

Your job – your life

What people really think about health and safety 2010

The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) is the world's largest professional health and safety organisation and the Chartered body for health and safety.

This booklet contains the highlights from two surveys conducted by YouGov to find out what people in Great Britain think about health and safety at work.

Your job – your life

YouGov survey for IOSH

Since we first ran this survey in 2008, we've seen more crazy health and safety headlines and experienced a global recession. We re-ran the survey in March 2010 to find out what people think of health and safety at work now, and whether opinions have changed.

YouGov carried out two online surveys, between 2 and 4 March 2010, asking the opinions of 4,644 adults from across Great Britain (weighted in order to be nationally representative). Of these, 2,804 were employed, and the published results are based on responses from these employed respondents.

Attitudes to health and safety

People continue to generally have a positive view of health and safety at work.

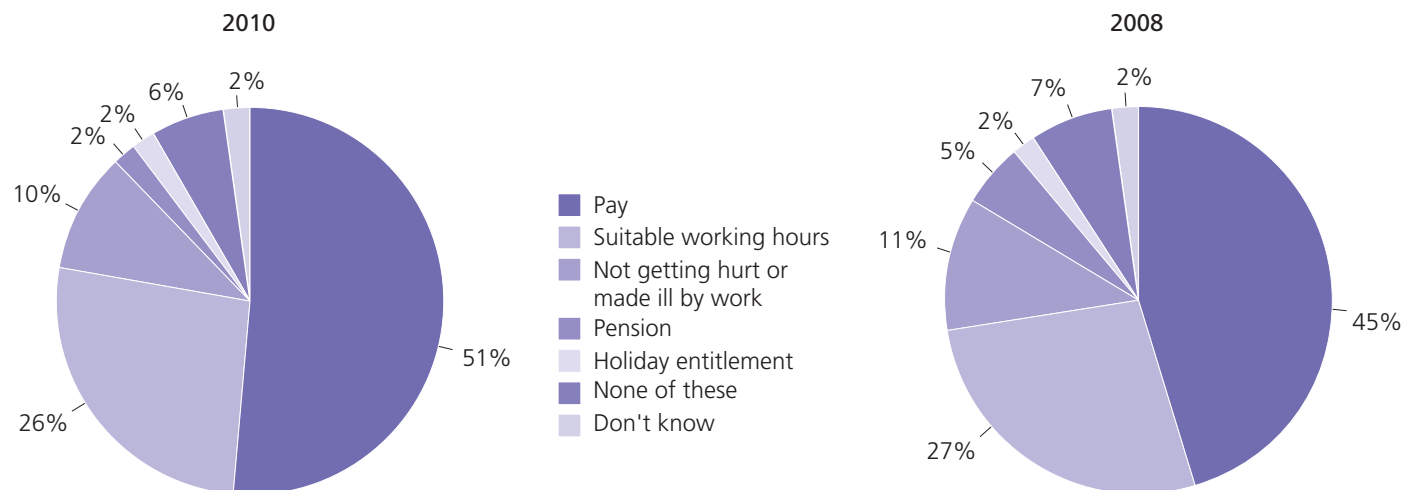
- 59 per cent felt that health and safety helped to save lives or prevent people getting ill or hurt at work (65 per cent in 2008)
- 60 per cent felt that health and safety at work was important to them (67 per cent in 2008)
- 88 per cent felt it was important that their work did not injure them or make them ill (94 per cent in 2008)

But this didn't mean that health and safety was their top priority. They thought that pay (51 per cent) and suitable working hours (26 per cent) were both more important than not being hurt or made ill by work (10 per cent). But health and safety was more important to them than holiday entitlement (2 per cent) and pensions (2 per cent).

Over 45s were more likely than those under 45 to rate health and safety as important, and young workers (aged 18–24) valued pay more highly than any other age group (62 per cent of them felt that this was the most important work-related issue).

Survey soundbite
"It is worthwhile and saves lives."

Which work issue is most important to you?



Figures do not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

What the boss thinks

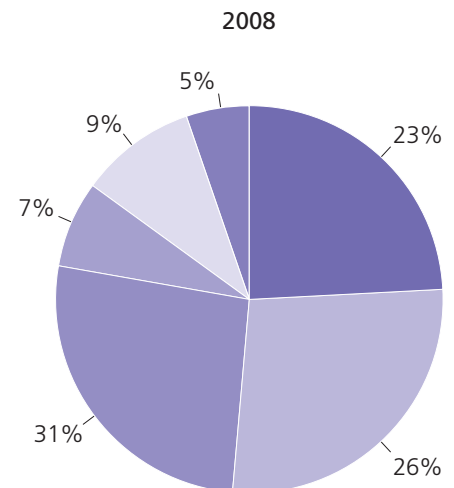
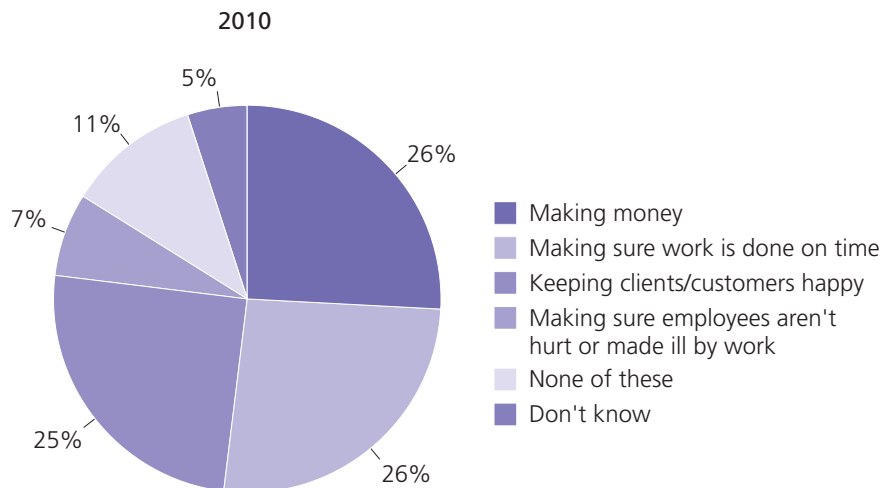
The majority (60 per cent) of respondents thought that it was important to their boss that work did not injure workers or make them ill. However, respondents didn't feel that this was the most important matter for their boss, with many more believing that this was making money (26 per cent), getting work done on time (26 per cent) or keeping customers happy (25 per cent). As with the previous survey (2008), only 7 per cent thought that making sure employees were unharmed was the boss's main concern.

Over half (58 per cent) felt health and safety was important to their boss. 18–24 year olds and over 55s were slightly more likely to believe that health and safety was important to their boss than other age groups.

Survey soundbite

"I believe that most of the regulations are to keep employees safe and to stop companies taking advantage of people."

What is most important to your boss?



Figures do not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

Whistling while they work

Only 22 per cent of respondents were prepared to blow the whistle by going to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) if their employer was breaking the law. But they were more likely to raise the issue in-house – 70 per cent said they would tell their line manager or supervisor if there was a problem with health and safety, and about a third (32 per cent) said they'd talk to their manager's boss about their concerns.

Less than half (41 per cent) of respondents said they'd raise health and safety issues with their colleagues,

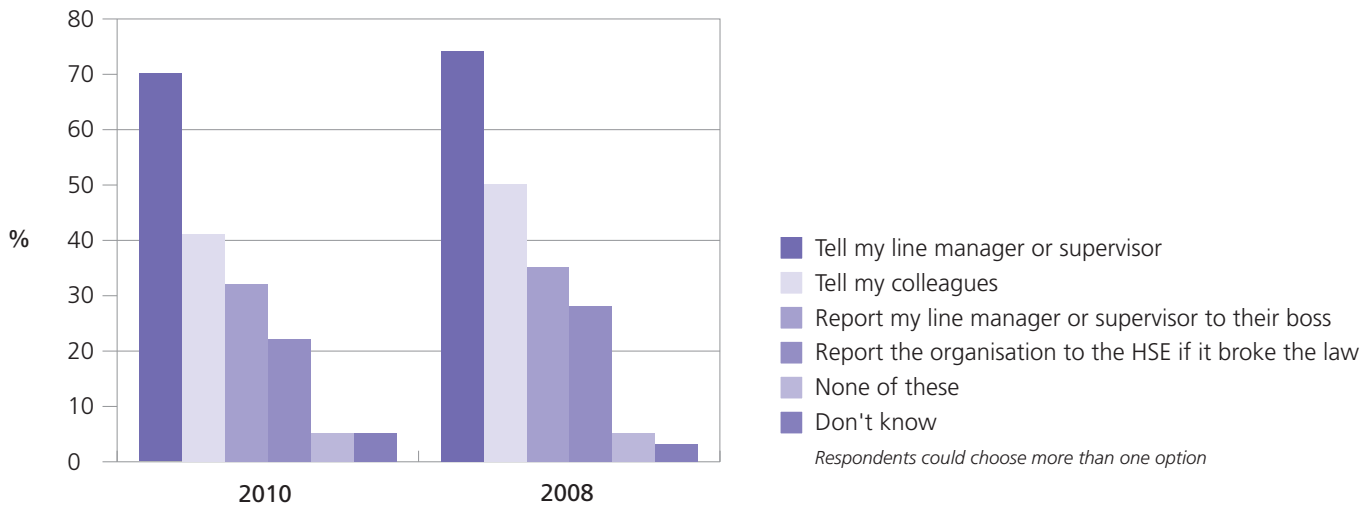
which is 9 percentage points lower than our previous poll. This could partly reflect the 6 percentage point drop in the respondents who felt it was important that their work did not injure them or make them ill – if people don't think health and safety is important to them, why would they report a potential hazard to their colleagues?

The 2010 survey found that all four suggested ways of raising concerns were down to some extent on the 2008 figures.

Survey soundbite

"Sometimes it's well and good but sometimes too petty and people should take some more responsibility for themselves and their actions."

Who would you talk to if there was a risk you or a colleague could be injured?



Getting health and safety advice

More people know where to go for health and safety advice at work than in our previous poll – 81 per cent of respondents compared to 76 per cent in 2008.

More young workers (aged 18–24) know where to get advice than in our previous poll – 70 per cent compared to 58 per cent in 2008.

However, young workers are still less likely to know where to get health and safety advice at their workplace than other age groups. 24 per cent of these young workers said they didn't know where to go, compared to 15 per cent overall.

Survey soundbite

"It is about education and the use of safe practices."

Injuries at work

In 2008/09, HSE statistics recorded 180 fatalities and the Labour Force Survey recorded 246,000 reportable injuries. There are also an estimated 1,000 work-related road deaths each year that are not included in the statistics.

Our survey saw 69 per cent of respondents underestimate the number of injuries at work in Great Britain each year (there are an estimated 200,000–300,000). 46 per cent thought that there were fewer than 50,000 injuries per year!

Survey soundbite

"Whilst some of it can seem petty and common sense, I am still surprised how much people don't know about health and safety."

'elf 'n' safety' – that's madness, innit?

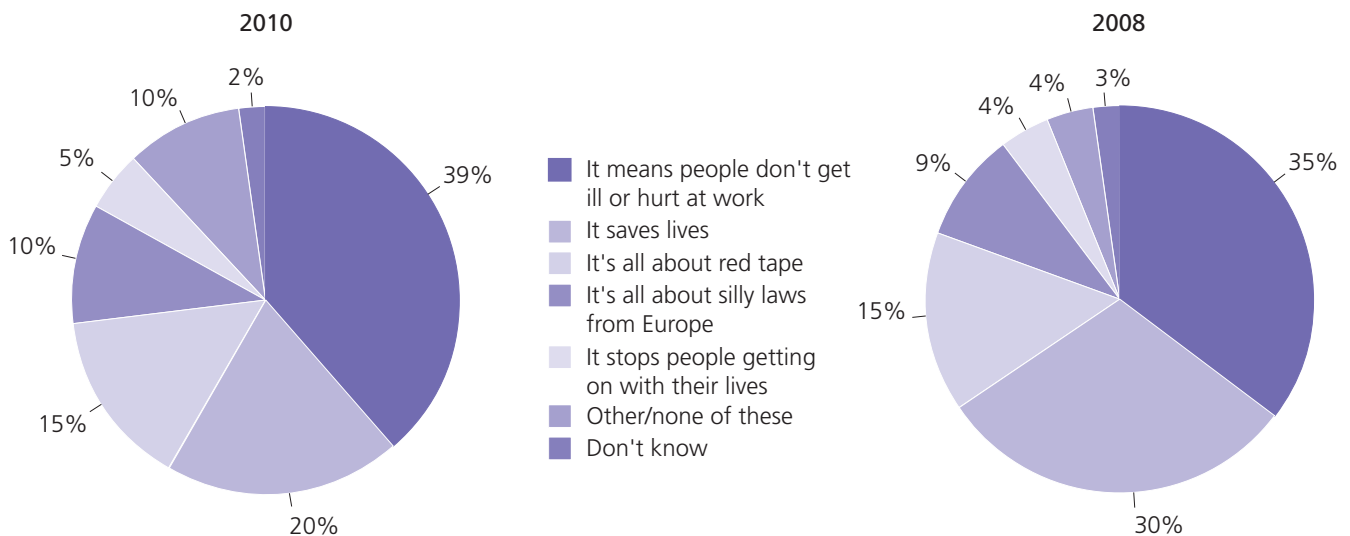
According to our respondents, health and safety isn't madness. Only 5 per cent felt health and safety stopped people getting on with their lives, while another 15 per cent felt it was unnecessary red tape.

70 per cent of respondents felt that health and safety regulations didn't make it difficult for them to do their job. Men (29 per cent) were more likely than women (18 per cent) to take the view that it makes their job more difficult.

Survey soundbite

"I believe it is a complex issue and it's all too easily used as a mask or headline."

What do you think about health and safety?



Figures do not always add up to 100% due to rounding.

What does it all mean?

This survey provides a snapshot of Britain's attitude to health and safety at work, as seen through the eyes of workers. The majority of opinions haven't changed much over the last two years, despite the global recession putting pressure on businesses, budgets and employment.

It's heartening to find that most workers in Great Britain have a positive attitude to health and safety and that more of them, especially young workers, know where to get health and safety advice at work than in 2008. However, there's still progress to be made here and it's obviously worrying that fewer workers seem prepared to raise health and safety concerns in 2010.

Also, some of our respondents felt that misinterpretation of the regulations was over the top and stifling. We gave them an additional opportunity to tell us what they thought about health and safety, and 7 per cent did so. These comments were often mixed, with concerns generally in five broad areas:

- **common sense has disappeared**
"It's sometimes subject to people being too pedantic and overcautious and thus removes 'common sense' from the equation."
- **there are lots of silly rules**
"It is worthwhile and saves lives; however, it is being taken too seriously now and silly rules are being put in place."
- **there's too much regulation**
"I feel there are certain laws which are there to protect the workforce but there are others which are plain annoying and get in the way of people doing their jobs efficiently."
- **the paperwork involved is over-complicated**
"Often comes with streams of over-complicated paperwork to prove practices to health and safety auditors."
- **it all comes down to insurance**
"It is yet another way that people are encouraged not to take responsibility for their own lives. It has also resulted in paranoia about being sued."

IOSH President John Holden thinks this survey shows a need for better risk education:

"I think this survey highlights the need to raise the risk IQ of Great Britain. The message we're getting here is that people appreciate the good reasons behind health and safety regulations that protect life and limb, but not the way they're sometimes being misinterpreted. I'd say education and leadership are key to ensuring a practical approach is taken and that people feel able to raise serious health and safety concerns, regardless of economic climate.

"Many of the UK business leaders we asked about health and safety indicated a problem with some aspects of how they felt they were expected to manage health and safety, but also showed their support for the principles and purpose behind it."

Links

You can download this summary from the IOSH website at www.iosh.co.uk/mediaresources and YouGov www.yougov.com.

About the 2010 surveys

There were two separate surveys carried out. For the first survey, fieldwork was undertaken between 2 and 4 March 2010. Total sample size was 2,262 adults.

For the second survey, fieldwork was undertaken between 3 and 5 March 2010. Total sample size was 2,382 adults.

Both surveys were carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18 plus).

About the 2008 survey

In 2008 there was one survey with two question sets. One question set had a sample size of 2,062 adults, the other had a sample size of 2,078 adults.

Fieldwork was undertaken between 28 and 31 March 2008. The survey was carried out online.

The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18 plus).

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IOSH is the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. With more than 37,000 members in 85 countries, we're the world's largest professional health and safety organisation.

We set standards, and support, develop and connect our members with resources, guidance, events and training. We're the voice of the profession, and campaign on issues that affect millions of working people.

IOSH was founded in 1945 and is a registered charity with international NGO status.

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