Connections between MSDs and Prescription Opioid Use in Construction

Musculoskeletal Disorders and Prescription Opioid Use among U.S. Construction Workers


Key Findings

- About 34.2% of construction workers reported at least one type of musculoskeletal disorder (MSD).
- MSDs were more prevalent among construction workers who were older, self-employed, or in poorer physical or mental health; but MSDs were less likely to be reported by workers who were racial/ethnic minorities or lacked health insurance.
- Compared to workers without MSDs, prescription opioid use tripled among construction workers with any type of MSD and quadrupled among those with MSD injuries.
- Prescription opioid use increased among workers with more than one type of MSD.

The findings suggest:

- The prevalence of MSDs in construction may be underestimated by injury data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as the estimates based on MEPS data indicate that the figure is much higher.
- To reduce the combined burden of MSDs and the opioid epidemic, the construction industry must adopt ergonomic solutions to reduce MSDs and support workers in injury recovery with effective, non-opioid pain management methods.