

The 2003 National Hunting Survey

The results are in.

by Readers

Over three months last spring, we took an informal survey on fieldandstream.com of 2,897 F&S readers about the state of hunting in America. The point was to find out what issues are on your mind, what problems we need to address as sportsmen, and what trends are shaping the future of hunting. Some of the results were encouraging, and some were alarming. Taken together, they make it clearer than ever that we are at a crossroads, and we need to pay attention to a rapidly shifting landscape. At the same time, it proves that we're committed to the land, the animals we pursue, and the traditions and values that keep us strong.

*Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

TRADITIONS

1. How many years have you been an active hunter?

Average: 24 years

2. How many times a year do you typically go hunting?

Average: 26 times

3. Compared to 10 years ago, do you find that more women are hunting, fewer women are hunting, or the number of women hunting has not changed?

63% More

32% No change

4% Fewer

5. Do you have any children age 18 or younger that go hunting?

58% No, I don't have any children age 18 or younger

22% Yes

19% No, I have children age 18 or younger but they don't hunt

4. Which of the following types of animals do you hunt?

Whitetail deer 82%

Rabbits/squirrels 60%

Turkeys 56%

Pheasants 46%

Ducks/geese 42%

Other birds 38%

Predators 34%

Quail 28%

Other animals 23%

Mule deer 21%

Elk/antelope 21%

Bears 14%

6. If you have children under 18 who do not hunt, do you plan to introduce them to hunting?

83% Yes

17% No

ETHICS

7. Compared to how hunters acted 10 years ago, would you say that “hunting ethics” have gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?

41% About the same

33% Worse

25% Better

8. Do you consider yourself a trophy hunter?

87% No

13% Yes

9. Do you support or oppose sponsored hunts for wolves, mountain lions, and other predators to help control populations?

74% Support

16% No opinion

10% Oppose

10. Would you bird hunt on a preserve where pen-raised pheasants or quail were added to the population of wild birds?

69% Yes

31% No

11. Do you support or oppose the hunting of animals in enclosures or fenced-in ranches?

65% Oppose

23% No opinion

12% Support

12. Should using bait to lure deer when hunting them be legal?

62% No

38% Yes

13. Should using bait to lure bears when hunting them be legal?

53% Yes

47% No

14. Do you think that modern hunting aids such as two-way radios, “electronic ears,” and infrared monitors for patterning deer movements violate the “fair chase” ethic?

41% No

40% Yes

19% No opinion

15. Do you consider assault-style rifles to be legitimate sporting guns?

67% No

33% Yes

16. Would you report other hunters if you discovered they were breaking the laws regulating hunting?

91% Yes

9% No

LAND

17. Do you currently pay to have access to hunting land?

81% No

19% Yes

18. Do you hunt primarily on public or private land?

40% Private land

31% About equally on both

29% Public land

19. Compared to 10 years ago, do you have more or fewer places close to where you live where you can go hunting?

64% Fewer

22% The Same

14% More

20. Do you think your state should use public funds to acquire more land for public hunting?

85% Yes

15% No

21. Thinking about the areas you go to hunt most often, is there more hunting activity on that land than 10 years ago or less hunting activity on that land?

50% More

28% The same

22% Less

22. Would you support a tax increase to enable the state to buy more land for public hunting and manage the resource.

66% Yes

34% No

COST

23. Have you ever paid for the services of a guide when hunting?

80% No

20% Yes

24. Do you think you are paying too much, too little, or the right amount for a license to hunt in the area where you live?

72% The right amount

21% Too much

8% Too little

25. Do you think nonresident hunters pay too much, too little, or the right amount for hunting licenses?

50% Too much

37% The right amount

13% Too little

26. Currently, does the cost of hunting licenses prevent you from hunting as much as you would like?

80% No

20% Yes

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

27. Do you think state and federal agencies are telling the truth about the number of ducks, doves, deer, and other game species?

68% Yes, estimates are accurate

18% No, estimates are biased higher

13% No, estimates are biased lower

28. Do you think people who want to purchase rifles and shotguns should be given background checks before they are allowed to buy the guns?

66% Yes

34% No

29. Do you belong to the National Rifle Association?

57% No

43% Yes

30. Which issue is more important to you when you make your voting decision: gun rights or land conservation?

64% Equally important

23% Gun rights

12% Land conservation

1% Neither

31. Do you personally belong to any conservation organizations?

50% Yes

50% No

ON THE JOB

32. How would you rate the job the NRA is doing in standing up for the rights of hunters

and gun owners?

32% Very Good
31% Excellent
23% Good
10% Mediocre
4% Poor

33. How would you rate the performance of your STATE FISH AND GAME AGENCY?

35% Good
32% Very Good
17% Mediocre
11% Excellent
6% Poor

34. How would you rate the job that PRESIDENT BUSH is doing in protecting the interests of hunters and sportsmen?

31% Very Good
31% Good
17% Excellent
15% Mediocre
6% Poor

THREATS

35. Which one of the following factors do you think poses the biggest threat to hunting in America?

41% Shrinking wildlife habitat
25% Anti-gun legislation
22% Animal rights movement
5% Hunting laws and regulations
3% Wildlife disease
3% Poachers

36. Have you ever encountered antihunting sentiment directed against you personally?

56% Yes
44% No

37. Do you think hunters are treated fairly by the media?

90% No, hunters are presented less favorably than they should be
9% Yes, hunters are treated fairly
1% No, hunters are presented more favorably than they should be

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