Laborers and material movers suffered the most injuries and illnesses with days away from work, followed by heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers and nursing aides, orderlies and attendants.

Drivers/sales workers and truck drivers; laborers and material movers; nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides; construction laborers, janitors and cleaners; carpenters; and stock clerks and order fillers experienced a higher percentage of injuries and illnesses than their employment share. Retail salespersons and registered nurses experienced a lower percentage of injuries and illnesses than their employment share.

NOTE: CPS employment data was not available for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers; light or delivery service truck drivers; and nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants. These occupations were included in higher level detail on this chart.

Transportation and material movers; production workers; installation, maintenance, and repair workers; construction and extraction workers, and service workers had a much higher share of injuries and illnesses than their employment share would suggest.

Of the occupations with at least 1/2% of the total days away from work cases, heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers had a median of 14 days. Industrial machinery mechanics had a median of 12 days. Industrial truck and tractor operators and light or delivery services truck drivers each had a median of 11 days. This compared to a median of 8 days for all occupations.

Injuries and Illnesses with days away from work
(Total = 1,315,920 injuries and illnesses)

Employment
(BLS- Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages)

Good-producing industries make up about 21 percent of private industry employment but account for 31 percent of the injuries and illnesses with days away from work while service producing industries make up about 79 percent of the employment and 69 percent of the injuries and illnesses.

Almost two-thirds of the injured or ill workers were men, well above their 59 percent share of the nation’s hours worked.

A majority of injured or ill workers were 20 to 44 years old. Workers 20 to 44 had a slightly higher share of injuries and illnesses, while workers 45 and older had a somewhat lower share, than each of their hours worked shares suggest.
The median days away from work due to nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses increased as the age of the worker increased.

Workers who were with their employers for more than 5 years became injured or ill less often than their employment share suggests.

Injury and Illness Topology

Nature of disabling condition

Event or exposure

Part of body affected

Source directly producing disability

Nurse sprains her back while lifting her patient

Each injury or illness is described from four viewpoints.

In goods producing industries, contact with objects and equipment and overexertion were the leading causes of injuries and illnesses. In service providing industries, these same two events along with falls to the same level were the leading causes.

The Nature of the Disabling Condition,
Occupational Injuries and Illnesses with Days Away from Work, 2003

Nature of Injury or Illness
(1,315,920 injuries and illnesses that resulted in days away from work)

- Sprains, strains 42.9%
- Sprains and strains accounted for 563,910 cases or 43 percent of all nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses.

The back and the upper extremities were involved in almost one-half of all occupational injuries and illnesses.

Nonfatal Occupational Injuries and Illnesses by Source of Injury or Illness, 2003

(1,315,920 injuries and illnesses that resulted in days away from work)

Four sources accounted for over half of all nonfatal injuries and illnesses that resulted in days away from work: floor, ground surfaces 18.8%; worker motion or position 15.4%; containers 13.1%; and parts and materials 9.6%.

Bodily reaction and exertion, contact with objects and equipment, and falls accounted for almost 90% of nonfatal injuries and illnesses that resulted in days away from work.

Carpal tunnel syndrome had a median of 32 days away from work, followed by amputations and fractures with 30 days each.

Injuries and illnesses to the shoulder (18 days), wrist (17 days), and to the knee (14 days) took the longest median time from which to recover.

Repetitive motion, with a median of 22 days, resulted in the longest absences from work among the leading events and exposures. Falls to a lower level with 15 days and transportation accidents with 14 days had the next longest median days away from work.

Median Days Away from Work Due to Nonfatal Occupational Injuries or Illnesses by Source, 2003

- Worker motion or position: 12 days
- Vehicles: 11 days
- Floors, walkways, ground surfaces: 10 days
- Containers: 9 days
- Parts and materials: 7 days
- Machinery: 7 days
- Health care patient: 6 days
- Tools, instruments, and equipment: 5 days
- Furniture and fixtures: 5 days
- Chemicals and chemical products: 3 days

All sources: 8 days

Of the source of the injury or illness, worker motion or position; vehicles; floors, walkways, ground surfaces; and containers had medians higher than the national median days away from work.

Sprains, strains, tears accounted for over three-fourths of the musculoskeletal disorders that resulted in days away from work in 2003.