PHASE ONE: FINAL REPORT
COVID-19’S DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT ON OREGON FARMWORKERS IS FAR-REACHING AND LONG-TERM

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ABOUT THE OREGON COVID-19 FARMWORKER STUDY (COFS)

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**NEXT STEPS FOR OREGON COFS**

A data brief will be released in the fall of 2021 focused on phase two results from forty-five in depth interviews with farmworkers.

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1. Farmworkers experience increased stress levels affecting their emotional well-being, but most lack access to mental health services.

2. Farmworkers are also caregivers. Farmworkers have trouble accessing affordable childcare and supporting their children’s education with the shift to remote classes.

3. Farmworkers experienced a significant loss of work and income during the COVID-19 pandemic creating broad economic challenges with significant differences by gender. They remained unaware of relief funds organized by the federal government and the state of Oregon and paid sick leave benefits. In particular, women find themselves losing months or weeks of work compared to men who lost weeks or days.

4. Farmworkers in general are experiencing resource gaps. But, those who speak Indigenous languages face additional information and accessibility gaps. Oregon Indigenous farmworkers speak at least 26 different languages from Guatemala and Mexico (such as Triqui, Mixtec languages, different Mam languages, Kanjobal, among others) and many are not fluent or literate in Spanish. In addition we found that Indigenous farmworkers lost more weeks and months of work, used supplemental food sources more, used shared transportation more, and worked for contractors more than non-Indigenous farmworkers.

5. Farmworkers take precautions at home and work as much as possible. Not all employers have taken consistent steps to prevent COVID-19 or protect workers.

6. Because of their living and working circumstances and lack of insurance, farmworkers encounter barriers to access to COVID-19 testing and care, the ability to quarantine, and benefits to support them if they do get sick despite reporting exposure to COVID-19.

7. Farmworkers worry greatly about family members outside the U.S., and the pandemic has resulted in a significant reduction in remittances sent to families in Mexico and Guatemala who depend on them.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Based on the above findings, the Oregon COFS Policy and Action Committee has endorsed the following fourteen recommendations that will be shared with policy makers, legislators, and other officials and institutions. The recommendations for action are based on what we have learned from farmworkers navigating the difficulties of COVID-19, forest fires, and displacement. Recommendations are the collective work and discussion of members of the OR COFS Policy and Action Committee, many of whom worked directly with farmworkers before and during each stage of the pandemic.

Recommendations are proposed by members of the OR COFS Policy and Action Committee:
CASA of Oregon
UNITE
Oregon Human Development Corporation
Centro Cultural de Washington County
Columbia Riverkeepers
Evaolcree
Farmworker Housing Development Corporation
Unidos Bridging Community
Bienestar
PCUN

1. Provide access to culturally informed methods of mental health support in a variety of languages and administered through trusted community clinics and university partnerships.

2. Subsidize or provide free access to childcare or learning centers, provide compensation for farmworkers who were forced to take time off work and/or relied on informal networks for caretaking/childcare responsibilities due to the closure of childcare facilities, transition to virtual education, and closure of schools as a result of COVID-19.

3. Implement digital literacy programs staffed with navigators to help farmworker families (students and parents) get connected, improve access to technology, and balance screen time by offering learning programs, supplying smartphones, tablets, and stipends to offset internet service costs.

4. Sustain, replenish, and expand state and community-led income and safety net support for farmworkers regardless of documentation status, such as the Temporary Paid Leave Program, Oregon Workers Relief Fund, COVID-19 Farmworker Rental Relief Fund, Oregon Worker Quarantine Fund with expanded qualifications and retroactive eligibility, and allow the Oregon State Individual Taxpayer Identification Number filers to claim Earned Income Tax Credit.

5. Reduce barriers to accessing safety net support by allocating resources to community-based organizations that reflect the communities they are serving (including Indigenous-led organizations) who have a history of working with the population, and equip them with appropriate language interpreters.

6. Address loss of wages that impacted farmworker women and others by expanding overtime eligibility for farmworkers and investigate gender-based discrimination during layoffs.

7. Create a state-coordinated, human-centered response team to ease barriers for exercising legal rights and provide guidance on relief applications by connecting farmworkers to legal and resource navigators that can provide legal advice on workplace rights, tenant rights, concerns over public charge, immigrant rights, driver’s licenses, and resource applications in the languages farmworkers speak.

8. Mandate employers provide adequate training, when not already required, in languages farmworkers use and provide targeted plans through experienced translators and interpreters 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. This means that the language the interpreter speaks is a correct language match, the interpreter has received training as an interpreter, and is not a family member.

9. Enforce existing anti-retaliation and workplace protections that assure farmworkers can take time off and/or can file employer complaints without fear of retaliation, such as supporting stronger whistleblower protections and abolishing farm labor collective bargaining restrictions.

10. Strengthen Oregon/OSHA occupational safety enforcement and worksite auditing activities, including random inspections.

11. To reach Oregon’s farmworkers in the administration of the vaccine, resources and information should flow to farmworker health clinics and farmworker-serving organizations to facilitate information about COVID-19 vaccinations and testing being available in Indigenous languages, farmworker clinics and farmworker-serving organizations need additional state resources for interpretation and the creation of materials in Indigenous languages.

12. Expand housing opportunities that can serve farmworker families facing housing insecurity and/or needing temporary quarantining shelter with adequate social distancing or shelter to recover from housing loss from fires.

13. Support farmworkers sending remittances to their families and communities by reducing money transfer fees and forming a matching funds support for their communities back home.

14. Establish a center for farmworker research that is rooted in community-based and collaborative research that can continue the effort of this study.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final results from a rapid response survey of 300 Oregonian farmworkers document just how pervasive and deleterious the COVID-19 global pandemic has been and continues to be on farmworkers and their families (in Oregon, the United States, and abroad). In this final report, we highlight the major findings. The discussion starts with an executive summary, followed by an overview of the study, and key findings. Key findings include subsections on women farmworkers, Indigenous farmworkers, and farmworkers in the workplace. The report then concludes with recommendations for action.

The Oregon COVID-19 Farmworker Study (COFS) provides strong evidence that the current pandemic has had a major impact on the work and home lives of Oregon’s estimated 174,000 farmworkers and their families. For the purposes of this report a seasonal farmworker is defined as an individual who was actively employed in agriculture on a seasonal basis (not more than 9 months) and a migrant farmworker meets the same definition as a seasonal farmworker, with temporary residence for the purpose of such employment (Rahe 2018: 2). Farmworkers and organizations that work with them have powerful and productive suggestions for improving the safety of workplaces and communities. This report may serve as a blueprint for recovery that will require intentional support from policy makers and employers. Findings from data collected with 300 surveys of farmworkers during the pandemic reveal the following:

MENTAL HEALTH
The combination of loss of income, inability to pay bills, and send remittances, struggles to educate children at home, and worry about relatives in home communities produced stress in a significant number of people surveyed—Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Many reported varied symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, and other conditions. The vast majority had no access to formal mental health treatment but many also reported creative ways of coping with their mental health symptoms including praying together, walking outside, listening to music and singing together, using social media, reading, hiking in nature, watching TV, Zumba classes, using traditional medicinal cures, and other activities. All were conscious of the need to work with their family members to create possibilities of connection and support. Informal networks of support were reported among farmworkers participants who joined together to support each other with medical and other costs.

IMPACT ON SCHOOLING AND CHILDREN
Families that were accustomed to being out working and going to school during the day were suddenly inside together, all day long. For families in crowded living quarters that they shared with others, they were often confined to one or two rooms. Everyone found themselves at home with children who had to adjust to school online. Often families did not have the internet in their home and children were attempting to access their classes through shared cell phones. School was often in English or in Spanish and Indigenous language speakers had difficulty even understanding what tasks their children were required to complete.

GENDERED DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT
Farmworker women were affected by COVID-19 in different ways than men. When the data is disaggregated by gender, 60 percent of women reported losing weeks and months of wages, while 45 percent of men reported losing the same span of work. Instead of continuing to work, significant numbers of women stayed home to do the carework of watching children, the elderly, and attempting to navigate online school. Women were more involved in helping their children navigate online school, but some men were also involved in helping their children learn. Men felt an obligation to continue working to provide for their families if they had them but also for relatives in home communities. Some women felt this burden as well.
farmworkers are much more likely to rely on supports that are very localized such as food banks and schools than on statewide programs. Local institutions and resources are more known and networks of Indigenous farmworker families share information about these local resources through kin and community networks in Indigenous languages. State-sponsored programs, which are often promoted in Spanish, are not visible to Indigenous farmworkers. Thus, communication and information about state-sponsored relief programs that Indigenous farmworkers may qualify for is a significant obstacle. For similar reasons, Indigenous farmworkers indicated less awareness than non-Indigenous farmworkers about sick pay and family leave.

SAFETY AT WORK AND HOME
Farmworkers are well educated on the pandemic and have a high level of awareness of safety measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. When conditions are under their control, as in their own households, they are careful to wash their hands, take off clothing, and mask when shopping or interacting with others. At work, where conditions are not in their control, they do their best to use the PPE provided and to social distance. Production conditions do not always permit that. Farmworkers are also aware of the use of quarantining as a way of preventing the spread of COVID-19, but often do not have adequate space in their housing to effectively quarantine from all household members. About 37 percent surveyed were tested for COVID-19. Those tested usually did not pay for their test and reported preferring to be tested at local, known clinics. Significant numbers of people who knew people who were infected or lived with someone infected reported that a minority of these people were tested.

BARRIERS TO TESTING AND TREATMENT, QUARANTINING, AND SICK LEAVE
Our survey found just over 15 percent of farmworkers in the sample tested positive for COVID-19. Farmworkers knew people infected or had been directly exposed to COVID-19 (closer to 49 percent), but few report getting tested (37 percent). Low rates of testing may reflect dimin-
ished access to these services, but more research is needed to determine the cause. Cost and fear of losing a job are significant barriers to accessing testing and care. Few farmworkers have the means to quarantine or isolate if they or someone in their household is sick. One-half or more of farmworkers surveyed remain unaware of paid sick leave benefits and existing relief funds organized by the federal government and the state of Oregon.

REMITTANCES/TRANSBORDER CONNECTIONS: IMPACT OUTSIDE U.S. IN MEXICO AND GUATEMALA
Most survey participants are connected to their communities of origin in Mexico and Guatemala. They use WhatsApp, and communicate regularly with parents, siblings, nieces, nephews, and others in their extended families. Many farmworkers are financially supporting members of their extended families in Guatemala and Mexico with regular remittances. A significant impact of their loss of income was that they also had less to send to their relatives. For many, that was an additional cause of worry as they knew that their elderly parents or others depended on what they sent to eat and pay for expenses. As the pandemic spread in Guatemala and Mexico, local markets shut down, buses and vans in regional transportation systems shut down, and people sheltered in place. The loss of remittances from families in the U.S. also negatively impacted people in Guatemala and Mexico.

CLOSER TO

49% know people infected or have been directly exposed

15% tested positive for COVID-19

37% report getting tested

Highlighted Results. Percentages will not sum to 100 percent.
INTRODUCTION

Farmworkers, deemed essential, were called to work on the frontlines of the global pandemic to produce and sustain food chains. Oregon farmworkers who are Latinx have faced disproportionate infection rates, consistently trending between 24.2 percent of all COVID-19 cases in the state despite being only 13 percent of the population. The Oregon Health Authority’s COVID-19 weekly report continues to highlight food packing and agricultural worksites as uniquely vulnerable to the spread of the virus due to workflows that require close proximity, and creating an overrepresentation of cases suffered by people of color at agricultural worksites.

The COVID-19 Farmworker Study (COFS) is the first study of its kind in Oregon to provide information about specific impacts on working conditions, sanitation, transportation, homelife, housing, remittances and connections to home communities in Guatemala and Mexico, medical attention and mental health of farmworkers and their families. The study is the result of nine months of planning and collaboration among eleven farmworker-serving community-based organizations, researchers from three Oregon universities, and contributions from a wide range of advocates around the state. Since the scientifically designed survey was administered by staff from trusted organizations in farmworker communities, we are confident that the results reflect the experiences of farmworkers in contact with farmworker-serving organizations, but a limitation of the survey is we are not able to capture the experiences of farmworkers who do not receive services from these organizations and are likely more vulnerable.

On March 8, 2020, the state of Oregon issued emergency orders and a stay-at-home order intended to reduce the spread of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). By March 20, 2020 when outbreaks in agricultural worksites across the country became quite visible, Oregon Law Center (OLC) and Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center (VGMHC) sent a letter to Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and Oregon Occupational Safety and Health (Oregon OSHA) requesting protection for farmworkers by petitioning to amend 437-004-1100 Relating to Field Sanitation and Related to Work and 437-004-1120 relating to Agricultural Labor Housing and Related Facilities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the letter, Oregon OSHA denied the request but allowed public comments. By May, agriculture and food production workers were deemed essential by the U.S. government and soon, clusters of Oregon farmworkers experienced COVID-19 outbreaks at places like Townsend Farms, Pacific Seafood, Duckwall Fruit, and producers of frozen fruit products. Oregon OSHA held a temporary rulemaking process including a public comment period and issued temporary rules that went into effect in May and June 2020. Oregon OSHA’s temporary rules (with exception to the housing portion extended by Executive Order 20-58 through April 30, 2021) expired in late October 2020. New reported outbreaks did not stop. For example, there was a reported COVID-19 outbreak among 59 agricultural workers in October of 2020 in Klamath County, according to officials.

Following the temporary rules, on June 27, 2020, Oregon OSHA issued “Statewide Mask, Face Shield and Face Covering Guidance” following the recommendations of the Oregon Health Authority. It wasn’t until November of 2020, that Oregon OSHA issued its “COVID-19 Temporary Standard for All Workplaces.” This standard did not become effective until November 16, 2020, making it difficult before that time for employees to report violations of practices such as physical distancing, sanitation requirements, and the right of workers testing positive for COVID-19, who quarantined, to return to their previous job without any adverse action. Oregon OSHA issued permanent rules in April 2021 regarding agricultural labor housing and in May 2021 regarding other types of workplaces.

In September of 2020, Oregonians witnessed farmworkers’ labor through intolerable air quality conditions resulting from historic wildfires. In February 2021, farmworkers faced disruptions once again due to snowstorms and ice. With catastrophic wildfire and extreme weather events, the vulnerability of Oregon farmworkers is even greater as people displaced still have to work in hazardous conditions.
The Oregon Health Authority estimates that 174,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and related family members’ support Oregon agriculture and put food on our tables.\textsuperscript{15} Despite delivering necessary food to our tables, farmworkers have not had equal access to the support and care provided to other essential workers, such as the daycare services some healthcare workers received. The existing structural disparities heightened by the pandemic make it critical that Oregon allocates adequate resources to prevent, identify, and treat COVID-19 and related consequences for already-vulnerable farmworkers.

This study provides the first statewide picture of the impact of COVID-19 on the work and home lives of Oregon farmworkers. The devastating effects of COVID-19 on farmworkers are tied to the dangerous and substandard working, living and social conditions that farmworkers have endured for decades well before the pandemic. As a unique group of essential workers, farmworkers merit special attention because farmworkers and their families continue to live through long-existing layers of inequality. Historical farmworker exclusions in the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) from collective bargaining and overtime pay continue to suppress wages and weaken worker protections. Nationally, farmworkers’ mean and median personal incomes during 2015-2016 remain in the range of $17,500 to $19,999.\textsuperscript{14} Farmworkers often receive lower wages, work in harsh working conditions, and some experience wage theft or retaliation as a result of employment discrimination.\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, most work at seasonal jobs—rarely holding full-time, year-round work.

More than one-third of Oregon’s agricultural workforce is undocumented. Fear of deportation and public charge laws often serve as a marginalizing factor, preventing many from accessing their legal rights and seeking public support.\textsuperscript{10} Farmworkers’ varied immigration statuses excluded many from accessing the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act relief, and unemployment benefits despite being labeled as essential workers.\textsuperscript{17 18}

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranks agriculture among the most hazardous industries with a high risk of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries. The average life expectancy of farmworkers is still only tallied at 49 years.\textsuperscript{19} Occupational dangers such as pesticide exposure,\textsuperscript{20} extreme weather, and dangerous road conditions to and from work,\textsuperscript{21} and psychosocial stressors of (im)migration experiences\textsuperscript{22} are all involved in reducing farmworkers’ length and overall quality of life. Despite experiencing higher risks and health disparities, only about half of farmworkers nationwide had some form of health insurance. There is no specific data about life expectancy, causes of death, or rates of health insurance coverage for Oregon farmworkers. At home, many farmworkers and their families confront housing and food insecurity.\textsuperscript{23 24}

The final report begins with the study contours. We first discuss our sample selection and survey methods administered by community-based organizations via telephone in this rapid-response study. Then, we provide details on workplace characteristics. Next we review participant demographics, such as marital status, family size, living situation, gender, Indigeneity, and ties to communities of origin. From this context, we delve into detail on the key findings of the survey with topic consideration for women farmworkers, Indigenous farmworkers, and farmworkers in the workplace. Finally, we share our policy prescriptions based upon the principal findings.
Regional survey targets were established based on historic labor demand using a three-year (2017-2019), monthly average of officially reported Agricultural Employment during June, July and August. These averages were computed for each of Oregon’s counties from published official Department of Labor data posted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages. County data were grouped within the eight USDA-designated Natural Resource Conservation Regions, and finally compiled further into four sampling regions, according to the temporal similarity of seasonal crop production in each Natural Resource Conservation Region. This sample strategy ensured that every type of Oregon agricultural production would have a chance to be represented in the survey.

The rapid nature of this study was only possible by using a nonprobability sample based on the organizational development of trusted networks that serve farmworker communities. The survey sample is designed to be representative of industry-specific characteristics, such as employer type and a mix of both on-farm and non-farm agricultural (forestry and support services, fishing, and fresh packers) employment. Representative demographic considerations include gender, age, length of settlement, and Indigeneity.

Partners were compensated for overhead, training, surveyor time, and survey incentives distributed to farmworkers for their participation. Surveyors completed a four-hour training module with follow-up weekly survey check-in meetings and a focus group scheduled at the end of survey collection. Farmworkers were given a $50 incentive. Each organization was given full autonomy to decide on the method of dispersal and was required to submit proof of payment to the fiscal sponsor based on best practices and confidentiality considerations of respondents. No respondent-identifying information was collected. The results were analyzed by a team of expert analysts who specialize in the themes of the survey. This report is based on the full 300 surveys, and follow-up qualitative interviews will be conducted in phase two.
WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS

Just over 50 percent of the farmworkers surveyed work in the Willamette Valley (Figure 2), which accounts for about 40 percent of agricultural production in Oregon, producing more than 170 different crops and hosting the vast majority of farmworkers.

Agricultural employment typically includes jobs in crop production, processing of crops, nurseries and greenhouses, reforestation efforts, and specialty forest product gathering. In some counties, estimates will also cover livestock, other field crops like hay and grass seed, and aquaculture (Rahe 2018: 2).
In our sample, workers were surveyed across 11 crop types/industries (see Figure 3), with the majority working in nurseries, berries, tree fruits, wine grapes, and vegetables. In addition to traditional forms of agriculture, we were also able to survey a small number of dairy, meatpacking, forestry, and seafood processing workers and those harvesting forest products such as salal and pinecones.

Throughout the state, 29 percent of farmworkers reported working for a Farm Labor Contractor (FLC) or a personnel agency. 46 percent reported being directly employed by a grower, 10 percent reported working for a packing house, and 4 percent said other, and 1 percent did not know or preferred not to answer (Figure 4).

The majority of farmworkers (31 percent) reported working in groups of 6-10 people followed by 26 percent reporting working with 0-5 people (see Figure 5). Eleven percent of respondents said they worked with crews of 11-15; 9 percent worked with 16-20 people; 8 percent worked between 21-25 and 26-30; 7 percent said 31-45; 5 percent worked with 46-80 people, and 2 percent reported working with crews of 81 or more.
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the 300 farmworkers surveyed, 50.3 percent (151 farmworkers) identified as women and 49.7 percent (149 farmworkers) as men. Studies estimate that up to 40 percent of Oregon’s 174,000 farmworkers and families are Indigenous. Twenty-five percent of respondents (75 farmworkers) in this study identified as Indigenous.

The median age in our sample was 40. Seventy-four percent of farmworkers reported being married or living with a partner, 16 percent said they were single, 10 percent were divorced or separated, and 3 percent preferred not to answer. A vast majority (78 percent) of respondents had between 1-4 children under the age of 18 in their care (see Figures 6 and 7).

FIGURE 6. MARRITAL STATUS

FIGURE 7. FAMILY SIZE

Number of Children Under 18 Living with You

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Children
The majority of farmworkers (58 percent) reported living in an apartment, 26 percent in a single-family home, 13 percent in a mobile home or trailer, and 1 percent reported renting a room (Figure 8).

Our survey did not explicitly identify farmworkers who live in temporary farmworker housing or are here as H2A temporary agricultural workers, but we did ask if their home was provided by an employer. Only 15 percent (5 percent), mostly men, in our sample replied affirmatively. Despite the grave issues documented concerning H2A workers, such as wage theft, discrimination, and harassment, our survey did not capture H2A workers. Our survey design captured the voices of those connected to community-based organizations and many H2A workers are often not reached.

Indigenous and women farmworkers were more likely to say they lived in apartments. Roughly 73 percent of Indigenous and 62 percent women farmworkers said they lived in apartments respectively. The majority of farmworkers were born or have lived in the United States for over twenty years. Only 16 percent reported living here less than ten years. The low rates of new arrivals likely reflects the downward trend in immigration. More recent arrivals are often less connected to farmworker serving community-based organizations.

Approximately 82 percent of respondents were born in Mexico, 11 percent in Guatemala, 6 percent in the United States, and 1 percent from Peru and Honduras. Seventeen percent of respondents speak Indigenous languages including Kanjobal/Q’añjob’al, varieties of Mam, Purépecha, Quiche, Triqui, as well as various distinct Nahualt, Mixtec and Zapotec languages, but the vast majority of farmworkers preferred to be interviewed in Spanish (97 percent). Twenty-five percent of farmworkers identify as Indigenous (from “pueblos originarios or pueblos indígenas”) in Mexico and Guatemala. Seventy-five percent did not identify as Indigenous. Two percent of respondents identified as 2-Spirit, Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning), and intersex (LGBTQI), or gender non-conforming, 7 percent preferred not to answer or did not know how to identify, and 2 percent responded “other.” Other relevant findings in terms of respondent characteristics include state of origin in Mexico (Aguascalientes, Baja California, Chihuahua, Colima, Durango, Federal District, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nayarit, Oaxaca, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, State of Mexico, Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Zacatecas), in Guatemala (Departments of Guatemala, Huehuetenango, Jutiapa, Quetzaltenango, Retalhuleu, and San Marcos), and most U.S.-born respondents were born in Oregon, California, and one respondent is from New York (Figure 9). Not pictured in the map below are two respondents from Peru.
KEY FINDINGS WITH DETAILS

1. Farmworkers experience increased stress levels affecting their emotional well-being, but most lack access to mental health services.

We asked respondents about the increased stressors on their daily lives during the pandemic. Many parents expressed they didn’t know how to help their children navigate the pandemic. Twelve people made specific comments about their children being bored, wanting to go out, and not knowing how to help them.

Seven in ten respondents reported physical, emotional and spiritual symptoms of stress and other indicators of mental health needs (Figure 10). These included cansado or tired (18 percent), coraje or frustration (9 percent), enojo or anger (7 percent), deprimido/a or depressed (29 percent), dolor de cabeza or headaches/migraines (19 percent), susto or fear/being frightened (25 percent), and not wanting to go to work (4 percent). Additional answers in open responses included: stress 12 percent, fear 9 percent, anxiety 7 percent, sadness 7 percent, concern 13 percent, and boredom 1 percent. Many voiced feeling spent and impotent for not being able to work (Figure 9). Respondents could report multiple symptoms. Many farmworkers worried about their financial situation, becoming infected, supporting their children, and not being around their support networks. Loss of income also caused multiple forms of stress. For those who were recovering from past trauma, the pandemic increased their fears.

FIGURE 10. EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

- BOREDOM 12% STRESSED
- PREFER NOT TO ANSWER 13% CONCERNED
- I DON’T WANT TO GO OUT OR GO TO WORK 18% TIRED
- ANXIETY/ DESPERATION 19% HEADACHES/MIGRAINES
- SADNESS 25% FRIGHT
- ANGER 29% DEPRESSED
- FRUSTRATION 30% DOESN’T APPLY
- FEAR 9%

"My wife was one of the first people who got COVID in March of 2020. Because this was so unexpected and new for us, it went very badly for all of us. She was hospitalized for days, and no one could see her. She suffered a lot from the language barrier, from the isolation and because I stopped working for two weeks we had no money to pay rent. This time was very stressful and worrying and full of problems for us. One is almost traumatized by not knowing what to do because of a lack of income."

- Fruit Farmworker, Jackson County, OR
Other symptoms mentioned by respondents included feeling: fear (“miedo”), stress (“estresada”), worry (“preocupado”), restlessness (“intranquilo”), boredom (“aburrida”), depression (“deprimida”), fear (“asustada”), tiredness (“cansado”), trauma (“un poco de trauma”), anxiety (“ansiedad”), and sad (“triste”).

Survey respondents also demonstrated creativity and resiliency in response to their symptoms and feelings. Many people shared their solutions that include exercising, drinking a lot of fluids, playing sports, listening to music, watching TV, shopping, walking, reading, taking vitamins, talking with family and spouses and children, drinking teas, maintaining their faith, reading, playing with their kids, Zumba, gardening, going out in nature, baths, and massages.

Even with these coping strategies, 82 percent of farmworkers reported no access to mental health services, and only 6 percent reported receiving some level of support, making their creativity and resiliency all the more impressive (Figure 11).

![FIGURE 11. ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT](image)

2. Farmworkers are also caregivers. Farmworkers have trouble accessing affordable childcare and supporting their children’s education with the shift to remote classes.

Most farmworkers relied on networks of family and friends for childcare (Figure 12).

![FIGURE 12. CHILDCARE BY MARITAL STATUS](image)

“The few farmworkers who did receive mental health care, reported obtaining care through local family clinics. On one occasion a family received care through a referral from their children’s school.”

- Vineyard Farmworker, Talent, OR
About 16 percent of farmworker parents reported being single, divorced, or separated with children under their care. Those farmworkers with children under the age of 12 had to figure out where to get care as COVID-19 shut down schools and forced abrupt changes to childcare arrangements: 47 percent stayed at home with a parent, adult relatives, older children, or friends; 1 percent took them to work; 12 percent were left home without adult supervision; only 13 percent paid someone to care for them at a childcare center or house where they paid for childcare; 4 percent preferred not to answer; and 32 percent said the question didn’t apply. Qualitative responses suggest that women did most of this caretaking. Open responses indicated that about 3 percent of parents (nine respondents), mostly mothers, said they quit their job to care for children.

Parents who were married or living with a partner (50 percent) were more likely to rely on a network of family, friends, and older siblings to care for children under 12. Only 24 percent of divorced, separated, and 22 percent of single parents indicated they left children with their networks of support, such as family, siblings and friends. Fourteen percent of divorced/separated and 16 percent of single parents said they took their children to work. Surprisingly, about the same percentage of parents (10-12 percent) across marital status said they paid for childcare at a center or house. A small percentage of single parents said they left their children home alone.

Many parents worried about their children missing school, having to go to school at home, and how they will be affected by these changes. Some struggled with their kids at home, one didn’t have access to the internet so they couldn’t participate in school. Many also noted that their older children are taking on more responsibility in the home and are feeling significant stress and uncertainty.

3. Farmworkers experienced a significant loss of work and income during the COVID-19 pandemic creating broad economic challenges with significant differences by gender. They remained unaware of relief funds organized by the federal government and the state of Oregon and paid sick leave benefits. In particular, women found themselves losing months or weeks of work compared to men who lost weeks or days.

Sixty-seven percent of farmworkers reported dramatic loss of work and income during the COVID-19 pandemic. These income losses have not been recovered due to systemic exclusions from important safety-net programs, such as Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, unemployment, workers compensation and other state and federal support programs. The seasonality of work, wildfires, and other intense weather events compound the effects of lost earnings and heighten the vulnerabilities of farmworkers and their families. The majority (53 percent) of farmworkers lost months and weeks of work, 12 percent lost days, and 3 percent lost hours (Figure 13). In all cases, this significantly reduced their income. Some lost work because the workplace shut down, they were exposed and quarantined, or they cared for someone close to them who got sick. When the data is disaggregated by gender, 72 percent of women reported losing months of wages, while only 28 percent of men reported losing months of work. Testimonies from farmworkers suggest that this gender gap relates to caretaking responsibilities that occurred during the sudden school closures. Women may have experienced more long-term loss of income than men due to leaving work because of the need to care for children and possibly facing gender discrimination at work. Women may have also been laid off first and/or brought back to work last. This trend continued into September of 2020 when remote schooling continued into the 2020-2021 school year.

“My 15-year-old son takes care of his little brothers and does not have time to himself as before due to COVID-19. This makes him a little angry, or stressed, depressed about being at home with this responsibility.”

- Fruit-Tree Farmworker, Milton-Freewater, OR
Farmworkers face barriers in accessing leave benefits during the pandemic. Only one farmworker in the open responses reported having knowledge of up to 80 hours of sick leave due to a federal policy change that allows up to 80 hours of sick leave for workers who need to quarantine, take care for someone else in quarantine, or to care for a child whose school or childcare provider was closed due to COVID-19.\textsuperscript{31}

Loss of wages has created significant challenges. A majority reported difficulties paying for basic expenses: 59 percent for food, 60 percent for rent, 59 percent for gas and electricity; 28 percent for water; 16 percent for childcare costs (Figure 14). A larger portion of Indigenous farmworkers reported difficulty paying rent 71 percent, food 69 percent, and gas and electric 68 percent (see more in section on Indigenous Farmworkers).

Through an open response we asked farmworkers about other expenses they struggled to pay.\textsuperscript{32} Twenty-three percent said they experienced difficulty paying for utilities (electricity, water, gas, waste fees); 21 percent said insurance (car, home, and medical); 18 percent identified automobile-related expenses, such as car payments, registration, insurance, gas and maintenance; 11 percent had trouble paying their cell phone bills; 6 percent reported difficulty paying for internet (necessary for kids in school); 4 percent medical bills or credit card debt; and 3 percent reported difficulty paying for personal hygiene products including diapers.

To supplement lost wages and increased expenses, many farmworkers went to food banks (54 percent), or to churches for help (16 percent), sought rent relief (28 percent). Others borrowed money from friends and family (10 percent) or utilized a combination of high interest loans (10 percent) and credit cards (5 percent). Many farmworkers also received food boxes and support from schools and non-profit organizations to make ends meet (Figure 15).

Beyond loss of wages due to loss of employment, results indicate that changes to pay structures often negatively impact workers, creating longer lasting impacts. Thirty-nine percent of farmworkers reported that their salaries or benefits had changed, due to disruptions in the food supply chain, receiving either lower piece rates, fewer hours of work, and/or a lack of overtime where applicable. On one occasion a farmworker reported their wages increased, but their hours were reduced.

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\textsuperscript{31} The 59 percent for food is based on the number of farmworkers who reported difficulty with food.

\textsuperscript{32} The 23 percent difficulty paying for utilities is based on the number of farmworkers who reported difficulty with utilities.

---

**FIGURE 14. DIFFICULTY PAYING EXPENSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas &amp; Electric</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**FIGURE 15. ASSISTANCE USE AND ACCESS**

- 5% High Interest Loans and Credit Cards
- 10% School and NGO Support
- 10% Family and Friends Loans
- 28% Rent Relief
- 16% Church
- 54% Food Bank

Results from Figure 14 and Figure 15 are from multiple choice questions. Amounts will not equal 100%.
Farmworkers who identified as Indigenous found similar sources of support, but were more likely to cite food banks (67 percent), loans from family and friends (16 percent), school and community support as important sources of relief.

Farmworkers often cited NGOs as important networks that connected them to many sources of support including food boxes, relief funds, masks, and hand sanitizer. In some instances, farmworkers reported they were discouraged by the process of seeking relief funds and assistance. Some farmworkers asked their landlords for rent relief directly or borrowed money.

Over 100 Oregon community partners came together to form a $20 million Oregon Worker Relief Fund33 to help immigrant Oregonians who did not qualify for unemployment, making ends meet during this crisis. Unfortunately, nearly one-half or more of farmworkers surveyed remain unaware of existing relief funds organized by the federal government and the state of Oregon and paid sick leave benefits. At the time of our study, 48 percent or 143 respondents were not aware of the fund. The remaining 6 percent of farmworkers said they were not aware of the fund’s name, but were aware of organizations providing relief connected to the fund (Figure 16).

The data suggest that 56 percent of farmworkers who identify as Indigenous were not aware of the fund, which indicates barriers to accessing existing resources for the population specifically. There were no major differences by gender. Having knowledge about access to relief and quarantine funds would greatly alleviate the stresses caused by lost wages.

Oregon law gives all workers, including many farmworkers, sick and family leave based on certain thresholds.35 36 When we asked farmworkers about their labor rights, such as access to Sick Leave Pay, overall 54 percent percent of respondents indicated they did not know about sick leave. There was not a visible information gap between respondents who identify as Indigenous (55 percent) or by gender.
Too often, in the imagination of consumers, farmworkers are men. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, women make up 32 percent of all occupations in agriculture and account for about 25 percent of farm laborers.\footnote{37}

In our sample slightly more than half of those surveyed were women, giving us detailed information about women farmworkers in Oregon. In our sample we found that while a majority of women were married, more than a third were single or divorced, often supporting children. Sixty-one percent of women reported that they were married or living with a partner, 21 percent single, 15 percent divorced or separated, 2 percent preferred not to answer, and 1 percent indicated their status as other (Figure 17).

The shift reflected here of more women losing months of wages than men reflects a national trend. The Center for American Progress reported in February of 2021 that “Over the course of the first 10 months of the pandemic, women—particularly women of color—have lost more jobs than men as industries dominated by women have been hit the hardest. Overall, women have lost a net of 5.4 million jobs during the recession—nearly 1 million more job losses than men.”\footnote{38} The report also notes that the majority of women who lost their jobs were women of color. “In September, 337,000 Hispanic women left the labor force entirely. Between November 2020 and December 2020, when many groups saw a decline or unchanged unemployment rate, Hispanic women’s unemployment rate increased nearly an entire percentage point, from 8.2 percent to 9.1 percent.”\footnote{39} In our survey question about childcare, several male respondents reported that their female spouses stayed home to care for their children, thus leaving the workforce.

### Figure 17
Women Farmworkers’ Marital Status
- **61%** Married / Partner
- **15%** Divorced / Separated
- **21%** Single
- **2%** Prefer not to answer
- **1%** Other

### Figure 18
Loss of Wages by Gender and Indigeneity

| Gender and Indigeneity | HOURS | DAYS | WEEKS | MONTHS | Does Not Apply
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous Women</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Men</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I. Women farmworkers were more likely to report losing months of wages than men (Figure 18). Thirty-nine percent of Indigenous farmworker women reported losing months of wages compared to 32 percent of women who did not identify as Indigenous.
It is important to consider gendered impacts for farmworker women in the workplace, such as their experience with various forms of sexual harassment\(^6\) and gender discrimination\(^4\) in the workplace. As noted above, while some women may have lost wages due to voluntarily leaving work or not seeking work because they need to care for children in the home, some women may have been laid off or fired from work at a proportionately higher rate than men or not brought back or brought back later from a lay-off.

Among women who lost work, Indigenous women were more likely than Indigenous men, or non-Indigenous men and women to lose months of work, as seen in Figure 18. In part this likely reflects the fact that some women stayed home to take care of children when other options were not available. Several Indigenous respondents commented specifically on women staying at home to take care of children. In some cases childcare options with other families or neighbors shut down as people became afraid to take in children from other families as the pandemic spread.

There are also visible trends by Indigeneity. Forty-seven percent of Indigenous men said they lost weeks of wages compared to only 25 percent of non-Indigenous men.

II. Women reported higher levels of COVID-19 infection compared to men.

Forty-three percent of women reported knowing a co-worker infected with COVID-19 compared to only 28 percent of men (Figure 19). Twenty-five percent of women revealed living with a family member infected with COVID-19, 18 percent reported knowing relatives infected, 16 percent said they themselves were infected, 13 percent said they knew friends infected, and 10 percent said they knew neighbors infected. Only 1 percent of women preferred not to answer or said they didn’t know, compared to 14 percent of men who preferred not to give an answer. Thirty percent of men said they knew relatives infected compared to only 18 percent of women.

III. Gender played an important role when seeking medical attention.

Women reported more barriers to seeking medical care than men, due in part to expectations that they are responsible for childcare and have a lower rate of driving than men. Eighty-one percent reported lack of childcare as a barrier, 75 percent reported fear of government authorities as a barrier, 75 percent cited a lack of transportation, and 75 percent cited fear of contracting a COVID-19 infection as a barrier to seeking medical attention (Figure 20).

IV. The burdens for women of having to keep working to earn income AND take care of children was significant. This is reflected below in the data that reveal that women reported higher levels of stress than men.

The majority of women, 61 percent, reported that they paid for childcare at a center or a house compared to only 39 percent of men (Figure 21). Women reported leaving children at home with family, siblings, or friends only 44 percent of the time versus 66 percent for men. This might suggest that some men consider leaving childcare up to female household members as an adequate solution, even if these women have to work.
This data makes clear that it is women who are responsible a majority of the time for either doing childcare themselves or finding someone else to help them out. Given that about 36 percent of the women in our sample were single, divorced or separated, they were likely to be the sole person in charge of childcare.

V. Women are reporting higher levels of stress. The higher levels of stress found among farmworker women in our sample is likely linked to the multiple and increased responsibilities many women had to take on.

Significant numbers of women reported symptoms of stress including 36 percent reporting depression, 27 percent reporting fear, 25 percent reporting migraines or severe headaches, and 23 percent reporting being tired (Figure 22). The pandemic revealed ongoing inequities in gender roles throughout the U.S. in terms of caretaking. But for essential workers, particularly for women who are solely responsible for supporting their children and caretaking, the burden was intense. According to the National Women’s Law Center (NWLC), “76.2 percent of single mothers caring for children under age 18 are in the labor force.” With COVID-19 “these women have been suddenly forced to juggle two jobs: childcare/education and their current employment.” Farmworkers cannot work from home. Those who were the sole income earners had to balance continuing to work, childcare, and keeping themselves and children safe from the virus. Some women also felt terrified of getting the virus and what could happen to them or their children. Yet, very few women, only 7 percent said they have access to mental health support compared to only 4 percent of men. This indicates that despite the increasing stress levels placed on women, most still do not have access to mental health support.
INDIGENOUS FARMWORKERS

While this study did not explicitly ask Indigenous participants specific questions on the types of discrimination they face, Indigenous farmworkers have recounted experiences where they have been called derogatory terms such as “oaxaco” or “oaxaquita” by coworkers or mayordomos. Some have also been told by supervisors and other bosses that they are not permitted to speak their own languages. The racial and ethnic hierarchies that put Indigenous people below mestizo and white people in Mexico and Guatemala follow Indigenous farmworkers from those countries into the workplaces and communities in the U.S.4 These dynamics manifest in and outside of the workplace.

4. Farmworkers in general are experiencing resource gaps. But, those who speak Indigenous languages face additional information and accessibility gaps. Oregon Indigenous farmworkers speak at least 26 different languages from Guatemala and Mexico (such as Triqui and Mixtec languages, Mam, and Kanjobal, among others) and many are not fluent or literate in Spanish. See footnote 30 on page 32 for a complete list. In addition we found that Indigenous farmworkers lost more weeks and months of work, used supplemental food sources more, used shared transportation more, and worked for contractors more than non-Indigenous farmworkers.

Many farmworkers face barriers in accessing community resources. As mentioned previously, research has documented a culture of stigma, such as the Public Charge, exclusion from safety nets, lack of trust in government support, negative experiences in previous applications, and uncertainty around immigration status adjustments that creates barriers for farmworkers to access support.33

The survey identified speakers of two Mam variants (21), Kanjobal (2), K’iche’/Quiche (1), Mixtec languages (17) Purépecha (3), Triqui (1), and Zapotec languages (2). Seventy-five respondents (25 percent) reported that their parents or grandparents are members of an Indigenous community. A majority of respondents (65 percent) reported that they or their foreman, usually called a mayordomo, received training on how to be safe from COVID-19 various times, 22 percent said they received little training, and 9 percent said they received no training. Of those who received training, information came in different forms: roughly 13 percent watched a video, 79 percent received a talk, 31 percent reported that they were taught how to use protective equipment, and 39 percent were given a written information sheet. Figure 23 maps the languages captured in the sample.

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“...Well, I understand Spanish which is the language used when they talk to us. But I think that not everyone speaks Spanish. Where I work many of us speak Mam. I translate for my wife and perhaps for another friend, but not for everyone. I think it would be better to communicate with everyone in Mam. The talks should be in Mam. Some people do not know how to read or write so signs are not useful.”

- Salai and Vineyard Farmworker, Cottage Grove, OR

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A large majority in our sample, 92 percent, stated they got the instructions in a language they understood. However, 5 percent (14) of respondents stated that they did not receive training in a language that they preferred and of those only 1 percent (2) said they understood some of the information provided in the training. These 14 respondents include four Mam speakers of the Todos Santos variant, one Mam speaker of the San Sebastian variant, two Mixtec speakers, one Purépecha speaker, one Nahuatl, two English, and three Spanish speakers. Eight people reported they preferred not to respond.

While one person reported having Mam interpretation for texts and YouTube videos, comments from several other Mam respondents revealed widespread concern about many people’s lack of understanding. Several people reported that they worked with almost all Mam speakers in blueberry harvesting, and they thought that at least half of them didn’t understand Spanish or the instructions.

All but three survey respondents opted to do the interview in Spanish (this may be an artifact of the make-up of the survey team which has only a couple interviewers available who speak Indigenous Mesoamerican languages). Further, the data point to the need to develop competency in a diversity of Indigenous languages from Mexico and Guatemala for future outreach and research efforts. Ninety-three percent of respondents listed Spanish as one of the languages they use at home. This might indicate that lack of linguistic competency in COVID-19-related outreach information is producing information gaps. In addition, some Indigenous language speakers understand some Spanish, but are not fluent Spanish speakers. Because of historical and current racism and discrimination against Indigenous people in Mexico and Guatemala, respondents may also be reluctant to disclose their Indigenous identity or to request that the interview be conducted in their first language.

I. In on-farm workplaces, 49 percent (37) of Indigenous farmworkers worked with a contractor compared to only 22 percent (49) of those farmworkers who did not identify as Indigenous to Meso-America (Mexico and Guatemala) (Figure 24).

Indigenous on-farm workers are more likely to work for farm labor contractors (49 percent), followed by growers (32 percent), personnel agencies or staffing agencies (8 percent), other types of employer (6 percent), packing house 4 percent, and 1 percent preferred not to disclose. Although the Pacific Northwest has been home to Indigenous farmworkers since the Bracero Program, many Indigenous farmworkers who have arrived in the past five years are likely to work alongside other recent arrivals, through farm labor contractors. Some Guatemalan Indigenous farmworkers who have arrived in the past eight years reported many workers rotate between working with contractors on formal farm settings and harvesting salmon, mushrooms or pinecones as independent workers or with

Well, at the beginning they gave explanations how to work and how to wash our hands every day. Now only from time to time. The truth is that we speak languages like Mam or other (languages) in Guatemala. Many people do not know Spanish. If they don’t understand, they can’t obey. In the explanations they do not use the other dialects or languages. It would be good if they give explanations in Mam. I understand something. They have to ask favors from those who understand so that they explain in another language. If there is no translation, people are left without the information. There are people who come to work the first day and do not understand.

- Berry Worker, Woodburn, OR
II. Indigenous farmworkers were most likely to receive a talk about COVID-19 safety measures, but received less information than non-Indigenous farmworkers specifically on protective equipment.

While many Indigenous farmworkers may understand some Spanish, it is not their first language. Rapid talks in Spanish may not convey all information required. Video explanations with demonstrations, often the preferred mode of communication for Indigenous farmworkers, were received by only 8 percent of Indigenous farmworkers (Figure 25).

Adequate training must include appropriate and quality interpretation services in the languages represented in work crews, and opportunities for people to ask questions. In addition, trainers should assure participants that their employer will not retaliate against them for asking questions.

When I lost my work, I didn’t have money to pay someone to take care of my daughter. Other expenses were the phone, sending money to my family in Guatemala who were deported from here. I also have a serious disease and I have to pay for medicine. I pay $125 for two months of medicine. I also have to pay to go to the doctor’s office for my illness.

- Salal, Berry, Forest, and Vineyard Farmworker, Cottage Grove, OR

Multiple choice answer
Percentages will not equal 100 percent.
Of the fourteen farmworkers (5 percent) in our sample who said they did not receive training in their preferred language, nine individuals or 13 percent of Indigenous farmworkers reported language inaccessibility in employer-provided training. Another 4 percent preferred not to answer or did not know.

III. Indigenous farmworkers were more likely to pay for a ride-share with people outside of their household as a mode of transportation to the workplace (Figure 26).

The inability of undocumented people to secure an Oregon driver’s license can affect farmworkers’ access to reliable transportation. While the license laws recently changed in Oregon, many undocumented people still face difficulties navigating the DMV website in English, including making an appointment. For more recent arrivals, including Indigenous farmworkers, lower incomes make buying a car challenging, as people prioritize other expenses like housing and food first. Lack of access to driver’s licenses and interdependence within hometown community networks results in workers utilizing ride-share and carpooling services run by others, often in vans filled to capacity.

IV. Farmworkers who self-identified as Indigenous were more likely to say that they lost weeks and months of wages. Results indicate wage losses have created food and housing insecurity for farmworkers that struggle to pay groceries and their rent each month.

Sixty-three percent of Indigenous farmworkers said they lost weeks and months of wages compared to only 49 percent of non-Indigenous workers reporting the same losses. Only 21 percent of Indigenous respondents said the question did not apply to them compared to 34 percent of those who did not identify as Indigenous. Loss of income for some had very difficult consequences (Figure 27).

These income losses created economic difficulties paying for basic expenses. For Indigenous farmworkers these insecurities have been more pronounced in specific areas: food 69 percent; rent 71 percent; gas and electric 68 percent; and child care 21 percent. Through an open response question, Indigenous farmworkers also reported difficulty paying many forms of insurance 23 percent (car, home, and health coverage); 19 percent identified automobile-related expenses, such as car payments, registration, insurance; 11 percent reported difficulty paying for internet (necessary for kids in school); 9 percent had trouble paying their cell phone bills and
medical bills, and 4 percent identified difficulty paying for utilities (electricity, water, gas, waste fees).

These farmworkers found similar sources of support as those who were non-Indigenous, but were more likely to cite their networks, such as food banks (67 percent), loans from family and friends (16 percent), and school and community support as important sources of relief (Figure 28). Many farmworkers cited school lunches and food box delivery from non-profits and community-based organizations as critical support. Indigenous farmworkers commonly cited using sources of support connected to obtaining food, which suggests the presence of food insecurity among this group of workers that put food on the tables of Oregonians.

V. Indigenous farmworkers reported taking the COVID-19 test. Despite surmounting barriers to language and medical attention access, a larger share of Indigenous farmworkers reported taking a COVID-19 test than non-Indigenous farmworkers. Forty-seven percent (35/75) of Indigenous farmworkers reported taking a test compared to 33 percent (75/225) of non-Indigenous farmworkers (Figure 29). One explanation why could be due to higher instances of COVID-19 outbreaks or targeted outreach by Community Based Organizations (CBOs) or clinics. Further analysis is needed to understand why.

VI. Indigenous farmworkers with children (73 percent) were more likely than non-Indigenous farmworkers (66 percent) to report using a vast network of family, friends, and older children to care for children under 12 years of age. Yet 25 percent of Indigenous farmworkers said they paid for childcare compared to 17 percent of non-Indigenous farmworkers in the sample (figure 30).

**FIGURE 28. USE OF NETWORKS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Bank</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent Relief</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans Family &amp; Friends</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Interest Loans</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and NGO Support</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 29. REPORTED TAKING A COVID-19 TEST BY INDIGENITY**

33% Non-Indigenous reported taking a COVID-19 test

47% Indigenous reported taking a COVID-19 test

**FIGURE 30. SOURCES OF CHILDRORE BY INDIGENITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home with family, siblings, friends</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid for childcare at center or house</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone at home</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take them to work</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to answer/ don’t know</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from Figure 28 and Figure 30 are from multiple choice questions. Amounts will not equal 100 percent.

This may reflect the greater loss of income suffered by Indigenous farmworkers during the pandemic, giving them fewer resources to spend on paid childcare. Women who left work to stay home and take care of children may also be reflected here.
FARMWORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE

At the time when farmworkers needed Oregon OSHA the most, Oregon OSHA was absent from monitoring the workplace to ensure essential workers were protected. A preliminary comparison of Oregon OSHA’s Top 25 Violations report in the past year appears on track to see a decline in workplace citations for agricultural labor housing. Oregon OSHA had only 6 citations listed on its “Top 25” list so far compared to 176 in 2019. Agriculture inspections appear to be down from 2020 as well. The lack of inspections and citations is concerning because it can create even less faith in a complaint-driven process. This means farmworkers must surmount heavy obstacles, including running the risk of retaliation when demanding safe workplace conditions. Random inspections and implementing alternative community inspection models can be steps toward restoring confidence.

One example is to create a model that would deputize community-based organizations to file lawsuits on behalf of these workers, in order to protect them from retaliation, and from going on the record and risking losing their jobs. This would make a huge difference for workers who today opt not to file complaints against employers because of the contracts and fear of retaliation. Below we outline a glimpse of Oregon farmworkers’ working conditions during COVID-19.

5. Farmworkers take precautions at home and work as much as possible. Despite their best efforts, not all employers have taken consistent steps to prevent COVID-19.

Farmworkers have made significant changes in the workplace and at home to limit their exposure to COVID-19. Since the pandemic began, the majority of farmworkers report changing their practices before entering their home after work to protect their families and others in the household, including changing and washing their clothes as soon as they arrive, limiting interaction with family until after they have showered, and disinfecting counters with more frequency.

1. When protective equipment is available, farmworkers take necessary precautions and follow safety procedures at home and in the workplace to minimize exposure to COVID-19, including changing their mode of transportation to the workplace.

In the workplace, 57 percent of farmworkers report washing their hands with frequency, five times or more, and many commented on using hand sanitizer when handwashing stations are not available.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, 90 percent of respondents report that they wear masks for all of their workday. They report that overall, 73 percent of their co-workers also wear a mask at all times.

“The workers themselves take turns to keep the bathrooms clean.
- Nursery Farmworker, Woodburn, OR

FARMWORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE 26
A distinctive shift also appears to be occurring in farmworkers’ transportation plans to and from work. While in the past a significant number may have travelled to work in vans or other larger shared vehicles, 74 percent of farmworkers reported making changes to their transportation plans. Many traveled in their own vehicles and avoided carsharing with people outside of their households as a strategy to limit exposure to the virus (Figure 31). While this has been a popular strategy, 13 percent of farmworkers still report car-sharing with ridesharing drivers with vehicles who offer shared transportation for a fee. Only 6 percent said they drove with friends or family and 3 percent of farmworkers said they travelled with their employer. This shift in transportation has created unique vulnerabilities for those who lack transportation and cannot distance themselves from other riders. It can also subject some farmworkers to hostile situations. In one case, a farmworker provided testimony that the person she rode to work with sexually accosted her and left her stranded in the fields.

II. Farmworkers report periods during the working day when they lack appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and cannot socially distance, despite saying that employers have taken some steps to prevent COVID-19 infection.

While the majority of farmworkers reported that their employer made some changes to prevent the spread of COVID-19 such as adding more bathrooms and sanitizing stations, 20 percent of farmworkers reported no changes to the conditions of bathrooms and handwashing areas. Seventy-eight percent of farmworkers reported receiving an employer-provided mask. Despite efforts to supply farmworkers with face-masks, 19 percent of farmworkers reported their employer did not supply them with masks. Compared to 17 percent of non-Indigenous workers, 27 percent of Indigenous farmworkers said they did not receive an employer-provided mask. Sixty-six percent of farmworkers reported that their masks were made of cloth. Twenty-two percent of farmworkers said they received disposable masks from their employer. Of those workers, 35 percent wore the employer-provided disposable masks for one day, 6 percent said 2 days, and 8 percent said they wore the mask for 3 days or more.

The majority, 65 percent, of farmworkers said their employer trained them on how to minimize the danger of COVID-19 “many times” and 22 percent said they were trained “a little bit” (Figure 32).

Despite high instances of training, 9 percent of farmworkers said they received no training on how to minimize COVID-19 exposure. Workers who told us they did not receive training were across each employer type: 11 percent growers, 9 percent contractors, 7 percent packing houses, and 3 percent personnel agencies. Only 45 percent of farmworkers employed by “other” said they received training “many times.” Employers under “other” included informal employment through a personal contact and those unclear who they are employed by and who signs their check.

The most common type of training farmworkers received from their foreman or employer was a talk, 79 percent; followed by a fact sheet, 39 percent. Thirty-one percent of farmworkers said they received an explanation on how to use protective equipment. However, only 13 percent of farmworkers reported seeing a training video, and only 1 percent preferred not to answer or didn’t know. Fourteen farmworkers (5 percent) in our sample said they did not receive training in their preferred language.

Thirty-two percent of farmworkers reported that during meetings or due to the structure of the work, there are moments during the workday when farmworkers cannot remain six feet apart. In those jobs that require working in close contact at all times or in specific periods, 30 percent of farmworkers report employers requiring them to be closer than six feet apart, without PPE (Figure 33).
The survey suggests that farmworkers know people infected or have been directly exposed to COVID-19. Over 55 percent of farmworkers reported they or people they know were infected by COVID-19. Thirty-six percent of farmworkers knew a coworker who was infected and 22 percent reported someone in their household has been infected. Twenty-three percent report that a relative has contracted COVID-19, and 9 percent report a neighbor had been infected. When asked what happened to the person(s) infected, 10 percent reported death, 28 percent said they were taken to the hospital, 53 percent were isolated away from family when possible, 17 percent reported they continued isolation in the same household with family, and 13 percent preferred not to respond.

Currently, OHA does not release the occupation of those who died due to COVID-19. Results indicate a far higher mortality rate than the 1 percent reported by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)²⁹ and from what one would expect from a small sample. Of our 300 respondents, 5 percent of them report that they have lost someone close to them (coworker, relative, or neighbor) to COVID-19. At a slightly higher rate, 6 percent report having been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 themselves.

Despite exposure few farmworkers reported getting tested. Overall, only 37 percent or 110 farmworkers reported having been tested for COVID-19 in our sample. Forty-seven percent of Indigenous farmworkers indicated getting tested. Of those 33 farmworkers reporting someone in their household became infected, 67 percent (22 farmworkers) said they took a test.

We also took a closer look at those farmworkers who reported knowing someone at work who was infected with COVID-19. Only 39 percent of the fifty-four farmworkers reporting knowledge of a worksite infection reported getting tested. These results do not fully reflect the infection wave in late fall and early winter months. Further research on testing accessibility and equity is required to fully understand testing rates.

Next, we cross-referenced farmworkers who reported getting a COVID-19 test with those who reported a

Farmworkers had several recommendations about employer practices that can be implemented to establish and sustain social distancing, some that are workplace-specific and others that can be applied in multiple settings. Many farmworkers recommended adding more restrooms and hand washing stations and sanitizing them with more frequency, continuing education and continuously giving information about COVID-19 prevention practices. Many farmworkers had specific recommendations on how to improve workflows to improve distancing, including slowing down conveyor belts and creating a better plan for when farmworkers come together to offload the fruit they have picked.

Workers can’t maintain distance, because when we pack the flowers the conveyor belt runs very fast and we need the help of other people and that is why we can’t distance sufficiently.

-Nursery Farmworker, Woodburn, OR

6. Because of their living and working conditions and lack of health insurance, farmworkers encounter barriers to accessing COVID-19 testing and care, struggle to quarantine effectively in overcrowded housing, and fear the costs of medical expenses if they do become severely sick from COVID-19.
work-site positive case by employer type. We found 41 percent of those were working for a grower, 25 percent FLC, 11 percent personnel agency, and 50 percent of those working for an ‘other’ employer tested following worksite exposure. In our small sample of 29 respondents working in a packing house, 82 percent that reported a work-site exposure took a COVID-19 test. It is important to note that our questions about COVID-19 testing only represent a moment in time and we did not directly ask farmworkers if they were infected at the worksite.

Most farmworkers reported they would go to a clinic (74 percent) if they needed care, followed by hospital or emergency room (38 percent), some would check online (12 percent), and two farmworkers said they would go to church. In many of the comments, farmworkers recognized specific clinics they were familiar with, such as the Virginia Garcia Clinic in Cornelius or Salud Medical Clinic in Woodburn.

Still, cost and fear of losing a job continue to be significant barriers to accessing testing and medical attention. Fifty percent of farmworkers reported that the cost of care would keep them from seeking medical attention (Figure 30).

Thirty-one percent reported loss of wages from taking time off work a barrier. Twenty-four percent of farmworkers reported fearing losing their job if diagnosed with COVID-19. Lack of sick time and childcare were also identified as barriers by 8 percent and 7 percent of respondents respectively. Six percent of farmworkers feared government authorities and three percent suggested that transportation is a barrier. Three percent of farmworkers worried about becoming infected by COVID-19 if they went to a healthcare facility and 12 percent preferred not to respond or did not know.

When we look at barriers to health care by Indigeneity, farmworkers who identify as Indigenous reported that fear of losing a job is a significant barrier at a higher response rate (29 percent) than non-Indigenous respondents (24 percent). In addition to language barriers, this is likely because they work lower-paying, unstable, seasonal jobs than other farmworkers, and have less support in the workplace (Figure 34). There were barriers to seeking care across gender differences as discussed in the Women Farmworker section above. In addition, we found few farmworkers have the means to quarantine or isolate if they or someone in their household is sick. The majority of farmworkers reported sharing their bedroom with family, typically spouses and young children. Most farmworkers said their housing had not changed since the start of the pandemic. Only 3 percent (10 farmworkers) said they are now living with more people. The survey did not directly ask if farmworkers lived with more than one family.

When farmworkers were asked what plans they may have to quarantine or isolate if they or someone in the household becomes infected with COVID-19, the vast majority (70 percent) reported they would stay in a room or a safe space in their household. Thirty-four percent of farmworkers worried about isolating in their homes and would consider staying at a hotel room (21 percent) or tent (13 percent) as an alternative. In the open responses, many farmworkers (19 percent) shared that they worried about isolating, indicating they did not have a plan and it would be difficult to isolate.

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“...My wife and I had to look for another place to live because we lived in a two bedroom apartment with seven people and when my wife got the virus we had to leave that place.

- Berry Farmworker, Jackson County, OR
One farmworker reported facing housing insecurity. They lived in their car with children while they looked for a new apartment. This has likely only increased due to the wildfires, as workers have to continue to work even though their housing is lost. Indigenous farmworkers were more likely to say they live in apartments than non-Indigenous workers, likely resulting in more crowded living conditions, particularly if apartments were shared among more than one household or had high levels of occupants (Figure 35). One family who lived in a two bedroom apartment had a member who got sick with the virus and they had to leave.

**Figure 35. Housing by Indigeneity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Apartment</th>
<th>Single Family Home</th>
<th>Mobile Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Highlighted responses*  
- Does not include:  
- Studio  
- Prefer not to answer/Don’t know  
- Rents a room  
- Other

7. Farmworkers worry greatly about family members outside the U.S. and the pandemic has resulted in a significant reduction in remittances sent to families in Mexico and Guatemala who depend on them.

Ninety percent of those surveyed reported that they worry about their families in their home communities, illustrating the strong connections people have with family outside of the U.S. Results suggest the additional economic and emotional burden farmworkers bear through providing support to their extended families outside of the U.S. COVID-19 has created significant challenges for those who support their families abroad.

Farmworkers reported a wide range of worries connected to their families in home communities. A majority of respondents worried about their relatives getting sick with COVID-19. They also worried about a lack of work because of shutdowns, a lack of access to medical care, lack of funds, shortages of food, health problems, underlying medical conditions such as diabetes mixing with COVID-19, that their relatives—particularly parents—would get sick and they would not be able to leave the U.S. to go to see them. Some expressed lack of faith in healthcare institutions in Mexico and Guatemala.

Overall, the vast majority of our sample, 85 percent or 254 farmworkers said that they have family in the homelands they support through remittances. Of those 254 farmworkers, 96 percent of respondents reported that they continue sending some level of money to relatives in their home communities. Many of those who send (40 percent), are sending smaller amounts. Nine percent are sending at the same levels prior to the pandemic (Figure 36).

**Figure 36. Remittances sent to relatives**

- I don’t send anymore  
- I send, but in less quantity  
- I send the same  
- I send more

*Multiple choice answer. Percentages will not equal 100 percent.*

Only 2 percent of farmworkers reported they are sending more. Forty-five percent of respondents indicated that they no longer send anymore, mostly due to income restraints. Three percent preferred not to answer and 1 percent responded “other.” Fifteen percent reported that the question did not apply to them.

Comments revealed how the loss of work and farmworkers’ own debts affected their ability to send funds. One still owed on a loan to pay a coyote for passage to the U.S. and had to renegotiate.

The COVID-19 global pandemic exacerbated by unprecedented wildfires in Oregon has demonstrated that farmworkers deemed “essential” are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, worsening already hazardous working conditions to maintain food on our tables. Oregon’s farmworker population—with an overwhelming proportion of Latinx and Indigenous people from Mexico and Guatemala—has experienced disproportionately higher rates of COVID-19 infection than people from other ethnic backgrounds and employment industries. Oregon Health Authority’s COVID-19 weekly report highlights food packing and agricultural worksites as uniquely vulnerable (i.e., at high risk) to the spread of the virus due to workflows and other factors that create an overrepresentation of cases suffered by people of color in agricultural worksites—such as high infection rates in agricultural areas like Umatilla, Morrow, and Malheur Counties.

Despite challenges, Oregon farmworkers demonstrate a commitment to safety in the face of COVID-19 while confronting economic, health, and social challenges without adequate safety nets and protections. The consequences signal a new normal, demanding immediate attention to maintain farmworkers’ safety and well-being at work and home.

“I worry about them getting sick and maybe they don't take into account that it [COVID-19] does exist. In Mexico you don't have the resources available here, one has to pay for the test and other expenses.”

- Vegetable Farmworker, Merrill, OR
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Based on the above findings, the Oregon COFS policy and action committee has endorsed the following fourteen recommendations that will be shared with policy makers, legislators, and other officials and institutions. The recommendations for action are based on what we have learned from farmworkers navigating the difficulties of COVID-19, forest fires, and displacement. Recommendations are the collective work and discussion of members of the OR COFS Policy and Action Committee, many of whom worked directly with farmworkers before and during each stage of the pandemic.

Recommendations are proposed by members of the OR COFS Policy and Action Committee:
CASA of Oregon
UNITE
Oregon Human Development Corporation
Centro Cultural Columbia Riverkeepers
Euvalclee
Farmworker Housing Development Corporation
Unidos Bridging Community
Bienestar
PCUN

1. Provide access to culturally informed methods of mental health support in a variety of languages and administered through trusted community clinics and university partnerships.

2. Subsidize or provide free access to childcare or learning centers, provide compensation for farmworkers who were forced to take time-off work and/or relied on informal networks for caretaking/childcare responsibilities due to the closure of childcare facilities, transition to virtual education, and closure of schools as a result of COVID-19.

3. Implement digital literacy programs staffed with navigators to help farmworker families (students and parents) get connected, improve access to technology, and balance screen time by offering learning programs, supplying smartphones, tablets, and stipends to offset internet service costs.

4. Sustain, replenish, and expand state and community-led income and safety net support for farmworkers regardless of documentation status, such as the Temporary Paid Leave Program, Oregon Workers Relief Fund, COVID-19 Farmworker Rental Relief Fund, Oregon Worker Quarantine Fund with expanded qualifications and retroactive eligibility, and allow the Oregon State Individual Taxpayer Identification Number filers to claim Earned Income Tax Credit.

5. Reduce barriers to accessing safety net support by allocating resources to community-based organizations that reflect the communities they are serving (including Indigenous-led organizations) who have a history of working with the population, and equip them with appropriate language interpreters.

6. Address loss of wages that impacted farmworker women and others by expanding overtime eligibility for farmworkers and investigate gender-based discrimination during layoffs.

7. Create a state-coordinated, human-centered response team to ease barriers for exercising legal rights and provide guidance on relief applications by connecting farmworkers to legal and resource navigators that can provide legal advice on workplace rights, tenant rights, concerns over public charge, immigrant rights, driver’s licenses, and resource applications in the languages farmworkers speak.

8. Mandate employers provide adequate training, when not already required, in languages farmworkers use and provide targeted plans through experienced translators and interpreters 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. This means that the language the interpreter speaks is a correct language match, the interpreter has received training as an interpreter, and is not a family member.

9. Enforce existing anti-retaliation and workplace protections that assure farmworkers can take time off and/or can file employer complaints without fear of retaliation, such as supporting stronger whistleblower protections and abolishing farm labor collective bargaining restrictions.

10. Strengthen Oregon/OSHA occupational safety enforcement and worksite auditing activities, including random inspections.

11. To reach Oregon’s farmworkers in the administration of the vaccine, resources and information should flow to farmworker health clinics and farmworker-serving organizations to facilitate information about COVID-19 vaccinations and testing being available in Indigenous languages, farmworker clinics and farmworker-serving organizations need additional state resources for interpretation and the creation of materials in Indigenous languages.

12. Expand housing opportunities that can serve farmworker families facing housing insecurity and/or needing temporary quarantine/ing shelter with adequate social distancing or shelter to recover from housing loss from fires.

13. Support farmworkers sending remittances to their families and communities by reducing money transfer fees and forming a matching funds support for their communities back home.

14. Establish a center for farmworker research that is rooted in community-based and collaborative research that can continue the effort of this study.


26 Oregon Department of Agriculture https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/shared/Documents/Publications/Administration/ORGrowingRegions.pdf


30 The full list of indigenous languages spoken by Indigenous immigrants in Oregon from Mexico and Guatemala includes: Guerrero Amuzgo, Valle Nacional Chiapantec; the Mayan languages Kanjobal, K’iche’ and two Mam dialects; Chuj and Akateco from Guatemala; the Alfa Mixtec languages San Miguel El Grande Mixtec and Yosohama of Northern Tlaxiaco Mixtec; the Baja Mixtec languages Juxtlahuaca Mixtec, Western Juxtlahuaca Mixtec and Cacalotetpec Mixtec; the Guerrero Mixtec languages Alcatlatzala Mixtec and Metlatonoc Mixtec; Teotzbal Mixtec; the Nahua languages Highland Puebla Nahua; Central Puebla Nahua; Central Guerrero Nahua; Eastern Huasteca Nahua; Huazache Nahua and Southeastern Puebla Nahua; Michoacán Mazahua (Otomi); Purepecha; San Juan Copala Triqui; Western Tlacolula Valley Zapotec and Loxicha Zapotec.

Open responses were recorded and recounted into the following categories: car expenses (including gas, repairs, insurance), phone, internet, and cable bills, medical bills, insurance (general, non-specified), personal items (clothing, furniture, personal hygiene, hand sanitizer), credit cards and bills.

Oregon Worker Relief Fund https://workerrelief.org/

When the survey was created, the Oregon Worker Quarantine Fund had not been announced and we did not ask directly about the fund.


Farmworkers were not asked about The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA or Act) requiring certain employers to provide their employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19.


"When Women Lose All The Jobs."

Murphy, Jeanne, Julie Samples, Mavel Morales, and Nargess Shadbeh. "They talk like that, but we keep working": sexual harassment and sexual assault experiences among Mexican indigenous farmworker women in Oregon." Journal of immigrant and minority health 17, no. 6 (2015): 1834-1839.


The calendar year information is completed in July of the following year.

Temporary COVID-19 rules regarding field sanitation, established by Oregon OSHA, require additional bathrooms/handwashing facilities for labor-intensive/hand labor operations (with some feasibility exceptions).


