

Brokered & Street Corner Day Labor in New Mexico

**A report by
the Southwest Center for Economic Integrity
April 2004**

Brokered & Street Corner Day Labor in New Mexico

The Southwest Center for Economic Integrity gratefully acknowledges the support and contributions of others toward the completion of this survey project.

Funders: The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
The Greenville Foundation

Collaborating Agencies:

The New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness
and
Community of Hope, Las Cruces
La Casa, Las Cruces
St. Elizabeth's Shelter, Santa Fe
St. John's Soup Kitchen, Santa Fe
St. Martins Hospitality Center, Albuquerque

Field Researchers: Hank Hughes, Matt Nacol, Bianca Sopoci-Belknap, Rory Sopoci-Belknap, Charles Rencountre, Amanda Sapir, Cecilia Campillo, Karin Uhlich.

Portions of this report may be reprinted or cited noting the Southwest Center for Economic Integrity as the source.

the Southwest Center for Economic Integrity's mission is to build economic strength by reinforcing fairness, understanding, and community action. The primary purposes are to promote corporate and industry accountability, cultivate community-based enterprises, and foster greater understanding of economic policies and practices.

Cecilia Campillo, Outreach Coordinator
Kelly Griffith, Communications and Development Coordinator
Amanda Sapir, Research Specialist
Karin Uhlich, Executive Director

PO Box 41972
Tucson, Arizona 85717-1972
www.economicintegrity.org
info@economicintegrity.org

the Southwest Center for Economic Integrity

Summary of New Mexico Day Labor Surveys Prepared for the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness

In January 2004, the Southwest Center for Economic Integrity and the New Mexico Coalition for the Homeless interviewed 172 people who do day labor work in Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Two different surveys were used. One survey asked questions specific to the conditions of people who use a labor broker. The second survey asked questions specific to the conditions of people who wait on street corners to find work. Ninety-one surveys were completed by people who seek work through brokered labor and 81 surveys were completed by people who seek work via waiting on street corners.

Brokered Day Labor

Workers surveyed indicated seeking labor at 17 different locations throughout New Mexico.

Day Labor Agencies & the # of Day Laborers Who Report Seeking Work at the Agencies Within the Last Year	
Labor Ready	36
Labor Express	27
Kelly Quest	3
Ruidoso Ready Labor	3
Quick Labor	2
Labor Concepts	2
Southwest Distributing	2
St. Martin's	2
American Temp	1
Casual Labor	1
Day Labor	1
Labor Finder	1
NM Dept. of Labor	1
Noon Day Ministries	1
Quest Personals	1
Santa Fe Services	1
Tandem	1

Wages and Fees

Wages and Fees		
Most Recent Hourly Wage	# of Day Laborers Earning the Wage	# of Day Laborers Charged Fees
Less than \$5.15	2	2
\$5.15	18	17
\$5.25	4	3
\$5.50	3	3
\$5.75	5	5
\$6.00	15	10
\$6.25	4	3
\$6.50	6	5
\$6.75	1	1
\$7.00	10	7
\$7.25	3	2
\$7.50	3	2
\$8.00	2	1
\$9.00-\$9.50	3	2
\$10	4	3
\$13	1	0
\$18	1	1

Fifty-three of 91 workers surveyed, or 58%, reported being charged fees by the day labor agency for **transportation** to and from a work site. The reported charge for round trip transportation generally ranges between \$2 and \$5. One person reported being charged \$10. According to survey results the average fee charged for round trip transportation is \$2.85.

Thirty-seven workers surveyed, or 41%, reported being charged for **gloves**. The charges reported for gloves ranges between \$1 and \$3. One person reported being charged \$25.

Thirty-seven workers surveyed, or 41% reported being charged for receiving wages in **cash versus a check**. Workers reported the fees charged either as dollar amounts or the percentage charged based on the amount of the check. The charges reported for check cashing ranges between \$1 plus change¹ to \$5. Workers who reported the fee as a percentage, reported being charged a 3% fee.

Safety Concerns & Injuries

¹ Workers cash checks using machines inside the brokered labor office. The check cashing machines only dispense bills, not change. Therefore, the fee for cashing a check through the brokered labor company becomes the charge to cash the check using the machines, plus the cents lost due to the machine not dispensing change.

Thirty-seven workers, or 41% of day laborers surveyed, report being concerned about safety on the job. The table below indicates the safety concerns as identified by workers. Percentages indicate the responses as a percentage of only those workers who reported being concerned about safety.

Safety Concerns	
Lack of Safety Equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hard hats required though not provided • not enough masks and gloves • steel toed boots needed though not provided • improper attire and safety guards for using and handling chemicals • no belts provided to support the back during lifting 	9 (24%)
Working On High Scaffolding and Ladders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wobbly scaffolding and ladders • being asked to go up and down repeatedly 	8 (22%)
Co-workers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • women reporting being harassed by men • poor supervision from managers • co-workers' s inexperience • co-workers working while intoxicated • being pushed by co-workers 	7 (19%)
General Concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asked to lift heavy objects while pregnant • falling objects at construction site • electrical cords by water • improper tools provided • OSHA protocols not observed • slipping • general fear of injury 	13 (35%)

Nine workers, or 10% of day laborers surveyed, report being injured while doing day labor work. All 9 reported the injury to a supervisor; 2 received workers' compensation.

Unpaid Waiting Time

What Time Do You Usually Report To the Temp Agency?	
3:30am-4:45am	18
5:00am-6:30am	59
7:00am-9:00am	12
8:30pm-midnight	2

What Time Do Jobs You Get Usually Start?	
6:00am-7:30am	48
8:00am-9:00am	36
10am-noon	4
3:00pm-midnight	3

Average Hours Workers Spend Waiting for Work: 2.2 hours

Desire for Work

Seventy-eight workers surveyed, or 86%, reported preferring a permanent job with regular hours over doing day labor work. Eleven workers, or 12%, prefer doing day labor. Two workers did not respond to the question.

Demographics

The age of workers surveyed ranges between years 21 and 64 years. The average age of workers surveyed is 43 years. Seventy workers surveyed, or 77%, reported being male. Twenty-one workers surveyed, or 23%, reported being female.

Twenty-eight workers surveyed, or 31%, reported their ethnicity as Latino. Twenty-four workers surveyed, or 26%, reported their ethnicity as White. Fourteen workers surveyed, or 15%, reported their ethnicity as Black. Twelve workers surveyed, or 13%, reported their ethnicity as Native American. Six workers surveyed, or 7%, reported their ethnicity as Multiracial. Five workers surveyed, or 5.5%, reported their ethnicity as an unspecified Something Else. Two workers surveyed, or 2%, refused to answer the question.

What Do You Consider Your Ethnic Background or Family Origin To Be?	
Latino	28 (31%)
White	24 (26%)
Black	14 (15%)
Native American	12 (13%)
Multiracial	6 (7%)
Something Else	5 (5.5%)
Refuse To Answer	2 (2%)
Asian	0 (0%)

Fourty-five workers surveyed, or 50%, reported staying in a homeless shelter. Twenty-three workers, or 25%, reported being homeless and living outdoors. Therefore, 68 workers surveyed, or 75%, reported being homeless. Ten workers surveyed, or 11%, reported living with family or friends. Seven workers surveyed, or 7%, reported renting a home. Six workers surveyed, or 7%, reported an unspecified other living situation. One worker surveyed, or 1%, reported owning a home.

What Is Your Current Housing Situation?	
Homeless, staying in shelter	45 (50%)
Homeless, living outside	23 (25%)
Living With Family/Friends	10 (11%)
Rent Home	7 (8%)
Other	6 (7%)
Own Home	1 (1%)

Thirty-five workers surveyed, or 38%, completed high school. Twenty-four workers surveyed, or 26%, reported completing some elementary or high school. Twenty workers surveyed, or 22%, reported completing some college. Five workers surveyed, or 5.5%, reported graduating from college. Three workers surveyed, or 3%, reported getting the General Education Diploma (GED). Three workers

surveyed, or 3%, report completing a graduate or professional degree. Two workers surveyed, or 2%, reported completing technical school.

What Is the Last Grade You Completed In School?	
3 rd	1 (1%)
9 th , 10 th , or 11 th	23 (25%)
12 th (graduated high school)	35 (38%)
G.E.D.	3 (3%)
Technical School	2 (2%)
1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd Year of College	20 (22%)
4 th Year of College (graduated college)	5 (5.5%)
Graduate or Professional Degree	3 (3%)

Thirty-nine workers surveyed, or 43%, reported that 75% to 100% of their monthly income is generated by day labor work. Twenty-one workers surveyed, or 23%, reported that less than 25% of their monthly income is generated by day labor work. Sixteen workers surveyed, or 18%, reported that 50% to 75% of their monthly income is generated by day labor work. Thirteen workers surveyed, or 14%, reported that 25% to 50% of their monthly income is generated by day labor work.

About How Much of your Monthly Income Usually Comes from Day Labor?	
Less than 25%	21 (23%)
25%-50%	13 (14%)
50%-75%	16 (18%)
75%-100%	39 (43%)

Street Corner Day Labor

Abuses

Thirty-two workers surveyed, or 40%, reported being paid less than the agreed wage. Twenty-seven workers surveyed, or 33%, report not being paid or being written a bad check for work completed. Twenty-five workers surveyed, or 31%, reported not receiving food, water, or breaks while working. Twenty-three workers, or 28%, reported being insulted or threatened by employers. Twenty-two workers, or 27%, reported being abandoned at a work site. Five workers surveyed, or 6%, reported experiencing violence or robbery by employers.

Have you experienced the following types of abuses from employers as a day laborer during the last two months?	
Paid Less Than Agreed On	32 (40%)
Not Paid for Work and/or Written A Bad Check	27 (33%)
No Food, Water, or Breaks Provided	25 (31%)
Insulted or Threatened	23 (28%)
Abandoned At the Work Site	22 (27%)
Violence or Robbery	5 (6%)

Injuries & Dangerous Jobs

Nineteen workers surveyed, or 24%, report being injured doing day labor work. Twenty-two day laborers, or 27%, report roofing as the most dangerous job.

Desire for Work

Seventy-two workers surveyed, or 89%, are currently looking for permanent work with regular hours. Seven workers surveyed, or 9%, are not currently looking for permanent work with regular hours. Two workers did not answer the question.

Forty-six workers surveyed, or 57%, reported seeking day labor work between 5 to 7 days a week, every week.

Demographics

The age of workers surveyed ranges between 19 years and 79 years. The average age of workers surveyed is 40 years. Sixty-eight day laborers surveyed, or 84%, reported having children.

Forty-four workers surveyed, or 54%, reported being born in Mexico. Thirty-four workers surveyed, or 42%, reported being born in the United States. Two workers surveyed, or 2.5%, reported being born in Guatemala. One day laborers reported being born in Ecuador.

In What Country Were You Born?	
Mexico	44 (54%)
United States	34 (42%)
Guatemala	2 (2.5%)
Ecuador	1 (1%)

Fifty-seven workers surveyed, or 70%, reported their ethnicity as Latino. Fourteen workers surveyed, or 17%, reported their ethnicity as white, including one person who identified as white and Jewish. Five workers surveyed, or 6%, reported their ethnicity as American Indian. Four workers surveyed, or 4%, reported their ethnicity as black.

Which of the following racial categories do you most closely identify with?	
Latino	57 (70%)
White	14 (17%)
American Indian	5 (6%)
Black	4 (4%)
Asian	0 (0%)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0 (0%)

Thirty-six workers surveyed, or 44%, reported living in a homeless shelter. Twelve workers surveyed, or 15% reported living in an apartment. Ten workers surveyed, or 12%, reported living on the street. Eight workers surveyed, or 10%, reported living in a house. Six workers surveyed, or 7%, reported living in a dormitory or cooperative. Three workers surveyed, or 4%, reported living in a trailer or mobile home. Three workers surveyed, or 4%, reported living in other spaces including an abandoned building, a friend’s home, and a motel. Two workers did not answer the question and one worker reported living in an apartment and a homeless shelter.

What Type of Housing Do You Currently Live In?	
Homeless Shelter	36 (44%)
Apartment	12 (15%)
On the Street	10 (12%)
House	8 (10%)
Dormitory or Cooperative	6 (7%)
Trailer or Mobile Home	3 (4%)
NA	2 (2.5%)

Twenty-two workers surveyed, or 27%, reported completing elementary school. Twenty-one workers surveyed, or 26%, reported completing junior high school. Fourteen workers surveyed, or 17%, reported completing high school. Eleven workers surveyed, or 14%, reported receiving a General Education Diploma (GED). Six workers surveyed, or 7%, reported completing no formal education. Three workers, or 4%, reported completing a vocational degree or certificate program. Five workers surveyed, or 6%, reported completing some college.² No workers reported graduating from college.

² Some workers reported completing some college as notations on their response to receiving the GED, completing high school, or in the ‘other’ category. Therefore, the number of responses equals more than the survey sample size of 81.

What Is the Highest Degree, Diploma, or Certificate that You have Obtained?	
None	6 (7%)
Elementary	22 (27%)
Junior High	21 (26%)
High School Diploma	14 (17%)
GED	11 (14%)
Vocational Degree/Certificate	3 (4%)
Some College	5 (6%)
College Degree	0 (0%)

SCEI Home