



NCFH

National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc.



MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKER DEMOGRAPHICS

More than 3 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers are estimated to be in the United States.¹ In order to plan, monitor, and evaluate the health status and needs of migrant farmworkers, demographic information is necessary. Because of the difficulties in surveying this highly mobile population, it is only possible to estimate and approximate this information. For twenty years, the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)² has collected information directly from migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States and has been one of the most accurate sources for obtaining demographic information on this group. A summary of their most recent findings is provided below.

Birthplace and Age

- 78 percent of all farmworkers were foreign born.
 - 75 percent were born in Mexico
 - 46 percent were from the traditional sending states of west central Mexico, including Guanajuato, Jalisco and Michoacan.
 - 19 percent of farmworkers were from the non-traditional sending states of southern Mexico, including Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Puebla, Morelos and Veracruz.
 - 2 percent of farmworkers were born in Central American countries
 - 1 percent are born elsewhere.
- Foreign-born farmworkers have spent an average of 10 years in the United States, while 29 percent have been in the U.S. for at least 14 years and 17 percent arrived less than one year ago.
- Farmworkers in the United States were relatively young, with an average age of 33. 50 percent of the farmworkers were less than 31 years old, 30 percent were between the ages of 25-34, 20 percent were between the ages of 20-24, and 20 percent were between the ages of 35-44.

Gender and Family

- 79 percent of migrant and seasonal farmworkers were male and 21 percent were female. Women were more likely to be born in the United States than men, with 33 percent of women and 20 percent of men being U.S.-born citizens.
- 58 percent of farmworkers surveyed were married. 51 percent were parents, of whom 66 percent were not accompanied by their children when they migrated.
- Farmworker women are more than twice as likely to live with their nuclear family than men (75 percent vs. 35 percent), and 97 percent of farmworker mothers lived with their children as compared to 55 percent of farmworker fathers.

Language and Education

- 81 percent of farmworkers surveyed spoke Spanish and 18 percent spoke English, a 2 percent increase in English speaking from the previous NAWS findings. Two percent spoke other languages such as Creole, Mixteco and Kanjbal.

- 24 percent said they could speak English “well”
 - 44 percent said they couldn’t speak English “at all”
 - 26 percent said they could speak English “a little”
 - 6 percent said they could speak English “some”
- The median level of completed education was sixth grade, with the majority (38 percent) of farmworkers completing fourth to seventh grades.
 - 13 percent had completed grade three or less
 - 13 percent had completed the 12th grade.
 - 72 percent completed their education in Mexico
 - 26 percent completed their education in the U.S.
 - 2 percent completed their education in Central American countries
 - Less than 1 percent completed their education in any other country
- Over time, the education level of foreign-born newcomers entering the hired farm workforce has increased. While six percent of the foreign-born newcomers in 1993-1994 reported never having attended school, only half as many (3%) so reported in 2001-2002. Conversely, the share of the foreign-born newcomers who had completed eight to eleven years of school rose from 23 percent in 1993-1994 to 37 percent in 2001-2002. On the other hand, compared to 1993-1994 when 7% of foreign born workers reported having had completed the twelfth grade, a smaller share (3%) reported the same in 2001-2002.

Labor Force

- 42 percent of farmworkers surveyed were migrants, having traveled at least 75 miles within the previous year to obtain a farm job. 35 percent of migrants traveled back-and-forth from a foreign country, primarily Mexico, and 26 percent traveled *only* within the United States, of whom:
 - 14 percent traveled to multiple farm locations inside the United States
 - 13 percent traveled 75 miles or more to one location inside the U.S
- Workers from Central America were employed in U.S. farm jobs for the most weeks of the year, with an average of 40 weeks. Mexican-born farmworkers spent 36 weeks of their year working in U.S. farm jobs and U.S.-born farmworkers spent an average of 31 weeks working in U.S. farm jobs.
- Farmworkers surveyed had an average of 12 years in U.S. farm experience. 41 percent of farmworkers had worked more than 10 years in U.S. farm jobs. A majority (72 percent) of all farmworkers expected to continue doing farm work for more than five years. 42 percent of farmworkers said they believed they could not obtain a non-farm job, 37 percent said they believed they could and 7 percent were unsure.
- Growers and packing firms employed four out of five farmworkers (79 percent). Labor contractors employed 21 percent of farmworkers, an increase from 14 percent in 1993-1994.
 - 34 percent of farmworkers worked in fruit and nut crops
 - 31 percent worked in vegetable crops
 - 18 percent worked in horticultural crops
 - 13 percent worked in field crops
 - 4 percent reported working in miscellaneous crops
- The majority of farmworkers, at 69 percent, found their current job through friends or relatives and 82 percent of foreign-born farmworkers obtained a job the same year that they came to the United States.
- 79 percent of farmworkers said they were paid by the hour, with an average wage of \$7.25 per hour. Sixteen percent were paid by the piece, 3 percent were paid a combination of hourly and by-the-piece wages and 2 percent were by salary.
- Farmworkers worked an average of 42 hours per week. 25 percent of farmworkers worked less than 35 hours. 25 percent worked between 35 and 40 hours. 25 percent worked between 41 and 49 hours. 25 percent worked 50 hours or more. Farmworkers had been employed with their current farm employer for an average of four and a half years and the majority (60 percent) said that their current job was seasonal and 25 percent said they worked year-round.
- The average individual farmworker had an income range from \$10,000 to \$12,499 and the average total family income ranged from \$15,000 to \$17,499. 30 percent of all farmworkers had total family incomes below the U.S. government’s poverty guidelines.

- Underemployment is widespread within the farm workforce. Farmworkers spent, on average, about 66 percent of the year performing U.S. farm work. When not employed by farm work, farmworkers spent 16 percent residing, but not working in the United States, 7 percent of the year outside of the U.S. and 10 percent of the year in non-farm employment.
- Only 39 percent of farmworkers reported as being covered by unemployment insurance, 54 percent said they were not and 8 percent did not know.
- A mere 8 percent of farmworkers reported being covered by employer-provided health insurance, a rate that dropped to 5 percent for farmworkers who are employed seasonally and not year-round.
- 22 percent of farmworkers said they, or someone in their household, had used needs-based services within the last two years:
 - 15 percent used Medicaid
 - 11 percent used WIC
 - 8 percent used Food Stamps
 - 1 percent used general assistance or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).

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. In 2006, Michigan & Idaho updated their enumeration totals using the methodology originally formulated in the 1993 Enumeration.

<u>STATE NAME</u>	<u>1990 ATLAS MSFW POPULATION³</u>	<u>1993 ENUMERATION MSFW POPULATION⁴</u>	<u>2000 ENUMERATION MSFW POPULATION⁵</u>
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	54,659 ⁶
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	90,228 ⁷
Minnesota	13,344	53,145	
Mississippi	0	15,139	18,191
Missouri	20,324	21,555	

Montana	13,026	14,480	
Nebraska	18,746	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
North Dakota	15,000	30,745	
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	
South Dakota	0	1,053	
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	
TOTALS	4,171,419	3,038,644	

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

² National Agricultural Workers Survey 2001-2002, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 2005

³ "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

⁴ Larson, Alice; Plascencia, Luis. "Migrant Enumeration Study". Washington, D.C.: Office of Minority Health, 1993

⁵ Larson, Alice. "Migrant Enumeration Study Update". Washington, D.C.: Office of Minority Health, 2000

⁶ Larson, Alice. "Migrant Enumeration Study Update". Washington, D.C.: Office of Minority Health, 2006

⁷ Larson, Alice. "Migrant Enumeration Study Update". Washington, D.C.: Office of Minority Health, 2006