

Language, Literacy, and Educational Backgrounds of Parents from MSHS-Eligible Households

Findings from the 2012-2016 National Agricultural Workers Survey



OPRE Report #2019-44



Introduction

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs provide child development services to migrant and seasonally laboring families while parents engage in difficult and often dangerous agricultural work. Just like other Head Start programs, MSHS programs offer services including medical and dental care, nutritional services, and mental health services.

MSHS enrolls children from birth through age five, offering early education to low-income migrant and seasonal families until children reach the age of mandatory school attendance.

Purpose

This brief highlights the language, literacy, and educational backgrounds of parents from MSHS-eligible households using data from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration 2012-2016 National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS).

Understanding the language, literacy, and educational backgrounds of parents in MSHS-eligible households can inform considerations related to family needs, risks, and resources. The information presented below may identify some areas of focus, which can enhance the capacity of MSHS programs to serve their communities.

Methods

This brief uses data from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration 2012-2016 National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS).

The NAWS collects data annually on a national random sample of crop farmworkers in the continental United States (U.S.). The NAWS uses field survey methods developed and refined for this predominantly migrant and seasonal farmworker population.

See <https://www.doleta.gov/naws> for more information about methods, measures and reports from the NAWS.

Sample

Families described in this brief as MSHS- eligible include a subsample of the full NAWS sample that have (1) at least one child under the age of six, (2) more than 50 percent of their income earned from agricultural work, and (3) a total income below 100 percent of the federal poverty level for their household size.

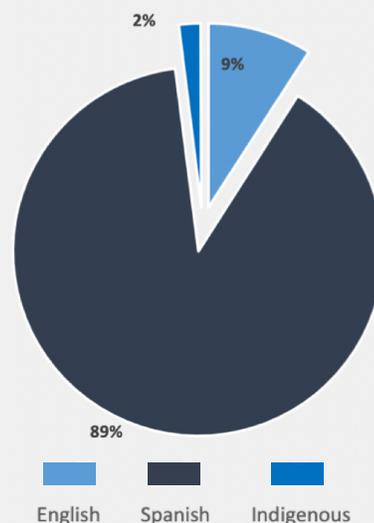
This brief describes all MSHS-eligible families, including both those who have received MSHS services and those who have not.

Findings

Most parents in MSHS-eligible households (89%) speak Spanish as their dominant language.

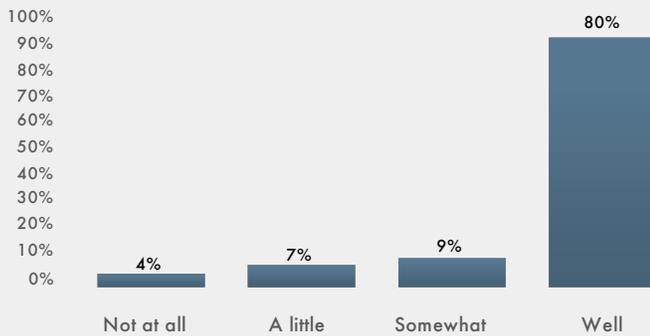
Only 9% of parents speak English as their dominant language and only 2% of parents predominantly speak an indigenous language.

Dominant Language of Parents in MSHS-Eligible Households



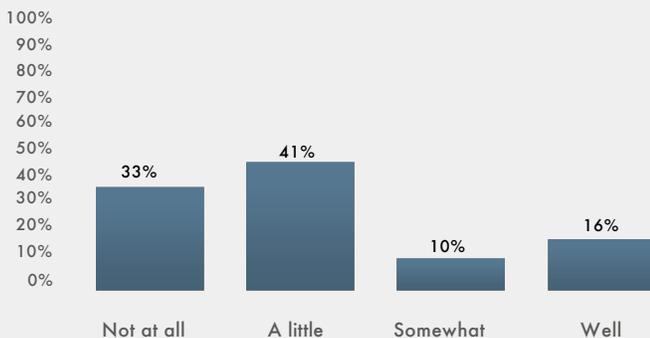
Findings

Spanish Reading Skills of Parents in MSHS-Eligible Households



- The majority of Spanish-speaking parents (80%) in MSHS-eligible households are able to read Spanish 'well'.
- An additional 9% of parents can read 'somewhat well', 7% can read 'a little', and 4% cannot read 'at all'.

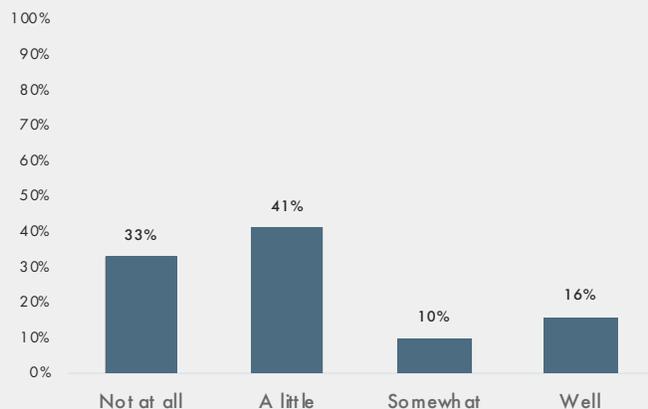
English Speaking Skills of Parents in MSHS-Eligible Households



- A third (33%) of parents in MSHS-eligible households speak no English.
- An additional 41% of parents speak 'a little' English. More than a quarter (26%) of parents speak English at least 'somewhat well'.

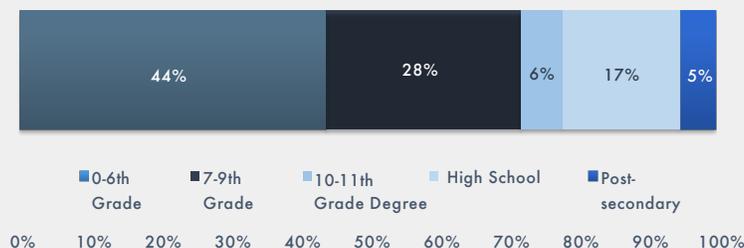
Findings

English Reading Skills of Parents in MSHS-Eligible Households



- Nearly half (47%) of parents in MSHS-eligible households are unable to read in English.
- More than a quarter (28%) of parents can read 'a little' English, 7% of parents can read 'somewhat well', and 18% of parents can read 'well'.

Educational Attainment of Parents in MSHS-Eligible Households



- Nearly half of parents in MSHS-eligible households (44%) did not attend school beyond the 6th grade and less than a quarter (22%) of parents completed high school.
- More than a quarter (28%) of parents attended school through 7th to 9th grade and an additional 6% attended school through the 10th or 11th grade. On average, parents in MSHS eligible households had attended school through the 8th grade.

Adult Education of Parents in MSHS-Eligible Households



- Some parents in MSHS-eligible households participated in adult education classes in the United States.
- For example, 17% of parents took an English or English as a Second Language class, 11% of parents participated in job training classes, and 3% of parents participated in GED classes.



This brief was prepared by Jenessa Malin, Ph.D., a Social Science Research Analyst in the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE). This brief relies on data collected and analyzed as part of the 2012-2016 National Agricultural Workers Survey conducted by JBS International, working with ETA/DOL. The ACF Project Officer is Wendy DeCoursey. For additional information visit: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/migrant-and-seasonal-head-start-supplement-to-the-national-agricultural>.

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