



*The mission of the California Labor Lab is to extend the pursuit of health and safety for workers in traditional employment to those in a wide range of alternative arrangements in partnership with affected communities.*

# Data Brief #10: On-the-Job Injuries among California's Workers

Edward Yelin, Alicia LaFrance, Ima Varghese Mac, Trisha Iley, and Nari Rhee

---

In 2022-2023, the California Work and Health Survey collected information on the health and employment of Californians between 18 and 70 years of age. Among the health questions were a series of items about injuries sustained on-the-job in the year prior to interview among all those who were employed during this time-frame. Specifically, respondents were asked if they had had an on-the-job injury and, if so, whether the injury required medical attention, was reported to anyone in the workplace, and resulted in workers' compensation payments.

All told, about 21.5 million Californians between the ages of 18 and 70 were employed at some point in the year prior to interview.

Among these 21.5 million ...

- 1.92 million (8.9% of those employed) sustained an on-the-job injury,
- Among the 1.92 million with injuries ...
  - 70% incurred one injury while the remainder incurred two or more.
  - 1.22 million reported their injuries to employers
  - 1.05 million indicated that their injuries required medical attention
  - Over 381,000 received workers' compensation payments
    - 19.9% of those with injuries
    - 1.8% of all employed in the year prior to interview

The occupations with the highest injury rates in the year prior to interview include:

- Farming, fishing, and forestry: 18.9%
- Construction and extraction: 17.6%

- Protective services: 13.9%
- Installation, maintenance, and repair: 13.9%

The occupations with the largest number of injuries in the year prior to interview include:

- Transportation and material moving: >152,000
- Construction and extraction: >139,000
- Sales and related occupations: >124,000
- Food preparation and serving: >106,000

The industries with the highest injury rates in the year prior to interview include:

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting: 21.1%
- Utilities: 17.5%
- Accommodations/food service: 14.4%
- Services, not elsewhere listed: 13.1%

The industries with the largest number of injuries in the year prior to interview include:

- Health care and social assistance: >168,000
- Accommodations/food service: >151,000
- Construction: >134,000
- Transportation and warehousing: >128,000

The survey did not ask respondents with two or more jobs to indicate the specific job at which they were injured. However, we are able to estimate the injury rate for those with only one job, almost all of whom sustained their injuries on that job.<sup>1</sup>

Among the approximately 14.7 million with only one job in the year prior to interview...

- 1.1million (7.7%) sustained an on-the-job injury
- About 231,000 had received workers' compensation payments

---

<sup>1</sup> Since individuals were queried about characteristics of jobs held only in the week and month prior to interview, some may have incurred an injury on a job that they had left prior to the period about which they were asked about their jobs. We can be more certain that those who were in jobs held for a year or longer actually were reporting about injuries sustained in such jobs. However, such individuals may be at lower risk of injury since we have shown that contingent employment is associated with higher injury rates (see section below).

Among the 11.7 million with only one job and who had held that job for a year or longer ...

- 0.8million (7.2%) sustained an on-the-job injury
- About 140,000 had received workers' compensation payments

### **Injury Rates by Demographic Characteristics**

Probably reflecting the mix of occupations and industries, injury rates differed significantly by ...

- *Gender*: men (9.9%) have higher rates than women (7.9%)
- *Age*: Injury rates were higher among those 18-34 (11.6%) than among older workers
- *Race/ethnicity*: Hispanics (10.1%) and those of "Other races", which includes those indicating multi-race backgrounds (11.0%) have higher rates than non-Hispanic whites (7.0%), Asian Americans (8.1%), and African Americans (9.6%)
- *Education*: Injury rates decline with each increment in educational level, from 12.8% among those with a high school degree or less to 9.3% among those with some college, 6.1% among those with a BA, and 4.3% among those with some education beyond a BA

### **Injury Rates by Job Characteristics other than Occupation and Industry**

The California Work and Health Survey collected information on how people were hired to do their jobs: whether they were in any form of alternative employment, including being an independent contractor, on-call worker, employed by a temp agency, or subcontracted from one employer to another; in a contingent job, that is one not expected to last beyond the current year; and in jobs in which clients secured through an app, such as a ride share worker

Many of these forms of employment were associated with significantly higher injury rates. Specifically:

- Those hired in any form of alternative employment had injury rates of 10.9% versus those formally hired by a firm or organization (7.0%)
- Those securing work through an app had injury rates (10.9%) that were higher than those securing work through more traditional means (8.0%)
- Those in contingent jobs had higher injury rates (10.4%) than those in more permanent positions (8.0%) although the difference wasn't statistically significant ( $p < .14$ )

## Summary

About one in eleven California workers sustained an on-the-job injury in the year prior to interview. About one in 20 reported the injury to their employers and stated that the injury required medical attention, and one in 50 received workers' compensation payments for their injuries.

Injury rates were higher among men than women; among workers 18-34 than among older workers; among Hispanics and those classifying themselves as "other races, including multi-races" than among non-Hispanic whites, Asian-Pacific Islanders, and African Americans; and among those with a high school education or less.

Occupations with high injury rates included farming, fishing, and forestry, construction and extraction, protective services, and installation, maintenance, and repair. Industries with high injury rates included agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting; utilities; accommodations and food service; and services not elsewhere classified.

Injury rates were also higher among those in alternative forms of employment and those securing clients through an app than those hired in more traditional ways; they were higher among workers in contingent jobs than in those with an expectation of greater longevity, albeit not to a level that reached statistical significance.

Our system of monitoring and compensating workers for injuries sustained on the job was developed in the 20th Century when most workers were formally hired by the firm for whom they did work and when job tenures were more likely to be longer, creating an incentive for employers to create a safe working environment both because they had invested in the workers and because they might face higher worker compensation insurance rates if they did not do so. A system to lower injury rates in an era when independent contracting and other forms of alternative and contingent employment are increasingly common has not yet been devised, but may need to take a form similar to health insurance made available through the Affordable Care Act in which the provision of the benefit is divorced from individual workplaces.

---

## About the Survey

*The California Work and Health Survey (CWHS) used a random sample of cell phones to develop its study cohort of 4,014 working age Californians. The CWHS was administered between November 2022 and May 2023 by telephone interviewers or completed on-line at the respondents' choice. Both the telephone-administered and on-line surveys could be completed in English or Spanish. The survey covered current employment status, working*

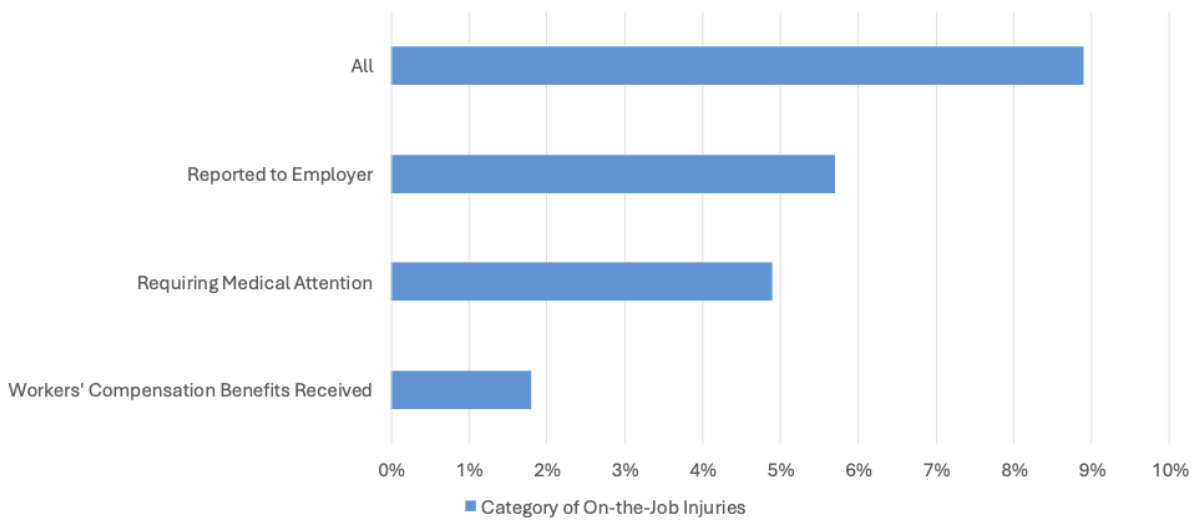
*conditions among the employed, health status, and economic well-being. The results were weighted to reflect known characteristics of the working age population of California.*

---

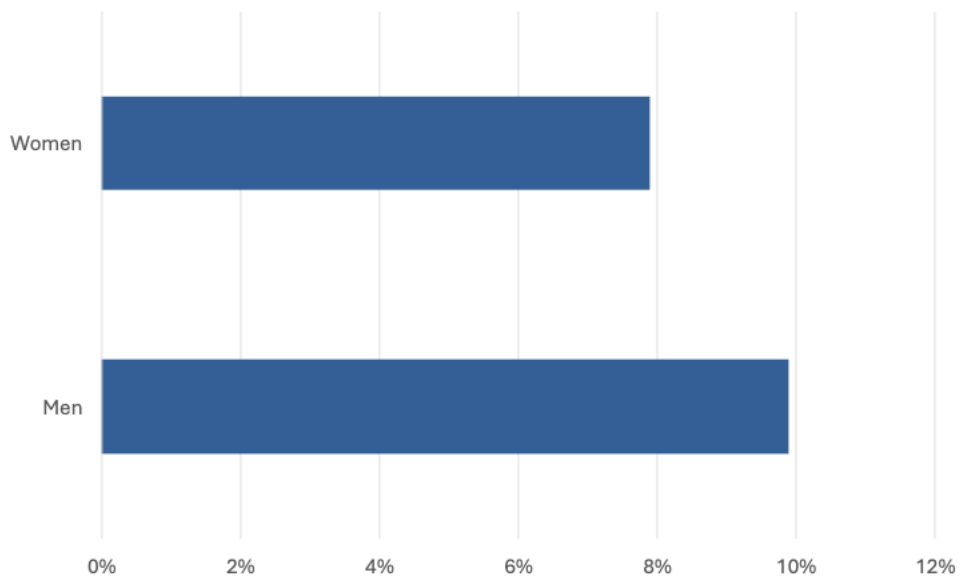
**Learn more:**

[calaborlab.ucsf.edu](https://calaborlab.ucsf.edu) | [calaborlab@ucsf.edu](mailto:calaborlab@ucsf.edu)

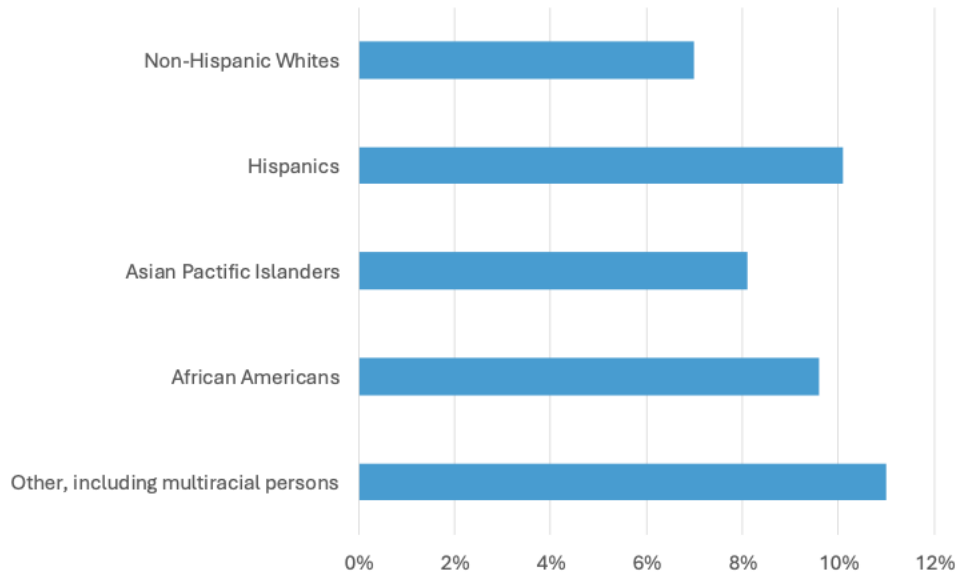
Rates of All On-the-Job Injuries and those Reported to Employers,  
Requiring Medical Attention, and for which Workers' Compensation  
Benefits Received, among Working Age Californians



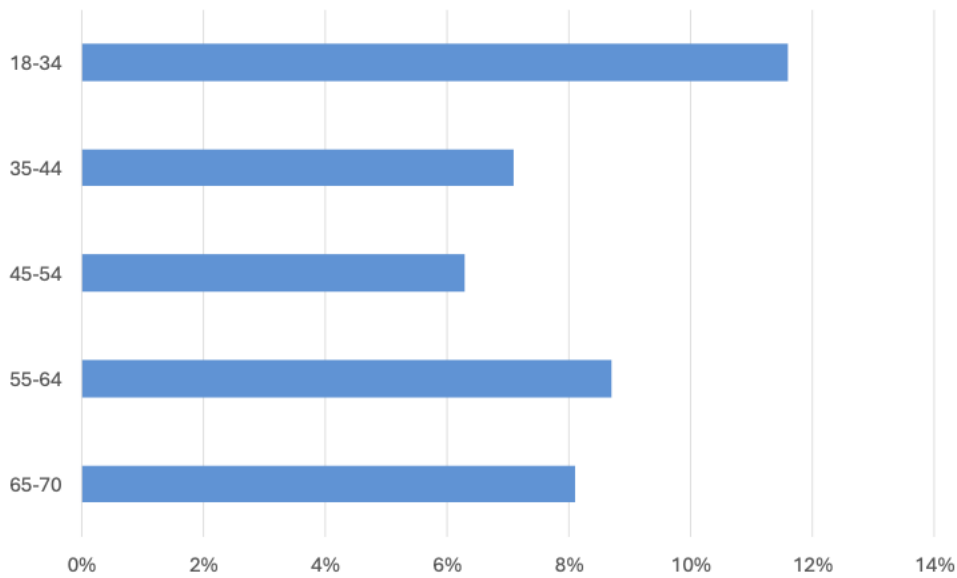
Injury Rates, by Gender



Injury Rates, by Race/Ethnicity



Injury Rates, by Age Category



Injury Rates, by Education Level

