



Working Conditions and Health in Central America

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.





Working Conditions and Health in Central America

- 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

DATE PREPARED: May 2021

PARTNER AGENCY: Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB)

SPONSOR: Chief Evaluation Office

CEO CONTACT: ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov

The Department of Labor's (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) sponsors independent evaluations and research, primarily conducted by external, third-party contractors in accordance with the [Department of Labor Evaluation Policy](#). CEO's research development process includes extensive technical review at the design, data collection and analysis stage, including: external contractor review and OMB review and approval of data collection methods and instruments per the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), Institutional Review Board (IRB) review to ensure studies adhere to the highest ethical standards, review by academic peers (e.g., Technical Working Groups), and inputs from relevant DOL agency and program officials and CEO technical staff. Final reports undergo an additional independent expert technical review and a review for Section 508 compliance prior to publication. The resulting reports represent findings from this independent research and do not represent DOL positions or policies.

