

The Needs of Farmworkers in Washington State: Preliminary Report

In 2022, WSIPP was directed to study the needs of Washington’s farmworkers, how state and federal agencies coordinate to provide services to farmworkers, and what policy options exist to address farmworkers’ needs. This preliminary report overviews farmwork and agriculture in Washington, summarizes the research literature on challenges faced by farmworkers in the US, and describes the plan for a 2024 survey of Washington farmworkers.

Background

Washington farms, ranches, dairies, and packing sheds employ over 113,000 farmworkers, with most located in counties with high agricultural output, such as Yakima, Grant, and Chelan.

Research Overview

Given the lack of rigorous research on Washington farmworkers, we review the national literature to establish context for our survey. We find that farmworkers in the broader US may face challenges in their work and daily lives that many workers in other occupations do not. This report describes the research literature on topics farmworkers will be asked about in the survey. Survey topics will include the following:

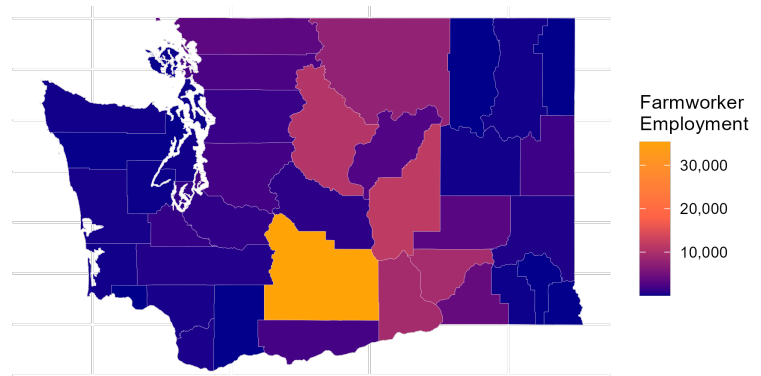
- Working conditions, such as injuries, exposure to smoke, heat, pesticides, and COVID-19;
- Wage and hour issues, such as overtime pay and the timing of pay;
- Use of government services and harassment or retaliation for asserting their rights; and
- Socioeconomic issues, such as access to food, housing, and healthcare.

The survey will aim to interview at least 200 farmworkers across the state between March and October of 2024. It will be among the first comprehensive studies of the conditions farmworkers face in Washington.

Limitations

WSIPP was not directed to address the needs of farm owners or employers. Further research would be required to explore this topic.

Reported Farmworker Employment in Washington by County



Data from Employment Security Department, 2022

Assignment Details

Assigned in 2022 Legislative Session
[ESSB 5693](#), Supplemental Operating Budget

[Full report available on WSIPP’s website](#)

Project lead: Cory Briar
cory.briar@wsipp.wa.gov
 360.664.9801