

# FARMWORKERS' HEALTH FACT SHEET

## DATA FROM THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS SURVEY

### INTRODUCTION

There are approximately 2.4 million agricultural workers employed on farms and ranches in the United States.<sup>1</sup> This fact sheet presents key statistics on the health of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers from data collected from 3,025 agricultural workers by the U.S. Department of Labor's National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) during the fiscal years 2011 and 2012.<sup>2</sup> The NAWS provides information about the employment, demographic, and health characteristics of crop workers and workers engaged in support activities for crop production. Health data covers health history, occupational health, and access to health care.

### LIMITATIONS

The NAWS is a valuable source of information but has several limitations. The survey includes workers on farms, orchards, greenhouses and nurseries, but it does not include workers employed in animal production, dairies or aquaculture. The survey covers a variety of farm jobs, including some supervisors. The NAWS includes workers with any immigration status, but excludes H-2A temporary agricultural guest workers. The NAWS interviews workers in their workplaces rather than their homes. The interviewed workers work for employers who consent to data collection by NAWS staff.

### GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS

- Gender: Seventy-two percent of NAWS respondents were male.
- Age: Twelve percent of respondents are age 55 or over, 17% are 45 - 54 years old, 25% are 35 - 44 years old, 29% are 25 - 34 years old, and 18% are 14 - 24 years old.<sup>3</sup>

### HEALTH HISTORY

Participants were asked if they have ever been told by a doctor or nurse that they have asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or urinary tract infections. Below are the percentages of NAWS respondents who reported that they had been told they had the following conditions:<sup>4</sup>

- High blood pressure: 8%
- Diabetes: 5%
- Asthma: 3%
- Urinary tract infections: 2%
- Heart disease: 0.8%
- Tuberculosis: 0.4%<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Martin, *Farm Labor and H-2A* (April 15, 2014) (unpublished document available upon request). See also, Philip Martin, *California Ag Employment: 2014* <http://migrationfiles.ucdavis.edu/uploads/cf/files/2014/04/22/martin-california-ag-employment-2014.pdf> (last visited December 15, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> This analysis utilizes the National Agricultural Workers Survey public access data from fiscal years 2011-2012. The data can be retrieved from <http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/naws.cfm>. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, except for percentages below 1%. Only results equal to or greater than 1% were reported (with the exception of the health history section).

<sup>3</sup> For more demographics, please refer to *Selected Statistics on Farmworkers* <http://www.farmworkerjustice.org/sites/default/files/NAWS%20data%20factsht%2011-4-14FINAL%20%281%29.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Statistics on these selected health conditions represent a lifetime prevalence, and may not represent disease burden at the time of data collection.

<sup>5</sup> Reported tuberculosis cases could include those who were diagnosed with active or latent tuberculosis.



## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

- Pesticide-related work: 16% of NAWS respondents had loaded, mixed or applied pesticides in the last 12 months.
- Drinking water and field sanitation: When asked if their employer provided disposable drinking cups and clean drinking water daily, 86% of NAWS respondents said that both were provided, 9% said only water was provided, and 6% said neither were provided. Ninety-eight percent reported that their employer provided a toilet and water for hand-washing.

## ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

- Health care utilization: Sixty-one percent of NAWS respondents had used health care services in the U.S in the last 2 years. Eight percent had used health care services in a country other than the U.S. at some point in the last two years.
- Type of provider: For their last visit with a health care provider,
  - 41% of respondents received care from a private provider;
  - 31% of respondents received care at a federally-qualified health center;
  - 14% received care at a dentist's office; and
  - 12% went to the hospital or emergency room.
- Payment for services: The majority of respondents reported paying for their own health care at their last health care visit. Forty-six percent paid for health care services out-of-pocket and 12% paid for the visit through their personal or family insurance plan. Just 14% of respondents used an employer provided health plan to pay for their last medical visit, 9% used Medicaid or Medicare and 9% were not charged for the services. The remaining 10% reported utilizing some other type of insurance plan (7%), a combination of payment sources (1%)<sup>i</sup>, or workers' compensation (1%). Only 1%<sup>i</sup> of respondents were billed but have not paid.
- Workers' compensation coverage: 68% of NAWS respondents reported that if he or she was injured at work or got sick as a result of work, his or her employer provided or would provide workers' compensation. Fourteen percent of respondents reported that no coverage existed and 17% of respondents did not know. Only 56% of respondents stated that their employer provided lost wages benefits for a work-related injury or illness, and 24% did not know.
- Insurance coverage: Thirty-two percent of NAWS respondents had health insurance. However, 82% of NAWs respondents reported that all or some of their children had health insurance. Within the last two years, 34% of respondents or someone in their household were covered through Medicaid.
- Barriers to care: The most prevalent barriers to obtaining health care reported by respondents were:
  - Cost of health care is too expensive: 30%
  - Language barriers: 3%
  - Not treated well because "undocumented"/ "no papers": 1%<sup>i</sup>
  - Lack of transportation/Health care is too far away: 1%
  - Needed services are not offered: 1%<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Estimate has a relative standard error between 31 and 50 percent and should be interpreted with caution.

