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Title of the Presentation

**Preferences of Minority Farmers for Urban Agriculture and Learning Resources:
A Case of Maryland.**

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Preferences of Minority Farmers for Urban Agriculture and Learning Resources: A Case of Maryland.

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Abstract:

Reducing the knowledge gap of minority farmers is paramount to their sustenance in farming. A case study of 14 minority farmers was conducted in Maryland. The findings revealed a need for revising the adopted teaching modality, timing of Extension and training programs. One-half of the participants indicated strong preference for multi-session weekend workshops compared to 36% for multi-session weekday workshops. Likewise, 29% of them favored a daylong weekend workshop over a daylong weekday workshop. The results imply that farmers' preference for weekend training seems to be higher than for weekday programs. Participants preferred shorter weekend sessions over a daylong weekday events.

Objectives:

This study explores the preferences of smallholder minority farmers for urban agriculture and learning resources to enhance their knowledge and skills in urban agriculture.

Research Methods:

- An exploratory case study of smallholder minority farmers conducted in 2022.
- Administered a semi-structured survey to 14 purposively selected backyard/kitchen gardening farmers.
- Survey instruments consisted of a five-point Likert scale, open- and close-ended, multiple-choice, rating scale, and demographic questions.
- Conducted an in-person interactive interviews/workshop, online survey, email and telephone communications
- Visited farms/fields to triangulate collected information.

Background Information:

- Urban agriculture (UA) also referred to as urban and community gardening has emerged as a reliable source of fresh produce and family income.
- Despite the multi-faceted contribution to food security and ecosystem conservation, small-scale farming is at a crossroads of survival in Maryland.
- Small-scale producers have been abandoning farms they inherited/owned/leased.
- Smallholder, limited resources minority farmers have been shifting to UA overtime.
- The iGeneration also seems reluctant to engage in agriculture because farming is relatively less lucrative.
- Indeed, such a scenario challenges agricultural professionals and Cooperative Extension (CE) in developing time-fitting strategic plans for economically viable and sustainable UA such as CG/BF.
- In addition, the existing knowledge gap of small-scale farmers about production economics of UA and inability to stay updated about fast-moving developments in technologies accompanied by a lack of systematic, regular, and need-based Extension and training programs made them technically and economically inefficient.
- Consequently, they are incapable of making informed decisions, losing self-employment opportunities, and unable to supplement household income.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

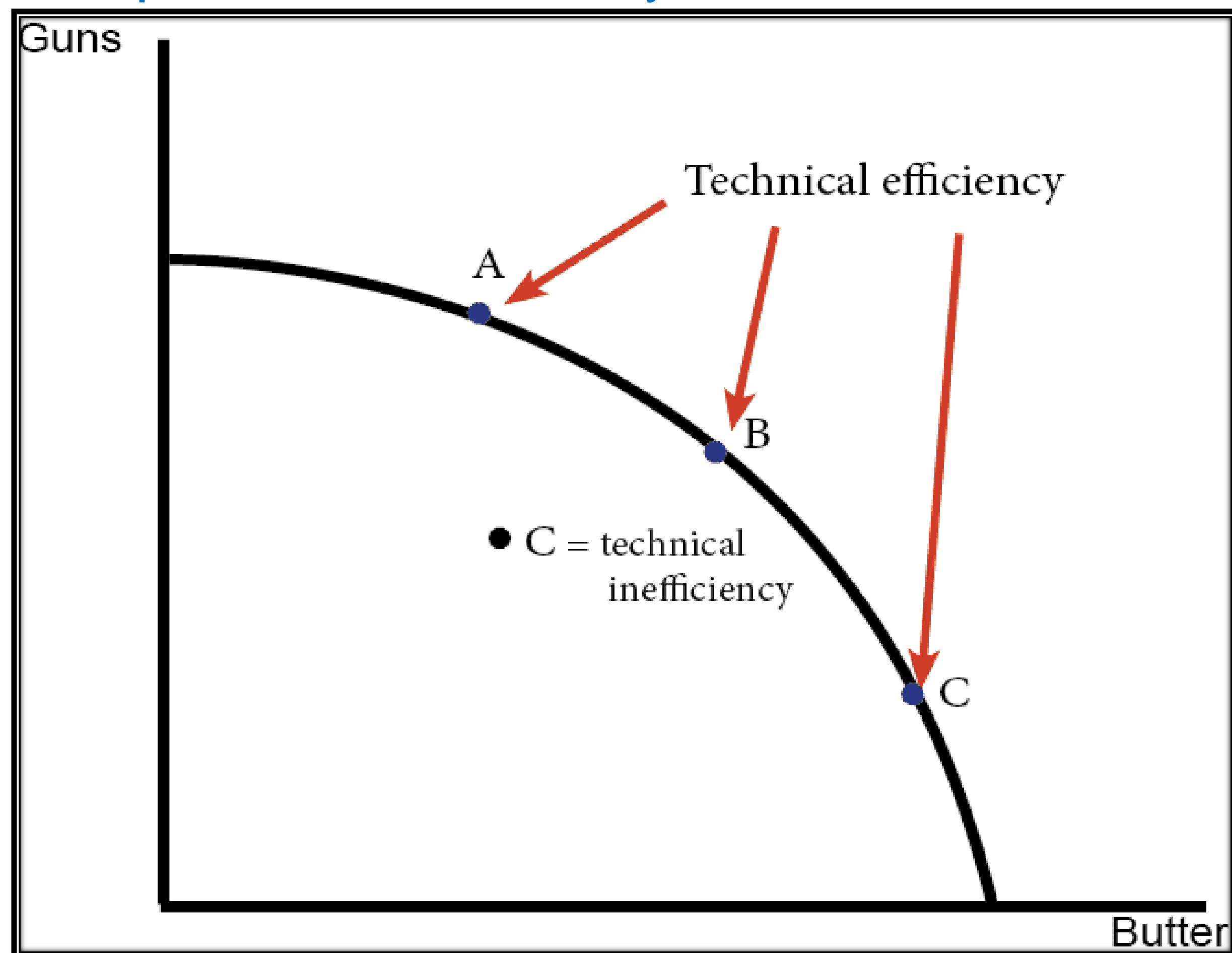


Figure 1: Pareto/Technical Efficiency in Production

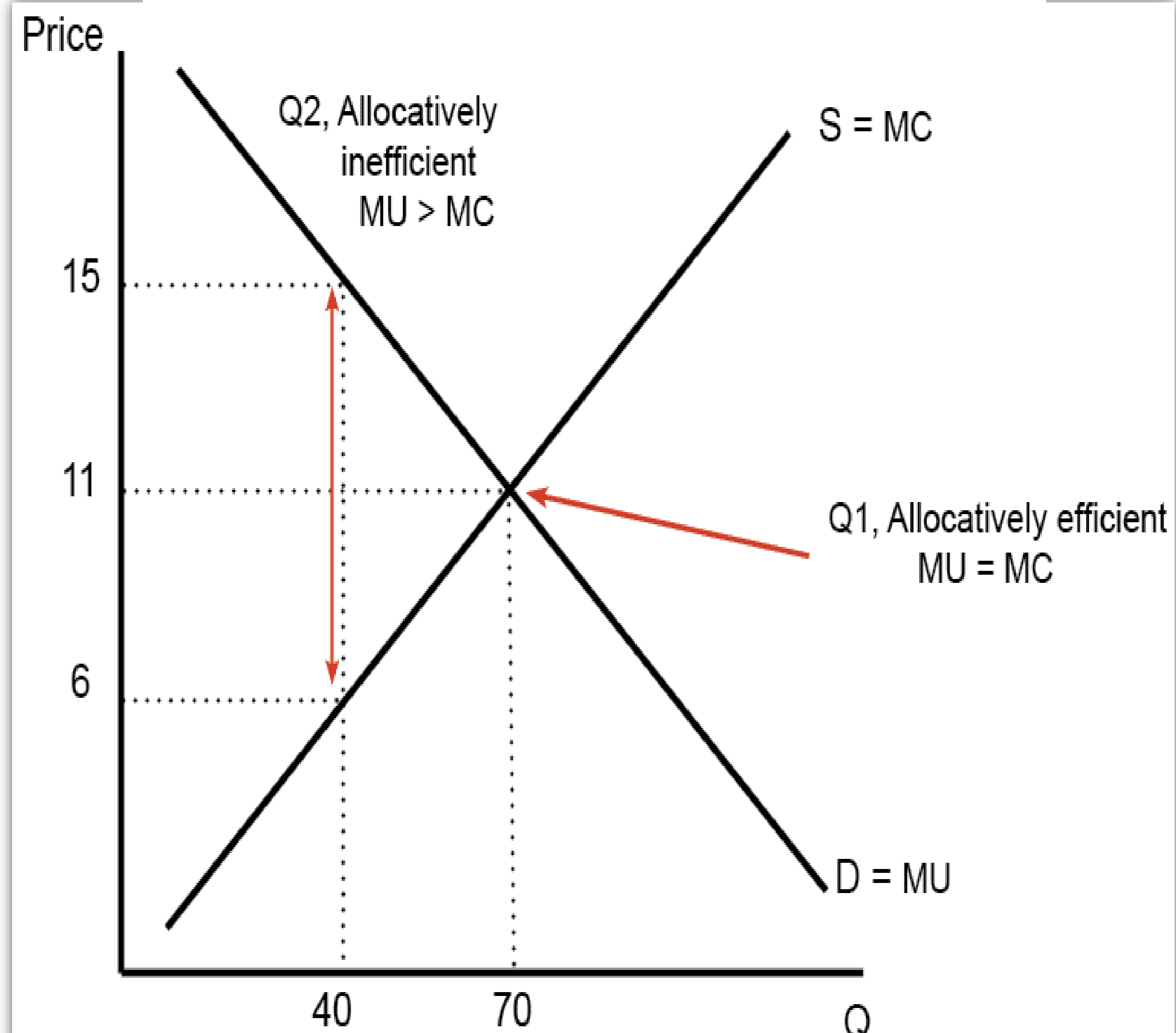


Figure 2: Allocative Efficiency in Production

Data Analytical Approach:

- Descriptive statistics
- Preference ranking
- Index values
- SWOP analysis
- SPSS
- Econometric Approach

Study Counties:

Baltimore
Baltimore City
Somerset
Wicomico
Anne Arundel

Farmers' perception about urban agriculture/gardening:

- 86% were engaged in urban agriculture (UA)
- UA interlinked to developing green city/green economy
- Localized production
- Reliable source of fresh produce
- Minimizing food travel miles
- Environmentally friendly practices
- Promoting healthy communities
- Effective Extension educational model
- Eating healthy campaign for all
- Revamping the vacant, under-utilized, abandoned land
- Fresh edible gardens
- Increasing economic activities locally
- Stimulating farmer markets, restaurants, groceries and School feeding programs
- Positive influence on food security and ecosystem conservation
- Substituting green import

The University of Maryland Eastern Shore, UMES Extension program offers educational programs to persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, veteran status, or disability and is an equal opportunity employer.

Farm Characteristics/Research Findings:

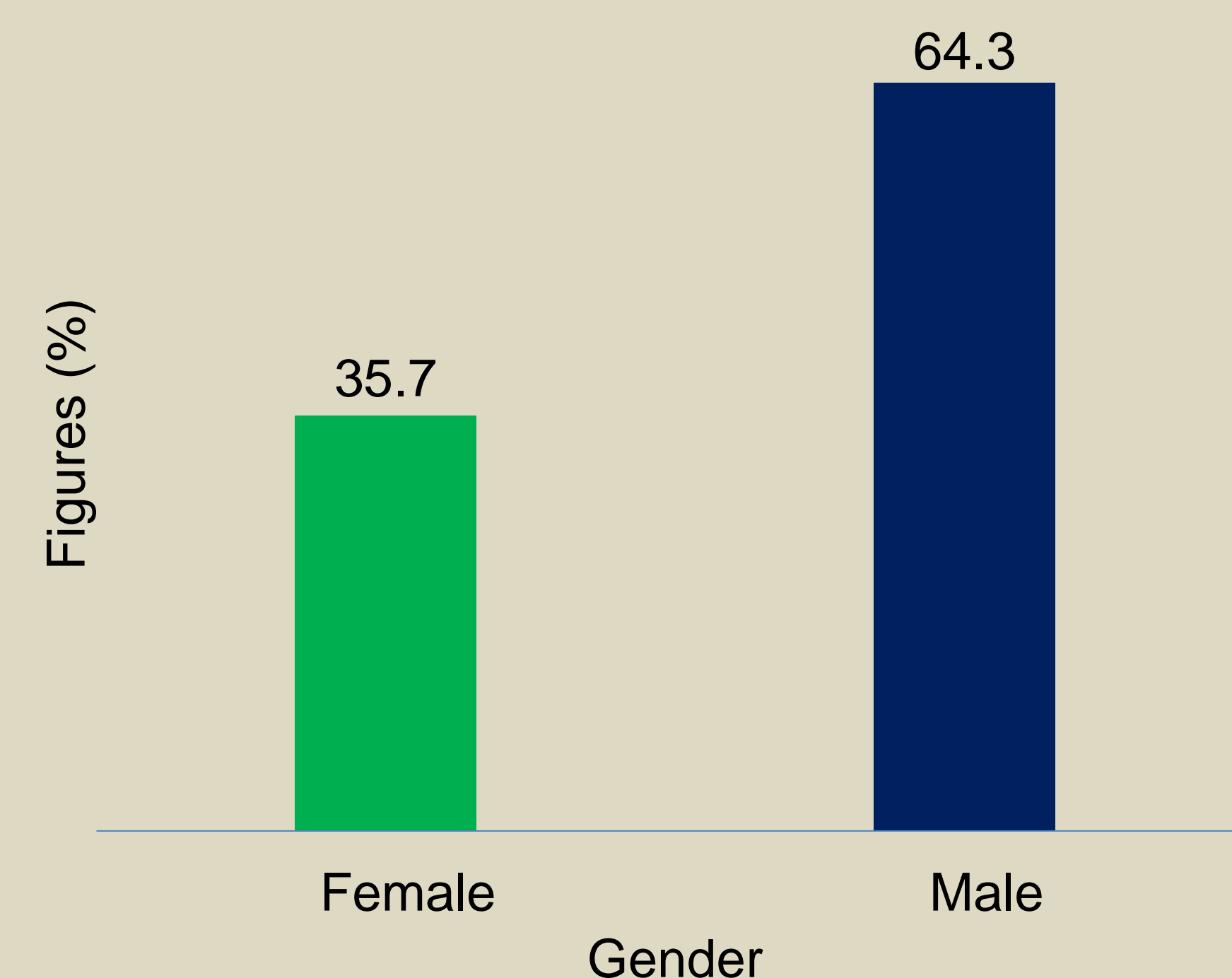


Figure 3: Farmers by gender

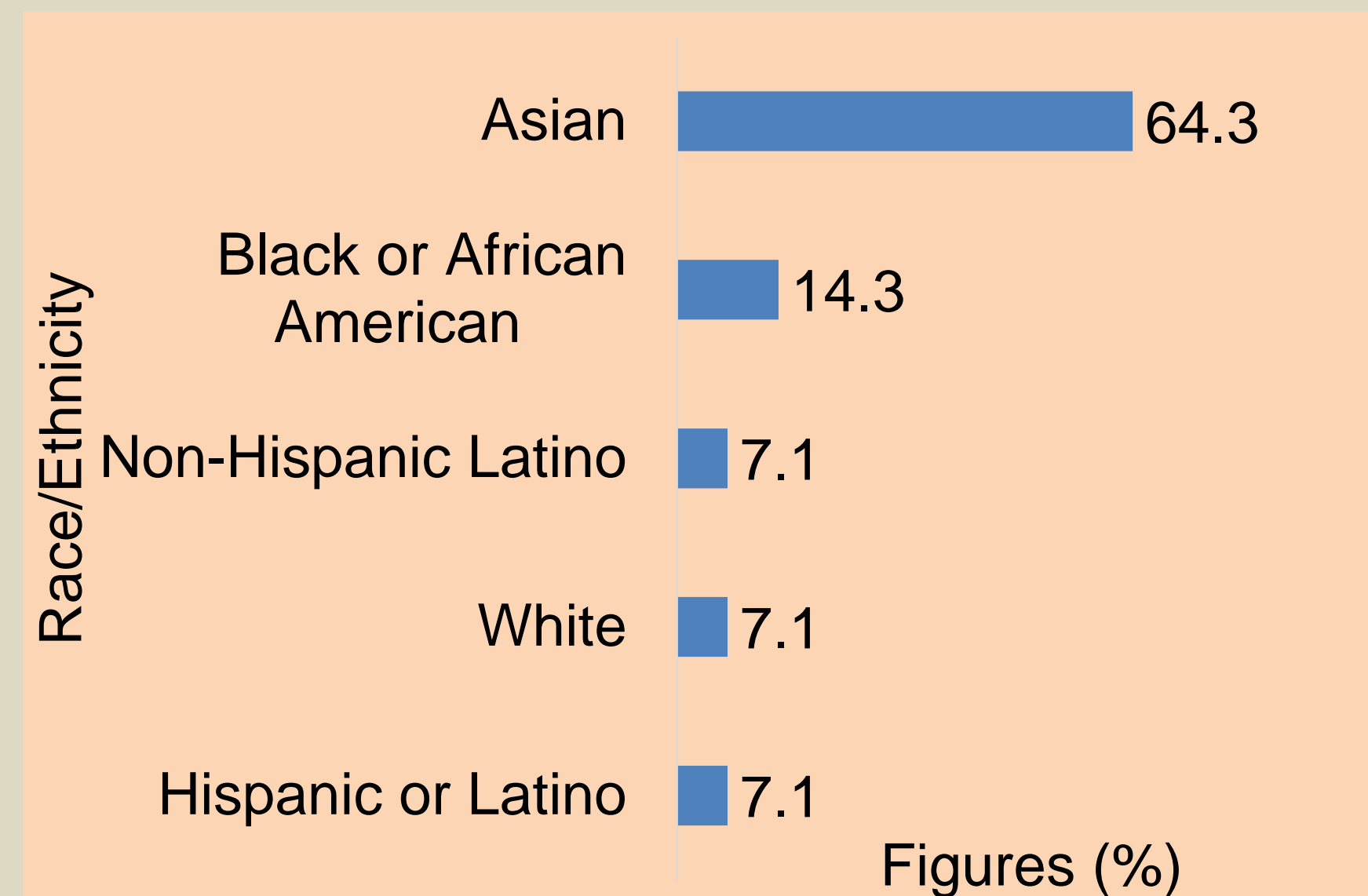


Figure 5: Farmers by race/ethnicity

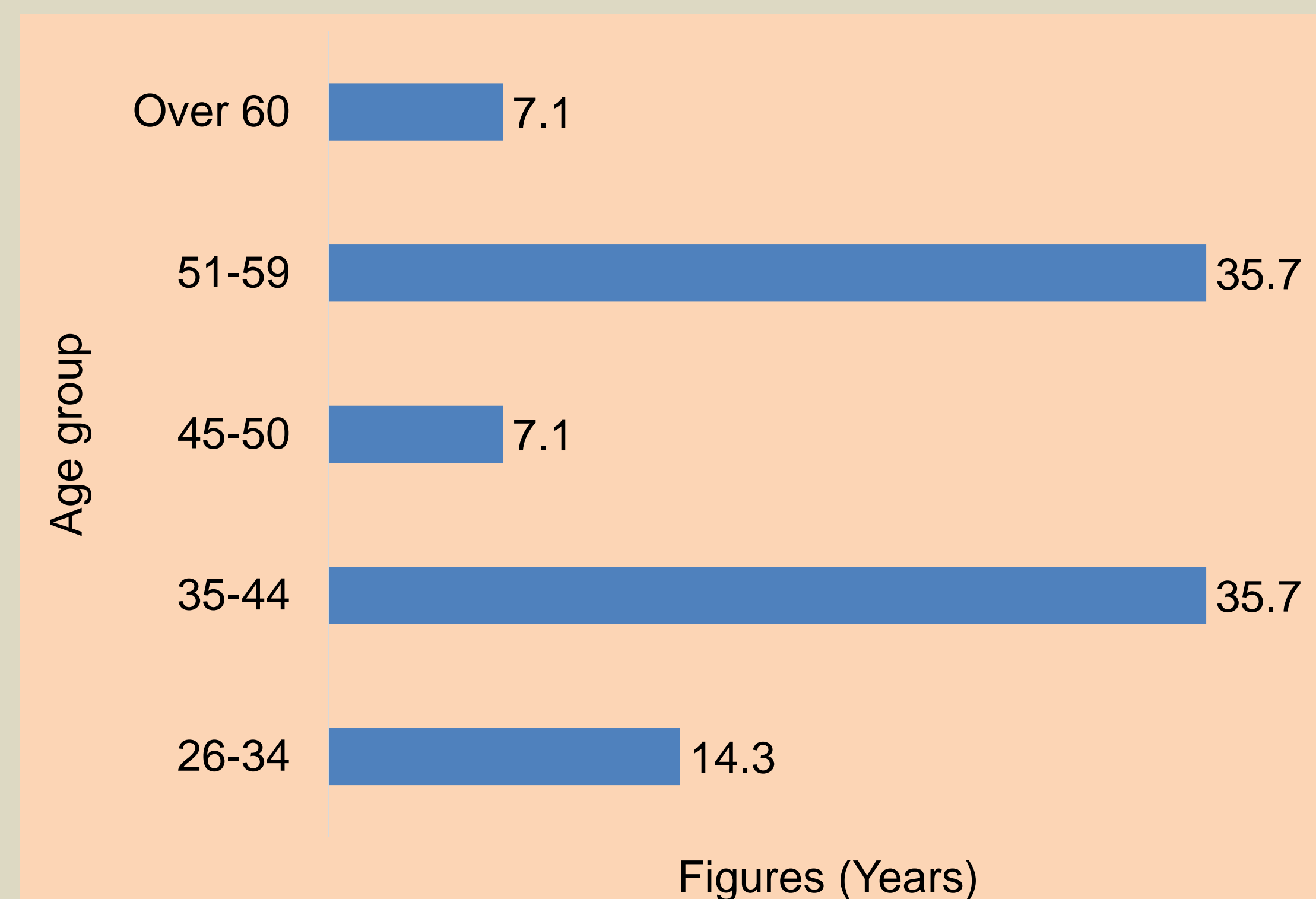


Figure 4: Farmers by age group



Figure 6: Farming experience

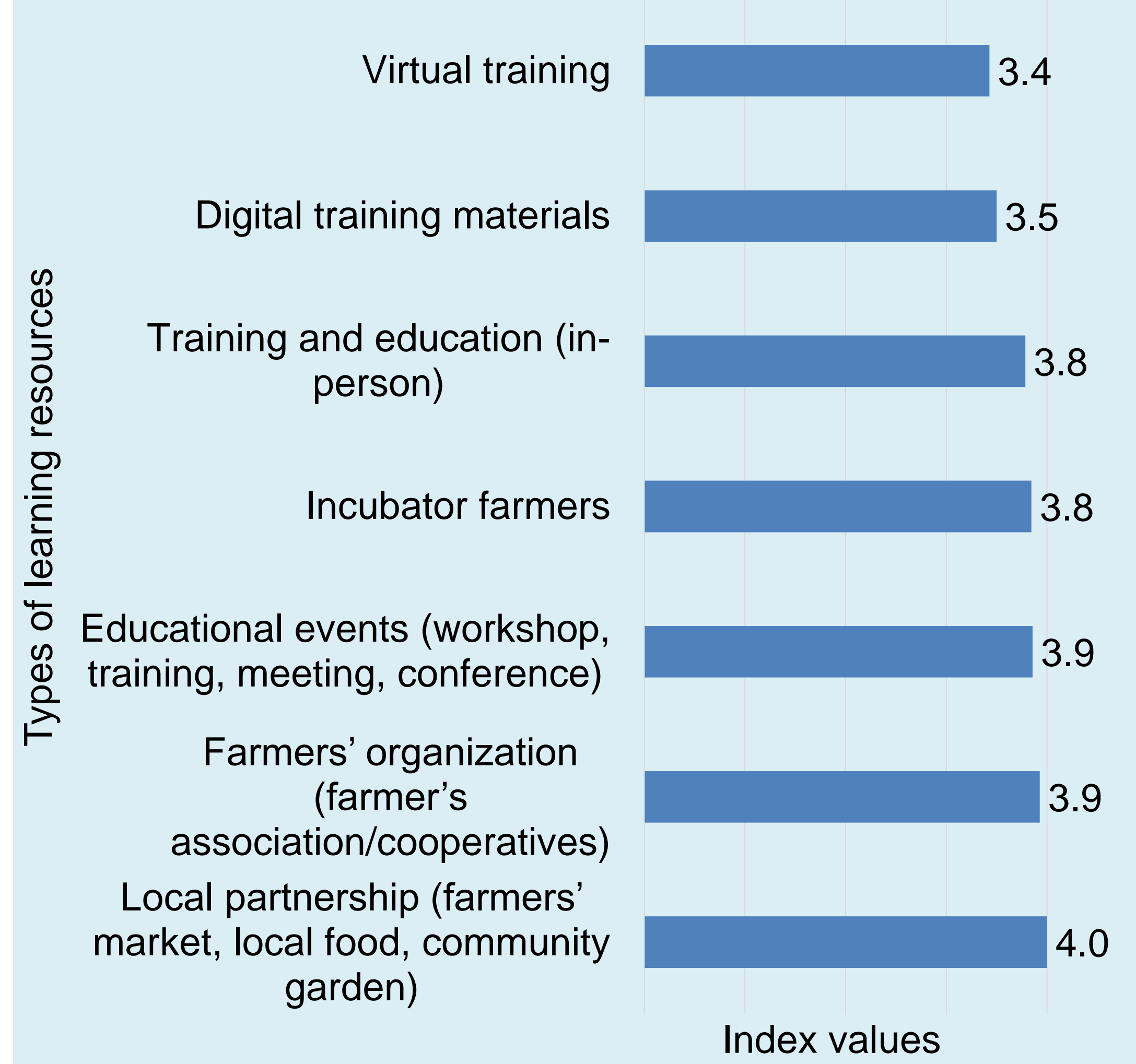


Figure 7: Important resources for small, socially disadvantaged and minority farmers (Index values)

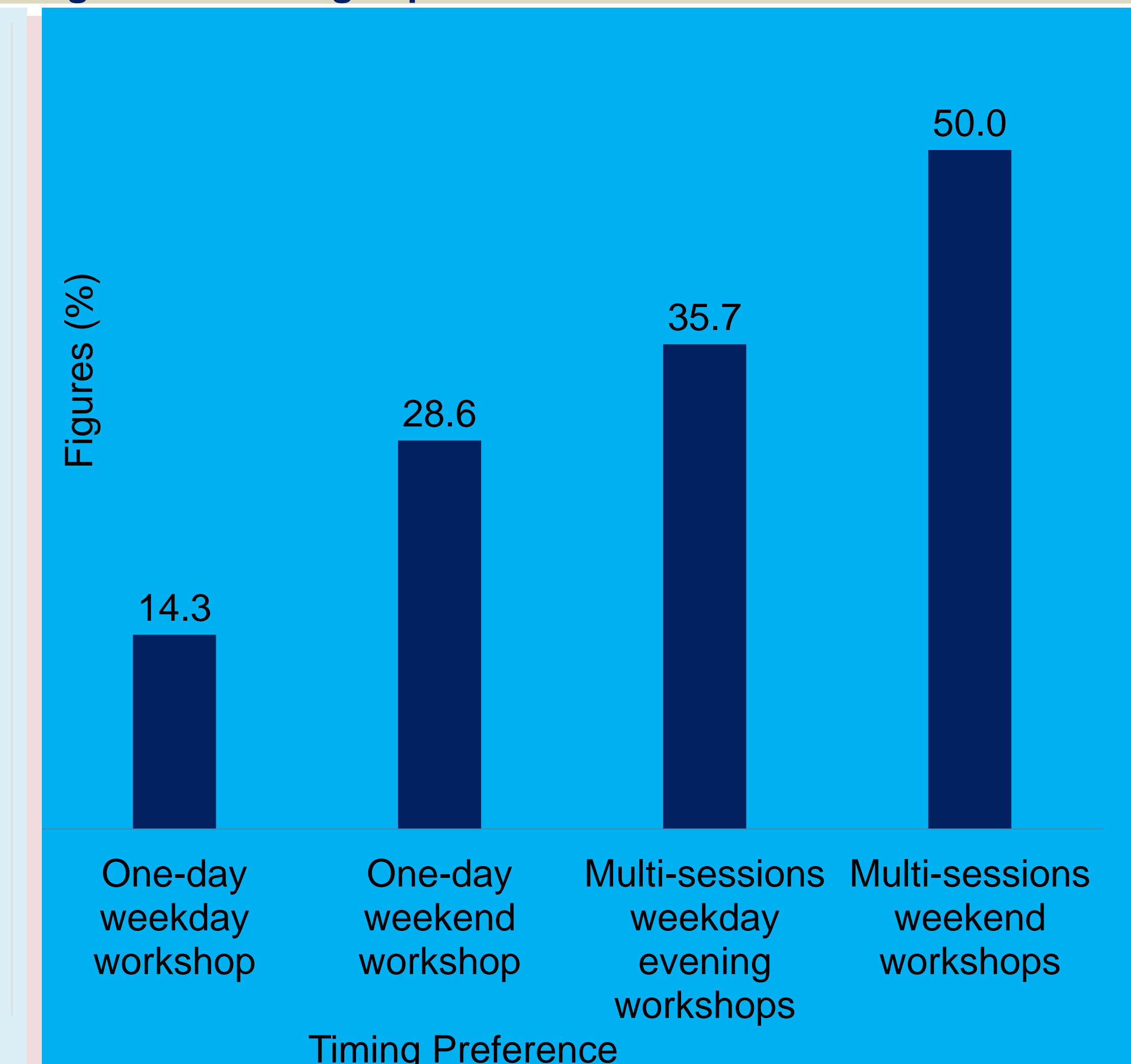


Figure 8: Time preference for training reported by farmers

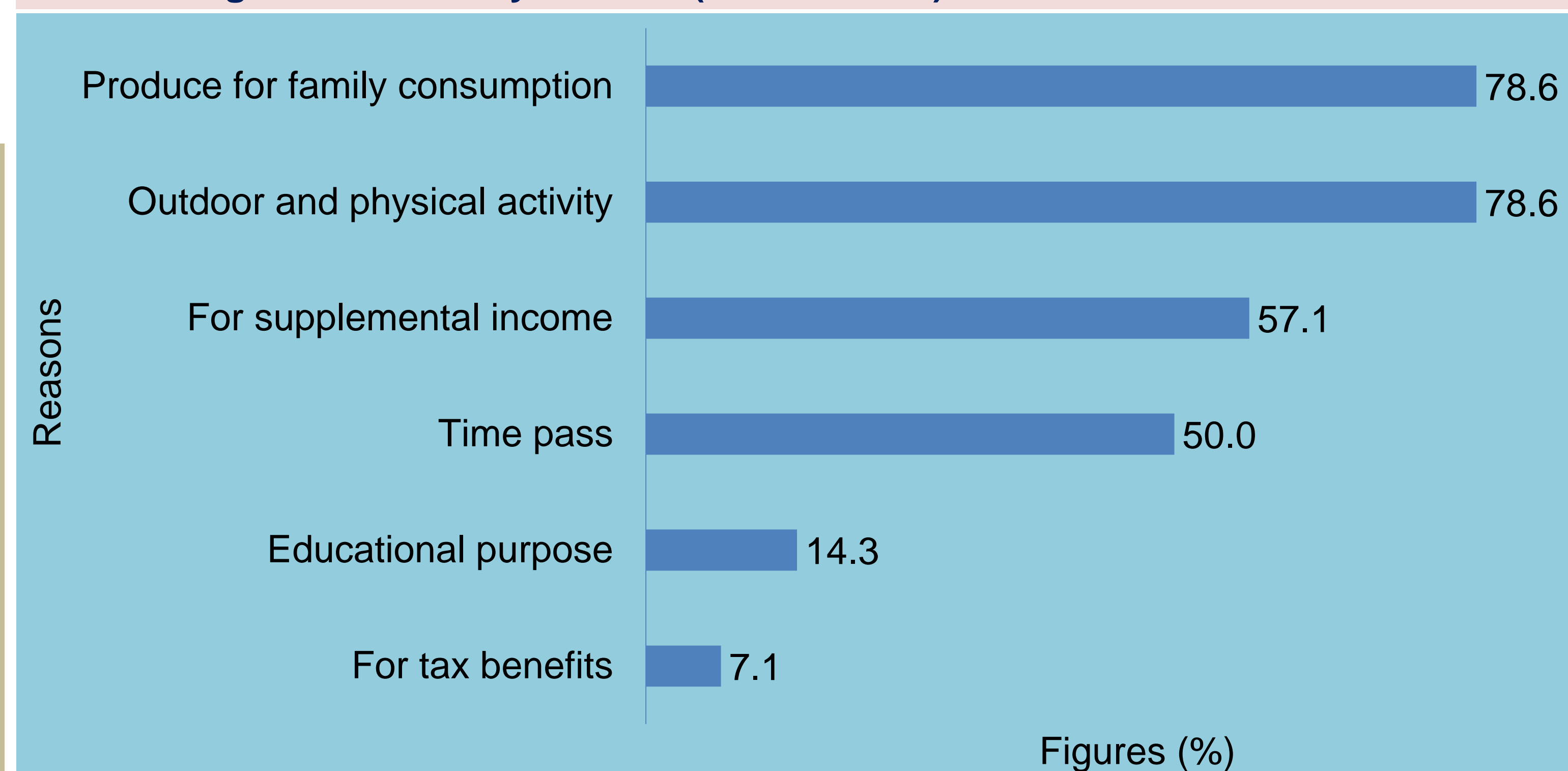


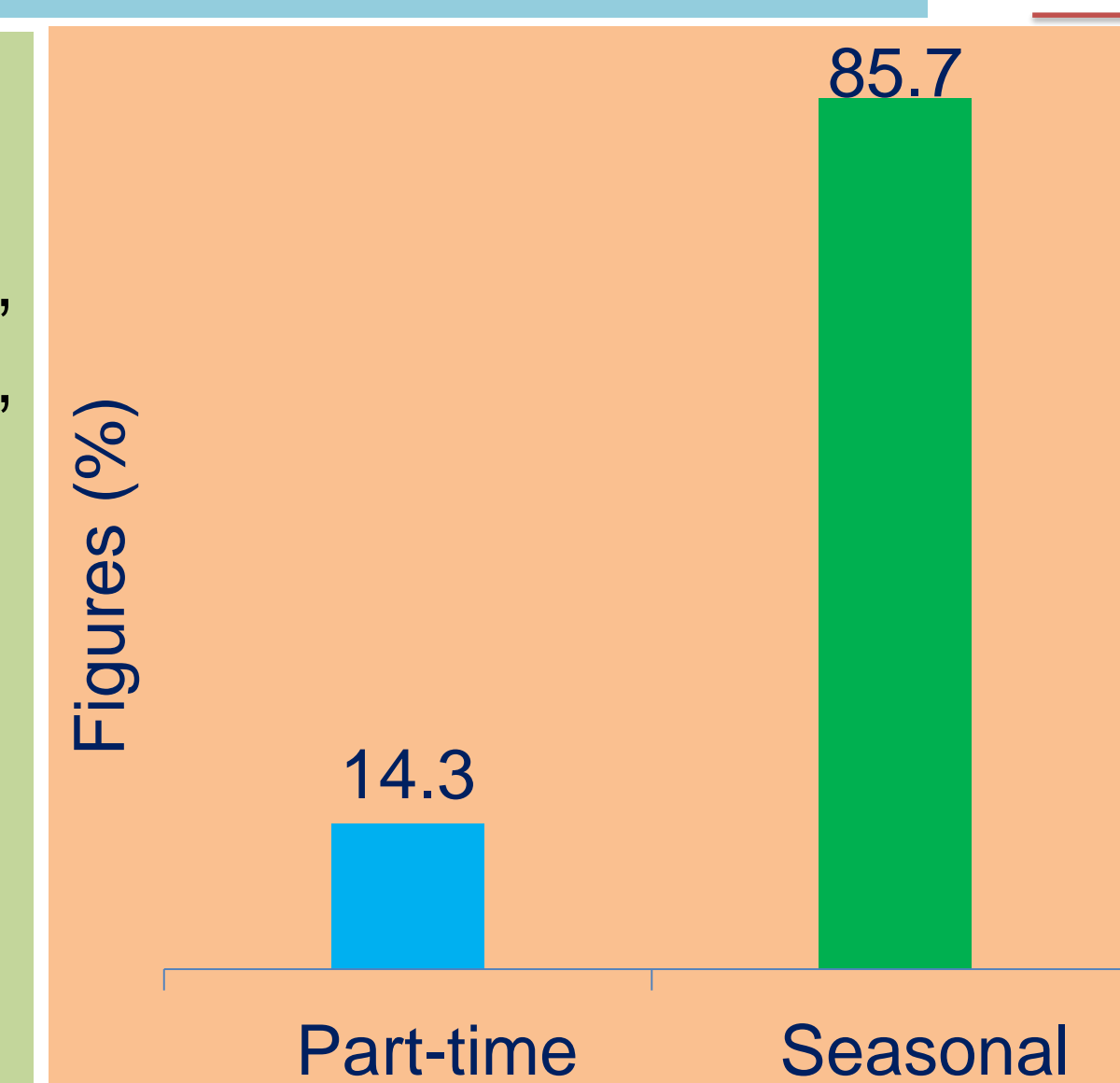
Figure 9: Reasons for farming (backyard/kitchen gardening)

Deficiencies in farm management practices:

- 70% farmers reported lack of record keeping
- Need for hands-on training: Systematic record-keeping, Time-fitting Extension education, Enterprise budgeting, Input-output modeling
- Need based farmers pedagogy
- Revise the on-going training practice
- Integration of medicinal herbs into vegetable production
- Production and health economics
- Farm business management of agricultural enterprises
- Frontier level of production

Crops Cultivated	N	Percent
Eggplant	6	42.9
Spinach	5	35.7
Okra	7	50
Peppers	8	57.1
Bitter Melon/Gourd	1	7.1
Red Rice	1	7.1
Bottle Gourd	1	7.1
Ash Gourd	1	7.1
Snake Gourd	1	7.1
Smooth Gourd	1	7.1
Colocasia/Taro	1	7.1
Chamsur/Garden Cress	1	7.1

Table 10: Ethnic crop growers



Acknowledgement: Northeast



Figure 11: Types of farmers