



AGRICULTURAL WORKER DEMOGRAPHICS

According to national reports from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor, there are an estimated 2 to 3 million migratory and seasonal agricultural workers in the United States.^{1,2} In order to plan, monitor, and evaluate the health status and needs of the agricultural worker population, demographic information is necessary. Accurately assessing the demographic information of this population has proven difficult over the years due to many factors: a highly mobile lifestyle, limited English proficiency, varying levels of citizenship status, cultural barriers, and difficulties in classifying agricultural workers posed by the peak time and seasonality of the crop production process. For nearly three decades, the U.S. Department of Labor has conducted the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) to collect information from migratory and seasonal agricultural workers (crop workers) in the United States and has been one of the most accurate sources for obtaining demographic information on this group. The NAWS is an employment-based, randomized survey of the demographic, employment, and health characteristics of the U.S. crop labor force. The information is obtained directly from agricultural workers through face-to-face interviews. The NAWS is performed under contract to the U.S. Department of Labor, and its information is made available to the public through periodic research reports and a public use data set. Each year, between 1,500 and 3,000 workers are interviewed. NAWS only interviews crop workers, thus information provided within this factsheet does not encompass agriculture workers of other agricultural industries, such as animal production, poultry or aquaculture.

This factsheet highlights recent demographic data from the 2013-2014 NAWS3 results based on a sample size of 4,235 workers.

Birthplace & Ethnicity

- The majority (73%) of all agricultural workers were foreign born:
 - 69% of all agricultural workers were born in Mexico.
 - 27% were from the U.S and Puerto Rico.
- 40% of foreign-born agricultural workers have spent 20 or more years in the United States. Thirty-five percent have been in the U.S. for 10 to 19 years, and 25% have been here for nine years or less.
- 47% of the crop workers were unauthorized, 31% were citizens, and 22% had work visas.

Age, Family & Gender

- The age of agricultural workers in the United States has been increasing since 2000:
 - 17% are between the ages of 14-24, compared to 35% in 1999-2000
 - 27% are between 25 and 34 years

- 24% are between 35 and 44 years
- 18% are between 45-54 years
- 14% are 55 years or more, compared to 5% in 1999-2000
- 72% of agricultural workers were male and 28% were female
- 63% of agricultural workers surveyed were married, 29% were single and 8% were divorced
- 57% of all agricultural workers were parents
- 29% of agricultural workers had one to two children in the household, and 14% had three or more.

Language & Education

- The following was noted for English speaking ability:
 - 27% could not speak English “at all
 - 32% speak English “a little”
 - 11% speak English “somewhat”
 - 31% speak English “well”
- Agricultural workers had completed the following grade levels:
 - 36% had completed grades 1 to 6
 - 21% completed grades 7 to 9
 - 28% had completed grades 10 to 12
 - 11% had completed education beyond grade 12

Employment

- More than a third (36%) of agricultural workers surveyed had more than 15 years of U.S. farm experience.
- Agricultural workers worked an average of 34.7 weeks a year in agriculture and spent an average of 6.3 weeks doing non-agricultural work and 9.4 weeks a year unemployed.
- 85% of agricultural workers said they were hired directly by the grower or producer, while 15% said they were employed by a labor contractor.
- Agricultural workers reported being employed in a variety of agricultural tasks:
 - 33% performed technical tasks
 - 26% performed pre-harvest tasks
 - 23% harvested products
 - 18% performed post-harvest tasks
- The breakdown of the primary crops worked by agricultural workers is as follows:
 - 41% worked with fruit and nuts
 - 21% worked with vegetables
 - 22% worked in horticulture
 - 13% worked with field crops
 - 3% reported working in miscellaneous or multiple crops.

Income, Benefits & Public Assistance

- More than a third of individual agricultural workers (36%) earned \$20,000 or more annually from agricultural work and 18% earned \$10,000 a year or less.

- 30% of all agricultural worker households had total family incomes below the U.S. government's poverty guidelines.
- The average hourly wage earned by an agricultural worker was \$10.19.
- Only 51% of agricultural workers reported being covered by workers' compensation insurance, 21% of workers said they were not covered, and 28% did not know.
- 14% of agricultural workers reported being covered by employer-provided health insurance.
- 43% of workers did not receive any type of need-based or contribution-based public assistance, while 57% did receive some form of assistance.

One of the most common and important questions regarding the agricultural worker population is how many agricultural workers there really are in a particular region, state or in the nation as a whole. Estimating the size of this population is difficult for the same reasons mentioned earlier, related to high mobility, language and cultural differences, and varying levels of citizenship status among others. Fortunately, there are some resources available, including the work of Dr. Alice Larson in the Migrant and Seasonal Enumeration Profile Studies and the NCFH population estimation studies, which use methodology, developed in collaboration with JBS International, Inc., Aguirre Division. NCFH's population estimation studies use the best available data and a readily understandable formula to compute the agricultural worker population estimates. More information on both resources can be found on the [NCFH website](#).

REFERENCES

1. Profile of Hired Farmworkers, A 2008 Update. Kandel, W, United States Department of Agriculture, 2008.
2. LSC Agricultural Worker Population Estimate Update. Legal Services Corporation, 2015
3. The National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) tables for 2013-2014. Available at <https://naws.jbsinternational.com/table/1>