



Communicating about Immigration Issues: Understanding Public Perceptions of e-Verify



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Introduction

Background

The most recent legislation, the Legal Workforce Act (H.R. 1772), requires employers to check employees' work eligibility through an electronic verification system, e-Verify (National Immigration Law Center, 2013).

What is e-Verify



E-Verify is a web-based system that allows employers to confirm employment eligibility information with data from U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration records (Rosenblum, 2011).

Why study e-Verify

- Due to physically demanding nature of crop production and harvest, many labors in agricultural business are non-native seasonal migrant worker or undocumented immigrant workers, the passage of this bill may impact agricultural employers' ability to hire the workforce to keep up with current levels of production.
- International agricultural educators inevitably encounter immigration issues and will need to communicate clearly about these issues

Objective

This study examined the factors impacting opinions of whether e-Verify should be voluntary for all employers.

Methodology



- Method: Online Survey
- Sample: 656 Florida Residents
- Response rate: 507/656 (77.3%)
- Descriptive statistics and Chi-square statistics were used for analysis

- Five-point Likert-type scale (1= *Strongly disagree*, 5= *Strongly agree*) on the statement "e-verify should be voluntary for employers."
- Post-stratification methods were used to weigh the data for potential exclusion, selection, and non-participation biases (Baker, et al. 2013)



Results

Results showed a significant association between respondent's personal characteristics/experiences and level of agreement that e-Verify should be voluntary for all employers.

Agreement level 1: strongly disagree-----5: strongly agree

	r	X ²	df	P
Age	.142	267.95	228	.04
Sex (female)	-.107	11.02	4	.03
Total family income	-.057	33.15	20	.03
Race/Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino(a)/Chicano(a)	.125	16.10	4	.00
Asian or Pacific Islander	.114	12.20	4	.02
Black or African American	.145	11.64	4	.02
White	-.231	31.99	4	.00
Know someone who has immigrated (with or without documentation) in the last 10 years	-.110	10.93	4	.03
Born in the United States	-.112	18.41	4	.00
Parents were born in the United States (includes Puerto Rico and U.S. territories)	-.153	27.97	12	.01
Speak a language other than English	.143	11.19	4	.03

Conclusion

- Opinions about the implementation of a system that requires employers check on legal status before hiring employees differed among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Obtaining and maintaining a viable agricultural workforce requires immigrant workers worldwide.
- Immigration policies have significant economic impact on agriculture. Even though policies such as e-Verify limit employers to hire unauthorized worker, if policy-makers don't generate a viable agricultural work force prior to the policy implication, it could lead to great economic loss. Immigration reform is not only an issue in the U.S. but one that many countries must deal with to ensure agricultural production is maintained.

Recommendations

- Agricultural educators should approach these topics carefully when discussing immigration and labor concerns with their stakeholders. Participants may not listen to important educational messages if offended by comments, which could have ramifications on the decisions they make.
- To further understand this topic on a global scale, similar research could be conducted in another country and compared with these results.

