

Northeastern migrant and seasonal farmworkers: general social context

While this workforce is comprised of a variety of different cultural groups, the largest are:

- Mexican and Mexican Americans
- Haitian migrants based in Florida
- Jamaican H2-A guest workers
- Puerto Rican migrant workers

In addition, Central and South American workers, as well as Eastern European, Asian and native American workers are present in smaller numbers.

http://www.knowledgeplex.org/kp/report/report/relfiles/hac_farmworker_report.pdf http://www.worldhungeryear.org/fslc/faqs/ria_010.asp?section=11&click=1

See Cultural Profiles Section
Characteristics of 4 distinct cultural
groups

- Mexican
- Haitian
- Jamaican
- Native American

Research (Trotter 1985), indicates that:

- Eastern migrant camps tend to recruit more single men than is typical for the other two migrant streams. The housing for the men is more often bar-rack-style, with shared sanitary facilities and sleeping quarters.
- In some cases, crew leaders provide meals and deduct the cost from the workers' pay. He may act as the exclusive intermediary between migrant and farmer.



- Migrants are often physically isolated from the nearby towns that surround the farms on which they work, have no transportation. The result is that the individual farmworker may be very dependent on the crew leader.

Implications for medical care

- Farmworkers may be afraid to identify an injury/illness as work-related due to **fear of being fired.**
- Farmworkers may not be able or willing to follow a treatment regimen involving rest, change in job tasks, light duty, or rest/stretching breaks. **Many work piece-rate, only being paid for quantity picked.**
- Farmworkers may not have the real or perceived ability to seek health care or follow-up on prescribed treatments **without the consent and involvement of the crew chief** and/or farm owner. In this case, the care provider may need to consult with the crew chief.

Eastern crop workers: who they are, where they come from, and how they work

Larson, 2001-2002 NAWS

These data include migrant, seasonal and year-around crop workers. Not included are dairy and other livestock workers, or fruit and vegetable processing workers. The comparison with national crop worker survey data shows the unique characteristics of the eastern crop workforce.

Majority male, foreign-born, married and undocumented

| | East | Rest of U.S. |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Average age | 32 | 33 |
| Female | 31% | 19% |
| Percent born in U.S. (incl. P.R.) | 32% | 21% |
| Percent married | 58% | 63% |
| Married, spouse present | 32% | 40%* |
| Percent undocumented | 50.8% | 53.1% |

Majority are Mexican; proportionately more African-American/Caribbean in East

| | East | Rest of U.S. |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Mexican | 64.7% | 73.6% |
| Mexican-American, or Chicano | 3.5% | 8.9% |
| Puerto Rican | 1.9% | 0.2% |
| Non-Hispanic Caucasian | 8% | 10.7% |
| African-American/Caribbean | 10% | 3.3% |

Majority hired by one farm only, work in non-farm employment also, and make slightly more than national average

| | East | Rest of U.S. |
|---|-------------|---------------------|
| Hired by producer directly (no contractor) | 99% | 75% |
| With one employer all year | 85% | 69% |
| Weeks in farm work | 30 | 32 |
| Weeks in non-farm work | 8.0 | 3.8 |
| Hourly wages received | \$7.37 | \$6.39 |

Majority of eastern crop workers appear to be “settled out” migrants

| | East | Rest of U.S. |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Follow the crop | 6.6% | 7.8% |
| Newcomer | 9.7% | 18.3% |
| Settled | 61.2% | 56.4% |
| Shuttle (between 2 points) | 22.6% | 17.3% |

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Educational attainment, English ability slightly above rest of U.S.

| | East | Rest of U.S. |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Ave years of school | 8.1 | 7.1 |
| with fifth grade or less | 19.0% | 7.0% |
| with some post-secondary ed | 8.8% | 3.8% |

| Ability to speak English | East | Rest of U.S. |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Not at all | 28.6% | 47.2% |
| Little | 31.7% | 24.9% |
| Somewhat | 7.9% | 5.8% |
| Well | 31.8% | 22.2% |

Horticulture utilizes proportionately more crop workers in the East

| Crop at time of interview | East | Rest of U.S. |
|----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Horticulture | 39.5% | 13.8% |
| Vegetables | 29.2% | 31.0% |
| Field crops | 16.9% | 12.8% |
| Fruits and nuts | 8.2% | 38.6% |
| Misc. and multiple | 6.2% | 3.8% |

Little public assistance or benefits, but more on-farm free housing than rest of U.S.

| | East | Rest of U.S. |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| unemployment insurance | 15% | 22% |
| Medicaid | 12% | 16% |
| Social Security | 0.9% | 2.4% |
| food stamps | 7.0% | 8.7% |
| free on-farm housing | 23% | 9% |
| health insurance coverage | 29% | 22% |
| Employer-provided insurance | 49% | 45% |
| Children health insured | 48% | 48% |

Janelle B. Montaner Larson, **Crop Workers in the Eastern United States – Mushroom Workers in South-eastern Pennsylvania** ; Prepared for discussion at Immigration Reform, Agriculture and Rural Communities University of California – DC. 14-15 June 2006 . [http://migration.ucdavis.edu/cf/more.php?id=202_0_2_0Basic demographics and income](http://migration.ucdavis.edu/cf/more.php?id=202_0_2_0Basic%20demographics%20and%20income)

JAMAICA



HAITI



Cultural Competency Caribbean (Jamaican/Haitian) Farmworkers

Official Language:

English-Patois
(Jamaican Creole)
(Strongly accented English with some African language influences)

Religions:

Protestantism
Catholicism
Rastafarianism
Voodoo

French

Haitian-Creole

(A mixture of French, African, English, Spanish and indigenous languages)



Socio-Cultural Values:

- Family ties are valued and there is a strong sense of family duty and responsibility for one's family.
- Educational opportunities are considered important and are seen as avenues to greater financial stability and opportunity.
- Sense of family reaches beyond the nuclear family, with extended family members playing important roles in an individual's life.
- Defer to authority and may not question judgements made by those considered to be more knowledgeable.
- It is an important source of pride and dignity for men to provide for their families and they will leave their homes for work for long periods to achieve this.

Economic Considerations:

Haitians:

- One of the poorest nations in the world.
(Minimum wage is US\$1.70/day)
- Farmworkers may be fleeing political unrest.
- 40% of Haitian farmworkers reported they could speak and read English well. (NAWS survey)

- Also may live in sub-standard, crowded living conditions.

Jamaicans:

- 34% of Jamaican citizens live below poverty.
- Political and economic conditions are fairly stable.
- 12% of Jamaicans are illiterate (World Bank).
- Living conditions may be sub-standard and crowded, as well.

Mexican farmworkers



Group description: Mexican workers are by far the largest cultural group among eastern farmworkers. They travel from all parts of Mexico, sometimes singly and sometimes in extended family groups. Informal personal networks are used to locating jobs, and workers may have a green card or be undocumented.

Languages

While Spanish is the most commonly spoken language, there are a wide variety of other languages spoken by indigenous peoples in Mexico. The clinician should be aware that not all Mexican patients speak or understand Spanish.

Home country social and economic factors



- A lack of jobs in Mexico often forces men to leave wives and families to seek work elsewhere
- Workers typically send money home during the time in the U.S. and return home every 1 to 2 years.
- Travel to the United

Common cultural values

- Respect for adults, parents and elderly.
- Personal trust often more important than professional status
- Strongly driven by desire to provide financial stability for family (including extended family).
- The father or grandfather is often the primary authority figure.
- It is uncommon for Hispanics to be aggressive or assertive in health care interactions.
- Direct eye contact is less among Hispanics than among Anglos.
- Direct disagreement with a provider uncommon; the usual response to a decision with which the patient or family disagrees is silence and noncompliance.

Religions

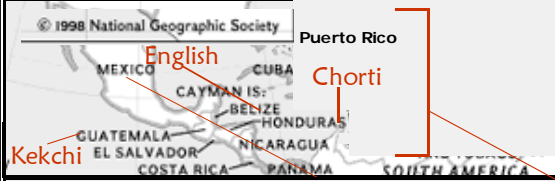
- Predominantly Roman Catholic
- concurrent belief in and use of magico-religious means of dealing with life.
- Candles with pictures of saints are found in many homes and are often part of altars in the living room or bedrooms. Each saint has a specialized as well as general religious function.
- Evangelical churches are growing in Mexico, particularly: Assemblies of God, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons), and Jehovah's Witnesses

Mexican farmworkers

Mexican health beliefs and practices

- Illness may be connected to environmental imbalances (too much hot/cold).
- Robust or oversized body types are considered healthy and a sign of financial success.
- Herbal teas and remedies are frequently used to treat illness.
- Illness is sometimes attributed with bad behavior or God's will.
- Health promotion or prevention services may be under-utilized. Individuals may wait to seek medical attention until health conditions are acute.
- Ill persons usually turn to family for care. Perhaps not as good at taking a proactive role in their own healthcare.
- Patients are not likely to ask for clarity or disagree with a physician's diagnosis or treatment recommendations.
- Patients may be less likely to discuss or expound on the degree of pain they are experiencing.
- Patients may take folk remedies in combination with pharmaceuticals.
- Patients may end a drug regimen as soon as relief from symptoms occurs, despite medical recommendations.
- Some common ailments not directly translatable to American culture:
 - "Los nervios" - "sickness of the nerves" and is common and may be treated spiritually and/or medicinally.
 - *Pasmo* is paralysis or paresis of extremities or face and is treated with massage.
 - *Susto* is fright resulting in "soul loss." *Susto* may be acute or chronic and includes a variety of vague complaints. Women are affected more than men

CENTRAL AMERICA



SOUTH AMERICA



Cultural Competency Hispanic and Latino/a Farmworkers

Indigenous Languages:

- Quiche
- Mam
- Nahuatl
- Otami
- Mayan
- Maya-Quiche
- Zapotec
- Mixtec
- Trascan
- Totonaco
- Quechua
- Aymara

Religions:

- Roman Catholicism
- Protestantism
- Judiasm
- Santeria-fusion of African spiritual worship and Catholicism
- Evangelism
- Pentecostal
- Espiritismo-spiritual beliefs and medium practices of talking with the dead
- Mormon

Economic Considerations:

- Most live below poverty level.
- Often live in sub-standard, crowded living conditions.
- Travel to the United States is often hazardous and expensive for farmworkers.
- Less than 5% of Latin American born Farmworkers report that they can read and speak English well (NAWS survey).
- May be fleeing social/political unrest in their country of origin.

Socio-Cultural Values:

- Sense of community is highly valued.
- Respect for adults, parents and elderly.
- Strongly driven by desire to provide financial stability for family (including extended family).
- Emphasis and dependence on interpersonal relationships for security.
- Often live in the present or are present-oriented. Survivalist living approach, which may not involve long-range health concerns.
- The father is often the primary authority figure.



Noteworthy Considerations for Interpersonal Communication:

Eye behavior can be important. "Evil eye" is believed to be a cause of illness in children stemming from looking at or admiring a child, but not touching them. Sustained eye contact can also be considered rude. Lowering eyes is a sign of respect. Attention to greetings are often considered important and a sign of respect.