

Results of ECU-NC State Farmworker Internet Survey

Problem

Internet access is important for staying connected with family, finding information, and using telehealth services. No one knows how many NC farmworkers have internet access, how much it costs, or what devices are available.

How We Did the Research

During the 2023 growing season,

- We asked outreach workers what questions were most important to include in a survey regarding internet and technology access.
- We trained outreach workers to administer surveys throughout the state, regularly contacting them to provide survey updates, troubleshoot problems, and deliver incentives.
- 20 outreach workers at 8 sites surveyed 1,034 farmworkers and family members across North Carolina.

What We Found

Who Was Surveyed:

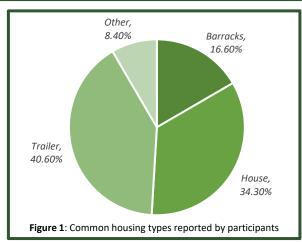
- 99% of participants were born outside of the U.S.: Mexico (91.7%), Central America (6.7%), or South America (0.2%)
- 75.6% of participants did not live here year-round (that is, they were migrant farmworkers)
- On average, there were 8.9 (range 1 to 90) workers in each household
- 25.1% of participants lived in a household with a family
- 12.4% of participants lived in a household with children

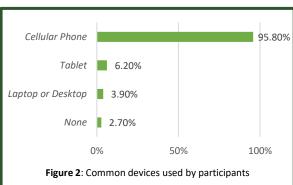
Communicating with Mobile Phones

- 81% of participants had consistent cell phone coverage for calls or texting
- 13.3% of participants could only send messages *some of* the time
- 3.7% of participants could only send and receive messages if there was Wi-Fi

Available Devices

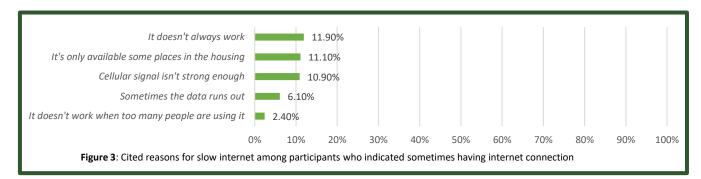
- Mobile phones were by far the most common device (Figure 2)
- 94.7% of devices allowed for video chat (if there was internet)





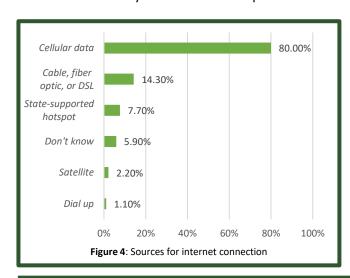
Internet Access and Speed

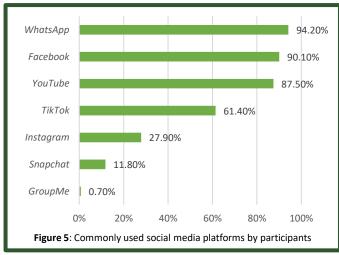
- 7.7% of participants had internet access through a NC Farmworker Health Program emergency hotspot
 - 21.3% of participants had internet access sometimes, none reported no internet access
 - 31.3% of participants with internet had fast enough internet to watch an online video *sometimes*, and 7.5% *did not* have fast enough internet to watch an online video
- Excluding participants with state-provided hotspots,
 - 25% of participants had internet access sometimes, and 4.3% had no internet access
 - 41.7% of participants with internet had fast enough internet to watch an online video *sometimes*, and 8.7% *did not* have fast enough internet to watch an online video
- Unreliable networks, poor cell service, and internet working only in certain places in the housing were all reasons why internet only sometimes worked (Figure 3)



Internet Service Type

- 80% of participants with internet access used cellular networks (Figure 4), and few participants had access to other sources of internet like cable, fiber optic, wired internet (14.3%) or satellite (2.2%)
- Most participants paid for their own internet, spending about \$49 per month
- Most commonly used social media platforms were WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube (Figure 5)





Funding and Research Ethics

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"A library-centered applied research program to advance digital equity for farmworkers in North Carolina"

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Project Website: Digital Equity in Farmworker Communities https://lib.ecu.edu/sites/farmworker-digital-equity/

