

Understanding the Barriers to Hunter Retention in Michigan:

Results of Focus Groups and Online Survey Research

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& associates

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Executive Summary

Michigan has experienced a decline in hunting participation since the 1990s. Data suggest that the primary experience for recruiting new hunters has shifted from small game to deer hunting, and that in Michigan overall hunter retention is strongly determined by deer hunting. While the proportion of Michigan youth that hunt deer has remained stable, the proportion of young adults that hunt deer is declining. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) contracted DJ Case & Associates (DJ Case) to conduct focus group and survey research to better understand young adult male hunters and female hunters of any age—to see if changes in hunting regulations could increase growth and/or retention among these key groups.

Survey

An online survey was conducted of Michigan residents who had purchased deer hunting licenses in the past five years. Some 32,000 respondents answered questions about where and when they deer hunt, their experiences with regulations, and their suggestions for changing regulations. Respondents were overwhelmingly men, and nearly 70% were 36–65-years-old. Survey participants were experienced deer hunters. Three-fourths of respondents had hunted 20 or more years; however, female respondents were more evenly distributed across a range of years of experience. Most respondents hunted in multiple seasons, with firearm season participation at 95%, archery at 78%, and muzzleloader at 58%. Very few respondents indicated they typically hunt in the Liberty Hunt (5%) and Independence Hunt (1%).

Three-fifths of respondents advocated keeping opening day of firearm season on November 15. Support for this was equally strong among women as among men. However, support was much stronger among older respondents than younger respondents, and support decreased in southern regions compared with northern regions in the state. Support did not vary substantially by license purchase behavior in the past five years, suggesting that purchases are not contingent on opening day staying on November 15. Indeed, only 17% of respondents explicitly said they would avoid opening day if it were moved to the nearest Saturday.

If opening day of firearms deer season were staggered across the state, few respondents (12%) said they would be more likely to travel to different sites to experience multiple opening days. However, willingness to travel increased slightly among younger respondents.

Antler Point Restrictions (APRs) did not negatively affect respondents' hunting participation. For those who hunt where APRs are already established, the overwhelming majority said they hunt the same amount or more often. For respondents who hunt primarily in an area that does not currently have APRs, the great majority said they would hunt the same amount or more if APRs were established. APRs were a little more popular among younger respondents than older respondents and a little more popular among men than among women. Differences by Management Region were negligible, except that respondents in existing APR areas in the Northern Lower Peninsula were somewhat more likely to indicate they hunted more often (12%, compared to 5–7% in other regions), and southern Michigan respondents were somewhat more likely to believe they would hunt more often if APRs were established in their

area (20% and 22% for the Southeastern and Southwestern regions, respectively) compared to those in the Northern Lower Peninsula (17%) and the Upper Peninsula (15%).

The great majority of survey respondents said they do not think deer hunting regulations prevent them from hunting more than they would like. Only 14% of respondents agreed that regulations were a barrier, ranging from a high of 21% among Upper Peninsula respondents to 12% in both southern regions. Differences in responses by age and gender were small. Most respondents (79%) also did not believe hunting regulations were too complex. Slightly more respondents in existing APR areas and in the northern Management Regions believed hunting regulations were too complex, but the greatest differences were by age group: only 12% of the youngest group up to 25% of the oldest group expressed concerns regarding complexity of the regulations.

All respondents had an opportunity to describe which regulations the DNR could change to increase their frequency of hunting. The respondents who answered mentioned three main changes: First, most respondents who would change a regulation mentioned APRs, with most supporting expanding them; second, these respondents would revise or eliminate early-season hunts, especially the youth hunt; third, these respondents support a one-buck-per-season limit.

In terms of multi-year license bundles, respondents were most interested (as a whole) in a three-year license bundle with a price discount. Over half of respondents in the southern regions indicated they were likely or very likely to purchase a three-year license with a discount. Most were also interested in obtaining a discount if they buy licenses in consecutive years, or entry into a prize lottery if they buy in consecutive years. Earning a discount if they refer a friend to buy a license garnered low interest.

Survey respondents had relatively low interest in attending one-day hunting workshops put on by Michigan DNR. The workshop with the highest level of interest was about land management, such as creating food plots, plantings, and habitat enhancement.

Focus Groups

Prior to the survey, six focus groups were conducted with three target audiences: 1) young men who are frequent hunters; 2) young men who are intermittent hunters; and 3) women who hunt. Focus groups were held at DNR locations in Ludington, Charlevoix, Cadillac, Kalamazoo, Lansing, and Bay City. Focus groups were well attended, with more than 80% of scheduled participants taking part.

Although staff attempted to recruit both “regular” as well as “intermittent” hunters, participants were skewed toward the “regular” (or even “avid”) end of the spectrum. Nearly three quarters of them have private land to hunt on, nearly three-quarters are bowhunters as well as firearm deer hunters, and nearly half spend more than 40 hours *preparing for deer* hunting season. Nearly all hunt with family—mostly to the exclusion of anyone else. About 40% of participants are getting to hunt as much as they would like. For the rest who want to hunt more than they currently are, the biggest factor preventing them from hunting more was work/school or family obligations. No one mentioned access to hunting land as a barrier for

themselves, but nearly all recognized that it was a big barrier to many other hunters. A few said that cost was becoming a factor, but none claimed cost had kept them from participating.

Hunting opening day of firearms season was very important to firearm hunters—less important if participants were bowhunters as well. A majority (64%) of participants would prefer to keep opening day on November 15 rather than move it to the nearest Saturday, but nearly one in five did not have a strong opinion either way. Only about 10% of respondents said they would hunt multiple opening days if that were an option. Most of the rest were not interested and/or thought it would cause law enforcement problems.

Most participants who were *not* bowhunters thought they would hunt more if the firearms season were longer. Firearms hunters who were also bowhunters almost unanimously said they did not want the firearms season to be longer, because it would necessarily cut into the bow season, which most of them preferred. Most bowhunters said they would prefer to make the bow season longer, not the firearms season.

The majority of participants (57%) supported APRs, and most other participants were unsure. The notable exception was the group of women in Cadillac: 11 of 12 strongly opposed APRs.

Focus group participants expressed little discomfort with regulations. The majority of participants reported felt strongly about following regulations and had little tolerance for lawbreakers and “slob hunters.” In three of the groups, one or more people mentioned that they trusted the DNR to set the regulations in the best interest of the deer population. In most of the focus groups, participants could not think of any regulations they would like to change. None of the participants said regulations constrained their deer hunting. Possible changes included the following:

- Make deer management units bigger to expand areas for antlerless tag use
- Make antlerless tags transferable across deer management units
- Make handgun carry regulations simpler
- Create more check stations for getting the hunter patch
- Create a single license that would be good for one buck and one doe
- Do away with the late antlerless season to protect the bucks from poaching
- Establish antler point restrictions

From these discussions, it appears most of the barriers to deer hunting are societal factors beyond the DNR’s control.

Take-home Messages

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on insights from the combined survey and focus group research. They are arranged in no particular order. See Conclusions section for more details.

- DNR regulations are not a barrier to deer hunting for the large majority of respondents.
- Respondents overall did not think Michigan deer hunting regulations were too complex.

- Respondents (particularly younger hunters) generally supported Antler Point Restrictions. When and where they do not conflict with biological management objectives, the DNR should consider expanding APRs.
- Respondents are in favor of youth opportunities, but had serious concerns about the current youth deer hunt and its impact on regular season hunts. It is not clear whether these concerns diminish hunting participation.
- Among respondents who suggested regulations changes, the most common topic mentioned was support for a *one-buck-per-season limit*. However, DNR should recognize that this survey included a higher proportion of hunters who participated in multiple seasons compared to the hunting population as a whole*, so a one-buck rule would affect survey respondents less than it would the average hunter.
- The majority of respondents advocated keeping opening day on November 15. However, support for moving the date to the nearest Saturday was highest among younger respondents, so the DNR should revisit this issue as older hunters age out of the activity.
- Certain differences by age category indicate the DNR should re-examine regulations by conducting a similar study in the near future. In particular, younger respondents—relative to older ones—were likelier to be neutral or supportive of moving opening day to closest Saturday, more willing to travel around the state if opening days were staggered, and more agreeable that there were changes to regulations the DNR could make to help them hunt deer more frequently.
- Consider discounted multi-year license bundles to increase year-to-year license sales.
- Different opening days in various parts of the state are unlikely to boost hunting or license purchases.
- Gender differences were minimal. Variation in opinions was greater across age categories than across gender.

*As estimated by Michigan DNR annual hunter surveys.

Introduction

Since the late 1990s Michigan, like many other states, has experienced a decline in hunting participation. Previous survey results suggest that the primary experience for recruiting new hunters has shifted from small game to deer hunting and that Michigan hunter retention is also strongly predicted by deer hunting behavior since approximately 90% of all licensed Michigan hunters purchase a deer license, and approximately 60% of deer hunters purchase only licenses to hunt deer.

Michigan's Baby Boomers are beginning to reach ages where their participation in deer hunting is starting to decline. While the proportion of Michigan youth that hunt deer has remained stable, the proportion of young adults that hunt deer is declining. That is, youngsters are still being introduced to hunting, but apparently are not continuing to hunt after they leave home.

For this reason, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) contracted DJ Case & Associates (DJ Case) to conduct focus group and survey research to better understand young adult male hunters and female hunters—to see if changes in hunting regulations could increase growth or at least increase retention among these key groups. The first phase of this research included six focus groups among female and young male deer hunters in September 2016. The second phase consisted of an online survey of nearly 200,000 hunters who had purchased at least one license in Michigan at some point during the past five years and who had an email address. This document reports the findings from these six focus groups and from the over 30,000 hunters who responded to the online survey.

Methods

This study used two methods to gain insight from the hunting population in Michigan—an online survey and in-person focus groups.

Online Survey

DJ Case drafted an initial list of questions based on insights from the focus groups and the goals of the Michigan DNR. Once all questions had been approved by DNR staff members, the 19-question survey was created using an online platform (QuestionPro). The survey instrument is contained in *Appendix C. Online Survey Instrument*. The first two questions of the survey qualified participants as adults and Michigan residents and politely terminated anyone not meeting those criteria. Two additional safeguards were added:

- 1) Only individuals who had received an email containing a link to the survey could take the survey.
- 2) No individual could complete the survey more than one time from the same email invitation.

In December 2016, the DNR provided DJ Case & Associates with a list of 192,352 Michigan residents who had purchased at least one license in the past five years *and* had provided an email address. The list was cleaned to remove identical email addresses, resulting in a list of 188,065 license holders with unique email addresses. Invitations to potential respondents were sent out on December 17 and 18, 2016. The invitation email is available in *Appendix D. Email Invitations for Online Survey*. By December 19, responses were as follows:

Sent:	188,065	
Bounced:	21,550	11.5% of sent
Delivered:	166,515	88.5% of sent
Opened:	20,494	12.3% of delivered
Viewed w/o taking:	2,181	10.6% of opened
Started:	17,602	85.9% of opened

Reminder emails were sent to everyone on the original list who had not completed the survey on January 9, 2017, and January 23, 2017. The final statistics for the invitations were:

Sent:	188,065	
Bounced:	29,239	15.5% of sent
Delivered:	157,934	83.9% of sent
Opened:	38,612	24.4% of delivered
Unsubscribed:	1,213	3.1% of opened
Viewed w/o taking:	1,518	3.9% of opened
Started:	36,527	94.6% of opened
Complete cases:	84.1% of opened	20.5% of delivered

(Note that the number of bounced emails did indeed increase between the initial invitation and the reminder emails. Three possible reasons explain this. First, some email servers wait longer to officially declare a bounce than others. Second, a follow-up invitation may have been flagged as “spam” and therefore bounced. Third, some of the email addresses may have been deactivated during the project.)

The invitation mentioned the opportunity for the respondent to influence the state’s deer hunting regulations. It also mentioned that participants could register for a drawing for a \$500 prepaid gift card. A link to the registration page for the drawing appeared on the thank-you page of the survey. Out of those who completed the survey, 75%, or 27,246 participants, chose to register for the drawing. The registration page is included in *Appendix E. Drawing Registration after Survey Completion*. A winner was drawn on February 28, 2017, and the prize was sent in mid-March.

Some invitees sent a text response directly to the email invitation. Responses fell into three major categories:

- 1) **Requests for technical support** – Those individuals were assisted to the best of DJ Case & Associates’ ability to make sure their responses were collected and to ensure they had a good experience with the survey.
- 2) **Refusal to take the survey** – A handful of invitees refused to take the survey. These were roughly divided between individuals concerned with their privacy and those that felt their answers would not be taken into account so that responding was not a productive use of their time.
- 3) **Additional Input** – Some individuals had additional thoughts and opinions they wanted to share that they perceived were not specifically requested in the survey. These responses are included in *Appendix F. Emails from Online Survey Respondents*.

For analyses of the entire survey dataset that follows, $N = 32,468$.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with representatives of the following populations:

- Male, 18-25 year old regular hunters
- Male, 18-25 year old intermittent hunters
- Female hunters

A “regular hunter” was defined as a hunter who purchased a deer hunting license in at least four of the past five hunting seasons. An “intermittent hunter” was defined as a hunter who purchased a deer hunting license in three or fewer of the past five hunting seasons.

One deer management technique that has generated a lot of interest among Michigan hunters is Antler Point Restrictions (APRs). In order to better understand the impact of APRs on hunter participation, one focus group from each target population was conducted in an area with and without APRs. Focus groups were held in the following communities:

Northwest Lower Peninsula (APR area)

- Ludington/Manistee – Young adult males, intermittent hunters
- Charlevoix – Young adult males, regular hunters
- Cadillac – Female hunters

Southern Michigan (non-APR area)

- Kalamazoo – Young adult males, regular hunters
- Lansing – Young adult males, intermittent hunters
- Bay City – Female hunters

Email invitations were sent to potential participants in the six target areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Focus Group Screening Criteria

Northwest Lower Peninsula (APR area)		#	Sex	Age	Licenses purchased
Ludington	Counties: Manistee, Mason, Lake, Newago, Oceana	429	Male	18-28	1-3 in the last 5 yrs
Charlevoix	Counties: Charlevoix, Emmet, Antrim, Otsego	105	Male	18-28	4 or 5 in the last 5 yrs
Cadillac	Counties: Wexford, Missaukee, Osceola	514	Female	Any	1 or more in last 2 yrs
Southern Michigan (non APR area)					
Kalamazoo	Counties: Kalamazoo	240	Male	18-28	4 or 5 in the last 5 yrs
Lansing	Counties: Eaton, Clinton, Ingham	257	Male	18-28	1-3 in the last 5 yrs
Bay City	Counties: Bay, Saginaw, Midland	804	Female	Any	1 or more in last 2 yrs

The adult male, regular hunter and female hunter focus groups were all full or nearly full after one or two rounds of emails. The intermittent, young male hunters were the most difficult to recruit, with both groups requiring three or four rounds of emails and at least one round of phone calls to fill the roster. All participants were offered dinner and a \$75 VISA gift card as incentives to increase participation.

Challenges in recruiting for all focus groups included:

- Inaccurate or deactivated email addresses in the license database
- Inaccurate phone numbers in the license database
- Emails and phone numbers for parents or spouses being used when purchasing licenses
- Young adult, male participants often had work or school conflicts or did not currently live in the area (away at college).

All focus groups were conducted from 6–8 p.m. at DNR facilities. A trained moderator conducted all focus groups, using a topic guide or script to guide all discussions. (See *Appendix A. Focus Group Topic Guide.*)

Each participant was given a written response form and a pen, which allowed them to provide some written feedback in addition to the verbal conversations. For certain key questions, after the group discussed the issue verbally, the moderator asked participants to complete an analogous question on the written response form. This gave participants the chance to provide input that might go against the thinking of the group (or strong personalities in the group) if they felt uncomfortable or unwilling to do so in the group setting. The written response form can be found in *Appendix B. Focus Group Written Response Form.*

All focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. Participant names were redacted from transcriptions to ensure confidentiality. The qualitative software program NVivo was used for analysis of the focus group data.

Results

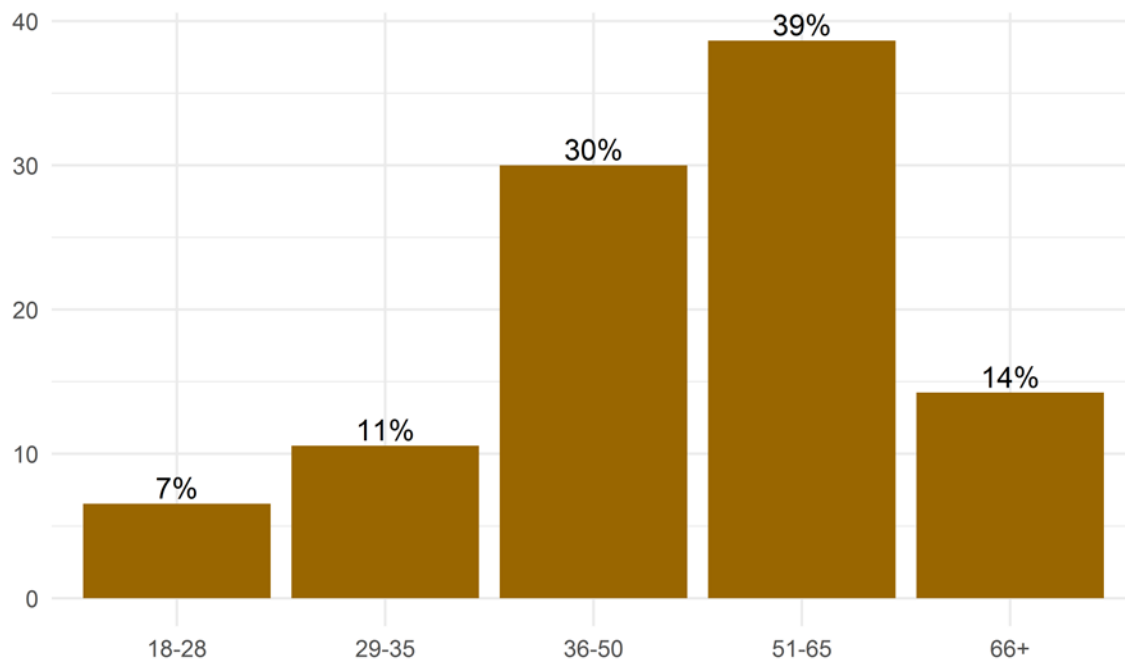
The results below begin with *participant* information from survey respondents and focus group participants. Next follow topics discussed in *both* the survey and in focus groups, followed by topics exclusive to the online survey, then topics exclusive to the focus groups.

Participant Information

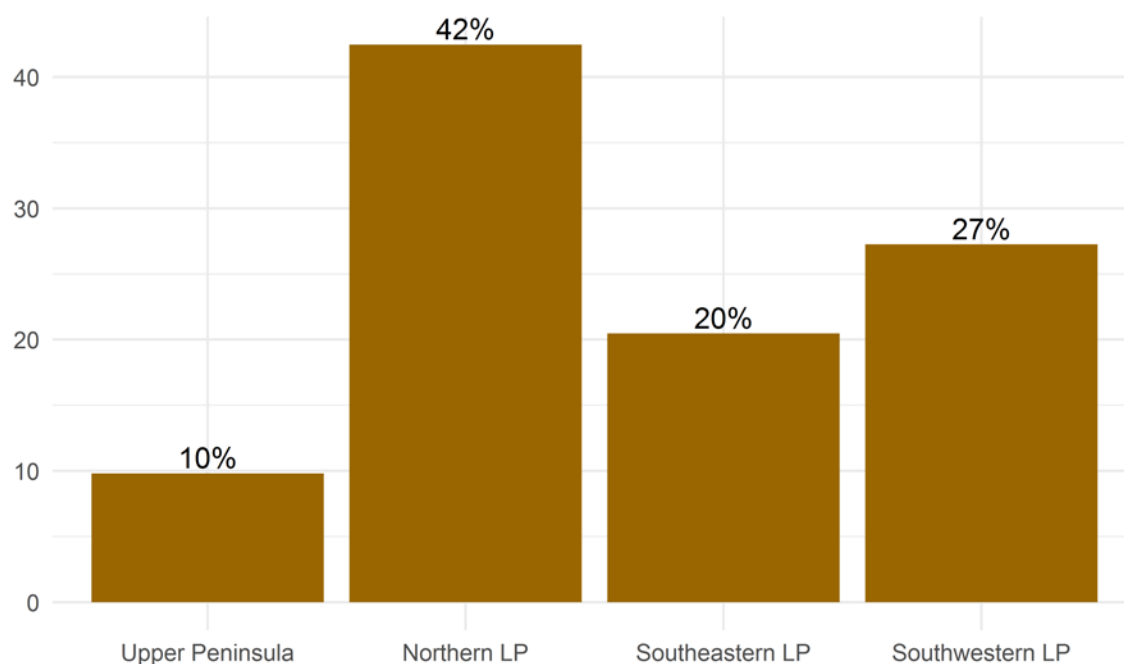
Survey Respondents

Respondents to the online survey were overwhelmingly men: the sample consisted of 95% men and 5% women. The majority of respondents were between 36 and 65 years old (Figure 1). About one-fifth were 35-years-old or younger.

Figure 1. Age of Respondents



Respondents selected where the Management Region where they have hunted deer the most frequently in the past five years (Figure 2). Nearly half have hunted the Northern Lower Peninsula, followed in frequency by the Southwestern Lower Peninsula, the Southeastern Lower Peninsula, and the Upper Peninsula.

Figure 2. Management Region Where Have Hunted the Most in Past 5 Years

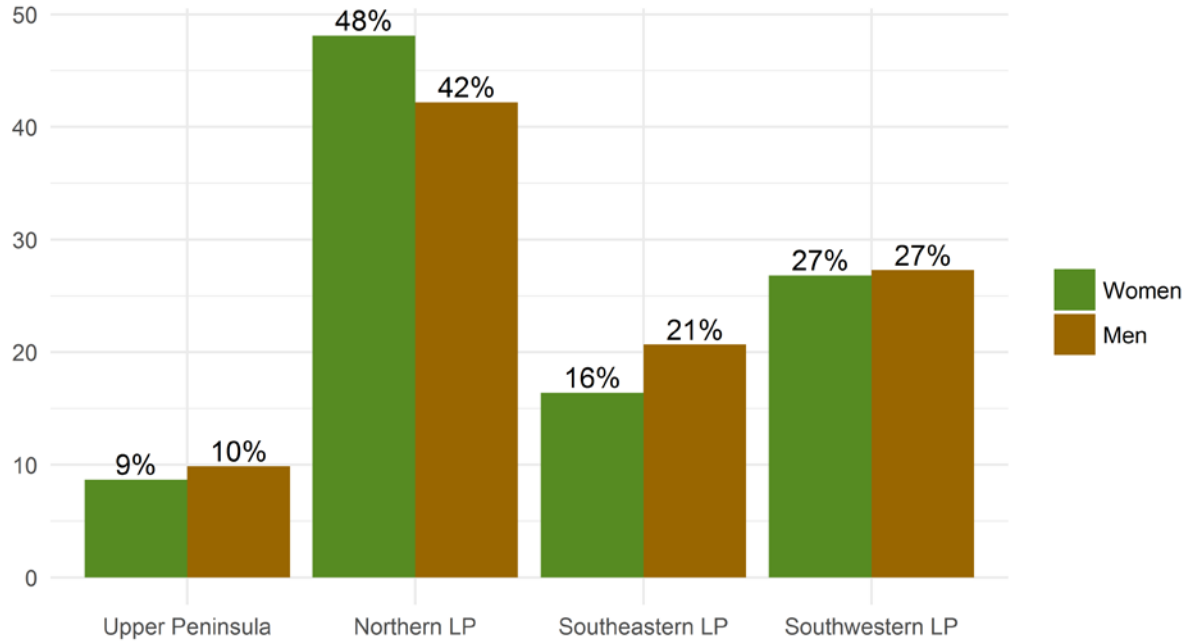
Respondents differed somewhat by age category in the Management Region where they have hunted most in the past five years (Table 2). Those respondents who have hunted most in the Upper Peninsula tended to be somewhat older than those who have hunted in the Lower Peninsula:

- Upper Peninsula: 54.0 years
- Northern Lower Peninsula: 51.7 years
- Southeastern Lower Peninsula: 48.9 years
- Southwestern Lower Peninsula: 48.8 years

Table 2. Management Region Where Have Hunted the Most in Past 5 Years, by Age Category

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
18-28	4%	6%	8%	8%
29-35	7%	10%	12%	13%
36-50	25%	28%	33%	32%
51-65	43%	40%	38%	35%
66+	21%	16%	10%	12%

Respondents were similar in terms of gender distribution in the Management Regions where they hunt (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Management Region Where Have Hunted the Most in Past 5 Years, by Gender

Respondents to the online survey were generally hunters with 20 or more years of experience hunting deer in any location (Figure 4). However, the women who responded—recall that they were 5% of the overall sample—were much more equally distributed across years of experience (Figure 5).

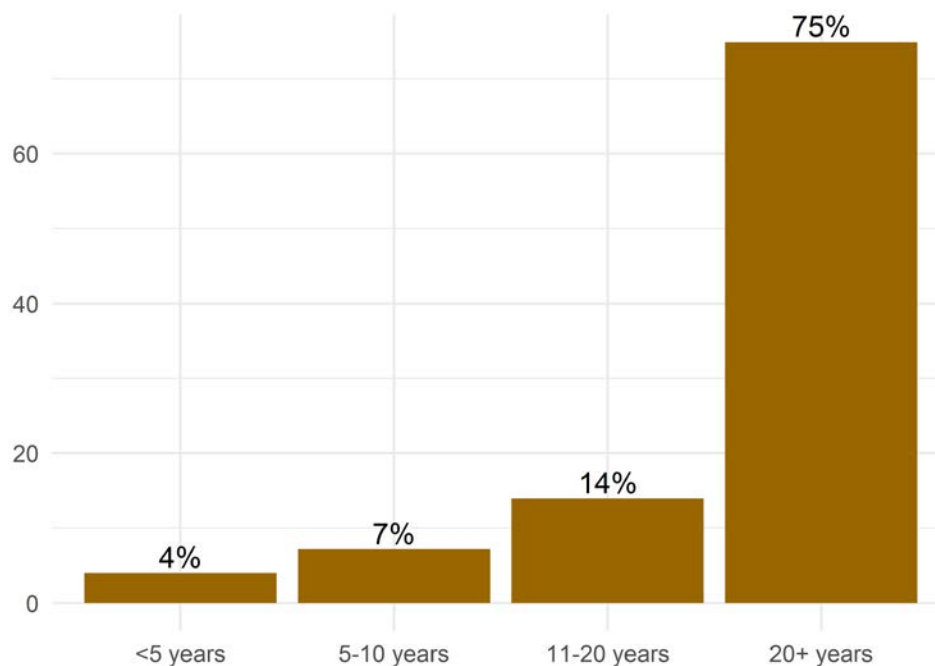
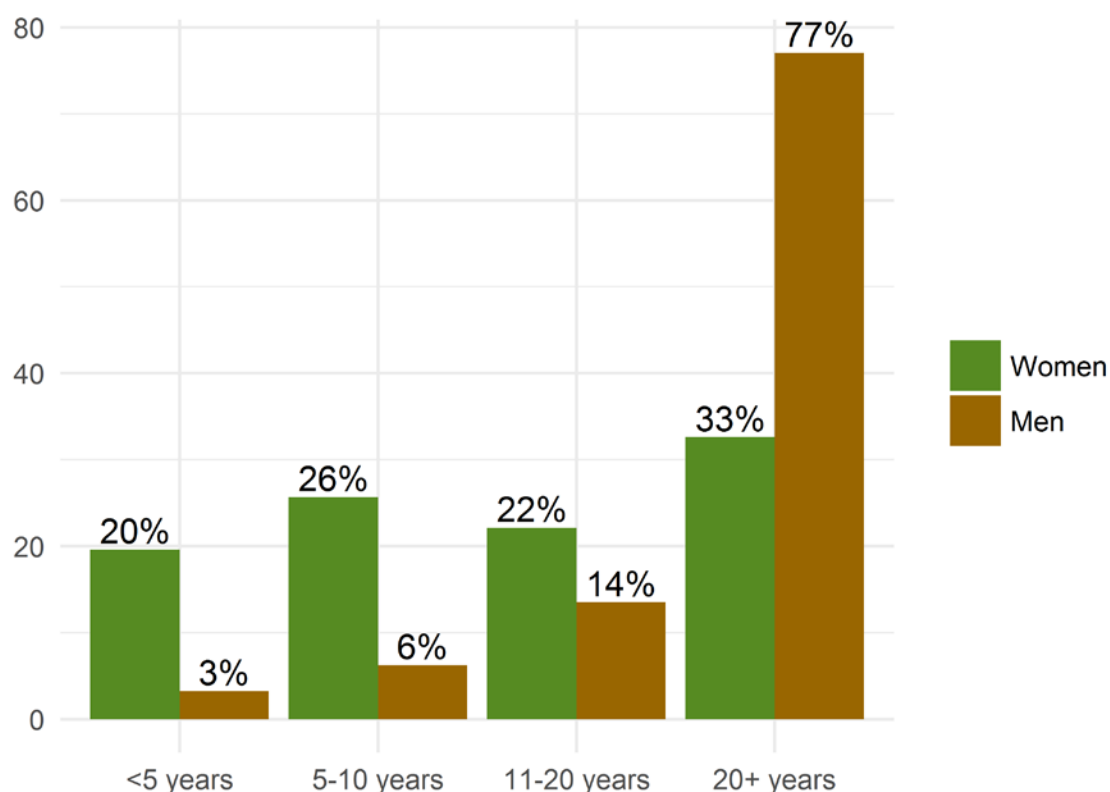
Figure 4. Years Have Hunted Deer

Figure 5. Years Have Hunted Deer, by Gender

As might be expected given their younger age, younger respondents were less likely to have purchased hunting licenses for each of the past five years (Table 3). Middle-aged and older respondents were especially likely to have purchased licenses in each of the past five years.

Table 3. Years of License Purchases, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
0 years	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
1 year	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%
2 years	6%	5%	3%	2%	2%
3 years	9%	8%	4%	4%	3%
4 years	9%	7%	6%	5%	5%
5 years	70%	77%	85%	87%	88%

Respondents said they try to hunt in a variety of seasons each year, especially firearm, archery, and muzzleloader (Table 4). (Respondents could select more than one season, so the column sums to more than 100.) Relatively few respondents to the survey hunt in the Liberty Hunt (a two-day firearms seasons in September for youth and hunters with disabilities) or Independence Hunt (a four-day firearms season in October for hunters with disabilities).

Table 4. Deer Season(s) Typically Hunt

Categories	Selected
Firearm	95%
Archery	78%
Muzzleloader	58%
Late Antlerless	29%
Early Antlerless	11%
Liberty Hunt	5%
Independence Hunt	1%

Focus Groups

Focus groups enjoyed good attendance rates from those who were recruited (Table 5).

Table 5. Focus Group Attendance, by Location

Focus Group Location	Group	Committed	Attended	Attendance Rate
Plainwell	Young Adult Male - Regular	11	11	100.00%
Charlevoix	Young Adult Male - Regular	10	7	70.00%
Lansing	Young Adult Male - Intermittent	11	8	72.73%
Ludington	Young Adult Male - Intermittent	11	8	72.73%
Bay City	Female	12	9	75.00%
Cadillac	Female	13	13	100.00%
<i>Total</i>		<i>68</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>82.35%</i>

The following participant information comes from the written response form administered during the focus groups. *Care must be taken not to extrapolate any of these percentages across the Michigan hunting population* since these participants were selected purposively, not randomly. These figures are only provided to give Michigan DNR a description of the composition of the focus groups.

Family status:

- 39% single, no children in the home
- 9% Single, children in the home
- 23% Married/cohabitating, no children in the home
- 27% Married/cohabitating, children in the home

Where do you hunt?

- 73% Private land
- 13% Public land
- 13% Both about equally

How close to home do you hunt?

Average = 24 miles from home (standard deviation = 35 mi)

Five participants hunted ≥ 100 miles from home.

Your age when you started deer hunting:

Average = 18 years old (standard deviation = 10 years)

Have you ever killed a deer?

90% yes

9% no

How much time do you spend preparing for deer hunting?

0% No time

27% Less than 10 hours

30% More than 10 hours but less than 40 hours

41% More than 40 hours

Which deer seasons do you hunt in? (Check all that apply).

88% Firearms

71% Archery

41% Muzzleloader

When do you hunt deer? (Check all that apply.)

86% Weekends

54% Before or after work

36% I take time off work/school each season to hunt locally

27% I take time off work/school each season to hunt "deer camp."

Topics Discussed on Survey and in Focus Groups

Results below are presented by topic. For the focus groups, analyses were initially conducted to see if there were major differences in responses among the three target audiences (young male regular hunters, young male intermittent hunters, and female hunters). There were occasional slight differences that are mentioned below as appropriate, but overall the responses from these three target audiences are remarkably similar and did not warrant breaking the results out by target audience.

Moving Opening Day

Most respondents—about 60%—preferred to keep opening day for the general public's firearms season on November 15. About 20% were neutral to such a move. About 20% supported moving it to the nearest Saturday. A similar pattern emerged across respondents' gender (Table 6) and the Management Region where they have hunted the most in the past five years (Table 7).

Table 6. Preferences on Opening Day, by Gender

Categories	Female	Male
Stay on November 15	60%	61%
Neutral	21%	16%
Move to closest Saturday	20%	24%

Table 7. Preferences on Opening Day, by Region Have Hunted Most

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
Stay on November 15	65%	62%	60%	58%
Neutral	16%	15%	18%	17%
Move to closest Saturday	20%	24%	22%	25%

Respondents varied only slightly by the number of years they have purchased a deer hunting license in the past five years (Table 8). This seems to indicate that license purchases may not be contingent in a direct way on opening day staying on November 15.

Table 8. Preferences on Opening Day, by License Purchases

Categories	0 years	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
Stay on November 15	57%	46%	46%	51%	56%	62%
Neutral	17%	26%	25%	20%	19%	15%
Move to closest Saturday	26%	28%	28%	29%	25%	23%

However, differences emerged depending on age category (Table 9) and depending on how important respondents rate deer hunting among their other activities (Table 10). To be clear, the majority of respondents supported keeping opening day of firearms season on November 15. But among younger respondents, one-quarter (27%) desired moving the date to the closest Saturday, and one-fifth (19%) were neutral. The likeliest supporters of keeping it on November 15 were 66 and older.

Table 9. Preferences on Opening Day, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
Stay on November 15	54%	56%	55%	63%	71%
Neutral	19%	19%	17%	14%	14%
Move to closest Saturday	27%	26%	27%	22%	15%

Those who rated deer hunting as their most important activity (or one of their more important activities) were highly likely to suggest keeping opening day on November 15. Those who rated

deer hunting as relatively less important were likelier to feel neutral about moving the date or to support moving it to the nearest Saturday.

Table 10. Preferences on Opening Day, by Importance of Hunting

Categories	Not imp.	Less imp.	Equally	One of more imp.	Most imp.
Stay on November 15	46%	41%	51%	60%	65%
Neutral	34%	28%	23%	17%	13%
Move to closest Saturday	19%	31%	26%	24%	22%

In the focus groups, 6 in 10 would prefer to keep opening day on November 15, rather than shifting it to a weekend. Primary reasons included tradition, not wanting to increase the number of people who participate, and not wanting to have to remember a different date each year. Nearly all participants agreed that moving opening day to a weekend would increase participation, but for many, that was not a good thing. Most of the respondents who supported the Saturday opener did so because they felt it would allow more participation by kids in school and people who had to work. A few participants said they would support a Saturday opening day if it could be shown scientifically that such a change would not negatively affect the deer herd. A number of participants worried that a change to a Saturday opener would cause a lot of confusion for hunters who were used to it being on November 15 for so long. Summary of written responses to question about moving opening day:

What is your preference regarding opening day of firearms season?

16% I would be more likely to hunt if it opened on a weekend

64% I prefer keeping the traditional November 15 opening date

18% I don't have a strong opinion about it

Attitudes toward Moving Opening Day

All survey respondents—regardless of their answers to prior questions—could select from a range of pre-written attitudes they might have toward moving opening day of firearms season to the Saturday closest to November 15. (In the tables below, “O.D.” signifies “Opening Day.” The columns sum to greater than 100 because respondents could make multiple selections.)

Table 11. Attitudes toward Moving Opening Day

Categories	Selected
I could hunt O.D. more often if it moved	20%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is and don't care date	16%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is but prefer Saturday	15%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is but prefer keeping Nov. 15	52%
Would allow kids/family to hunt O.D. more often	26%
Would increase hunters, but I would still hunt	42%
Would increase hunters, so I would avoid	17%

Several results are notable (Table 11). First, 20% said they could hunt opening day if it moved to Saturday. Second, 26% agreed moving it would allow children and family to hunt opening day more often. Third, a relatively small proportion (17%) would *avoid* hunting opening day if it were moved. Hence, while most respondents advocated for keeping opening day on November 15, most indicated they would not skip it even if it did move.

Attitudes toward moving opening day were nearly indistinguishable among women and men (Table 12). Greater differences emerged across age categories (Table 13). Younger respondents were likelier to say they *could* hunt opening day more often if it moved. About one-quarter of younger respondents said they would avoid opening day if it moved, compared with about one-sixth of older respondents.

Table 12. Attitudes toward Moving Opening Day, by Gender

Categories	Female	Male
I could hunt O.D. more often if it moved	24%	20%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is and don't care date	16%	16%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is but prefer Saturday	11%	15%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is but prefer keeping Nov. 15	52%	52%
Would allow kids/family to hunt O.D. more often	25%	26%
Would increase hunters, but I would still hunt	40%	42%
Would increase hunters, so I would avoid	20%	17%

Table 13. Attitudes toward Moving Opening Day, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
I could hunt O.D. more often if it moved	39%	29%	25%	16%	5%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is and don't care date	16%	15%	16%	16%	17%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is but prefer Saturday	15%	15%	17%	16%	11%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is but prefer keeping Nov. 15	47%	46%	46%	55%	62%
Would allow kids/family to hunt O.D. more often	29%	25%	29%	24%	23%
Would increase hunters, but I would still hunt	47%	45%	41%	42%	42%
Would increase hunters, so I would avoid	24%	22%	17%	15%	16%

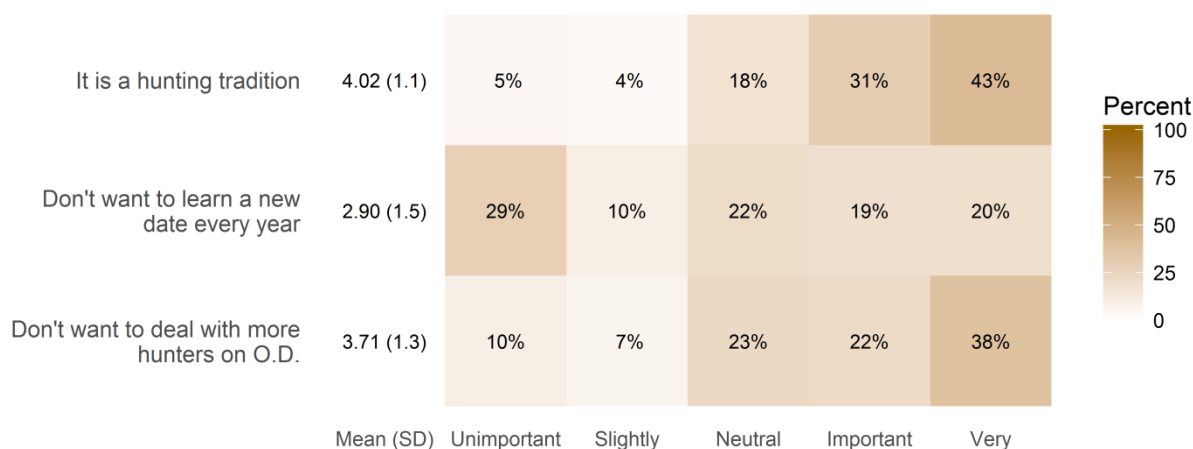
Attitudes toward moving opening day varied across the number of years respondents had hunted deer (Table 14). Two-fifths (39%) of respondents with fewer than five years of experience said they could hunt opening day more often if it moved, compared with one-sixth (16%) of respondents with 20 or more years of experience. Thirty percent of respondents with fewer than five years of experience said they would avoid opening day if it moved because doing so would increase hunters, compared with 15% of highly experienced respondents.

Table 14. Attitudes toward Moving Opening Day, by Length of Time Deer Hunting

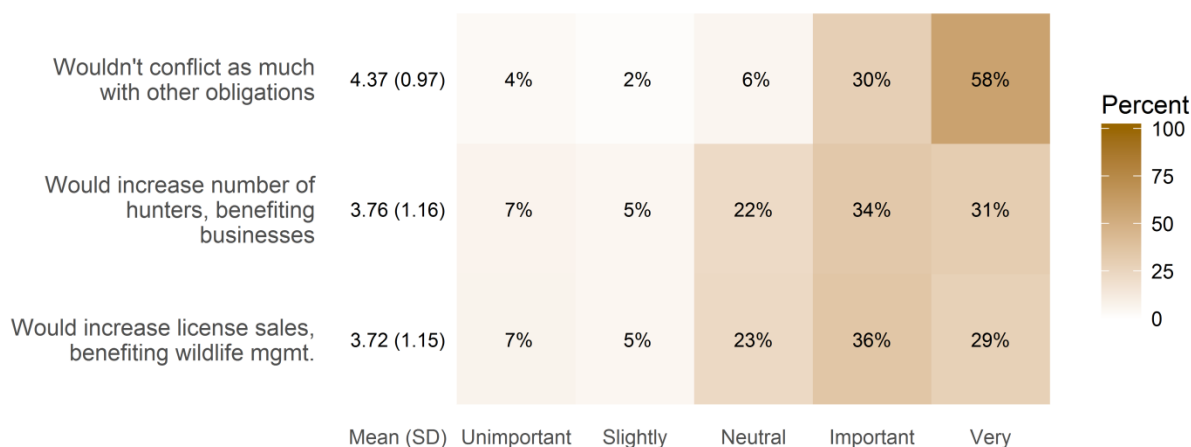
Categories	<5 years	5-10 years	11-20 years	20+ years
I could hunt O.D. more often if it moved	39%	34%	28%	16%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is and don't care date	16%	15%	16%	16%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is but prefer Saturday	13%	15%	15%	15%
I will hunt O.D. whenever it is but prefer keeping Nov. 15	33%	42%	47%	54%
Would allow kids/family to hunt O.D. more often	27%	27%	26%	26%
Would increase hunters, but I would still hunt	38%	44%	44%	42%
Would increase hunters, so I would avoid	30%	23%	20%	15%

Importance of Reasons for Keeping or Moving Opening Day

Survey respondents who said they prefer that opening day stay on November 15 could select from a few pre-selected reasons for keeping opening day then (Figure 1). The reason that was selected as most important to the highest proportion of respondents was “hunting tradition,” with about three-quarters selecting this as “important” or “very important.” Another popular reason was that respondents did not want to “deal with more hunters on opening day.” This was selected by 60% of respondents as “important” or “very important.” A relatively less important reason for not moving the date was “learning a new date every year,” which 39% of respondents selected as “important” or “very important.”

Figure 6. Importance of Reasons for Keeping Opening Day on November 15

Survey respondents who said they prefer moving day to the nearest Saturday could select from a few pre-selected reasons for moving opening day (Figure 7). The most important reason was that moving it would eliminate conflict “with other obligations,” followed by increasing “the number of hunters, which would benefit Michigan businesses.” Almost equally as important was that moving the day “would increase license sales, benefiting wildlife management.”

Figure 7. Importance of Reasons for Moving Opening Day to Nearest Saturday

For three-quarters of focus group participants, opening day of firearms season on November 15 was somewhat or very important. The primary reasons were because it was a social tradition and offered the best chance of getting a deer (if the respondent was not a bowhunter). Most of the participants who said it was not important to them were bowhunters, so they had already been hunting for weeks prior to firearms season. A few said they did not like the crowds, while a few others said the social aspects were what made opening day appealing. Summary of written focus group responses to question about importance of opening day:

How important is it to you to hunt opening day of firearms deer season each year? (Check all that apply)

50% Very important

23% Somewhat important

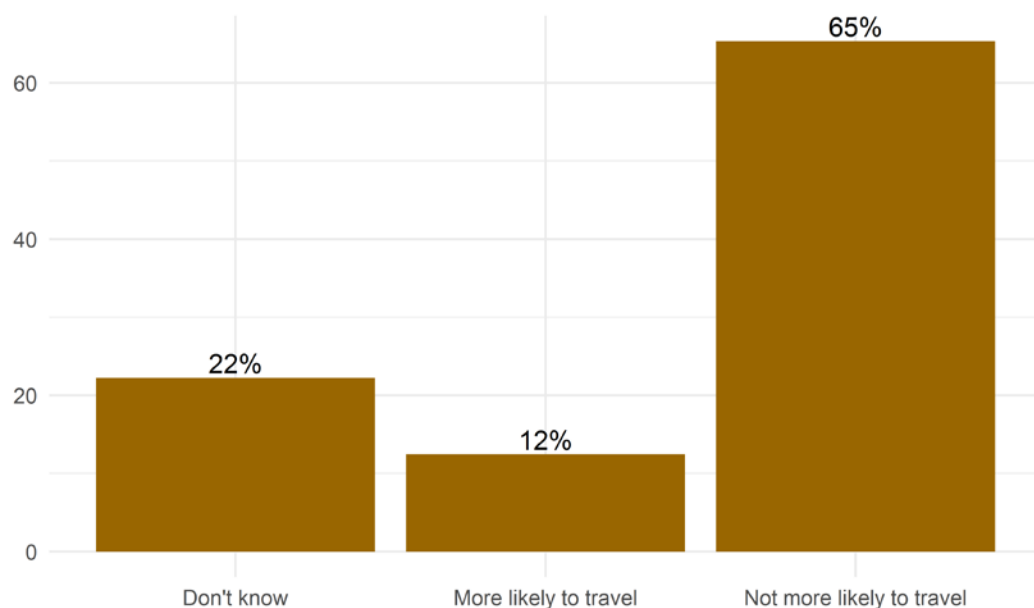
14% Not important

14% I always hunt opening day (except for emergency, etc.)

13% I hunt opening day when it's convenient

Staggering Opening Day across the State

Waterfowl seasons often open on different dates in different parts of the state, allowing hunters to travel and hunt on multiple opening days. Respondents were asked if they would be willing to travel if there were multiple opening days for firearms deer season. A small proportion—about one-tenth—of respondents said they are more likely to travel (Figure 8). Most respondents said they were not willing to travel, and about one-fifth were unsure.

Figure 8. Willingness to Travel if Multiple Opening Days

Younger respondents were slightly likelier to say they would travel if there were multiple opening days across the state (Table 15). However, the majority of respondents across all age categories were not more likely to travel.

Table 15. Willingness to Travel if Multiple Opening Days, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
Don't know	24%	24%	24%	22%	19%
More likely to travel	19%	17%	14%	11%	7%
Not more likely to travel	58%	59%	62%	68%	74%

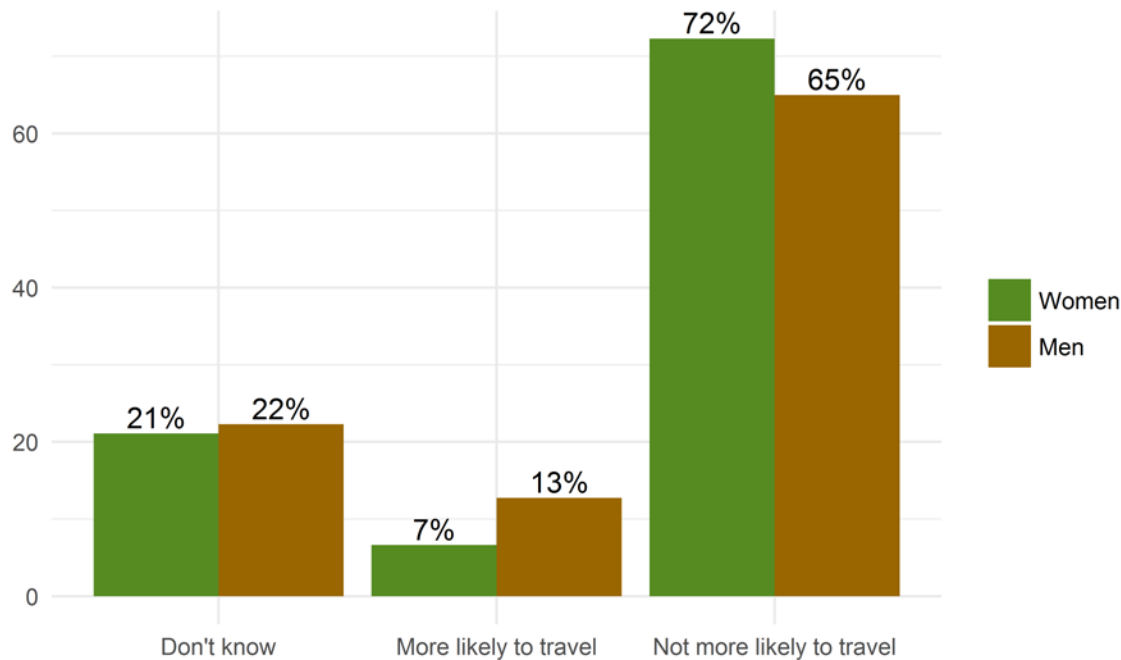
Length of time hunting was not a major source of variation (Table 16). Respondents with limited and high levels of experience were about similar: Around 14% said they were more likely to travel; around 60% said they were not more likely to travel.

Table 16. Willingness to Travel if Multiple Opening Days, by Length of Time Deer Hunting

Categories	<5 years	5-10 years	11-20 years	20+ years
Don't know	29%	26%	24%	21%
More likely to travel	14%	14%	14%	12%
Not more likely to travel	57%	60%	62%	67%

Women versus men were about equally likely to say they would not travel if there were multiple opening days across the state (Figure 9). Indeed, 7% of women and 13% of men said they were more likely to travel. About one-fifth were unsure.

Figure 9. Willingness to Travel if Multiple Opening Days, by Gender



In focus groups, about 10% of attendees said they would participate in more than one opening day. Most people thought it would be difficult to enforce the law, and they immediately dismissed the idea. A few said it was an intriguing option, and they would consider it if it could be proven that it would not negatively affect the deer herd. A few also raised the point that it seemed like “stealing” someone else’s deer. That issue resonated with others in the groups where it came up. Summary of written focus group responses to question about having staggered opening days:

If Michigan started and ended firearms deer season on a different date in different parts of the state, would you be more likely to travel to other locations to hunt multiple opening days?

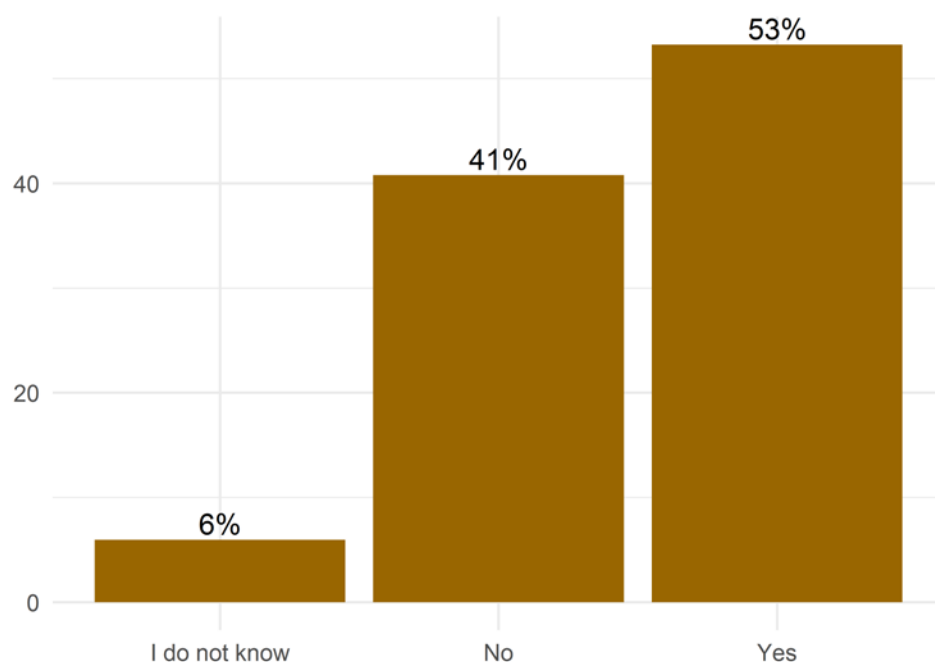
9% I would be more likely to travel to other locations

80% I would not be any more likely to travel to other locations

9% I don’t know

Antler Point Restrictions

Nearly all respondents knew whether or not Antler Point Restrictions (APRs) were in effect where they hunt most frequently (Figure 10). Just over half said they do have APRs where they hunt most frequently. Six percent said they did not know.

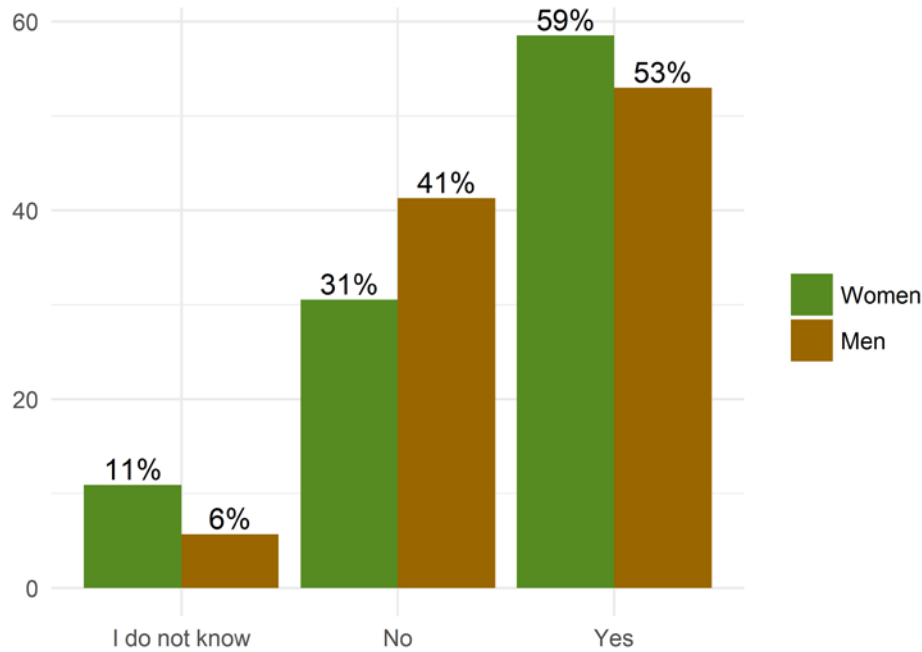
Figure 10. Antler Point Restrictions Established Where Respondents Hunt Most Frequently

Women respondents were slightly likelier to hunt in areas with APRs, and slightly likelier to be unsure if the area where they hunt most frequently has established APRs (Figure 11). Younger respondents were less likely to hunt in areas with APRs. Older respondents were more likely (Table 17).

Table 17. Antler Point Restrictions Established Where Respondents Hunt Most Frequently, by Age Category

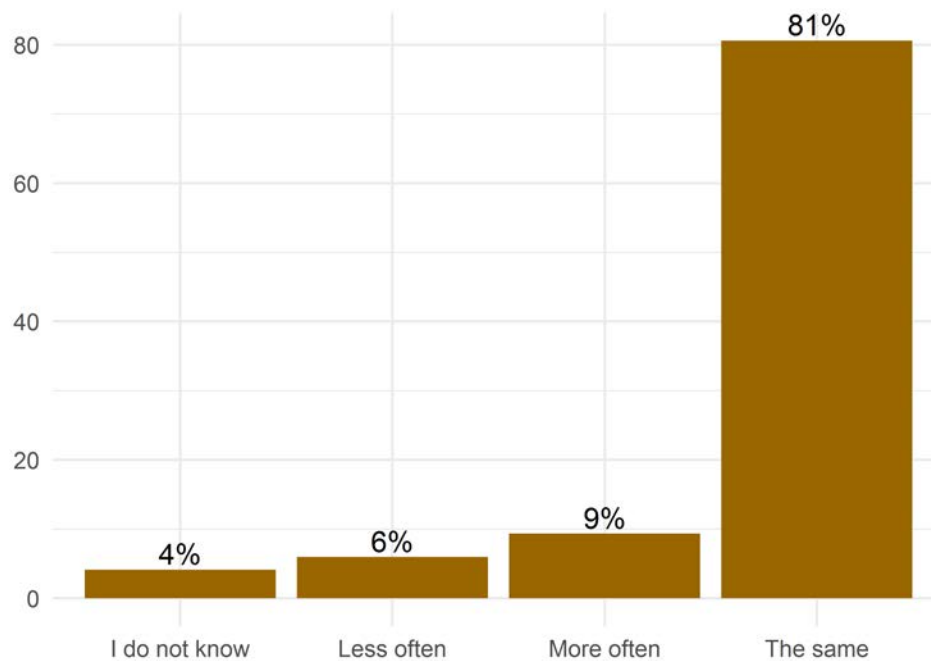
Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
I do not know	9%	6%	5%	6%	8%
No	42%	45%	44%	39%	33%
Yes	49%	49%	50%	55%	59%

Figure 11. Antler Point Restrictions Established Where Respondents Hunt Most Frequently, by Gender



For the 53% of respondents who hunt most frequently in an area with APRs, the great majority said they hunt the same despite these restrictions (Figure 12). Nine percent hunt more often, and 6% hunt less often.

Figure 12. Where APRs are Established, Respondents Hunt More, Less, the Same



Women and men reported hunting about the same in APR areas (Figure 13). Younger respondents were somewhat likelier to report hunting more, compared with older respondents (Table 18). Older respondents were likeliest to say they hunt the same despite or because of APRs. Respondents with limited experience were most likely to be unsure (Table 19).

Figure 13. Where APRs are Established, Respondents Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Gender

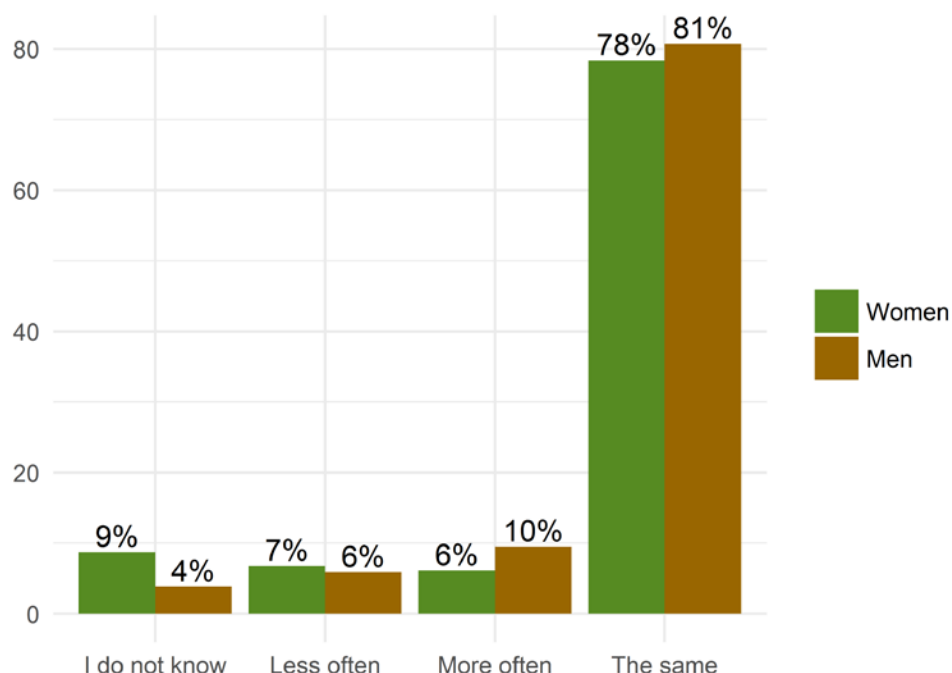


Table 18. Where APRs are Established, Respondents Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
I do not know	9%	6%	4%	3%	4%
Less often	6%	5%	5%	6%	7%
More often	13%	15%	11%	7%	6%
The same	73%	74%	79%	83%	83%

Table 19. Where APRs are Established, Respondents Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Length of Time Hunting Deer

Categories	<5 years	5-10 years	11-20 years	20+ years
I do not know	16%	8%	5%	3%
Less often	5%	6%	5%	6%
More often	4%	8%	13%	9%
The same	74%	77%	77%	82%

A similar degree of hunting frequency applies across Management Regions, with most respondents reporting that they hunt the same amount (Table 20). Examining the results of frequency of purchasing licenses reveals a couple of noteworthy patterns (Table 21). First, those who have purchased licenses every year were highly likely to say that APRs have not affected their frequency of hunting. Second, those who have rarely purchased licenses were likely to be unsure of how their hunting frequency would change.

Table 20. Where APRs are Established, Respondents Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Management Region

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
I do not know	2%	2%	8%	8%
Less often	10%	6%	3%	4%
More often	5%	12%	6%	7%
The same	82%	79%	83%	82%

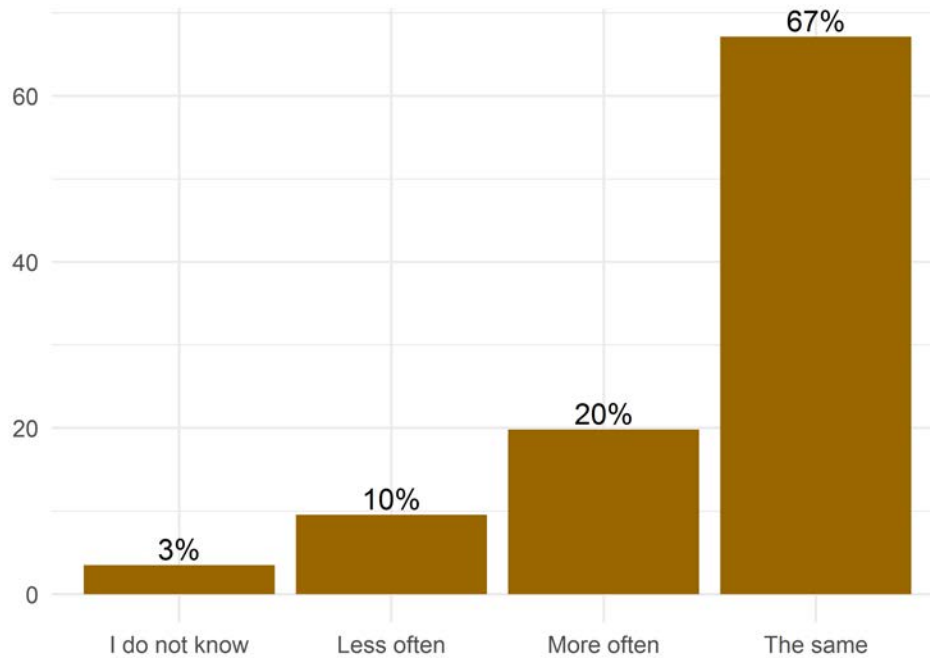
Table 21. Where APRs are Established, Respondents Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Frequency of License Purchases

Categories	0 years	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
I do not know	22%	21%	13%	10%	7%	2%
Less often	14%	9%	11%	10%	10%	5%
More often	4%	4%	5%	5%	4%	10%
The same	60%	66%	71%	75%	78%	82%

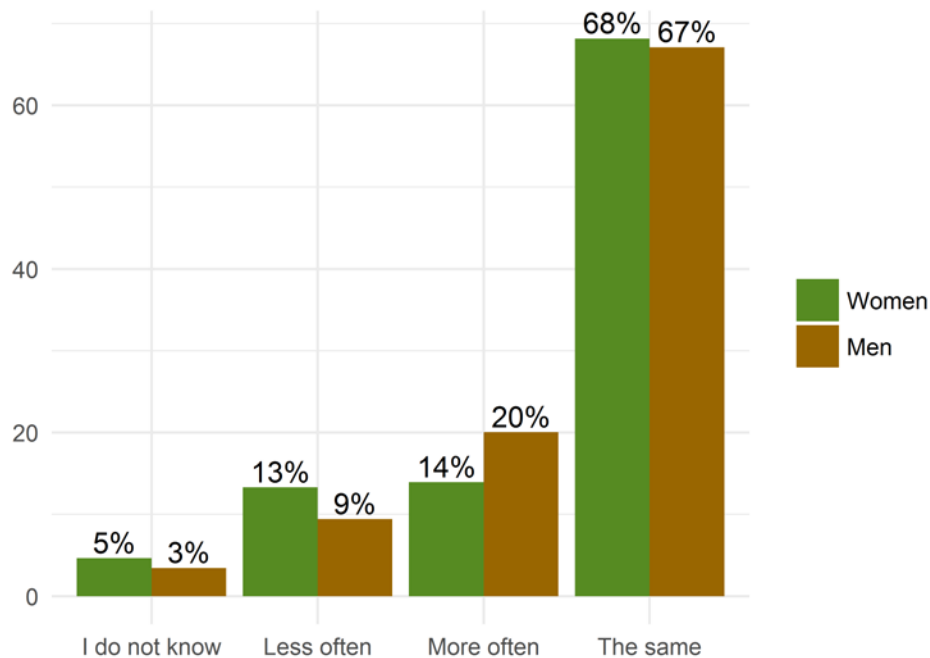
Respondents who said they hunt “more often” had the opportunity to explain why. These respondents frequently mentioned that there are more bucks and bigger antlers. In other words, the quality of deer has increased as a result of APRs, leading many respondents to note that they are “excited” about hunting a “trophy.”

Respondents who said they hunt “less often” as a result of APRs also had an opportunity to explain why. The reasons varied, including frustration over government regulations, the desire to decide personally what to shoot, the desire for freedom on one’s private property, a lack of time to return multiple times to hunt (to obtain a buck that met the requirements), and the belief that APRs only help those who are “trophy hunters.” (Regarding the latter, these hunters see themselves as focused primarily on obtaining meat. One noted, “you don’t eat the antlers.”)

The 41% of respondents who do *not* currently hunt in an area with APRs were asked how the establishment of APRs would affect their frequency of hunting (Figure 14). If APRs *were* to be established, two-thirds said they would hunt the same. One-fifth said they would hunt more often, and one-tenth said they would hunt less often.

Figure 14. If APRs were Established, Respondents Would Hunt More, Less, the Same

Men indicated at a slightly higher rate that they would hunt more often if APRs were established (Figure 15).

Figure 15. If APRs were Established, Respondents Would Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Gender

Younger respondents were likeliest to say they would hunt *more* often if APRs were established in the Management Region where they hunt most frequently (Table 22). About one-third reported as such. A little over 10% of older respondents said they would hunt less. Across all age categories, the majority of respondents would hunt more or at least the same amount.

Table 22. If APRs were Established, Respondents Would Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
I do not know	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%
Less often	5%	4%	7%	12%	15%
More often	34%	35%	24%	13%	7%
The same	58%	59%	66%	71%	73%

If APRs were to be established, roughly 10% of respondents said they would hunt less often, no matter their experience deer hunting (Table 23). However, a larger proportion said they would hunt more often (30% of those with 11–20 years of experience) or at least the same.

Table 23. If APRs were Established, Respondents Would Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Length of Time Hunting Deer

Categories	<5 years	5-10 years	11-20 years	20+ years
I do not know	5%	4%	3%	3%
Less often	9%	9%	6%	10%
More often	13%	21%	30%	18%
The same	72%	66%	60%	68%

Examining the results by Management Regions shows no appreciable differences in how often respondents think they would hunt if APRs were established (Table 24). Respondents generally thought they would hunt about the same or even more often, across frequency of license purchases (Table 25).

Table 24. If APRs were Established, Respondents Would Hunt More, Less, the Same, by Management Region

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
I do not know	6%	4%	3%	3%
Less often	16%	12%	8%	8%
More often	15%	17%	20%	22%
The same	63%	67%	68%	67%

Table 25. If APRs were Established, Respondents Would Hunt More, Less, the Same, by License Purchases

Categories	0 years	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
I do not know	7%	11%	6%	5%	5%	3%
Less often	16%	10%	17%	12%	13%	9%
More often	26%	15%	16%	17%	16%	20%
The same	51%	65%	61%	66%	65%	67%

Respondents could explain why they would hunt less often, more often, or the same if APRs were to be established. The reasons mirrored those offered by respondents who already hunt in areas with APRs.

During focus group conversations, the majority of respondents expressed mild support or had no strong opinions about APRs. The notable exception was the group of women in Cadillac, in which 11 out of 12 strongly opposed APRs. But in the other locations, if a group contained at least one member that was strongly supportive, the general sense of the group was mild or strong support. However, when they answered this question on the written response form, support dropped to 57% (see below). It appears that many who said they supported APRs during discussions switched to “unsure” on the written form. In any case, outside of the Cadillac group, there was very little opposition to APRs among participants.

The primary reasons hunters in the focus groups gave for supporting APRs were the belief that they would lead to seeing bigger bucks and/or a more healthy deer herd in general. A few also mentioned that APRs would lead to Michigan becoming more of a deer hunting destination, which would be good for businesses. Several people favored a one-buck-per-season rule over APRs. Many people mentioned that DNR needs to do a lot of outreach to explain APRs if they expand the APR area.

The reasons given in the focus groups for opposition to APRs (or being unsure) included the fear that the hunter would have to pass up a large, healthy deer that only had six points (or point count could not be determined because of brush, etc.), fear that younger or new hunters would have to pass up really nice deer, and irritation about the state telling them what kind of deer they could harvest. Several hunters were already hunting in the zone that has APRs, and they said they are already seeing bigger bucks. At least one person said DNR needs to show solid proof the concept works before expanding it. Several hunters in several different focus groups said they recognized that implementing APRs might cause hunters to have to make sacrifices in the short term (especially if you hunt on the zone boundary), but they believed it would be worth it in the long run. Summary of focus group written responses to question about APRs:

Do you support Antler Point Restrictions?

57% Yes

16% No

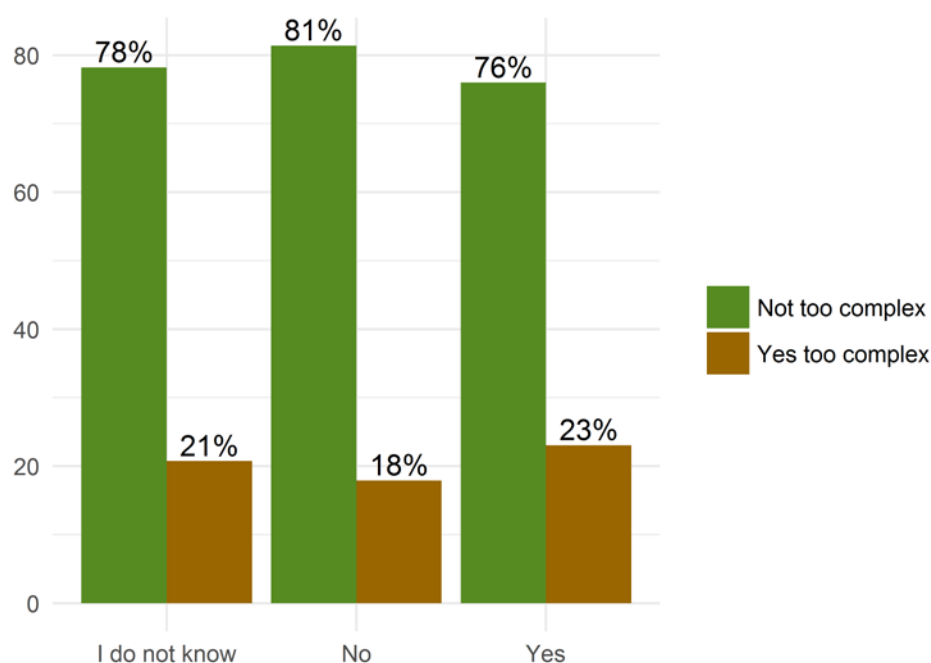
21% Unsure

Complexity of Regulations

The great majority of survey respondents said they do not find deer hunting regulations in Michigan to be too complex (79% versus 21% who said yes).

The source of complexity does *not* appear related to the presence or absence of APRs (Figure 16). Eighteen percent of respondents who hunt most frequently in an area *without* APRs find deer hunting regulations in Michigan to be too complex. Only slightly more (23%) respondents who hunt most frequently in an area *with* APRs found regulations to be too complex.

Figure 16. Complexity of Hunting Regulations, by Presence of APRs Where Hunt



Respondents differed slightly depending on the Management Region where they hunt most frequently (Table 26). Those who hunt primarily in the Upper Peninsula were slightly more likely to find deer hunting regulations to be too complex versus those who primarily hunt in Southwestern Lower Peninsula (26% versus 17%).

Table 26. Complexity of Hunting Regulations, by Region Where Hunt

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
No	74%	76%	82%	83%
Yes	26%	24%	18%	17%

Older respondents were the most likely to find hunting regulations to be too complex (Figure 17). One-quarter of respondents 66 and older said hunting regulations were too complex, compared with 12% of respondents 28 and younger. Regardless of years of experience hunting deer, about 80% of respondents did not find regulations to be too complex (Figure 18).

About three-fifths of women and men found regulations not to be too complex, compared with about two-fifths who did (Figure 19).

Figure 17. Complexity of Hunting Regulations, by Age Category

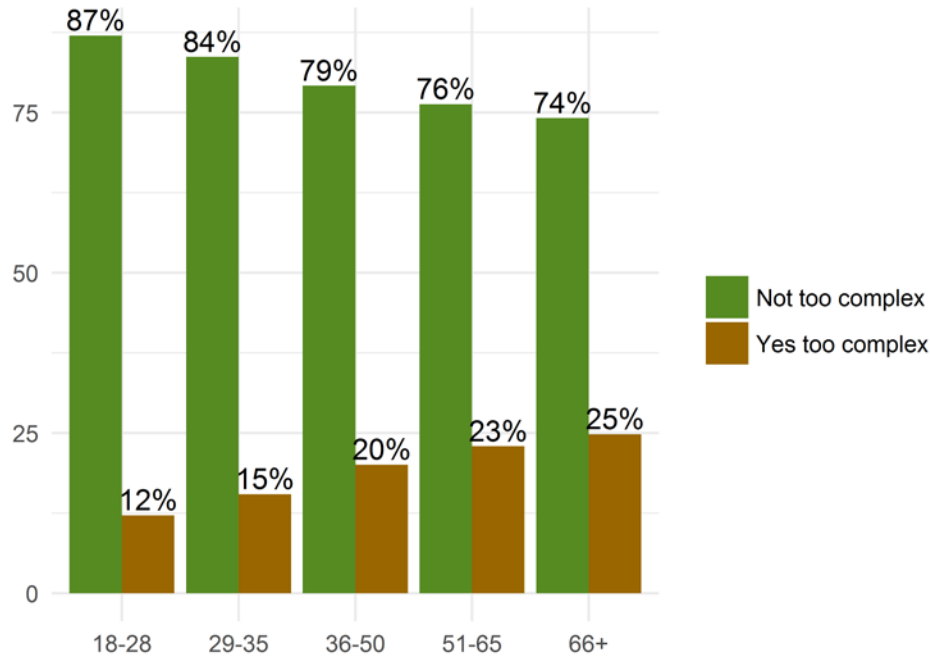


Figure 18. Complexity of Hunting Regulations, by Length of Time Hunting Deer

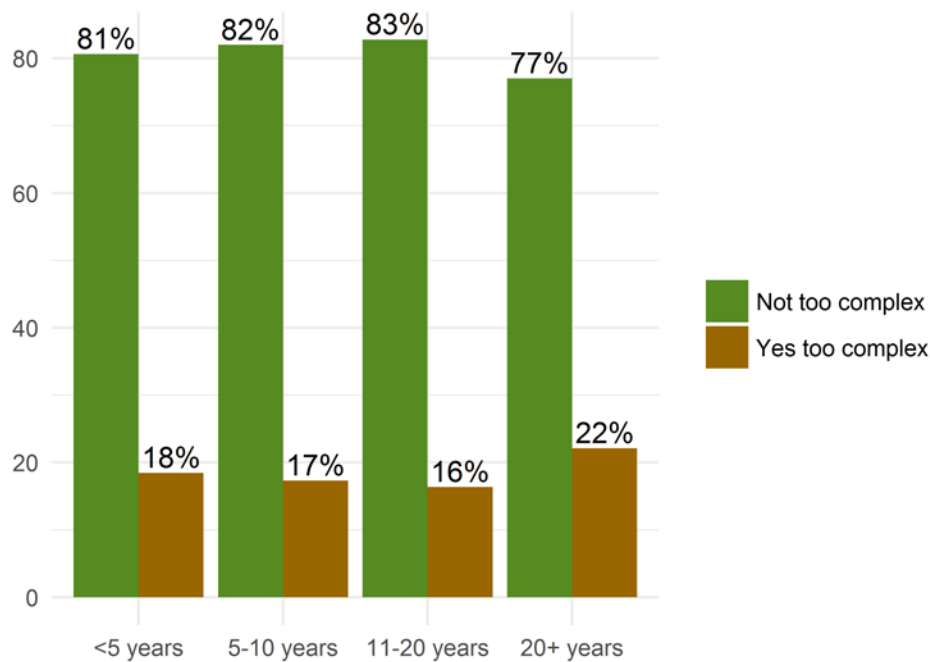
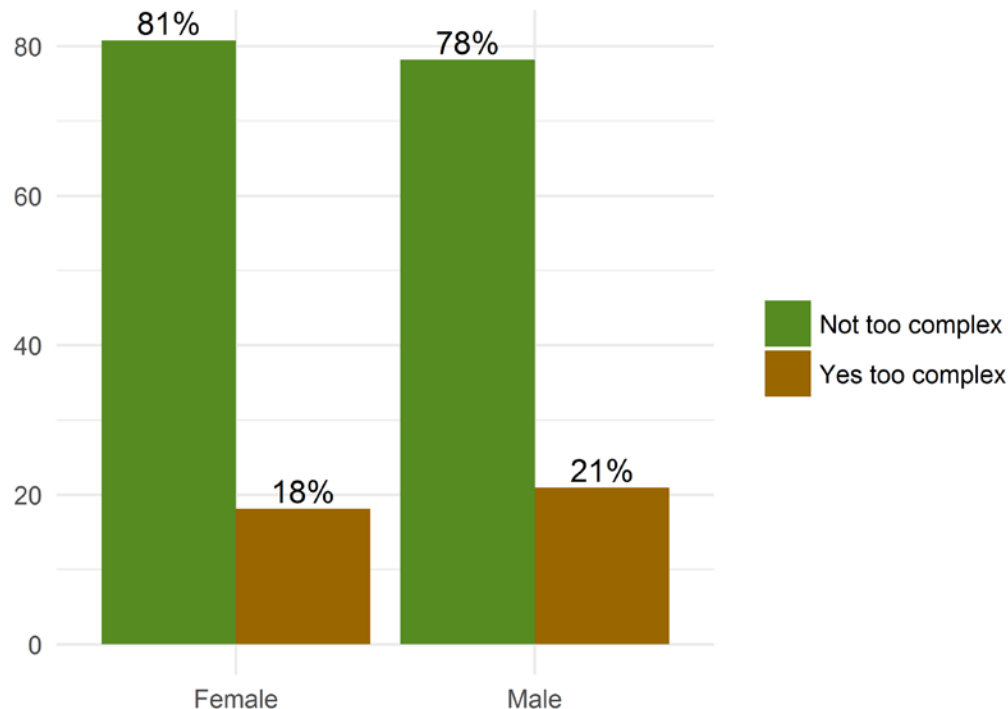


Figure 19. Complexity of Hunting Regulations, by Gender

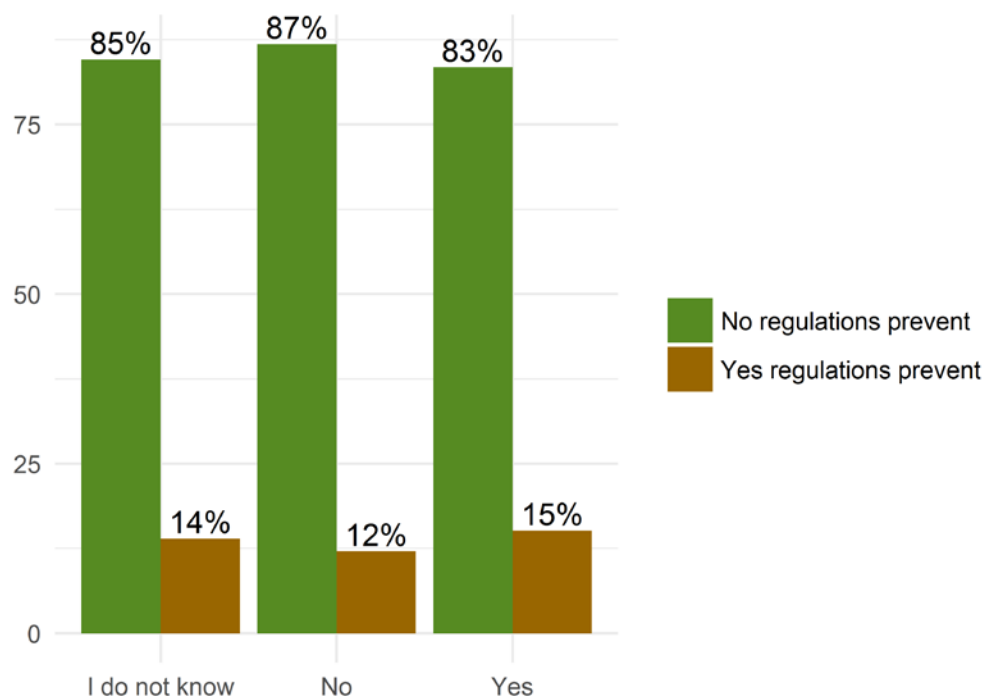
There was very little discomfort with regulations among focus group participants. In five of the six groups, there were practically no problems with regulations at all. A few people mentioned a great furor a few years ago when deer baiting regulations were changed, and several mentioned that wolf regulations were a hot topic at present, but deer hunting regulations were not a problem. In the women's focus group in Cadillac, five of the 13 participants said they argue about regulations a lot. These individuals were proud of the fact that they "tell it like it is" and do not like a government agency telling them what they can and cannot do. At the same time, most of them recognized the need for hunting regulations at some level. The majority of participants in all focus groups gave the perception that they felt strongly about following the laws and regulations, and had very little patience for lawbreakers and "slob hunters." In three of the groups, one or more people mentioned that they trusted the DNR to set the regulations in the best interest of the deer population.

Barriers of Regulations

The great majority of survey respondents said they do not think deer hunting regulations in Michigan prevent them from hunting more than they would like (86% versus 14% who said yes).

The presence of APRs does not appear to have a direct effect on barriers to hunting (Figure 20). Fifteen percent of respondents who hunt in areas with APRs say regulations pose a barrier to their hunting as much as they would like. This compares with 12% of respondents who hunt in areas without APRs.

Figure 20. Regulations Prevent Hunting as Much as Would Like, by Presence of APRs Where Hunt



Respondents who hunt in the Upper Peninsula were likeliest to say hunting regulations prevent them from hunting as much as they would like (Figure 21). About one-fifth said so, compared with about one-tenth in the Southeastern and Southwestern Lower Peninsula.

Figure 21. Regulations Prevent Hunting as Much as Would Like, by Management Region

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
No	79%	86%	88%	88%
Yes	21%	14%	12%	12%

There were no appreciable differences by age categories (Figure 22). Over three-fifths of respondents said regulations do not prevent them from hunting as much as they would like, regardless of their age. A similar pattern emerged by length of time hunting deer (Figure 23) and by gender (Figure 24).

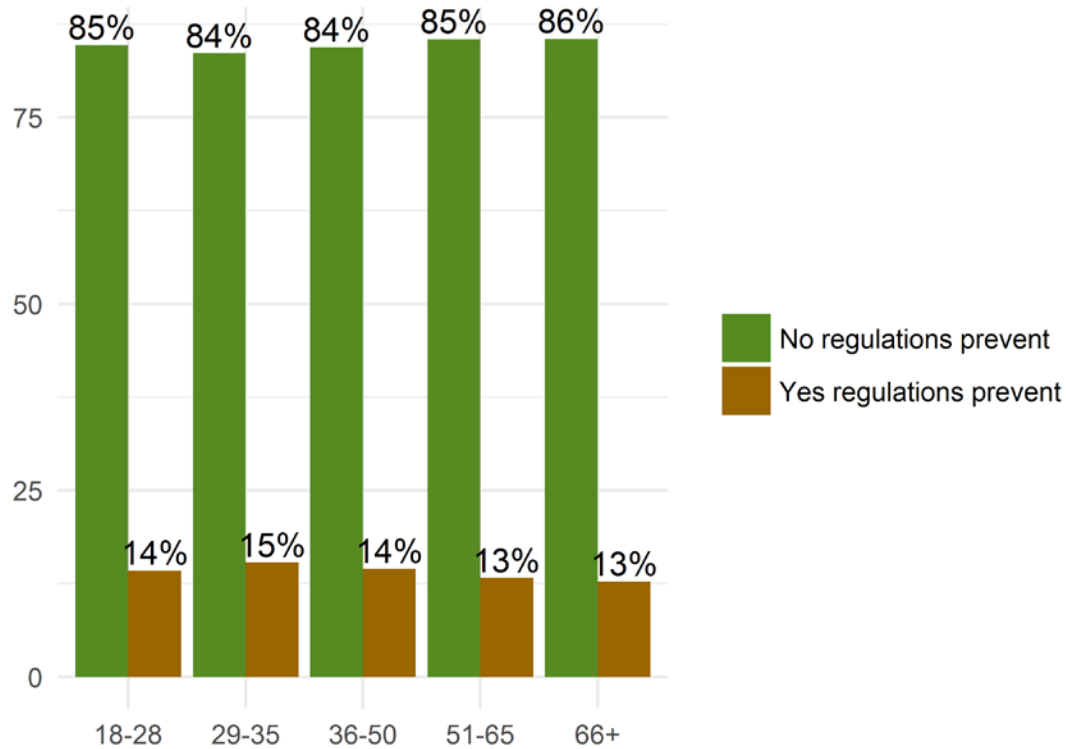
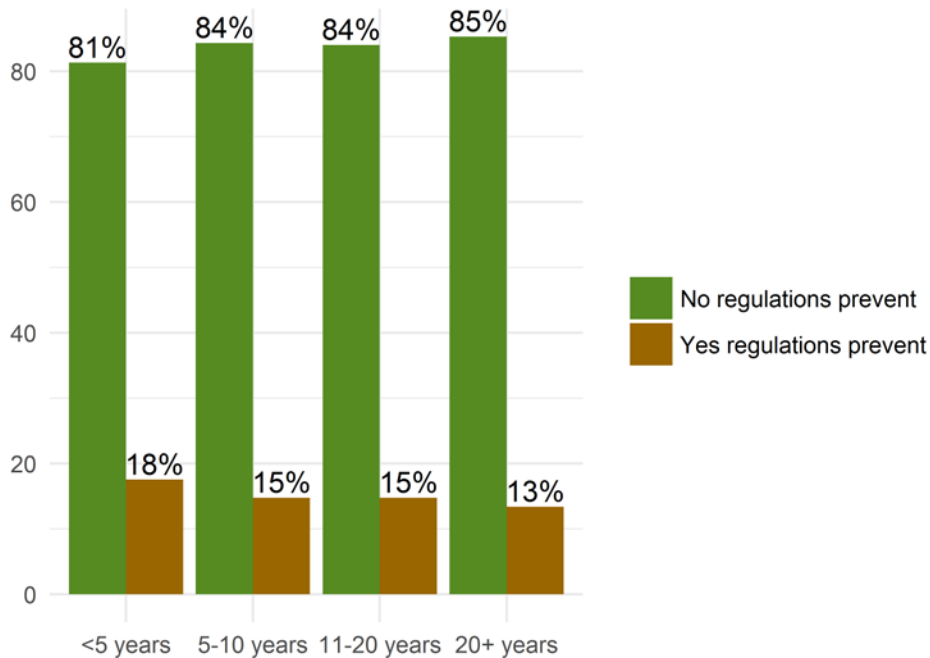
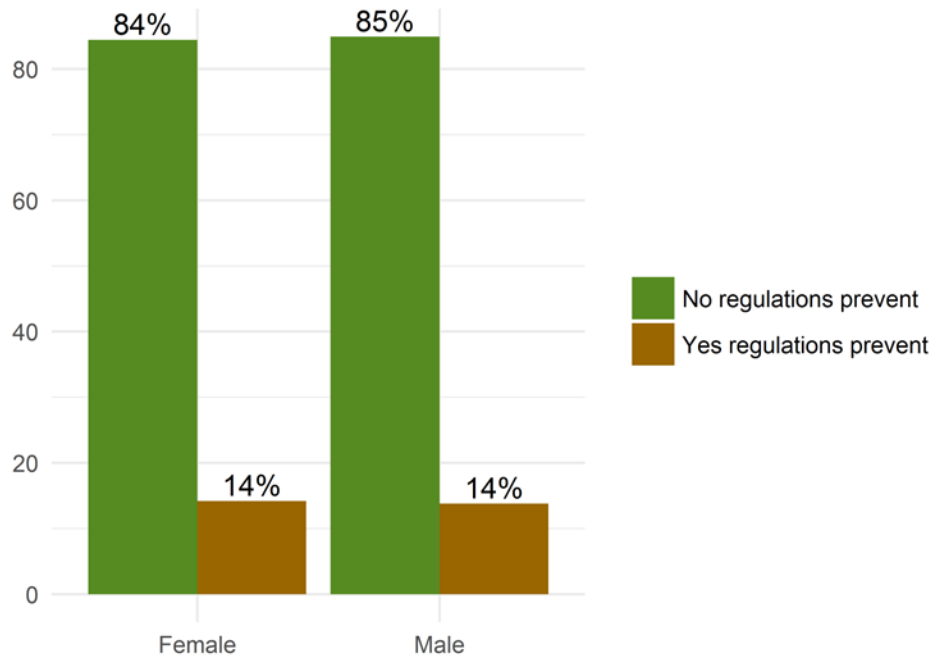
Figure 22. Regulations Prevent Hunting as Much as Would Like, by Age Category**Figure 23. Regulations Prevent Hunting as Much as Would Like, by Length of Time Hunting Deer**

Figure 24. Regulations Prevent Hunting as Much as Would Like, by Gender

The 14% of respondents who said that regulations prevent them from hunting as much as they would like to were asked to explain via recording a typed response. To categorize the responses, a random sample of 150 of these dynamic-text responses was coded. The four major topics, accounting for 49% of the responses, were as follows:

- 1) Antler Point Restrictions: 26 responses, or 17% of the 150, mentioned APRs. Three explicitly advocated for them; the remainder seemed to advocate against them.
Examples:
 - a. Against: "Antler point restrictions. I pay property taxes on about 250 acres in NW lower Michigan, but had NO SAY in what deer is legal to shoot. Very unhappy about that!!!"
 - b. Against: "Antler point restriction will now lessen the number of licenses, and therefore the amount of days, that I hunt. After hunting for the past three years and only seeing one shootable buck, I will only purchase a single tag for the 2017 season."
 - c. Against: "Having to pass up a deer because of horn restrictions"
 - d. Against: "The point restrictions per area is confusing & lowers opportunity. I avoid those areas."
 - e. Unclear: "The upper peninsula antler point restrictions should be identical to the lower peninsula licensing..."
 - f. For: "Deer antler restrictions. I would like to see a statewide implementation of antler point restrictions for BOTH antlered deer tags. This would result in more and bigger deer within several years and this would make me more likely to hunt."

- 2) Overlapping and multiple seasons: 23 responses, or 15% of the 150, mentioned overlapping and multiple seasons. Examples:
- a. "Too many different seasons. Everyone should have equal access, except maybe veterans and disabled. Kids should not get special treatment - I never did."
 - b. "youth hunt should be only be allowed shout does only. they should not have any help in shooting a gun or bow. i'm all for the youth hunt, not the way it's run."
 - c. "Early and special hunts"
 - d. "Why have so many seasons. If you want to eliminate all the deer just have a firearm season. 7 or 8 seasons is a joke."
 - e. "The deer are already spooked when I get in the bow stand"
 - f. "Special hunts such as the youth hunt should be doe only! Children get deer fever hunting and shooting a doe, and they don't have to shoot a buck to enhance the desire to hunt. All these early seasons are degrading the quality of hunting for archers"
 - g. "Do NOT have the youth hunt THREE DAYS before the opening of bow season. It's like hunting on the 4th day of the season. ANYBODY KNOWS the FIRST DAY of the season is the BEST."
 - h. "Our second bow season is destroyed by late antlerless firearm season. First bow season is messed up by the independence and youth hunt. It's ridiculous."
- 3) Length of seasons: 17 responses, or 11% of the 150, mentioned the length of seasons. These responses were sometimes imprecise, leaving it difficult to determine which particular season was too short. Examples:
- a. "Gun season is way too short."
 - b. "The season dates can make hunting difficult. It would allow more hunters opportunity to hunt if the season dates were expanded."
 - c. "The length of the firearms and muzzle loader seasons."
 - d. "firearm season is not long enough! extend season to include 3 weekends."
 - e. "I would like to hunt for a longer period but rifle season is only from November 15 to November 30."
 - f. "Too short of a season"
- 4) Baiting restrictions: 11 responses, or 7% of the 150, mentioned baiting restrictions, either supporting them or criticizing them. Examples:
- a. "No Baiting in North east Mi."
 - b. "Baiting. I do food plots on 4 different properties. But there are times deer prefer other food. I think you should be able to mix the two."
 - c. "baiting should be banned for all species."
 - d. "No baiting. The land in our 1mile square is all chisel plowed hence no food source so no deer in the area."
 - e. "The no feeding zone we have in Alpena"

- f. "Baiting. Needs to go back to allow baiting before opening day. I would like to see the amount you can distribute be increased some also."
- g. "Combo tag restrictions and baiting/TBD restrictions in DMU 452"
- h. "Baiting. But I understand why there are restrictions and I support them."

Respondents mentioned a variety of additional topics. Each had relatively low representation (i.e., was mentioned by one to three respondents). These included criticisms of restrictions on areas where respondents could bowhunt, buck limits, confusion over regulations between geographical places, the cost of licenses, having the firearms season prior to archery season, restrictions on rifles, and restrictions on hunting wolves in the Upper Peninsula. Three respondents mentioned their desire to use an all-terrain vehicle or four-wheeler to reach their blind or tree stand:

- "Hunting using an ATV. I had 3 strokes a couple years ago, getting around would be much easier. But not chasing deer or hunting while on it. But to get to and from my blind/stand."
- "I am permanently disabled. Not being able to use my atv in many places limits me"
- "handicap access for my boy. limiting four wheel access on state land is fine what about people that cant walk and cant afford expensive wheel chairs made for the woods . went threw the process of getting him a handicap off road permit only to be to be told by the DNR it was only god for two-tracks not all two-track just ones open fore motor vehicles. hunting two-track is not hunting."

Regulations did not pose an explicit barrier to anyone in the focus groups. There were a few ideas about regulation changes that might be helpful (e.g., make high-powered rifles legal for deer, expand the zones for doe tags), but nothing that needed changing to allow these participants to hunt more.

Although they did not prevent participants from hunting more, current youth hunt regulations were discussed in most focus groups. Nearly everyone was supportive of the youth hunt in concept, but in most focus groups there were some pretty strong negative feelings about how it was currently being delivered. The biggest concern was that it is held too early in the season, which resulted in:

- a. Nice bucks don't have an opportunity to breed before they are taken
- b. Parents/mentors are shooting big deer, but claiming the kids are doing it
- c. Early hunts disturb deer patterns prior to regular seasons
- d. Kids can hunt too young. There should be a minimum age limit
- e. Kids looking for their first deer usually don't care how big the deer is—let them shoot does instead of bucks
- f. Creating false and unrealistic expectations for youth hunters after they age out of the youth hunt program

In notable contrast to this general opposition that came out in most focus groups, the young male, regular hunters in the Charlevoix focus group were all strongly in favor of the youth hunt as currently implemented.

Regulation Changes to Encourage More Frequent Hunting

Survey respondents were asked if there were any changes that Michigan DNR could make to the regulations that would help them to hunt deer more often. About three-fifths (62% of respondents) said “no,” while 38% said “yes.” (Recall that 86% of respondents said hunting regulations did not prevent them from hunting as much as they would like.)

Male respondents were slightly more likely to agree that DNR could make changes to help them hunt more—38% to 30% (Figure 25). Younger respondents were likelier to agree that the DNR could make changes in regulations to help them deer hunt more (Figure 26). Over 40% said so, compared with 31% of older respondents. Age category operated differently from length of time hunting, with no clear pattern emerging with respect to less-experienced and more-experienced hunters (Figure 27). In short, younger respondents were more willing to agree that DNR could make changes, but this was not reducible to experience hunting.

Figure 25. Changes DNR Could Make to Help Respondents Hunt More Often, by Gender

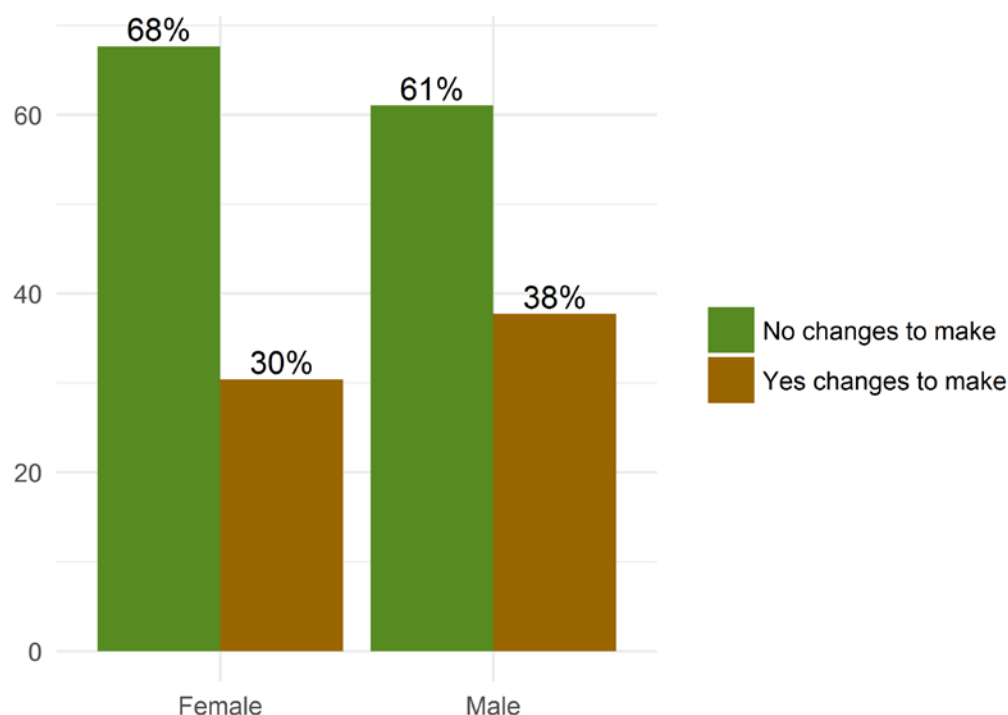
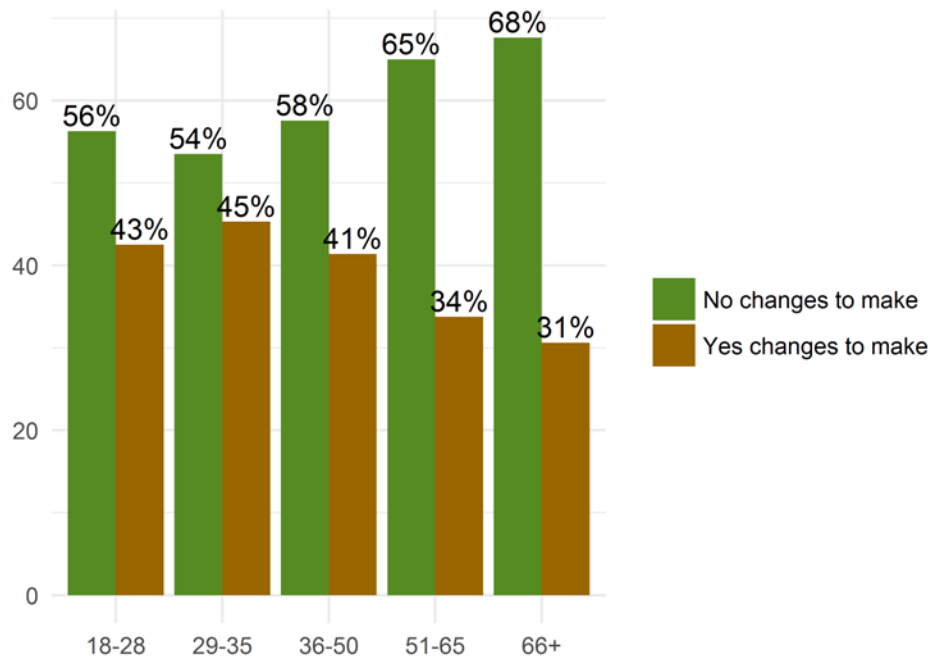
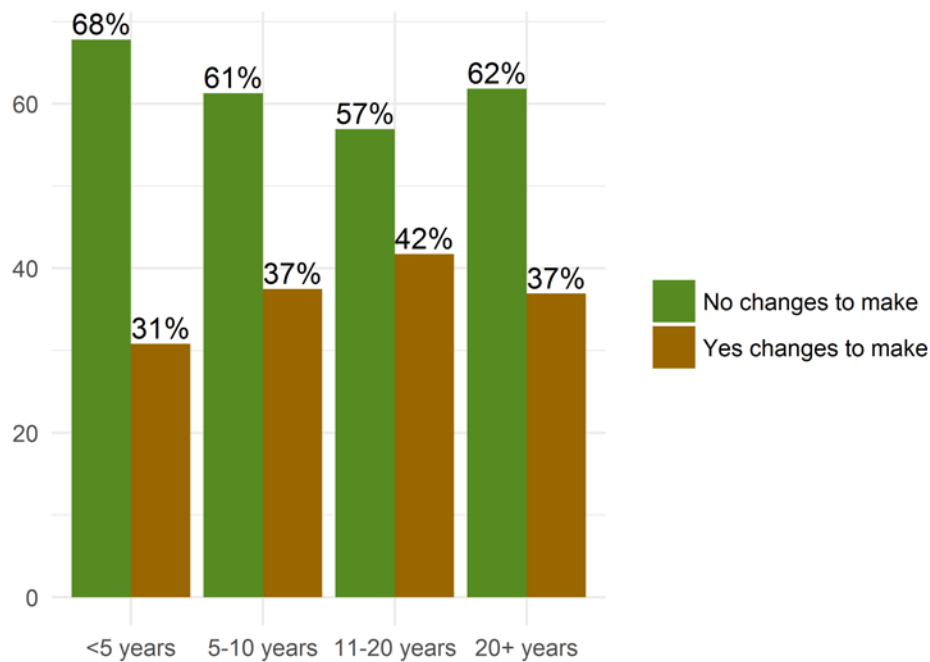


Figure 26. Changes DNR Could Make to Help Respondents Hunt More Often, by Age**Figure 27. Changes DNR Could Make to Help Respondents Hunt More Often, by Length of Time Deer Hunting**

The presence of APRs was not a source of variation (Figure 28). The presence of APRs was not any more or less associated with respondents perceiving the DNR could make changes in regulations. Location was slightly related to answers to this question, with respondents who hunt most in the Upper Peninsula agreeing slightly more than respondents who hunt in the Lower Peninsula (Table 27).

Figure 28. Changes DNR Could Make to Help Respondents Hunt More Often, by APRs Have Been Established in Area Where Hunt Most Frequently

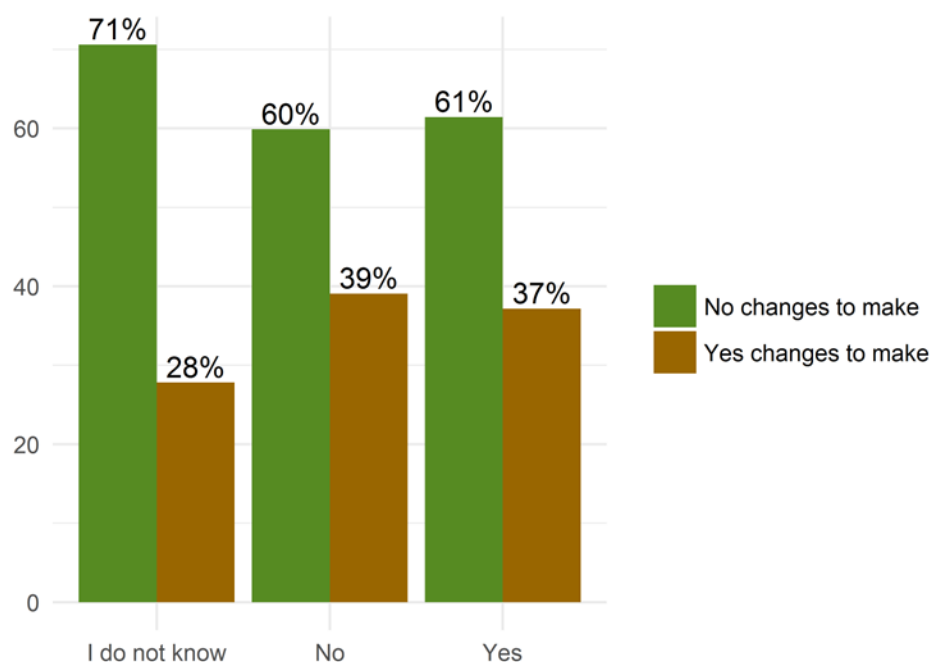


Table 27. Changes DNR Could Make to Help Respondents Hunt More Often, by Management Region

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
No	57%	63%	63%	62%
Yes	43%	37%	37%	38%

The 38% of respondents who said that, yes, Michigan DNR could make changes to help them hunt deer more often, had the opportunity to explain what changes the DNR should make via typing a response. To categorize the responses, a random sample of 150 was coded. The three major topics that accounted for 59% of the responses were as follows:

- 1) Antler Point Restrictions: Recall from above that the vast majority of survey respondents hunt the same or more because of APRs where they are established (Figure 12), or that they *would* hunt more or the same if APRs were established (Figure 14). In line with this more general finding, 47 responses, or 31% of the 150 coded open-ended responses, mentioned APRs. Eight explicitly advocated against them; six were unclear. The

remaining 33 explicitly advocated for them. (Support for increasing APRs often went hand in hand with support for a one-buck limit.) Examples:

- a. For: "Maintain the point restriction in the Northern Lower, I don't know if it is permanent but I would like to see the restriction remain in place."
 - b. For: "APRs and one buck per person."
 - c. For: "Uniform point restrictions"
 - d. For: "Not more often, but we need more antler restrictions. In the southern half of the lower P."
 - e. For: Antler restriction would be great.
 - f. For: "I would like to see a change to one antlered tag and a point restriction state wide."
 - g. For: "Mandatory statewide APR to increase size of bucks."
 - h. For: "Apr, one buck rule, less crowding in the woods"
 - i. Against: "take the point restrictions off"
 - j. Against "Get rid of point restrictions and lower the price"
- 2) One-buck limit: 22 responses, or 14% of the 150, mentioned establishing a limit of one buck per hunter per season. Examples:
- a. "One buck system. The buck to doe ratio is so lopsided. Year and a half old bucks are breeding where 3-6 year old class bucks should be breeding."
 - b. "APRs and one buck per person."
 - c. "Earn-a-buck tags in Michigan. Where you would have to harvest a doe in order to be eligible to purchase a buck tag. Or just one buck tag per hunter. Limiting the number of buck tags will encourage all hunters to be more selective"
 - d. "1 buck tag, shorter firearm season in mid to late December or January. Do something to increase the quality of the bucks besides relying on hunters to pass up small bucks. Consider modeling our laws after the other Midwest states with a much higher"
 - e. "one buck license does 2 improve quality that's why I go to Iowa every year and pay 500 dollars for license"
 - f. APR, Limit Harvest to only 1 Buck per season."
 - g. "Increase antler restrictions, for a stronger mature buck population. Or limit # of taken bucks to 1 animal only. We are behind Ohio on a strong buck population"
 - h. "Single buck and doe license for the year regardless of the season (archery or firearm). We need more disciplined hunters and a better balance between doe to buck ratio. Bigger bucks is more revenue and a chance to get out of state nonresident money"
- 3) Special hunts, particularly youth season: 20 responses, or 14% of the 150, mentioned special hunts and the youth season in particular. Examples:
- a. "Not allow youth hunters to shoot bucks."
 - b. "get rid of the youth hunt . I think its easy for poaching and unethical taking of big bucks. I think kids get spoiled by being able to take a deer when its easier then get discouraged when its not so easy."

- c. "Cut out many of these special hunts; and eliminate block tags. Too many animals are killed and wasted."
- d. "The hunting pressure Starts in September and goes into the new year. This is way to much time over four months. In my area the deer do not move during the day at all. only at night after shooting hours early 2AM to 6AM. Over the last 20 years I have noted this change. The bigger bucks only move at 12AM to about 4AM. The only deer that i have now are does and young bucks at the edge of darkness early and late."
- e. "The season is WAY too long. Look at Pennsylvania. I am all for youth and disabled hunting, but not so early."
- f. "Stop the youth hunt or only make it doe hunting. Stop early doe season. By time deer season comes around deer are spook."
- g. "Make youth hunt a doe hunt, especially if your going to keep early doe season the same time. You learn just as much shooting a doe as you do a buck."

A number of other topics emerged with lower proportions (1 to 8 mentions):

- Increase the length of the firearm season (8)
- Increase deer hunting season overall (8)
- Lower the cost or price of licenses (7)
- Disallow crossbows from archery season (4)
- Change Opening Day to Saturday or Friday (5)
- Issue fewer doe tags (3)
- Increase baiting or remove restrictions (3)
- End baiting (2)
- Re-open antlerless hunting on public land in the Upper Peninsula for archery (2)
- Decrease antlerless deer tags (2)
- Decrease the complexity of regulations (2)
- Eliminate the base license (2)
- Decrease overlapping seasons (e.g., firearms and muzzleloader) (2)
- Boost poacher enforcement (2)
- Make check-ins mandatory (1)
- Eliminate late antlerless on private land (1)
- Issue fewer antlerless permits for private land hunters (1)
- Create a lifetime license (1)
- Make the early doe season statewide, or eliminate it (1)
- Expand the limited firearm zone to include more options than the current straight walled cartridge options (1)
- Make muzzleloader season cap-and-ball / flintlock only (1)
- Revisit the requirements of what counts as a "disabled" hunter (1)
- Allow the DNR to overrule municipalities that restrict hunting within their area (1)

- Allow public hunting on private land (1)
- Separate archery and gun tags (1)
- Eliminate small game license (1)
- Set up stations to distribute unwanted game meat (1)
- Make regulations uniform across the state (i.e., Upper and Lower peninsulas) (1)
- Allow hunter access to private farm land if landowners receive block permits for crop damage (1)

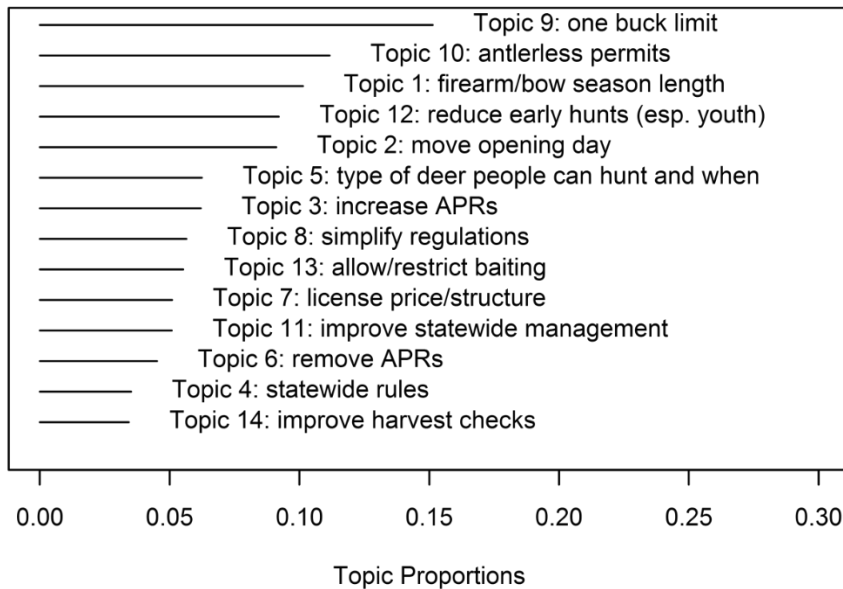
To supplement this analysis, Structural Topic Modeling (STM) was used to analyze the 11,771 open-ended responses to the question, “Are there any changes that Michigan DNR could make to the regulations that would help you to hunt deer more often?” STM is particularly useful where the number of responses is large, as in this case. STM allows researchers to identify the prevalence of topics, as well as their content via a quantitative analysis. Each open-ended response, or document, can be associated with one or more topics. Topics are defined as distributions over a vocabulary of words that represent semantically interpretable themes. “Semantically interpretable” means that each topic has two qualities. First, it is cohesive, so high-probability words for that topic tend to co-occur within each response. Second, it is exclusive, so top words for that topic are unlikely to appear within the top words of other topics.

Topic analysis revealed 14 *major* topics among these open-ended responses (Figure 29). (To focus attention on the most salient topics—and to eliminate incoherence from obscure topics mentioned by only a few respondents—a word had to be mentioned at least 100 times to be considered in analysis.) Note that “Topic Proportion” in the X-axis is the relative proportion of each topic, adding to 1.

- One-sixth of the overall topics identified dealt with support for a one-buck limit.
- One-eighth of the overall topics involved comments about antlerless permits.
- About one-tenth of comments touched on the length of firearm or bow seasons (generally to lengthen them), the reduction of early-season hunts (especially youth hunts), and support for moving opening day to the nearest Saturday to November 15.
- The remaining topics were mentioned with relatively lower frequency: Wide-ranging comments about what types of deer people can shoot and when (e.g., velvet antlered buck); support for increasing APRs; a general recommendation to simplify regulations; comments about either allowing or restricting baiting; general recommendations to change the price of licenses or their structure; and support for improving statewide management of deer populations, removing APRs, adopting statewide rules and regulations to eliminate complexity, and improving checks on and enforcement of harvest and takes.

Figure 29. Topic Proportions Identified by Structural Topic Modeling

Top Topics



In most of the focus groups, participants could not think of any regulations they would like to change. During discussions, a handful of possible changes emerged, including:

- Make the doe tag zones bigger
- Make doe tags transferable across zone lines
- Make handgun carry regulations simpler
- Create more check-in stations for getting the hunter patch
- Create a single license that would be good for one buck and one doe
- Do away with the late antlerless season to protect the bucks from poaching

Focus group participants provided a variety of responses for what DNR could do, but it was clear that most of these items were “would be nice to have” rather than “need to have” in order to continue deer hunting or hunt more often. Ideas included:

- Put more law enforcement in the field—reduce poaching and “slob hunters” on public lands—make public lands more “hospitable,” with fewer bad experiences
- Make deer management units bigger to expand areas for antlerless tag use
- Create a single license that allows hunters to take one buck and one doe
- Do away with the base license for small game
- Create a 3-year license bundle (with price discount) and/or a “refer-a-friend” discount, and/or a repeat-buyer discount
- Make the use of high-powered rifles legal for deer
- Reduce the cost of deer license/reduce license cost for first-time hunters
- Manage for bigger bucks/manage for more deer

- Create a women's hunting day (like the youth hunt)
- Implement antler point restrictions
- Eliminate antler point restrictions
- Implement a one-buck rule instead of antler point restrictions
- Offer workshops on hunting techniques (gutting/butchering, use of GPS, etc.)
- Encourage more private land access for deer hunting
- Encourage farmers with deer problems to let hunters solve the problem
- Improve signage on public lands—especially tracts that are “land-locked” by private land
- Add a third weekend to the firearms season
- Extend the archery season
- Reduce coyote population
- Improve outreach to the public: hunters are not “rednecks,” hunters are solution to deer-vehicle collision problems and crop depredation problems, etc.

Topics Exclusive to the Online Survey

Certain topics were explored only on the online survey. These included how important hunting is to respondents, attitudes toward discounts on licenses, and interest in attending one-day workshops put on by Michigan DNR about different aspects of deer hunting.

Where Hunt Deer

Respondents hunt deer primarily on land owned by family members or friends, followed by public land (Table 28). Relatively few hunt on leased land. (Columns sum to greater than 100 because respondents could make multiple selections.) As reported above, focus group participants answered a differently worded question about where they hunt:

- 73% Private land
- 13% Public land
- 13% Both about equally

Table 28. Type of Land Where Hunt Deer

Categories	Selected
Owned by family or friend	83%
Public land	48%
Leased land	9%
Other land	4%

Few differences emerged by age category (Table 29). Around half of respondents said they hunt on public land, no matter their age. Over three-fifths hunt on land owned by family or friends. Women respondents were much less likely than men to hunt on public land (Table 30).

Table 29. Type of Land Where Hunt Deer, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
Leased land	9%	10%	11%	8%	6%
Other land	2%	2%	3%	4%	5%
Owned by family or friend	88%	87%	84%	82%	80%
Public land	49%	53%	51%	48%	42%

Table 30. Type of Land Where Hunt Deer, by Gender

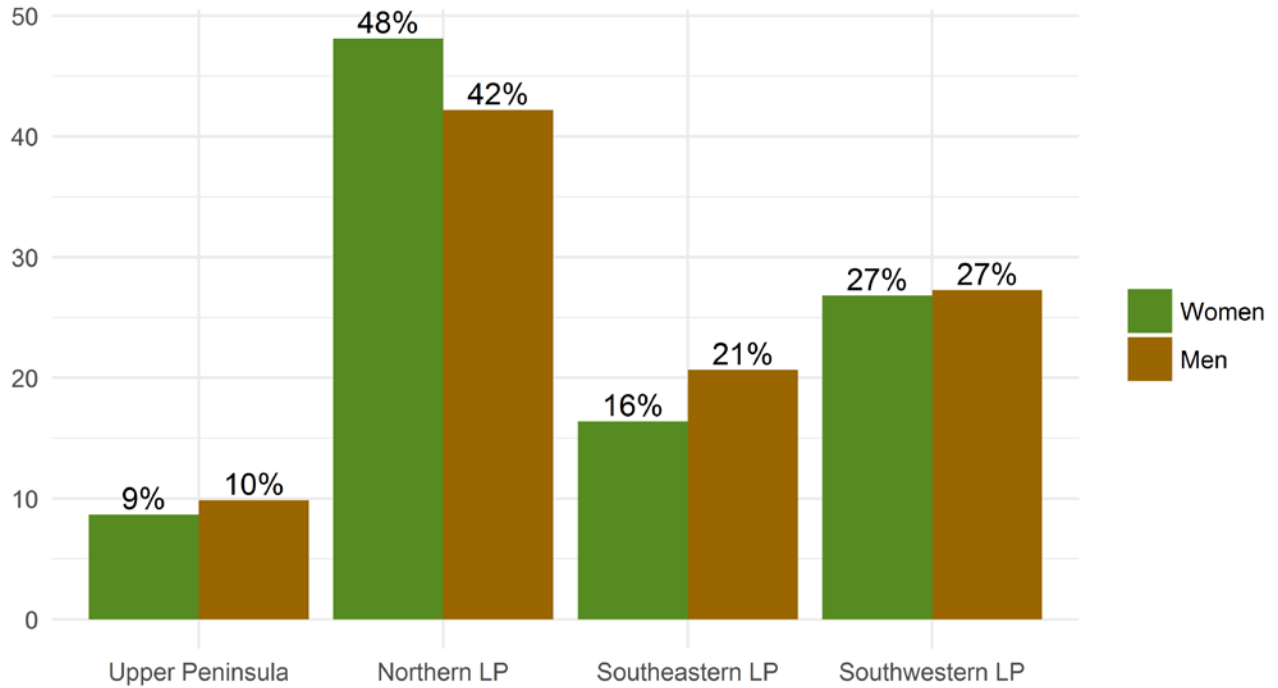
Categories	Female	Male
Leased land	6%	9%
Other land	3%	4%
Owned by family or friend	88%	83%
Public land	30%	49%

Respondents varied somewhat by age category in the region where they have hunted the most in the past five years (Table 31). (This table was presented above, but is included here again for convenience.) Hunting in the Upper Peninsula is more popular among older respondents. Hunting in southern portions of the Lower Peninsula is more popular among younger respondents.

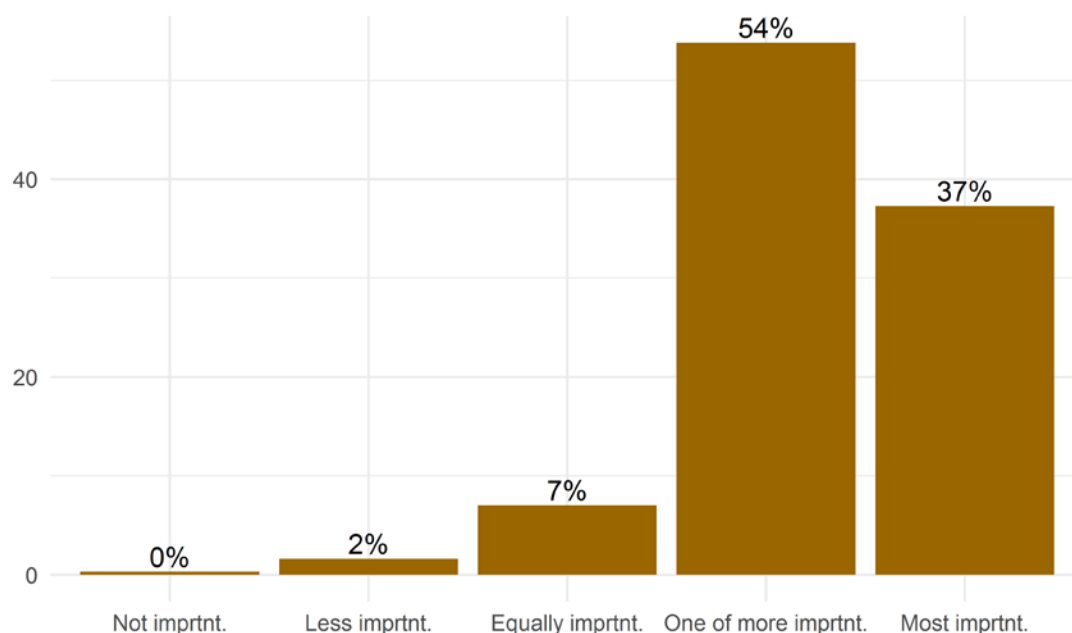
Table 31. Management Region Have Hunted Most in Past 5 Years, by Age Category

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
18-28	4%	6%	8%	8%
29-35	7%	10%	12%	13%
36-50	25%	28%	33%	32%
51-65	43%	40%	38%	35%
66+	21%	16%	10%	12%

By gender of respondents, women and men were similar in the Management Regions where they have hunted the most in the past five years (Figure 30). (This chart was presented above, but is included here again for convenience.) The Northern Lower Peninsula was slightly more popular for women.

Figure 30. Management Region Have Hunted the Most in Past 5 Years, by Gender***Importance of Hunting***

Respondents could rate how important deer hunting is compared to their other activities (Figure 31). Over one-third of respondents said it was their most important activity. Over one-half said it was one of their more important activities. A fraction (7%) said it was equally important to their other activities.

Figure 31. Importance of Hunting

Younger respondents in the survey were most likely to say deer hunting was their most important activity (Table 32). Older respondents were most likely to say deer hunting was one of their more important activities.

Table 32. Importance of Hunting, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
Not important	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Less important	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Equally important	7%	6%	6%	7%	9%
One of more important	50%	47%	49%	57%	60%
Most important	40%	45%	43%	34%	29%

License Discounts

Some respondents said they would like to have multi-year license bundles for various reasons, especially so they do not have to remember to buy a license every year. Respondents were asked how likely they would be to take advantage of different deer hunting license options (where 1 = not at all likely and 5 = very likely). The mean responses of each option were:

- Two-year license bundle = 2.49
- Three-year license bundle = 2.36
- Three-year license bundle with a price discount = 3.17

Younger respondents were especially likely to indicate they would purchase a three-year license with a price discount (Table 33). Older respondents were likely to indicate they would

not do so. Added together, two-thirds of 18–28-year-olds said they would be likely or very likely to purchase a three-year license with a price discount. This compared with one-third of respondents ages 66 and older who would do so. Women and men were similar in their willingness to purchase this option (Table 34).

Table 33. Likelihood of Purchasing a Three-Year License with a Price Discount

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
Not at all likely	15%	16%	22%	29%	40%
Unlikely	6%	7%	8%	11%	13%
Neutral	13%	14%	16%	16%	15%
Likely	23%	23%	21%	20%	13%
Very likely	43%	39%	33%	25%	18%

Table 34. Likelihood of Purchasing a Three-Year License with a Price Discount, by Gender

Categories	Female	Male
Not at all likely	22%	26%
Unlikely	9%	10%
Neutral	15%	15%
Likely	22%	20%
Very likely	32%	29%

Respondents varied slightly by the Management Region where they hunt most often (Table 35). Respondents who have hunted most often in the Upper Peninsula were least likely to indicate willingness to purchase a three-year license with a price discount. There was no appreciable pattern depending on how many years a respondent had purchased a license in the past five years.

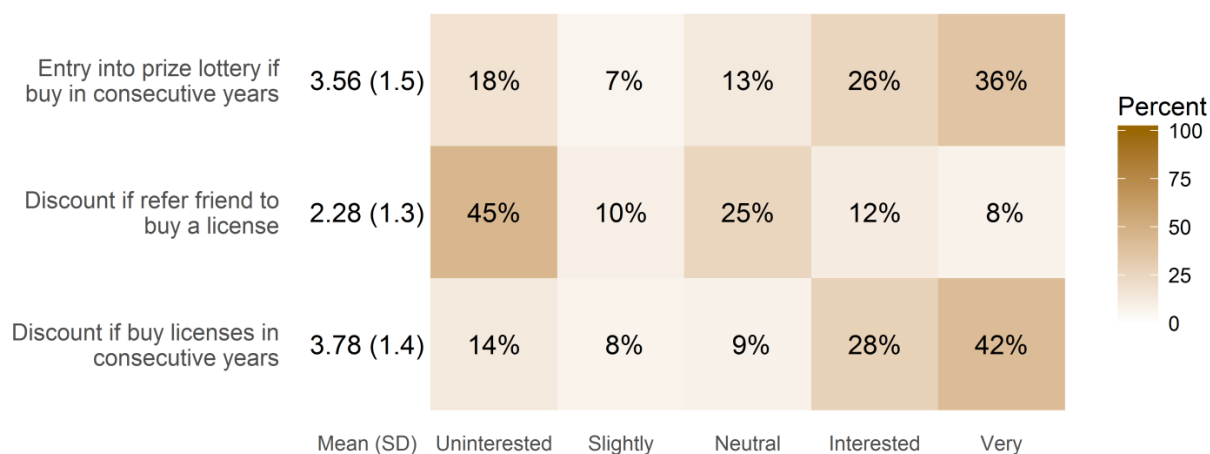
Table 35. Likelihood of Purchasing a Three-Year License with a Price Discount, by Region Where Have Hunted Most Often

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
Not at all likely	33%	27%	24%	24%
Unlikely	10%	10%	9%	10%
Neutral	16%	15%	14%	16%
Likely	17%	19%	20%	21%
Very likely	23%	28%	33%	30%

Table 36. Likelihood of Purchasing a Three-Year License with a Price Discount, by License Purchases

Categories	0 years	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
Not at all likely	29%	23%	23%	25%	26%	26%
Unlikely	12%	8%	8%	9%	9%	10%
Neutral	19%	17%	16%	15%	16%	15%
Likely	18%	21%	22%	21%	22%	19%
Very likely	22%	31%	31%	30%	27%	29%

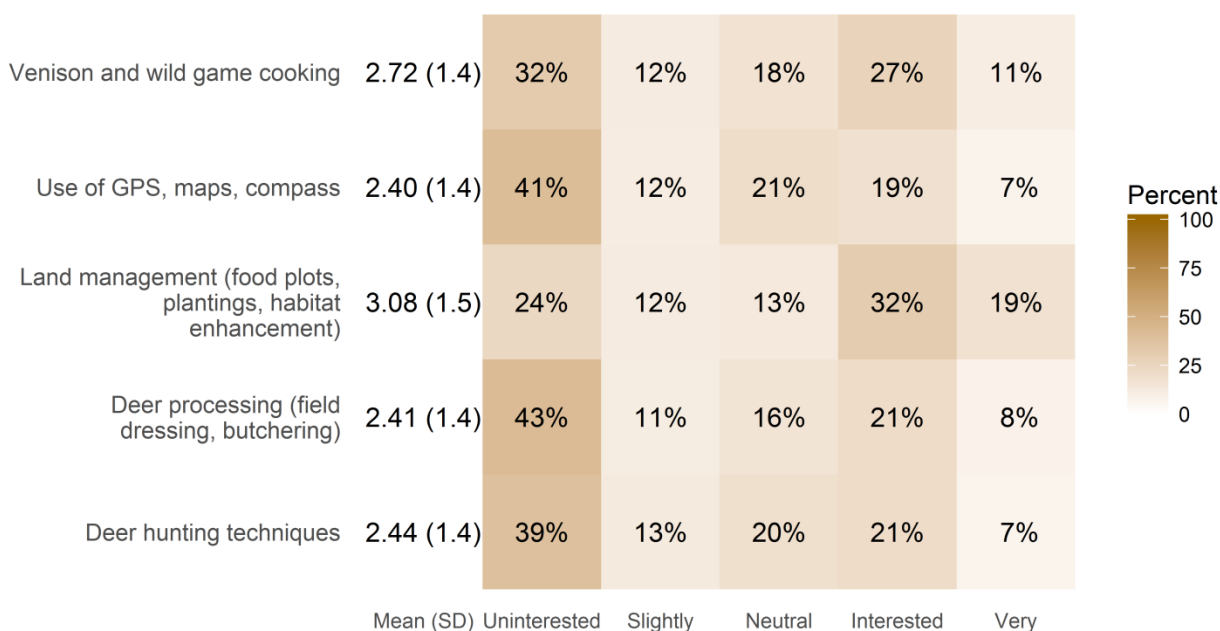
Respondents were also asked how much interest they would have in a few techniques to boost license sales (Figure 32). Three options were provided—entry into a prize lottery, a discount if refer a friend, and a discount if purchase licenses in consecutive years.

Figure 32. Interest in Potential Discounts or Lottery***Interest in Workshops***

Respondents could indicate how much interest they had in attending a one-day workshop on five distinct topics:

- Venison and wild game cooking
- Use of GPS, maps, and compass
- Land management
- Deer processing
- Deer hunting techniques

The most popular class was land management, such as food plots, plantings, and habitat enhancements, with a mean of 3.1 out of 5 (Figure 33). The least popular was use of GPS, maps, and compass.

Figure 33. Interest in Potential One-day Workshops

Interest in land management classes was slightly higher among younger respondents (Table 37) in the Lower Peninsula (Table 38). There were no appreciable differences by the gender of respondents (Table 39).

Table 37. Interest in Land Management Classes, by Age Category

Categories	18-28	29-35	36-50	51-65	66+
Not interested at all	17%	19%	22%	26%	32%
Slightly interested	11%	11%	12%	13%	13%
Neutral	14%	13%	13%	14%	13%
Interested	34%	35%	32%	31%	29%
Very interested	24%	23%	21%	17%	14%

Table 38. Interest in Land Management Classes, by Management Region

Categories	Upper Peninsula	Northern LP	Southeastern LP	Southwestern LP
Not interested at all	31%	23%	23%	24%
Slightly interested	12%	12%	12%	13%
Neutral	13%	13%	13%	13%
Interested	30%	32%	32%	32%
Very interested	15%	19%	20%	18%

Table 39. Interest in Land Management Classes, by Gender

Categories	Female	Male
Not interested at all	24%	24%
Slightly interested	15%	12%
Neutral	12%	13%
Interested	31%	32%
Very interested	18%	19%

Topics Exclusive to Focus Groups

Identity as a “Hunter”

Focus group respondents were asked whether they think of themselves as a hunter, and what makes a “hunter” in their minds. Nearly all focus group participants thought of themselves as hunters—most of them strongly identified with the label. Three out of 56 thought they were only marginal, or that it depends on the definition. When asked “what makes a hunter in your mind?” respondents offered a variety of elements, including:

- Going afield in search of game with intent to harvest
- Possession of a valid hunting license
- Desire to harvest game
- Persistence
- Patience
- Passion
- Knowledge of nature
- Knowledge of regulations
- Amount of time you put into hunting
- Ethics
- Commitment
- Respect for game, other hunters and property
- Discipline
- Appreciation for nature
- Desire to use the animal (for food, not just a trophy)
- Family time
- Conservation of the herd
- Self-control
- Preparation
- Frequency

There was interesting discussion regarding frequency of hunting. Some felt that you had to go hunting every year (or nearly every year) to be considered a “real hunter” and not a “weekend warrior.” Others took a bit of offense at that notion and offered reasons why they could not personally go every year (college, had a baby, etc.) but said they were definitely still “real

hunters.” In most of these discussions, the groups came around to the basic understanding that *desire to hunt* and remain in the community of hunters was the most important criterion.

Hunting Partners

The vast majority of focus group participants hunt with family. A few hunt alone, and fewer still hunt with friends. Most had friends who also hunt, but they rarely if ever hunted deer together. A few mentioned that they were much more likely to hunt other species (waterfowl in particular) with friends, but not deer. Many participants also had friends who were non-hunters, and several mentioned having friends who were opposed to hunting. Participants said that hunting doesn’t come up much in conversation with non-hunting or anti-hunting friends, and is not a problem for their relationships.

Satisfaction with Hunting Frequency

About 40% of focus group participants said they got to hunt as much as they wanted. For the rest who wanted to hunt more than they currently are able to, the biggest factor preventing them from hunting more was work/school. A close second was family obligations. A few other factors were mentioned, but were not nearly as prevalent as work and family. These included travel time (hunting ground was far from home), age/physical condition, and cost. Surprisingly, no one mentioned access to hunting land as a barrier for themselves, but nearly all recognized that it was a big barrier to many other hunters. A few said that cost was becoming a factor—especially if they wanted to hunt does in multiple zones, but none claimed cost had kept them from participating. A number of the participants claimed that deer hunting regulations were complex and sometimes difficult to figure out, but none said that regulations were constraining their deer hunting. From these discussions, it appears most of the barriers to deer hunting are societal factors beyond DNR’s control.

Increasing Frequency of Deer Hunting

To the question, what sorts of things would allow you to deer hunt more often? a wide variety of ideas were offered, including:

- Have more, bigger deer in Michigan (sometimes attached to a comment about the need for more APR counties)
- Create access to more private lands (most did not know about the Habitat Access Program)
- Create a sign-up system to hunt public lands to create some accountability to reduce the number of “slob hunters” and associated bad experiences
- Increase law enforcement presence to weed out the “slob hunters”
- Better access to “landlocked” public lands (some public lands are marked as private by local residents to keep people off)
- Make more doe tags available (or doe tags available in more areas)
- Increase the amount of equipment that is sized and styled for women hunters
- Some wanted to reduce the cost of licenses, but others defended the price because it pays for deer and wildlife management
- Make opening day a state holiday so getting off work would not be a problem

- Provide a cadre of people who could help older or ailing hunters with dragging and gutting deer

Information Sources on Regulations

Nearly all focus group participants pick up a hard copy of the Digest every year. About half check the DNR website every year. About half said they ask family or friends about changes to regulations, with mixed results (some said they were very reliable, others said they usually had to verify the information against the website or digest). Nearly half said they do Google searches to find information on particular changes. A handful said they viewed YouTube videos about regulations. A handful of participants said they called the DNR hotline and/or contacted a DNR field office about regulations.

Extending Deer Season

Respondents answered whether or not they would hunt more if firearms deer season were longer. Answers to this question were mixed, and depended largely on whether the participant bowhunted or not. Most hunters who were NOT bowhunters thought they would hunt more if the firearms season were longer. A few said they would only hunt more if the season was lengthened on the front end, because it is too cold on the back end. Hunters who were also bowhunters almost unanimously said they did not want the firearms season to be longer, because it would necessarily cut into the bow season, which most of them preferred. Most bowhunters said they would prefer to make the bow season longer, not the firearms season.

Barriers of Overlapping Seasons

Some deer seasons overlap, such as muzzleloader with archery. Overlapping seasons did not present a barrier to any focus group participants.

Discussion in Focus Groups

Following are summaries of the focus group discussions by location.

Kalamazoo (Plainwell), Male, 18-25, Regular (11 participants)

1. Special hunting memory.
Half mentioned family connection. Sense of accomplishment. Feeling the rush when you see game. Personal challenge. Spiritual experience.
2. Do you think of yourself as a hunter? What makes a hunter in your mind?
All thought of themselves as hunters. Five thought of themselves as avid; the others were just “regular hunters.” A hunter is defined by: persistence, patience, dedication, ethics, commitment, respect for game and for other hunters, discipline, having the means and intent to legally kill an animal.
3. Who do you hunt with?
Most hunt with family. A few hunt with friends. For some, their hunting friends were the same as their “social” friends; for others, it was a separate group. At least one thought

of deer hunting as a solitary activity—felt that waterfowl or other types of hunting were better suited to hunting with others.

4. Do you get to deer hunt as much as you would like? If not, what keeps you from deer hunting as much as you would like?

Two of this group said they got to hunt as much as they would like. The rest did not. They were prevented by work, family obligations, school, other hobbies, distance from hunting area (long drive time—have to plan a full weekend), too cold in the late season. Access was not a problem for this group, but they recognized that it was a big problem for some other hunters.

5. What sorts of things would allow you to deer hunt more often?

Create a sign-up system to hunt state lands—that would provide accountability so you wouldn't have as many "yahoos" out there making it unsafe for others. Someone mentioned the DNR's Habitat Access Program, but only four in the group knew about it. All really liked the idea. They thought it would be better than hunting public land, and that the concept had a lot of potential.

6. Do you hunt with a bow, crossbow, and muzzleloader?

Eight out of ten hunted with a bow and gun. Only four used a muzzleloader. Didn't have time to learn to use a bow. Can't afford another hobby (time or money). Already use a bow and muzzleloader season overlaps—prefers to use the bow.

7. What has your experience with regulations been?

Most had no issues with regulations. One was a little confused about APRs up north. Several mentioned that they wished deer management units for antlerless licenses were bigger – noting they are only good for 3 counties, so have to buy more if want to hunt in a different DMU. One wished antlerless tags were transferable across deer management units. Make the handgun carry rules simpler and easier. Would like more check stations for getting the deer hunter patch. Would like to have one license that would be good for one buck and one doe (didn't like having to buy multiple tags). Do away with the late antlerless season to protect the bucks from poaching.

8. How or where do you get information on regulations?

DNR website, DNR digest, word-of-mouth from family or hunting friends. Those sources were good—no issues.

9. How important is opening day of firearms season to you? What would you think of moving opening day from November 15 to the nearest Saturday?

All but one said it was very important—mostly for social reasons (tradition), but also because it is the best day to see and get a deer. The one who said it was not that important to him said it was because he was almost exclusively a bowhunter now. Most thought that moving opening day to the nearest weekend would increase the number of people who could participate, but not all thought that was a good idea. They liked that it

would probably allow more kids and college students to hunt opening day. Most worried that it would be confusing to people who were used to the Nov 15 start date.

10. If opening day of firearms deer season were staggered, so that the season opened on different days in different areas of the state, would you travel to hunt on an opening day in more than one area?

Most said they would not participate in multiple opening days, and nobody really liked the idea.

11. If firearms deer season were longer, would you hunt more?

Over half said they would hunt more if the firearms season were longer, and thought their friends would hunt more, too.

12. Does the overlap of some deer seasons (e.g., ML season overlaps archery season) present a barrier to your hunting?

Did not ask this question directly. Through answers to other questions, it was clear that the overlap was not really an issue to this group.

13. Do you support antler point restrictions?

No one in this group had strong feelings about it one way or the other. Most supported it in concept but recognized that there were concerns, like not being able to shoot a giant 6-pointer, or a youth not being able to harvest his/her first buck. One person opposed them. He said we need a social change (more people passing up small bucks) rather than mandating it. Another said we need solid proof that it works before we implement it anywhere else.

14. Looking ahead, do you see yourself hunting more, less, or about the same as you do now?

Most thought they would hunt more or the same amount as they do now.

15. Are there any deer hunting regulations that pose a barrier to your hunting effort?

Make high-powered rifles legal for deer; expand the zones for doe tags.

16. How or where do you get information about hunting techniques? Are they clear?

Did not ask.

17. If MI DNR could do anything to help you hunt deer more often, what would it be?

Implement APRs—manage for bigger bucks. Add a third weekend to the rifle season. Increase the amount of land in HAP. Lower the cost of a license to first-time hunters. Have a women's hunting day.

Lansing, Male, 18-25, Intermittent (8 participants)

1. Special hunting memory.
Over half mentioned family associations. One said he did NOT grow up with hunting, but he really wants to make it a family connection for his kids.
2. Do you think of yourself as a hunter? What makes a hunter in your mind?
All thought of themselves as hunters. Pursuing a legal game animal, having the drive to pursue game, making quick decisions, motivation, passion, persistence, patience, knowledge of nature, knowledge of regulations, amount of time you put into it. When asked if intermittents were still hunters, they said yes, so long as they had the desire to be a hunter.
3. Who do you hunt with?
Almost all hunted with family. Most had friends who also hunt, but they do not hunt together. Some had social friends who do not hunt, but they do not oppose hunting.
4. Do you get to deer hunt as much as you would like? If not, what keeps you from deer hunting as much as you would like?
Six of the eight went hunting as much as they want to. Two were vehement that they did NOT get to hunt enough and it was because of school, work and family obligations.
5. What sorts of things would allow you to deer hunt more often?
Make deer season longer or split up the season during the rest of the year. (Others did not like that idea). Several had a desire for more money to buy private land to hunt or buy gas and lease fees to get there. Time was the big barrier, but most said they wouldn't hunt that much more than they already do, even if they had more time.
6. Do you hunt with a bow, crossbow, and muzzleloader?
7 out of 8 hunt with gun and bow. Three hunted with muzzleloader. Three hunted with all three methods. One did not want to take up bow because he doesn't have the time to become proficient. Others weren't really interested in taking up new methods – they are happy with what they are doing right now.
7. What has your experience with regulations been?
This group had no problems or issues with regulations. They were all strict rule followers. One said he doesn't always understand the reasoning for some regulations but was glad there is good science behind it. One said it is easier to go hunting now than it has ever been.
8. How or where do you get information on regulations?
All of them got the DNR digest every year. Four said DNR website. One person used the DNR hotline. Several said they ask family members or use Google to find answers.

9. How important is opening day of firearms season to you? What would you think of moving opening day from November 15 to the nearest Saturday?
Opening day was important to two participants (tradition and best chance to get a deer), but not very important to the other six. Two said they do not go on opening day—too crowded and they prefer to bowhunt up until opening day. All but one opposed moving opening day to a weekend. One said that if it could be shown that a Saturday opener did not negatively affect the deer herd, he would probably support it.
10. If opening day of firearms deer season were staggered, so that the season opened on different days in different areas of the state, would you travel to hunt on an opening day in more than one area?
There was a mixed reaction to this but most finally settled on not liking the idea.
11. If firearms deer season were longer, would you hunt more?
Most would not hunt more, even if the season were longer. The bowhunters in the group proposed that the firearms season be *shortened*, not lengthened.
12. Does the overlap of some deer seasons (e.g., ML season overlaps archery season) present a barrier to your hunting?
Overlap was not a problem for anyone in this group.
13. Do you support antler point restrictions?
About half of the group was very supportive of the concept. The rest were mildly supportive but agreed DNR would need a lot of education and outreach to prevent people from poaching. Several said they would prefer a one-buck rule rather than APRs.
14. Looking ahead, do you see yourself hunting more, less, or about the same as you do now?
Five will hunt more, 2 about the same, and 1 less.
15. Are there any deer hunting regulations that pose a barrier to your hunting effort?
None.
16. How or where do you get information about hunting techniques? Are they clear?
Magazines, online magazines, TV shows, YouTube, books, word-of-mouth, family, “trial & error.”
17. If MI DNR could do anything to help you hunt deer more often, what would it be?
Extend the bow season, offer deer hunting in other times of the year, have cheaper doe tags, manage for bigger and healthier bucks (make Michigan more like Iowa—a tourism destination for hunting), better distribution of the deer herd, offer a 3-year license bundle to save 10%, implement a “refer-a-friend” discount, offer award for repetitive license buyers, offer lottery prizes for first-time hunters and people who check in deer.

18. Is access to hunting land a problem for you?

Access was not a problem for this group.

19. How many of you hunt other types of animals besides deer?

Didn't ask this question.

20. Have you ever participated in a workshop or educational program to learn more about hunting or hunting-related activities?

A couple had participated in archery workshops. All said they would be interested in workshops or events about hunting.

Bay City, Female (9 participants)

1. Special hunting memory.
Most mentioned a family connection (nearly evenly distributed between fathers and husbands).
2. Do you think of yourself as a hunter? What makes a hunter in your mind?
Ten out of 11 thought of themselves as hunters. The one who didn't said it depends. Sometimes she feels she isn't experienced enough to be a hunter in the full meaning. Their definition of a hunter included pursuit of game with the intent to kill, appreciation for nature, celebrate the harvest of an animal, feeding the family, family time, respect-ethics, knowledge of equipment and proficiency in using it. To one participant, "weekend warriors" weren't hunters; but another one claimed to be a "weekend warrior," and she felt like she was indeed a full hunter.
3. Who do you hunt with?
Nearly all hunted with family members—mostly husbands, fathers, and sons. Some knew friends or co-workers who were anti-hunting, but none said it was a problem.
4. Do you get to deer hunt as much as you would like? If not, what keeps you from deer hunting as much as you would like?
Only two out of 11 said they hunted as much as they like. The others wanted to hunt more but were limited primarily by work and family obligations. Several said distance to the land they hunt on was a barrier—would go more frequently if it were closer to home. Several were limited by physical conditions. None felt that regulations were a barrier, although several mentioned that the regulations were very wordy and certain topics were confusing (e.g., youth hunt vs. mentor hunt).
5. What sorts of things would allow you to deer hunt more often?
Having property nearby. Not having to work. More access to private land or better access to landlocked public lands (some are marked as private by local residents to keep people off). More doe tags available in my area. More, bigger bucks in my area (see APR discussion). Equipment better suited to women (it is getting much better, but still leaves a lot to be desired).
6. Do you hunt with a bow, crossbow, and muzzleloader?
Many of this group hunted with all three methods. Several did not use a bow, and said they didn't feel confident with a bow or that it required too much time to become proficient. One did not hunt with a muzzleloader and said she had no desire—it was too messy and too much hassle.
7. What has your experience with regulations been?
Already covered this question above.

8. How or where do you get information on regulations?
All used the DNR Digest. Almost all used the DNR website. Many used Google searches. A few mentioned Michigan Out-of-Doors publication and staff at local sporting goods stores (but you have to be careful—some of those people don't know much).
9. How important is opening day of firearms season to you? What would you think of moving opening day from November 15 to the nearest Saturday?
Opening day was very important to most of these participants—tradition and best chance of harvesting a deer. A few said it was not that important (they were bowhunters). Most of this group did not want to move opening day to a Saturday. A couple were ambivalent.
10. If opening day of firearms deer season were staggered, so that the season opened on different days in different areas of the state, would you travel to hunt on an opening day in more than one area?
Three of 11 thought staggered opening days was a good idea, although all agreed it could cause a lot of confusion among hunters.
11. If firearms deer season were longer, would you hunt more?
A few of the group (firearms hunters only) would hunt more if there were more days. All the bowhunter participants did not want it to be longer. They said they would be out there either way. All of the bowhunters said they would hunt more if the bow season were longer.
12. Does the overlap of some deer seasons (e.g., ML season overlaps archery season) present a barrier to your hunting?
Not a problem to this group.
13. Do you support antler point restrictions?
Eight of 11 supported APRs; three were undecided. One had personal experience, because she hunts land in the APR area. She said she is definitely seeing bigger bucks now. One undecided person said the area she hunts is very thick, and she was uncertain she would be able to discern antler points in the thick cover.
14. Looking ahead, do you see yourself hunting more, less, or about the same as you do now?
Eight of the 11 think they will hunt more in the future; three will hunt about the same.
15. Are there any deer hunting regulations that pose a barrier to your hunting effort?
This group was unanimous in its opposition to the current emanation of the youth hunt. They all thought it was messing up deer patterns for the firearms season. They didn't think youth should be allowed to use rifles; they thought adults sitting with the youth were doing the shooting. They were in favor of moving the youth season later, and/or

make it does only. All of them liked the youth hunt conceptually, just not the current way it is implemented.

16. How or where do you get information about hunting techniques? Are they clear?

Outdoor TV, Cabela's, Magazines, Friends, Internet, Pinterest, DNR YouTube's.

17. If MI DNR could do anything to help you hunt deer more often, what would it be?

Ideas offered include having special days for women to hunt; have a bigger law enforcement presence to reduce poaching and "slob hunting," get more private land access (HAP), have a class on map/compass/GPS use, do away with the base license ("I will never hunt small game"), move youth deer season to late October, improve access and signage to public lands, have a day when you can field test products before buying them, make fewer points needed to get a bear tag.

18. Is access to hunting land a problem for you?

Did not ask.

19. How many of you hunt other types of animals besides deer?

Did not ask.

20. Have you ever participated in a workshop or educational program to learn more about hunting or hunting-related activities?

One participant mentioned attending a Becoming an Outdoorswoman workshop. Three had heard of it. Several knew that a local retailer (Duncan Gun Shop) had shooting classes.

Ludington, Male, 18-25, Intermittent (8 participants)

1. Special hunting memory.
Most had a connection with family—mostly fathers. The rush of the first deer, sights and sounds of deer camp.
2. Do you think of yourself as a hunter? What makes a hunter in your mind?
Six out of 8 thought of themselves as hunters. The other two viewed themselves as marginal hunters. The definition of a hunter to this group included persistence, anticipation, intention to make a 1-shot kill, respect for the outdoors, conservation of the herd, patience, preparation, passion, plan life around hunting season, respect for the land, animals, and other hunters. One said that anyone who goes into the field in pursuit of game is a hunter, but there are various levels of hunter. These folks thought a person with the desire to hunt is still a hunter, even if he/she has to skip for a year or more. It was mostly about desire.
3. Who do you hunt with?
Nearly all hunted with their families. Most had friends who were also hunters, but they did not hunt together. One said his wife was anti-hunting (Buddhist), but they worked it out.
4. Do you get to deer hunt as much as you would like? If not, what keeps you from deer hunting as much as you would like?
Four of 8 got to hunt as much as they wanted. If not, it was because of college, work and family.
5. What sorts of things would allow you to deer hunt more often?
Most wanted more antlerless deer tags. One said that some counties have a lottery for antlerless tags—maybe consider making it a lottery for bucks instead. But someone else pointed out that care has to be taken with the number of does that can be taken or it would have population effects. But all felt that they could harvest more deer than they are currently taking in this area. This group hunted private land, but they recognized that efforts to improve access to hunting land would be a great thing for many other hunters. Maybe reduce the cost of the license. But most agreed that while they complain about the price going up, but it's really not a barrier to their participation. The DNR had a good reputation with this group. Most wanted to see more law enforcement—to reduce poaching and “slob hunters.”
6. Do you hunt with a bow, crossbow, and muzzleloader?
Several hunted with all three. Rifle hunter only said it was purely an efficiency thing. He was raised as a meat hunter and the rifle is best chance to get a deer. Not interested in other methods. Others said they didn't like muzzleloaders—it's a hassle and heard horror stories of misfires. One was afraid of wounding a deer with a bow—found a

broadhead embedded in a deer's shoulder one time, and didn't want to do that to a deer.

7. What has your experience with regulations been?
Nobody really had any problems with regulations. One mentioned a great furor a few years back when baiting regulations were changed, but not much since then. Most hunters respect DNR and the regulations they set.
8. How or where do you get information on regulations?
Four of 8 used the DNR digest every year. Three used DNR website every year. Most said they asked family and friends, and then verified with DNR sources if needed. Nobody had any problems with the regulations.
9. How important is opening day of firearms season to you? What would you think of moving opening day from November 15 to the nearest Saturday?
Opening day was very important to this entire group. The tradition, heritage, family memories and family time were most important. Best opportunity to get meat, economic importance to local communities were also listed. "It's like Christmas morning." A few of the group wouldn't mind if it changed to be on a weekend, but most were opposed. One said it might start a riot if you tried to change it. Might also confuse a lot of people. Several recognized it would benefit younger hunters or people who can't get off work on a week day.
10. If opening day of firearms deer season were staggered, so that the season opened on different days in different areas of the state, would you travel to hunt on an opening day in more than one area?
Most liked this idea, and would hunt multiple opening days if they had the time or money. Most thought it would be worth a try. Several mentioned it could create enforcement problems. One hunter mentioned it seemed a bit like "stealing" another hunter's opening day opportunity. Most agreed with that feeling.
11. If firearms deer season were longer, would you hunt more?
Everyone in this group would hunt more if the season were longer.
12. Does the overlap of some deer seasons (e.g., ML season overlaps archery season) present a barrier to your hunting?
Not a problem for anyone in this group.
13. Do you support antler point restrictions?
Seven of 8 supported APRs. They result in bigger bucks and a healthier herd. One opposed because it forces youth to pass up really nice deer that they should be able to harvest. One said APRs might cost us personally, but improvements to the herd are worth it.

14. Looking ahead, do you see yourself hunting more, less, or about the same as you do now?

Six would hunt more; two would hunt about the same.

15. Are there any deer hunting regulations that pose a barrier to your hunting effort?

Most did not like the youth hunt as it is currently configured. It is held too early. Kids are shooting big bucks before they get a chance to breed, and the kids don't care what kind of deer they shoot. Just make it a doe hunt for the youth. All supported youth hunts in general, just not the current way it is done.

16. How or where do you get information about hunting techniques? Are they clear?

Did not ask this question

17. If MI DNR could do anything to help you hunt deer more often, what would it be?

More access to private property to hunt. More/better law enforcement presence on public lands to reduce the number of bad experiences you hear about. Reduce poaching. Encourage farmers to let hunters help them fill depredation permits. Offer hunter education through schools—even if they don't intend to hunt—to give them an appreciation for it.

Charlevoix, Male, 18-25, Regular (7 participants)

1. Special hunting memory.
Most involved family. Providing own meat. Seeing unusual things in the great outdoors.
2. Do you think of yourself as a hunter? What makes a hunter in your mind?
All thought of themselves as hunters. Definition included pursuing game in the outdoors, passion, frequency is important, self-discipline and self-control, scouting, knowledge of regulations, ethics. Half said if a person has desire but had to skip buying a license for a few years they are still hunters; the other half said no—you have to have a license to be a hunter. One participant offered that you have to support the Second Amendment to be a hunter—most agreed with that notion.
3. Who do you hunt with?
Most only hunt with family. One only hunts with friends. One said he only hunts alone. Some had social friends who hunted; some had social friends that did not hunt. No one had friends or family that were anti-hunting.
4. Do you get to deer hunt as much as you would like? If not, what keeps you from deer hunting as much as you would like?
Four of the 7 got to hunt as much as they want. For those who didn't, barriers include work, family obligations (small kids), school. All agreed work was the biggest barrier. Cost was not really a barrier, but they wanted to know why the license cost went up. One said that the regulations were sort of confusing but not really a barrier to hunting.
5. What sorts of things would allow you to deer hunt more often?
More bigger bucks, more deer on public lands, more friends who hunt, better access to private land, more time.
6. Do you hunt with a bow, crossbow, and muzzleloader?
Three of 7 hunted with all three methods. One was a "ballistics nerd," so bow and muzzleloader didn't interest him. One said that by the time muzzleloader season opens, he is done and switches over to ice fishing. Others said that by muzzleloader season, bucks almost impossible to find/kill, and it is too cold.
7. What has your experience with regulations been?
This group did not have problems with regulations. They trusted DNR's judgment. Someone mentioned the wolf issue, and everyone agreed that was a hot potato but they still did not personally question or dispute the regulations.
8. How or where do you get information on regulations?
All used the DNR digest. Four of 7 used the DNR website. Half used family but noted they are not always reliable. A couple call the field office. Several used YouTube videos. All said they used the "What has changed" section of the digest—very helpful.

9. How important is opening day of firearms season to you? What would you think of moving opening day from November 15 to the nearest Saturday?
Six out of 7 said opening day is extremely important to them. Never miss it, love the “war zone” sensation—exciting that others around you are being successful, tradition, best chance to get a deer. One said that he knows he will get a deer in one of the seasons, so opening day is not that important to him. Five of seven did not want to move opening day to a Saturday. Two thought it was a good idea.
10. If opening day of firearms deer season were staggered, so that the season opened on different days in different areas of the state, would you travel to hunt on an opening day in more than one area?
Several said if it could be proven that it would not negatively affect the herd it would be fun to have several different opening days. Others thought it could have negative impact on local hunters for other folks to come into their areas just to hunt more opening days.
11. If firearms deer season were longer, would you hunt more?
The group was split. Bowhunters are already hunting more, so longer season would not help them. Gun hunters would probably hunt more—but only if it opened earlier. If it stayed open later they probably wouldn’t hunt more (too cold).
12. Does the overlap of some deer seasons (e.g., ML season overlaps archery season) present a barrier to your hunting?
Not a barrier to this group.
13. Do you support antler point restrictions?
All in this group strongly supported APRs. They could see improvement in bucks and health of the herd. One was a taxidermist, and he said he is seeing bigger bucks now. All agreed that it presented some challenges in certain circumstances, especially when you live on the zone boundary but it was worth it. None of these hunters knew anyone who was opposed.
14. Looking ahead, do you see yourself hunting more, less, or about the same as you do now?
Two of the 7 will hunt more; five will hunt about the same.
15. Are there any deer hunting regulations that pose a barrier to your hunting effort?
This group really liked the youth hunt. Gives youth a better opportunity. Weather is good, warmer—great for kids. Thought the DNR should require a check-in—would reduce poaching that goes on during that time.
16. How or where do you get information about hunting techniques? Are they clear?
Did not ask.

17. If MI DNR could do anything to help you hunt deer more often, what would it be?

This group really anchored on communication efforts. They wanted I&E efforts to show the public that hunters were not redneck hillbillies. Show the connection of hunters as a solution to the deer-vehicle collision issue. Create connections between hunters and farmers with deer depredation issues. Maybe create a GEMS program for deer.

Cadillac, Female (13 participants)

1. Special hunting memory.
All of the stories involved family—mostly fathers, husbands, kids and grandkids. Many started hunting the traditional way, but several told stories of how dads did not get them into hunting—it was boyfriends or husbands who got them into hunting later in life.
2. Do you think of yourself as a hunter? What makes a hunter in your mind?
All thought of themselves as hunters. Their definitions included patience, desire, morals and ethics, (take good shots), respect for environment and for people and property, care about safety, use the animal for food, spend time so you can be prepared. Some thought you had to have your own equipment to truly be a hunter, but others said you didn't have to own it, but you had to be familiar with it.
3. Who do you hunt with?
All in this group hunted with family only or else they hunted alone. None hunted with friends. Most had friends who were hunters but just didn't hunt with them. Several said they talk about hunting with their non-hunting friends; one said she mostly talks hunting with male friends—her female social friends don't hunt or appreciate it.
4. Do you get to deer hunt as much as you would like? If not, what keeps you from deer hunting as much as you would like?
Only four of 12 got to hunt as much as they would like. The rest were prevented by work, family obligations (kids), or time (hunting property too far away to hunt frequently). One said she was scared of bears in the area (and potentially coyotes). Regulations were not a problem for this group. Several said that cost was becoming an issue.
5. What sorts of things would allow you to deer hunt more often?
If I didn't have to work, or if I didn't have kids. One said she would hunt more if she had someone to gut the deer for her. Make opening day a state holiday so could always get off work. Make licenses cheaper. Increase the deer population.
6. Do you hunt with a bow, crossbow, and muzzleloader?
Four of 12 hunted with all three methods. One was interested in bow, but didn't have time to invest in it. One said bows were expensive. Most of the group were not interested in muzzleloaders because the late season was too cold.
7. What has your experience with regulations been?
Five said they accept the regulations as they are—not really a problem. Five said they argue about regulations a lot. These women wore it on their sleeves that they liked to “tell it like it is.” One said she thinks almost any regulation is a barrier. She sees the need for them but doesn't like government telling her what she can and cannot do.

Several others felt the same. They couldn't really come up with any specific regulations they thought were problematic except for antler point restrictions (see below).

8. How or where do you get information on regulations?

All picked up the DNR Digest every year. All but one checked the DNR website every year. Five of 12 got information from family—all said it was accurate. Most also did Google searches about regulation issues. All said the Digest was clear, but most said there were areas of the website that were confusing. They didn't name anything specific—they just thought the overall navigation was difficult. All of them received emails from DNR and all loved them.

9. How important is opening day of firearms season to you? What would you think of moving opening day from November 15 to the nearest Saturday?

Nine of the 12 said opening day was very important—mostly because of tradition. A couple said it wasn't that important because they usually already have their deer by then. One said it was important, but not nearly as important as the youth hunt. None was in favor of moving opening day to a Saturday. They liked the tradition of Nov 15.

10. If opening day of firearms deer season were staggered, so that the season opened on different days in different areas of the state, would you travel to hunt on an opening day in more than one area?

None of this group would hunt more if there were multiple opening days—uninterested.

11. If firearms deer season were longer, would you hunt more?

Five of 12 would hunt more if the firearm season were longer. Bowhunters were worried it would cut into their season. Most said it was about right as it is—they get burned out and/or it gets too cold to hunt any later in the year. Most wanted to keep it the same—tradition.

12. Does the overlap of some deer seasons (e.g., ML season overlaps archery season) present a barrier to your hunting?

The only conflict this group spoke about was the youth hunt. All of them wanted to put age limits on who can participate—all are convince there are a lot of adults shooting deer early and putting their kids' tag on it. Six thought the early season created unrealistic expectations for the youth who participate. Several said the early youth hunt prevents good bucks from breeding before they are removed from the population. Four liked the youth hunt just fine but thought the age should be restricted.

13. Do you support antler point restrictions?

Eleven of 12 opposed APRs. They had several pretty large misunderstandings about deer biology. One said the number of points a deer has at 2 years old is all it's ever going to get. They think genetics plays a much bigger role in how big bucks get than how old they are. They didn't like being told what deer they could shoot. All agreed the second buck should be restricted, but not the first.

14. Looking ahead, do you see yourself hunting more, less, or about the same as you do now?
Seven thought they would be hunting more in the future; five thought about the same.
15. Are there any deer hunting regulations that pose a barrier to your hunting effort?
APRs. Get rid of them.
16. How or where do you get information about hunting techniques? Are they clear? Did not ask.
17. If MI DNR could do anything to help you hunt deer more often, what would it be?
Manage for bigger herd (more animals) and bigger antlers. Reduce coyote population. Reduce cost of deer tags. Offer more hunter safety courses (offer it in schools like it used to be). Offer educational workshops on deer hunting.

Summary of Focus Group Discussion

Following are thoughts based on focus group analysis. These items are numbered for ease of reference only—they do not represent priority order.

1. Most of these focus group participants were avid hunters or leaning toward avid. Even among the participants who were intermittent hunters by license-buying behavior, many were avid by desire and expertise. It is likely that the attitudes and behaviors of hunters who are intermittent by self-definition and desire to hunt are underrepresented in these results.
2. Related to #1, nearly 3 out of 4 focus group participants were bowhunters, in addition to (or to the exclusion of) firearms hunters. This affinity for archery hunting definitely affected some of the results regarding season start dates, lengths, etc.
3. A strong majority of participants hunt with family—not so much with friends or others. It is well understood that hunting participation depends tremendously on social support networks. These results suggest that, at least within these target audiences, social support for deer hunting should be focused on family relationships.
4. More than 3 out of 4 of these participants hunted on private lands, and less than 15% hunted public lands. As a result, very few participants said that access to hunting land was a barrier to hunting for them. Some of them mentioned that access to hunting land was a barrier to other people they know, if not for them personally.
5. Barriers to hunting were as expected: dominated by work, school, and family obligations. Others of note: distance from home to hunting ground, other types of hunting or other hobbies, health, daycare for kids, weather.
6. Regulations are not really a barrier for most of these participants. They brought up a variety of regulation changes they would like to see (more doe tags, bigger doe hunting zones, changes to licensing and APRs, etc.) but very little that would get them to hunt more than they already do. Most of them get and review the DNR Digest and/or go to DNR website every year. Most claimed to hold ethical, responsible hunting in high regard, and had little tolerance for poachers or “slob hunters” (results are likely biased, as it is very unlikely a poacher would attend a focus group on hunting sponsored by the DNR).
7. Opening day of firearms season is somewhat or very important for three-quarters of participants. Sixty-four percent would prefer to keep opening day on November 15 rather than shifting to the closest weekend. The web survey found similar results, although younger hunters were more likely to favor a change of opening day to the nearest weekend.

8. Less than 10% would take advantage of multiple opening days. A few participants expressed some interest in this concept, but most said they were not interested or that it wasn't worth the other problems it might cause.
9. Fifty-seven percent of participants supported antler point restrictions on their written response forms. This is a little lower number than anticipated based on the conversations. Most participants (with the notable and nearly unanimous exception of the women in the Cadillac group) stated in the group discussions that they supported APRs. A good number of the mild supporters must have switched to "Unsure" when they completed the written form.
10. The strong opposition to APRs in the Cadillac focus group was fueled largely by misunderstandings about deer biology. Some good information, delivered by a credible source, could likely change the minds of a fair number of these participants.
11. The topic that generated the most discussion and frustration in the focus group project was youth hunts. The topic guide did not have a specific question about the youth hunt, and it did not come up in the first focus group (Kalamazoo); however, it came up so strongly in the second group (Lansing), the moderator made sure it came up in every focus group after Lansing. When asked, nearly every person in every focus group stated that they approved of having special hunts for youth, but many of them had problems with how the youth hunt is currently administered. The biggest concern was that it is held too early in the season, which resulted in:
 - a. Nice bucks don't have an opportunity to breed before they are taken
 - b. Suspicion that parents/mentors are shooting big deer but claiming the kids are doing it
 - c. Kids can hunt too young. There should be a minimum age limit
 - d. Kids looking for their first deer don't care how big the deer is—let them shoot does
 - e. Creating false and unrealistic expectations for youth hunters after they age out of the youth hunt program

12. When asked what MI DNR could do to get them (or others like them) to hunt more frequently, a variety of responses were provided:
- a. Put more law enforcement in the field—reduce poaching and “slob hunters” on public lands—make public lands more “hospitable,” with fewer bad experiences.
 - b. Make zones for doe tags bigger.
 - c. Create a single license that allows hunter to take one buck and one doe.
 - d. Do away with the base license for small game.
 - e. Create a 3-year license bundle and/or a “refer-a-friend” discount.
 - f. Make the use of high-powered rifles legal for deer.
 - g. Reduce the cost of license.
 - h. Manage for bigger bucks/manage for more deer.
 - i. Create a women’s hunting day (like youth hunt).
 - j. Implement a one-buck rule instead of APRs.
 - k. Offer workshops on hunting techniques (gutting/butchering, use of GPS, etc.).
 - l. Encourage more private land access for deer hunting.
 - m. Encourage farmers with deer problems to let hunters solve the problem for them.
 - n. Develop a cadre of people that can help hunters (such as those who are older or ailing) who are unable to complete all aspects of the hunting (such as gutting).

Conclusions

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on results of the online survey and focus groups considered together. They are arranged in no particular order. Readers should recognize the limitations of these data. As noted in the description of methods above, survey invitations were only sent to hunters who provided their email address when they bought a license, so results are not necessarily representative of all Michigan deer hunters. Survey and focus group results suggest that hunters in the sample may be more avid than a typical Michigan deer hunter (as estimated by Michigan DNR annual hunter surveys).

- 1) Regulations are not a barrier to deer hunting for the large majority of respondents. The great majority of survey respondents (86%) said they do *not* think deer hunting regulations in Michigan prevent them from hunting more than they would like. These results were virtually identical across age categories and gender. There were slight differences by region, with a high of 21% of Upper Peninsula respondents indicating regulations were a barrier down to 12% in both southern regions.
- 2) Deer hunting regulations are not too complex. The great majority of survey respondents (79%) said they do not find deer hunting regulations in Michigan to be too complex. Women and men were nearly indistinguishable in their answers to this question. Slightly more respondents in existing APR areas and in the northern Management Regions believed hunting regulations were too complex, but the greatest differences were by age group: 12% of the youngest group up to 25% of the oldest group said regulations were too complex.
- 3) Antler Point Restrictions seem to be a draw for younger hunters. Where APRs *are* established, younger respondents are likelier to report hunting more often, compared with older respondents: 13% of 18–28-year-olds hunt more often, compared with 7% of 51–65-year-olds. The figures are even starker if APRs *were to be established* where respondents hunt. More than one-third of 18–28 and 29–35-year-olds said they would hunt more often, compared with 13% of 51–65-year-olds. However, women were not as likely as men to indicate they had hunted more in areas with existing APRs (6% vs. 10%, respectively) or would hunt more in areas with potential future APRs (14% vs. 20%, respectively). When and where they do not conflict with biological management objectives, the DNR should consider expanding APRs.
- 4) Consider revisiting the purposes of and regulations for *early hunts*—hunts that occur before the regular deer season: it is unclear if reducing or eliminating special hunts (especially youth hunts) or restricting the types of deer that can be taken during these events would improve hunter retention, but respondents leveled a number of criticisms toward these early seasons (e.g., they startle deer and change their patterns, parents do the hunting for the youth, and they reduce later hunters' chances of taking a buck).

- 5) When suggesting changes to regulations, a number of respondents supported a *one-buck-per-season limit*. We recommend the DNR investigate implementation of a one-buck-per-season limit instead of, or possibly in addition to, APRs. However, we also urge caution for two reasons. First, opposition to this change was not able to be measured, as there was no survey or focus group question about this topic specifically. Second, the survey sample included a higher proportion of respondents who participated in multiple seasons compared to the hunting population as a whole, so these respondents would likely be less affected by lost harvest and recreation opportunities that could result from implementing this season limit.
- 6) Continue to reassess the possibility of moving opening day of firearms deer season to a Saturday. In this research, shifting the opening day of firearms season did *not* garner strong support among survey respondents. In fact, when given the option to keep opening day on November 15, to move it to the closest Saturday, or to remain neutral, the majority of respondents—especially older ones—advocated for keeping it on November 15. The majority of younger respondents also opposed the move, but younger respondents were likelier to be neutral (19%) or to support moving it (27%). Among all respondents, the proportion who said they could hunt opening day more often if it moved (20%) were balanced by the proportion who said they would avoid it if it moved (17%). However, among 18-28-year-olds, 39% said they could hunt opening day more often if it moved, while only 24% said they would avoid opening day if it moved. Making a change to opening day right now might not be worthwhile, but given these indications of age differences, DNR should revisit this issue in the near future.
- 7) Certain differences by age category suggest the DNR should regularly survey deer hunters to see if/how these attitudes change over time. In particular, younger respondents—relative to older ones—were likelier to be neutral or supportive of moving opening day to closest Saturday, more willing to travel around the state if opening days were staggered, and more agreeable there were changes to regulations the DNR could make to help them hunt more frequently. If the goal is to encourage greater participation among young hunters, DNR should watch these trends closely.
- 8) Consider offering multi-year license bundle options that include a price discount. Respondents who were younger and lived in southern Michigan were especially likely to indicate they would purchase a three-year license with a price discount.
- 9) Creating multiple opening days of firearm deer season is unlikely to boost participation. Two-thirds (65%) said they were not willing to travel to take part in an additional opening day in a different region of the state, and 22% said they did not know.
- 10) Among respondents, gender differences were minimal. Age differences were more salient, especially in perceptions of the complexity of regulations and attitudes toward moving opening day and the importance of hunting. Some regional differences were also noted, but did not rise to the level of indicating region-specific regulation changes.

Appendix A. Focus Group Topic Guide

Good evening and welcome to the deer hunting focus group. Thanks for coming out tonight. I'm Phil Seng, DJ Case & Associates. [describe.]

Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan State University have contracted with us to conduct focus groups with hunters across Michigan. This is the Xth of 6 focus groups that we are conducting throughout the state.

DNR is conducting these focus groups to talk with hunters like you about hunting participation. One of the things we've found in our research is that, compared to past decades, about the same number of people start hunting (usually when they're young), but fewer people continue hunting as they get older. We're trying to figure out why that is and how DNR might improve the value of hunting experiences to increase the interest folks have to continue hunting as they grow older.

Let me assure you we're not trying to "sell you" anything here tonight. There are no right or wrong answers. Michigan DNR is very interested in hearing your opinions, ideas, and interests, and they're hoping to improve what they do to better meet your interests as a result of what you have to say.

I am recording tonight's meeting, but that is strictly to ensure that I capture what you say correctly. In our final report, your name will not be attached to anything you say—all will remain confidential.

I think most of you met [names] from Michigan DNR as you were coming in tonight. [Names] are here as observers, and they will not be participating in the discussion. At times it might be a little weird, because you may have a question about seasons, etc., that you know they could answer, but they are not allowed to speak during the focus group. We want to know what YOU think and believe without benefit of their answers. But at the end of the session they will answer questions or provide contact info so you can reach them later at your convenience.

Our process is very simple. I have a list of questions and topics here. For some questions, I will ask each one of you to respond in order; for others, I'll just throw it out there and anyone who wants can answer. For some questions I may just ask for a show of hands. For some of the questions, after we're done with discussion, I will ask you to fill out a brief written response on this form. Please don't work ahead! I'll let you know when to fill out each question.

I apologize in advance if I have to close off a conversation. My primary job is to make sure we get through all the questions, and I may need to hurry us along from time to time. We will finish promptly at X p.m. After we finish, we will stick around to answer questions if you like, and we will give you a \$75 Visa gift card to thank you for sharing your time with us tonight.

Any questions before we begin?

1. Okay, to get to know each other a little better, let's start with brief introductions. Please say your name, where you live, and a very brief summary of a time when you were hunting

when you said, “This is why I hunt. This is why I’m here and go through all the trouble to be out here.” Tell us about that moment. [Give them a minute to think].

Please fill out questions 1-3 on your response form. PLEASE DO NOT WORK AHEAD.

2. Do you think of yourself as a hunter? Why/why not? What makes a hunter, in your mind?

[Prompt for regularity / consistency (“goes every year whenever possible”), equipment (“has all the right gear”), knowledge of regulations (“knows the handbook backward and forward”). If it is not volunteered, explore whether some have not bought a license in some years or stopped buying licenses but still consider themselves to be a hunter.]

Please fill out questions 4-7 on your response form. PLEASE DO NOT WORK AHEAD.

3. Who do you hunt with? Are the people you hunt with the same people you hang out with when you aren’t hunting? In other words, are your “hunting” friends different from your “regular” friends?

Thanks, now please fill out questions 8-10 on your response form.

4. Do you get to deer hunt as much as you would like?

If no, what sorts of things prevent you?

[If it is not volunteered, explore whether there are concerns that regulations are too confusing or change too often, or whether the new license structure in particular is too confusing, or if the cost of licenses is too high for the individuals or for families.]

Thanks, now please fill out question 11 on your response form.

5. Now let’s think about it from the other side of the coin: What sorts of things would help you go deer hunting more often? [Offer if they don’t come up organically: More/better access, simpler regulations, lower expense, better equipment, friends/partners to hunt with, training, more deer, or more kinds of deer they like to hunt (e.g., more bucks, bigger/older/quality bucks)].
6. Do you hunt with a bow, crossbow or muzzleloader? If not, why not? If you don’t hunt with these methods, would you consider it? [If not, why not?]

[To increase your total deer hunting time in a given year?]

Thanks, now please fill out questions 12-14 on your response form.

Let's turn our attention to regulations on hunting for a bit. First, I'll ask about your general opinion and thoughts, and then I'll ask some more specific questions about existing regulations and proposed changes.

7. Overall and in general, what has your experience been with regulations? Do you have strong opinions or get into heated debates about them, or are they mostly a non-issue to you? [Are there regulations that you think keep people away from hunting?]
8. How or where do you get information about hunting regulations? Are the sources clear and understandable? What do you do if you have questions?
9. Now tell me about opening day of the firearm deer season. How important is it to you to hunt opening day?

One idea that's been floating around for a while now is moving the start date of firearm hunting season from November 15 to a weekend—say, a certain Saturday in November. The idea is maybe more people could participate because they wouldn't be working or in school on opening day. Any thoughts about this? Do you think it would "work" (boost number of hunters), and is that good?

10. If opening day of firearms deer season were staggered so that the season opened on different days in different areas of the state, would you travel to hunt on an opening day in more than one area? Why or why not?

Thanks, now please fill out questions 15-18 on your response form.

[#11 AND #12 NOT AS IMPORTANT AS APR DISCUSSION IF TIME IS SHORT]

11. Let's talk about the length of deer season. If firearms deer season were longer, do you think you would you hunt more? Would more people take up hunting? Would you like to see the length changed for any of the other seasons?

12. Some types of deer seasons overlap. For example, muzzleloader season overlaps a bit with archery season. Do these kinds of overlap bother you or present a barrier to you?

Now I'd like to ask you about antler point restrictions, or "APRs."

[For the NW region that has APRs – Week 2]

Currently in this part of Michigan, a firearms deer hunter can only take a buck that has at least 3 points on one side, and if you purchase a combination deer license, the second, "restricted" tag can only be used on a buck that has at least 4 points on one side. The purpose of these APRs is to let younger bucks grow to maturity.

13. Do you support these antler point restrictions? Why?

OR

In what ways do you believe they affect the deer population? In what ways do you believe they affect hunter satisfaction? Are you more likely to hunt deer (or hunt more days) because these restrictions are in place? Why?

Thanks, now please fill out question 19 on your response form.

14. Looking ahead, do you see yourself hunting more, the same, or less than you currently do? Why? [Think about just in the next season or two as well as looking a few years or more down the road.]

15. Are there other hunting regulations that you think pose a barrier to you or other people hunting deer?

We'll be wrapping up in just a few minutes. Before we go, I want us to take a step back and consider everything we've discussed tonight—family, friends, regulations, special experiences, upcoming life changes—all of it. Considering all those things we've discussed, if the Michigan DNR could do anything to help you hunt deer more often, what would it be?

Other questions if there is time:

16. How or where do you get information about hunting (techniques, equipment, strategies, How-to)? Are these sources clear and understandable?

[Prompt for DNR website, DNR YouTube videos, DNR social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest)].

17. Is access to hunting a land a problem for you? How could DNR help?
18. How many of you hunt game other than deer (such as turkeys, waterfowl, or small game)? If you do, do those types of hunting have similar barriers as deer hunting?
19. Have you ever participated in a workshop or educational program to learn more about hunting or hunting-related activities, like general outdoor skills or handling and cooking game? If so, what did you find most and least valuable? If not, are there programs that could provide instruction that you think would make you more confident or likely to participate in hunting in the future?

[Past events could include Becoming an Outdoors Woman, Gourmet Gone Wild, various learn-to-hunt workshops or mentored hunting events run by the DNR or various NGOs]

Other areas of the state have what are called “hunter’s choice” regulations. In these areas, hunters that purchase a combination license are faced with antler point restrictions for both of their buck tags. Hunters that purchase a regular deer license have limited themselves to taking no more than 1 buck, and are not required to meet minimum antler point restrictions.

20. What do you think of “hunter’s choice” regulations? Do you think these rules have different effects on deer populations or hunter satisfaction than antler point restrictions? If regulations are put in place to change buck harvest, would you prefer having this choice between being limited to a single buck or having point restrictions, or would you rather see across-the-board antler point restrictions put into place?

Appendix B. Focus Group Written Response Form

Name:

Date:

1. Family Status:

- ☐ Single – No children in the home
- ☐ Single – Children in the home
- ☐ Married/Cohabiting – No children in the home
- ☐ Married/Cohabiting – Children in the home

2. How close to home do you typically deer hunt with firearms? Within about _____ miles. (If you hunt multiple locations, select the area where you hunt MOST.)**3. Do you MOSTLY hunt on:** ____ Private land ____ Public land ____ Both about equally
*Please Stop – Do Not Work Ahead!***4. Please rate the importance of each of the following reasons you hunt from 1 to 5 (where 1 is unimportant and 5 is very important).**

- a. ____ Spending time outdoors
- b. ____ Enjoying time spent with friends and family
- c. ____ The feeling of excitement when seeing deer
- d. ____ Bringing home meat for food
- e. ____ Bringing home a trophy
- f. ____ Demonstrating my hunting skill
- g. ____ The physical exercise that hunting provides
- h. ____ Enjoying time spent alone in the field
- i. ____ Other: _____

5. When did you start deer hunting?

- ☐ Year: _____ (approximate is fine)
- ☐ Your age at that time: _____ (approximate is fine)

6. Have you ever successfully taken a deer?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

If yes, about how many deer have you personally taken since you started hunting? _____

7. How much time do you spend (outside deer season) preparing for the hunt by scouting, checking trail cameras, setting up stands and blinds, etc.?

- ☐ No time at all
- ☐ Less than 10 hours
- ☐ More than 10 hours but less than 40 hours

- ☐ More than 40 hours

Please Stop – Do Not Work Ahead!

8. Who do you deer hunt with? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ I mostly hunt alone
☐ Spouse/significant other
☐ Family members besides spouse/significant other
☐ Friends

9. If you have children, do you hunt with them?

- ☐ I do not have children
☐ I have children, and I do **NOT** hunt with them
☐ I have children, and I **DO** hunt with them

10. If you hunt with friends, are they the same friends you hang out with when you aren't hunting?

- ☐ I don't hunt with my friends
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ I hunt with some of my "non-hunting friends" but not all of them

Please Stop – Do Not Work Ahead!

11. List the top 3 things that compete for your time during firearms deer season. (Be as specific as possible.)

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Please Stop – Do Not Work Ahead!

12. What deer seasons do you typically hunt in? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Firearm
☐ Bow
☐ Muzzleloader

13. Where do you deer hunt? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Land owned by you, your family, or a friend
☐ Leased land
☐ Public hunting land
☐ Other: _____

14. When do you hunt deer? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Weekends
- ☐ Before or after work
- ☐ I take time off work/school each season to hunt locally
- ☐ I take time off work/school each season to hunt at "deer camp"

Please Stop – Do Not Work Ahead!

15. How important is it to you to hunt opening day of firearms deer season each year? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not important
- ☐ I always hunt opening day (except for emergency, etc.)
- ☐ I hunt opening day when it's convenient

16. What is your preference for opening day of firearms deer season?

- ☐ I would be more likely to hunt opening day if it were on a weekend
- ☐ I prefer keeping the traditional November 15 opening date
- ☐ I don't have a strong opinion about it.

17. If Michigan allowed firearms hunters to take a buck or a doe (like archery hunters) which of the following would you *most likely* do?

- ☐ I would take the first large, healthy deer that came along (whether buck or doe)
- ☐ I would hold out for a buck
- ☐ I would hold out for a buck early, but I would settle for a doe late in the season

18. If Michigan started and ended firearms deer season on different dates in different parts of the state, would you be more likely to travel to other locations to hunt on multiple "opening days"?

- ☐ I would be more likely to travel to other locations
- ☐ I would not be any more likely to travel to other locations
- ☐ I don't know

Please Stop – Do Not Work Ahead!

19. Do you support antler restrictions?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Please explain your answer:

Thank you!

Appendix C. Online Survey Instrument

Are you a Michigan resident? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

What is your age? *

☐ Under 18

☐ 18–28

☐ 29–35

☐ 36–50

☐ 51–65

☐ 66+

What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

What deer seasons do you try to hunt in every year? (Check all that apply.) *

☐ Firearm

☐ Archery

☐ Muzzleloader

☐ Early Antlerless Firearm

☐ Late Antlerless Firearm

☐ Liberty Hunt (September two-day firearm season for youth and hunters with disabilities)

☐ Independence Hunt (October four-day firearm season for hunters with disabilities)

How many years have you been hunting deer? *

☐ Less than 5 years

☐ 5–10 years

☐ 11–20 years

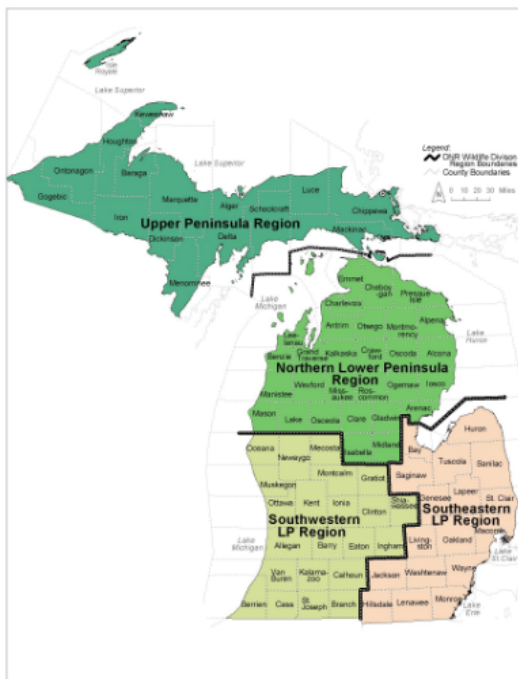
☐ 20+ years

In the last five years, how many times have you purchased a deer hunting license in Michigan? *

- ☐ I haven't purchased a deer hunting license in the past 5 years.
- ☐ One year
- ☐ Two years
- ☐ Three years
- ☐ Four years
- ☐ I have purchased a deer hunting license every year for the past five years

Where do you deer hunt? (Check all that apply.) *

- ☐ Land owned by your family or a friend
- ☐ Leased land
- ☐ Public land
- ☐ Other



Please select the Management Region in which you deer hunted MOST frequently in the last 5 years. (Select only one). *

- ☐ Upper Peninsula Region
- ☐ Northern Lower Peninsula Region
- ☐ Southwestern LP Region
- ☐ Southeastern LP Region

As a recreational activity, how important is deer hunting for you compared to your other recreational activities? (Select one.) *

- ☒ My most important recreational activity
- ☐ One of my more important recreational activities
- ☐ No more important than my other recreational activities
- ☐ Less important than most of my recreational activities
- ☐ Not at all important to me as a recreational activity

Currently, opening day of firearms deer season in Michigan is November 15. For various reasons, some hunters would like to see opening day moved to the nearest Saturday. Which of the following best describes your opinion? (Please check one.) *

- ☐ I would prefer opening day to stay on November 15, regardless of whichever day of the week it falls
- ☐ I would prefer opening day to be moved to the Saturday nearest to November 15
- ☐ I don't have a strong opinion either way

Please rate the following reasons why you would prefer to keep opening day on November 15:

	Not important at all	Not very important	Neutral	Important	Very Important
It is a hunting tradition *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't want to have to learn and remember a different date every year *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If it is a Saturday, more people will hunt, and I don't want to deal with any more hunters on opening day *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If opening day were moved to the Saturday nearest to November 15, which of the following describe your opinion(s)? (Check all that apply.) *

- ☐ It would allow me to hunt opening day more frequently
- ☐ It would allow my kids or other family members to hunt opening day more frequently
- ☐ It would increase the number of hunters in the field, so I would probably no longer hunt opening day to avoid the extra hunting pressure
- ☐ It would increase the number of hunters in the field, but that would not keep me from hunting opening day
- ☐ I will hunt opening day no matter what day of the week it is, but I would prefer to keep it on November 15
- ☐ I will hunt opening day no matter what day of the week it is, but I would prefer it moved to Saturday
- ☐ I will hunt opening day no matter what day of the week it is, and I really don't care if it is November 15 or the closest Saturday

Waterfowl seasons often open on different dates in different parts of the state, which provides hunters a chance to travel and hunt on multiple opening days. If Michigan started the firearms deer season on different dates in different parts of the state, would you be more likely to travel to other locations to hunt on multiple firearms deer season opening days? *

- ☐ I would be more likely to travel to other locations
- ☐ I would not be any more likely to travel to other locations
- ☐ I don't know

Some hunters say they would like to have multi-year license bundles, so they don't have to remember to buy their tags every year. Please indicate how likely you would be to take advantage of the following deer hunting license options:

	Not at all likely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely
Two-year license bundle *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Three-year license bundle *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Three-year license bundle with a price discount *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate how much interest you would have in the following:

	Not interested at all	Slightly interested	Neutral	Interested	Very interested
Discounted price for your deer hunting license if you refer a friend to buy a license *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discounted price for your deer hunting license if you buy licenses in consecutive years *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Entry into a prize lottery for hunters who buy licenses in consecutive years *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Some hunters would like additional tips or instruction on various topics. Please indicate how much interest you would have in attending a one-day workshop on the following topics:

	Not interested at all	Slightly interested	Neutral	Interested	Very interested
Deer processing (field dressing, butchering) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deer hunting techniques *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of GPS/maps/compass *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Land management (food plots, plantings, habitat enhancements) *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Venison and wild game cooking *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have mandatory Antler Point Restrictions been established by the Michigan DNR for the area in which you deer hunt MOST frequently? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I do not know

Have you hunted deer more often, less often, or about the same specifically because of the Antler Point Restriction? *

- ☐ More often
- ☐ Less often
- ☐ The same
- ☐ I do not know

In general, do you find the deer hunting regulations in Michigan to be too complex? *

- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
-

Are there any hunting regulations that keep you from hunting as much as you would like?

- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
-

Are there any changes that Michigan DNR could make to the regulations that would help you to hunt deer more often?

- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
-

Thank you! You have successfully completed the survey, which will help DNR Wildlife Division better understand what hunters want and improve the deer hunting experience in Michigan. If you would like to enter the random drawing for a \$500 VISA gift card, please click here: DeerHunterDrawing.questionpro.com

If you don't wish to enter the drawing, your response to the survey has been saved and you can close the browser window safely.

Appendix D. Email Invitations for Online Survey

Subject Lines

12/17/16 Original - DNR Wants Your Opinion about Deer Hunting Regulations

01/09/17 Reminder 1 - Second Chance – Michigan Deer Hunter Survey

01/23/17 Reminder 2 - Time is running out - Tell DNR What You Think About Deer Hunting Regulations

Body of all emails

Dear Michigan Hunter,

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is conducting an online survey of resident deer hunters like you, to find out what you think about some of Michigan's deer hunting regulations and their impact on the quality of your hunting experience.

Would you be willing to complete a short survey to tell us what you think? It should take less than ten minutes, and all hunters who complete the survey will be entered into a drawing to win a \$500 VISA gift card.

Please go to [Start Survey](#) to complete the survey.

Thank you for being a Michigan deer hunter, and for your input to help us make that experience even better in the future!

Appendix E. Drawing Registration after Survey Completion

To enter the random drawing for a \$500 VISA gift card, please enter your name and e-mail address here. Your information will not be used for any other purpose (only to contact you if you are the winner) and will be deleted as soon as the prize drawing is completed on February 28, 2017.

First Name :

Last Name :

Email Address :

Appendix F. Emails from Online Survey Respondents

Some respondents took the survey and also replied to the survey invitation via email. The text that follows comes directly from these emails with no efforts to correct grammar, spelling, or other issues.

I've already filled out one survey regarding the deer season hoping there was a comments section at the end. Unfortunately there was not. So I will send this email hoping it reaches someone and not a computer. I have not purchased a Michigan deer license in 2 or 3 years now due to the poor hunting. Beyond tired of seeing 1-2 year old bucks being shot just so the person can say they shot a buck. We flat out need stricter antler restrictions. 4 or better on one side with period. No exceptions. No matter it be a single license or a combo tag. This being said I will continue traveling out of state to hunt an area where trophy deer are able to reach their full potential. Not shot as a 1 year old 4 point. The last several years I have had access to 3,040 acres and have ran a multitude of food plots and game cameras on all this property I've only seen several bucks I would consider harvesting. Granted I've had an ungodly amount of immature bucks on camera only to see them get shot on neighboring properties because after all its a buck and the tag allows them to do so. Wouldn't be so bitter if these young bucks were harvested by young or first time hunters but no they're being shot by adults who have hunted since they were kids. Never thought when I was 12 years old and started now hunting that I'd ever have to travel 12 hours or more and spend roughly 10-12% of my yearly income (which would normally be spent in Michigan) to have a decent opportunity to harvest a mature deer. Hopefully in the next few years things can improve until then I will continue watching immature deer get harvested in my home town and travel to hunt and spend money elsewhere.

Sincerely

When I thought the seasons in our area couldn't get any worse –it did. I seen 1 deer in the archery season and that was a doe and I had to shoot it if I wanted any venison. Firearm season, 3 of us never seen a deer. This area that we hunt is the Avery Hills Area between Lewiston and Atlanta – everybody used to hunt this area and we always seen deer. Now, since they opened this area to no limit on does, the firearm hunters have got the deer down to practically nothing and it just keeps allowing you to buy as many permits as you want in this area. There has never been a sick deer taken out of this public area and yet the slaughter has not stopped.

I wrote the DNR a letter back about 6 or 7 years ago and asked them to come out and see what I have commented on, but it never got a reply. And now the forestry department has come in and is clear cutting most of the area here. This used to be one of the best hunting areas around and there used to be a lot of hunters, including people coming in, setting up camp sites with

trailers, tents and whatever else you could live in. And now you are lucky to see one or two campsites – and they only stay for the first couple of days and then they leave because there are so few deer here. If I can convince my son to go back to Wisconsin and hunt, I will not be hunting Michigan much anymore.

I'm sorry you had to destroy this beautiful hunting area, but I guess this goes along with your unsuccessful cormorant protection and for some silly reason, reinstalling wolves in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and now the wolves are now working their way down to the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. Please stop and think of what you are doing to our lakes and hunting areas before you analyze the damage you are doing to the will of the sportsmen. STOP.

A very disgruntled hunter who used to love to hunt and fish this area that has been devastated. If you want proof of what I'm saying, come out here and count the deer tracks in the snow and maybe you will reconsider using some common sense in managing the deer in this area or any other areas. There are no deer runways. All you see is a few deer tracks and when you can count the number of deer tracks, that's telling you that there are no such things as runways anymore. When you take away the supply, which is the doe, you can't reach the demand that hunters need.

In the future, I wish you more success in your endeavors, but I think more of you should get out in the fields and read less books and listen to what the hunters have to say after all, we're the ones that knows what's going on out there.

I probably won't get a reply and I don't expect one. I've never got one before, because you people seem to think you know more about what's going on out there than I do. I've only got about 60 years, which doesn't make me qualified. Really?

seems like cwd is on paid farms, not letting mother nature should take its course

Every time I try to open these surveys all I get is a bunch of gibberish. If I get one I can fill out I would be happy to give my input. I can tell you I deer hunt on Federal Land in Lake County. I like the 3 point on one side or better rule and hope it eventually goes to 4 point on one side. We have seen a major increase in bucks and are starting to see several 2 ½ year old and some 3 ½ year old deer. I would say the buck to doe ration is 1:2 in my area right now. 3 years ago I shot a doe with my bow. 2 years ago I took a 2 ½ year old 7 point and 6 point and last year I took a 2 ½ year old 6 point and a doe. All with my bow. Also a one buck tag rule would be nice to see but I know is probably not a possibility. Our camp has decided to implement that on our own last year in hopes to see more mature bucks make it.

Why did the DNR cave to the special interest group (HSUS) and allow the city of Ann Arbor sterilize the deer herd?

UPDATE | The DNR Let Ann Arbor Sterilize Your Deer

In a year when deer issues threaten to divide the hunting community, the Department of Natural Resources just did something that ought to unite it, and not for a good reason. The Michigan DNR - the agency that you fund with your hunting, fishing and trapping license dollars - just gave the City of Ann Arbor the go-ahead to sterilize free-ranging whitetail deer which you have entrusted the DNR to manage. Every single deer hunter in Michigan - no matter what your views are on APR's, baiting or the one-buck rule - ought to be united in condemning DNR leadership for caving to the anti-hunting interests like HSUS who have pushed for sterilization.

According to the Ann Arbor News, the Michigan DNR approved the City of Ann Arbor's plan to sterilize does in some parts of the city while culling deer in other parts of the city, all by White Buffalo, Inc., the same company behind the plan to give vasectomies to bucks in Staten Island, New York. The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has been pushing communities and state agencies around the country to adopt sterilization as a way to prevent urban bowhunting or future culling. All it would take to stop them in Michigan is for DNR leadership to simply follow its own deer management plan, just updated and approved last month, and say, "No, you can't do that to Michigan's deer." But they didn't.

Instead of "pursuing policies which encourage hunting, including archery hunting, in urban/suburban areas, to address urban/suburban deer issues," and upholding the public trust we place in the DNR to manage our resources, they're allowing an independent company to implement the number one anti-hunting strategy for eliminating deer hunting. What's next? Allowing insurance companies or farmers to sterilize deer under the guise of "research" to address traffic accidents or crop damage? We didn't spend the last century restoring deer herds so they can be sterilized. In Michigan, when there are more deer than the habitat can support, we hunt them and eat them: We don't waste the resource.

If you're as upset as we are about this, consider signing up for public comment at the Natural Resources Commission meeting on Thursday. We will fight this with everything we have. We're going to invest staff time and resources in making sure this travesty never happens again in Michigan. Help us protect your deer and your deer hunting heritage by making a donation at www.mucc.org/donate!

Dear DNR associate,

You can survey me in person if you visit me at the Hanover lecture series in one week from today at MSU ANR natural resources building, Room 225 after the lecture series is over. It would be good to meet you, and that's a quick drive from the state office there. If you don't, that's okay too, but for now I'm going to opt out.

Dear DNR Wildlife,

Thank you for the sending me the survey on deer hunting; I value the resource and appreciate your efforts to improve the experience.

Some feedback on the survey: one of the questions midway through the survey requires an answer in response, yet no answers were appropriate for me. The question was something like "How would a different opening (firearm) day affect you?" and all of the answers seemed to say "It would affect me because ...". I only archery hunt, and I typically archery hunt throughout the gun season in the same manner, so opening day changes wouldn't substantially affect me; there should be an option for this in the survey to accommodate hunters that are neutral on the issue. Otherwise, people like me are forced to submit an answer indicating that it will affect us. Probably too late to change the survey, but worth thinking about in the interpretation of your data.

Best,

Your survey has no place for input. I have hunted since 16, I am 56. I don't like the early gun hunts before bow season. I don't like having to buy all of my tags up front. I hunt more for food than sport. It is getting more expensive to hunt and I am seeing less deer. Next year may be the first year I don't hunt in 40 years.

Matt, thanks for responding. I was expecting a box to add additional information to the On Line Survey, however there was none.

I would like to add my additional comments on the opening day deer hunt. Personally I believe the DNR should consider changing with the times. Each year less youth hunters are interested in hunting. I believe the hunters along with the DNR, needs to share partial responsibility for the loss of interest. While traveling out west, I noticed how families gather on opening day pheasant hunts, always on the third Saturday in October, like it's Christmas Holiday. It's truly a family ritual.

I see absolutely no reason for the Youth Deer Hunt and would hope this could and will be *eliminated immediately*. This could be accomplished if the opening day was moved from November 15, to either the second or third Saturday in November. These youth hunts are a failed endeavor of the DNR, even though the DNR had the right idea in mind attempting to get more kids involved.

Either way, the goal is to get kids involved in hunting once again. What harm would this cause if the DNR adopted a three year trail program. If this doesn't work and we don't see a significant

increase in hunting licenses, the DNR could always make the decision to move it back to November 15.

My friends who attended Hunter Safety back in 1972 still hunt and fish together today. I am not sure what the correlation is between Hunting and Fishing, however I can say all of my friends are very successful, none have ever spent a day in jail, and we all remain friends to this day.

Good luck, I am hopeful the DNR will make the right decision.

Thanks

When you see 4 wolves tearing the buck apart you just shot what would call it ? we did not need to bring them back. Also these excuses for the hunt kill being low because of hard winters is B>S. back in the 50's when you could not even get your car off the highway there were more deer than you could imagine. also take a walk in the woods some time and tell me how many rabbits you see I say none. used to be fun hunting, now glad I quit and have lot of friends feel the same Get rid of all these early hunts and go back to the 15 day season and that's it but that will never happen all the DNR is interested is \$\$\$\$ I could go on for ever but you will just trash this anyway so have a nice day

I was wondering if there has been any thought to making the reserved waterfowl hunt a points drawing like the beer hunt drawing . My son an I have been putting in for 12 years an have only been drawn 2 times an will never put in agine unless it goes to a more fair system

To many doe permits allowed go back to 1 buck till herd goess

Just a quick question. How many lifetime licenses were sold and is there any talk of ever selling lifetime licenses again in the future? I know this is not your department but thought I would ask anyway. I have saved a couple of license dealers from irate customers that were trying to purchase a lifetime license. They argued that they could buy one because they had a friend that had one. I had to explain to them and the agent that it was a one time offering in 1989 and has never been offered again.

Spreading the seasons out to February 1st, provides more opportunity for family and friends to plan hunting events. Decongesting (spreading out) the deer seasons would provide time for scheduling other events without interfering to much with the hunting seasons. Some hunters are pretty much absent from family life during firearm and muzzleloader seasons. If muzzleloader season was later, like early/mid January with an extended bow season, a special license might be palatable. Probably more benefits and some risks...

Thanks for the interest in my opinions.

I hope that the DNR never changes the date of opening day of deer season. Like I mentioned in my survey, we need to keep the 15th to make sure the dominant bucks have a chance to breed before being harvested. If it does get changed, I would prefer to see it made the first Saturday "after" the 15th. Otherwise, season could conceivably start on the 9th. That is too early.

Thanks for the reply and for what you do.

Completed your survey and am disappointed with the thought of changing the date. In most magazines, stories, tv shows; most everything refers to traditions and pass it on. Many of us have, November 15 is the Day! To change it for economics purposes and/or a "weekend" is hogwash!! It's a shame that long time traditions can ever stay just that. If we'd stop and reflect on many of the great changes we've made, I'm sure there are many we wish we could take back. Let's not make another mistake.

Hey Matt,

To be honest with you, I didn't expect to hear back. This is awesome that you have taken time to answer my note.

As I mentioned, I am an avid Michigan deer hunter. I also hunt in Ohio, Iowa, Canada, and several western states (Alaska too but of course those are blacktail deer). I hunt Archery season (with a compound), shotgun, rifle, muzzle loader, and then back to archery. I'm also an avid fisherman and a licensed taxidermist. I have studied deer and deer hunting for nearly 5 decades and if I weren't so lazy, I believe I could write a pretty good book on the subject.

Now having said all that, does that make me an expert? That I cannot say. One thing I would say for sure is that I'm what you might call "old school" when it comes to hunting. I can remember when seeing a deer track in Washtenaw County was pretty exciting stuff back in the 60s. And I was in the thick of things when we enjoyed wonderful deer hunting in the UP deer camp in the 80s. I know a lot of deer hunters, and eventually when talking with them, MDNR deer management usually becomes a topic of discussion.

I think one has to be aware and consider that there is more than one kind of deer hunter in Michigan. I think there are several kinds but basically just a few. Obviously there are those among us that are trophy hunters. Those guys are going to pretty hard to please so, I don't think that it's reasonable to try and manage for them without ticking off the larger majority.

I think the majority want to see deer. Most I think would be happy with a "racked buck". Of course they can dream about the giant mega buck 180+ inchers, but basically those are nothing more than dreams. Most guys I know are happy with a nice 2 year old 8 or 10 point that would score 120 inches or so. They would be ecstatic with a 3 year old!! And beyond that 4+ year old

deer are scarce as hens teeth. And kuddos to the DNR for implementing point restrictions in some areas. I have heard some good reports from those areas that the hunters think it is working. Of course it works. Except for the occasional hi grading of a few genetically superior 8 point yearlings. It works.

Ok Matt, before I put you to sleep with my ramblings, let get to a few things I am not in favor of.

Early doe hunt in mid Sept. Come on maaaaaaan! How many big boys fall during that fiasco? You know you can still pattern the big bucks in Sept. Dad kills a lot of the giants during those hunts. It's ridiculous. Not to mention the disturbance in the woods before the archery hunters get in there. Not one hunter that I know, and I know a lot of em, approve of this hunt. Not one!

Then you have the youth gun hunt in October. Another atrocity. Let the kids, who have already had everything handed to them on silver platter, go out and sit in dad's tree stand that he has been baiting for a month and shoot the biggest buck they will probably ever shoot in their lifetime (unless dad takes the gun). Dad will gut it, drag it out, and do everything else, while the kid in tow cant stay on the trail because he has his nose stuck in his iphone. This my friend, is wrong. This is not going to make a young person a hunter.

Now....I am all for the Liberty and Independence hunts! Those guys deserve it!

Crossbows (100 yard gun bows).....I'm afraid that ship has sailed. Too many people to piss off if you try and stop that joke. I am all for crossbows for the disabled like it used to be. Now you have a generation of hunters that think deer hunting is matter of throwing the bait down and climbing up in a tree and shooting the deer at 20 yards. That is a shame to me.

I am not in favor of baiting, but I don't have a problem if people want to do it. I understand, if you only have 10 or 20 acres to hunt on, you may need to bait in order to see any deer. The amount of bait is an issue. Most are getting carried away.

Doe hunting.....I'm fine with the way the DNR is managing the doe hunting. I shoot does for the freezer if I feel like they are plentiful enough. Right now here at my place they are not so I am not taking does here in Washtenaw Co. Other parts of the county have plenty of deer but not around my house for some reason. We used to have lots of deer here but not for several years. I suspect the coyotes have a lot to do with it. I caught one this morning.

Well Matt....I'm going to have to get off here. Thank you for letting me say a couple of things about deer hunting here in our great state.

Take care.

Just to be sure I record your thought correctly as you saying that the additional hunters/hunting pressure from the popularity of the crossbow ruined archery season OR that the additional effectiveness of the crossbow over the traditional bow ruined archery season?

Yes you are right in saying , it's a much more advanced weapon , not Archer ever considered it a bow and arrow , it has no business being in Archery season , the archers fought against it in the 80, and won , we lost this time , and over money the Archery season will be destroyed ! you put probably 8 hundred thousand guys and girls in the would with a crossbow and you think it's not going to have an effect on deer population ? since I got your attention , why is there an early deer season , when the bucks killed haven't even bread yet ? everyone I talked to the fathers did the shooting , the kids can't even hold the gun up , let alone shoot a deer !, ps , you asked for my input you got it , but all real archers who shoot and practice to be proficient with a real Bow , know a crossbow is a basically a gun ! thanks for asking [name removed]

I have taken the survey and would like to offer some suggestions.

- 1) Establish a two deer, 1 buck limit per year with antler restrictions
- 2) Base deer license should be for buck or doe
- 3) Move firearm opening day later in the year, maybe Thanksgiving weekend, providing more doe pregnancy.
- 4) Establish mandatory deer check-in on web and random physical check-in.

Thank you,

I've completed this survey, but didn't see a spot for general comments. I would like to state that I would like to see the state of Michigan revert to a one buck rule instead of two, we see a lot of people taking two 2.5year old bucks just because they are legal. If two bucks are still issued, perhaps one during firearm and one archery. APR has been working great in our area. Thanks

My primary hunting area is Grand Traverse County, where APR's have been in effect for several years. This fall I saw more deer total, and more bucks, than I have EVER seen up there while hunting. The bucks were generally not legal per the APR's, but all looked very healthy.

From my perspective the APR's have been a good thing for the deer herd up there, and I support them very much, even though it means having to "pass" on a guy that might have some good body size but not qualify under the APR's.

HOW ABOUT SOME COMMENTS?--FORGET ANTLER RESTRICTIONS-GO TO ONE BUCK ONLY-I HAVE HUNTED IOWA NINE TIMES AND IT WORKS WELL THERE-PLEASE RESPOND AND LET ME KNOW MY COMMENT WAS HEARD--[name removed]

There is a severe need for antler restrictions and or a one buck limit in the northern lower peninsula.

Please use the KISS principle "Keep it simple stupid." The regulations are too complex. I think you take the fun out of fishing and hunting with all of the complex regulations. I'm tired of the cat and mouse play with the DNR officers and the sportsmen. Sportsmen are treated like criminals until proven otherwise. I'm done with hunting and fishing, I need to get a law degree now just to read and understand the regulations. I'll be studying law instead of hunting.

Not sure if this email will get to anyone, but I found an issue with the survey. In the question about opening day, and whether my hunting behavior would change if the timing of opening day would change, there is no option for those of use who don't hunt opening day. I tried to leave the question blank (because I don't hunt opening day) but it required me to put an answer down and that will lead you to false conclusions about opening day.

Well I feel it's going good and being really fair about the rules but hot pink instead of orange. not good lol.

Make a 6 point minimum or 4 point on one side minimum restriction statewide. or a 1 buck limit. Lets start growing mature bucks. Keep killing does if population is too high. My opinion.

I just completed your survey. Some of the questions regarding licensing did not apply to me because I have a life time license. You should have a spot on the survey were lifetime license holders can indicate this.

I am against changing opening day because it could possibly fall early enough during the peak rut which could interrupt deer breeding habits. We need those dominant bucks to breed as many does as possible before being harvested. Even before I retired, I was against changing opening day.

Somehow, you need to educate hunters on the importance of reading the regulations. Maybe they are too complicated for some people to read and understand. The biggest give away that they are not read is the fact that so many hunters still "stick" the tag to the antler. Page 62 of the regs tells how to properly attach a tag and when. I live next to the Gregory State Game area and still see many deer removed from the State land with no tag. They walk right by my house. Hunters need to be educated about regulations, not taught how to cook venison. I think hunters that violate the regs, "I didn't know that," is not an excuse. It should be mandatory that they take a test on hunting regulations before they are allowed to buy another license.

My lifetime deer tags do not have a sticky backing like the over the counter tags do. Make all deer tags like that. I even contacted Jimmy Gretzinger and suggested during a hunting segment that they talk about the proper way to tag deer. He said it was a good idea and they'll try to work it in, but it may have to wait until next year.

Thank you for your time and best regards,

Do you not think that a late season is hurting deer hunting instead of helping it? You shoot one doe" isn't there the chance of killing a unborn ? She could of had twins.... We have enough hunts as there is private land or not

Deer hunting is a great, long standing, tradition in MI; much enjoyed my me and my whole family for the past 40+ years.

We own a farm near Dexter Mich and have assisted handicapped, veterans in hunting for deer on our land this year.

We hope to do more of that next year.

Thanks for all you at the DNR do to encourage deer hunting in Michigan. It is a great tradition among Michigan sportsmen and sportswomen.

One other regulation that needs adjusting is the youth hunt. We have families here in the Copper Country that have 5 to 12 children. Many of these buy licenses for all and harvest large numbers of deer, with not all shot by the license holder. This harvest, along with severe winters and canine predators, has an impact on the already low deer population. I firmly believe in the youth hunt, but feel there should be a limit of two youth licenses per family.

Spend more money on habitat

Limit Indian deer kills

Allow wolf hunting

Have a no spike rule

To many crossbows , ruined the Archery season

Would like one buck tag in whole state

Would love to see antler point restrictions in southeastern lower Peninsula on both tags! Way too many young deer being taken out every year. Harder and harder every year to harvest a 3 + yr old deer.

Allow cross bow use in U.P. Post firearm season

There is not many deer in mich you have let the insurance company's kill off our deer herd

not a resident, now officially in florida. however, i own a camp and home in the UP. think it is very unfair to have to pay out of stay license fees. as a result, have not bought a tag in two years. this also means my two sons, 3 grandchildren also do not hunt (we all use to every year). i live in marquette 5 mths a year, and still work part time at marquette general hospital, paying michigan taxes. you need to fix this. poor management is killing hunting now and for the future. by restricting hunting opportunities does the state really think this is good? [name and contact information removed]

I would like to see a restriction on all doe hunting on state land in the northern lower and a statewide 3point on a side buck restriction state wide. Also a max harvest of one buck bow one buck gun. The deer hunting over the past 40 years on state land in Clare and Roscommon Counties is bad and getting worse. Deer are concentrated on private lands near agriculture. Also remove the shotgun zone rules completely. They're a joke, modern muzzle loaders and sabot shotguns have the ballistics of modern rifles now.