

The Needs of Farmworkers in Washington State: Series Recap

The 2022 Washington Legislature tasked WSIPP with conducting a study of the needs of farmworkers, including a survey of farmworkers on work-related issues, an assessment of how state and federal agencies coordinate on farmworker issues, and a review of research-backed programs and policies to help farmworkers.

Background

Previous research has established that farmworkers are socioeconomically vulnerable at the national level, but the condition of farmworkers is not as well known within Washington.

Findings

Key findings from our survey of 202 farmworkers include:

- More than half of the respondents said employers do not consistently adjust work for heat or smoke.
- English speakers were more likely to receive safety-related training and equipment.
- Nearly half of farmworkers reported using government services, and 69% of those who did sought help from a community organization or figure.
- 43% of H-2A workers report struggling to find housing and food “every week” despite being guaranteed both by their visa status.
- Having health insurance is associated with greater use of preventative healthcare and less use of emergency services.

While Washington is one of the most effective states at providing services to farmworkers, according to federal agency staff, coordination between state agencies is hampered by a lack of formal processes for collaboration, such as shared databases on claims and enforcement actions or official linkages between personnel at different agencies.

The research literature emphasizes the importance of state- and community-led initiatives to support the specific regional needs of farmworkers.

Limitations

This report series does not focus on the challenges farmers and agricultural employers face. The survey sample is not necessarily representative of all farmworkers in Washington.

Frequency of Respondent Experiences

Experience	% of respondents
<i>Work-related exposures</i>	
Exposure to excessive heat	55%
Exposure to smoke	51%
Exposure to pesticides	45%
Work-related injury	15%
<i>Use of services</i>	
Using government services	45%
<i>Socioeconomic risks</i>	
Food insecurity	42%
Housing insecurity	26%
Lack of insurance	39%

Assignment Details

Assigned in 2022 Legislative Session
[ESSB 5693](#), Operating budget

Links to the full reports are provided below:
[Preliminary Report](#)
[Final Report](#)

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