

QSS20S1 Final Project Memo 1

Bess Neiblum

Last updated: April 27, 2021

1 What I learned

One of the first and most important challenges the WHD faces is that they are underfunded and understaffed. Even though the many of their investigations find violations with employer compliance with H-2 regulations, they believe they don't have the resources or capacity to efficiently investigate all violations. While wages owed and violations have increased, funding for the WHD has decreased. Additionally, backwages owed for H-2 violations make up only a small part of total wages owed to farmworkers, so there might be little incentive for farms to pay.

About the data, the text also notes that there may be some duplication because violations of different statutes and laws often overlap. Another note is that some farms were responsible for a large percentage of violations, referred to in the text as "bad apples". Additionally, the violations did not always correspond to the states where there is more agricultural labor, indicating that violations may be found more often where WHD offices are better funded or have more resources.

Violations are extremely common among farm labor contractors, with almost 3/4 of investigations finding violations. However, there was no consistent pattern found for repeat violators among farm labor contractors.

2 Gaps and questions

1. Can we find a direct correlation between the branches of the WHD in states/regions that have less resources and less funding to fewer H-2 violations found?
2. Do farms that do not employ farm labor contractors have fewer overall violations?