



Who supports Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in California?

Comparisons of current and former CSA members

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Outline

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- Analysis
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 - Current members
 - 1) information sources influencing decision to join, 2) impacts of membership, & 3) willingness to pay more
- Conclusion

Background

- Almost all studies of CSAs involve case study (intensive) methods, which are suited for understanding the causal mechanisms behind social and socio-ecological configurations
 - Very few studies examine CSAs using extensive methods, which allow for generalizability about populations
- Studies of CSA membership typically only gather data on current members, not former members
- Our study sought to fill these gaps by focusing on California

Research questions

- Who are current and former CSA members and/or member households in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, education, income, and age?
- Why did current and former CSA members join a CSA? How satisfied are/were they with various attributes of their CSA? What conditions interfere with CSA participation?
- Are current CSA members willing to pay more for their share, especially when considering fair farmer salaries?

Methods

- We asked all CSAs in California to share links to our survey of current CSA members and former CSA members
 - for the current member survey:
 - $n = 1,149$ for individual responses, from 41 different CSAs (out of 249); of these 41 farms, 11 have fairly representative samples (between 20% and 76%, average 31%)
 - for the former member survey:
 - $n = 409$ for individual responses, from 27 different CSAs (out of 249)
- To our knowledge these are the largest current and former CSA member surveys yet done, and the data is roughly representative of CSA membership statewide (but we are unable to determine the member population overall)

Background of current and former CSA members

- We asked members a wide array questions regarding:
 - demographics
 - their use of food support (from government programs to emergency food sources)
 - enjoyment of food-related activities

Current & former CSA members: demographics

- Gender
- Race and ethnicity
- Education
- Income
- Age

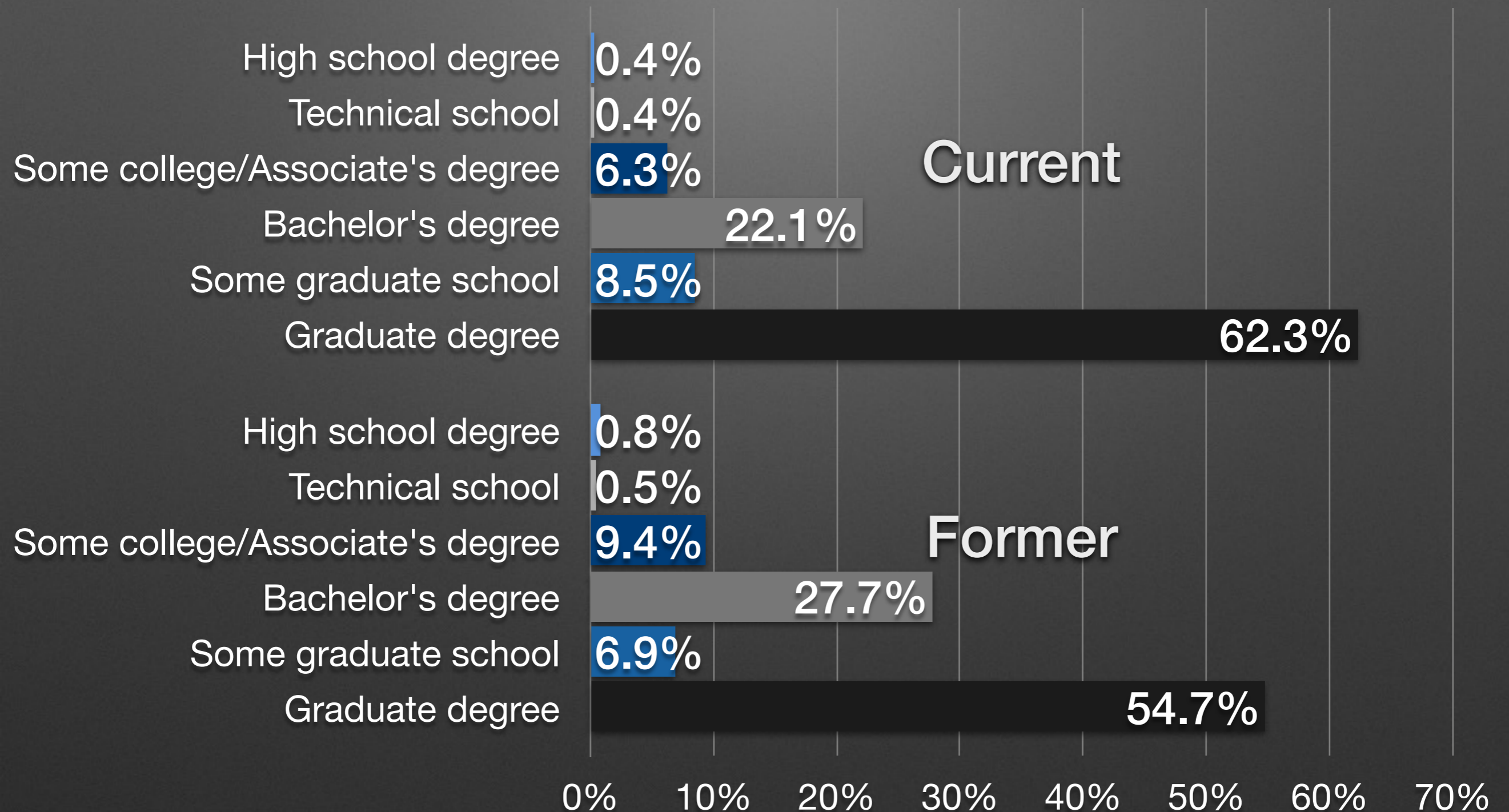
Gender of respondent

	Current %	Former %
female	83.6%	86.1%
male	15.6%	13.9%
couple	0.2%	—
genderqueer	0.1%	—
butch on F-T-M continuum	0.1%	—

Race and ethnicity of respondent

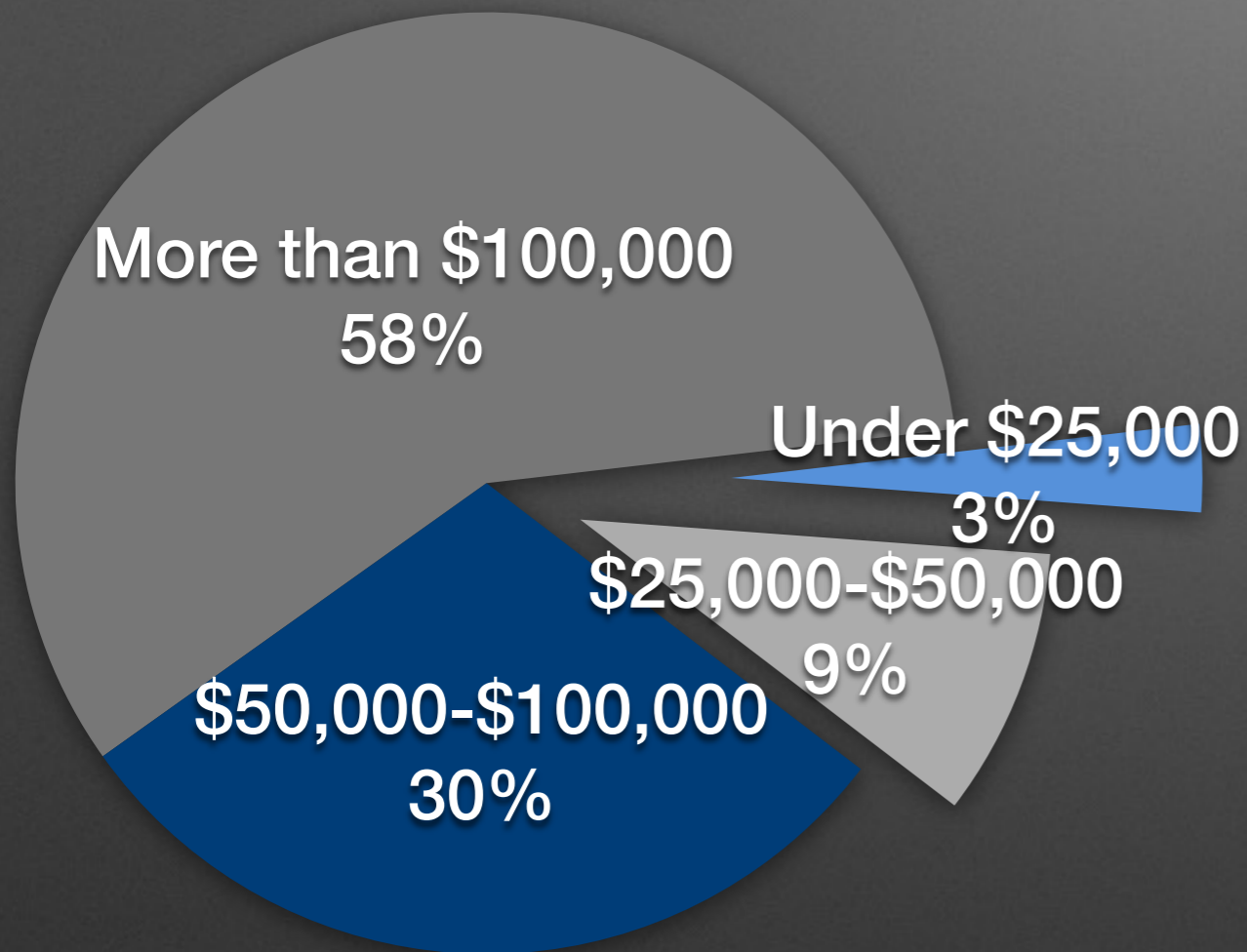
	Current %	Former %
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	83.0%	76.9%
Hispanic or Latino	5.3%	6.1%
Black or African American alone	1.4%	1.4%
Asian alone	7.6%	10.8%
More than one race indicated	6.4%	6.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.1%	0.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.2%	0.3%

Education (household member with the most formal education)

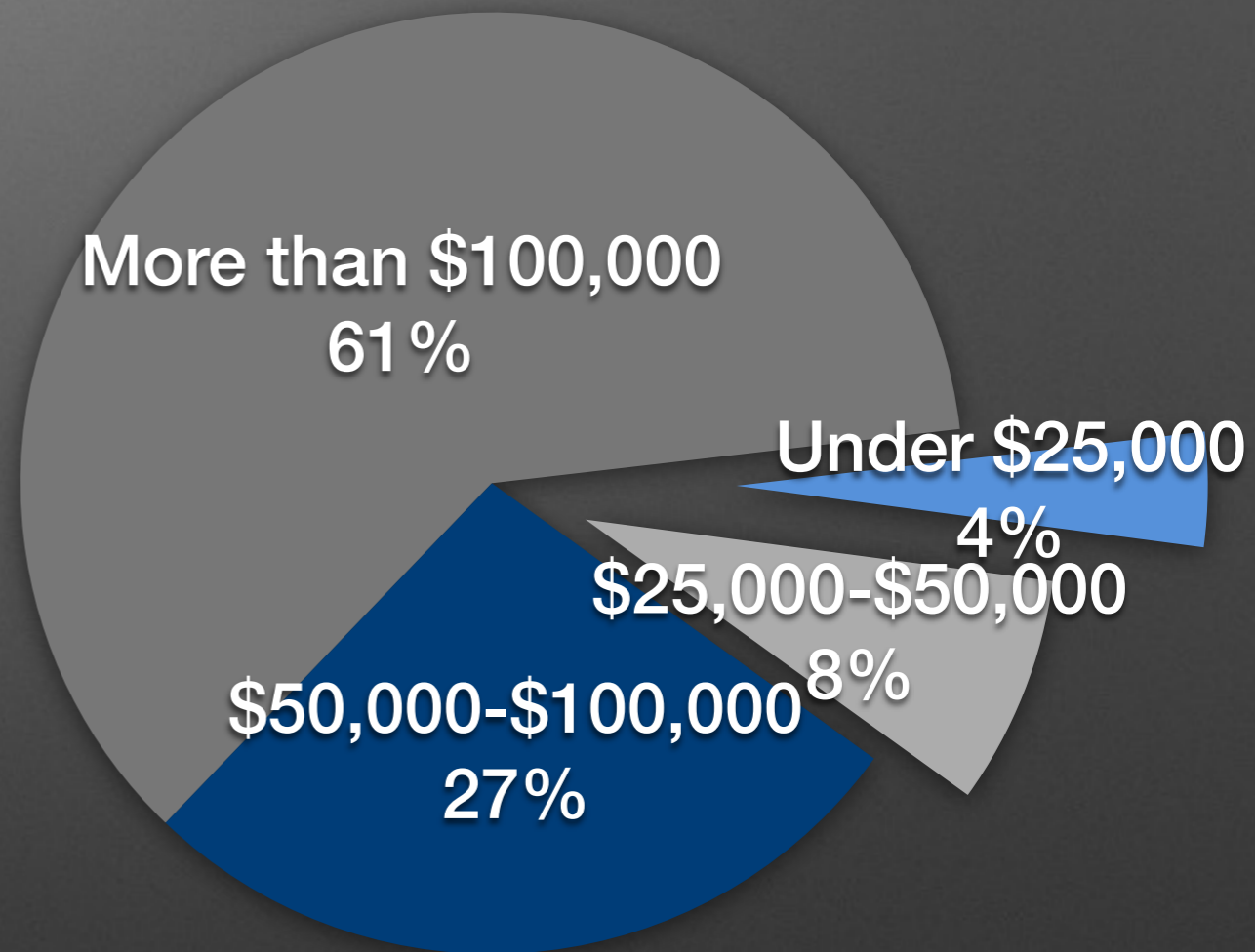


Household gross income

Current



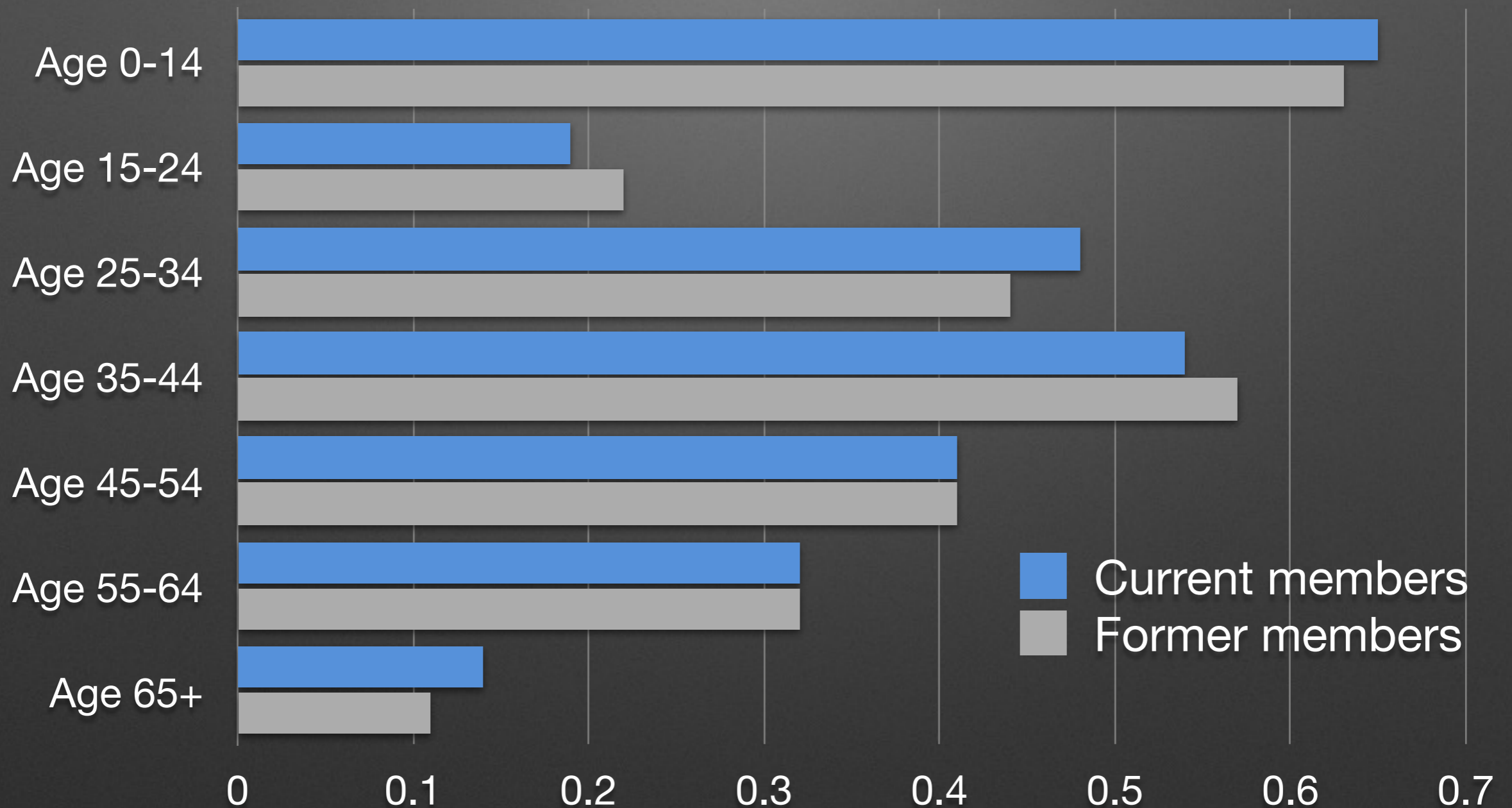
Former



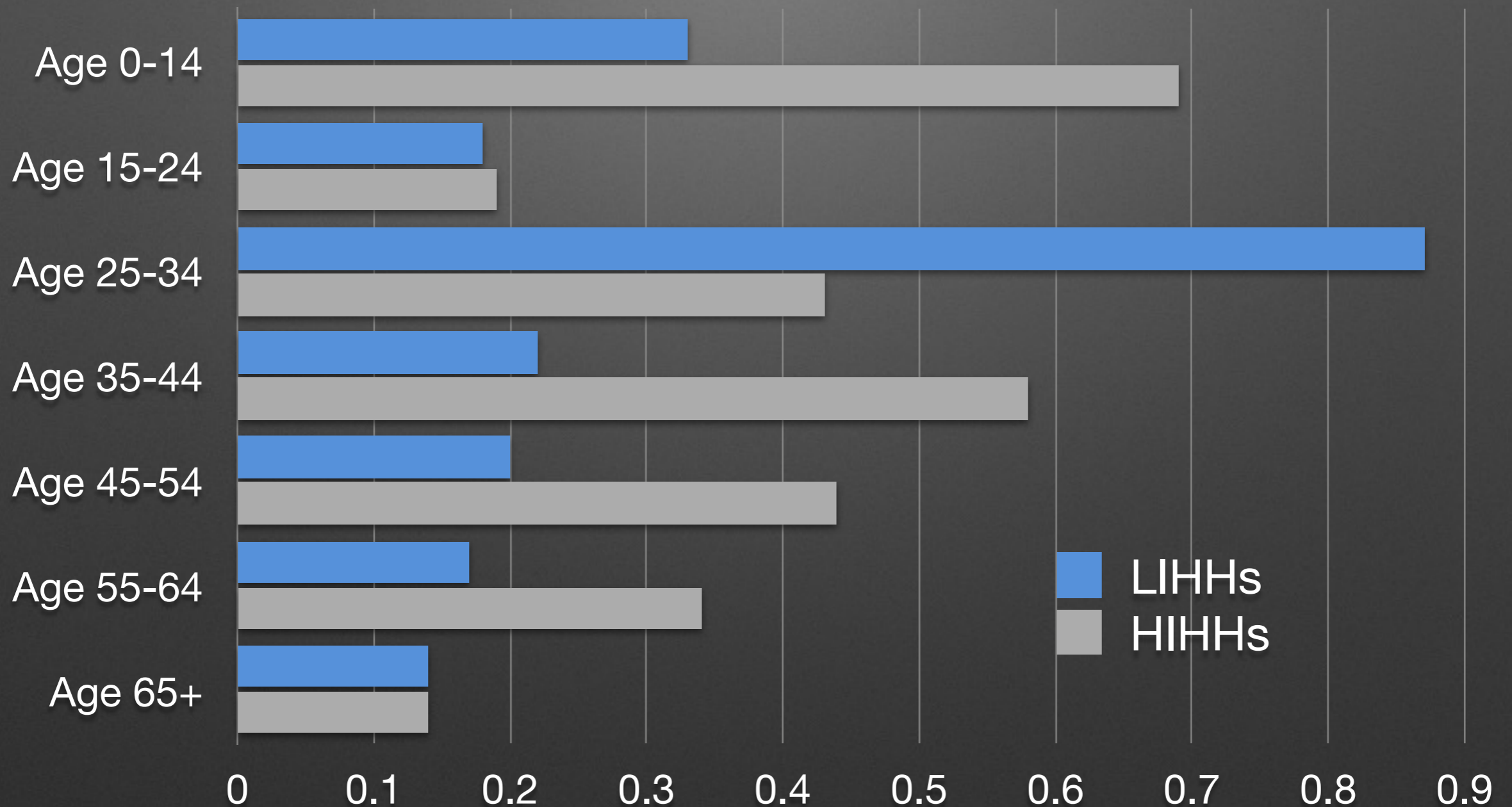
Household Size & Age

- HH size
 - Current: mean = 2.7, median = 2, min = 1, max = 16
 - Former: mean = 2.7, median = 2, min = 1, max = 7
- HH average age
 - Current: mean = 37.5, median 31.5; Former: mean = 37.7, median 34
 - Former: mean = 37.7, median 34

Average number of household members of various ages



Average number of household members of various ages, by income



Comparative snapshot

	US Pop.	CA Pop.	CA Current CSA Member	CA Former CSA Member
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	62.6%	39%	83.0%	76.9%
Hispanic or Latino	17.1%	38.4%	5.3%	6.1%
Black or African American alone	13.2%	6.6%	1.4%	1.4%
Asian alone	5.3%	14.1%	7.6%	10.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.2%	1.7%	0.1%	0.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
Female persons	50.8%	50.3%	83.6%^	86.1%^
Persons 65 years and over	14.1%	12.5%	5.1%	4.2%
Persons per household	2.63	2.94	2.73	2.70
High school graduate or higher	86.0%	81.2%	100%^	100%^
Bachelor's degree or higher	28.8%	30.7%	92.9%^	89.1%^
Median household income	\$53,046	\$61,094	\$125,000*	\$125,000*
Persons in poverty	14.5%	16.8%	3%**	1.6%**

US & CA data from US Census Bureau, July 2013 estimates

Current & former CSA members: food relationships

- Household use of food support
- Enjoyment of food activities

Household use of food support

	Current		Former	
	Mean	St Dev	Mean	St Dev
Any use of below food support sources	2.2%	0.15	2.8%	0.16
CalFresh (a.k.a. food stamps, SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)	0.9%	0.09	1%	0.1
reduced cost or free school meals	0.9%	0.09	1.3%	0.11
produce prescription from a doctor or nurse	0.8%	0.09	1%	0.1
WIC - Women, Infants and Children	0.4%	0.07	0.5%	0.07
food bank or food pantry	0.3%	0.05	0.5%	0.07
soup kitchen or similar meal program	0.2%	0.04	0	0
other free or reduced cost food from organizations or government	0.1%	0.03	0.3%	0.05
Farmers Market Nutrition Program	0.1%	0.03	0.3%	0.05

Enjoyment of food activities

	Current			Former		
	Mean	St Dev	Median	Mean	St Dev	Median
cooking and food preparation	4.6	0.6	5	4.4	0.8	5
learning about cooking, food preparation, and/or preserving	4.5	0.7	5	4.3	0.8	4
gardening	4.1	0.9	4	3.9	1.1	4
preserving food	3.8	0.8	4	3.5	0.9	4
shopping for food	3.7	0.9	4	3.4	1.1	4
fishing, hunting, and/or foraging	3.4	1.1	3	2.7	1.3	3

Level: 5=greatly enjoy, 4=enjoy, 3=neutral, 2=dislike, 1=greatly dislike

Background comparisons

- Current members are more likely to be white (alone, non-Latino) than former members, and less likely to be Asian than former members
- Current members are more likely to have graduate degrees
- Former members have slightly higher incomes on average
- Household age compositions are the same

Comparison of CSA membership experiences

- We asked current and former members questions about:
 - reasons for joining
 - how important various CSA attributes are to them, and how satisfied they are with them
 - conditions they face that interfere with CSA participation

Reasons for joining

	Current			Former		
	Mean	St Dev	Median	Mean	St Dev	Median
to obtain high quality, fresh food	8.3	2.3	9	8.3	2.3	9
to support alternative/organic agriculture	6.8	2.5	7	6.3	2.7	7
to improve my health or my family's health	6.4	2.6	7	6.6	2.6	7
for environmental benefits (e.g. reduce food miles)	6.2	2.4	6	6.0	2.7	6
to support local farmers' livelihoods	5.9	2.5	6	5.6	2.8	6
to obtain safe food	5.3	2.6	5	5.4	2.9	6
for convenience	4.5	3.0	4	5	3.2	5
to be part of a community or build community	4.2	2.5	4	4.2	2.8	4
to improve farmworkers' working conditions	4.2	2.2	4	3.9	2.3	4
to save money on food	2.9	2.5	2	2.7	2.5	2

Forced ranking, 10 is top, 1 is bottom

Current members: importance of & satisfaction with CSA attributes

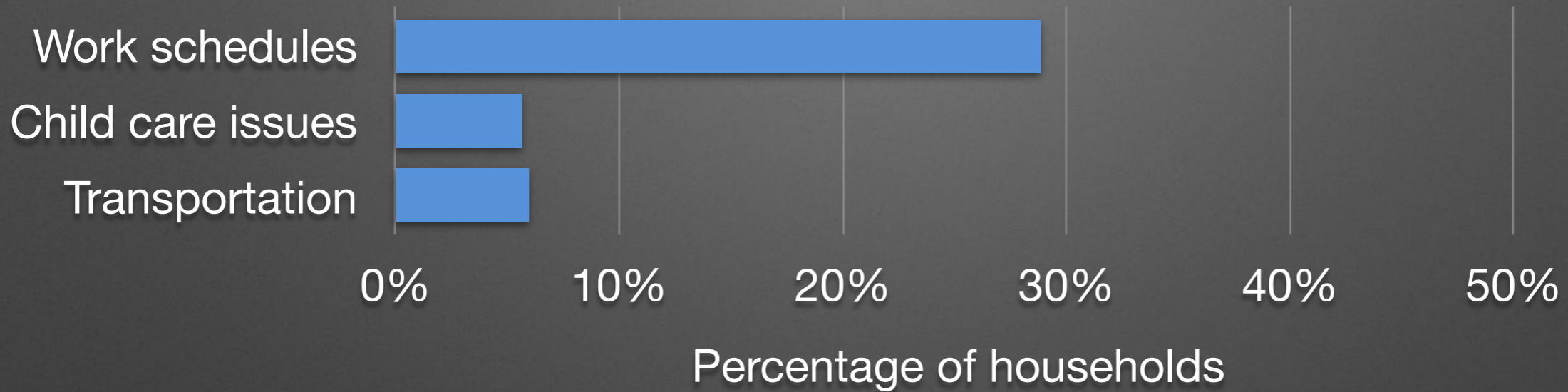
	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap (Sat-Imp)
high quality produce	4.9	4.8	-0.2
the farm's agricultural practices (e.g., organic)	4.6	4.7	0.1
appropriate quantity of food in the share	4.4	4.6	0.2
convenient pickup/delivery location	4.3	4.6	0.3
health, dietary, &/or lifestyle impacts from membership	4.0	4.6	0.6
appropriate diversity of products in the share	4.3	4.3	0.0
affordability	3.9	4.2	0.3
short transportation distances for produce	3.8	4.4	0.6
ease of communication with CSA staff/farmer	3.6	4.4	0.9
ability to choose share items/content	2.7	3.7	1.0
knowing my farmer personally	2.6	3.9	1.2
sense of community in the CSA (incl. member events)	2.6	3.8	1.3
newsletter	2.6	4.1	1.6

Former members: importance of & satisfaction with CSA attributes

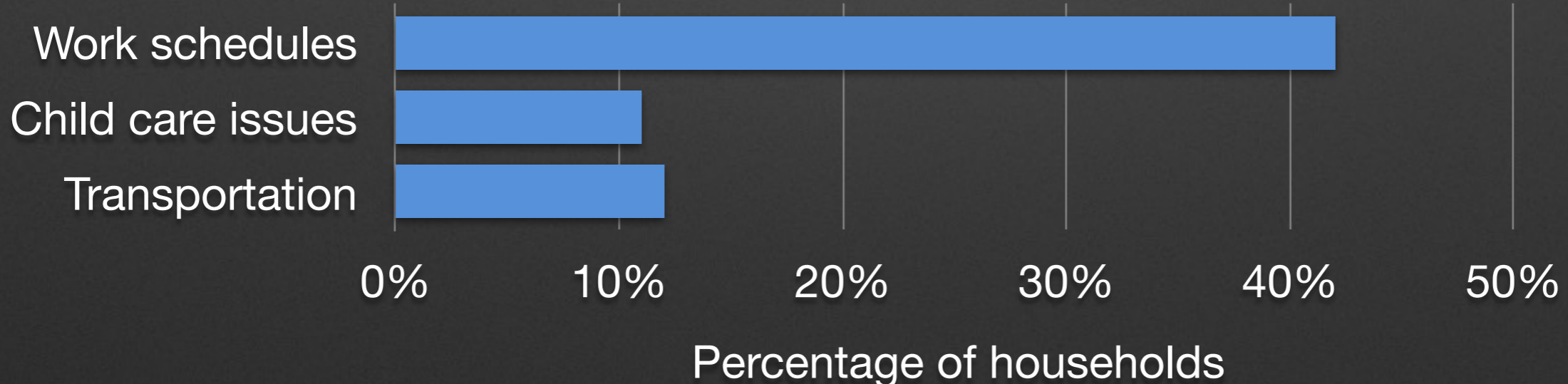
	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap (Sat-Imp)
high quality produce	4.9	4.3	-0.6
the farm's agricultural practices (e.g., organic)	4.3	4.3	-0.1
appropriate quantity of food in the share	4.5	3.8	-0.7
convenient pickup/delivery location	4.3	3.9	-0.4
health, dietary, &/or lifestyle impacts from membership	3.8	4.2	0.4
appropriate diversity of products in the share	4.3	3.4	-0.9
affordability	4.0	3.5	-0.5
short transportation distances for produce	3.6	4.1	0.5
ease of communication with CSA staff/farmer	3.2	3.9	0.6
ability to choose share items/content	3.6	3.0	-0.5
knowing my farmer personally	2.3	3.4	1.1
sense of community in the CSA (incl. member events)	2.2	3.4	1.2
newsletter	2.3	3.6	1.4

Conditions interfering with CSA membership

Current



Former



Comparing members' experiences

- Current members rate supporting alternative/organic agriculture very highly, while former members rate improving health more highly
- Current members have only minor gaps between importance and satisfaction, while former members have more gaps that are wider, especially around diversity of product, product quantity, product quality, ability to choose share content, and affordability
- Former members experience much more interference to CSA participation from work, child care, and transportation

Former members

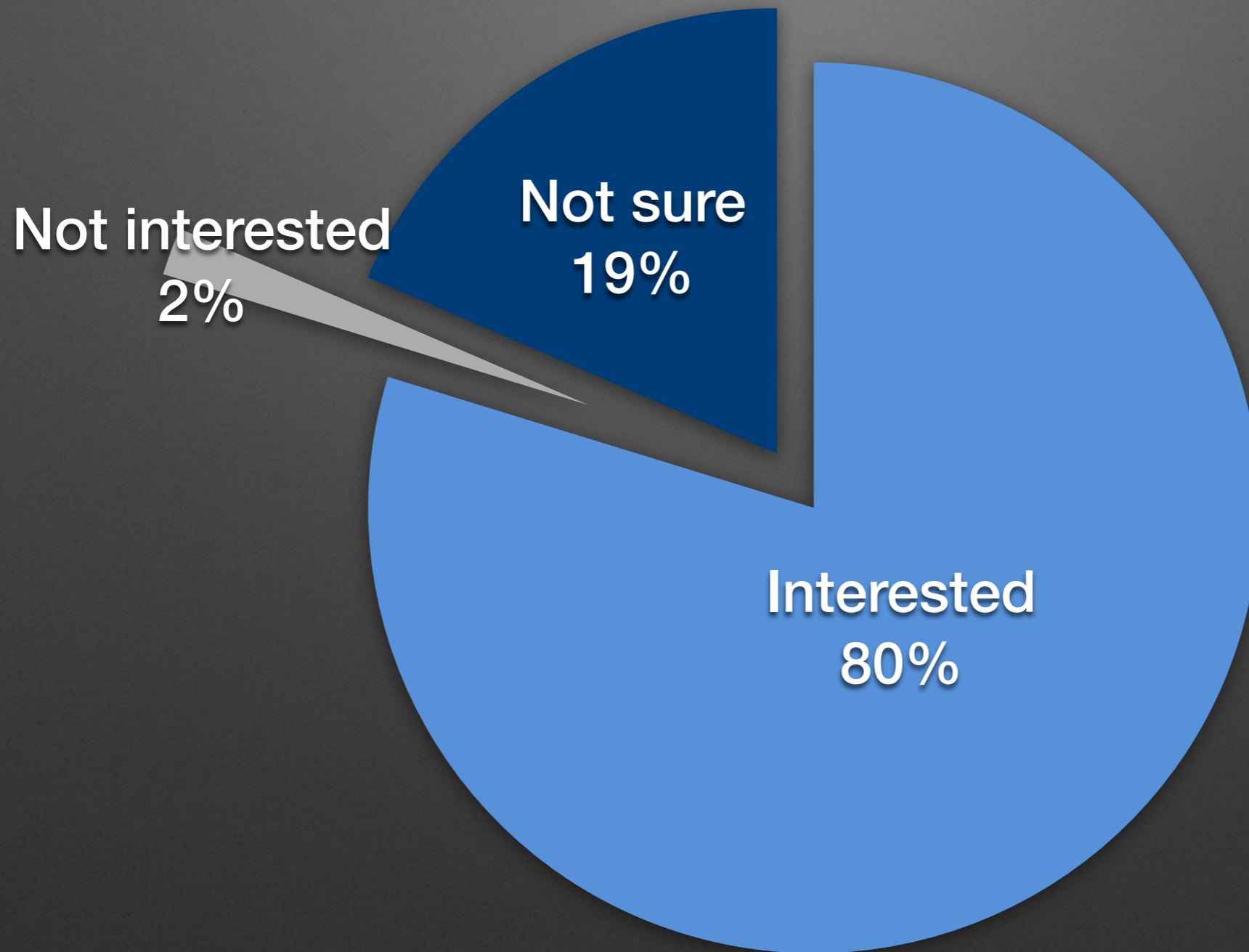
- We asked former CSA members about:
 - their reasons for discontinuing
 - their interest in joining another CSA

Reasons for discontinuing

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Mean	St Dev	Median
The product mix did not meet my needs	47%	18%	35%	2.9	1.2	3
Lack of choice about products included	41%	18%	41%	3.0	1.3	3
Too little diversity in products in the share	33%	23%	44%	3.2	1.2	3
Lack of choice about quantity and/or frequency	23%	19%	58%	3.4	1.2	4
Lack of time for cooking or processing the food	27%	17%	56%	3.5	1.2	4
Price per box is too high	21%	25%	54%	3.5	1.1	4
Too low of a value	19%	26%	56%	3.5	1.1	4
Inconvenient to pick up or receive the share	25%	12%	63%	3.6	1.3	4
Too much food in the share	19%	16%	65%	3.6	1.1	4
Lack of knowledge for food preparation	17%	14%	69%	3.8	1.1	4
Too little food in the share	11%	18%	71%	3.9	1.0	4
Payment period is too long	3%	21%	77%	4.0	0.8	4

Range: 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree

Interest in joining a CSA again



Current members

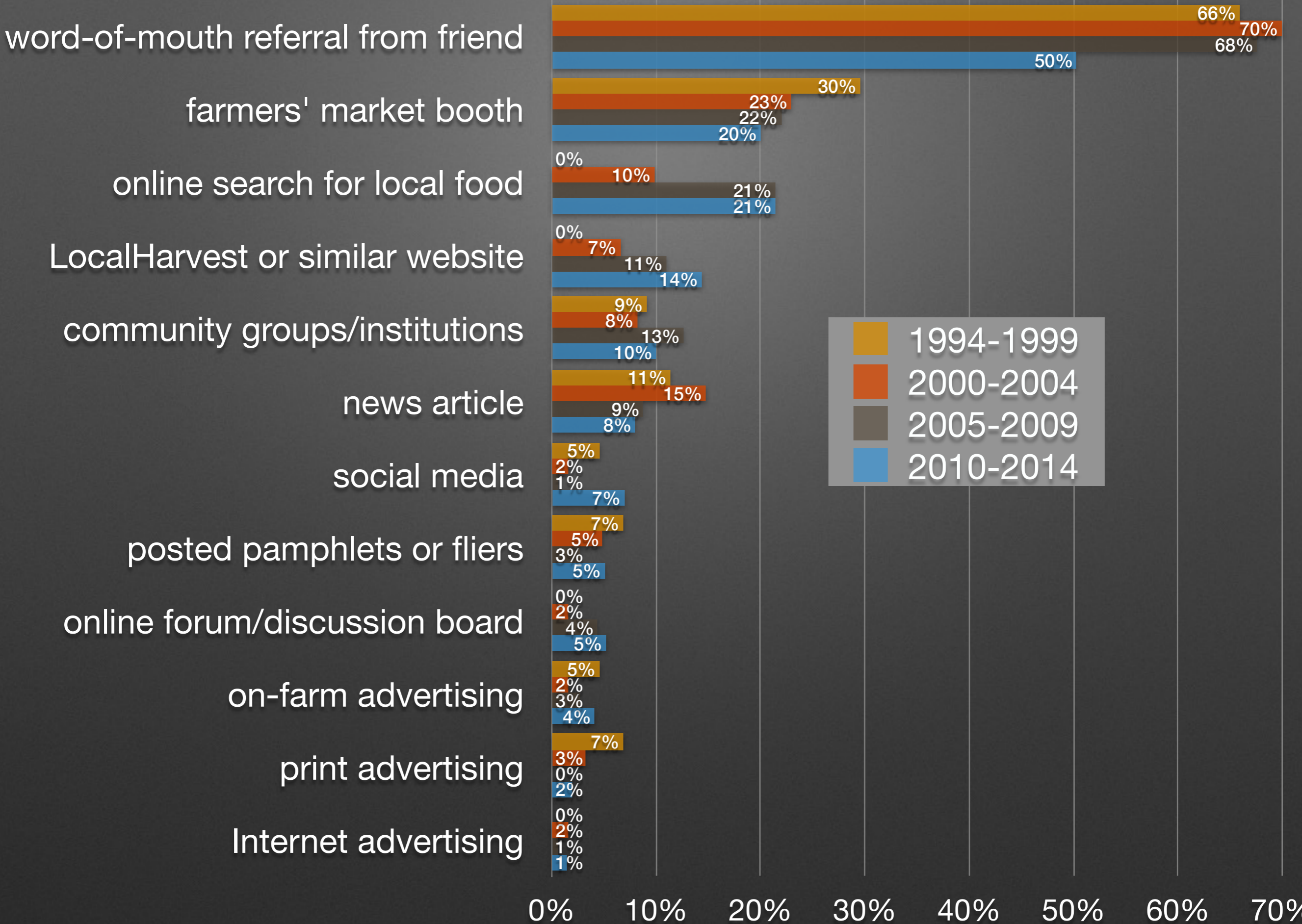
- We asked current members about:
 - sources of information influencing the decision to join
 - impacts of membership
 - willingness to pay more for their share

Sources of information influencing decision to join

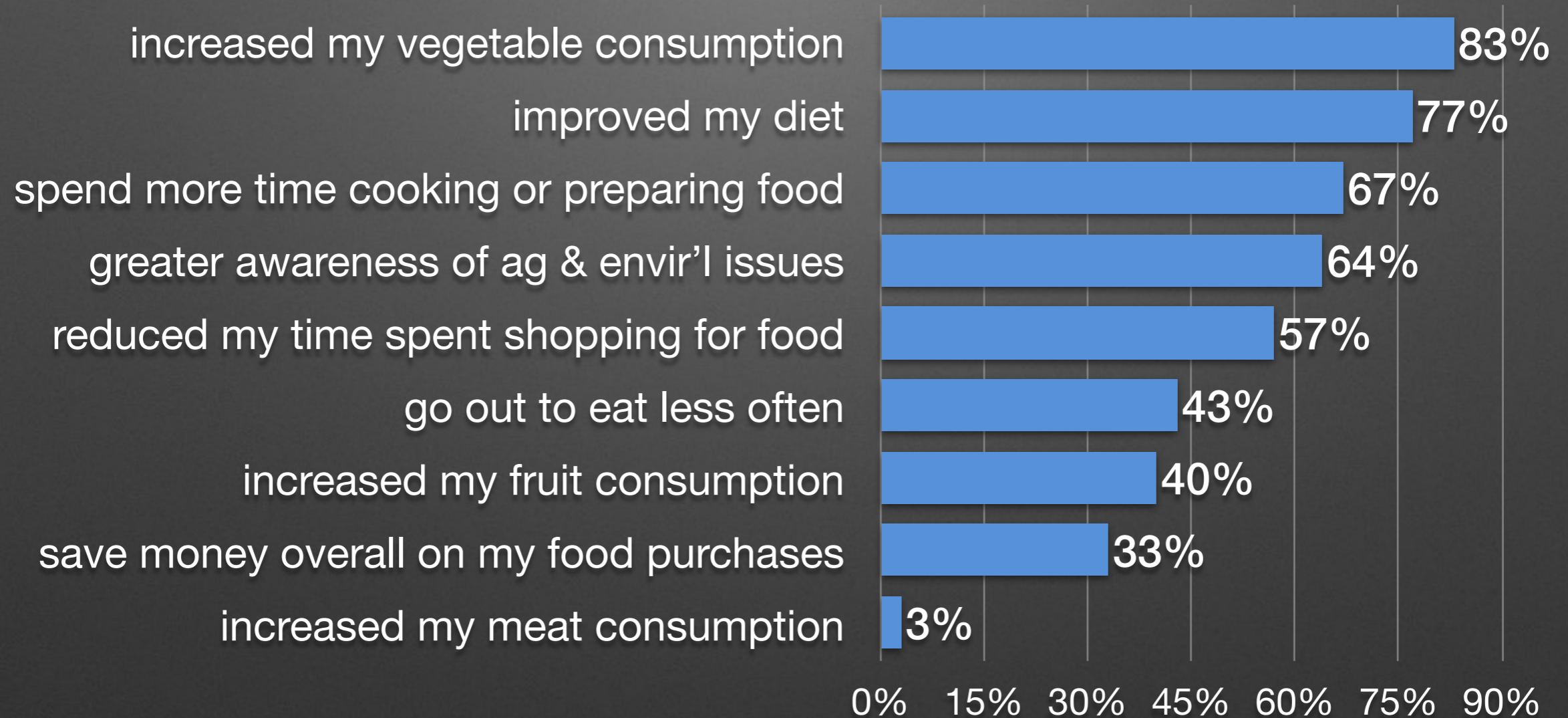
	Mean	St Dev
word-of-mouth referral from friend	55%	0.50
farmers' market booth	21%	0.41
online search for local food (e.g., Google, Yahoo, Bing)	20%	0.40
LocalHarvest or similar website for finding local food and CSAs	13%	0.33
community groups and institutions (e.g., churches, schools)	10%	0.30
news article	9%	0.28
social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)	5%	0.23
posted pamphlets or fliers	5%	0.21
online forum/discussion board	5%	0.21
onfarm advertising (e.g., at a farm stand or youpick place)	4%	0.19
print advertising (e.g., newspaper, magazine)	2%	0.14
Internet advertising (e.g., banners or sponsored search results)	1%	0.11

Respondents could choose more than one

Sources of information influencing decision to join, over time



Impacts of membership



Willingness to pay more

- We asked members how much they currently pay and how much they consider it worth, then calculated the difference as a percentage of their current payment
- We then asked members how much they'd be willing to pay for their share to provide a fairer salary for the farmer(s)

Willingness to pay more

- A large portion, 41.2%, said their CSA share was worth more than they pay (more details on next slide)
 - on average, members thought the share was worth 12.4% more than what they pay
- The vast majority (74.6%) said they'd be willing to pay more for their share
 - on average, members said they'd be willing to pay 19% more than what they pay

Monetary value of CSA share, n=983

	%
Worth more than what pay	41.2%
Worth the same as what pay	46.1%
Worth less than what pay	12.6%

	%
Worth 50%+ more	8.2%
Worth 25%-50%	10.8%
Worth 1-25% more	22.2%
Worth the same	46.2%
Worth 1-25% less	8.3%
Worth 25-50% less	4.3%

Willingness to pay more to provide fairer farmer salary, n=881

	Percentage
Willing to pay more	74.6%
Willing to pay the same	24.5%
Willing (still want) to pay less	0.8%

	%
Willing to pay 50%+ more	4.8%
Willing to pay 25%-50% more	15.2%
Willing to pay 1-25% more	54.6%
Willing to pay the same	24.6%
Willing to pay 1-25% less	0.5%
Willing to pay 25-50% less	0.3%

Monetary value of CSA share by income category

Income category	Mean	St Dev	25th %ile	Median	75th %ile	N
Less than \$10,000	-4.6%	27.0%	-20.0%	-8.3%	4.8%	8
\$10,000 to \$14,999	13.9%	42.1%	-7.4%	0.0%	33.3%	7
\$15,000 to \$24,999	16.1%	25.9%	0.0%	5.9%	20.0%	15
\$25,000 to \$34,999	22.5%	46.7%	0.0%	0.0%	40.9%	28
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11.9%	24.4%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	61
\$50,000 to \$74,999	12.8%	25.7%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	127
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13.5%	32.5%	0.0%	0.0%	20.7%	156
\$100,000 to \$149,999	11.7%	32.8%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	238
\$150,000 to \$199,999	13.6%	25.3%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	137
\$200,000 or more	10.4%	24.2%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	154
None stated	10.1%	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%	14.0%	52
All categories combined	12.4%	29.3%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	983

Willingness to pay more by income category

Income category	Mean	St Dev	25th %ile	Median	75th %ile	N
Less than \$10,000	5.9%	19.9%	0.0%	0.0%	8.8%	8
\$10,000 to \$14,999	18.5%	25.4%	0.0%	12.1%	20.0%	6
\$15,000 to \$24,999	16.1%	14.6%	3.6%	13.1%	26.7%	12
\$25,000 to \$34,999	23.3%	41.0%	5.9%	17.6%	25.0%	27
\$35,000 to \$49,999	15.7%	18.4%	0.0%	13.6%	25.0%	57
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19.6%	21.5%	5.9%	17.6%	25.0%	118
\$75,000 to \$99,999	20.0%	21.2%	2.4%	17.6%	25.0%	136
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19.0%	30.5%	0.0%	15.4%	25.0%	215
\$150,000 to \$199,999	21.7%	19.0%	11.1%	17.6%	25.0%	123
\$200,000 or more	18.7%	22.6%	3.7%	17.2%	25.0%	139
None stated	12.6%	11.9%	0.0%	11.9%	20.0%	40
All categories combined	19.0%	24.1%	0.0%	16.7%	25.0%	881

Conclusion: membership

- Relative to the general population of California, CSA members are disproportionately female, white, non-elderly, and formally educated, and with much higher incomes
- That (1) 58% of member households have incomes over \$100,000 and (2) less than 3% of households have incomes under \$35,000 shows the class dimensions of CSA membership

- That various racial and ethnic categories are disproportionately represented — non-Latino whites more, and all other races/ethnicities less — might suggest the whiteness of CSA (cf. Guthman 2008)
- However, incomes between CSA members of almost all racial/ethnic groups are essentially the same
- Is the extreme disproportionality due to the intersection of race/ethnicity and class (i.e., the relative lower percentage of households of people of color as a proportion of households with the highest incomes), rather than the way that whiteness operates in AFNs? Or are both in effect?

- While direct marketing is not necessarily classed nor raced, CSA's specific form of lack of product choice is since it requires a desire social embeddedness (within a largely white space/movement) over economic instrumentality
- to be able to choose to not have a choice most people first have to know that the choice they've foregone (more flexible produce purchasing) is still available to them
- given their incomes, most CSA members have alternative options for securing the food they need/want if the CSA share doesn't provide it

- Also, the social networks that connect new members to CSA are classed and raced
- by far the top sources of information that influenced joining was “word-of-mouth referral from friend” (55%)

Conclusion: members' values

- Current and former members have some different priorities relative to the original conception of CSA
 - Current members' lowest ranked CSA attributes in terms of importance (on average “of minor importance”) include 1) knowing the farmer personally and 2) sense of community in the CSA
- A main focus instead is more on individual and family improvement, a hallmark of the aspirational middle class (Sharzer 2012)

- Might it be possible to actively remind CSA members about the importance of other aspects of CSA, including creating an economically viable option for farmers and creating a sense of community?
- Our data does suggest that considering the economic well-being of farmers encourages some members to be willing to pay more
 - 75.6% of respondents would be willing to pay more to provide a fairer salary to the farmer(s)

Conclusion: former members

- Former members' main reasons for leaving involve issues with common attributes of the CSA model: 1) The product mix did not meet my needs, 2) Lack of choice about products included, 3) Too little diversity in products in the share
- This suggests a lack of fit between common CSA attributes and much of the population, even the population that tries CSA

Next steps

- Household survey of primary grocery purchasers in California
 - we will be able to look at shopping preferences of people of various incomes and races/ethnicities

Acknowledgments

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