



# **Why Do Unionized Workers have more Nonfatal Occupational Injuries?**

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Anecdotal evidence and labor unions' activities suggest that unionized workers should have less occupational injuries than non-unionized workers. A quantitative and qualitative analysis of the empirical literature reveals that unions seem to be effective in reducing fatal injuries, but that, contrary to expectations, unions are clearly associated with more nonfatal injuries. Panel estimates at the individual level for the first time confirm and reinforce the paradoxical union impact on nonfatal injuries. The three most prominent explanations suggested in the literature for this paradoxical result can be ruled out using econometric methods. However, supporting empirical evidence is offered for a novel explanation based on the theory of behavioral adaptation. According to this, unions make workplaces safer, but workers respond to this enhanced safety by changing their behaviour and reducing their own self-prevention activities. The net effect is an increase in nonfatal injuries.

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