

Workers and opioids: A snapshot

RECENT DATA SHOWS THE IMPACT
OF OPIOIDS ON THE WORKFORCE

By Kevin Druley, associate editor

NIOSH data shows that, in 2017:



44%

of workers' compensation claims included at least one prescription for opioids – **down from 55%** in 2012.

95% of the **70,067**

U.S. drug overdose deaths occurred among the **working age population** (15-64 years old).

Among workers' comp claims with opioids prescribed:

55%

of prescriptions were for an injury that occurred in the previous 2 years.

30%

were for injuries that had occurred 2-5 years prior.

15%

were for injuries that had occurred 5 or more years prior.

Source: NIOSH, 2017

Prescription drugs account for approximately

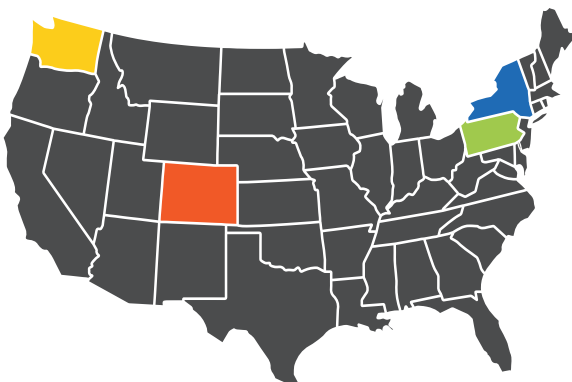
14% of all workers' comp medical costs.

Source: National Council on Compensation Insurance, 2019

Nearly half of U.S. states follow commercial **workers' comp treatment guidelines** "to encourage (and discourage) treatment protocols for a specific injury or illness."

States with their own guidelines:

Colorado | New York | Pennsylvania | Washington



Source: International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions, 2018



760

Number of drug overdose deaths that occurred in workplaces between 2011 and 2016

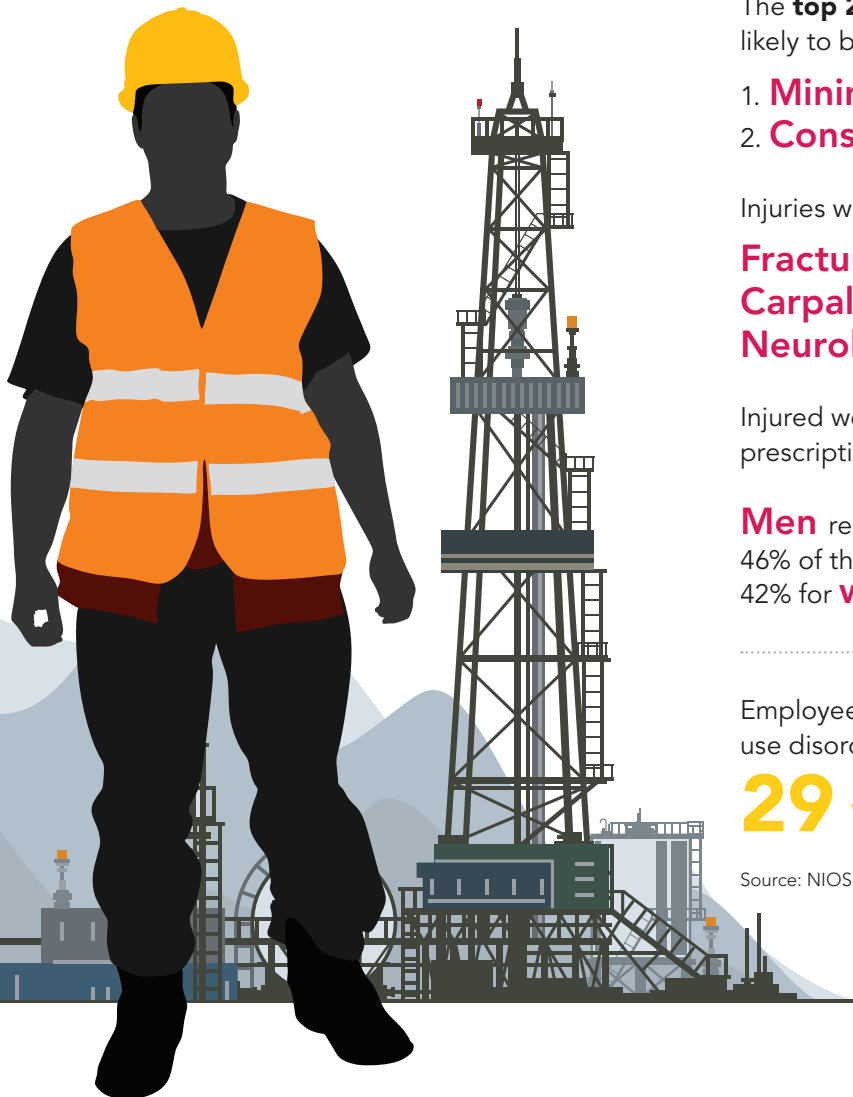
53.6

Percentage of those workers ages **25-44** who died from opioids.

Source: NIOSH, 2019

“Opioid abuse is likely to be under-coded in administrative claims data.”

– *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 2016



“Understanding what happens when someone is injured is important to understanding how opioids impact your employees and workforce. This information is critical to understanding the path that injured workers may follow when prescribed opioids, and can help prioritize what interventions will help the most, and where your workforce is particularly vulnerable.”

– Rachael Cooper, senior program manager, substance abuse and harm prevention safety, National Safety Council

According to 2018 data from the Workers Compensation Research Institute:

The **top 2 industries** in which workers were most likely to be prescribed opioids for pain:

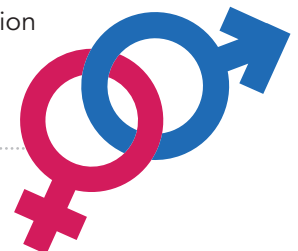
1. **Mining, oil and gas** (65%)
2. **Construction** (55%)

Injuries with the highest rate of opioid prescriptions:

- Fractures** (79%)
- Carpal tunnel syndrome** (70%)
- Neurological spine pain** (66%)

Injured workers **55 and older** received an opioid prescription 49% of the time.

Men received an opioid prescription 46% of the time compared with 42% for **women**.



Employees with a pain medication use disorder miss an average of

29 workdays a year.

Source: NIOSH, 2017