

NSSF® Report

AMERICANS ATTITUDES

Toward Hunting,
Fishing, Sport Shooting
and Trapping 2019



Conducted for the
National Shooting Sports Foundation®
by Responsive Management



THE FIREARMS INDUSTRY TRADE ASSOCIATION

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**National Shooting Sports Foundation and
Responsive Management**

2019

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Although NSSF partnered with Responsive Management for this report and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies provided funding for it, any errors in the report are the sole responsibility of Responsive Management.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted by Responsive Management and the National Shooting Sports Foundation to assess trends in Americans' attitudes toward hunting, fishing, sport shooting, and trapping. Responsive Management has tracked public attitudes on the four activities in various forms since 1995, and the study makes use of this trend data by examining how Americans' attitudes have changed over the years.¹ The project was funded by a Multistate Conservation Grant from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The study entailed a scientific telephone survey of adult Americans, ages 18 and older. Details of the survey methodology are shown in the body of the report.

Overall, 80% of Americans approve of legal hunting. Approval of hunting is highest in the Midwest (at 86% approval) and is lowest in the Northeast (72%). Americans' level of approval of hunting has remained generally consistent over the past quarter century, with a gradual increase in approval since 1995 when approval was at 73%.

However, approval of hunting varies considerably depending on the stated reason for hunting. When the reasons are utilitarian in nature—for meat, to protect humans or property, for wildlife management—approval is very high, but hunting drops substantially when the reason is for the sport or for the challenge; meanwhile, less than a third of Americans approve of hunting for a trophy. Nonetheless, approval of these less popular hunting motivations has rebounded following rather sharp declines in 2016 (note that administration of the 2016 survey followed several high-profile news stories that depicted trophy hunting in a negative light).

The species being hunted also affects approval of hunting. Hunting of ungulates and waterfowl is more accepted than hunting of predator species, while the hunting of African lions and elephants has even less approval among Americans. Similarly, approval of hunting depends on the technique being used, especially the extent to which the technique in question allows for fair chase (i.e., whether the animal has a reasonable chance to evade the hunter). For example, more Americans approve of hunting with archery equipment than approve of hunting with high-tech gear or hunting on property that has a high fence around it.

The survey findings suggest that fishing is less controversial than hunting: 93% of Americans approve of legal recreational fishing (compared to 80% who approve of legal hunting). Like hunting, however, approval of fishing depends on the motivation: more Americans approve of fishing for food than fishing for the sport, for the challenge, or for a trophy fish. Meanwhile, most methods of fishing have high approval, with the exceptions of gigging and snagging.

The survey also examined attitudes toward shooting, finding that 81% of Americans approve of legal recreational shooting. This finding is consistent with the approval rates for shooting found in previous survey years, with the exception of a slight dip in approval in 2011.

Trapping is more controversial than the other outdoor recreational activities explored in this study. Public opinion on regulated trapping is split: 52% of Americans approve while 31% disapprove. Again, attitudes appear to be influenced by the stated motivation for the activity: there is relatively high approval of trapping for wildlife restoration, population control, food, and property protection, but less approval of trapping for money, fur clothing, and recreation.

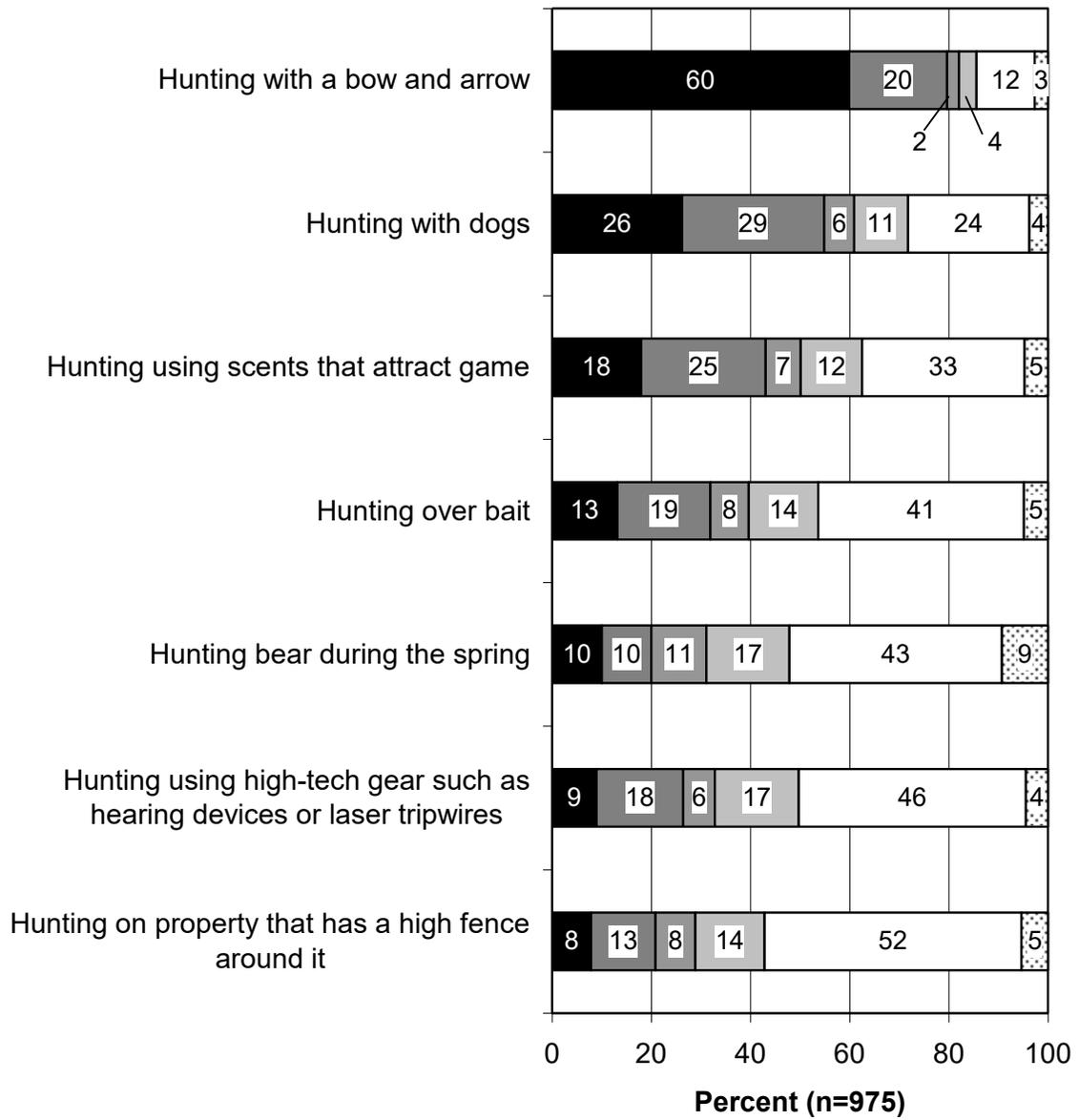
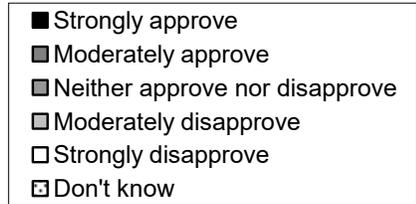
Higher approval of all four activities (hunting, fishing, shooting, and trapping) is correlated with being male, white, living in a rural area, living in the Midwest or Southeast regions, and growing up with firearms. Conversely, *lower* approval of the activities is associated with being female, Hispanic, black, living in an urban area, living in the Northeast or West regions, and *not* growing up with firearms.

¹ For the trend results in this report, comparisons of the new data are made only to previous Responsive Management survey questions that used consistent wording.

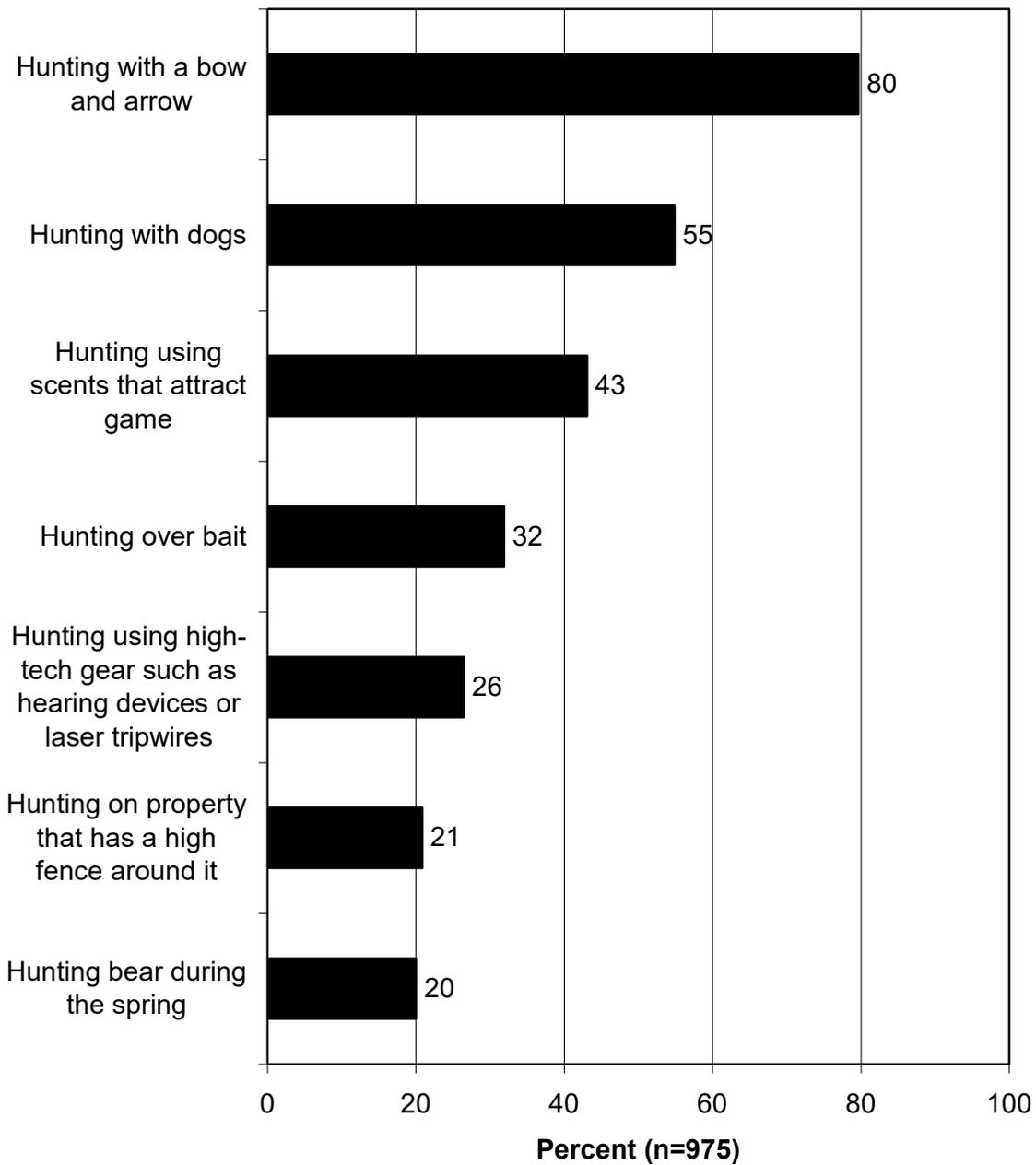
METHODS OF HUNTING

- The methods used to hunt also affect Americans' attitudes toward the sport. The hunting methods asked about in the survey and the percentages who approve of each are listed below, in descending order of *strong* approval:
 - Hunting with a bow and arrow (80% approve; 60% *strongly* approve)
 - Hunting with dogs (55% approve; 26% *strongly* approve)
 - Hunting using scents that attract game (43% approve; 18% *strongly* approve)
 - Hunting over bait (32% approve; 13% *strongly* approve)
 - Hunting bear during the spring (20% approve; 10% *strongly* approve)
 - Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires (26% approve; 9% *strongly* approve)
 - Hunting on property that has a high fence around it (21% approve; 8% *strongly* approve)
 - The nationwide results for this series of hunting methods are shown together on one graph, followed by graphs showing the series results within each region and the regional crosstabulation for each method individually.
 - Although hunting using high-tech gear and on high-fence property remain unpopular methods of hunting, approval for each has notably increased since 2016.

Percent that [approve / disapprove] of hunting using each of the following methods:



Percent that strongly approve or moderately approve of hunting using each of the following methods:



**Percent that strongly or moderately approve of
hunting using each of the following methods:
(West Region)**

