



# **ISSUES RELATED TO HUNTING ACCESS IN THE UNITED STATES**

## **SOUTH DAKOTA RESULTS**

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

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**2009**

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The views contained in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

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

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to better understand issues related to hunting access. Research indicates that difficulty with access to lands for hunting has become a constraint to recruiting and retaining sportsmen. Adequate access to land is one of the fundamental issues affecting the future of hunting today, but it is, fortunately, an issue over which agencies and organizations have some influence.

This project entailed a nationwide survey of hunters that included detailed questions about access to hunting lands. The study identifies and quantifies an array of access issues that hunters face today, and it provides in-depth baseline data with which to compare conditions in the future. The study is based on a nationwide survey and individual state surveys that assessed the effectiveness of access programs and acquired data for future programs, and the results can help guide the future use of funding for access programs.

The overall project entailed analyzing data obtained from a series of focus groups conducted in 2008 (which were also used in developing the survey instrument), a nationwide telephone survey with an oversampling in 16 states where a variety of access programs are currently under way, 16 state reports for those oversampled states, and a final national report of the results with recommendations for implementing effective access programs. This report discusses the South Dakota survey only. Specific aspects of the research methodology for the South Dakota survey are discussed below.

For the survey, telephones were selected as the preferred sampling medium because of the near universality of telephone ownership. Additionally, telephone surveys, relative to mail or Internet surveys, allow for more scientific sampling and data collection, provide higher quality data, obtain higher response rates, are more timely, and are more cost-effective. Telephone surveys also have fewer negative effects on the environment than do mail surveys because of reduced use of paper and reduced energy consumption for delivering and returning the questionnaires. The telephone survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), and the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish

and Parks (SDDGFP). The survey questionnaire was reviewed by numerous university professors and staff with knowledge of surveying methods, as well as many fish and wildlife agency personnel with knowledge of hunting access issues. The questionnaire included some “screener” questions; those who had *not* hunted at least once in the past 5 years were not interviewed.

The survey instrument included questions about the following hunting programs that are used in South Dakota (descriptions of the programs are included as Appendix A):

- The Open Fields program
- The Conservation Reserve Program
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Waterfowl Production Areas
- The wheretohunt.org website
- The huntinfo.com website
- The huntandshoot.org website
- South Dakota’s Walk-In Hunting Areas
- South Dakota’s Controlled Hunting Access Program
- South Dakota’s Volunteer Antlerless Deer Hunter Program
- South Dakota’s Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Program
- South Dakota’s Game Production Areas, or GPAs
- South Dakota’s Interactive South Dakota Public Lands Maps and Information system on the Division of Wildlife’s website
- The printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas*
- The *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* on the SDDGFP’s website
- South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands program

To ensure that the researchers would know which species were associated with various results, the survey asked respondents to answer most questions about the species they primarily hunt. In these questions, QPL inserted the respondent’s primary species name into the question so that answers would be specific to a particular species. Therefore, keep in mind that many questions, such as ratings of access, are specific to a particular species rather than being about hunting overall.

Interviews were conducted Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturday from noon to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., local time. The survey was conducted in July 2009. Responsive Management obtained a total of 808 completed interviews.

The software used for data collection was Questionnaire Programming Language. The analysis of data was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management.

### **SPECIES HUNTED, HUNTING AVIDITY, AND TRENDS IN HUNTING PARTICIPATION**

- The majority of South Dakota licensed hunters primarily hunted upland game birds (54%) in the past 12 months, followed in popularity by white-tailed deer (28%). These are distantly followed by waterfowl (7%) and mule deer (3%). Note that the question asked respondents to name the *single* species they *primarily* hunt, not all species they hunt.
  
- The median number of days that hunters say they typically hunt annually in South Dakota is 15 days.
  
- The median number of years that hunters in the survey have hunted is 35 years.
  
- Hunters in the survey were asked to indicate how many of the past 5 years they had hunted. The large majority of those hunters (87%) are quite avid, having hunted all 5 of the past 5 years.
  
- Hunters were asked to indicate whether their hunting participation in South Dakota has increased, remained the same, or decreased over the past 5 years: while they most commonly say that it has stayed the same (50%), the percentage who say it has decreased (28%) slightly exceeds the percentage who say it has increased (22%).

### **LOCATIONS OF HUNTING ACTIVITIES**

- Hunters in South Dakota more often hunt their primary species on private land (58% hunt on private land mostly, and 82% do so at least half the time) than on public land (17% hunt on public land mostly, and 41% do so at least half the time).
  - A crosstabulation was run of four primary species that had enough hunters for analysis: white-tailed deer, mule deer, upland game birds, and waterfowl (with a fifth category of “any deer”). This crosstabulation found that waterfowl hunters have the greatest

propensity to hunt mostly on public land. On the other hand, those with the greatest propensity to hunt mostly on private land are upland game bird hunters. Overall, these differences on this question are statistically significant.

- Another question has implications regarding how much hunters need to find access to hunting lands. Hunters much more commonly say that they mostly hunt their primary species on the same land each year (70%) than say that they hunt it on different lands each year (4%).
- In a crosstabulation of hunting on public/private land and hunting on the same/different lands (the questions discussed above), the sample could be divided into 9 groups (as shown in the matrix below), with the largest portion being those who primarily hunt on private/same lands (48.2%).

	<b>Hunts mostly on <i>public</i> land (17.3%)</b>	<b>Hunts public and private lands both about <i>equally</i> (24.2%)</b>	<b>Hunts mostly on <i>private</i> land (58.5%)</b>
<b>Hunts mostly on the <i>same</i> land each year (69.8%)</b>	Public/Same 9.9%	Both/Same 11.7%	Private/Same 48.2%
<b>Hunts same and different lands both about <i>equally</i> (26.1%)</b>	Public/Both 6.1%	Both/Both 10.8%	Private/Both 9.2%
<b>Hunts mostly on <i>different</i> lands each year (4.1%)</b>	Public/Different 1.2%	Both/Different 1.7%	Private/Different 1.1%

- The survey asked hunters to indicate how far they typically travel from home to hunt their primary species: 39% travel no more than 20 miles to do so; however, the same percentage (39%) travel more than 50 miles. The median distance is 35 miles.
  - Another question explored the modes of transportation that hunters use to access the land on which they hunt: 70% use a car or truck (by far the top mode), followed by walking (57%), and distantly followed by ATV (5%). Note that hunters could name more than one mode.

## FACTORS CONSIDERED IN CHOOSING LANDS ON WHICH TO HUNT

- The survey asked 11 questions about the importance of various factors in hunters' decisions regarding where to hunt their primary species (shown in Text Box 1 below). For each factor, they were asked if it was *very* important, *somewhat* important, or *not at all* important.
  - Four factors stand out markedly more important than the rest in the ranking by the percentage saying the factor is *very* important: that the land is not crowded with other sportsmen (79% say this is *very* important), that the land is owned by somebody they know personally (65%), that they are familiar with the land (62%), and that the land is easy to access by walking (59%).

### TEXT BOX 1

#### Factors in hunters' decisions regarding where to hunt that were asked about in the survey:

- That the land is public land
- That the land is private land
- That the land is owned by someone the respondent knows personally
- That the land is familiar to the respondent
- That the land is close to the respondent's home
- That the land is easy to access by foot
- That the land is easy to access by car or truck
- That the land is not crowded with other sportsmen
- That the land has well-maintained roads
- That the respondent can use ATVs or off-road vehicles
- That the land allows hunting with dogs

- After the series of questions discussed above, the survey asked hunters if there are any other factors that are important in their decision making regarding where to hunt. Three additional factors were commonly mentioned: the availability of game, accessibility, and the quality of the land.

## CONSTRAINTS TO HUNTING PARTICIPATION

- A direct question asked hunters whether lack of hunting access had caused them *not* to hunt a particular species as much as they would have liked in the past 5 years, and they are split on the question: 41% of them agreed that it had done so, while 56% disagreed. In follow-up in an open-ended question, the top-named access problems were private land being posted, a simple lack of land to hunt on, the cost of access, and the land being leased to others (the four reasons that were markedly more important than the rest).

- In follow-up, hunters were asked to name the species that they had not hunted as much as they would have liked because of access problems. The top-named species is upland game birds (55% among those who agreed to the above question), followed by white-tailed deer (37%), waterfowl (25%), and mule deer (13%). Note that hunters could name more than one species on this question.
- The survey asked a series of 25 questions about possible hunting access constraints (shown in Text Box 2 on the following page). For each possible constraint, the survey asked hunters if it had been, over the past 5 years, a *major* problem, a *moderate* problem, a *minor* problem, or *not at all* a problem.
- The potential constraints that had the highest percentage of hunters saying that the constraint was a *major* problem were the cost of gas (19%), not being able to find the landowner to ask permission (15%), being denied permission to hunt on somebody else's land (14%), finding previously open private land closed because a club has now leased it (13%), finding previously open private land posted by the landowner (12%), finding previously open private land sold and posted by the new landowner (11%), and less land on which to hunt due to private land ownership changes (10%). All of these had 10% or more of respondents saying it was a *major* problem.

**TEXT BOX 2****Possible constraints to hunting access that were asked about in the survey:**

Road closures  
Less land on which to hunt  
Less land on which to hunt because the land use has changed  
Less land on which to hunt due to private land ownership changes  
Not having enough information about where to hunt  
The information about where to hunt being inaccurate  
Not having ATV access in general  
Not being able to retrieve the hunt harvest because of ATV restrictions  
Having maps that show huntable land but being unable to locate that land on the ground  
Being unable to locate a road or other access route to huntable land  
Not being sure of the boundaries of huntable land  
Having to travel too far to hunt  
Being denied permission to hunt on somebody else's land  
Not being able to find the landowner to ask permission  
Finding previously open private land posted or closed by the landowner  
Finding previously open private land sold and posted or closed by the new landowner  
Finding previously open private land closed because a club has now leased it  
Private land blocking access to public land for hunting  
Poor maintenance of roads or trails  
The cost of gas  
Not being able to find a good place to park their vehicle  
Not being able to find a place to launch a boat  
Housing or other development making land not huntable  
Information from the South Dakota Division of Wildlife being out of date  
Access or leasing fees being expensive

- A follow-up question to one of the questions within the aforementioned series asked those who indicated that road closures had been a problem to indicate how the road had been closed. Most commonly, the road was closed by a gate, although a few indicated that the road was closed by a “No trespassing” sign posted by a landowner, was closed by lack of maintenance (e.g., downed trees not cut out of the way, gullies), or was closed by a berm or dirt pile deposited at the entrance.
- Most commonly, the road closures were perceived to be seasonal/temporary rather than permanent.
  - Another follow-up question asked for the location/type of the closed road. Most commonly, the closed roads were “other” public roads (other than National Forest roads or BLM roads); in sum, 69% indicated some sort of public road. Meanwhile, 23% indicated that the closed roads were private.

- Another follow-up question within the above series was asked of those who indicated that not being able to retrieve their harvest because of ATV restrictions had been a problem (only 5% indicated that this was a problem). The follow-up question asked if they agreed or disagreed that not being able to retrieve game with an ATV had caused them to hunt less than they would otherwise have liked to do, and 33% agreed (less than 2% of hunters overall), while 67% disagreed. This suggests that ATV restrictions are *not* an important problem to the overwhelming majority of hunters, as only 5% indicated that ATV restrictions on retrieving game had been a problem, and, further, less than 2% of hunters hunted less than they would otherwise because of ATV restrictions.
  
- A final follow-up question within the above series was asked of those who indicated that private land blocking access to public land had been a problem. The follow-up question asked how much of a problem was *intentional* blocking of public land by a private landowner, and 64% of those respondents indicated that private landowners *intentionally* blocking access was a problem.
  
- After the above series of questions, the survey then presented hunters a list of 16 problems with actions hunters may have had to take because of the problem (e.g., leaving a hunt area because of crowding from other recreationists). The list of problems is shown in Text Box 3 on the following page. For each possible problem, the survey asked hunters if it had been, over the past 5 years, a *major* problem, a *moderate* problem, a *minor* problem, or *not at all* a problem.
  - In looking at the ranking by the percentage saying the problem was *major*, *moderate*, or *minor*, the top problems are leaving an area because of crowding from other hunters (50%), leaving an area because they felt unsafe because of other hunters (33%), not being sure whether they were on private or public land (31%), not being sure whose land they were on (29%), leaving an area because of the irresponsible behavior of other hunters (28%), and not going on a hunt or changing locations because of access problems (26%)—all with more than a quarter saying it had been a problem.

**TEXT BOX 3****Possible problems regarding hunting access that were asked about in the survey:**

Not going on a hunt or changing locations because of access problems  
Not going on a hunt or changing locations because the respondent felt that a leasing fee was too expensive  
Not going on a hunt or changing locations because map information was wrong  
Not going on a hunt or changing locations because access for those with disabilities was not available  
Leaving an area because of crowding from other hunters  
Leaving an area because of crowding from other recreationists  
Leaving an area because respondent felt unsafe because of other hunters  
Leaving an area because of the irresponsible behavior of other hunters  
Not being sure whether he/she was on private or public land  
Not being sure whose land he/she was on  
Not hunting somewhere because of ATV restrictions  
Not hunting somewhere because ATV use is allowed or not restricted  
Being in an area where he/she was not sure which hunting regulations applied  
Being confused by a state agency map that was hard to follow  
Discontinuing a hunting club membership because he/she felt the fees were too expensive  
Trying to join a hunting club that was already full

- The survey asked hunters a series of 10 questions about factors that may or may not influence access to hunting land in South Dakota in general, regardless of whether their own participation is affected by it (shown in Text Box 4 on the following page). For each factor, the survey asked hunters if they think it is a *major* problem, a *moderate* problem, a *minor* problem, or *not at all* a problem.
- In looking at the ranking by the percentages saying the factor is a *major*, a *moderate*, or a *minor* problem, 4 of the 10 factors have more than a third saying it is a problem: private land posted or closed because the landowner is specifically concerned about liability (46%), lack of or unclear signs marking public hunting lands (43%), public or private land tracts being broken up when sold or leased (38%), and equipment use restrictions on public land (34%).

**TEXT BOX 4****Factors that may or may not influence hunting access that were asked about in the survey:**

Poor management or allocation of uses of public land  
 Lack of or unclear signs marking public hunting lands  
 Restrictions on public land  
 Closures of public land by government agencies  
 Not enough access to public lands for those with disabilities  
 Housing and commercial development  
 Gas and oil extraction on public lands  
 Public or private land tracts being broken up when sold or leased  
 Private land posted or closed because the landowner is specifically concerned about liability  
 Management of land for purposes other than hunting, such as timber cutting

- When asked in an open-ended question if there were any things that had taken away from their enjoyment of hunting in South Dakota, even if those things did not prevent them from actually going, 39% of hunters indicated that something had taken away from their enjoyment. Most commonly, they named an access-related problem (12%), followed by a regulation-related answer (6%), age/health (5%), and no time/family or work obligations (4%). Note that the analysis broke down the “access-related problems” category into specific access problems as subsets of access-related problems overall. Primary among those access problems are private land being posted (3%), a simple lack of land to hunt on (3%), and land leased to others (2%).

**RATINGS OF ACCESS TO HUNTING LANDS IN SOUTH DAKOTA**

- A basic question asked hunters to rate access to hunting land in South Dakota overall. They are more positive than negative: 69% give a rating of excellent or good, while 31% give a rating of fair or poor. Note that the moderate answers (good and fair) far exceed the extreme answers (excellent and poor).
  - In a related question, ratings of the SDDGFP’s *management of access* to hunting lands are even better: 70% give an excellent or good rating, and 22% give a fair or poor rating. Note that “good” ratings far exceed any other answer.

- The ratings of access were crosstabulated by various other questions to see if any differences among respondents emerged.
  - In the crosstabulation by number of years of hunting experience, long-time hunters are more likely to give a poor rating; these differences are statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.001$ ).
  - Access ratings are markedly more positive among waterfowl hunters (80% give a rating of excellent or good). They are markedly more negative among hunters of upland game birds (only 64% give an excellent or good rating). Overall, these differences on this question are statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.001$ ).
  - Access ratings are markedly better among hunters who hunt mostly on private land, relative to those who hunt mostly on public land. These differences are statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.001$ ).
  
- Those who hunted their primary species on public land at least half the time were asked to rate access to public lands in South Dakota. Excellent and good ratings (70% give one of the two responses) far exceed fair and poor ratings (28%).
  - Top reasons for rating public land access as fair or poor are no land to hunt on, land being too crowded with other hunters, land blocked by private land, and the land simply being closed.
  
- Those who hunted their primary species on private land at least half the time were asked to rate access to private lands in South Dakota. Excellent and good ratings (57% give one of the two responses) exceed fair and poor ratings (40%).
  - Top reasons for rating private land access as fair or poor are the cost of access, land being posted, and the land being leased to others.

## **FACTORS THAT MAY POSITIVELY AFFECT ACCESS**

- The survey asked 15 questions about things that would make hunting access easier (shown in Text Box 5 on the following page). For each item, the survey asked hunters if it would be *very effective*, *somewhat effective*, or *not at all effective* at making it easier to access land on which to hunt.

- In looking at the ranking by the percentage saying that the items would be *very* effective at making access easier, three items stand out—all with a majority saying it would be *very* effective: having a list of landowners with telephone numbers for asking permission to hunt (60%), having signs that clearly mark boundaries of huntable land (55%), and having paper maps of hunting lands for their primary species (51%).
- A second tier consists of five items that each have at least a third saying it would be *very* effective at making access easier: having up-to-date information on a website showing lands where hunting their primary species is allowed (47%), having easements or designated public sections of leased and private lands preserved for public hunting (42%), having easements or public rights-of-way on private land to access adjacent public land (38%), having a state agency acquire more land for hunting (38%), and having maps of hunting lands for their primary species on a website (37%).

#### **TEXT BOX 5**

##### **Things that might make hunting access easier that were asked about in the survey:**

- Having a list of landowners with telephone numbers where the respondent could call to ask to hunt on their land
- Having signs that clearly mark boundaries of huntable land
- Having up-to-date information on a website showing lands where hunting is allowed
- Having paper maps of hunting lands
- Having maps of hunting lands on a website
- Being able to find hunting lands using GPS
- Having timely information about any road closures
- Having more ATV access
- Having more lands with ATV restrictions
- Being able to pay a user fee to hunt restricted public land
- Being able to pay a user fee to hunt private land
- Being able to pay extra to increase the chances of getting a license issued through a lottery
- A South Dakota state agency acquiring more land for hunting
- Having easements or public “rights-of-way” on private land to access adjacent public land
- Having easements or designated public sections of leased and private lands preserved for public hunting

## **POTENTIAL REASONS THAT LANDOWNERS MAY CLOSE THEIR LAND TO HUNTING**

- The survey asked eight questions about possible reasons that landowners may close their land to public hunting (shown in Text Box 6 on the following page). For each possible reason, the survey asked hunters if they think it is a *very important* reason, a *somewhat important* reason, or a *not at all* important reason that landowners close their land to the public for hunting.

- Four items stand out above the rest in the ranking by the percentage saying the reasons are *very* important, three of which relate to misuse of the land. The top item is that the landowner wants to allow only personal or family use of the land (68% say this is a *very* important reason that landowners close their land); the next three relate to misuse of the land: irresponsible shooting or similar behavior (61%), property damage other than litter (60%), and litter (58%).

**TEXT BOX 6**

**Possible reasons that landowners may close their land to public hunting that were asked about in the survey:**

Liability concerns

Irresponsible shooting, drinking alcohol, or similar behavior by hunters (excluding property damage or litter)

Property damage caused by other hunters (excluding litter)

Litter

Land being too crowded

The landowner wanting to allow only personal or family use of the land

The landowner not making enough money from hunters

The landowner not receiving enough compensation or incentives from the state

- The large majority of hunters (77%) think that a program that provides landowners with compensation or incentives for opening their lands to the public for hunting would be *very* or *somewhat* effective at improving hunting access in South Dakota.
- The overwhelming majority of hunters (96%) are *not* aware of any laws in South Dakota that reduce the liability of landowners who open their lands to the public for hunting; meanwhile, 3% are aware of such laws.
  - In a related question, the large majority of South Dakota hunters (77%) support laws to reduce landowner liability for landowners who open their lands to the public for hunting; only 6% oppose (the remainder give neutral answers).
  - Another related question found that a large majority of hunters (73%) think that legislation reducing landowner liability would be *very* or *somewhat* effective at improving hunter access to private lands in South Dakota; only 12% think it would *not* be at all effective.

- Finally, a slight majority of hunters (52%) agree that legislation reducing landowner liability would significantly increase the number of landowners who would open their lands to the public for hunting; meanwhile, 31% disagree.

## **PARTICIPATION IN AND USE OF VARIOUS PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES**

- The survey asked about 15 programs in South Dakota that pertain to hunting access (some state programs and some national programs). The programs about which the survey asked are shown in Text Box 7 below.
  - A basic line of questioning asked hunters about their awareness of the various programs, and 5 of the 15 programs had large majorities aware of them: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas (73% were *very* or *somewhat* aware of it), South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas (73%), the Conservation Reserve Program (69%), South Dakota's Game Production Areas (69%), and the printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* (69%). All other programs have awareness levels of 30% or lower.
  - Another series of questions asked hunters about their use of or participation in the access programs. Those same five programs above had the highest rates of use/participation: the printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* (57% have used it), South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas (54%), South Dakota's Game Production Areas (48%), the Conservation Reserve Program (47%), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas (43%).

### **TEXT BOX 7**

#### **Hunting access programs that were asked about in the survey:**

The Open Fields program  
 The Conservation Reserve Program  
 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas or WPAs  
 The wheretohunt.org website  
 The huntinfo.com website  
 The huntandshoot.org website  
 South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas  
 South Dakota's Controlled Hunting Access Program  
 South Dakota's Volunteer Antlerless Deer Hunter Program  
 South Dakota's Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Program  
 South Dakota's Game Production Areas, or GPAs  
 South Dakota's Interactive South Dakota Public Lands Maps and Information system on the Division of Wildlife's website  
 The printed South Dakota Hunting Atlas  
 The South Dakota Hunting Atlas on the SDDGFP's website  
 South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands program

- For each program of which a hunter was aware, the survey asked him/her to rate it at making hunting access easier.
  - The programs with the highest percentages of hunters giving an *excellent* or *good* rating, all at 47% or more, are the printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* (72% rate it excellent or good), South Dakota's Game Production Areas (64%), South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas (63%), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas (58%), the Conservation Reserve Program (55%), the *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* online (52%), and the interactive South Dakota Public Lands Maps and information system website (47%).
  
- The survey included a specific question about use of private lands enrolled in any walk-in access program in South Dakota. More than two-fifths of hunters (41%) hunt their primary species *often* or *sometimes* on such lands. On the other hand, more than a third (36%) *never* do so.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED IN DECIDING WHERE TO HUNT**

- In the broadest question about sources of information, hunters were asked in an open-ended question where they got information on places to hunt and hunting access in South Dakota. The most popular source is friends/family/word of mouth (51%), by far the top answer. Other notable answers include a state agency other than a website (19%), pamphlets/brochures (9%), and specific sites on the Internet (8%).
  
- The survey asked hunters if they had visited the websites of four agencies (the South Dakota Division of Wildlife, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management). Slightly more than a fourth of hunters in South Dakota had visited the SDDGFP site (27%). Lower amounts (from 7% to 12%) had visited the other sites.
  - Follow-up questions asked hunters to rate the usefulness of the websites' information on places to hunt and hunting access in planning hunting trips. Ratings are positive: all of the sites had a majority of site visitors (from 71% to 79%) rating its access information as excellent or good.

- The survey asked six questions about actions that hunters may take in deciding where to hunt (shown in Text Box 8 below). For each action, the survey asked hunters if they always, sometimes, rarely, or never do it when deciding where to hunt.
- About two-thirds or more of hunters *always* or *sometimes* do four things in deciding where to hunt: 60% ask a friend or family member where to hunt, 49% scout or physically look for a place, 41% knock on landowners' doors to ask permission, and 39% use paper maps to find a place to hunt.

**TEXT BOX 8****Actions hunters may take in deciding where to hunt that were asked about in the survey:**

- Ask a friend or family member where to hunt
- Knock on a landowner's door to ask permission to hunt
- Use paper maps to find a place to hunt
- Use GPS to locate hunting land
- Find available hunting lands on the Internet
- Scout or physically look for land on which to hunt

- Within the above series of questions was a question asking how often hunters scout or physically look for land on which to hunt. In follow-up, they were asked how many days they typically spend scouting for hunting locations. The median number of days they typically spend annually scouting for hunting land is 4 days, among those who scout for land.

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## **INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to better understand issues related to hunting access. Research indicates that difficulty with access to lands for hunting has become not just a point of frustration, but a very real barrier to recruiting and retaining sportsmen. Adequate access to land is one of the most fundamental issues affecting the future of hunting today. Indeed, access is the *most* important factor associated with hunting participation that is not a time-related or demographic factor<sup>1</sup>—in other words, the most important factor over which agencies and organizations can have an important influence.

While hunting is an important historic, social, and cultural activity in the United States, it is also important to the economy and to conservation. Hunters are avid conservationists who donate more money to wildlife conservation, per capita, than do non-hunters or the general population as a whole in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Their hunting license fees and the excise taxes they pay on sporting goods and ammunition fund state fish and wildlife agency activities and provide Federal Aid monies. Hunters also contribute large amounts of money to the economy through the pursuit of their sport. In fact, hunters spend several billion dollars on their sport annually.<sup>3</sup>

However, participation in hunting is declining. Research shows that there has been a general decline in hunting participation for the past two decades.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, much research has been devoted to assessing the decline in hunting participation and hunting dissatisfaction. One reason that hunters increasingly report as a cause of dissatisfaction is poor hunting access. Access problems negatively affect hunters by taking away from their enjoyment of hunting and/or causing them to hunt less often. Previous research has shown that access is a leading reason for hunter dissatisfaction, and that not enough available hunting access is a significant factor that influences hunters' decisions to stop hunting.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Responsive Management/National Shooting Sports Foundation. 2008. *The Future of Hunting and the Shooting Sports: Research-Based Recruitment and Retention Strategies*. Produced for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Grant Agreement CT-M-6-0. Harrisonburg, Virginia.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/U.S. Census Bureau. 2007. *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. Washington, D.C.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

In addition to an in-depth look at hunting access issues at the national and regional levels to obtain baseline data, this project assesses the success of many initiatives and programs related to access that have already been implemented. This assessment identifies which programs and program elements are most effective, and which are not, by assessing a sample of states (in addition to the nationwide survey). This includes the following 16 states: Alabama, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

By acquiring baseline data on access issues and assessing the effectiveness of programs designed to improve hunting access, this project provides research-based information to assist in efforts to reduce hunting access conflicts and improve and increase access to lands for hunting. This research also helps to more effectively utilize the millions of dollars of future funding for implementing access programs by indicating which programs and program elements are having the greatest impact and by providing data to guide and increase the success of the efforts of new and current programs.

There is an important need for this project because 1) access to lands for hunting has become a very real barrier to hunter recruitment and retention; 2) previous studies have shown that access is a leading reason for hunter dissatisfaction and that not enough available hunting access is a significant factor that influences hunters' decision to stop hunting; 3) most previous studies were conducted on a state-by-state basis rather than a regional or national basis and are not comparable across states; 4) the effectiveness of numerous initiatives and programs related to access that have already been implemented on the ground needs to be evaluated; and 5) the results will help to ensure the most effective utilization of funding for access programs in the future. In short, there is a strong need for information and strategies upon which to build hunting programs that create, improve, and facilitate access to lands for hunting, which will ultimately positively affect hunting participation as well.

This project entailed a nationwide survey of hunters to accomplish several major objectives. The study identified and quantified the full array of access issues that hunters face today, and it provided in-depth baseline data with which to compare conditions in the future at a national

level. In addition, the study included individual state surveys to assess the effectiveness of access programs currently in place in 16 states and acquired data for future programs, and the results can help guide the future use of funding for access programs.

The overall project entailed analyzing data obtained from a series of focus groups conducted in 2008 (which were also used in developing the survey instrument), a nationwide telephone survey with an oversampling in 16 states where access programs are currently under way, 16 state reports for those oversampled states, and a final national report of the results with recommendations for implementing effective access programs. This report discusses the South Dakota survey only. Specific aspects of the research methodology for the South Dakota survey are discussed below.

For this survey, telephones were selected as the preferred sampling medium because of the near universality of telephone ownership among South Dakota hunters. Additionally, telephone surveys, relative to mail or Internet surveys, allow for more scientific sampling and data collection, provide higher quality data, obtain higher response rates, are more timely, and are more cost-effective. Telephone surveys also have fewer negative effects on the environment than do mail surveys because of reduced use of paper and reduced energy consumption for delivering and returning the questionnaires. 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.

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 this survey. Interviewers were instructed on type of study, study goals and objectives, handling of survey questions, interview length, termination points and qualifiers for participation, interviewer instructions within the survey instrument, reading of the

survey instrument, skip patterns, and probing and clarifying techniques necessary for specific questions on the survey instrument. 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.

The telephone survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management, the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), and the participating state agencies and organizations represented in the listing on the acknowledgments page, including the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (SDDGFP). The survey questionnaire was reviewed by numerous university professors and staff with knowledge of surveying methods, as well as many fish and wildlife agency personnel with knowledge of hunting access issues. Responsive Management conducted a pre-test of the questionnaire to ensure proper wording, flow, and logic in the survey. The questionnaire included some "screeener" questions; those who had *not* hunted at least once in the past 5 years were not interviewed.

The survey instrument included questions about the following hunting access programs that are used in South Dakota (descriptions of the programs are included as Appendix A):

- The Open Fields program
- The Conservation Reserve Program
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas
- The wheretohunt.org website
- The huntinfo.com website
- The huntandshoot.org website
- South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas
- South Dakota's Controlled Hunting Access Program
- South Dakota's Volunteer Antlerless Deer Hunter Program
- South Dakota's Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Program
- South Dakota's Game Production Areas, or GPAs
- South Dakota's Interactive South Dakota Public Lands Maps and Information system on the Division of Wildlife's website
- The printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas*
- The *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* on the SDDGFP's website
- South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands program

The sample was of hunting license holders representative of hunters in South Dakota overall.

The sample was obtained from the SDDGFP.

Interviews were conducted Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturday from 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 was conducted in July 2009. Responsive Management obtained a total of 808 completed interviews with South Dakota licensed hunters.

The software used for data collection was Questionnaire Programming Language (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.

Because the survey contained a large number of questions, and no single respondent could feasibly go through all the questions that would apply to him/her, some questions were asked only of a randomized portion of the sample. In other places, only certain respondents received some questions because the questions applied only to specific respondents (e.g., only those who were aware of a given program were asked to rate its effectiveness).

After the surveys were obtained by the interviewers, the Survey Center Managers and/or statisticians checked each completed survey to ensure clarity and completeness. The analysis of data was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management.

In examining the results, it is important to be aware that the questionnaire included several types of questions:

- Open-ended questions are those in which no answer set is read to the respondents; rather, they can respond with anything that comes to mind from the question.
- Closed-ended questions have an answer set from which to choose.

- Some questions allow only a single response, while other questions allow respondents to give more than one response or choose all that apply. Those that allow more than a single response are indicated on the graphs with the label, “Multiple Responses Allowed.”
- Many closed-ended questions (but not all) are in a scale, such as excellent-good-fair-poor.
- Many questions are part of a series, and the results are primarily intended to be examined relative to the other questions in that series (although results of the questions individually can also be valuable).

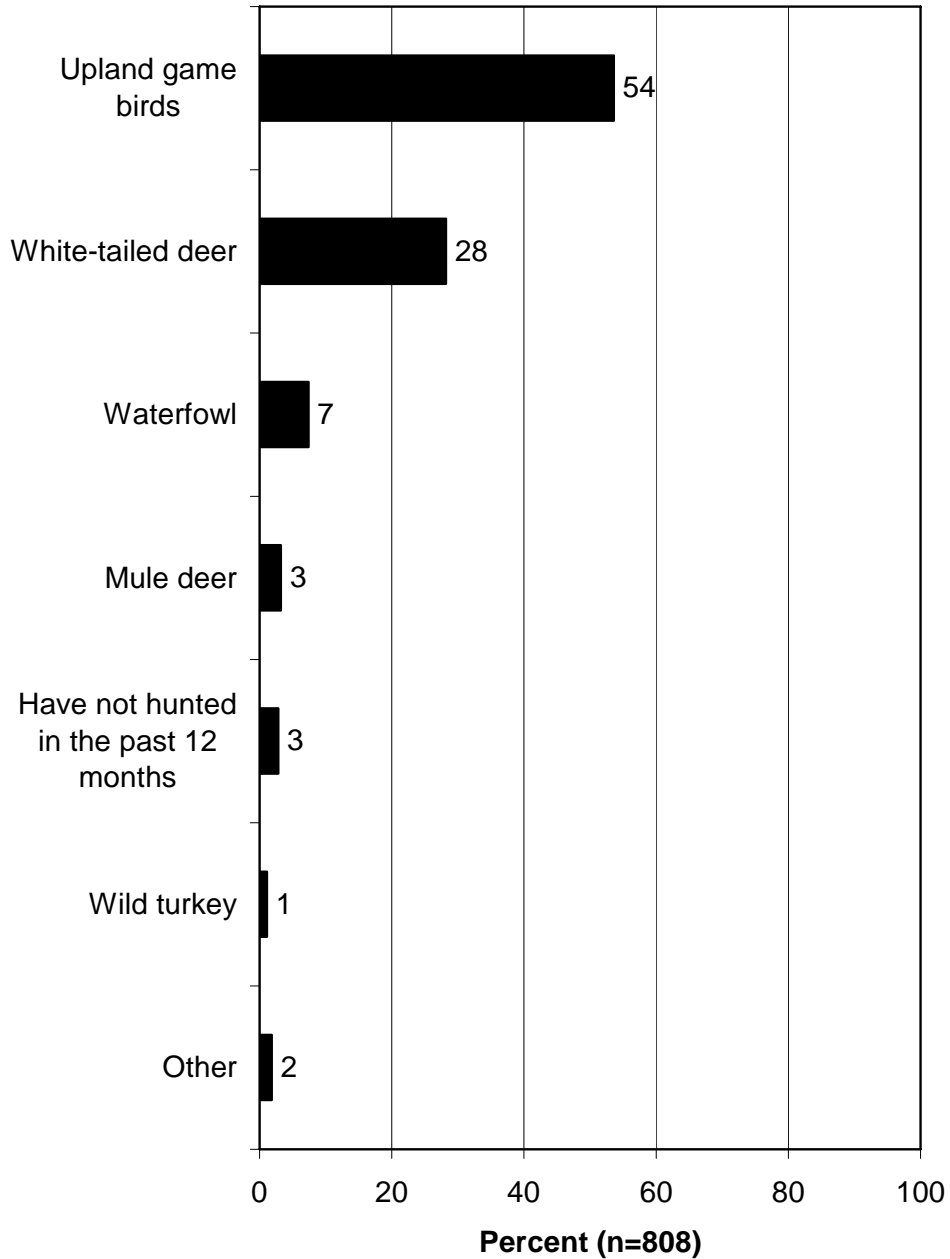
The research team sought to learn about access problems of hunters, but conjectured that hunting access problems could vary from species to species. To ensure that the researchers would know which species were associated with various results, the survey asked respondents to answer most questions about the species they *primarily* hunt. For applicable questions, QPL inserted the respondent’s primary species name into the question. For instance, Question 55 would have been “Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting white-tailed deer?” for those who primarily hunt white-tailed deer, and it would have been “Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting waterfowl?” for those who primarily hunt waterfowl. In the graphs, the questions show where the species name would be automatically inserted into the question by the QPL program. For instance, the graph for Question 55 is shown as “Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting (species)?”

Occasionally, results may not sum to exactly 100% because of rounding. Additionally, rounding on the graphs may cause apparent discrepancies of 1 percentage point between the graphs and the reported results of combined responses (e.g., when “strongly support” and “moderately support” are summed to determine the total percentage in support).

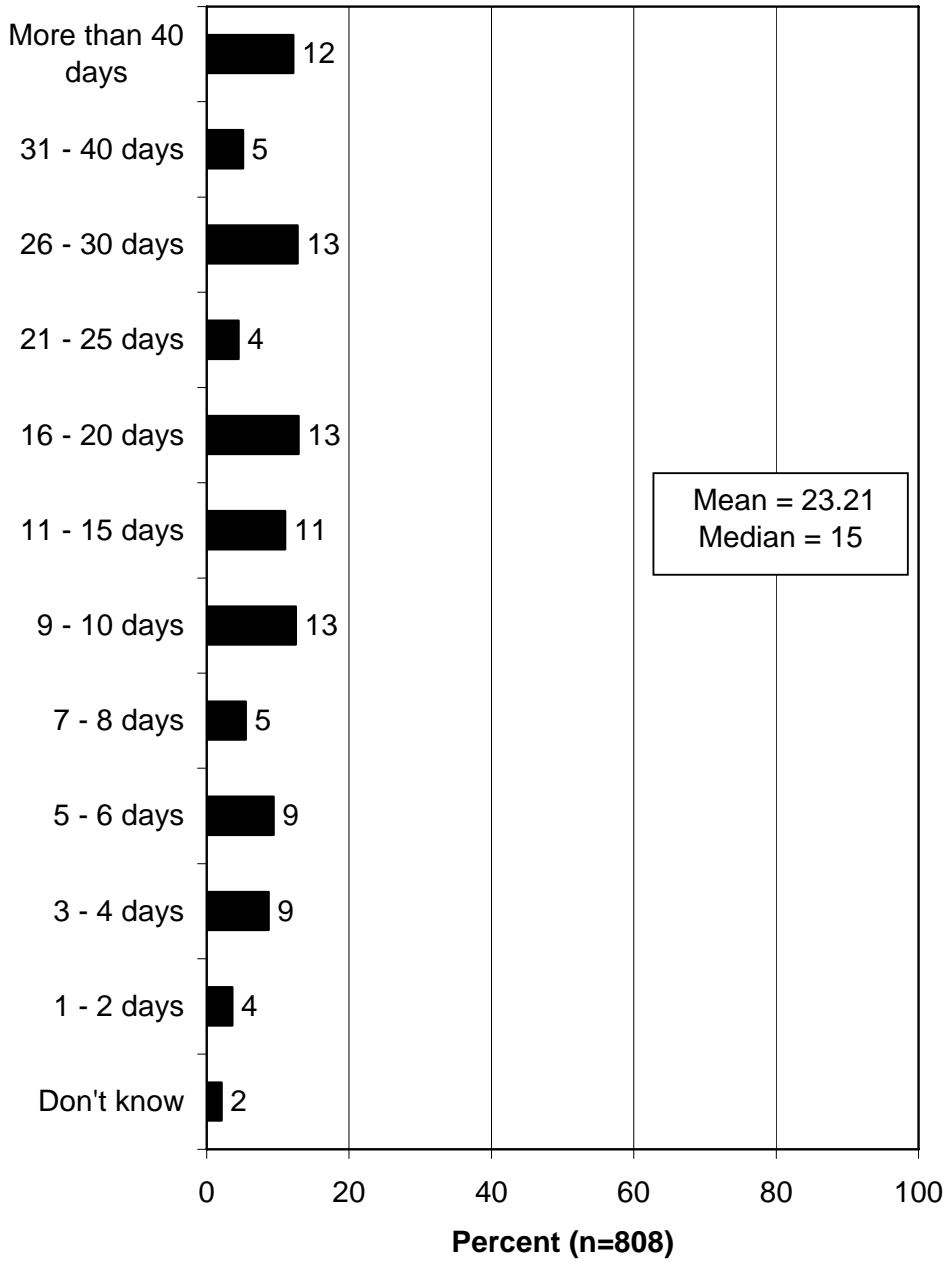
## **SPECIES HUNTED, HUNTING AVIDITY, AND TRENDS IN HUNTING PARTICIPATION**

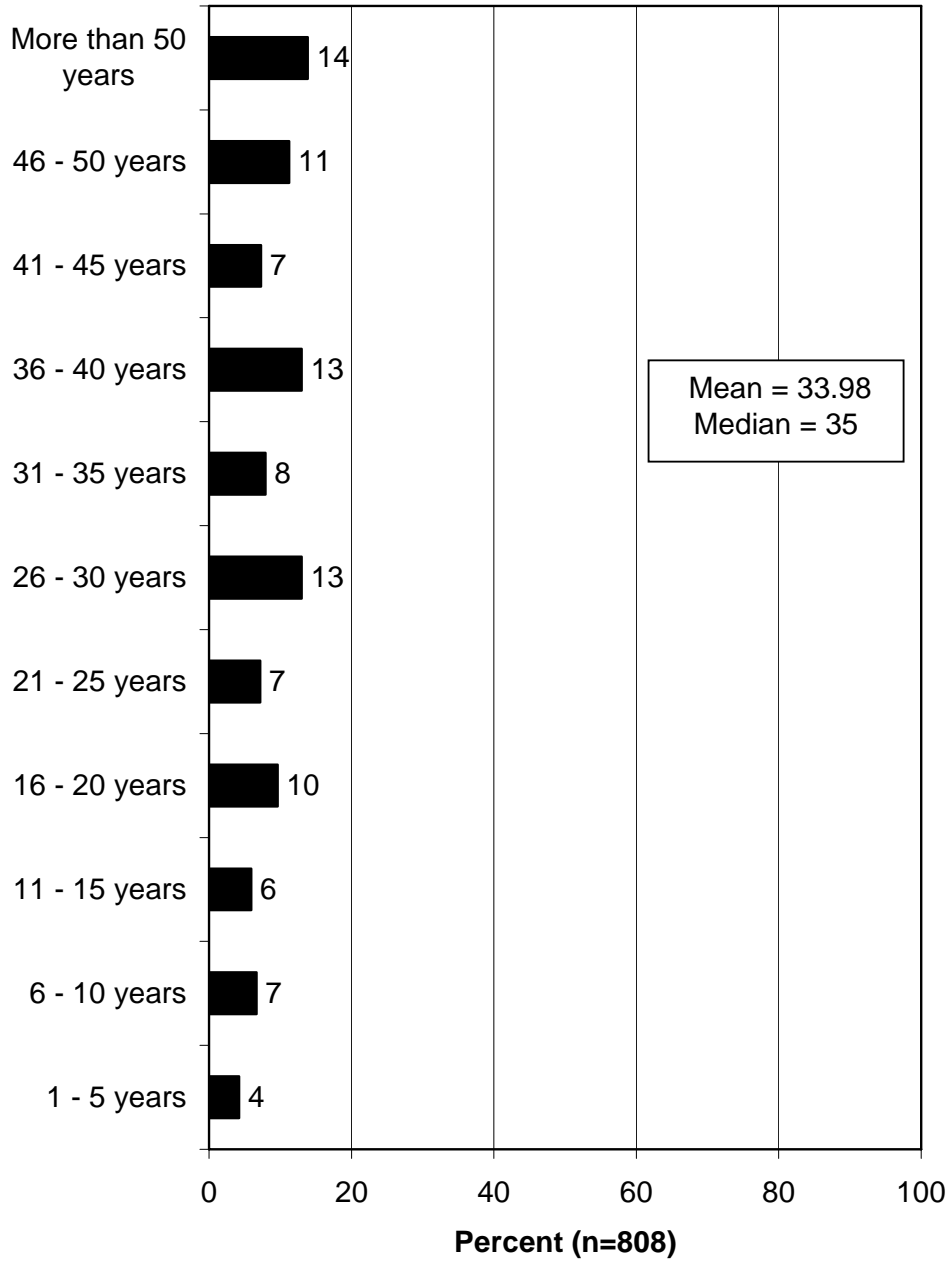
- The majority of South Dakota licensed hunters primarily hunted upland game birds (54%) in the past 12 months, followed in popularity by white-tailed deer (28%). These are distantly followed by waterfowl (7%) and mule deer (3%). Note that the question asked respondents to name the *single* species they *primarily* hunt, not all species they hunt.
  
- A graph shows the typical number of days that hunters hunt in South Dakota annually. The median is 15 days.
  
- Hunters in the survey were asked to indicate how long they have been hunting. Responses are well-distributed among the number of years, as shown in the graph; the median is 35 years.
  
- Hunters in the survey were asked to indicate how many of the past 5 years they had hunted. The large majority of those hunters (87%) are quite avid, having hunted all 5 of the past 5 years.
  
- Hunters were asked to indicate whether their hunting participation in South Dakota has increased, remained the same, or decreased over the past 5 years: while they most commonly say that it has stayed the same (50%), the percentage who say it has decreased (28%) slightly exceeds the percentage who say it has increased (22%).

**Q23. What single species did you primarily hunt in South Dakota in the past 12 months?**

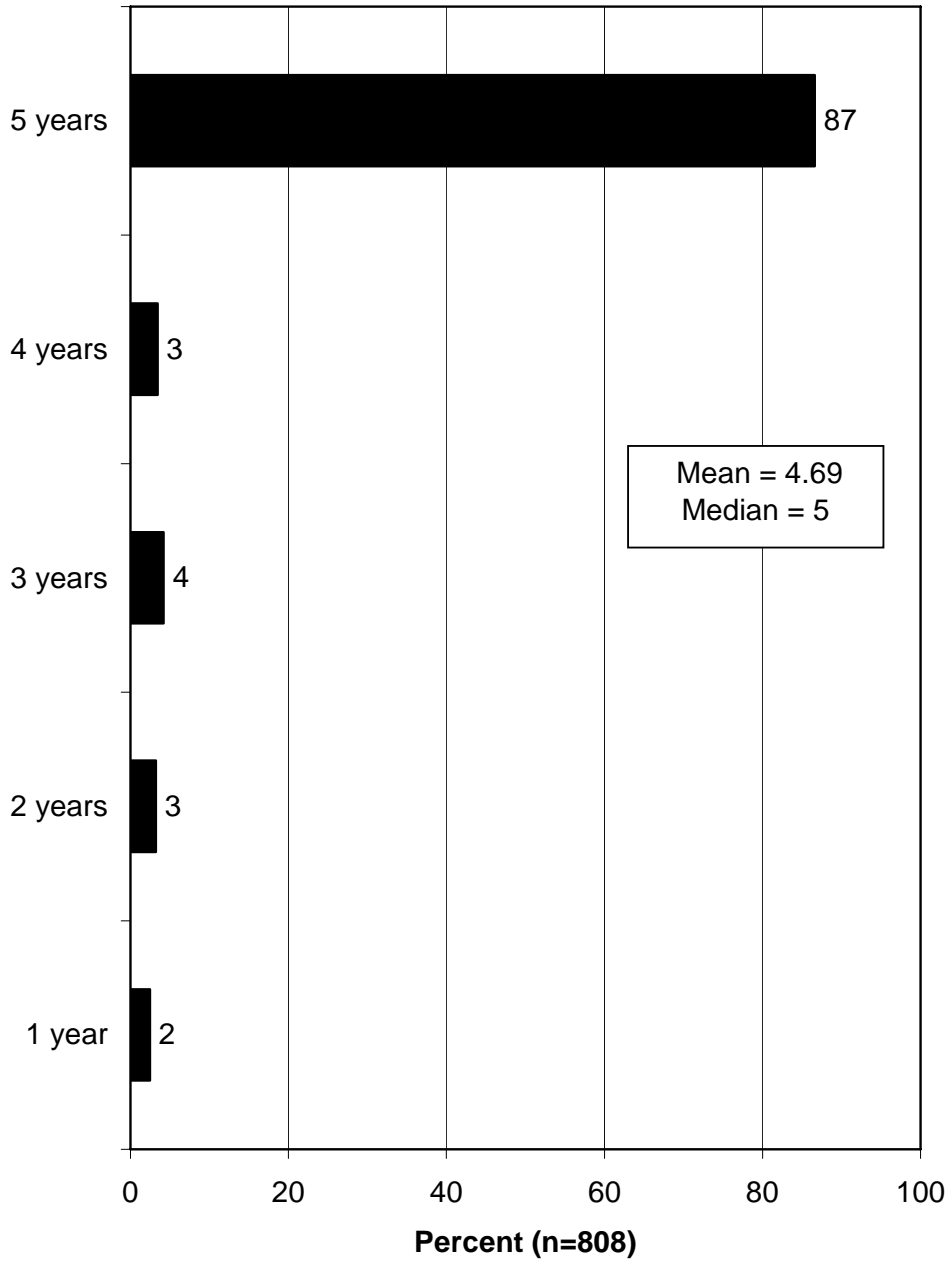


**Q26. About how many days do you usually hunt each year in South Dakota?**

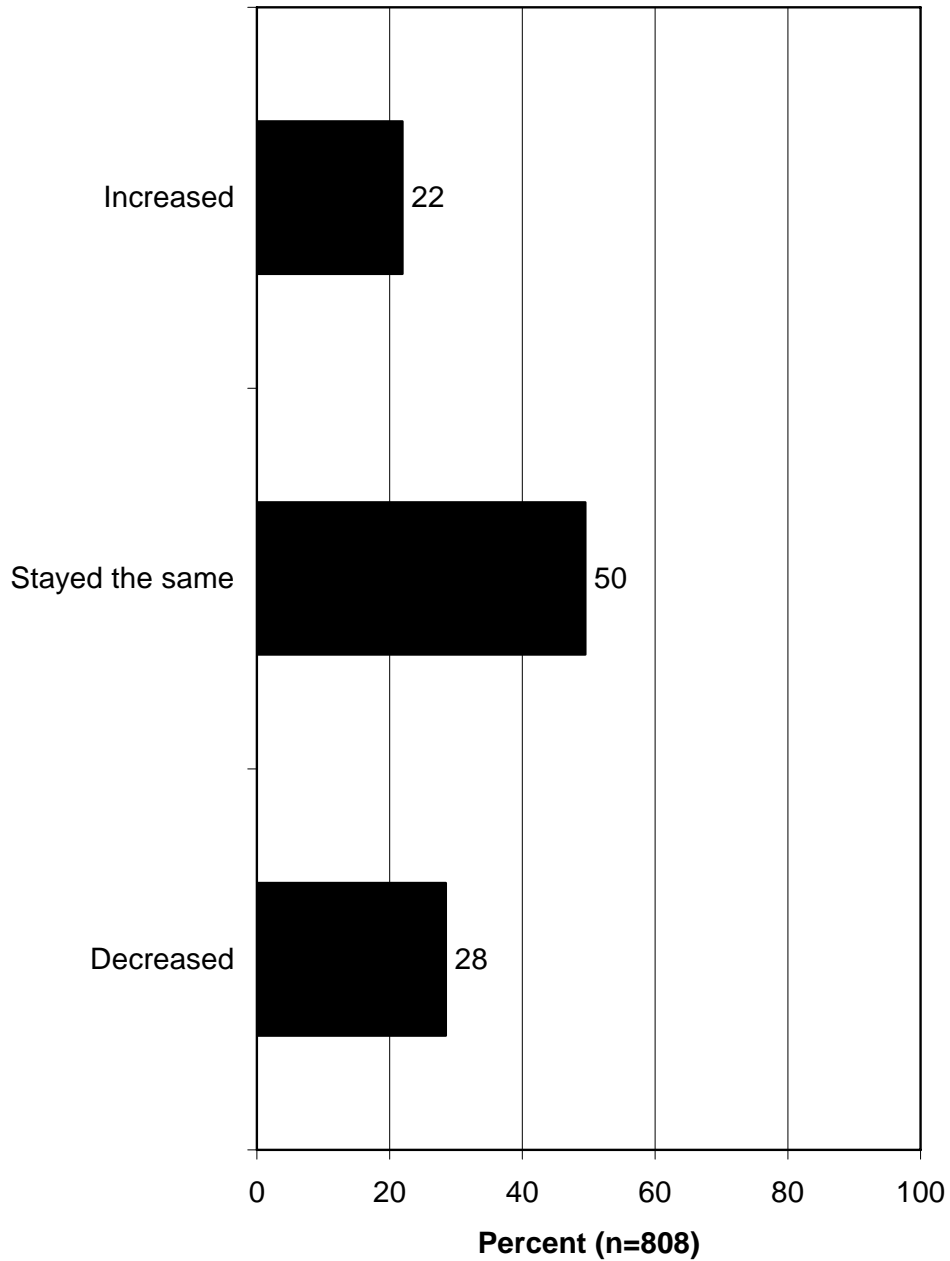


**Q15. How many years have you hunted?**

**Q19. How many of the past 5 years have you hunted in South Dakota?**



**Q30. Would you say your hunting participation in South Dakota has increased, stayed the same, or decreased over the past 5 years?**



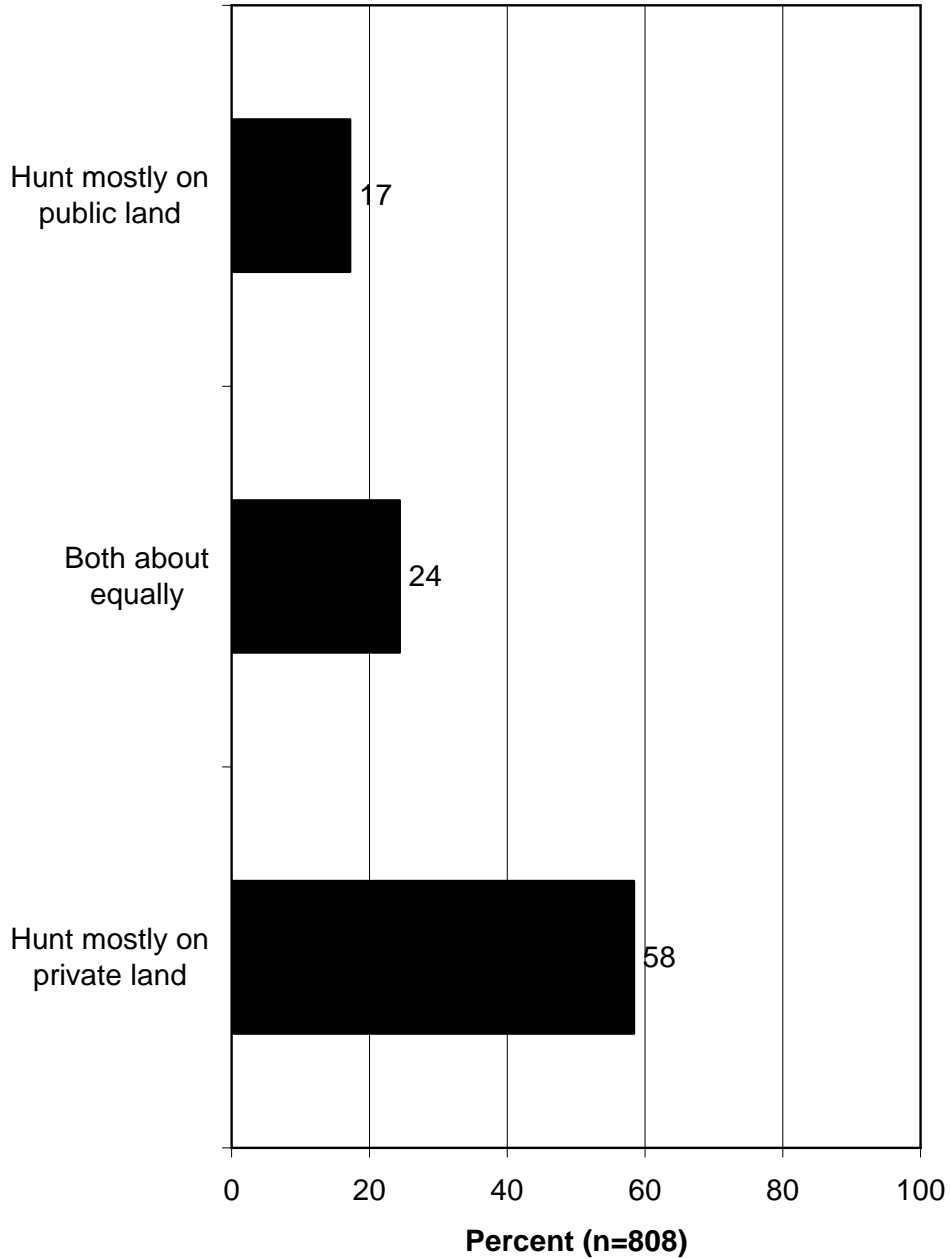
## LOCATIONS OF HUNTING ACTIVITIES

- Hunters in South Dakota more often hunt their primary species on private land (58% hunt on private land mostly, and 82% do so at least half the time) than on public land (17% hunt on public land mostly, and 41% do so at least half the time).
  - A crosstabulation was run of four primary species that had enough hunters for analysis: white-tailed deer, mule deer, upland game birds, and waterfowl (with a fifth category that was created for “any deer”). This crosstabulation found that waterfowl hunters have the greatest propensity to hunt mostly on public land. On the other hand, those with the greatest propensity to hunt mostly on private land are upland game bird hunters. Overall, the differences on this question are statistically significant.
  
- Another question has implications regarding how much hunters need to find access to hunting lands. Hunters much more commonly say that they mostly hunt their primary species on the same land each year (70%) than say that they hunt it on different lands each year (4%).
  
- In a crosstabulation of hunting on public/private land and hunting on the same/different lands (the questions discussed above), the sample could be divided into 9 groups (as shown in the matrix below), with the largest portion being those who primarily hunt on private/same lands (48.2%). (For readability, the data presented in the matrix below are also shown in a graph, with the size of the bars representing their proportion of the whole sample.)

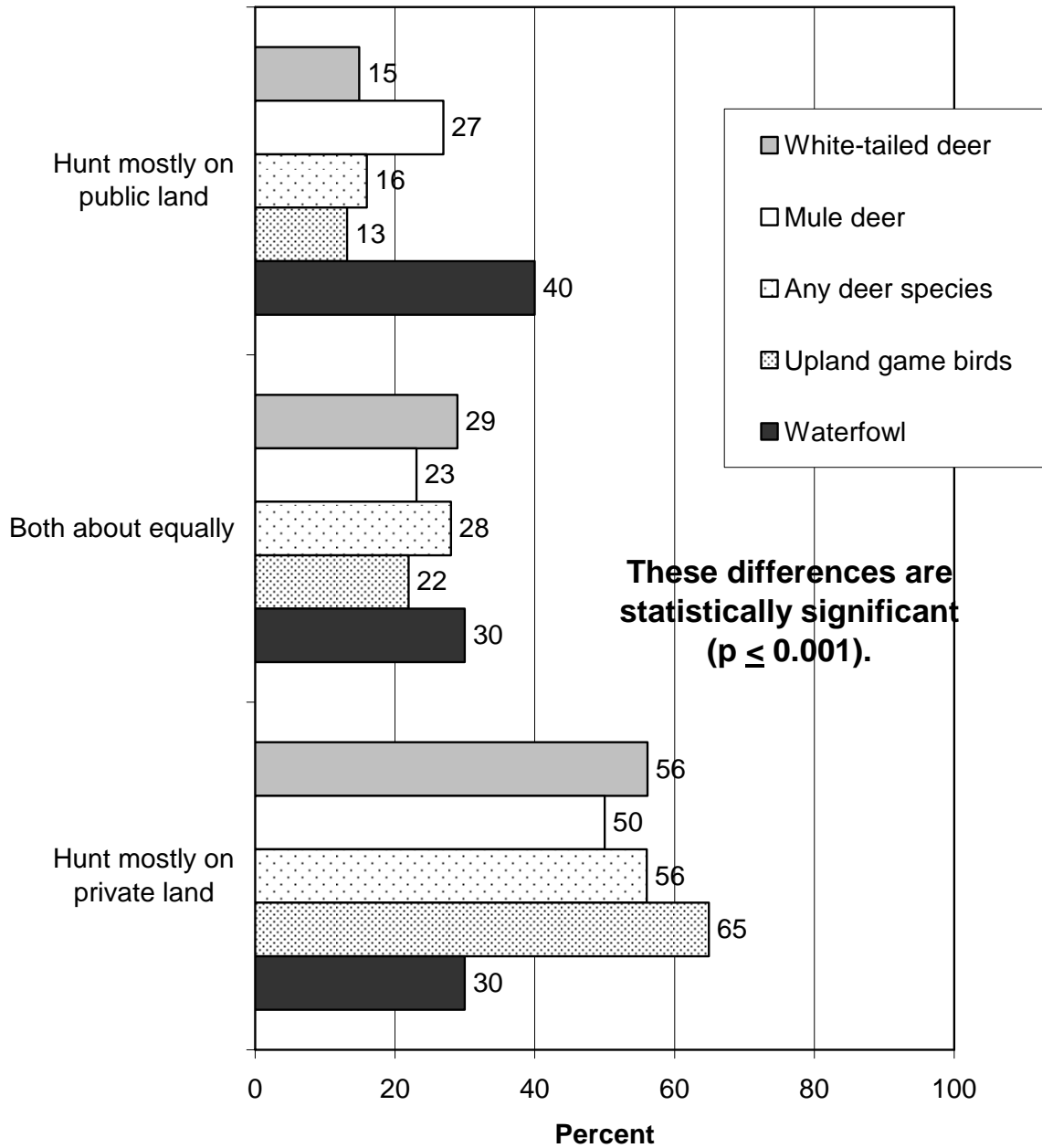
	<b>Hunts mostly on <i>public</i> land (17.3%)</b>	<b>Hunts public and private lands both about <i>equally</i> (24.2%)</b>	<b>Hunts mostly on <i>private</i> land (58.5%)</b>
<b>Hunts mostly on the <i>same</i> land each year (69.8%)</b>	Public/Same 9.9%	Both/Same 11.7%	Private/Same 48.2%
<b>Hunts same and different lands both about <i>equally</i> (26.1%)</b>	Public/Both 6.1%	Both/Both 10.8%	Private/Both 9.2%
<b>Hunts mostly on <i>different</i> lands each year (4.1%)</b>	Public/Different 1.2%	Both/Different 1.7%	Private/Different 1.1%

- The survey asked hunters to indicate how far they typically travel from home to hunt their primary species: 39% travel no more than 20 miles to do so; however, the same percentage (39%) travel more than 50 miles. The median distance is 35 miles.
  - Another question explored the modes of transportation that hunters use to access the land on which they hunt: 70% use a car or truck (by far the top mode), followed by walking (57%), and distantly followed by ATV (5%). Note that hunters could name more than one mode.

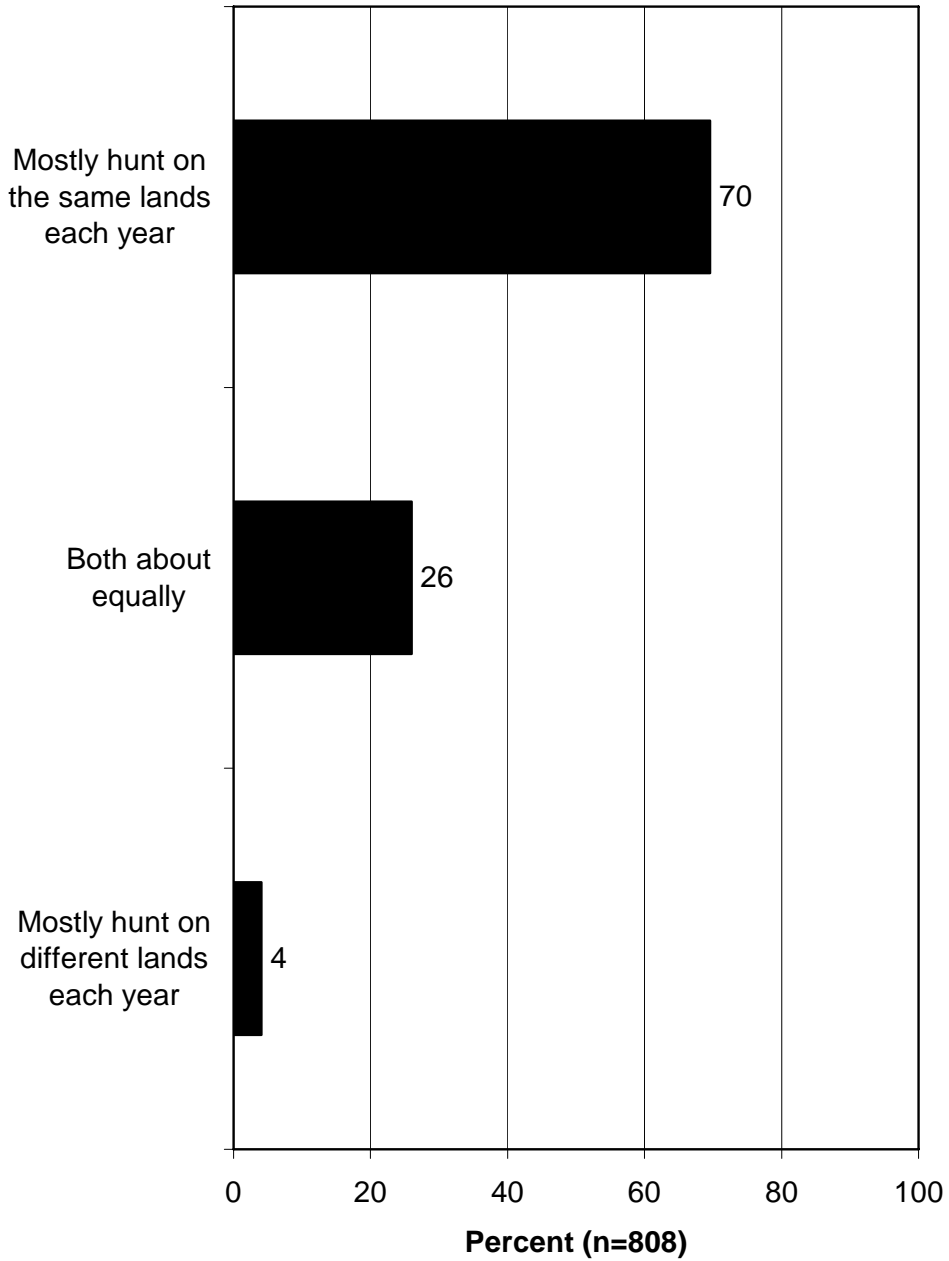
**Q58. For (species) hunting, would you say you hunt mostly on public land, mostly on private land, or on both about equally, in South Dakota?**



**Q58. For (species) hunting, would you say you hunt mostly on public land, mostly on private land, or on both about equally, in South Dakota?**

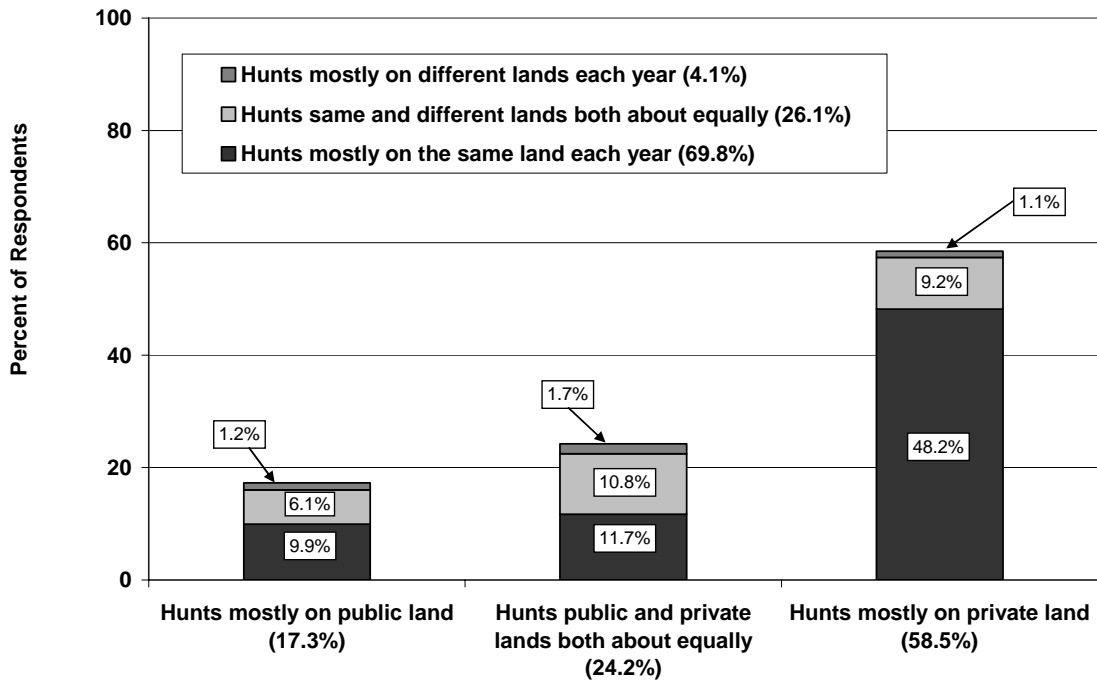


**Q57. When hunting in South Dakota for (species), do you mostly hunt on the same lands each year, mostly hunt on different lands each year, or both about equally?**

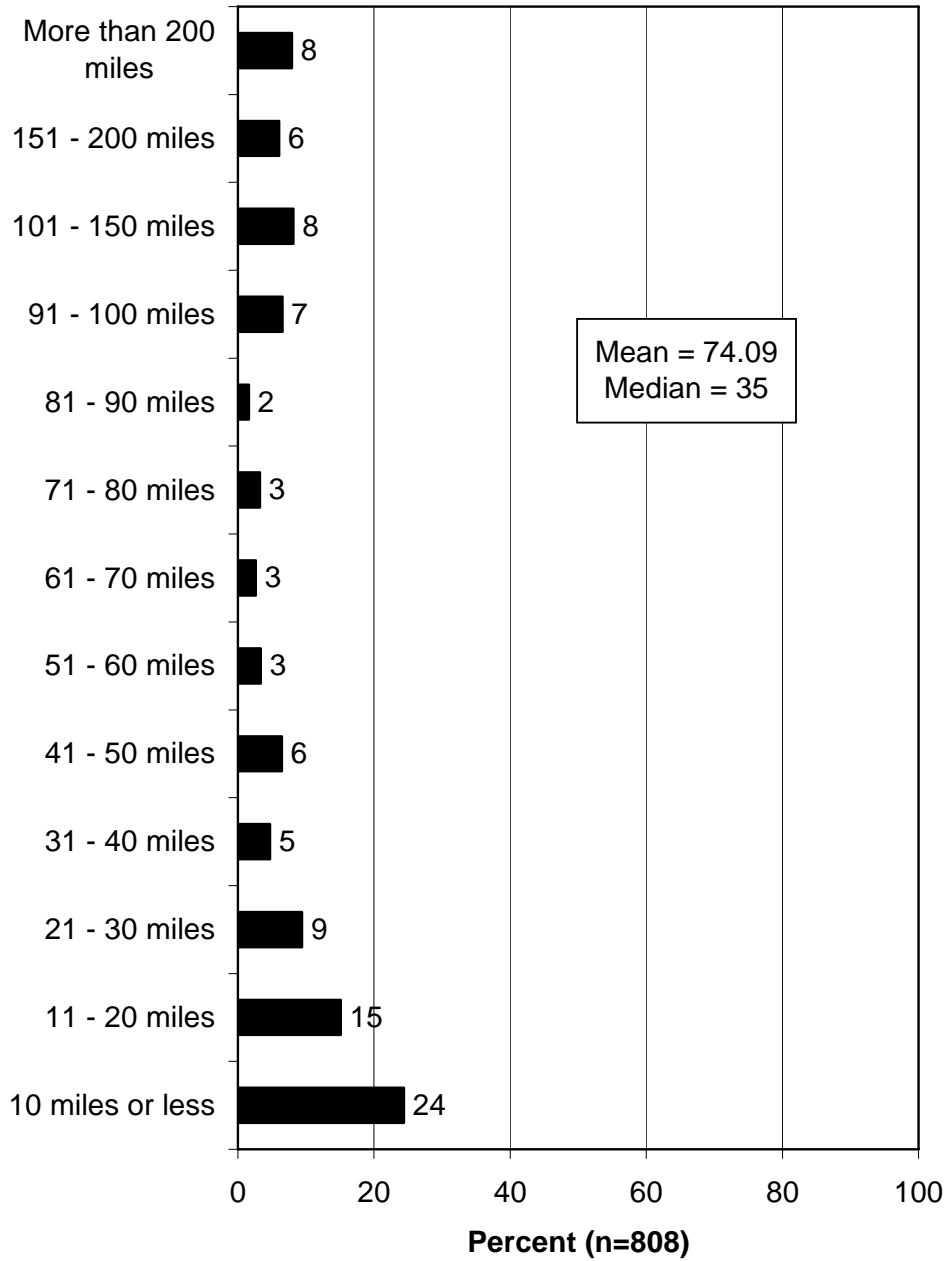


- The graph below shows a combination of Question 57 (hunts on same or different lands) and Question 58 (hunts on public or private lands).

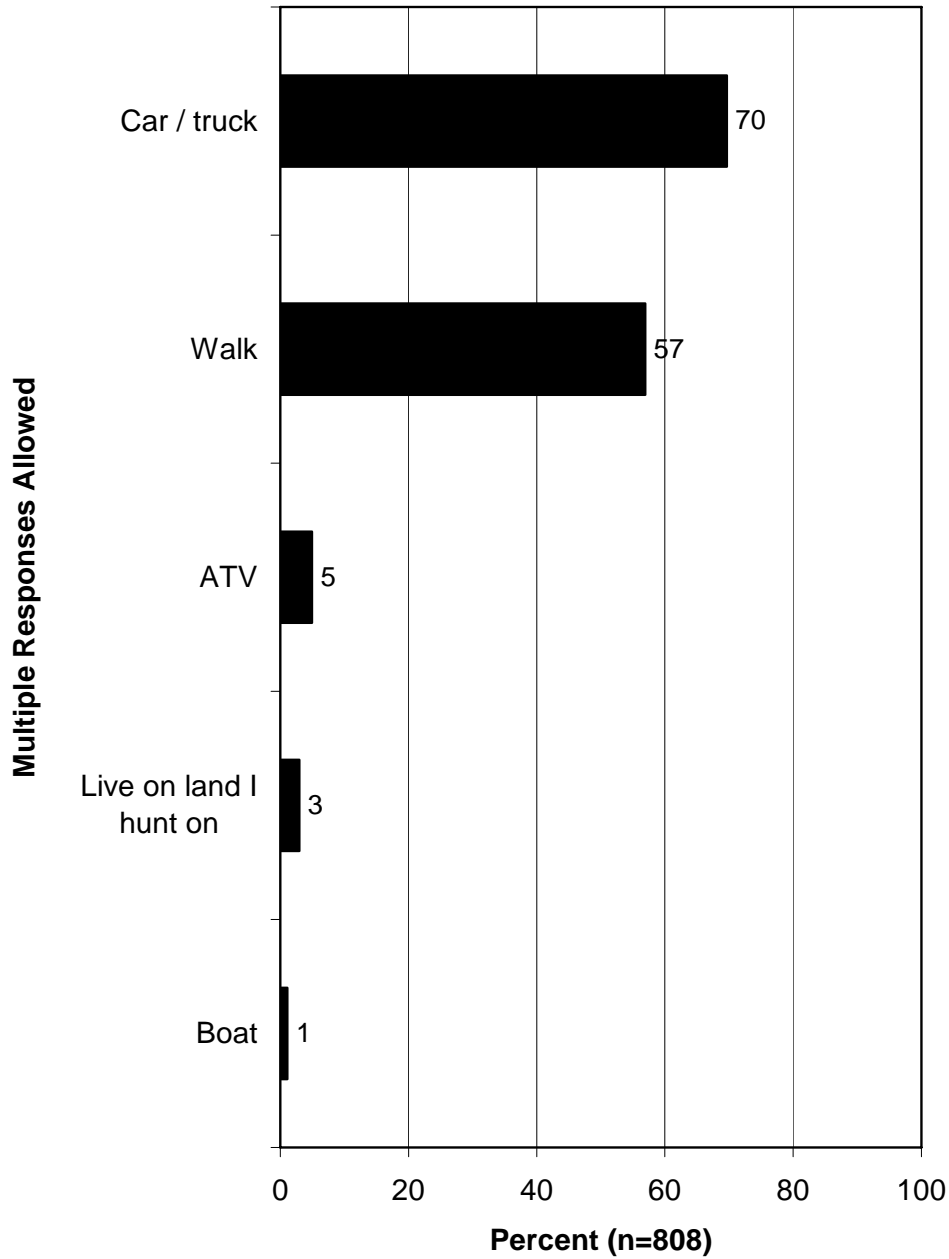
**Q57/58. Hunting on public versus private lands and hunting on same versus different lands.**



**Q85. How far do you usually travel from home, one way, in miles, to hunt in South Dakota?**



**Q89. Which modes of transportation do you use to access the land you hunt on?**



## FACTORS CONSIDERED IN CHOOSING LANDS ON WHICH TO HUNT

- The survey asked 11 questions about the importance of various factors in hunters' decisions regarding where to hunt their primary species (shown in Text Box 1 below). For each factor, they were asked if it was *very* important, *somewhat* important, or *not at all* important. Note that the starting point in going through the list in each interview was randomized to eliminate order bias. The results of the series of questions were then ranked.
- Four factors stand out markedly more important than the rest in the ranking by the percentage saying the factor is *very* important: that the land is not crowded with other sportsmen (79% say this is *very* important), that the land is owned by somebody they know personally (65%), that they are familiar with the land (62%), and that the land is easy to access by walking (59%).
  - Three more factors are shown to be important in looking at the ranking by *very* or *somewhat* important in addition to the factors mentioned above. Those additional factors that are important include that the land is close to home, that the land is easy to access by car/truck, and that the land is private land.
  - A final graph shows the ranking by the percentage saying the factors are not at all important.

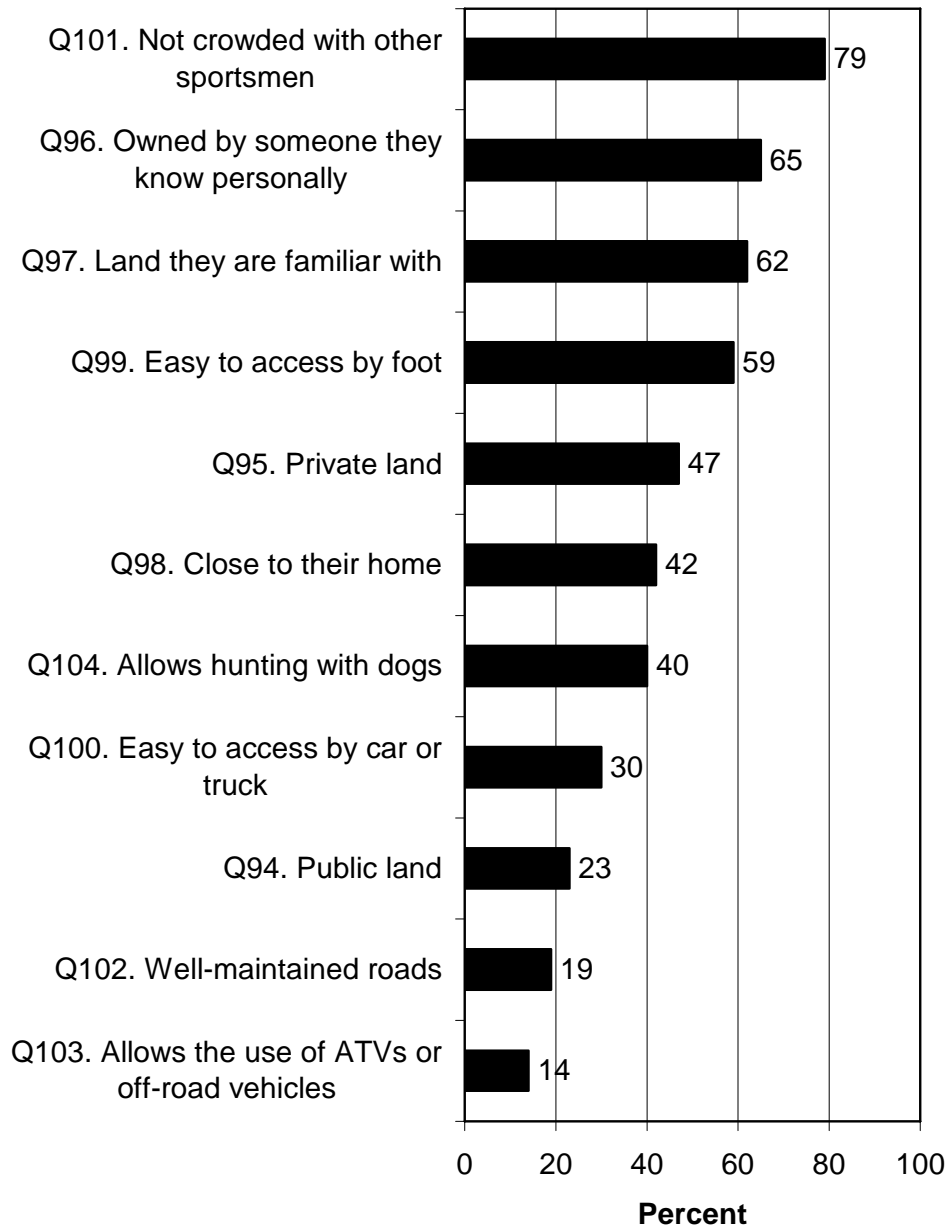
### TEXT BOX 1

#### Factors in hunters' decisions regarding where to hunt that were asked about in the survey:

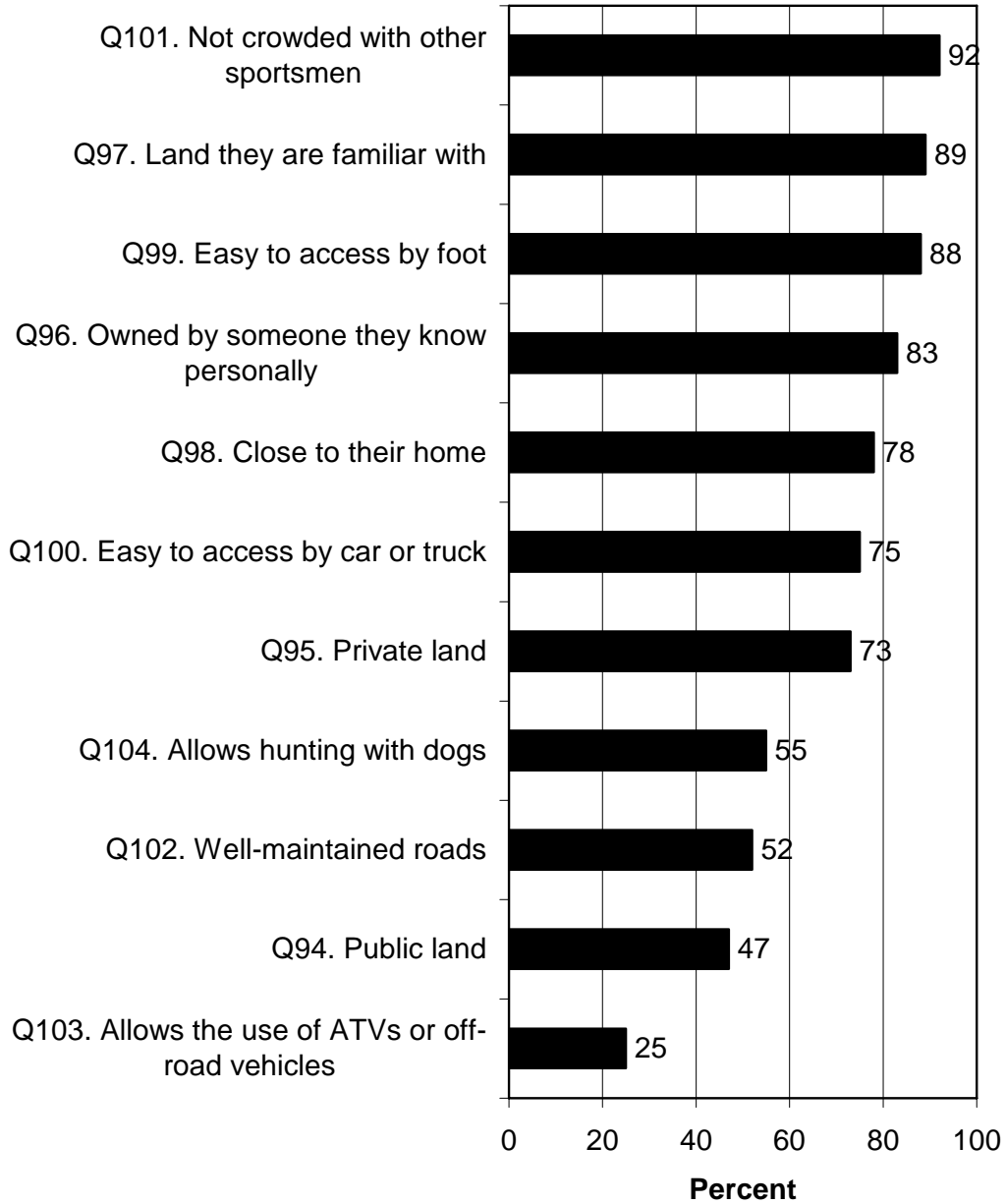
- That the land is public land
- That the land is private land
- That the land is owned by someone the respondent knows personally
- That the land is familiar to the respondent
- That the land is close to the respondent's home
- That the land is easy to access by foot
- That the land is easy to access by car or truck
- That the land is not crowded with other sportsmen
- That the land has well-maintained roads
- That the respondent can use ATVs or off-road vehicles
- That the land allows hunting with dogs

- After the series of questions discussed above, the survey asked hunters if there are any other factors that are important in their decision making regarding where to hunt. Three additional factors were commonly mentioned: the availability of game, accessibility, and the quality of the land.

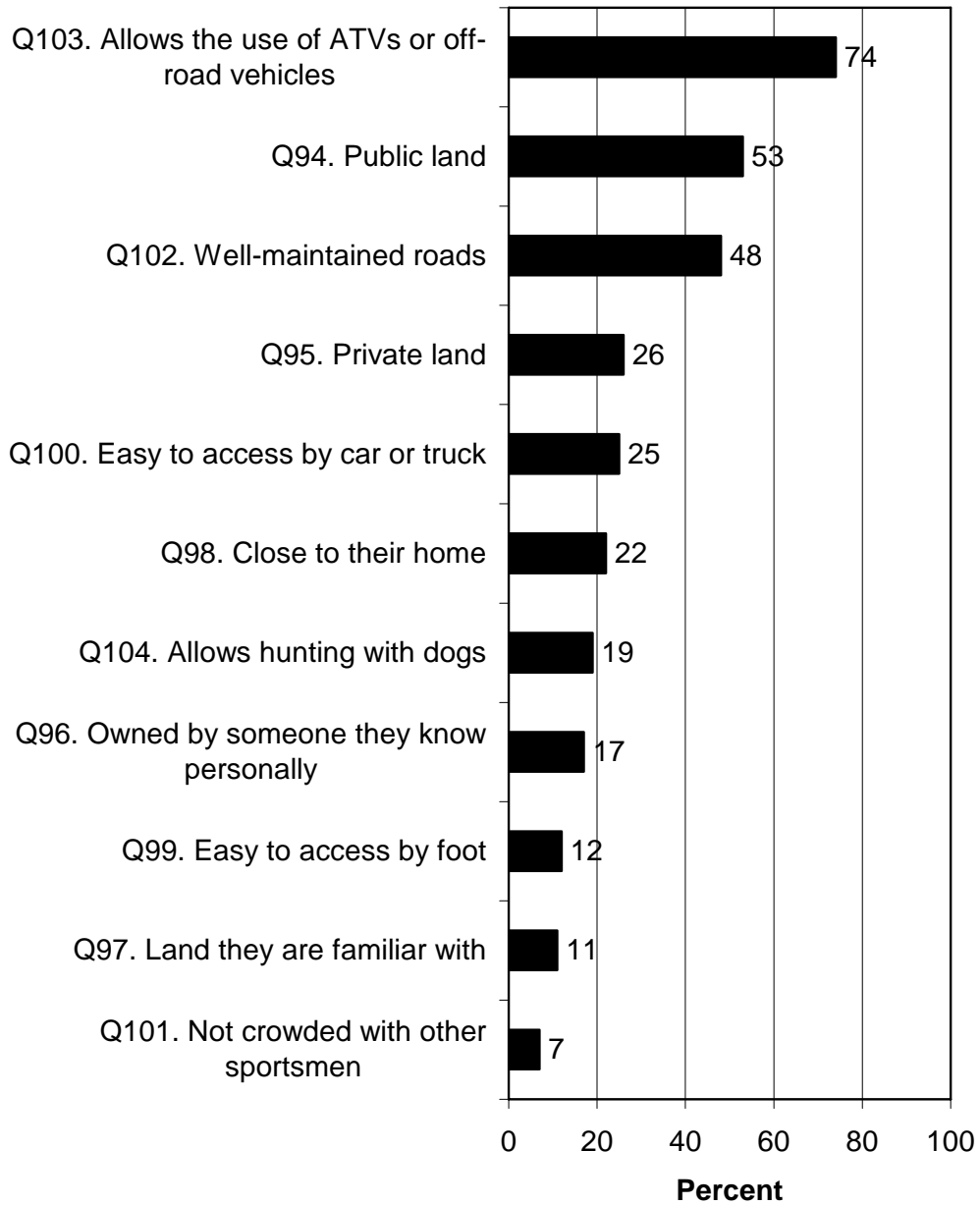
**Percent who indicated that the following are very important when deciding where to hunt (species) in South Dakota:**



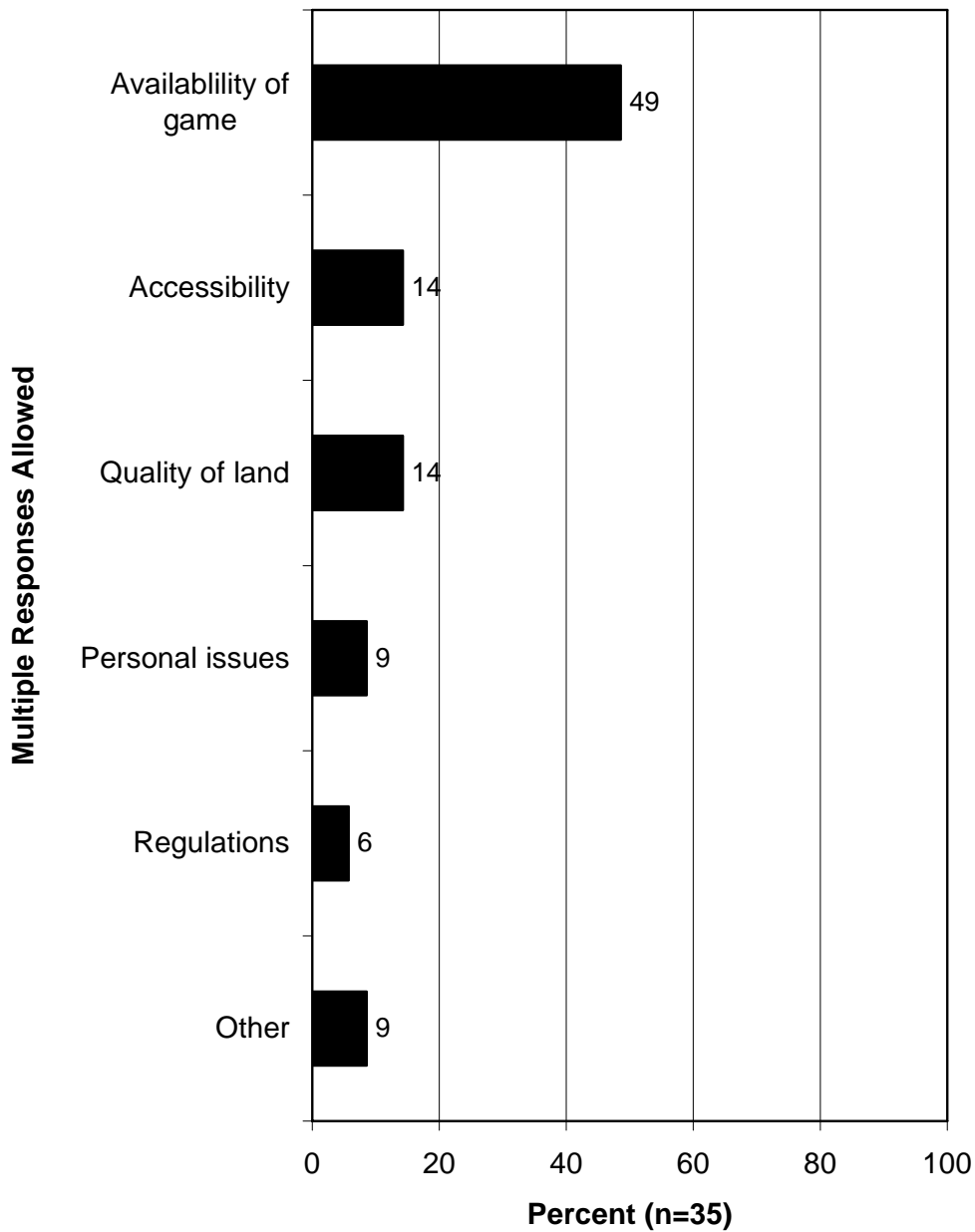
**Percent who indicated that the following are very or somewhat important when deciding where to hunt (species) in South Dakota:**



**Percent who indicated that the following are not important at all when deciding where to hunt (species) in South Dakota:**



**Q106. What other factors are important to you when deciding where to hunt? (Asked of those who said that there are other factors that are important to them when deciding where to hunt.)**



## CONSTRAINTS TO HUNTING PARTICIPATION

- A direct question asked hunters whether lack of hunting access had caused them *not* to hunt a particular species as much as they would have liked in the past 5 years, and they are split on the question: 41% of them agreed that it had done so, while 56% disagreed. In follow-up in an open-ended question, the top-named access problems were private land being posted, a simple lack of land to hunt on, the cost of access, and the land being leased to others (the four reasons that were markedly more important than the rest).
  - In follow-up, hunters were asked to name the species that they had not hunted as much as they would have liked because of access problems. The top-named species is upland game birds (55% among those who agreed to the above question), followed by white-tailed deer (37%), waterfowl (25%), and mule deer (13%). Note that hunters could name more than one species on this question.
  
- The survey asked a series of 25 questions about possible hunting access constraints (shown in Text Box 2 on the following page). For each possible constraint, the survey asked hunters if it had been, over the past 5 years, a *major* problem, a *moderate* problem, a *minor* problem, or *not at all* a problem. The starting point in going through the list in each interview was randomized. The results of the series of questions were then ranked.
  - The potential constraints that had the highest percentage of hunters saying that the constraint was a *major* problem were the cost of gas (19%), not being able to find the landowner to ask permission (15%), being denied permission to hunt on somebody else's land (14%), finding previously open private land closed because a club has now leased it (13%), finding previously open private land posted by the landowner (12%), finding previously open private land sold and posted by the new landowner (11%), and less land on which to hunt due to private land ownership changes (10%). All of these had 10% or more of respondents saying it was a *major* problem.
  - A ranking was also produced of the percentage giving a rating of *major*, *moderate*, or *minor* problem. The seven problems above were again at or near the top, along with not being sure of the boundaries of huntable land.
  - A third set of graphs in this series is shown consisting of the ranking by the percentage saying the constraint was not a problem at all.

**TEXT BOX 2****Possible constraints to hunting access that were asked about in the survey:**

Road closures  
Less land on which to hunt  
Less land on which to hunt because the land use has changed  
Less land on which to hunt due to private land ownership changes  
Not having enough information about where to hunt  
The information about where to hunt being inaccurate  
Not having ATV access in general  
Not being able to retrieve the hunt harvest because of ATV restrictions  
Having maps that show huntable land but being unable to locate that land on the ground  
Being unable to locate a road or other access route to huntable land  
Not being sure of the boundaries of huntable land  
Having to travel too far to hunt  
Being denied permission to hunt on somebody else's land  
Not being able to find the landowner to ask permission  
Finding previously open private land posted or closed by the landowner  
Finding previously open private land sold and posted or closed by the new landowner  
Finding previously open private land closed because a club has now leased it  
Private land blocking access to public land for hunting  
Poor maintenance of roads or trails  
The cost of gas  
Not being able to find a good place to park their vehicle  
Not being able to find a place to launch a boat  
Housing or other development making land not huntable  
Information from the South Dakota Division of Wildlife being out of date  
Access or leasing fees being expensive

- A follow-up question to one of the questions within the aforementioned series asked those who indicated that road closures had been a problem to indicate how the road had been closed. Most commonly, the road was closed by a gate, although a few indicated that the road was closed by a “No trespassing” sign posted by a landowner, was closed by lack of maintenance (e.g., downed trees not cut out of the way, gullies), or was closed by a berm or dirt pile deposited at the entrance.
- Most commonly, the road closures were perceived to be seasonal/temporary rather than permanent.
  - Another follow-up question asked for the location/type of the closed road. Most commonly, the closed roads were “other” public roads (other than National Forest roads or BLM roads); in sum, 69% indicated some sort of public road. Meanwhile, 23% indicated that the closed roads were private.

- Another follow-up question within the above series was asked of those who indicated that not being able to retrieve their harvest because of ATV restrictions had been a problem (only 5% indicated that this was a problem). The follow-up question asked if they agreed or disagreed that not being able to retrieve game with an ATV had caused them to hunt less than they would otherwise have liked to do, and 33% agreed (less than 2% of hunters overall), while 67% disagreed. This suggests that ATV restrictions are *not* an important problem to the overwhelming majority of hunters, as only 5% indicated that ATV restrictions on retrieving game had been a problem, and, further, less than 2% of hunters hunted less than they would otherwise because of ATV restrictions.
  
- A final follow-up question within the above series was asked of those who indicated that private land blocking access to public land had been a problem. The follow-up question asked how much of a problem was *intentional* blocking of public land by a private landowner, and 64% of those respondents indicated that private landowners *intentionally* blocking access was a problem.
  
- After the above series of questions, the survey then presented hunters a list of 16 problems with actions hunters may have had to take because of the problem (e.g., leaving a hunt area because of crowding from other recreationists). The list of problems is shown in Text Box 3 on the following page. For each possible problem, the survey asked hunters if it had been, over the past 5 years, a *major* problem, a *moderate* problem, a *minor* problem, or *not at all* a problem. The results of the series of questions were then ranked.
  - In looking at the ranking by the percentage saying the problem was *major*, *moderate*, or *minor*, the top problems are leaving an area because of crowding from other hunters (50%), leaving an area because they felt unsafe because of other hunters (33%), not being sure whether they were on private or public land (31%), not being sure whose land they were on (29%), leaving an area because of the irresponsible behavior of other hunters (28%), and not going on a hunt or changing locations because of access problems (26%)—all with more than a quarter saying it had been a problem.

- Also shown is the graph in this series showing the ranking by the percentage saying the given item had been a *major* problem, as well as the ranking by the percentage saying the given item had been *not* a problem at all.

**TEXT BOX 3****Possible problems regarding hunting access that were asked about in the survey:**

Not going on a hunt or changing locations because of access problems  
Not going on a hunt or changing locations because the respondent felt that a leasing fee was too expensive  
Not going on a hunt or changing locations because map information was wrong  
Not going on a hunt or changing locations because access for those with disabilities was not available  
Leaving an area because of crowding from other hunters  
Leaving an area because of crowding from other recreationists  
Leaving an area because respondent felt unsafe because of other hunters  
Leaving an area because of the irresponsible behavior of other hunters  
Not being sure whether he/she was on private or public land  
Not being sure whose land he/she was on  
Not hunting somewhere because of ATV restrictions  
Not hunting somewhere because ATV use is allowed or not restricted  
Being in an area where he/she was not sure which hunting regulations applied  
Being confused by a state agency map that was hard to follow  
Discontinuing a hunting club membership because he/she felt the fees were too expensive  
Trying to join a hunting club that was already full

- The survey asked hunters a series of 10 questions about factors that may or may not influence access to hunting land in South Dakota in general, regardless of whether their own participation is affected by it (shown in Text Box 4 on the following page). For each factor, the survey asked hunters if they think it is a *major* problem, a *moderate* problem, a *minor* problem, or *not at all* a problem. The starting point in going through the list in each interview was randomized to eliminate order bias. The results of the series of questions were then ranked.
  - In looking at the ranking by the percentages saying the factor is a *major*, a *moderate*, or a *minor* problem, 4 of the 10 factors have more than a third saying it is a problem: private land posted or closed because the landowner is specifically concerned about liability (46%), lack of or unclear signs marking public hunting lands (43%), public or private land tracts being broken up when sold or leased (38%), and equipment use restrictions on public land (34%).

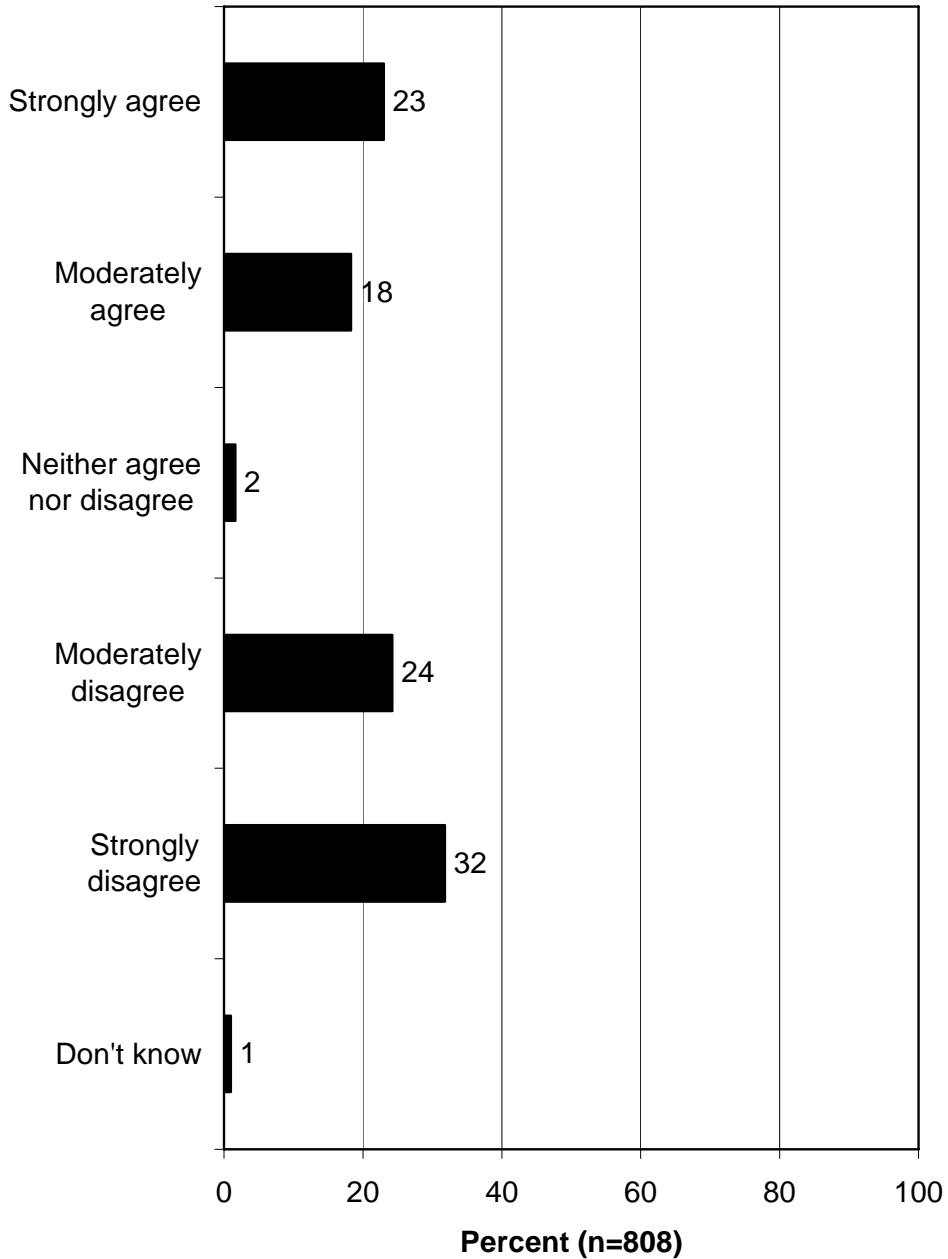
- Also shown is the graph in this series showing the ranking by the percentage saying the given factor is a *major* problem, as well as the ranking by the percentage saying the given factor is *not* a problem at all.

**TEXT BOX 4****Factors that may or may not influence hunting access that were asked about in the survey:**

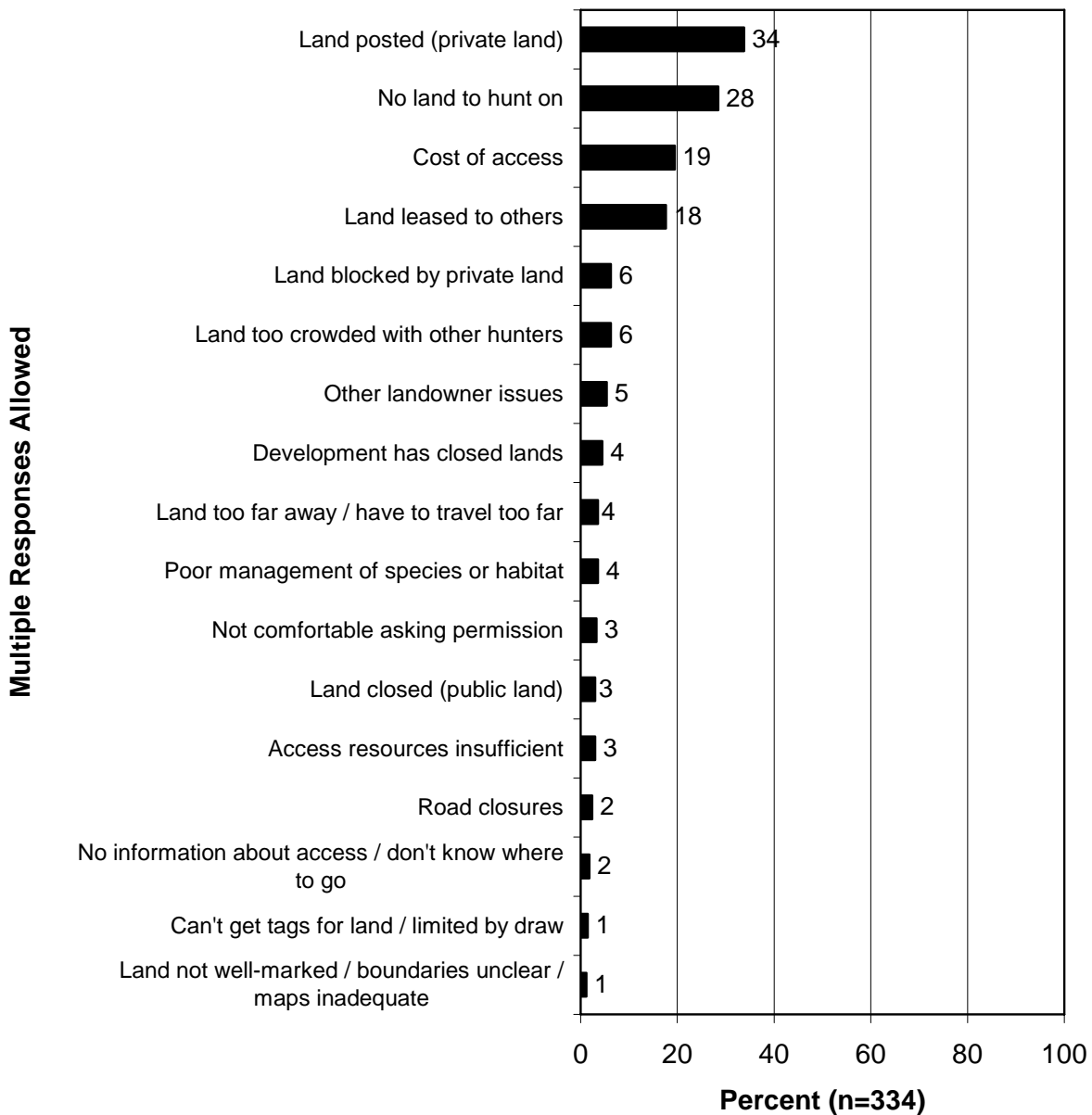
Poor management or allocation of uses of public land  
Lack of or unclear signs marking public hunting lands  
Restrictions on public land  
Closures of public land by government agencies  
Not enough access to public lands for those with disabilities  
Housing and commercial development  
Gas and oil extraction on public lands  
Public or private land tracts being broken up when sold or leased  
Private land posted or closed because the landowner is specifically concerned about liability  
Management of land for purposes other than hunting, such as timber cutting

- When asked in an open-ended question if there were any things that had taken away from their enjoyment of hunting in South Dakota, even if those things did not prevent them from actually going, 39% of hunters indicated that something had taken away from their enjoyment. Most commonly, they named an access-related problem (12%), followed by a regulation-related answer (6%), age/health (5%), and no time/family or work obligations (4%). Note that the analysis broke down the “access-related problems” category into specific access problems as subsets of access-related problems overall. Primary among those access problems are private land being posted (3%), a simple lack of land to hunt on (3%), and land leased to others (2%).

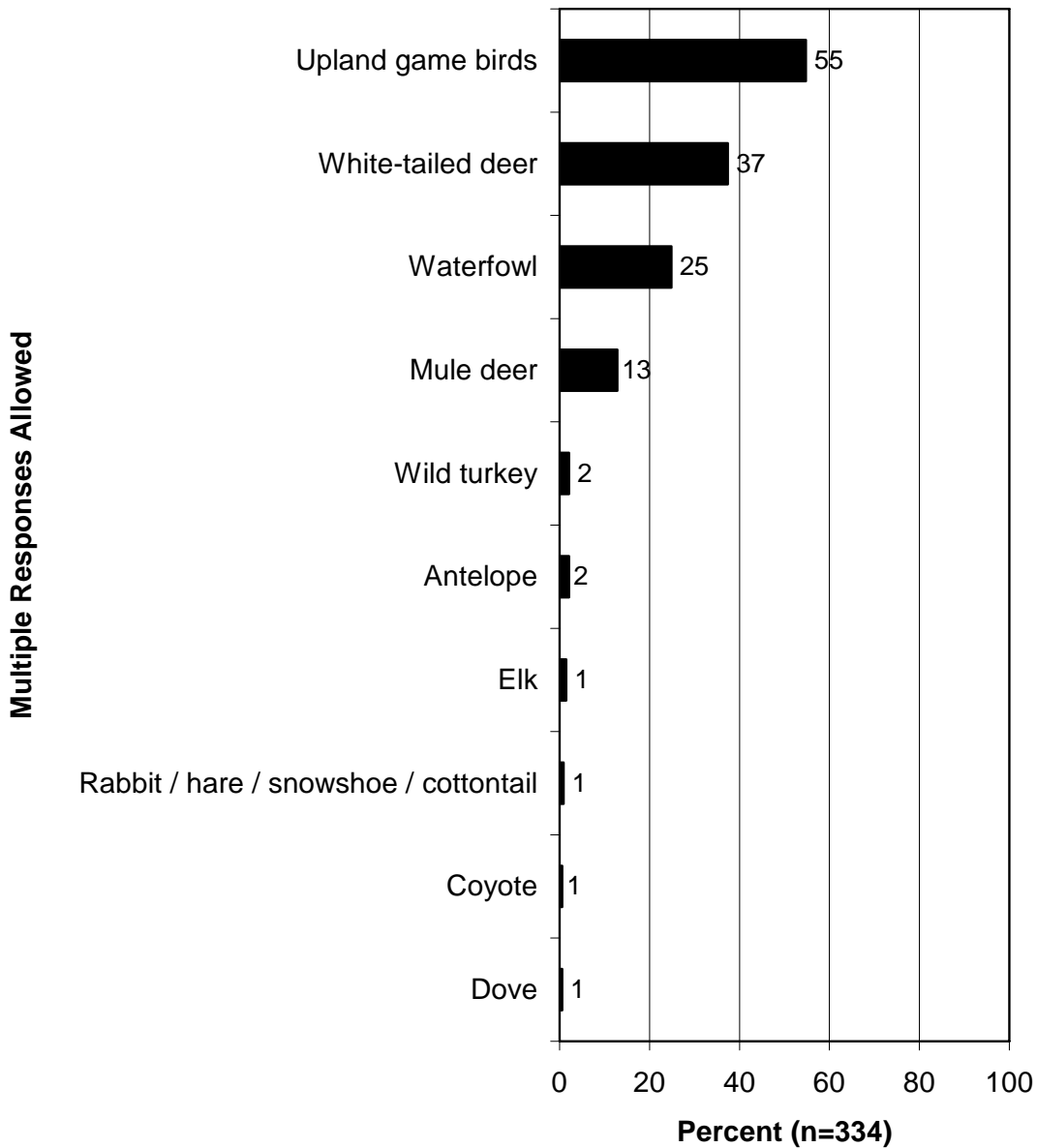
**Q40. Do you agree or disagree that a lack of access to hunting lands in South Dakota has caused you to not hunt any species as much as you would have liked in the past 5 years?**



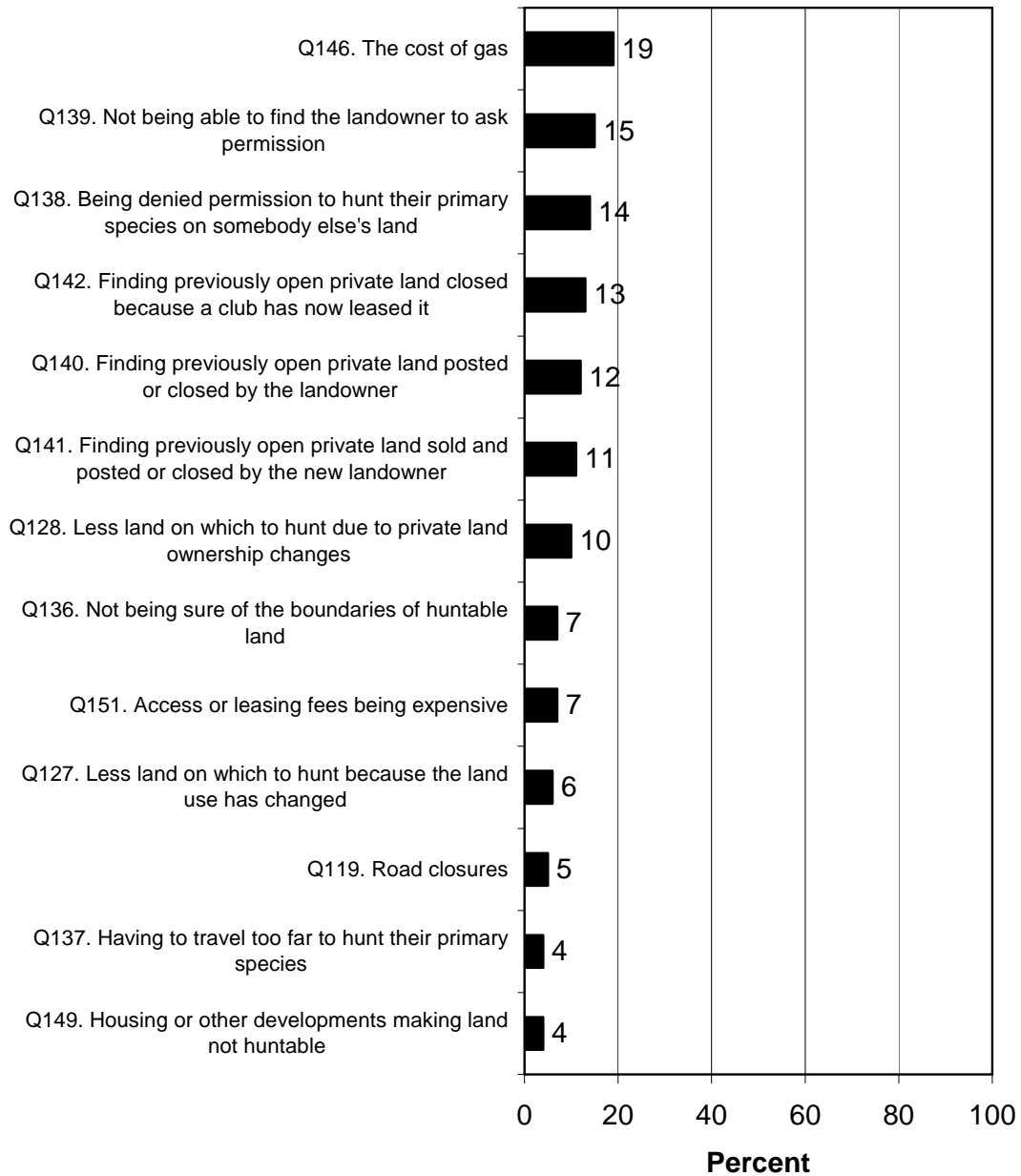
**Q48. What are the specific access problems that have caused you not to hunt this/these species as much as you would have liked? (Asked of those who agree that lack of access to hunting lands in South Dakota has caused them not to hunt a species as much as they would have liked in the past 5 years.)**



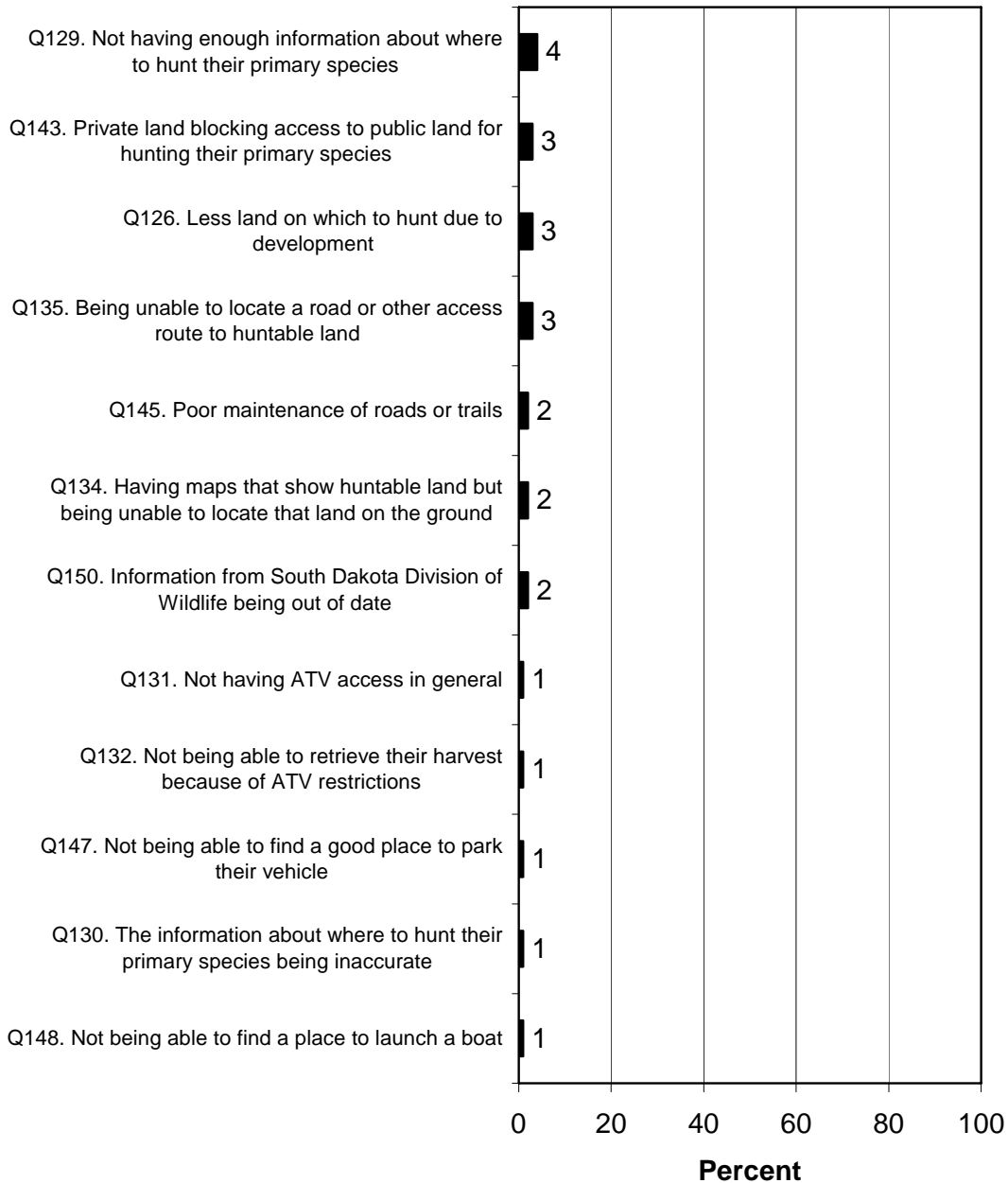
**Q43. What species have you not hunted as much as you would have liked as a result of access problems? (Asked of those who agree that lack of access to hunting lands in South Dakota has caused them not to hunt a species as much as they would have liked in the past 5 years.)**



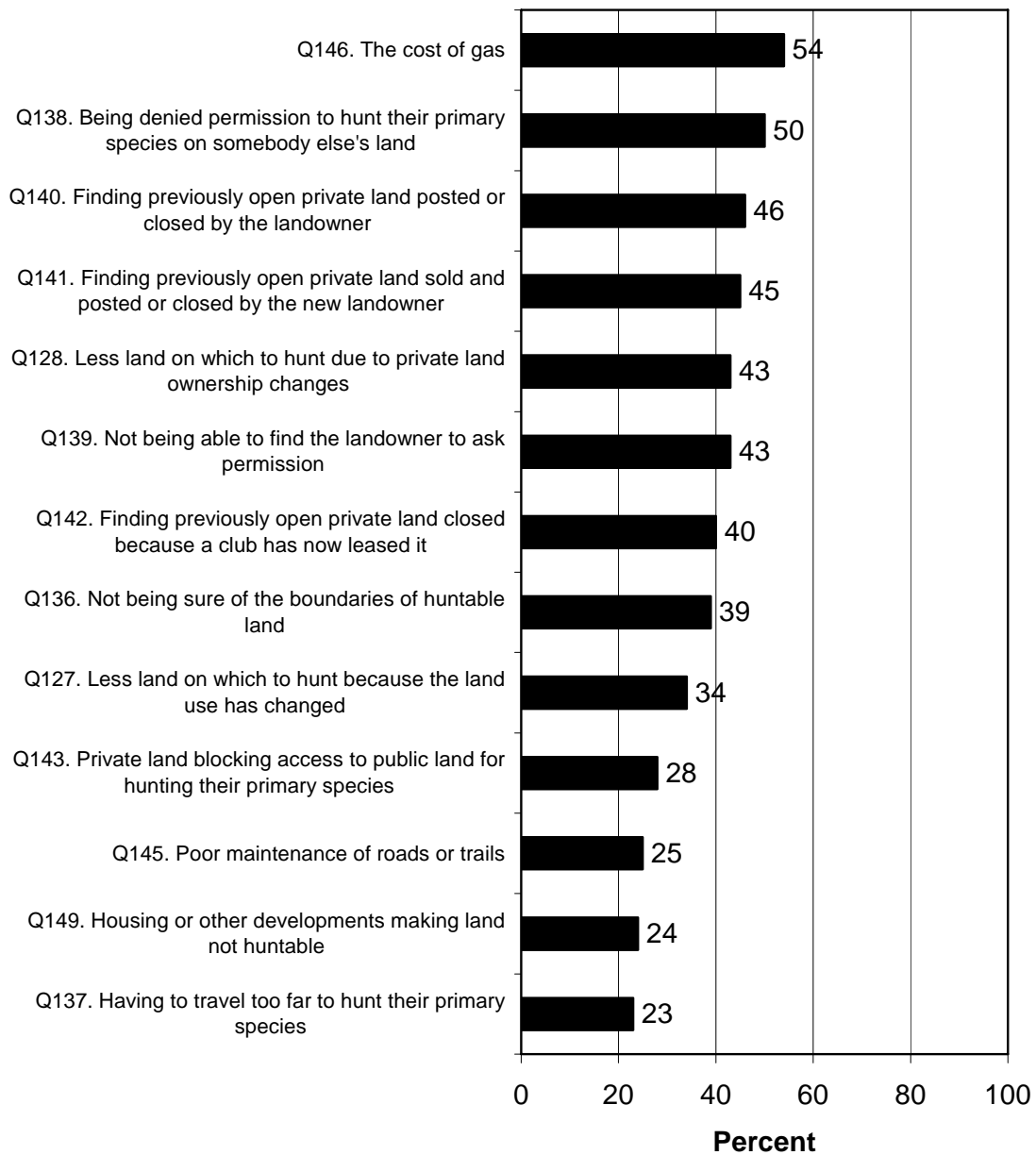
**Percent who indicated that the following hunting access problems have been a major problem in the past 5 years when hunting (species).  
(Part 1)**



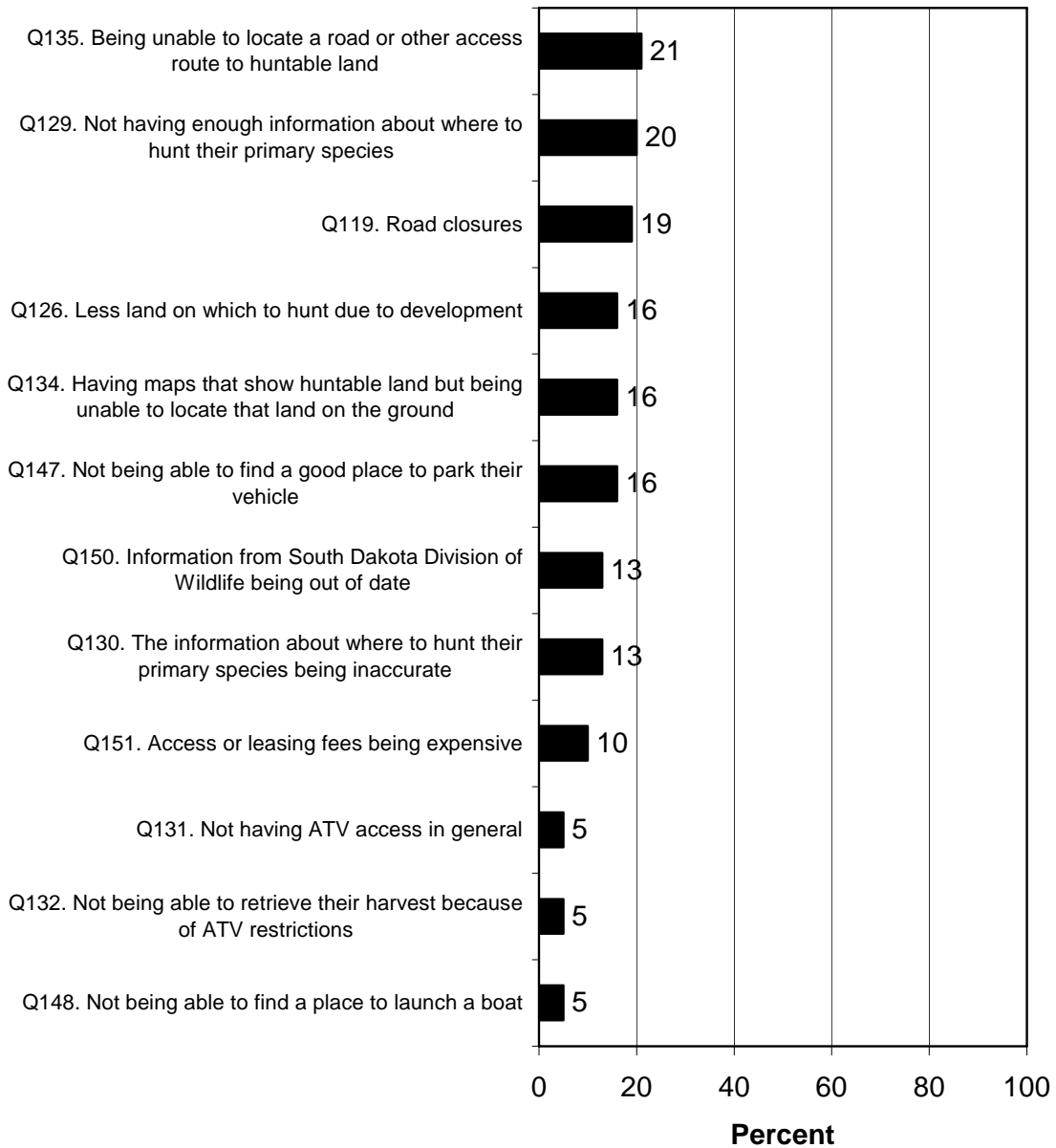
**Percent who indicated that the following hunting access problems have been a major problem in the past 5 years when hunting (species).  
(Part 2)**



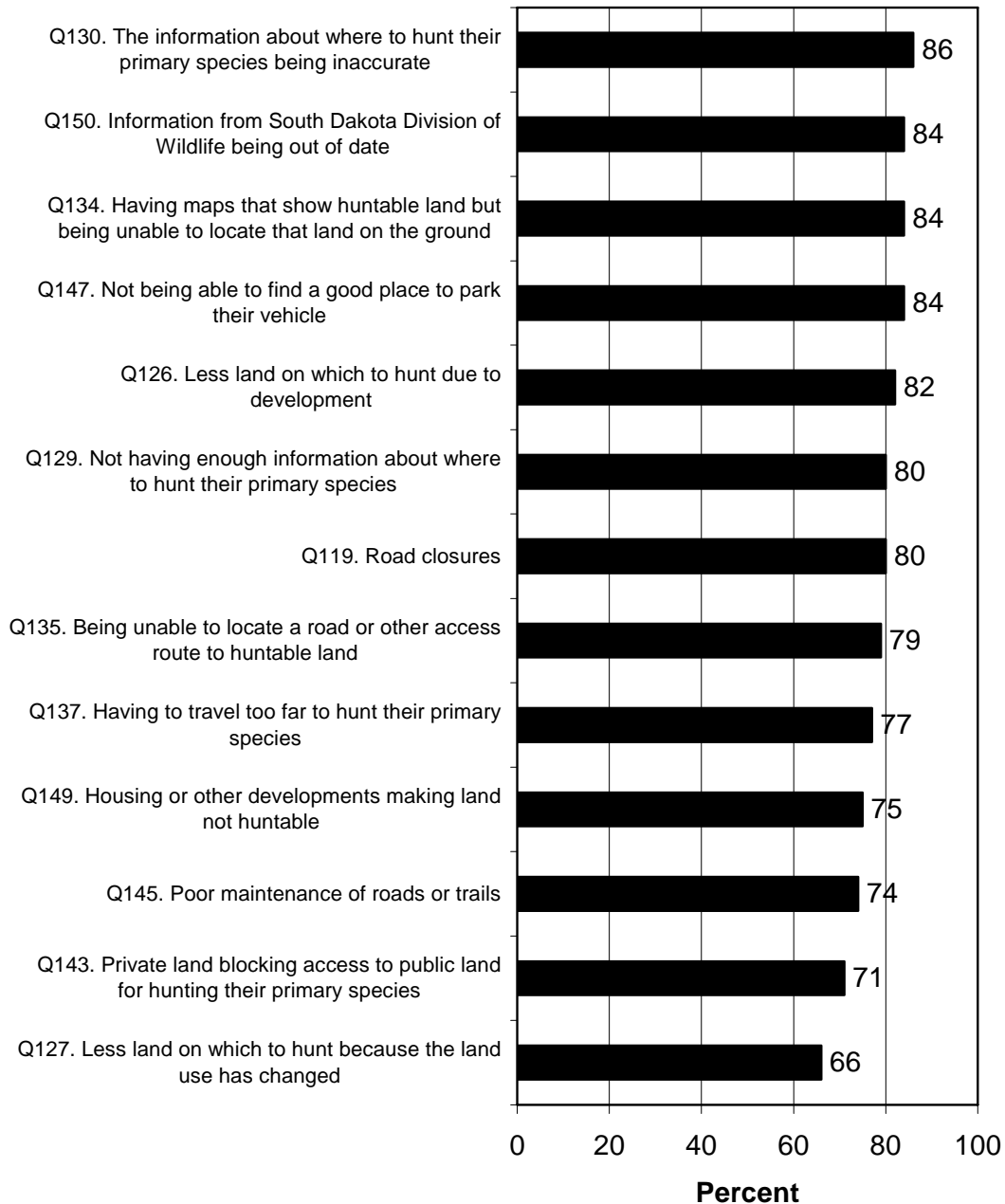
**Percent who indicated that the following hunting access problems have been a major, moderate, or minor problem in the past 5 years when hunting (species).  
(Part 1)**



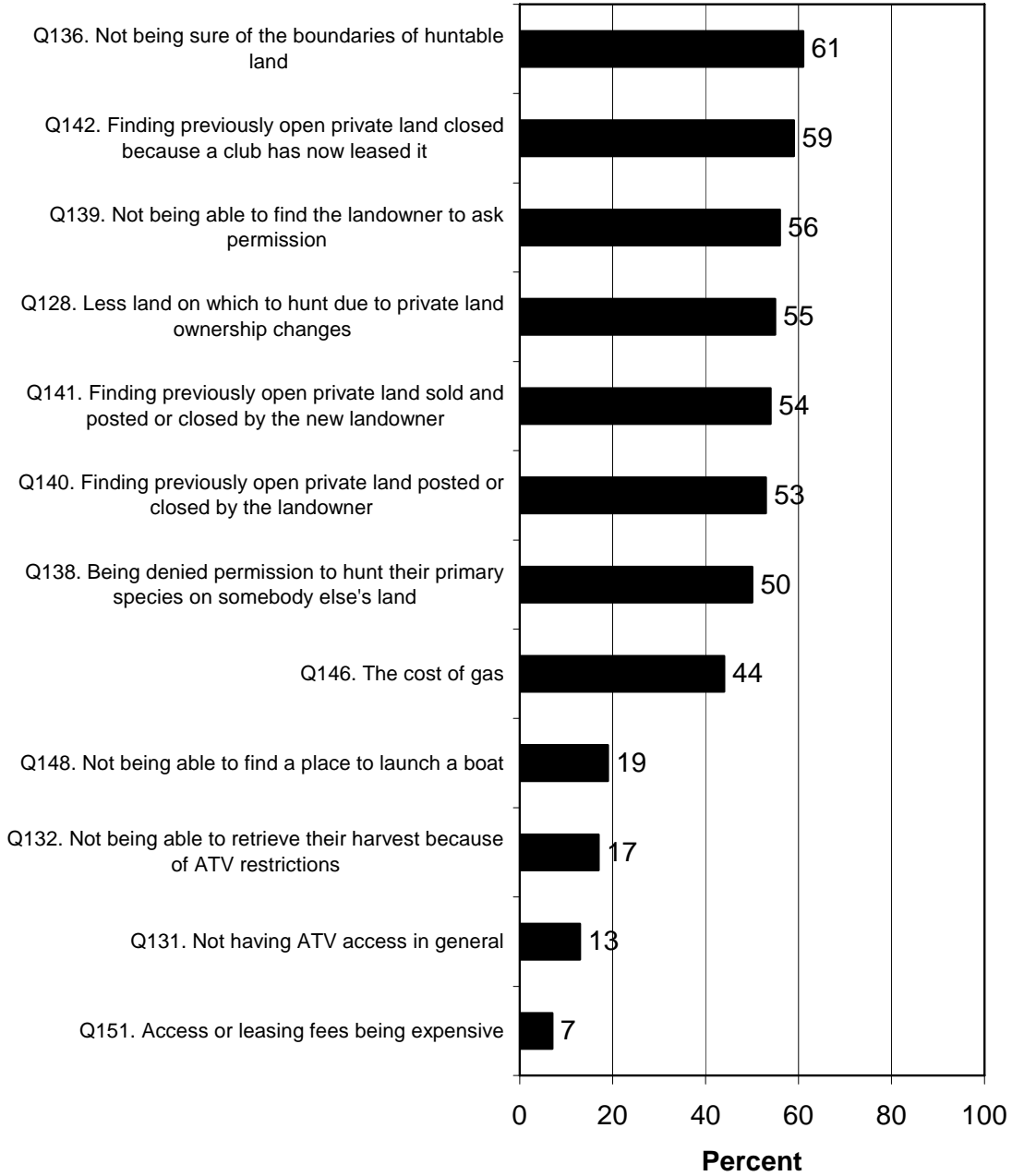
**Percent who indicated that the following hunting access problems have been a major, moderate, or minor problem in the past 5 years when hunting (species).  
(Part 2)**



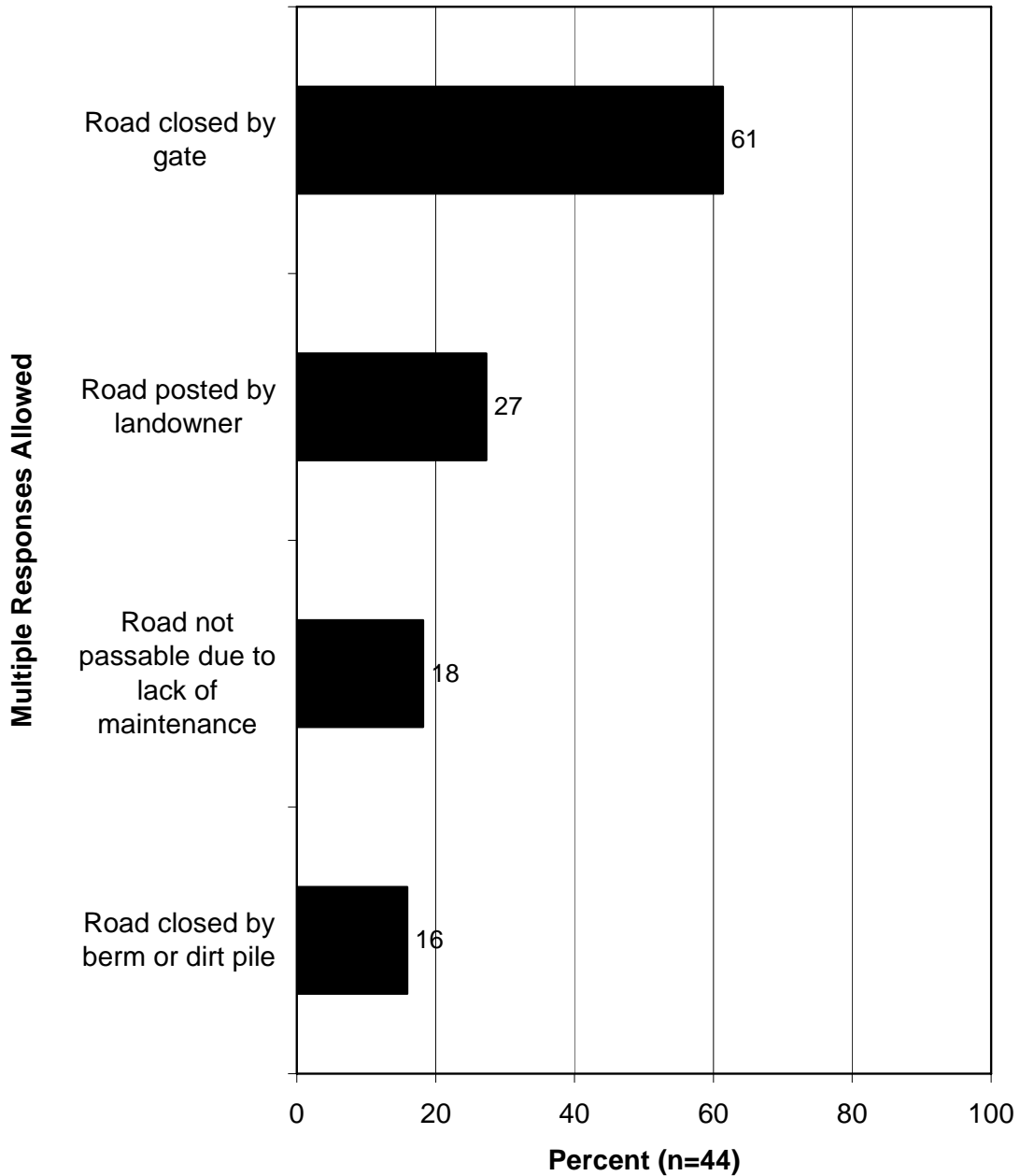
**Percent who indicated that the following hunting access problems have not been a problem at all in the past 5 years when hunting (species).  
(Part 1)**



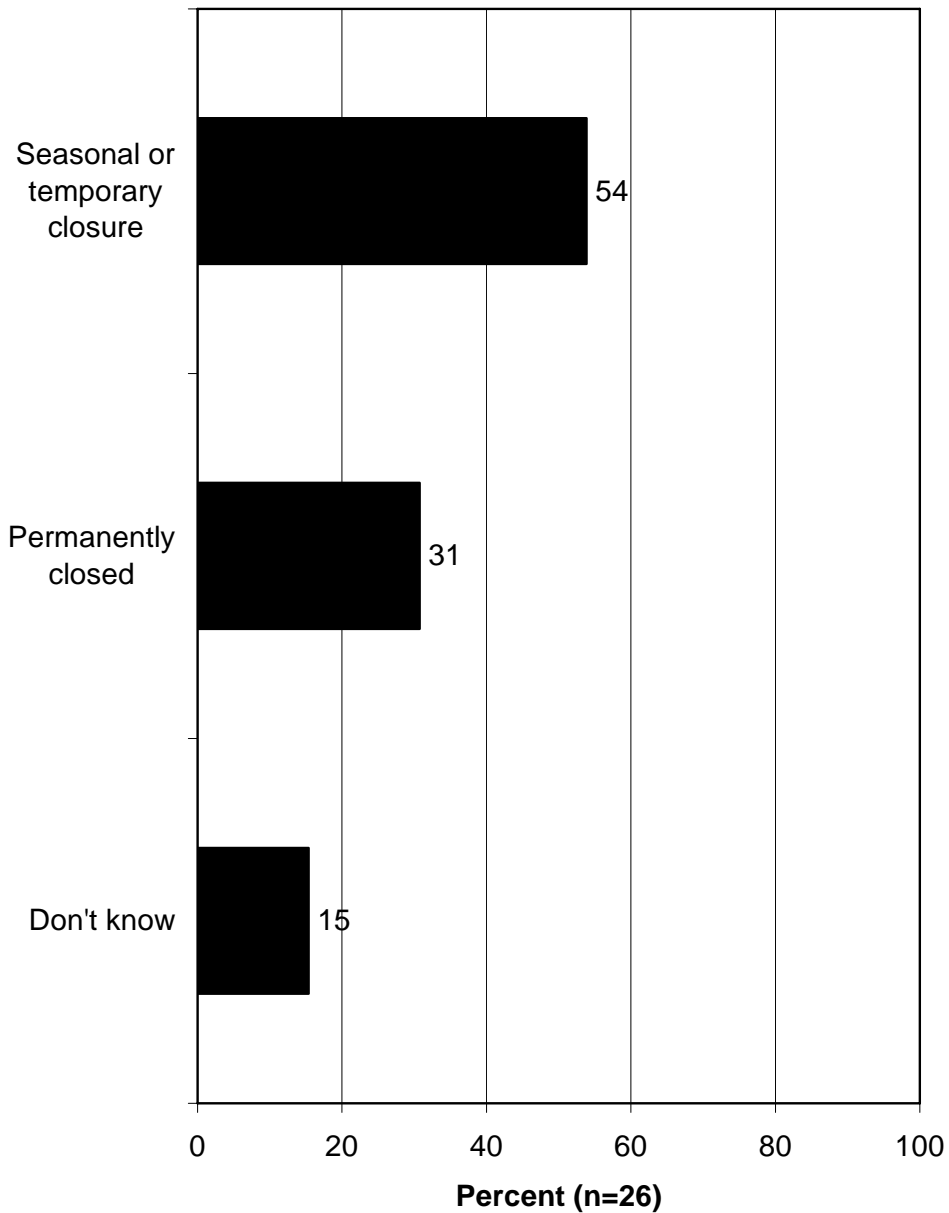
**Percent who indicated that the following hunting access problems have not been a problem at all in the past 5 years when hunting (species).  
(Part 2)**



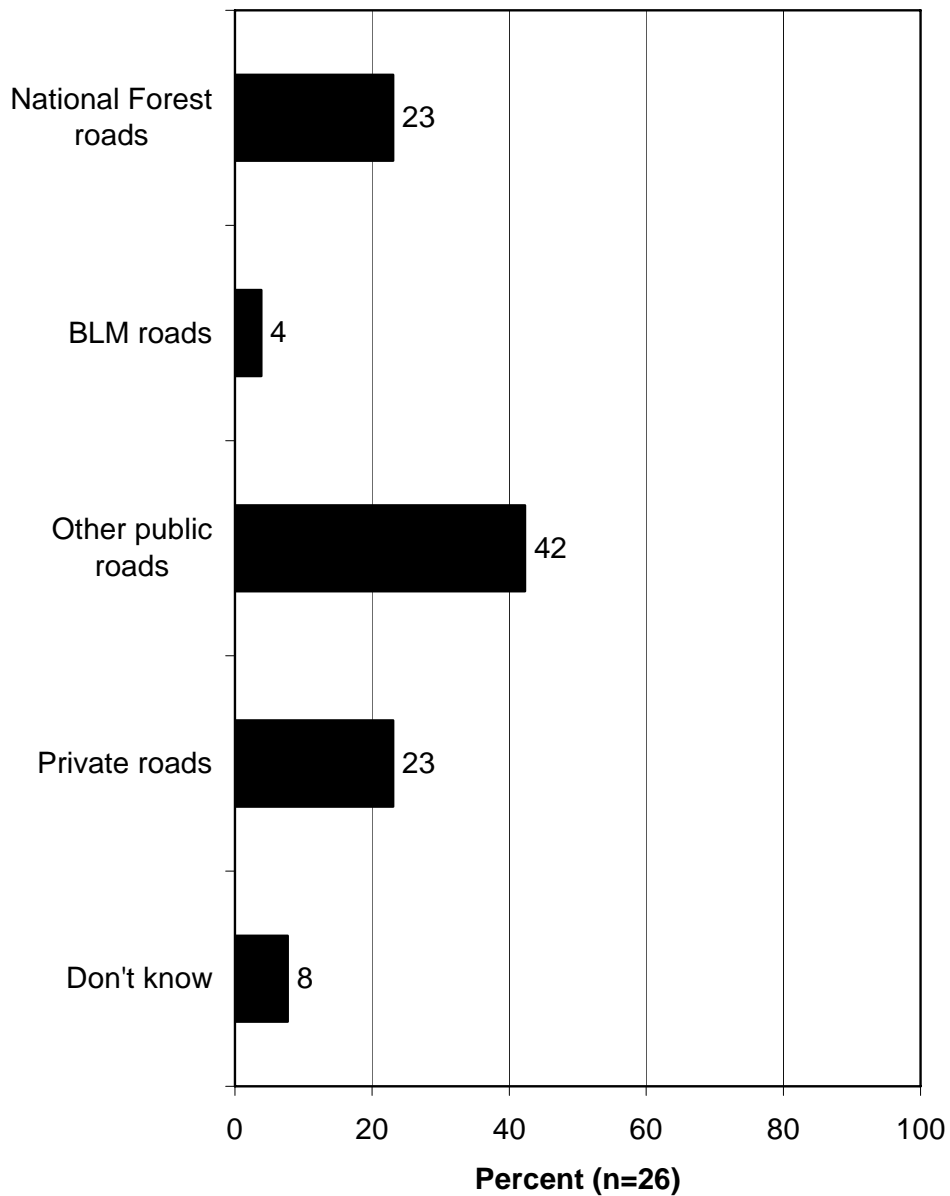
**Q122. How were the roads closed? (Asked of those who said road closures have been a problem when they were hunting their primary species.)**



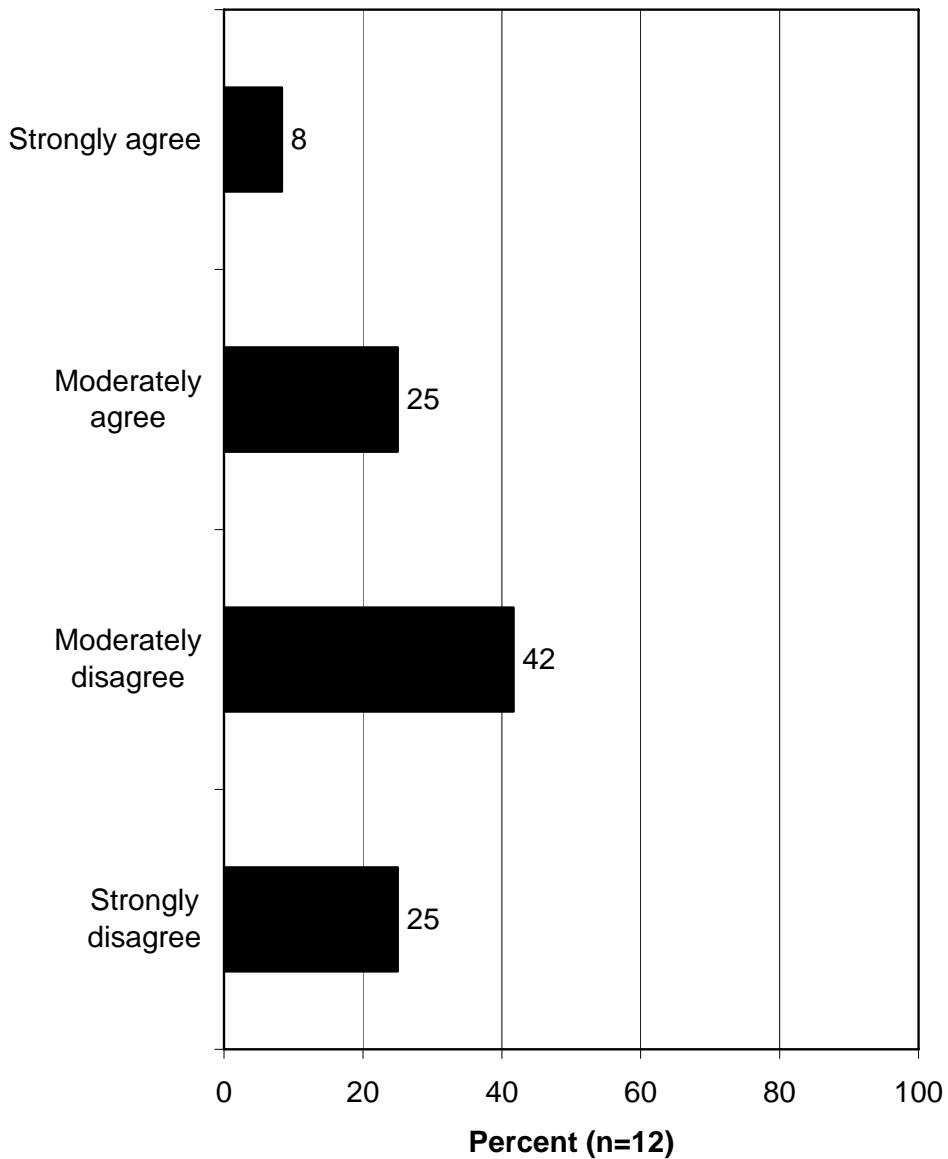
**Q124. Was this a seasonal or temporary closure, or was it permanently closed? (Asked of those who said road closures have been a problem when they were hunting their primary species and who said the road was closed by a gate.)**



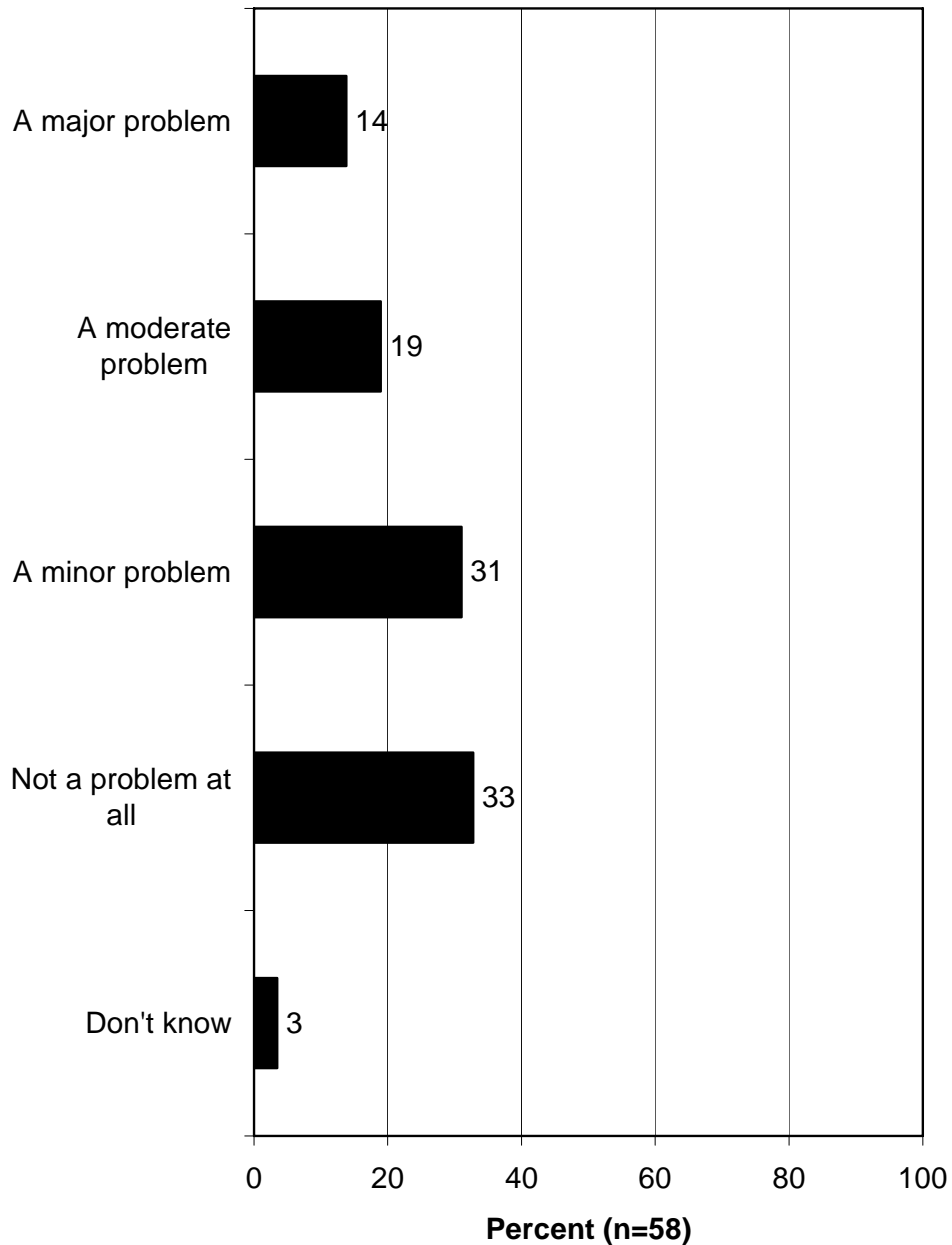
**Q125. Were the closed roads National Forest roads, BLM roads, other public roads, or private roads? (Asked of those who said road closures have been a problem when they were hunting their primary species and who said the road was closed by a gate.)**



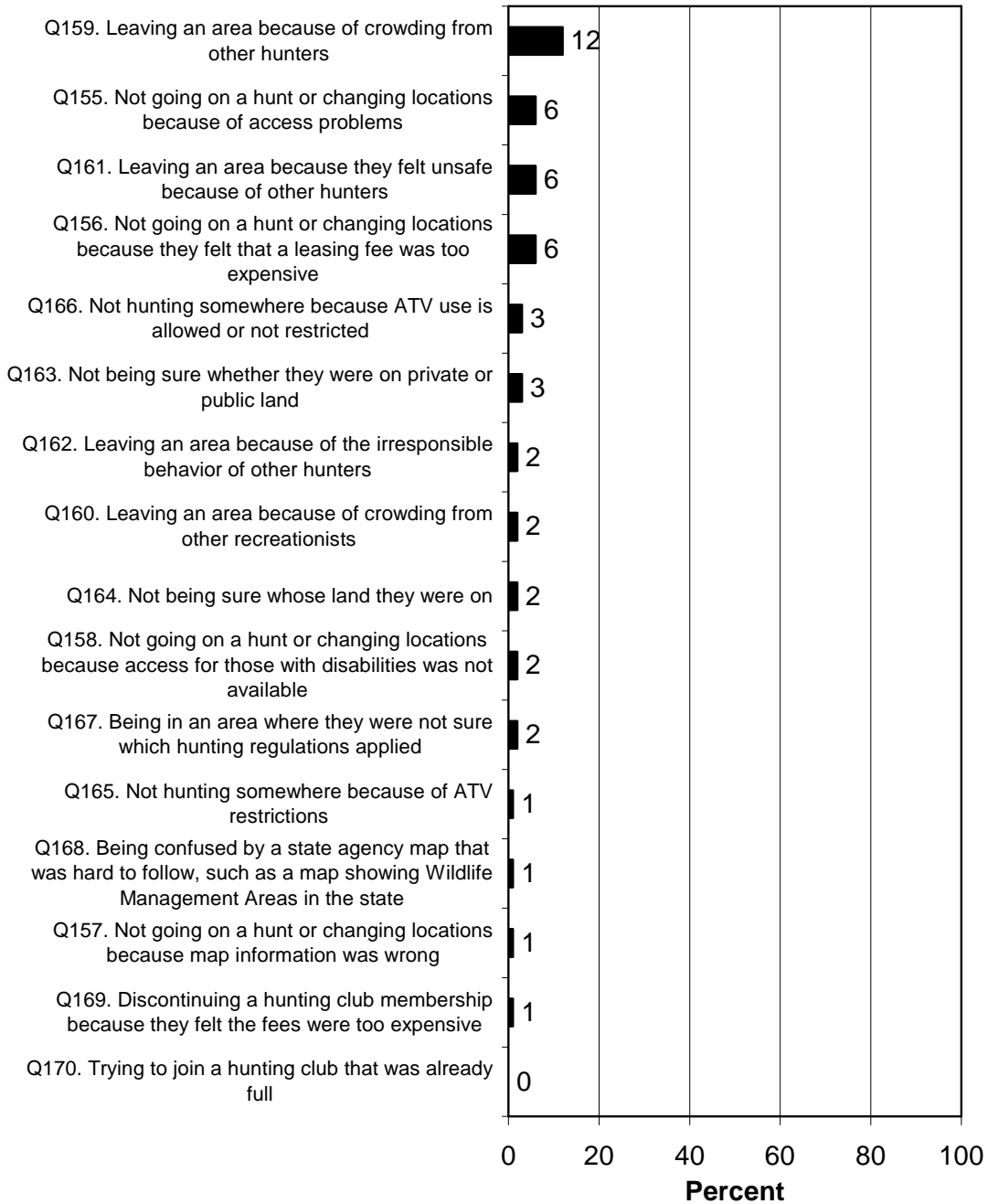
**Q133. Do you agree or disagree that not being able to retrieve your harvest with an ATV has caused you to hunt less in the past 5 years? (Asked of those who said that not being able to retrieve their harvest because of ATV restrictions has been a problem when they were hunting their primary species.)**



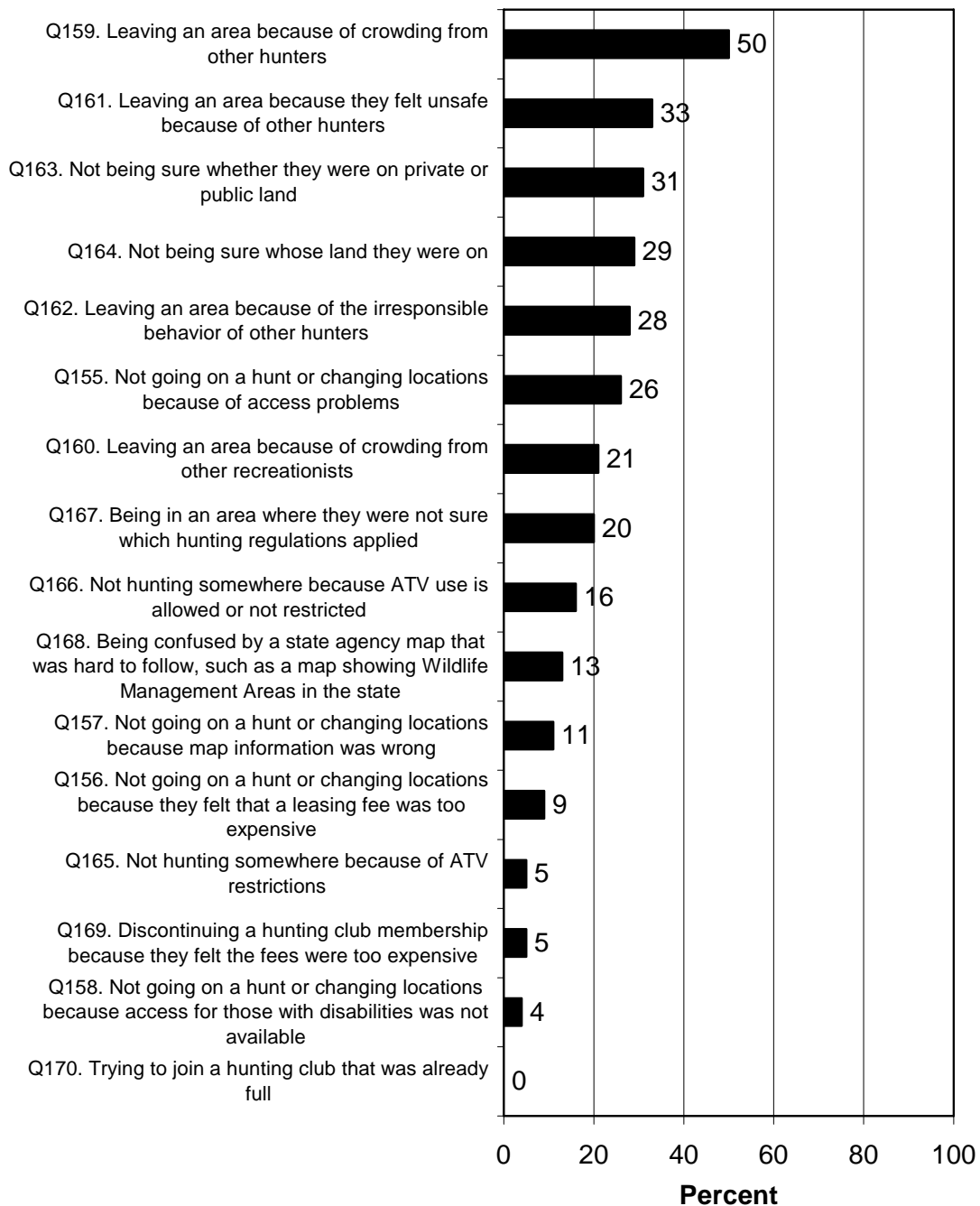
**Q144. How much of a problem were landowners intentionally blocking or making it difficult to physically access public land? (Asked of those who said that private land blocking access to public land has been a problem when they were hunting their primary species.)**



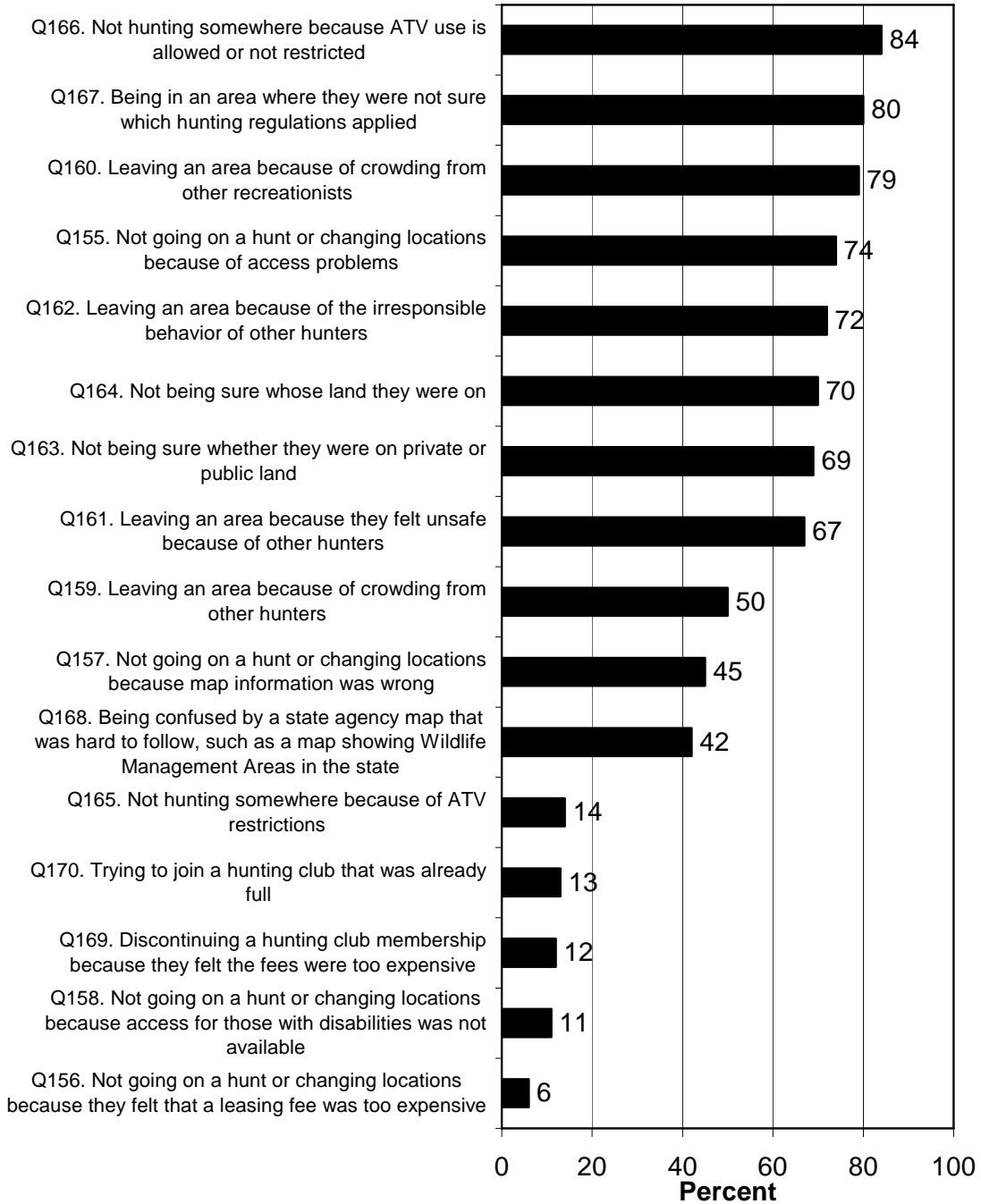
**Percent who indicated that the following have been a major problem in the past 5 years when hunting (species).**



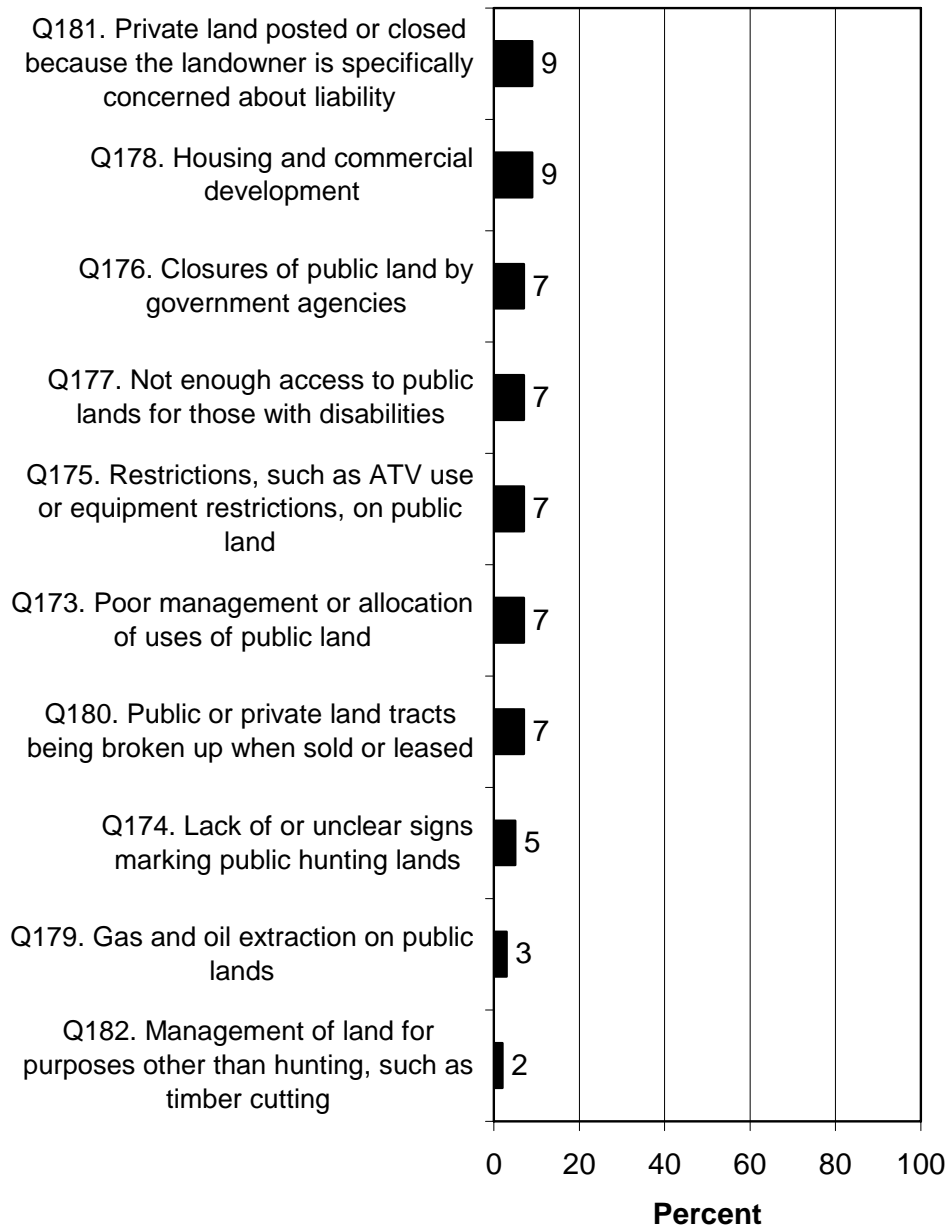
**Percent who indicated that the following have been a major, moderate, or minor problem in the past 5 years when hunting (species).**



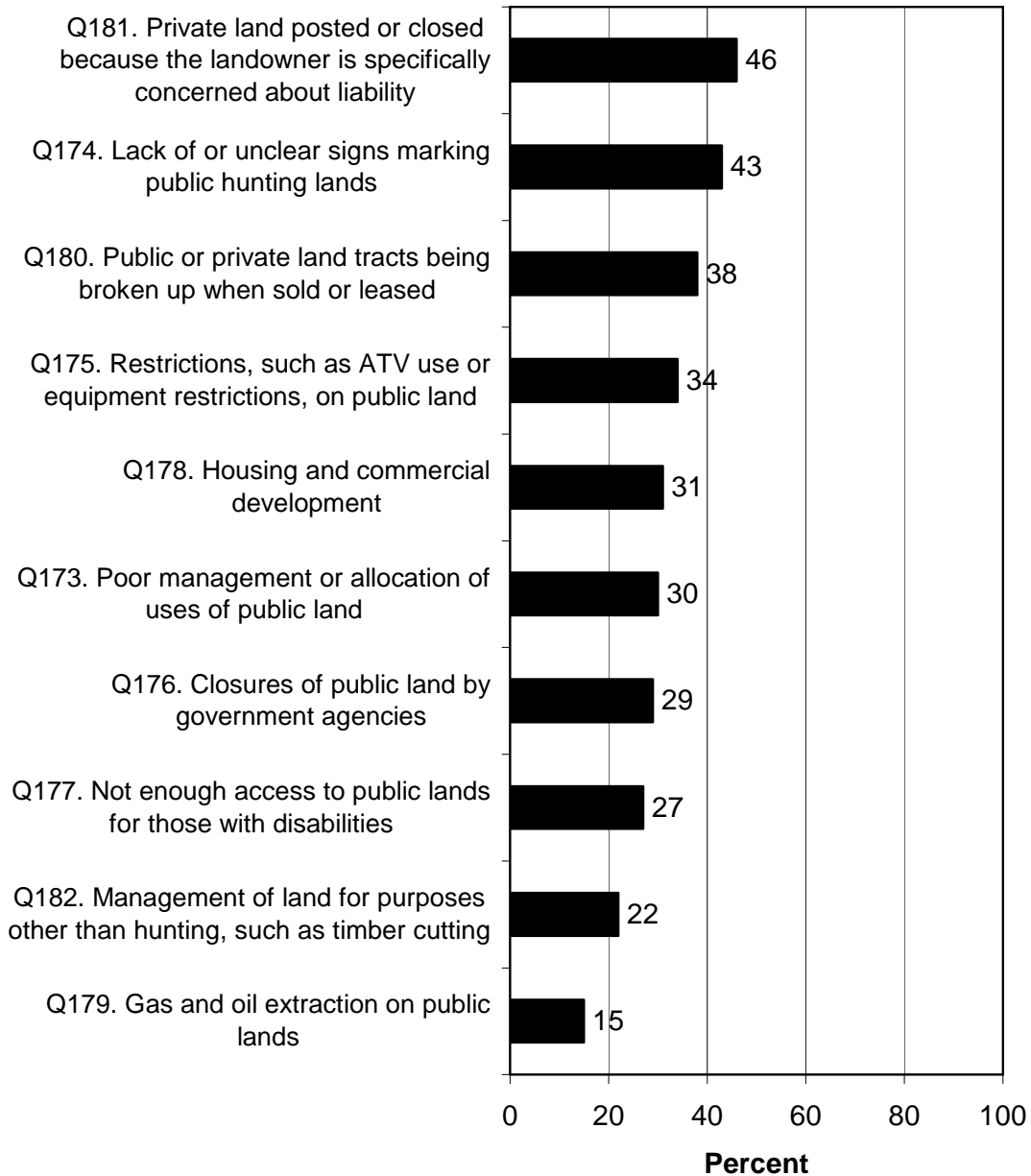
**Percent who indicated that the following have not been a problem at all in the past 5 years when hunting (species).**



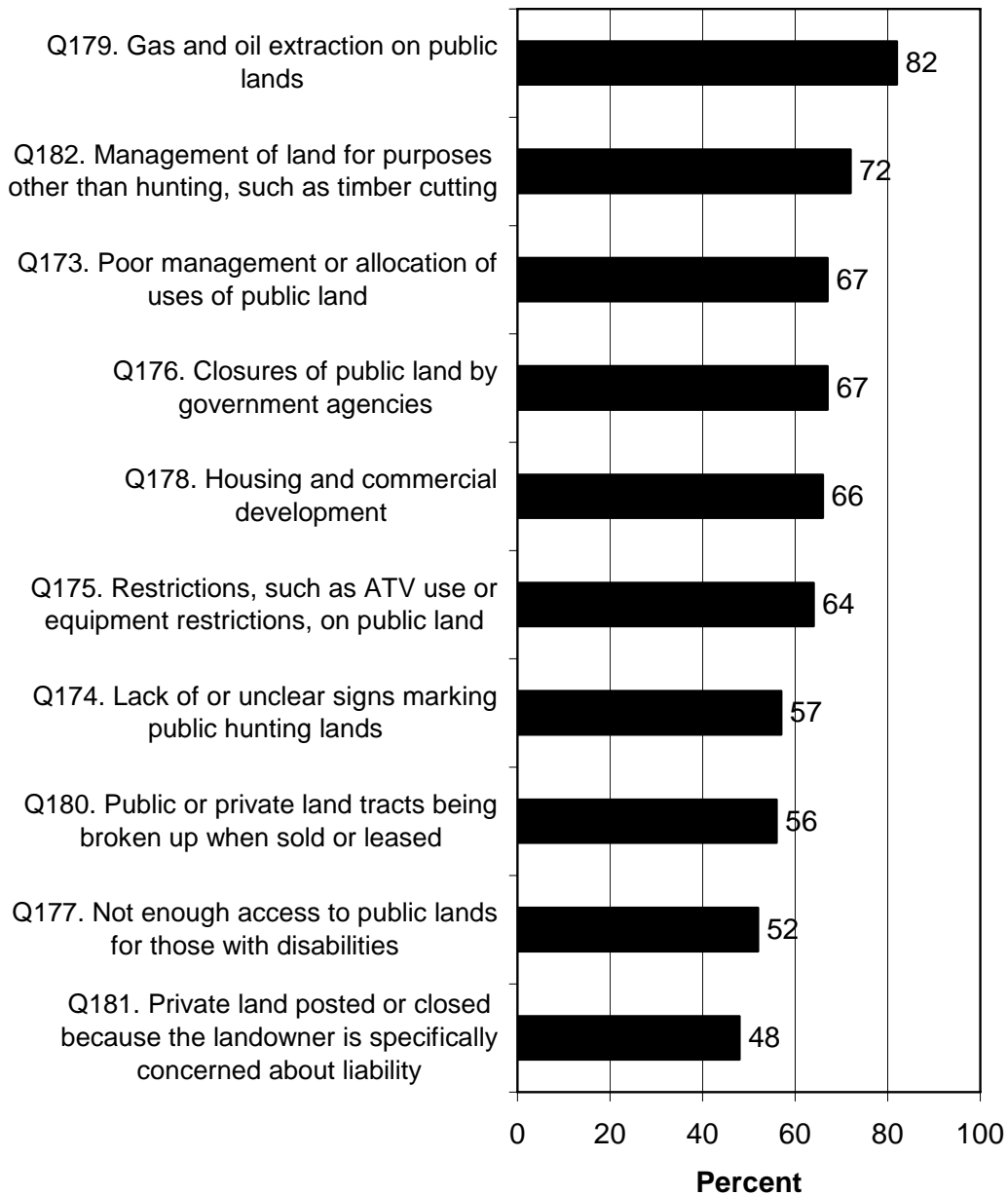
**Percent who indicated that the following factors have been a major problem in accessing hunting land in South Dakota in general.**



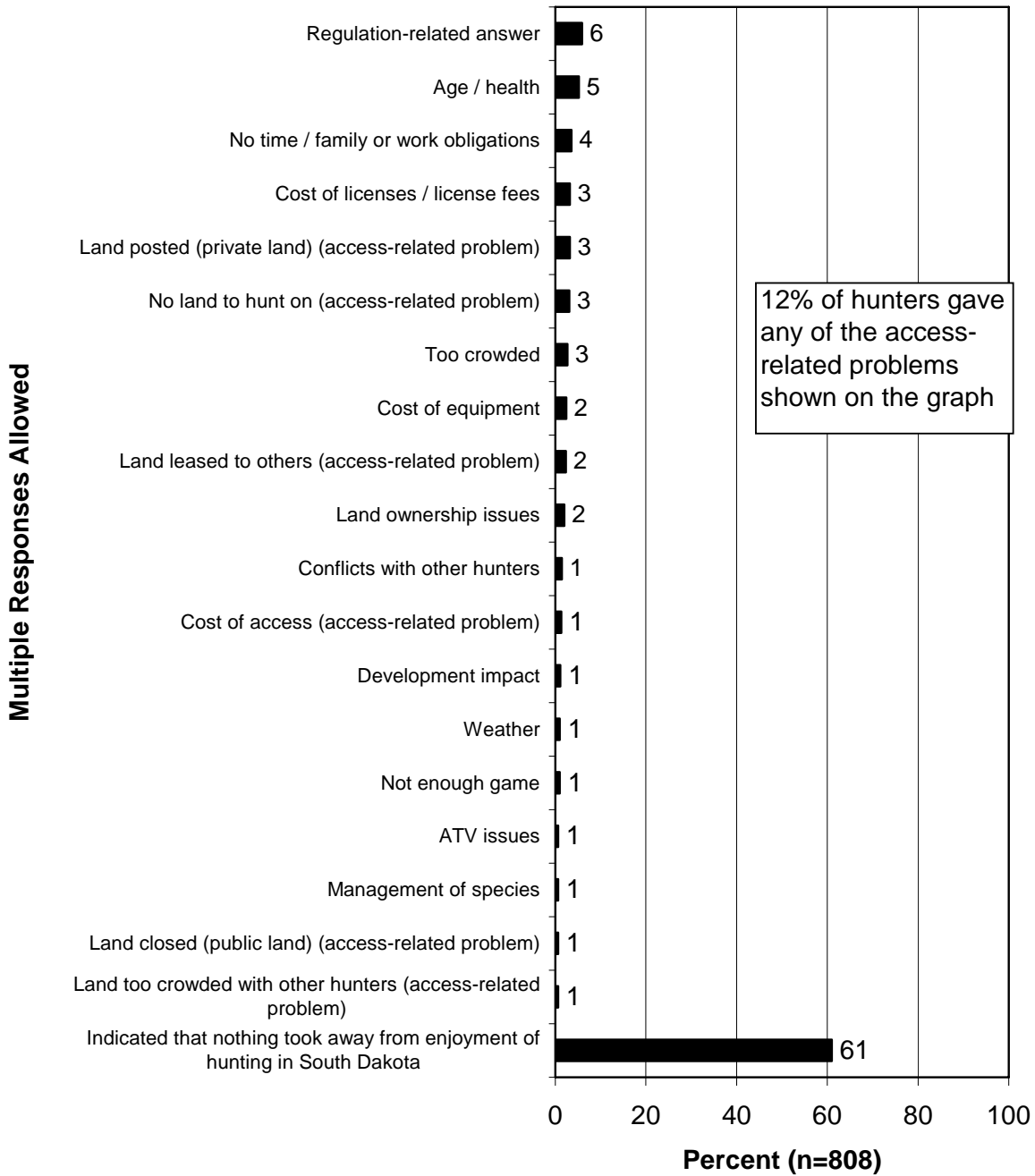
**Percent who indicated that the following factors have been a major, moderate, or minor problem in accessing hunting land in South Dakota in general.**



**Percent who indicated that the following factors have not been a problem at all in accessing hunting land in South Dakota in general.**



### Q31/34/38. What takes away from your enjoyment of hunting in South Dakota?

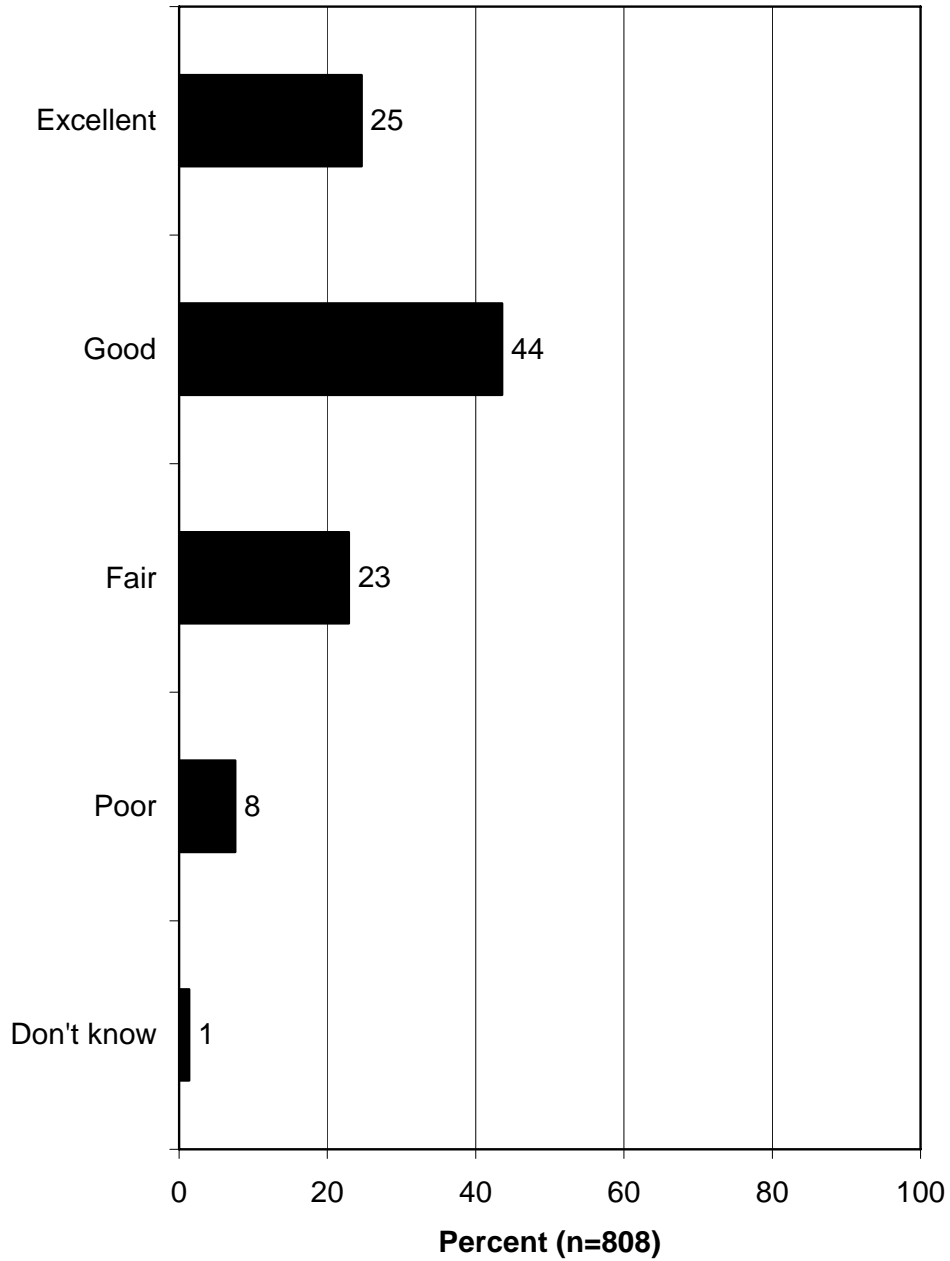


## RATINGS OF ACCESS TO HUNTING LANDS IN SOUTH DAKOTA

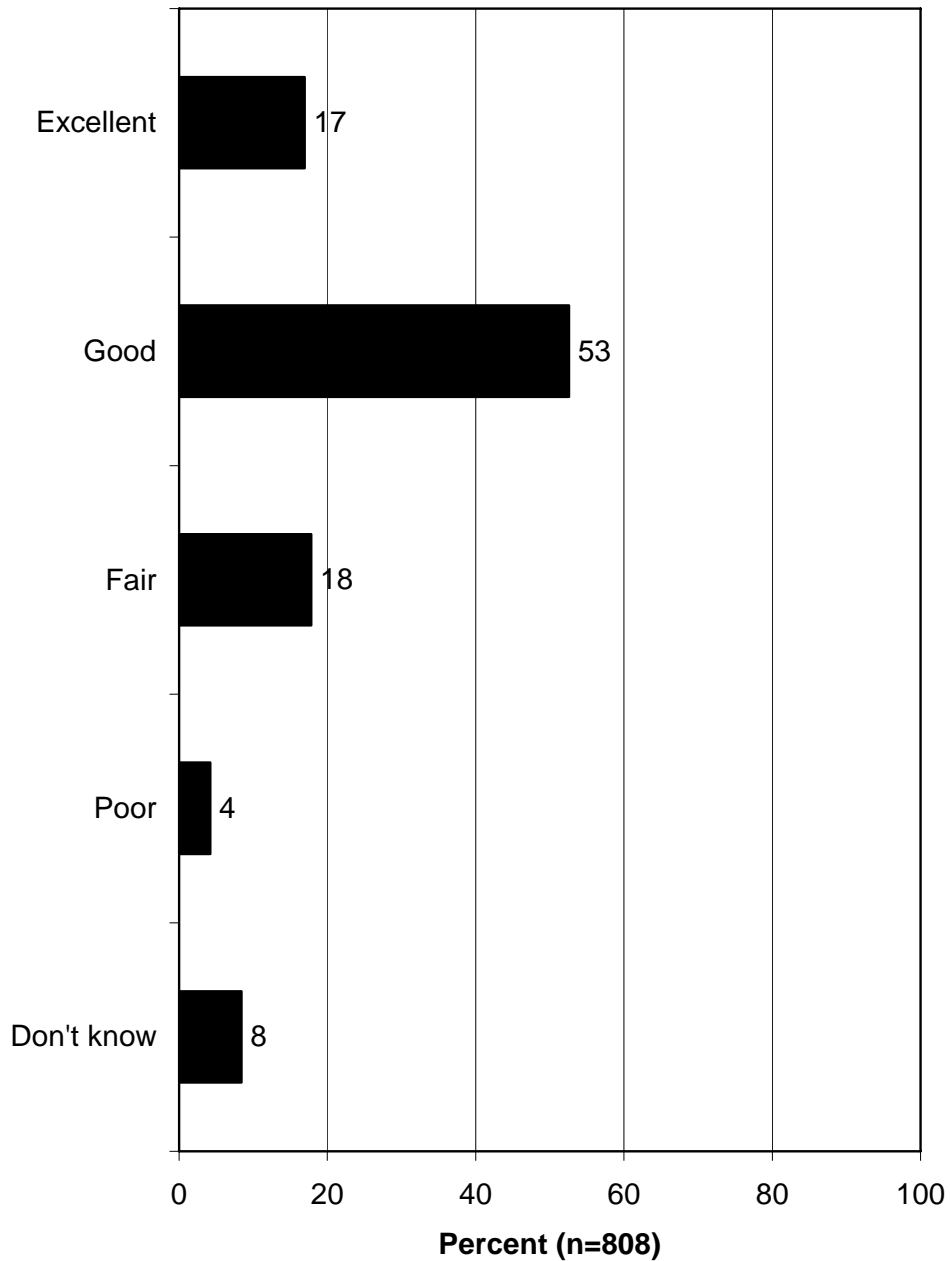
- A basic question asked hunters to rate access to hunting land in South Dakota overall. They are more positive than negative: 69% give a rating of excellent or good, while 31% give a rating of fair or poor. Note that the moderate answers (good and fair) far exceed the extreme answers (excellent and poor).
  - In a related question, ratings of the SDDGFP's *management of access* to hunting lands are even better: 70% give an excellent or good rating, and 22% give a fair or poor rating. Note that "good" ratings far exceed any other answer.
  
- The ratings of access were crosstabulated by various other questions to see if any differences among respondents emerged. Positive ratings in this context are those in the top half of the scale (excellent or good), and negative ratings are those in the lower half (fair or poor).
  - In the crosstabulation by number of years of hunting experience, long-time hunters are more likely to give a poor rating; these differences are statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.001$ ).
  - Access ratings are markedly more positive among waterfowl hunters (80% give a rating of excellent or good). They are markedly more negative among hunters of upland game birds (only 64% give an excellent or good rating). Overall, these differences on this question are statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.001$ ).
  - The question about ratings of the SDDGFP's *management of access* to hunting lands was also crosstabulated by primary species hunted; there were *no* statistically significant differences.
  - A crosstabulation of access ratings was run by hunters who hunt mostly on different or same lands each year; overall, these differences are *not* statistically significant.
  - Access ratings are markedly better among hunters who hunt mostly on private land, relative to those who hunt mostly on public land. These differences are statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.001$ ).
  - A crosstabulation of access ratings was run by the typical distance a hunter travels to hunt, but the differences are *not* statistically significant.

- Those who hunted their primary species on public land at least half the time were asked to rate access to public lands in South Dakota. Excellent and good ratings (70% give one of the two responses) far exceed fair and poor ratings (28%).
  - Top reasons for rating public land access as fair or poor are no land to hunt on, land being too crowded with other hunters, land blocked by private land, and the land simply being closed.
  
- Those who hunted their primary species on private land at least half the time were asked to rate access to private lands in South Dakota. Excellent and good ratings (57% give one of the two responses) exceed fair and poor ratings (40%).
  - Top reasons for rating private land access as fair or poor are the cost of access, land being posted, and the land being leased to others.

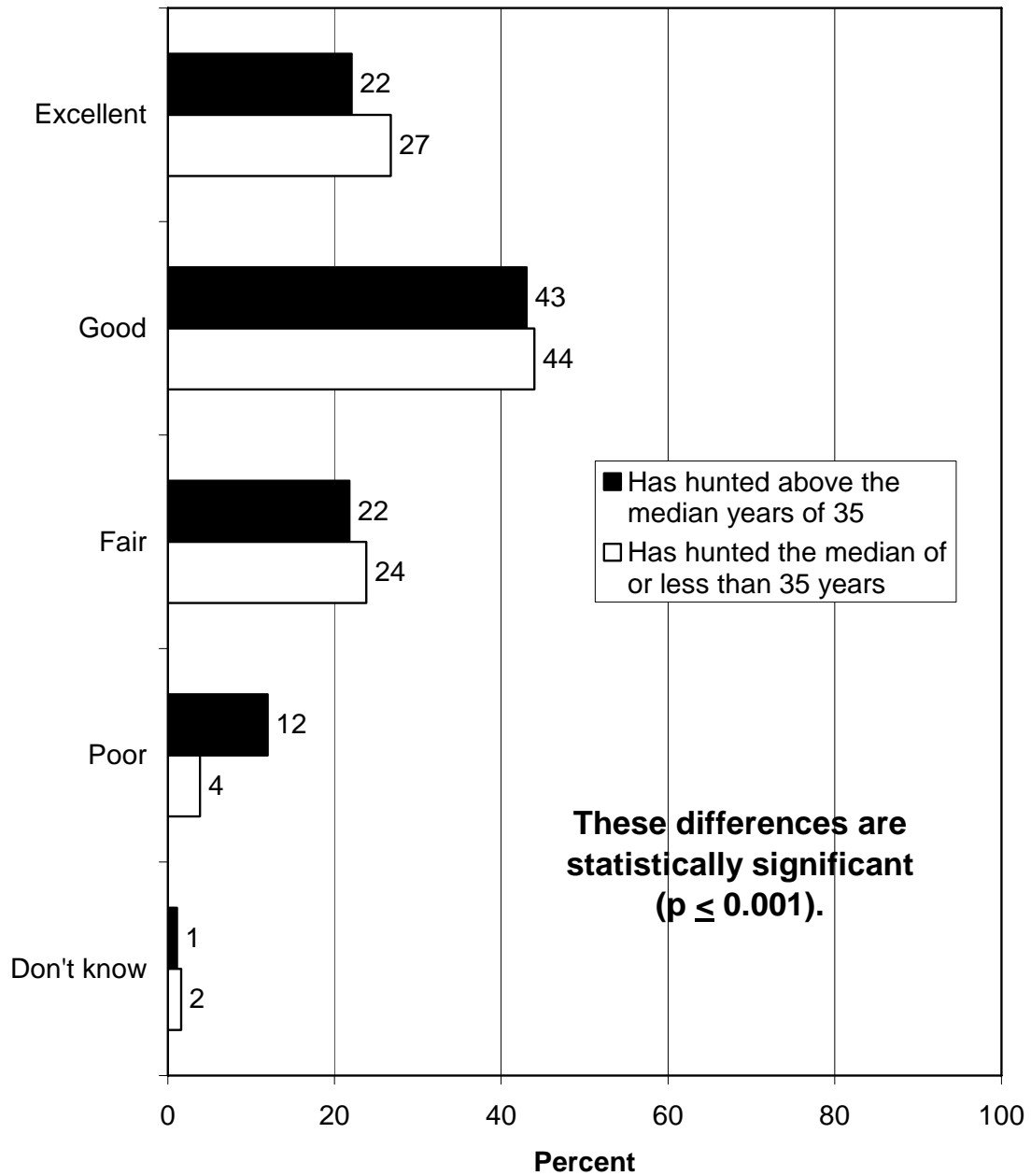
**Q55. Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting (species)?**



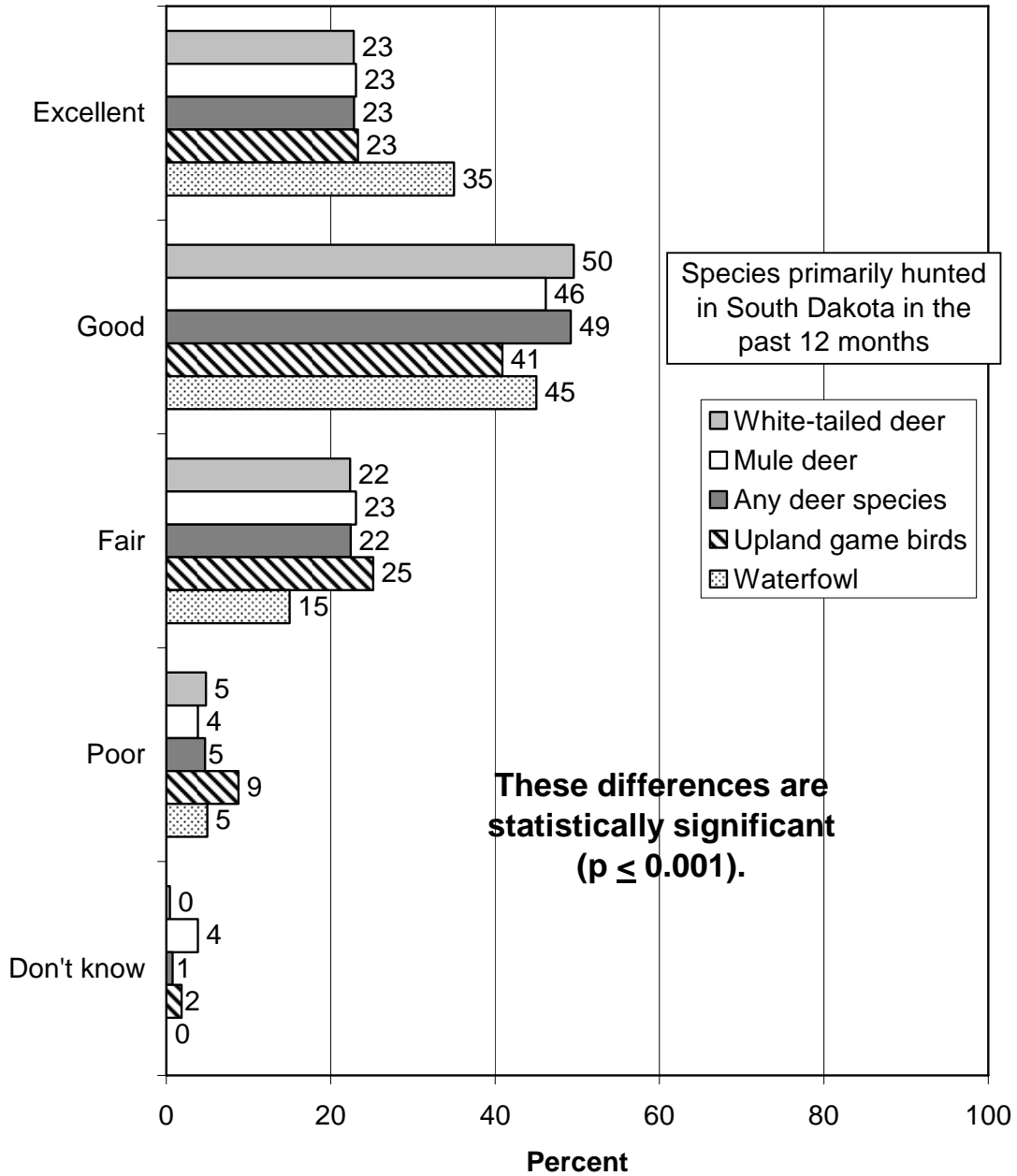
**Q56. How would you rate the South Dakota Division of Wildlife's management of access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting (species)?**



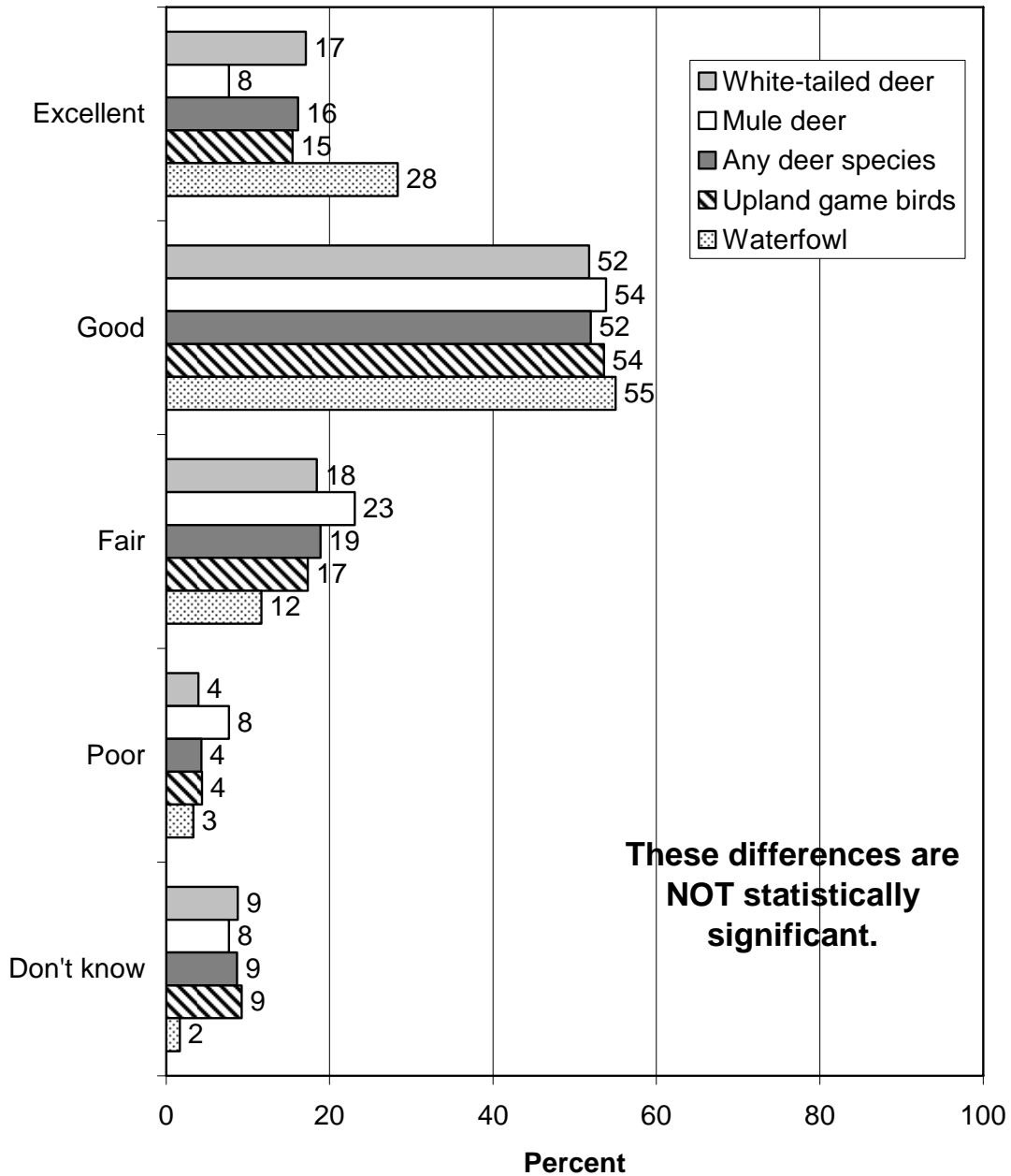
**Q55. Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting (species)?**



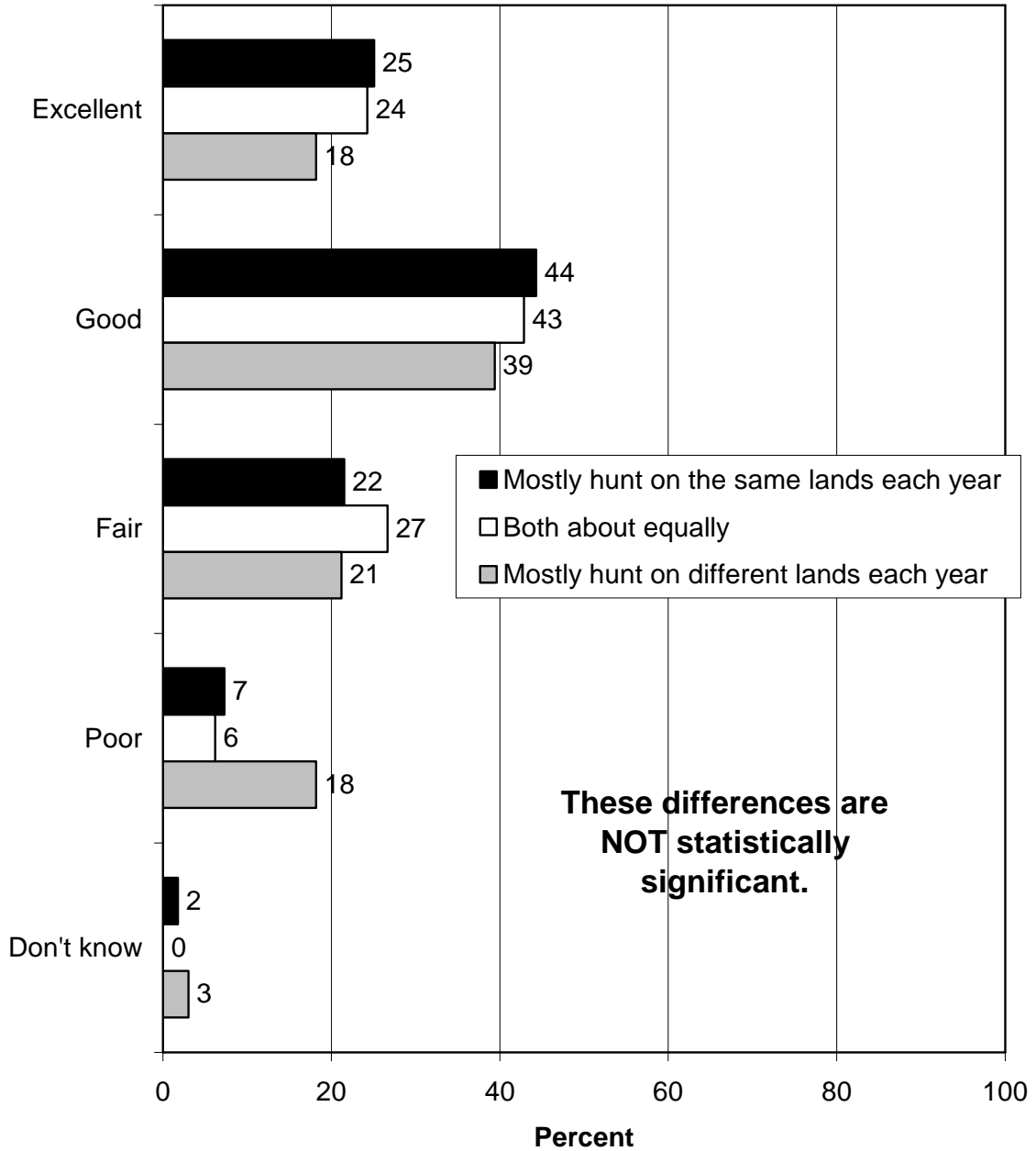
**Q55. Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting (species)?**



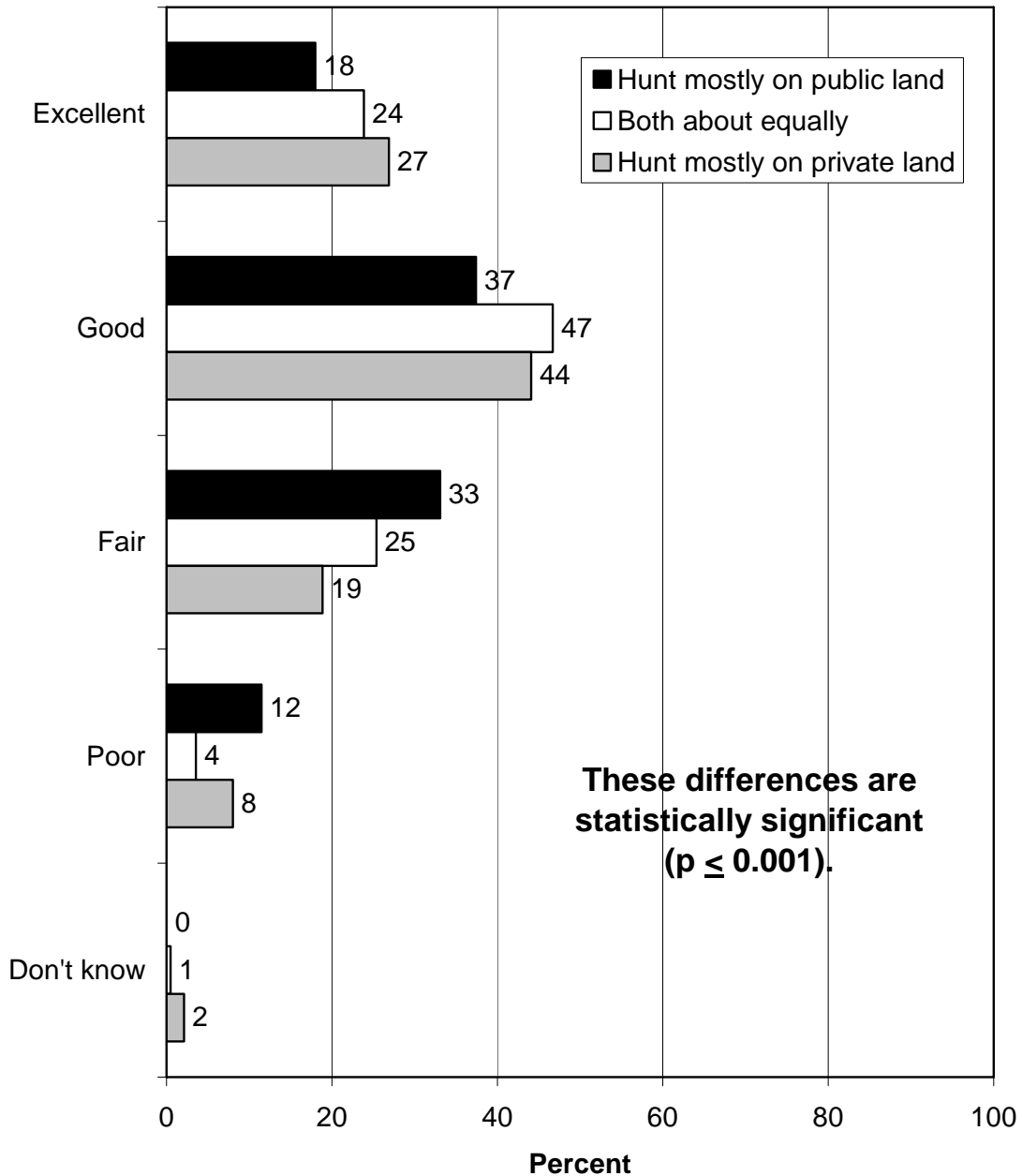
**Q56. How would you rate the South Dakota Division of Wildlife's management of access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting (species)?**



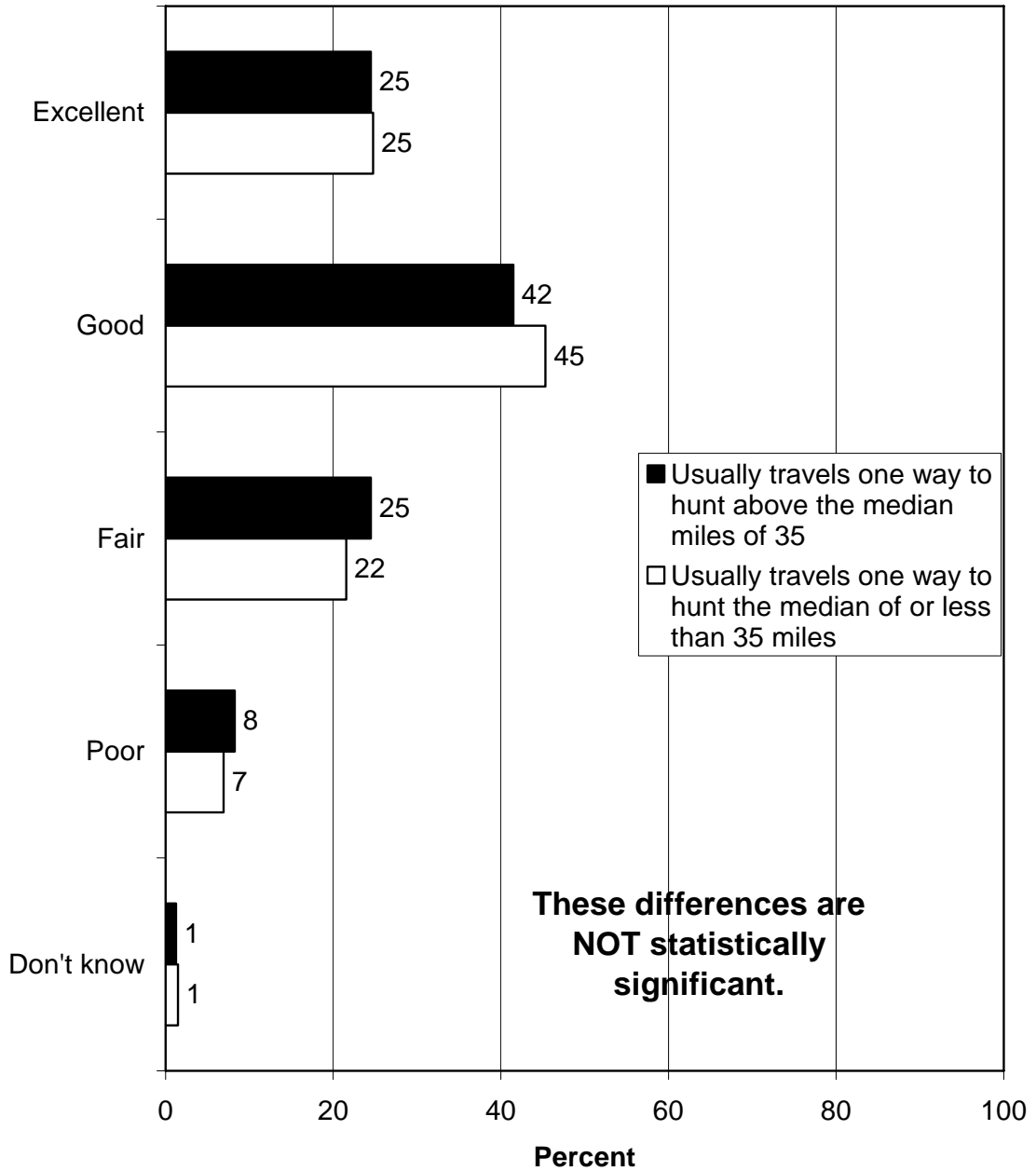
**Q55. Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting your preferred species?**



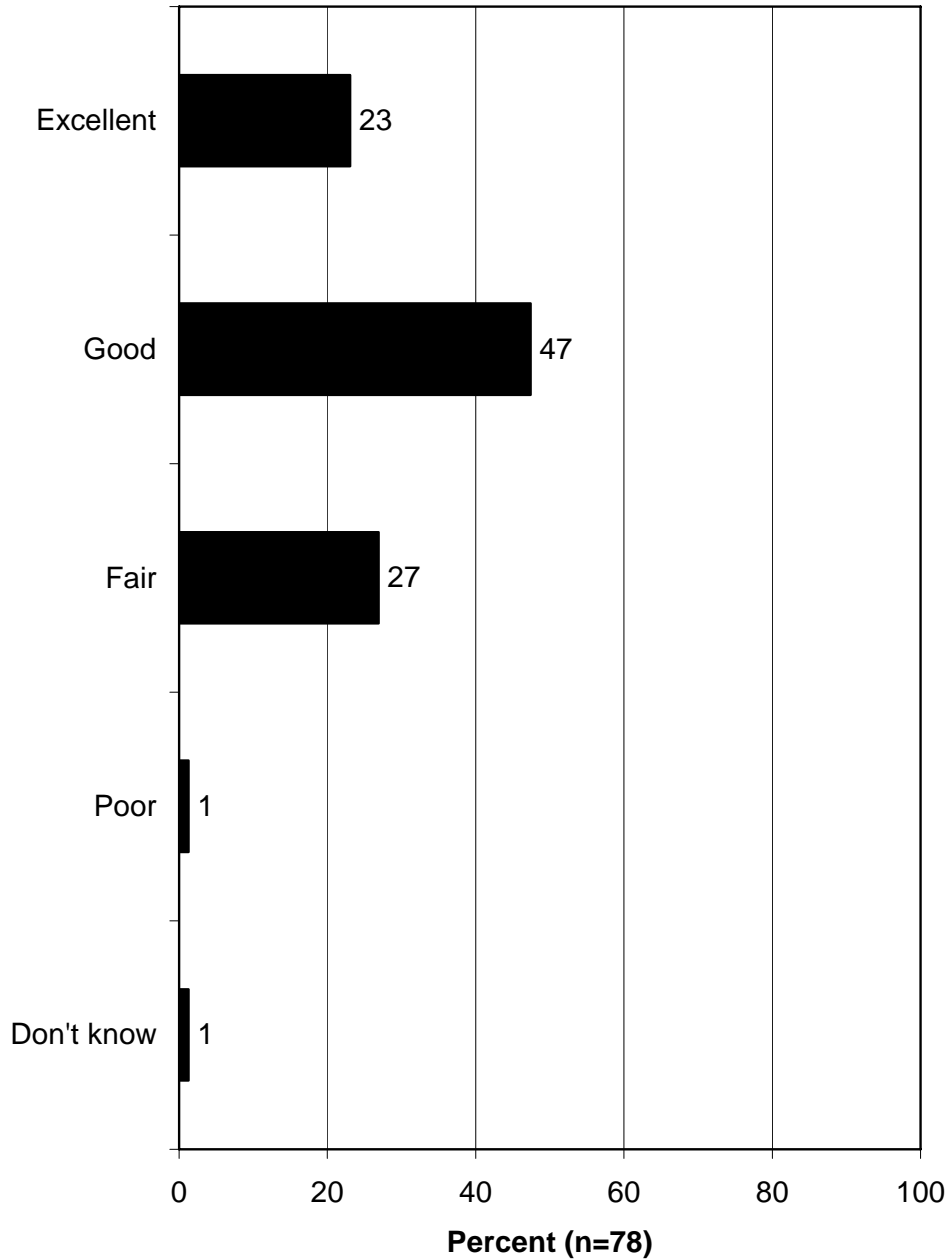
**Q55. Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting your preferred species?**



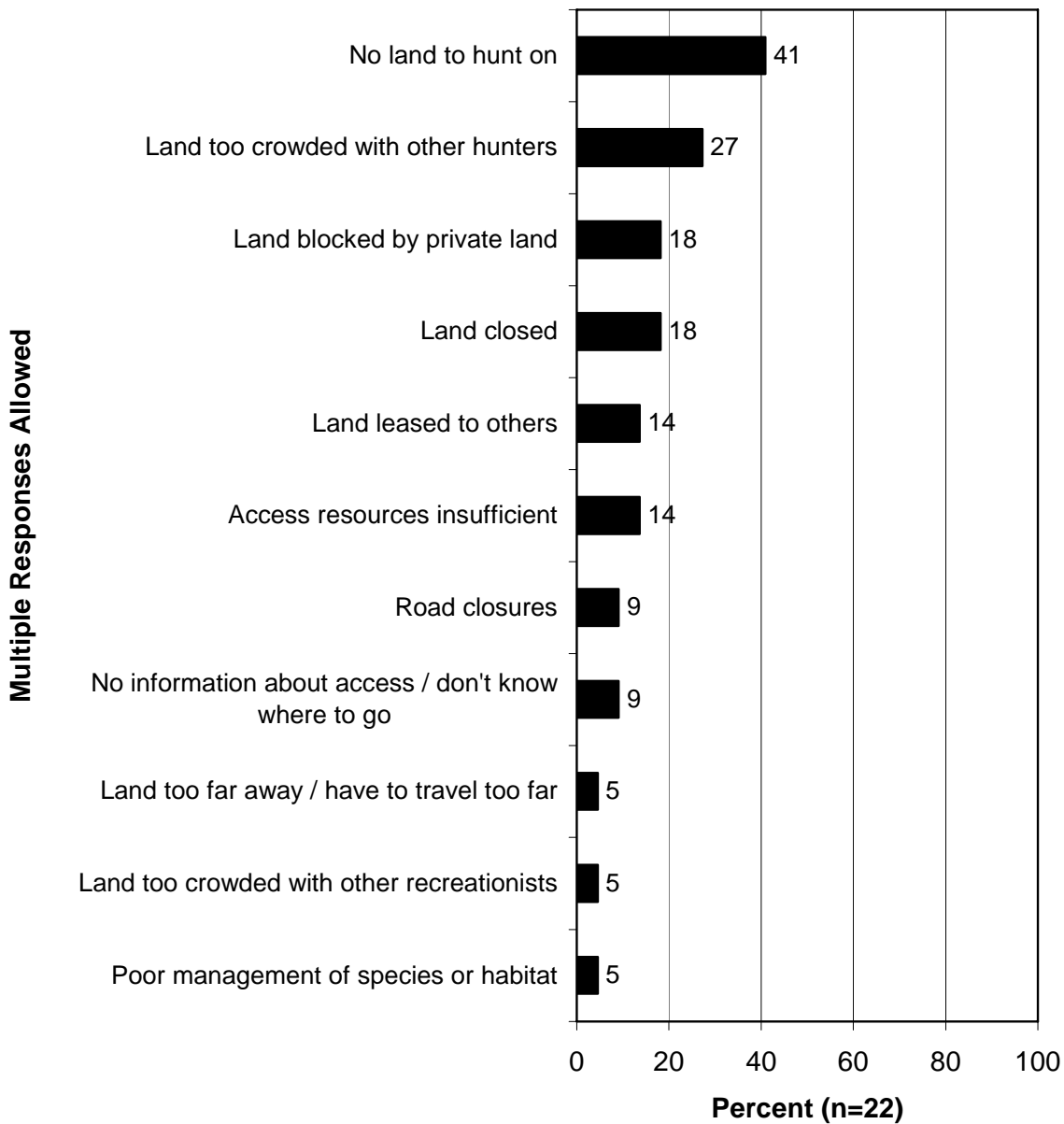
### Q55. Overall, how would you rate access to hunting lands in South Dakota for hunting your preferred species?



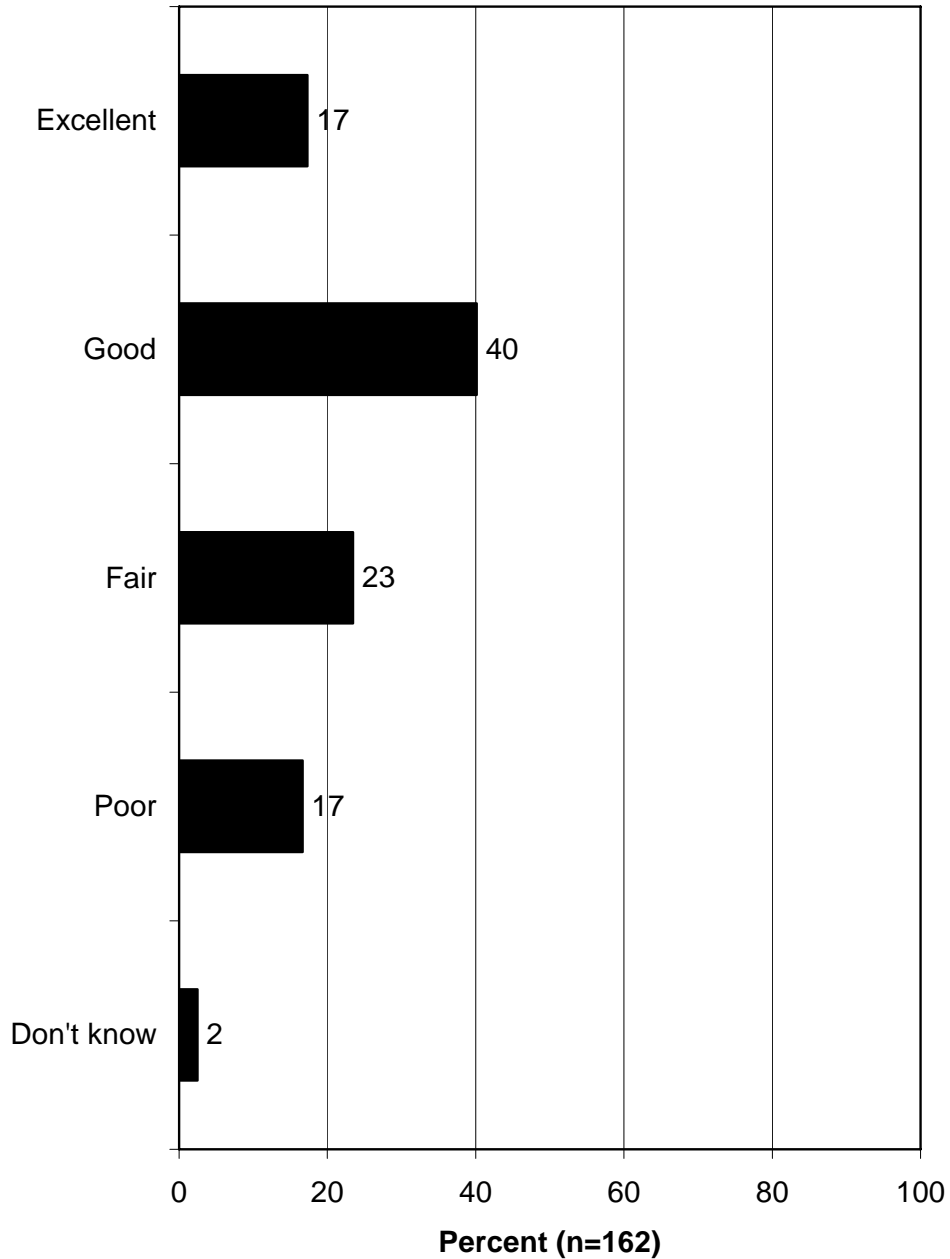
**Q63. How would you rate access to public lands for hunting (species) in South Dakota? (Asked of those who hunted their primary species on public lands at least half the time.)**



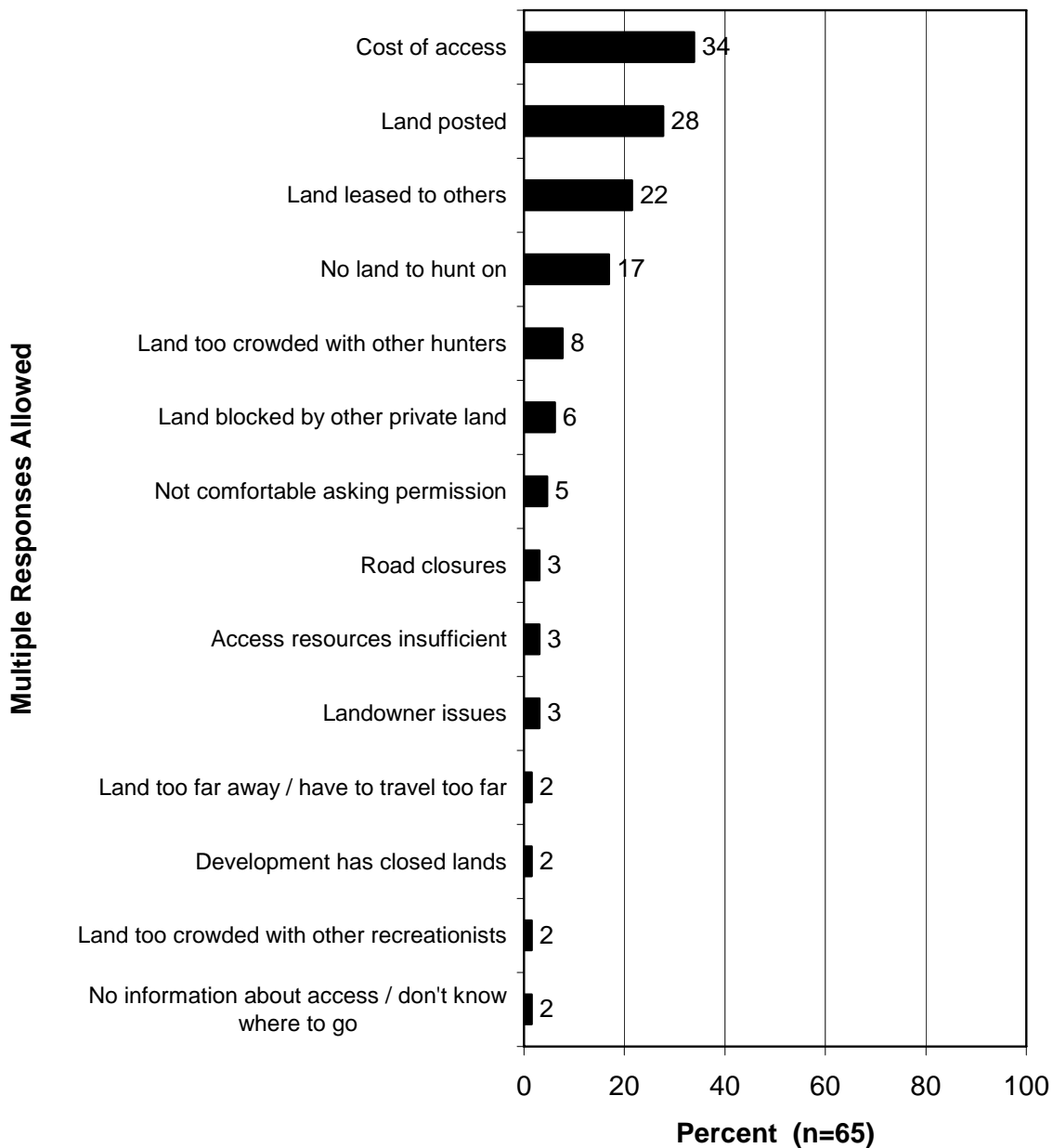
**Q66. What are the specific reasons you rate access to public land to hunt on in South Dakota as (fair/poor)? (Asked of those who hunted their primary species on public lands at least half the time and rated the access to public land as fair or poor.)**



**Q69. How would you rate access to private lands for hunting (species) in South Dakota? (Asked of those who hunted their primary species on private lands at least half the time.)**



**Q72. What are the specific reasons you rate access to private land to hunt on in South Dakota as (fair or poor)? (Asked of those who hunted their primary species on private lands at least half the time and rated the access to private land as fair or poor.)**



## FACTORS THAT MAY POSITIVELY AFFECT ACCESS

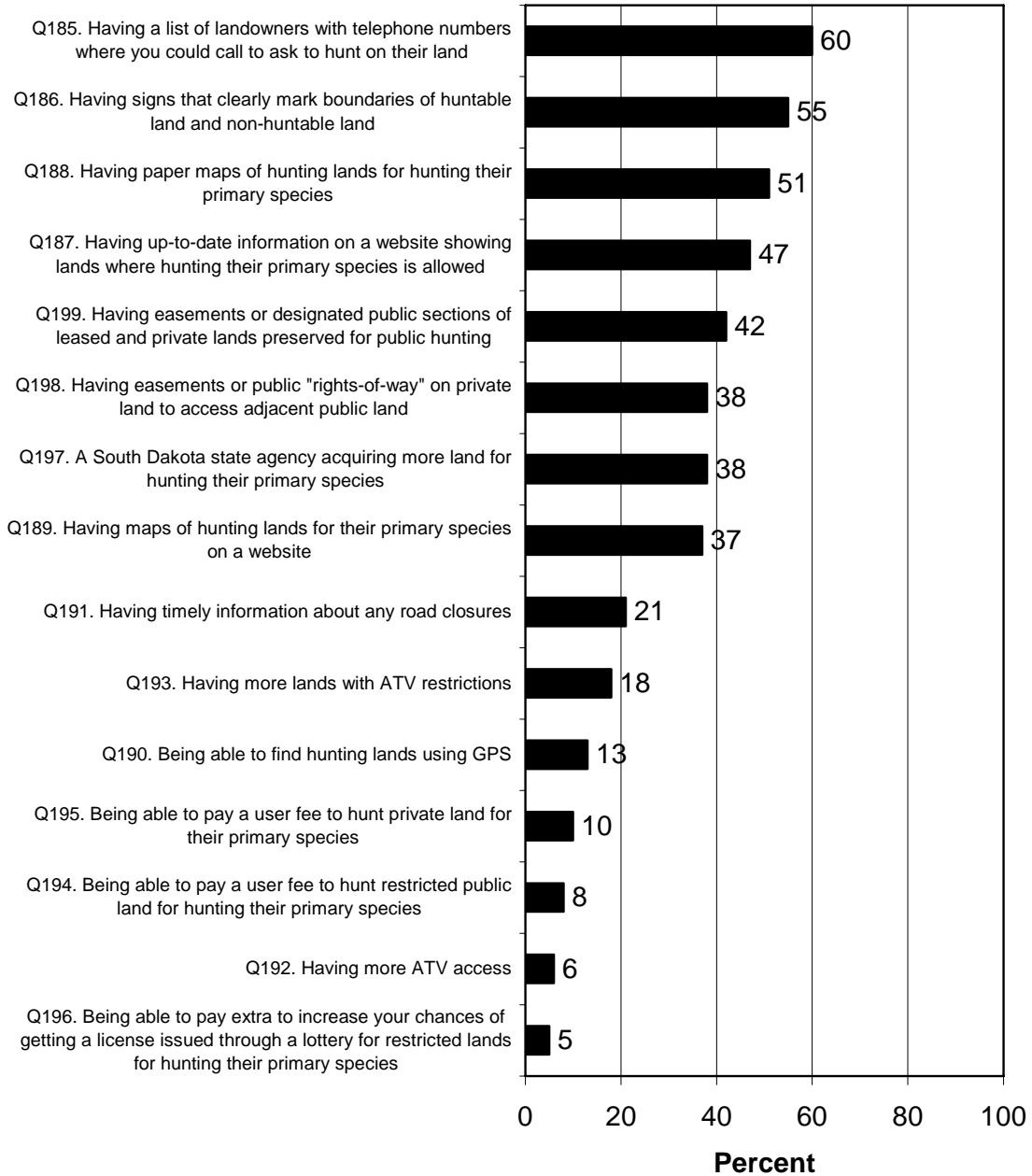
- The survey asked 15 questions about things that would make hunting access easier (shown in Text Box 5 below). For each item, the survey asked hunters if it would be *very* effective, *somewhat* effective, or *not at all* effective at making it easier to access land on which to hunt. The starting point in going through the list in each interview was randomized. The results of the series of questions were then ranked.
- In looking at the ranking by the percentage saying that the items would be *very* effective at making access easier, three items stand out—all with a majority saying it would be *very* effective: having a list of landowners with telephone numbers for asking permission to hunt (60%), having signs that clearly mark boundaries of huntable land (55%), and having paper maps of hunting lands for their primary species (51%).
  - A second tier consists of five items that each have at least a third saying it would be *very* effective at making access easier: having up-to-date information on a website showing lands where hunting their primary species is allowed (47%), having easements or designated public sections of leased and private lands preserved for public hunting (42%), having easements or public rights-of-way on private land to access adjacent public land (38%), having a state agency acquire more land for hunting (38%), and having maps of hunting lands for their primary species on a website (37%).
  - Another graph in this series is shown consisting of the ranking by the percentages saying the items would be *very* or *somewhat* effective, and a final graph shows the percentages saying *not at all* effective.

### TEXT BOX 5

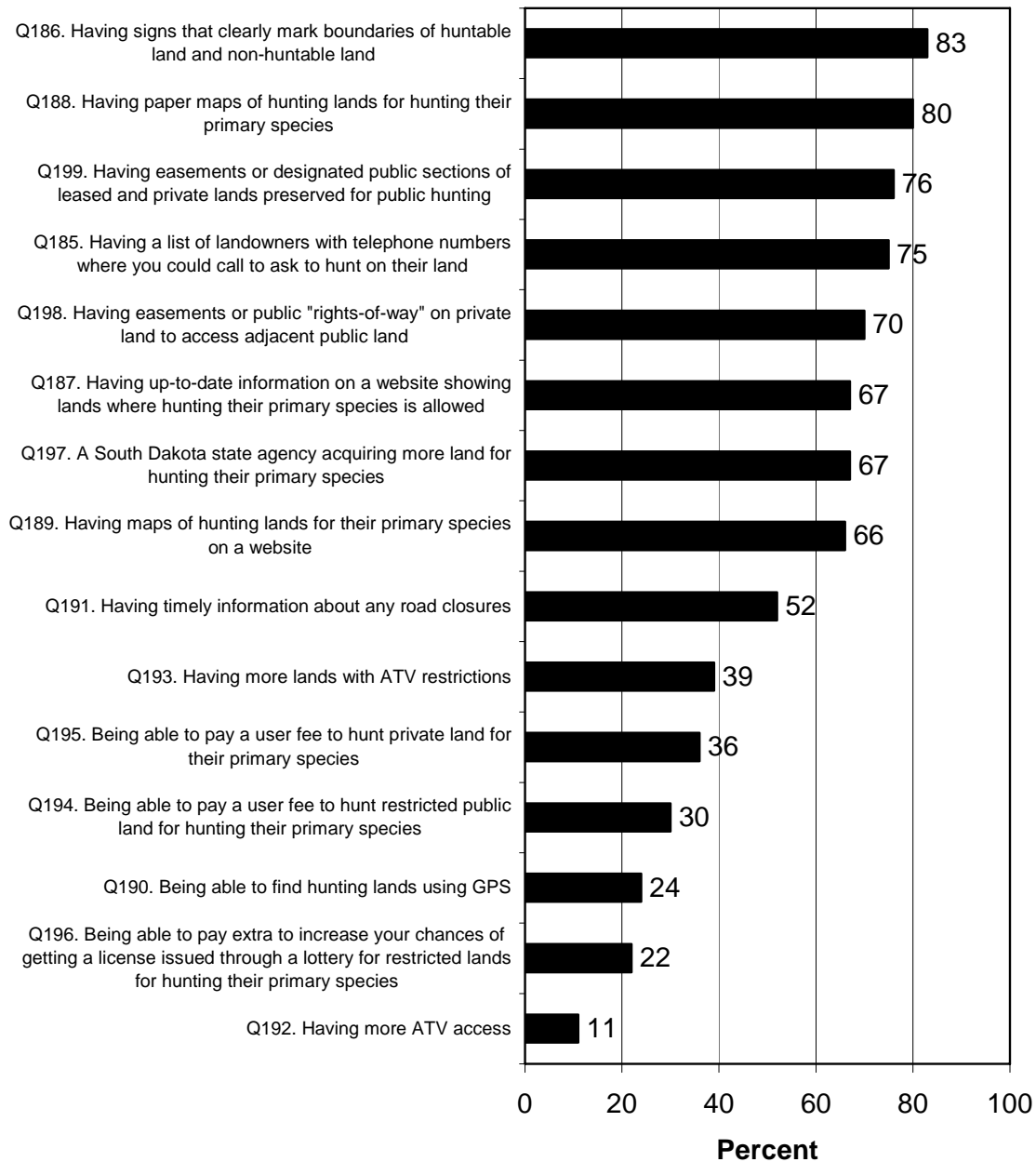
#### Things that might make hunting access easier that were asked about in the survey:

- Having a list of landowners with telephone numbers where the respondent could call to ask to hunt on their land
- Having signs that clearly mark boundaries of huntable land
- Having up-to-date information on a website showing lands where hunting is allowed
- Having paper maps of hunting lands
- Having maps of hunting lands on a website
- Being able to find hunting lands using GPS
- Having timely information about any road closures
- Having more ATV access
- Having more lands with ATV restrictions
- Being able to pay a user fee to hunt restricted public land
- Being able to pay a user fee to hunt private land
- Being able to pay extra to increase the chances of getting a license issued through a lottery
- A South Dakota state agency acquiring more land for hunting
- Having easements or public “rights-of-way” on private land to access adjacent public land
- Having easements or designated public sections of leased and private lands preserved for public hunting

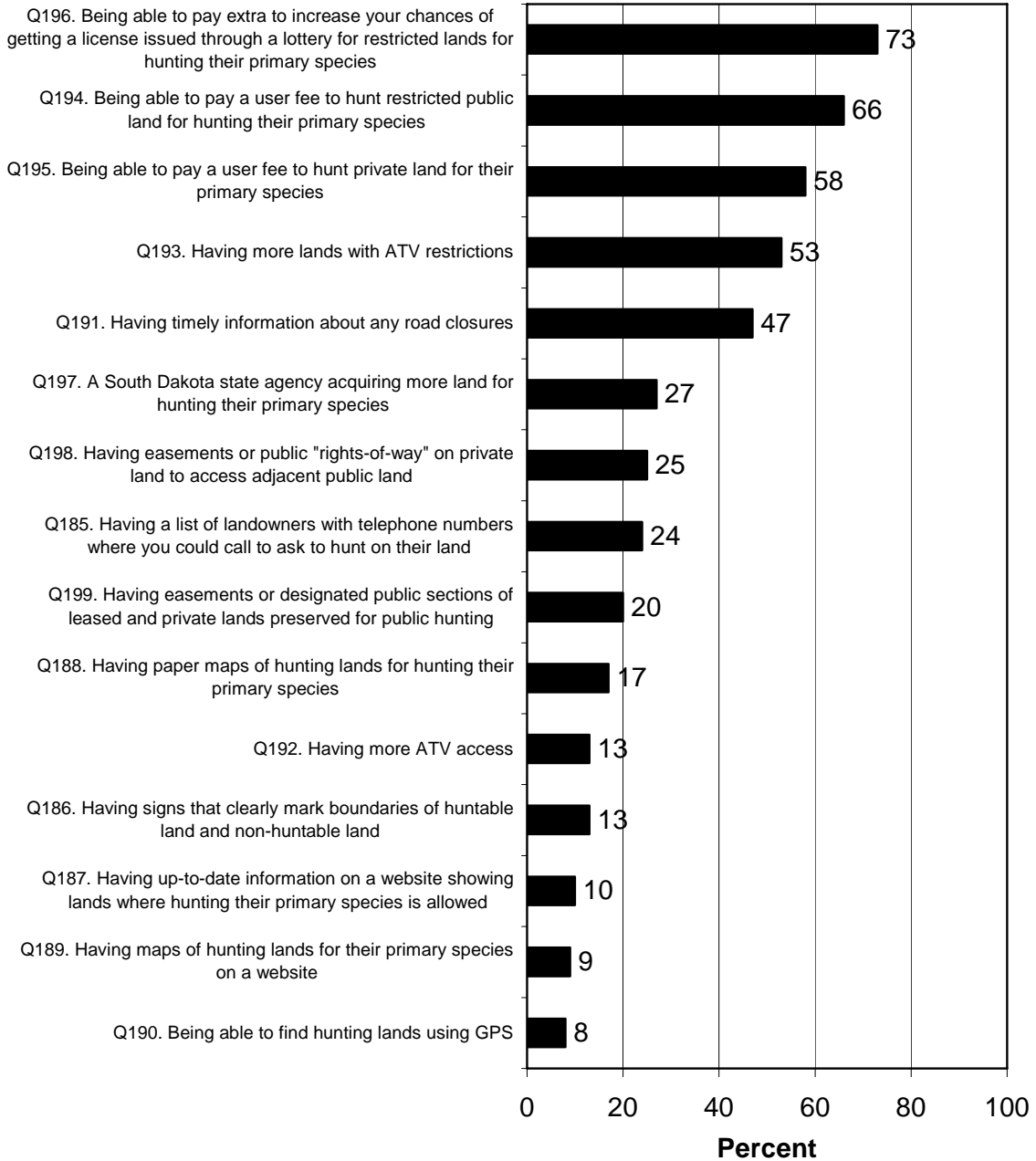
**Percent who indicated that the following would be very effective at making it easier for them to access land to hunt (species), including lands they don't currently hunt.**



**Percent who indicated that the following would be very or somewhat effective at making it easier for them to access land to hunt (species), including lands they don't currently hunt.**



**Percent who indicated that the following would not be effective at all at making it easier for them to access land to hunt (species), including lands they don't currently hunt.**



## POTENTIAL REASONS THAT LANDOWNERS MAY CLOSE THEIR LAND TO HUNTING

- The survey asked eight questions about possible reasons that landowners may close their land to public hunting (shown in Text Box 6 below). For each possible reason, the survey asked hunters if they think it is a *very important* reason, a *somewhat important* reason, or a *not at all* important reason that landowners close their land to the public for hunting. The starting point in going through the list in each interview was randomized. The results of the series of questions were then ranked.
  - Four items stand out above the rest in the ranking by the percentage saying the reasons are *very* important, three of which relate to misuse of the land. The top item is that the landowner wants to allow only personal or family use of the land (68% say this is a *very* important reason that landowners close their land); the next three relate to misuse of the land: irresponsible shooting or similar behavior (61%), property damage other than litter (60%), and litter (58%).
  - The results of the ranking by *very* or *somewhat* important are similar to the above ranking.
  - A third graph in this series is shown consisting of the ranking by the percentage saying the reason is not at all important.

### TEXT BOX 6

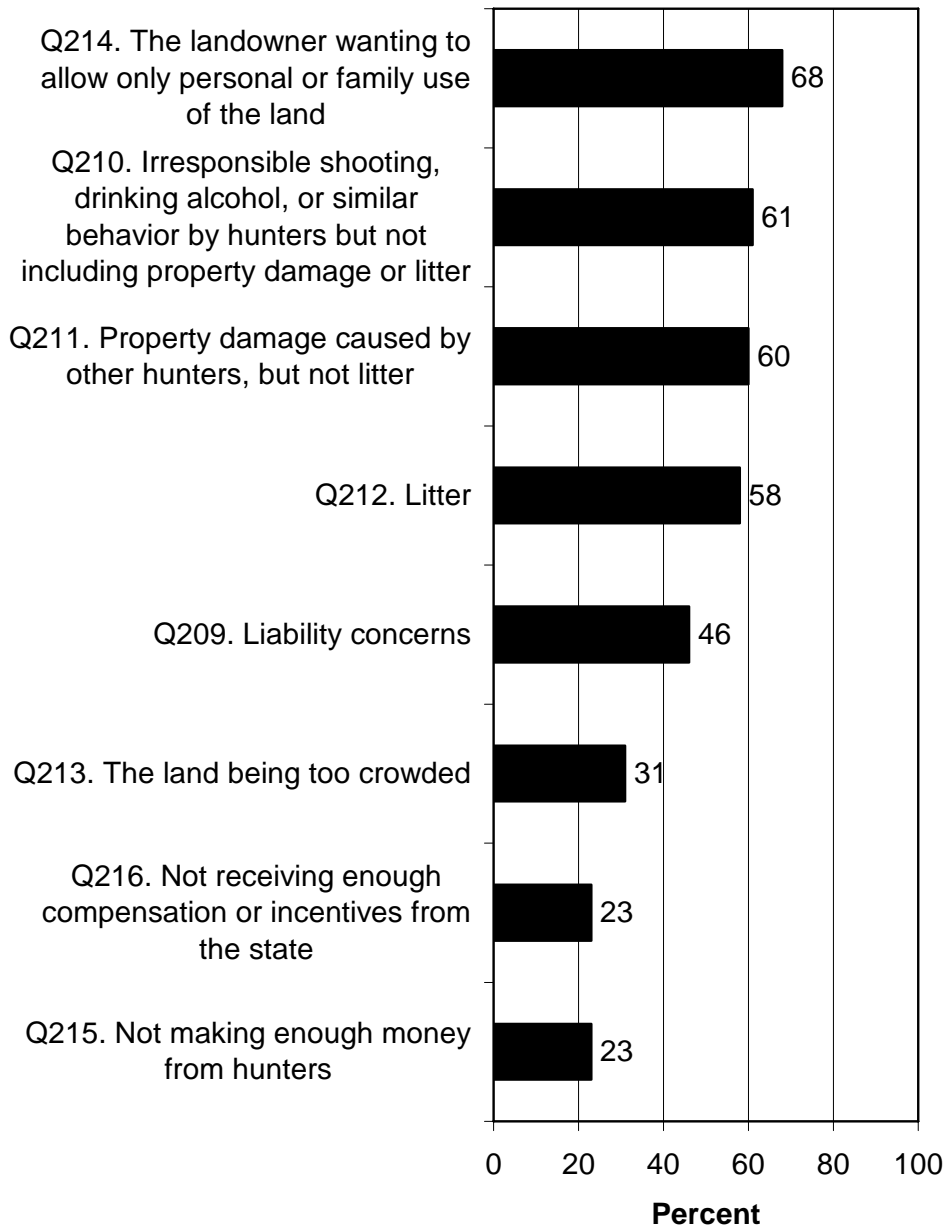
**Possible reasons that landowners may close their land to public hunting that were asked about in the survey:**

- Liability concerns
- Irresponsible shooting, drinking alcohol, or similar behavior by hunters (excluding property damage or litter)
- Property damage caused by other hunters (excluding litter)
- Litter
- Land being too crowded
- The landowner wanting to allow only personal or family use of the land
- The landowner not making enough money from hunters
- The landowner not receiving enough compensation or incentives from the state

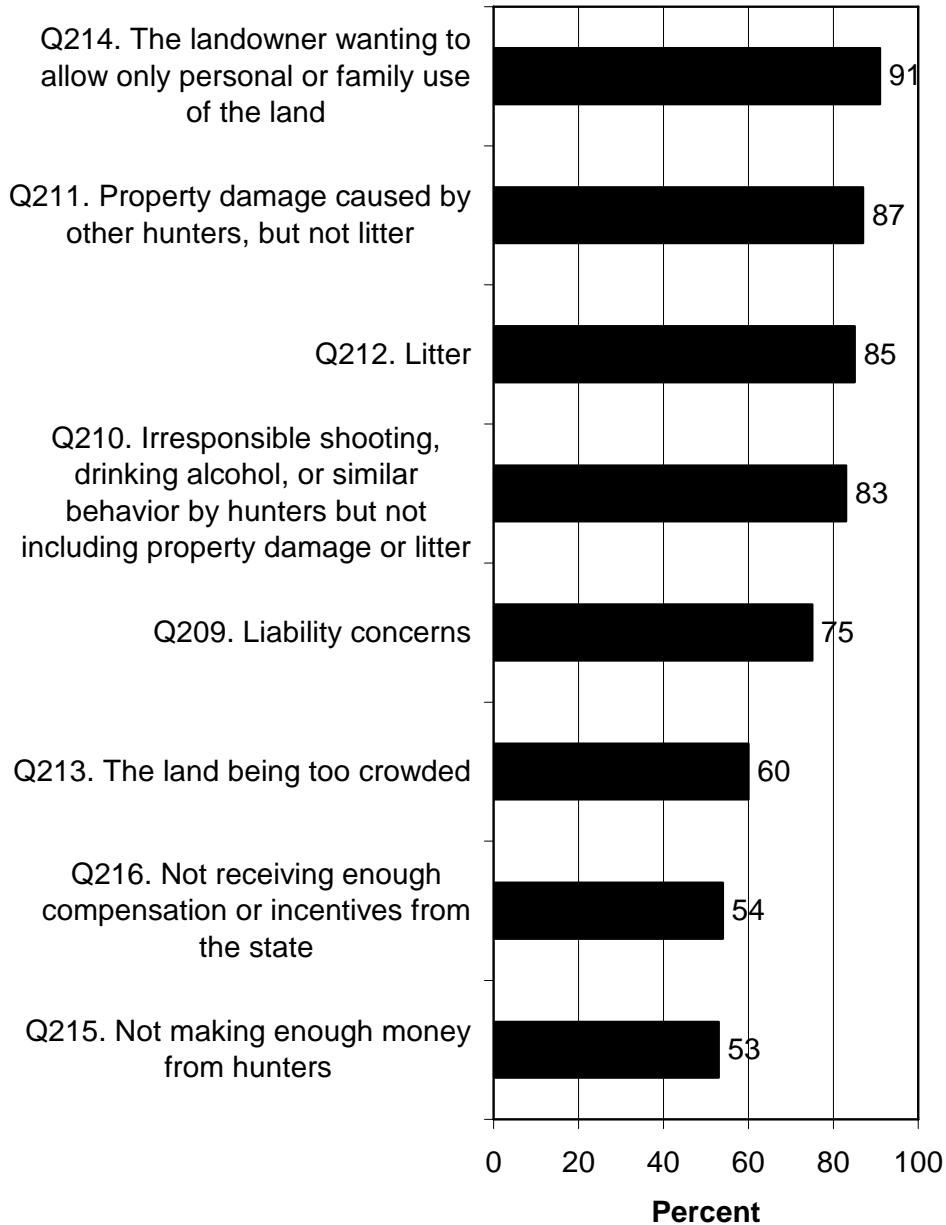
- The large majority of hunters (77%) think that a program that provides landowners with compensation or incentives for opening their lands to the public for hunting would be *very* or *somewhat* effective at improving hunting access in South Dakota.

- The overwhelming majority of hunters (96%) are *not* aware of any laws in South Dakota that reduce the liability of landowners who open their lands to the public for hunting; meanwhile, 3% are aware of such laws.
  - In a related question, the large majority of South Dakota hunters (77%) support laws to reduce landowner liability for landowners who open their lands to the public for hunting; only 6% oppose (the remainder give neutral answers).
  - Another related question found that a large majority of hunters (73%) think that legislation reducing landowner liability would be *very* or *somewhat* effective at improving hunter access to private lands in South Dakota; only 12% think it would *not* be at all effective.
  - Finally, a slight majority of hunters (52%) agree that legislation reducing landowner liability would significantly increase the number of landowners who would open their lands to the public for hunting; meanwhile, 31% disagree.

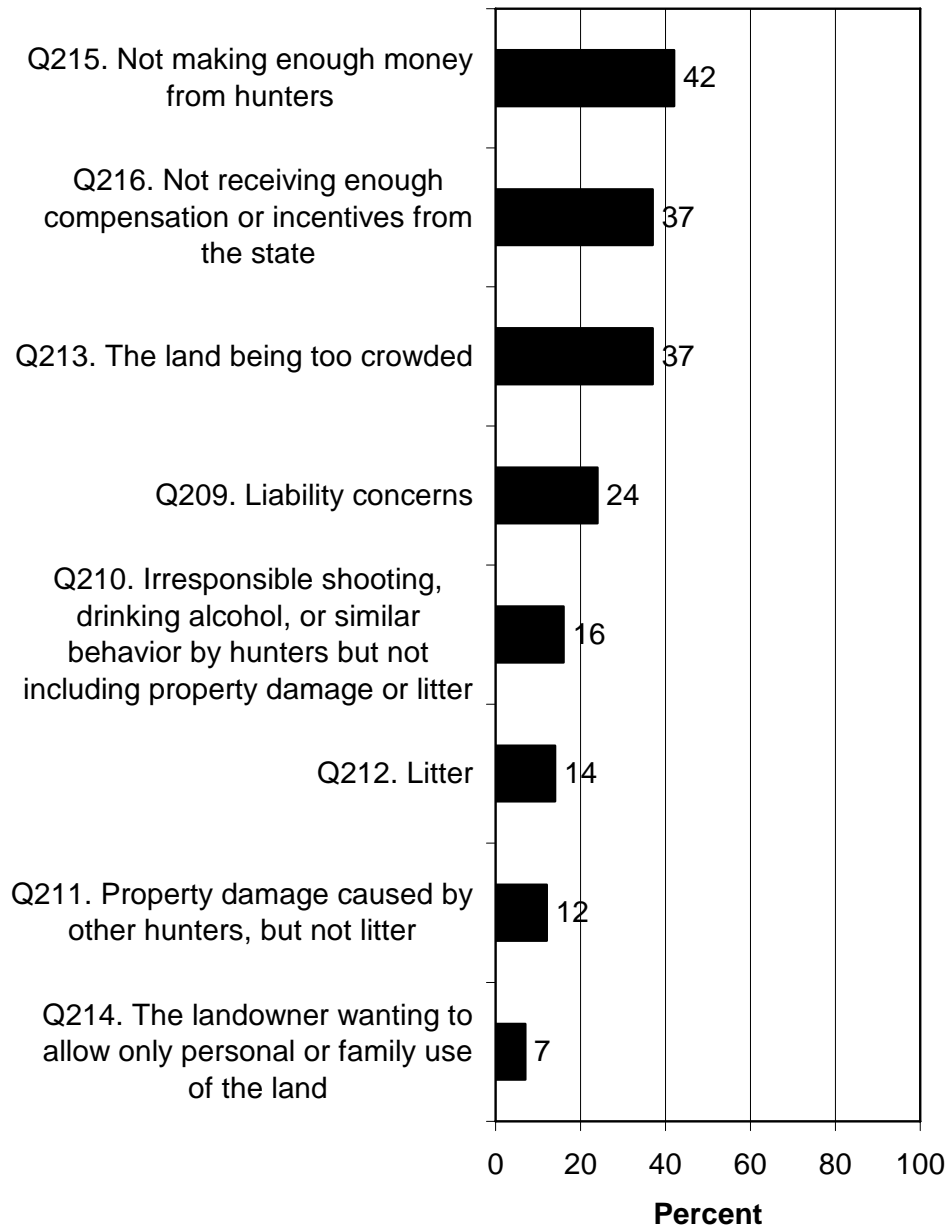
**Percent who think the following reasons are very important to landowners in South Dakota who close their lands to the public for hunting.**



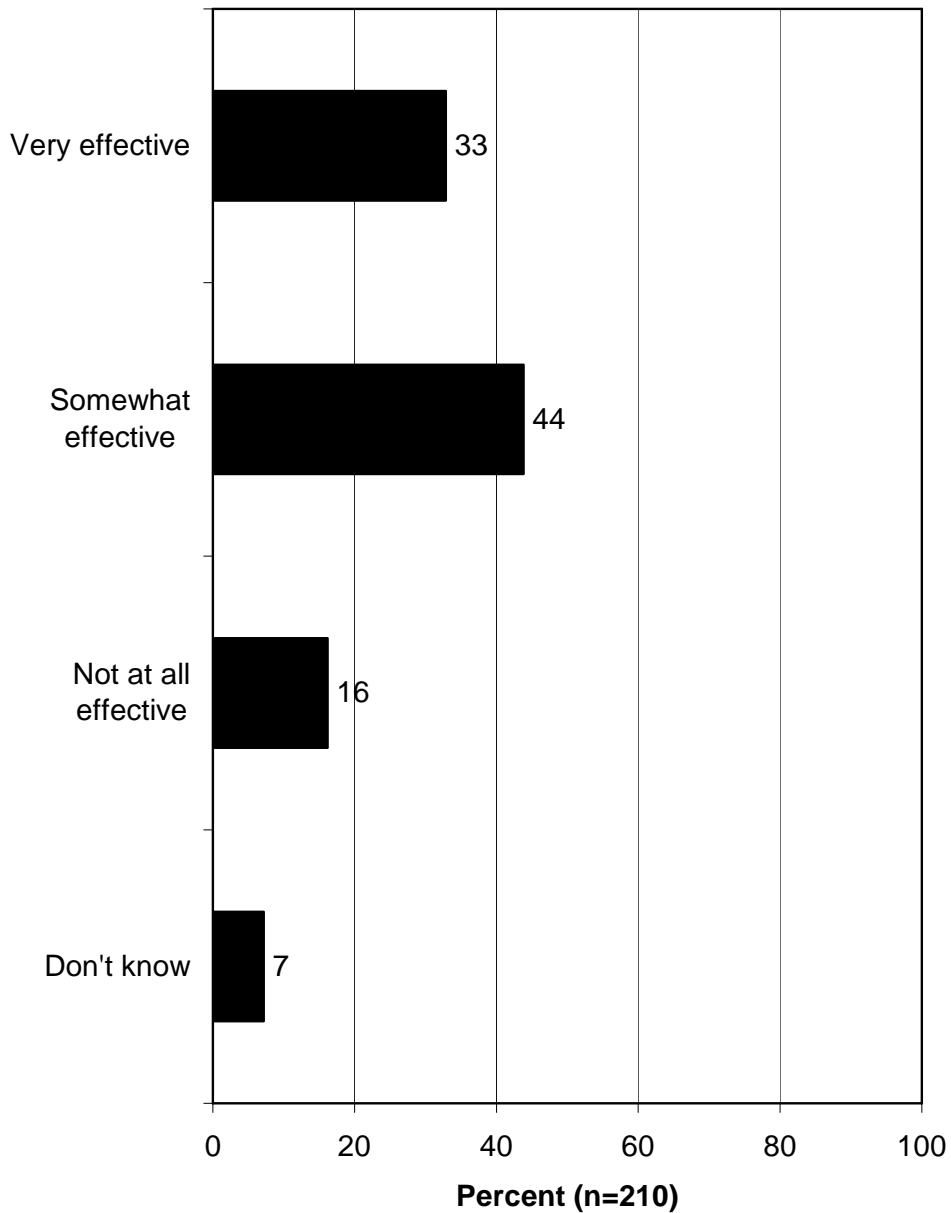
**Percent who think the following reasons are very or somewhat important to landowners in South Dakota who close their lands to the public for hunting.**



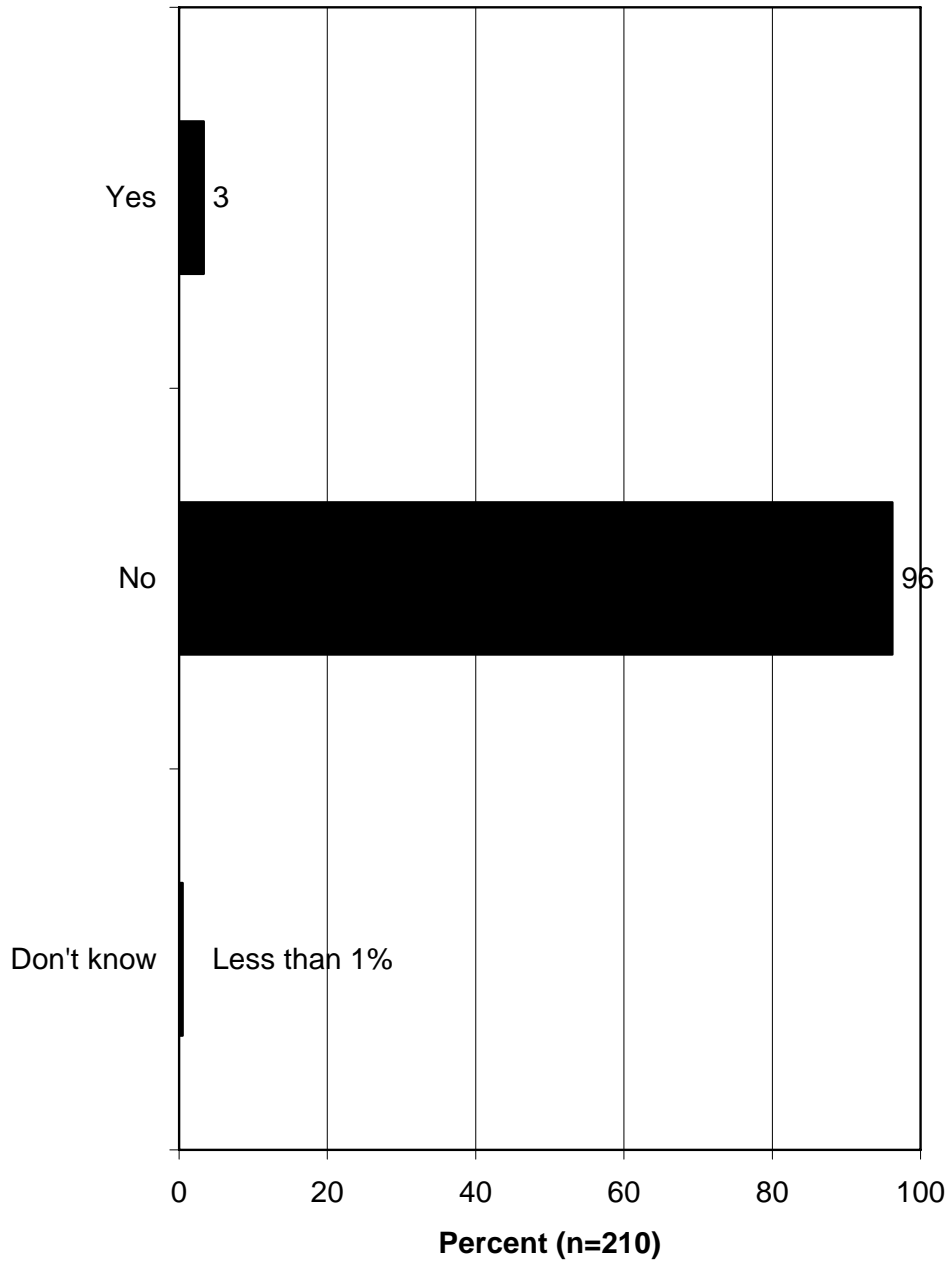
**Percent who think the following reasons are not important at all to landowners in South Dakota who close their lands to the public for hunting.**



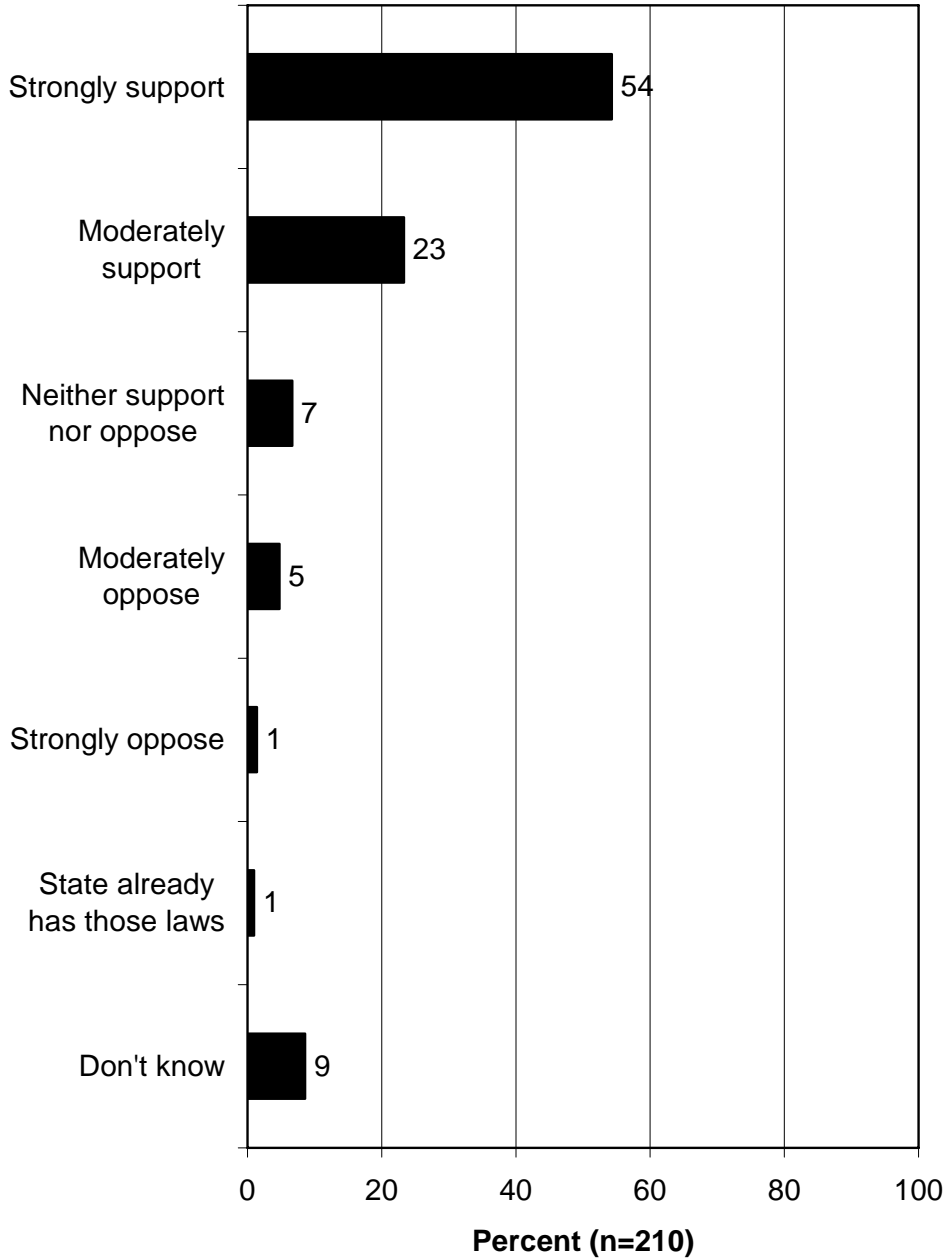
**Q217. In your opinion, how effective do you think a program providing landowners compensation or incentives for opening their lands to the public for hunting would be at improving hunting access to private lands in South Dakota?**



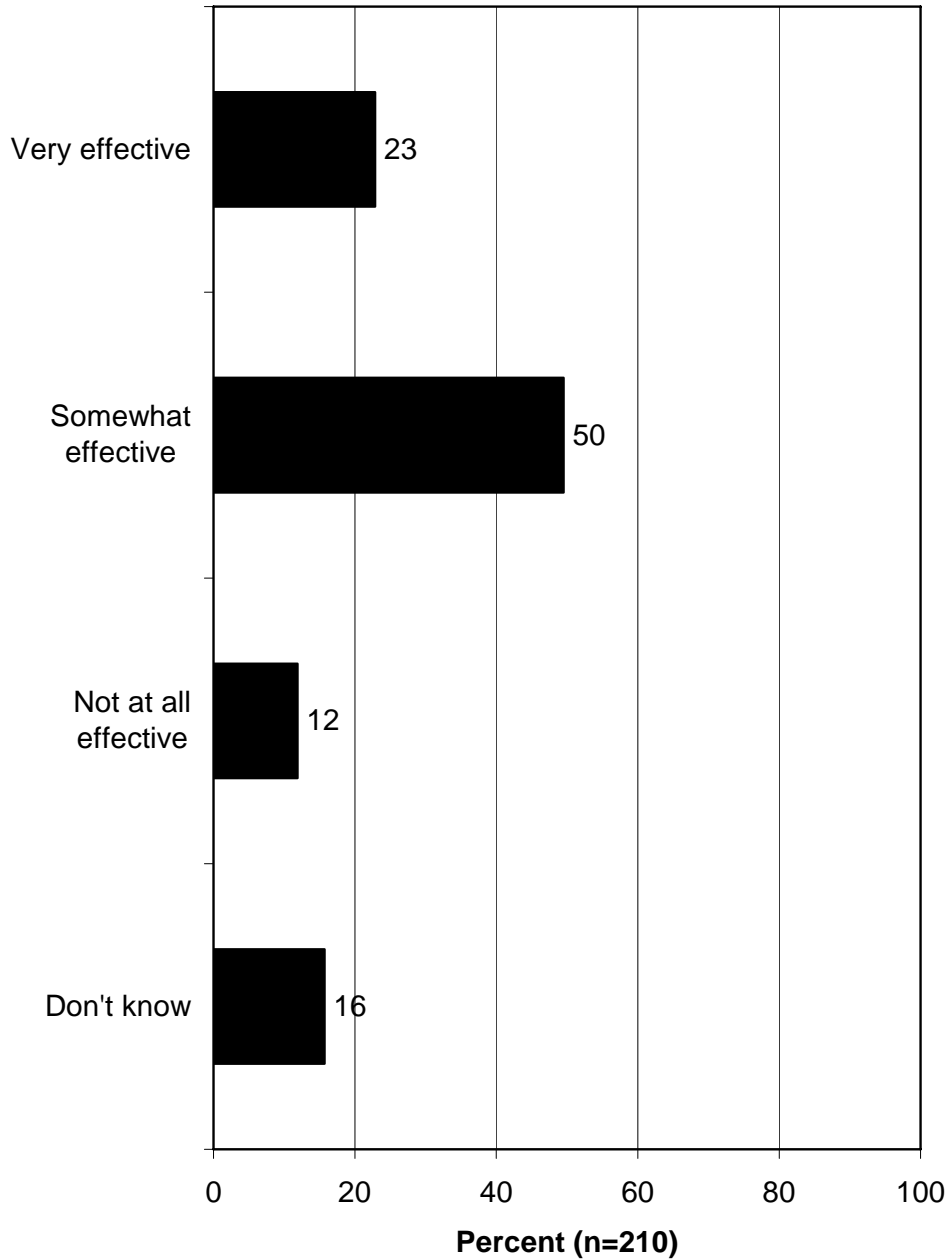
**Q218. Are you aware of any laws in South Dakota that reduce landowner liability for landowners who open their lands to the public for hunting?**



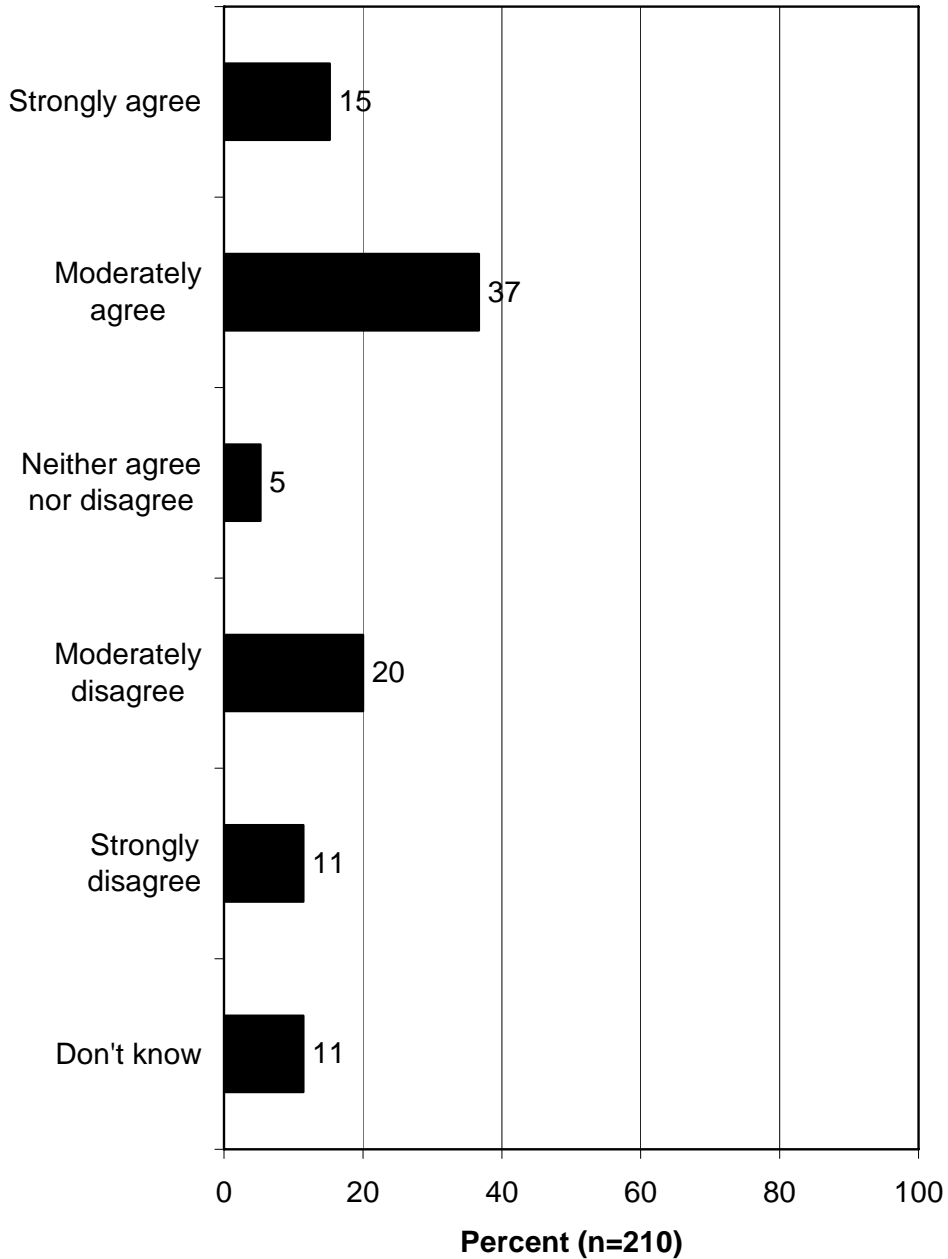
**Q219. Do you support or oppose South Dakota laws to reduce landowner liability for landowners who open their lands to the public for hunting?**



**Q220. In your opinion, how effective do you think legislation reducing landowner liability is or would be at improving hunting access to private lands in South Dakota?**



**Q224. Do you agree or disagree that legislation reducing landowner liability would significantly increase the number of landowners who open their lands to the public for hunting?**



## PARTICIPATION IN AND USE OF VARIOUS PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

- The survey asked about 15 programs in South Dakota that pertain to hunting access (some state programs and some national programs). The programs about which the survey asked are shown in Text Box 7 below.
  - A basic line of questioning asked hunters about their awareness of the various programs, and 5 of the 15 programs had large majorities aware of them: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas (73% were *very* or *somewhat* aware of it), South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas (73%), the Conservation Reserve Program (69%), South Dakota's Game Production Areas (69%), and the printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* (69%). All other programs have awareness levels of 30% or lower.
  - Another series of questions asked hunters about their use of or participation in the access programs. Those same five programs above had the highest rates of use/participation: the printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* (57% have used it), South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas (54%), South Dakota's Game Production Areas (48%), the Conservation Reserve Program (47%), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas (43%).

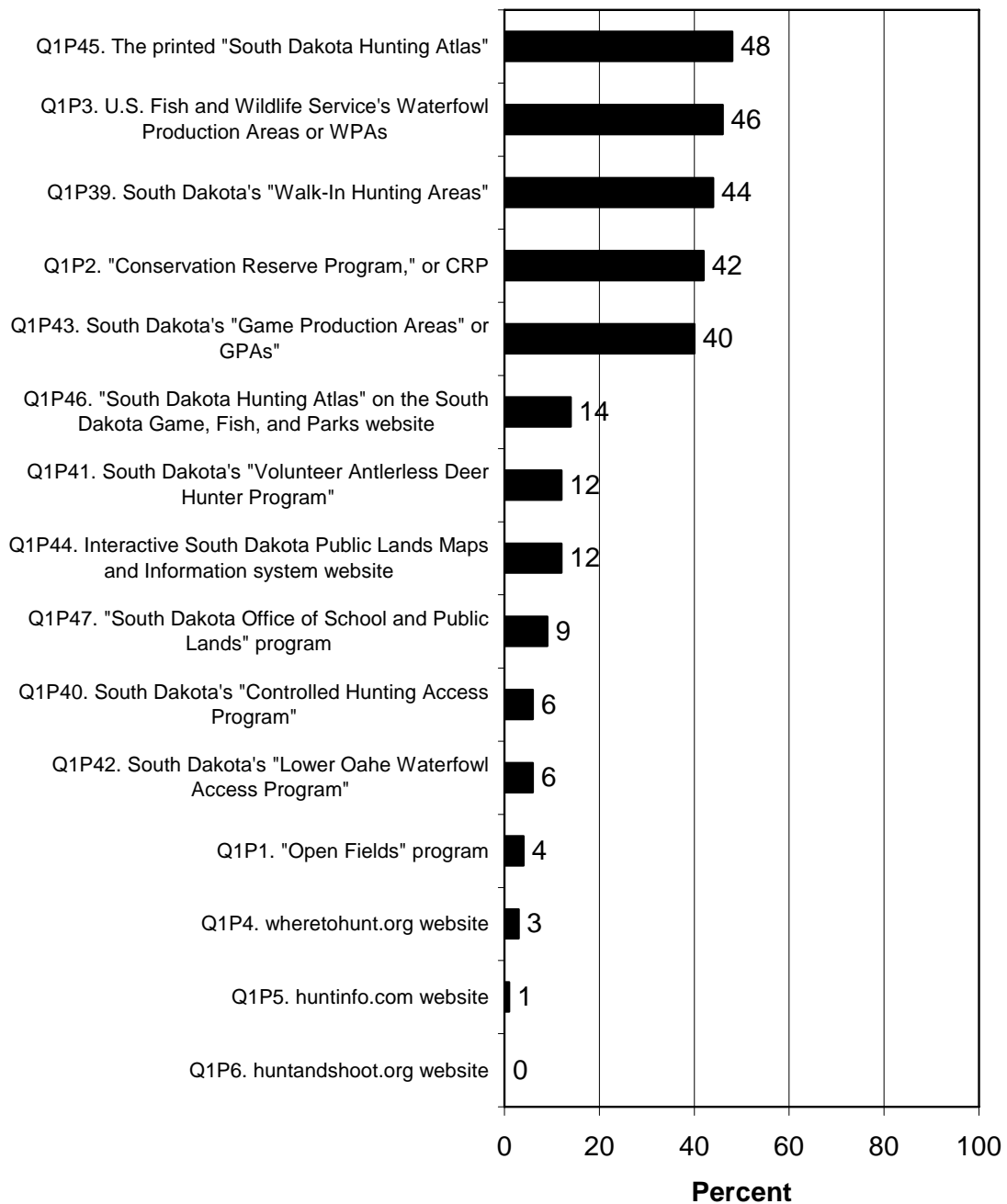
### TEXT BOX 7

#### Hunting access programs that were asked about in the survey:

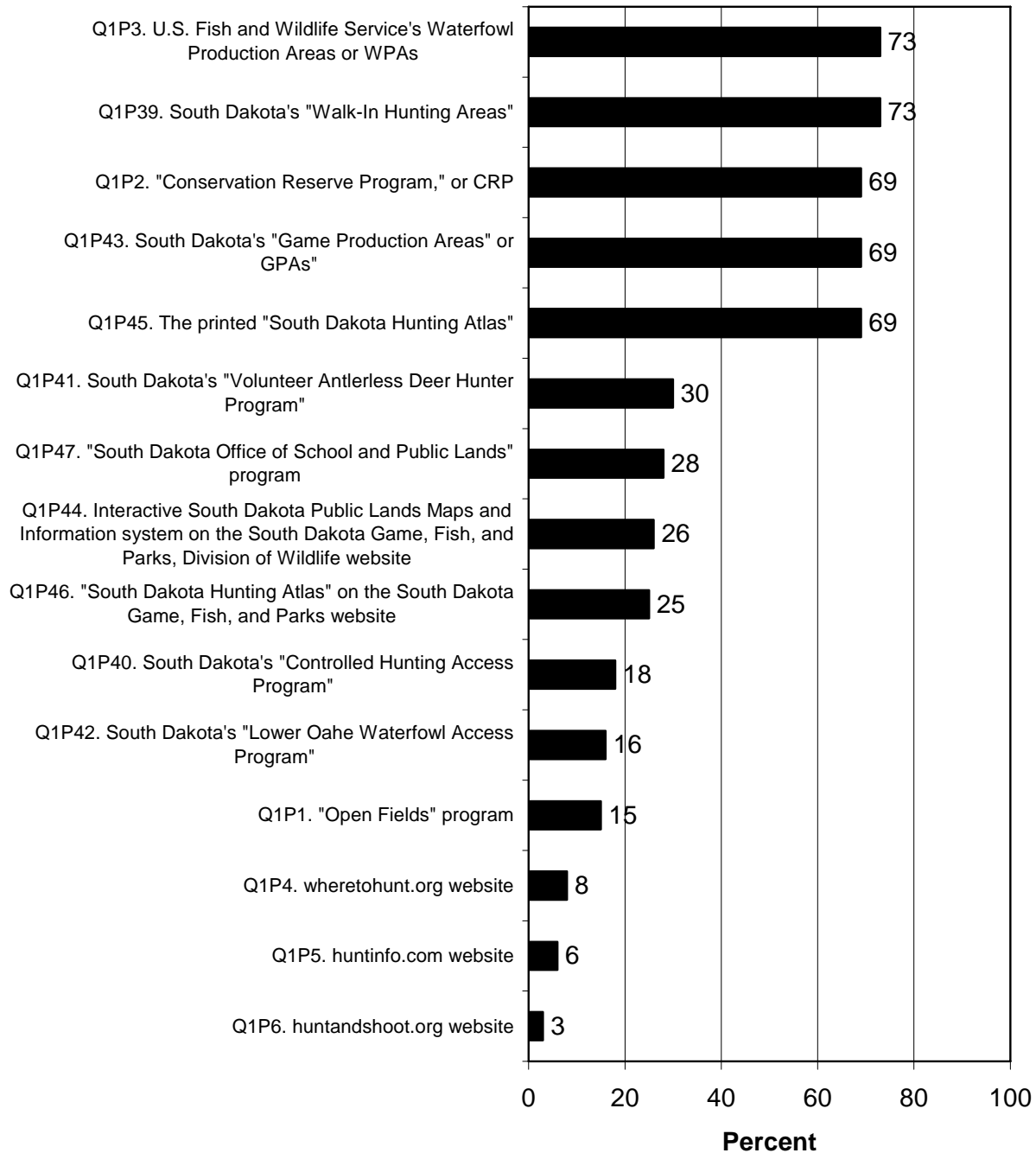
The Open Fields program  
 The Conservation Reserve Program  
 The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas or WPAs  
 The wheretohunt.org website  
 The huntinfo.com website  
 The huntandshoot.org website  
 South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas  
 South Dakota's Controlled Hunting Access Program  
 South Dakota's Volunteer Antlerless Deer Hunter Program  
 South Dakota's Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Program  
 South Dakota's Game Production Areas, or GPAs  
 South Dakota's Interactive South Dakota Public Lands Maps and Information system on the Division of Wildlife's website  
 The printed South Dakota Hunting Atlas  
 The South Dakota Hunting Atlas on the SDDGFP's website  
 South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands program

- For each program of which a hunter was aware, the survey asked him/her to rate it at making hunting access easier.
  - The programs with the highest percentages of hunters giving an *excellent* or *good* rating, all at 47% or more, are the printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* (72% rate it excellent or good), South Dakota's Game Production Areas (64%), South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas (63%), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas (58%), the Conservation Reserve Program (55%), the *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* online (52%), and the interactive South Dakota Public Lands Maps and information system website (47%).
  - The graphs for this series of questions also include the percentages giving a rating of *excellent*, giving a rating of *fair* or *poor* combined, and giving a rating of *poor*.
  
- The survey included a specific question about use of private lands enrolled in any walk-in access program in South Dakota. More than two-fifths of hunters (41%) hunt their primary species *often* or *sometimes* on such lands. On the other hand, more than a third (36%) *never* do so.

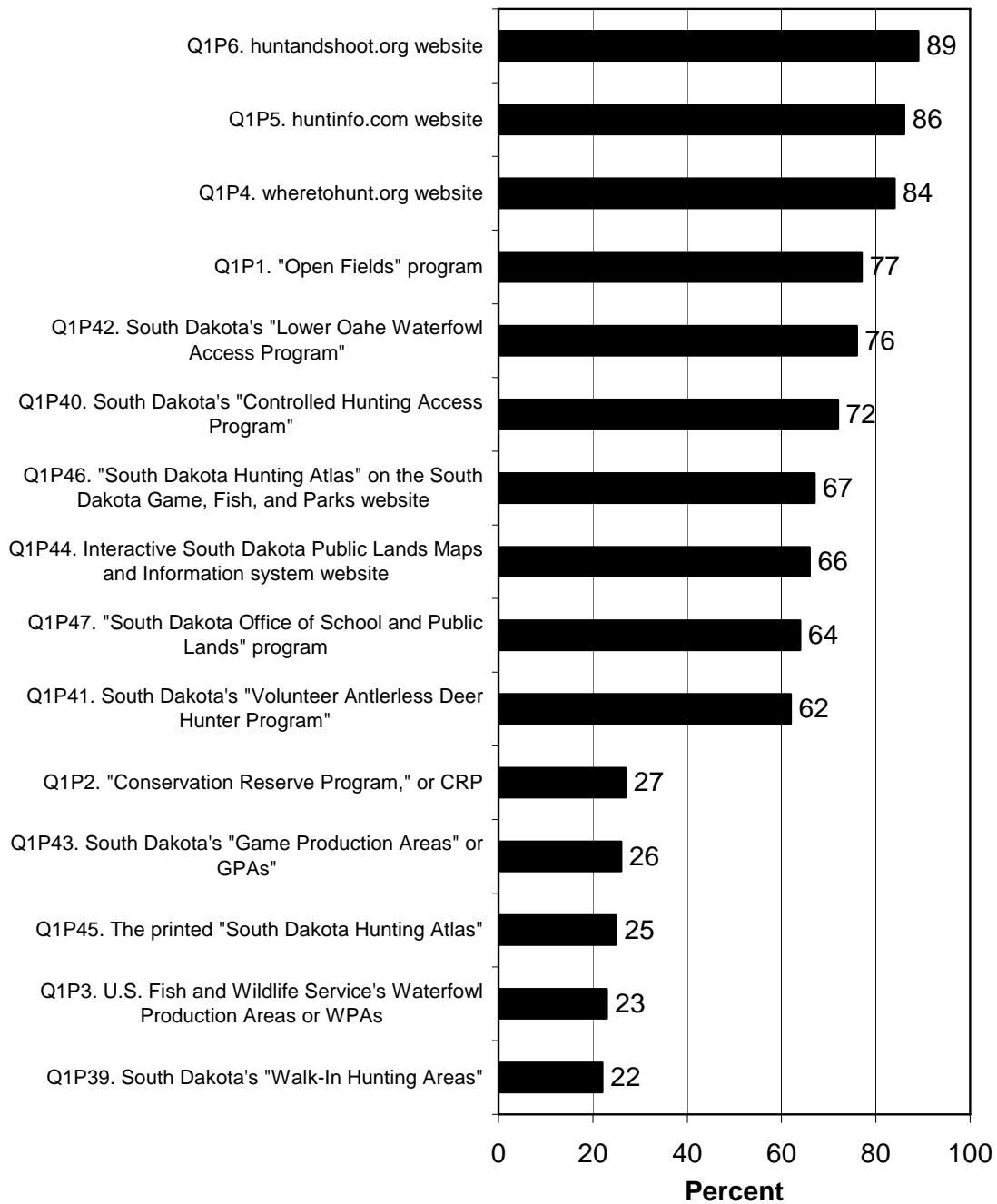
**Percent who are very aware of the following hunting-related programs and resources.**



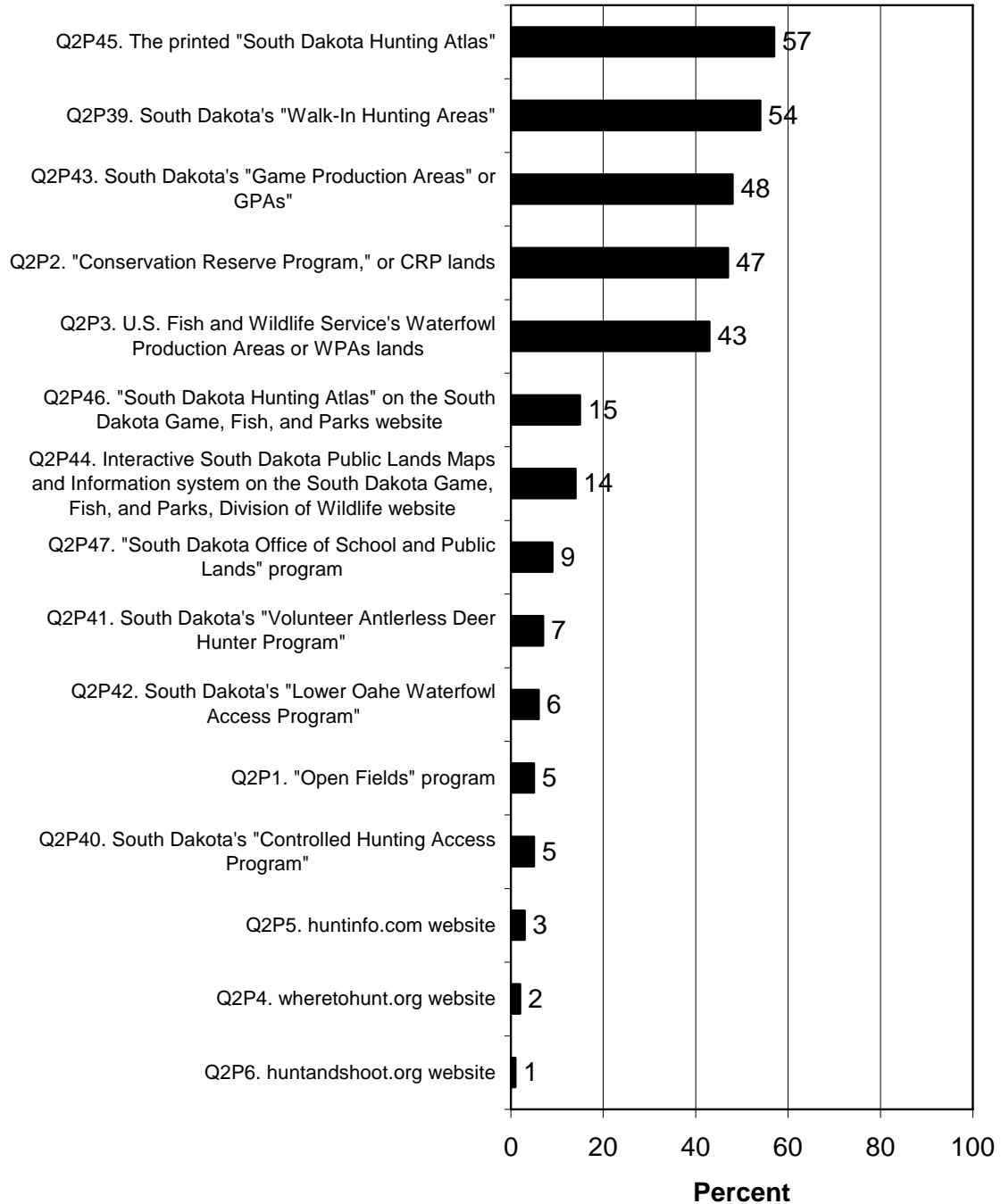
**Percent who are very or somewhat aware of the following hunting-related programs and resources.**



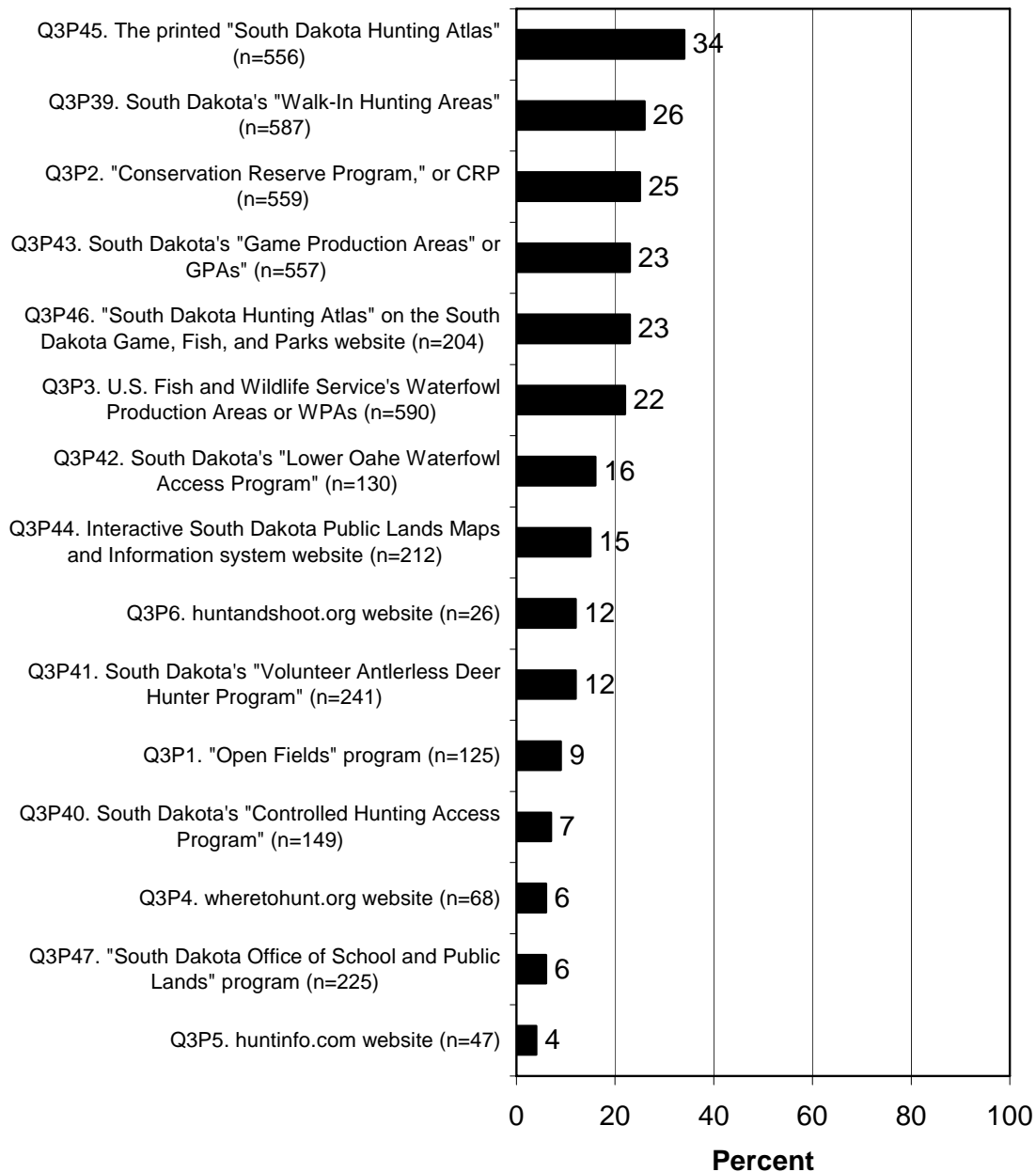
## Percent who are not at all aware of the following hunting-related programs and resources.



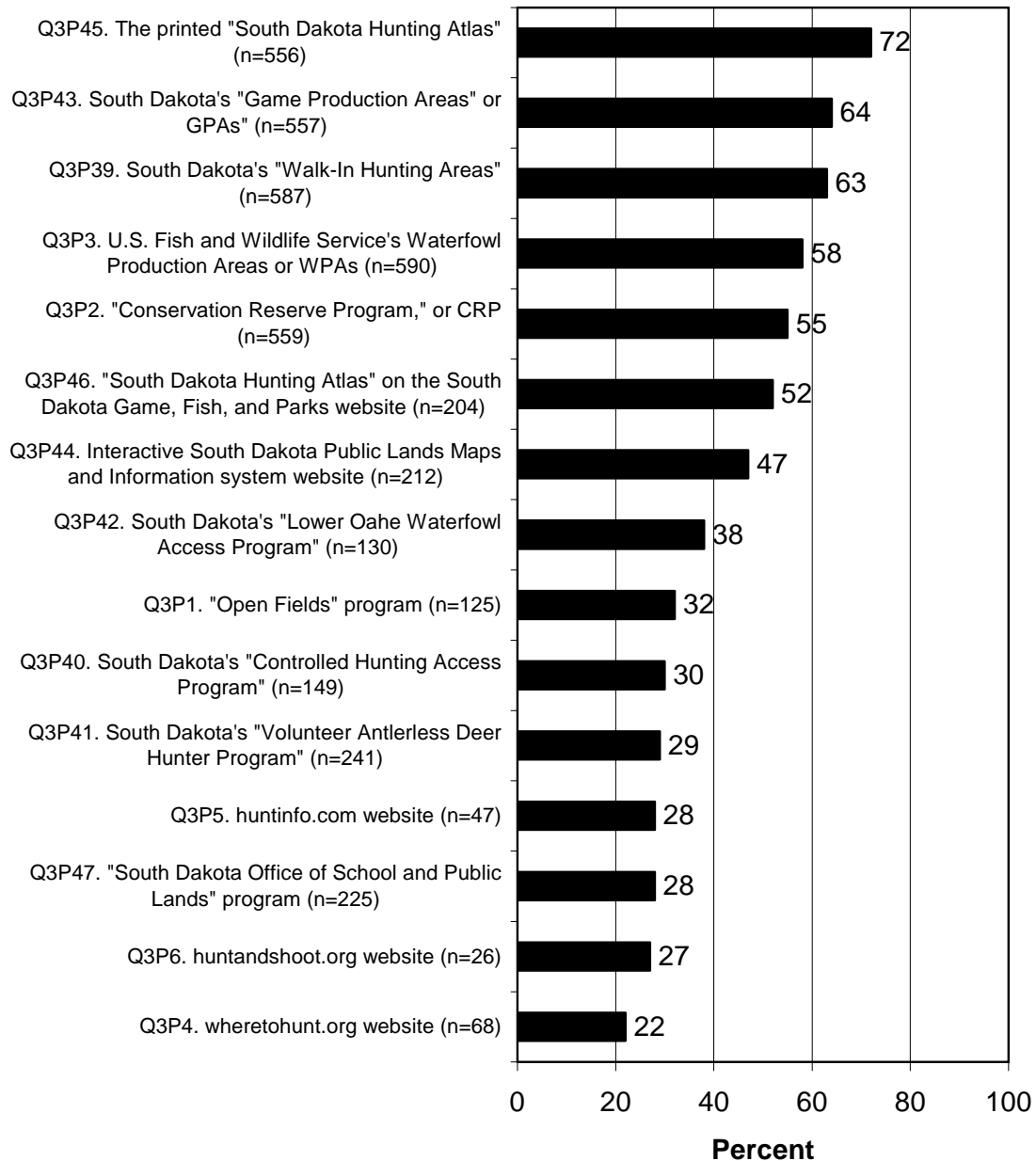
**Percent who have used or participated in the following programs in the past 5 years.**



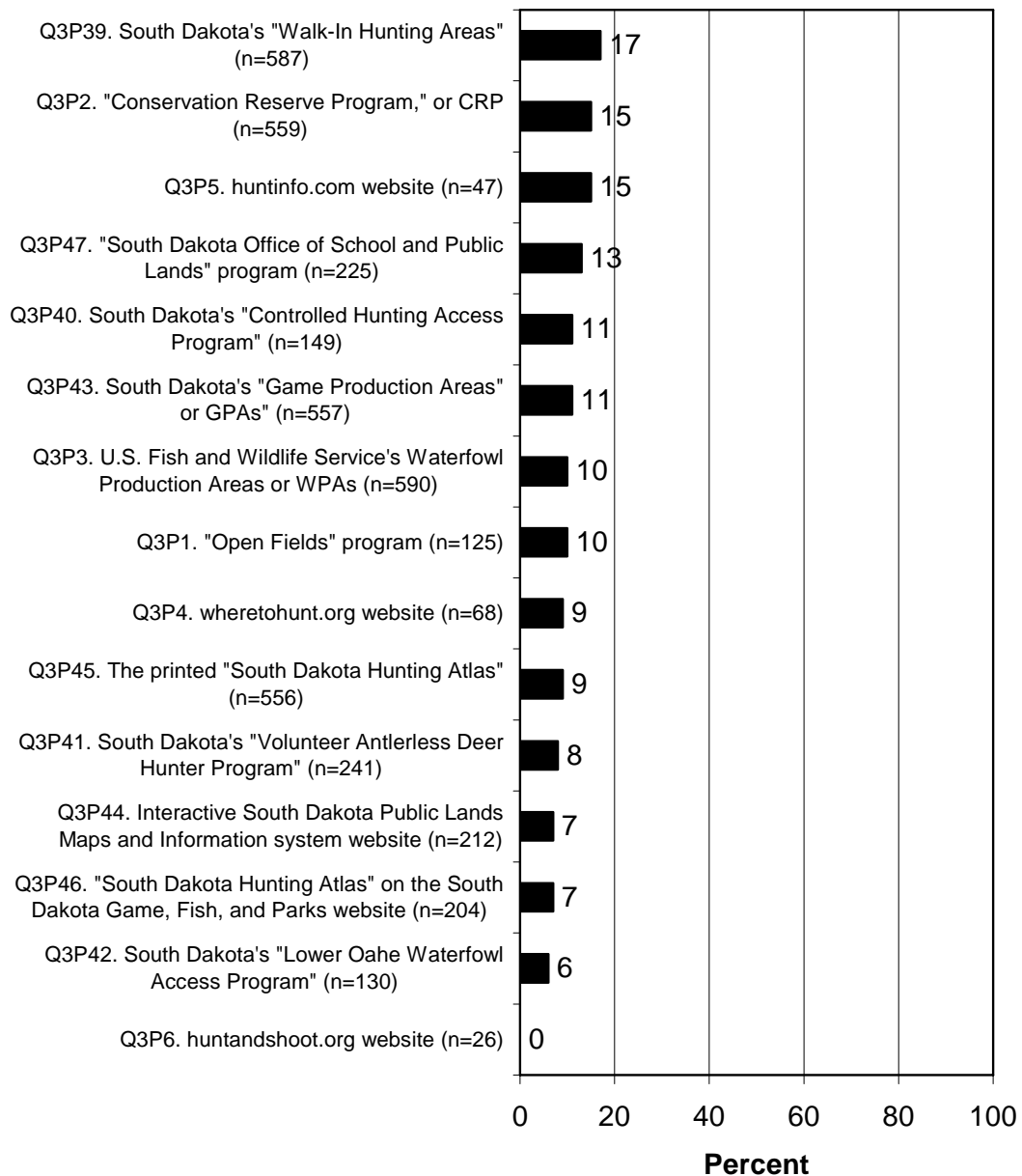
**Percent who rate the following programs/resources they are aware of for making hunting access easier as excellent. (Asked of those aware of the programs/resources.)**



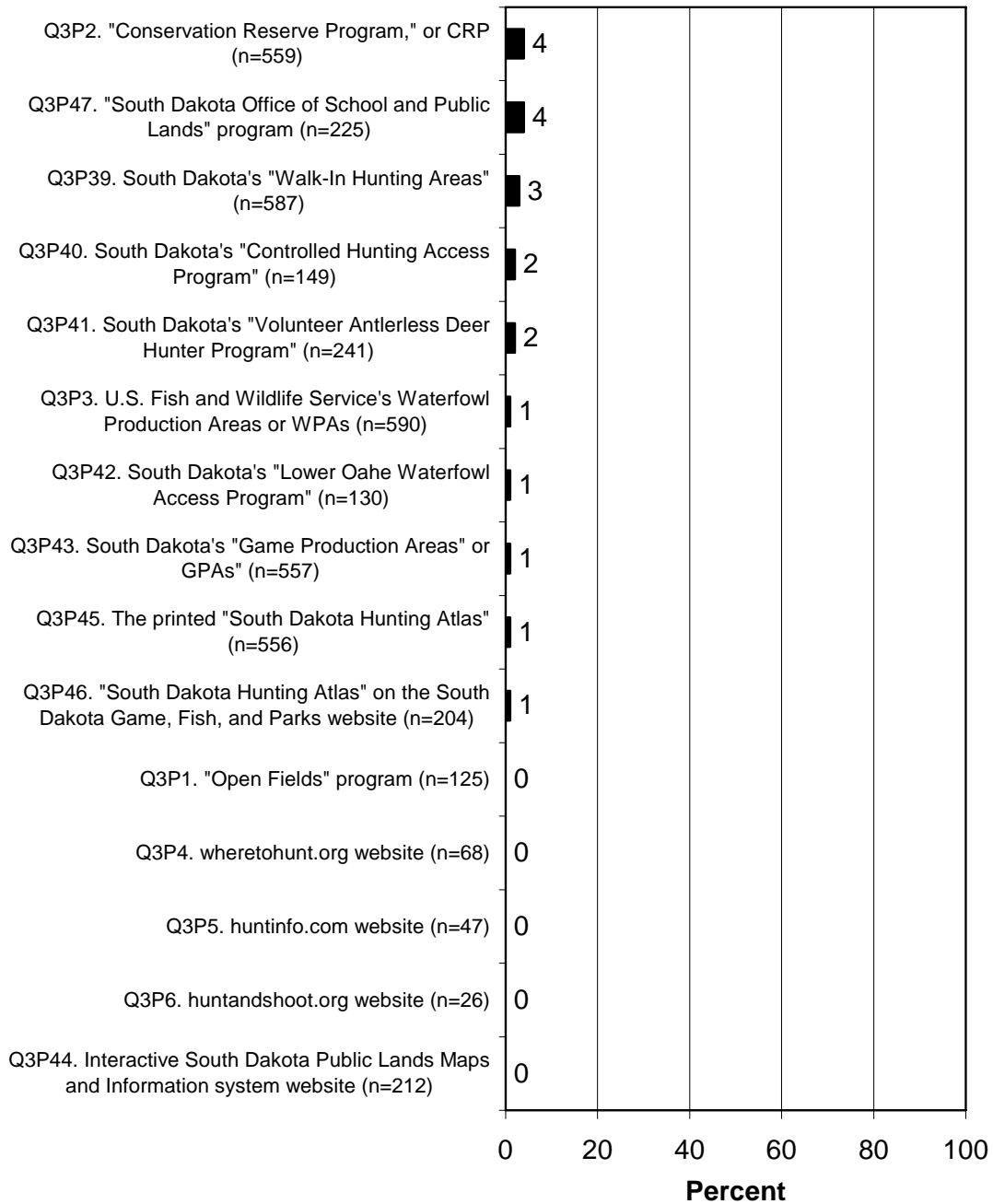
**Percent who rate the following programs/resources they are aware of for making hunting access easier as excellent or good. (Asked of those aware of the programs/resources.)**



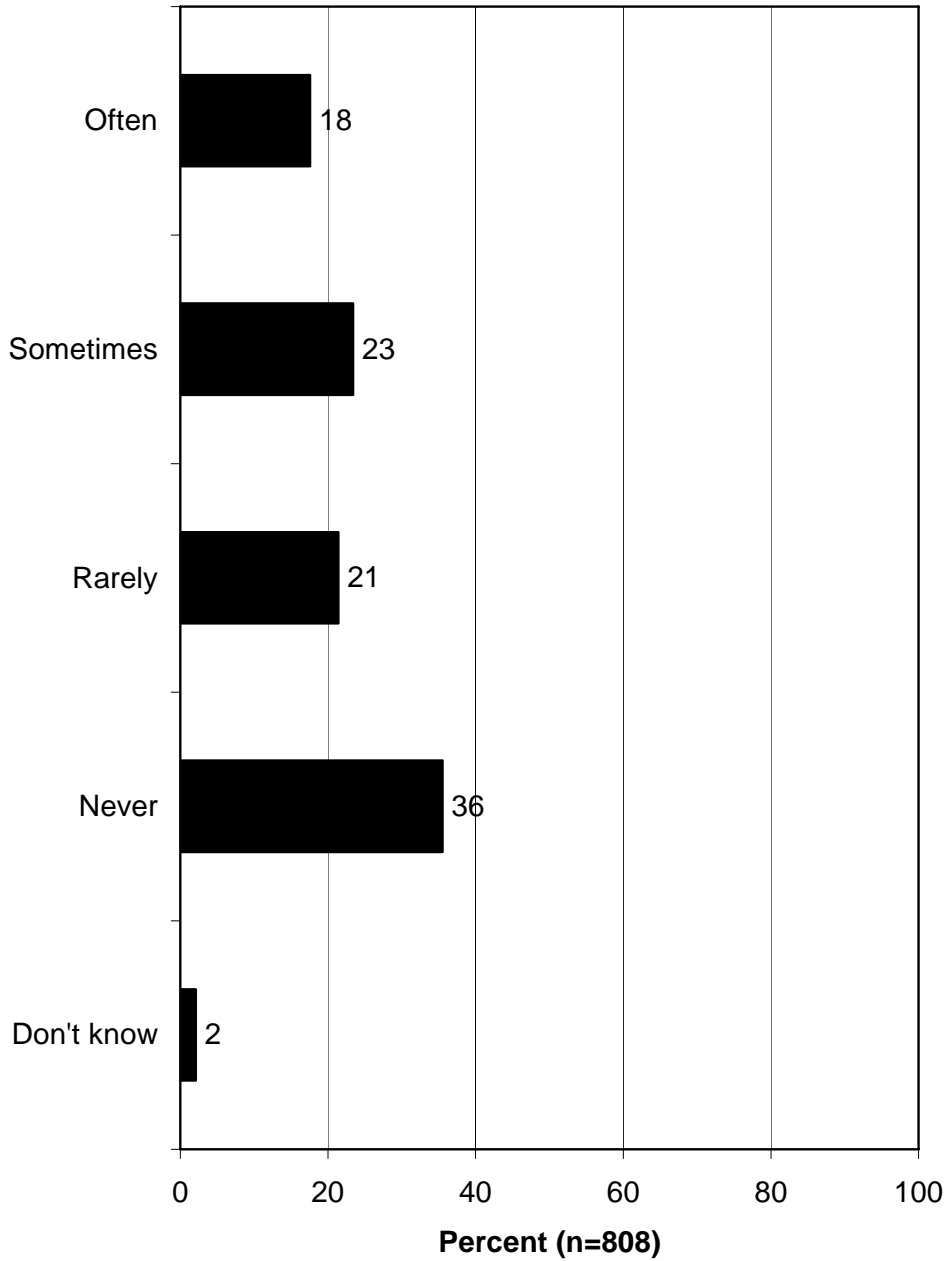
**Percent who rate the following programs/resources they are aware of for making hunting access easier as fair or poor. (Asked of those aware of the programs/resources.)**



**Percent who rate the following programs/resources they are aware of for making hunting access easier as poor. (Asked of those aware of the programs/resources.)**



**Q59. How often do you hunt for (species) on private lands enrolled in a Walk-In Access program or a state-run private land access program in South Dakota?**



## SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED IN DECIDING WHERE TO HUNT

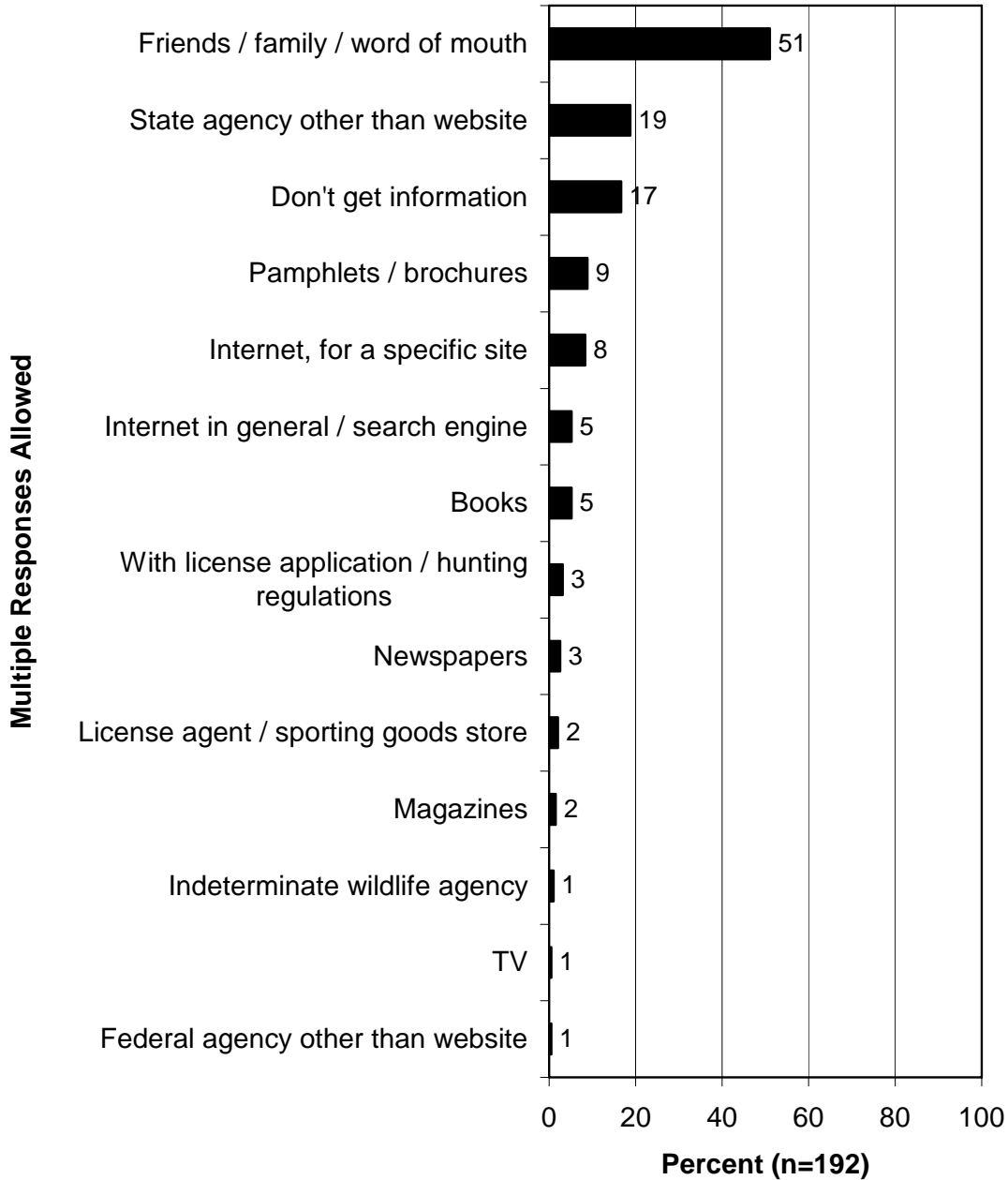
- In the broadest question about sources of information, hunters were asked in an open-ended question where they got information on places to hunt and hunting access in South Dakota. The most popular source is friends/family/word of mouth (51%), by far the top answer. Other notable answers include a state agency other than a website (19%), pamphlets/brochures (9%), and specific sites on the Internet (8%).
  - In follow-up, hunters rated the accuracy of the information they receive: while 77% say it is *very* accurate, 22% say it is only *somewhat* accurate or *not at all* accurate. Obviously, this latter group has found enough inaccuracies to *not* rate it *very* accurate.
  
- The survey asked hunters if they had visited the websites of four agencies (the South Dakota Division of Wildlife, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management). Slightly more than a fourth of hunters in South Dakota had visited the SDDGFP site (27%). Lower amounts (from 7% to 12%) had visited the other sites.
  - Follow-up questions asked hunters to rate the usefulness of the websites' information on places to hunt and hunting access in planning hunting trips. Ratings are positive: all of the sites had a majority of site visitors (from 71% to 79%) rating its access information as excellent or good.
  
- The survey asked six questions about actions that hunters may take in deciding where to hunt (shown in Text Box 8 on the following page). For each action, the survey asked hunters if they always, sometimes, rarely, or never do it when deciding where to hunt. The starting point in going through the list in each interview was randomized. The results of the series of questions were then ranked.
  - About two-thirds or more of hunters *always* or *sometimes* do four things in deciding where to hunt: 60% ask a friend or family member where to hunt, 49% scout or physically look for a place, 41% knock on landowners' doors to ask permission, and 39% use paper maps to find a place to hunt.

**TEXT BOX 8****Actions hunters may take in deciding where to hunt that were asked about in the survey:**

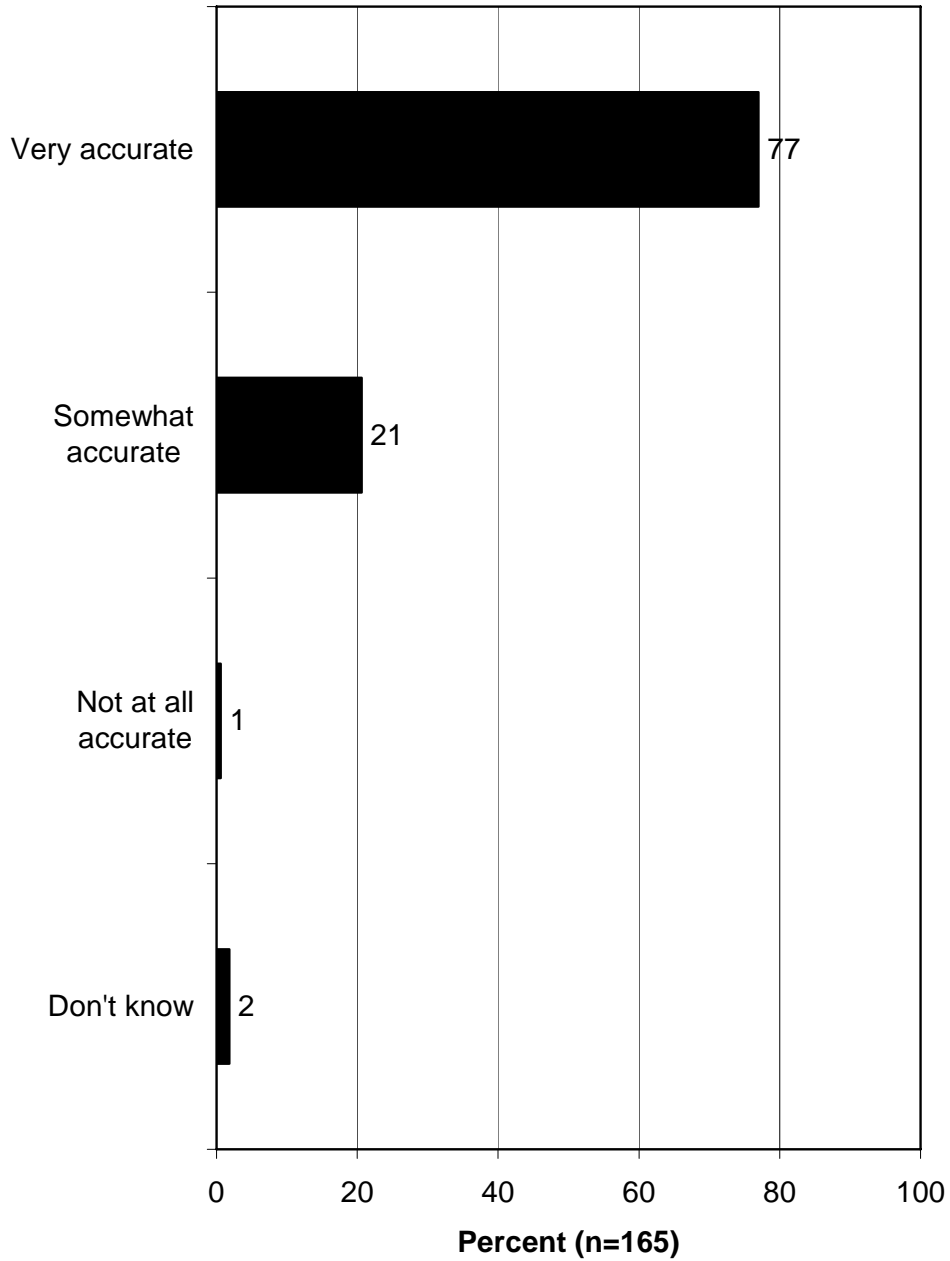
- Ask a friend or family member where to hunt
- Knock on a landowner's door to ask permission to hunt
- Use paper maps to find a place to hunt
- Use GPS to locate hunting land
- Find available hunting lands on the Internet
- Scout or physically look for land on which to hunt

- Within the above series of questions was a question asking how often hunters scout or physically look for land on which to hunt. In follow-up, they were asked how many days they typically spend scouting for hunting locations. The median number of days they typically spend annually scouting for hunting land is 4 days, among those who scout for land.

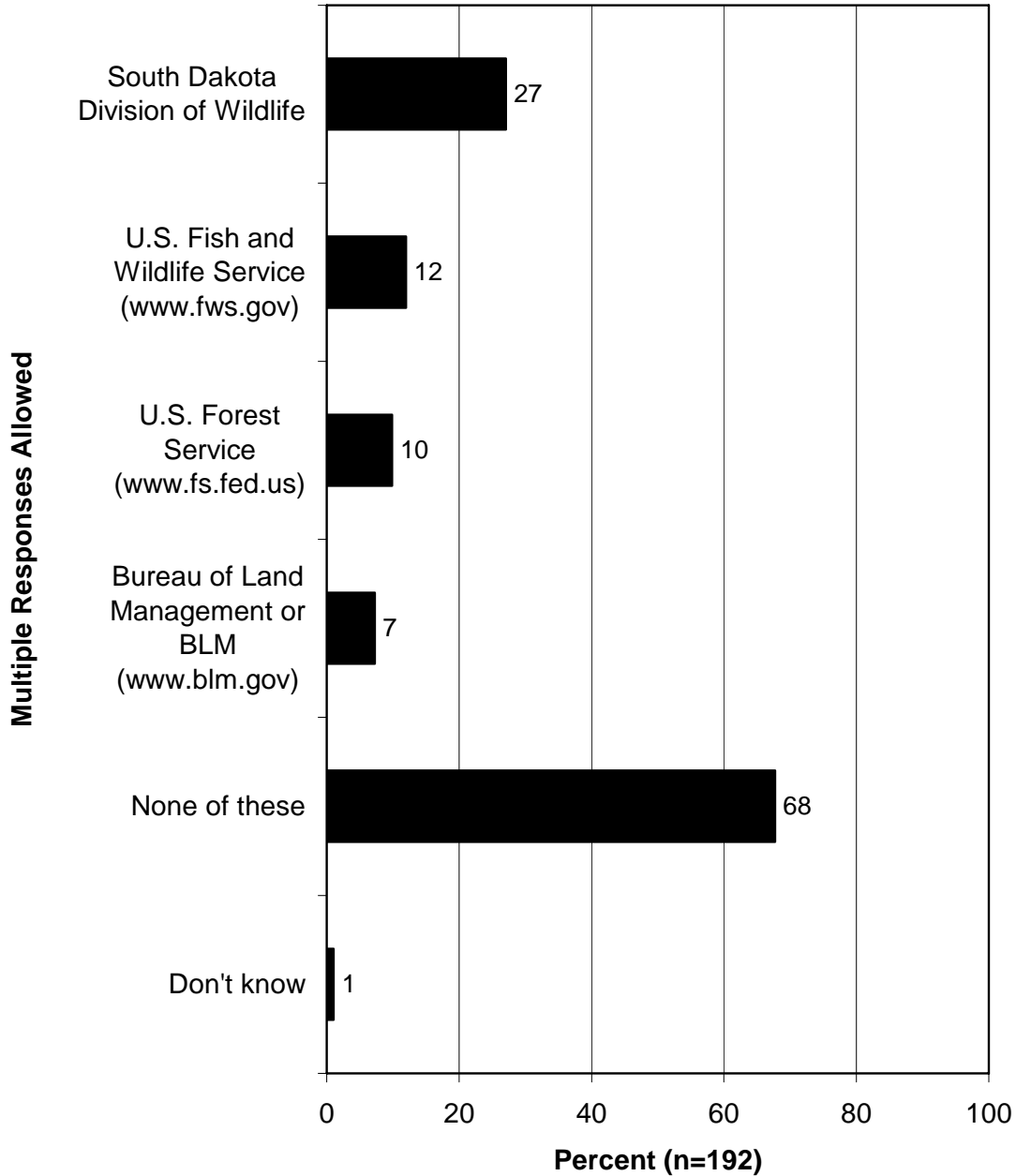
### Q227. Where do you get information on places to hunt and hunting access in South Dakota?



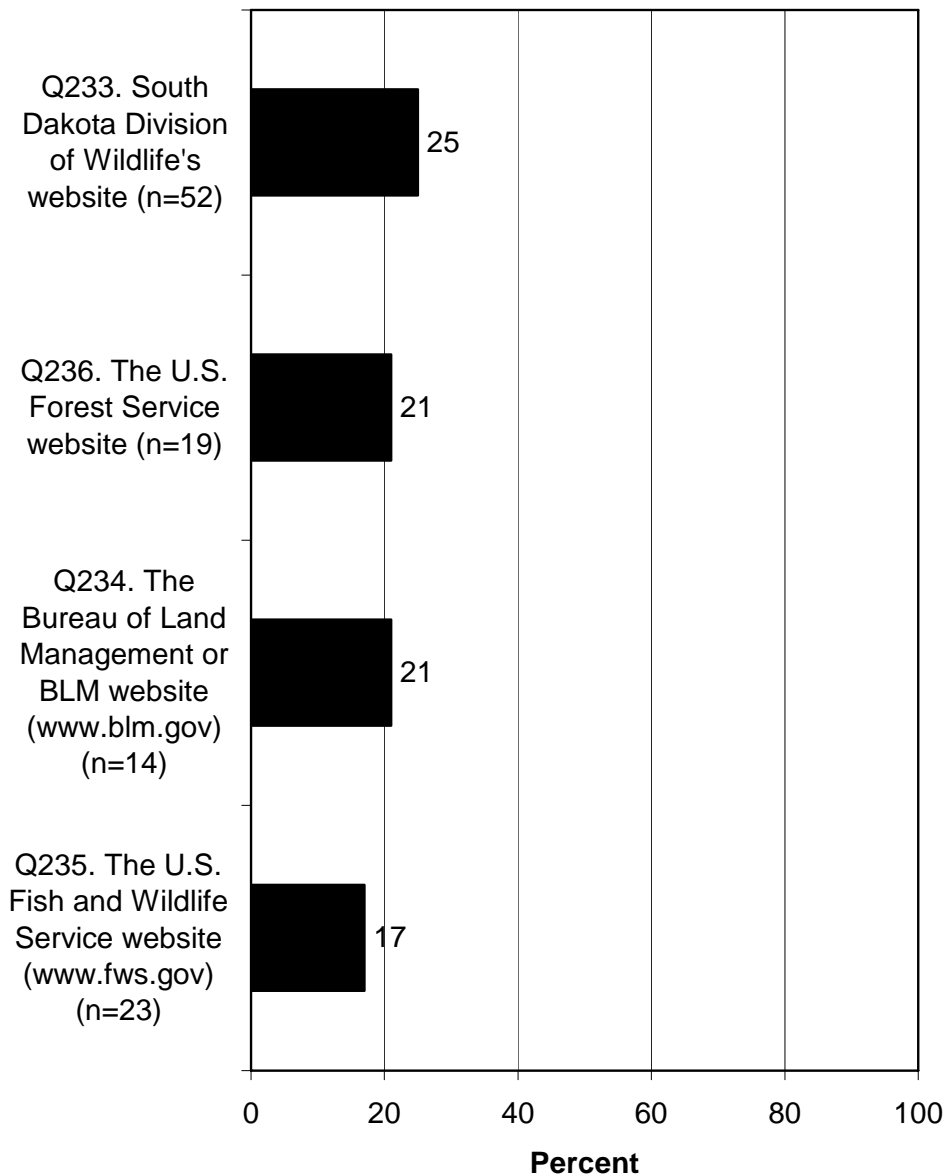
**Q229. In general, how accurate is the information you typically receive?**



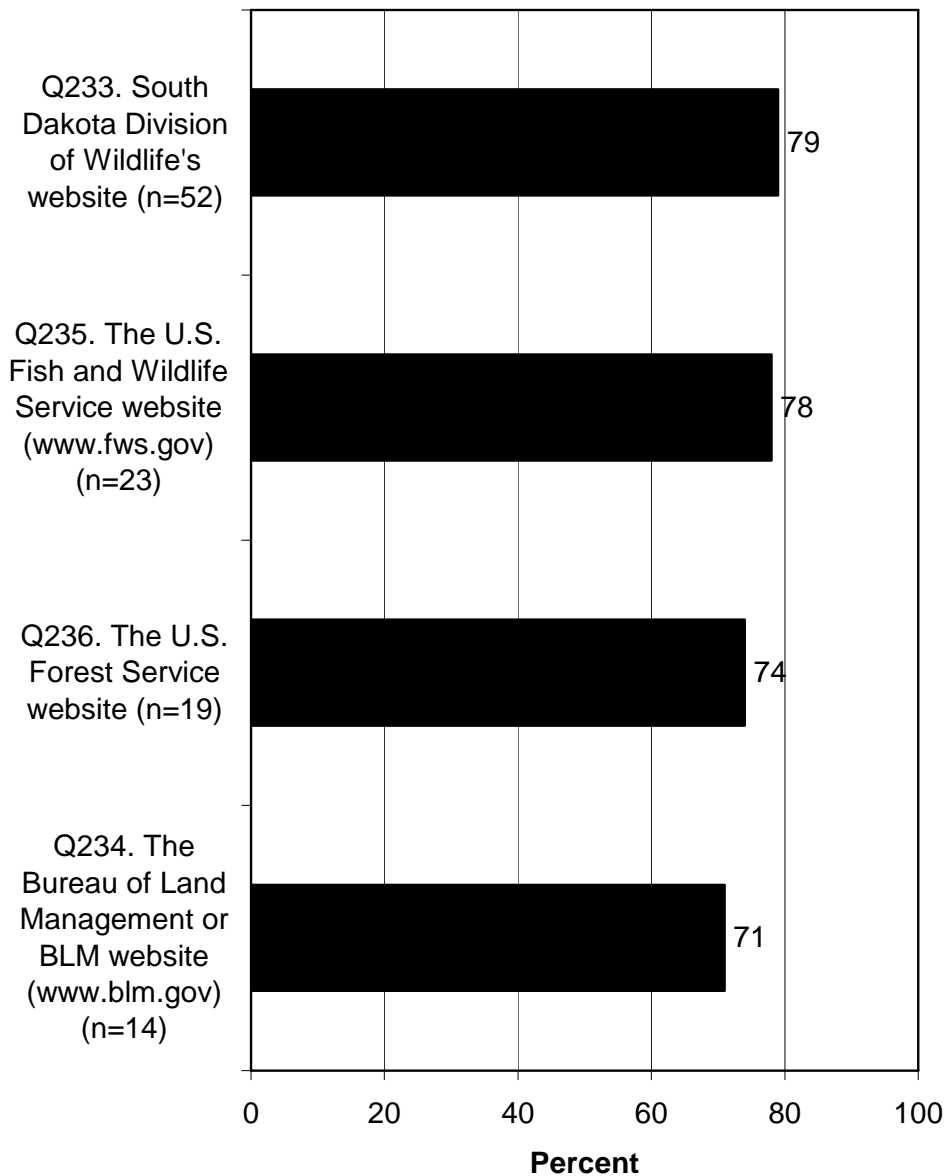
**Q232. Please tell me if you have visited any of the following websites to look for information on places to hunt and hunting access?**



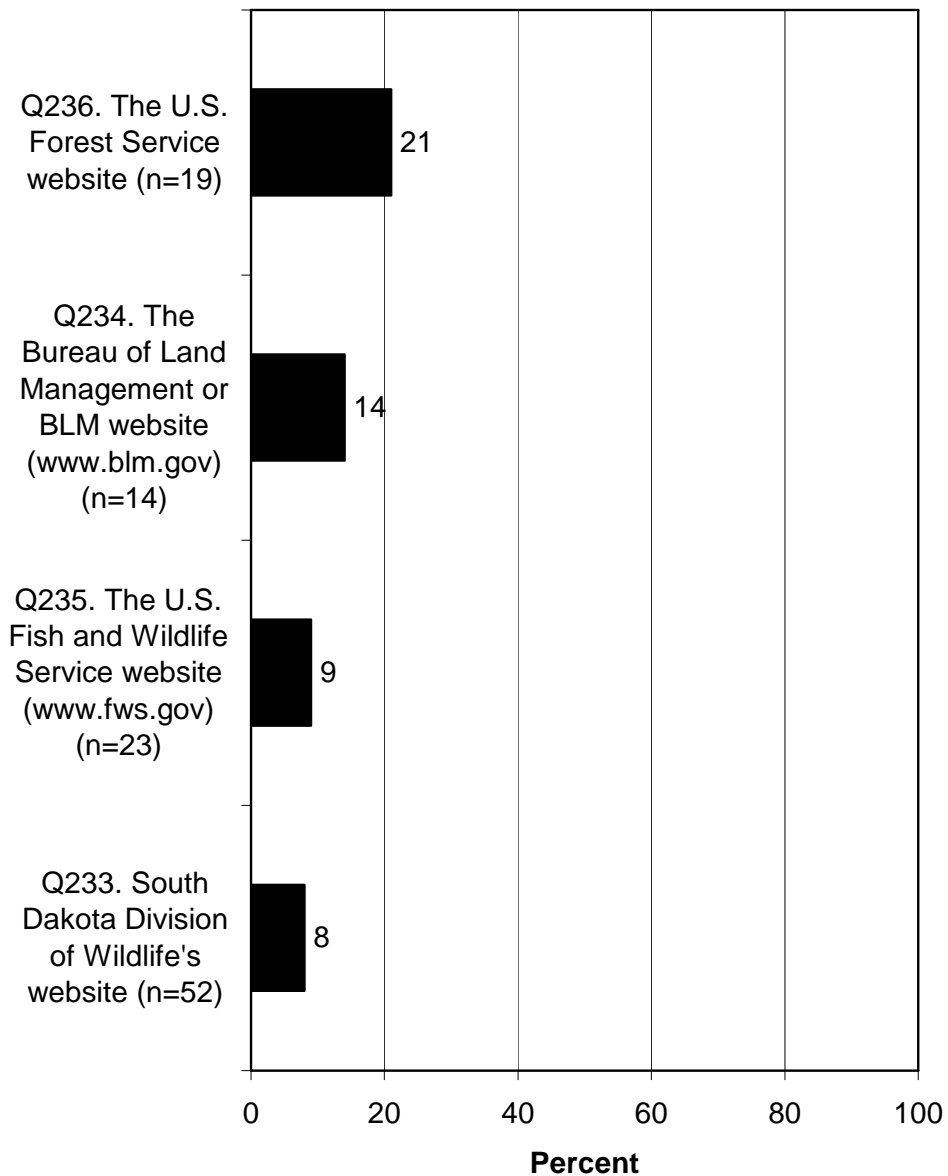
**Percent who rate the usefulness of the information on places to hunt and hunting access as excellent for planning their hunting trips in South Dakota.  
(Asked of those who visited the website.)**



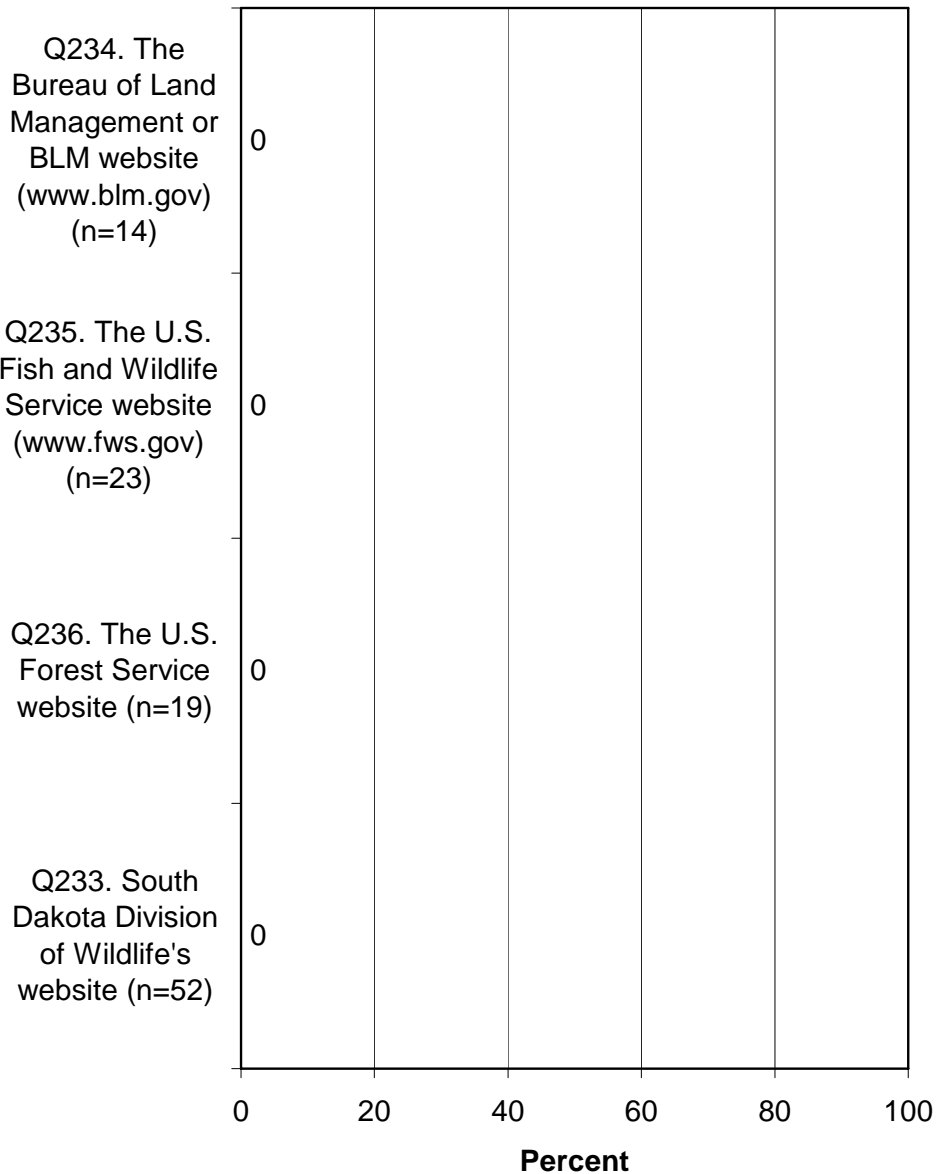
**Percent who rate the usefulness of the information on places to hunt and hunting access as excellent or good for planning their hunting trips in South Dakota. (Asked of those who visited the website.)**



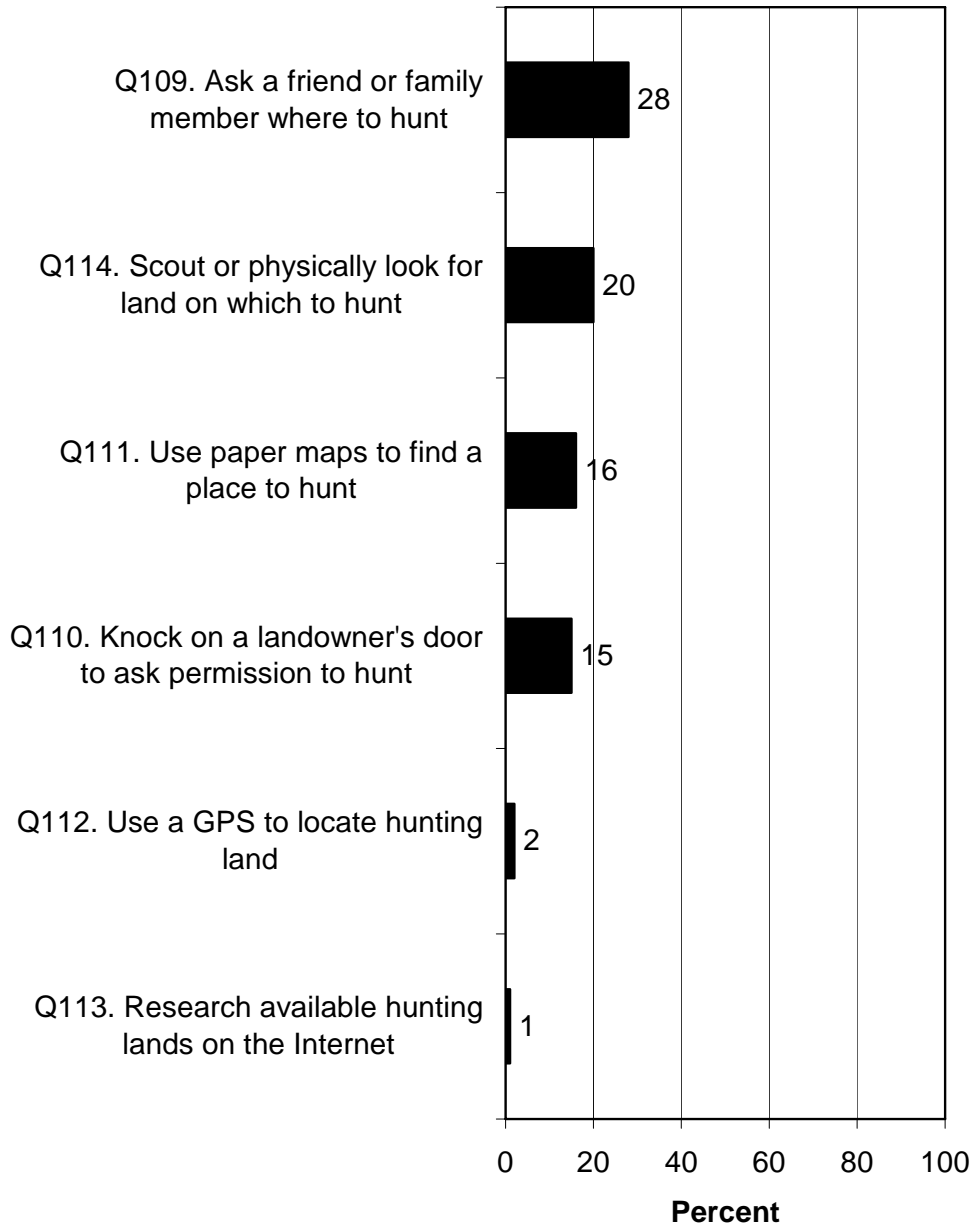
**Percent who rate the usefulness of the information on places to hunt and hunting access as fair or poor for planning their hunting trips in South Dakota. (Asked of those who visited the website.)**



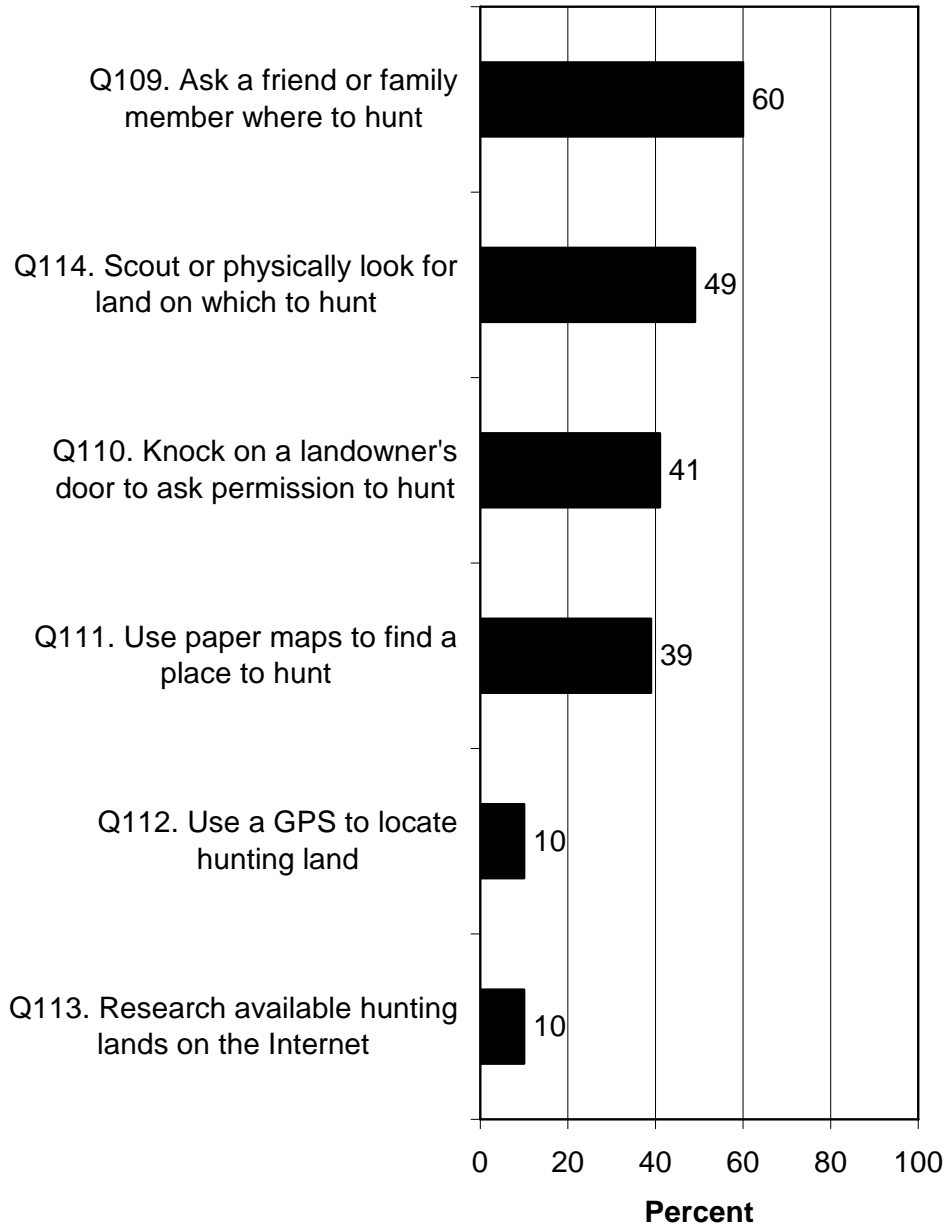
**Percent who rate the usefulness of the information on places to hunt and hunting access as poor for planning their hunting trips in South Dakota. (Asked of those who visited the website.)**



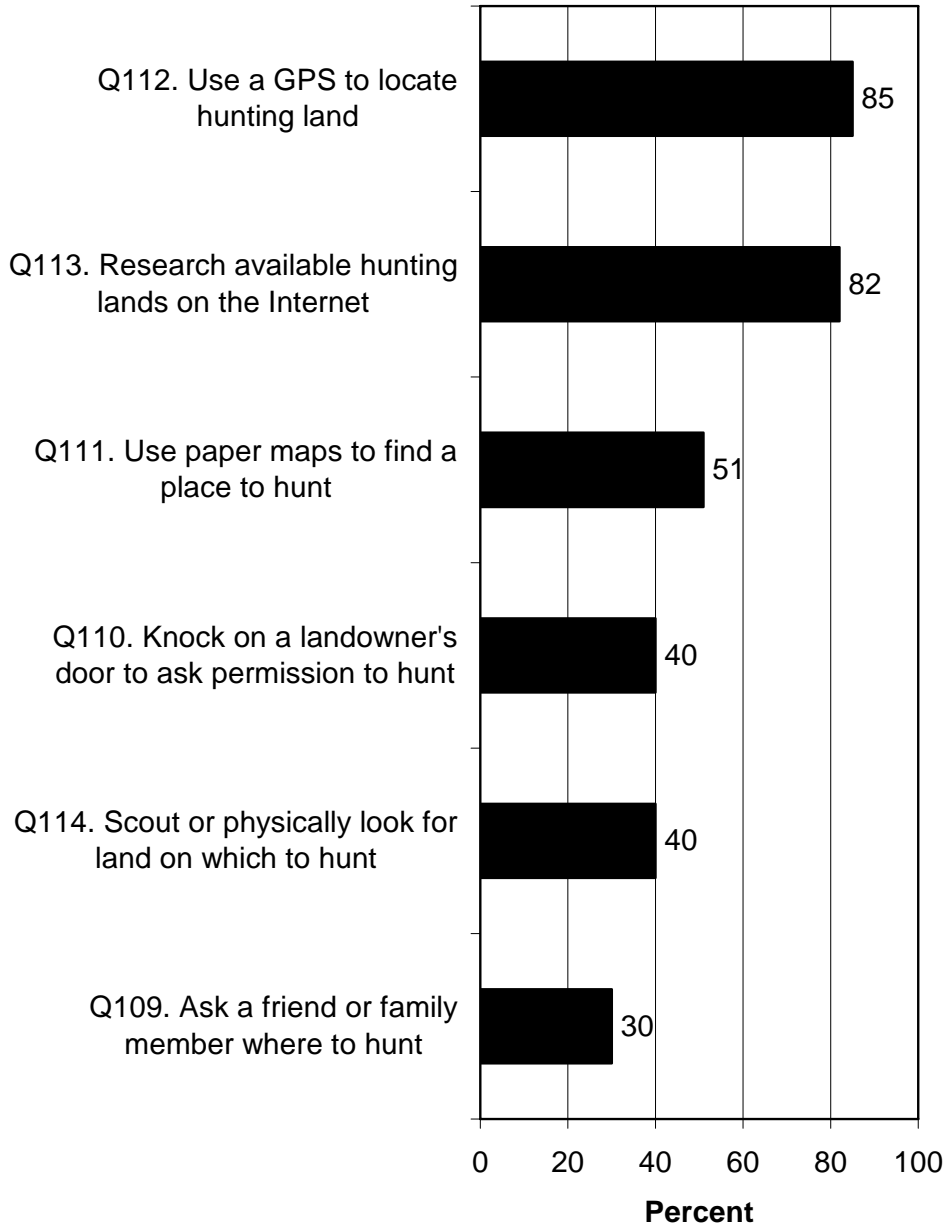
**Percent who always do the following when deciding where to hunt (species) in South Dakota:**



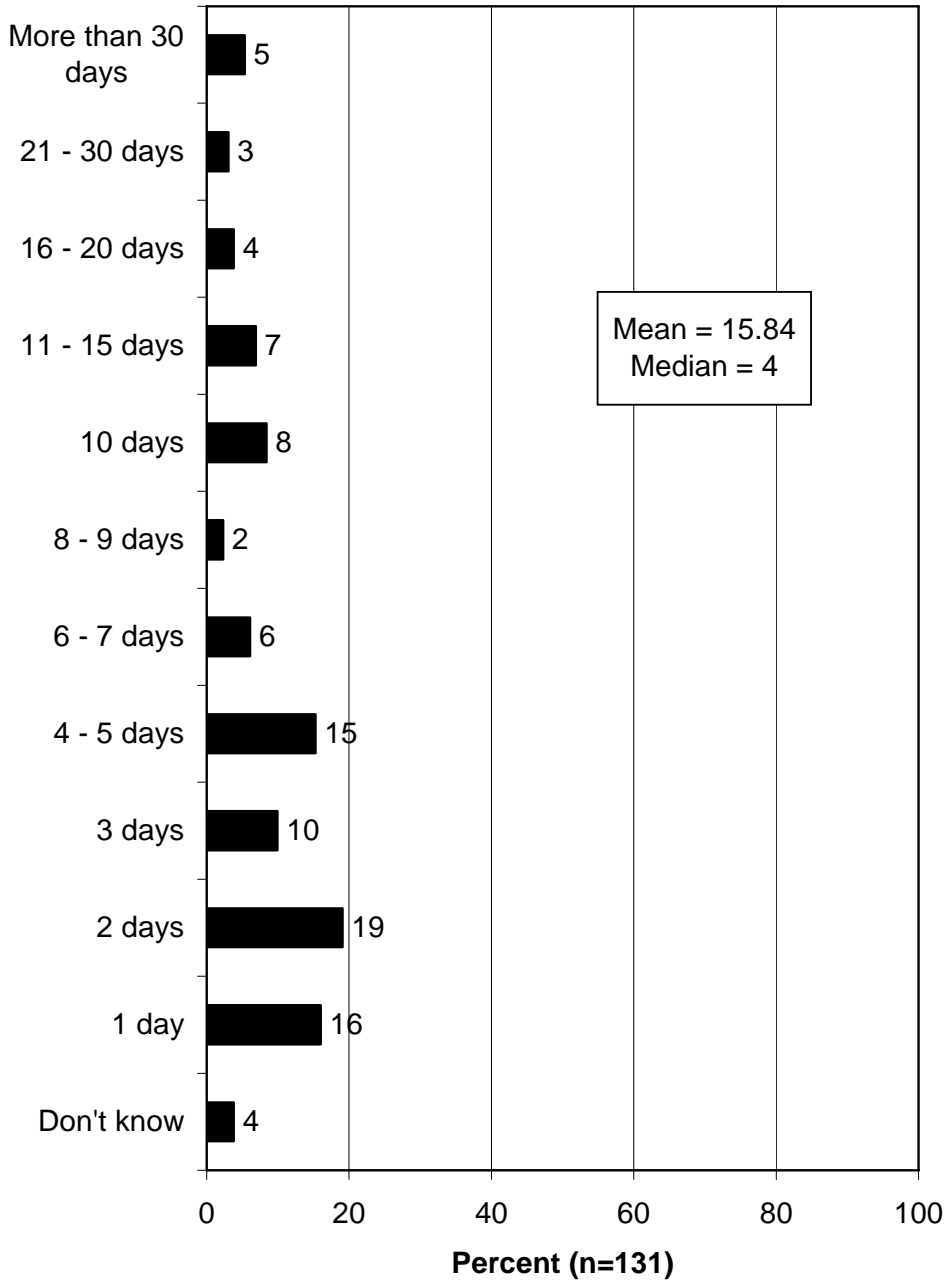
**Percent who always or sometimes do the following when deciding where to hunt (species) in South Dakota:**



**Percent who never do the following when deciding where to hunt (species) in South Dakota:**



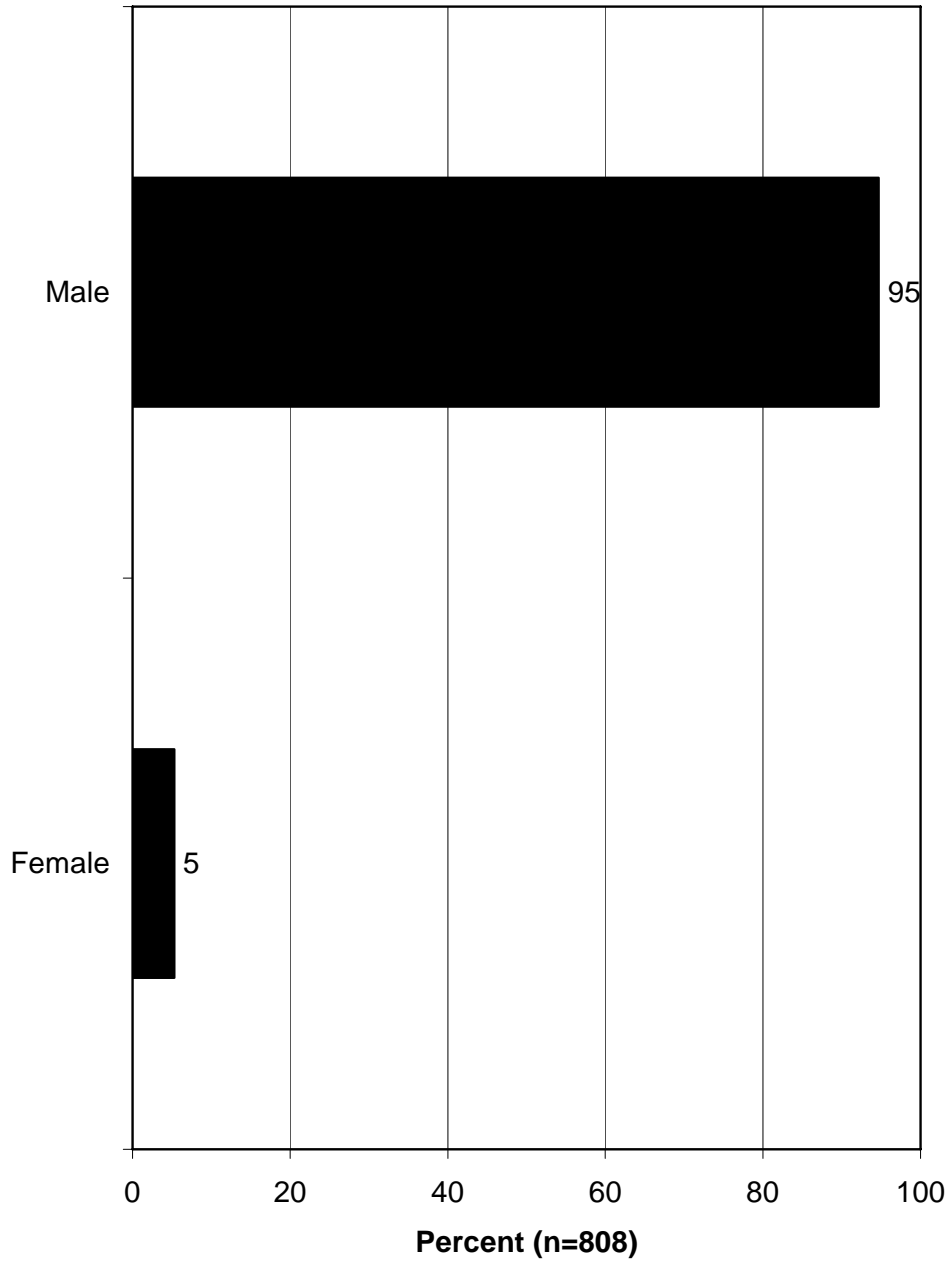
**Q115. About how many days do you usually scout for land on which to hunt for (species) each year in South Dakota? (Asked of individuals who scout for land on which to hunt.)**

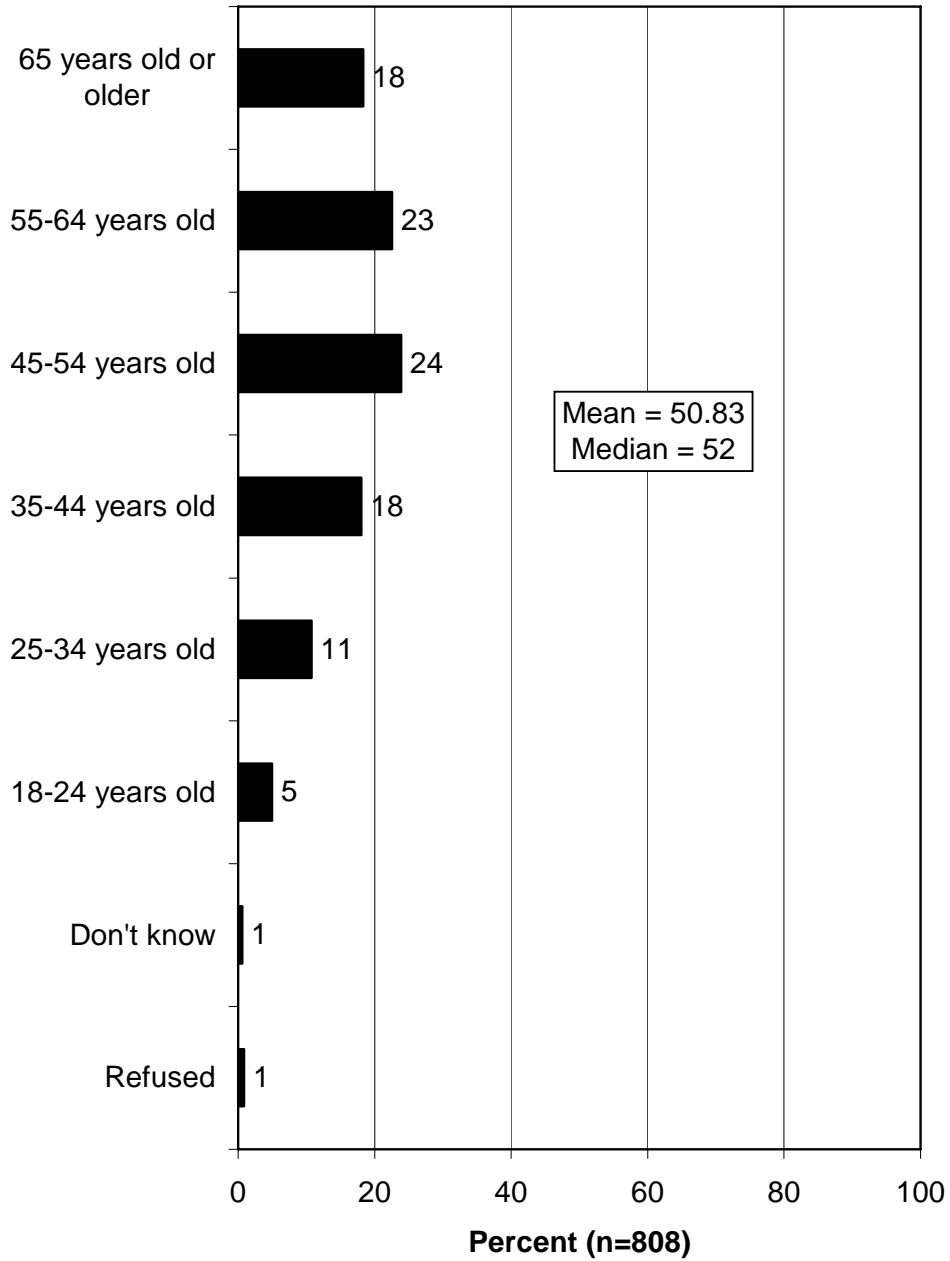


## **DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

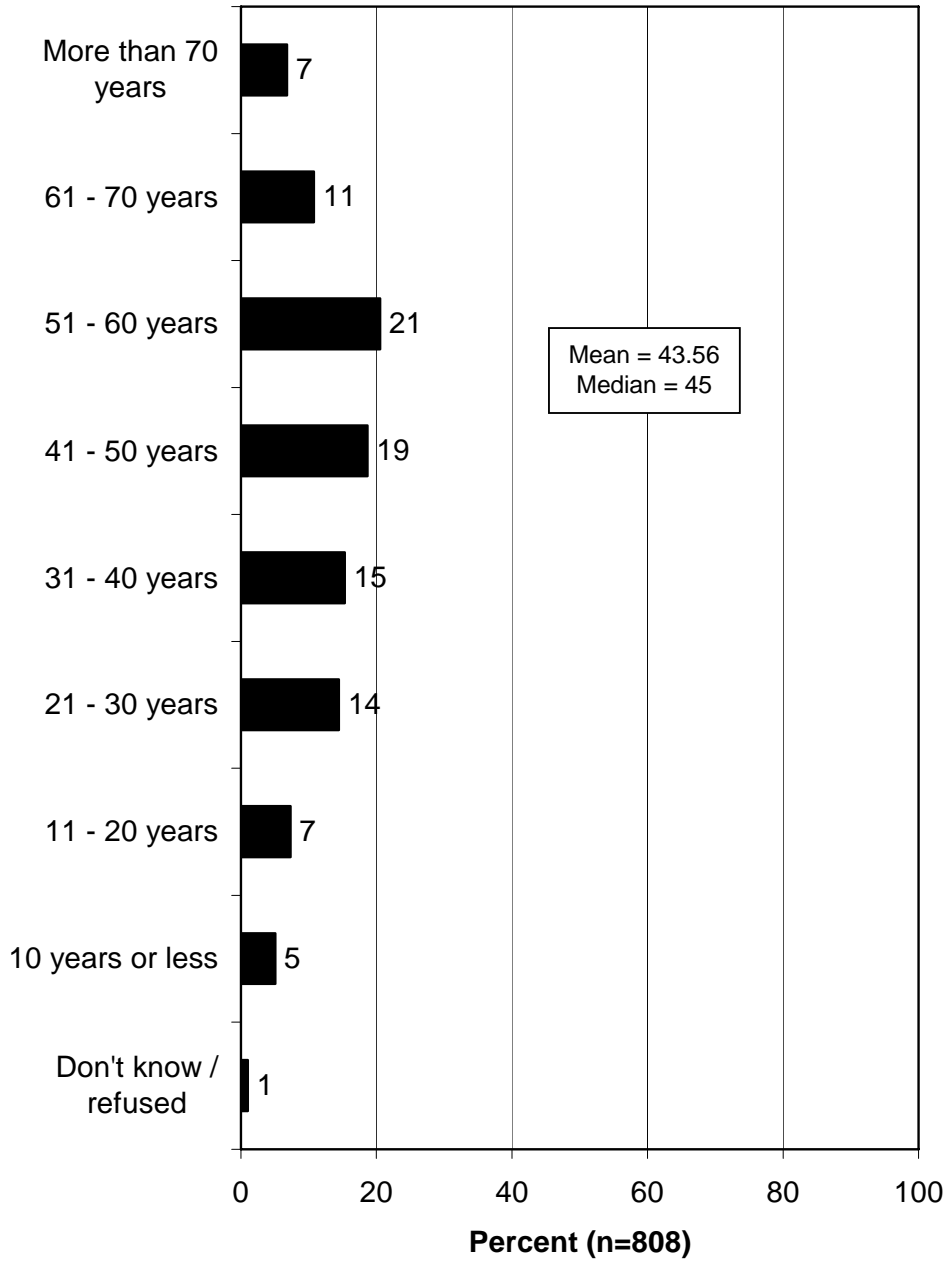
- Most South Dakota hunters in the survey are male (95%).
  
- The ages of South Dakota hunters are shown, which follow a bell-curve with the peak in the 45-54 years old category. The mean age is 50.8 years old.
  
- The number of years of residency in South Dakota is shown, with the answers well-distributed. The mean is 43.6 years.
  
- Hunters in the survey are predominantly from a rural area (35%) or a small city/town (37%). Nonetheless, 27% are from a large city/urban area or a suburban area.
  
- Educational levels are shown: 68% of South Dakota hunters have some college or trade school coursework (with or without a degree), and 48% have at least an Associate's or trade school degree, with or without a higher degree.

**Q248. Respondent's gender (not asked; observed by interviewer).**



**Q242. Respondent's age.**

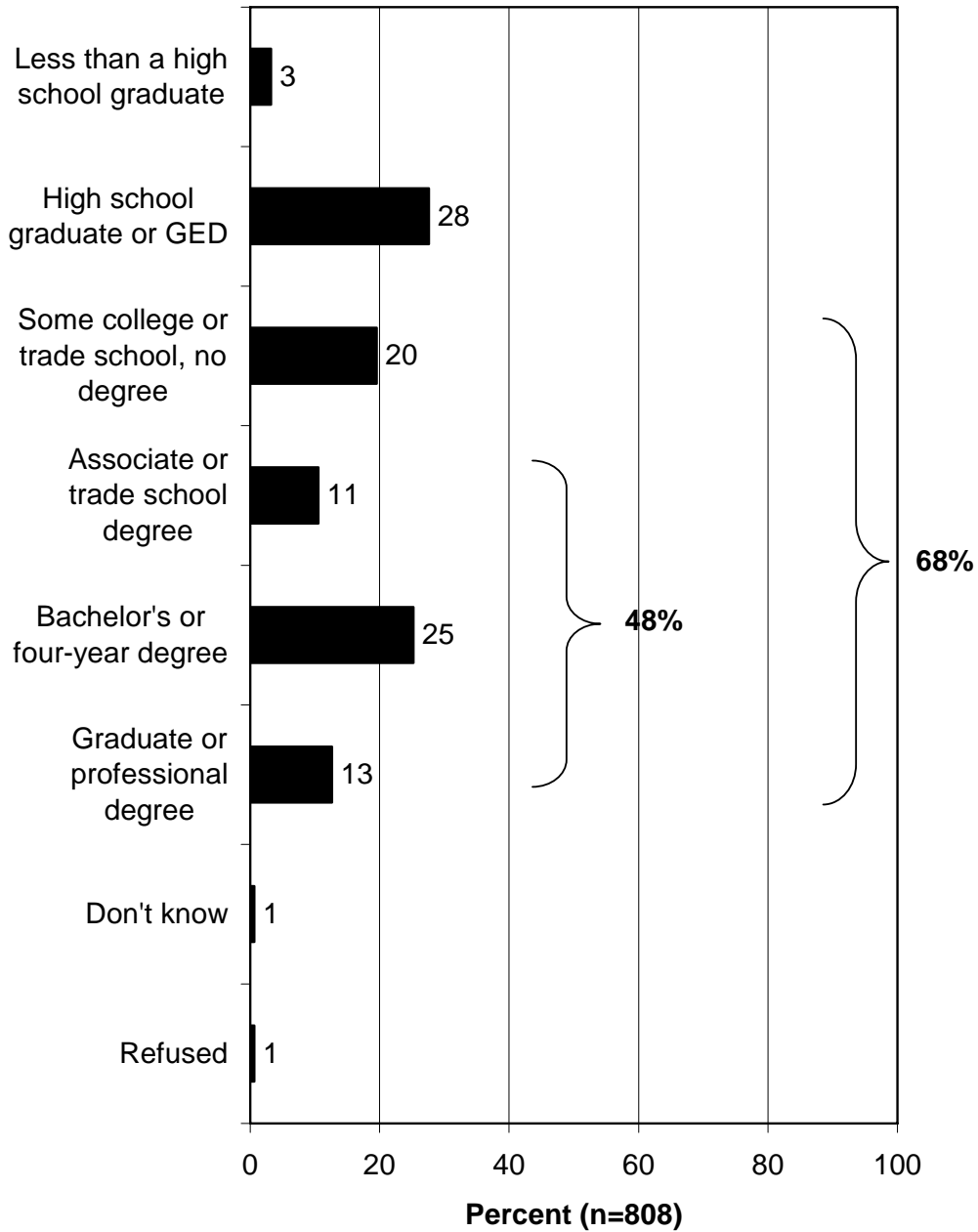
### Q238. How many years have you been a resident of South Dakota?



**Q240. Which of the following statements best describes where you currently live?**



**Q241. Which of the following statements best describes the highest level of formal education you have completed?**



## **APPENDIX A: DESCRIPTIONS OF HUNTING ACCESS PROGRAMS USED IN SOUTH DAKOTA**

### **Open Fields**

This national program provides incentives to landowners to allow public access for hunting. It is essentially a funding source to help states implement existing programs and/or develop new ones. In exchange for opening their lands for hunting, the state pays landowners a modest fee.

### **Conservation Reserve Program**

The CRP, which is a Federal program, pays farmers to take agricultural lands out of production to achieve conservation objectives, including reduced soil erosion and provision of wildlife habitat. This program is purely a habitat enhancement program rather than an access program—there are no requirements that landowners provide access; nevertheless, hunters may use these lands subject to landowners' permission.

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs)**

WPAs, which are a subset of the lands in the National Wildlife Refuge System, are public lands purchased by the Federal Government for the purpose of increasing the production of migratory birds, particularly waterfowl. These areas preserve wetlands and grasslands critical to migratory birds including waterfowl. Funding for the acquisition of these areas comes from sales of the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps (colloquially called "Duck Stamps"). WPAs are open to hunting and fishing.

### **Wheretohunt.org website / Huntinfo.org website**

Both of these addresses are for the same site. This website is maintained by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF). The site provides links to all state hunting agencies.

### **Huntandshoot.org website**

This site, also maintained by the NSSF, has links to the above sites. This site also includes a listing, state-by-state, of various hunting (and shooting) programs available in that state.

### **South Dakota's Walk-In Hunting Areas**

This program seeks to provide the public with added quality hunting opportunities, to improve the relationships between landowners and hunters, and to improve hunter ethics. The program provides incentives to landowners who sign a contract allowing public hunting access (foot-traffic only). The locations are published in the *South Dakota Hunting Atlas*. The agency provides signage to clearly mark boundaries.

### **South Dakota's Controlled Hunting Access Program**

The program, which goes by the acronym CHAP, is a cooperative effort between private landowners and Game, Fish and Parks to open up additional private land to public big game hunting. Lands enrolled in CHAP do not function like those lands enrolled in Walk-In Area program. Hunters who use land enrolled in CHAP must check in with the landowner or at a self-serve check-in box to obtain a permission slip. Many CHAP areas have additional restrictions. Another difference is that payments to landowners are based on hunter use rather than acres enrolled.

### **South Dakota's Volunteer Antlerless Deer Hunter Program**

In this program, deer hunters who already hold antlerless licenses and are looking for private land on which to hunt antlerless deer add their names, contact information, and the counties in which they are interested in hunting to a web-based list. That list can then be accessed by landowners, who invite the hunters to their property. A landowner can choose which license types he or she is willing to host and can search by county, thus producing a list of hunters that match the landowner's specifications.

### **South Dakota's Lower Oahe Waterfowl Access Program**

This program entails allowing public access for waterfowl hunting on private land. Game, Fish and Parks issues restricted nonresident waterfowl licenses that are valid only on private land in three counties adjacent to Lake Oahe for three consecutive days. The program provides pass shooting opportunities, decoy hunting opportunities, and other waterfowl hunting opportunities. The access areas also provide some small game hunting opportunities prior to the fall arrival of the geese.

### **South Dakota's Game Production Areas, or GPAs**

Game, Fish and Parks has purchased various land tracts called Game Production Areas (GPAs) across the state that are open to public access for hunting or wildlife viewing. The areas entail management actions that maintain or improve habitat and that allow game species to propagate. Special restrictions for vehicle access are posted at the entrances to these areas.

### **South Dakota's Interactive South Dakota Public Lands Maps and Information system on the Division of Wildlife's website**

This interactive tool allows users to view maps and other information about public lands in South Dakota. Various layers in the mapping allow specific features or types of land to be shown. It also allows GPS data to be downloaded into GPS units.

### **The printed *South Dakota Hunting Atlas***

The *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* contains maps and information on South Dakota's Walk-In Areas, Game Production Areas (GPAs), Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs), some School Lands, and some BLM lands. Each year's new atlas becomes available in late August.

### **The *South Dakota Hunting Atlas* on the SDDGFP's website**

The above atlas is also on the agency website. The map is in PDF format, divided into 73 mapping units.

### **South Dakota Office of School and Public Lands program**

When South Dakota became a state in 1889, the federal government granted the state more than 3.5 million acres of land. In each township sections 16 and 36 were to be used for schools and other public purposes. These are known as common school lands. To manage these lands and the money they generated, the state constitution established the Office of the Commissioner of School and Public Lands. Common school lands were either to be sold or leased and the proceeds deposited in a permanent trust fund for education. The money is generated from grazing, mineral, oil and gas leases, interest on the Common School Permanent Fund, and interest on land sales contracts. School lands are available to the public for hunting and fishing.

## **ABOUT RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT**

Responsive Management is a nationally recognized public opinion and attitude survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Its mission is to help natural resource and outdoor recreation agencies and organizations better understand and work with their constituents, customers, and the public.

Utilizing its in-house, full-service, computer-assisted telephone and mail survey center with 45 professional interviewers, Responsive Management has conducted more than 1,000 telephone surveys, mail surveys, personal interviews, and focus groups, as well as numerous marketing and communications plans, need assessments, and program evaluations on natural resource and outdoor recreation issues.

Clients include most of the federal and state natural resource, outdoor recreation, and environmental agencies, and most of the top conservation organizations. Responsive Management also collects attitude and opinion data for many of the nation's top universities, including the University of Southern California, Virginia Tech, Colorado State University, Auburn, Texas Tech, the University of California—Davis, Michigan State University, the University of Florida, North Carolina State University, Penn State, West Virginia University, and others.

Among the wide range of work Responsive Management has completed during the past 20 years are studies on how the general population values natural resources and outdoor recreation, and their opinions on and attitudes toward an array of natural resource-related issues. Responsive Management has conducted dozens of studies of selected groups of outdoor recreationists, including anglers, boaters, hunters, wildlife watchers, birdwatchers, park visitors, historic site visitors, hikers, and campers, as well as selected groups within the general population, such as landowners, farmers, urban and rural residents, women, senior citizens, children, Hispanics, Asians, and African-Americans. Responsive Management has conducted studies on environmental education, endangered species, waterfowl, wetlands, water quality, and the reintroduction of numerous species such as wolves, grizzly bears, the California condor, and the Florida panther.

Responsive Management has conducted research on numerous natural resource ballot initiatives and referenda and helped agencies and organizations find alternative funding and increase their memberships and donations. Responsive Management has conducted major agency and organizational program needs assessments and helped develop more effective programs based upon a solid foundation of fact. Responsive Management has developed websites for natural resource organizations, conducted training workshops on the human dimensions of natural resources, and presented numerous studies each year in presentations and as keynote speakers at major natural resource, outdoor recreation, conservation, and environmental conferences and meetings.

Responsive Management has conducted research on public attitudes toward natural resources and outdoor recreation in almost every state in the United States, as well as in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan. Responsive Management routinely conducts surveys in Spanish and has also conducted surveys and focus groups in Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese.

Responsive Management's research has been featured in most of the nation's major media, including CNN, ESPN, *The Washington Times*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and on the front pages of *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*.

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