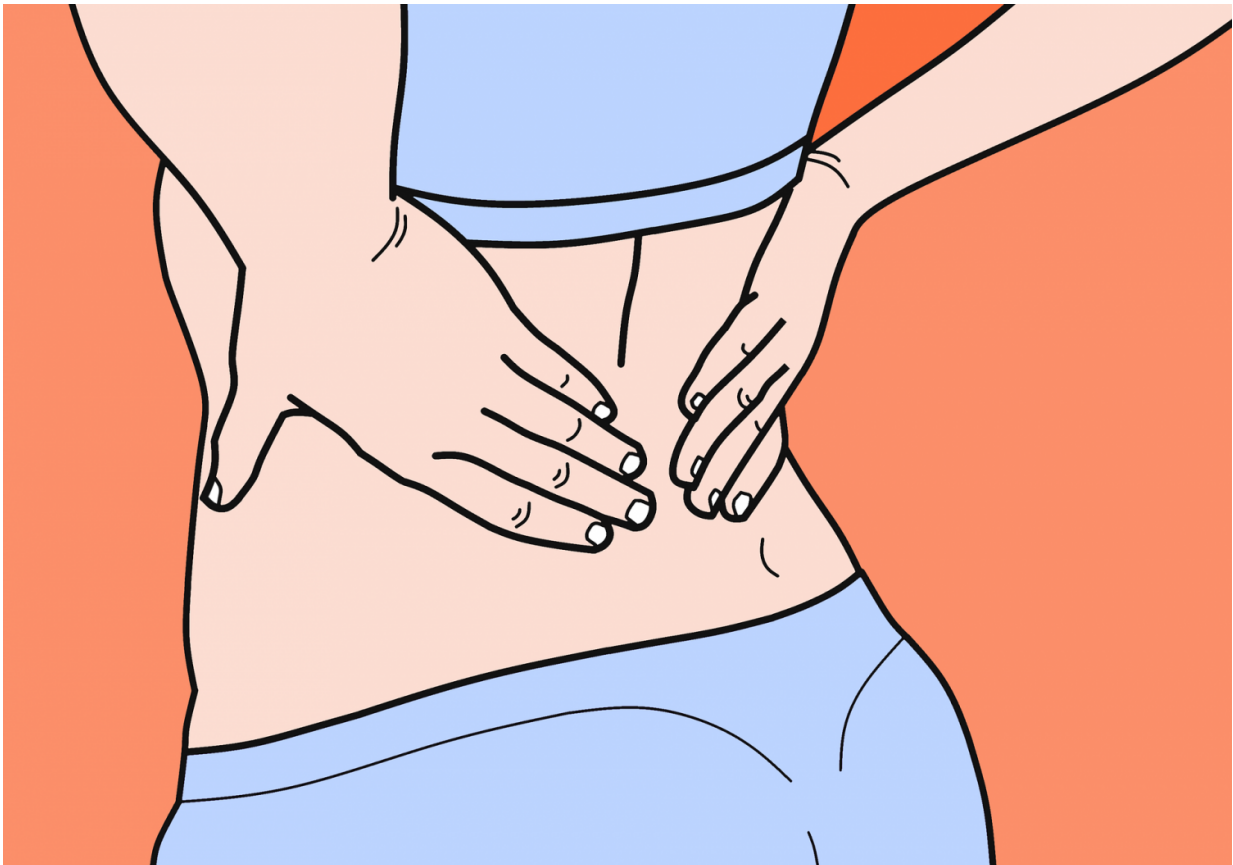


Low back pain is prevalent among workers and may be underreported

May 14 2019



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Low back pain affects more than a quarter of working adults, often affecting their ability to work. However, these estimates may be

underreported. Survey findings are published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

There are few estimates available in the U.S. of the proportion of back pain that is related to work. In 2015, the NHIS (National Health Interview Survey) collected supplemental data about the work-relatedness and the effects on work of back pain—specifically, [low back pain](#)—among U.S. workers for the first time in nearly 3 decades.

Researchers randomly surveyed more than 19,000 adults to [estimate](#) the burden of low back pain among U.S. workers and whether the pain was related to work and/or had an effect on work. They found that the 3-month prevalence of any low back pain among U.S. workers was approximately 26.4 percent, representing almost 40 million workers. Many of these cases were attributed to work by a [health care](#) professional, but most workers affected did not discuss work-relatedness with their providers. They also found that low back pain had affected many current workers' ability to work.

According to the researchers, these findings may greatly underestimate the total occupational effect of low back pain in the population because of the short recall period and exclusion of former workers, some of whom may have left the workforce because of work-related low back [pain](#).

More information: *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2019).
<http://annals.org/aim/article/doi/10.7326/M18-3602>

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