



WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY ROADMAP 2022
TOWARDS ZERO - HIGH IMPACT HARMS

FALLS FROM HEIGHTS

DATA INSIGHTS AND ACTION PLAN



TOWARDS ZERO – HIGH IMPACT HARMS

FALLS FROM HEIGHTS

Falls from heights has been identified as a high impact harm under action area II of the *SafeWork NSW Work Health and Safety Roadmap to 2022*, due to the high number of workplace fatalities and serious injuries that occur as a result of this mechanism. One goal of the *WHS Roadmap to 2022* is to eliminate or significantly reduce fatalities and serious injuries resultant from falls from heights – towards zero.

Falls from heights incidents can have a devastating impact physically, emotionally and financially to workers, as well as their families, friends, businesses and the wider community.

Falls from heights is defined as falling from one level to another, and can be as small a distance as falling from the first rung of a ladder, or as high as falling from a high-rise building.

The majority of people who are seriously or fatally injured fall from a height of four metres or less, with the construction industry reporting the most number of falls. Whilst falls are evenly spread across age groups, most fatalities occur in the 45 and over age groups.

This document outlines the priorities of the *Towards Zero Falls from Heights* program and provides an analysis of falls from heights data from three key data sets:

- work related fatalities
- workers compensation; and
- incidents reported to SafeWork NSW.

The data focuses specifically on those incidents that resulted in a fatality or serious injury. Also included in this document is a SafeWork NSW action plan that is updated bi-annually.

1. WORK RELATED FATALITIES

26 fatalities 

There were 26 work related fatalities reported to SafeWork NSW as a result of a fall from a height over the three-year period to 2016/17.¹

INDUSTRY AND WHAT THEY FELL FROM

The industry with the most reported fatalities was construction, with ten.

The most common things people fell from were roofs, ladders and scaffolds.



¹ Source: Work-related fatalities reported to SafeWork NSW 1/7/2014 – 30/6/2017

The below tables provide a breakdown of industry classes, and what people fell from.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY	
Fatal falls from heights and what they fell from	
Painting and Decorating Services	
Roof	2
Electrical Services	
Other and not specified ladders	1
House Construction	
Extension ladders or builders' ladders	1
Mobile or tower scaffolding	1
Roof	1
Non-Residential Building Construction	
Systems or unit scaffolding	1
Other Building Installation Services	
Other and not specified ladders	1
Other Residential Building Construction	
Systems or unit scaffolding	1
Roofing Services	
Roof	1

TOTAL 10

OTHER INDUSTRIES	
Fatal falls from heights and what they fell from	
Accommodation	
External walkways and platforms	1
Amusement and Other Recreational Activities	
Safety harness	1
Building and Other Industrial Cleaning Services	
Roof	1
Clay Brick Manufacturing	
Roof	1
Gardening Services	
External walls, brick or otherwise	1
Higher Education	
Other outdoor environmental agencies	1
Horse & Dog Racing Administration & Track Operation	
Horses, donkeys, mules	1
Log Sawmilling	
Tray, loading board or table top of truck/semi-trailer	1
Logging	
Trees	1
Other Agricultural Product Wholesaling	
Other and not specified forklift trucks	1
Other Fruit and Tree Nut Growing	
Elevating work platforms	1
Other Manufacturing n.e.c	
Roof	1
Road Freight Transport	
Other and not specified trucks, semi-trailers, lorries	1
Sheep-Beef Cattle Farming	
Horses, donkeys, mules	1
Not specified	
Extension ladders or builders' ladders	1
Roof	1

TOTAL 16

OCCUPATION

The occupations with multiple fatalities included painting trade workers, electricians, gardeners and truck drivers, with the majority being construction related trades or occupations.

The remaining occupations were in mixed industries.



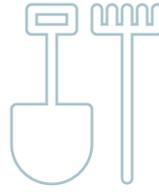
3

Painting Trade Workers



2

Electricians



2

Gardeners



2

Truck Drivers

CONSTRUCTION OCCUPATIONS

Painting trades workers	3
Electricians	2
Building and plumbing labourers	1
Carpenters and joiners	1
Construction managers	1
Insulation and home improvement installers	1
Plumbers	1
Roof tilers	1

OTHER INDUSTRY OCCUPATIONS

Gardeners	2
Truck drivers	2
Agricultural, forestry and horticultural plant operators	1
Air conditioner and refrigeration mechanics	1
Bystander	1
Other miscellaneous labourers	1
Sports coaches, instructors and officials	1
Sportspersons	1
Not specified	5

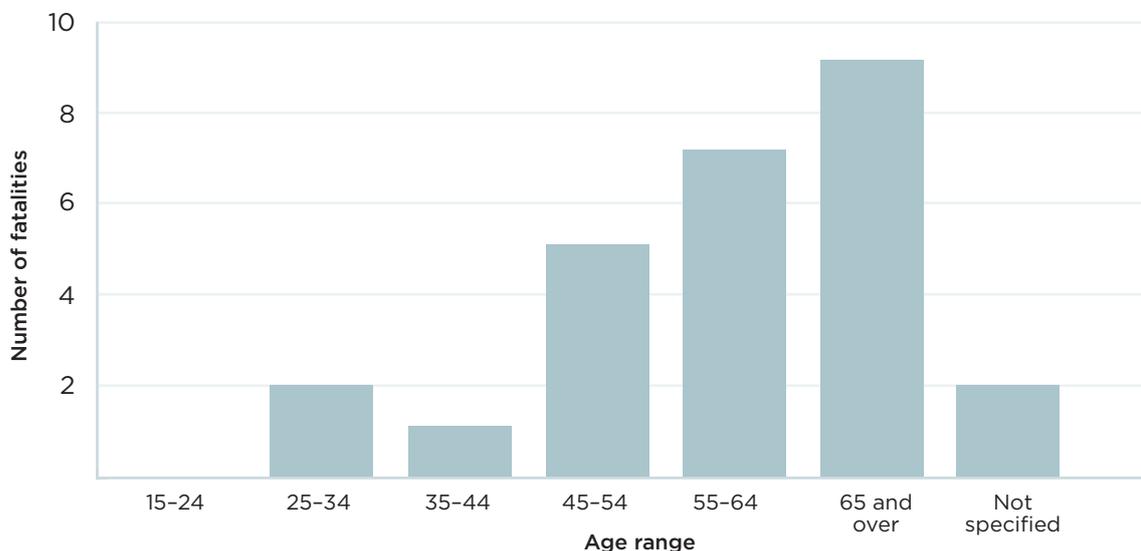
TOTAL 11

TOTAL 15

AGE RANGE

In sections 2 & 3 of this document we see that the number of those falling is evenly spread across most age groups, however, three quarters of the fatalities were in the 45 and over age groups.

Age of fatally injured person for fatalities reported to SafeWork NSW 2014/15 - 2016/17



2. WORKERS COMPENSATION

\$327million

Between 2013/14 and 2015/16 there were 12,136 claims resultant from a fall from a height². The financial cost of these claims was \$327 million, with total lost time being 126,945 weeks.

The three industries with the highest number and cost of claims were the construction industry (\$90.7 m), followed by manufacturing (\$45.3 m) and transport, postal and warehousing (\$30.5 m).

Almost 98 per cent of claims resulted in a temporary disability, with 6,332 being a major claim. A major claim is one where the injury resulted in death, or permanent or temporary disability with at least one week of weekly benefit entitlement paid.

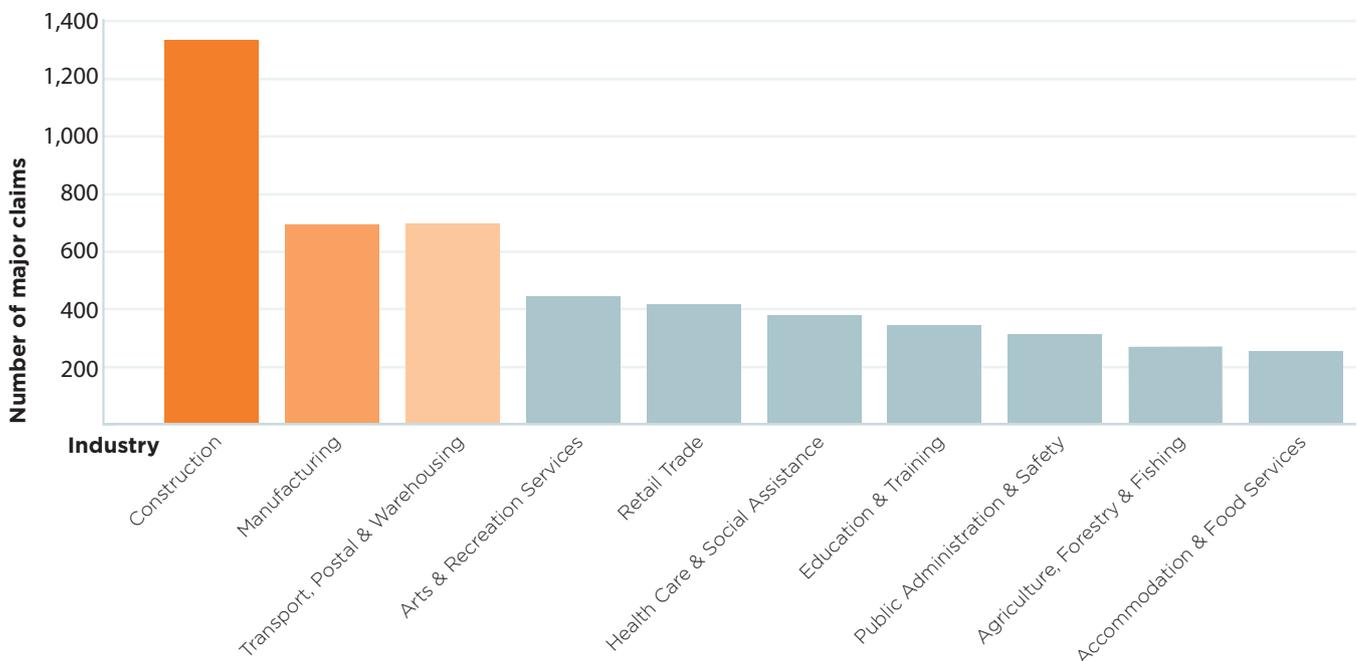
The Towards Zero - Falls from Heights program focusses on fatalities and serious injuries, and so the remainder of this section includes workers compensation claims classified as a major claim, with minor claims excluded.

INDUSTRY

The top ten industries for number of major claims are listed below.

The number of major claims in the construction industry was double that of the next two highest industries.

Industry of major claims for workers compensation 2013/14-2015/16



² Source: Workers Compensation data 2013/14 to 2015/16 provided by NSW State Insurance Regulatory Authority.

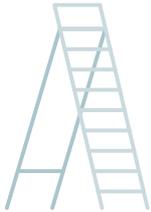
TOP 3 INDUSTRIES FOR MAJOR CLAIMS

The top 3 industries, their top breakdown agencies and occupations are listed below.

Breakdown agencies are the object, substance, or circumstance that was principally involved in, or most closely associated with, the event. In the context of falls from heights, this is mostly what they fell from.

CONSTRUCTION

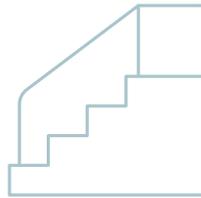
Top 5 breakdown agencies



492
Ladders



126
Buildings and other structures (mostly roofs)



105
Steps and stairways



98
Scaffolding



78
Traffic and ground surfaces

Top 5 occupations



195
Labourers



174
Carpenters/Joiners



120
Electricians



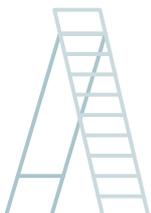
106
Plumbers



60
Building/Plumbing Labourers

MANUFACTURING

Top 5 breakdown agencies



140
Ladders



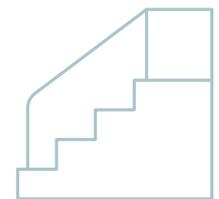
113
Steps and stairways



81
Trucks



36
Traffic and ground surfaces



26
Buildings and other structures (mostly external steps)

Top 5 occupations



106
Labourers



65
Truck Drivers



30
Factory process workers



28
Misc Technicians and Trades Workers



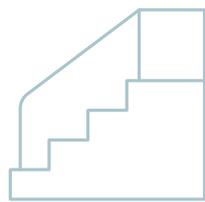
21
Metal Fitters/Machinists and Carpenters/Joiners

TRANSPORT, POSTAL AND WAREHOUSING

Top 5 breakdown agencies



237
Trucks



66
Steps and
stairways



41
Traffic and
ground surfaces



31
Ladders



23
Trailers, caravans

Top 5 occupations



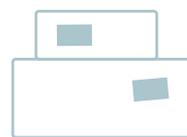
306
Truck Drivers



42
Labourers



27
Train/
Tram Drivers



24
Storepersons

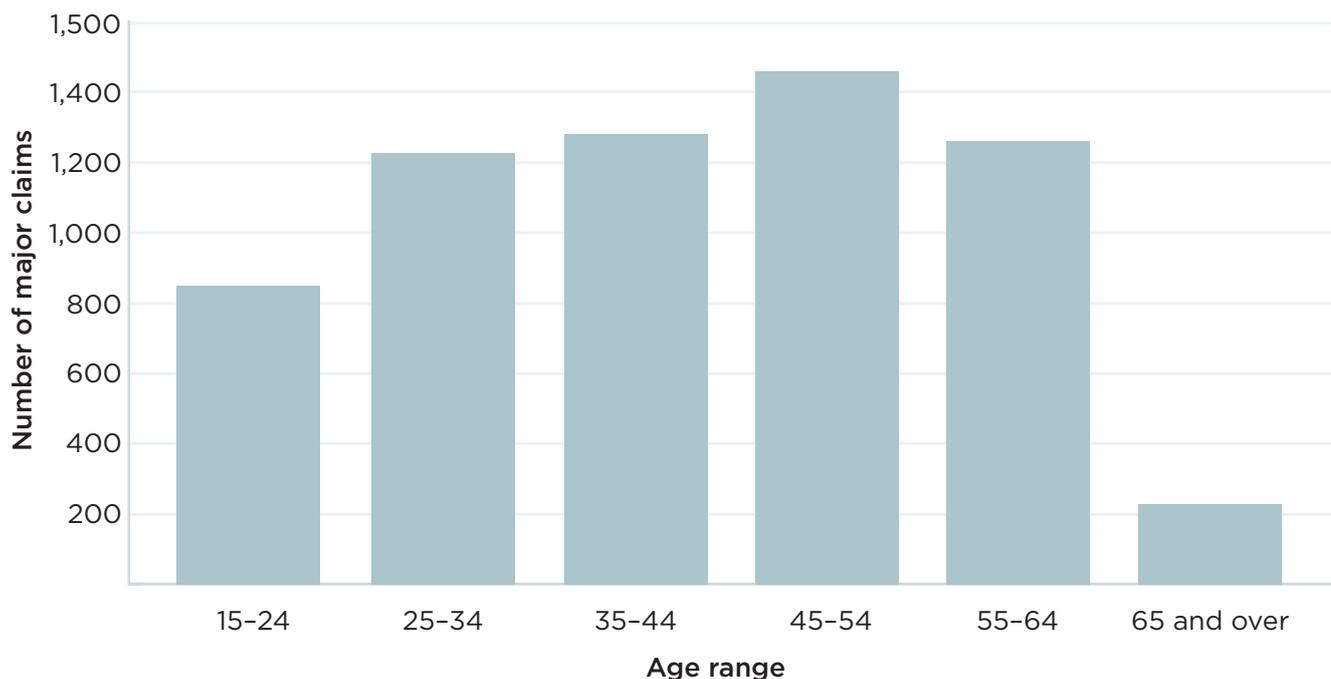


24
Delivery Drivers

AGE RANGE

The age range of those falling was evenly spread, with the 45 to 54 year old group having the highest number of claims.

Age groups of major claims for workers compensation 2013/14-2015/16



3. INCIDENTS REPORTED TO SAFEWORK NSW

This section includes incidents reported to SafeWork NSW, regardless of whether the injured party was eligible for workers compensation. It includes some types of workers that may not be represented in section 2, such as sole traders and sub-contractors.

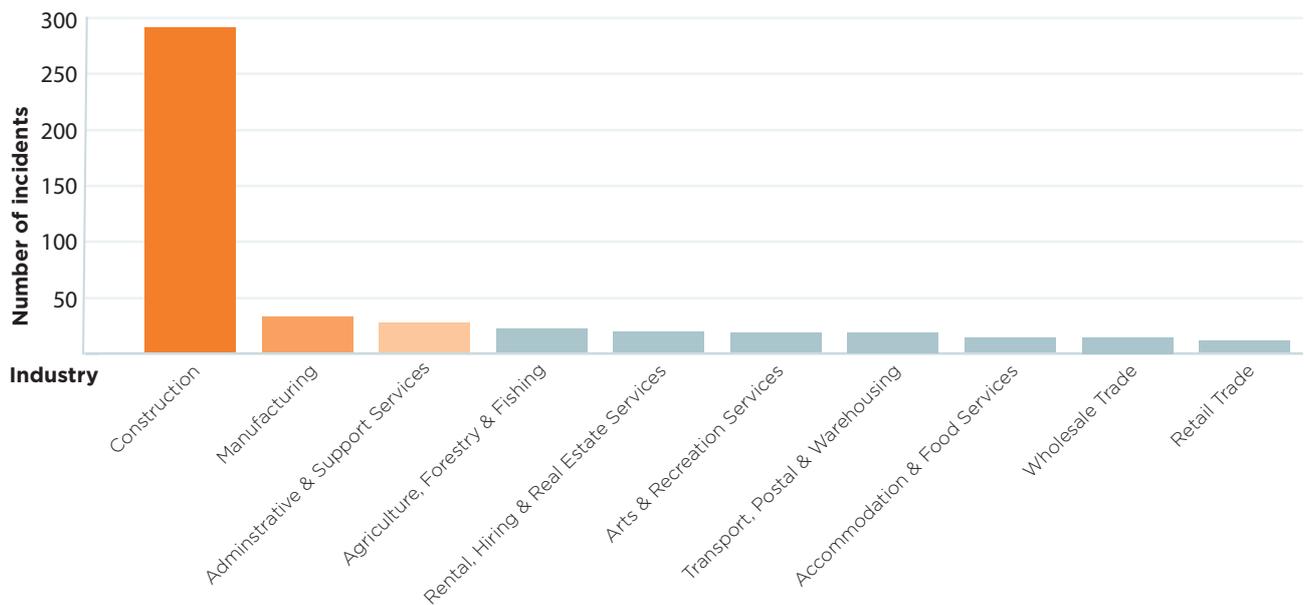
In the three-year period between 2014/15 and 2016/17, there were more than 1600 falls from heights incidents, with approximately a quarter of these categorised by SafeWork NSW as category 1 (critical) or category 2 (high).³

Category 1 and 2 incidents are where there is risk of significant or permanent incapacity, or a dangerous incident with immediate risk of serious injury or illness.

INDUSTRY

Of the more than 400 category 1 and 2 incidents, the vast majority were reported as being in the construction industry, followed by manufacturing and administrative and support services.

Top 10 industries for category 1 and 2 falls from heights incidents reported to SafeWork NSW 2014/15 to 2016/17.



³Source: SafeWork NSW Falls from heights category 1 and 2 incidents reported 2014/15 - 2016/17

WHAT THEY FELL FROM

The top five things workers fell from in category 1 and 2 incidents were ladders, roofs (off or through - including skylights), scaffolds (including mobile), formwork and penetrations.

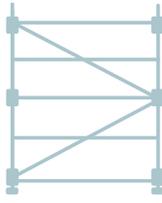
Ladders, roofs and scaffolds accounted for 49 per cent of all falls.



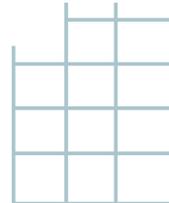
84
Ladders



64
Roofs



50
Scaffold



26
Formwork

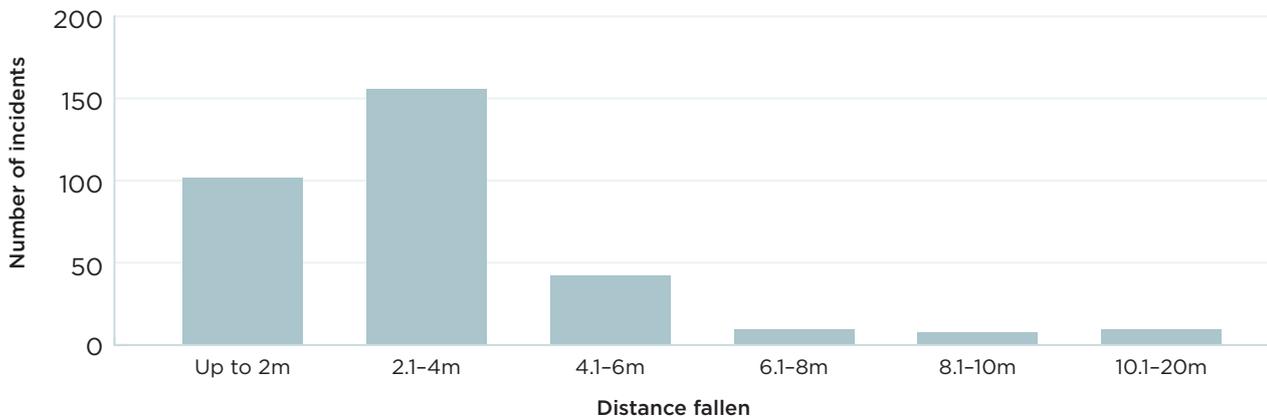


23
Penetration

DISTANCE FALLEN

The majority of people fell from a height of between 2.1 and 4 metres (about one storey) to the surface below, followed by up-to 2 metres.

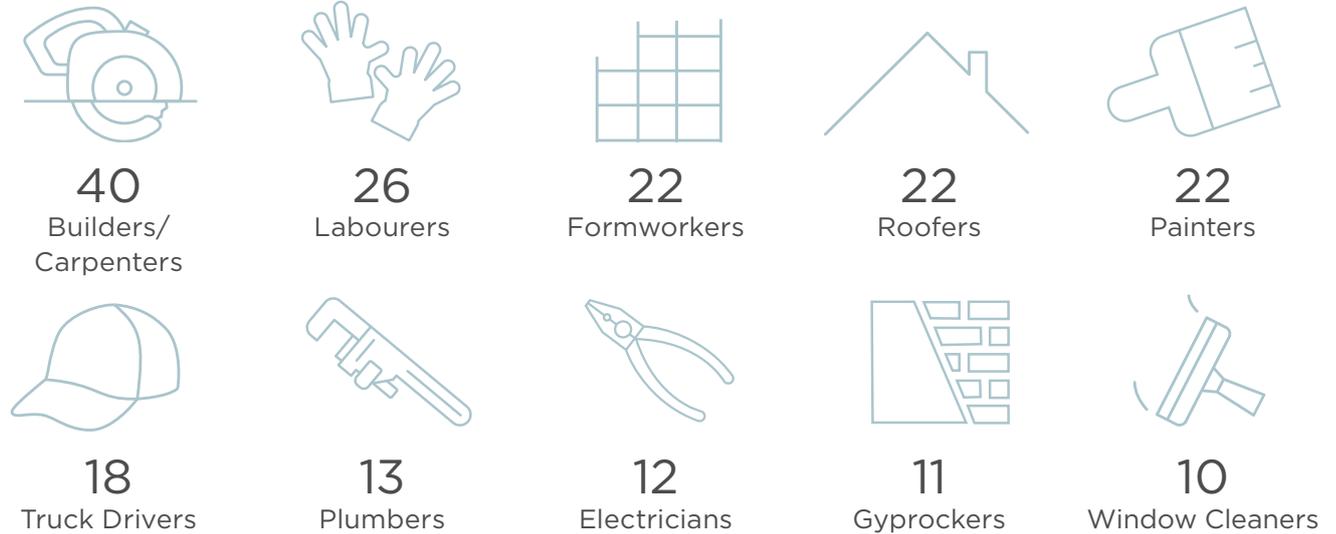
Distance fallen for category 1 and 2 falls from heights incidents reported to SafeWork NSW 2014/15 to 2016/17.



OCCUPATION

The top ten occupations are depicted below.

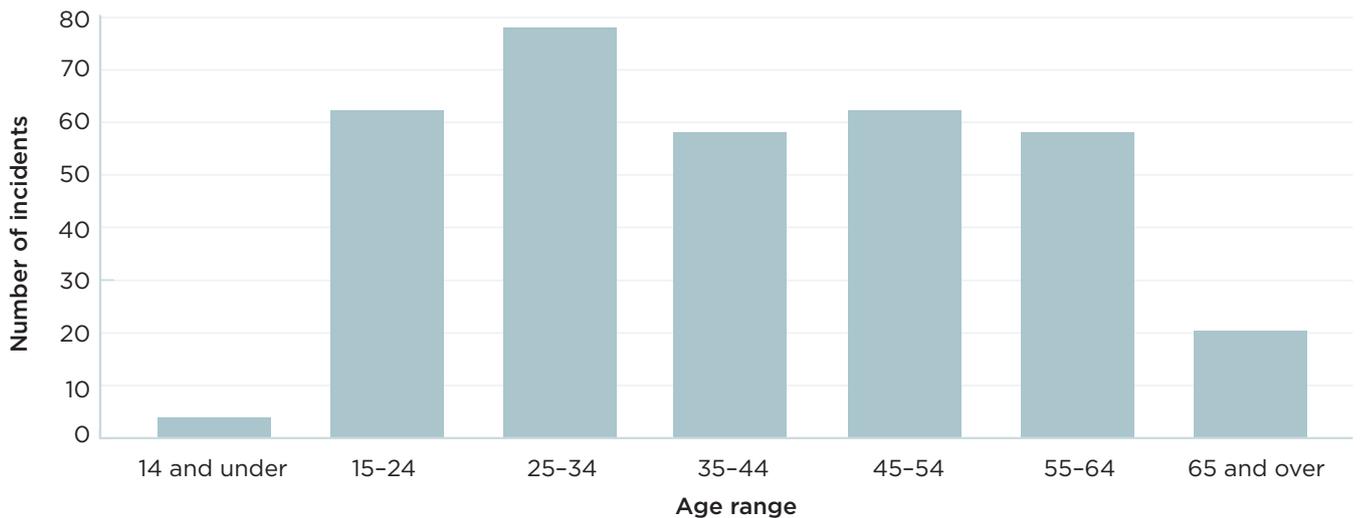
The top five of these occupations made up approximately a third of all workers who fell.



AGE RANGE

The age range of those falling in category 1 and 2 incidents was evenly spread, except for the 25-34 age group who had the greatest numbers.

Age of injured party for category 1 and 2 falls from heights incidents reported to SafeWork NSW 2014/15 to 2016/17.



OUR FOCUS

SafeWork NSW's *Work Health and Safety Roadmap to 2022* identifies a number of high impact harms, with the goal being to eliminate or significantly reduce fatalities and serious injuries – towards zero.

The *Towards Zero Falls from Heights* program to 2022 will focus primarily on the construction industry, due to its dominance of all three data sets.

Manufacturing and transport feature strongly in workers compensation data and so will also be prioritised, along with the main things people fell from and most at-risk occupations.

Our top priorities include:

PRIORITY INDUSTRIES		
• Construction	• Manufacturing	• Transport
WHAT PEOPLE FALL FROM		
• Roofs	• Trucks	• Steps/Stairways
• Ladders	• Scaffolds	
MOST AT RISK OCCUPATIONS		
• Builders/Carpenters	• Painters	• Factory Workers
• Labourers	• Electricians	• Storepersons
• Truck (and other) Drivers	• Roofers	
• Formworkers	• Plumbers	

OUR COMMITMENT

SafeWork NSW will work closely with priority business and worker representatives to determine the best safety solutions for the specific industries, occupations and/or tasks where workers or work groups are most at risk.

SafeWork NSW will provide an appropriate mix of advice, education and enforcement, to ensure a fair and level playing field for those who are doing the right thing by protecting workers from the risk of falls from heights.

In order to achieve a significant reduction in fatalities and serious injuries, by the end of the program SafeWork NSW aims to:

- Ensure industry has the best safety practice in place when working at heights
- Secure strong and productive collaborations with business and worker representative groups
- Publish simple safety guidance and tools addressing high risk activities
- Undertake appropriate interventions in targeted industries, and for at-risk occupations
- Have the appropriate instruments and/or legislation in place, to address falls from heights risks.

For more information about how to work safely at heights, see www.safework.nsw.gov.au or call **13 10 50**.

TOWARDS ZERO – HIGH IMPACT HARMS

FALLS FROM HEIGHTS TO 2022

ACTION PLAN 2019-2020

The initiatives in this action plan are directed towards the top three industries who reported falls from heights fatalities and serious injuries, being construction, manufacturing, and transport.

This action plan will be updated in 2021.

INITIATIVE	WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE FOR 2019-2020
Understand why people are falling	We will better understand the contributing factors to why people fall from - ladders, scaffolds, roofs, trucks and stairways - through collaboration with industry and in-depth analysis of serious incidents and fatalities reported to SafeWork NSW.
Secure strong industry collaborations	We will identify and invite industry collaborations with employer and worker groups who represent those most at risk, through subject-specific focus groups and improved communication mechanisms.
Publish best practice safety guidance	We will work with industry to review the best safe practices for working on ladders, scaffolds, roofs, trucks and stairways - and publish simple safety guidance and tools.
Help employers and workers understand working at heights best practice	We will provide educative advice at safety events, through site visits and requests for assistance, seminars and webinars, to assist employers keep their workers safe.
Zero tolerance to workers lives at risk	Inspectors will have a consistent approach to addressing working at heights risks and will provide an appropriate mix of education, advice and compliance. SafeWork NSW will continue to embed a zero-tolerance approach to those who place workers lives at risk when working at heights.
Spotlight on scaffolding	We will work with scaffolding installers, suppliers and employers to improve compliance standards.
Long term solutions	We will scope the feasibility of strengthening training and supervisory requirements in reducing the number of falls from heights incidents, and opportunities to introduce or influence regulatory or building related instruments.

Falls from heights interventions will also be delivered for other industries not prioritised in this action plan, through the *Work Health and Safety Roadmap 2022*.

See www.safework.nsw.gov.au or call **13 10 50**.

