

Agricultural Workers' Living Arrangements: An Examination of Latino Thoroughbred Workers and a National Crop Worker Sample



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Background

Farmworkers need adequate housing as low quality housing has been linked to poor health and disease ^{1,2,3}. The agricultural labor force is ever-increasingly comprised of Latino farmworkers, who disproportionately face adverse risk to occupational health and safety ^{4,5}. Available literature shows that farmworker housing conditions are often substandard and inadequate ^{4,6,7}. One subgroup of Latino farmworkers, Latino thoroughbred workers (LTWs), who compose two-thirds of the horse industry workforce, have received little attention in literature and none in regards to their housing characteristics ⁸. Evidence suggests that LTWs may have different work and living characteristics than other farmworkers, such that LTWs may have more job stability and benefits, yet earn lower wages than Latino farmworkers ⁹. As housing is considered a potential health hazard, research warrants the need to document LTW housing to begin to understand its impact on worker health and well-being ^{1,2}. This study seeks to describe the demographic and living characteristics among Latino thoroughbred farm workers, and understand how these characteristics compare to a referent national agriculture population from the National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS).

Methods

This study is a part of a larger community and employer-engaged research project, *Thoroughbred Worker Health and Safety Study* (TWHS) or *Proyecto de Salud y Seguridad del Trabajador Equino* ¹⁰. To be eligible to participate, workers had to (1) self-identify as Latino, (2) be over eighteen, and (3) have worked at a thoroughbred farm for at least nine months in the past year. Participants (N=225) were recruited to participate in an interview-administered survey via a community-based, purposive sampling strategy between October 2013 and April 2014. Workers were recruited and interviewed in the community at stores, churches, or social events; through flyers; and through word-of-mouth. Data were collected by one of four trained lay health promoters (*Promotoras*).

Secondary data from NAWS Cycles 2011-12 were merged to account for small sample size (N=3025). Those who had not worked for over a year and those on H-2A visas were ineligible for the NAWS. Data was analyzed using SPSS ¹¹ and SAS ¹². Univariate descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and chi-square tests were performed.

Results

Demographic Characteristics	TWHS (N=225)		NAWS (N=3025)		t _(Df)	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Age	35.4	9.62	37.78	12.83	-3.37 ₍₂₈₄₎	0.001
Years in US	14.46	8.44	17.06	10.90	-4.27 ₍₂₉₆₎	<0.001
Years in Horse/Farm work	10.5	7.31	15.36	11.96	-9.10 ₍₃₂₁₎	<0.001
Hourly Pay (\$)	10.25	2.41	9.20	2.02	6.70 ₍₁₉₃₎	<0.001
	n	%	n	%	χ ² _(Df)	p
Ethnicity					40.5 ₍₁₎	<0.001
Hispanic/Latino	225	100	2520	84.56		
Birth country					83.7 ₍₃₎	<0.001
US*	2	0.89	670	22.15		
Mexico*	190	84.44	2202	72.79		
Central America*	26	11.56	116	3.83		
Other*	7	3.11	37	1.22		
Gender					5.04 ₍₁₎	0.025
Male	193	85.78	2407	79.57		
Education					7.24 ₍₁₎	0.007
Less than High School	170	75.60	2020	66.80		
Marital Status					2.40 ₍₁₎	0.121
Married	152	67.56	1883	62.37		
Parent¹					6.16 ₍₁₎	0.013
Yes	146	65.18	1706	56.40		
Worker Type					146.7 ₍₁₎	<0.001
Permanent (FT/PT)	223	99.11	1612	58.22		
Seasonal/Temporary	2	0.89	1157	41.78		

¹Parent denotes if worker has a child 18 years or younger in the TWHS sample; 17 years or younger in NAWS *Indicates significant pairwise differences between populations, Bonferroni adjusted p<0.05

Housing Characteristics	TWHS (N=225)		NAWS (N=3025)		t _(Df)	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Cost of Housing Per Month (\$)	378.35	211.33	444.99	—	—	—
Number of Adults in Household	2.53	1.57	0.72	0.78	-17.12 ₍₂₃₃₎	<0.001
Number of Children in Household ¹	1.25	1.60	0.91	1.27	-3.15 ₍₂₄₆₎	0.002
Total Number in Household	3.78	2.21	1.63	1.71	-14.33 ₍₂₄₄₎	<0.001
	n	%	n	%	χ ² _(Df)	p
Housing Type					237.9 ₍₄₎	<0.001
Trailer/Mobile home*	52	23.11	70	24.88		
House ^{2*}	82	36.44	1675	55.56		
Apartment*	90	40.00	541	17.94		
Tent	0	0	3	0.10		
Other	1	0.44	46	1.53		
House Location					15.4 ₍₁₎	<0.001
On farm	59	26.22	484	16.07		
Spouse's Housing					6.3 ₍₁₎	0.012
Lives with worker	116	77.33	1651	85.02		
Does not live with worker	34	22.67	291	14.98		
Payment for Housing					46.8 ₍₅₎	<0.001
Pays for employer-provided housing	3	1.34	111	3.67		
Paid by non-work related institution*	6	2.68	29	0.96		
Receives free housing from employer*	57	25.45	392	12.97		
Owens home (or family does)*	30	13.39	797	26.36		
Rents from non-employer	128	57.14	1687	55.81		
Other	0	0	7	0.23		

¹Number of children in household for TWHS sample refers to children 18 years or younger; 17 years or younger in NAWS ²House consists of single-family, duplex, triplex, etc. *Indicates significant pairwise differences between populations, Bonferroni adjusted p<0.05

Discussion

Based on differences in demographic and housing characteristics between LTWs and NAWS crop workers, we identified financial and social factors that may have the potential to impact the health and well-being of LTWs. Relative to crop workers, LTWs tended to be paid more per hour, a greater proportion held permanent positions, tended to receive housing assistance (housing provided by the employer or institution), and paid a lower amount for housing per month, suggesting the potential for these factors to promote health and well-being. Conversely, with the potential to adversely impact health and well-being, LTWs tended to live with more people—which less often included their spouses—a greater proportion lived in apartments rather than homes (which fewer owned), and a greater proportion lived on the farm than crop workers.

Findings suggest that LTWs may be subject to financial and social factors that may potentially promote and/or detract from LTW health and well-being. Future research, which incorporates housing quality metrics in its scope, is needed to understand distinctions in housing quality and elucidate the relationship between farmworker housing characteristics, health outcomes, and social factors.

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More information

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