

**"Age, Gender, and Race as Factors in California  
Farmworker Occupational Health Protection and  
Knowledge"**

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## **Abstract**

**Objective:** This study set forth to determine: (1) To what extent do California farmworkers experience health and safety code violations in the workplace? (2) What is the level of knowledge among California farmworkers regarding occupational health and safety practices? (3) Do differences in rates of occupational health and safety code violations experienced exist between age, gender, and racial groups in the California farmworker population? (4) Do differences in knowledge regarding occupational health and safety practices exist between age, gender, and racial groups in the California farmworker population?

**Methods:** The data for this study comes from a California-wide survey of 910 farmworkers conducted by the California Rural Legal Assistance in the winter of 2002-2003. The surveys were administered primarily in Spanish and included questions regarding workplace conditions, pesticide use, medical conditions, housing conditions, knowledge of rights, knowledge of resources, knowledge of health information, and various demographic questions. The data for this study was analyzed using SPSS through cross-tabulations and chi square tests

**Results:** In measures of health and safety regulation violations and of knowledge of health and safety information, little significant difference was found between different age groups, and between males and females. Between indigenous and non-indigenous farmworkers, it was found that farmworkers with indigenous backgrounds were more likely to report violations and also were more likely to report higher levels of health and safety knowledge.

**Dedico esta obra a los campesinos, a mis padres, y a todos los inmigrantes en los Estados Unidos.**

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## **Introduction**

California farmworkers are valuable but extremely overlooked members of our society who play vital role in feeding America. Virtually no American can say that they have never eaten something picked or processed by these men and women who work in the agricultural fields of California. Their hard work helping California feed people across the country and the world warrants that they be paid respect and that attention be brought to their condition in the workplace. Research into their health and safety is important not only because we depend so greatly on these workers, but because we as a society must be vigilant of the enforcement of laws that protect the rights of all workers.

The Farmworker Movement of the 1960s and 70s secured for farm-workers vital legal rights and protections of their health in the workplace. Yet, while the Movement was able to bring about change in the laws concerning the occupation health and safety conditions for farm-workers, the effectiveness of these laws in improving the occupational health status of farmworkers is heavily dependent on whether or not these laws are observed. Therefore, it is important that the enforcement and effectiveness of these laws be measured and evaluated.

This thesis will do just that by determining the extent to which California farmworkers experience workplace safety regulation violations and by determining the amount of knowledge farmworkers possess regarding occupational safety. Delving deeper, this thesis will then explore whether or not differences in protection and knowledge exist between age, gender, and indigeny groups of farmworkers. The goal of this thesis is contribute the body of literature new knowledge that will help us ascertain whether or not we are succeeding in taking good care of those who feed us.