

# Decent & Dignified Housing for Migrant Farmworkers

*Migrant Rights Network - Food & Farmworkers Working  
Group Submissions to Consultations on Mandatory  
Requirements for Employer-Provided Accommodations  
in the TFW Program, 2020*

“We are all humans but some employers treat us like objects, once you don't serve them they change you for another one. So many years of work and at the end they do not say even thank you after working for them almost all our life. We have no indoor bathroom. We have to use a portable toilet outside or pee in a bottle. No internet or television. No dryer or washing machine. We are living in conditions of modern day slavery. We want decent houses, not stables. It feels worse than if we were in prison. We want our children with us because we miss them terribly.” - Migrant Farmworker

## Table of Contents

<b>About Us</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
Housing Cannot Be Improved Without Full and Permanent Immigration Status for All	3
Top Migrant Farmworker Priorities for Decent Housing	4
<b>Failures of these Housing Consultations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Methodology and How to Read These Submission</b>	<b>8</b>
Methodology	8
How these submissions are structured	9
How to read these submissions	9
<b>Migrant Worker Response to Consultations on Mandatory Requirements for Employer-Provided Accommodations in the TFW Program, 2020</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Envisioning a home	10
2. Worker Demands For Decent Housing	15
3. Migrant Worker Response to Proposed Minimum Accommodation Requirements for Primary Agriculture	18
4. Graphic representation of worker responses to quantitative survey questions	25
5. Selected photographs shared by workers of their current housing conditions	34
6. Top worker concerns about current housing through illustrative quotes	36

## About Us

Consultation materials were created by the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (ON) in close collaboration with other members of the Food and Farmworker group of the Migrant Rights Network: Asociación de Mexicanos en Calgary (AB), Sanctuary Health and RAMA - Radical Action with Migrants in Agriculture (BC); Cooper Institute (PEI), Immigrant Workers Centre (Quebec), Northumberland Community Legal Centre and FCJ Refugee Centre (Ontario) and Migrante Canada (Chapters: Migrante BC, Migrante AB, Migrante MB, Migrante ON, Migrante Ottawa, Migrante Quebec). These groups distributed the surveys to migrant farmworkers, and are endorsing these submissions.

In addition, consultation materials were shared by Caribbean Workers Outreach Project, HORIZONS, Migrant Worker Expert Working Group, Niagara Workers Welcome, OHCOW, Southridge Community Church, and individual community members.

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## Executive Summary

### **Housing Cannot Be Improved Without Full and Permanent Immigration Status for All**

Bonifacio Eugenio Romero  
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Juan Lopez Chaparro

Migrant farmworkers that died from COVID-19. Each infected in an outbreak on their farm because of their housing and working conditions. Each infected because they were not able to protect themselves because of their lack of permanent immigration status.

For over half a century now, migrant farmworkers have been coming to Canada growing and packaging food and feeding communities. Despite the permanent need for their work, their immigration status in Canada is temporary.

Lack of permanent immigration status is not simply about denying migrants the security and stability of being able to stay in Canada permanently. Access to basic rights and the ability to enforce them is determined by immigration status. This is especially true for those on tied permits, like migrant farm workers.

When speaking out results in termination, homelessness, being forced to leave the country, and not being able to return, asking for fair wages, decent housing, or a safe workplace becomes simply impossible.

At least one in 23 people in Canada today are migrant or undocumented, without full immigration status. The immigration system has created a category of person - the migrant

- who is excluded from existing legal rights and protections at the provincial and federal level. It is not feasible to change discrete labour, education, housing, health, policing and other laws at both the federal level and in 13 provinces and territories to include this category of person without addressing the fundamental instrument of their exclusion. We must create a society where all residents have equal rights and access, and that means full and permanent immigration status.

It is neither effective nor just to simply amend laws and policies that emerge from this temporary immigration system. The current housing consultations are only necessary because migrant farmworkers do not have the power to assert their rights under existing landlord-tenant protections in provinces and territories because of their immigration status.

Rather than perpetuate a system where the people that grow our food and feed us continue to be indentured to their employers - in which employer-provided housing is a central tool of that subjugation - we must envision a just food system where those that sustain it are treated with the dignity, respect and appreciation they deserve.

The first step in this is creating a single-tier immigration system where all residents of the country have the same and equal rights and status. Only then can farm workers assert their rights to dignified and decent housing.

## Top Migrant Farmworker Priorities for Decent Housing

Despite significant challenges and limitations in the consultation processes ([outlined below](#)), migrant worker-led organizations reached out to and spoke with hundreds of migrant farmworkers between November 1st and 21st through a number of different mechanisms outlined in the [methodology section](#). We received input from 453 migrant farmworkers across the country. This submission summarizes their demands for decent housing.

The worker feedback presented in this report must be understood in the context of the extreme power imbalance between workers and employers and the long history of abuse and exploitation of migrant farm work programs. Migrant farmworkers are wary of speaking their whole truths. Their experiences are worse than what is detailed here, and their demands are much greater.

Yet even with these downward pressures on workers' demands, the results of our consultations reveal two core guiding principles that underpin workers' demands.

These principles are:

**Worker self-determination:** Workers want the autonomy to make decisions about their lives as every human being deserves. They do not want employers or governments making decisions for them. It is workers' needs and wants that should guide all decisions about workers' housing.

**Humanity, dignity and respect:** Workers want to live and work in conditions that respect their full humanity and not be treated as machines or worse, 'slaves', as many stated in their responses to this consultation. Migrant workers deserve *homes*, not just *housing*.

Further, we insist that the guidelines must prioritize:

- **Urgency:** Housing is indecent, inhumane and unlivable today. There is no time to lose. Illness has spread and cost lives and rights have been trampled. Robust and enforceable guidelines must be put into place immediately.
- **Enforceable Rights:** Migrant workers want rights that are real, which means rights they can enforce. The proposed guidelines must be coupled with proactive enforcement, anti-reprisal protections, and full and permanent immigration status for all.

### **The top five priorities identified by migrant workers in our consultation process are:**

1. **Privacy:** Over half (51%) of the respondents identified privacy as the priority for decent housing. Migrant farmworkers see this as a matter of basic human dignity. Being warehoused with many others or crowded together in small houses makes it impossible for workers to take care of their physical and mental health and well-being.
2. **Space:** Nearly half the respondents (43.43%) highlighted space as their key priority. Workers want communal as well as private space, both indoor and outdoor, where they can relax during their spare time, watch TV, play sports, host guests, socialise and grow food. They want storage space for their personal belongings. They need separate change rooms to be able to keep dirty work clothes away from living spaces for cooking and resting.

Many workers spoke specifically about the mental and physical toll from living in crowded housing, and the need for no more than 1 or 2 people per bathroom and kitchen.

3. **Quality of life:** Nearly one in three workers (28.1%) identified quality of life needs as key priorities. They want their housing to include laundry, kitchen, shower and bathroom facilities under one roof so they don't have to travel large distances between them. They want to have clean drinking water, hot water for showers, heating in winter, and cooling in the summer. They want furniture and basic amenities (such as blenders, coffee makers, etc) to be in good condition, and have access to phones and free internet. They want less social isolation: workers want their homes away from their workplaces and employers' homes, and closer to grocery stores, remittance services and health facilities.
4. **Family unity:** More than one in four (26.28%) workers said they want their families here with them. Many migrant workers spend 8 months of the year in Canada, others spend 2 or more years at a time. Migrant workers want homes where their families can live with them, but the majority said they don't want their families living in conditions like their current housing. Demands for family are demands for full and permanent immigration status.
5. **Worker Control:** A quarter of respondents (25%) noted worker control and autonomy as a key priority. Migrant workers want the freedom to choose when to be alone or in social spaces; to be quiet or loud; when to cook and where to eat; to live without

employer surveillance or control over their movement or visitors; to choose when to eat or shower without having to negotiate with others. Migrant workers want the freedom to make choices in their housing, not live under the current institutionalized conditions.

The results of our survey are very clear:

- 79.9% of workers don't want a bunk bed;
- 62% of respondents want their own room;
- 84.9% want to share a bathroom with no more than one person;
- 84.3% want to share a kitchen with no more than one person;
- 46% of respondents believe their housing should be improved "A LOT";
- 85.6% of respondents believe they should have full and permanent immigration status on arrival; and
- 65% are unsatisfied with the building structure of their homes; 78% are unsatisfied with common spaces, 70.6% are unsatisfied with furniture; 74.3% are unsatisfied with sleeping areas; 63.3% are unsatisfied with laundry areas, 66.1% are unsatisfied with bathroom areas; and 48.6% are unsatisfied with internet and phone access.

We also received significant feedback on the experiences and worker satisfaction with current housing, including data on room-sharing, which is detailed graphically below.

We call on the federal government to create enforceable national standards for dignified housing for all migrants in employer controlled homes (including migrant care workers) immediately and ensure full and permanent immigration status for all migrant and undocumented people.

## Limitations of these Housing Consultations

On July 31, 2020, the federal government finally made an [announcement](#) about migrant farmworkers. Instead of changing any laws or creating new policies, \$52.6 million were allocated to employers. The announcement also promised to “work to develop mandatory requirements to improve employer-provided accommodations, focusing on ensuring better living conditions for workers.” This was in response to recommendations by us calling for a “national housing standard so that workers can live safely and with dignity,” as part of a package of reforms starting with full and permanent immigration status for all.

The government’s announcement followed multiple communications by migrant worker led organizations including (but not limited to):

- [March 16, 2020](#): Letter by Migrant Rights Network on healthcare, immigration, worker rights, emergency income and offering our support to ensure migrants were at the table to create a response to COVID-19.
- [March 26, 2020](#): Letter by Migrant Rights Network on income support for migrants in Canada.
- [April 1, 2020](#): Letter by Migrant Rights Network migrant farmworkers and housing.
- [May 12, 2020](#): Public statements in response to the Agri-Food Immigration Pilot Program, which continues to exclude most farmworkers outlining policy mechanisms to ensure migrant rights and protections.
- [June 15, 2020](#): Migrant Workers Alliance for Change released a damning report showing immense migrant worker exploitation during COVID-19 and lack of

supports for migrants outlining 17 recommendations.

The consultations announced in July were effectively launched on October 28th. In the call for feedback, the federal government identified that the purpose of this consultation is **“not to pursue short-term changes for the 2021 season or to address the current pandemic”**.

That is, eight months into a pandemic, with over 1,600 migrant farmworkers infected across Canada, with at least 125 infected as we write this just in Ontario, with three workers dead, absolutely no laws and policies have been created that will even come into force in 2021, much less deal with the crisis at hand in 2020.

Neither the consultation process nor the guiding documents were created by migrant workers and their organizations. As a result, they suffer several critical weaknesses, including:

- These consultations completely leave out migrant care workers who live in employer-controlled housing;
- The consultations are open to employers, provincial governments and even the general public. No mechanism has been outlined to prioritize migrant farmworker input over that of others despite the massive power imbalance that exists and the fact that migrant workers are the ones that live in these houses;
- The regulations proposed do not include an enforcement strategy;
- The consultation documents were circulated in English as PDFs on October 28th to migrant supporting organizations

and employers. Migrant workers speak multiple languages, but may not have high levels of reading and writing literacy. Most are unable to give input in response to emailed documents in English;

- The consultations were launched at a time that most migrant farmworkers are unable to participate. Most workers start leaving Canada after Thanksgiving, the end of harvest. Those that remain are at the end of the season and working overtime. Those that have returned home are often in regions without reliable telephone or internet access;
- Almost all farmworkers have had their mobility restricted by their employers who are refusing to let them leave the farms or

have visitors. Workers have limited access to the internet and telephone on farms in Canada;

- No resources were provided to migrant worker supporting organizations to facilitate worker participation in these consultations; and
- The guidelines largely do not treat migrants as full human beings with social lives, collective and individual needs, and with differing opinions from farm to farm.

# Methodology and How to Read This Submission

## **Methodology**

Between October 29th and November 21st we gathered information from workers in the following ways:

METHOD 1: We distributed images and videos with two questions, in English and Spanish, over Facebook, WhatsApp groups and text messages. Workers were asked to answer:

- a. What is your house like now?
- b. What do you want it to be like?

Workers were encouraged to send responses as audio notes, photos or videos. When workers responded, they were asked follow-up clarifying questions.

**In total, we consulted with 96 workers in this way.**

METHOD 2: We adapted the federal government's worker survey into an online survey in English and Spanish. Based on input from workers, the survey questions were designed to reflect the reality of workers' housing needs and desires. For example, the proposed regulations suggest 6 people per toilet, but in our initial meetings with worker leaders, we were directed to limit options to either single use or 1-2 people, because six people was too many. A third option of "any number" was also added. Most of the questions were multiple choice to ensure ease of response. The survey also included two qualitative questions:

- a. What are the top 3 things you do not like about your housing?
- b. Speak freely, and tell the whole truth. What are the most important things in a decent house that you and your co-workers want?

**In total, 330 unique workers responded to the survey.**

METHOD 3: We organized group meetings, in person and online, of worker leaders who had consulted with their co-workers. These leaders brought ideas and then jointly developed visions of their ideal homes. In-person meetings provided props and materials for workers to build models of these homes.

**We met with a total of 27 workers in this way.**

In total, we consulted with **453 workers**.

62% of the respondents communicated with us in Spanish, while the rest (32%) communicated in English. The respondents are from Ontario (47.7%), followed by British Columbia (38.3%), Nova Scotia (4.7%), Quebec (4.4%), New Brunswick (2.2%), Alberta (1.4%) and PEI (0.2%).

## **How this submission is structured**

We present the information we gathered through these three methods in the following ways:

1. [Envisioning a Home](#): These are the responses from the focus groups outlined in Method 3. This includes photographs of model homes built by workers.
2. [Worker Demands For Decent Housing](#): An analysis of worker demands for decent housing from the qualitative responses from both surveys and direct communication (but excluding the focus group responses that appear in the previous section). We have included some



sample quotes to illustrate the kinds of responses we received.

3. [Worker demands consolidated as responses to the Proposed Minimum Accommodation Requirements for Primary Agriculture](#);
4. [Graphic representation of worker responses to quantitative survey questions](#): This includes details of how many workers share rooms, houses, bathrooms, kitchens, etc., as well as worker satisfaction with their current housing conditions;
5. [Select photographs shared by workers](#) of their current housing conditions; and
6. [Top worker concerns about current housing](#) through illustrative quotes.

### **How to read this submission**

The constrained timelines and weaknesses of the consultation process outlined in the preceding section, and the ways in which employers have limited worker mobility, made it impossible for our methodology to be appropriately collaborative.

Many workers refused to participate because they did not trust the process and said, “Nothing will change”. They have seen - even over the last year during a public health crisis -

how little their lives and livelihoods matter to the federal government despite the essential work they do. Others refused to participate for fear of reprisals, despite our assurances of complete confidentiality and anonymity, believing that it would jeopardize their work now or in the future.

Where workers did participate, many insisted that they would only ask for the minimum possible changes because “Employers will never give more”. Many told us they felt they were expected to be “grateful” for being able to work in Canada and said they picked “satisfied” as a survey response even when they weren’t.

This means the feedback contained in this report does not truly reflect the breadth and richness of workers’ desires for decent and dignified housing. It is rather a snapshot of what workers feel they can win at this moment. As we outlined earlier, housing conditions are worse than those reported here and workers’ actual demands are much more comprehensive.

# Migrant Worker Response to Consultations on Mandatory Requirements for Employer-Provided Accommodations

## 1. Envisioning a home

We convened four focus group discussions with 27 workers. As laid out in the previous section, it was not possible to consult with more workers in this way, but the input received through this process is the most important content of our submission. We urge the federal government to create a process for workers to meaningfully design their own decent housing with their co-workers as part of the national housing standards.

In our focus groups, workers used props and materials to lay out or draw the homes they envisioned in Canada. Workers are the experts in their housing, and made very specific proposals for improvements based on their experiences. Overall:

- When asked to build their homes together and in conversation with each other, participants began first by creating their own private bedrooms, stressing **privacy**. Workers spoke about the need for a place to be alone for their physical and emotional well-being, to be able to truly rest and connect with family, as well as for preventing the spread of illness.
- Workers stressed the need for more **space** as essential for mental health and basic dignity. Space was also about storage of personal belongings, keeping dirty and pesticide infested work clothes away from other living areas, being able to store food supplies and the ability to create a comfortable home environment. In each of these conversations, workers identified *exactly* how their current accommodation could be adapted to become more decent.
- Workers then added **social and communal spaces**, noting the importance of community. This included outdoor spaces, including gardens to grow their own food and outdoor areas to play and socialize. Workers talked about television to be able to watch the news, and the need for entertainment. Workers overwhelmingly agreed on the need for space to welcome guests.
- All the workers built homes to include their children: children's bedrooms, cribs, high-chairs at the dining table. Workers spoke about the stress of **family** separation, including fears for their families' safety back home (from natural disasters, violence, etc.). Workers overwhelmingly said that for their house to be a home, their families needed to be there.
- Workers spoke at length about **location and accessibility**, including easy travel from their homes to work sites as well as access to laundry, bathrooms, sleeping, dining and socializing areas under one roof. Conversation on location also included the need to not be isolated from the off-farm community: access to healthcare, social connections, grocery stores and remittance services, and accessible transportation. In each conversation, workers proposed more suitable locations in their communities for worker housing.







outdoor social space

private bedroom with space to relax and watch TV

private bathroom

quiet eating area

private bathroom

private bedroom with my wife & storage space

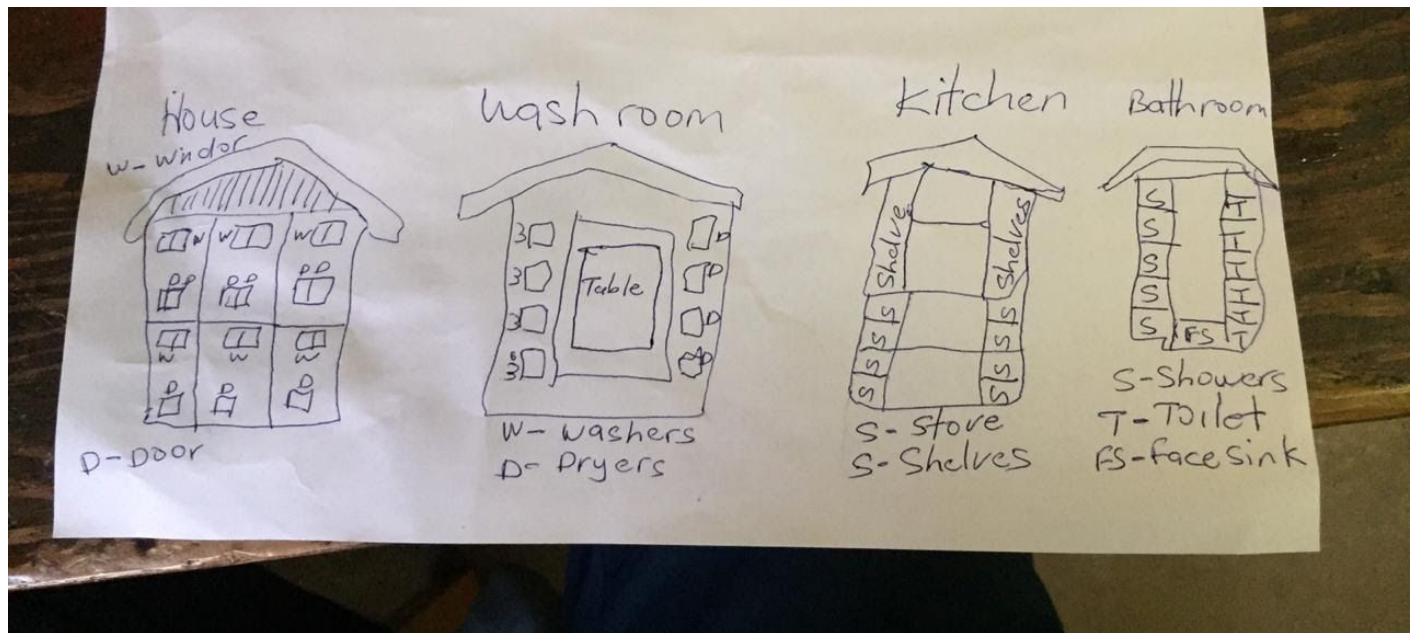
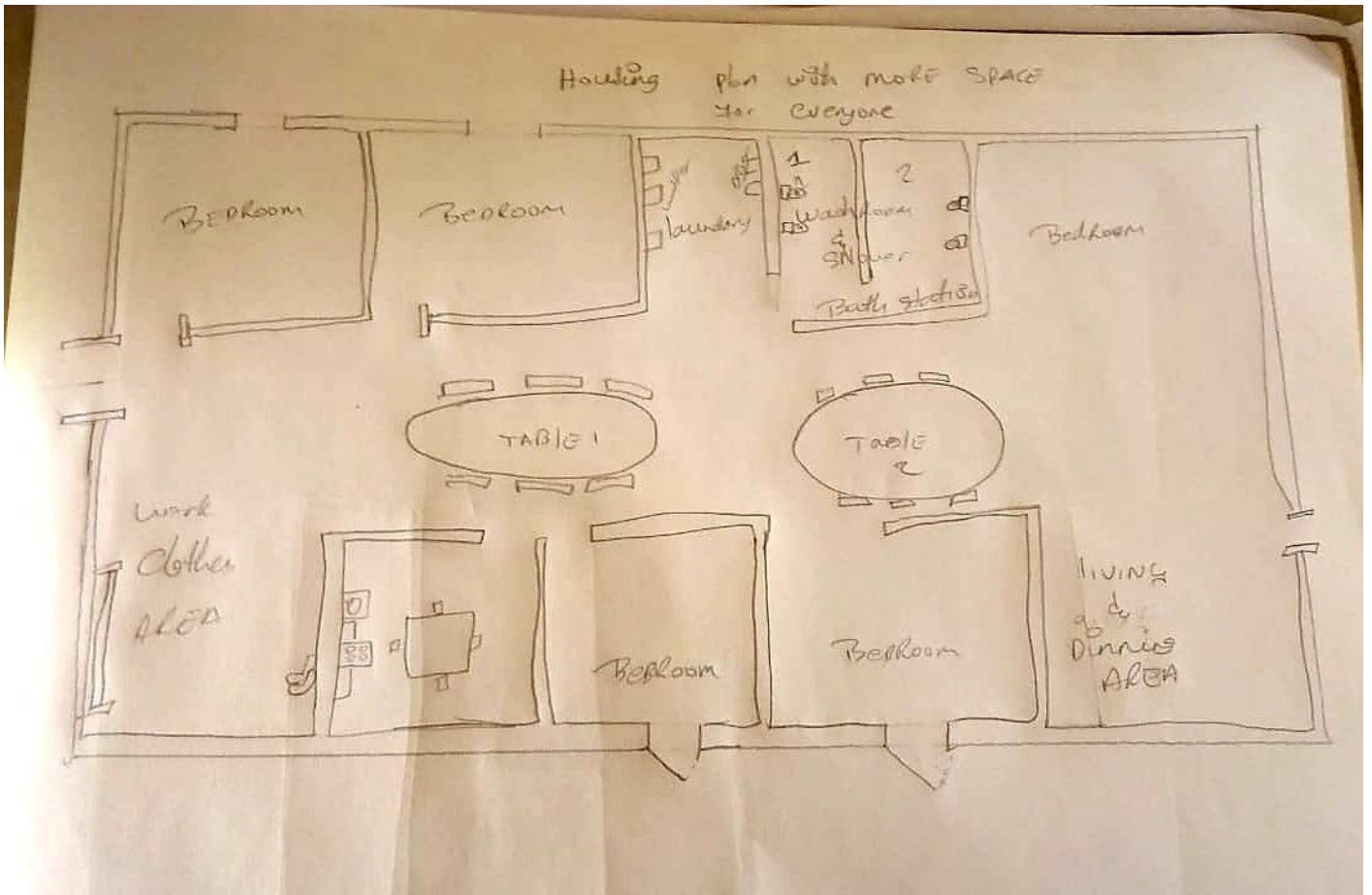
open spaces to allow physical distancing

comfortable place to relax after work

big kitchen







Worker Drawings of How to Adapt Current Dwelling

## **2. Worker Demands For Decent Housing**

Workers' priorities for the changes they want in their housing are: privacy, space, family unity, quality of life, and worker control. In each of these areas we provide details of the specific changes workers want, with quotes that summarize their demands. **These quotes are crucial to understanding migrant worker priorities.** Workers all had a number of demands, ranging from the specific to values-based. The bigger picture of decent housing that emerges is one that provides workers with a sense of home, a dignified place to rest and live like the whole human beings that they are.

### **Privacy**

Over half (51%) of the respondents identified privacy as the priority for decent housing. Migrant farmworkers see this as a matter of basic human dignity. Being warehoused with many others or crowded together in small houses makes it impossible for workers to take care of their physical and mental health and well-being.

Any national housing standard must ensure dignified homes where workers can spend time alone comfortably when not working, if they so choose.

"A larger space so we can have privacy; in general you can't talk on the phone with your family members about personal issues when you live in such a small space. Sharing a room with someone else is fine, but the place must be spacious so you can move freely, and ideally have your own space to store personal belongings. Ideally a living room where you don't have to touch people who share the same apartment. Privacy is essential for a person, and is something that many workers don't have. That's because it's too expensive for the boss. You live in a small space while their houses have up to three floors that they sometimes don't even use. While it's true that we come to this country out of necessity, we also have dignity; in our countries we are poor, but we have more than enough space and privacy. Thank you."

"Having a bedroom per person so that there's more privacy, and since we don't have the family with us it would be better; the houses should be decent for every farm worker, we should be treated for who we are, workers in agriculture. Don't cram so many people in a house."

"I think the right thing is to live in a house, not a trailer as we're living now. The space is too small because there are many people living here and we're very far from the village to buy things; there's no privacy in the bedrooms, we're very close together and the bunk beds are in poor state and we can't rest well. Also to be able to have visitors and leave freely, which is prohibited. Hopefully one day the government might allow us to have our family with us; it would be like a dream."

"Private bedroom with a door that locks, comfortable bed & supportive mattress. Spaces to relax and socialize. Family unity - space for partners & children. Low/no rent."

### **Space**

Nearly half the respondents (43.43%) highlighted space as their key priority. Workers want communal as well as private space, both indoor and outdoor, where they can relax during their spare time, watch TV, play sports, host guests, socialise and grow food. They want storage space for their

personal belongings. They need separate change rooms to be able to keep dirty work clothes away from living spaces for cooking and resting. This is especially important from a health and safety perspective to ensure pesticides aren't entering houses. Many workers spoke specifically about the impacts of crowding on their mental health, and the need for no more than 1 or 2 people per bathroom and kitchen.

"[I want] one bedroom per person with a television, night stand & dresser, opportunity & space for wife & children to visit because the program has destroyed so many families, better wages so we can rent our own place."

"I would like to have a separate space to spend time with my housemates and receive visitors, a refrigerator for two people, an individual bedroom with individual furniture to store clothes, bedrooms that are decently separated, general supervision of the house and issues, setting up rules to be followed in terms of cleanliness and the physical condition of the house and healthy coexistence. And when there is abuse or other problems, the employer should facilitate the dialogue with workers using translators, reaching fair solutions for everyone to avoid some workers overpowering others. To clarify, we're not asking for luxuries in the house, but merely a decent space where we can have an 8-month work stay with respect and dignity. Special attention should be given to the bedroom."

"One bedroom per worker with private bathroom/shower, ceramic tile floor in kitchen, more kitchen sinks, entrance room to change out of work boots/clothes, industrial washers + dryers"

### **Quality of life**

Nearly one in three workers (28.1%) identified quality of life needs as key priorities. They want their housing to include laundry, kitchen, shower and bathroom facilities under one roof so they don't have to travel large distances between them. They want to have clean drinking water, hot water for showers, heating in winter, and cooling in the summer. They want furniture and basic amenities (such as blenders, coffee makers, etc) to be in good condition, and have access to phones and free internet. They want less social isolation: workers want their homes away from their workplaces and employers' homes, and closer to grocery stores, remittance services and health facilities. This includes accessible transportation. Many workers commute by bicycle, on treacherous rural roads without proper traffic infrastructure, and accidents are common.

"I wish that someday government and society as whole take better decisions so we can have a dignified place for a human life. I would like one day to enjoy a place for two people with a washroom and 2 bedrooms. This may not be imposible and hopefully one day this becomes a reality. Because after a hard day of work we need to rest and a home without noise and rushes, where our privacy is respected and our comfort is not compromise when we are far from home. I hope that this happens one day."

"The houses should be decent for every farm worker, we should be treated for who we are, workers in agriculture."

"I want my family to be able to come. I want to have my own room I already spend all day with the guys I work with. I want water I can drink



so I don't have to buy it all. I want to be able to do laundry at my house, not up at the farm.”  
“We all deserve dignity and to be treated nice, after all we have years of experience... we deserve to be treated right and a good salary and to be recognized as skilled labour.”

“The main thing would be clean water; also a good kitchen where everything worked well, and the same for showers and bathrooms; air conditioning because here we don't have one and the humidity rises to the floor and some nights it's hard to sleep because it's too hot, and the floor become slippery and dangerous. This would be good for me, personally.”

“I think the government should consider the sacrifices we made and contributions to the country leaving our families at home, I think they should make sure we are well taken care of while here working , we shouldn't be cram in tight spaces and force to work in dangerous conditions, and to be victimized for standing up for our rights, we as farm workers should feel home while we are here and not like we are in prison.”

### **Family unity**

More than one in four (26.28%) workers said they want their families here with them. Many migrant workers spend 8 months of the year in Canada, others spend 2 or more years at a time. Migrant workers want homes where their families can live with them, but the majority said they don't want their families living in conditions like their current housing. Demands for family are demands for full and permanent immigration status.

“I want to wake up with my family. Knowing that we're together would make me feel like home. For more than 20 years we've never spent even one full year together and I've

never celebrated my birthday with them. I'm always working in Canada. Communicating with them is sometimes difficult for lack of time, and a cellphone can't replace the human feeling of embracing your family.”

“I want to have my family with me, space for a garden, and more space to have visitors. Simply put, I need to have a decent social life.”

“I would really like my three sons with me, if I could get some space to grow some vegetables that would be great. Privacy is what every conscious human would want. I like my space very much. I'm a clean and tidy person who love things in order.”

“It is very important that we feel good where we live because i believe that after work, the housing is the next most important aspect because we can be very good workers but where we live is very important and in many cases the majority of complaints are about the housing, I believe that the conditions are so bad that when people ask to transfer is because of the housing conditions. I would love to have a cooked warm meal. The dream would be to have a place with my wife and kids waiting for me, they are my motor and my motivation to be 100% at work, sometimes we receive a phone call from back home and we have to keep working while we are worried, but if we are given the opportunity of reuniting with my family that would be my dream if i have a choice.”

“I need my family with me. All i want is to get permanent status for me and my family”

### **Worker Control**

A quarter of respondents (25%) noted worker control and autonomy as a key priority. Migrant workers want the freedom to choose

when to be alone or in social spaces; to be quiet or loud; when to cook and where to eat; to live without employer surveillance or control over their movement or visitors; to choose when to eat or shower without having to negotiate with others. Migrant workers want the freedom to make choices in their housing, not live under the current institutionalized conditions. This means worker consultation must be central to establishing housing guidelines.

"I would want more privacy, because sometimes I would rather be alone. Sometimes I wish that I wouldn't have to go in the kitchen to even cook, I should be able to cook in my room. Really would want a television to keep up with the news. And I can't manage the bunk beds. It's a no no I don't want anybody above me and I definitely don't want to be on top."

"One person per bedroom with their own bathroom. 5 person maximum per house with

2 fridges + 1 freezer, 2 stove, dinner table & chairs enough for everyone at the house + extra for guests. Living room space with TV, free wifi, comfortable couches. Change room to keep work gear before entering the house. Porch with chairs. Central A/C. Washer + dryer. Location closer to town & away from where the boss lives."

"No storage space for our clothes or food. 12 in one bedroom, bunkbeds, used to use cardboard and sheets for privacy between beds and now that's not allowed. Only 4 stoves, 3 toilets and 4 showers. Whenever we complain about these things we get fired so we keep them to ourselves."

"I would like to have a room to receive visitors, since currently we're not allowed to have visits in the house; less interference of the employer in the house, because he decides who can come in."

### **3. Migrant Worker Response to Proposed Minimum Accommodation Requirements for Primary Agriculture**

As part of its consultation process, the federal government proposed minimum accommodation requirements. **In this section we outline how these requirements need to be improved based on the basic principles that we identified earlier: self determination; and humanity, dignity and respect.** The standards proposed do not fundamentally treat migrant workers as human beings with social and personal needs, and must therefore be overhauled with that in mind. Standards must include mechanisms for collaborative consultation on farms so workers can collectively determine their needs each season. At the same time, guidelines must extend to address the location of housing, including access to transportation so workers can access the services they need, such as to healthcare, remittances, community support, and so on.

It is crucial to re-assert here that **minimum standards must be enforceable.** That means proactively assessing housing conditions before and during the season and enforcing standards with real penalties for employers found in violation. Under current immigration laws, it is simply not possible for workers to speak up about such violations - employers can often easily identify which workers made complaints and will either fire them or simply not call them back the next season. With so much

employer control, migrant farmworkers without permanent immigration status will not be able to speak up and assert their rights and a complaints-based/post facto enforcement system cannot work. Anti-reprisal protections must also be put into place for workers who have been punished for raising concerns. Here again, the only real protection that can be provided to migrant farm workers is full and permanent immigration status.

Finally, there should be no costs to migrant farmworkers associated with these guidelines. Migrant farm workers earn extremely low wages and yet are currently forced to cover many of the costs that makes their labour available to employers, and in conditions that are inhuman. There should be **absolutely no deductions from migrant worker pay for housing.**

	<b>PROPOSED FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TFW PROGRAM</b>	<b>OUR ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
BUILDING STRUCTURE	<p>Accommodations must be sound as per PT building codes, fire codes and health and safety legislation e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no leaks, electrical issues, mould, or pest infestations</li> <li>• proper safety equipment (e.g. smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, etc.)</li> <li>• proper and adequate structural features (windows, separate spaces, doors)</li> <li>• any hazardous materials must not be kept close to living quarters</li> <li>• required egress, emergency exits and lighting</li> </ul> <p>The building must be accessible to the public.</p>	<p>Provincial and territorial building codes, fire codes and health and safety legislation already apply, and yet as is documented in this submission and in numerous other reports, migrant workers are living in dwellings unsuitable for human beings. Thus, the highest standard of tenancy rights and residential protections must be set for migrant worker housing with effective measures for enforcement.</p> <p>Enforceable guidelines must specify the minimum number and types of doors (interior and exterior) instead of relying on PT regulations. Doors are crucial for privacy, space, family unity, quality of life and autonomy.</p> <p>Distance between hazardous materials and sleeping and eating areas must be specified.</p> <p>There should be a maximum limit on the number of workers per house based on the guidelines outlined herein.</p> <p>Housing must ensure wheelchair access and be accessible to workers with disabilities or injuries. Many workers cannot safely move around their housing once they are injured.</p> <p>Clear ventilation and heating and cooling</p>

		<p>guidelines must be set for all areas. Similarly windows and light should be available in absolutely all areas. Many workers complain about temperature variances in different parts of the house, and lack of light and working windows.</p> <p>Minimum access to daylight regulations should be set using LEED, and ISO 2014a.</p> <p>While buildings must be accessible to the public, this should not be a form of employer control. That is, workers must have the right to determine who comes and goes, including employers. All workers must have keys not just to their bedroom but the entire house. Employers, supervisors, public health officials, etc. must seek permission to enter.</p>
<p>COMMON LIVING SPACES</p>	<p>Housing must allow for a temperature range of 20°C-25.5°C (68°F-78.8°F) can be maintained in <b>all areas and at all times</b>.</p> <p>Housing must have proper, functional heating and A/C equipment to maintain specified temperature range and humidity control e.g. central or room AC; central heating, space heaters (depending on the time of year the accommodations are inhabited).</p> <p>Sufficient furniture should be provided dependent on the number of workers housed in the accommodations.</p> <p>Furniture should be of sound construction and in good condition.</p> <p>A maximum occupancy rate of 7.44 sq. m (80 sq. ft) of total usable, and unobstructed floor area per person for common living spaces.</p>	<p>There should be sufficient space for workers to host guests privately.</p> <p>In houses of more than 4 people, there should be multiple distinct common spaces to allow for quiet space.</p> <p>Common spaces must include outdoor space where workers can grow food and socialize (including sports, gym and recreational facilities). Clear guidelines must be created for such common spaces.</p> <p>Common living spaces must include separate storage spaces for work clothes and boots. A large proportion of workers complained about tracking mud and dirt into their bedrooms because there is no other space to store work attire. This is also a crucial health and safety issue to ensure pesticides do not enter worker homes.</p> <p>Workers should have access to television with multiple and multi-lingual channels for the purposes of news and entertainment. Other entertainment and games must be made available as per</p>

		<p>workers request. Migrant workers don't have access to storage spaces in between seasons, so cannot purchase televisions each year.</p> <p>80 square feet per common living space is insufficient to ensure multiple spaces for workers to rest in, particularly with small bedrooms and no guidelines for dining areas. We recommend a doubling of this to 160 feet as per worker priorities around social space, usability and privacy.</p>
<p>SLEEPING FACILITIES</p>	<p>Each bedroom should have a maximum of four (4) workers per room with a minimum distance of 2.0 m (approx. 72 inches) maintained between all beds.</p> <p>Each bedroom should be supplied with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A desk</li> <li>• A waste basket</li> <li>• A padded chair</li> </ul> <p>At least four (4) coat hooks on interior walls.</p> <p>Each room should be fully enclosed with a door and a mortise-type lock and the occupant(s) shall be supplied with one (1) key per occupant at no cost.</p> <p>All beds must consist of a proper bed base/frame at least 20 cm (7.87 inches) off the floor, a clean pillow, a clean, supportive mattress of sound construction with a minimum width of 38" (95.6 cm), a minimum length of 75" (190.5 cm), and a minimum height of 25" (63.5 cm).</p> <p>Each worker should be supplied with: A linens package in clean and good condition (no holes) upon arrival, which includes a minimum of two (2) pillowcases, two (2) sheet sets and at least one (1) blanket per bed.</p>	<p>Each bedroom should have a maximum of one (1) worker per room. Privacy is the top demand of workers. 62% of the respondents requested a private bedroom. This is crucial for quarantining purposes as well as maintaining mental and physical health.</p> <p>Bedrooms must be large enough for families to live together, including sleeping spaces for children.</p> <p>There should be sufficient storage space for all family members.</p> <p>The practice of using bunkbeds must end. Nearly 80% of workers said they did not want a bunkbed. 57% of respondents reported sleeping in bunk beds right now.</p> <p>The storage space proposed is extremely small. Not only is the amount proposed too small for a single person, many workers buy items in Canada and store them throughout the season to ship back home. Storage space must be large enough to accommodate all worker belongings safely.</p> <p>In addition to minimum dimensions for beds, workers with different body types must be able to request larger beds when needed at no extra cost. For example, anyone near or over 6 feet cannot comfortably sleep in a bed of 75" length.</p>

	<p>An adequate, enclosed, storage space/compartments within a reasonable distance from the bed, which may take the form of one locker OR one shelf OR a small dresser (2-4 feet in size).</p> <p>Review approach to bunkbeds, including alternative designs/approaches that would meet public health objectives and improved living conditions.</p> <p>Males and females cannot share a bedroom (unless they are spouses).</p> <p>Workers should be provided their own individual bed and are not required to share a bed with anyone other than a spouse.</p> <p>Spouses should be provided with a double/queen size mattress.</p>	
<p>WASHROOM FACILITIES</p>	<p>All washrooms must be within worker accommodations.</p> <p>Washrooms to be separated from sleeping rooms by full partitions and lockable doors and to have separate ventilation with exhaust fan.</p> <p>Ratios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One (1) toilet for every five (5) workers.</li> <li>● One (1) shower, with opaque privacy barriers and in good working condition and sanitary, must be accessible for every four (4) workers.</li> </ul> <p>Each shower should be accompanied with an adjacent dressing cubicle with curtains, a hinged seat on the wall or a bench seat and two (2) double clothes hooks.</p> <p>One (1) sink furnished with a mirror above for every four (4) workers with</p>	<p>There should be one toilet and one shower for every 1-2 workers.</p> <p>Many workers wake up early in the morning and work late until night often far away from their accommodations. Waiting for multiple people to use toilets and showers at the beginning or end of day can add hours to a workers' day and severely worsens quality of life.</p> <p>Hot water should be regulated not just in the sink but also in the shower. The hot water tank size should be set at 20 gallons per occupant using the tank.</p> <p>Water in the washrooms and showers must be clean and meet the highest drinking water quality standards. Workers reported rashes on their bodies after using well water for showers.</p> <p>Water must be tested at least twice a season. Workers report pipes being switched from tap water to well water</p>



	<p>hot (&gt;43C) and cold running water.</p> <p>Urinals shall be furnished at the ratio of one (1) per fifteen (15) persons.</p>	<p>during the season.</p> <p>One sink per every 4 workers means that workers must wake up even earlier to prepare to go to work. There should be one sink for every two workers.</p> <p>Washroom facilities should also be regulated near work sites. Workers report not being able to use washrooms during work and needing to use nearby wooded areas. Workers are then given 30 minutes at lunch to eat and use the washroom, when sometimes washrooms are a 20 minute walk away.</p>
<p>EATING FACILITIES</p>	<p>Ratios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● One (1) dining set with table and chairs in good condition for every ten (10) workers</li> <li>● One (1) microwave for every ten (10) workers</li> <li>● One (1) oven and stove (with minimum of four (4) functional burners) available for every six (6) workers</li> <li>● One (1) refrigerator (able to keep foods at 4°C or lower), with sufficient space for food storage, must be provided for every six (6) workers</li> <li>● Adequate cabinets and shelves for cooking equipment and food storage</li> </ul>	<p>Clean drinking water must be mandated. All housing must be required to pass tests for clean drinking water twice a season. Many workers reported being unable to drink the water from the taps and needing to buy water.</p> <p>Dining table sets should include a chair for each worker in the house, as well as visiting guests, including high chairs for children.</p> <p>Expecting six workers to cook separate meals on 4 burners is inhumane. There should be one stove for every two workers.</p> <p>Refrigerator sizes must be specified. Many workers complained of refrigerators being too small. Refrigerators must be mandated to have 6 cubic feet of space per worker.</p> <p>Kitchens must include all cooking utensils and a sufficient number of appliances (blender, kettle, etc.) and pots and pans. Currently, some workers are forced to purchase their own kitchen supplies that they cannot store or travel with and that are extremely expensive.</p> <p>More microwaves must be provided. Most workers receive a 30 minute break for</p>

		lunch. In this time, they must visit the washroom, as well as heat up and eat food, and return to work. Workers can spend almost their entire break waiting for their turn to heat up their food.
LAUNDRY FACILITIES	<p>Worker accommodations must contain free laundry facilities for the workers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One (1) full-sized washer and dryer in good working order for every ten (10) workers.</li> </ul> <p>Additional drying facilities (e.g. clotheslines) must be in the laundry area and not in the bedrooms.</p> <p>Facilities used to clean personal protective equipment (e.g. spray masks, rain gear, gloves) must be separate from laundry machines and living areas.</p>	<p>In one case, a worker reported biking 7 miles to get to a laundry. On-site laundry facilities are crucial.</p> <p>There should be one washer and dryer for every six workers. Workers are only able to do laundry on their day off - and waiting in line behind nine people is not possible when clothes get extremely dirty working in the fields.</p>
AMENITIES	Access to phone service and free internet will be provided where available.	Access to phone and free internet should be provided to all workers.

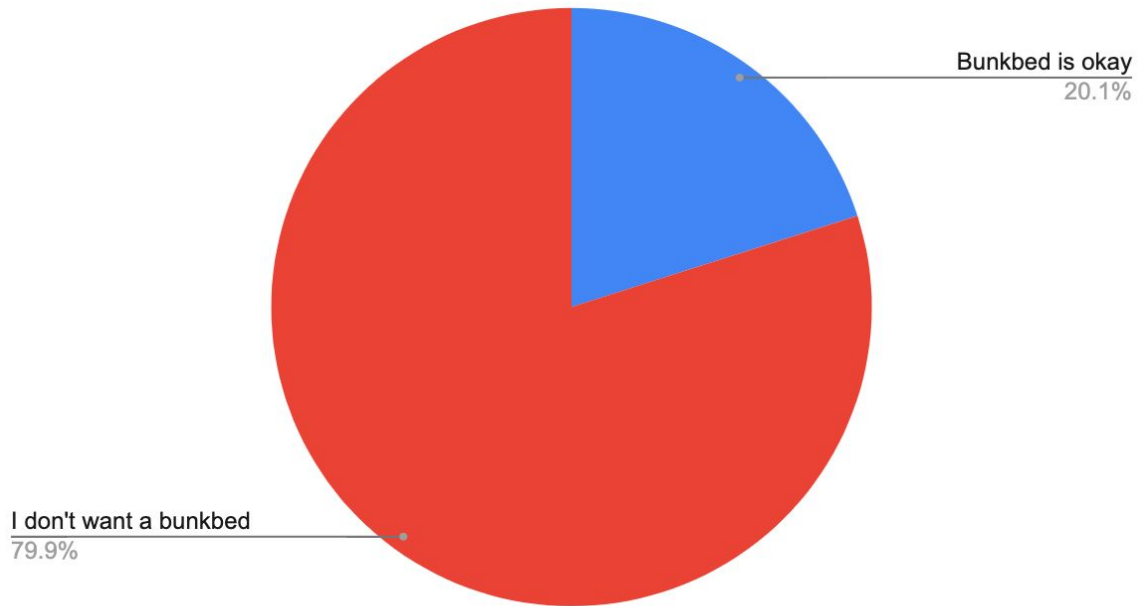


#### 4. Graphic representation of worker responses to quantitative survey questions

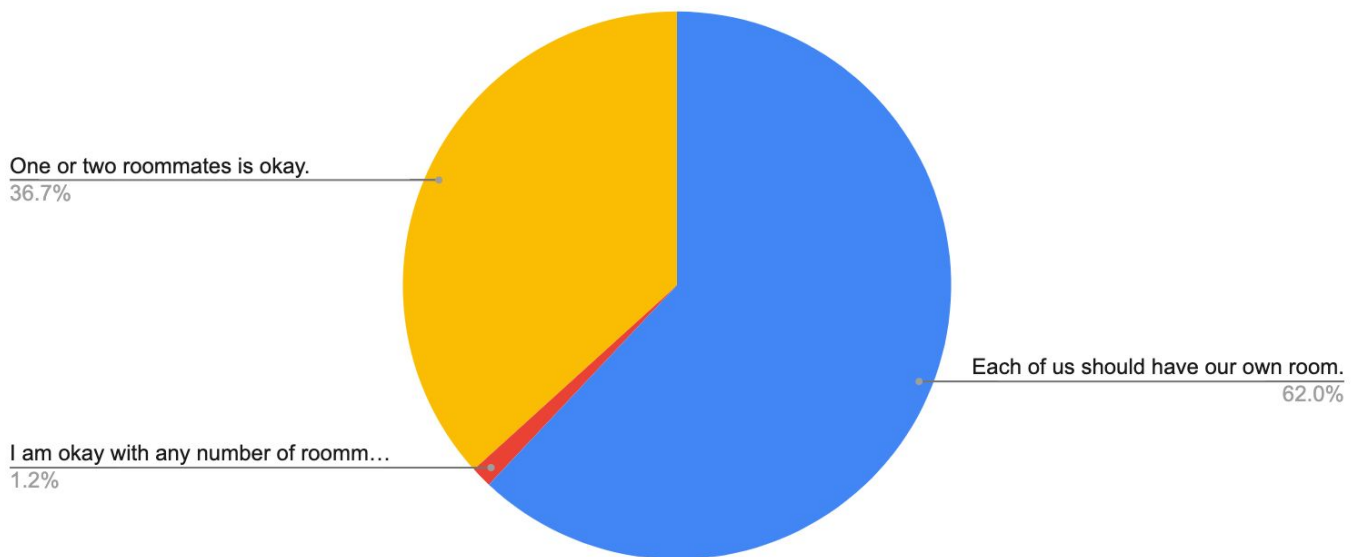
We received survey responses from 330 workers, the following are their response to each question:

*What workers want*

Do you want a bunkbed?



How many workers should share a bedroom?



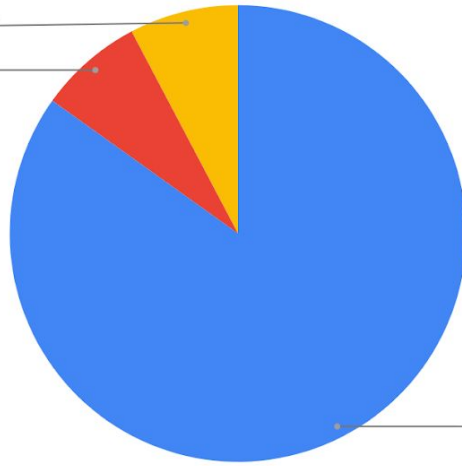
How many workers should share a bathroom (one shower, one toilet, and one sink)?

I am okay with any number of people using a bathroom.

7.7%

Each of us should have our own bathroom.

7.4%



One or two people per bathroom is okay.  
84.9%

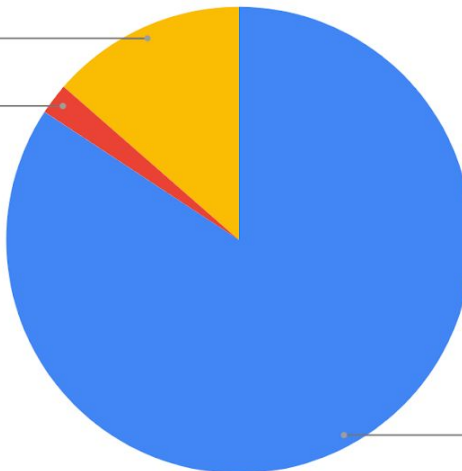
How many workers should share one fridge, one sink, one stove, one oven, and one microwave?

I am okay with any number of people using a kitchen.

13.6%

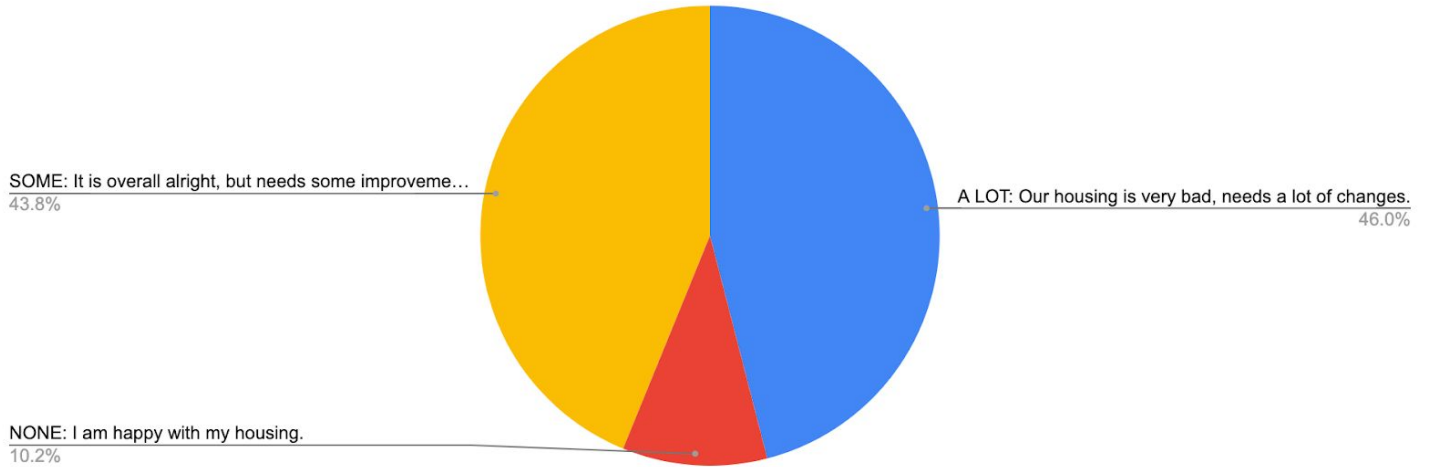
Each of us should have our own kitchen.

2.2%

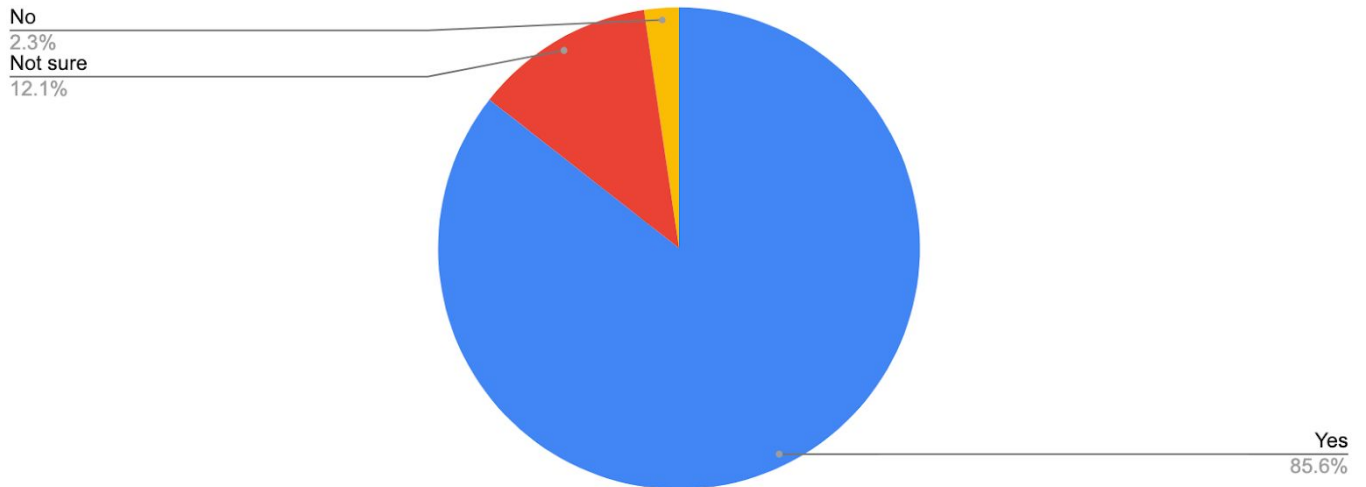


One or two people per kitchen is okay.  
84.3%

Overall, how much do you think your housing should be improved?

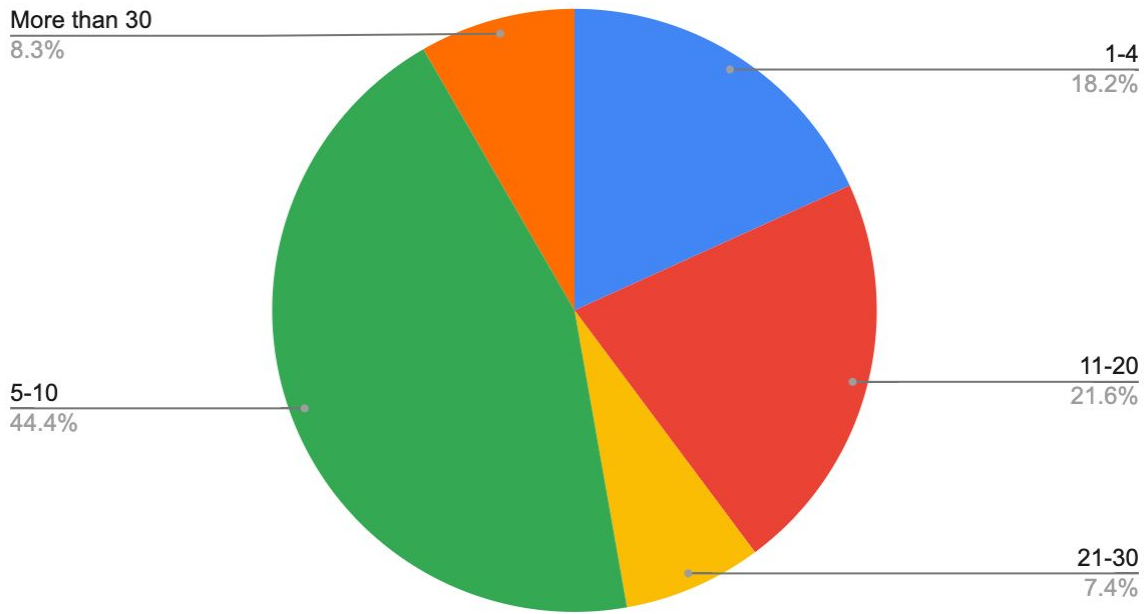


Do you believe that you, and other migrant workers, should be able to get permanent resident status in Canada, along with your families, from the time you arrive?

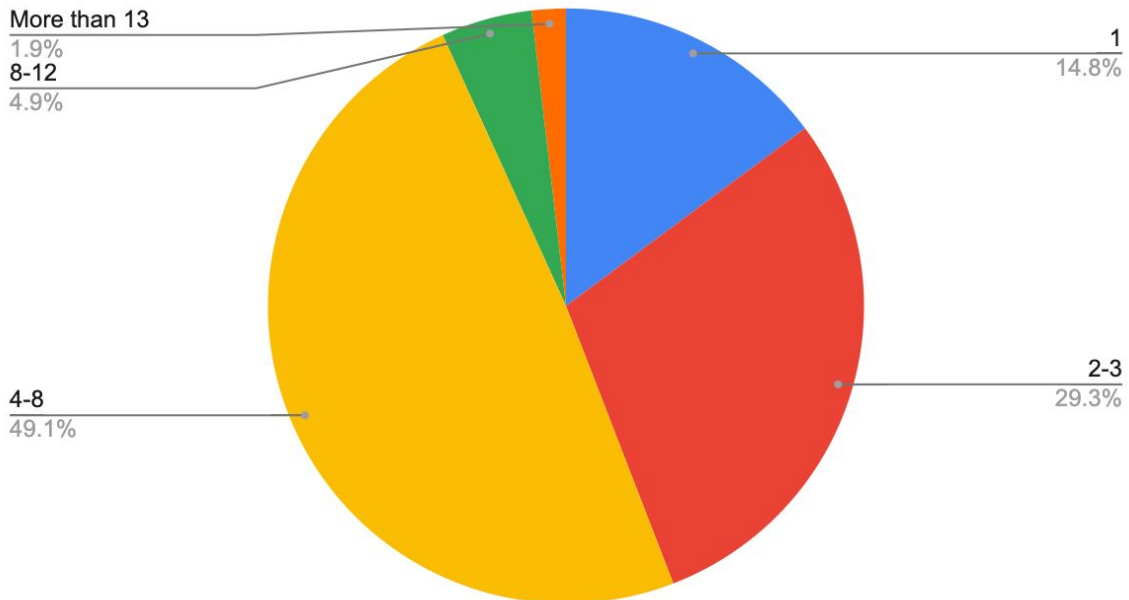


## Current Worker Housing & Satisfaction By the Numbers

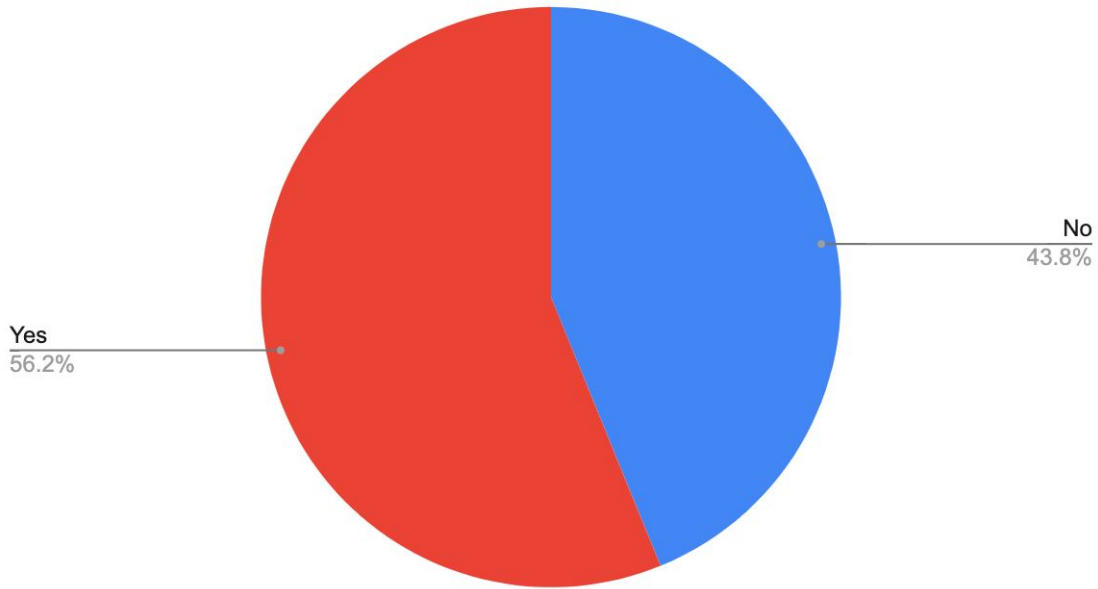
### How many people live in your house?



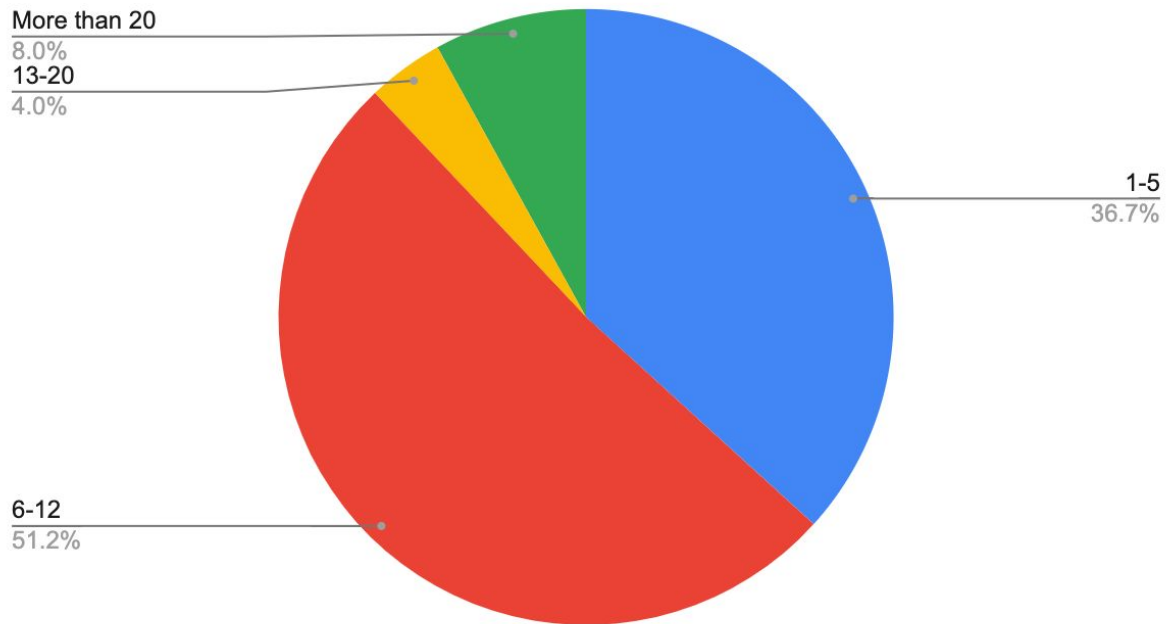
### How many people in each bedroom?



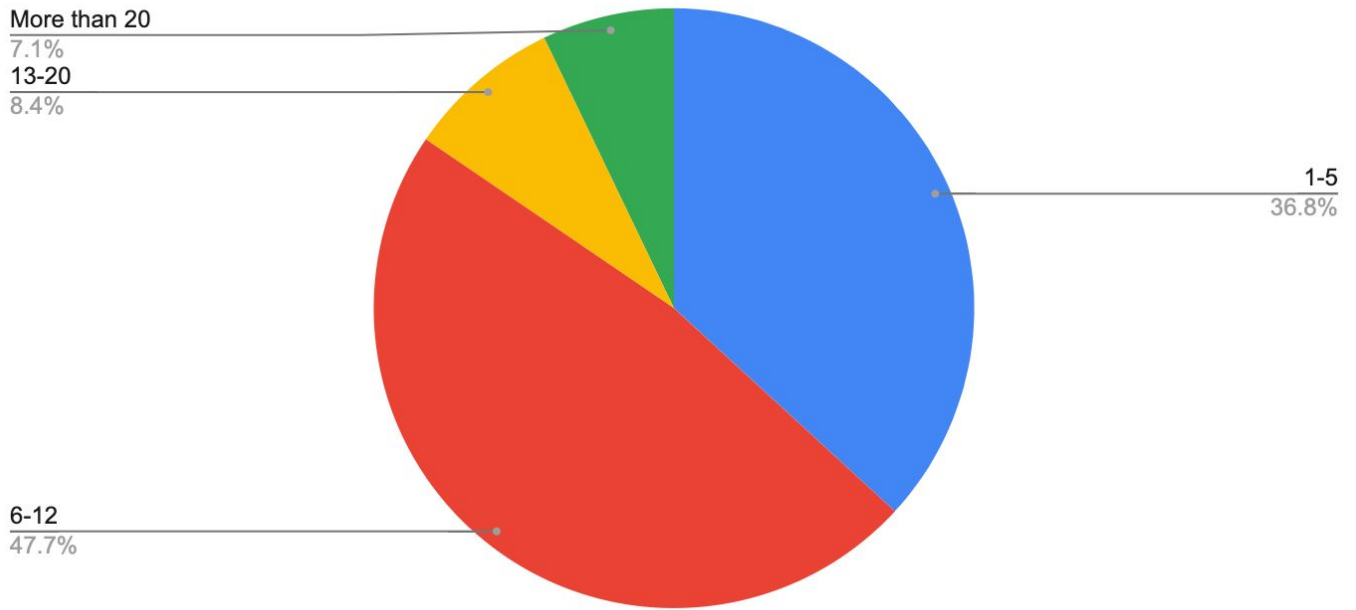
Do you sleep in a bunkbed?



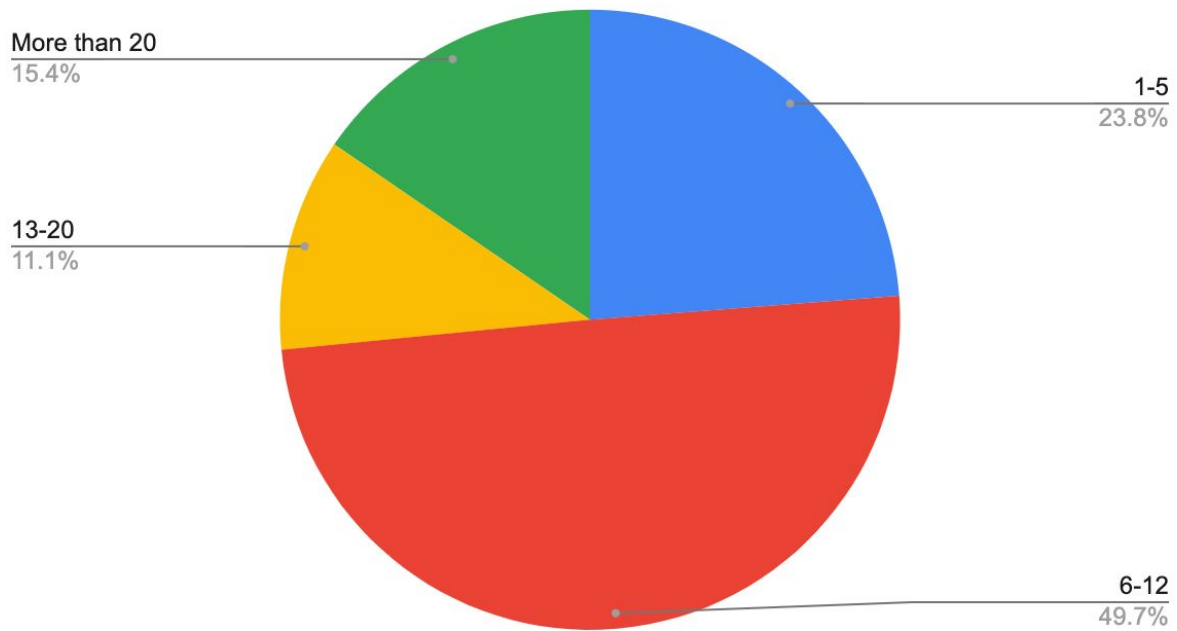
How many people share a bathroom? (Not showers)



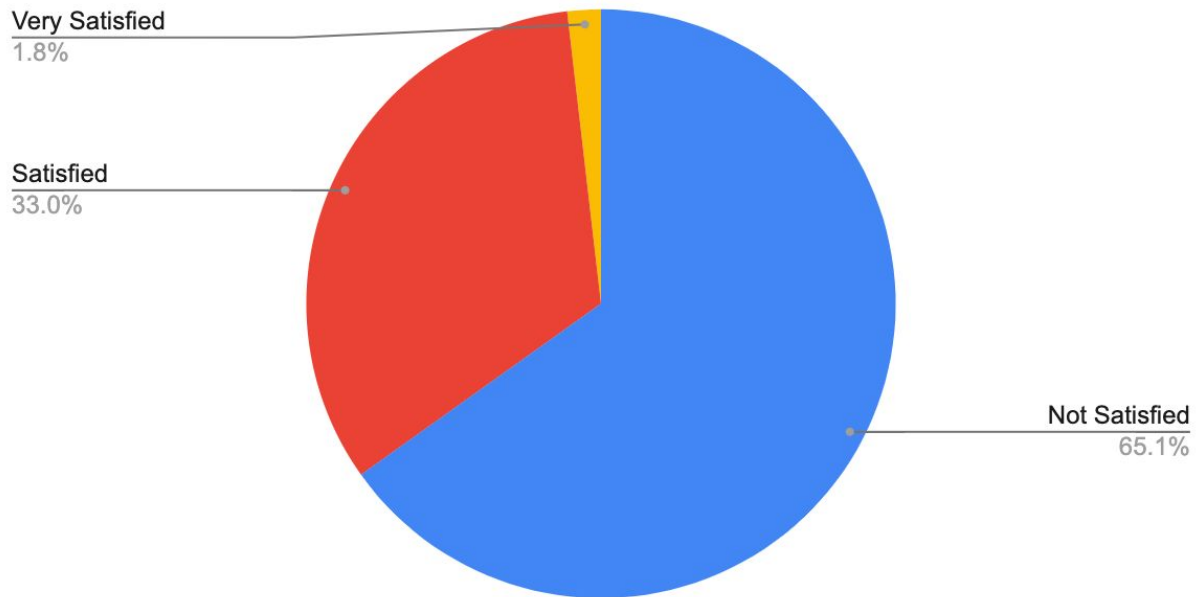
### How many people share a shower? (Not bathroom)



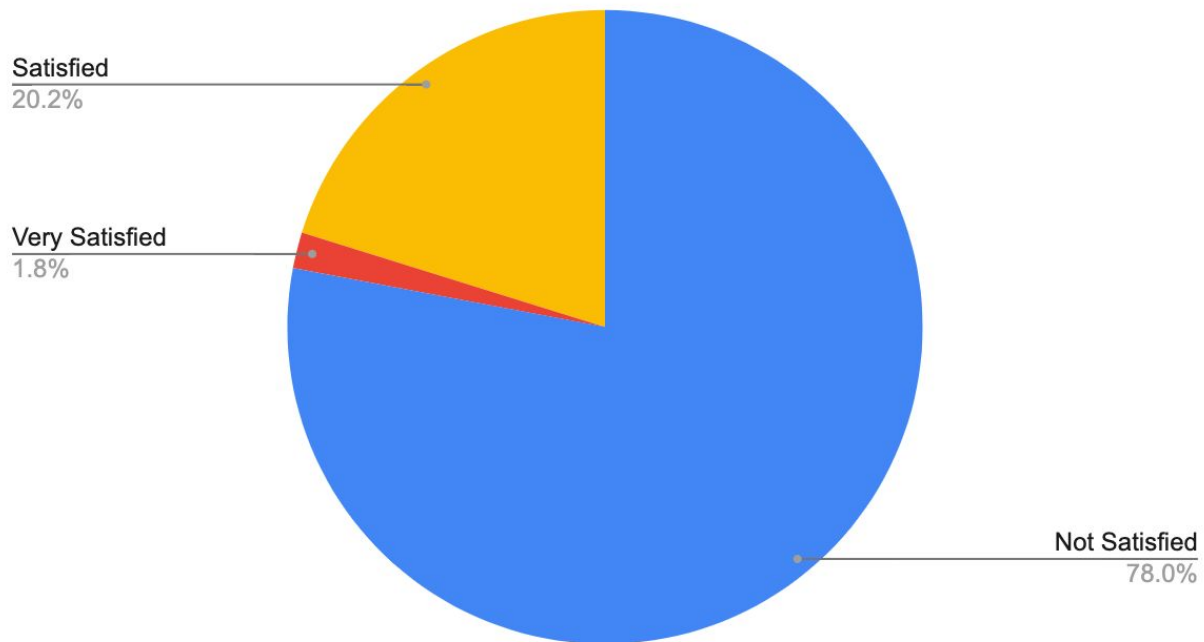
### How many people share the kitchen?



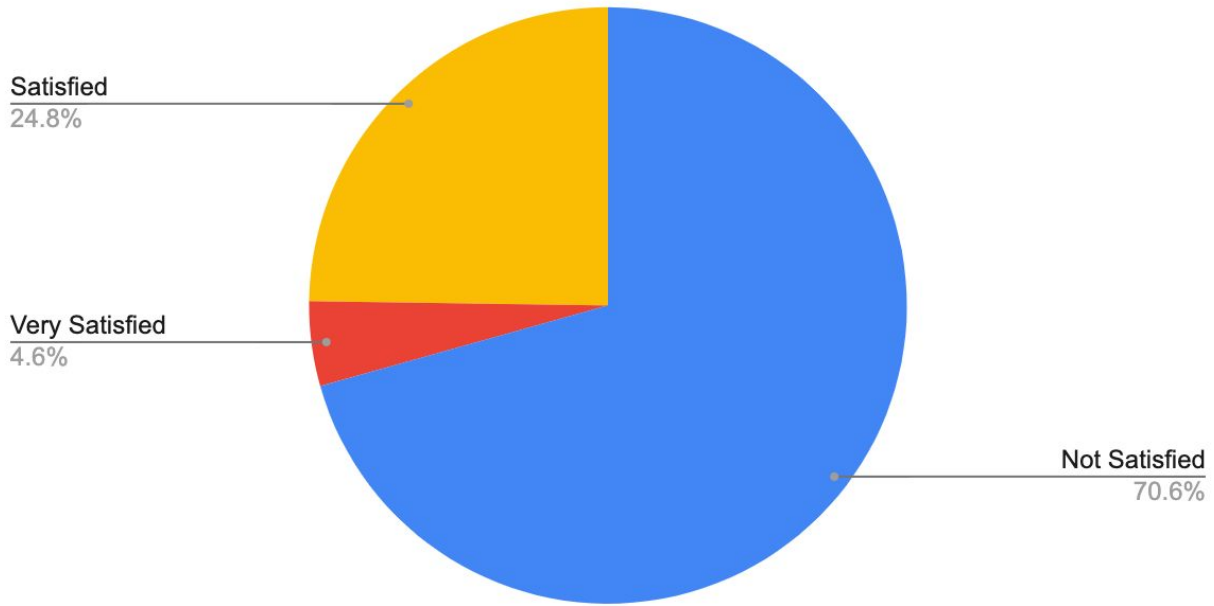
Are you satisfied with the overall condition of your accommodations (structure, heating and cooling)?



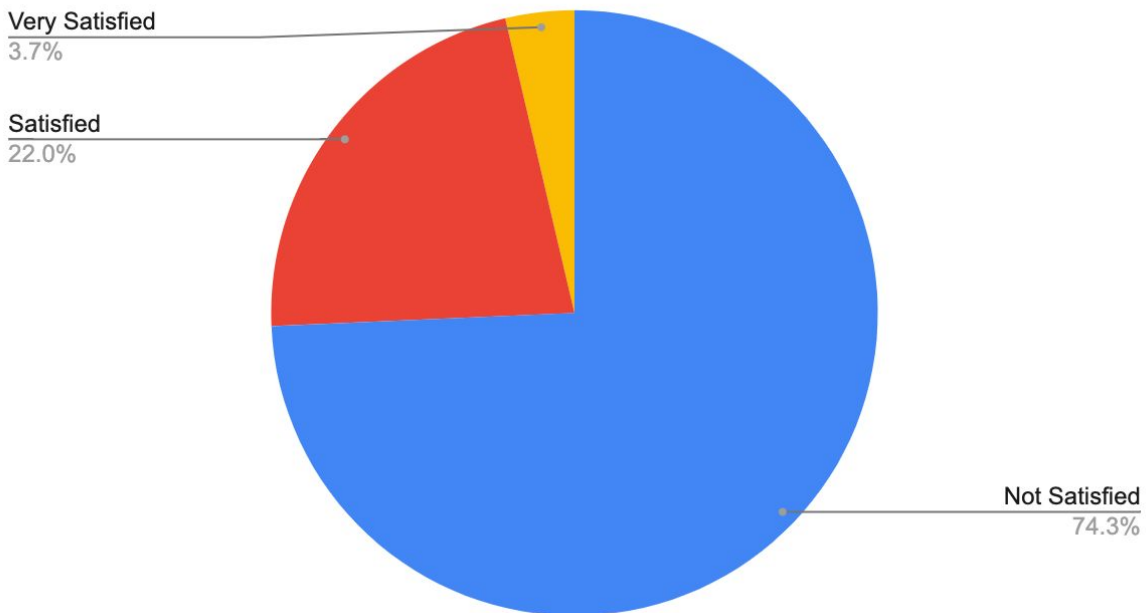
Are you satisfied with your common living space?



Are you satisfied with the furniture based on the number of workers housed in the accommodations?

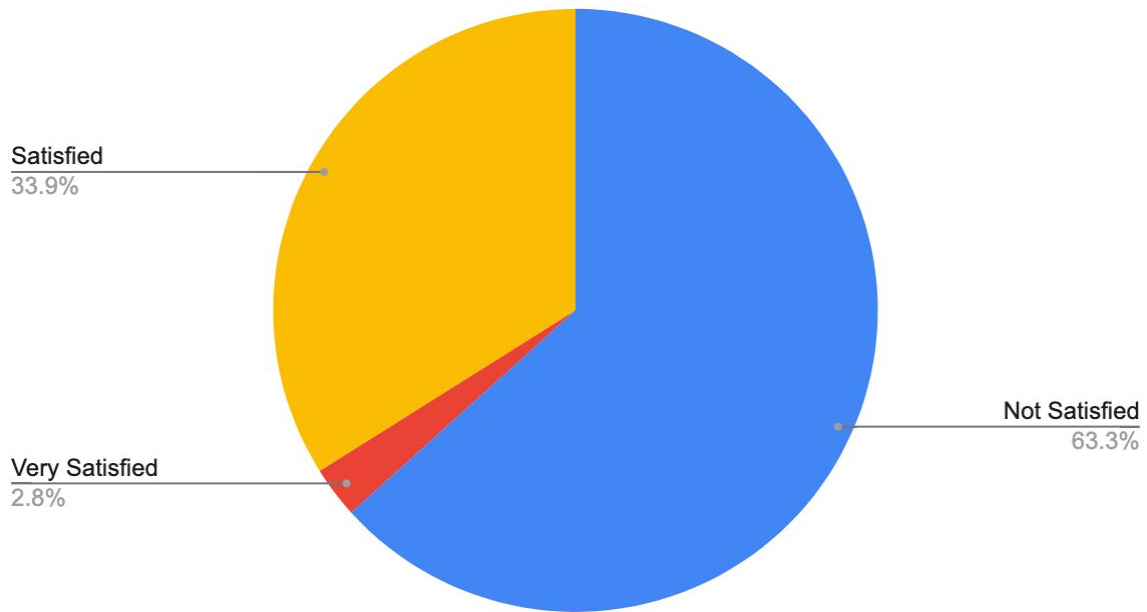


Are you satisfied with your sleeping area?

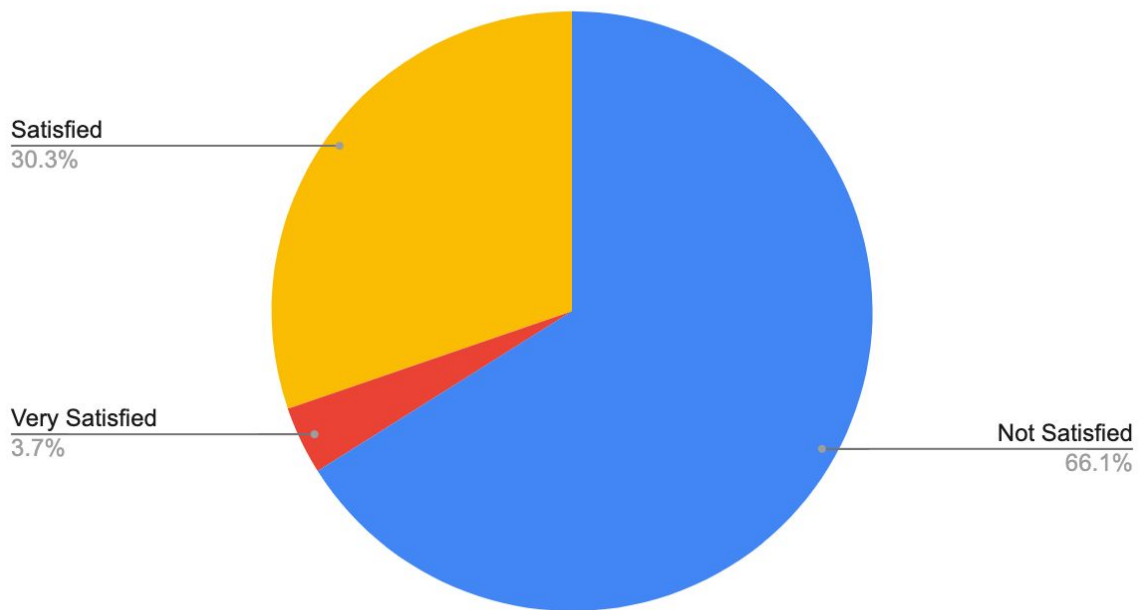




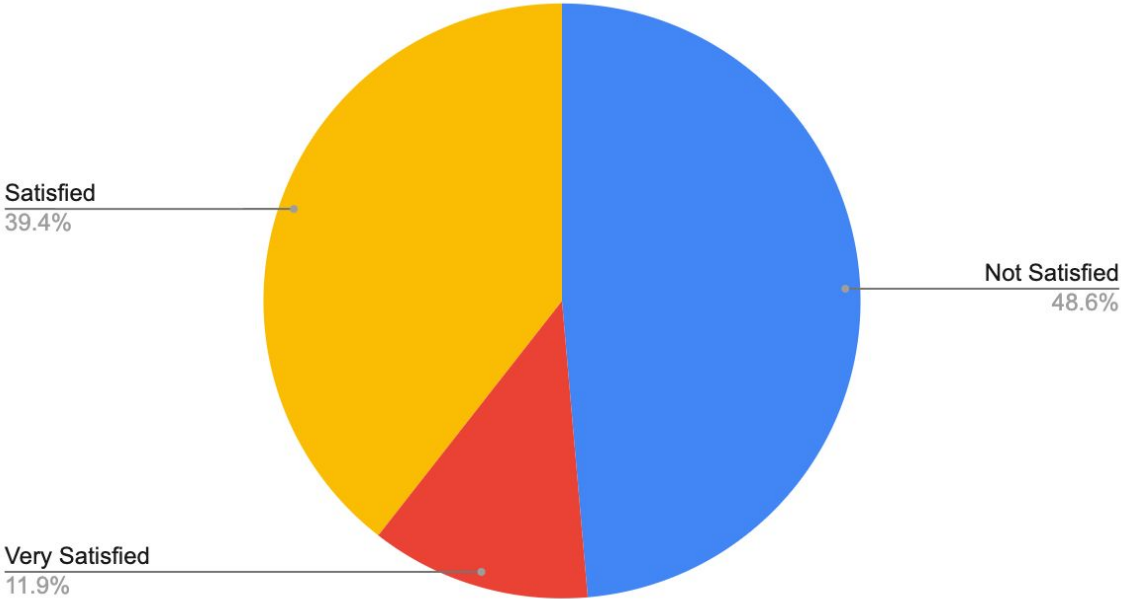
Are you satisfied with the laundry area?



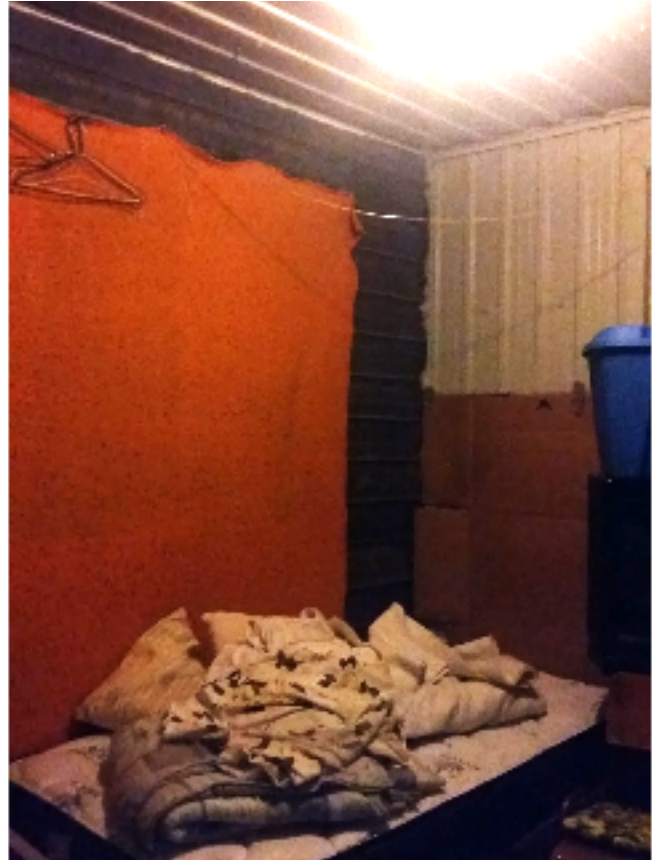
Are you satisfied with the bathroom areas?



Are you satisfied with the access to internet and phones?



**5. Selected photographs shared by workers of their current housing conditions**









## **6. Top worker concerns about current housing through illustrative quotes**

In all three of our consultation methods, we asked migrant workers to spell out concerns with current housing. The responses received were coded. The following issues were highlighted as top priorities of concern by a majority of workers: Lack of privacy; overcrowding in bedrooms and shared spaces; not enough toilets, showers, or stoves for the number of workers using them; appliances and amenities in poor condition (including broken toilets, substandard & uncomfortable beds); lack of clean drinking water; pest infestations; lack of heating and cooling; distance from communities to access health services, social supports, groceries, remittances; and excessive employer control over workers lives and fear of reprisals.

Below are some of the responses we received:

*It's hot in summer; when it rains it drips inside, and the basement leaks.*

*They don't let us to increase the heat of the house because they say is going to very expensive the Bill, so we have cold inside the house*

*8 people & 1 bathroom, old house that smells like mould & mildew. No washer or dryer*

*The toilet doesn't have a door, only a curtain so when somebody is showering you can't use the toilet. Right now we sleep in a big hallway with 20 guys in bunkbeds. No privacy. No dryer so we can't dry our clothes when it rains*

*Too crowded, lack of privacy. Isolated rural location. Next to chicken barns, so the smell & flies are inescapable.*

*One sink in kitchen for 10 ladies 5 ladies in a room without doors and uncomfortable bunk beds*

*53 to 60 people share living space. We sleep on bunk beds. And curtain separates us. All 60 of us use the bathroom and kitchen*

*6 years ago I made a complaint because the housing conditions were very bad in another farm and when the inspectors came the employer only showed the houses that were in better conditions, he was never sanctioned because they are still receiving mexicans*

*Need good bed, need phone ,need good table, good walk way to house ,live and the packing house a late of rat in our house boss don't want you to use heater. come in your house when you are not there .pit is at the door way it stink at times . Need filter water not clean .*

*5 guys, 2 bedrooms with bunkbeds. One bathroom with broken toilet.*

*It depends in which farm i am because they transfer us from farms between the company, in one we each have used to live 26 in one house, we created a system to be able to live together while some take showers others cook and others eat but this was organized by us not the boss, because we only have 3 showers, 4 toilets, 3 stoves. in the other farm we live 30 people and the schedule is harder to work around because sometimes we have to wait for the company bus to pick us up for 1 hour and that messes our system up.*

*There is no privacy and we live in a cellar.*

*Live with 4 others. There was an inspection at his bunkhouse, but workers were never asked anything.. The employer got previous notice*

*and was aware of the visits so he made us clean the house before the visit.4 workers to a room, no storage for clothes.*

*They took away our living room to make another bedroom; there's only one stove and there aren't enough chairs in the dining room.*

*20 guys in the basement, 7 upstairs with bunkbeds & one bathroom*

*6 women in two rooms in a small trailer. We can barely turn in it.*

*Kitchen is in a different building, bathroom is in a different building, have to walk to the barn for laundry (far)*

*We live in a barn. 2 ft between bed, no privacy, bunkbeds, too noisy - can't get rest*

*12 guys to a room on bunkbeds, no privacy*

*They live in a very crowded space, the beds are very close to the diner and kitchen area, they have bunkbeds, there are cockroaches all over including the fridge, there are rats, the pump in the basement was broken and created a flood, they painted the floors and the humes were so strong the workers had headaches and had to leave the house*

*i think we need more privacy...another thing is the cooler and heating system, we do not have anything of that here, so we need to let turned on the oven for this place do not get frozen.*