# The Future of Hunting and the Shooting Sports

## Research-Based Recruitment and Retention Strategies



**Responsive Management
and
The National Shooting Sports Foundation**

# THE FUTURE OF HUNTING AND THE SHOOTING SPORTS

## RESEARCH-BASED RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

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### FINAL REPORT

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Although numerous people assisted with this project, any errors, omissions, or typographical mistakes in the report are the sole responsibility of Responsive Management.

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to better understand the factors related to hunting and sport shooting participation, identify strategies to better meet the needs of current and potential participants, and more effectively communicate to the public about these activities.

Data suggest that the future of hunting and the shooting sports is precarious. The number of active hunters and sport shooters has decreased in the U.S., and fewer young people are entering these sports. However, while data indicate that participation in the U.S. has been declining, there are strategies that fish and wildlife agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry can pursue to retain hunters and shooters in these sports, to get them to hunt and shoot more often, to recruit new hunters and shooters into these sports, and to gain wider public acceptance of these activities among non-participants.

There are many reasons hunting and sport shooting participation are important to America. One reason is simply the number of hunters and shooters in the United States—this is a large constituency. In 2006, 12.5 million Americans 16 years old and older hunted (USFWS/US Census 2007), and almost 19 million participate in the shooting sports in any given year (NSGA 2007). The number grows when considering a longer timeframe, which is reasonable, as many sportsmen do not hunt or shoot every year. Indeed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that 18.6 million Americans 16 years old and older hunted at least once in the 5-year period of 2002-2006 (USFWS/US Census 2007).

An overwhelming majority of Americans support hunting and shooting, and support (but not participation) has been increasing during the past decade. Overall, 78% approve of hunting, and 16% oppose (RM 2006a). Meanwhile, 79% approve of legal shooting, and only 13% disapprove (RM 2006b). Additionally, the American public thinks that it is important that state fish and wildlife agencies provide opportunities for recreational hunting and shooting.

Surveys show that the opportunity to hunt and shoot is important to the American public, even though many of these individuals will never hunt or shoot themselves.  In a recent study in the southeastern United States, 79% of these states' residents said it is very or somewhat important that people have the opportunity to hunt in their state (58% said it is *very* important) (RM 2005a), and in another study in the northeastern U.S., 75% of residents said it is very or somewhat important that people have the opportunity to hunt in their state (53% said it is *very* important) (RM 2004a).

Sportsmen are essential to species protection and species management, as well.  Game management programs, which are funded by sportsmen's dollars, have brought back numerous wildlife species from unhealthy population levels, such as wild turkey, wood duck, white-tailed deer, beaver, pronghorn antelope, and Canada goose.  At the beginning of the 20th Century, there were approximately 650,000 wild turkeys nationwide, but thanks to wise wildlife management and aggressive reintroduction programs funded by sportsmen's dollars, today there are an estimated 5.4 million wild turkeys nationwide (NSSF 2006).  Other numbers demonstrate that sportsmen have been a catalyst for wildlife conservation:  from a low of approximately 12,000 animals, pronghorn antelope have increased to 1 million; from a low of 40,000, Rocky Mountain elk have increased to 1 million; from being rarely seen, wood ducks have increased to 5.5 million; and the trumpeter swan population has increased from a low of only 73 individuals to approximately 25,000 (NSSF 2006).

In addition to species protection, sportsmen are integral to habitat conservation.  Wildlife management efforts and advocacy, funded and fueled by sportsmen, have conserved millions of acres of land, thereby providing vital habitat for both game and nongame wildlife. For instance, sales of Federal Duck Stamps, most typically purchased by sportsmen, have provided revenue for the purchase or lease of over 5.2 million acres of waterfowl habitat in the U.S. (USFWS 2007a).  Much of these lands are now protected in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System.  Sportsmen's organizations also have protected millions of acres of habitat in the non-profit sector.  Ducks Unlimited has conserved 11.9 million acres of waterfowl habitat throughout North America (Ducks Unlimited 2007).  The National Wild Turkey Federation, using cooperative arrangements, has helped conserve 11.3 million acres of wildlife

habitat (NWTF 2006).  The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has protected 1,000 square miles of elk habitat (RMEF 2007).  Also, SCI has funded and managed many programs dedicated to wildlife conservation, such as work with private landowners in Alaska to provide enough suitable grazing habitat for moose to ensure the viability of the moose population.

The above are only a few of the many examples where sportsmen have played integral roles as donors and advocates for habitat conservation.  Indeed, relative to the general public, sportsmen are more generous with their time and money in conservation efforts: sportsmen are more likely to join and support conservation organizations than are non-sportsmen.  The average hunter donates $53 per year; by comparison, the average U.S. resident donates $32 per year to conservation organizations (RM 2002a).

Hunting has had major economic impacts on the U. S. economy, as well.  The *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* indicates that hunters spend at least $22.7 billion on hunting each year (USFWS/US Census 2007).  It is estimated that hunters support 593,000 jobs (Southwick Associates 2007).  Annually, expenditures related to hunting produce $5.0 billion in Federal tax revenue and $4.2 billion in state and local tax revenue (Southwick Associates 2007).

Shooting also has important economic impacts on the U.S. economy.  Research found that the typical recreational target shooter spends, over the course of his or her lifetime, more on equipment and travel than does the typical hunter, with an estimated average expenditure of more than $75,000 for a typical recreational target shooter (NSSF/Southwick Associates 2008).

Sportsmen wield considerable political clout.  A large percentage are registered to vote, and more than a third of them say that candidates' conservation policies and views have a *major* influence on their voting behavior (RM 2006c).  It should not be overlooked that in 2004 both major Presidential candidates—Republican and Democrat—openly displayed their participation in hunting and actively courted the American hunter and sport shooter.  And sportsmen and sportsmen's issues cut across political boundaries. One recent survey of sportsmen found that hunters and shooters are

strongly represented among Republicans, Democrats, and those with no political affiliation (RM 2006b).

Four primary components made up this study. Phase I entailed a literature review of past research pertaining to hunting and the shooting sports. Phase II entailed a series of focus groups in diverse geographic areas of active hunters and shooters, lapsed hunters and shooters, non-hunters and non-shooters, and anti-hunters and anti-shooters. Note that half of the focus groups were conducted after the surveys described in Phase III below; these focus groups were conducted specifically to obtain more information about topics identified in Phases I, II, and III of the project.

Phase III entailed two nationwide telephone surveys: the first on a sample of hunters and shooters, and the second on a sample of the general population (the latter sample containing non-hunters and non-shooters). Throughout this report, these surveys are referred to as "Phase III" when they are referenced. The methodologies for the focus groups and telephone surveys are discussed in "Chapter 10. Methodology."

Phase IV of this study entailed a compilation and examination of all the data obtained in the previous three phases of the project, as well as the production of the final report. This project was funded under Multistate Conservation Grant CT-M-6-0, awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## NOTES ON READING THE TEXT

This report includes original source data (i.e., data obtained from the focus groups and telephone surveys conducted specifically for this project) and secondary source data (i.e., data obtained from governmental agencies or from previous studies, including previous studies conducted by Responsive Management). References in this text to the original source data obtained from the focus groups and telephone surveys will be referred to as Phase II (focus group research) and Phase III (the telephone surveys). When reference is made to secondary data, such as other, previous surveys conducted by Responsive Management or other researchers, the text indicates the source.

In many of the graphs, reference is made to "active" hunters and shooters and "inactive" hunters and shooters. Active refers to those who participated in their respective sport in the past 2 years. Inactive refers to those who participated at some time in their life but not within the past 2 years. Note that the survey actually tracked two sub-groups within the "inactive" category, which sometimes show up in the graphs, where applicable: inactive participants who participated in the past 5 years (but by definition did not participate in the past 2 years) and inactive participants who participated at some time in their life but not within the past 5 years.

This report uses the term, "sportsmen," in the gender-neutral sense to refer to both sportsmen and sportswomen.

Because this report contains secondary source data as well as primary data, sources are referenced throughout the text. The following are the source note abbreviations that are used.
    IHEA refers to the International Hunter Education Association.
    NSGA refers to the National Sporting Goods Association.
    NSSF refers to the National Shooting Sports Foundation.
    RM refers to Responsive Management.
    USCG refers to the U.S. Coast Guard.
    USFWS refers to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
    USFWS/US Census refers to the *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* that is conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in conjunction with the U.S. Census Bureau.

Any opinions contained herein, as well as any errors or omissions, are the responsibility of the authors. Although this work was sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the research was carried out independently, any conclusions expressed in this book do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

# CHAPTER 2
# PARTICIPATION IN HUNTING AND
# THE SHOOTING SPORTS

Differing figures have been presented regarding the number of
hunters and shooters in the U.S. These differences usually stem from
the different sources of data and the differing operational definitions
of hunters and shooters in the data sources. "Operational
definitions" include, for instance, the timeframe of participation,
with some studies asking about people's participation within the
previous 2 years, and other studies asking about participation in the
previous 1 year. Other differences in operational definitions include
the level of participation (whether doing something only once fits the
definition of participant or whether an activity must be done *more*
than once). Finally, for hunting, there is a difference between
determining participation based on surveys (which measure
participation regardless of whether a license is required) or on
number of licenses sold.

## HUNTING PARTICIPATION

➢ **Between 14 million and 18 million U.S. residents participate
   in hunting in any given year. This represents approximately
   5% of the U.S. population.**

According to the *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and
Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, which has been conducted every 5
years since 1955 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S.
Census Bureau, 14.1 million U.S. residents aged 6 years old or older
went hunting in 2006 (12.5 million residents 16 years and older, and
1.6 million residents 6-15 years old). This number translates to
approximately 5% of the total U.S. population (USFWS/US Census
2007).

According to hunting license sales data collected by the individual
states and compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (known as
Federal Assistance data because the data are used to allocate funding
under the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration

Programs), 14.6 million hunters bought at least one hunting license in 2007 (the most recent year for which data are available) (USFWS 2008).

Another data source, the National Sporting Goods Association, estimates that 17.8 million hunters (excluding those who went bowhunting only) aged 7 years old or older participated in hunting more than once in 2006 (NSGA 2007).

> **Data suggest that there is "churn" rate of approximately 37%—that this is the percentage of hunters who participate periodically.  On the other hand, approximately 63% are "annual" hunters.**

Among active hunters (those who hunted in the past 2 years), 63% hunted all 5 of the previous 5 years (Figure 2.1).  (Among all hunters who had hunted at least once within the previous 5 years, 49% had hunted all 5 of those years, giving an upper limit to the churn rate of 51%.  Note, though, that the true churn rate is probably closer to the 37% figure because encompassed in "has hunted in the past 5 years" are many who hunted only 1 year of the 5 previous years, meaning that they may have hunted only once and should perhaps not be included in determining a churn rate among "hunters."  Nonetheless, the data are valuable in providing this upper limit to the churn rate.)

Other researchers have also reported similar churn rates among hunters.  Enck and Decker (1991) and Teisl et al. (1991) report that from 59% to 85% of hunters hunted every year since they first started hunting, varying by species hunted, by weapon used, and by state.  Trend data from previous Responsive Management research on factors related to hunting participation in the U.S. found that 71% of hunters indicated they had hunted every year during the previous 5 years (RM 1995).

**Figure 2.1.  Churn Rate Among Hunters**

**How many of the past 5 years have you hunted?**
**(Asked of hunters who hunted in the past 5 years.)**
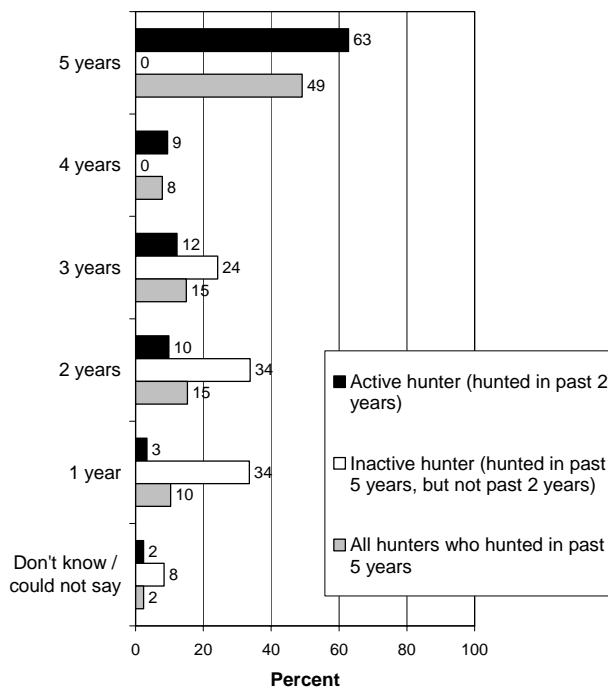


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **Among all those who ever participated in hunting (even if only once), just over half participated in the past 5 years.**

A breakdown of all the hunters in the general population (in this case, defined as anybody who ever went hunting) found that 43% are active hunters (they hunted in the previous 2 years) and another 14% are recently lapsed hunters (they hunted in the past 5 years, but not in the past 2 years).  The remaining 43% have hunted at some time in their life but have not done so in the past 5 years (Figure 2.2) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 2.2. Composition of Hunters in the General Population**
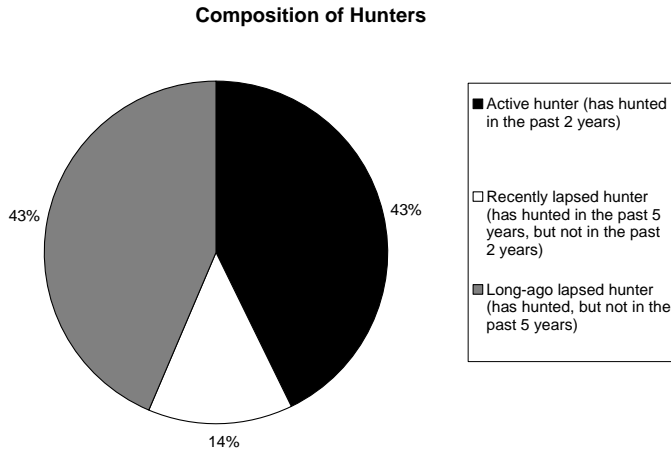
**Composition of Hunters**

43%                 43%

■ Active hunter (has hunted in the past 2 years)

□ Recently lapsed hunter (has hunted in the past 5 years, but not in the past 2 years)

■ Long-ago lapsed hunter (has hunted, but not in the past 5 years)

14%

Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

An analysis of Phase III data on active and inactive (referred to as "lapsed" in Figure 2.2) hunters found that *active* hunters are more likely than are inactive hunters to have the following characteristics:

- Is very interested in going hunting in the next year.
- Has taken somebody new to the sport of hunting.
- Currently has family members who hunt.
- Has fished in the past 5 years.
- Has camped in the past 5 years.
- Has friends who hunt.
- Is very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year.
- Is between 18 and 34 years old.
- Has gone boating in the past 5 years.
- Has been invited to go hunting with a friend.
- Has had a child ask to be taken hunting.
- Has gone hiking in the past 5 years.
- Rates access for hunting in state of residence as excellent or good.
- Has viewed wildlife in the past 5 years.
- Is male.
- Was first taken hunting by his or her father.
- Rates access to private lands for hunting in state of residence as excellent or good.
- Has gone water-skiing in the past 5 years.

- Lives in a small city or town or a rural area.
- Has been a member or donated to a conservation or sportsman's organization in the past 2 years.
- Rates access to public lands for hunting in state of residence as excellent or good.
- Goes sport shooting in addition to hunting.
- Grew up in a household with firearms.
- Has visited a state or national park in the past 5 years.
- Thinks few or no hunters drink alcohol while hunting.
- Was younger than the median age when first went hunting.
- Had a group or person who taught him or her to hunt.
- Has a household income of less than $80,000.

An analysis of Phase III data indicates that *inactive* hunters are more likely than are active hunters to have the following characteristics:

- Did not indicate interest in going hunting in the next year.
- Has not taken somebody hunting who is new to the sport of hunting.
- Did not indicate interest in going target or sport shooting in the next year.
- Does not currently have family members who hunt.
- Does not have friends who hunt.
- Has not been invited to go hunting with a friend.
- Has not had a child ask to be taken hunting.
- Is 65 years old or older.
- Is female.
- Was not first taken hunting by his or her father.
- Lives in a large city/urban area or a suburban area.
- Has not been a member of nor donated to a conservation or sportsman's organization in the past 2 years.
- Did not grow up in a household with firearms.
- Rates access for hunting in state of residence as fair or poor.
- Thinks most or some hunters drink alcohol while hunting.
- Is between 35 and 64 years old.
- Did not have a group or person who taught him or her to hunt.
- Started hunting when older than the median initiation age of hunters.

➢ **White-tailed deer is, by far, the most commonly hunted species, distantly followed by wild turkey, upland game birds, rabbit or hare, squirrel, and waterfowl. Rifles and shotguns predominate as hunting equipment typically used—for each, a majority say that they typically use it. Other more specialized types of equipment are used by less than a quarter of active hunters.**

White-tailed deer is the most commonly hunted species among active hunters, with fully 78% naming this as a species that they typically hunt (Figure 2.3) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Other commonly hunted species are wild turkey (23%), upland game birds such as pheasant, quail, and chukar (16%), rabbit or hare (16%), squirrel (16%), and waterfowl (14%).

**Figure 2.3. Species Typically Hunted**

**Which species do you typically hunt?**
**(Among active hunters.)**
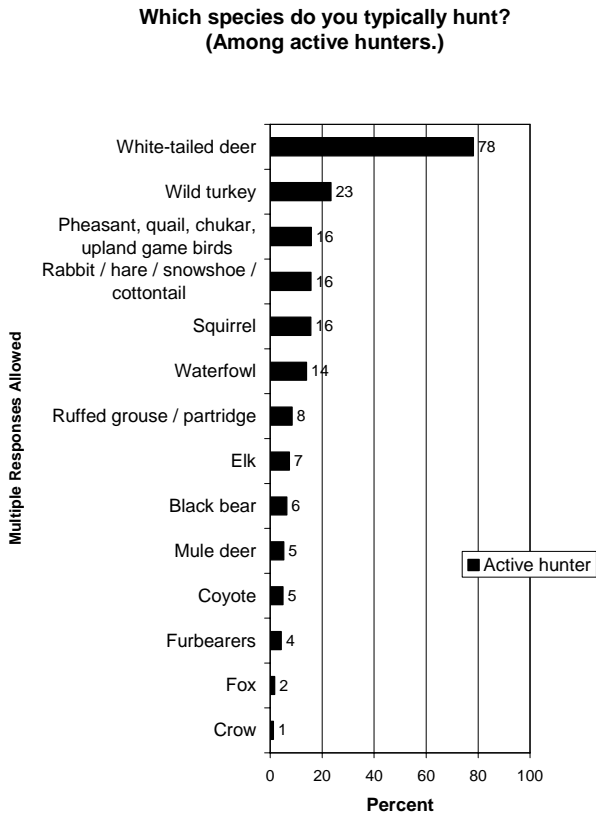


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

Rifles (typically used by 69% of active hunters) and shotguns (55%) are the most-used hunting equipment. Meanwhile, 23% of active hunters typically use archery equipment, 13% a muzzleloader rifle, and 8% a handgun (Figure 2.4) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Note that active hunters and inactive hunters are similar in use of rifles and shotguns, but inactive hunters' use of other types of equipment is lower than that of active hunters.

## Figure 2.4.  Equipment Typically Used by Hunters

**What types of equipment do/did you typically use?**
**(Among all hunters.)**
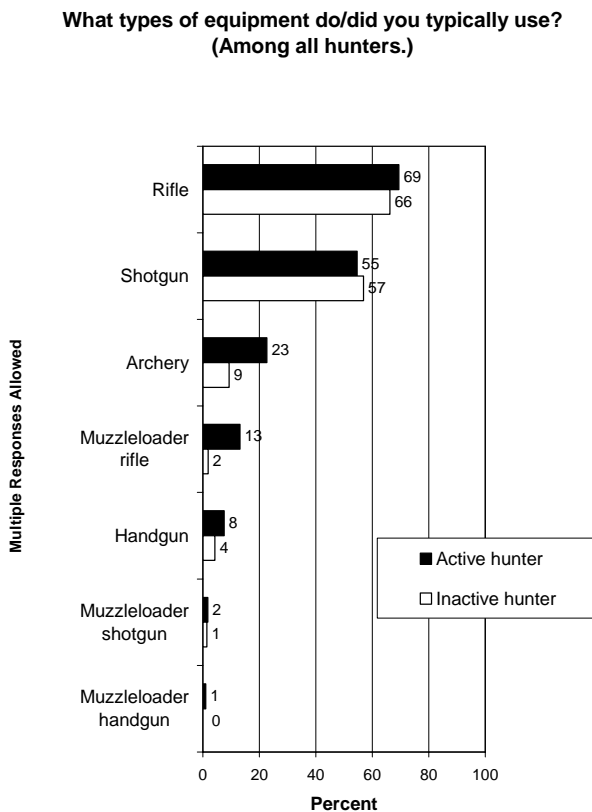


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

> ➢ **Typical hunting companions include friends, fathers, sons, spouses, and brothers.  A relatively low percentage typically hunt alone.**

About a third of active hunters (34%) typically hunt with friends, and 25% typically hunt with their father.  Sons (15%), spouses (13%),

and brothers (12%) are also common hunting companions.
Meanwhile, 14% typically hunt alone (Figure 2.5) (Phase III—RM
2007a).

**Figure 2.5.  Hunters' Typical Hunting Companions**

**With whom do/did you typically hunt?**
**(Among all hunters.)**
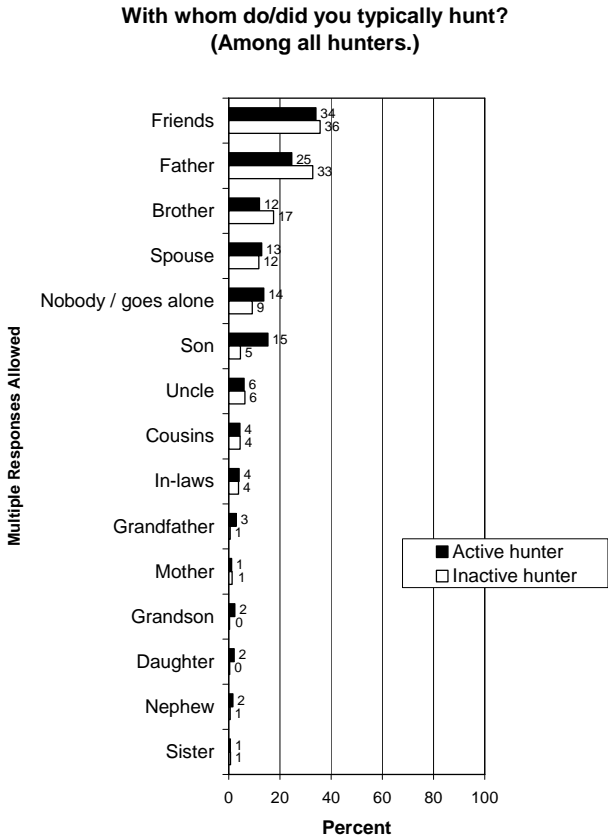


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

> ➤ **About two-thirds of active hunters have taken a hunting**
>   **safety course, and most often the course was mandatory to**
>   **get a license.**

Phase III asked about participation in hunting safety courses, and
65% of active hunters had taken a hunting safety course.  Of those
who took a course, 62% of active hunters say the course was
mandatory.  While a lower percentage of inactive hunters took a
hunting safety course, this may simply be a manifestation that

inactive hunters tend to be older than active hunters, and hunters over a certain age were not subject to mandatory hunting education requirements when they started hunting.

# TRENDS IN HUNTING PARTICIPATION

> ➢ **Hunting participation as measured in absolute numbers as well as a percentage of the U.S. population is declining in the U.S.  (Note that this is nationally; not all states have declining participation in hunting.)**

The data on trends show that hunting participation has declined in recent years both in absolute numbers of hunters and licenses sold (shown below in Figure 2.6) as well as in the percent of the U.S. population (not shown, but by implication since the total population has grown and the number of hunters has declined).

**Figure 2.6.  Trends in Hunting Participation**
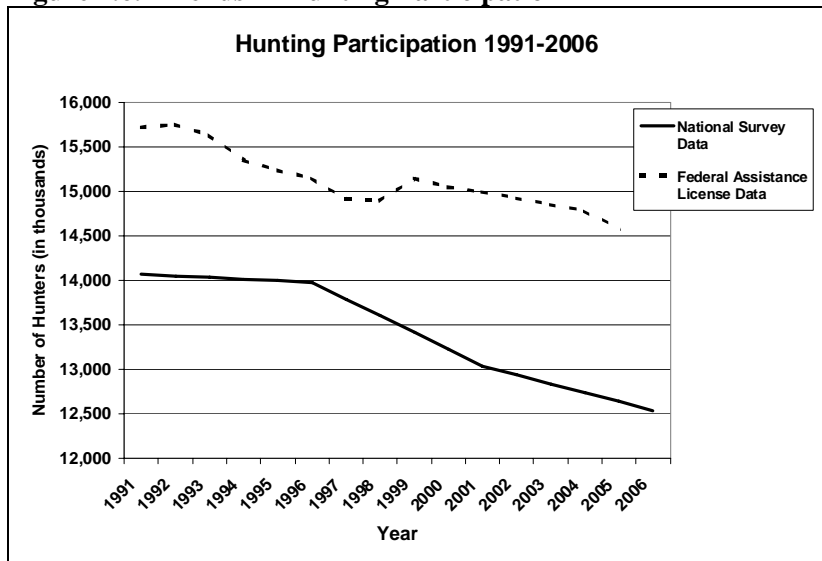


Sources:  USFWS/US Census 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007; USFWS 2007b

A further look at license sales data since 1980 (the comparison above starts at 1991) even more graphically shows the decreasing trend in hunting participation (Figure 2.7).

**Figure 2.7.  Trends in Hunting License Sales Since 1980**

**Hunting License Holders for Nation**



Source:  USFWS 2007b

Changing demographic factors in the U.S. are driving the trend of decreasing hunting participation.  One of the most important trends is the increasing urbanization of the U.S.  Most of the population now lives in non-rural housing, with increasing urbanization expected to continue for some time.  According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1950, 36% of the U.S. population lived in a rural area.  This percentage went down to 30% in 1960, to 25% by 1990, and down to 22% in 2000.  This demographic trend is important because hunting participation is positively correlated with living in a rural area (RM 2004a, 2005a, 2006b).  To compound this factor, an analysis of *National Survey* data found that hunter recruitment was down sharply among urban residents, relative to residents of non-urban areas (Leonard 2007).  Therefore, not only is more of the U.S. becoming urban, but the urban demographic group is becoming even less likely to hunt.

Phase III directly asked active hunters about their trend in hunting participation in the past few years, and the most common answer was that their participation level had remained the same (48%). However, those saying it had decreased (28%) just slightly exceeded those saying it increased (24%).

> ➤ **One recent regression analysis identified three factors**
>   **important to hunting participation trends: housing units per**
>   **square mile, overall geographic distribution of federal**
>   **hunting lands in a state, and the percent of available hunting**
>   **lands in a state that are leased.**

In a study conducted for The Conservation Fund, Responsive
Management (2003a) determined the characteristics of hunting lands
that are correlated to hunting participation rates by ranking physical
and perceptual factors related to hunting lands for each state and
comparing them to participation trends from the *National Survey of
Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* (USFWS/US
Census 1997, 2002) and from license sales data (USFWS 2007b).
Responsive Management ran predictive regression analyses on the
strongest dependent variable, percent change in numbers of total
hunters in the state between 1991 and 2001, using data from the 2001
*National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated
Recreation*. The top two variables significantly related to percent
change in total hunters were housing units per square mile and
overall geographic distribution of all federal hunting lands. A third
variable approached significance (i.e., it was just below the threshold
of statistical significance): the percent of all lands available for
hunting in the state that are leased (i.e., leased hunting lands relative
to all hunting lands) (RM 2003a). It may be that the third variable is
acting as a proxy for proactive agency efforts to secure access rather
than there being some intrinsic quality of leased lands versus other
types of lands, but the research did not determine this.

Another study suggested a link between hunting participation in a
state and the rate of new housing starts (RM 2008a). That study
analyzed 43 variables (including economic data such as the
Consumer Price Index, Dow Jones Industrial Averages, median
income, and NASDAQ yearly averages; demographic statistics
relating to age and ethnicity; weather data on rainfall and average
monthly temperatures; and population density statistics such as
hunters per square mile and housing per square mile) for potential
correlations to increased license sales on a national level. Among
those variables, the rate of new housing starts was significantly
related to decreased license sales: as housing starts increased,
hunting license sales decreased. The correlation could be a result of
two things or a combination of them: that increased urbanization
simply takes away access and available lands, and/or that the

increased construction activity could leave less time for some hunters
to go hunting (Phase III found that many hunters work in the
construction industry).

The other correlation found among the 43 variables was the percent
of the state's population in the 65 to 69 years old category (a proxy
for the aging of the population).  Higher percentages of the
population in that age group (or more simply, the older the
population) were correlated to decreased license sales (RM 2008a).
(Note, however, that the analysis could not determine if the lower
license sales in this group is caused by their not needing a license—
as some states do not require those over a certain age to purchase an
annual license—or whether it is caused by a decline in participation
among this age group.)

Qualitative work within the overall study discussed immediately
above that examined 43 variables also found a relationship between
increased license sales and a state's change in its various license
types (RM 2008a).  Specifically, changes in license types could
include a change in a particular existing license type, the addition of
a new license type, or a discontinuation of a license type.  That data
suggest that the introduction of license types or the introduction of
new privileges or opportunities associated with existing license types
is instrumental in stimulating license purchases.  It may be that those
new or apparently "new" license types put hunting opportunities
back into hunters' consciousness, thus stimulating participation.  In
fact, the findings suggest that in some cases, even those licenses that
are merely repackaged (that is, licenses that have not been changed
or modified significantly except beyond their advertised appearance)
tend to have an increase in sales.

Finally, although new housing starts and the aging population were
found to be statistically correlated with license sales, none of the
other 43 variables showed significant positive or negative
correlations (although some states provided exceptions, none of
which affected the overall results).  Thus, this study is noteworthy as
much for what it did not uncover:  that so few concrete factors
appeared to affect license sales beyond urbanization and an aging
population.

➢ **The downward trend in hunting participation is manifested
in the lower recruitment rates in various geographic areas as**

**well as among males nationally.  It is also manifested in lower retention rates in various geographic areas.**

Leonard (2007) found that initiation rates (which obviously affect subsequent participation rates) declined in every region of the U.S. from 1990 to 2005, particularly the Mountain Region ( a decline of 44%), Pacific Region (46%), and New England (55%).  (Note that the regions are as defined by the USFWS.)  Also, there was a decline of 38% in initiation rate among males (although the rate among females remained fairly constant).  There were large decreases in retention rates in several regions, particularly the Mountain Region (28%) and the Pacific Region (25%).

➢ **Trends in hunting participation need to be put into context of trends regarding participation in outdoor recreation as a whole.  Research suggests declining trends in most outdoor recreation.**

Pergams and Zaradic (2008) analyzed data on visits to national parks, state parks, and national forests, as well as fishing license data and surveys on camping, hiking, and backpacking, with their conclusion being that the number of participants have declined in most of these activities (the exceptions being a slight rise in backpacking and hiking).  The trends in hunting participation, then, are part of an overall trend toward decreasing participation in many outdoor activities.

# SHOOTING PARTICIPATION

➢ **Almost 19 million U.S. residents participate in shooting sports in any given year, excluding hunting, bowhunting, and archery.**

The Superstudy® of Sports Participation estimated that 18.8 million people (7% of the U.S. population age 6 and over) participated in sport shooting in 2005 (not including hunting, bowhunting, or archery).  This includes 13.8 million U.S. residents who participated in target shooting with a rifle, 10.7 million who participated in target shooting with a handgun, 4.0 million who participated in trap/skeet shooting, and 3.0 million who participated in sporting clays in 2005.  The total number of participants for target shooting with a handgun

or rifle was 16.9 million (6%) in 2005.  Additionally, approximately 6.6 million people (3%) participated in archery (American Sports Data, Inc. 2006).

➢ **Data suggest that there is "churn" rate of approximately 33% for shooting—that this is the percentage of shooters who participate periodically.  On the other hand, approximately 67% are "annual" shooters.**

Among active shooters (those who shot in the past 2 years), 67% shot all 5 of the previous 5 years (Figure 2.8).  (Among all shooters who had shot at least once within the previous 5 years, 56% had shot all 5 of those years, giving an upper limit to the churn rate of 44%. Note, though, that the true churn rate is probably closer to the 33% figure because encompassed in "has shot in the past 5 years" are many who shot only 1 year of the 5 previous years, meaning that they may have shot only once and should perhaps not be included in determining a churn rate among "shooters."  Nonetheless, the data are valuable in providing this upper limit to the churn rate.)

**Figure 2.8.  Churn Rate Among Shooters**



How many of the past 5 years have you gone target or sport shooting? (Asked of shooters who shot in the past 5 years.)

| | Active shooter (shot in past 2 years) | Inactive shooter (shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years) | All shooters who shot in past 5 years |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 years | 67 | 0 | 56 |
| 4 years | 8 | 0 | 7 |
| 3 years | 9 | 18 | 11 |
| 2 years | 11 | 26 | 14 |
| 1 year | 3 | 41 | 11 |
| Don't know / could not say | 3 | 14 | 3 |
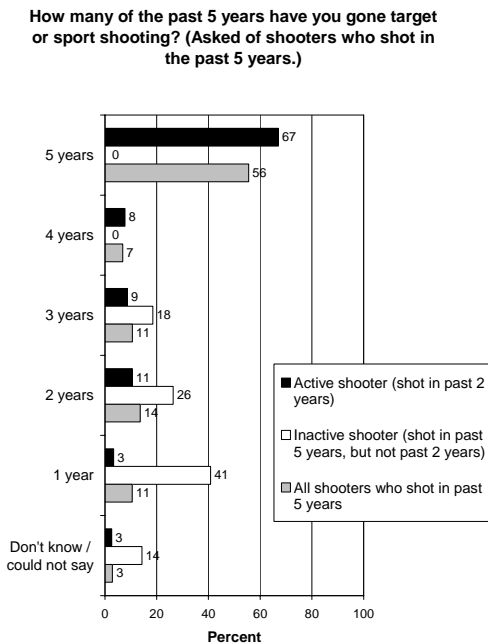
Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

> ➤ **Among all those who ever participated in shooting (even if only once), nearly two-thirds participated in the past 5 years.**

A breakdown of all the shooters in the general population (in this case, defined as anybody who ever went shooting) found that 50% are active shooters (they shot in the previous 2 years) and another 14% are recently lapsed shooters (they shot in the past 5 years, but not in the past 2 years).  The remaining 36% have shot at some time in their life but have not done so in the past 5 years (Figure 2.9) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 2.9.  Composition of Shooters in the General Population**
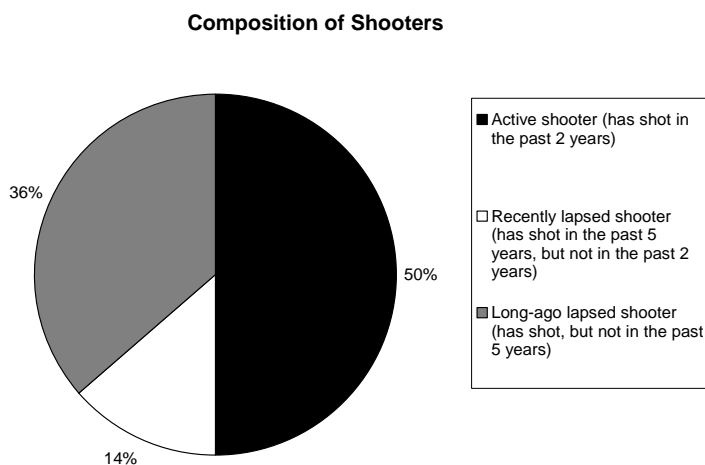
**Composition of Shooters**



■ Active shooter (has shot in the past 2 years)

□ Recently lapsed shooter (has shot in the past 5 years, but not in the past 2 years)

■ Long-ago lapsed shooter (has shot, but not in the past 5 years)

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

An analysis of Phase III data on active and inactive (referred to as "lapsed" in Figure 2.9) shooters found that active shooters are more likely than are inactive shooters to have the following characteristics:

- Is very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year.
- Is very interested in going hunting in the next year.
- Has friends who shoot.
- Has fished in the past 5 years.
- Has taken somebody shooting who is new to the sport of shooting.
- Goes hunting in addition to sport shooting.
- Has camped in the past 5 years.

- Has gone boating in the past 5 years.
- Is male.
- Currently has family members who shoot.
- Has been a member of or donated to a conservation or sportsman's organization in the past 2 years.
- Household income is $80,000 or more.
- Has gone water-skiing in the past 5 years.
- Has viewed wildlife in the past 5 years.
- Has gone hiking in the past 5 years.
- Is between 18 and 34 years old.
- Grew up in a household with firearms.
- Has visited a state or national park in the past 5 years.

A statistical analysis of Phase III data indicates that inactive shooters are more likely than active shooters to have the following characteristics:

- Did not indicate interest in going target or sport shooting in the next year.
- Did not indicate interest in going hunting in the next year.
- Has not taken somebody shooting who is new to the sport of shooting.
- Does not have friends who shoot.
- Is female.
- Does not currently have family members who shoot.
- Is 65 years old or older.
- Has not been a member of nor donated to a conservation or sportsman's organization in the past 2 years.
- Did not grow up in a household with firearms.
- Household income is less than $80,000.

➢ **Target shooting is the most popular type of shooting sport, with participation in other types of shooting at well less than half of target shooting. Use of a rifle or a shotgun predominates (with some using both), closely followed by use of a handgun, and distantly followed by use of archery equipment.**

Phase III found that 82% of active shooters had target shot with a firearm, while the other types were done by about a third or less, including skeet (34%), trap (34%), sporting clays (29%), and archery target shooting (27%) (Figure 2.10). Of note on this graph is that

active shooters were much more likely to have participated in more than just target shooting with a firearm.  Also, these data are consistent with a situation where many of the inactive shooters target shot perhaps only once or a few times and then simply dropped shooting altogether—in other words, they were never really into shooting anyway (recall that "inactive" shooters can include, but are not exclusively made up of, people who shot one time and then never did so again).

**Figure 2.10.  Types of Shooting in Which Shooters Have Participated**

**What types of sport shooting have you done?**
**(Asked of shooters who shot in past 5 years.)**
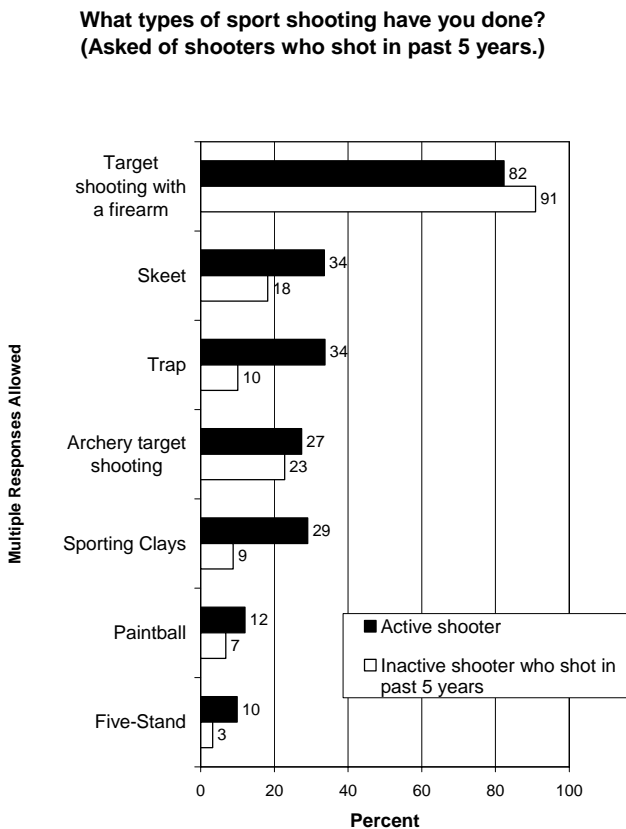


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Phase III found that majorities of active shooters typically use rifles (65%) or shotguns (56%) (obviously, some typically use both), and

half typically use handguns (50%) (Figure 2.11).  More specialized
equipment is used by less than a quarter of active shooters.

## Figure 2.11.  Types of Equipment Shooters Typically Use

**What types of equipment do you typically use?**
**(Among active shooters.)**
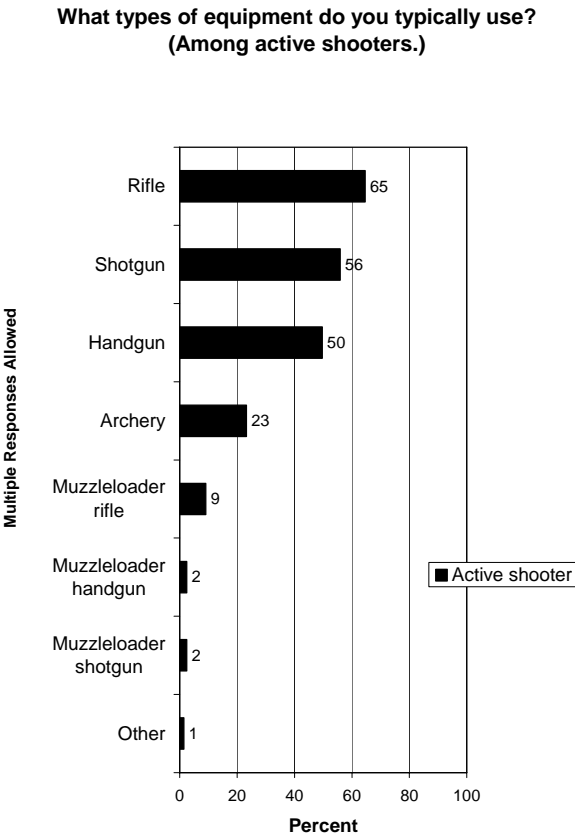


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

> ➢ **Friends, fathers, spouses, and sons (but not daughters) are**
>    **the predominant typical shooting companions among active**
>    **shooters.  Nonetheless, more than a tenth typically go alone.**

Phase III found that 42% of active shooters go with friends, the
companions with whom shooters most commonly shoot (Figure
2.12).  Additionally, 19% typically shoot with their father, 17% with
their son, and 15% with their spouse.  Meanwhile, 13% typically go
alone.  (Note that in a later section, data shows that this varies greatly
from the people with whom shooters *first* went shooting.)

**Figure 2.12.  Shooters' Typical Shooting Companions**

**With whom do you typically target or sport shoot?**
**(Among active shooters.)**
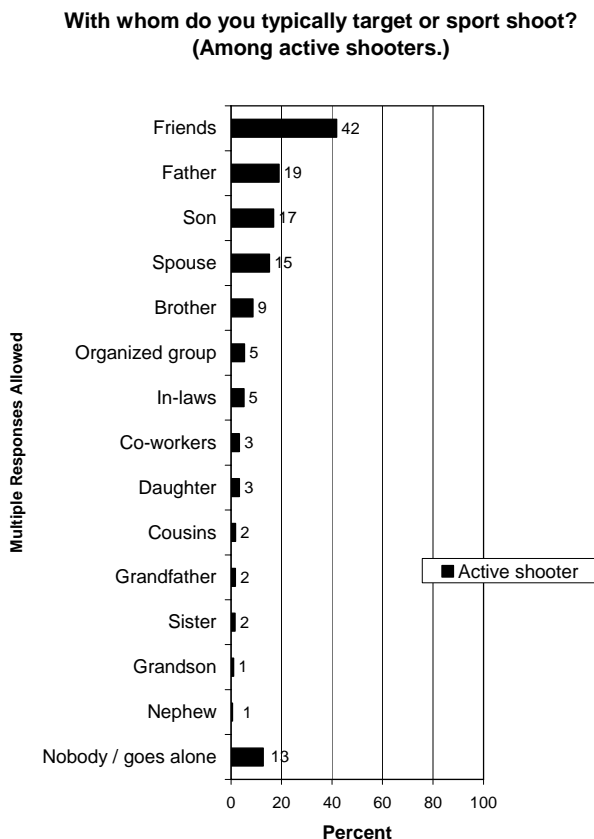


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

# TRENDS IN SHOOTING PARTICIPATION

➢ **Several sources of trends data show that sport shooting participation is declining over the long term, particularly archery and target shooting.  Participation in trap, skeet, and sporting clays appears to be more stable, but note that these specific sports engage only a small proportion of all shooters. (As with hunting, trends in shooting participation are not the same in every state.)**

The Superstudy® showed that archery participation and target shooting with a rifle or handgun have declined in recent years, while trap shooting, skeet shooting, and sporting clays have remained fairly stable (see Figures 2.13, 2.14, and 2.15 that follow) (American Sports Data, Inc. 2005). Note that these trend graphs examine absolute numbers of participants. However, when examined as a percentage of the total U.S. population, all of these sports showed a decline in the *rate* of participation among the total population.

**Figure 2.13. Participation Trends in Archery**
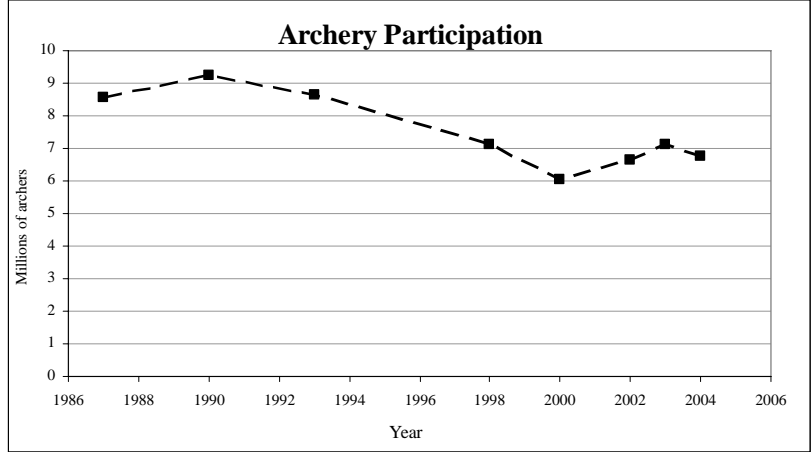


Source: American Sports Data, Inc. 2005

**Figure 2.14. Participation Trends in Target Shooting with a Rifle and Handgun**
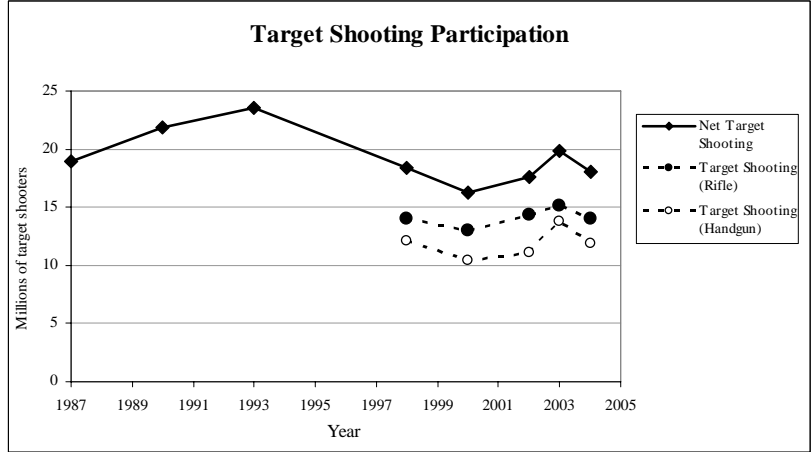


Source: American Sports Data, Inc. 2005

**Figure 2.15.  Participation Trends in Shooting Sports**
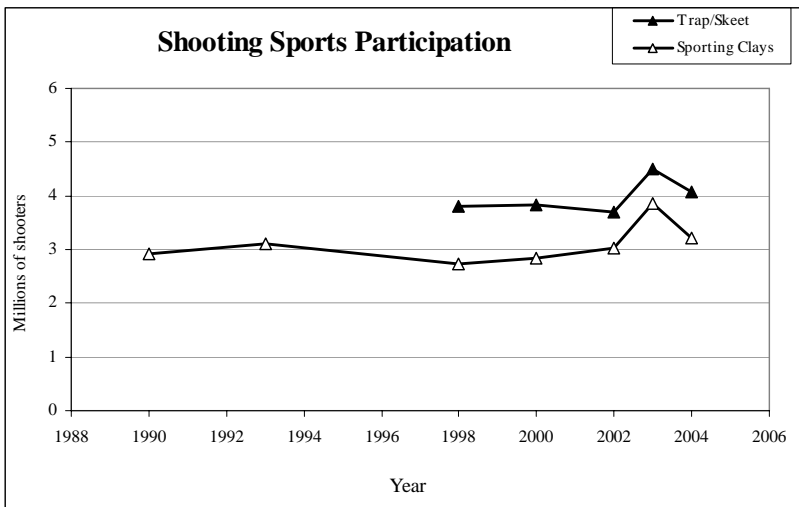


Source:  American Sports Data, Inc. 2005

Phase III directly asked active shooters about their trend in shooting participation, and while the most common answer was that their participation level had remained the same (51%), there were more who said their level had decreased (29%) than said it had increased (20%), suggesting that overall participation is declining.

> ➤ **As was done with hunting, trends in shooting participation need to be put into context of trends regarding participation in outdoor recreation as a whole, which research suggests is generally declining.**

As discussed before, Pergams and Zaradic (2008) found that the number of participants in visiting national forests and parks, visiting state parks, fishing, and camping have all declined.  The trends in shooting participation, then, appear to be part of an overall trend toward decreasing participation in many outdoor activities.

# CROSSOVER PARTICIPATION BETWEEN HUNTING AND SHOOTING

➢ **A little more than 2 out of 5 people who participate in either hunting or shooting do both activities.**

A breakdown of all active participants in either hunting or shooting found that 43% hunted and shot in the past 2 years, while 14% hunted only and 43% shot only in the past 2 years (Figure 2.16) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 2.16.  Ratio of Hunters to Shooters**

**Active Hunter and Shooter Ratio**

| | |
|---|---|
| ■ | Has hunted and shot in the past 2 years |
| □ | Has only hunted in the past 2 years |
| ▨ | Has only shot in the past 2 years |

43%   43%

14%
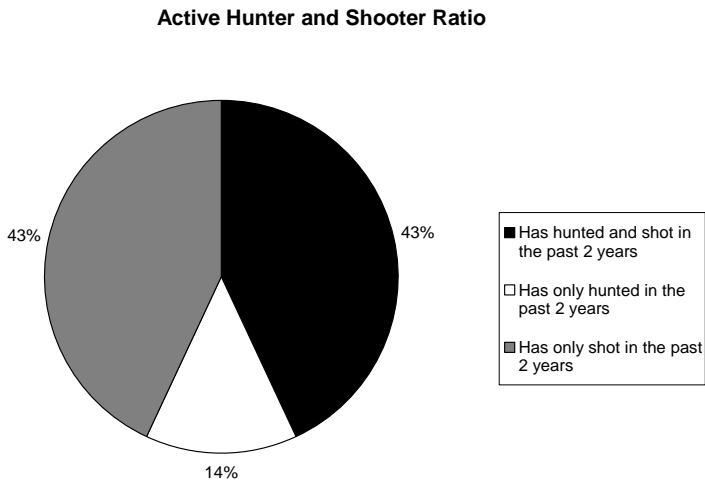
Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

# CHAPTER 3
# U.S. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HUNTERS AND SHOOTERS

## U.S. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

> ➤ **Three demographic trends in particular have strong implications for participation in hunting: the trend toward increasing urbanization, the aging of the American population, and the declining proportion of the U.S. population that is white/Caucasian. All three of these trends run counter to an increase in hunting participation.**

As discussed above, the U.S. population is becoming more urban and suburban at the expense of rural areas. Indeed, most of the U.S. population now lives in non-rural housing, with increasing urbanization expected to continue in the foreseeable future (Figure 3.1). As late as 1950, 36% of the U.S. population lived in rural housing, but that proportion has dropped to approximately a fifth of the population (22% in 2000; expected to drop to just above 20% by 2010).

**Figure 3.1. Trends in Rural-Urban Split in the U.S.**

The Percent of Population (All Ages) in Urban Versus Rural Housing
Data from 2002 Census (web)



Source: U.S. Census
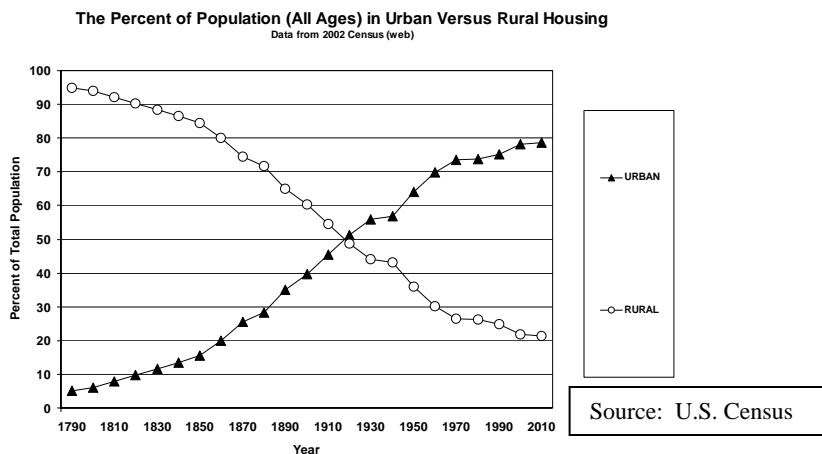
Because hunting is more often a pursuit of rural people than it is of urban people, the decline in the proportion of the population that is rural means that a smaller proportion of the population is likely to hunt. Indeed, in a comprehensive regression analyses on hunting participation on a state-by-state basis, of approximately 400 variables that might relate to hunting participation (the variables examined were obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Census Bureau, the *National Surveys*, and directly from the states through surveys conducted by Responsive Management on hunting lands access and availability), only 3 variables were found to correlate with increased hunting participation on a state-by-state basis (RM 2003a). One of these variables was low housing density (i.e., more rural). States that had low housing density were more likely to have experienced an increase in the number of hunters between 1991 and 2001.

This finding supports Applegate (1984), who found that the most important factor in hunting desertion was the percentage of the state population living in a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. Applegate found that a rural environment was much more conducive to the maintenance and transmission of hunting than was an urban environment.

There are four important aspects of urbanization's effect on hunting participation to be considered. The paragraph at the top of this page relates to one aspect: the dilution of the hunting culture itself. With less rural land and a lower rural population, there are fewer people growing up in a rural, hunter-friendly environment. There are also fewer people growing up in an environment that fosters being comfortable around firearms, a prerequisite to participation in hunting (and shooting, for that matter). The second aspect is related to the first: urbanization contributes to a deterioration of a hunter's social group for hunting as people move from place to place. The third aspect is simply that urbanization takes away land that formerly could have been hunted. Included in this taking of land is the "buffer zone" around the new development that is also off-limits to hunting (typical state laws do not allow hunting within a certain distance of an occupied dwelling). The fourth aspect of urbanization, concomitant with the taking of rural land, is that hunters have farther to go to find hunting lands (and they may not be as familiar with those lands), putting a further damper on participation.

Given the important relationship between rural residency and hunting participation, demographic trends toward increased urbanization present an additional challenge to the recruitment and retention of hunters. As a smaller proportion of youth grow up in rural areas, in which participation in hunting is a more typical occurrence, efforts to maintain the participation rate will become more difficult.

Another important demographic trend influencing hunting participation is an aging society. U.S. Census Bureau data indicate that the median age of Americans has increased from 28.0 years of age in 1970 to 36.4 years in 2006. Furthermore, the median age of white Americans, the demographic group most likely to hunt, was even older, at 39.0 years in 2006. The increasing age of the American population is especially detrimental to hunting participation because young adults are more likely to hunt than are older adults. Leonard (2007) examined the continuing decline in hunting participation reported in the *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* in 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006 and found a rapid decrease in hunting through the teenage years, followed by a steady decline after the age of 25.

Another important demographic trend is that the proportion of the U.S. population made up of the ethnicity group identified as white/Caucasian is declining. This is the ethnic group that is most likely to hunt. Therefore, the ethnic group most likely to hunt is declining as a proportion of the total.

# DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF HUNTERS

> **In general, hunting is a pursuit of rural white males.**

Fully a third of hunters (33%) describe their place of residence as rural, and this percentage is even higher among *active* hunters (38%) (Phase III—RM 2007a). This compares to just 23% of the general population as a whole who describe their place of residence as rural. Additionally, 63% of hunters (70% of *active* hunters) describe their place of residence to be small city/town *or* rural, compared to 51% of the general population as a whole (Phase III—RM 2007a). Of some

interest is that a markedly higher percentage of inactive hunters are suburban than are active hunters.

The large majority of hunters (86%) identify themselves as white/Caucasian (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The large majority of hunters (77%) are male (84% among *active* hunters) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Of note is that inactive hunters tend to be older than active hunters, and this is particularly evident at the upper end of the age spectrum. Although only 10% of active hunters are 65 years old or older, 23% of inactive hunters are that age, reinforcing other findings that suggest that many inactive hunters simply dropped out because of age or health rather than for other reasons (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Although not a "demographic" finding, it is worth noting that 35% of active hunters are members of or have donated to a sportsmen's or conservation organization in the past 2 years.  Among inactive hunters, 17% are members of or have donated to a sportsmen's or conservation organization in the past 2 years (Phase III—RM 2007a).  The most common organizations to which they belonged or donated are the National Rifle Association, the Nature Conservancy, a local hunt or gun club, or a species-specific organization such as Ducks Unlimited, Quail Unlimited, or Pheasants Forever.

# DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SPORT SHOOTERS

> **In general, sport shooting is a pursuit of white males. Shooters are only slightly more rural than is the general population.**

Ethnicity for shooters is almost identical to that of hunters:  the large majority of active shooters (87%) identify themselves as white/Caucasian (Phase III—RM 2007a).  This is a higher white ethnicity than the general population as a whole (79% in the general population survey).

The large majority of active sport shooters (77%) are male (Phase III—RM 2007a). (Note that this is higher than the general population.)

While *active* shooters are more rural than the general population (30% of *active* shooters, compared to 23% of the general population), this is not the case among inactive shooters (21%) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

It is instructive to examine the demographic differences between active shooters and inactive shooters. While ethnicity is about the same in the two groups, a greater percentage of active shooters are male than are inactive shooters. Also, as stated above, active shooters are more rural than are inactive shooters. Education levels and income levels are about the same between the two groups. There is an important difference in occupations, with inactive shooters more likely to be retired and more likely to be older, suggesting that age is a factor in dropping out of the shooting sports (Phase III—RM 2007a).

As was noted with hunters, even though it was not, strictly speaking, a "demographic" finding, 36% of active shooters are members of or have donated to a sportsmen's or conservation organization in the past 2 years. Also, among inactive shooters, 17% are members of or have donated to a sportsmen's or conservation organization (Phase III—RM 2007a). The National Rifle Association is the most common organization to which they belonged and/or donated, followed by The Nature Conservancy and a local hunt or gun club.

# CHAPTER 4
# HUNTING AND SHOOTING INITIATION, RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND DESERTION

## HUNTING INITIATION

➢ **Most hunters start hunting in childhood, with *younger* initiation correlated with *greater* avidity and retention.**

Hunters most commonly first went hunting during the 10-12 year-old range, and a majority (58%) had hunted at least once by the age of 12 years (Phase III—RM 2007a). The current Phase III research reinforces research by others. For instance, Applegate (1977) found that initiation needs to occur by the age of 20 to instill a long-term love of the sport. Leonard (2007) found in an analysis of *National Survey* data that 67% of hunters were initiated at 20 years old or younger, and 18% of first-time hunters in 2006 were 10 years old or younger.

Rural residents (who tend to be more avid hunters than urban residents) are typically initiated at an earlier age than are urban residents. Leonard (2007) found that 38% of first-time hunters living in rural areas are 12 years old or younger, while 26% of first-time hunters living in urban areas are that age.

When crosstabulating initiation age with questions pertaining to avidity, those who started hunting at a younger age are more avid. For instance, active hunters were asked about the number of days they typically hunt in a year, and those who started hunting at a younger age typically hunt more days in a given year. In particular, in Figure 4.1, look at the percentages of each hunter group who typically hunt at the low end of the scale, from 1-5 days and 6-10 days: those who were older when they started hunting are well represented in these responses that indicate low avidity. On the other hand, well represented at the upper end of the number of days they typically hunt are those who started hunting at an early age (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.1. Number of Days Hunters Typically Hunt in a Year by Age of Initiation**



**How many days do you typically hunt in a year?**
**(Among active hunters.)**
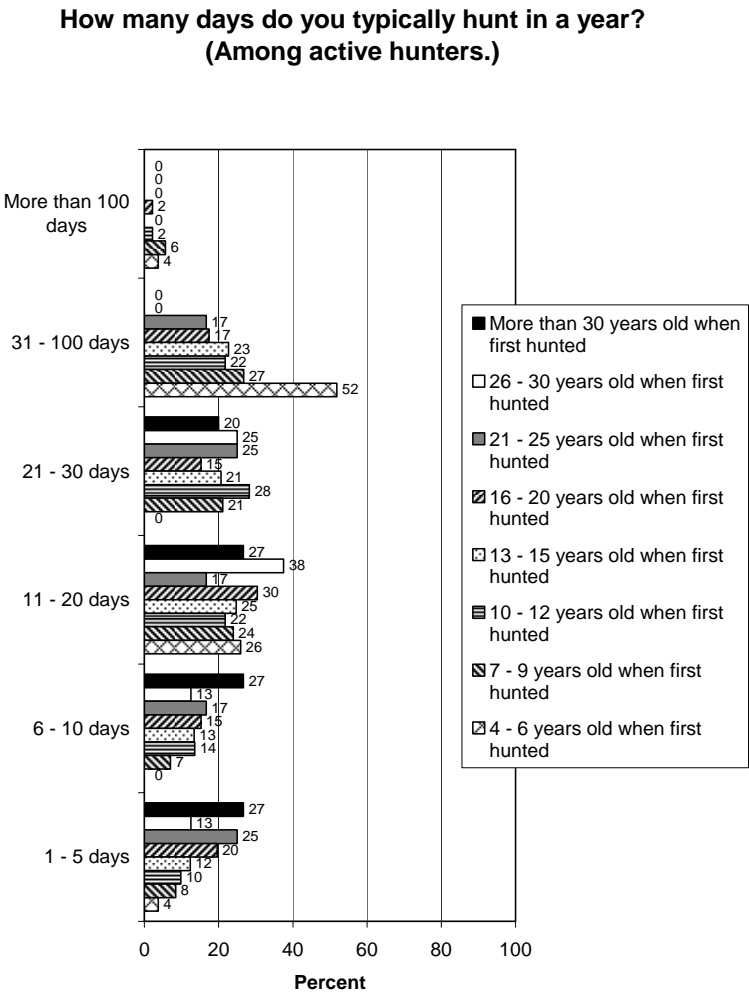
Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

An additional crosstabulation highlights the greater avidity of hunters who start hunting at an early age. Figure 4.2 shows interest among active and inactive hunters for hunting in the next 2 years, and those who started hunting at an early age are generally more interested in hunting in the next 2 years (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.2.  Interest in Hunting by Age of Initiation**

**How interested are you in going hunting in the next
2 years?
(Among all hunters.)**
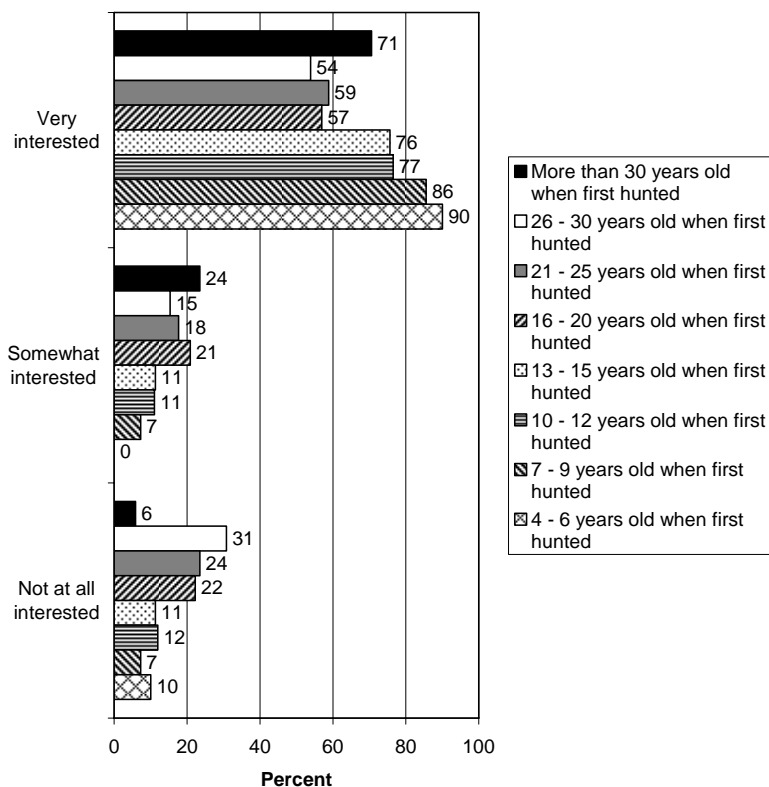


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **Family issues and family values play a critical role in hunting
initiation (as well as satisfaction and desertion).**

Initiation into hunting almost always occurs within the context of
family, and some of the greatest satisfactions—without which there
would be no initiation—are derived from family relationships while
participating in this activity.

➢ **Initiation into hunting is most commonly through *male* family members, particularly the father or stepfather, but also including uncles, brothers, and grandfathers.**

The majority of active hunters were first taken hunting by their father (68%), followed by friends (8%), grandfather (7%), spouse (6%), and uncle (6%) (Figure 4.3) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Similar answers were given to the question, "Who most influenced you to be a hunter?" Note the lower percentage of inactive hunters who were first taken by their father and the higher percentage first taken by friends.

**Figure 4.3. Those Who First Took Hunters Hunting**

**Who first took you hunting?**
**(Among all hunters.)**
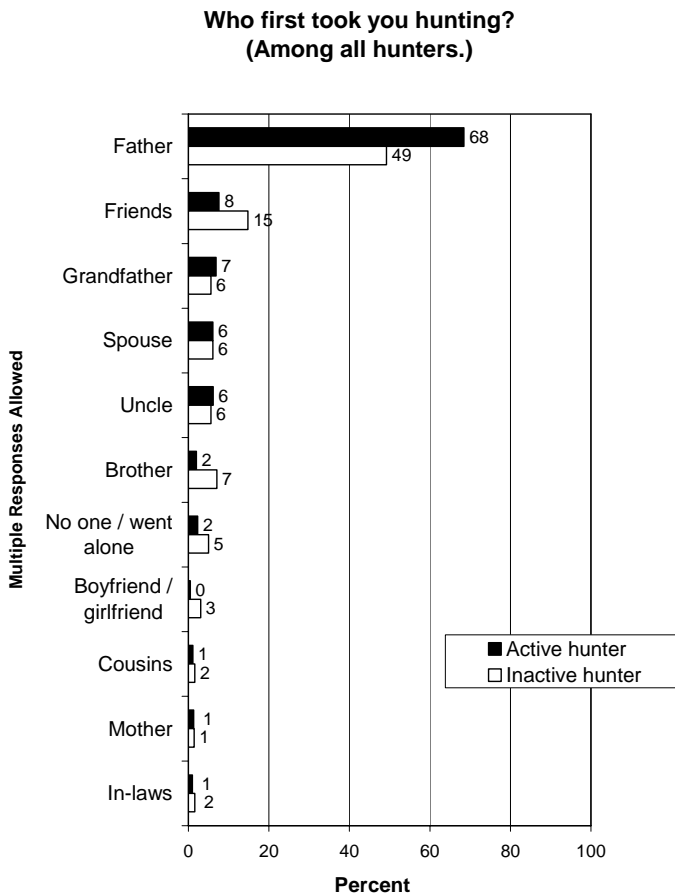


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

One researcher found another familial connection to participation. Increased *frequency* of participation by male parents resulted in increased overall participation rates for children.  Participation rates for children steadily increased when male parents participated 1-3 days, 10-19 days, and 30 or more days in hunting activities: for sons, the participation rate climbed from 27% to 46% to 61%, and from 9% to 13% to 26% for daughters (Leonard 2007).

Other research has examined whether single-parent households have an effect on children's hunting rate.  The data do not show that growing up in a single-parent household negatively affects children's rate of hunting (Duda et al. 1998, RM 2003b, Leonard 2007).

Further, hunting participation by the female parent increased the likelihood of higher participation rates for both sons and daughters, compared to male parental participation.  If a male parent hunted 10-19 days, the participation rate for sons (46%) and daughters (13%) was considerably less than if a female parent hunted 10-19 days; in that case, 64% of sons and an estimated 50% of daughters participated (Leonard 2007).

In addition to the above findings regarding initiation by family, the totality of the Phase I literature review reinforces that it takes a hunter to make a hunter.  Almost all hunters are initiated when they are young by family members.  Hunters initiated this way hunt more frequently and are more likely to be avid hunters throughout their life when compared to hunters initiated in some other way.  The presence of other family members who hunt, the exposure to hunting, and the presence of the hunting culture are of utmost importance in hunting initiation (as well as continuation) (Applegate 1977, Decker et al. 1984, Decker et al. 1992).  Rarely does hunting initiation occur outside of these parameters.  Hunters come from hunting families, and hunting families produce hunters (RM 1995).

The link between family and initiation is graphically illustrated in Figure 4.4.  Responsive Management found in a survey of youth that 92% of all youth who had hunted in the previous year came from a hunting family.  (Note that "past year" in Figure 4.4 refers to 2002.)

**Figure 4.4.  Youth Hunters From Hunting and Non-Hunting Families**

**Youth Who Hunted in the Past Year by Hunting/Non-Hunting Families (Pie Represents All Youth Who Hunted in Previous Year)**

Youth who went hunting in the past year from non-hunting families
8%

Youth who went hunting in the past year from hunting families
92%
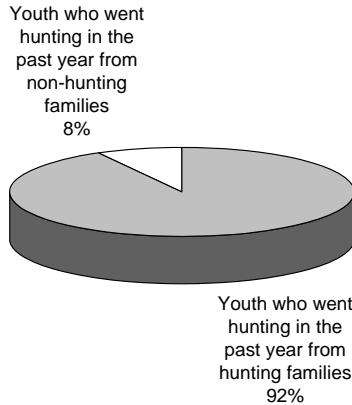
Source:  RM 2003b

> ➢ **Small game figures prominently in hunting initiation, particularly relative to the role it plays among established hunters.**

When asked to name the species they first hunted, three of the four most common answers pertain to small game:  30% of hunters named rabbit or hare, 22% named squirrel, and 13% named pheasant, quail, chukar, or upland game birds in general (Figure 4.5) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  (One of the four answers was white-tailed deer, with 20% first hunting deer, but this is the most commonly hunted species overall.)  Note that 1% or less named wild turkey, elk, or moose, and none named black bear.  A comparison of the above results to the species that established hunters have hunted finds that, among established hunters, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, elk, and black bear are all more prominent than among beginner hunters. Other research also suggests that starting with small game is effective in initiation among children (Leonard 2007).

**Figure 4.5. Game First Hunted**

**What type of species did you first hunt?
(Among all hunters.)**
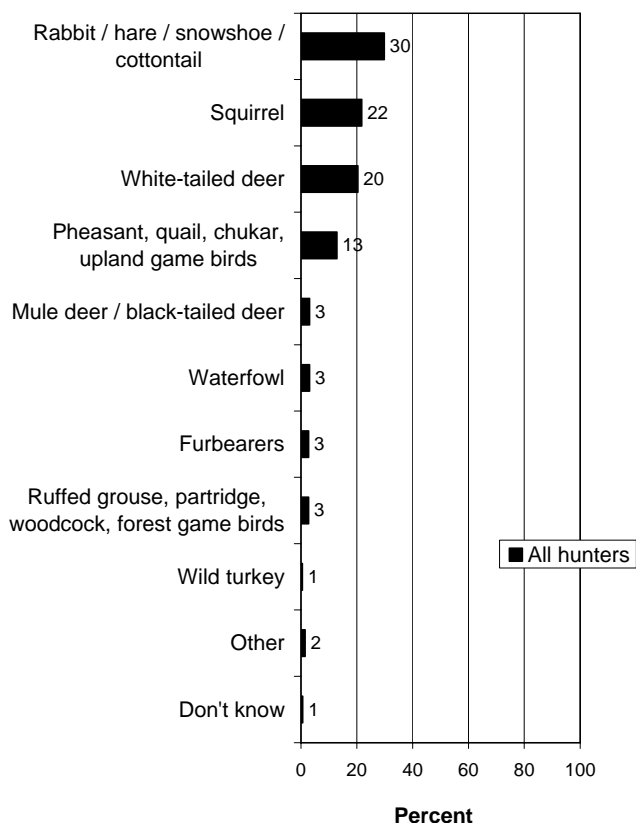


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **Beginning hunters overwhelmingly use basic equipment: shotguns and rifles. Conversely, more established hunters branch out in equipment choices, using archery and muzzleloading firearms more commonly than beginning hunters do.**

When asked to name the hunting equipment they first used for hunting, nearly all hunters say shotgun (63%) and/or rifle (40%). Only 3% first used archery equipment, and 1% first used any type of muzzleloader (Phase III—RM 2007a).

> **Mentoring plays an important role in hunting initiation (and in this context, mentoring primarily refers to informal mentoring—such as a parent taking a child).**

Many of the survey results suggest the important role of mentoring: hunters start young, suggesting that beginning hunters are with adults when they start hunting (although not specifically asked in the survey for this project if they first went hunting alone, there is no research that points toward hunting initiation entailing children hunting alone); no hunters indicated that *nobody* first took them hunting (or, in other words, none of the respondents said that they first went alone), and 84% of hunters indicated that there was a person or group who influenced them to be a hunter (typically their father or stepfather) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Other research also backs up the assertion that mentoring plays an important role in hunting initiation (Decker et al. 1984, Decker et al. 1992, Duda et al. 1998, RM 2003b).

Whether taking others to hunt specifically to pass on the hunting heritage or taking them to hunt simply for other reasons, the majority of hunters (79%) said that they have taken somebody hunting who was new to the sport, most commonly their sons or stepsons, friends (or a friend's child), nephews, daughters, or grandsons (Phase III—RM 2007a).  (Note the prominence of males in this listing of who they took hunting.)

The success of mentoring is manifested in the fairly high percentage of mentors who said that *all* of the people they mentored continued to hunt: 61% said all continued to hunt.  Additionally, another 25% said most or some continued to hunt, and only 11% said that none continued to hunt (Phase III—RM 2007a).

> **Mandatory hunter education itself does not appear to be a constraint to hunting participation.  However, some researchers have suggested that the *timing* of the education— requiring a person to go through the entire education course before being able to even try hunting—may have some constraining effect.**

Based on a regression analysis of *National Survey* data and a survey of 13 to 20 year-olds, it does not appear that mandatory hunter education requirements are having a marked deleterious effect on

hunter recruitment (RM 1997a, 1997b), although, in Phase III, mandatory hunter education was one of the few factors within agency control that showed an increase (but only a slight increase) as a constraint over the past decade (however, note that the total percentage who said that this was a constraint is quite small).

Nuse (2004:24) made the important observation that the "problem is not hunter education *per se*. [Hunters] will need and want information and skills learned in hunter education classes. The problem is [that] it is the wrong sequence of events for these folks. They need to know more about hunting and have a chance to try hunting before committing time and energy to a formal course." Furthermore, Wentz and Seng (2000:21) called for "the development of flexible hunter education delivery systems that allow convenient access to programs for all students."

# HUNTING RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND DESERTION

> **In the most basic question related to recruitment and retention, a large majority of active hunters say that they are *very* interested in going hunting in the next year. Interest is highest for hunting big game, followed by small game. Somewhat lower in interest, but still with a substantial percentage interested, is hunting waterfowl.**

Interest in hunting is quite high among active hunters, with 82% saying that they are *very* interested, and another 14% being *somewhat* interested (for a total of 96% showing interest) (Phase III—RM 2007a). It is worth noting that inactive hunters, on the other hand, showed almost no interest, with only 14% of inactive hunters *very* interested and 17% *somewhat* interested (for total interest of only 31%). Follow-up questions about three types of hunting (for big game, for small game, and for waterfowl) that were asked only of those respondents interested in hunting showed that the most interest is for big game, followed by small game and then waterfowl.

> **Hunting recruitment that follows the natural path of initiation outlined previously is likely to be the most successful.  Hunters following that route of initiation— starting young and being mentored by others, particularly family—typically show greater subsequent avidity for hunting.**

In comparing active hunters with inactive hunters (using active versus inactive as a measure of avidity), active hunters typically started hunting at a younger age than did inactive hunters:  60% of active hunters had started by the age of 12, while only 49% of inactive hunters had started by the age of 12 (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Additionally, when compared to inactive hunters, active hunters are more likely to have first been taken hunting by their father (68% of active hunters, but only 49% of inactive hunters, were first taken by their father).  Conversely, inactive hunters are more likely to have first been taken by a friend (15% of inactive hunters, but only 8% of active hunters) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  In a similar vein, 56% of active hunters say that their father most influenced them to be a hunter, compared to 40% of inactive hunters being most influenced by their father (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Meanwhile, only 6% of active hunters were most influenced by friends, compared to 17% of inactive hunters.

> **Being in a hunting culture—such as having friends and family who hunt or at the very least approve of and support hunting—is vital in hunting recruitment, wherein experienced hunters help initiate new people into hunting (Decker et al. 1984, Decker et al. 1992).  It is easier to recruit a person into hunting who is familiar with hunting and is part of a hunting culture than it is to recruit a person from outside of the hunting culture.  Indeed, "It takes a hunter to make a hunter" (RM 1995).**

Several measures suggest that avidity for hunting is related to having grown up in and being in a hunting culture.  Again, in comparing active hunters, inactive hunters, and non-hunters as a proxy measure of avidity, active hunters are much more likely than are inactive hunters or non-hunters to have a family member who hunts:  while only 13% of active hunters say that nobody else in their family hunts, 44% of inactive hunters say that nobody else in their family hunts

and 65% of non-hunters say that nobody in their family hunts (Figure 4.6) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## Figure 4.6.  Family Members Who Hunt

**Percent of various groups with no family members
who participate in hunting.
(Among the general population.)**
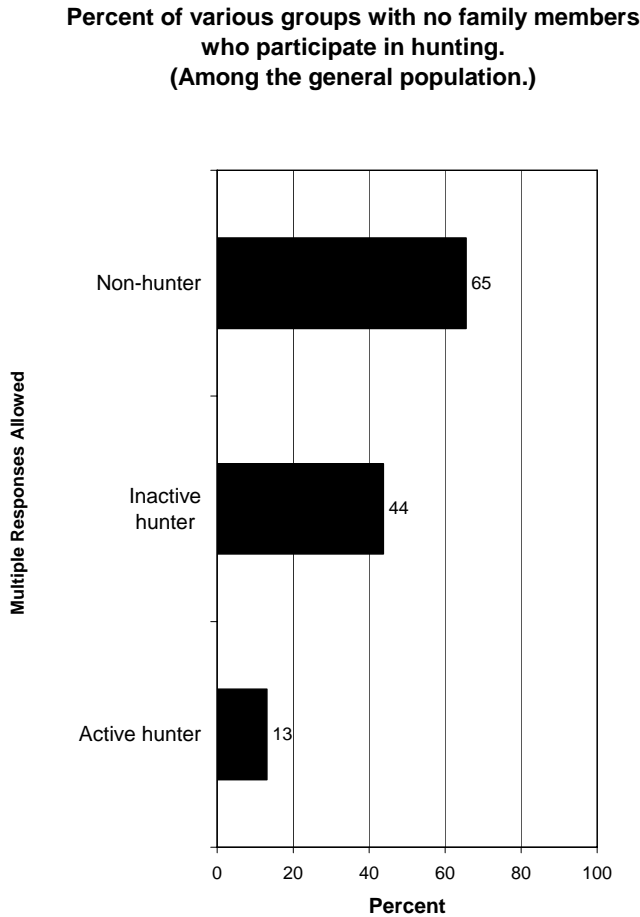


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Also, active hunters are more likely to have friends who hunt:  98% of active hunters have friends who hunt, compared to just 83% of inactive hunters (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Additionally, active hunters are slightly more likely to have grown up in a household that contained firearms:  91% of active hunters, compared to 86% of inactive hunters, grew up in a household with at least one firearm (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Finally, active hunters are more likely to have been part of an organization when they were growing up that went hunting (regardless of whether the respondent actually went hunting with the group), compared to inactive hunters:  27% of active hunters, versus 17% of inactive hunters, belonged to such an organization (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **Previous research by Responsive Management indicates that utilitarian reasons or achievement-oriented reasons (for the meat or to get a trophy) are not primary motivations for hunters to hunt; instead, more aesthetic reasons or appreciative-oriented reasons predominate (to be close to nature, to be with family, to be with friends).  Recruitment and retention efforts should be made with this information in mind—there is simply less response for utilitarian and achievement-oriented reasons to hunt.**

As shown in Figure 4.7, a national study of hunters found that only 22% hunted primarily for the meat, while 76% hunted primarily for aesthetic or appreciative-oriented reasons:  for the sport or recreation (33%), to be with family or friends (27%), or to be close to nature (16%) (RM 2006b).  Another national study of spring turkey hunters found that 45% hunted spring turkey for the sport or recreation, 15% to be with family and/or friends, 14% to be close to nature, 14% for relaxation, and only 7% for the meat (RM 2003c).  Other studies found that getting a trophy animal is of low importance to hunters (RM 2005b, 2007b).

**Figure 4.7.  Motivations for Hunting**

**What was your most important reason for hunting
in the past 2 years?
(Among all hunters.)**
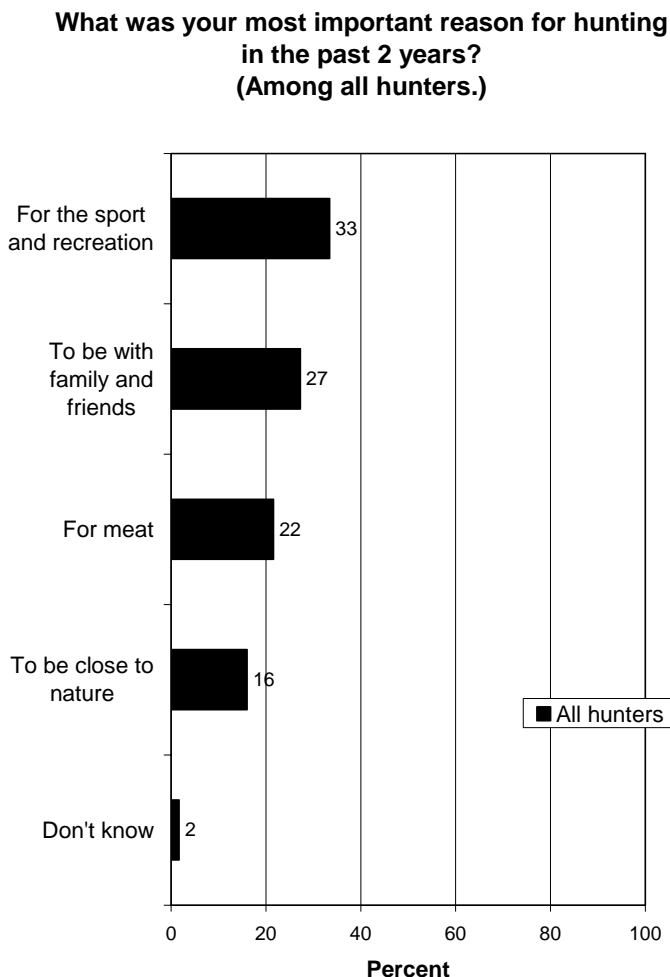


Source:  RM 2006b

It should be mentioned that utilitarian hunting formerly was important but is becoming less so nowadays.  This is illustrated by older studies that did show a high percentage of hunters hunting for meat:  one study in 1980 found that 43% of hunters hunted for meat, 37% for sport and recreation, 10% to be close to nature, and 9% to be with family and/or friends (Kellert 1980).  Since that time, hunting for meat has become less important, while hunting for other reasons has grown in importance, as shown in Figure 4.8.

**Figure 4.8.  Trends in Motivations for Hunting**

## Trends in motivations for hunting.
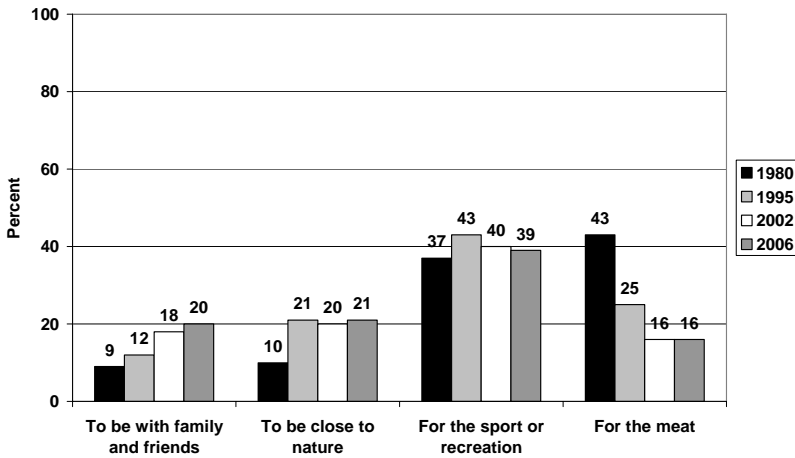


Source:  Kellert 1980; RM 1995, 2003d, 2006a

It is important to note, however, that although most hunters do not hunt primarily for the meat, nearly all (97% of active hunters and 95% of all hunters) eat, or their family eats, the animals they kill (Figure 4.9) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

### Figure 4.9.  Hunters' Consumption of the Animals They Harvest

**Do you or your family eat the animals you kill?**
**(Among all hunters.)**
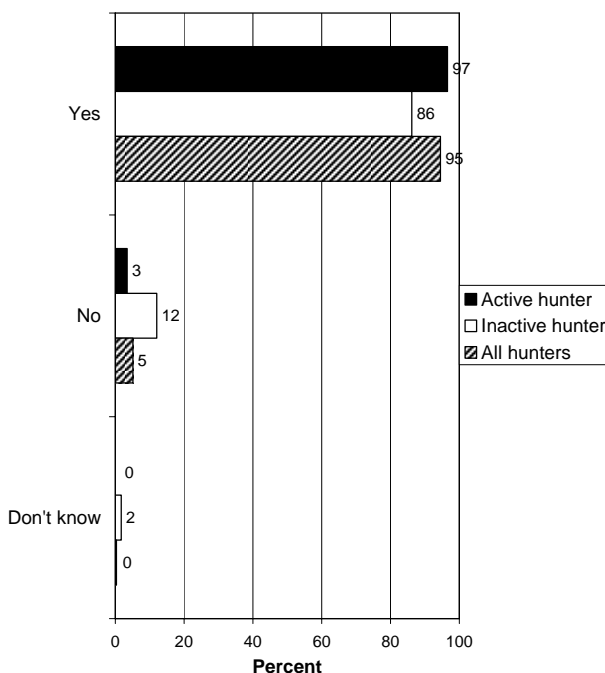


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Given that aesthetic reasons predominate in motivations for hunting, it is not surprising that interest in hunting in a wilderness area is fairly robust, with 72% of active hunters and 83% of inactive hunters expressing interest in hunting in a wilderness area in the next 2 years (49% and 46%, respectively, are *very* interested) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Conversely, when hunters were asked about their support or opposition to various types and methods of hunting, those types/methods that would likely have the highest harvest success rates (hunting using high-tech gear, hunting in a high-fence preserve, and hunting over bait) are *opposed* by a majority of hunters, likely because those methods are thought to *not* give the game "fair chase"

(Phase III—RM 2007a). Had utilitarian motivations predominated, one could conjecture that types/methods of hunting that typically achieve high harvest success would be better supported.

➢ **The above looked at motivations for hunting; in a similar vein is an examination of reasons and scenarios that would encourage hunting. One very effective scenario encouraging hunting is being invited to go hunting by a friend or family member.**

Active hunters were asked if they had ever been invited to go hunting: 88% of active hunters had been invited to go hunting, most typically by friends (Phase III—RM 2007a). Of these active hunters who had been invited, 88% went hunting with that person who had invited them (meaning that overall, about 77% of active hunters were invited and went). Inactive hunters also were asked this question, and 94% indicated that they had been invited to go hunting, also most commonly by friends, but only 66% went hunting when invited (meaning overall that approximately 62% were invited and went). Also, the survey directly asked hunters whether, when invited to go hunting by a friend, they *would* go, and a majority of hunters (59%) indicated that they would definitely or probably go (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Also pertaining to this topic, hunters who had taken somebody hunting who was new to the sport were asked why they took them hunting, and the top answer by far was because that person had expressed an interest in going (Figure 4.10) (Phase III—RM 2007a). That answer greatly exceeded doing so for fun, doing so to encourage interest in the sport, or for passing on the hunting heritage.

When asked in the follow-up question what they thought the new person got out of the experience, the top answer was that the new person had a good time and got new memories. Another important answer was that the person got a better understanding of hunting, nature, and/or firearms (Phase III—RM 2007a).

### Figure 4.10.  Motivations for Taking a New Participant Hunting

**Why did you take somebody hunting?**
**(Asked of hunters who have taken someone with**
**them new to the sport of hunting.)**
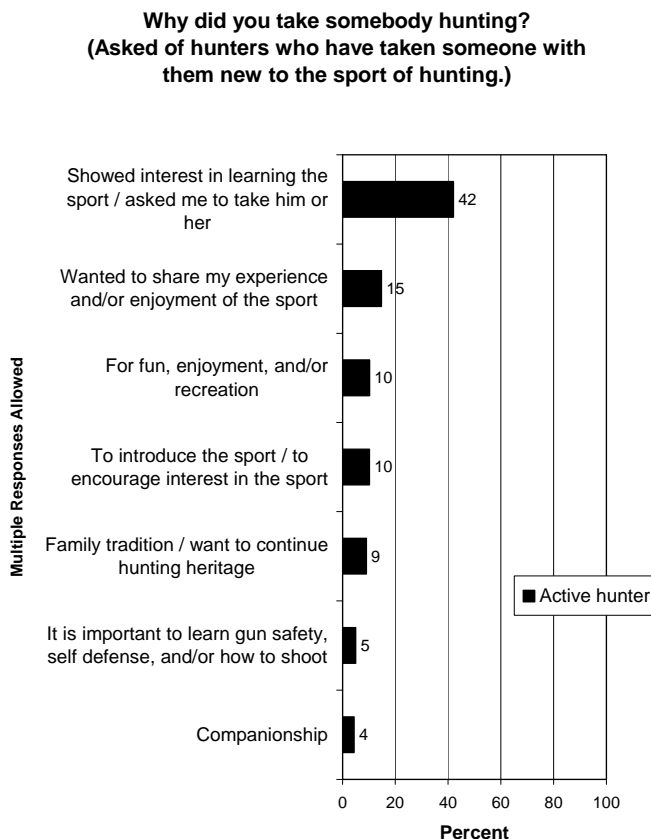


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Active hunters were asked if they had ever been involved with five hunting-related activities or scenarios (e.g., watched a hunting television program, was invited to go hunting by a friend) and then, if they had, if their hunting had increased afterwards.  The activity with the highest percentage of subsequent participation increase was being invited by a friend.  Another way to look at this combines the findings regarding the percentage who were involved and the findings on the percent who subsequently increased their participation, which again points out the efficacy of invitations as a means of increasing participation (Figure 4.11).  Among active hunters, 86% had been invited to go hunting by a friend, and 28% subsequently increased their hunting participation afterwards, which

translates to 24% of all active hunters who increased their participation after being invited (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## Figure 4.11.  Hunting Activities That Increased Hunting Participation Among Active Hunters

**Percent of active hunters who were involved in the following hunting-related activities or scenarios and the percent who increased their participation afterwards.**
**(Among active hunters.)**
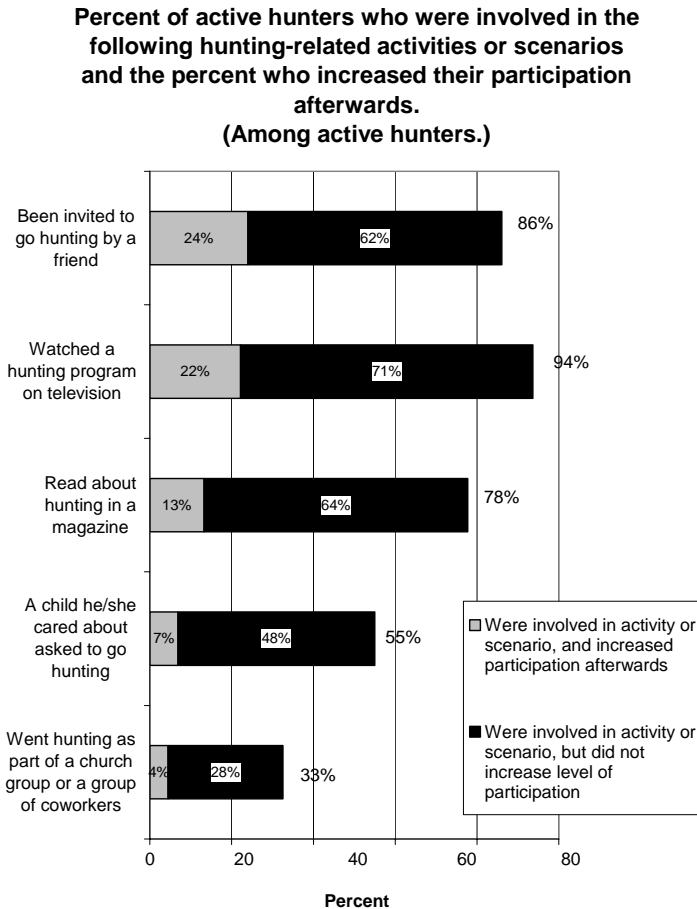


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **Many of the top factors causing dissatisfaction with hunting are outside of the control of wildlife agencies, including hunters' health and age, time obligations because of family and/or work, loss/lack of interest, and weather.  Nonetheless, there are some factors over which agencies have some (but not complete) control, the most important being access, behavior of other hunters, and game populations.**

As instructive as examining the factors and scenarios to which hunters positively respond is examining the factors and scenarios that cause dissatisfaction with and desertion of hunting (Figure 4.12). Hunters whose hunting participation has declined were asked in an open-ended question (meaning that no answer set is read, and respondents can give top-of-mind responses) to name the causes of the decline, and the most common answers were age/health (42%) and time obligations for family and/or work (32%)—the leading answers by far. In comparison, only 16% mentioned an access problem, the next nearest answer.

**Figure 4.12. Reasons for Declines of Hunting Participation**

**What are the main factors that have contributed to a decrease in your hunting activity over the past 5 years? (Asked of all hunters whose amount of hunting decreased in the past 5 years.)**
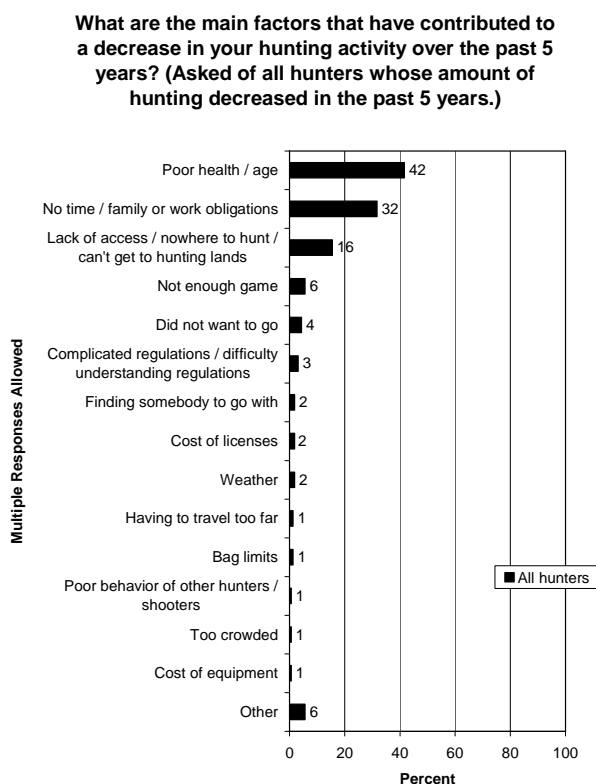


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

Similarly, active hunters were asked in an open-ended question about things that may have prevented them from going hunting in recent years (Figure 4.13). The top things preventing hunting participation were lack of time because of family and/or work obligations (29%)

and age or poor health (19%)—both items outside of agency influence (Phase III—RM 2007a).  The next item on the list was lack of access (9%).

## Figure 4.13.  Constraints to Hunting Participation

**Are there any things that have prevented you from going hunting in recent years? (Among active hunters.)**
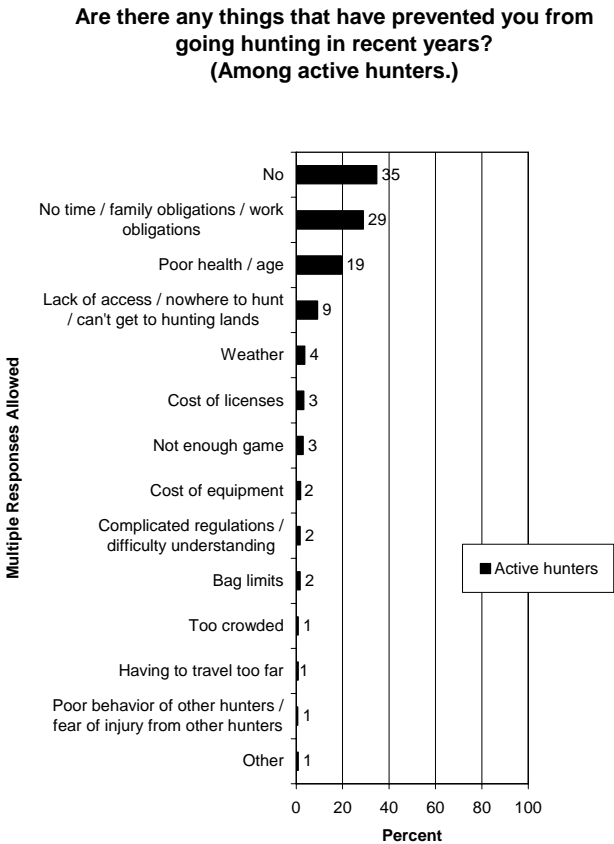


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

A slightly different open-ended question, although related, asked about things that may have taken away from enjoyment, even if they did not prevent actual hunting (Figure 4.14).  These dissatisfactions tend to be those over which agencies may have more influence:  lack of access (12%), poor behavior of other hunters (5%), not enough game (5%), complicated regulations (3%), and crowding (3%) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  (Note that in this question, 60% of hunters indicated that nothing had taken away from their enjoyment of hunting.)

## Figure 4.14.  Dissatisfactions with Hunting

**Are there any things that have taken away from
your enjoyment of hunting, even if they didn't
prevent you from actually going hunting?
(Among all hunters.)**
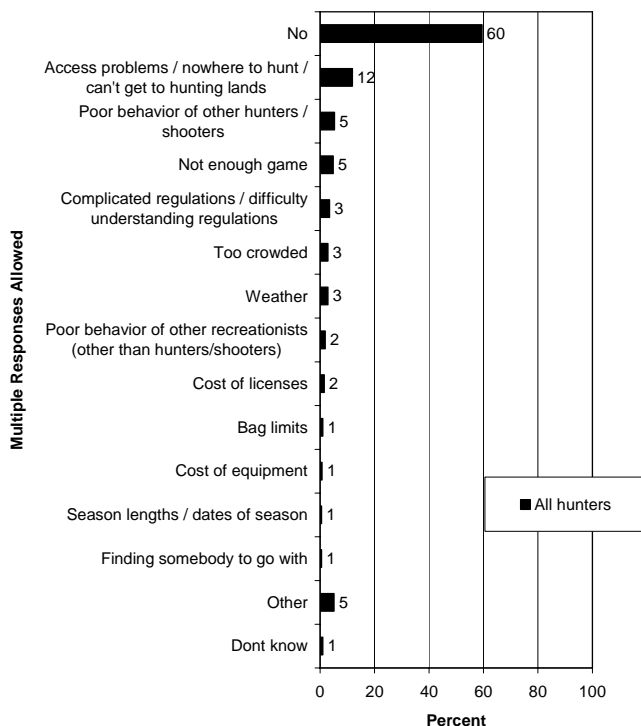


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Using a methodology that differs from the open-ended inquiries discussed immediately above, a series of questions further explored dissatisfactions with hunting.  Active hunters were asked a series of 25 questions about things that may have taken away from their enjoyment of hunting.  For each potential dissatisfaction, the hunter was asked if it strongly took away from satisfaction, moderately took away, or did not take away from satisfaction, and the results were put onto a single graph.  In looking at *strong* dissatisfactions in these questions, hunters' top dissatisfactions relate to access:  not enough places to hunt and not enough access.  These are followed by two items outside of agency influence (work obligations and amount of free time), but then the next two are things, again, that are in part

under agency influence:  pollution/litter and poor behavior of other
hunters (Figure 4.15) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## Figure 4.15.  Dissatisfactions Among Active Hunters

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly
took away from his/her enjoyment of hunting or strongly
influenced his/her decline in participation.
(Among active hunters.)**

| Category | Percent |
|---|---|
| Not enough places to hunt | 26 |
| Not enough access | 23 |
| Work obligations | 21 |
| Amount of free time | 17 |
| Pollution or litter | 15 |
| Poor behavior of hunters | 14 |
| Family obligations | 11 |
| Costs of licenses | 10 |
| No one to go with | 9 |
| Having to travel to hunt | 8 |
| Not enough game | 8 |
| Personal health | 8 |
| Too many hunters in the field | 7 |
| Cost of hunting equipment | 7 |
| Mandatory hunter education | 6 |
| Complex regulations | 5 |
| Not enough law enforcement officers | 4 |
| Fear of injury by another hunter | 4 |
| Feeling of causing pain to animals | 4 |
| Other people's negative opinions | 4 |
| Not enough trophy game | 4 |
| Bag limits/season lengths | 3 |
| Harassment by anti-hunters | 3 |
| Loss of interest | 2 |
| Feeling that hunting endangers animal populations | 2 |

■ Active hunter

Note that each of these questions was asked individually, with 25 questions in all.  For each item, the survey asked, "Did this strongly, moderately, or not take away from your enjoyment of hunting?" (for active hunters whose participation did not decline) or "Did this strongly, moderately, or not influence your decline in hunting participation in the past 5 years?" (for active hunters whose participation declined).  The results were then combined into this single graph.

**Percent**

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Trends comparisons show marked increases in several factors over
which agencies have limited influence, particularly work obligations,
family obligations, and having no one to go with.  With the
exception of not enough places to hunt, other items do not markedly
increase (Figures 4.16 and 4.17) (RM 1995, Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.16.  Trends in Dissatisfactions Among Active Hunters (Part 1)**

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly took away from their enjoyment of hunting. (Part 1.)**
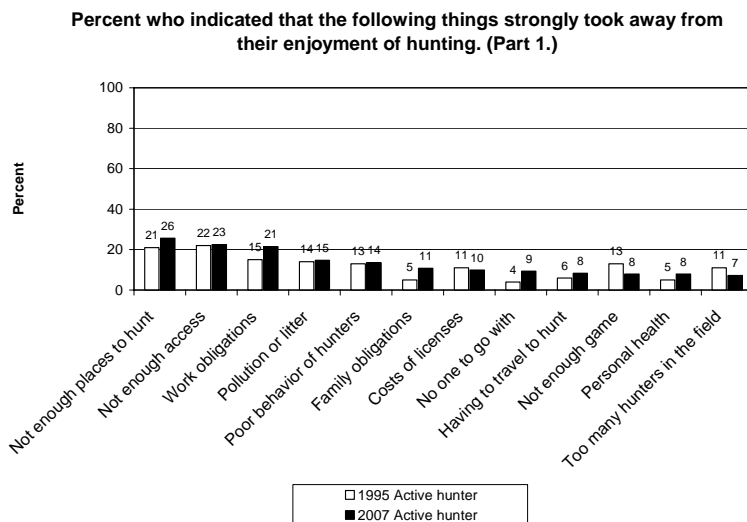


Source:  RM 1995, Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 4.17.  Trends in Dissatisfactions Among Active Hunters (Part 2)**

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly took away from their enjoyment of hunting. (Part 2.)**
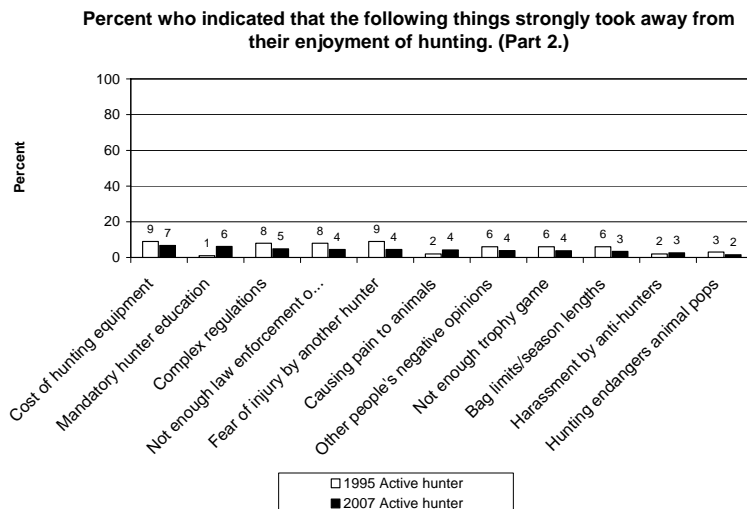


Source:  RM 1995, Phase III—RM 2007a

These same 25 questions were asked of inactive hunters, except that they were asked if it strongly influenced, moderately influenced, or did not influence their decision to *not* go hunting in recent years. Four items stand out above the others as *strong* constraints—all outside of agency influence:  amount of free time, family obligations, work obligations, and loss of interest.  The next item on the list is lack of access (Figure 4.18) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.18.  Constraints to Participation Among Inactive Hunters**

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly influenced him/her to not hunt in recent years. (Among inactive hunters.)**

| | Percent |
|---|---|
| Amount of free time | 40 |
| Family obligations | 35 |
| Work obligations | 34 |
| Loss of interest | 33 |
| Not enough access | 17 |
| Feeling of causing pain to animals | 16 |
| Not enough places to hunt | 16 |
| Personal health | 14 |
| Poor behavior of hunters | 11 |
| No one to go with | 10 |
| Having to travel to hunt | 10 |
| Too many hunters in the field | 9 |
| Cost of hunting equipment | 9 |
| Feeling that hunting endangers animal populations | 8 |
| Fear of injury by another hunter | 7 |
| Costs of licenses | 6 |
| Not enough law enforcement officers | 6 |
| Not enough game | 6 |
| Mandatory hunter education | 5 |
| Pollution or litter | 5 |
| Complex regulations | 3 |
| Not enough trophy game | 3 |
| Bag limits/season lengths | 3 |
| Other people's negative opinions | 2 |
| Harassment by anti-hunters | 1 |

■ Inactive hunter

Note that each of these questions was asked individually, with 25 questions in all.  For each item, the survey asked, "Did this strongly, moderately, or not influence your decision to not go hunting in the past 2 years?"  The results were then combined into this single graph.

**Percent**

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Again, trends comparisons show marked increases in several factors over which agencies have limited influence:  amount of free time,

family obligations, work obligations, and loss of interest (Figure 4.19)  (RM 1995, Phase III—RM 2007a).  Other items over which agencies would have more influence did not markedly increase (Figures 4.20 and 4.21) (RM 1995, Phase III—RM 2007a).

## Figure 4.19.  Top Reasons for Hunting Cessation Among Inactive Hunters 1995 to 2007

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly influence their decision to not go hunting in recent years. (Shows only selected results for comparison.)**
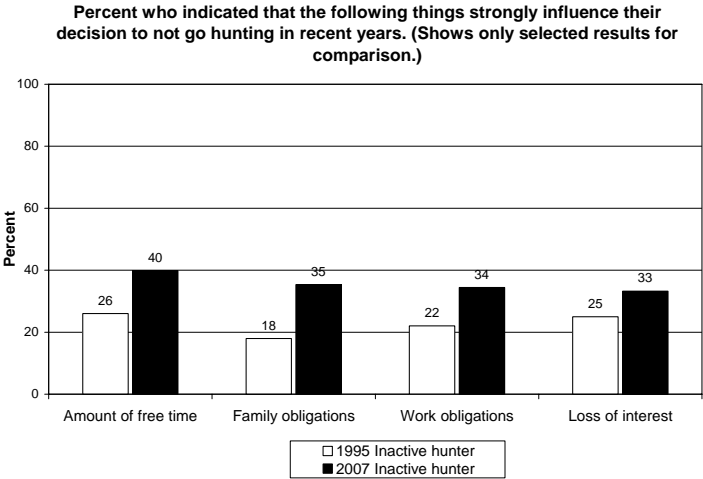


Source:  RM 1995, Phase III—RM 2007a

## Figure 4.20.  Trends in Dissatisfactions Among Inactive Hunters (Part 1)

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly influence their decision to not go hunting in recent years. (Part 1.)**
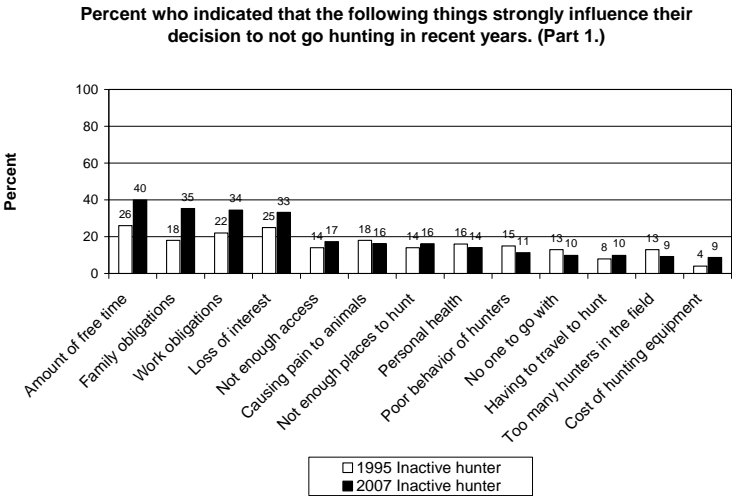


Source:  RM 1995, Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 4.21.  Trends in Dissatisfactions Among Inactive Hunters (Part 2)**

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly influence their decision to not go hunting in recent years. (Part 2.)**
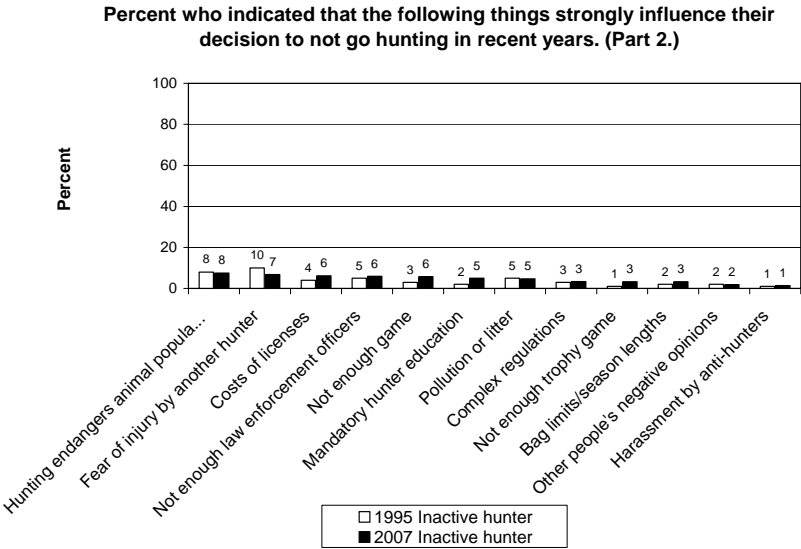


Source:  RM 1995, Phase III—RM 2007a

Non-hunters were asked a series of 26 questions, similar to those immediately above, regarding things that strongly, moderately, or did not influence them to never go hunting.  The top *strong* influences are lack of interest, concern about causing pain to animals, and being uncomfortable around firearms (Figure 4.22).  Note that the fourth on the list is based on misinformation:  thinking that hunting endangers animal populations.

**Figure 4.22. Constraints to Hunting Participation Among Non-Hunters**

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly influenced his/her decision to never go hunting. (Among non-hunters.)**

| Constraint | Percent |
|---|---|
| Lack of interest | 69 |
| Concern about causing pain to animals | 46 |
| Uncomfortable around firearms | 21 |
| Thinks hunting endangers animal pops | 14 |
| Fear of injury by another hunter | 13 |
| Family obligations | 12 |
| Work obligations | 12 |
| Amount of free time | 11 |
| Poor behavior of other hunters | 10 |
| Cost of hunting equipment | 8 |
| Not having anyone to go with | 7 |
| Pollution or litter | 6 |
| Not enough law enforcement officers | 6 |
| Personal health | 5 |
| Too many hunters in the field | 5 |
| Not enough access to places to hunt | 5 |
| Costs of licenses | 5 |
| Not enough places to hunt | 4 |
| Complex regulations | 4 |
| Mandatory hunter education | 4 |
| Having to travel to hunt | 4 |
| Other people's negative opinions of hunting | 3 |
| Not enough game | 3 |
| Bag limits or season lengths | 2 |
| Harassment by anti-hunters | 2 |
| Not enough trophy game | 1 |

■ Non-hunter

Note that each of these questions was asked individually, with 26 questions in all. For each item, the survey asked, "Did this strongly, moderately, or not influence your decision to never go hunting?" The results were then combined into this single graph.

X-axis: Percent (0 to 100)

Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

Phase III asked active hunters in a direct question if conflict with other recreationists had ever taken away from their enjoyment of hunting. The large majority (80%) answered no (either no conflict at all or no conflict that detracted from satisfaction); nonetheless, there were a few (18%) who indicated that they had experienced a conflict with other recreationists that had taken away from their enjoyment. In follow-up, they most commonly said that the other recreationists were other hunters/shooters or ATV/dirt bike riders. Only a few had problems with anti-hunting activists.

> ➢ **Access and lack of places to hunt are the top dissatisfactions among active hunters as well as the top constraints among inactive hunters over which agencies and organizations have marked influence. It is important, then, to examine access, which appears to be more a problem of having land available that is, unfortunately, inaccessible rather than an absolute lack of land on which to hunt.**

Perhaps the most basic finding in Phase III regarding access that should be discussed prior to discussing access *problems* is how hunters access the lands on which they hunt (regardless of whether they had problems): by foot and by truck/car are the most-used modes of travel to access hunting lands, with only 20% saying that they use an ATV. When asked directly about access problems, 20% of hunters indicated that they had experienced an access problem while hunting or trying to hunt at some time. The majority of hunters who had encountered access problems (60%) were trying to access private land at the time. Furthermore, most of those who had access problems said that the problem was that they were denied access to private lands (60% of those who had encountered access problems), typically land owned by a person rather than a corporation. When asked whether they would characterize the access problem as an absolute lack of land versus a situation where land exists for hunting but the hunter just cannot get to it, the majority of those with access problems indicated the latter—that there is land available, but hunters cannot get to it (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The above remarks about access and private land should not be taken to mean that access problems do not occur on public lands, as 38% of hunters who had experienced access problems were attempting to access public lands at the time, most commonly national or state forests (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Another important finding is that hunters are more likely to say that access to hunting land has gotten worse over the past 5 years than to say it has gotten better (Figure 4.23). While 10% of hunters said that overall access to hunting land has gotten better, 34% said it has gotten worse. Likewise, 8% said that access to private land has gotten better, compared to 36% who said it has gotten worse, and 7% said access to public lands has gotten better, while 21% said it has gotten worse (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.23.  Trends in Access for Hunting**

**Percent of hunters who indicated that access to the
following lands for hunting in his/her state has gotten
better or gotten worse over the past 5 years.
(Among inactive hunters who hunted in past 5 years.)**
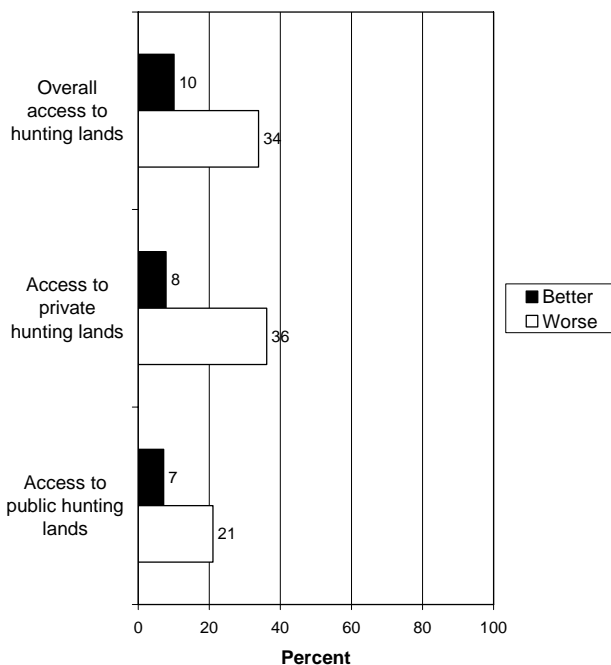


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

In a follow-up question about access, hunters who had said that
access has gotten worse were asked to name the reasons that access
has gotten worse.  The top two reasons are that hunters cannot get
permission to hunt private lands (the implication being that private
hunting land exists but that hunters cannot get to it) and the loss of
land because of urbanization.  There is some blame for the lack of
permission on the poor behavior of other hunters:  note that 11%
gave a reason for access problems related to poor behavior causing
the land to be closed.  Another common problem mentioned was that
private land is often leased to a hunting club and that the general
public is then barred from using it (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Hunters were asked if they would agree or disagree that access
problems have taken away from their hunting enjoyment or caused
them not to hunt as much as they would have liked (Figure 4.24).  A
substantial percentage of hunters agreed (33%), although,
fortunately, more disagreed (50%) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

### Figure 4.24.  Access Problems and Satisfaction with Hunting

**Would you agree or disagree that access problems
have taken away from your hunting satisfaction or
caused you to not hunt as much as you would like?
(Among all hunters.)**
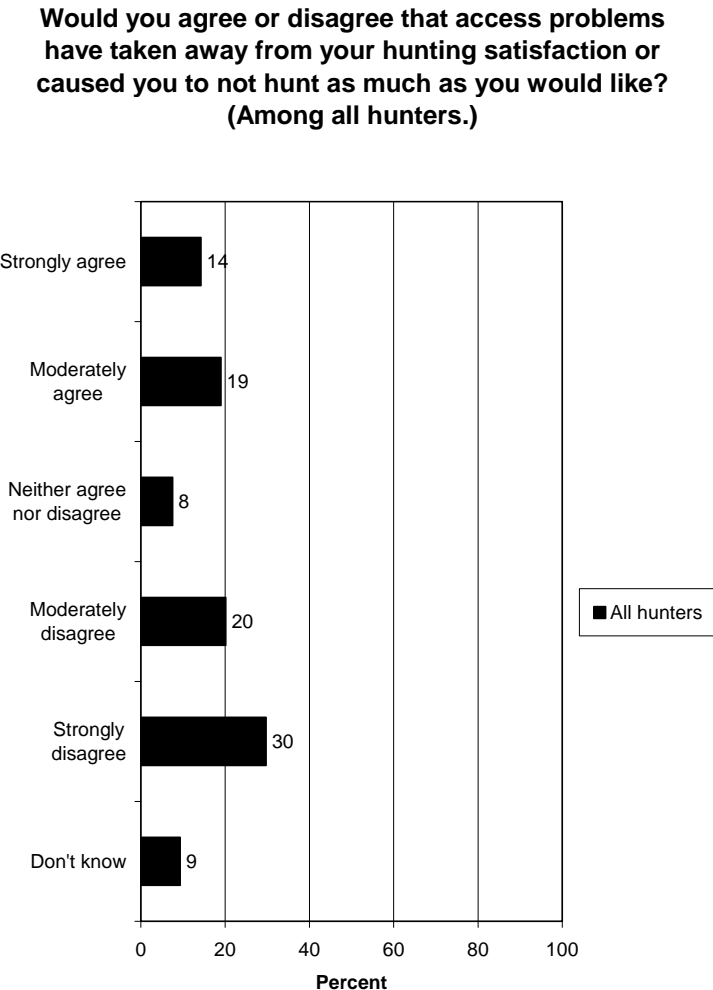


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **A minor constraint that should nonetheless be discussed is that some hunters are reticent about putting their social security number on license applications.**

In the Phase II focus groups, one inactive hunter said, "[Y]ou have to give the clerk your social security number, driver's license, home address, and credit card number. Doesn't that seem way too much? Risk the nightmare of identity theft?"

# SHOOTING INITIATION

➢ **Most shooters started shooting at a young age (although the typical age of initiation is just slightly older than for initiation into hunting).**

Shooters most commonly first went shooting during the 10-12 year-old range, and nearly half (49%) had gone shooting at least once by the age of 12 years (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **As with hunting initiation, shooting initiation closely involves male family members.**

The majority of active shooters (57%) were first taken shooting by their father or stepfather (Figure 4.25). This was followed by friends (12% were first taken by friends). Note the predominance of other male family members, after father, including grandfathers (7%), brothers (5%), and uncles (4%) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Also note in Figure 4.25 the link in avidity (using active versus inactive as a measure of avidity) and being first taken shooting by one's father rather than one's friends.

**Figure 4.25.  Those Who First Took Shooters Shooting**

**Who first took you shooting?**
**(Among all shooters.)**
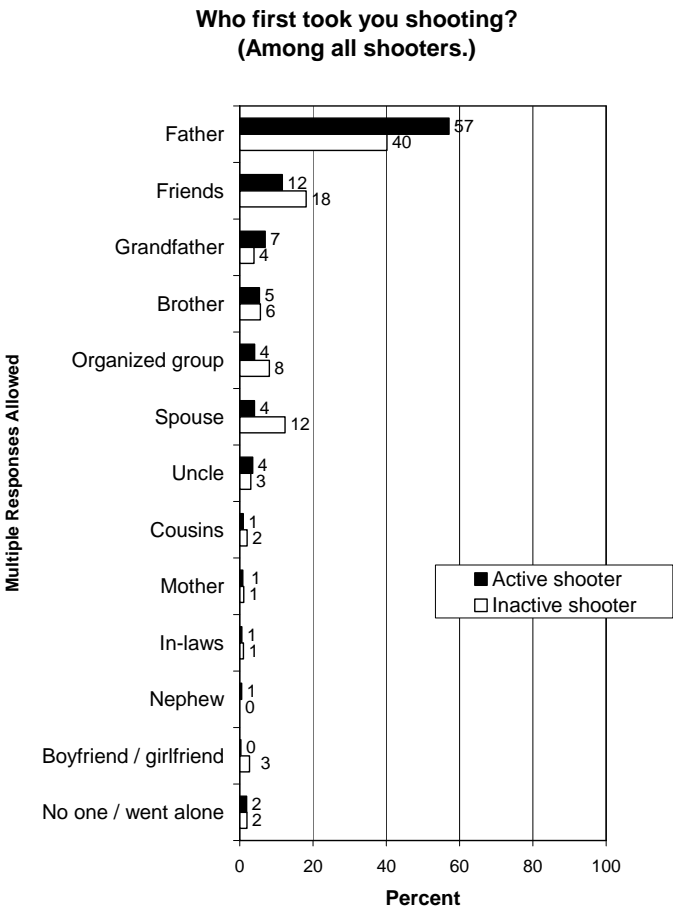


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **One of the most basic shooting activities is of primary importance in shooting initiation:  target shooting with a firearm.  In contrast, more experienced shooters branch out into other types of shooting sports.**

For the overwhelming majority of active shooters, their first shooting activity was target shooting with a firearm (77%), whereas the other shooting sports had much lower percentages of shooters having done them first:  archery (8% of active shooters did this first), sporting clays (6%), trap (3%), and skeet (3%) (Figure 4.26) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.26. First Shooting Activities**

**What type of target or sport shooting did you first do?**
**(Among active shooters.)**
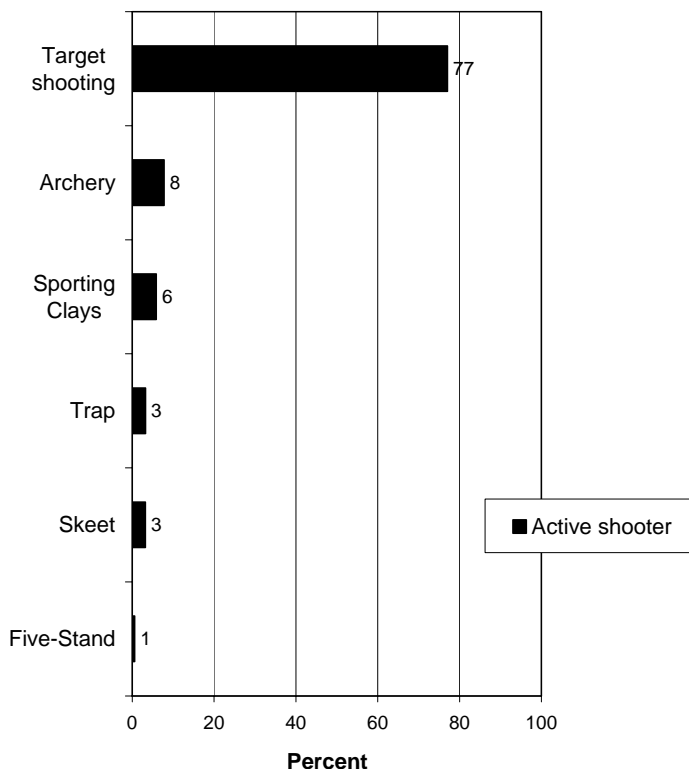


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

It is instructive to look at the types of shooting that active shooters say that they have done versus those they first did, illustrating that they branch out into shooting activities other than simple target shooting with a firearm as they gain experience (Figure 4.27). For example, while only 8% did archery first, 27% have done target shooting with archery equipment; similarly, 3% did skeet shooting first, compared to 34% who have gone skeet shooting. Similar results are found in sporting clays and trap shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.27.  Types of Shooting First Done by Shooters and Ever Done**

**What type of target or sport shooting did you first do / have you ever done?**
**(Among active shooters.)**
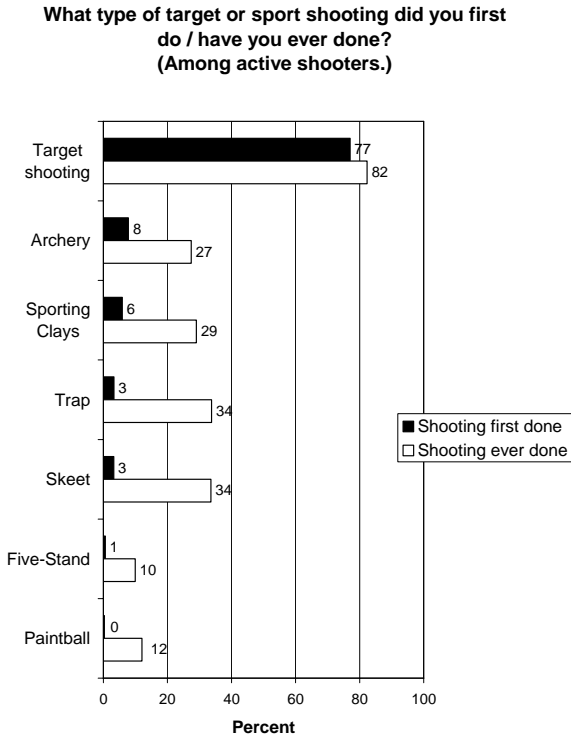


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **Mentoring plays an important role in shooting initiation (as with hunting, in this context, mentoring primarily refers to informal mentoring—such as a parent taking a child).**

More than three-fourths of shooters (78%) indicated that a person or group taught the shooter to target or sport shoot, most commonly the respondent's father or stepfather, but also including friends, uncles, brothers, and grandfathers (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Looking at mentoring from the other side, 65% of active shooters have taken somebody shooting who is new to the sport.  Most commonly, they took their sons or stepsons, as well as friends (or a friend's child), but daughters/stepdaughters, spouses, nephews, grandsons, and cousins also figure prominently as people that shooters have taken shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

As with mentoring in hunting, there is a fairly high percentage of shooting mentors who said that the people they mentored continued to shoot: 53% of active shooters who took somebody new shooting said all continued to shoot, another 34% said most or some continued to shoot, and only 9% said that none continued to shoot (Phase III— RM 2007a).

# SHOOTING RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND DESERTION

➢ **In the most basic question related to recruitment and retention, a large majority of active shooters say that they are *very* interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year. Interest is highest for target shooting with a rifle or shotgun, followed by target shooting with a handgun. Somewhat lower in interest, but still with substantial percentages interested, are skeet, sporting clays and trap shooting.**

Interest in shooting is quite high among active shooters, with 66% saying that they are *very* interested, and another 27% being *somewhat* interested (for a total of 93% showing interest) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Those active shooters who expressed interest in shooting were asked follow-up questions regarding interest in various types of shooting. Interest is most robust for target shooting with a rifle or shotgun (64% were *very* interested, among those who were interested in shooting and who were asked the follow-up questions regarding interest in various types of shooting), followed by target shooting with a handgun (50%), skeet (39%), sporting clays (34%), and trap shooting (30%). Interest in five-stand is slight (12%).

Inactive shooters who were interested in shooting—although only 40% of inactive shooters expressed interest—were also asked those follow-up questions regarding types of shooting in which they may be interested. Their greatest interest was in target shooting, particularly target shooting with a handgun; they expressed little interest in skeet, sporting clays, trap shooting, or five-stand.

➢ **Shooting recruitment is similar to hunting recruitment in that the path of initiation discussed previously—being mentored in childhood by family members and being familiar with firearms and the shooting culture—is likely to be more successful than is an alternative path.**

Active shooters typically started shooting at a younger age than did inactive shooters.  Phase III found that 52% of active shooters had begun shooting by the age of 12, but only 33% of inactive shooters had begun by that age.

Active shooters were more commonly first taken shooting by their father (57% of active shooters), compared to inactive shooters (40%).  Conversely, inactive shooters were more commonly first taken shooting by friends (18% of inactive shooters versus 12% of active shooters), an organized group (8% of inactive versus 4% of active shooters), or spouse (12% of inactive versus 4% of active shooters) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **Analogous to hunting, shooting recruitment is helped by a shooting culture.  People who have friends and family who shoot and who grew up in a household that contained firearms are more amenable to shooting recruitment efforts.**

A comparison of active and inactive shooters finds that active shooters are much more likely to have a family member who shoots (Figure 4.28).  Phase III found that 67% of inactive shooters have no family members who shoot, compared to 23% of active shooters.

### Figure 4.28. Family Members Who Shoot

**Do you have any family members who target or sport shoot?**
**(Among all shooters.)**
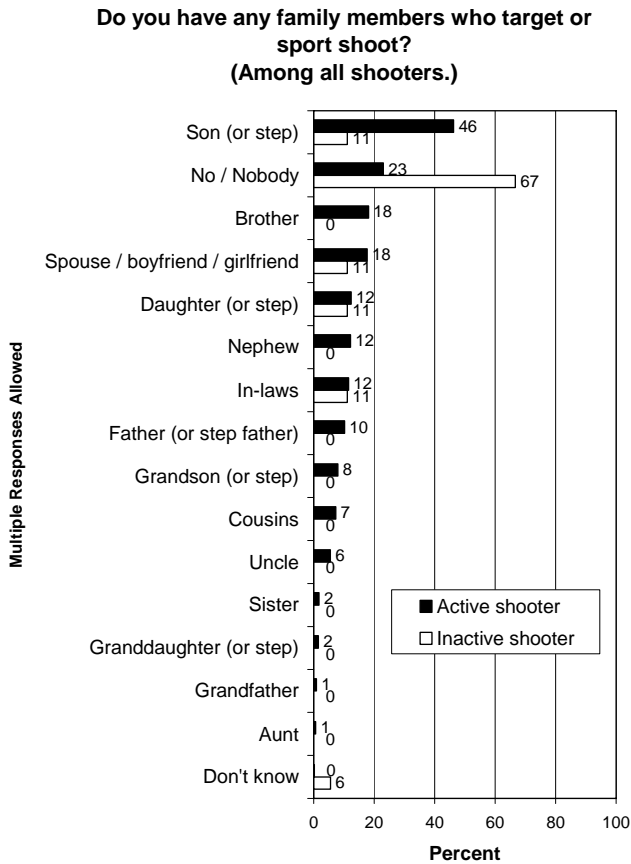


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

Active shooters are also more likely to have friends who shoot: 88% of active shooters, compared to 60% of inactive shooters, have friends who shoot (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Active shooters, relative to inactive shooters and non-shooters, are more likely to have grown up in a household that had firearms: 83% of active shooters, but only 72% of inactive shooters and 44% of non-shooters, grew up in a household with firearms (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Finally, active shooters are more likely to have been part of an organization that went shooting (even if the respondent did not go shooting with that organization): 26% of active shooters, but only

6% of inactive shooters, were part of such an organization when growing up (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **While fun and recreation is the most common reason that shooters go target or sport shooting, utilitarian reasons are important, with slightly more than half of shooters choosing a utilitarian reason.**

The top reason that active shooters give, when asked to choose among six reasons that they shoot, is for fun and recreation (40% of active shooters) (Figure 4.29).  However, this is followed by three utilitarian reasons (19% shoot to improve hunting skills, 17% shoot to improve shooting skills, and 13% shoot for self defense training) that together sum to nearly half of active shooters (49%) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  These results suggest that active shooters should be thought of as about evenly split between those who shoot for utilitarian reasons and those who shoot for appreciative-oriented reasons.

**Figure 4.29.  Motivations for Shooting Among Active Shooters**



**What is your most important reason for target or sport shooting? (Among active shooters.)**
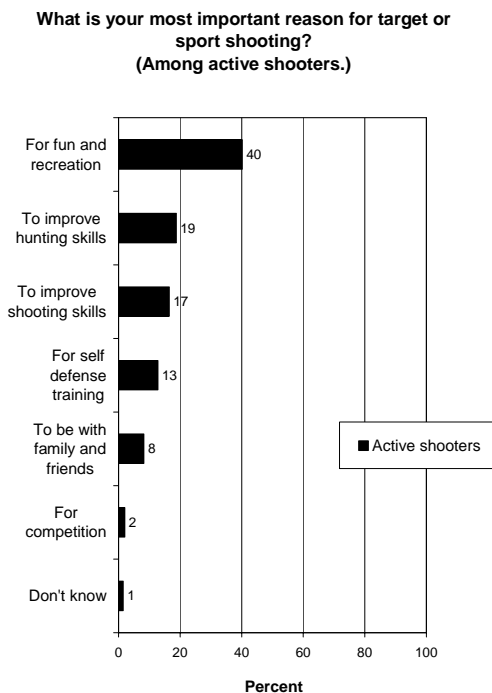
Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Compared to active shooters, a higher percentage of inactive
shooters shot for fun and recreation (48%, compared to 40% of
active shooters) and shot to be with family or friends (14%,
compared to 8% of active shooters).  On the other hand, a lower
percentage of inactive shooters shot for a utilitarian reason (38%,
compared to 49%) (Figure 4.30) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.30.  Motivations for Shooting Among Inactive Shooters**

**Thinking about when you've gone shooting, what is
your most important reason for target or sport
shooting?
(Among inactive shooters.)**
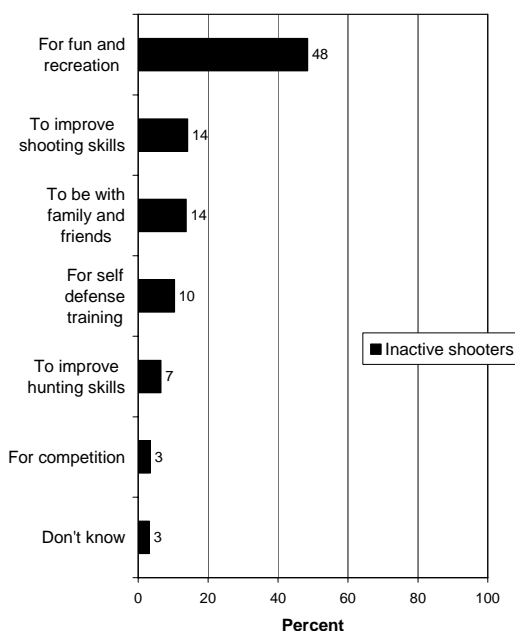


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

> ➤ **Similar to an examination of motivations for shooting is an
>    examination of things that would encourage shooting.
>    Invitations from friends and family and requests from
>    children to go shooting are relatively effective in encouraging
>    people to go target or sport shooting.**

A large percentage of active shooters (81%) indicated that they had,
at some time, been invited to go target or sport shooting, and nearly
all of those who were invited (94%) subsequently accepted the

invitation and went shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a). This suggests that an invitation to go shooting is an effective mechanism for shooting recruitment.

Another question explores the other side of this. The most common reason that mentors took somebody shooting who was new to the sport was because that person showed interest in shooting (Figure 4.31) (Phase III—RM 2007a). This suggests that being asked to take somebody shooting is also effective in encouraging participation. It is interesting to note that passing on the shooting heritage or passing on a family tradition were not nearly at the same level of importance as reasons that mentors took somebody shooting who was new to the sport, at a lower percentage than teaching gun safety or simply for fun as a reason to take somebody shooting.

### Figure 4.31. Motivations for Taking a New Participant Shooting

**Why did you take somebody shooting? (Asked of shooters who have taken someone with them who was new to the sport of shooting.)**

| Reason | Percent |
|---|---|
| Showed interest in learning the sport / asked me to take him or her | 36 |
| It is important to learn gun safety, self defense, and/or how to shoot | 19 |
| For fun, enjoyment, and/or recreation | 14 |
| To introduce the sport / to encourage interest in the sport | 12 |
| Wanted to share my experience and/or enjoyment of the sport | 6 |
| Family tradition / want to continue heritage | 3 |
| Companionship | 1 |

*Multiple Responses Allowed*

■ All shooters who mentored somebody

Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

In follow-up to the above question, mentors were asked what they thought the new initiate got out of the shooting experience, and the top answer was that the new person had a good time and made new memories. Secondarily, the new person got a better understanding of the sport and of firearms themselves (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Shooters were asked if they had been involved in five shooting-related activities or scenarios, and then the survey followed by asking if their participation in shooting had increased or decreased subsequent to the activity or scenario. The results of both these questions suggests that invitations to go and requests to take somebody shooting play a role in shooting recruitment (Figure 4.32). A large majority of active shooters (76%) said that they had been invited to go shooting specifically by a friend, and 27% of those people who were invited said their shooting participation increased afterwards (which translates to approximately 16% of all active shooters who increased their participation after being invited to go). Also, 48% of active shooters said a child had asked to be taken shooting, and 27% of those who had been asked to take a child shooting said that their shooting participation increased afterwards (meaning approximately 13% of all active shooters increased their participation after being asked to take a child). Contrast this with, for instance, watching a shooting program on television: while a majority (72%) of active shooters had watched a shooting program, only 6% of those people said that subsequently their shooting increased (meaning only approximately 4% of active shooters increased their participation after seeing a television program) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.32. Shooting Activities That Increased Shooting Participation**

**Percent of active shooters who were involved in the following shooting-related activities or scenarios and the percent who increased their participation afterwards.**
**(Among active shooters.)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Been invited to go target or sport shooting by a friend | 16% ▌ 60% | 76% |
| A child he/she cared about asked to go target or sport shooting | 13% ▌ 35% | 48% |
| Read about target or sport shooting in a magazine | 8% ▌ 44% | 53% |
| Went shooting as part of a church group or a group of coworkers | 6% ▌ 30% | 36% |
| Watched a shooting program on television | 4% ▌ 67% | 72% |

Legend:
- □ Were involved in activity or scenario, and increased participation afterwards
- ■ Were involved in activity or scenario, but did not increase level of participation

X-axis: Percent (0, 20, 40, 60, 80)

Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

In a finding that is related to shooting recruitment (particularly regarding whether firearms safety courses affect recruitment), more than half of active shooters (54%) have taken a firearms safety course (Phase III—RM 2007a). Also note that this is more than double the percentage of inactive shooters who have taken a firearms safety course, suggesting that talking about safety concerns and

having safety courses available does *not* negatively affect recruitment. (One could *not* say, however, that safety courses have a positive effect, since cause and effect cannot be determined with these data—it could be that more avid shooters are simply more interested in taking a course, or it could be that having taken a course stimulates avidity.) It is also worth noting that more than half of the firearms safety courses taken by shooters include live firing exercises (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Among inactive shooters who took a firearms safety course, the two most common answers regarding the affiliation of the organization that conducted the course are the U.S. government/military and law enforcement agencies (Phase III—RM 2007a). This suggests that many of the inactive shooters may be ex-military personnel or ex-law enforcement officers whose shooting experiences were part of their occupations and may not have been done for any other reason. In short, these inactive shooters should not be thought of as having been involved in the shooting sports in a recreational sense.

➢ **The top dissatisfactions with and constraints to participation in shooting relate to personal or social factors, not to factors over which agencies or organizations would have much influence: lack of time because of family and/or work obligations and age/health. (Note that there are some dissatisfactions and constraints over which agencies do have more influence, which rank just below these two, the most important of which—access and cost—are discussed more fully in the next bullet points several pages hence.)**

This section examines those factors and scenarios that cause dissatisfaction with and desertion from shooting. Shooters whose participation had declined were asked in an open-ended question (which means that no answer set is read, and respondents can give top-of-mind responses) to name the causes of their decline in shooting participation. Time constraints because of family and work obligations topped the list, followed by health/age (Figure 4.33) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## Figure 4.33.  Reasons for Declines of Shooting Participation

**What caused your target or sport shooting participation to decline? (Asked of shooters whose amount of shooting has decreased over the past 5 years.)**
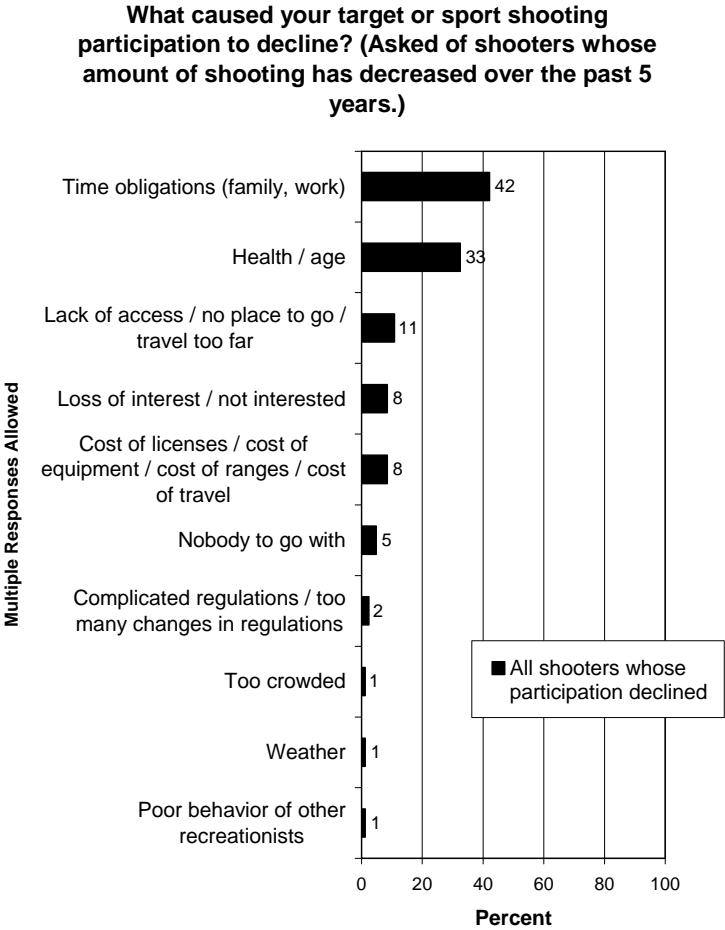


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

A similar open-ended question asked active shooters about things that may have prevented them from shooting as much as they would have liked in recent years.  Lack of time because of family and/or work obligations led the list of constraints (25% of active shooters named this constraint), followed by age/poor health (12%)—both over which agencies and organizations have almost no influence (Figure 4.34) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  (Note that these two were followed by constraints that *are* within the realm of influence of agencies, including access, which will be discussed in the next bullet points.)  Inactive shooters had similar constraints (lack of time and

age/poor health), with the addition of simple lack of interest in going shooting—all personal or social factors.

## Figure 4.34. Constraints to Shooting Participation

**Are there any things that have prevented you from going target or sport shooting in recent years?
(Among active shooters.)**
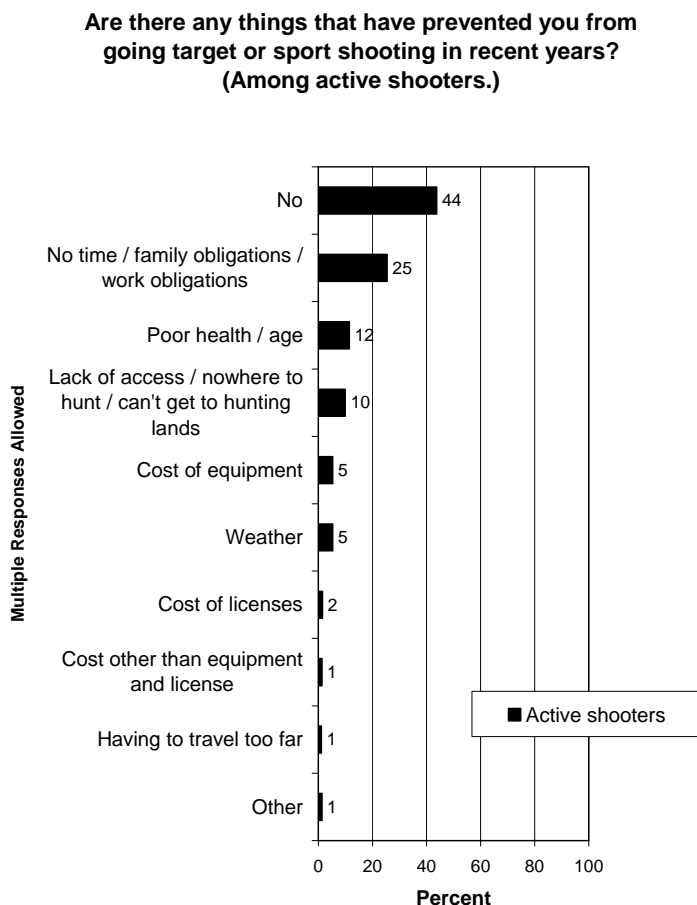


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

Another open-ended question delved into those things that negatively affected shooters' satisfaction with shooting. While the majority of shooters (77%) indicated that nothing had taken away from their shooting enjoyment, the remainder gave a multitude of factors (but no factor was named by more than 5%), including access problems (5%), cost of equipment (3%), and poor behavior of other shooters (3%) (Figure 4.35) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.35. Dissatisfactions with Target or Sport Shooting**

**Are there any things that have taken away from
your enjoyment of target or sport shooting, even if
they didn't prevent you from actually going target
or sport shooting?
(Among all shooters.)**
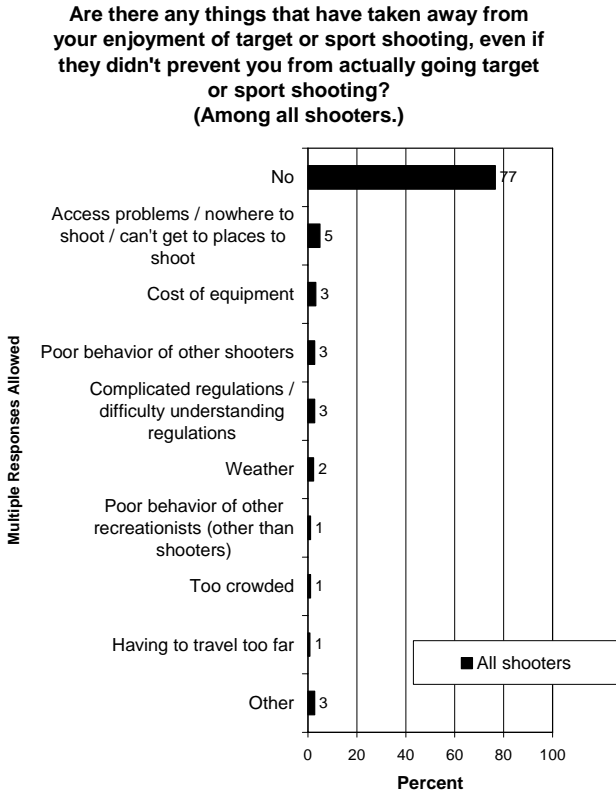


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

In a more definitive way to examine dissatisfactions with shooting
and constraints to shooting participation, active shooters were
directly asked 17 individual questions about things that may have
taken away from their enjoyment of shooting. (Again, this
methodology differs from open-ended questioning.)  For each
potential item, the shooter was asked if it strongly took away from
satisfaction, moderately took away from satisfaction, or did not take
away from satisfaction.  The results of these 17 separate questions
were then put onto a single graph.  The most important
dissatisfactions among active shooters are amount of free time and
work obligations—dissatisfactions largely outside of agency or
organizational influence.  However, the third and fourth items are not
enough places to shoot and not enough access, dissatisfactions that
are within the realm of agency influence (Figure 4.36) (Phase III—
RM 2007a).

## **Figure 4.36. Dissatisfactions Among Active Shooters**

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly took away from his/her enjoyment of target or sport shooting or strongly influenced his/her decline in participation. (Among active shooters.)**

| Item | Percent |
| --- | --- |
| Amount of free time | 28 |
| Work obligations | 22 |
| Not enough places to shoot | 19 |
| Not enough access | 19 |
| Family obligations | 16 |
| Have other interests that are more important | 13 |
| Having to travel to shoot | 10 |
| Cost of shooting equipment | 6 |
| No one to go with | 5 |
| Personal health | 5 |
| Harassment by anti-shooters | 4 |
| Fear of injury by another shooter | 3 |
| Poor behavior of shooters | 3 |
| Loss of interest | 3 |
| Other people's negative opinions of shooting | 3 |
| Lack skills | 2 |
| Thinks shooting might be wrong | 0 |

■ Active shooter

Note that each of these questions was asked individually, with 17 questions in all. For each item, the survey asked, "Did this strongly, moderately, or not take away from your enjoyment of shooting?" (for active shooters whose participation did not decline) or "Did this strongly, moderately, or not influence your decline in shooting participation in the past 5 years?" (for active shooters whose participation declined). The results were then combined into this single graph.

**Percent**

Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

These same 17 questions were asked of inactive shooters, except that inactive shooters were asked if each item had strongly influenced, moderately influenced, or not influenced their decision to *not* go shooting in recent years. For this group, all of the top items were personal or social constraints largely outside of agency or organization influence: other interests, amount of free time, work and family obligations, and loss of interest in shooting. Constraints over which agencies and organizations have some influence, such as not enough access or cost of equipment, were relatively low compared to these above constraints (Figure 4.37) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.37.  Constraints to Participation Among Inactive Shooters**

**Percent who indicated that the following things strongly influenced him/her to not target or sport shoot in recent years. (Among inactive shooters.)**

| Constraint | Percent |
|---|---|
| Have other interests that are more important | 56 |
| Amount of free time | 42 |
| Work obligations | 38 |
| Family obligations | 36 |
| Loss of interest | 29 |
| Not enough access | 14 |
| Personal health | 14 |
| No one to go with | 13 |
| Not enough places to shoot | 12 |
| Having to travel to shoot | 9 |
| Cost of shooting equipment | 8 |
| Fear of injury by another shooter | 8 |
| Poor behavior of shooters | 7 |
| Thinks shooting might be wrong | 6 |
| Lack skills | 4 |
| Other people's negative opinions of shooting | 3 |
| Harassment by anti-shooters | 2 |

■ Inactive shooter

Note that each of these questions was asked individually, with 17 questions in all. For each item, the survey asked, "Did this strongly, moderately, or not influence your decision to not go shooting in the past 2 years?" The results were then combined into this single graph.

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Similar to the series of 17 questions discussed above, non-shooters were asked about 15 potential constraints that might have influenced them to never go shooting.  By far the top potential constraint was a lack of interest (fully 68% said lack of interest *strongly* influenced them to never shoot), distantly followed by being uncomfortable around firearms, family obligations, amount of free time, work obligations, and fear of injury from another shooter (Figure 4.38) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.38. Constraints to Shooting Participation Among Non-Shooters**

**Percent who that indicated that the following things strongly influenced his/her decision to never go target or sport shooting.
(Among non-shooters.)**

| Category | Percent |
|---|---|
| Lack of interest | 68 |
| Uncomfortable around firearms | 23 |
| Family obligations | 17 |
| Amount of free time | 15 |
| Work obligations | 15 |
| Fear of injury by another shooter | 14 |
| Poor behavior of other shooters | 11 |
| Not enough places to shoot | 9 |
| Cost of shooting equipment | 8 |
| Not having anyone to go with | 7 |
| Personal health | 6 |
| Costs of ranges | 6 |
| Other people's negative opinions of shooting | 5 |
| Too many shooters at the ranges | 4 |
| Harassment by anti-shooters | 4 |

■ Non-shooter

Note that each of these questions was asked individually, with 15 questions in all. For each item, the survey asked, "Did this strongly, moderately, or not influence your decision to never go shooting?" The results were then combined into this single graph.

**Percent**

Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

Phase III asked active shooters if conflict with other recreationists had ever taken away from their enjoyment of shooting, and while the vast majority (82%) answered no (either no conflict at all or no conflict that detracted from satisfaction), there were some (17%) who indicated that they had experienced a conflict with other recreationists that had taken away from their enjoyment. In follow-up, they most commonly said that the other recreationists were other shooters or ATV/dirt bike riders, although a few indicated that they had conflict with anti-shooting activists.

➢ **Lack of access to shooting places has a negative effect on some shooters.**

Access issues negatively affect some shooters.  For example, nationally, 18% of shooters had a problem finding a range that was *not* too far away, 16% said that they had trouble finding a place to shoot, 16% said that they had trouble finding a range that had available times to shoot, and 10% indicated that they had trouble finding a range that was *not* too expensive (Phase III—RM 2007a). Active shooters, relative to inactive shooters, were more likely to say that any of these had been a problem.

Additionally, when asked about access overall and access to private and public places for shooting, the percentage of shooters who said that access has gotten worse in the past 5 years exceeds the percentage who said it has gotten better (Figure 4.39).  For overall access, 12% said it has gotten better, compared to 19% who said it has gotten worse; for access to public places, 6% said it has gotten better, compared to 18% who said it has gotten worse; and for access to private places to shoot, 6% said it has gotten better, compared to 25% who said it has gotten worse (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Typical reasons given for the worsening of access are loss of land because of urbanization, being unable to secure permission to access private land, and anti-shooting or anti-hunting campaigns.

**Figure 4.39. Trends in Access for Shooting**

**Percent of shooters who indicated that access to the
following lands for shooting in his/her state has gotten
better or gotten worse over the past 5 years.
(Among all shooters.)**
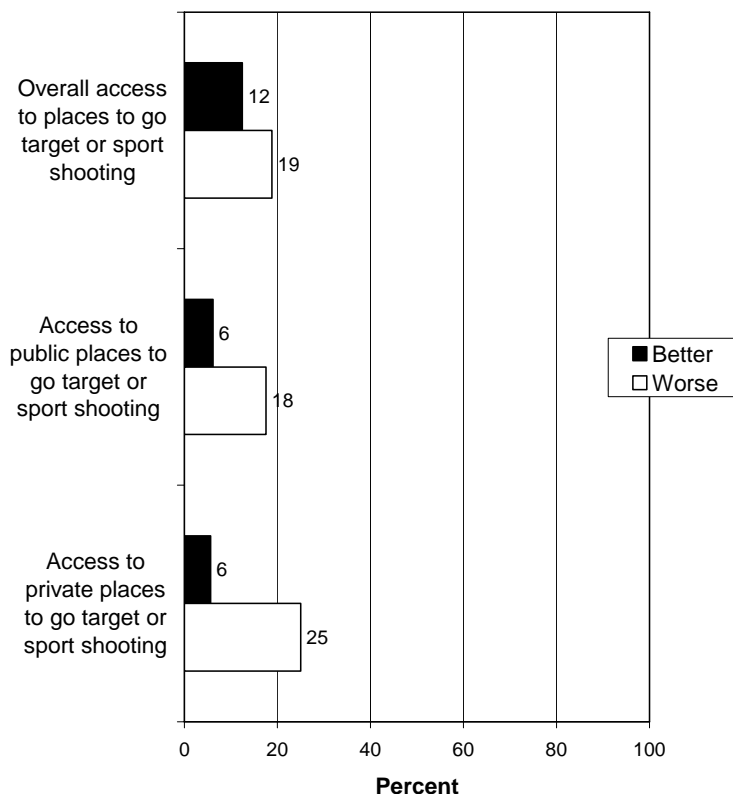


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

In a direct question regarding whether access problems have taken
away from satisfaction with shooting or caused the shooter to
participate less often than he/she would otherwise, 28% of shooters
agree that access problems have taken away from satisfaction or
lowered participation levels; nonetheless, 56% disagree (Figure 4.40)
(Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.40.  Access Problems and Satisfaction with Shooting**

**Would you agree or disagree that access problems
have taken away from your shooting satisfaction or
caused you to not shoot as much as you would
like?
[General population survey.]**
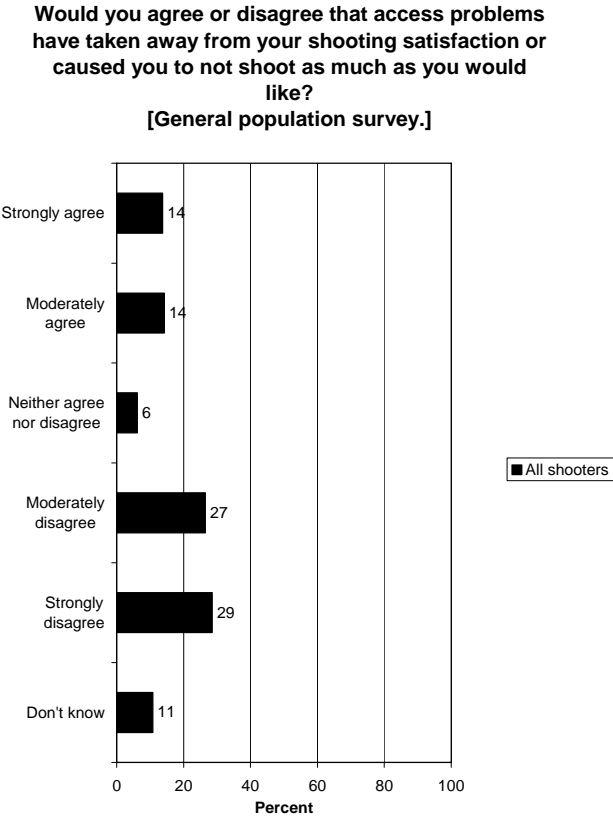


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

> **Costs associated with shooting have a negative effect on some
> shooters.**

Cost was named as a constraint or dissatisfaction with shooting
among a small percentage of shooters:  8% of shooters whose
participation declined named cost as a factor in an open-ended
question (see Figure 4.33) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Also, 5% of
active shooters indicated, in an open-ended question, that cost had
prevented them from shooting as much as they wanted in recent
years (see Figure 4.34) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  When asked in an
open-ended question if anything had taken away from their
enjoyment of shooting, even if it did not prevent them from shooting,
3% of shooters named cost (see Figure 4.35) (Phase III—RM
2007a).

Cost was also asked about within the series of direct (rather than open-ended) questions, but it ranked below social and personal factors discussed previously (lack of time, work obligations, family obligations) as well as access (see Figures 4.36 and 4.37) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Nonetheless, cost is a constraint or dissatisfaction among some and is a factor over which agencies and organizations have some amount of influence.

➤ **There is some opposition to shooting at targets that simulate human outlines, suggesting that recruitment and retention efforts should minimize the connection between firearms and any potential harm to humans.**

Shooters were asked about support or opposition to target or sport shooting on Sundays and about shooting at targets that simulate human outlines. While Sunday shooting is widely accepted (only 15% of shooters *oppose* shooting on Sundays), shooting at human outline targets is not as widely accepted, with 43% opposing (Phase III—RM 2007a). There is also a disparity between active shooters (37% oppose shooting at human outline targets) and inactive shooters (50% oppose) on this question, suggesting that some shooters have a distaste for any connection between shooting and harm to humans.

# CROSSOVER PARTICIPATION BETWEEN HUNTING AND THE SHOOTING SPORTS

➤ **Data suggest that some amount of crossover of participation between hunting and the shooting sports exists. Slightly more of these people who did both activities started out as hunters and later got into shooting rather than the other way around. Typically, the time interval between the initial participation in one activity and the initial participation in the second activity is no more than 3 years.**

Approximately four-fifths of hunters have also shot at some time (although this is *not* to say that four-fifths of hunters are *active* shooters). Conversely, about three-fifths of shooters have hunted at some time (again, they may not be *active* hunters). Certainly, then, it

is reasonable to assume that some initiation into hunting occurs as a result of participation in shooting, and slightly more initiation into shooting occurs as a result of participation in hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

More of the respondents who had done both activities started out as a hunter and later got into shooting (53% described their initiation into the activities this way) than started out as a shooter and later got involved in hunting (40%); the remaining 7% could not say (Figure 4.41) (Phase III—RM 2007a). This suggests that it will be slightly easier to get hunters to participate in target or the shooting sports rather than the other way around, and the qualitative data in Phase II also support this. The typical timeframe between initiation into one activity and initiation into the second activity is no more than 3 years: 55% of hunters said it was 3 years or less between their first hunting and first participation in shooting, and 57% of shooters said it was no more than 3 years between their first shooting and first participation in hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 4.41. Crossover Between Shooting and Hunting**

**Did you start out primarily as a shooter and then later get into hunting, or did you start out primarily as hunter and then later get into shooting? (Asked of those who have both target/sport shot and hunted.)**
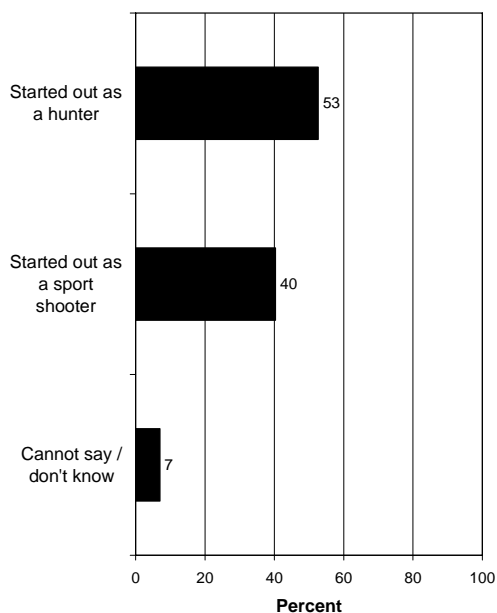


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Among those who had done both, the Phase III survey asked whether their shooting was done only to improve hunting skills or whether they considered their shooting to be separate from their hunting.  A majority of those who did both (61%) said that they considered their shooting to be separate from their hunting.  Similarly, respondents who were both *active* hunters and *active* shooters were asked whether their shooting is done primarily as part of hunting activities or whether their shooting is completely separate from their hunting: just over half (51%) of these active participants said their shooting is completely separate from hunting activities (Phase III—RM 2007a).

A fact pertaining to crossover is that 82% of active hunters are interested in going shooting in the next year.  Likewise, 65% of active shooters are interested in going hunting in the next year.

# CHAPTER 5
# MOTIVATIONS FOR AND
# SATISFACTION WITH HUNTING
# AND THE SHOOTING SPORTS

## MOTIVATIONS FOR HUNTING

➢ **The top motivations for hunting are aesthetic and appreciative-oriented reasons; utilitarian reasons or achievement-oriented reasons are not primary. This is important to keep in mind when discussing hunter satisfaction and the factors related to their satisfaction.**

As shown in Figure 4.7 in the previous chapter, a national study of hunters found that 76% of hunters hunted for aesthetic or appreciative-oriented reasons (33% did so for the sport or recreation, 27% did so to be with family or friends, and 16% did so to be close to nature), while only 22% hunted for the meat (RM 2006b). Given these findings, it is not inconsistent for many hunters to indicate that a successful harvest is not necessary for a satisfying hunt. (Not to say that *continual* lack of harvest success would not eventually cause dissatisfaction and possible desertion, but *occasional* harvest failure does not appear to cause widespread dissatisfaction or desertion.)

## HUNTING SATISFACTION

➢ **Satisfaction with hunting among hunters is positive, with large majorities of active and inactive hunters satisfied.**

Large majorities of active hunters (85%) and inactive hunters (74%) were very or somewhat satisfied with their hunting experiences (Figures 5.1 and 5.2) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 5.1.  Active Hunters' Satisfaction with Hunting**

**How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with
your hunting experiences?
(Among active hunters.)**
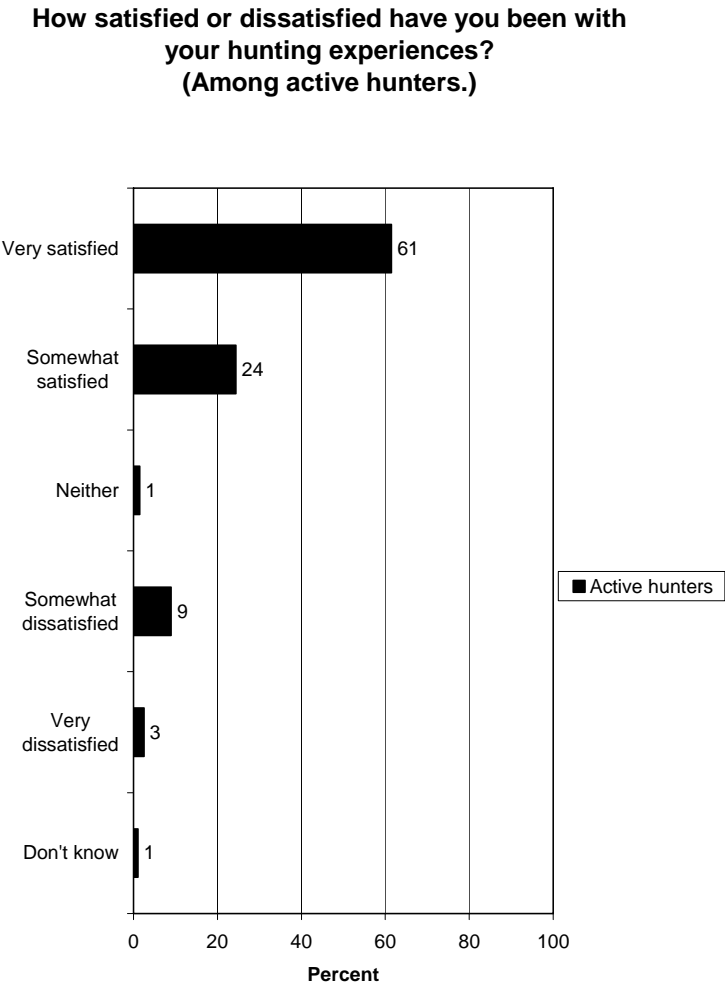


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 5.2.  Inactive Hunters' Satisfaction with Hunting**

**When you last went hunting, how satisfied or
dissatisfied were you with your hunting
experiences?
(Among inactive hunters.)**
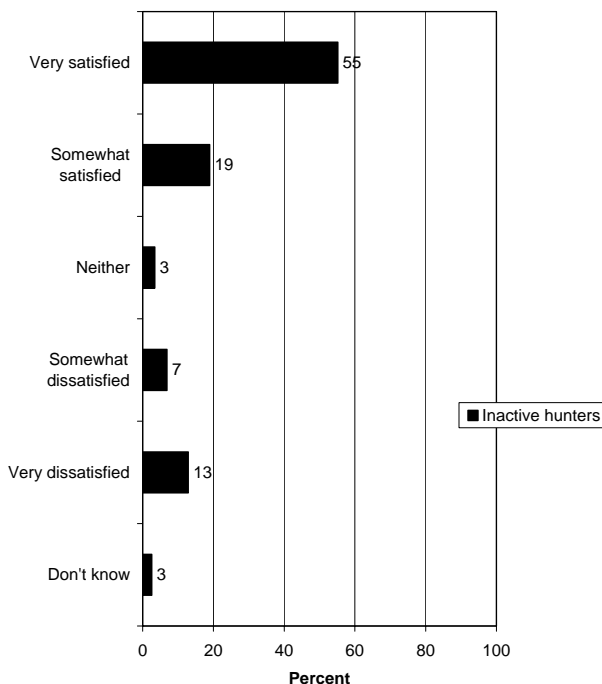


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a


# FACTORS RELATED TO HUNTERS' SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION

## THE DYNAMIC ASPECTS OF SATISFACTION

➤ **All discussions of hunter satisfaction should keep in mind
that satisfaction parameters are dependent on the experience
of the hunter and are not consistent throughout a hunter's
lifetime.**

An illustration of changing satisfaction parameters is found in "specialization theory," where, for instance, hunters move from activities of low specialization to activities of high specialization, such as where a beginner hunter may hunt small game and then eventually move on to large game and/or more specialized equipment.  Satisfaction parameters may change as the hunter becomes more experienced, especially in that the aesthetic and appreciative-oriented components of hunting may become more important with more hunting experience (Bryan 1979).  To further elucidate, Bryan (1979) noted that various recreationists go through "careers" in their sport, with the earliest stages typified by less specific demands on the resource and the later stages typified by more specific demands.  For example, in the early stages any game, such as small game, may suffice, whereas later only wild turkey hunting will suffice, or one may begin using a shotgun and later move toward bow and arrow (Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3.  Specialization in Hunting**
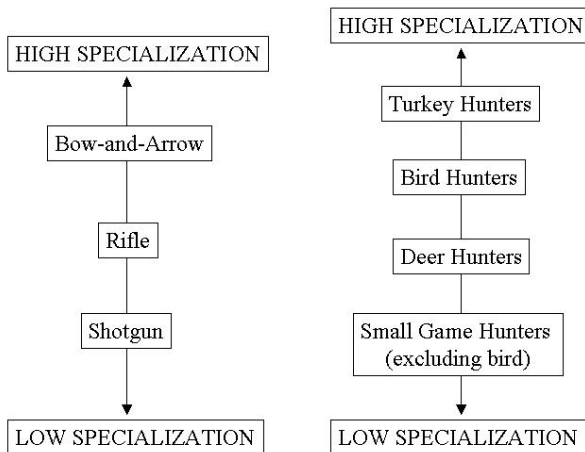


Source:  Bryan 1979

In short, Bryan noted that specialization takes place both within and between different types of hunters.  Low specialization in hunting includes the progression from small game hunters (typically excluding bird) to deer hunters to upland game bird hunters to turkey hunters.  Within hunting the degree of specialization moves from shotgun to rifle to bow-and-arrow (or muzzleloader, although this is not included in Figure 5.3).  The deer hunter begins with an

orientation toward the kill while manning a stand on an organized hunt. As experience is gained, the trophy deer becomes important. As more experience is gained, the non-consumptive components become important and the pursuit becomes more important than the kill.

Overall, Bryan (1979) has some general observations on participation: 1) newcomers are intent on getting results from a recreational activity, 2) numbers become important as an activity becomes an established behavior, 3) once the numbers stage has been reached, specialization begins, and 4) at the extreme end of specialization, the activity itself becomes important for its own sake. Bryan suggests that managers need to have a profile of demand for different types of recreationists within categories. The more specialized recreationist generally spends more on the sport, has stronger (and often better informed) opinions about its management, and often wields more political power than the less specialized recreationist.

## VARIOUS MOTIVATIONS FOR HUNTING RESULT IN MULTIPLE SATISFACTIONS AMONG HUNTERS

> ➤ **Data suggest that the quality of a hunting experience and hunting satisfaction is dependent on the extent to which a hunter finds the desired mix of satisfactions he or she is seeking from the sport.**

Heberlein (1988) noted that the quality of a hunt is judged by the hunter based on several hierarchal factors that collectively determine the quality of a hunt; he cautions managers to *not* focus on one thing. Hendee (1972, 1974) and Potter et al. (1973) identified the importance of recognizing the different motivations for hunting and managing for their attainment. Hendee (1974) termed this a "multiple satisfactions approach." Some of these satisfactions included (and have analogous counterparts among the various motivations for hunting) being close to nature, camaraderie, using special equipment, and exercise. Hendee's multiple satisfactions approach had direct and important implications for wildlife managers: game harvested and days afield are important, but other aspects of hunting should be managed as well to ensure and increase hunter satisfaction.

## HARVEST SUCCESS AS A FACTOR IN SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION WITH HUNTING

> ➤ **Harvest success is positively correlated with satisfaction; however, there are many hunters who still have a satisfying hunting experience without harvesting game. In this light, harvest should be seen as one of several factors related to satisfaction. (Again, this is not to say that *continual* lack of harvest success would not cause dissatisfaction and possible desertion eventually.)**

A statewide study of Washington State hunters found that 83% of deer hunters who had harvested a deer indicated being satisfied with their deer hunting that season, while 54% of those who had not harvested a deer were satisfied (RM 2008b). The difference in being *very* satisfied was particularly high: 52% of those who harvested, versus 20% of those who had not, were *very* satisfied. Note, however, that even among those who did not harvest a deer, satisfaction (54%) still exceeded dissatisfaction (43%), pointing out that satisfaction is dependent on more than harvest success. The results were similar among elk hunters regarding being *very* satisfied (67% of those who harvested versus 23% of those who did not harvest) and being very or somewhat satisfied (91% of those who harvested versus 64% of those who did not harvest). But note that a majority of non-harvesters were, nonetheless, satisfied.

A study conducted by Responsive Management pertaining to youth weekend hunts in Vermont found that harvest success made only a slight difference in overall satisfaction with the youth hunt, as 96% were satisfied among those who harvested game and 85% were satisfied among those who did not harvest game (Figure 5.4) (RM 2007b). In that Vermont study, both groups had a high satisfaction rate, and harvest success made only a small difference in desire to continue to hunt in the future.

**Figure 5.4.  Harvest Success and Satisfaction**

**Satisfaction as it relates to harvest of game on first year of Youth Weekend Hunts. (Among current adult license holders who had participated in a Youth Weekend Hunt as a youth.)**
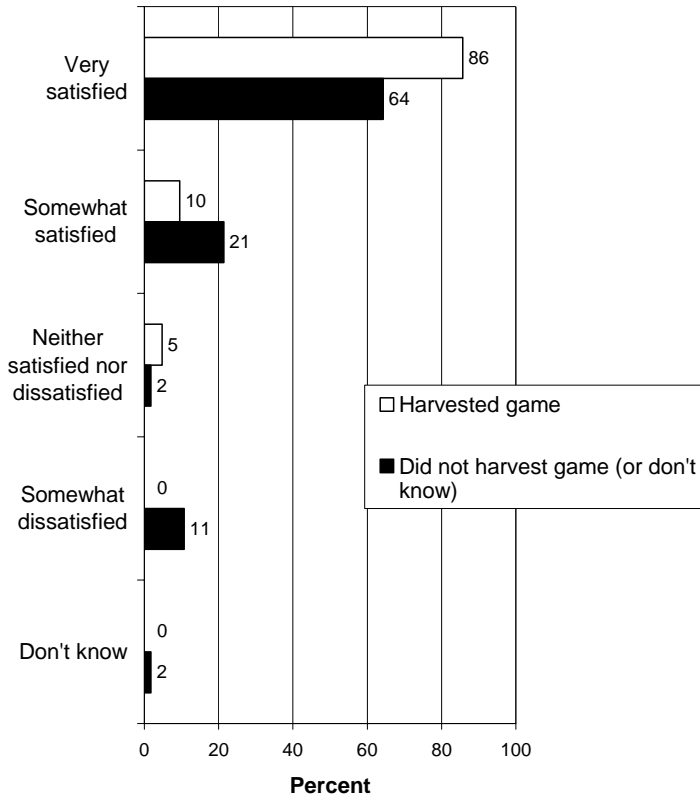


**(Question asked, "How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your hunting in your first year of youth weekend hunts?"  Harvest or lack of harvest in the crosstabulation pertains to harvest specifically during the first youth weekend hunt.)**
Source:  RM 2007b

➢ **While the above findings suggest a positive correlation between harvest success and satisfaction, a general lack of harvest success does not appear to be plaguing hunting, as lack of game is *not* one of the top dissatisfactions with or constraints to hunting.**

It is instructive to examine, in an indirect way, a lack of harvest success or a general lack of game as factors in satisfaction. For example, when hunters whose hunting participation had declined in the past 5 years were asked in an open-ended question (in which no answer set is read) to give the reasons for their declining participation (see Figure 4.12), only 6% of them indicated that the decline was prompted in part by a lack of game (Phase III—RM 2007a). Also, that survey asked active hunters in an open-ended question if there were any things that may have prevented them from going hunting, and lack of game was well down the list, with only 3% naming this as something that prevented them from hunting (see Figure 4.13) (Phase III—RM 2007a). All hunters were asked in an open-ended question whether anything had taken away from their enjoyment, even if those things had not prevented them from hunting, and, again, lack of game was low, with only 5% saying it had taken away from their enjoyment (see Figure 4.14) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Nonetheless, a direct question (note that the above questions were open-ended, with no response list of choices being read to the respondent) asked hunters if not enough game had kept them from hunting or had taken away from their enjoyment, and 28% of hunters indicated that lack of game had, although only 9% gave the "strongly" answer (Figure 5.5) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

To reiterate, the result in Figure 5.5 seems much higher than the results of the open-ended questions discussed immediately above; however, the disparity is not as great as it first appears. Because the former questions were open-ended, in which the respondent could say anything that came to his or her mind, respondents typically answered with the one or two *primary* factors, and lack of game was simply not one of the most important top-of-mind answers. The latter question in Figure 5.5 asked specifically about whether lack of game had been a constraint or dissatisfaction, and the question did not stipulate that the factor being asked about—not enough game— had to be a *primary* factor, just whether it was a factor at all. In this question, the overwhelming majority of hunters (70%) said that lack of game had *not* kept them from hunting or taken away from their enjoyment. Note that in a ranking of all the possible constraints or dissatisfactions that were asked about in direct questions, lack of game was low on the lists (see Figures 4.15 and 4.18).

**Figure 5.5. Not Enough Game as a Dissatisfaction or Constraint to Hunting Participation**

**Did not enough game strongly, moderately, or not (take away from your enjoyment of hunting? / influence your decision to not hunt in the past 2 years? / influence your decline in hunting in the past 5 years?) (Among all hunters.)**



Note: Active hunters whose participation did not decline were asked about their enjoyment of hunting; active hunters whose participation declined were asked about their decline in participation; and inactive hunters were asked about not hunting in the past 2 years.

Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

> **Other studies reiterate that harvest is one of several factors related to satisfaction.**

While hunters derive many satisfactions from hunting in addition to bagging game, harvest certainly plays a role in satisfaction. Indeed, many studies have found that harvest is correlated to satisfaction to some degree, particularly until a certain threshold of harvest is reached (More 1973, Potter et al. 1973, Schole et al. 1973, Stankey et al. 1973, Decker et al. 1980, Langenau et al. 1981, Vaske et al 1982).

## HUNTING ACCESS AND CROWDING AS FACTORS IN SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION WITH HUNTING

### The Physical Aspect of Access

> ➢ **Hunting access has two important components:  the actual existence of the land on which to hunt, and a way of getting to that land.  Problems with access must be first categorized before a solution is offered.**

In some cases, lack of access can mean that the hunter cannot find land on which to hunt—simply a lack of available land. Urbanization, for instance, can convert huntable land into non-huntable land because of the presence of residential development. Such development not only takes away the actual house lot itself, but also removes land in a buffer around the development, because all states have laws that prevent shooting and hunting within a certain distance of houses and roads.  Another example of the lack of available land occurs when private lands are leased to hunting clubs, which then prevent public access to that land.  This problem was discussed frequently in focus groups that were conducted by Responsive Management in the Midwest (RM 2005c).

In other cases, land exists for hunting, but access to it is blocked by private lands.  In other words, a private landowner may restrict access to his land, thereby preventing anybody from passing through it to get to lands for which access is open (such as some public lands).  In studies conducted by Responsive Management that delved into hunting access, focus group research and survey comments uncovered instances where private landowners had illegally blocked access to public lands by posting no trespassing signs on public lands (RM 2003e, 2005c).

Another example of the latter example where, again, land exists but access is blocked occurs because of road closings and restrictions on vehicular access.  In some instances, the distance—though unblocked—is too far for feasible access for hunters. (This is not to advocate for completely unfettered vehicular access to America's public lands, as that would, in itself, create a dissatisfaction to many recreationists, including hunters, who use public lands.  Rather, the above simply states a fact about access.)

In the Phase III survey, hunters who had experienced access problems while hunting were asked whether the access problem was a lack of land on which to hunt or a situation where land existed that the hunter could not get to. The majority of those with access problems (60%) indicated the latter—that land existed but they could not get to it—rather than an absolute lack of land. Among *active* hunters with access problems, an even higher percentage (68%) said that land existed but that they could not get to it (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**The Psychological Aspect of Access**

➢ **In addition to the two components discussed above, access has both a physical component and a psychological component. A psychological constraint in some instances may be as damaging or more damaging than a physical constraint.**

An example of a psychological constraint to hunting access is the need to obtain permission from a landowner to hunt on the land. Although such land, technically speaking, is accessible, if the landowner is simply hard to contact or the hunter is uncomfortable interacting with that landowner, access can be, for practical purposes, blocked.

Another type of psychological constraint is lack of information about where to hunt. However, this does not appear to be an important problem, as only 8% of hunters indicated that they had had difficulty getting information on places to hunt (Phase III—RM 2007a). Indeed, many state agency websites have copious information on places to hunt. For example, on the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' website, the top heading on the "hunting" page is "Where to Hunt." As another example, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website includes a feature called "GoHunt!," which is an interactive mapping site with Game Management Unit boundaries and other hunting information.

**Overall Access to Hunting Lands**

> ➤ **Lack of access is an important constraint to hunting participation among hunters.**

In a direct question (Have you ever had access issues when hunting or access issues that have prevented you from hunting?), 20% of hunters said that they had experienced access issues, while 78% had not had access issues (Phase III—RM 2007a). However, other results of the surveys show slightly lower percentages naming access as a problem, as discussed below.

Inactive hunters were asked in an open-ended question why they had not hunted in recent years. Although time obligations, lack of interest, and health/age led the list of reasons, lack of access was the fourth-ranked reason, with 9% of inactive hunters saying that it was a contributing reason why they had not hunted (Phase III—RM 2007a). Among active hunters, 9% said in an open-ended question that lack of access was something that had prevented them from hunting at some time (see Figure 4.13) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

All hunters were asked in an open-ended question if there were any things that had taken away from their enjoyment of hunting, even if these things had not prevented them from going hunting. Lack of access was named by 12% of them (see Figure 4.14) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Hunters who had experienced a decline in their hunting participation were asked to name the factors contributing to their decrease in hunting activity. Again, health/age and time obligations (family and work) led the list by far (with age/health being particularly important among inactive hunters), but lack of access was, nonetheless, named by 16% of them (see Figure 4.12) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

In direct questioning, when hunters were asked a series of questions about possible constraints and dissatisfactions, lack of access was important. Figure 4.15 showed that access issues were the first- and second-ranked items that took away from satisfaction or contributed to a decline in participation, with 26% saying not enough places to hunt and 23% saying not enough access strongly took away from enjoyment or contributed to a decline in participation (Phase III—RM 2007a). Likewise, Figure 4.18 showed that lack of access is the

fifth-ranked item that strongly influenced inactive hunters to not hunt in recent years (although it ranked below lack of time, family obligations, work obligations, and loss of interest), with 17% saying it strongly influenced them to not hunt recently (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Finally, hunters were directly asked to rate access overall to hunting lands within their state of residence. The majority (58%) rated overall access as excellent or good; however, 9% gave overall access a poor rating (Phase III—RM 2007a).

> **Lack of access is one of the top constraints over which agencies and other organizations have substantial influence.**

Note that in the results discussed above, lack of access was exceeded only by poor health/age, time obligations for work and family, and lack of interest. While lack of interest is somewhat within the influence of agencies and organizations, poor health/age and time obligations are almost completely outside of any influence of agencies or organizations.

**Access to Public Lands**

> **A primary consideration in examining access to public land is simply the vast differences in the amount of public land among the various states. Many western states, for example, have huge tracts of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Additionally, the amount of acreage in National Forests varies greatly from state to state.**

> **For the most part, access to public lands is perceived to be better than access to private lands for hunting, and, for most hunters, access to public land is *not* as important a problem for hunters. Nonetheless, there are some hunters who experience access problems on public lands.**

Nearly half of hunters (48%) rate access to public lands for hunting in their state as excellent or good. Nonetheless, 11% of them rate public land access as poor, and 32% rate it fair or poor (the remaining 21% answer, "Don't know") (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Access to Private Lands**

> ➤ **Access to private lands is more of a problem than access to public lands.**

Access to private land had worse ratings than both access to public lands and access overall in the Phase III surveys. Well short of a majority (40%) of hunters rated access to private lands for hunting as excellent or good (compared to 48% for public land), and 18% rated private land access as poor (compared to 11% for public lands) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Indeed, the percentage giving excellent or good ratings (40%) equaled the percentage giving fair or poor ratings (also 40%), with the remainder answering that they do not know.

Hunters who thought that access had gotten worse over the past few years were asked to indicate why it had gotten worse. The top answer was not being able to get permission to hunt private lands, and other important answers were that private land had been closed because of poor behavior of hunters and that private land had been leased to hunting clubs (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Crowding**

> ➤ **Crowding is an issue that is tangentially related to access in that crowding can become a psychological access issue. While access may not, technically, be blocked, access could be said to be lacking, *de facto,* because the hunter may no longer consider the crowded land to be hunting land to which he or she wants access.**

> ➤ **Fortunately, crowding is *not* named as an issue by the overwhelming majority of hunters.**

Hunters whose hunting participation had declined over the past 5 years were asked in an open-ended question to give their reasons for the decline, and crowding was well down the list. Only 1% of these hunters said crowding had caused their participation to decline (see Figure 4.12) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Inactive hunters were asked in an open-ended question why they had not hunted in recent years, and less than 1% of them named crowding as the reason (Phase III—RM 2007a). Active hunters were asked if there were any things that

prevented them from hunting in recent years, and 1% named crowding (see Figure 4.13) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The above discussion covered things that may have *prevented* hunting participation or caused a decline; the same survey asked hunters in an open-ended question about things that may have taken away from enjoyment of hunting, even if they did not prevent participation. Crowding was named by only 3% of hunters (see Figure 4.14) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Note, however, that a slightly higher percentage of hunters (5%) named poor behavior of other hunters/fear of injury from another hunter, a reason that may be tangentially related to crowding.

Even in direct (as opposed to open-ended) questions, crowding was not a highly ranked constraint or dissatisfaction. In Figure 4.15, too many hunters in the field was well down the list of things that strongly took away from enjoyment or influenced a decline in participation, with only 7% giving the "strongly" response (Phase III—RM 2007a). Likewise, in Figure 4.18, too many hunters in the field is not at the top of the list of constraints, with 9% of inactive hunters saying it strongly influenced them to not hunt in recent years (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## HUNTER ETHICS, HUNTER BEHAVIOR, AND SAFETY CONCERNS AS FACTORS IN SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION WITH HUNTING

> ➢ **Poor hunter behavior/fear of injury from other hunters is not a top dissatisfaction with or constraint to hunting, but it is one of the top dissatisfactions/constraints over which agencies and organizations have some influence.**

Hunters were asked in an open-ended question if there were any things that had taken away from their enjoyment of hunting, and 5% named poor behavior of/fear of injury from other hunters, ranking it below access, but above lack of game (see Figure 4.14) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

In a direct question among the series of possible constraints or dissatisfactions, 14% of active hunters said that poor behavior of other hunters strongly took away from enjoyment or influenced a

decline in their hunting (see Figure 4.15) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Similarly, in direct questioning, 11% of inactive hunters said that poor behavior of other hunters strongly influenced them to not hunt in recent years (see Figure 4.18) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

There is a link between hunter behavior and lack of access.  Hunters who said that access had gotten worse were asked to indicate why it had gotten worse, and 11% of them said that poor hunter behavior had led to private land being closed to hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **As indicated previously, poor hunter behavior is not a top dissatisfaction.  However, this does not mean that hunters are unconcerned about poor hunter behavior.**

More than a third of hunters (37%) agree that a lot of hunters violate hunting laws.  Nonetheless, a greater percentage (52%) disagree. Just more than half of those who agree said that their perception that a lot of hunters violate laws takes away from their hunting enjoyment (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Hunters were asked if they had ever witnessed a violation, and nearly half of them (45%) had witnessed a violation, and they overwhelmingly thought that the hunter intentionally violated the law (as opposed to doing so out of ignorance).  Furthermore, of those who were hunting when they witnessed the violation, more than half said that their awareness of the violation decreased their own enjoyment of hunting that day (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Two questions explored hunters' perceptions of other hunters' behavior.  So as to ensure there would be no bias, the sample of hunters was divided in half, with one half being asked if they agreed or disagreed that "most hunters *safely* handle firearms" and the other half being asked if they agreed or disagreed that "most hunters *carelessly* handle firearms."  Either way, the overwhelming majority of hunters think that hunters safely handle firearms (93% agree that they safely handle firearms, and 80% *disagree* that they *carelessly* handle firearms) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Other findings suggest that hunter behavior is of some concern to many hunters.  The overwhelming majority of hunters (89%) think that all hunters should be required to pass a hunting safety course to

get a license. Additionally, 54% of all hunters think that hunters should be required to periodically take a refresher hunting safety course (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **Poaching in all its various forms is the hunting/wildlife violation that hunters think is most commonly committed. This is followed by trespassing.**

Hunters were asked which laws they think hunters violate the most often. The top answer is trespassing; however, the next three answers are all types of poaching: exceeding bag limits, hunting out of season, and hunting without a license. Added to these types of poaching are those given by lower percentages: illegal equipment, spotlighting, shooting a legal species but an illegal type (e.g., a buck with antlers too small), other illegal take methods, and baiting (where illegal). The sum of all types of poaching exceeds trespassing as the most common hunting/wildlife violation that hunters think is committed (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **Hunters drinking alcohol is a concern to some hunters, but not to most of them, even though nearly all hunters think that alcohol drinking occurs among hunters.**

Hunters were asked to say how many hunters they think drink alcohol while hunting. The overwhelming majority (81%) say that at least a few do so. However, despite this large percentage, only 5% of those who had been aware of a violation indicated that the violation was hunting while intoxicated, suggesting that at least some alcohol use occurs that is *not* thought to be problematic, and certainly alcohol use below the point of intoxication is *not* thought to be a problem (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## COSTS AS A FACTOR IN SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION WITH HUNTING

➢ **Costs can be broken down into three broad components: equipment costs, trip costs, and license costs.**

➢ **Costs related to hunting are not major dissatisfactions or constraints.**

Active hunters were asked in an open-ended question if any things had prevented them from hunting in recent years:  only 3% said cost of licenses, and 2% said cost of equipment (see Figure 4.13) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Inactive hunters were also asked this question:  3% said cost of equipment, and 3% said cost of licenses (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Inactive hunters were asked in an open-ended question why they had not hunted in the previous 2 years, and cost of equipment/travel costs was named by only 2%, and the cost of licenses was named by only 1% (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Also, hunters were asked in an open-ended question if any things had taken away from their enjoyment of hunting, even if the things did not prevent hunting participation.  Cost of licenses was named by 2%, and cost of equipment was named by 1% (see Figure 4.14) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Similarly, hunters were asked in an open-ended question about things that caused hunting participation to decline (among those whose participation declined).  Only 2% of hunters whose participation had declined said that cost of licenses influenced their decrease in participation, and 1% said cost of equipment was a cause for decreased hunting participation (see Figure 4.12) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

In direct (as opposed to open-ended) questioning, costs of licenses and costs of equipment did not rank relatively high as constraints or dissatisfactions among active hunters.  Regarding possible constraints or dissatisfactions, 10% of active hunters named the cost of licenses and 7% named the cost of equipment as something that strongly took away from satisfaction or strongly influenced a decline in hunting, putting both of them well down the ranking (see Figure 4.15) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Also in direct questioning among inactive hunters, cost of hunting equipment (9%) and cost of licenses (6%) were well down the list of constraints that strongly influenced them to not hunt in recent years (see Figure 4.18) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

> **It is interesting to examine the portion of typical hunter expenses taken up by license fees. In reality, license fees are a minuscule portion of total costs, suggesting that for some hunters, license costs are greater psychologically than they are in actuality.**

Based on data from the latest *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, total costs of all licenses, tags, and permits is only about 3% of a hunter's total costs (Figure 5.6).

**Figure 5.6. Costs of Licenses, Tags, and Permits as a Portion of Hunting Expenditures**

**Licenses, stamps, tags, and permits as portion of total hunting expenditures.**
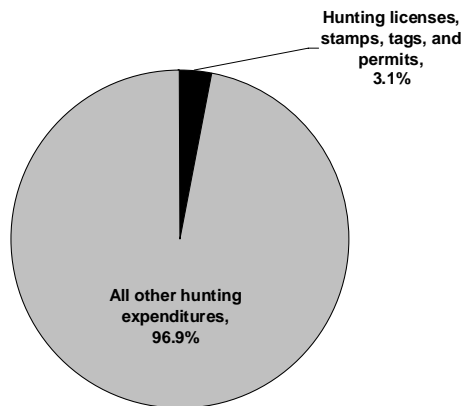


Source:  USFWS/US Census 2007

# MOTIVATIONS FOR SHOOTING

> **As discussed in the previous chapter, shooters' motivations for shooting are about evenly divided between utilitarian reasons and appreciative-oriented reasons.**

As shown in the graph in the previous chapter (Figure 4.29), the top reason that active shooters give for going shooting, among a choice of six reasons, is for fun and recreation (40% of active shooters). The next three reasons, though, are all utilitarian and total 49% of shooters:  19% shoot to improve hunting skills, 17% shoot to

improve shooting skills, and 13% shoot for self defense training (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Therefore, the results suggest a fairly even split in those shooting for utilitarian reasons and those shooting for appreciative-oriented reasons.


# SHOOTING SATISFACTION

➢ **The overwhelming majority of active shooters indicated that they have been satisfied with their target or sport shooting experiences.**

With 62% of active shooters being *very* satisfied and another 30% being *somewhat* satisfied, a total of 92% of active shooters are satisfied with their shooting experiences.  Even most inactive shooters indicated being satisfied (84% of them were satisfied with their shooting the last time they went shooting) (Phase III—RM 2007a).


# FACTORS RELATED TO SHOOTERS' SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION

## ACCESS TO RANGES AND PLACES TO SHOOT AS A FACTOR IN SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION WITH SHOOTING

➢ **As with hunting, lack of access is one of the top dissatisfactions or constraints over which agencies and organizations may have some influence.**

Inactive shooters were asked in an open-ended question why they had not shot in recent years, and lack of access/no place to shoot was named by 8%.  Note, however, that all dissatisfactions with higher percentages are, for the most part, outside of agency/organization influence—time obligations (39%), loss of interest (33%), and age/poor health (11%) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Active shooters were asked if any things had prevented them from going target or sport shooting in recent years, and 10% of them named lack of access, exceeded only by time obligations (25%) and age/poor health (12%) (see Figure 4.34) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Shooters whose participation had decreased in recent years were asked to indicate why their shooting participation had decreased. While the top constraint was time obligations (42%), followed by age/poor health (33%), third on the list was lack of access (11%) (see Figure 4.33) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

When asked to name any things that have taken away from their enjoyment of shooting, even if they did not prevent shooting participation, lack of access was the top dissatisfaction, although named by only 5% of shooters (all other dissatisfactions were named by even lower percentages) (see Figure 4.35) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Note that the large majority of shooters (77%) indicated that nothing had taken away from their enjoyment of shooting.

In a direct question (as opposed to the open-ended questions discussed above that solicit top-of-mind responses) about access to places to shoot, the results show that access is a problem for some shooters.  Specifically, among active shooters, lack of places to shoot (19%) was the third-ranked item that strongly took away from satisfaction or strongly influenced a decline in shooting, exceeded only by lack of time and work obligations (see Figure 4.36) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Among inactive shooters, 14% named lack of access to places to shoot as strongly influencing their decision to not shoot in recent years, exceeded only by social or personal factors (e.g., lack of time, loss of interest) (see Figure 4.37) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Also in direct questioning, 12% of active shooters rated access to places to shoot in their state as poor.  Even greater percentages of active shooters rated access to public lands (16%) and private lands (21%) for target or sport shooting as poor.  In the question specifically about shooting *ranges* (the other questions simply asked about "places to shoot" or "lands for shooting"), 16% of active shooters rated access to shooting ranges as poor (Figure 5.7) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  On the other hand, the percentages of active shooters who gave a rating of excellent are 25% for access to places to shoot, 15% for access to public lands, 14% for access to private

lands, and 13% for access to shooting ranges (Figure 5.8) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Private land for shooting has notably more shooters rating access to it as poor than rating access to it as excellent.  It is worth noting that inactive shooters were *not* much more likely to give poor ratings for access (except regarding shooting ranges), suggesting that lack of access is *not* a primary influence in desertion; rather, it seems to be more of a dissatisfaction rather than a preventive.

**Figure 5.7.  Poor Ratings of Access for Shooting**

**Percent of shooters who rated the access to the following areas as poor.
(Among all shooters.)**
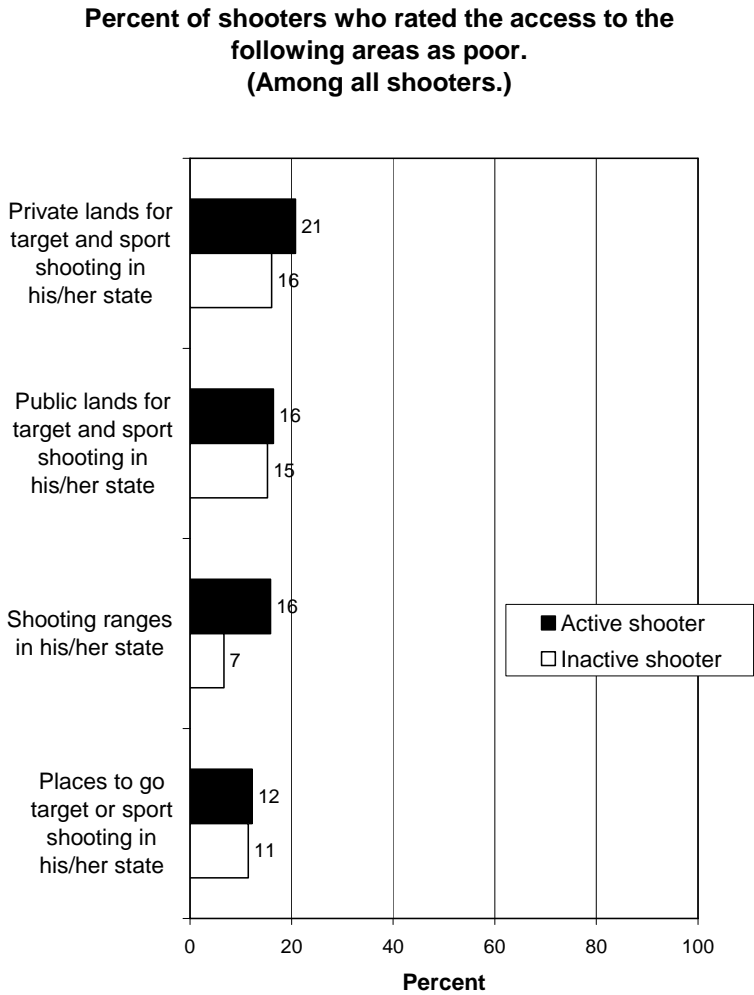


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 5.8. Excellent Ratings of Access for Shooting**

**Percent who rated the access to the following areas as
excellent.
(Among all shooters.)**
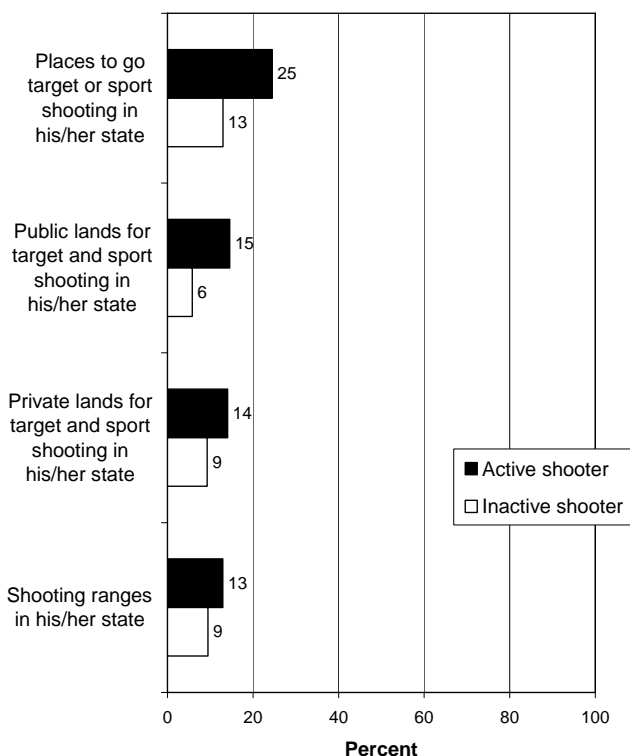


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Another direct question asked shooters if they agreed or disagreed that access problems had taken away from their shooting satisfaction or caused them not to shoot as much as they would have liked. Although disagreement (55%) exceeded agreement (34%), the percentage who agreed is substantial (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Active shooters were asked if they had ever had problems finding shooting ranges under certain conditions (e.g., finding a range with available times, finding a range that wasn't too expensive).  In the simplest question, 21% had a problem finding a place to shoot.  With conditions added, the results were similar: 23% had a problem finding a range that wasn't too far away, 20% had a problem finding

a range that had available times to shoot, and 14% had a problem finding a range that wasn't too expensive (Figure 5.9) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## Figure 5.9.  Shooters' Problems Finding Places to Shoot

**Percent of shooters who indicated having problems finding places or ranges at which to shoot under the following conditions.**
**(Among active shooters.)**
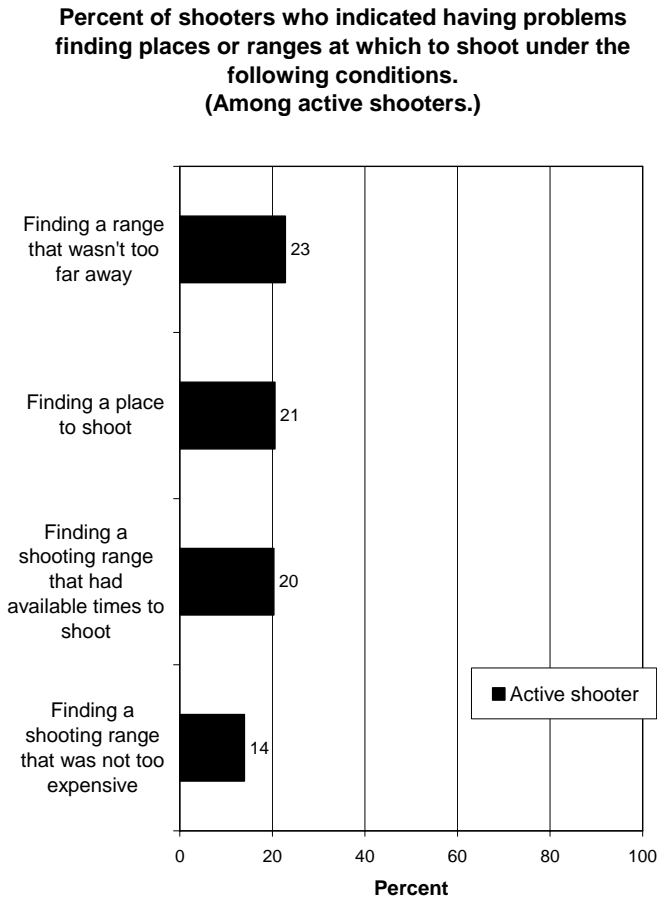


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

It does *not* appear that lack of *information* about access is the primary root of the problem with lack of access:  in a direct question, only 14% of active shooters indicate that they have had difficulty getting information on places to shoot (Phase III—RM 2007a). Nonetheless, at 14%, lack of information may be a constraint worth addressing, particularly in that it is something over which agencies and organizations may have much sway.

➢ **The data suggest that access to places to shoot is getting worse.**

When asked to indicate whether access for target or sport shooting has gotten better or worse in the past 5 years, the percentage of active shooters who answered "worse" far exceeded the percentage who answered "better." The survey asked about access for shooting overall (14% of active shooters said it has gotten better, but 22% said it has gotten worse), access to public places (5% said better, but 22% said worse), and access to private places (4% better, 29% worse). In a follow-up question, those who think access has gotten worse were asked to indicate why they think it has gotten worse, and three answers stood out: loss of land because of urbanization was the leading culprit, followed by the inability to get permission to shoot on private land and anti-shooting/anti-firearms campaigns. Next on the list among active shooters, but far exceeded by the three aforementioned reasons, was not enough ranges/closing of ranges (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## SHOOTING RANGE AMENITIES AS FACTORS IN SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION WITH SHOOTING

➢ **In examining desired shooting range amenities, keep in mind that the favorite type of shooting for the overwhelming majority of shooters is target shooting with a firearm or, to a much lesser extent, target shooting with archery equipment. Together, these two types of shooting are the favorites for 77% of shooters, with the shooting sports (clays, skeet, trap, and five-stand) being the favorite of 20% of shooters (Phase III—RM 2007a).**

➢ **Previous research on shooting ranges found that proximity is one of the most important "amenities" (if that can be called an amenity). While that research was among hunters (rather than pure shooters), given the overlap of the two groups— hunters and shooters—it is reasonable that the results can be applied to shooters, in general. Phase III survey results support the importance of proximity, as well.**

In a study specifically about shooting ranges conducted for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, hunters who used an

outdoor shooting range were asked if there were any problems or drawbacks with the range they currently use, and the top drawback was that the range was too far away, albeit named by only 8% of hunters who used a range (RM 2005d). On the other hand, hunters who had *not* used an outdoor shooting range but who expressed interest in doing so were asked why they had previously never used one. The second most common answer was that the range was too far away/inconvenient location (21%), exceeded only by that the respondent already had somewhere else to shoot.

Additionally, Minnesota hunters were asked to say what had prevented them from shooting at an outdoor range at all or as much as they would have liked. For each hunter group (hunters were asked this question for each type of firearm they used), the constraint of the range being too far away was the second most common answer, in each case exceeded only by lack of personal time. The constraint of the range being too far away was given by from 15% to 27% of the hunter groups, depending on the type of firearm (no personal time was given by 42% to 68% of the various hunter groups) (RM 2005d).

Finally, hunters in the aforementioned shooting range study were asked about distances that they currently travel or would be willing to travel to shooting ranges, including indoor ranges. In each case, the majority gave a time that they would be willing to drive that was no more than 30 minutes (RM 2005d).

Phase III reinforces the importance of proximity. For example, 10% of active shooters said that having to travel too far to shoot strongly took away from their enjoyment of target or sport shooting or strongly influenced their decline in participation (see Figure 4.36). Additionally, in Phase III, the majority of active shooters (59%) gave an answer of no more than 30 miles as the distance they would be willing to travel (one-way) to shoot at a reasonably priced range (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## BEHAVIOR OF PARTICIPANTS AND SAFETY CONCERNS AS FACTORS IN SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION WITH SHOOTING

➢ **Previous research on shooting ranges found that many hunters (again, although the shooting range survey was of hunters, the findings are pertinent to shooters) are concerned about their safety while participating in shooting. Additionally, Phase III survey data also found behavior and safety concerns to be important among some shooters. These findings suggest that poor behavior of other shooters and a feeling of being unsafe would both take away from shooting satisfaction.**

In an open-ended question, wherein the respondent is not prompted by any response choices, that asked hunters to name the most important amenities when selecting an outdoor range at which to shoot, safety was the most commonly named "amenity" (RM 2005d). It is also worth noting that shooters who are knowledgeable about safe firearms practices may be especially intolerant of those who do not safely handle their firearm.

Phase III directly asked active shooters about things that took away from their satisfaction or caused a decline in participation. As Figure 4.36 showed, 3% of active shooters said that fear of injury from another shooter strongly took away from their satisfaction or strongly influenced their decline in participation, and 3% said the same about the poor behavior of other shooters.

## COST AS A FACTOR IN SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION WITH SHOOTING

➢ **Costs appear to affect some shooters' satisfaction. In general, though, cost is *not* one of the important dissatisfactions with shooting, even at ranges, where the costs of shooting would necessarily be greater relative to shooting in a place other than an established range.**

Phase III survey data show that 6% of active shooters said that the cost of shooting equipment strongly took away from their satisfaction or strongly influenced a decline in their participation (see

Figure 4.36).  Regarding shooting specifically at ranges, when hunters who use an outdoor range were asked about any possible drawbacks of the outdoor shooting range that they currently use, 7% of them said that the cost of the range is a drawback (note, however, that this is less than the percentage who said the lack of proximity is a drawback) (RM 2005d).  Additionally, hunters who formerly used an outdoor shooting range but no longer do so only rarely blamed the cost of the range for their discontinuance of use—less than the percentage who said that lack of interest, lack of time, or lack of proximity caused them to stop using the particular outdoor range (RM 2005d).  All these results suggest that cost is not one of the major dissatisfactions with shooting for most shooters, but it is a dissatisfaction to some.

# CHAPTER 6
# TARGET MARKETS

## MARKETING TO TARGET GROUPS

Marketing is a deliberate and orderly step-by-step process that begins with people (markets) and ends with programs, products, services, and strategies.  This chapter focuses on the various potential markets for hunting and shooting recruitment and retention.  The data from Phase II and III suggest that there are 11 distinct "markets" that should be considered in hunting and shooting recruitment and retention efforts (note that these are markets, not *target* markets, as some perhaps should not be targeted at all).  The assessment of the markets included data collected through focus groups, the Phase III telephone surveys conducted for this study, and extensive statistical analyses of the data.  It is important to note that, while 11 individual markets have been identified, some of the markets may share characteristics and/or recommended strategies for recruitment and retention.

## IDENTIFIED HUNTING MARKETS

The research examined six specific hunting markets (Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1.  Hunting Markets**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Active hunters who are likely to continue hunting |
| 2 | Active hunters who are hunting less frequently |
| 3 | Active hunters who are at high risk of deserting the sport |
| 4 | Inactive hunters who may be easily persuaded to start hunting again |
| 5 | Inactive hunters who are less likely to be persuaded to start hunting again |
| 6 | Non-hunters who are very interested in hunting |

These markets were identified based in part on a breakdown of active hunters, inactive hunters, and non-hunters according to their interest

in hunting in the next year, as shown in Figures 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 6.1.  Interest in Hunting Among Active Hunters**

**How interested are you in going hunting in the next year?**
**(Among active hunters.)**
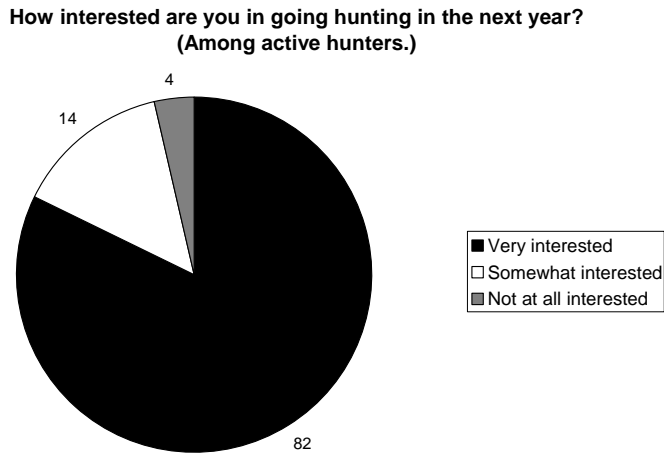


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 6.2.  Interest in Hunting Among Inactive Hunters Who Hunted in the Past 5 Years**

**How interested are you in going hunting in the next year?**
**(Among inactive hunters who have hunted in the past 5 years,**
**but not in the past 2 years.)**
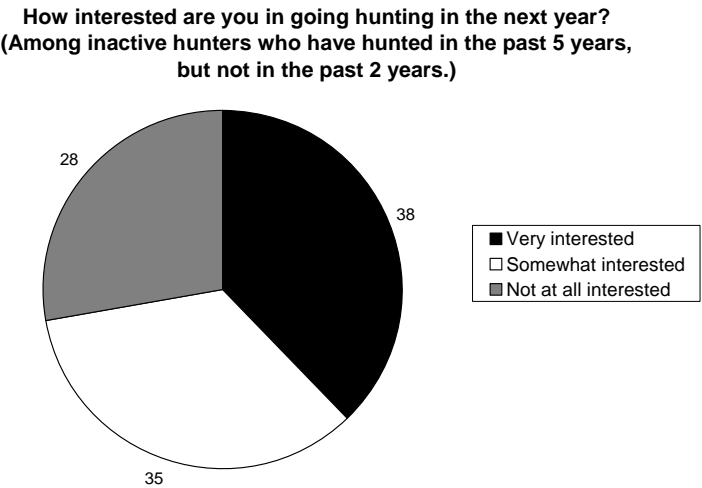


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

## Figure 6.3. Interest in Hunting Among Inactive Hunters Who Did Not Hunt in the Past 5 Years

**How interested are you in going hunting in the next year? (Among inactive hunters who have hunted, but not in the past 5 years.)**
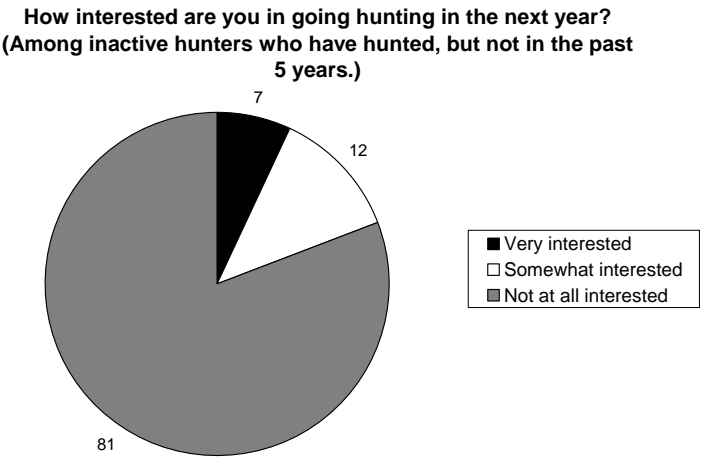


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

## Figure 6.4.  Interest in Hunting Among All Inactive Hunters

**How interested are you in going hunting in the next year? (Among all inactive hunters.)**
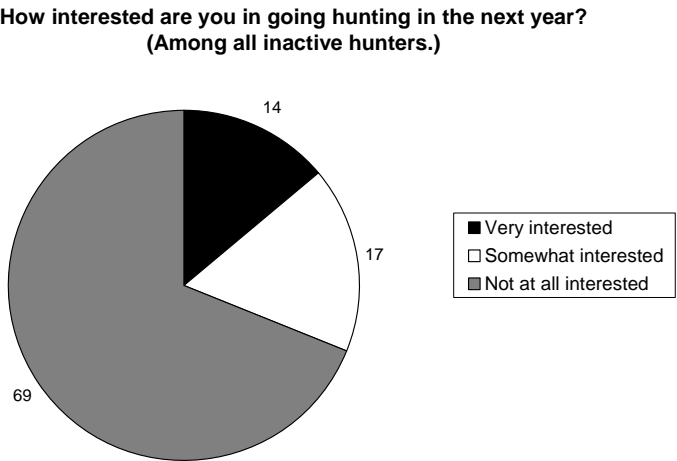


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

## Figure 6.5.  Interest in Hunting Among Non-Hunters

**How interested are you in going hunting in the next year?**
**(Among non-hunters.)**



Legend:
- ■ Very interested
- □ Somewhat interested
- ▨ Not at all interested
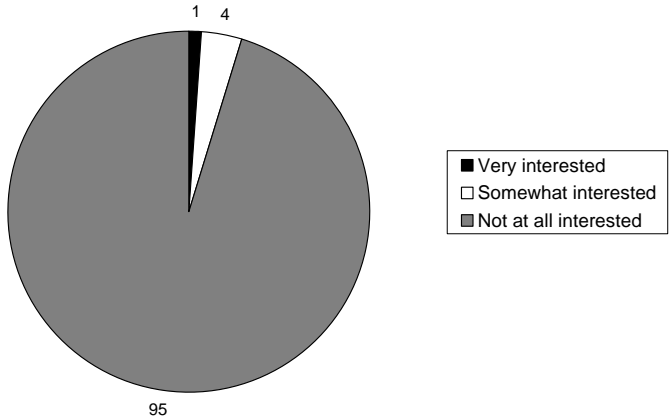
Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **HUNTING MARKET #1—ACTIVE HUNTERS WHO ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE HUNTING (Row 1 in Table 6.1): The data suggest that currently active hunters are traditional hunters, and a large majority are likely to continue hunting.**

Active hunters who are very interested in going hunting in the next year comprise a very large market:  82% of active hunters indicated that they are very interested in going hunting in the next year (Figure 6.1) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Extensive statistical analysis suggests that the market of active hunters who are very interested in going hunting next year are traditional hunters.  They are more likely (relative to active hunters who are *not* very interested in going hunting next year) to be young males who have friends who hunt, and they are more likely to go hunting more than the median number of days in a year.  It appears that hunters in this market are immersed in the hunting culture and were initiated into hunting at a younger age (relative to active hunters who are *not* very interested in going hunting next year), and they show strong interest in numerous outdoor recreation activities, including camping (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Among active hunters who are very interested in going hunting in the next year, not enough land to hunt on and poor access to lands to

hunt on are among the top factors that strongly took away from their enjoyment of hunting.  It is important to note, however, that active hunters who are very interested in going hunting in the next year and whose amount of hunting has increased or stayed the same over the past few years were more likely (compared to active hunters who are *not* very interested in going hunting in the next year) to rate access to private lands for hunting in their state of residence as excellent or good, suggesting that access is not as much an issue for this group as for others.  Other top factors that took away from hunting enjoyment among all active hunters very interested in hunting in the next year include work obligations and amount of free time (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Large majorities of active hunters very interested in hunting in the next year are also interested in several other hunting and shooting activities, including target shooting with a rifle or shotgun, hunting for big game, target or sport shooting, and hunting for small game. They do not appear very interested in shooting sporting clays, trap shooting, skeet shooting, five-stand shooting, or hunting for waterfowl (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The group of active hunters who are very interested in hunting in the next year are not a high-risk market for decreased hunting participation or cessation.  Retention efforts with this group should focus on messages that encourage the introduction of others to the sport, as well as mentoring opportunities to increase their social support by giving them additional hunting companions.  Messages should encourage them to recruit others for the personal satisfaction of sharing their experiences with others and for creating new memories for the person being mentored (Phase II and Phase III— RM 2007a).

> ➢ **HUNTING MARKET #2—ACTIVE HUNTERS WHO ARE HUNTING LESS FREQUENTLY (Row 2 in Table 6.1): The data suggest that active hunters who are hunting less frequently than they once did are an aging group whose decreased participation appears to be the result of increasing age and related health problems.**

Active hunters who are hunting less frequently than other active hunters as well as active hunters who indicated that their hunting activity has decreased over the past few years show a correlation to

being 65 years old or older, regardless of their level of interest in going hunting in the next year.  It is also important to note, however, that those whose participation has decreased over the past few years are more likely (relative to active hunters whose participation has not decreased) to rate access to private lands as fair or poor, suggesting that access (in addition to or instead of age) is a constraint or dissatisfaction among this group as well (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Although it is difficult to prevent hunting cessation due to age (or health), it may be valuable to target this group for introducing or mentoring younger family members prior to their cessation in an effort to preserve the hunting culture and enhance familial support. Emphasizing available access to lands to hunt on may also be beneficial for this market (Phase III—RM 2007a).  This group could be an ideal source of volunteers for programs, as well.

➢ **HUNTING MARKET #3—ACTIVE HUNTERS WHO ARE AT HIGH RISK OF DESERTING THE SPORT (Row 3 in Table 6.1):  Active hunters who are at a high risk of deserting the sport are a small but important group.**

Only 5% of active hunters whose participation has decreased over the past few years are not at all interested in hunting in the next year (this represents only 1.4% of all active hunters).  The data suggest that the group of active hunters who are not at all interested in hunting in the next year is also an aging group, as well as more likely to be female (compared to active hunters who are interested in going hunting).  The top two factors that strongly took away from hunting enjoyment among this group were not enough places to hunt and a lack of interest.  Not enough access to places to hunt and having other interests that are more important were also top factors that strongly took away from their hunting enjoyment or were reasons for decreased participation (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Targeting the group of active hunters who are at a high risk of deserting the sport should emphasize hunting opportunities and available access.  Note, however, that this is an extremely small group (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **HUNTING MARKET #4—INACTIVE HUNTERS WHO MAY BE EASILY PERSUADED TO START HUNTING AGAIN (Row 4 in Table 6.1):  An important target market for hunter recruitment is inactive hunters who may be easily persuaded to start hunting again.**

More than a third (38%) of inactive hunters who hunted in the past 5 years but not in the past 2 years indicated that they are very interested in hunting in the next year.  Combined with inactive hunters who have hunted at some time in their life but not in the past 5 years, 14% of all inactive hunters are very interested in hunting in the next year (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The data suggest that inactive hunters who are very interested in going hunting in the next year are more likely (compared to inactive hunters who are *not* very interested) to be young, active outdoor recreationists who learned hunting from an individual or a group and who have family members who currently hunt.  It appears that those in this group are more likely (again, relative to inactive hunters who are *not* very interested in hunting in the next year) to have camped and fished in the past 5 years and also to be very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year.  This group is more conservation-minded, being more likely to agree that funding for wildlife management is a reason to support hunting and that the conservation work that hunters have done is a reason to support hunting, compared to inactive hunters who are *not* very interested in hunting in the next year (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Inactive hunters who are very interested in hunting in the next year indicated that other obligations and interests are the primary factors that strongly influenced their decision not to go hunting or strongly influenced their decline in hunting, including amount of free time, work obligations, having other interests that are more important, and family obligations.  Yet, those in this market indicated that they are also very interested in going target shooting with a handgun or with a rifle or shotgun.  Interest was not high, however, for trap shooting, shooting sporting clays, hunting for waterfowl, or five-stand shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

It is important to note that poor access to lands to hunt on and not enough land to hunt on were also factors that strongly influenced this

group's decisions not to go hunting or their decline in hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

This group appears to have the interest and the social support necessary to bring them back to hunting, but other obligations and interests prevent them from participating. Efforts to reactivate this group should include encouraging them to take a family member hunting and, importantly, *emphasizing hunting as part of their overall outdoor lifestyle*. Efforts should also focus on providing hunting opportunities and combining hunting opportunities with their other interests, especially target shooting. Addressing access to land to hunt on and emphasizing the connection between hunting and successful wildlife management and conservation will also increase the appeal of hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **HUNTING MARKET #5—INACTIVE HUNTERS WHO ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE PERSUADED TO START HUNTING AGAIN (Row 5 in Table 6.1): Inactive hunters who are not at all interested in going hunting in the next year are more likely to be older and to have other interests and priorities.**

About two-thirds (69%) of all inactive hunters, and a somewhat lower percentage (28%) of recently inactive hunters (those who had hunted in the past 5 years but not the past 2 years), indicated they are not at all interested in going hunting in the next year. The data suggest that this group is more likely (compared to inactive hunters who are interested in going hunting) to not have family members and friends who hunt. They also are more likely to be 65 years old or older, female, and have no interest in going target or sport shooting in the next year (again, relative to inactive hunters who are interested in going hunting) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

It appears that those in this group may not be convinced that hunting helps conservation; they were more likely (compared to inactive hunters who are interested in going hunting) to *not* agree that conservation work that hunters have done is a reason to support hunting, that funding for wildlife management is a reason to support hunting, and that the role played by hunters in wildlife management is a reason to support hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

A lack of interest and other priorities for their time are important impediments to this group's hunting participation. More than half (58%) of inactive hunters who are not at all interested in going hunting in the next year indicated that having interests that are more important strongly influenced their decision not to go hunting, and another 47% said they were simply not interested. Not having time, family obligations, not wanting to kill animals, and work obligations were also important factors that strongly influenced their decision not to hunt (Phase III—RM 2007a).

This market lacks the social support system for and strong interest in hunting. Given their lack of social support, lack of interest, and increasing age, it is unlikely that they will become active hunters again, but efforts to reactivate this group could include providing opportunities and combining those opportunities with other interests. It may also be important to convince this group that hunting positively affects wildlife management and conservation (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **HUNTING MARKET #6—NON-HUNTERS WHO ARE VERY INTERESTED IN HUNTING (Row 6 in Table 6.1): A small yet potential target market for hunter recruitment is non-hunters who are very interested in hunting. This group appears to be young males living in more rural areas who are also interested in target or sport shooting.**

The data suggest that there is a very small yet potentially recruitable group of non-hunters: 1% of those who have never gone hunting indicated they are very interested in hunting. It appears that the group consists of young males (ages 18 to 34) who live in a small city or town or rural area and who are interested in going hunting as well as going target or sport shooting in the next year. Those in this group are also highly likely to have grown up in a household with firearms, but they do not appear to have the social or familial support needed to facilitate hunting initiation and participation (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Non-hunters who are very interested in going hunting in the next year also indicated that recruitment programs designed to introduce new hunters to the sport may increase their interest in hunting, such as "bring your kids" and "bring your spouse" hunting programs with reduced license costs, a free skills seminar, programs that provide

hunting equipment or transportation to places to hunt, and programs conducted in a safe and controlled manner (Phase III—RM 2007a).

This market should be targeted with recruitment programs that appeal to family participation, reduced costs, and a safe environment.  Because this group is also very interested in going target or sport shooting, appeals to this group and recruitment programs directed at this group should integrate shooting with hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

# IDENTIFIED SHOOTING MARKETS

The research examined five specific shooting markets (Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2.  Shooting Markets**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Active shooters who are likely to continue shooting |
| 2 | Active shooters who are at high risk of deserting the sport |
| 3 | Inactive shooters who may be easily persuaded to start shooting again |
| 4 | Inactive shooters who are less likely to be persuaded to start shooting again |
| 5 | Non-shooters who are very interested in shooting |

These markets were identified based in part on a breakdown of active shooters, inactive shooters, and non-shooters according to their interest in shooting in the next year, as shown in Figures 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, and 6.10 (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 6.6.  Interest in Shooting Among Active Shooters**

**How interested are you in going target or sport shooting in the next year? (Among active shooters.)**
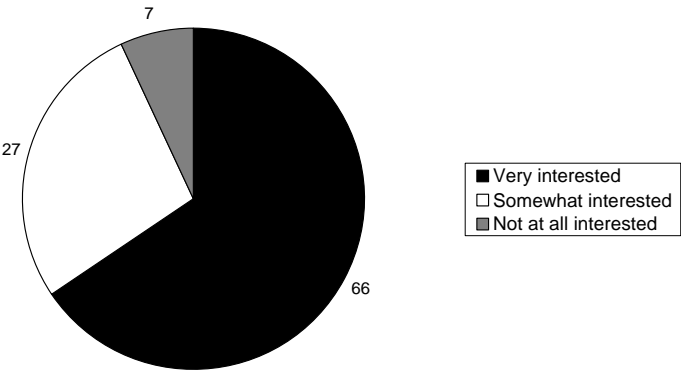


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 6.7.  Interest in Shooting Among Inactive Shooters Who Shot in the Past 5 Years**

**How interested are you in going target or sport shooting in the next year? (Among inactive shooters who have shot in the past 5 years, but not in the past 2 years.)**
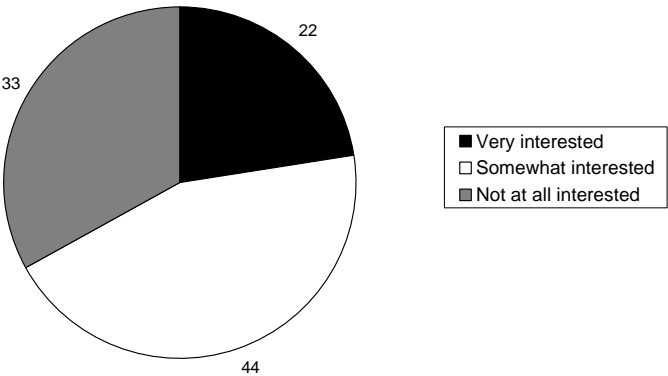


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 6.8.  Interest in Shooting Among Inactive Shooters Who Did Not Shoot in the Past 5 Years**

**How interested are you in going target or sport shooting in the next year? (Among inactive shooters who have shot, but not in the past 5 years.)**
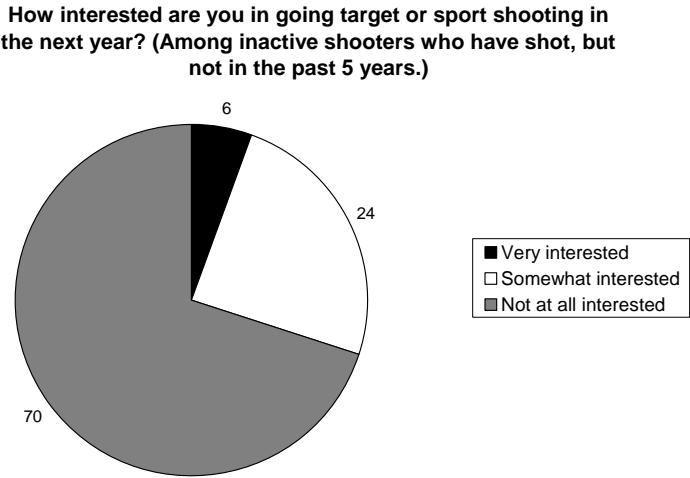


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 6.9.  Interest in Shooting Among All Inactive Shooters**

**How interested are you in going target or sport shooting in the next year? (Among all inactive shooters.)**
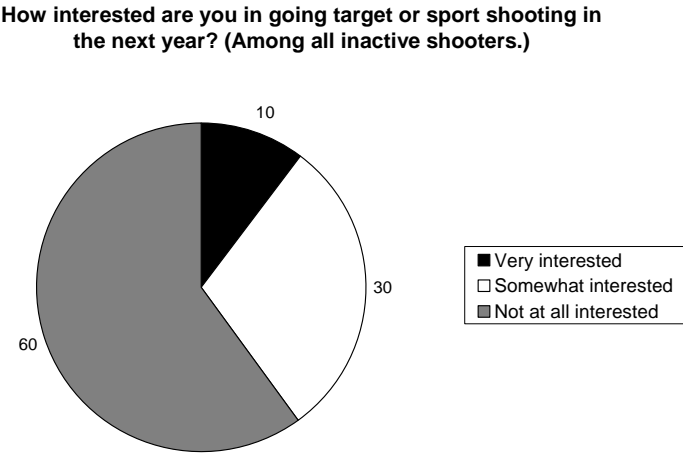


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 6.10. Interest in Shooting Among Non-Shooters**

**How interested are you in going target or sport shooting in the next year? (Among non-shooters.)**
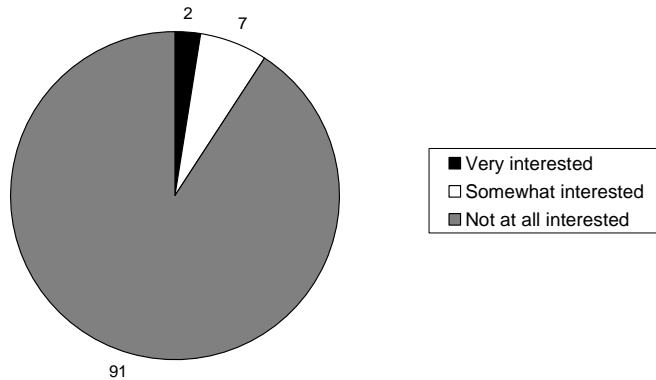


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

> ➤ **SHOOTING MARKET #1—ACTIVE SHOOTERS WHO ARE LIKELY TO CONTINUE SHOOTING (Row 1 in Table 6.2): Currently active shooters have a social support system in place that would tend to keep them shooting, perhaps even in the absence of encouragement, but retention of this group should, nonetheless, still be a priority.**

Two-thirds (66%) of currently active shooters are very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year. The focus for communications with active shooters should be on retention since one-third of the market remains only somewhat or not at all interested in target or sporting shooting in the next year (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Active shooters who are very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year are active in numerous outdoor activities, and it appears that they are more likely (compared to active shooters who are *not* very interested) to hunt, to have gone boating, hiking, and/or camping in the past 5 years, and to have family members and friends who shoot (Phase III—RM 2007a).

This market is interested in some shooting activities more than other shooting activities and is also interested in some hunting activities.

Interest is highest in the following activities: target shooting with a rifle or shotgun, hunting for big game, target shooting with a handgun, and hunting (non-specific). Interest is much lower for skeet shooting, shooting sporting clays, trap shooting, hunting for waterfowl, and five-stand shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Efforts directed at this group should focus on retention to prevent further loss of interest in target or sport shooting. Marketing should encourage this group to take family members, especially children, and friends shooting with them to maintain the familial and social support system to maintain participation (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **SHOOTING MARKET #2—ACTIVE SHOOTERS WHO ARE AT HIGH RISK OF DESERTING THE SPORT (Row 2 in Table 6.2): There is a small group of currently active shooters who are not at all interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year.**

Only 7% of currently active shooters are not at all interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year. Active shooters not at all interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year indicated that other interests that are more important is the top factor that strongly took away from their enjoyment of shooting, followed by not enough access to places to shoot, personal health, and family obligations. The data did not indicate specific demographic factors particularly associated with this group, suggesting that, demographically, they are much like other active shooters (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **SHOOTING MARKET #3—INACTIVE SHOOTERS WHO MAY BE EASILY PERSUADED TO START SHOOTING AGAIN (Row 3 in Table 6.2): A substantial group of inactive shooters have the familial support for participation in target or sport shooting, but appear to have other priorities.**

About a fifth (22%) of inactive shooters who have shot in the past 5 years but not in the past 2 years indicated that they are very interested in target or sport shooting in the next year, and another 44% are somewhat interested; however, among inactive shooters who have shot but not in the past 5 years, a much smaller percentage (6%) are very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next

year. Among all inactive shooters, only 10% are very interested in target or sport shooting in the next year (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The data suggest that inactive shooters who are very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year are more likely (relative to inactive shooters who are not very interested) to have family members who shoot. This group of inactive shooters appears to have learned to shoot in a group or from another person, and an important reason for learning was to improve shooting skills. This group may also be interested in going hunting in the next year (Phase III—RM 2007a).

While they have expressed an interest in target or sport shooting, inactive shooters who are very interested in shooting in the next year have not necessarily made shooting a priority. The top factors that inactive shooters said have strongly influenced their decision not to go shooting or have strongly influenced their decline in shooting participation are amount of free time, family obligations, work obligations, and having other interests that are more important (Phase III—RM 2007a).

It appears that inactive shooters are very interested in hunting for big game and target shooting with a handgun. Providing opportunities for them to participate in target or sport shooting (and hunting) will be important when targeting this group. They do not seem very interested in hunting for waterfowl, skeet shooting, shooting sporting clays, five-stand shooting, or trap shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Efforts to recruit inactive shooters who are very interested in target or sport shooting back into the sport and retain them should emphasize the familial shooting culture, encouraging inactive shooters to reconnect with shooting while enjoying time with family members who also shoot or would like to learn to shoot. Efforts should try to enhance interest, provide opportunities for participation, and acknowledge the shared interest in shooting *and* hunting, perhaps by providing opportunities that combine shooting and hunting activities (Phase III—RM 2007a). Note that within the hunting realm there was relatively high interest in hunting big game, and within the shooting realm there was relatively high interest in target shooting with a handgun (this is not to say that those two particular activities should be combined; rather, combinations of

various hunting and shooting activities should be explored where appropriate).

➢ **SHOOTING MARKET #4—INACTIVE SHOOTERS WHO ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE PERSUADED TO START SHOOTING AGAIN (Row 4 in Table 6.2):  Inactive shooters who are not at all interested in shooting in the next year are also more likely (compared to inactive shooters who are interested) to *not* have family members and/or friends who shoot, and they are more likely to have other interests and priorities.**

Over half (60%) of inactive shooters are not at all interested in target or sport shooting in the next year.  This is a reasonably large market but is likely to be a difficult group to recruit back into shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The data suggest that this group is more likely (compared to inactive shooters who are interested in shooting in the next year) to not have family members and/or friends who shoot, and they are more likely to have not taken somebody shooting who was new to the sport.  A majority (62%) indicated that they have other interests that are more important.  Other factors that strongly influenced their decision not to go shooting include lack of interest, lack of time, work obligations, and family obligations (Phase III—RM 2007a).

This market lacks the social support system for active shooting participation.  It is unlikely that they will become active shooters again, but efforts to reactivate this group should, nonetheless, include providing the social support necessary for them to begin shooting again by connecting them to others who shoot (Phase III— RM 2007a).  This group includes some who should be approached by others wanting to be taken shooting (i.e., this group includes some of the "mentors" in the Step Outside situation).

➢ **SHOOTING MARKET #5—NON-SHOOTERS WHO ARE VERY INTERESTED IN SHOOTING (Row 5 in Table 6.2): A small yet potential target market for sport shooting recruitment is non-shooters who are very interested in target or sport shooting.  The group appears to be young adults living in urban areas who have participated in other outdoor activities.**

The data suggest that there is a small yet potentially recruitable group of non-shooters: 2% of those who have never gone shooting indicated they are very interested in target or sport shooting, and it appears that the group consists of young adults (ages 18 to 34) who live in urban areas and who grew up in a household with firearms. They are highly likely to have friends who shoot and have been active in other outdoor activities in the past 5 years, such as fishing and camping (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Among non-shooters who are very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year, a majority (86%) are very interested in going target shooting with a handgun, while over half (57%) are very interested in skeet shooting, and substantial percentages are very interested in going target shooting with a rifle or shotgun (43%) and shooting sporting clays (43%). While many of the other markets that show an interest in hunting also show an interest in shooting and vice versa, this market is a bit different; these potential shooters do not appear to be interested in hunting activities (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Things that may increase this non-shooter group's interest in target or sport shooting are programs that they know are conducted in a safe and controlled manner, access to free equipment as well as a variety of equipment, being invited by a friend, and a local shooting clinic or class (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Non-shooters in this market live in urban areas and are very interested in shooting, so they should be targeted by providing or promoting local opportunities to shoot. Communications should stress that the available opportunities are in safe and controlled environments in order to increase the likelihood that they will participate (Phase III—RM 2007a).

# INACTIVE PARTICIPANT MARKETS

The identified hunting markets and shooting markets discussed above are analyzed and broken down by current activity levels and current interest levels in the activities. Further analysis suggests that inactive hunters and inactive shooters can be further broken down into distinct segments based on other factors (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Inactive hunters and inactive shooters are the most important target markets for "re-recruitment" efforts.  It should not be assumed, however, that all inactive hunters and inactive shooters are simply active hunters and active shooters who have "taken a year or two off."  The data indicate that there are three types of inactive hunters and shooters (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **The first market segment of inactive hunters and inactive shooters consists of individuals who have participated in hunting or shooting only once or twice and who have only a loose connection (if any) to the hunting or shooting culture.**

The first inactive market segment consists of individuals who have participated in hunting or shooting once or twice by being taken by someone else, such as accompanying a spouse, friend, or parent in the field, or by being part of a group that participated.  These one-time participants have only a loose connection to the hunting or shooting culture; they have gone hunting and/or shooting, but they have not become a hunter or a shooter (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **The second market segment of inactive hunters and inactive shooters consists of individuals who are very similar to active hunters and active shooters except they are an aging market.**

This second inactive market segment consists of individuals who are very similar to active hunters and active shooters with the exception of age.  The data analysis shows that one of the most important reasons inactive hunters and inactive shooters no longer participate is because of age and health-related issues (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **The third market segment consists of inactive hunters and inactive shooters who are similar to traditional hunters and shooters, except that they have become much less interested in hunting and shooting for a variety of reasons.**

The third inactive market segment consists of traditional hunters and shooters who appear to be similar to traditional hunters and shooters who have simply decreased participation in the past few years, but who have actually become much less interested in hunting and shooting for a variety of reasons.  These reasons include simple loss of interest, but a lack of opportunity and a lack of access to that opportunity are also important reasons (Phase III—RM 2007a).

It is extremely important to recognize these segmented markets among inactive hunters and inactive shooters when implementing retention efforts. Current interest levels in hunting and shooting may also vary within these market segments. Retention efforts that target inactive hunters and inactive shooters should use appropriate messages based on how closely the segment being targeted is connected to the hunting and/or shooting culture and their reasons for decreased participation (e.g., age versus loss of interest). The target messages should also incorporate the previous recommendations for inactive hunters and inactive shooters based on interest levels (Phase III—RM 2007a). To simply think of all inactive, or lapsed, participants as "low-hanging fruit" is to misunderstand who these people are. Certainly some could be considered in this way, but the idea that all these inactive participants are ready to jump back into these sports at the slightest urging is an inaccurate assessment of them.

# CHAPTER 7
# HUNTING AND SHOOTING
# RECRUITMENT AND
# RETENTION PROGRAMS

Fish and wildlife agencies, non-governmental organizations, and sportsmen's organizations have developed numerous programs over the years designed to introduce newcomers to hunting and shooting and to rekindle participation among inactive hunters and shooters. However, while there exists a wealth of research on hunting and some on sport shooting, there is only limited research on the myriad hunting and shooting recruitment and retention programs. The information presented in this chapter comes from two primary sources: the series of 20 focus groups involving active hunters and shooters, inactive hunters and shooters, and non-hunters and non-shooters, as well as participants in various recruitment and retention programs (such as First Shots, Becoming an Outdoors Woman, Alabama's youth dove hunt, and the National Archery in the Schools Program) (Phase II of this project), and the two major surveys conducted under Phase III of this project.

The information that follows discusses hunters' and shooters' awareness of and attitudes toward recruitment and retention programs, including the most successful elements of existing recruitment and retention programs, the key messages that resonate with potential participants in hunting and shooting programs, and the information that would assist in the development and implementation of future recruitment and retention program efforts.

## AWARENESS OF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAMS

➢ **There is little overall awareness of specific programs that encourage hunting and shooting among hunters and shooters, and even less among non-hunters and non-shooters. Though hunters appear more likely than shooters to be**

**aware of such programs, majorities of them still indicate being unaware.**

The majority of active hunters (55%) are not aware of any programs that encourage hunters to hunt and shooters to shoot, while an even higher percentage (67%) of inactive hunters are likewise not aware of any such programs. Shooters appear to be slightly less aware of such programs: 67% of active shooters are not aware of any programs that encourage hunting and shooting, and 76% of inactive shooters are not aware of any programs (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The qualitative research in Phase II also reinforced the fundamental importance of basic awareness of programs that encourage hunting and shooting, such as the introductory First Shots program on handgun use. Participants in the focus groups—many of whom identified themselves as non-hunters or non-shooters—noted that unless potential hunters and shooters are raised within traditional cultures that encourage these activities, such individuals tend to fall outside of the general spectrum of awareness for introductory courses, recreational opportunities, etc.

➢ **Regarding programs that encourage hunters to hunt and shooters to shoot, hunters and shooters are most commonly aware of programs sponsored by the National Rifle Association or programs that take place at local hunting or gun clubs or shooting ranges.**

Awareness of programs is quite low among hunters. Only 11.4% of active and inactive hunters are aware of NRA programs, while only 9.1% of active hunters and 3.8% of inactive hunters are aware of programs at local hunting or gun clubs or shooting ranges (Figure 7.1) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

### Figure 7.1. Awareness of Programs Among Hunters

**What programs are you aware of that encourage
hunting or shooting?
(Among all hunters.)**
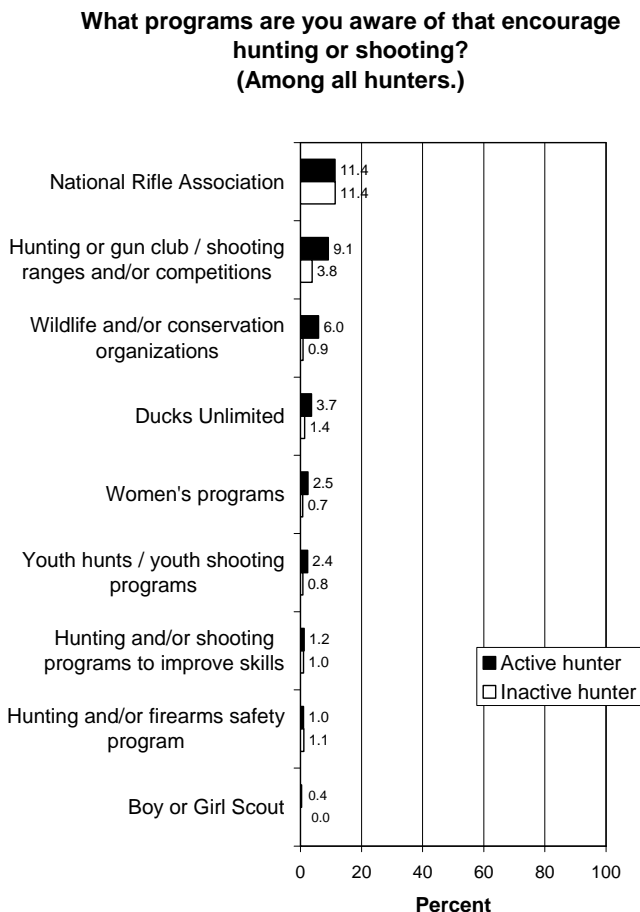


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

As it is among hunters, awareness of programs is quite low among shooters, too. Only 7.4% of active shooters and 9.7% of inactive shooters are aware of NRA programs, while 8.6% of active shooters and 3.9% of inactive shooters are aware of programs at their local hunting or gun clubs or shooting ranges (Figure 7.2) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 7.2. Awareness of Programs Among Shooters**

**What programs are you aware of that encourage
hunting or shooting?
(Among all shooters.)**
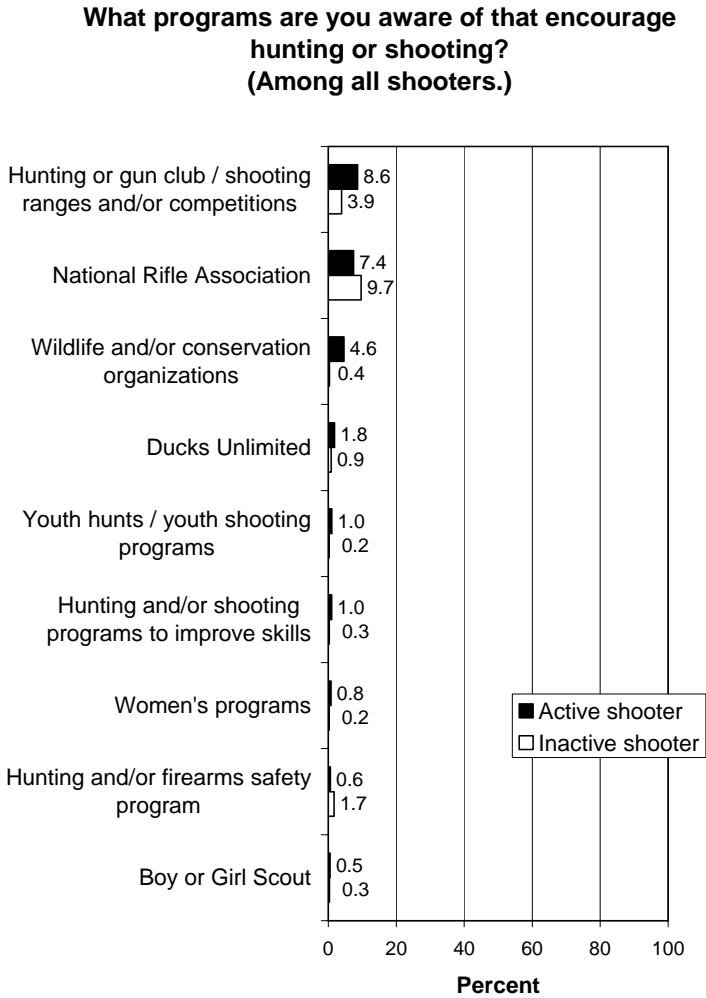


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

# PARTICIPATION IN RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAMS

➢ **In line with generally low levels of awareness, the majority of hunters and shooters have not participated in programs designed to encourage hunting and shooting. Shooters, however, are slightly more likely to have participated in such programs than are hunters.**

Among active hunters, 11% have participated in some type of program that encourages hunting and shooting, while only 2% of inactive hunters have done the same (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Shooters, on the other hand, appear slightly more likely to have participated in programs that encourage hunting and shooting: 14% of active shooters indicated participation in a program that encourages hunting and shooting, while 4% of inactive shooters indicated participation in one (Phase III—RM 2007a).

➢ **Of those who participate in programs that encourage hunting and shooting, hunters and shooters most commonly participate in programs sponsored by the NRA, programs that take place at local hunting or gun clubs or shooting ranges, and programs affiliated with wildlife/conservation organizations. Boy/Girl Scouts and activities related to job training (such as through the military or law enforcement) are other primary opportunities for individuals to take part in programs that encourage shooting.**

Among *all* hunters, participation in programs that encourage hunting and shooting is quite low: 3% of active hunters participated in a program sponsored by a wildlife or conservation organization, and 2% of active hunters participated in an NRA program. Inactive hunters had even lower overall percentages of participation: less than 1% took part in NRA programs, nonspecific hunting or shooting programs, and programs held at local hunting or gun clubs or shooting ranges (Figure 7.3) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Note that this was an open-ended question.

**Figure 7.3.  Participation in Programs Among Hunters**

**Which programs have you participated in? (Among all hunters.)**
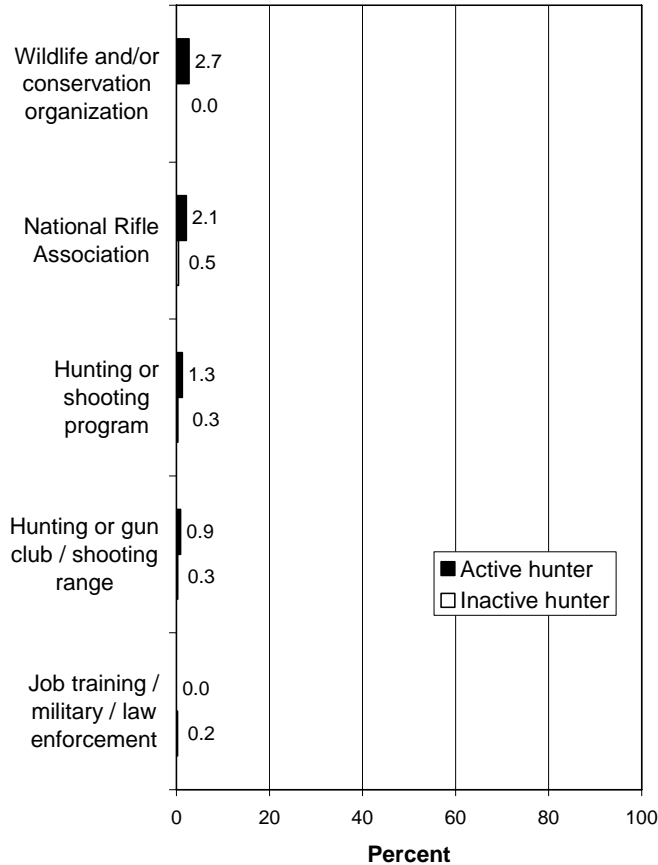


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Among shooters, participation is also low:  4% of all active shooters participated in a program sponsored by a hunting or gun club or shooting range, 2% participated in programs sponsored by wildlife/conservation organizations, and 2% participated in various competitions.  Among all inactive shooters, 1% participated in programs connected to job training, the military, or law enforcement, while a further 1% participated in Boy/Girl Scouts and programs

sponsored by the National Rifle Association (Figure 7.4) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 7.4.  Participation in Programs Among Shooters**

**Which programs have you participated in? (Among all shooters.)**

| Program | Active shooter | Inactive shooter |
|---|---|---|
| Hunting or gun club / shooting range | 4.0 | 0.5 |
| Wildlife and/or conservation organization | 2.0 | 0.3 |
| Competitions | 1.6 | 0.5 |
| Hunting or shooting program | 1.0 | 0.0 |
| Job Training / military / law enforcement | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| National Rifle Association | 0.7 | 0.6 |
| Hunting and/or firearms safety course | 0.5 | 0.0 |
| Women's program | 0.4 | 0.0 |
| Boys or Girls Scout | 0.3 | 0.7 |

Percent (0 to 100)

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

> ➤ **Limited data indicate that programs sponsored by the Boy Scouts and local hunting or gun clubs or shooting ranges appear to be among the more effective programs at increasing hunters' and shooters' level of participation following their involvement in the program.**

The Phase III surveys asked hunters and shooters who had participated in programs to describe their levels of hunting and

shooting before and after their participation in the programs.  In this sense, the researchers were able to measure the ability of the programs to effectively increase hunters' and shooters' participation levels.

Among hunters who indicated participation in a Boy Scouts program that encourages hunting or shooting, 75% said that their amount of hunting increased following participation in the program. Meanwhile, half of those hunters who participated in a program at a local hunting or gun club or shooting range said that their hunting increased following their involvement in the program (the other half said that their amount of hunting did not change) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Interestingly, shooters tended to be influenced by the same programs:  72% of shooters who participated in a program at a local hunting or gun club or shooting range said that their amount of shooting increased following their involvement in the program, whereas 71% of shooters who took part in a Boy Scouts program that encourages hunting or shooting said that their shooting increased after participating (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The avidity levels of hunting and shooting following participation in Boy Scouts suggest the importance of organizations that offer the opportunity to engage in specialized activities such as hunting or shooting, but that do not exist *only* to provide hunting and shooting opportunities.  Rather, this seems to be an example of individuals joining a youth organization that merely exposes them or provides an introduction to a variety of different activities (including hunting and shooting) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Additionally, hunting clubs, gun clubs, and shooting ranges appear to be highly important in providing local opportunities.  Such clubs or ranges may be conveniently located for participants, as well as being able to provide social, comfortable atmospheres for participants. They also appear to be ideal locations for introductory courses to hunting and shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

# PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE INTEREST IN HUNTING AND SHOOTING

> ➢ **There are subtle preferences in the various programmatic elements and opportunities that could potentially increase non-hunters' interest in hunting; however, most potential participants appear to require an assurance that programs are conducted in a safe and controlled manner. Additionally, invitations from friends and requests by children are two other scenarios likely to at least make one *consider* participating in hunting.**

Figures 7.5 and 7.6 show the various programmatic elements and opportunities that could potentially increase non-hunters' interest in hunting, and none of the items stands out markedly above the rest (Phase III—RM 2007a). However, the qualitative research in Phase II revealed at least three prerequisites associated with non-hunters' willingness to at least consider hunting, and these appear near the top of the list in Figure 7.5: a program that the participant knows is conducted in a safe and controlled manner; being invited to go by a friend; and having a child the participant cares about ask to be taken hunting.

# Figure 7.5.  Programs That Would Increase Interest in Hunting (Part 1)

**Percent of non-hunters who indicated that the following programs or opportunities would increase his/her interest in hunting.
(Among non-hunters.) (Part 1.)**

| Program | Percent |
|---|---|
| Opportunity to shoot a bow at a range | 18 |
| A program he/she knows is conducted in very safe and controlled manner | 17 |
| Being invited to go by a friend | 17 |
| Having child he/she cared about ask to be taken hunting | 16 |
| A free skills seminar | 16 |
| Being able to take class / seminar for reasonable cost at local shooting range | 16 |
| Being able to borrow / try several different types of firearms during same session | 15 |
| "Bring your spouse" program with reduced/no license costs for spouses | 13 |
| Being able to shoot at range for less than an hour, such as 15-minute session | 12 |
| "Bring your kids" program with reduced/no license costs for kids | 12 |
| The opportunity to shoot a handgun at a range | 12 |
| Programs that provide equipment that he/she may not personally own | 11 |

■ Non-hunter

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 7.6.  Programs That Would Increase Interest in Hunting (Part 2)**

**Percent of non-hunters who indicated that the following programs or opportunities would increase his/her interest in hunting. (Among non-hunters.) (Part 2.)**

| Program | Non-hunter |
|---|---|
| Going as part of a church group / group of co-workers | 11 |
| Providing all equipment so he/she can go out and just start hunting | 11 |
| Programs specifically for families | 11 |
| Offering hunting as part of next vacation | 10 |
| Borrowing free hunting equipment from local outfitter / agency | 10 |
| A lecture on hunting held at school / other public place | 9 |
| Programs that help him/her find others to hunt with | 9 |
| Programs that provide transportation to places to hunt | 9 |
| A shooting clinic held at local shooting range | 9 |
| Programs for certain groups so he/she can hunt with own peer group | 8 |
| Local shooting competitions similar to bowling leagues | 6 |
| The opportunity to shoot high-powered rifle / ammunition | 2 |

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

It is also instructive to note the findings from qualitative research conducted in 2002 to assist with messaging for the NSSF's Step Outside efforts:  the research revealed some of the key messages that appeal to hunters who would consider acting as mentors and take

others hunting.  The messages that tested the highest among hunters
were (RM 2002b):

- Making time to be with family and friends is important to
  you.
- Being outdoors hunting with family and friends is a great
  way to spend quality time with them.
- Hunting is something that bonds family and is very special
  to you personally.  You want to share that.
- Inviting someone hunting is a great way to teach someone
  about what sportsmen/women are really like.
- Hunting is something that bonds friends and is very special
  to you personally.  You want to share that.

For both groups—non-hunters and active hunters—messages that
address or incorporate family and friends and shared time and
experiences tended to have the greatest effect.  Step Outside is
regarded as one of the best methods of recruitment because of the
tremendous effects of mentorship, role-modeling, and memorable
time shared between family members and friends.

➢ **Programs conducted in a safe and controlled manner,
  invitations from friends, and the opportunity to shoot a bow
  at a range are the top items that may increase non-shooters'
  interest in shooting.**

For the most part, non-shooters are subtle in their prioritization of
individual programmatic elements and opportunities that would
increase their interest in shooting.  However, the three items
mentioned above tend to stand out to some degree when
non-shooters rate the items that would increase their interest in
shooting, and the quantitative findings for non-shooters are closely
aligned with the findings for non-hunters discussed above:
non-shooters are adamant that programs be conducted in a safe and
controlled manner, and non-shooters appear most willing to consider
shooting if they are invited by a friend (Figures 7.7 and 7.8).
Further, those non-shooters who would consider participation appear
particularly interested in knowing that the courses or programs are
taught by experts or professional instructors (Phase III—RM 2007a).

## Figure 7.7.  Programs That Would Increase Interest in Shooting (Part 1)

**Percent of non-shooters who indicated that the following programs or opportunities would increase his/her interest in shooting. (Among non-shooters.) (Part 1.)**

| Program | Percent |
|---|---|
| Program he/she knows is conducted in safe and controlled manner | 29 |
| Being invited to go by a friend | 26 |
| The opportunity to shoot a bow at a range | 24 |
| The opportunity to shoot a handgun at a range | 21 |
| Being able to learn to target or sport shoot from shooting expert | 21 |
| A free skills seminar | 21 |
| Providing all equipment so he/she can go out and just start shooting | 20 |
| Programs that provide equipment he/she may not personally own | 20 |
| Borrowing free shooting equipment from local outfitter / agency | 19 |
| A shooting clinic held at a local shooting range | 19 |
| Being able to borrow / try several different types of firearms during same session | 19 |
| Programs for certain groups so he/she can shoot with own peer group | 18 |
| Being able to take class / seminar for reasonable cost at local shooting range | 18 |
| Going as part of a church group / group of co-workers | 17 |

■ Non-shooter

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

**Figure 7.8.  Programs That Would Increase Interest in Shooting
(Part 2)**

**Percent of non-shooters who indicated that the
following programs or opportunities would
increase his/her interest in shooting.
(Among non-shooters.) (Part 2.)**

| Program | Percent |
|---|---|
| Being able to shoot at range for less than an hour, such as 15-minute session | 17 |
| Having a child he/she cared about ask to be taken shooting | 17 |
| Offering target or sport shooting as part of next vacation | 17 |
| "Bring your spouse" program with reduced / no range costs for spouses | 16 |
| Half-day programs | 16 |
| Programs specifically for families | 16 |
| Local shooting competitions similar to bowling leagues | 15 |
| Programs that help him/her find others to shoot with | 15 |
| A lecture on shooting held at school / other public place | 13 |
| Programs that provide transportation to places to shoot | 13 |
| The opportunity to shoot high-powered rifle / ammunition | 12 |
| Two-day programs that entail overnight stay | 11 |
| "Bring your kids" program with reduced / no range costs for kids | 10 |
| Seeing target or sport shooting programs on TV | 10 |
| Reading about target or sport shooting in a magazine | 9 |

■ Non-shooter

Percent (0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)

Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Phase II found that both non-hunters and non-shooters appear most likely to consider introductory courses or programs that are free of charge.

Again, it is useful to note alongside these findings the results from the Step Outside messaging study, in which experienced shooters indicated the messages that would be most likely to prompt them to

consider taking a younger or inexperienced person shooting. The messages that tested the highest among shooters were, again, those that rely heavily on themes of family, friends, and shared time (RM 2002b):

- Inviting someone shooting is a great way to teach someone about what sportsmen/women are really like.
- Being outdoors shooting with family and friends is a great way to spend quality time with them.
- Making time to be with family and friends is important to you.
- It is personally gratifying to share your knowledge of shooting and introduce someone to an experience you enjoy.
- Our outdoor heritage depends on introducing others to shooting.

➢ **Active hunters and shooters will almost certainly go hunting or shooting if invited by a friend, whereas inactive hunters and shooters are moderately less likely to do so.**

Whereas 36% of active hunters said they would *definitely* go hunting if invited by a friend, and 57% of active hunters said they would *probably* go, just 10% of inactive hunters said they would *definitely* go, and 23% said they would *probably* go (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Responses from shooters were similar: 28% of active shooters said they would *definitely* go shooting if invited by a friend, while 59% said they would *probably* go. Inactive shooters were again more unlikely to commit: just 6% said they would *definitely* go if invited, while 49% said they would *probably* go (Phase III—RM 2007a).

# SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAM ELEMENTS AND PROGRAM ELEMENTS THAT APPEALED TO PARTICIPANTS

➢ **The qualitative research in Phase II revealed that a comfortable atmosphere, an effective volunteer workforce, adequate promotional/advertising efforts, and a standardized**

> **training and implementation process are essential for the
> long-term well-being of recruitment and retention programs.**

In the Phase II research, program coordinators and directors of numerous recruitment and retention programs from across the country were interviewed about the elements important to developing successful recruitment and retention programs, many of which proved to be desirable among participants in later focus groups (such as First Shots participants, Becoming an Outdoors Woman participants).

In Phase II, program coordinators and directors stressed the need for a setting and atmosphere comfortable for participants (especially for individuals participating for the first time).  The Alabama Youth Dove Hunt was cited in particular for its relaxed, social setting ideal for families.  Further, the National Archery in the Schools Program was mentioned as an effective way to introduce a shooting sport within school systems, with the intention of encouraging shooting sports outside of the schools as well.

The Phase II research found that volunteers, whose interests and expertise may be highly useful to recruitment and retention programs (especially insofar as such volunteers may be trained as safety or education instructors), are essential to many recruitment and retention programs.

Direct mailings, newspapers, radio, agency magazines, local television, and coordination with the state tourism department were identified as means of publicizing recruitment and retention programs.  Throughout the qualitative research in Phase II, coordinators and directors emphasized the need to utilize various media in a coordinated effort to spread awareness of programs. Partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations are also important to publicity efforts for recruitment and retention programs.

According to coordinators and directors in Phase II, standardization of each recruitment and retention program helps to ensure the continued success and long-term effectiveness of these programs. Standardization (such as through "best practices" guidelines and workshops for instructors to develop effective teaching) is particularly important as it relates to the training of volunteers and

others involved in each recruitment and retention program (note that standardization here does not mean making all programs the same; rather, each program should be standardized). Standardization in program management and implementation will lead to a proven template sufficient for use in future programs.

> **The qualitative research in Phase II further revealed certain elements of existing hunting recruitment and retention programs that strongly appealed to participants. The majority of these elements were cited various times throughout the Phase II focus groups, demonstrating that they are desirable to a broad spectrum of potential hunters. It should be noted that the creation of programs incorporating these elements constitutes only one-half of the overall task; the other half will be to vigorously advertise and promote awareness of these elements in all publicity materials.**

The elements of existing hunting recruitment and retention programs that strongly appealed to participants include:
- Participants and potential newcomers desire a social setting; a prime example is the setting of the Alabama Youth Dove Hunt.
- Many participants are also enticed by the opportunity to observe a hunt or accompany a friend or relative before they participate themselves.
- A firm emphasis on safety policies and implementation procedures is essential for newcomers who may have safety concerns. Similarly, a safe and controlled environment is essential to addressing such concerns and promoting an appropriate shooting environment.
- Newcomers desire that any course or program be taught by a knowledgeable expert (this sentiment is especially true of women participants).
- Offering different activities for different age groups appears to be an effective way of reinforcing the familial aspect of the hunting tradition.

> **The qualitative research in Phase II likewise revealed some of the key desirable elements for sport shooting programs. As before, many of the same elements were discussed throughout the focus groups, indicating broad desirability**

**and the potential for successful application. It should again be stated that the creation of programs that incorporate the elements below will likely be inconsequential without dedicated advertising to promote awareness of these elements in all publicity materials.**

The key desirable elements for sport shooting programs include:

- As with hunters, potential new shooters desire a safe and controlled environment in which safety issues are given proper attention.
- As with hunters, participants feel at ease in relaxed, social environments.
- Again, making a variety of activities available to participants of different age groups will encourage broad participation and will reinforce a family-oriented atmosphere; the array of activities available at the Alabama Outdoor Expo is a prime example.
- Potential new shooters highly desire affordability of courses in which they may participate for the first time; courses or programs completely free of charge are the most desirable.
- Shooting facilities with convenient locations and hours of operation are essential to reaching a broad spectrum of participants (note the importance of weekend and evening hours), as lack of free time is one of the most commonly cited reasons for non-participation in recreational activities.
- Courses or programs held specifically for women proved highly popular in the focus groups; for example, participants in the Becoming an Outdoors Woman program appeared particularly satisfied with their experiences. Opportunities for bonding and camaraderie among peers tend to be powerful motivators for participation in such courses.
- Shooting sports programs utilizing non-lethal guns as a means of introducing newcomers are likely to be well-received by non-shooters and even anti-shooters. By making non-lethal guns available, such programs will reinforce safety and the importance of learning to handle firearms and becoming comfortable with them.
- Archery tended to be discussed widely in the focus groups, and many participants expressed a desire to see archery opportunities at shooting facilities. Adding archery equipment to shooting facilities may be a highly valued

opportunity for many participants (note the popularity of the National Archery in the Schools Program).

# MESSAGES THAT RESONATE TO ATTRACT PARTICIPANTS

➢ **Non-hunters and non-shooters will be more receptive to shooting sports programs that link participation in the shooting sports with personal skills development, confidence, mental concentration, and healthy competition.**

The qualitative research in Phase II helped to uncover attitudes toward various messages that may be useful in helping to create awareness of and participation in shooting sports programs. Among the messages that resonated most highly were the various physical and mental qualities and attributes required of sport shooters in order to demonstrate proficiency. The development of hand-eye coordination was regarded as a valuable form of *skills development*; *confidence building* arose from participation in programs such as Becoming an Outdoors Woman and the National Archery in the Schools Program; capable shooters demonstrate significant *mental concentration*, which in turn can allow for *relaxation* in breathing and overall approach; and both men and women alike are attracted to the healthy form of *competition* found in target shooting activities. Individuals throughout the qualitative research in Phase II responded quite positively to each of these areas, suggesting that prominent mentions in promotional materials and advertising may be important for increasing and diversifying overall participation.

➢ **The introductory nature of many courses on shooting sports—particularly the First Shots program—is highly appealing to many potential participants and should be emphasized in publicity materials.**

The concept of an introductory course designed to provide newcomers with a basic knowledge and familiarity with firearms cannot be underestimated in publicity materials. Phase II suggested that non-shooters will be extremely reluctant to participate in a shooting program unless they are assured that the program is geared toward newcomers. Introductory courses designed to provide an

overview are also more likely to be free of charge to participants, another important selling point to those new to sport shooting.

The qualitative research in Phase II also found that the introductory nature of a novice sport shooting program tends to be inviting and enjoyable to many participants, as the skill level of others involved will likely be comparable to their own. This creates a relatively stress-free and encouraging environment; note the following quotation from a First Shots participant:

> *"[First Shots is a program designed for those who are] basically brand new to firearms. I got the sense that it was purely an informational program. If you hate guns, that's fine; it was more just about learning about handguns."*

➢ **Programs and courses on hunting and shooting sports tend to be well-received when they remain focused on guidelines and instruction, as opposed to political issues or cultural values.**

The qualitative research in Phase II found numerous individuals who expressed surprise at the fact that introductory shooting sports courses and programs were purely instructional and informational in nature and did not address the political issues involved with gun rights or gun ownership. Many individuals responded quite positively to the apolitical nature of programs like First Shots—the fact that firearms were not being associated with any particular area of the political spectrum appeared to come as something of a relief to these individuals. By ignoring political issues and cultural values, hunting and shooting sports programs are able to keep the focus on basic instruction, safety guidelines, and the other educational aspects in which new and experienced participants appear to be primarily interested.

Note the following quotation from a First Shots participant:

> *"When you go to gun-related events, sometimes an indoctrination is par for the course. But this was nicely apolitical."*

> ➢ **Personal protection and self-defense appear to be key motivations for individuals of various experience levels to participate in sport shooting programs. Similarly, a working knowledge of basic handgun operation was found to be a strong motivator among those who may not plan on participating in sport shooting on a regular basis.**

Throughout the qualitative research in Phase II, newcomers and advanced shooters alike indicated that their attendance in sport shooting programs came at least partly from a desire to acquire some understanding of self-defense and personal protection; advanced shooters often reported wanting to improve their skills or to brush up on basics. Many participants said that they wanted a basic, working knowledge of how to operate a handgun; this motivation was evident particularly among First Shots program participants, as the course was alternately described as a "refresher" course and an "introductory" program.

Numerous participants said they were simply interested in becoming proficient enough with a handgun to be able to use one if a situation ever called for it. The desire to be "ready" or "prepared" tended to be a crucial motivating factor among these participants. Such motivations appear to be particularly pronounced among individuals who have had some level of exposure to—if not experience with—firearms before, such as individuals who grew up with family members who shot firearms.

The following quotation from a First Shots participant addresses this motivation:

> *"[My reasons for taking First Shots] were a combination of personal protection and growing up in a hunting family. I'd used a handgun before but had never taken a training class, so it was a combination of just gathering more information on safety and experience."*

# CHAPTER 8
# PUBLIC OPINION ON HUNTING
# AND THE SHOOTING SPORTS

## OPINIONS ON HUNTING

> **The large majority of adult Americans—about three-quarters—support or approve of hunting.**

Among the general population who have not hunted in the past 2 years, 73% support legal hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a). A previous nationwide survey found that 78% of all adult Americans approve of legal hunting (with 45% *strongly* approving), while only 16% disapprove (Figure 8.1) (RM 2006a). The term "legal hunting" was used to ensure that respondents would not include poaching and other types of illegal hunting in their opinions. In another nationwide survey (albeit conducted during the 1990s, but which has applicability to current public opinion) that asked a question specifically about the *legality* of hunting, 81% of adult Americans agreed at that time that hunting should continue to be legal (RM 1995).

Additionally, studies suggest that approval of hunting has increased slightly over the past decade (Figure 8.2). In 1995, 73% of Americans approved of legal hunting, while 22% disapproved (RM 1995); in 2003, 75% approved and 17% disapproved (RM 2003d); and in 2006, 78% approved and only 16% disapproved (RM 2006a).

## Figure 8.1.  Support for Hunting Nationally

**Do you approve or disapprove of legal hunting?**
**(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
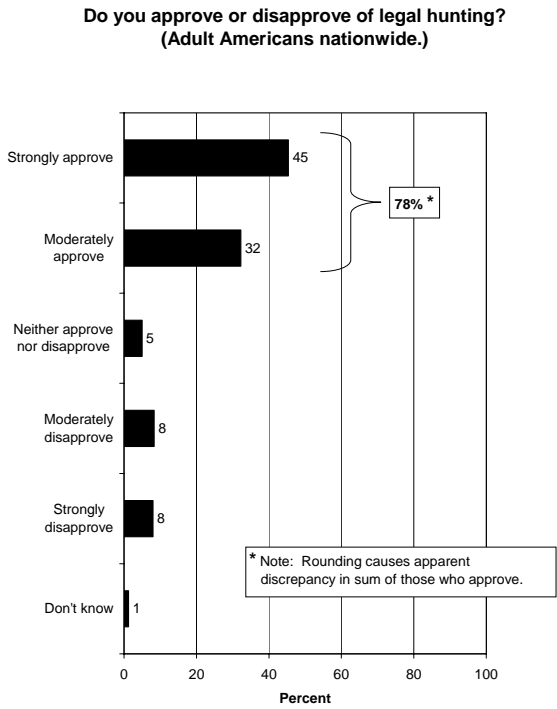


Source:  RM 2006a

## Figure 8.2.  Trends in Support for Hunting

**Trends in Approval and Disapproval of Hunting**
**(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
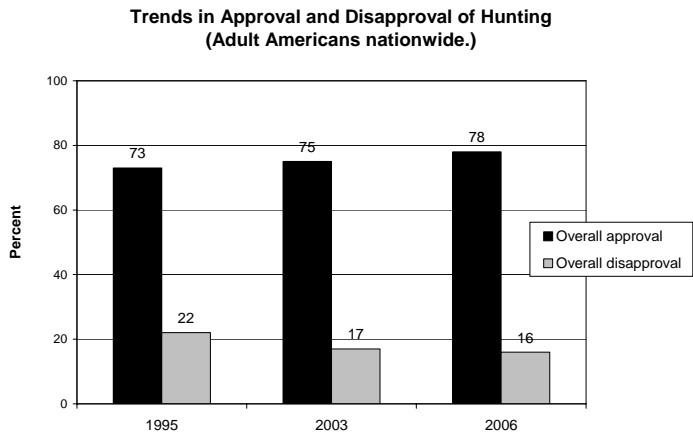


Source:  RM 1995, 2003d, 2006a

➢ **Absence of support or approval of hunting does *not* translate into wanting to ban hunting altogether.**

In an example that highlights the difference between disapproving of hunting and not otherwise wanting to stop others from hunting, 77% of women approved of hunting, but fully 95% of them indicated that it is okay for women to hunt.  Put another way, while 13% disapproved of hunting, only 4% said that it is *not* okay for women to hunt (RM 2005e).  (Note that in this study, 96% of women said it is okay for men to hunt, with only 3% saying it is *not* okay for men to hunt.)

➢ **Support and/or approval of hunting varies when the motivation for hunting is considered.  Hunting that is seen as benefiting the species as a whole, including wildlife habitat, or hunting for meat is more acceptable than sport hunting or trophy hunting.**

Among the general population, there is high support for hunting to protect humans from harm, as well as hunting to protect habitat from being damaged from overpopulation of species (Figure 8.3).  Support dropped, however, for hunting to protect farm property such as crops and particularly for hunting to protect personal property such as gardens (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 8.3. Support for Hunting for Various Reasons**

**Percent who indicated strong or moderate support for the following reasons that people might hunt. (Adult Americans nationwide.)**
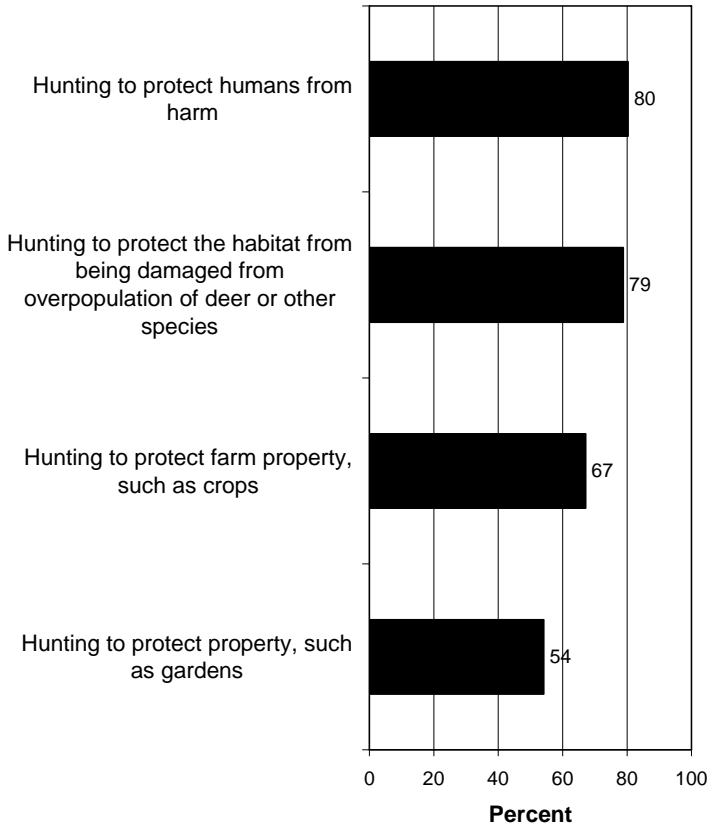


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Additionally, a recent nationwide survey found that more than 80% of Americans approve of hunting for the meat, to protect humans from harm, for animal population control, and to manage wildlife populations (Figure 8.4).  A bare majority approve of hunting for the sport, and less than a majority approve of hunting for the challenge, to supplement income, or for a trophy (RM 2006a).

**Figure 8.4. Approval of Hunting by Motivation**

**Percent who strongly or moderately approve of
various motivations for hunting.
(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
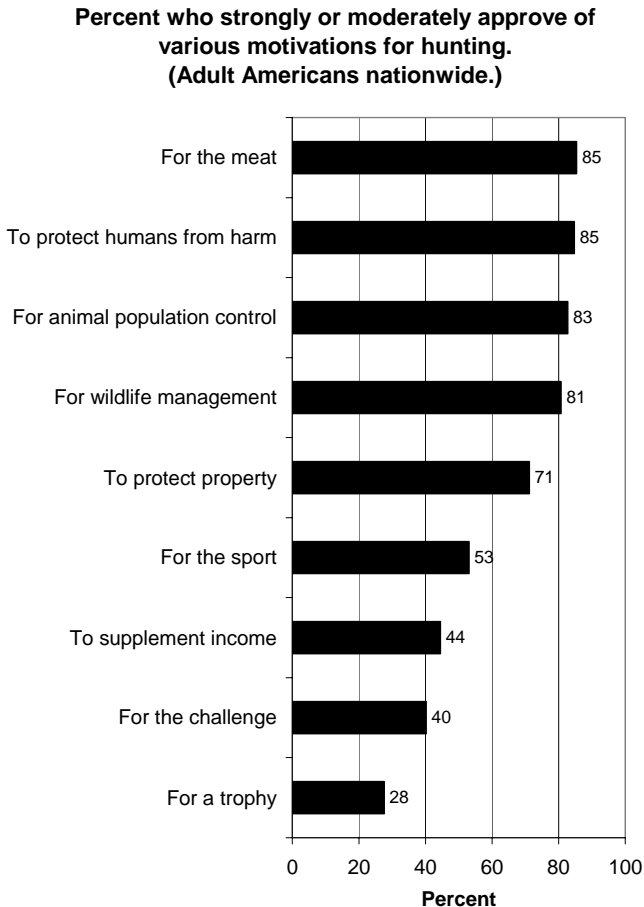


Source:  RM 2006a

In one state that was studied, New Hampshire, support for increasing the deer population was lowered when respondents were informed that ecological damage might result from the increased deer population (respondents who supported increasing the deer population were asked follow-up questions, "Would you still support if you knew..."). A commensurate reduction in support was *not* observed when respondents were informed that personal property might be damaged. In short, respondents were more tolerant of deer damage to personal property than to the ecosystem (RM 2004b). An implication is that hunting to protect the ecosystem is more acceptable than hunting to protect personal property.

➢ **Support or approval of hunting varies greatly according to the species being hunted.**

Research indicates that hunting for deer, elk, or waterfowl is more acceptable than is hunting for predators, such as bear or mountain lions.  In one nationwide study, approval of hunting for deer, wild turkey, small game, waterfowl, and elk exceeded approval of hunting for black bear, mountain lion, or mourning dove (Figure 8.5) (RM 2006a).  (The fact that mourning dove is so low on the following graph may be because many people in some parts of the country think of them as songbirds, not game birds, a finding of a 1974 study by Linder et al.)

**Figure 8.5.  Approval of Hunting of Various Species**

**Percent of Americans who moderately or strongly approve of hunting various species.
(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
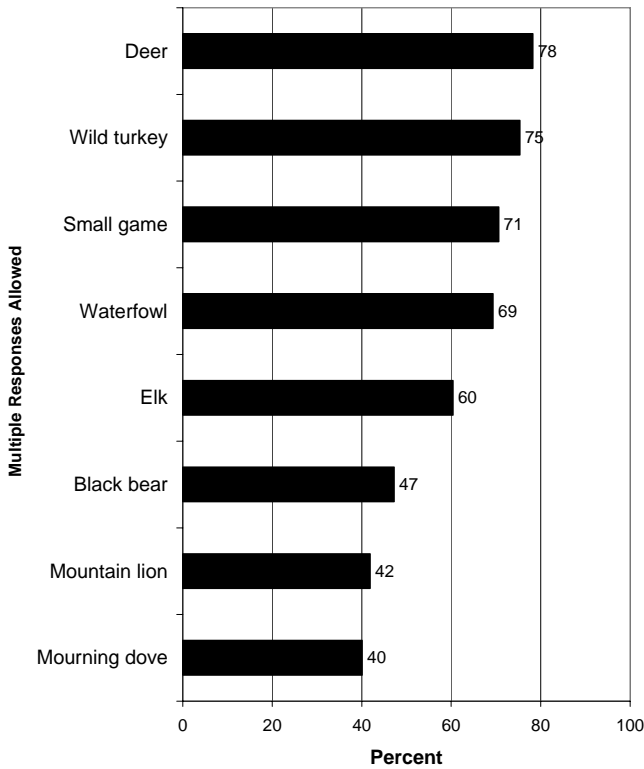


Source:  RM 2006a

A study in Washington State also found large differences in support of hunting according to the species to be hunted. While 86% of the state's residents supported hunting deer and 82% supported hunting elk, only 56% supported hunting black bear, and 55% supported hunting cougar (RM 2002c).

> ➢ **Support or approval of hunting varies greatly when the method of hunting is considered.**

While most Americans support hunting in general, there is less support of hunting with dogs, and much less support for hunting over bait, hunting using high-tech gear, and hunting in a high-fence preserve. In Phase III, support was higher for hunting with dogs (57% strongly or moderately support) and hunting on Sundays (41% support) than it was for hunting over bait (27% support) or hunting using high-tech gear or hunting in a high-fence preserve (both with 20% support) (Figure 8.6). In looking at opposition, three methods have a large majority opposing: hunting using high-tech gear, hunting in a high-fence preserve, and hunting over bait. Further, about half oppose hunting using special scents to attract game (Figure 8.7).

**Figure 8.6.  Support of Various Methods of Hunting**

**Percent who indicated strongly or moderately supporting
the following types of hunting.
(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
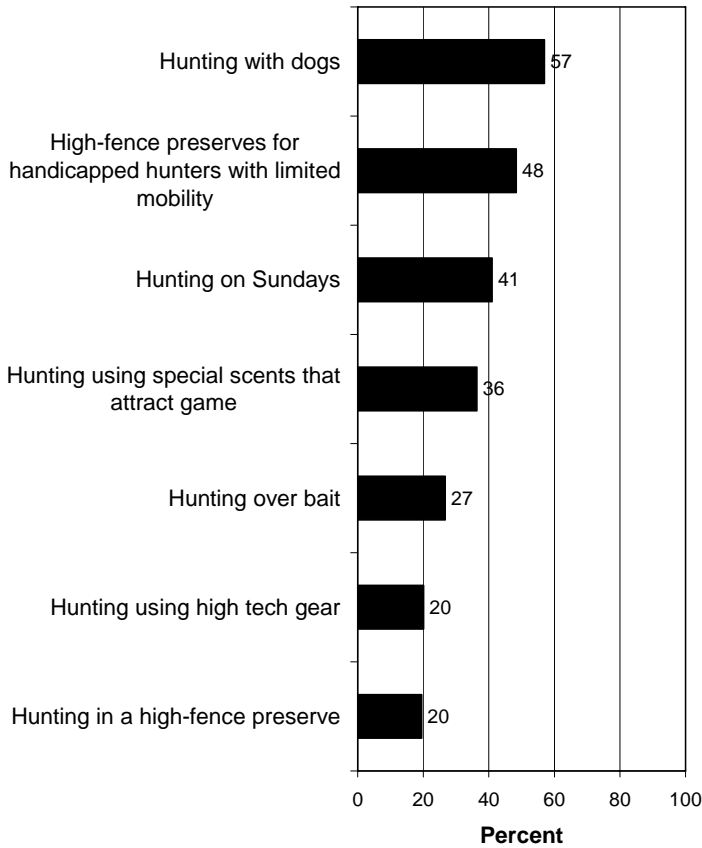
**Figure 8.7. Opposition to Various Methods of Hunting**

**Percent who indicated moderately or strongly opposing the following types of hunting.
(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
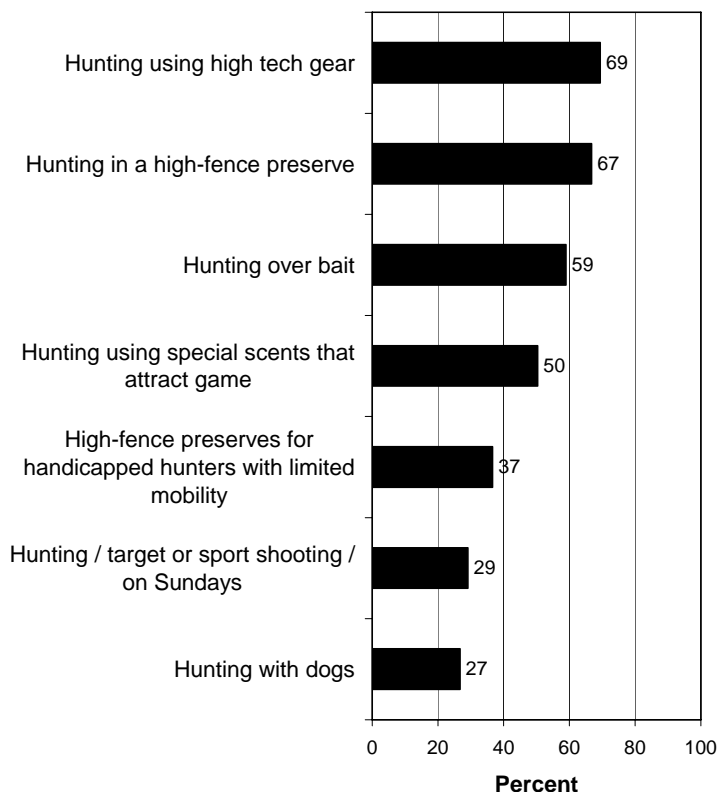


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

Even among hunters, support varies according to method of hunting. Most hunters support hunting with dogs, hunting on Sundays, and hunting using special scents to attract game, but only a little more than a third support hunting over bait or hunting using high-tech gear, and only about a quarter support hunting in a high-fence preserve (Figure 8.8) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 8.8.  Support of Various Methods of Hunting Among Hunters**

**Percent who support the following types of hunting.**
**(Among all hunters.)**
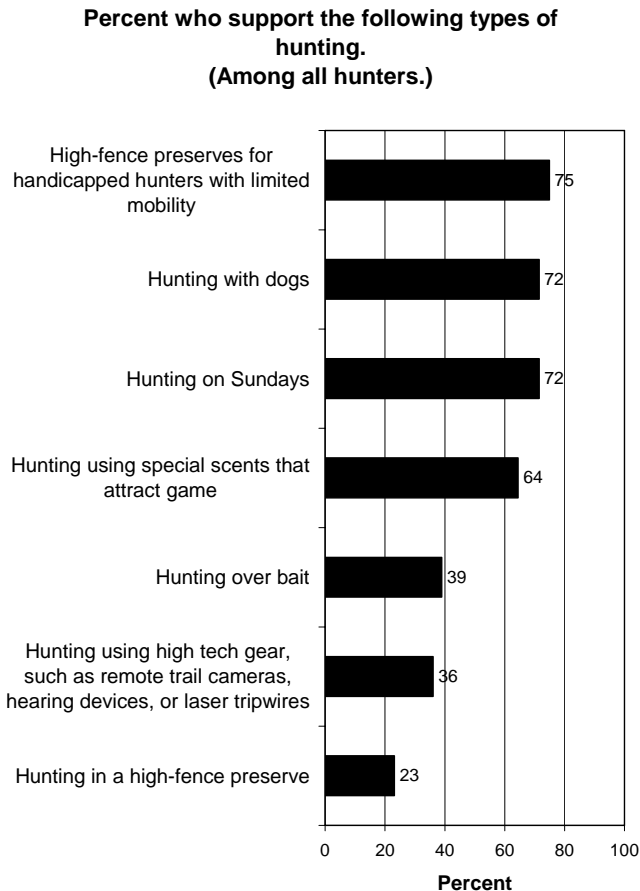


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

> ➢ **Support or approval of hunting is affected by exposure to the hunting culture.  Approval of hunting is positively correlated with exposure to hunting.**

Research has shown consistently for years that people who know hunters are much more likely to approve of hunting than are those who do not know hunters (Applegate 1977, RM 2002a).  One study found that one of the strongest correlations to having positive attitudes toward hunting was having a family member who hunts (RM 2002a).

➢ **Mass media are more likely to report the negative aspects of hunting and shooting than to report the positive aspects.**

Related to the hunting culture is the source from which people get information about hunting. Mass media tend to highlight negative incidents and information. Although Americans tend to be exposed to good and bad things regarding hunting and shooting about equally (Phase III found that 33% of non-hunters had heard good things about hunting, and 38% of them had heard bad things about hunting in the previous 2 years, and 15% of non-shooters had heard good things and 12% had heard bad things about shooting), when asked about the source of bad things about hunting and shooting, Americans most commonly heard bad things from mass media, and they most commonly heard good things through word-of-mouth (Phase III—RM 2007a). This has implications for support or approval of hunting—if most of the information a person gets is from mass media (as may be the case of somebody *not* within the hunting culture), opinions could be negatively affected. Among those within the hunting culture, who would presumably hear much through word-of-mouth, opinions could be positively affected.

➢ **Support or approval of hunting varies according to various demographic factors. A greater percentage of men approve of hunting than women. Rural residents approve of hunting at a slightly higher rate than do urban residents. Older people are more likely to approve of hunting than are younger people. White Americans approve of hunting at a higher rate than do non-whites. Finally, greater levels of education are associated with lower levels of approval of hunting.**

Gender has a considerable effect on support or approval of hunting. As Figure 8.9 shows, among the general population who have not hunted in the past 2 years, 82% of males support hunting, while 67% of females support hunting (9% of males oppose, and 20% of females oppose) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Another recent nationwide survey similarly found that males are more likely than females to approve of hunting, with 84% of males approving of hunting and only 72% of females approving of it (RM 2006a). Conversely, only 13% of males were disapproving compared to 20% of females. Other researchers found that anti-hunters are more likely to be women than men (Shaw 1975, Kellert and Berry 1980).

**Figure 8.9.  Support of Hunting by Gender**

**Do you support or oppose legal hunting?**
**(All respondents except active hunters.)**
**(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
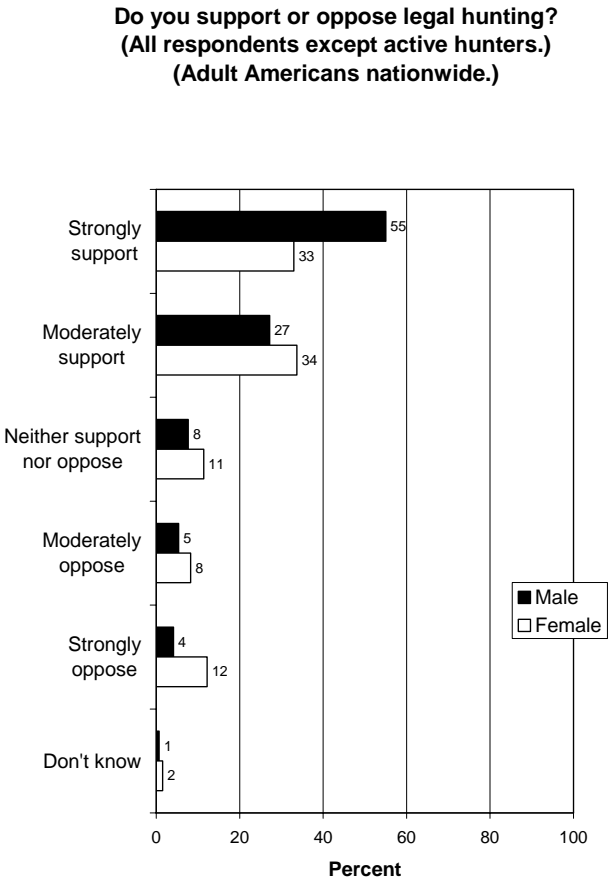


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

Figure 8.10 shows that support for hunting is highest in rural areas (79% of those residing in a rural area not on a farm and 89% of those on a farm support) and lowest in urban areas (67% of those residing in a large city or urban area) (note that these results excluded active hunters) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Also, a demographic analysis of another nationwide survey found that the likelihood to approve of hunting increases as the population density decreases:  70% of urban residents, 72% of suburban residents, 80% of residents in small cities or towns, and 89% of rural residents approved of hunting (RM 2006a).  Also, the aforementioned studies that delved into characteristics of anti-hunters found that anti-hunters are more likely to be urban than rural (Shaw 1975, Kellert and Berry 1980).

**Figure 8.10. Support of Hunting by Residence**

**Do you support or oppose legal hunting?**
**(All respondents except active hunters.)**
**(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
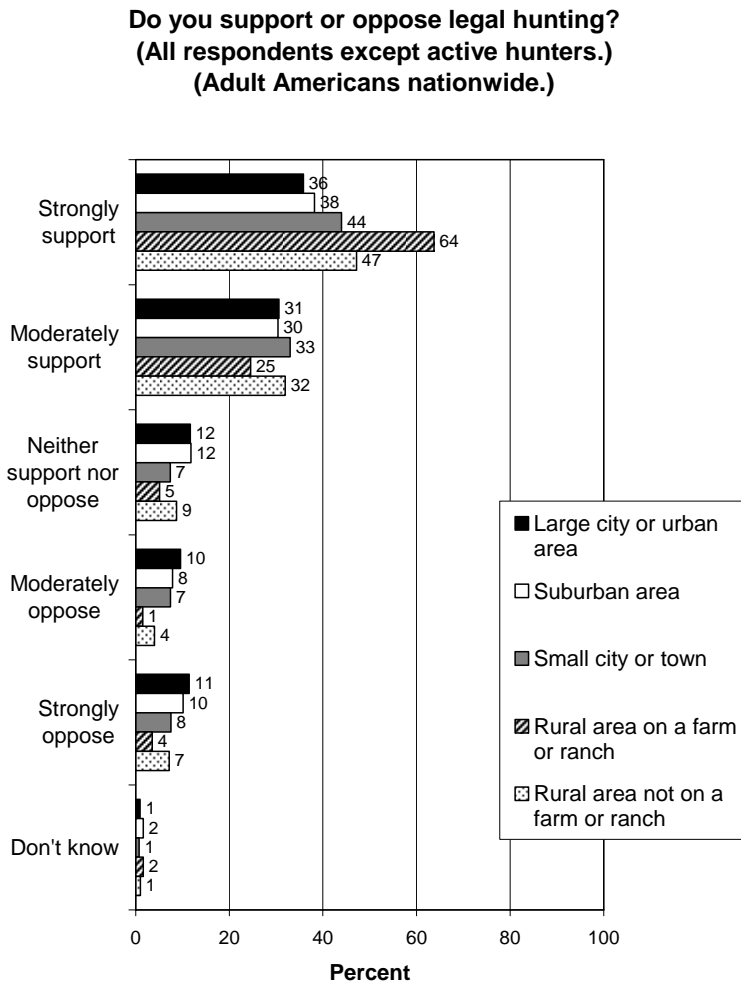


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

Age affects approval rates of hunting: older people are more approving of hunting. For example, 83% of Americans 65 years old and older approve of hunting, while only 55% of Americans 18-24 years old approve (RM 2006a). Meanwhile, Phase III also found that, as the age increases, support increases among those who have not hunted in the previous 2 years (while 56% of those aged 18-24 years support, 74% of those 65 and older support) and opposition decreases (35% of those aged 18-24 years oppose, while only 15% of those 65 and older oppose).

Ethnicity is linked to variations in approval of hunting. A recent nationwide survey found that white Americans had a higher approval rate (83%) than did non-whites (61%) (RM 2006a).

Finally, higher levels of education are negatively correlated with approval of hunting. The aforementioned recent study found that 46% of those with no college experience and 51% of those with some college but no degree *strongly* approve of hunting, while only 43% of those with a Bachelor's degree and 40% of those with a post-graduate degree *strongly* approve of hunting (RM 2006a).

➢ **There are a multitude of reasons that people oppose hunting. Some of the prominent ones include moral opposition to hunting, feelings regarding animal pain and suffering, hunter behavior, safety issues, perceived (erroneous) damage to wildlife populations and ecosystems, and firearms issues.**

One of the most prominent reasons that some people oppose hunting is that they perceive it as being morally wrong: 56% of anti-hunters in one national survey gave this reason for their opposition, the top answer (Kellert and Berry 1980).

The pain and suffering of animals also plays a part in opposition to hunting. Non-hunters were asked whether 26 specific things had influenced them to never go hunting (Figure 8.11). While lack of interest was the item with the highest percentage saying it was an influence in their decision to never hunt, concern about causing pain to animals was the second-ranked item (Phase III—RM 2007a). Additionally, the national study by Kellert and Berry discussed above found that 18% of anti-hunters were opposed because of the pain inflicted on animals and 15% because they love animals, the second- and third-ranked reasons in that study (1980).

**Figure 8.11. Reasons for Not Hunting**

**Percent who indicated that the following things
influenced his/her decision to never go hunting.
(Among non-hunters.)**

| Reason | Percent |
|---|---|
| Lack of interest | 82 |
| Concern about causing pain to animals | 61 |
| Uncomfortable around firearms | 35 |
| Thinks hunting endangers animal pops | 28 |
| Fear of injury by another hunter | 27 |
| Poor behavior of other hunters | 25 |
| Family obligations | 21 |
| Work obligations | 20 |
| Amount of free time | 18 |
| Cost of hunting equipment | 17 |
| Pollution or litter | 14 |
| Not enough law enforcement officers | 14 |
| Not having anyone to go with | 14 |
| Too many hunters in the field | 13 |
| Not enough access to places to hunt | 12 |
| Costs of licenses | 11 |
| Personal health | 11 |
| Not enough places to hunt | 11 |
| Having to travel to hunt | 11 |
| Complex regulations | 11 |
| Not enough game | 8 |
| Mandatory hunter education | 8 |
| Other's negative opinions of hunting | 8 |
| Bag limits or season lengths | 8 |
| Harassment by anti-hunters | 5 |
| Not enough trophy game | 4 |

Note that each of these questions was asked individually, with 26 questions in all. For each item, the survey asked, "Did this strongly, moderately, or not influence your decision to never go hunting?" The results were then combined into this single graph.

**Percent**

Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

The perception of poor behavior of hunters can negatively affect support or approval of hunting. In the series of 26 questions discussed above regarding why some people chose not to hunt, the poor behavior of hunters was named by 25% of non-hunters as being an influence on their decision to not hunt (Figure 8.11) (Phase III—RM 2007a). The same research by Kellert and Berry discussed above found that disrespectful and unethical conduct of some hunters was among the reasons given for opposition to hunting (1980). Note

that hunter behavior is further explored in the next major section of this chapter, "Opinions on Hunter Behavior and Safety."

There is some opposition to hunting (and, more importantly, reticence to participate in hunting when not otherwise opposed) based on safety concerns.  Just more than a third of non-hunters (35%) said that their discomfort around firearms was an influence on their decision to not hunt, and 27% said that fear of injury from another hunter influenced them not to hunt (Figure 8.11) (Phase III— RM 2007a).  Additionally, one national study found that approximately 2 of 5 Americans felt that hunting is an unsafe recreational activity (RM 1995).  (The next subsection of this report discusses safety and hunter behavior in more detail.)

There is also some opposition to hunting based on the erroneous belief that hunting endangers wildlife populations, an example being that 28% of non-hunters said that an influence in their decision to not hunt is their belief that hunting endangers animal populations (Figure 8.11) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  Furthermore, although untrue, 46% of Americans—nearly half—agree that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some species to become endangered (Figure 8.12) (Phase III—RM 2007a).  In reality, because nearly all fish and wildlife management and enforcement funding comes from sportsmen, hunting as practiced in the U.S. today has multiple benefits for wildlife species.

**Figure 8.12. Agreement or Disagreement That Modern Hunting Causes Species To Become Endangered**

**Hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some species to become endangered. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? (Adult Americans nationwide.)**
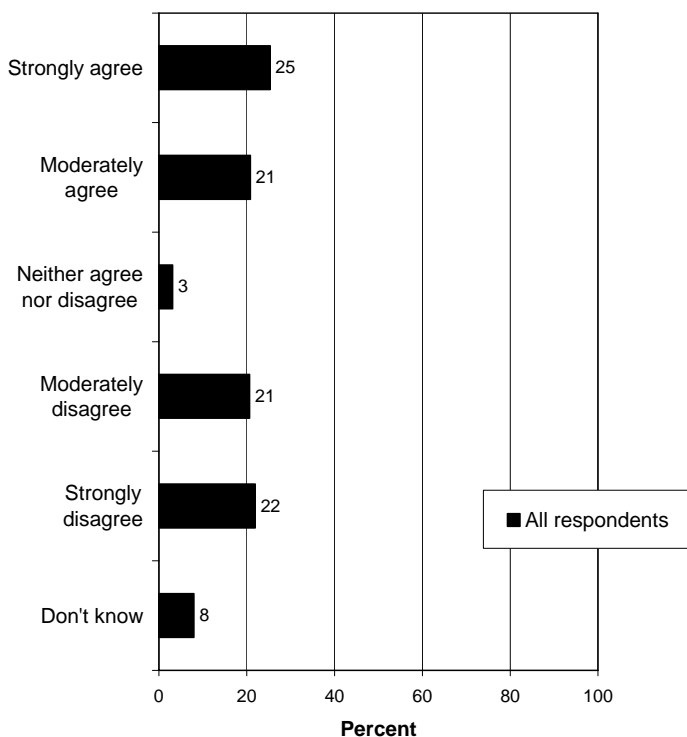


Source: Phase III—RM 2007a

There is a small amount of opposition to hunting based on the belief among some people that hunting is linked to anti-social behavior. However, no research has shown that hunters are more likely to commit violent crimes or display aggression than are non-hunters (Causey 1989).

➢ **Some studies suggest that personal feelings and beliefs that people hold about specific *situations* have more influence on their opposition to hunting than do their general beliefs about hunting.**

Illustrating this point is a study about a moose hunt that was proposed in New Hampshire a few years ago. That study found that opposition to the proposed moose hunt centered more on people's beliefs about specific aspects of the proposed hunt (whether there were enough moose to support a controlled hunt, whether too many moose would be killed, and whether the moose hunt would leave enough moose for subsequent wildlife viewing) rather than on their general beliefs about hunting (Donnelly and Vaske 1995). A study pertaining to hunting black bears in Maryland found variation in support of a proposed black bear hunt based on the conditions associated with the hunt—support was highest when residents were asked if they would support black bear hunting if they knew that the black bear population as a whole would not be endangered (RM 2004c).

Another example that highlights feelings about specific situations that affect support of hunting is the difference in general support of hunting and support of hunting on Sundays. While 73% of the general population (excluding active hunters) support hunting in general, only 41% of the general population (*including* active hunters) support hunting on Sundays (Phase III—RM 2007a). Similarly, in a study in North Carolina, 81% of residents approve of hunting, but only 25% support the legalization of hunting on Sundays (RM 2006d).

➢ **Americans' opinions on hunting are not fixed. Public opinion changes—both the overall public opinion changing over time as well as each person's opinions changing as he or she ages.**

Support for hunting is lower among youth than among adults, and this disparity between opinions of youth and adults has been noted for years (Westervelt and Llewellyn 1985, RM 2003b). The implication is that as people age, they become more supportive of hunting (otherwise, the relatively low support among youth found in years past would have translated to low support among adults now; this did not happen).

Public opinion about hunting may also change over time as other factors change. For instance, approval of deer hunting in New Jersey, which one researcher tracked for years, rose more than 10 percentage points since the 1970s (Applegate 1995), with some

speculating that increased deer-human conflicts fueled the rise in approval of deer hunting.

# OPINIONS ON HUNTER BEHAVIOR AND SAFETY

> ➢ **Hunter behavior and safety issues are important concerns among non-hunters, and there is a distinction between public opinion on hunting and public opinion of hunters themselves. Even among hunters, there is concern about the behavior of other hunters.**

Nearly a third (32%) of non-hunters disagree with the statement, "In general, hunting is a safe recreational activity" (Phase III—RM 2007a). (Note that 61% of non-hunters agree with the statement.) In conjunction with safety concerns are concerns about ethical hunter behavior. More than a third of inactive hunters (38%) and active hunters (36%) agree that "a lot of hunters violate hunting laws" (Phase III—RM 2007a). Furthermore, large majorities of those active and inactive hunters who witnessed a wildlife violation indicated that they thought the violator knew the law but violated it intentionally.

When active and inactive hunters were asked to indicate how many hunters they think drink alcohol while hunting, 34% of active hunters and 45% of inactive hunters think that at least some (i.e., they answered *some* or *most*) hunters drink alcohol while hunting (Phase III—RM 2007a).

An overwhelming majority of Americans (92%) think that all new hunters should be required to pass a hunter education course before being allowed to get a license (Phase III—RM 2007a). This suggests that safety is an important concern of the public.

Despite the mixed results regarding behavior discussed above, the large majority of the general population believe that hunters, in general, safely handle firearms. This question was asked in two ways to eliminate bias in the question, with the sample divided into half, and each half given one of the two versions of the question. Among the first half of the sample, 75% of the general population

*agree* that most hunters *safely* handle firearms, and in the second half of the sample, 67% of the general population *disagree* that most hunters *carelessly* handle firearms (Phase III—RM 2007a). (In looking at the other side, 14% disagree that most hunters safely handle firearms, and 18% agree that most hunters carelessly handle firearms.)

An interesting finding is that half of the general population (50%) agree with the statement, "Hunting causes more deaths among participants than does fishing" (Phase III—RM 2007a). In reality, more people die while fishing than while hunting. Fishing deaths are typically from drowning while fishing from a boat—for example, in the U.S. Coast Guard's 2006 Boating Statistics, 225 of the 710 boating-related fatalities in 2005 occurred to people whose activities included fishing from the boat (USCG 2006). In that same year, only 6 hunters died in a boating accident. Additionally, approximately 100 hunters died in firearm-related accidents in 2004—the most recent year that good hunting fatality data are available—and it is likely that 2005 was similar (IHEA 2006). Therefore, the data suggest that about twice as many people die while fishing than while hunting. Even among active hunters, a substantial percentage (16%) agree that hunting causes more deaths than fishing (Phase III—RM 2007a). All of this simply illustrates that hunting is perceived as more dangerous than it really is, while other activities can be more dangerous than many people think.

➢ **Despite the mixed perceptions of hunter behavior, most Americans agree that hunters respect living things.**

Phase III found that 66% of all respondents (including hunters and non-hunters) agree that hunters respect living things, while only 17% disagree.

# ATTITUDES TOWARD WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE VALUES

➢ **Wildlife is very important to the American public. Studies consistently show that it is important to the majority of Americans to know that wildlife exists and to protect wildlife and wildlife habitat.**

Two large regional studies found that 91% of residents in the northeastern U.S. and 90% in the southeastern U.S. feel that it is *very* important that wildlife exists in their state. When *very* and *somewhat* important are combined, nearly all residents are included as thinking it to be important that wildlife exists in their state—98% in both the northeastern and southeastern U.S. (Figure 8.13) (RM 2004a, 2005a).

**Figure 8.13. Perceptions of the Importance of Wildlife**

**Is it important or unimportant to you that wildlife exists in [STATE]?**
**(Residents of the northeastern and southeastern states.)**
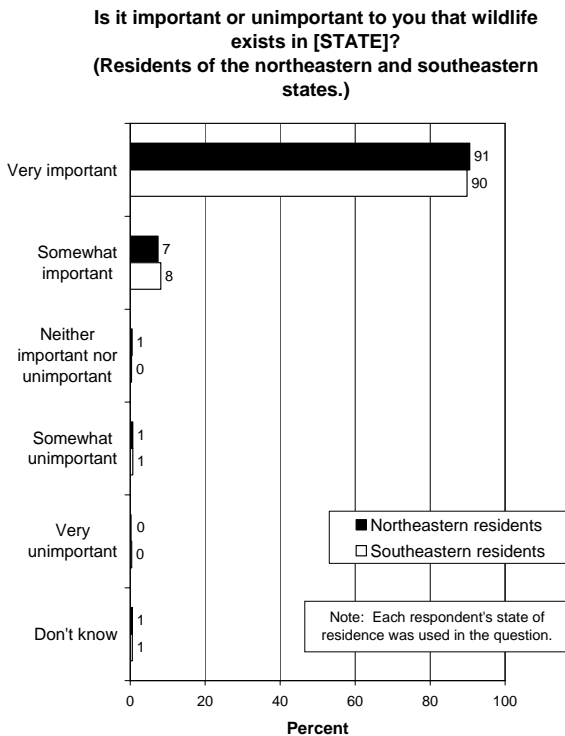


Source: RM 2004a, 2005a

➢ **As discussed previously, many Americans express more concern that wildlife populations not be damaged than they do that personal property, such as gardens, not be damaged (RM 2004b).**

➢ **A related issue that pertains to attitudes toward hunting and wildlife is Americans' knowledge of the "North American Model of Wildlife Conservation." Familiarity with this term (and presumably with the model itself) is low.**

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is based on
several underlying principles, primary among them being that
wildlife is a public resource, not privately owned.  It includes the
prohibition of markets in harvested (and live) wildlife, and it entails
the guidance of management through science and gave rise to fish
and wildlife agencies to ensure that wildlife populations are
protected.  Additionally, an important component of the model is that
funding for wildlife management comes primarily from anglers and
hunters (through license fees and excise taxes on equipment) and
shooters (through excise taxes on equipment).

In a statewide survey in Arizona, only 3% of adult state residents
were very familiar with the North American Model of Wildlife
Conservation, and another 24% were somewhat familiar (Figure
8.14).  The large majority (72%) were not at all familiar with it (RM
2008c).

**Figure 8.14.  Knowledge of the North American Model of
Wildlife Conservation**

**Would you say you are very familiar, somewhat
familiar, or not at all familiar with the "North
American Model of Wildlife Conservation"?
(Adult Arizona residents.)**
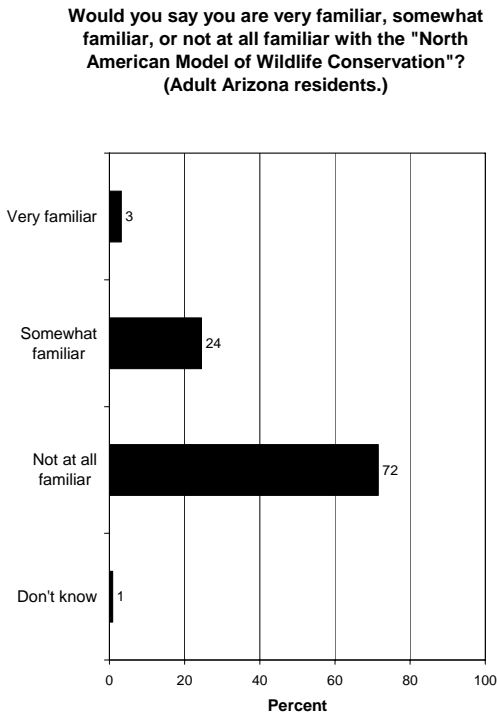


Source:  RM 2008c

# OPINIONS ON HUNTING TO MANAGE WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

> ➢ **Support or approval of hunting is high when it is tied to the benefits of wildlife management.**

Americans are often willing to tolerate a reasonable amount of wildlife conflict and personal property damage for the benefit of wildlife. For example, a statewide study in New Hampshire asked respondents if they supported increases in deer and moose populations. The survey found that majorities of those residents who supported an increase in the population of deer and moose still supported the increase even if it meant increased vehicle collisions with the animals or increased property damage and conflicts with humans. However, majorities did *not* still support an increase in the deer or moose population if it meant less food or poorer health for the deer or moose population as a whole or damage to habitat for other wildlife (Figure 8.15) (RM 2004b). This finding suggests that hunting is more acceptable when it is seen as benefiting the population as a whole or wildlife habitat in general.

The findings above can be reiterated in examining Figure 8.4 at the beginning of this chapter. Note that hunting approval is quite high when done for animal population control (83% of Americans approve) or for wildlife management (81%). This is contrasted to, for instance, hunting for the sport (only 53% approve) or hunting for a trophy (28%). These findings also show that hunting is more acceptable when it is seen as benefiting the population or its habitat.

The Phase III surveys also explored reasons to support hunting. Majorities of non-hunters agree that the role played by hunters in wildlife management is a reason to support hunting (55% of non-hunters agree), that the funding for wildlife management provided by hunters (through licenses and excise taxes) is a reason to support hunting (54% agree), and that the conservation work that hunters have done is a reason to support hunting (51%). Meanwhile, the percentages who disagree is at 12% or less (the remainder giving a neutral answer).

**Figure 8.15.  Support for Increasing the Deer or Moose
Population With Various Conditions Attached**

**Percent who would still strongly or moderately
support an increase in the deer/moose population
in their county if it meant…
(Asked of New Hampshire hunters who think the
deer/moose populations should be increased.)**
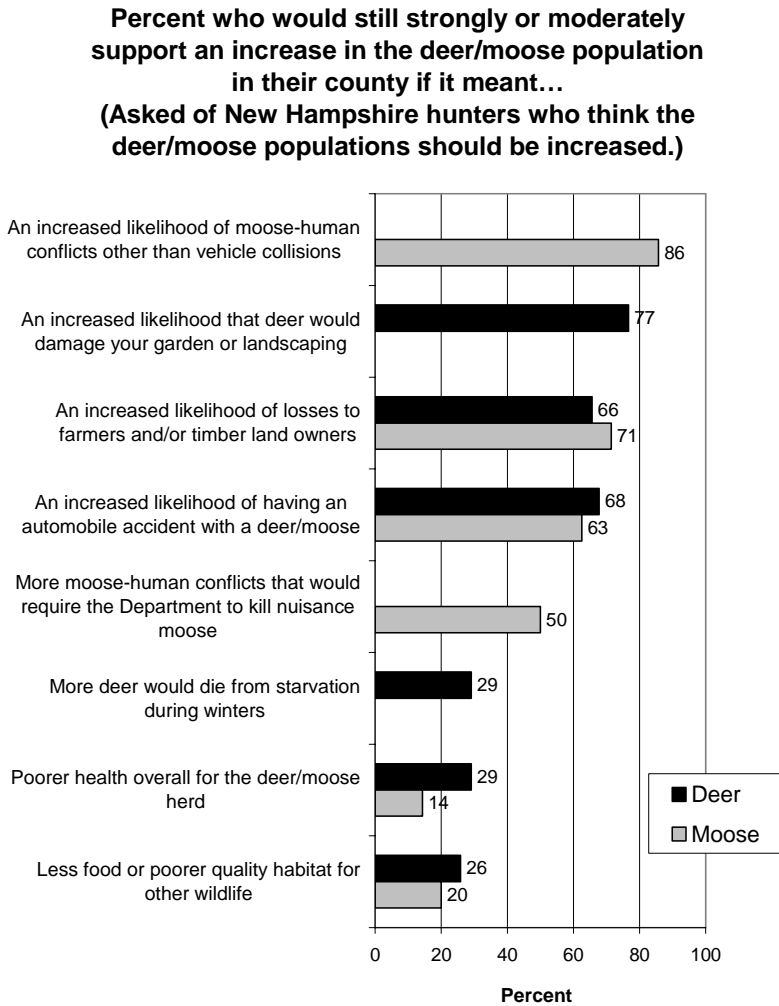


Source:  RM 2004b

# ANTI-HUNTING SENTIMENTS

➢ **Very few Americans are actively anti-hunting or hold an
animal rights philosophy, as most of them hold a middle-
ground viewpoint regarding the use and welfare of animals.**

Attitudes toward hunting involve attitudes toward animal welfare and animal rights. As typically defined, animal *welfare* allows the use of animals, as long as the animals are treated humanely and with respect, but animal *rights* dictates absolutely no use of animals. While very few Americans support animal rights, many of them support animal welfare. Indeed, Americans fall in the middle between no use of animals at all and complete animal utilization with no constraints. Figure 8.16 shows the results of a national study that examined animal welfare issues. This study found that 18% of Americans agree that animals have rights like humans and should not be used in any way and, on the other side, 30% agree that animals are here for human use and can be utilized regardless of the animal's welfare or rights. Both of these have much lower levels of agreement among Americans than does the middle ground—that animals can be used by humans as long as the animal does not experience undue pain and suffering (85% agree with this) (RM 2006b). Another study suggests that only 3% of Americans actually *live* by an animal rights philosophy, meaning that they do not eat animal products and as consumers they purchase no animal products at all—including clothing (RM 1996).

**Figure 8.16. Opinions on Animal Rights and Animal Welfare**



Opinions on Animal Rights and Animal Welfare. (Adult Americans nationwide.)

Based on these three statements:

Q375. Animals have rights like humans and should not be used in any way.

Q376. Animals can be used by humans, as long as the animal does not experience undue pain and suffering.

Q377. Animals are here for human use and can be utilized regardless of the animal's welfare or rights.
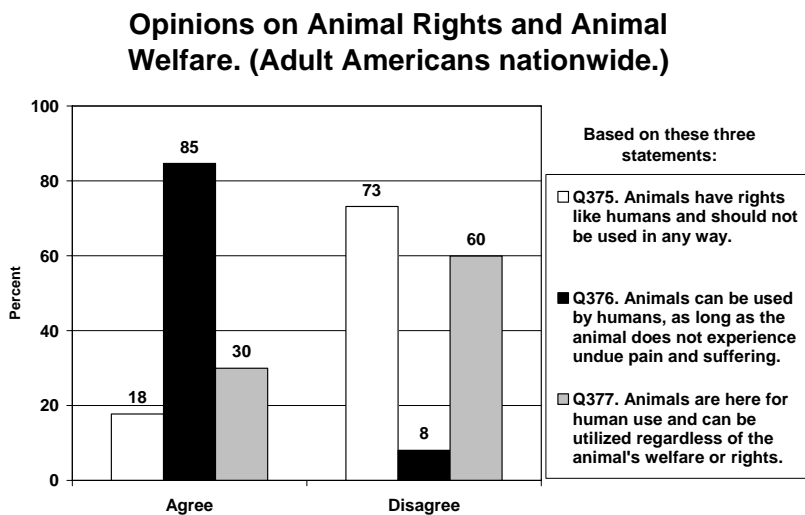
Source: RM 2006b

This support of animal *welfare* colors Americans' opinions on hunting, where issues related to humaneness and fair chase are

important.  For instance, many people, hunters included, approve of
hunting in general but do not approve of hunting over bait, which is
perceived as *not* providing fair chase and is antithetical to animal
welfare.  Indeed, Phase III found that there are much lower levels of
support for hunting over bait relative to support of hunting in
general.  Another case in point comes from a statewide survey in
Mississippi, where only 28% of the public supported legalizing the
hunting of white-tailed deer over bait, a much lower percentage than
the percent (89%) who approved of hunting in general (RM 2005f,
2005g).  Of course, that small percentage of Americans with an
animal *rights* viewpoint will not support hunting.

# OPINIONS ON THE SHOOTING SPORTS

> **A strong majority of Americans support target and sport
> shooting.  Support/opposition or approval/disapproval of the
> shooting sports are not caught up in animal welfare and
> animal rights issues, which makes the shooting sports
> somewhat less controversial than hunting.  Nonetheless,
> there is some resistance to the shooting sports based on some
> Americans' opposition or disapproval of firearms.**

The large majority of Americans (79%) approve of legal recreational
shooting, with most of them *strongly* approving (53%), and only
13% disapprove (Figure 8.17) (RM 2006b).  Also, even a majority of
non-shooters support target and sport shooting:  67% support target
or sport shooting, while only 16% of non-shooters oppose (Phase
III—RM 2007a).

Additionally, when presented with a continuum from complete
acceptance ("shooting sports are perfectly acceptable") to no
acceptance ("shooting sports are inappropriate nowadays"), the
majority of Americans (63%) choose the acceptance end of the
continuum, while only 11% choose the no acceptance end of the
continuum (Figure 8.18) (RM 2006b).  Furthermore, as Figure 8.18
shows, the trend is stable regarding acceptance of the shooting sports
(Roper Starch Worldwide 2001, RM 2006b).

## Figure 8.17.  Approval or Disapproval of Recreational Shooting

**In general, do you approve or disapprove of legal recreational shooting?**
**(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
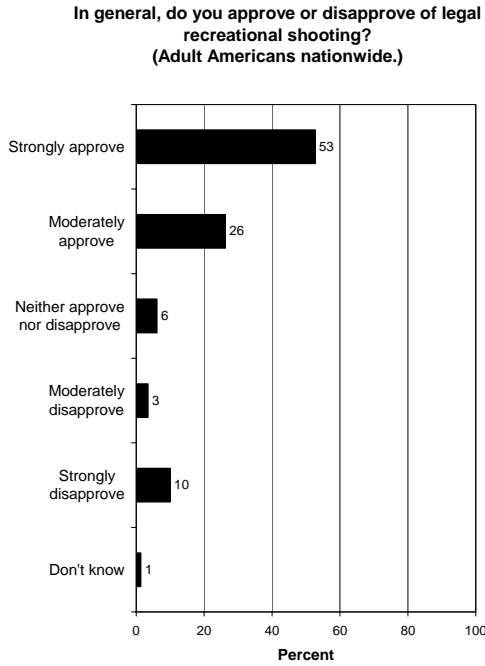


Source:  RM 2006b

## Figure 8.18.  Acceptance of the Shooting Sports

**Which of the following statements best describes your opinion of recreational shooting sports?**
**(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
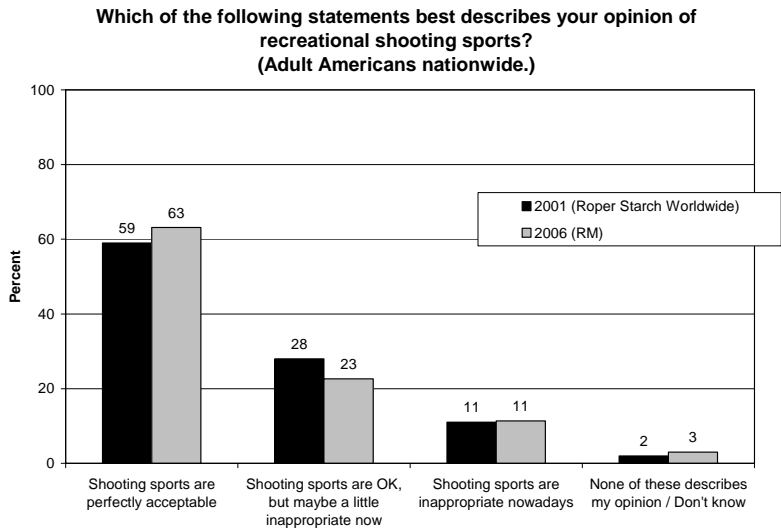


Source:  Roper Starch Worldwide 2001, RM 2006b

Also regarding public acceptance of shooting sports, large majorities of Americans agree that target shooting has a legitimate place in modern society (84% agree) and that firearms have a legitimate place in modern society (78%), and slightly lower percentages (although still majorities) agree that handguns have a legitimate place in modern society (67%) and that there are legitimate reasons for owning handguns other than for self-defense (60%) (RM 2006b).

> **Support of the shooting sports varies slightly when the motivation for shooting is considered.  The utilitarian reason asked about—shooting to learn self-defense—has slightly more support than does shooting for recreation.**

A very large majority of the general population support shooting to learn self-defense (78%), while slightly less, although still a large majority, support shooting for recreation (72%) (Figure 8.19). Opposition to shooting is at 15% for self-defense and 22% for recreation (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Related to the findings immediately above, a large majority of non-shooters agree that target and sport shooting help people develop good concentration skills (70%), and a slight majority agree that it is important to continue the shooting heritage of the country (52%). Less than a majority, but a substantial percentage nonetheless, agree that target and sport shooting help people learn good values (40%) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

**Figure 8.19.  Support for Two Motivations for Shooting**

**Do you support or oppose shooting for
recreation / to learn self-defense skills?
(Adult Americans nationwide.)**
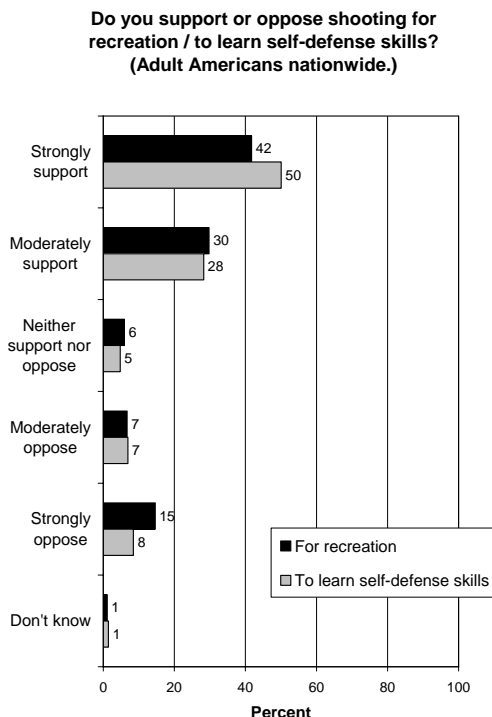


Source:  Phase III—RM 2007a

➢ **Support or approval of the shooting sports varies according
to various demographic factors.  A greater percentage of
men support the shooting sports than do women.  Rural
residents support the shooting sports at a slightly higher rate
than do urban residents.  Interestingly, age does not appear
to have as strong a correlation to support of the shooting
sports relative to the correlation between age and support of
hunting; nonetheless, age appears to have a slight effect on
support of the shooting sports, with older ages being more
supportive.  Finally, no correlation was found between
education level and support of the shooting sports (recall that
education and support of hunting are related) (Phase III—
RM 2007a).**

Support for the shooting sports among those who are not active
shooters is higher among men (82% support; 7% oppose) than it is
among women (70% support; 16% oppose) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

Support for the shooting sports among those who are not active shooters is higher among rural residents than it is among urban residents. While 77% of rural residents not on a farm and 88% of those on a farm support the shooting sports, 70% of those who live in a large city or urban area support the shooting sports (Phase III—RM 2007a).

As stated above, Phase III found no *strong* correlation between age and support of the shooting sports, although it did find a slight difference among those who are not active shooters. While 73% of those 65 years old and older support the shooting sports, 66% of those 18 to 24 years old support them (Phase III—RM 2007a). Opposition differs even less than does support: 12% of those 65 years old and older oppose the shooting sports, while 19% of those 18 to 24 years old oppose them.

➢ **There is one primary reason that people oppose shooting: opposition to firearms, whether because of moral opposition, simple safety concerns, or issues related to firearms and violence.**

Among the general population who never went target or sport shooting, 7% gave an answer (to an open-ended question) relating to not liking guns or not having guns in their household (including because of the presence of children in the household) as a reason for not shooting, and 3% gave an answer related to moral opposition to firearms (Phase III—RM 2007a). In a direct question, 23% of non-shooters said their discomfort around firearms strongly influenced their decision to never go shooting (see Figure 4.38) (Phase III—RM 2007a). Regardless of their underlying thoughts, these reasons center on the firearm itself.

In the Phase II research of anti-shooters, focus group participants elaborated on their opposition to firearms, for both moral and safety reasons; opposition discussion occurred primarily in the North Dakota focus group of non-hunters and the Washington State group of anti-hunters and anti-shooters. Several participants said that firearms simply elevate the risk of violence, and that by avoiding interactions with firearms, they automatically minimize that risk. Participants who indicated a fundamental opposition to firearms because of the potential for violence typically did not oppose the right of others to own and use firearms; rather, most of these

participants were only adamant about their own decisions not to associate with firearms.

In describing their feelings toward firearms, some anti-hunters and anti-shooters had personal experiences to which they alluded, such as negative exposure to firearms during childhood. However, a number of participants cited no specific examples or instances of gun violence; rather, they viewed the *threat* or the *potential* for gun violence as inherent in any firearms use. Other participants, particularly self-described anti-hunters, voiced fundamental opposition to killing: out of principle, these participants opposed any taking of life, and tended to view firearms as simply a means of taking lives. Most participants who opposed firearms nonetheless tended to be sympathetic to sustenance hunters who harvest only what they consume—this tended to be the single exception to most opposition to firearms.

➢ **The reputation that shooters enjoy among the public is fairly good, again benefiting (relative to hunting) by not being associated with issues surrounding the taking of game.**

The large majority of the general population believes that shooters, in general, safely handle firearms. This question was asked two ways in the general population survey to eliminate bias in the question, with the sample divided in half, and each half given one of the two ways. In the first way to ask this question, 70% of the general population agreed that most shooters safely handle firearms, and in the second way, 66% of the general population *disagreed* that most shooters carelessly handle firearms (Phase III—RM 2007a). (In looking at the other side, 13% disagreed that most shooters safely handle firearms, and 19% agreed that most shooters carelessly handle firearms.)

Additionally, a large majority of Americans (78%) agree that shooting sports participants are highly concerned about safety and responsible use of firearms, while only 11% disagree (RM 2006b).

Inactive shooters were asked in an open-ended question why they had not gone target or sport shooting recently, and only 15% of these respondents indicated that fear of injury from another shooter strongly or moderately influenced them to not go shooting, and only 13% said poor behavior of other shooters strongly or moderately

influenced them to not go shooting (Phase III—RM 2007a). In direct questions, 14% of non-shooters said fear of injury by another shooter strongly influenced them not to go shooting, and 11% said the same regarding poor behavior of other shooters (see Figure 4.38) (Phase III—RM 2007a).

The reputation of the shooting sports, however, is not helped by the mass media. One study found that 73% of adult Americans disagree (with 54% *strongly* disagreeing) that the mass media, such as news, television, and movies, accurately portray how firearms are used in the real world (Figure 8.20) (RM 2006b).

**Figure 8.20. Opinions on Mass Media's Portrayal of Use of Firearms**

**Do you agree or disagree that mass media, such as news, television, and movies, accurately portray how firearms are used in the real world? (Adult Americans nationwide.)**
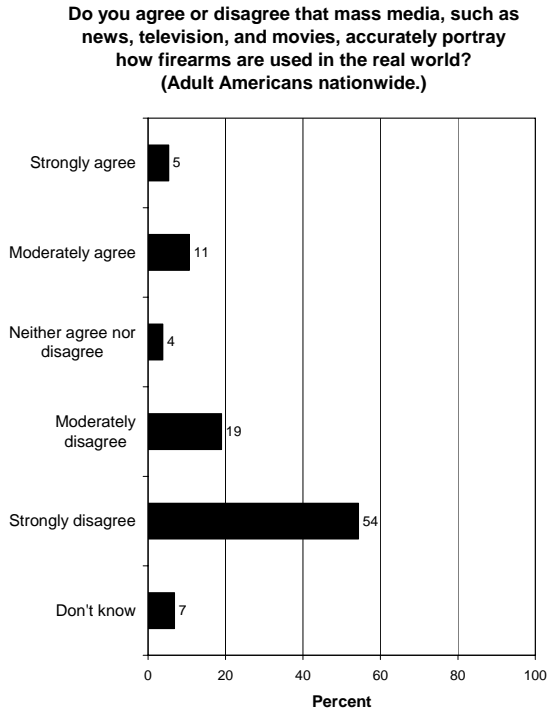


Source: RM 2006b

## ➤ **Most Americans agree that shooters respect living things.**

Two-thirds (66%) of Americans agree that shooters respect living things, while only 16% disagree (Phase III—RM 2007a).

# CHAPTER 9
# IMPLICATIONS AND
# ACTION ITEMS

## OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

This report presents the findings of one of the largest and most comprehensive studies ever conducted on the factors related to hunting and sport shooting participation. The research entailed a thorough literature review, two series of nationwide focus groups (20 focus groups altogether), and two major scientific telephone surveys. Additionally, throughout the course of this 3-year project, dozens of fish and wildlife professionals, outdoor recreation professionals, university professors and researchers, and sportsmen's and conservation organization personnel were consulted regarding hunting and sport shooting participation, hunting and shooting recruitment and retention programs, and the future of hunting and the shooting sports.

For the literature review, several hundred studies on hunting and sport shooting participation were examined. In the first series of focus groups, active hunters, lapsed hunters, non-hunters, anti-hunters, active shooters, lapsed shooters, non-shooters, and anti-shooters were questioned in-depth about their attitudes, interests, satisfactions, and dissatisfactions with hunting and sport shooting, as well as what types of facilities, programs, services, and communications would increase their interest in the activities.

The factors associated with attitudes, interests, satisfactions, and dissatisfactions with hunting and sport shooting were also quantified through two separate scientific telephone surveys. The first survey was of the general population and identified respondents' various activity levels and attitude dispositions. This identification method allowed the researchers to interview individuals who could be found in no other way. The groups interviewed included those who had gone hunting or sport shooting in their youth (or some time in the distant past) but no longer do so, those who had gone hunting or sport shooting in the past 5 years but not in the past 2 years, and those who had gone hunting or sport shooting in the past 2 years, as

well as those who had never gone hunting or sport shooting. The latter group—those who had never participated in hunting or sport shooting—were interviewed to determine why they had never gone hunting or sport shooting and what might increase their interest.

The first survey was quite extensive, with some interviews lasting 40 minutes or more (the average survey was approximately 20 minutes in length). Researchers did not rely only on open-ended responses where only top-of-mind issues would be recalled. For example, lapsed hunters and lapsed sport shooters were presented with numerous (as many as 25) factors that may or may not be reasons they did not hunt or shoot in recent years. Each factor was presented individually, and the lapsed hunter or shooter was asked, "Did this strongly, moderately, or not influence your decision to not hunt/shoot in the past 2 years?"

Active hunters and sport shooters were also presented with numerous factors that may or may not have taken away from their satisfaction and participation levels (as many as 25). This series of questions among these groups allowed the researchers to obtain quantitative data on the specific factors that contribute to hunters' and shooters' dissatisfactions with and cessation of the activities. Similarly, individuals who had hunted or had gone sport shooting were also questioned extensively and specifically about the circumstances and programs that assisted them in becoming a hunter or shooter. Non-hunters and non-shooters were questioned on the potential of various facilities, programs, and services that would increase their interest and participation in hunting and the shooting sports.

A second similar telephone survey of hunters and sport shooters was administered to obtain more in-depth information and increase the sample size of known hunters and sport shooters to allow for extensive crosstabulations and statistical analysis. For both surveys, a battery of nearly 400 questions was developed and administered to various market segments, including active, lapsed, non-, and anti-hunters and shooters.

The second round of focus groups focused on exploring specific program elements that would increase participation among current hunters and shooters and increase interest and participation among lapsed hunters and lapsed shooters as well as non-hunters and non-shooters. For example, in one focus group, non-hunters were

taken to observe a youth dove hunt in Alabama. After actively observing the youth dove hunt, the non-hunter observers participated in an in-depth discussion about how effective this program would be in recruiting new hunters and how much the program sparked their interest in hunting. For other focus groups, program participants from many well-known recruitment and retention programs were interviewed about the effectiveness of the programs in recruiting and retaining hunters and shooters. The focus group discussions included participants in such programs as *Becoming an Outdoors Woman*, *First Shots*, and *Step Outside*.

Finally, the data from the two surveys were extensively crosstabulated and analyzed. One such analysis for both surveys examined respondents who were asked how interested they were in going hunting as well as how interested they were in going sport shooting. The response options were very interested, somewhat interested, and not at all interested. Extensive crosstabulations were conducted on the data among non-hunters, lapsed hunters, and active hunters who indicated they were very interested in going hunting and non-shooters, lapsed shooters, and active shooters who indicated they were very interested in going shooting. Using the extensive analysis, target markets were identified for recruitment and retention purposes. Many other analyses similar to this were also conducted to identify other markets, as well as to identify facilities, services, and programs that have the best likelihood of increasing the success of recruitment and retention efforts within those markets.

Based on this extensive research, it is clear that there is no "silver bullet" to increase hunting and sport shooting participation. Hunting participation and sport shooting participation are declining as the result of an increasingly urban and aging society, lack of nearby quality hunting or shooting opportunities, lack of awareness and access to those opportunities, and lack of coordination and use of the best available research to guide hunting and sport shooting recruitment and retention programs, as well as a lack of sufficient financial resources for the administration of such programs.

Although there is no "silver bullet" to increase hunting and shooting participation, there are numerous fronts on which the profession can move to counteract the impacts that urbanization, age, lack of opportunity, and lack of access are having on participation. The rest of this chapter offers action items to help counteract such impacts

and aid recruitment and retention.  Some of the recommended actions call for understanding various aspects of hunting and the shooting sports and include such efforts as developing a comprehensive working knowledge of the situation and the importance that demographic factors play in declining participation. Other action items are actions *not* to be taken.  One such example of an action *not* to be taken addresses the common belief that single-parent households are causing a decrease in hunting participation, because research does not support that growing up in a single-parent household negatively affects interest or participation in hunting. Several studies have found that youth from single-parent households are as likely as youth from dual-parent households to participate in hunting.  An action item herein notes that scarce resources should not be invested in programs to combat this nonexistent "problem."

Many of the recommended action items are very specific.  For example, the research for this study uncovered how important it is for non-shooters and potential shooting participants to know that the programs to introduce them to sport shooting will be conducted in a safe and controlled manner.  More than any other service, facility, or program, potential shooters want to be assured that these programs will be conducted in a safe and controlled environment.  Related to this action item, the use of non-lethal firearms should be considered when introducing non-shooters to shooting activities.  While many Americans show an interest in wanting to shoot, the fear of firearms prevents them from trying the activity, and research shows that, once they try shooting, their fear is often overcome.  Just as the bicycle industry would not flourish without the important use of training wheels to alleviate fear and facilitate proficiency, neither will sport shooting flourish without its own "training wheels" in the form of controlled environments and non-lethal firearms.

Several crucial action items are concerned with the need for agencies, sportsmen's organizations, and industry to understand the importance of language.  Language matters, and the specific words that are chosen for use will make the difference between public acceptance and public rejection of hunting and sport shooting.  As communications expert Dr. Frank Luntz notes, "It's not what you say, it's what people hear" (Luntz 2007).  For example, it is important when talking to non-hunters about hunting that the terms "legal" and "regulated" be used.  Past Responsive Management research has shown that when some non-hunters hear the term

"hunting," they think of activities such as poaching. Because the activity (hunting) to which wildlife professionals are referring is *legal, regulated hunting*, it is important that this meaning is communicated clearly to the audience. Some individuals are concerned that explaining or qualifying the term "hunting" in this way may appear apologetic about the activity, and they are therefore hesitant to do so, preferring to simply use only the term, "hunting." However, using the recommended language in this report is not about being apologetic about hunting and shooting, it is about communicating clearly with non-hunters and non-shooters. It is also about increasing support and acceptance of hunting and sport shooting.

It is the researchers' firm belief that declining participation in hunting and sport shooting can be reversed, given adequate financial resources, development of recruitment and retention programs based on a solid foundation of research, training for professionals in the best methods to deliver recruitment and retention services, programs and facilities, and an enhanced partnership among agencies, industry, and sportsmen's organizations. This approach is not dissimilar to the approach the wildlife management profession has taken over the past 100 years to address declining wildlife populations, which has resulted in bringing back many wildlife species from perilously low levels to thriving populations. Applying science-based research to accurately identify the issues, develop programs to effectively address the issues, and train those involved in the effort can also result in successful hunting and sport shooting recruitment and retention programs with thriving participation.

# DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS BASED ON A SOLID FOUNDATION OF RESEARCH

➢ **Wildlife management programs are based on a solid foundation of research. Hunting and sport shooting programs must also be based on a solid foundation of research. The data contained in this report, as well as the research on hunting and shooting documented in the**

**literature review in Phase I of this project, provide a
continuing resource in decision-making and planning. The
literature review examined hundreds of studies directly
pertaining to hunting and shooting participation,
recruitment, retention, and desertion. The two surveys
administered specifically for this project contained hundreds
of questions about many aspects of hunting and shooting.**

Action Item 1.     The detailed primary source data in this report
      from the focus groups and the surveys should be used in
      planning beyond the specific recommendations the research
      team discusses below.

Action Item 2.     A plethora of other research was also consulted
      and examined in the literature review (Phase I of this
      project), and their findings are included in this report; those
      findings, too, should be used as a continuing resource.

➢ **Taking a marketing approach—using the "science" of
marketing—enhances efforts to maintain and increase
hunting and shooting participation. A marketing approach
maintains the following order of decision-making: 1) clearly
and specifically define goals; 2) identify publics and decide
which ones should become markets; 3) define specific and
quantified objectives for each target market; 4) understand
the target market approach through research; 5) tailor
programs, products, services, and messages by tailoring
product, price, place, and promotion efforts to each target
market; and 6) evaluate the efforts directly to the established
goals and objectives in terms of outcomes, not outputs.**

Action Item 3.     Use a marketing approach, with clearly defined
      goals, defined market segments, quantifiable objectives for
      each target market, tailored programs for those target
      markets, and evaluation of efforts.

Action Item 4.     Before developing programs to maintain and
      increase hunting and shooting participation, establish clearly
      defined goals and commit those goals to writing. There are
      several paths to maintaining and increasing hunting and
      shooting participation and increasing hunting license sales in
      the U.S., and each path necessarily dictates different target
      markets, with tailored products, programs, services, and
      messages for each target market. In short, each goal dictates
      different strategies. It is important to identify these goals
      up-front. The following are some potential goals (but not all

possible goals) for various target markets:  1) increase hunting license sales, 2) keep current hunters hunting and current shooters shooting, 3) encourage active participants to hunt or shoot more often, 4) encourage dropouts to return to the activities, 5) encourage sporadic participants to participate more often and consistently, 6) encourage hunting and shooting participation among market segments that have not tried these activities, 7) maintain high satisfaction levels among active participants, and 8) develop a hunting and shooting culture.  As stated above, each of these goals would be applicable to specific target markets.

# DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

➢ **Broad demographic changes in the U.S. affect hunting and shooting participation.  Many of the demographic changes contribute to declining participation in hunting and the shooting sports and are, indeed, the primary reasons for declines in hunting and shooting sports participation.**
   Action Item 5.     Be cognizant of the effect that urbanization and loss of rural land has on hunting and the shooting sports.  Urbanization reduces the land available for hunting and shooting (including not only the actual land that is developed but a buffer zone around it in which hunting and shooting are limited and even prevented), and urbanization also reduces *access* to available lands.
   Action Item 6.     Understand that urbanization causes a loss of rural *people* as well as a dilution to the hunting and shooting culture, a constituency and environment important for hunting and shooting initiation.  Urbanization and participation in hunting and shooting are negatively correlated.  The implication is that not only is land and access to that land for hunting and shooting disappearing, but the rural culture that fosters these activities is disappearing, resulting in fewer people that have the typical demographic characteristics of hunters and shooters, and there is a dilution of the social environment in which hunting and shooting flourish.  Additionally, because urbanization often contributes to more difficult access, it can thereby make hunting and sport shooting more time-consuming, further negatively affecting participation (time is hugely

important as a constraint to or dissatisfaction with participation).

Action Item 7.    Note that the rate of housing starts is negatively correlated to hunting participation:  as housing starts increase, hunting license sales decrease.  This could be another manifestation of the problem identified immediately above regarding loss of rural land, but other factors appear to be at play.  (A good topic for further study would be whether the link between high housing starts and decreased hunting license sales in a state is caused by a loss of available land or because of loss of available time among a large sector of the economy—construction—that includes many hunters and shooters, or a combination of both.)

Action Item 8.    Related to housing starts, agencies and the industries should develop plans and strategies that address the apparent diminution of participation during boom times in building and construction and the increase of participation during times of a slow housing market.

Action Item 9.    Be aware of the effects that an aging society has on hunting and shooting participation.  Younger participants are more avid than are older participants.  As the hunting and shooting population ages, more desertion is expected.  Retention programs for seniors are vital and, in particular but not exclusively, should be in the form of volunteer mentors for both hunting and shooting recruitment and retention programs.

Action Item 10.   Note that many people perceive that they have less free time than they once did.  This is the result of an urban and suburban environment where lives are busier and more households require both parents to work and where more non-hunting and non-shooting activities (such as kids' soccer) are scheduled.  This constraint has an important effect on hunting and shooting participation, and, unfortunately, it is a constraint over which agencies and organizations have little influence.  Nonetheless, knowledge of this constraint is important in any decision-making regarding recruitment and retention strategies.  Simply put, hunting and shooting programs, services, and facilities that take into consideration hunters' and shooters' (both existing and potential) time constraints will be more effective than programs, services, and facilities that do not.  An example is the location of facilities or the hours of operation, which will

greatly affect potential participants' ability to use the facilities. If Americans' lack of time is made to be an important consideration in development of programs, services, and facilities, more effective recruitment and retention will result.

Action Item 11.   Finally, regarding demographic trends, be aware that white ethnicity is declining as a proportion of the American population.  Again, one of the demographic characteristics correlated to hunting participation is declining as a proportion of the total population (keep in mind, however, that total numbers of this ethnic group are increasing, as they are of nearly all ethnic groups in the U.S.).  Developers of programs targeted at non-whites need to keep in mind that non-whites have lower participation rates to begin with and also have higher rates of desertion once recruitment occurs.

# RECRUITMENT

➢ **The "natural" path of hunting and shooting initiation occurs at a young age, and the beginner typically is first taken hunting or shooting by his or her father or other male family member.**

Action Item 12.   Be aware that efforts to recruit new hunters and shooters outside of the traditional hunting and shooting community will be very difficult; account for this when prioritizing recruitment efforts.  Those from outside the hunting and shooting community should not be the first targets in a recruitment campaign.

Action Item 13.   Understand that higher avidity in hunting and shooting is linked to younger ages of initiation, and this, in turn, means that recruitment programs have a window of opportunity among potential participants under the age of 16.

Action Item 14.   Be aware that higher avidity is linked to being mentored by one's father; conversely, there is a higher dropout rate among those initiated by somebody other than their father.

➢ **The "natural" path entails the beginner being immersed in a hunting or shooting culture (particularly as this pertains to family members).**

Action Item 15.   Be aware that higher avidity in hunting and shooting is linked to participation with other family members and friends who hunt and shoot.  Initiation without immersion in the hunting and shooting culture usually ends in hunting and shooting cessation.

Action Item 16.   Realize that immersion in a hunting and shooting culture requires that potential hunters and shooters develop personal connections with the sports.  There is more to becoming a lifelong hunter or shooter than simply participating in those activities.  The establishment of affinities for the sports and friends within the sports is more important than simple participation.

➢ **The "natural" path entails starting with simple activities and small game or commonly hunted species.**

Action Item 17.   Note that, typically, shooters start with simple target shooting and hunters start with small game (or white-tailed deer, which is the most commonly hunted species).  Also note that hunters who start with small game or commonly hunted game have higher retention rates.

➢ **Encourage hunting and shooting recruitment that follows the "natural" path of initiation; deviations from this "natural" path are less effective.**

Action Item 18.   Encourage participation with family members, particularly programs that encourage fathers (and other male family members to a lesser extent) to hunt or shoot with their children.  This replicates how "natural" recruitment is done.  Hunters and shooters who are initiated by their father have higher retention rates than do those who are initiated via a different path.  The Families Afield program follows this concept and has introduced many newcomers to hunting in a family setting.

Action Item 19.   Agency decisions regarding hunting licenses should consider family, and some type of "family" hunting license should be offered.  Most hunters hunt with family, not alone.  Research should be conducted to determine the feasibility of a family hunting license and its likely effect on

overall participation as well as its likely effect on agency revenue.

Action Item 20.   Encourage women in households with hunting husbands to go hunting, as recruitment rates are quite high in households in which both parents participate in hunting.

Action Item 21.   Participation with friends is secondary to participation with family, particularly for new participants. While programs or efforts that encourage participation with friends can have utility, particularly with getting active participants to become more avid, note that familial participation at the start is correlated to high avidity and high retention rates.

Action Item 22.   Promote youth programs, which are important in that they start participation at a young age.

Action Item 23.   Enhance opportunities for hunting small game when targeting youth in recruitment efforts.

Action Item 24.   When encouraging mentoring, use the term, "experience," such as "sharing the experience," because that word resonates well as a motivation for mentors.

Action Item 25.   Develop a program that targets senior hunters who have dropped out because of age or health to pass on what they have learned to new hunters (as data show that one segment of inactive hunters is much like active hunters except that age or health have forced them to reduce or quit hunting).  This mentoring strategy also has the benefit of encouraging more participation—i.e., retention—among those seniors who otherwise would not go hunting.

Action Item 26.   Encourage the use of the Step Outside message, wherever possible.  One-on-one mentoring has proven utility in recruitment and replicates the "natural" recruitment path.

Action Item 27.   In a corollary to Step Outside, support efforts to prompt children to ask adults to take them hunting or shooting.  The top reason that mentors took somebody hunting or shooting who was new to the sport was because that person expressed interest in being taken hunting or shooting.  Programs that encourage people to ask a child to go hunting or shooting are effective and represent only half of the equation; however, the other side of the equation is to encourage children (or others new to the sports) to ask to be taken hunting or shooting.  Such a program could be called, "Take Me Hunting" or "Take Me Shooting," which

> complements the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's "Take Me Fishing" campaign.

Action Item 28.   Encourage simple types of shooting (e.g., target shooting rather than trap) and hunting (e.g., small game rather than wild turkey) at first.  More challenging game to hunt or difficult shooting sports can cause early frustration and desertion; these more challenging types of hunting and shooting are best left for more experienced participants.

Action Item 29.   Even among inactive shooters—those who had at some time gone shooting but have not recently done so— there is greater interest in target shooting with a handgun, rifle, or shotgun than in any type of clay target sports.  Focus on target shooting when targeting *inactive* shooters.

➢ **The "natural" path of initiation includes social satisfactions (such as relaxation or being with family and friends) as well those satisfactions directly related to the resource (such as harvesting game).  Social satisfactions can be as or more important than "resource" satisfactions.**

Action Item 30.   The qualities of hunting and shooting that would appeal to non-participants include many "social" elements.  Ensure that those social elements are considered in recruitment efforts, since no amount of resource-related satisfaction will succeed in recruiting new participants in the absence of the social satisfactions.

➢ **Some shooting terminology and themes resonated well.**

Action Item 31.   For recruiting newcomers, the term "target shooting" resonated better than "sport shooting."  Promote the idea that everyone should know about firearms and firearms safety—it is better to know what to do around firearms than to not know what to do.  Promote that shooting improves concentration skills.  Indicate that shooting is done in a safe and controlled environment and that shooting skills programs are taught by experts.  And promote that target shooting is fun.

➢ **There is a market of outdoor recreationists who are active in many forms of outdoor recreation and who show interest in hunting and shooting.  In particular, these are young males**

who are active in many outdoor activities.  This suggests that a target market exists among other outdoor recreationists.
>
> Action Item 32.   Consider packaging and advertising hunting and shooting opportunities as part of a comprehensive, overall outdoor experience to interest and recruit those within this target market.

> ➤ **While mandatory hunter education itself does not appear to be a constraint to hunting participation, the *timing* of the education appears to have some constraining effect.  In other words, requiring a person to go through the entire education course before being able to even try hunting may discourage some from trying it at all.**
>
> Action Item 33.   Structure hunter education requirements to allow the potential hunter to try the sport before requiring him or her to complete the full hunter education program. This is the concept behind the successful Families Afield program.

> ➤ **Data do not show that single-parent households negatively affect hunting participation.  While it seems intuitive that children from single-parent households (considering that most single-parent households are headed by women) would have lower participation rates than children from households in which their parents are married, research does not support this position.  It may be that "weekend" fathers make more of an effort to provide activities for their children, and it may be that other family members step in to fill the "father" role.  Regardless, children from single-parent households have about the same participation rate as children from dual-parent households.**
>
> Action Item 34.   Do not spend limited agency resources targeting single-parent households for recruitment and retention efforts.

# RETENTION

> ➤ **Retention is important because it targets the most amenable market:  existing hunters and shooters.**
>
> Action Item 35.   Ensure that efforts to bolster hunting and shooting participation not focus solely on recruitment but

also focus on retention.  Phase III quantified the difficulty in recruitment and also showed that many current hunters and shooters are at risk of ceasing participation.  Indeed, retention programs should be a higher priority than recruitment programs.  Retaining these existing participants will be efficacious in bolstering participation levels.

➢ **As with recruitment, there is evidence that a "natural" path to retention exists.  Evidence suggests that people who stay active in a sport move from a continuum of simplicity to more specialized activities.**
Action Item 36.   Note that avidity is linked to more specialization.
Action Item 37.   Encourage a variety of activities among active hunters and shooters to move them up the continuum within the sports in order to retain participants (but not for initiating them).

➢ **Concomitant to multiple motivations for hunting and shooting is that there will also be multiple satisfactions with these activities.**
Action Item 38.   Manage for multiple satisfactions.  For instance, regarding hunting, although harvest is important, it is not the only aspect of hunting that is important.  Agencies must manage for all aspects of hunting to enhance hunter satisfaction—from keeping wildlife management areas as aesthetically appealing as possible, to considering family issues whenever decisions are made that affect hunters, to publicizing game recipes.  (Note that managing for multiple satisfactions also enhances recruitment, but is most important as a means of retaining hunters and shooters.)
Action Item 39.   Manage a state's hunting areas for a range of opportunities.  For instance, while trophy hunting is not a top motivation for many hunters, there will be value in having some areas managed for quality game, while managing other areas primarily for the largest possible herd, and still other areas (or seasons) for the naturalistic/wilderness qualities.  There are markets for each of these hunting experiences.  Matching target groups to preferred hunting opportunities will enhance hunter satisfaction among hunters.
Action Item 40.   When managing for multiple satisfactions, make every attempt to still keep regulations from becoming

overly complicated, as a dissatisfaction to hunting for some is the complexity of regulations.

Action Item 41.   Communicate the multiple satisfactions approach.  Enhanced communications are vital to communicate to hunters and shooters why this multiple satisfactions strategy was initiated, including, for instance, the featured hunting opportunity of each site or season, and the specific regulations for each site or season in a clear and concise manner.  An increase in complexity of regulations can be actively countered with effective communications programs to hunters.

➢ **The social dimensions of hunting and shooting are important in the design and development of strategies to keep current hunters hunting and current shooters shooting.  Although hunting, for example, could not take place in the absence of game, the social satisfactions are critically important as well.**

Action Item 42.   Ensure that retention strategies address the social dimensions of hunting and shooting.  Do not focus solely on resource issues, such as more game or more shooting ranges, without also addressing the social dimensions.

➢ **Retention is higher when participants have others, especially family members, to hunt and shoot with.**

Action Item 43.   Encourage continued participation with family members, and develop programs and services with families in mind (in this context, think of families as a whole rather than as individuals).  This ensures the hunter or shooter has the social support necessary to sustain interest and participation.

Action Item 44.   While encouraging participation with friends can be important in retention, note that participation with friends is secondary to participation with family.  Those who participate with family have higher retention rates than do those who participate only with friends.

➢ **Social and psychological constraints to hunting and shooting are highly important.**

Action Item 45.   Understand that social and psychological constraints to hunting and shooting participation (such as family obligations, amount of free time, work obligations,

and loss of interest) are as or more important than are resource-based constraints (such as land availability).  Any recruitment or retention effort that does not take into account the social and psychological constraints to hunting and shooting will not be effective.  As Leopold noted (1949), "Recreational development is a job not of building roads into lovely country, but of building receptivity into the still unlovely human mind."

Action Item 46.   Be aware that social and psychological constraints are worse now compared to a decade ago (as measured by the percentage of participants indicating that the factor is a constraint), such as family obligations, amount of free time, work obligations, and loss of interest, unlike the constraints discussed below that are within influence of agencies and that have not markedly worsened over the past decade.

➢ **It appears that agencies are on the right path in retention of hunters, based on trends data (unfortunately, comparable trends on shooting data are not available).**

Action Item 47.   Continue efforts on those potential constraints over which agencies have influence.  Trends analysis for inactive hunters regarding constraints to hunting show that the following have not become more of a constraint (or are even less of a constraint):  poor behavior of other hunters, too many hunters in the field, fear of injury from another hunter, costs of licenses, amount of law enforcement presence, complex regulations, amount of game, bag limits, and season lengths.  These are less problematic than (or are the same now as) they were 10 years ago, the implication being that agencies are doing a good job in these areas. Unfortunately, the things out of agency control are getting worse now, such as work and family constraints.

➢ **Hunting and shooting are often "unstructured" activities that exist in a structured 21st Century.**

Action Item 48.   Make efforts to get hunters and shooters to schedule their activities (send reminders well in advance of events, for instance) so that hunting and shooting do not become those things that people do when they have no other activities scheduled.  In short, people make time for scheduled activities (e.g., a kids' soccer game) simply

because they feel it necessary to do them once they are on the calendar; unscheduled activities get put off. In other words, encourage hunters and shooters to *make* time for their activities. A campaign to "put it on the calendar" should be considered, targeted at active hunters and shooters.

➢ **Avidity in hunting and shooting is correlated to increased specialization.**

Action Item 49.   While cause and effect can go both ways (people become more avid because they try more specialized activities within these sports, and people try more specialized activities because they become more avid), there would certainly be some participants who would increase their avidity if they were introduced to specialized activities within the activities. Encourage active hunters and active shooters to try a variety of activities within these sports by providing information on the range of hunting and shooting opportunities that are available (and, of course, make them available).

➢ **Regarding hunter satisfaction, which is, obviously, directly related to retention, there are multiple satisfactions that hunters can derive from their hunting.**

Action Item 50.   Develop hunting regulations that account for multiple satisfactions. Because harvest is not the only satisfaction, it is perhaps as important that some areas be managed to maximize the possibility of simply seeing game rather than to maximize harvest.

# TARGET MARKETS

➢ **Several distinct markets for retention and recruitment efforts exist.**

➢ **The data from Phases II and III suggest that there are six markets for hunter recruitment and retention (note these are markets, not *target* markets, as some should perhaps not be targeted, or certainly not targeted primarily). Efforts to recruit or retain hunters should use messages and strategies appropriate for the characteristics of each market. Some**

**markets have a higher potential for recruitment or retention than others.**

Action Item 51.   *Hunting Market 1:  Active hunters who are likely to continue hunting*.  Encourage active hunters who are likely to continue hunting to introduce others to the sport and promote mentoring opportunities.  Currently active hunters who are likely to continue hunting are a large market made up of traditional hunters—young males who hunt avidly and who have friends who hunt.  They were immersed in the hunting culture at a young age and show strong interest in numerous other outdoor recreation activities.  This market is not a high-risk market for decreased hunting participation or cessation.  Active hunters who are very interested in hunting in the next year comprise 82% of all active hunters.

Action Item 52.   *Hunting Market 2:  Active hunters who are hunting less frequently*.  Encourage this group to introduce and mentor others, particularly younger family members and emphasize available access to lands to hunt on.  Active hunters who are hunting less frequently are an aging group, and the data suggest that their decreased participation may be the result of increasing age.  However, it appears that access to private lands may also be an issue for this market.  This may be a difficult group to retain given the increasing age.

Action Item 53.   *Hunting Market 3:  Active hunters who are at high risk of deserting the sport*.  Target active hunters who are at a high risk of deserting the sport by emphasizing hunting opportunities and available access.  Active hunters who are not at all interested in hunting in the next year are at a high risk of deserting the sport.  This market is a small but important group:  5% of active hunters whose participation has decreased over the past few years are not at all interested in hunting in the next year, and 4% of *all* active hunters are not at all interested in hunting in the next year.  The data suggest that this market is an aging group that is also more likely (compared to active hunters who are interested in hunting in the next year) to include females.  The top factors that strongly took away from hunting enjoyment among this group were not enough places to hunt and a lack of interest.

Action Item 54.   *Hunting Market 4:  Inactive hunters who may be easily persuaded to start hunting again*.  Target inactive hunters who are very interested in hunting in the next year

with messages that emphasize hunting as part of an overall outdoor lifestyle and combine hunting with other interests (e.g., target shooting) and obligations (e.g., family). This group is an important target market because they may be easily persuaded to return to the sport and comprise a substantial portion (38%) of inactive hunters who hunted in the past 5 years but not in the past 2 years. Among all inactive hunters, 14% are very interested in hunting in the next year. This group is more likely than are inactive hunters who are somewhat or not at all interested in hunting to be young, active outdoor recreationists who learned hunting from an individual or group, to have family members who currently hunt, and who are more conservation-minded. This group appears to have the interest and the social support necessary to bring them back to hunting, but other obligations and interests are preventing their participation; some of the other interests and obligations include other outdoor activities.

Action Item 55.   *Hunting Market 5: Inactive hunters who are less likely to be persuaded to start hunting again*. Use messages that focus on hunting opportunities, combining those opportunities with other interests, and the benefits of hunting for wildlife management when targeting inactive hunters who are not at all interested in hunting in the next year. This is a substantial group: 28% of all inactive hunters who had hunted in the past 5 years but not the past 2 years indicated they are not at all interested in hunting in the next year. This group is an aging group and is more likely than inactive hunters who are interested in going hunting to not have any family members or friends who hunt. A lack of interest and social support, as well as other priorities for their time, are important impediments to this group's hunting participation. This market lacks the social support system for and strong interest in hunting. Given their lack of social support, lack of interest, and increasing age, it is less likely that they will become active hunters again.

Action Item 56.   *Hunting Market 6: Non-hunters who are very interested in hunting*. Target non-hunters who are very interested in hunting in the next year with recruitment programs that appeal to their active outdoor lifestyle and also that appeal to their desire for family participation, reduced costs, and a safe environment. This is a small yet potential

target market for hunter recruitment, with 1% of all non-hunters indicating that they are very interested in going hunting in the next year. This market appears to be young males (ages 18 to 34) who live in a small city or town or rural area and who are also interested in target or sport shooting. Those in this group are also more likely than those non-hunters who are somewhat or not at all interested in hunting to have grown up in a household with firearms, but they do not appear to have the social or familial support needed to facilitate hunting initiation and participation. This group also indicated that recruitment programs designed to introduce new hunters to the sport may increase their interested in hunting, such as "bring your kids" and "bring your spouse" hunting programs with reduced license costs. They also responded well to a free skills seminar, programs that provide hunting equipment or transportation, and programs conducted in a very safe and controlled manner.

➢ **The data from Phases II and III suggest that there are five markets for shooter recruitment and retention (note these are markets, not *target* markets). Efforts to recruit or retain shooters should use messages and strategies appropriate for the characteristics of each market. As with the identified hunting markets, some shooting markets have a higher potential for recruitment or retention than others.**

Action Item 57. *Shooting Market 1: Active shooters who are likely to continue shooting.* Encourage currently active shooters to take family members, especially children, and friends shooting with them to maintain the familial support system to help facilitate more avid shooting participation. While active shooters who are very interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year comprise 66% of all active shooters and have a social support system in place, retention of this group should still be a priority since one-third of the market remains only somewhat or not at all interested in target or sport shooting in the next year. Active shooters who are very interested in shooting in the next year are active in numerous outdoor activities, and it appears that they are more likely than active shooters who are somewhat or not at all interested in going shooting in the next year to have family members and friends who shoot.

Action Item 58. *Shooting Market 2: Active shooters who are at high risk of deserting the sport.* Target active shooters not at all interested in shooting in the next year with messages that emphasize available access to places to shoot. This is a small but high-risk group for decreased shooting participation or cessation: 7% of currently active shooters are not at all interested in going target or sport shooting in the next year. This group indicated that having other interests that are more important is the top factor that strongly took away from their enjoyment of shooting, followed by not enough access to places to shoot, personal health, and family obligations.

Action Item 59. *Shooting Market 3: Inactive shooters who may be easily persuaded to start shooting again.* Target inactive shooters who are very interested in target or sport shooting in the next year with messages that emphasize the familial shooting culture, that encourage them to reconnect with shooting while enjoying time with family, and that acknowledge the shared interest in hunting. Inactive shooters very interested in shooting in the next year comprise 10% of all inactive shooters. This group, because they are more likely than are inactive shooters somewhat interested or not at all interested in shooting in the next year to have family members who shoot, has the familial support for participation in target or sport shooting, but this group appears to have other priorities. The top factors that have strongly influenced this group's decision not to go shooting or strongly influenced their decline in shooting participation are amount of free time, family obligations, work obligations, and having other interests that are more important.

Action Item 60. *Shooting Market 4: Inactive shooters who are less likely to be persuaded to start shooting again.* Try to reach inactive shooters who are not at all interested in target or sport shooting in the next year with messages that emphasize shooting opportunities and participation with family and friends. This group is a reasonably large market that will be difficult to recruit back into shooting, given their lack of a social support system. Sixty percent of all inactive shooters are not at all interested in target or sport shooting in the next year, and the data suggest that this group is more likely than inactive shooters who are interested in shooting

in the next year to *not* have family members and/or friends who shoot. A majority (62%) indicated that they have other interests that are more important. Other factors that strongly influenced their decision not to go shooting or strongly influenced their decline in shooting participation include loss of interest, lack of time, work obligations, and family obligations.

Action Item 61. *Shooting Market 5: Non-shooters who are very interested in shooting*. Target non-shooters who are very interested in target or sport shooting in the next year with messages about local opportunities to shoot and stress that the opportunities are available in safe and controlled environments. This is a small yet potential target market for shooter recruitment, with 2% of all non-shooters indicating that they are very interested in going shooting in the next year. This market appears to be young adults (ages 18 to 34) who live in urban areas and who grew up in a household with firearms. This group is also more likely than non-shooters who are somewhat interested or not at all interested in shooting in the next year to have friends who shoot and to have been active in other outdoor activities in the past 5 years, such as fishing and camping. While many of the other markets that show an interest in hunting also show an interest in shooting and vice versa, this market is a bit different: these potential shooters do not appear interested in hunting activities. Factors that may increase this group's interest in shooting are programs that are conducted in a safe and controlled manner, access to free equipment, being invited by a friend, and a local shooting clinic or class.

➢ **Interest in hunting and shooting appears to be highest among young adults, especially males, who are active in other outdoor recreation activities, such as fishing and camping.**

Action Item 62. Target young adults, especially males, who are outdoor enthusiasts with hunting and shooting recruitment efforts and promote hunting and shooting as part of an overall outdoor lifestyle. Efforts using these elements will likely resonate among each of the markets very interested in going hunting or shooting in the next year, including active, inactive, and non-participants. Active hunters, inactive hunters, non-hunters, and non-shooters who are each very

interested in hunting and/or shooting in the next year are more likely than their counterparts (e.g., those not very interested in hunting in the next year) to be between the ages of 18 and 34. Two of these groups, active hunters and non-hunters who are very interested in going hunting and/or shooting, are also more likely to be male than are active hunters and non-hunters who are only somewhat interested or not at all interested in hunting and/or shooting. Active hunters, inactive hunters, active shooters, and non-shooters who are very interested in hunting and/or shooting in the next year are each more likely than their counterparts to have participated in other outdoor activities in the past 5 years, especially camping and fishing. Each market very interested in hunting or shooting is very interested in both hunting and shooting activities, with the exception of non-shooters, who indicated high interest in shooting activities but not hunting activities.

➢ **High interest in hunting appears to be correlated with high interest in shooting among many of the identified hunting and shooting markets, with the exception of non-shooters who are very interested in target or sport shooting in the next year.**

   Action Item 63.  Address the potential for combining hunting and shooting activities when targeting active hunters, inactive hunters, and non-hunters very interested in hunting in the next year and active shooters and inactive shooters who are very interested in shooting in the next year. Each of these markets is very interested in both hunting and shooting activities, with the exception of non-shooters. Do *not* target non-shooters using similar messages; this group, in general, is not interested in hunting.

➢ **Inactive hunters and inactive shooters can be further broken down into market segments for "re-recruitment" efforts. The research indicates that there are three types of inactive hunters and shooters: individuals who have participated in hunting or shooting only once or twice and who have only a loose connection to the hunting or shooting culture, individuals who are very similar to active hunters and active shooters except they are an aging market, and traditional**

**hunters and shooters who have actually become much less interested in hunting and shooting for a variety of reasons.**

Action Item 64.   Target inactive hunters and inactive shooters with appropriate messages based on how closely the segment being targeted is connected to the hunting and/or shooting cultures and their reasons for decreased participation (e.g., age versus loss of interest), as well as their interest levels. Do not assume that all inactive hunters and inactive shooters are "low hanging fruit."  The research shows that one market segment of inactive hunters and inactive shooters consists of individuals who have participated in hunting or shooting only once or twice and who have only a loose connection to the hunting or shooting culture; this group was taken hunting or shooting by someone else and have not actually become a hunter or shooter.  A second market segment of inactive hunters and inactive shooters consists of individuals who are very similar to active hunters and active shooters with the exception of age, and one of their most important reasons for lapsed participation is age and health-related issues.  A third market segment of inactive hunters and inactive shooters consists of individuals who are similar to traditional hunters and shooters but have become much less interested in hunting and shooting for a variety of reasons, including lack of opportunity and lack of access to that opportunity. Current interest levels in hunting and shooting may vary within these market segments, but it is important to recognize the characteristics associated with each of these inactive market segments and not simply assume that all inactive participants are similar in their reasons for no longer participating.

# RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRAMS

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

➢ **Recruitment and retention programs have room for expansion.  While there are numerous excellent recruitment and retention programs, most active and inactive hunters and shooters have limited or no experience with or**

**awareness of these programs.  Program participants are very satisfied with these programs, and it is clear that a large market exists for these programs.**

Action Item 65.   Realize that awareness of hunting and shooting programs will likely be limited without a concerted effort to expand, promote, and advertise such programs.

Action Item 66.   Ensure that information about programs is disseminated on a wider scale.  It appears that awareness of and participation in programs is not robust, in general, as Phase III found few participants in formal recruitment or retention programs and low levels of awareness of the programs among non-participants.  While different strategies are required for various target markets, an effort is needed to increase awareness of (and concomitant participation in) programs.

Action Item 67.   Set up a web page (if one does not yet exist) on the agency website where hunters and shooters can see what programs and events are happening in his or her area.  This needs to be keyed to specific areas, not just a listing of programs and events statewide.  A local focus is best.

Action Item 68.   Put a link (an internal link to another page within the agency website, not an external link) on agency websites specifically for information about (and perhaps even titled) "How to get started hunting" and "How to get started shooting."  This link would provide a person interested in either of these sports the basic knowledge— such as what is needed and places to go—to get started. Develop this information assuming the reader has no prior experience with hunting and shooting.

Action Item 69.   Increase the number and variety of programs. The fact that a low percentage of people are involved in these programs suggests that more opportunities and more varied opportunities are needed, particularly as a *retention* strategy among existing participants.

Action Item 70.   Consider more advanced programs as part of the entire suite of program offerings, as qualitative data suggest a market exists for advanced programs among active hunters and shooters.

Action Item 71.   Note that efforts that consist *solely* of advertising to promote participation probably have little utility.  Data suggest that advertising alone will probably not markedly increase participation in hunting or the shooting

sports. On the other hand, promotion efforts coupled with specific existing or new and improved opportunities for participation or as a way to get people to programs that promote hunting and shooting will have a positive effect on retention and recruitment.

Action Item 72.   Ensure that programs are non-partisan, which makes them more inclusive. Strive to make a common ground that makes participants comfortable. Avoid political or value-laden commentary within programs. Programs with partisan content risk alienating potential participants.

Action Item 73.   Finally, regarding expansion of program participation, consider using testimonials from program participants in advertisements, as these will be effective in reaching a variety of potential participants, especially reluctant participants. Consider the positive impact the following testimonial might have on other potential participants:

> *"I was very nervous, and very nervous with [my two children] at the same time. I came out very relaxed, very comfortable; I felt good about learning so much and having the opportunity. I was very happy. … There were children from [my son's] school. I was surprised to see them."*
> —First Shots program participant

## PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS

➢ **Introductory programs are highly desirable and should be advertised as such.**

Action Item 74.   Emphasize the introductory nature of hunting and sport shooting programs in advertising and promotional materials—qualitative data suggest that a market exists for programs that concentrate on introductions to hunting, sport shooting basics, and protection and self-defense, particularly among inactive hunters and shooters.

Action Item 75.   Allow for a comfortable, social atmosphere within programs—this will foster relationships, bolster attendance, and reinforce a relaxed feeling of which participants will want to be part.

➢ **As the relative proficiency of program participants improves, demand for advanced courses is likely to increase.**

Action Item 76.   Plan advanced courses according to demand; allow participants to advance or "graduate" according to their performance levels.  This will keep participants interested in working to fulfill personal goals and will retain them.

➢ **The mental and physical requirements of hunting and sport shooting are qualities attractive to the general population.**

Action Item 77.   Programs—particularly sport shooting programs—should emphasize skills development, confidence, mental concentration, accuracy, breathing control, and healthy competition.  Like hunters and sport shooters, members of the general population are highly interested in developing these qualities, and these aspects should be linked to sport shooting whenever possible.

➢ **Many individuals are motivated by the desire to "be ready and prepared, just in case."**

Action Item 78.   The qualitative research suggests that numerous individuals not intending to regularly participate in sport shooting nevertheless choose to enroll in courses as a way of learning the basics of handgun operation.  Such individuals appear to be motivated by the principle of being prepared for hypothetical situations involving guns.  Certain programs may wish to address this motivation in promotional or awareness materials.  An example is the focus group participant whose daughter, who had no personal interest in shooting, took a firearms safety course because she often babysat for other people (for pay) and felt the need to know how to handle firearms in case one of the kids that she babysat found a parent's gun.

➢ **Camaraderie tends to be a key motivation for repeat participants, i.e., those who have enrolled in a program before and enjoyed themselves.**

Action Item 79.   Emphasize camaraderie—particularly in the publicity materials for a program like Becoming an Outdoors Woman—as a way to boost participation and spread awareness via word-of-mouth.

Action Item 80.   Note the growing popularity of women-only
      programs (in which camaraderie tends to be a tremendous
      motivator for participation), and tailor programs accordingly
      to target markets such as these (and other specified or
      exclusive programs).

## COORDINATION OF PROGRAMS

➤ **A great many programs and campaigns to increase hunting
   and shooting participation exist, calling for better
   coordination.**
   Action Item 81.   Facilitate coordination of available and
      planned programs, including agency programs, programs
      administered by not-for-profit organizations, and less
      traditional programs such as informal recruitment taking
      place at local shooting ranges, all of which dovetail with
      agency goals.  The large number of programs calls for better
      coordination of campaigns to eliminate needless duplication
      of effort.  Indeed, each agency should have at least one
      coordinator to manage recruitment and retention efforts and
      programs.  A coordinator ensures that programs do not
      overlap unnecessarily and that resources are efficiently used.
   Action Item 82.   In an item that is related to better coordination,
      develop an inventory of recruitment and retention programs
      to identify program overlaps and program gaps.
   Action Item 83.   Within the dictate regarding coordination of
      programs discussed above, consider developing a nationwide
      program somewhat analogous to the Recreational Boating
      and Fishing Foundation for hunting and shooting, based on
      the strengths of that program.  Although hunting and
      shooting recruitment and retention efforts will be different
      than such efforts for fishing, a national program will assist
      nationwide recruitment and retention efforts (note that
      national efforts can still be, and should be, focused locally).
   Action Item 84.   Fully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of
      the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation so that the
      good things can be replicated in an analogous program for
      hunting and shooting while the efforts that do not work can
      be avoided.
   Action Item 85.   Wherever possible, reinforce the efforts and
      activities of local shooting facilities and ranges, as these

locations had a high correlation to increased subsequent participation in hunting and shooting among attendees.

Action Item 86.   Continue to promote and advertise industry-related websites, which often list and categorize hunting and sport shooting programs and opportunities by location.

> **An information forum to allow program managers to easily see what other programs are doing would help in coordination and facilitate programmatic success.**

Action Item 87.   Facilitate information exchanges regarding programs.  Better coordination does not mean limiting the variety of programs that should be offered, as more variety allows for more participants.  However, program managers should be aware of what other programs are doing, and information forums about programs to allow this exchange of information would be efficacious.  Programs should not needlessly duplicate efforts, nor should they infringe on other programs' participation and interests.  The information forum could be in the form of an annual meeting of recruitment and retention program managers (although travel funds would need to be a necessary component because of budgetary constraints among program managers).

## FUNDING FOR PROGRAMS

> **Funding is an ever-present constraint to developing and administering hunting and shooting recruitment and retention programs.**

Action Item 88.   Strive to make programs pay for themselves, at least in part, which helps to ensure their continuation.  It may be desirable (perhaps even necessary) to develop a business plan or business model for potential programs.  Having programs pay for themselves ensures long-term viability.

Action Item 89.   In this regard, involving the private, *for-profit* sector to deliver recruitment and retention programs should not be dismissed.  In short, use the free market concept when feasible and appropriate.

Action Item 90.   The above item is not to say that public funding, where available and appropriate, should not be sought; it should.

Action Item 91.   Additionally, *not*-for profit funding should be sought.  Use partnerships whenever possible, which allow agencies and organizations to leverage funding and effort.

Action Item 92.   Use volunteers in hunting and shooting programs, as numerous state agencies have had success with volunteer workforces in the past; volunteers also represent a cost-effective way of providing program instruction and assistance.  Volunteering is also a form of retention among the volunteers themselves, especially among aging hunters and shooters who are at risk of dropping out of the hunting and shooting culture completely.

## PROGRAMS AND THE CULTURE OF HUNTING AND SHOOTING

> **Hunting and shooting participation is highly correlated to living in a hunting or shooting culture—being surrounded by family or friends who participate and an atmosphere where hunting and shooting are part of the culture.**

Action Item 93.   Note the strengths of the Step Outside concept (including one-on-one mentorship), which is a good example of a program that addresses the hunting and shooting culture and, indeed, uses that culture.  Make use of the existing Step Outside *theme*—that mentorship is important.

Action Item 94.   Also encourage the other side of the coin from having the mentor ask a newcomer to go with them— encourage potential newcomers to ask experienced hunters or shooters to take them hunting or shooting.

Action Item 95.   Initiate and support programs such as Alabama's Youth Dove Hunt, which is another program that fosters and supports the hunting culture.  (Note that Alabama is not the only state with such a program, but it was one of the programs about which one of the focus groups for this project was centered and is, therefore, familiar to the research team.)  Because dove hunting is in relatively open land (as opposed to forested land), people can see what is happening and first-time participants can observe without having to actually shoot—thereby allowing a comfort level to develop that may encourage more active participation later.  Additionally, it is an annual, scheduled event, which dovetails with a previous action item calling for making

hunting and shooting more structured—making hunting and shooting events scheduled on the calendar. Furthermore, it becomes part of the community and fosters interaction among community members focused on the hunt.

Action Item 96.   Also note the strengths of the First Shots, Becoming an Outdoors Woman, and Women in the Outdoors programs—research suggests that these programs have been effective in introducing non-hunters and non-shooters to hunting and shooting) (Lueck and Thomas 1997; RM 2005e, Phase III—RM 2007a). Consider modeling future programs on these successful efforts.

➢ **Because the mentor-beginner relationship is so strong in hunting and shooting, recruitment programs must use this method and message when possible.**

Action Item 97.   Encourage mentoring (such as the Step Outside message) whenever possible, as this has proven utility in encouraging hunting and shooting participation and is linked to high levels of avidity. Indeed, one-on-one mentorship is by far the most effective recruitment strategy, and hunters and shooters who have had a mentor are more likely to remain active than are those who have not.

➢ **Follow-up programs after initiation, particularly within a short time after a hunter's or shooter's first experience, are critical.**

Action Item 98.   Develop programs that provide support after the first trial period. Data from Phase III indicate that many of the lapsed hunters and shooters are individuals who tried the activities but did not stay with them, particularly because there was no follow-up with other hunters and shooters and there was no other "next-level" event.

➢ **Annual events and repetitiveness foster the hunting and shooting culture.**

Action Item 99.   When possible, develop programs that have *annual* events that participants can look forward to. The predictability fosters continued participation year after year and enhances not only recruitment but retention. A scheduled event becomes a community affair and fosters the hunting and shooting culture.

**CROSSOVER OF HUNTING AND SHOOTING**

➢ **There was more crossover from hunting to shooting rather than shooting to hunting. In other words, more people started out as hunters and later became active in shooting rather than the other way around.**

    Action Item 100. Realize that recruiting shooters from the ranks of hunters will be easier than recruiting hunters from the ranks of shooters.

    Action Item 101. Move quickly in recruiting crossover participation, as data show that this crossover, when successful, typically occurs within 3 years of first participation in the other activity. Hunting programs need to include information on shooting and shooting programs need to include information on hunting to help foster this crossover.

**CONCERNS ABOUT FIREARMS AND THE SAFETY (AND PERCEIVED SAFETY) OF PROGRAMS**

➢ **Fear of firearms is an important disincentive to participation in hunting and the shooting sports; this fear cannot be downplayed by professionals when developing recruitment programs. While many Americans show an interest in wanting to shoot, the fear of firearms prevents them from trying the activity, and research shows that, once they try shooting, their fear is often overcome. Just as the bicycle industry would not flourish without the important use of training wheels to alleviate fear and facilitate proficiency, neither will sport shooting flourish without its own "training wheels" in the form of controlled environments and non-lethal beginner firearms.**

    Action Item 102. Educate hunting and shooting professionals regarding how profound some non-participants' fears of firearms is; this fear may be underestimated by many professionals.

    Action Item 103. Take steps to eliminate the fear of firearms. This is the first step in encouraging participation among some Americans.

Action Item 104. Note that simply increasing non-participants' knowledge of the relative safety of hunting and the shooting sports is important in overcoming the fear of firearms.

Action Item 105. Promote the concept of teaching children how to behave around firearms/handle firearms safely—this is another major motivation among adults who enroll in such courses.

Action Item 106. Consider that the use of non-lethal firearms will be effective in getting non-shooters to shoot, allowing them to become more comfortable around firearms. After they are comfortable with non-lethal firearms, they will "graduate" to lethal firearms. This is the shooting sports' parallel to the training wheels on bicycles. Fewer bicycles would be sold to children if the bicycle industry did not manufacture and sell training wheels.

Action Item 107. Provide alternatives to the necessity of owning firearms (thus having to store them at home) for participating in the shooting sports, as many non-participants indicated an interest in shooting if they did not need to keep firearms in their home.

Action Item 108. Do not avoid talking about safety in hunting and shooting programs, as simply ignoring safety does not alleviate concerns. Note that data suggest that concerns already exist, so talking about safety will not create the concern; rather, it addresses the concern that already is there.

Action Item 109. When promoting shooting recruitment programs, emphasize that they are conducted in a safe and controlled manner (in fact, use these very words, "in a safe and controlled manner"). It is not enough that the programs be conducted in a safe and controlled manner; it must be *communicated* that they are conducted in a safe and controlled manner. Describe the safety features of programs.

## USER CONFLICTS

➢ **There is evidence that user conflicts, including use of ATVs, are negatively affecting some participants, particularly in hunting.**

Action Item 110. Ensure that user conflicts are considered and addressed. Simply providing opportunities for hunting and shooting will be ineffectual without considering potential

conflicts and the damping effect such conflicts would have on those opportunities.

# FOSTERING A HUNTING AND SHOOTING CULTURE

➢ **There is an overwhelmingly strong correlation to growing up in a hunting or shooting culture and subsequent participation. Participation in these activities is far lower outside of this culture.**

Action Item 111. Facilitate the hunting and shooting culture. Although this appears to be something that cannot be synthetically created, the circumstances for creating such a culture can be assisted. It should be noted that not only are active hunters and shooters immersed in the hunting and shooting culture, but inactive hunters and shooters, conversely, are far more likely than are active participants to have come from outside of this hunting and shooting culture.

➢ **There is a strong correlation between living in a hunting and shooting culture and participation.**

Action Item 112. Create (or assist in making) an environment conducive to a hunting and shooting culture. Simply getting groups together socially and to participate in the activities will allow and encourage development of such a culture.

Action Item 113. Encourage clubs, shooting ranges, and organizations to hold events that allow people to mix, specifically where active participants mix with lapsed and non-participants.

Action Item 114. Likewise, foster social support after a recruitment and retention event or program by encouraging participants to get together.

Action Item 115. Consider peer-group license packages (as well as family licenses, which was previously discussed in an action item) to foster the hunting culture. As with the possible family license, research should be conducted to determine the feasibility of a peer-group hunting license and its likely effect on overall participation as well as its likely effect on agency revenue.

➢ **The positive aspects of hunting and shooting are not widely known, and the media tend to highlight negative aspects.**

　　Action Item 116. Promote the positive images of hunting and shooting. Encourage dissemination of information about the good aspects of hunting and shooting (within the context of other findings on messages that are well received and those that are not) to counteract bad publicity—and the resulting damage to the hunting and shooting culture.

　　Action Item 117. Encourage the mass media outlets to report on positive aspects of hunting and shooting. Phase III quantified that the mass media are far more likely to focus on negative aspects of hunting and shooting. Not surprisingly, the media focus on bad publicity simply because "bad" is considered more newsworthy. Press releases that highlight, for instance, a conservation project that hunters have done or the awarding of a scholarship related to shooting would provide positive images in the mass media.

　　Action Item 118. Closely work with and interact with media representatives by inviting them to events and courses to assist them in understanding the positive aspects of hunting and shooting.

# ACCESS, LAND AVAILABILITY, AND OPPORTUNITY

## COMPONENTS OF ACCESS

➢ **Access is the most important issue agencies and organizations can address and is the key to "opportunity," which is the most important factor related to participation. It is important to note, however, that access has four components, and each must be addressed in a comprehensive approach in providing opportunities.**

　　Action Item 119. Realize that "access" can pertain to the availability of land (actual land to hunt and shoot on).

　　Action Item 120. Understand that another aspect of access is getting to the land (e.g., some public lands are blocked by intervening private lands, some public lands are distant from roads).

Action Item 121. Realize that access also pertains to getting
    around once participants are on the lands.
Action Item 122. Finally, know that access has a
    "psychological" aspect (e.g., lack of information; perceived
    barriers, regardless of whether they actually exist).


## PHYSICAL ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY

➢ **Access is critically linked to participation and is an
    important dissatisfaction among active hunters and shooters.
    A way to ensure that hunting and shooting opportunities
    exist is by ensuring that there are places to hunt and shoot
    and ways to get to those places, and that potential
    participants are fully aware of those places.**
    Action Item 123. Continue to ensure that there are available
        lands for hunting and shooting. Lack of places to hunt and
        shoot and lack of access to lands are the most important
        dissatisfactions with or disincentives to participation among
        active hunters. Furthermore, it is a disincentive on which
        agencies and organizations have substantial influence.
    Action Item 124. The most important access issue agencies and
        organizations can address is access to private lands.
        Additional ways for hunters and shooters to access private
        lands is necessary, particularly private land owned by
        individuals rather than corporations, as hunters were more
        likely to have a problem accessing private land owned by an
        individual than private land owned by a corporation. Lack
        of access to private lands is an important problem, and
        landowner programs can bridge this gap.
    Action Item 125. Evaluate private lands access programs
        throughout the country to determine which ones work the
        best, as well as what the pitfalls are.
    Action Item 126. Consider leasing lands as a way to provide
        access. Leasing lands for hunting, where possible, is a good
        way to provide lands—and it is positively linked to hunting
        participation. Leasing lands can also be a good way to
        provide hunting lands near urban and suburban areas.
    Action Item 127. Regarding the data that show a correlation
        between hunting participation and percent of a state's
        hunting land that is leased, conduct a study to further delve
        into this issue to increase the understanding of the relation

between the percent of hunting land that is leased and hunting participation.

Action Item 128. Develop access and opportunities for hunting closer to urban areas (this may have the concomitant benefit of reducing time required to take a hunting trip for those living in and near urban areas).

Action Item 129. Many landowners report closing their lands because of poor hunter behavior. Programs that emphasize good hunter behavior in the field and ways to graciously gain access to private lands will also address the private lands access constraint. Provide constant reminders to hunters who access private lands (and public lands for that matter, but this item relates specifically to private lands) of the importance of proper and ethical behavior while hunting. Remind hunters that hunting on private lands is a *privilege*, not a *right*.

Action Item 130. Landowner liability laws need to account for private lands access for hunting. If the laws do not already address landowner liability, they should be amended to shield private landowners from liability, thereby removing a concern that affects landowners' willingness to open their lands to hunting.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL ACCESS

➢ **Psychological access is also critically linked to participation.**

Action Item 131. Be cognizant that psychological "constraints" can be as effective as actual constraints in preventing participation. It is not enough to simply provide physical access if a psychological "constraint" still exists—indeed, the effort to provide physical access in such a situation will be wasted.

## INFORMATION ABOUT AVAILABLE LANDS AND ACCESS

➢ **Information about hunting and shooting opportunities is critically important.**

Action Item 132. Provide additional information on land availability for hunting and shooting and ranges available for shooting, and ensure that there are high levels of awareness

on how to access this information, as lack of information can be as detrimental to participation as actual lack of land or ranges in preventing hunting and shooting. Available lands and ranges that are unknown are useless in providing opportunities for hunting and shooting.

Action Item 133. Also be aware that agencies and organizations have a huge influence on this aspect. It is critically important that information is easily available.

Action Item 134. Many excellent resources and databases exist on hunting and shooting opportunities and access. Communications regarding the *availability* of this information is necessary and must be disseminated to increase awareness and subsequent use of these resources and databases. Feature specific locations where hunters can hunt and shooters can shoot in agency publications and public service announcements. Articles on specific locations should be regular features in all agency and organization publications and websites.

Action Item 135. Ensure that enough information is available within private lands access programs, particularly information about how to contact landowners. If the hunters cannot contact the landowners or do not know what private lands are in specific programs, the access is not true access.

# COMMUNICATING TO THE PUBLIC ABOUT HUNTING AND SHOOTING

## GENERAL STRATEGIES ABOUT COMMUNICATING TO THE PUBLIC

➢ **Discussing hunting and shooting can be emotionally charged; some communication strategies are useful in these discussions.**

Action Item 136. Be prepared for potentially extreme reactions and emotions when discussing hunting and shooting. However, do *not* respond back in an extreme, contentious, or emotional manner (while, at the same time, avoiding a condescending tone).

Action Item 137. Understand the social context and competing values that people have. An example is the opinions on

Sunday hunting: there are many who support hunting in general but not on Sundays. It is important to understand their values (in this case, religious) that affect their opinions on hunting. (Although this example pertains to hunting, understanding the social context applies to shooting as well.)

➢ **There is a difference between acceptance of hunting and shooting and actual participation in them. The strategies in this section for the most part address the former, not the latter.**
   Action Item 138. Keep in mind the difference between fostering public *acceptance* of hunting and shooting, which these communication strategies discuss, and fostering greater *participation* in hunting and shooting, which the strategies in this section do not address.


## COMMUNICATING ABOUT HUNTING

➢ **There may be a tendency to think that hunting is not widely accepted among the general public; those who oppose or disapprove of hunting may be quite vocal.**
   Action Item 139. Keep in mind and communicate to others that the large majority of Americans support or approve of hunting.

➢ **The terms "hunting" and "legal hunting" have an important difference. The latter term is much more acceptable than the former to non-hunters, as the former term can include (particularly in some non-hunters' minds) *illegal* hunting.**
   Action Item 140. When discussing hunting with non-hunters, use the term "legal hunting" or "regulated hunting" to ensure that the non-hunters are not reacting against illegal hunting, as focus group research has indicated that some non-hunters include illegal hunting in their concept of "hunting" when the term is not otherwise stipulated.

➢ **There is a difference between animal *rights* and animal *welfare*; while very few Americans support animal rights, nearly all support animal welfare.**
   Action Item 141. Be clear on the distinction between animal *rights* and animal *welfare*. Note that animal rights typically

is defined as absolutely no use of animals and that only about 3% of Americans live by this belief.

Action Item 142. On the other hand, note that animal welfare means that some use is acceptable as long as animals are treated humanely and with respect.

Action Item 143. Because the overwhelming majority of Americans (85%) agree with the animal welfare philosophy, not the animal rights philosophy, it is important to portray the "caring" side of wildlife management. Presenting facts in discussions about hunting is vital; however, it is also vital to show the listener how much wildlife professionals care about wildlife and the wildlife resource. Anti-hunters should not be allowed to commandeer the "we care about wildlife" message as theirs.

➢ **Hunting has many ecological benefits.**

Action Item 144. Communicate that hunting keeps wildlife from harming critical habitat. There is high support—nearly 4 out of 5 Americans—for hunting to protect habitat from being damaged from overpopulation of deer and other species.

Action Item 145. Emphasize the role that hunting and hunters play in wildlife management, and emphasize that management entails protection of wildlife populations. Note that there is high approval—more than 4 out of 5 Americans—of hunting for animal population control and hunting for wildlife management.

Action Item 146. Emphasize that wildlife management today is a science—that hunting is part of the scientific management of wildlife, which entails the work of trained biologists to ensure the protection of wildlife populations as a whole.

Action Item 147. When discussing hunting with non-hunters, note that, in general, ecological benefits (e.g., hunting to protect habitat) resonate better than human benefits (e.g., hunting to protect personal property, hunting to protect crops), with the exception of hunting to protect humans from harm.

Action Item 148. Focus on facts, but do not forget the heart. Non-hunters may not perceive hunters (and hunting and shooting professionals, for that matter) as caring because, simply put, they shoot game. Emphasize that hunters (and, again, professionals) deeply care about wildlife.

➢ **Hunting does not endanger wildlife.**
　　Action Item 149. Realize that there is an erroneous perception that must be countered: nearly half of Americans think that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some species to become endangered.
　　Action Item 150. Indicate that no species in the U.S. ever became threatened, endangered, or extinct from legal, regulated hunting. (In fact, note that past hunter-fueled extinctions happened in an era when there were no agencies to protect wildlife and, therefore, no controls on hunting.)
　　Action Item 151. Educate the public on the North American Model of Wildlife Management, which includes hunting and the funding hunters (and shooters) provide and which, furthermore, has made North America arguably the best place in the world for wild animals. Preliminary research indicates that very few people are aware of the North American Model of Wildlife Management.

➢ **Hunting for the meat is highly accepted.**
　　Action Item 152. Approval of hunting for the meat had the highest approval of nine possible motivations discussed in a nationwide survey of Americans: 85% of Americans approve of hunting for the meat. Therefore, communicate that the overwhelming majority (97%) of active hunters consume the animals they hunt.
　　Action Item 153. Discuss programs such as "Hunters for the Hungry" and SCI's "Sportsmen Against Hunger," which provide food for others, and emphasize the value that the meat from hunting provides for others.

➢ **Hunting for deer, wild turkey, or waterfowl is more acceptable among the general population than is hunting for predators or species perceived as exotic or less common.**
　　Action Item 154. Note that approval of hunting for deer (78% of Americans approve), wild turkey (75%), and waterfowl (69%), is much higher than hunting for elk (60%), black bear (47%), or mountain lions (42%). Communication strategies among non-hunters should keep in mind the lower acceptance of hunting for these latter species.
　　Action Item 155. Note that approval of hunting for mourning dove is low in some parts of the country, perhaps because in

those parts of the country, people think of them as backyard
songbirds rather than game birds.

➢ **Approval or support of hunting is affected by discussion of
specific hunting techniques.**
  Action Item 156.  Note that overall support for hunting (more
      than 73%) was higher than when *any* condition was applied
      to hunting, such as hunting with dogs (57%) or hunting on
      Sundays (41%).  In some contexts, communications to
      non-hunters would be best in general terms.
  Action Item 157.  In particular, avoid discussing hunting
      techniques that infringe on the public's perception of "fair
      chase," such as hunting using high-tech gear (only 20% of
      Americans support), hunting over bait (27% support), and
      use of special scents to attract game (36% support).

## THE ERRONEOUS PERCEPTION OF A LINK BETWEEN HUNTING AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

➢ **Some anti-hunters have tried to establish a connection
  between hunting and anti-social and deviant behavior, but no
  research has shown that hunters are more likely to commit
  violent crimes or display aggression than are non-hunters.**
  Action Item 158.  Communicate that participation in hunting
      does *not* cause anti-social behavior (and that there is research
      backing up this assertion that hunting does not cause anti-
      social behavior).

## COMMUNICATING ABOUT SHOOTING

➢ **While the shooting sports do not get directly involved in
  animal rights or animal welfare issues, the shooting sports
  are tied up in firearms issues.**
  Action Item 159.  It is important to stress the safety of the
      shooting sports—relative to countless other sports, shooting
      has a very low injury rate.
  Action Item 160.  Continue efforts to ensure that shooters are
      ethical and safe.  Note that, unfortunately, 19% of
      Americans agree that "most target and sport shooters
      carelessly handle firearms."

➢ **There may be a tendency to think that shooting and firearms themselves are not widely accepted among the general public; those who oppose or disapprove of shooting and firearms may be quite vocal.**

Action Item 161. Keep in mind and communicate to others that the large majority of Americans support or approve of shooting and accept the legitimate use of firearms.

➢ **Some messages pertaining to shooting resonated better than others among the general public.**

Action Item 162. Note that one message that resonated very well is that shooting can be a way of fostering and improving concentration skills. Use this message when communicating the value of participating in the shooting sports.

➢ **Public acceptance of rifles and shotguns is greater than acceptance of handguns, the latter having some negative connotations for some individuals in American society.**

Action Item 163. Efforts to promote acceptance of shooting sports should focus on rifles and shotguns.

Action Item 164. Avoid communications imagery that shows people shooting at human silhouettes. Be aware that there is much resistance among the general public to target shooting at human silhouettes, and images showing this will not be as well-received as alternative images (e.g., a person shooting at a standard bull's eye target with a rifle).

## A HUNTING AND SHOOTING CULTURE AMONG NON-PARTICIPANTS

➢ **One way to counteract the negative news about hunting and shooting is to foster a hunting and shooting culture.**

Action Item 165. While this is an obvious strategy—fostering a hunting and shooting culture—there are concrete actions that can be taken. In particular, encourage more hunters and shooters to talk about these sports to non-participants. There is a strong relationship between knowing a hunter or shooter and supporting these activities. The more hunters and shooters are out talking about the positive aspects of hunting and shooting, the more support there is for these activities.

Action Item 166. Encourage hunters and shooters to become involved in local conservation projects or other local projects for the good of the community.  This has two benefits (in addition to the benefit of the local project itself):  it allows a mixing of hunters and shooters with non-hunters and non-shooters, thereby fostering the hunting and shooting culture, and it also bolsters the reputation of hunters and shooters as caring individuals.

➢ **There are differences between public attitudes toward the sports themselves (hunting and shooting) and the attitudes toward the participants (hunters and shooters).  The overall attitude toward hunting and shooting is made up of both components—the attitude toward the sports themselves, and the attitudes toward their participants.  Indeed, research shows that there is more support for hunting than for hunters, and a few illegal or unethical acts by just a handful of hunters can sully the name and reputation of hunters as a whole and erode support for both hunting and hunters, and the same applies to unethical conduct by shooters.**

Action Item 167. Encourage additional hunter and shooter ethics programs to increase support for hunting and shooting.

Action Item 168. Clearly communicate to hunters and shooters that their future is in their own hands regarding the image of these sports.  Hunters and shooters, more than anti-hunters and anti-shooters, hold the key to future public opinion regarding hunting and shooting.

Action Item 169. Ensure that hunters understand that attitudes toward hunters and their behavior have a direct effect on the opportunity to engage in the activity itself:  keeping open private lands on which to hunt depends on good hunter behavior.

Action Item 170. Note that perceptions of the safety of the sport of hunting are also directly tied to hunter behavior.  Unfortunately, nearly a third of non-hunters (32%) disagree that "hunting is a safe recreational activity."

# AGENCY AND ORGANIZATION ISSUES

## GENERAL ACTION ITEMS FOR AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

➢ **A national strategic plan would bring into focus exactly what needs to be done to recruit and retain hunters and shooters.**

Action Item 171. Develop a national strategic plan for hunting and shooting recruitment and retention.

Action Item 172. Encourage states to develop their own strategic plans that fall under the national strategic plan. If funding becomes available, a strategic plan based on the national goals and national strategic plan could be a prerequisite to receive funding.

➢ **A national "umbrella" program that serves hunting and the shooting sports may have utility, as coordination of programs minimizes wasteful duplication of efforts and also ensures that gaps are not left unaddressed.**

Action Item 173. The researchers recommend that a national umbrella program be explored, even if within an existing organization, to assist as a clearinghouse of information and a center for ideas and communications. Agencies, organizations, and the industries should work in tandem to increase participation in these sports; a national umbrella program would greatly facilitate cooperation among all stakeholder groups in reaching their common goals. The importance of this recommendation cannot be overstated. There is the potential for major symbiotic relationships: agencies have credibility and access to important information; industry has marketing and promotional expertise, access to existing and potential hunters and shooters, and a customer service motive; and organizations have access to hunters and shooters.

Action Item 174. It may be that this umbrella program necessitates a national office, as well, and the hunting and shooting community should consider creating a national office. Such a national office would have three primary functions. The first would be to coordinate efforts among agencies and organizations to implement strategies to increase hunting and shooting participation. The second would be to act as a clearinghouse of information and

programs to individuals interested in some aspect of
participation in these activities.  Contact between someone
interested in some aspect of hunting or shooting and this
entity would come from a website that would be advertised
as part of an umbrella campaign.  Third, this office would
serve as institutional memory to document what works and
what does not work in terms of promoting hunting and
shooting.  Currently, there is little documentation of the
outcomes of recruitment and retention programs.  Another
function of this office would be to provide marketing
expertise, advice and assistance to state fish and wildlife
agencies and organizations, and recruitment and retention
"audits."

Action Item 175.  In a similar vein, consider developing an
annual National Hunting and Sport Shooting Recruitment
and Retention Conference for the exchange of ideas and
information and to facilitate coordination of programs.

Action Item 176.  Also along these lines regarding a national
program, consider developing a National Conservation
Training Center course for hunting and shooting
professionals to teach them the human dimensions aspects of
hunting and the shooting sports and the best practices
regarding recruitment and retention.  The term "marketing"
is by far one of the most misused and most misunderstood
terms within the wildlife and outdoor recreation management
profession.  Often equated with hard selling, cheap selling,
trickery, or simply promotion, many professionals shy away
from learning what marketing really is and how utilizing a
marketing approach can contribute to their hunting and
shooting promotion efforts.  A class designed specifically for
professionals would go a long way in helping them to better
understand marketing and their constituencies, and such a
class would assist them in promoting hunting and shooting
based on the best available research on recruitment and
retention practices.

➢ **There are two components to an agency's work:  product
and service.**

Action Item 177.  Agencies need to become as focused on
service as on product.  This is especially important because
of changing hunter motivations and hunter constraints.  In
the future, it will not be enough to simply "provide game."

Agencies must become as adept at the service side of the management of hunting as they are at the biological side of hunting.

➢ **Well-educated professionals regarding recruitment and retention are essential.**

Action Item 178. Work with universities that offer degree programs in wildlife management or other related degree programs (such as parks and recreation management) to ensure that the latest human dimensions research is included, particularly research regarding the best practices and successes of recruitment and retention programs. Consider developing a model class to teach wildlife students as well as parks and recreation students the best strategies for hunting and shooting recruitment and retention.

Action Item 179. Support classes that teach students about hunting, such as the course on hunting at West Virginia University. Consider ways this course could be used as a template for other universities. Consider giving students the opportunity for live-fire exercises in such a course, as direct exposure decreases the fear of firearms and the negative connotations that lack of experience fosters.

## AGENCY PROGRAMS

➢ **Inadequate funds and effort are allocated to recruitment and retention programs.**

Action Item 180. Insufficient funds or resources can doom agency and organization efforts. Ensure that funds and resources are commensurate with the importance of recruitment and retention.

Action Item 181. Assign full-time personnel, or even a unit within an agency, to recruitment and retention, as part-time attention is simply not enough.

Action Item 182. Educate agency and organization personnel about hunter and shooter recruitment and retention—it is important that they not labor under erroneous perceptions. This can be accomplished through sending them to courses such as those described above.

➢ **Programs must be given time to work.**

Action Item 183.  Ensure that adequate time is allowed for recruitment and retention programs to work.  An agency or organization may give up on a program too soon if it does not get immediate results.  Recruitment and retention strategies are necessarily long-term endeavors.

➢ **Credibility is important in programs to make participants comfortable, and the general public thinks of agency personnel as credible.**

Action Item 184.  When using agency staff in programs, ensure that they wear a uniform or have another way to clearly identify them as a person of authority.  Research shows that agency personnel are the highly credible spokespersons regarding wildlife, hunting, and shooting.

➢ **Motivations for hunting have changed over the past decades.**

Action Item 185.  Agencies and organizations must pay attention to the changing motivations for hunting.

Action Item 186.  Do not overly emphasize "trophy" game; this is an important motivation for only a minority of hunters.  Furthermore, harvesting trophy animals is not a primary satisfaction for most hunters.  Promotion, particularly promotion aimed at new or potential hunters, that focuses on large, trophy game fails to attract most hunters and non-hunters.

## LICENSES

➢ **Qualitative data suggest that some hunters are reticent about putting their Social Security number on license applications.**

Action Item 187.  Lobby states that require the hunter's Social Security number on the application to use another way to identify the hunter.

➢ **Changes in licenses appear to be positively correlated with increased sales.**

Action Item 188.  Change license structures—such as by offering different types of licenses from year to year, or an additional offering of a 3-day license when no such type of

license had previously been offered—as preliminary
research suggests that this boosts license sales.

# FURTHER RESEARCH

➤ **There is little funding of shooting research, particularly
relative to hunting research, nor is there a national database
regarding the shooting sports within the public domain.**
Action Item 189.  In general, there does not appear to be much
funding being put forth on shooting sports research,
particularly recruitment and retention.  Increase funding for
shooting sports research.
Action Item 190.  Note that there is no data source regarding
shooting analogous to the hunting data provided by the
*National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-
Associated Recreation*.  Consider creating a public domain
source of data on shooting.  (Note that data sources on
shooting are available from private sources, while the
*National Survey* is within the public domain.)  The
researchers suggest that a national survey for shooting be
developed and administered periodically to provide both
national data and state-by-state data.

➤ **There are several areas for further research—areas in which
data are sparse or entirely lacking.**
Action Item 191.  Formal recruitment and retention programs
must be scientifically evaluated to determine who they
primarily serve, as well as their effectiveness, particularly
relative to other programs.  This research would provide
valuable data on which programs should be used in various
situations for various target markets.  It would also
highlight what the strengths and weaknesses of the
programs are.
Action Item 192.  As stated previously, exploratory research
suggests a correlation between high housing starts in a state
and reduced hunting license sales.  This topic needs further
study.  In particular, research should determine if this
correlation actually exists, and if so, how strong it is.
Furthermore, the cause of the correlation (again, if it exists)
should also be explored.  It may be that reduced
participation is primarily because of loss of available land,

or it may be that reduced participation is because of loss of available time among a large sector of the economy—construction—that includes many hunters.

Action Item 193.  Another topic for further study is the apparent correlation between hunting participation and percent of hunting land in a state that is leased.  Conduct a study to further understand the relation between the percent of hunting land in a state that is leased and hunting participation.

Action Item 194.  There appears to be a relationship between increased hunting license sales and agency changes to its license structure (e.g., an additional offering of a 3-day license when no such type of license had previously been offered), but this topic needs to be further explored.  It would be instructive to know if a variety of licenses or more specialized licenses being offered has an effect on overall participation.

Action Item 195.  Because Phase II focus group research found that some attendees of firearms courses were doing so as part of self-defense training (rather than for recreation) and Phase III research suggested that some shooting recreationists were uncomfortable with the "human harm" aspect of firearms, research should be conducted to determine the effect on the *recreational* shooter of having to mix with those taking a course primarily for self-defense. (This is not to say that those in a self-defense course would not be encouraged to shoot recreationally; however, pure recreationists perhaps should not be mixed with those who are primarily interested in self-defense.)

# A FINAL ACTION ITEM

➢ **Implementation is the next step.**

Action Item 196.  Put these actions into place as soon as possible. While proper planning is essential, plans cannot be left in the planning stage without follow-through.  Action now will ensure the continuation of the hunting and shooting heritage in the U.S. in the future.

# CHAPTER 10
# METHODOLOGY

## LITERATURE REVIEW

For Phase I of this project, the research team reviewed several hundred reports, many websites, and several data sources pertaining to various aspects of hunting and the shooting sports. These reports and other informational and data sources included governmental publications, academic journals, agency websites, agency and organizational newsletters, and magazines. Additionally, the researchers examined in-house reports previously prepared by Responsive Management pertaining to hunting and the shooting sports from the company archive, which includes hundreds of reports for various federal and state agencies and many not-for-profit organizations.

## FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY
### OVERVIEW

For Phase II of this study, 10 focus groups were conducted prior to the surveys, and another 10 focus groups were conducted after the surveys. The pre-survey focus groups obtained information that was used in the development of the survey instruments. The post-survey focus groups refined the researchers' knowledge of specific issues that were discussed in the survey and about which the researchers needed additional information. The focus groups were recorded for further analysis. Although some of the focus groups were conducted after the Phase III surveys, all of the focus groups collectively are referred to as Phase II of this project.

Note that ideas and concepts from the focus groups are integrated into the report, particularly the recommendations that were made. In some instances, verbatim quotations from the focus groups are included in the report. Specific aspects of the focus group methodology are detailed below.

**FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY IN GENERAL**

Focus groups are non-directive group discussions that expose spontaneous attitudes of small groups. These focus groups entailed in-depth, structured discussions with small groups, typically 10 to 12 people, about various hunting- and shooting-related issues. The use of focus groups is an accepted research technique for qualitative research, and these focus groups provided a qualitative exploration of attitudes, opinions, perceptions, motivations, constraints, participation, and behaviors related to hunting and shooting.

An experienced, trained moderator (Steven J. Bissell, Ph.D., Mark Damian Duda, or Martin Jones) led each focus group, as unobtrusively as possible, through a discussion guide and looked for new insights into why individuals felt the way they did about particular issues related to hunting and shooting. The moderator kept the discussion within design parameters without exerting a strong influence on the discussion content. The use of the discussion guide in conducting the focus groups ensured consistency in data collection.

The focus groups in this study, as do all focus groups, called for small sample sizes. The conclusions rested on face validity and relied on the depth of analysis rather than the breadth of analysis. This focus group research, as does all qualitative research, sacrificed reliability or the ability to replicate results for the sake of increased validity.

Analysis of the focus groups was conducted through observation of the focus group discussions by the moderator (who compiled post-focus group notes) and reviews of the video and/or audio recordings. Thus the analyses were performed in three iterations: 1) the actual focus group observations, 2) review of video and/or audio recordings, and 3) the development of findings for this final report.

**FOCUS GROUP LOCATIONS**

The locations for the focus groups were chosen based on several factors. The first was to ensure a wide geographic spread of participants. The second factor was the existence of facilities and pools of potential participants in various areas. Finally, some locations were dictated by the location of programs, such as the

Youth Dove Hunt in Alabama. The locations of the pre- and post-survey focus groups, as well as the types of participants, are shown in Figures 10.1 and 10.2.

### Figure 10.1. Pre-Survey Focus Group Locations



**Focus Groups Prior to Nationwide Surveys**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Denver, CO | Anti-hunters, anti-shooters |
| 2. Bismark, ND | Active hunters |
| 3. Phoenix, AZ | Active shooters |
| 4. Beaverton, OR | Ex-hunters, ex-shooters |
| 5. Houston, TX | Ex-shooters |
| 6. Norcross, GA | Non-hunters, non-shooters |
| 7. Montgomery, AL | Program participants (e.g., Step Outside) |
| 8. Cambridge, MA | Ex-hunters |
| 9. Montgomeryville, PA | Non-shooters |

10. Nationwide via telephone of hunting and shooting recruitment and retention program managers

**Figure 10.2.  Post-Survey Focus Group Locations**

## Focus Groups After Nationwide Surveys

1. Montgomery, AL.  Non-hunters, non-shooters, observed Youth Dove Hunt
2. Minneapolis, MN.  Active shooters, First Shot participants
3. Bismark, ND.  Active hunters
4. Bismark, ND.  Non-hunters, from state with relatively high hunting rate
5. Phoenix, AZ.  Non-shooters, First Shot participants (children and adults)
6. Phoenix, AZ.  Non-shooters, First Shot participants (children and adults)
7. Seattle, WA.  Anti-hunters, anti-shooters
8. Barre, VT.  Becoming an Outdoors Woman participants
9. Memphis, TN.  Hunters, purchased license as result of recent marketing campaign
10. Memphis, TN.  Hunters, did not purchase a license but were exposed to a marketing campaign

# TELEPHONE SURVEY METHODOLOGY
## OVERVIEW, FACILITIES, AND DEVELOPMENT OF QUESTIONNAIRES

This project entailed two separate surveys:  one of the general population, and the other of hunters and shooters, both collectively referred to as Phase III of this project.  For the surveys, telephones were selected as the preferred sampling medium because of the universality of telephone ownership.  In addition, a central polling site at the Responsive Management office allowed for rigorous quality control over the interviews and data collection.  Responsive Management maintains its own in-house telephone interviewing facilities.  These facilities are staffed by interviewers with experience

conducting computer-assisted telephone interviews on the subjects of natural resources and outdoor recreation.  The telephone survey questionnaires were developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the NSSF.  Responsive Management conducted a pre-test of each questionnaire and made revisions, where necessary, to the questionnaire based on the pre-test.

To ensure the integrity of the telephone survey data, Responsive Management has interviewers who have been trained according to the standards established by the Council of American Survey Research Organizations.  Methods of instruction included lecture and role-playing.  The Survey Center Managers and other professional staff conducted project briefings with the interviewers prior to the administration of these surveys.  Interviewers were instructed on research goals and objectives, handling of survey questions, interview length, termination points and qualifiers for participation, interviewer instructions within the survey instruments, reading of the survey instruments, skip patterns, and probing and clarifying techniques necessary for specific questions.  The Survey Center Managers and statisticians monitored the data collection, including monitoring of the actual telephone interviews without the interviewers' knowledge, to evaluate the performance of each interviewer and ensure the integrity of the data.

## INTERVIEWING PROCEDURES AND DATA ANALYSIS

Interviews were conducted Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturday noon to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., local time.  A five-callback design was used to maintain the representativeness of the sample, to avoid bias toward people easy to reach by telephone, and to provide an equal opportunity for all to participate.  When a respondent could not be reached on the first call, subsequent calls were placed on different days of the week and at different times of the day.  The survey of the general population was conducted from July to September 2007, and the hunter/shooter survey was conducted from September to October 2007.  Responsive Management obtained a total of 5,040 completed interviews from the general population sample, including 679 interviews with active hunters, 1,094 with inactive hunters, 989 with active shooters, 1,208 with inactive shooters, and 2,429 with non-participants (note that some respondents did both activities; also note that the ratios of various participants shown in Figures 2.2, 2.9, and

2.16 are derived from weighted data and will not match the ratios of interviews). In the hunter/shooter sample, Responsive Management obtained 1,053 completed interviews. Not all respondents answered every question, as the survey skipped questions of some respondents as appropriate (e.g., non-hunters were not asked to rate their satisfaction with hunting).

The software used for data collection was Questionnaire Programming Language 4.1 (QPL). The survey data were entered into the computer as each interview was being conducted, eliminating manual data entry after the completion of the survey and the concomitant data entry errors that may occur with manual data entry. The survey instrument was programmed so that QPL branched, coded, and substituted phrases in the survey based on previous responses to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data collection. The QPL code also included error handlers to ensure accurate entry of the responses. The analysis of data was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management.

## BREAKDOWN OF SAMPLES INTO HUNTER PATH AND SHOOTER PATH

As indicated above, there were two separate surveys conducted for this study: a survey of the general population (using random digit dialing of households nationally), and a survey of hunters and shooters (from license data and shooting equipment warranty cards provided by the NSSF). Together, the surveys encompassed the full range of the American adult public and included all participant and non-participant groups: active hunters (hunted in the previous 2 years), inactive hunters (hunted at some time, but not within the previous 2 years), non-hunters (never hunted), active shooters (shot in previous 2 years), inactive shooters (shot at some time, but not within the previous 2 years), and non-shooters (never went target or sport shooting).

The sample of hunters was developed to match proportionally the distribution of hunters nationwide. This distribution was based on the data of hunters provided by the *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. The sample of shooters approximated the distribution of the U.S. adult population in general (because no comparable database exists for shooting

participation as it does for hunting through the *National Survey*). For the general population survey, random digit dialing produced a sample that was proportional to the U.S. population.

To determine the participant and non-participant groups, each survey first determined respondents' participation levels in hunting and shooting, and this information was then used to determine skip paths in the survey.

Specifically, the participation questions were whether the respondent had hunted within the following timeframes:
- hunted in the past 2 years;
- hunted in the past 5 years, but not the past 2 years;
- hunted ever, but not in the past 5 years; and
- never hunted.

The resulting participation levels can be represented in the Venn diagram that follows (Figure 10.3).

**Figure 10.3.  Participation Levels in Hunting**
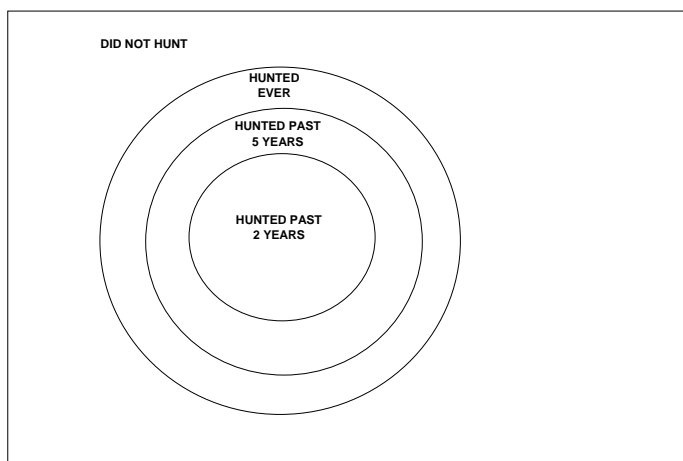


Following the hunting questions, analogous questions in the survey determined participation levels in target and/or sport shooting, as follows:
- shot in the past 2 years;
- shot in the past 5 years, but not the past 2 years;
- shot ever, but not in the past 5 years; and
- never shot.

Accounting for overlap of these groups (i.e., a person can hunt *and* shoot), there are 16 possible combinations of participation levels in hunting and shooting, as shown in Figure 10.4.

**Figure 10.4.  All Possible Groups of Hunters and Shooters Based on Participation Levels**
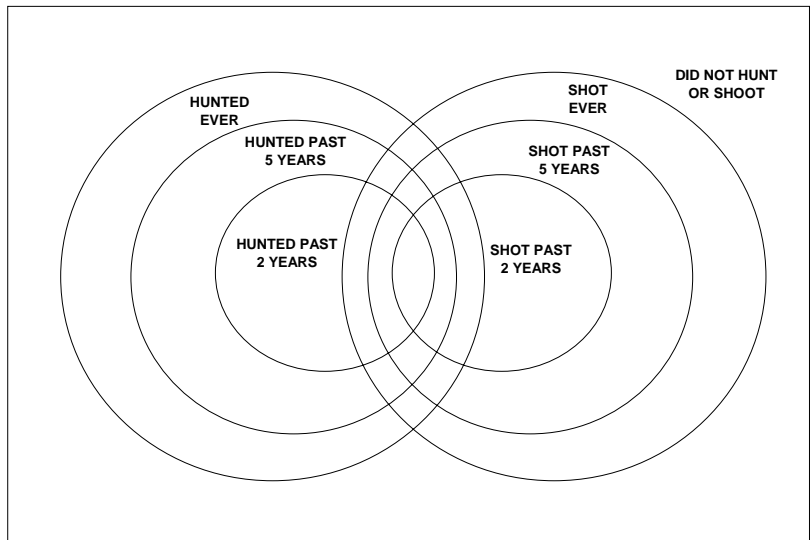


Because this project sought to obtain information about both hunting *and* shooting, for each survey, there were two separate survey "paths" that respondents could be put into for the interviews:  a hunting "path" or a shooting "path."  The survey design needed to ensure that each survey path contained all possible respondent groups in their proper proportions, based on all possible combinations of participation levels in hunting and shooting. Therefore, the sample was first randomly divided into two even groups, with one group getting the hunting "path" in the survey and the second group getting the shooting "path" (as indicated in the first column in Table 10.1 that follows).  Within each survey path, the sample was broken down into distinct groups (16 for the general population survey, but only 15 for the hunter/shooter survey because non-participants were not interviewed in the hunter/shooter survey) based on their participation in hunting and shooting.  These are shown in the second and third columns of Table 10.1 on the following page.

**Table 10.1. Survey Groupings Based on Survey Paths and Participation Levels**

| SURVEY PATH | HUNTING STATUS | SHOOTING STATUS | GROUP | ID NO.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hunting | Hunted in past 2 years | Shot in past 2 years | Active hunter | 1 |
| Hunting | Hunted in past 2 years | Shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Active hunter | 2 |
| Hunting | Hunted in past 2 years | Shot ever, but not in past 5 years | Active hunter | 3 |
| Hunting | Hunted in past 2 years | Never shot | Active hunter | 4 |
| Hunting | Hunted in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Shot in past 2 years | Recently lapsed hunter | 5 |
| Hunting | Hunted in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Recently lapsed hunter | 6 |
| Hunting | Hunted in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Shot ever, but not in past 5 years | Recently lapsed hunter | 7 |
| Hunting | Hunted in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Never shot | Recently lapsed hunter | 8 |
| Hunting | Hunted ever, but not in past 5 years | Shot in past 2 years | Long-term lapsed hunter | 9 |
| Hunting | Hunted ever, but not in past 5 years | Shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Long-term lapsed hunter | 10 |
| Hunting | Hunted ever, but not in past 5 years | Shot ever, but not in past 5 years | Long-term lapsed hunter | 11 |
| Hunting | Hunted ever, but not in past 5 years | Never shot | Long-term lapsed hunter | 12 |
| Hunting | Never hunted | Shot in past 2 years | Non-hunter | 13 |
| Hunting | Never hunted | Shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Non-hunter | 14 |
| Hunting | Never hunted | Shot ever, but not in past 5 years | Non-hunter | 15 |
| Hunting | Never hunted | Never shot | Non-hunter | 16 |

*ID numbers pertain to the Venn diagram that follows.

**Table 10.1 (continued)  Survey Groupings Based on Survey Paths and Participation Levels**

| SURVEY PATH | HUNTING STATUS | SHOOTING STATUS | GROUP | ID NO.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shooting | Hunted in past 2 years | Shot in past 2 years | Active shooter | 17 |
| Shooting | Hunted in past 2 years | Shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Active shooter | 18 |
| Shooting | Hunted in past 2 years | Shot ever, but not in past 5 years | Active shooter | 19 |
| Shooting | Hunted in past 2 years | Never shot | Active shooter | 20 |
| Shooting | Hunted in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Shot in past 2 years | Recently lapsed shooter | 21 |
| Shooting | Hunted in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Recently lapsed shooter | 22 |
| Shooting | Hunted in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Shot ever, but not in past 5 years | Recently lapsed shooter | 23 |
| Shooting | Hunted in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Never shot | Recently lapsed shooter | 24 |
| Shooting | Hunted ever, but not in past 5 years | Shot in past 2 years | Long-term lapsed shooter | 25 |
| Shooting | Hunted ever, but not in past 5 years | Shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Long-term lapsed shooter | 26 |
| Shooting | Hunted ever, but not in past 5 years | Shot ever, but not in past 5 years | Long-term lapsed shooter | 27 |
| Shooting | Hunted ever, but not in past 5 years | Never shot | Long-term lapsed shooter | 28 |
| Shooting | Never hunted | Shot in past 2 years | Non-shooter | 29 |
| Shooting | Never hunted | Shot in past 5 years, but not past 2 years | Non-shooter | 30 |
| Shooting | Never hunted | Shot ever, but not in past 5 years | Non-shooter | 31 |
| Shooting | Never hunted | Never shot | Non-shooter | 32 |

*ID numbers pertain to the Venn diagram that follows.

Based on the survey path and the hunting/shooting participation status, respondents were put into various groupings for the survey

(four groupings for each "path" in the general population survey, three groupings for each "path" in the hunter/shooter survey), as shown in the fourth column in Table 10.1, and each survey "path" had proper representation of all possible respondent groups. Figure 10.5 is a Venn diagram that graphically displays the groupings and the survey paths, with the ID number in the fifth column of Table 10.1 keyed to the Venn diagram.

**Figure 10.5. Graphic Representation of Survey Groupings Based on Survey Paths and Participation Levels**
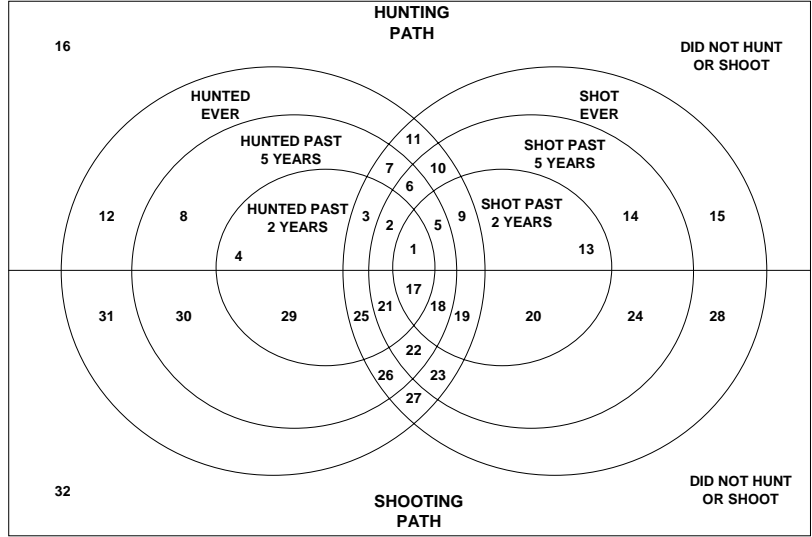


The largest circle on the left represents those who have ever hunted; the smaller circle within that large circle represents those who hunted in the past 5 years but not the past 2 years; and then the smallest circle on the left represents those who hunted in the past 2 years. On the right are analogous circles for shooting. In addition, the circles intersect, representing those who have participated in both activities, albeit perhaps at different avidity levels. The area outside of the circles represents those who have done neither activity. The horizontal line divides the sample into the two survey "paths." Note that each survey "path" includes all 16 types of hunters/ shooters in the correct proportions based on all possible combinations of participation levels.

The survey design ensured that the samples for both survey paths were identical to each other and that each survey path had an unbiased sample, which is the reason, for instance, that an active hunter who did not shoot (outside of hunting activities) had an equal chance of being put into the "active hunter" grouping or the "non-shooter" grouping. Had the survey simply assigned respondents into

the activity group based on the activity in which they were more active, the survey would not have had proper representation of all possible participation groups (it would have biased the sample toward more active participants), as demonstrated by Figure 10.6 below that does *not* have separate paths for hunting and shooting.

**Figure 10.6.  Survey Groupings That Would Have Resulted from an Incorrect Survey Design**
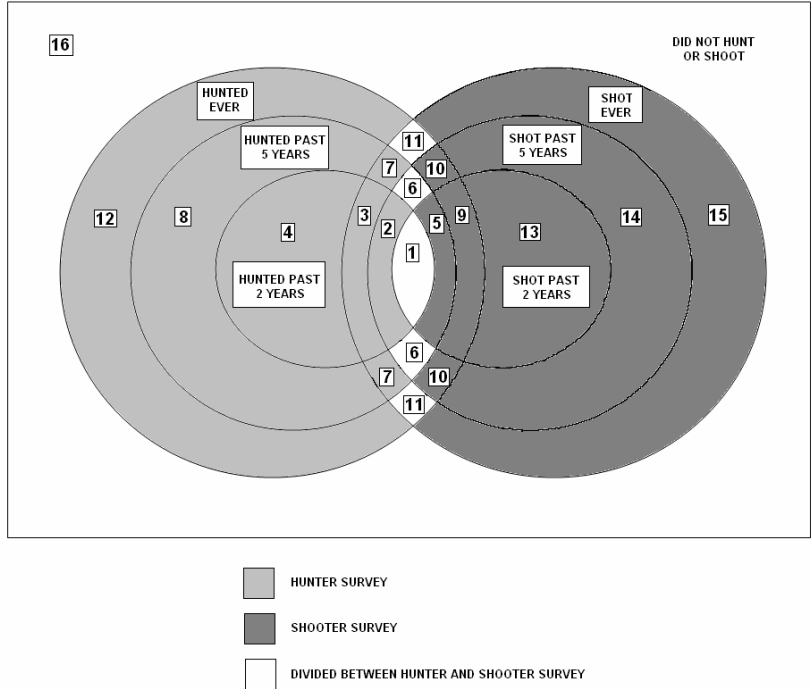


In the hypothetical *incorrect* survey design, the hunter "path" would exclude respondents represented by areas 5, 9, and 10 in Figure 10.6, and the shooter "path" would exclude respondents represented by areas 2, 3, and 7.  Furthermore, the hunter path would have too many of those in areas 2, 3, and 7; conversely, the shooter path would have too many of those in areas 5, 9, and 10.

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