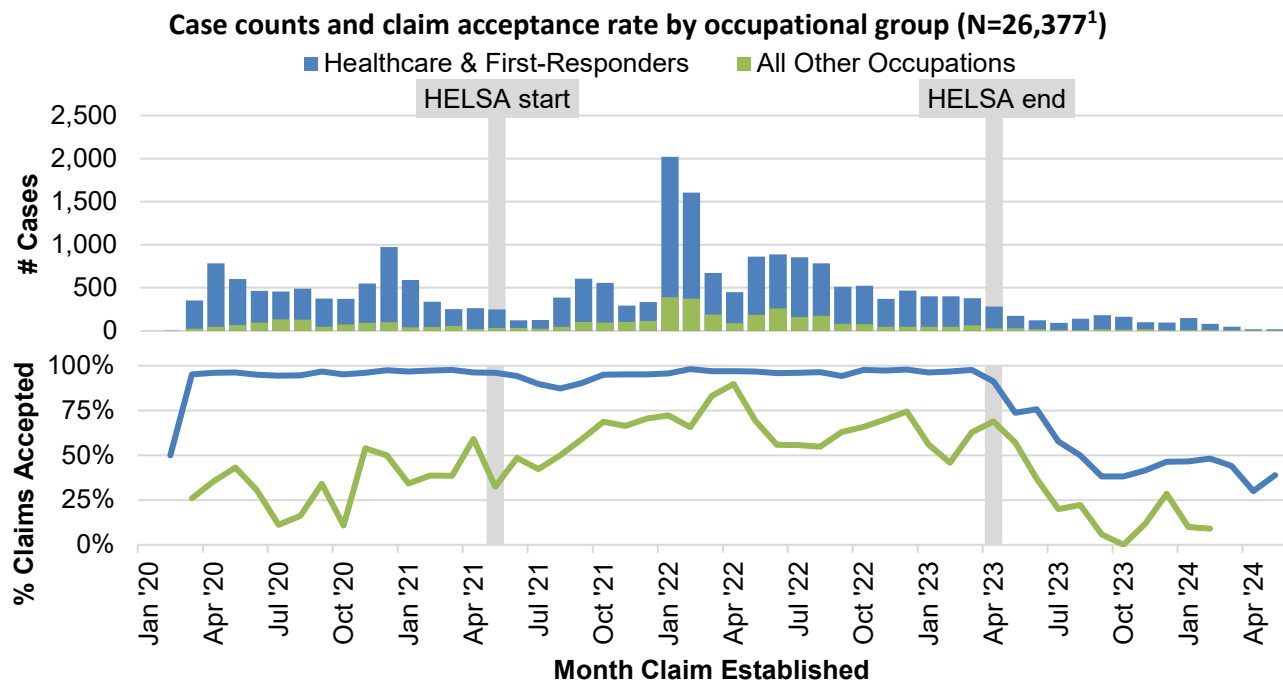


Trends in COVID-19 Cases in Relation to Presumption Coverage

Washington State Workers' Compensation Claims, March 2020 to May 2024



The Health Emergency Labor Standards Act (HELSA, RCW 15.32.181) was in effect from May 2021 to April 2023. It enacted a rebuttable presumptive that COVID-19 was an occupational disease for all frontline workers.

Frontline workers included Healthcare and First-Responders. Select workers in All Other Occupations across industries like Agriculture, Food Service, Retail, and Public Transit could qualify under HELSA depending on their contact with the public or essential duties.

- Occupations other than Healthcare and First Responders:
 - Filed claims at almost twice the rate during HELSA presumption coverage (28 per week) compared to pre-HELSA (16 per week)
 - Experienced a higher claim acceptance rate during HELSA (65%) compared to pre-HELSA (32%)

HELSA may have improved access to workers' compensation for these covered workers.

- The period that HELSA was in effect coincided with the pandemic peak due to the Omicron variant and the reopening of businesses and schools. These factors likely drove up case counts independent of HELSA, and limits what we can conclude from the data.

See the full report [COVID-19 Surveillance in Washington Workers' Compensation Data Final Report](#), SHARP publication # 64-57-2025.

1. Cases are defined as suspected or confirmed occupational exposure to COVID-19, with or without infection.