



Racial and ethnic inequities in the return-to-work of workers experiencing injury or illness

Findings from a systematic review

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Jetha et al. (2023). Racial and ethnic inequities in the return-to-work of workers experiencing injury or illness: A systematic review. *Under review.*

Why should we be studying race?

Public health context

Some Terminology

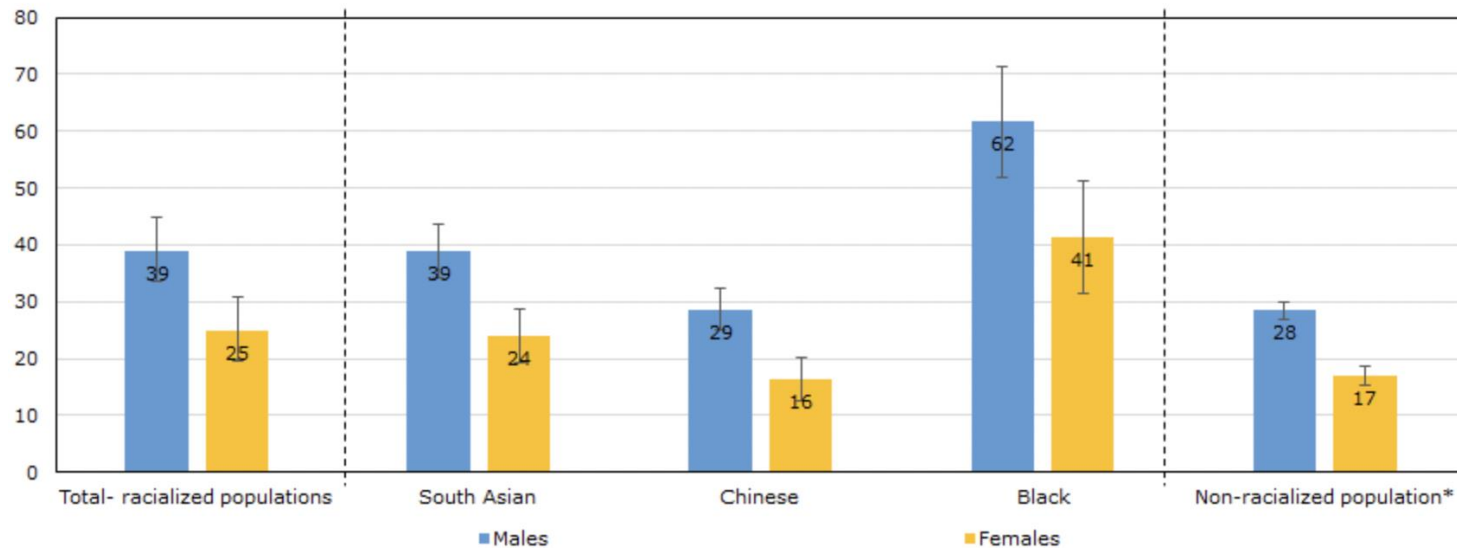
- **Race and ethnicity** are the categories we use to describe groups of people who share similar physical or cultural attributes.
- **Racism** is a system of oppression in which status, resources, and opportunities are inequitably distributed based on race or ethnicity.
- Race and ethnicity are social constructs with no basis in biology.
- Race and ethnicity matter because of racism.

Race and Health

- Racial inequities exist for nearly every known health outcome.
- Health inequities are not uniform across racial and ethnic groups.

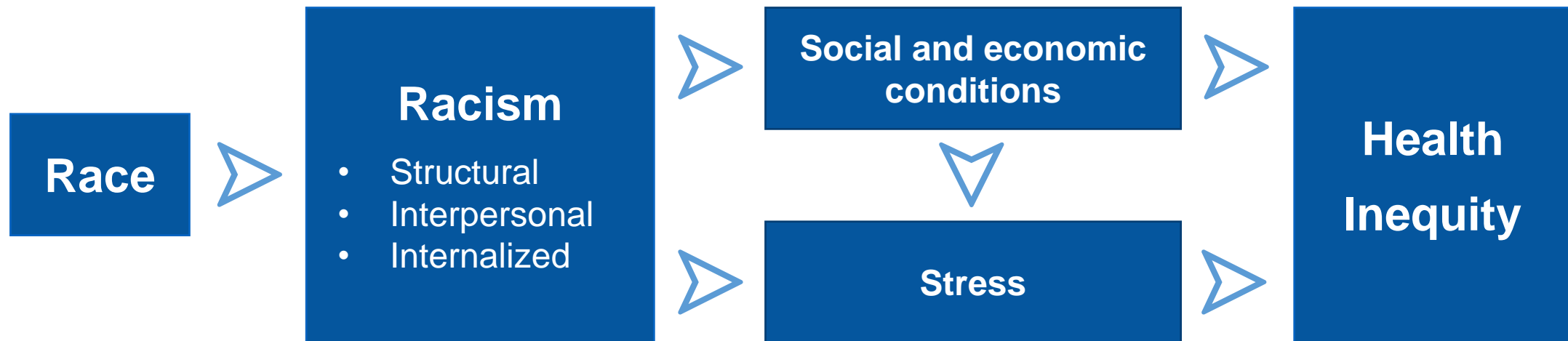
Chart 1
Age-standardized COVID-19 mortality rates in Canada between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020, by sex and racialized groups in 2016

Age standardized mortality rate (per 100,000)



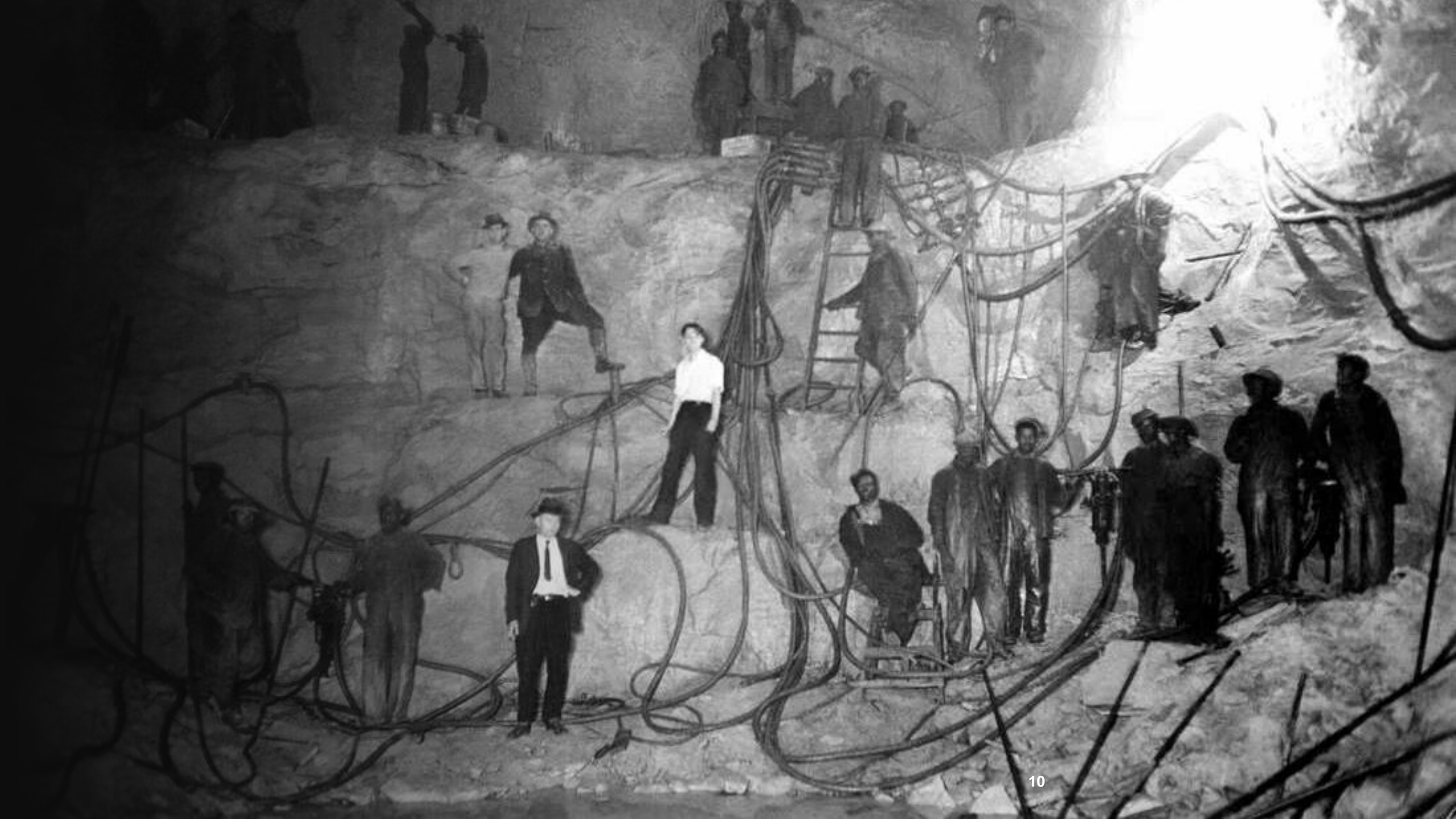
Racism and Health

- Racial health inequities exist because of underlying social and economic inequities, which are themselves rooted in racism.
- When we measure race, we are measuring the effects of racism.



Racial Inequities in Occupational Health







When compared to White workers, non-White workers are:

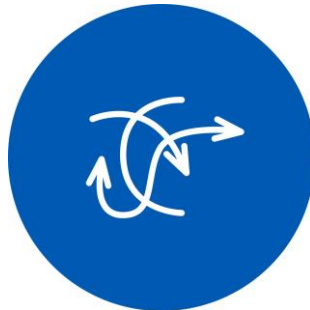
- More likely to work in occupations with the highest injury risk
- More likely to be exposed to hazardous working conditions
- More likely to experience fatal occupational injuries
- Less likely to be diagnosed with an occupational injury and receive treatment
- More likely to underreport a workplace injury

How do race and ethnicity shape return-to-work (RTW) experiences?

RTW Process



Series of steps



Occurs within a complex system with multiple actors



Some face extended or intermittent work disability

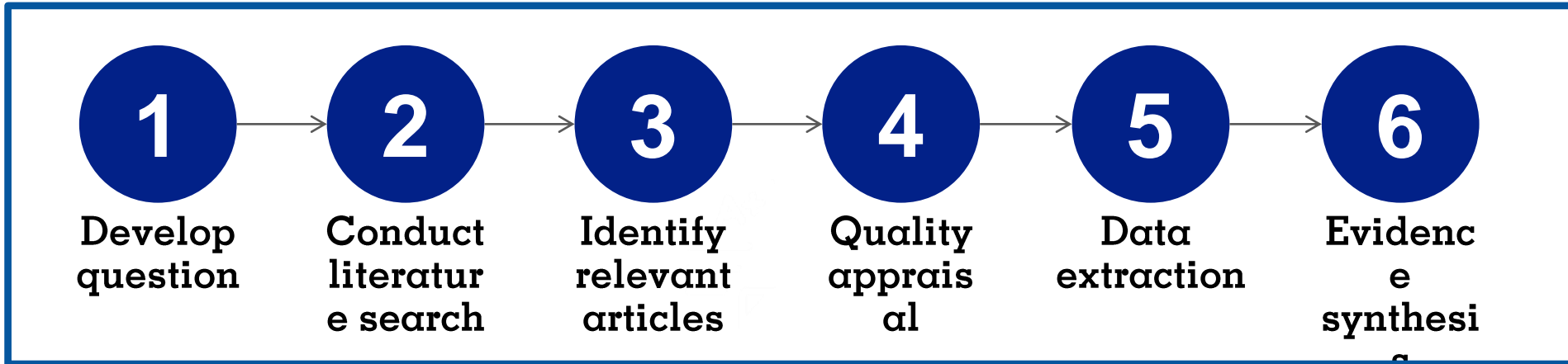
Structural and interpersonal racism may exist at different phases of the RTW process

Racism may contribute to disparate RTW outcomes between workers of color and their White counterparts.

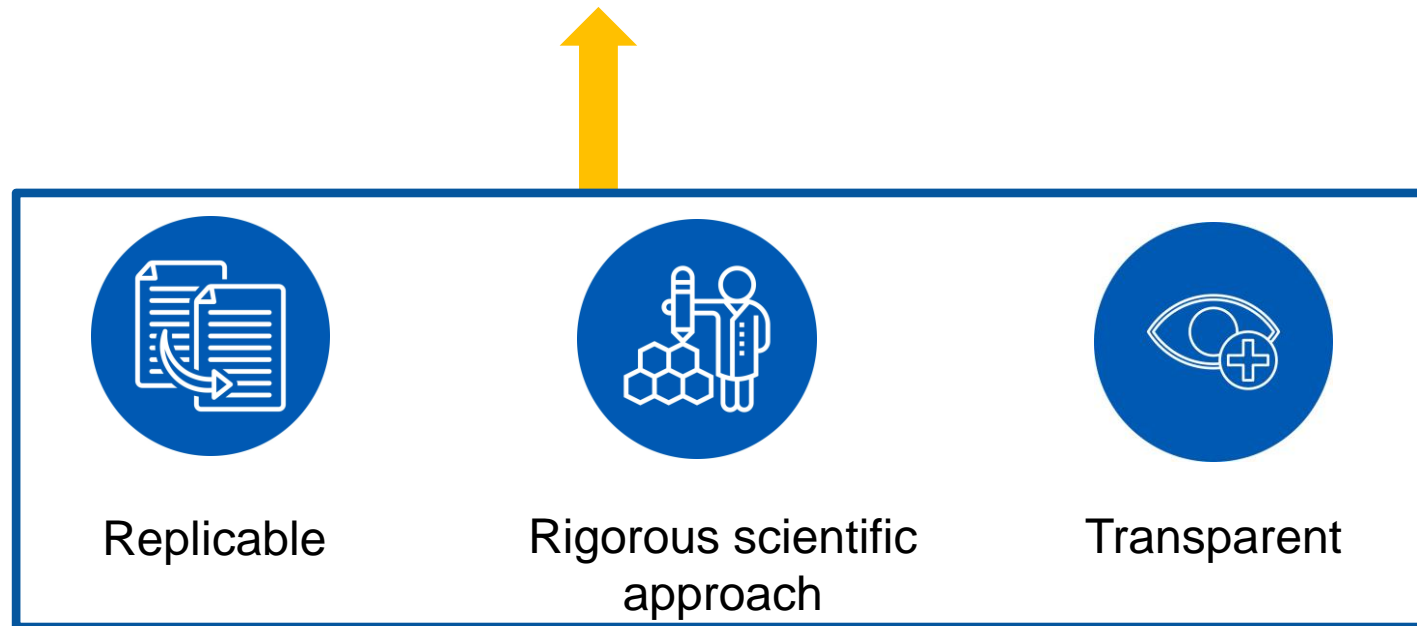
Overarching Research Objective

To examine whether there are racial and ethnic inequities in RTW outcomes among workers who experience an occupational or non-occupational injury or illness

Systematic review

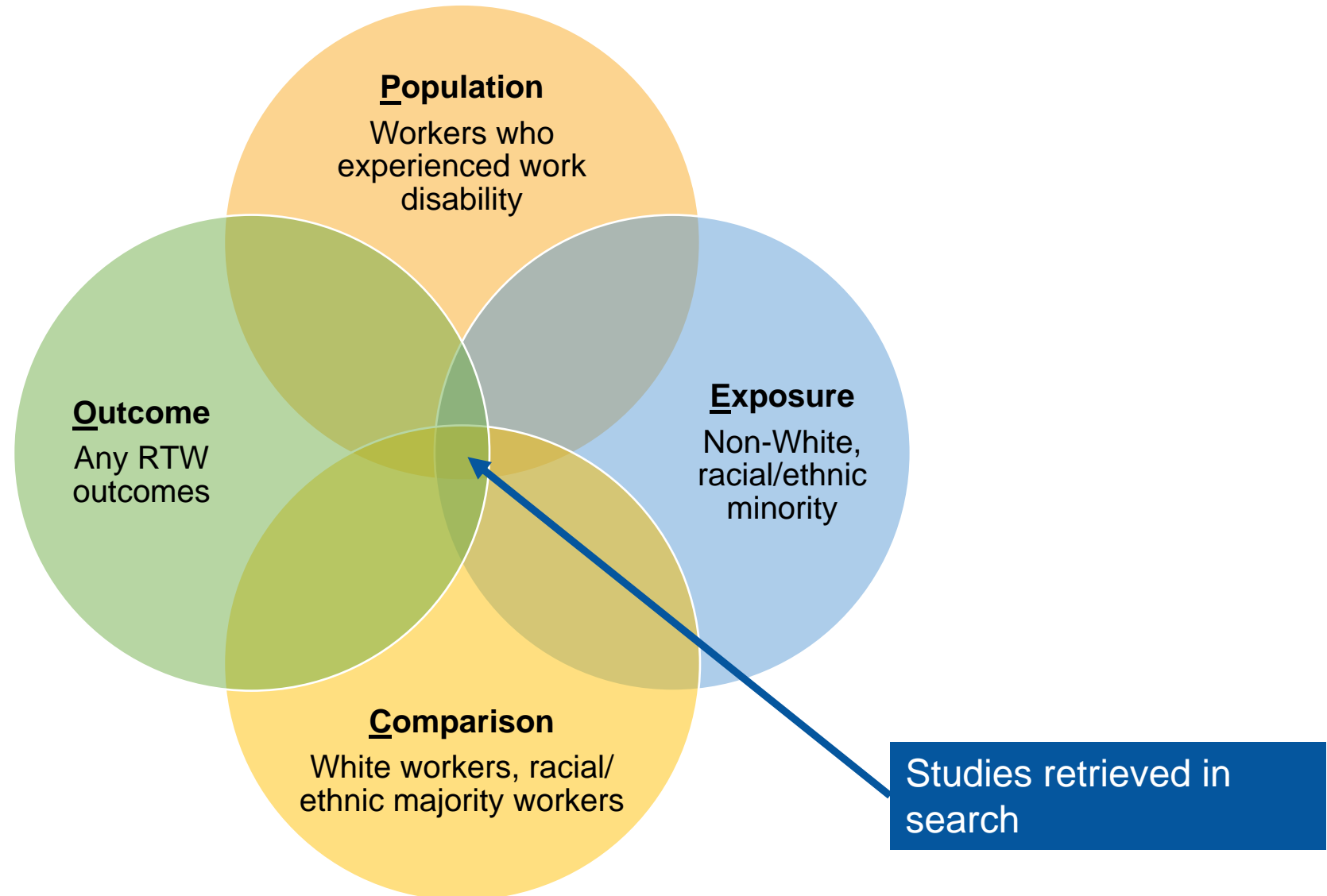


Systematic Review Process

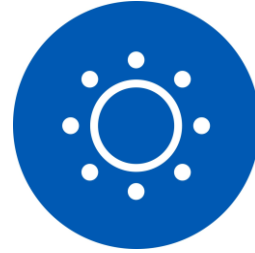


Steps taken to minimize Bias

Step 2. Literature search



Step 3: Identify relevant studies through title/abstract and full-text reviews



Study inclusion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers with work disability due to occupation <i>or</i> non-occupational injury or illness OECD country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-White worker Racial or ethnic minority worker <i>Or</i> exposure to racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White workers <i>Or</i> racial or ethnic majority workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any outcome reflecting the RTW process Quantitative study design
Study Exclusion criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immigrant or linguistic minority <i>without</i> specifying race Military or veteran populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings from non-white or racial/ethnic minority workers not presented <i>Or</i> racism not measured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comparison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTW outcomes not presented Pre-injury or illness employment not presented Other research designs

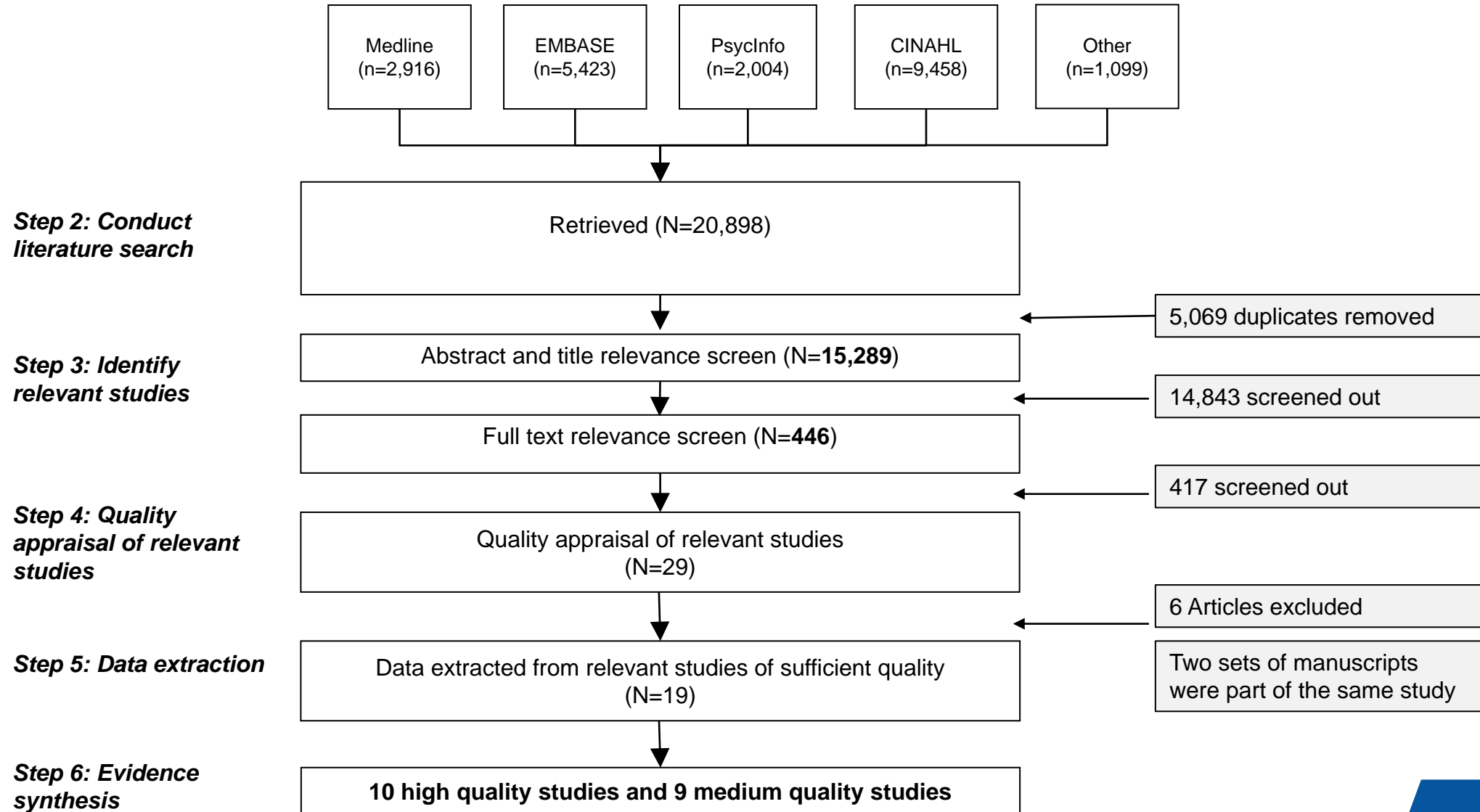
Steps 4-6: Quality assessment and evidence synthesis

Level of Evidence	Minimum Quality	Minimum Quantity	Consistency	Strength of Messages
Strong	High (H)	3	3H studies agree; If >3 studies, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the M + H agree	Recommendations
Moderate	Medium (M)	2H or 2M + 1H	2H studies agree or 2M + 1H agree; If >3 studies, $> \frac{2}{3}$ of the M + H agree	Practice Considerations
Limited	Medium (M)	1H or 2M or 1M + 1H	1 H or 2 (M and/or H) studies agree; If >2 studies, $> \frac{1}{2}$ of the M + H agree	Not enough evidence to make recommendations or practice considerations
Mixed	Medium (M)	2	Findings from M + H are contradictory	
Insufficient	No high quality studies. Only medium quality studies that do not meet the above criteria			

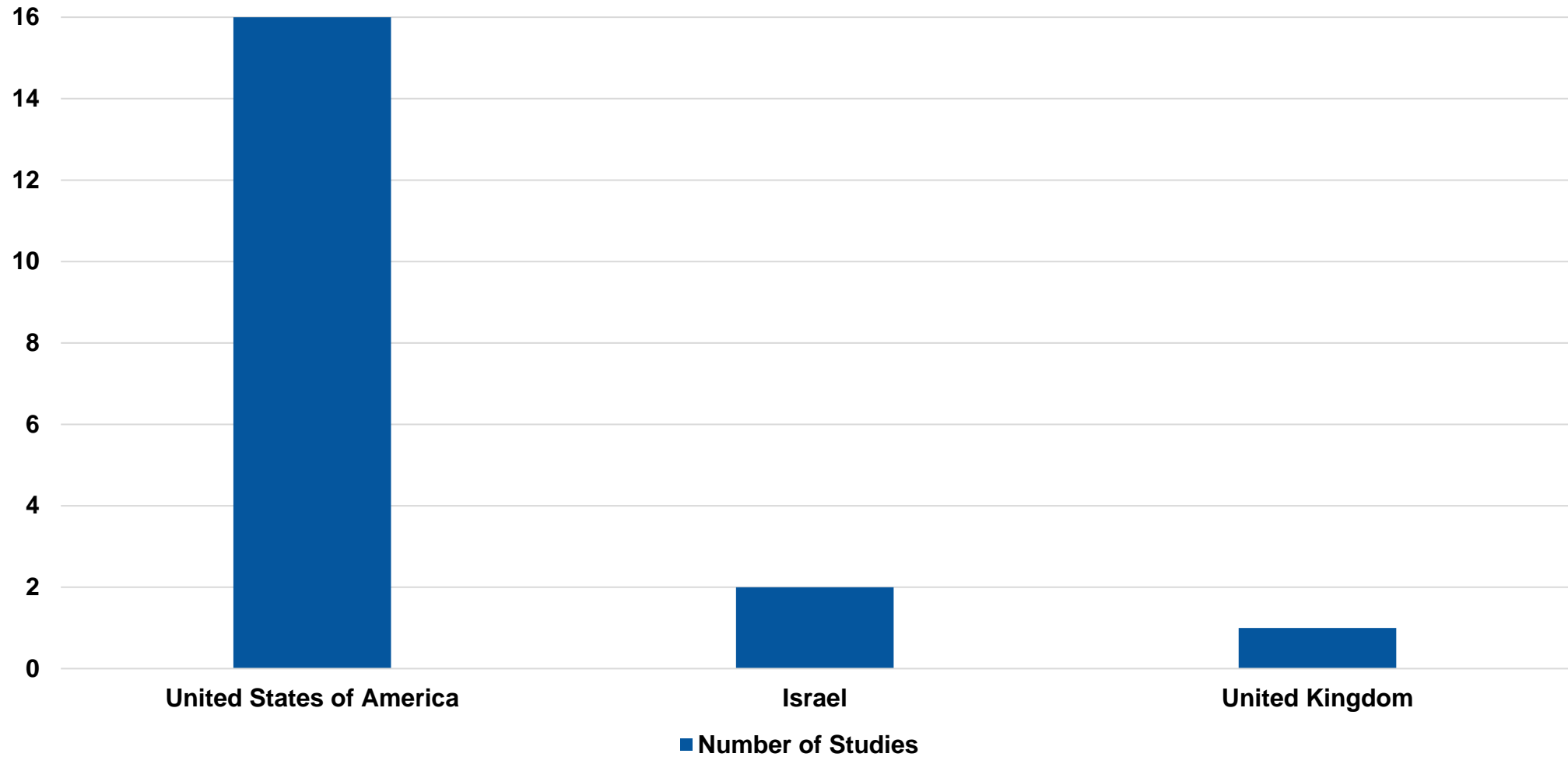
*High = >85% in quality assessment; Medium = 50-85% in quality assessment

Results

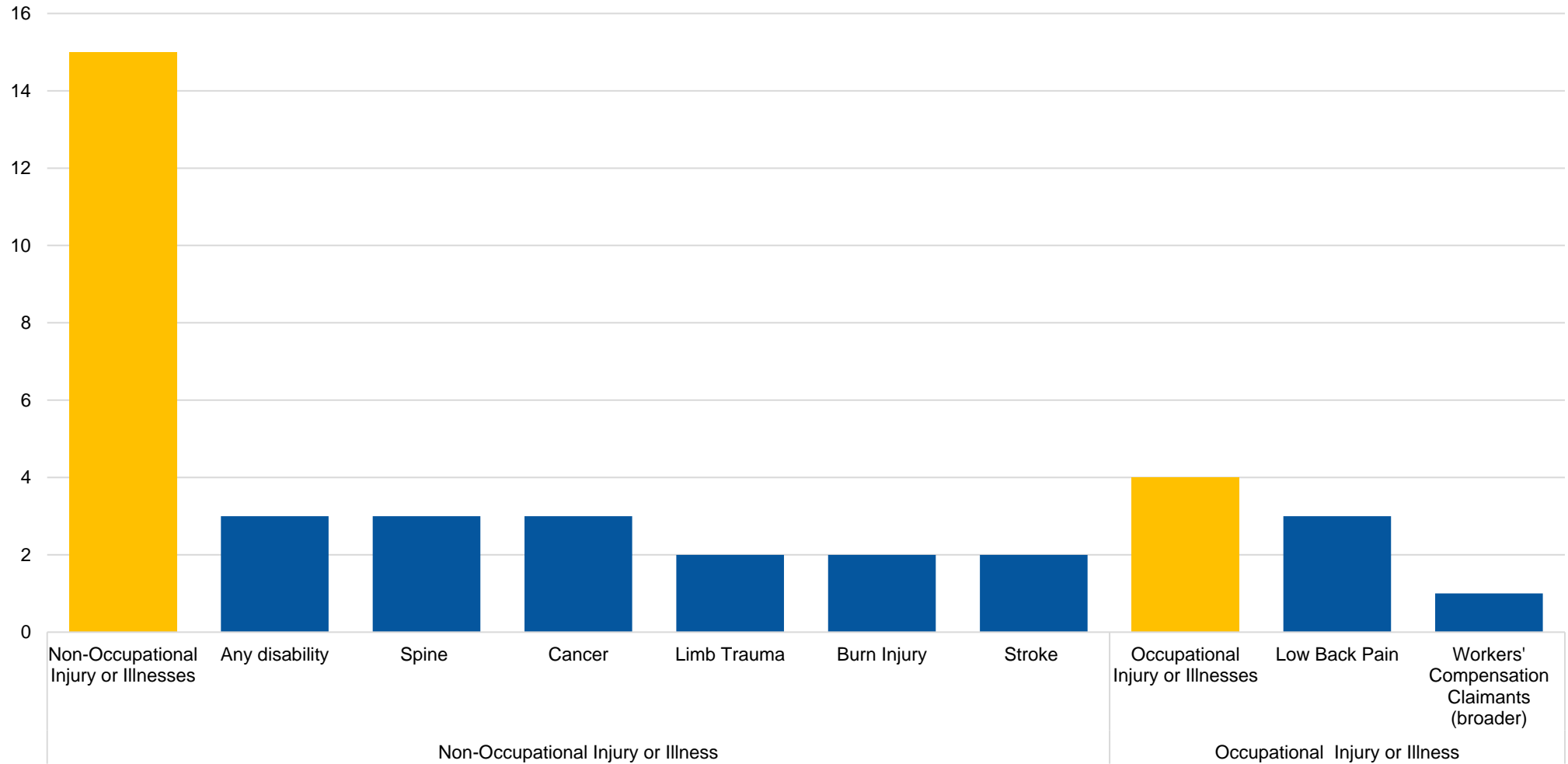
Review Flowchart



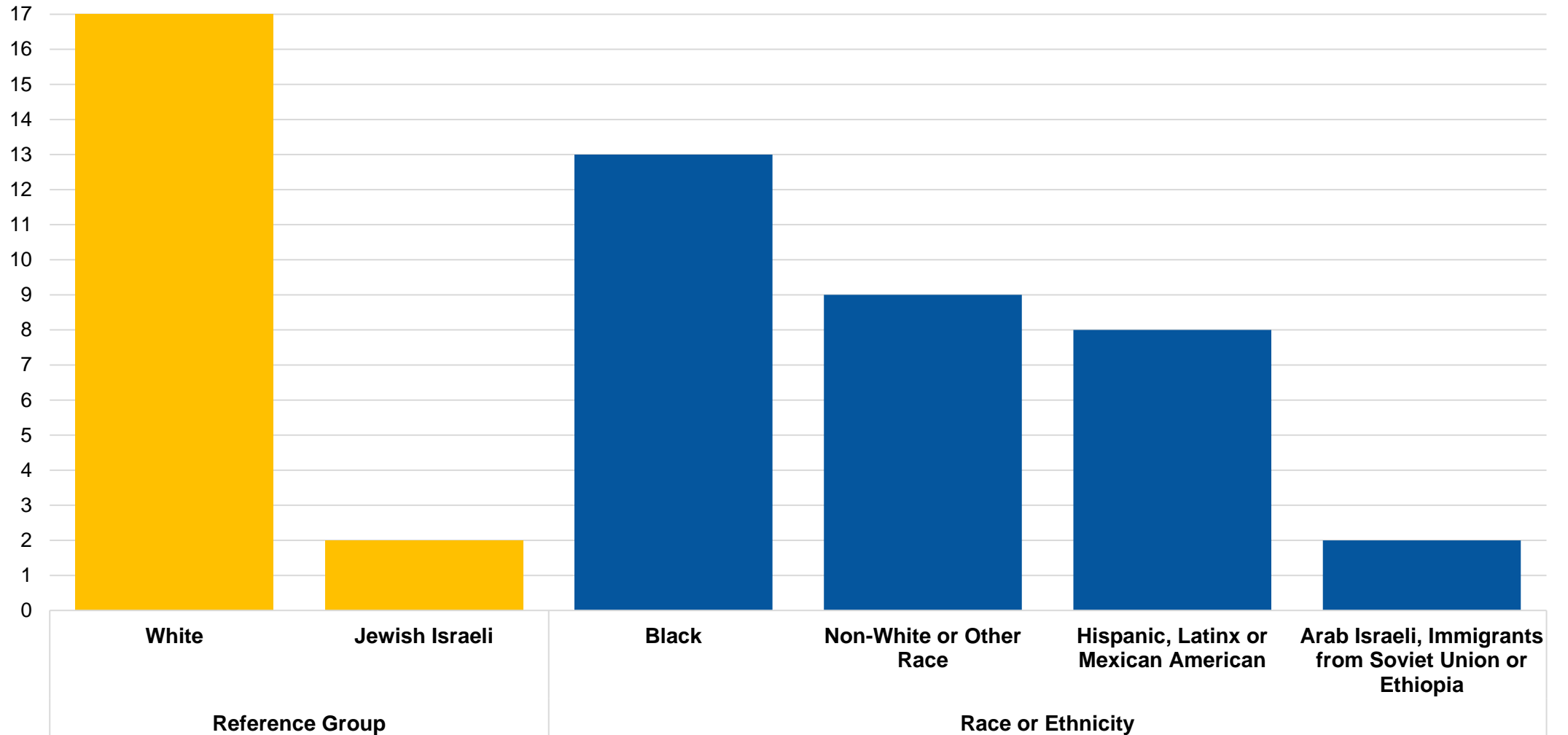
Study Location



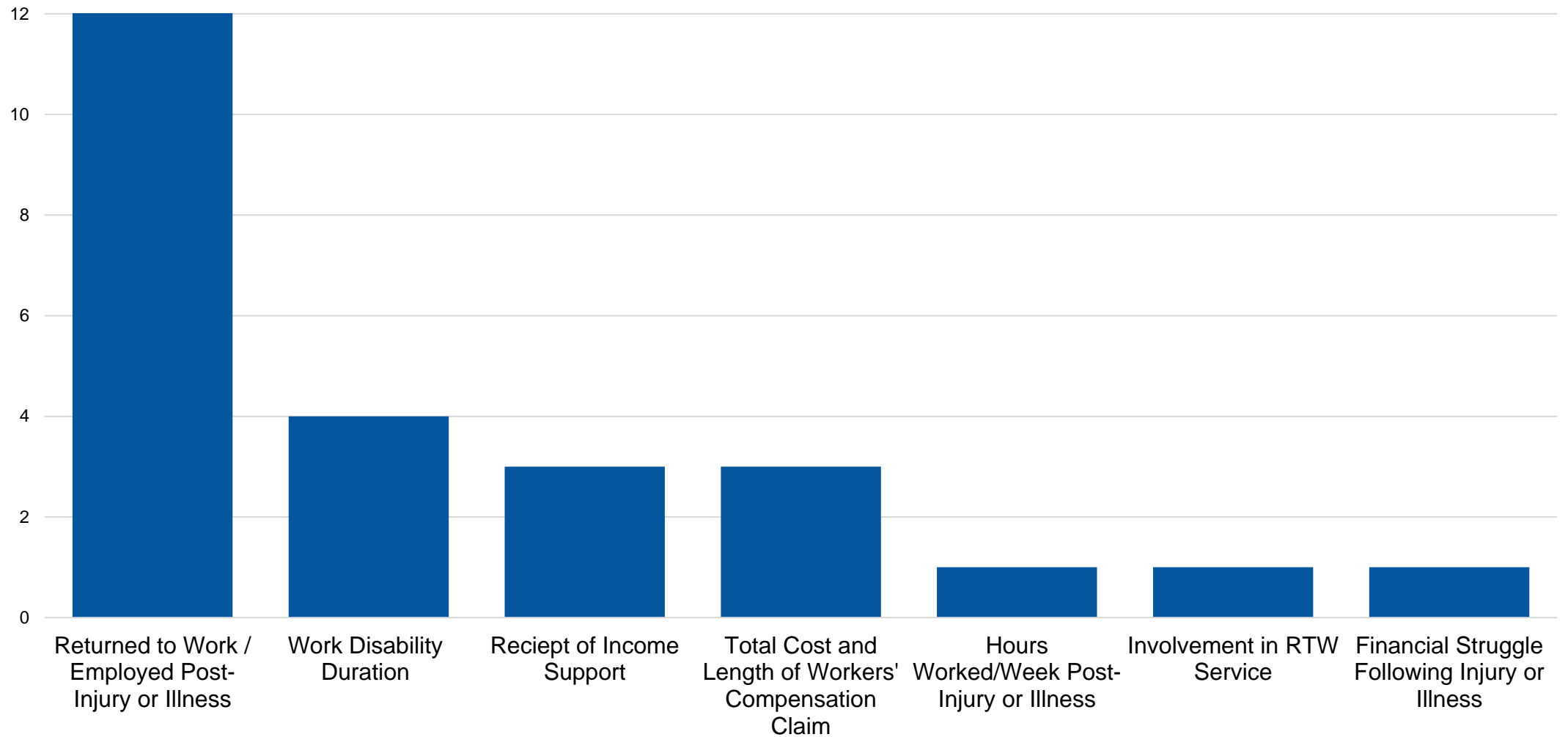
Injury or Illness Type



Racial and Ethnic Breakdown



RTW Outcomes Measured



Overarching Finding

Non-White and racial/ethnic minority workers with an occupational or non-occupational injury or illness tend to experience worse RTW outcomes relative to White and racial/ethnic majority workers

Findings from some selected studies

RTW post injury or illness

- Black participants with breast cancer significantly less likely to be employed at two months following cancer diagnosis (69%) when compared to White (85%) (Odds ratio [OR]=0.43, 95% CI 0.26-0.71)¹
- White participants with work-related low back pain more likely to be employed six years post workers' compensation settlement (67%) when compared to Black participants (57%) (OR=1.6 95% CI 1.0- 2.5)²
- Latinx participants were significantly less likely to RTW following a stroke (31%) when compared to White participants (50%) (OR=0.31, 95% CI 0.12-0.81)³

Other findings

- Non-White injured workers receive less total workers compensation⁴, less likely to report receiving a disability payment⁵, more likely to report post-injury financial struggle⁶

Practice Messages Based on Evidence Synthesis



Message 1

Non-White workers are less likely to report returning to work following a non-occupational injury or illness

Non-White workers will benefit from specific policy or programmatic attention to support RTW

Strong level of Evidence

3 High Quality Studies; 7 Medium Quality Studies

Message 2

Black workers may face specific obstacles to returning to work following a non-occupational injury or illness

Black workers could benefit from tailored policy or programmatic attention to address unique experiences returning to work

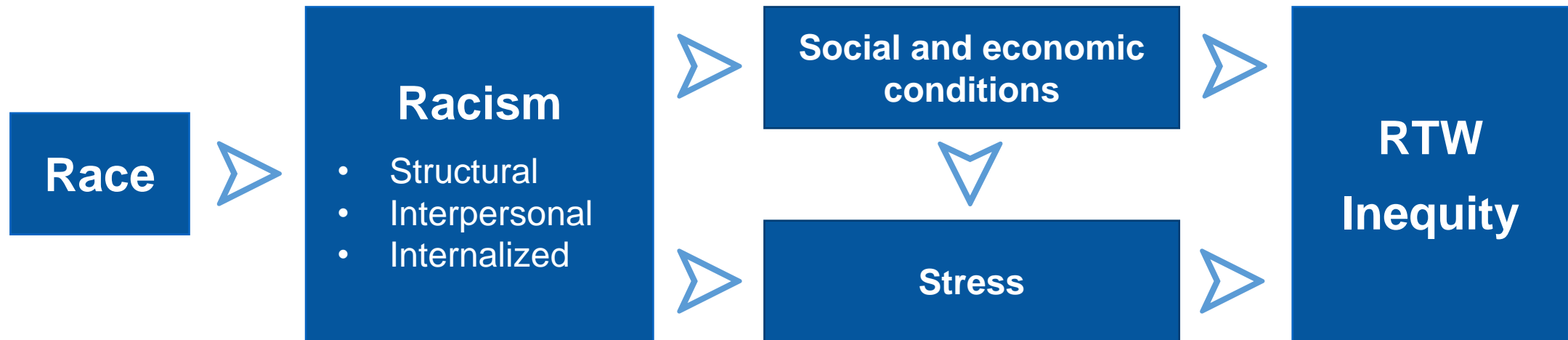
Moderate levels of Evidence

2 High Quality Studies; 3 Medium Quality Studies

Discussion

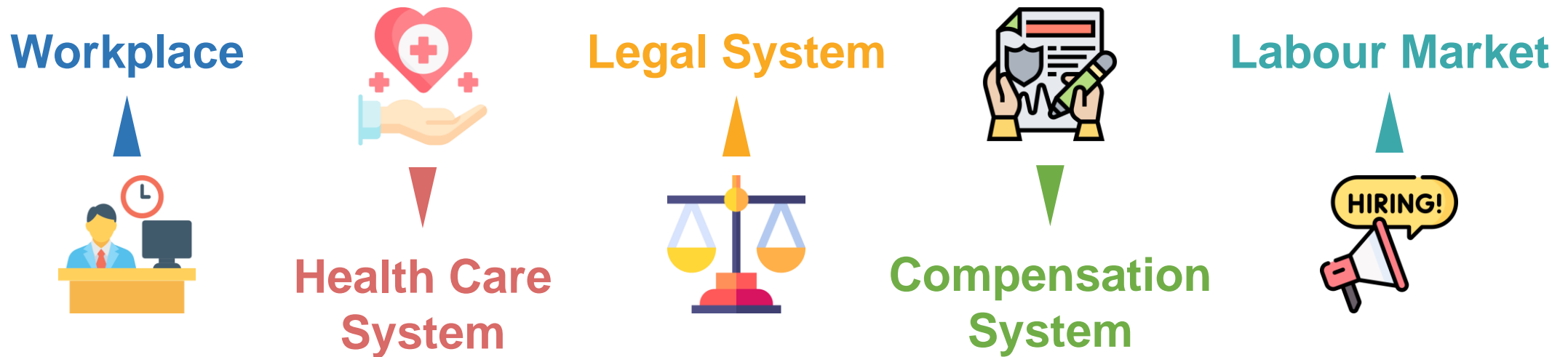
How do we interpret our findings?

- The specific mechanisms underlying racial and ethnic inequities in return to work are not well documented
- Neighbouring fields like public health provide a valuable clue



Racism as a Barrier to RTW

- Extensive background evidence implicates racism as the fundamental cause of racial and ethnic inequities in RTW
- Workers of colour face systemic barriers across various phases and components of the RTW process, reducing their likelihood of returning to work following an injury or illness



Racism in the Workplace

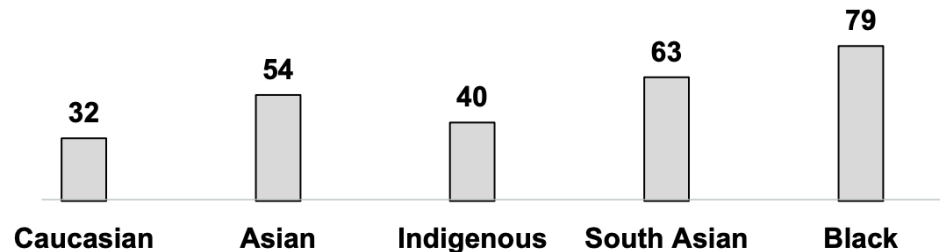
THE MAJORITY OF CANADIANS WITNESS OR EXPERIENCE RACISM WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION THEY WORK FOR

Percent of employees who agree there is **evidence of racism** in their organization.

Percent of employees who agree that racism in the workplace has **damaged their relationship with their employer**

56%

41%



2021 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Business and Racial Justice in Canada.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Construction industry faces reckoning over racism on job sites

Contractors and trade unions have pledged to crack down on anti-Black racism and hate of all forms after a number of recent incidents



CANADA | News

Workplace racism could make Black, racialized Canadians dread returning to the office

Racism is a Ubiquitous Exposure

TORONTO STAR

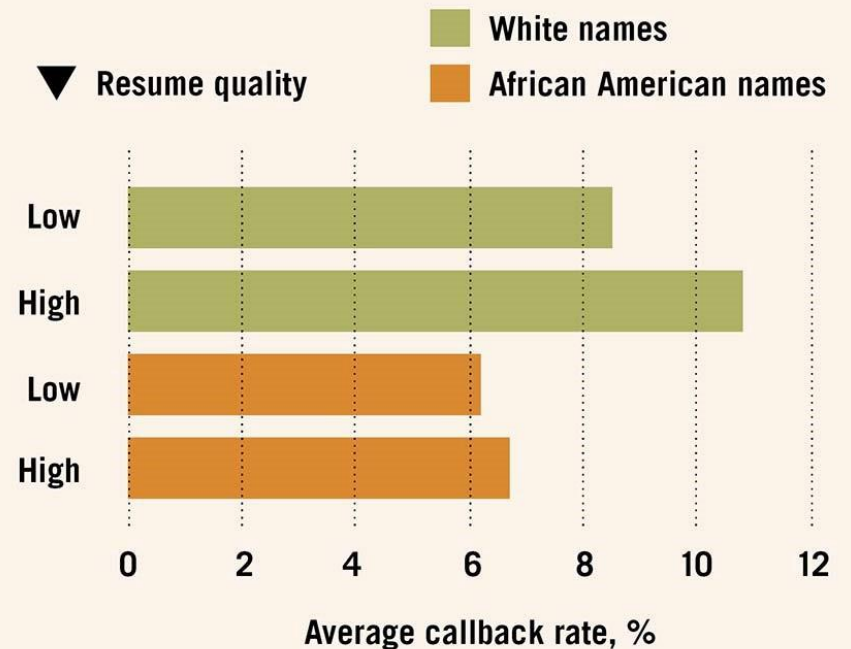
Systemic racism in Canada's healthcare system persists

'Heroes or hostages?': Communities of color bear the burden of essential work in coronavirus crisis

Some say this could be leading to the disproportionate death rates for people.

Racism in a resume

Job applicants with African American-sounding names got fewer callbacks.



Is racism actually an important factor when it comes to RTW?.... Yes



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The NFL Will Stop Assuming Racial Differences When Assessing Brain Injuries

June 2, 2021 · 5:19 PM ET

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

How 'race-norming' was built into the NFL concussion settlement

The NFL and lawyers for former players blame the controversial practice on doctors. But both sides negotiated a settlement that guaranteed race would affect payouts — and defended the practice long after concerns were raised.



By Will Hobson

August 2, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. EDT



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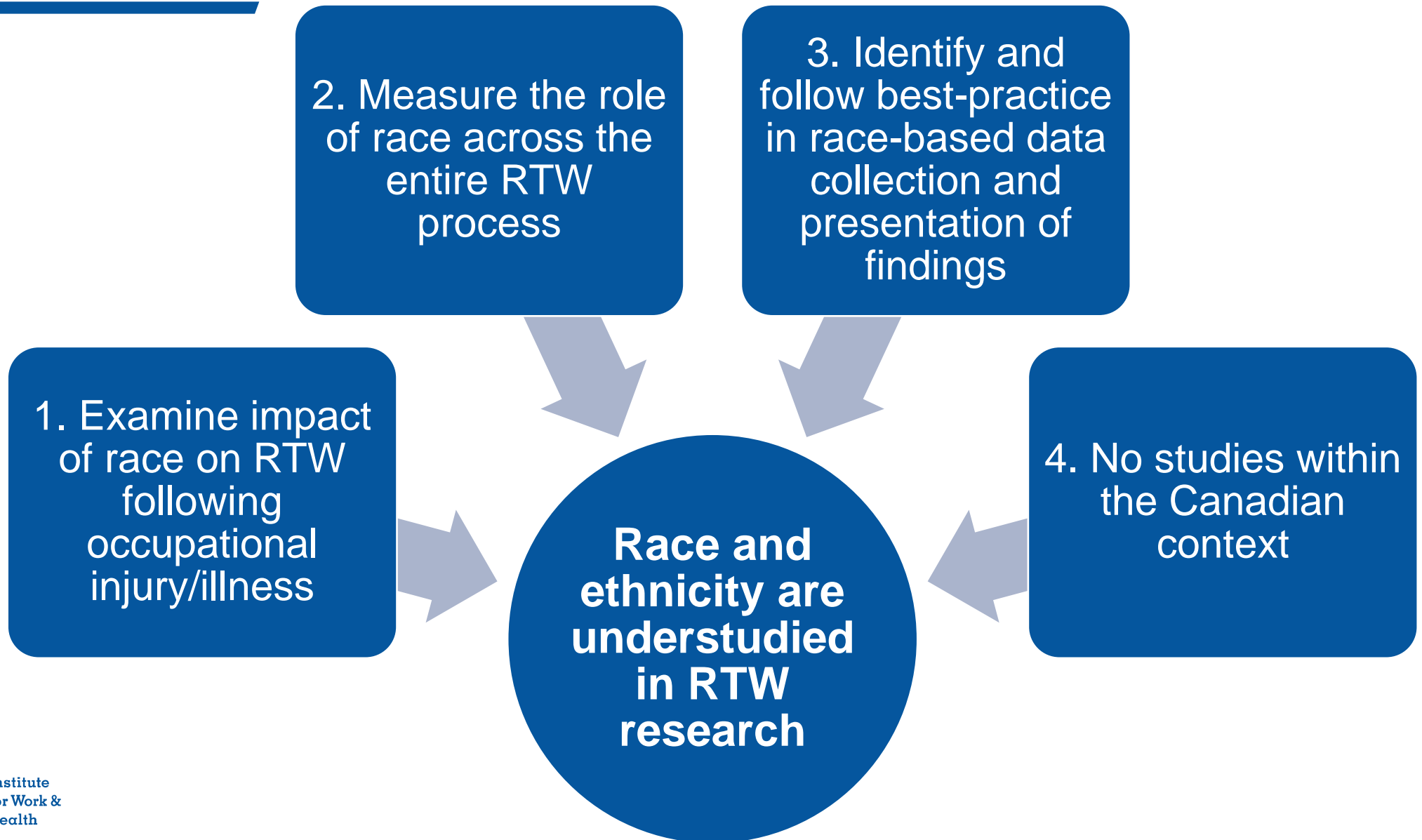
POLICY | OPINION

The NFL's Racist 'Race Norming' Is an Afterlife of Slavery

A statistical manipulation that underpaid Black players in concussion settlements exemplifies American football's immersion in the legacy of slavery

By Tracie Canada, Chelsey R. Carter on July 8, 2021

Steps Forward in RTW Research



Thank you

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