

SOURCES OF WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION IN AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES



Report

July 2015

SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

Sources of work health and safety information in Australian workplaces

July 2015



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Preface

The Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022 (the Australian Strategy) seeks to explore the action area of Health and safety capabilities: Improved work health and safety capabilities.

This report summarises findings from the Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey 2012 and the Health and Safety at Work: Your experiences and costs Survey 2014 for sources of work health and safety information used by workers in Australian businesses. The report presents this information with regard to worker type, business/ workplace size, occupation and industry. This report identifies what sources are most commonly used by workers and explores differences amongst varying working situations. This report also examines how employers provide work health and safety information to their workers and the types of employers that receive this information.

Conducting and publishing research to inform the development and evaluation of work health and safety policies is a function of Safe Work Australia as per Safe Work Australia Act 2008 (Cwlth). This research report was written to inform the development of policies in relation to sources of work health and safety information used by Australian workers. The views and conclusions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of Safe Work Australia Members.

Perceptions of Work Health and Safety: Sole traders, employers and workers Surveys 2012 and Health and Safety at Work: Your experience and costs Survey 2014

This report presents findings from nation-wide surveys of sole traders, employers and workers. Responses to the survey questionnaire were weighted to reflect the size, primary location and main industry of businesses in Australia. As is often the case with large surveys, the response rate was low. This increases the risk that the views and experiences of the study sample are biased and affects the extent to which those views and experiences can be generalised to the population of interest. In short, the survey provides potentially valuable information from 520 sole traders, 1052 employers and 1311 workers (2012) and 706 sole traders and 1644 employers (2014) but we cannot be confident that the information is representative of the whole population. It is therefore important that estimates or comparisons, particularly those based on the relatively small number of medium-sized and large businesses, are seen as indicative or suggestive rather than representative or definitive.

As with all statistical reports, the potential exists for minor revisions over time.

Contents

Executive summary	vi
Background	vi
Main findings	vii
The Study	1
Rationale	1
Approach	1
Limitations	3
Main findings	4
Sources of information (2014): What are the three main sources you use to get information about work health and safety?	4
Sources of information (2012): What are the three main sources from which you have learnt something about work health and safety in the past 12 months?	6
Information sources over time: Time series analysis	16
Employer dissemination of work health and safety information	18
Conclusions	28
References	30
Appendix	31
Work Health and Safety Perceptions Sole Trader, Employer and Worker Surveys 2012	31
Health and Safety at Work: Your experience and costs 2014	33

Executive summary

Background

How employers and workers gain access to work health and safety information has been identified as an area of interest in the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-22 (the Australian Strategy) under the action area of Health and safety capabilities: Improved work health and safety capabilities.

This paper reports on sources of work health and safety (WHS) information used by Australian businesses and workers as measured by two national surveys: The Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey 2012 and the Health and Safety at Work: Your experience and costs Survey 2014. The influence of key factors of worker type, size of business, occupation and industry are investigated. How employers provide information to their workers and the groups of workers who receive this information is also examined.

In accordance with the national priority industries identified in the Australian Strategy which require the greatest improvement in relation to reducing incidence of deaths and/ or injuries, this report will focus on the sources of WHS information in the following industries:

- Agriculture
- Road transport
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Accommodation & food services
- Public administration & safety, and
- Health care & social assistance.

Further information on these priority industries can be found on the Safe Work Australia website.

Health and Safety at Work: Your experience and costs Survey 2014

The Health and Safety at Work Survey was conducted to measure the impact of model WHS laws on businesses 18–30 months after the laws were introduced in most Australian jurisdictions. The survey targeted sole traders and employers in Australian businesses.

Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey 2012

The Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey aimed to provide a national baseline measure of work health and safety attitudes, beliefs and actions shortly after the model WHS laws were introduced. The survey targeted four types of respondents: employers, sole traders, health and safety representatives and workers.

Main findings

Sources of work health and safety information

In 2014 the three main sources used by Australian businesses overall to get information about work health and safety were Government documents and publications (33%), the Media (32%) and Employer/ Industry associations (31%). The Media was the most used source of work health and safety information for employers and sole traders operating in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing and Accommodation and food services industries.

In 2012 the most common source from which something was learnt about work health and safety for Australian business owners (employers and sole traders) was the Media. The most common sources for Australian workers were Training courses and the Media. For Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) and Workplace Health and Safety Professionals (WHSPs) the most common sources were Government Acts/ regulations and publications and Employer/ industry associations.

Across the priority industries for sole traders the Media and Experience/ doing the job itself tended to be common sources of learning about work health and safety. For employers in priority industries there was a great deal of variation in how they learnt about work health and safety. Industry pamphlets and newsletters, the Media and the Internet were commonly utilised. Across the priority industries the most common source of learning about work health and safety for workers was Training courses.

Training courses have been a popular source of learning about work health and safety for workers overall over the past 10 years. The Media has consistently been an important source of work health and safety information for all worker groups (excluding CEOs in 2001). Since 2010, the Internet has become an increasingly popular method of learning about work health and safety.

Employer dissemination of work health and safety information

In 2014 employers indicated that they either provided their workers with information or notified workers about work health and safety policies and procedures through walks around the workplace alone or with other managers (68%), through informal communication with workers (54%) and during meetings on work health and safety with management and through notice boards (35% each).

Importantly, 24% of Manufacturing employers indicated they gave no information regarding work health and safety policies and procedures to their workers, followed by 18% in Agriculture, forestry and fishing and 17% in Road freight transport.

In 2012 employers most commonly provided to their workers or workers obtained work health and safety information during a walk around the workplace either alone or with managers and through informal communication with work mates about work health and safety.

Employers commonly provided information about work health and safety to part-time/ casual workers and full-time workers. One third of employers indicated that they provided work health and safety information to contractors/ sub-contractors.

Employers operating in Construction and Transport, postal and warehousing were more likely to provide information to contractors/ subcontractors and to apprentices/ trainees than employers operating in the other priority industries.

Disclaimer

This research report was written to inform the development of policies in relation to information sources used by Australian businesses and workers as well as how employers provide information and to whom they provide it to. The views and conclusions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of Safe Work Australia Members.

The Study

Rationale

Knowing the sources of information that sole traders, employers and workers use to gain knowledge about work health and safety is critical in understanding where efforts best be placed to get work health and safety information out to as many Australian workers as possible. The information in this report can be used to formulate policies and procedures for the dissemination of work health and safety information to specific groups of workers to maximise the spread of information.

Approach

Health and Safety at Work: Your experience and costs Survey 2014

The Health and Safety at Work survey was conducted to measure the impact of model WHS laws on businesses 18–30 months after the laws were introduced in most Australian jurisdictions. The survey sought information on the following:

- Sources of work health and safety information
- Awareness and effect of officer duties
- Perceptions of work health and safety and risk management activities
- Cost (time and money) of adopting and complying with the model WHS laws, and
- HSR training, costs and activities.

The survey included owners, senior managers, Chief Executive Officers and Chief Financial Officers in businesses that employed workers as well as owners of non-employing businesses ('sole traders' or partnerships). It asked respondents to report the estimated amount of money and time spent on work health and safety compliance activities in 2012–13.

The Health and Safety at Work survey was conducted nation-wide between June and August 2014. The survey was conducted just over two and a half years from the introduction of the model WHS laws in the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory and just over one and a half years in South Australia and Tasmania.

Information sources

This item asked sole traders and employers: 'What are the three main sources you use to get information about work health and safety?' This item was altered slightly from the Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey 2012.

Methods of providing work health and safety information

This item asked employers: 'Which of these methods best describes how workers obtain or are given information on work health and safety?' Employers could select multiple responses for this item. This item originated from the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS) 1995.

Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey 2012

The Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey collected information on awareness of work health and safety responsibilities and law changes, awareness of workplace risks, due diligence in undertaking activities to eliminate or minimise risks, and work health and safety communication, consultation and attitudes. The project's broader ongoing aim is to examine the changes that have occurred in the health and safety performance of Australian workplaces since the introduction of the model legislation and to determine why these changes have occurred.

The survey involved four groups of respondents: businesses that employed workers, businesses that did not employ other people (sole traders or partnerships working in their own premises or in others' premises), people who were employed and were either a Health and Safety Representative or Work Health and Safety Professional (HSR/ WHSP) and people in paid employment (excluding self-employed). A different questionnaire was designed for each of the respondent groups.

The survey of businesses collected completed surveys from 1052 employers and 520 sole traders and the survey of workers collected completed surveys from 1311 workers and 669 HSRs/ WHSPs across Australia. To create a representative sample, the responses for sole traders, employers and workers were weighted to produce estimates of the number of businesses and workers within Australia that hold particular views about work health and safety. See Appendix A for further information on the survey methodology.

Information sources

This item asked respondents: 'What are the three main sources of information from which you have learnt something about work health and safety in the last 12 months?' This item originated from the Motivations Attitudes Perceptions and Skills (MAPS) Survey conducted in 2010.

Methods of providing work health and safety information

This item asked employers: 'Which of these methods best describes how workers obtain or are given information on work health and safety?' Employers could select multiple responses for this item. This item originated from AWIRS 1995.

Employer dissemination of work health and safety information

This item asked employers: 'Please indicate if these groups of workers are provided with information on work health and safety.' This item originated from AWIRS 1995.

Information sources over time: Time series analysis

As previously stated the information sources item included in the Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey 2012 was taken from the MAPS Survey 2010. Prior to MAPS, this item was also included in three surveys: The CEO and Supervisors Survey 2001; Community Awareness of Occupational Health and Safety (ANOP) Survey 1998; Community Awareness of, and Attitudes to, Occupational Health & Safety (ANOP) Survey 1995. Responses to the information sources item across surveys has been analysed to create an 8 year time series. The information sources item in the Health and Safety at Work Survey 2014 is not included in the time series analysis as it is not comparable with the items used in previous surveys.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is that it relies on self-reported data and the findings presented in this report are based on people's perceptions. The sources of information nominated by survey respondents may differ from the actual sources of information used in a workplace.

Surveys such as the Work Health and Safety Perceptions Employer Survey and the Health and Safety at Work Survey were professionally sampled using the best available sampling frame to ensure representative data but some response bias cannot be discounted. As such, the findings should be taken as indications only and not as statistically significant differences between groups. Findings presented by business size should be taken only as indicative, particularly for medium and large businesses as a high proportion of the survey respondents were small businesses. However, the substantial number of surveys completed for these surveys means that responses do provide an indication of work health and safety perceptions and practices and baseline data for comparison with follow-up surveys.

The report covered a large amount of information available while attempting to be as concise as possible. As such some of the findings and conclusions may appear too simplistic.

Results preamble

Due to the qualitative nature of the findings, there are no accompanying statistics such as confidence intervals to indicate the reliability of estimates or inferences.

Main findings

Sources of information (2014): What are the three main sources you use to get information about work health and safety?

The three main sources of information used by Australian businesses in 2014 were Government documents and publications, the Media and Employer/ Industry associations

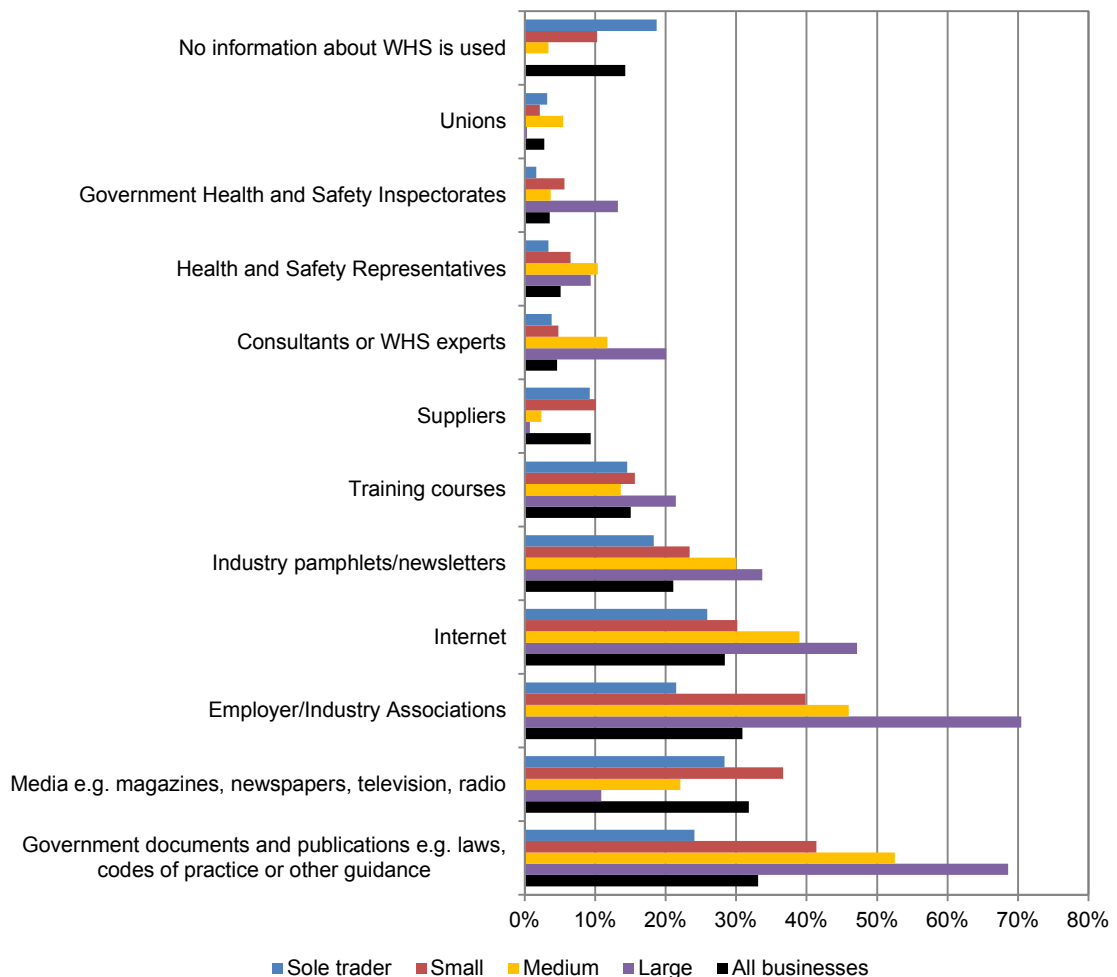
Business size

In 2014 the three main sources of information used by Australian businesses to get information about work health and safety were Government documents and publications (33%), the Media (32%) and Employer/ Industry associations (31%).

Figure 1 shows that sole traders relied slightly more on the Media and Internet (28% and 26%) than Government documents and publications (24%). For employing businesses, small business employers used Government documents and publications (41%), Employer/ Industry associations (40%) and the Media (37%) with employers in medium and large businesses using Government documents and publications (53% and 69%), Employer/ Industry associations (46% and 70%) but used the Internet (39% and 47%) rather than the Media.

Of some concern, 19% of sole traders indicated no sources are used to get information about work health and safety.

Figure 1: Main sources used to get information about work health and safety by business size

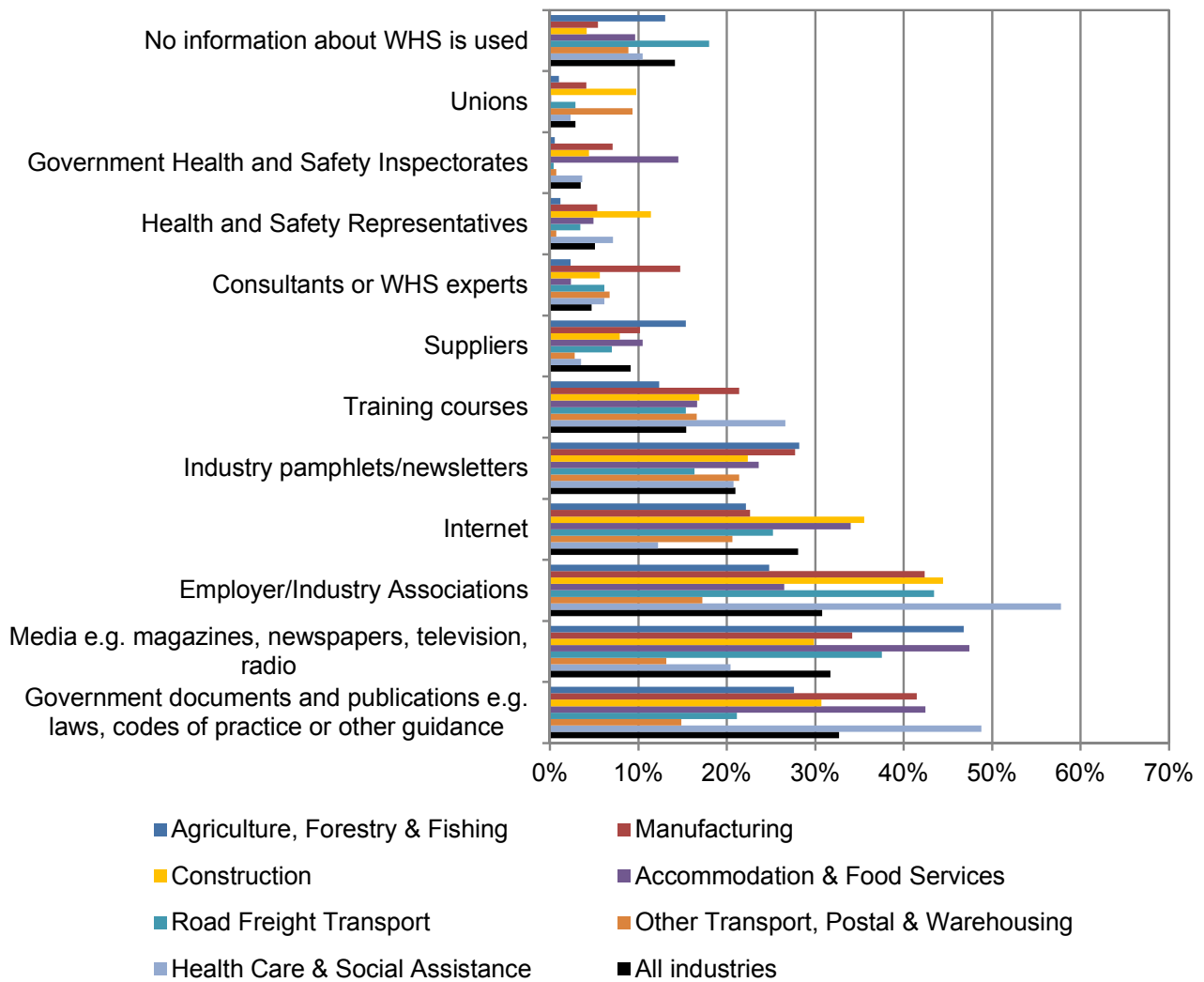


In 2014 Employer/ industry associations were the most used source of work health and safety information by four of the priority industries

Industry

Figure 2 shows that the Employer/ industry associations were the most used source of work health and safety information for employers and sole traders operating in the Manufacturing (42%), Construction (44%), Road freight transport (43%) and Health care and social assistance (58%) industries. The Media was the most used source of work health and safety information for employers and sole traders operating in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing and Accommodation and food services industries (47% each).

Figure 2: Main sources used to get work health and safety information by industry*



* Public administration and safety not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

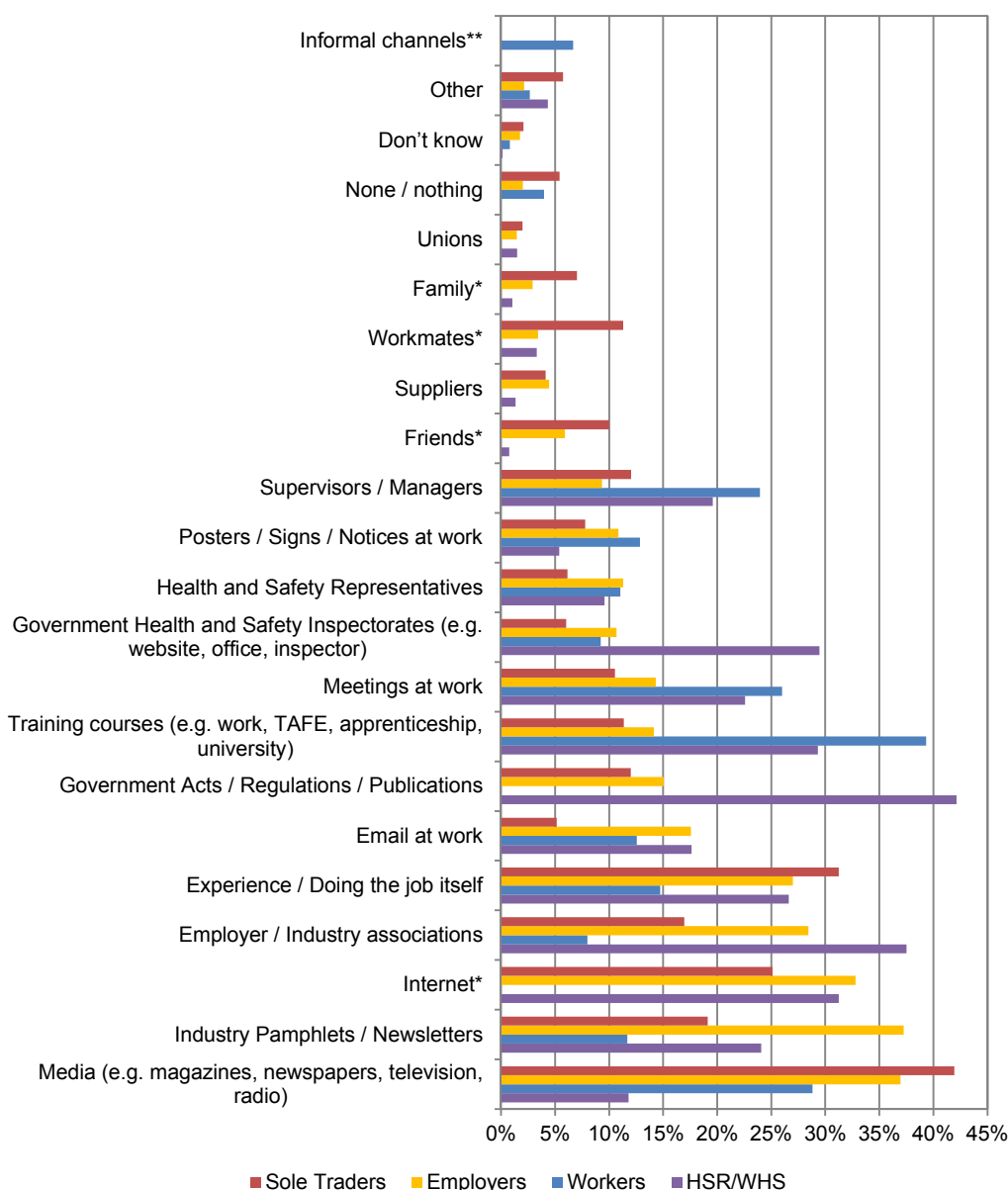
Sources of information (2012): What are the three main sources from which you have learnt something about work health and safety in the past 12 months?

In 2012 the Media was the most common source from which something was learnt about work health and safety for Australian businesses

Worker type

Figure 3 shows that the most common source from which something about work health and safety was learnt for Australian business owners (employers and sole traders) was the Media. Conversely, the most common source for Australian workers was Training courses (39%) followed by the Media (29%). For HSRs and WHSPs the most common sources were Government Acts/ regulations and publications (42%) and Employer/ industry associations (38%).

Figure 3: Sources of work health and safety information by worker type



* Not asked of workers
 ** Asked of workers only

Thirty one percent of sole traders indicated that experience/ doing the job itself was a manner in which they learnt about work health and safety information

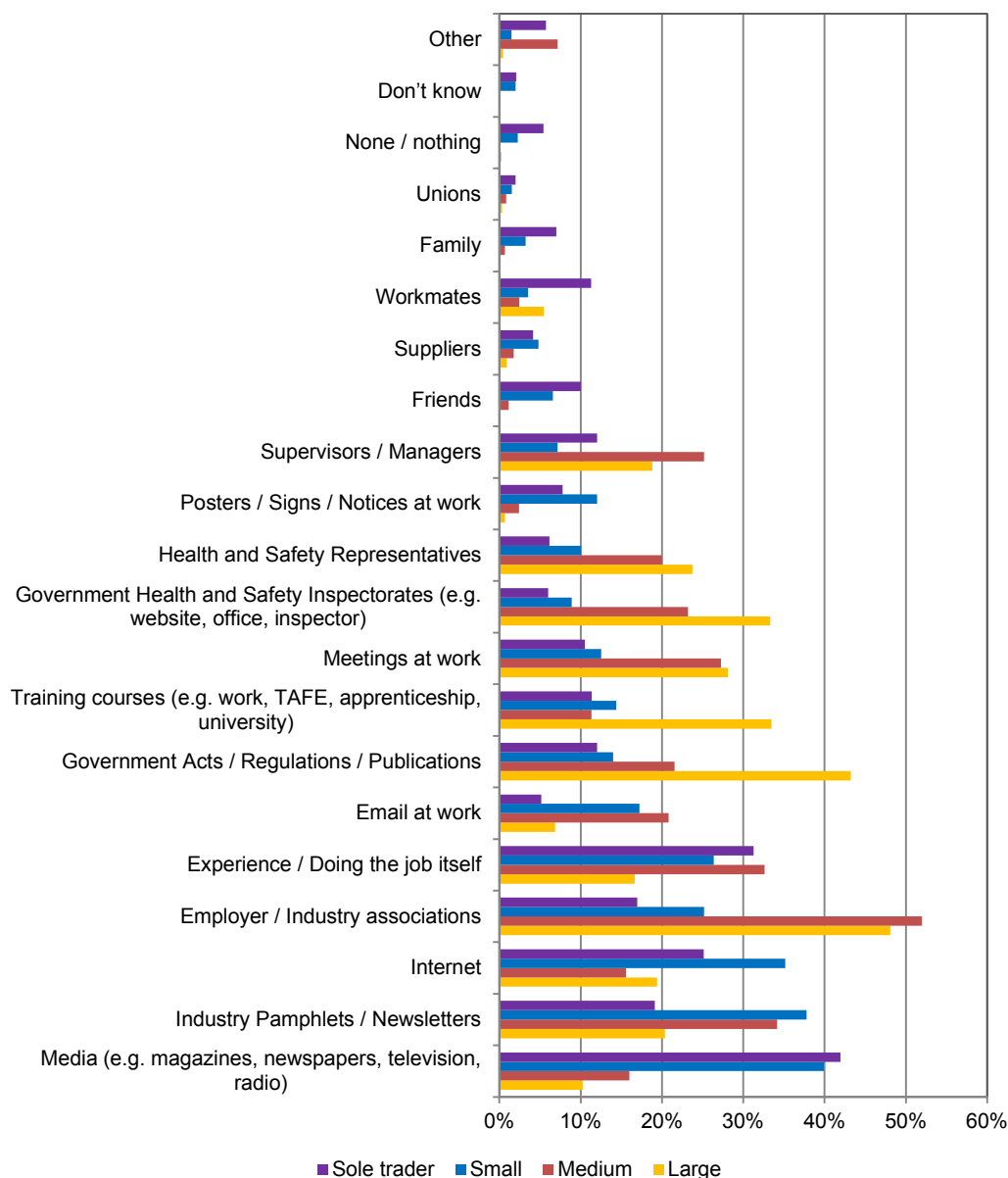
Employers and sole traders learnt about work health and safety from the Media to a similar extent (37% and 42%). While employers indicated they learnt something about work health and safety from Industry pamphlets/ newsletters (37% each) and the Internet (33%), sole traders utilised Experience/ doing the job itself (31%) and the Internet (25%).

For workers, other than Training courses (39%) their main sources were the Media (29%) and Meetings at work (26%). For HSRs and WHSPs Government Acts/ regulations and publications (42%) Employer/ industry associations (38%) and the Internet (31%) were the main sources from which they learnt something about work health and safety.

Business size

Figure 4 shows that sole traders and small business employers appeared to be similar in their learning about work health and safety from the Media (42% and 40%, respectively). Small business employers also appeared to learn from Industry pamphlets/ newsletters (38%) and the Internet (35%). Medium and large business employers tended to learn about work health and safety from somewhat different sources. Half of medium business employers learnt from Employer/ industry associations followed by Industry pamphlets/ newsletters and Experience/ doing the job itself (38% and 33%, respectively). Almost half of large business employers also learnt about work health and safety information from Employer/ industry associations, followed by Government Acts/ regulations and publications (43%) as well as Training courses and Government health and safety inspectorates (33% each).

Figure 4: Information sources for businesses by business size



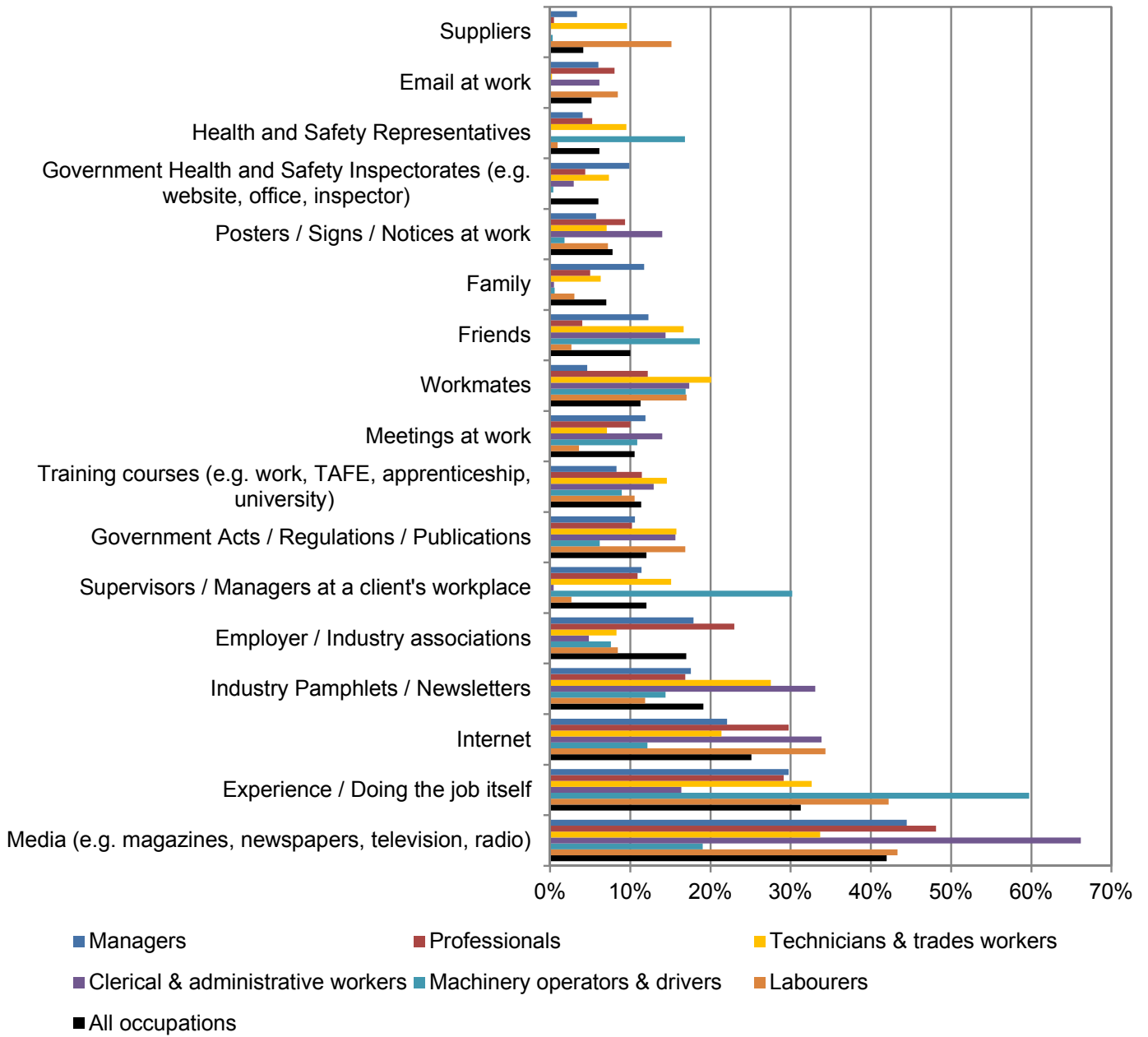
Occupation

Sole traders

Sixty percent of Machinery operators and drivers indicated that experience/doing the job itself was the main way in which they learnt about work health and safety information

Figure 5 shows that sole traders most commonly learnt something about work health and safety from the Media for almost all occupation groups. The highest level of use was among sole traders working as Clerical & administrative workers (66%). Five of the six occupation groups shown also indicated Experience/ doing the job itself as an important source from which they learnt about work health and safety information, with 60% of Machinery operators & drivers indicating that this is how they learnt about work health and safety. Four of the six occupation groups also indicated that the Internet was an important source from which they learnt about work health and safety, with around one third of Labourers (34%), Clerical and administrative workers (34%) and Professionals (30%) indicating that they learnt about work health and safety from this source.

Figure 5: Information sources for sole traders by occupation*



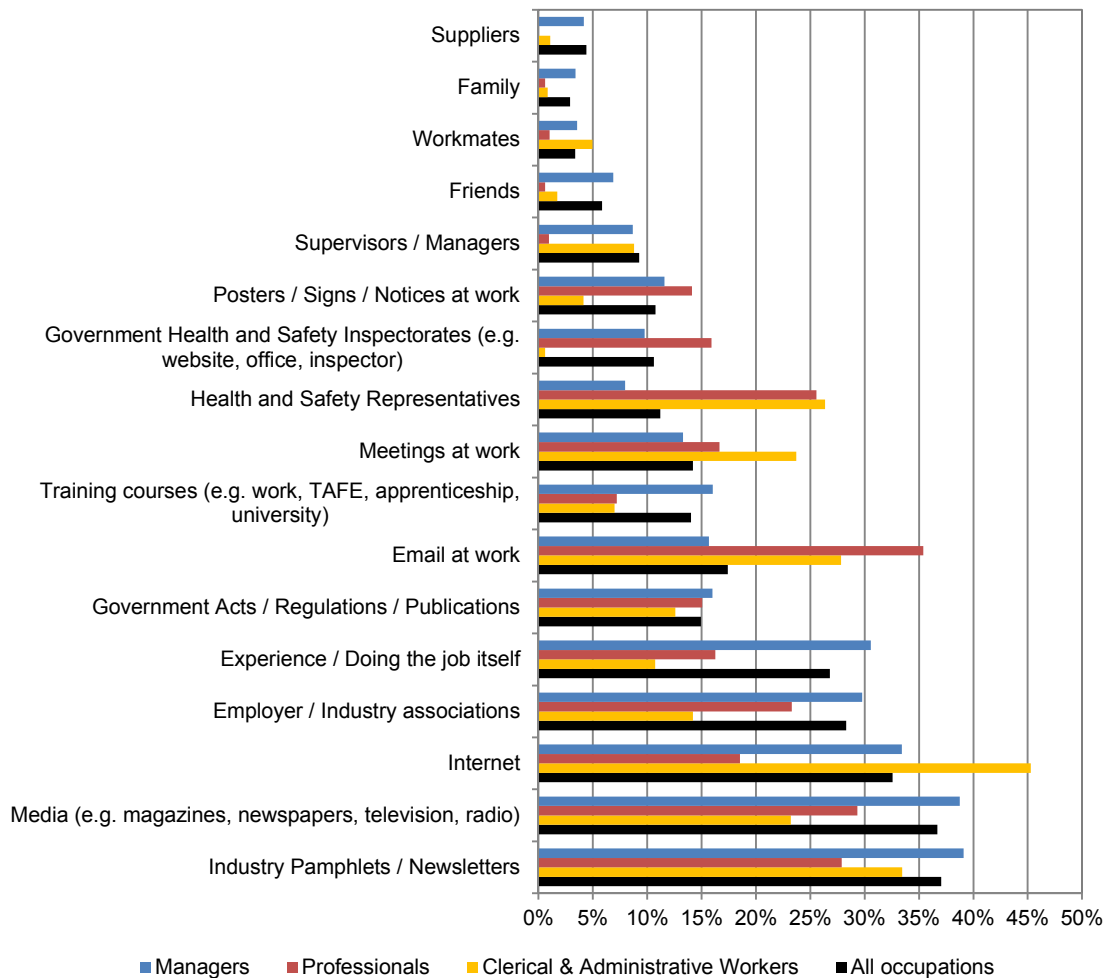
* Community and personal service workers and Sales workers not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

Employers

Almost half of employers working as Clerical and Administrative workers learnt about work health and safety from the Internet

Figure 6 shows that among employers the three occupation groups shown learnt about work health and safety from a range of sources. While Managers learnt mainly from Industry pamphlets/ newsletters and the Media (39% each), Professionals learnt from Emails at work (35%) and Clerical and administrative workers learnt from the Internet (45%). Clerical and administrative workers and Professionals (26% each) were more likely to learn about work health and safety from HSRs compared to Managers (8%).

Figure 6: Sources of information for employers by occupation*



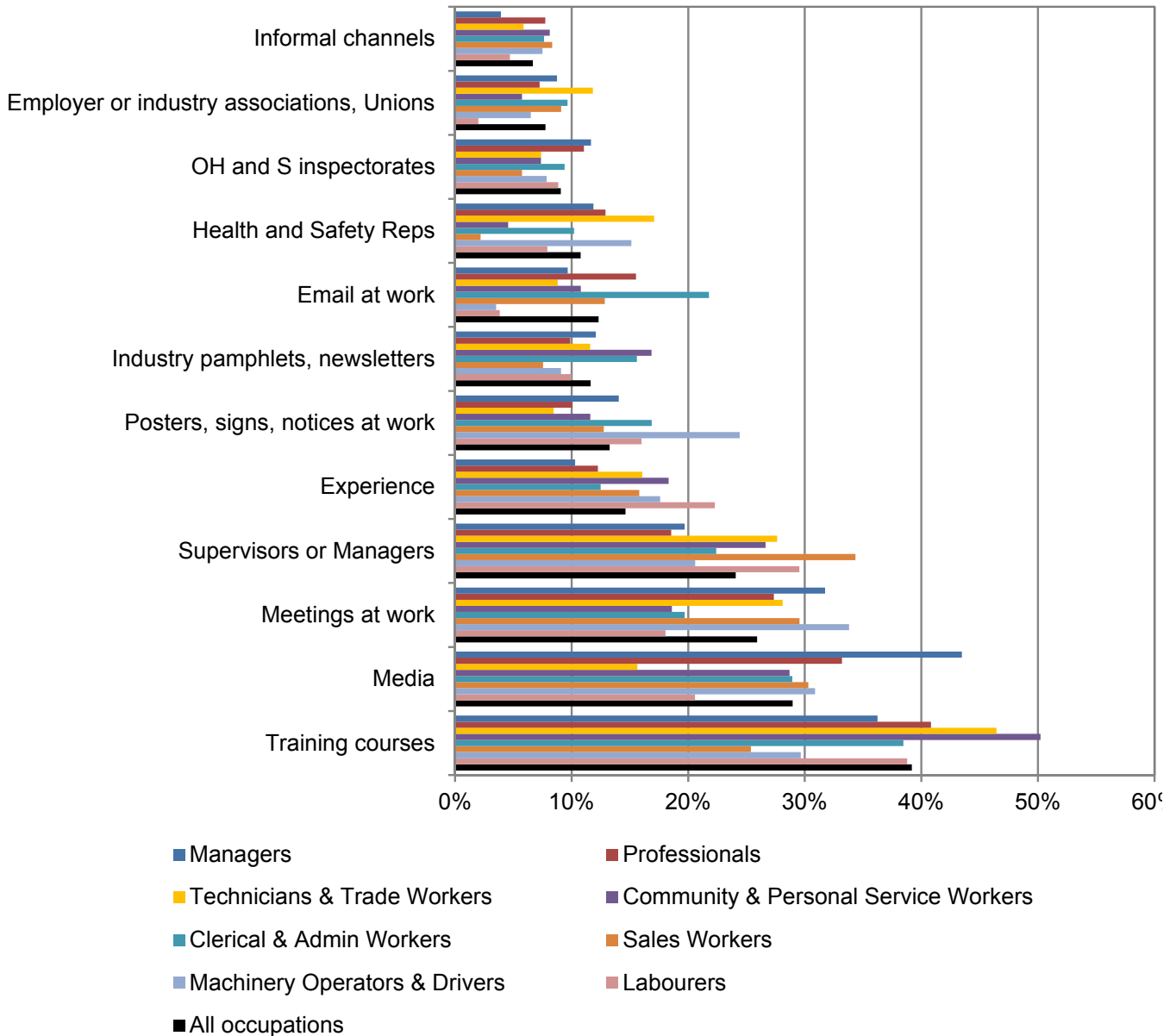
* Occupations such as Technicians and trades workers, Machinery operators and drivers and Labourers not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

Workers

Training courses and the Media were among the top three ways in which workers learnt about work health and safety for almost all occupation groups

Figure 7 shows that for workers almost all occupation groups indicated that Training courses and the Media were among the top three sources from which they learnt something about work health and safety. Half of Community and personal service workers and 46% of Technicians and trades workers indicated that they learnt about work health and safety from Training courses, while 43% of Managers indicated that they learnt about work health and safety from the Media.

Figure 7: Sources of information for workers by occupation



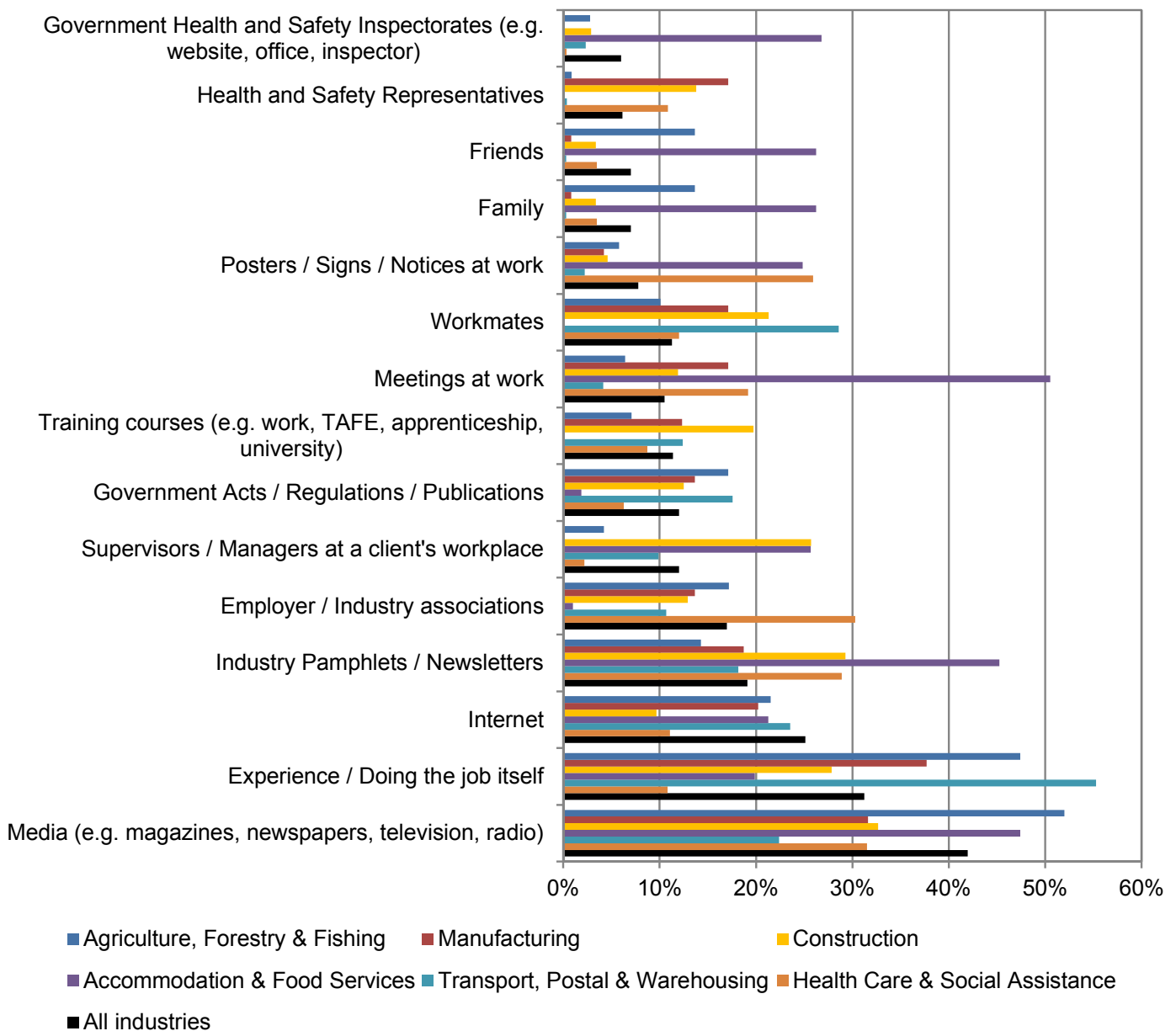
Industry

Sole traders

More than half of sole traders operating in Transport, postal and warehousing learnt about work health and safety from Experience/ doing the job itself

Figure 8 shows that half of sole traders operating in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry learnt something about work health and safety from the Media, with almost half (47%) of sole traders in Accommodation and food services also learning from this source. Just over half (55%) of sole traders operating in the Transport, postal and warehousing industry and just under half (47%) operating in Agriculture, forestry and fishing learnt something about work health and safety through Experience/ doing the job itself.

Figure 8: Sources of information for sole traders by industry*



* Public administration and safety not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

Employers

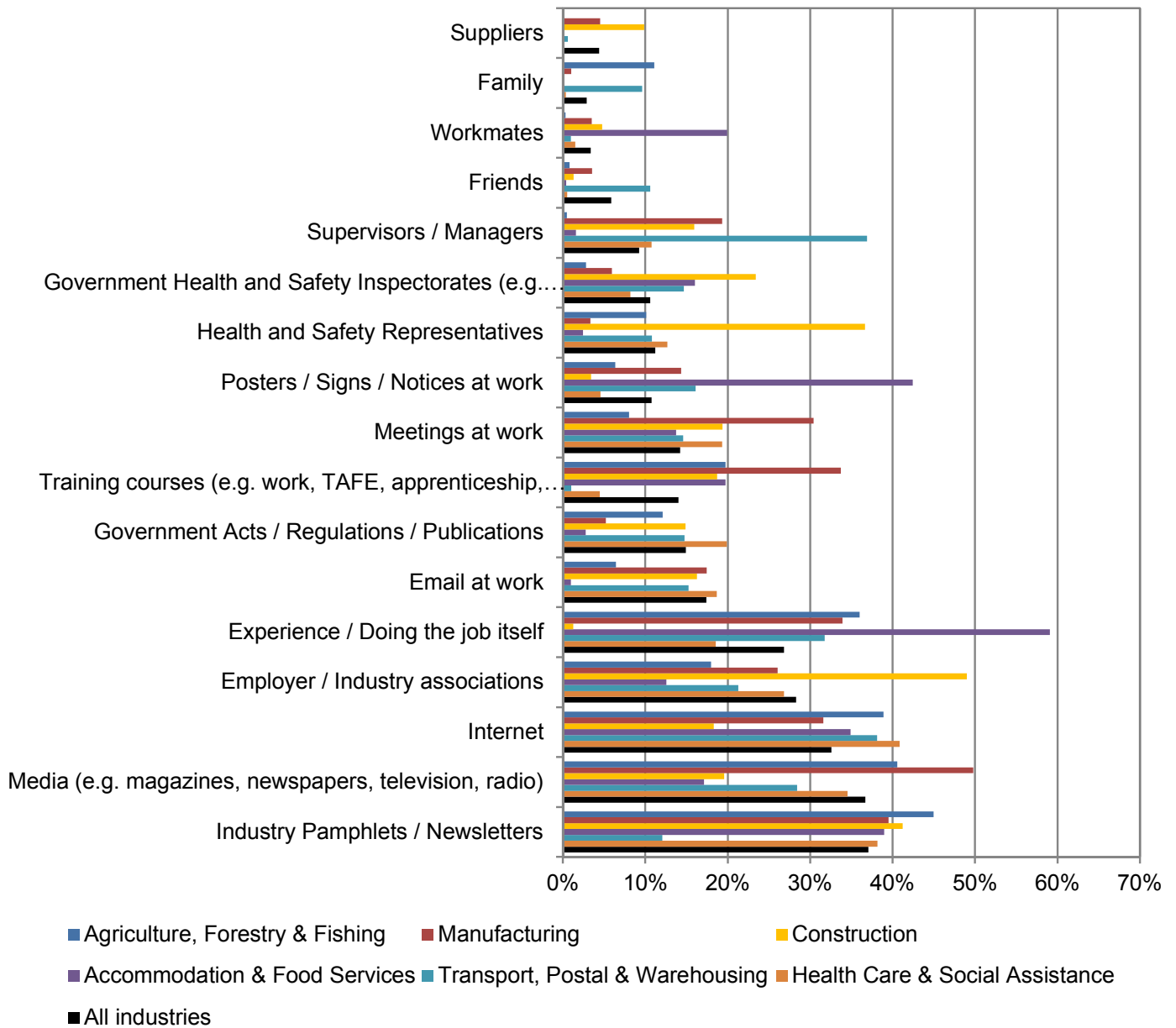
One third of employers in the construction industry learnt something about work health and safety from Health and Safety Representatives - much higher than in any other industry

Figure 9 shows that there were some differences among employers operating in the priority industries in terms of the main sources from which they learnt something about work health and safety:

- In Agriculture, forestry and fishing the information about work health and safety was learnt from Industry pamphlets/ newsletters (45%), Media (41%) and Experience/ doing the job itself (39%).
- In Manufacturing half of employers indicated that they learnt about work health and safety from the Media, followed by Industry pamphlets/ newsletters (39%), Experience/ doing the job itself and Training courses (39% each).
- In Construction, half of employers learnt about work health and safety from Employer/ industry associations followed by Industry pamphlets/ newsletters (41%) and Health and Safety Representatives (37%).
- Over half (59%) of employers in Accommodation and food services learnt from Experience/ doing the job, followed by Posters/ signs/ notices (42%) and Industry pamphlets/ newsletters (39%).
- In Transport, postal and warehousing employers reported learning something about work health and safety from the Internet, Supervisors/ managers and Experience/ doing the job itself (38%, 37% and 32%, respectively).
- In Health care and social assistance employers most commonly learnt about work health and safety from the Internet (41%), Industry pamphlets (38%) and the Media (35%).

Fifty nine percent of employers in Accommodation and food services learnt about work health and safety through Experience/ doing the job

Figure 9: Sources of information for employers by industry*



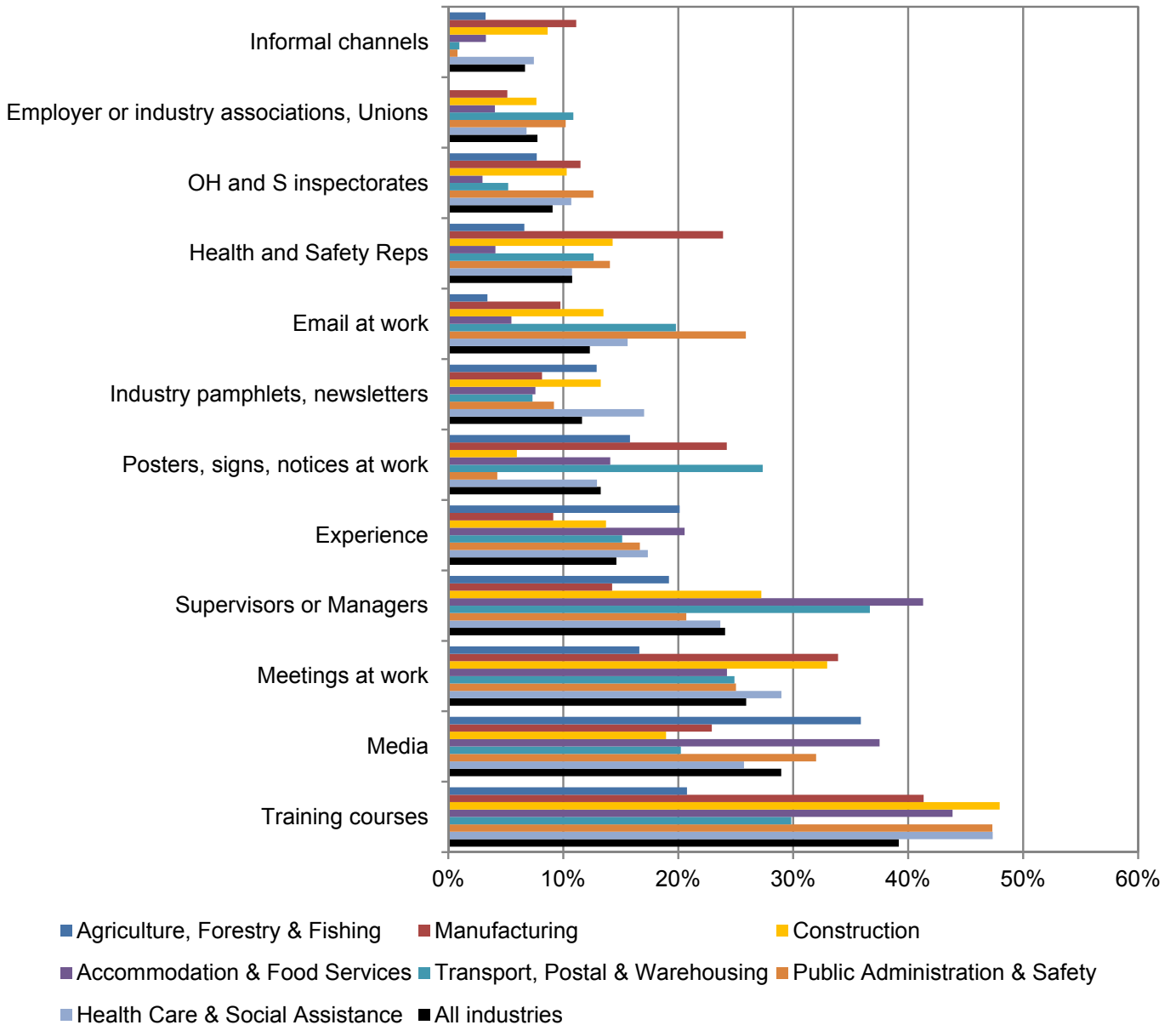
* Public administration and safety not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

Workers

Almost half of workers working in the Construction, Public administration and safety and Health care and social assistance industries learnt about work health and safety through Training courses

Figure 10 shows that workers in most priority industries most often learnt something about work health and safety from Training courses. In contrast, workers in the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industry learnt more from the Media (36%) whereas workers in the Transport, postal and warehousing industry learnt from their Supervisors/ managers (37%).

Figure 10: Sources of information for workers by industry



Information sources over time: Time series analysis

The Media has consistently been an important source of work health and safety information for almost all worker groups

Table 1 shows the changes over time between 1995 and 2012 in the sources from which different worker groups learnt about work health and safety. All worker groups (excluding CEOs in 2001) have consistently learnt about work health and safety through the Media, although less so than in the mid 1990s which is likely to be due to the use of the internet as a source of information in the later years.

Training courses have remained a popular source from which workers have learnt about work health and safety, with CEOs and business owners less likely to learn from this source.

Industry pamphlets and newsletters were not a widely used source from which work health and safety was learnt from in the mid 1990s, however their use increased into 2010 and beyond. Less than 10% of CEOs reported that they learnt about work health and safety from Industry pamphlets or newsletters in 2001, while over one third (37%) of employers reported learning about work health and safety from Industry pamphlets or newsletters in 2012.

In the mid 1990s around half of workers indicated that they learnt about work health and safety through informal channels, however this decreased substantially over the later years. In 2012 almost one third of sole traders indicated that they learnt about work health and safety through Informal channels.

Work health and safety regulators and Government have become a far less popular method of learning about work health and safety in the recent years in comparison to the mid 1990s to 2001. The Internet has become an increasingly popular mode from which workers have learned about work health and safety information since 2010.

Table 1: Information sources over time

	1995		1998		2001		2010*		2012	
	Workers %	Workers %	Workers %	Workers %	CEOs %	Supervisors %	Workers %	Sole traders %	Employers %	Workers %
Training courses	48	42	4	41		32	41	11	14	39
Media										
Newspapers, magazines	54	67	2	25		34	29**	42	37	29**
Television	61	69	-							
Radio	33	35	-							
Meetings at work	-	-	-	28		24	28	11	14	26
Industry pamphlets or newsletters	49	57	9	18		22	18	19	37	12
Supervisors or managers	59	44		21		13	21	12	9	24
WHS representatives	-	-	9	15		16	15	6	11	11
Posters/ signs/ notices at work	54	55	2	17		12	17	8	11	13
Informal channels	58*	45*	8*	16		11	16	32	17***	7
Employer or industry associations	30	48	36	11		14	11	17	28	8
WHS regulators/ government	43	34	41	7		11	7	6	11	9
Email at work	-	-	-	5		6	5	5	17	12
Internet	-	-	8	2		7	2	25	33	-
Experience/ doing the job itself	-	-	-	4		5	4	31	27	15

Includes: Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, Construction, Manufacturing, Transport & Storage and Health & Community Services only

* Workmates only

** Includes the internet

*** Workmates, family, friends, suppliers

Employer dissemination of work health and safety information

How workers are provided with information or notified about work health and safety policies and procedures (2014)

The provision of work health and safety information to workers is an obligation of Person's Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBUs) under the Work Health and Safety Act (Cwlth). Specifically:

Division 2, 19 Primary duty of care

(3) A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as reasonably practicable:

- (f) the provision of any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking (p 16)

In 2014 employers provided information on policies and procedures regarding work health and safety through walks around the workplace and informal communication

In 2014 Australian businesses indicated that workers were provided with information or notified about work health and safety policies and procedures during a walk around the workplace alone or with other managers (68%), through informal communication with workers (54%) and during meetings on work health and safety with management and through notice boards (35% each). Thirty seven percent of businesses indicated they informed workers through other means.

Business size

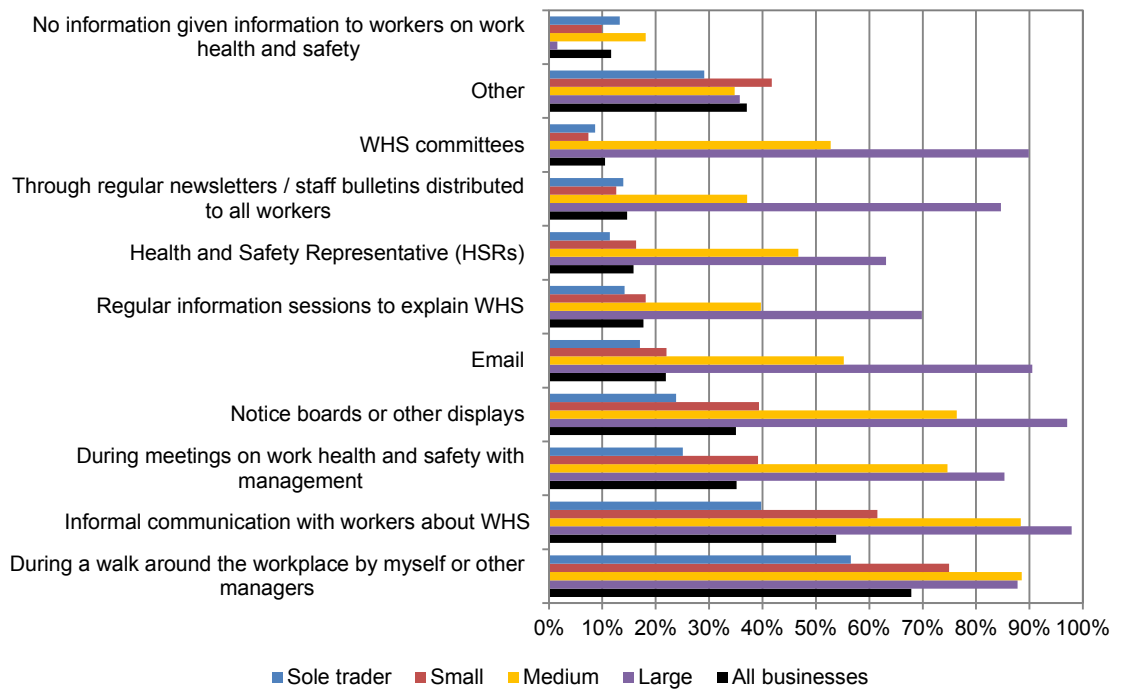
Figure 11 shows that large businesses were more likely to utilise these methods of information delivery compared to medium and small businesses, with the exception of during a walk around the workplace by myself or other managers where large and medium businesses were equally likely to use this method.

Almost all large business provided information to workers through informal communication and through notice boards and other displays, with 90% also utilising email and work health and safety committees to provide information to workers.

Almost half of employers operating in small business indicated that they used other means of providing information or notifying workers of work health and safety policies and procedures

Forty two percent of employers operating in small businesses indicated they used other means of providing information on work health and safety policies and procedures to workers, followed by 36% of employers in large businesses and 35% in medium businesses. Of some concern, 18% of employers operating in medium businesses indicated that they provided no information to their workers, followed by 10% of employers operating in small businesses.

Figure 11: How workers are informed of work health and safety policies and procedures by business size



Industry

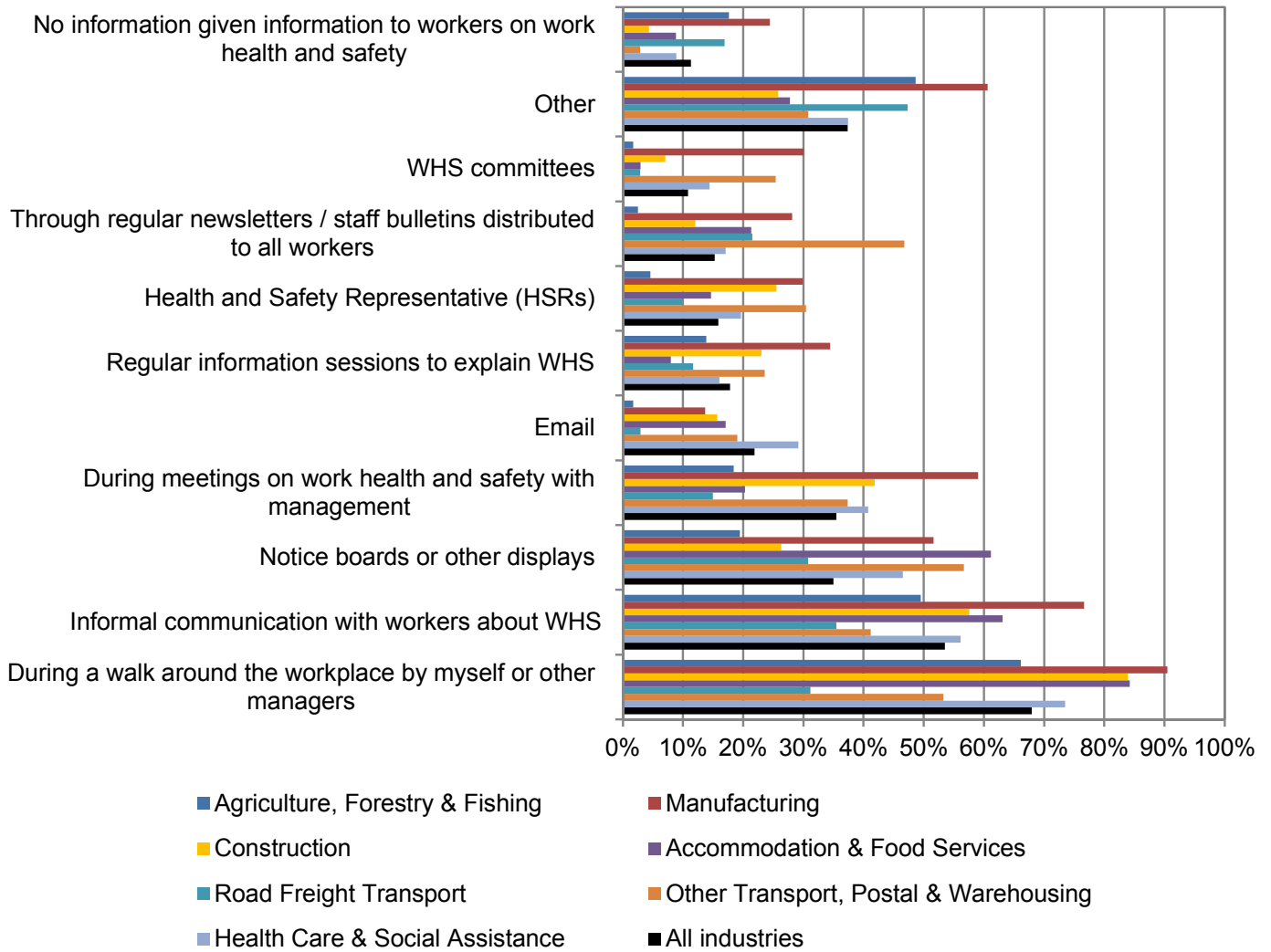
Figure 12 shows that the majority of employers operating in Manufacturing, Construction and Accommodation and food services informed workers of policies and procedures during a walk around the workplace (90%, 84% and 84% respectively).

Interestingly, 61% of Manufacturing employers, 49% of Agriculture, forestry and fishing employers and 47% of Road freight transport employers indicated that they provide this information to their workers through means other than those shown in Figure 8.

Of some concern, 24% of Manufacturing employers indicated they gave no information regarding work health and safety policies and procedures to their workers, followed by 18% in Agriculture, forestry and fishing and 17% in Road freight transport.

Almost one quarter of manufacturing employers indicated that their workers are not provided any information on work health and safety

Figure 12: How workers are informed of policies and procedures regarding work health and safety by industry*



* Public administration and safety not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

In 2012 employers most commonly provided work health and safety information to their workers during a walk around the workplace alone or with managers

How workers obtain or get given information on work health and safety (2012)

Employers indicated that workers most commonly were provided with or obtained information on work health and safety during a walk around the workplace either alone or with managers and through informal communication with work mates about work health and safety (60% and 57%, respectively). One third of employers informed their workers during meetings on work health and safety with management while over one quarter (28%) informed their workers through work health and safety displays in kitchens, lunch rooms, etc.

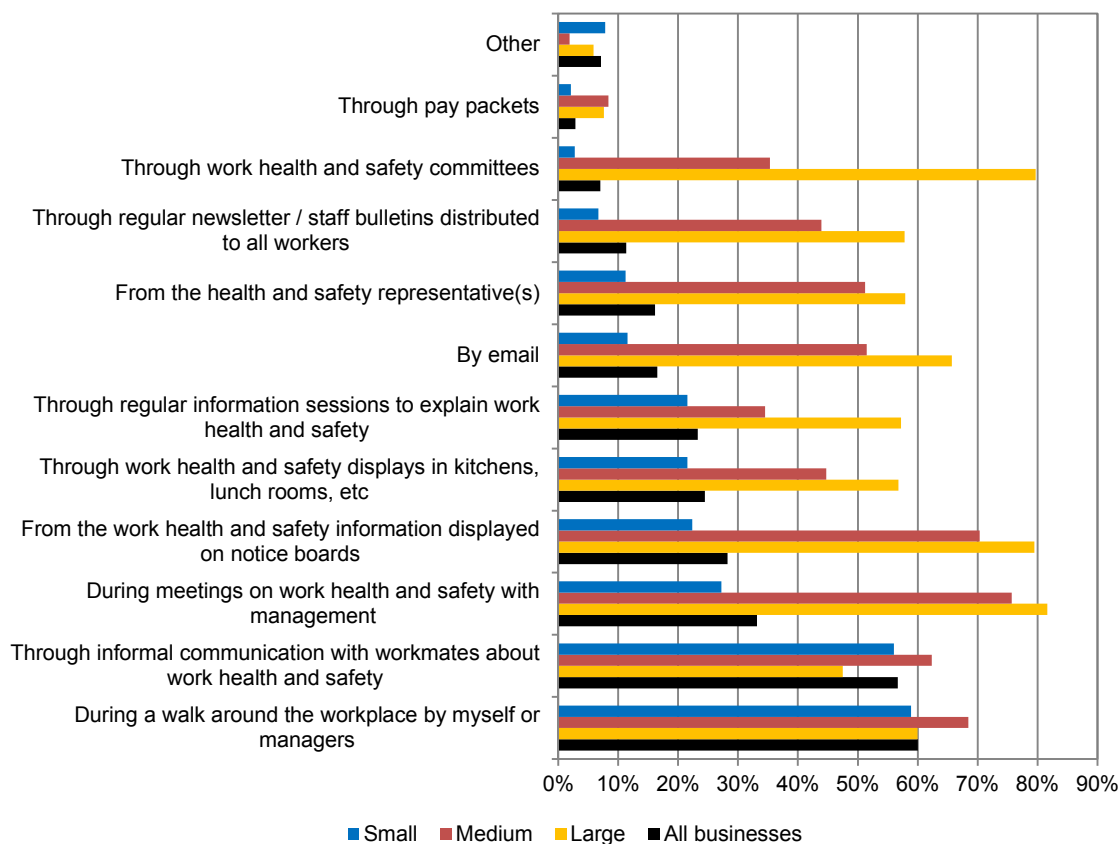
Business size

Figure 13 shows that small business employers tended to be less likely to inform their workers of work health and safety matters through any means. The greatest differences were for through work health and safety committees (3% compared to 35% medium and 80% large), during meetings on work health and safety with management (27% compared to 76% medium and 82% large) and from the work health and safety information displayed on notice boards (22% compared to 70% medium and 79% large) than medium and large businesses. Small business employers also tended to be less likely compared to medium and large business employers to inform their workers of work health and safety:

- Through work health and safety displays in kitchens, lunch rooms, etc
- From the Health and Safety Representative(s)
- By email
- Through regular newsletters/ staff bulletins distributed to all workers
- Through regular information sessions to explain work health and safety.

Large business employers appeared to be more likely to inform workers of work health and safety through work health and safety committees (80%) compared to medium and small business employers (35% and 3%, respectively).

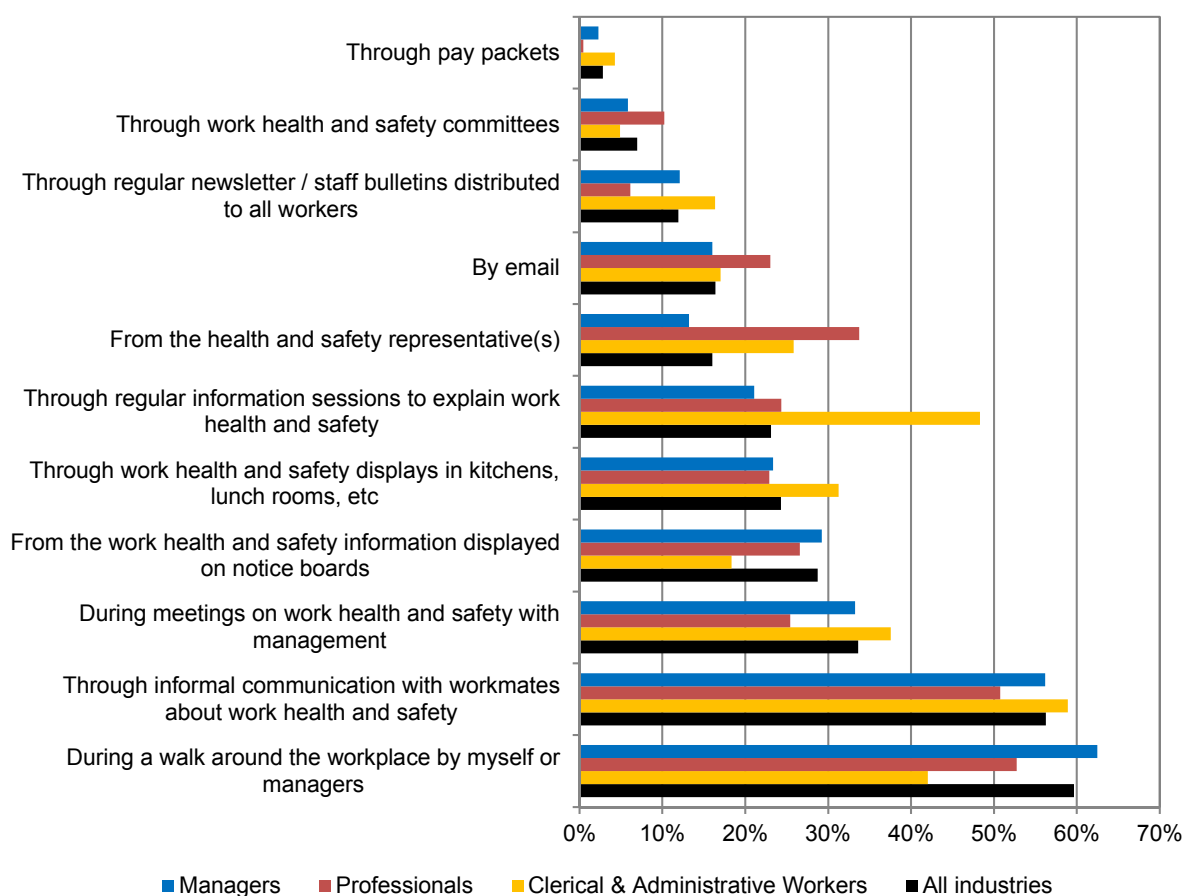
Figure 13: How employers provide work health and safety information to their workers by business size



Occupation

Figure 14 shows that employers working as Managers and Professionals tended to provide work health and safety information to their workers during a walk around the workplace by themselves or with managers (62% and 53%) and through informal communication with work mates about health and safety (56% and 51%). A similar pattern was observed for Clerical and administrative workers, with 48% of employers also indicating that they provided work health and safety information to their staff through regular information sessions to explain work health and safety.

Figure 14: How employers provide work health and safety information to their workers by occupation



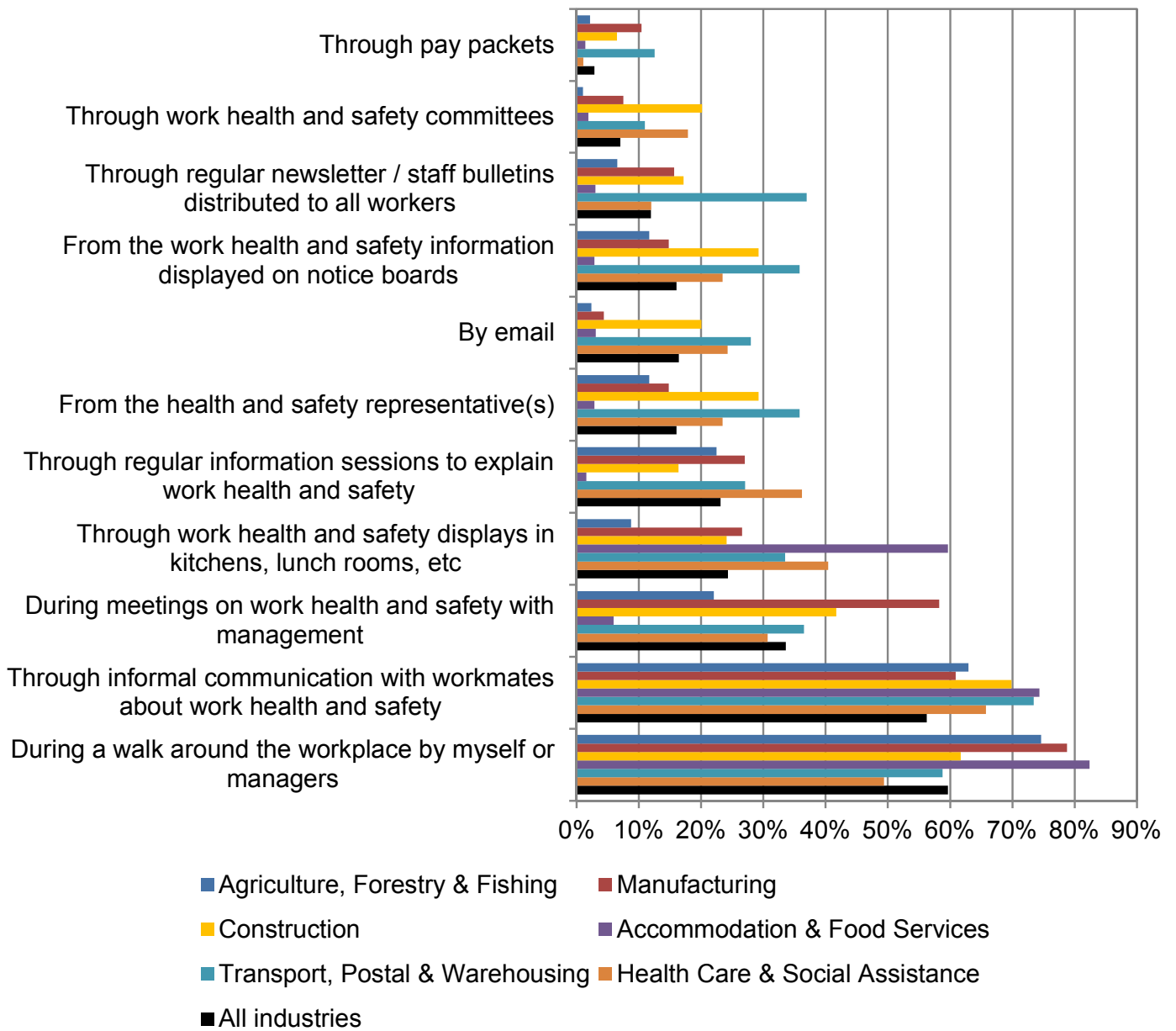
* Occupations such as Technicians and trades workers, Machinery operators and drivers and Labourers not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

Industry

Figure 15 shows that employers in the priority industries most commonly provided their workers with work health and safety information during a walk around the workplace alone or with managers and through informal communication with work mates about work health and safety.

Interestingly, compared with the other priority industries a very small proportion of employers in Accommodation and food services (6%) indicated that they provided staff with work health and safety information during meetings on work health and safety with management. Similarly, a small proportion of employers in Agriculture, forestry and fishing indicated that they provided work health and safety information to their workers through work health and safety displays in kitchens, lunch rooms, etc compared to the other priority industries. These results likely reflect the nature of the working environment in which these industries operate.

Figure 15: How employers provide work health and safety information to their workers by industry



* Public administration and safety not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

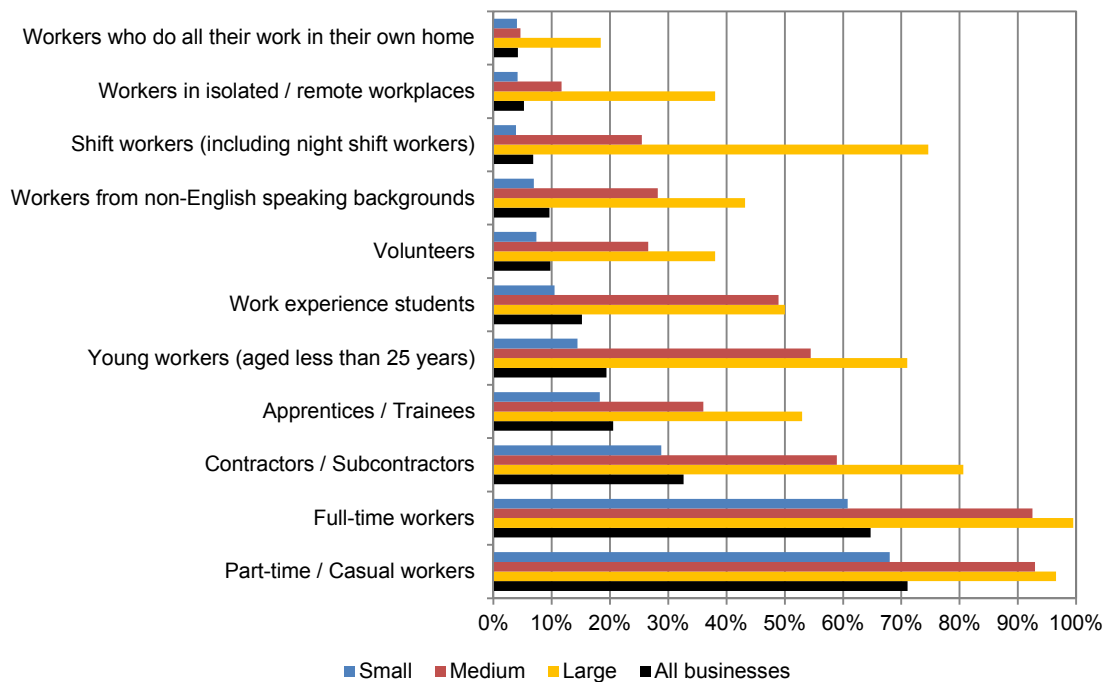
Who is informed of work health and safety (2012)?

Employers indicated the group of workers most commonly provided with information about work health and safety were part-time/ casual workers (71%) and full-time workers (65%). One third of employers also indicated that the provided contractors/ sub-contractors with work health and safety information.

Business size

Figure 16 shows that for all groups of workers small business employers tended to be less likely to provide work health and safety information than medium and large business employers. Specifically, small businesses appeared to be less likely to provide work health and safety information to part time/ casual workers (68%) and full time workers (61%) in comparison to medium (93% each) and large business (97% and 99%) employers. Small business employers also tended to be less likely to provide information to contractors/ subcontractors (29% compared to 59% for medium and 81% for large) apprentices/ trainees (18% compared to 36% for medium and 53% for large) and young workers (14% compared to 54% for medium and 71% for large).

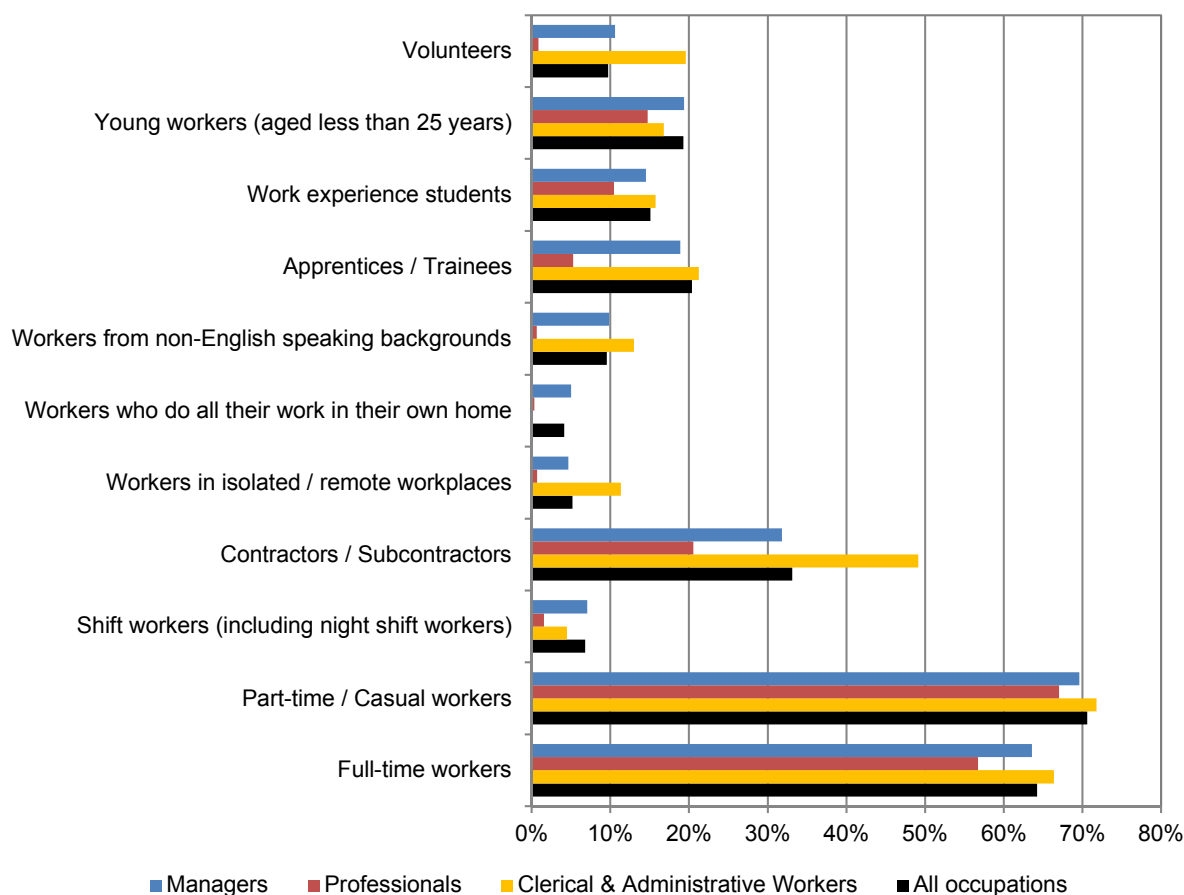
Figure 16: Groups of workers provided with work health and safety information by business size



Occupation

Figure 17 shows that employers working as Managers, Professionals and Clerical and administrative workers were slightly more likely to provide work health and safety information to part time workers compared to full time workers. Almost half (49%) of employers working as Clerical and administrative workers provided work health and safety information to Contractors/ subcontractors, higher than that reported by Managers (32%) and Professionals (21%).

Figure 17: Groups of workers provided with work health and safety information by occupation



* Occupations such as Technicians and trades workers, Machinery operators and drivers and Labourers not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

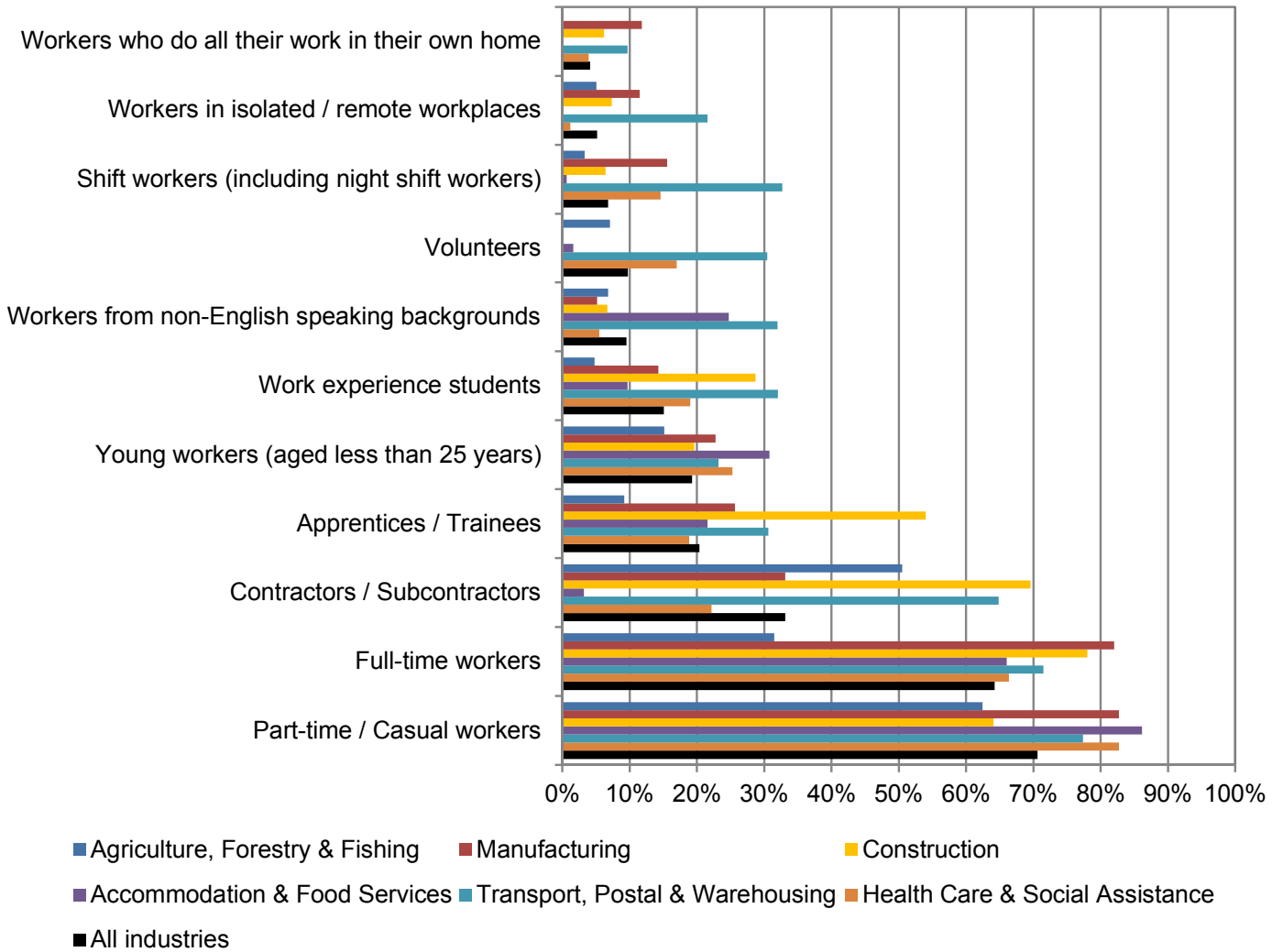
Industry

Employers operating in Construction and Transport, postal and warehousing were more likely to provide information to contractors/ subcontractors compared to the other priority industries

Figure 18 shows employers operating in the Accommodation and food services, Manufacturing and Health care and social assistance industries were the most likely to provide part time/ casual workers with work health and safety information (86%, 83% and 83% respectively) followed by employers operating in Transport, postal and warehousing (77%). Eighty two percent of employers in Manufacturing indicated that they provided full time workers with work health and safety information, followed by 78% of Construction employers.

Employers operating in Construction and Transport, postal and warehousing were more likely to provide information to contractors and subcontractors (70% and 65%), with these employers also more likely to provide information to apprentices/ trainees (54% and 31%) than employers operating in the other priority industries. Employers operating in Transport, postal and warehousing were more likely to provide information to work experience students (32%), workers from non-English speaking backgrounds (32%), volunteers (30%), shift workers (33%) and workers in isolated/ remote workplaces (22%) compared to employers operating in the other priority industries.

Figure 18: Groups of workers provided with work health and safety information by industry



* Public administration and safety not shown due to very small numbers of survey respondents.

Conclusions

Sources of work health and safety information

The Media is an important source of work health and safety information for Australian businesses and workers and has been since the mid-1990s. This suggests that work health and safety campaigns that are run through the media (print and television) will have the best chance of reaching Australian business owners and workers.

The Internet as a source of work health and safety information has increased in popularity since 2010 and remained stable in 2012. With the increasing use and popularity of smart phones and other handheld devices, it can be anticipated that the popularity of the internet as a source of work health and safety information will increase in the coming years. This suggests that whereas campaigns run via the media may be most effective at general awareness-raising, the internet represents an increasingly preferred method for businesses, sole traders and workers to inform themselves about specific work health and safety matters. With this in mind, governments, regulators and employer/industry associations could focus on delivering traditional and innovative new content through this medium to maximise accessibility, practicality and effectiveness of information content and delivery.

Training courses are the most common and quite likely preferred source from which workers learn about work health and safety and have been since the mid-1990s. This indicates that governments and regulators could focus on the development of practical and high quality training courses in order to deliver work health and safety information to workers.

Dissemination of work health and safety information

The most common process for employers to provide work health and safety information to workers in 2012 and 2014 was through walks around the workplace with managers and supervisors and informal communication with work mates regarding work health and safety (for example, through conversations). The study suggests it would therefore be important to focus attention on capacity-building for those within a workplace that are providing the specific knowledge (such as the managers and supervisors) given that employers primarily provide work health and safety information through this means. Future work could also potentially examine the effectiveness of this mode of work health and safety information dissemination.

While it is an obligation of PCBU's to provide work health and safety information to workers, the findings of this report indicate that this is not occurring to the full extent in Australian businesses. The majority – but not all – employers indicated that full time and part time workers are given work health and safety information, however for the remaining worker groups the provision of information appears to be minimal. This may indicate that businesses require assistance in providing information to their workers, particularly workers other than those working full time and part time, which could be facilitated by the development of business-specific information packages by industry bodies or regulators.

Just one third of employers indicated that they provided work health and safety information to contractors/ subcontractors. This suggests that the majority of Australian contractors are not being given work health and safety information by employers (as they are required by the model WHS laws), which may present a risk given contractors then rely on the information they glean from the Media, Experience/ doing the job itself, the Internet and via Family/friends. This may be the result of employers being unsure of their statutory duties towards contractors as anecdotal evidence from the Health and Safety at Work Survey 2014 has suggested.

References

Hawke, A. & Wooden, M. (1997). The 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey, *The Australian Economic Review*, 30 (3), pp 323-328.

Wundersitz, L.N. (2011). Best Practice in OHSW Mass Media Campaigns, *University of Adelaide*, pp 1-61.

Appendix

Work Health and Safety Perceptions Sole Trader, Employer and Worker Surveys 2012

The Perceptions of Work Health and Safety Survey aimed to provide a baseline measure of work health and safety attitudes, beliefs and actions shortly after the model WHS laws were introduced. The survey targeted four types of respondents: employers, sole traders, health and safety representatives and workers. There were four separate questionnaires tailored for the four types of respondents. All four questionnaires covered similar themes and questions.

Work Health and Safety Perceptions Employer and Sole Trader Survey 2012

The employer survey was a paper based survey, conducted from October 2012 to January 2013. A random sample of 10 000 employing businesses were drawn by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for this survey and the same sample was used for the survey of sole traders. The sample took into account the number of businesses in each industry. A total of 1052 employers completed the survey. Taking into account the completed interviews by sole traders (N = 520) the response rate was about 16%. The data were weighted by business size, industry and state/territory.

Demographic information

Of the 1052 employers that provided completed responses to the employers survey, 66% were male and 33% were female (697 males and 348 females). The most common age group of respondents was 45-54 years (36%) while the least common was 20-34 year olds (6.1%).

Of the 520 sole traders that completed the sole trader survey, 75% were male and 24% were female (388 males and 127 females). The most common age group was 45-54 years (26%) while the least common was 20-34 years (8.5%).

Work Health and Safety Perceptions Worker Survey 2012

The worker survey was conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) during September to October 2012. The survey used a dual frame approach (both landline and mobile). A sample for random digit dialing was purchased from the commercial sample provider SampleWorx with an aim of completing 650 interviews from landline numbers and 650 interviews from mobiles. For the landline sample the qualifying respondent was chosen by asking to speak with the person who had the most recent birthday of all those in the household who were at least 18 years of age and had worked in paid employment (for an employer) in the past 6 months. For the mobile sample the person who answered was qualified to answer the survey if they were at least 18 years and had worked in paid employment (for an employer) in the past 6 months. A total of 1311 interviews were completed out of 5618 in scope contacts, giving a response rate of 23%. The worker survey data were weighted by state/territory, sex, age and occupation to match population proportions obtained from the August 2012 quarter of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey. This report presents findings from this weighted dataset.

Demographic information

Of the 1311 workers that completed the worker survey, 50% were male and 50% were female (653 males and 658 females). The most common age group was 50 – 64 years (30%) while the least common was 65 – 75 years and over (3%).

Information sources

This item originated from the Motivations Attitudes Perceptions and Skills (MAPS) Survey conducted in 2010. Prior to MAPS, this survey item was included in the Community Awareness of Occupational Health and Safety (ANOP) Survey 1998 and Community Awareness of, and Attitudes to, Occupational Health & Safety (ANOP) Survey 1995. Worksafe Australia commissioned a national benchmark study of community awareness of, and attitudes to, OHS. One facet of this survey was community awareness and education - including unprompted and prompted sources of work health and safety information.

A national benchmark survey of 2004 Australians aged between 16 and 65 was conducted from 4 to 14 November 1995. Interviews were by telephone and took between 15 and 25 minutes. Sampling procedures were rigorous. A stratified random sample was used that gave the probability of selection equal to population distributions, with an independent sample drawn for each state/ territory and capital city.

Methods of providing work health and safety information and Employer dissemination of work health and safety information

These items originated from the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AIWRS) 1995. In 1989-90 the Commonwealth Department of Industrial Relations conducted the AIWRS - arguably the first workplace-based survey of industrial relations structures, processes and outcomes to be undertaken that could claim to be representative of Australian industry (Hawke & Wooden, 1997). This survey was repeated in 1995. As stated by Hawke and Wooden (1997) the main objectives of the Federal Government in conducting the survey again in 1995 were:

- i) to assess changes that have taken place in workplace industrial relations since 1990;
- ii) to assess and evaluate the impact of a range of industrial relations and labour market policies; and
- iii) to inform the annual reporting requirement of the Industrial Relations Reform Act

Hawke and Wooden (1997) provide details of the sample: ‘the main workplace sample is representative of all workplaces with 20 or more employees, excluding workplaces classified to the Agriculture, forestry and fishing industries and Defence industries. The sampling frame used was the Australian Bureau of Statistics Business Register, with selections stratified by both industry (18 groups) and size (five bands). The aim was to collect data from 2000 workplaces. To achieve this, 3892 workplaces were selected and screened, with 2732 being identified as eligible for inclusion. Of these, 185 were not used with the remaining 2547 yielding 2001 interviews (giving a response rate of 79%)’.

See Hawke and Wooden (1997) for further details.

Health and Safety at Work: Your experience and costs 2014

In 2014 Safe Work Australia conducted a survey of the work health and safety costs and experiences of businesses across Australia. The 2014 Health and Safety at Work: your experiences and costs (Health and Safety at Work) survey was part of a second wave of studies for the evaluation of the model work health and safety laws. Specifically, this meant determining progress towards the achievement of objectives of the July 2008 Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA).

The primary aim of the Health and Safety at Work survey was to help answer the question ‘in what ways has model legislation impacted on regulatory burden for businesses of different sizes and operating in one, or more than one, jurisdiction?’ Although not to the extent of the Agency’s earlier studies, the survey also enquired about certain work health and safety activities and experiences that help answer the question ‘what changes have occurred in the health and safety performance of Australian workplaces since the introduction of the model legislation, and to what can these changes be attributed?’

The Health and Safety at Work Survey was a paper-based questionnaire posted to a random sample of 10 000 businesses in June 2014. Respondents also had the option to complete the questionnaires online. The Australian Bureau of Statistics drew the sample from businesses listed on the Australian Business Register, which contains all businesses that apply and receive an Australian Business Number. The Australian Bureau of Statistics considered the size, primary location and industry of each business when drawing the sample.

Safe Work Australia commissioned a service provider to assemble and post the 10 000 survey packages (including introduction letters, questionnaires and reminder letters) to businesses on the list drawn by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Another service provider received the completed questionnaires, entered the data, and managed the alternative online mode.

By the end of August 2014, a total of 2350 business owners and senior managers (including 706 sole traders) returned useable questionnaires. Considering out of scope units, this resulted in an overall response rate of about 24%.

The data were weighted to produce estimates of the number and proportion of businesses in Australia affected by the model WHS laws. The weights accounted for the sampling strategy and response rates.

