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Prevalence of Farmer Health Conditions

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Introduction

- The average age of a farmer is 56 and projected to increase in the coming years¹
- Farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural producers are in the top 10 of the most fatal professions in the United States¹
- Over 200,000 permanently disabling injuries occur annually on farms²
- The prevalence of health conditions and impairments among farmers and ranchers in New Mexico is unknown.
- This study explores the prevalence of health conditions and impairments among agricultural producers residing in New Mexico.

Methods

Method: A descriptive study that includes a survey questionnaire in which the participant can indicate agreement or select one or more descriptive answers and provide demographic information.

Inclusion: New Mexico farmers, ranchers, and food growers who are able to speak, read, and/or write in basic English. A farmer is classified as someone who grows \$1,000 or more of food, feed or fiber.

Instrument: A self-report questionnaire consisting of open ended questions and closed ended questions. Participants identified variables of gender, age, ethnicity, state quadrant in which they farm or ranch, types of agricultural production, and presence/absence of health conditions. Participants were then asked if any of these conditions create an impairment to participation in activities of daily living, work, leisure, and community life.

Procedure: The survey was delivered in person, by phone, e-mail, and through flyers. The surveys administered took anywhere from 5 minutes to 20 minutes for responders to complete. Surveys were passed out at farmer's markets and flyers were strategically placed on bulletin boards and other common areas farmers frequent.

- Nineteen respondents self reported having pain related to working, fifteen of them were under the age of 45.
- Six respondents reported having difficulty getting on and off farm equipment.
- Two respondents reported having difficulties with activities of daily living.
- Sixty percent of respondents are experiencing stress, worry, or emotional concern related to agricultural work.

Discussion

Developing trends were found in the data: difficulty getting on and off farm equipment, lifting or carrying items in the workplace, experiencing cognitive changes, and having stress, worry or emotional concern related to living or working on a farm.

Results

Demographics of Survey Respondents (N=33)

* Age not given

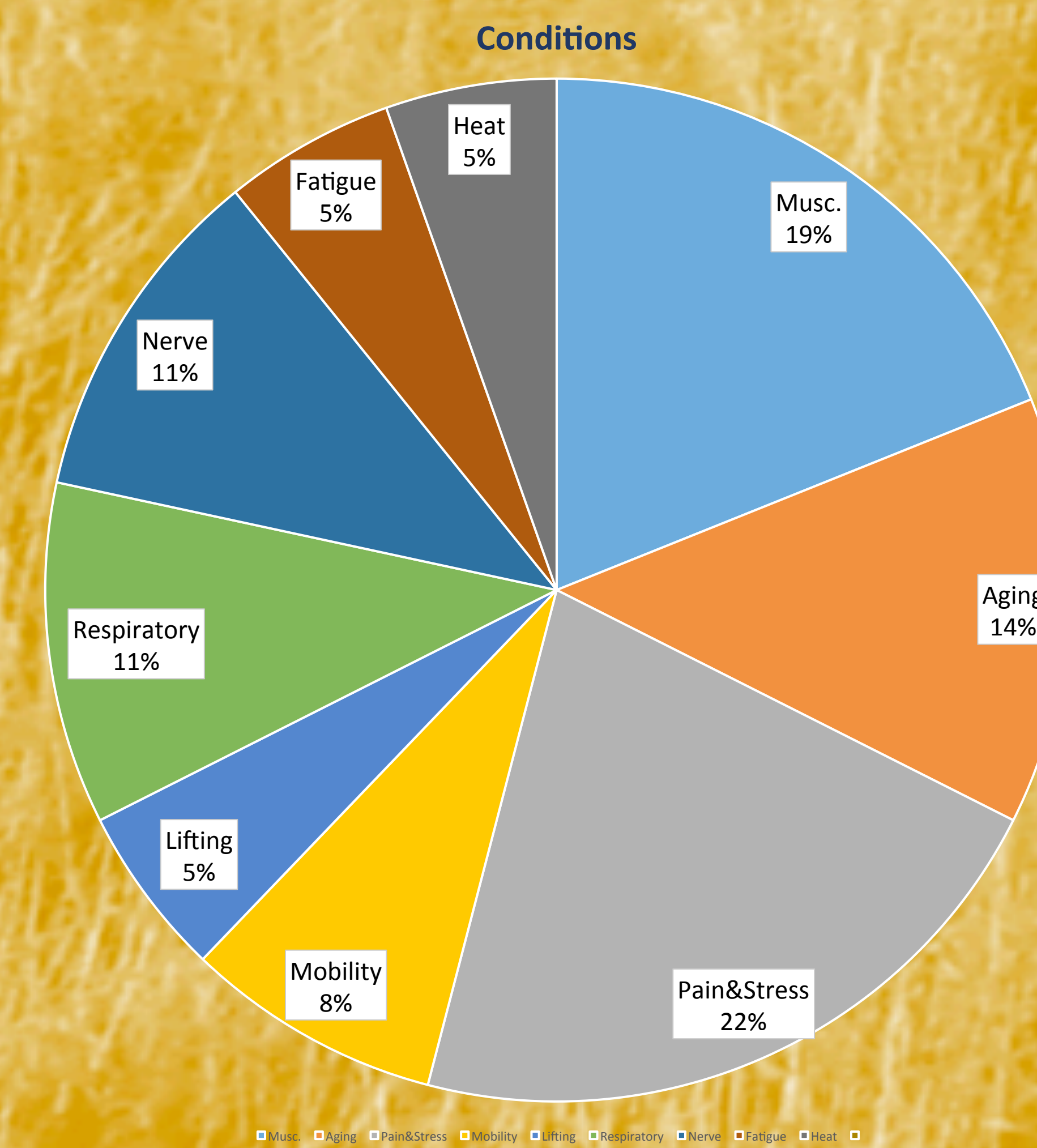
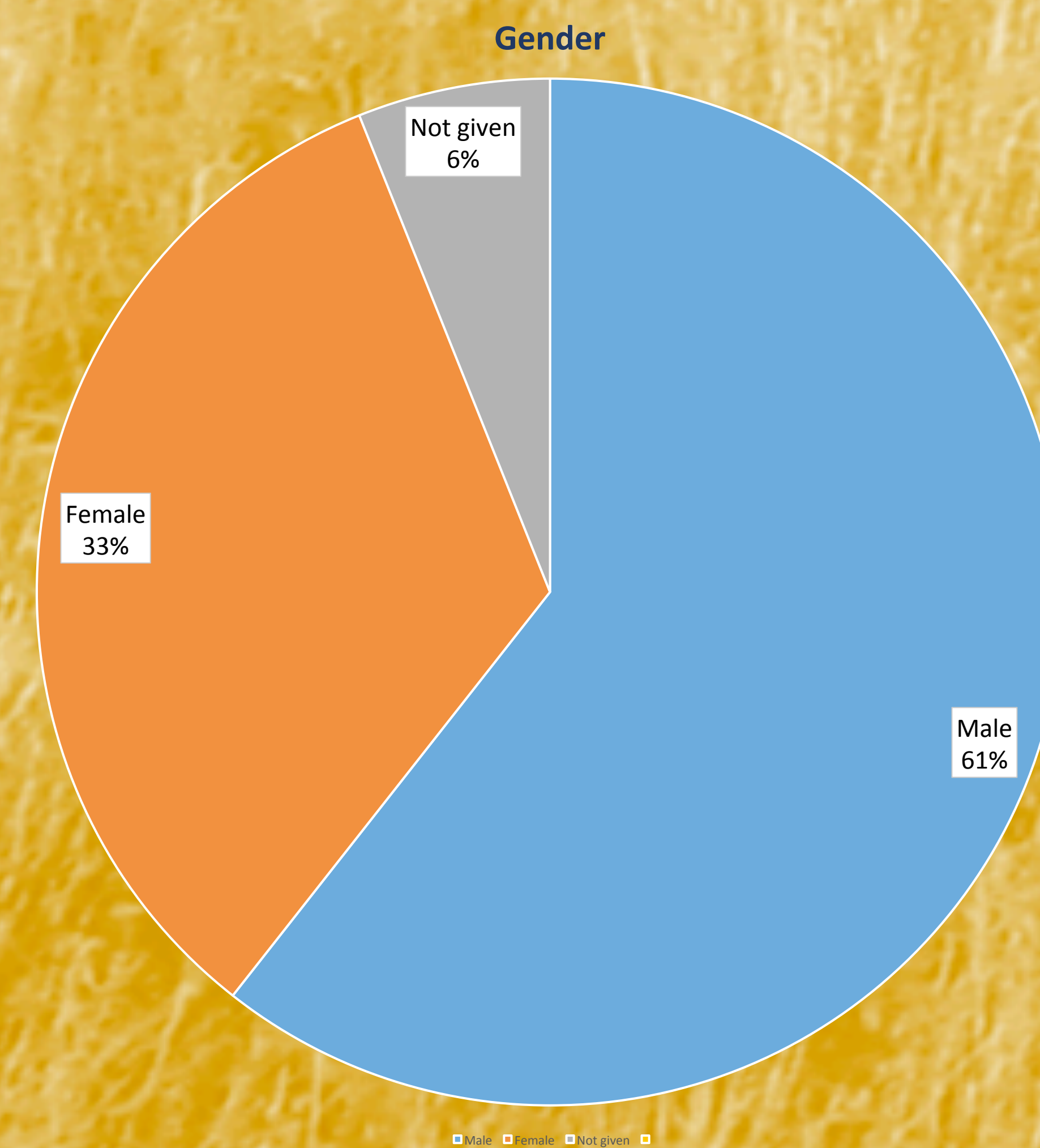
Gender	N (31)	Ages 18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66+
Male	20	3	6	5	—	4	2
Female	11	1	5	2	2	1	—

Literature Review

- Nine separate research articles found a correlation between pesticide exposure and developing Parkinson's Disease³
- One of the largest health impairments affecting farmers and ranchers is injury and musculoskeletal disorders⁴
- Farmers diagnosed with arthritis have decreased participation in farm tasks⁵
- Farmers are at increased risk for skin cancer due to their substantial exposure to ultraviolet rays⁶
- Farmers experience one of the highest rates of suicide of any industry and there is growing evidence that those involved in farming are at higher risk of developing mental health problems⁷
- Due to their occupation farmers are at higher risk for noise induced hearing loss when compared to workers in other professions⁸

Conclusion

- There are a lack of current studies determining the prevalence of health conditions in farmers and ranchers in New Mexico.
- The preliminary findings of the pilot survey support the notion that farmers and ranchers in New Mexico experience a multitude of health conditions and impairments that limit their participation on the farm. Further studies are indicated to learn the prevalence of health conditions of food growers in New Mexico.
- Limitations included small sample size, limited geographic area sampling, instrument flaws, convenience sampling, and non-generalizability of findings.
- A number of respondents reported that their level of participation on the farm has been impacted by aging.



References
 1. U.S. Dept. of Labor, 2015
 2. (National Safety Council, 2015).
 3. (Dhillon et al, 2008)
 4. (Osborne et al, 2012).
 5. (Taylor-Givens, Trask, King, Koehncke, & Saskatchewan, 2015).
 6. (Carley and Stratman, 2015)
 7. (Fraser et al., 2005)
 8. (McCullagh, Ronis & Lusk, 2010)
 9. The University of New Mexico-Health Sciences Center International Review Board approved the research in May 2015.