



Center for Worker Health

Wake Forest School of Medicine

POLICY BRIEF

Latinx Child Farmworkers in North Carolina: Personal and Educational Characteristics

Summary

Children as young as 10 years old can be hired to work on farms in the United States. Children hired to do farm work are most often Latinx. Agriculture is a hazardous industry, and Latinx children hired to do farm work are at risk for injury, illness and death. However, we know very little about these child farmworkers. This policy brief provides information on the personal and educational characteristics of 202 Latinx child farmworkers ages 10 to 17 years who were interviewed between May and November 2017 in North Carolina.

These Latinx child farmworkers included girls (38%), as well as boys (62%). Most (81%) were born in the United States. Overwhelmingly (95%), they were enrolled in school, and although most worked during summer breaks, many also worked during the school year. Almost one-third had repeated at least one grade in school.

This study documents the young ages at which these Latinx child farmworkers are engaged in agricultural labor. Policies limiting the ages at which children can be hired for farm work and limiting their involvement in farm work during the school year need to be considered.

Why does it matter?

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in the US, with high levels of injury and death experienced by agricultural workers. Children as young as 10 years of age can be hired to work on farms in the US (children of any age can work on their parents' farms). Many of the children hired to work on farms in North Carolina and elsewhere in the US are Latinx. Yet little research has addressed the immediate or long-term effects of farm work on the health, development or well-being of these Latinx children. Information on who these children are and the risks to which they are exposed is needed to inform policies and procedures to improve their safety and well-being.

What did the researchers do?

In 2017, researchers recruited 202 Latinx child farmworkers ages 10 to 17 working across North Carolina with the help of community partners. These child farmworkers completed interviewer-administered questionnaires in their preferred language (Spanish or English). The interviews included questions on the child farmworkers' personal, educational, work, and health characteristics. The interviews also collected data to describe workplace characteristics, such as organization of work and work safety culture.



Photo courtesy of Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs

Research for this policy brief is reported in: Arcury TA, Arnold TJ, Sandberg JC, Quandt SA, Talton JW, Malki A, Kearney GD, Chen H, Wiggins MF, Daniel SS. Latinx child farmworkers in North Carolina: Study design and participant baseline characteristics. *Am J Ind Med.* 2019;62:156-167.

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What did the researchers find?

Latinx Child Farmworker Personal Characteristics

- The child farmworkers in this study included both girls and boys (Fig 1a), and children ages 10 to 17 years (Fig 1b).
- Most children were born in the US (Fig 1c).
- Most children lived with at least one parent, but almost 1 in 10 did not live with a parent (Fig 1d).

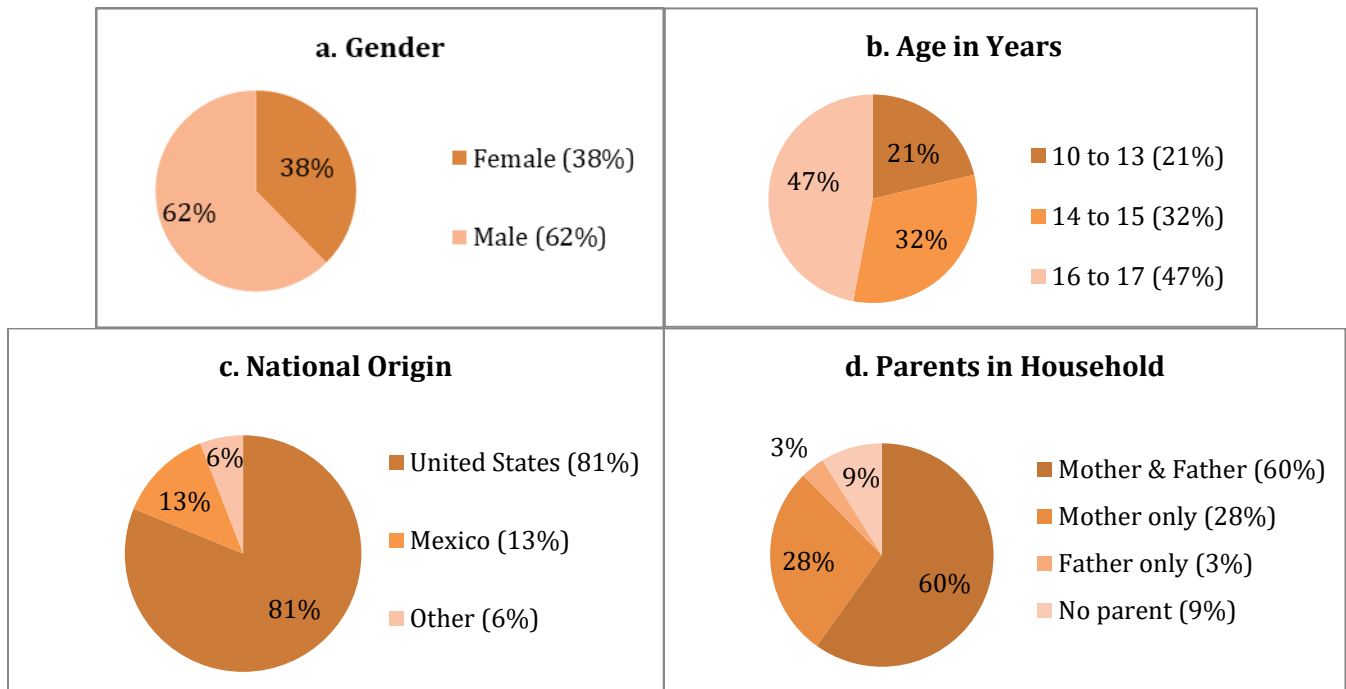


Figure 1 a-d. Child farmworker personal characteristics, North Carolina, 2017

Latinx Child Farmworker Educational Characteristics

- Most (95%) of the child farmworkers were currently enrolled in school.
- The last school grade the child farmworkers had completed (Fig 2) included elementary, middle, and high school.
- Although most child farmworkers worked during their summer break (Fig 3), about one-quarter also worked during the fall and spring school semesters, as well as during school holidays.
- Six (3%) of the child farmworkers reported missing school due to work, and 12 (11%) reported missing after-school or summer programs due to work.
- Sixty-one (30%) of the 202 child farmworkers repeated a grade at least once.

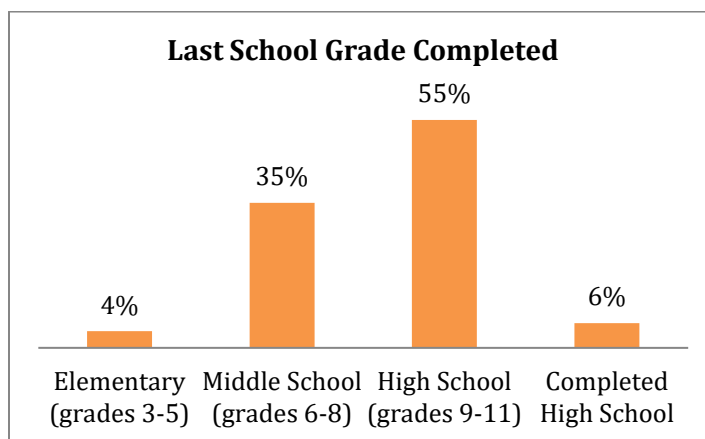


Figure 2. Educational level of child farmworkers

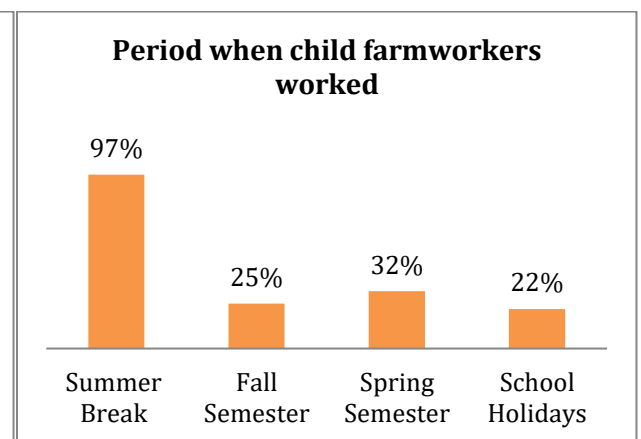


Figure 3. Work relative to school year

Recommendations

These results raise questions about the appropriate ages at which children should be hired to be farmworkers, and whether they should be allowed to do farm work during the school year. Policies limiting the ages at which children can be hired for farm work and limiting their involvement in farm work during the school year need to be considered.