Background and Aims The aim of this study was to analyze the impact of chronic low back pain as the cause of disability retirement in Croatia, comparing surgical and nonsurgical treatment approach.

Methods Data was collected from disability pension register of Department of Medical Assessors in Ministry of Labor and the Pension System for the period 2016-2022. Assessment was done individually depending on the specific limitation caused by disease, and patient’s current job. There are two different types of disability pensions: complete loss of working capacity for any form of employment and partial loss, meaning there is still residual working capacity.

Results During 7 years period (2016-2022), 42% of patients with musculoskeletal diseases assessed as having complete or partial loss of working ability, were patients with chronic low back pain: 63% were surgically treated. Complete loss of working ability was determined in 36% of surgically treated patients, while 64% were assessed as having partial loss, median age was 53, and 55% were male. Concerning nonsurgical treatment approach, complete loss of working ability was determined in 27% of patients, while 73% were assessed as having partial loss, median age was 55, and 34% were female. There was no difference in education level: 42% low education, 56% secondary education, and 2% with university diploma.

Conclusions Higher percentage of patients with chronic low back pain who were assessed to have complete or partial loss of working ability were treated surgically. These findings could have certain impact on treatment approach to patients with low back pain.