

VENTURA COUNTY FARMWORKER HOUSING STUDY

PHASES 2 AND 3

Summary
Presentation
Fall 2024



**COORDINATED AND FUNDED BY THE COUNTY OF VENTURA, AND ALL TEN CITIES;
AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HOUSE FARM WORKERS!**



bae urban economics

COUNTYWIDE FARMWORKER HOUSING STUDY AND ACTION PLAN

- Initiated by County of Ventura, along with local nonprofit *House Farm Workers!*, in Fall 2021:
 - To identify housing needs of farmworkers in the County and consider alternate solutions to improve and develop much-needed farmworker housing throughout the County.
- Project addresses the County's certified 2021-2029 Housing Element Program HE-E, and adopted programs in several VC cities indicating countywide support towards farmworker housing.



PROJECT PARTNERS

The **County of Ventura's Resource Management Agency** is dedicated to ensuring a sustainable quality of life by protecting the health, safety, and resiliency of our community and our environment.

House Farm Workers! promotes affordable, safe and stable housing for Ventura County farm workers and their families through education and advocacy since 2004.

FARMWORKER HOUSING STUDY OVERVIEW

Phase 1: Advisory Council Formation

- Approximately 40 community stakeholders, including Ventura County and all ten cities

Phase 2: Survey Methodology and Design

- Survey Instruments, Outreach Plans, Training Materials

Phase 3: Survey Implementation

- Employer and Farmworker Surveys, Stakeholder Interviews, Farmworker Focus Group Session

Phase 4: Farmworker Study and Action Plan

- Pending

Phase 5: Community Engagement in Implementing the Action Plan

- Pending

PROJECT PHASES 2 AND 3

- **Phases 2 and 3** were coordinated and funded by:
 - County of Ventura;
 - All 10 cities (Camarillo, Moorpark, Newbury Park, Ojai, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks and Ventura);
 - Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC); and
 - The UC Thelma Hansen Fund
- Study and Action Plan will be utilized by the ten cities and County to develop targeted programs and strategies to address identified housing needs of farmworkers, and to support agricultural businesses with a stable and healthy workforce.



PHASES 2 AND 3 PROJECT TEAM

County of Ventura,
Resource Management Agency /
Planning Division

House Farm Workers! (HFW!)

County of Ventura,
Human Services Agency /
Farmworker Resource Program (FRP)

BAE Urban Economics (BAE)



PHASE 2 MATERIALS DEVELOPED

Stakeholder Interview Guides

- Questions tailored to different stakeholder types, including farmworker representatives and advocates, agricultural industry representatives

Employer Survey

- Survey methodology, outreach plan, and survey instrument (online survey format)

Farmworker Survey

- Survey methodology, outreach plan, survey instrument (English and Spanish), and survey team training materials



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Winter 2022-2023

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS — KEY ACTIVITIES

- Coordinating Committee identified key stakeholders
- Conducted outreach to key stakeholders to request interviews
- Conducted 11 interviews by telephone
- Summarized interview results for incorporation into Phase 2-3 Report

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW KEY OBSERVATIONS

- There is an acute challenge of deteriorating housing availability and affordability for farmworkers in Ventura County.
- Farmworkers' low wages and unique vulnerabilities exacerbate the housing crisis for this group.
- As a result of housing challenges for farmworkers, employers face difficulties in recruiting and retaining a sufficient workforce, which may require changes in crops grown and industry output in the future.



AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYER SURVEY

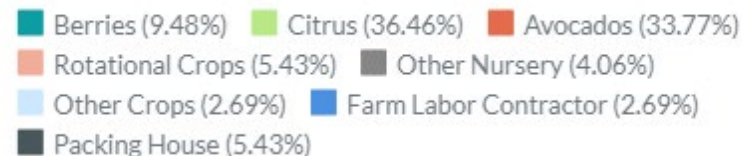
March to August 2023

EMPLOYER SURVEY - KEY ACTIVITIES

- Developed survey instrument and supporting materials
- *HFW!* conducted outreach to agricultural employer community with support of VC Farm Bureau to encourage survey participation via SurveyMonkey
- BAE monitored survey responses and worked with FRP and *HFW!* to target outreach as needed
- *HFW!* conducted follow-up outreach to agricultural employer community to increase survey response
- Consultant tabulated results for incorporation into Phase 2-3 Report

EMPLOYER SURVEY RESPONSE

- Between March and August 2023, 40 representatives of Ventura County agricultural employers responded to the survey
- Representation across key sectors, including berry, orchard, rotational crops, nursery, and farm labor contracting
 - Citrus and Avocado most heavily represented
- Representation across Ventura County's major agricultural regions

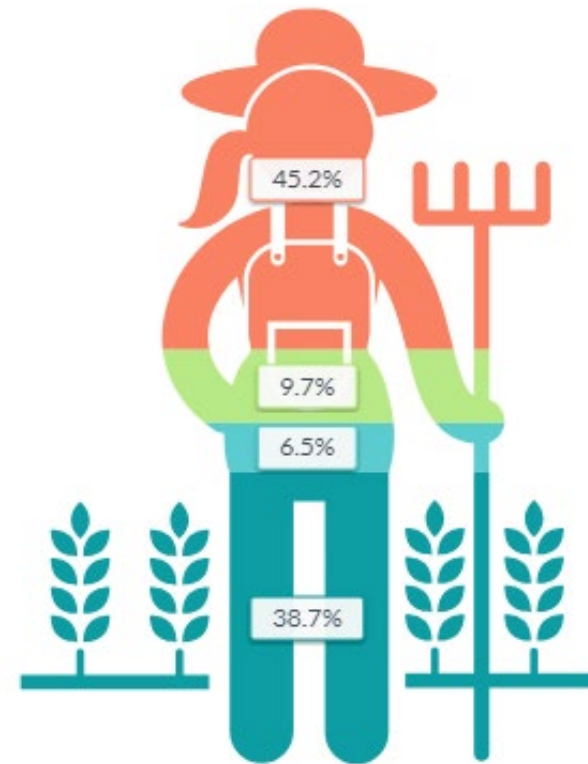




EMPLOYER SURVEY KEY OBSERVATIONS

LABOR NEEDS OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

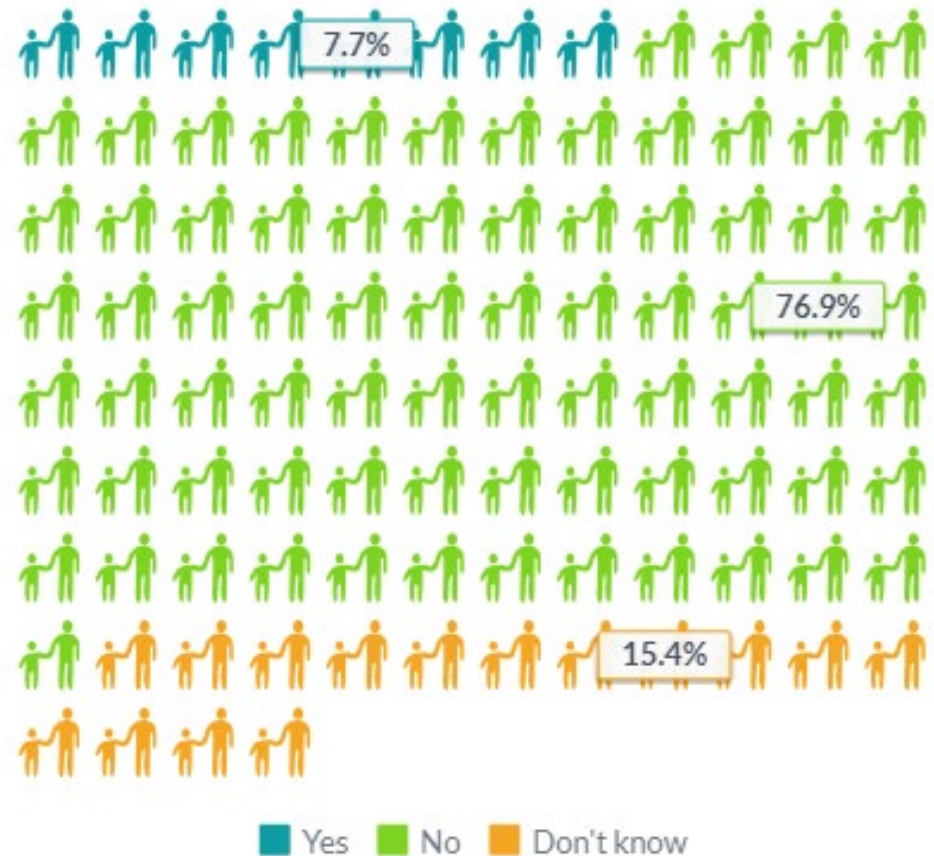
94 percent of respondents
expected stable to growing
labor needs over the next five
years



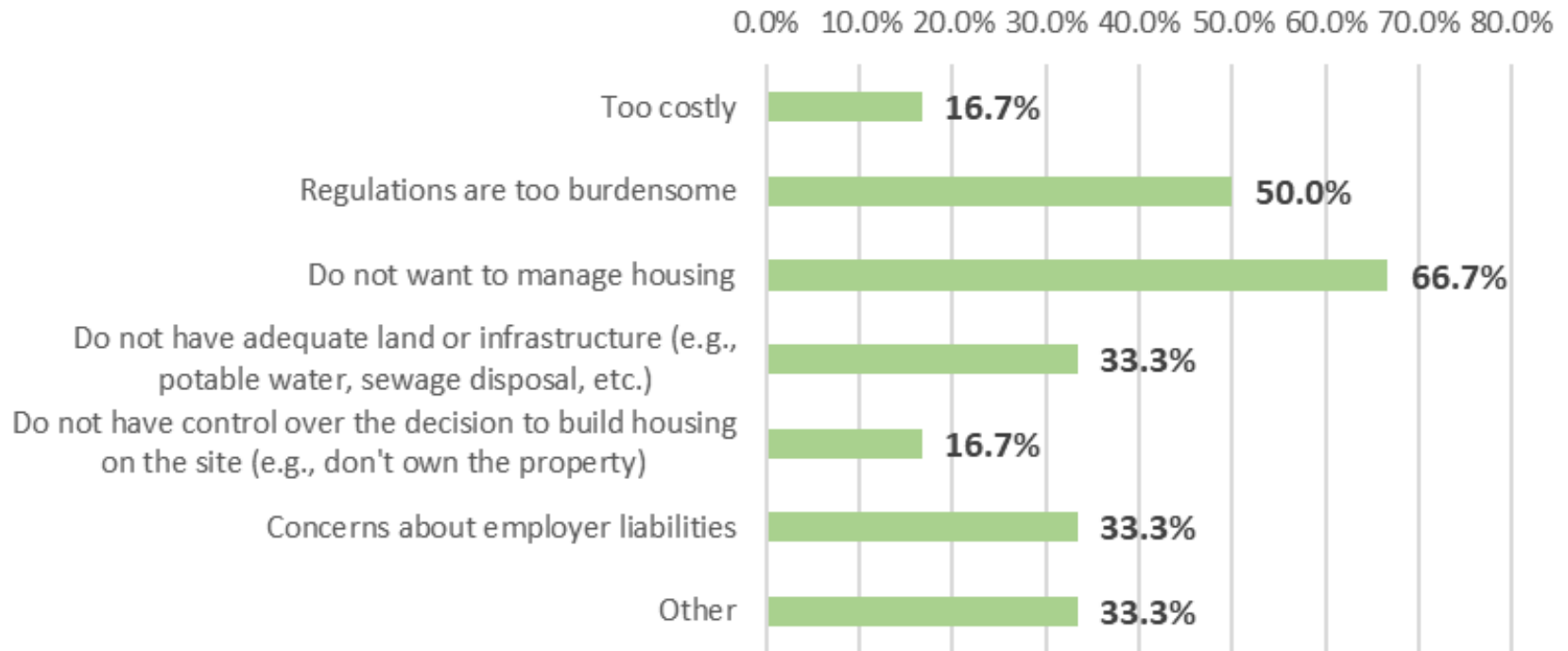
- Increase
- Decrease
- Reduce in labor needs due to increases in efficiency/advances in tech
- Remain the same

ADEQUACY OF FARMWORKER HOUSING SUPPLY

77 percent of respondents do not agree that housing for farmworkers is available in sufficient quantities



Reasons for Not Providing Employee Housing in the Future



REASONS FOR NOT PROVIDING EMPLOYEE HOUSING

The most frequently cited reason for not providing employee housing is not wanting to manage housing



FARMWORKER SURVEY

April to October 2023

FARMWORKER SURVEY — KEY ACTIVITIES

- BAE and FRP developed Farmworker Survey and supporting materials
- Project Partners implemented an outreach plan to inform the community about the survey.
 - Provided an overview of the project; developed a bilingual project website, bilingual flyers, informational videos in five languages; in-person booths at community events, and social media coverage.
 - Outreach was done directly to agricultural employers.
- BAE trained Farmworker Resource Program (FRP) staff for surveying
- *HFW!* and FRP coordinated outreach to schedule in-person farmworker survey interviews

FARMWORKER SURVEY — KEY ACTIVITIES (CONTD.)

- FRP conducted one-to-one survey interviews with farmworkers in five languages: Spanish, Mixteco, Zapoteco, Purepecha, English
- BAE monitored survey results and coordinated with *HFW!* and FRP to target surveys to reach targets by crop type and agricultural areas
- Level of effort required to complete this task:
 - ✓ Survey instrument was beta tested twice in Spanish for efficiency
 - ✓ iPads were used for surveying
 - ✓ Survey typically took 20-30 mins
 - ✓ Respondents were provided with an incentive on completion of the survey
- FRP confirmed that crop and location requirements were met (per the Survey Methodology); ensuring that all VC locations/ag roles were surveyed
- BAE tabulated results for incorporation into Phase 2-3 Summary Report

ESTIMATED FARMWORKER POPULATION

- BAE estimated an annual average annual farmworker employment of 25,000 in Ventura County *(Based on 2020 data from the California Employment Development Department, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, and 2017 Census of Agriculture)*
 - Estimate represents jobs, not workers; may exclude those who are informally employed
 - Some jobs may be held by more than one worker (e.g., employee turnover during the year);
 - Some workers may hold more than one job in agriculture (e.g., work for more than one employer)
- County of Ventura 2021-2029 Housing Element estimated between 18,000 and 36,500 agricultural workers; and indicated that higher end of the range is more accurate and should be used for estimating farmworker housing needs. *(Based on information received from VC Agricultural Commissioner and House Farm Workers! task force)*

VC jurisdictions/stakeholders could use a minimum number of 25,000 for planning future housing; however, more housing may be necessary for informally employed farmworkers

FARMWORKER SURVEY RESPONSE

- FRP completed 417 in-person surveys with non H-2A Ventura County farmworkers between April 2023 and October 2023
- Survey respondents worked in all of Ventura County's major crops as well as packing houses, and agricultural support services, such as farm labor contractors
- Survey respondents worked in all of Ventura County's major agricultural regions

Completed Surveys vs. Targets by Survey Categories (417 completed surveys, 11-10-23)

Area*	Crops							Total Target*	Surveyed *
	Berries	Citrus	Avocado	Rotational Crops	Other	Rangeland	Support Activities		
Camarillo/Somis (a)	20	1	0	5	10	0	0	36	70
Fillmore/Piru	1	3	1	1	8	0	0	15	34
Meiners Oaks/Ojai (Upper and Lower)	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	8
Moorpark	15	5	2	1	5	0	0	28	28
Oxnard/Port Hueneme	149	1	0	17	11	0	0	178	181
Santa Paula	5	2	1	1	2	0	0	12	52
Simi Valley	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thousand Oaks-Newbury Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ventura (b)	19	0	0	1	1	0	0	21	50
Other (Countywide Support: FLC, Packing House, etc.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	104	104	
Total Target	210	12	5	27	40	1	104		
Surveyed *	231	72	69	82	45	6	106		

* Refer to the Survey Stratification section in the Farmworker Survey Summary Report for explanation of agricultural sub-basins and survey targets. The completed surveys by crop and by area do not total to 417 because farmworkers could work with more than one crop and/or in more than one area.

Notes:

(a) Includes Arroyo Santa Rosa Valley and Pleasant Valley.

(b) Includes Ventura Mound.

Source: BAE, 2024

SURVEY TARGETS

Total Target for Surveys: 400
Total Completed Surveys: 417

FARMWORKER SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

- 42 percent male, 57 percent female, remainder did not state
- Ages ranging from 18 to 78 and a median age of 39 years
- Representation across key sectors, including berry, orchard, rotational crops, nursery, packing houses, and farm labor contracting
- Representation across Ventura County's major agricultural regions



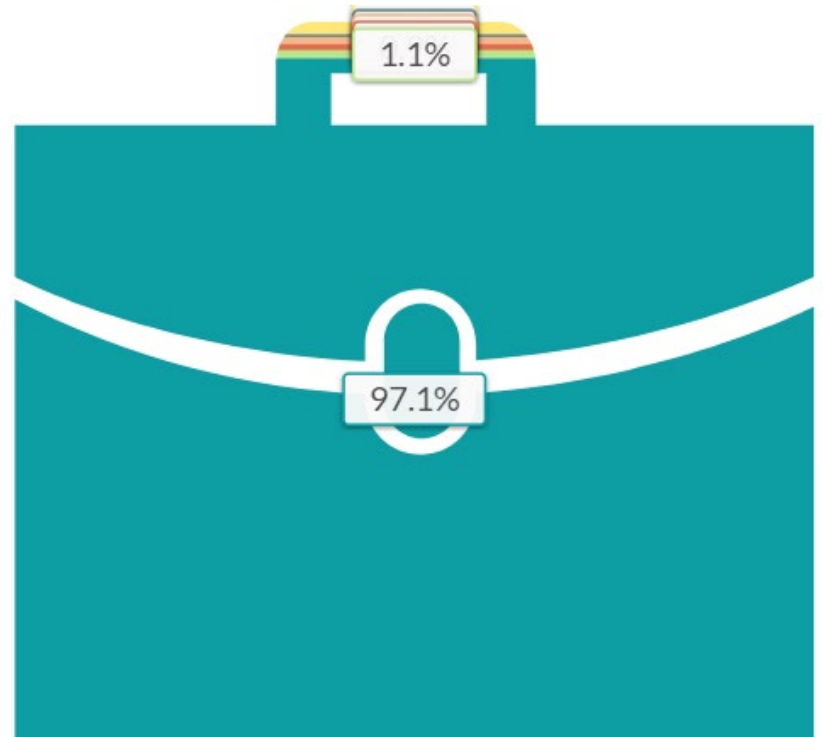
■ Male (42.04%) ■ Female (57.16%)
■ I'd rather not say (0.8%)



FARMWORKER SURVEY KEY OBSERVATIONS

JOBS IN ADDITION TO AGRICULTURE WORK

97.1 percent of respondents
only work in agriculture



- No Other Jobs/Only in Ag.
- Retail/Services
- Restaurant/Hospitality
- Const./Maint.
- Childcare
- Other

NUMBER OF YEARS LIVING IN VENTURA COUNTY

Half of farmworkers have lived here longer than 15 years and the other half have lived here less than 15 years

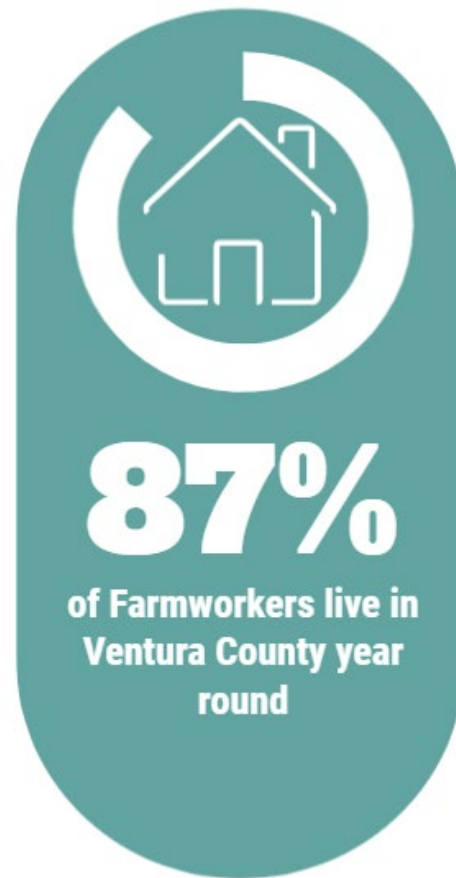
Median years living
in Ventura County



15 Years

PORTION OF YEAR LIVING IN VENTURA COUNTY

Residency in Ventura County ranges from five months to 60 years with a median of 15 years.



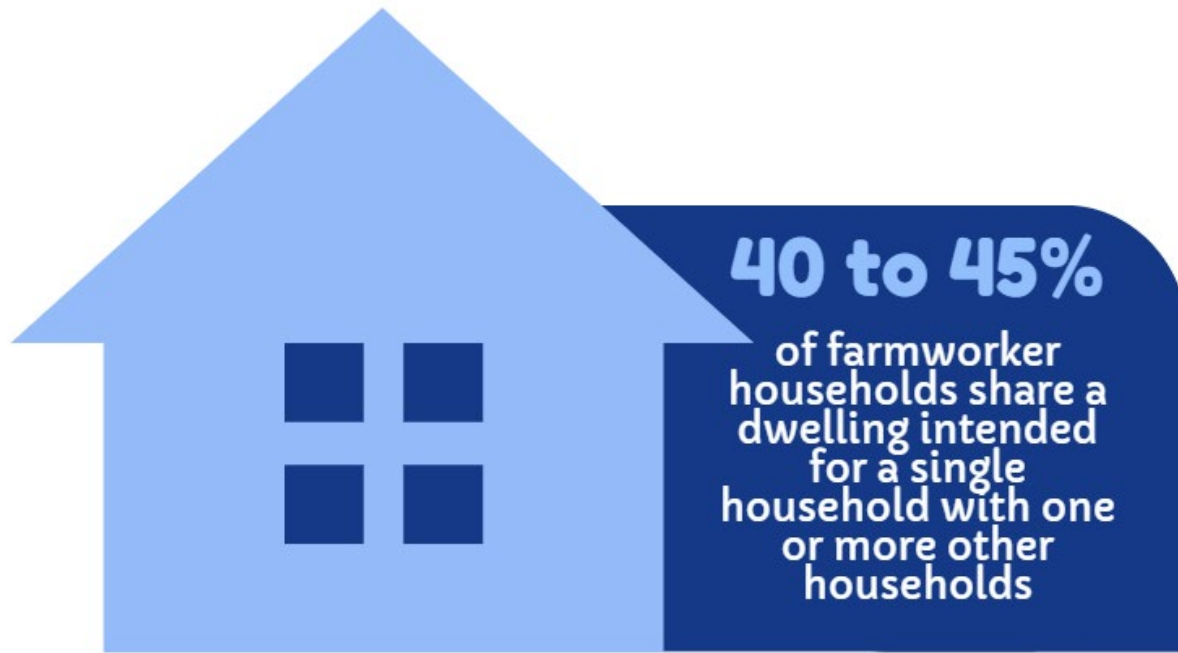


of Farmworkers report six or more repairs needed for their housing

Types of repairs may range from minor issues (e.g., replace smoke detector, repair screens on windows, provide consistent trash collection, etc.) to major repairs affecting health & safety (e.g., fix poor condition of sewer/septic system, no separate kitchen, mold/mildew, etc.) which may need addressing if they occur in the same unit

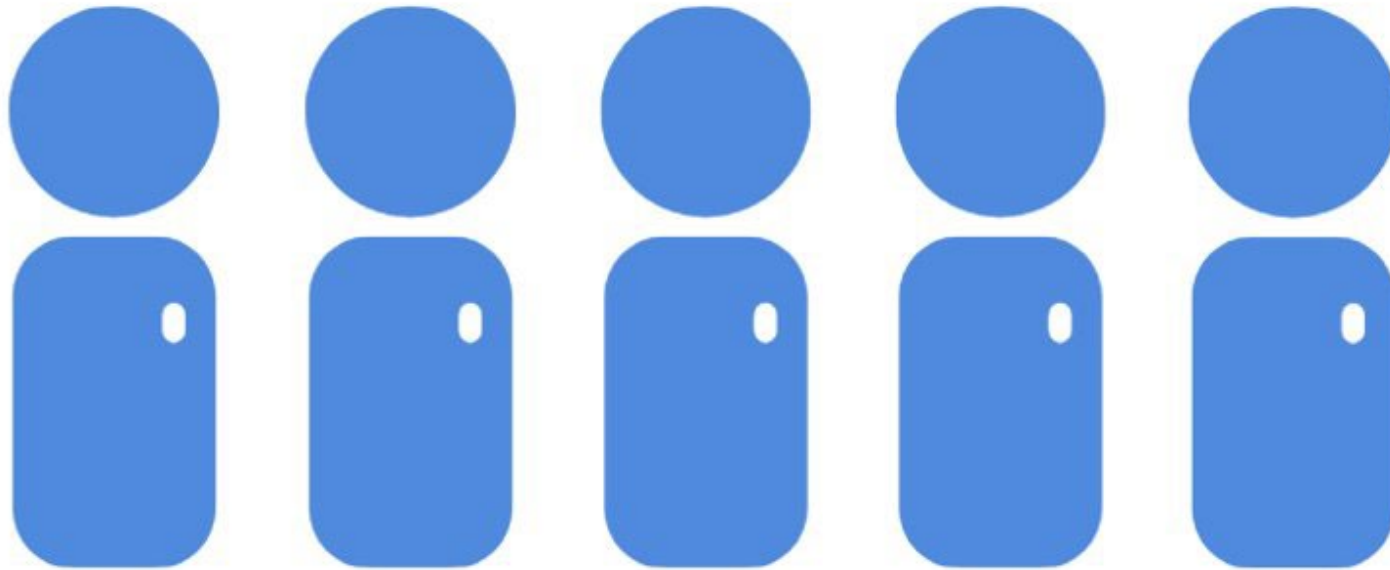
RESPONDENTS WITH SIX OR MORE HOUSING REPAIRS IDENTIFIED

While some conditions identified for repairs may, in isolation, be relatively minor, other conditions could cumulatively pose risks to health or personal safety/security, for children, elderly, and vulnerable populations



FARMWORKER HOUSEHOLDS SHARING HOUSING UNITS WITH OTHER HOUSEHOLDS

- 40.1 percent of respondents share their bathroom with people from outside their household.
- 43.1 percent share the kitchen with people outside of their household.



**For the purposes of this report, a household includes related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, wards, or employees who share the housing unit. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit, is also counted as a household.*

FARMWORKER HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Median size of respondent households is 5 persons

INCOME

For the purposes of this report, a **household includes related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, wards, or employees who share the housing unit. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit, is also counted as a household.*

Personal Income of Farmworkers

The median personal earnings in 2022 for survey respondents was between \$22,500 and \$24,999

Household* Income

The median household income in 2022, when combined with other members of the household was \$35,000 and \$37,499

Income spent on Housing

48 percent of the combined household income is spent towards the cost of housing



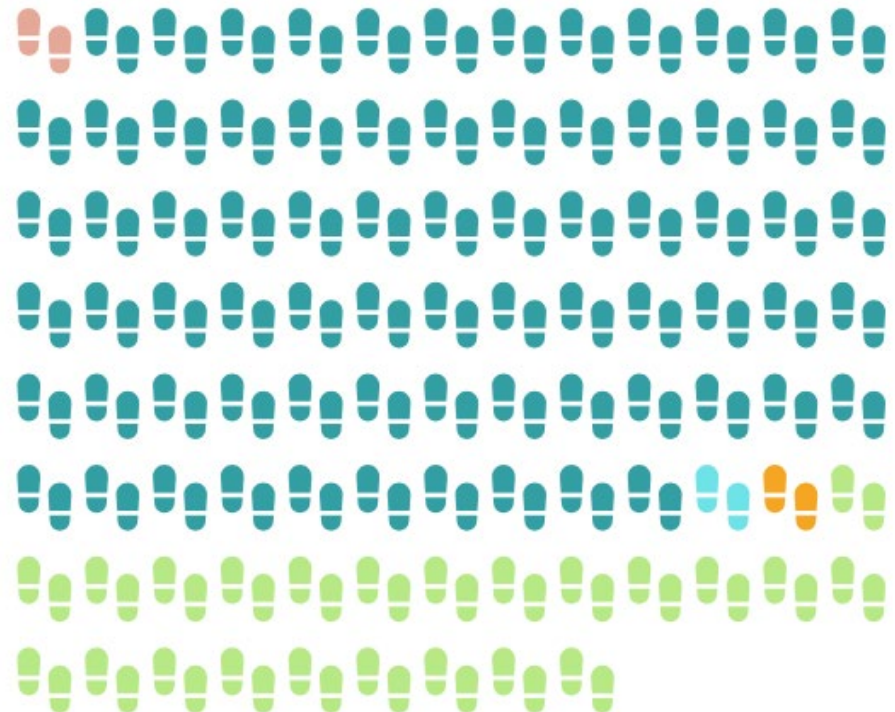
PREFERRED HOUSING TYPE

89.4 percent of respondents
would prefer to live in a single-
family house



COMMUTE MODE

74 percent of respondents use personal vehicles for commute



- On foot (0.99%)
- Bicycle (0.3%)
- Personal Vehicle (73.76%)
- Carpooling (0.89%)
- Employer-provided bus or van (0.89%)
- Pay someone to take you (23.17%)



FARMWORKER FOCUS GROUP MEETING

October 25, 2023

FOCUS GROUP MEETING PLANNING

- Event funded by VCTC and UC Thelma Hansen
- Project Partners and VCTC developed boards in Spanish and English for focus group stations
- Planning Committee designed outreach materials in English and Spanish, and engaged with agricultural employers to gather focus group participants
- Conducted training for meeting facilitators
- Art area donated by the Santa Paula Art Museum



FOCUS GROUP MEETING

EVENT KEY ACTIVITIES

- Hosted focus group session with 34 participants, speaking 5 languages
- Participants brought family members, totaling 80 attendees
- 27 staff members from four agencies assisted with the event
- An incentive was provided to all farmworker participants, as well as a catered dinner for all attendees
- Coordination Committee compiled focus group input for inclusion in Survey Report



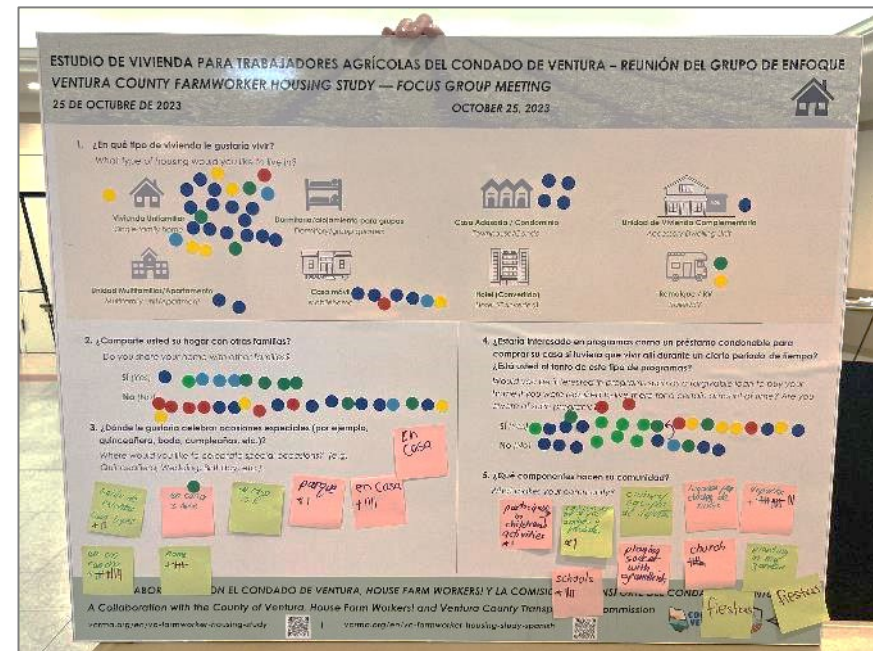
FOCUS GROUP MEETING KEY OBSERVATIONS: HOUSING

Participants

- 1/3 shared home
- 2/3 interested in forgivable loan to buy a home
- Spanish most common language spoken in participants' home

Participant Housing Challenges

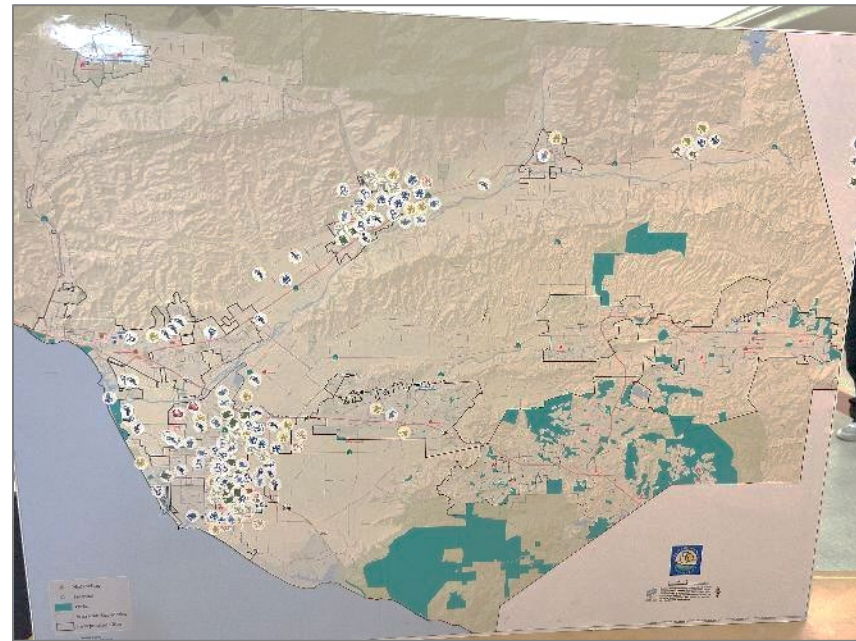
- Unaffordable suitable housing
- Too small
- Distance to schools
- Not knowing who to contact about housing issues



FOCUS GROUP MEETING KEY OBSERVATIONS:

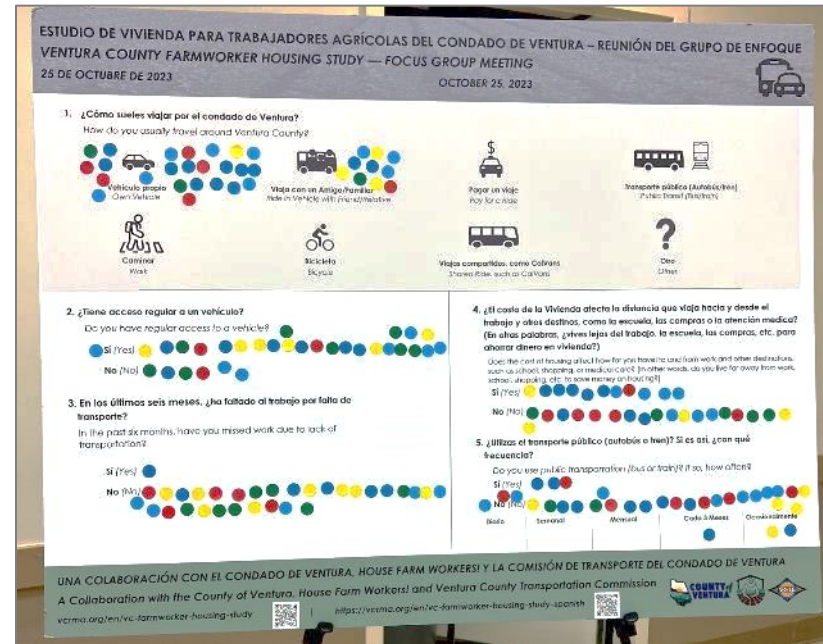
WHERE TO LIVE

- Focus group participants generally validated findings from the Farmworker Survey
 - Strong preference for single-family homes
 - Most farmworkers live in the Oxnard/Port Hueneme area and along the Highway 126 corridor
 - 40% would prefer living on a ranch; 60% would prefer living in a community
 - What makes a community? Sports, church, school, accessible amenities



FOCUS GROUP MEETING KEY OBSERVATIONS: TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNITY

- Transportation related challenges include cost, trouble with parking at home or work, feeling unsafe when using public transit
- Most farmworkers travel to work in a personal vehicle
- Cost, size, and distance to schools were the most commonly cited housing challenges
- Most participants indicated they did not know who to contact for assistance with transportation (2/3) or housing issues (97%)





AREAS OF AGREEMENT

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

Housing Crisis - All groups acknowledge the acute challenge of deteriorating housing availability and affordability for farmworkers in Ventura County, exacerbated by farmworkers' low wages and unique vulnerabilities.

H-2A Workers – Stakeholder interviews and the Employer Survey respondents agree that there is increasing utilization of H-2A workers in response to a domestic labor shortage.

Housing Conditions - The Farmworker Survey and Focus Group Session both highlight that the current housing conditions for farmworkers are not adequate, with many compromising on their living arrangements, primarily due lack of affordability of more suitable housing.

AREAS OF AGREEMENT (CONTD.)

Transportation - Both the Farmworker Survey and Focus Group Session indicate that most farmworkers use personal vehicles for commuting, and the cost of transportation is a significant issue.

Lack of Knowledge of Where to Find Assistance – Both the Farmworker Survey and the Focus Group Session indicate that most farmworkers do not know where to find assistance for housing or social services needs.

NOTES FROM OUR FARMWORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

"The lack of affordable housing options has forced us to make do with what little we have, enduring the constant stress and uncertainty that comes with living in such conditions... **The thought of having a stable and safe home fills me with a sense of longing and a desire for the security and comfort that such a living situation could provide.** If we were fortunate enough to live in a more affordable housing environment, I imagine that the positive impacts would be profound..." ~ Julian O.

"Prior to living in Lloyd-Butler Ranch, **my family and I lived in a small garage that only had one window.** We're a family of 5 and there was never enough space for all us, so a lot of the time it was difficult to give each other the privacy we wanted and needed. For a long time, my mom kept on looking for houses and other places where we could rent but since my father's job isn't a high paying job it was very difficult to find a place that he could afford... **Since living here I'm able to say that my family looks more at peace and much happier, including myself.**"

~Jamillet R.

"In our [one bedroom] apartment, **I sleep in the living room, along with my older brother and my younger brother, while my little sister sleeps in the bedroom with my mom and dad.** Having so many people in such a small space meant that the house was never quiet and while at times I appreciated it, there were even more where **I wished times were different.**"

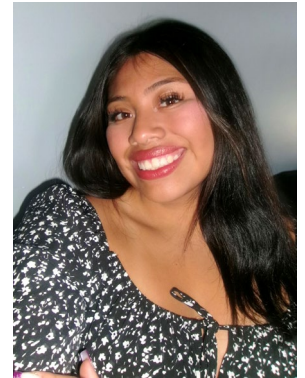
~Jazmin G.



NOTES FROM OUR FARMWORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

“We live in a mobilehome since 11 years... In winter, **we have to sleep with four blankets because our heating system doesn't work.** When it rains, **our roof and windows start leaking, so we have buckets to catch the rain...** In the summer when it gets hot, **ants start getting into our home, and there are ants everywhere.** They get into our food, and sometimes we can't eat the food until we pick out the ants.”

~ Elizabeth R.



“We love living here [Cabrillo Economic Development Housing]. **I've seen the community here grow together.** Living in a good neighborhood has many benefits. We do not have any violence or the police patrolling the area at night. The community works together to maintain a safe environment... **I live in an area where we are close to stores, schools, and gas stations.**

Walking to the school or the doctor takes less than 20 minutes which is great.

~ Angela C.

“Since I was a child, I have seen my parents' sacrifices to provide me with the necessities while working nonstop to pay the **high cost of rent** and even neglecting their health. **My family would not undergo the ongoing struggles if I lived in a more safe and affordable housing environment...**”

~ Agle R



"WE CELEBRATE THE TEAMWORK AMONG
THE LEADERS AND COMMUNITY OF VENTURA
COUNTY WHO SUPPORT IMPROVING HOUSING
FOR FARMWORKERS, OUR ESSENTIAL WORKERS.
THE SURVEY IS THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF
CONTINUING COLLABORATION."

~ADVISORY COUNCIL

STAKEHOLDER PRESENTATIONS

- September 5, 2024 – Release of Survey Report and Media Outreach
- September 10, 2024 – County Board of Supervisors
- October to December 2024 – All Ten City Councils
- October to December 2024 – Stakeholders
- October 24, 2024 – HOME Conference (*HF*W! table)

Advisory Council members have opportunity to support at each stakeholder presentation event

NEXT STEPS

- **Phase 4:** Farmworker Housing Study and Action Plan (Fall 2024 to Fall 2025 - Anticipated)
- **Phase 5:** Community Engagement in Implementing the Action Plan (Fall 2025 – Anticipated)

For updates, see: <https://vcrma.org/en/vc-farmworker-housing-study>

To get involved,
see: <https://vcrma.org/en/farmworker-get-involved>



QUESTIONS?