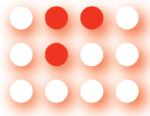


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Exposure to asbestos

Nearly one in four UK construction workers believe they may have been exposed to asbestos fibres, placing them at higher risk of contracting terminal cancers later in life.

That stark finding comes from a survey commissioned by health and safety professionals body the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) to find out how much construction workers know about this hazard.

Key findings include:

- three out of five (59%) have been informed of the asbestos risks and have had this reinforced regularly with training; one in seven (15%) has never been informed;
- almost one in four (23%) say they have been exposed to asbestos, with just one in four (27%) saying they haven't been exposed;
- one in three (32%) have never checked the asbestos register before starting work on a new site, with 15% of these not knowing about the register; and
- one in six (18%) said that if they found asbestos they would either be unsure or have no idea what to do.

And with potentially half a million buildings containing this lethal mineral, employees across many sectors risk being exposed every day – continu-

ing the trend of Britons having the world's highest chances of dying from mesothelioma, the deadliest asbestos-related cancer.

Leading scientists and safety and health experts have expressed concern about the findings. Along with IOSH, they are calling on employers across all sectors to ensure they do not expose employees.

Dr Lesley Rushton, the new chair of the UK's Industrial Injuries Advisory Council and a leading expert on workplace carcinogens, said: "Uncertainty and ignorance surrounding how to prevent workers from breathing in the fibres is deeply worrying.

"This is particularly the case among small companies, sole traders and older workers. It is crucial that we reach them, to inform them of the risks and how these can be managed, to ensure their future health is not compromised."

www.iosh.co.uk/News/No-Time-to-Lose-asbestos.aspx

Inflation at its lowest for a year

Retail price inflation has fallen for a third consecutive month and is now at its lowest since March 2017.

In March 2018, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) stood at 278.3 and the annual rate of inflation on the

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measure favoured by union negotiators was down to 3.3% against a 3.6% increase the previous month. Cheaper petrol, alcohol and tobacco helped ease inflationary pressures.

In March, inflation under the new Consumer Prices Index Housing (CPIH) was down to 2.3% from 2.5%. Meanwhile, inflation under the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) was down to 2.5% from 2.7%.

	Price inflation			
	RPI ¹	RPI	RPIX ²	CPIH
		<u>% increase on a year earlier</u>		
February 2017	268.4	3.2	3.5	2.3
March	269.3	3.1	3.4	2.3
April	270.6	3.5	3.8	2.6
May	271.7	3.7	3.9	2.7
June	272.3	3.5	3.8	2.6
July	272.9	3.6	3.9	2.6
August	274.7	3.9	4.1	2.7
September	275.1	3.9	4.1	2.8
October	275.3	4.0	4.2	2.8
November	275.8	3.9	4.0	2.8
December	278.1	4.1	4.2	2.7
January 2018	276.0	4.0	4.0	2.7
February	278.1	3.6	3.6	2.5
March	278.3	3.3	3.4	2.3

¹ January 1987=100 ² RPI except mortgage interest payments

Just six of the 14 groups that make up the basket of goods used to calculate the RPI increased by more than 3.3% in March.

The 8.8% increase in the clothing and footwear group included a rises of 11.8% and 9.6% in men's and women's clothing respectively.

The fuel and light group posted an increase of 6.4% which included a 10.4% increase in electricity prices and a 19.8% rise in the cost of domestic oil.

In the leisure services group, only foreign holidays with a 6.9% increase was above the overall increase of 4.8%.

Motoring costs were down, with the overall increase down to 3.2% from 3.9%. Petrol and oil fell by 0.3%, offset by a 9.8% increase in vehicle tax and insurance.

The overall rise in the food group was up to 2.7% and included substantial increases of 15.5% for butter and 9.1% for lamb.

The housing group's increase was steady at 2.5%, but included a 3.8% increase in council tax and rates.

More than 33%	%	Less than 3.3%	%
Clothing & footwear	8.8	Motoring expenditure	3.2
Fuel & light	6.4	Leisure goods	3.1
Tobacco	5.9	Catering	2.7
Fares etc	5.5	Food	2.7
Leisure services	4.8	Housing	2.5
Household goods	3.4	Alcoholic drink	2.1
		Household services	1.6
		Personal goods & services	1.0

www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/march2018

Number of jobless people resumes its fall

Unemployed numbers fell for the first time this year, official figures show.

The number of unemployed people in the UK was down by 16,000 to 1.42 million in the three-month period ending February 2018 compared with the previous three-month period ending November 2017, according to Labour Force Survey data.

The fall in numbers was sufficient to cut the unemployment rate to 4.2% from 4.3%.

The fall was all down to a 17,000 cut in the number of unemployed men to 751,000. Their unemployment rate was cut to 4.2% from 4.3%.

The number of unemployed women, however, increased by 1,000 to 672,000 from 671,000. Nevertheless, their unemployment rate was cut to 4.2% from 4.3% as more women were in employment.

There was an increase on the other main unemployment measure – the claimant count – which only includes claimants receiving Jobseeker's Allowance and those on the means-tested Universal Credit.

In March 2018, unemployment under this count rose by 11,600 to 855,300 from the revised figure for February of 843,700. The increase in numbers did not affect the joblessness rate which remained at 2.4%.

Male claimant numbers increased by 7,100 to 523,400 and their joblessness rate was up to 2.8% from 2.7%.

The number of female claimants increased by 4,500 to 331,800, pushing their joblessness rate up to 2.0% from 1.9%.

Unemployment seasonally adjusted				
	Claimants ¹		LFS ³	
	(000s)	% ²	(000s)	%
January 2017	765	2.2	1,580	4.7
February	762	2.2	1,559	4.7
March	784	2.2	1,541	4.6
April	796	2.3	1,530	4.6
May	801	2.3	1,495	4.5
June	806	2.3	1,484	4.4
July	803	2.3	1,455	4.3
August	802	2.3	1,443	4.3
September	805	2.3	1,425	4.3
October	812	2.3	1,429	4.3
November	824	2.3	1,439	4.3
December	830	2.4	1,470	4.4
January 2018	829	2.3	1,453	4.3
February (r)	844	2.4	1,423	4.2
March (p)	855	2.4		

¹ Jobseeker's Allowance and Universal Credit claimants ² Percentage of working population – the employees, unemployed, self-employed and the armed forces.
³ The Labour Force Survey definition of unemployment – the number of unemployed people who want a job and are ready to start work in two weeks, and have looked for work in the past four weeks. Each figure is the average of the past three months – a rolling average. (p) provisional (r) revised

Regions In the three months to February 2018, unemployment fell in six of the UK's 12 regions/countries, was unchanged in the East, and was up in the remaining five.

There was a 16,000 fall in London, while numbers were down by 12,000 in the West Midlands.

The regional increases included a 16,000 rise in the South East,

The unemployment rate was at or above the UK average of 4.2% in six of the 12 regions/countries.

The highest rates were 5.2% in Yorkshire and the Humber and 5.0% in the West Midlands.

In March 2018, the claimant count rose in all but one of the 12 regions/countries – the exception was Northern Ireland where it fell.

The claimant count rate was above the UK average of 2.4% in seven regions/countries. The highest rates were 4.7% in the North East and 3.2% in the North West.

Region	March claimants		LFS Dec – Feb	
	Number	%	Number	%
North East	57,700	4.7	63,000	4.8
North West	119,800	3.2	147,000	4.1
Yorkshire & the Humber	81,500	2.9	141,000	5.2
East Midlands	50,100	2.0	99,000	4.1
West Midlands	92,400	3.0	143,000	5.0
East	53,600	1.7	118,000	3.7
London	126,500	2.1	239,000	4.8
South East	70,800	1.4	161,000	3.4
South West	48,200	1.6	97,000	3.4
Wales	40,600	2.6	70,000	4.6
Scotland	85,500	2.9	115,000	4.2
Northern Ireland	28,700	3.1	30,000	3.5

www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/april2018

Total earnings growth takes hit in February

The erosion of average weekly earnings has continued in the second month of the new year.

In February 2018, average weekly earnings growth, including bonuses, were provisionally estimated to have risen by 2.3% against the 2.8% increase in January.

As retail price inflation rose by 3.6% in February and by 4.0% in January there was a real-terms decrease in earnings of 1.3 percentage points and 1.2 percentage points respectively.

The sectoral figures for February, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), show manufacturing earnings growth was down to 2.3% from 2.9% in January.

Growth in services was down to 2.4% from 2.7%.

In the private sector as a whole, growth also posted a substantial decrease to 2.3% from 2.9% the previous month. On the other hand, in the public sector, excluding financial services, growth was up to 2.6% from 2.4%.

Headline earnings growth (the rolling three-month average) for the whole economy in February was steady at 2.8%.

In manufacturing, growth was cut to 2.8% from 3.1%, while growth in services was stuck at 2.8%.

In the private sector as a whole, growth was steady at 2.9%, while in the public sector, excluding financial services, growth edged up to 2.3% from 2.1%.

2000= 100	Average Weekly Earnings Indices ¹					
	Whole economy	annual change	Manufacturing	Services	Private sector	Public sector ²
Dec 2016 (r)	158.6	1.7%	159.2	162.0	158.6	160.4
Jan 2017 (r)	159.2	1.8%	159.7	162.8	159.2	160.5
February (r)	159.8	3.0%	160.3	163.3	160.0	160.6
March	160.3	2.4%	159.9	164.0	160.4	161.1
April	160.7	1.4%	160.9	164.3	160.8	161.1
May	160.8	2.0%	160.6	164.5	160.8	162.2
June	161.3	2.8%	160.9	164.8	162.0	161.2
July	161.5	1.7%	162.2	165.1	161.5	162.1
August	162.0	2.4%	162.3	165.6	162.2	163.2
September	162.6	2.8%	162.8	166.2	163.0	162.2
October	162.8	2.4%	163.8	166.5	163.1	163.5
November	163.3	2.4%	164.1	166.9	163.6	163.5
December (r)	163.6	3.1%	164.3	167.3	164.0	163.6
Jan 2018 (r0)	163.6	2.8%	164.4	167.2	163.9	164.4
February (p)	163.6	2.3%	163.9	167.1	163.6	164.7
% annual rise for February			2.3%	2.4%	2.3%	2.6%
% rise — February headline rate ³		2.8%	2.8%	2.8%	2.9%	2.3%

¹ Average weekly earnings in Great Britain seasonally adjusted ² Excluding financial services ³ Annual increase in rolling three-month average (p) provisional

The ONS also produces regular pay figures which strip out bonuses. In February, earnings growth for the whole economy was up to 2.9% from 2.7% in January.

The annual increases in the year to February for various sectors, along with the previous month's rises in brackets, were: manufacturing 2.8% (2.8%);

services 2.9% (2.6%); private sector 3.0% (2.8%); and public sector, excluding financial services, 2.6% (2.4%).

The average increase in regular pay in the whole economy for the three-month period ending February was up to 2.8% from 2.6% the previous month.

The three-month sectoral increases were: manufacturing 2.9% (2.9%); services 2.7% (2.5%); private sector 2.9% (2.7%); and public sector, excluding financial services, 2.3% (2.1%).

The following table is based on the median average earnings figures for April 2017 published in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. The original median figures have been updated by the 1.8% increase in average weekly earnings, including bonuses, for the whole economy between April 2017 and February 2018 to give a rough estimate of earnings now in the various occupational groups.

Full-time average weekly earnings by occupation	
	£ a week
All employees	£560.30
All male	£602.10
All female	£502.50
Managers	£838.90
Professionals	£746.30
Associate professionals	£616.50
Admin & secretarial	£439.40
Skilled/craft	£519.00
Services	£367.90
Sales	£377.10
Operatives	£481.00
Other manual jobs	£376.30

www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/april2018

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