

Colorado cannabis workers are happy, but need better safety training: study

March 16 2018, by Anne Manning

Occupational health researchers at Colorado State University are drawing attention to worker safety and satisfaction in a young industry still finding its feet: legal cannabis.

CSU researchers in the Department of Psychology have completed a first-of-its-kind, peer-reviewed study that examines the demographics, physical environment and psychosocial aspects of working in the [cannabis](#) trade, which is now legal in some form in over half the United States, including Colorado. The study results were published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*.

The study, led by psychology graduate student Kevin Walters, is a snapshot of who works in the cannabis industry in Colorado. It outlines potential improvements in [worker health](#) and safety, and it delineates specific hazards for workplaces to take note of, from ergonomic concerns due to trimming plants to slips, trips and falls.

"We don't want our work to be the end," Walters said. "We're just starting to build a conversation."

The study extends from a report co-authored by Walters, published last year, which was aimed at cannabis industry leaders. Both documents rely on results of a 214-person survey of cannabis industry workers across the Front Range of Colorado. The population sampled was "direct to plant," meaning employees who come in contact with [cannabis plants](#) or products at work every day.

The participants were asked about their occupation, job tasks, well-being, occupational health and safety, and cannabis and tobacco use.

The results found that workers were generally job-secure and valued safety. They also regularly consumed cannabis, expressed low concerns about workplace hazards, and reported occupational injuries and exposures.

Working in the industry, the authors found, is associated with positive outcomes for workers. But there is an imminent need to establish more formal health and safety training and guidelines in order to build up a culture of best practices. According to survey results, about 46 percent of respondents reported little to no [worker safety](#) training since beginning their employment.

The need to evaluate the cannabis workforce is gaining ground in the [public health](#) sphere. The state of Colorado recently published an industry-specific guide to worker health and safety. In June and November, the Center for Health, Work & Environment at the Colorado School of Public Health, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, jointly hosted [safety](#) trainings that highlighted many of the issues Walters' study outlined. To date, these organizations have trained more than 220 people. The course, the first of its kind, is now available online.

More information: Kevin M. Walters et al, An overview of health and safety in the Colorado cannabis industry, *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* (2018). [DOI: 10.1002/ajim.22834](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.22834)

Provided by Colorado State University

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