

Advancing Farmworker Housing in Vermont



**Presented to the
Vermont House Agriculture Committee**

Dan Baker, PhD
University of Vermont
Dept of Community Development & Applied Economics
University of Vermont Extension Agricultural Business
daniel.baker@uvm.edu

April 10, 2024

**Research & Training Funding provided by the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center
Project Funding provided by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board**

Research on Vermont Dairy Farm Labor

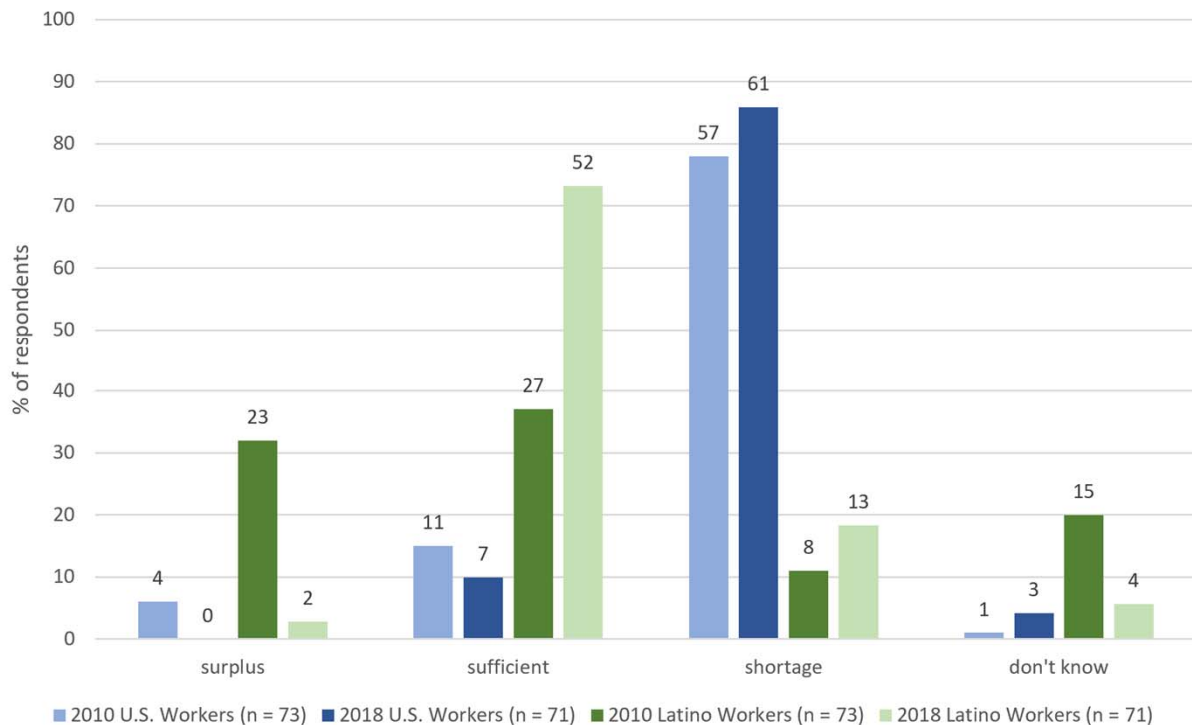
- **Dairy Farmer Occupational Spanish**
 - 91 farmers between 2007 and 2010
- **Dairy Farmer Interviews**
 - 2010, 73 farms statewide
 - 2018, 71 farms statewide
 - 2021, 29 farms statewide (Covid Response)
- **Latino Dairy Farmworker Interviews**
 - 2010 : 33 Latino workers (and 21 US workers)
 - 2016: 173 Latino farmworkers were surveyed on 116 unique farms
 - 2018 and 2019: 67 Latino farmworkers from 40 unique farms
 - 2023 – 36 attendees at 3 farmworker stakeholder meetings
 - 2022-2024 – 196 Latino farmworkers in Vermont and New York
- **Public Opinion surveys (Vermonter Poll)**
 - 2010-2023



Farmworker surveys are conducted by native Spanish-speakers or bi-lingual professionals
Reviewed and approved by the UVM Institutional Review Board

Vermont Dairy's chronic shortage of labor:

Labor Supply for U.S. and Latino Workers



2018: Of the 586 non-family farmworkers employed 57% were Latinx

Farms hiring Latinxs:

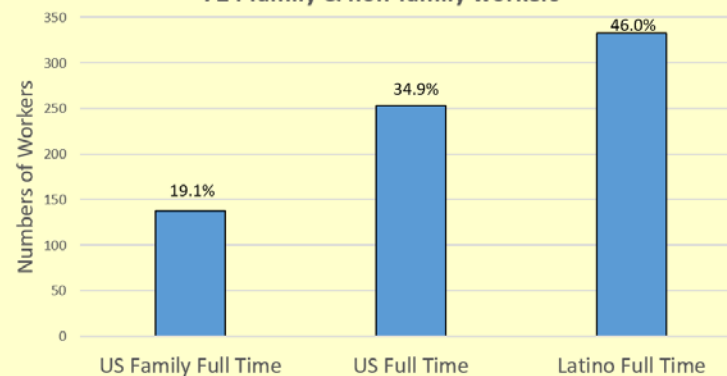
In 2010:

56% of farms surveyed hired Latinx workers

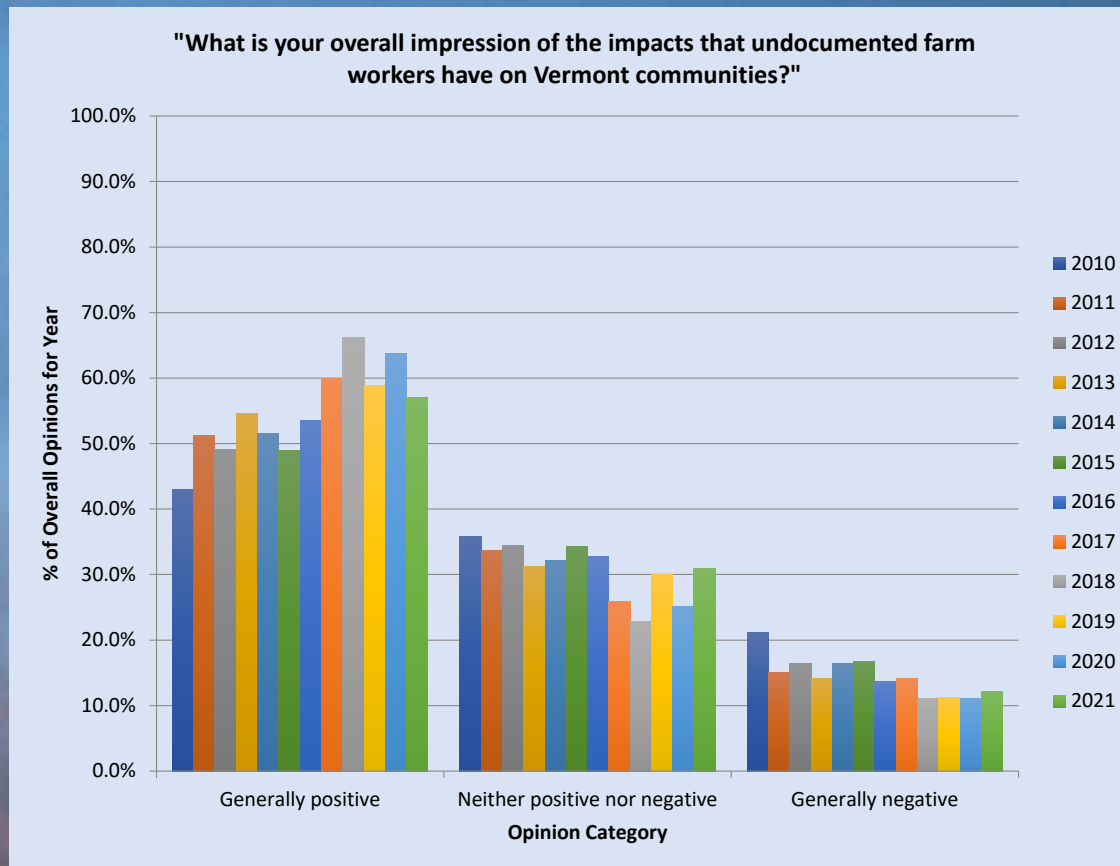
In 2018:

94% of farms surveyed hired Latinx workers

Farm Labor 2018
71 Farms
724 family & non-family workers



Vermont Support for Migrant Farmworkers is consistently strong



2022-2032 Farm Safety Farmworker Interviews

- **196 interviews completed to date**
 - **96 farmworker interviews on 56 farms in Vermont**
 - **100 interviews on 32 farms in New York**

77% Mexico

- 20% Chiapas (29% of Vermont interviewees)
- 11% Veracruz
- 11% Puebla
- 10% Tabasco

23% Guatemala

- 12% from Huehuetenango (22% of NY interviewees)

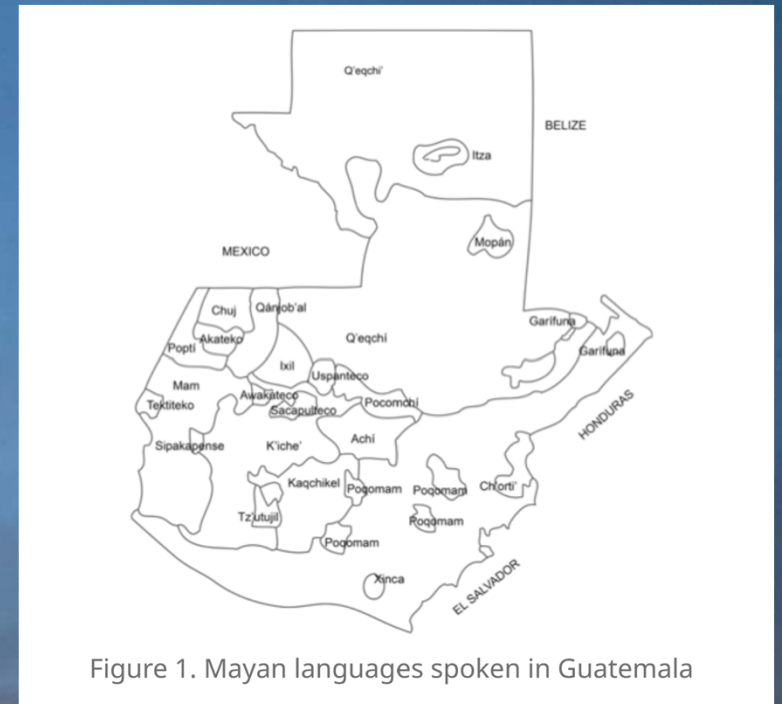


Map: Google Earth

Primary Language

- Spanish –
 - 96% for Mexican workers
 - 80% for Guatemalans
- K'iche' is the most common "other" primary language (33%)

n=196



Map source: [University of Texas](#)

Farmworker Housing Project

Housing is one of the most common non-wage benefits provided to workers on dairy farms (*Dairy Farmer Survey, n=71, 2018*)

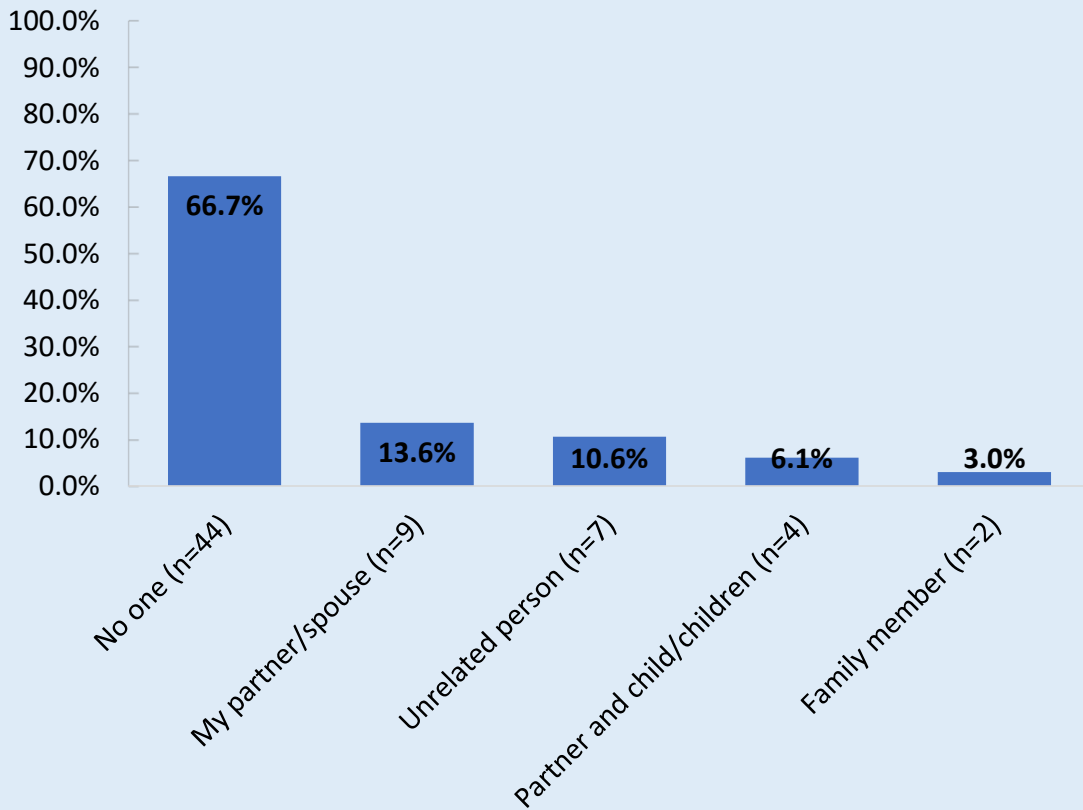
Latino Workers	100% received housing and utilities
US Workers	Housing provided by 62% of farms, Utilities provided by 53% of farms

Housing options differ for US worker compared to migrant dairy farmworkers



2019 Farmworker Survey: Housing Density

"I share my bedroom with..."



Number of people living in workers housing (n=66)

Range: 1-9

Mean: 4.3



Number of bedrooms in workers housing (n=66)

Range: 1-7

Mean: 3.7

Farmworker Housing Stakeholder Group

There is no formal statewide group to share research, needs and coordinate planning. In its absence we have this “Ad Hoc Farmworker Housing Group.”

Seven meetings of this ad hoc group since 2019

- **23 unique stakeholder organizations and individuals (March '21)**

Formalizing this group has been a goal since the beginning

In John Ryan's 2021 farmworker housing report to VHCB he recommended this group:

- **Coordinate efforts**
- **Develop Stakeholder Commitment**
- **Create an Action Plan**
- **Promote Dialogue**
- **Educate**
- **Engage existing housing non-profits and programmatic models**
- **Tailor recommendations to farm scale**
- **Think creatively**

FARMWORKER HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Prepared for the
VERMONT HOUSING &
CONSERVATION BOARD
Montpelier VT

April 2021

Vermont Farmworker Housing Program

- Three rounds of funding to date provided by the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
- Champlain Housing Trust is the lead agency
- UVM Extension does outreach and engagement to farmers and farmworkers
- Two programs:
 - Housing Repairs
 - Housing Replacements



Photo : C Glassberg, Champlain Housing Trust

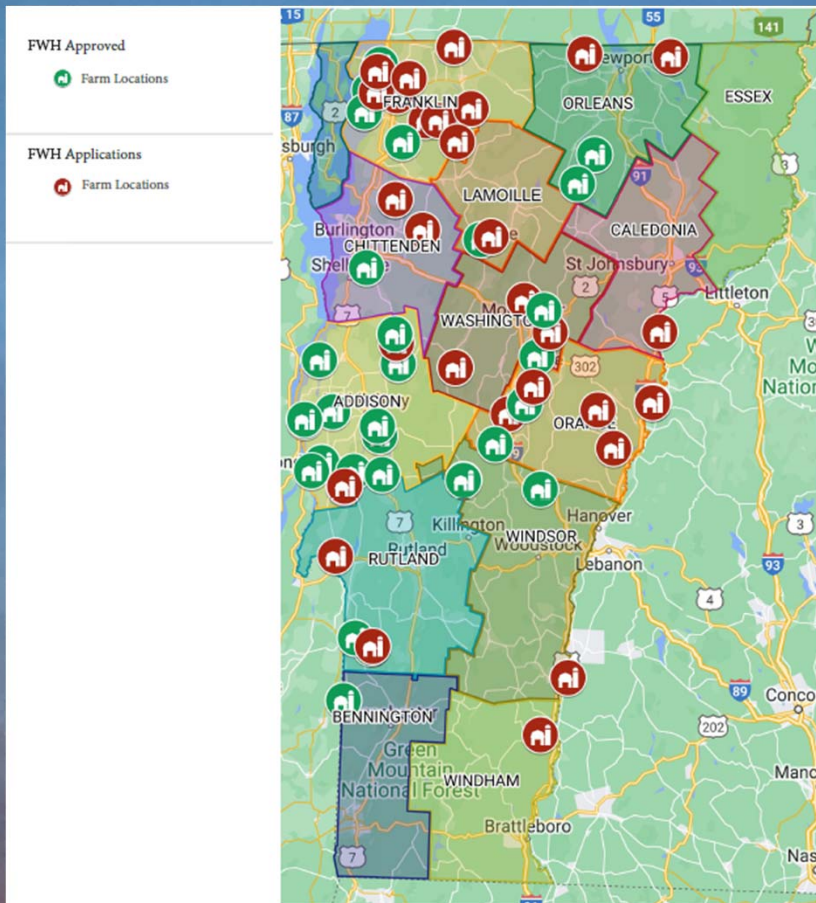
Current Status of Repair Projects

Projects on 35 Farms

- A few farms have more than one project
- One farm has 3 housing units within its “project”
- 20 projects have begun construction or been completed
- 24% of farms with expenses to date will be covering costs over their loan amount to complete the project
 - Several farms will be covering costs significantly greater than \$30,000.

Key to success of the programs has been listening to feedback and evolving the program to address issues

Distribution of Applicants and Approved Projects



County	Approved Projects
Addison	13
Franklin	5
Orleans	3
Orange	3
Rutland	3
Washington	2
Chittenden	2
Windsor	2
Bennington	1
Lamoille	1
Windham	0
Caledonia	0
Total	35

Vermont Farmworker Housing Repair Program

Activities and Results to date

- 60 farms submitted applications
 - Several more farms are currently in the application process
- Repairs approved for 42 units on 35 farms
 - Types of farm businesses
 - 49% dairy
 - 14% diversified (fruit & vegetables, livestock, maple)
 - 11% vegetable
 - 6% turkey
 - 3% Livestock
 - 3% apple orchard
 - 3% flower



141 farmworkers are benefitting from the program to date

Priority Repairs

(as of 12/23)

- Bathroom – 16%
- Windows & doors – 14%
- Kitchen – 9%
- Insulation – 7%
- Siding– 5%
- Septic 5%
- Plumbing – 5%
- Electrical Repairs – 4%
- Roof – 4%

Other repair areas include sleeping & living spaces, mold, HVAC, stairs, decks,



Farm 1- Before



Farm 1- After



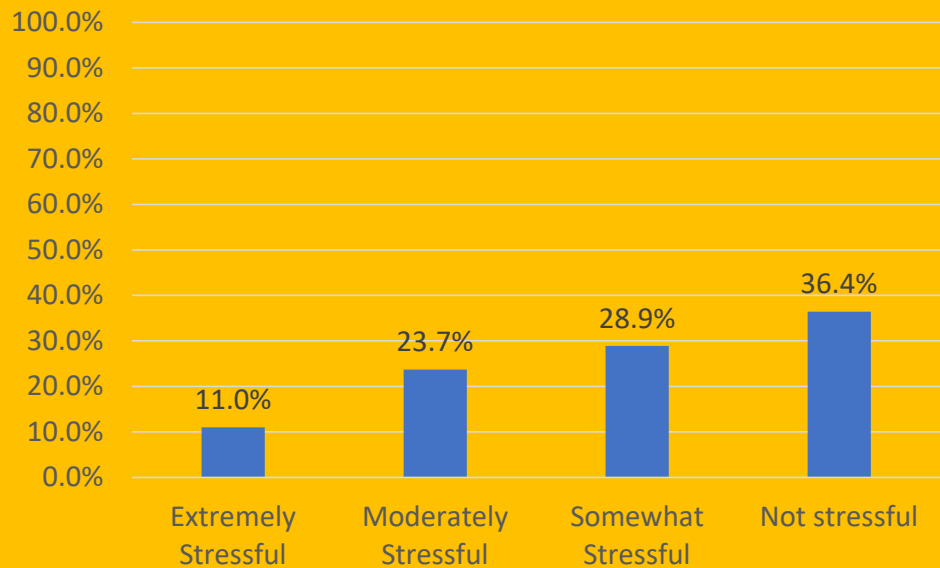
Vermont Dairy Farmworker Housing Stress

Some preliminary evidence of progress

Sometimes I feel that my housing is inadequate

2016

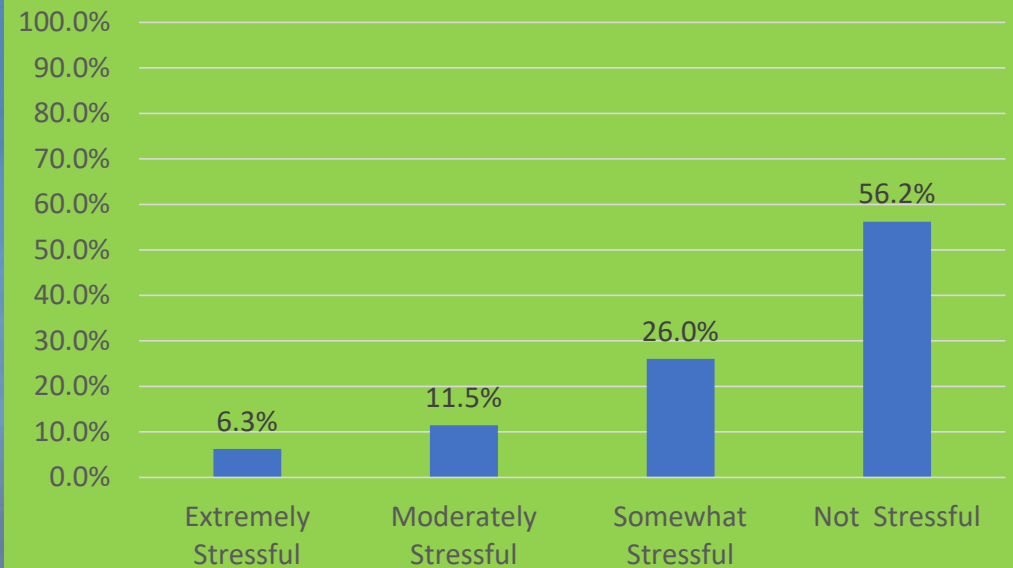
n=173



Sometimes I feel that my housing is inadequate

2022-2023

N=96



Important caveat:

This was not a panel study.

These were not necessarily the same farmworkers or same farms interviewed between the two studies.

Further analysis of the data is in progress.

Across the lake in New York there has been significant recent investment in farmworker housing

- **100 workers on 28 farms were interviewed**
- **Only 5% reported any housing stress**
- **Anecdotal reports of a farmworker housing construction “boomlet”**
 - **New housing designs**

In Vermont Farmworker Demographics and Housing Needs are changing

- More women living and working on farms
- Sharp increase in the number of migrant children on farms
 - Both require more privacy and more space
- Farmers have also requested new housing (not repairs or replacement)
 - This is not currently available through the current programs
- Farmers understanding and confidence in the program has increased and applications continue to be received.

- Questions and Comments?



Photo : C Glassberg, Champlain Housing Trust