

Overview

Workers of color experience disproportionate rates of work-related injury and illness (WRII). Workers' compensation systems, however, typically do not track race and ethnicity, making it difficult to monitor WRII disparities.

Identifying racial and ethnic differences in WRII is essential for understanding how racism affects workplace safety and workers' compensation insurance programs.

In this study, using Washington State workers' compensation claim information from 2013 through 2017, we employed the Bayesian Improved Surname Geocode (BISG) method to estimate the race and ethnicity of injured workers, and then compared WRII claim rates within industries and occupations by race and ethnicity to identify disparities.

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Research for Safe Work

The SHARP Program at the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries partners with business and labor to develop sensible, effective solutions to identify and eliminate industry-wide hazards. Learn more at: lmi.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/about-sharp

Racial Disparities in Claim Rates

Racial and ethnic disparities in workers' compensation claims rates

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Key Findings

- In all industry sectors, WRII claim rates for non-White workers were significantly different from rates for White workers.
 - Black/African Americans had considerably higher claim rates compared to Whites in every industry sector—ranging from 2.3 to 14-fold higher, including rates:
 - Fourteen times higher in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing.
 - Over eight times higher in Construction.
 - Three times higher in Wholesale and Retail Trade.
 - Hispanic/Latino claim rates were also higher than those for Whites in every industry sector, including double the rate in both the Manufacturing and Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sectors.
 - Asian/Pacific Islanders had similar or lower claim rates compared to Whites in all industry sectors, except for a rate 3.9 times higher in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing.
- Black/African American workers had the highest rates of WRII claims across all industry sectors and occupational groups.

Impact

Work-related injury rates differ by race and ethnicity both across and within industry sectors and occupational groups, and certain industries and occupations show greater disproportions in worker risk. The results of this study, and further research to better understand these disparities, can inform prevention efforts and provide policymakers with knowledge needed to identify steps to eliminate the increased risks faced by workers of color.

Find the article here:

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