



# NCFH

National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc.

## **Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Demographics Fact Sheet**

*It is estimated that there are over 3 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>. In order to plan, monitor, and evaluate the health status and health needs of migrant farmworkers, demographic information is needed. Because of the difficulties in counting and surveying this highly mobile population, it is only possible to estimate and approximate information on migrants. For years, the data gathered by the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)<sup>2</sup> has been one of the most accurate sources for obtaining demographic information on migrant and seasonal farmworkers. A summary of their most recent findings is provided below.*

### **General Farmworker Information**

- 81% of all farmworkers were foreign born, of these 95% were born in Mexico, 2% in Latin America, 1% in Asia, and 1% in other countries. The NAWS research also showed that foreign-born farmworkers had spent an average of 10 years in the United States and that one-third of the foreign-born had arrived within the last two years.
- The average age of farmworkers surveyed was 31. Half of the 2,000 farmworkers surveyed in the 1997-1998 NAWS were under 29, 31% between 25-34, 21% between 20-24, and 18% between the ages of 35-44.
- 80% of migrant and seasonal farmworkers surveyed were men, 20% were women. The women were more likely to be U.S. born than the men, 34% and 15% respectively.
- One half of farmworkers surveyed were married, and slightly less than one half were parents. Among those farmworkers who were parents, one half were not accompanied by their children when they migrated.
- Farmworker women were more likely to live with their nuclear family than men (74% vs. 27%), and 91% of farmworker mothers lived with their children as compared to 42% of farmworker fathers.
- 84% of farmworkers surveyed spoke Spanish, 12% English and 4% other languages such as Tagalog, Ilocano, Creole and Mixtec. The median level of education completed was 6<sup>th</sup> grade; 20% had less than three years of education. Only 15% of farmworkers surveyed had completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. 73% of farmworkers completed their education in Mexico, 21% in the U.S., 3% in Puerto Rico, 2% in Central America, 1% in South East Asia or the Pacific Islands.
- Using school completion data as an indicator of ability to process written information, 85% of farmworkers would have difficulty in processing the written information regardless of the language in which the materials were printed.
- 56% of farmworkers surveyed migrate in order to secure employment. Of those 56%, 17% had at least two farm jobs more than 75 miles apart, and 39% moved between two or more jobs close in location yet more than 75 miles from their home base. 44% of farmworkers surveyed were non-migrants, working farm jobs less than 75 miles away from their home base.

- 58% of farmworkers make their homebase in the U.S., with 42% based out of the country. Survey results indicate that international migration decreases with farmworker exposure to life in the U.S.
- Non-Mexican-born Latinos spent 56% of their year in farm labor, Mexican-born spent 48%, U.S. born spent 46%, and Asian-born spent 43%.
- Farmworkers surveyed had worked an average of 8 years in U.S. agriculture. 30% of farmworkers 18 years and older had worked in U.S. crop agriculture for more than 10 years.
- Labor contractors employ 19% of farmworkers. 61% of farmworkers worked in fruits, nuts, or vegetables; 1/3 were employed in crop harvesting and ¼ were in semi-skilled technical jobs.
- 77% of farmworkers surveyed were paid by the hour, with an average hourly wage of \$5.94. 20% by piece rate and 2% were paid in combination. 56% of farmworkers worked between 31-50 hours per week, 30% worked 30 hours or less, and 15% worked more than 50 hours per week. 14% of farmworkers worked for their employer year round while 83% worked for employers on a seasonal basis.
- “Nearly three-quarters of U.S. farmworkers earned less than \$10,000 per year; three out of five farmworker families had incomes below the poverty level.”
- “Underemployment is widespread within the farm workforce. In 1997-98, farmworkers spent, on average, about 47 percent of their time in U.S. farm work, 24 percent of their time living abroad, 19 percent of their time residing but not working in the U.S., and 8 percent of their time in U.S. nonfarm employment.”
- Only 20% were covered by unemployment insurance, with a very low 5% being covered by employer provided health insurance. 45% of farmworkers reported being covered by unemployment insurance, 46% reported not being covered, and 9% did not know. 10% of farmworkers received paid holidays and/or vacations.
- 17% of farmworkers used needs-based services; 13% used Medicaid; WIC and Food Stamps were used by only 10%, and only 1% of farmworkers used Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Public Housing, or General Assistance.

### **Population Demographics**

The following chart breaks down the number of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their dependents by state and national totals. The 1990 Atlas of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers and the 1993 Farmworker Enumeration Study are the two most common studies used by researchers when trying to determine the number of farmworkers within a given state. Both studies use different methodologies and come up with different numbers. The 2000 enumeration study is an update of 11 states using the methodology originally formulated in the 1993 Enumeration.

<b><u>STATE NAME</u></b>	<b><u>1990 ATLAS MSFW POPULATION<sup>4</sup></u></b>	<b><u>1993 ENUMERATION MSFW POPULATION<sup>1</sup></u></b>	<b><u>2000 ENUMERATION MSFW POPULATION<sup>3</sup></u></b>
Alabama	6,483	8726	
Alaska	0	91	
Arizona	31,795	41,130	
Arkansas	0	18,734	27,613
California	1,362,534	700,233	1,302,797
Colorado	49,347	39,290	
Connecticut	9,421	4,418	
Delaware	5,397	6,583	
Florida	435,373	238,247	286,725
Georgia	93,604	104,101	
Hawaii	0	18,728	
Idaho	119,968	49,625	
Illinois	20,840	86,214	
Indiana	7,716	30,299	

Iowa	34,230	10,010	
Kansas	18,533	3,150	
Kentucky	0	11,289	
Louisiana	0	7,357	12,349
Maine	8660	19,039	
Maryland	4,267	24,267	9,522
Massachusetts	7,813	4,414	
Michigan	67,227	161,020	
Minnesota	13,344	53,145	
Mississippi	0	15,139	18,191
Missouri	20,324	21,555	
Montana	13,026	14,480	
Nebraska	18,756	12,697	
Nevada	0	666	
New Hampshire	726	2,639	
New Jersey	13,522	32,007	
New Mexico	9,255	20,784	
New York	30,811	73,423	
North Carolina	344,944	142,144	156,893
Ohio	11,621	33,631	
Oklahoma	0	16,599	14,202
Oregon	128,564	147,245	103,453
Pennsylvania	24,711	43,963	
Puerto Rico	231,889	77,075	
Rhode Island	459	469	
South Carolina	18,560	52,445	
Tennessee	6,571	16,824	
Texas	500,138	370,815	362,724
Utah	8,983	17,991	
Vermont	1,785	2,148	
Virginia	15,079	41,876	
Washington	442,444	193,437	289,235
West Virginia	2,700	9,697	
Wisconsin	8,199	24,138	
Wyoming	6,800	3,299	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4,171,419</b>	<b>3,038,644</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Larson, Alice; Plascencia, Luis. "Migrant Enumeration Study". Washington, D.C.: Office of Minority Health, 1993

<sup>2</sup> National Agricultural Workers Survey 1997-1998, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1999

<sup>3</sup> Larson, Alice. "Migrant Enumeration Study Update". Washington, D.C.: Office of Minority Health, 2000

<sup>4</sup> "An Atlas of State Profiles Which Estimate Number of Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers and Members of Their Families", Rockville, MD. US Department of Health and Human Services, 1990