



Mule deer hunter attitude survey



Introduction

- Survey of resident mule deer hunters to learn about opinions, attitudes, and values related to mule deer hunting and management
- Survey allowed hunters a chance provide feedback on a variety of topics related to mule deer management in Wyoming
- Results will be utilized to inform stakeholders and mule deer managers about resident opinions on mule deer hunting and management in the state of Wyoming



What is the purpose of the attitude survey?

- Game and Fish is managing a public resource
- Management decisions are rooted in how the public wants their resource and recreation managed – not only biology
- This survey was last conducted in 2017, 2012, 2006
- The attitude survey is different from the annual harvest survey





Attitude survey methods



The survey is conducted by Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (WYSAC) at University of Wyoming



The survey questionnaire was coordinated with Game and Fish



The survey was conducted in August and September of 2023



2023 Mule deer hunter attitude survey methods

77,762

Survey was sent to 77,762 resident hunters who purchased or applied for a deer license in the previous 3 years

10,183

10,183 responses were received (11.8%), removed

7,487

7,487 responses received were valid (9.7% of surveys sent)

8,303

A postcard with a link was sent to hunters without an email on file. 10.7% of the valid responses were not associated with an email

8,988

Surveys were sent electronically via email. 8,988 valid responses were completed by using the link in the individual email invite. 1,195 responses were completed online via passcodes provided on the postcards and email.



Comparison to previous surveys

Past surveys

- Data collected by phone
- Sampled the population
- Extensive follow-up to minimize non-response bias
- Less survey bias
- Phone surveys are more expensive
- Conducted by a private contractor

2023 survey

- Electronically surveyed
- Sent to all individuals who bought or applied for a license in previous three years (2020-22)
- 2-3 follow-up emails were sent to encourage non-respondents to respond
- Conducted by WYSAC

Respondents were given a choice of 5 levels

- Extremely satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Extremely dissatisfied



Survey questions

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with several mule deer management topics



Survey sections



Satisfaction

Questions pertaining to hunter satisfaction



Management

Questions pertaining to Game and Fish management of hunting opportunities



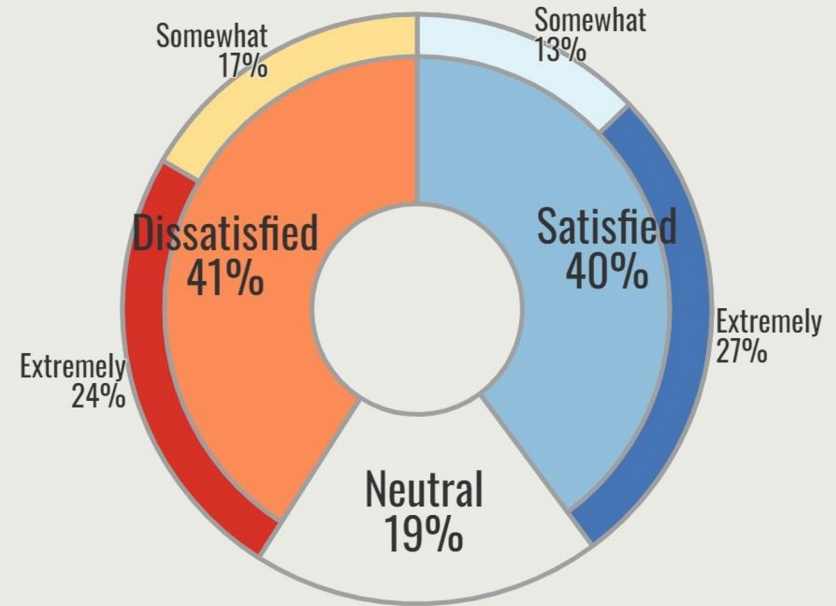
Satisfaction

2023 Mule deer hunter attitude survey
Questions pertaining to hunter satisfaction



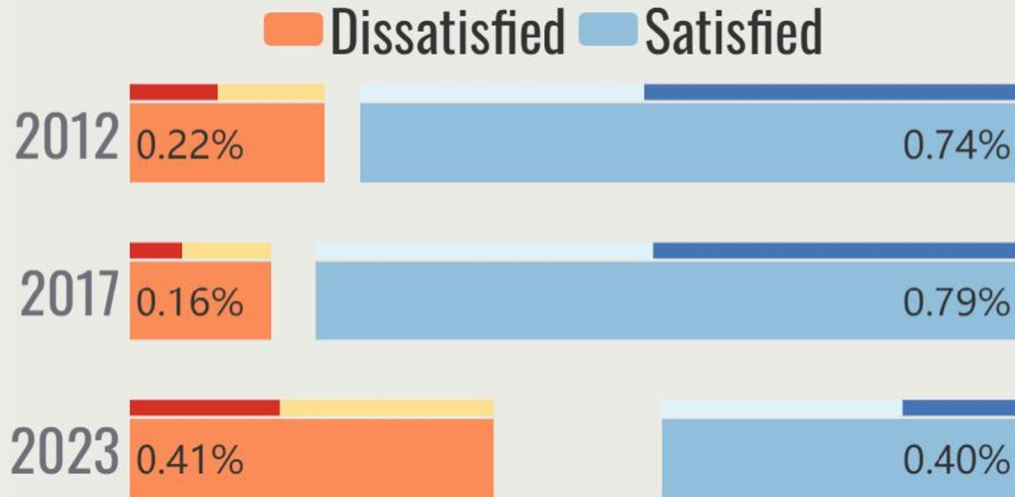
Satisfaction

How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the overall quality of your mule deer hunting experience the last time you hunted in Wyoming?





Satisfaction



65% of those surveyed in 2023 reported the quality of their mule deer hunting experience has declined over the last three years

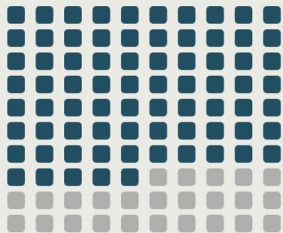
2012	74%
2017	79%
2023	40%



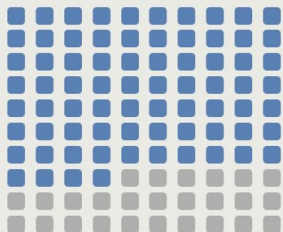
Satisfaction

2012

■ 376k Mule Deer

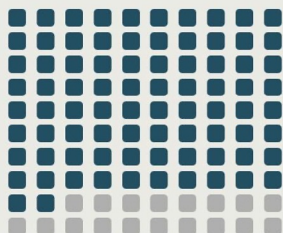


■ 74% Satisfied

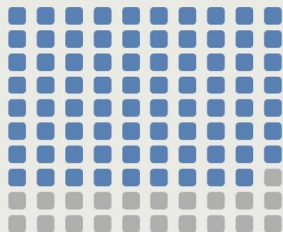


2017

■ 409k Mule Deer

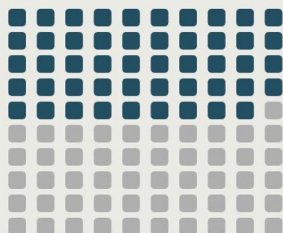


■ 79% Satisfied

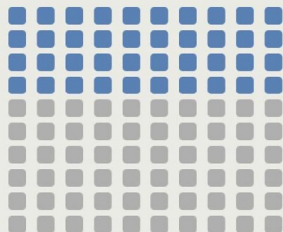


2023

■ 243k Mule Deer



■ 40% Satisfied



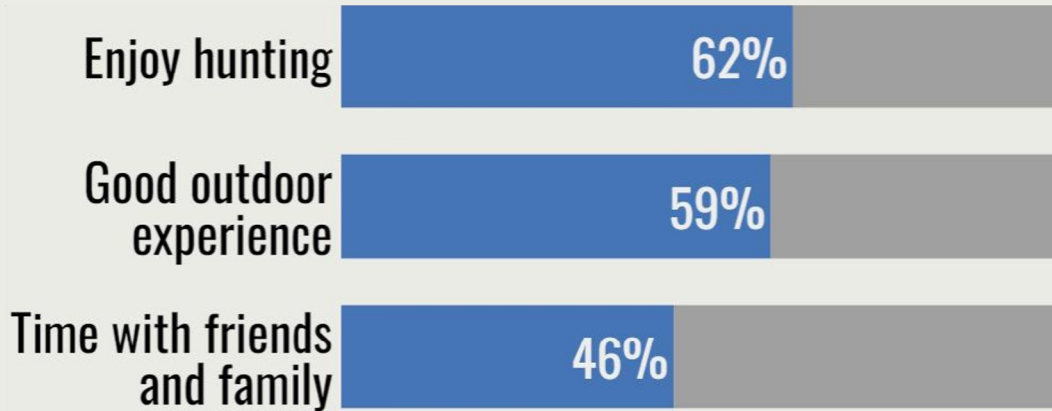
The decrease in the proportion of satisfied hunters coincides with a larger decline in mule deer abundance statewide.

-166,000

Change in statewide mule deer population from 2016 to 2022



Satisfaction

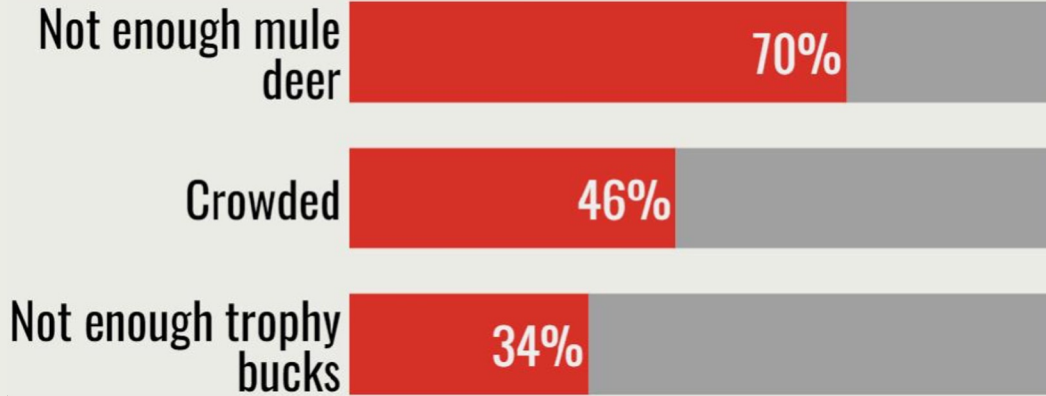


What are the reasons you were satisfied with the quality of your mule deer hunting experience?

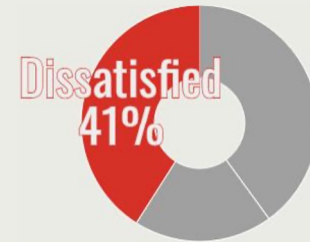




Satisfaction



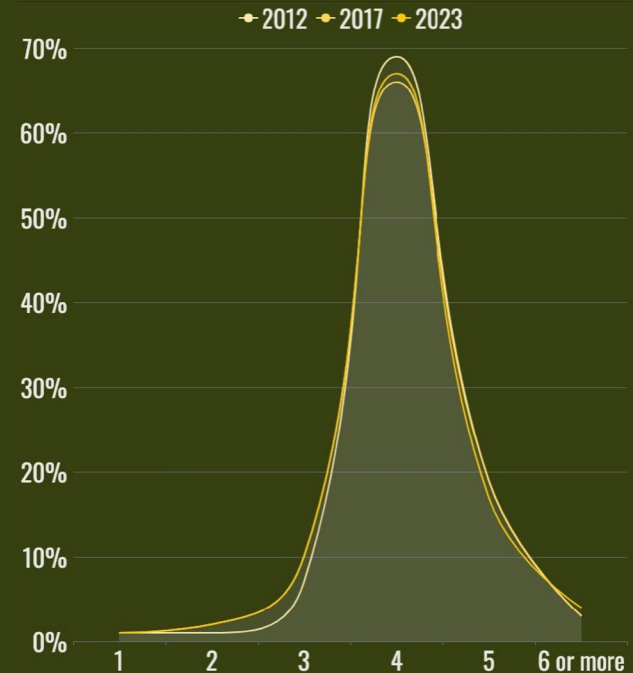
What are the reasons you were dissatisfied with the quality of your mule deer hunting experience?





Satisfaction

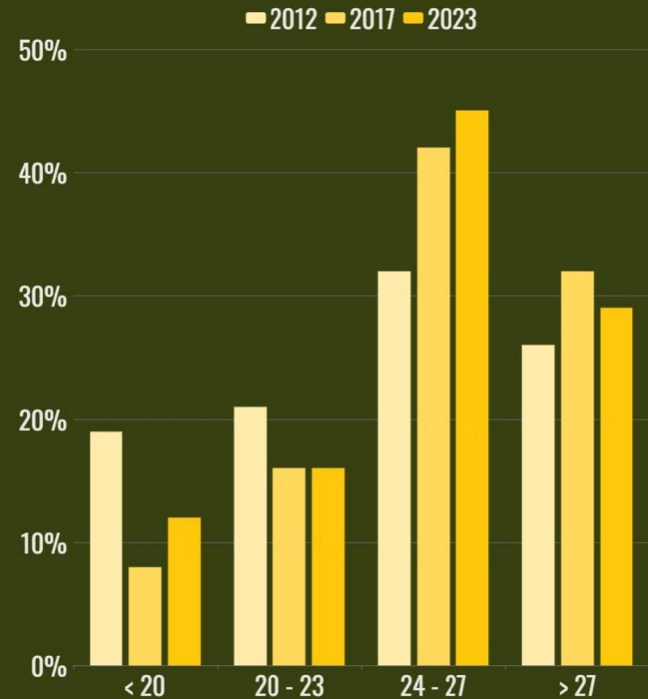
What is the minimum number of points on one side that a buck should have for you to consider a deer a trophy buck?





Satisfaction

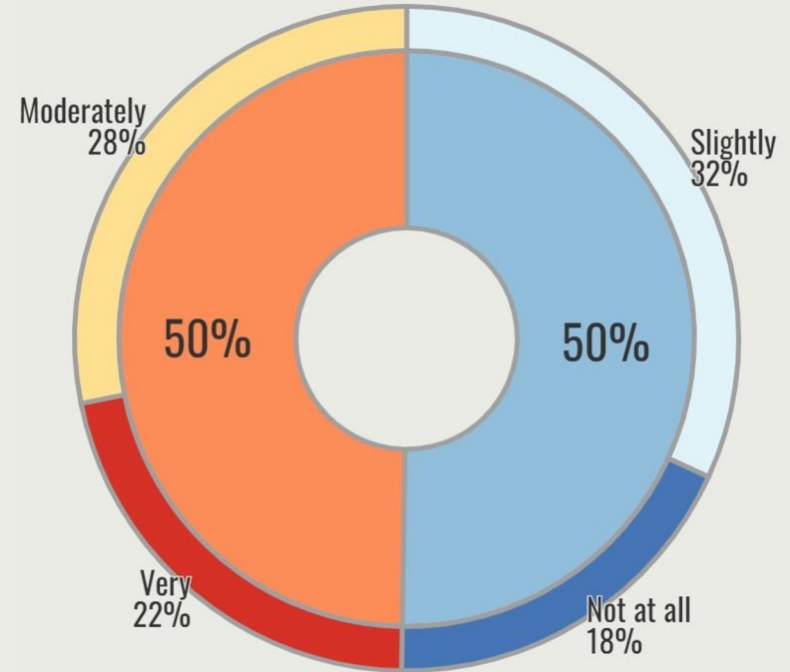
What is the minimum antler spread, in inches, that a buck should have for you to consider a deer a trophy buck?





Satisfaction

To what extent did you feel crowded by other hunters while hunting mule deer in Wyoming over the past three years?





Satisfaction

2017 Survey

- 53,000 active hunters statewide
- 26% of dissatisfied hunters selected crowding

2023 Survey

- 41,000 active hunters
- 46% selected crowding

-23.5%

Change in active hunters
from 2016 to 2022

Active Hunters





Satisfaction

Key takeaways

More deer = higher hunter satisfaction

- Far fewer hunters are satisfied with their hunting experience than in previous surveys
- Declines in hunter satisfaction mirror declining mule deer populations
- Other factors such as crowding are probably far less impactful than mule deer abundance



Management

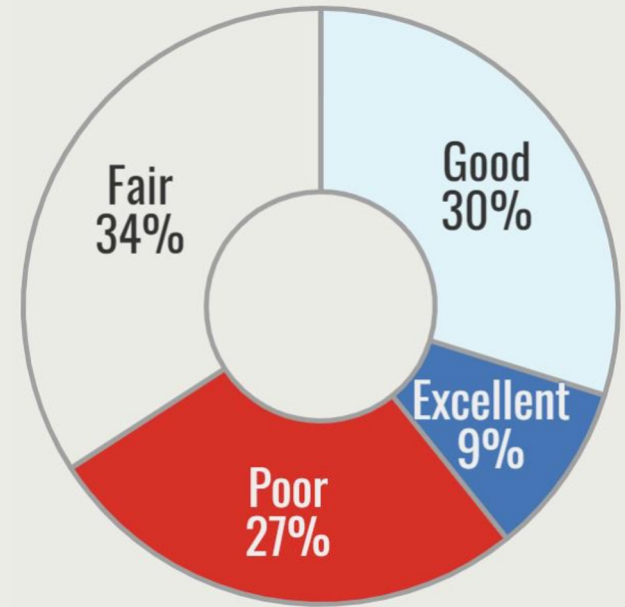
2023 Mule deer hunter attitude survey

Questions pertaining to Game and Fish
management of hunting opportunities



Management

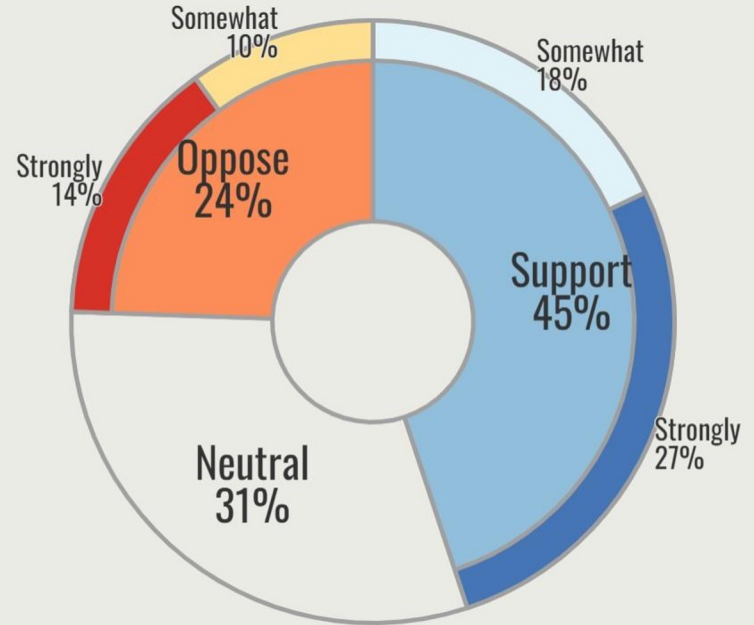
Do you think the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is doing an excellent, good, fair or poor job of managing the mule deer hunting opportunities in the hunt area where you most often hunted mule deer in Wyoming in the past three years?





Management

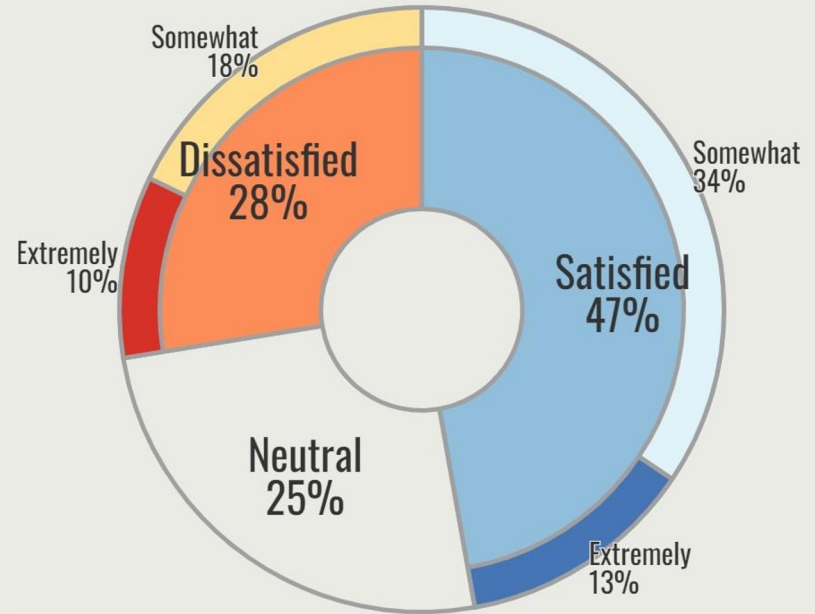
How much do you support or oppose separate licenses for mule deer and white-tailed deer?





Management

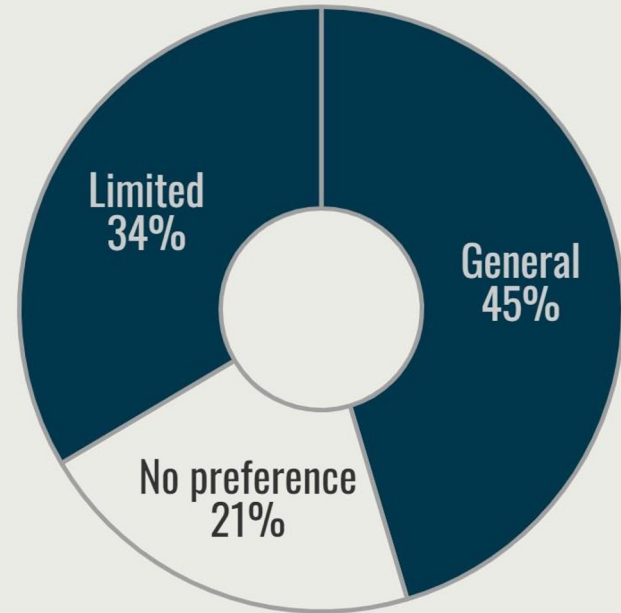
How satisfied are you with the current approach by Game and Fish for managing hunting opportunities, using a combination of general and limited quota hunt areas?





Management

Do you prefer general license seasons or limited quota seasons?



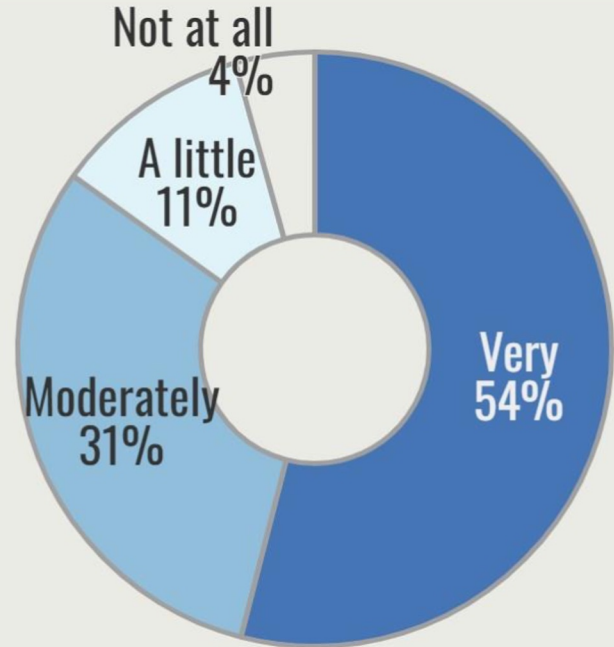


Management

How important is it to you, personally, to hunt mule deer in Wyoming every year?

85%

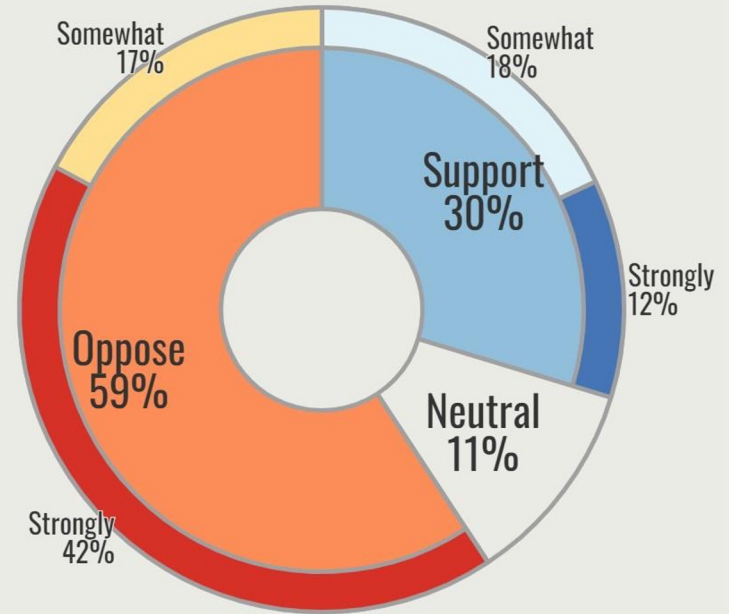
Moderately and very important





Management

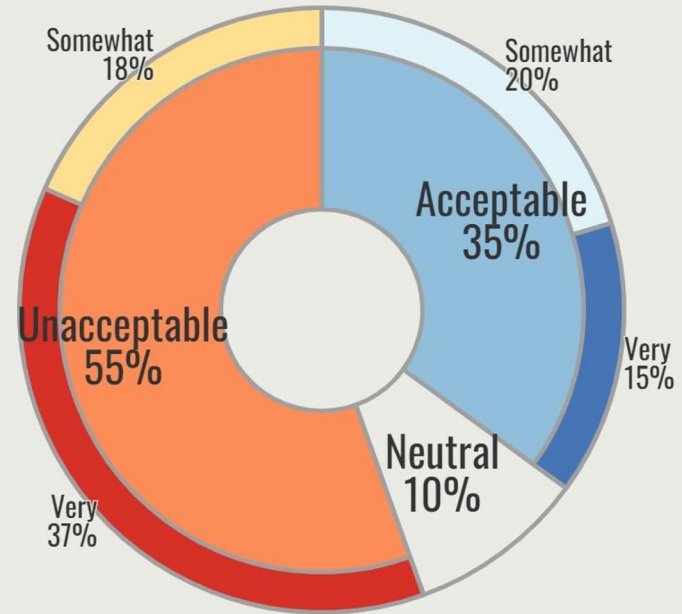
How much would you support or oppose limiting the number of resident hunters in the field to reduce crowding in Wyoming, even if it makes it less likely that you would draw a license?





Management

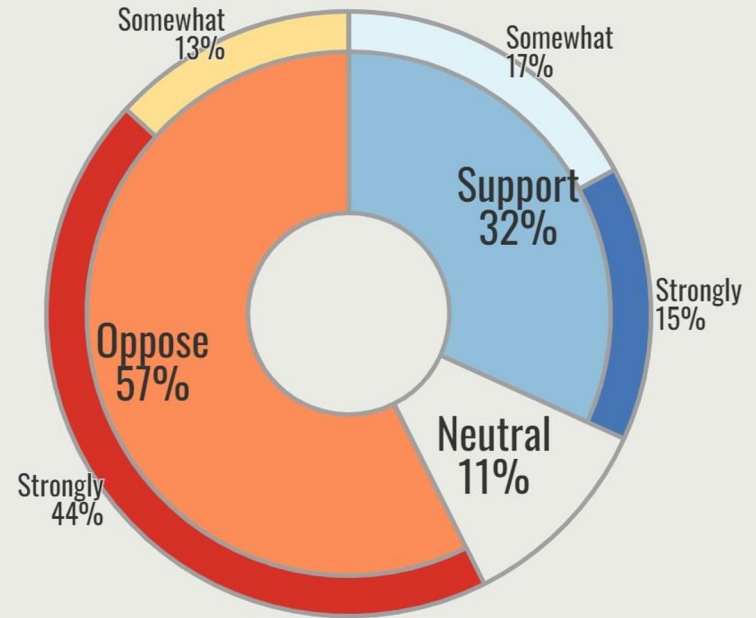
How acceptable or unacceptable would limited quota seasons in all hunt areas in Wyoming be to you?





Management

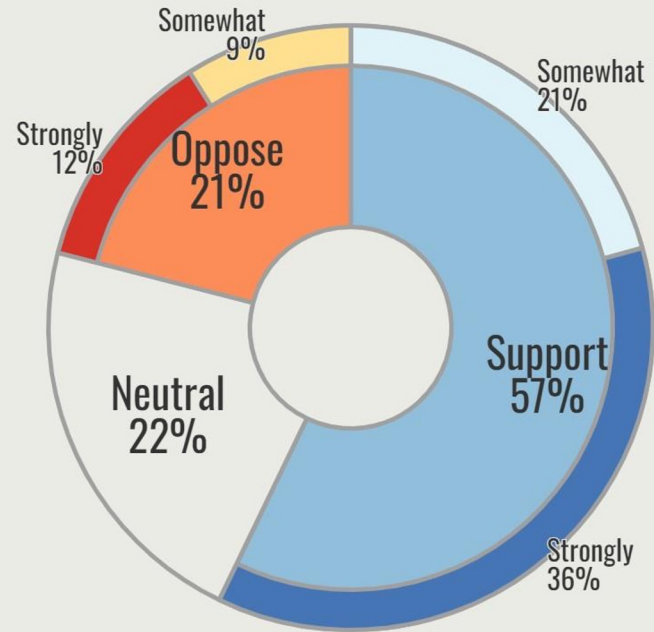
Currently resident general license holders can hunt in any general hunt area statewide. Would you support or oppose requiring resident general license holders to select a single region of the state to hunt?





Management

How much would you support or oppose mandatory harvest reporting, meaning every license holder is required to complete a harvest survey (regardless of whether they harvested an animal)?



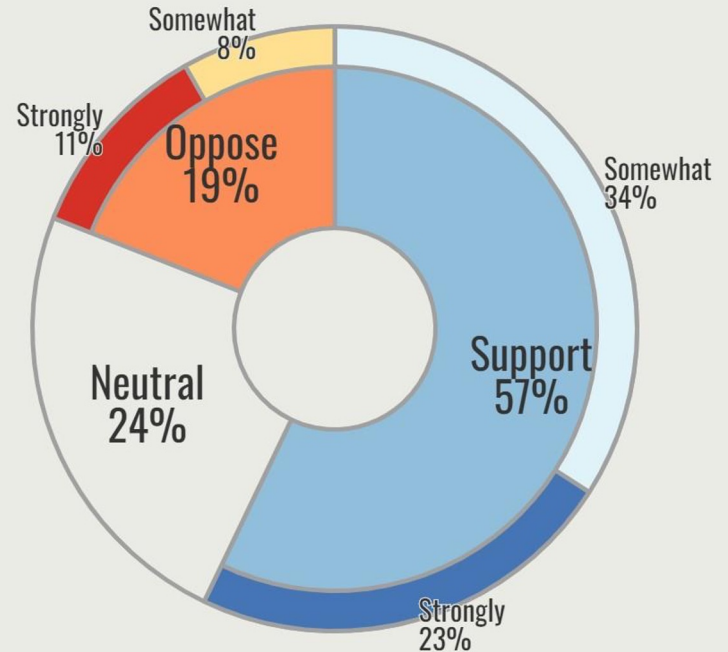


Management

How much do you support seasons designed to reduce CWD levels through harvesting deer at greater rates to reduce density?

3X

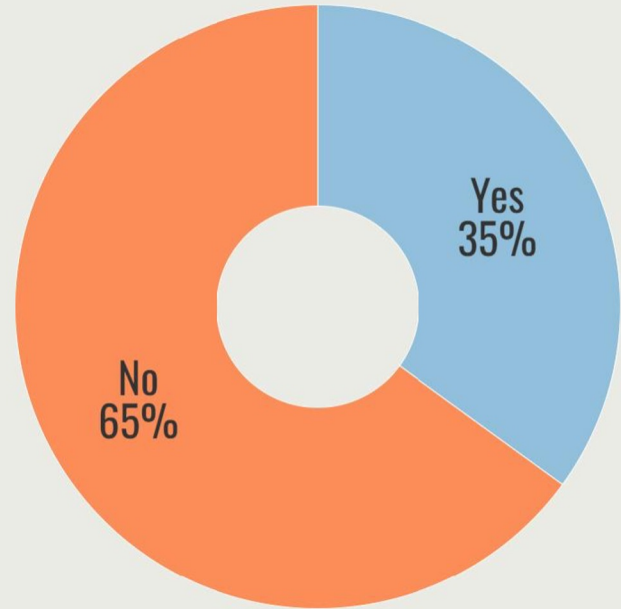
Support vs. oppose





Management

Should the Department consider a weapon of choice season, meaning mule deer hunters would be restricted to a specific weapon type and season structure (bow only or rifle only)?





Management

Key takeaways

Maintain opportunity

- Respondents generally support the current framework combining general licenses in some areas with limited quota licenses in others
- Strong opposition to any changes that would limit opportunity, even if they would reduce crowding
- Strong support for mandatory harvest reporting and addressing CWD

Additional resources and information

- Full survey results available
- Responses at the county level
- Responses by age group
- Individuals surveyed were also given the chance to respond to several additional questions developed by researchers at the University of Wyoming on the topics of elk and mule deer management





Questions?

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