



## Working through the pain: illness and work limitations reported by older construction roofers

### Age, work limitations and physical functioning among construction roofers

*Laura Welch, Elizabeth Haile, Leslie Boden and Katherine Hunting. Work, 2008.*

#### Overview

The authors sought to investigate the intersection of aging with work limitations, chronic medical and musculoskeletal conditions, and physical functioning among construction workers. The researchers interviewed 979 union construction roofers who between the ages of 40 and 59 to document medical conditions, musculoskeletal disorders, and physical limitations on their ability to work.

#### Key Findings

- Sixty-nine percent (69%) of respondents reported at least one of the listed medical conditions or musculoskeletal disorders in the previous two years. Forty-two percent (42%) of the roofers reported multiple conditions.
- Lower back pain/sciatica was the most commonly mentioned musculoskeletal disorder, reported by more than one-quarter of the roofers.
- Respiratory problems were the most commonly mentioned medical condition, reported by nearly 15% of the roofers surveyed.
- Nearly one-third of respondents reported that in the two years preceding the interview they had missed time from work due to one of the medical or musculoskeletal disorders cited.
- Approximately half the surveyed roofers continued to work despite pain and medical conditions that limited their ability to perform tasks. In the youngest segment surveyed (age 40-44), 48% of respondents identified limitations on their ability to work due to pain or ill health. In the oldest segment surveyed (age 55-59), 51% of workers reported such limitations.

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#### See full report:

<http://1.usa.gov/1PuMZ8D>

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