

Rhode Island Hunters' Attitudes Toward Hunting and Wildlife Management



Credit: Sarah Petrarca

**Study conducted for the
Rhode Island Department of Environmental
Management, Division of Fish & Wildlife**

2022



RHODE ISLAND HUNTERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD WILDLIFE AND HUNTING MANAGEMENT

2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted for the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish & Wildlife (the Division), to determine hunters' attitudes toward wildlife management and the actions of the Division. The survey assessed various aspects of hunter participation, behaviors, harvest success, satisfaction, preferences, and demographic characteristics. This report represents the Division's first major survey of licensed hunters in 15 years. The study consisted of a scientific, multi-model survey of hunters licensed to hunt in Rhode Island, resident or nonresident, aged 15 years old or older. (Hunters younger than 18 needed the permission of a parent or guardian to take the survey.)

The survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the Division. The sample of licensed hunters was provided by the Division, and it included those who had a license to hunt in Rhode Island within the past 3 years. An attempt was made to interview every licensed Rhode Island hunter; therefore, the study was an attempted census rather than a probability-based random sampling of hunters.

The survey used a multi-modal approach that included multiple forms of contact (email, mail, and/or telephone) and two survey modes (online and telephone surveys). The survey was computer coded for both online surveying and telephone surveying. The surveys were administered from March to June 2022, and Responsive Management obtained 3,021 completed surveys.

The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management. The survey results were weighted by license type and contact method to match the proper proportions within the hunter license database. At a 95% confidence interval the sampling error is estimated to be plus or minus 1.58 percentage points.

GENERAL HUNTING CHARACTERISTICS

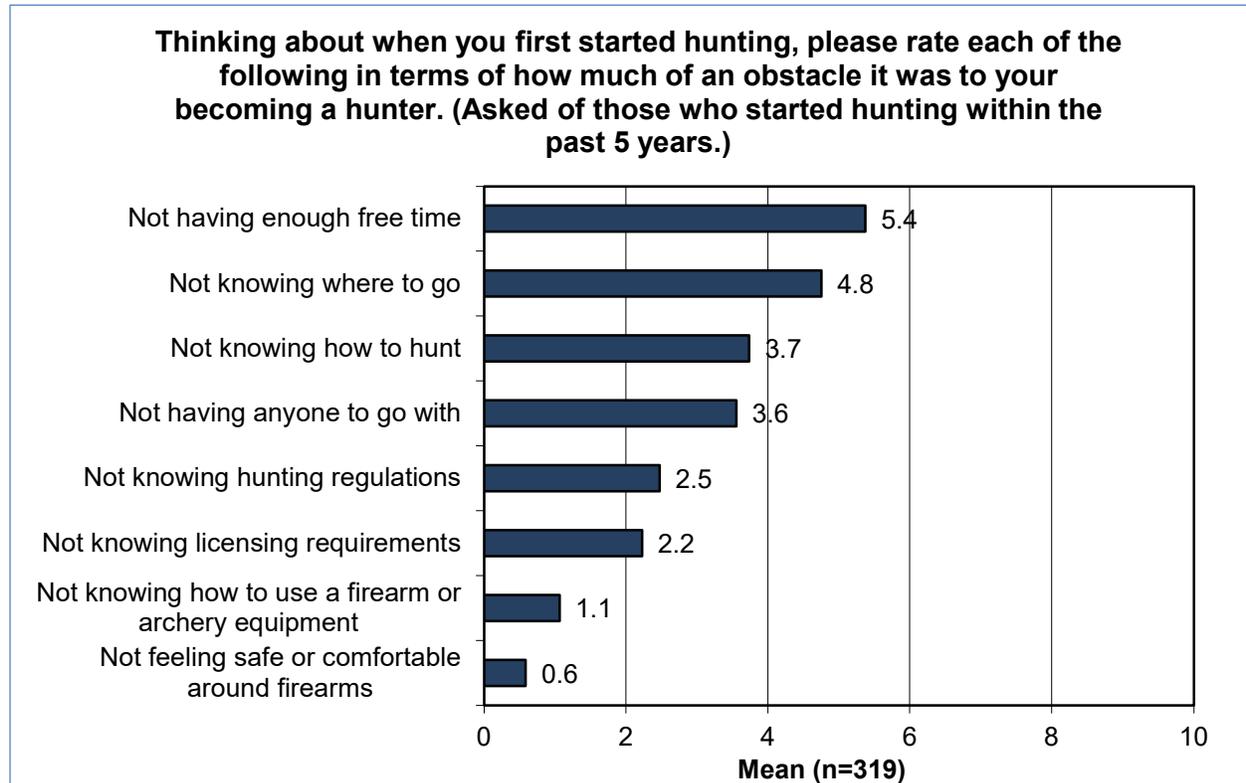
Among all Rhode Island hunting license holders in the sample, 78% hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years, 17% have hunted before (in or out of state) but not in Rhode Island in the past 3 years, and 4% never hunted.

From this point on, only those who hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years are included in the survey questions. References to "hunters" in the text now refer to those who hunted in the past 3 years.

Nearly half of hunters have decades of experience: 47% have been hunting over 20 years. The mean number of years hunted is 28.47 and the median is 30. As to hunting specifically in Rhode Island, the mean is 19.80 years and the median is 15 years.

Those who started hunting within the past 5 years were presented with eight potential obstacles to becoming a hunter, and they were asked to rate how much each was an obstacle, on a scale of 0 to 10. A lack of free time is the only obstacle with a mean rating above the

midpoint of 5, suggesting that most of the listed items were not substantial obstacles to becoming a hunter. The top ratings are for lack of free time (mean rating of 5.4) and not knowing where to go (4.8). A second tier includes not knowing how to hunt (3.7) and not having anyone to go with (3.6).



Next, hunters were asked to rate the importance of seven factors that helped them get ready to hunt on their own, on a scale of 0 to 10. The top ratings were for a friend, family member, or mentor taking them hunting (mean rating of 8.2); a friend, family member, or mentor showing them how to use a firearm or archery equipment (8.0); and a hunting regulations book from a state fish and wildlife agency (8.0). Also receiving high ratings were a state hunter education course (7.3) and a friend, family member, or mentor sharing equipment and gear (7.1). Online information and YouTube videos received low ratings of importance.

Overall, 41% of hunters say that their amount of hunting in Rhode Island stayed about the same over the past few years, while slightly more say it has decreased (32%) than increased (26%).

HUNTING IN OTHER STATES

Regarding the states of hunting activity by Rhode Island hunters in the past few years, 30% hunted mostly in Rhode Island, 21% hunted mostly in states other than Rhode Island, and 10% hunted in Rhode Island and other states about equally; 38% did not hunt in another state. Those who hunted in other states most commonly hunted in the nearby states of Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New York.

These multi-state hunters most frequently said that hunting in Rhode Island is about the same as in other states (42% stated this), whereas slightly more said the hunting is worse in Rhode Island (30%) than better (22%).

Sunday hunting in Rhode Island is an important draw for nonresident hunters: most (91%) say that it is an important reason they hunt in the state; 81% say it is *very* important. In contrast, only 5% say Sunday hunting is unimportant. Also, a majority of hunters, residents and nonresidents, (55%) say the Division's pheasant program is at least a somewhat important reason they hunt in the state, compared to 26% who say it is not at all important and 19% who do not know.

MENTORING

About three quarters of hunters (74%) have mentored another hunter, and an even higher percentage (88%) are at least somewhat likely to mentor other hunters in the future.

The survey stated that the minimum age to hunt unsupervised in Rhode Island is 15 years old. A majority of hunters (70%) think this is about the right age, while 20% think it is too young and 7% think it is too old.

HUNTING LANDS

The availability of hunting land is not rated very highly by hunters: 41% rate the availability in the top half of the scale (excellent at 10%; good at 31%), compared to 56% who rate it in the bottom half of the scale (fair at 38%; poor at 18%). However, note that most hunters give a moderate rating (good or fair) rather than an extreme rating. Hunters most frequently hunt on public land in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) (56% do so), private land owned by someone else (48%), and private land owned by themselves or family members (24%). Respondents could name multiple types of land.

A majority of hunters (55%) travel less than 30 miles to hunt; the median distance is 65.23 miles and the median is 18 miles.

Those who typically hunt on public lands or co-op units in Rhode Island are more likely to say those lands offer a worse hunting experience compared to other lands (31% state this) than a better experience (14%); meanwhile, 35% say they offer about the same kind of experience and 20% do not know.

Among those who typically hunt on public lands or co-op units, 44% say there is about the right number other hunters on them and 35% say there are too many. Over three fourths of these hunters (77%) agree that these lands are generally safe to hunt on, compared to only 6% who disagree.

Those who typically hunt on WMAs most frequently hunt the Arcadia, Big River, Great Swamp, Carolina, Durfee Hill, and Buck Hill WMAs.

SPECIES HUNTED

Overall, 76% of hunters (those who hunted in Rhode Island within the past 3 years) hunted during the 2021-2022 season. By far, deer was the most hunted species in the past season (75% of those who hunted in 2021-2022 hunted deer), while about a quarter of these hunters hunted upland game birds, waterfowl, turkey, and small game.

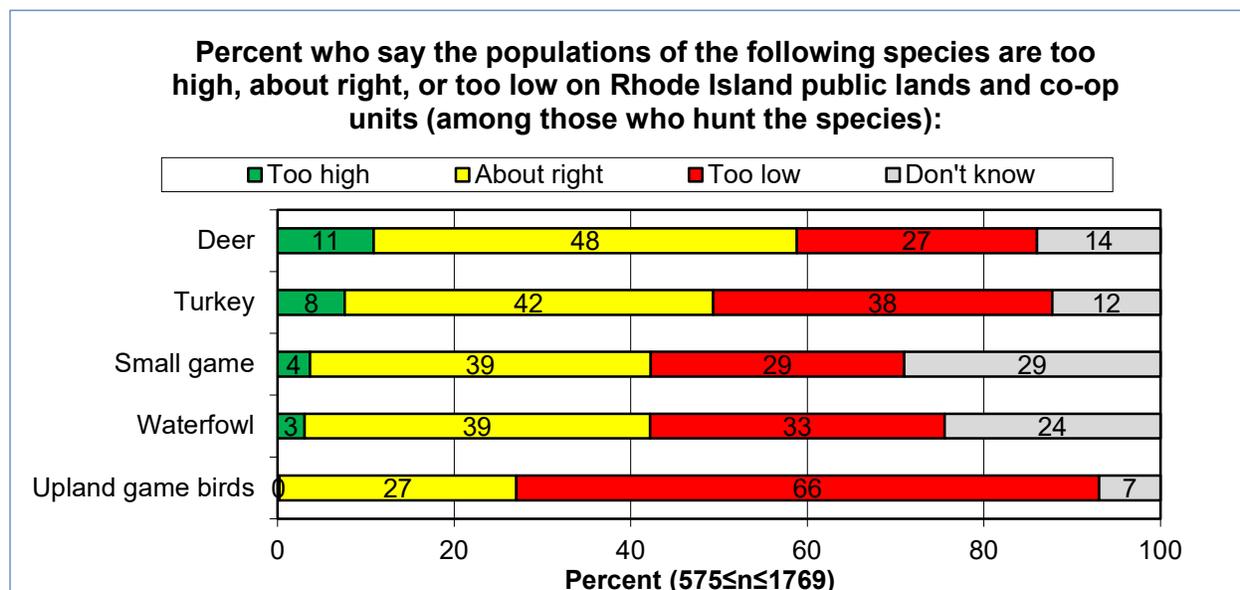
Hunters spent nearly 122,000 days hunting deer last season. In addition, hunters spent over 22,000 days hunting upland game birds, waterfowl, and small game, and they spent nearly 12,000 days hunting turkey.

Looking at those who hunted in the past 3 years but not the past year in Rhode Island, about two thirds typically hunt deer, about a third hunt waterfowl, and about a quarter hunt upland game birds. Among all hunters, 74% anticipate hunting deer next year, a third expect to hunt upland game birds, turkey, and waterfowl, and about a quarter expect to hunt small game.

Hunters were next asked which species they think they will hunt 5 years from now, and the results are similar to their 1-year projections. The percentages expecting to hunt each species or species group are: deer (76% expect to hunt deer in 5 years), turkey (40%), upland game birds (37%), waterfowl (37%), and small game (30%).

While hunting in Rhode Island in the past few years, 52% of hunters have seen fishers, 27% have seen bobcats, and 8% have seen black bears (these species were specifically asked about in the survey).

Hunters for each species or species group were asked if the populations of the species were too high, about right, or too low on Rhode Island public lands and co-op units. Hunters most commonly stated that the populations were about right, with the exception of upland game bird hunters, in which two thirds think the population is too low. Results are shown in descending order of *too high* percentages.



HUNTING EQUIPMENT

Rhode Island hunters most often hunt with shotguns (78%), archery equipment (57%), and muzzleloader rifles (48%) (respondents could give multiple responses). Most hunters (85%) use more than one type of equipment. When asked to name their most preferred weapon for hunting, hunters most often said shotguns (37% gave this response), archery equipment (20%), muzzleloader rifles (17%), and modern rifles (12%).

Among those who hunted in the 2021-2022 season, the mean expenditure for equipment is \$1,193.25 (the median is \$400) and the mean expenditure for trips is \$331.86 (the median is \$100).

DEER HUNTING SATISFACTION

A majority of deer hunters (72%) were satisfied with their deer hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years, compared to 14% who were dissatisfied.

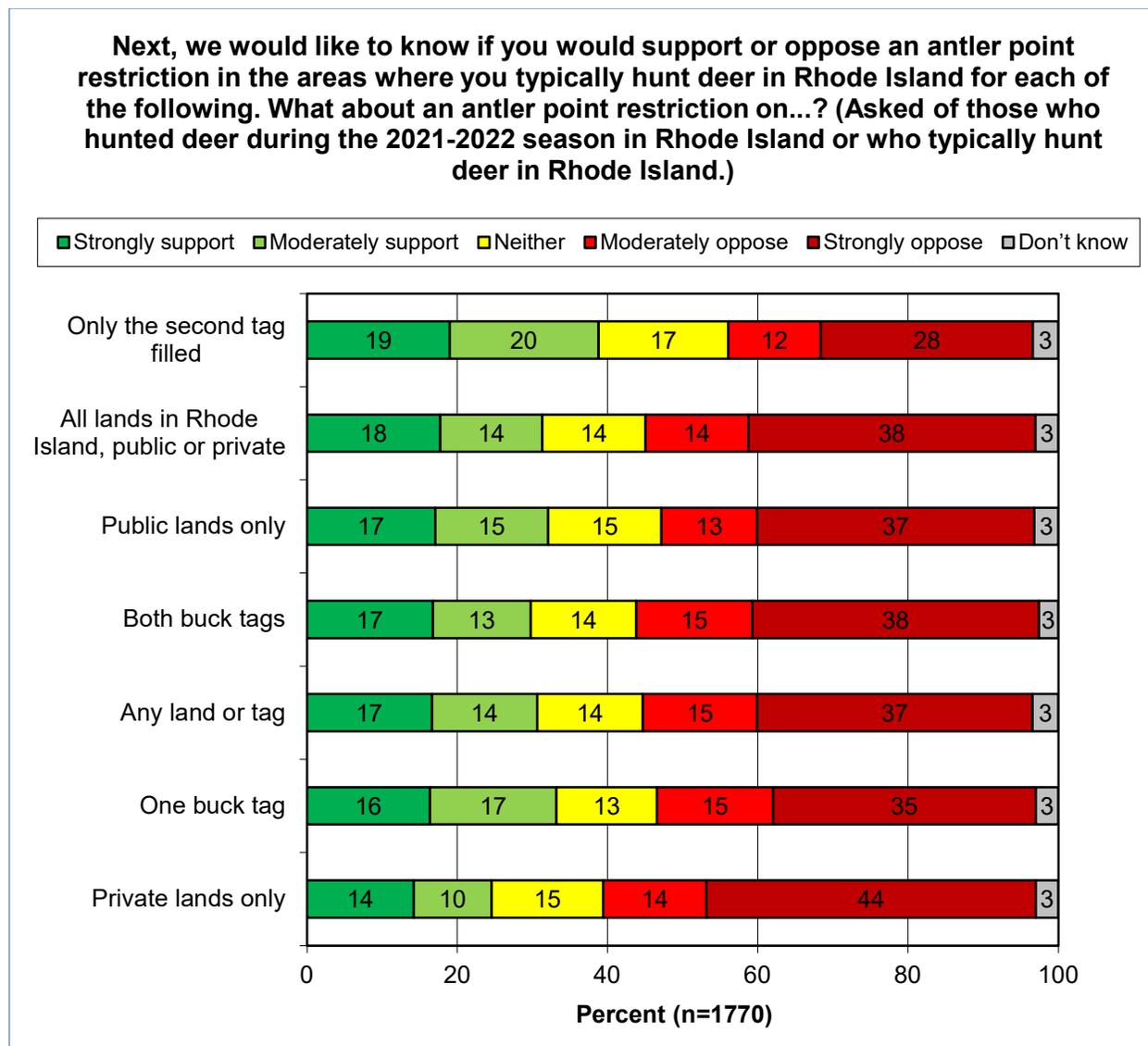
Deer hunters are knowledgeable about the Division's deer program: 61% are very knowledgeable, 33% are somewhat knowledgeable, and 4% are a little knowledgeable.

Deer hunters were asked about their satisfaction with three aspects of the Division's deer program. All aspects had large majorities being satisfied with them: tagging and reporting requirements (81% of deer hunters are very or somewhat satisfied with this), bag limits (83%), and the season structure (77%).

The majority of deer hunters (52%) say the deer population where they typically hunt is remaining about the same, while slightly more say it is decreasing (22%) than increasing (17%). Also, 51% prefer to hunt any deer they see, while 38% prefer to hunt only mature bucks.

Within the past few years, 61% of deer hunters have not taken any harvested deer to a butcher, processor, or taxidermist, whereas 28% have gone to a butcher or processor in Rhode Island. Next, the survey stated that the import of deer carcasses into Rhode Island is banned from any states other than Massachusetts or Connecticut. More deer hunters oppose (43%) than support (26%) having no exemptions to the ban, with the remainder being neutral. (In other words, there are more hunters who want to continue allowing deer carcasses from Massachusetts or Connecticut.)

Deer hunters were asked about support for or opposition to antler point restrictions in seven different scenarios. There was much more opposition than support in each scenario, with the highest opposition to antler point restrictions on private lands only (58% strongly or moderately oppose this) and for both buck tags (54%, summed on unrounded numbers). The full list is shown on the following page in descending order of strong support.



DEER HUNTING EFFORT AND HARVEST

Among those who hunted deer in 2021-2022, a majority (55%) primarily hunted for the meat, 22% hunted for the sport, and 10% hunted to be close to nature.

These hunters participated a mean of 20.05 days and a median of 15 days (this was the most avid hunter group last season).

Over a third of deer hunters successfully harvested deer during the 2021-2022 hunting season in Rhode Island. Approximately 6,100 hunters harvested approximately 4,100 deer, with over 2,200 being bucks.

In the 2021-2022 deer season, deer were most commonly harvested in Washington and Providence Counties. Also, 7% of deer hunters shot a deer that they did not recover last season.

Most of those who harvested deer in 2021-2022 (87%) reported their harvest online or by smartphone, and 9% reported by calling the Division. Only 3% did not report their harvest. Nearly half of the season's deer hunters (47%) have ever brought harvested deer to a Division check station. Deer hunters who brought harvested deer to a check station most often visited the Arcadia and Durfee Hill Management Areas. These hunters give high ratings to their check station experience: 92% rate it in the top half of scale (excellent at 62%; good at 30%), compared to only 6% who rate it in the bottom half of the scale (fair at 4%; poor at 2%).

CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Nearly half of deer hunters (44%) have heard anything about Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Rhode Island in the past few years, compared to 54% who have not. Deer hunters are more likely to know a great deal (12%) or moderate amount (46%) about CWD (58% combined) than to know a little (33%) or nothing (8%) (41% combined).

Deer hunters were asked to rate how much of a problem they think CWD is in Rhode Island, on a scale of 0 to 10. In general, they are not overly concerned: the mean rating is 3.0 and the median is 2. About a quarter of deer hunters gave a 0 rating.

TURKEY HUNTING

Turkey hunters were much more likely to be satisfied (58%) than dissatisfied (19%) with their turkey hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years.

Among those who hunted turkey in 2021-2022, 42% primarily hunted for the sport, 32% hunted for the meat, and 12% hunted to be with family and friends.

Turkey hunters participated a mean of 6.45 days and a median of 5 days during the 2021-2022 season.

About a quarter of turkey hunters (26%) successfully harvested turkey during the 2021-2022 hunting season in Rhode Island. Approximately 1,800 hunters harvested over 600 turkeys. Turkey were most commonly harvested in Washington and Providence Counties.

SMALL GAME HUNTING

A slight majority of small game hunters (56%) were satisfied with their small game hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years, while 20% were dissatisfied.

Among those who hunted small game in 2021-2022, 32% primarily hunted for the meat and 30% hunted for the sport.

Small game hunters participated a mean of 13.29 days and a median of 10 days during the 2021-2022 season.

The most hunted small game species in 2021-2022 were squirrel (55% of small game hunters hunted squirrel), rabbit (54%), and coyote (51%).

For each small game species listed in the survey, 2021-2022 small game hunters were asked if they specifically targeted the species or if they hunted it because the opportunity presented itself. The results are shown below in descending order of the species that were targeted:

- Squirrel: 74% targeted the species; 25% hunted it because of the opportunity
- Rabbit: 64% targeted; 34% opportunity
- Coyote: 61% targeted; 38% opportunity
- Fox: 50% targeted; 42% opportunity
- Raccoon: 44% targeted; 51% opportunity

Among those who hunted rabbit in the 2021-2022 season, 38% hunted on WMAs, most frequently the Arcadia, Great Swamp, and Carolina WMAs.

There were over 1,700 small game hunters during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island. Squirrel was the most harvested small game, with nearly 1,000 squirrel hunters harvesting nearly 5,300 squirrel.

Number of Small Game Hunters and Harvested Small Game During the 2021-2022 Hunting Season										
Species	Hunters in Sample	Estimated Number of Hunters	Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Harvest per Successful Hunter	Estimated Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Percent Successful Hunters
Small Game (overall)	473	1,744	1,589	1,899						
Coyote	226	907	789	1,026		3.36	1,109	652	1,566	36
Fox	40	146	96	196		2.40	82	3	161	23
Raccoon	27	98	57	139		7.10	197	0	398	28
Rabbit	236	946	825	1,067		6.72	2,871	1,864	3,878	45
Squirrel	253	978	855	1,100		9.26	5,283	3,934	6,631	59

UPLAND GAME BIRD HUNTING

A majority of upland game bird hunters (57%) were satisfied with their upland game bird hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years, although a sizable percentage (28%) were dissatisfied.

By far, pheasant was the most hunted species by those who hunted upland game birds in the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island (91% did so). This is distantly followed by woodcock (26%) and mourning dove (22%). Nearly 2,300 hunters hunted upland game birds during the season, with over 2,000 hunters harvesting nearly 11,000 pheasant. The tabulation on the following page shows the full list of upland game bird hunters and harvested species.

Number of Upland Game Bird Hunters and Harvested Upland Game Birds During the 2021-2022 Hunting Season										
Species	Hunters in Sample	Estimated Number of Hunters	Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Harvest per Successful Hunter	Estimated Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Percent Successful Hunters
Upland Game Birds (overall)	545	2,270	2,101	2,439						
Bobwhite Quail	41	165	112	218		4.90	139	0	278	17
Crow	21	81	43	118		15.69	457	0	1,015	36
Mourning Dove	115	509	418	601		12.54	3,270	1,900	4,639	51
Pheasant	500	2,064	1,900	2,227		7.17	10,830	8,925	12,735	73
Woodcock	147	597	499	695		2.83	615	368	861	36
Chukar	26	109	66	153		15.47	1,287	286	2,288	76

Among those who hunted upland game birds in 2021-2022, 34% primarily hunted for the sport, 31% hunted for the meat, and 25% hunted to be with family and friends.

Upland game bird hunters participated a mean of 11.35 days and a median of 8 days during the 2021-2022 season.

Pheasant hunters who also hunted out of state most commonly say that the quality of pheasants is about the same in Rhode Island as it is in other states (45% stated this); they are slightly more likely to say the quality is worse in Rhode Island (19%) than better (14%). A substantial percentage (22%) do not know.

WATERFOWL HUNTING

A strong majority of waterfowl hunters (69%) were satisfied with their waterfowl hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years, compared to 17% who were dissatisfied.

Waterfowl hunters are knowledgeable about the Division's waterfowl program: 54% are very knowledgeable, 31% are somewhat knowledgeable, and 11% are a little knowledgeable. A majority of those who hunted waterfowl last season (60%) are satisfied with the current season structure and 19% are dissatisfied.

Waterfowl hunters are divided on the concept of splitting the state into two zones with separate season structures: 37% support and 31% oppose. There is an even split on the concept of keeping one zone and changing the season dates to accommodate more early season ducks at the expense of waterfowl hunting later in January: 38% support and 38% oppose. Neutral and "don't know" percentages were substantial for both questions.

Among those who hunted waterfowl in 2021-2022, 36% primarily hunted for the sport, 30% hunted to be with family and friends, and 25% hunted for the meat.

Waterfowl hunters participated a mean of 12.22 days and a median of 7 days during the 2021-2022 season.

Waterfowl hunters spent a mean of \$813.21 and a median of \$300 on equipment and a mean of \$323.45 and a median of \$100 on trips during the 2021-2022 season. The relatively low expenditure on trips suggests that many hunted close to home.

The most common waterfowl species hunted during 2021-2022 are Canada goose (79% hunted this) and dabbling ducks/mallards (69%), distantly followed by sea ducks/eiders (39%), diving ducks/ringnecks (38%), brant (29%), and merganser (27%).

Nearly 2,000 hunters hunted waterfowl during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island. The most hunted species were Canada goose (nearly 1,600 hunters harvested over 8,300 Canada goose) and dabbling duck/mallard (nearly 1,400 hunters harvested nearly 13,000 dabbling duck).

Number of Waterfowl Hunters and Harvested Waterfowl During the 2021-2022 Hunting Season									
Species	Hunters in Sample	Estimated Number of Hunters	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Harvest per Successful Hunter	Estimated Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Percent Successful Hunters
Waterfowl (overall)	465	1,986	1,824	2,148					
Canada Goose	368	1,571	1,422	1,720	8.62	8,313	6,470	10,156	61
Snow Goose	29	117	72	162	1.46	10	0	26	6
Brant	132	570	474	667	9.11	2,625	1,665	3,585	50
Diving Ducks	182	755	645	864	13.29	6,827	4,559	9,094	68
Dabbling Ducks	338	1,375	1,234	1,516	13.03	12,698	9,707	15,690	71
Sea Ducks	176	776	665	886	10.15	4,911	3,439	6,383	63
Coot	23	121	75	166	5.03	354	0	872	58
Merganser	115	543	449	637	4.77	1,976	1,463	2,489	76

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The information sources used most frequently by hunters to get information on hunting in Rhode Island are the Division's website (58% stated this), the Division's Hunting and Trapping Regulation Guide (50%), the Division in general, excluding those two sources (24%), and word-of-mouth (21%).

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted for the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish & Wildlife (the Division), to determine hunters' attitudes toward wildlife management and the actions of the Division. The survey assessed various aspects of hunter participation, behaviors, harvest success, satisfaction, preferences, and demographic characteristics. This report represents the Division's first major survey of licensed hunters in 15 years. The study consisted of a scientific, multi-model survey of hunters licensed to hunt in Rhode Island, resident or nonresident, aged 15 years old or older. (Hunters younger than 18 needed the permission of a parent or guardian to take the survey.)

Specific aspects of the research methodology are discussed below.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the Division, based on the research team's familiarity with hunting and wildlife management. The survey was computer coded for both online surveying and telephone surveying.

The online survey was coded in an online survey platform. Note that the online survey was closed, meaning it was available only to respondents who were specifically selected for the survey and were provided with a unique access code that was required for entering the survey. Respondents could complete the survey only once. The survey could not be accessed through a general internet search.

The telephone survey was coded using Responsive Management's computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. An important aspect of this CATI process is that the computer controls which questions are asked, but each telephone survey is administered by a live interviewer.

For both the online and telephone surveys, the survey instrument was programmed to automatically skip questions that did not apply and to substitute phrases in the survey based upon previous responses, as necessary, for the logic and flow of the surveys. There were slight differences between the telephone and online versions of the survey to accommodate each survey mode, but otherwise the surveys were identical. Responsive Management conducted pre-tests of the survey questionnaire in both modes to ensure proper wording, flow, and logic in the surveys. Both the online and telephone versions produced data that could be exported directly into Responsive Management's data analyses programs.

SURVEY SAMPLE

The sample of licensed hunters was provided by the Division, consisting of those who had a license to hunt in Rhode Island within the past 3 years. The sample included email addresses and landline or cellular phone numbers for most hunters. Responsive Management emailed a survey link to all hunters with a valid email address in an attempt to obtain as many completed online interviews as possible. Also, hunters without an email address, or those with an invalid email address that bounced back, were contacted by telephone. Finally, hunters without either an email address or phone number in the hunter database were sent a letter inviting them to

take the survey; the letter provided both a link to take the survey online and a number that they could call to have the survey administered by telephone, whichever they preferred.

These multiple contact attempts provided complete coverage and allowed hunters to complete the survey online or by telephone. An attempt was made to interview every licensed Rhode Island hunter; therefore, the study was an attempted census rather than a probability-based random sampling of hunters. The contact procedures are further discussed in the following section.

MULTI-MODAL SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

The survey used a multi-modal approach that included multiple forms of contact (email, mail, and/or telephone) and two survey modes (online and telephone surveys). This multi-modal approach was used to ensure the most extensive coverage possible of Rhode Island hunters, meaning potential respondents who could not be reached using one form of contact could be contacted using another.

Prior to survey administration, on March 18, 2022, the Division released a newsletter informing Rhode Island hunters of the forthcoming survey. The newsletter confirmed the legitimacy of the study, discussed its purposes and goals, encouraged a high response rate from hunters, and let hunters know that Responsive Management would be contacting them.

Those hunters in the sample with an email address were first contacted by email with an invitation to take the survey. The email contained a direct link to the online survey, as well as a brief description of the purpose of the survey. As many as four emails were sent to hunters in the sample with valid email addresses: one initial email and three reminder emails. The initial email was sent to hunters on March 29, 2022, with reminder emails sent to hunters who had not yet responded to the survey three more times, if needed, at 4- to 6-day intervals.

Note that incorrect and failed email addresses that could not be corrected were removed, and those hunters were placed in the sample to be contacted by telephone (if a number was available) or by letter.

The next two pages show the Division's newsletter, and the page after that shows the outgoing email invitation.

Division Newsletter About the Hunter Survey



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday, March 18, 2022

CONTACT:
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SURVEY AIMS TO UNDERSTAND HUNTERS' EXPERIENCES, PREFERENCES TO HELP DEM IMPROVE STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES

PROVIDENCE – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) Division of Fish and Wildlife has partnered with Responsive Management, a professional survey research firm, to conduct a study of licensed Rhode Island hunters this spring. Designed to better understand hunting participation, experiences, preferences, and opinions in the state, the study is DEM's first major survey of licensed hunters in 15 years.

"This is one of many planned opportunities for DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife to collect constituent input that's essential for steward management," said DEM Supervising Wildlife Biologist David Kalb.



"Our management of wildlife should be based on sound, science-based management and the values of the people that hunt and fish in Rhode Island. This is one way we can collect data on

values and satisfaction. The study results are an important tool in maintaining and improving Division efforts to managing wildlife and providing hunting opportunities in the state.”

The survey will be distributed to all hunters, ages 15 and up, who have purchased a Rhode Island hunting or trapping license within the past three years. Hunters with a valid email address in the RI hunt and fish licensing system will receive a link from [Responsive Management](#) to complete the survey. Hunters with no email address or invalid/bounce-back email addresses will be added to a telephone sample to increase coverage and will be contacted either via phone, text, or mail. Survey phone calls will come from a Providence area phone number. Responsive Management’s goal is to reach an overall sample size of 3,000 hunters. DEM issued nearly 8,000 hunting licenses in 2021.

The best way for hunters to ensure participation is to confirm a working email address is associated with their profile in the RI hunt and fish licensing system. As Responsive Management prepares to contact hunters about this study, DEM hopes to see a high response rate that accurately represents the RI hunting community.

“Responsive Management, led by Executive Director Mark Duda, brings 30 years of survey and human dimensions research to the table,” said DEM Deputy Director of Wildlife Jay Osenkowski. “Their work has spanned across all 50 states, every state fish and wildlife agency, and major conservation organizations including the American Sportfishing Association, Archery Trade Association, Ducks Unlimited, and Hunters’ Leadership Forum. We are excited for the opportunity to collaborate with them and provide this opportunity to RI hunters.”

The survey may take respondents 15 to 25 minutes to complete, depending on their previous hunting experiences. Responsive Management will analyze survey data and prepare a final report to provide DEM with a better understanding of hunter values, satisfaction, and quality of RI hunting experiences as well as hunter opinions and perceptions of important management issues. A summary of survey data will be available to the public in the fall on DEM’s [website](#).

Hunting has a long tradition in Rhode Island, supporting family customs, connecting people with nature, providing food resources, and attracting tourism to the state. Hunters, anglers, and sportsmen and women provide funding for wildlife conservation through the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) [Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program](#), and through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses. These funds allow DEM to acquire and protect wildlife habitat, study local species, and educate the public on the importance of conservation and management in the state. Hunters and anglers purchased more than 80,000 licenses, permits, stamps, and tags in 2021 and contribute more than \$235 million to Rhode Island’s economy each year.

For more information about DEM divisions and programs, visit www.dem.ri.gov or follow us on [Facebook](#), Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM), or Instagram (@rhodeisland.dem) for timely updates.

Email Invitation to Take the Survey

Dear Rhode Island Hunter,

As a hunter with a Rhode Island hunting license and a valued member of our hunting community, we would like to invite you to participate in a quick survey.

The [Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management \(DEM\) Division of Fish and Wildlife](#) is conducting this study to get feedback from hunters in order to better understand hunting participation, experiences, preferences, and opinions in the state.

The study is DEM's first major survey of licensed hunters in 15 years. As one of the hunters selected to participate in the study, your answers are very important to this study and to future management decisions.

The Division would like to know more about everyone's opinions, regardless of experience or knowledge. You do NOT need to have hunted recently; we would still like your opinion. Your answers are very important to this study and to future management decisions.

Your answers will be kept completely confidential and will not be associated with your name or contact information in any way. The survey will only take 10-15 minutes, based on your level of activity and the number of species you hunt.

[Click Here to Start the Survey](#)

[Responsive Management](#), an independent research firm that specializes in natural resource and fish and wildlife issues, has been contracted by the Division to conduct this study. If you need technical assistance with the survey, please contact Responsive Management via email at research@responsivemanagement.com.

For more information on this study:

Please visit the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) Division of Fish and Wildlife's website [HERE](#).

View the full news release: [RI DEM News Release](#)

Or visit the RI DEM's Facebook ([Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management](#)), Twitter ([@RhodeIslandDEM](#)), and Instagram ([RhodeIsland.DEM](#)) for updates on this study.

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate.

Sincerely,
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish and Wildlife
and
Responsive Management

Most hunters without an email address, or those with an invalid email address that bounced back, had a phone number in the database; therefore, attempts were made to contact all of these hunters by phone. For the telephone phase of the survey, telephone interviews were conducted Monday through Friday from noon to 9:00 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 7:00 p.m., local time, using interviewers with experience conducting computer-assisted surveys about conservation and outdoor recreation. A five-callback design was used to avoid bias toward people easy to reach by telephone and to provide an equal opportunity for all to participate. When a respondent could not be reached on the first call, subsequent calls were placed on different days of the week and at different times of the day. The survey was conducted at the time of initial contact, or a callback time was set that was more convenient for the respondent.

After five attempts were made to contact those with cell phones, a text message was sent to those who could not be reached as well. The text included a link to take the survey online.

For quality control, survey center managers monitored some of the interviews in real time and provided feedback to the interviewers. To further ensure the integrity of the telephone survey data, Responsive Management has interviewers who have been trained according to the standards established by the Council of American Survey Research Organizations. Methods of instruction included lecture and role-playing. The survey center managers and other professional staff conducted briefings with the interviewers prior to the administration of this survey. Interviewers were instructed on type of study, study goals and objectives, handling of survey questions, interview length, termination points and qualifiers for participation, interviewer instructions within the survey questionnaire, reading of the survey questions, skip patterns, and probing and clarifying techniques necessary for specific questions on the survey questionnaires.

For both the online and telephone versions of the survey, the questionnaire was programmed to branch and substitute phrases in the survey based on previous responses to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data collection. The survey questionnaire also contained error checkers and computation statements to ensure quality and consistent data.

Finally, those hunters without either an email address or a telephone number were mailed a letter on April 14, 2022. The letter provided a direct URL address for the survey to take it online, as well as a toll-free number to call if they preferred to take the survey by telephone. The toll-free number allowed respondents to contact Responsive Management to take the survey by telephone at that time or to schedule another time for the telephone interview. The letter included the logo of the Division to assure recipients that the survey was legitimate. In addition, each letter included a unique access code that the respondent had to enter in the online survey or give to the interviewer to complete the survey by telephone. The access code served as a unique identifier and ensured that only those who were selected for the survey sample could take the survey, that respondents who had taken the survey would not be further contacted, and that respondents could take the survey only once. The survey could not be accessed through a general internet search. The letter is shown on the following page.

Mail Invitation to Take the Survey

April 14, 2022

**Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management**235 Promenade Street | Providence, RI 02908 | 401.222.4700 | www.dem.ri.gov |

@RhodeIslandDEM

Dear Rhode Island Hunter,

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) Division of Fish and Wildlife is conducting this study to get feedback from hunters in order to better understand hunting participation, experiences, preferences, and opinions in the state. The study is DEM's first major survey of licensed hunters in 15 years. As one of the hunters selected to participate in the study, your answers are very important to this study and to future management decisions.

Your answers will be kept completely confidential and will not be associated with your name or contact information in any way. The survey will only take 10-15 minutes, based on your level of activity and the number of species you hunt.

Responsive Management, an independent research firm that specializes in natural resource and fish and wildlife issues, has been contracted by the Division to conduct this study. **If you need technical assistance with the survey, please contact Responsive Management via email at research@responsivemanagement.com.**

If you would like to complete the survey with one of our professional telephone interviewers, please call 844-836-9364. Please have your Access Code ready so we can pull up your survey. Your Access Code is XXXX.

If you prefer to complete the survey online, you can go to <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/6822297/Rhode-Island-Hunter> and enter your Access Code to begin the survey.

Please refer to the below press release for more information about this study.

Thank you again for your time and willingness to participate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Damian Duda".

Mark Damian Duda,
Responsive Management

Overall, the surveys were administered from March to June 2022. After both the telephone and online surveys were obtained, the survey center managers and/or statisticians checked each completed survey to ensure clarity and completeness.

In total, Responsive Management obtained 3,021 completed surveys.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management. The survey results were weighted by license type and contact method to match the proper proportions within the hunter license database.

Throughout this report, findings of the survey are reported at a 95% confidence interval. For the overall sample of Rhode Island hunters, the sampling error is estimated to be at most plus or minus 1.58 percentage points. The sampling error was calculated using the formula described below, with a sample size of 3,012 and a population of 13,743 licensed Rhode Island hunters.

Sampling Error Equation

$$B = \left(\sqrt{\frac{N_p(.25)}{N_s} - .25} \right) (1.96)$$

Where: B = maximum sampling error (as decimal)
 N_p = population size (i.e., total number who could be surveyed)
 N_s = sample size (i.e., total number of respondents surveyed)

Derived from formula: p. 206 in Dillman, D. A. 2000. *Mail and Internet Surveys*. John Wiley & Sons, NY.

Note: This is a simplified version of the formula that calculates the maximum sampling error using a 50:50 split (the most conservative calculation because a 50:50 split would give maximum variation).

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

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

- Single response questions: Some questions allow only a single response.
- Multiple response questions: Other questions allow respondents to give more than one response or choose all that apply. Those that allow more than a single response are indicated on the graphs with the label, "Multiple Responses Allowed."
- Closed-ended questions have an answer set from which to choose.
- Open-ended questions are those in which no answer set is presented to the respondents; rather, they can respond with anything that comes to mind from the question.
- Scaled questions: Many closed-ended questions (but not all) are in a scale, such as one that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
- Series questions: Many questions are part of a series, and the results are primarily intended to be examined relative to the other questions in that series (although results of the questions individually can also be valuable). Typically, results of all questions in a series are shown together.

Most graphs show results rounded to the nearest integer; however, all data are stored in decimal format, and all calculations are performed on unrounded numbers. For this reason, some results may not sum to exactly 100% because of this rounding on the graphs. Additionally, rounding may cause apparent discrepancies of 1 percentage point between the graphs and the

reported results of combined responses (e.g., when “strongly agree” and “moderately agree” are summed to determine the total percentage who agree).

The initial questions about hunting participation and the demographic questions at the end of the survey were given to the full sample of licensed hunters (sample size of 3,012), but otherwise the bulk of the survey was administered only to those who hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years (sample size of 2,410). Throughout the report, “hunters” refers to those who hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSES GRAPHS

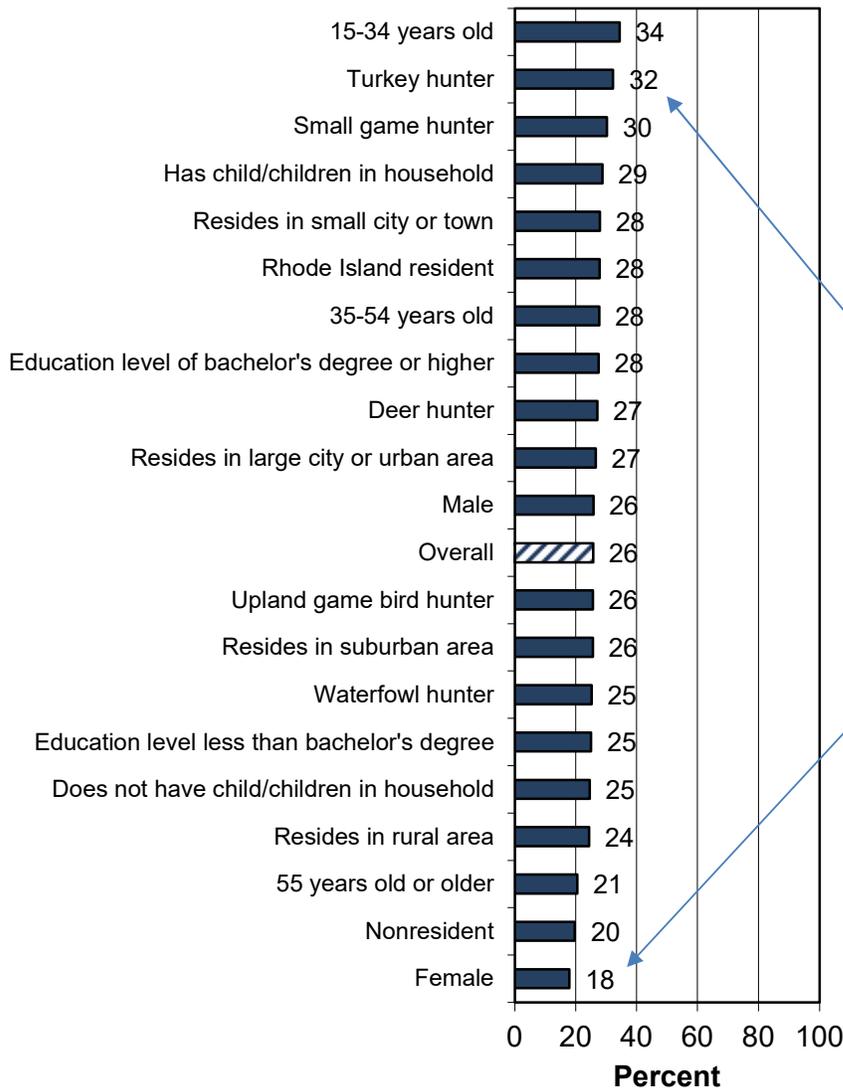
In addition to graphs depicting the results of each individual survey question, the report includes special graphs that show how various demographic groups respond to certain questions. The example on the following page shows the percentages of the various groups who said that their amount of hunting in Rhode Island has increased over the past few years.

Overall, 26% of hunters have increased their amount of hunting in Rhode Island, as shown by the patterned bar. Those groups shown above the overall bar have a higher rate of increased hunting compared to hunters overall. Meanwhile, those groups shown below the overall bar have a lower rate of increased hunting participation compared to hunters overall.

When one group is above the overall bar (for instance, in this example, males), its counterpart or one of its counterparts (in this instance, females) is below the overall bar. The distance from the overall bar matters, as well. If a group is close to the overall bar (such as males in this example), then the group should not be considered markedly different from hunters overall. A rule of thumb is that the difference should be 5 percentage points or more for the difference to be noteworthy.

Example of a Demographic Analyses Graph

Percent of each of the following groups whose amount of hunting in Rhode Island has increased over the past few years:



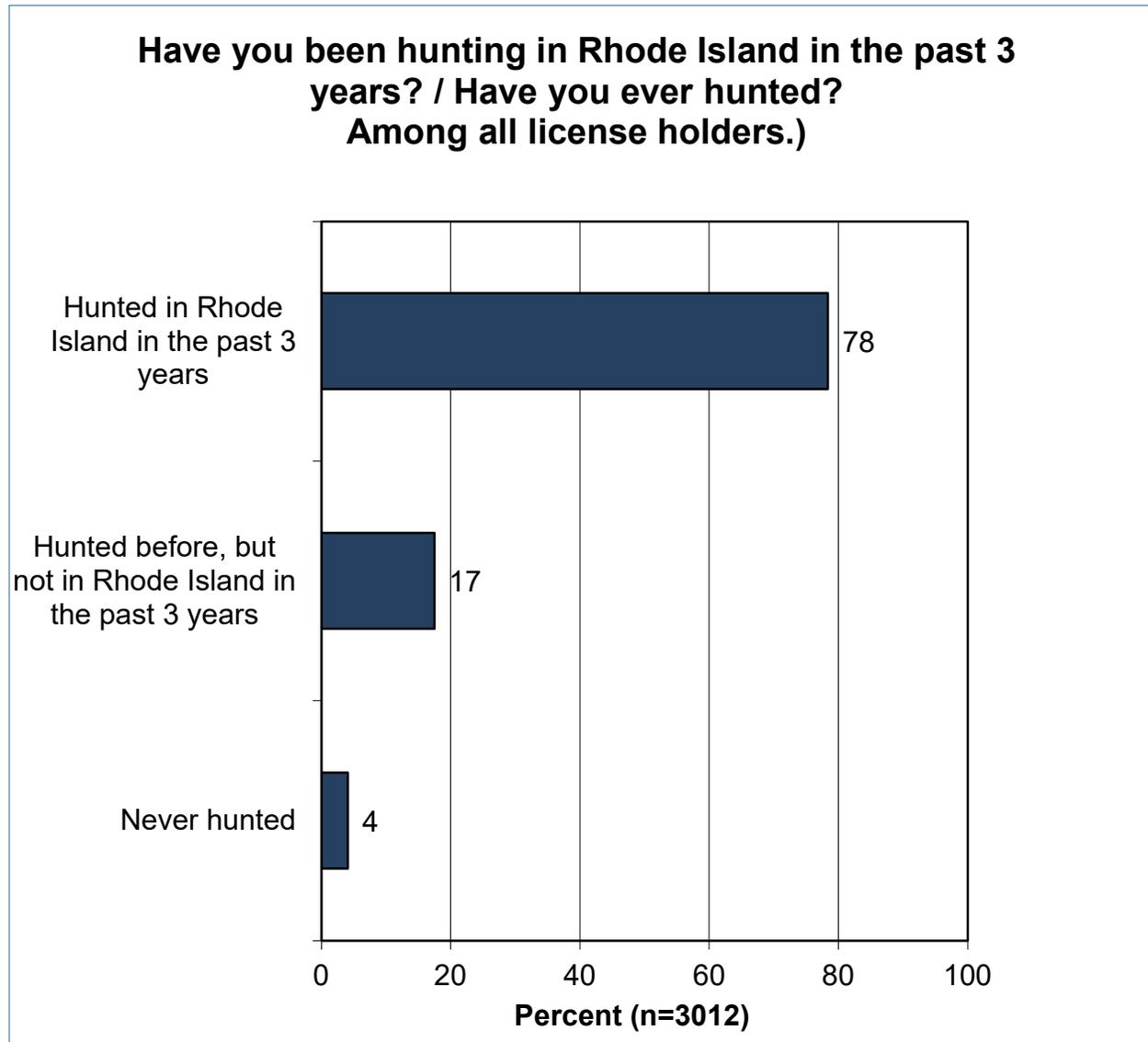
Among hunters overall, 26% say that their amount of hunting in Rhode Island has increased over the past few years, as indicated by the patterned bar.

Those groups above the patterned bar are more likely to have increased their hunting participation, relative to hunters overall. For instance, 32% of turkey hunters gave this response, a markedly higher rate than among hunters overall.

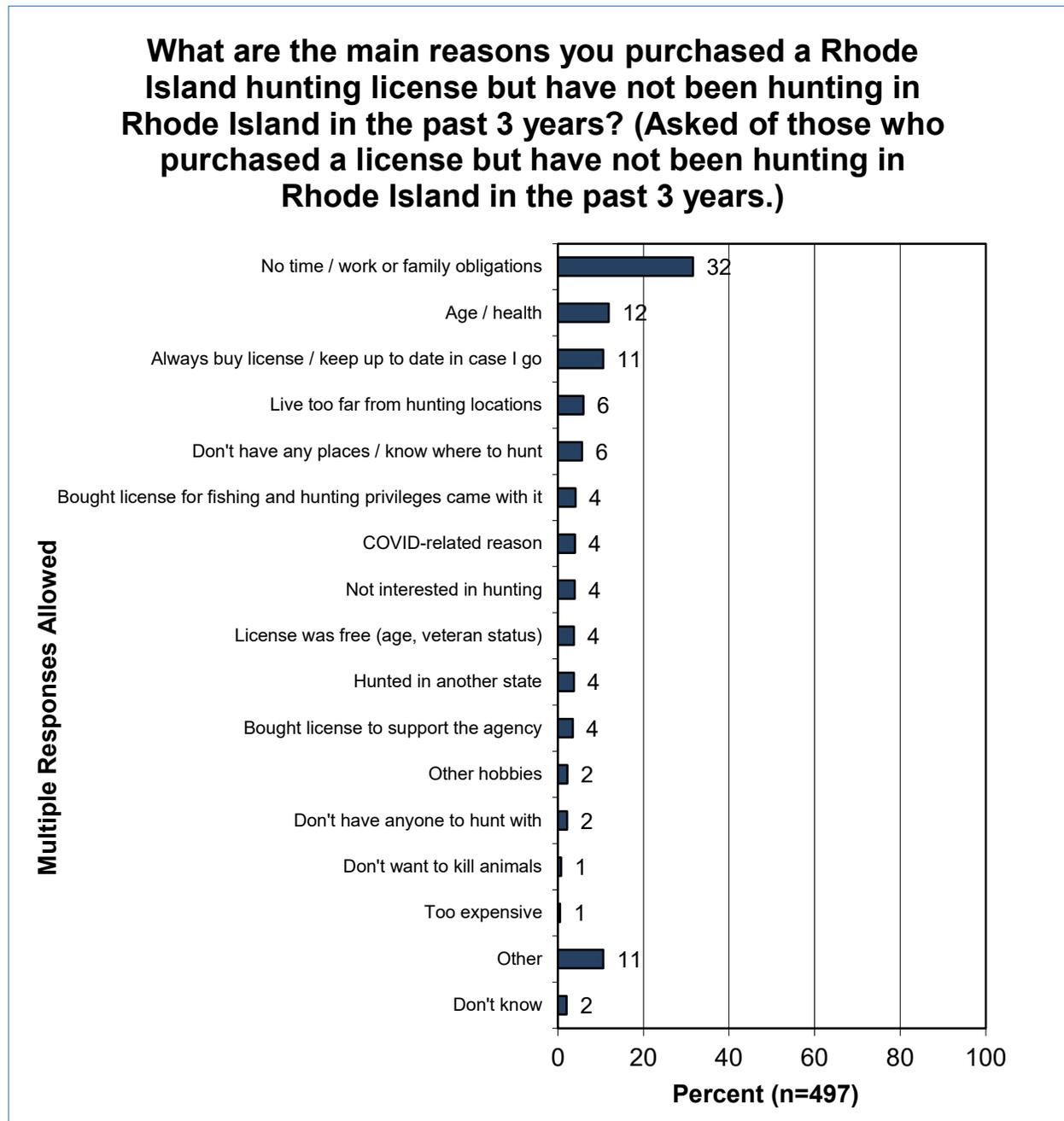
Conversely, only 18% of female hunters have increased their participation in recent years, a lower rate than among hunters overall.

GENERAL HUNTING CHARACTERISTICS

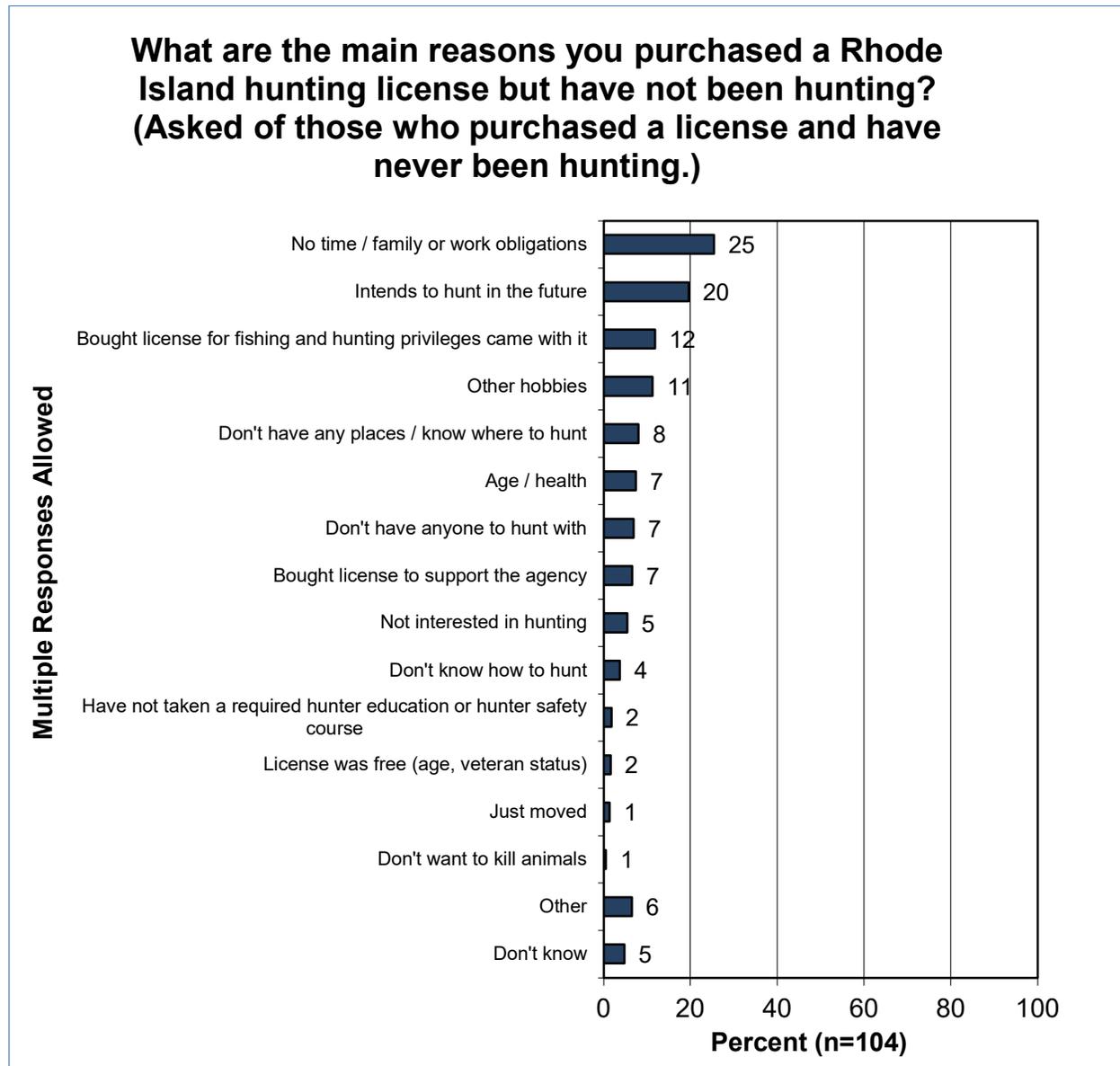
The survey first asked all Rhode Island hunting license holders in the sample if they had been hunting in the state in the past 3 years; over three quarters (78%) had done so. Those who answered “no” or “don’t know” were asked if they have ever hunted. The graph below shows the two questions combined: 78% hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years, 17% have hunted before (in or out of state) but not in Rhode Island in the past 3 years, and 4% never hunted.



Those who purchased a Rhode Island hunting license but have not hunted in the state in the past 3 years were asked why not, in an open-ended question. About a third stated a lack of time to do so (32% gave this response), while 12% cited age or health and 11% said they always buy a license or keep it up to date in case they decide to participate. The full list of responses is shown.

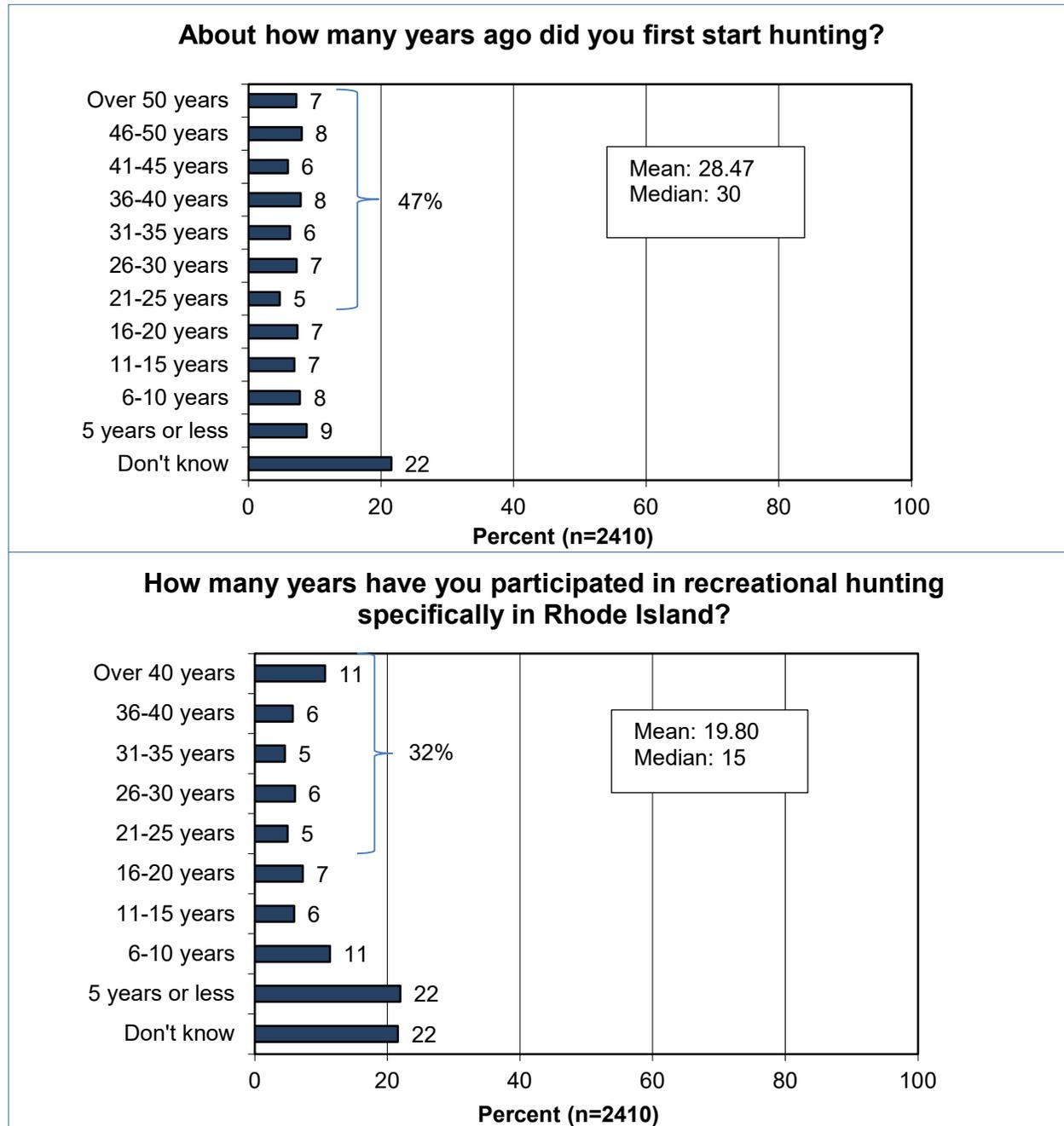


Those who purchased a license but have never been hunting were asked the same open-ended question. Again, the top response was a lack of time (25% stated this). Also, 20% stated that they plan to hunt but have not yet done so.

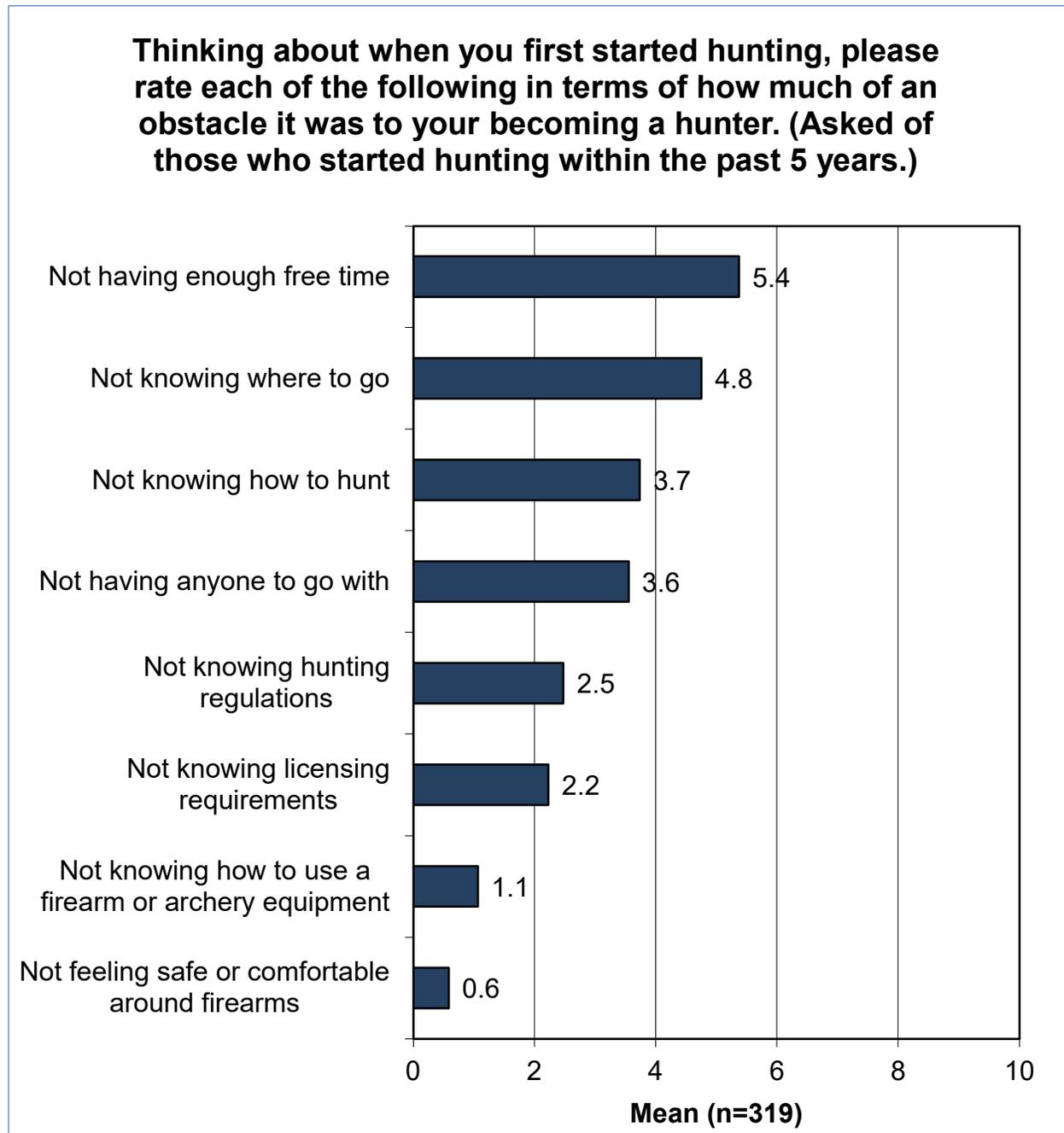


At this point in the survey, those who had not hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years were skipped ahead to the final section on demographic characteristics. The hunting questions that compose the bulk of the survey were given to those who hunted in the state in the past 3 years, and the sample size of this group is 2,410 (compared to the full license sample size of 3,012). To avoid cluttering the graph labels, the statement, “(Asked of those who hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years.)” is implied but not stated on all these graphs. Note that other subgroups of hunters are identified by “Asked of” statements on graphs where appropriate.

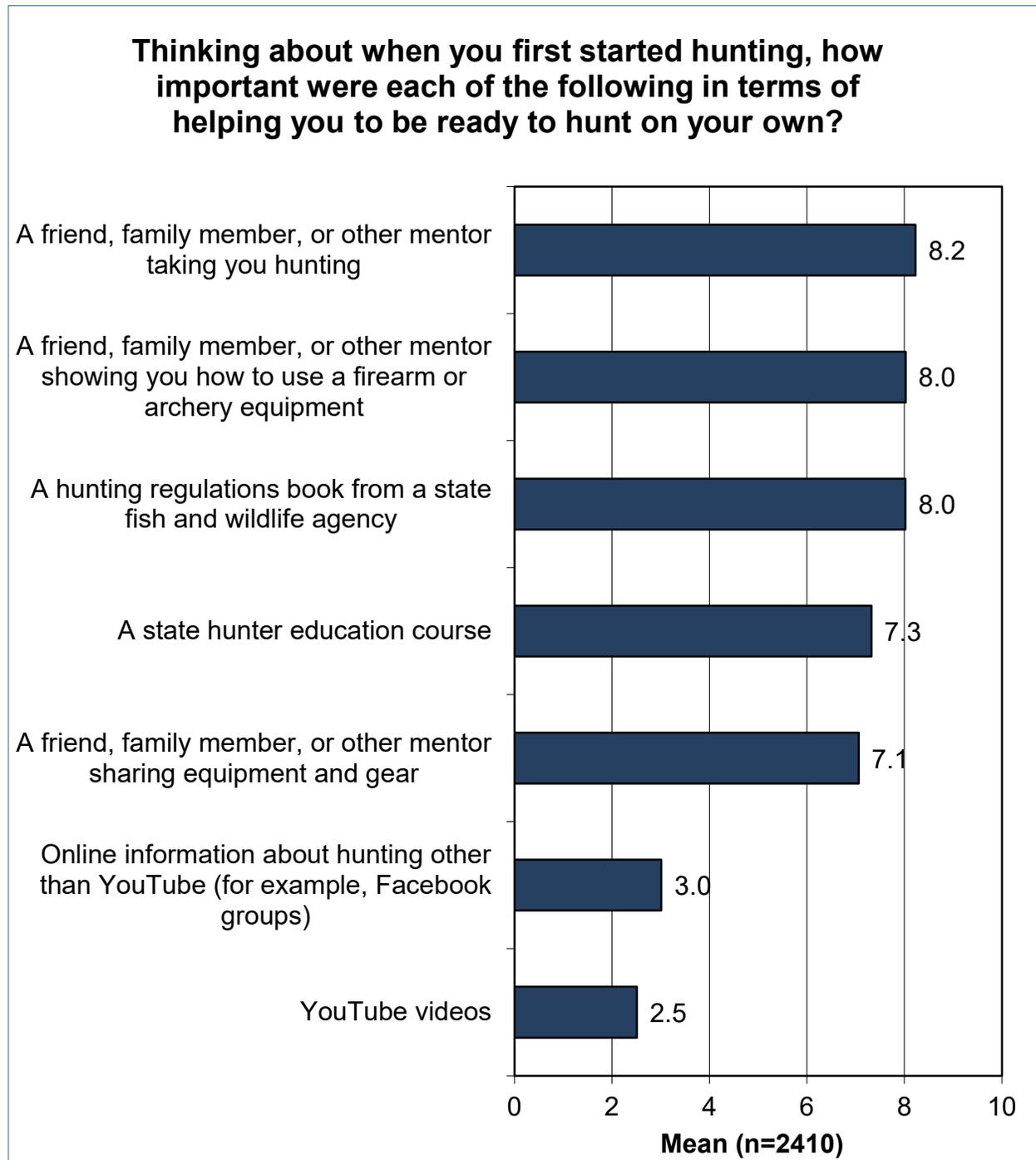
Rhode Island hunters have a varied amount of experience. Nearly half of hunters have decades of experience: 47% have been hunting over 20 years. The mean number of years hunted is 28.47 and the median is 30. As to hunting specifically in Rhode Island, the mean is 19.80 years and the median is 15 years.



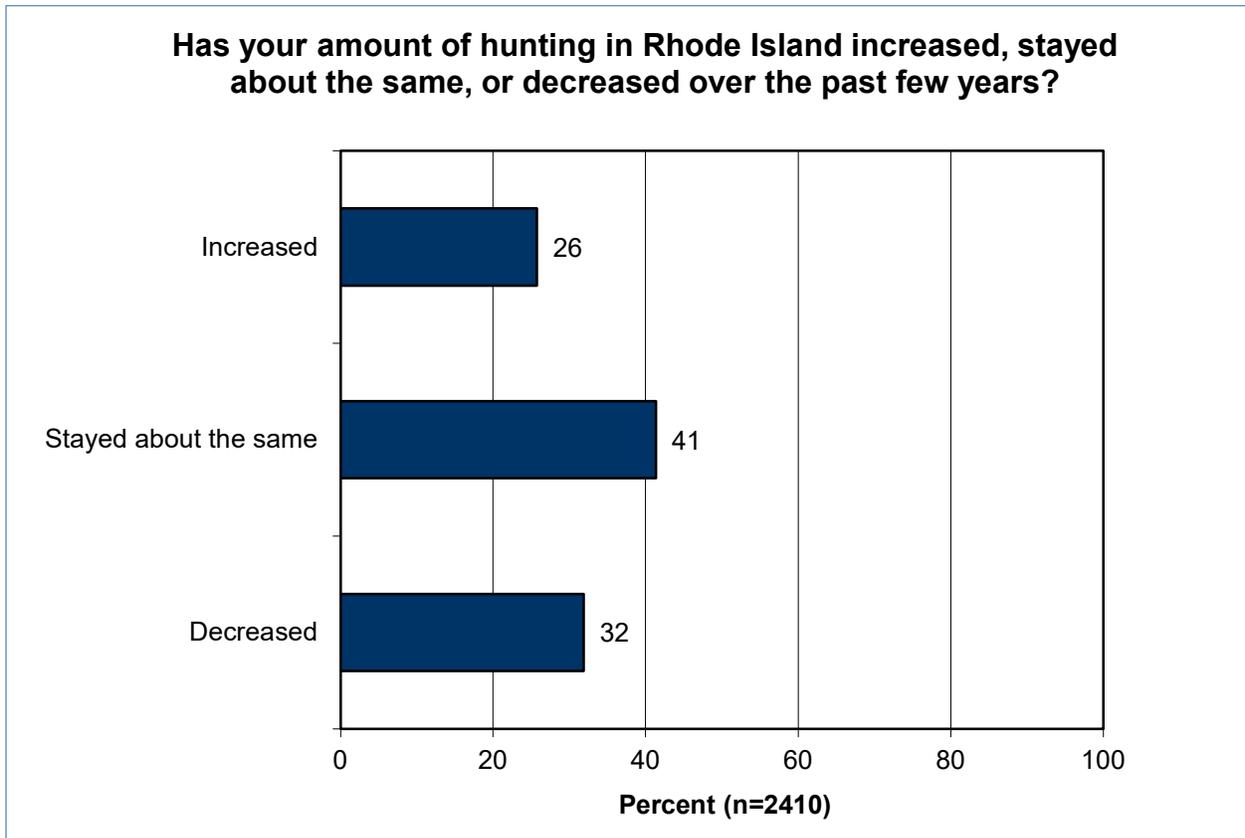
Those who started hunting within the past 5 years were presented with eight potential obstacles to becoming a hunter, and they were asked to rate how much each was an obstacle, on a scale of 0 to 10. A lack of free time is the only obstacle with a mean rating above the midpoint of 5, suggesting that most of the listed items were not substantial obstacles to becoming a hunter. The top ratings are for lack of free time (mean rating of 5.4) and not knowing where to go (4.8). A second tier includes not knowing how to hunt (3.7) and not having anyone to go with (3.6). The full list is shown.



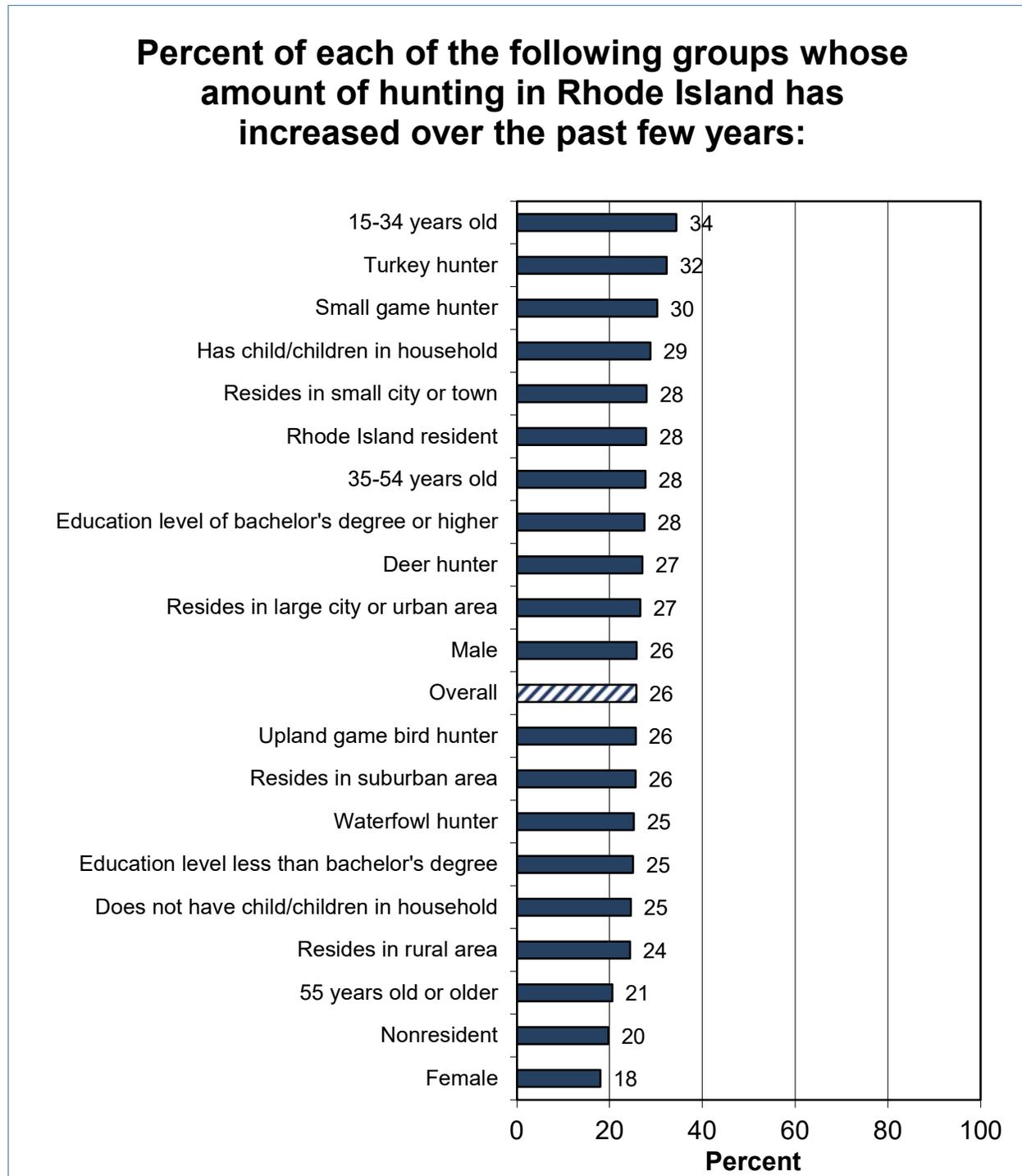
Next, hunters were asked to rate the importance of seven factors in helping them get ready to hunt on their own, on a scale of 0 to 10. The top ratings were for a friend, family member, or mentor taking them hunting (mean rating of 8.2); a friend, family member, or mentor showing them how to use a firearm or archery equipment (8.0); and a hunting regulations book from a state fish and wildlife agency (8.0). Also receiving high ratings were a state hunter education course (7.3) and a friend, family member, or mentor sharing equipment and gear (7.1). Online information and YouTube videos received low ratings of importance.



Overall, 41% of hunters say that their amount of hunting in Rhode Island stayed about the same over the past few years, while slightly more say it has decreased (32%) than increased (26%).

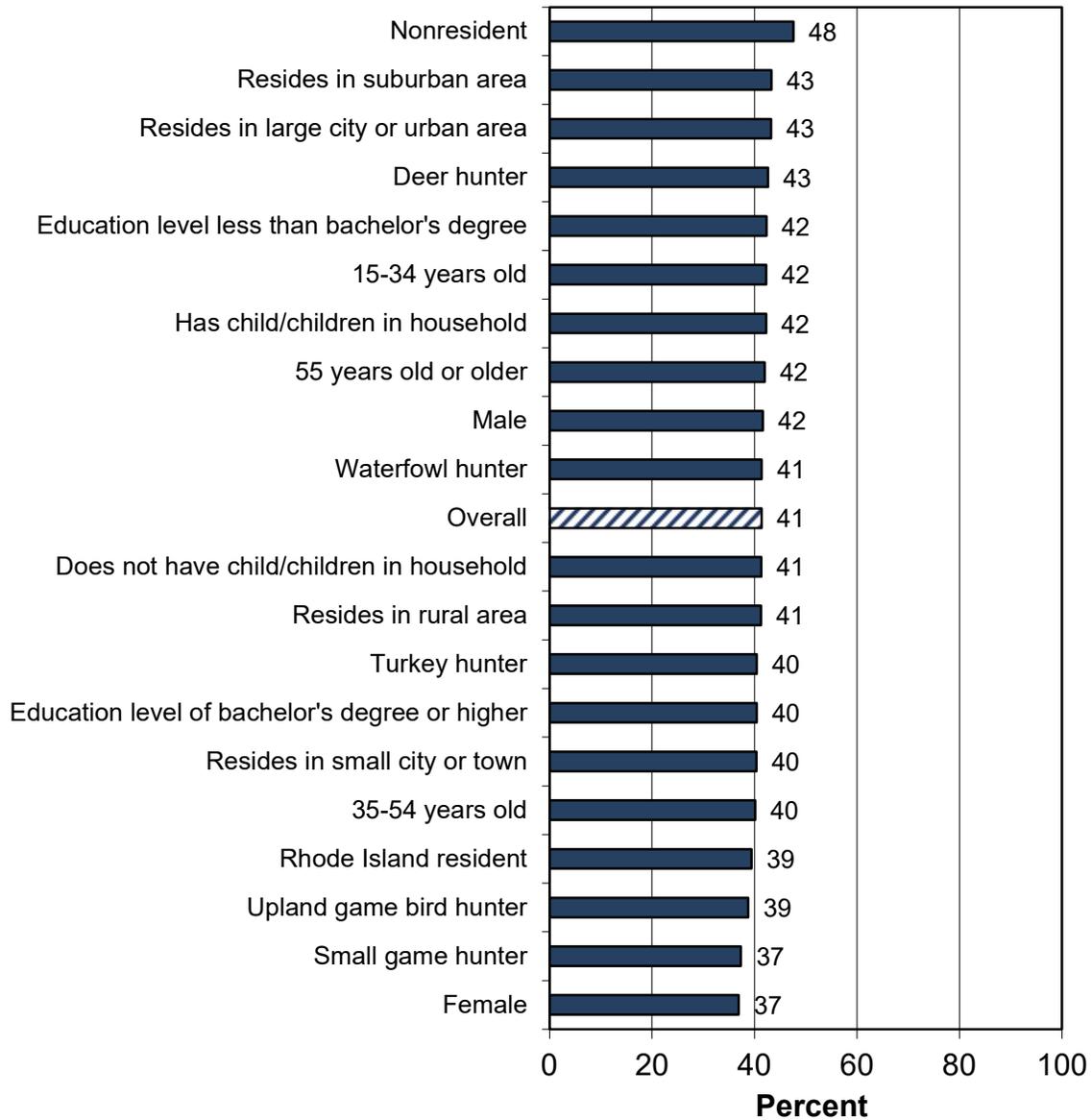


The previous question was examined more closely. The demographic analyses graph below shows that the groups most likely to have increased their amount of hunting in Rhode Island over the past few years are younger hunters and turkey hunters.

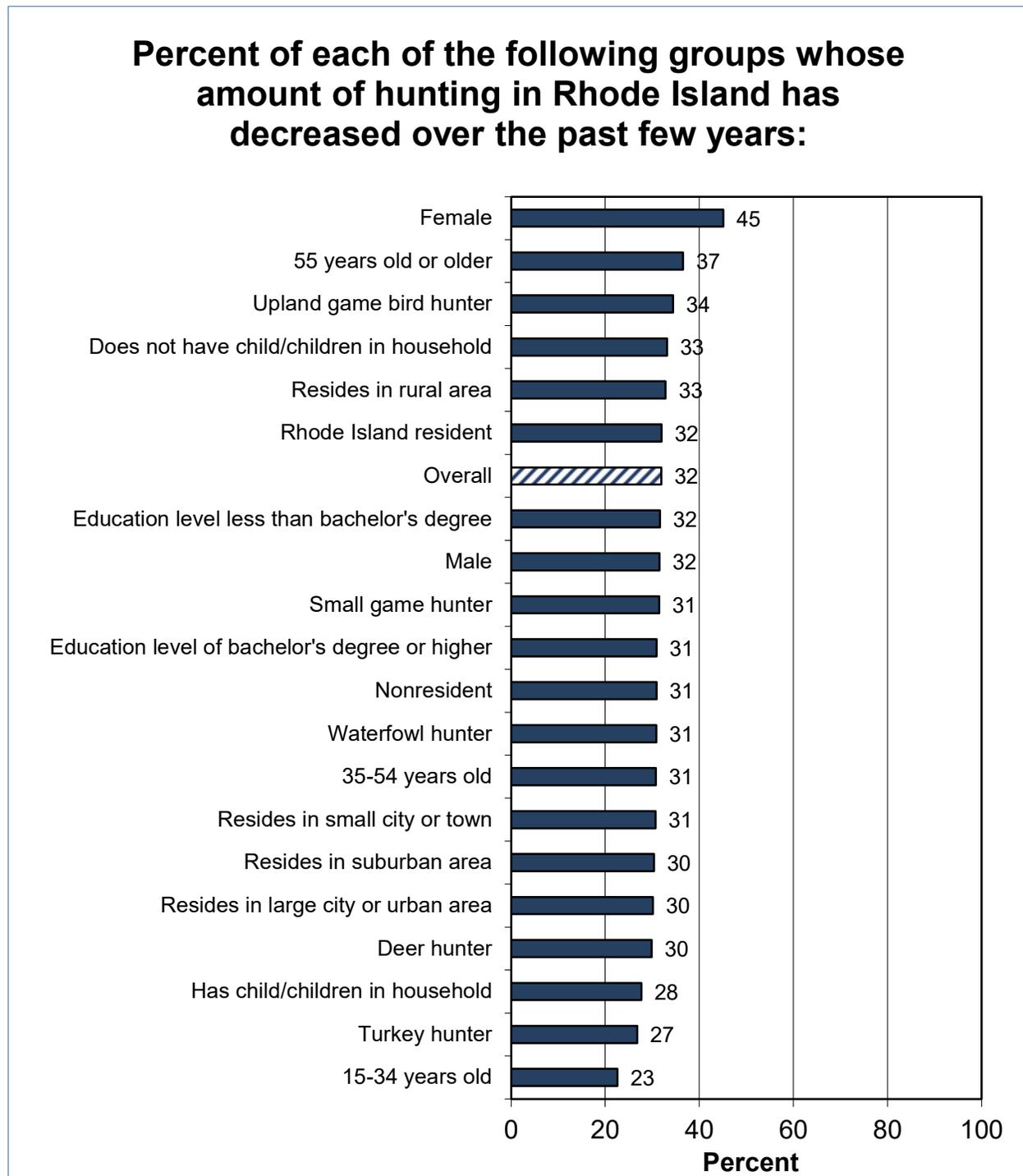


Nonresident hunters are more likely than the other groups to have maintained a consistent amount of hunting in the past few years. There is little variation among the other groups.

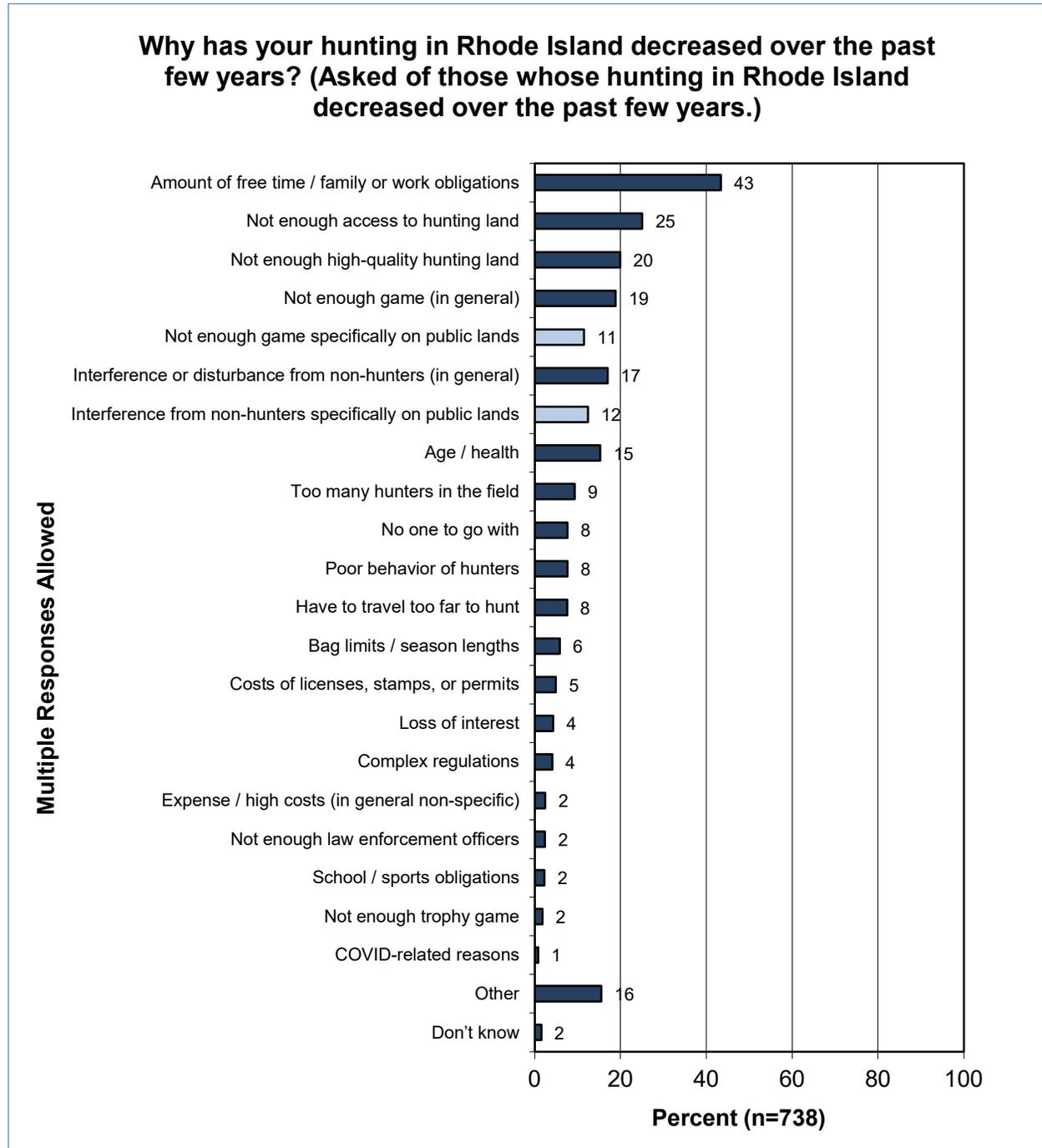
Percent of each of the following groups whose amount of hunting in Rhode Island has stayed about the same over the past few years:



Female hunters and older hunters are the groups most likely to have decreased their amount of hunting in Rhode Island.

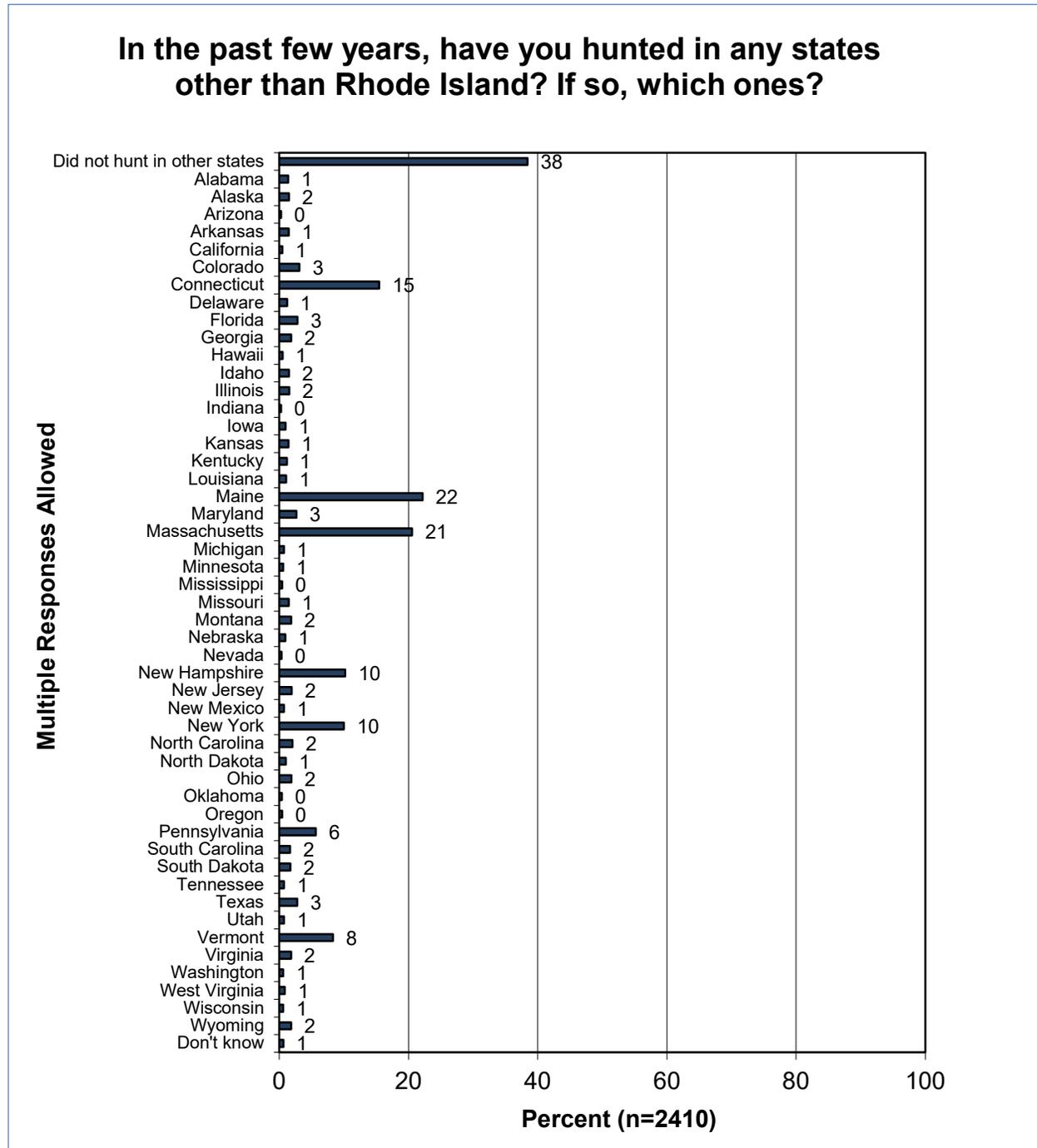


Those whose hunting in Rhode Island has decreased over the past few years most commonly said the reasons are lack of free time, lack of access to hunting land, and lack of high-quality hunting land.

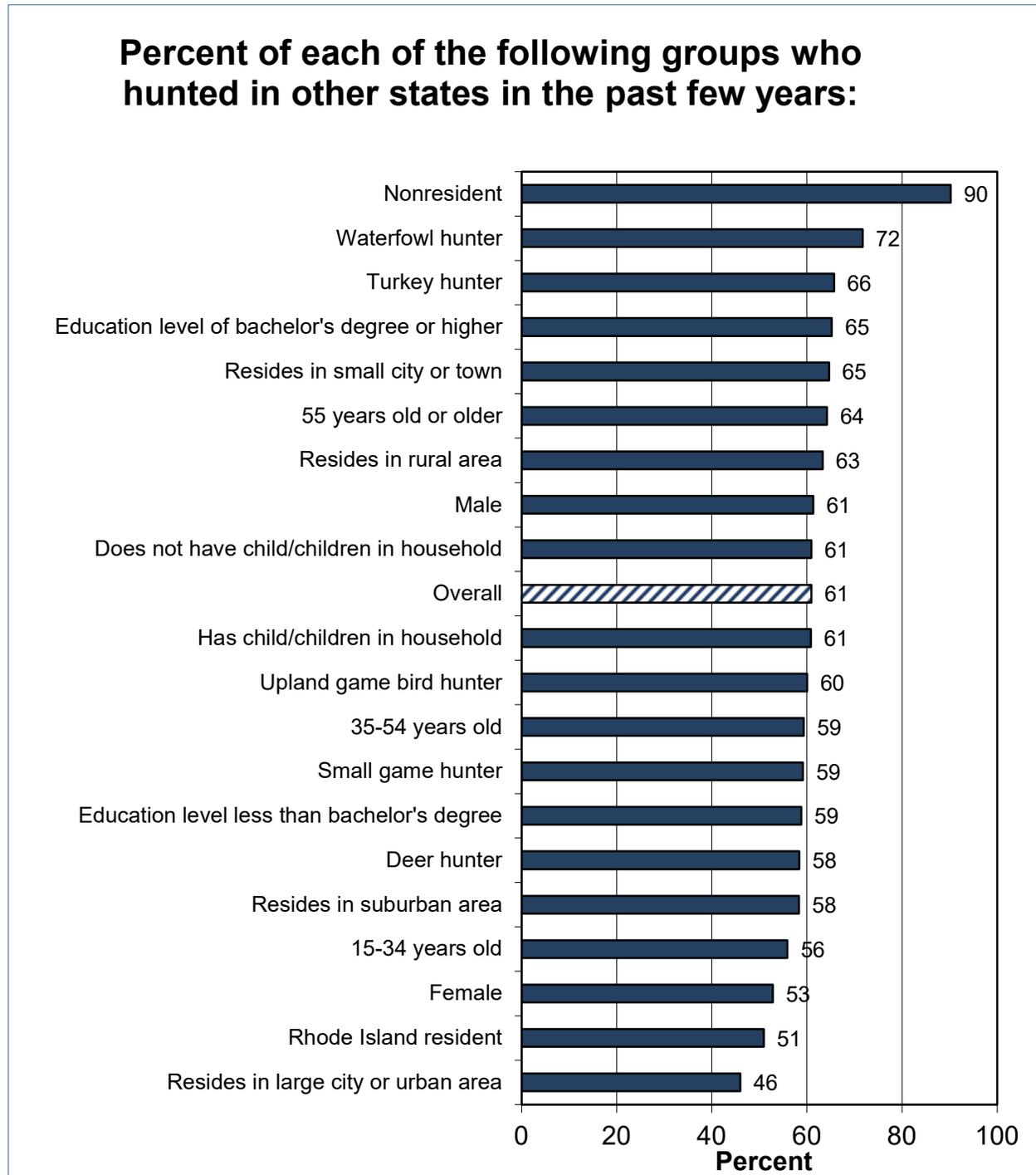


HUNTING IN OTHER STATES

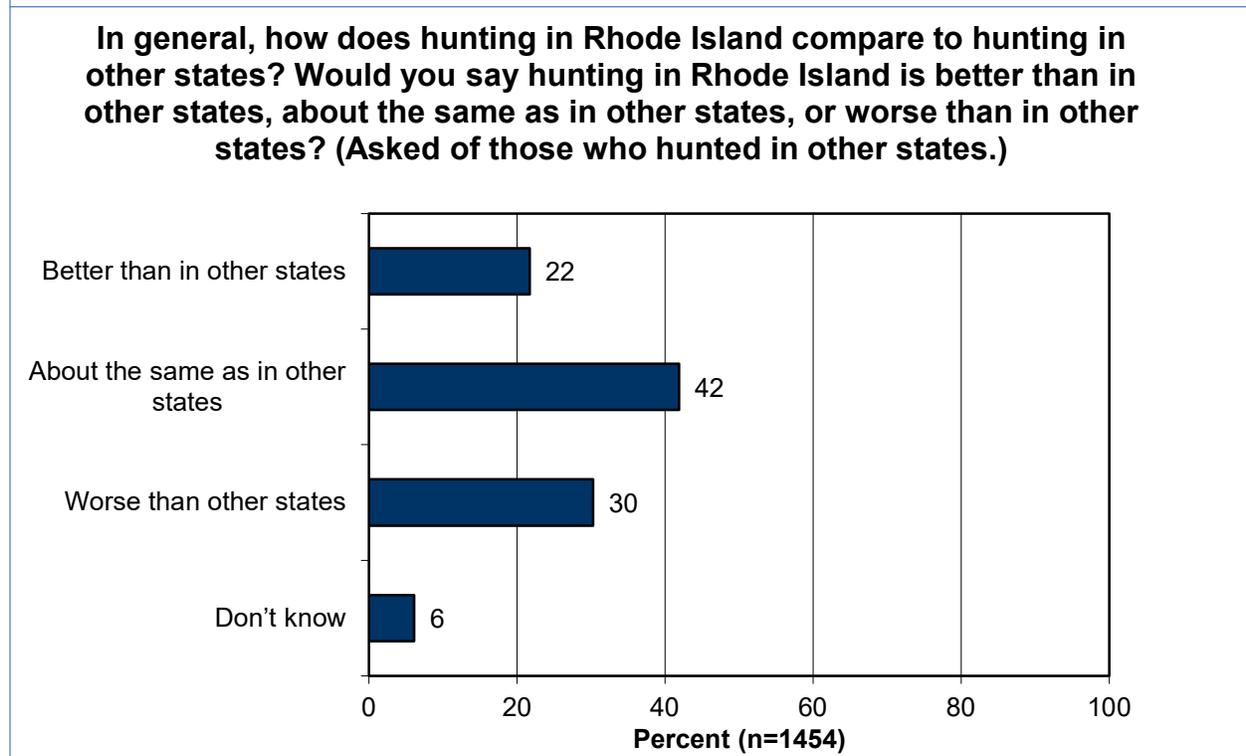
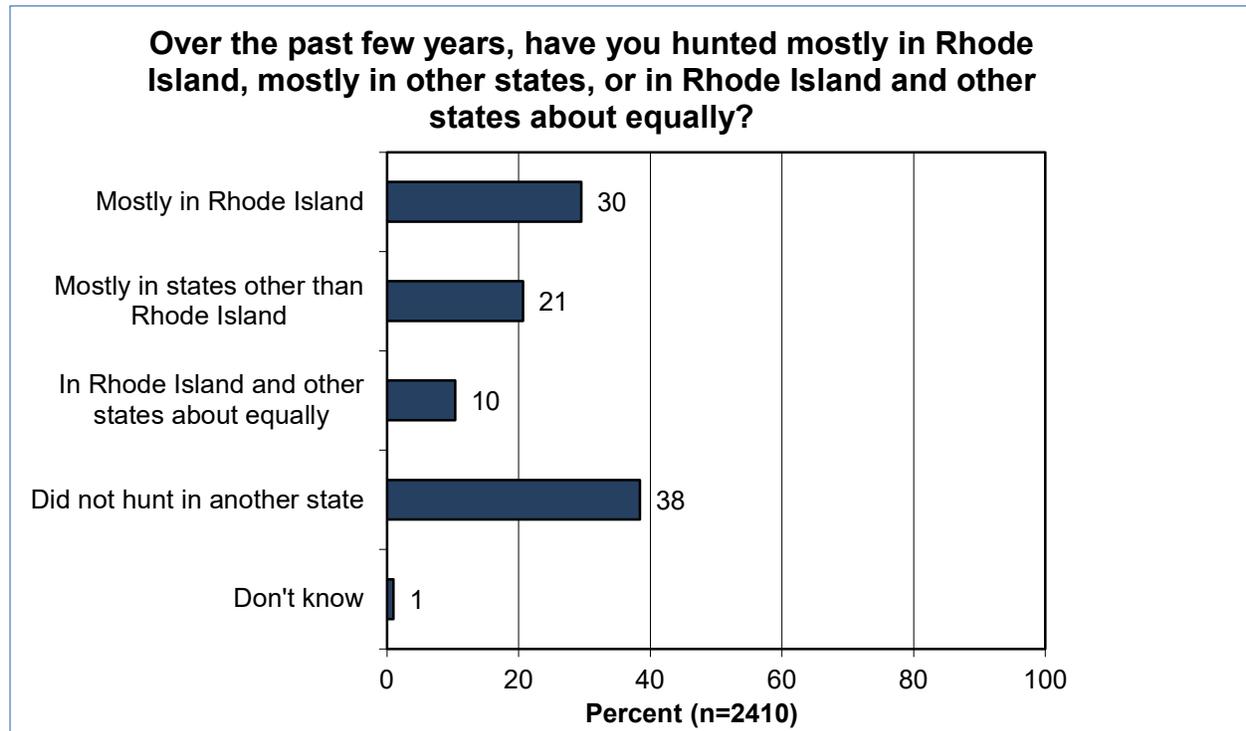
A majority of Rhode Island hunters (61%) have hunted in other states in the past few years, most commonly in the nearby states of Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New York.



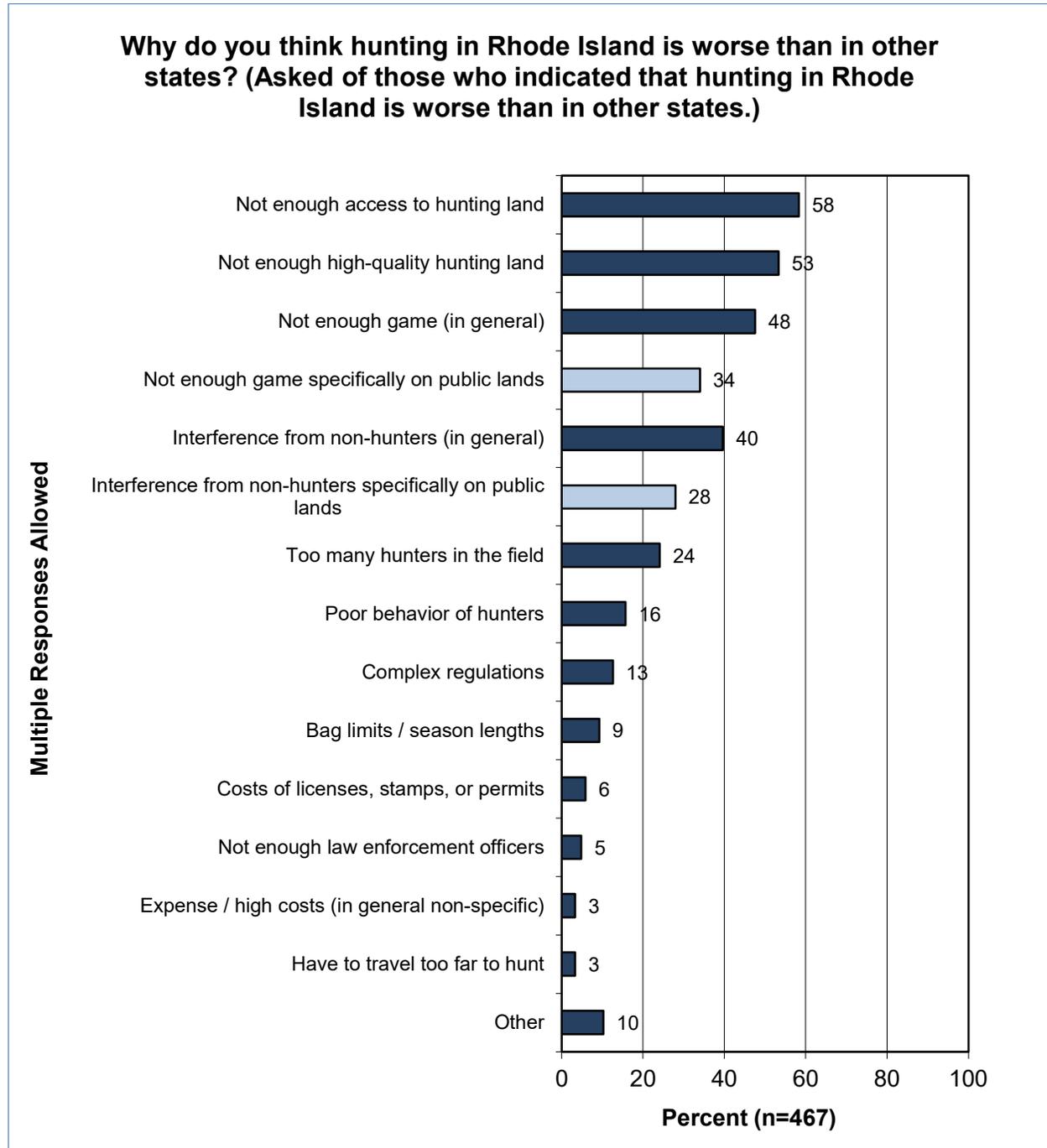
Apart from nonresidents, waterfowl hunters are the group most likely to have hunted in other states in the past few years.



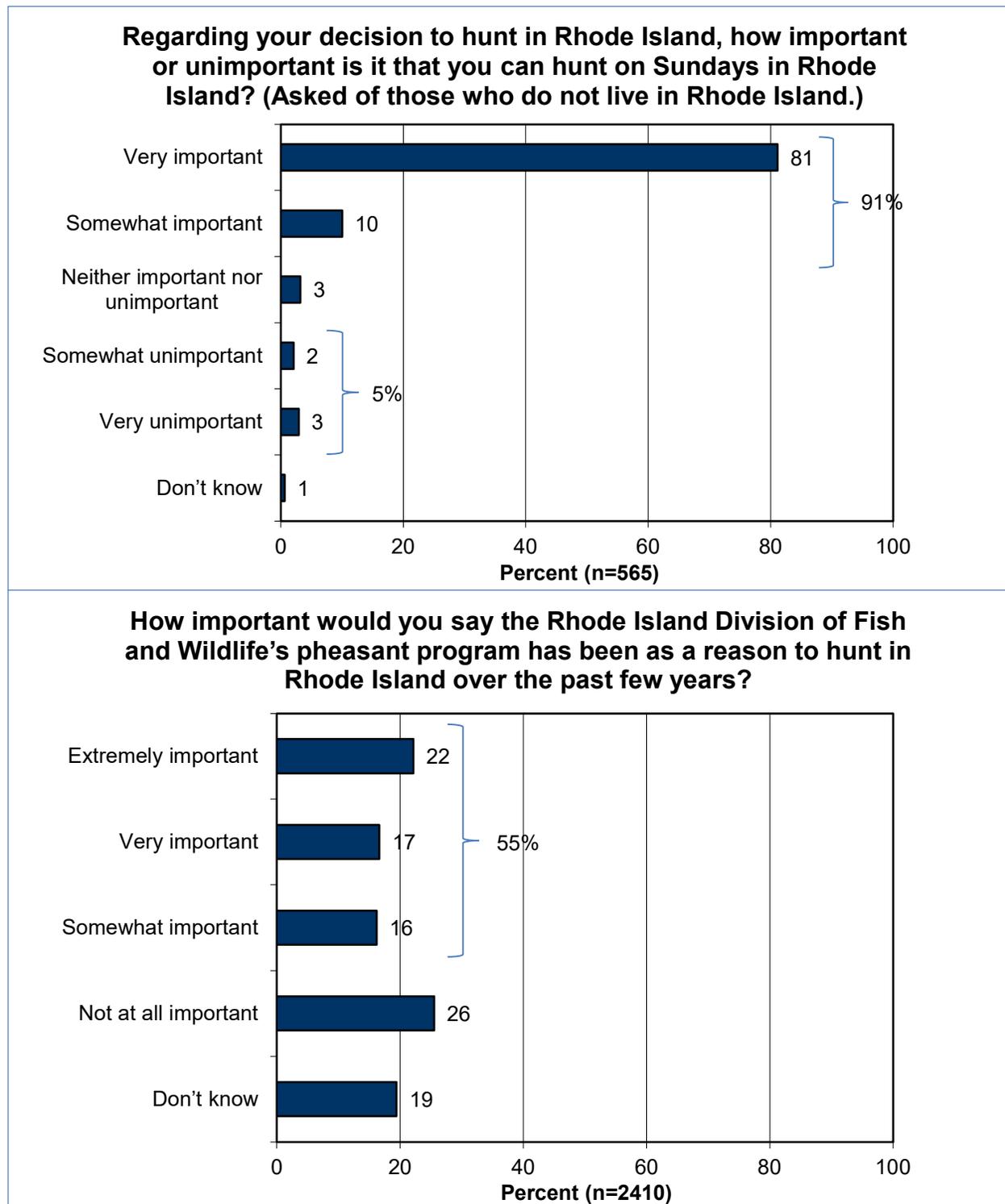
Regarding the states of hunting activity by Rhode Island hunters in the past few years, 30% hunted mostly in Rhode Island, 21% hunted mostly in states other than Rhode Island, and 10% hunted in Rhode Island and other states about equally; 38% did not hunt in another state. In addition, these multi-state hunters most frequently said that hunting in Rhode Island is about the same as in other states (42% stated this), whereas slightly more said the hunting is worse in Rhode Island (30%) than better (22%).



Among hunters who said that hunting in Rhode Island is worse than in other states, the top reasons given are lack of access to hunting land, lack of high-quality hunting land, lack of game on public land, and interference from non-hunters.

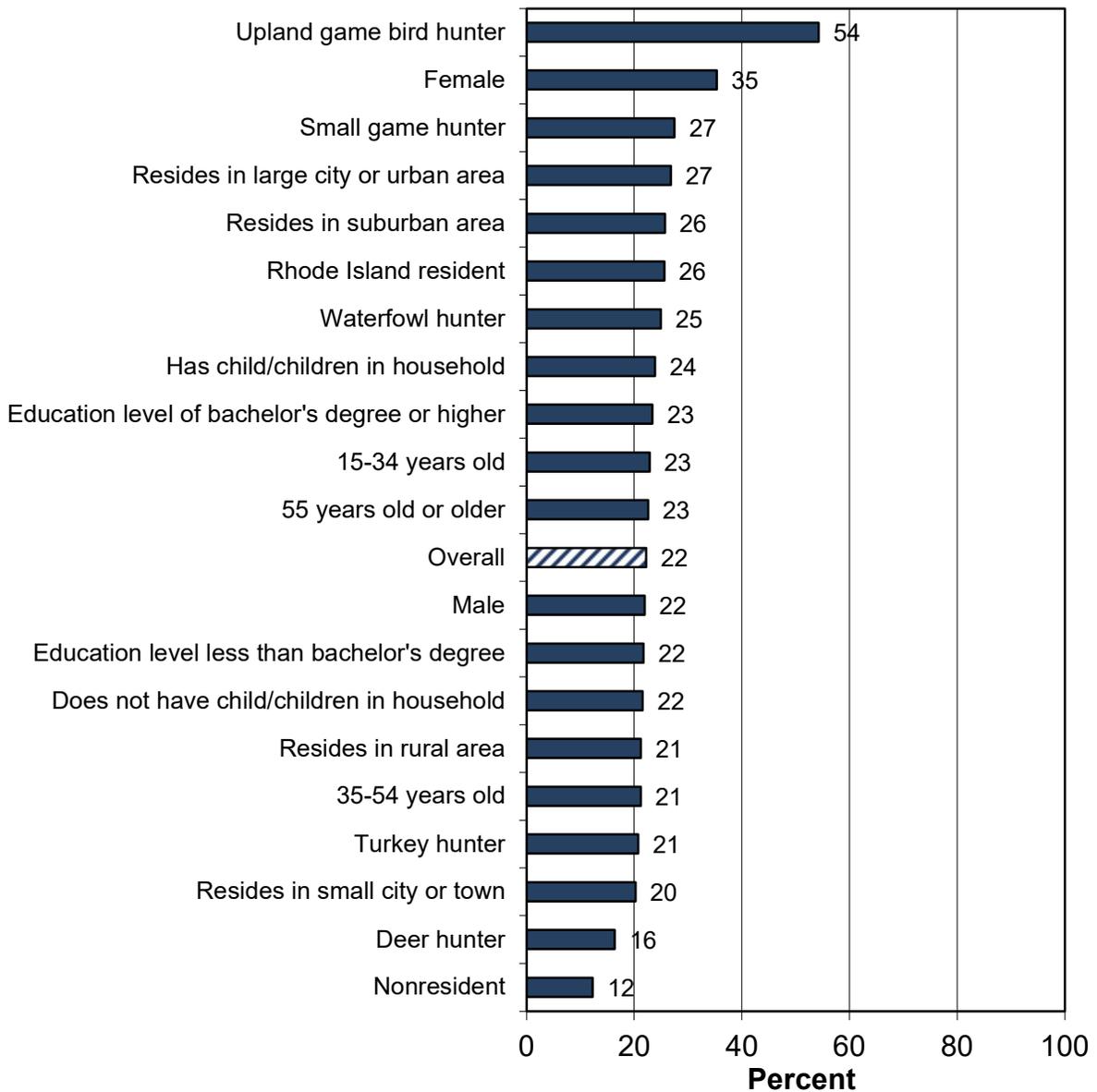


Sunday hunting in Rhode Island is an important draw for nonresident hunters: most (91%) say that it is an important reason they hunt in the state; 81% say it is *very* important. In contrast, only 5% say Sunday hunting is unimportant. Also, a majority of hunters, residents and nonresidents, (55%) say the Division's pheasant program is at least a somewhat important reason they hunt in the state, compared to 26% who say it is not at all important and 19% who do not know.



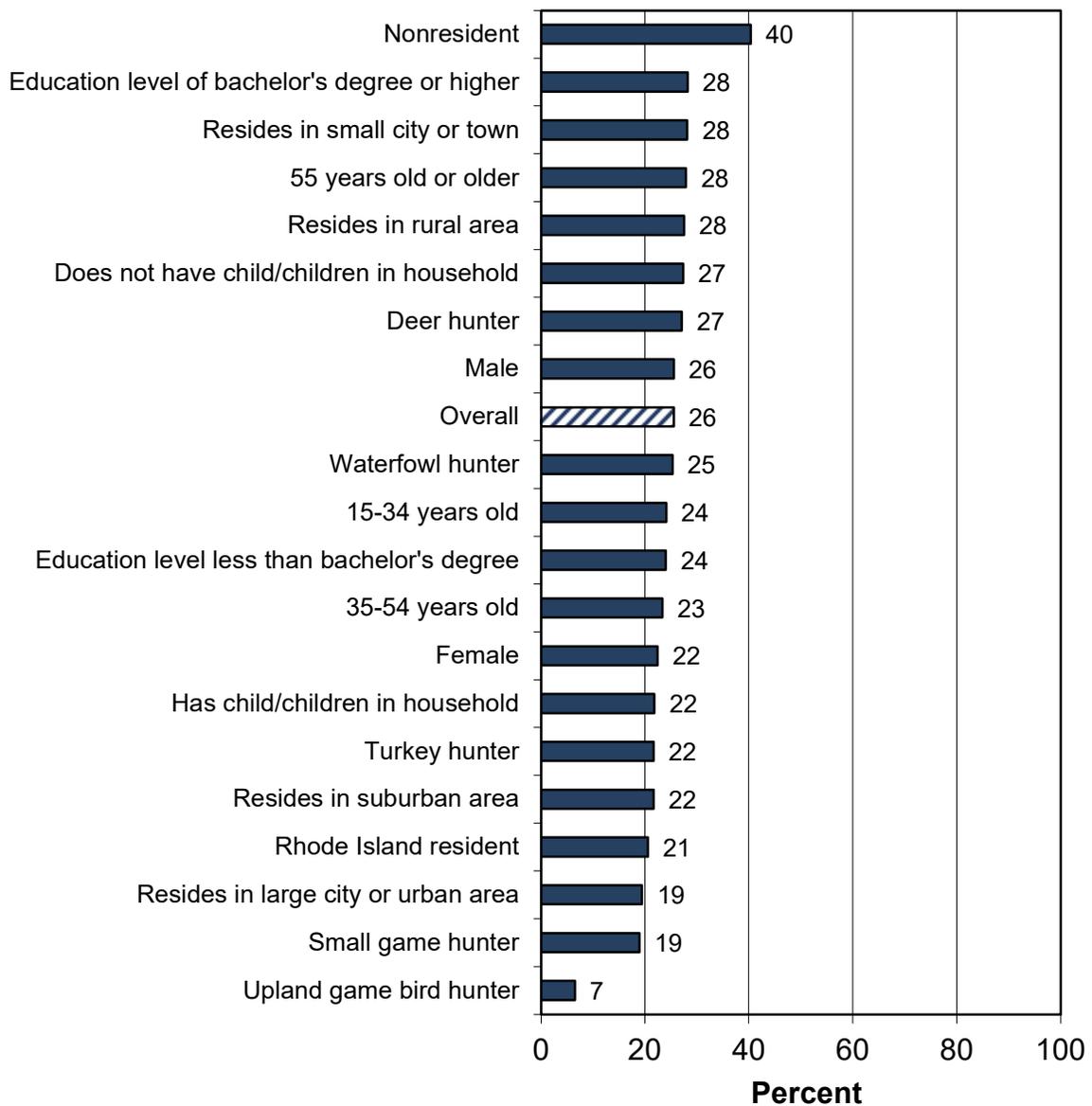
A majority of upland game bird hunters (54%) say the Division's pheasant program has been *extremely* important as a reason to hunt in the state. Over a third of female hunters (35%) also gave this response.

Percent of each of the following groups who say that the Division's pheasant program has been extremely important as a reason to hunt in Rhode Island over the past few years:



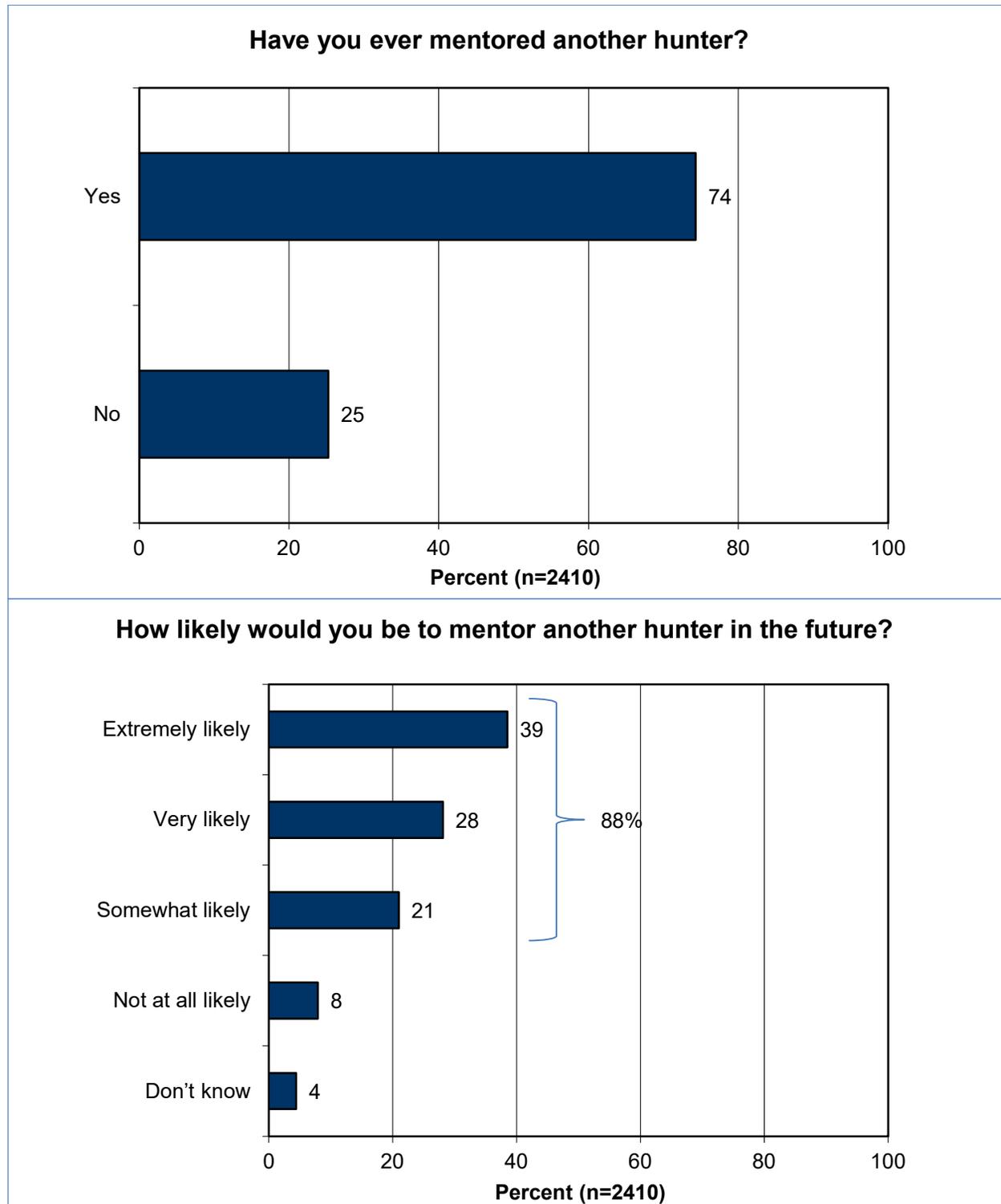
On the other hand, 40% of nonresident hunters say the pheasant program has been *not at all* important as a reason to hunt in Rhode Island.

Percent of each of the following groups who say that the Division's pheasant program has been not at all important as a reason to hunt in Rhode Island over the past few years:

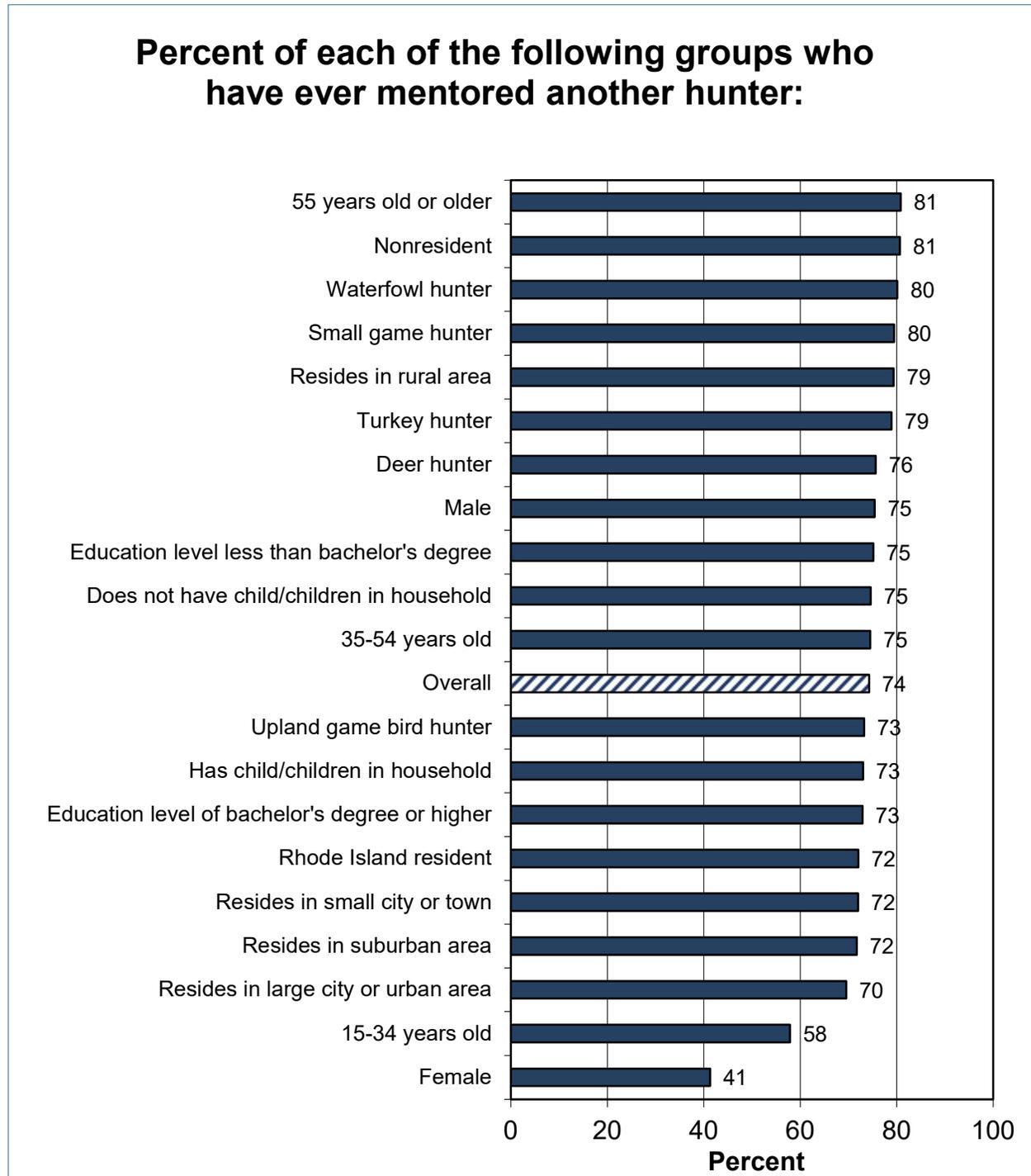


MENTORING

About three quarters of hunters (74%) have mentored another hunter, and an even higher percentage (88%) are at least somewhat likely to mentor other hunters in the future.

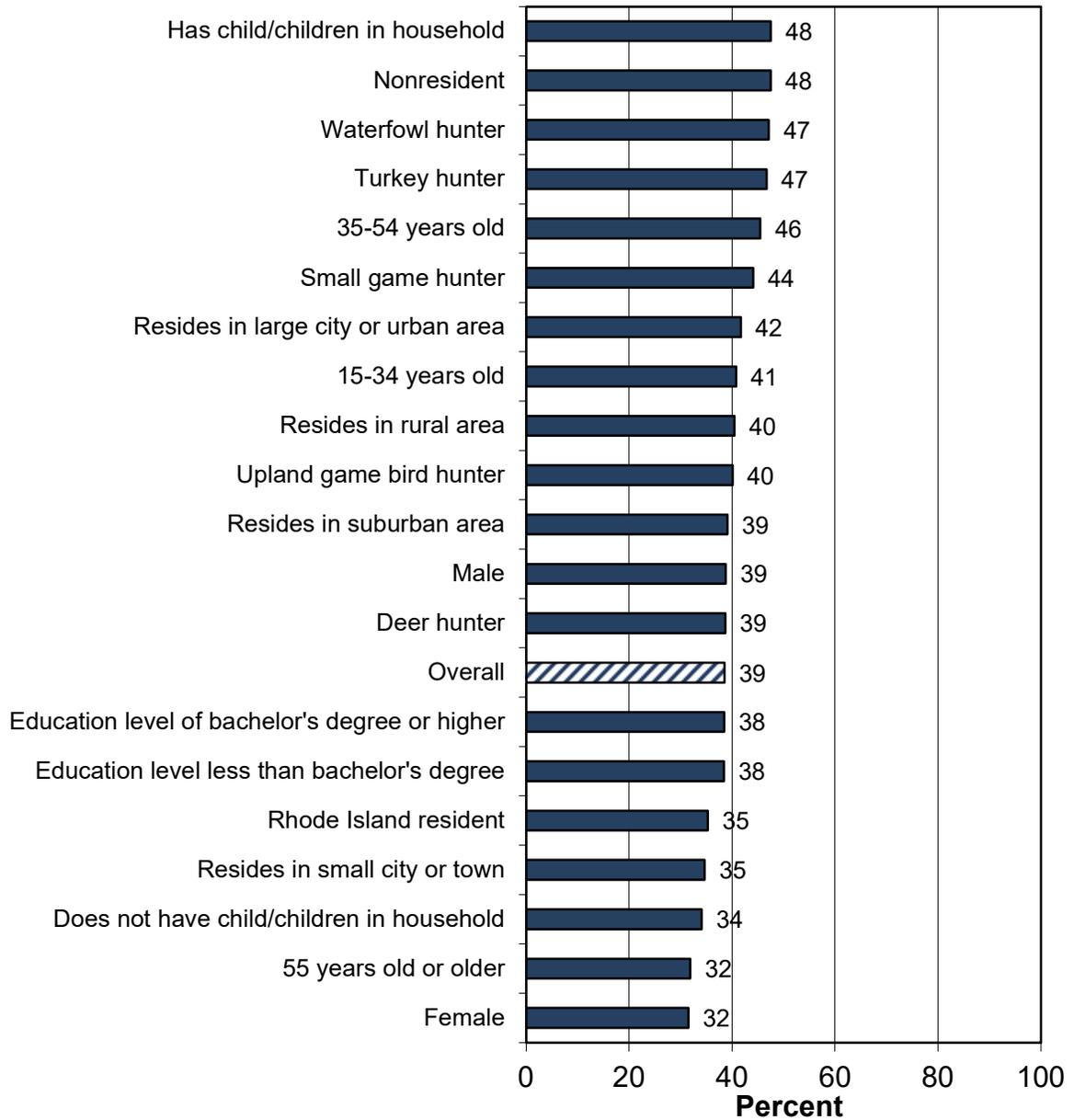


The groups most likely to have mentored other hunters include older hunters; nonresidents; waterfowl, small game, and turkey hunters; and rural residents.



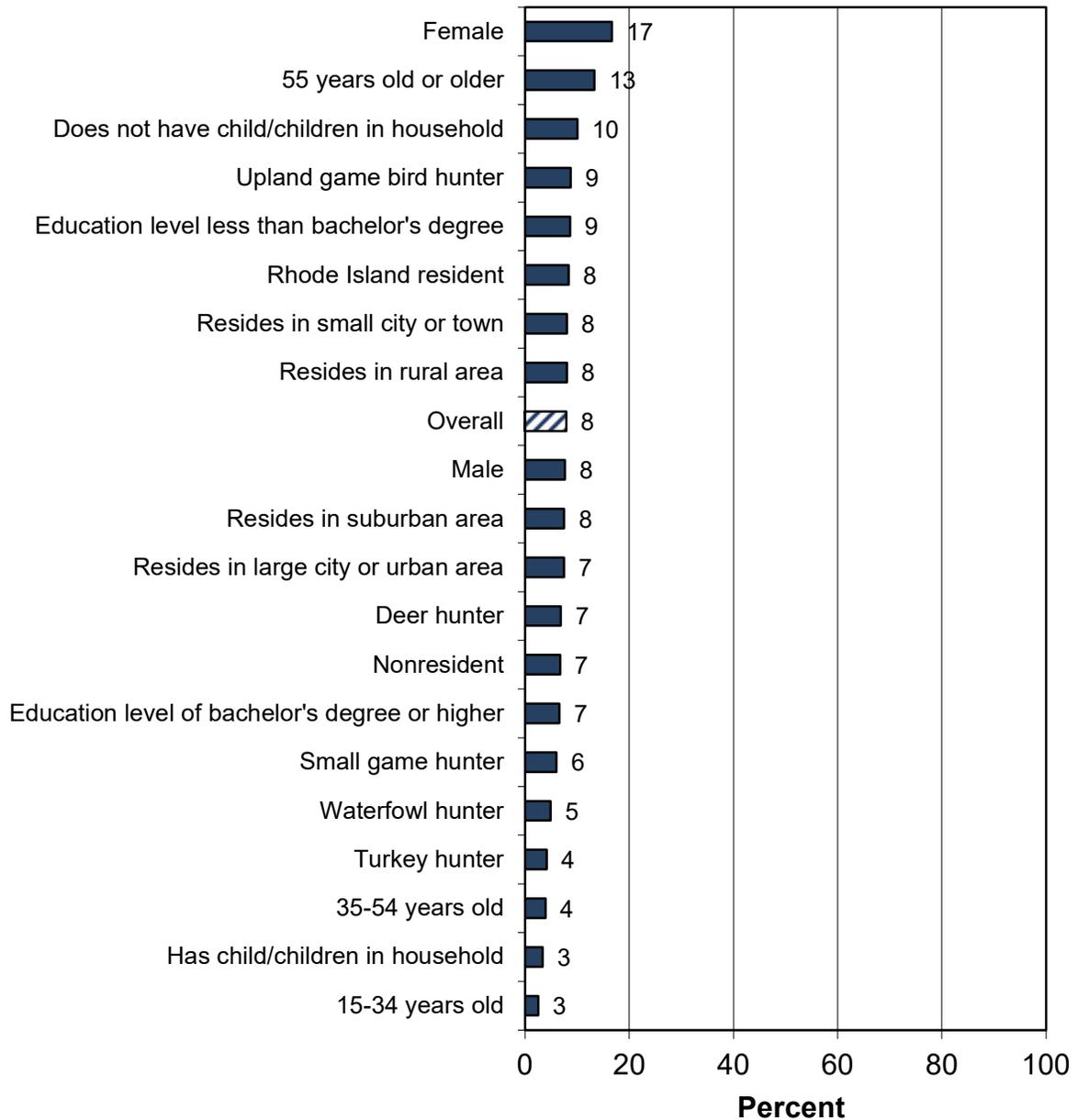
Groups with the highest percentage who are *extremely* likely to mentor other hunters in the future include parents; nonresidents; waterfowl, turkey, and small game hunters; and middle-aged hunters.

Percent of each of the following groups who are extremely likely to mentor another hunter in the future:

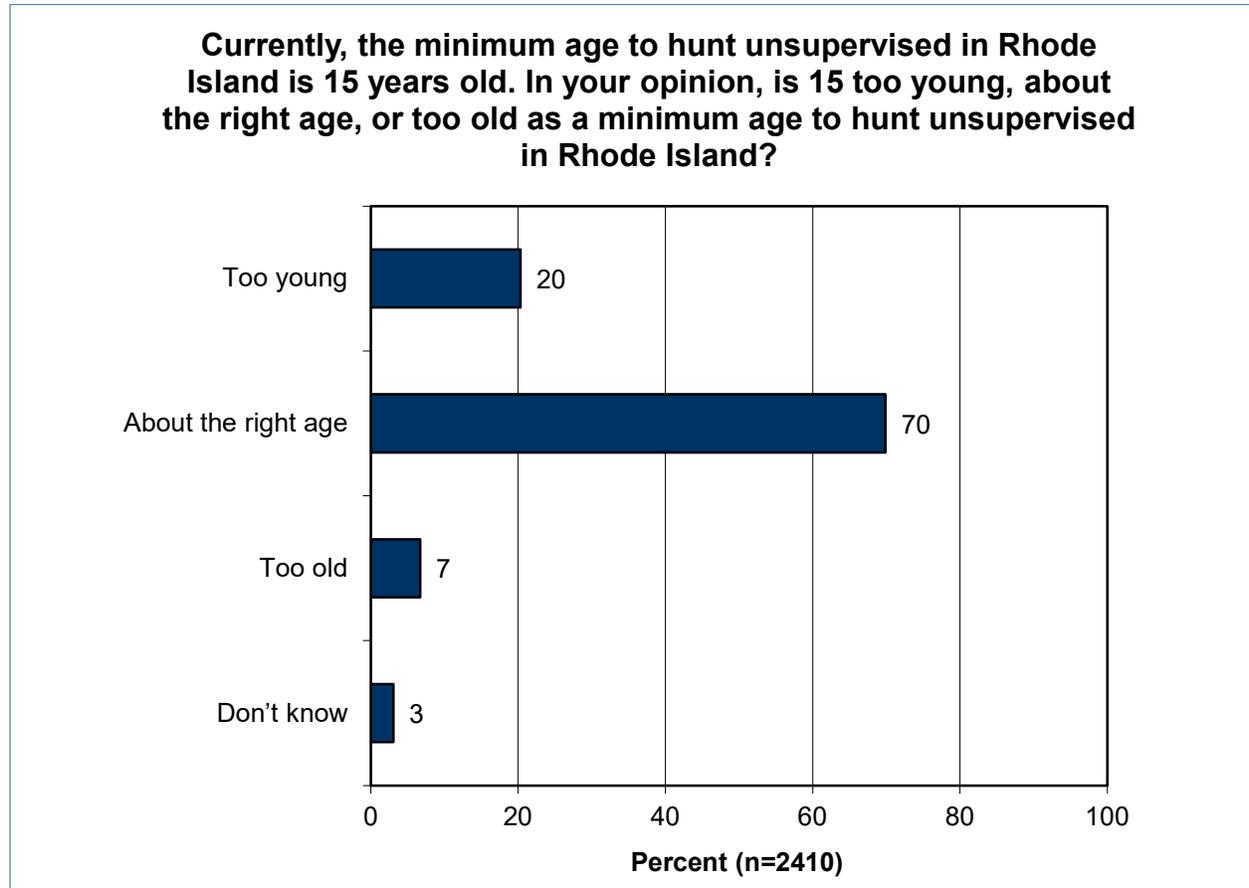


In contrast, groups with the highest percentage who are *not at all* likely to mentor other hunters are female hunters and older hunters.

Percent of each of the following groups who are not at all likely to mentor another hunter in the future:

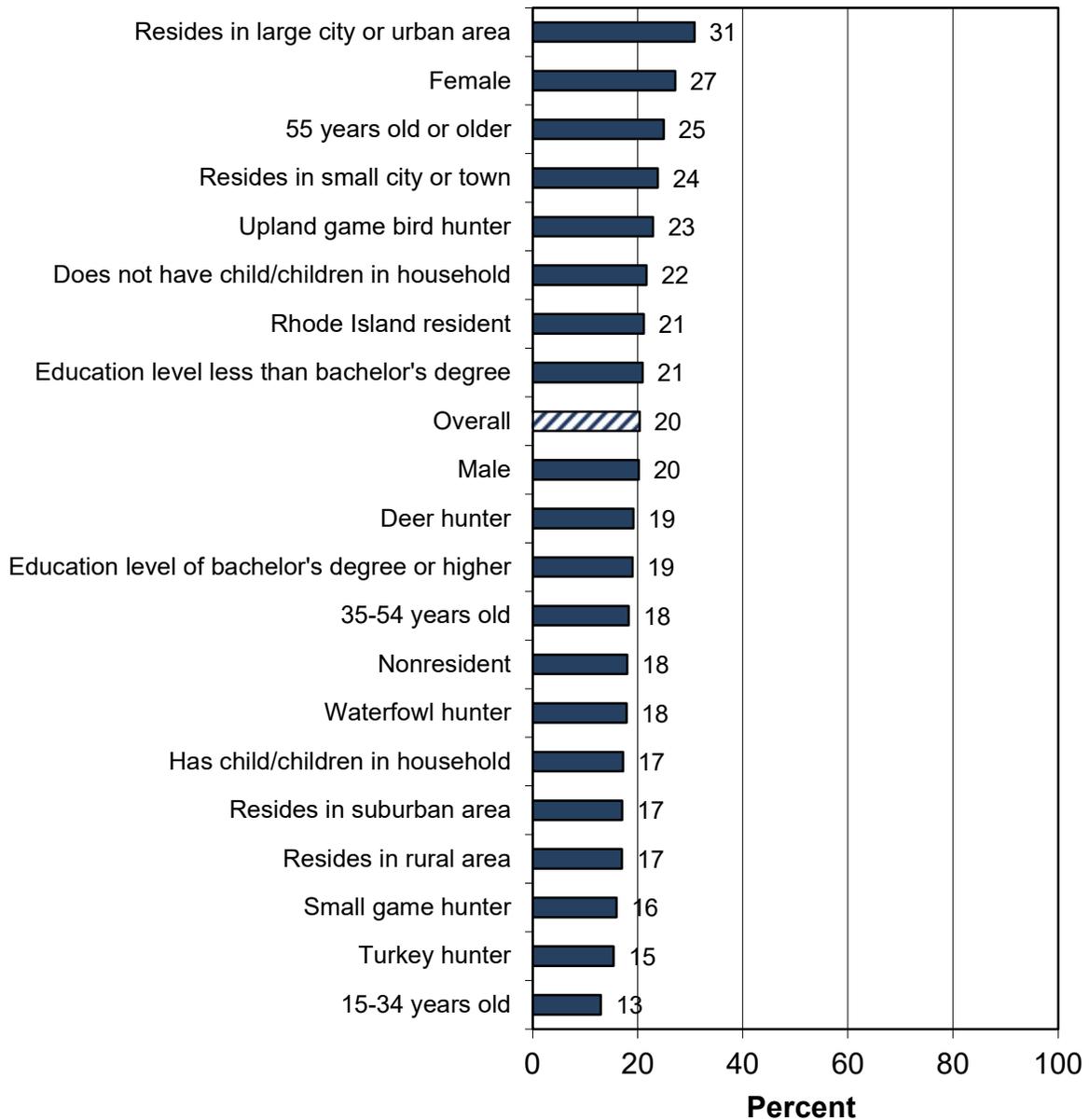


The survey stated that the minimum age to hunt unsupervised in Rhode Island is 15 years old. The majority of hunters (70%) think this is about the right age, while 20% think it is too young and 7% think it is too old.



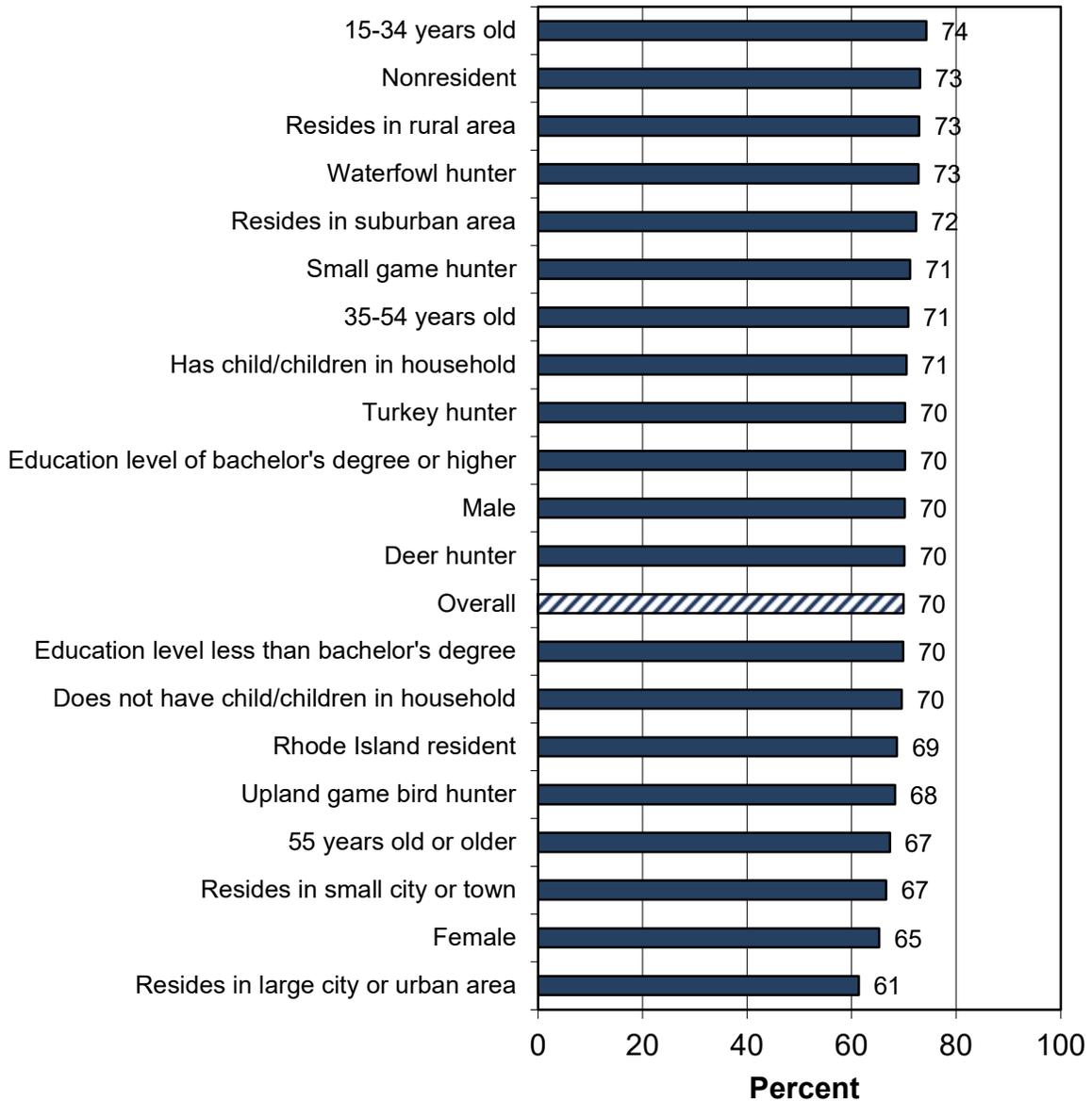
Large city residents and female hunters are the groups most likely to think that hunting unsupervised at the age of 15 is too young.

Percent of each of the following groups who think that the minimum age of 15 to hunt unsupervised in Rhode Island is too young:



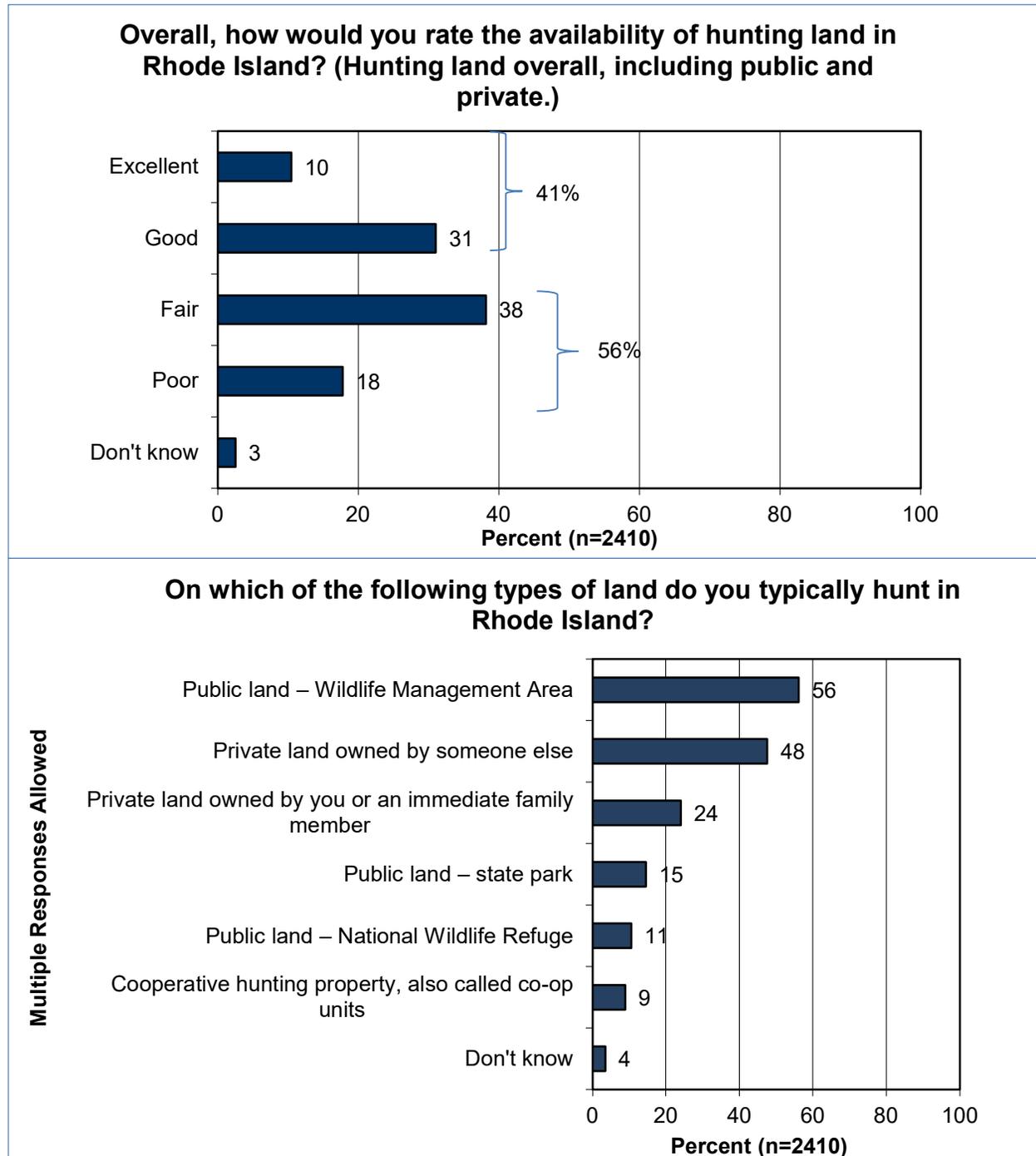
Apart from the groups previously mentioned, there is little variation among the groups who think that the minimum age of 15 is about right for unsupervised hunting in Rhode Island.

Percent of each of the following groups who think that the minimum age of 15 to hunt unsupervised in Rhode Island is about the right age:



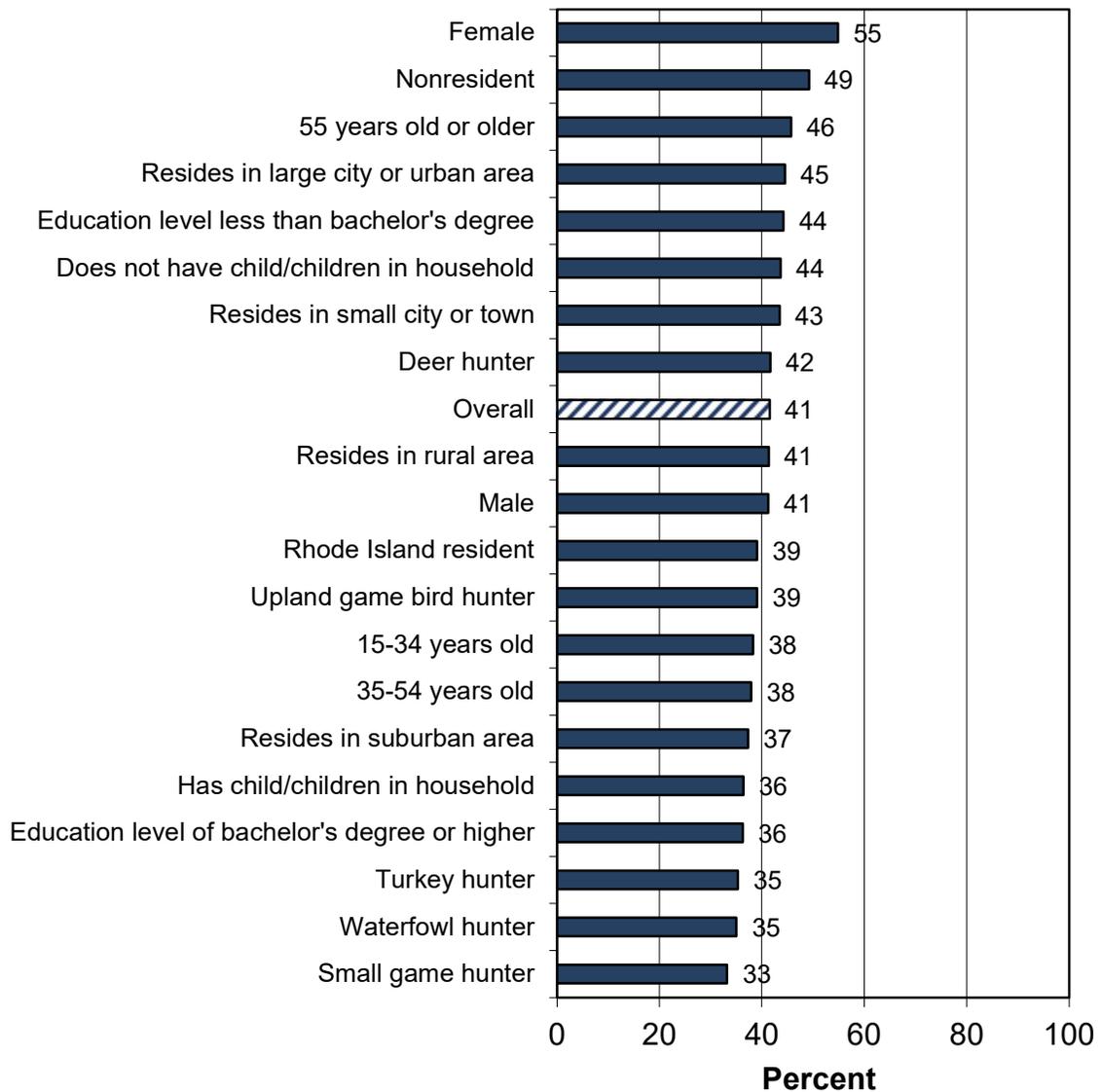
HUNTING LANDS

The availability of hunting land is not rated very highly by hunters: 41% rate the availability in the top half of the scale (excellent at 10%; good at 31%), compared to 56% who rate it in the bottom half of the scale (fair at 38%; poor at 18%). However, note that most hunters give a moderate rating (good or fair) rather than an extreme rating. Hunters most frequently hunt on public land in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) (56% do so), private land owned by someone else (48%), and private land owned by themselves or family members (24%). Respondents could name multiple types of land.

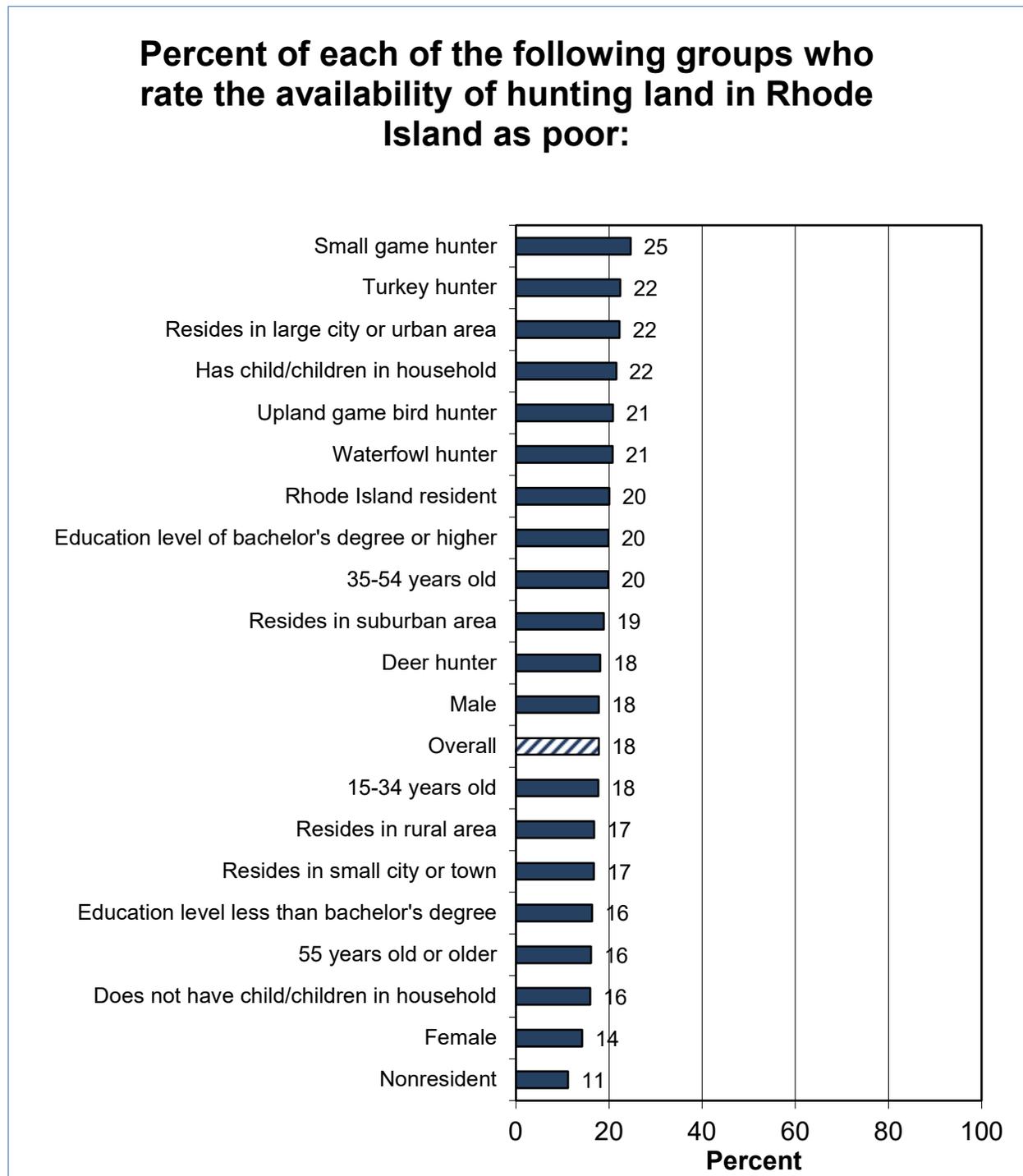


Female and nonresident hunters are more likely than other groups to rate the availability of hunting land as excellent or good.

Percent of each of the following groups who rate the availability of hunting land in Rhode Island as excellent or good:

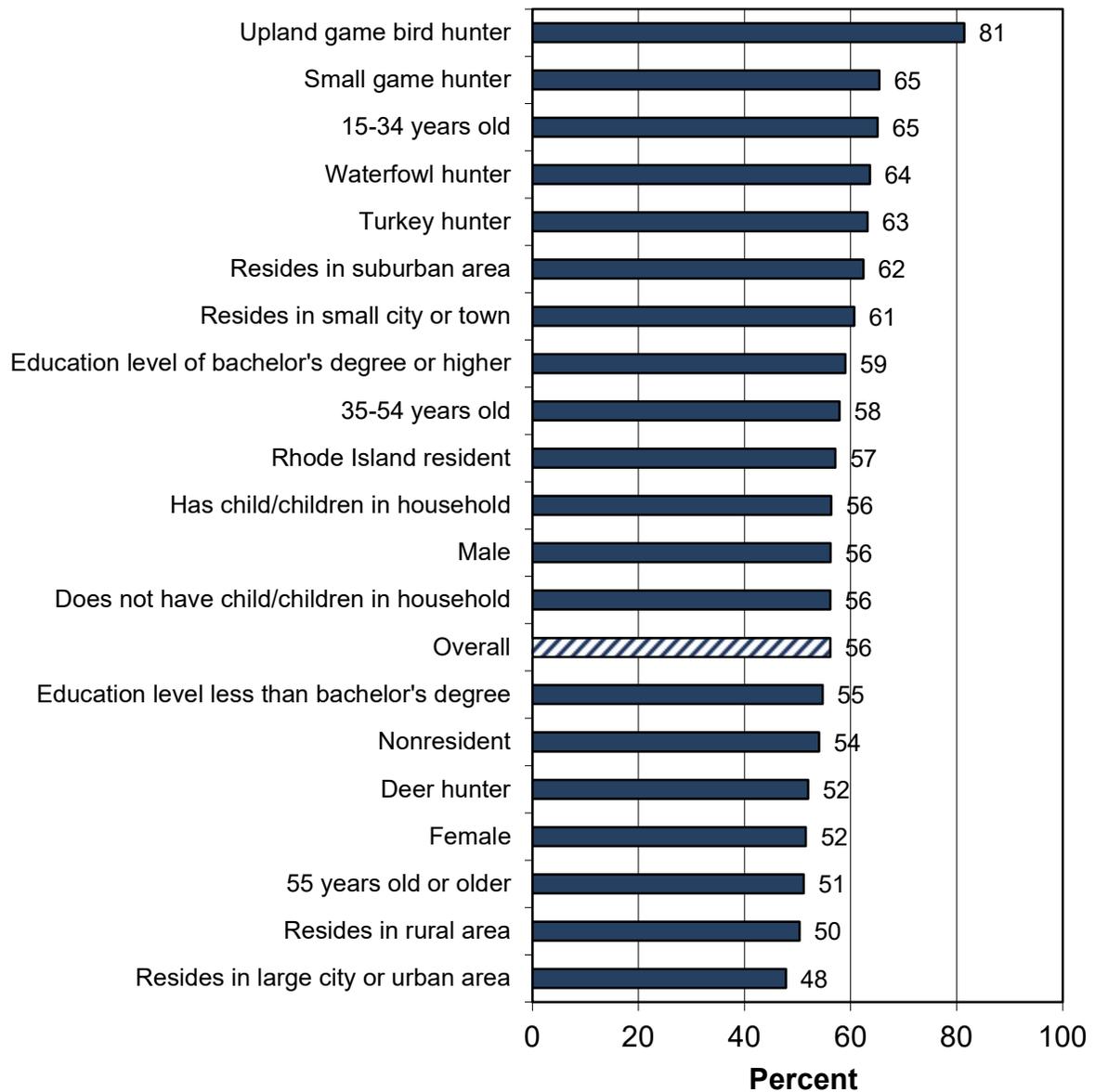


Small game hunters are the group most likely to rate the availability of hunting land in Rhode Island as poor.



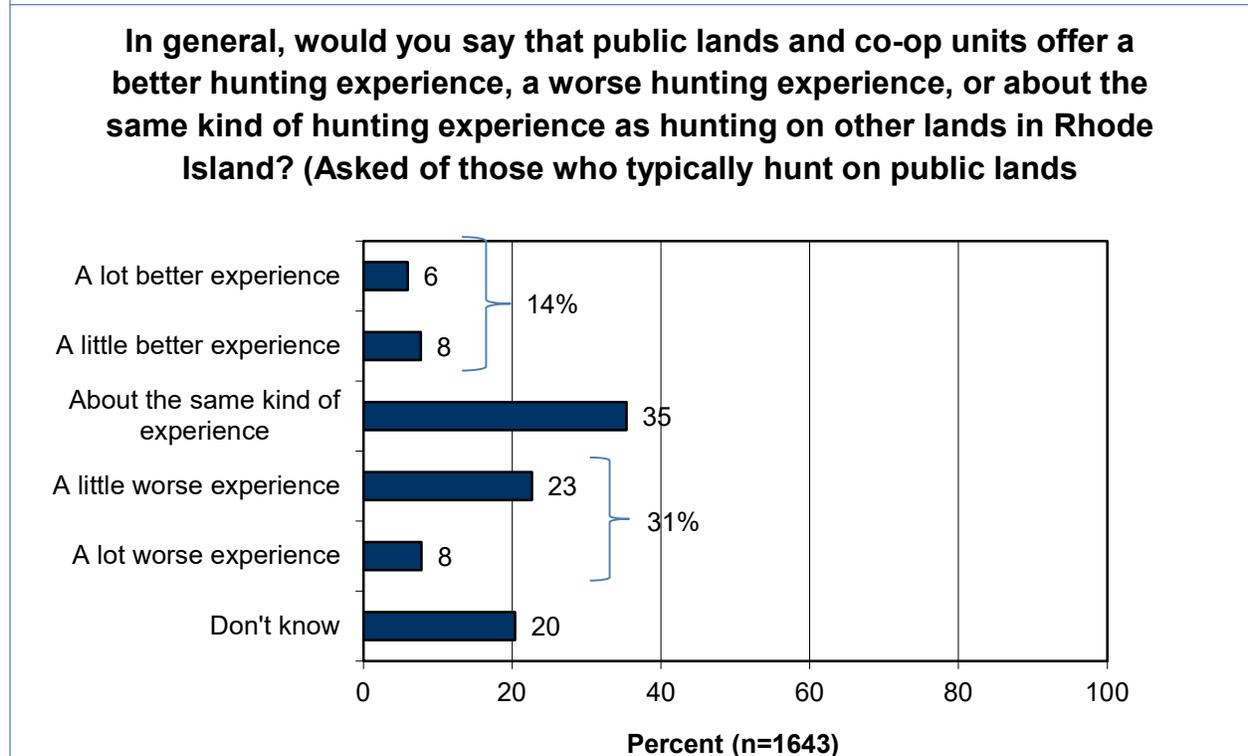
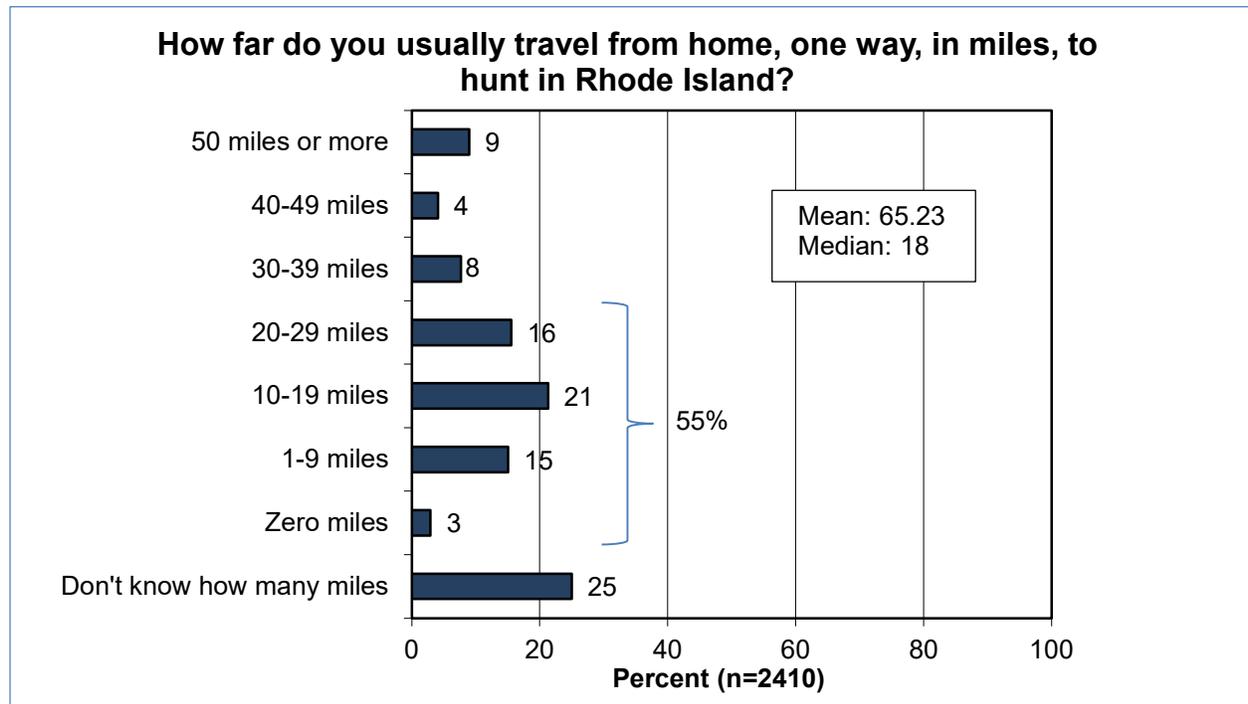
By far, upland game bird hunters are the group most likely to hunt on WMAs in Rhode Island. Other groups who are more likely than hunters overall to hunt on WMAs include small game, waterfowl, and turkey hunters; younger hunters; and suburban residents.

Percent of each of the following groups who typically hunt on Wildlife Management Areas in Rhode Island:



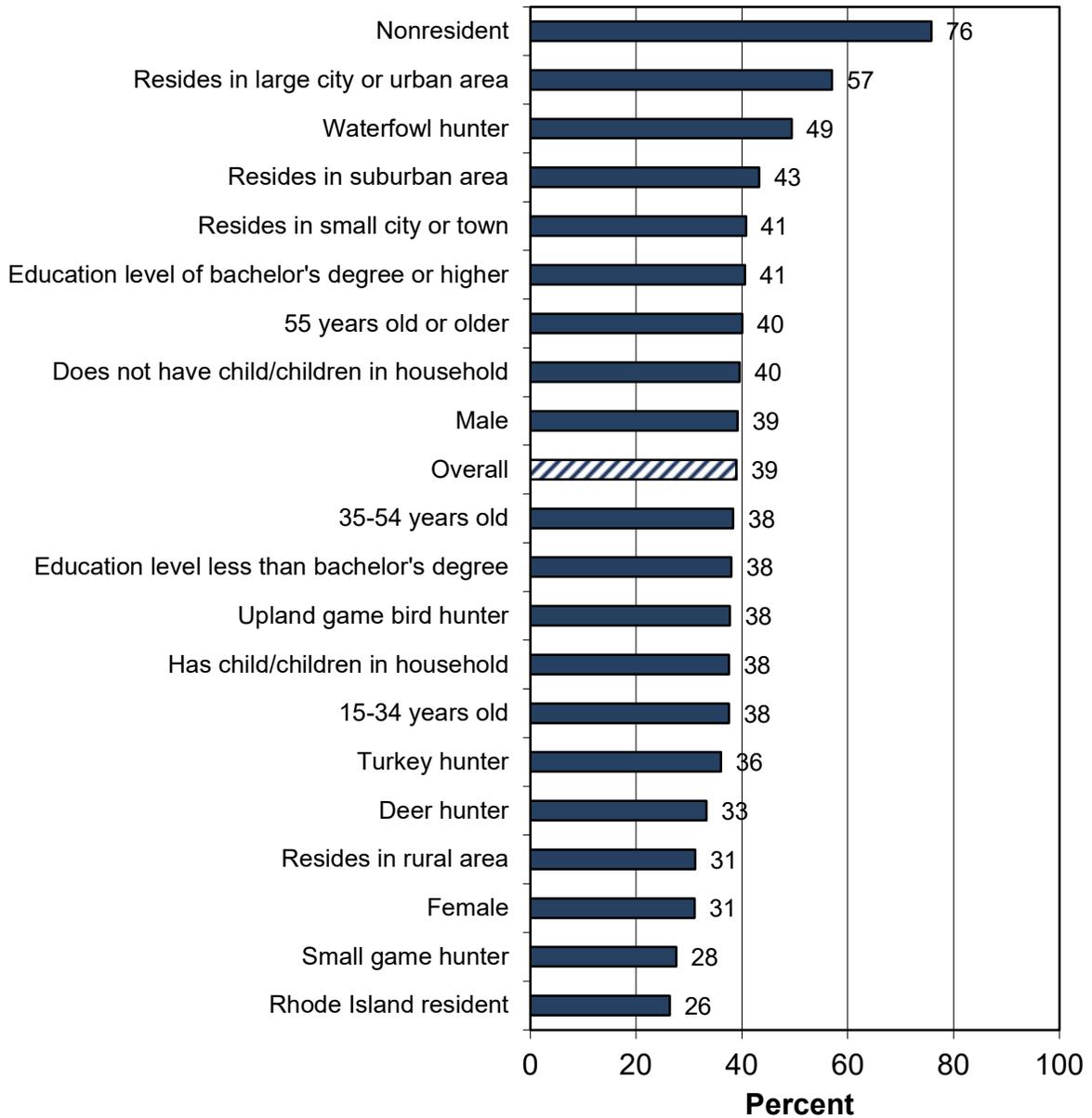
A majority of hunters (55%) travel less than 30 miles to hunt; the median distance is 65.23 miles and the median is 18 miles.

Those who typically hunt on public lands or co-op units in Rhode Island are more likely to say those lands offer a worse hunting experience compared to other lands (31% state this) than a better experience (14%); meanwhile, 35% say they offer about the same kind of experience and 20% do not know.

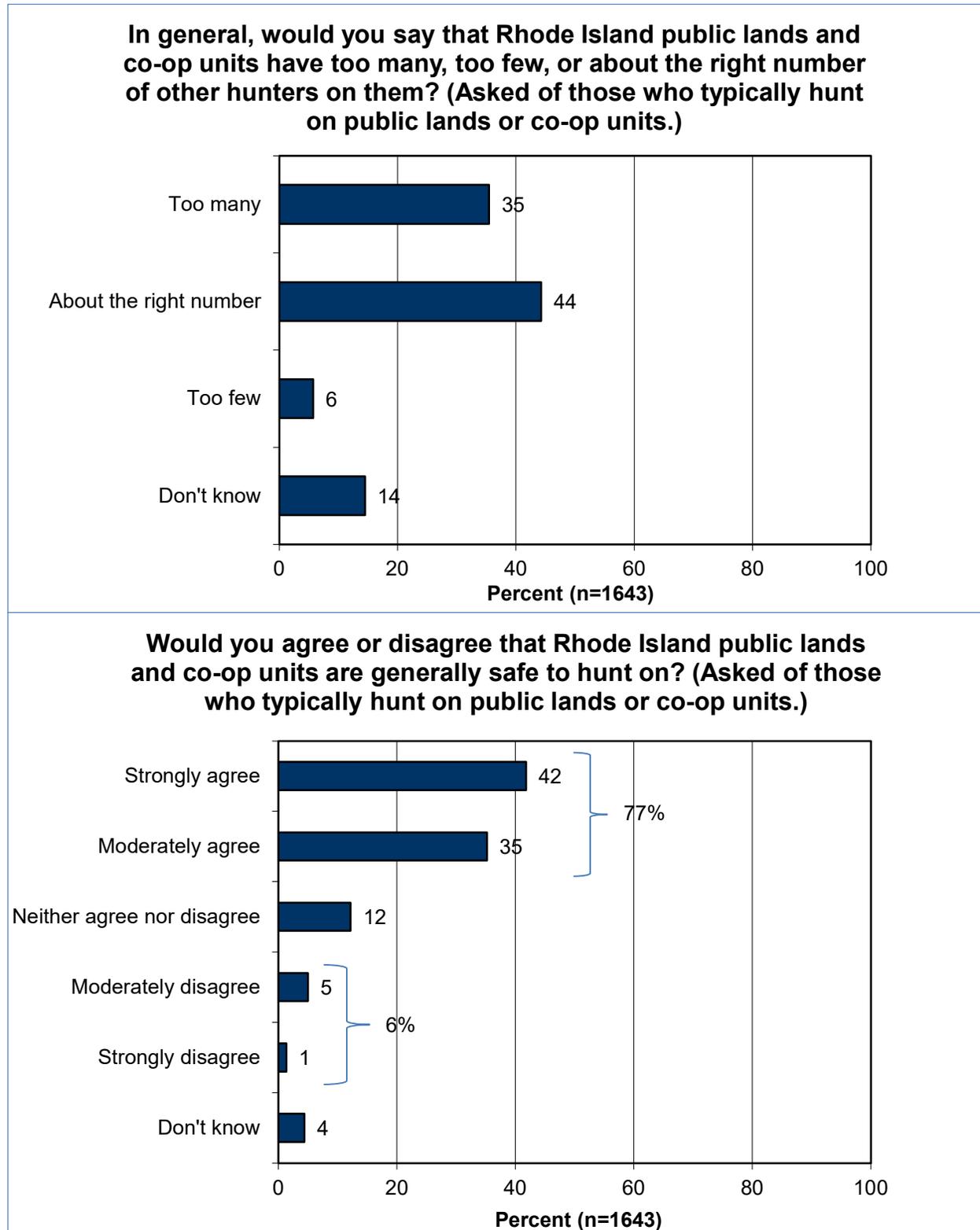


Apart from nonresidents, large city residents and waterfowl hunters are most likely to travel more than the median distance of 18 miles to hunt in Rhode Island.

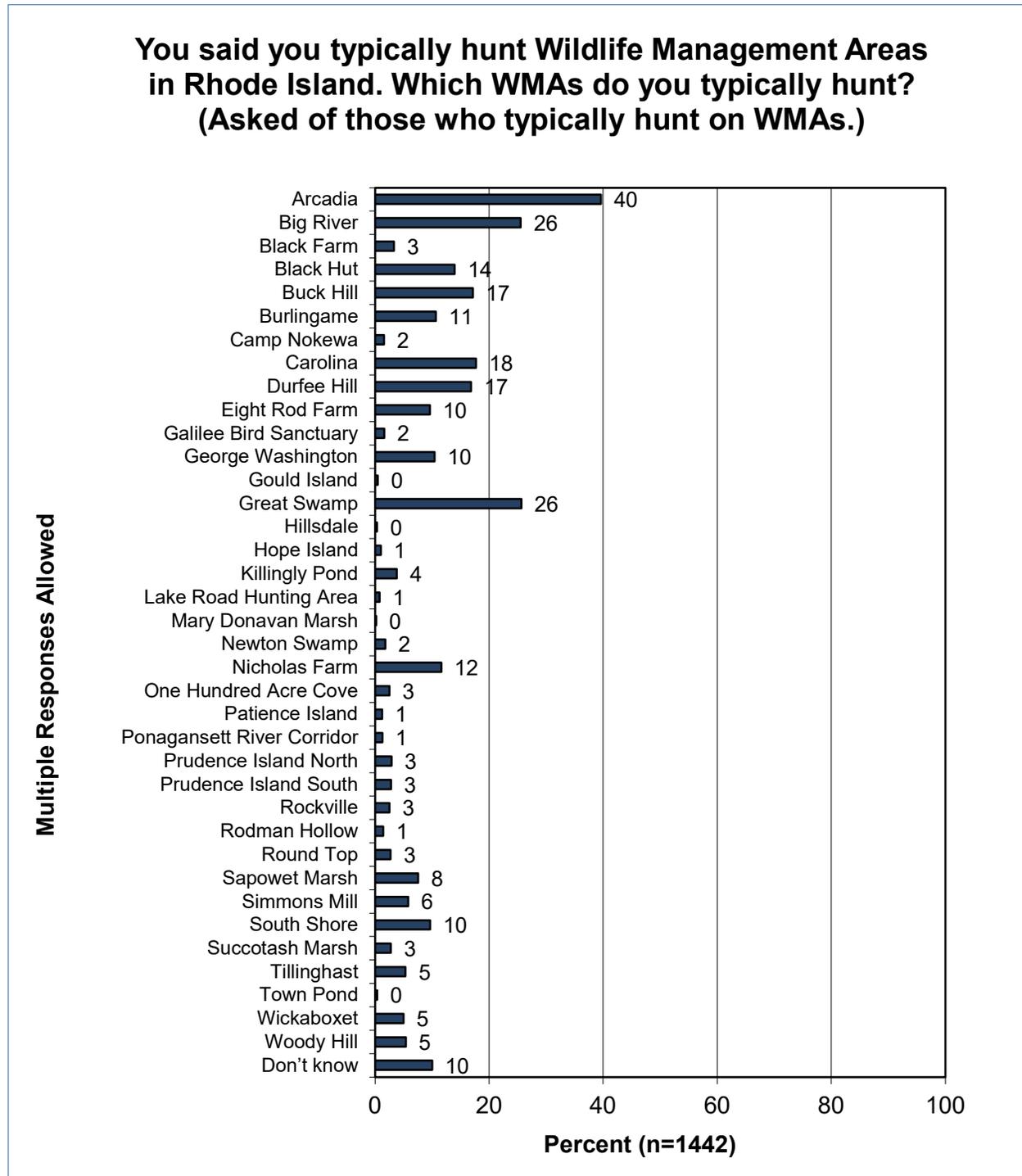
Percent of each of the following groups who travel more than the median distance of 18 miles to hunt in Rhode Island:



Among those who typically hunt on public lands or co-op units, 44% say there is about the right number other hunters on them and 35% say there are too many. Over three fourths of these hunters (77%) agree that these lands are generally safe to hunt on, compared to only 6% who disagree.

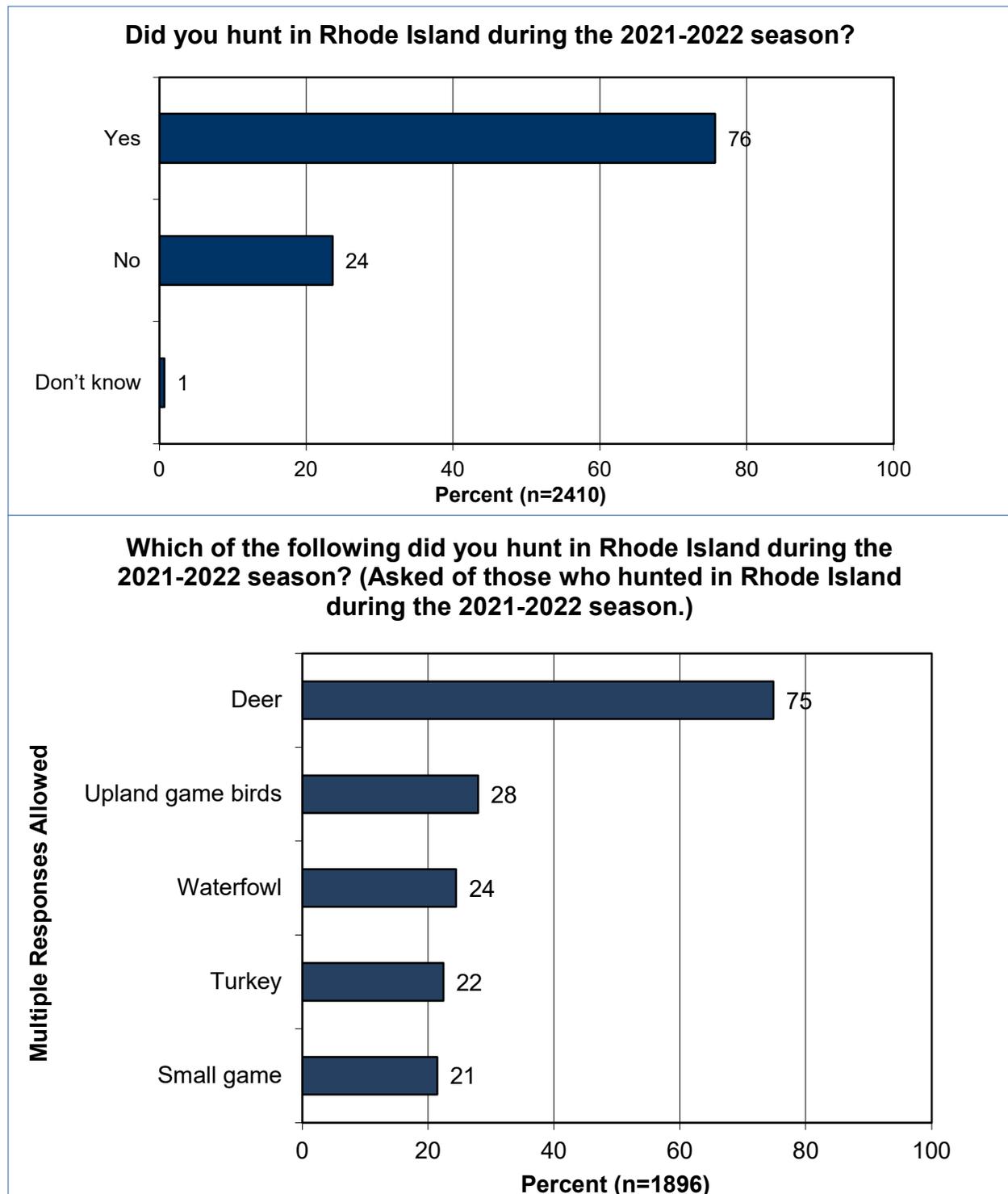


Those who typically hunt on WMAs most frequently hunt the Arcadia, Big River, Great Swamp, Carolina, Durfee Hill, and Buck Hill WMAs. The full list is shown below in alphabetical order.



SPECIES HUNTED

Overall, 76% of hunters hunted in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season. (Recall that “hunters” is defined here as those who hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years.) By far, deer was the most hunted species in the past season (75% of those who hunted in 2021-2022 hunted deer), while about a quarter of these hunters hunted upland game birds, waterfowl, turkey, and small game.



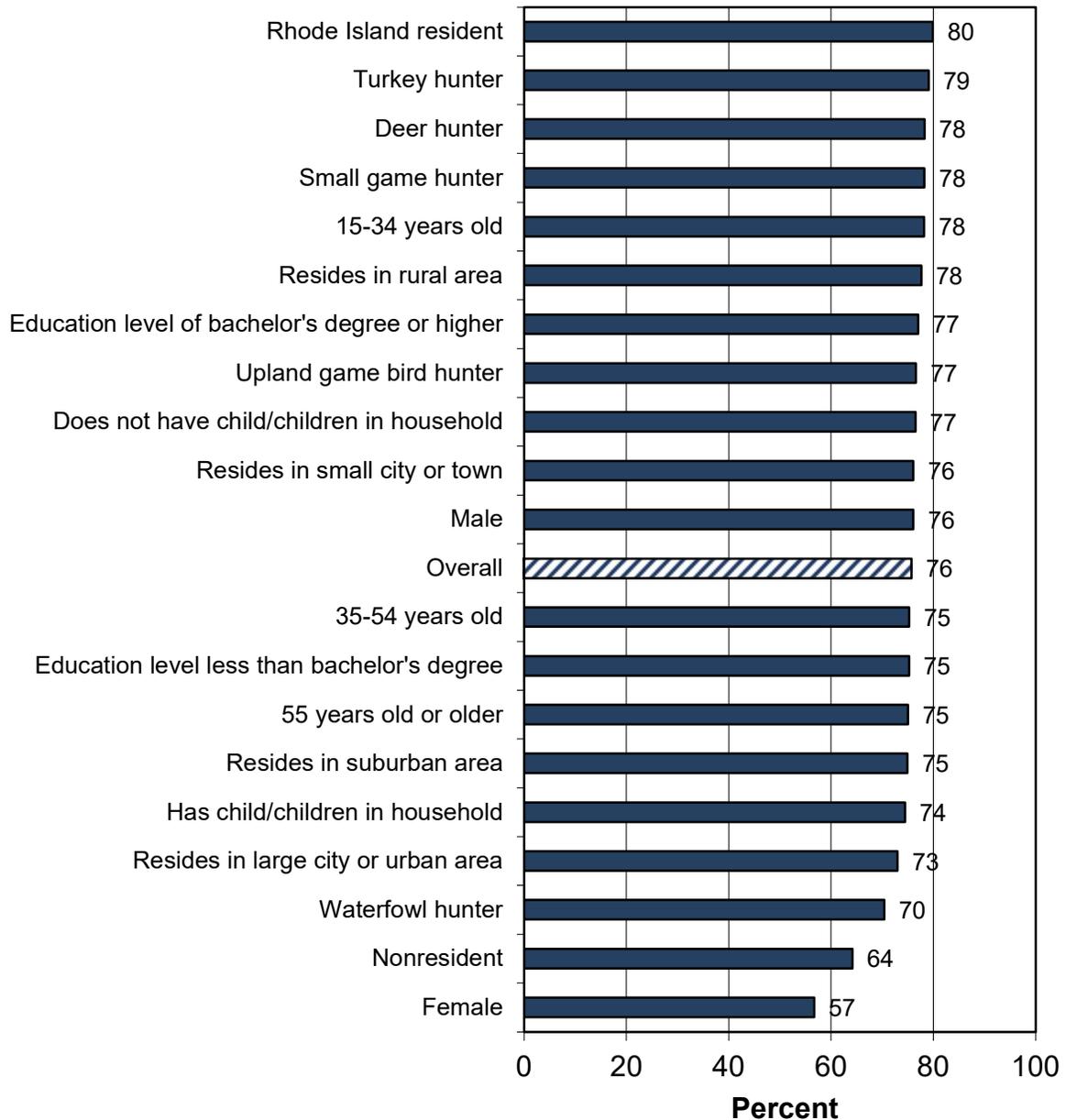
The tabulation below shows the estimated number of days that were spent hunting each species or species group during the 2021-2022 hunting season in Rhode Island. Hunters spent nearly 122,000 days hunting deer last season. In addition, hunters spent over 22,000 days hunting upland game birds, waterfowl, and small game, and they spent nearly 12,000 days hunting turkey.

Estimated Days Spent Hunting Each Species in 2021-2022			
Species	Estimated Days Hunted	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Deer	121,876	115,048	128,703
Turkey	11,762	10,449	13,075
Small Game	22,694	19,111	26,277
Upland Game Birds	25,682	22,705	28,660
Waterfowl	23,290	20,432	26,148

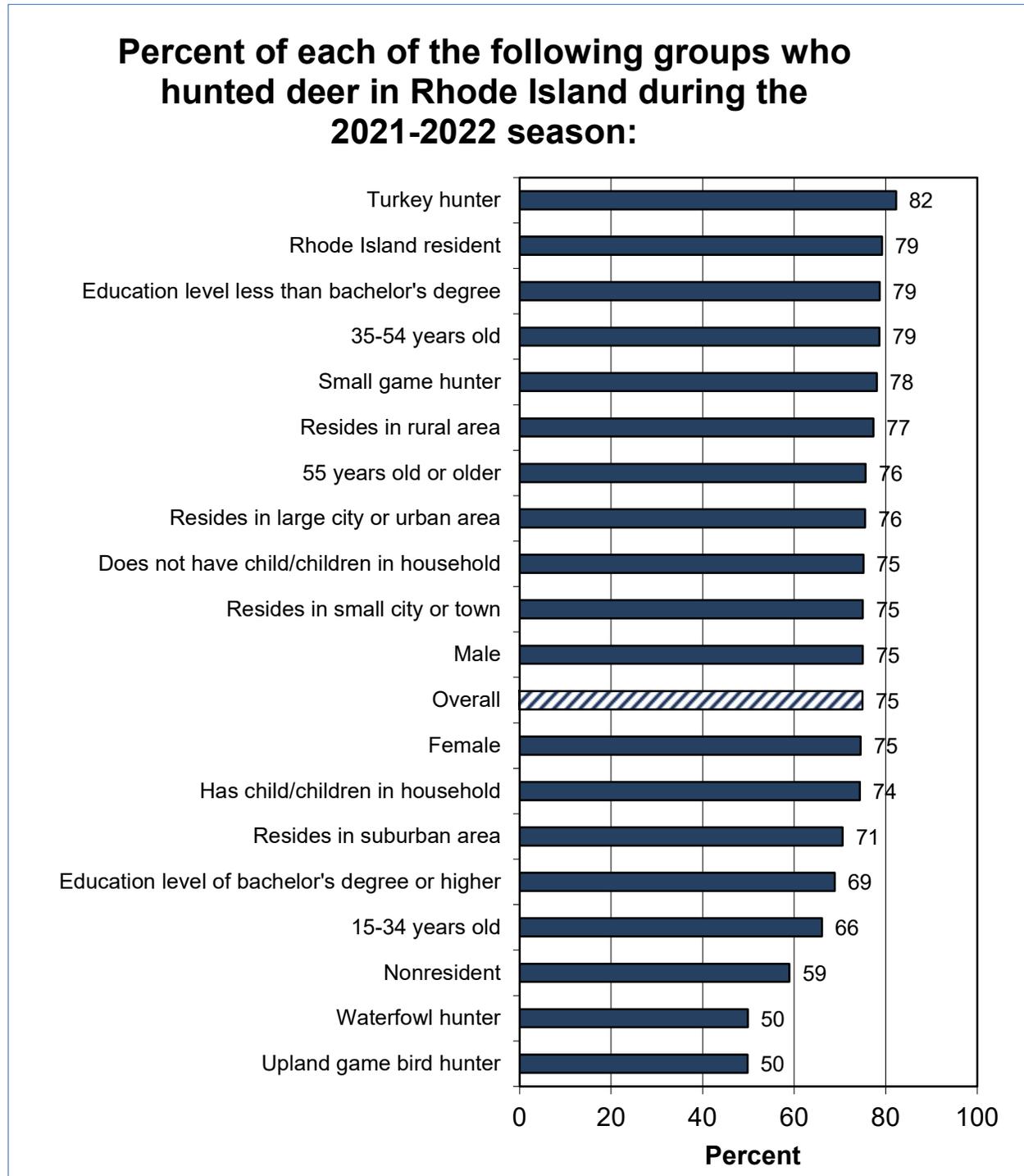
The estimated numbers of hunters and harvested species are shown in the subsequent chapters that are specific to each species or species group.

Female hunters, nonresidents, and waterfowl hunters were less likely to hunt during the 2021-2022 season than other hunter groups. Otherwise, there was little variation among the groups.

Percent of each of the following groups who hunted in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season:

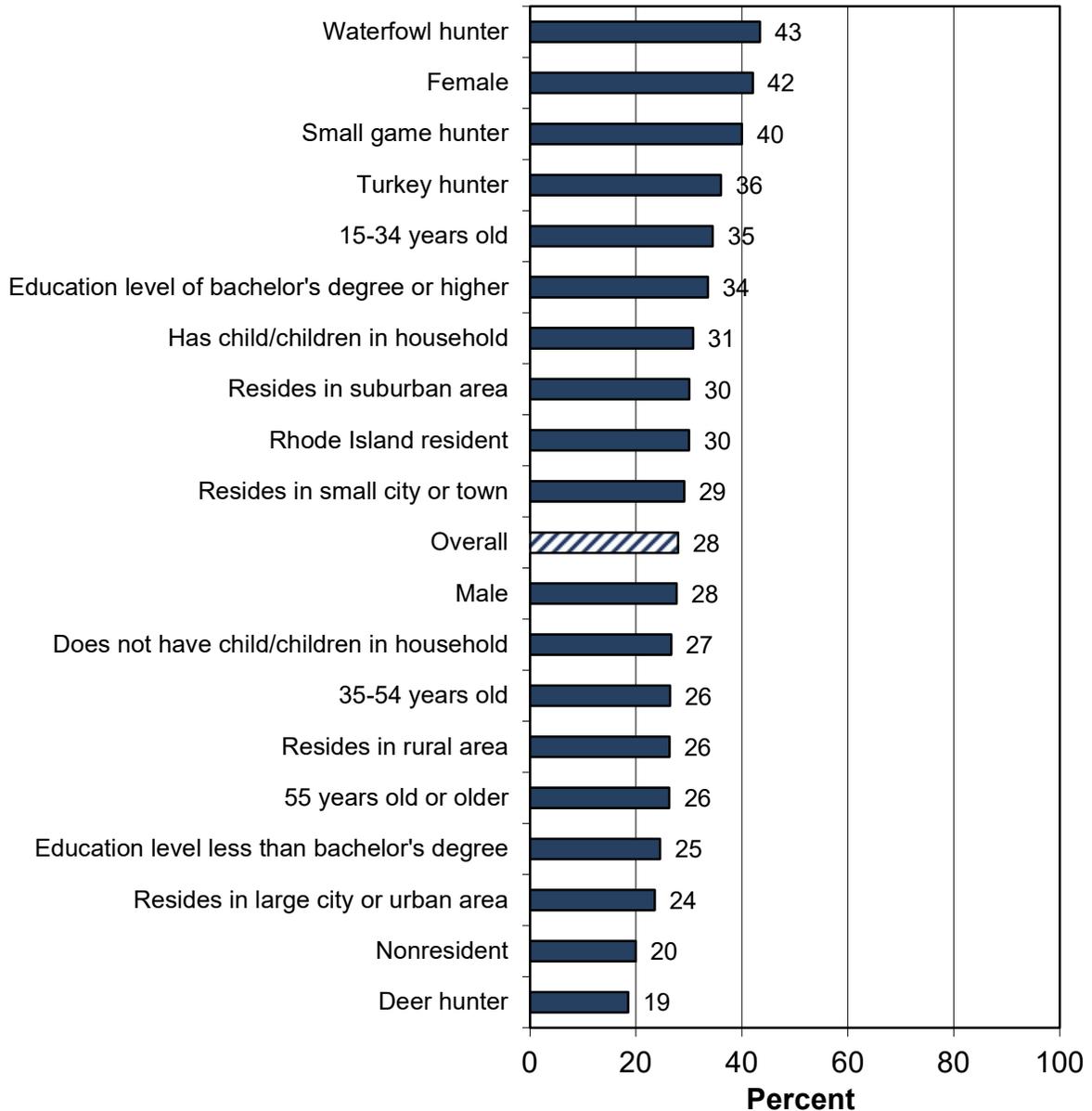


Turkey hunters were the group who most often hunted deer in the 2021-2022 season. (Deer hunters would be shown at 100% on this graph by definition; therefore, this group was not shown. The same logic applies to the following demographic analyses graphs that are specific to the species hunted in 2021-2022.)



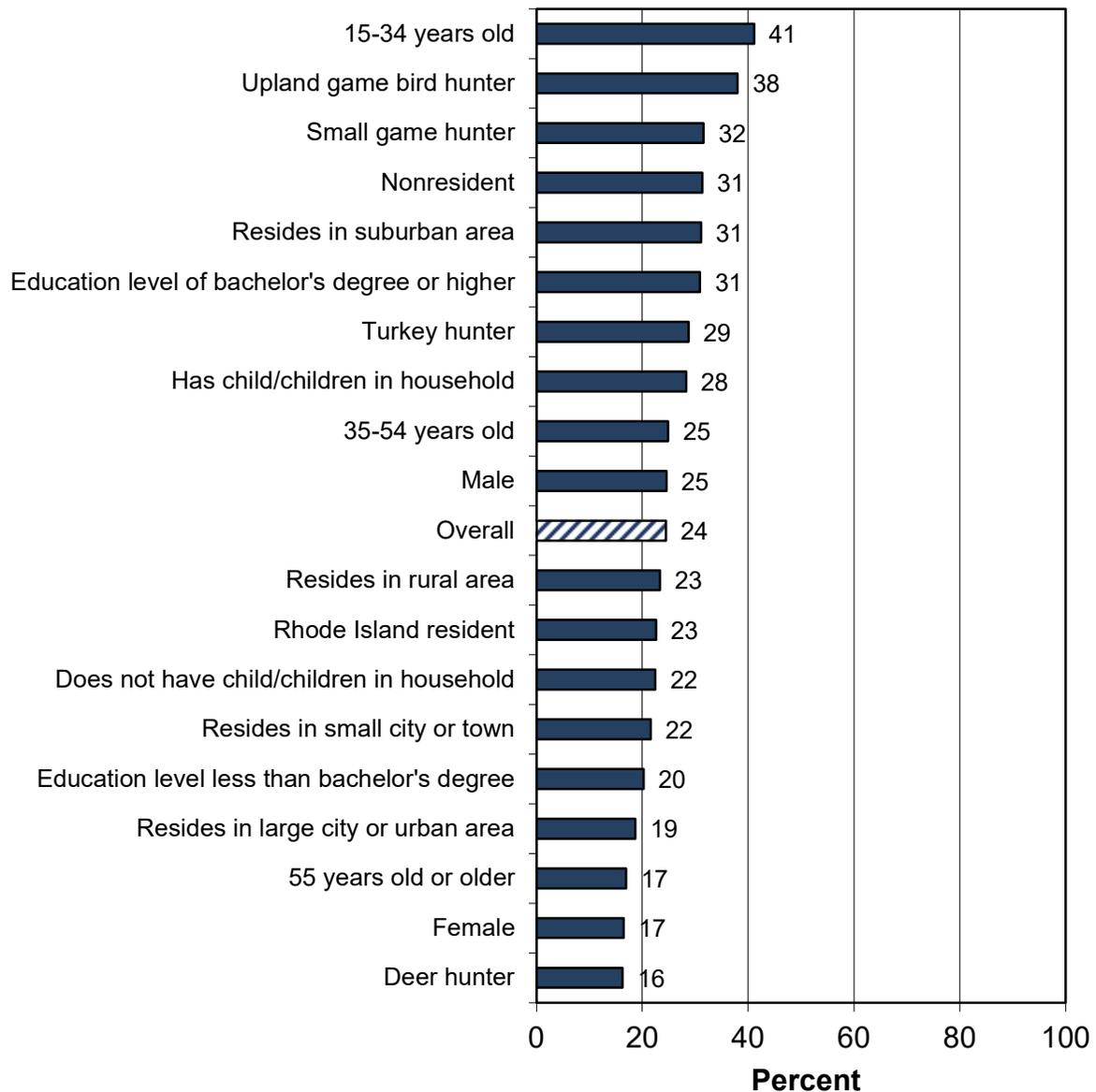
The groups who most often hunted upland game birds in the 2021-2022 season include waterfowl hunters, females, and small game hunters.

Percent of each of the following groups who hunted upland game birds in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season:

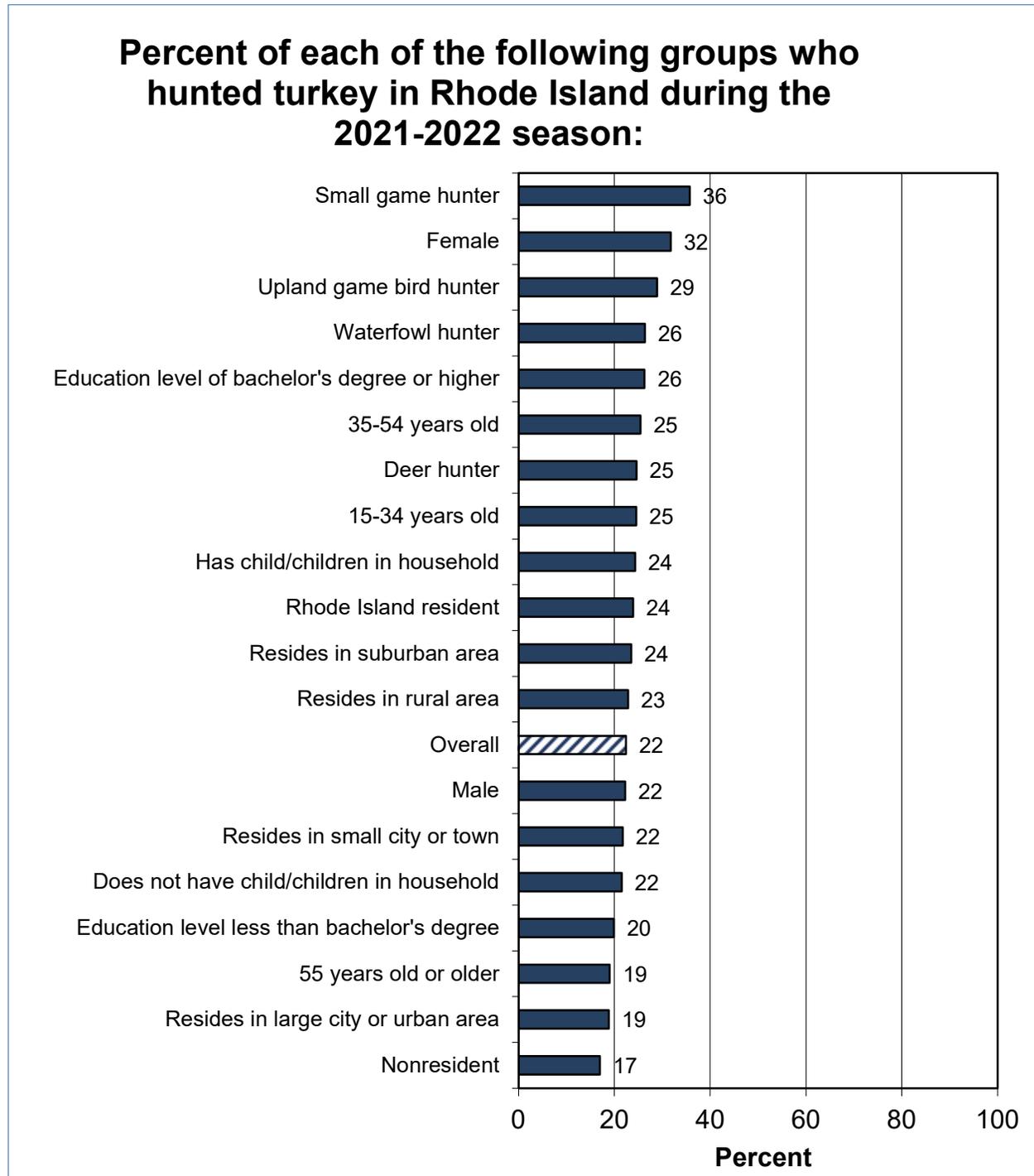


Younger hunters and upland game bird hunters were the groups who most often hunted waterfowl in the 2021-2022 season.

Percent of each of the following groups who hunted waterfowl in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season:

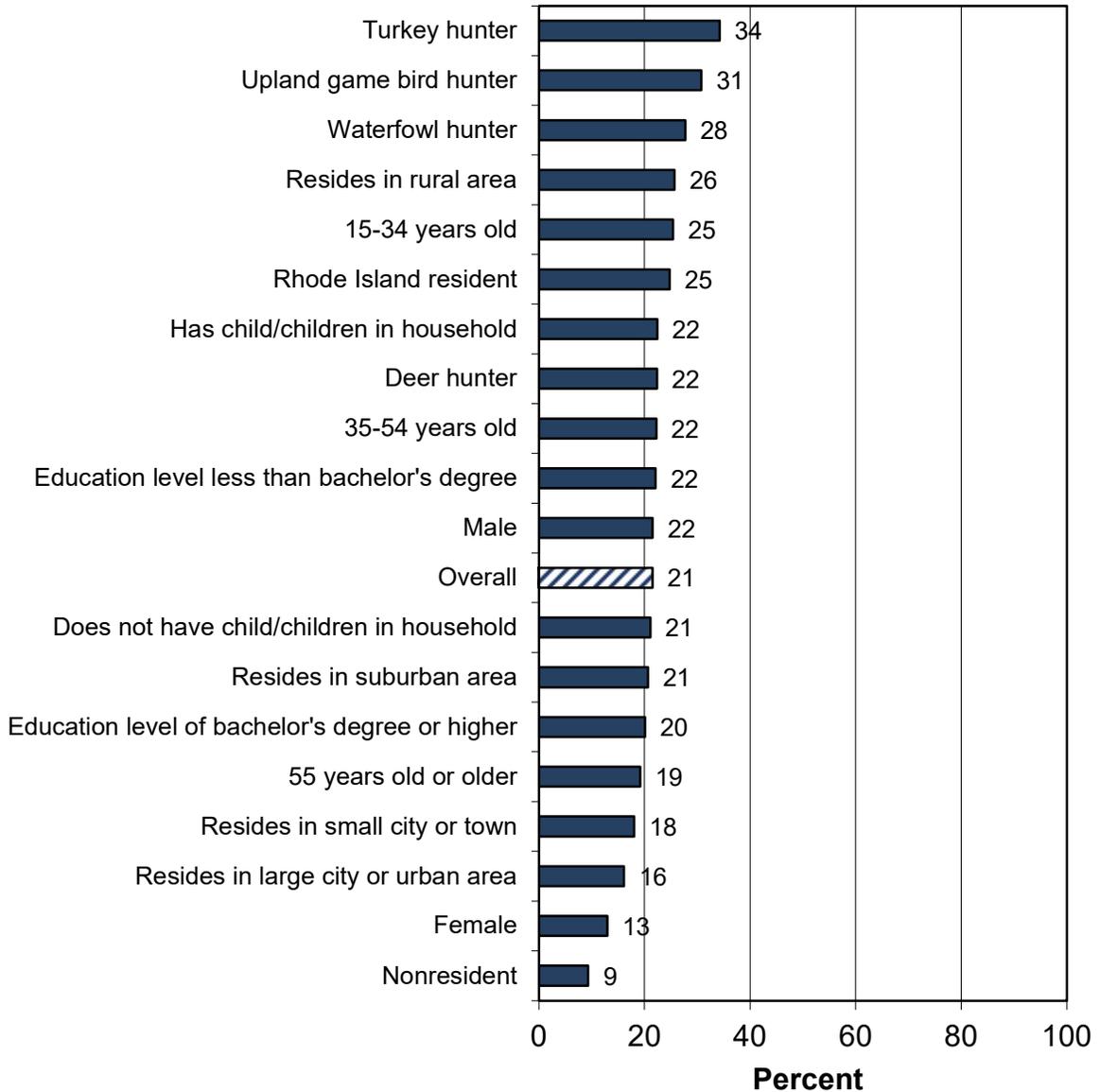


Small game hunters, females, and upland game bird hunters were the groups who most often hunted turkey in the 2021-2022 season.

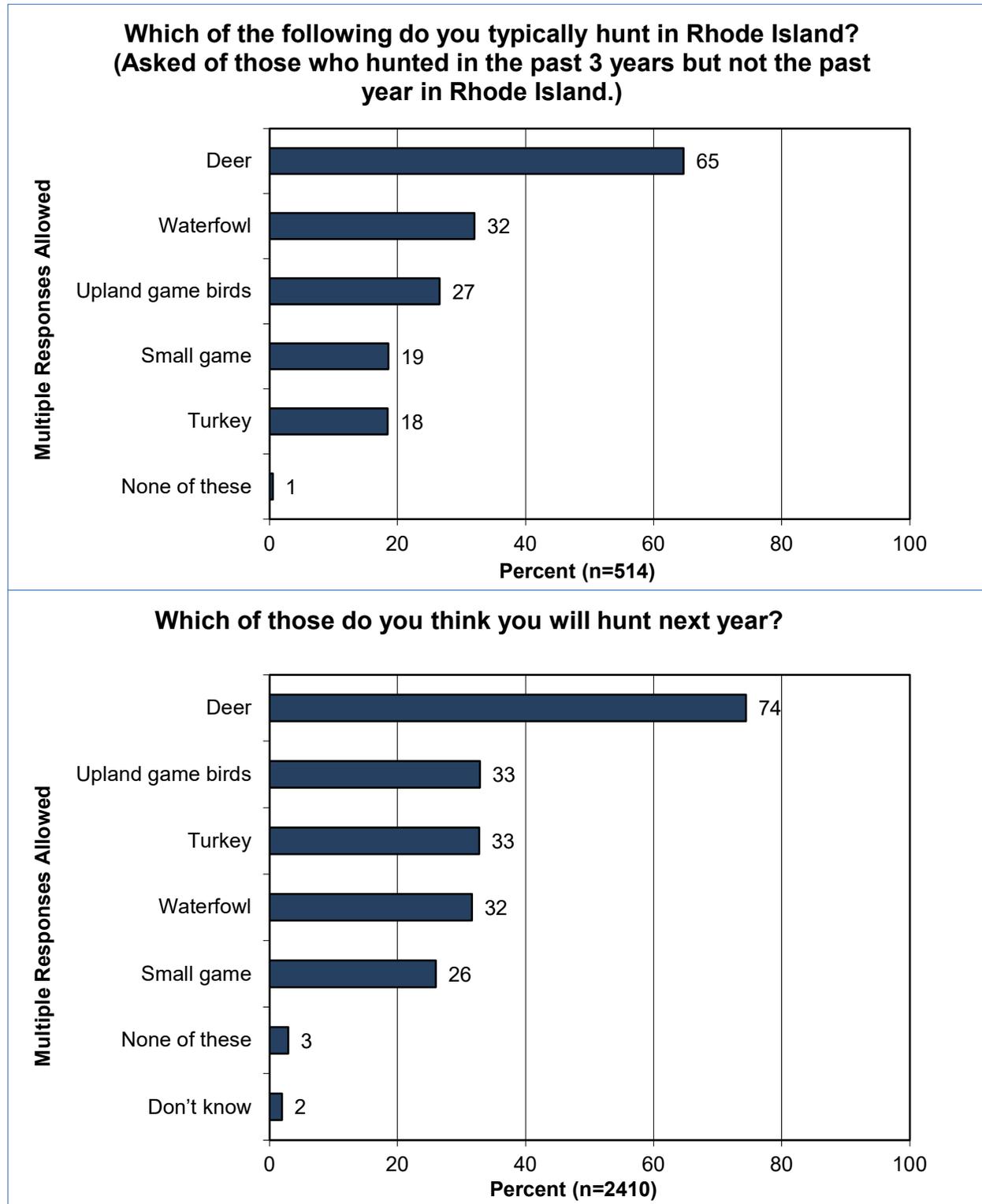


Turkey, upland game bird, and waterfowl hunters were the groups who most often hunted small game in the 2021-2022 season.

Percent of each of the following groups who hunted small game in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season:

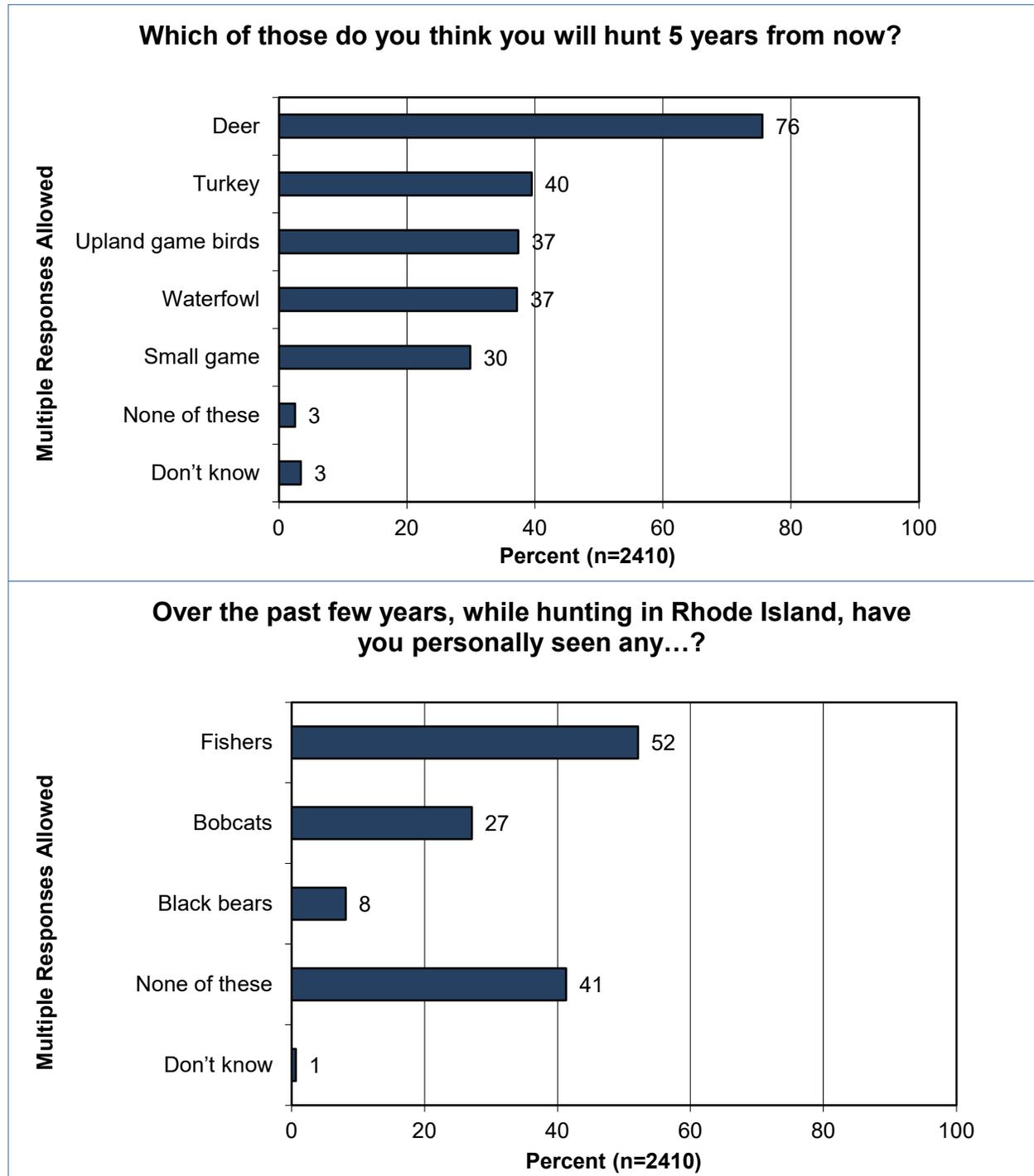


Looking at those who hunted in the past 3 years but not the past year in Rhode Island, about two thirds typically hunt deer, about a third hunt waterfowl, and about a quarter hunt upland game birds. Among all hunters, 74% anticipate hunting deer next year, a third expect to hunt upland game birds, turkey, and waterfowl, and about a quarter expect to hunt small game.

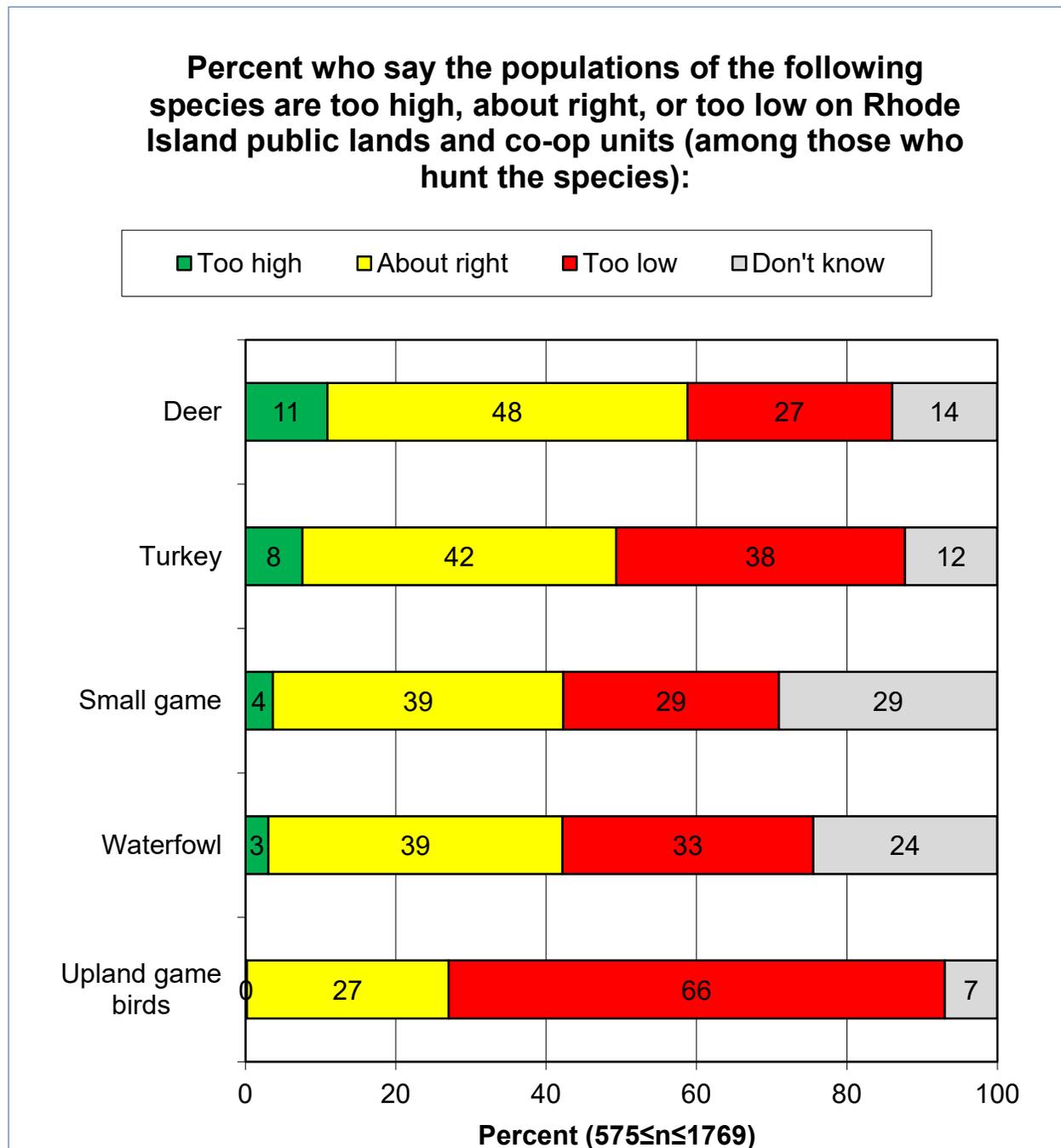


Hunters were next asked which species they think they will hunt 5 years from now, and the results are similar to their 1-year projections. The percentages expecting to hunt each species or species group are: deer (76% expect to hunt deer in 5 years), turkey (40%), upland game birds (37%), waterfowl (37%), and small game (30%).

While hunting in Rhode Island in the past few years, 52% of hunters have seen fishers, 27% have seen bobcats, and 8% have seen black bears (these species were specifically asked about in the survey).

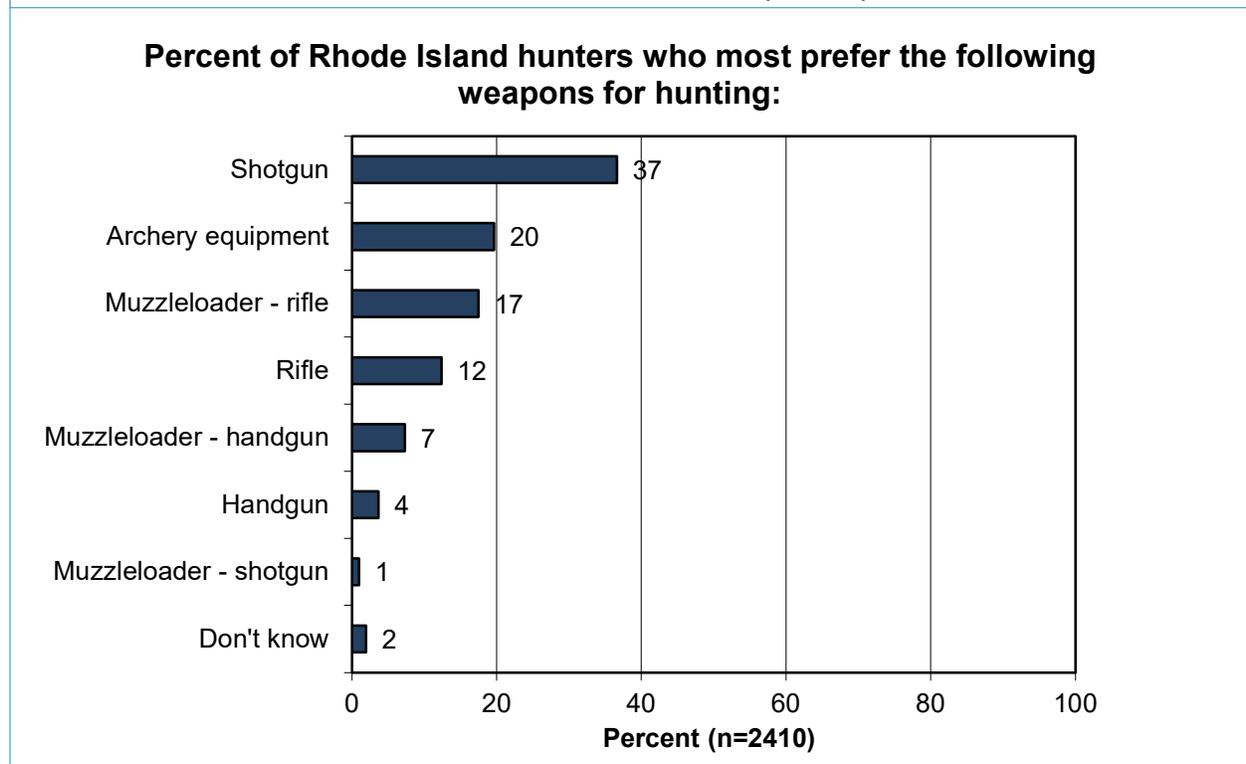
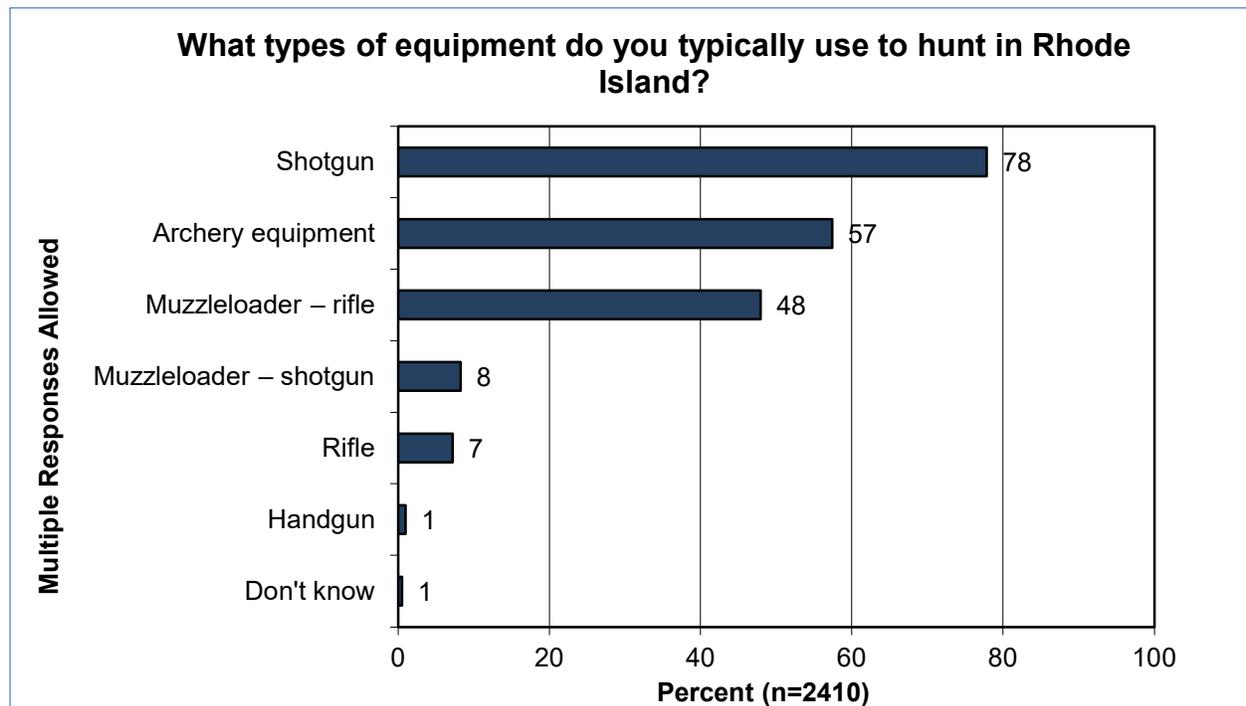


Hunters for each species or species group were asked if the populations of the species were too high, about right, or too low on Rhode Island public lands and co-op units. Hunters most commonly stated that the populations were about right, with the exception of upland game bird hunters, in which two thirds think the population is too low. Results are shown in descending order of *too high* percentages.



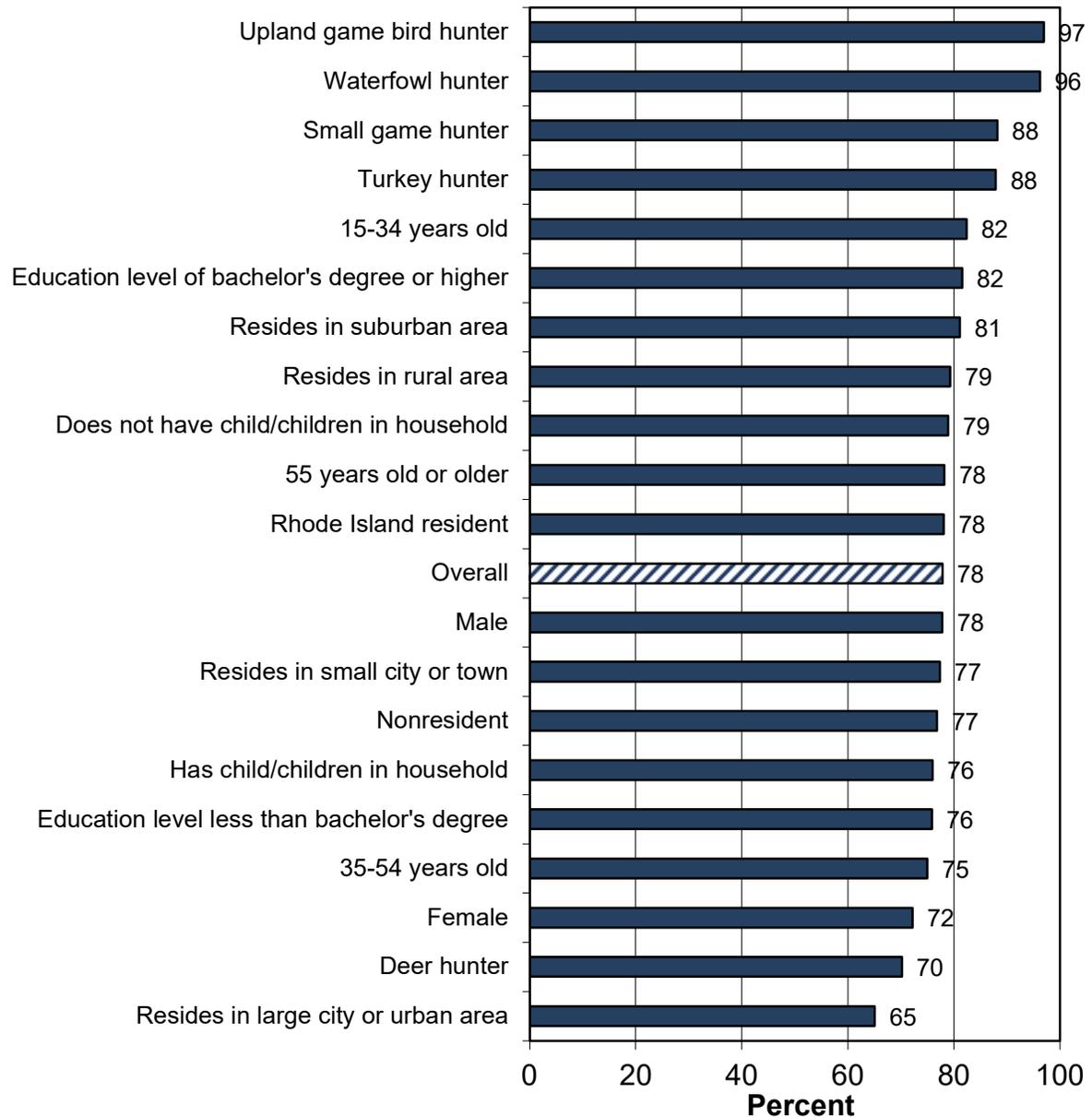
HUNTING EQUIPMENT

Rhode Island hunters most often hunt with shotguns (78%), archery equipment (57%), and muzzleloader rifles (48%) (respondents could give multiple responses). Most hunters (85%) use more than one type of equipment (graph not shown). When asked to name their most preferred weapon for hunting, hunters most often said shotguns (37% gave this response), archery equipment (20%), muzzleloader rifles (17%), and modern rifles (12%).



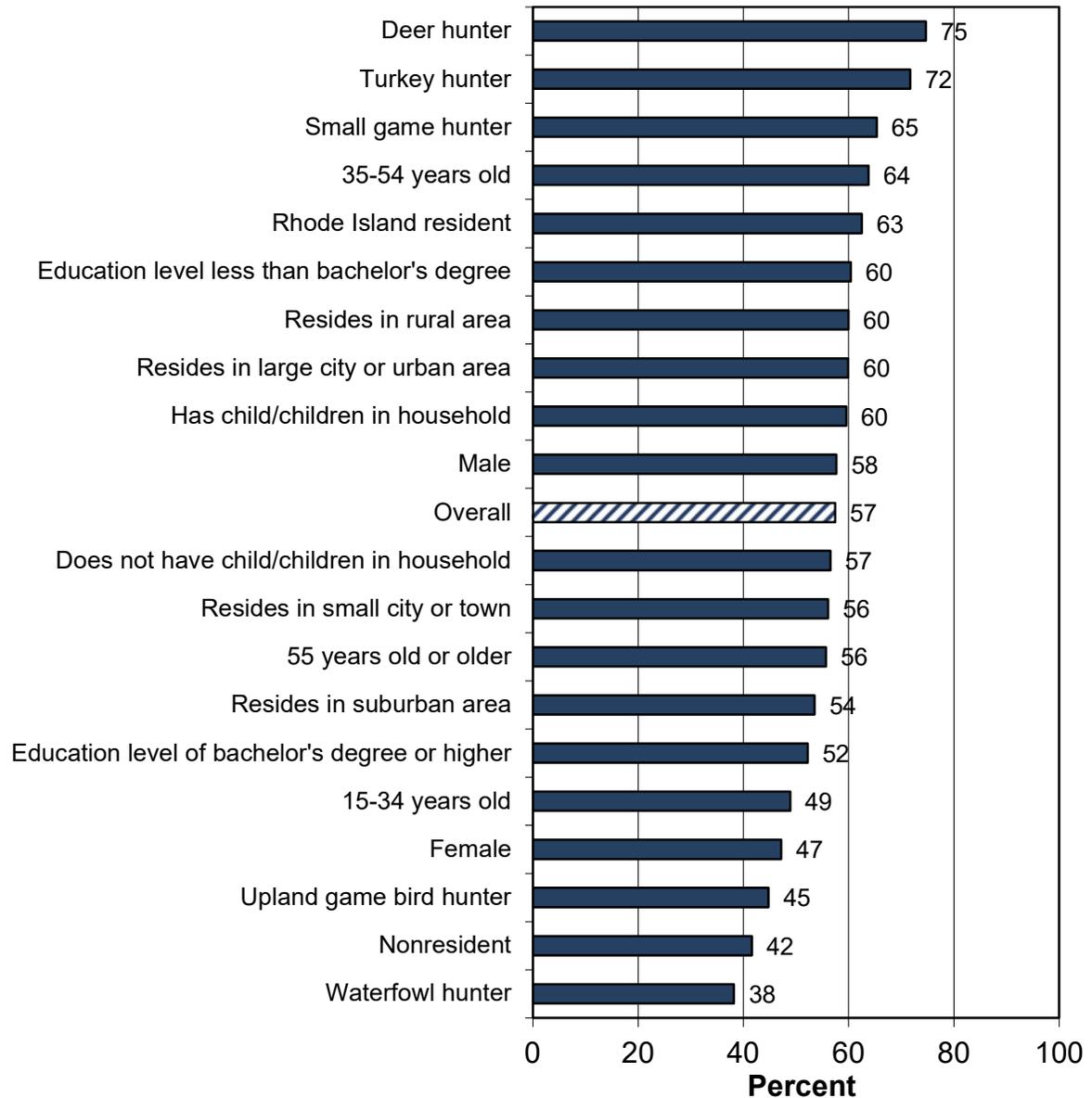
The groups most likely to use a shotgun include upland game bird, waterfowl, small game, and turkey hunters (in other words, all the species hunter groups except deer hunters).

Percent of each of the following groups who typically use a shotgun to hunt in Rhode Island:



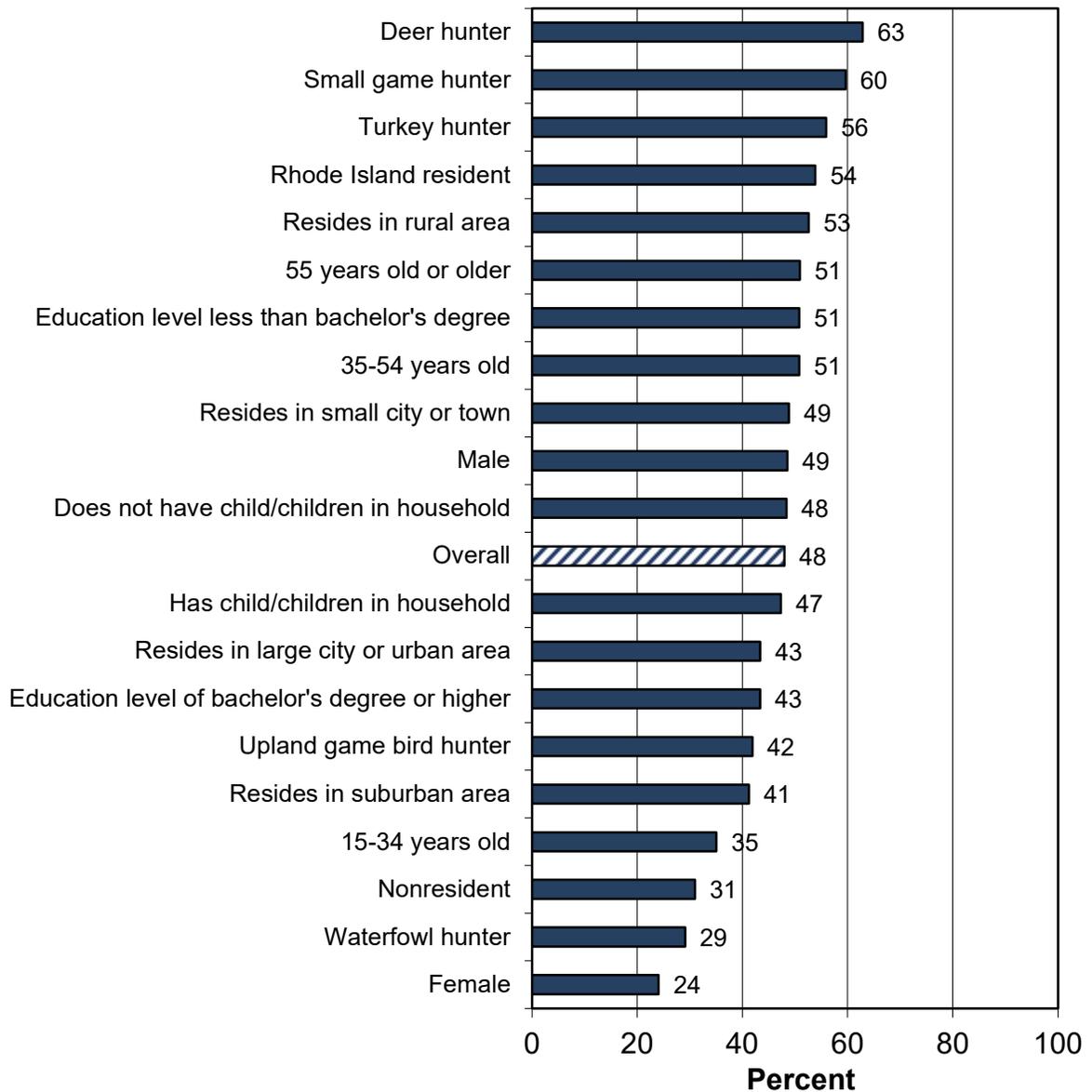
Deer and turkey hunters are the groups most likely to hunt with archery equipment. (Note that these are the hunter groups that have the highest percentages who use archery equipment, although it does not necessarily mean that they are using archery equipment to hunt these species.)

Percent of each of the following groups who typically use archery equipment to hunt in Rhode Island:

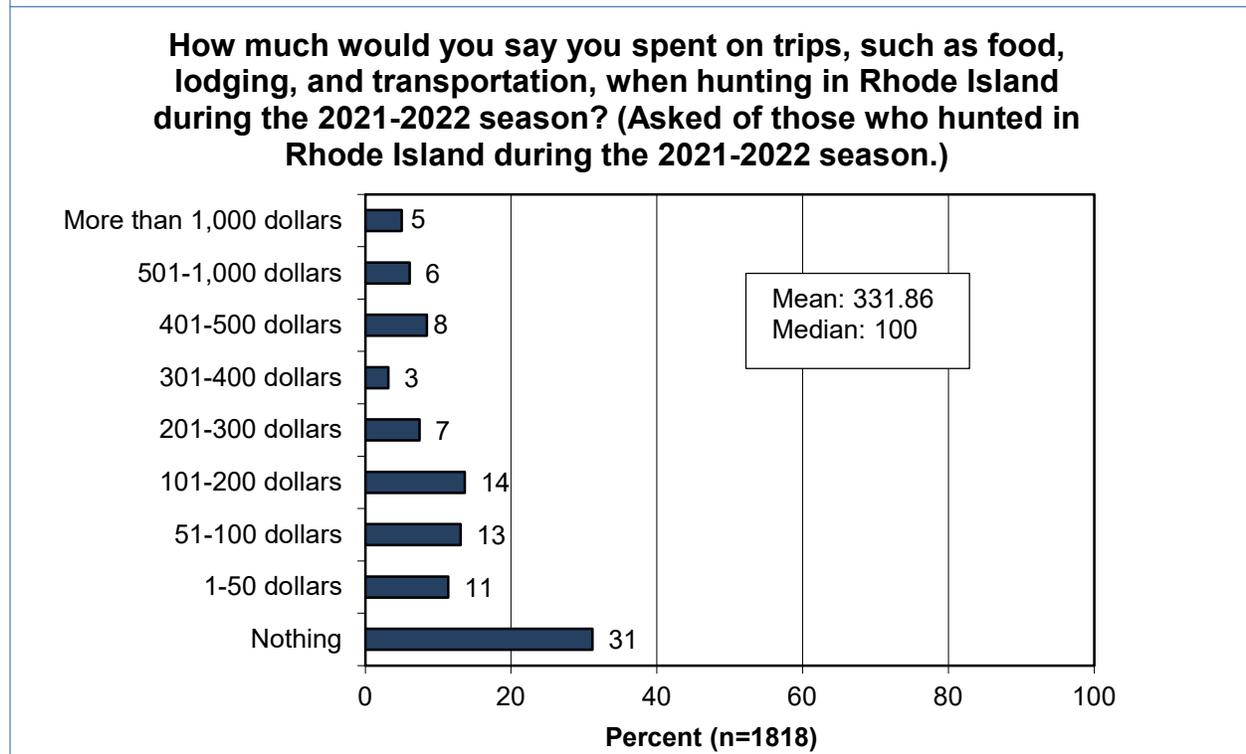
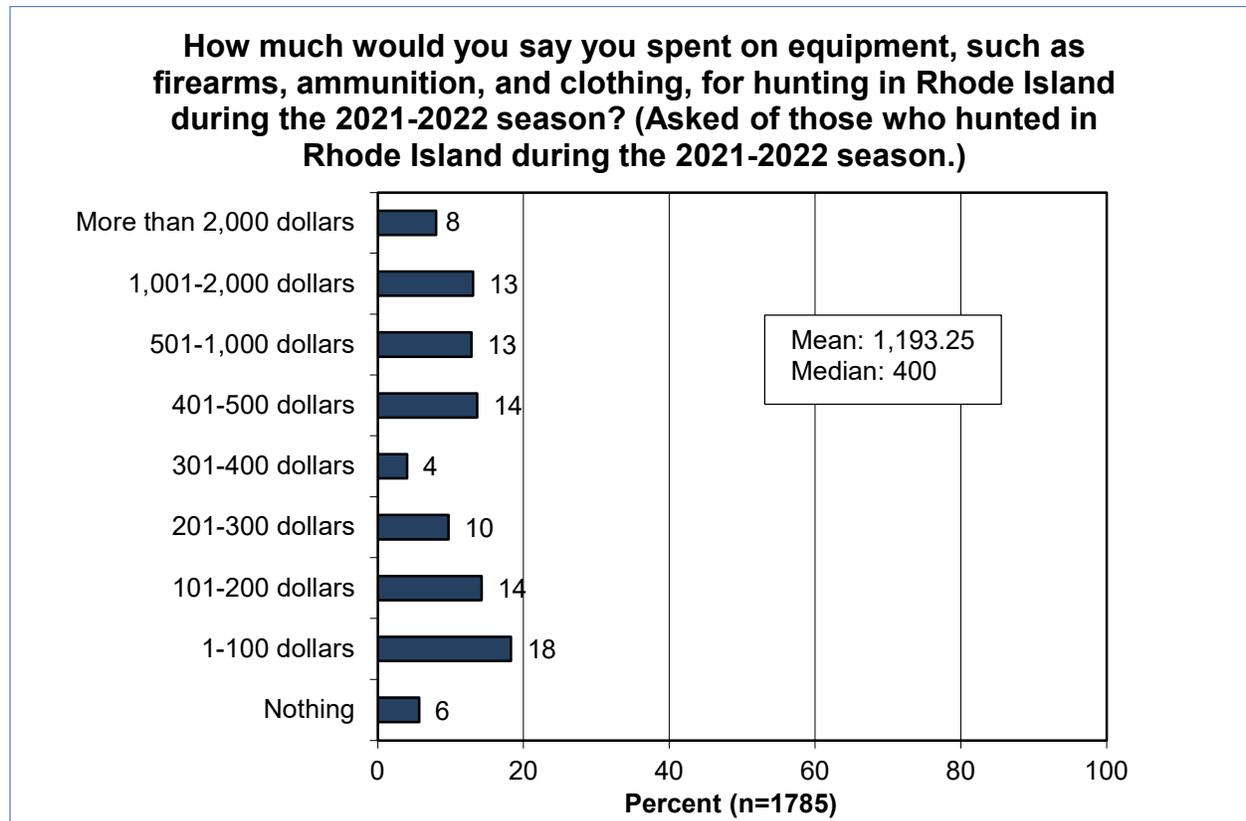


Muzzleloader rifles are most frequently used by deer, small game, and turkey hunters.

Percent of each of the following groups who typically use a muzzleloader rifle to hunt in Rhode Island:

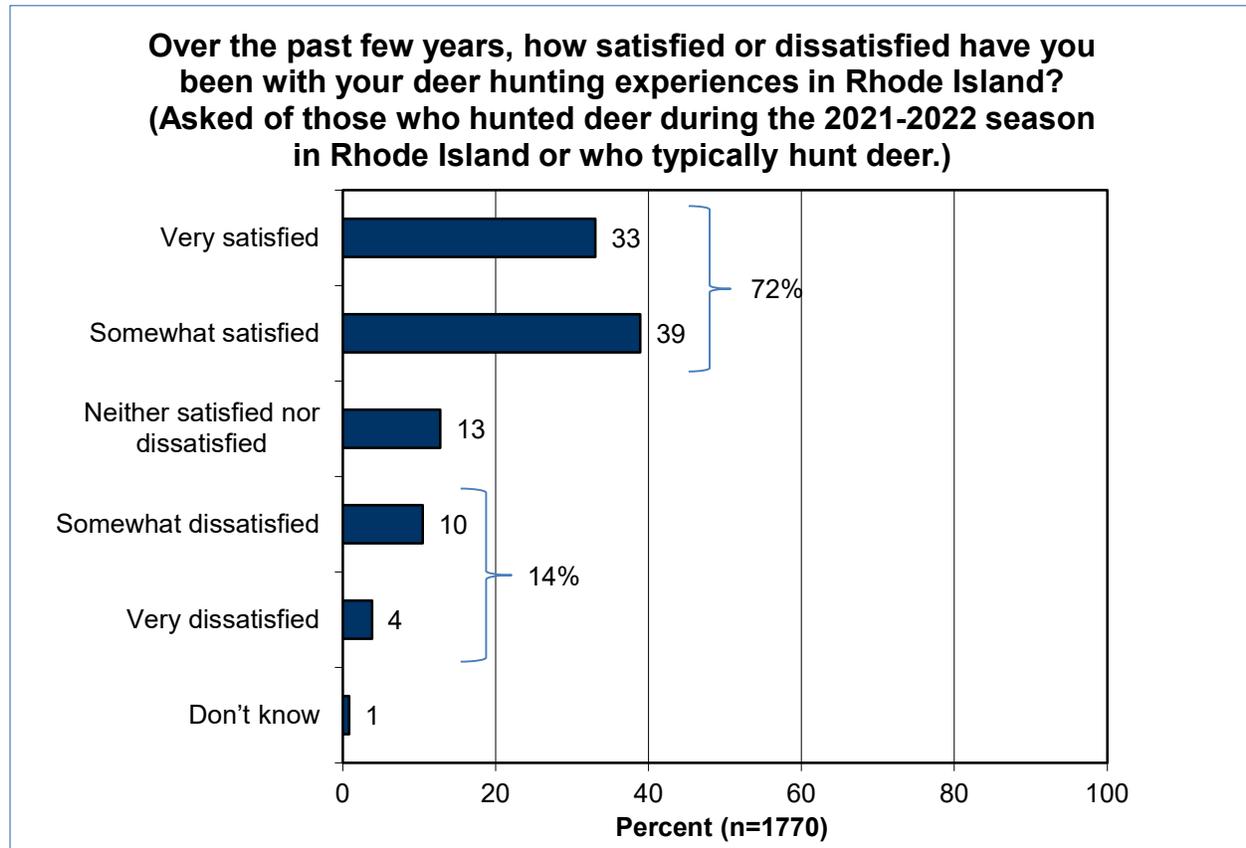


Among those who hunted in the 2021-2022 season, the mean expenditure for equipment is \$1,193.25 (the median is \$400) and the mean expenditure for trips is \$331.86 (the median is \$100).

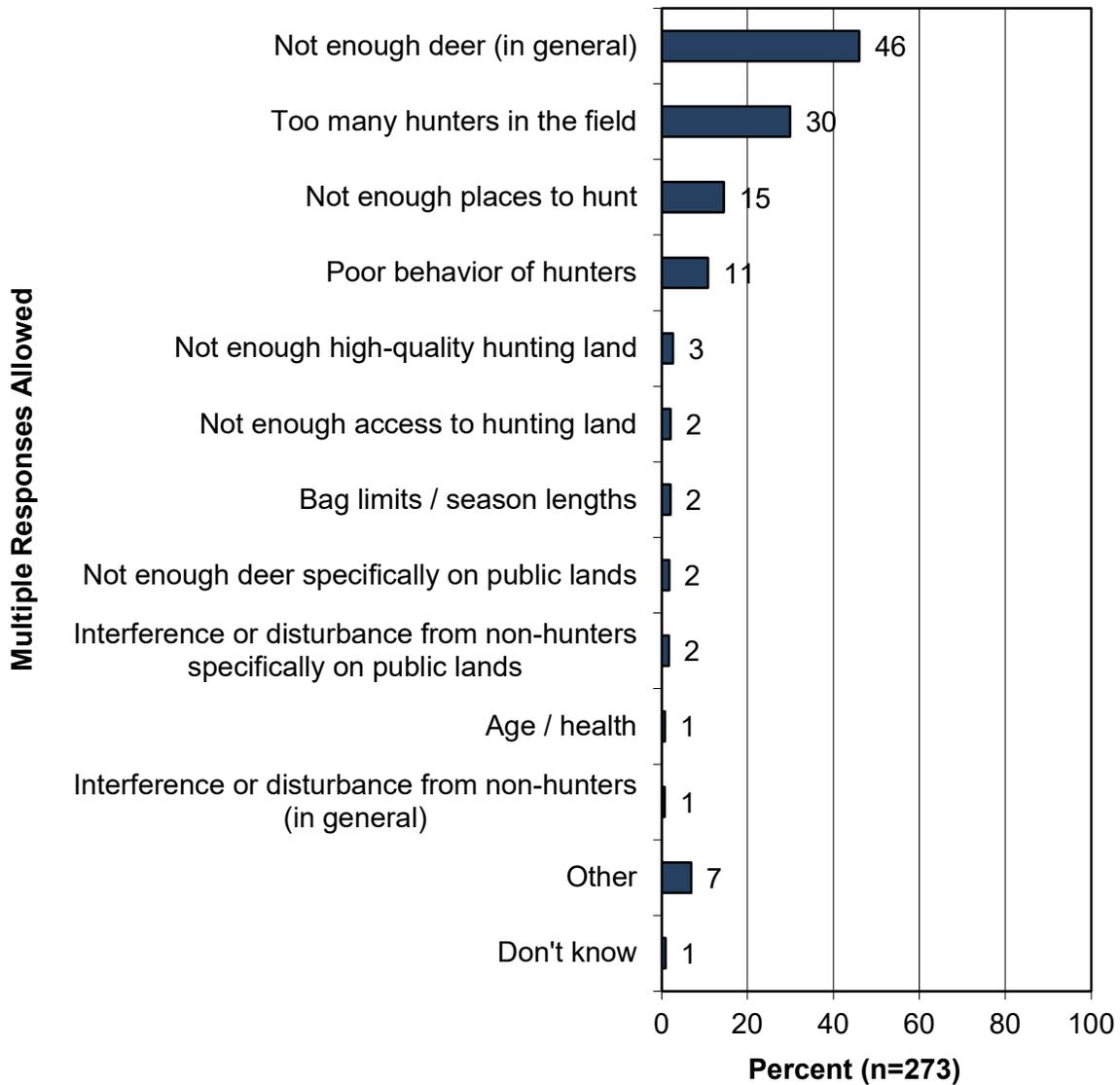


DEER HUNTING SATISFACTION

A majority of deer hunters (72%) were satisfied with their deer hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years, compared to 14% who were dissatisfied. (“Deer hunters” is defined here as those who hunted deer in the last season or who typically hunt deer. The same naming convention applies to hunters of the other species or species groups.) In an open-ended question, those who are dissatisfied most commonly said the reasons are lack of deer, too many hunters in the field, lack of places to hunt, and poor behavior by other hunters. The full list is shown on the following page.

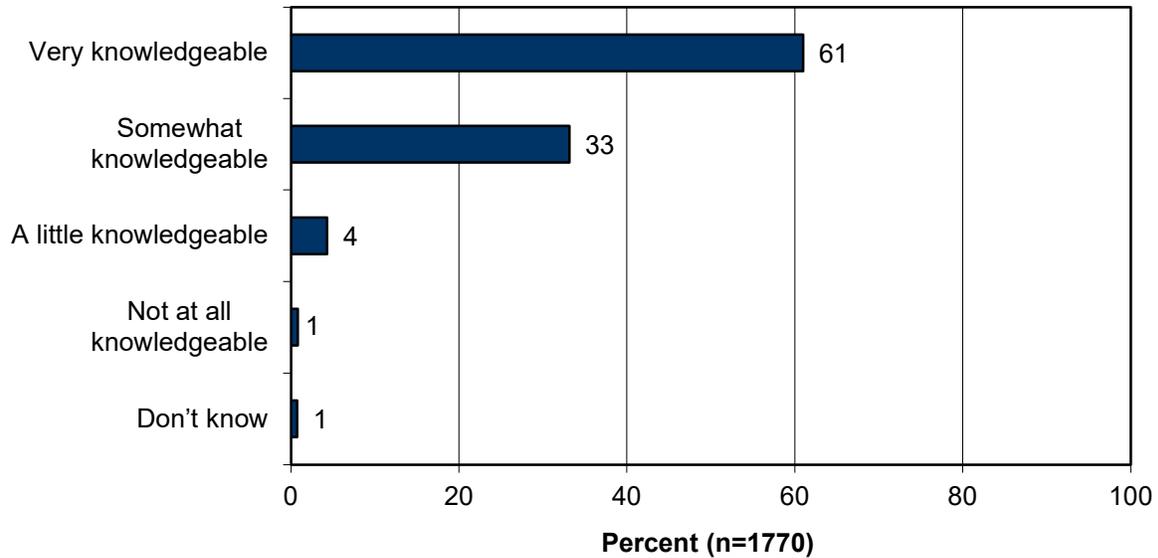


**Why have you been dissatisfied with your deer hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years?
(Asked of those who indicated being dissatisfied with their deer hunting experiences in Rhode Island.)**

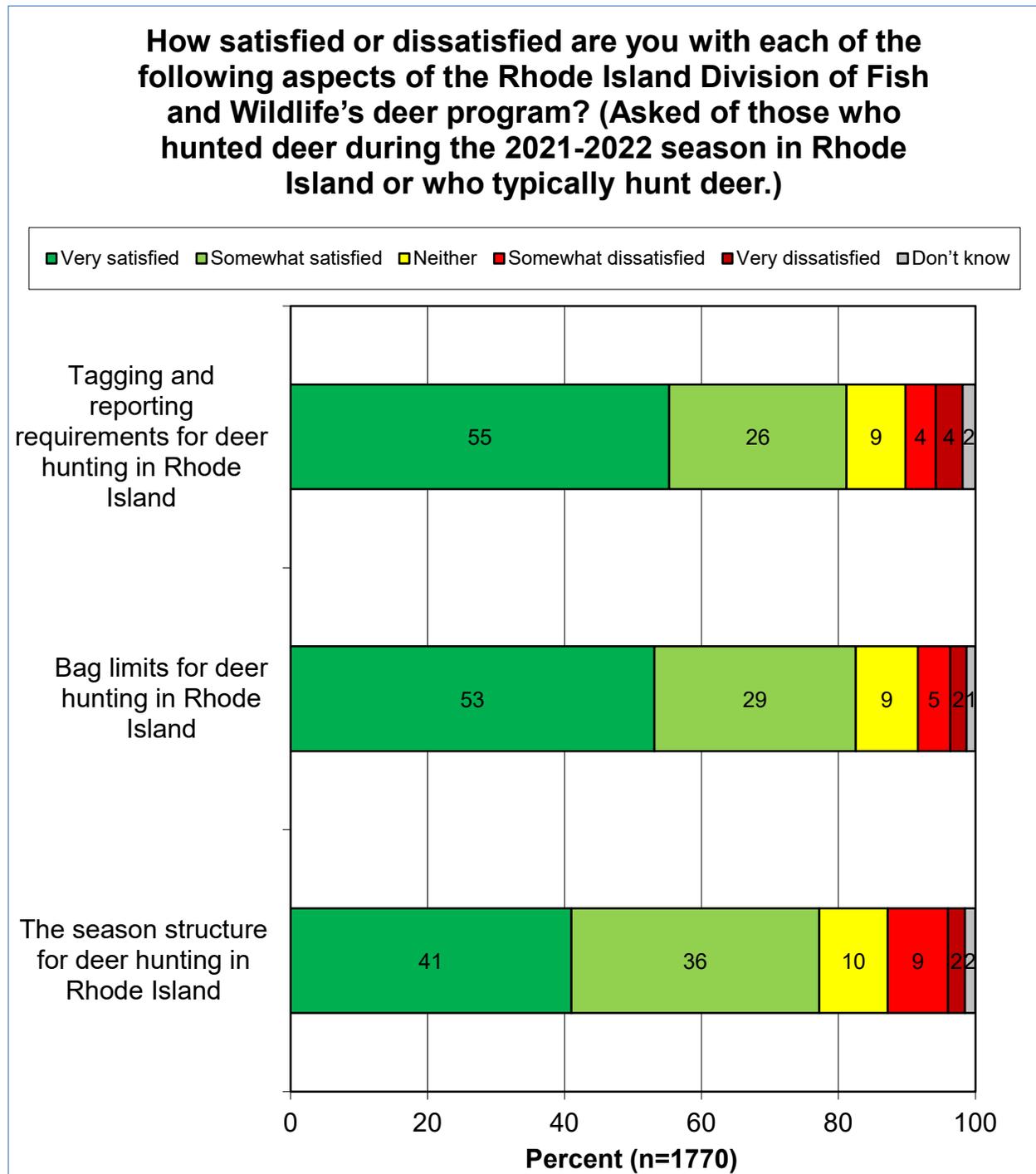


Deer hunters are knowledgeable about the Division's deer program: 61% are very knowledgeable, 33% are somewhat knowledgeable, and 4% are a little knowledgeable.

In general, how knowledgeable would you say you are about the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife's deer program, including deer licensing requirements, regulations, and seasons? (Asked of those who hunted deer during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island or who typically hunt deer in Rhode Island.)

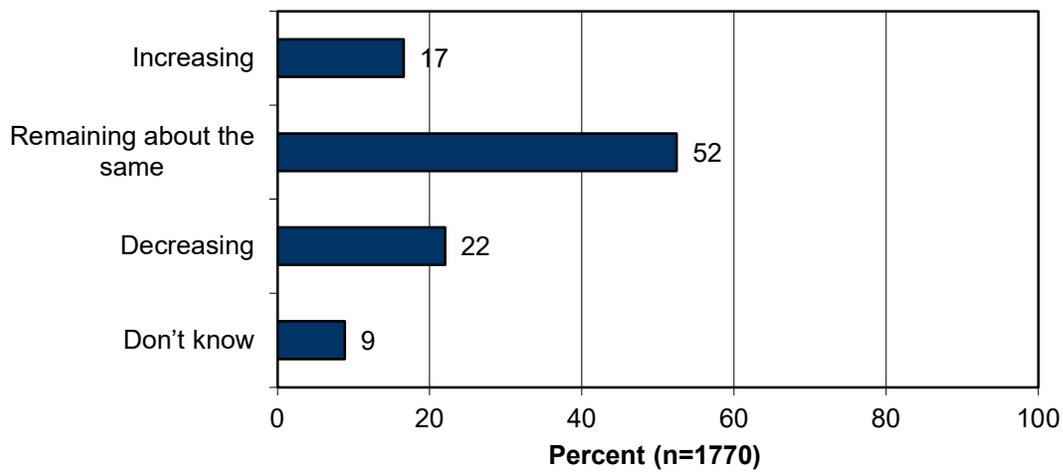


Deer hunters were asked about their satisfaction with three aspects of the Division's deer program. All aspects had large majorities being satisfied with them: tagging and reporting requirements (81% of deer hunters are very or somewhat satisfied with this), bag limits (83%, summed on unrounded numbers), and the season structure (77%). The results are shown in descending order of very satisfied percentages.

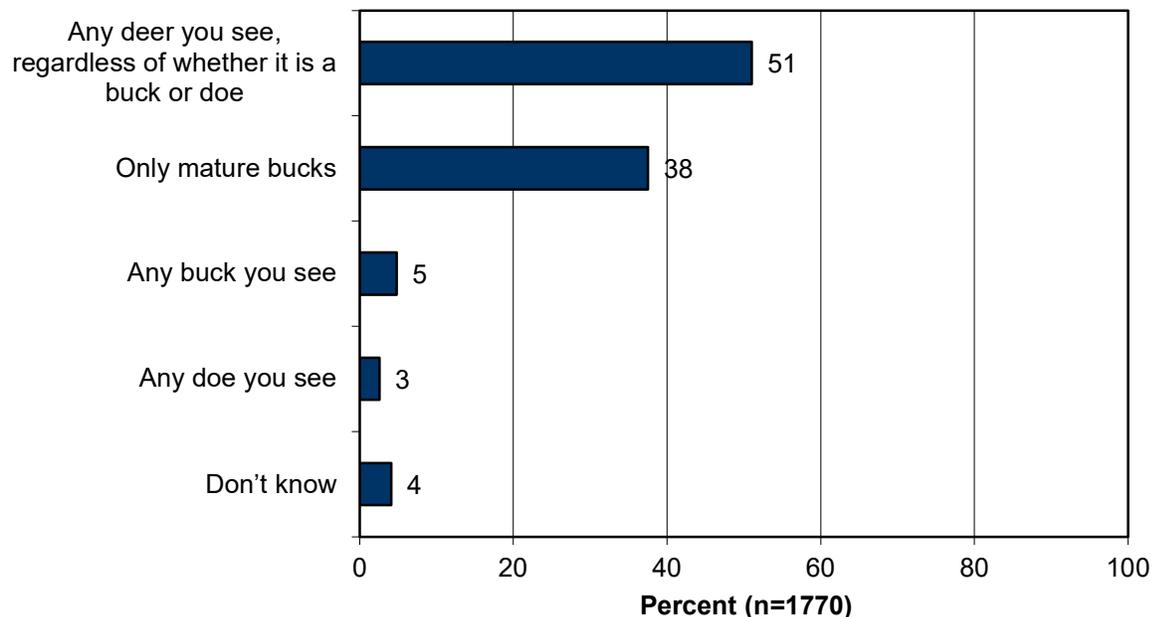


The majority of deer hunters (52%) say the deer population where they typically hunt is remaining about the same, while slightly more say it is decreasing (22%) than increasing (17%). Also, 51% prefer to hunt any deer they see, while 38% prefer to hunt only mature bucks.

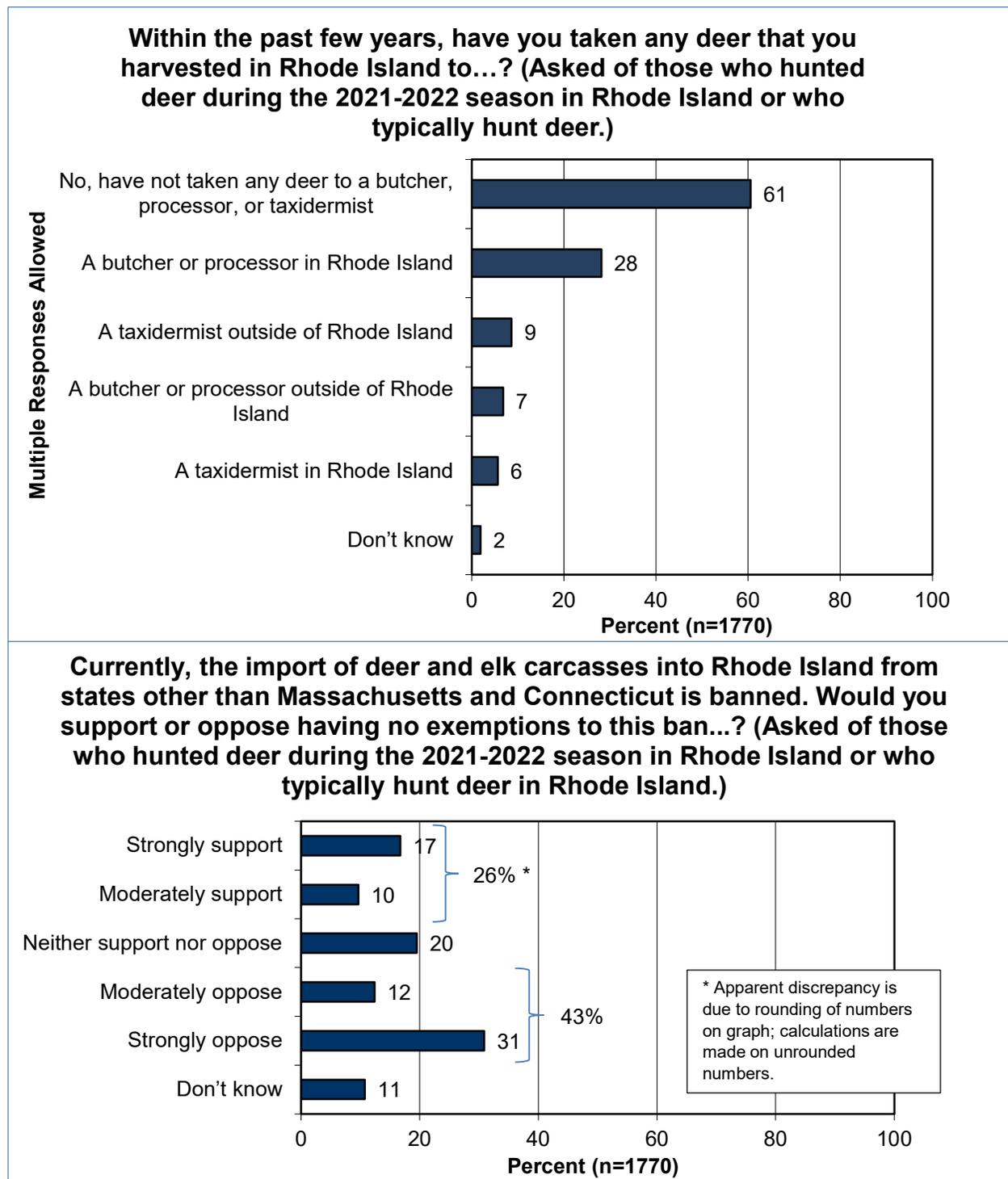
In terms of the areas where you typically hunt deer in Rhode Island, would you say the deer population is increasing, remaining about the same, or decreasing? (Asked of those who hunted deer during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island or who typically hunt deer in Rhode Island.)



In general, when hunting deer in Rhode Island, do you prefer to hunt...? (Asked of those who hunted deer during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island or who typically hunt deer in Rhode Island.)

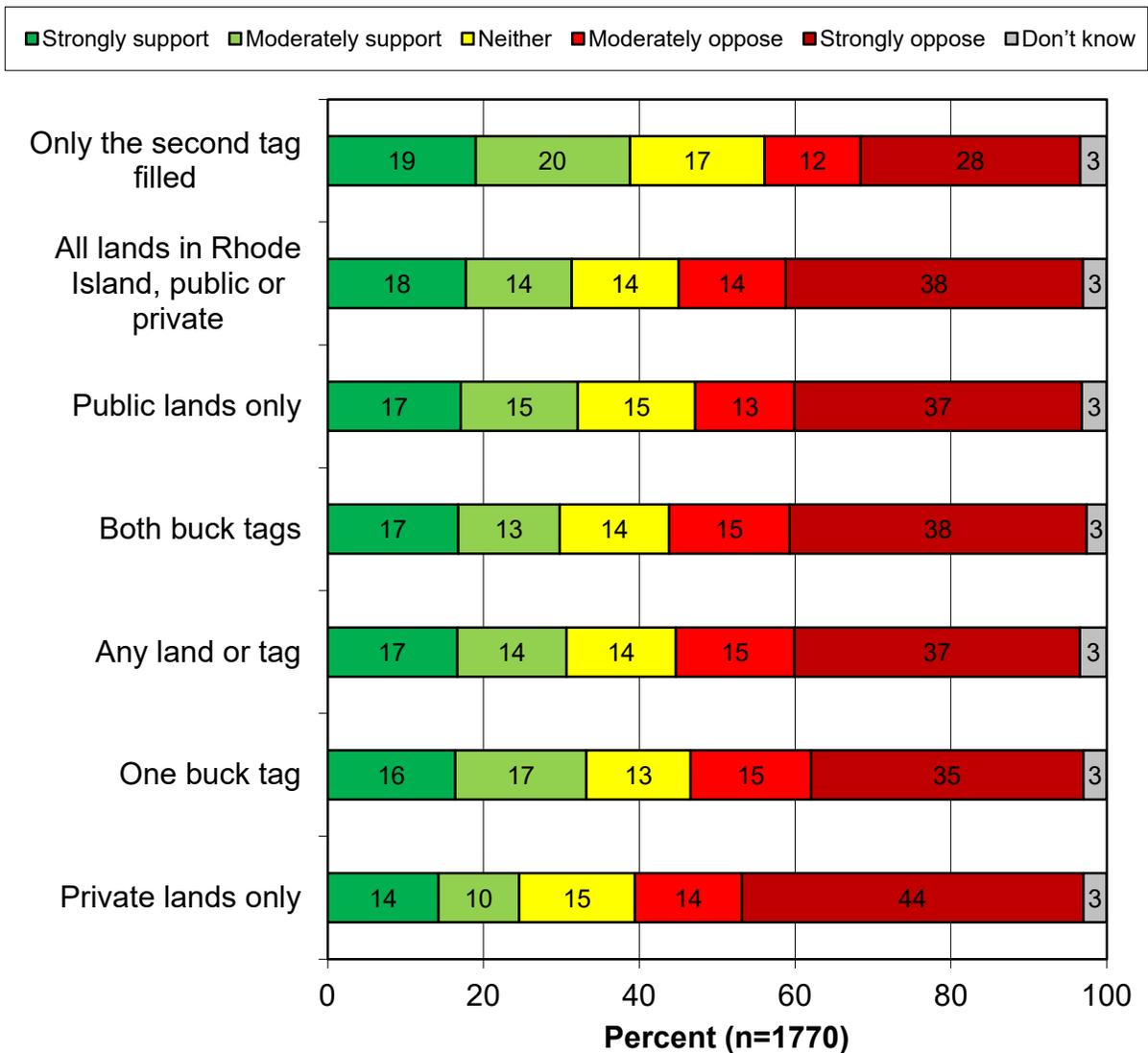


Within the past few years, 61% of deer hunters have not taken any harvested deer to a butcher, processor, or taxidermist, whereas 28% have gone to a butcher or processor in Rhode Island. Next, the survey stated that the import of deer carcasses into Rhode Island is banned from any states other than Massachusetts or Connecticut. More deer hunters oppose (43%) than support (26%) having no exemptions to the ban, with the remainder being neutral. (In other words, there are more hunters who want to continue allowing deer carcasses from Massachusetts or Connecticut.)



Deer hunters were asked about support for or opposition to antler point restrictions in seven different scenarios. There was much more opposition than support in each scenario, with the highest opposition to antler point restrictions on private lands only (58% strongly or moderately oppose this) and for both buck tags (54%, summed on unrounded numbers). The full list is shown below in descending order of strong support.

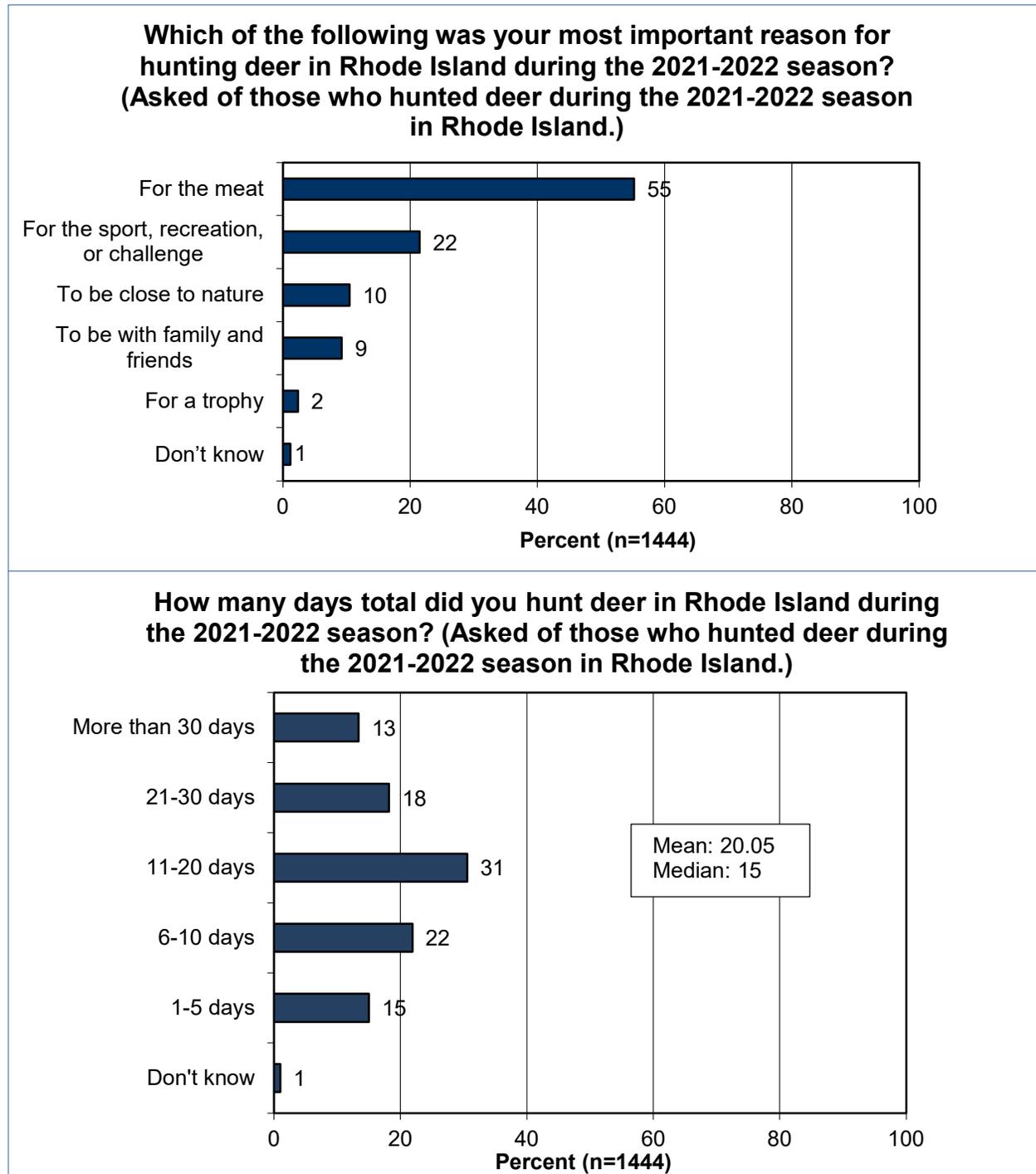
Next, we would like to know if you would support or oppose an antler point restriction in the areas where you typically hunt deer in Rhode Island for each of the following. What about an antler point restriction on...? (Asked of those who hunted deer during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island or who typically hunt deer in Rhode Island.)



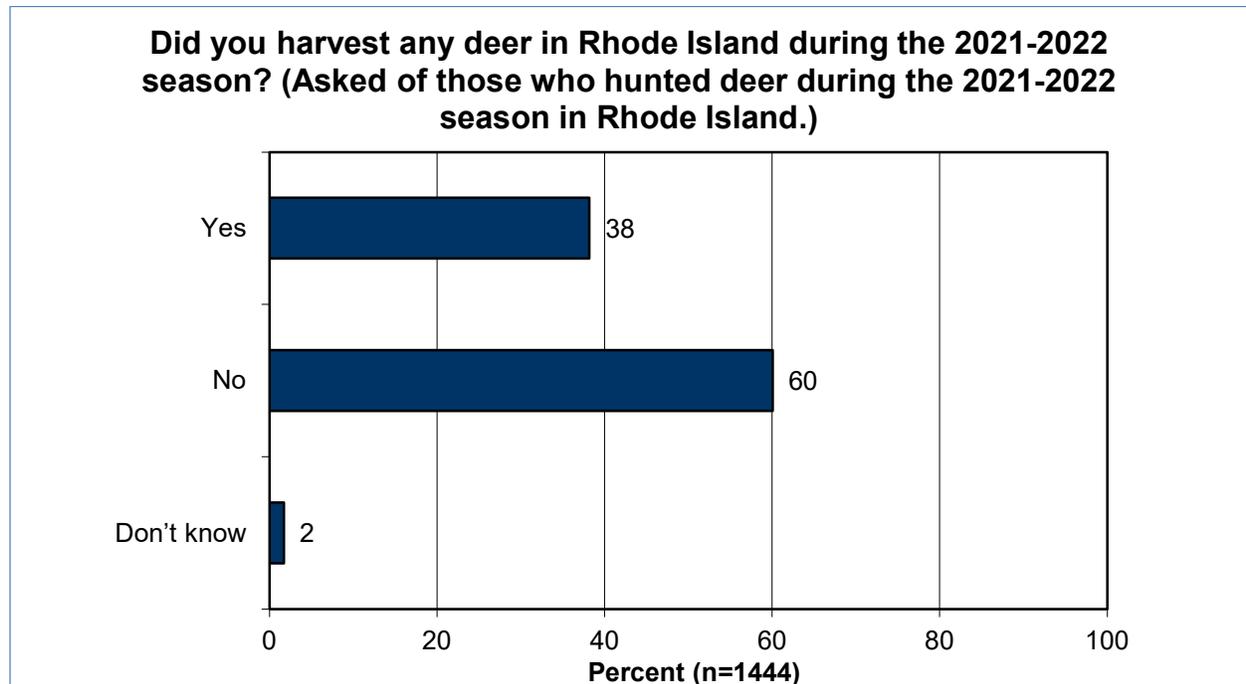
DEER HUNTING EFFORT AND HARVEST

Among those who hunted deer in 2021-2022, a majority (55%) primarily hunted for the meat, 22% hunted for the sport, and 10% hunted to be close to nature.

These hunters participated a mean of 20.05 days and a median of 15 days (this was the most avid hunter group last season).

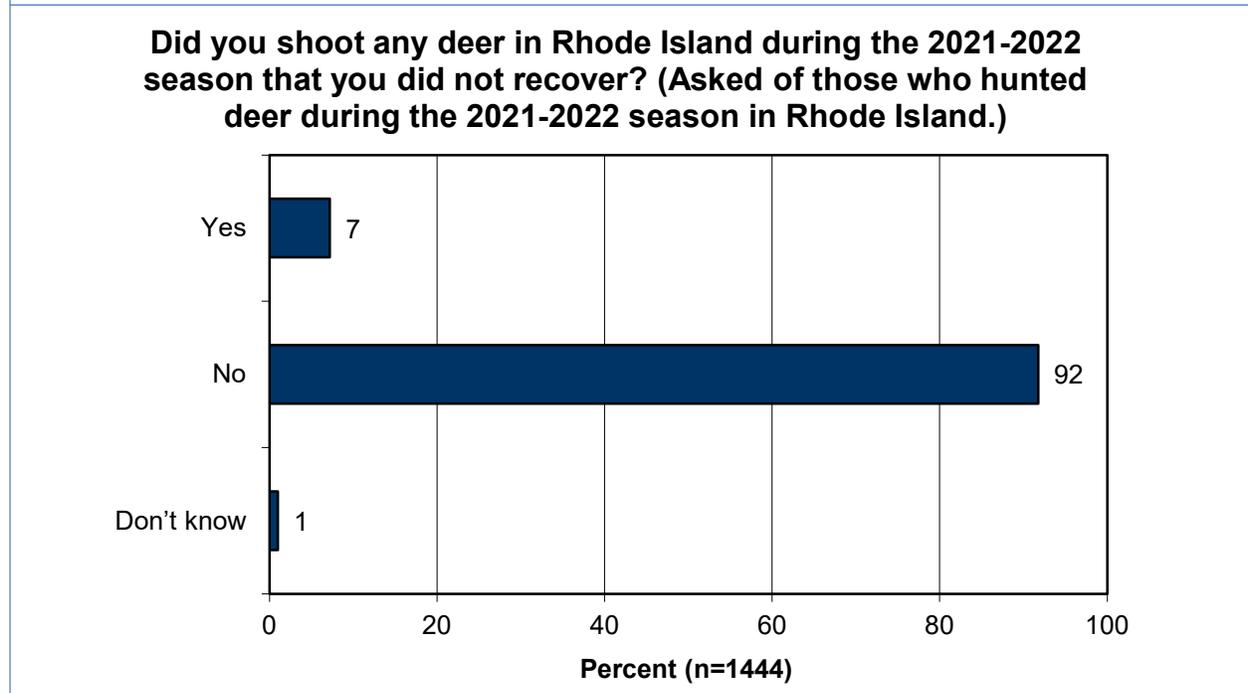
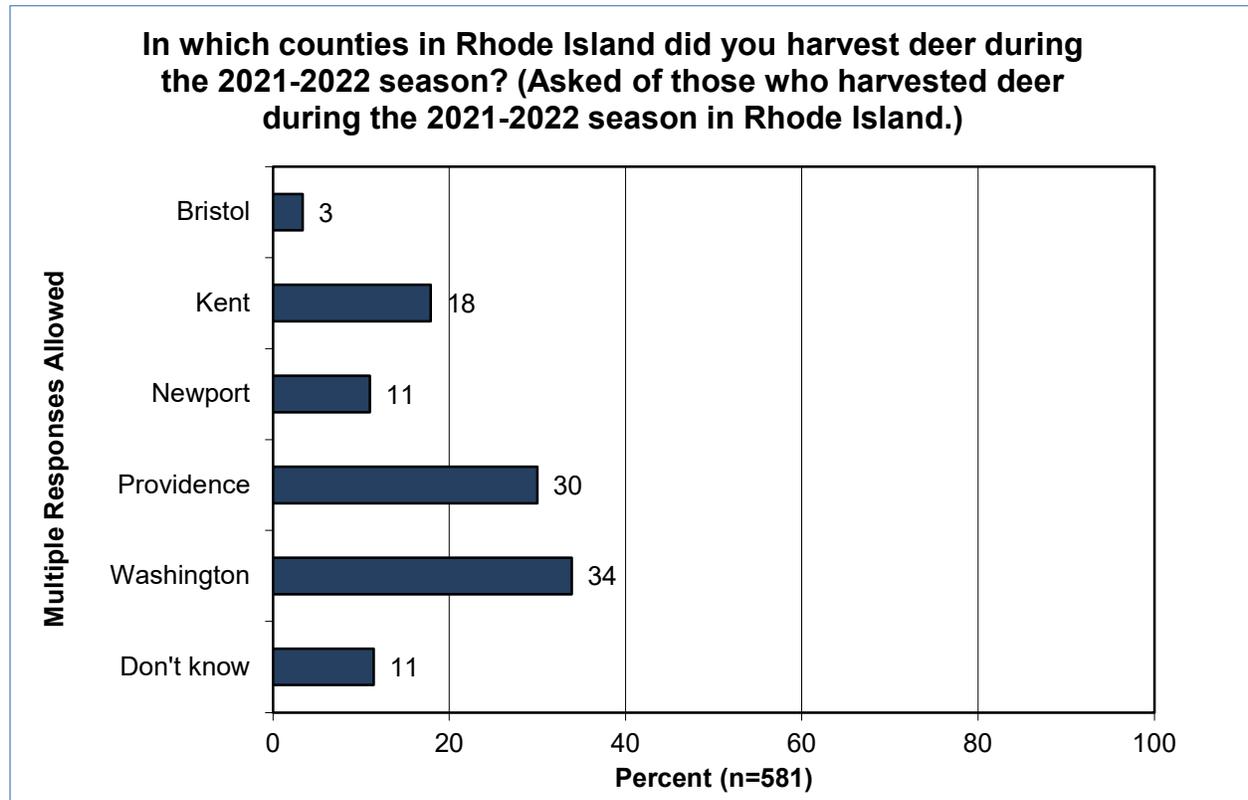


Over a third of deer hunters who hunted during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island successfully harvested deer. The tabulation below shows that approximately 6,100 hunters harvested approximately 4,100 deer, with over 2,200 being bucks.

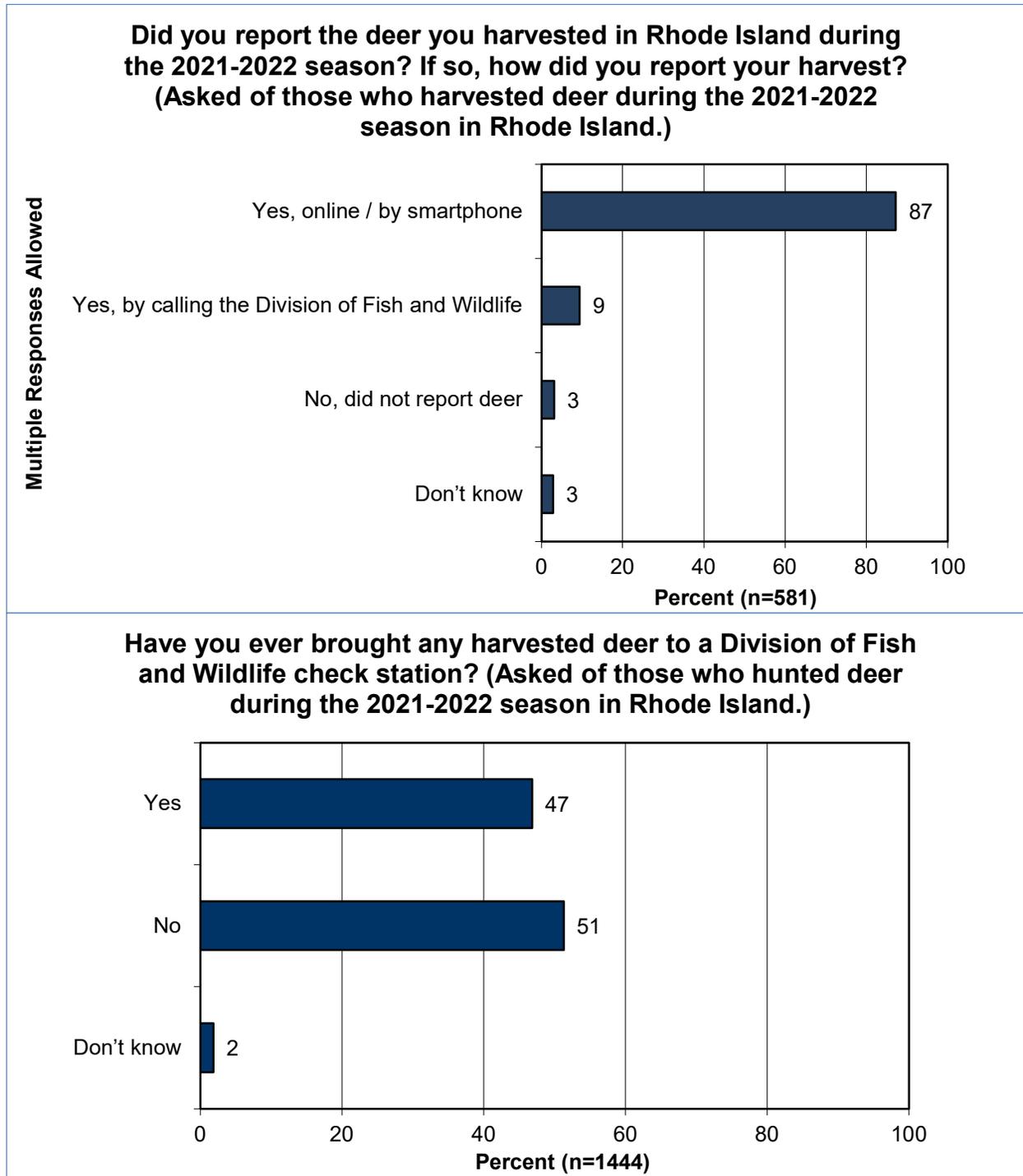


Number of Deer Hunters, Harvested Deer, and Harvested Bucks During the 2021-2022 Hunting Season									
Deer Hunters in Sample	Estimated Number of Deer Hunters	Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Deer Harvested per Successful Hunter	Estimated Deer Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Percent Successful Hunters
1,440	6,083	5,919	6,246		1.76	4,085	3,692	4,477	38
					Bucks Harvested per Successful Hunter	Estimated Buck Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
					0.96	2,229	2,012	2,447	

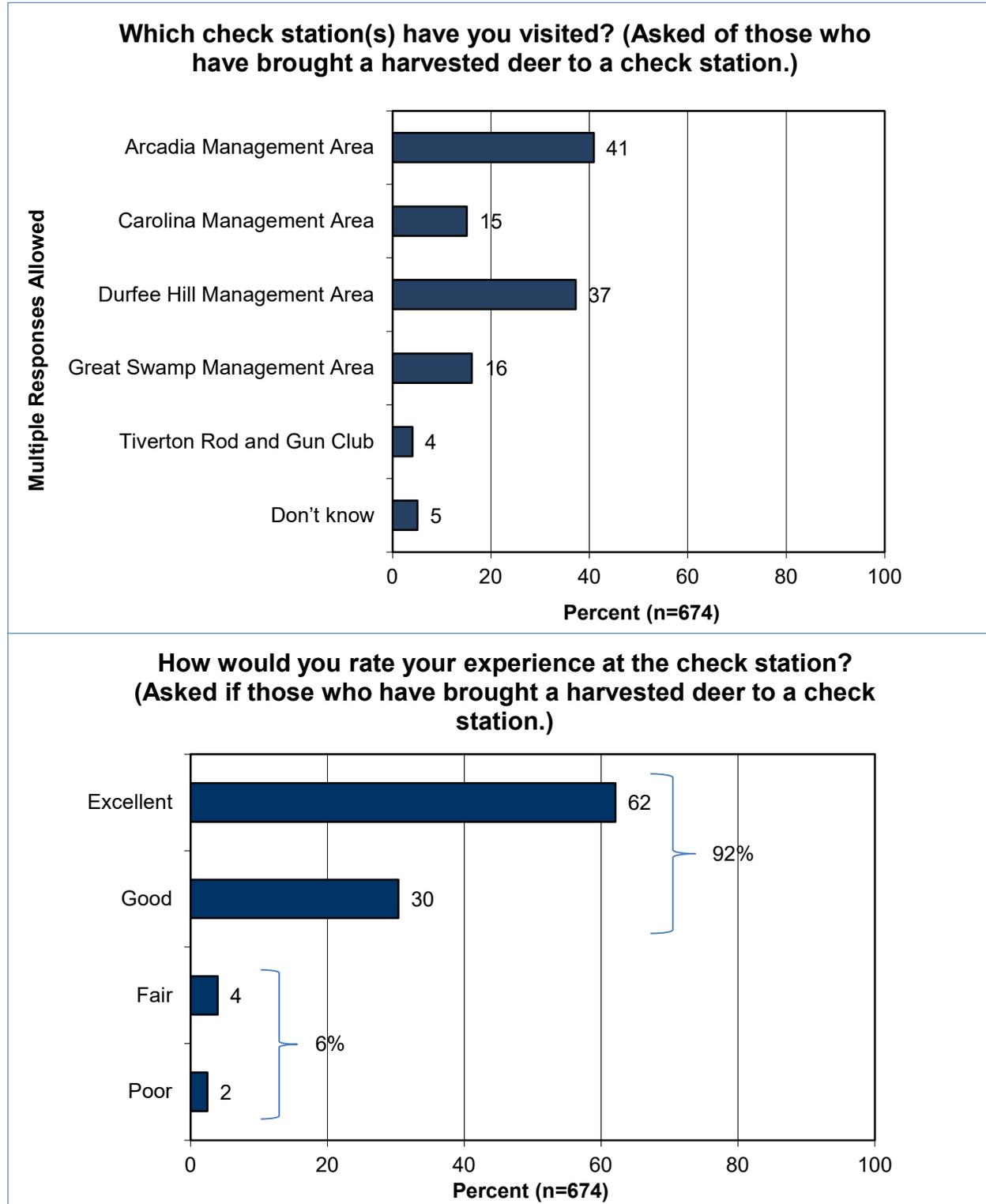
In the 2021-2022 deer season, deer were most commonly harvested in Washington and Providence Counties. Also, 7% of deer hunters shot a deer that they did not recover last season.



Most of those who harvested deer in 2021-2022 (87%) reported their harvest online or by smartphone, and 9% reported by calling the Division. Only 3% did not report their harvest. Nearly half of the season's deer hunters (47%) have ever brought harvested deer to a Division check station.



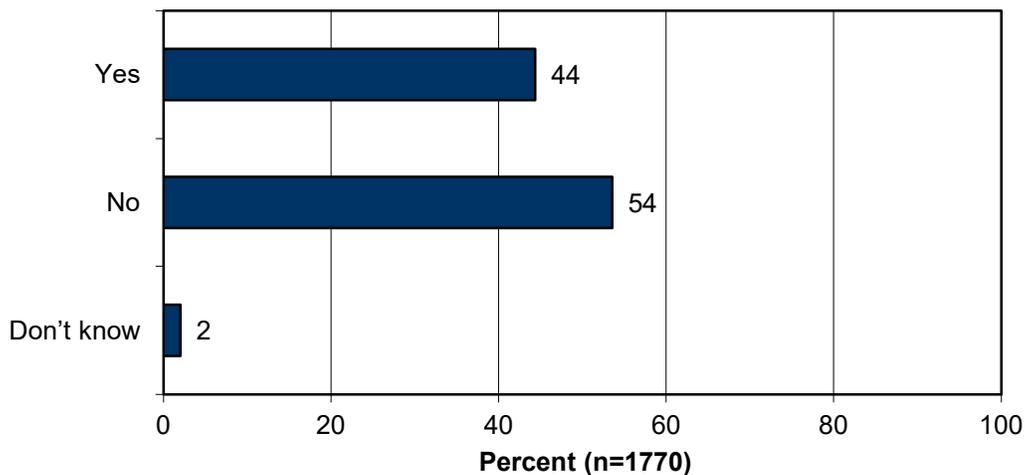
Deer hunters who brought harvested deer to a check station most often visited the Arcadia and Durfee Hill Management Areas. These hunters give high ratings to their check station experience: 92% rate it in the top half of scale (excellent at 62%; good at 30%), compared to only 6% who rate it in the bottom half of the scale (fair at 4%; poor at 2%).



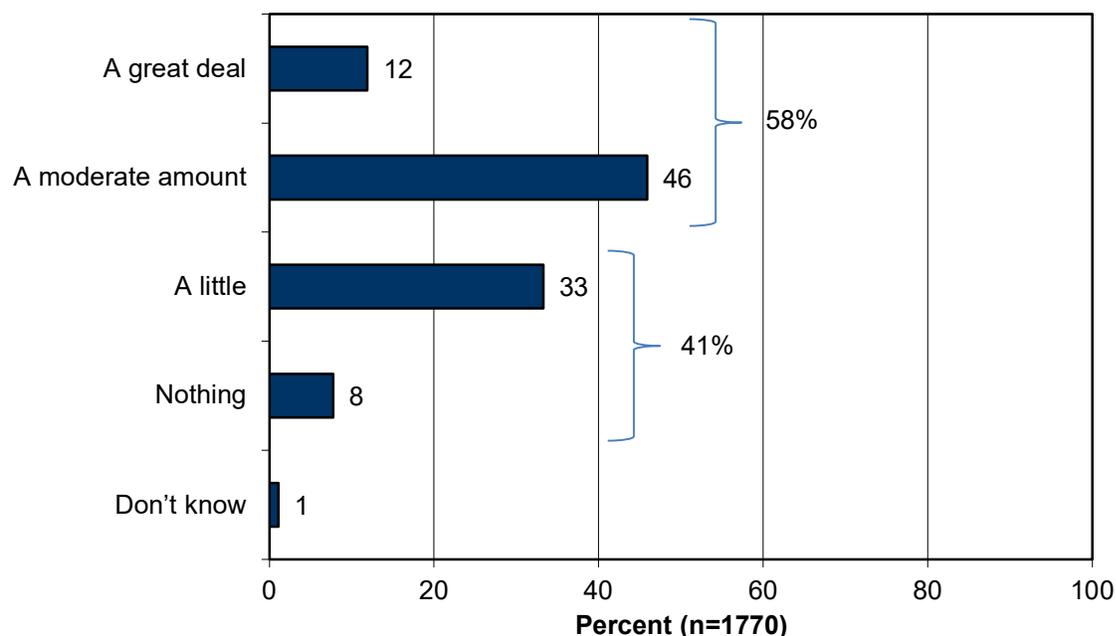
CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Nearly half of deer hunters (44%) have heard anything about Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Rhode Island in the past few years, compared to 54% who have not. Deer hunters are more likely to know a great deal or moderate amount about CWD (58% combined) than to know a little or nothing (41% combined).

**In the past few years, have you heard anything about Chronic Wasting Disease, also referred to as CWD, in Rhode Island?
(Asked of those who hunted deer during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island or who typically hunt deer in Rhode Island.)**

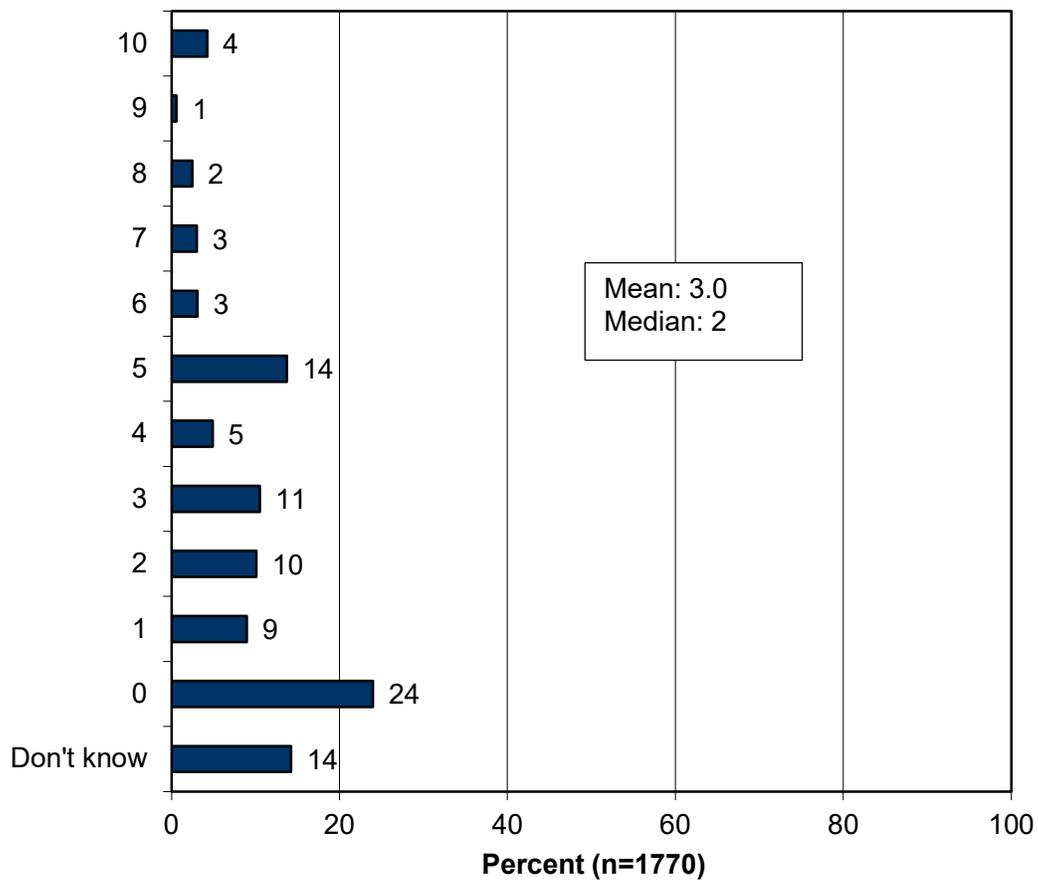


How much would you say you know about Chronic Wasting Disease? (Asked of those who hunted deer during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island or who typically hunt deer in Rhode Island.)



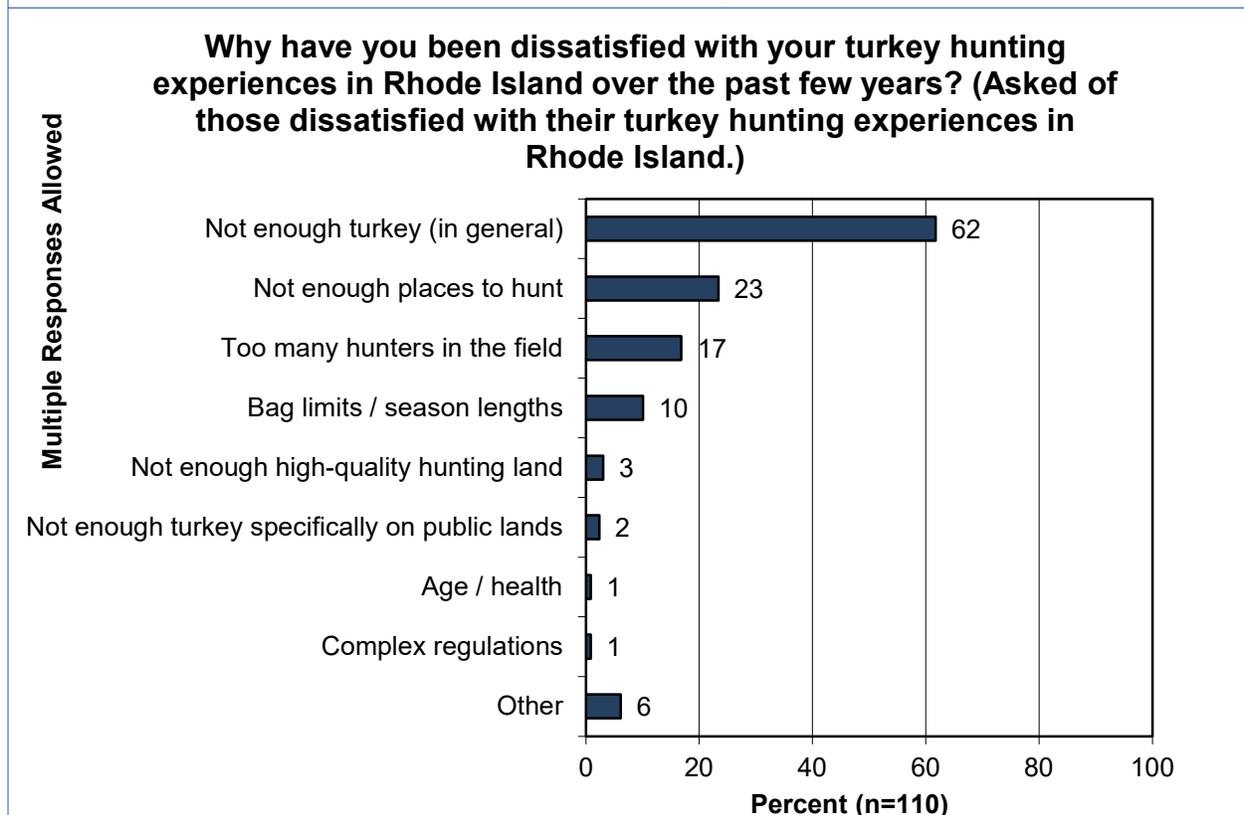
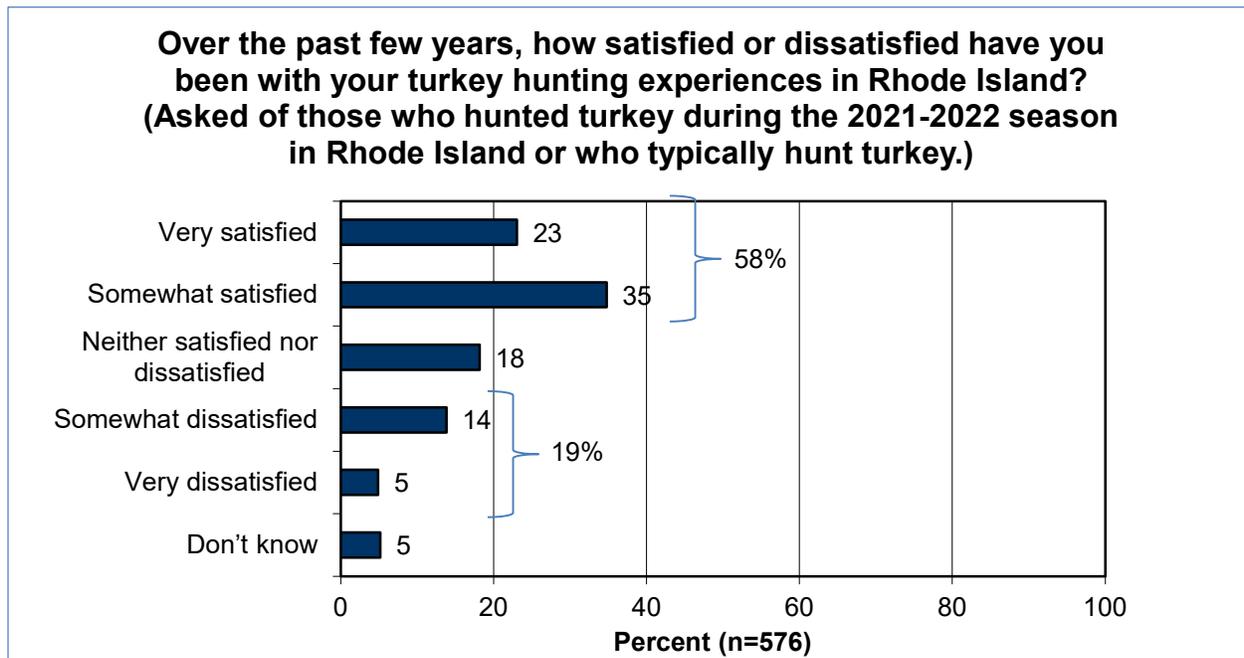
Deer hunters were asked to rate how much of a problem they think CWD is in Rhode Island, on a scale of 0 to 10. In general, they were not overly concerned: the mean rating was 3.0 and the median was 2. About a quarter of deer hunters gave a 0 rating.

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not a problem at all and 10 is a major problem, how much of a problem would you say Chronic Wasting Disease is for the state of Rhode Island? (Asked of those who hunted deer during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island or who typically hunt deer in Rhode Island.)



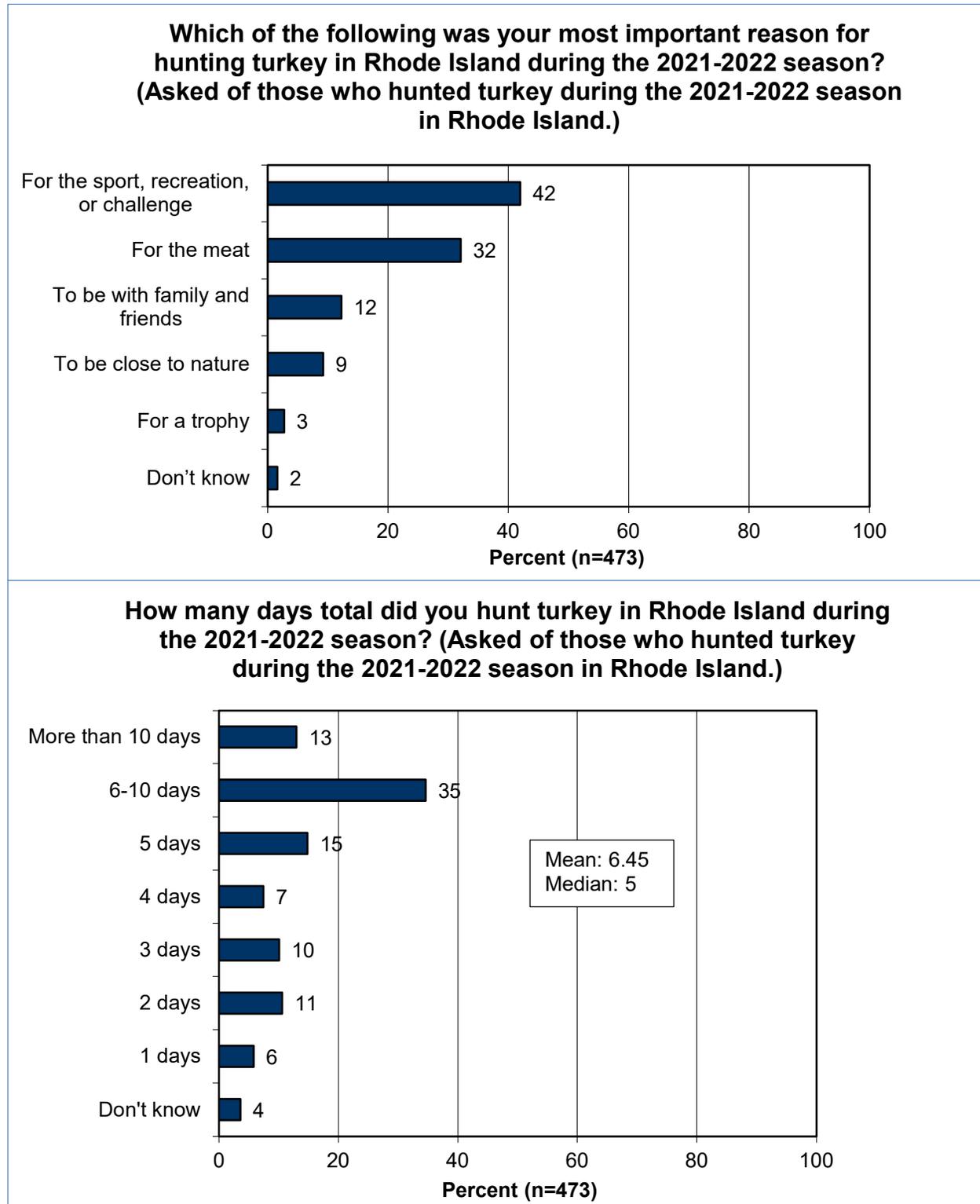
TURKEY HUNTING

Turkey hunters were much more likely to be satisfied (58%) than dissatisfied (19%) with their turkey hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years. In an open-ended question, those who were dissatisfied most often said the reasons are lack of turkey, lack of places to hunt, and too many hunters in the field.

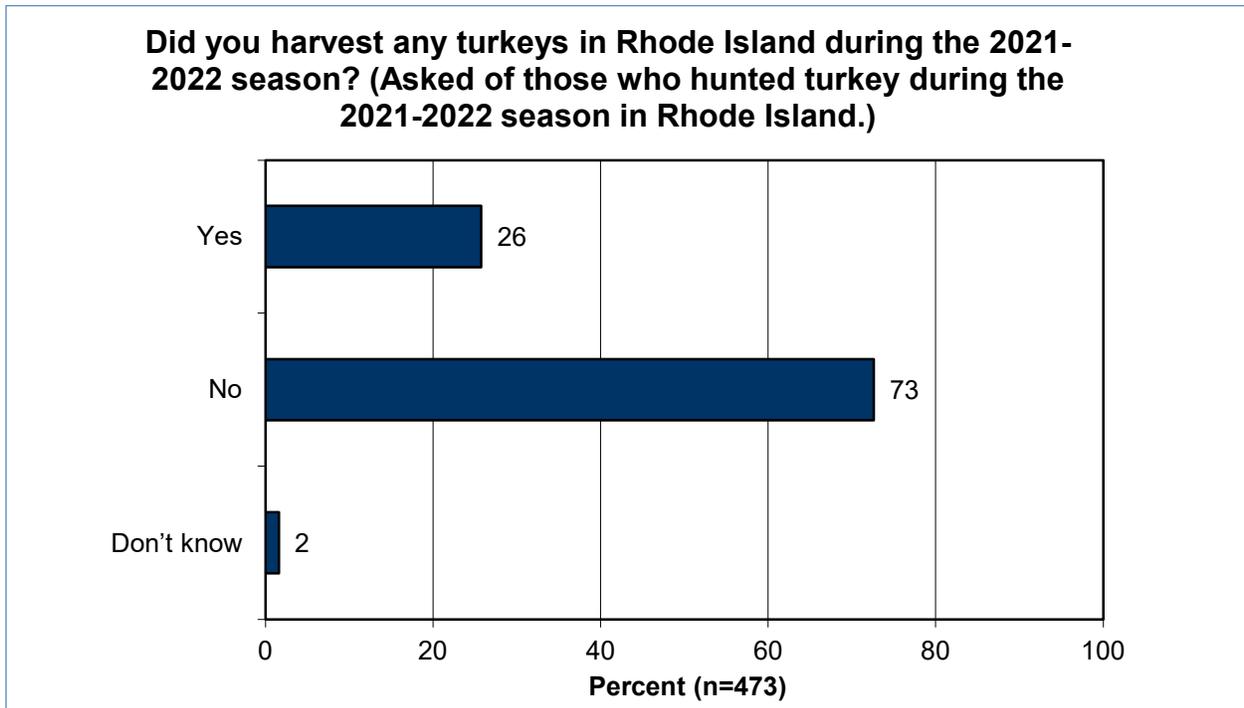


Among those who hunted turkey in 2021-2022, 42% primarily hunted for the sport, 32% hunted for the meat, and 12% hunted to be with family and friends.

These hunters participated a mean of 6.45 days and a median of 5 days.

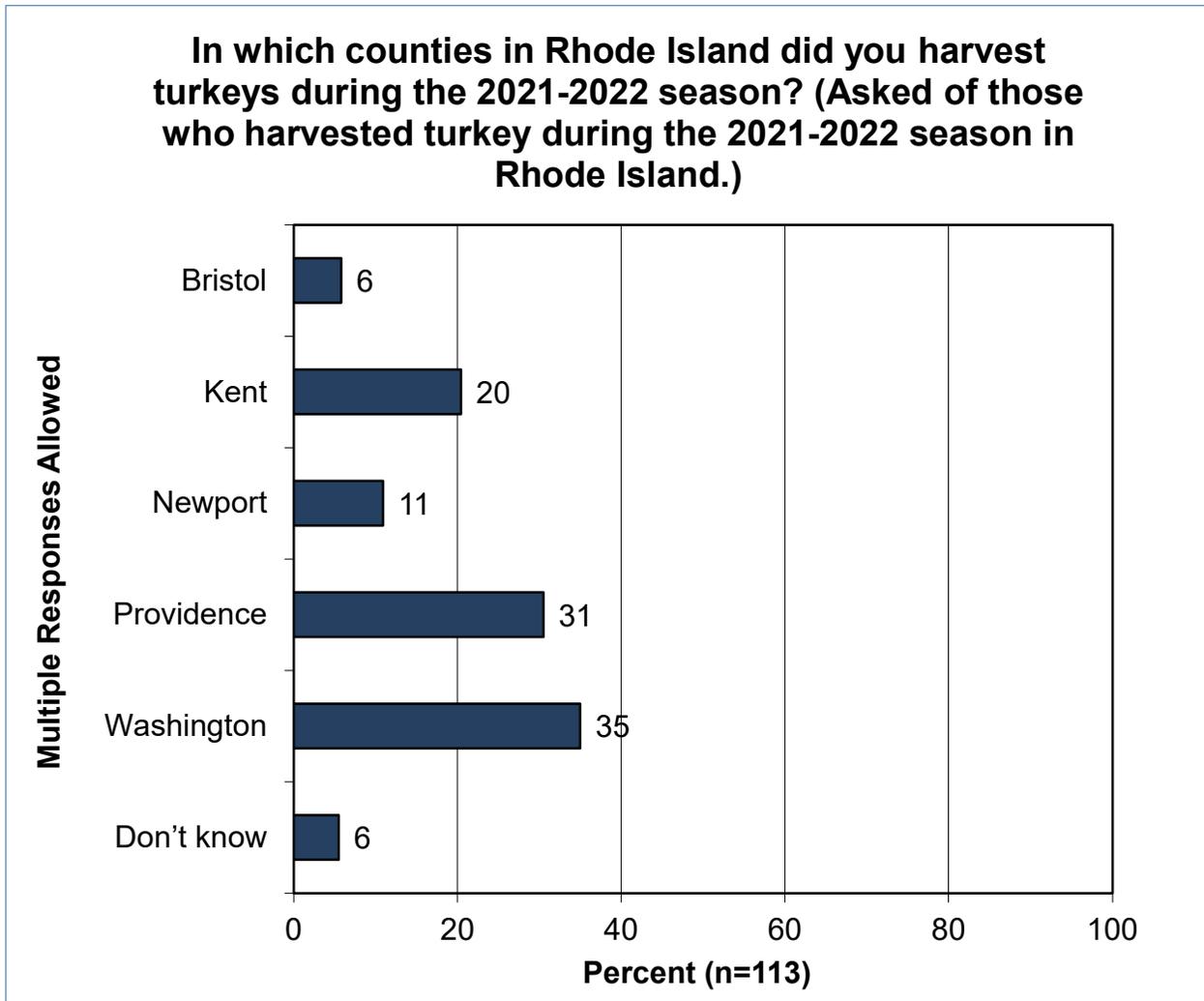


About a quarter of turkey hunters (26%) successfully harvested turkey during the 2021-2022 hunting season in Rhode Island. Approximately 1,800 hunters harvested over 600 turkeys.



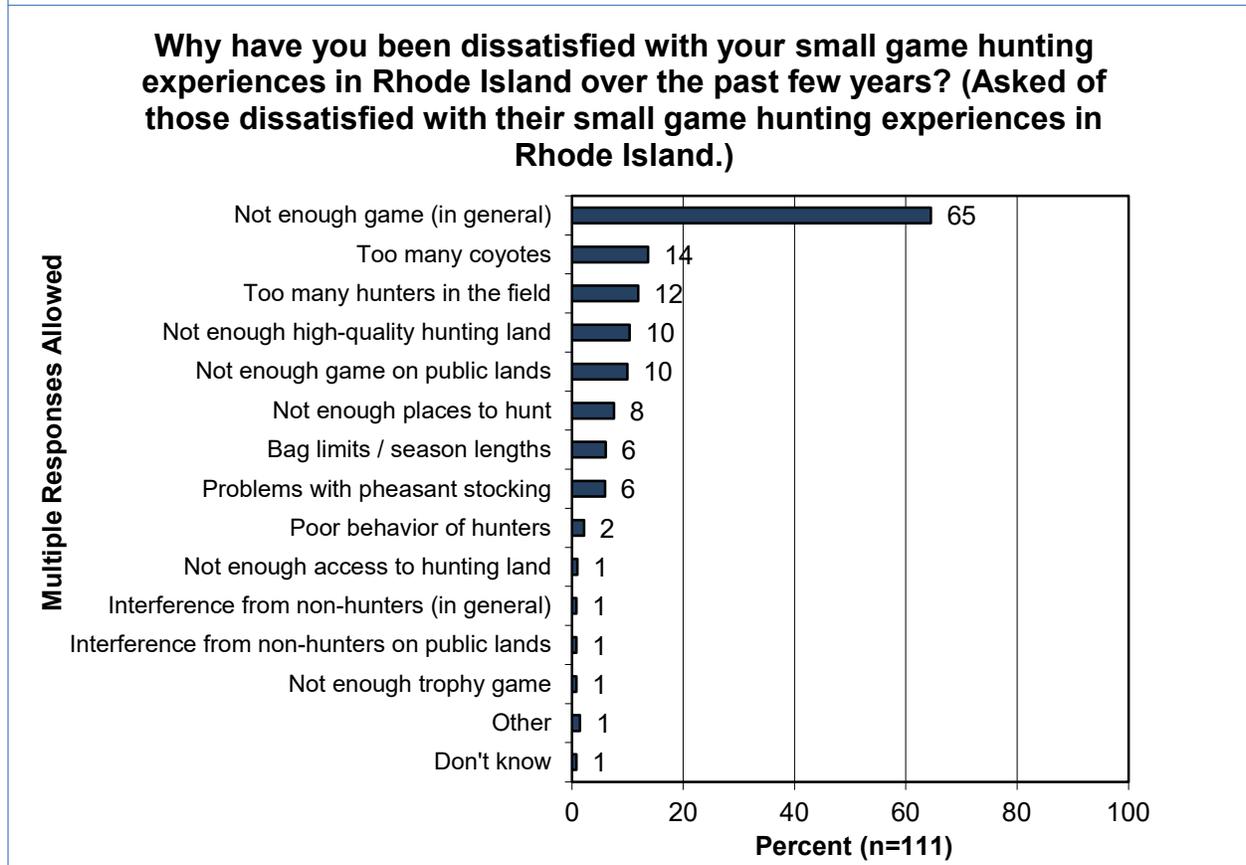
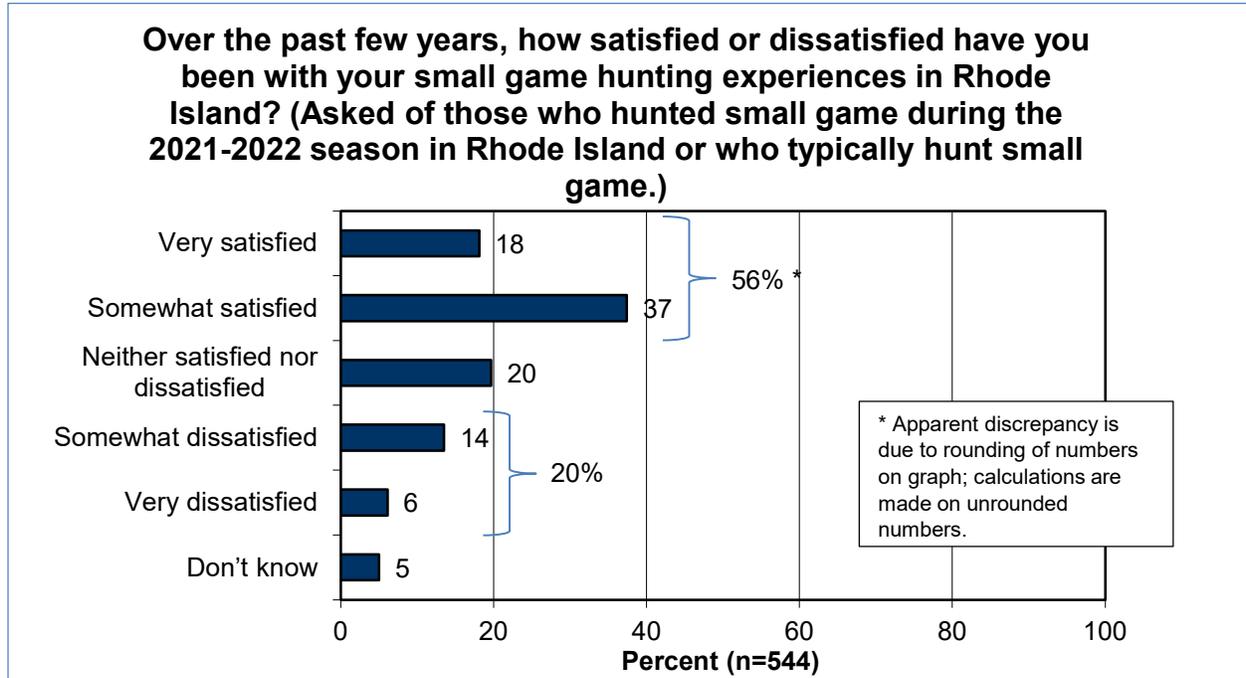
Number of Turkey Hunters and Harvested Turkey During the 2021-2022 Hunting Season								
Turkey Hunters in Sample	Estimated Number of Turkey Hunters	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Turkey Harvested per Successful Hunter	Estimated Turkey Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Percent Successful Hunters
473	1,821	1,664	1,978	1.29	607	484	729	26

In the 2021-2022 turkey season, turkey were most commonly harvested in Washington and Providence Counties.



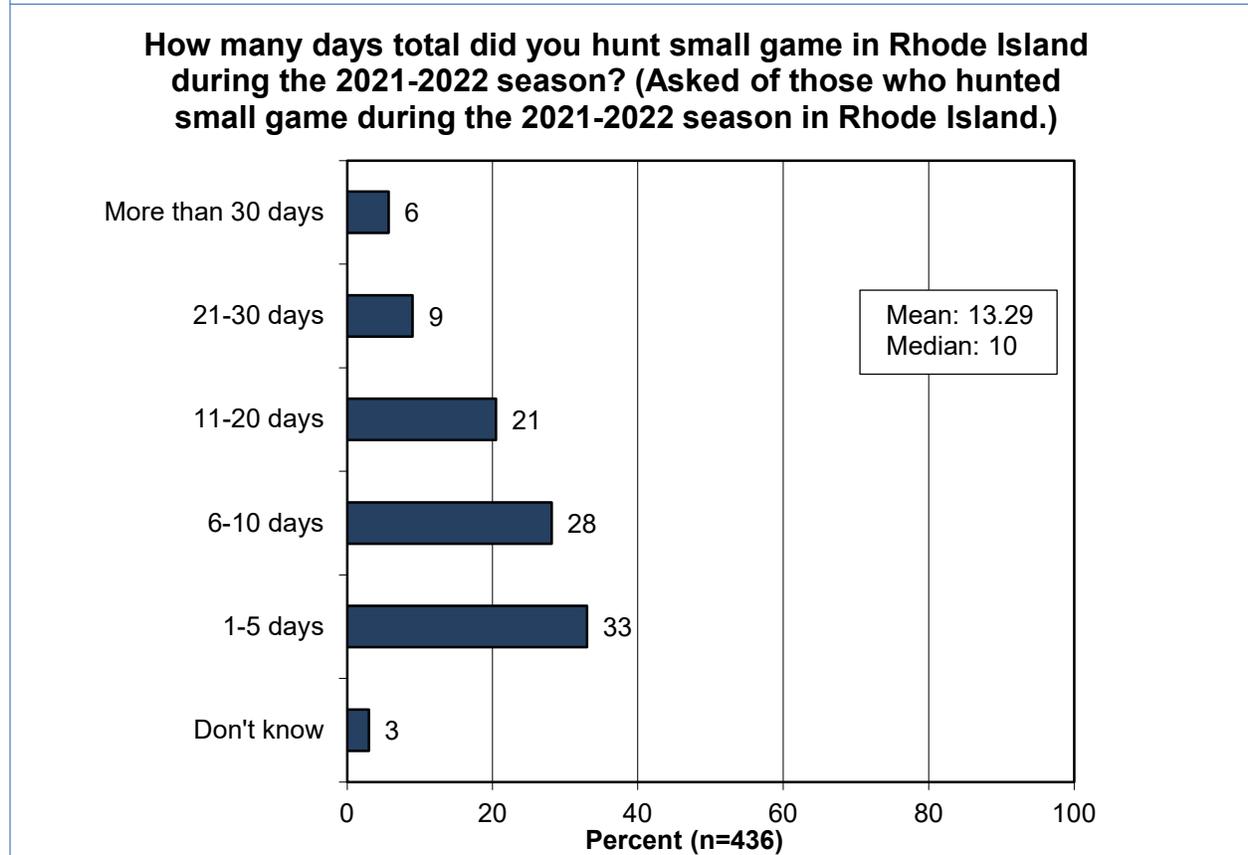
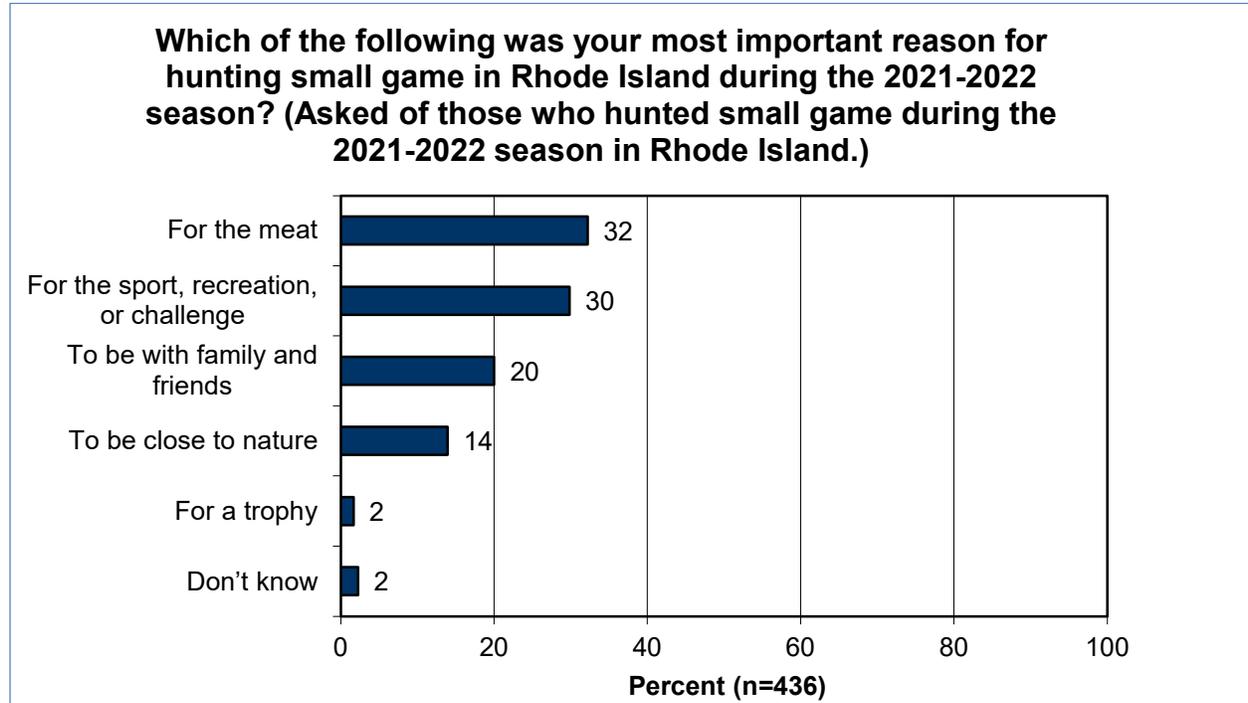
SMALL GAME HUNTING

A slight majority of small game hunters (56%) were satisfied with their small game hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years, while 20% were dissatisfied. A majority of those who were dissatisfied (65%) said the reason was a lack of game.

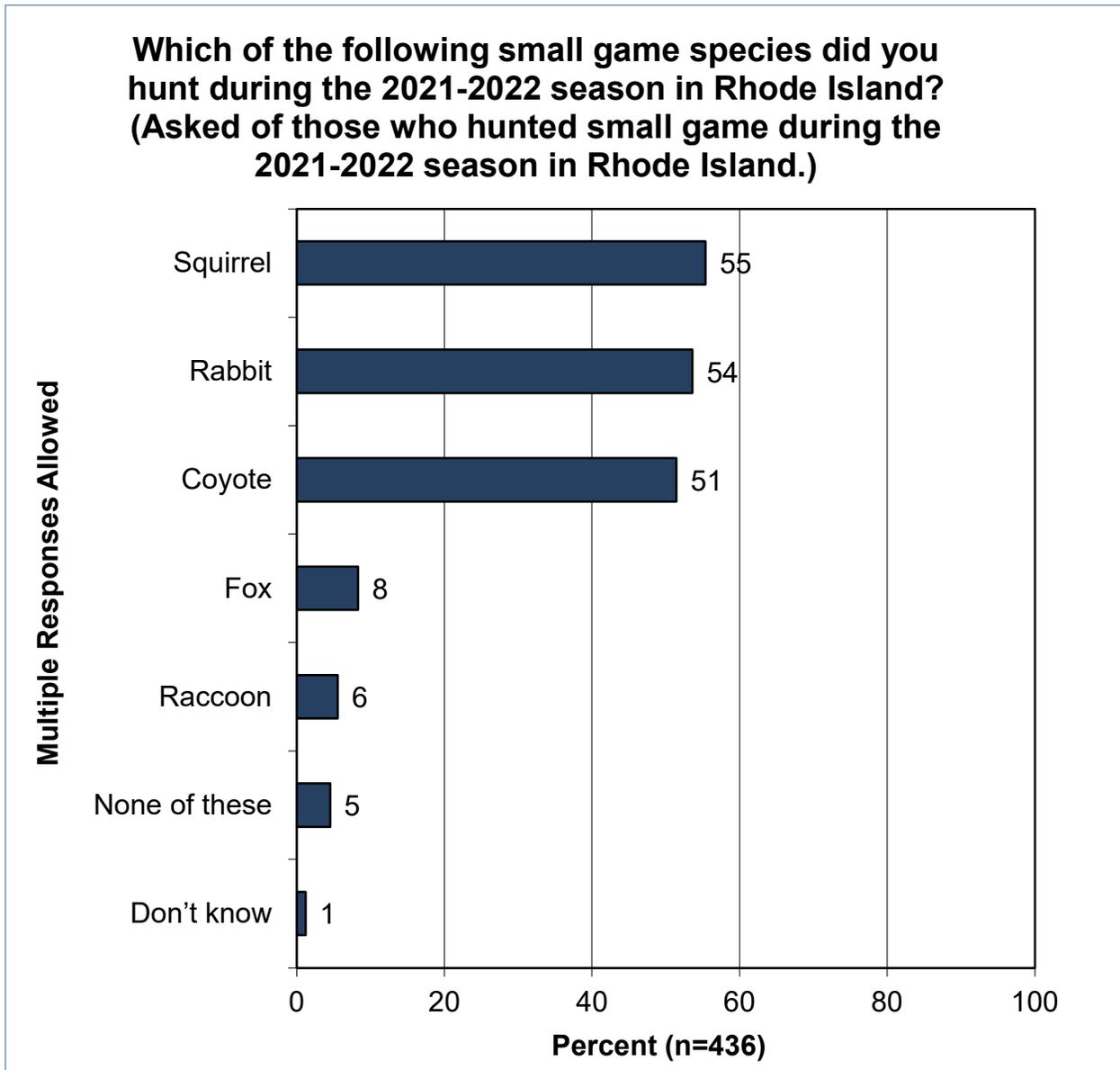


Among those who hunted small game in 2021-2022, 32% primarily hunted for the meat and 30% hunted for the sport.

These hunters participated a mean of 13.29 days and a median of 10 days.



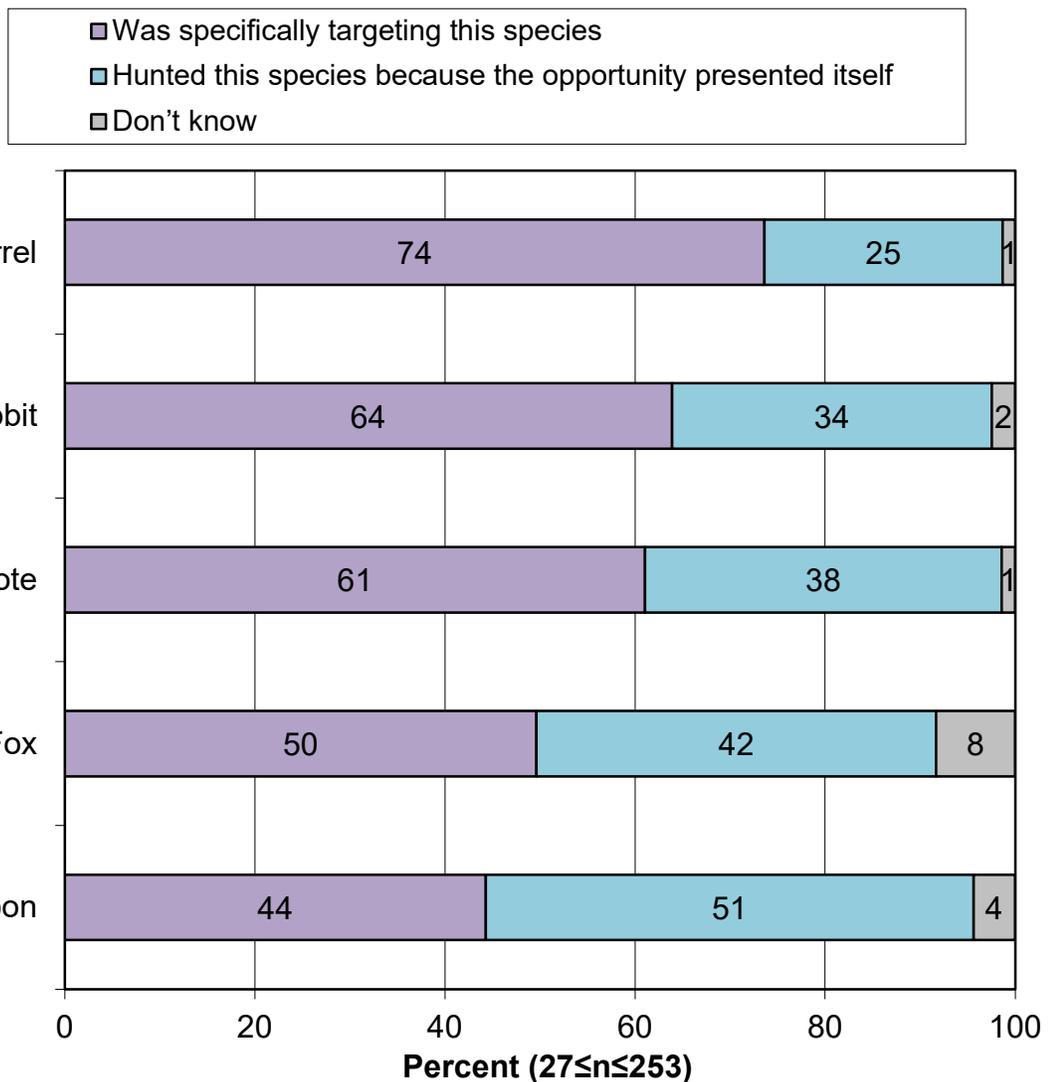
The most hunted small game species, among those who participated in 2021-2022, were squirrel (55%), rabbit (54%), and coyote (51%).



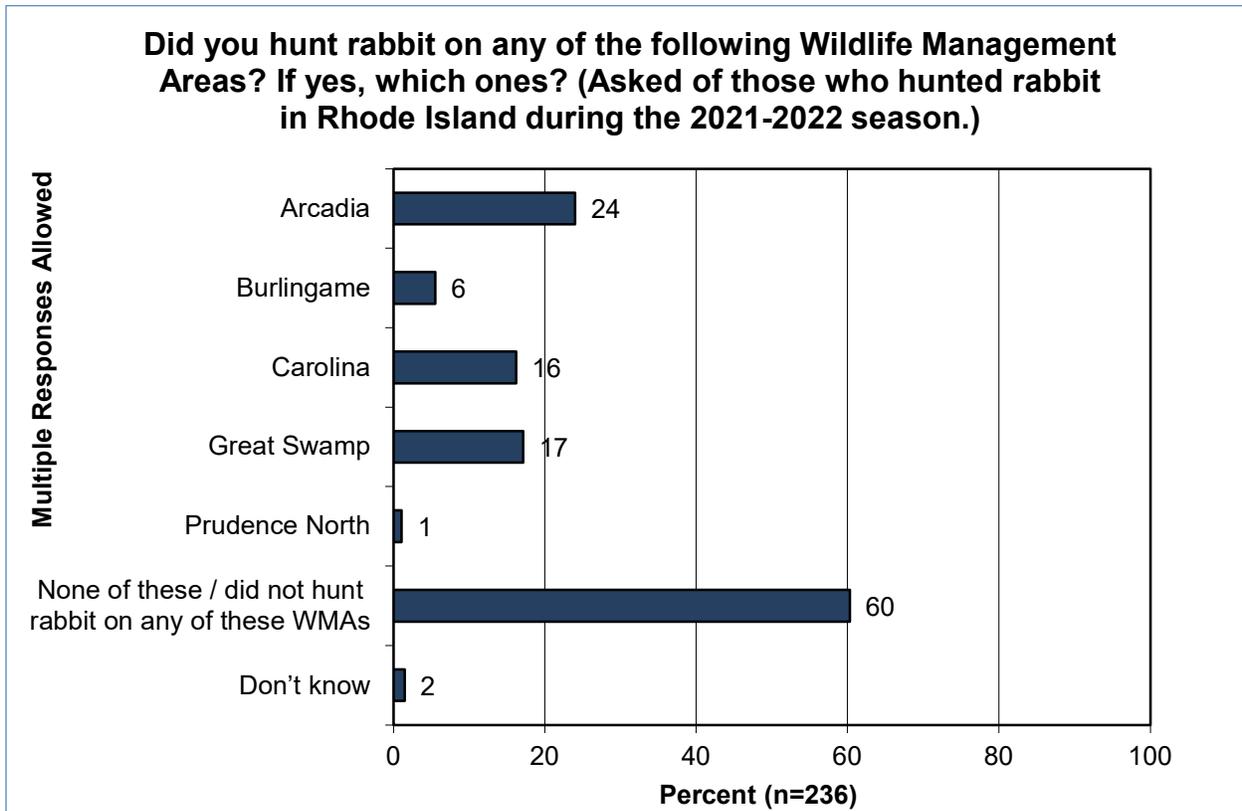
For each small game species listed in the survey, 2021-2022 small game hunters were asked if they specifically targeted the species or if they hunted it because the opportunity presented itself. The results are shown below in descending order of the species that were targeted:

- Squirrel: 74% targeted the species; 25% hunted it because of the opportunity
- Rabbit: 64% targeted; 34% opportunity
- Coyote: 61% targeted; 38% opportunity
- Fox: 50% targeted; 42% opportunity
- Raccoon: 44% targeted; 51% opportunity

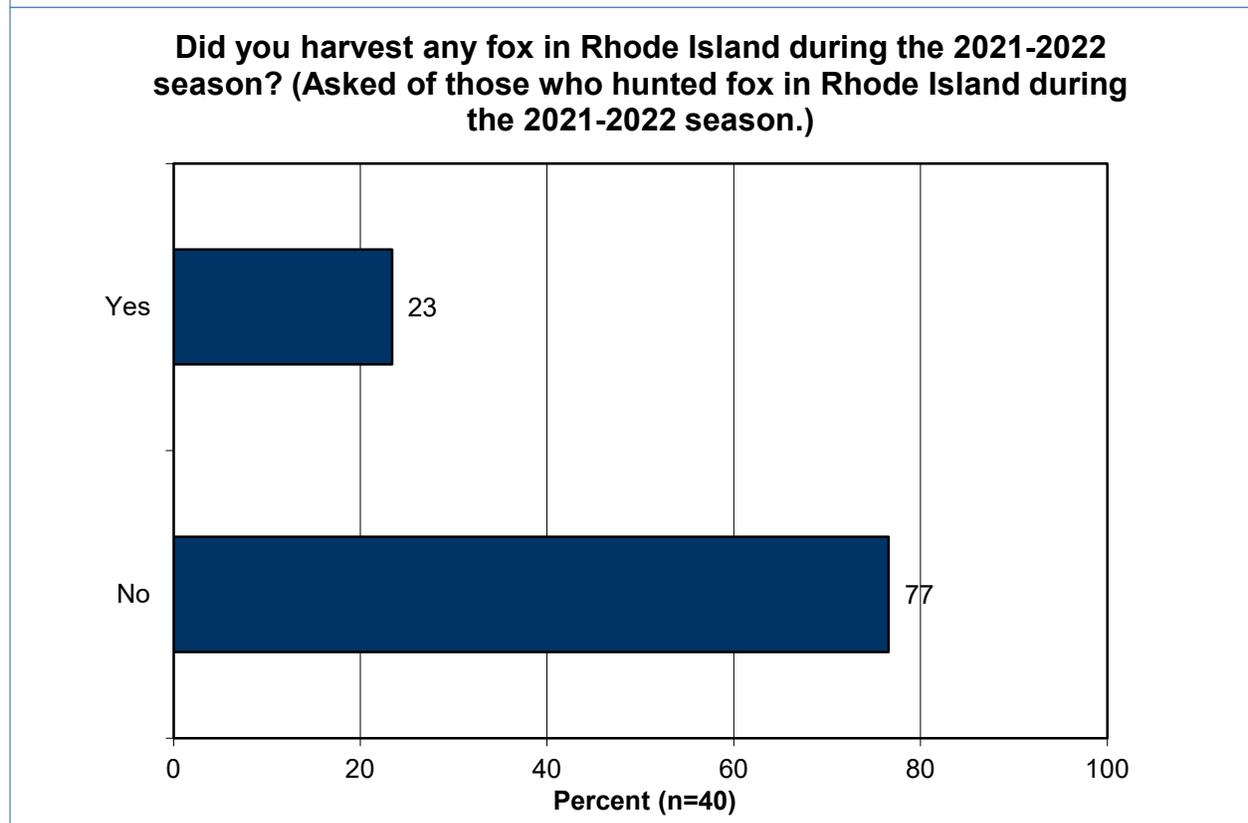
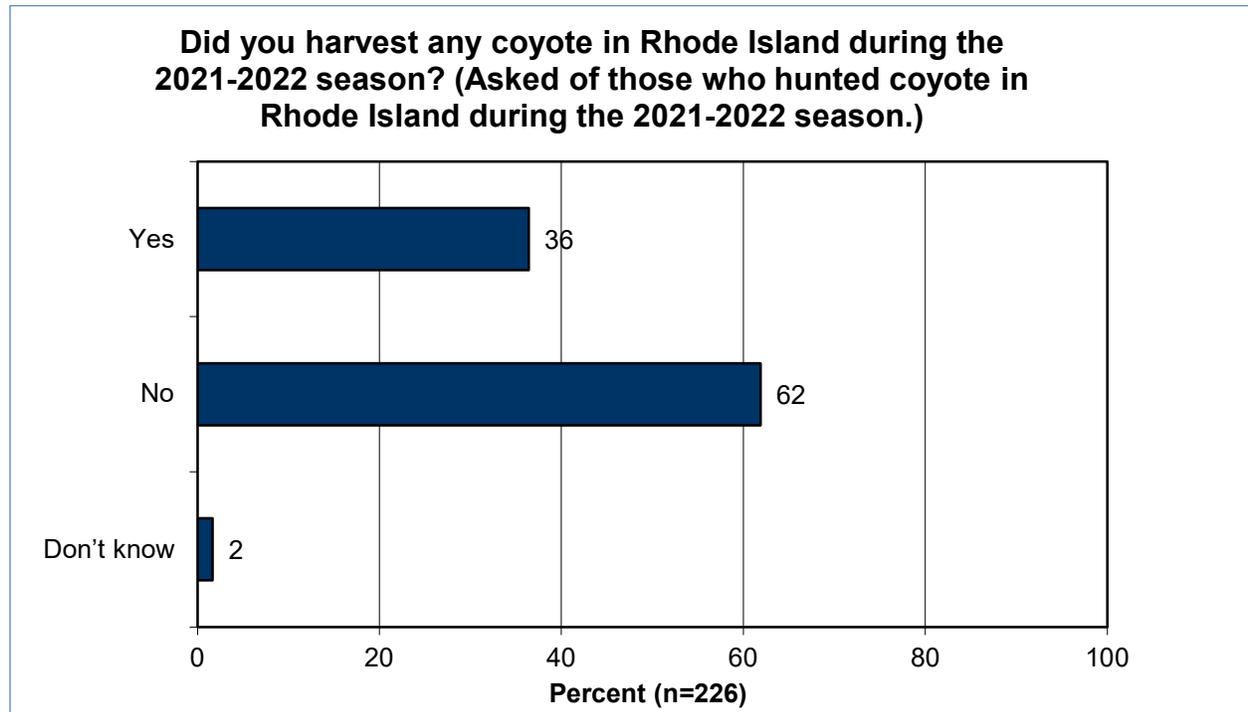
Percent of small game hunters who specifically targeted the species and who hunted the species when the opportunity presented itself (among those who hunt the species):

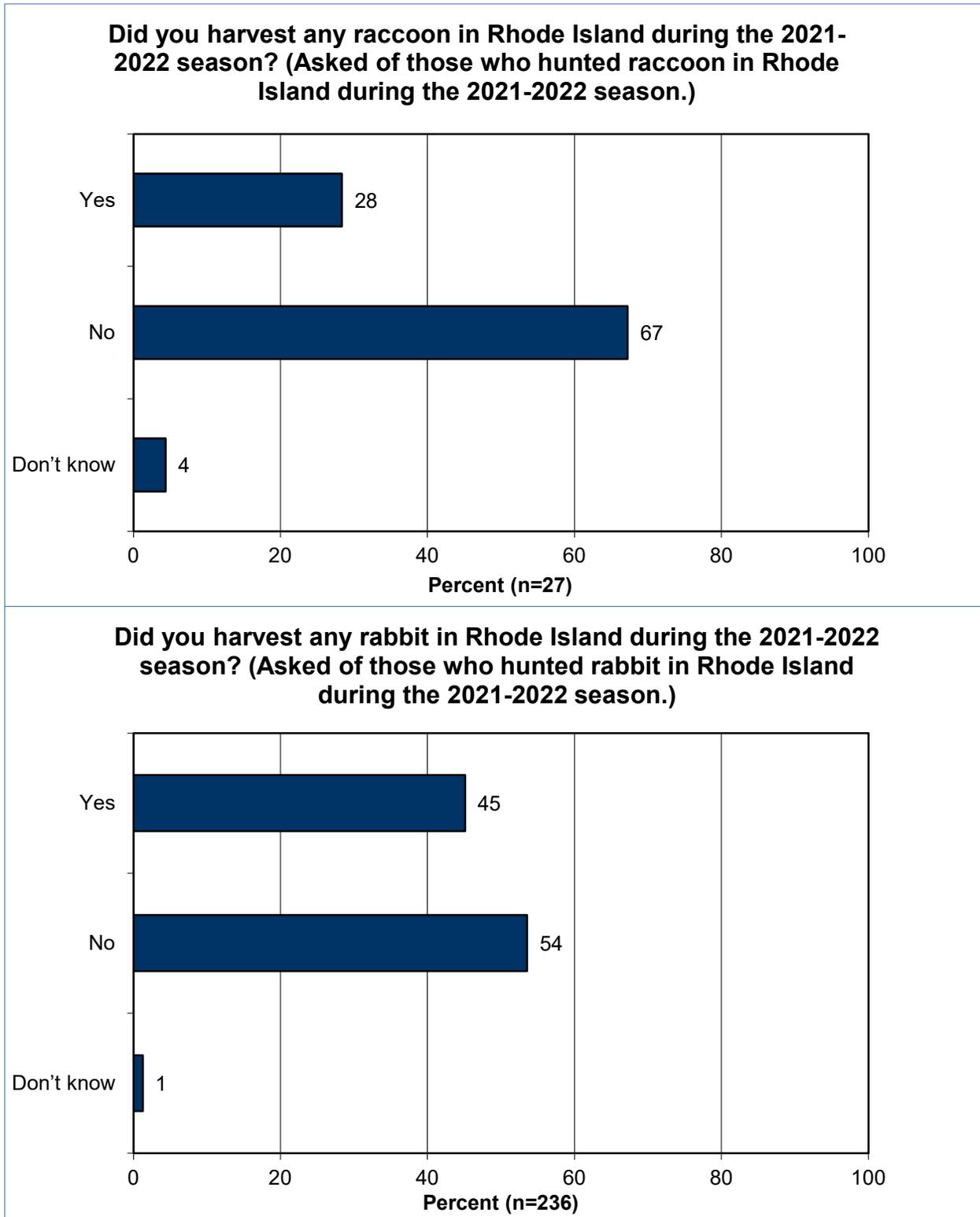


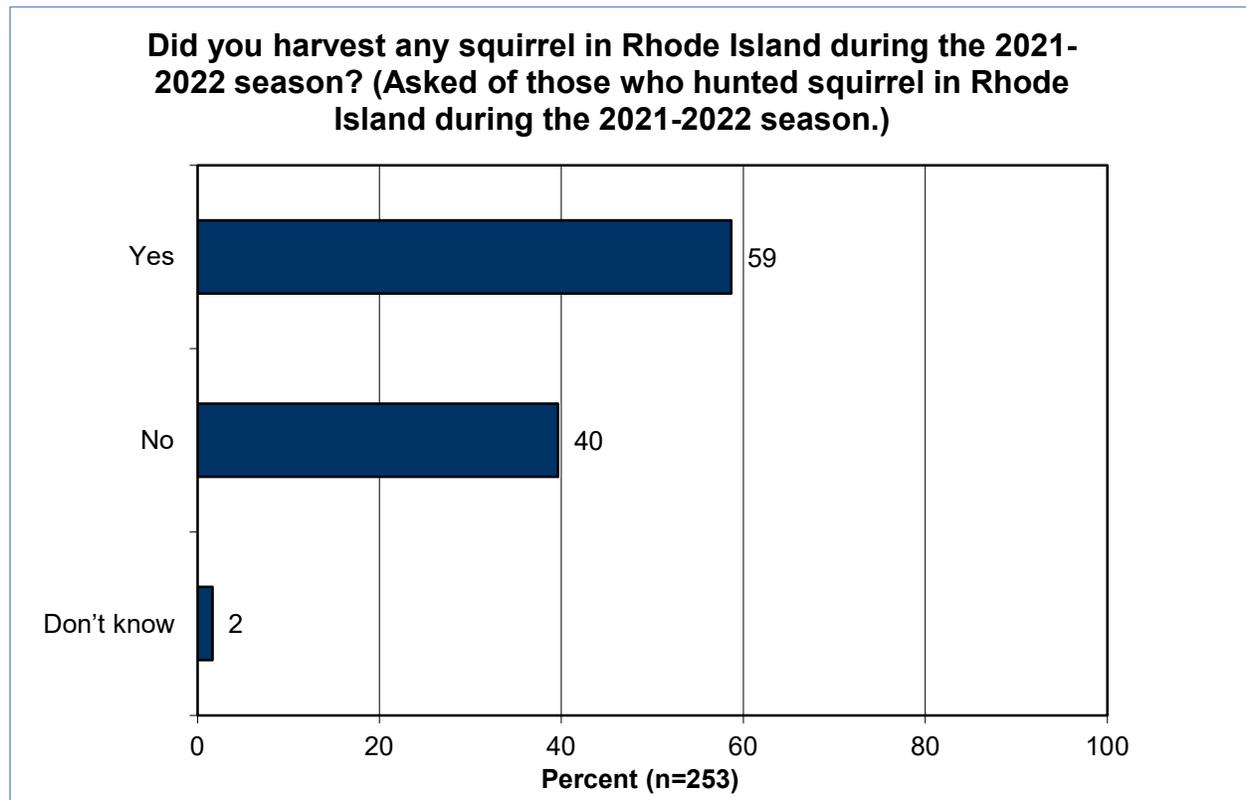
Among those who hunted rabbit in the 2021-2022 season, 38% hunted on WMAs, most frequently the Arcadia, Great Swamp, and Carolina WMAs.



The next five graphs show the harvest success rates among hunters of the specific small game species. Squirrel hunters (59% harvested) and rabbit hunters (45%) were the most successful.





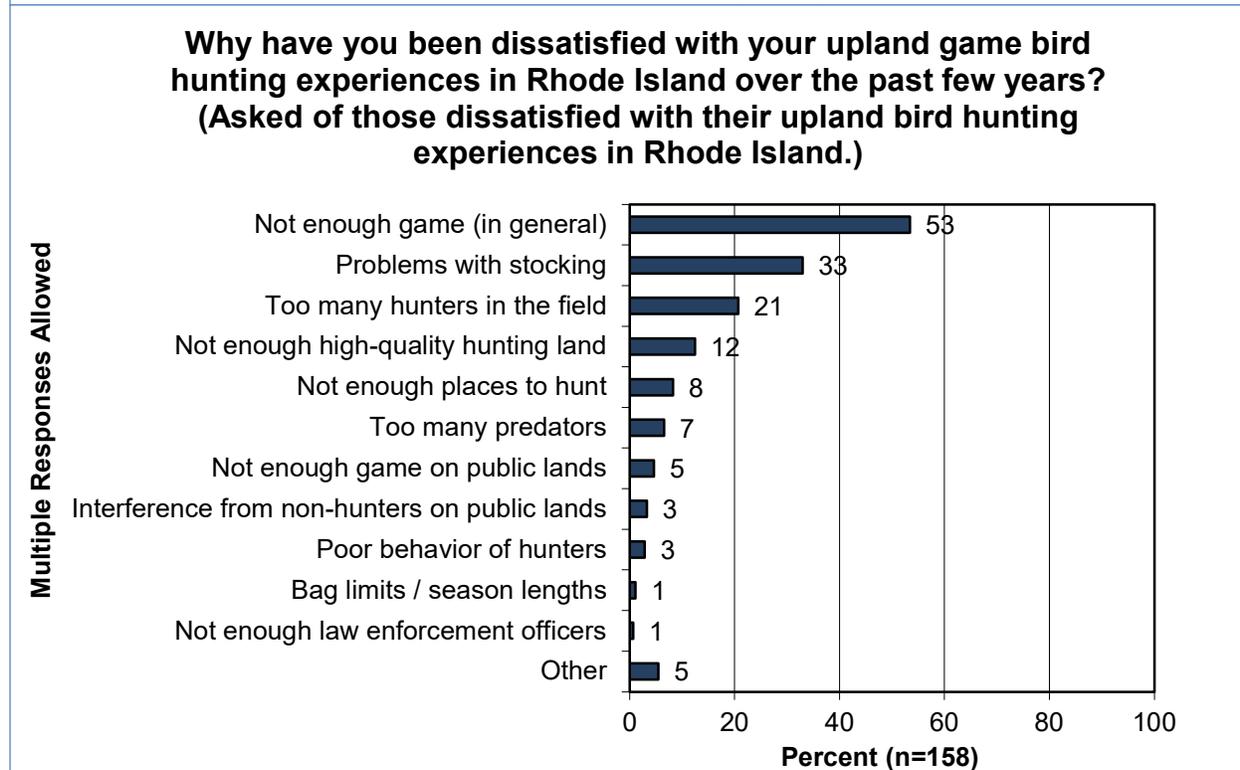
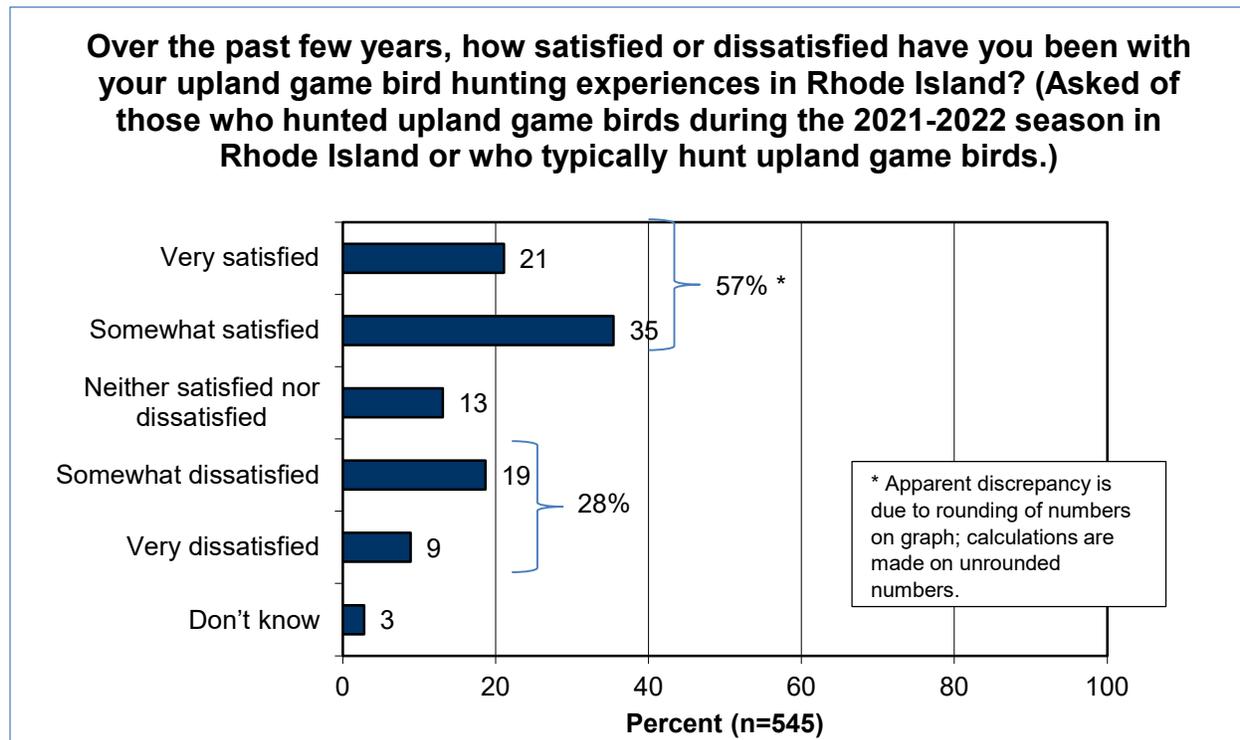


There were over 1,700 small game hunters during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island. Squirrel was the most harvested small game, with nearly 1,000 squirrel hunters harvesting nearly 5,300 squirrel.

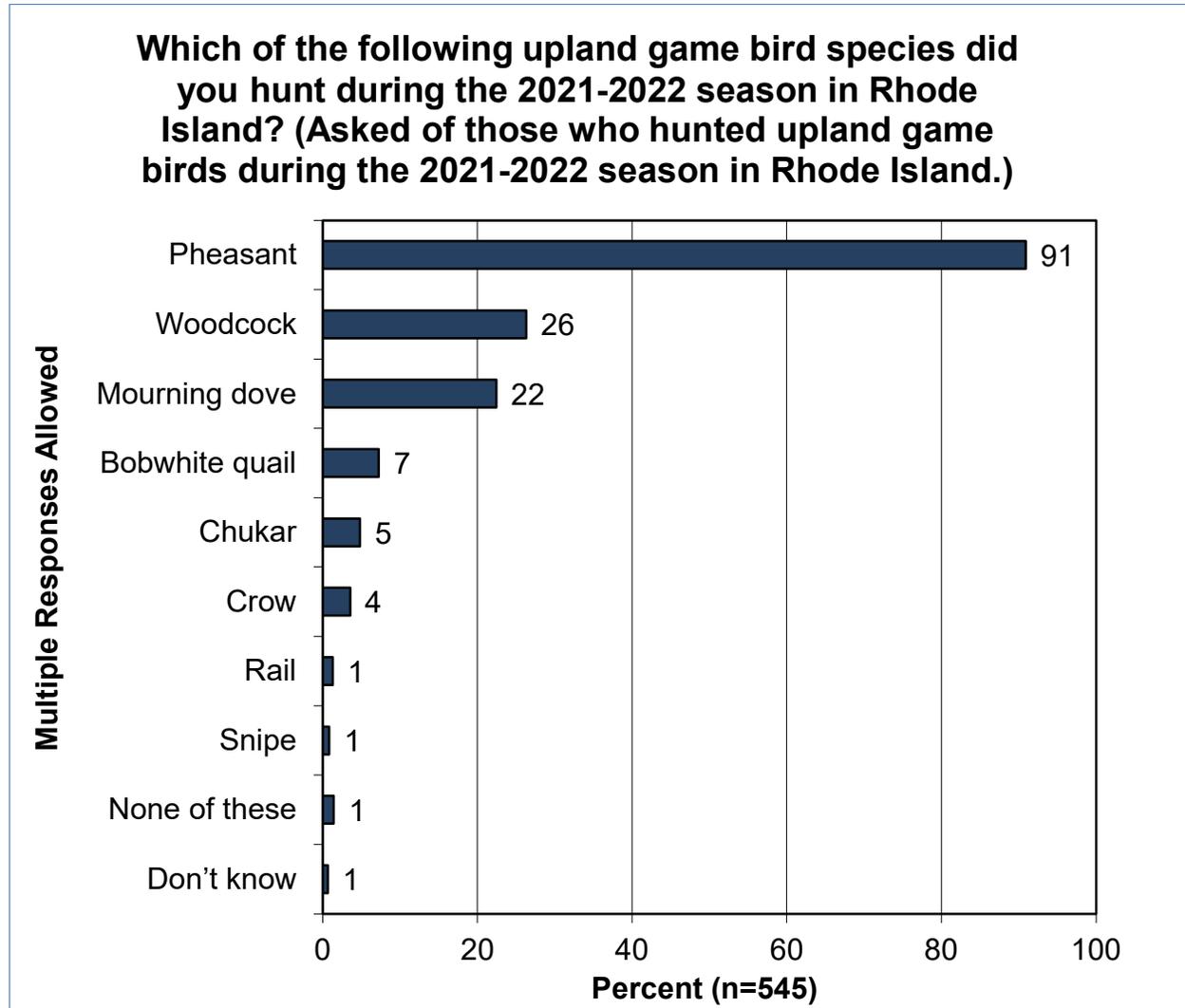
Number of Small Game Hunters and Harvested Small Game During the 2021-2022 Hunting Season									
Species	Hunters in Sample	Estimated Number of Hunters	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Harvest per Successful Hunter	Estimated Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Percent Successful Hunters
Small Game (overall)	473	1,744	1,589	1,899					
Coyote	226	907	789	1,026	3.36	1,109	652	1,566	36
Fox	40	146	96	196	2.40	82	3	161	23
Raccoon	27	98	57	139	7.10	197	0	398	28
Rabbit	236	946	825	1,067	6.72	2,871	1,864	3,878	45
Squirrel	253	978	855	1,100	9.26	5,283	3,934	6,631	59

UPLAND GAME BIRD HUNTING

A majority of upland game bird hunters (57%) were satisfied with their upland game bird hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years, although a sizable percentage (28%) were dissatisfied. In an open-ended question, those who were dissatisfied most often said the reasons are lack of game, problems with stocking, and too many hunters in the field.

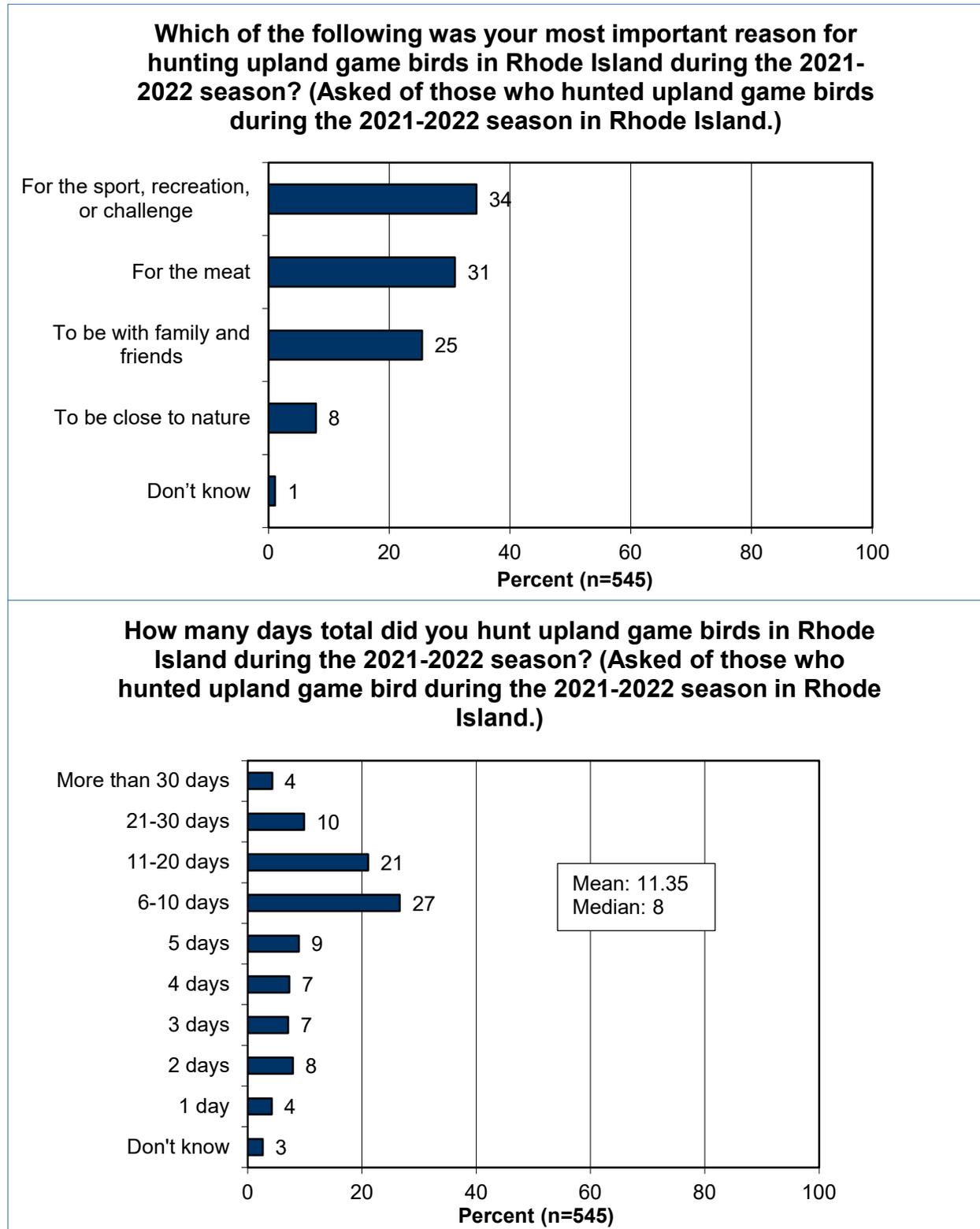


By far, pheasant was the most hunted species by those who hunted upland game birds in the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island (91% did so). This is distantly followed by woodcock (26%) and mourning dove (22%).



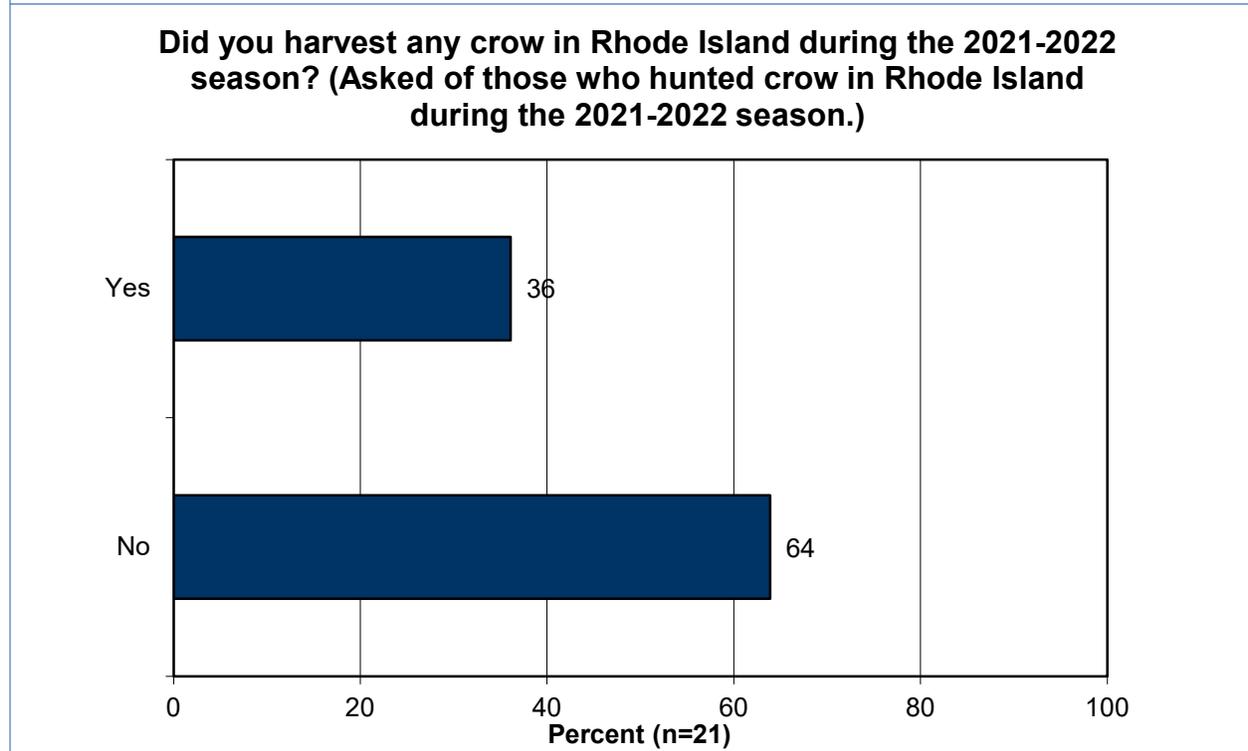
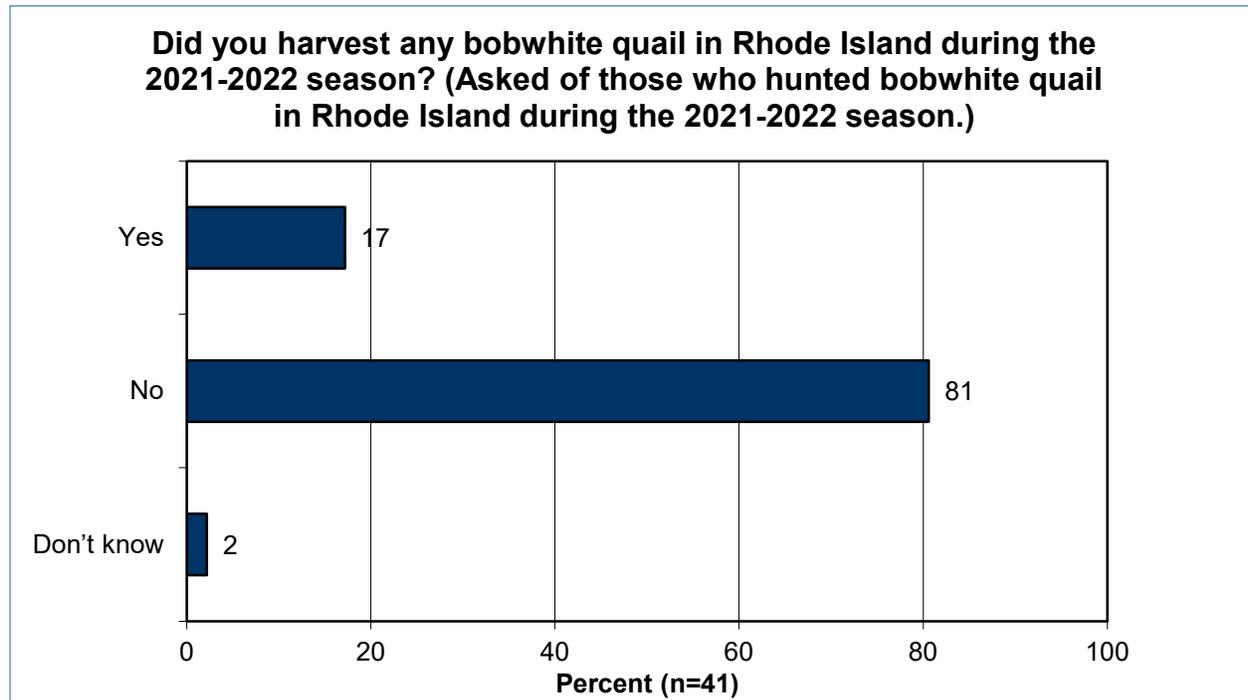
Among those who hunted upland game birds in 2021-2022, 34% primarily hunted for the sport, 31% hunted for the meat, and 25% hunted to be with family and friends.

These hunters participated a mean of 11.35 days and a median of 8 days.

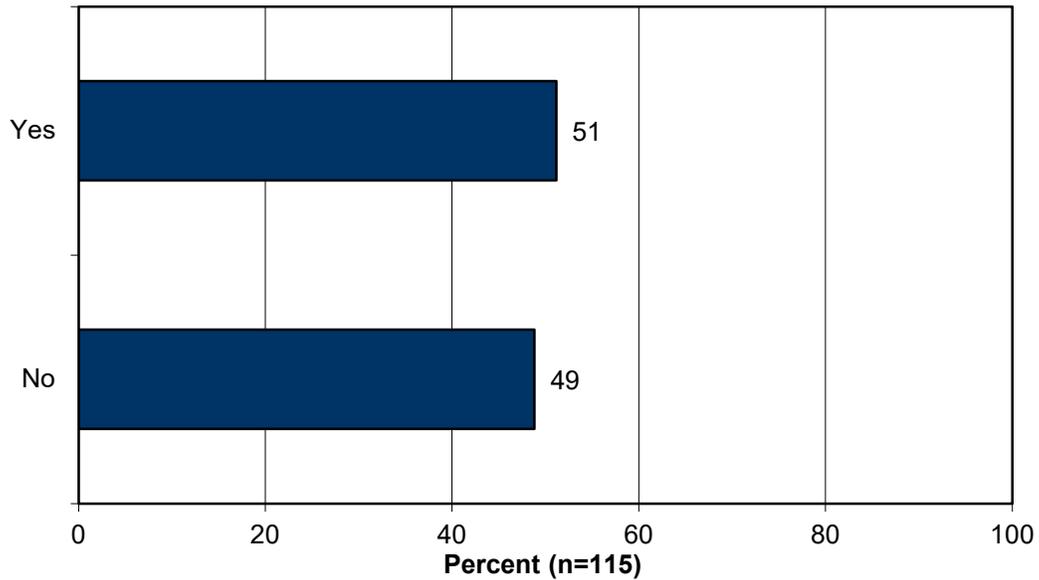


The next six graphs show harvest rates among those who hunted the species. Chukar hunters (76% harvested chukar) and pheasant hunters (73%) had the most success.

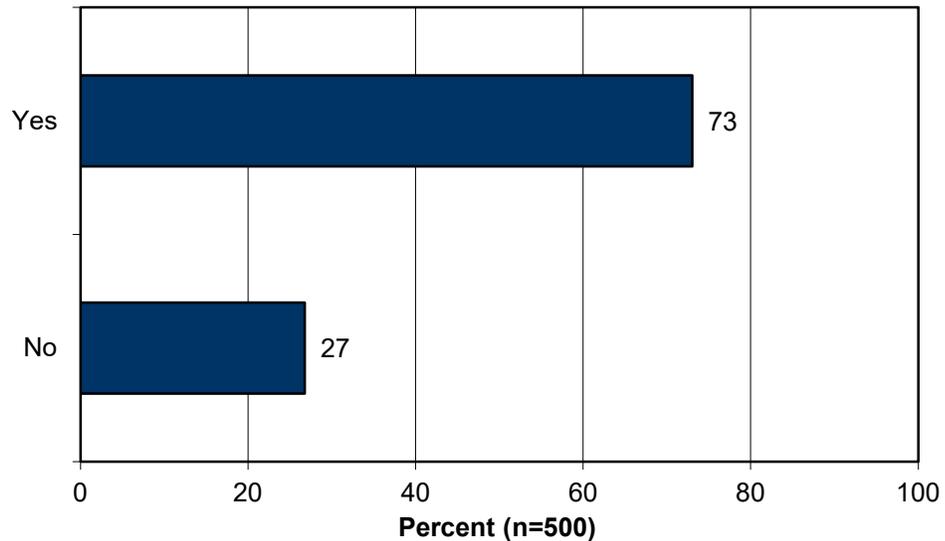
Note that rail and snipe were also asked about in the survey. However, only 4 hunters in the sample hunted rail (2 harvested) and only 6 hunted snipe (no one harvested). These species are not shown in the graphs or tabulation.



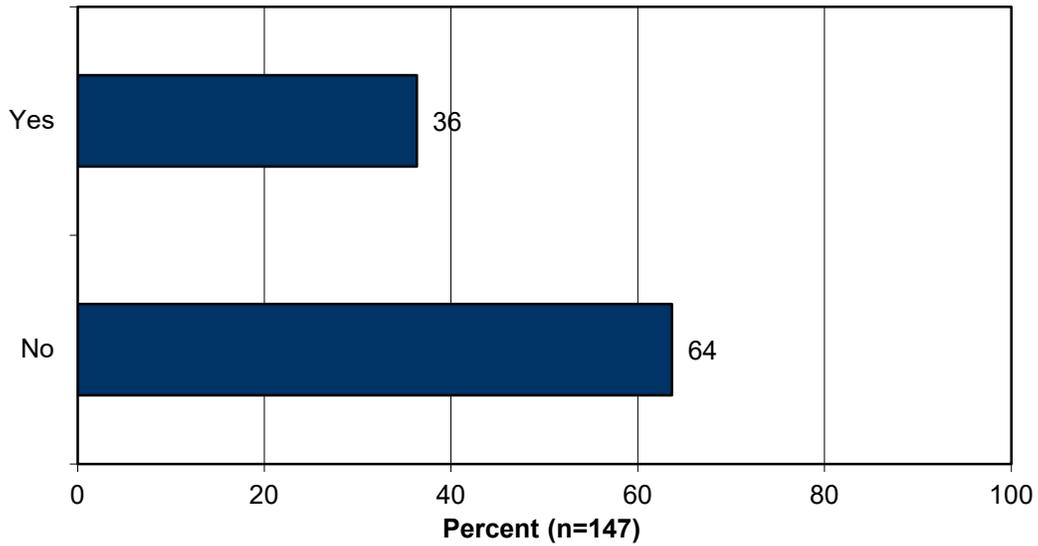
Did you harvest any mourning dove in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season? (Asked of those who hunted mourning dove in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season.)



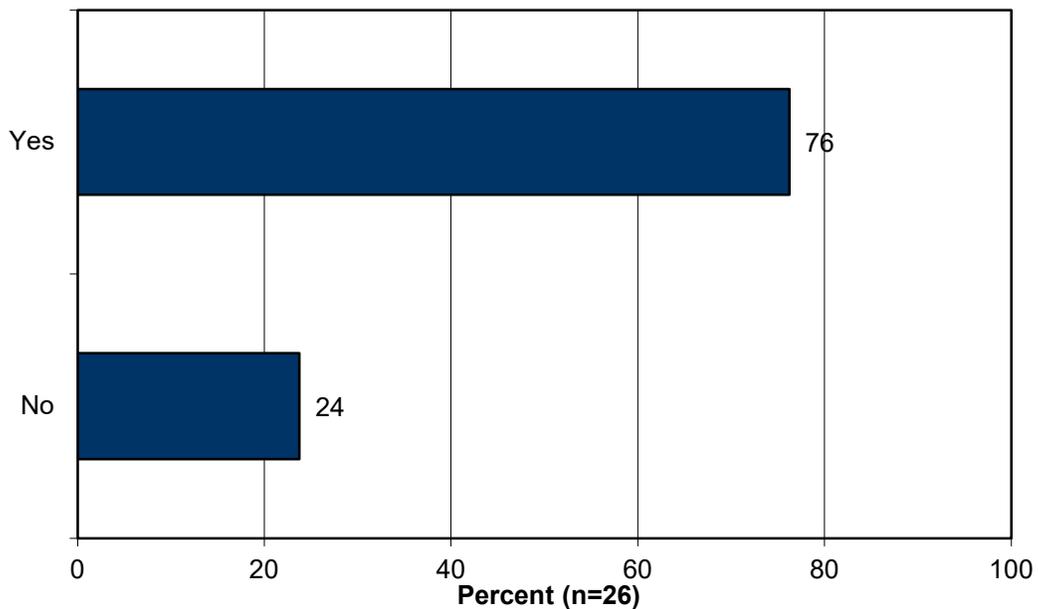
Did you harvest any pheasant in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season? (Asked of those who hunted pheasant in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season.)



Did you harvest any woodcock in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season? (Asked of those who hunted woodcock in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season.)



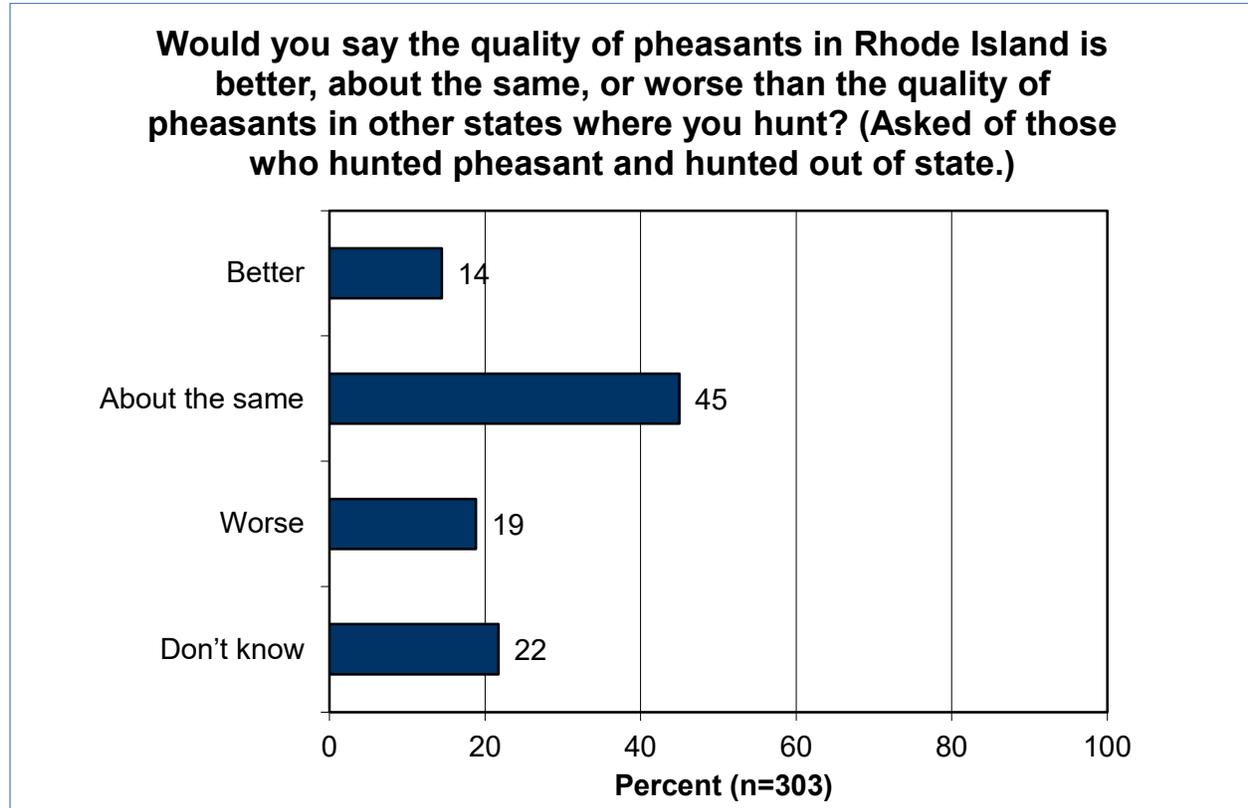
Did you harvest any chukar in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season? (Asked of those who hunted chukar in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season.)



Nearly 2,300 hunters hunted upland game birds during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island. Pheasant was the most hunted upland game bird species, with over 2,000 hunters harvesting nearly 11,000 pheasant.

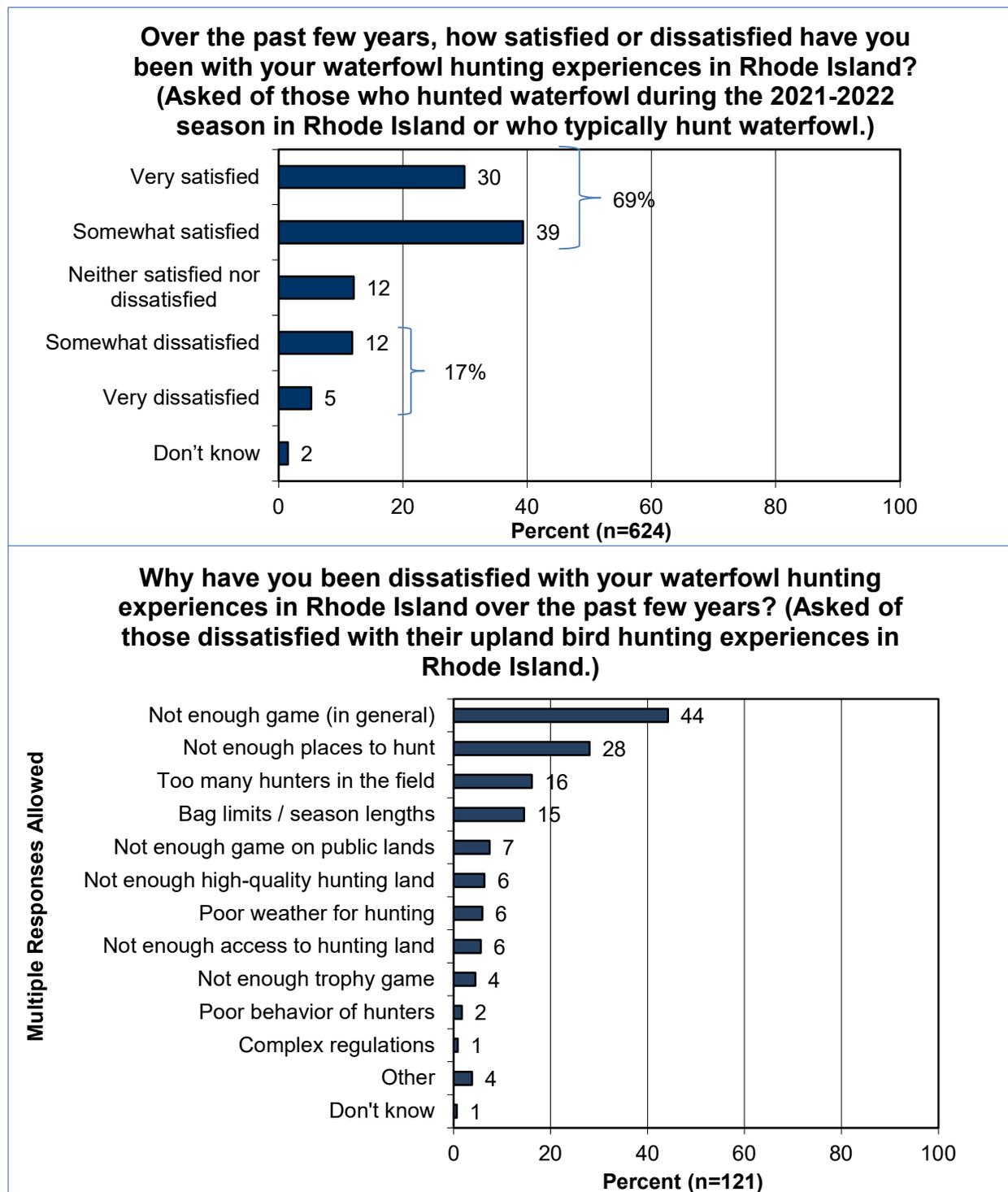
Number of Upland Game Bird Hunters and Harvested Upland Game Birds During the 2021-2022 Hunting Season										
Species	Hunters in Sample	Estimated Number of Hunters	Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Harvest per Successful Hunter	Estimated Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Percent Successful Hunters
Upland Game Birds (overall)	545	2,270	2,101	2,439						
Bobwhite Quail	41	165	112	218		4.90	139	0	278	17
Crow	21	81	43	118		15.69	457	0	1,015	36
Mourning Dove	115	509	418	601		12.54	3,270	1,900	4,639	51
Pheasant	500	2,064	1,900	2,227		7.17	10,830	8,925	12,735	73
Woodcock	147	597	499	695		2.83	615	368	861	36
Chukar	26	109	66	153		15.47	1,287	286	2,288	76

Pheasant hunters who also hunted out of state most commonly say that the quality of pheasants is about the same in Rhode Island as it is in other states (45% stated this); they are slightly more likely to say the quality is worse in Rhode Island (19%) than better (14%). A substantial percentage (22%) do not know.

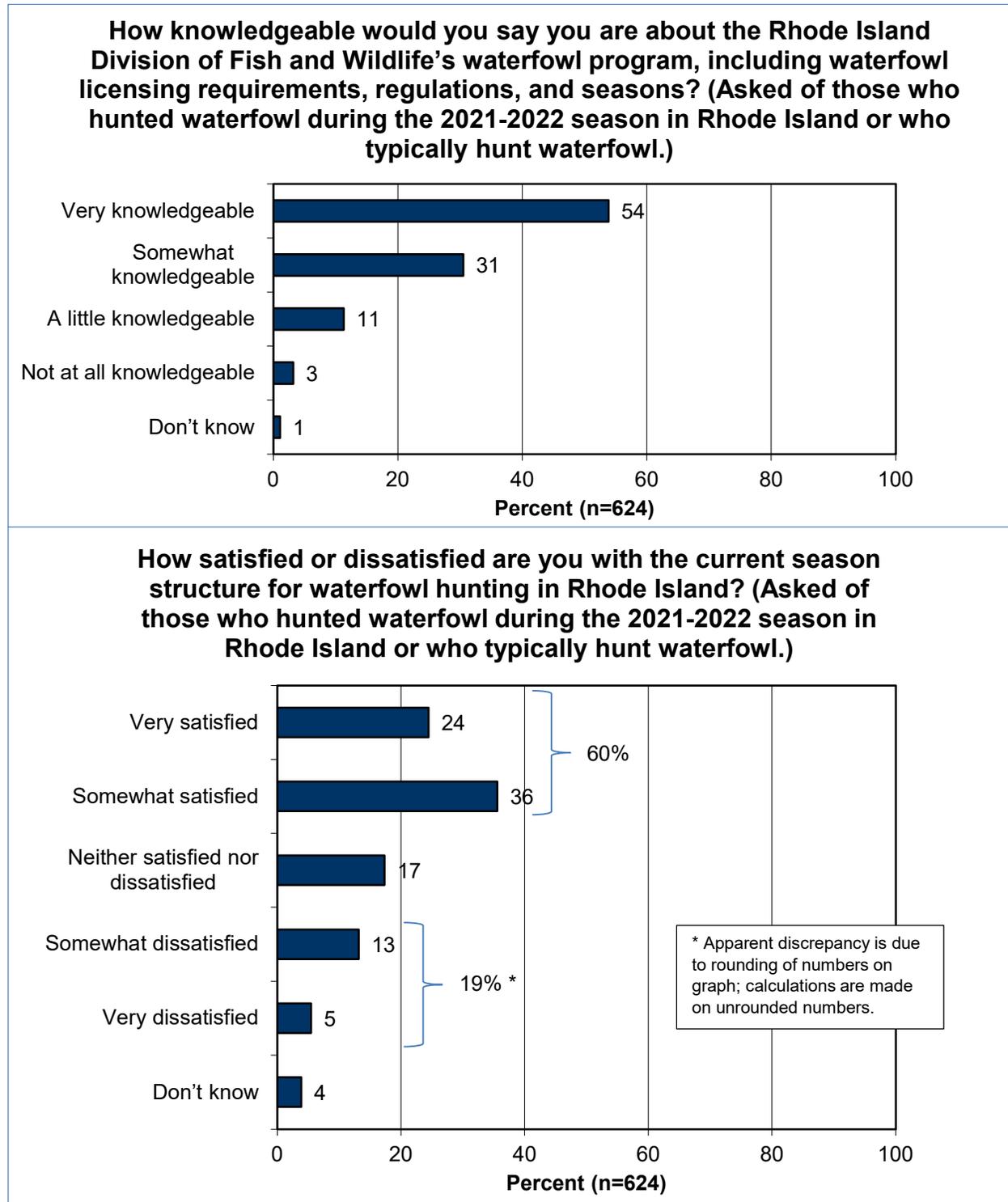


WATERFOWL HUNTING

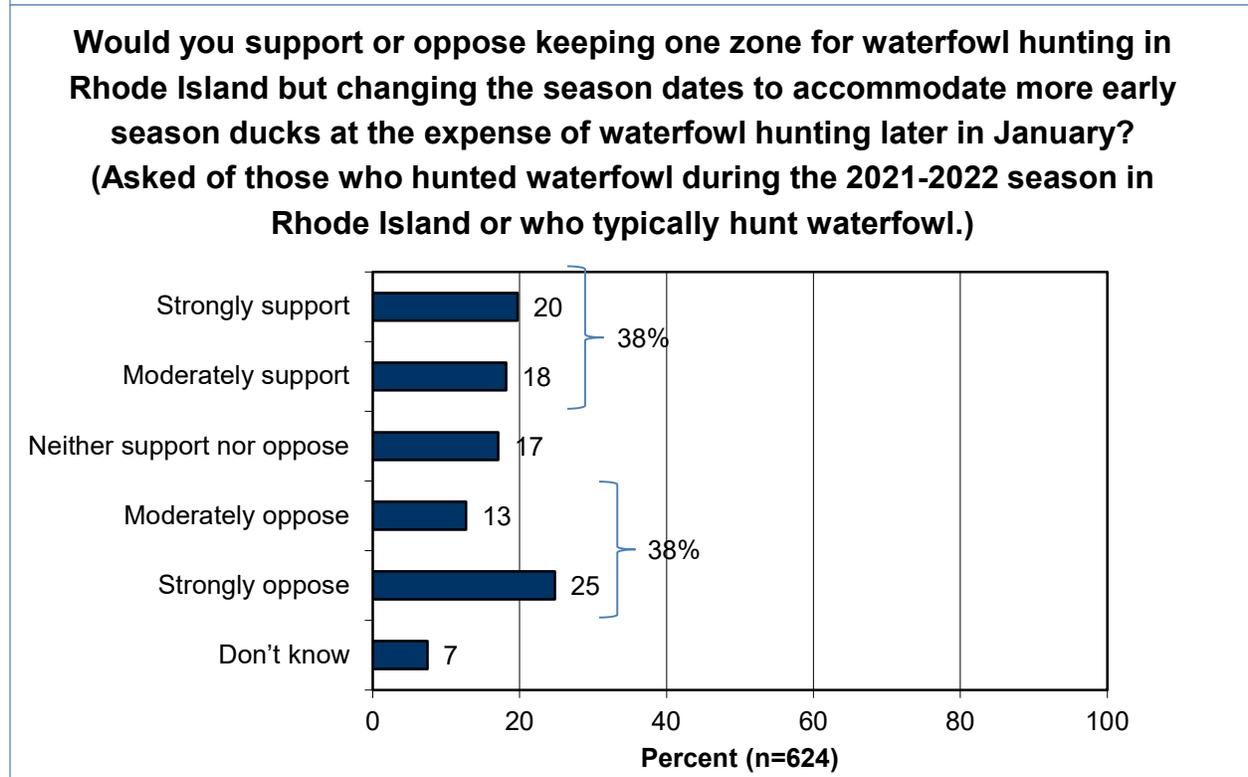
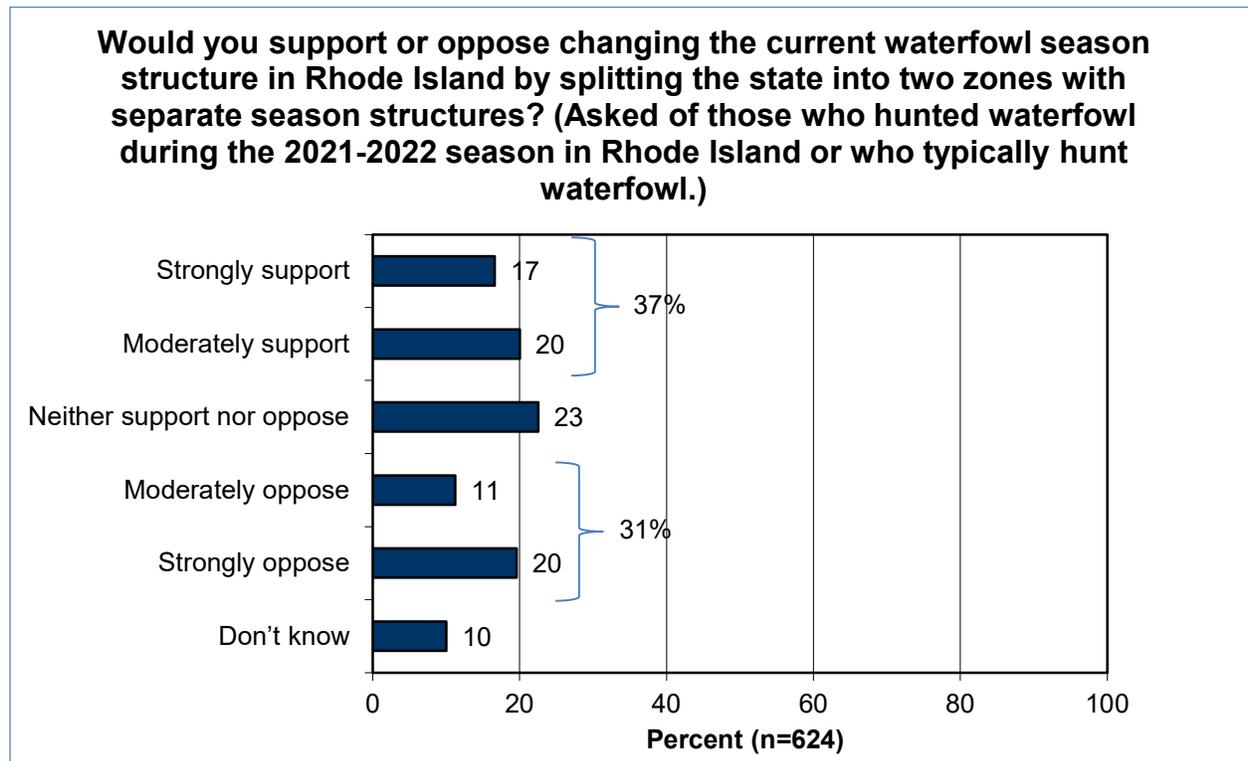
A strong majority of waterfowl hunters (69%) were satisfied with their waterfowl hunting experiences in Rhode Island over the past few years, compared to 17% who were dissatisfied. In an open-ended question, those who were dissatisfied most often said the reasons are lack of game and lack of places to hunt.



Waterfowl hunters are knowledgeable about the Division's waterfowl program: 54% are very knowledgeable, 31% are somewhat knowledgeable, and 11% are a little knowledgeable. A majority of those who hunted waterfowl last season (60%) are satisfied with the current season structure and 19% are dissatisfied.

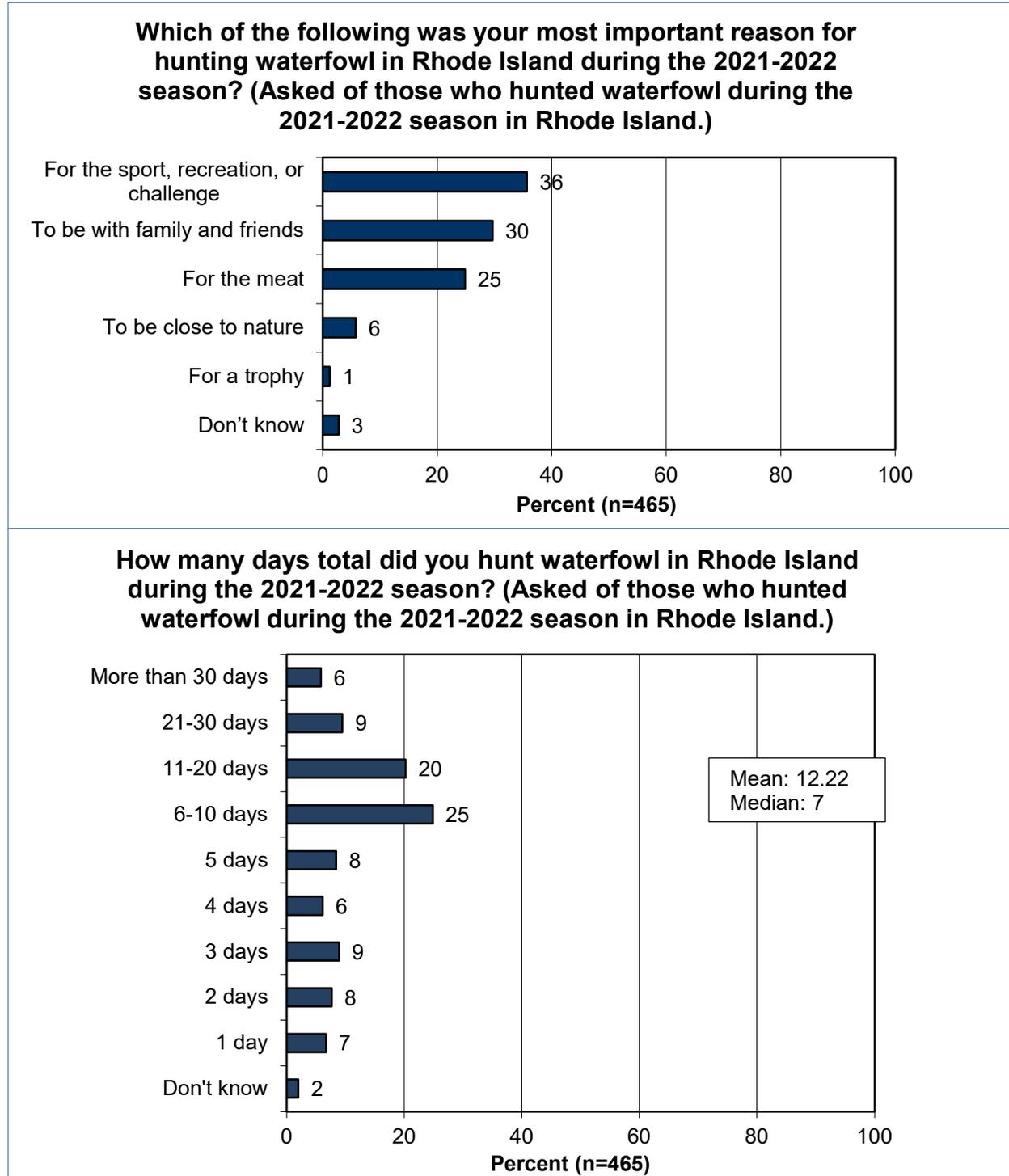


Waterfowl hunters are divided on the concept of splitting the state into two zones with separate season structures: 37% support and 31% oppose. There is an even split on the concept of keeping one zone and changing the season dates to accommodate more early season ducks at the expense of waterfowl hunting later in January: 38% support and 38% oppose. Neutral and “don’t know” percentages were substantial for both questions.

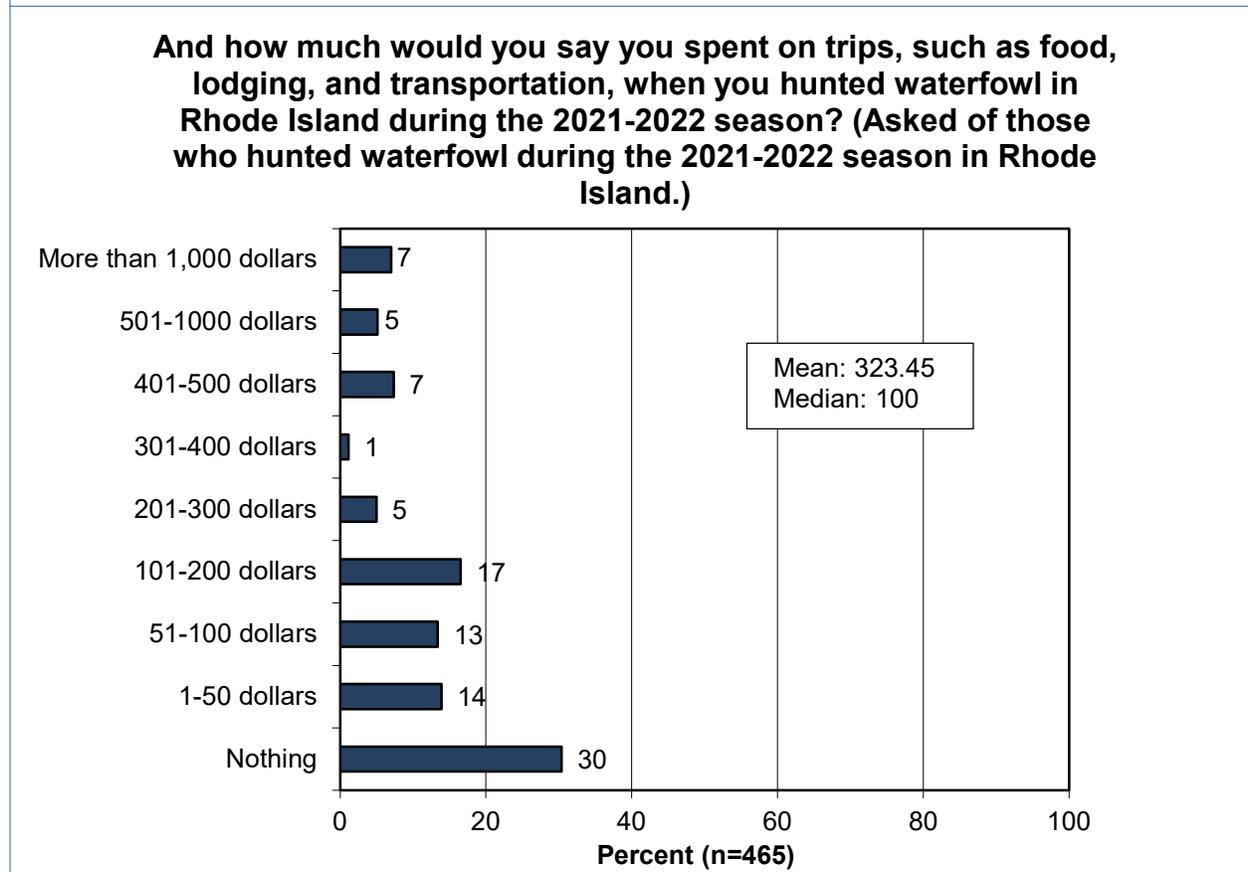
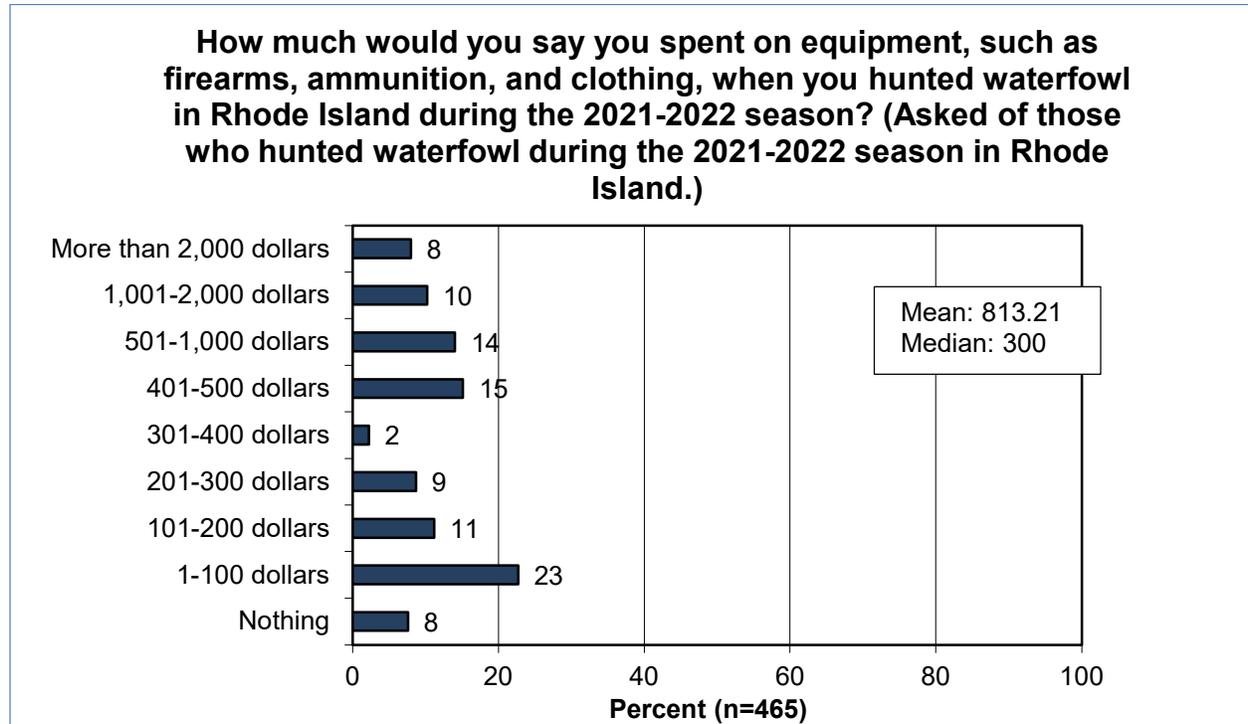


Among those who hunted waterfowl in 2021-2022, 36% primarily hunted for the sport, 30% hunted to be with family and friends, and 25% hunted for the meat.

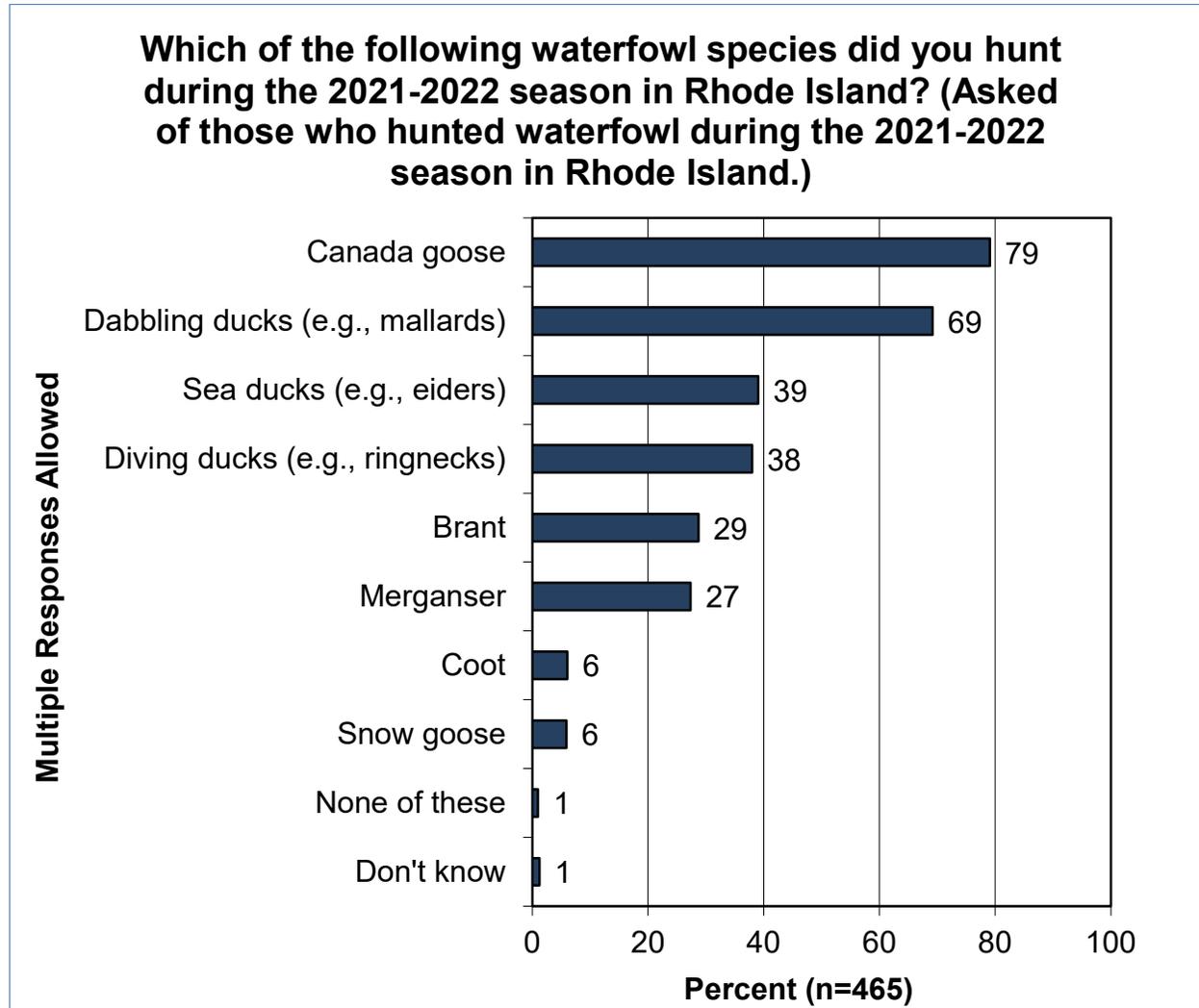
These hunters participated a mean of 12.22 days and a median of 7 days.



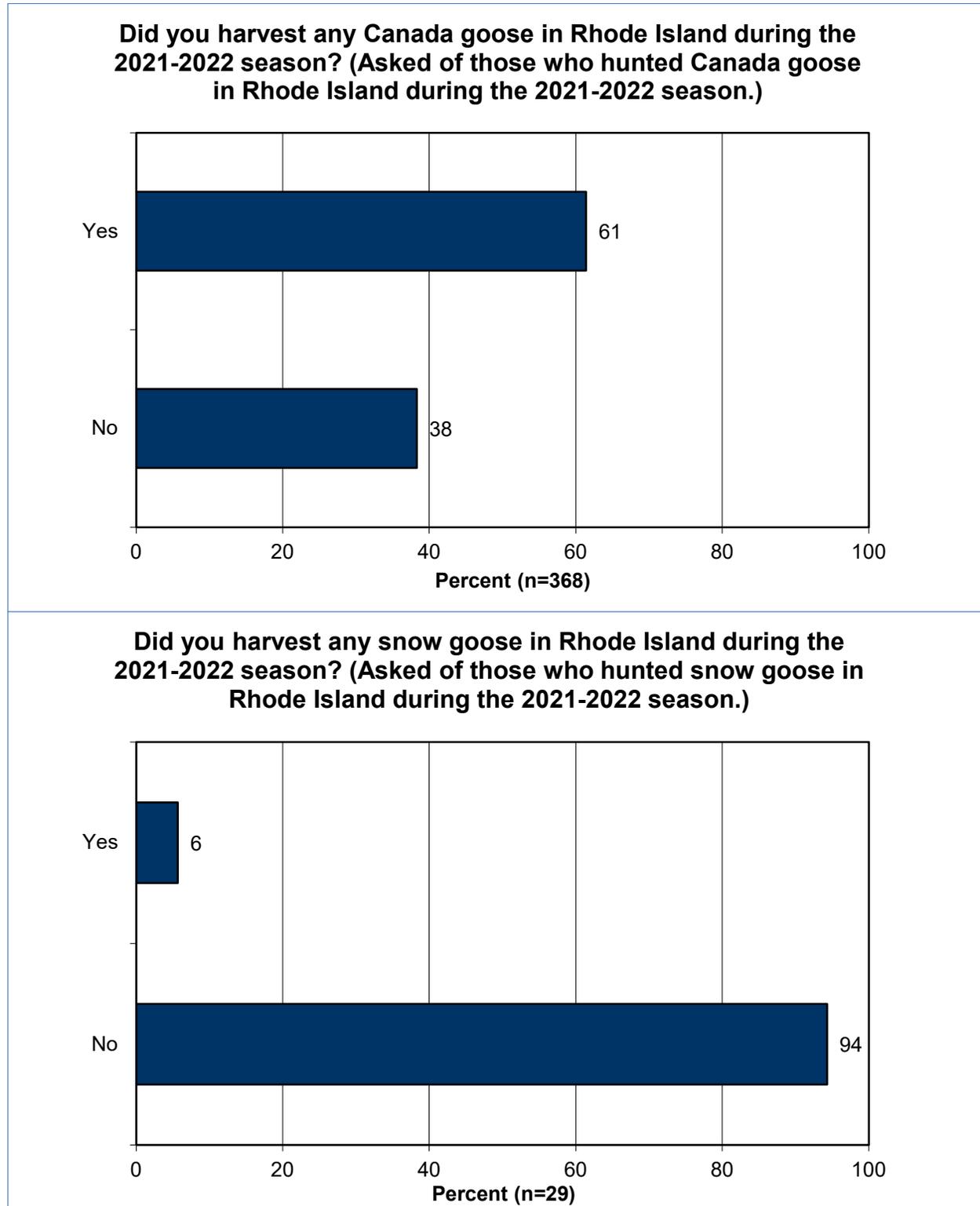
Waterfowl hunters spent a mean of \$813.21 and a median of \$300 on equipment and a mean of \$323.45 and a median of \$100 on trips during the 2021-2022 season. The relatively low expenditure on trips suggests that many hunted close to home.

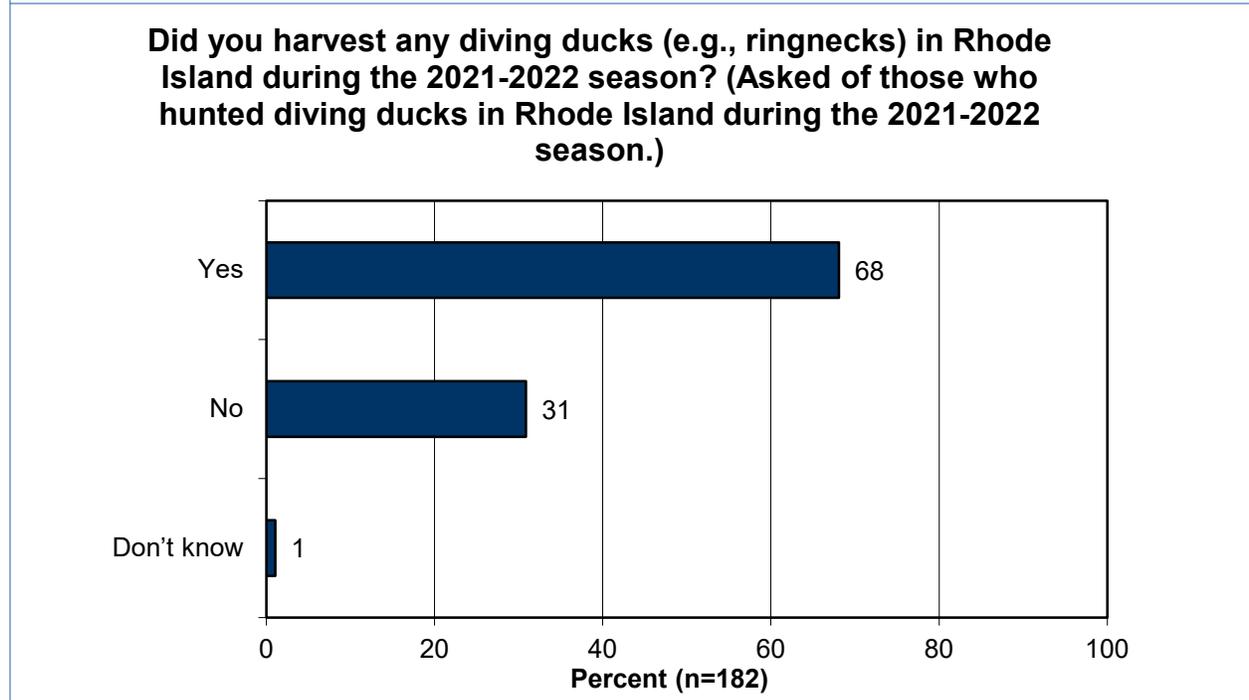
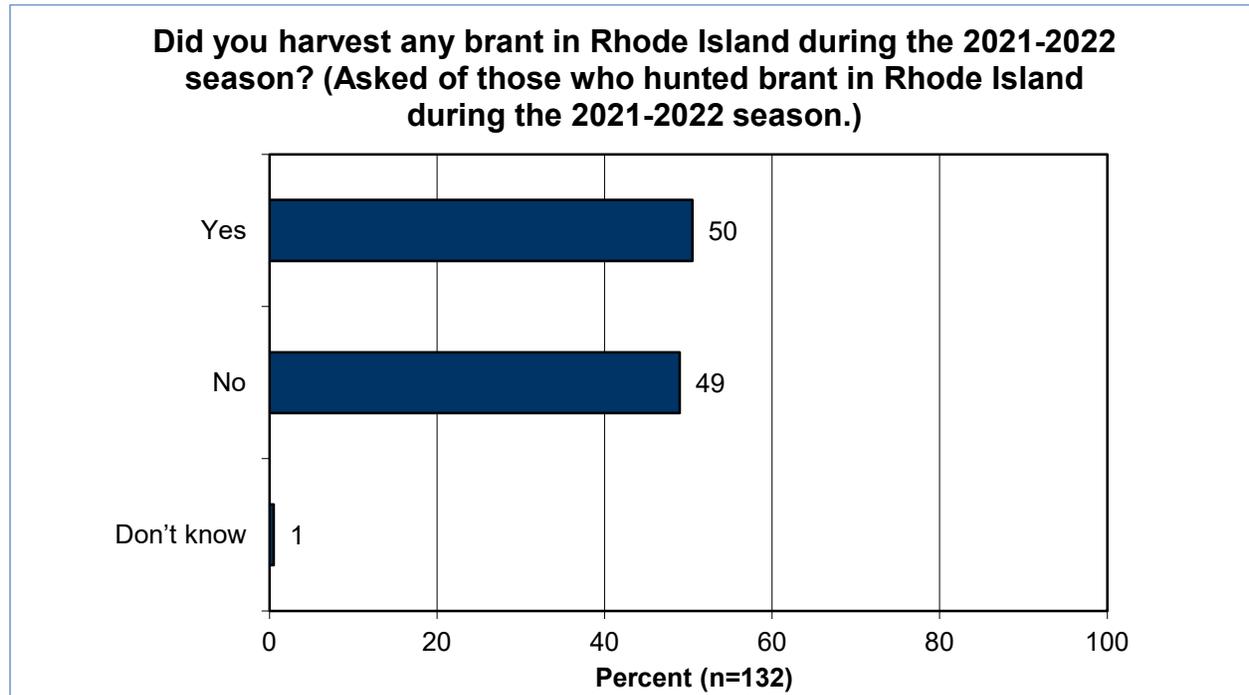


The most common waterfowl species hunted during 2021-2022 are Canada goose (79% hunted this) and dabbling ducks/mallards (69%), distantly followed by sea ducks/eiders (39%), diving ducks/ringnecks (38%), brant (29%), and merganser (27%).

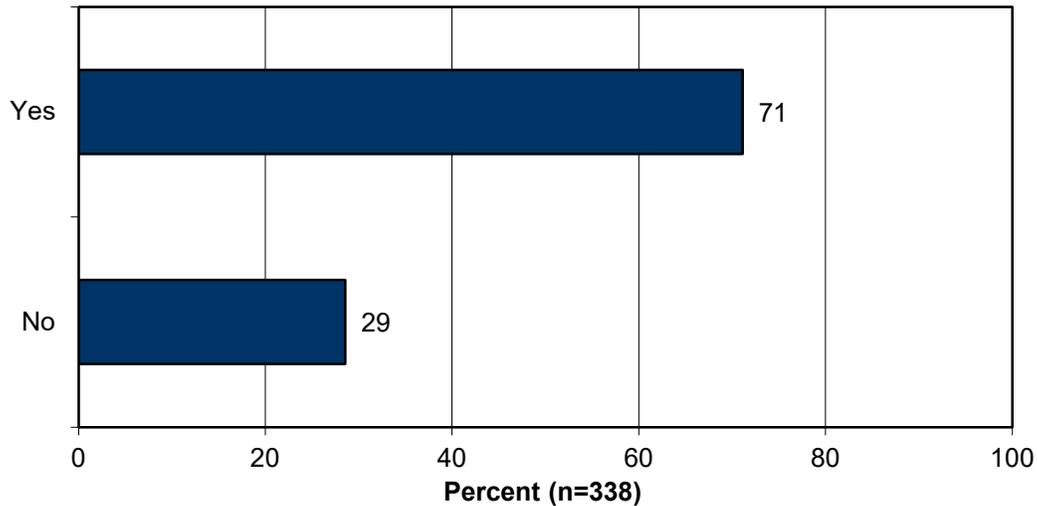


The next eight graphs show harvest rates among those who hunted the species. Merganser hunters (76% harvested merganser), dabbling duck/mallard hunters (71%), and diving duck/ringneck hunters (68%) had the most harvest success.

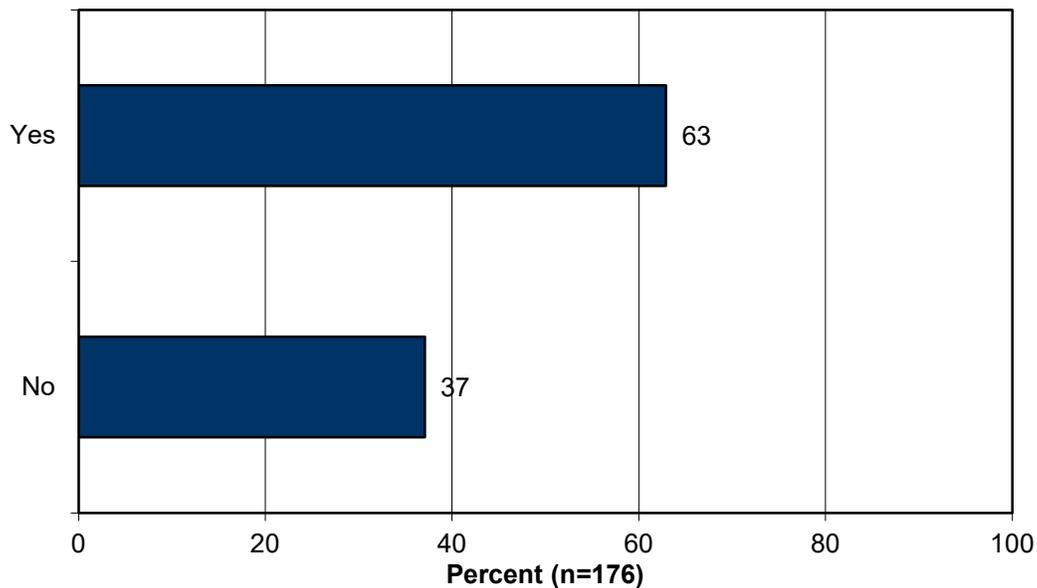




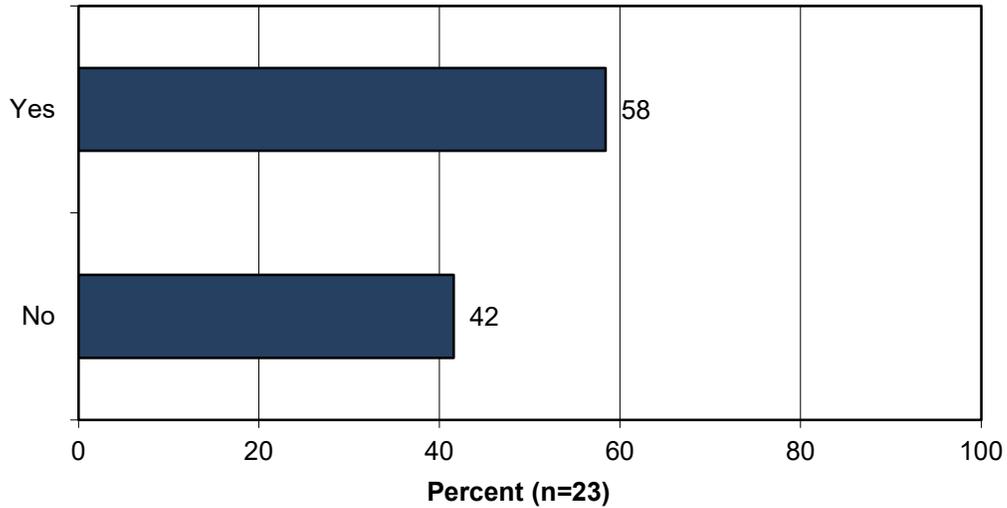
Did you harvest any dabbling ducks (e.g., mallards) in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season? (Asked of those who hunted dabbling ducks in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season.)



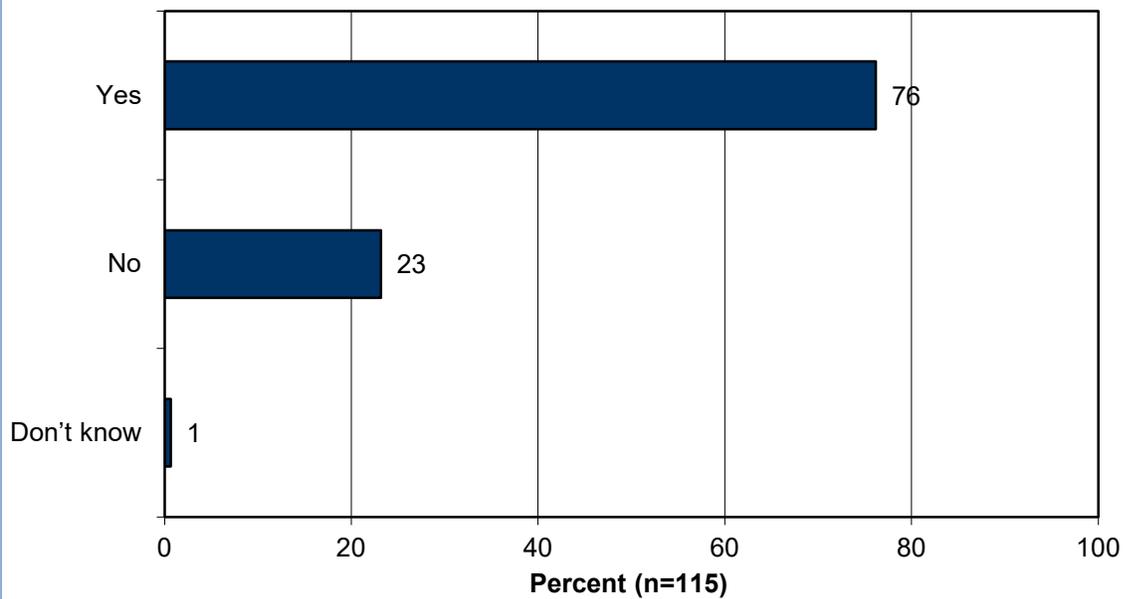
Did you harvest any sea ducks (e.g., eiders) in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season? (Asked of those who hunted sea ducks in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season.)



Did you harvest any coot in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season? (Asked of those who hunted coot in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season.)



Did you harvest any merganser in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season? (Asked of those who hunted merganser in Rhode Island during the 2021-2022 season.)



Nearly 2,000 hunters hunted waterfowl during the 2021-2022 season in Rhode Island. The most hunted species were Canada goose (nearly 1,600 hunters harvested over 8,300 Canada goose) and dabbling duck/mallard (nearly 1,400 hunters harvested nearly 13,000 dabbling duck).

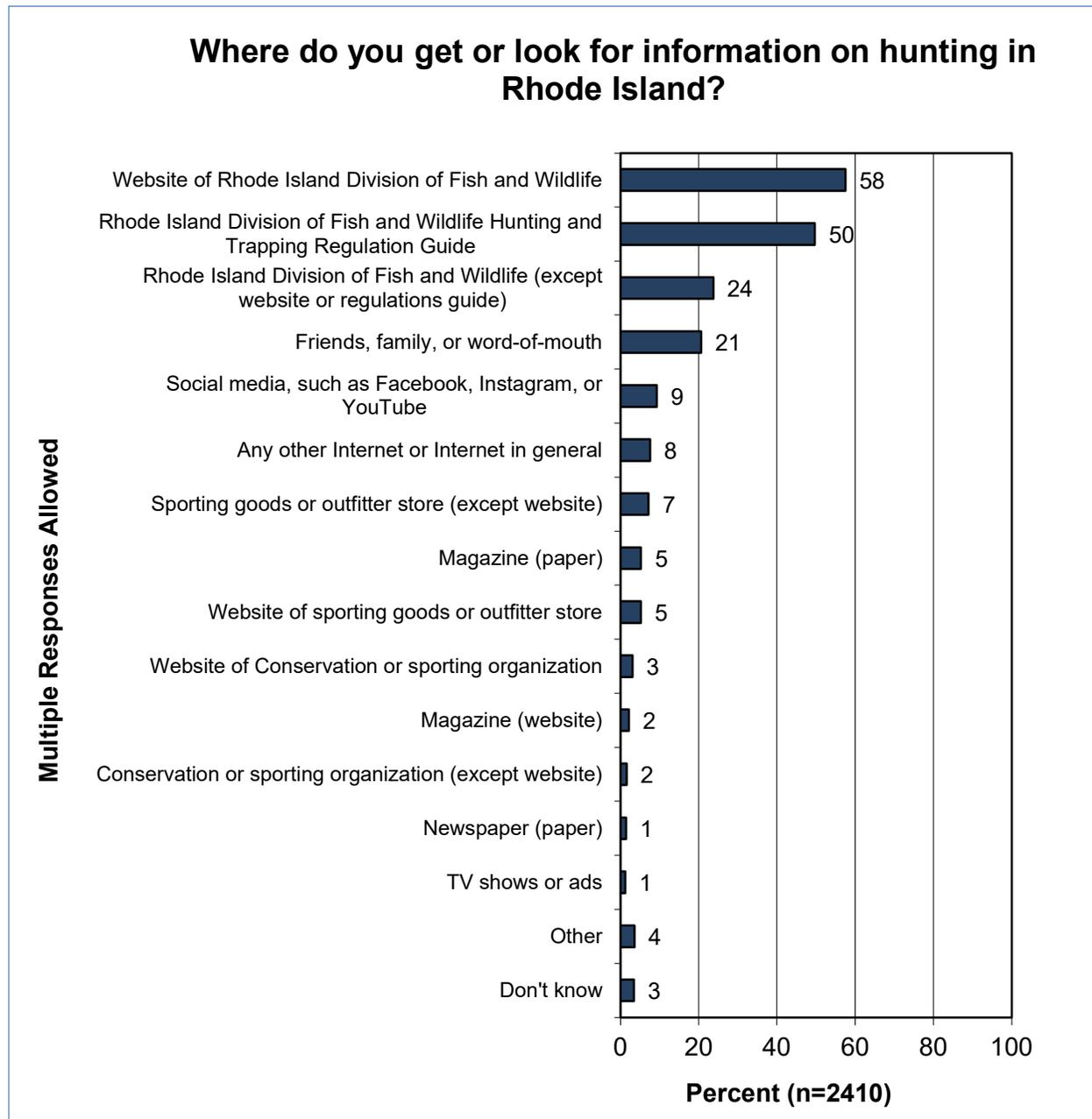
Number of Waterfowl Hunters and Harvested Waterfowl During the 2021-2022 Hunting Season										
Species	Hunters in Sample	Estimated Number of Hunters	Lower Bound	Upper Bound		Harvest per Successful Hunter	Estimated Harvest	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Percent Successful Hunters
Waterfowl (overall)	465	1,986	1,824	2,148						
Canada Goose	368	1,571	1,422	1,720		8.62	8,313	6,470	10,156	61
Snow Goose	29	117	72	162		1.46	10	0	26	5
Brant	132	570	474	667		9.11	2,625	1,665	3,585	50
Diving Ducks	182	755	645	864		13.29	6,827	4,559	9,094	68
Dabbling Ducks	338	1,375	1,234	1,516		13.03	12,698	9,707	15,690	71
Sea Ducks	176	776	665	886		10.15	4,911	3,439	6,383	63
Coot	23	121	75	166		5.03	354	0	872	58
Merganser	115	543	449	637		4.77	1,976	1,463	2,489	76

AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE HUNTING

The survey asked about hunting and harvest of amphibians and reptiles. However, only 9 hunters harvested amphibians or reptiles during the 2021-2022 hunting season in Rhode Island: 6 harvested snapping turtle, 2 harvested bull frog, and 1 harvested toad. The median time spent hunting these species was 3 days. Among these hunters, 6 harvested by hand, 2 used spears, 2 used hook and line, 1 used a handheld dip net, and 1 used a rifle. The estimated numbers of hunters and harvested species were not calculated based on these low sample sizes, and no graphs or tables are shown.

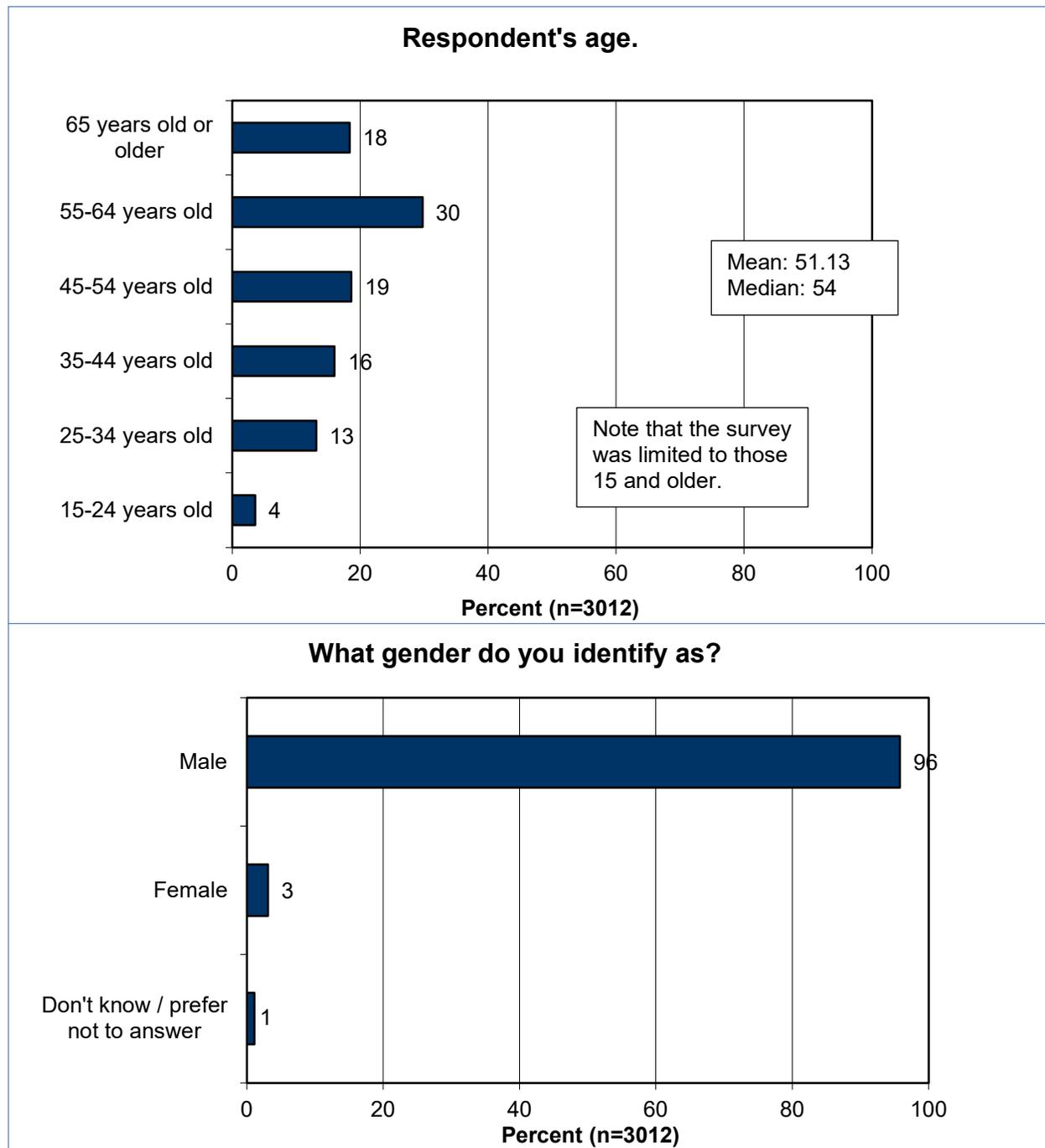
SOURCES OF INFORMATION

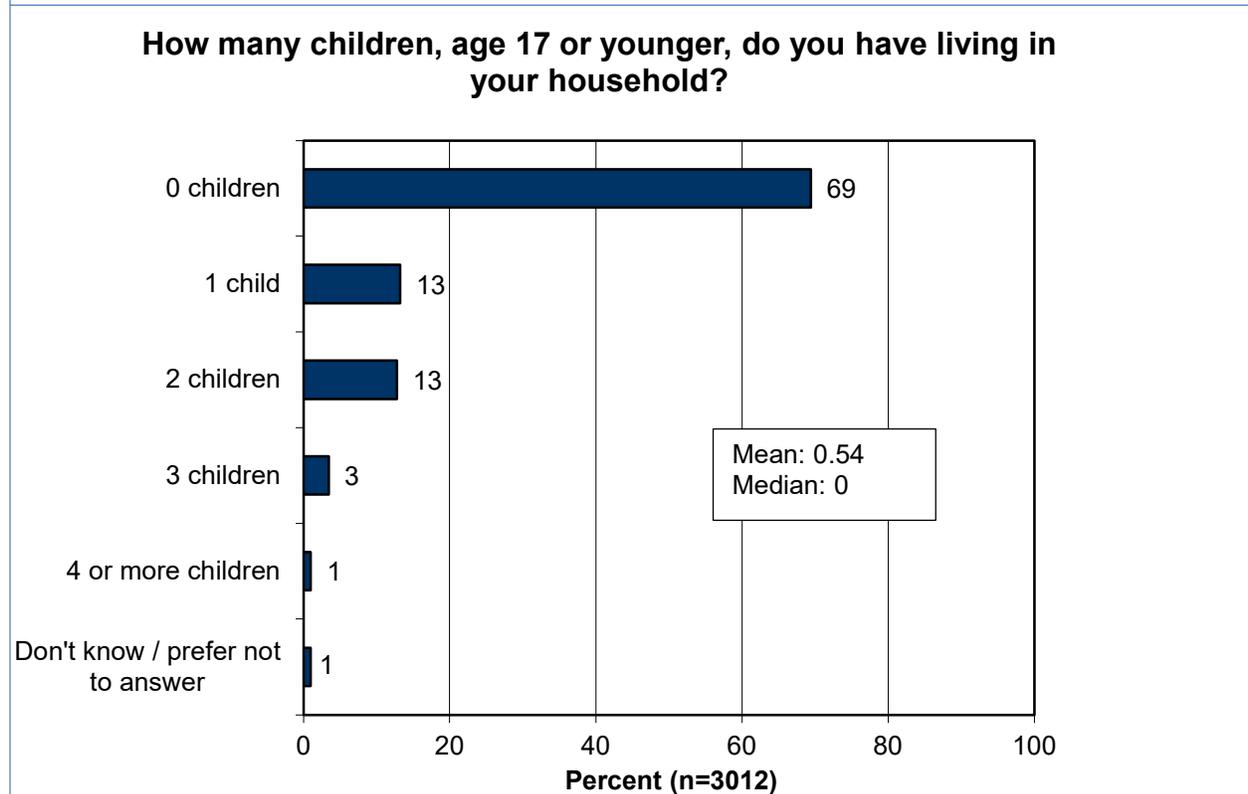
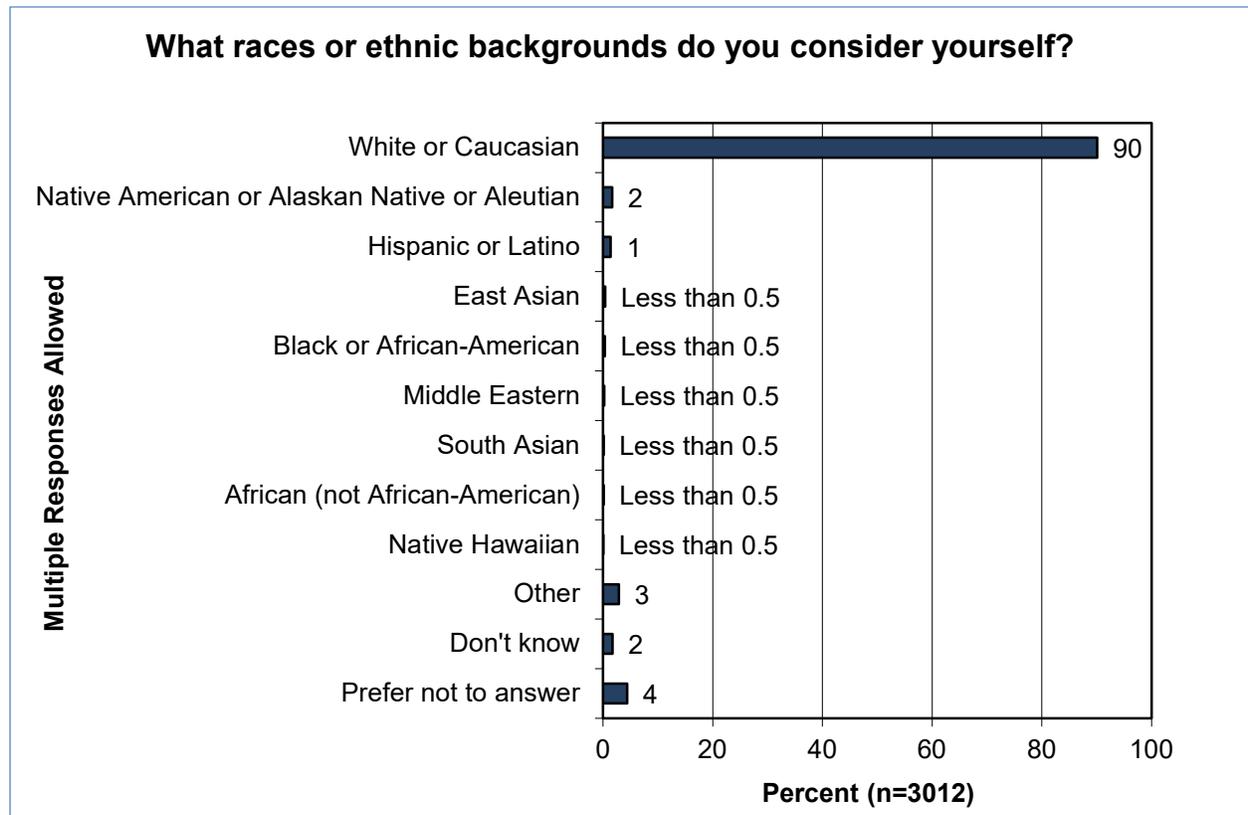
The information sources used most frequently by hunters to get information on hunting in Rhode Island are the Division's website (58% stated this), the Division's Hunting and Trapping Regulation Guide (50%), the Division in general, excluding those two sources (24%), and word-of-mouth (21%).



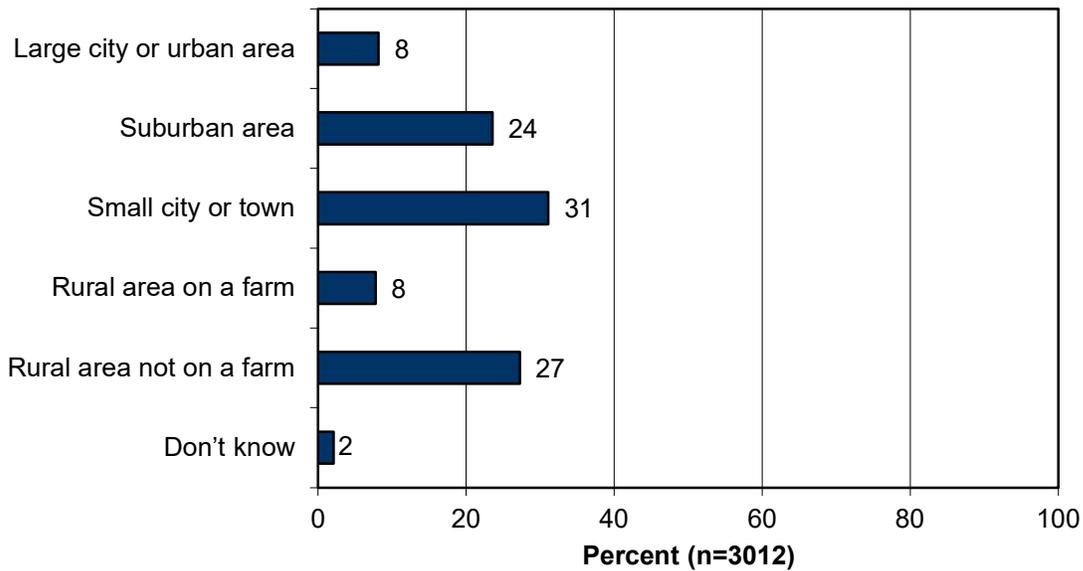
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The following demographic data were primarily used for crosstabulations, but they are shown in this section on their own: age, gender, race or ethnicity, children in the household, type of residential area (urban-rural continuum), education level, and state of residence. (Note that these are the demographic characteristics of all license holders in the sample, not just of those who hunted in Rhode Island in the past 3 years.)

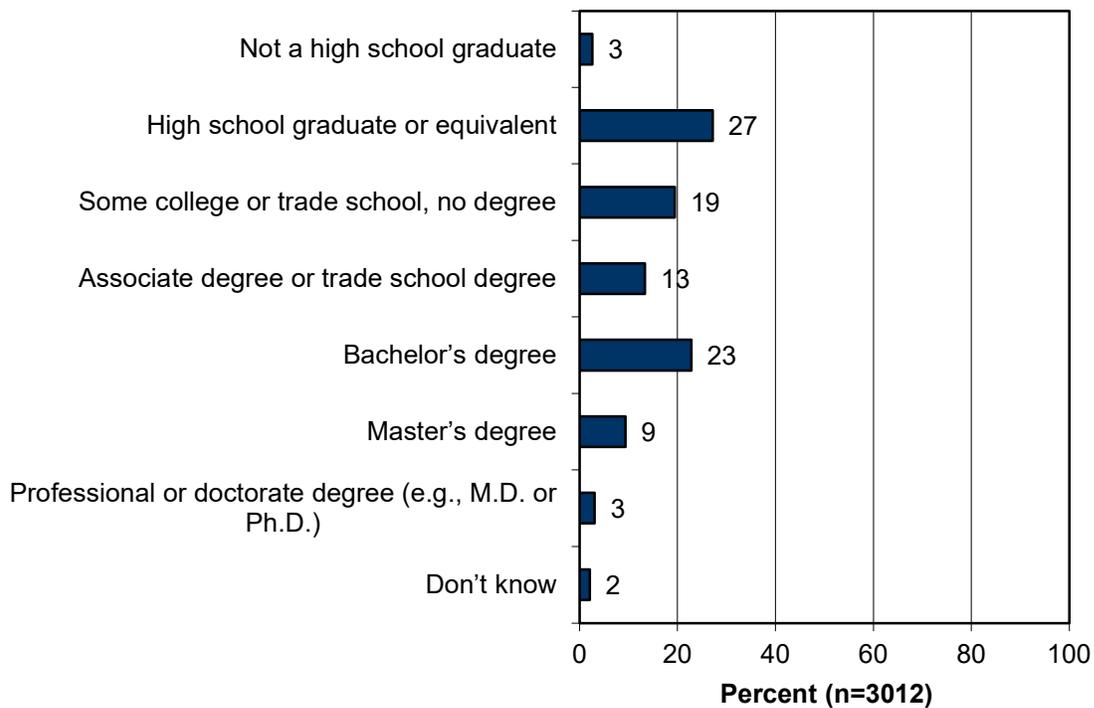




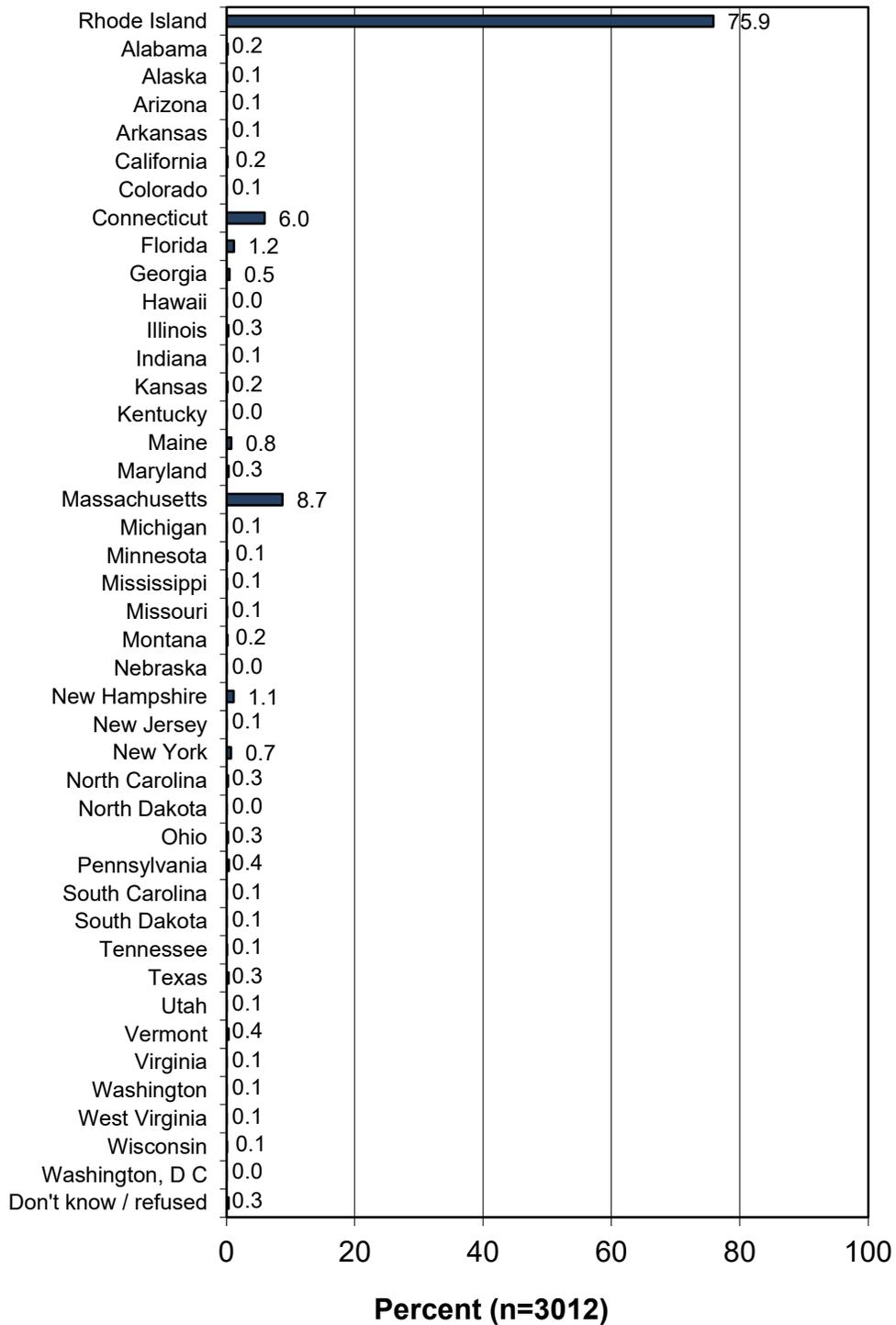
Do you consider your place of residence to be a large city or urban area, a suburban area, a small city or town, a rural area on a farm, or a rural area not on a farm?



What is the highest level of education you have completed?



What is your current state of residence?



ABOUT RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT

Responsive Management is an internationally recognized survey research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues. Our mission is to help natural resource and outdoor recreation agencies, businesses, and organizations better understand and work with their constituents, customers, and the public. Focusing only on natural resource and outdoor recreation issues, Responsive Management has conducted telephone, mail, and online surveys, as well as multi-modal surveys, on-site intercepts, focus groups, public meetings, personal interviews, needs assessments, program evaluations, marketing and communication plans, and other forms of human dimensions research measuring how people relate to the natural world for more than 30 years. Utilizing our in-house, full-service survey facilities with 75 professional interviewers, we have conducted studies in all 50 states and 15 countries worldwide, totaling more than 1,000 human dimensions projects *only* on natural resource and outdoor recreation issues.

Responsive Management has conducted research for every state fish and wildlife agency and every federal natural resource agency, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Coast Guard, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. Additionally, we have also provided research for all the major conservation NGOs including the Archery Trade Association, the American Sportfishing Association, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Dallas Safari Club, Ducks Unlimited, Environmental Defense Fund, the Izaak Walton League of America, the National Rifle Association, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation, the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited, and the Wildlife Management Institute.

Other nonprofit and NGO clients include the American Museum of Natural History, the BoatUS Foundation, the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, and the Ocean Conservancy. As well, Responsive Management conducts market research and product testing for numerous outdoor recreation manufacturers and industry leaders, such as Winchester Ammunition, Vista Outdoor (whose brands include Federal Premium, CamelBak, Bushnell, Primos, and more), Trijicon, Yamaha, and others. Responsive Management also provides data collection for the nation's top universities, including Auburn University, Clemson University, Colorado State University, Duke University, George Mason University, Michigan State University, Mississippi State University, North Carolina State University, Oregon State University, Penn State University, Rutgers University, Stanford University, Texas Tech, University of California-Davis, University of Florida, University of Montana, University of New Hampshire, University of Southern California, Virginia Tech, West Virginia University, Yale University, and many more.

Our research has been upheld in U.S. Courts, used in peer-reviewed journals, and presented at major wildlife and natural resource conferences around the world. Responsive Management's research has also been featured in many of the nation's top media, including *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, CNN, National Public Radio, and on the front pages of *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*.