

**February 2005**

**RB 2005-02**

# **Survey of Hispanic Dairy Workers in New York State**

**Thomas R. Maloney  
David C. Grusenmeyer**

**Department of Applied Economics and Management  
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York 14853-7801**

### **How to order copies of this report**

Publication Price Per Copy: \$9.00

For additional copies, contact:

Jody Beck  
43 Warren Hall  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY 14853-7801

E-mail: jcb47@cornell.edu  
Fax: 607-255-2231  
Phone: 607-254-4916

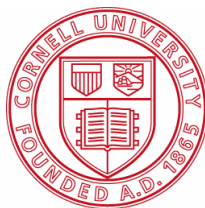
*It is the Policy of Cornell University actively to support equality of educational and employment opportunity. No person shall be denied admission to any educational program or activity or be denied employment on the basis of any legally prohibited discrimination involving, but not limited to, such factors as race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, age or handicap. The University is committed to the maintenance of affirmative action programs, which will assure the continuation of such equality of opportunity.*

# Acknowledgements

The authors wish to recognize those organizations and individuals who contributed to this research. Without their support and assistance, this study would not have been possible. We thank the **New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets** and **Cornell Cooperative Extension** for providing funding for this research. **New York Farm Bureau** and the **Northeast Dairy Producers Association (NEDPA)** encouraged member participation in the survey.

The staff of the **Survey Research Institute** in the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations provided data analysis and report writing expertise. **Yasamin Miller** prepared the data for analysis, analyzed the data and performed the appropriate statistical analyses and **Deirdre Nissenson** assisted with the data analysis, developed the various charts and tables and helped prepare the final report. **Lisa Coffin**, Quality Milk Production Services provided the Spanish translation for the survey instrument, assisted with the content of the survey instrument and conducted some of the surveys. **Terry Batchelder** in the Cornell Department of Animal Science helped to develop the survey instrument and conducted some of the surveys. Cornell student **Kate Walton** also assisted on managing the survey data and **Jody Beck** typed sections of this report.

We wish to thank the people who conducted the actual on-farm surveys for their outstanding work. Several of the survey enumerators were from the New York State Migrant Education Program, including **Dennis Sexton, Todd Goldthwait, Louann Brown, and Lucy Burch**. Other enumerators included **Janice Degni, Ed Triana, Terry Batchelder, and Lisa Coffin**. **Nelson Bills** and **Max Pfeffer** made helpful comments on an earlier draft of this report.



**Cornell University**  
**Cooperative Extension**

The authors are Senior Extension Associate in the Department of Applied Economics and Management and Senior Extension Associate in PRO-DAIRY respectively.

# Abstract

New York State is the third largest dairy state in the United States based on milk production (behind California and Wisconsin). Since the mid-1990's, the trend toward hiring Hispanic workers on New York's larger dairy farms (usually 400 cows or more) has steadily increased and currently the trend is moving to smaller dairies (in the 50-100 cow range). The purpose of this study is to create a demographic profile of Hispanic dairy workers on New York farms and to gain an understanding of the workers' perceptions regarding their employment situation. The information was collected in personal interviews from 111 Hispanic workers on 60 farms, and included compensation and other information collected from employers. Three-fourths of the surveyed workers are from Mexico and about one-fourth from Guatemala. They are typically young (84% were 30 years old or younger) and almost always male. The workers are not highly educated, only 51% have attended no more than primary school. One-fourth completed secondary school, including 2% who attended or graduated from a university. Hiring Hispanic dairy workers is still a relatively new practice, as 72% of the employers reported that they hired their first Hispanic employee since January 2000. In addition, 73% of the surveyed employees said their tenure with the farm had been two years or less. On average, surveyed workers had three U.S. employers since they began working in this country. Starting wages reported by employers for their Hispanic employees ranged from \$5.50 to \$10.00 per hour, with a mean of \$6.87. Current wages range from \$5.50 to \$11.50, with an average wage of \$7.51. Hispanic dairy employees received a variety of employer provided benefits, including: housing with water, heat and electricity (91%), transportation (52%), telephone in residence (51%), satellite television (47%), and space for a garden (63%). On average, the Hispanic dairy workers surveyed worked 62 hours per week and only 16% worked less than 51 hours per week. These workers also said they would like to work an average of 66 hours per week if possible and that they would look for other employment if they could not work at least 55 hours. Both workers and employers identified challenges in a cross-cultural employment situation. Employees indicated that their top three greatest challenges were crossing the border, language and lack of freedom to do what they want. Employers, on the other hand, indicated that the top three obstacles were language, cross-cultural understanding and immigration issues.

# Table of Contents

Section	Page
Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Study Approach.....	4
Results	
Farms .....	6
Hispanic Dairy Farm Employees .....	8
Worker's Previous Experience .....	11
Reasons for Coming to the Farm.....	13
Obstacles Faced.....	14
Trips Home & Deportation .....	14
English Proficiency.....	15
Challenges Faced .....	15
Farm Duties .....	17
Compensation & Money Transfer .....	19
Benefits & Services .....	20
Job Satisfaction .....	21
Future Plans .....	24
Conclusions & Implications .....	25
Suggested Areas for Further Study.....	31
References .....	32
Appendix	
Hispanic Worker Survey (Face-to-Face Survey Questions of Workers) .....	34
Hispanic Worker Compensation Survey (Survey Questions of Employers) .....	39

# List of Charts

## Page

Figure 1:	Distribution of Farm Herd Size .....	6
Figure 2:	Number of Farms Surveyed by County .....	7
Figure 3:	Age Distribution .....	8
Figure 4:	Country of Origin .....	8
Figure 5:	Education Distribution.....	9
Figure 6:	Status of Spouse .....	9
Figure 7:	Status of Children.....	10
Figure 8:	Distribution of Years with the Farm .....	10
Figure 9:	Calendar Year First Started Working in the U.S. ....	11
Figure 10:	Worker's Reason for Leaving Last Job.....	12
Figure 11:	Calendar Year Hired First Hispanic Worker .....	12
Figure 12:	Distribution of Reasons for Coming to Work on This Farm.....	13
Figure 13:	Whether Deported Since Working in the U.S. ....	14
Figure 14:	Whether Traveled Home Voluntarily Since Working in the U.S.....	14
Figure 15:	How Well Workers Speak English .....	15
Figure 16:	Greatest Challenges Coming to U.S. ....	16
Figure 17:	Employer-Identified Obstacles .....	16
Figure 18:	Distribution of Hours Worked Per Week (employee-reported) .....	17
Figure 19:	Distribution of Job Activities Performed .....	18
Figure 20:	Tasks Workers Would Like to Learn More About .....	18
Figure 21:	Distribution of Services Provided to Worker .....	20
Figure 22:	What Workers Like Most About Their Job.....	21
Figure 23:	What Workers Like Most About Their Employer .....	22
Figure 24:	What Workers Find Most Difficult About Their Job .....	22
Figure 25:	What Workers Would Like to Change.....	23
Figure 26:	Plans for the Future .....	24
Figure 27:	Plans for the Future by Marital Status.....	24

# List of Tables

---

**Page**

Table 1:	Distribution of Farms and Workers by County.....	6
Table 2:	Distribution of Number of U.S. Employers .....	11
Table 3:	Quartiles of Hourly Wage Earned .....	19
Table 4:	Methods Used to Transfer Money Home .....	19

# Executive Summary

---

The survey included 111 Hispanic employees on 60 New York dairy farms. These farms are situated in 17 counties and distributed fairly evenly across the State. While this survey focused on Hispanic workers, they represent only a small fraction of all employees reported on New York State dairy farms. Herd sizes represented in the survey sample ranged from 50 to 3,200 cows. Hispanic dairy workers are primarily employed on larger farms with 48% of the farms having 500 or more cows. Three-fourths of the surveyed workers were from Mexico, and about one-fourth from Guatemala. They are typically young (84% were 30 years or younger) and almost always male. The workers surveyed were not highly educated, though only 3% of those surveyed have no formal education. About half (51%) have attended at least some primary school but went no further than primary school education. One-fourth (25%) completed secondary school, including 2% who attended or graduated from a university.

## Workforce Stability & Retention

The utilization of Hispanic dairy employees has increased substantially in the new millennium. Of the surveyed employers, 72% hired their first Hispanic employee since January 2000. The duration of employment tends to be relatively short. Among surveyed employees, 44% said their tenure with the farm has been less than one year, 29% between one and two years, 20% between two and three years and 7% have been with their current employer 4 years or more. By contrast, only about 25% actually began working in the U.S. during the 12 months prior to the survey, while about 24% have been working in the U.S. for 4 years or more. About 71% of surveyed Hispanic employees working in the U.S. 4 years or longer have changed employers at least once.

On average, surveyed workers have had about three U.S. employers since they began working in this country. Nearly 28% have had only one U.S. employer while about the same number (29%) have had four or more U.S. employers. The Hispanic dairy workers in this study were asked about their family situation. Just over 44% of employees surveyed do not have a spouse, just over 39% have a spouse in their home country and only about 14% have a spouse with them here in the U.S. When asked about children, 52% said they have children, while only 11% have children in the U.S. and slightly less than 5% had their children with them at the farm. In some cases the children with them are young while in other instances a father and son are both employed here in the U.S. and sometimes on the same farm.

When asked about return trips to their home country, the majority (80%) reported that they had not returned home on a voluntary basis since coming to the U.S. In addition, 20% reported that they had returned home voluntarily and 14% reported that they had been deported at least once. When reporting their future plans, nearly seven in ten (68%) surveyed workers said they will work here for some period of time and eventually return to their home country. Only about three in ten said they plan to stay in the U.S. long term. Nearly 67% of surveyed workers here with their spouse said they plan to remain in the U.S. long term, compared with 17% for workers with a spouse in their home country and 30% for unmarried workers.



## Why Did They Come?

Workers were asked why they came to the farm where they currently work. More than one-half (52%) of the workers said friends and/or family was the primary reason for coming to the farm. Nearly one-third (31%) came for the year-round work, about 24% of the surveyed employees were attracted by wages and about 15% by working conditions. The starting wage reported by employers for their Hispanic employees ranged from \$5.50 to \$10.00 per hour with a mean of \$6.87. Current wages for 102 employees for whom wage data were supplied by the employer ranged from \$5.50 to \$11.50 with an average wage of \$7.51. In addition to cash wages, from the employees' perspective, the total compensation package for over 91% of employees included employer provided housing including water, heat and electricity. About half of the employees also had transportation, a telephone in their residence and Spanish language television provided by their employer. Just over 63% of employees had garden space provided by their employer. Other forms of compensation provided to some employees include: milk quality or work performance bonuses, annual cash bonuses, extra weekend or holiday pay, some food, uniforms, clothing, boots, and payment of medical bills.

In addition to paying into Social Security, only 1% of employers say they pay into a retirement account for their employees and none of the surveyed employees are contributing to an employee funded retirement. None of the surveyed employees received health insurance, however in written comments several employers said they paid part or all of the employees' medical bills. One benefit of dairy employment is that most (81%) of employers say that job advancement opportunities are available for Hispanic employees.

On average, the Hispanic dairy workers surveyed worked 62 hours per week. Only 16% worked less than 51 hours per week. Workers also reported that they would prefer to work an average of 66 hours per week and insist on working at least an average of 55 hours per week or they will look for another job.

## Challenges/Obstacles

Both workers and employers identified challenges in the cross-cultural employment situation. Employees indicated that their greatest challenges in order of priority were crossing the border, language and lack of freedom to do what you want. Employers, on the other hand, indicated that the top three obstacles were language, culture and immigration issues. When asked what they liked most about their jobs, the top six answers workers provided in order of priority were: milking, "everything," animals, work environment, the job is not boring and/or the job is calm/tranquil. When asked what they liked most about their employer, 74% indicated that their employer was a good man who takes care of his workers and 28% indicated that their employer is calm and doesn't yell. However, 10% said there was nothing they liked about their employer or made a negative comment.

# Introduction

---

New York State is the third largest dairy state in the United States based on milk production behind California and Wisconsin. Dairy farms are found in most up-state New York counties and range in size from less than 50 cows to over 3,000 cows, yet only a small percentage of farms have more than 400 cows. In the past decade, New York dairy farmers have found it increasingly difficult to recruit and hire individuals to fill dairy related positions, especially milker positions. Beginning in the mid-1990's, the number of dairy employers hiring Hispanic workers to fill positions began to increase. They quickly found that these new workers for the most part, are willing to work long hours for going wage rates and come to the farm with a strong work ethic and a willingness to please their employers. While challenges exist, including understanding culture, overcoming the language barrier, transportation and meeting basic needs, employers found that Hispanic workers met their labor needs particularly well. (Maloney 1999, Stup and Maloney 2003).

At least two studies have been conducted to assess the attitudes and perceptions of dairy employers regarding employment of Hispanic workers. However, this study is the first in the Northeast to interview Hispanic workers regarding their perceptions of dairy employment. The purpose of this study is to interview Hispanic dairy workers in New York State and determine perceptions of their work, their perceived needs from both employer and community, as well as work schedules and compensation information.

Prior to conducting this study, most of the information available on the experience of Hispanic dairy workers was primarily anecdotal. This survey, in an organized way, gathered demographic and employment related information from a significant number of Hispanic dairy employees and employers. In the authors' experience, dairy employers anticipating hiring their first Hispanic workers have expressed many questions and concerns. The results of this survey are intended to provide dairy employers with insights regarding how to effectively supervise, reward and train their employees. In addition, survey results provide information to educators, organizations, communities and individuals who wish to learn more about the dynamics of Hispanic workers on New York dairy farms.

## Study Approach

---

The survey instrument was designed by the authors with input from bi-lingual trainers who regularly work on New York dairy farms providing training to Hispanic employees. The survey instrument was divided into two distinct sections. The first section was used to interview workers on the farm and gain insight into the perceptions workers have about dairy farm work as well as to gather information regarding worker demographics.

The second section of the survey instrument was an employer questionnaire asking about wages and benefits, as well as perceptions of dairy owners or managers as employers of Hispanic workers. The survey instrument was field tested on farms before the final version was completed. Copies of the worker and employer survey instruments can be found in Appendices A and B. Due to concerns about literacy of the survey target audience, their willingness to complete and return a written survey and the distribution of Hispanic dairy workers in farming communities across New York State, the survey was conducted via personal interviews of workers on the farms.

Eight survey enumerators were selected to conduct the on-farm surveys of workers. Enumerators were selected based on four primary criteria. These include: 1) their ability to conduct the interview in Spanish; 2) the geographic area where they lived and worked so as to provide broad coverage across the state; 3) their interest in participating in this type of study; 4) the enumerators' personal relationships with the workers. Personal relationships and a level of trust already existed between workers and the enumerators facilitating the collection of accurate and complete answers to the survey questions.

Enumerators selected the employees to be surveyed based on two guidelines. First, they were asked to survey not more than three employees per farm. Second, they were also asked to survey workers of all ages and lengths of employment on the farm. Since all enumerators had personal contacts on New York dairy farms, they selected the farms and employees based on their work schedule at the time the survey was conducted. In other words, the enumerators conducted the survey usually when they were on the farm for purposes of their every day work. As a result of this selection process the size distribution of farms in the survey is materially different from the New York State dairy sector as a whole. Statewide, only 167 farms were classified as dairy farms with more than 500 lactating cows in 2002; these farms represent less than 3% of all New York dairy farms according to the Census data (USDA, 2004). By comparison farms in the survey were substantially larger than most of the State's dairies, for example 49% of the farms in the survey had 500 cows or more. At the other end of the spectrum, the Census reports that nearly one third of all New York dairy farms have 50 or fewer cows while only 1 farm in the survey had 50 cows or less.

Some of the enumerators were recruiters for the New York State Migrant Education Program and had contacts on the farm through their on-going work. The second type of enumerator was bi-lingual and regularly trained dairy workers on farms. Training included dairy related tasks and English as a second language. The third type of enumerator was a bi-lingual Cooperative Extension Agent.

Targeted workers were asked and volunteered to participate, each was given the choice to be involved or not and they had the choice to withdraw from the survey at any time during the interview. Each surveyed employee was given a \$5 prepaid phone card as a thank you for their participation. Enumerators were compensated for each completed survey they submitted. It is important to point out that the survey cannot be construed as a random sample of Hispanic dairy workers in New York State. It was determined at the time the survey was initiated that a random sample was not possible given the geographic distribution of the employees and the fact that no complete list of farms with Hispanic employees or the employees themselves was available.

The second part of the survey was directed at farm employers and, in most cases, the survey form was given to the farmer by the enumerator with a self-addressed stamped envelope. In some cases, when the farmer was not available, or if the farmer did not respond by mail in a reasonable time, the farm owner was contacted by phone and asked to complete and submit the survey. In some cases, the survey information was taken over the phone.

Survey data from both employee and employer surveys were initially coded into a spreadsheet, checked for completeness and accuracy, and later exported to a SAS file for data analysis. Text responses to open ended questions were entered, word for word, into a text file and manually analyzed, consolidated and summarized.

## **Reporting of Results**

One hundred eleven surveys of dairy farm workers were conducted on sixty New York dairy farms. As the survey results are presented in this report, not all responses add to 111 workers or 60 farms. In some cases, respondents failed to answer certain questions on the worker survey or the employer survey was not obtained from a specific farm.

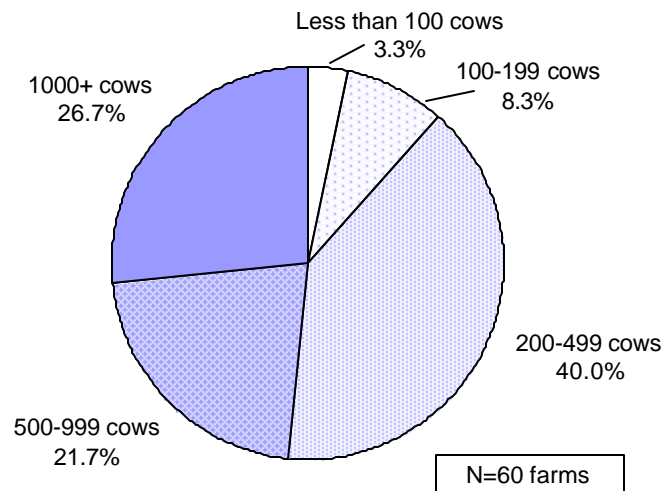
Presented in this report are frequencies of responses by question. Results are reported only for completed responses. Response categories were combined in some instances for logical reporting.

# RESULTS

## Farms

A total of 60 farms in New York State were included in this study, with the sizes ranging from a minimum of 50 cows to a maximum of 3,200 in the herd. More than one-fourth (27%) have a farm with 1000 or more cows, nearly one-fourth (22%) have 500-999 cows in their herd and four out of ten (40%) have 200-499 cows. Fewer than one out of ten (8%) have herds with 100-199 cows and only a small fraction (3%) of these farms have less than 100 cows in their herd. (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1: Distribution of Farm Herd Size**



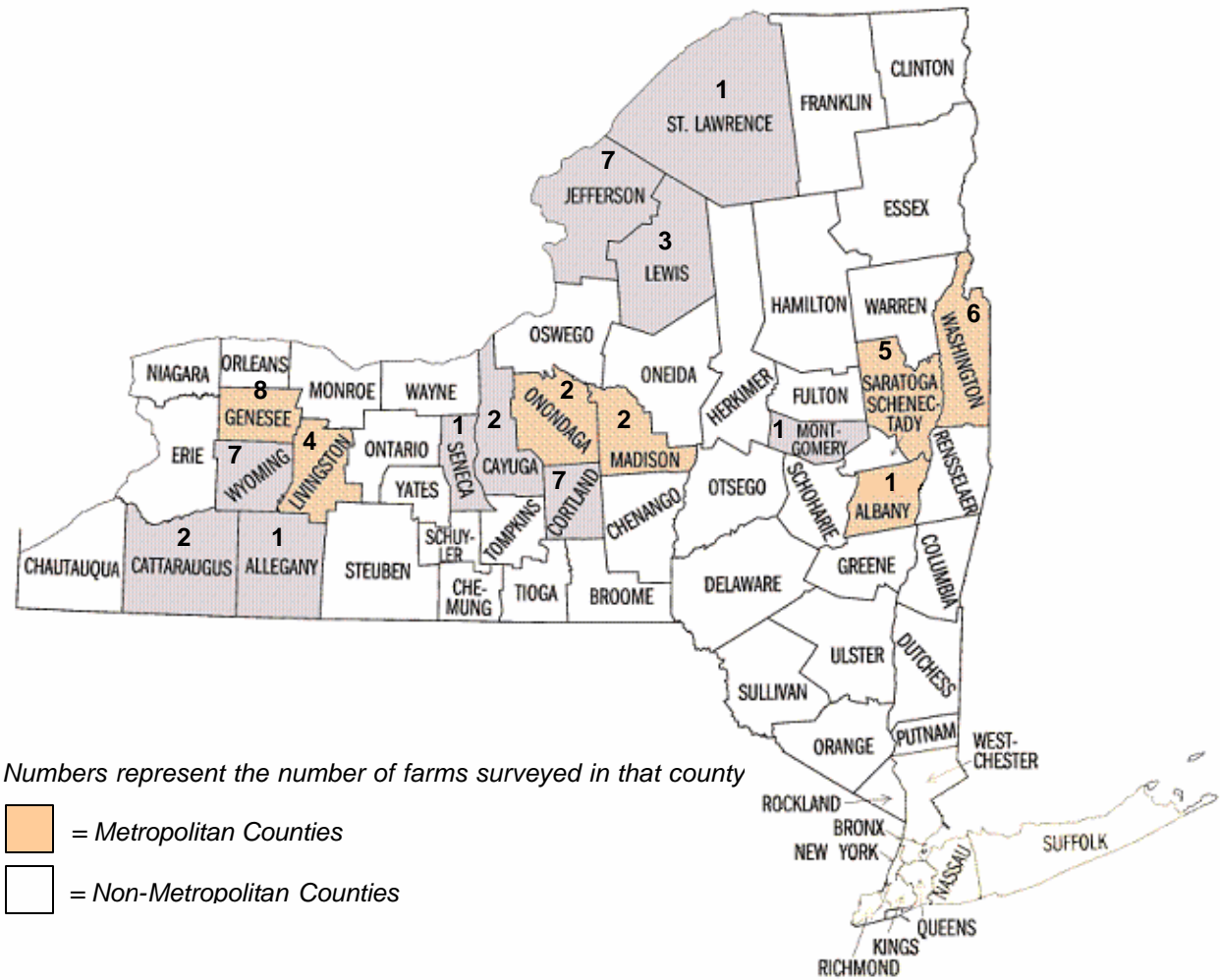
A total of 111 Hispanic workers were surveyed from the 60 farms. While this survey focused on Hispanic workers, they represent only a small fraction of all employees reported on New York State dairy farms. Referring once more to recent Census data, dairy farms employed nearly 21,600 workers during the 2002 Census year (USDA 2004). These farms were located within seventeen counties. Almost half of the farms (28 out of 60) are located in more densely populated Statistical Metropolitan Areas (SMA). A little less than half (43%) of the workers were interviewed on farms located in an SMA. Conversely, 32 farms are from non-metropolitan areas with a total of 63 workers surveyed across these farms. (See Table 1 and Figure 2)

**Table 1: Distribution of Farms and Workers by County**

METROPOLITAN COUNTIES		
County	# of Farms (N=28)	# of Workers (N=48)
Albany	1	1
Genesee	8	18
Livingston	4	6
Madison	2	3
Onondaga	2	2
Saratoga	5	10
Washington	6	8

NON-METROPOLITAN COUNTIES		
County	# of Farms (N=32)	# of Workers (N=63)
Allegany	1	1
Cattaraugus	2	4
Cayuga	2	6
Cortland	7	14
Jefferson	7	11
Lewis	3	7
Montgomery	1	1
Seneca	1	1
St. Lawrence	1	3
Wyoming	7	15

**Figure 2: Number of Farms Surveyed by County**

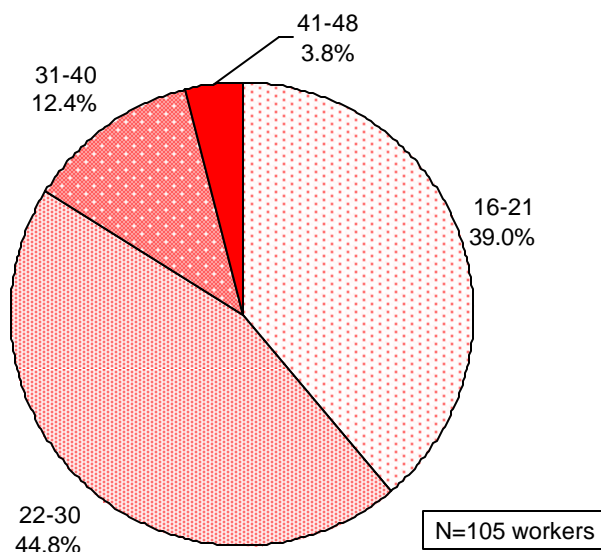


Source: US Department of Commerce.

# Hispanic Dairy Farm Employees

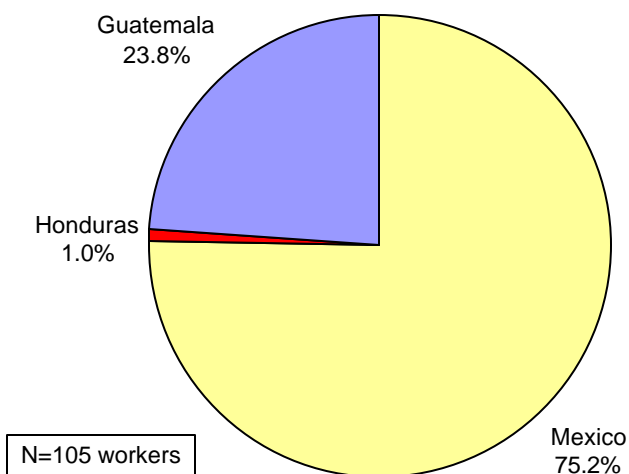
Nearly four out of ten (39%) of the workers surveyed are young, between the ages of 16 and 21. Another four out of ten (45%) are between 22 and 30 years old. About one out of ten (12%) are 31-40 years old and only a small percentage (4%) of these workers are over 40 years old. (See Figure 3)

**Figure 3: Age Distribution**

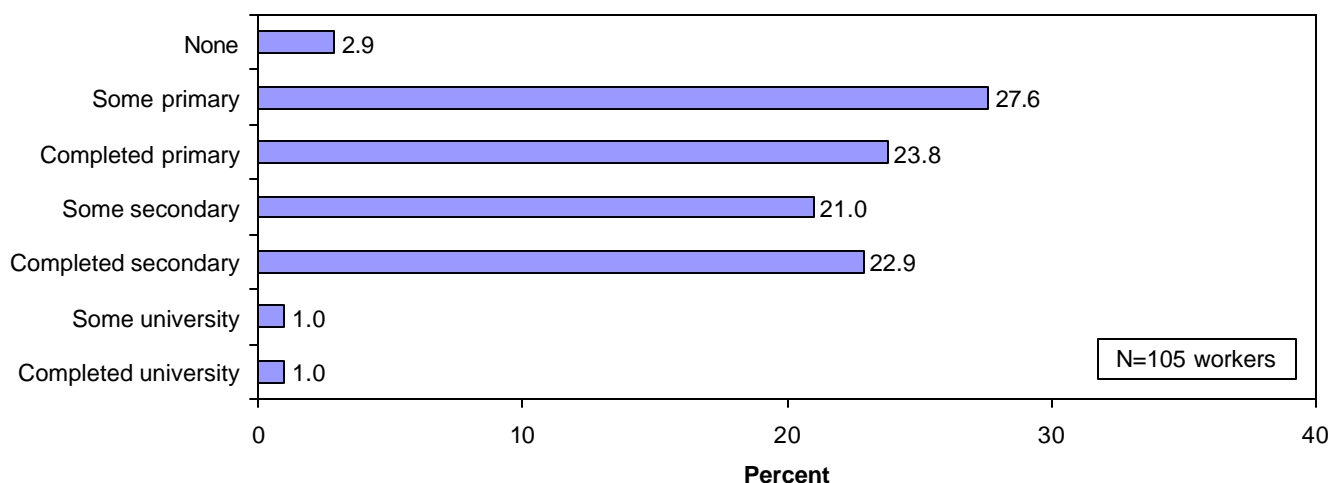


The vast majority (75%) of the workers surveyed are from Mexico. Additionally, nearly one-fourth (24%) are from Guatemala and 1% came from Honduras. (See Figure 4)

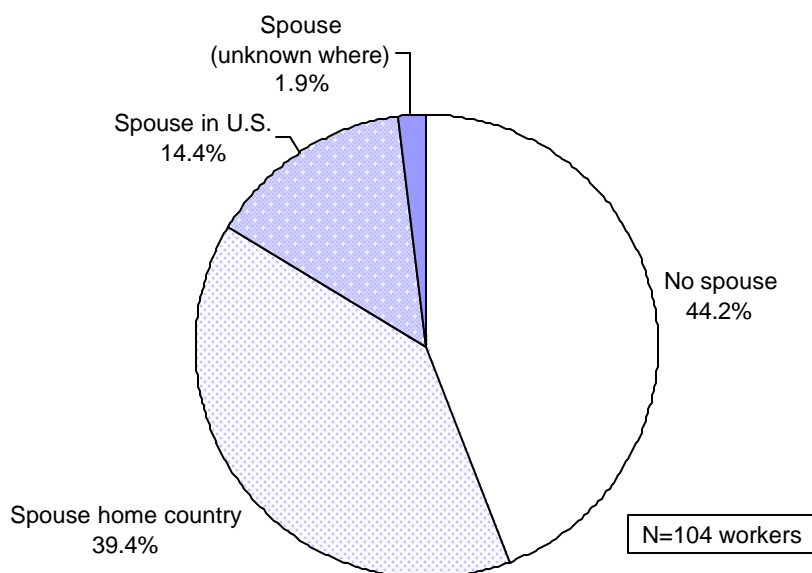
**Figure 4: Country of Origin**



As one might expect, nearly all the workers included in this survey were male – 98% vs. 2% female. When asked the level of education they have completed, 3% of those surveyed have had no education at all. One-half (51%) have attained at least some but no higher than a primary school education and about one out of five (21%) have completed only some secondary school. However, one-fourth (25%) have completed secondary school or higher (including 2% who have attended or graduated from a university). (See Figure 5)

**Figure 5: Education Distribution**

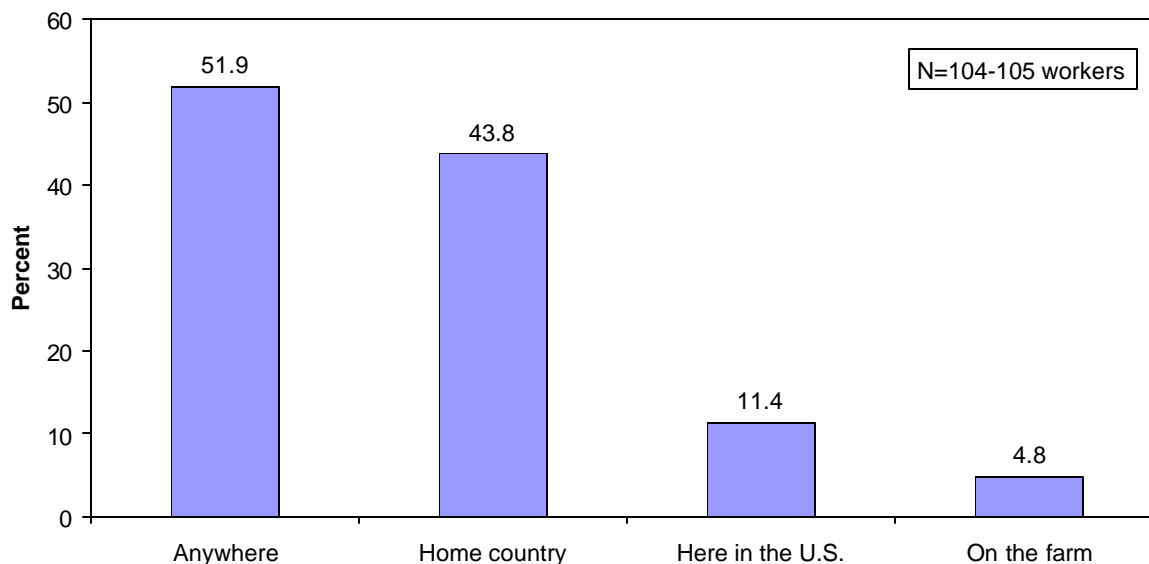
Workers were asked if they have a spouse and, if so, to indicate where their spouse currently resides. Less than one-half (44%) of the workers surveyed do not have a spouse. Conversely, more than one-half (56%) of the farm workers do have a spouse and for more than one out of ten (14%), the spouse lives in the U.S. as well. However, most spouses (71%) still live in the worker's home country. (See Figure 6)

**Figure 6: Status of Spouse**



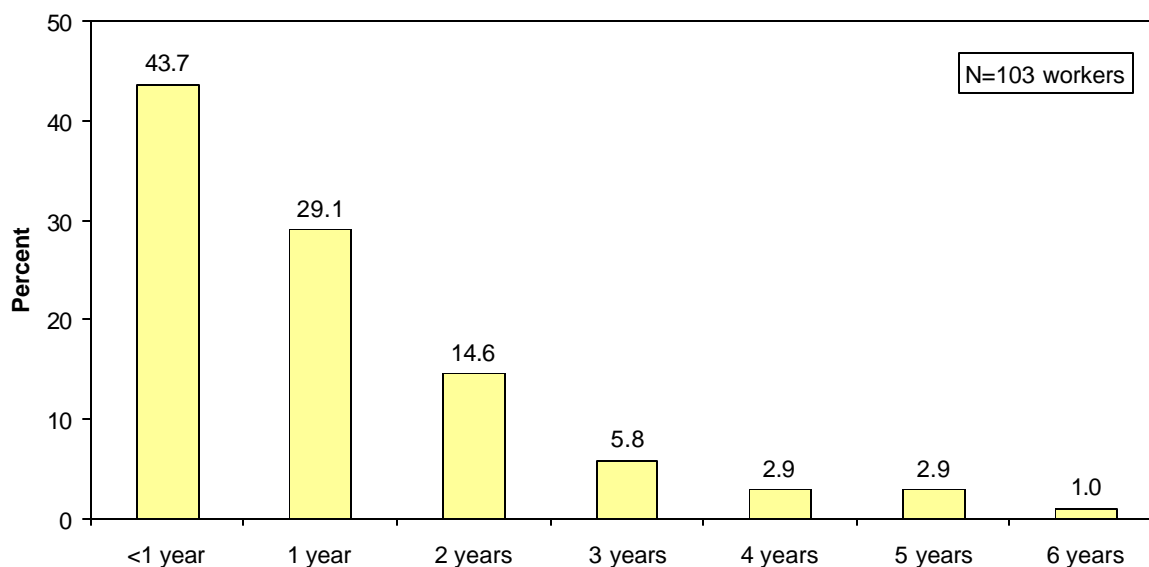
The workers were then asked if they had children and then, if applicable, where their children are living. More than one-half (52%) of these workers have children – 44% overall have children in their home country, while 11% have children in the U.S. and 5% overall specifically have children living with them on the farm. In some cases this was a father and son both working on the farm. (See Figure 7)

**Figure 7: Status of Children**



As reported by their employers, for most (73%) of these workers, their tenure with the farm has only been a year or less (29% between 12 and 24 months; 44% less than 12 months). Another one out of five (20%) of the workers have been on the farm for more than two and less than four years and 7% report being with the farm for four years or more (with a maximum of 6 years). (See Figure 8)

**Figure 8: Distribution of Years with the Farm**

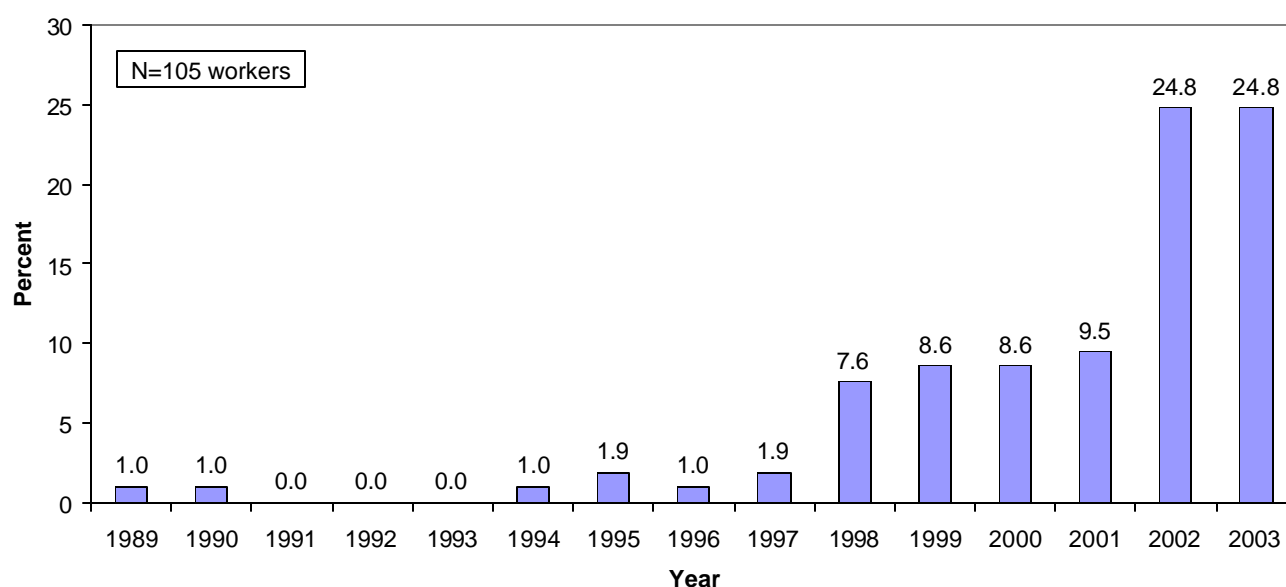


## Worker's Previous Experience

Workers were asked whether they had worked with dairy cows before coming to the farm. Nearly six out of ten (58%) of the workers surveyed had previous experience with cows before arriving on the farm. For only about one-third (32%) of the workers surveyed, their last job (prior to coming to this farm) was also at a dairy farm.

When asked when they first started working in the United States, nearly one-fourth (24%) of these workers said they have been working in the United States for more than five years. Meanwhile, more than three-fourths (76%) of the workers surveyed have come to the United States in the past five years – with nearly one out of ten (9%) working in the U.S. for the first time only in the past year and an additional one-half (50%) beginning their U.S. employment one to two years ago. (See Figure 9)<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 9: Calendar Year First Started Working in the U.S.**



On average, these workers have had about three U.S. employers each since they began working in this country. About one-fourth (28%) have had only one employer in the United States. Roughly the same proportion (29%) have had four or more U.S. employers. (See Table 2)

**Table 2: Distribution of Number of U.S. Employers**

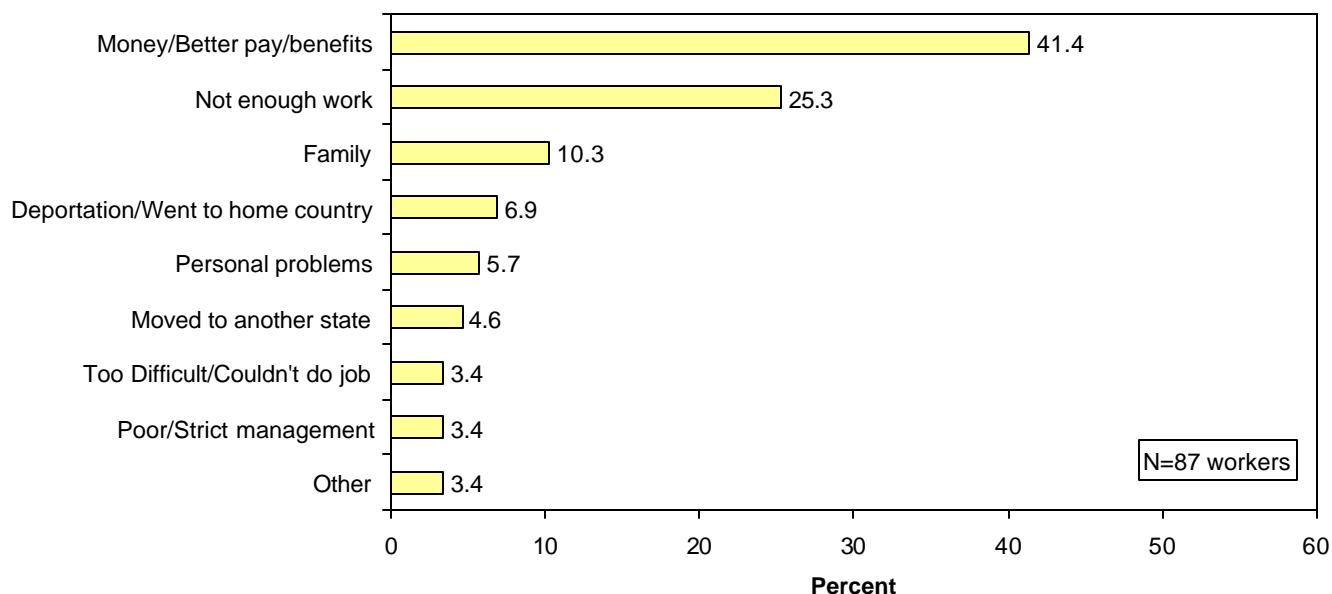
# of Employers	% of Workers (N=105)
1	27.6
2	22.9
3	21.0
4	11.4
5	7.6
6+	9.5

<sup>1</sup> Data for 2004 are not shown in Figure 9 because a full calendar year cannot be represented.

When asked on an open-ended basis why they left their most recent job, of the 87 workers who responded to the question, four out of ten (41%) said it was for the money or benefits they would be getting on the farm. One out of four (25%) mentioned, unprompted, that there was not enough work with their previous employer. After that, leading reasons included wanting to be with or near other family members (10%), the previous job being too difficult (7%), having (or being forced) to return to their home country for a period of time (7%), personal problems (6%) and/or moving to another state (5%). Some of these workers came directly from their home country to their current employment while some came from other employment in the U.S. (See Figure 10)

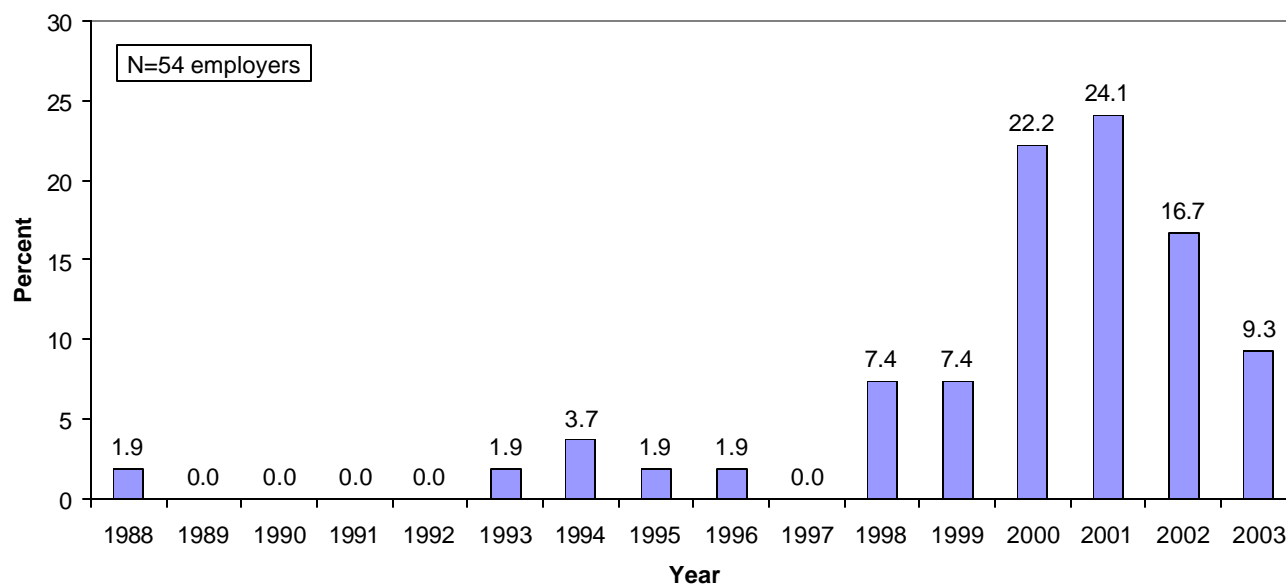
**Figure 10: Worker's Reason for Leaving Last Job**

(Note: Unprompted responses; multiple responses allowed)



From the employers' perspective, most (74%) hired their very first Hispanic worker in the past five years, with about one out of ten (11%) hiring their first Hispanic employee only the last year or two. More than ten years ago, very few (7%) of these farmers were employing Hispanic workers. (See Figure 11)<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 11: Calendar Year Hired First Hispanic Worker**



<sup>2</sup> Data for 2004 are not shown in Figure 11 because a full calendar year cannot be represented.

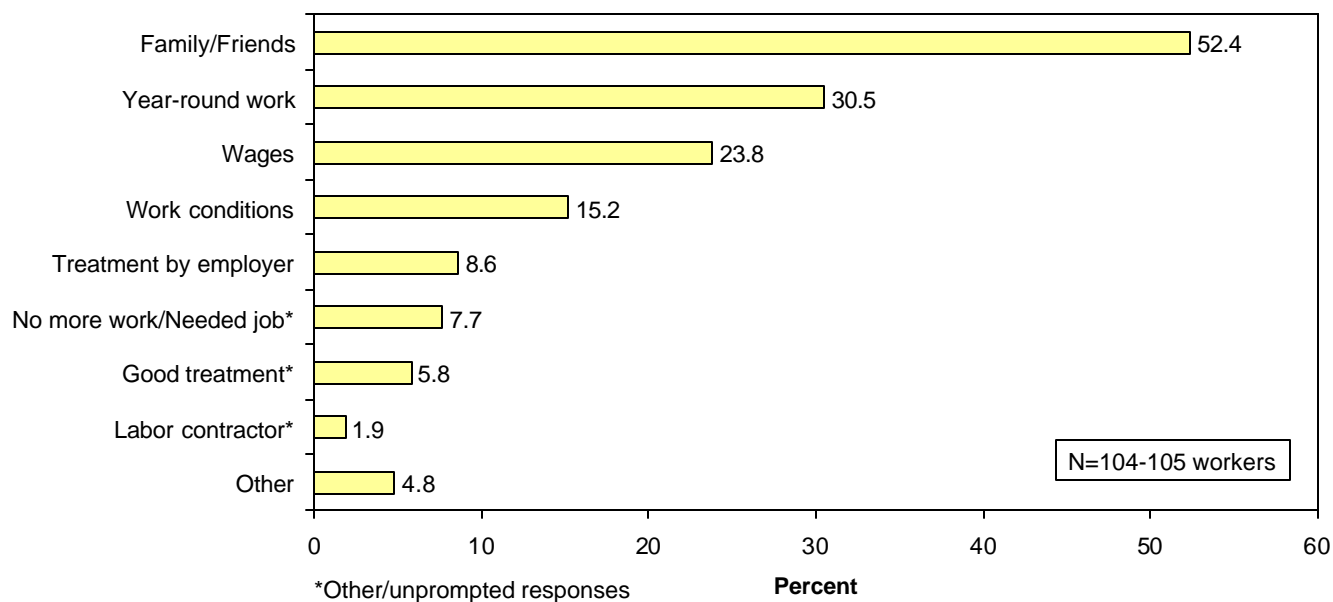
## Reasons for Coming to the Farm

Workers were asked why they came to the particular farm they were currently working at and were offered possible responses. They were asked if their reason was because of wages, friends or family, the availability of year-round work, the work conditions, or the treatment by the employer. Respondents were also permitted to offer other reasons.

For more than one-half (52%) of the workers surveyed, friends and/or family was the reason for coming to the farm. Year-round work attracted three out of ten (31%) workers and one-fourth (24%) were drawn by the wages they would be earning. Meanwhile, work conditions were cited as a reason for coming to the farm by about one out of six (15%) workers and only one out of ten (9%) said that it was the treatment by their employer that was the reason for them to come to work on the farm. One out of five workers surveyed provided other, unprompted replies when asked this question, such as needing the job because there was no more work at their previous employer (8%), hearing good things in general about the way they would be treated on the farm (6%), because a labor placement service brought them (2%). (See Figure 12)

**Figure 12: Distribution of Reasons For Coming to Work on This Farm**

*(Note: Multiple responses allowed)*

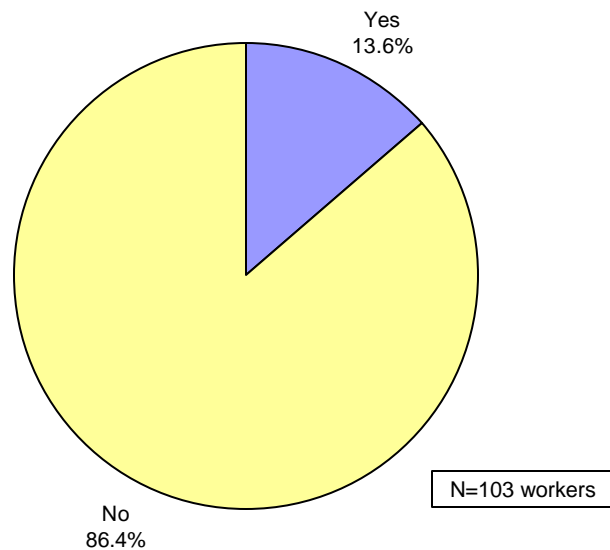


# Obstacles Faced

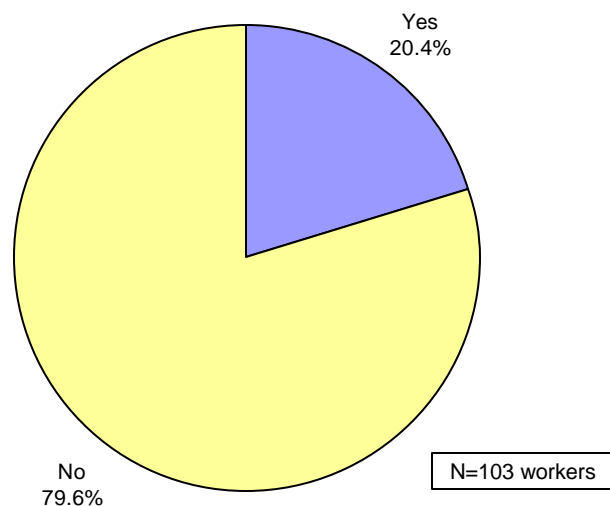
## Trips Home & Deportation

When asked how many trips they have taken home since they first started working in the United States (either by deportation or voluntarily), we find that the vast majority of these workers have never been deported (86%) (See Figure 13), but also have not had the opportunity to travel to their home country on a voluntary basis (80%) (See Figure 14). However, a sizable minority (14%) of workers have been deported since beginning to work in the United States; nearly one out of ten (9%) only once, some (5%) twice. Separately, one-third (33%) of employers report that they have had employees deported in the past.

**Figure 13: Whether Deported Since Working in the U.S.**



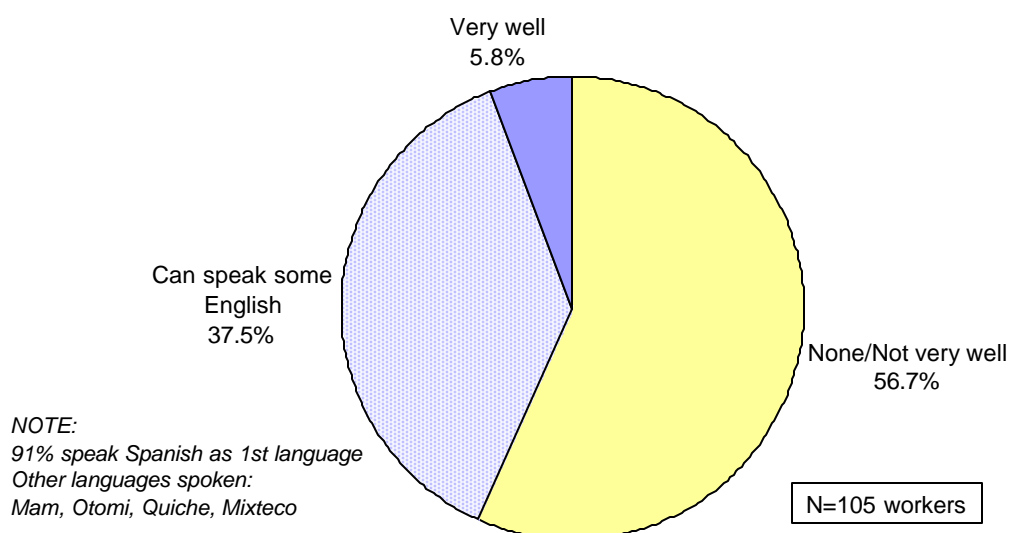
**Figure 14: Whether Traveled Home Voluntarily Since Working in the U.S.**



## English Proficiency

Workers were asked how well they speak English, with the response options being “not very well,” “can speak some English,” and “very well.” More than one-half (57%) of those surveyed reported that they do not speak English very well. A little more than one-third (38%) can speak some English, but only 6% said they speak English very well. (See Figure 15)

**Figure 15: How Well Workers Speak English**

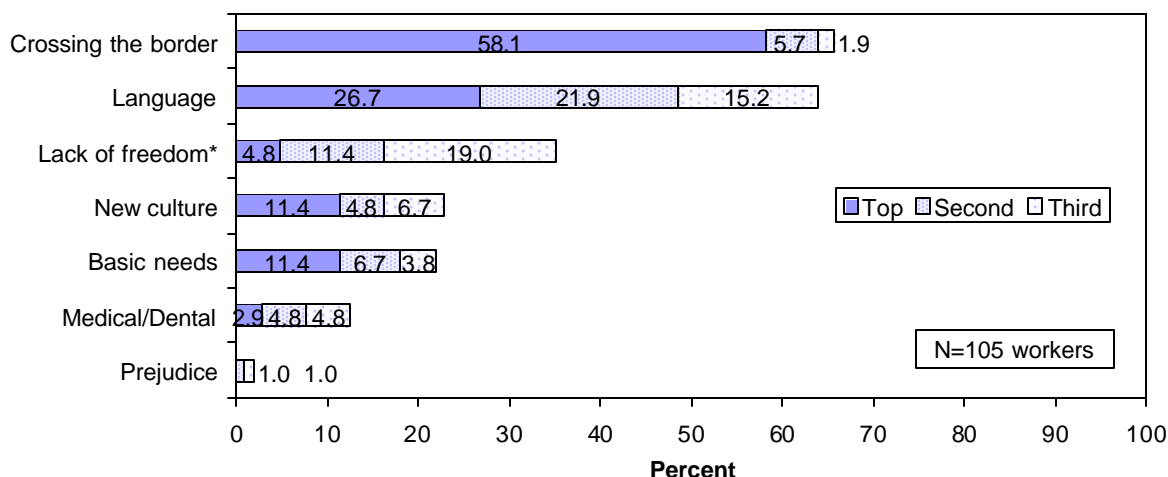


## Challenges Faced

In total, a list of eight items were presented to workers and they were asked to rank in order the top three that were the greatest challenges for them when they came to the United States. These possible options were:

- Meeting basic needs (food, housing, transportation, etc.)
- Understanding a new culture (U.S. customs and ways of doing things)
- Overcoming the language barrier
- Prejudice
- Lack of freedom to do what you want
- Medical or dental services
- Crossing the border
- Other (specify)

Presented below are the responses that came up most often as being one of the top three challenges faced by these workers. As expected, given the lack of English proficiency reported above, language is one of the leading challenges faced by these workers when they come to the United States – nearly two-thirds (64%) say it is one of the top three challenges they experienced. Just getting into the U.S., crossing the border, is the foremost challenge, with 66% claiming it was one of the top three challenges, and most (58%) of them picking it as the top challenge they faced. For the surveyed workers, after language, lack of freedom to do what you want is mentioned by about one-third (35%) as one of their top 3 challenges, followed by understanding the new culture (23%) and meeting basic needs (22%). (See Figure 16)

**Figure 16: Greatest Challenges Coming to U.S.**

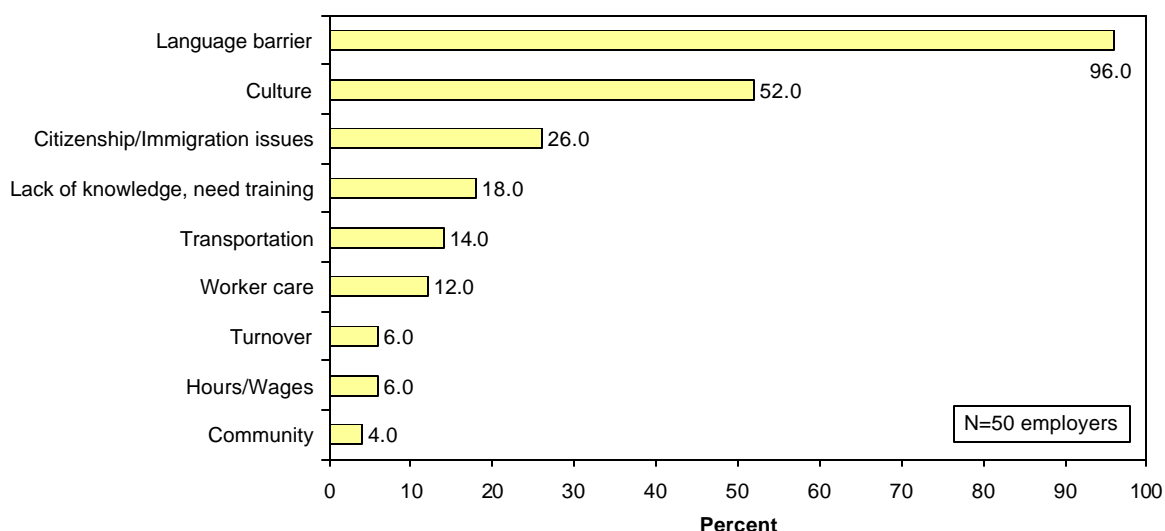
\*Statement in the survey read "lack of freedom to do what you want"

A few (approximately one out of ten) workers also mentioned "other" answers in response to this question. The types of challenges that emerged unaided included dealing with one's undocumented status upon arrival in the U.S. (4%), being far away from family (3%), learning a new job (3%) and/or making friends or finding a girlfriend (2%).

Employers were also asked, on an unprompted basis, to describe the top three obstacles that they feel must be overcome to be a successful employer of Hispanic workers. Virtually every employer (96%) said that the language barrier is a leading obstacle, with some having to hire translators in order for communication to be possible. More than one-half (52%) talked about cultural differences and challenges faced as a result (e.g., trying to understand and meet workers' needs, making sure you speak in a gentler tone of voice, etc.). Citizenship or immigration issues was an obstacle mentioned by one-fourth (26%) of the employers surveyed and nearly one out of five (18%) mentioned the workers' lack of knowledge or experience and the need to provide training as an obstacle that must be overcome. (See Figure 17)

**Figure 17: Employer-Identified Obstacles**

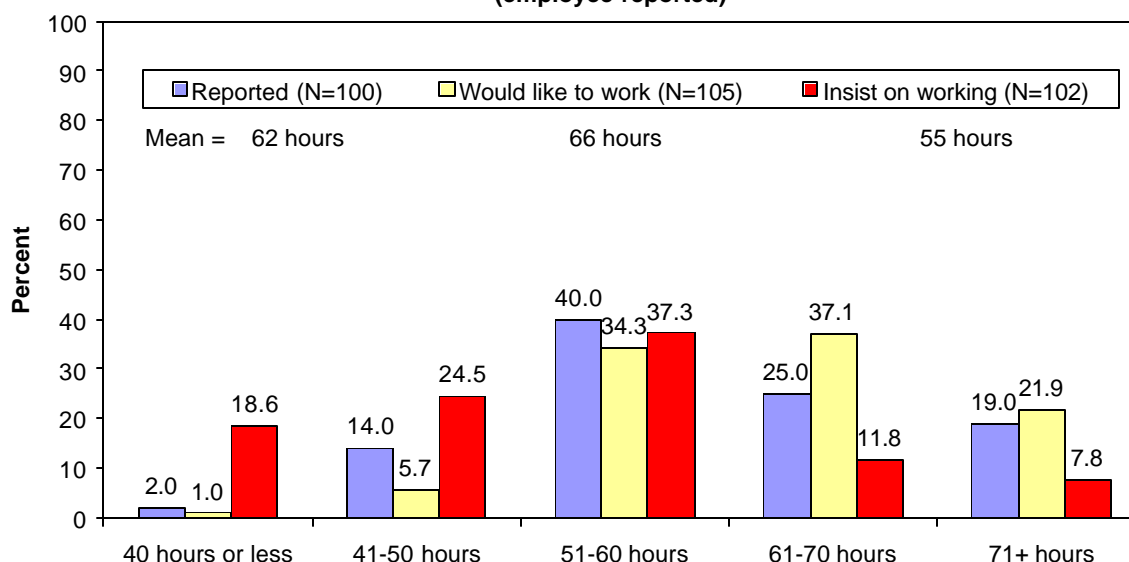
(Note: Unprompted responses; multiple responses allowed)



## Farm Duties

Employees were asked three questions about their hours worked per week – how much they actually worked, how much they would like to work and how much they insist on working in order to keep them from looking for another job. On average, workers insist on working at least 55 hours per week, are actually working 62 hours per week, but would like to work 66 hours per week. Very few employees (2%) are working 40 hours or less. One out of five (19%) work more than 70 hours per week and one-fourth (25%) are working between 61-70 hours per week. The largest proportion (40%) of workers, however, have a 51-60 hour work week. (See Figure 18)

**Figure 18: Distribution of Hours Worked Per Week**  
(employee-reported)

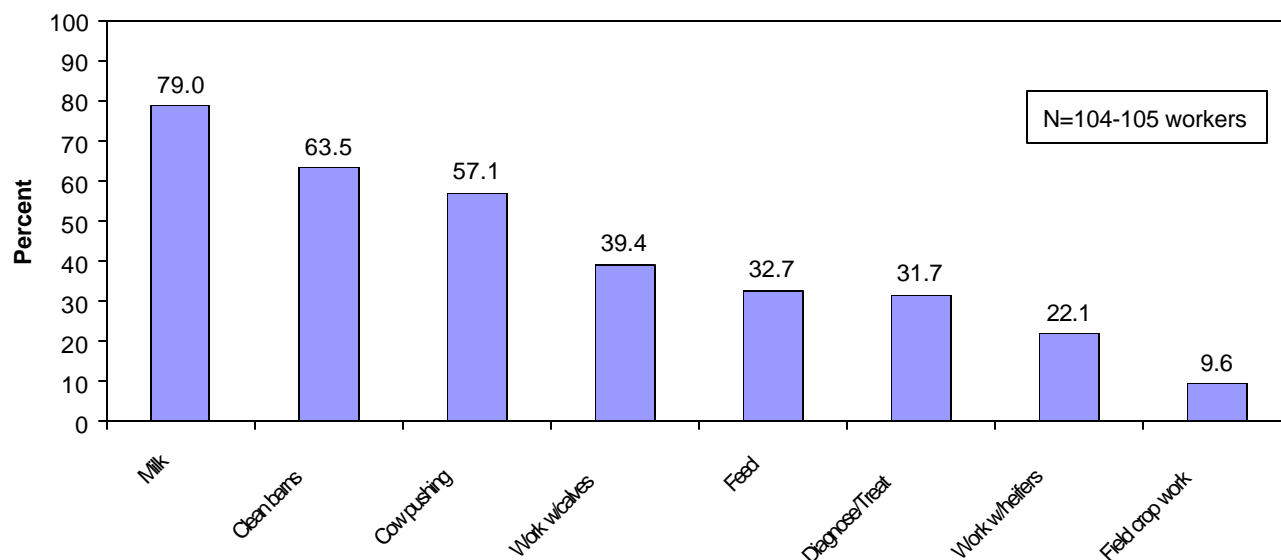


Workers were presented with a list of eight specific jobs and asked to report how many hours they spent doing each job. From this information, a variable was created to turn these data into yes/no responses indicating whether each job was performed by the worker.

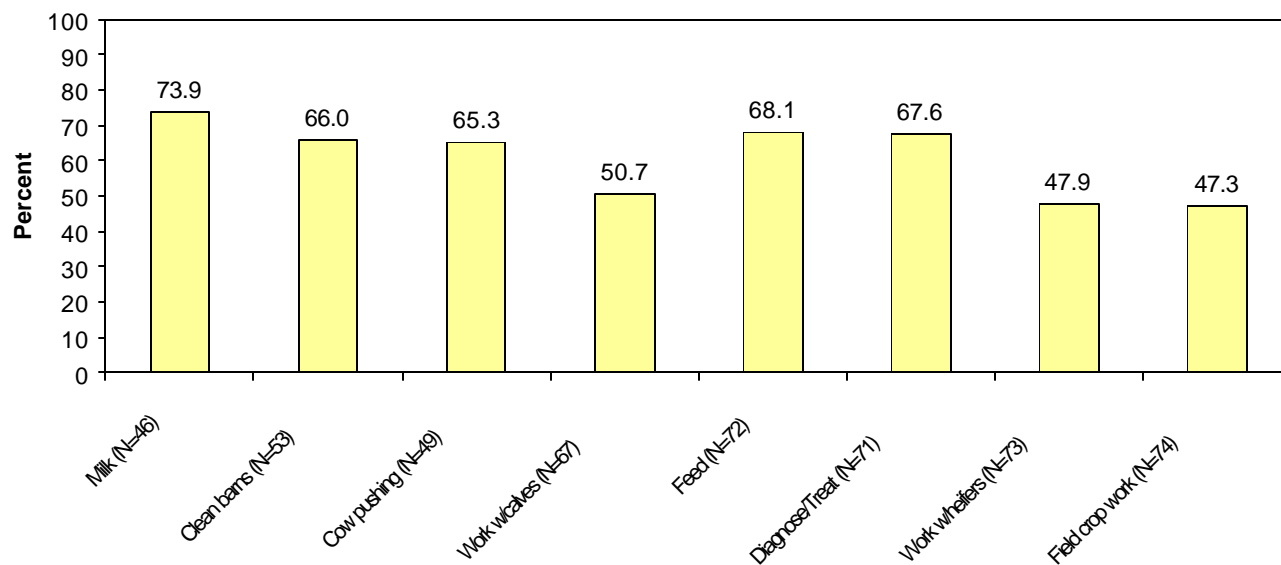
The majority (79%) of workers surveyed perform milking as part of their job duties. About six out of ten workers clean parlors and barns (64%) and/or push cows (57%). Roughly one-third work with calves (39%), do feeding (33%) and/or diagnose and/or treat sick animals (32%). About one-fifth (22%) work with heifers as part of their job, while only one out of ten (10%) do field crop work. (See Figure 19)

Workers were then asked if they would like to learn this job, if they did not currently do it or learn more about it if they did, using a 3-point scale where 1 is “strong no” and 3 is “strong yes.” Reported in Figure 15b, for each job function asked about, are the proportions of workers who say “strong yes” when asked if they would like to learn or learn more about that job function. Milking rises to the top, with three-fourths (74%) wanting to learn to milk or learn more about milking. It is interesting to note that for certain functions (feeding, diagnosing/treating, and working with heifers), the proportion of workers wanting to do or learn more about these jobs is double the proportion who are currently doing them. And, in the case of field crop work, it is five times higher. (See Figure 20)



**Figure 19: Distribution of Job Activities Performed***(Note: Multiple responses allowed)*

Beyond the listed job duties inquired about, workers were also allowed the opportunity to mention other activities performed as part of their job. Unprompted, 7% mentioned marking or inseminating cows, 5% talked about their work with machinery, and/or 3% specifically talked about driving being part of their job responsibilities.

**Figure 20: Tasks Workers Would Like to Learn or Learn More About***(Note: Multiple responses allowed)*

## Compensation & Money Transfer

Data regarding workers' hourly wages were reported by employers. On average, these workers' starting hourly wage was nearly seven dollars (\$6.87) per hour, with the first/lowest quartile earning between \$5.50 and \$6.49/hour, the second quartile earning \$6.50-\$6.99/hour, the third quartile earning \$7.00/hour and the fourth quartile/highest paid workers earning \$7.01-\$10.00/hour. At the time of the survey, the average hourly wage had increased to \$7.51 per hour – first quartile \$5.50-\$6.99, second quartile \$7.00, third quartile \$7.01-\$8.00, fourth quartile \$8.01-\$11.50. (See Table 3)

**Table 3: Quartiles of Hourly Wage Earned**

	Starting Wage (N=104)	Current Wage (N=102)
1 <sup>st</sup> Quartile	\$5.50 - \$6.49	\$5.50 - \$6.99
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quartile	\$6.50 - \$6.99	\$7.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quartile	\$7.00	\$7.01 - \$8.00
4 <sup>th</sup> Quartile	\$7.01 - \$10.00	\$8.01 - \$11.50
Mean	\$6.87	\$7.51
Standard Deviation	.81	1.04

When asked if they make money transfers to their home country, virtually every worker surveyed (97%) reported sending money home. Of those who provided an explanation for how and where money transfers were made, the leading response was Western Union (46%). After that, one out of five (21%) reported using a Mexican store that delivers to their house (with some specifically naming Primo Vasquez, who owns a Mexican store in Sodus, NY), 16% said they use a money order through the mail and 11% used King Express, a money order service to Guatemala often accessed through small ethnic stores. Some (7%) send money home using a bank transfer and 4% have sent a money gram home. A fraction (3%) of the workers surveyed said they go into town and send money through a Mexican store and/or using Girasol (3%), which is a money wire service to Mexico that is often accessed at a local Mexican grocery. (See Table 4)

**Table 4: Methods Used to Transfer Money Home**

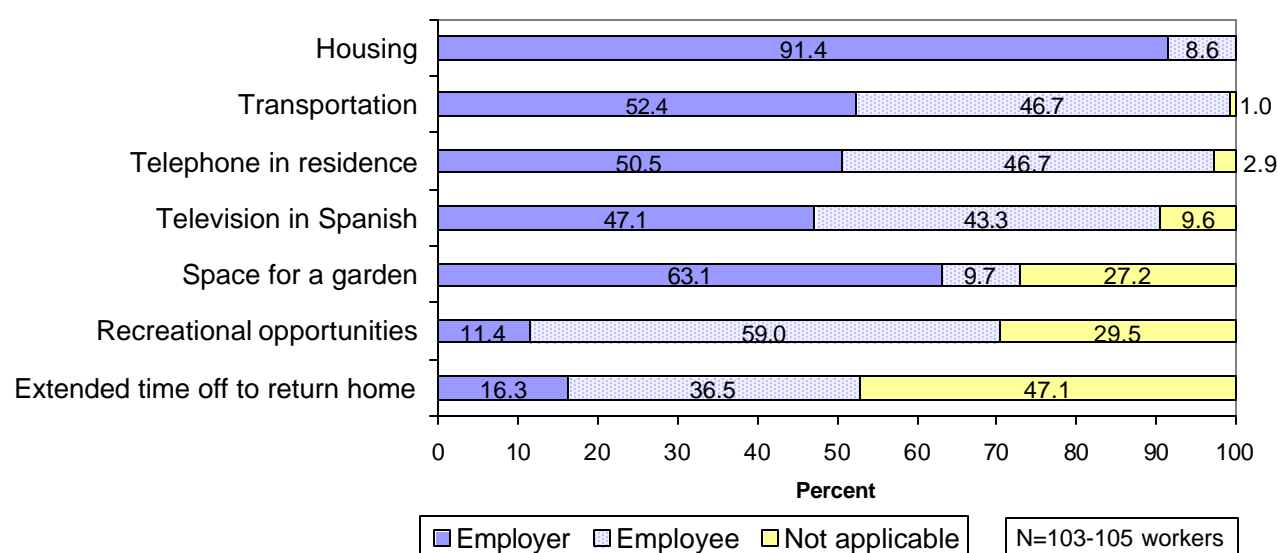
*Note: Multiple responses allowed*

	% of Workers (N=95)
Western Union	46.3
Mexican Store (at house)	21.1
Money order (mail)	15.8
King Express	10.5
Bank Transfer	7.4
Money Gram	4.2
Mexican Store (in town)	3.2
Girasol	3.2

## Benefits & Services

Workers were asked to identify, out of a list of seven “basic needs,” which ones were provided by their employer, which ones were provided by the employee, and which were not applicable to them. Most workers (91%) report having housing provided by their employer, the remainder provide or pay for it themselves. Other services available to at least nine out of ten workers are transportation (99% have it, 52% provided by employer), a telephone in their residence (97% have it, 51% provided by employer), Spanish television (90% have it, 47% provided by employer). In total, about three-fourths (73%) have space for a garden on the farm (63% provided by employer). About the same number have access to recreational opportunities, though for only one out of ten (11%) workers is this provided by their employer. More than one-half (53%) of these workers are permitted extended time off so they can return to their home country, and for one out of six (16%), this is a benefit provided by their employer. (See Figure 21)

**Figure 21: Distribution of Services Provided to Worker**



Interestingly, employers say that they provide housing as a benefit to 95% of their Hispanic workers (versus 91% of workers reporting above that their employer provides housing). No other “formal” benefits (with the exception of 1% who say they pay for a retirement account) are reportedly provided (0% provide health insurance, 0% provide employee-funded retirement). When asked to name other types of bonuses or benefits provided at no charge, employers reported the following:

### Bonuses (% of Hispanic Workers receiving)

- Milk quality bonus (12%)
- Year-end/Christmas cash bonus (6%)

### Other Benefits (% of Hispanic Workers receiving)

- Driven to town for shopping, etc. (28%)
- Paid utilities (27%)
- Television (22%)
- Telephone (17%)
- Vacation (16%)
- Uniforms/Clothing (11%)
- Weekend/Holiday pay (9%)
- Milk/Meat (7%)

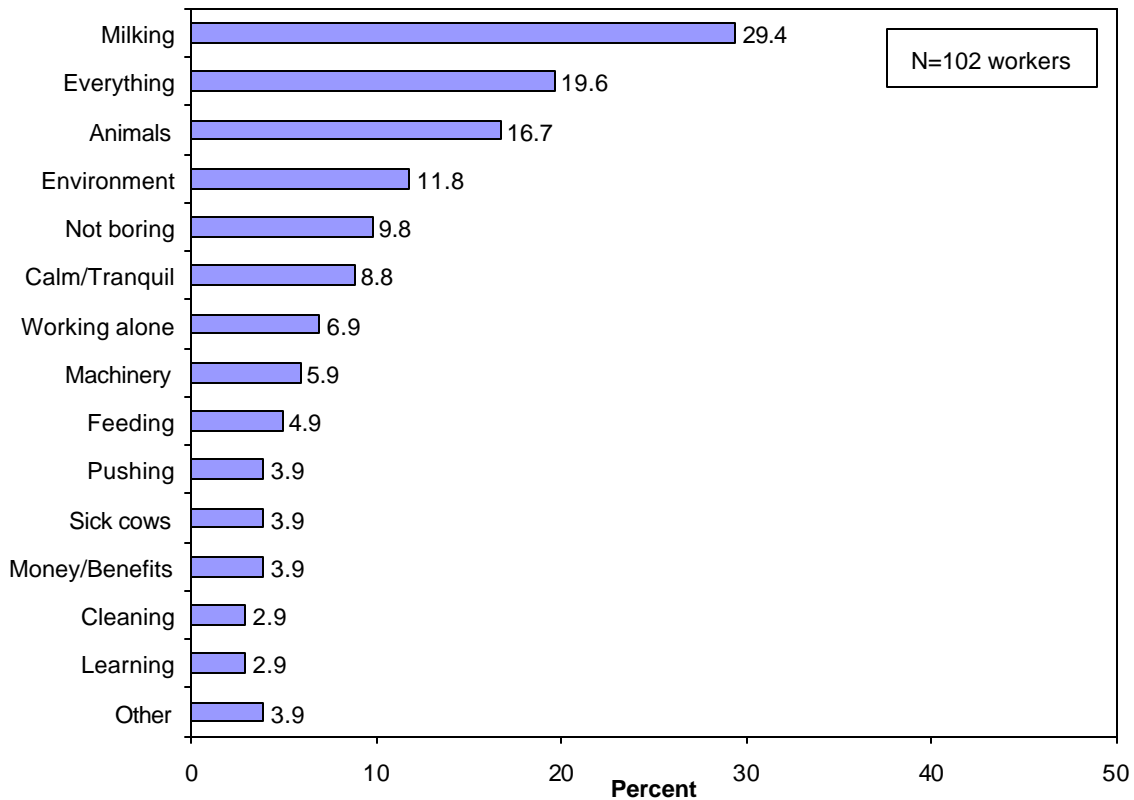
Another “perk” of the job is that most (81%) employers say that job advancement opportunities are available for Hispanic workers on their farm.

# Job Satisfaction

Workers were asked to state the one thing that they like most about their job. They were not provided a list of possible response options and the following unprompted responses emerged. One out of three (29%) workers mentioned milking specifically, while nearly one out of five (17%) talked about their work with animals in general, almost one out of ten (9%) referenced “tranquility” or “calm” (often in association with milking) and 7% appreciated being able to work alone. Approximately one out of ten liked the easy work or the fact they are treated well (12%) and/or the fact that they are always busy and never bored (10%). One out of five (20%) said they liked “everything” about their job. (See Figure 22)

**Figure 22: What Workers Like Most About Their Job**

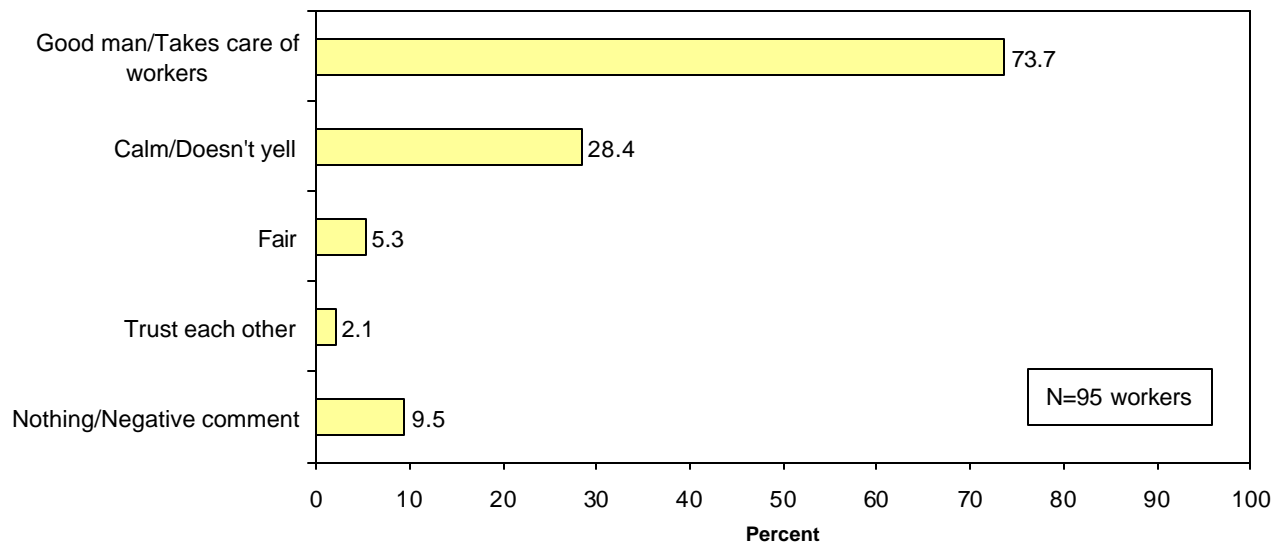
(Note: Unprompted responses; multiple responses allowed)



When asked what they like most about their employer or supervisor specifically, also on an unprompted basis, most (74%) of the workers surveyed talked about their boss being a “good man” and treating them well in general. More than one out of four (28%) explicitly pointed out that their employer’s demeanor (i.e., calm, doesn’t yell) was what they liked most. After that, 5% mentioned that their employer was fair and 2% said that trust (in both directions) was the quality they liked most about their employer. Importantly, one out of ten (10%) workers made a point of saying that there was nothing positive about their employer or provided a particular negative comment. (See Figure 23)

**Figure 23: What Workers Like Most About Their Employer**

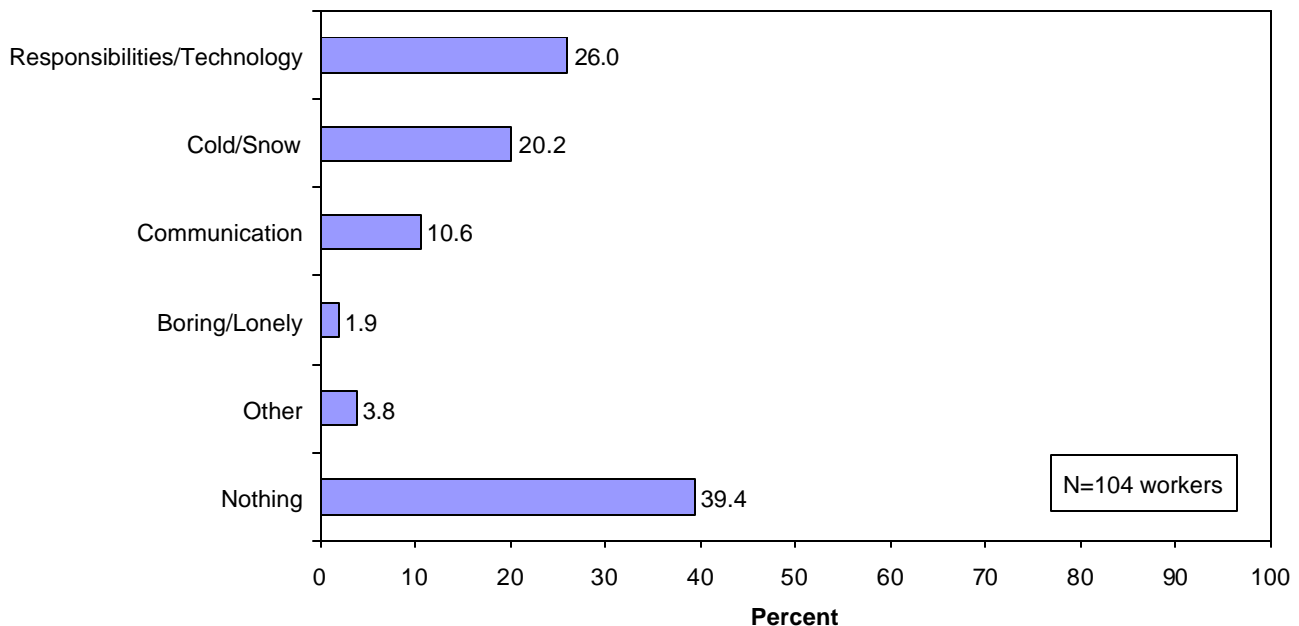
(Note: Unprompted responses; multiple responses allowed)



Workers were also given the direct opportunity to point out the negative when they were asked to describe the most difficult things about their job. Overall, nearly four out of ten (39%) workers said that they found nothing difficult about their job. However, one out of four (26%) talked about their responsibilities and expressed some concern about living up to them (e.g., taking care of sick animals, fixing machinery, etc.). One out of five (20%) complained about the cold weather, one out of ten (11%) struggled with communication issues, and 2% were bored or lonely. (See Figure 24)

**Figure 24: What Workers Find Most Difficult About Job**

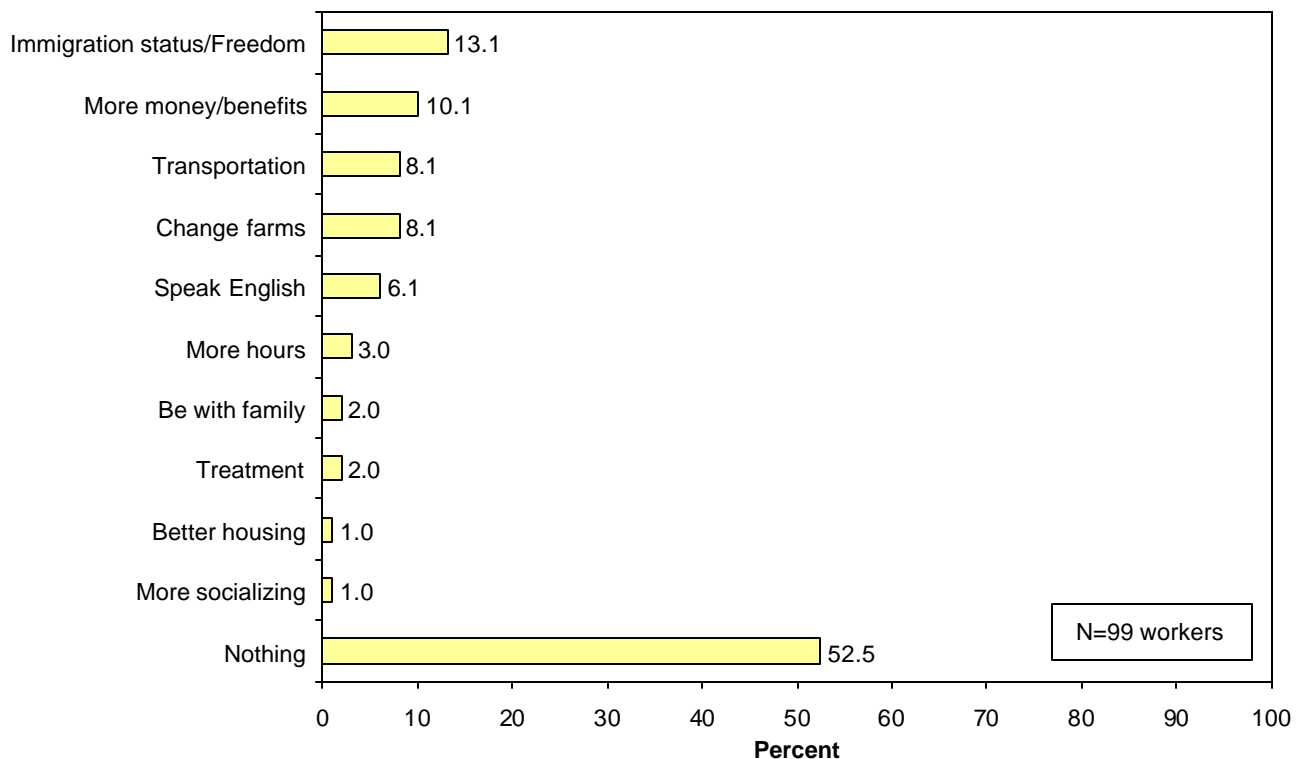
(Note: Unprompted responses; multiple responses allowed)



The final question in the survey asked workers if there was something in their situation that they would like to change or improve. More than one-half (52%) of the workers surveyed stated that there is nothing that they would like to change or improve about their situation. However, the remaining one-half of workers did have unprompted comments. At the top of this list was wanting to change their immigration status so they could have more freedom to move around the country (13%), followed by more money or benefits (10%), transportation so they can get off the farm (8%), changing farms (8%) and/or learning to speak English (6%). (See Figure 25)

**Figure 25: What Workers Would Like to Change**

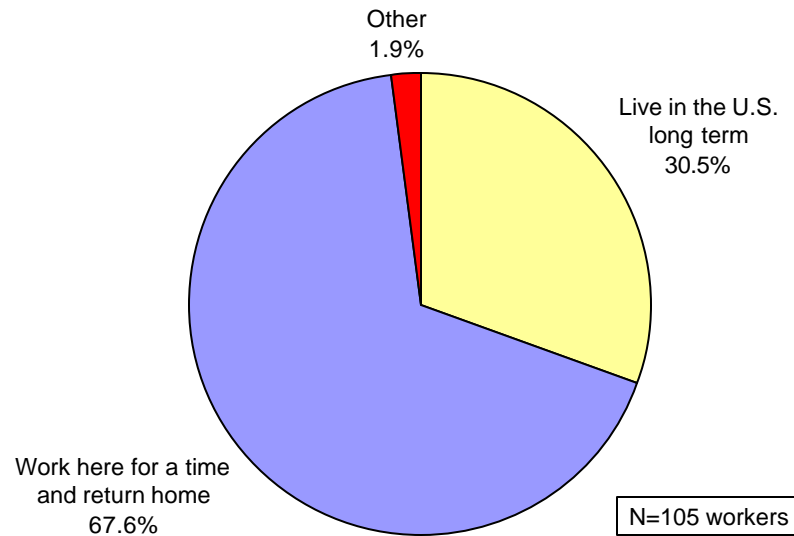
*(Note: Unprompted responses; multiple responses allowed)*



## Future Plans

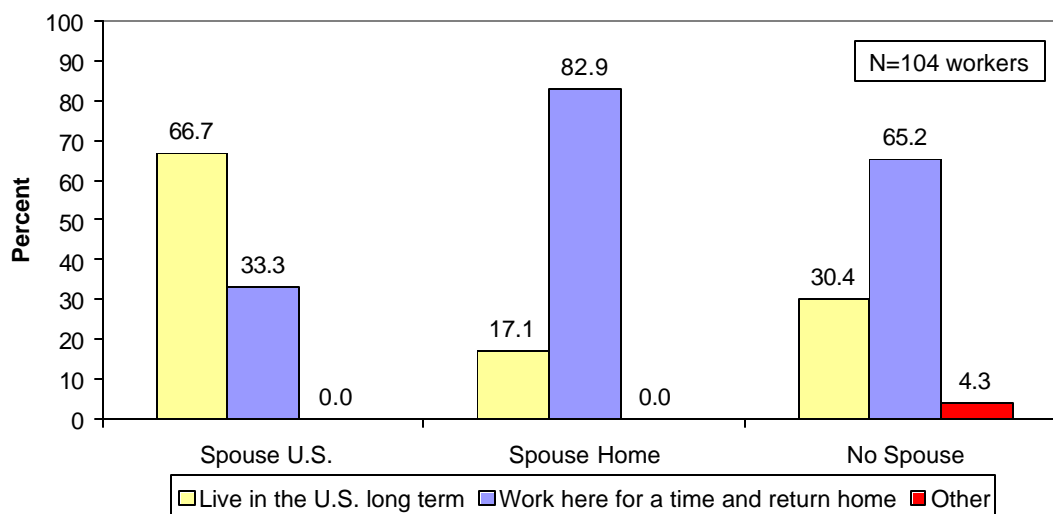
When asked about their plans for the future, two-thirds (68%) of the workers surveyed in this research said that they plan to work here for a time and then eventually return to their home country. More than three out of ten (31%) plan to stay in the United States long term. (See Figure 26)

**Figure 26: Plans for the Future**



Workers with a spouse in the United States are twice as likely to plan to stay long term (67% vs. 33% planning to return home) and most (83%) who left a spouse behind, plan to return to their home country. Of those who are not married, nearly two-thirds (65%) plan to return home. (See Figure 27)

**Figure 27: Plans for the Future by Marital Status**



## Conclusions & Implications

---

The presence of Hispanic workers on New York dairy farms is a relatively new development. Comprehensive data are not currently collected by Federal data providers, but a common perception is that the number of Hispanic workers on dairy farms has increased, substantially over the past five years. The purpose of this survey, the first of its type in the Northeastern U.S., is to determine how Hispanic dairy employees perceive their work and their needs from both their employer and the community. The results of the survey are intended to provide dairy employers with insights regarding how to effectively supervise and reward their employees. They are also intended to provide information to political leaders, policy makers, organizations, communities and individuals who wish to learn more about the dynamics of Hispanic workers on New York dairy farms. Survey results will also be useful to Cooperative Extension and other community educators in planning and delivering effective educational programs for both Hispanic employees and their managers.

### The Importance of Family

The survey results reflect the importance of family in the lives of the immigrant workers studied. In Hispanic cultures, men for generations left home for extended periods of time to support their family if they could not find work in their home community (Durand and Massey 2004). In this study, 98% of the workers were men who had left home either to support a spouse and children at home or to support siblings and parents at home in Mexico or Guatemala. Of the surveyed workers, 97% regularly send money to family members in their home country. Typically, Hispanic workers can make as much or more in one hour working on a New York dairy farm than they can make in a day in their home country. As of January 1, 2005 the minimum daily wage in Mexico, depending on the region of the country, ranges from \$3.95 to \$4.20 U.S. per person per day. The average daily wage in Mexico is reported to be 2.5 times the minimum wage or \$9.87 - \$10.50 U.S. per person per day (The Arizona Republic 2005). Wages for workers in this study ranged from \$5.50 to \$11.50 per hour.

While most of the participants in this survey are in the United States to support family members, only 14% of those surveyed had a spouse with them in the United States and only 11% had children in the United States compared to 39% who said they had a spouse in their own country and 44% who said they had children in their home country. So, while family is very important in Hispanic cultures, it has also been traditionally necessary for men to leave the family to find work to support their family (Durand and Massey 2004). Likewise, as shown in this survey, while Hispanic workers are in the United States, they make it clear to their employers that they want to work a substantial number of hours per week with a goal of maximizing their weekly income. The higher the weekly paycheck, the more money workers have to send to family members in their home country. Workers in this study worked an average of 62 hours per week, and 84% of the workers surveyed worked 51 or more hours per week. Survey participants also reported that they insist on working an average of 55 hours per week or they will look for other work. Survey respondents talked about loneliness and missing family members and working long hours helps keep the employees occupied.

Another important family related issue is the process of sending money home. When asked if they make money transfers to their home country, almost every worker surveyed (97%) reported sending money home. There are three important issues related to money transfers for immigrant workers: security, convenience and cost. In rural Upstate New York, money transfer options are sometimes limited, but this study demonstrates that workers have been resourceful in locating money transfer services that fit their needs. The most common method of money transfer reported by 46% of workers surveyed is Western Union, usually accessed at a local supermarket or discount department store. In addition, 16% indicated that they acquired money orders and mailed them home, while another 7% use bank transfers.



All other options mentioned by survey respondents were some type of money wiring service – usually at a small local store. The most convenient method of transferring money reported is money transferred at a Mexican store which has a delivery truck that comes to the farm. Workers simply give money to the truck driver at the farm to be transferred later. Obviously, there is a high level of trust between the store owner and the workers.

Cost is an important money transfer issue. A large number of the workers were using Western Union, which is typically the most expensive way to transfer money (usually costing at least 6% of the amount to be transferred). The other sources for money transfers listed usually cost substantially less. This raises the question of how to lower the cost for those individuals who are using expensive forms of money transfers. In some cases, it appears that the employer could be helpful in trying to locate lower cost, yet secure and convenient, money transfer options for their workers.

### **Language/Communication**

Overcoming the language barrier is regarded as a substantial challenge by both the employers and the employees who participated in this survey. When asked how well they speak English, nearly 57% of the workers indicated that they speak no English or that they speak English “not very well.” Workers also listed overcoming the language barrier as the second greatest challenge they face coming to the United States after crossing the border. When employers were asked in an open-ended question to identify obstacles they must overcome to be successful employers of Hispanic workers, 96% identified the language barrier as the most important obstacle they needed to overcome. When workers were asked what they find most difficult about their job, 11% indicated communication and when workers were asked what they would like to change about their job, 6% indicated they would like to be able to speak English.

There are two primary issues relating to overcoming the language barrier. First is the availability of language education via language education tools, classes, tutoring, and training conducted in Spanish. The second is the desire and commitment to learn another language. Generally speaking, English as a second language instruction, tutoring and local Spanish classes, including at community colleges, are all available to members of dairy communities who wish to take advantage of them. Admittedly, employers, managers and workers spend so many hours on the job that it takes an extraordinary commitment to find the time to invest in language education outside of work. Regardless, the language issue is so important to a productive and orderly work place that it deserves more attention. More resources geared toward using dairy related and agricultural related words and phrases would be helpful. In addition, it appears that more effort is needed to encourage English speakers on the farm to learn and use Spanish and Spanish speakers on the farm to learn and use English. Employers might consider providing some time during work hours for workers to learn another language through a tutor coming on the farm or through group language sessions on the farm. Employers might also consider paying workers for the time they spend learning a second language or an increase in pay for learning a second language. Until the language barrier is more effectively overcome, it seems likely that advancement of workers into more complex jobs or into supervisory roles will be delayed. Employers who encourage their employees to learn a second language can have a strong influence on how quickly employees progress in their language training, in their jobs and integrating into communities (Pfeffer and Parra December 2004).

### **Legal Status**

The fact that there are large numbers of Hispanic workers in the United States without proper documentation is widely known and discussed. In the U.S. Department of Labor’s National Agricultural

Worker Survey (NAWS) 1997-1998 a majority (52%) of workers reported that they were not authorized to work in the United States. This survey database is now somewhat out of date and many experts feel the actual percentage is much higher.

Workers in this study were not directly asked if they had entered the United States legally, nor did they directly state as part of the survey that they were in the country illegally. However, answers to several of the questions clearly indicate a concern over legal status on the part of both employers and Hispanic employees. When asked to select from a list of the greatest challenges in coming to the United States, two-thirds (66%) of the workers surveyed said crossing the border was one of their top three challenges. When employers were asked to identify the greatest obstacles in managing a Hispanic work force, citizenship and immigration issues was third on the list after language and culture. When asked how many trips they had taken home since first starting to work in the United States, either voluntarily or by deportation, 14% of the workers indicated that they had been deported at least once. Also, when workers were asked what they would like to change about their employment situation in an open-ended question, 13% indicated immigration status and freedom.

This survey reinforces the general perception that a portion of Hispanic workers in the United States, whether working in agriculture or outside of agriculture, do not have legal status to live or work here. Agricultural employers often do not know if a worker has legally entered the United States because most workers who have entered the country illegally, have fraudulent documents which they present to the employer when they are hired. This raises two critical issues for agricultural employers. First, it is very important that employers ask their workers for proper documentation and fill out I-9 forms to verify that they have done so. Agricultural employers should do everything possible to ensure that their workers have authentic documents. Second agricultural employers may choose to become involved in the policy making process surrounding immigration reform. Legislative efforts to adjust the working status of immigrants currently employed in U.S. agriculture have been on the agenda of the U.S. Congress for more than ten years and have received strong backing from hundreds of agricultural organizations. Agricultural immigration reform is one way to address the issue of illegal workers in agriculture, and agricultural employers have an opportunity to be active participants in this policy making discussion (Holt 2005).

### **Job Responsibilities and Job Satisfaction**

By far, the most common task the surveyed workers performed was milking followed by other jobs directly related to the milking process. Some workers also worked with calves and heifers but only 10% did any type of field crop work. For the most part, workers appeared to be very satisfied with the work they do and would like to learn other jobs within the dairy business.

The survey results included several indicators of job dissatisfaction, as well as job satisfaction. An indicator of job dissatisfaction was workers' reasons given for leaving their last job. In response to an open-ended question, 41% of the workers indicated they left their last job for better pay and benefits and 25% left their previous job because there was not enough work or the hours were insufficient. When workers were asked why they came to work at their current farm, two of the top three reasons given in order of priority were: year-round work and wages. It is important to note that some of these workers came to their current dairy employment directly from a low wage job in their home country, some from migrant field labor in fruits and vegetables, some from employment outside of agriculture, and some from employment on other dairy farms. While survey results indicate that pay is important, other issues were important to the surveyed workers as well. When workers were asked what they liked most about their job, their answers were varied, but positive. Employees reported that they like milking (in most cases in a modern parlor), they like working with animals and they like the opportunity to work in an

environment that was calm and not boring. When asked what they liked about their employer or supervisor on an unprompted basis, 74% of the workers surveyed talked about their boss being “a good man” and treating them well. One attribute of a boss or supervisor that appears to be very important to Hispanic workers is that the employer is calm and respectful. Of the workers surveyed, 28% said one of the things they liked about their boss is that he is calm and does not yell. When workers were asked what is most difficult about their job, the top three responses were: learning responsibilities and technology required, working in the cold and the snow, and communication, which also is likely to include language. It is also interesting to note that when workers were asked what is most difficult about their job, 39% indicated that nothing was difficult. Many of the farms participating in the survey have only employed Hispanic workers for two years or less, and the employment situation appears to be going well and in most cases the workers are very satisfied. Employers will continue to be challenged to overcome the language barrier and to provide employees the training they need to accept increasing responsibility in the business. Hispanic employees appear very willing to learn new jobs and increase their responsibilities, especially if it means an increase in wages. Overcoming the language barrier and implementing progressive training and development programs on the farm appear to be the two most positive things employers can do to increase the value of Hispanic workers within the business. Of the survey respondents, one in five (20%) said that working in the cold and snow was one of the most difficult aspects of their job. Since these employees generally come from warm climates they may initially need assistance in selecting proper work clothing for winter weather.

## **Compensation**

As indicated earlier, wages and benefits are the primary motivators for Hispanic workers coming to the United States for work. With the cultural importance of family and the need to leave the family to find work, as discussed previously, many Hispanic employees are not necessarily motivated by the money per se, but rather by what the money will do for their loved ones back home. Most attempt to maximize their income by working as many hours as possible and all in this survey are paid an hourly wage. The average current wage paid to surveyed Hispanic dairy employees is \$7.51 per hour. The range is \$5.50 to \$11.50. As will be noted below, employers furnish other perquisites, housing in particular, enabling most Hispanic employees to remit a substantial portion of their earnings to family in their home country.

In addition to wages, employees also receive a variety of benefits. Of the workers surveyed, 91% reported that their employer provides them housing, including heat, electricity and water substantially deferring the cost of living in the United States. Other benefits are also frequently provided, including transportation, a telephone in their residence, television, satellite TV in Spanish and space for a garden.

As mentioned previously the top three reasons given for coming to work on this farm were Family/Friends (52%), Year-round Work (31%) and Wages (24%). Since most Hispanic employees are closely networked with their friends and family working in the U.S., compensation information is readily shared so employers are pressured to provide competitive compensation packages. If an employer does not provide sufficient wages and benefits, it is possible in many cases for the employee to locate, through friends and family, a job where the wages and benefits are better. Also, the number of hours available for an individual to work are as important or even more important than the hourly wage since hours worked have such a significant influence on the total weekly wage. Workers make it clear that they will not stay on a farm if sufficient hours of work are not provided.

## Retention

A key concern of any employer is the retention of productive and satisfied workers, yet among surveyed employees, 87% said their tenure with the farm was two years or less. There are two issues evident here. One is workers moving from farm to farm and worker-retention on individual farms, and second, to a much smaller extent, workers returning to their home country. On average, surveyed workers have had about three U.S. employers since they began working in this country. Nearly 28% have had only one U.S. employer, while about the same number (29%) have had four or more U.S. employers.

In trying to predict whether workers will remain working in the United States for some period of time, researchers have found that the most accurate predictor is not necessarily the workers' stated intent, but rather the presence of nuclear family here in the United States with them. Individuals here without their nuclear family may state an intention to stay in the U.S. long term, but they are also likely to return home in spite of their stated intent. At the same time, immigrants here with their wife and children are more likely to indicate an intent to remain working in the U.S. long term and more likely to follow through on their stated intent (Chavez 1984, Pfeffer and Para November 2004). Among Hispanic employees on New York dairy farms, some are here with brothers or cousins, but few have wives or children here with them. While 56% of these Hispanic workers are married, only 14% of the workers surveyed have a spouse with them here in the U.S.; 39% have a spouse in their home country.

Hispanic employees are potentially a highly mobile work force. From the standpoint of employee retention, these data suggest that employers should be certain that they are paying competitive wages and that they have adequate year-round work and hours available for their employees.

Another aspect of Hispanic employee retention is the employees' feeling of acceptance, comfort and belonging in both the work environment and the community. It is absolutely essential that employers maintain a work place completely free of discrimination or racial bias where everyone can feel accepted and comfortable. This becomes more difficult at the community level but highlights the need in some cases for employers to advocate for their employees in the community. Part of feeling comfortable in a community is the ability to accomplish things such as renting a house, opening a bank account, obtaining a drivers license and purchasing a car. Recent research at Cornell University reported by Max Pfeffer and Pilar Parra in the December 2004 issue of *Northeast Dairy Business* showed a dramatic increase in a Hispanics' ability to accomplish these things if they speak English. So helping Hispanic employees to learn English makes them a more valuable employee and in a round about way will increase their level of comfort in both the work and community environments thereby improving employee retention.

## Challenges and Obstacles

The challenges and obstacles identified by employers and their Hispanic workers were strikingly similar in many respects. When employees were asked their greatest challenges when coming to the U.S. and given a list of challenges, the top three challenges were crossing the border, language and lack of freedom to do what they want. When employers were asked the open-ended question, "What top three obstacles do you feel you must overcome to be a successful employer?", the top three obstacles mentioned were the language barrier, cross-cultural understanding and citizenship/immigration issues. Employee training and transportation were fourth and fifth on the employers' list. For long term success with Hispanic workers in New York's dairy industry, some reasonable solution to the illegal alien problem must be found. The most likely scenario is a political solution coming through the legislative process in Washington, D.C. that will give employees working visas or legal status to work in the United States (Holt 2005). Language training will continue to be a major issue. Farm employers should

continue to urge their supply dealers and agri-business support people to develop materials, both training tapes and other educational materials, in Spanish. Likewise, they should continue to invest in their own language training so that they can effectively speak the language of their workers, avoid misunderstandings and create a work environment based on employee growth and development. This type of work environment is only possible if the language barrier is substantially overcome. Employers should also give employees incentives to learn the English language including an increase in pay if they learn the language and time off to attend classes either on the farm or off the farm. Agricultural employers are continually challenged to educate themselves regarding the culture of their workers. Employers who understand the culture of their employees are in a much stronger position to show respect and build loyalty with the workers over the long term. Hispanic workers in this survey indicated that their third greatest challenge in coming to the U.S. was lack of freedom to do what they wanted. This is an important issue and one that has several dimensions. First, when employees do not have drivers licenses or friends with vehicles and licenses, they are at risk of being somewhat isolated on the farm and dependent upon the employer to provide most if not all of the transportation, thus limiting their mobility. In other instances, employees are reluctant to leave the farm for fear that they will be reported by citizens or noticed in the community by law enforcement officials and possibly deported. The third issue relating to lack of freedom has to do with employees working in very rural areas, perhaps ten miles or more from town, leaving them somewhat disconnected from the community. The issue of community acceptance of Hispanic workers was not raised in the survey as a major issue by Hispanic employees or their employers, yet issues relating to being assimilated into the community are very likely to be important in years ahead. Agricultural employers will be challenged to find ways to promote and foster community acceptance of their immigrant workers within their communities. It is also important to note that most of the dairy farms in this study were large by New York standards – 88% had 200 cows or more. However, this situation is changing and in the future it is likely that an increasing number of smaller dairies will employ Hispanic workers.

## **Suggested Areas for Further Study**

---

### **1. Overcoming the Language Barrier**

Further study is needed to identify the obstacles to effectively overcome the language barrier between Hispanic workers, their employers, managers and co-workers. Questions to be answered include: “To what extent does the language barrier impede productivity in the work place?; What are the obstacles to overcoming the language barrier?; What impact does the language barrier have on workplace safety?; What tools and techniques are needed to successfully address language issues on the dairy farm; and Are some things that are thought to be language barriers actually the result cultural differences”?

### **2. Job Growth and Advancement**

There is a need for further study of job growth and advancement opportunities for Hispanic workers on dairy farms. Career ladder and professional development opportunities on New York dairy farms should be more clearly identified. Potential language, production knowledge and cultural barriers to advancement should be identified and strategies developed to overcome them.

### **3. Turnover and Retention**

The Hispanic work force on New York dairy farms continues to be mobile. There is a variety of reasons why Hispanic workers leave their employers within a year or two of coming to the farm. These reasons for leaving need to be more clearly identified and understood so that strategies can be developed to retain these valuable workers over a longer period of time.

### **4. Money Transfer Options**

Further analysis is needed comparing high-cost money transfer services to low-cost money transfer services. Education programs are needed to direct workers to low-cost, secure and convenient money transfer systems. In the process of addressing this issue, the use of banks and banking services by Hispanic workers should also be examined.

## References

---

- Chavez, L.R. "Doctors, Curanderos and Brujas: Health Care Delivery and Mexican Immigrants in San Diego." *Medical Anthropology* 15:31-37, 1984.
- Durand, Jorge and Douglas S. Massey. "Crossing the border: research from the Mexican Migration Project." Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2004.
- Holt, James S. "The Looming Agricultural Labor Crisis and Legislative Remedies," *Managing the Hispanic Work Force Conference Proceedings*, Jan 18-21, 2004. Department of Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University.
- Maloney, Thomas R. "Management of Hispanic Employees on New York Dairy Farms: A Survey of Farm Managers." EB 99-19, Department of Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University, November 1999.
- Pfeffer, M. J. and P. A. Parra. "Immigrants and the Community." Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University, November 2004. [http://rnyi.cornell.edu/poverty\\_and\\_social\\_inequality](http://rnyi.cornell.edu/poverty_and_social_inequality)
- Pfeffer, M. J. and P. A. Parra. "New Immigrants: Language skills open opportunities." *Northeast Dairy Business*, December 2004.
- Stup, Richard E. and Thomas R. Maloney. *Managing Hispanic Workers: Perceptions of Agricultural Managers*. Dairy Alliance, Department of Animal Science, The Pennsylvania State University, 2003.
- The Arizona Republic, Online Edition January 6, 2005. Mexico sets increase in minimum wages. Associated Press, December 24, 2003, 12:00AM.
- US Department of Agriculture. 2002 Census of Agriculture, New York, State and County Data, Volume 1, Geographic Area Series, Part 32, AC-02-A-32, Washington DC, June 2004.
- U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/metroarea.html>
- U.S. Department of Labor. Findings from the "National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 1997-1998," Research Report No. 8, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Office of Program Economics, Washington, D.C., March 2000.

# APPENDIX



Farm Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name of Worker: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Enumerator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Encuesta de Trabajadores Hispanos Hispanic Worker Survey**

### **Part I Demográficos / Demographics**

1. ¿Cuántos años tiene usted?

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

2. ¿De dónde esta usted?

Where are you from?

País /Country \_\_\_\_\_

Estado/Departamento /State/Department \_\_\_\_\_

Pueblo /Village \_\_\_\_\_

3. Sexo (marcar uno)

Sex (circle one)

Masculino/Male

Femenino/Female

4. ¿Cuál nivel de educación ha cumplido usted? (marcar uno)

What level of education have you completed? (check one)

nada

primaria

secundaria

Universidad

\_\_\_\_\_ none

\_\_\_\_\_ primary k-8

\_\_\_\_\_ secondary 9-12

\_\_\_\_\_ University

5.

a. ¿Tiene usted esposo/a?

Do you have a spouse

Sí/Yes

No/No

Marcar todos que se aplican/check all that apply:

En el caso de sí/If yes:

En su país/In your home country

\_\_\_\_\_

Aquí en EEUU/Here in the U.S.

\_\_\_\_\_

En el rancho/On the farm

\_\_\_\_\_

b. ¿Usted tiene hijos?

Do you have children

Sí/Yes

No/No

Marcar todos que se aplican/check all that apply:

En el caso de sí/If yes:

En su país/In your home country

\_\_\_\_\_

Aquí en EEUU/Here in the U.S.

\_\_\_\_\_

En el rancho/On the farm

\_\_\_\_\_

6. ¿Ha trabajado usted con vacas lecheras en el pasado?

Have you worked with dairy cows before?      Sí/Yes \_\_\_\_ ranchos/farms      No/No

En el caso de sí, ¿cuántas vacas?

If yes, what was the number of cows?

Su país/your country

a. Menos de 10/Less than 10

b. 10-50/10 – 50

c. Más que 50/More than 50

EEUU /United States

a. Menos de 100/Less than 100

b. 100-500/100 – 500

c. Más que 500/More than 500

7. ¿Cuándo comenzó usted trabajar en los EEUU?

When did you first start working in the United States?

Mes/month \_\_\_\_\_ Año/year \_\_\_\_\_

8. ¿Cuántos patrones ha tenido usted aquí en EEUU (Cuántos lugares ha trabajado Ud. en EEUU)?

How many U.S. employers have you worked for? \_\_\_\_\_

9. ¿Por qué dejó usted su trabajo anterior?

Why did you leave your last job? \_\_\_\_\_

¿El trabajo anterior era en una lechería?

Was your last job at a dairy?

Sí/Yes No/No

10. ¿Por qué vino usted a esta finca para trabajar? (marcar todos que se aplican)

Why did you come to this farm to work? (check all that apply)

El pago      familia/amigos      trabajo todo el año      condiciones del trabajo  
wages      family/friends      year-round work      work conditions

Tratamiento por el patrón      Otro \_\_\_\_\_

Treatment by employer      Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. ¿Cuántos viajes ha tomado usted a su país desde comenzar trabajar en EEUU?

How many trips have you taken home since you first started working in the

U.S. \_\_\_\_\_

12. ¿Cuál era lo más difícil para usted a llegar en EEUU? (marcar en orden los primeros 3)  
 What was the greatest challenge for you when you came to the U.S.? (mark in order the top 3)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Lograr los necesidades básicas (comida, vivienda, transporte, etc.)  
 Meeting basic needs (food, housing, transportation, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Entender una cultura nueva (cultura de EEUU y maneras de hacer cosas)  
 Understanding a new culture (U.S. customs and ways of doing things)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Superar la barrera de la idioma  
 Overcoming the language barrier
- \_\_\_\_\_ Prejuicio  
 Prejudice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Falta de libertad para hacer lo que quiere hacer  
 Lack of freedom to do what you want
- \_\_\_\_\_ Otro/Other \_\_\_\_\_

13.

- a. ¿Manda usted dinero a su país?  
 Do you make money transfers to your home country?      Sí/Yes      No/No
- b. ¿En el caso de sí, cómo y dónde hace la transferencia de dinero?  
 If yes, How and where do you make money transfers?

14. ¿Cómo tan bien habla usted ingles?  
 How well do you speak English?

- \_\_\_\_\_ No muy bien/Not very well
- \_\_\_\_\_ Puede hablar un poco español/Can speak some English
- \_\_\_\_\_ Muy bien/Very well

15. Planes para el futuro. Marque la opción que usted le gusta hacer.  
 Plans for the future. Mark the option you would like to do.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Vivir en EEUU por el largo plazo. / Live in the United States long term.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Trabajar aquí un tiempo y regresar a su casa. / Work here for a time and return home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ otra cosa. / other. \_\_\_\_\_

## Part II – Necesidades Básicas / Basic Needs

16. ¿Cómo tan importante es que el patrón le ofrece: (marcar la cajita apropiada)?

How important is it that your employer offers: (please check the appropriate box)

	Proveído provided	Esencial Essential	Importante Important	No le importa Not Important
Teléfono en la casa /Telephone in residence				
Vivienda (casa) /Housing				
Transporte /Transportation				
Oportunidades recreativas /Recreational opportunities				
Televisión en español /TV in Spanish				
Tiempo libre extendido para volver a su casa /Extended time off to return home				
Entrenamiento para nuevos trabajos/ Training in new job skills				
Oportunidad para avance en el trabajo / Opportunities for advancement				
Espacio para un huerto / Space for a garden				
otro / otro _____				
otro / otro _____				

## Part III Características del Trabajo / Job Characteristics

Trabajo Job	Horas que hace este trabajo	Me gustaría aprender ese trabajo		
Horas trabajadas por semana Hours worker per week _____	Hours spent doing this job	No fuerte I would like to learn this job Strong No	Sí fuerte Strong Yes	
Ordeñar /Milking		1	2	3
Identificar y tratar la mastitis en la sala Diagnosing and treating mastitis in the parlor		1	2	3
Alimentar las vacas /Feeding		1	2	3
Trabajo con becerras /Working with calves		1	2	3
Trabajo con vaquillas /Working with heifers		1	2	3
Identificando y tratando vacas enfermas /Diagnosing and treating sick cows		1	2	3
Trabajar con los pastos /Field crop work		1	2	3
Limpiando los establos /barn cleaning		1	2	3
Arreando vacas /cow pushing		1	2	3
Otro /Other - _____		1	2	3

17. ¿Cuántas horas por semana le gustaría trabajar?  
How many hours per week would you like to work?

---

---

18. ¿Cuántas horas insista usted trabajar o buscará otro trabajo?  
How many hours per week do you insist on working or you will look for a different job?

---

---

19. ¿Qué cosa le gusta más de su trabajo?  
What one thing do you like most about your job?

---

---

20. ¿Qué cosa le gusta más del patrón o supervisor?  
What one thing do you like most about your employer or supervisor?

---

---

21. ¿Qué son las cosas más difíciles de su trabajo?  
What are the most difficult things about your job?

---

---

---

---

22. ¿Qué puede hacer el patrón para hacer mejor su trabajo?  
What could your employer do to make your job better?

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Hispanic Worker Compensation Survey

Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Person providing compensation information: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Employee #1</b>	<b>Employee #2</b>	<b>Employee #3</b>
1. Employee Name	_____	_____	_____
2. Starting hourly wage	_____	_____	_____
3. Years with the farm	_____	_____	_____
4. Current hourly wage	_____	_____	_____
5. Average hours worked per week	_____	_____	_____
6. Benefits: (Check all that apply)			
Housing	_____	_____	_____
Health Insurance	_____	_____	_____
Retirement paid by employee	_____	_____	_____
Retirement paid by employer	_____	_____	_____
Bonuses – specify	_____	_____	_____
Other - Specify	_____	_____	_____

7. What year did you hire your first Hispanic worker? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Have you ever had one of your Hispanic employees deported? (Circle one) Yes    No

**(OVER)**

9. Are there job advancement opportunities for Hispanic workers on your farm? (Circle one)    Yes    No

10. Identify the top three obstacles that you feel you must overcome to be a successful employer of Hispanic workers.

Obstacle #1

---

---

---

Obstacle #2

---

---

---

Obstacle #3

---

---

---

### OTHER A.E.M. RESEARCH BULLETINS

RB No	Title	Fee (if applicable)	Author(s)
2005-01	The Profitability of Agricultural Lending Relationships		LaDue, E., Gloy, B. and C. Cuykendall
2004-13	Dairy Farm Management Business Summary, New York State, 2003	(\$20.00)	Knoblauch, W., Putnam, L. and J. Karszes
2004-12	Optimal Institutional Mechanisms for Funding Generic Advertising: An Experimental Analysis		Messer, K., Schmit, T. and H. Kaiser
2004-11	Impact of Generic Milk Advertising on New York State Markets, 1986-2003		Kaiser, H., Wang, Y. and T. Schmit
2004-10	Consumer Preferences and Marketing Opportunities for Premium "Tree-Ripened Peaches" in New York State		Uva, W., Cuellar, S., and M. Cheng
2004-09	Agricultural Finance Markets in Transition; Proceedings of The Annual Meeting of NCT-194	(\$12.00)	Gloy, B., Editor
2004-08	Dairy Market Impacts of Milk Protein Imports and Trade Policy Alternatives		Bishop, P. and C. Nicholson
2004-07	The Coupon Report: A Study of Coupon Discount Methods		Park, K. and M. Gomez
2004-06	Marketing and Merchandising Practices for Fresh Sweet Corn in Supermarkets		Cuellar, S. and Uva, W.
2004-05	Sweet Corn Marketing Channels in New York State – A New York Sweet Corn Grower Survey		Uva, W.

Paper copies are being replaced by electronic Portable Document Files (PDFs). To request PDFs of AEM publications, write to (be sure to include your e-mail address): Publications, Department of Applied Economics and Management, Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801. If a fee is indicated, please include a check or money order made payable to Cornell University for the amount of your purchase. Visit our Web site (<http://aem.cornell.edu/research/rb.htm>) for a more complete list of recent bulletins.