

31. African American Women Compared to Women of Other Races: Differences in Demographic Workforce Characteristics and Occupational Injury Morbidity Risk during 1996

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Objectives: To examine the demographic workforce characteristics and occupational injury morbidity risk among a traditionally understudied population, African American women, and to compare these characteristics to women of other races.

Methods: Demographic workforce characteristics and estimates of employment used to calculate injury rates were derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS) monthly micro data files for 1996. Injury morbidity data were obtained from a national probability sample of hospital emergency departments (EDs) in the U.S. This hospital-based surveillance system is named the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS).

Results: An examination of possible demographic workforce risk factors in the CPS data showed that a higher proportion of African American females were classified as working in cleaning and building services, protective services, and health services (25% compared to 16% for all other women), while a smaller proportion were employed as professional or management. When socioeconomic factors from the CPS data were compared, a larger proportion of African American females reported family incomes of less than \$20,000 (35% compared to 17% for both whites and women of other racial groups), and were single or without a spouse present (65% and 42%, respectively). From the injury morbidity data in NEISS, we estimate that about 141,479 (95% CI: 85,187–197,771) African American women aged 16 years or older were treated for an occupational injury in a hospital ED in the U.S. in 1996, yielding an annual rate of 2.4/100 full time equivalent workers (FTEs) (95% CI=1.4–3.3). The injury rate ratio for African American women compared to whites was 1.4, while the rate ratio was close to 1.0 compared to women of other racial groups. African American women 45–54 years of age had the highest relative injury risk compared to white women in the same age group (rate ratio=1.6). African American women 16–19 years of age had the highest injury rate (4.2/100 FTEs). The injury rates decreased steadily with increasing age for all racial groups. The body parts most frequently injured among African Americans were the trunk, back, and groin, while injuries to the hands and fingers comprised the largest proportion among both white women and women of other racial groups. By nature of injury, sprains and strains accounted for 40% of all injuries among African American women, compared to 33% and 32% for whites and other racial groups, respectively.

Conclusions: Further examination of the *NEISS* injury morbidity data are needed to code the cases according to the industry in which the patient was employed and the job tasks which were being performed at the time of injury. Focusing on high risk jobs and the types of injury incidents among this traditionally understudied population will assist public health professionals in the development of prevention strategies among these workers.

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