



Aon Risk Solutions

Aon Global Risk Consulting | Casualty Risk Control

2015 Safety Management Function: Current State of Ergonomics Programs

An Aon Report

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Executive Summary

Annually, Aon's Casualty Risk Control practice surveys risk professionals including Safety, Claim and Risk Managers to provide insights into various aspects of safety management. Our 2015 survey focused on the function and effectiveness of Ergonomic programs within our clients' organizations.

What are the ergonomic-related experiences in your business sector and operation?

We surveyed ergonomics and health and safety professionals to learn more about the current state of their ergonomics programs. One hundred and thirteen professionals responded to questions about their organization's programs, including the following:

- Who is responsible for ergonomic programs?
- What is driving ergonomic efforts?
- What is the experience with third-party vendors?
- What metrics are being used and are they effectively measuring efforts and success?



Survey Highlights

Demographics

- The top industries represented were Durable Goods Manufacturing and Business or Professional Services followed by Health Care, Education and Transportation.
- The largest group of respondents are employed by companies with less than 250 total employees.
- Respondents largely identified themselves as a site level manager or corporate/global manager of environmental, safety and health operations.

Injuries with Greatest Concerns

- Back injuries, followed by hand/wrist injuries are the primary concern for respondents.

Ergonomics Program Management and Ownership

- 28% of respondents report the ergonomics program is driven by regional or corporate staff.
- 26% report the organization does not have a designated owner of the ergonomics program or process.
- 69% report employee health and safety is the primary driver of the ergonomics process; 9% report company culture directs the ergonomics process while 6% indicate operational efficiency is the primary driver.
- 40% report currently or historically using a third-party to assist with elements of the ergonomics program. 35% of this group report they have regular and direct interaction with the third-party and are satisfied with the service provided.

Ergonomics Program Metrics

- OSHA recordable metrics and near miss reports were the most commonly used program or process measures, followed by workers' compensation (WC) claim frequency and cost.
- Task analysis (ergonomics risk assessment) scores are used in 36% of program metrics.
- 28% reported using behavioral observation points.
- 24% benchmark against their internal locations and 8% benchmark against external firms.
- When asked what metrics would be most valuable to the ergonomics process, 45% responded discomfort reports and task analysis scores, and 41% noted near miss reports and behavioral observation points would be valuable.

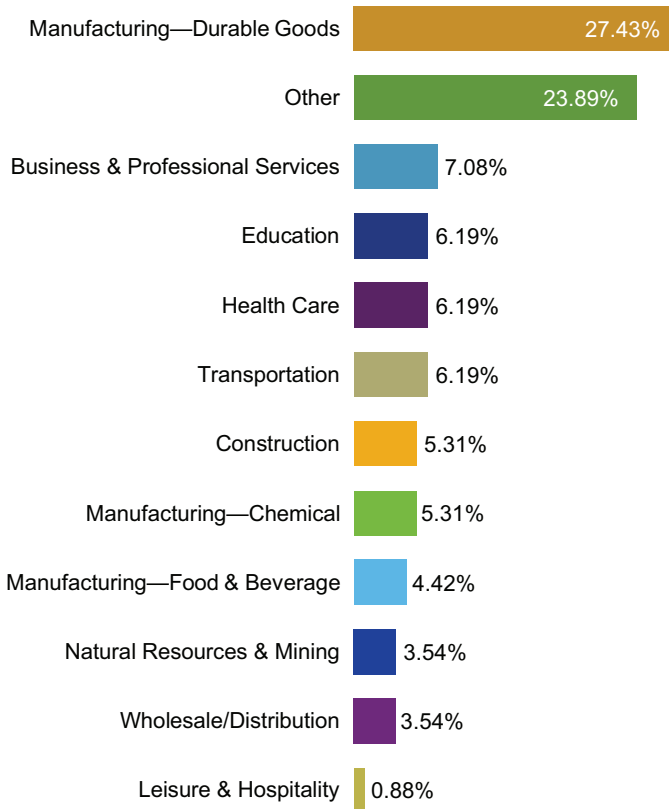
Task Analysis

- One-third of respondents said they pro-actively use ergonomic task analysis or assessment tools as part of new and retrofit process design, claim and injury management, job specific training, and other applications.
- One-third of respondents do not currently use any ergonomic task analysis or assessment tools.
- 21% report that an assessment is completed only *after* an injury or complaint is reported.
- A mere 13% of respondents reported that more than 75% of job/tasks in their workplace have had an ergonomic assessment within the last 12 months.
- Nearly half (42%) report that less than 5% of tasks have had an assessment within the last 12 months.

The voluntary survey was administered online and consisted of 13 questions. The survey was open from March 30, 2015 to June 22, 2015, and promoted through various technical groups and at two industry conferences: 2015 Michigan Safety Conference and Safety 2015 Professional Development Conference sponsored by the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE). Participation in survey was open to any interested party; however, respondents were EHA, risk, and safety professionals. Aon clients and non-clients, registered participants of conferences or other interested parties may have participated. Aon is solely responsible for the design and interpretation of the analysis and holds the copyright thereto.

Q1

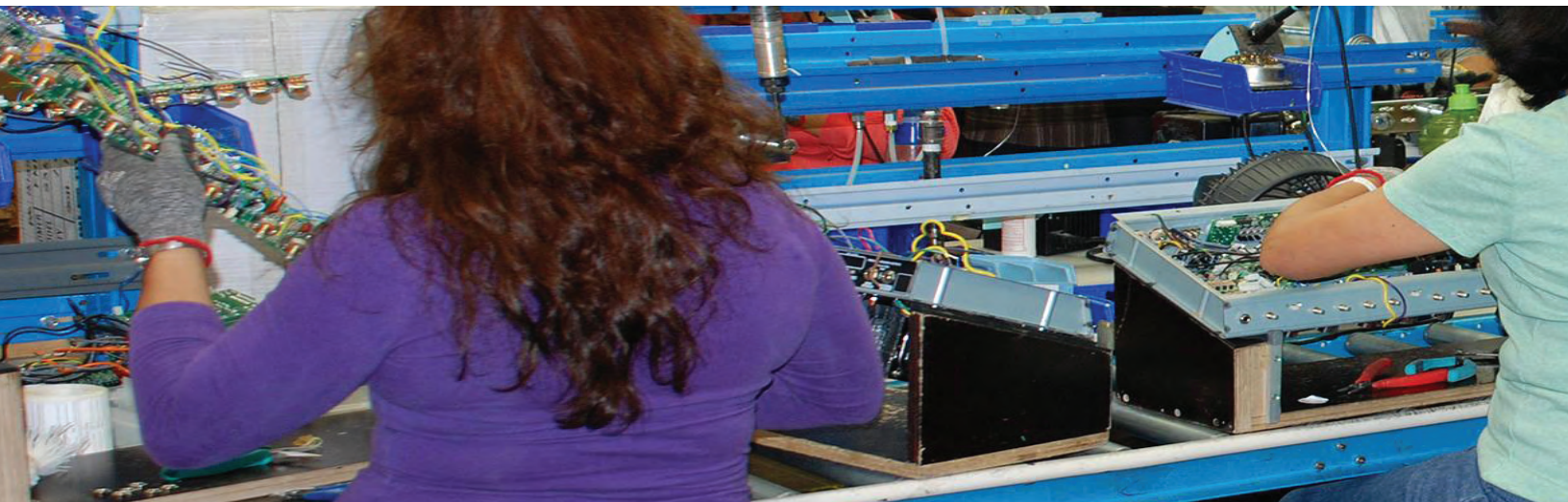
What is your firm's primary business/industry type?



The top identified industries represented were Durable Goods Manufacturing and Business or Professional Services followed by Health Care, Education and Transportation.

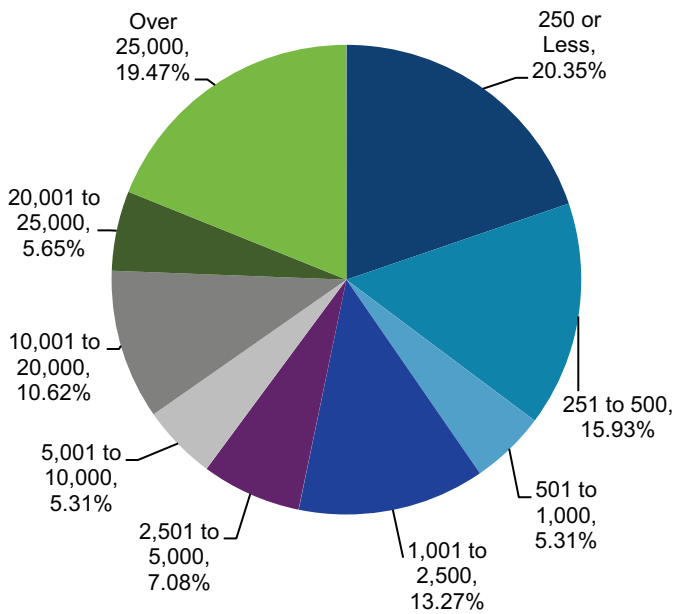
The “Other” categorization included representation from:

- Utilities
- Government
- Agriculture



Q2

Across all operations, how many employees work for your organization?



Number of employees at responding organization.

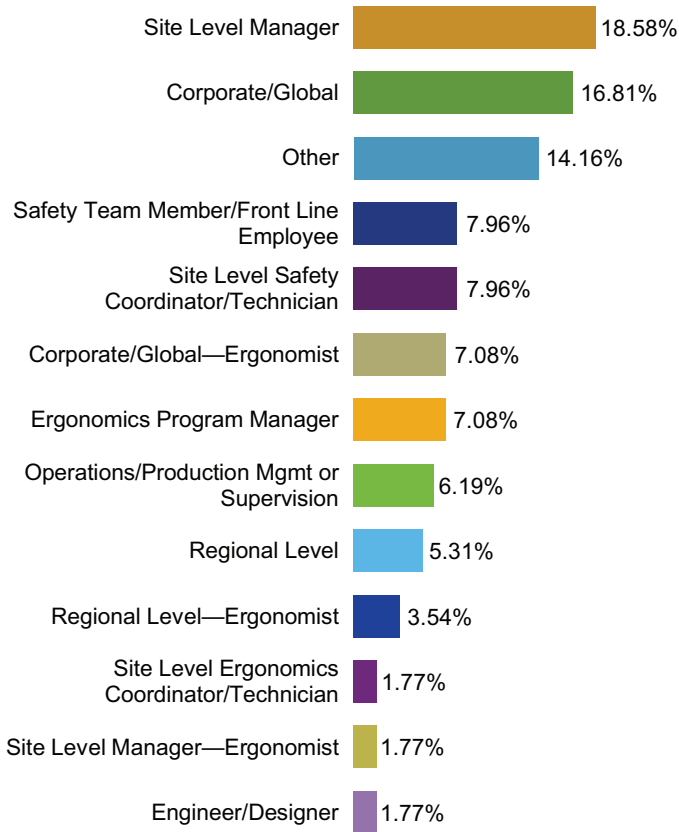
Survey Participants

A broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences are reflected in the results of the 113 professionals, with large numbers of respondents from relatively small or very large organizations.





From the list below, select the item that best describes your role within your organization?

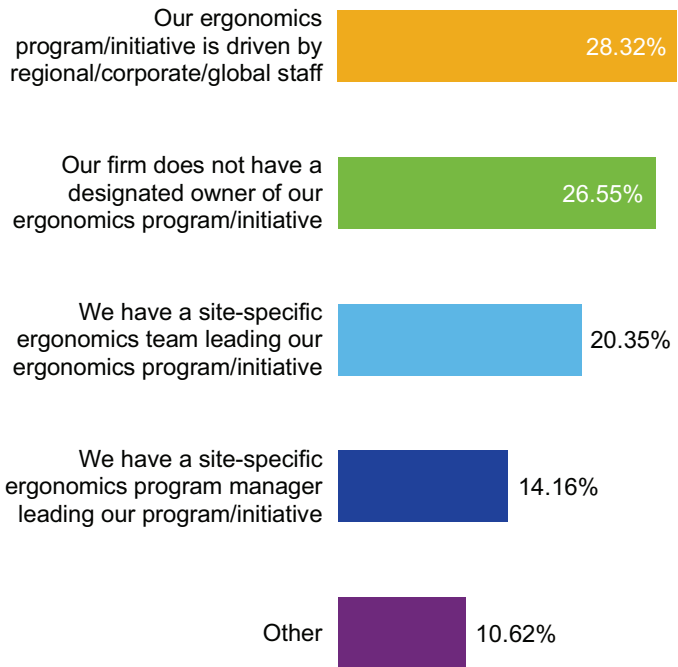


The majority of respondents were general environmental, health and safety site level managers. However, professionals designated as specific leaders in 'ergonomics' were found at the site, regional, corporate, and global level. This may indicate that certain sectors or sizes of operations see ergonomics efforts as distinctly different from general environmental, health and safety efforts, requiring specific expertise, budget, and/or resources.

This also reflects that many organizations see the value of specific management around the ergonomics process with over 35% of respondents indicating this carries a management-level position.

Q4

Who is responsible for your firm's ergonomics program?



Over 25% of respondents reported their organization does not have a designated owner of the ergonomics program/initiative.

Organizations lacking an ergonomics process owner may experience significant lag in process improvements and difficulty sustaining ergonomics initiatives. In “lean” terms, without a designated process, responding to ergonomic issues only after complaints, claims, or identified cost leakage can be inefficient. Production line planning, tool selection and individual workstation assessments can all find waste streams in terms of wait time and rework without a proactive process.

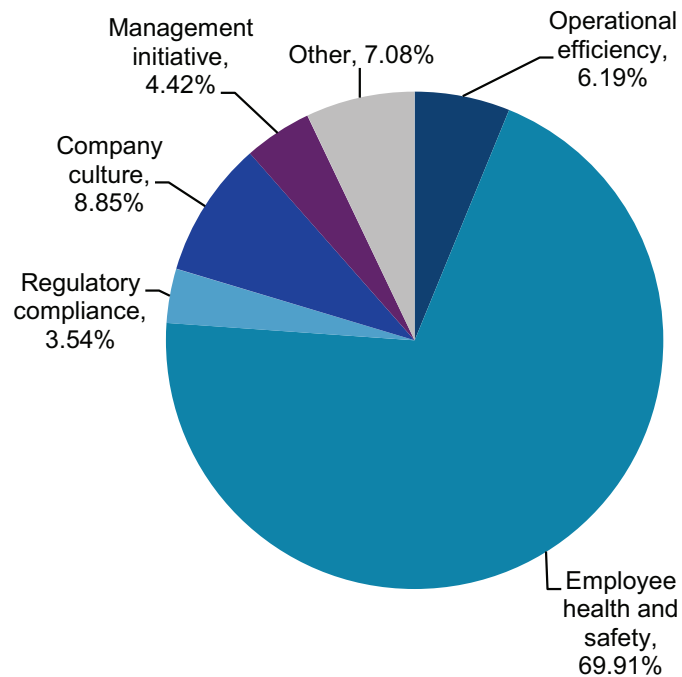
28% of respondents use a consistent program or initiative across their corporate operations.





Q5

What is the primary driver behind your firm's ergonomic-related efforts?



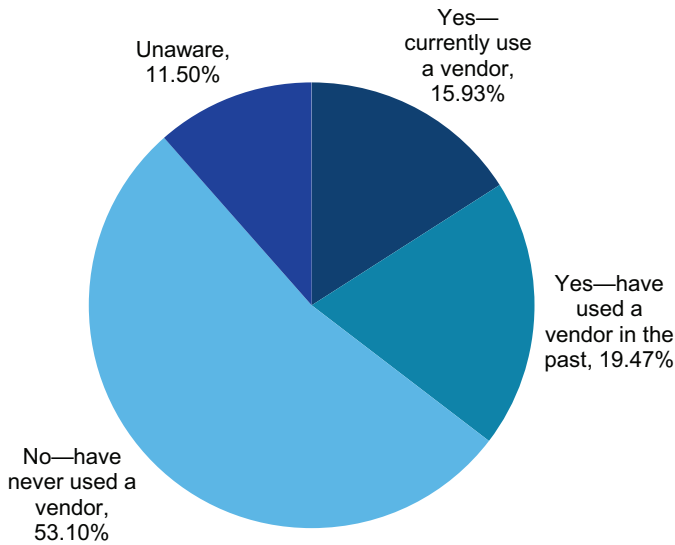
Employee health and safety remains the primary driving force behind ergonomics efforts. However, forward-thinking organizations looking to design leaner and more efficient operations, are utilizing proven ergonomic strategies as an avenue to leverage.

About 8.9% of those who responded report company culture is driving ergonomic efforts, which indicates a significant need to focus strategies on improving the organizational culture around ergonomics.

This may also indicate that decisions about ergonomics are not strategically integrated at an operational management level and could be a significant area for improvement.

Q6

Is your company currently using a third-party vendor to assist with your ergonomics program?

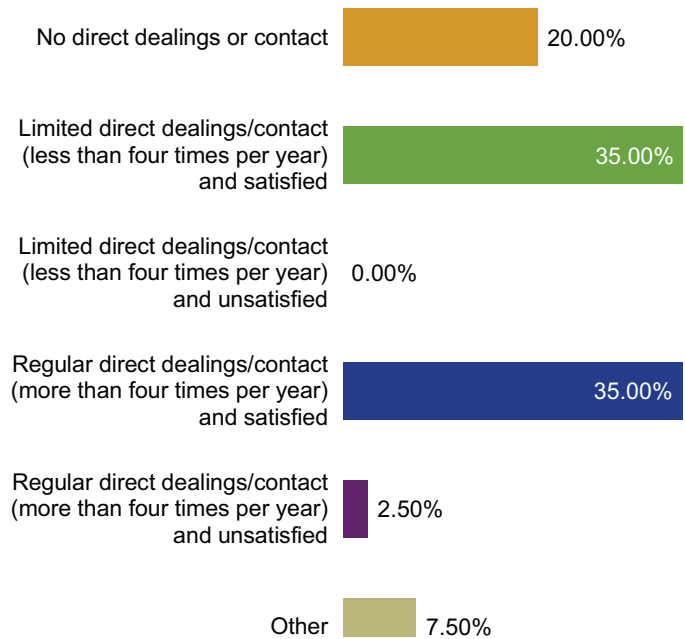


53% of those polled rely on in-house ergonomic expertise—though specific information around the qualifications, experience, education, and credentials of that expertise were not identified, and may be the subject for future surveys.

Third-party vendors are or have been a part of the ergonomics process for 35% of companies. Additionally, 70% of those who have used a third-party report direct dealings and a satisfactory relationship. Further study may be conducted to determine implementation success and specific expertise that is sought after in the third-party relationships.

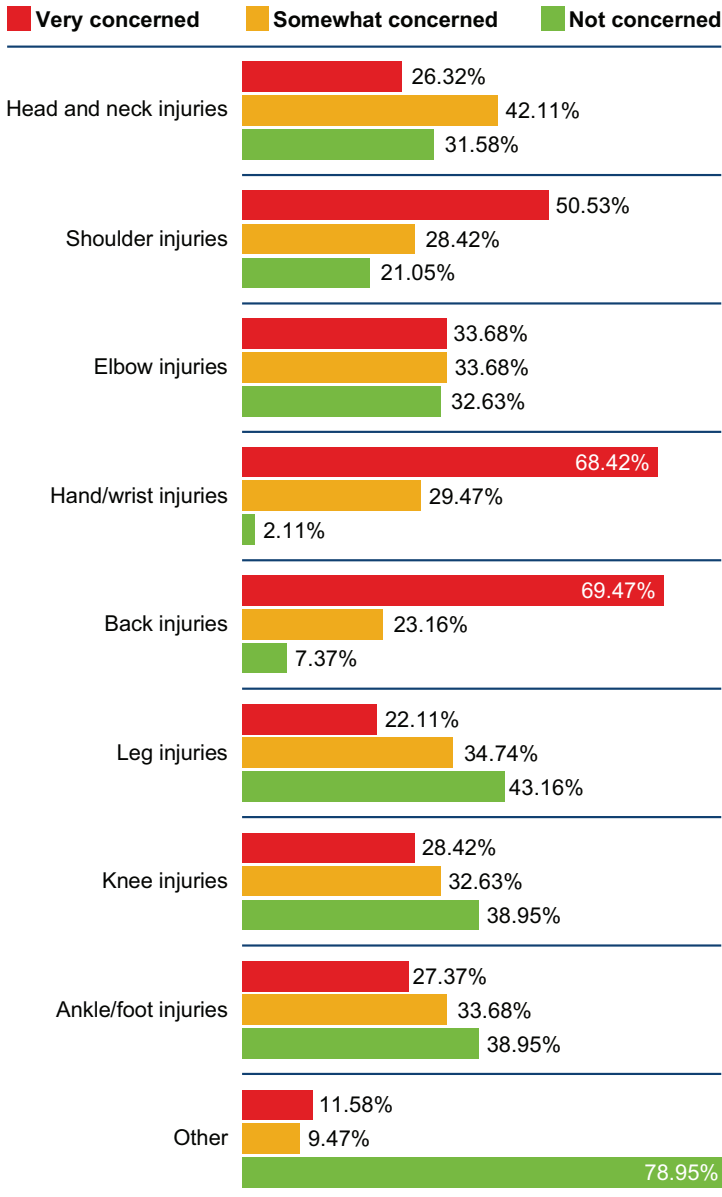
Q7

How would you describe your relationship with your firm’s ergonomic vendor or their representative?





Thinking about soft tissue injuries experienced by employees at your company, please indicate your level of concern.



Respondents were asked to rate each category independently.

Hand/wrist and back injuries were reported to be the greatest area of concern. A combination of force, awkward postures, and repetition are risk factors for injuries to these body parts.

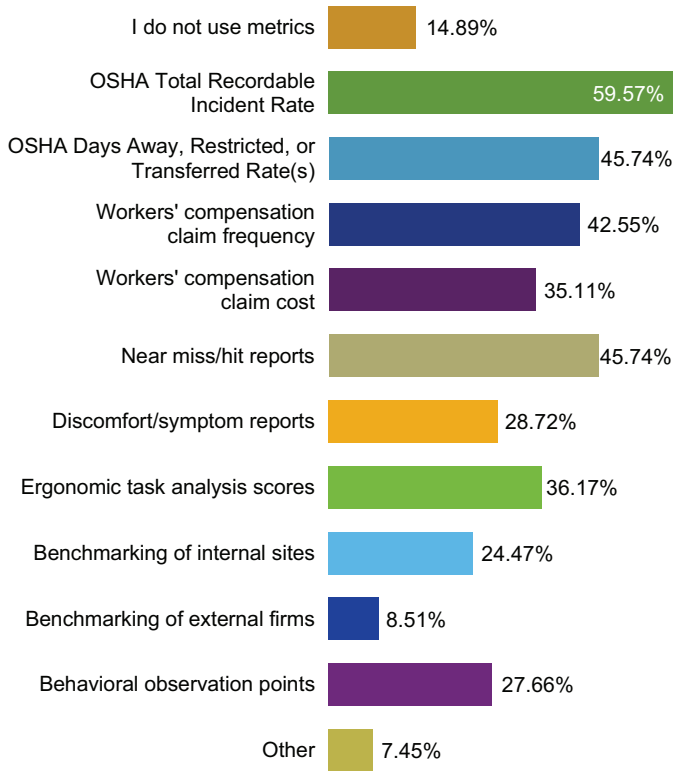
Both legacy and newly designed work areas can present these risk factors. It may be that ergonomics is not considered early enough in work demands and workstation design to eliminate risk factors to these body areas. This is also supported by the responses to ergonomic risk and task assessments triggers—post incident versus design phase.

Reactive ergonomics response to injury rather than proactive job design may contribute to overall injury experience as well.

The following two questions looked at the metrics used and additional metrics that would provide value.



Select the metrics that have been used to measure your firm’s ergonomics program or efforts.



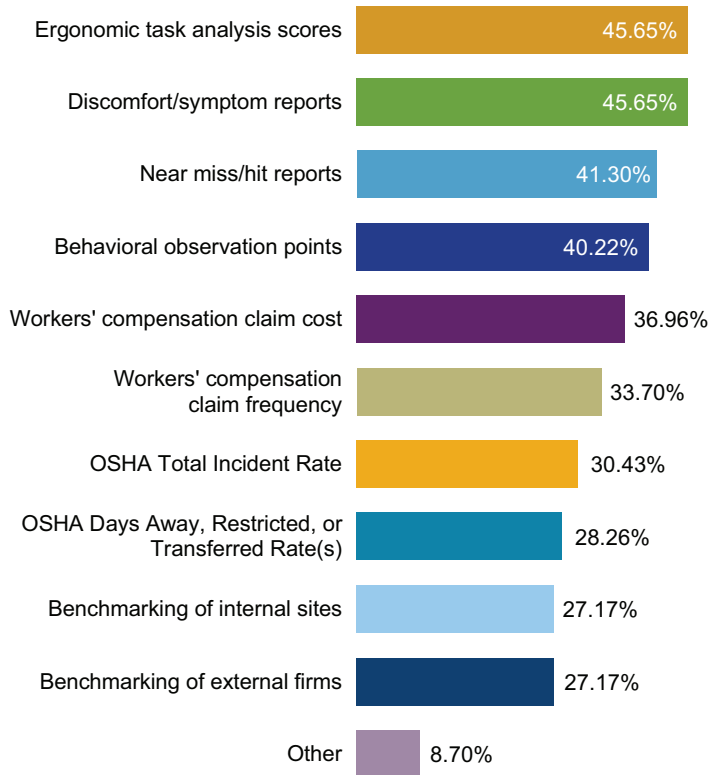
Respondents were asked to select “all that apply,” therefore, percentages are the result of multiple answers.

We see that OSHA total incident rate (TIR) and OSHA days away, restricted and transferred (DART) metrics are the most used metrics reported. While there are mandatory reporting requirements around these measures they are lagging metrics, and can be somewhat subjective. When asked what metrics would be most valuable to gauge ergonomics performance, respondents perceived the most value in leading indicators such as task analysis risk scores, discomfort surveys, and behavioral observations. This indicates a gap between data perceived as valuable and data actually used for dashboards and reporting. In order to drive improvement proactively—including risk assessment, quantification, and mitigation—task analysis scores are needed.

This might also indicate that—in some cases—ergonomics is still reactive to, and largely measured by employee-reported health and well-being. Creating metrics that measure the ergonomics program, in terms of productivity and culture, is key to high performing ergonomics programs.

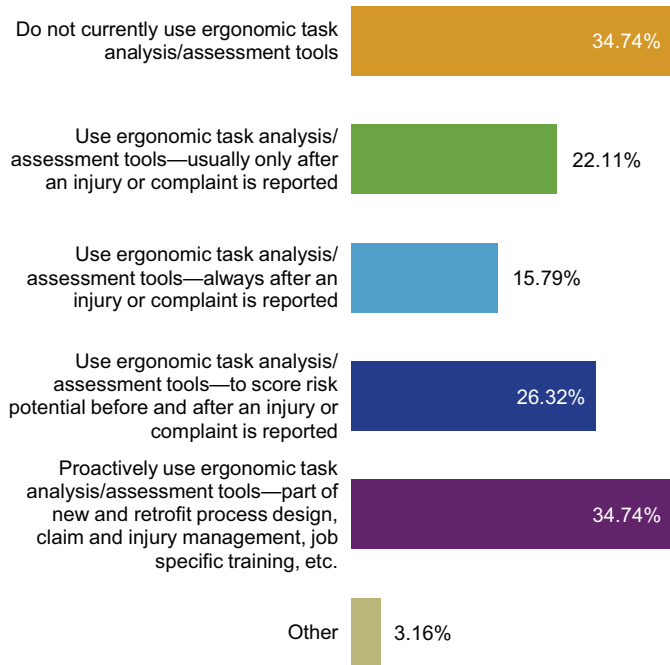


Of the metrics below, select the metrics you'd like to use our think would be valuable to gauge your ergonomic related efforts.



Q11

When are task analysis/assessment tools used in your organization?



35% of respondents reported their organization proactively use ergonomic task analysis/assessment tools as part of new and retrofit process design, claim and injury management, job specific training, and other activities.

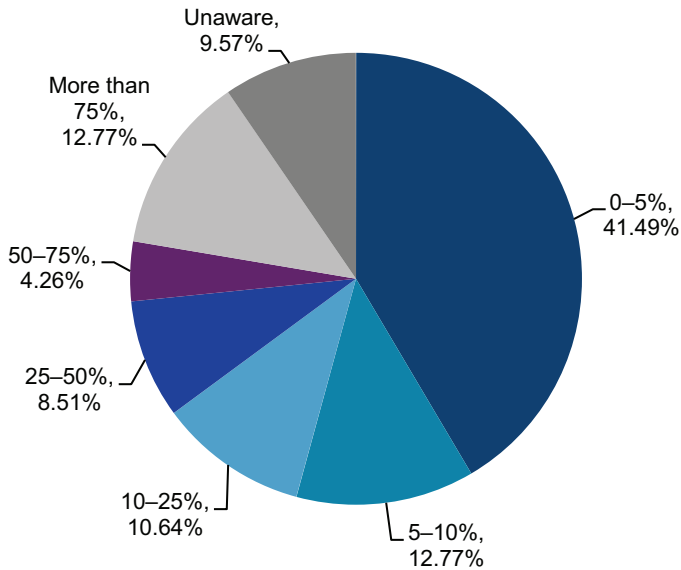
35% of respondents reported that they do not use any ergonomics assessment tools highlighting an opportunity for more targeted intervention.

Responses suggest a wide variation of organizations' measurement of ergonomic exposure, with equal percentages reporting proactive analysis and no task analysis either before or after a reported injury, with an "inverse curve" of use in conjunction with injuries or complaints.



Q12

What percentage of jobs/tasks have had a documented ergonomic assessment within the past 12 months?



Over 40% of respondents indicated that less than 5% of jobs had a documented assessment within the past 12 months, while only 13% reported that over 75% of the jobs had such an assessment.

This would indicate, as reported by a combined 40% in the question above, that organizations seeking to identify and assess risk are most likely examining this only after an injury had occurred. This supports an opportunity for organizations to transform their ergonomics programs from managing consequences to managing risk.

Essential to this process is:

- A tool for measuring and quantifying ergonomic exposure/s
- Consistent application of the tool by trained and qualified staff
- Re-evaluation of exposure/s following ergonomic improvements, or when a change to the work process is introduced



Conclusion

Our 2015 Safety Management Function—Ergonomics survey illustrates the varied landscape of ergonomics management within organizations and environmental, health and safety functions. Our respondents from both large and small operations would like to see more use of a proactive risk management approach. Respondents also stated they would prefer to use leading indicators of risk and ergonomic improvements, but are largely still relying on lagging data such as OSHA incident rates to measure the success of their efforts. Employee health and safety is clearly the primary driver of ergonomic efforts, though some operations see ergonomics primarily as an operational function.

This survey also indicates that ownership for the ergonomics process varies across employers and between global, corporate, regional, and site-level authority. While not utilized by a majority of respondents, a consistent, scalable, and sustainable corporate-level program is recommended as a best practice.

Third-party vendors are a strong partner in ergonomics efforts for many respondents and generally are seen as value-added. Future surveys may seek to understand the skills or credentials sought with third-party providers. Further study may also create a more effective metric by considering the specific level of the organization that determines the metrics of ergonomics program success and the reason there is a measurable disconnect between what is being reported as success and what professionals and practitioners report.

About Aon

Aon plc (NYSE:AON) is a leading global provider of risk management, insurance brokerage and reinsurance brokerage, and human resources solutions and outsourcing services. Through its more than 72,000 colleagues worldwide, Aon unites to empower results for clients in over 120 countries via innovative risk and people solutions. For further information on our capabilities and to learn how we empower results for clients, please visit: <http://aon.mediaroom.com>.

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