Working Conditions and Health in Central America

SUMMARY
In 2016, the Chief Evaluation Office partnered with the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) to fund researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston to understand the prevalence, nature, and possible consequences of working conditions on employment and health status of the Central American workforce, with a particular focus on work-related violence.

In a previous study, researchers at the University of Texas School of Public Health developed and piloted a survey module on adult work-related violence, designed to be integrated and administered as part of a larger survey on working conditions and health in Central America.

This Department of Labor-funded study was the result of the annual process to determine the Department’s research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the growing labor evidence-base to inform programs and policies that impact international labor issues and addresses Department strategic goals and priorities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Half of the survey participants did not have a formalized hiring agreement, many of them did not receive written pay stubs.
- When asked about the nature of their work:
  - 67% of workers who participated in the survey reported performing repetitive movements at their job
  - 38.8% reported frequent use of equipment, including instruments, tools, or machines, that can cause injury
  - 24.9% reported frequently performing job tasks that require working in an uncomfortable position.
- Researchers found that 28.4% of workers who participated in the survey reported having a poor understanding of their labor rights.
- Seven percent of survey respondents reported having a union at the worksite, and 15% reported having had evaluations, measurements, or controls of the possible health risks at their jobs.
Survey participants reported feeling unsafe at home (15%), at work (20%), in the neighborhood (23%), and on route to work (24%).

SEE FULL REPORT

TIMEFRAME: 2016-2020
SUBMITTED BY: The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
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PARTNER AGENCY: Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB)
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