

SAFER

WORKPLACES

TOGETHER

WCB/ NOVA
SCOTIA

NOVA SCOTIA

Safer Workplaces Together

A Strategic Framework for
Workplace Injury Prevention
in Nova Scotia

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
How We Work Together	04
Setting Priorities	08
Taking Action	09
Priority Focus Area 1	09
Priority Focus Area 2	11
Priority Focus Area 3	13
Measuring Success	15
Moving Forward Together	16
Additional Information	17

Introduction

Purpose and Context

Nova Scotia has made significant progress in workplace injury prevention over recent years through the concerted efforts of all prevention network partners. In the early 2000s, when we began working together on injury prevention the way we do today, the injury rate in our province was 3.0—today, it's less than half that.

However, to significantly move the needle in prevention priority areas, we need to focus on areas of highest risk with a continuous improvement mindset—investing our resources and collective efforts into key areas for the greatest benefit to workers and workplaces.

When we coordinate these efforts effectively through structured, evidence-based prevention strategies, we can prevent more injuries and save lives. The recent review of Nova Scotia's workers' compensation system specifically called for greater collaboration, clarity, and data sharing between Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB), the Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration's (LSI) Safety Branch, and their partners in the prevention network.

This framework responds to that call by establishing a structured approach that focuses our collective efforts where they matter most: Setting the vision, priorities, and outcomes needed to positively change behaviour and prevent workplace-related injuries.

Workplace safety is everyone's responsibility. Injury prevention works best when workplaces, with support from partners, take steps to keep workers safe and protect their physical and mental health.

Workplace Injury Rates:

Between 1994 and 2025, Nova Scotia workplace injuries rates have reduced from

3% to 1.31%
an all time historic low.

What Does Today's Data and Research Show?

There is no single perfect model for prevention across Canada, but prioritization and measurement are keys to improvement.

Musculoskeletal Injuries (MSIs) accounted for 61% of all time-loss claims in 2024.

Between 2012 and 2022, the proportion of lost-time claims due to psychological injuries more than doubled across Canada.

More young people and newcomers to Canada are joining the workforce in Nova Scotia. Newcomers to the workforce are at a 3–5 times higher risk of injury because they often do dangerous, hands-on jobs and may not know their safety rights, hazards, or protections.

Nearly half of supervisors surveyed in Nova Scotia (47%) said safety initiatives often don't translate into lasting behaviour change, with workers reverting to previous habits when initiatives are not reinforced.

How We Work Together

Prevention Governance Network

Across Canada, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to governing workplace injury prevention. In some provinces, prevention is managed by a government department or workers' compensation board, while others have created joint organizations. Each model has its own benefits and drawbacks. Regardless of model, best practice emphasizes the importance of collaboration and clarity in roles and responsibilities.

In Nova Scotia, WCB leads prevention, in partnership with LSI. They collaborate with the prevention network, bringing together each organization's distinct expertise and resources in support of stronger prevention outcomes. This framework documents this approach to ensure clarity, alignment, and sustainability over time.

How is Each Partner Accountable for Workplace Safety?

Every partner in Nova Scotia's prevention system has a role to play:

Employers play a central role by creating physically and psychologically safe working environments, complying with regulations, supporting awareness and education, and fostering a culture of safety for their workforce.

Labour, Skills and Immigration's (LSI) Safety Branch handles the nuts and bolts of safety—inspections, enforcement, and ensuring compliance with regulations. They identify hazards and hold employers accountable for meeting safety standards. They also hold responsibility for workplace safety legislation and regulations.

Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia (WCB) works day-to-day with employers, providing coaching and guidance to prevent injuries. They help build the connection between prevention efforts and successful return-to-work programs.

Safety Associations focus on awareness, education, and training within their sectors. Nova Scotia has eight sector safety associations, each with their own structure, priorities, and initiatives. They act as bridges between system partners and employers, bringing grassroots insights and sector-specific expertise. They collaborate with WCB and LSI to review data and best practices, establish priorities, design and implement actions, and monitor progress toward overall targets.

Workers and Supervisors play vital roles in injury prevention by recognizing hazards, following safe practices, and helping build a culture of safety on the job. Workers are responsible for protecting their own health and well-being as well as that of those around them, while supervisors have significant influence on both physical and psychological safety through their actions and leadership.

Unions advocate for safe working conditions, support worker rights and well-being, and partner in the development and promotion of prevention actions and initiatives.

Industry Associations promote best practices across their sectors, raise awareness among members, and collaborate with system partners to advance safety standards and culture.

Advisors and Subject Matter Experts share best practices, raise awareness, and provide education and training opportunities that help employers and workers create safer, healthier work environments.

Clear Roles, No Red Tape

Function	WCB	LSI	Safety Associations	Employers	Workers	Others
Planning & Coordination	✓	✓	✓			
Data & Analysis	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Education & Awareness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training			✓	✓		✓
Compliance & Enforcement		✓		✓		



Why do we focus on supervisors in prevention actions?

Supervisors are the bridge between policy and practice, as they translate organizational commitments into daily safety behaviours. This makes their role critical for managing risks, preventing MSIs, and fostering safe workplaces.

The role of supervisors in the safety Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is to promote a proactive safety culture while they also report, respond, investigate, correct, and lead other workers. Supervisors asked us for increased support in building these safety skills and capabilities.

How will the Network Come Together?

WCB invites partners across the prevention network to come together yearly through a structured process to review workplace injury and safety data, set shared priority focus areas, exchange insights and best practices, and design and implement coordinated actions.

This annual process ensures the network is aligned and focused on efforts that make the greatest impact. Long-term and ongoing collaboration and communication between WCB, LSI, and their partners builds a more structured and inclusive network for workplace injury prevention.



The first action will be for WCB, LSI, and safety associations to come together to review and share the injury and compliance data that each party holds, and explore what stronger data-sharing between partners could look like in the short, medium, and long term.

Annual Collaborative Process

Each year, prevention partners will come together to:

- 1. APRIL: Review Data and Set Indicators**—Set overall network indicators and analyze injury trends, compliance data, and emerging risks using tools such as AI and data visualization platforms to build common understanding across all partners.
 - Output: Data needed to inform priority setting and action planning.
- 2. MAY: Set Priority Focus Areas**—Focus on areas where we can make the biggest impact together, leveraging data to identify top risks, emerging issues, and strategic priorities. We will check in on them yearly, but we expect to keep these priorities in place for multiple years to make real improvements and make sure the new practices last. Between May and September, for each priority area, WCB and LSI will collect key data, trends, research on best practices, and the Nova Scotia current context. This information will be shared with the prevention network to help inform action planning.
 - Output: Three (3) priority focus areas where we will invest our time and resources to have the greatest impact over several years.
- 3. SEPTEMBER: Design 2-Year Action Plans**—Create specific initiatives based on proven best practices from Nova Scotia and across Canada, with clear key performance indicators (KPIs). We will plan actions over two-year periods at a time, so there's enough time for people to

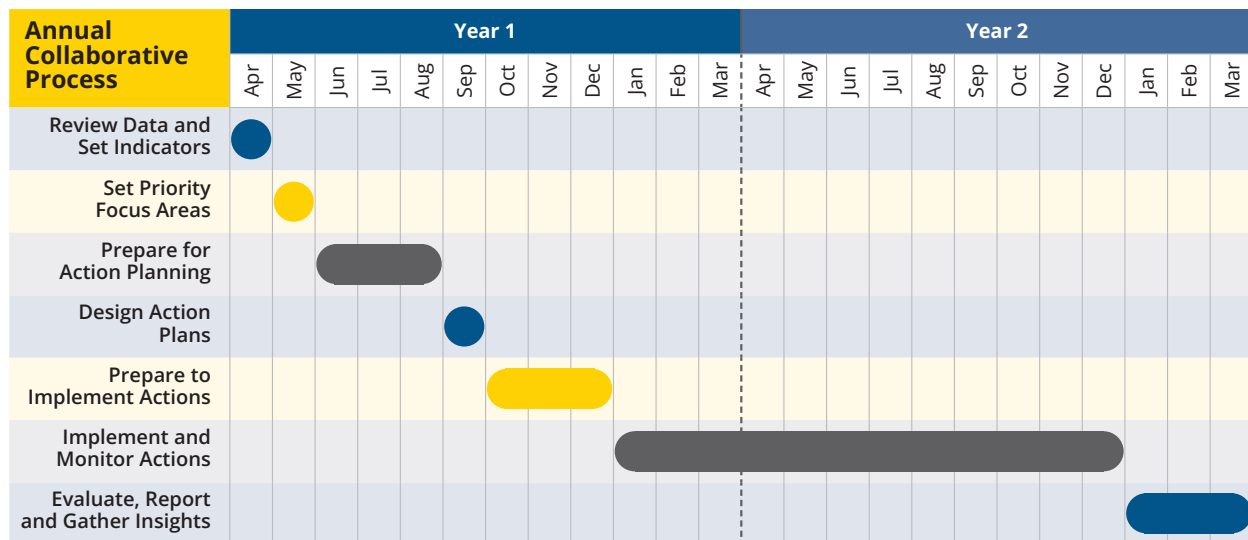
adjust their behaviours and ways of working. We will review and validate or update actions each year. From September to December, we will prepare for the implementation of the actions in the coming year.

- Output: Clear, tangible actions to be implemented and measured for impact.

4. JANUARY – DECEMBER: Implement and Monitor—Execute actions and monitor progress against KPIs quarterly, sharing lessons learned and adapting as needed.

5. FOLLOWING JANUARY – MARCH: Evaluate, Report, and Gather Insights—We will gather insights from workplaces, check indicators, and assess the previous year’s measures and outcomes. We will share and apply lessons learned.

- Output: Transparent sharing of progress and lessons learned.



Setting Priorities

2025/26 Prevention Priorities

WCB and LSI have identified three (3) priority focus areas to guide injury prevention work in Nova Scotia for 2025/26.

1. **Sprains, strains, and other musculoskeletal injuries**—the most common type of workplace injury in Nova Scotia.
2. **Psychological injury, focusing on harassment¹ and traumatic incidents**—safety issues that have become emerging priorities for Nova Scotians.
3. **Focused support for supervisors**—to help them build stronger safety capabilities.

All priority areas will focus on helping vulnerable workers—those who may face higher risks because of their age, language, job type, experience, or other barriers.

WCB and LSI will regularly scan prevention activities and best practices across Canada and the world to identify new and innovative ways to prevent workplace injuries.

Actions in this plan were taken from Canada-wide best practices to encourage collaboration in the prevention network and build a strong foundation for the future.



Artificial intelligence (AI) will be used to review data to identify potential priorities and actions. Tools like AI and data visualization platforms will be used and shared to help all partners better understand what the injury data means, learn which tools give the best insights, and find out about new risks, trends, and opportunities to improve workplace safety.

These three priorities for 2025/26 were set through a streamlined process, as this is the first year of the strategy. The priorities will be refined in 2026 with input from the prevention network.

¹ As defined in Part 27 of the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations of Nova Scotia.

Taking Action

Priority Focus Area 1

1 Sprains, strains, and other musculoskeletal injuries

Focus for 2025-2030 **Prevent sprains, strains, and other musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs)**—the most common type of workplace injury in Nova Scotia.

What does data and best practices show?

- MSIs like sprains and strains are the most common workplace injuries in Nova Scotia, making up 61% of time-loss claims in 2024 and affecting workers across many industries, especially in healthcare and social services.
- Ontario, BC, and Manitoba have successfully reduced MSIs (see Appendix for data). They use practical tools (e.g., risk assessments, checklists and worksheets, videos, training guides), training, and industry-specific community support—showing that targeted efforts can work.

See appendix for details on current state, best practices, and challenges.

Action Plan

	Deliverables	Partners	Timeline
Community of Practice	Launch an MSI community of practice (COP) for employers and safety associations to share best practices and lessons learned on how to address common physical risk factors for MSIs.	WCB, LSI, Safety Associations, Employers	<i>March 2026</i>
Leadership and Supervision	Within the COP, develop a coaching program for leaders to be “ergonomic champions”, representing different levels of safety accountability, to mentor others and reinforce practices.	WCB, LSI, Safety Associations, Employers	<i>To Be Confirmed</i>
	Sector-specific training for supervisors on MSI risk factors and assessment tools to identify risks.	Safety Associations	<i>May 2026</i>
Awareness and Education	• Promote tools on risk factors. • Offer a webinar on risk mapping (September 2025). • Offer a webinar on MSI best practices (October 2025).	WCB, LSI	• <i>Ongoing</i> • <i>Completed</i> • <i>October 2025</i>

Action Plan			
	Deliverables	Partners	Timeline
Compliance Initiatives	• Include sector-specific MSI-focused elements in LSI workplace inspections and priority hazard checklists.	WCB, LSI, Employers	• <i>Ongoing</i>
	• Plan and deliver sector specific proactive inspections – starting in acute care.		• <i>By end of 2026</i>
Prevention Analysis	• Share findings of Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME)-driven initiative that focuses on preventing workplace injuries through AI-powered ergonomic analysis.	WCB, Safety Associations, OHS	• <i>Ongoing</i>
How we will measure progress		How we will know if we are successful	
1. Rates of positive compliance.		1. Improving MSI-focused compliance across all sectors.	
2. MSI claim frequency and duration—relative to changes in the workforce.		2. Reducing MSI claim frequency and duration.	

Priority Focus Area 2

2 Psychological injuries, focusing on harassment and traumatic incidents

Focus for 2025-2030 **Take action to support workplaces on preventing harassment¹ and traumatic injuries**—safety issues that Nova Scotians and other jurisdictions told us are emerging priorities for them, here and across Canada.

What does data and best practices show?

- Sharp increases in mental health-related claims and disabilities across Canada reflect both rising incidence and better recognition of psychological injuries.
- Compensation boards across Canada reported that between 2012 and 2022, the proportion of lost time claims due to mental disorders more than doubled. PTSD now makes up nearly half of all mental health injury claims which are often more complex and costlier than physical injuries, demanding specialized attention and long-term recovery strategies.
- BC reported that from 2020 to 2024, psychological injury claims increased by 64%.
- Other provinces including Saskatchewan, Ontario, and BC are taking effective measures in this area (see Appendix for data) — they use practical tools (e.g., online guides, risk assessments, workshops, webinars, peer-led sessions), clear guidance, and strong education to help prevent these complex and often hidden injuries.

See appendix for details on current state, best practices, and challenges.

Action Plan

	Deliverables	Partners	Timeline
Community of Practice	Launch a psychological safety community of practice for employers and safety associations to share best practices and lessons learned to prevent harassment in the workplace, particularly those who need the most help.	WCB, LSI, Safety Associations, Employers	March 2026
Leadership and Supervision	Within the community of practice, develop a coaching program and peer-learning sessions for leaders at different levels of safety accountability to be “psychological safety champions”.	WCB, LSI, Safety Associations, Employers	To Be Confirmed
	Offer discounted cost third-party for training opportunities for leadership roles on responding to complaints and modeling behaviour for psychological safety.	Safety Associations	May 2026

¹ As defined in Part 27 of the Workplace Health and Safety Regulations of Nova Scotia.

Action Plan			
	Deliverables	Partners	Timeline
Awareness and Education	Deliver “Rethink Safety” (WCB) and “Safety Goes Beyond...” (LSI) awareness initiatives and resources to workplaces.	WCB, LSI	<i>Completed</i>
	Create and provide additional guides and learning modules on psychological safety in the workplace.	LSI	<i>In progress</i>
	Implement violence prevention initiatives in acute care and transit.	WCB, LSI	<i>In progress</i>
How we will measure progress		How we will know if we are successful	
1. Harassment prevention positive compliance.		1. Workplaces take appropriate steps to comply with bullying and harassment regulations.	
2. Rates of psychological incident and injury reporting.		2. Short-term: increase incident reporting – to reflect increasing awareness and reducing stigma of reporting.	
3. Psychological injury rates.		3. Longer-term: reduce incidents and durations through prevention programming to respond to significant risk factors.	

Priority Focus Area 3

3 Focused support for supervisors

Focus for 2025–2030

Focused support for supervisors—For 2025/26, the focus will be on helping supervisors build stronger safety capabilities.

In future years, we will focus on supporting workplaces with high priority or unique needs, like working with employers with a history of injuries.

What does data and best practices show?

- Prevention leaders like Ontario, BC, and Saskatchewan (see Appendix for data) show that targeted support for small businesses, strong enforcement, and hands-on follow-up after serious incidents can improve safety, boost compliance, and reduce workplace fatalities.
- While many prevention network members have access to injury data, many requested better information that would help them design effective prevention actions and programs and measure progress in real time.
- Small businesses make up 98% of employers in Nova Scotia, and many need more support with safety and compliance.
- 73% of NS supervisors surveyed rated clear procedures for reporting safety concerns as either very or extremely helpful. Supervisors see strong potential in reporting processes for hazard identification, but inconsistent application and lack of follow-up erode confidence.

See appendix for details on current state, best practices, and challenges.

Action Plan

	Deliverables	Partners	Timeline
Awareness and Education	Serious/fatal injuries: Share lessons learned with prevention network partners across all industry sectors, and identify actions to reduce risks.	WCB, LSI, Safety Associations	March 2026

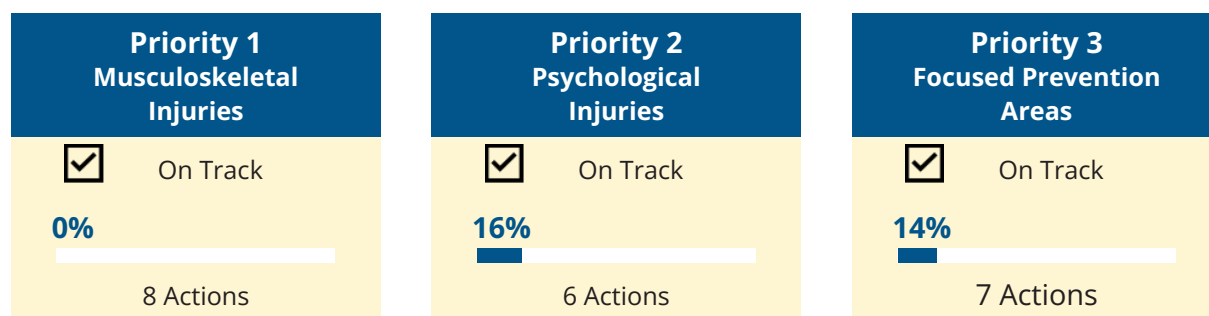
Action Plan			
	Deliverables	Partners	Timeline
Awareness and Education (cont'd)	Data Sharing and Information:		
	• Create a WCB and LSI shared data repository—to share data on prevention and compliance between the two organizations.	WCB, LSI	<i>Completed</i>
	• Regularly review new technology and AI opportunities to advance prevention.	WCB, LSI	<i>Yearly, ongoing</i>
	• Provide helpful injury and trend information to the prevention network.	WCB, LSI	<i>Yearly, ongoing</i>
Targeted Initiatives and Programs	Small Businesses: Pilot the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) business safety portal with 200 small businesses in Nova Scotia.	WCB, LSI, Small Businesses	<i>Launched by Sept 2026</i>
	Supervisors: Through promotion and compliance, empower supervisors to improve Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) priority hazards identification and mitigations (IRS promotion for supervisors).	LSI, Safety Associations	<i>By end of 2026</i>
How we will measure progress		How we will know if we are successful	
1. Number of reportable injuries, across all industry sectors in Nova Scotia and proportionate to workforce size.		1. Reduce number of reportable injuries ¹ .	
2. Rates of compliance across all industry sectors across the province.		2. Increase compliance across all industry sectors.	
		3. Programming to respond to significant risk factors.	

¹ As defined in the Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act

Measuring Success

Our 2025-2030 Workplace Injury Prevention Scorecard

We track both leading indicators (preventing injuries before they happen) and lagging indicators (measuring the impact of our efforts over time). We chose these indicators so that we track not only fewer injuries, but also improvements in the culture and conditions that prevent them from happening in the first place.



Prevention Indicators	Benchmark	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2030 Target
LAGGING INDICATORS							
Injury Frequency, per 100 workers	1.31						1.16
Injury Duration, per 100 workers	270 days						174 days
Number of serious injuries, all sectors	Benchmark To Be Determined						To Be Determined
LEADING INDICATORS							
Compliance rate for OHS priority hazards, across all sectors	67%						75%
Participation in safety culture assessments, targeted sectors	Benchmark To Be Determined						70%
Improvements in leadership commitment to safety	Benchmark To Be Determined						To Be Determined
Improvements in worker confidence in reporting unsafe conditions	Benchmark To Be Determined						To Be Determined

Serious injuries refer to reportable injuries, as defined in Nova Scotia's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*—they include fractures, hospital admissions, life-threatening incidents, or death, unless the injury qualifies for the first exception.

Moving Forward Together

Nova Scotia has built strong momentum in workplace injury prevention. By working together with shared accountability, clear roles, and coordinated efforts, our prevention network can continue to reduce workplace injuries and create safer environments for all workers.

This framework provides the structure to focus our collective efforts to deliver the greatest impact. Success depends on all partners—WCB, LSI, safety associations, employers, workers, and others—playing their part in creating safer workplaces together.

Our progress will be measured not just in statistics, but in respect in workplaces, lives protected and greater workplace productivity. When all partners work as one prevention system, we can achieve results that no single organization could accomplish alone.

Additional Information

Context and Considerations for Taking Action

How are actions identified?

Once priorities are determined, actions are planned, and key performance indicators (KPIs) are set.

Actions are informed by best practices in injury prevention from Nova Scotia and across Canada. The action plan is flexible and updated as we learn and improve.

Understanding the current state and best practices for our 2025 – 2030 priorities¹:

Priority 1: Sprains, strains, and other musculoskeletal injuries

Current State in Nova Scotia

- Sprains, strains, and other musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) have been the most common workplace injury in Nova Scotia for several years. In 2024, they made up 61% of all WCB claims that caused time off work.
- MSIs happen in many industries, especially in caring jobs like health and social services, where workers often put their clients' safety before their own.
- 67% of Nova Scotian supervisors surveyed consider safety training on lifting techniques and equipment as very or extremely helpful. However, 18% observe that safety initiatives miss to create and sustain meaningful behaviour change, with workers reverting to old and ingrained habits after training or other safety efforts.
- Supervisors are the frontline in ensuring MSIs are prevented through correct equipment use, coaching, and reinforcement of safe practices. When reporting pathways or equipment access break down, supervisors lose credibility, and it becomes more challenging for workers to engage in behaviour change. Strengthening supervisor capacity and authority for training reinforcement, equipment provision, and hazard reporting directly reduces MSI risk.
- Previously, workers in home care or long-term care in Nova Scotia were more likely to be injured than in any other sector. From 2018 to 2024, multiple partners worked together to support these sectors by identifying key safety competencies for leaders and workers, offering specialized inspections to foster improved OHS compliance, and universal employee support and return-to-work services. They also researched and applied best practices to reduce high injury rates and recovery times specifically for safe handling and mobility and violence prevention:
 - From 2017-2024, injury rates in Nova Scotia dropped by 48% in home care and 32% in long-term care and are now at historical lows, despite growth in the workforce.

Priority 1: Sprains, strains, and other musculoskeletal injuries

Best Practices (cont.)

- Preventing musculoskeletal injuries is also a priority prevention area across Canada—most provinces report it as the injury type with the highest aggregate cost and impact. Across Canadian leaders, there has been progress in MSI prevention outcomes recently including:
 - Manitoba: From 2017-2024, MSIs decreased by 7% from 8,316 to 7,728 total claims.
 - Ontario: From 2021-2023, MSI time-loss injury frequency decreased by 10.5% from 0.38 to 0.34 per 100 workers.
 - BC: From 2021-2024, MSI claims decreased by 4% from 19,031 to 18,268 total claims.
- What are these leaders doing in terms of prevention?
 - Ontario, BC, and Manitoba all offer useful tools (e.g., risk assessments, checklists and worksheets, videos, training guides), training, and other guidance focused on safe body movements and worker involvement in programming, seasonal safety talks such as being aware of winter conditions for walking, etc.
- Ontario and BC have also decreased MSIs in high-risk industry sectors. In BC (manufacturing) and Ontario (healthcare), Communities of Practice for high-risk industries help workers and employers share best practices and work together to reduce common injury risks. They share a strong focus on ergonomics and physical risk prevention through training and education such as safe lifting, using lifts and equipment aids, repetitive motion control measures, and the avoidance of awkward postures, etc.):
 - BC: From 2015-2024, MSIs in the manufacturing sector have decreased by 26.3% from 0.99 to 0.73 per 100 workers.
 - Ontario: From 2022-2023, MSI claims in the healthcare sector decreased by 6.6% from 1,860 to 1,737 total claims.

Barriers and Challenges

- MSIs come in many forms and affect different jobs—which can make it hard for employers to know where to begin.
- Employers across Nova Scotia are at different stages in their prevention journeys and safety culture—but most still face many muscle and joint injury cases.
- There's a wealth of data about these injuries—the challenge is to use this information in a way that creates action to prevent them.

Priority 2: Psychological injuries, focusing on harassment and traumatic incidents

Current State in Nova Scotia

- In 2024, traumatic psychological injuries hit a record high in Nova Scotia—with 194 cases causing workers to miss time, especially among first responders.
- Also in 2024, the Government of Nova Scotia passed legislation making it possible to get compensation for psychological injuries caused by long-term stress or workplace harassment.
- WCB and LSI introduced new tools, resources, and services in 2024 to help workers and employers prevent and manage psychological injuries.
- WCB and LSI have focused heavily on raising awareness and providing education about psychological injuries in 2024-25.
- 95% of NS supervisors surveyed feel personally committed to setting a good example on both physical and psychological safety. However, many highlighted that they don't truly feel encouraged or empowered especially around psychological safety. Supervisors are gatekeepers of workplace culture. Their daily actions can normalize respectful workplaces or allow harassment and stigma to persist. Without specific training and tools for psychological safety, even well-meaning supervisors feel underprepared. Equipping supervisors to model behaviours, intervene early, and foster respectful team dynamics is critical to preventing harassment and traumatic psychological injuries.

Best Practices

- Preventing psychological injuries is still new across Canada—and more cases will be reported as prevention efforts start to change how people act. Across Canadian leaders, more claims mean greater awareness and fewer barriers to report incidents:
 - Ontario: From 2018-2024, psychological injury claims increased by 15.4% from 2,549 to 2,942 total claims.
 - BC: From 2020-2024, psychological injury claims increased by 64% from 4,437 to 7,258 total claims.
 - Saskatchewan: From 2017-2021, psychological injury claims increased by 36.8% from 174 to 238 total accepted claims.
- What are these leaders doing in terms of prevention?
 - Saskatchewan has proactive policies, a central online resource, expert partnerships, and using data to help employers.
 - In 2025, Ontario created a toolbox to help workplaces of all sizes assess their risks and build prevention plans that target violence and harassment.
 - BC offers a toolkit on bullying and harassment, as well as workshops, webinars, and peer-led sessions for workers and supervisors.

Priority 2: Psychological injuries, focusing on harassment and traumatic incidents

Barriers and Challenges

- 2025 is the first year Nova Scotia is providing compensation for gradual onset psychological injury and workplace harassment—WCB, LSI, and prevention partners are still learning about trends and practices.
- Regulations have recently been introduced in Nova Scotia to help employers know what they need to do.
- Across Canada, reporting of psychological injuries is expected to rise as awareness and acceptance grow, but success will be defined less by fewer claims and more by supporting workers to recover sooner and spend less time away from work.

Priority 3: Focused support for supervisors**Current State in Nova Scotia**

- As of 2023, businesses with 1-99 employees make up 98% of all Nova Scotia employers - many of which don't know where to begin with safety and following rules, and need access to resources, tools, and support.
- Nova Scotia is improving workplace safety compliance with new legislation and regulations on preventing harassment and supporting mental health.
- In 2024, there were 20 workplace-related fatalities in Nova Scotia, across several industry sectors—up from 18 in 2024.
- 73% of NS supervisors surveyed rated clear procedures for reporting safety concerns as either very or extremely helpful. Supervisors see strong potential in reporting processes for hazard identification, but inconsistent application and lack of follow-up erode confidence. Compliance cannot rely on policy alone. Effective hazard identification depends on reliable reporting pathways and supervisors' ability to notice and act on risks in real time. Sustained mitigation requires initiatives that are practical, reinforced, and supported by leadership follow-through, not one-off campaigns.

Best Practices

Small Businesses:

- As of December 2023, there were 1.10 million employer businesses in Canada. Of these, 1.07 million (98.1%) were small businesses, demonstrating the significance of small businesses to the workforce context and to injury prevention across the country.
 - Ontario is a leader in supporting small businesses to prevent injuries—small business membership in their Health and Safety Excellence Program has increased to 51%. Approved providers lead businesses through 41 safety topics to help them gain accreditation and recognition for excellence in health and safety management. Each of the 41 topics completed earns rebates or incentives against WSIB premiums for workplaces.
 - Ontario has implemented several initiatives to improve small business safety – in 2025 they piloted the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) new business safety portal to provide resources, tools and guidance to help improve safety compliance and outcomes amongst small businesses.

Prevention through Compliance:

- Compliance with Occupational Health and Safety requirements is not only required by employers and workers—it also reduces the likelihood of accidents and injuries.
 - BC leads the country in safety compliance with strong rules, active enforcement, and tailored support and training. Their prevention efforts span encompass workplace inspections, education efforts, consultations with employers, and worksite investigations. They issue orders to obtain immediate compliance and

Priority 3: Focused support for supervisors

Best Practices (cont.)

- designed to educate, then reinforce learning and improvement in workplace safety. They also have a dedicated stream for proactive inspections to generate awareness and learning in targeted sectors. Their focus on compliance has helped lower injury rates (2.07 injuries per 100 workers in 2023, down from 2.24 per 100 in 2021).

Prevention of Serious Injuries and Fatalities:

- Everyone has the right to a safe work environment, and any fatality is one too many.
- Through their multi-year fatalities and serious injuries prevention strategy, WorkSafe Saskatchewan's prevention team works with employers to investigate serious injuries and create action plans for future prevention. Saskatchewan has seen workplace-related fatalities slowly drop, reaching a record low of 27 in 2024.
- The Institute for Work and Health (Ontario, Canada) found in 2006 that workers with less than one month on the job had four times the injury claim rate compared to those with over a year of tenure [Men at 5 times the risk, and women at 3.3 times]. A second study from 1999-2008 reaffirmed that new workers had over three times the risk of lost time injury in their first month of work.
- Engagement surveys for this project with Nova Scotian workers identifies that safety information materials are rarely available or hard to find in their workplaces. They also indicated that the information is difficult to understand due to the density of information, being full of legal jargon, not being job-specific enough, and can feel overwhelming, especially for newcomers.
- Manitoba identifies "New Workers" as workers who are new to the workforce and young workers between 15 to 24, new to the Canadian workforce with 5 years or less of experience in Canada, or new to their specific job or occupation, such as seasonal workers. They offer a New Worker Orientation and Training Guide which covers rights and responsibilities of workplace parties, OHS orientation, things to consider, and resources such as helpful tips and new workers resources. The number of severe injuries in Manitoba has declined from 3,051 in 2020 to 2,832 in 2024.

1 Best practices do not reflect proven causal impact on workplace injury rates. In this best practice review, targeted engagements and triangulating multiple points of data were used to build a comprehensive understanding of workplace safety initiatives and their outcomes and increase confidence in the findings and insights in the analysis.