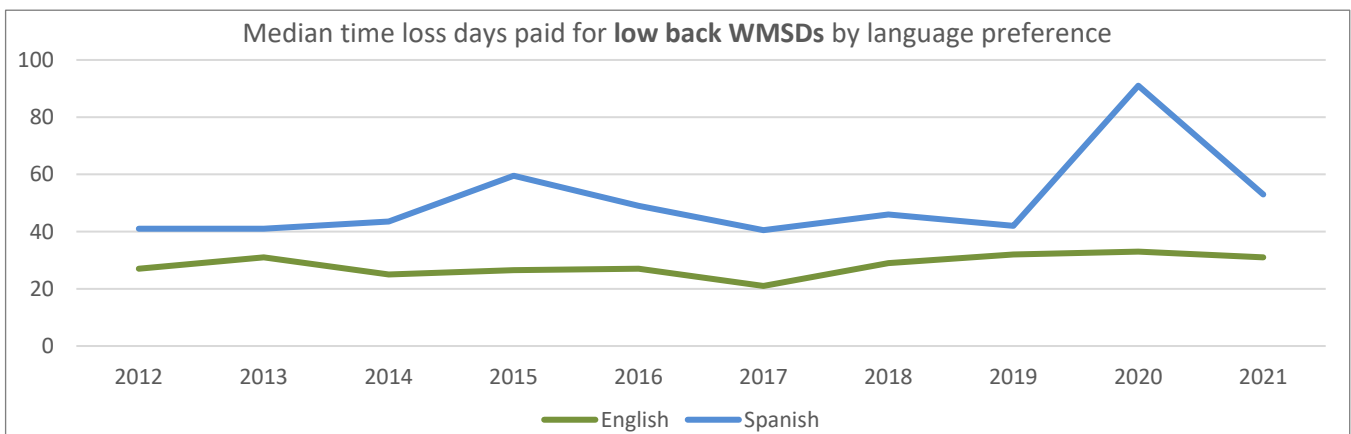
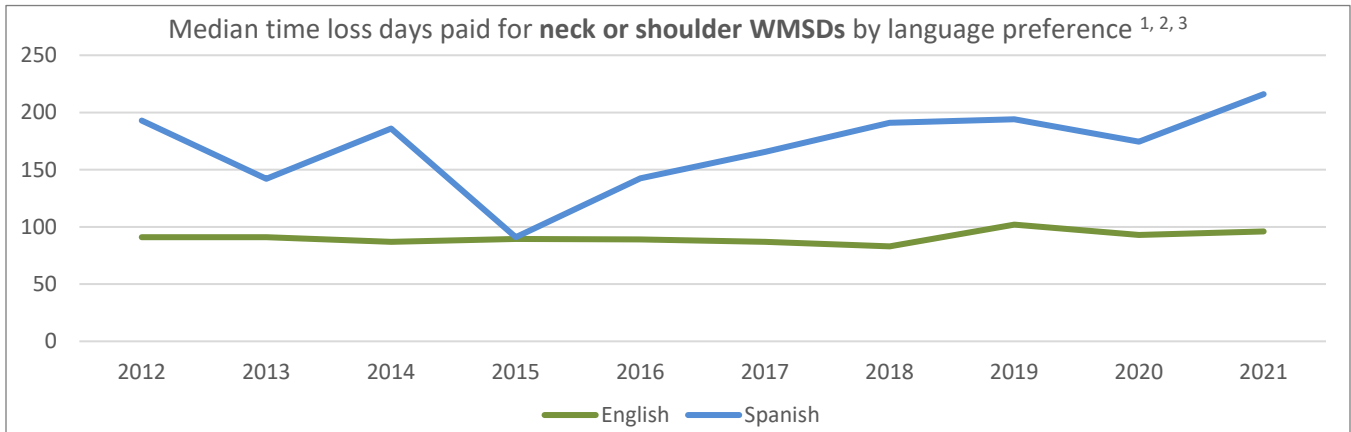


Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs)

Workers' compensation days of time loss paid in first two years after filing a claim for WMSDs by claimant language preference, 2012-2021



Key points

- The median number of days paid for missed work (time loss days) for the first two years of a claim for back, neck and shoulder WMSDs was significantly higher for those who prefer to communicate in Spanish compared to those who prefer to communicate in English.^{4,5}
- There are likely many reasons for these large differences in time loss days. To improve outcomes for Spanish speaking workers, further research should focus on:
 - Work injury severity and its relationship to using the workers' compensation system;
 - Access to and use of health care in the workers' compensation system, and
 - The availability of return to work options for all workers, but specifically those who speak or prefer a language other than English.

Additional information

- Previous research has reported similar results for time loss days paid for low back WMSDs.⁶
- Latino/a/e workers frequently face high risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) due to the physically demanding nature of their jobs and the exposure to poor work safety climates, particularly those in essential industries like agriculture, food processing, and construction.^{7,8} The COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated these existing health disparities in several ways including physical strain, limited access to healthcare, and heightened exposure and stress.⁹

Why is this topic important?

WMSDs can be painful, and may take a long time to heal. They also cost more than many other types of work-related injuries. It is important to report these injuries as soon as possible because as time goes on these injuries can get worse if you keep working at the same tasks. Research shows that as WMSDs get more severe they take much longer to heal, and can eventually result in not being able to work anymore.

Next steps

- The [L&I ergonomics website](#) provides resources about how to prevent sprains and strains in your workplace.
- If you are interested in an ergonomics consultation, email ergonomics@LNI.wa.gov to schedule one. This consultation is free. L&I also offers a remote option for ergonomics consultation, see their remote consultation information here: <https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/docs/RemoteErgonomicsServices.pdf>

1. WMSDs are defined as work-related injuries that typically affect soft tissues such as joints, nerves, tendons, ligaments, muscles, blood vessels, cartilage, or spinal discs. WMSDs are generally caused by work activities that are repetitive, require forceful exertion, expose the worker to vibration, and/or involve awkward postures and unnatural positions of the worker.
2. State fund only compensable time loss (TL) claims with dates of injury from 2012–2021. Minimum TL days for all groups was one day; maximum time loss days paid for all groups was 730 days. WMSD claims were identified using a standard definition – RCW 49.17.020(11) with OIICS Body Part lumbar region (231) for low back claims and body part codes (10, 21) for neck and shoulder.
3. Language based on claimant's preference as indicated on the report of accident form.
4. Median days is used to describe the data because the mean (average) could over or under estimate time loss days. The median represents the middle value in a set of numbers, with half of the values higher than that amount, and half lower.
5. A Wilcoxon Test for difference in low back WMSD time loss days was statistically significant for longer duration for Spanish language preferring claimants, $W = 12281931$, $Z = 8.0424$, $p < 0.0001$; for neck and shoulder WMSD, $W = 5886529$, $Z = 7.2778$, $p < 0.0001$
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