



FARMWORKER STUDY

Covid19farmworkerstudy.org

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October 12, 2020

The following are responses to questions not answered during the Oregon COVID-19 Farmworker Study (COFS) press conference that took place on September 22, 2020. The following responses were created in collaboration with the Oregon COVID-19 Farmworker Study team, including: Jennifer Martinez, Portland State University; Ron Mize, Oregon State University; Lynn Stephen, University of Oregon; Gabriela Perez Baez, University of Oregon; Julie Samples, Oregon Law Center; Valentin Sanchez, Oregon Law Center; Peter Hainley, CASA of Oregon; Rosie Andalon, CASA of Oregon; and Kathy Keesee-Morales, UNETE Center for Farmworker Advocacy. Document translation from English to Spanish was generously provided by Vicente Alonso.

- 1. The website states: “COFS is also a tool for funneling resources (in the form of study funds) to community-based organizations and to workers themselves.” Which community-based organizations in Oregon are receiving resources and at what amounts?** Eleven community-based partners that helped us realize the study---Bienestar, CASA of Oregon, Centro Cultural de Washington County, Euvalcree, Farmworker Housing Development Corporation, Legal Aid Services of Oregon, Oregon Human Development Corporation, Oregon Law Center, UNETE, Columbia River Keepers, Unidos Bridging Community, and University of Oregon. Each organization (except OLC) was paid \$20/HR per survey (estimated at 2.5 hours), 5 hours of training, and an amount of overhead based on the number of surveys they carried out (either \$500 or 1,000), and incentives that then would be paid out to respondents.
- 2. How are resources being distributed to workers and at what amounts? Is any of the financial information available to the public?** Each organization is distributing a \$50 incentive. Each CBO had the autonomy to decide the form of distribution (gift card; grocery certificate; cash).
- 3. There are well over 100,000 farmworkers in Oregon with over 5,000 just in Woodburn alone. Why did only 214 participate in your study?** This was answered during the press conference. You can watch the press conference video again here <https://tinyurl.com/PressConferenceORCOFS>
- 4. In what counties were these surveys conducted?** In our preliminary sample (214 surveys) the surveys were distributed as such: Jackson 30; Lane 3; Lincoln 2; Deschutes County 1; Hood River 22; Umatilla 15; Wasco 4; Klamath 4; Malheur 26; Marion 45;



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Washington 59; Yamhill 3. Preliminary results do not include the full 300 surveys and their county distributions.

5. **How many different employers are represented in the 214? (That is to say, of the 214 farmworkers surveyed, do the answers correlate with all different employers, i.e. answers are representative of 214 different employers from across the state?) If not, how many employers can be correlated to the responses?** This is not a random sample, instead, we used a convenience sampling method focused on organizations with trust. So at this point, we are not saying correlation. We did not ask for employer names, but we did ask if farmworkers worked on-farm (Employer or Farm Labor Contractor/ Personnel Agency) or off-farm. We also sought out folks that worked in Forestry, Packing industries, and Seafood. Keep an eye out for more specific briefs on various topics.

6. **Para Valentin: did the indigenous speakers lack information about Covid precautions and social distancing, or was it that the information about relief funds and other assistance and supports that were missing?**

This was answered during the press conference. You can watch the press conference video again here <https://tinyurl.com/PressConferenceORCOFS>

7. **What indigenous languages did your 214 sample engage?**

The survey identified speakers of Mam (16), Q'anjob'al (also known as *Kanjobal*) (2), K'iche/Quiche (1), Mixteco languages (14), P'urhepecha (2), Triqui/Trique languages (1), and Zapotec languages (1) so far. Documentation from the Oregon Law Center's many years of outreach with farmworkers as well as Oregon court interpreter request data show at least 23 indigenous languages from Mexico and Guatemala found in Oregon—Achi, Akateko, Amuzgo, Chuj, Ixil, Huichol, Jakalteko, Kaqchikel, Mam, Maya Yucatan, Mixteco Alto, Mixteco Bajo, Nahuatl, P'urhepecha, Q'anjob'al, Q'eqchi, Quiche (K'iche'), Tlapaneco, Tojolobal, Trique languages (Intunyoso & Copala), Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Zapotec languages (Various).

8. **Did data show indigenous respondents less likely to know about and engage in COVID-19 safe practices than non-indigenous respondents (verifying language and other difficulties this population faces)?**

A majority of respondents (68 percent) reported that they or their foreman, expressed as mayordomo, received training on how to be safe from COVID-19 various times, 20% said they received little training, and 8% said they received no training. Of those that received training, 6% (11) of respondents stated that they did not receive training in a language that they preferred and of those 4% (9) said they understood some of the information provided in the training. We have not looked at COVID-19 safe practices by indigeneity. Stay tuned for future briefs with topic-specific information.



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9. Please talk about how these findings will be shared and used to encourage policy/program changes.

Oregon COFS shares results with any public agencies and community based organizations seeking more information. The team is also working on coordinating/organizing a legislative briefing.

10. What advice do you have for entities trying to communicate with farmworkers about prevention? In our county, Washington, 15 % of our population identifies as Hispanic/Latinx yet more than 50% of our COVID-19 cases are among Hispanic/Latinx people, and we know many are farmworkers.

We have several policy recommendations: Implement digital literacy programs to improve farmworker families' access to technology, such as supplying smartphones, tablets, and stipends to offset internet service costs; Mandate employers provide training, when not already required, in languages farmworkers speak and provide targeted plans to improve language accessibility of information, rules, guidance published by government agencies, by funding local organizers and navigators that can reach and inform farmworkers who speak Indigenous languages; and Ease barriers for exercising legal rights by connecting farmworkers to legal navigators that can provide legal advice on workplace rights, tenant rights, concerns over public charge, and immigrant rights.

Phase II of the survey will also allow for further discussion with farmworkers about their ideas of what would work for them.

11. Were there any interviews done with folks who had received support from the Oregon Workers Relief Fund, COVID-19 Farmworker Rental Relief Fund, and/or the Oregon Worker Quarantine Fund? I'm just curious if there are stories or data from families who had received support to help advocate for the renewal of that type of funding.

We asked farmworkers if they knew about the Oregon Worker Relief Fund. At the time of the survey launch, the Quarantine Fund had not been available and we did not include it to our list of questions. We did not ask respondents specifically if they have received support from the Oregon Worker Relief Fund and the Oregon Worker Quarantine Fund. We did ask farmworkers about the type of assistance they have used during the pandemic. Fifty-three percent said they used food banks and twenty-eight percent said they used a rental relief program. Additional data analysis would be needed to quantify how many farmworkers recognized the Worker and Quarantine Relief fund as sources of support in comment sections of the survey.

12. Have the workers shared anything about an increase in workplace violence?



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We did receive testimony from Surveyors/Promotores that spoke to the unique vulnerabilities arising from safe practices farmworkers are taking to protect their families, such as taking their own vehicle to the workplace instead of the collective *raitero* network. We heard about a woman with no transportation resorted to riding with a co-worker that sexually accosted her and left her stranded in the fields after she resisted his advance.

13. Priscilla Tovar would like to know if you have heard workers talk more about suicide?

Many reported stress from their children being at home and having to home-school them. Twelve people made specific comments about their children being bored, wanting to go out, and not knowing how to help them. In the preliminary results the data does not reveal reported suicide ideations or attempts. However, we do recognize that this topic is tabooed and may be underreported.

14. We already translate materials into many indigineous languages, and in pictures, we hired consultants to do posting on social, we work with our CBO's including Centro and Virginia Garcia, we work with growers and directly with farmworkers--but we are still facing many barriers of misinformation and fear.

While the survey did not specifically ask about the best modes of delivering informational materials, reaching indigenous communities requires developing culturally and linguistically appropriate materials in a simplified form. As mentioned during the press conference, many indigenous languages no longer have or do not have a formal written method which creates additional challenges, but it also creates an opportunity to be creative. One other possible way to disseminate informational materials outside of social media is through the use of commercial and public radio stations across the state. Also, local tv stations offer another opportunity to air video/audio content in indigenous languages to reach workers as they prepare for work or when they return home and can catch some of the local news.

There has been some initial interest around further asking farmworkers about how to best relay information.

15. What kind of mediums are being used to tell farmworkers about the Covid regulations? Have they been successful? If not, what would be a good way to let them know about it?

There appears to be a range of strategies and media used by CBOs and state agencies. The question posed deserves more discussion. In our survey farmworkers are reporting



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that they understand COVID-19 safe practices. However, when it comes to workplace enforcement, farmworkers fear retribution or losing their job. We must first understand how fear plays into complaint practices.

16. Would it better to distribute PPE directly to the farm workers as opposed to their employers?

Worksite context should inform outreach efforts. In Oregon, Seventy-seven percent of farmworkers reported receiving an employer-provided mask. Despite efforts to supply farmworkers with face-masks, 20% of farmworkers report their employer did not supply them with masks. Farmworkers with no employer provided masks worked for growers (33%); contractors (42%); personnel agency (9%); packing houses (5%); and others (12%). They worked in berries (35%); nurseries (23%); vine fruit (23%); fruit/nut trees (14%); and a range of other agricultural jobs (19%) such as pine cones, onion, mushrooms, and salal. Our partner study in California revealed that PPE is best distributed through community based organizations that can act as an intermediary.

17. Let's pretend that money poured in to reach people who use INDIGENOUS languages: Would you prioritize printed materials? Or navigators? Or access to internet? Or enforcement changes? Or other?

First, there has to be an investment in communicating with growers, contractors, mayordomos, and others who interact directly with workers and are responsible for providing safety instruction and support. Short videos that can be viewed on cell phones and audio files that target specific rights and safety practices in short chunks would be good. These can be produced in the dominant Indigenous languages in a particular area. Our study found 12 languages. Recent Indigenous Guatemalans speaking Mam, Q'anjob'al (*Kanjobal*) among other languages would be the first ones to start with. The need for navigators is also great. Many Indigenous immigrants have little schooling or a grade school education--some have more and some are highly educated. Working to identify bilingual and trilingual youth and train them as navigators is one strategy. Working with high schools and community colleges, churches. One problem is that recent Indigenous immigrants are often not connected to community based organizations except for churches--evangelical and catholic. The pandemic has shut down these spaces as well. In phase 2 we will have the opportunity to ask farmworkers what type of information works for them.

Questions from Chat:

18. Is there a migrant farmworkers union? There is a farmworker's union in Oregon, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), and other organizations that serve farmworkers. A specific union for those workers who move in streams in and out of the



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state is more difficult to pinpoint. The United Farm Workers also have an office in Oregon.

19. Will OSHA ask for legal status when they talk to workers? If so, do they have connections to ICE?

To our knowledge, Oregon OSHA does not ask for legal status when they talk to workers. However this question is best suited for Oregon OSHA to answer. Michael Wood, administrator of Oregon OSHA has confirmed the agency has no connections to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). He told us “We have no connections with ICE, we do not care about legal status (workers are entitled to a safe and healthy workplace under the law regardless of status) and we will not ask about it.” <https://www.osha.gov/pls/osha7/eComplaintForm.html>

20. Will the partners in this study be taking the policy recommendations to the Legislature?

This was partially answered during the press conference. You can watch the press conference video again here <https://tinyurl.com/PressConferenceORCOFS>

21. Where do farmworkers get information about COVID and health updates in their county?

The farmworkers in our survey relayed that they got information at work, also from their children’s schools, and sometimes from other sources.

22. We indigenous Mesoamerican are not a protected class? This is problem because funding doesn’t get to the people that deserve and need. Also. my mom was a farm worker and she is an indigenous. but few of us are able to get an education and we lose our indigenous definition just because we are not farm workers. we indigenous go back to our communities and if we don’t have opportunities at professional level then so much for the effort of our indigenous parents work and sacrifice.

A great point. Creating the conditions for Mesoamerican Indigenous peoples in Oregon to be recognized and supported is important. Educating everyone about Indigenous peoples from Mexico, Guatemala and elsewhere who contribute much to our state is key and making resources available to reach Mesomarian Indigenous people in all sectors--should be a priority. The issues found in this survey are not particular to farmworkers who are Indigenous but in many cases to Mesoamerican Indigenous people in all sectors of work.

23. Did the workers work in the 500 plus (air quality) because they have strong work ethics or because they did not have a choice cause no laws is protecting them specifically?

This was answered during the press conference. You can (re)watch the press conference video again here <https://tinyurl.com/PressConferenceORCOFS>

Workers can choose to stay home with no wages and risk losing their jobs or go to work without specific health and safety regulations that apply to their situation. Oregon OSHA does not have any specific regulations regarding farmworkers and outdoor air quality;



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while they encouraged employers to cease operations, there are no specific mandatory regulations.

24. Do we have any examples of businesses paying farm workers to not work during the wildfires?

We did not ask this specific question in relation to the wildfires.

25. What kind of mediums are being used to tell farmworkers about the Covid regulations? Have they been successful? If not, what would be a good way to let them know about it?

Please see responses to questions #14 and #17.

26. For indigenous populations is it better to provide info in written or video, spoken format?

Some indigenous languages from Mexico and Guatemala are no longer written in a standard form and/or the written language is not universally known. Video or audio formats are better, as well as verbal presentations. Please see answer to question 14. Other resources include Pueblo Unido PDX, Mixteco Community Organizing Project, CIELO, etc.

27. Will the study offer ideas for ways we all can improve? For example, how do we improve enforcement of working conditions, how do we more effectively disseminate information?

We see several ways that our findings can improve enforcement of working conditions, protect workers from exposure to COVID, and particularly disseminate information in the languages that farmworkers speak. Our policy prescriptions are highlighted based on our major findings: <https://tinyurl.com/PressConferenceORCOFS>.

**28. My question is this, why isn't there a plan of Coronavirus "testing" of the H2a workers upon their arrival?? It is critical that H2A workers be tested to avoid the spread of the virus!!! This is not only an Oregon problem it is a nationwide problem!Fernando Gutierrez State Monitor Advocate Oregon Employment Department Migrant & Seasonal Farmworker Program
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In our policy prescriptions, we recommend no-cost, rapid response testing available to all farmworkers, in no way does this preclude temporary workers recruited through the H-2A visa program. What we would caution against is any assumption that this is a one-way problem (the presumption that Mexican workers are bringing COVID-19 to the United States). We see this rapid response testing approach protecting both H2-A workers from contracting COVID in the United States as well as not spreading the virus upon return to Mexico so in this particular case, testing should be conducted upon arrival and before time of departure.



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The Oregon COVID-19 Farmworker Study Team (a consortium of 11 farmworker-serving organizations and academics from Portland State University, University of Oregon, and Oregon State University) announces the preliminary survey findings from more than 200 farmworkers living across all of Oregon. The initial findings provide unique insights into the conditions of these essential workers during the pandemic that are now exacerbated by historic wildfires. For more information on the project, please visit <http://covid19farmworkerstudy.org/>