

The Health of Young Workers in the United States

Construction Sector



IN THIS REPORT

What do we know about young workers in the US?

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Young workers are a large segment of the US workforce.¹ Over one third of US high school students work during the school year, and even more work during the summer.² 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!³

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.^{1,2,4}

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.⁵

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

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How do subgroups within the Construction sector differ across health measures?

Comparisons by sociodemographic subgroup

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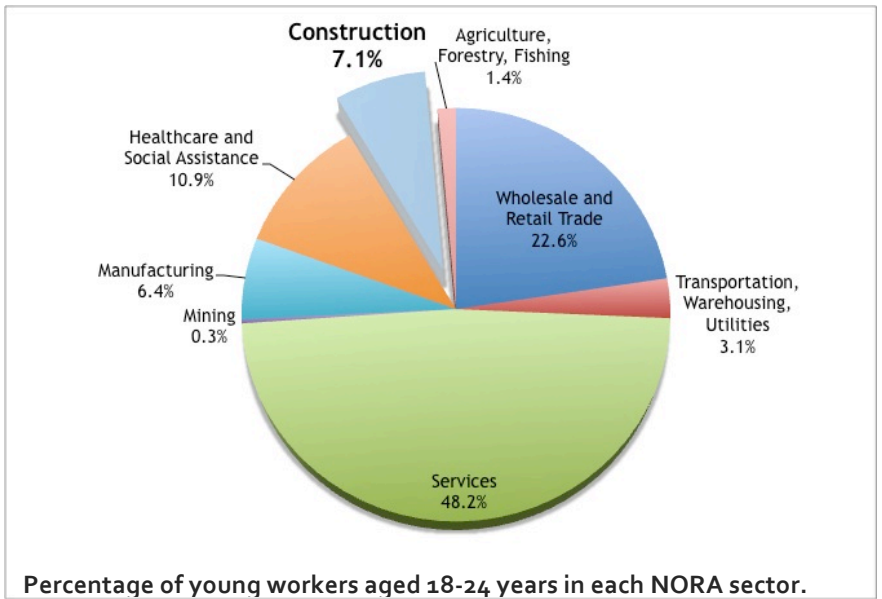
Demographic Characteristics

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



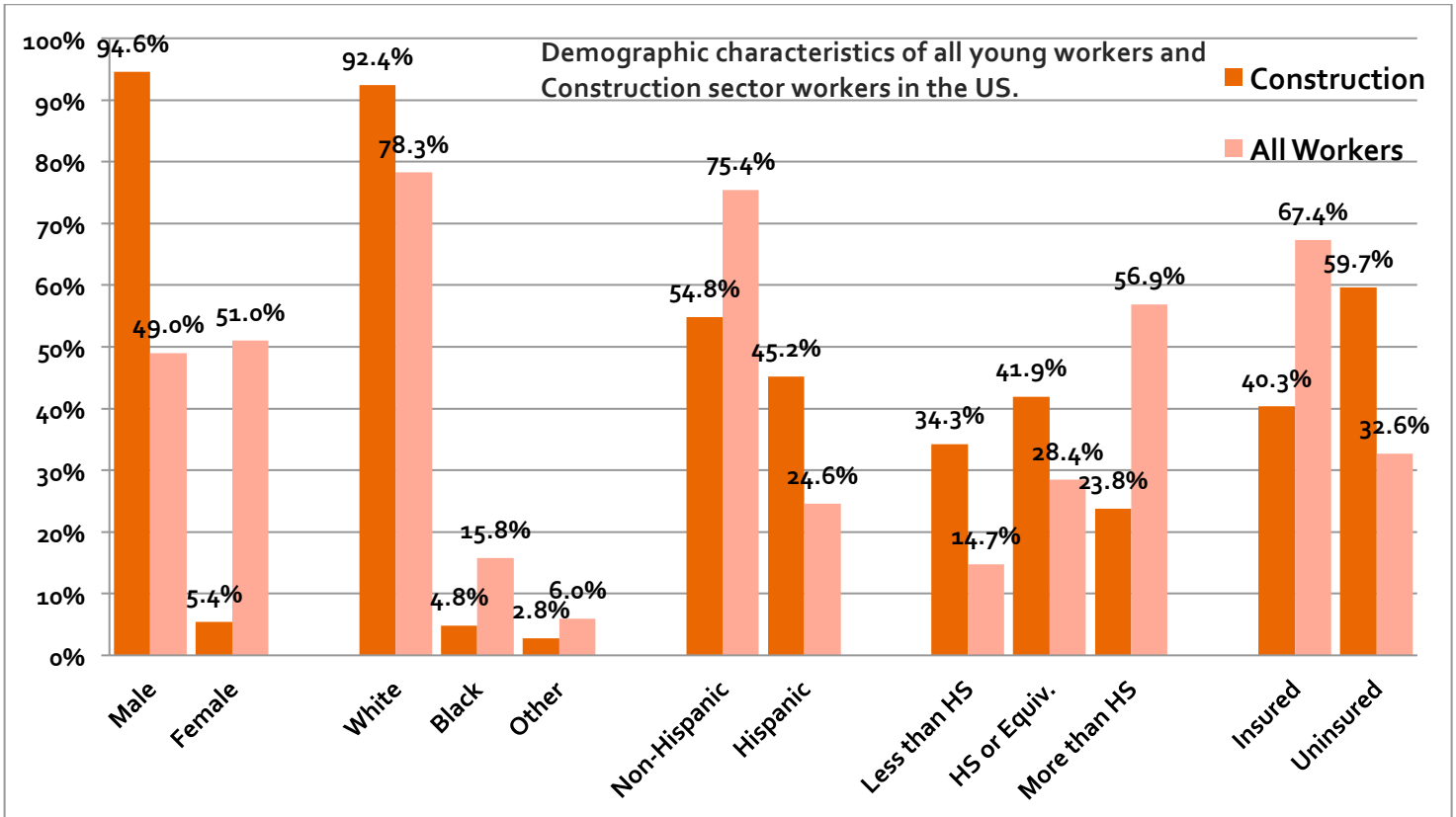
young workers, whereas the Construction sector is almost 95% male.

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%).

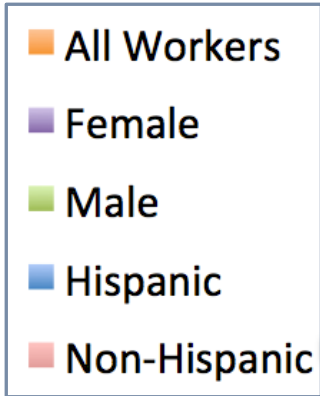


*Please note HS=high school and Equiv=equivalent

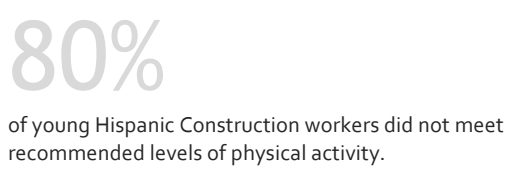
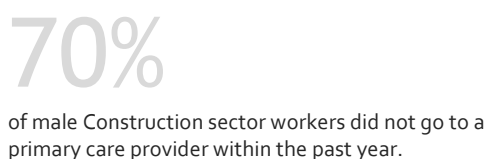
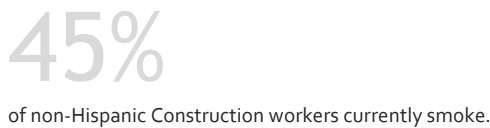


National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA)

Young workers are grouped by NORA industry sector. For more details on NORA, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/nora/>



FAST FACTS



Comparisons by Demographic Characteristics

Health Domains

We have grouped our findings into four broad categories:

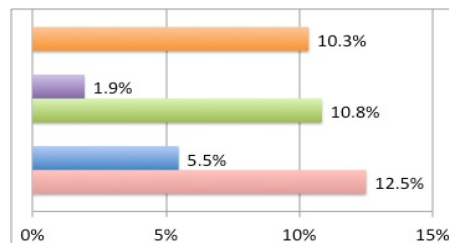
- Health Status
- Functional Health Capabilities
- Health Behavior
- Healthcare Utilization

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).

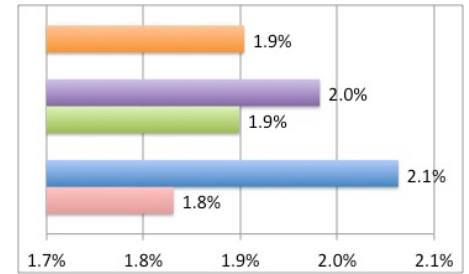
The box to the left describes the color that corresponds to each group for the following graphs.

Health Status

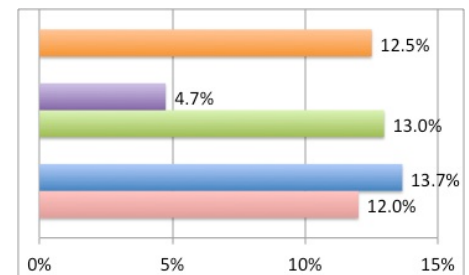
Non-Hispanic workers (12.5%) had more than twice as many asthma cases than Hispanics (5.5%), and slightly more than all young Construction workers (10.3%).



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

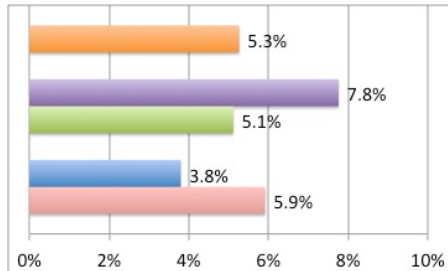


Overall, 12.5% of young Construction sector workers were obese with females reporting the lowest percentage (4.7%).



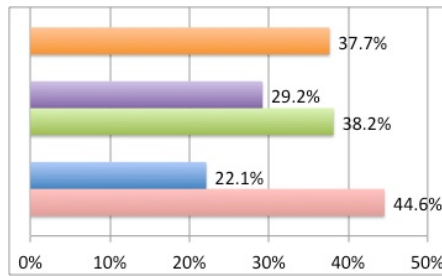
Functional Health Capabilities

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%).

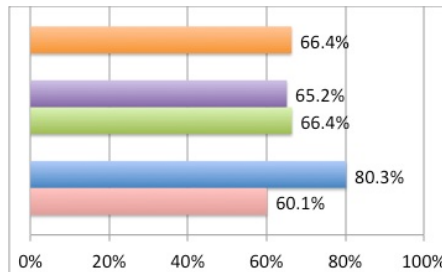


Health Behavior

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

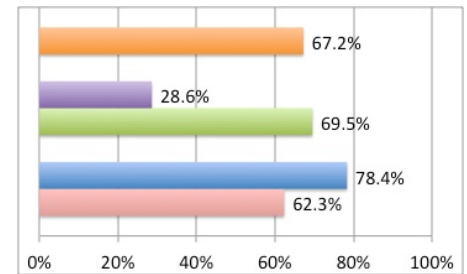


More Hispanic Construction workers (80.3%) reported not meeting recommended levels of physical activity compared to non-Hispanics (60.1%).



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%).



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>.

Florida Department of Health:
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/>

References:

1. NRC. *Protecting Youth at Work: Health, Safety and Development of Working Children and Adolescents in the US*. 1999.
2. Rubenstein H, Sternbach MR, Pollack SH. Protecting the health and safety of working teenagers. *Am Fam Physician*. Aug 1999;60(2):575-580, 587-578.
3. Wegman DH, Davis LK. Protecting youth at work. *American journal of industrial medicine*. Nov 1999;36(5):579-583.
4. Castillo DN, Davis L, Wegman DH. Young workers. *Occup Med*. Jul-Sep 1999;14(3):519-536.
5. Caban-Martinez AJ, Lee DJ, Goodman E, et al. Health indicators among unemployed and employed young adults. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine / American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Feb 2011;53(2):196-203.



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 and our sister site for information specifically on young workers: www.flye.co.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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