FARM BOX PILOT PROJECT

- **Farmers** offer weekly farm boxes at participating retail sites that consumers can easily access. Box contents change throughout the season.

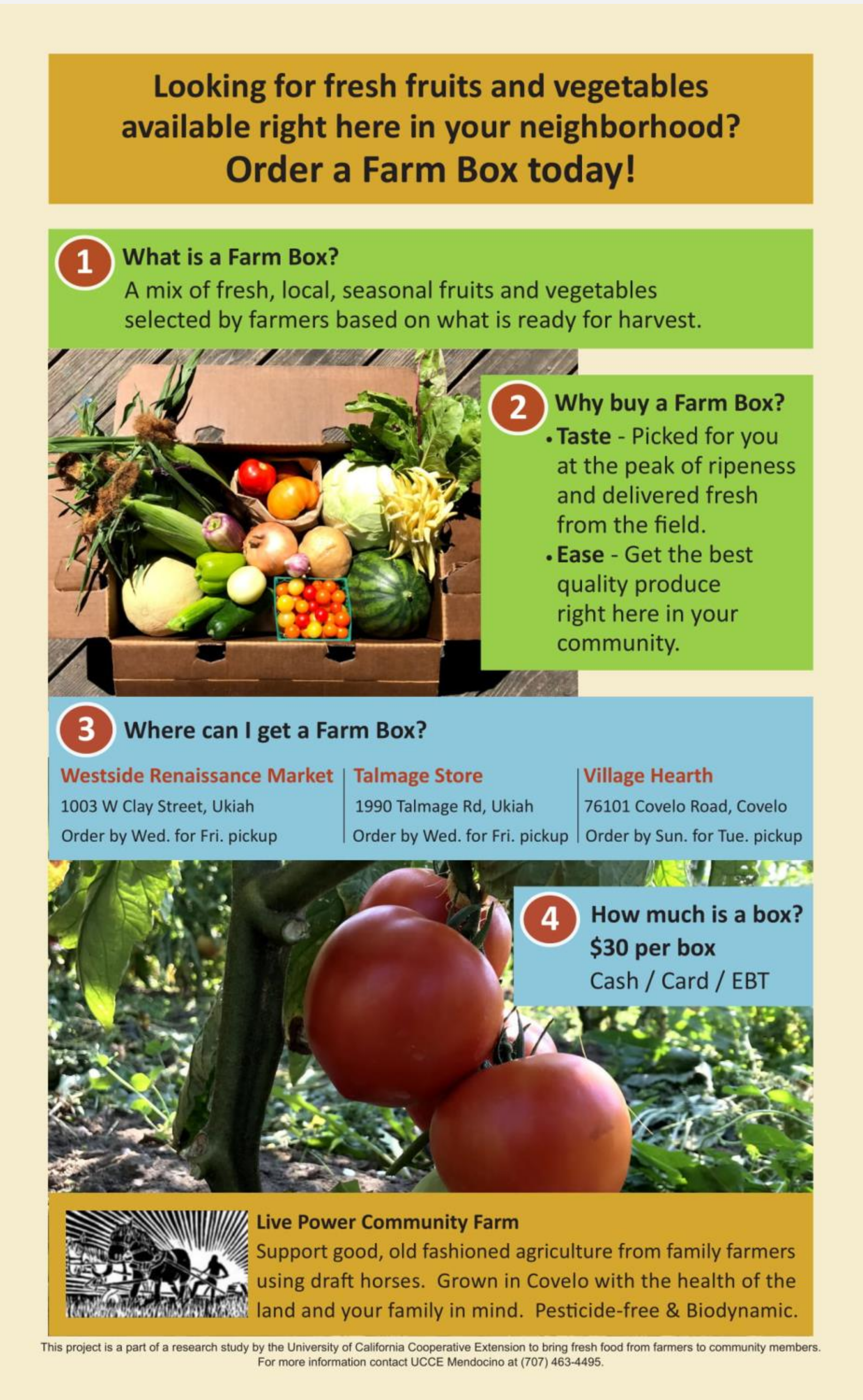
- **Retailers** serve as a drop-off point, in exchange for a nominal 10% transaction fee. Participating retailers advertise via sandwich boards and flyers. In-store whiteboards detail the cost and weekly contents of the box.

- **Customers** pre-order a farm box at the retail site (or on-line) on a week-to-week basis for pick-up later that week. Customers can use SNAP/EBT (with some caveats).

3 RETAIL STORE LOCATIONS IN CA

OF BOXES SOLD (CA)

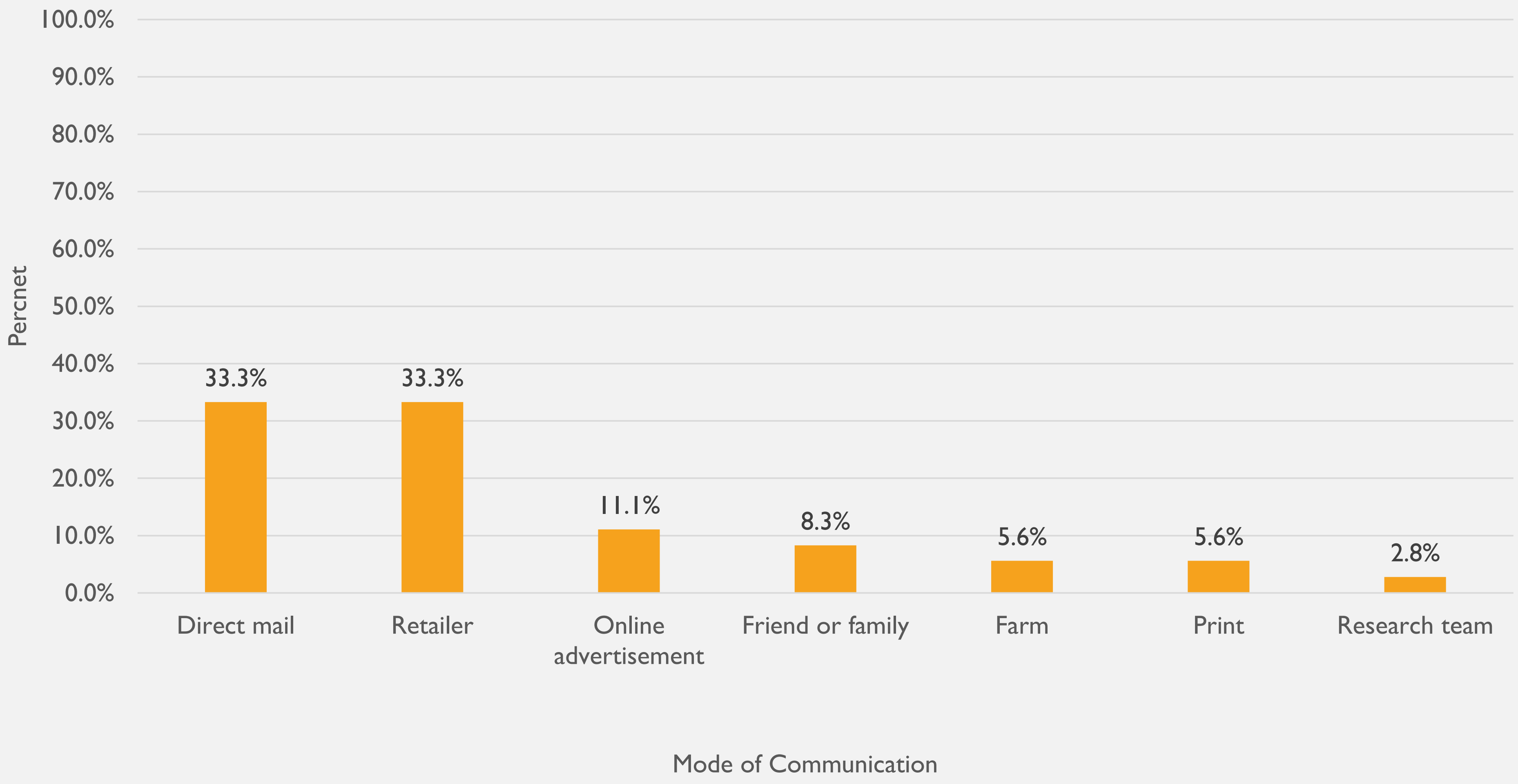
LOCATION	#
Location 1 (Westside Renaissance Market)	83
Location 2 (Talmage Store)	22
Location 3 (Village Hearth)	15
TOTAL	**120**



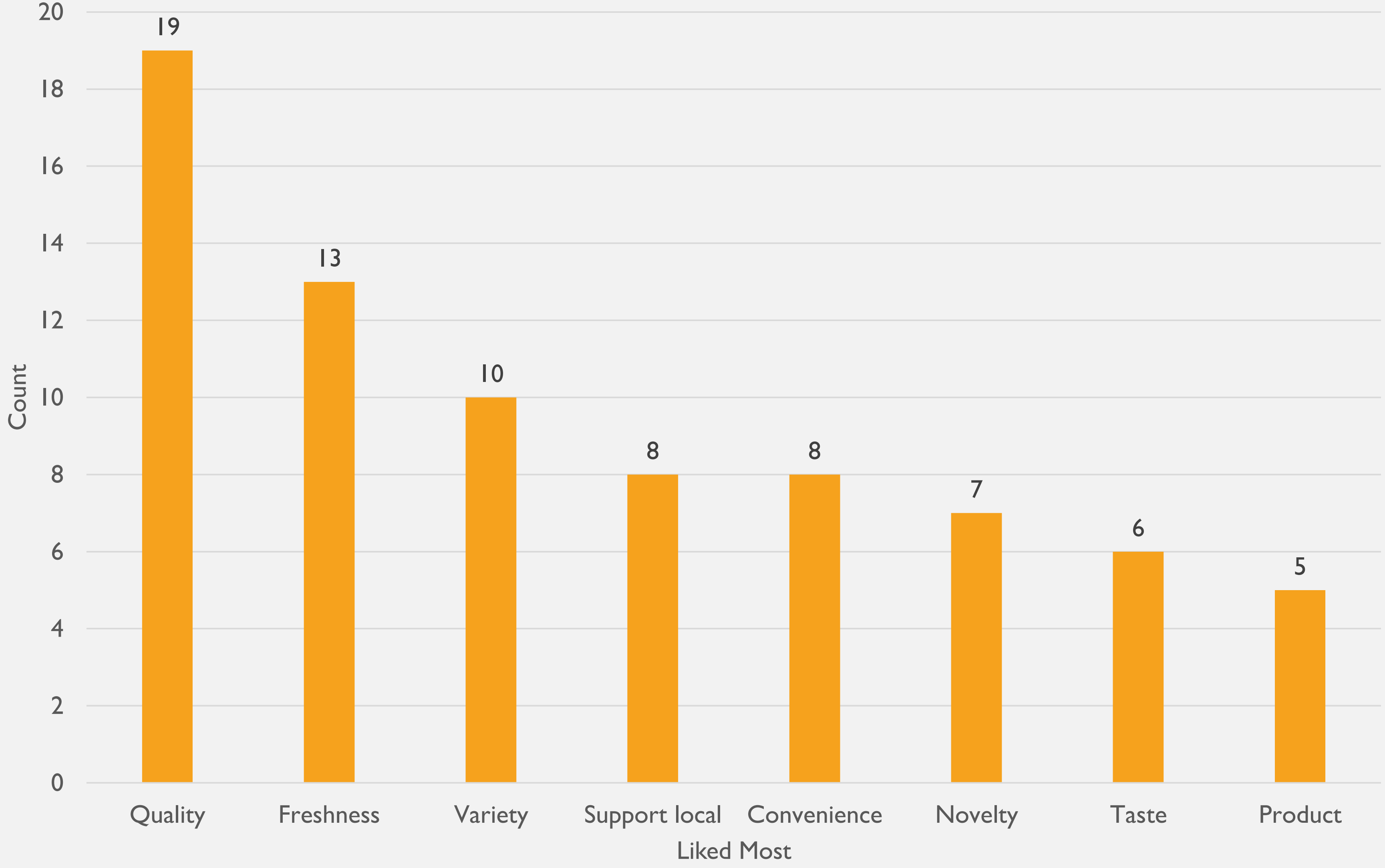
FARM BOX PURCHASER SURVEY

2018 Season All States

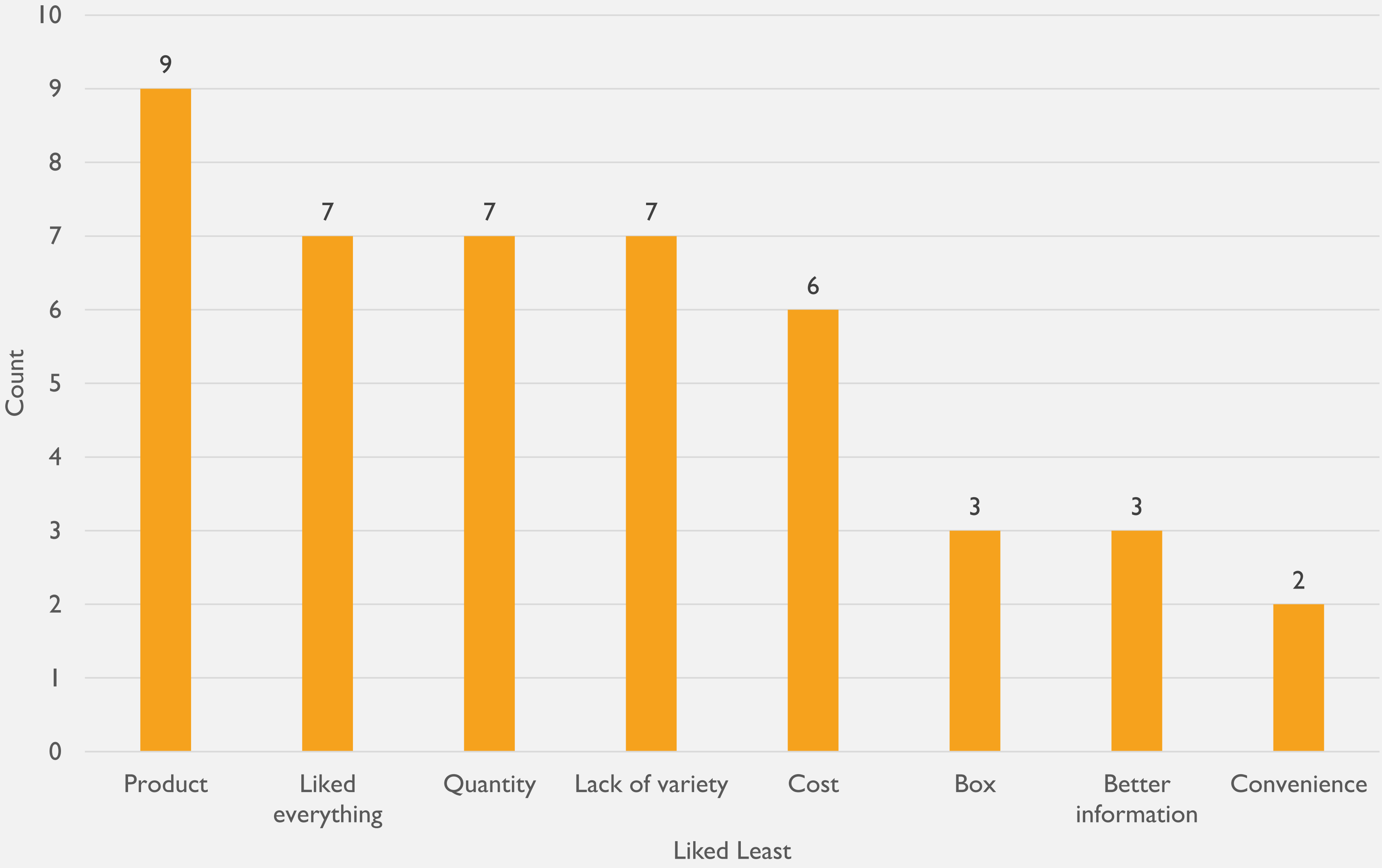
HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT FARM BOXES? (n=36)



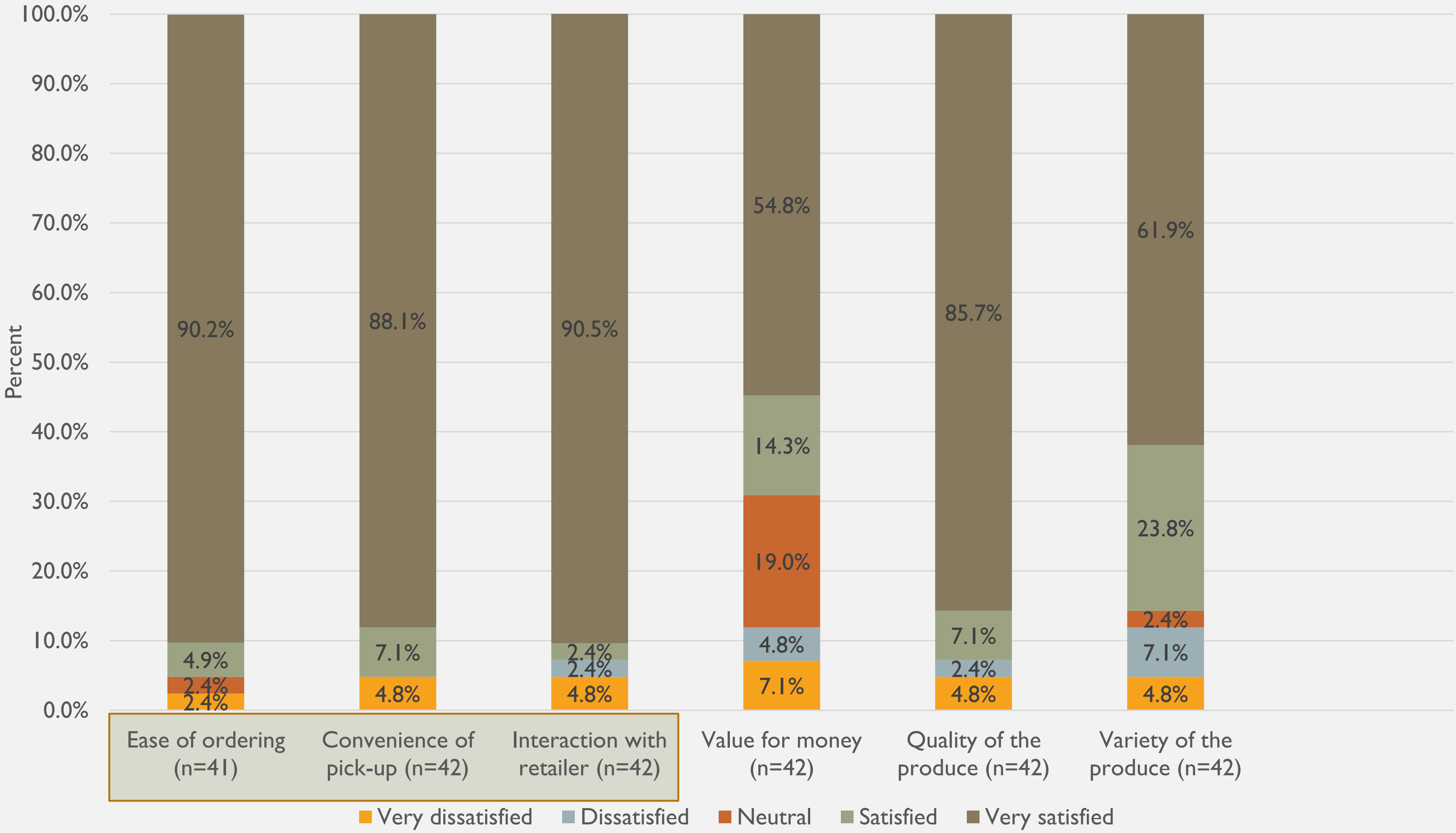
WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT YOUR FARM BOX? (n=46)



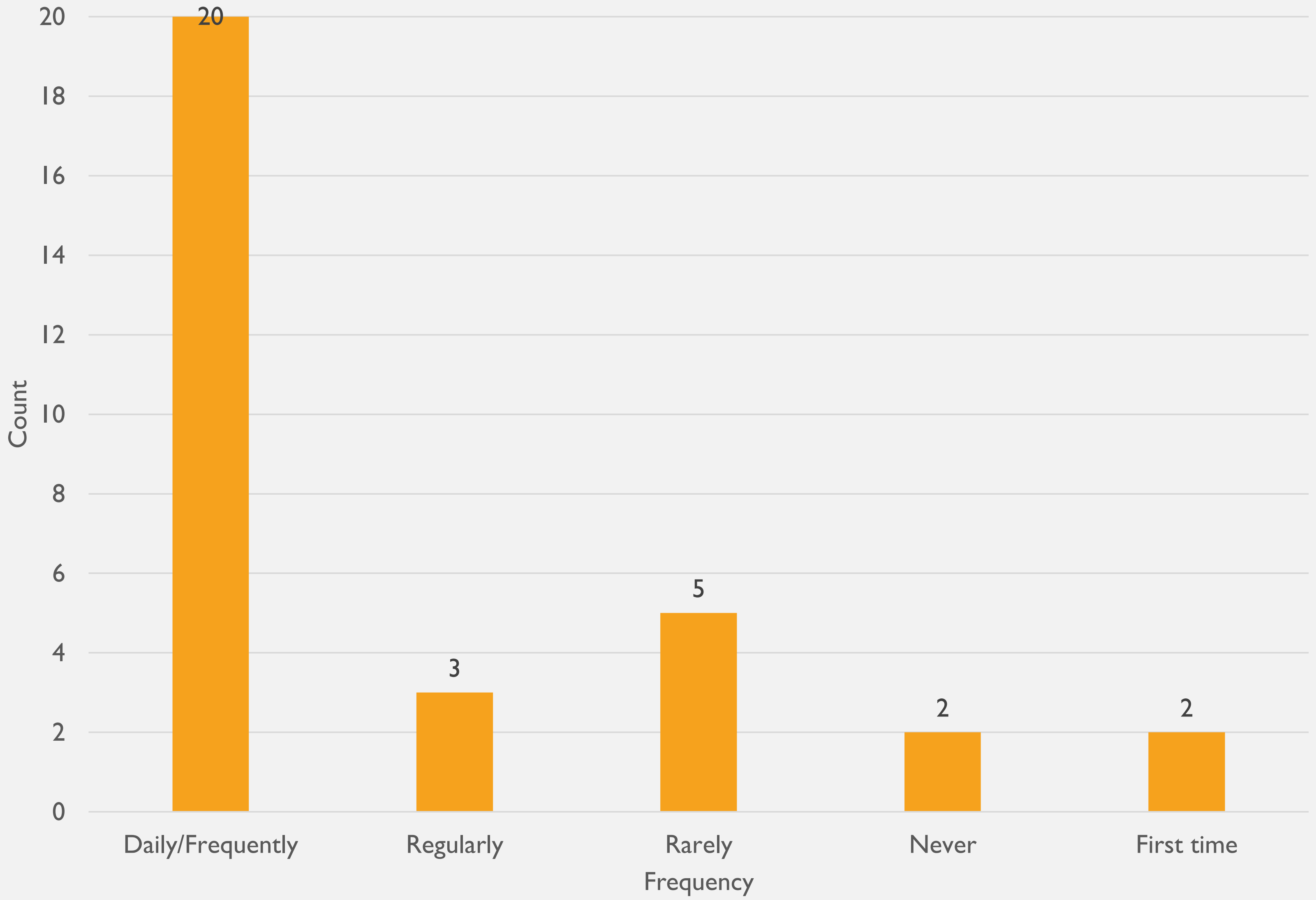
WHAT DID YOU LIKE LEAST ABOUT YOUR FARM BOX? (n=46)



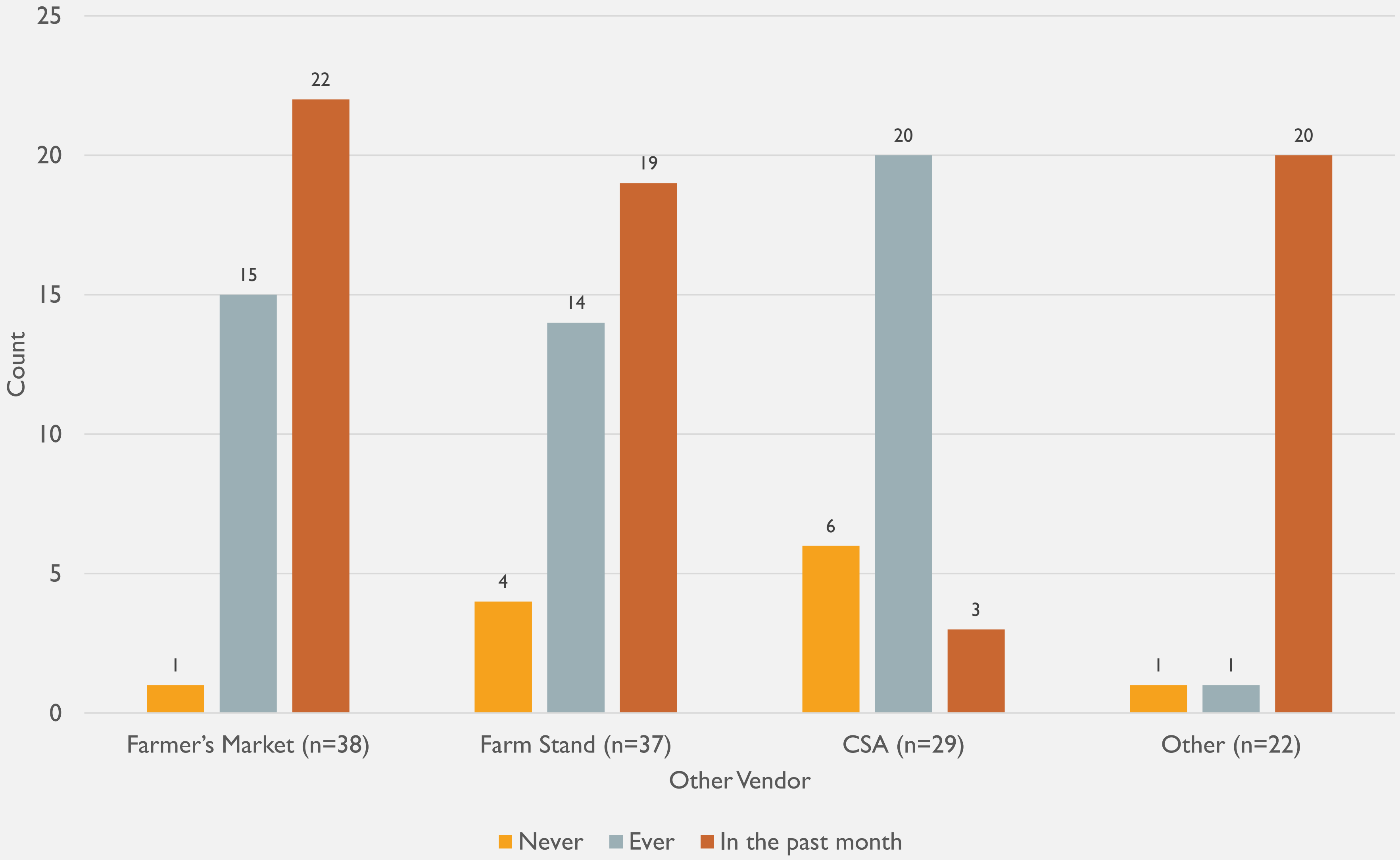
LEVEL OF SATISFACTION



HOW OFTEN DO YOU SHOP AT THIS STORE? (n=32)



WHERE ELSE DO YOU SHOP FOR LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE?



RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- The average age was **60 years old** (n=39).
- 90% were **female** (n=40).
- 98% were **white** (n=41).
- Traveled an average of **6 minutes** to purchase the box (n=42).
- Average of **1.9 adults** in household (n=42).
- Average of **0.4 children** in their household (n=41).
- 42.5% had household incomes over $75,000 (n=40)


REFLECTIONS

POST-SEASON REFLECTIONS FROM EXTENSION, FARMERS AND RETAILERS

- What worked well?
- What didn't work?
- What's next for the model?

WHAT WORKED WELL? (1 OF 2)

- Partners were motivated
  - Farmers ready to explore new market channels because of market saturation or excess capacity.
  - Farmers were primarily motivated by values; they wanted to feed their community. CSA farmers saw opportunity to educate community members who haven't tried CSA in the past.
  - Many retailers wanted to increase their stock of produce and provide more veggies to their community.
- Direct mailers and News releases worked
  - The direct mailers helped boost sales.
  - News releases in local papers contributed to increased sales.
  - But interest generated from above quickly waned after 1 month. Regular waves of outreach is necessary to keep info fresh in consumers' minds.

WHAT WORKED WELL? (2 OF 2)

"It's literally a one-minute's drive down the road for me. Honestly, I could have hitched up a bike trail or I just run the stuff down there, that sort of stuff. That was the nice thing about it."
– WA Farmer 1

- Convenient for most of the farmers
  - Farmers with DTC models already aligned with the farm box process were less inconvenienced and happier with the model. This may be because the farmers…
    - Already had to pre-pack and deliver boxes for their CSA
    - Did not drive out of the way for delivery
- Dedicated contact for both farmers and retailers
  - Having additional hands to check-in and work directly with partners at the beginning, helped provide smoother sailing throughout the season.
  - Where either the farmer or retailer was very proactive, the need for dedicated "extra" hands was not necessary for the entire season.

WHAT DIDN’T WORK WELL? (1 OF 2)

“[…] why is it six boxes one week and then three weeks in a row there's zero. Like, "Huh? What happened there?" So, kind of figuring it out, you know.”
- WA Farmer 3

- Quantity of sale
  - Farmers did not sell as many boxes during the year as they expected.
  - Farmers noted that sales were low but they were hopeful that the model can work.
- For retailers, the lack of collateral sales didn’t help.
  - Retailers experienced more foot traffic but found that most purchasers of the box did not purchase additional items in the store, a fact that is corroborated by the purchaser survey.
- For Consumers
  - Price-point
  - Did not lead to creation of loyal customers

WHAT DIDN'T WORK WELL (2 OF 2)

"**I tried to do the posting every week of what veggies were there. […] We probably could've sold a few more boxes if we had more information in the store about it, but we were just doing so much and were a little bit exhausted. So we didn't like talk about it but we could've told more people.**" – VT Retailer 5A

- Additional time on administration for both farmers and retailers
  - Both farmers and retailers needed additional time for administration than expected. Most participants noted between 1-3 hours of additional work per week.
  - Retailers, typically the store manager, spent time to train
- Communication
  - There were difficulties in communication between the farmers and retailers.
  - Above led to issues in payment, ordering, delivery. However, those in smaller communities were able to resolve these issues easier.
- Ownership of the model was lacking
  - Neither the farmer nor the retailer took full ownership of the model, leading to confusion with order, delivering and payment processes, limited marketing, and possibly low sales.

WHAT'S NEXT… FARM-CENTRIC OR WHOLESALE?

"Just like cut out that retailer person in terms of having to take the orders, having to communicate with them because they're busy too." – WA Farmer 2

- **Farm-centric:** The farmer takes care of the ordering, payment, packing and delivery process. The retail site becomes only a drop off-site.
- **Wholesale:** The farmer only takes care of packing and delivery process. The retailer handles the ordering, storage and payment process; they can also mark up the price of the box. In this model, if they do not sell the box, they must eat the cost of the box.
- Farmers thought a farm-centric model, where the farmer is in control of the order and payment processes, would be better since retailers are often busy with higher priorities. Further, many farmers are used to taking payment and felt more comfortable cutting down the retailer intermediary on this aspect of the model.
- Most retailers agreed that it would be better for the farmer to take full ownership of the process. One of the primary reasons for this is because there is little profit that can be made for the retailer in this model.

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