

Issues



Violence in the Workplace Comes Under Closer Scrutiny

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Violence in the Workplace Comes Under Closer Scrutiny

Homicides in the workplace have gained prominence in recent years, but the motives behind these heinous crimes have been largely misunderstood. While conventional wisdom believes them to be primarily crimes of anger and passion, recently released data from the BLS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries point to robbery as the primary motive. And that census further shows that handling money at work during evening hours can heighten the risk of becoming a homicide statistic.

The BLS Census counted 1,063 work-related homicides in 1993, its second year in operation. The accompanying chart depicts these homicides from three perspectives: Motive, primary work activity, and time of incident. It shows that a clear majority of those tragic deaths happened during a robbery. Often they occurred in places we visit almost every day: Restaurants, convenience and grocery stores, and gas stations. Many were committed well into the evening hours when few customers and employees were around to witness the incident. Under similar conditions, some taxicab drivers also fell victim to deadly nocturnal attacks.

Homicide was, by far, the leading manner in which women were fatally injured on the job. Deadly violence took the lives of 188 women workers in 1993, or about 40 percent of the 481 women fatally injured that year. Women homicide victims worked at a variety of jobs, including cashiers, innkeepers, store owners, waitresses, and office clerks.

Other violence at work

Besides profiling homicides, BLS recently began surveying the number of nonfatal assaults and acts of violence in private workplaces that required injured wage and salary workers to take off a workday or more. In 1992, about 22,400 of such incidents were reported, each requiring, on average, about 5 days away from work to recuperate.

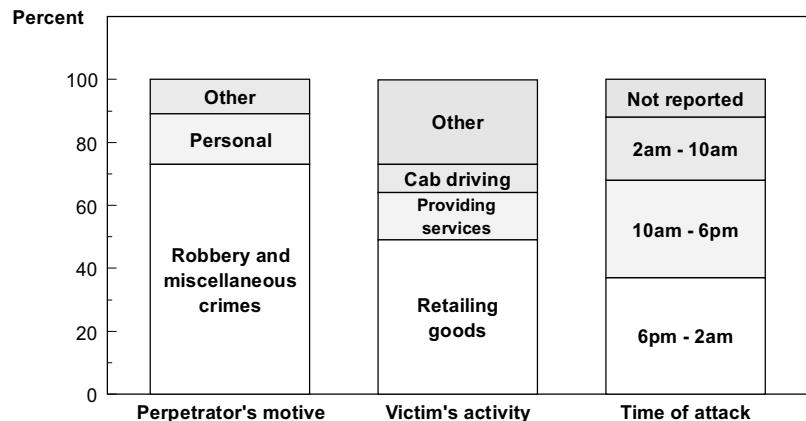
The accompanying table shows that the way nonfatal violent incidents occurred differed markedly from the pattern for work-related homicides. Shootings and stabbings, for example, accounted for about 5 percent of nonfatal cases but they were about 90 percent of all homicides counted in both the 1992 and the 1993 BLS Census. Still, some shooting and stabbing survivors might

have been only inches away from being counted in the 1992 BLS Census. Instead, they required, on average, 5 to 6 weeks away from work for their wounds to heal. Victims of shootings and stabbings, both fatal and nonfatal, overwhelmingly were men.

A sizable proportion of the victims of nonfatal violence were caregivers in nursing homes and hospitals. Ironically, some of these workers were injured by intransigent patients, who resisted their assistance; others were assaulted by patients prone to violence. Most of these caregivers were female nurses and their aides. And typically they required about 3 to 5 days away from work to recuperate from their injuries.

For more information on the BLS Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries

Percent distribution of homicides at work by motive, activity, and time, 1993



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1993

Assaults and other violent acts resulting in days away from work, selected characteristics, private industry, 1992

Violent act	Total cases	Women as a percent of total	Median days away from work
Total, violent acts by persons	22,396	56	5
Hitting/kicking/beatng	10,425	55	5
Squeezing/pinching/scratching/twisting	2,457	84	4
Biting	901	53	3
Stabbing	598	7	28
Shooting	560	3	30
All other specified acts (e.g., rape, threats)	5,157	60	5
Unspecified acts	2,301	46	6

and its companion annual survey of disabling (lost worktime) injuries and illnesses, contact, the Office of Safety, Health and Working Conditions, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Ave.NE., Room 3180, Washington DC 20212-0001, (202) 606-6304.

Information in this report is available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 606-7828, TDD phone (202) 606-5897, TDD message referral phone: 1-800-326-2577.

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