Smas

Building safer futures:

How Smas-certified contractors outperform UK construction Health & Safety benchmarks

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About the author

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Adam's goal is to lead with confidence and knowledge, making modern complex issues digestible by breaking down technical jargon and turning it into clear, actionable insight. He is a Chartered Quality Professional of the CQI, A Chartered Fellow with the CMI, and a Technical Member of IOSH. He has recently achieved an MBA with Distinction from Exeter University, a Post-Graduate diploma with Distinction in strategic leadership and a Dean's award for exceptional performance.

As the Technical Director for Smas Worksafe, Adam helps contractors across the UK gain nationally recognised certifications. Over the past decade, he has established himself as a thought leader with a deep passion for the intersection of technology, regulation, and behavioural science. He maintains a strong interest in Industry 4.0, digitalisation, and the evolving future of Industry – particularly how intelligent systems, data, and automation can enable safer, more ethical, and higher-performing organisations.

Executive summary

This report presents a thorough, data-backed analysis that compares safety outcomes for Smas-certified contractors against national benchmarks set up by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

To examine RIDDOR accident incident rates (AIR), fatal industry statistics, and both HSE (2025) and Local authority (2024) enforcement activity, we've drawn from a sample of anonymised data from over 35,000 assessments, completed between 2018 and 2024.

We found that Smas-certified contractors demonstrate a substantially better safety performance than the national average. Specifically, they experience 76.88% fewer RIDDOR-reportable incidents and 77.58% fewer fatal injuries compared to the construction sector benchmark. What's more, enforcement actions against certified contractors are 63.10% lower than the national all-authority rate.

This report also looks at the influence of how long a contractor has had their certification, as well as company size. We found that, whilst longer-tenured and medium-sized firms report slightly higher incident and enforcement rates, these are likely due to more complex site operations and better reporting accuracy – not because of reduced safety standards.

For clients and principal contractors, this validates Smas certification as a strategic partner for managing supply chain risks. For contractors, it highlights the value of certification as a commitment to safety and commercial readiness.

Smas Worksafe certification is more than just administrative – it delivers measurable safety benefits, regulatory assurance, and offers a platform for continuous improvement in one of the UK's most high-risk sectors.

A note on data sources

Smas safety performance uses incident and enforcement information provided during the assessment process, which is routinely cross-checked against national databases to confirm accuracy. National benchmarks are taken from publicly available data published by the HSE and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The enforcement comparison uses all-authority data (HSE + Local Authorities), while HSE-only figures are used for Improvement and Prohibition Notice counts. Although the methodologies differ, the comparative trends remain a reliable indicator of relative performance.

Introduction

Smas Worksafe provides Health & Safety certification to contractors, predominantly within the UK housebuilding sector, with our three key products: **Worksafe** (Safety Schemes in Procurement – SSIP), **Worksafe Plus** (SSIP plus elements including environmental and quality management), and **Worksafe Pro** (the Common Assessment Standard). This paper looks at the correlation between specifically Smas's Worksafe certification and Health & Safety outcomes, benchmarking RIDDOR statistics, fatality rates, and enforcement actions against national averages.

Health & Safety performance is a moral obligation and a business-critical concern in the construction industry. Incidents impact lives, productivity, and reputations. This report aims to clarify how certification schemes can influence measurable safety outcomes.

Report methodology

Data overview

- SSIP assessment records from 2018 to 2024
- Over 35,000 assessments
- Data included workforce numbers, reported incidents (past 3 years) and verified HSE/Local Authority enforcement history
- All personally identifiable and company-specific information was anonymised before analysis

RIDDOR – aligned incident categories

- Injuries to non-workers
- Occupational diseases
- Over three days of incapacitation
- Over seven days of incapacitation
- Specified injuries

Statistical models used

Descriptive statistics

Summarised average AIR and fatality rates

Annualisation

Incidents annualised over three-year reporting window, per 100,000 workers

Group stratification

Tenure and company size segmentation

Proportional rate comparison

Enforcement rates calculated for Smas contractors and compared with the national all-authority enforcement rate (HSE + Local Authorities). HSE-only 2024/25 notice counts are used as totals only.

Benchmark comparison

National vs Smas data comparison for contextual insight

HSE benchmarking data

Metric	Value	Source
HSE RIDDOR AIR	213, per 100,000 workers	HSE Annual Statistics
HSE RIDDOR AIR (Construction)	297, per 100,000 workers	HSE Annual Statistics
Fatal injuries (Construction)	1.65 per 100,000 workers	HSE Annual Statistics
All enforcement notices (HSE & local Authority), 2023/24)	9,210 (all industries)	HSE Enforcement Database
HSE Improvement Notices (HSE inspectors only, 2024/25)	~3,200	HSE Annual Report 2024/25
HSE Prohibition Notices (HSE inspectors only, 2024/25)	~1,200	HSE Annual Report 2024/25
Total HSR inspector notices (2024/25)	~4,400	HSE Annual Report 2024/25
Total registered construction firms	364,514	ONS (2023)
Approx. national enforcement rate	~2.52%	Derived (9210 ÷ 364,514)

Results

RIDDOR-adjusted AIR

AIR (Per 100,000 workers)

Smas contractors show a 76.88% lower AIR compared to the 2024/25 HSE benchmark.

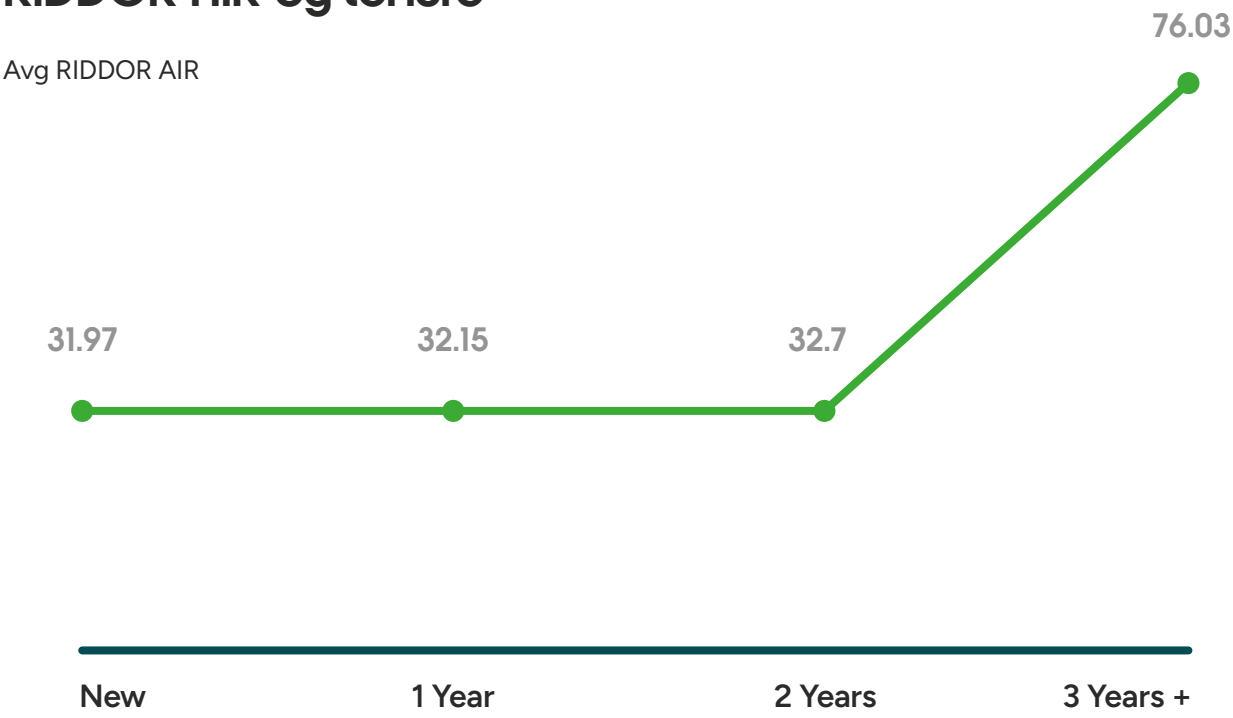
These results indicate that Smas-certified companies experience fewer incidents than the national overall benchmark (213 per 100,000 workers) and the UK construction average (297 per 100,000).

Fatal injury rate

Fatal Injury Rate (Per 100,000 Workers)

Smas contractors show a 77.58% lower fatal injury rate compared to the 2024/25 HSE benchmark.

RIDDOR AIR by tenure



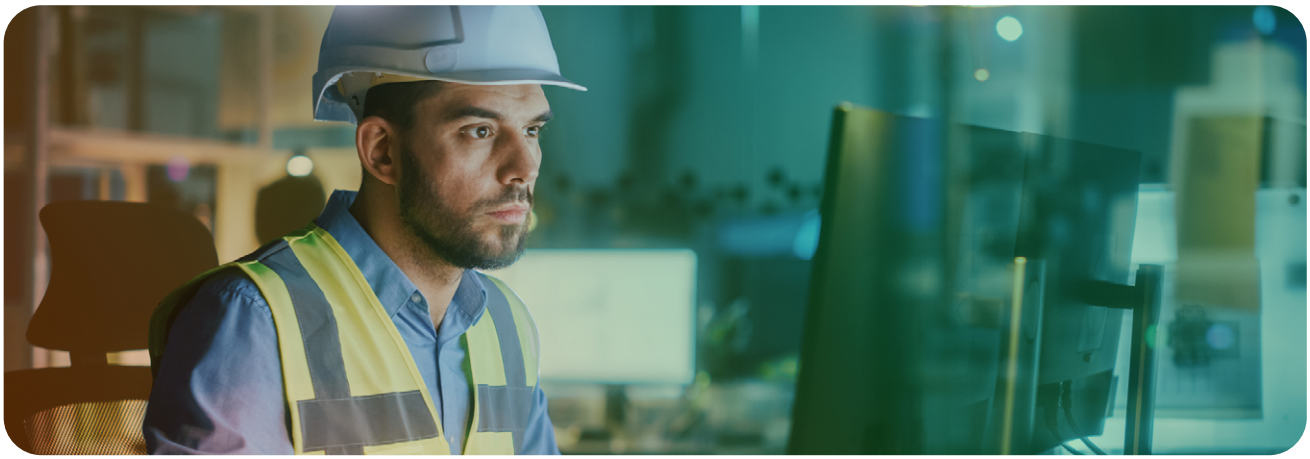
Because the AIR values across the first three tenure groups are so consistent, we're confident that this rise isn't directly caused by declining safety standards. Rather, the earlier stability suggests that reporting practices and incident severity are likely stable across shorter-tenured organisations.

The jump after three years may instead be because of:

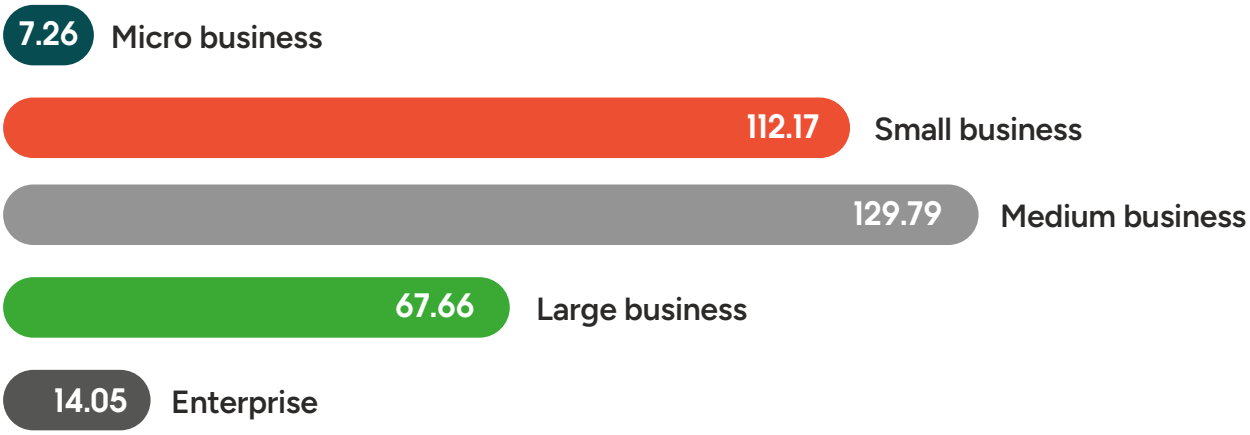
- The accumulation of more assessments over time,
- A broader range of operational scenarios,
- Or, the inability to pinpoint exactly when the incidents occurred within each tenure band due to current data reporting constraints

This trend is likely influenced by the structure of the dataset. The assessment data successfully captures incidents reported over the past three years of certification – but it generalises after that. For example, an incident could have occurred within the third, fifth, or even tenth year of continuous certification – but it would still be reported as "3 Years+" in the dataset.

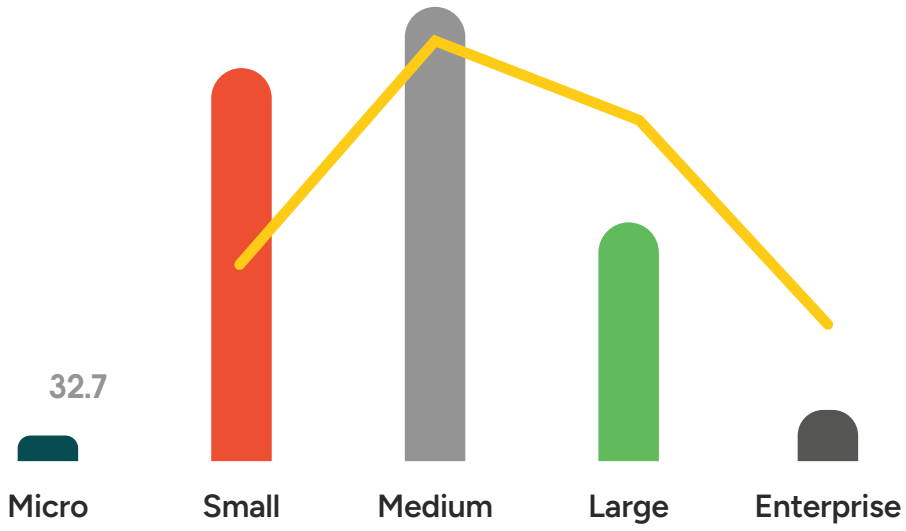
So, the AIR in the 3 Years+ group may reflect the longer reporting exposure and wider range of operational activities from firms with greater tenure, rather than poor safety performance.



Average RIDDOR AIR by company size



These results indicate that Smas-certified companies experience considerably fewer incidents than the national benchmark. Interestingly, small and medium-sized companies show the highest incident rates in the dataset. This may reflect greater exposure to operational risks or less developed safety infrastructure, whereas enterprise-level firms – with more resources and mature systems – tend to report lower rates despite their size.



This trend displays a bell-curve shape, with accident rates rising sharply from micro to small, peaking in medium-sized companies, before declining in larger firms and enterprises. The distribution suggests that the bulk of RIDDOR-reportable incidents occur within the small to medium enterprise (SME) category.

This is likely influenced by the scale and nature of operations:

- Micro firms may have limited exposure due to fewer workers or simpler site structures.
- Medium-sized businesses often operate at a larger scale, introducing more risks.
- Medium-sized businesses may also lack the robust systems, governance, or internal departments that larger firms have to properly manage risks.
- Large and enterprise-level organisations may have less AIR reports due to more structured compliance functions, dedicated safety staff, and better access to resources and training.

HSE enforcement action

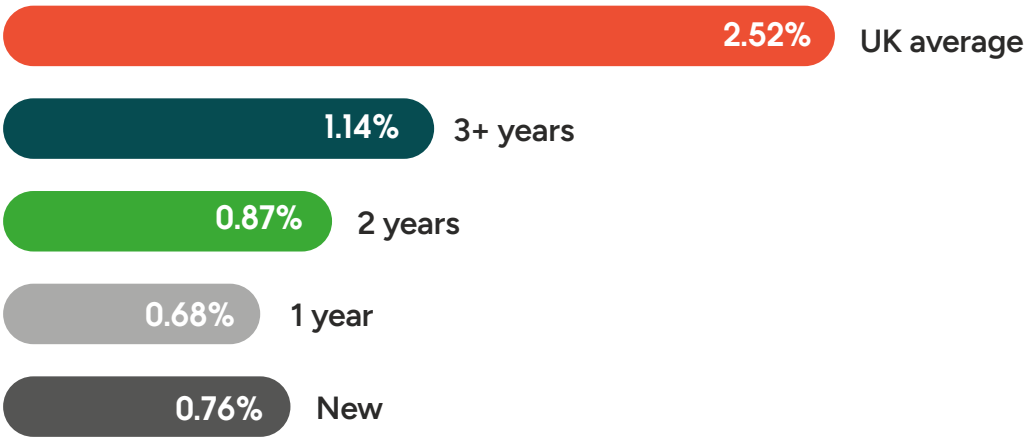
HSE Enforcement Rate

These bar charts reinforce the findings in our tables, showing that Smas-certified contractors experience significantly fewer enforcement actions than the UK construction average.

The headline figure of 0.93% enforcement for Smas contractors compares favourably to the 2.52% national average, highlighting the risk-reduction benefit of certification.

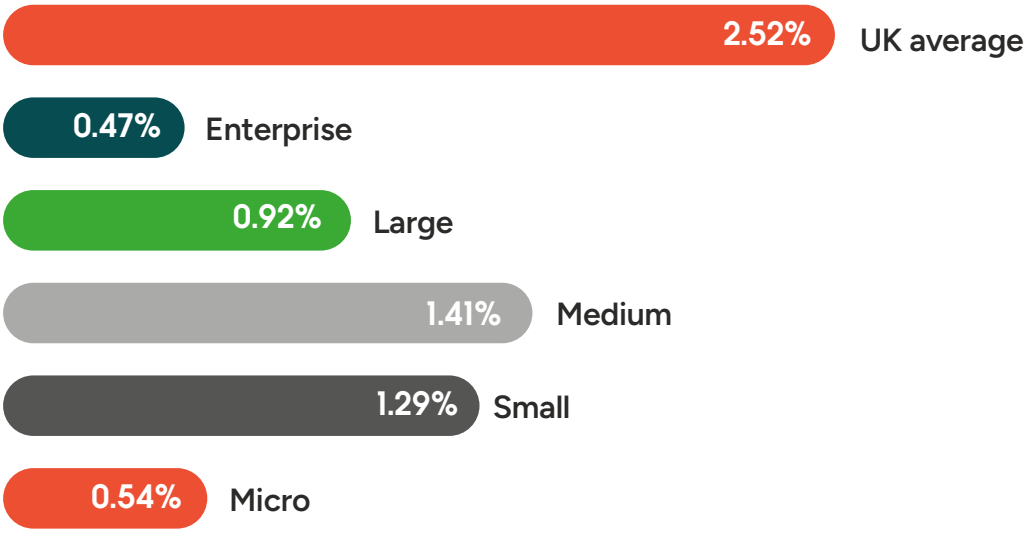
The 2.52% figure is an estimated enforcement rate calculated by dividing the total number of notices issued by HSE and Local Authorities (2023/24) across all industries by the number of registered construction firms.

Enforcement Rate by Tenure



When it comes to tenure, enforcement rates remain under 1% for companies with less than three years of certification, with a slight increase to 1.14% in firms with more than three years. This trend aligns with the earlier observations around AIR, suggesting that operational scale and broader reporting exposure over time may lead to elevated figures in older firms.

Enforcement Rate by size



We can see a similar bell-curve distribution in the enforcement data by company size, mirroring the AIR findings. Medium-sized firms show the highest enforcement rate (1.41%), with lower figures seen at both ends of the spectrum (micro (0.54%) and enterprise-sized (0.47%) businesses).

This consistency across two different safety performance indicators reinforces the idea that small to medium-sized businesses is the key changing point for safety intervention.

The data shows a consistent trend: Smas-certified contractors are far less likely to be subject to HSE enforcement action compared to the broader national average. This difference supports the idea that third-party certification drives proactive compliance and helps identify and reduce risk factors earlier.

Overall interpretation

The findings of this report show a clear pattern: **Smas-certified contractors outperform national averages across all key safety metrics**. From fatal and non-fatal incident rates to HSE enforcement activity, certification appears to correlate with measurable improvements in Health & Safety outcomes.

The evidence suggests that, across the board, Smas certification encourages:

- **Proactive risk management**
- **Consistent reporting practices**
- **Stronger safety cultures**

Whilst some higher figures appear among older and larger firms, these are likely due to greater exposure and more robust internal reporting, rather than a decline in safety performance. These pockets of higher rates showcase the importance of continuous engagement and tailored support strategies.

What's more, the bell curve trends seen across both AIR and enforcement suggest that SMEs are a vital pressure point in the industry. These businesses may benefit the most from structured certification schemes like Smas, which offer frameworks for control, guidance, and compliance maturity.

Strategic considerations for stakeholders

For clients and principal contractors

The strategic benefits of Smas-certified supply chains are significant. They can notably reduce the risk of engaging non-compliant or unsafe contractors. The statistical case for integrating Smas certification into procurement practices is now clearer than ever, offering data-backed assurance on contractor maturity and due diligence.

For contractors

The findings of this report have practical implications for contractors. Beyond compliance, Smas certification is a symbol of operational competence and cultural commitment to safety. However, this report shows that certification is not just symbolic: it is correlated with real-world safety performance. Longer-term certification may encourage a cycle of continuous improvement, especially when paired with guidance and support.

For industry and policy makers

The potential impact of Smas certification is significant. The evidence supports wider adoption of structured certification schemes. Policy makers and regulatory bodies may view schemes like Smas as tools for driving behavioural change, particularly within SMEs. There's a strong case for encouraging more widespread certification through incentive structures or supply chain expectations.

Conclusion

This report presents robust, data-driven evidence that Smas-certified contractors are achieving significantly better Health & Safety outcomes compared to national benchmarks. Namely, Smas-certified contractors have:

- An Accident Incident Rate that is 76.88% less (68.71/100,000 workers) than the UK construction industry average (297/100,000 workers)
- A fatality rate that is 77.58% lower (0.37/100,000 workers) than the UK construction industry average (1.65/100,000 workers)
- And an HSE enforcement rate that is 63.10% lower than the estimated enforcement rate (0.93% compared to 2.52%)

These findings offer compelling reassurance for clients and principal contractors: partnering with Smas-certified contractors can visibly reduce supply chain risk, improve operational continuity, and demonstrate due diligence in duty-holder roles.

For contractors, the data reinforces that achieving and maintaining Smas certification is beneficial for tendering, and serves as a measurable indicator of safety leadership and organisational maturity.

The message is clear: certification with Smas Worksafe can enhance workforce protection and commercial performance in one of the UK's most risk-exposed sectors.

Smas Worksafe – proud to support businesses across the UK

As one of the UK's leading Health & Safety providers, we've helped thousands of contractors show their commitment to workplace safety. Whatever the size of your business, we'll support you to achieve Worksafe Plus certification so you can get recognised nationwide and open up a world of opportunities for your business.

Whether you're ready to go for it now or you would like some more advice, just get in touch and we'll have a chat. You can call us on **01752 697370** or email **info@smasltd.com**.