

The Most Dangerous Occupations

If you're destined to die on the job, odds are overwhelmingly good that you're a man. Although women make up nearly half of the workforce, they account for only about 8 percent of the 6,000 or so annual job-related fatalities tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Why this difference? The answer is less tightly linked to a male craze for death-defying occupations than one might think.

Bomb squad technicians, plague fighters, volcanologists—the list goes on—risk death routinely. But because few people are employed in these lines of work, the absolute number of casualties is quite small; thus, the BLS and other agencies do not include these data. Deaths rack up far more ominously among transportation workers, construction workers and other laborers. Those are not jobs that women typically occupy.

One explanation for this occupational gender gap, according to several studies, is that women have generally moved into those sectors of the job market in which employment has expanded. Writing in the April 1997 *Monthly Labor Review*, economist Barbara H. Wootton observed that between 1975 and 1995, job growth climbed fastest among managers and professionals, more than doubling for managers, for instance. Women now hold about half of all managerial and professional positions. During that same interval, growth was slowest for some more hazardous jobs such as laborers and farmers, and women gained fewer places in these occupations.

Based on the fatality rate for men and women combined, fishers and timber cutters hold the most dangerous jobs, although truck drivers sustained the highest number of deaths. Indeed, highway traffic accidents accounted for 22 percent of fatal work-related injuries and have increased in number nearly 20 percent over the past five years, according to the National Safety Council. Beyond this worrisome trend, the overall rate of fatal occupational injuries—4.7 per 100,000 employed—has decreased by about 10 percent over the same period. In general, both men and women are facing less danger of becoming a statistic. —Kate Wong, staff writer

Aircraft pilots, truckers and construction laborers make the top 10. Women would prefer to work at Microsoft



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The 10 Most Dangerous Occupations

Occupation	Employed (in thousands)	Employment % Men	Employment % Women	Fatality Count	Fatality Rate*	Leading Fatal Events
Timber cutters	79	97.0	3.0	121	128.7	Felled tree
Fishers	47	95.7	4.3	58	123.4	Drowning
Water transportation	52	96.6	3.4	49	94.2	Fall from ship
Aircraft pilots	120	98.8	1.2	100	83.3	Air crash
Structural metal workers	66	100.0	0	45	68.2	Fall
Mining and other extractive occupations	145	98.7	1.3	75	51.7	Vehicle-related
Construction laborers	811	95.4	4.6	333	41.1	Fall
Taxicab drivers	248	91.7	8.3	100	40.3	Homicide
Truck drivers	3,075	94.3	5.7	857	27.9	Highway crash, jackknifing
Farm occupations	2,177	78.4	21.6	615	27.5	Tractor-related

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data are from 1997.

*per 100,000 workers