

U.S. National Pulse on Infectious Diseases among Farmworkers

Keeping a pulse on the health of farmworkers in the U.S.
September Edition 2022:
Monkeypox (MPX)

The purpose of this National Pulse is to systematically collect and share 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

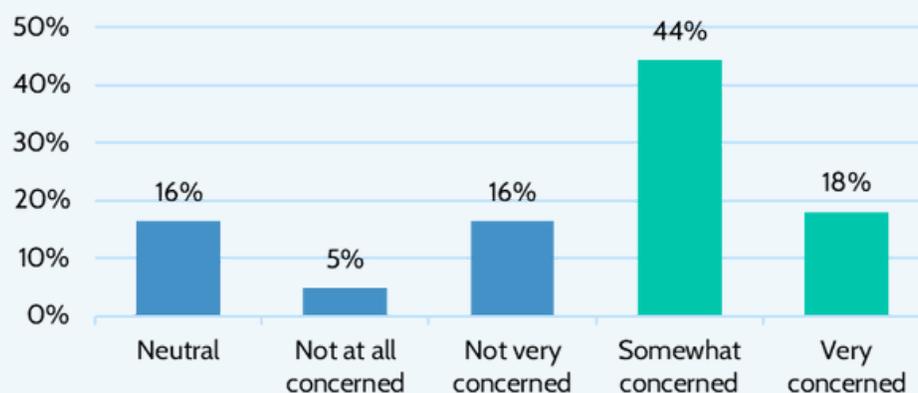
At the beginning of September 2022, NCFH circulated a short poll in English and Spanish via email to a total of 204 network contacts. These contacts include executive and outreach staff of Migrant Health Centers, farmworker-serving non-profit organizations, and health department staff. A total of 61 recipients participated in the poll, who serve farmworkers in 27 states across the country. The topic of this month's poll was Monkeypox (MPX).



90% of respondents work directly with farmworkers

62% of respondents were either somewhat or very concerned about MPX among farmworkers in their communities. While the vast majority of respondents are unaware of any possible cases of MPX among farmworkers in their communities, one participant reported they are certain there has been one case of MPX among the farmworkers their organization serves, and three have heard of at least one possible case.

62% of respondents are either somewhat or very concerned about MPX among Farmworkers



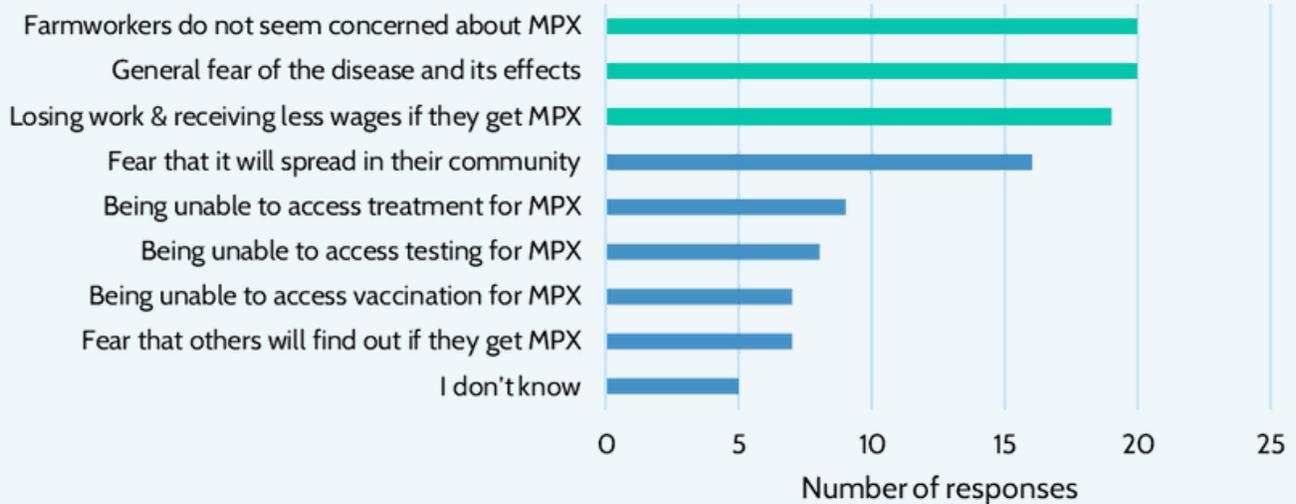
“This is not an issue I’ve heard any farmworkers discuss MPX, nor have I raised it with any. So I’m not aware of it being a big issue.”
-Poll respondent

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

- 1) farmworkers do not seem concerned about MPX,
- 2) general fear of the disease and its effects, and
- 3) losing work & receiving less wages if they get MXP.

Many participants noted that MPX has not been a topic of conversation during outreach or that the topic has not come up among their organizations clients or patients.

Top concerns about MPX among Farmworkers



“I think it is important for farmworkers to know how they can contract the disease, since transmission of the Monkeypox virus differs from that of COVID-19.”
— Poll respondent

Respondents also ranked the [top types of resources that organizations need about MPX](#).

1. Guidance and information on MPX risks, symptoms, testing, treatment, and prevention actions
2. Health education materials for farmworkers
3. Training
4. Information on available health care resources

[Types of trainings](#) that would be useful for organizations include:

- Monkeypox 101 (general information on MPX including risks, symptoms, testing, treatment, and prevention)
- Vaccination information and resources
- Strategies for how to address stigma associated with MPX during outreach

“Que estan mas expuestos debido a su trabajo y que ellos en veces no pueden pagar para ir a chequearse con un doctor y por el miedo de a perder su unica fuente de ingreso que es su trabajo no digan que tienen sintomas y pueden ser mas vulnerables a contraer la viruela de mono.”

“They are more exposed because of their job and sometimes they can't afford to pay to get checked by a doctor and because they are scared of losing their job, that is their only income source, they don't say they have symptoms and they can be more vulnerable to get the MPX” – Poll respondent

Farmworker COVID-19 Community Assessments

NCFH completed data collection in the last two communities for Phase 2 of the FCCAs. A total of 224 surveys were collected in Atlantic and Cumberland Counties, New Jersey in early August. The last community for survey collection was Yakima County, Washington, where 302 farmworkers were surveyed in the last weekend of August. NCFH is grateful to all the farmworkers, stakeholders and data collectors that helped with data collection for Phase 2 of the FCCAs!

NCFH published the second community report from Phase 2 for Sampson County, North Carolina. A total of 336 surveys were collected with farmworkers in early spring. Findings indicate that four out of five (81%) respondents were fully vaccinated with an FDA- or WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccine, while only 29% of respondents had received at least one booster dose. Findings suggest additional barriers to vaccines for farmworkers who are undocumented, who reported a vaccination uptake of 61%, and only 10% received at least one booster dose.

Next up: [Weld County, Colorado Community Report](#) just released!



Media & Research

Media Articles

[Trusted community messengers, data key in North Carolina's journey to vaccine equity](#)

NC Health News, August 4, 2022

"In contrast to other states, North Carolina has almost eliminated the gap between Black and white vaccination rates across all age groups. The state's efforts have also led vaccination rates to be higher for Hispanic populations than non-Hispanic populations... Focused efforts were also made to reach underserved communities including migrant farmworkers, meat and poultry processing workers and unhoused populations."

[Washington state COVID safety rule for farmworkers upheld by appeals court](#)

Reuters, August 11, 2022

"A U.S. appeals court on Thursday rejected a flower nursery's claim that a 2020 Washington state rule requiring agricultural businesses to take various steps to protect workers from COVID-19 was invalid. A unanimous three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the state's rule, which required farms to provide face masks, conduct temperature checks and enforce social distancing, did not conflict with any federal regulations enforced by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration."

[Only half of Fresno County's Latinos are vaccinated for COVID. Here are ways to do better](#)

The Fresno Bee, August 16, 2022

"Fresno County has done better than most agricultural counties in California confronting COVID-19, as measured by countywide vaccination rates. Fresno County residents should be proud of the progress made by their public health department, working in collaboration with community-based organizations. But serious inequities persist. Only half of the Latinos in Fresno County have been vaccinated, and they are also much less likely than whites to be 'up to date' with vaccination (45% vs. 58%)."

[Increasing tick-borne diseases: Better information and enhanced protection for outdoor workers](#)

BioMed Central, August 19, 2022

"Certain human populations in these newly endemic areas, such as those involved in land and animal-centered occupations, are at a particularly high risk of TBDs due to their increased exposure to tick bites. For example, individuals involved in farming activities and forestry work have been shown to be 3-10 times more likely to be infected by tick-borne pathogens (TBPs)."

[Monkeypox in Oregon is disproportionately hurting Latino men](#)

Oregon Public Broadcasting, August 22, 2022

"While the numbers remain too small to draw broad conclusions, Multnomah County health officials note that they are spreading information in Spanish and prioritizing vaccine doses for Latino men who qualify."

Research Articles

[SARS-CoV-2 seroprevalence and risk factors among meat packing, produce processing, and farm workers](#)

PLOS Global Public Health, July 13, 2022

- "In a study in North Carolina in 2020, half of food processing workers showed evidence of past SARS-CoV-2 infection, a prevalence five times higher than most of the United States population at the time of the study. Work environments with loud ambient noise may pose elevated risks for SARS-CoV-2 transmission. High noise levels may require workers to reduce distancing, shout, or remove face masks to communicate, increasing respiratory droplet emission. This association may not be due directly to high noise levels, as volume maybe a surrogate marker of jobs that are high risk for other reasons. A cold work environment was also associated with higher risk of SARS-CoV-2 seropositivity in unadjusted analysis. Our study did not observe a significant association between reported mask wearing at work and SARS-CoV-2 seropositivity, but our surveys did not capture the technique with which masks were worn or mask type."

[Occupational Lyme Disease: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#)

MDPI, January 25, 2022

- "Occupational risk factors place many individuals at risk of tick bites and Lyme Disease. Compared to the general population, there are differences in geographical exposure to ticks in work environments, especially among foresters and farmworkers. For this reason, strategies should be implemented to improve the awareness of the spread of Lyme Disease (LD) among vulnerable workers. These could include combined action on the part of local public health agencies and labor/civil organizations to inform workers of the risks involved and the need to consult a physician after experiencing a tick bite."
- "This study confirmed that LD is an occupational hazard for forestry and agricultural workers. A non-significant increase in risk may be observed in other categories of workers who enter infested areas (soldiers) or work with animals (veterinarians, breeders). Although we expected that climate change effects might contribute to LD infections by promoting the proliferation of ticks, we observed that the previously high occupational risk in outdoor workers had fallen over the past decade. The spread of prevention measures and knowledge of LD may have brought about this reduction in the occupational risk that now tends to overlap that of the general population."



[Did prioritizing essential workers help to achieve racial/ethnic equity in early COVID-19 vaccine distribution? The LA pandemic surveillance cohort study](#)

American Journal of Industrial Medicine, February 20, 2022

- “Prioritizing essential workers did not provide proportionally greater early vaccine uptake benefits to racial/ethnic groups that were disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Early prioritization of essential workers during vaccine campaigns is an important but insufficient strategy for reducing racial/ethnic disparities in early vaccine uptake. Additional strategies addressing access and trust are needed to achieve greater equity in vaccine distribution.”
- “While Latinos (24.9%), Blacks (22.4%), and Asians (21.4%) were more likely to be prioritized essential workers than Whites (14.3%), their marginal gains in vaccine uptake due to their essential worker status did not significantly differ from that of Whites. At the population-level, prioritizing vaccines for essential workers increased the probabilities of vaccination by small and similar amounts among Asians (5.3%; 95% confidence interval [CI]: 3.3%, 7.5%), Blacks (4.0%; 95% CI: 1.7%, 6.5%), Latinos (3.7%; 95% CI: 2.3%, 5.1%), and Whites (2.9%; 95% CI :1.9%, 3.9%).”



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.