



FARMWORKER HEALTH IN CALIFORNIA

A Presentation of the UC
Merced Farmworker Health
Study Report

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Labor Center
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Photo credit: David Bacon

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

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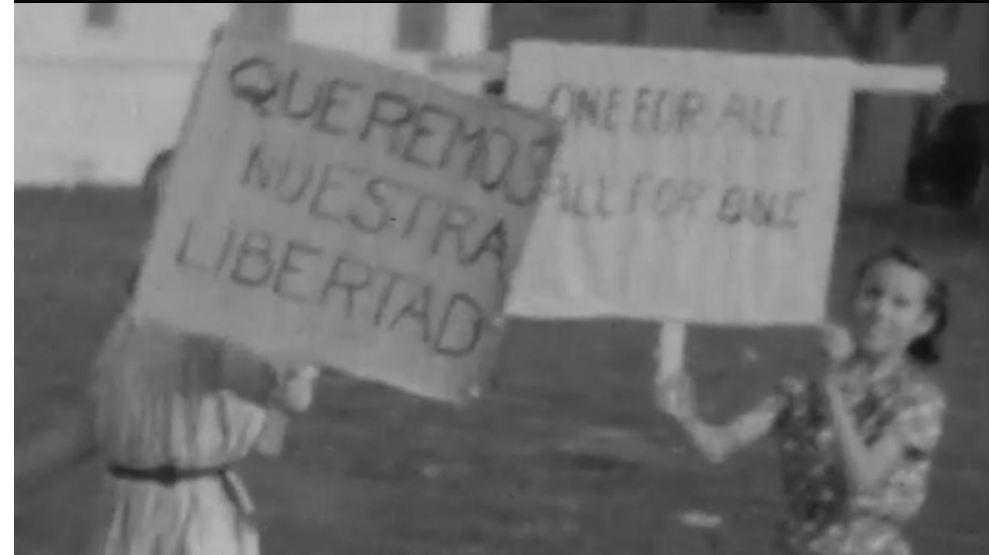
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

California agriculture was modeled upon the southern plantation (Arax and Wartzman 2005).

Modern worker protections excluded agricultural workers and domestic workers

- The 1935 National Labor Relations Act
- The 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act

Credit: Madera County Library, California History and Family Research Room



STUDY PURPOSE

Primary purpose: determine the **health status** of farmworkers in California

Secondary aim: investigate the impact of **social determinants of health** on farmworker health

- Healthcare access
- Healthcare coverage
- Workforce health needs/ training needs

CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

The concept of “social and economic organization” serves as a key conceptual frame.

- The earliest social science studies indicated a relationship between race, economic position and mortality (Du Bois 2003[1906]).
- Foundational literature in the “social determinants of health” made similar arguments about race, income and mortality.



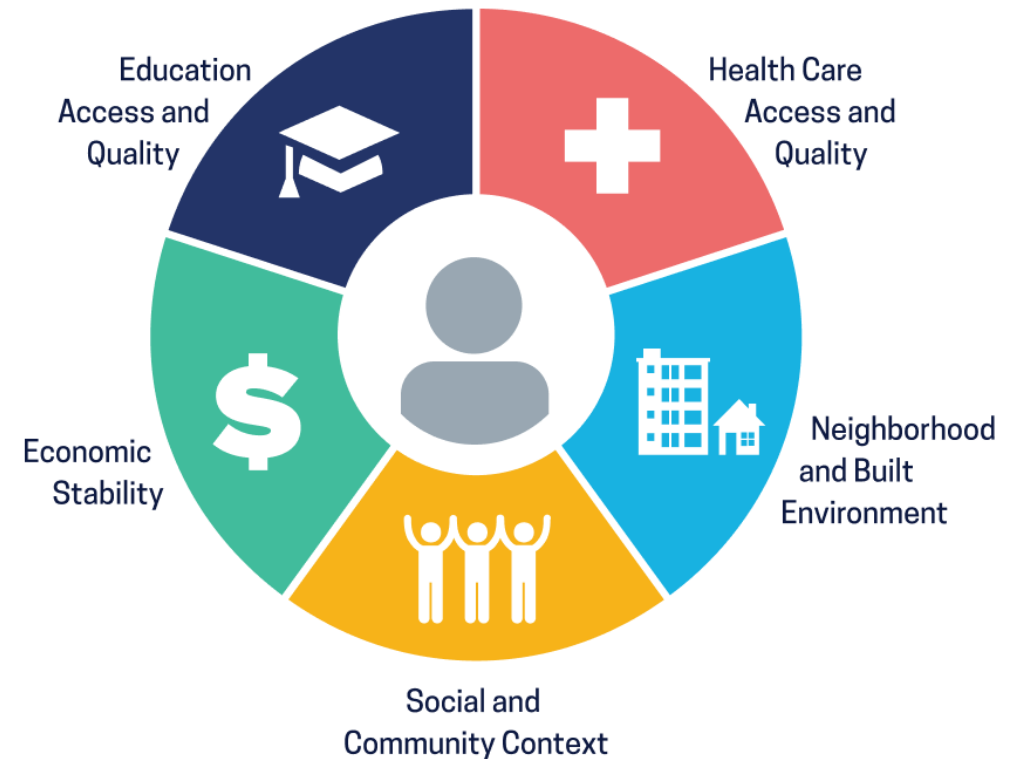
CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

Today the term “social determinants of health” is a foundational concept in the field of health and human services

- World Health Organization
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)- Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP)

Image credit: US DHHS- ODPHP (2023)

Social Determinants of Health



CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

The field of public health also utilizes the concept of social determinants of health.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- California Department of Public Health-Office of Health Equity

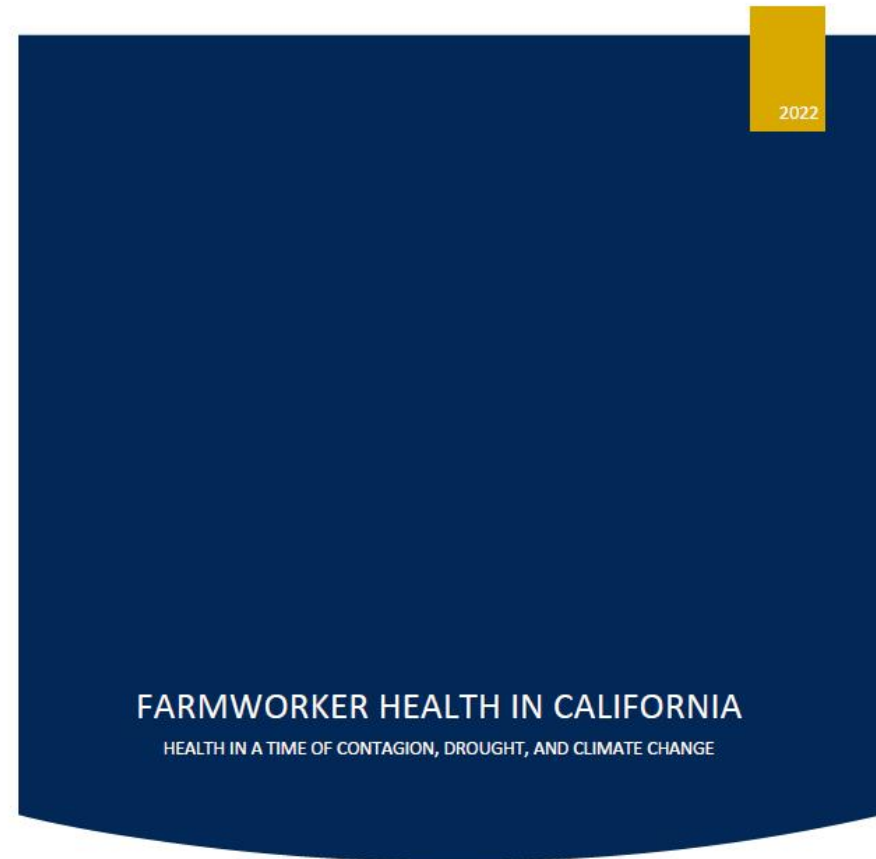


Image credit: CDC (2023)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

The UC Merced Farmworker Health study is an intervention in the field of public health

It asks many questions about health and health access, but also questions about work not present in previous studies of farmworker health



COMMUNITY AND
LABOR CENTER
UC MERCED

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The UC Merced Community and Labor Center conducted community engaged research with a community advisory board (CAB)

- CAB consisted of 26 farmworker-serving community, worker and labor organizations

Farmworker CAB provided strategic input during every step of the study

- Development of survey instrument
- Data collection
- Planning dissemination



FARMWORKER CAB

Alianza Coachella Valley

California Rural Legal Assistance

California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation

Californians for Pesticide Reform

Campesinas Unidas del Valle de San Joaquin

Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño

Central California Environmental Justice Network

Center for Farmworker Families

Central Valley Empowerment Alliance

Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative

Cultiva La Salud – Fresno

Cultiva La Salud – Merced

Dolores Huerta Foundation

Fresno Asian Business Institute & Resource Center

Lideres Campesinas

Mixteco Indigena Community Organizing Project/Proyecto Mixteco Indigena

The Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment

Training Occupational Development Educating Communities Legal Center

United Farm Workers of America

United Farm Workers Foundation

Valley Voices

Vision y Compromiso

West Modesto Community Collaborative

Westside Family Preservation Services Network

Women's Farmworker Association

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ten CAB organizations and two clinics conducted 1,242 in-person interviews with farmworkers from August 2021 to January 2022.

- Interview length: 2-4 hours
- Six languages: Spanish, Mixteco, Triqui, Zapotec, Ilocano, and English
- Locations across California
 - Major agricultural regions: San Joaquin Valley, Salinas Valley, Napa-Sonoma Counties, Imperial Valley, Coachella Valley, Lower Central Coast
 - Cities: Fresno, Lindsay, Hanford, Poplar, Ventura, Sonoma, Salinas, El Centro and Coachella
- 205 out of 1,242 farmworkers completed a more detailed medical survey and provided a non-fasting blood draw

DATA COLLECTION

Californians for Pesticide Reform (CAPS)

Campeſinas Unidas Del Valle De San Joaquin

Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN)

Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)

Central Valley Empowerment Alliance, Inc. (CVEA)

Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño (CBDIO)

Lideres Campeſinas

Training Occupational Development Educating Communities (TODEC) Legal Center

United Farm Workers of America (UFW)

Valley Voices

Vo Neighborhood Medical Clinic

UC Berkeley CERCH & CSVS



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DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Farmworker Health Study shares many of the same characteristics as representative samples of California farmworkers, such as the American Community Survey.

Exceptions include the oversampling of women and Indigenous persons, to better understand their experiences.

Table 1. FWHS Demographics

		FWHS 2021	ACS 2019
<i>Demographics</i>	Age (median)	41	39
	Female	56%	32%
	Married	67%	53%
<i>Race</i>	Latino	99%	95%
	Indigenous	25%	0%
<i>Nativity</i>	Foreign-born	91%	79%
	Year arrived to US	2001	2001
<i>Primary Language</i>	Spanish	88%	88%
	Indigenous	7%	1%
	English	3%	9%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The largest share of our sample was in the San Joaquin Valley. Many of the state's farmworkers live in the region.

Most other regions had a higher distribution in our study than their share of the state's farmworker population.

This enabled sample sizes large enough for some geographic comparisons.

Table 2. FWHS Geographic Distribution

<i>Region</i>	FWHS 2021	ACS 2019
San Joaquin Valley	42%	61%
Upper Central Coast	21%	17%
Imperial and Coachella Valley	20%	6%
Sonoma/Napa	12%	3%
Lower Central Coast	5%	14%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

HOUSEHOLD

The distribution of our sample among different household sizes was nearly identical with the ACS.

The median household size was 4 persons per household.

The median number of children per household was two.

Table 3. FWHS Household Characteristics

		FWHS 2021	ACS 2019
<i>Household size</i>	1	3%	4%
	2	11%	11%
	3	15%	15%
	4	23%	23%
	5	18%	19%
	6	14%	15%
	7+	15%	14%
<i>Children per household</i>	0	30%	38%
	1	18%	17%
	2	23%	21%
	3	17%	14%
	4	8%	7%
	5+	4%	3%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

HOUSING

Most farmworkers were renters (92%).

One in ten (90%) did not have access to water at home.

Table 4. Housing Characteristics

<i>Type</i>	Single-family home	55%
	Apartment	31%
	Labor camp/boarding/motel	9%
	RV/car	4%
<i>Ownership</i>	Rent	92%
	Mortgage	8%
<i>Access to water</i>		90%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

HOUSING PROBLEMS

Large minorities of farmworkers reported several problems with housing, from trouble cooling (39%) to bad water taste (37%) and the built environment.

Table 5. Housing Problems

	<u>Percent</u>
Taste of water at home ("bad" or "very bad")	37%
Trouble keeping house cool	39%
Household problems	
Rotting wood	16%
Mold	14%
Water damage	13%
Leaks	12%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

A black and white photograph of farmworkers in a field. In the foreground, a man in a plaid shirt and a baseball cap is crouching, holding a round fruit. In the background, another worker is visible near a large container. The text 'FARMWORKER HEALTH' is overlaid in the center.

FARMWORKER HEALTH

FARMWORKER HEALTH

More than one in three (36%) respondents self-rated their health as only “fair” or “poor.”

Table 6. Farmworker Health

<i>Overall Health Status</i>	<u>Percent</u>
Excellent	10%
Very Good	13%
Good	42%
Fair	31%
Poor	5%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

Forty-two percent of farmworkers self-reported having been diagnosed with at least one chronic condition.

Table 7. Self-Reported Chronic Conditions

	Women	Men	Total
Percentage with chronic disease	47%	37%	42%
Diabetes	22%	17%	20%
Hypertension	17%	21%	19%
Anxiety	12%	7%	10%
Depression	11%	5%	8%
Asthma	8%	6%	7%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.



MENTAL HEALTH

In terms of mental health, 87% of farmworkers had at least one adverse childhood experience.

This is associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression.

Fifteen percent of survey respondents reported feelings of uncontrollable worry

MEDICAL INFORMATION

The Salinas sample included collection of medical information.

Farmworkers had elevated rates of several test results, indicating higher risk of chronic disease.

Findings suggest chronic disease may be higher than self-reports suggest.

Table 8. Normal and Abnormal Results of Laboratory Tests (hematology, clinical chemistry, immunology)

<i>Glucose</i>	High (>200)	12%
	borderline High (131-199)	39%
	Normal (<130)	49%
<i>Hemoglobin A1C</i>	Diabetes	22%
	Prediabetes	34%
	Normal	43%
<i>C-Reactive protein</i>	High risk	42%
	Average risk	30%
	Low risk	28%

N=204

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

COVID-19

Results indicate a high prevalence of farmworkers affected by COVID-19's long-term health effects.

Table 9. COVID Diagnosis and Recovery

	<u>Percent</u>
Suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case	40%
Positive test for COVID-19	29%
Not back to normal	41%
Had not gone back to work	10%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Farmworker women experienced elevated rates of three types of adverse pregnancy outcomes:

- Preterm birth
- Low birthweight
- Birth defects

Table 10. Adverse Pregnancy Outcomes Among Women

	FWHS	CA Avg
Preterm Birth	14%	9%
Low birthweight	15%	7%
Birth defects	5%	3%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.



**SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF
HEALTH**

HEALTHCARE ACCESS

We collected data on two measures of healthcare access: healthcare coverage and healthcare utilization.

More than half (51%) of farmworkers did not have health insurance coverage.

Most (78%) had a usual source of care, and among those this was most often a community health center or migrant clinic (58%).

But only 43% of farmworkers claimed that they had visited a doctor's clinic within the past year

Table 11. Healthcare Access and Utilization

		<u>Percent</u>
<i>Health Insurance</i>	Health insurance coverage	51%
	Reason for lack of coverage	
	Not eligible (immigration status)	36%
	Too expensive	28%
	Not eligible (work status)	12%
	Children with health insurance	74%
<i>Type of Care</i>	Usual Source of Healthcare	78%
	CHC/ Migrant Clinic	58%
	Doctor	29%
	Hospital/ER	7%
	Other	5%
	Traditional Medicine	1%
	Pharmacist	<1%
<i>Utilization</i>	In the past 12 months, visited a doctor's clinic	43%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

WORK

The profile of a farmworker is one of economic and class disadvantage.

Most farmworkers work full-time for a third-party, with low earnings; some workers must significantly travel away from home.

Table 12. Work Characteristics

<i>Worker</i>	Median Hours Worked	40
	Migrant Worker	22%
	Median Personal Wage	\$16,000
<i>Employer Type</i>	Contractor	68%
<i>Work Type</i>	Field Work	84%
	Packing House	11%
	Nursery	2%
	Other	3%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

WORKPLACE COMPLIANCE

The State of California has wage standards for workers, and for farmworkers, that exceed federal standards.

Our findings indicate some amount of employer non-compliance with wage and hour provisions in agricultural work.

Table 13a. Employer Compliance with Workplace Health and Safety Standards

<i>Wage & Hour</i>	<i>Were not paid wages by an employer (at any point)</i>	<i>19%</i>
	<i>Worker was paid all or part in cash</i>	<i>15%</i>
	<i>Did not receive minimum number of rest breaks</i>	<i>15%</i>

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

WORKPLACE COMPLIANCE

The State has also implemented innovative reforms in workplace health and safety, such as a Heat Standard, or a Wildfire Smoke Standard.

Our survey alone found hundreds of cases of workers expressing that they experienced non-compliance with workplace health and safety standards.

Table 13b. Employer Compliance with Workplace Health and Safety Standards

<i>Heat Standard</i>	Employer never:	
	Provided Heat Illness Prevention Plan	43%
	Monitored temperature on hot days	20%
	Monitored for heat illness when >95 degrees	22%
	Provided enough shade during breaks when >80 degrees (Respondent never) received heat-related illness training	15%
<i>Pesticide Training</i>	Applied pesticides	9%
	Did not receive training on use of pesticides	25%
<i>Wildfire Smoke</i>	Respirators lacking but "always" needed	32%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

WORKPLACE COMPLIANCE

One in three (36%) said they would be unwilling to report employer non-compliance that they witnessed.

Among those unwilling to report, nearly two in three (64%) said they would be unwilling to report due to fear of retaliation (such as job loss, deportation).

Table 13c. Employer Compliance with Workplace Health and Safety Standards

<i>Filing Reports</i>	If witnessed non-compliance, unwilling to file a report	36%
	Unwilling to file due to fear of retaliation	64%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Farmworkers faced great social and economic challenges and limited rights.

Only four in ten (41%) farmworkers said they were eligible for unemployment benefits.

Most respondents expressed the highest level of fear (67%) when asked how often they worry about family separation due to deportation.

Table 14. Farmworker Social and Economic Rights

<i>Social & Economic Rights</i>	<u>Percent</u>
How to cover a \$400 expense in an emergency	
Cannot pay	23%
Pay over time	65%
Pay in full	12%
Did not qualify for unemployment benefits	59%
Worried about family separation due to deportation ("always")	67%
Food insecurity (food security "very low," "low, or "marginal")	54%

Source: UC Merced Community and Labor Center analysis of Farmworker Health Survey 2021-2022.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our report ends with policy recommendations, including:

- Continue to invest public resources in protecting workers' rights.
- Invest public resources in agricultural development that raises industry work standards.
- Expand access to the economic safety net.
- Expand access to the healthcare safety net.
- Expand healthcare access.