Addressing Special Populations: Immigrant Workers in California

Suzanne Teran
Labor Occupational Health Program
U.C. Berkeley
Immigrant Workers Are Silent In Sickness And in Health

The fear of deportation keeps illegal workers quiet.

Firm Put Untrained Immigrants At Risk to Remove Asbestos

Hispanics risk life, limb to work in unsafe U.S. factories

For Hispanic Immigrants, a Higher Job-Injury Risk
California Population 1999: 33,813,642

- Latino: 49%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 31%
- African American: 12%
- American Indian/Alaska Native: 7%
- Non-Hispanic/White: 1%
## Major industries by ethnicity and nativity, 1996. California

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Latino Native</th>
<th>Latino Foreign</th>
<th>Asian Native</th>
<th>Asian Foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agriculture</strong></td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction</strong></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Manufacturing</strong></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Services</strong></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Latino native</td>
<td>Latino foreign</td>
<td>Asian native</td>
<td>Asian foreign</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/ Technical workers</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical/ sales workers</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafts workers</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operatives</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service workers</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>6%</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Estimated Undocumented Population in California

1.4 million

Industries dependent on undocumented labor

- Light manufacturing
- Agriculture
- Food processing
- Hotel and Restaurants
- Garment
- Transportation
- Residential construction and building services
- Retail Trade
- Health care
- Domestic care
Increased Risk of Injury and Illness

Greater Risk:

- Latino men: 2 times more likely
- Latina women: 1.5 times more likely
Adults with very high blood lead levels: 46% were Latino.

Korean workers in LA: 40% suffered injuries requiring treatment or lost workdays.

Victims of serious accidents in LA: 3 in 4 had Spanish surnames.

Day laborers in LA: twice the rate for construction workers in California.
Fatalities

- Disproportionate share of victims of workplace violence
- 40% increase in fatalities among Latinos in construction
- Latinos accounted for 67% of manufacturing-related fatalities in LA.
Less Likely to Report Injuries

- Room Cleaner: 77%
- Work Related Pain: 23%

Workers' Comp Injury
Hazards:
- Aware of hazards, but little opportunity to take action
- Work without adequate controls
- Have inadequate PPE

Workers’ Rights:
- Unaware of their rights
- Fear speaking up or reporting problems

Training:
- No training in their primary language

Regulations/Cal-OSHA:
- Unaware of Hazard Communication or Injury and Illness Prevention Program requirements
- Have no knowledge of Cal/OSHA
- Express cynicism toward the role of inspectors

Experience from our training program
Taking Action to Improve Health and Safety

Following training, Spanish-speaking workers attempted action as often as English speakers. However, they were only half as successful in achieving changes.
Special Challenges: Factors that impact health and safety risk

1. Immigration Status
2. Lack of training/knowledge of laws
3. “Informal” jobs
4. No health insurance
5. Cultural differences
6. Language barriers
7. Priority of work
8. Exposure at work and home
Approaches to Prevention

1. Comprehensive education and outreach programs to reach workers and employers

Workers:

- Culturally and linguistically appropriate programs
- Partner with community-based organizations, unions, and county programs

Employers:

- Provide demonstration programs
- Emphasize importance of training in workers’ primary language
2. Improve access to care

3. Improve training regulations and enforcement efforts
   - Bilingual inspectors

4. Research to better document problem

5. Support rights of workers to join a union