

Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin, 1998



Artist: Alma Gomez

A Demographic and Health Profile

**Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin, 1998:
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

HIGHLIGHTS	i
INTRODUCTION	1
Brief History of Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin	1
Purpose of Survey	3
METHODOLOGY	3
Sampling Procedure	3
Interviewers and the Interview Schedule	4
Limitations of Sample	5
Response Rate	5
Employers	5
Workers	6
Final Sample Size and Weighting	6
Significant Differences	6
Estimating the Total Population from the Sample	6
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	7
Estimated Migrant Population and Location in State	7
Age	9
Gender	10
Marital Status	11
Family and Household Composition	12
Number of Persons in Household	13
Number of Children in Household	14
Number of Generations in Household	16
Education	17
Language and Literacy	18
Heritage and Home	19
ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS	20
Employment	20
Years as a Migrant Worker	20
Type of Work	21
Method of Payment	22
Employment Rates	23
Income	25
Total Family Income and Poverty Status	25
Sources of Income	26
Public Assistance	27
ENVIRONMENT	28
Housing	28
Type of Dwelling	28
Adequacy	29
Rent	30
Sanitary Facilities at Work Site	31
HEALTH	32
Health Status	32
Chronic Disease	33
Conditions That Bother Workers	34
Use of Health Services in Wisconsin	34
Preventive Health Visits	35
SERVICES NEEDED	36
REFERENCES	37
APPENDIX	38

LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND MAP

Tables

Table 1.	Migrant Farmworker Population, 1978-1998	2
Table 2.	Number of Employers of Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin and Estimated Number of Workers, by Size of Establishment, 1998	5
Table 3.	Number of Workers' Names Sampled, Interviewed, and Reasons for Non-Interview	6
Table 4.	Migrant Farmworker Population in 1998	7
Table 5.	Age of Workers	9
Table 6.	Gender of Workers	10
Table 7.	Marital Status of Workers Age 18 Years and Older	11
Table 8.	Family Composition of Field and Cannery Workers	12
Table 9.	Number of Persons in Workers' Households	3
Table 10.	Number of Children in Household	4
Table 11.	Number of Generations in Household	6
Table 12.	Education of Workers	7
Table 13.	Language Spoken by Migrant Workers	8
Table 14.	Place Workers Consider "Home"	19
Table 15.	Number of Years as a Migrant Worker, by Type of Work and Gender	20
Table 16.	Type of Work	21
Table 17.	Method of Payment	22
Table 18.	Percent of Wisconsin Migrant Workers Employed in Field and Cannery Work, by Month: August 1997-July 1998	23
Table 19.	Total Family Income	25
Table 20.	Workers Below Federal Poverty Level	25
Table 21.	Sources of Income in 1997	26
Table 22.	Percent of 1997 Family Income from Migrant Work	26
Table 23.	Use of Public Assistance Programs in Last 12 Months	27
Table 24.	Type of Dwelling	28
Table 25.	Satisfaction with Dwelling	29
Table 26.	Amount of Rent Paid Per Month	30
Table 27.	Presence of Sanitary Facilities by Type of Workplace, 1978, 1989 and 1998	31
Table 28.	Workers' Self-Assessment of Health, by Gender and Family Income	32
Table 29.	Health Conditions That Bother Workers "Very Much" or "Some"	34
Table 30.	Time Since Last Dental, Eye, or General Physical Exam	35
Table 31.	Social and Health Services Used and Needed by Members of Workers' Households	35

Figures

Figure 1.	Estimates of Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin, 1945-1998	2
Figure 2.	Age of Workers	9
Figure 3.	Gender of Workers	10
Figure 4.	Marital Status of Workers	11
Figure 5.	Family Composition	12
Figure 6.	Number of Persons in Household	13
Figure 7.	Number of Children in Household	14
Figure 8.	Percent of Non-workers in Migrant Population, 1978-1998	15
Figure 9.	Number of Generations in Household	16
Figure 10.	Education of Workers	17
Figure 11.	Primary/Secondary Language Spoken by Migrant Workers	18
Figure 12.	Place Workers Consider Home	19
Figure 13.	Number of Years as a Migrant Worker by Type of work and Gender	20
Figure 14.	Type of Work	21
Figure 15.	Method of Payment	22
Figure 16.	Percent of Migrants Employed in Agriculture, Other Work, and Unemployed, by Month: August 1997-July 1998	24

Figure 17.	Percent of Workers Employed in Field Work and Cannery Work, by Month: August 1997-July 1998	24
Figure 18.	Total Family Income	25
Figure 19.	Sources of Income, 1997	27
Figure 20.	Type of Housing	28
Figure 21.	Satisfaction With Dwelling	29
Figure 22.	Rent Paid Per Month	30
Figure 23.	Sanitary Facilities in Workplace, 1978-1998	31
Figure 24.	Workers' Self-Assessment of Health	32
Figure 25.	Percent Stating "Fair" or "Poor" Health by Sex and Family Income: Migrant Workers and U.S. Adults	33
Figure 26.	Percent of Workers Who Never Had a Dental, Eye, or General Physical Exam	35

Maps

Map 1.	Migrant Agricultural Population in Wisconsin, 1998	8
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HIGHLIGHTS

Interviews with a random sample of 152 migrant field and cannery workers in Wisconsin during the months of June through September, 1998 provided the following information:

- About six of every ten workers were male.
- Ages ranged from under 18 to over 65; the mean age was 41.
- Nearly half the workers were accompanied by family members; most of the remainder came as "singles."
- Most workers (62%) had no more than an elementary school education; only 15% had completed high school.
- Although Spanish was the primary language for 95% of the workers, half of them also spoke English.
- When not migrating, 76% regarded Texas as home; most of the remainder named Mexico.
- Workers have been doing migrant work from one to over 25 years. The average for men is over 13 years, for women fewer than 8.
- Only 27% of migrants were employed in field work and 70% in canneries; a few did other work.
- Of those doing field work, a larger proportion were males; among females, a slightly larger proportion worked in canneries than in the field.
- Field work was more likely done by families, whereas cannery work was more likely done by "singles."
- Three-fourths of field workers were paid by the hour, the rest by piece or weight. Nearly all cannery workers were paid by the hour.
- Average family income was \$13,600, supporting an average of 4 people, with almost 60% living below the federal poverty rate. Both income levels and numbers of dependents were slightly higher for field than cannery workers.
- For both field and cannery workers, 70% of their income came from migrant work.
- Just over half of field workers and 71% of cannery workers received unemployment compensation in 1997. About one-third of each group received both food stamps and Medicaid.

- Over 80% lived in housing provided by the employer, and just over half paid rent. Among rent-payers, the average cost was almost \$150 per month.
- About half were “very satisfied” with their housing in Wisconsin; most other workers were “somewhat satisfied.”
- Sanitary facilities at most work sites met legal requirements: 93% of workers reported that drinking water was available; 99% said that toilets were provided; 97% said that work sites had places to wash hands.
- As to health status, 41% rated their health as fair or poor, which compares to less than 10% of the total U.S. population.
- Almost 70% of the workers had visited a doctor, clinic or hospital in the past year. Two-thirds of these visits were in Wisconsin.
- Health problems that bothered workers most were eye trouble, backaches, headaches, stomach pains and trouble sleeping.
- As to chronic illness and disabilities, mentioned most frequently were high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, heart problems, thyroid problems, and injuries.
- Preventive care is needed: 28% never had a general physical examination; 28% never had an eye examination; 13% never had a dental checkup.
- Although 70% of migrants have dealt with Spanish-speaking health professionals, the other 30% felt that personnel who speak Spanish are sorely needed. Nearly half said they need dental care, but that it was not available. Among other services migrants felt they needed were first-aid training and help with weight control.

INTRODUCTION

Brief History of Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin

Migrant farmworkers¹ first appeared in Wisconsin around the turn of the century. At that time, sugar beet and vegetable production expanded, leading to the recruitment of European workers from low-income areas in several midwestern cities, including Sheboygan, Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis, and Kansas City. Most early migrant farmworkers were Belgian; they were later replaced by Germans and Russians. Many of these migrants eventually bought their own farms, settled in the community, and became permanent residents of the state.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the number of migrant Hispanic workers increased. Sugar beet companies actively recruited workers from the Southwest and along both sides of the Mexican border.

By 1942, Wisconsin growers increased farm production to support the war effort but experienced severe labor shortages. This led to the establishment of the National Emergency Farm Labor Program (1943-47) which permitted the importation of foreign workers. In Wisconsin, male workers were imported from Jamaica, the Bahamas, British Honduras, and Mexico. German and Italian prisoners of war were also used. In 1945, the number of foreign agricultural workers peaked at 6,700.

Following World War II, many Wisconsin farmers abandoned their agricultural pursuits for higher-paying jobs in the city. Wisconsin's production of crops requiring a large seasonal labor force did not decrease, but growers recruited more domestic migrant farmworkers and fewer foreigners. About 85 percent of the migrant farmworkers in Wisconsin during the postwar period were Texas-Mexicans. The remainder were recruited from neighboring states, from the South (mostly from Louisiana and Mississippi), and from the Chippewa, Oneida, and Menominee Indian tribes in northern Wisconsin. Wisconsin also received some foreign workers from 1951 to 1964, mainly from Mexico, under the federal "Bracero Program," which was aimed at alleviating agricultural labor shortages.

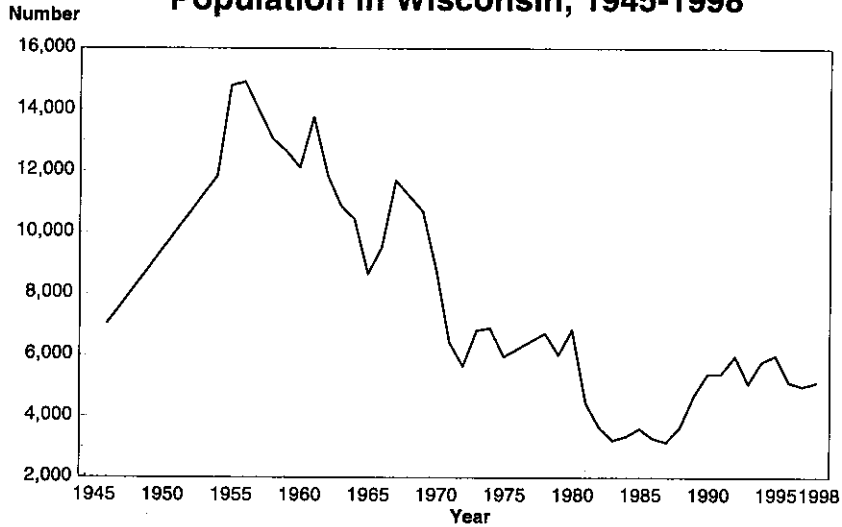
Since 1955, the number of migrant farmworkers in the state has declined due to the mechanization of planting, picking, and sorting crops, and the use of herbicides in agriculture. These industrial advances lowered labor requirements for the production of many commodities. Since the late 1980s, however, increased production of highly perishable crops -- primarily vegetables for processing -- created more jobs for migrant workers in the food processing sector². These countervailing forces can be seen in Figure 1 (page 2), which shows the trend in employment of migrant farmworkers in Wisconsin from 1945 to the present.

¹The terms "migrant farmworker," and "migrant worker" are used interchangeably in this report. "Migrant farmworker" refers to workers who travel from and sleep away from their homes in order to work in agricultural production. This includes not only workers in field production, but also workers in food processing. In 1998, the workers were employed in canneries and in the planting, cultivating, harvesting and packing of numerous fruits and vegetables, as well as nursery stock and Christmas trees. Seasonal farm workers, who work in the same industry but return home to sleep, are not included in this report.

² The terms "food processing" and "cannery" are used interchangeably in this report.

Many workers also travel with family members who do not work. Table 1 indicates the numbers of dependents who came with migrant workers to Wisconsin since 1978. The proportion of dependents to total migrants has declined over the last twenty years from 27 percent in 1978 to 10 percent in 1998. Most dependents or non-workers are children. However, some elders also used to travel with the families in order to help with child care, cooking, and maintaining the household. As will be discussed later in this report (see page 15), there has been a shift to fewer families with children and more single workers in the past ten years.

Figure 1. Estimates of Migrant Farmworker Population in Wisconsin, 1945-1998



Source: Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations (1945-1995), WI Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Migrant Services (1996-1998).

Table 1. Migrant Farmworker Population, 1978-1998

Year	Workers			Dependents		Total Migrant Population
	Field	Cannery	Total	Number	Percent	
1978	3,075	1,797	4,872	1,843	27.5	6,715
1979	2,823	1,941	4,764	1,253	20.8	6,017
1980	3,109	1,931	5,040	1,805	26.4	6,845
1981	2,310	1,102	3,412	1,037	23.3	4,449
1982	1,858	885	2,743	923	25.2	3,666
1983	1,708	706	2,414	814	25.2	3,228
1984	1,881	731	2,611	750	22.3	3,361
1985	2,035	750	2,785	822	22.8	3,607
1986	1,959	602	2,561	730	22.2	3,291
1987	1,813	721	2,534	633	20.0	3,167
1988	2,006	937	2,943	718	19.6	3,661
1989	2,297	1,616	3,913	769	16.4	4,682
1990	2,534	2,202	4,736	834	15.0	5,570
1991	2,530	2,082	4,612	783	14.5	5,395
1992	2,717	2,544	5,261	718	12.0	5,979
1993	2,285	2,217	4,502	578	11.4	5,080
1994	2,070	2,945	5,015	785	13.5	5,800
1995	2,159	3,113	5,272	717	12.0	5,989
1996	1,845	3,284	5,129	579	10.1	5,708
1997	1,900	3,091	4,991	591	10.6	5,582
1998	1,962	3,155	5,117	566	10.0	5,683

Source: Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations (1945-1995), Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Migrant Services (1996-1998).

Purpose of Survey

Little current information is known about migrant workers and their family members who work in the agricultural industry in Wisconsin.

The Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Migrant Services, is mandated to enforce the Wisconsin 1977 Migrant Labor Law (Chapter 17, amended 1985 Act 191). The Bureau must ensure that (1) every employer of migrant farmworkers is registered with the Bureau, (2) workers are given contracts that specify working regulations, such as length of employment and rate of pay, and, (3) housing meets minimum standards of code, if housing is supplied as part of the contract. Thus, the only information collected on an annual basis is limited to the number, name and location of employers who hire migrant farmworkers, and, if housing is supplied, the number of units that have been approved for occupancy.

The much broader purpose of this survey is to provide current demographic, economic and environmental information about migrant farmworkers. Numerous state and county agencies, non-profit organizations, churches, health and educational institutions, and other community groups are anxious for current data about the migrant farmworker population. Many of these organizations and institutions need to know where the migrants are located in the state; their gender and age; what kinds of health, child care, housing, or other problems they may have; and what types of services they express a need to receive while in Wisconsin. This survey will help fill the gap in this needed information. The survey also obtained information about migrant mothers and their children. That information will be the subject of a future report.

The data reported here are arranged into two groups: workers who are employed by food processing companies (i.e., canneries) and workers who perform various activities in agriculture, such as preparing the soil, planting, cultivating, harvesting crops, sorting and packing various products (i.e., field work). These products include, but are not limited to, various fruits and vegetables such as apples, corn, green beans, cucumbers, onions, carrots, cabbage, and cherries, and also trimming and packing Christmas trees and working in sod farms, peppermint fields, and plant and tree nurseries.

The worker data are presented in the two groups, field work and cannery work, because the employers are located in different sections of the state, the Migrant Health Clinic is located closer to the field than the cannery workers, and because the housing and working conditions tend to vary between the two types of employment, with more group housing for cannery workers versus family housing for field workers, and more steady work (less dependent on the weather) more likely to occur for food processors.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Procedure

In 1998, a random sample of migrant farmworkers was selected from payroll lists of all employers with ten or more workers registered with the Bureau of Migrant Services. The sampling ratio was one in ten workers in field work (10%) and one in twenty (5%) in food processing. Two different ratios were used because there were almost twice as many workers in canneries as in field work. Since research funds were limited, we

wanted to be sure to have sufficient numbers in field work.³ We contacted 146 employers who had workers at 158 sites,⁴ first sending them a letter explaining the purpose of the survey. We followed this by a telephone call to the employer to get the number of migrants each planned to employ and arranged to get a copy of the payroll list during their "peak" period of employment. Eventually we ended up with 35 employers with 50 sites. Of the 146 employers contacted, 54 employed fewer than ten workers; 40 employers were not employing migrants that season; three said they were out of business; and no information was obtained from 14 employers after repeated calls, all of whom had few migrants. Of the 50 sites, we interviewed workers at 33 sites, located in 16 counties. Managers at six sites refused to participate. The remaining 11 sites had ended their employment of migrants before or during the time we sampled, or weren't going to employ migrants until late fall, after we had completed the interviewing. Thus, we estimate that there were a little over 5,000 workers in Wisconsin in 1998. This is similar to the Bureau of Migrant Services' estimate of 5,117.⁵

Interviewers and the Interview Schedule

Six individuals were trained to conduct the interviews with migrant workers whose names were randomly chosen from recent payroll lists of employers. It was the interviewers' responsibility to locate the individuals and arrange to conduct the interview in person at the convenience of the respondent.

Five interviewers were bi-lingual (English and Spanish). The sixth person was not fluent in Spanish but had been an administrator of a migrant health clinic for a number of years and thus knew about migrants' lifestyle and environment. All but one of the interviewers were women.

The survey instrument was written in both languages, and respondents chose the one they preferred. About 80 percent of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. An informed consent form was read to each prospective respondent, which included information about confidentiality, reasons for the study, and the respondents' ability to stop the interview at any time. Verbal consent to continue constituted informed consent. Respondents received a small first aid kit or plastic water bottle as a token remuneration at the end of the interview. An offer to send a summary of the survey results was extended, and many respondents filled in a card with their name and address to get the results.

Interviewers received a full day of training. They were taught about sampling procedures and received detailed information both about the questions in the interview schedule and about migrant farmworkers' life, work and services available to them in Wisconsin. Interviewers then conducted a "pre-test" interview with migrants. Some interviewing began in mid-June 1998, continued throughout the summer months, and

³ In actuality, we sampled 20 percent of the field work lists and 10 percent of the cannery lists, so that we would have ample names for replacements when workers had already left the area, or were unable to be located.

⁴ Five employers in food processing had 28 multiple plants or sites in the state. Because each plant had a manager who was or was not willing to cooperate, the following information is classified by sites, not employers.

⁵ The difference between our estimate and the Bureau of Migrant Services is that we missed the workers who came and left Wisconsin before we began interviewing (late June) and who were employed after we stopped interviewing (mid-September). We also occasionally missed the peak period of employment.

changes were made in wording, translation, and/or order of the questions. Production ended the last day of September.

The interviews took about one hour, on average, ranging from 25 minutes to two hours, 15 minutes. Topics included sources of income, quality of housing, health status, use of health facilities, employment, expressed needs for health, education and social services, as well as demographic information such as age, sex, education and language proficiency of every member of the respondent's household.

Limitations of Sample

Payroll lists of employers with fewer than ten workers were not sampled. This was due to the high cost of sampling and interviewing one or two workers per farm. This eliminated over half of all employers, although this group employed less than ten percent of all migrant workers in the state (see Table 2). We believe that eliminating this group from our final sample may have affected the proportion of workers under a labor contract. That is, in the total sample, over 95 percent of the respondents said they were working under contract. It is also possible that we interviewed many fewer undocumented workers. We cannot estimate this because we did not ask their legal work status. We are unsure if we also missed migrants who only stay in the state a short time. We know that some employers who employ very few migrants rely on the same workers year after year. On the other hand, it is possible that small employers pick up a few itinerant workers who may work only a short period of time.

Table 2. Number of Employers of Migrant Farmworkers in Wisconsin and Estimated Number of Workers, by Size of Establishment, 1998

Size	Number of Employers	Estimated Number of Workers
Less than ten workers	66	363
Ten or more workers	49	3,700
Total	115	4,063

Five employers refused to participate (three in agriculture, two in food processing). These unsampled sites represented about 16 sampled workers in food processing and 12 sampled workers in field work whom we did not interview. We have no indication, however, that these workers and their families were different than others we interviewed. For two additional food processors who refused to share their payroll lists, we went to the housing camp, randomly sampled housing units, and interviewed one worker living in the sampled units.

Response Rate

Employers. We counted 35 employers with ten or more workers located at 50 sites. Of these, we sampled workers at 37 sites (representing 25 employers). Employers at six sites refused to participate and, because of time constraints, workers at ten additional sites were not interviewed. There are many problems finding pre-identified workers through a random sample of names. For example, the workers may have left the employer between the time of the payroll list and the time the interviewer goes on site. Also, if the worker does not live in employer provider housing, he or she may be unknown to the other workers. Still other workers are working double shifts, or have many commitments when they are not working, and thus the interviewer could not find a suitable time to interview them.

Workers. Based on the sampling ratios mentioned above (10% of field workers; 5% of food processing workers), we estimated we would need interviews with 277 individuals.⁶ Table 3 shows the results of our endeavor. We completed interviews with 156 workers. Of the 121 workers not interviewed, 17 refused and 56 were unavailable or had left the camp. Twelve workers on the payroll list were not migrants but seasonal workers who lived in Wisconsin year-round, and thus were eliminated because they did not fit the definition of "migrant." Finally, the interviewers were unable to locate some of the individuals who were to be interviewed. A very small proportion of workers actually refused to be interviewed (6.1%). The biggest reason for non-interviews was never locating the person whose name we had randomly selected from the payroll list.

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Interviewed	156	56.3
Non-Interview	121	43.7
Unavailable, left camp	56	20.2
Refused	17	6.1
Seasonal, not migrant	12	4.3
Never located, out of time	36	13.0
Total Sampled	277	100.0

Final Sample Size and Weighting

When we processed the 156 interview schedules, we discovered that four additional interviews were with seasonal workers: two workers who stayed at McKay nursery year-round and two workers who lived near the border in Illinois and who "commuted" to a plant in Wisconsin, returning home every night. Therefore, this report is based on interviews with 152 migrant workers. Because the sampling ratio was five percent of all workers in food processing and ten percent of all workers in agricultural field work, interviews were weighted by these ratios in the analysis in order to calculate the results for "total workers" in Wisconsin.

Significant Differences

To test differences between two groups (field vs. cannery workers; male vs. female workers), statistical tests were applied. In the tables that follow, only statistically significant results are noted.

Estimating the Total Population from the Sample

If the reader is interested in estimating the total number of migrant workers in a specific category, or the total number in Field or Cannery work for a specific characteristic, the Appendix explains the procedure that can be utilized with the tables presented in this report.

⁶ Our original intention was to interview about 200 migrant farmworkers, which would provide a four percent sample of all workers in the state. This would provide an adequate number to examine demographic, economic, and social characteristics as well as health and service needs of workers in field work and food processing separately. Unfortunately, we completed only 88 interviews with workers in food processing and 64 interviews with workers in field work. However, because the respondents were randomly selected, we believe this still provides an adequate base on which to evaluate information from the workers.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Estimated Migrant Population and Location in State

According to the Bureau of Migrant Services, there were 5,177 migrant workers in Wisconsin and 5,647 total in 1998. Table 4 and Map 1 (page 8) show the location of the migrant population by county.

Table 4. Migrant Farmworker Population in Wisconsin, 1998

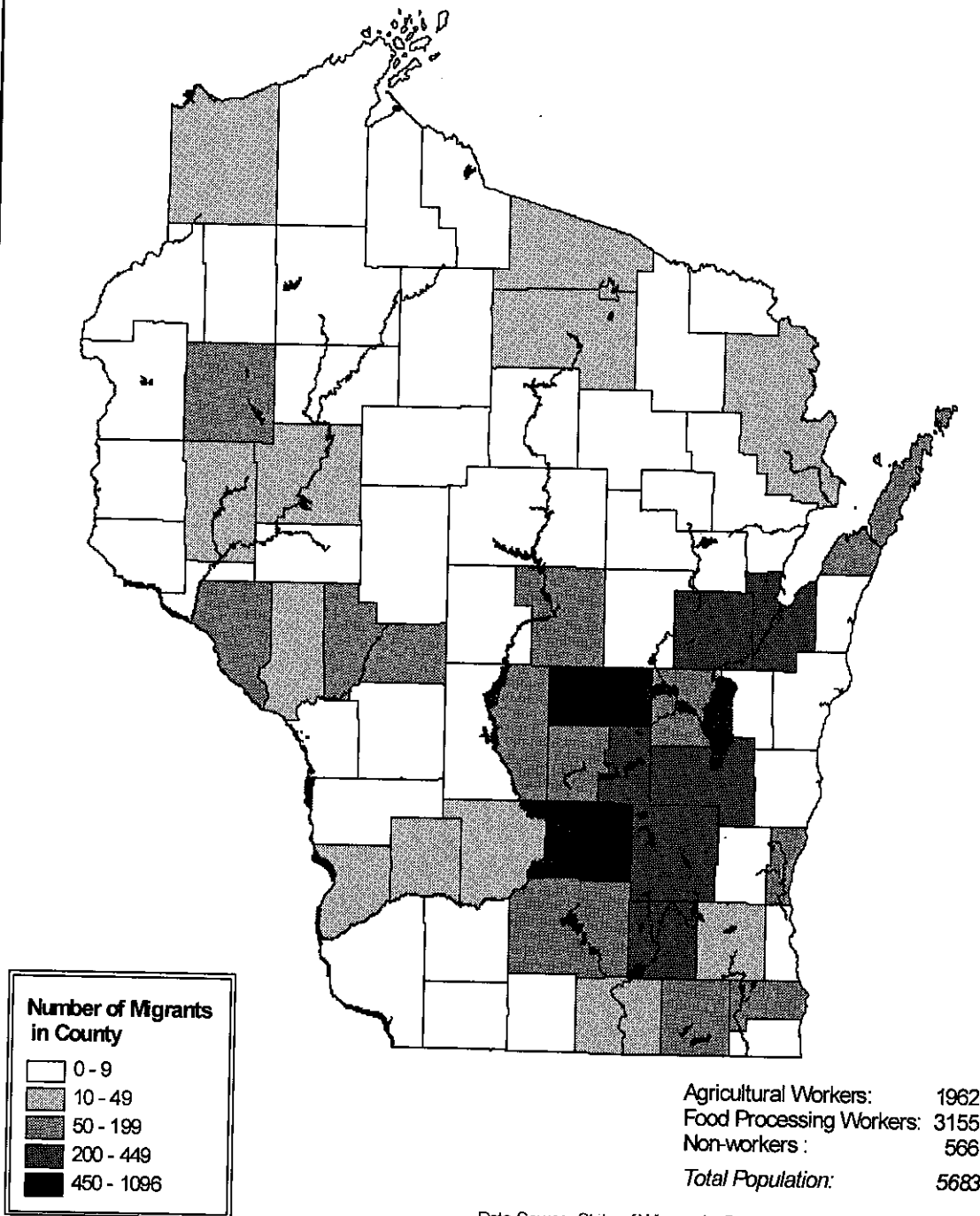
County	Field or Agricultural Workers	Cannery or Food Processing Workers	Non-Workers	Totals
Adams	92	0	12	104
Barron	13	136	20	169
Brown	67	263	0	330
Buffalo	51	0	12	63
Burnett	9	0	0	9
Chippewa	14	0	0	14
Columbia	2	767	53	822
Crawford	33	0	0	33
Dane	4	115	4	123
Dodge	3	329	55	387
Door	12	82	15	109
Douglas	13	0	0	13
Dunn	10	0	0	10
Eau Claire	6	0	0	6
Fond du Lac	24	259	0	283
Green Lake	74	373	2	449
Jackson	179	0	0	179
Jefferson	165	0	39	204
Marinette	10	0	0	10
Marquette	142	0	50	192
Milwaukee	3	0	2	5
Oneida	24	0	0	24
Outagamie	26	279	0	305
Ozaukee	0	137	0	137
Portage	0	101	0	101
Racine	49	0	10	59
Richland	31	0	1	32
Rock	14	0	0	14
Sauk	0	20	0	20
St. Croix	0	0	0	0
Vilas	12	0	0	12
Walworth	29	135	10	174
Washington	7	0	0	7
Waukesha	8	0	6	14
Waupaca	5	0	0	5
Waushara	818	9	269	1096
Winnebago	13	150	6	169
Total	1962	3155	566	5683

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Bureau of Migrant Services. 1998 Migrant Population Report.

Waushara County, in the central part of the state, has almost half of the field farmworkers in the state. Columbia County follows, with the next largest number of workers, but these workers are employed by food processing plants. Other than Waushara County, all counties with more than 200 workers utilize most migrant labor in food processing.

Map 1.

Migrant Agricultural Population in Wisconsin, 1998



Data Source: State of Wisconsin, Bureau of Migrant Services, 1998.

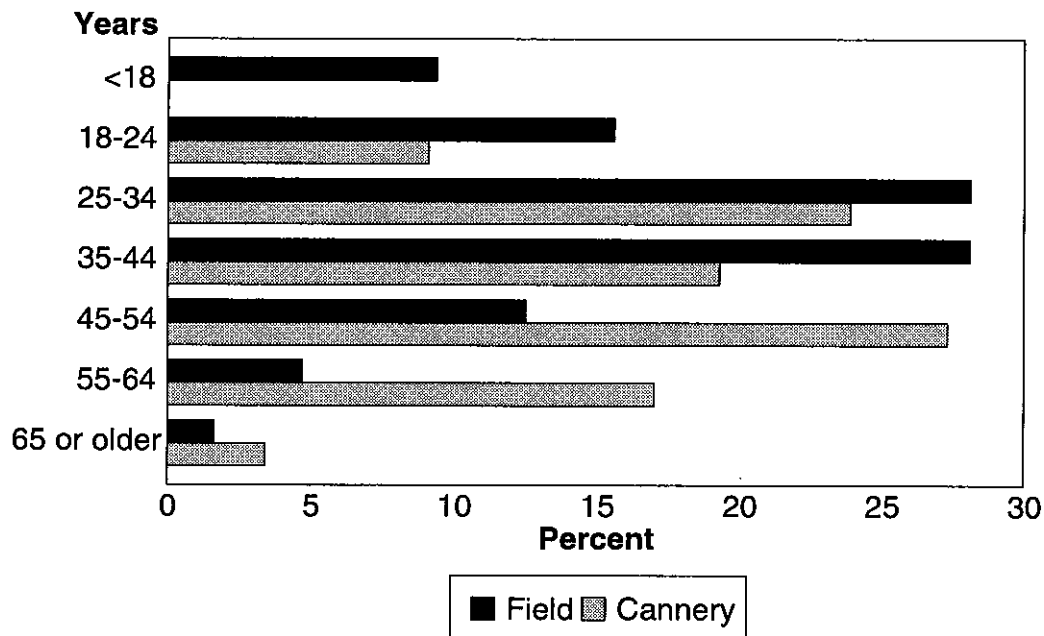
Age

Workers employed by food processors are significantly older, on average, than workers in the fields. About 10 percent of the field workers are under the age of 18, whereas none are under 18 in canneries. There is almost 9 years difference in the mean age.

Age	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
<18	9.4	0.0	4	2.5
18-24	15.6	9.1	16	10.8
25-34	28.1	23.9	38	25.0
35-44	28.1	19.3	33	21.7
45-54	12.5	27.3	35	23.4
55-64	4.7	17.0	21	13.8
65 or older	1.6	3.4	4	2.6
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100
Mean Age*	34.3 yrs.	42.9 yrs.		40 yrs.

* p < .001, t-test.

Figure 2. Age of Workers

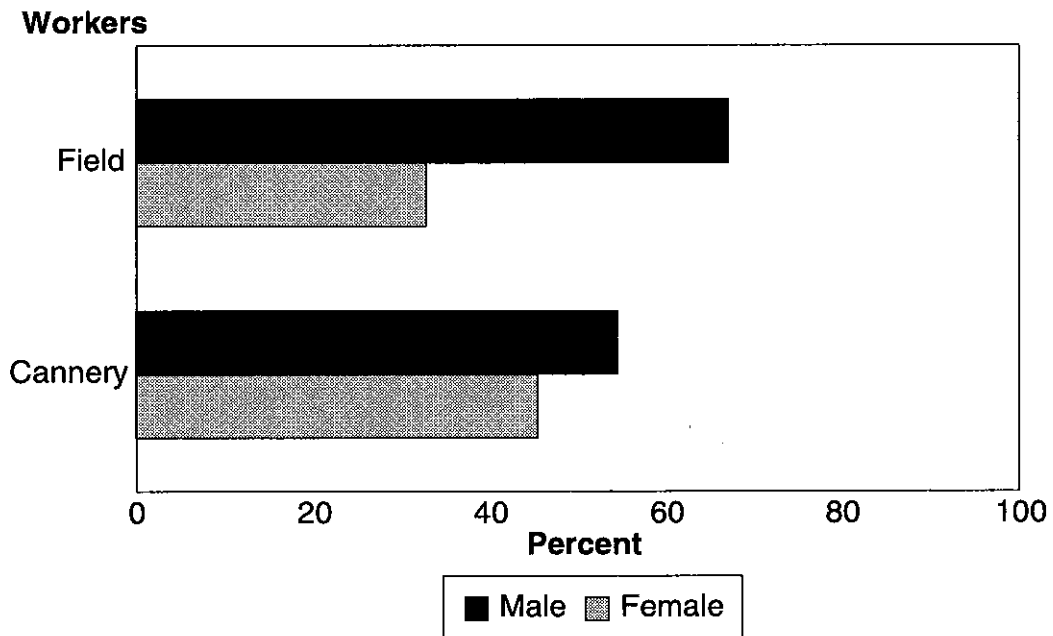


Gender

More men than women are employed as migrant workers. Overall, the sex ratio is 150 males to 100 females. Men are more likely to work in the field, while women are more likely to work in canneries.

Gender	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
Male	67.2	54.5	91	59.9
Female	32.8	45.5	61	40.1
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100.0

Figure 3. Gender of Workers

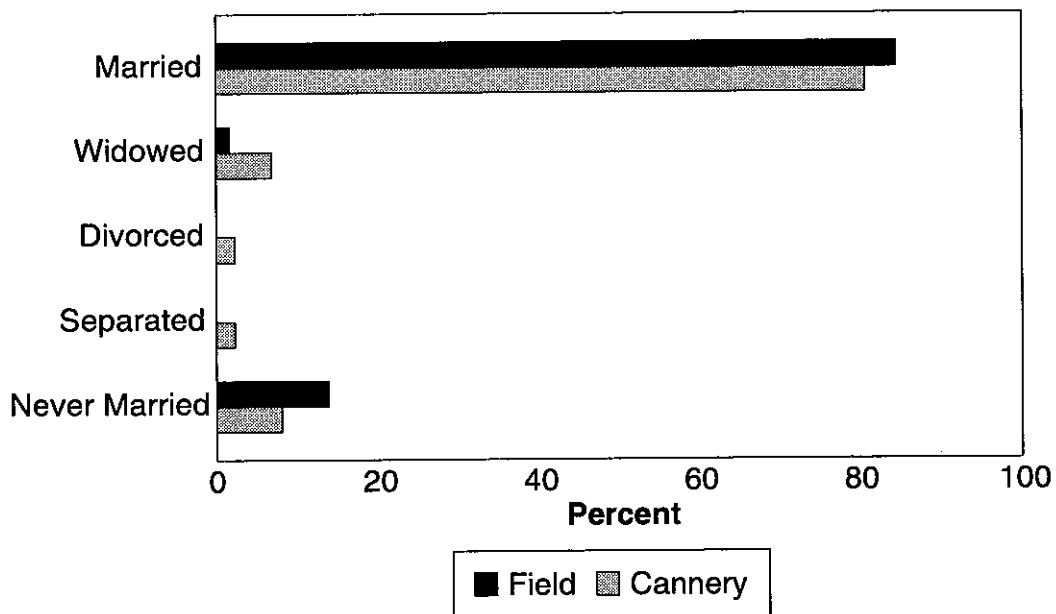


Marital Status

The great majority of migrant workers are currently married. A larger proportion of field workers than cannery workers said that they had never been married (13.8% compared to 8.0%).

Marital Status	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
Married	84.5	80.6	121	81.6
Widowed	1.7	6.8	8	5.6
Divorced	0.0	2.3	3	1.7
Separated	0.0	2.3	3	1.7
Never Married	13.8	8.0	14	9.4
Total	100.0	100.0	148	100.0

Figure 4. Marital Status of Workers



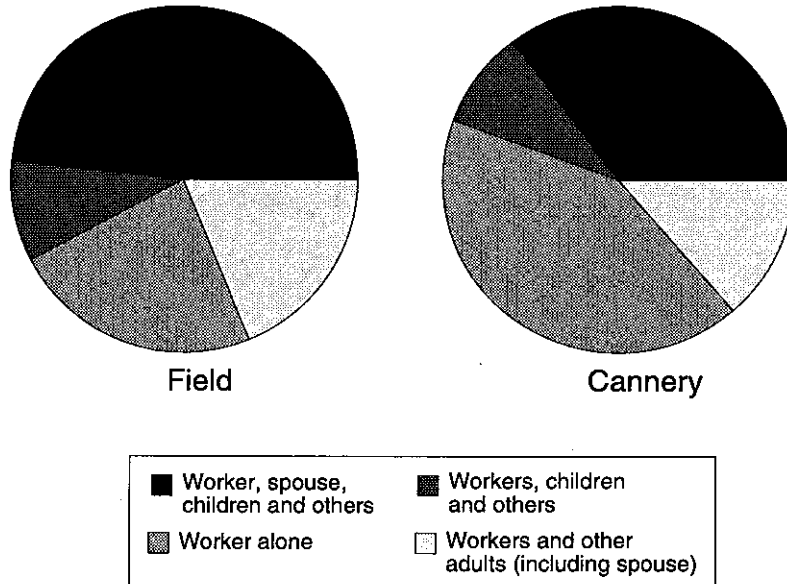
Family and Household Composition

Migrant workers may travel alone, with relatives, or with unrelated persons.

In 1998, half of all workers came with relatives, 37 percent came alone, and 15 percent came with other adults which may or may not include spouse. There are differences between field and cannery workers. Many more cannery workers than field workers came alone. One explanation for this difference is that employers may specify in their contracts that they want only "single" men or women because of their housing supply. That is, they may have a dormitory that will house only men or only women. Another explanation is that children as young as 12 may work in the fields, whereas a child must be 16 to work in the cannery. Thus, young children are sometimes left at home. And "worker alone" does not imply the worker is not married, but rather that he or she is hired and housed as an individual. In fact, 43 of 56 workers who came alone reported being married.

Composition	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
Worker, spouse, children and others	48.4	35.3	59	38.7
Worker with children and others (no spouse)	9.4	9.1	14	9.2
Worker alone or with nonrelatives	23.4	42.0	56	37.1
Worker and other adults (no children)	18.8	13.6	23	15.0
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100.0

Figure 5. Family Composition



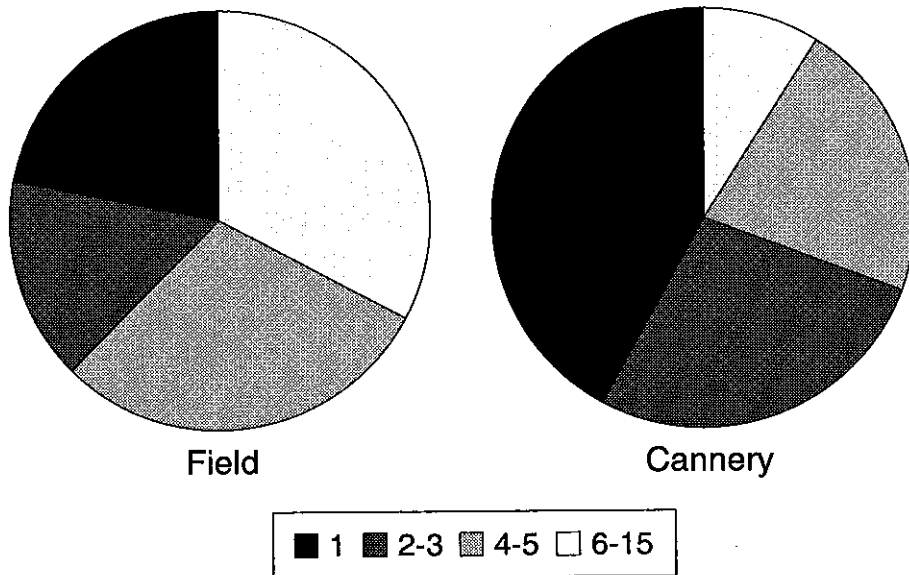
Number of Persons in Household

Field worker households⁷ have more members than cannery worker households. On average, there are four persons in field worker households compared to about three in cannery worker households. This is due to a much higher proportion of "single" workers hired by food processors.

No. of Persons	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
1	21.9	42.0	55	36.7
2-3	15.7	27.3	37	24.2
4-5	29.6	21.7	36	23.7
6-7	26.5	3.4	15	9.6
8-9	6.3	2.2	5	3.3
10-15	0.0	3.4	4	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100.0
Mean Number*	4.2	2.9		3.3

* p = .005 (Difference of means t-test)

Figure 6. Number of Persons in Household



⁷ Household refers to households in Wisconsin and does not include members who remained at home.

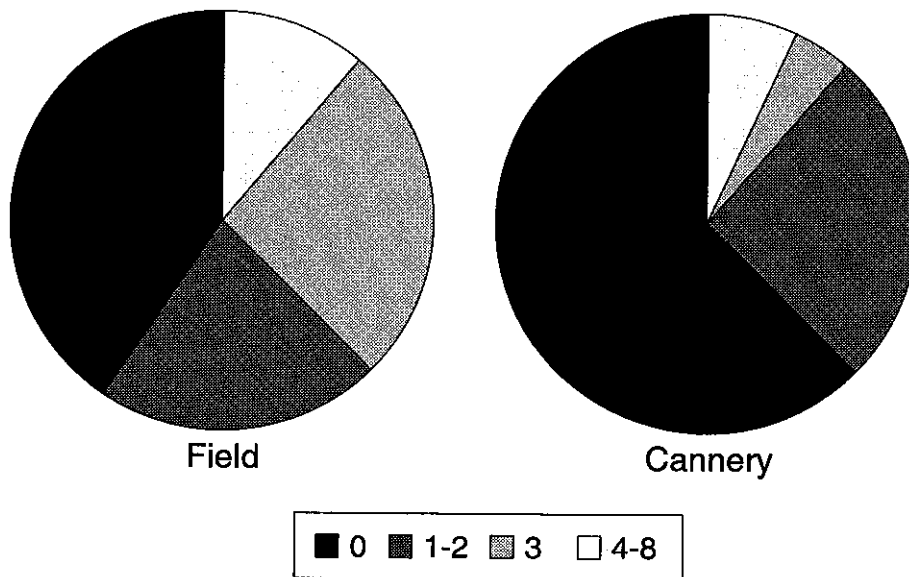
Number of Children in Household

Households of field and cannery workers differed significantly in the proportions with children and the number of children in each. Field workers had more households with children and larger numbers of children within the households.

Number	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
None	40.6	62.5	86	56.7
One	7.8	13.7	18	12.1
Two	14.1	12.5	20	13.0
Three	26.5	4.5	16	10.4
Four-Eight	11.0	6.8	12	7.8
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100.0
Mean Number*	1.6	0.9	1.0	
Percent With Children	59.4	37.5		43.3

* p < .01 (Difference of Means t-test)

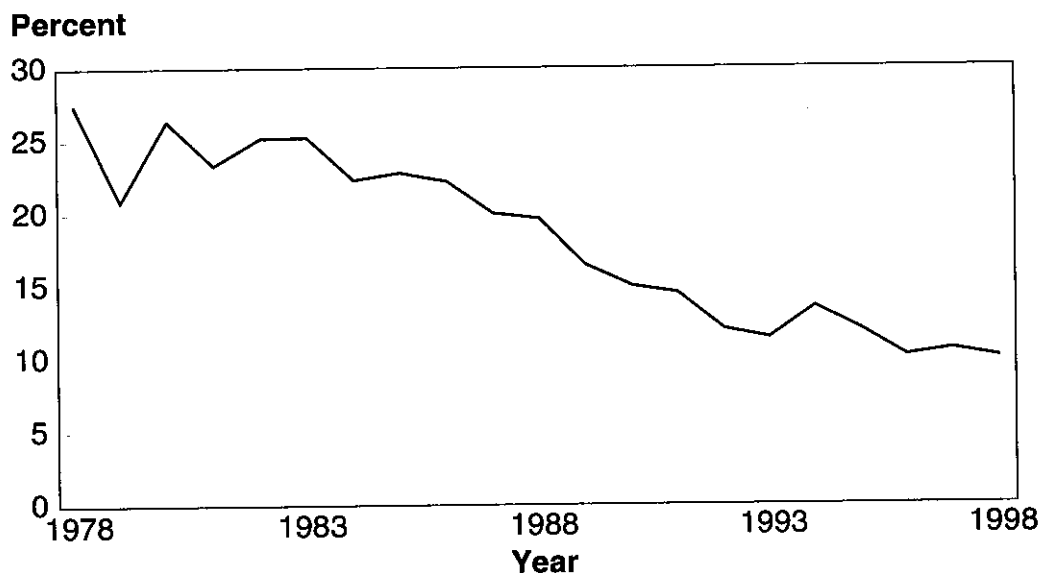
Figure 7. Number of Children in Household



The fact that families working in fields tend to bring their children with them, whereas many workers in food processing do not, helps to explain the long-term trend illustrated in Figure 8. The proportion of dependents (or non-workers) has rapidly declined since 1978. Today, dependents make up only 10 percent of the migrant population, contrasted with almost 30 percent twenty years ago.

This is consistent with the employment trend showing more migrant labor in food processing than field agriculture. In 1978, about 83 percent of migrants worked in field agriculture and 37 percent in food processing. In 1998, the situation is almost reversed; 39 percent work in the fields and 81 percent work in canneries.

Figure 8. Percent of Non-workers in Migrant Population, 1978-1998



Source: See Table 1 (page 2).

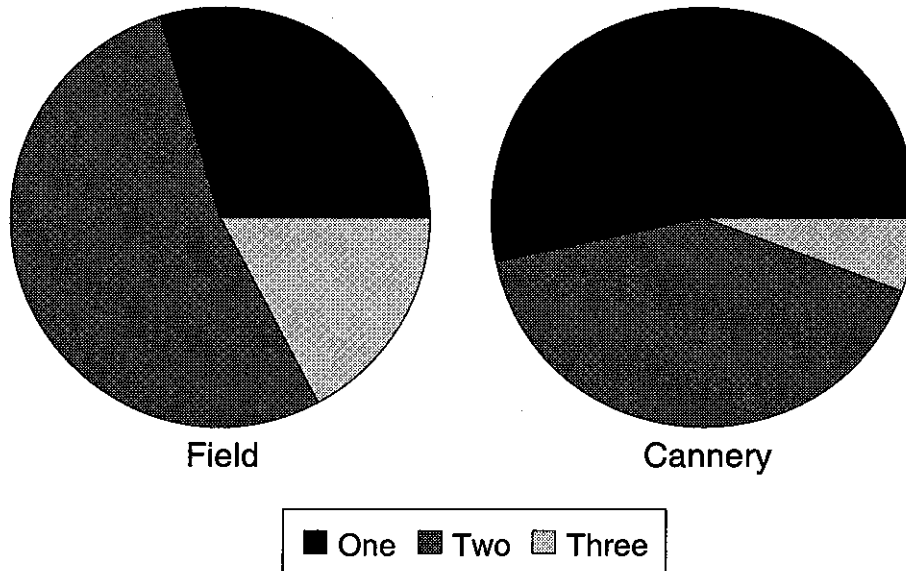
Number of Generations in Household

About 70 percent of field worker households contained more than one generation, compared to about half of cannery worker households.

Number	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
One	29.7	53.4	72	47.3
Two	53.1	40.9	67	44.1
Three	17.2	5.7	13	8.6
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100.0

p = .01 (Chi-square test).

Figure 9. Number of Generations in Household

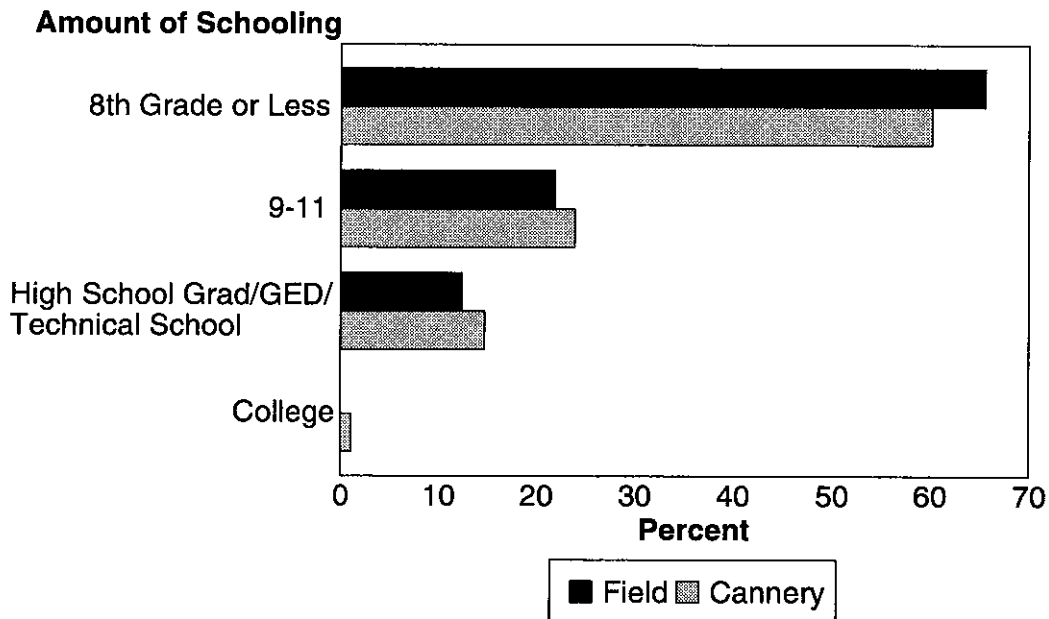


Education

The level of completed education for both field and cannery workers is quite similar. Over 60 percent of all workers have had no more than an elementary school education.

Education	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
8 th Grade or Less	65.6	60.2	94	61.7
9-11	21.9	23.9	35	23.3
High School Grad/ GED/Technical School	12.5	14.8	22	14.2
College	0.0	1.1	1	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100.0

Figure 10. Education of Workers



Language and Literacy

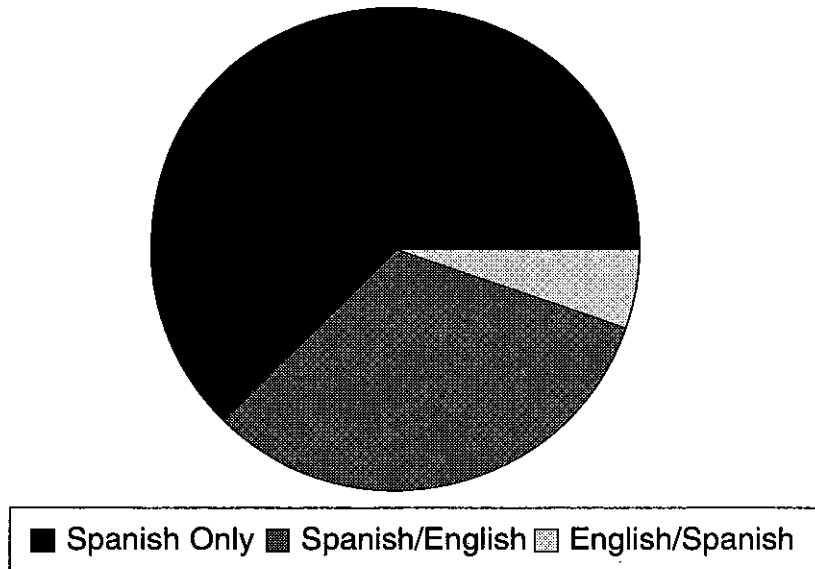
Over 95 percent of workers said Spanish was the language they speak most often; the remaining 5 percent speak English as their preferred language.

Of the 144 workers who preferred Spanish, 95 spoke only Spanish and 49 spoke both Spanish and English. The eight individuals who preferred English all spoke Spanish as well. Field and cannery workers were quite similar in their language usages.

Primary/Secondary	Number	Percent
Spanish Only	95	62.5
Spanish/English	49	32.2
English/Spanish	8	5.3
Miztec/Spanish	1	*

Respondents were also asked if they write in their primary language. Eighty-one percent of field workers and 94 percent of cannery workers said they are able to write in their primary language.

Figure 11. Primary/Secondary Language Spoken by Migrant Workers



Heritage and Home

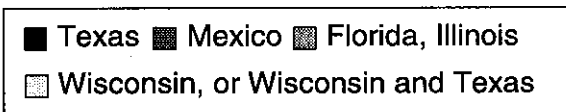
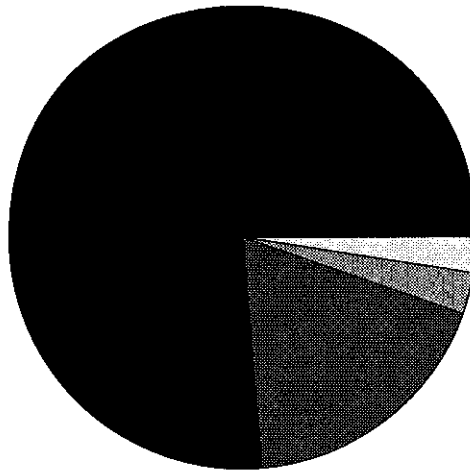
All workers interviewed were of Mexican heritage.

Respondents were asked, "Do you usually live in Wisconsin or some other state or country when you are not working as a migrant? Do you consider (this place) your home?" Three-fourths of the migrant farmworkers consider home to be Texas. Another 18 percent call Mexico home.

Table 14. Place Workers Consider "Home"

Place	Number	Percent
Texas	116	76.3
Mexico	28	18.3
Florida, Illinois	4	2.9
Wisconsin	3	1.7
Wisconsin and Texas	1	0.8
Total	152	100.0

Figure 12. Place Workers Consider Home



ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Employment

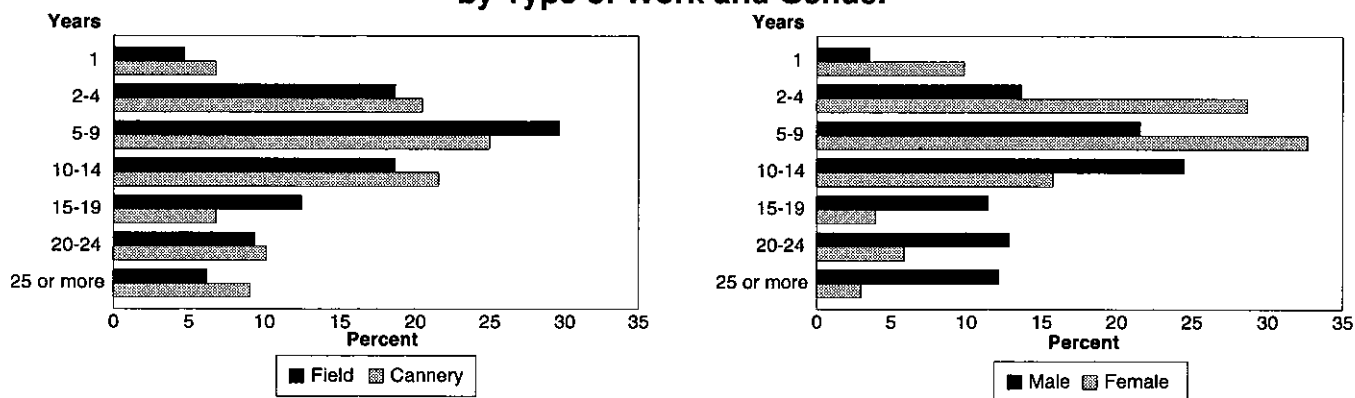
Years as a Migrant Worker

Eleven was the average number of years worked as a migrant. Years as a migrant worker vary dramatically by gender. Women have worked an average of less than 8 years as migrants while men have worked more than 13 (p <.001).

Years	Type of Work		Gender		Total	
	Field	Cannery	Male	Female	Number	Percent
1	4.7	6.8	3.6	9.9	10	6.3
2-4	18.7	20.5	13.7	28.7	30	20.0
5-9	29.8	25.0	21.6	32.7	39	26.3
10-14	18.7	21.6	24.5	15.8	32	20.8
15-19	12.5	6.8	11.5	4.0	13	8.3
20-24	9.4	10.2	12.9	5.9	15	10.0
25 or more	6.2	9.1	12.2	3.0	13	8.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	152	100.0
Mean Years*	10.9	11.0	13.3*	7.8*		11.0

* p <.001 (Difference of Means, t-test).

Figure 13. Number of Years as a Migrant Worker by Type of Work and Gender



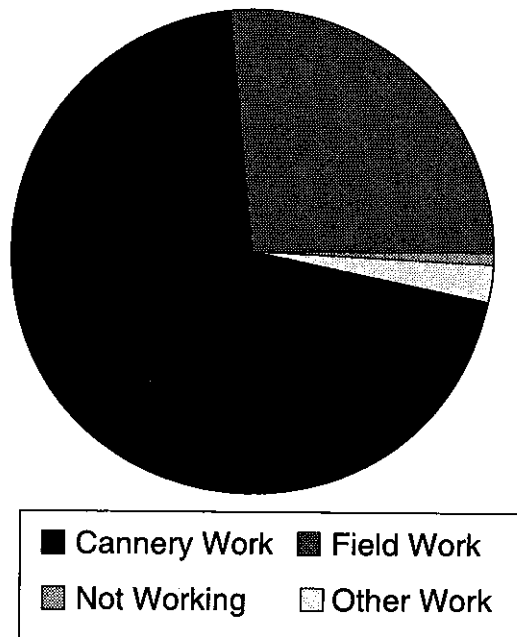
Type of Work

Twenty-seven percent of migrant workers are employed in agricultural field work and 70 percent in food processing, primarily in canneries. The remainder are employed in other work or not currently employed. This is a substantial shift from twenty years ago when 47 percent did field work and 41 percent worked in canneries, with the remainder working in both or farm-related jobs. A higher percentage of women are employed in canneries than in field work.

Type of Work	Number	Percent
Field work	40	26.6
Cannery work	107	70.1
Other work	4	2.5
Not working	1	0.8
Total	152	100.0

Field workers perform a variety of tasks including planting, weeding, trimming, and harvesting agricultural products. Some drive tractors or trucks, work in offices, or work as crew leaders. Among migrants in the food processing industry, working on the line, inspection, machine operation, quality control, and sanitation are common tasks. Still others drive trucks or fork lifts, work in warehouses, or in cafeterias.

Figure 14. Type of Work

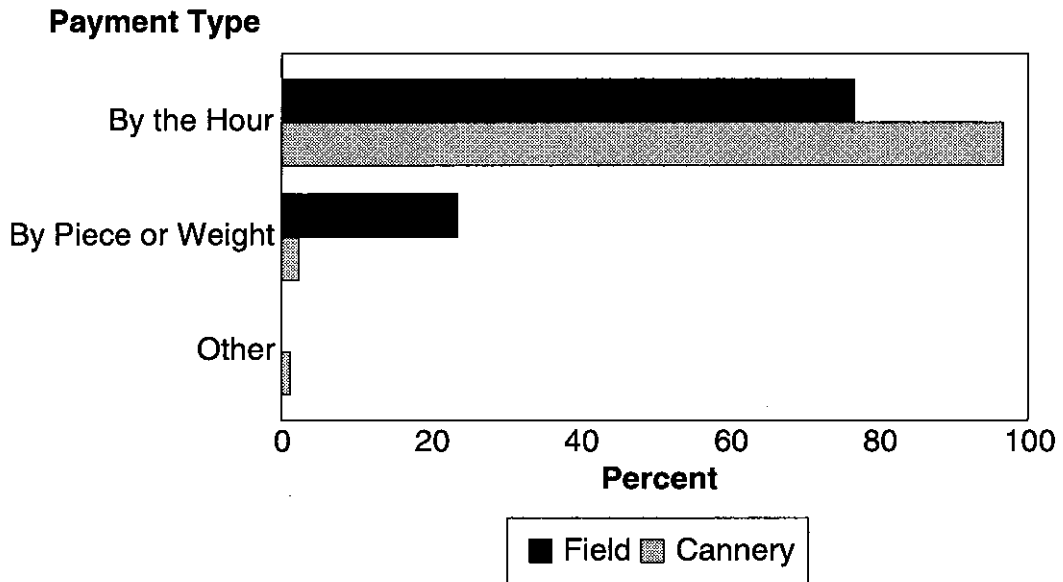


Method of Payment

The vast majority of workers are paid by the hour. The remainder are paid by the piece or weight. Far more field workers than cannery workers are paid by the piece or weight. All but one respondent stated that they were working under a Migrant Labor Worker Agreement Contract, as is required by the State of Wisconsin.

Method of Payment	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
By the Hour	76.6	96.6	137	91.2
By Piece or Weight	23.4	2.3	12	8.0
Other	0	1.1	1	0.8

Figure 15. Method of Payment



Employment Rates

Interviewers asked workers to think back over the past year and tell us, month by month, what state they lived in, whether they were employed, and if it was in agricultural or other work. From this information, we constructed "rates of employment." Table 18 presents this information.

The cyclical nature of employment is illustrated in Figure 16 (page 24). Employment peaks in the months of July and August, declining to below 30 percent during December, January, and February.

It is also noteworthy that for six months (December 1997 - May 1998) unemployment reached extremely high levels -- from 56 percent in May to 73 percent in January (see Table 18 and Figure 16).

Both field and cannery work go in cycles. Figure 17 (page 24) shows the proportion of workers employed in both industries by month. The percent of migrants employed in canneries ranges from just under 70 percent in August to less than 4 percent from January to April. The proportion in field work reaches a high of 30 percent during June and July and drops to under 10 percent from December to February.

Table 18. Percent of Wisconsin Migrant Workers Employed in Field and Cannery Work, by Month: August 1997 - July 1998

	Field Work	Canneries	Non Agricultural	Total Employment	Unemployment Level
Aug. '97	21.7	69.7	6.0	97.4	2.6
Sep. '97	24.3	55.3	7.9	87.5	12.5
Oct. '97	24.1	44.2	10.4	78.7	21.3
Nov. '97	17.9	22.5	15.8	56.2	43.8
Dec. '97	9.2	9.2	17.4	28.7	71.3
Jan. '98	7.1	2.9	16.6	26.6	73.4
Feb. '98	9.2	2.1	17.4	28.7	71.3
Mar. '98	12.5	2.5	17.9	32.9	67.1
Apr. '98	20.0	3.8	14.5	38.3	61.7
May '98	21.2	9.6	13.7	44.5	55.5
Jun. '98	27.8	35.9	7.5	71.2	28.8
Jul. '98	30.3	64.3	2.1	96.7	3.3

Figure 16. Percent of Migrants Employed in Agriculture, Other Work, and Unemployed, by Month: August 1997-July 1998

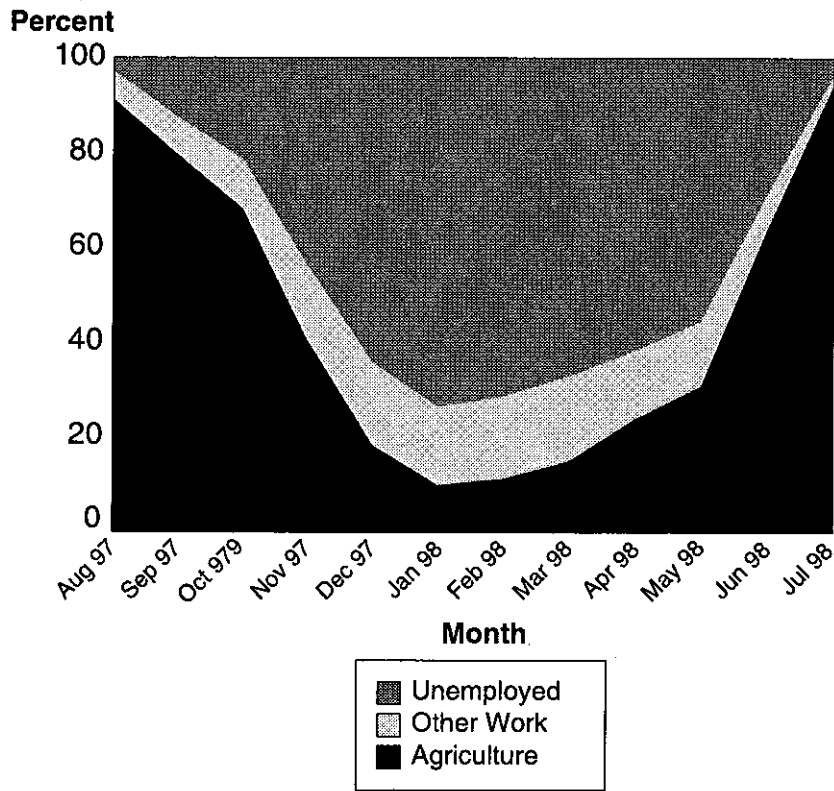
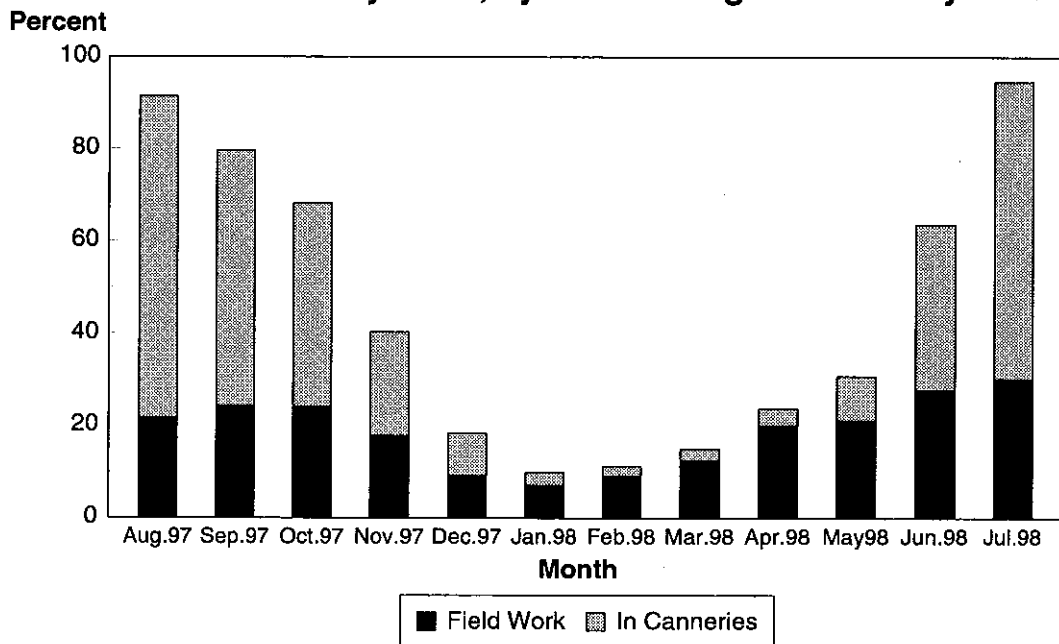


Figure 17. Percent of Workers Employed in Field Work and Cannery Work, by Month: August 1997-July 1998



Income

Total Family Income and Poverty Status

The average annual family income for all migrant workers in 1998 was \$13,600. An average of four people were dependent on this amount. Nearly 60 percent of migrant families live below the federal poverty rate,⁸ and nearly all live below 200 percent of the poverty level. Both income levels and number of dependents averaged slightly higher for field workers than for cannery workers.

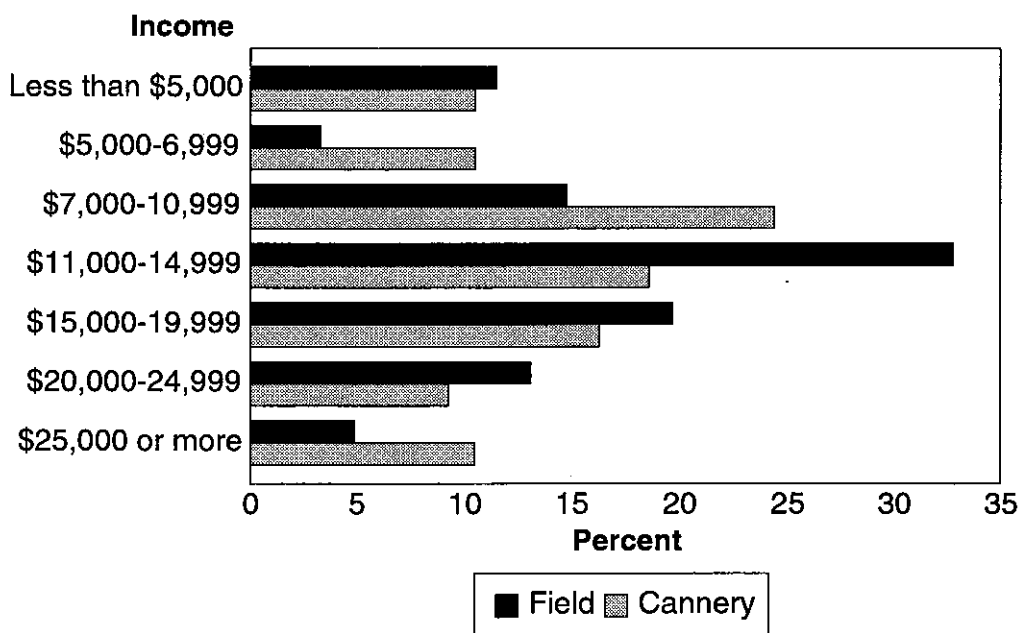
Table 19. Total Family Income

Income	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
Less than \$5,000	11.5	10.5	16	10.7
\$5,000-6,999	3.3	10.5	13	8.6
\$7,000-10,999	14.8	24.4	32	21.9
\$11,000-14,999	32.8	18.6	33	22.3
\$15,000-19,999	19.7	16.3	25	17.2
\$20,000-24,999	13.1	9.3	15	10.3
\$25,000 or more	4.9	10.5	13	9.0
Total	100.0	100.0	147	
Mean	\$14,013	\$13,478		\$13,617

Table 20. Workers Below Federal Poverty Level

Federal Poverty Level	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
< 100%	58.3	59.3	87	59.1
100-149%	20.0	19.8	29	17.2
150-199%	20.0	16.2	25	19.8
200% or more	1.7	4.7	6	3.9
Total	100.0	100.0	147	100.0

Figure 18. Total Family Income



⁸ The federal government measures the poverty rate on a yearly basis. The poverty rate is a statistical measure based on family income and the number of persons dependent on that income. As an example, for a family of four persons, the federal poverty level was \$16,050 in 1997 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1997).

Sources of Income

Wages. Nearly all migrants (98%) said they and/or family members earned wages in 1997. About one fifth (22%) said that wages were their only source of income. An additional 41 percent said wages and unemployment compensation made up their total 1997 income.

Table 21. Sources of Income in 1997

Source of Income	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
Wages*	98.5	98.8	151	97.9
Unemployment Compensation	52.5	70.5	100	65.8
Loan from Bank	23.8	16.1	27	18.1
Loan from Friends or Relatives	10.9	6.8	12	7.9
Social Security or Other Retirement	7.8	5.7	9	6.2
Worker's Compensation	3.1	3.4	5	3.3
Alimony, Child Support	1.5	2.4	4	2.1
Disability, SSI	1.5	1.2	2	1.2
Interest, Dividends, Rent	1.5	0	1	0.4

* Includes wages from all types of work.

Table 22 shows the proportion of 1997 family income derived from migrant work. About 10 percent of the workers had no income from migrant work in 1997. However, 21 percent of the families depended solely on migrant income. On average, both field and cannery workers earned approximately 70 percent of their income from migrant wages.

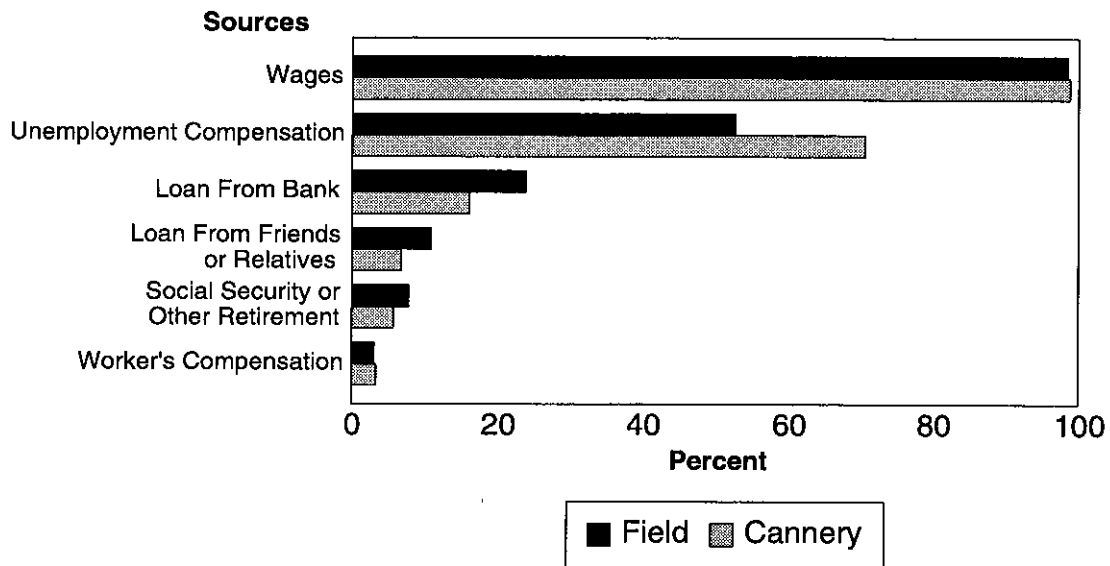
Table 22. Percent of 1997 Family Income From Migrant Work

Percent of Wages From Migrant Work	Number	Percent
1-49	11	7.9
50-74	31	22.3
75-89	43	30.9
90-99	11	7.9
100%	29	20.9
Total	139*	100.0
Mean		69.8

* 13 respondents didn't know.

Other Sources. Many migrant workers compensate for low wages by using other sources of income. In 1997, cannery workers were considerably more likely to be receiving unemployment compensation. Field workers were more likely to supplement their wages with loans. Relatively few workers received worker's compensation, social security, interest or dividends, alimony or child support, or disability payments (see Table 21, page 26).

Figure 19. Sources of Income, 1997



Public Assistance

Two forms of public assistance were relatively common among migrant workers. Thirty-four percent reported using food stamps and 38 percent medical assistance over the course of the prior 12 months. Field workers were more likely than cannery workers to receive these payments.

Type of Assistance	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
Food Stamps	43.8	30.7	52	34.2
Medical Assistance	46.9	35.2	58	38.3
Government Subsidized Housing	3.1	1.1	3	1.7
AFDC/W2/Welfare	4.4	0.0	2	1.2

ENVIRONMENT

Housing⁹

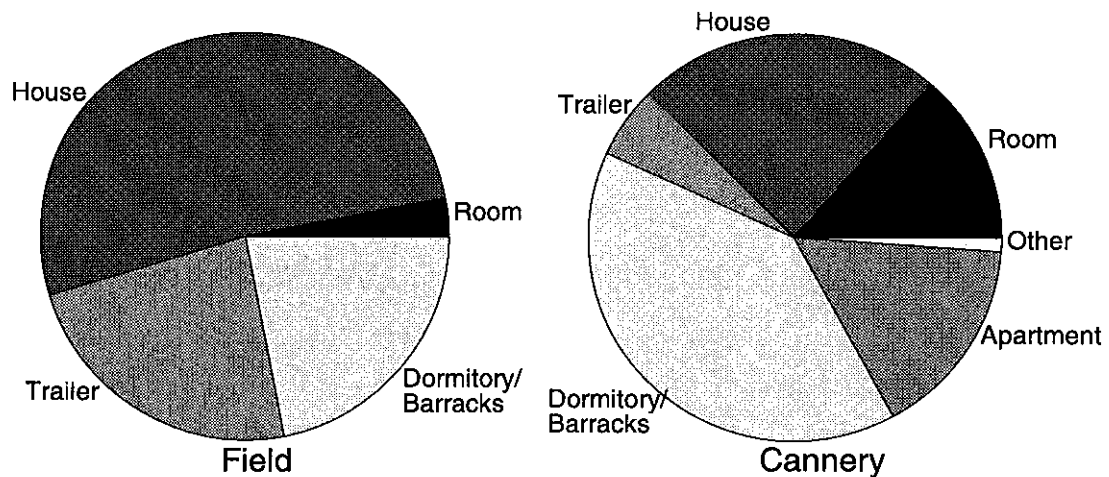
Type of Dwelling

Housing arrangements for field and cannery workers differ somewhat. Over half of all field workers live in houses, often shared with a number of other workers; just under half dwell either in trailers or dormitory/barracks; and only a few live in rooms. Most frequently, cannery workers live in dormitory/barracks, followed by living in a house. Unlike field workers, nearly one-third of cannery workers live either in a room or apartment.

Category	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
Room(s)	3.1	13.6	16	10.8
House	51.6	23.9	47	1.2
Trailer	23.4	5.7	16	1.4
Dormitory/Barracks	21.9	39.8	53	1
Apartment	0	15.9	18	1.7
Other	0	1.1	1	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100.0

p < .01 (Chi square test)

Figure 20. Type of Housing



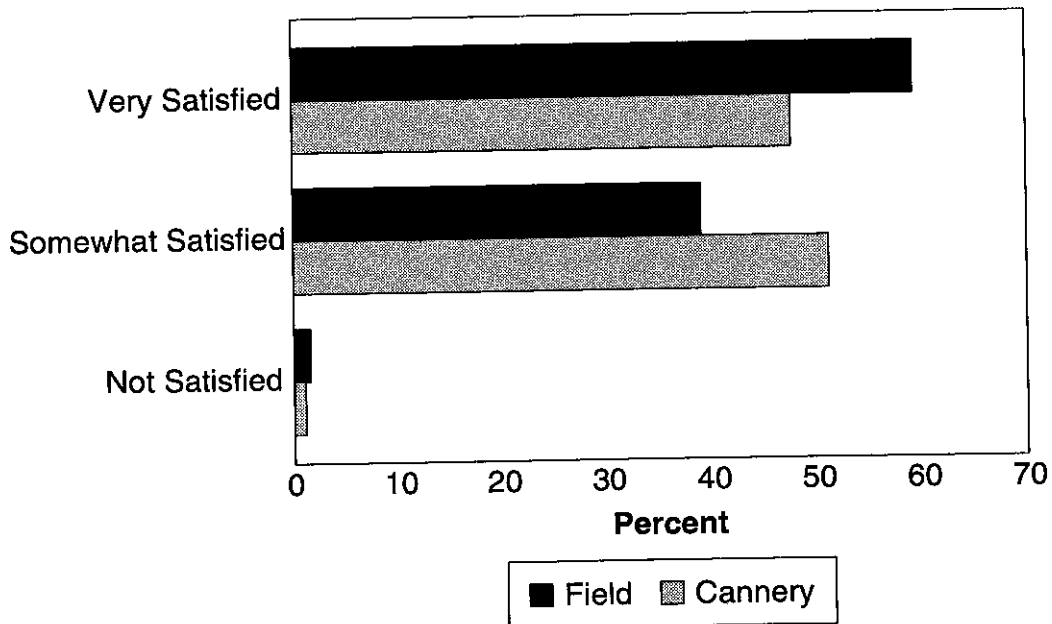
⁹ Housing here refers only to living quarters in Wisconsin.

Adequacy

Nearly all migrant workers said they were satisfied with their housing in Wisconsin. About half report feeling "very satisfied." Ninety percent said their dwelling in Wisconsin had hot running water, 70 percent had burners or an oven, 65 percent had a bath or shower in their dwelling, and 93 percent had access to a washing machine.

Category	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
Very Satisfied	59.3	47.7	77	50.9
Somewhat Satisfied	39.1	51.2	73	47.9
Not Satisfied	1.6	1.1	2	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	152	100.0

Figure 21. Satisfaction With Dwelling

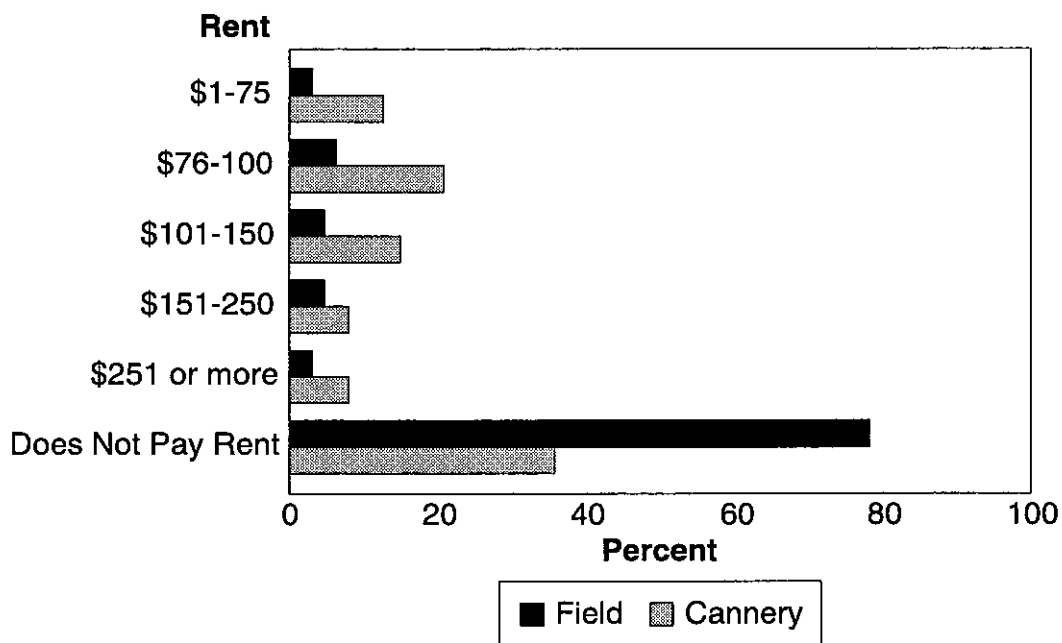


Rent

More than four out of five workers live in a housing facility provided by the employer. Just over half of workers report paying rent. Among those who pay rent in Wisconsin, the average cost is just under \$150 per month. More cannery workers (65 percent) than field workers (23 percent) live in employer-provided housing. Average rent paid is 22 percent higher for field workers. Only 11 percent of workers pay for utilities (electricity, gas, water, or heat). This figure varies little between field and cannery workers.

Amount	Field	Cannery	Total	
			No.	%
\$1-75	3.1	12.6	15	10.1
\$76-100	6.3	20.7	25	16.8
\$101-150	4.7	14.9	18	12.2
\$151-250	4.7	8.0	11	7.1
\$251 or more	3.1	8.0	10	6.7
Do Not Pay Rent	78.1	35.6	71	47.0

Figure 22. Rent Paid Per Month



Sanitary Facilities at Work Site

Vast improvement has occurred since 1978 in access to drinking water, toilets, and water to wash hands at the workplace. Much of the change was due to the sanitary codes set by OSHA in 1986 that required employers of ten or more migrants to provide these facilities. Table 27 and Figure 23 show the major improvement in coverage. Almost all cannery workers had these facilities by 1989. Currently, most -- but not all -- field workers also have these facilities.

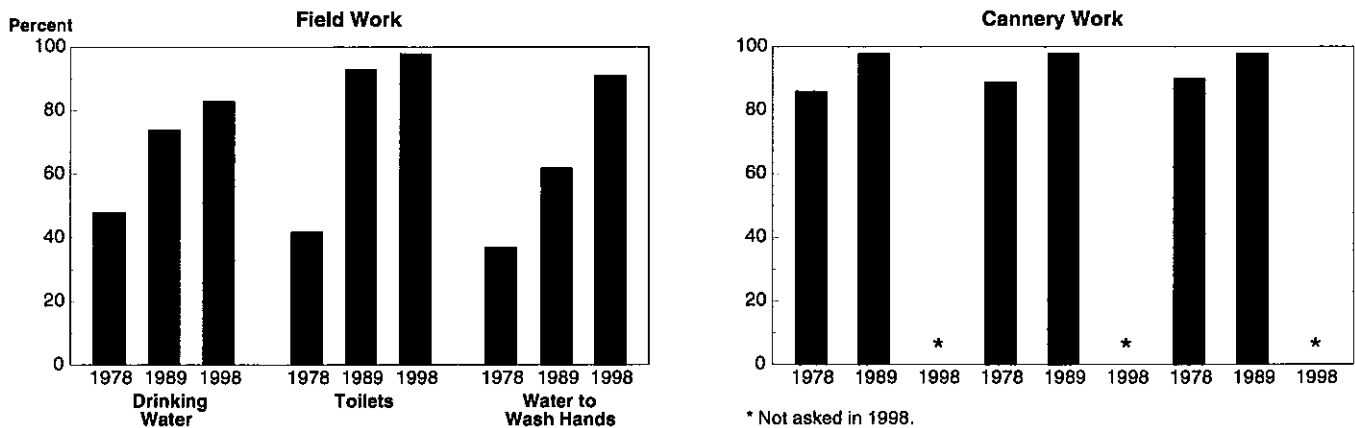
Table 27. Presence of Sanitary Facilities by Type of Workplace, 1978, 1989 and 1998

Sanitary Facility	Field Work			Cannery		
	1978	1989	1998	1978	1989	1998
Drinking Water	48.2	74.1	83.3	86.3	97.9	*
Toilets	41.9	93.1	98.5	88.8	97.9	*
Water to Wash Hands	37.2	62.1	90.9	90.1	97.9	*

* Not asked of cannery workers in 1998.

Source: 1978: Slesinger, (1979) Health Needs of Migrant Workers in Wisconsin, p. 46. 1989: Slesinger and Ofstead, (1990) Migrant Agricultural Workers in Wisconsin, 1989, p. 30.

Figure 23. Sanitary Facilities in Workplace, 1978-1998



HEALTH

Health Status

All workers were asked to rate their current health as excellent, good, fair or poor. Only 15 percent rated their health as "excellent," 44 percent said "good," and 41 percent said "fair" or "poor."

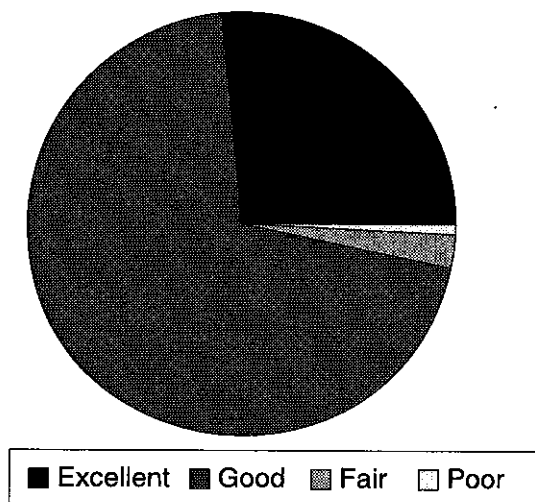
Poor self-assessments of health tend to vary by sex and income. Women, as well as those with lower incomes, tend to say they are in poorer health.

Table 28. Workers' Self-Assessment of Health, by Gender and Family Income

Characteristic	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Total	
					Number	Percent
Gender						
Male	16.8	46.1	37.1	0.0	89	100.0
Female	12.5	42.2	39.1	6.2	64	100.0
Income*						
< \$15,000	12.6	42.1	42.1	3.2	95	100.0
\$15,000-24,999	17.5	47.5	35.0	0.0	40	100.0
\$25,000+	14.3	57.1	21.4	7.1	14	100.0
Total (%)	14.6	44.2	38.3	2.9		100.0
(N)	22	67	58	4	152	

* Three cases had missing information on income.

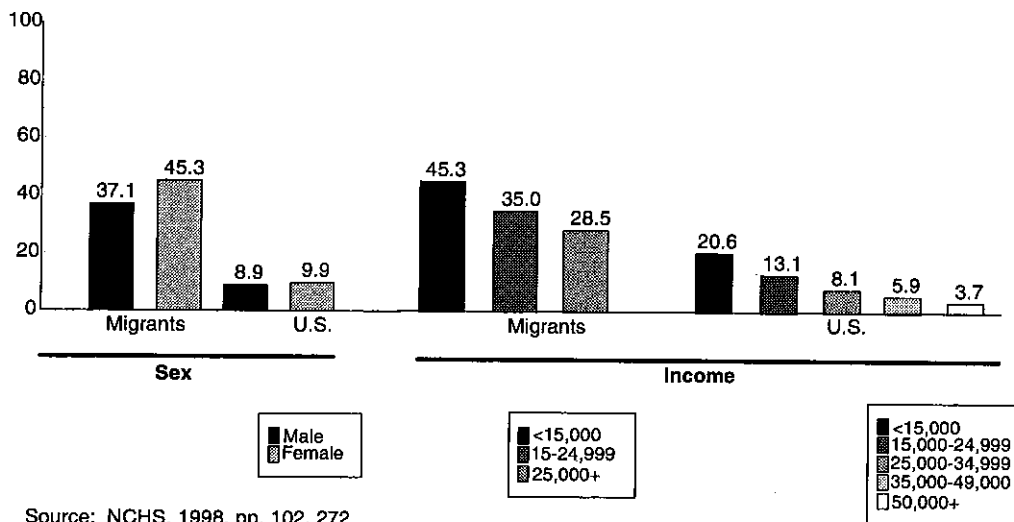
Figure 24. Workers' Self-Assessment of Health



Migrants rate their health poorer than the U.S. population as a whole. For example, 41 percent of migrant workers believe their health is fair or poor compared to only 12 percent of the total adult population (NCHS, 1998).

Figure 25 displays the very large difference between the health assessments of migrant workers and those of the U.S. adult population as a whole.

Figure 25. Percent Stating "Fair" or "Poor" Health by Sex and Family Income: Migrant Workers and U.S. Adults



Source: NCHS, 1998, pp. 102, 272.

Chronic Disease

Asked whether they had any chronic illness, disability or health problems, one out of four workers answered "yes." Of these, 84 percent had seen a doctor about it in the past year.

Among the problems mentioned (in order of frequency) were high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, heart problems, thyroid problems, and accidents. A number of additional problems were mentioned by one or two respondents. These included back and foot problems, stomach infections, colitis, ulcer, allergies, headaches, colds, sinusitis, bladder control, kidney stones, glaucoma, cataracts, nerves, and high cholesterol.

Conditions that Bother Workers

Workers were asked, "At this time, do each of the following conditions bother you very much, some, or not at all." Table 29 presents the proportion of workers who responded that the condition bothered them "very much" or "some."

Almost half of all workers said they had eye trouble. A fairly large proportion also reported backaches, headaches, and arthritis. These conditions may be a result of the type of work they do and the environmental conditions under which they work. Migrants often work in dusty fields in the hot sun which may cause irritation in the eyes and headaches from strain and heat. Backaches and arthritis often result from lifting and bending for long hours, putting strain on muscles and joints. Also among the frequently mentioned conditions are those that may indicate some personal anxiety or nervousness, such as trouble sleeping, stomach pains, low spirits, or depression. Additional questions were asked about feeling stress and what they did about it. These results will be presented in a later report.

Table 29. Health Conditions that Bother Workers "Very Much" or "Some"

Condition	Percent	Condition	Percent
Eye trouble	47.5	Menstrual problems (women only)	12.9
Backache	38.8	Irritability	12.9
Headaches	35.4	Pain in chest	12.5
Arthritis	22.1	High blood pressure	12.5
Stomach pains	20.8	Swollen joints	12.1
Trouble sleeping	20.4	Allergies, hay fever	11.7
Tooth/gum trouble	16.3	Sinus	9.2
Low spirits, depression	16.3	Bladder trouble	7.9
Nervousness	15.8	Kidney trouble	6.3
Shortness of breath	15.4	Diabetes	5.9
Ear trouble	14.6	Asthma	2.9
Cough	14.6	Sexually transmitted disease, Venereal disease	0.0
Swollen leg	14.2		

Use of Health Services in Wisconsin

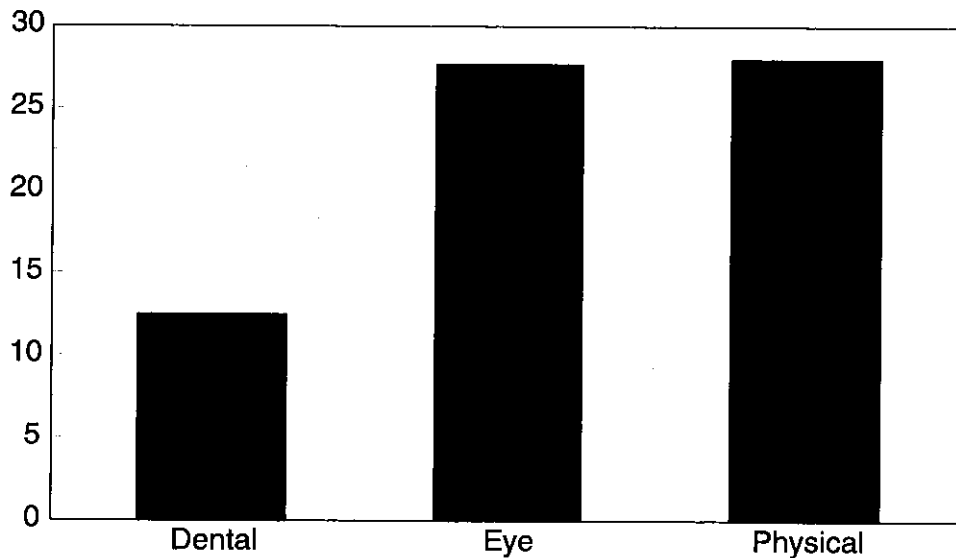
Almost 70 percent of migrant workers (105 individuals) visited a doctor, clinic or hospital in the past year. Two out of three visits were in Wisconsin.

Preventive Health Visits

Workers were asked the last time they visited a dentist for a checkup or cleaning, the last time they had a vision or eye examination by a specialist, and the last time they had a general physical examination. Almost two thirds had their teeth checked within the past two years, 47 percent had an eye exam, and 48 percent had a general physical. On the other hand, as shown in Figure 26, sizable proportions of workers never had a physical, eye or dental checkup.

Years	Dental Exam		Eye Exam		Physical Exam	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 1 year	58	37.9	31	20.6	41	27.2
1 yr. - 2 yrs. 11 mos.	42	27.5	40	26.4	32	20.9
3 yrs. - 4 yrs. 11 mos.	9	5.8	20	13.5	16	10.9
5 yrs. - 9 yrs. 11 mos.	11	7.5	8	5.5	7	4.6
10 or more years	13	8.8	10	6.3	13	8.4
Never	19	12.5	42	27.7	42	28.0
Total	152	100.0	151	100.0	151	100.0

Figure 26. Percent of Workers Who Never Had a Dental, Eye, or General Physical Exam



SERVICES NEEDED

Workers were asked about a series of social and health services they or a family member had used in the past 12 months. If the service had not been used, the worker was asked if that service was needed by themselves or a family member. Table 30 displays in the first column the proportion of households that used the service and, in the second column, the proportion of those who had not used the service but felt they needed the service.

It is reassuring that 70 percent of migrants came in contact with Spanish-speaking health professionals. It is also important that the other 30 percent felt that Spanish language personnel are sorely needed. Dental care was the service most needed but not used by migrant workers. Care of the teeth and gums is often of low priority to families with limited income. In fact, as was shown in Table 30 (page 35), 12.5 percent of the respondents said they had never been to a dentist for a checkup.

Programs to promote immunization of children apparently have been somewhat successful in reaching their target population, with almost two-thirds of the families having used an immunization clinic. HIV/AIDS information programs also have reached about one-third of the families. Of those families not reached, one-fifth feel that they need this information.

Both first aid training and weight control are services in which the proportion who say they need the service is larger than those who have used it. Clearly, programming would be well-received in these areas.

Table 31. Social and Health Services Used and Needed by Members of Workers' Households

Type of Work and Service	Used Past 12 Months	Needed
Spanish speaking health professionals	69.6	28.8
Dental care	61.2	46.7
Immunization clinic	63.3	7.9
HIV/AIDS information	36.3	22.2
Emergency care services	28.3	4.1
Day care/babysitting	22.1	8.0
Family planning	20.8	12.7
Nutrition information	16.7	14.1
First aid training	15.0	37.7
Weight control	10.4	22.1
Chiropractic	6.3	10.7
Domestic violence information	6.3	3.2
Child abuse/neglect information	5.8	4.9
Mental health services	5.4	8.8
Expectant Parent classes	5.4	7.5
Visiting nurse service	5.0	2.7
Marriage/family counseling	4.2	3.0
Drug/alcohol counseling	3.3	8.6
Home visit by public health nurse for birth	2.9	0.4

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APPENDIX

Procedure To Estimate the Total Number of Migrant Workers in a Specific Category

We estimated that there were 5,117 migrant farm workers in Wisconsin in 1998. If the reader wishes to estimate the total number of persons in a specific category from the tables presented in this report, the following instructions can be followed.

I. State Totals

As a rough estimate of the total number of migrant workers in a specific category, take the proportion found in the "Total Percent" column in each table and multiply the percent by 5,117. Round each estimate to the nearest tenth. We round the number to indicate to the reader that this is an estimated, not actual, number. This provides an estimate of the total number of migrant workers in that specific category.

Example:

Table 6. Gender of Workers

Gender	Total		Estimated Number in State	
	Number	Percent		
Male	91	59.9	$59.9\% \times 5,117 = 3,065$	Rounded 3,060
Female	61	40.1	$40.1\% \times 5,117 = 2,052$	Rounded 2,050
Total	152	100.0	5,117	Rounded 5,110

That is, there were 91 males and 61 females interviewed in the migrant worker sample. This converts to approximately 3,060 males and 2,050 females in the state.

II. Field and Cannery Totals

To determine the numbers within the "field" and "cannery" classifications, multiply the percent of the category of interest in field work by 1,962 and cannery work by 3,155.

Example:

Table 12. Education of Workers

Education	Field	Estimated Number of Field Workers in State	
8 th grade or less	65.6	$65.6\% \times 1,962 = 1,287$	Rounded 1,290
9-11	21.9	$21.9\% \times 1,962 = 430$	Rounded 430
High School Grad/GED/ Technical School	12.5	$12.5\% \times 1,962 = 245$	Rounded 245
College	0.0	0	0
Total	100.0	1,962	Rounded 1,960

Education	Cannery	Estimated Number of Cannery Workers in State	
8 th grade or less	60.2	$60.2\% \times 3,155 = 1,899$	Rounded 1,900
9-11	23.9	$23.9\% \times 3,155 = 754$	Rounded 750
High School Grad/GED/ Technical School	14.8	$14.8\% \times 3,155 = 467$	Rounded 467
College	1.1	$1.1\% \times 3,155 = 35$	Rounded 40
Total	100.0	3,155	Rounded 3,160