Author's response to reviews

Title: An ecological study of regional variation in work injuries among young workers

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Dr. Phillips,
Thank you for the opportunity to revise and resubmit this manuscript for consideration at BMC Public Health. Below, we respond to the two reviewers' comments:

Dr. Salminen's review
1. We have added the study of geographic variation of work injuries in Canada referred to.
2. As suggested, we have given Factors 3 and 4 different names.
3. That was a typographical error and have corrected it to read that small workplaces have higher work injury rates than larger workplaces.

Minor revisions
4. In the introduction, we now provide the range of elevated risk found for young workers among studies calculating rates using hours worked.
5. We have deleted Figures 2 through 5.

Discretionary revisions
6. In the Results, we initially labeled this factor as rural because low population density loaded strongly on this factor. However low population density does not necessarily mean that the primary industry is farming so we use the more generic term of low population density.
7. We now provide as an appendix a map of the census divisions with a legend of division names that correspond to Figure 1.

Dr. Horwitz's review
8. As suggested we now provide 95% confidence intervals for the rate estimates.
9. In the methods, we now provide additional detail on which parts of the workforce are not covered.
10. In the Discussion, we note the advantages and assumptions regarding the use of FTEs when calculating claim rates.
11. While acknowledging that this is a broader age group than examined in many U.S. young worker studies, there are several reasons we combined teenage and young adult claims. On pages 4-5 we point out many similarities in the employment patterns of teenage and young adult workers. On page 12, we also note that work injury rates are similar in these two age groups and methodological reasons for combining the two age groups. Finally in the discussion we suggest that this is a potential issue that can be explored in future research.
12. In the discussion, we now discuss differences in minimum age regulations and how this may limit the comparability and generalizability of the results. Also, in the introduction we provide more information on what previous young workers studies have found in terms of factors associated with injury risk. However, as we note in the discussion the different definitions for what is a lost-time claims across these studies make direct detailed comparisons problematic.

Minor revisions
13. We have made the editing changes suggested.

Discretionary revisions
14. In the results section, we now provide information on claims by gender and the breakdown of nature of injuries by regional group (Table 6).
15. We clarify in the methods section that the unionization rate is constructed from a separate national survey of the labour force (i.e., not a field in the claims data) and is constructed at the regional level.

We believe that these comments were helpful in clarifying and strengthening the paper, and we hope that you and the reviewers find these revisions address the issues raised. Please let me know if you have any further questions.
Warm regards,
Curtis Breslin