

Farmland Preservation Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the Ottawa County Farmland Preservation Survey results. The survey was distributed to 1,636 landowners and received 408 responses.

Survey results identified the need to support farmland preservation efforts.

- 82% of respondents think farmland loss is now or could be a problem.
- 82% of respondents think it's important to preserve farmland in Ottawa County.

The following preservation methods were identified as most important to implement:

● Continue the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program.

This should include advocating for additional federal and state support and focusing preservation efforts in the most critical areas.

- 63% of respondents strongly agree/agree that agricultural conservation easements are an important farmland preservation tool.
- 98 respondents are interested in learning more about the PDR program.
- 24% of respondents are considering permanently preserving their farmland so that it remains agricultural.

● Coordinate an improved growth strategy using planning and zoning.

This may include an ag mapping initiative, piloting a transfer of development rights program, and increasing engagement with local units.

- 88% of respondents strongly agree/agree that this is an important farmland preservation method.
- Of the respondents who felt farmland loss is now or could be a problem, 97% indicated that it could be due to urban/suburban sprawl.

● Increase the effectiveness of succession planning efforts.

This may include piloting an incentivized program for succession planning and mobilizing beginning farmer resources.

- 78% of respondents strongly agree/agree that this is an important farmland preservation method.
- 78% of respondents are age 55 and older.
- 76% of respondents are not first generation farmers.
- 75% of respondents are planning to pass their farmland to heirs.

● Actively address barriers to the economic viability of farming.

This may include addressing taxation issues, adopting agricultural technologies, and enhancing income diversification opportunities.

- 88% of respondents strongly agree/agree that this is an important farmland preservation method.
- 67% of respondents receive income from farming, however 46% of these respondents require additional sources of off-farm income.

Next Step: Develop a **Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Implementation Plan** that defines the actions and tasks necessary to preserve farmland and farming through the methods identified as most important to Ottawa County landowners.



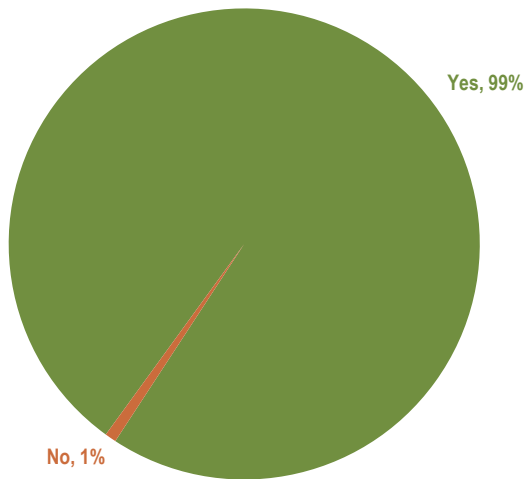
Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Introduction

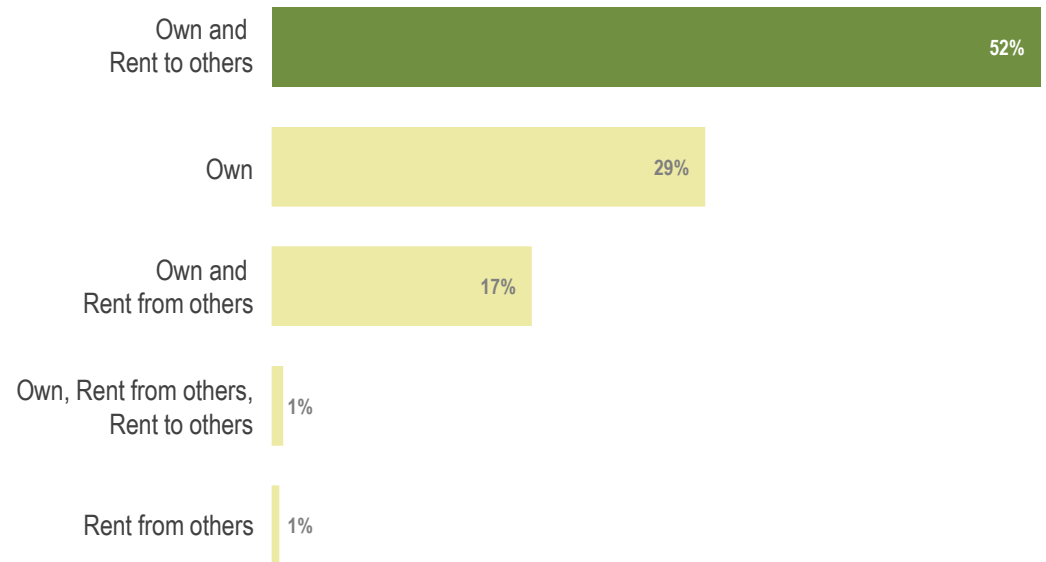
Response rate

In January 2019, the Ottawa County Planning and Performance Improvement Department (PPID) mailed a survey seeking input on the topic of farmland preservation. The survey was mailed to 1,636 property owners in Ottawa County who own 5 or more acres of land that is classified as agricultural for tax purposes. As of March 1, 2019, 408 completed surveys were returned to the PPID. This is a 25% response rate.

Do you own and/or rent farmland in Ottawa County?*



Of those who own and/or rent farmland in Ottawa County,** 52% own and rent farmland to others.



* 384 respondents answered this question

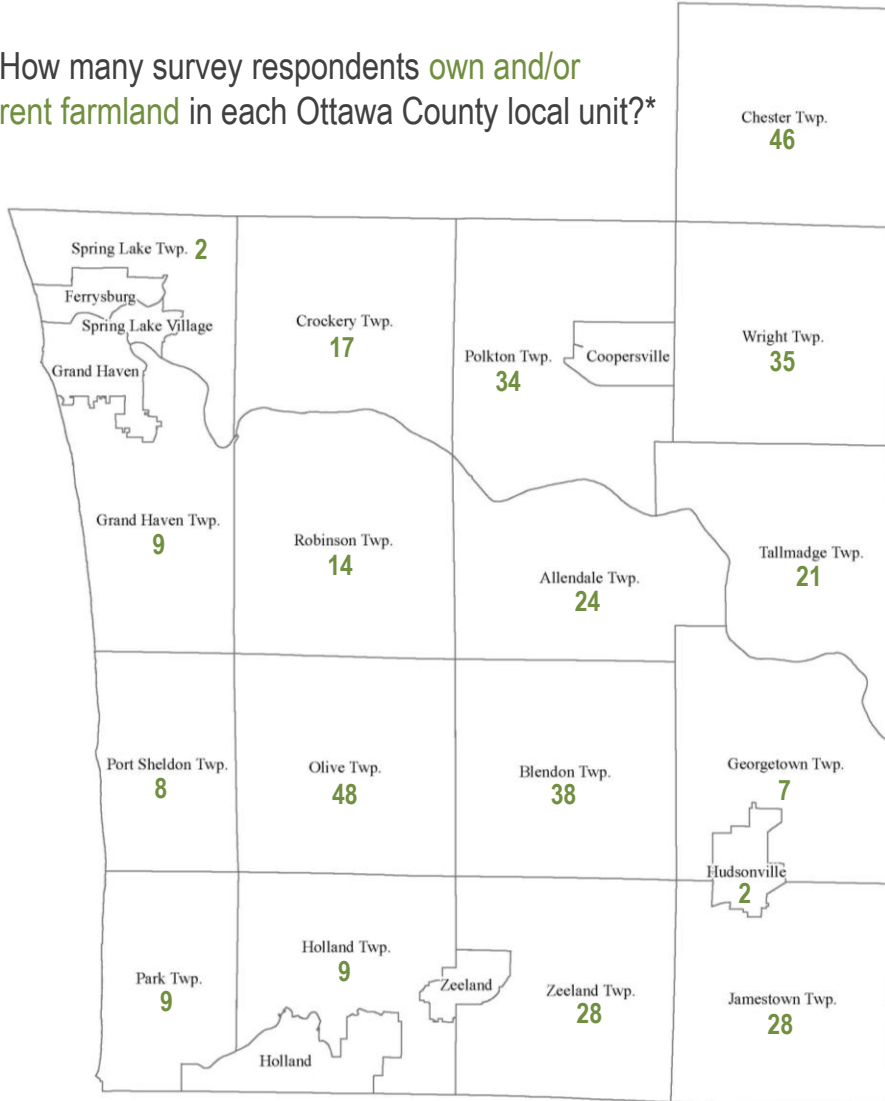
** Based on 381 respondents who own and/or rent farmland in Ottawa County



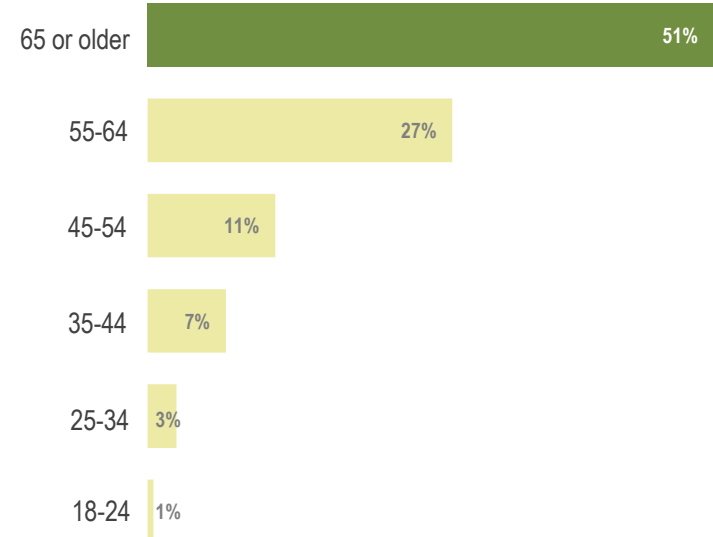
Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Demographics

How many survey respondents own and/or rent farmland in each Ottawa County local unit?*



What is your age category? **



* 379 respondents answered this question

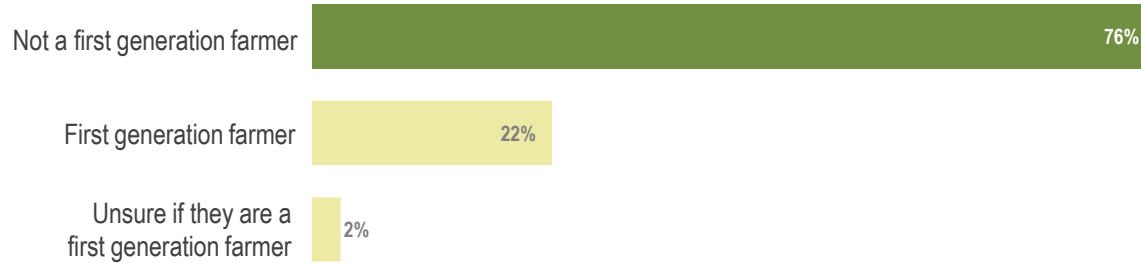
** 383 respondents answered this question



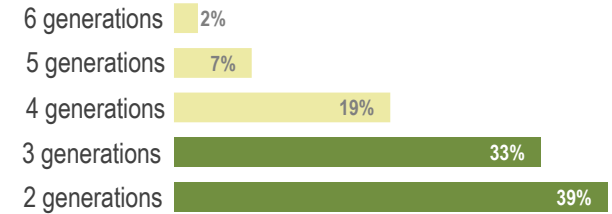
Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Demographics

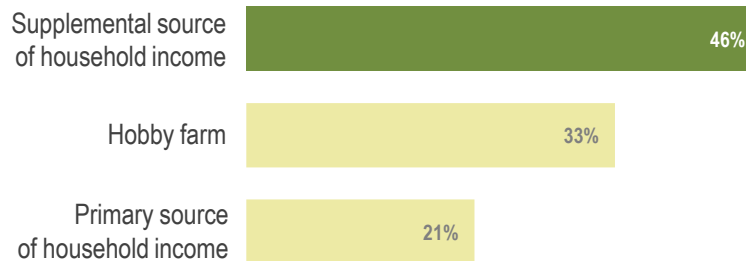
Are you a first generation farmer?*



The majority indicate 2 or 3 generations of their family have farmed/owned their land.**



How would you characterize your farm income?***



* 389 respondents answered this question

** 189 respondents answered this question

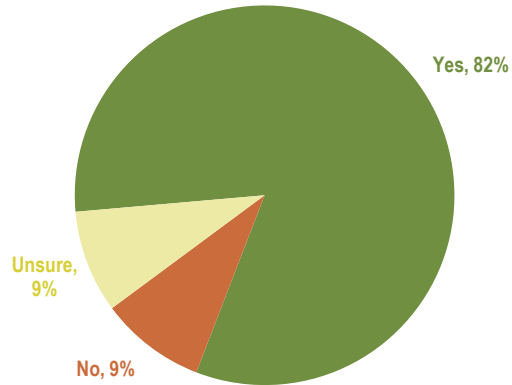
***380 respondents answered this question



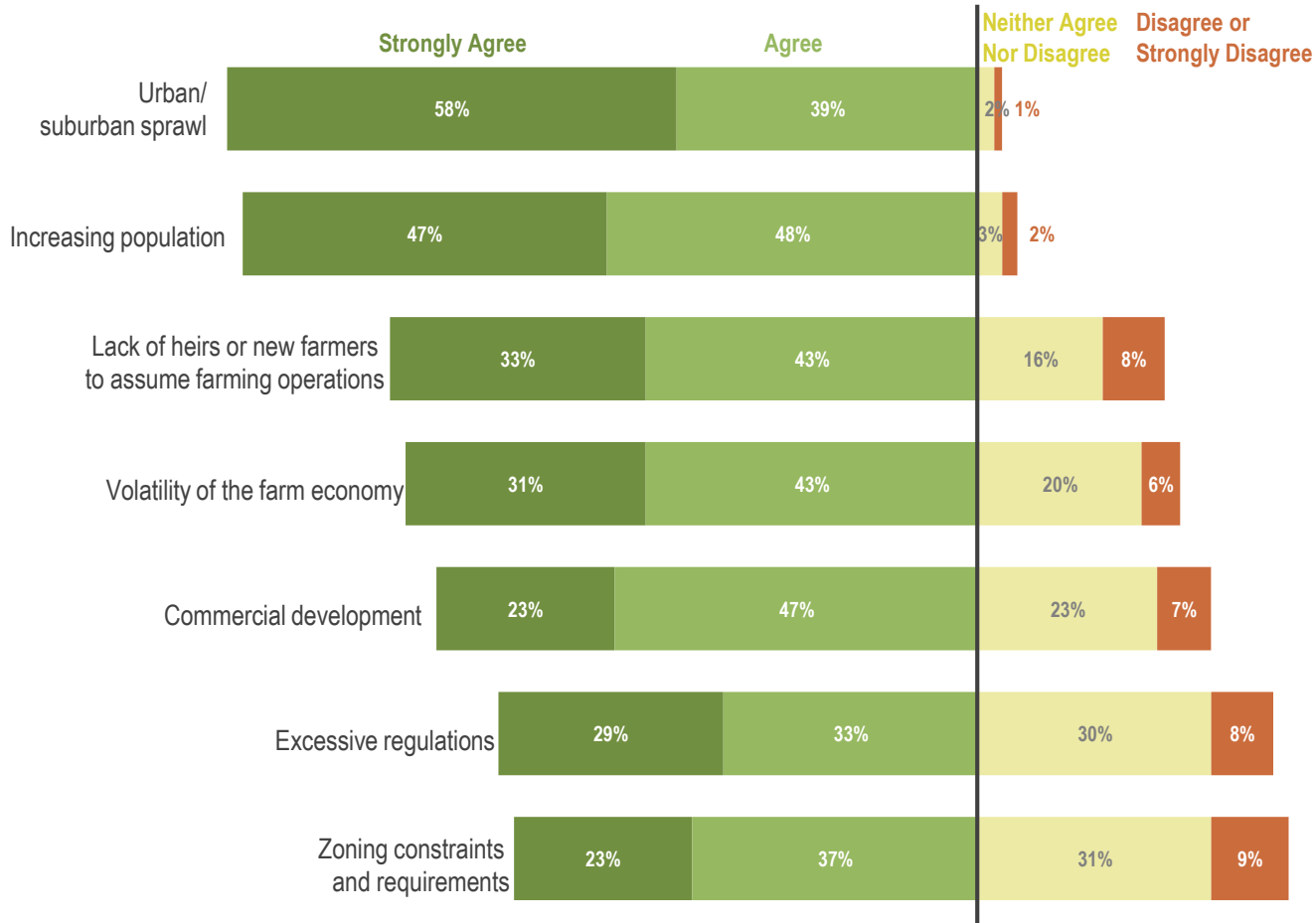
Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Farmland Loss in Ottawa County

Do you think farmland loss is or could be a problem in Ottawa County?*



Of those who said farmland loss is or could be a problem in Ottawa County,** they indicated it could be due to...



* 400 respondents answered this question

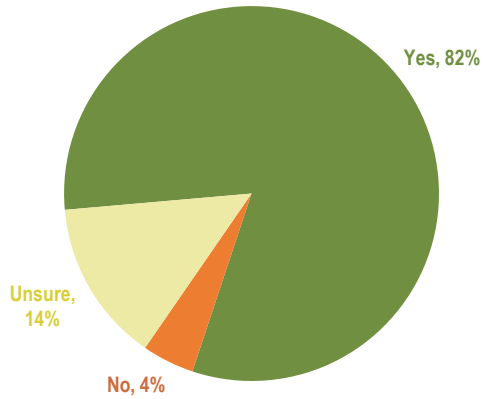
** Between 321 and 325 respondents answered each of these questions



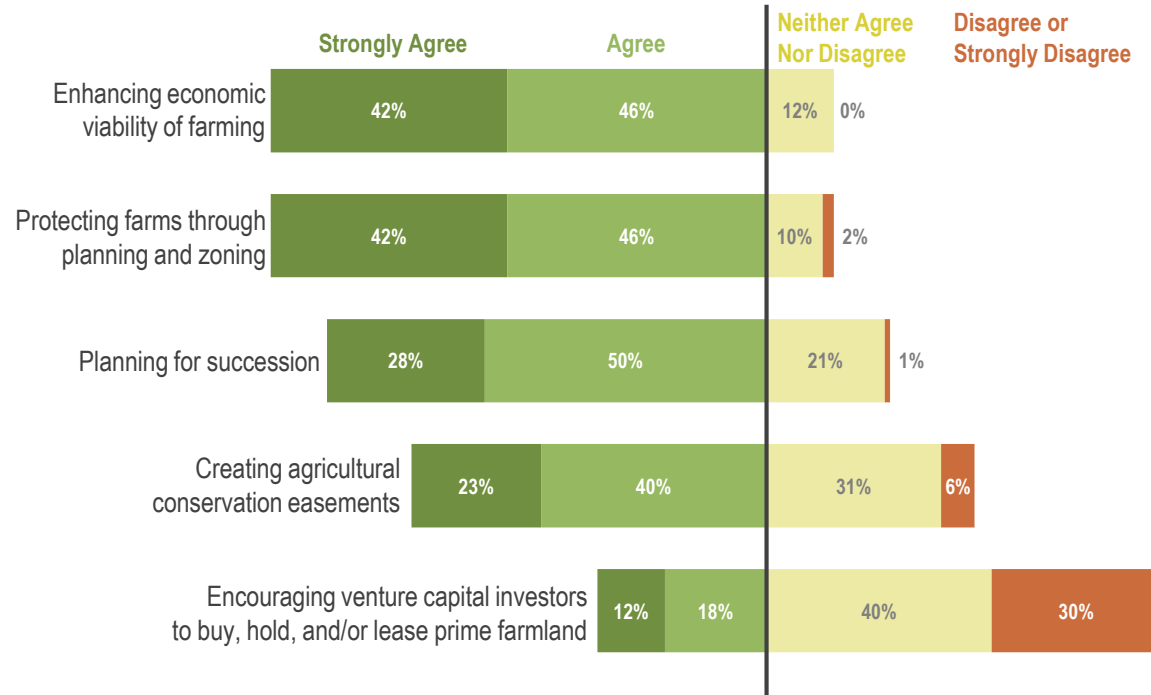
Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Farmland Preservation in Ottawa County

Do you think it is important to preserve farmland in Ottawa County?*



Of those who said it is important to preserve farmland in Ottawa County,** they feel it is important to do so by...



* 400 respondents answered this question

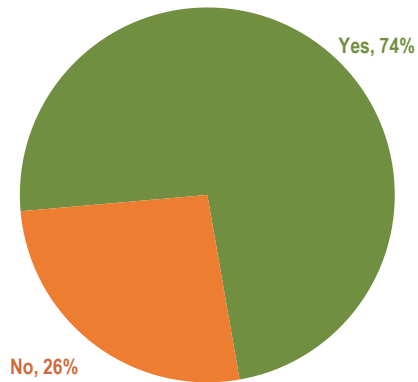
** Between 313 and 322 respondents answered each of these questions



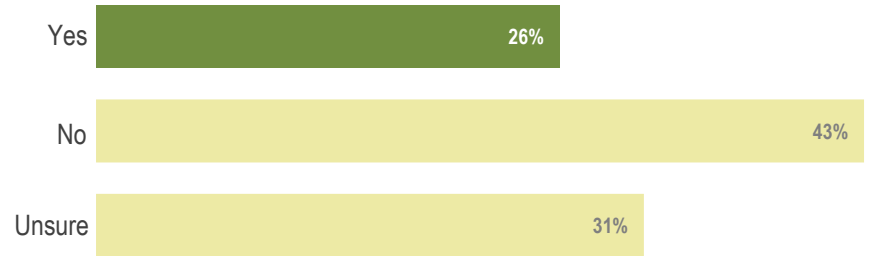
Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Ottawa County's Farmland Preservation Program

Prior to taking this survey, were you aware that Ottawa County has a Farmland Preservation Program?*



Would you like to learn more about the Ottawa County Farmland Preservation Program?***



* 402 respondents answered this question

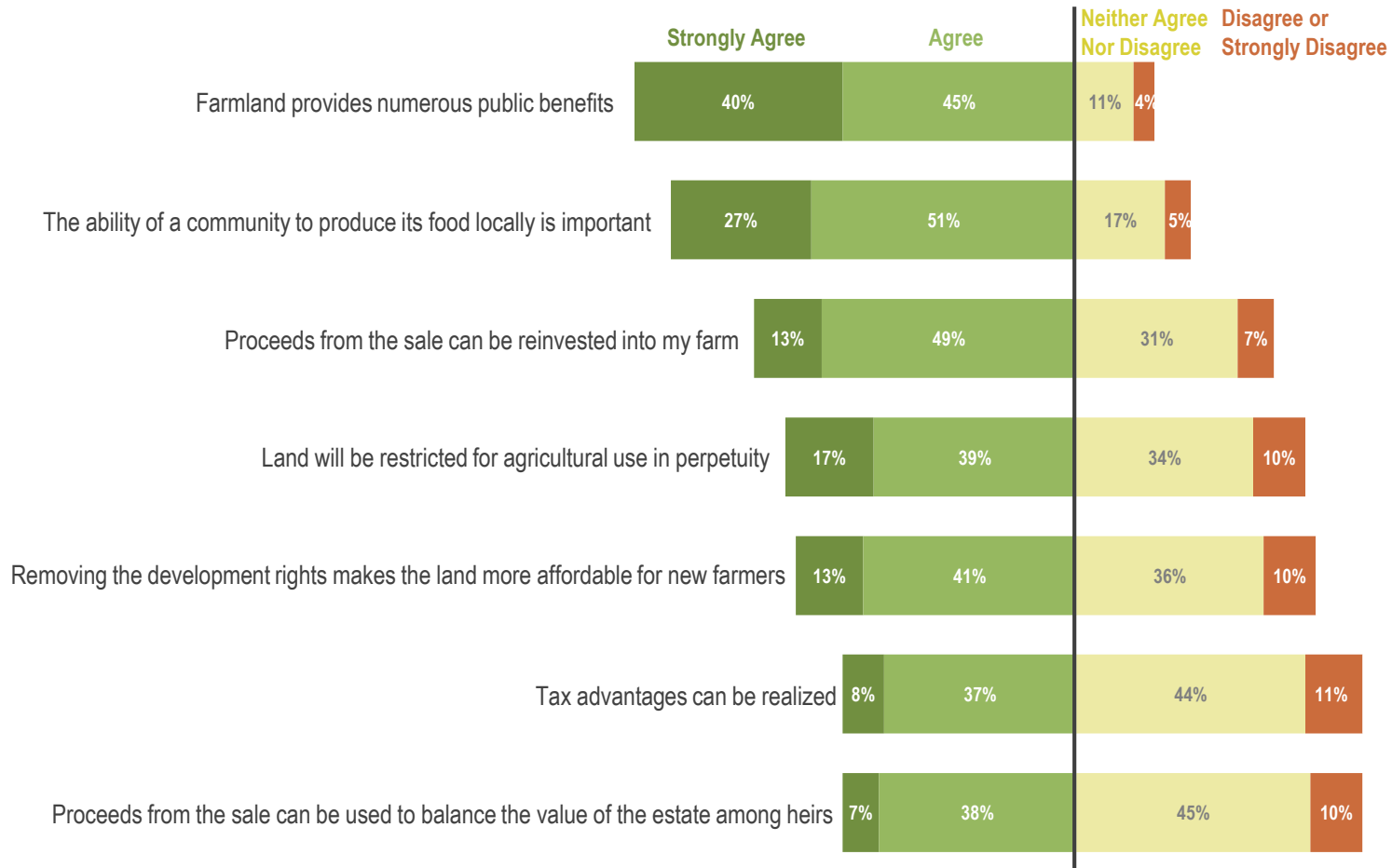
** 380 respondents answered this question



Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Ottawa County's Farmland Preservation Program

Participating in the Ottawa County Farmland Preservation Program* could be valuable because...



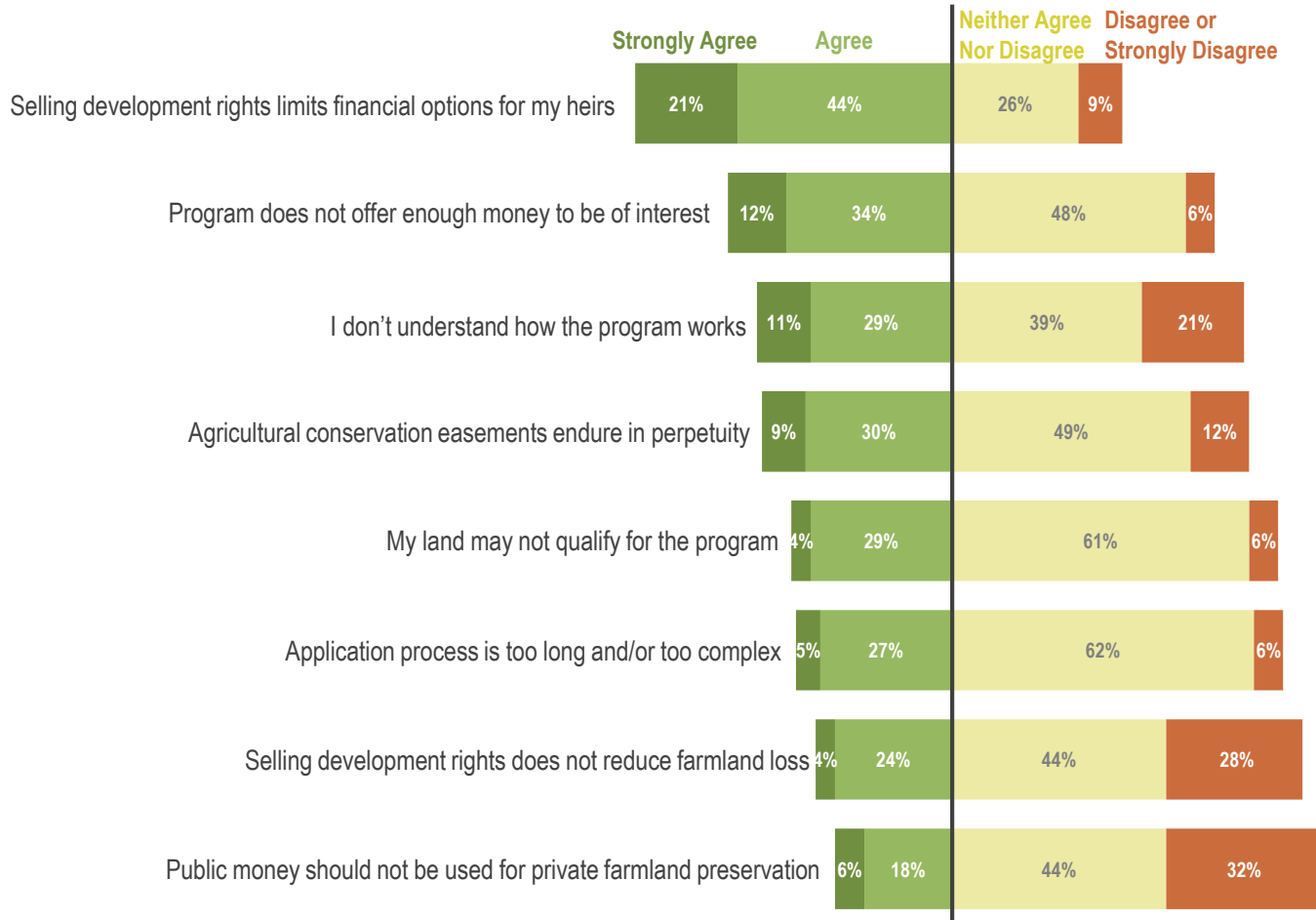
* Between 383 and 388 respondents answered each of these questions



Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Ottawa County's Farmland Preservation Program

I would not participate in the Ottawa County Farmland Preservation Program* because...



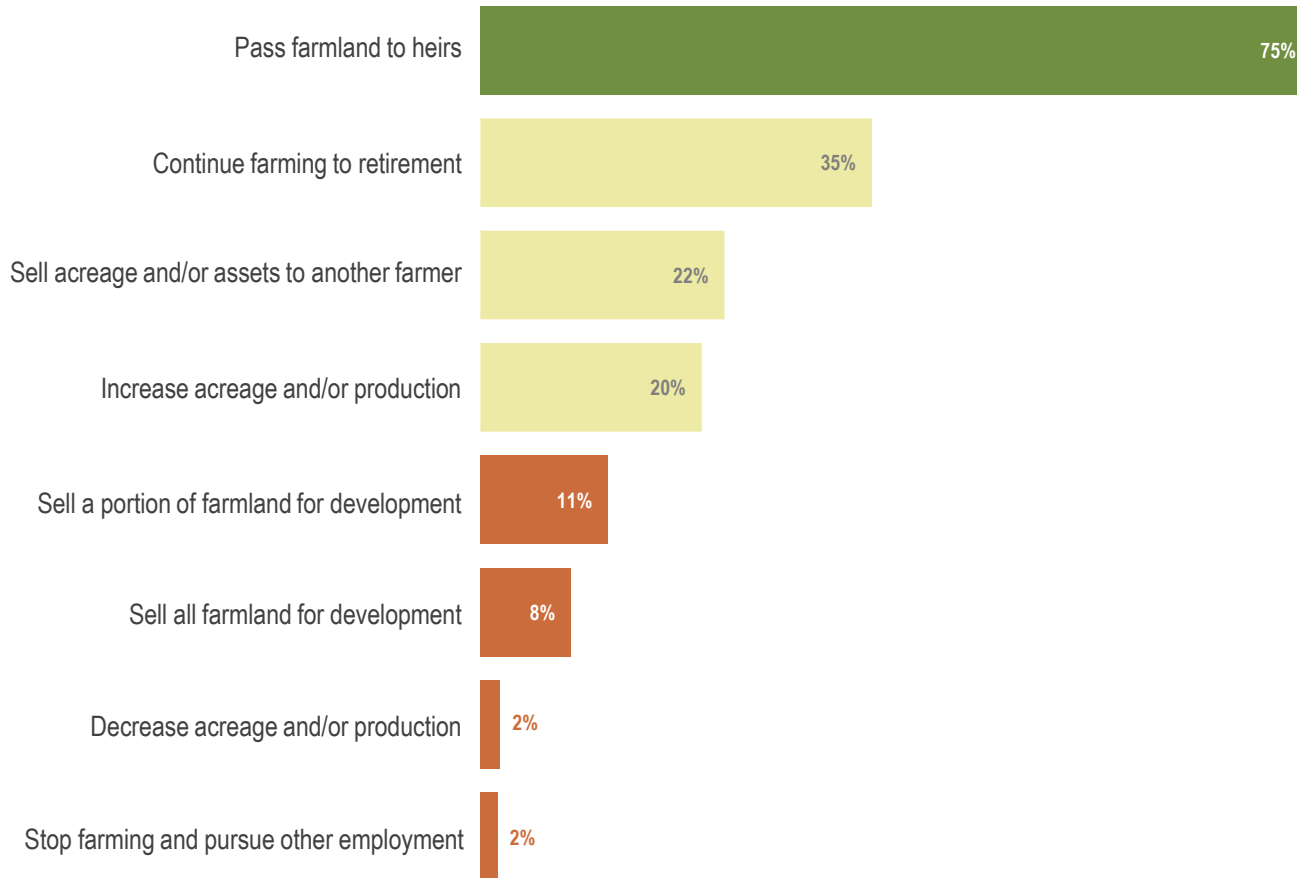
* Between 358 and 373 respondents answered each of these questions



Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Plans for the Future

As property owners* plan for the future, 75% are considering passing their farmland to heirs.



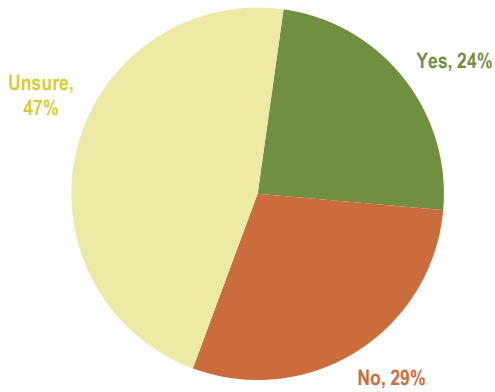
* 392 respondents answered this question. Respondents were able to select multiple answers for this question



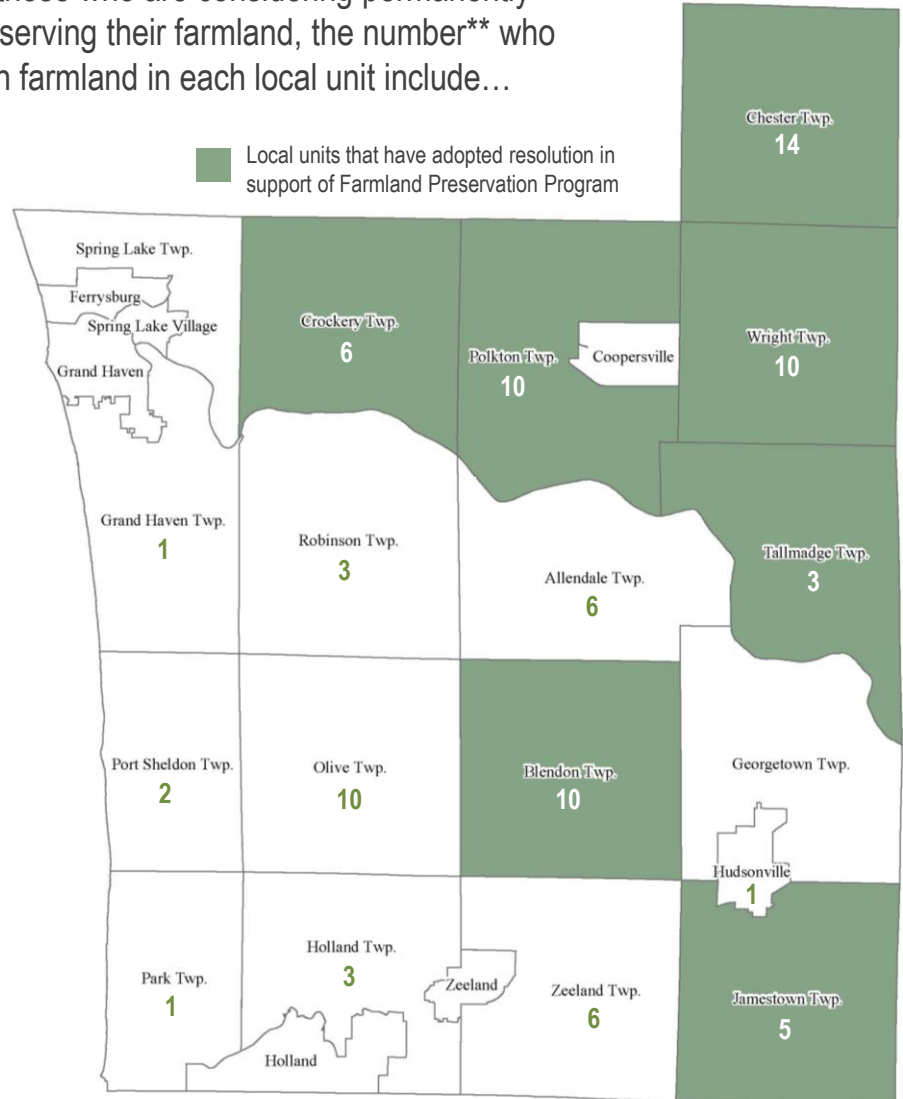
Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Permanent Preservation of Farmland

Are you considering permanently preserving your farmland so that it remains agricultural?*



Of those who are considering permanently preserving their farmland, the number** who own farmland in each local unit include...



* 393 respondents answered this question

** 91 respondents answered this question

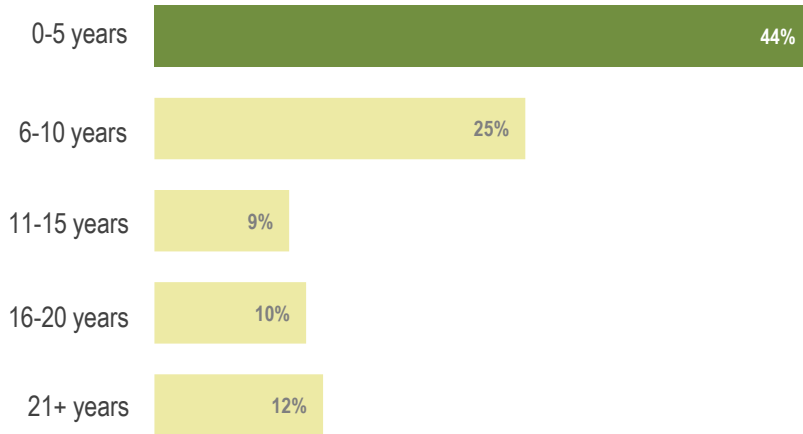


Farmland Preservation Survey Results

Permanent Preservation of Farmland

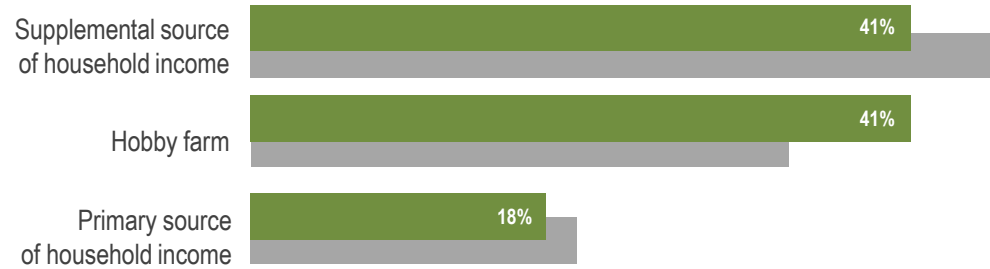
Of those who are considering permanently preserving their farmland...

They'd* like to preserve it in...

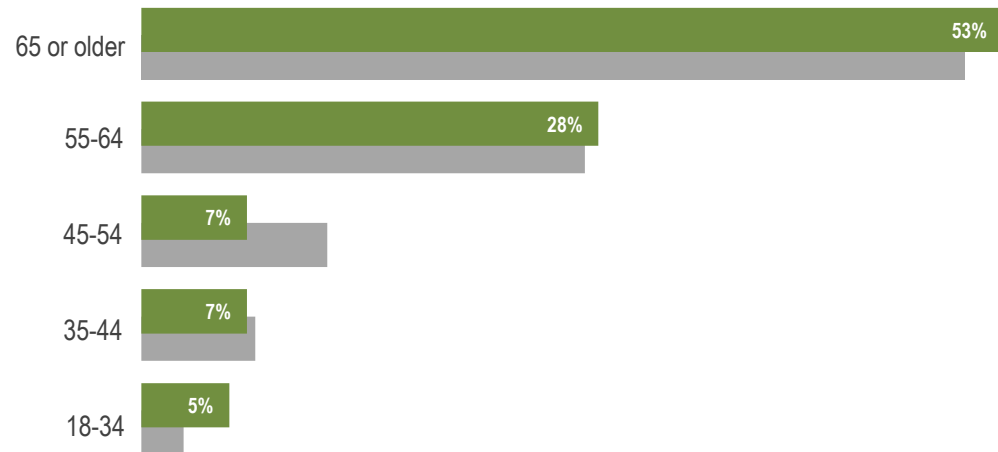


100% are second generation+ farmers**

They*** would characterize their farm income as... compared to all survey respondents



Their*** age category is... compared to all survey respondents



* 88 respondents answered this question

** 75 respondents answered this question

*** Between 92 and 93 respondents answered these questions