

The October Review

In the first few years of the 21st century, there have been many changes in the way occupational illness and injury statistics are gathered, classified, and tabulated. One benefit of these changes has been an increased ability to understand the safety and health situation of specific populations, many of which are better defined in the new data. This special issue looks at the ways the Bureau of Labor Statistics has been working to improve the data and snapshots the injury and illness pictures facing some special populations in the United States.

William J. Wiatrowski describes the new data developments: industry and occupation classification has evolved to more closely fit the modern economy; racial, ethnic, and geographic classification has become more detailed and precise; and new medical definitions are included in the data.

Occupational injuries of young workers are analyzed by Janice Windau and Samuel Meyer, and injuries, illnesses, and fatalities among older workers are discussed by Elizabeth Rogers and William J. Wiatrowski. Anne B. Hoskins reports on injuries and illnesses among women workers. Samuel Meyer covers injuries and illnesses among older farming workers and Jessica R. Sincavage focuses on Asian workers.

Phillip R. Hunt, Jong Uk Won, Allard Dembe, and Letitia Davis look at hospital discharge data as a potential source of additional information on injuries and illnesses in the workplace.

Scott Richardson contributes a visual essay on the injuries and illnesses statistics of foreign-born workers of Hispanic origin.

Another day at the ...

On an “average day” in the United States in 2004, persons aged 15 and older slept about 8.6 hours, spent 5.2 hours doing leisure and sports activities, worked for 3.7 hours, and spent 1.8 hours doing household activities. The remaining 4.7 hours were spent in a variety of other activities, including eating and drinking, attending school, and shopping. This “average day” measure reflects the average distribution of time across all persons and days.

On an average weekday, in comparison, persons employed full time spent 9.2 hours working, 7.5 hours sleeping, 3.0 hours doing leisure and sports activities, and 0.9 hour doing household activities. The remaining 3.4 hours were spent in other activities, such as those described above. You can find out more about how various segments of population spent their time in “American Time Use Survey — 2004,” news release USDL 05-1766.

Work at home

In May 2004, 20.7 million persons usually did some work at home as part of their primary job. These workers, who reported working at home at least once per week, accounted for about 15 percent of total nonagricultural employment, essentially the same percentage as in May 2001.

About half of those who usually worked at home were wage and salary workers who took work home from the job on an unpaid basis. Another 16 percent had a formal arrangement with their employer to be paid for the work they did at home. The remainder—about one-third of persons who usually worked at home in May 2004—were self-

employed.

Among those taking work home without a formal arrangement to be paid for that work, the most common reason for working at home was to “finish or catch up on work” (56 percent). An additional 32 percent reported that they worked at home at least once per week because it was the “nature of the job.”

“Coordinate work schedule with personal or family needs” and “business is conducted from home” were each cited by about 3 percent of wage and salary workers who worked at home on an unpaid basis. Find out more in “Work at Home in 2004,” news release USDL 05-1768.

Productivity up overall in retail

Productivity, as measured by output per hour, increased 6.1 percent in retail trade in 2004. Output rose by 6.5 percent while hours increased by 0.4 percent. Labor productivity rose in 21 of the 27 detailed retail trade industries in 2004. The largest increases were 18.1 percent in sporting goods and musical instrument stores and 17.2 percent in electronic shopping and mail order houses. There were declines in labor productivity in a few industries, including shoe stores, florist shops, and auto parts emporia.

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