

U.S. National Pulse on Infectious Diseases among Farmworkers

Keeping a pulse on the health of farmworkers in the U.S.

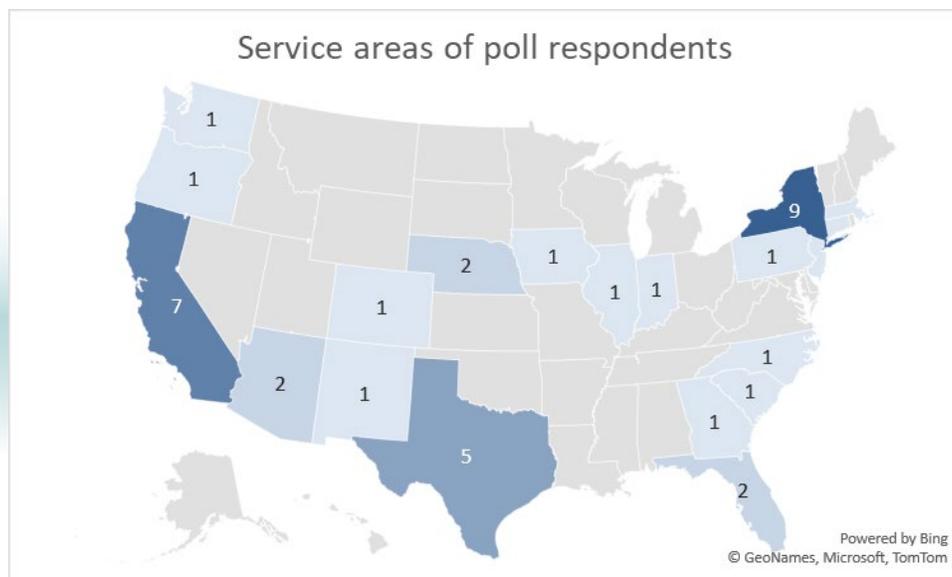
October Edition 2022: Sexually Transmitted Infections

The purpose of this National Pulse is to systematically collect and share timely, significant network insights, current media stories, and research about issues and trends concerning COVID-19, influenza, and other emerging infectious diseases among farmworkers in the U.S. This edition includes...

1. findings from a national poll of farmworker-serving organizations;
2. insights from recent data collection efforts with farmworkers; and
3. a summary of recent research and media articles published

Network Insights

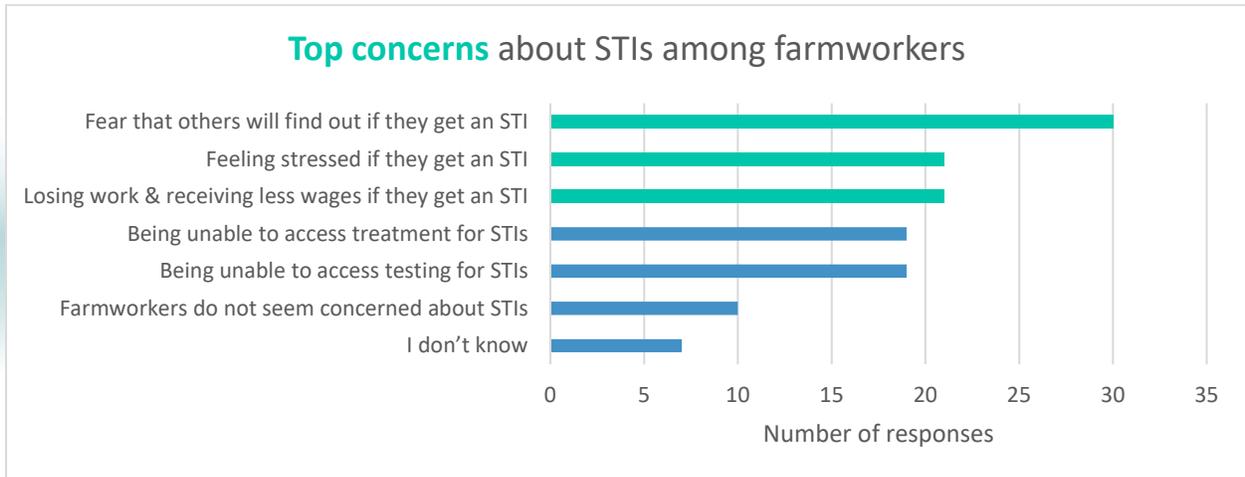
At the beginning of October 2022, NCFH circulated a short poll in English and Spanish via email to a total of 204 network contacts. These contacts include **executive and outreach staff of Migrant Health Centers, farmworker-serving non-profit organizations, and health department staff**. A total of **55 recipients participated in the poll, who serve farmworkers in 21 states** across the country. The topic of this month's poll was Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).



80% of respondents work directly with farmworkers

Based on their work with farmworkers, respondents identified top concerns about STIs among farmworkers in their communities. The most common concerns were

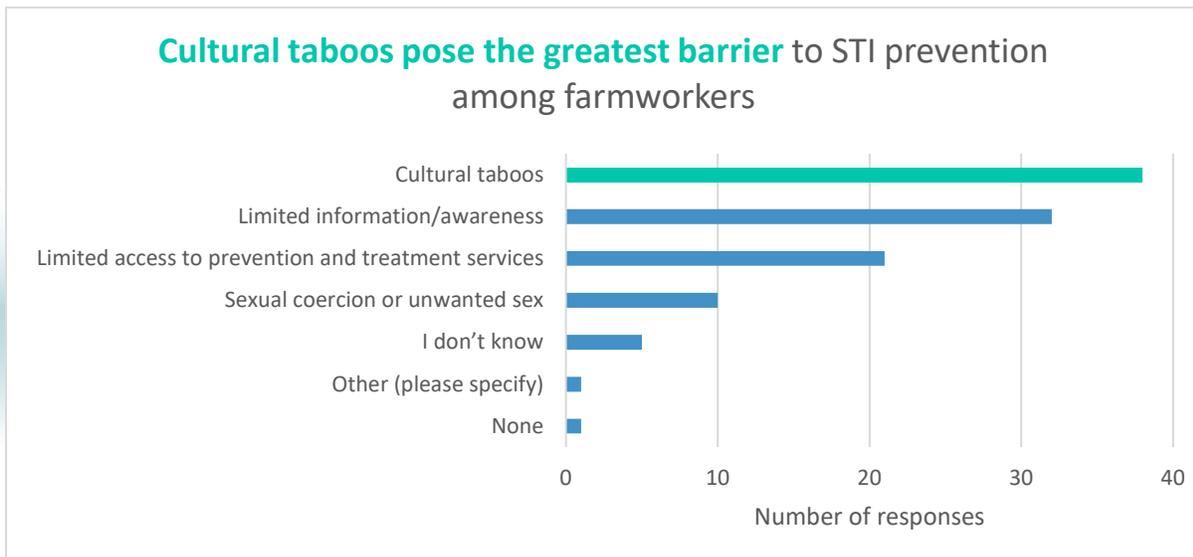
- 1) fear that others will find out if they get an STI,
- 2) feeling stressed if they get an STI, and
- 3) losing work and receiving less wages if they get an STI.



“This is a difficult conversation in our community. How do we get started on that?”
-Poll respondent

Some participants noted that while many farmworkers are not concerned about STIs, those that are concerned will seek care. One participant explained, “we find very few [farmworkers] are concerned with STIs and if they are, they will be checked out by a provider on our Mobile unit and taken care of.” However, the majority of participants note that STIs are a serious issue due to the cultural barriers that their communities, farmworkers, and families face.

Respondents identified cultural taboos as the primary barrier to STI prevention for farmworkers in their communities, including resistance to discussing sex-related topics or seeking STI services. Following cultural taboos, limited information or awareness on STIs, risk, and consequences received the second highest number of responses. One respondent wrote in “cost of treatment” as a significant barrier as well.



“There is a cultural resistance when speaking about STI's that leads to people not being informed. How can we disseminate this topic and engage with the farmworker community?”
– Poll respondent

Many respondents expanded on specific cultural barriers to STI prevention among farmworkers including:

- Some religions don't support the promotion of contraceptives
- Stigmatization and discrimination around being LGBTQIA+ (“Being LGBT is looked down upon, and most will not speak about sexual encounters with the same sex”)
- Stigmatization surrounding sex work and relations with sex workers (“Sex workers are active on farms and ag workers are lonely and vulnerable”)
- Farms located in conservative communities where stigmatization surrounding sexual health issues may be greater than in more progressive communities

Respondents ranked the top **types of resources that farmworkers need to protect their sexual health.**

1. Health education resources (that are low literacy, in appropriate languages, and are culturally sensitive. For example, videos with basic information on STIs in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Indigenous languages)
2. Direct support in accessing testing and treatment (such as medical bill coverage, transportation, interpretation, etc.)
3. Access to prevention resources (e.g., condoms)

Respondents also ranked the top **types of resources that organizations need about STIs.**

1. Training
2. Health education resources
3. Additional outreach staff
4. Information on available health care resources

Types of trainings that would be useful for organizations include:

- Basics on STIs (including transmission, prevention, and treatment)
- How to talk about STIs with farmworkers, including...
 - a. How to communicate while being culturally competent
 - b. How to discuss in Spanish or Indigenous languages
 - c. How to address gender dynamics (for example, being a female health educator to a group of men)
 - d. Strategies for addressing stigma associated with STIs during outreach
- Behavioral interviewing (specific to community and culture organizations are working with)

“Most workers don’t like talking about sexual education, especially to a woman.”
– Poll respondent

In addition to these resources, one respondent noted the importance of repetitive outreach to normalize the conversation about STIs. They explain, “constant and consistent conversations and access to prevention resources [is needed] in order to normalize the conversation and normalize the usage of prevention resources as a tool for better health.” In addition, the ability for farmworkers to seek care confidentially and privately may help. However, “the majority of them live isolated from everything, they are transported to work, they only have limited time for everything, they are told when and where to do grocery shopping.” Receiving testing or treatment for an STI becomes even more difficult as farmworkers lack control over their time.

Farmworker COVID-19 Community Assessments (FCCAs)

Over the past year, NCFH collected surveys from 2,504 farmworkers across 10 communities as part of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the FCCAs. Community reports for Yakima County, Washington and Atlantic and Cumberland counties in New Jersey will be released over the next couple of months along with an executive summary of data from the five communities in Phase 2.

NCFH published its third report of Phase 2 from Weld County, CO where approximately 250 surveys were collected in early summer 2022. Findings indicate the proportion of farmworkers (72%) that had received their initial series of the COVID-19 vaccine was similar to vaccination uptake in the county as a whole (73%). However less than one out of three respondents had received the booster vaccine as of June 2022.

[Read the full report.](#)

To learn more about NCFH’s Farmworker COVID-19 Community Assessments, [CLICK HERE.](#)

Media & Research

Media Articles

[Amid pandemic uncertainties, Latino immigrants put trust in their 'promotoras'](#)
National Geographic, September 16, 2022

[COVID vaccine equity gap closing for Oregon's Latino communities](#)
KGW8, September 19, 2022

[Street team continues door-to-door canvassing in Immokalee to bridge healthcare gap](#)
PBS and NPR for Southwest Florida, September 26, 2022

[\\$670 Million Awarded by USDA to Farm, Meatpacking and Grocery Workers for their 'Essential Role' in U.S. Food Systems During Pandemic](#)
Drovers, October 5, 2022

Research Articles

[Pandemic Impact on Florida Farmworkers: Emerging Takeaways to Inform Outreach and Policymaking](#)

University of Florida, IFAS Extension, Colby Silvert et. al, December 2021

This publication covers lessons learned from the pandemic about farmworker's unique challenges like unavoidable exposure to infectious diseases. Specific needs were discussed to explore systemic solutions and build on and strengthen existing efforts in Florida.

[Farmworkers and COVID-19: Community-Based Partnerships to Address Health and Safety](#)

American Journal of Public Health, August 2021

This article is a commentary about COVID-19 impact on U.S. agricultural workers with references to research that displays disproportional impact due to lack of protections in place. This commentary argues that workplace conditions are likely the reason for higher rates of COVID-19 positivity reported among this population, and not only cultural preferences or housing environment.



[READ THE NCFH COVID-19 IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL WORKERS FACT SHEET!](#)

[THIS FACT SHEET IS UPDATED QUARTERLY TO BRING THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION ABOUT THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.](#)