



## National Agricultural Workers Survey 2019-2020 Selected Statistics

Below are key findings from the recently released 2019-20 results of the U.S. Department of Labor's [National Agricultural Workers Survey \(NAWS\)](#). The NAWS provides an economic and demographic portrait of crop workers and crop support workers through in-person interviews at their workplaces.

Based on the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture, an estimated 2.4 million farmworkers labor on our nation's farms and ranches, cultivating and harvesting crops and raising and tending to livestock. The NAWS surveys those workers on farms and in orchards, greenhouses and nurseries, which include the majority of nursery products, grains, and field crops, as well as all fruits and vegetables. However, it does not include workers in all types of agricultural production; it excludes livestock, poultry, and fishery employees. Although the survey covers a variety of farm jobs, including some supervisors, it excludes administrative staff and mechanics. The NAWS does not survey workers who hold H-2A temporary agricultural guestworker visas.

### Immigration Status and Nationality

- The agricultural industry relies on a predominantly immigrant workforce. According to the NAWS, approximately 68% of farmworkers are foreign-born, the overwhelming majority from Mexico.
- 36% of farmworkers surveyed by the NAWS were United States citizens, 19% were lawful permanent residents and another 1% had other work authorization through another status (excluding H-2A visas).
- The NAWS found that approximately 44% of farmworkers are undocumented immigrants who lack work authorization.
- The NAWS results on immigration status may be skewed, with lower undocumented percentages due to a fear of self-reporting undocumented status. Other sources estimate that the proportion of undocumented farmworkers may be [much higher](#). Regardless, even under the NAWS estimates, more than one million farmworkers are undocumented.

### Ethnicity and Language

- 78% of all farmworkers identify as Latino/Hispanic. 10% of farmworkers self-identify as indigenous.
- Spanish is the most dominant (comfortable) language for 62% of all farmworkers. 32% of farmworkers reported they could speak English well, while 29% of workers shared that they do not speak any English.

### Age and Gender

- The majority of farmworkers are men; just 34% of farmworkers are female.
- Farmworkers' average age at the time of this survey was 41 years old. The average age of farmworkers has been steadily increasing over the last several surveys.
- 19% of farmworkers are 55 or over, 18% are between 45 and 54 years old, 26% are between 35 and 44 years old, 23% are between 25 and 34, and 14% between 14 and 24 years old.

### Year Foreign-Born Farmworkers First Entered the U.S.

- The majority (85%) of foreign-born farmworkers first entered the United States more than 10 years ago, with 70% first entering more than 15 years before the date of their NAWS interview.
- A significantly smaller percentage entered the country within the last 10 years: 16% first entered the United States fewer than 10 years prior to their NAWS interview in 2019-2020.

## **Family Status**

- 57% of farmworkers are married, and 50% of farmworkers have children. Some reported having children or a spouse who live abroad.

## **Time Spent in Agriculture**

- The average farmworker has 17 years of experience in farm work.
- 62% of farmworkers in the United States have 11 or more years of U.S. farm work experience.

## **Seasonality and Working Hours**

- Due to the seasonal nature of the work on many crop farms, the large majority of crop workers do not work all year long even if they work for more than one farm in a single year.
- Farmworkers averaged 39 weeks of farm work in the past year, working an average of 46 hours per week.

## **Migrant Workers**

- A decreasing number of farmworkers are “migrant workers,” meaning that they traveled “at least 75 miles during a 12-month period to obtain a farm job.” Only 15% of farmworkers in 2019-2020 were migrants, compared to 42% in 2001-2002.
- 83% of farmworkers reported that they were employed by a single employer throughout the year. However, a farm labor contractor that brings a crew of workers to several farms during a year can count as a single employer.
- The survey found that 12% of all farmworkers are employed by farm labor contractors. The use of contractors for hiring farmworkers can vary widely by region. For example, the NAWS found that in California from 2015-2019, 28% of workers were employed by farm labor contractors.

## **Wages, Income and Poverty**

- Farmworkers averaged \$13.59 per hour in wages. Piece-rate wage earners, a minority of the workforce, earned an average of \$14.63. Hourly wage earners averaged \$13.05.
- Farmworkers’ average personal income was in the range of \$20,000 to \$24,999 while their family income was \$25,000- \$29,999.
- 20% of farmworkers’ family incomes fall below the poverty level. However, because the survey results did not include dependents living outside of the United States, this number may not completely reflect the number of families living in poverty.
- 13% of workers stated that they or someone in their household had received food assistance (SNAP) in the previous two years. Only 9% of workers reported that a member of their household participated in WIC (the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children). Farmworker use of public assistance has historically been low and many families, particularly undocumented families, are hesitant to apply for benefits even if they are eligible.

## **Health Insurance and Health Care**

- Only 48% of farmworkers reported that they had health insurance. Of these insured workers, 26% received employer-provided health insurance and 39% received health insurance through a government program (likely Medicaid). 88% of workers’ children were insured, the vast majority (84%) through Medicaid/government programs.