

Environmental Justice in the Workplace



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Objective

Prepare a report on occupational health disparities in the state of Michigan.

Rationale

Work is a social determinant of health, however occupational health is generally not included in the discussion of health disparities, there are both historical and ongoing examples of occupational health disparities: Covid Pandemic (1); Navajo Uranium Miners (2); Silicosis in Michigan Foundry workers (3); Distribution of Michigan workforce by race/ethnicity (4); and economic costs/lost productivity in low wage workers from work injuries (5).

METHODS

The American Community Survey was used to examine Michigan workers ≥16 years by race/ethnicity and industry/occupation. Michigan Public Health Reporting Regulations were used to determine race/ethnicity by work-related injuries/illnesses in Michigan.

RESULTS/CONCLUSION

Top Occupations by Race/Ethnicity and Sex for Michigan Workers (2020–2024)

Race & Ethnicity	Male	Female
Native American	Production (16%)	Business & Financial Operations (14%)
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Educ. Instruction & Library (25%)	Production (38%)
Latino/ Hispanic	Production (16%)	Office & Administrative Support (16%)
White	Management (14%)	Office & Administrative Support (16%)
Black	Transportation & Mat. Moving (19%)	Office & Administrative Support (17%)
Asian	Architecture & Engineering (16%)	Computer & Mathematical (14%)
Multiple Races	Management (16%)	Office & Administrative Support (16%)



Latino farm workers harvesting lettuce



African-American worker pouring molten metal at a foundry.

Photo by David Parker, MD

RESULTS/CONCLUSIONS CONTINUED

Examples of work-related deaths in Michigan:

- A Latino construction worker in their 50's was crushed by a 90,500-pound concrete bridge I-beam that fell over.
- A Native American oil drill operator in their 30's was pinned between a drilling rig and an oil rig.
- Two Latino teens were asphyxiated while cleaning a 3,000-gallon farm feed tank.
- A Native American forklift driver in their 50's was crushed when the forklift they were driving, carrying two paper bales, overturned.

TETRAD IMPLICATIONS

Tetrad funding enabled collaboration between groups with different perspectives that have not previously worked together. Funding allowed two students to be hired and introduced to the subject of occupational health disparities. We were able to identify stakeholders and disseminated findings. The collaborators are currently working on a peer-reviewed paper. Challenges relate to lack of current availability of external federal funding for health equity, but good working relationships were developed for future work together.

REFERENCES

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