



# The need for legal aid for agricultural workers in Minnesota and North Dakota

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## Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (HACER)

*HACER works in concert with Latine communities to access, generate, and disseminate credible and relevant research in order to inform institutional decisions and public policy.*

# Overview



**Background**



**Methods**



**Findings**



**Conclusions**



# Background

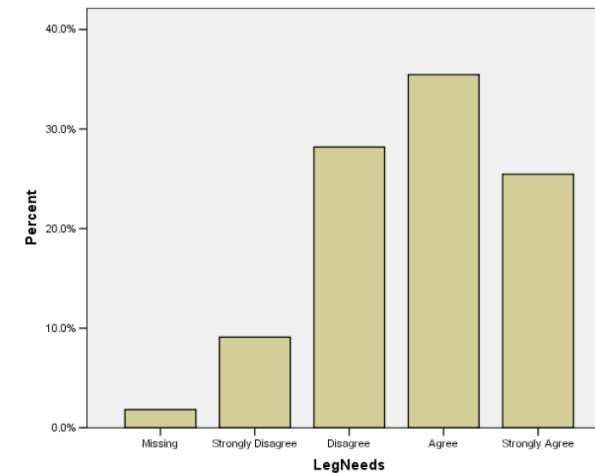
# Background

- Assess the legal needs of agricultural workers in Minnesota and North Dakota
- HACER completed a prior needs assessment with SMRLS in 2006



November 2006

Figure 15: I know another migrant who needs legal services



# Evaluation Questions

1. What are the demographics of the agricultural workers in Minnesota and North Dakota?
2. What are the needs of agricultural workers in Minnesota and North Dakota?
3. What impact has the COVID-19 pandemic had on the needs of agricultural workers in Minnesota and North Dakota?

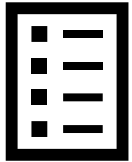


# Methods

# Project components



Secondary analysis of Census data



Community partner survey



**Focus groups with agricultural workers**



**Agricultural worker survey**



# Methods

- Secondary data analysis
  - Census data compiled by HACER
  - Data tables
- Community partner survey
  - Online survey administered by the AWP to partners

# Methods

- Focus groups
  - 10 focus groups with agricultural workers and some spouses
  - Conducted over Zoom
  - Conducted in English and Spanish
  - Gift card offered for participation
- Agricultural worker survey
  - Online and paper copies available
  - Available in English and Spanish
  - Gift card raffle offered as incentive

## Topics

- Demographics
- Employment
- Housing
- Immigration
- COVID-19
- Awareness of rights
- Immigration
- Family and individual rights
- Education

# Outreach strategies

- Focus groups
  - Former clients and their connections
  - Community partners, like TVOC
- Surveys
  - Focus group participants
  - Viewers of our Facebook pages
  - In-person outreach to farmworker housing
  - Community partners

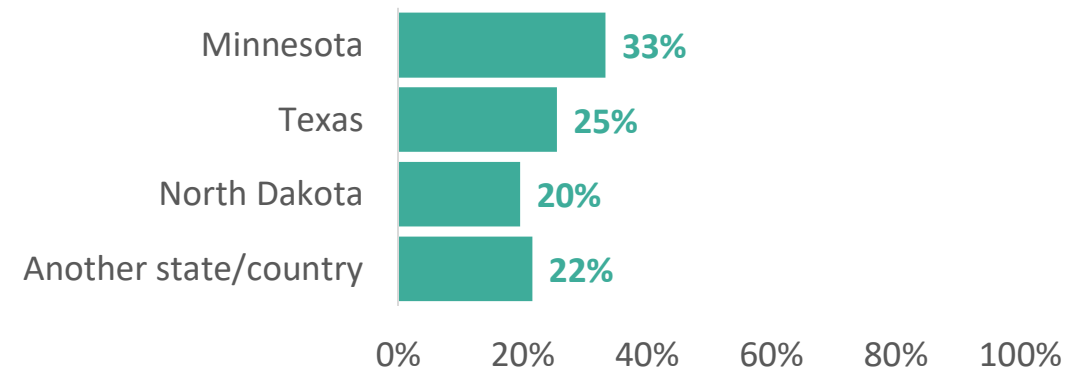


# Findings

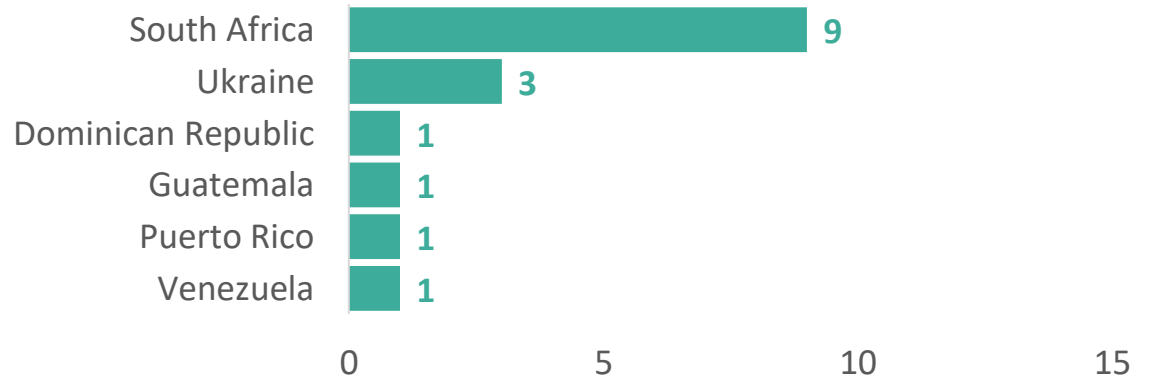
# Focus group findings

- 51 participants across 10 focus group
- 39% of focus group participants were female
- More than half of participants were born in Mexico
- 78% of participants consider Minnesota, North Dakota, or Texas their permanent home

Permanent Home (N=51)



Other countries of origin (n=16)



# Focus group findings

- **Improved working conditions**, including improved communication with employers, not being overworked, having adequate breaks, and working in appropriately heated environments;
- **Adequate compensation** for their work as it relates to higher wages and health benefits;
- **Information on legal issues**, such as having an understanding of U.S. laws and protections, and having a pathway to residency;
- **Education and training**, including having adequate on-the-job training and having the desire to learn English;

# Quotes from focus groups

*“They look at us as ... an object that serves you at the moment and you can throw it away.”*

*“If you don't have a good relationship with the farmer from day one and or he doesn't come clean from the day that you spoke to him about what you're going to do, but you get to the farm and what is expected of you, which was never mentioned in the conversation over the phone before he came to the US, that changes a lot of things ...”*

## Quotes from focus groups

*“Well, in this case there were many people who spoke Spanish. But there is nothing better than expressing yourself directly with the boss. Because it is not always the same translation. For that reason I also left because there was like a bad translation. Well then, I decided to retire.”*



# Focus group findings, cont.

- **Adequate housing** and access to short-term affordable housing for those that travel from other places to work;
- **Human resources** at places of employment to go over contract paperwork and provide oversight;
- Access to newer and safer tools to ensure the **safety** and wellbeing of agricultural workers;
- **Adequate access to transportation;**
- And wishing they could bring their family with them when doing this work, as they often take the work to **support their families.**

## Quotes from focus groups

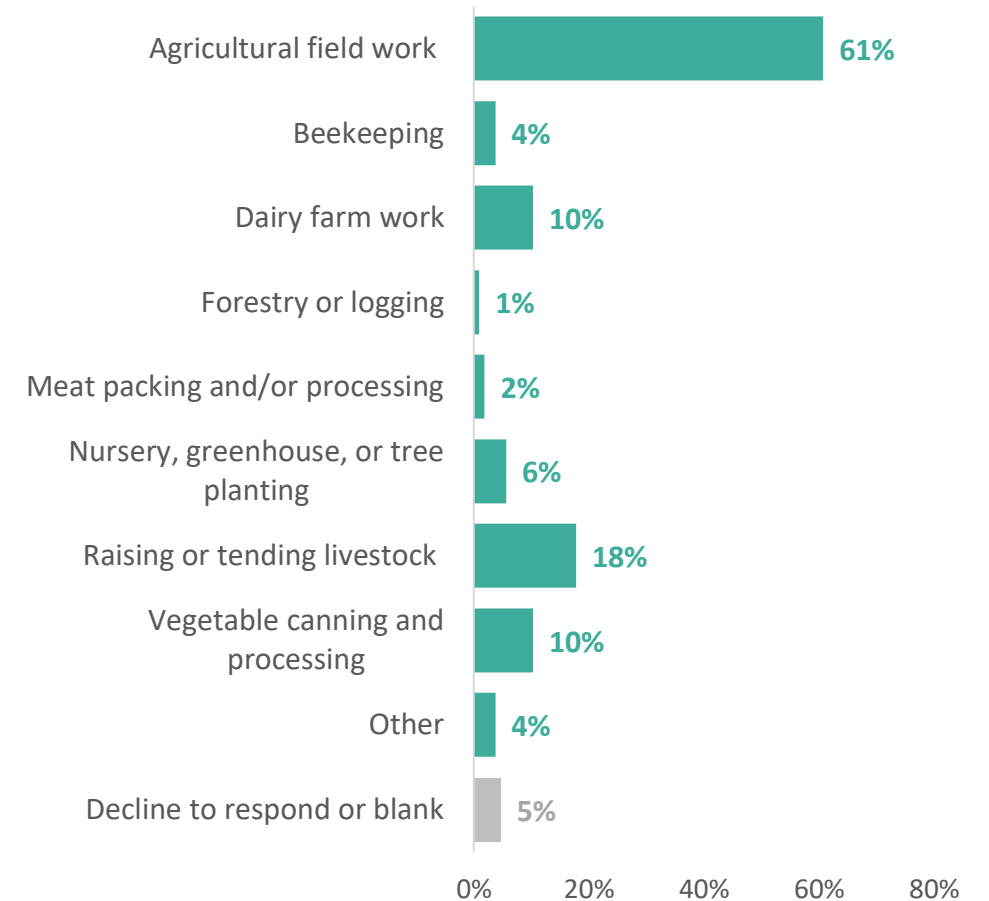
*“There is no housing here. Here it is rented only annually. You have to fill out a rental agreement for a year... If you are not going to rent for a year, they do not rent you. Many people have to go through the embarrassment of sometimes lying to rent a place because there is nowhere to live and they want to work and there is work. Here in North Dakota, there is a lot of work here, but there is no housing.”*

*“You know, if you run into a problem, there's not really people or a system in place that will back you up and protect your information and sort it out.”*

# Survey findings

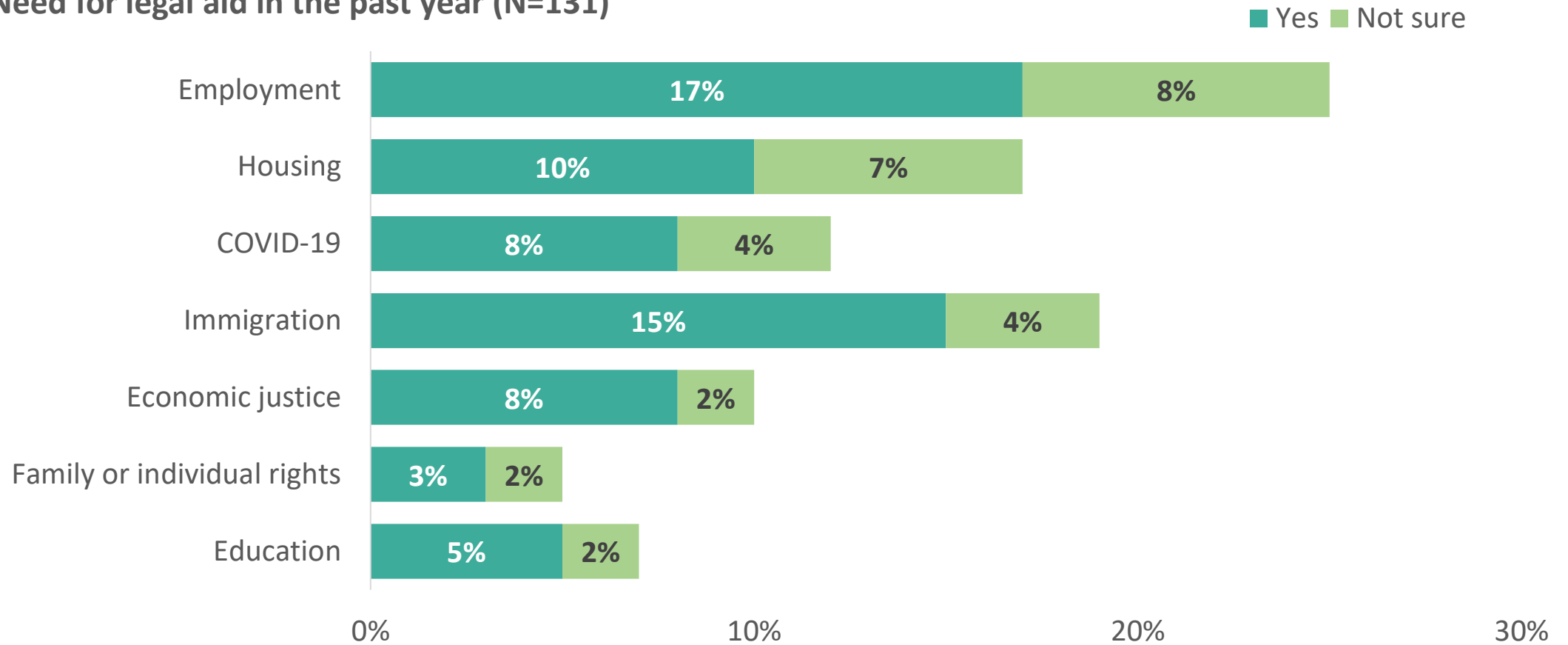
- 131 participants in total
- 82% reported being currently employed in agriculture
- 52% of participants currently living in Minnesota, and 32% in North Dakota
- 61% reported doing agricultural field work

Type of agricultural work done for those currently employed in agriculture (N = 107)



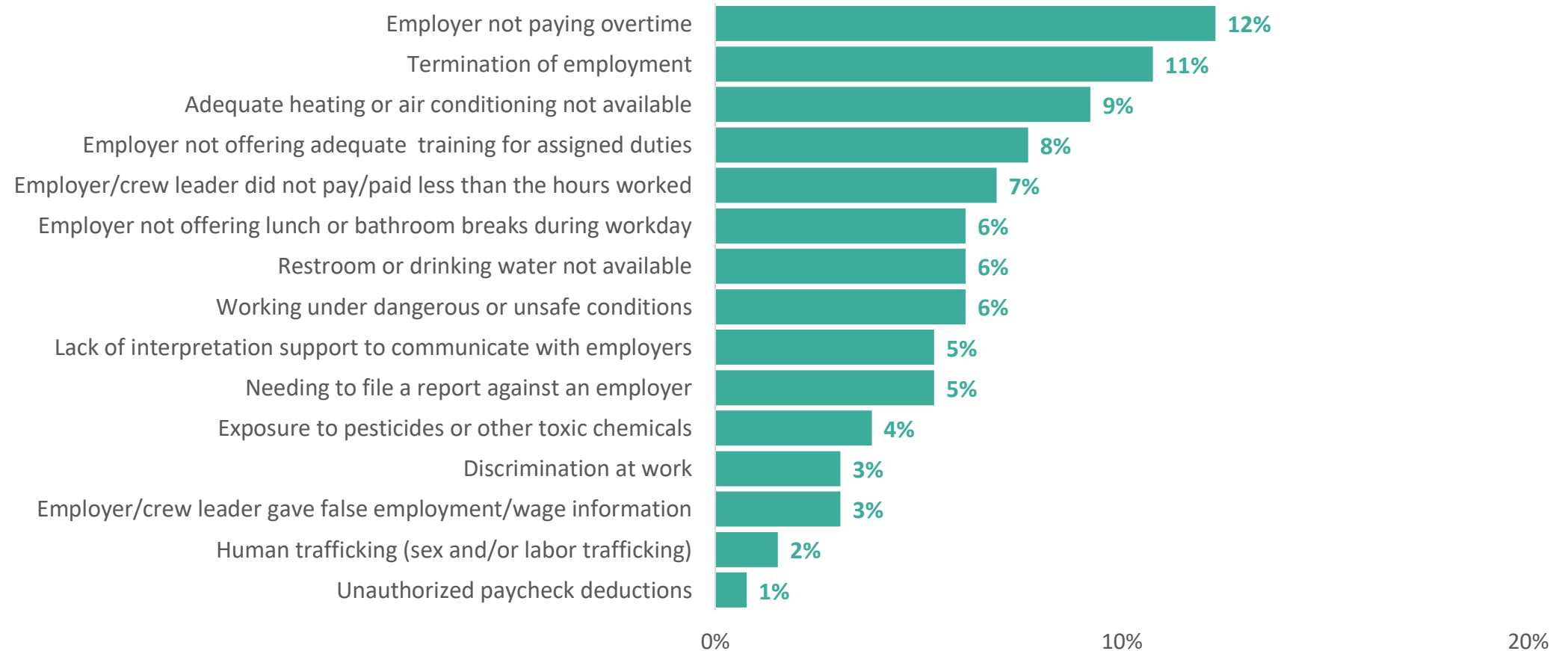
# Survey findings

## Need for legal aid in the past year (N=131)



# Survey findings: Employment\*

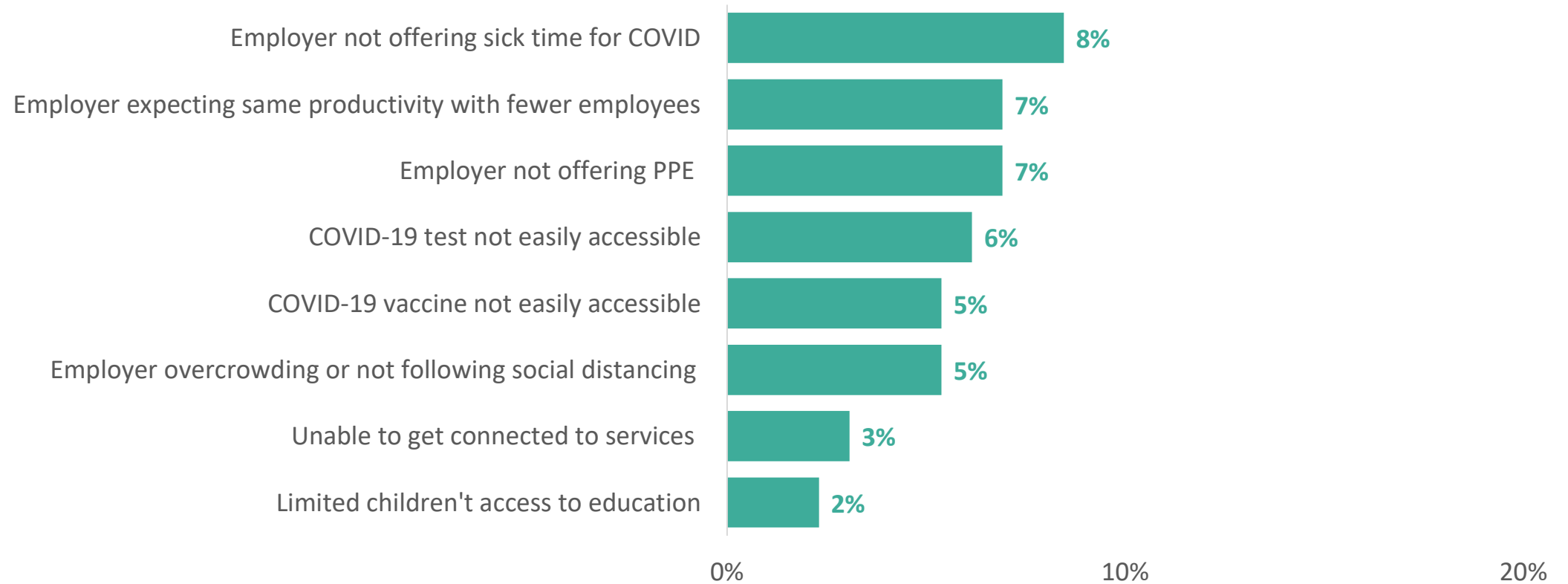
## Employment (N=131)



\*It is important to note that agricultural workers are exempt from overtime pay laws in North Dakota.

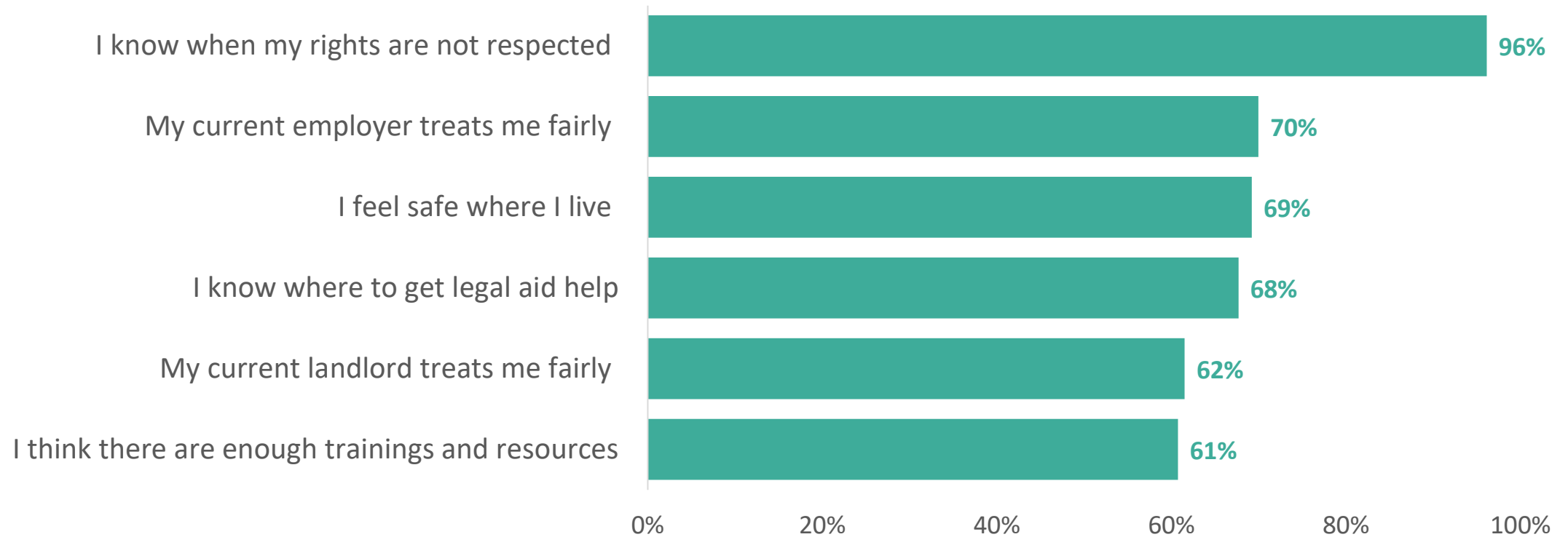
# Survey findings: COVID-19

COVID-19 (N=131)



# Survey findings: Agreement on rights and awareness

## Agreement on rights and awareness (N=131)



# Other analyses made in report

- Differences by state (Minnesota vs North Dakota)
- Difference by Hispanic ethnicity
- Appendices– Differences by:
  - Gender
  - Birthplace
  - Income
  - Travel from home





# Conclusion

# Conclusions

- Employment and immigration are still areas in which agricultural workers need legal aid
- Need for improved understanding of employee rights
- Differences of the needs for services of workers in MN vs. ND
- Limitations:
  - 2020 Census data not available for sample size calculations
  - Small sample size



Questions?