What do we know about young workers in the US?

Young workers are a large segment of the US workforce. Over one third of US high school students work during the school year, and even more work during the summer. In fact, by the time they finish high school, 80% of US youth will have worked at some point in their lives. The US has the highest percentage of young workers in any developed nation!

Some studies show that working during youth can be both beneficial and risky, in both the short and long term. Work can teach a young person responsibility and independence, and provide skills and increased self-esteem; however, young workers are at increased risk for injury, illness, and death compared to all other workers.

The level of risk can vary considerably across occupations.

For example, 40% of young workers in precision production/craft/repair occupations are current smokers compared to 28% of all young workers.

Information related to chronic disease status and other non-injury related health information for young workers is limited. The objective of this report is to provide an overview of different aspects of the health of young US workers in the Construction sector based on the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's (NIOSH) National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) industry sector groups (http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/).

Who are young Construction workers in the US?
Demographic information

How do subgroups within the Construction sector differ across health measures?
Comparisons by sociodemographic subgroup
Demographic Characteristics

From 2004-2010, there was on average 16.9 million young workers aged 18-24 years in the US workforce.

To the right is a pie chart showing how young workers are distributed by industry sector groups. Over 7% (about 1.2 million) of young workers are employed in the Construction sector, which includes many occupations, such as: roofers, carpenters, and craft and metal workers.

The graph below shows the percentage of all young workers and those in the Construction sector across a number of demographic characteristics.

There is about an even amount of males and females among all young workers, whereas the Construction sector is almost 95% male.

Among all young workers, 15.8% are black compared to only 4.8% of young Construction workers.

One quarter of all young workers are Hispanic compared to 45.2% in the Construction sector.

Compared to 14.7% of all young workers, over one third of young Construction workers have less than a high school education.

Lastly, almost half as many young workers were uninsured compared to only those in Construction (32.6% vs. 59.7%).

*Please note HS=high school and Equiv=equivalent*
National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA)
Young workers are grouped by NORA industry sector. For more details on NORA, visit: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/

FAST FACTS

- All Workers
- Female
- Male
- Hispanic
- Non-Hispanic

Health Domains
We have grouped our findings into four broad categories:
- Health Status
- Functional Health Capabilities
- Health Behavior
- Healthcare Utilization

Only certain measures from each health domain and comparisons between gender and ethnicity are shown in this report. You can find more information at the University of Miami Occupational Research Group (UMORG) website (see bottom of page 4).

The box to the left describes the color that corresponds to each group for the following graphs.

- Health Status
  Non-Hispanic workers (12.5%) had more than twice as many asthma cases than Hispanics (5.5%), and slightly more than all young Construction workers (10.3%).

All listed groups had similar reports of having a non-HIV sexually transmitted disease (1.8%-2.1%).

Overall, 12.5% of young Construction sector workers were obese with females reporting the lowest percentage (4.7%).

- Comparisons by Demographic Characteristics

- 45% of non-Hispanic Construction workers currently smoke.
- 70% of male Construction sector workers did not go to a primary care provider within the past year.
- 80% of young Hispanic Construction workers did not meet recommended levels of physical activity.
- **Functional Health Capabilities**
  Among all young Construction workers, 5.3% reported having any functional limitation (e.g., difficulty walking, memory problems) with females having the highest percentage (7.8%).

- **Health Behavior**
  About 37.7% of young Construction workers are current smokers with non-Hispanics reporting the highest percentage (44.6%).

- **Healthcare Utilization**
  Almost two-and-a-half times as many males than females had not seen a primary care provider in the past year (69.5% vs. 28.6%).

More Hispanic Construction workers (80.3%) reported not meeting recommended levels of physical activity compared to non-Hispanics (60.1%).

**Conclusion**
Young Construction workers may be at high risk for poor health. Furthermore, certain subgroups within this sector are disproportionate in their risk, such as the two-fold difference seen in smoking between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Subgroup differences are important to consider in the development of tailored interventions in the Construction industry.

---

**How can I find more information?**

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS): [http://www.cdc.gov/NCHS/NHIS.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/NCHS/NHIS.htm)

Florida Department of Health: [http://www.doh.state.fl.us/](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/)

---

**References:**


---

**UMiamiORG**

*University of Miami Occupational Research Group*

These data were prepared by the University of Miami Occupational Research Group (UMORG). We study a wide variety of health issues in the US workforce. Visit the UMORG website for more health information on US workers: [www.umiamiorg.com](http://www.umiamiorg.com) and our sister site for information specifically on young workers: [www.flye.co](http://www.flye.co).

---

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Manuel A. Ocasio: MOcasio@med.miami.edu

David J. Lee, PhD: DLee@med.miami.edu

University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Clinical Research Building, R-669 Miami FL 33136