

# URBAN AGRICULTURE

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF INDIANA'S URBAN AGRICULTURALISTS



Diversified Farming and Food Systems  
[purdue.edu/dffs/](http://purdue.edu/dffs/)  
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## WHO ARE INDIANA'S URBAN AGRICULTURALISTS?

Urban agriculture (UA) strives to address local food insecurity issues in cities and suburban areas and comes in many forms - community gardens, green roofs, reclaimed vacant lots, and indoor farms. Purdue Extension conducted a needs assessment, which included an online survey, focused on individuals across Indiana who are involved in any type of UA to better serve this growing sector. This bulletin presents the demographic information collected in this state-wide survey and compares the findings with those collected by two national surveys<sup>1,2</sup>.

### SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:

#### 61.3% FEMALE

The majority of respondents identified as female (61.3%), while 36.6% as male, and 2.2% preferred not to answer.

#### 34% RESIDE IN MARION COUNTY

Marion County (Indianapolis) accounted for the highest concentration of urban agriculturalists, however, respondents reside in 22 counties across the state.

#### 9.8% BLACK

While most respondents identified as white (83.7%), nearly 10 percent identified as Black or African American. This percentage is higher than other national agricultural surveys and mirrors the share of population in Indiana (9.6%) who identified with this racial category in the 2020 US Census<sup>3</sup>.

## CREATING THE SURVEY

The assessment team sought to maximize engagement with UA clientele, involving stakeholder feedback at multiple steps of an iterative survey development process. Purdue Extension initiated the process by hosting listening sessions in the three largest metropolitan counties in the state: Allen County (Fort Wayne), Lake County (Gary), and Marion County (Indianapolis). The UA Extension Educator in each of those counties invited 6-8 farmers to join in a conversation about their farms, communities, challenges, and priorities they would like to see Extension address. Nathan Shoaf and Dr. Laura Ingwell conducted farm visits at many different UA operations as a follow-up to the listening sessions to engage in one-on-one conversations with participants to further inform the development of the survey. A subset of UA farmers received a consultation fee to review the survey instrument to ensure it was linguistically appropriate and reflected their needs and wants. This valuable feedback led to final changes to the survey instrument.

The survey was created in Qualtrics and was distributed via email lists of individuals who attended previous Purdue Extension events. Community partners including the Indiana Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) and the Indiana Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helped disseminate the survey. It was also shared on social media and through other NGOs, including the Hoosier Young Farmer Coalition. It is not known how many individuals received the survey; however, 207 respondents accessed the online tool. It was completed by 95 and partially completed by 28, representing 59.4% of the respondents that accessed the tool online.



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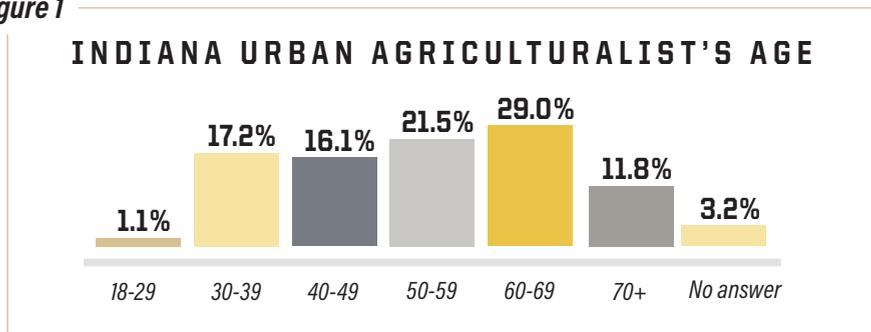
To gain insight into the unique characteristics of Indiana urban agriculturalists, the survey's findings are compared with the results from two national surveys:

- The 2017 Census of Agriculture Farm Producers conducted by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service <sup>1</sup> which captured all farmers, not just those practicing UA;
- The 2016 UA baseline survey published by the National Center for Appropriate Technology in the ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture program <sup>2</sup>.

### AGE

The Indiana UA survey presented six age categories from which to choose (Figure 1). 34.4% of the Indiana respondents were under 50, and 50% of the respondents in the survey belonged to the 50-69 age group. While an average age cannot be provided, it can be inferred that Indiana urban agriculturalists are younger than the national average for all farmers (57.5 years, 2017 Census) but skew older than the 2016 UA baseline study (44 years).

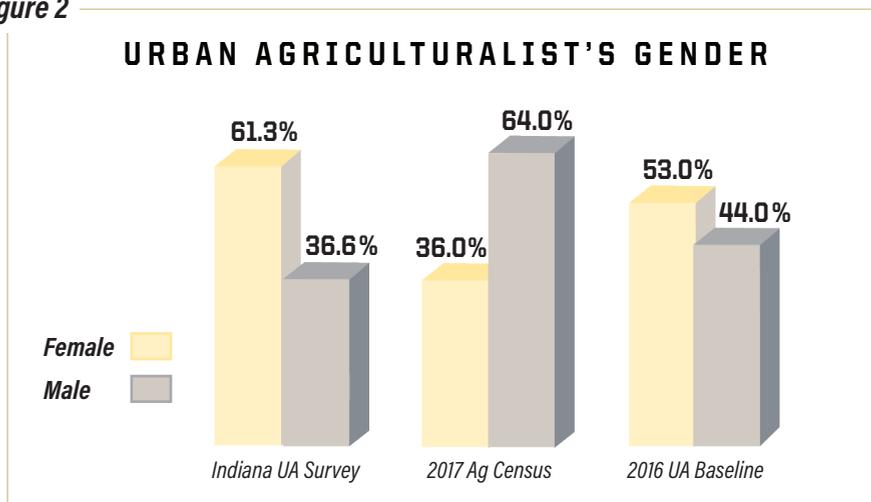
Figure 1



### GENDER

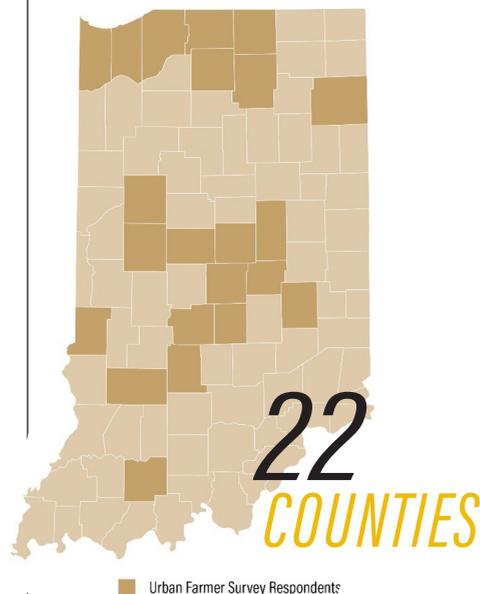
Indiana urban agriculturalists are significantly more likely to identify as female than the average US farmer. 61.3% of the Indiana UA survey respondents identified as female while only 36% of the 2017 Census did so. While this result was anticipated, it was even higher compared to the 2016 UA baseline survey (53%).

Figure 2



Marissa Renz of Plant Happiness, LLC in Fort Wayne, IN. Photo by Charles Jischke

## WHERE ARE INDIANA'S URBAN AGRICULTURALISTS?



Purdue's attention to, and investment in, UA began in Marion County. Faculty and staff have worked for years to build relationships with growers and partnering organizations to develop and deliver programs that support the industry.

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# SURVEY INSIGHTS



Danielle Guerin from Soul Food Project Indy in Indianapolis, IN. Photo by Charles Jischke

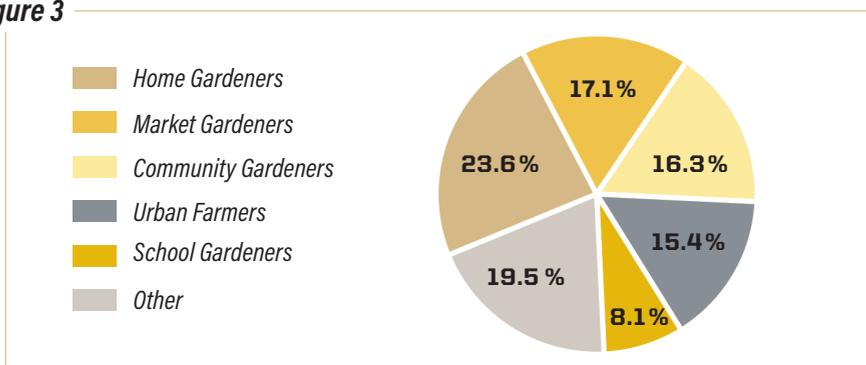
## ETHNICITY & RACE

The ethnicity of Indiana urban agriculturalists (Hispanic/Non-Hispanic) was very similar to that of both national agricultural surveys but lower than what was recorded for the state in the 2020 US Census<sup>3</sup>. 3.3% identified as Hispanic, 84% as non-Hispanic, and 4% preferred not to answer. Most respondents identified their race as white (83.7%), followed by Black or African American (9.8%), some other race (2.2%), two or more races (1.1%) and 3.3% preferred not to answer. No respondents identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The percentage identifying as Black closely matched the share of population in Indiana (9.6%) who identified with this racial category in the 2020 US Census and was much higher than the two national ag surveys. Only 1.3% of farmers in the 2017 Ag Census and 5% of the 2016 baseline UA survey identified as Black.

## AGRICULTURIST IDENTITY

UA is a broad umbrella, and the Indiana survey asked respondents to self-identify with one of several types of "gardeners." 23.6% of respondents identify as home gardeners, followed by market gardeners (17.1%), community gardeners (16.3%), urban farmers (15.4%), and school gardeners (8.1%). The remaining 19.5% associated with a variety of other options.

Figure 3



1. USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017 Census of Agriculture. Complete data available at [www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus](http://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus).

2. Oberholtzer, Lydia, Carolyn Dimitri, and Andy Pressman. "Urban Agriculture in the United States: Baseline Findings of a Nationwide Survey." NCAT, 2016.

3. US Census Bureau, 2020 US Census. Complete data available at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/data/interactive-maps.html>.

01

### Consider the preferences of female urban agriculturalists

The high response of female farmers is valuable to consider when creating and delivering programs. Women prefer to learn from other women, value time for networking at events, and prefer interactive learning opportunities. Women also value personal contacts and are more likely to engage and participate once personal contact has been made.

02

### Continue to build relationships and trust with BIPOC communities

The comparatively high number of Black respondents to the survey suggest that Purdue Extension's efforts to build relationships with BIPOC farmers in Indiana have been successful. However, based on respondent numbers alone, it is evident that there are more Black farmers who did not complete the survey. Representation among other racial and ethnic groups was low compared to the state's demographics. Purdue Extension must continue building relationships and trust among underrepresented communities and invest in resource development that is culturally relevant and accessible such as translating resources and programs into Spanish and other languages.

03

### Continued need for state-wide support for UA

The geographic distribution of respondents throughout the state demonstrates the widespread participation in urban agriculture and need for programming and resources throughout the state.