

Home Food Gardening in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

7 October 2020

preliminary results

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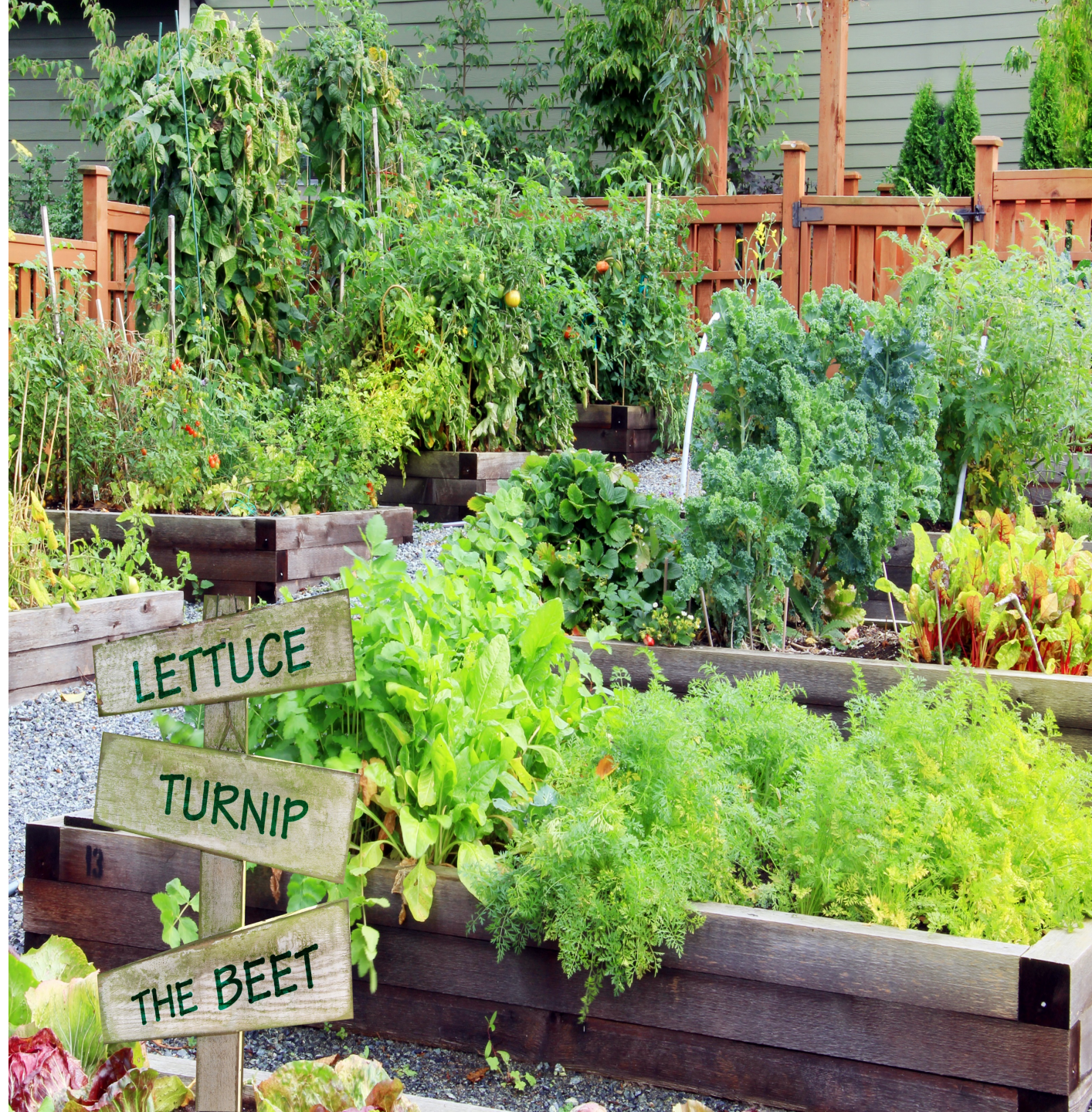
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Study Overview



Aim of Survey: To investigate the prevalence and varieties of and attitudes to home food gardening in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methodology: A representative survey of Canadians was conducted from September 28, 2020, to September 30, 2020, in partnership with Angus Reid. The survey was conducted online. 1,023 valid responses were collected.

Margin of Error: +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. Any discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

Key Findings

(1)



51% of respondents grow at least one variety of fruit or vegetable in a home garden. Of that, 17.4% of respondents started growing food at home in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

43% of home food gardeners spend 10 hours or less per week gardening.

52.5% of those who grow food at home are women, 47.1% are men, and 0.4% identify as neither male nor female. 5% more women started growing food at home since COVID-19 than men, which is in line with the overall gender breakdown of those who grow food at home in general.

96% of Canadians purchase at least some of their fruit and vegetables from a grocery store. With only 1.7% of home food gardeners able to supply all of their monthly fruit and vegetable consumption, home food gardening is not a significant source of financial competition to grocery stores.

A majority of home food gardeners have a university degree/certificate/diploma.

Key Findings

(2)



The frequency of organic fruits and vegetable purchases is not a determining factor in home food gardening. 51.9% of home food gardeners sometimes buy organic produce, while 51.7% of non-home food gardeners sometimes buy organic produce.

Dietary preferences and requirements do not have any significant impact on home food growing. 79.7% of home food gardeners have no dietary preferences. 4.4% of home food growers are some form of vegetarians or vegans, while 5.2% of non-gardeners are vegetarians or vegans.

A greater percentage of British Columbians and Prairie residents are home food gardeners than those who are not. Ontario is almost exactly even between those who grow food at home and those who do not, at 50.1% and 49.9%, respectively. Out of all the respondents who grow food at home who live in Atlantic Canada, 23.7% of respondents started gardening this year. It is the highest proportion of new gardeners within a region in the country. 87.2% of Prairie residents who grow food at home have done so for more than a year.

Key Findings

(3)



82.4% of home food gardeners live in a single-family house, which corresponds to the fact that 70.2% of home food growers grow at least some of their home produce in front and/or backyards.

18.6% of gardeners are growing at least some food on balconies. Out of all the respondents who grow food at home who live in Quebec, 31.3% of respondents grow at least some food on a balcony, the highest percentage in the country.

41% of new gardeners do not have children, versus 29.9% of long-time gardeners (for a total of 32% childless gardeners)

55.5% of home food gardeners consider gardening to be good exercise; 69% of home food gardeners find gardening relaxing.

Key Findings

(4)



51.8% of long-time home gardeners agree that they grow food at home because it is safer than what they can buy in store. For those who started growing food at home during the pandemic, only 42.9% agree that food safety was a factor in their decision to garden.

52.6% of respondents are at least somewhat worried about food shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is reasonably consistent for both home food gardeners (55%) and non-gardeners (50.1%). Only 7% of total respondents are not at all worried about food shortages. Among new home food gardeners, 53.9% are worried about food shortages, compared to 55.2% of long-time gardeners.

39.8% of total respondents at least somewhat agree that finding certain specific food stuffs has been challenging during the pandemic.

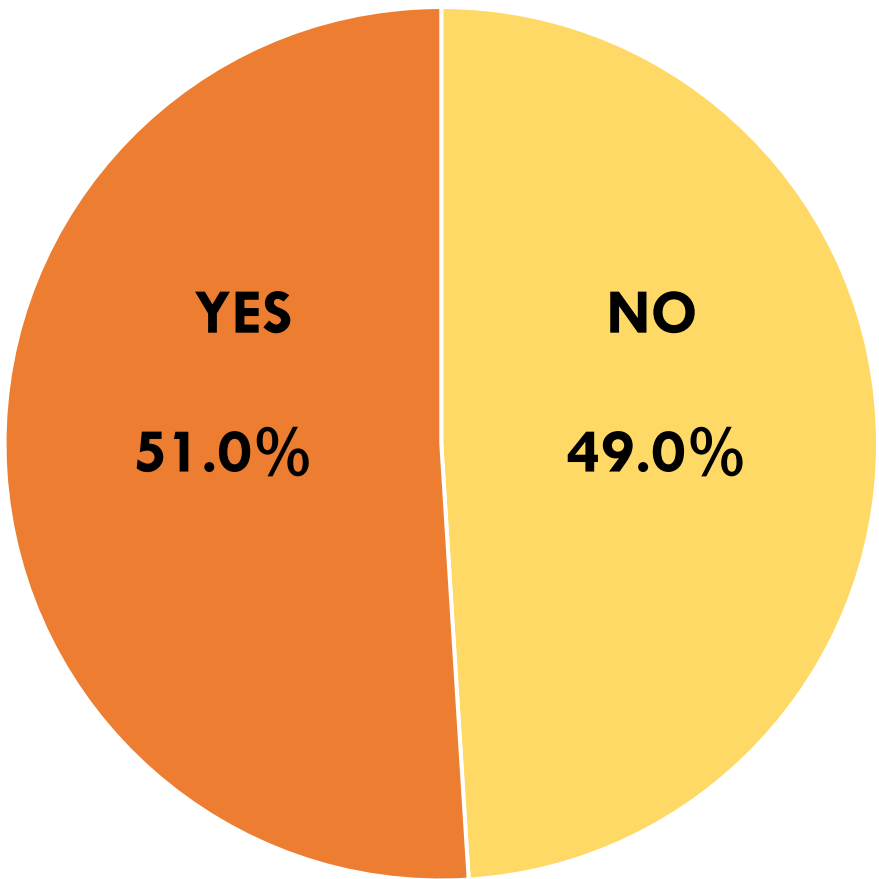
85% of total respondents are concerned that food prices will rise because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is consistent for both long-time and new home food growers and non-home home growers. This concern is not noticeably impacted by whether or not respondents had lost income due to the pandemic.



Scope of Home Food Gardening in Canada

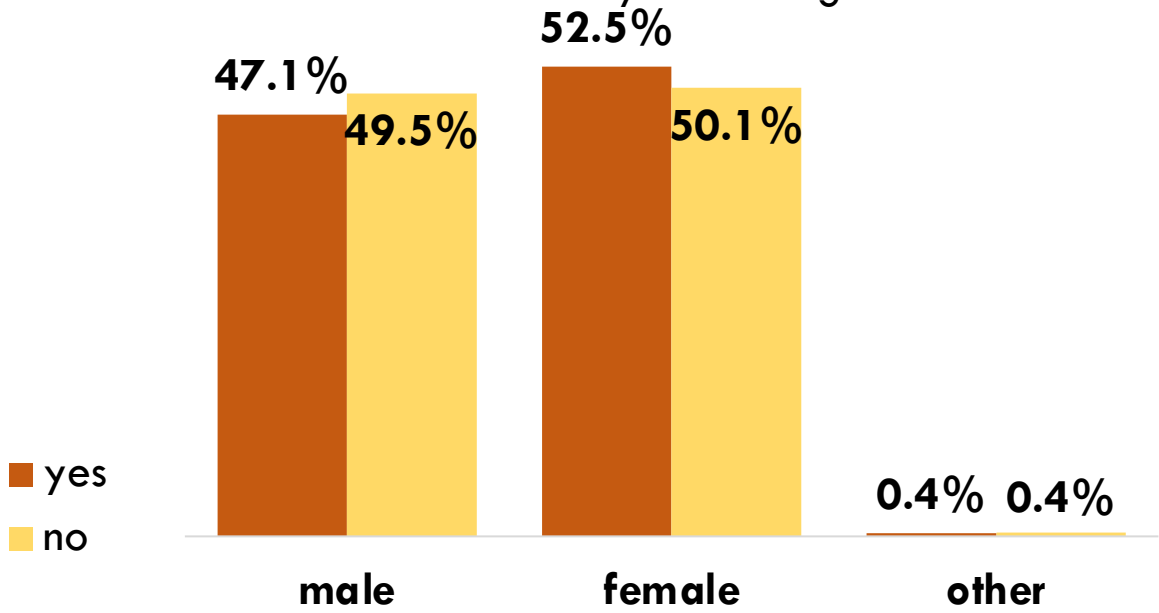


Q: Do you grow vegetables and/or fruits at home?

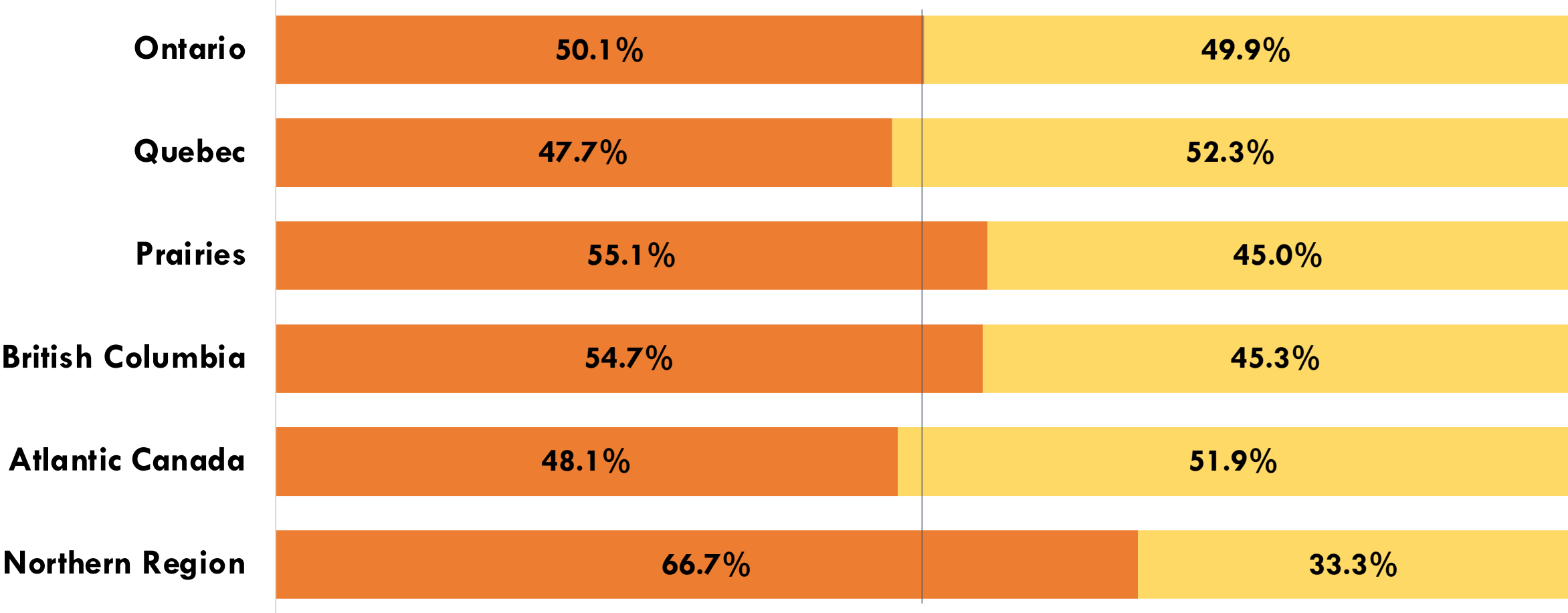


highest percent (36%) of home food gardeners are 54-72 years of age

second highest perfect (34.1%) of home food gardeners are 24-38 years of age



Q: Do you grow vegetables and/or fruits at home? (by geographic region)



 yes  no

Q: What is the main reason you don't grow vegetables and/or fruits at home?



I don't have space

41.5%

19.8% tried to grow food at home in the past with little to no success (their plants died)

I'm not interested

25.0%

3.3 % do not have favourable soil conditions and/or sun exposure on their property to support a food garden

I don't have time

15.0%

I can't afford to

2.0%

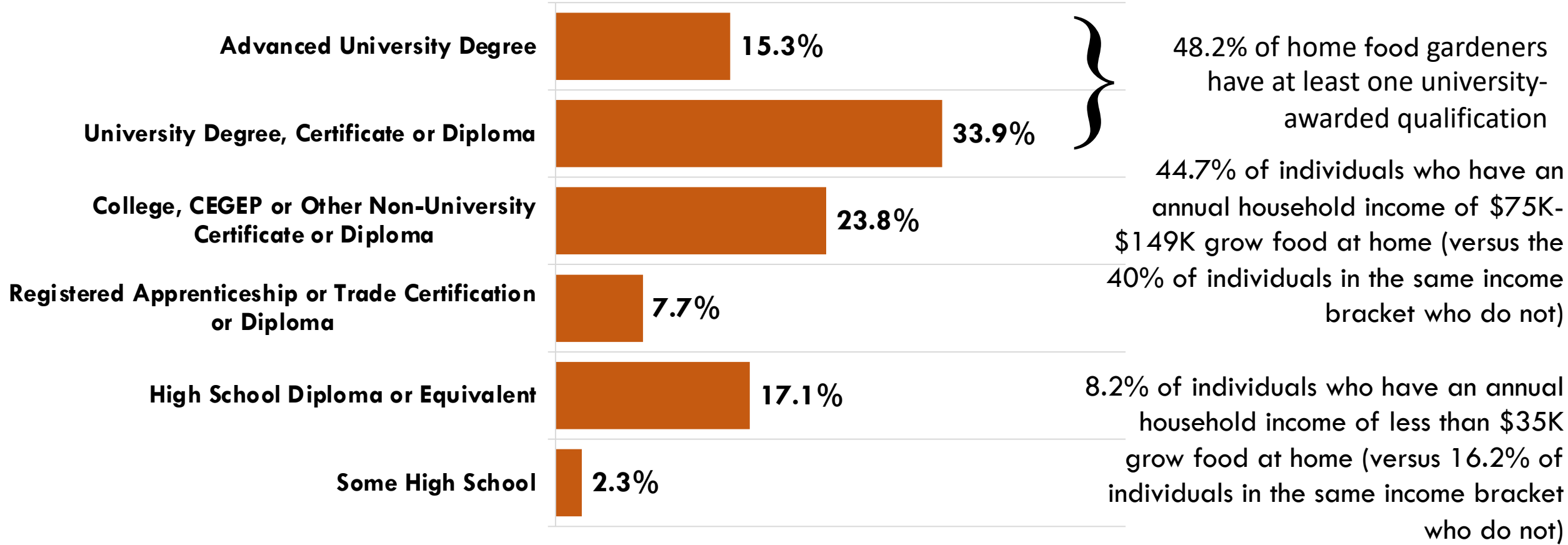
1.8 % are not physically able to tend to a garden

Other

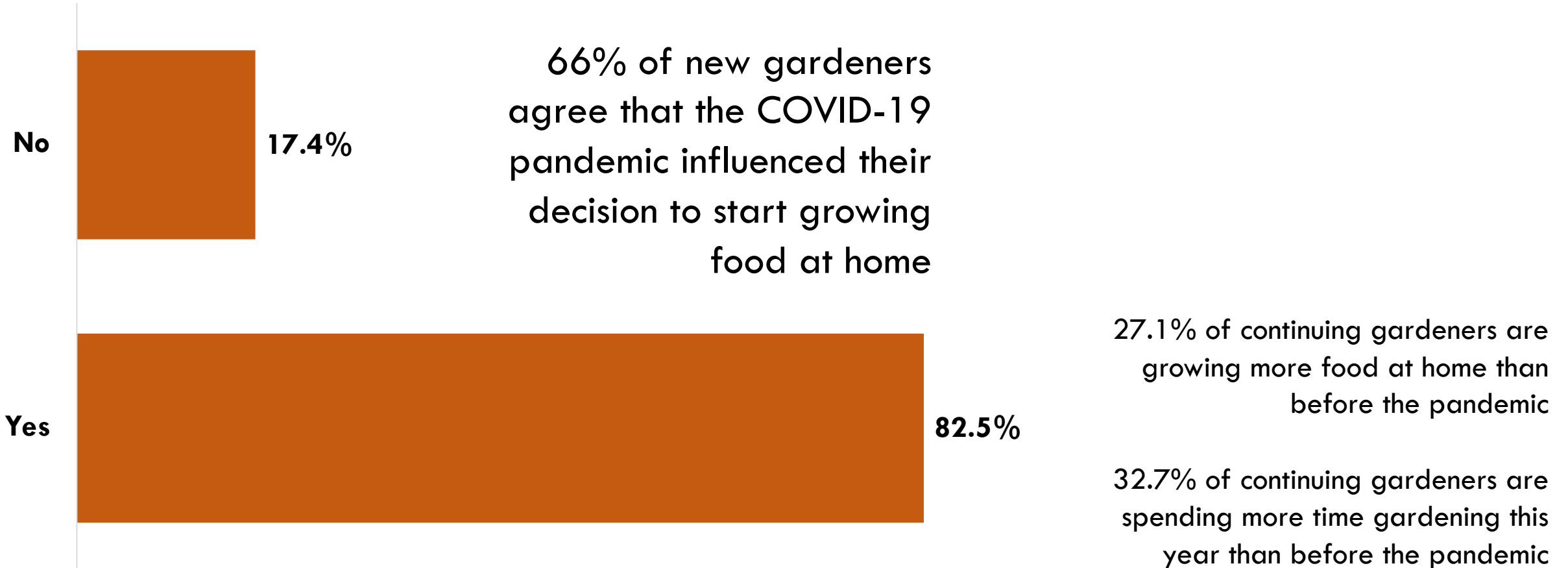
16.6%

Q: Do you grow vegetables and/or fruits at home?

‘Yes’, highest level of completed education



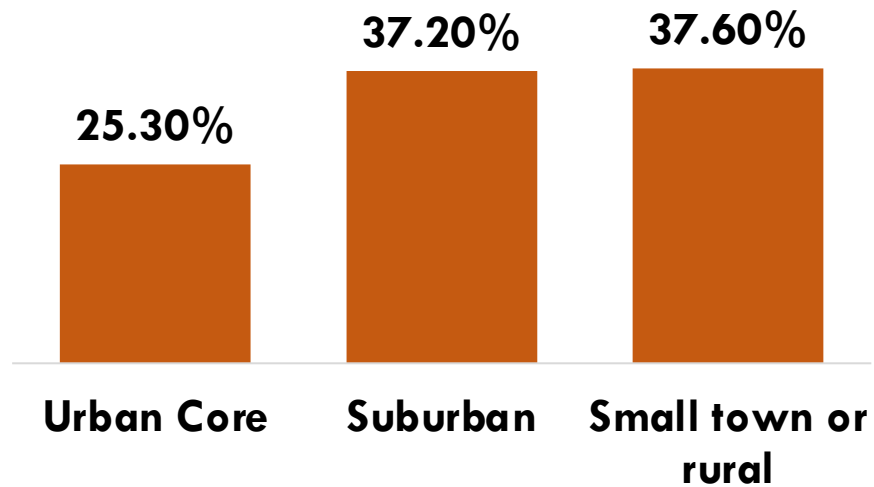
Q: Did you grow vegetables and/or fruits at home before the COVID-19 pandemic?



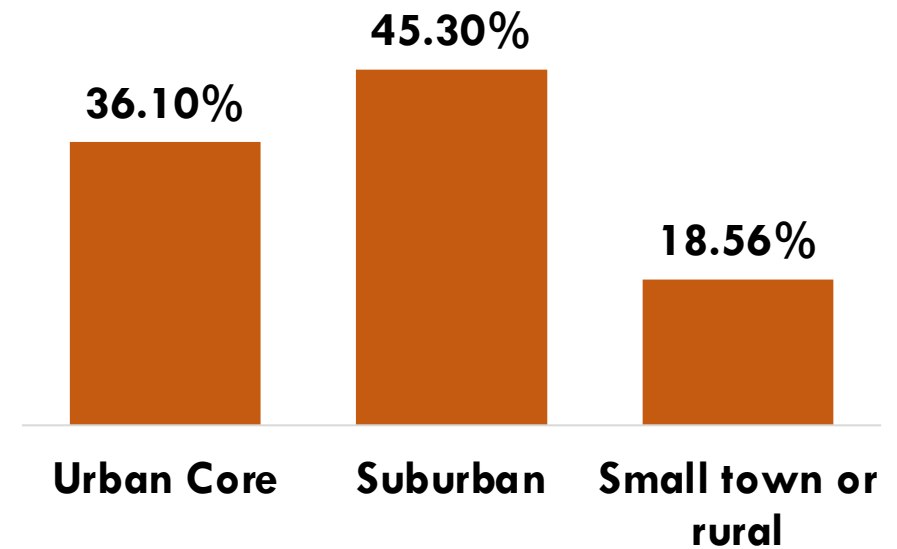
Q: Which of the following best describes where you currently reside?



respondents who have a home food garden



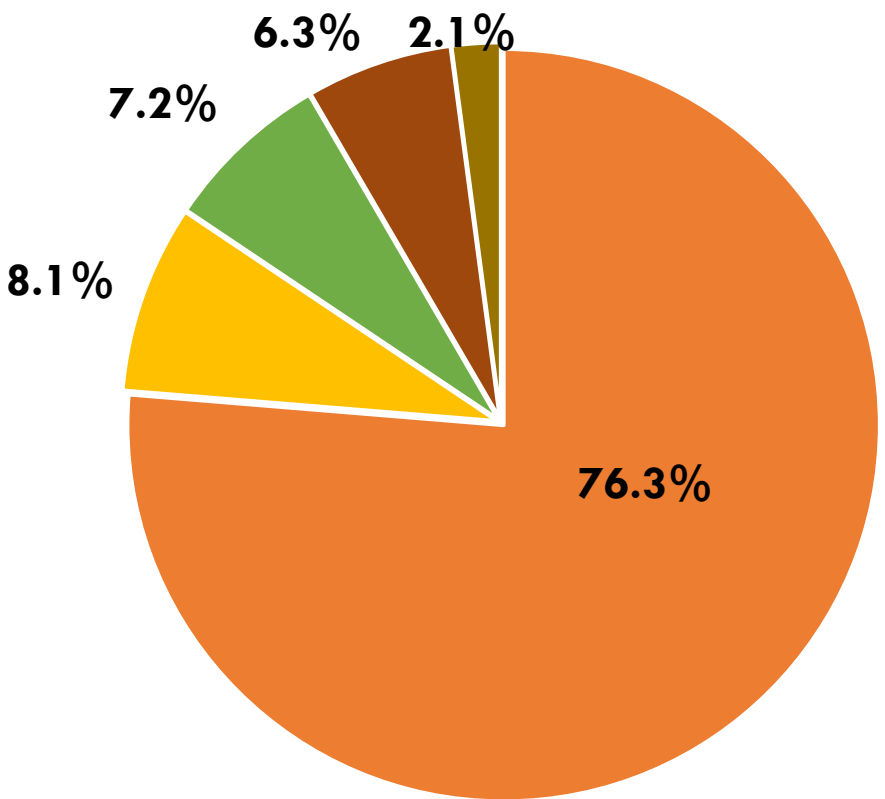
respondents who do not have a home food garden



Q: What best describes your housing situation? (respondents with home food gardens)

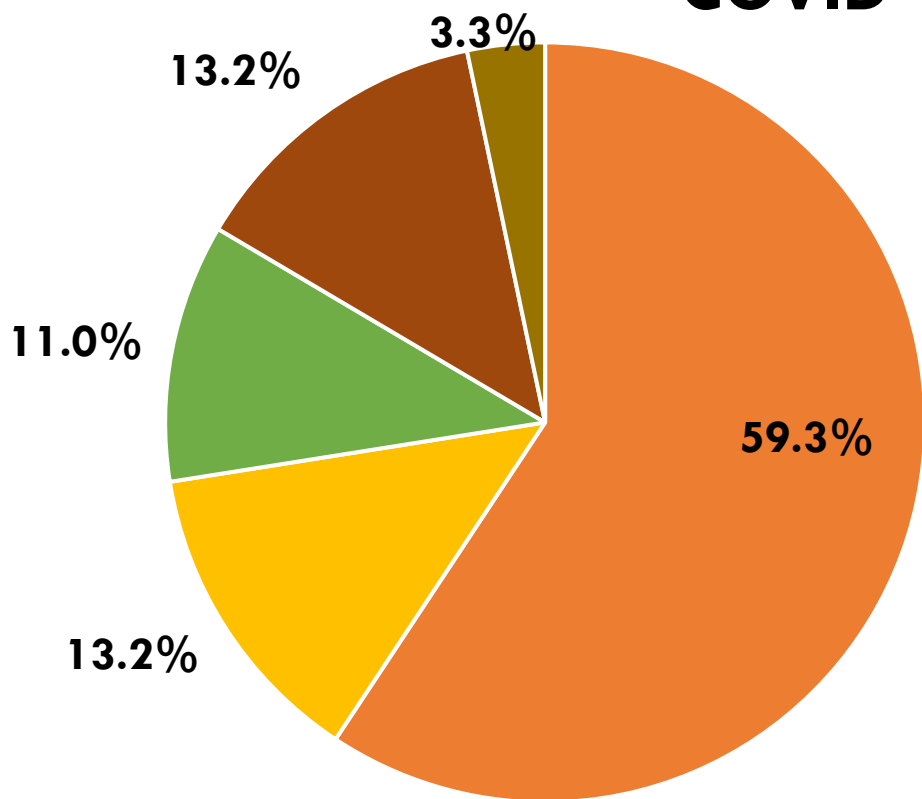


long-time food gardeners

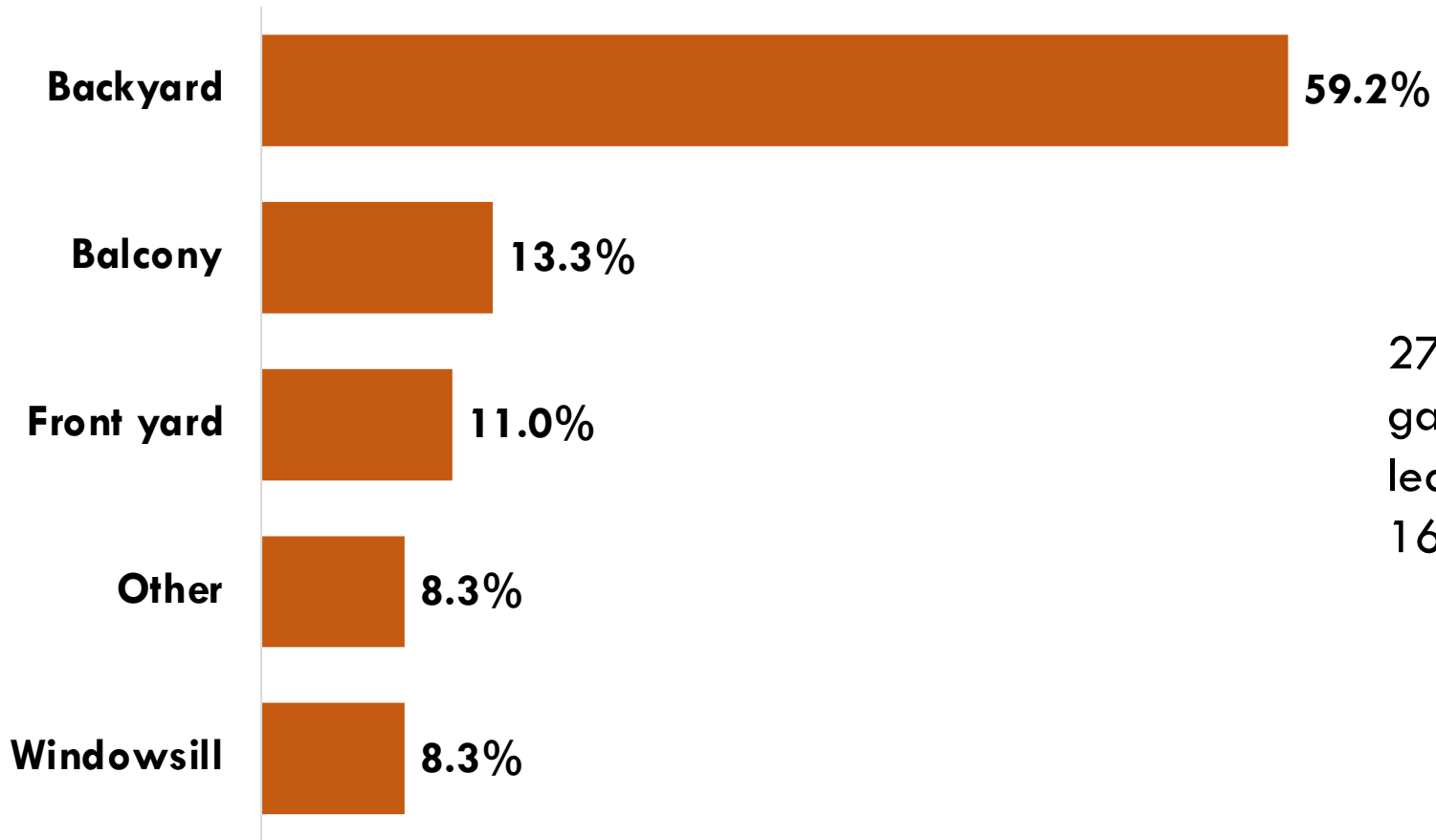


gardeners who started growing food during COVID-19

- Single-family detached dwelling
- Single-family semi-detached dwelling
- Condominium or apartment with fewer than 8 units
- Condominium or apartment with 8 units or more
- Other

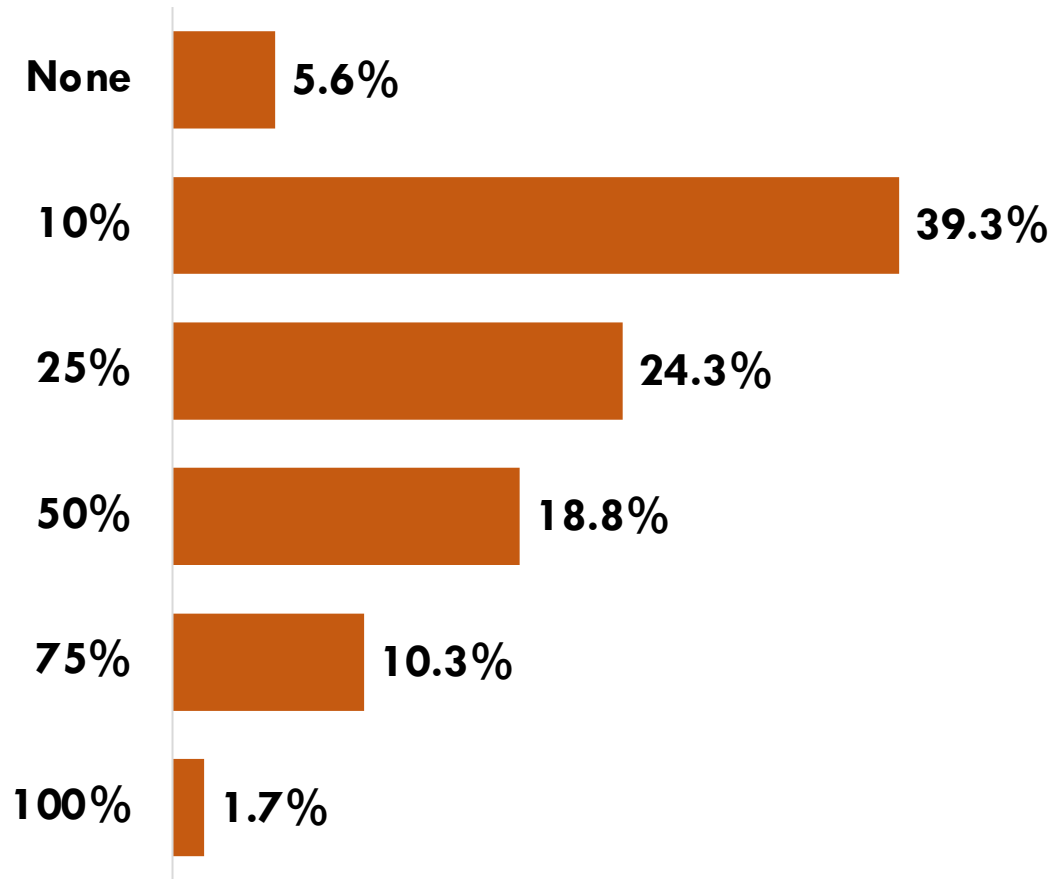


Q: Where do you grow vegetables and/or fruits at your home?



27.5% of respondents who started gardening during COVID-19 grow at least one food on a balcony, versus 16.7% of long-time gardeners

Q: Think about how many vegetables and/or fruits were consumed by your household in the past month. Approximately what percentage did you grow yourself?



Long-term gardeners grew a greater proportion of their monthly fruit and/or vegetable consumption versus new gardeners who started gardening during COVID-19:

20.2% of long-term gardeners got 50% of their monthly produce from their own gardens versus 12.1% of new gardeners

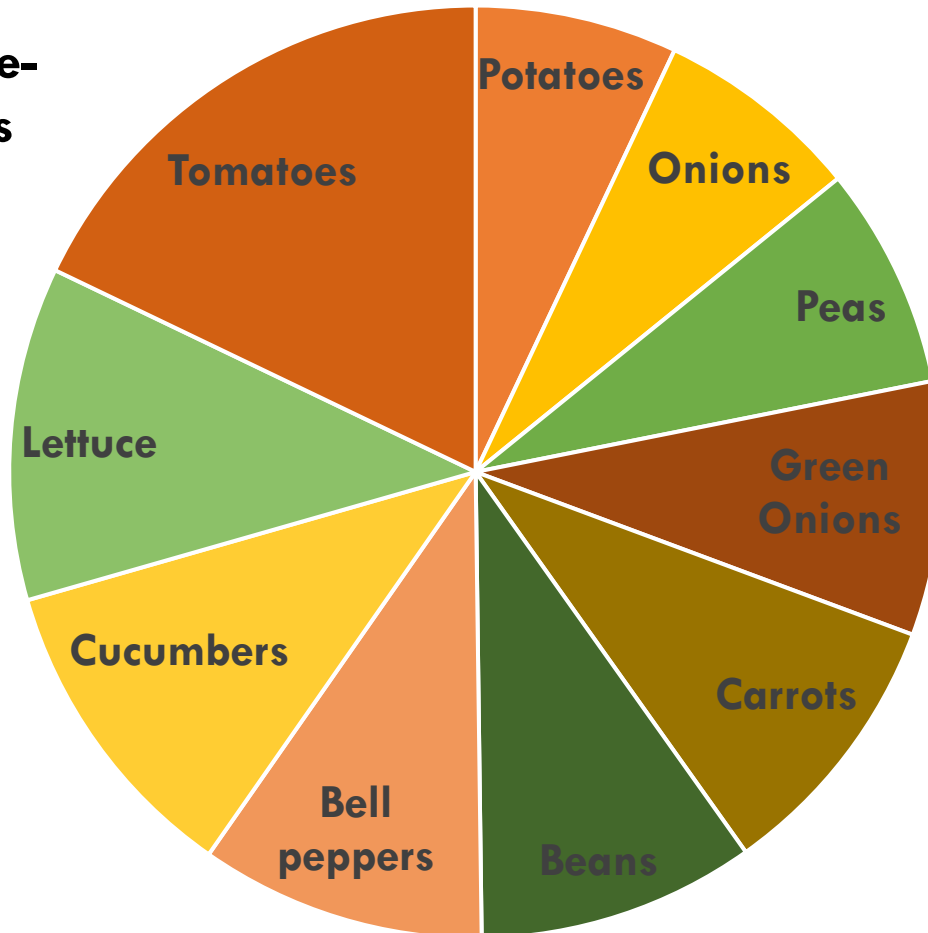
37.8% of long-term gardeners got 10% of their monthly produce from their own gardens versus 46.2% of new gardeners

Q: What vegetables and/or fruits do you grow?

Check all that apply.



The 10 Most Home-Grown Vegetables and Fruits



89.3% of home food gardeners grow tomatoes – by far the most popular crop

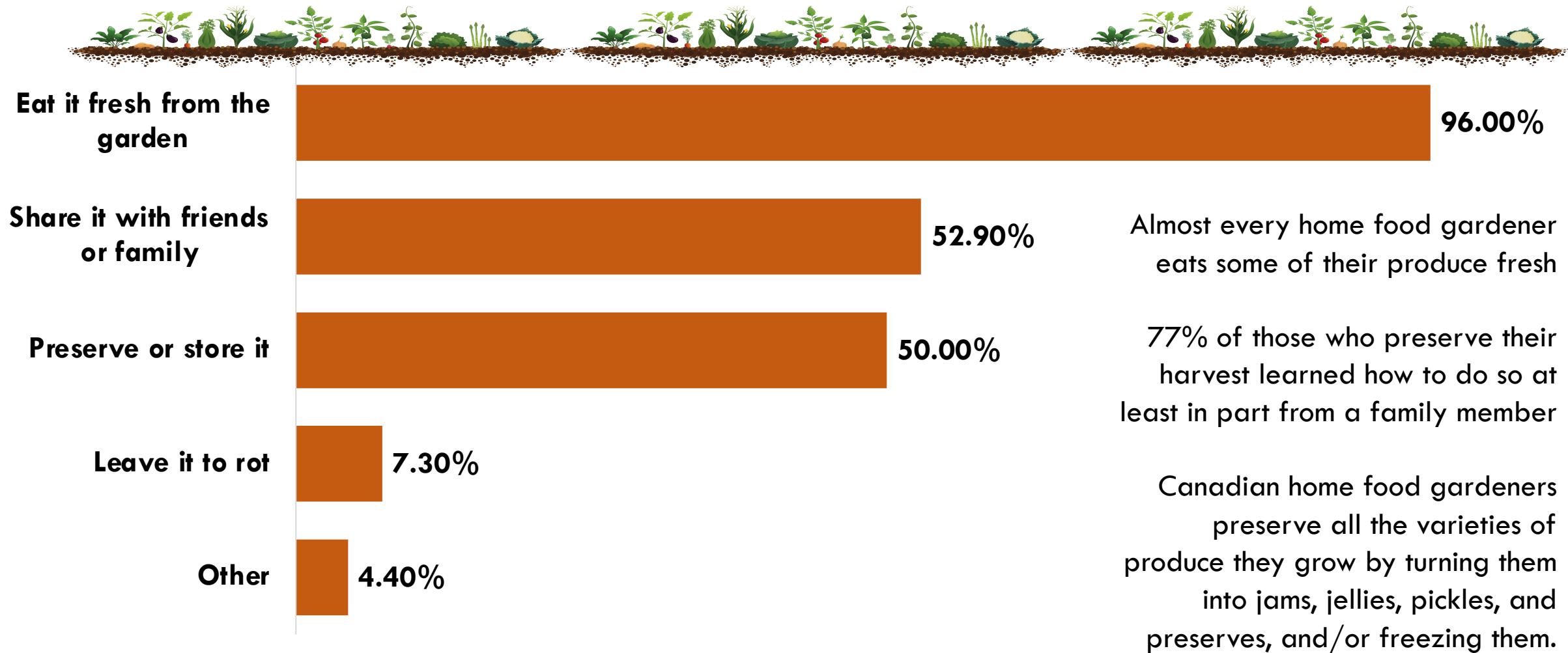
57.9% cent grow lettuce, the next most-popular, followed by cucumbers at 54.6%

32% of gardeners grow strawberries, making it the 11th most popular crop

Other than tomatoes, home food gardeners grow substantially more vegetables than they do fruit

Q: What do you do with the harvest from your garden?

Choose all that apply.





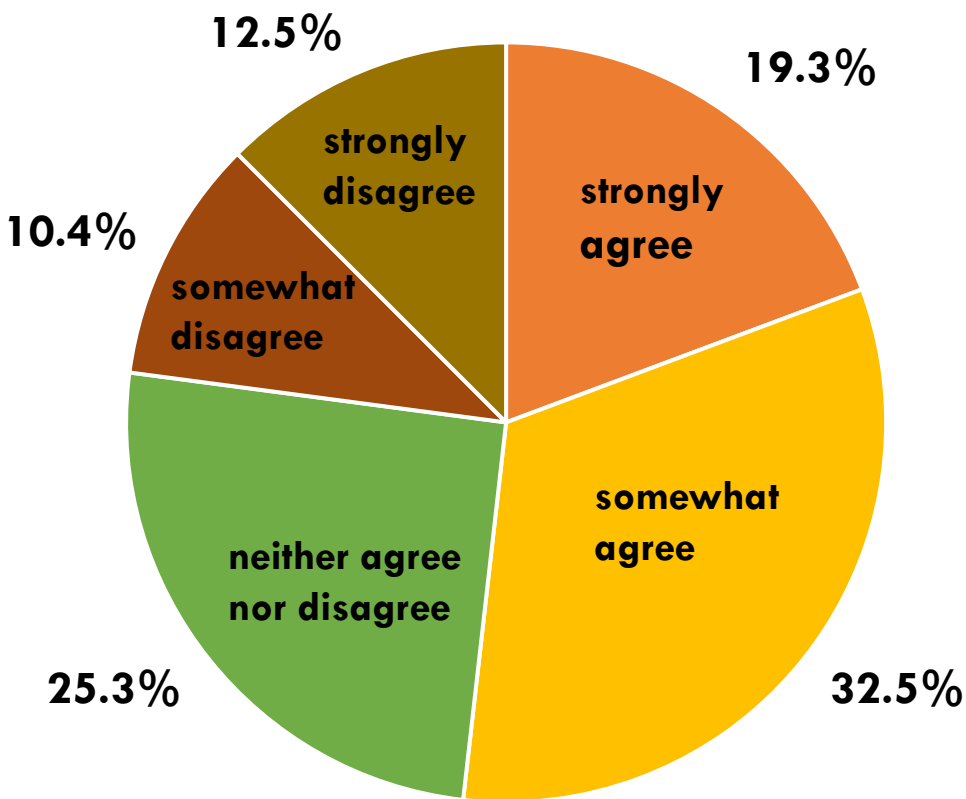
**Reasons for
Growing
Food at
Home**



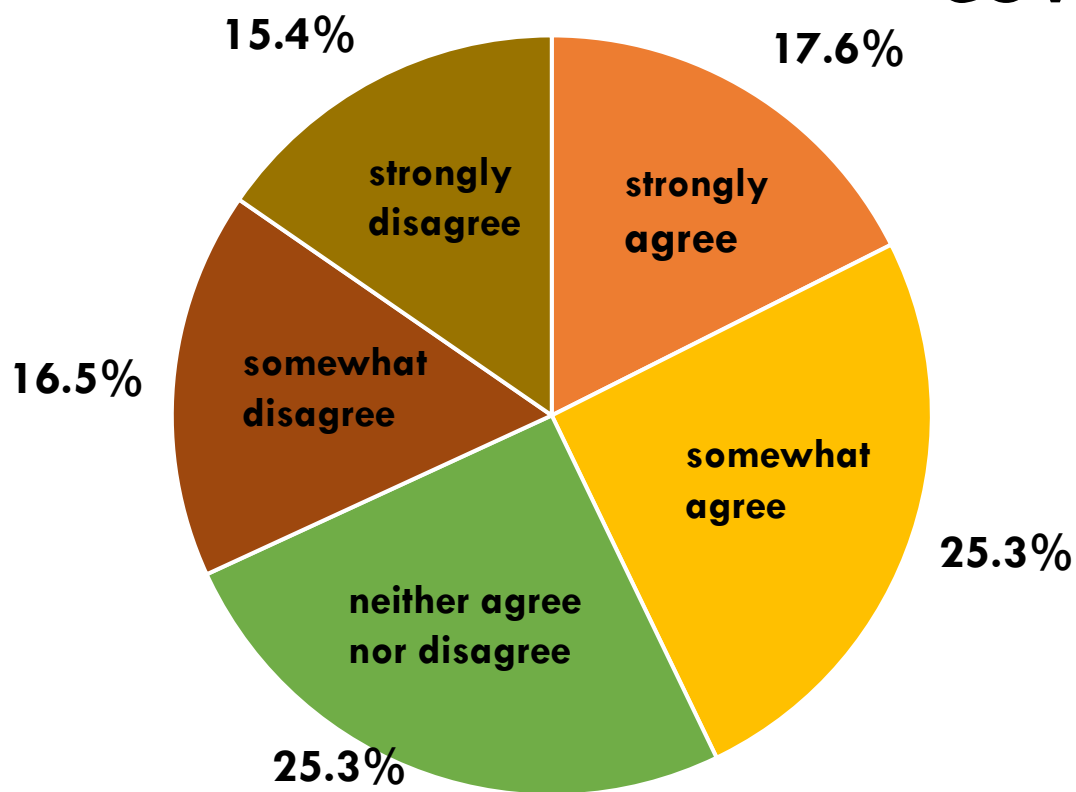
Q: I grow food because it is safer than food from the store.



long-time food gardeners



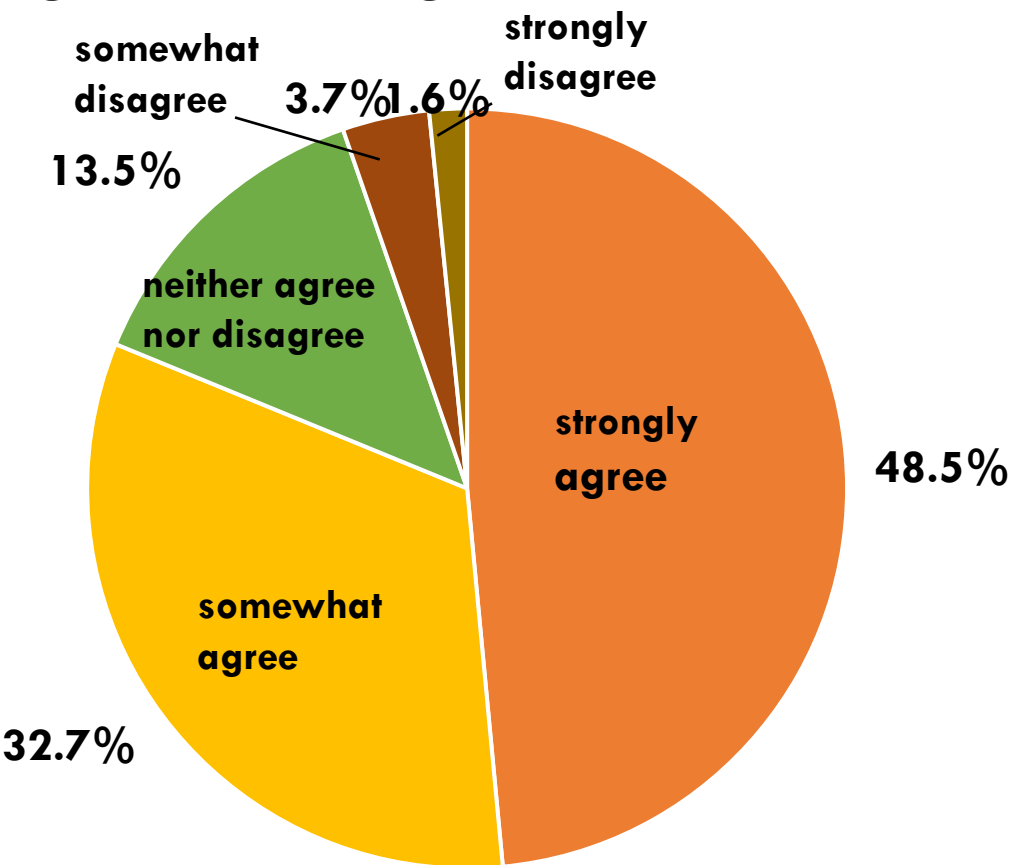
gardeners who started growing food during COVID-19



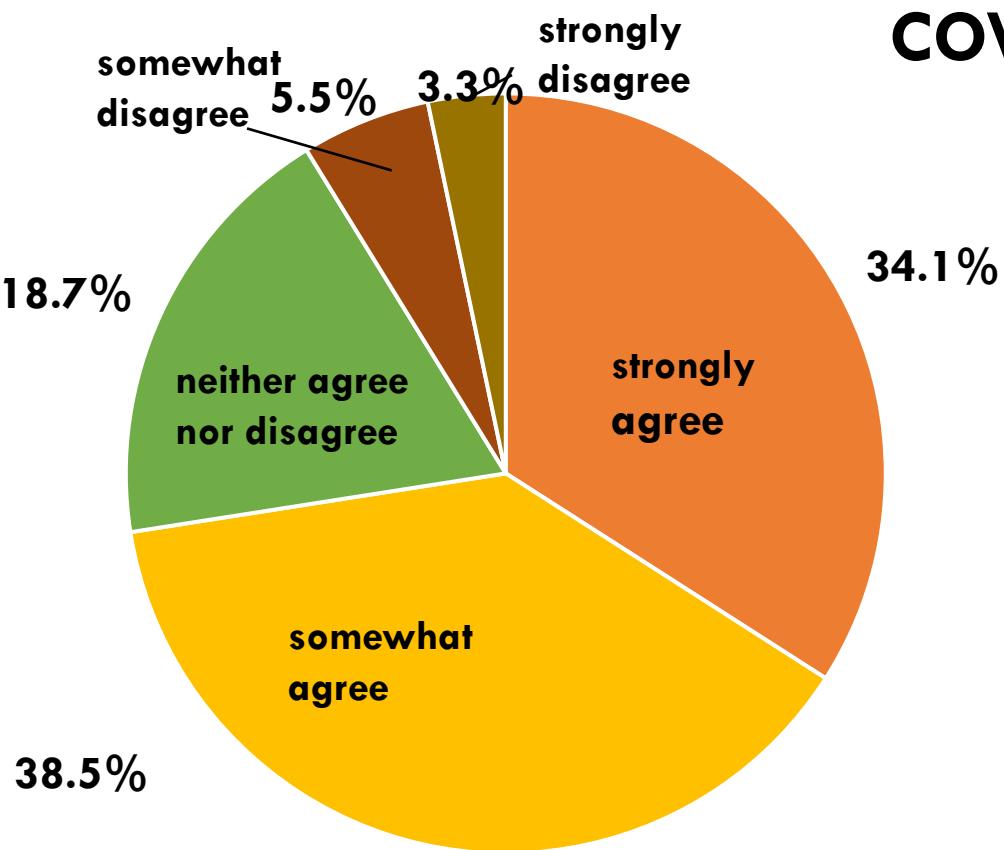
Q: I grow food because it has more flavor than food from the store.



long-time food gardeners



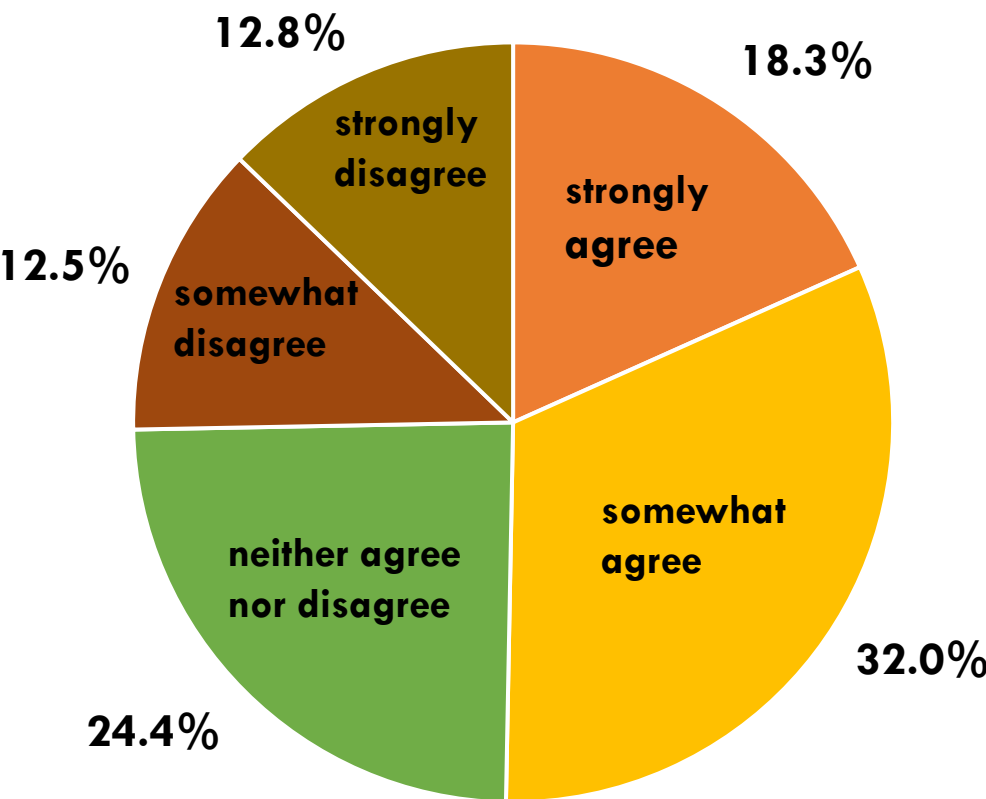
gardeners who started growing food during COVID-19



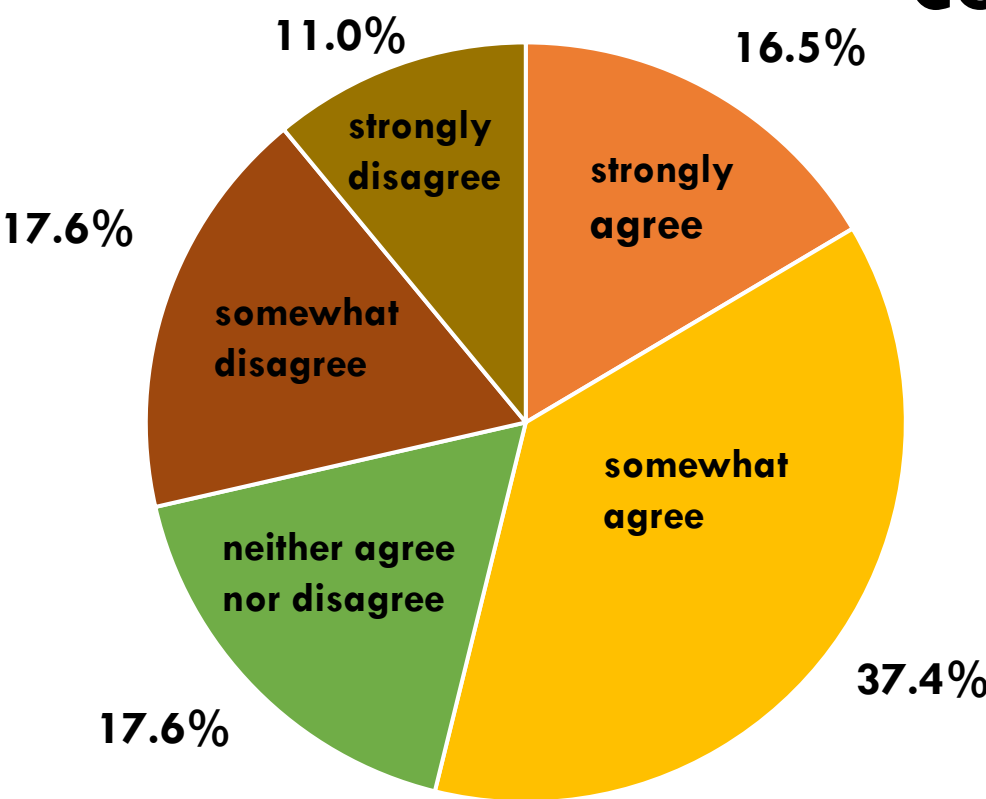
Q: I grow food to save money.



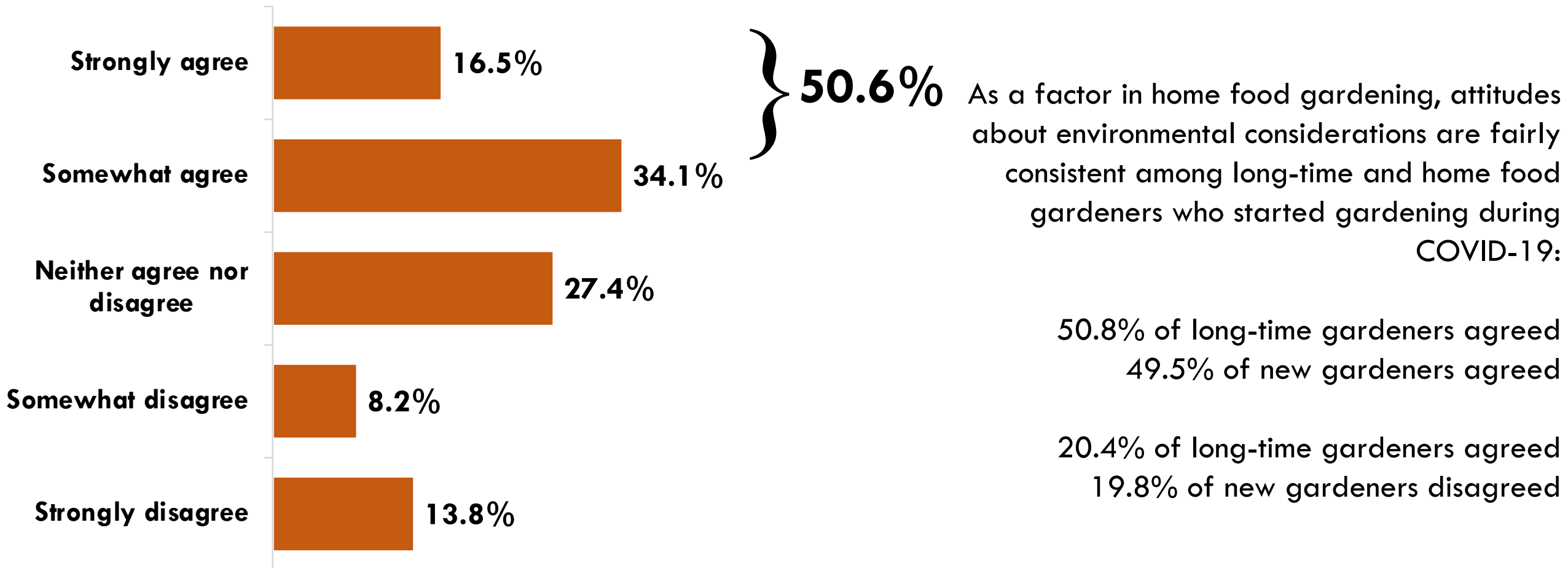
long-time food gardeners



gardeners who started growing food during COVID-19



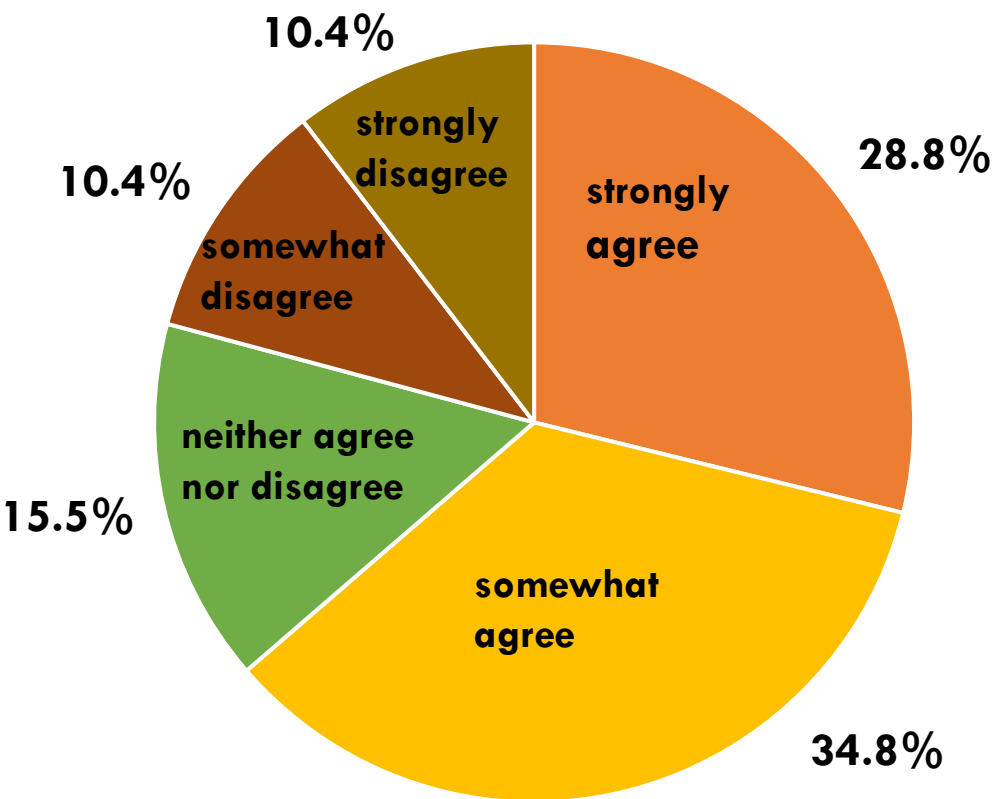
Q: I grow food to reduce my environmental impact.



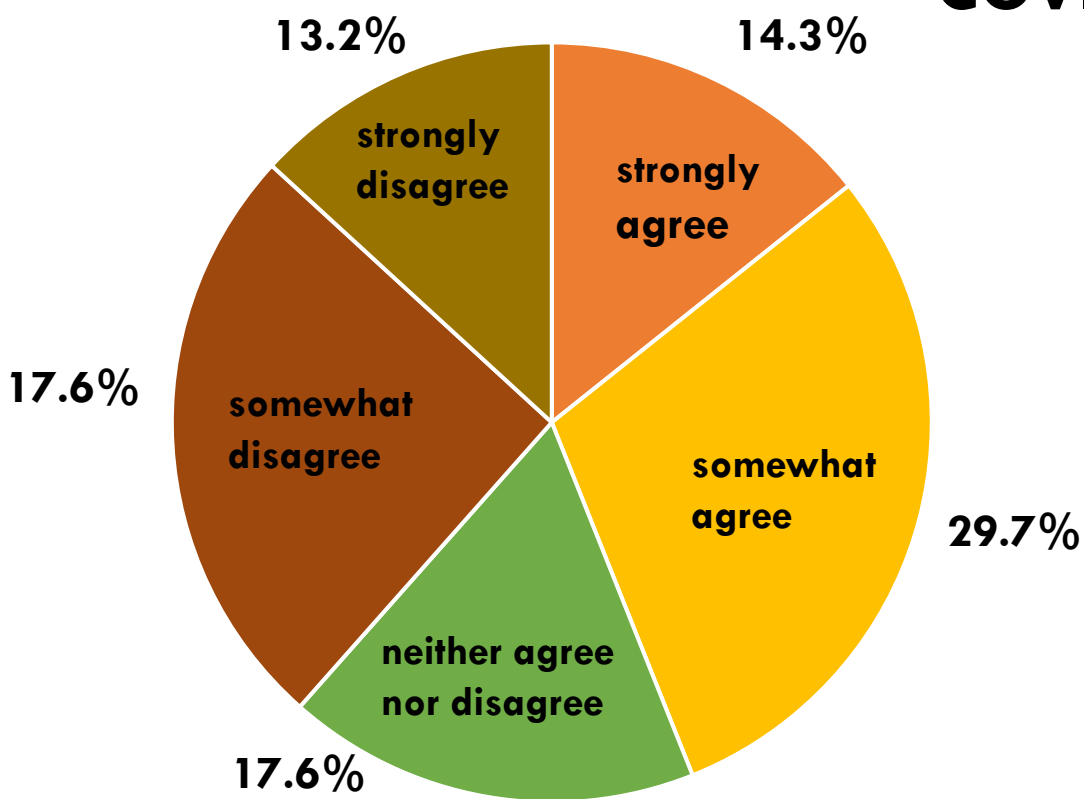
Q: Growing food is a family tradition.



long-time food gardeners



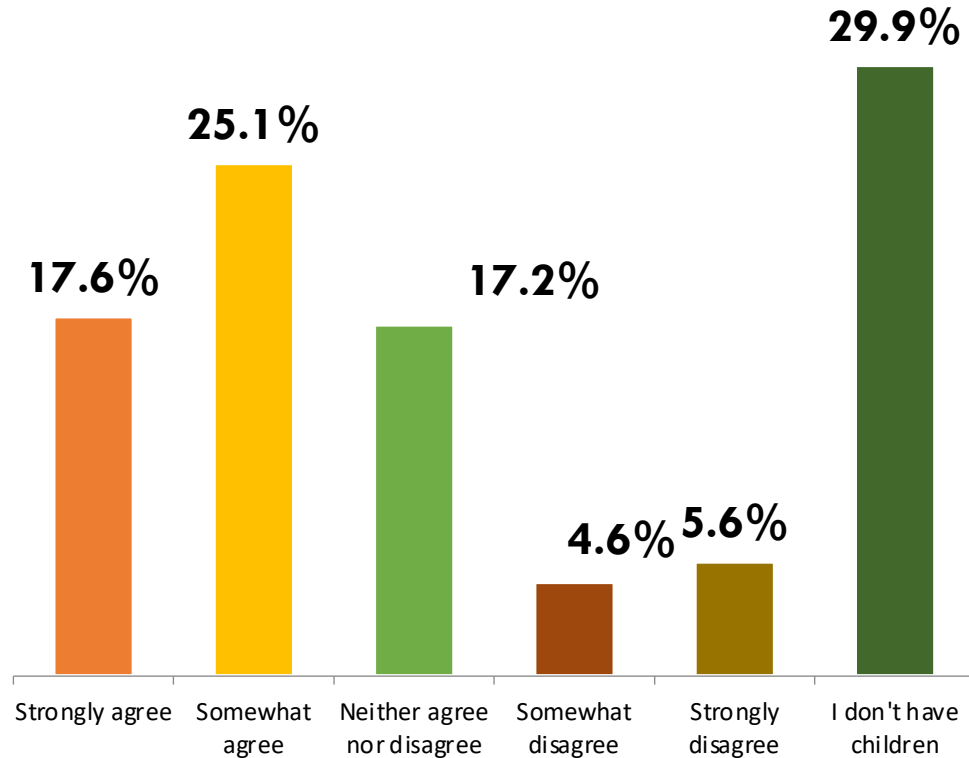
gardeners who started growing food during COVID-19



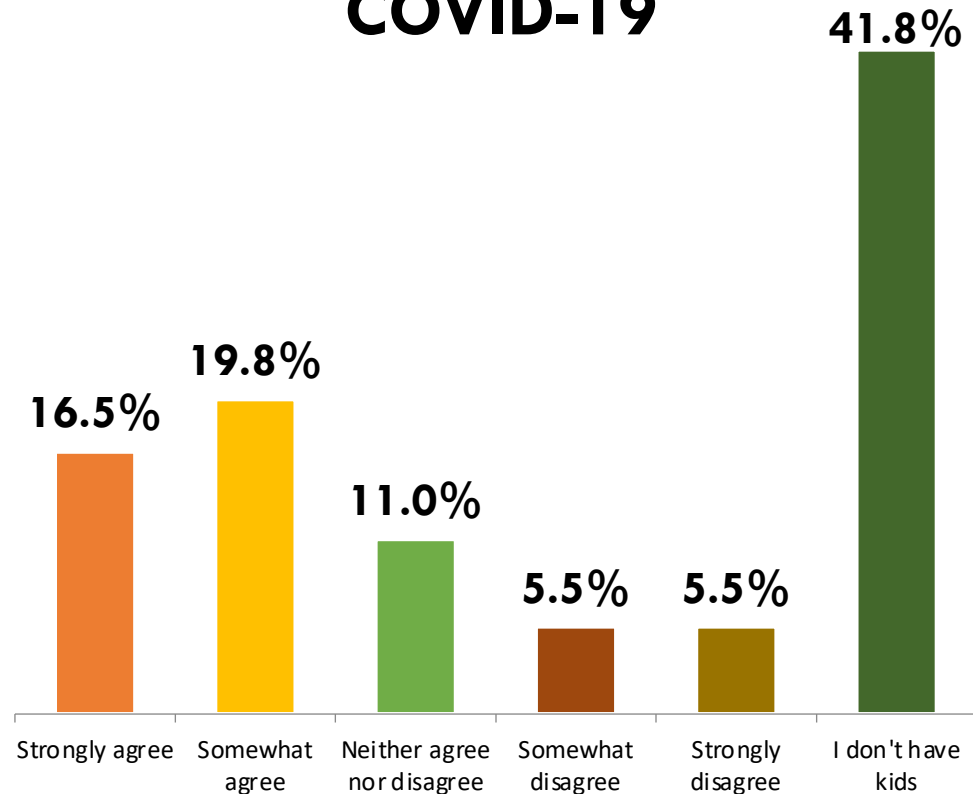
Q: I grow food to teach my children new skills and knowledge.



Long-time food gardeners



Gardeners who started growing food during COVID-19





Implications and Conclusions



Recommendations



- **Popularity of home food gardening:**

This study was completed at the end of the first summer of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, after most of Canada's citizens were under lockdown from mid-March 2020 to June 2020, to prevent and control the spread of the disease. A follow-up survey should be completed September 2021 to discover if as many Canadians are still growing food at home and if more Canadians have joined the home food growing movement.

- **Land use policy:**

The results of this study have significant implications for land use policy in densely populated cities. 25% of those who live in the urban core of a city grow at least one fruit or vegetable at home, usually on a balcony. 19.1% of non-gardeners claim the lack of space is why they do not grow food at home. Municipal governments need to increase awareness of their community gardens: every major city in Canada has a community garden program, some of which are quite extensive, offering financial support for tools and seed in addition to the free use of municipal land. Studies should be conducted among city residents to discover the level of interest in growing their own food in a community garden. Such results could provide meaningful policy recommendations to municipal and even provincial governments.

Recommendations (continued)



- **Land use policy continued:**

The number of condominium and apartment home food gardeners is also on the rise. 15.42% of home food growers live in a condo or apartment building, while 13.2% of new home food growers live in a building with 8 units or more, while 13.2% of new home food growers live in a building with 8 units or more. This presents a unique opportunity for condo boards, renters' groups, and neighbourhood organizations to start home food growing associations. Studies should be carried out specifically focusing on small-pot and container gardening among condo and apartment residents. Resident-building based community gardens could also be an opportunity.

- **Canadians' perceptions of food supply:**

The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, with no end in sight. Regardless of if they grow some of their own produce, Canadians need to better understand their food supply systems. Because of the rate of change in socio-economic conditions caused by COVID-19, frequent surveys of Canadian consumers exploring their attitudes to food and food security need to be carried out.

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