

THE WHOLE STORY

What work really does to people

The real toll of death, illness and injury caused by work — and why the official figures don't show it.

GREAT BRITAIN • A HAZARDS CAMPAIGN BRIEFING FOR SAFETY REPS

HAZARDS CONFERENCE 2026



THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Work kills more people every year than war.

3 MILLION+

people die every year around the world because of their work

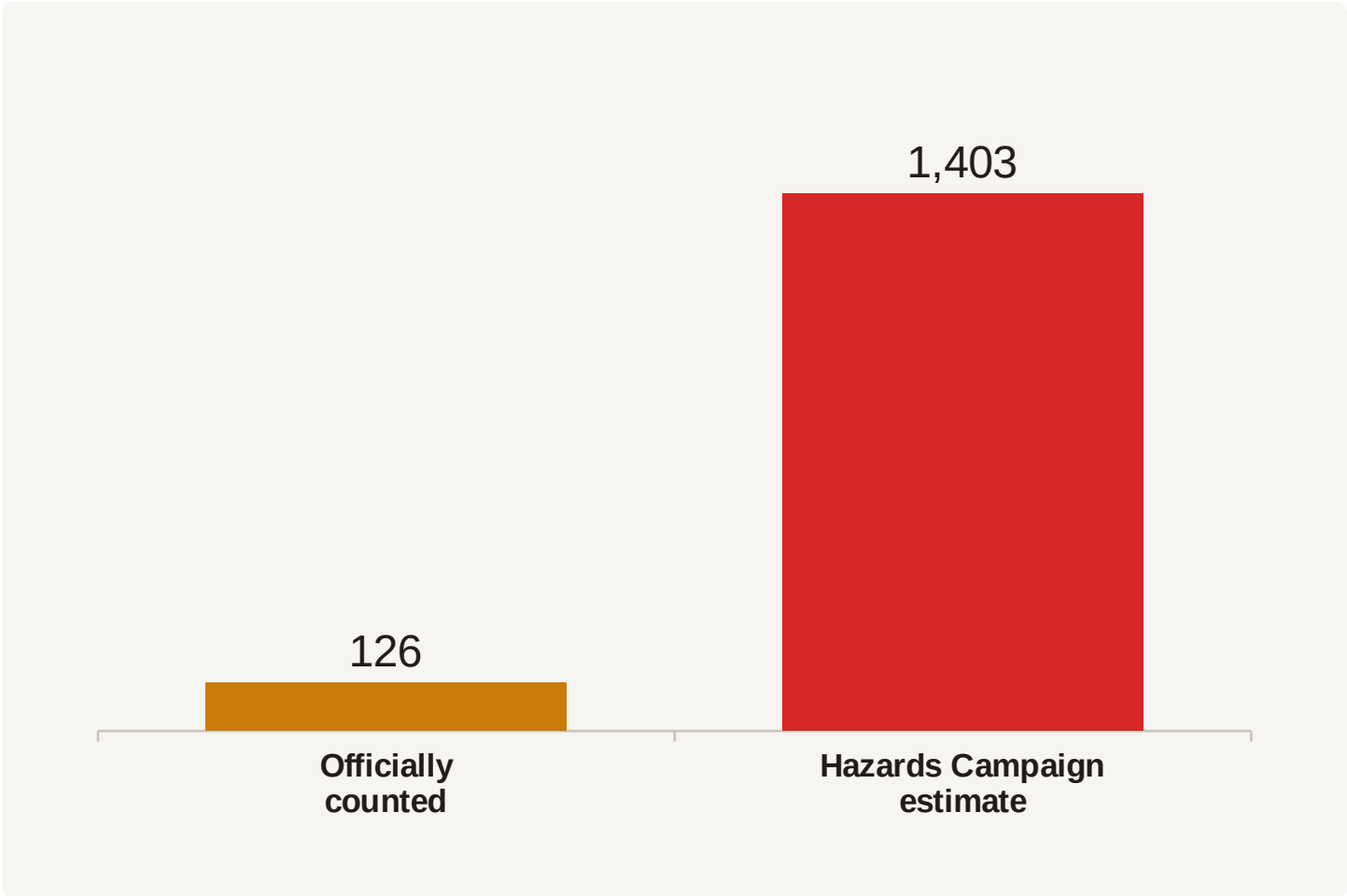
400 MILLION+

more are injured on the job every year

9 in 10 of these deaths are not sudden accidents — they're illnesses that build up slowly over years, like cancer, heart disease and lung disease caused by conditions at work.



Deaths from accidents at work, each year



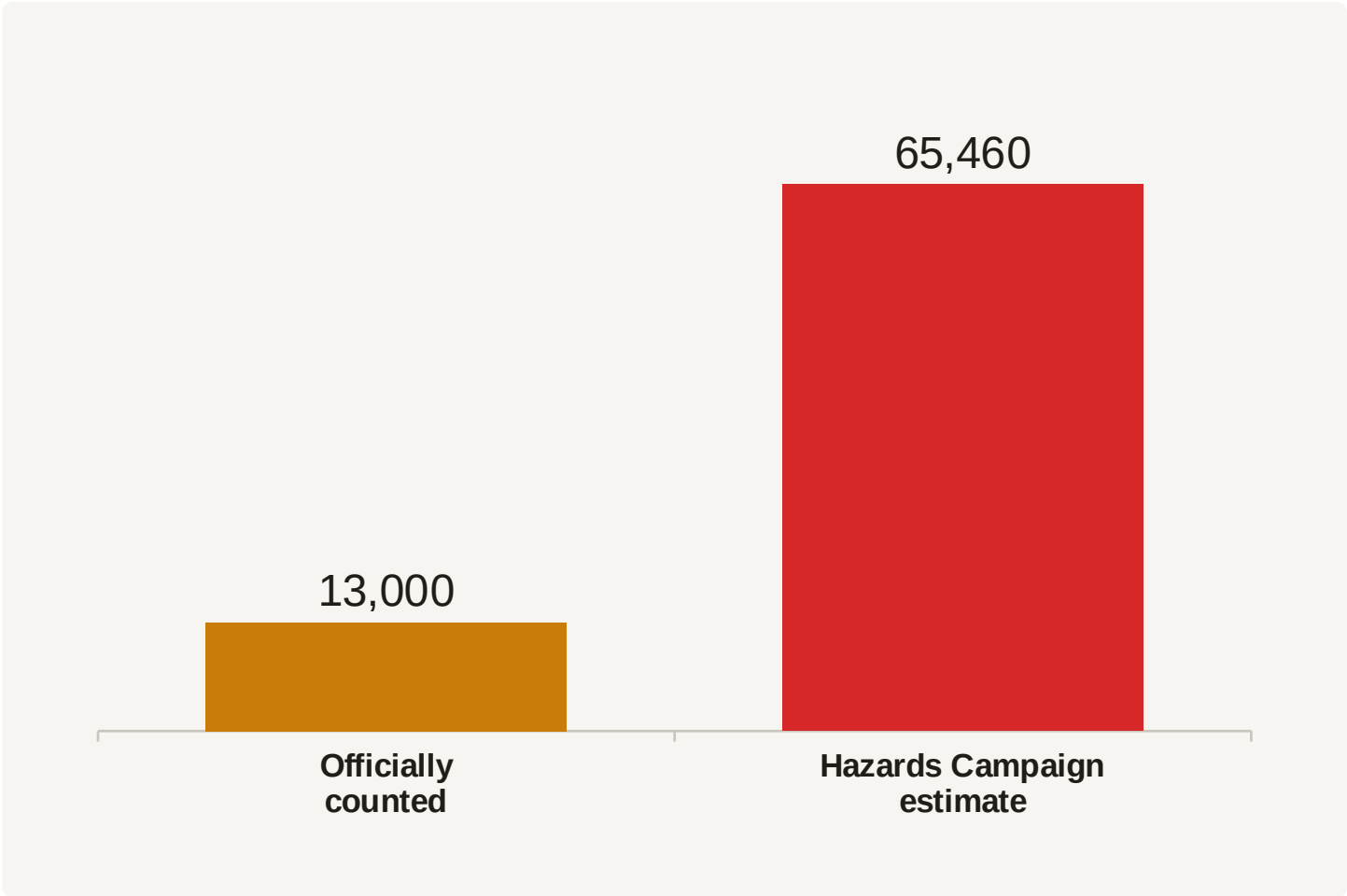
11x HIGHER

The official figure only counts deaths reported under one narrow law — RIDDOR.

It misses deaths at sea and in the air, on the roads while working, and suicides linked to work-related pressure.



Deaths from illness caused by work, each year



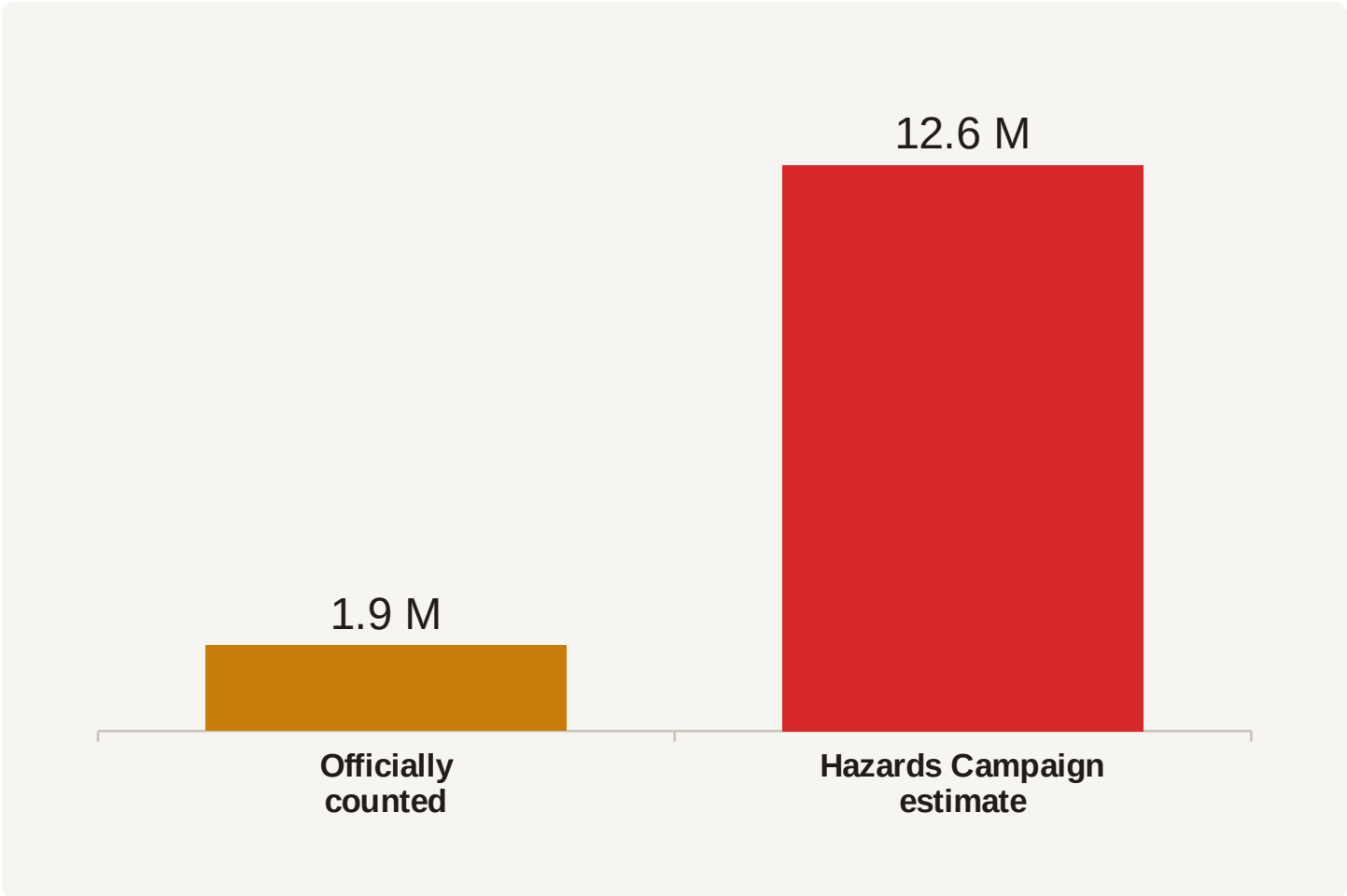
5× HIGHER

Most work deaths aren't accidents at all — they're illnesses that build up over years.

Cancer, heart disease and lung disease caused by dust, chemicals, stress and overwork — see the breakdown ahead.



People made ill by their work, each year



6× HIGHER

Millions of people are living with an illness caused or worsened by their job.

Most of them are never counted in the official statistics at all.



Why is the official number so much lower?

It isn't because the harm isn't happening. It's because the official figures only count what's reported through one narrow system.

1

Killed at sea or in the air

Deaths on ferries, boats and aircraft while working aren't reported under the same system.

2

Killed on the road for work

Road deaths while working or commuting for work are left out of the headline count.

3

Suicides linked to work pressure

Deaths where work-related stress was a factor are not officially recorded as work deaths.

4

Illnesses that take years to appear

Cancers and lung disease from past exposure to chemicals or dust surface decades later.

5

Long Covid caught at work

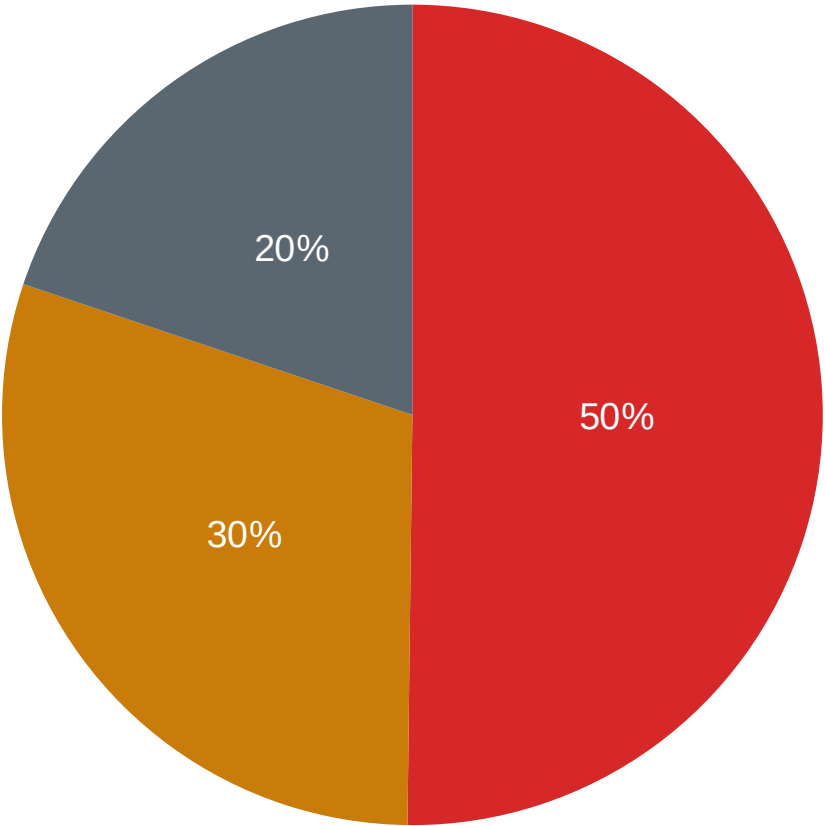
No longer even being recorded — reporting was scaled back from 2023.



CAUSE OF DEATH BREAKDOWN

What's really killing workers?

Hazards Campaign estimate of work-related illness deaths per year, Great Britain

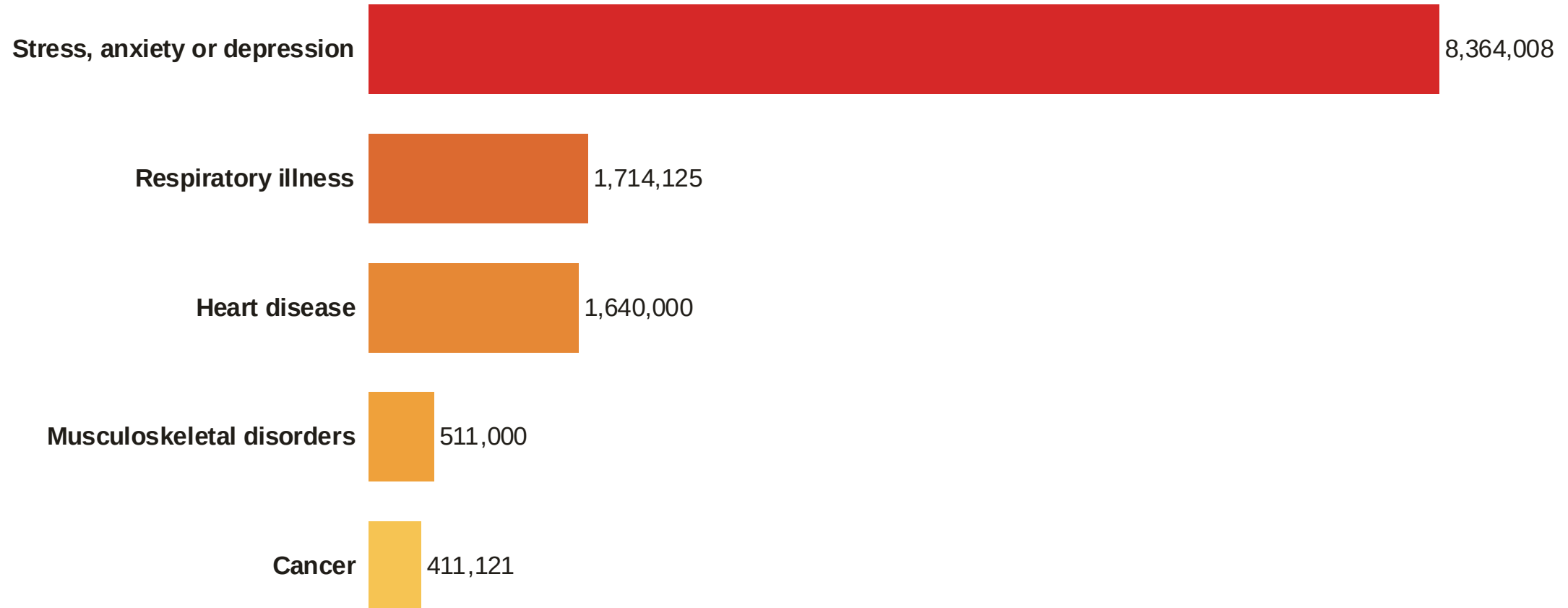


● Heart disease	32,855
● Cancer	19,619
● Lung & breathing disease	12,986
Total	65,460

None of these are the kind of accident most people picture when they think “workplace safety.”



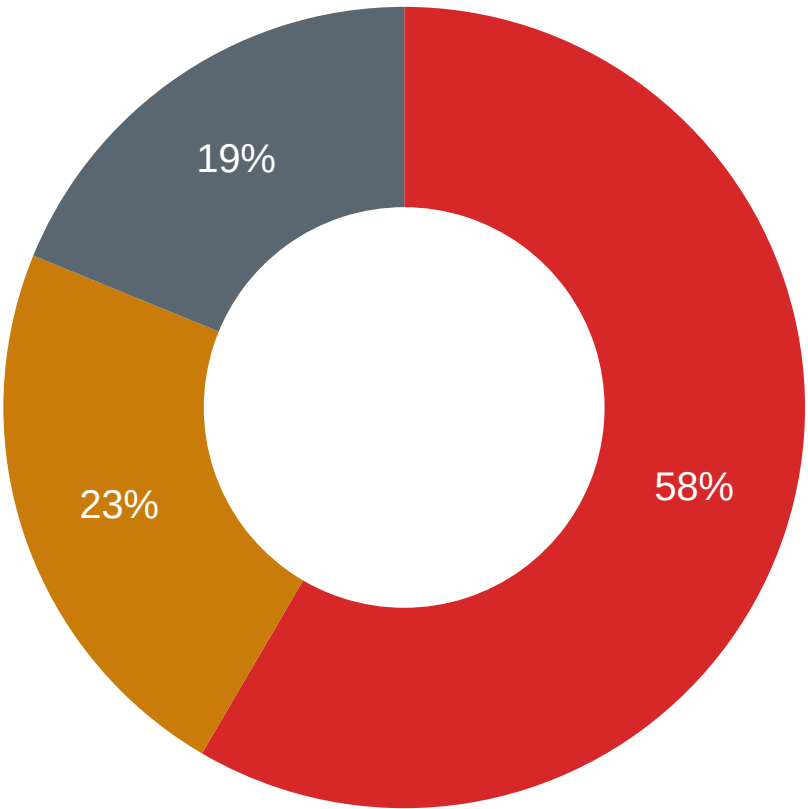
12.6 million people are living with an illness caused by work



THE REAL COST

Who actually pays the price?

Fatal injuries and work-related cancer alone cost Great Britain around £28 billion a year.



£28 BILLION

estimated annual cost of fatal injuries and work-related cancer in Great Britain

Families pay 59% of the financial cost — and 100% of the heartbreak.

The employers whose workplaces cause the harm carry only 19% of the cost.



Questions worth asking your employer

Official figures make workplaces look far safer than they really are. Use the fuller picture to push back.



Can we see all incident and near-miss reports — not just the ones legally required to be reported?



How are we monitoring long-term health, not just counting injuries after they happen?



What's being done to prevent stress, overwork and exposure to harmful substances?



Are we investing in real prevention, or just doing the legal minimum?





HAZARDS CAMPAIGN

The Whole Story · August 2026 · Hazards Conference 2026

“Every work-related death should be recognised, counted, and made to count.”

— Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK)

Sources: Health and Safety Executive (HSE) · Office of Rail and Road · Marine Accident Investigation Branch · Air Accident Investigation Board · Department for Transport · Samaritans · National Records of Scotland · Macmillan Cancer Support · British Heart Foundation · Asthma + Lung UK · Mental Health First Aid England

Prepared for Health and Safety representatives · hazards.org

