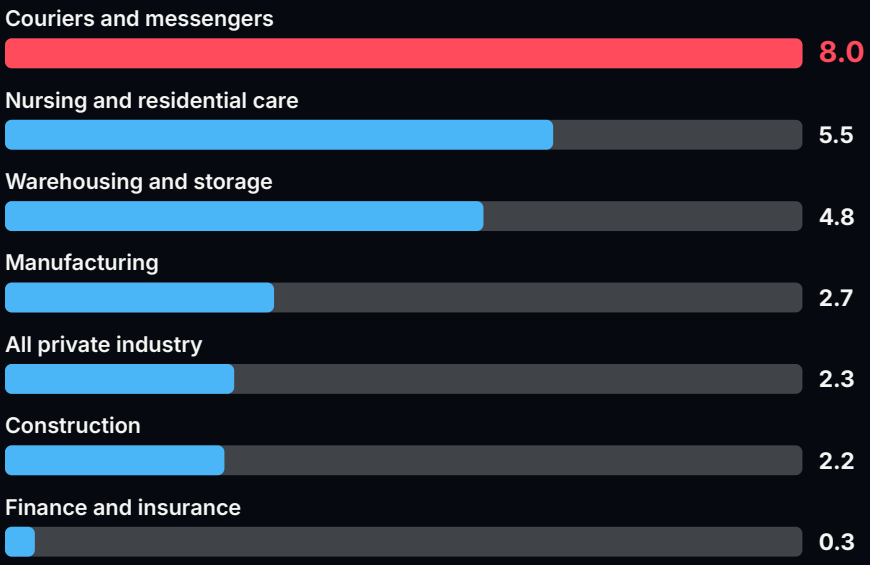
Formula, constant, example and the rule for hours as the BLS gives them (page last modified March 2025). The cases come from OSHA's log, Form 300, or its summary, Form 300A.

THE NUMBERS

Same formula, different work

In 2024 the rate for all US private industry was 2.3 recordable cases per 100 full-time workers. Behind the average, the same formula gives very different numbers from one kind of work to the next.

RECORDABLE CASES PER 100 FULL-TIME WORKERS, US, 2024



The kind of case differs too. In warehousing, 4.1 of the 4.8 involved days away, restricted work or transfer, most of them restriction or transfer (2.6). Among couriers, days away led (4.2 of 8.0).

OUR READING

A rate below the national average says little. Compare it with your own industry, and look at which kind of case makes up the number.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026

Cases per 100 full-time equivalent workers, as employers reported them under OSHA's rules; BLS survey for 2024, Table 1, released January 2026.

THE MODEL

What counts as a case

OSHA's rule, 29 CFR 1904.7, records a work-related injury or illness that leads to death, days away from work, restricted work or transfer, medical treatment beyond first aid, or loss of consciousness, or that a doctor or other licensed professional diagnoses as significant.

First aid: not a case

- Non-prescription medicine at normal strength
- A tetanus shot
- Cleaning a wound, plasters, butterfly strips
- Hot or cold packs, elastic bandages
- Massage; fluids for heat stress

Medical treatment: a case

- The same medicine at prescription strength
- Other vaccines, such as rabies
- Stitches or staples
- A rigid splint to immobilise
- Physical therapy or chiropractic

The rule calls its list of 14 first-aid treatments complete. A note at the head of the rule adds that recording a case does not mean that the employer or the worker was at fault, or that a rule was broken.

OUR READING

The line runs through the treatment, not the injury. The same cut is first aid with butterfly strips and a recordable case with stitches.

Source: Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Code of Federal Regulations, annual edition, 2024

Shortened from 29 CFR 1904.7, Code of Federal Regulations, annual edition 2024. Each side lists 5 examples. Leading and lagging indicators are in No. 2.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

What a low rate can hide

Eurostat counts accidents at work that cause at least four full calendar days of absence. In 2024 the EU had 1,359 per 100,000 people employed. Romania reported 65, France 2,622.

NON-FATAL ACCIDENTS AT WORK PER 100,000 EMPLOYED, 2024



Eurostat warns that very low rates may reflect under-reporting, and that well-established reporting systems may often explain high ones. In 2009 the US GAO surveyed occupational health practitioners: 67% had seen workers fear discipline for reporting, and over a third had been asked for treatment that kept a case off the log but was not enough to treat it.

OUR READING

A low rate can mean safe work, or work where cases are not reported. The number alone cannot tell the two apart.

Sources: Eurostat, Statistics Explained, 2026; US Government Accountability Office, 2009

Eurostat: simple rates, not adjusted for the mix of industries; data extracted September 2026. GAO: 504 of 1,131 practitioners answered (45%), about the workplaces where they treated workers in 2008.

HOW IT IS MEASURED

One case, a new rate

The hours are the denominator. A small site has few of them, so one case moves its rate a long way. The base matters too: the ILO standard counts per million hours, five times the US base.

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE, TWO SITES IN ONE YEAR

Small site	25 people, 50,000 hours: 1 case = 4.0, 2 cases = 8.0
Large site	1,000 people, 2,000,000 hours: one more case adds 0.1
Per million hours	the small site's 4.0 becomes 20

One more case doubles the small site's rate and barely shows at the large one. The sites and figures are invented.

01	**Show the count and the hours**	Next to the rate, so a reader sees how many cases make it.
02	**Use twelve months**	A rolling year gives a small site enough hours to read.
03	**Name the base**	200,000 hours, a million hours, or people employed.

OUR READING

A small site with a second case has not become twice as dangerous overnight. Read the count before the rate.

Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025; Sixteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, International Labour Organization, 1998

The example and the three checks are the editors'. 2,000 hours a year is the BLS base per worker; the ILO frequency rate is from its 1998 resolution.

More in the essay A bad day or a problem?

TOOL OF THE ISSUE

The safety rate card

One card per site and month, filled in before the number goes into a report. The safety cross logs each event by day and works out the rates from the hours.

01 Site and period the month, and the twelve months to date

02 Cases days away, restriction or transfer, other recordable; first-aid cases apart

03 Hours worked hours actually worked, without paid leave; where they come from

04 Rate and base cases × 200,000 ÷ hours, or × 1,000,000; write which

05 Compared with our last twelve months; our industry, with its year

06 What the rate does not show near misses, first-aid cases, reports still open, any sign that people hold back

Sources: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025; Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Code of Federal Regulations, annual edition, 2024; Sixteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, International Labour Organization, 1998

Our proposal, built on the BLS formula, OSHA's recording criteria and the ILO frequency rate. Near misses are in No. 63.

Open the tool: Safety Cross stivencatalyst.com/tools/safety-cross/

SOURCES AND METHOD

Every figure has a source.

The figures in this issue come from the sources below. The year shows how recent each one is.

How To Compute Your Firm's Incidence Rate for Safety Management
US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025
https://www.bls.gov/iif/overview/compute-nonfatal-incidence-rates.htm

Incidence rates of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses by industry and case types, 2024 (Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, Table 1)
US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2026
https://www.bls.gov/web/osh/table-1-industry-rates-national.htm

29 CFR Part 1904: Recording and Reporting Occupational Injuries and Illnesses
Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Code of Federal Regulations, annual edition, 2024
https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2024-title29-vol5/pdf/CFR-2024-title29-vol5-part1904.pdf

Resolution concerning statistics of occupational injuries (resulting from occupational accidents)
Sixteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians, International Labour Organization, 1998
https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_087528.pdf

Accidents at work statistics
Eurostat, Statistics Explained, 2026
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Accidents_at_work_statistics

Workplace Safety and Health: Enhancing OSHA's Records Audit Process Could Improve the Accuracy of Worker Injury and Illness Data (GAO-10-10)
US Government Accountability Office, 2009
https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-10-10.pdf

EDITORIAL METHOD

Each figure was checked for its year, its publisher and what it measures, in the full text where it could be opened. A source read only in a summary, an abstract or excerpts is marked “via”. A figure not confirmed in what was read is marked so on its page, or left out. The editor's interpretation is marked “Our reading”.



MANAGEMENT REVIEW

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Every issue, one management question, checked against the best research.

ALL ISSUES

stivencatalyst.com/magazine/management-review.html

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Edited by Stiven Janaqi, who answers for it; “the editors” in this publication means him. Its texts, translations, layout and the checking of figures against their sources are done in working sessions with Claude, an AI model by Anthropic.
stivencatalyst.com/how-this-is-made.html