

Work-Related Asthma

Among adults with asthma, approximately 15% may have occupational asthma (Balmes et al., 2003) and 21.5% may have work-exacerbated asthma (Henneberger et al., 2011). There are fewer than 60 physician reports of work-related asthma (WRA) in Connecticut annually. According to data from the CT DPH Occupational Illness and Injury Surveillance System (OISS), from 1992 - 2008, 497 cases of WRA in Connecticut residents were reported (Figure 38). Females, whites, and individuals 35 - 54 years old were the most frequently affected by WRA during this time period (Table 16). With regard to ethnicity, 7.6% of the WRA cases reported from 1992 - 2008 were Hispanic; however, information on ethnicity was unknown or missing for 47.9% of cases. White females represented the majority of reported WRA cases, accounting for 210 (42.3%) of all cases.

Workers in service, manufacturing, and public administration sectors represented 33%, 24.9%, and 21.1% of reported WRA cases, respectively. Production jobs accounted for 14.1% of cases and office and administrative support jobs for 11.5%. Of the 474 WRA cases for which causes of illness were reported on the Physician's Report of Occupational Disease, 147 (31%) were attributed to the category "Other", which included a variety of agents such as: other unspecified cause, solder, acryl compounds, aldehydes, and smoke. Indoor air quality (IAQ) was listed as a cause of WRA for 133 (28.1%) cases. See Appendix K for additional information on the frequency of WRA by industry, occupation, and causative agent.

The 2007 - 2009 Asthma Call-back Survey (ACBS) collected information from adults with current asthma about their work environments. ACBS respondents were asked if they thought that their asthma was related to chemicals, smoke, fumes, or dust in their workplace. Based on their responses, it is estimated that 56,600 (23.4%) thought that their asthma was caused or made worse by exposure(s) in their current jobs. Approximately 98,400 (41.4%) thought that their asthma was caused or made worse by any job (current or previous) that they had held. ACBS participants were asked if they were ever told by or ever told a doctor or health professional that their asthma was related to any job that they had ever had. Findings were that among Connecticut adults with current asthma, approximately 18,400 (7.6%) were diagnosed with work-related asthma and 34,600 (14.2%) told a health professional that their asthma was related to any job they had ever had.

Approximately 103,400 (43.5%) of Connecticut adults with current asthma may have asthma that was caused or exacerbated by exposure(s) in the workplace. It is estimated that among adults with current asthma: 56,300 (38.9%) females and 47,100 (50.6%) males; 87,700 (43.5%) non-Hispanic Whites; 2,700 (42%) non-Hispanic Blacks; 7,400 (39.9%) Hispanics; and 2,900 (44.2%) non-Hispanic Others may have asthma that was caused or made worse by environmental factors at work. Roughly 21,700 (9.2%) Connecticut adults with current asthma changed or quit their jobs because chemicals, smoke, fumes, or dust caused or made their asthma worse.

Figure 38. Physician-Reported Cases of Work-Related Asthma by Year, Connecticut, 1992 – 2008

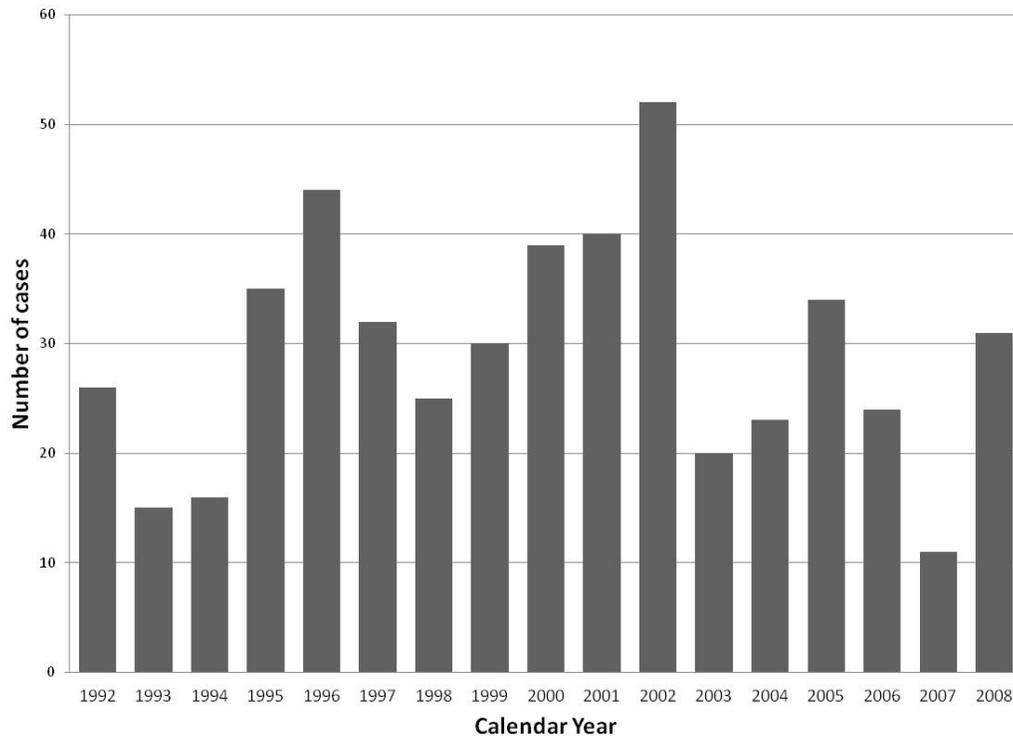


Table 16. Work-Related Asthma by Selected Demographics, Connecticut, 1992 – 2008

Characteristics	Number (%)
Total	497 (100.0)
<i>Sex</i>	
Male	198 (39.8)
Female	297 (59.8)
Missing/Unknown	2 (0.4%)
<i>Race</i>	
Asian	^a
Black	65 (13.1)
White	347 (69.8)
Other	^{aa}
Missing/Unknown	65 (13.1)
<i>Ethnicity</i>	
Hispanic	38 (7.6)
Not Hispanic	211 (42.5)
Missing/Unknown	248 (49.9)
<i>Age group</i>	
18 – 24 years	23 (4.6)
25 – 34 years	77 (15.5)
35 – 44 years	158 (31.8)
45 – 54 years	169 (34.0)
55 – 64 years	60 (12.1)
65 + years	^a
Missing/Unknown	^{aa}

^a Number suppressed in keeping with confidentiality regulations.

^{aa} Number suppressed to restrict calculation of cells < 6.