

# Responsive Management



## **NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION HUNTING PARTICIPATION AND ATTITUDE SURVEY AND TRENDS STUDY**

### **Executive Summary**

**2005**

**Conducted for the National Shooting Sports Foundation  
by Responsive Management**

**NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION  
HUNTING PARTICIPATION AND ATTITUDE SURVEY  
AND TRENDS STUDY**

**Executive Summary**

**2005**

**Responsive Management National Office**

Mark Damian Duda, Executive Director  
Peter E. De Michele, Ph.D., Director of Research  
Martin Jones, Research Associate  
Andrea Criscione, Research Associate  
Chad Craun, Research Associate  
Tim Winegord, Survey Center Manager  
Alison Lanier, Business Manager  
Steven J. Bissell, Ph.D., Qualitative Research Associate  
Ping Wang, Ph.D., Quantitative Research Associate  
James B. Herrick, Ph.D., Research Associate

130 Franklin Street  
Harrisonburg, VA 22801  
Phone: 540/432-1888 Fax: 540/432-1892  
E-mail: [mark@responsivemanagement.com](mailto:mark@responsivemanagement.com)  
[www.responsivemanagement.com](http://www.responsivemanagement.com)

## **Acknowledgements**

Responsive Management would like to thank Frank Briganti and Chris Dolnack of the National Shooting Sports Foundation for their input, support, and guidance on this project.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted for the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) to determine hunters' opinions on and attitudes toward hunting and shooting sports, including their participation in these sports, and how their opinions on hunting and the shooting sports affects their voting behavior. The study also examined trends in attitudes and opinions based on comparisons with previous surveys that asked some of the same questions. The study entailed a telephone survey of hunters who had hunted for at least 2 of the past 5 years.

For the survey, telephones were selected as the preferred sampling medium because of the universality of telephone ownership. The telephone survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the NSSF based in part on previous surveys on these subjects. Interviews were conducted Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturday noon to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., all local time. The survey was conducted in January 2005. Responsive Management obtained a total of 1,012 completed interviews.

The software used for data collection was Questionnaire Programming Language 4.1. The analysis of data was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management. The results were weighted so that the distribution of the sample within regions defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service matched the distribution of the hunting population in those regions, using data from the *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. Throughout this report, findings of the telephone survey are reported at a 95% confidence interval. For the entire sample of hunters, the sampling error is at most plus or minus 3.08 percentage points.

## GENERAL HUNTING PARTICIPATION

- Respondents' hunting avidity was high: 96% had hunted in all years from 2000-2004, and the mean of respondents' length of hunting experience was 35 years. (Note: to be surveyed, all respondents had to have hunted in 2004 as well as one additional year from 2000-2003.)

- The small number of respondents who had *not* hunted in at least one of the years from 2000 to 2004 most commonly cited lack of time, health, or family obligations as the factor preventing them from going hunting.
  - There is evidence that the typical frequency of hunting is declining slightly: those whose participation decreased (26%) outnumbered those whose participation increased (13%). This question was analyzed for trends, as well. In the 2005 survey, relative to previous surveys except 1991, a higher percentage answered that they are hunting less than in previous years; furthermore, the 2005 survey had the lowest percentage of hunters saying that they hunted more, relative to all previous studies.
  - Most of those who hunted more days said that they had more time available to hunt. The trend is for a slightly higher percentage of hunters to say they have more time as well as more game to hunt, relative to earlier studies, and for a lower percentage of hunters to say there is more and/or better land available.
  - Those who hunted fewer days most commonly cited lack of time, health/age, or work obligations as factors in their hunting decline. Health/age was cited more often in the 2005 study than it was in previous studies.
- Somewhat more than a third of respondents (38%) indicated that they currently hunt with a bow. Avidity is high for bowhunting, as nearly all those who consider themselves as being current bowhunters have bowhunted within the past 5 years.
- Common reasons given for hunting with a bow were that bowhunting is more of a challenge or sport than is hunting with firearms, that bowhunting lengthens the season, and that bowhunting is more fun than firearms hunting.
  - The trends analysis regarding reasons why respondents hunt with a bow shows a lower percentage than previous studies, in general, saying they bowhunt because of the challenge (although this is nearly the same as in the 2000 study). Also, a lower percentage said bowhunting is fun, relative to the 2000 study (although this is a higher percentage than in 1986-1996). A higher percentage relative to the 2000 study said that they hunt with a bow because it is quiet and peaceful and it is less crowded.
- Of those who own a handgun, 44% indicated that they hunt with a handgun.

**SPECIES HUNTED AND AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT HUNTING SPECIES**

- By far, the species most often hunted was deer: 91% of respondents had hunted deer within the past 5 years. Other popular species were turkey (42%), pheasant (34%), rabbit (33%), ducks (31%), and squirrel (31%). Relative to the 2000 study, hunting of every species declined except for deer, elk, and moose, which remain about the same as in the 2000 study. In looking at the longer trend over all previous studies, hunting of turkey and elk is up from the 1986 study.
  
- For each species, those who had hunted that species were asked follow-up questions about how often they had hunted that species in previous years and whether they hunt that species more or less now than they did previously.
  - Deer was by far the leading species hunted in previous years. Other leading species that respondents had hunted often or sometimes in previous years were duck, turkey, grouse, squirrel, dove, and rabbit.
  - Turkey was the species for which the highest percentage said their hunting has increased relative to previous years, followed by coyote, deer, elk, duck, and moose. Species for which substantial percentages say they now hunt less than they did in previous years are quail, moose, pheasant, grouse, duck, and rabbit. The trends analysis for these questions shows, in general, lower percentages of hunters saying their hunting for each particular species has increased, with the exception of moose. Several species had notably higher percentages saying they hunt the species less: duck, grouse, geese, deer, and turkey.
  
- Cross-tabulations were run of the amount of hunting for each species in previous years by their reported participation trend (i.e., whether they are hunting the species more, the same, or less).
  - Those who had previously been avid hunters for the particular species (defined as having previously hunted it “often”) remain avid for deer, elk, bear, turkey, and coyote: these species had low percentages of avid hunters saying they hunted those species less now than they previously did. Avidity was not as great for quail, rabbit, crow, and duck: these species had relatively high percentages of avid hunters saying they now hunt those species less.

- The analysis found several species with relatively high gains in avidity among hunters who previously showed low avidity for that species (i.e., among hunters who previously hunted the species only “rarely” or “sometimes,” these species had relatively high percentages saying they now hunt the species more): deer, duck, geese, turkey, and coyote.

## CONSTRAINTS TO HUNTING PARTICIPATION

- A substantial percentage of respondents (41%) said that they have a problem finding time to go hunting, and these results are consistent with previous studies.
  - The overwhelming majority of those who indicated that they have a problem finding time to hunt cited work (81%) as a reason for their not finding time to hunt. Family (29%) was another important reason. Family has grown as a constraint to hunting participation relative to previous studies.
  - Few respondents indicated that other sports, other hobbies, school, or travel were problems with their finding time to hunt.
- The small number of respondents who had *not* hunted in at least one of the years from 2000 to 2004 most commonly cited lack of time (31%), health (21%), or family obligations (14%) as the factor preventing them from going hunting. Similarly, those who said that they hunted less often in 2004 than in previous years most commonly cited lack of time, health/age, and work obligations as factors that caused them to hunt less, and those who said that they shot less often in an individual outing in 2004 relative to previous years most commonly cited less game, lack of time, and health/age as factors causing them to shoot less.
  - A trends analysis was run on the question regarding reasons for *not* hunting (in those years in which respondents did not hunt). Lack of time, health, and family obligations have slightly increased as reasons for not hunting.
- The survey asked about 14 factors that may or may not have been constraints to respondents’ hunting participation. The survey first asked how much of a problem the factor was 5 years ago; the survey then asked whether the factor had become a greater or lesser problem in hunting participation now. Hunting access and access-related issues were problems 5 years

ago and remain problems now, with indications that the problems related to access may be worsening.

- The factors that had the highest percentages saying that they were problems 5 years ago were access to hunting land (10% said this was a *major* problem 5 years ago; 41% said this was a *major or minor* problem 5 years ago), crowded hunting areas (10% major; 41% major or minor), less landowner cooperation (8% major; 36% major or minor), and concern over anti-hunting activists (7% major; 34% major or minor).
  - The factors that had the highest percentages saying that they were *not* problems 5 years ago were finding someone to hunt with (87% said this was not a problem 5 years ago), small bag limits (81%), hunting regulations (78%), the cost of ammunition (78%), license costs (77%), and distance needed to travel (76%).
  - The top factors deemed to have become greater problems recently were access to hunting land (56% said this has become a much or somewhat greater problem), less landowner cooperation (46%), crowded hunting areas (41%), concern over anti-hunting activists (36%), and less game in general (36%). Note that this last factor, “less game in general,” also had the highest percentage saying that this had become a *lesser* problem.
  - The trends analysis based on comparisons to previous studies showed lower percentages in the 2005 study, relative to the 2000 study, saying that access to hunting, crowded hunting areas, anti-hunting attitudes or activities, cost of firearms, and distance needed to travel had become much or somewhat greater problems. Higher percentages said license costs and hunting regulations were greater problems in hunting.
- When read a list of items that might or might not persuade the respondent to go hunting or shooting more often, a majority (73%) said that an invitation from a friend would persuade them to go hunting or shooting more, distantly followed by a free day of shooting at a nearby club (35%).

## **PARTICIPATION IN SHOOTING SPORTS**

- A majority of respondents (52%) target shoot with a shotgun, rifle, and/or handgun (for purposes other than sighting-in the firearm). Target shooters are split on whether they say

they are shooting more or less than they did 5 years ago: 25% said they shoot more, but 29% said they shoot less.

- The trends analysis showed that the participation rate in target shooting with a firearm in the 2005 was consistent with other studies with the exception of 2000: from the 1986 to 1996 studies, the rate was from 49% to 55%; it spiked in the 2000 study to 77% before falling back to 52% in the 2005 study.
  - The trends analysis on the question whether the respondent is shooting more or less than 5 years ago shows decreasing avidity: lower percentages claim to be shooting more in the 2005 study than did in the previous studies.
  - Common reasons for target shooting more now than 5 years ago (asked of those who shoot more) are more available time, because it's fun, and that the respondent's family is interested. Conversely, those who target shoot less often now than they did 5 years ago most commonly cite less available time.
  - The trends analysis regarding reasons for increased shooting found that family interest is notably up from previous studies, while "to improve shooting" has decreased as a reason for more shooting. More time as a reason for increased shooting is slightly up from the 2000 study. The trends regarding reasons for decreased shooting found health/age notably higher than in previous studies, as does that the local range/club does not have the facilities. Less time available as a reason for shooting less is down from previous studies.
- Of those who target shoot, a majority target shoot with a rifle (55%), and a majority shoot with a handgun (52%); slightly less than a majority participate in trapshooting (47%) or sporting clays (42%); about a third shoot skeet (34%).
- The trends regarding participation rates in various shooting activities shows that sporting clays are more popular than in most previous studies (although about the same as in the 2000 study); other target shooting sports' participation rates remain fairly stable relative to all the previous studies considered as a whole. The participation rates are down, however, relative to the 2000 study, which saw a spike in every type of target shooting sport.

- Most avidity is shown for target shooting with a rifle or handgun. The trends analysis shows that avidity has declined slightly for skeet shooting, target handgun shooting, and target rifle shooting relative to the 2000 study.
- Of those who own a handgun, 69% indicated that they target shoot with a handgun.
- Those who target shoot were asked about their propensity to target shoot more under four certain conditions. The leading item that would prompt greater participation in target shooting was the presence of a shooting facility nearby (46% said this would increase their participation in target shooting), followed by having competitions held at a nearby shooting facility (41%) or having family programs offered at a nearby facility (37%).

### **CONSTRAINTS TO SHOOTING SPORTS PARTICIPATION**

- Those who indicated that they target shoot less often now than they did 5 years ago most commonly cite lack of time as the reason, although health/age, loss of interest, and lack of a place to shoot are important reasons for declining target shooting participation.
- For each target shooting sport, respondents who indicated that they do not participate were asked for reasons why they do not participate. The leading reason for each was no interest. For rifle target shooting, sporting clays, skeet, and trapshooting, “no time” and “no club nearby” were other important reasons for non-participation. For handgun target shooting, “no equipment” was an important reason along with “no time” and “no club nearby.”
  - The trends analysis found that no interest as a constraint to participation has increased over the previous studies for each target shooting sport; no time increased as a constraint over the 2000 study for skeet and sporting clays. Never tried it as a constraint has decreased for trapshooting, skeet, and sporting clays.
- When read a list of items that might or might not persuade the respondent to go hunting or shooting more often, a majority (73%) said that an invitation from a friend would persuade them to go hunting or shooting more, distantly followed by a free day of shooting at a nearby club (35%).

## **FIREARMS USED AND PURCHASED**

- Respondents were asked about the number of firearms of each type they own. The most popular types of firearms are rifles (mean number owned is 7.36) and shotguns (mean number owned is 4.39). The mean number of handguns owned is 2.78. The most popular subtypes of rifles and handguns are centerfire rifles and handguns.
  - In the trends analysis, the results are about the same in the 2005 study relative to the 2000 study regarding the number of shotguns and number of centerfire rifles that respondents say they own. The trends analysis shows that respondents own slightly fewer rimfire rifles now than they did in the 2000 study. The number of black powder rifles owned has increased over the 2000 study, while the number of handguns (all types) owned has slightly decreased.
  
- Half of all respondents indicated that they had purchased a shotgun (50%), and nearly half indicated that they had purchased a rifle (48%), in the past 5 years. A lower but still substantial percentage (29%) indicated that they had purchased a handgun in the past 5 years. Relative to the 2000 study, lower percentage said that they purchased a shotgun, a rifle, or a handgun.
  - Most typically, those who purchased firearms had purchased new firearms rather than used firearms. A large majority of those who had purchased a shotgun had purchased a new one (84% had purchased one or more new shotguns); 28% had purchased a used shotgun. (The total exceeds 100% because some respondents had purchased both new and used shotguns.) Purchases of new shotguns declined in the 2005 study relative to the 2000 study.
  
- Respondents who own multiple guns of the same general type (i.e., shotgun or rifle) typically use different guns of the same general type for different game. Relative to the 2000 study, a higher percentage of hunters in the 2005 study use one shotgun or one centerfire rifle for all game.
  
- A majority of those who own a handgun (70%) use their handgun for protection, while nearly an equal percentage (69%) target shoot with a handgun. Less than a majority (44%) indicate

that they hunt with a handgun. A notably lower percentage of hunters in the 2005 study relative to the 2000 study use their handgun for target shooting. Also, a slight majority of those who own one or more handguns (51%) use different handguns for different activities. Relative to the 2000 study, a higher percentage of hunters in the 2005 study use one handgun for all activities.

## **AMMUNITION USED**

- While the majority of respondents (72%) do *not* reload their own ammunition, a substantial percentage (28%) do. A lower percentage load their own ammunition in the 2005 study relative to the 2000 study.
  - Common reasons for reloading their own ammunition include that reloaded ammunition is cheaper and more accurate and that doing so is fun or is a hobby. The trend is for a lower percentage to say that reloading is cheaper and higher percentages to say that reloaded ammunition is more accurate and that reloading is fun/is a hobby.
  - A slight majority of those who reload their own ammunition (52%) reload shotshells; the trend regarding shotshells is that a lower percentage are reloading shotshells than in previous studies.
  - A large majority of those who reload their own ammunition (73%) reload centerfire rifle cartridges; this percentage is nearly the same as in the two previous studies (2000 and 1996), but it is higher than in 1986 and 1991.
  
- A small percentage of respondents (14%) purchase reloaded ammunition, with a slightly lower percentage purchasing reloaded ammunition in the 2005 study relative to the previous studies. The most common places from which respondents purchase reloaded ammunition are stores (52% of those who purchase reloaded ammunition make purchases from a store), friends (27%), and gun shows (12%). Gun shows have slightly increased as a source of reloaded ammunition relative to previous studies.
  - The majority of those who purchase reloaded ammunition from a friend purchase centerfire rifle ammunition (67%), although substantial percentages purchase centerfire handgun ammunition (30%) or shotshells (23%). In looking at trends, a greater percentage purchases reloaded centerfire rifle ammunition (with the exception of the

1996 study) and centerfire handgun ammunition (with the exception of the 1986 study) from friends than in previous studies, and a lower percentage purchases reloaded shotshells from friends.

- The trend in reloading shotshells appears to be lessening, as those who reload shotshells most commonly said that they reload fewer now than when they started reloading shotshells. A comparison to previous studies shows a downward trend in number of shotshells reloaded.
  - Those who indicated that they reload more shotshells now than when they started most commonly gave as the reasoning that they hunt or target practice more now. Conversely, those who reload fewer shotshells now said that they do not shoot or hunt as much as they did, that they lack time, that they use fewer shells, or that buying new shells is cheaper than reloading.
  - The mean number of shotshells reloaded by those who reload shotshells was 2,487 annually; the mean number of centerfire rifle cartridges reloaded by those who reload them was 1,042.
  
- Those who reload centerfire rifle cartridges are split between those who reloaded them “a lot” (49%) and those who reloaded them “a little” (46%) when they started reloading centerfire rifle cartridges. There is also an even distribution regarding whether those who reload centerfire rifle cartridges are reloading more (34%), about the same (31%), or fewer (34%) cartridges than when they started reloading, with no consistent long-term trends (i.e., over all previous studies) on this particular question, although relative to only the 2000 study, a higher percentage of hunters are reloading fewer centerfire rifle cartridges.
  - Common reasons for reloading more centerfire rifle cartridges now than previously are that the respondents hunt or target practice more now, that reloaded centerfire rifle cartridges are cheaper, and that reloaded centerfire rifle cartridges perform better. The only reason for reloading more that shows a clear long-term trend is reloading for better performance: a greater percentage reloaded for that reason in the current study than did in previous studies. Relative to the 2000 study only, lower percentages of hunters said either that they target shoot more or that reloaded centerfire rifle cartridges are cheaper.

- Common reasons for reloading fewer centerfire rifle cartridges now than previously are that the respondents do not hunt or shoot as much now or that they lack time. There are no clear, consistent trends regarding this question.

## VOTING BEHAVIOR AND VOTING ISSUES

- A majority of respondents were avid voters: 77% say that they always vote during presidential election years, and 63% say they always vote during non-presidential years; only 5% say they never vote during presidential years. In the 2004 presidential election, 87% voted.
  - Those respondents who voted in the 2004 election most commonly named gun rights/second amendment rights (35%) as one of the most important issues that influenced their vote. Other important issues include moral values (18%), the economy (15%), Iraq (14%), homeland security (13%), and hunters' rights (10%). When asked to name the single most important issue (the previous question allowed multiple responses), gun rights/second amendment rights was the top issue (20%).
  - A large majority (70%) said they voted for George W. Bush, while 11% said they voted for John Kerry; 17% did not wish to divulge their voting choice in the 2004 election.
- A third of respondents (33%) were aware of the Vote Your Sport campaign.
  - A majority of those who were aware of the Vote Your Sport campaign and who voted in 2004 agree with the position of the Vote Your Sport campaign.
  - Among those who agree with the Vote Your Sport campaign and who voted in 2004, 37% said the Vote Your Sport campaign influenced their vote. Most commonly, those who agree with the Vote Your Sport campaign and who voted in 2004 say that the Vote Your Sport campaign did *not* influence their vote but that they, nonetheless, voted with the candidate perceived to be most consistent with the Vote Your Sport campaign.
- Those who voted in 2004 and were aware of the Vote Your Sport campaign were asked to name the most important sportsmen's issues (multiple responses allowed). Ensuring gun rights was the top answer (55%), distantly followed by three other issues with substantial

percentages: improving hunting and fishing access to public land (26%), ensuring hunters' rights (24%), and improving hunting and fishing access to private land (20%).

- All respondents were asked if they would be interested in receiving information on voting issues related to hunters' rights and gun rights, and about half expressed interest in each: 48% expressed interest in information about hunters' rights, and 49% expressed interest in information about gun rights.
- Magazines are the most popular source of information regarding hunters' rights and gun rights voting issues, followed by newspapers and the Internet.

## HUNTER EDUCATION

- A large percentage of respondents (74%) did not attempt to attend a hunter education program in the past 2 years, with little change over the previous study. Of those who attempted to attend a program, most did *not* have difficulty attending a program, exceeding those who did have difficulty by a ratio of 5 to 1.
  - Those who had difficulty most commonly cited time in general or time related to work obligations. Substantial percentages also cited travel distance and lack of knowledge of where the programs are offered. The trends analysis showed that a much lower percentage cited lack of room in the class/not enough classes being held, but higher percentages cited lack of time or distance of travel to the course.
- When asked to name the home study format they preferred, respondents were evenly distributed among responses, from 12% to 17% for any response. In total, 29% wanted a computer-compatible course (Internet or CD).
  - The trends analysis found lower percentages saying that any of the formats was preferred, with the exception of an Internet format.
- Respondents were asked about the appropriate content for basic hunter education courses: 21% said the current contents match what they think the basic course should contain, and another 10% indicated that the courses should consist of a core curriculum of essential

subjects; however, 40% think that basic hunter education courses should be expanded beyond their typical, current scope.

## **LAND OWNERSHIP**

- The overwhelming majority of respondents (89%) own their primary residence. Also, a substantial percentage of respondents (45%) own land on which they can hunt. A slightly higher percentage of respondents in 2005 say they own land on which they can hunt, relative to previous studies.
  - In a related question, respondents were asked to name their type of residence, and 90% indicated that they live in a house, 4% in a mobile home, and 1% in an apartment (this was asked of all respondents, including those who do not own the residence).
  - Most respondents (77%) do *not* own a secondary residence, but 19% do own a secondary residence, with about half of those secondary residences being used for hunting and/or shooting activities.

