

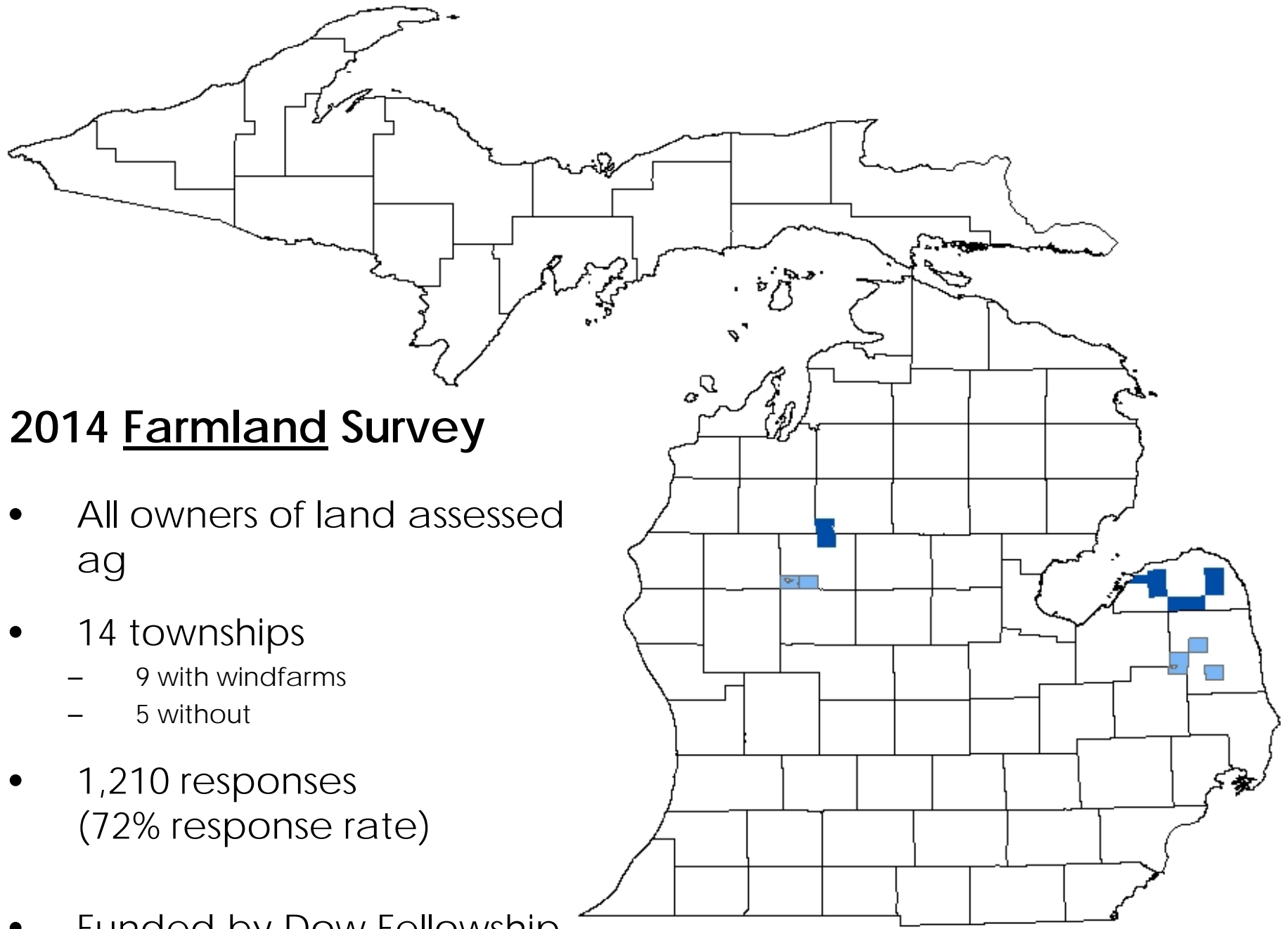
# Lessons Learned from MI's Windfarms

MMEA Fall Conference  
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Sarah Mills, PhD

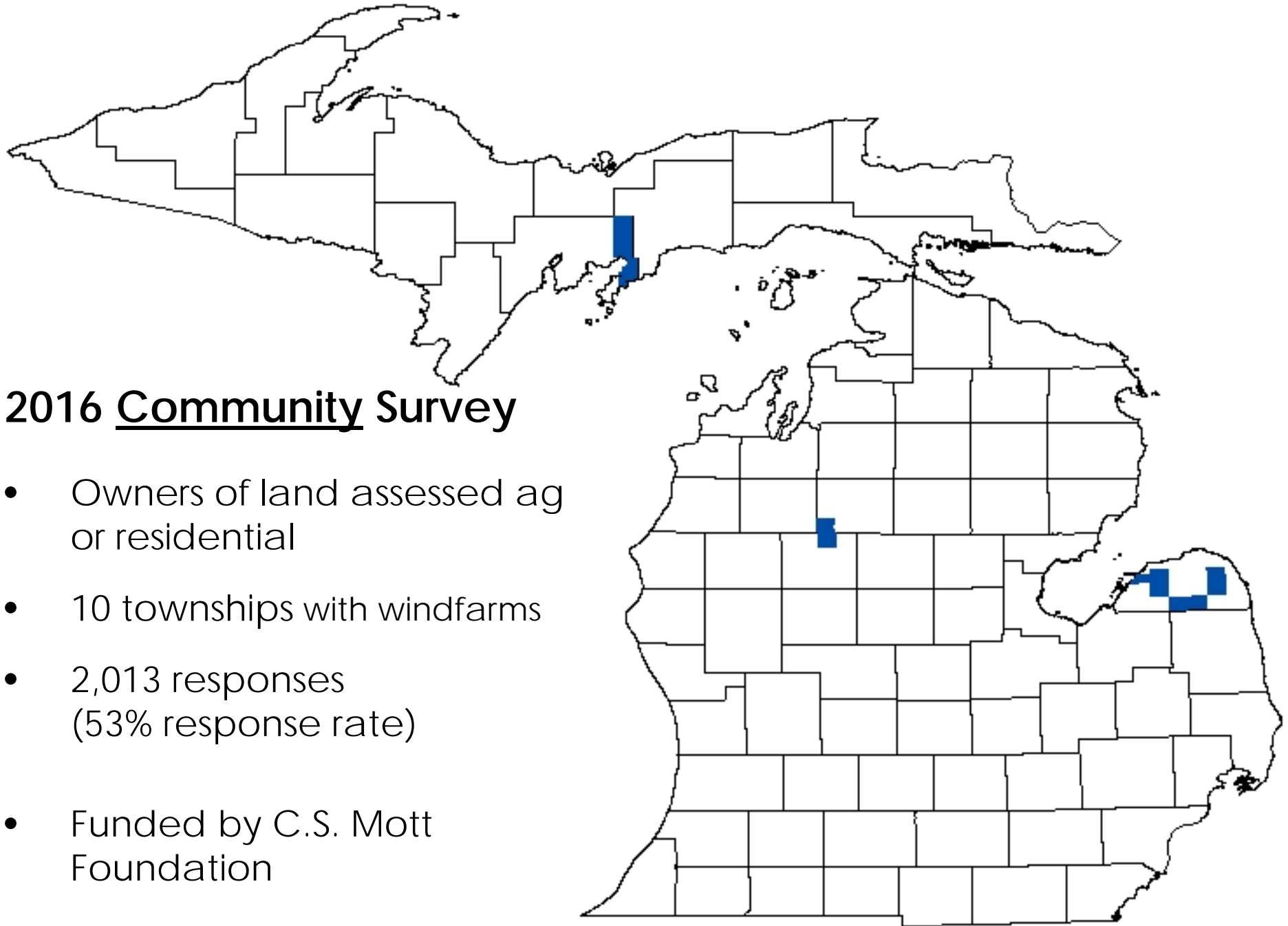
# Why this research?

- Investigate Gratiot & Huron County claims of farmland preservation
- Understand why such different experiences



## 2014 Farmland Survey

- All owners of land assessed ag
- 14 townships
  - 9 with windfarms
  - 5 without
- 1,210 responses (72% response rate)
- Funded by Dow Fellowship



## 2016 Community Survey

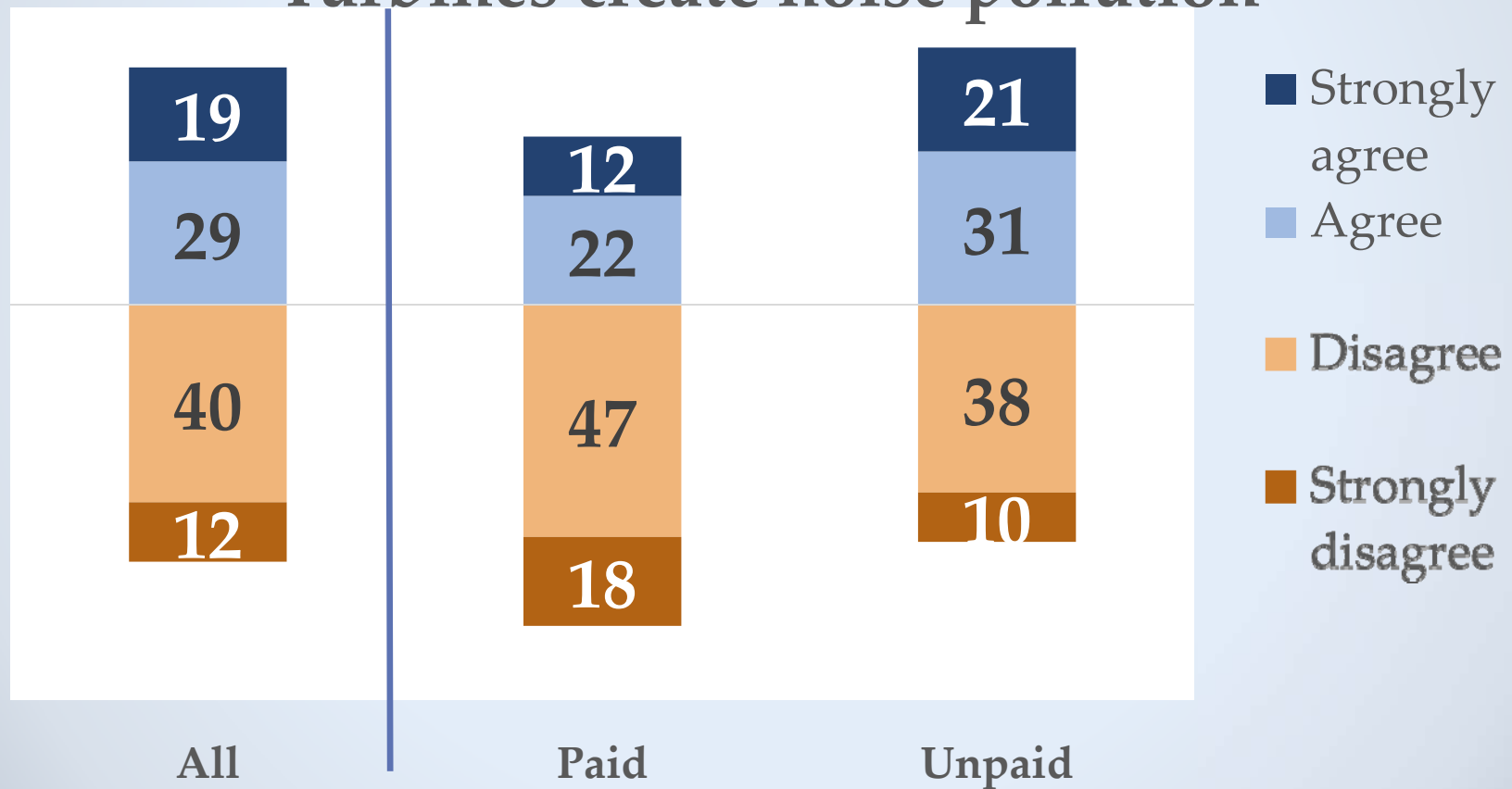
- Owners of land assessed ag or residential
- 10 townships with windfarms
- 2,013 responses  
(53% response rate)
- Funded by C.S. Mott Foundation

# Data about the negative impacts

- Views on noise, visual impact, property values roughly 50/50
  - Financial stake = rosier view
  - OR
  - no financial stake = more soured view
  - BUT STILL SPLIT OPINIONS**

# Noise

## Turbines create noise pollution



# Data about the negative impacts

- Views on noise, visual impact, property values roughly 50/50
  - Financial stake = rosier view
  - OR
  - no financial stake = more soured view

**BUT STILL SPLIT OPINIONS**
- Most don't (72%) see health impacts, but some do
- Majority (70%) don't think it's divided the community
  - Even in some pretty contentious projects

# Data about the positive impacts

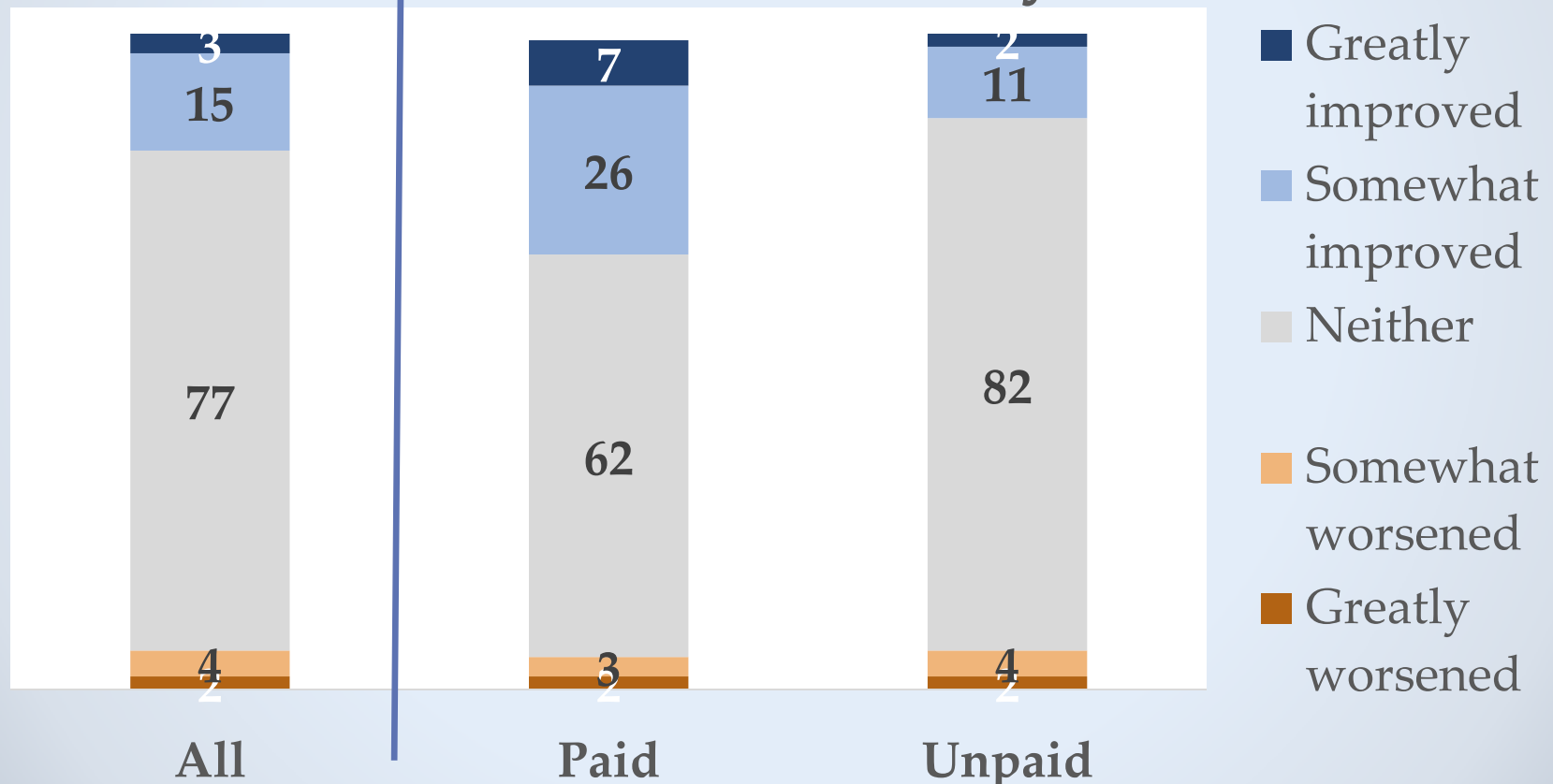
- Most (78%) see job creation with caveat about types of jobs
- Majority (60%+) haven't seen changes to roads, townships services, county services, or local schools
  - Despite pretty substantial payments
  - Likely because of how money being used: plug holes, do more of same



# Tax Benefits

\$2.749 Million to county gov't in Huron County in 2015

## Turbines' effect on county services

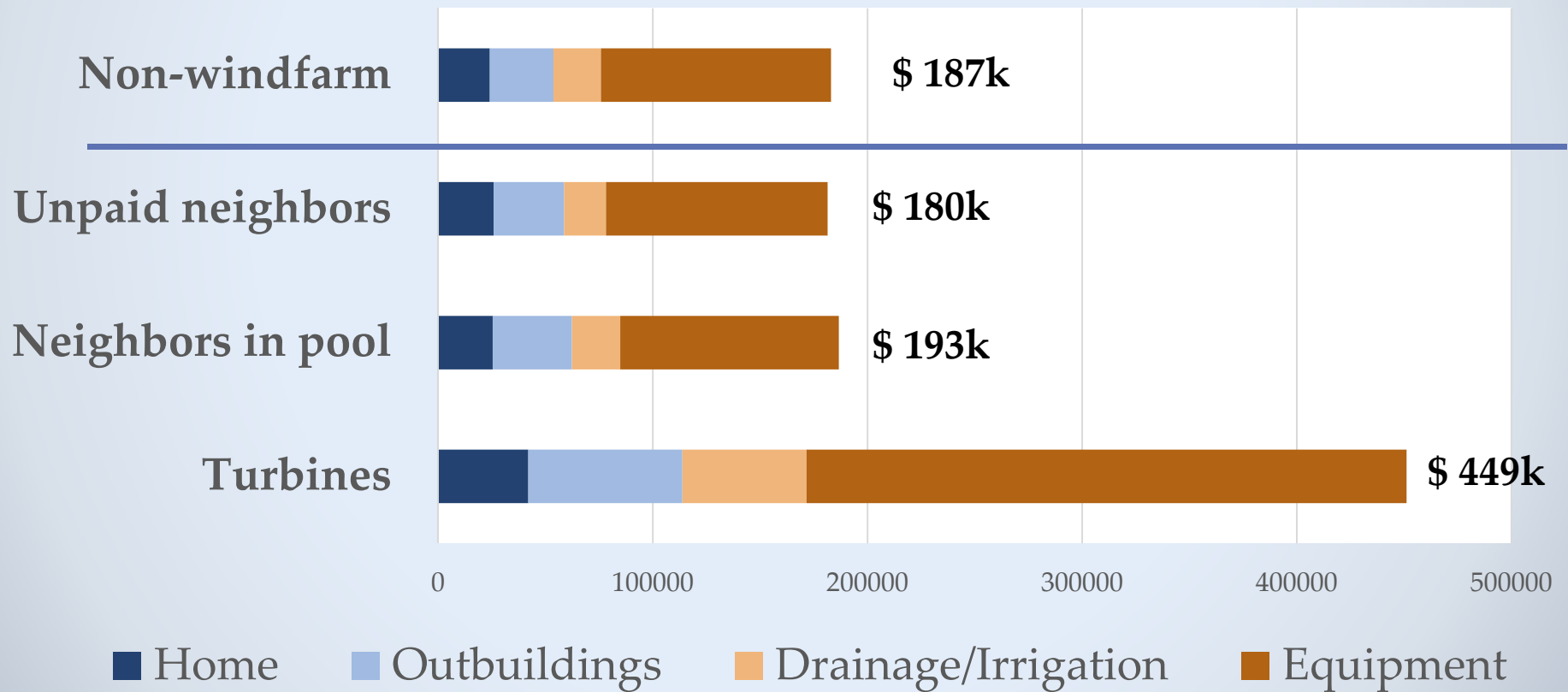


# Data about the positive impacts

- Most (78%) see job creation with caveat about types of jobs
- Majority (60%+) haven't seen changes to roads, townships services, county services, or local schools
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  - Likely because of how money being used: plug holes, do more of same
- Landowner payments linked to substantial increase in on-farm investment (2x neighbors, control) and increase in succession planning

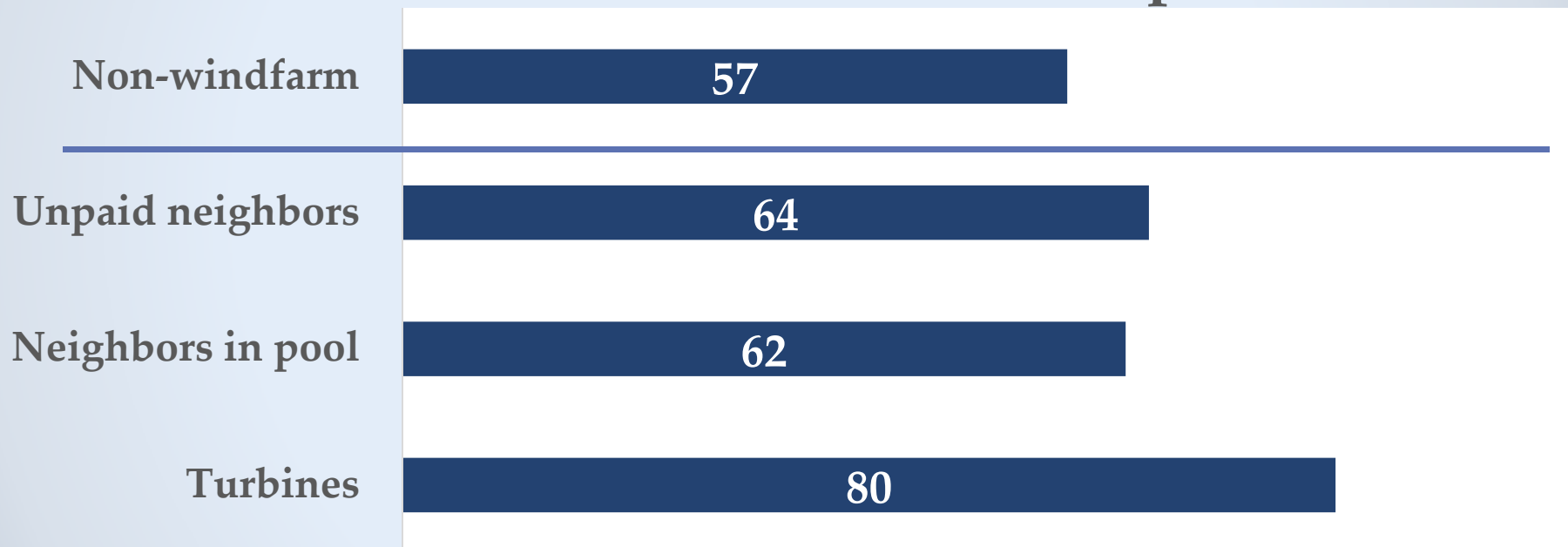
# Farm Investment

Investments over 5 years: 2009-2013



# Farm Succession

% that have farm succession plan



# Overall drivers of attitudes

- Direct compensation
- Type of land owned
  - secondary vs. primary residence
  - farmland / rental property *only*
- Being within earshot of turbines
- Attitudes about process, wind developer

# What Happened with Huron Wind?

- Previous experiences (some good, some bad)
  - Many different wind developers in Huron County
  - Tax table changes a huge concern
- Turbine fatigue: “we’ve done our part”
- County voting = lots of heterogeneity
  - Not all farmers/farming families
  - Yeas: 26% - 54%
  - Turnout: 9% - 61%
- Those who cared, voted

# What's the Lesson?

- Windfarms = economic development proposition
  - Compatible with ag
  - Not with residential growth, tourism
- Indirect economic benefits not felt by average landowner
- Business models that directly pay more landowners keep the peace
- Wind developers, local officials need to act transparently



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# The CLOSUP Wind Project

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