

# Scope of Injury and Illness of Healthcare Employees Receiving California Workers' Compensation, 2007-2016

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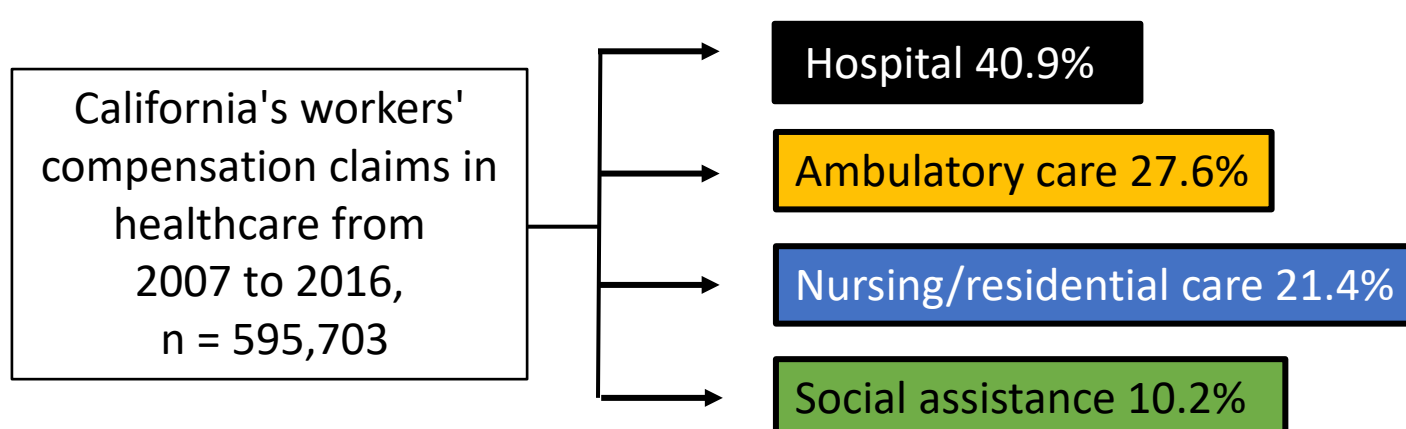
## Background

Occupational injury and illness rates are higher among healthcare employees than any other private employment sector (BLS, 2018). California's healthcare industry employs 2.4 million people and employers struggle to maintain injury and illness prevention programs—the most common California Occupational Safety and Health Administration citation (Cal/OSHA, 2019). This analysis examines 10 years of California workers' compensation claims in healthcare settings to find targeted areas for prevention interventions.



## Methods

Data was provided by the California Workers' Compensation Information System and population estimates were from the State of California's Department of Finance and the Employment Development Department.



## Results

This study found the most frequent injuries were strains or tears (45.8%), the most frequent cause lifting (10.7%), and the most frequent area injured was low back (13.2%); all highest among nursing/residential care setting employees. Hospitals had the highest average rates of worker disability with 649 claims per 10,000 employees annually (Figure 1). Over this 10-year period, there was a statistically significant trend in the number of injury claims in ambulatory care, increasing 6.5% per year ( $p=0.02$ ), while social services decreased 4.8% per year ( $p<0.001$ ). Nurses in hospitals, aides in nursing homes, and social workers in the field experienced more injuries or illnesses than the industry average (Table 1). The change in injury incidence rates was compared between California counties from 2007 to 2016, adjusted for census population (Figure 2). The counties with the greatest increases in claim counts were Lassen (35 more cases per 10,000 population), Modoc (24 more cases per 10,000 population), and Sacramento (15 more cases per 10,000 population).

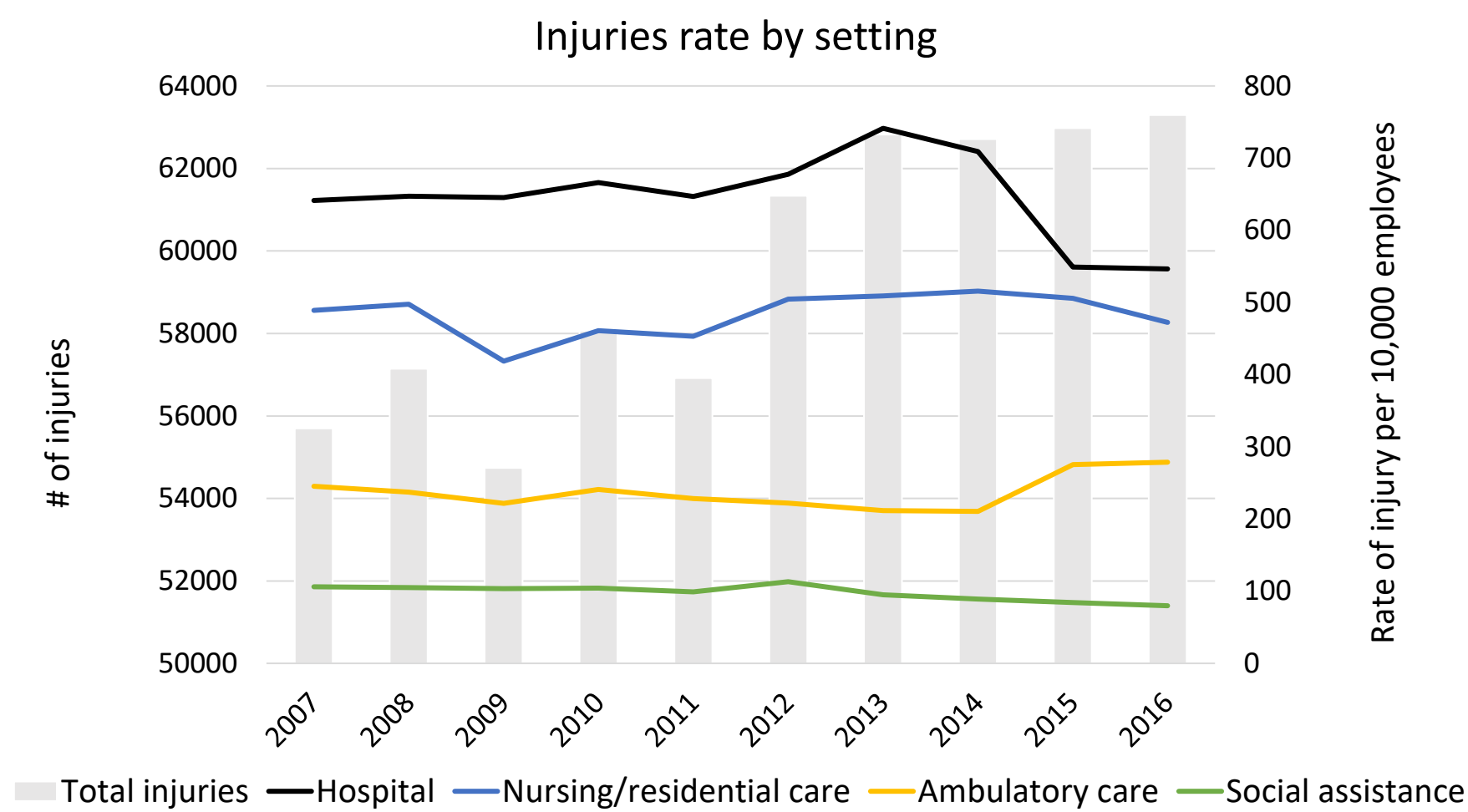
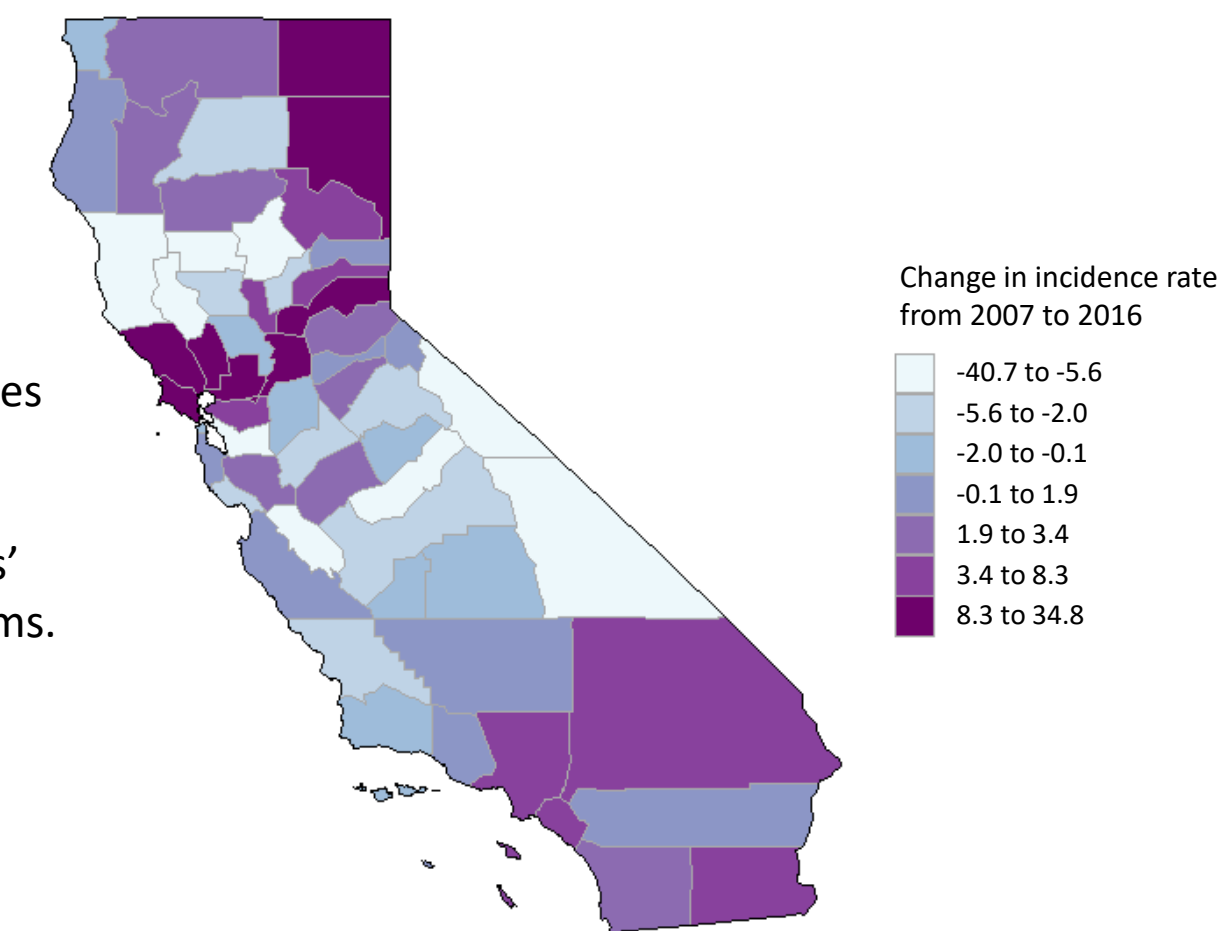


Figure 1. Occupational injuries in California healthcare continue to increase with ambulatory care facilities seeing the biggest increase in rate of injury per 10,000 employees since 2014.

Table 1. Nurses in hospitals, aides/assistants in nursing facilities, and social workers in the field experienced more injuries or illnesses than the industry average.

Job type	Total		Hospital		Ambulatory care		Nursing/residential care		Social assistance	
		%		%		%		%		%
Nurse	102777	17.3	69764	28.7	20240	12.3	12032	9.5	741	1.2
Aide/Assistant	80800	13.6	27070	11.1	15765	9.6	35432	27.8	2533	4.2
Custodial	65651	11.0	30129	12.4	9034	5.5	19135	15.0	7353	12.2
Other	58309	9.8	15702	6.5	20089	12.2	16967	13.3	5551	9.2
Social worker	56117	9.4	6603	2.7	7934	4.8	20041	15.7	21539	35.6
Technician	47022	7.9	26073	10.7	19370	11.8	1340	1.1	239	0.4
Administrative	52408	8.8	21861	9.0	19611	11.9	5244	4.1	5692	9.4
Providers	18702	3.1	7830	3.2	8264	5.0	1786	1.4	822	1.4
Dental	13868	2.3	110	0.0	13596	8.3	45	0.0	117	0.2
N/A	100049	16.8	38228	15.7	30683	18.6	15276	12.0	15862	26.6

Figure 2. Lassen, Modoc, and Sacramento counties have the highest increasing rates of healthcare workers' compensation claims.



## Conclusion

- Musculoskeletal injuries remain the most frequent injury for healthcare employees.
- While hospitals experience the greatest number of injuries, employees of ambulatory care sites have increasing rates of injury.
- Nurses in hospitals, aides/assistants in nursing facilities, and social workers in the field may benefit the most from prevention interventions.