

INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS' HEALTH



HEALTH STATUS: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

What will you find on this Summary Sheet?

This document summarizes the scientific literature regarding occupational health of international migrants within the Region of the Americas. The information provided here is based on a broader scoping review of the published scientific literature regarding international migrants' health in the Region of the Americas between January 2016 and March 2023.

This summary sheet is a narrative and descriptive synthesis of several main topics related to the field, with a focus on international migration and health in the Region. It does not fully represent the heterogeneity of information available internationally in terms of type of migrants, countries of origin, and study designs; however, it provides a description of general patterns often found in this literature. In this scoping review, 12 articles addressed the health status of international migrants associated with occupational exposures.

The results presented in the following scientific literature review summary sheet are based on selected articles from the review and are not intended to be an exhaustive review of all current literature. You can find all references in the interactive dashboard located within PAHO's Information Platform on Health and Migration.

[Access the PAHO Information Platform on Health and Migration](#)

Are there other similar scientific literature summary sheets on international migrants' health available?

The scoping review on international migrants' health included total of 837 academic articles categorized within three broad themes: health outcomes, health systems and health determinants. All these articles are described and presented in an interactive dashboard and other 11 summary sheets are available that touch upon more specific categories within these three major themes. If you want to learn more about how working conditions can impact health of international migrants, you can find more information on the summary sheet on Living Conditions and Health Determinants.

MAIN FINDINGS

What can we learn from the scientific literature so far about International Migrants' Occupational Health?

Studies retrieved from the published scientific literature suggest some of the following findings:

MUSCULOSKELETAL PAIN

- Some studies explore musculoskeletal pain and its relationship with migrants' working conditions. Mexican migrants in the United States (U.S.) report experiencing knee and back pain derived from work activities (1). and Bolivian migrant women in Argentina experience increased postural pain, as well as respiratory and dermatological symptoms due to agricultural chemicals, and work accidents (2).
- Research also suggests that there are differences in musculoskeletal pain by legal status. Undocumented migrants had lower rates of these conditions than documented migrants, specifically, they were 41% and 25% less likely of having chronic and musculoskeletal conditions, respectively. These results were not explained by length of residence or language proficiency which could mean an immigrant epidemiologic paradox among Mexican workers (3).

OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES

- In the U.S., there is evidence that immigrant workers have a higher share of work-related deaths in the context of natural resources, construction, and maintenance in contrast to native workers, who had a greater share of

deaths in management, professional, and related occupations (4).

- Data from a study based in the U.S. shows that occupational fatalities among foreign-born workers have increased (5).

WORKING CONDITIONS

- A study conducted in Mexico highlights that working conditions that deter immigrants' health relate to precarious employment, an absence of a pre-established contract, activities that are sustained for long working hours and performed in extreme weather conditions (6).
- There is also evidence from the U.S. that reports that 24.5% of surveyed Latino immigrants had experienced wage theft at their last job, which can have an impact on workers physical and mental health. Authors emphasize that wage theft can be conceptualized as structural racism that has important effects for immigrant health (7).

OTHER HEALTH OUTCOMES

- Evidence retrieved shows that higher levels of occupational activity were associated with increased depressive symptoms which could be related to specific job characteristics and demands (8).
- As highlighted in the literature, another occupational health risk factor that migrants face in their work activities is the lack of opportunities of sustaining a healthy diet during their working hours (9).
- It has also been described by the literature that migrant workers with greater occupational activity levels were 65% less likely to be obese, while a sedentary lifestyle increased odds of obesity by 2.4-fold (8).



Featured Article

Among the Farm, the Factory, and Home: Productive and Reproductive Work of Female Migrant Farmworkers in Mendoza (Argentina) and its Impact in the Health Disease Process (2)

Female agricultural workers face precarious working conditions common to all agricultural workers. However, there are gender inequalities that affect them, specifically. This article explores the experiences of female migrant farmworkers in Mendoza, Argentina, through qualitative interviews. The purpose of the study was to analyze the relationship between working conditions and health from a gender perspective. Interestingly, results indicate that in the case of women, both productive and reproductive labor impact their health. In terms of productive labor, women's experiences show how, given gender inequities, they are given the most precarious and worse remunerated jobs. Further, since reproductive labor is also attributed as women's responsibility, their working hours far extend agriculture shifts, intertwined with unpaid domestic work that is undertaken in a context of economic deprivation and with hindered access to support social services. In the own words of an immigrant woman working in agriculture:

"I used to leave my children, who are five kids, and then left to work passing the river [...] I worked there until twelve and then came quickly to feed them and send to school. I finished eating, cleaned my house - just like now - and then ran back to work at the vans. I arrived later at six in the afternoon, and they were already here. Once back home I made them dinner, and then I washed at night, I washed approximately until one o'clock in the morning. I laid down and then got up at five in the morning for cooking. Daily I had to cook everyday so that them can go to school, my husband could go to work, and I too, go to work". [unofficial translation]

Featured Article

Musculoskeletal Pain, Depression and Stress among Latino Manual Laborers in North Carolina (10)

This study appraises the association between musculoskeletal pain, mental health, and work conditions in Latino manual laborers. To this end, Latino farmworkers and non-farmworkers in North Carolina were interviewed, using a two-year longitudinal study design, to capture information on self-reported musculoskeletal pain, depressive symptoms, stress, work safety climate, and precarious job status. Results indicate that health outcomes differ between manual laborers, where more non-farmworkers, as compared to farmworkers, experienced neck, and shoulder pain. Also, depressive symptoms were significantly associated with neck and shoulder pain, and precarious job status had a significant association with back pain. The study suggests that future research areas should address details of work and migration for improving policy aimed at relieving pain and improving mental health.



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HEALTH AND MIGRATION

MAPPING OF
SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

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