

# Mental Disorder Claims

(Reported to WorkSafeBC 2017 to 2019)

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## Background

Section 5.1 of the *Workers Compensation Act (Act)* was amended July 1, 2012, and now includes mental disorders caused by significant work-related stressors, including bullying and harassment, and mental disorders that are a reaction to one or more work-related traumatic events.

In 2018, the *Act* was further amended to introduce a presumption for mental disorder claims for eligible occupations. Policy and practice amendments in 2018 clarified how evidence of a traumatic event and a significant stressor should be assessed. In 2019, the presumption for mental disorder claims was extended to additional occupations.

## Mental Disorder Claims Reported to WorkSafeBC:

In 2019, 5,440 new mental disorder claims were reported to WorkSafeBC. This includes claims where the psychological injury is the primary injury on the claim, and claims where the psychological injury develops as a consequence of a physical injury.

Under section 5.1 of the *Act*, WorkSafeBC may accept a mental disorder that is work-related and is a reaction to:

- one or more traumatic work-related events; or
- a significant work-related stressor, or a cumulative series of significant work-related stressors.

Some of these claims will be adjudicated under the presumptive clause in section 5.1 (1.1) of the *Act*. For workers in eligible occupations who have been exposed to traumatic event(s) in their work and have been diagnosed with a mental disorder that may arise from a traumatic event, the mental disorder is presumed to be caused by employment.

WorkSafeBC may also accept a psychological condition on claims where the psychological injury develops as a consequence of a physical injury.

To be allowed for compensation under section 5.1 of the *Act*, a mental disorder claim requires a diagnosis by a psychologist or psychiatrist.

## Mental Disorder Claims, by eligibility status:

	Allowed	Disallowed	No Adjudication Required	Pending	Rejected	Suspended	Total
2017	1,351	1,093	280	4	15	1,191	3,934
2018	1,516	937	282	381	20	1,268	4,404
2019	2,310	1,346	108	286	31	1,359	5,440

Not all claims registered receive an allow or disallow decision. Some claims are suspended and therefore do not proceed through the decision-making process. This happens after the claims are registered and is often a choice workers make not to proceed with the requirements of the claims investigation, including obtaining a diagnosis from a psychologist or psychiatrist. Suspended claims may proceed at a future point and receive an allow or disallow decision. A smaller number of claims are classified as no adjudication required, or rejected. These claims may have been filed in error or when the worker was employed by an employer not covered under the Act in B.C.

## Allow rates for Mental Disorder Claims:

In 2019, on mental disorder claims where an allow/disallow decision was made, 63% were allowed.

	Allowed	
	Number	Percent
2017	1,351	55%
2018	1,516	62%
2019	2,310	63%

- These percentages are for claims where an allow/disallow decision was made.
- The allow rate is the number of claims with an allow decision, as a percentage of the claims where an allow/disallow decision was made.
- The increase in the allow rate in 2018 is largely a result of the new presumption for eligible occupations, and policy and practice changes that clarified how evidence of a traumatic event and a significant stressor should be assessed.

## Mental Disorder Claims Allowed for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

Of the mental disorder claims reported in 2019, 2,310 were allowed for a mental disorder. Of these, 641 have an accepted PTSD injury.

	Mental disorder claims allowed	Mental disorder claims with an accepted PTSD injury
2017	1,351	266
2018	1,516	344
2019	2,310	641

## Mental Disorder Claims – Presumption:

In May 2018, the *Workers Compensation Act* was amended to introduce a presumption for mental disorders. For workers in eligible occupations, who have been exposed to traumatic event(s) in their work and have been diagnosed with a mental disorder that may arise from a traumatic event, the mental disorder is presumed to be caused by employment. Eligible occupations were defined under the *Act* as correctional officers, emergency medical assistants (e.g., paramedics), firefighters (assigned primarily to fire suppression duties), police officers and sheriffs.

In April 2019, the mental disorder presumption was amended to include emergency response dispatchers, health care assistants, and nurses. In May 2019, the definition of “firefighter” in the *Act* was amended and the presumption now covers wildland firefighters, fire investigators and firefighters working for First Nations or other Indigenous organizations.

Mental disorder claims for workers in an eligible occupation are considered first under the presumption. If the claim is not covered under the presumption (e.g., not a traumatic event), then the claim is adjudicated under section 5.1.

Of the mental disorder claims reported in 2019 and adjudicated under the presumption, 506 were allowed and 33 were disallowed.

## Mental Disorder Claims adjudicated under the presumption, by occupation:

Occupation:	2018			2019		
	Allowed	Disallowed	Allow Rate	Allowed	Disallowed	Allow Rate
<b>Total - All Occupations</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>94%</b>
Paramedical occupations	81	2	98%	161	9	95%
Nurse				128	12	91%
Correctional officer	50	3	94%	94	3	97%
Firefighter	26	2	93%	58	2	97%
Police	16	2	89%	25	4	86%
Dispatchers				21	2	91%
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates				13	1	93%
Managers in social, community and correctional services				2	0	100%
Social and community service workers				2	0	100%
By-law enforcement and other regulatory officers				2	0	100%

- The allow rate is the number of claims with an allow decision, as a percentage of the claims where an allow/disallow decision was made.

## Report Methodology & Data Notes

A mental disorder claim is identified as a claim that has a new and first psychological injury added on the claim in the reporting year. This can be a newly registered claim where the psychological injury is the first and only injury on the claim, or this can be an allowed physical injury claim where a new psychological injury is accepted on the claim.

A psychological injury is defined by having an ICD-9 code in the psychological injury range from 290 to 319, with the exception of ICD-9 3079 which is used for occupational disease.

The 2019 claims data reflects the eligibility decision on the claim file at January 31, 2020. The 2018 claims data reflects the eligibility decision on the claim file at January 31, 2019. The 2017 claims data reflects the eligibility decision on the claim file at November 30, 2018. These numbers will fluctuate over time, as eligibility decisions continue to be updated. For example, a number of claims that were initially suspended will move to a decision if the worker decides to proceed with a psychological assessment. Another example is when a review or appeal decision is reached that results in a different eligibility decision.

Beginning January 1, 2016, claims reported for mental disorders have been coded with an occupation. The occupation is recorded on the claim file based on the information available at the time. For data prior to 2016, only accepted time-loss claims were coded with an occupation.

For the purposes of this report occupations are grouped as follows:

- Nurse includes registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses and licensed practical nurses
- Teacher and assistant includes kindergarten, elementary and secondary school teachers, and elementary and secondary school teacher assistants

## Additional Data Tables:

### Mental Disorder Claims Reported to WorkSafeBC, by industry subsector:

Industry subsectors with more than 100 mental disorder claims reported in 2019 are listed.

Industry subsector	2017	2018	2019
<b>Total - All Sectors</b>	<b>3,934</b>	<b>4,404</b>	<b>5,440</b>
Health Care and Social Services	1,111	1,387	1,856
Transportation and Related Services	387	385	443
Education	234	293	418
Public Administration	320	339	351
Accommodation, Food, and Leisure Services	220	256	330
Retail	248	247	288
General Construction	182	192	242
Federal Government	123	168	236
Other Services (not elsewhere specified)	182	227	225
Deposit Sector 11 (Provincial Government and Crown Corporations)	102	151	176
Business Services	140	120	147

## Mental Disorder Claims Reported to WorkSafeBC, by occupation:

The eligible occupations covered under the presumption plus other occupations with more than 100 mental disorder claims reported in 2019 are listed.

Occupation	2017	2018	2019
<b>Total - All Occupations</b>	<b>3,934</b>	<b>4,404</b>	<b>5,440</b>
Correctional officer	58	124	167
Paramedical occupations	114	193	271
Firefighter	66	91	83
Police	97	61	66
Sheriffs and bailiffs	5	0	6
Nurse	340	394	496
Social and community service workers	228	281	371
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	157	187	201
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	129	172	184
Teacher and assistant	116	171	273
Retail salespersons	80	112	119
Transport truck drivers	115	111	101
Dispatchers	52	55	49

## Mental Disorder Claims reported in 2019, by occupation:

The eligible occupations covered under the presumption plus other occupations with more than 100 mental disorder claims reported in 2019 are listed. The allow rate is the number of claims with an allow decision, as a percentage of the claims where an allow/disallow decision was made.

Occupation	2019				
	Claims Reported	Allowed	Disallowed	Allow Rate	Accepted PTSD injury
<b>Total - All Occupations</b>	<b>5,440</b>	<b>2,310</b>	<b>1,346</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>641</b>
Correctional officer	167	113	18	86%	70
Paramedical occupations	271	180	20	90%	92
Firefighter	83	66	3	96%	44
Police	66	32	6	84%	21
Sheriffs and bailiffs	6	3	2	60%	0
Nurse	496	225	100	69%	62
Social and community service workers	371	161	70	70%	40
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	201	78	43	64%	16
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	184	85	44	66%	22
Teacher and assistant	273	87	73	54%	8
Retail salespersons	119	36	35	51%	8
Transport truck drivers	101	61	21	74%	13
Dispatchers	49	27	8	77%	15



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Occupation	2018				
	Claims Reported	Allowed	Disallowed	Allow Rate	Accepted PTSD injury
<b>Total - All Occupations</b>	<b>4,404</b>	<b>1,516</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>344</b>
Correctional officer	124	80	10	89%	39
Paramedical occupations	193	104	12	90%	62
Firefighter	91	45	9	83%	30
Police	61	30	7	81%	17
Sheriffs and bailiffs	0	0	0	0%	0
Nurse	394	117	77	60%	16
Social and community service workers	281	96	45	68%	23
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	187	58	31	65%	11
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	172	58	43	57%	5
Teacher and assistant	171	41	40	51%	6
Retail salespersons	112	36	29	55%	8
Transport truck drivers	111	62	16	79%	8
Dispatchers	55	17	9	65%	5

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Occupation	2017				
	Claims Reported	Allowed	Disallowed	Allow Rate	Accepted PTSD injury
<b>Total - All Occupations</b>	<b>3,934</b>	<b>1,351</b>	<b>1,093</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>266</b>
Correctional officer	58	40	6	87%	13
Paramedical occupations	114	51	19	73%	19
Firefighter	66	28	16	64%	19
Police	97	23	9	72%	11
Sheriffs and bailiffs	5	2	2	50%	0
Nurse	340	112	71	61%	13
Social and community service workers	228	91	54	63%	20
Nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates	157	49	49	50%	7
Bus drivers, subway operators and other transit operators	129	66	36	65%	8
Teacher and assistant	116	33	36	48%	2
Retail salespersons	80	13	32	29%	5
Transport truck drivers	115	73	21	78%	15
Dispatchers	52	21	9	70%	9