

SUMMARY

California employs an estimated 800,000 farmworkers. Most work seasonal jobs – rarely holding full-time, year-round work. While all essential workers put themselves at risk when they show up for work during the COVID-19 pandemic, farmworkers face additional risks because they lack critical social safety net support afforded to others. A 915 person [COVID-19 Farmworker Study](#) (COFS) statewide survey and 63 in-depth interviews illustrate long-standing crises, vulnerabilities, and economic frailties within the food system, heightening insecurity, risk, and health disparities for farmworkers and their families.

This research brief elevates the health, household, and workplace struggles of COFS participants amidst the pandemic and reveal uneven distribution of resources, poor enforcement and eroded levels of trust toward government entities. [Findings from both phases of the California COFS study make an urgent appeal: provide immediate direct relief to farmworker communities and the organizations that have been trustworthy lifelines for years and essential during this pandemic.](#)

POLICY ACTIONS FOR EQUITABLE INCLUSION AND PROTECTION OF FARMWORKERS

Expand and simplify access to income and safety net resources and services that move beyond education and overcome barriers for farmworkers, regardless of documentation status.

Address language barriers by including visual education along with Mexican Indigenous, Asian and non-academic Spanish languages in culturally appropriate literacy levels.

Expand healthcare access and coverage regardless of documentation status.

Expand and simplify access to disaster income and safety net relief for farmworkers, regardless of documentation.

Engage farmworkers and farmworker-serving CBOs to design and implement direct services, workplace safety, education, and outreach that will meet local COVID-19 needs.

Ease the barriers for farmworkers to report COVID-19 related complaints, protect against retaliations, and bolster health and safety enforcement and compliance agencies.

METHODS

COFS Phase One took place between May 19 and July 20, 2020 and conducted 915 surveys with a team of 51 surveyors managed by six community-based organizations

COFS Phase Two conducted 63 in-depth interviews with California farmworkers from August-October, 2020. The Phase Two COFS study in California documents intensified workplace inequalities and economic burdens, household and community-level suffering and stress, and ever more disparate access to healthcare, social and economic support and relief, and testing services that continued to unfold.

915 California Surveys by Region
May 2020-July 2020



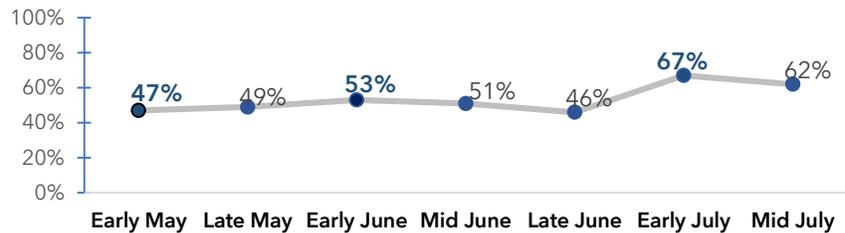
KEY FINDINGS

Work

- Difficult to understand safety communications and resource information
- Food system fallout with dramatic loss of work and income especially for women
- Uneven protections, uneven enforcement, lack of transparency and communications, fear of repercussion and retaliation

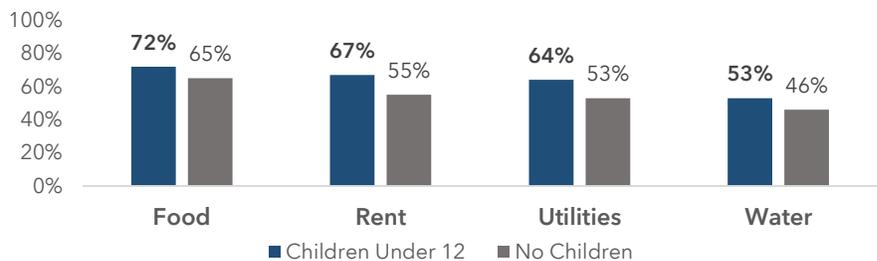
On average, nearly half of the survey respondents (52%) reported decreased farm work time resulting in income losses during the pandemic. The three month survey period (May- July 2020) displayed an increasing trend of lost work time and income

INCREASING TREND OF LOST WORK TIME AND INCOME (MAY-JULY, 2020)



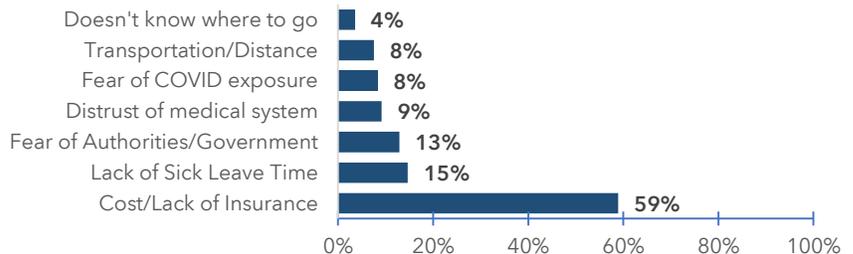
All households experienced hardship paying for basic needs. Workers with work time losses reported more hardship than those without work losses. Households with Children under age 12 also reported higher rates of hardship than household without children.

HIGHER HARDSHIPS TO PAY FOR BASIC NEEDS AMONG HOUSHOLDS WITH CHILDREN



Workers identified many long-standing healthcare barriers that existed prior to COVID-19. More than half (59%) reported costs, lack of insurance, as a significant barriers to access.

REPORTED HEALTHCARE BARRIERS



Farmworkers and CBOs have grounded insights about how to improve pandemic response

Partners & Funders

COFS is a collaborative research project facilitated by the California Institute for Rural Studies, with a team of social science researchers and six farmworker-serving community-based organizations: Alianza Ecologista, Centro Binacional para el Desarrollo Indígena Oaxaqueño, Central California Environmental Justice Network, Comité Cívico del Valle, Farmworker Care Coalition/Vista Community Clinic and Líderes Campesinas.

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For a full list of partners and supporters, visit www.covid19farmworkerstudy.org

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