

Employer-Sponsored Health Benefits of Farmworkers: Differences by Documentation Status

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Background & Research Questions

Background

- Crop production agriculture is one of the most dangerous industries in the United States
- Farmworkers have limited access to health care services
- More than half of farmworkers in the United States lack immigration documentation status (undocumented), making them vulnerable to exploitation by employers
- Undocumented workers generally want to remain anonymous, and thus may be less likely to advocate for health benefits

Research Questions

- Do differences in access and knowledge of access to employer-sponsored health benefits exist by documentation status among farmworkers in the United States?
- Do differences in use of employer-sponsored health benefits exist by documentation status among farmworkers in the United States?

Data, Key Measures, & Methods

Data

National Agricultural Workers' Survey years 1999-2000
 •Nationally representative survey of the crop production workforce

Key Measures

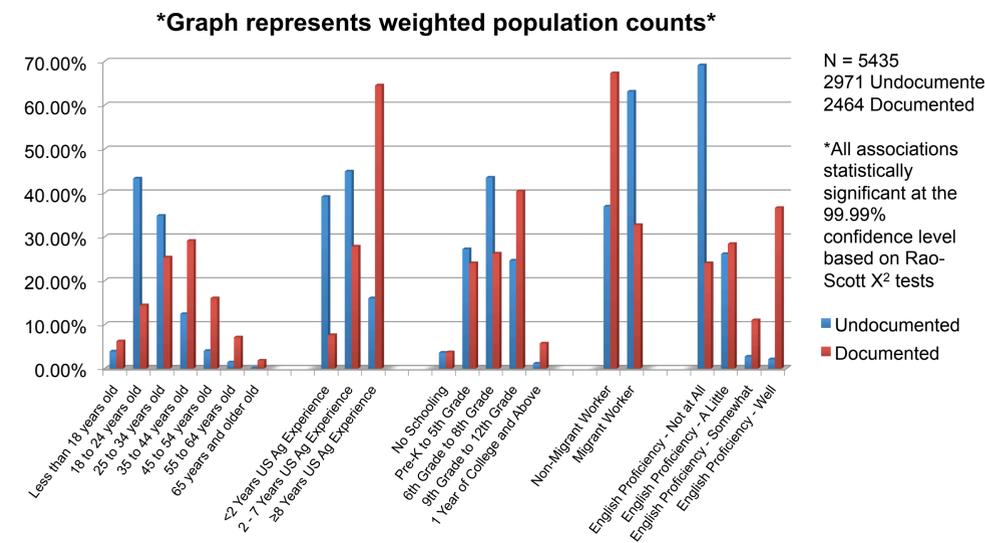
- Documentation status of workers
- Employer-sponsored health insurance (ESI) knowledge
- Employer-sponsored health insurance coverage
- Workers' compensation (WC) wage replacement knowledge
- Workers' compensation wage replacement coverage
- Workers' compensation medical insurance knowledge
- Workers' compensation medical insurance coverage
- Primary payer of medical costs for medical care visits

Methods

Descriptive statistics of farmworkers by documentation status
 Logistic regressions

- Independent predictor is documentation status of worker
- Outcome measures consist of remaining key measures listed above
- Multivariate models estimated to control for confounding
- Models account for complex survey design

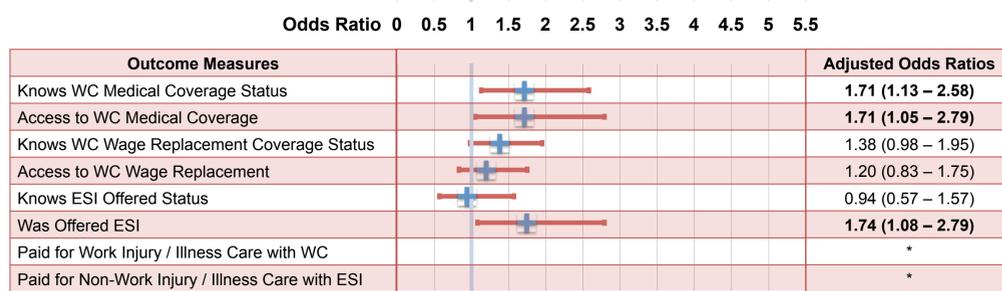
Demographic Characteristics of Sample



- The undocumented portion of the sample were younger on average than the documented portion
- Undocumented workers were less experienced in US agriculture than the documented workers
- Undocumented workers had a lower level of education on average than their documented counterparts
- Almost 70% of the undocumented workers were migrant workers, while migrant workers represented around 30% of the documented workers
- About two thirds of undocumented workers could not speak English at all, compared to less than a quarter of documented workers

Logistic Regression Results

Outcome Measures	Unadjusted Odds Ratios
Knows WC Medical Coverage Status	3.66 (2.56 – 5.24)
Access to WC Medical Coverage	1.73 (1.09 – 2.74)
Knows WC Wage Replacement Coverage Status	3.18 (2.40 – 4.20)
Access to WC Wage Replacement	2.10 (1.46 – 3.02)
Knows ESI Offered Status	3.31 (2.23 – 4.90)
Was Offered ESI	3.48 (2.48 – 4.90)
Paid for Work Injury / Illness Care with WC	0.35 (0.07 – 1.80)
Paid for Non-Work Injury / Illness Care with ESI	0.45 (0.18 – 1.15)



Bold odds ratios are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level
 Standard errors are calculated using Taylor Series with SAS
 Multivariate models adjusted for marital status, age, years of farmwork in the US, education, gender, follow the crop status, migrant status, English speaking proficiency, and ethnicity

Reference group is undocumented farmworkers

Unadjusted Models

- Undocumented workers had lower odds of knowing benefits status in all categories
- Undocumented workers had lower odds of being offered benefits in all categories
- Undocumented workers had higher odds of paying for care with benefits, however results were not statistically significant

Adjusted Models

- Undocumented workers had lower odds of knowing WC medical coverage status, and being offered WC medical coverage
- Undocumented workers had lower odds of being offered ESI
- All other adjusted associations not statistically significantly different than zero
- Use of benefits models were not run due to small size of sample subsets

Summary of Findings

Bivariate regressions suggest differences in both access and knowledge of access to workers' compensation medical coverage, workers' compensation wage replacement, and employer-sponsored health insurance based on farmworker documentation status

Adjusted models demonstrate differences in access to workers' compensation medical coverage, knowledge of access to employer-sponsored health insurance based on farmworker documentation status

Bivariate analyses examining use of workers' compensation and employer-sponsored health plans showed no significant differences based on the documentation status of the farmworker

Implications & Future Research

- Access to ESI among undocumented farmworkers is increasing in importance as a result of the undocumented immigrant exclusion from health insurance exchanges in the ACA, as well as Medicaid restrictions maintained under the ACA – without these other important pathways to coverage, lack of access to ESI could leave these individuals without access to critical health services
- WC is an important resource for the health and welfare of workers in the event of a work-related injury or illness – undocumented farmworkers appear to be at a disadvantage with regard to knowledge of their access to the program, which again could inhibit access to critical health care and/or wage replacement benefits
- Future research should investigate implications of lack of ESI access on access to health services in this population after full implementation of the ACA
- Future research should address questions with more recent data and with a larger sample

Acknowledgements

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