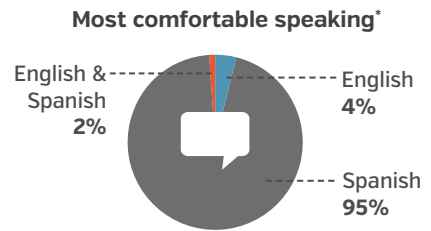
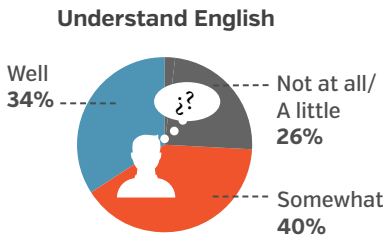
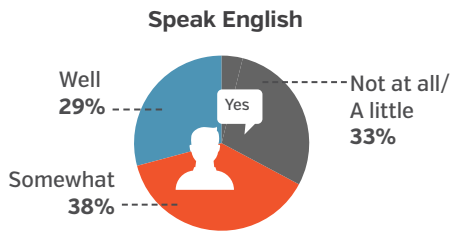


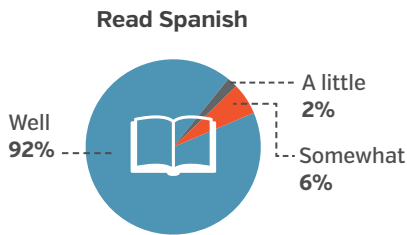
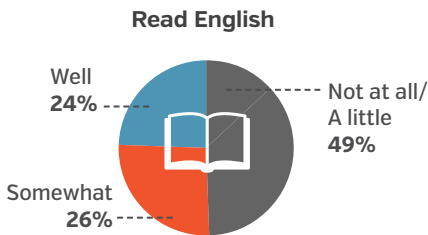
# Worker Language and Communication: What are we learning from workers?

This is part of a series of research briefs reporting the findings from the Thoroughbred Worker Health and Safety Study. **The goal of this brief is to describe the language abilities of Latino thoroughbred farmworkers and their communication with supervisors.** All 225 Latino Thoroughbred workers who participated in the Thoroughbred Worker Health and Safety Study were asked about their native language, English language ability and comprehension, as well as how they communicated with their supervisor. This brief reports those findings.

## English Abilities

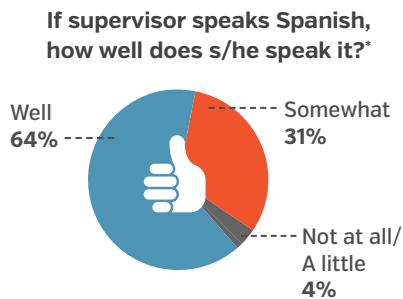
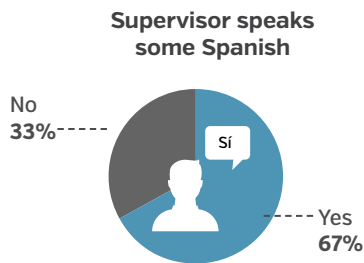


\* Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding

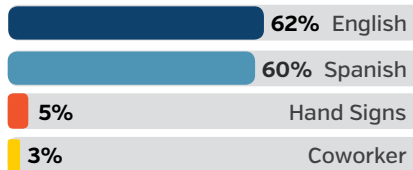


*"Communication is probably the biggest obstacle any horse farm has"*  
-Manager of large farm

## Communication with Supervisor



**How does worker communicate with supervisor?\***



*"It's kind of a sink or swim situation where they learn pretty quickly but there's a lot of hand signals and gesturing... Probably the biggest problem is you think somebody understands what you're saying and they go off and do something completely different"*

-Manager/owner of small farm

## Thoroughbred Worker Health & Safety Study

**WHO?** Researchers at the University of Kentucky and University of Maryland, guided by Industry and Community Advisory Councils, funded by CDC/NIOSH

**WHAT?** Research study to identify farm safety & health challenges, work organization & farms' best practices

**WHEN?** 2011-2016

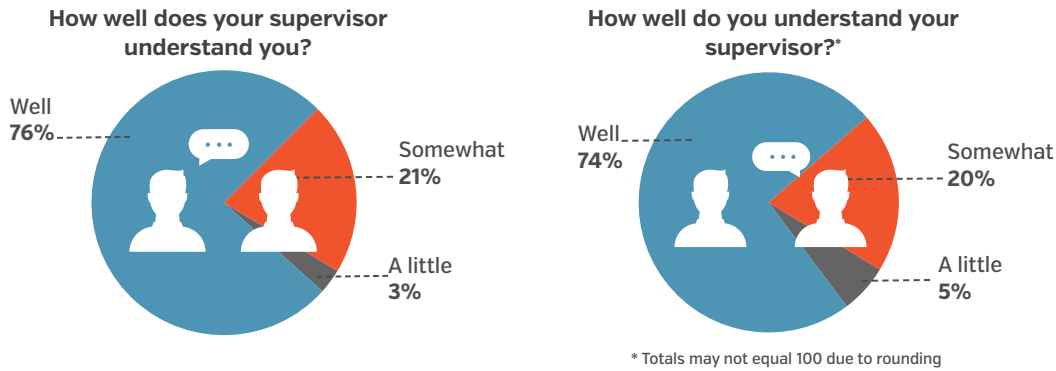
**WHERE?** Thoroughbred Farms

**HOW?** Interviews with farm representatives & workers

**WHY?** To improve worker health & safety & reduce costs for farms



## Communication with Supervisor, continued



*"I didn't speak English. They taught me using signs, but ... I didn't even understand."*  
 –Latino Thoroughbred worker

## Selected Bilingual Resources Provided to Workers

### Employee Policy Manual



### Employee Safety manual



### English as a Second Language classes



### Among Latino Thoroughbred workers:

- 92% could read Spanish
- Half could read English
- Only 4% had access to policy or safety manuals in Spanish

## Management Tips

- Ask workers to repeat back instructions to confirm if key information is being communicated. Do not assume workers understand you just because they nod their heads.
- Identify individuals within your workforce that can serve as translators, if a language barrier exists in your workforce.
- Translate all documents into the relevant languages of your workforce and keep the language simple. Aim for a 5th grade reading level.\*
- Subsidize or compensate workers to attend English classes or provide classes onsite during lunch or after work.
- Incentivize managers in similar ways to learn Spanish.
- Label items on the farm in both Spanish and English to aid comprehension and learning.

\*For information on how to assess a document's grade level, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/ouzrbx>.

## Resources

**Agsafe bilingual safety materials**  
[www.agsafe.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=55&Itemid=69](http://www.agsafe.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55&Itemid=69)

**Blue Grass Farms Charities:**  
**provides onsite English classes**  
 English: (859) 219-0910  
 Español: (859) 351-4426  
[www.bgfcky.org](http://www.bgfcky.org)

**KEMI Horse Safety Program in Spanish**  
[www.kemi.com/safety/resources/sample\\_horse\\_safety\\_program-sp.pdf](http://www.kemi.com/safety/resources/sample_horse_safety_program-sp.pdf)

**OSHA multilingual training materials**  
[www.osha.gov/dte/grant\\_materials/material\\_listing\\_language.html](http://www.osha.gov/dte/grant_materials/material_listing_language.html)

## Acknowledgements

We thank the participating farms and workers that made this research possible.

This work is supported by the Southeast Center for Agricultural Health and Injury Prevention, University of Kentucky College of Public Health under CDC/NIOSH Cooperative Agreement 5U54OH007547-14. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC/NIOSH.

For more information, please visit [www.workersafetyandhealth.com](http://www.workersafetyandhealth.com) or contact Dr. Jennifer Swanberg at [jswanberg@ssw.umaryland.edu](mailto:jswanberg@ssw.umaryland.edu) or Jess Miller Clouser at [jess.clouser@uky.edu](mailto:jess.clouser@uky.edu).