



Executive Summary: Work-Related Injuries in Middle-Aged and Older Workers in Newfoundland and Labrador

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Executive Summary

Background

Middle-aged and older workers (i.e., those aged 45 years and older) offer many benefits to employers. These benefits include significant knowledge, skills, work experience, and a strong work ethic as a result of increasing life and work experience, greater control of language, ability to solve complex problems, motivation to learn, and less absenteeism. These strengths contribute to a reduced risk of workplace injuries for middle-aged and older workers compared to other age groups.

Older workers, however, may also pose significant challenges for employers, including increased risk for specific types of injuries. When older employees can no longer meet the demands of the job because of reduced mobility, functional ability, and the development of chronic health conditions associated with aging, their risk for severe work-related injuries increases.

It is critically important to understand the prevalence of work-related injury rates in older workers in Canada, and Newfoundland and Labrador, specifically, because the percentage of actively working older adults in this province has increased dramatically over the last 20 years. From 1995 to 2015, the proportion of seniors, aged 65 years and older, working tripled in Newfoundland and Labrador (from 4.0 to 15.5%), which was the greatest increase in older workers amongst all Canadian provinces.

In addition to understanding the incidence of injuries in Newfoundland and Labrador, the purpose of this report was to learn more about the factors that increase the risk of injury in the population of workers aged 45 years of age and older, physical and mental health outcomes, and use of health services as the result of work-related injuries.



Methods

This study was based on **Canadian Longitudinal Survey on Aging (CLSA)** data. CLSA is the largest and most in-depth study on aging ever conducted in Canada. The CLSA is based on a national, randomly selected sample of over 50,000 Canadian men and women, ages of 45-85 years, at recruitment. The CLSA includes a wide range of socio-demographic and health-related measures. At the time of this study, we used measures from the **Baseline Questionnaire** of the CLSA and the follow-up **Maintaining Contact Questionnaire** administered about 18 months later. Of the 51,250 middle-aged and older adults who had a baseline assessment and one follow-up assessment, 3,470 were from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Key Findings

- The incidence of work-related injuries in middle-aged and older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador was 262 per 10,000, which was the lowest rate of all Canadian provinces.
- Most of the work-related injuries in middle-aged and older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador were classified as sprains or strains (24.8%). Other work-related injuries were classified as musculoskeletal pulls or tears (includes herniated disc, and torn muscles and tendons) (18.2%) and all other injury types (33.0%).
- Of the middle-aged and older workers with injuries, 52% reported occupations characterized by work inside of a building and 48% reported occupations characterized by work outside.
- The largest proportion of middle-aged and older workers with work related injuries in Newfoundland and Labrador reported occupations requiring the use of equipment, machinery, and tools.
- Of those middle-aged and older workers with work-related injuries in Newfoundland and Labrador, 56.7% had less than a post-secondary level education, whereas 25.4% had at least some post-secondary education.
- In Newfoundland and Labrador, the likelihood of work-related injuries was higher for: (a) workers aged 45-54-years vs 55-85-year-olds (i.e., 85.9% of work-related injuries were among those who were between the ages of 45 and 54 years), (b) those who worked non-regular work schedules as opposed to day schedules, and (c) smokers.
- Additional risk factors emerged when conducting analyses for Canada as a whole, which may be due to the larger sample size. For Canada, the likelihood of work-related injuries

was increased for: (a) workers aged 45-54-years, (b) men, (c) those with lower personal income, (d) those working non-regular schedules or working full-time, (e) those with a mood disorder, (f) those with vision problems, and (e) smokers.

- Among middle-aged and older workers in Canada, having work-related injuries was associated with several outcomes, including higher levels of psychological distress, lower life satisfaction, and decreased odds of reporting good general health and aging healthy. Work-related injuries also increased the likelihood of emergency department visits and overnight hospitalizations within about 18 months after the work-related injury.

Conclusions

The findings presented in this report contribute to our greater understanding of factors associated with work-related injuries among middle-aged and older workers in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada as a whole. As injury incidence rates are an indicator of the safety performance at workplaces, such information can be useful for planning future health and safety measures at work and emphasize the need to engage both men and women in prevention of workplace injury and to improve health outcomes as a result of work-related injuries.

