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Chalita Brandly
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Workplace Injuries And Illnesses And Employer Costs For Workers' Compensation

Abstract

Depending on the circumstances surrounding an occupational injury or illness, employees may receive workers' compensation benefits to replace lost wages and to pay for medical expenses. This *Spotlight on Statistics* looks at workplace injury and illness data and the costs to employers for workers' compensation in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations

Keywords

workplace safety, injury, illness, workers' compensation, employer costs

Comments

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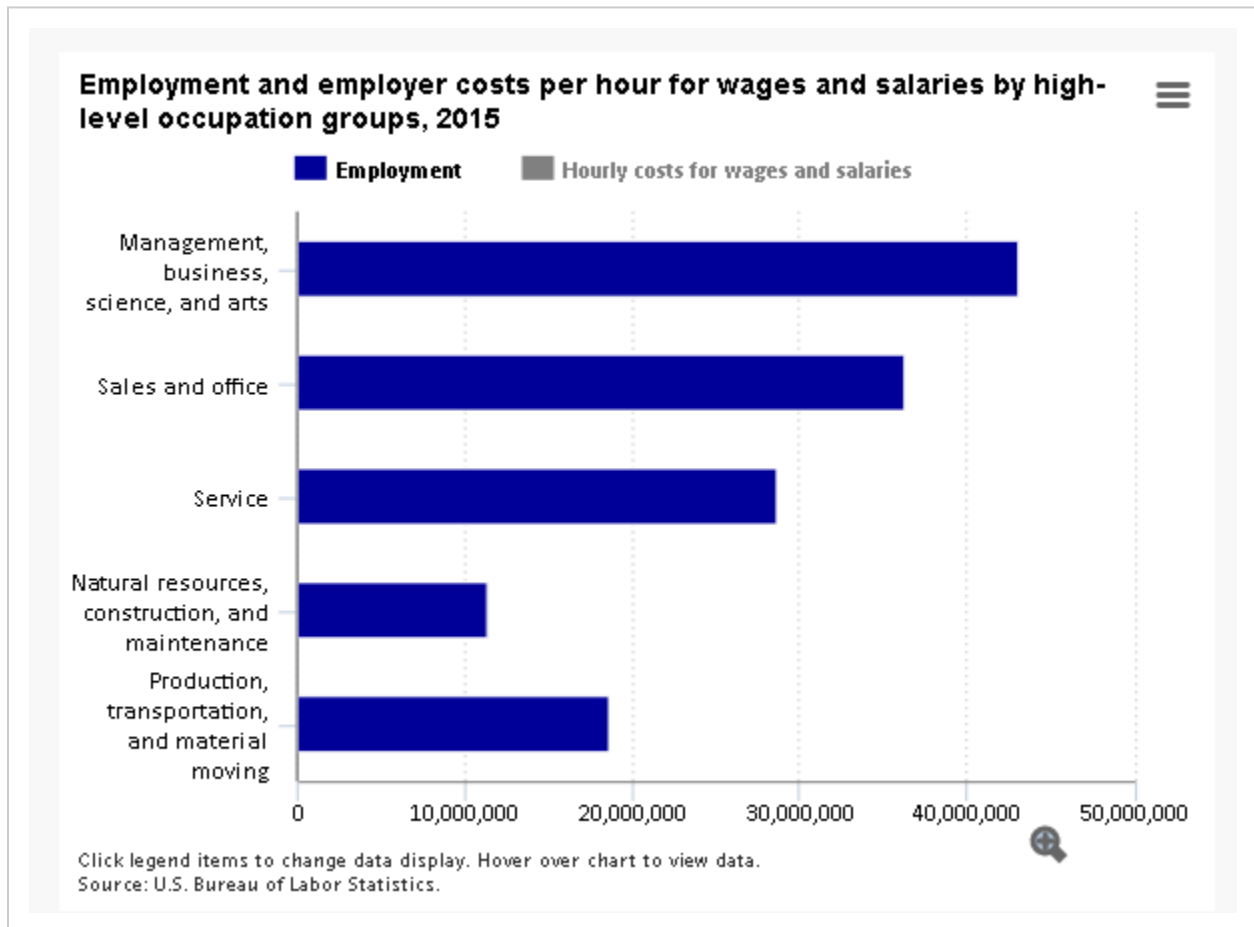
Workplace Injuries And Illnesses And Employer Costs For Workers' Compensation

Chalita Brandly

Depending on the circumstances surrounding an occupational injury or illness, employees may receive workers' compensation benefits to replace lost wages and to pay for medical expenses. This *Spotlight on Statistics* looks at workplace injury and illness data and the costs to employers for workers' compensation in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations.

More than 11 million people work in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations

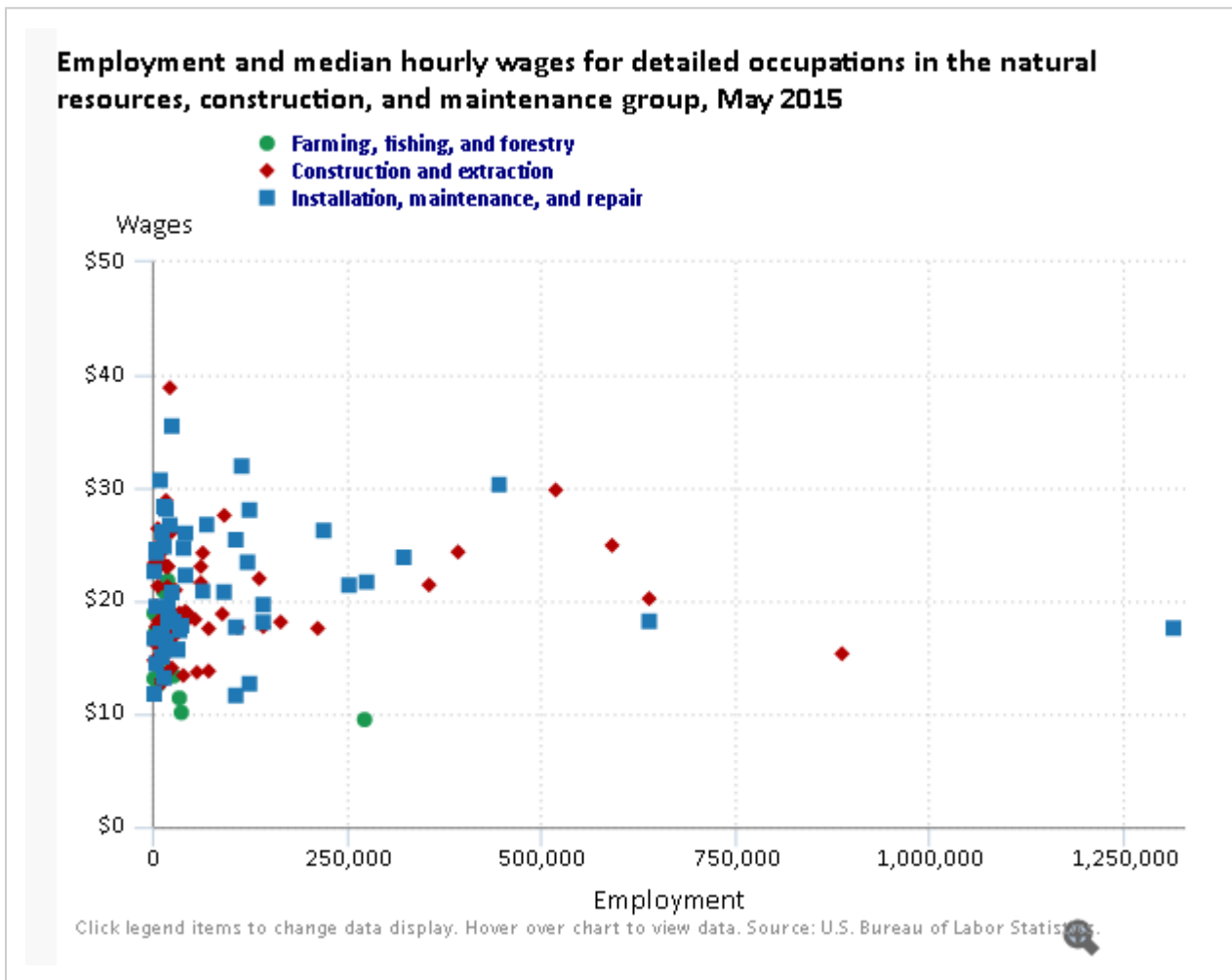
Among the five high-level civilian occupational groups, the natural resources, construction, and maintenance (NRCM) group is the smallest, in terms of employment, with 11.3 million wage and salary workers in May 2015. By contrast, the largest group, management, business, science, and arts occupations, employed 43.0 million workers in May 2015. The average employer cost for wages and salaries in NRCM occupations was \$22.68 per hour worked in March 2015, which was comparable to the hourly cost for all civilian workers (\$22.88).



What occupations are included in the natural resources, construction, and maintenance group?

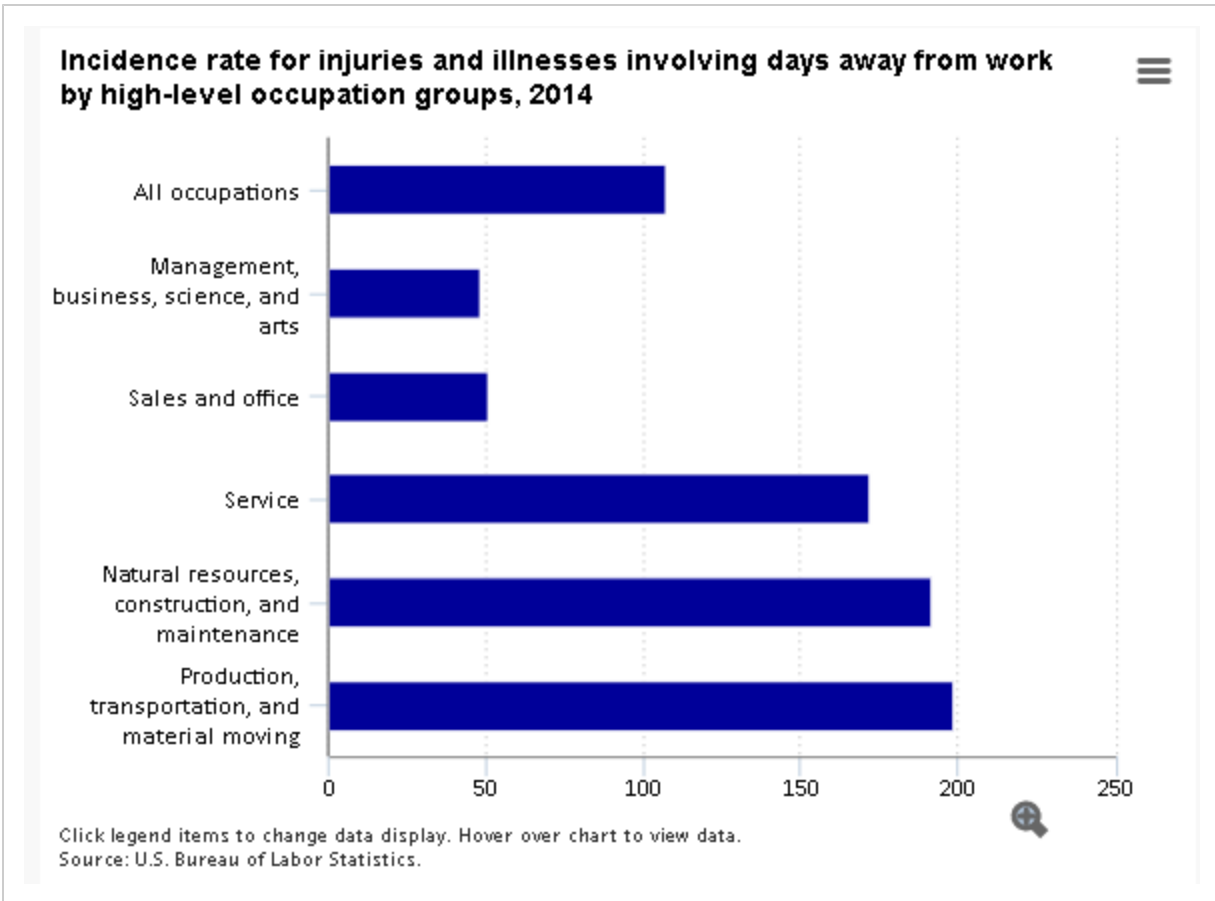
The natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (NRCM) group consists of three major occupational groups and 126 detailed occupations. In terms of employment levels in May 2015, the largest detailed occupations are maintenance and repair workers, general (1,314,560), construction laborers (887,580), carpenters (639,190), automotive service technicians and mechanics (638,080), and electricians (592,230). Among the smallest occupations are watch repairers (2,200), animal breeders (1,130), and fishers and related fishing workers (540).

The NRCM group also includes a wide range of occupations in terms of median hourly wages. The highest paid occupation is elevator installers and repairers, whose median hourly wages in May 2015 were \$38.88, or more than twice the median for all occupations (\$17.40). The occupation with the lowest hourly wages was farmworkers and laborers, crop, nursery, and greenhouse, whose median wage was \$9.51 per hour in May 2015, a little more than half the median for all occupations.



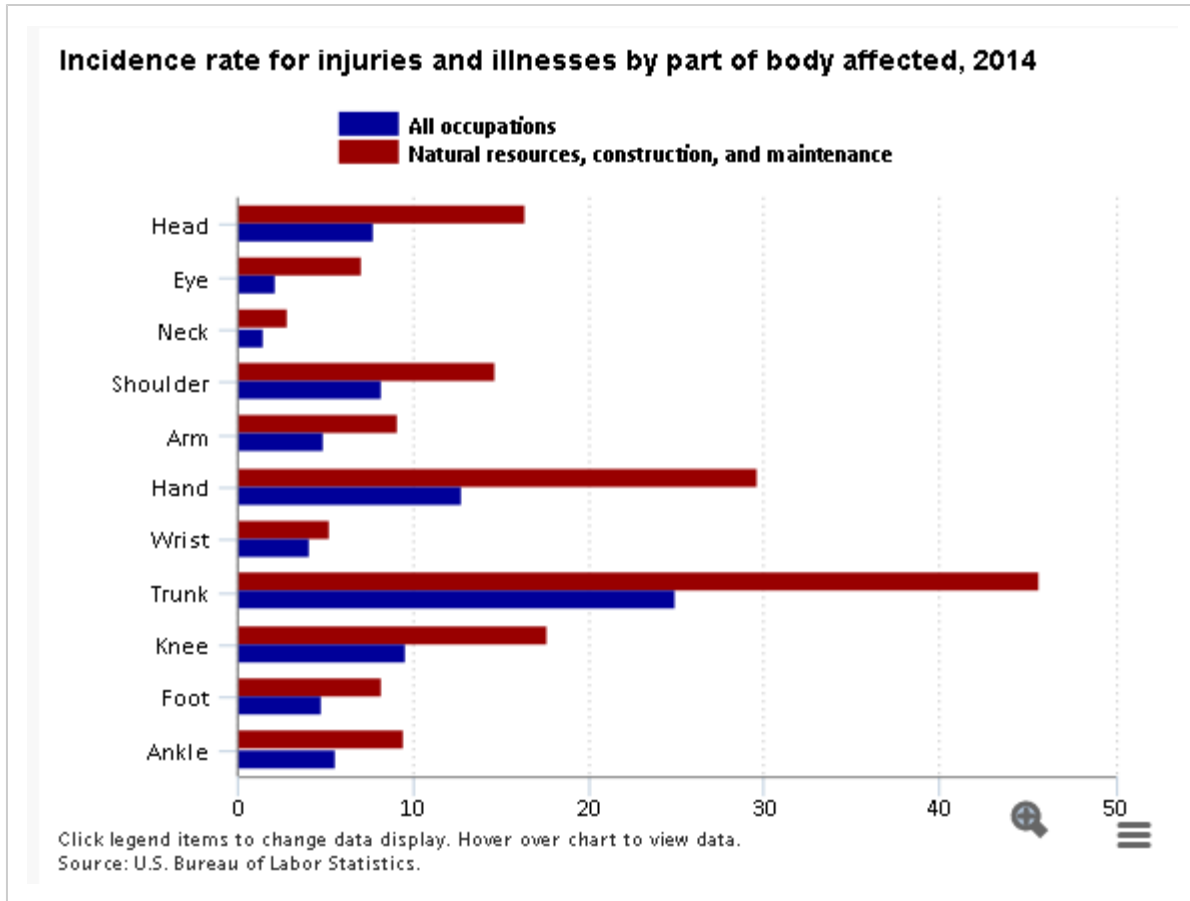
Incidence of days-away-from-work cases is high in the NRCM occupations

Although the natural resources, construction, and maintenance (NRCM) group is the smallest of the high-level occupation groups, in terms of employment, it had one of the highest rates of absences due to work-related injuries and illnesses. The incidence rate for injuries and illnesses involving days away from work—the number of such incidents per 10,000 full-time workers—was 191.6 in the NRCM occupations in 2014, compared with 107.1 for all occupations.



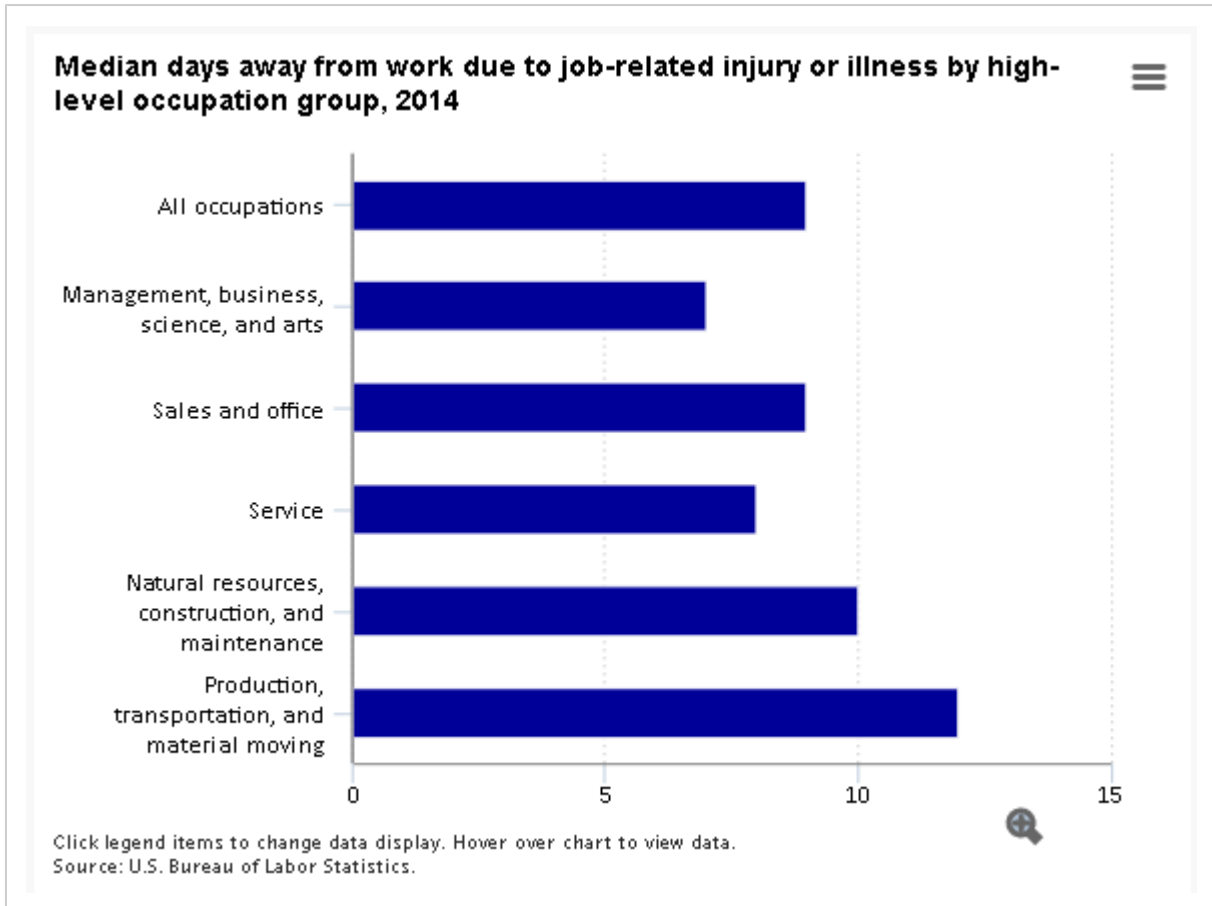
Trunk, hand, and head injuries more likely in NRCM occupations

In terms of the body part affected by a workplace injury or illness, the natural resources, construction, and maintenance (NRCM) occupations had incidence rates for the trunk, hand, and head that were nearly twice the comparable rates for all workers. In the NRCM occupations, the incidence rate for the trunk was 45.7 in 2014, compared with 24.9 for all workers. The rates in the NRCM group for the hand (29.6) and head (16.4) were also higher than for all workers (12.7 and 7.8, respectively).



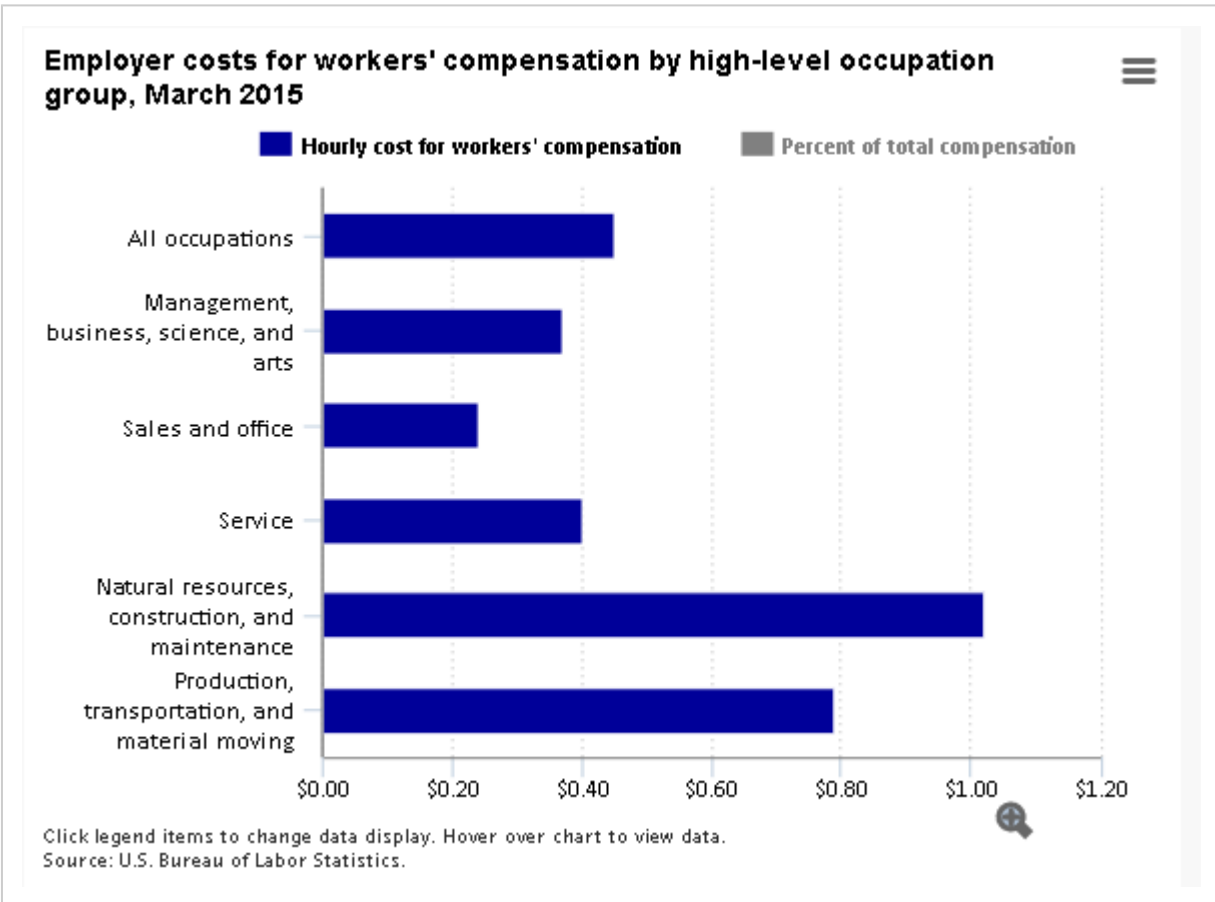
Median days away from work similar in NRCM occupations to all workers

The median number of days away from work because of a job-related injury or illness in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations was 10 days in 2014, compared with 9 days for all workers.



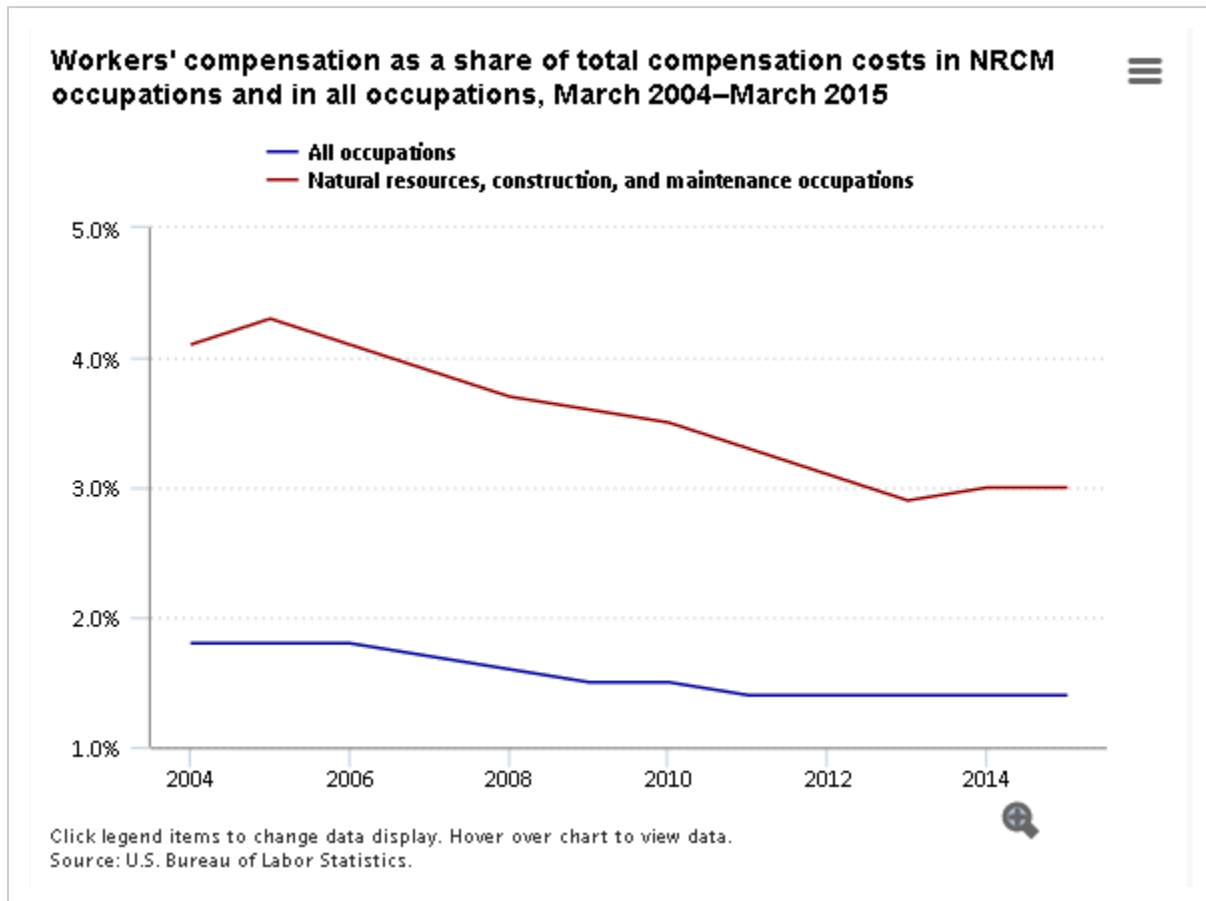
Workers' compensation costs are higher in the NRCM group than in other occupations

Workers' compensation, a system of insurance established by state law and financed by employers, provides payment to workers or their families specifically for occupational illnesses or injuries. In March 2015, employers spent an average of \$1.02 per hour worked for workers' compensation in the natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (NRCM) group, compared with \$0.45 for all occupations. Workers' compensation costs made up 3.0 percent of total compensation costs in the NRCM group, compared with 1.4 percent in all occupations.



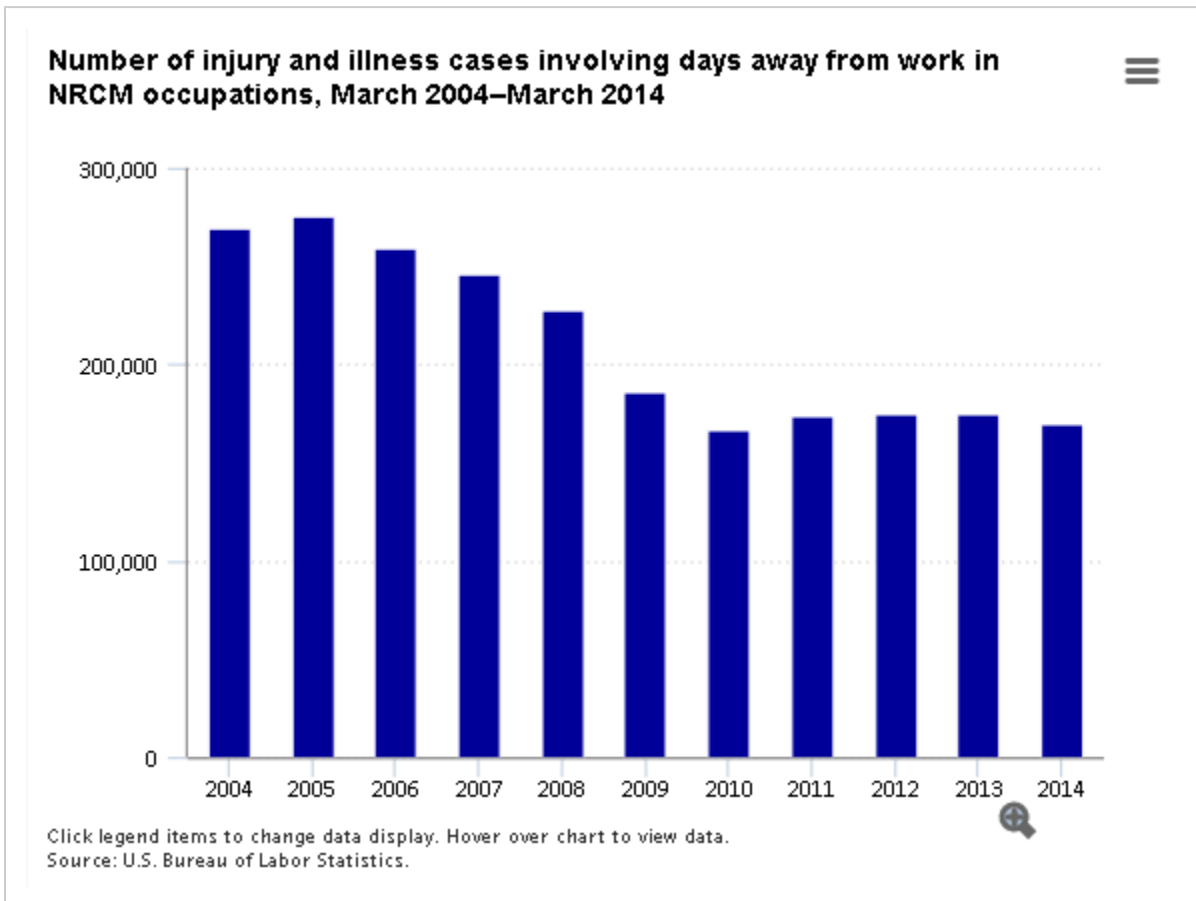
Workers' compensation costs historically much higher in NRCM occupations than other occupations

Over the period from March 2004 to March 2015, BLS estimates for workers' compensation costs as a share of total compensation costs were much higher for natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations than for all occupations.



Workers' compensation costs and the number of injury and illness cases requiring days away from work

Between March 2004 and March 2014, workers' compensation cost as a share of total compensation ranged from 3.0 percent to 4.5 percent for private industry workers in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations. Injury and illness cases requiring days away from work ranged from 166,700 to 275,800 during the same period.



More information

Chalita Brandy is an economist formerly with the Office of Compensation and Working Conditions, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The [2010 Standard Occupational Classification \(SOC\)](#) system is used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and other federal statistical agencies to classify workers into occupational categories for the purpose of collecting, calculating, or disseminating data. All workers are classified into one of 840 detailed occupations according to their occupational definition. To facilitate classification, detailed occupations are combined to form 461 broad occupations, 97 minor groups, and 23 major groups. In addition, many BLS programs categorize the major groups into one of five high-level aggregation groups (six, including military-specific occupations): management, business, science, and arts; sales and office; service; natural resources, construction, and maintenance; and production, transportation, and material moving occupations. The natural resources, construction, and maintenance (NRCM) group consists of the 3 major groups farming, forestry, and fishing; construction and extraction; and installation, maintenance, and repair occupations. See the [2010 SOC User Guide](#) for more information on the various groupings. Some BLS programs use a different title for the management-professional group: management, professional, and related occupations. For consistency, this *Spotlight on Statistics* uses the 2010 SOC title throughout: management, business, science, and arts occupations.

The [May 2015 employment](#) data are from the [Occupational Employment Statistics \(OES\)](#) program. The OES measures occupational employment and wages for all wage and salary workers in nonfarm establishments in the United States. In the OES, data are not tabulated for the high-level aggregate group natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations; estimates are available separately for the major occupational groups farming, forestry, and fishing; construction and extraction; and installation, maintenance, and repair. The OES survey does not include the self-employed, owners and partners in unincorporated firms, household workers, or unpaid family workers.

The data on injuries and illnesses are from the BLS [Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities](#) program, which provides data on work-related injuries, illnesses, and fatalities by incident, industry, geography, occupation, and other characteristics. These data are collected through the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses and the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries.

The data on workers' compensation and other employer costs are from the [National Compensation Survey – Employment Cost Trends](#) program, which produces quarterly indexes measuring change over time in labor costs (Employment Cost Index) and quarterly data measuring level of average costs per hour worked (Employer Costs for Employee Compensation).