

Responsive Management™



FORGING THE FUTURE OF WYOMING'S WILDLIFE: Human Dimensions Research Results in Support of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan

Conducted for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department

by Responsive Management

2018

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Human Dimensions Research Results in Support of the
Wyoming Game and Fish Department's 2018-2023 Strategic Plan**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was conducted for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (also referred to simply as Game and Fish) to conduct human dimensions research in support of an agency-wide strategic plan.

The human dimensions research conducted by Responsive Management encompassed seven components in addition to the launch meeting:

1. An online qualitative assessment (Game and Fish employees)
2. Pre-survey focus groups (the general public, including hunters, anglers, and other recreationists)
3. A scientific telephone survey of three samples
 - a. Wyoming residents (the general public; note that this included resident hunters and anglers in the proportion that they occur in a general population sample)
 - b. Nonresident hunters (this sample is solely of nonresidents because the sample of Wyoming residents contained resident hunters)
 - c. Nonresident anglers (again, note that the sample of Wyoming residents contained resident anglers)
4. An employee survey (Game and Fish employees)
5. Post-survey focus groups (the general public, including hunters, anglers, and other recreationists)
6. Public meetings (the general public); administered after the survey
7. An online public forum (the general public)

An overview of the methodologies used and a synopsis of the results of each method immediately follow. For more detailed information about the methodologies and a comprehensive discussion of results, please see the main body of this report.

METHODOLOGY

The methods section starts with a discussion of the launch meeting. It then gives a brief overview of the seven components of the project.

METHODOLOGY: LAUNCH MEETING

Prior to the start of this multi-faceted research project, staff from Responsive Management and The Cooperation Company convened a project launch meeting with Wyoming Game and Fish Department personnel on September 14 and 15, 2017, at the Curt Gowdy State Park Visitor Center. The launch meeting was attended by Game and Fish executive staff and division leadership and allowed for an in-depth discussion of project goals, objectives, and contextual information relating to previous agency planning efforts—these topics helped to establish the overall direction of the current study.

The researchers also discussed with staff details related to the data collection from Wyoming residents, including planned focus group and public meeting locations and populations and groups to be surveyed. The researchers used a portion of the launch meeting to conduct a “SWOT” analysis, so named because it is a structured planning method that evaluates an organization’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. A SWOT analysis is an initial identification of favorable and unfavorable internal and external factors that an organization can address through its objectives in its strategic plan.

METHODOLOGY: QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF GAME AND FISH EMPLOYEES AND STAKEHOLDERS

The purpose of the qualitative assessment was to establish a foundation of data from Game and Fish employees and stakeholders pertaining to the study goals, outcomes, and key agency characteristics relevant to the upcoming strategic plan. The questionnaire was coded using online software, and a link to it was distributed to employees and stakeholders by email using a database of email addresses provided by Game and Fish.

The data were collected between October and November 2017. Responsive Management obtained a total of 223 completed responses from employees and stakeholders. The data were then analyzed based on the following breakdown of respondents:

- Internal employees, which includes all permanent and non-permanent Game and Fish employees; and
- Stakeholders, which includes Game and Fish Commissioners, members of the Governor’s Fish and Wildlife Task Force, and directors of other Wyoming agencies.

METHODOLOGY: PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUPS

Responsive Management planned, coordinated, and facilitated five focus groups in November 2017 in Cheyenne, Rock Springs, Riverton, Gillette, and Cody. These focus groups were conducted *prior* to the telephone survey and other data collection in order to help plan topics for the survey and other opinion gathering tools. Each focus group consisted of 9 to 12 residents who engaged in one or several forms of outdoor recreation relevant to Game and Fish, including hunting, fishing, trapping, boating, hiking, and wildlife viewing/photography (note that most group participants engaged in more than one of the activities, meaning that many hunters also fished, many boaters also hiked, and so forth). Additionally, most groups included at least one landowner of 10 acres or more, with some groups having several landowners.

The use of focus groups is an accepted research technique for the qualitative exploration of attitudes, opinions, perceptions, motivations, constraints, and behaviors. Focus groups provide researchers with insights, new hypotheses, and understanding through the process of interaction. Focus groups allow for extensive open-ended responses to questions; probing; follow-up questions; group discussion; and observation of emotional responses to topics—aspects that cannot be measured in a quantitative survey. Qualitative research provides researchers with a more detailed understanding of the topics or issues of concern in the study.

Each focus group was conducted using a discussion guide that allowed for consistency in the data collection. The discussion guide included top-of-mind questions as well as more specific questions addressing opinions on and attitudes toward outdoor recreation, wildlife management, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and other pertinent topics. Each group was recorded for later analysis and transcription. The groups each lasted approximately 2 hours and were led by one of Responsive Management's trained moderators. Responsive Management recruited focus group participants using a random sample of general population residents in each of the five locations, as well as databases of hunting and fishing license holders provided by Game and Fish.

METHODOLOGY: TELEPHONE SURVEY

While the other methods (those previously discussed as well as some that are discussed later) offered maximum opportunity for the public to provide input, obtained in-depth qualitative data, and/or provided the researchers with a comprehensive look at the full range of issues and reactions associated with outdoor recreation and wildlife management in Wyoming, a scientific, probability-based survey was conducted to acquire *quantitative* data for evaluating the true distribution of residents' and recreationists' awareness, opinions, and attitudes. Surveys are quantitative research used to systematically examine the population being studied based on a representative sample so that the results can be replicated and generalized to the population of interest. For this study, a scientific survey was used to examine three groups: Wyoming general population residents, nonresident hunters, and nonresident anglers.

For the survey, telephones were selected as the preferred sampling medium because of the almost universal ownership of telephones (both landlines and cell phones were called). Additionally, telephone surveys, relative to mail or Internet surveys, have better representation of the sample than do surveys that are read by the respondent (i.e., mail and Internet surveys) because the self-read surveys systematically exclude those who are not literate enough to complete the surveys or who would be intimidated by having to complete a written survey—by an estimate of the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute of Literacy (2016), up to 43% of the general population read no higher than a "basic level," suggesting that they would be reticent to complete a survey that they have to read to themselves. Finally, telephone surveys have fewer negative effects on the environment than do mail surveys because of reduced use of paper and reduced energy consumption for delivering and returning the questionnaires.

The telephone survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Game and Fish and Responsive Management, based on the research team's familiarity with outdoor recreation and wildlife management issues, and the input obtained from the qualitative assessment of Game and Fish employees and stakeholders and the pre-survey focus groups. Responsive Management conducted pre-tests of the questionnaire to ensure proper wording, flow, and logic in the survey.

As discussed previously, three separate populations were sampled: 1) the statewide population of Wyoming residents, 2) nonresident hunters, and 3) nonresident anglers. Within each sample, a probability-based selection process was used to ensure that each eligible respondent had an approximately equal chance of being selected for the survey.

In the analysis of the data from the telephone survey, six data runs of the following groups were examined:

1. Residents overall (from the statewide resident sample).
2. Residents regionally (residents categorized into one of eight regions based on their place of residence).
3. Hunters, broken down into residents and nonresidents (resident hunters being anybody in the resident sample who bought a Wyoming hunting license in the previous 5 years; nonresident hunters being the nonresident licensed hunter sample provided by Game and Fish).
4. Anglers, broken down into residents and nonresidents (resident anglers being anybody in the resident sample who bought a Wyoming fishing license in the previous 5 years; nonresident anglers being the nonresident licensed angler sample provided by Game and Fish).
5. Consumptives vs. non-consumptives (“consumptives” referring to anybody who had a hunting, trapping, or fishing license; “non-consumptives” referring to those who did not have a hunting, trapping, or fishing license—in other words, everybody else). Note that “consumptives” are also referred to as “hunters/trappers/anglers” in the graphs or text, and “non-consumptives” are also referred to as “non-hunters/trappers/anglers” in the graphs or text.
6. Non-consumptive wildlife viewers (being those who viewed wildlife but did not hunt, trap, or fish). Note that this is different from the non-consumptives above because it includes only those *who specifically viewed wildlife*.

A note about “consumptives” and “non-consumptives” as used in this report:

“Consumptives” applies to hunting, trapping, and fishing. In this report, as discussed in item #5 above, one data run was made of those who had a *license to hunt, trip, or fish* (not on whether they had actually hunted, trapped, or fished). Therefore, “consumptives” refers to holders of licenses that allowed hunting, trapping, or fishing. On the graphs, consumptives are also identified as “hunters/trappers/anglers”; note that this is based on having a license.

“Non-consumptives” refers, in this report, to anybody who did not hold a hunting, trapping, or fishing license. This includes those who viewed wildlife or did any of the other activities that were asked about in the survey, as well as those who did *none* of the activities about which the survey asked questions. Because this all-encompassing data run (i.e., it was consumptives compared to *everybody else*) included those who did no wildlife-associated recreation, the last data analysis run discussed above (item #6) was conducted. It looks at those who specifically *viewed wildlife* as one of their activities but did not hunt, trap, or fish. The graphs and tables, therefore, always indicate that this last data run is of *non-consumptive wildlife viewers*.

Finally, the use of these terms does not imply that other wildlife-associated and outdoor recreation does not have an impact on wildlife and fish; any outdoor activity, such as wildlife viewing, camping, or hiking, can affect wildlife and habitat in the area and can change the behaviors of wildlife. Rather, the terms in this report are used strictly as indicated above to define specific data runs.

METHODOLOGY: ONLINE EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Concurrent with the scientific telephone survey of Wyoming residents, nonresident hunters, and nonresident anglers, Responsive Management conducted an online survey of Game and Fish employees. Prior to this survey, employees were sent a short questionnaire of open-ended questions about the general strengths and weaknesses of the agency (the SWOT analysis referred to previously). The results of that qualitative analysis were used in part to develop this survey, which is quantitative in nature and covers more specific areas.

The survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Game and Fish and Responsive Management. The database of employee email addresses was provided by Game and Fish. Emails were sent to all on the list, and employees had the option of taking the survey. The emails included a link to the survey, and the survey could only be taken through this email link. In other words, it was not possible for just anybody surfing the Internet to come across the survey. Also, a globally unique identifier tied to each email address ensured that each person could take the survey only once.

Responsive Management provided assurances at the outset that all employee responses would be kept completely confidential. It should also be noted that all questions in the survey were optional—a respondent could continue on with the survey if he or she chose to leave a question blank.

METHODOLOGY: POST-SURVEY FOCUS GROUPS

Following the telephone survey of Wyoming residents, nonresident hunters, and nonresident anglers, five focus groups were conducted in February 2018 in Laramie, Casper, Sheridan, Worland, and Jackson. (Recall that five focus groups were conducted in November 2017, prior to the telephone survey, in different locations throughout the state.) The groups included in the focus groups and the methods used in recruiting participants, conducting the focus groups, and analyzing the data are the same as those described for the pre-survey focus groups.

METHODOLOGY: POST-SURVEY PUBLIC MEETINGS

Responsive Management planned, coordinated, and facilitated ten regional public meetings with the general public and Game and Fish stakeholders. The purpose of the public meetings was to provide an open forum for input and feedback, an opportunity for two-way dialogue between the agency and its constituents, and a means of identifying issues of interest or concern with regard to outdoor recreation and wildlife management in Wyoming. These meetings were also intended to help reinforce transparency and encourage public investment in decision-making. Game and Fish staff attended each meeting in uniform and, toward the end of each meeting, reiterated the major themes they had heard.

The public meetings were advertised ahead of time, held in a public or publically accessible site, and allowed anybody who wished to attend to do so. The ten public meetings were planned to occur near every Game and Fish regional office, as well as in Cheyenne and Gillette. The locations and dates of the public meetings are:

- Cheyenne (February 5, 2018)
- Laramie (February 5, 2018)
- Casper (February 6, 2018)
- Lander (February 6, 2018)
- Gillette (February 7, 2018)
- Green River (February 7, 2018)
- Sheridan (February 8, 2018)
- Pinedale (February 8, 2018)
- Cody (February 9, 2018)
- Jackson (February 10, 2018)

Each meeting was facilitated by Responsive Management staff. Each meeting began with a brief presentation that included an overview of the research being conducted for Game and Fish by Responsive Management, a summary of results of the research to that point, the guidelines for conducting public meetings, and a list of questions intended to guide the flow of public input during the meeting. Rules for public input were then explained to the attendees, which included the requirement that only one person speak at a time, a time limit for speaking during the meeting, the restriction of open debate and challenges to other members of the audience, and adherence to the established topic of the meeting.

METHODOLOGY: PUBLIC FORUM

Six online public forums were offered for any member of the general population to be able to provide input and engage in open discussion with other interested parties. The forum allowed comments on one or more of the following topics: wildlife and wildlife viewing; hunting; fishing; boating; hunter education, educational programs, and communication; and any other miscellaneous Wyoming Game and Fish topics. The forums were maintained on a dedicated website (www.wildlifeforum.org) that included a description of the strategic planning research, a listing of the public meetings, and introductory questions for each forum posed by researchers for all website visitors to read, if desired.

Commenters could visit the forum as often as they liked and leave comments addressing the questions or any other aspects of outdoor recreation or wildlife management in Wyoming. Commenters also had the opportunity to engage with one another in a typical online discussion format. Responsive Management maintained a moderating presence in the forum but otherwise did not engage with participants in any way.

All forum comments posted before March 2018 (excluding any comments that were deleted by the moderator due to inappropriate or irrelevant content) were reviewed and considered when developing the summary of results for the public forum. A separate report includes the verbatim comments. Forum comments posted after March 2018 will be reviewed by Game and Fish and the strategic planning team.

LAUNCH MEETING RESULTS

Staff from Responsive Management and The Cooperation Company convened a project launch meeting with Wyoming Game and Fish Department personnel on September 14 and 15, 2017, at the Curt Gowdy State Park Visitor Center. The launch meeting was attended by Game and Fish executive staff and division leadership.

The primary purpose of this meeting was to help establish the overall direction of the study and to brainstorm topics that should be covered.

This meeting identified the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Game and Fish Department, as well as the perceived opportunities available to the agency and the threats to it.

This meeting established that the project would entail a short assessment questionnaire for employees and stakeholders, focus groups, a telephone survey of the general population (which includes resident hunters and anglers) and nonresident hunters and anglers, an employee survey, focus groups to occur after the surveys, public meetings, and a public forum for comments.

RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF GAME AND FISH EMPLOYEES AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Like the Launch Meeting, the primary purpose of this assessment was to establish the topics that should be covered in the subsequent research, as well as to help put those topics into perspective.

One aspect of the assessment was to establish goals of the project.

The most important goals that were identified in the assessment were to educate the public and garner their trust, to develop a useable and measurable strategic plan, to assess and improve employee morale, to increase funding, and to manage all wildlife, not just game and fish species.

Another aspect of the assessment was to identify desired outcomes of the project.

These included garnering public support for Game and Fish activities, making an actionable strategic plan, and maintaining robust fish and wildlife populations.

An additional part of the assessment identified key strengths of the agency.

These included committed and knowledgeable employees, abundant natural resources, a strong relationship with the public, financial stability, good relationships with other entities, success stories, and autonomy in management of natural resources.

Weaknesses were also identified as a part of the assessment.

These included inflexible leadership and structure, low employee morale among some employees, a limited funding base, lack of engagement with non-users, favoritism toward landowners, and poor communication.

The assessment was also used to identify opportunities for the agency.

These included public interest in wildlife, partnerships with other entities, existing research, and pending employee turnover because of retirements (i.e., the opportunity to hire new employees).

Finally, the assessment identified threats to the agency.

These included lack of funding, habitat loss, disease, and (undue) political influence.

PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Five focus groups were conducted *prior* to the telephone survey and other data collection methods. Focus groups are discussions among a small group of people, led by a moderator through a discussion guide, in which participants are allowed to give any input that they want. These focus groups with residents were conducted in geographically diverse areas across Wyoming: Cheyenne, Rock Springs, Riverton, Gillette, and Cody.

Generally, it seems that focus group participants are satisfied with Game and Fish.

They clearly expressed their value of Wyoming's wildlife in relation to their families and to the many outdoor recreational opportunities across the state. They also expressed their overall appreciation for the work of Game and Fish, especially given their budgetary limitations.

PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: ACCESS

Access was the most discussed issue in each focus group across multiple topics of conversation.

The issue of access was brought up across multiple conversations, even when the focus group discussion promptings did not directly involve access.

Hunters expressed frustration that landowners restrict hunting on their land to those able to pay large fees for trophy hunts, while not permitting resident Wyoming hunters to hunt their land.

This occurs, they say, even while excessive elk and deer populations are destroying landowners' food sources and properties. To add to participants' frustration, they noted that some landowners also receive compensation from the state for land that has been damaged by elk and deer.

With regard to fishing access, some participants noted the difficulty of fishing on streams and rivers that are owned partially by the state and partially by private landowners.

They claim such scenarios can require impractical fishing and boating methods to avoid trespassing on the privately owned streambeds and banks.

Some non-consumptive outdoor recreationists also discussed access in terms of roads and trails that have been closed due to a lack of maintenance, thereby prohibiting them from hiking, viewing wildlife, photographing wildlife, and other similar activities.

PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: MANAGEMENT

Regarding species management, some focus group participants questioned the wisdom of reintroducing wolves, while others noted the increasing danger to hikers, hunters, and wildlife viewers—especially near Cody—of encountering grizzly bears.

Focus group discussions included those who questioned the efficacy and the financial practicality of attempting to eliminate certain non-native fish species in order to bring back native species.

Some in the focus groups noted the need for Game and Fish to place greater emphasis on managing nongame species.

Regarding habitat management, some participants commented on the widespread deadwood in Wyoming's forests as a fire hazard and reflected on the perceived mismanagement of Russian olive and sagebrush.

Finally, regarding recreation management, some participants who are particularly interested in non-consumptive outdoor recreation emphasized more maintenance on trails and roads throughout the state in order to increase access.

PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: REGULATIONS

There were multiple comments across all focus groups regarding the complexity of Game and Fish hunting regulations.

Some appreciated the complexity and noted that it requires a level of commitment to read and understand the regulations that eliminates uncommitted hunters. However, others expressed frustration and/or concern over the regulations' complexity and asserted that (at a minimum) it discourages the recruitment and retention of young and/or inexperienced hunters.

Across all five focus groups, many participants called for simplifying the regulations to some degree, thereby making hunting and fishing more accessible to Wyoming's outdoor recreationists.

It was suggested a few times in different focus groups that the administrators who write the regulations are too removed from the field to properly understand how such regulations may or may not be practically applied to hunting, fishing, and access scenarios.

In connection to the regulations, many focus group participants also noted the difficulty of drawing tags for big game hunts, and expressed difficulty understanding the regulations concerning boundaries between public and private land, including the many designated hunting areas (and the accompanying area-specific regulations) from which to choose.

Boaters commented on the need to better enforce AIS inspection regulations.

PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: EDUCATION

Multiple focus group participants across all five focus groups commented on the need for more educational initiatives, especially toward youth and young hunters.

They are concerned that, without proper education through parents, schools, or other community or state programs, fewer youth will be interested in hunting.

Some boaters emphasized the development of statewide boating ethics and etiquette education in relation to interacting with other outdoor recreationists.

PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: COMMUNICATION

Multiple participants across all focus groups requested more and better communication from Game and Fish regarding one or more of the following: regulations, policy decisions, annual Game and Fish budgetary allocations, website improvement and development, simplifying the regulations, and other suggestions.

It seems that some outdoor recreationists—particularly hunters and anglers—experience varying degrees of difficulty using the Game and Fish website to retrieve needed information; purchase licenses, tags, stamps, etc.; and locate pertinent Game and Fish contact information.

PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: GAME AND FISH FUNDING

Some focus group participants noted that they would like Game and Fish to consider excise taxes and fees for non-consumptive outdoor recreation items and activities as an additional funding source. However, some hunters and anglers expressed apprehension with this idea, indicating that they would prefer Game and Fish to remain mostly funded by license fees and related expenses from hunting and fishing.

The latter people noted that they would like to retain as much consideration, attention, and funding from Game and Fish toward their respective activities as possible. Instead, they suggested increasing current resident and nonresident hunting and fishing fees. A few hunters and anglers expressed their willingness to pay slightly higher resident hunting and fishing license (and related) fees. Some also emphasized increasing nonresident license fees and tags in order to generate additional funding for Game and Fish.

PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS: RESOURCES AND PERSONNEL

Some focus group participants noted they would like to see Game and Fish allocate more resources and personnel for non-consumptive outdoor recreational interests and for nongame species management efforts.

They perceive that the subsequent lack of attention to such issues is due to limited funding and other limited resources. As mentioned earlier, some would like to see Game and Fish funding sources expand to include non-consumptive outdoor recreationists, which would include (from their perspective) more resources and personnel allocated to non-consumptive activities and nongame species management.

GENERAL POPULATION AND HUNTER / ANGLER SURVEY RESULTS

The results that follow are from a scientific, probability-based random sampling survey of the general population (i.e. residents statewide), as well as nonresident hunters and nonresident anglers. The survey was conducted by telephone. The analyses were conducted on several groups, including residents statewide, resident hunters, nonresident hunters, resident anglers, nonresident anglers, and wildlife viewers.

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: PARTICIPATION

Participation in hunting and fishing is robust in Wyoming.

About a third of residents had purchased a hunting license within the past 5 years, and nearly half had purchased a fishing license in that time.

Other activities with robust participation include hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing.

Nearly three fourths had hiked, about two thirds had camped, and about two thirds had gone wildlife viewing.

Public lands are of great importance for both hunting and fishing in Wyoming.

A large majority of hunters use mostly public land, and an even larger majority of anglers access their fishing mostly through public land.

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: ISSUES OF CONCERN

The viability of wildlife populations, poaching, and wolf management were important concerns of residents when asked about Wyoming's fish and wildlife.

Regarding issues pertaining to hunting, residents most commonly name access.

Invasive species as an issue is the most commonly named fishing issue, according to residents.

As with fishing issues, the most commonly named boating issue is invasive species.

Residents' top concern regarding educational programs of the Game and Fish Department is that more are needed in schools.

Finally, the top issues confronting wildlife enthusiasts who do not hunt, fish, or trap, as perceived by residents, are dissemination of information and access.

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: ACCESS

Rating of access was asked about directly for several activities. The best ratings are for access to view wildlife and to hike. There appears to be room for improvement regarding fishing and hunting: although a majority give access ratings of *excellent* or *good* to these activities, in both cases the *good* ratings exceed the *excellent* ratings.

Maintaining roads and keeping them open were common ways that residents think access can be improved.

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: KNOWLEDGE OF THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

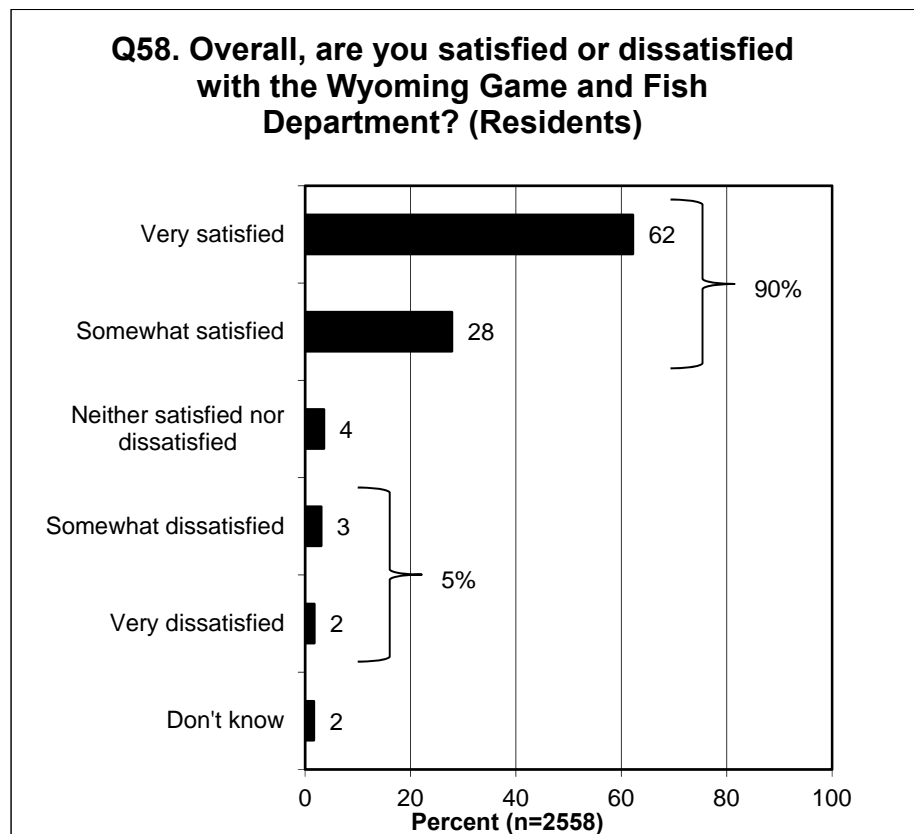
The typical Wyoming resident is knowledgeable about Game and Fish: nearly three quarters say that they know *a great deal* or *a moderate amount* about the agency. Hunters/trappers/anglers have, of course, robust knowledge levels, but even a majority of those who do not hunt, trap, or fish say that they know *a great deal* or *a moderate amount*.

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: SATISFACTION WITH THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Satisfaction is high with the agency: 90% of residents are satisfied, including 62% who are *very satisfied*.

Satisfaction is high across various user groups: more than 90% of hunters and anglers (both resident and nonresident) are satisfied, and just under 90% of non-hunting/non-trapping/non-fishing wildlife viewers are satisfied.

The perception that there is not enough law enforcement is a leading reason for dissatisfaction, exceeding reasons related to habitat or fish/wildlife management.



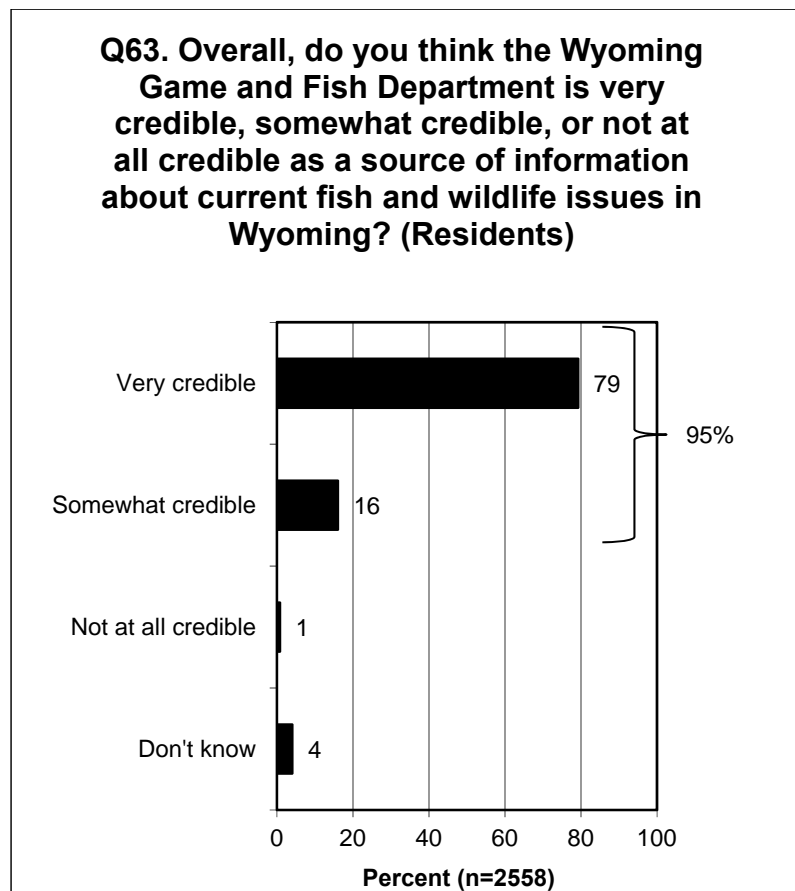
Satisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Residents

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: OPINIONS ON THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

The agency enjoys high ratings of credibility among the general public, hunters, and anglers.

Among residents, 95% rated the agency credible, with 79% rating it *very* credible. Hunters, anglers, and wildlife viewers give similarly high ratings of credibility.

The conservation and protection of wildlife, habitat, and natural resources was the top-named benefit that the Game and Fish Department provides. Additionally, providing opportunities for hunting, fishing, and viewing wildlife are important benefits that were named. Rounding out this list of perceived benefits is the provision of information and education about fish and wildlife.

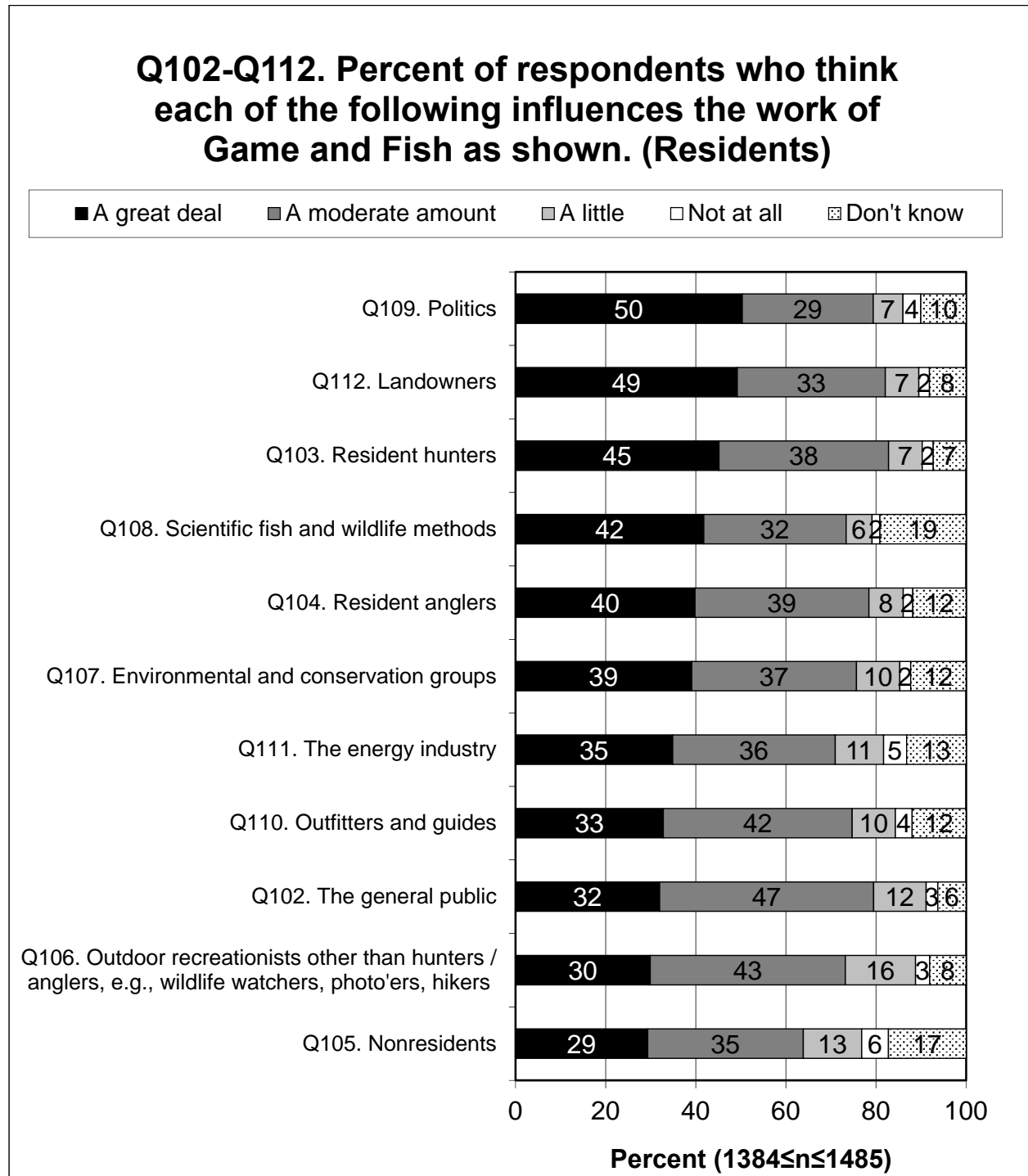


Perceived Credibility of the Game and Fish Department Among Residents

The majority of residents agree that Game and Fish balances fish and wildlife management with opportunities for hunting and fishing. Listening to the public and incorporating feedback into agency decision-making was one aspect that could be improved, according to the percent who agree that they do this well.

When the survey asked about influences on the agency, politics was seen by residents as the top influence. Landowners and resident hunters were also perceived as having high levels of influence. In the middle of the ratings on this was scientific fish and wildlife methods, and lowest on the list was nonresidents.

Environmental/conservation groups and the energy industry are perceived as having about the same level of influence, and both are in the middle of the ranking of influences.



Residents' Perceptions of Influences on the Game and Fish Department

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: PRIORITIES OF THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Residents' top priorities are the protection of fish and wildlife by the enforcement of laws, the protection of Wyoming's waters from invasive species, and the management and maintenance of Wildlife Habitat Management Areas.



Ratings of Importance of Game and Fish Department Efforts

Residents' best performance ratings are given to the Game and Fish Department's efforts at providing fishing opportunities, protecting fish and wildlife by the enforcement of laws, and the issuing of licenses.

Note that the protection of fish and wildlife showed up in the top three in importance and performance. This comparison of importance and performance is the topic of the next item.

When comparing the ratings of importance and performance, those efforts rated highly important are the same ones, in general, that are rated highly in performance. In other words, the ratings of performance are generally commensurate with the importance residents place on the efforts.

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: OPINIONS ON LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

The large majority of hunters and anglers agree that the hunting and fishing regulations and licensing requirements are clear and easy to understand.

Hunters rated the clarity of both the hunting regulations and the hunting licensing requirements, and anglers did the same regarding fishing: of the four ratings, no less than 88% agreed that the regulations/requirements are clear and easy to understand (agreement ranged from 88% to 96%).

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Internet, including the Game and Fish website, are the most important sources of fish and wildlife information among residents, and more so among hunters and anglers.

In a direct question, two thirds of residents indicated visiting the Game and Fish website at some time. Of course, visitation is even higher among hunters and anglers.

The large majority of those who visited the website agreed that the information was easy to find.

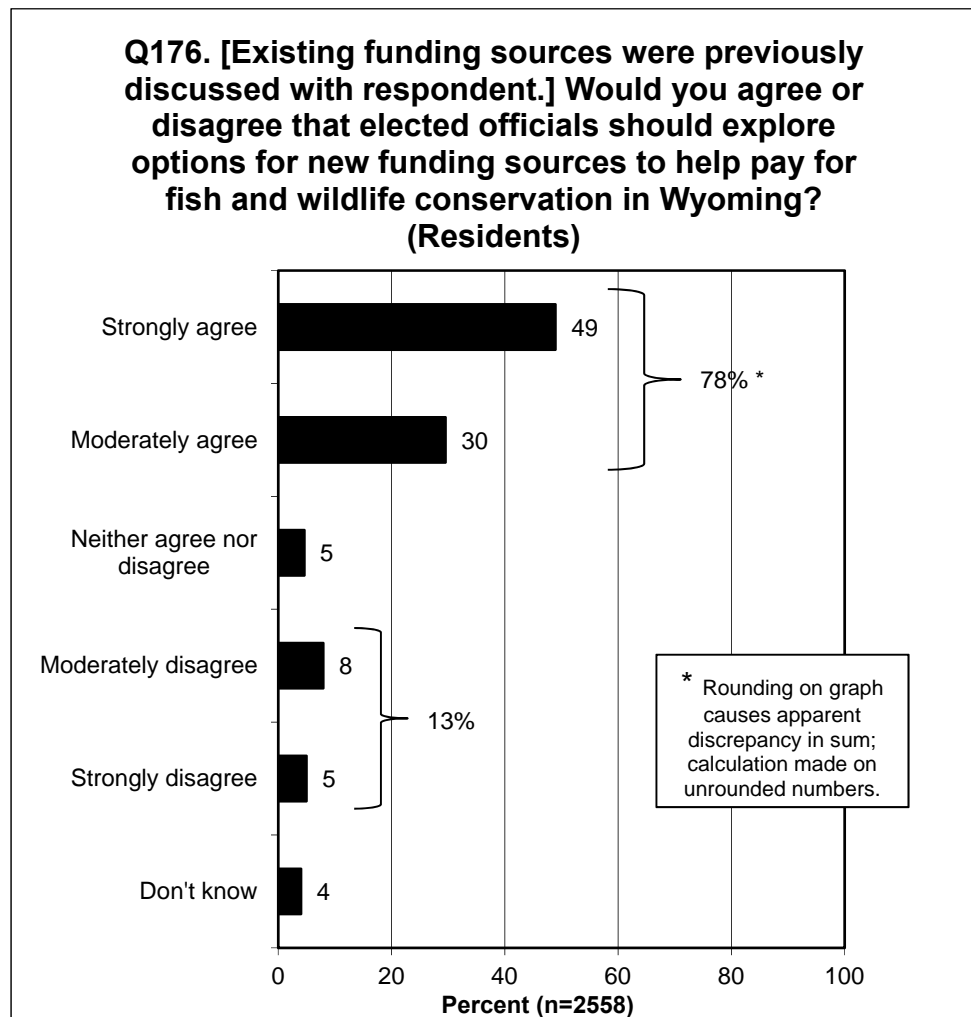
The only concern might be that, although 82% overall agreed that the information was easy to find, agreement was fairly evenly divided between *strongly* agree and *moderately* agree, suggesting that the latter group's visitation was not completely smooth.

TELEPHONE SURVEY RESULTS: FUNDING

Among the general public, less than half named hunting and fishing licenses as a source of Game and Fish funding—suggesting that a majority are unaware, perhaps, that this is an important funding source and are not giving due credit to hunters and anglers for this funding. Furthermore, more than a quarter of residents named general taxes, which is not a primary source of funding.

A low percentage of residents, as well as hunters and anglers, named excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, which is an important source. One might have expected that a higher percentage of hunters and anglers would have mentioned excise taxes on their equipment (at most, 6% named it).

More than three quarters of residents, hunters, and anglers agree that elected officials should explore options for new funding sources to help pay for fish and wildlife conservation in Wyoming.



Residents' Opinion on the Game and Fish Department's Exploring Funding Options

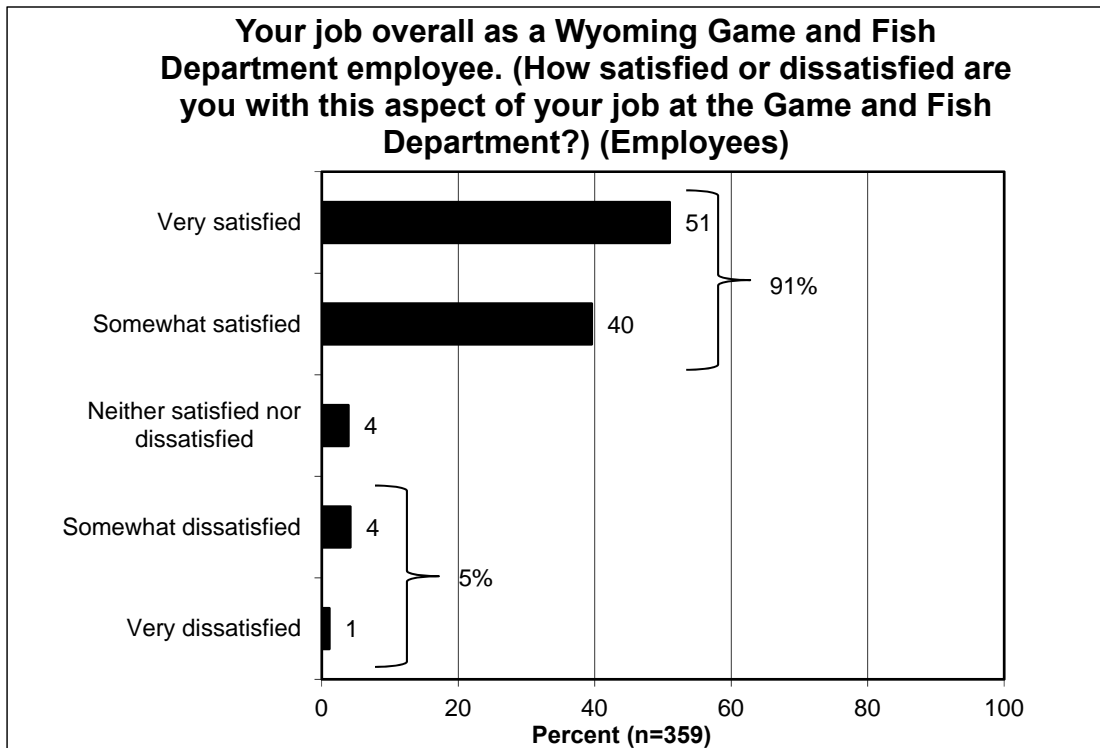
EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS

Employees were administered a survey that included questions about their job satisfaction, their opinions on entities that may or may not influence the agency, the importance of various Game and Fish efforts, and the performance of Game and Fish at those efforts, as well as other questions.

In this survey, many of the questions were open-ended, and many employees gave quite detailed responses to the questions; the analysis includes a qualitative look at these responses. Although there was good information in the responses, to protect anonymity, the report cannot show the verbatim comments, as use of colloquialisms and so forth could compromise anonymity.

Satisfaction with their overall job is high among employees (91% are satisfied).

Although overall satisfaction is high, those who are satisfied are fairly evenly distributed between being *very* satisfied and *somewhat* satisfied, meaning that this latter group could be more satisfied.

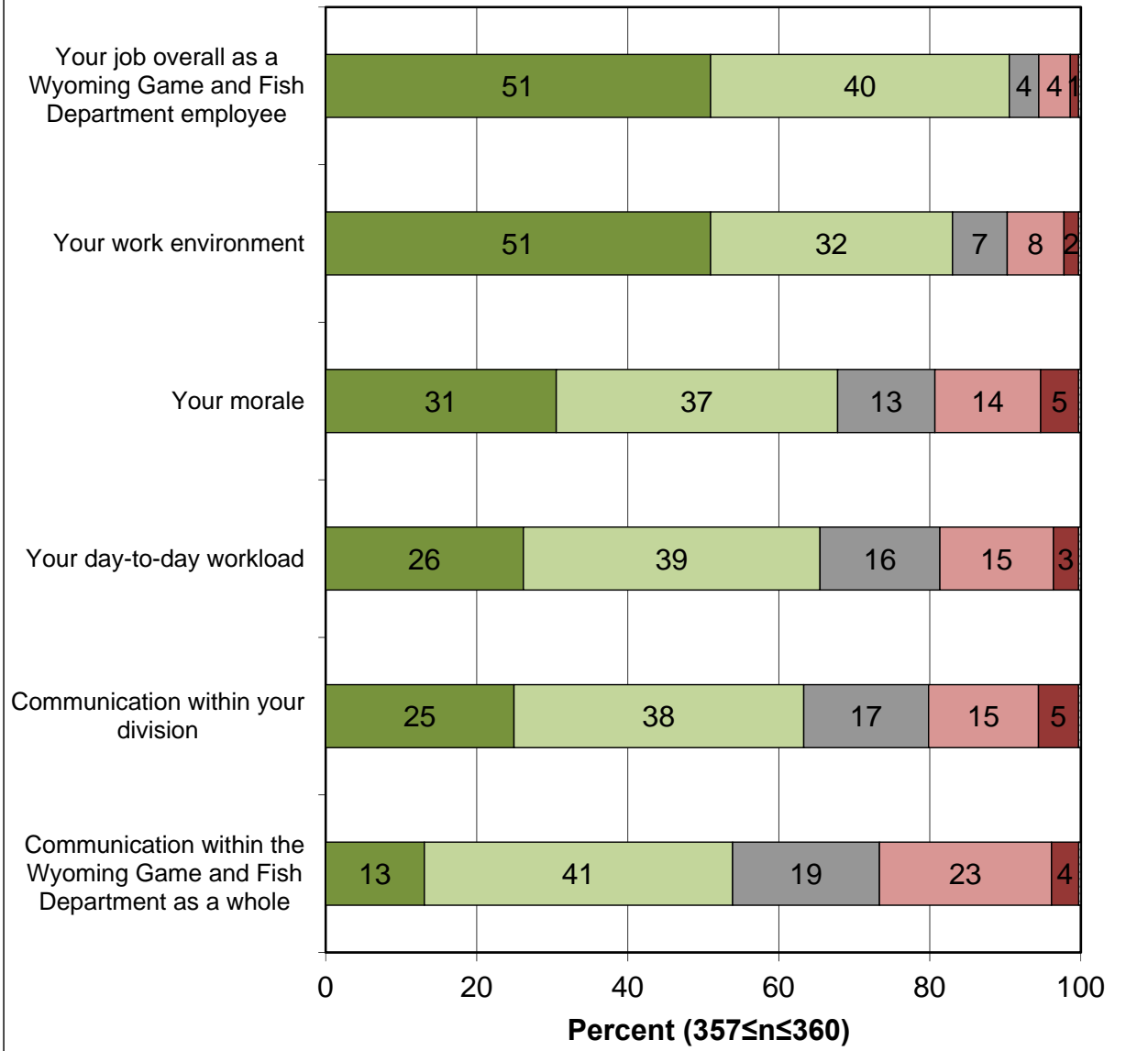


Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction With Their Job Overall, Employees

Regarding various aspects of their job, employees are most satisfied with their work environment. The area in which they are not as highly satisfied is communications. This includes inter- and intra-divisional communications.

Percent of respondents who are [satisfied / dissatisfied] with each of the following aspects of their job at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. (Employees)

■ Very satisfied ■ Somewhat satisfied ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied ■ Somewhat dissatisfied ■ Very dissatisfied ■ Don't know



Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction With Various Aspects of Their Job, Employees

Employees perceptions of their opportunities for training and professional development are positive, as are their perceptions of how well the agency retains employees. Less positively perceived is transparency in decision-making (which is related to communication, which was cited above as being not as good as it could be).

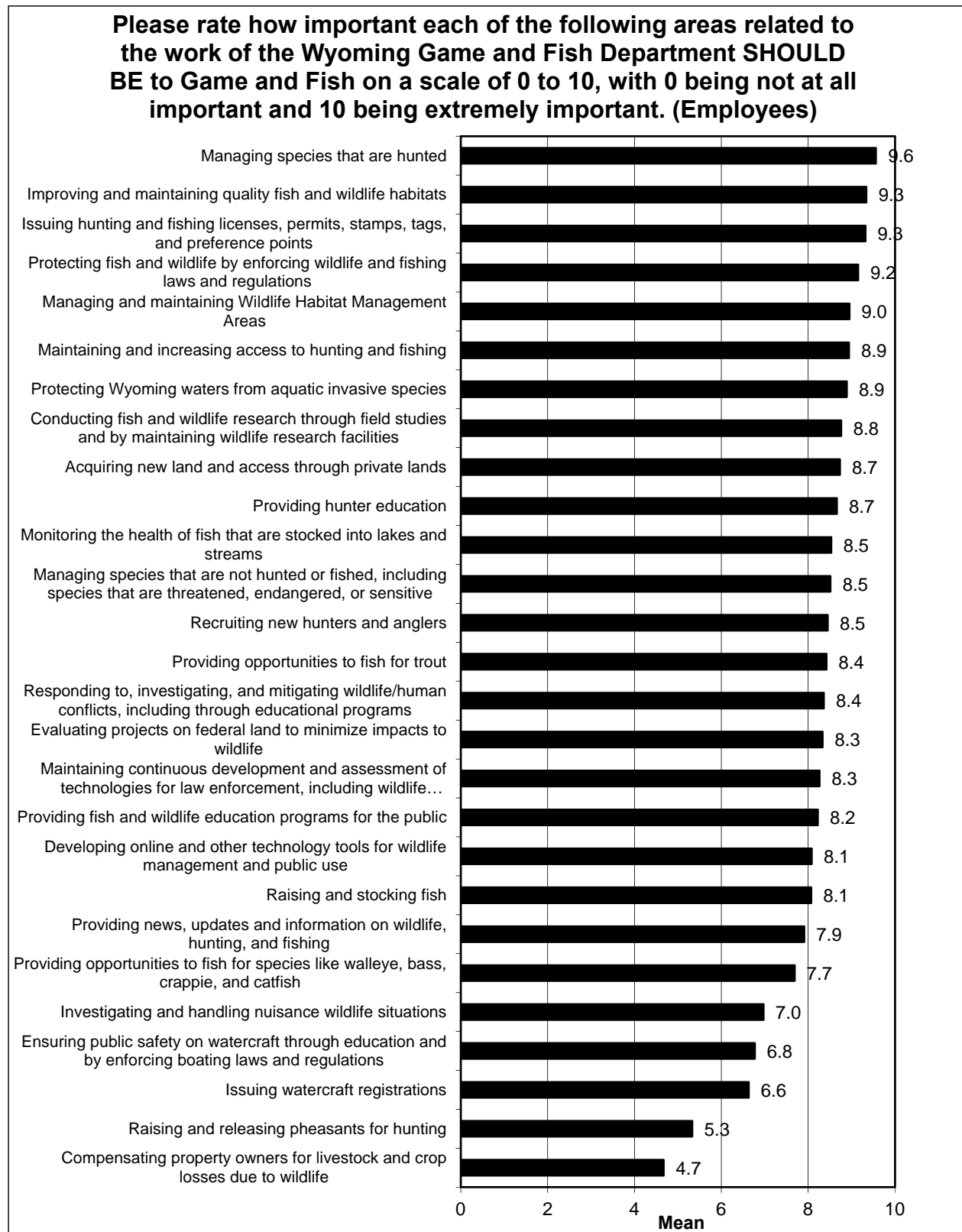
The overwhelming majority of employees rate the Game and Fish Department in the top half of the scale at conserving fish and wildlife: 93% give a rating of *excellent* or *good*.

The caveat to this positive rating is that these 93% are about evenly divided between *excellent* and *good*, meaning that for the latter, the efforts could be rated higher.

Employees' highest priorities are for managing species that are hunted, improving habitats, issuing licenses, and protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing laws.

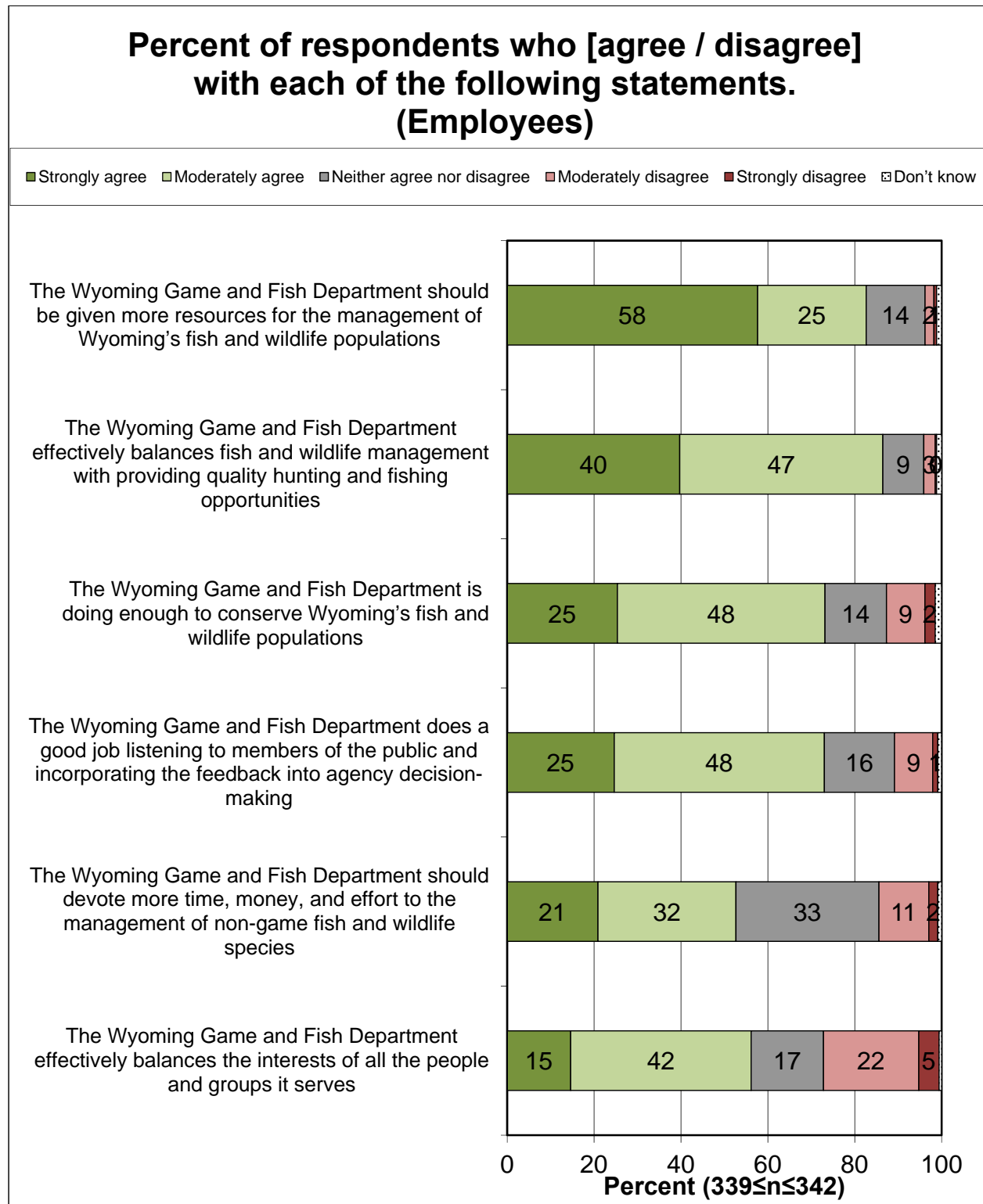
Regarding performance, the top-rated efforts pertain to fishing and boating, as well as two items already discussed as being highly important: managing species that are hunted, and issuing licenses and related products.

Employees also rate the priority of providing education highly.



Importance of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Employees

Employees generally feel that the agency balances fish and wildlife management and providing fishing and hunting opportunities. There is less agreement that the agency balances the interests of all groups it serves.



Agreement or Disagreement With Statements About the Game and Fish Department's Accommodation of All Constituents, Employees

Employees think that politics and landowners have the biggest influence on the work of Game and Fish. They also attribute outfitters and guides as having a high level of influence. In the middle of their ranking is scientific fish and wildlife methods.

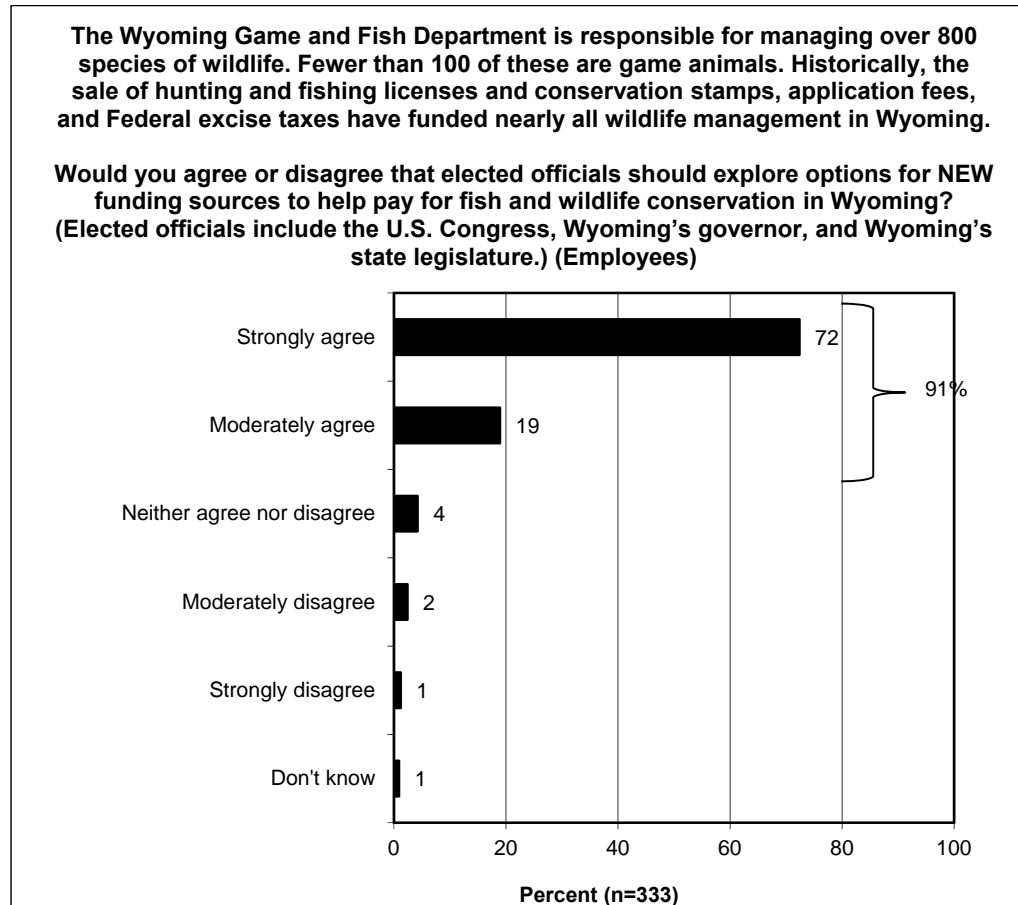
Some employees stated that agency priorities are redirected if someone contacts a friend at the Governor's office, the Game and Fish Director's Office, the Game and Fish Commission, or the legislature; they went on to state that when special interests result in top-down decisions, it can have negative consequences on wildlife, employee morale, and the public trust. Special interests that were cited as having too much influence include politicians, outfitters, ranchers (livestock producers), the energy industry (extraction or wind and solar), the agricultural industry, and large landowners in general.

Some feel that special interests have a disproportionate influence on agency decisions.

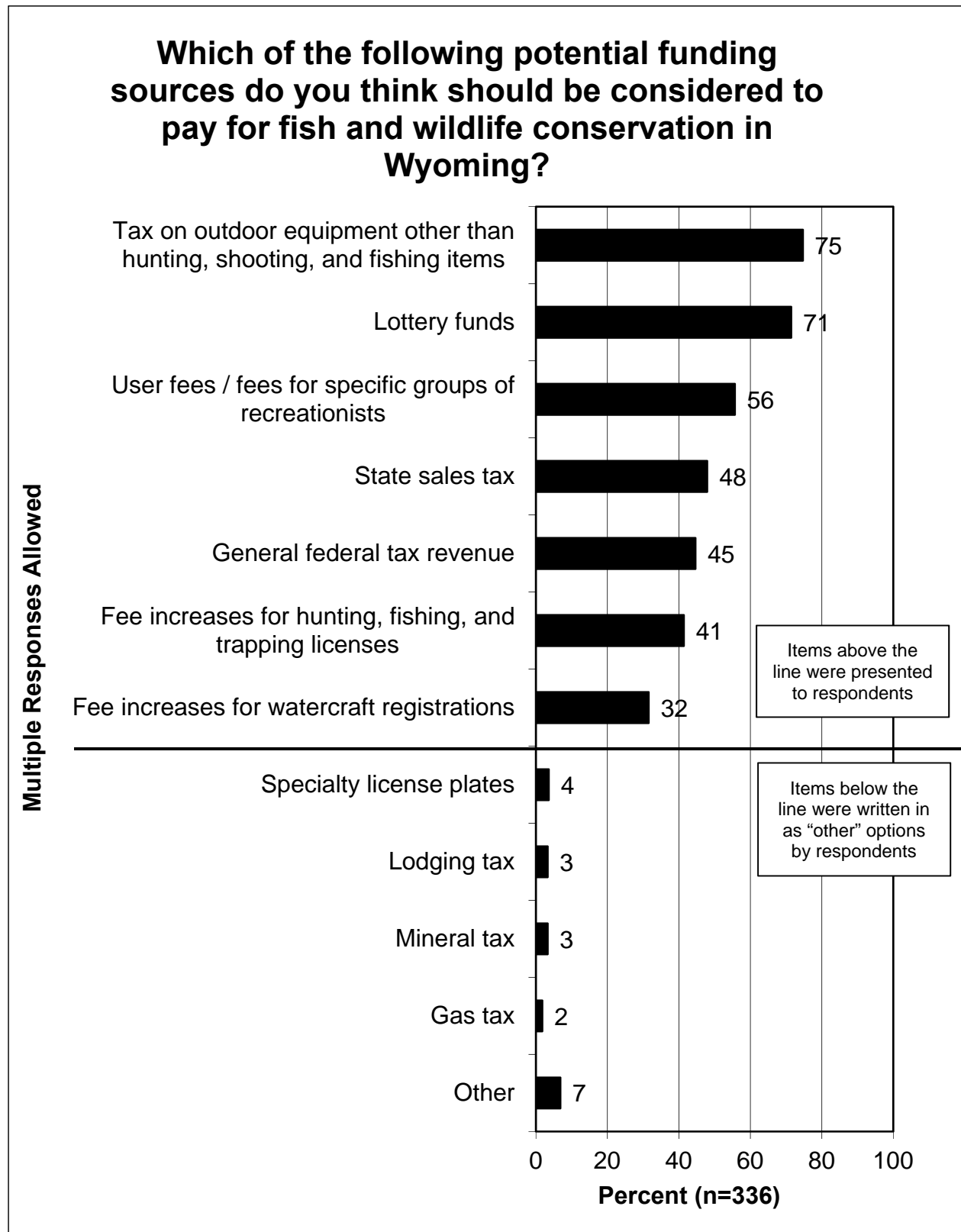
Certain groups are said to dominate public meetings and influence management decisions, particularly politicians, outfitters, ranchers (livestock producers), the agricultural industry, the energy industry, and large landowners in general.

Employees overwhelmingly agree that elected officials should explore options for new funding sources.

Many feel that non-consumptive recreationists should contribute in some way to habitat and wildlife management. There are concerns that youth apathy will eventually result in decreased funding from license sales.



Opinion on Exploration of New Funding Sources, Employees



Potential Funding Sources to Consider, Employees

Leadership should trust employee input and micromanage less.

Many employees stated that decisions are made top-down, with little input from field personnel or subject matter experts in the specific units or programs.

COMPARISON OF GENERAL POPULATION AND EMPLOYEE RESULTS

The telephone survey of the general population and the online survey of Game and Fish employees include a number of identical questions. This section looks at the responses by the public and by employees side-by-side. It compares how the opinions and attitudes of Game and Fish employees regarding the influences, priorities, and performance of the agency match up to the opinions and attitudes of the constituents they serve.

On a number of issues Game and Fish employees appear to be more critical of the agency than the general population is. This was reflected in certain questions regarding agency effectiveness and influences, but not in a series that had direct ratings of performance. Major findings from the comparisons are shown below.

Game and Fish employees are more critical than the public about the agency's effectiveness in balancing the interests of all the groups it serves.

The general population (35%) was much more likely than employees (15%) to *strongly agree* with this statement, whereas employees much more often selected *moderately disagree* or a neutral response.

Game and Fish employees, compared to the public, less often agree that the agency is doing enough to conserve Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations.

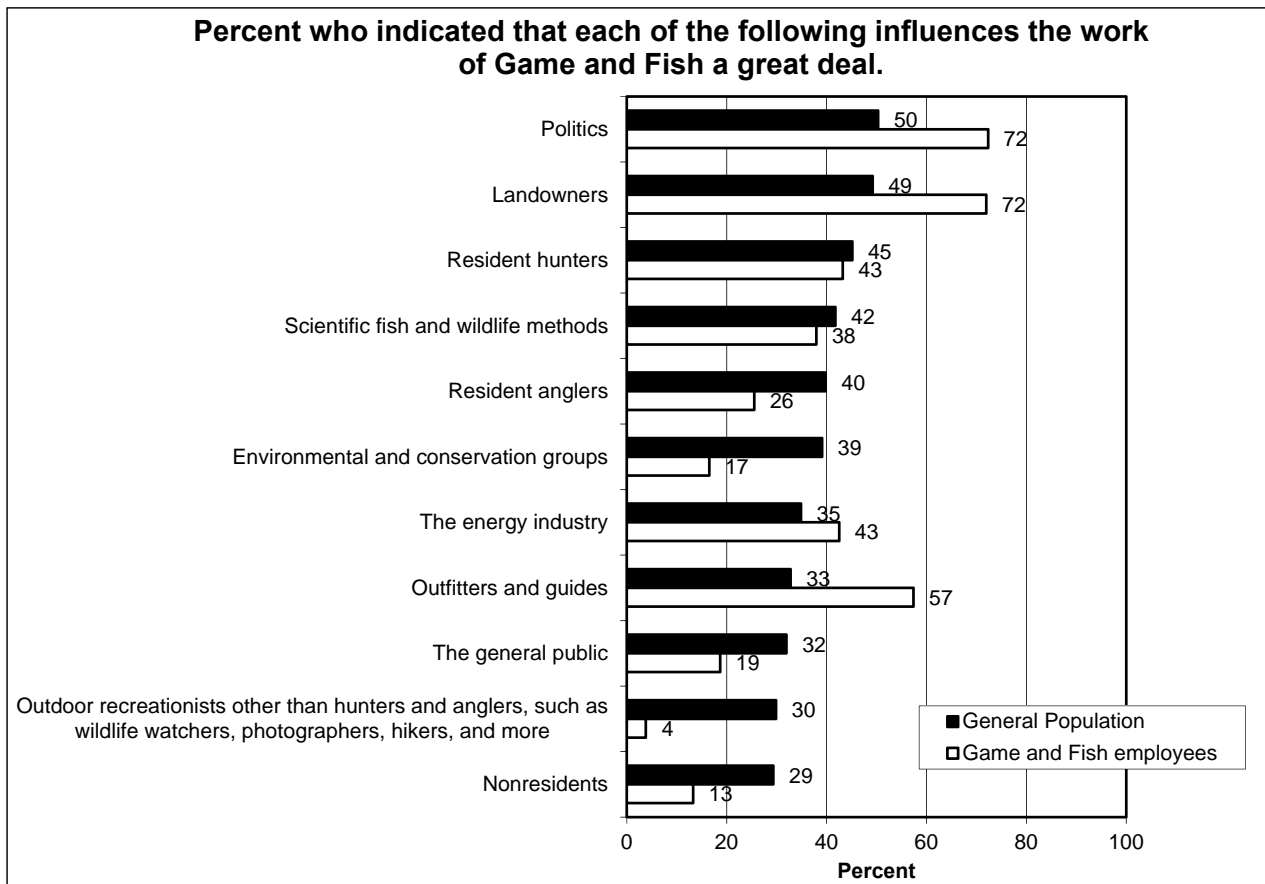
About half of the general population (49%) *strongly* agrees with this statement, compared to 25% of Game and Fish employees.

Most Game and Fish employees (96%) think that politics influences the agency's work.

This compares to 79% of the public who thinks that. Breaking it down, 72% of employees said that politics influences the agency *a great deal* and 24% said it does *a moderate amount*. Other factors that employees, more so than the public, think influence the agency's work are outfitters and guides, the energy industry, and landowners.

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, are overwhelmingly more likely to say the agency is influenced by outdoor recreationists other than hunters and anglers.

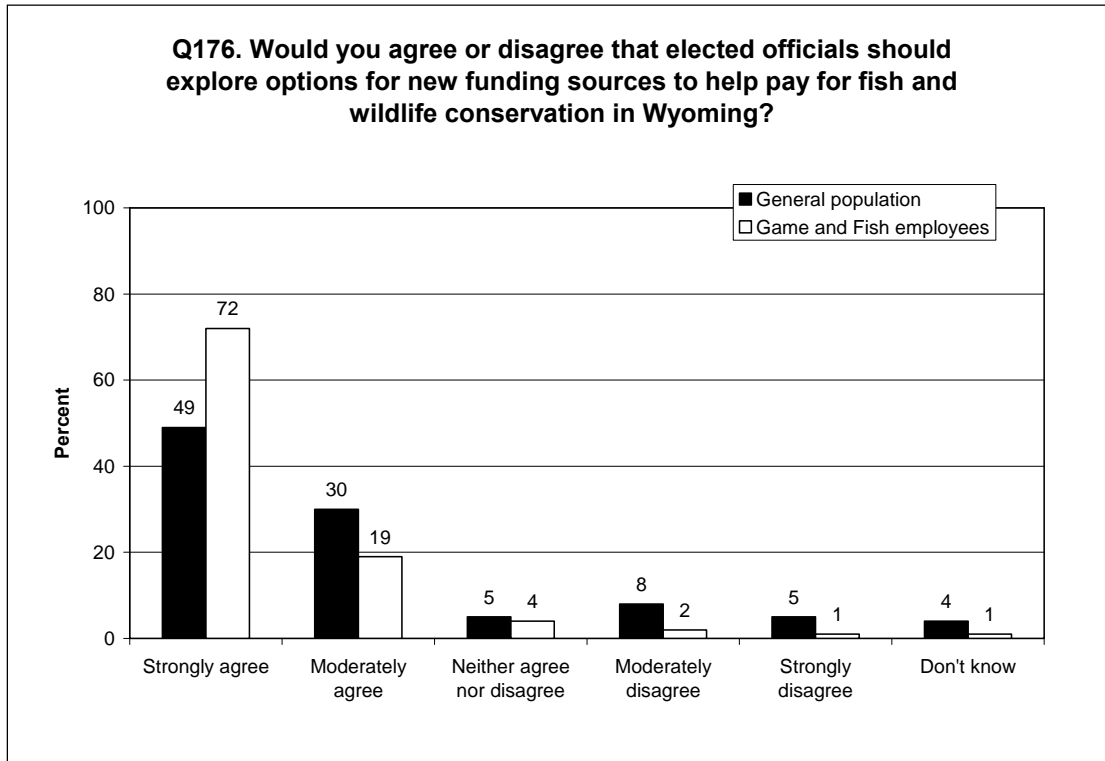
Nearly a third of the public (30%) thinks this group influences the agency *a great deal* and 43% said it does *a moderate amount*; this compares to only 4% and 16% of employees, respectively. Other factors that the general population, more so than Game and Fish employees, thinks influence the agency's work are the general public, nonresidents, and environmental and conservation groups.



Comparisons of Opinions on the Influences as a Whole

Game and Fish employees overwhelmingly support options for new funding sources.

In all, 72% of employees *strongly agree* with the concept and 19% *moderately agree*, for a total of 91%. The general population also agrees, although support is markedly lower (49% and 30%, respectively).



Comparisons of Opinions on New Options for Funding

Game and Fish employees, compared to the public, ranked outdoor recreation issues higher in priority.

The two groups ranked the priority of 27 areas of work related to the agency. Some of the most striking differences related to issues concerning outdoor recreation. For example, “acquiring new land and access through private land” was ranked 9th on the list by employees but 24th by the public. Also, “recruiting new hunters and anglers” was ranked 13th by employees but 26th by the public. This latter difference suggests that employees value the funding provided by new hunters and anglers, whereas the public may not be aware of this funding connection. Also, the public may have the mindset that they do not want more crowding or competition in their places of recreation. Other categories ranked notably higher by employees include “issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points” and “maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing.”

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, ranked boating issues higher in priority.

The category “ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations” was ranked 11th by the public and 24th by employees, and “issuing watercraft registrations” was ranked 18th by the public and 25th by employees.

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, ranked education and nuisance wildlife issues higher in priority.

Categories that were ranked higher on the public’s list include “protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species”; “providing hunter education”; “responding to, investigating, and

mitigating human/wildlife conflicts, including through educational programs”; “providing news, updates, and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing”; and “investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations.”

The agency’s performance is rated favorably by both the general population and Game and Fish employees.

Although earlier comparisons suggested that employees are more critical of the agency than are the public at large, performance ratings of the 27 categories were generally high and comparable between the two groups. In fact, employees have markedly higher ratings than the public regarding “raising and stocking fish,” “raising and releasing pheasants for hunting,” and “compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife.” Note, however, that these categories were ranked at and near the bottom in the Game and Fish employees’ list of priorities.

POST-SURVEY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Five focus groups were conducted after the surveys had been administered. These focus groups were conducted with a diverse selection of Wyoming residents in Laramie, Casper, Sheridan, Worland, and Jackson from February 5 through 10, 2018. The methodology is discussed in full in Chapter 12, “Methodology.”

While the points highlighted below do not illustrate the full range of comments and feedback offered by focus group participants, they do delineate the most often and thoroughly discussed issues across all five of the focus groups, indicating that they are major themes and areas of interest and/or concern among focus group participants.

Overall, focus group participants indicate they have a favorable view of Game and Fish. Many participants view Game and Fish as doing a very good job with fish and wildlife management while also balancing the various needs and requests of their respective constituencies.

While most participants tend to think Game and Fish is doing the best job possible, given budgetary and personnel limitations, they also would like to see Game and Fish pursue additional funding sources to increase its budget and overall effectiveness, preferably without taking additional federal money.

One of the most often discussed requests, which arose in almost every conversation across all five focus groups, is for Game and Fish to provide more educational opportunities for the general public, including for largely untapped demographic groups such as women and youth.

In tandem, there are many requests for more information regarding aquatic invasive species, regulatory and policy decision-making rationale, and contact information.

Almost any time in focus group conversations where participants responded that they would require more information on a specific topic in order to offer an informed comment, the discussion turned to the need for Game and Fish to provide more education and information to Wyoming residents concerning issues related to licensing, aquatic invasive species, regulations, poaching, and outdoors skills, among many other topics.

Multiple participants also request that Game and Fish streamline its educational and informational outreach by increasing its use of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) and by developing and promoting outdoors-skills development for youth and the general public.

In addition to providing more education and information, many participants request more advertising (via newspaper, television, and social media) and outreach (via local events, public meetings, etc.) to develop their knowledge base.

Most participants, with the exception of those in Jackson, feel that Game and Fish should open a hunting season on grizzly bears to responsibly manage the growing population. Unlike their attitudes toward wolves, focus group participants tend to view grizzlies as being native to Wyoming and therefore deserving of more patience.

Some participants, with the exception of most in Jackson, feel that Game and Fish should promote a “shoot-on-sight” policy with wolves. Other participants across multiple focus groups who do not feel as strongly about a shoot-on-sight policy still favor opening a hunting season on wolves. Multiple participants across all focus groups (including Jackson) also note that landowners who kill wolves to protect their livestock should not be penalized. Due to the perception that the initial wolf reintroduction involved a species of wolf that is not native to Wyoming, many focus group participants seem to view wolves in general as unwelcome in the state.

Most focus group participants think that land access in Wyoming has improved, but also feel that Game and Fish can and should continue to promote additional access to public land by working with landowners. Additionally, a number of participants note examples of federal land with closed trails and roads due to an apparent lack of maintenance. These participants indicate that better partnerships between Game and Fish and federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management) could help promote better road and trail maintenance and provide more access to federal public lands as a result.

Most participants understand that license fees are higher for nonresidents and therefore make up an important revenue source for Game and Fish. But participants also struggle with the practical impacts of increasing visitation from nonresidents (recreational pressure, irresponsible behavior, etc.).

RESULTS OF POST-SURVEY PUBLIC MEETINGS

This section discusses the results of the ten public meetings that were held in (listed in chronological order of the meeting dates) Cheyenne, Laramie, Casper, Lander, Gillette, Green River, Sheridan, Pinedale, Cody, and Jackson. For full details of the methodology and structure of the public meetings, see Chapter 12 of this report).

Through an analysis of the public meetings, 31 distinct topics are covered in the full report that follows this executive summary, which emerged as primary areas of concern among meeting attendees.

In addition, analysis of most public meetings warranted an “other” category. Funding, agency performance, and equity (or the balancing of various stakeholders’ interests) emerged as the top areas of discussion.

Not every topic was mentioned in every meeting, nor were the topics discussed given equal attention in each meeting.

In part, this is due to the eight distinct Game and Fish management regions, with each region having its own wildlife, geography, and concerns. In addition, however, some meetings attracted larger audiences of guides, non-consumptive users, or anglers, while other meetings attracted larger numbers of hunters and other groups.

The order and importance of particular topics is often indicative of the makeup of each meeting’s attendees.

For example, introducing a muzzleloader/primitive weapon hunting season was only mentioned in two meetings, and only briefly in one of those meetings. In the Gillette public meeting, however, the introduction of a muzzleloader/primitive weapon season was the most mentioned topic. With this level of interest in hunting, one could safely assume that the Gillette public meeting had a relatively large number of hunters in attendance.

Funding was the most frequently discussed topic in the meetings overall, being the only topic that was mentioned in all ten public meetings. Most funding discussion focused on the need to find alternate sources of funding in order to avoid becoming overly reliant on sportsmen to fund Game and Fish. A smaller portion of conversation about funding focused on public desire for transparency in funding sources.

Discussions of Game and Fish performance, which represented the second most addressed topic, indicated that most interactions with Game and Fish staff were very positive. Most attendees expressed a strong approval of Game and Fish, as well as a high level of trust in decision-making associated with the 5-year strategic plan.

Equity was one of the greatest themes throughout the entirety of the public meeting process. Issues in regard to licensing, access, consumptive versus non-consumptive users, and habitat all seemed to relate to the public’s desire to have all constituents equally represented by Game and Fish.

PUBLIC FORUM RESULTS

The public forum was a website comprising a homepage and six discussion pages. The six forum discussion categories were wildlife and wildlife viewing; hunting; fishing; boating; hunter education, educational programs, and communication; and “other” Wyoming Game and Fish topics (the “other” allowing any pertinent topic that forum contributors felt was not covered in the five established categories).

PUBLIC FORUM RESULTS: GAME AND FISH FUNDING

Contributors to the online public forum wanted Game and Fish to explore funding sources that include non-consumptive outdoor recreationists.

They promoted this concept in terms of Game and Fish adjusting to the changing outdoor recreational activities; many forum contributors said that people are increasingly interested in wildlife viewing, wildlife photography, hiking, camping, and other kinds of non-consumptive outdoor recreation. Such wildlife consumers wanted better representation in Game and Fish management and regulatory decision-making.

Many forum contributors wanted Game and Fish to increase nonresident hunting fees.

While some were wary that a steep nonresident fee increase could discourage nonresidents from hunting in Wyoming and therefore decrease Game and Fish funding, many advocated for it nonetheless.

Some in the fishing and hunting forums advocated for nonresident guide fees that would allow Wyoming guides to remain competitive and provide another income stream for Game and Fish.

PUBLIC FORUM RESULTS: ACCESS

Contributors across multiple forum sections discussed access. Anglers were concerned for the access of streams in which the state owns the waters but landowners own the stream beds and banks.

Hunters were concerned that large tracts of public land are inaccessible because they are landlocked by private land that landowners will not permit hunters to pass through to access public land.

Non-consumptive outdoor recreationists such as hikers and wildlife viewers were concerned about the apparent increases in road and trail closures on public land due to a perceived lack of maintenance.

Their concern was heightened by having observed some recreationists who use motorized vehicles (such as ATVs) to breach closed public trails and roads and have created ruts and changes in geography that are difficult to restore.

PUBLIC FORUM RESULTS: LARGE CARNIVORE MANAGEMENT—WOLVES AND BEARS

Many contributors, especially in the hunting and wildlife viewing forums, discussed the management of wolves and grizzly bears; however, there was no consensus.

Reasons for supporting the hunting of wolves included that wolves were felt to thin elk herds too much, that wolves were felt to change elk migration patterns, and that landowners could lose money because hunters would not lease land on which the wolves had depleted the elk and deer.

Those who advocated for hunting grizzly bears tended to view the species with greater amicability than they did wolves, but they still believed that grizzlies need to be re-educated as to acceptable boundaries between themselves and human populations.

Nobody seemed to argue that grizzly populations are too high (as many advocates for wolf hunting argued was the case with wolf populations), but they often noted that grizzly populations have stabilized and that a hunting season can be opened on them.

One reason for opposing the hunting of both wolves and grizzlies was the perceived economic incentive of wildlife viewing related to these species specifically.

Thinning their populations could result in less tourism, meaning less funding within the state.

Some opposition to hunting wolves and grizzly bears was expressed as a rights issue—essentially, the right to view wolves and bears is just as valid as the right to hunt them.

Some participants claimed that the rights issue can be resolved by giving wildlife viewers and other non-consumptive recreationists a “seat at the management table.”

Another reason to oppose hunting wolves that was expressed is that human encroachment into wildlife habitat does not necessarily mean the species should be extirpated in that area.

Those who opposed hunting grizzlies thought it is poor management to allow a hunting season just because the species has achieved a self-sustaining population.

As for bears presenting a threat to Wyoming neighborhoods and more rural human populations, some opposed to hunting grizzlies advocated for more bear-friendly community efforts, noting that human encroachment onto grizzly territory has been increasing.

PUBLIC FORUM RESULTS: TRAPPING

Multiple contributors to the hunting and wildlife viewing forums commented on trapping. The vast majority of these contributors opposed the current state of trapping in Wyoming, on the grounds that trapping causes undue and prolonged suffering to wildlife.

Some contributors who opposed trapping expressed concern about family pets.

Those in the forum who opposed trapping generally suggested one of two preferred outcomes: a total statewide ban on trapping, or new restrictions to make current Wyoming trapping regulations and laws more stringent.

PUBLIC FORUM RESULTS: EDUCATION

Contributors to the hunting, boating, and other issues forums all commented on the need to increase educational and training opportunities for young and inexperienced hunters and non-consumptive outdoor recreationists.

Boaters' comments regarding education/instruction centered on boating etiquette and proper behavior, especially for boating and non-boating anglers and other recreationists on or near the water.

Some felt education on hunter ethics has not kept pace with the rise in hunting technology: this was commonly mentioned in terms of crossbows and scopes, especially as the latter may encourage hunters to take shots from too far away.

Some comments advocated for updating hunter safety instruction to reflect considerations of such hunting technology. It was thought that increased attention to this technology would be particularly meaningful to younger and less experienced hunters, who may be the most intent on harvesting game.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (also referred to simply as Game and Fish) to conduct human dimensions research in support of an agency-wide strategic plan.

The human dimensions research conducted by Responsive Management encompassed seven components in addition to the launch meeting:

1. An online qualitative assessment (Game and Fish employees)
2. Pre-survey focus groups (the general public, including hunters, anglers, and other recreationists)
3. A scientific telephone survey of three samples
 - a. Wyoming residents (the general public; note that this included resident hunters and anglers in the proportion that they occur in a general population sample)
 - b. Nonresident hunters (this sample is solely of nonresidents because the sample of Wyoming residents contained resident hunters)
 - c. Nonresident anglers (again, note that the sample of Wyoming residents contained resident anglers)
4. An employee survey (Game and Fish employees)
5. Post-survey focus groups (the general public, including hunters, anglers, and other recreationists)
6. Public meetings (the general public); administered after the survey
7. An online public forum (the general public)

The various methods were chosen to allow the maximum opportunity for the public, as well as Game and Fish, to provide input regarding these issues. The way that the input is analyzed differs from method to method. While the public meetings and public forum provide the maximum opportunity for participating—because they are open to the public—they are best analyzed *qualitatively* rather than *quantitatively*. In other words, while their findings are important, they cannot be said to be representative of any group because they are not scientifically representative; anybody could participate, and people could comment multiple times in both the public meetings and on the public forum.

Likewise, focus groups obtain qualitative data, too. Their small sizes (generally about a dozen participants) allow for in-depth discussion. However, they are not statistically representative of any groups. While there were criteria for participation, the groups are not meant to be fully representative of the groups defined by those criteria. This approach allows the identification of the full range of issues. In other words, a focus group of Wyoming recreationists is not a representative group of the state's recreationists, nor are they intended to be. Instead, focus groups are analyzed qualitatively.

On the other hand, the results of the telephone survey are analyzed quantitatively because the sample is representative of a given group—for this research, Wyoming residents (in one sample for the survey), nonresident hunters (in the second separate sample for the survey), and nonresident anglers (in the third separate sample). All three samples are analyzed quantitatively, but separately from one another. At no point are all three of these groups combined; their results are reported separately. A full description of all these methods for obtaining input are discussed in the last chapter of this report.

When examining the results in this report, several things should be kept in mind. In the telephone survey and employee survey, the questionnaires contained several types of questions, as detailed below.

- Open-ended questions are those in which no answer set is read to the respondents; rather, they can respond with anything that comes to mind from the question.
- Closed-ended questions have an answer set from which to choose.
- Single or multiple response questions: Some questions allow only a single response, while 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.”
- Scaled questions: Many closed-ended questions (but not all) are in a scale, such as excellent-good-fair-poor.
- 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 support” and “moderately support” are summed to determine the total percentage in support).

The following acronyms and phrases are used in this report:

Game and Fish – when used in title case, this refers to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department; when “game and fish” in lower case, the reference is to the actual animals and fish

AIS – aquatic invasive species

ATV – all-terrain vehicle, commonly called 3-wheeler or 4-wheeler

CWD – chronic wasting disease

e.g. – for example, used to give an example

GIS – geographic information system

I&E – information and education

i.e. – that is, used to define or restate the meaning of a phrase, word, or concept

IT – information technologies

NGO – non-governmental organization; also sometimes referred to as nonprofits

PWC – personal watercraft

QPL – Questionnaire Programming Language; surveying software for telephone surveying that directs the question order (note that a live interviewer conducts the survey)

R3 – recruitment, retention, and reactivation; used in the context of increasing hunting and fishing participation

Responsive Management – a Harrisonburg, Virginia, firm that conducts human dimensions research about natural resources and outdoor recreation; along with

The Cooperation Company, it moderated the public meetings, the public forum, and focus groups; conducted the surveys; and analyzed the data and public input for this report

SWOT – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats; used in the phrase, “SWOT analysis,” which is an analysis of an entity’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

The Cooperation Company – an Olympia, Washington, firm that assisted with the project to obtain public input for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and produce a strategic plan

2. LAUNCH MEETING

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The primary purpose of this meeting was to help establish the overall direction of the study and to brainstorm topics that should be covered.

This meeting identified the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Game and Fish Department, as well as the perceived opportunities available to the agency and the threats to it.

This meeting established that the project would entail a short assessment questionnaire for employees and stakeholders, focus groups, a telephone survey of the general population (which includes resident hunters and anglers) and nonresident hunters and anglers, an employee survey, focus groups to occur after the surveys, public meetings, and a public forum for comments.

Staff from Responsive Management and The Cooperation Company convened a project launch meeting with Wyoming Game and Fish Department personnel on September 14 and 15, 2017, at the Curt Gowdy State Park Visitor Center. The launch meeting was attended by Game and Fish executive staff and division leadership and allowed for an in-depth discussion of project goals, objectives, and contextual information relating to previous agency planning efforts—these topics helped to establish the overall direction of the study. The researchers also discussed with staff details related to the upcoming data collection with Wyoming residents, including planned focus group and public meeting locations and populations and groups to be surveyed.

The researchers used a portion of the launch meeting to conduct a SWOT analysis, so named because it is a structured planning method that evaluates an organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. A SWOT analysis is an initial identification of favorable and unfavorable internal and external factors that an organization can address through its objectives in its strategic plan. In other words, a SWOT analysis is one method for conducting a "situational assessment" of the needs to be addressed in an organizational strategic plan. Also called "environmental scanning," this activity asks the organization to look at its internal and external working environment for factors that, if managed differently, would lead to success. Consequently, a SWOT analysis can help an organization articulate advantages it wishes to maximize and vulnerabilities it wishes to manage.

Strengths (elements of the organization that confer an advantage) and weaknesses (elements of the organization that present risk) are both *internal* organizational factors. Opportunities (elements in the environment that the organization could use to its advantage) and threats (elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the organization) are both *external* factors in the organization's working environment. Findings from the SWOT analysis are tabulated in Section 2.3.

While this chapter is intended as a reasonably comprehensive overview of the input collected at the launch meeting, it is not intended as an exhaustive record of everything covered there. The

topics and decisions regarding the data collection summarized here were subject to change based on subsequent discussions between the researchers and Game and Fish as the overall project progressed.

2.1. DETAILS RELATED TO DATA COLLECTION

Following is a summary of the decisions made at the launch meeting regarding some of the various data collection tools and project milestones.

FOCUS GROUPS

It was decided that the focus groups would include a diverse combination of hunters, anglers, landowners, boaters, wildlife viewers, and other Game and Fish constituents. The preference was to segment the focus groups primarily by location, with each group then including a range of viewpoints and perspectives representative of the location.

Pre-Survey Focus Groups

The pre-survey focus groups were planned for the following locations on the following dates (see Chapter 4):

- Cheyenne (November 6, 2017)
- Rock Springs (November 7, 2017)
- Riverton (November 8, 2017)
- Gillette (November 9, 2017)
- Cody (November 10, 2017)

Post-Survey Focus Groups

The post-survey focus groups were planned for the following locations on the following dates (see Chapter 8):

- Laramie (February 5, 2018)
- Casper (February 6, 2018)
- Sheridan (February 8, 2018)
- Worland (February 9, 2018)
- Jackson (February 10, 2018)

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The ten public meetings were planned to occur near every Game and Fish regional office, as well as in Cheyenne and Gillette. Dates of the meetings were coordinated based on the optimal times in each region. The public meetings were to be conducted at the following locations on the following dates (see Chapter 9):

- Cheyenne (February 5, 2018)
- Laramie (February 5, 2018)
- Casper (February 6, 2018)
- Lander (February 6, 2018)
- Gillette (February 7, 2018)
- Green River (February 7, 2018)
- Sheridan (February 8, 2018)
- Pinedale (February 8, 2018)
- Cody (February 9, 2018)
- Jackson (February 10, 2018)

SURVEYS

The project called for a survey of residents, hunters, and anglers using one questionnaire and then a survey of employees with a different questionnaire. In addition, a qualitative assessment used a questionnaire but was not, strictly speaking, a quantitative survey. This latter item is discussed first because it was the first conducted.

Initial Qualitative Assessment of the Project

There was interest in distributing a questionnaire for a qualitative assessment (not strictly a survey but rather an open-ended set of questions) to all Game and Fish employees; members of the Travel, Recreation, Wildlife, and Cultural Resources Committee of the Wyoming State Legislature; all seven Wyoming Game and Fish Commissioners; and members of the Governor's Fish and Wildlife Task Force. Agency employees were allowed to "opt in" to the questionnaire and were informed of the quantitative survey of all agency employees that would follow later.

Scientific Telephone Survey of Wyoming Residents, Hunters, and Anglers

Consistent with the original plan for this survey, it was decided that Responsive Management would survey Wyoming residents in a stratified sample in regions that approximate the Game and Fish's eight management regions (at least 300 surveys completed per region; the regions are discussed in full in Chapter 12, "Methodology"). However, there was interest from Game and Fish in also surveying smaller samples of nonresident hunters and anglers—this portion of the data collection would entail 200 completed interviews with each group of recreationists (Responsive Management would sample nonresident hunters and anglers using the agency's license databases).

Survey of Employees

A survey of employees was also planned, as mentioned above. This survey was to be conducted in a way that would be most convenient to employees.

MEETINGS WITH AGENCY LEADERSHIP

Planned for March 2018, the researchers were to avoid dates that conflicted with the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference (March 26-30, 2018) and any scheduled Commission meetings.

2.2. MEETING NOTES BY DIVISION / SECTION

The following are notes compiled by the researchers regarding key issues, concerns, and project expectations specific to individual sections of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. These notes provide a general overview of some of the themes addressed during the launch meeting, many of which have relevance to the aforementioned SWOT analysis.

PERSPECTIVE FROM THE COMMISSION

- Would like to determine how to garner stronger support from the public, with the expectation that support from the public and NGOs may carry over to the legislature.
- Recognition that a "bottom up" planning process will be good for the agency.
- Impressed with the quality of Game and Fish's employees.

PERSPECTIVE FROM THE DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

- Cognizant of the fact that the public seems to want “more of everything!”
- There is a desire to engage stakeholders and chart a true strategic plan moving forward.
- In terms of data collection, there is strong interest in using the full toolbox of techniques; previous planning efforts undertaken by Game and Fish did not always take a neutral approach to the data collection but did offer a wide scope of outreach in terms of the number of public meetings and other events.
- There is interest in developing a strong functional strategic plan.

PERSPECTIVE FROM COMMUNICATIONS

- Cognizant of the fact that Game and Fish tries to please everyone by throwing out lots of messages in lots of different places—there is the feeling that Game and Fish does a lot of things “shallowly” and could be doing certain things more “deeply.”
- There is a need to more fully understand the public and develop better communications.
- There is a need to understand the agency’s credibility and how it can be leveraged.
- Game and Fish can sometimes be too reactive; can sometimes go in too many directions.
- There is a need to identify true priorities: what is most important?
- There is a need to understand the vocal minority in Wyoming.

PERSPECTIVE FROM FISCAL / FINANCIAL

- There is a need to guarantee a long-term funding mechanism for resources that are owned by everyone—need to guarantee funding for the management goals of the agency and public.
- There is a need to minimize certain legislative mandates such as licensing complexities.
- There is a need to maintain or exceed reporting needs.
- In terms of licensing complexities, many do not understand what the license allocation process is, and many are not aware why certain decisions are made.
- There is a desire to secure better engagement from the public and nonresidents.

PERSPECTIVE FROM FISHERIES

- There is a need to ensure that the agency is checking in with the public adequately; special interest groups are already at the table—how can the agency get the wider public involved?
- Ideally, the upcoming strategic plan could tie in with existing division operational plans.
- Recognition of the fact that nonresidents represent an important funding source.
- Ideally, the legislature would allow the Commission to set license structure and fees.
- Public support can be used to assert Commission priorities before the legislature.
- Need to continue considering the strategy of applying management goals (managing for trophies, for diversity, etc.) on a regional basis.
- There is a need to assess recreationist travel times and local access opportunities.

PERSPECTIVE FROM INTERNAL OPERATIONS

- There is concern about small segments of the general population that sometimes sway major management decisions—how can the agency engage that minority and balance that with the majority that may feel differently?
- There is a need to emphasize agency transparency and improve decision-making processes.
- There is a need to convince the public that the agency listens, and a need to improve trust and support for Game and Fish.
- The agency itself needs to reconcile its various strategic and operational plans.
- Recognize that wedge issues, such as agency's trucks and the lack of transferable licenses, will come up in the data collection.

PERSPECTIVE FROM WILDLIFE

- There is a desire to capitalize on the agency's culture of building relationships in communities.
- Reiterating a point made by others, there is a need to better understand the priorities, opinions, and attitudes of the public.
- It is useful to keep in mind that many critics of the agency are with conservation organizations.
- There is recognition of the fact that planning processes help the agency to be more responsive to the public—the current assessment will help the legislature understand the public and where the agency is coming from.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES ADDRESSED

- Consistent with much of the above, several personnel addressed the need for Game and Fish to reach out to different types of people and different segments of the public, especially to reframe the general public as partners in conservation through a collaborative approach.
- Similarly, it is important to recognize that connecting the public to natural resources may be difficult when a segment of the Wyoming public is transient in nature.
- IT issues have both internal and external dimensions: the former covers what employees have to deal with, the latter covers what the public sees in terms of licensing, permits, etc.
- It will be important for the surveys and focus groups to address not only satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the current license structure but also opinions on potential solutions.
- Similarly, the research must address the perception of complicated licensing allocation, transferable landowner licenses, and opinions on resident preference points.
- Wildlife issues include elk management (the population of which has plateaued) and predation effects on big game populations (wolves and grizzlies are in higher density).
- On the services side, Game and Fish needs to address support from the public and Commission for the agency to take advantage of good opportunities relating to land acquisition and access (the survey should address support for the agency to purchase land).
- The research should also examine various administrative issues related to licensing, such as potential misunderstanding of applications, re-issuance of licenses, etc.

2.3. FINDINGS FROM SWOT ANALYSIS

Tables 2.3.1 through 2.3.4 summarize the outcomes of the SWOT analysis conducted with Game and Fish senior personnel at the strategic plan launch meeting. While the items shown in each table have been categorized based on the similarity of the issues, the main value of the tables is in the factors themselves.

Table 2.3.1. Strengths, as Identified in the SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	
Category	Factor
Administration	Movement towards more Commission authority (license fees)
	We have a strong and supportive Commission
	Strong Commission
	Cost accounting structure
Cooperation	Partnerships
Funding	Two thirds of aquatic invasive species funding is not from the Game and Fish fund
	Available funding; smart investments
	Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration; Federal Aid Comprehensive Management System status
Program	Outreach activities
	Disease-free hatchery system
	Aquatic invasive species program is under Game and Fish control and funding
	Good hatchery infrastructure
Resources	Wyoming wildlife (diverse, iconic, abundant, habitat)
	Wyoming has the best wildlife and habitat in the lower 48 states
	Our great fish and wildlife resources – all species
	Abundant and diverse wildlife resource
	World class fish and wildlife resource
	High quality resources (fish and wildlife)
Staff	Resource quality
	Personnel
	Personnel (dedicated, technical)
	People who work in wildlife management are deeply committed
	Culture (we are branded and recognizable)
	Solid team (retention)
	Highly motivated work force
	Quality people
	Dedicated, long-term employees
Personnel (dedication, professional culture of excellence)	
Stakeholders	Supportive conservation groups
	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Muley Fanatics raise more money here than anywhere else
	Double the national average participation in hunting and fishing
	People find deep meaning in nature, wildlife, and the outdoors
	Raving fans
	Publics connected to the resource
	Public support
	Public value of wildlife
	License demand
	Public interest in our mission
	Passionate consumers, non-consumptive users, employees
High demand hunting opportunity	
Wyoming is a small town with long streets = ability to communicate to publics, conservation organizations, agencies	

Table 2.3.2. Opportunities, as Identified in the SWOT Analysis

OPPORTUNITIES	
Category	Factor
Administration	Process/program simplification; streamlining
	Legislative education
	Commission authority
	License revenue collection process modifications
	Legislators
	Commission/policy changes to increase revenue and decrease expenses
Business	Technology
	New technology (manage and protect wildlife and habitat)
	New technology
Cooperation	Other state agency policy and process changes
	Partnerships (private/federal)
	Increase partnerships and relationships
	Other states want our trout eggs and our trout
Funding	New funding sources
	Funding from non-consumptive users
	Cost savings (unemployment; workers comp; mandated programs versus others)
Resources	Nature and wildlife provide the antidote to many problems we face now and will face
	Warm water species
	Diverse, abundant, world-class wildlife resource
	Abundant natural resources; ongoing potential funding sources
Staff	Lack of personnel
	Implement changing technology → resistance to change and business practices
	Employee activities (engagement, morale)
Stakeholders	Increased understanding of the agency (education)
	Increased participation
	Engaged public (vested interests; demand for hunting and fishing opportunity)
	Creating new fishermen will build a cadre of Game and Fish supporters
	Electronic media to educate and inform the public
	Public support can help with the strategic plan
	Marketing
	Culture of wildlife – Wyoming citizens value wildlife resources; change to yield public support
	Engage the public in what we do
The growing Latino population enjoys the outdoors, fishing, and hunting	

Table 2.3.3. Weaknesses, as Identified in the SWOT Analysis

WEAKNESSES	
Category	Factor
Administration	Statutory and rule constraints (limit efficiency)
	Arbitration process for damage
	As an agency, we are not nimble
	Game and Fish is mostly reactive
Business	IT resources (programming, hardware, support, back-up systems)
	IT capacity
	Allocating Game and Fish's staff and fiscal resources on the highest priorities (we try to do it all)
	No control of the license fee structure
	Database management
	Planning
	IT programming capacity inadequate
	Long-range strategic direction
	Commission flexibility regarding funding
	IT resources
Infrastructure	
Cooperation	Poor relationships with some federal agencies
	Working relationship with politicians
Funding	Our current funding model is unstable and not sustainable
	Diverse funding
	Funding
	Lack of non-traditional funding sources
	Funding – traditional versus non-consumptive
	Deferred maintenance backlog
	Unpredictability of future funding
Funding	
Resources	Illegal fish introduction will jeopardize valuable fisheries
Staff	Institutional entrenchment
	Aquatic invasive species only has one permanent employee
	Willing, trained, and qualified senior leaders
	Inadequate staffing limits aquatic invasive species and aquatic habitat programs
	[Lack of] human dimensions/public opinion research [to understand] what they want
Stakeholders	Scientists and those in law enforcement think differently than the average citizen
	Lack of understanding public engagement and feedback
	Complicated regulations
	Messaging non-consumptive users of the resources
	Lack of understanding – constituents and employees
	Public trust
	Complicated license allocation process
	[Lack of] public understanding of Game and Fish link between wildlife and their quality of life
	Licensing system VERY complicated
Much of the Wyoming public does not understand what we do or why – Game and Fish does not get credit for good things we do	

Table 2.3.4. Threats, as Identified in the SWOT Analysis

THREATS	
Category	Factor
Administration	Legislative oversight (fiscal)
	Inability to direct resources (ESA; legislature)
	Legislative oversight/statutory change possibilities
	Increased federal power in various agencies as a result of litigation (e.g., Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
	ESA / NEPA / EIS
	Adversarial legislators
	ESA = demands on funding to research and mitigate
	Off-reservation treaty hunting/fishing rights
	Political/regime change in executive branch
Cooperation	Federal regulation
Funding	Increasing costs and more expectations with no additional funding
	Funding – sustainable, reliable funding of the agency
	Long-term funding
	Decreased funding
Resources	Wildlife disease issues (CWD, AdNO)
	Disease/bio-security
	Habitat loss (development, fragmentation)
	Invasives
	Invasives (cheat grass, aquatic invasive species)
	Illegal introductions
	Changing landownership patterns
	Aquatic invasive species in other states = loss of warm/cool water fish imports (need w/c hatchery)
	Disease
	Declining big game (moose, mule deer)
	ESA and associated restrictions
	Wildlife diseases could further reduce the health of these animals
	Decline in quality habitat
	Drought could severely decrease wildlife populations
	Disease (Brucellosis, CWD, Adenovirus, new unknown diseases)
	Disease and invasives
	Disease
	Energy development (what is the right balance?)
Disease/environmental degradation/etc. leading to resource collapse	
Stakeholders	New harvesting technology (ethics, fair chase)
	Illegal take of vulnerable big game (northern border – winter ranges)
	Vocal public (special interests; paid lobby; passionate)
	National trends in outdoor activity declines could limit our future public support
	Not enough awareness of aquatic invasive species rapid response – PR not fully developed and vetted
	Anti-hunting/trapping ground and individuals
	Reduction in wildlife resources = reduction in opportunity = reduction in revenue
	Lack of public support – agency relevancy to the state's citizens
	Unengaged public (political decisions)
	Silent assassins
	Lack of trust in government
Wyoming's population is aging, becoming more urban and is spending less time outside	

3. QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF GAME AND FISH EMPLOYEES AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Like the Launch Meeting, the primary purpose of this assessment was to establish the topics that should be covered in the subsequent research, as well as to help put those topics into perspective.

One aspect of the assessment was to establish goals of the project.

The most important goals that were identified in the assessment were to educate the public and garner their trust, to develop a useable and measurable strategic plan, to assess and improve employee morale, to increase funding, and to manage all wildlife, not just game and fish species.

Another aspect of the assessment was to identify desired outcomes of the project.

These included garnering public support for Game and Fish activities, developing an actionable strategic plan, and maintaining robust fish and wildlife populations.

An additional part of the assessment identified key strengths of the agency.

These included committed and knowledgeable employees, abundant natural resources, a strong relationship with the public, financial stability, good relationships with other entities, success stories, and autonomy in management of natural resources.

Weaknesses were also identified as a part of the assessment.

These included inflexible leadership and structure, low employee morale among some employees, a limited funding base, lack of engagement with non-users, favoritism toward landowners, and poor communication.

The assessment was also used to identify opportunities for the agency.

These included public interest in wildlife, partnerships with other entities, existing research, and pending employee turnover because of retirements (i.e., the opportunity to hire new employees).

Finally, the assessment identified threats to the agency.

These included lack of funding, habitat loss, disease, and (undue) political influence.

This chapter presents the major findings of the qualitative assessment of Game and Fish employees and stakeholders. For each section of this chapter, which correspond to an open-ended survey question, major findings from employees are shown first, followed by a summary of findings from stakeholders. Hereinafter, employees are referred to as *internal employees* to emphasize that they represent the internal component of the assessment, and stakeholders are referred to as *external stakeholders* to emphasize their external component. The methodology is discussed in full in Chapter 12, "Methodology."

3.1. MOST IMPORTANT GOALS OF THE PROJECT

This section looks at internal employee goals first, then external stakeholder comments. The internal employee goals are in the form of action statements.

INTERNAL EMPLOYEES

Five goals emerged among employees. The goals are shown in bold, followed by an explanation of the action statement.

Educate the public and garner their trust.

Many employees stressed the importance of reaching out to the public and gaining their confidence that Game and Fish is making the best decisions to benefit wildlife as well as recreational users and the public at large. It is important to solicit the desires of the public and make it clear that those desires are being considered, which in turn will make the public feel like a partner in wildlife management. This includes balanced input from the *entire* public—residents and nonresidents, consumptive and non-consumptive users, as well as non-recreationists—not just the sportsmen or landowners who already attend public meetings or otherwise provide feedback (indeed, the terms “squeaky wheel” and “vocal minority” were frequently used throughout the responses to the qualitative assessment).

This is the public’s chance to help guide Game and Fish’s direction for the next 5 to 10 years. With that in mind, the public should be informed about the diversity of wildlife and habitat throughout Wyoming, the ecological consequences of wildlife management policy, the sources and limitations of funding, and what can be accomplished if more funding were available. If public desires run counter to the recommendations of biologists or other professional expertise, these differences, and the reasons for them, should be clearly communicated. Game and Fish should learn about the public’s wants but also the public’s willingness to pay for those wants. An engaged and informed public with stakes in Game and Fish’s success could be a valuable ally in advocating for funding legislation.

Develop a useable and measurable strategic plan.

The strategic plan should clearly state Game and Fish’s long-term goals and areas for improvement over the next 5 to 10 years. This plan should set goals for wildlife species and fisheries; address common frustrations of hunters, anglers, and the general public; address ways to increase funding; and demonstrate what Game and Fish can achieve and what is beyond its control.

The plan needs to include specific and measureable goals so that progress can be periodically assessed and, if necessary, procedural adjustments can be made. It was emphasized that the strategic plan should be a living document that is integrated naturally into the day-to-day responsibilities; the strategic plan must not sit idly on a shelf after outreach and effort is expended to create it.

Assess and improve employee morale.

An important aspect of this overarching project is to determine the overall morale of Game and Fish employees, to determine the causes of and solutions to low morale (where it exists), and to evaluate employees’ perceptions of the direction of management. The project should determine how to best provide the equipment, technical assistance, staffing, and budgets needed to avoid employee burnout.

Increase funding.

Many concerns about funding limitations were raised. As demographics change, hunters and anglers are likely to become a smaller percentage of the overall constituency, so the funding apparatus needs to reflect this.

Manage all wildlife, not just game and fish species.

Some employees questioned if Game and Fish is doing enough to protect and conserve all species, not just those that are targeted by hunters and anglers.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

These respondents agreed with internal employees on the importance of developing a strategic plan and engaging the entire public, not just sportsmen, on priorities regarding wildlife. In addition, stakeholders mentioned the following goals:

- Determine how Game and Fish can adapt to changes in the number of hunters, revenues, and climate, as well as other factors, to maintain quality habitat.
- Improve efficiency.
- Obtain funding from all users, not just from hunters and anglers through license sales.
- Pursue opportunities to collaborate with other agencies on projects.
- Provide a balance between conservation and population growth, as well as between conservation and energy development.
- Grow youth participation in outdoor recreation.

3.2. MOST IMPORTANT OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

This follows a similar format to the previous section. Internal employee input is looked at first; their outcomes are shown as bold statements followed by details pertaining to the statement. Then external stakeholders are looked at.

INTERNAL EMPLOYEES

Three primary outcomes are detailed, followed by a “catch-all” outcome for some miscellaneous outcomes.

Public support for Game and Fish activities.

As with the most important project goals, employees frequently stated that the most important project outcome is public trust and support for Game and Fish's critical projects. This includes support from non-consumers; it was suggested that Game and Fish has rarely sought their input in the past, and that too much attention has been given to outfitters. It was noted that the public should feel comfortable reporting crimes and expressing concerns. Consider what the public wants, but clearly explain the scientific reasoning behind any requests that are unsustainable or cannot be met for other reasons. For example, if the public wants to grow a deer population, but the carrying capacity has been reduced due to habitat loss and more deer will only exacerbate winter starvation and disease, Game and Fish has a responsibility to inform the public that habitat enhancement and expansion must first be achieved. If the public feels they have been heard and respected, they will be much more likely to support Game and Fish's agenda, potentially through financial support or legislative pressure.

An actionable strategic plan.

The strategic plan will include long-term goals for wildlife management, but should also include tangible plans that can be implemented quickly without excessive cost. The plan should address prioritization of projects, resources, personnel, and spending; it should consider a comprehensive list of the public's and employees' wants; it should include an evaluation of different avenues for funding; it should identify Game and Fish shortcomings and areas for improvement; and it should include project milestones and schedules. These are some, but not all, of the plan's critical elements. The plan should be adjustable for future possibilities.

Robust fish and wildlife populations.

Again there was emphasis that wildlife management plans should be structured to consider all wildlife and fish, not just game that is hunted or trapped and fish species that are fished. Sporting opportunities should be provided, but not at the expense of the overall health of the ecosystem.

Other desired outcomes.

Other desired outcomes mentioned by employees include improved employee retention, more research on CWD, increased participation at public meetings, trust and partnerships with nongovernment organizations, and data to show the public and Governor's office.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

The desired outcomes listed by external stakeholders largely coincide with those listed by internal employees. Stakeholders provided additional emphasis that revenue should be generated by all users, not just sportsmen, and that data should clearly support management decisions on product, policy, rules, and procedures.

3.3. SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE EXPLORED IN RESEARCH

Again, this section looks first at internal employees before considering external stakeholders. They are in the form of actions that internal employees and external stakeholders want the research and/or the agency to take.

INTERNAL EMPLOYEES

Employee responses were diverse and did not coalesce into a few top categories. Therefore, these responses are shown in a bulleted list.

- Consider how to engage non-consumptive users.
- Make nongame wildlife a higher priority; consider renaming Game and Fish to something like the Department of Wildlife to show that game species are not the only ones of concern.
- Show the proportions of Game and Fish resources that go to specific functions (e.g., fish, habitat, nongame, research).
- Consider proactive functions by personnel such as research, networking, and training.
- Share information—email is not always a good way to communicate to employees.
- Embrace the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.
- Seek alternative funding.
- Educate the public on Game and Fish; for example, it does not just consist of game wardens.
- Compare Game and Fish practices to those of other states.
- Control predators.

- Manage feedgrounds.
- Avoid preferential treatment of outfitters, agriculture, and nonresident hunters.
- Mitigate CWD and brucellosis.
- Compare public desires to legislative requirements.
- Increase motivations for youth participation.
- Address bias, favoritism, and unbalanced workloads in Game and Fish.
- Evaluate degree to which politics has driven policy.
- Gauge resident and nonresident knowledge of big game management, diseases, fish stocking, and the inner workings of Game and Fish.
- Consider how to fund more game wardens and digital wildlife investigators.
- Consider how to address the escalating pace of energy development in the state.
- Simplify the licensing procedure.
- Incorporate more advanced mobile apps to engage the younger generation.
- Obtain public's long-term wildlife goals; Game and Fish professionals will best know how to achieve goals once they are known.
- Establish career paths for employees.
- Determine how to address political and institutional limitations.
- Ensure public knows where to find information.
- Educate public on science if it differs from their preferences; invest in ad campaigns.
- Provide more law enforcement, particularly regarding ATVs on public land.
- Do not fall behind on technology/IT.
- Eliminate exploitation of animals.
- Manage mule deer and other herd sizes.
- Make accurate hunting boundaries in GIS.
- Work with other agencies to implement best scientific practices.
- Acquire public land with oil and gas royalties.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

In addition to the issues touched on above, stakeholders noted the following issues:

- Study the studies; a lot of research exists but big game populations other than elk continue to decline.
- Increase cooperation between departments.
- Establish incentives for landowners to preserve or enhance habitats.
- Share biological data between agencies.
- Establish socioeconomic profiles of users and non-users.
- Establish liaisons with agencies and federal partners.
- Identify specific opportunities that can be elevated for the visitor economy.
- Determine how all users can help pay for fish and wildlife management.

3.4. KEY STRENGTHS OF THE AGENCY

This section parallels the first part of the SWOT analysis—the strengths. Internal employees' responses to the assessment question are looked at first, followed by the external stakeholders' comments.

INTERNAL EMPLOYEES

Committed and knowledgeable employees.

A great strength of Game and Fish is the diverse base of skills and knowledge within its employees. Personnel are talented, passionate about wildlife, diverse in their backgrounds and contributions, and experts in their fields. Furthermore, Game and Fish personnel are dispersed throughout the state and accessible to constituents. Strong leadership, excellent feedback on customer service, and the ability to recruit talented personnel were also cited as key strengths.

Abundant natural resources.

Wyoming's natural landscape and abundant fish and wildlife populations are a prize attraction to resident and nonresident visitors. The tourism industry is essential to the state's livelihood, so it is fortunate that Wyoming, arguably, boasts more intact ecosystems and wildlife populations than other western states.

Strong relationship with the public.

The Game and Fish Department has employees dispersed throughout the state. Personnel have become part of their local communities; consequently, the agency can relate to the public on a personal level. Effective customer service contributes to the favorable public opinion as well. Also, nonresident hunters hold a positive view of Game and Fish and the hunting opportunities it provides. The public has a passion for wildlife and is therefore invested in Game and Fish's success.

Current financial stability.

It was noted that the state shows an increase in hunting and fishing participation, unlike most of the country, and that there is a relatively positive budget outlook at the moment.

Good relationships with other entities.

Many employees noted that Game and Fish has a good working relationship with state and federal agencies, industry, landowners, conservation organizations and other NGOs, and the public at large. This has led to a high level of visibility and cooperation on shared goals.

Success stories.

Game and Fish can garner support for its objectives by showing examples of past successes. Examples include fish stocking, bird farms, and game and nongame species recovery. Public outreach, youth camps, and public events are worth noting, as are the hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities provided by Game and Fish.

Autonomy.

Because Game and Fish is not supported under the state's general fund, it has the autonomy and authority to prioritize and implement the best management practices without political interference. One comment stated that Game and Fish is "the only game in town" and that wildlife management at the federal level has become heavily politicized and out of touch.

Other key strengths.

Other Game and Fish strengths that were mentioned include a strong communication framework (e.g., social media, I&E officers, the Department website, and *Wyoming Wildlife* magazine), years of research to provide a scientific basis for management decisions, flexibility for employees to seek training and involvement with organizations to strengthen skills, and a small state population.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

The key strengths mentioned by external stakeholders basically match those mentioned by internal employees. Stakeholders also stated that Game and Fish is proactive on fish and wildlife issues and that it has advanced lab work capabilities (a new facility in Laramie).

3.5. KEY WEAKNESSES OF THE AGENCY

It should be noted that many issues listed as weaknesses here seem to contradict items previously listed as strengths. This reflects a diversity of opinions within Game and Fish. The quantitative survey of Game and Fish employees, presented in Chapter 6 of this report, provides further insight into how widespread certain opinions are; for example, the percentage of employees who express low morale.

INTERNAL EMPLOYEES**Inflexible leadership and structure.**

Many concerns were raised that Game and Fish is too steeped in tradition to implement change, particularly as it relates to hunting seasons. Related comments include that biologists have to plead for changes; that there is a lack of quality leaders; that a culture of egotism and groupthink exists; that field personnel distrust administrative decisions; that there are bureaucratic bottlenecks at administrative levels; that there is a “we know best” attitude without buy-in from the public; and that there is a lack of diversity at supervisory positions.

Low employee morale among some employees.

Factors influencing low morale include lower pay than other state agencies, lack of job security, high employee turnover, little recourse to deal with problem personnel, and lack of internal assessment in a safe and secure feedback environment. Game and Fish is small compared to other agencies, and employee burnout occurs through a combining of workloads; a specific example mentioned is a lack of administrative assistance, which causes employees to spend too much time on office paperwork, contracts, grant tracking, and so forth, in addition to their primary duties. It was also stated that there is no Human Dimensions specialist. (On the other hand, it was stated that many positions at Cheyenne and Regional offices are not necessary.)

Limited funding base.

Game and Fish's dependency on license sales to fund all programs, including those that do not bring in revenue, is seen as a considerable weakness. Employees indicated that Game and Fish needs to find a way to generate funding from non-consumptive users.

Lack of engagement with non-users.

Employees stated that there is a need for public outreach and programs for people who do not hunt or fish. There is an inability to get the public involved in the regulatory process, apart from the vocal minority. The employees feel that a great majority of people on the website are sportsmen and that there is not much website activity among the non-hunting and non-fishing public, including the anti-hunting people.

Favoritism toward landowners.

Similar to the above item, employees noted a culture of protecting landowner interests at the expense of protecting wildlife habitat, and there is a continual creep of commodity interests into decision-making. Also noted was a culture where residents get special treatment, although nonresident hunters fund the bulk of the agency.

Poor communication.

The dispersed nature of the Game and Fish Department into multiple regions and offices makes coordination difficult. Some employees said the swing to decentralization has gone too far, and each division seems to be an empire unto itself. Also, Game and Fish needs to better communicate within the agency and with the public to get adequate recognition of its accomplishments. The phone center was noted as a weakness, the public meetings are not working, and there are no general email customer service links (only the webmaster email).

Other key weaknesses.

Other weakness cited by employees include that there is too little focus on nongame species, that no formal research section exists, that there is a need to better manage the Wyoming legislature to get favorable outcomes, the IT and licensing system are insufficient, that there is too much focus and money going to western Wyoming, and that privatization and development threaten wildlife habitat.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Most weaknesses listed by stakeholders correlate to those listed above. Stakeholders also mentioned extreme weather and long winters, the low state population, legislative meddling, a lack of control on fish and wildlife issues, and the state's reliance on the energy industry at the expense of the environment.

3.6. KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE AGENCY

Paralleling the third part of the SWOT analysis is the question about key opportunities for the agency. Internal employees are considered first.

INTERNAL EMPLOYEES**Public interest in wildlife.**

Although a wide array of opportunities were mentioned by Game and Fish employees, the one mentioned most frequently is the public's passion for Wyoming wildlife. There is a desire among most people to protect wildlife, and interest in hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing is up in the state. Meanwhile, there is a growing demographic of non-hunting/non-fishing users of natural resources (such as hikers and wildlife viewers), which provides Game and Fish an opportunity to find a palatable funding mechanism from this user base. Ultimately, people want the Game and Fish Department to succeed, and public scrutiny of agency work is an advantage.

Partnerships with other entities.

Game and Fish has a good relationship with many other entities, such as state and federal agencies, local conservation groups, landowners, NGOs, and academia. In particular, there are NGOs with an interest in public education and recruitment. Also, Game and Fish can work with colleges; for example, it can institute a program of having students shadow field personnel. Existing data can be shared between the various organizations.

Existing research.

Game and Fish has developed troves of scientific data over the years. For example, fish sampling data and check station data can be presented to the public in a user-friendly format. Also, Game and Fish has numerous success stories that can be shared with the public to enlist its support.

Pending employee turnover.

Employees noted that an aging staff will result in substantial employee turnover in the next few years. This is seen as an opportunity to hire quality personnel, particularly due to the poor job market in natural resources. In addition, new and diverse staff may help Game and Fish adjust to changing demographics and move beyond its traditional policies (for example, it can have greater focus on nongame species and non-hunting/non-fishing users of natural resources).

Other opportunities.

Game and Fish employees listed several other opportunities or calls for action:

- Excellent workforce.
- Abundant natural resources.
- Leadership Development program.
- Social media.
- Outsource expertise such as computer programming or the licensing system.
- More digital technology for hunters, anglers, and Game and Fish employees.
- Video conference capabilities.
- Develop a volunteer program.
- Extraction industry is at a low point (an opportunity for the wildlife recreation industry).
- Elk and deer hunting opportunity is very good right now.
- Mobile technology for data collection.
- Some freedom to make decisions without political pressure (not under general state fund).
- School presentations.
- Booths at home shows or state fairs.
- Create entry level positions.
- Cross train employees to help in different areas.
- Unite public groups to discourage poor hunter behavior.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

External stakeholders also cited the quality workforce, partnerships, existing data and institutional knowledge, and the world-class resource. To those they added the following opportunities:

- Increased public comment and input.
- Use of Governor's tags and/or Commissioner's tags to increase poaching reports.
- Evaluate users and non-users to market holistically (i.e., not just target one objective).
- Public meetings.
- Task forces to hear the public and meet with Game and Fish leadership.

3.7. KEY THREATS TO THE AGENCY

The "T" in the SWOT analysis is for threats. Internal employees and external stakeholders were asked about the threats to the agency, and the former's responses are discussed first.

INTERNAL EMPLOYEES

Lack of funding.

There is a long-term decline in hunting, so with an aging user base it is imperative to recruit younger hunters (and anglers). Also, there is a potential loss in federal funding sources. At the other end, there are higher costs of administration, including IT, disease monitoring, and population monitoring. It was stated that there is currently no monetary diversification plan. Game and Fish needs funding other than license increases.

Habitat loss.

Several factors contribute to declining wildlife habitat and populations, including climate change, disease, invasive species, pressure to privatize public lands, housing expansion into rural areas, and the energy industry, particularly wind energy development and reduced regulation of the extraction industries.

Disease.

Many employees mentioned disease, notably CWD and brucellosis, and warned that Game and Fish will be blamed if a crisis occurs.

Political influence.

The federal government is upending legislation that protects natural resources while simultaneously loosening regulations on energy. At the state level, there is pressure to manage wildlife for human consumption rather than species benefit, and the legislature is undermining environmental protections via property rights bills. In general, anti-government sentiment was noted by several employees.

Other threats.

Game and Fish employees listed several other threats:

- Loss of institutional knowledge from upcoming retirements.
- Nongame species are underrepresented in agency priorities.
- Manipulation by vocal special interests.
- Employee turnover and morale.
- Lack of opportunity for employee growth.
- Time demands (reporting, meetings, planning, NEPA, grant management).

- Outdated software.
- Cyber security/all data at risk of being breached.
- Any needed change will have those opposing it.
- Anti-hunting/fishing/firearm sentiment.
- Vandalism.
- Have not followed through on plans in the past.
- Residents want to restrict nonresidents.
- Lack of trust between Director's Office and employees.
- Endangered species litigation.
- Campaigns to change hunting season structure.
- Unrealistic public demands (kill wolves, stock walleye everywhere, charge nonresidents more)
- Litigation to block state management authority over recovered species (grizzly bear, wolf, trumpeter swan)

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

External stakeholders listed several of the threats covered above, plus the following:

- Highway fatalities for wildlife.
- Drought.
- Locals get upset by marketing to nonresidents.
- Reduced roadside maintenance.
- Federal unfunded mandates.
- Public attention on other priorities like education.
- Cost of managing bear and wolf.

3.8. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

A final question in the assessment simply asked for any additional comments that the employees and stakeholders wanted to leave.

INTERNAL EMPLOYEES

Mixed thoughts on survey and strategic plan.

Many employees see this project as a great opportunity to take public input and develop an effective strategy for Game and Fish moving forward. It was emphasized that the eventual strategic plan should be a living document with annual updates and clear objectives. Strategy recommendations must be feasible and actionable, not overly detailed and idealistic. Conversely, there were many employees who expressed skepticism over this entire exercise. In the past, plans have just sat on the shelf and/or had onerous reporting requirements. There is apathy toward more surveys and plans from some employees, who just want to work on their tasks. There will need to be a convincing build-up and complete buy-in from employees for significant change to take root. Also, there were comments that this survey contained "double talk" and that forthcoming surveys will need a larger sample size ("only angry, uninformed outdoorsmen speak their mind"). It was suggested to hold focus groups with non-hunters (this was done; see Chapters 4 and 8).

Outsource public relations.

It is important for Game and Fish to engage the public. Given the day-to-day responsibilities of employees, it was recommended that Game and Fish pursue additional PR / I&E personnel. Biologists should stick to fish and wildlife, while another entity handles the social work. After soliciting public input, it is important for Game and Fish to remain engaged with its constituents.

Manage nongame species.

It was reiterated that all wildlife species need protection and conservation, not just game or charismatic species.

Reach out to all of the public.

It was reiterated that Game and Fish needs to reach the public beyond those who purchase licenses or attend public meetings. Interestingly, it was stated that public meetings are a faded concept, while another stated that public meetings are valuable for older generations who do not use a computer.

Other additional comments.

Other additional comments from Game and Fish employees include:

- General comments that the agency is doing a great job.
- Set up booths or hold meet-the-warden events.
- Increase access to more lands, public or private (make landlocked public lands available).
- Game and Fish must agree on challenges from mule deer, disease, large carnivores, and special interests.
- Show the public what Game and Fish actually does.
- Need public support for initiatives with young people, wildlife management, and funding.
- Valid licenses on cell phones.
- Mandatory harvest reporting for all species.
- Fees only for draw rather than paying for entire license upfront.
- Science-based management; do not pander to vocal minority.
- Address stagnant wages and high turnover.
- More leadership transparency to address disconnect between Cheyenne and Regions.
- More diverse opinions in the agency than administration sees.
- Get an economist and biologist (panels composed of ranchers, farmers, and developers).
- Do not worry so much about image.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

External stakeholders provided the following additional comments:

- Need for public involvement, but public is not always up to speed and needs to be educated.
- Double down on outreach and let the public know they are being heard.
- Include all users of fish and wildlife in funding.
- The Wyoming Department of Transportation supports the Game and Fish Department and will happily share information as needed.

4. PRE-SURVEY FOCUS GROUPS

This section discusses five focus groups that were conducted *prior* to the telephone survey and other data collection methods. A full discussion of the methodology of these focus groups is included in Chapter 12 of this report, but briefly, focus groups are discussions among a small group of people, led by a moderator through a discussion guide, in which participants are allowed to give any input that they want. These focus groups with residents were conducted in geographically diverse areas across Wyoming: Cheyenne, Rock Springs, Riverton, Gillette, and Cody.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Generally, it seems that focus group participants are satisfied with Game and Fish.

They clearly expressed their value of Wyoming's wildlife in relation to their families and to the many outdoor recreational opportunities across the state. They also expressed their overall appreciation for the work of Game and Fish, especially given their budgetary limitations.

ACCESS

Access was the most discussed issue in each focus group across multiple topics of conversation.

The issue of access was brought up across multiple conversations, even when the focus group discussion promptings did not directly involve access.

Hunters expressed frustration that landowners restrict hunting on their land to those able to pay large fees for trophy hunts, while not permitting resident Wyoming hunters to hunt their land.

This occurs, they say, even while excessive elk and deer populations are destroying landowners' food sources and properties. To add to participants' frustration, they noted that some landowners also receive compensation from the state for land that has been damaged by elk and deer.

With regard to fishing access, some participants noted the difficulty of fishing on streams and rivers that are owned partially by the state and partially by private landowners.

They claim such scenarios can require impractical fishing and boating methods to avoid trespassing on the privately owned streambeds and banks.

Some non-consumptive outdoor recreationists also discussed access in terms of roads and trails that have been closed due to a lack of maintenance, thereby prohibiting them from hiking, viewing wildlife, photographing wildlife, and other similar activities.

MANAGEMENT

Regarding species management, some focus group participants questioned the wisdom of reintroducing wolves, while others noted the increasing danger to hikers, hunters, and wildlife viewers—especially near Cody—of encountering grizzly bears.

Focus group discussions included those who questioned the efficacy and the financial practicality of attempting to eliminate certain non-native fish species in order to bring back native species.

Some in the focus groups noted the need for Game and Fish to place greater emphasis on managing nongame species.

Regarding habitat management, some participants commented on the widespread deadwood in Wyoming's forests as a fire hazard and reflected on the perceived mismanagement of Russian olive and sagebrush.

Finally, regarding recreation management, some participants who are particularly interested in non-consumptive outdoor recreation emphasized more maintenance on trails and roads throughout the state in order to increase access.

REGULATIONS

There were multiple comments across all focus groups regarding the complexity of Game and Fish hunting regulations.

Some appreciated the complexity and noted that it requires a level of commitment to read and understand the regulations that eliminates uncommitted hunters. However, others expressed frustration and/or concern over the regulations' complexity and asserted that (at a minimum) it discourages the recruitment and retention of young and/or inexperienced hunters.

Across all five focus groups, many participants called for simplifying the regulations to some degree, thereby making hunting and fishing more accessible to Wyoming's outdoor recreationists.

It was suggested a few times in different focus groups that the administrators who write the regulations are too removed from the field to properly understand how such regulations may or may not be practically applied to hunting, fishing, and access scenarios.

In connection to the regulations, many focus group participants also noted the difficulty of drawing tags for big game hunts, and expressed difficulty understanding the regulations concerning boundaries between public and private land, including the many designated hunting areas (and the accompanying area-specific regulations) from which to choose.

Boaters commented on the need to better enforce AIS inspection regulations.

EDUCATION

Multiple focus group participants across all five focus groups commented on the need for more educational initiatives, especially toward youth and young hunters.

They are concerned that, without proper education through parents, schools, or other community or state programs, fewer youth will be interested in hunting.

Some boaters emphasized the development of statewide boating ethics and etiquette education in relation to interacting with other outdoor recreationists.

COMMUNICATION

Multiple participants across all focus groups requested more and better communication from Game and Fish regarding one or more of the following: regulations, policy decisions, annual Game and Fish budgetary allocations, website improvement and development, simplifying the regulations, and other suggestions.

It seems that some outdoor recreationists—particularly hunters and anglers—experience varying degrees of difficulty using the Game and Fish website to retrieve needed information; purchase licenses, tags, stamps, etc.; and locate pertinent Game and Fish contact information.

GAME AND FISH FUNDING

Some focus group participants noted that they would like Game and Fish to consider excise taxes and fees for non-consumptive outdoor recreation items and activities as an additional funding source. However, some hunters and anglers expressed apprehension with this idea, indicating that they would prefer Game and Fish to remain mostly funded by license fees and related expenses from hunting and fishing.

The latter people noted that they would like to retain as much consideration, attention, and funding from Game and Fish toward their respective activities as possible. Instead, they suggested increasing current resident and nonresident hunting and fishing fees. A few hunters and anglers expressed their willingness to pay slightly higher resident hunting and fishing license (and related) fees. Some also emphasized increasing nonresident license fees and tags in order to generate additional funding for Game and Fish.

RESOURCES AND PERSONNEL

Some focus group participants noted they would like to see Game and Fish allocate more resources and personnel for non-consumptive outdoor recreational interests and for nongame species management efforts.

They perceive that the subsequent lack of attention to such issues is due to limited funding and other limited resources. As mentioned earlier, some would like to see Game and Fish funding sources expand to include non-consumptive outdoor recreationists, which would include (from their perspective) more resources and personnel allocated to non-consumptive activities and nongame species management.

4.1. ATTITUDES TOWARD THE IMPORTANCE OF WILDLIFE IN WYOMING

Each focus group began with a discussion regarding the relative importance of wildlife in the lives of participants. These initial discussions suggest that, almost without exception, wildlife is greatly important to Wyoming residents: consistently across the five locations, participants indicated that they placed significant value on wildlife in their own lives as well as the lives of their family members. A number of participants who said they had moved to Wyoming from other states commented that the abundance of wildlife in Wyoming was a major factor in their decision to move to the state (Wyoming's wildlife was sometimes said to set the state apart from other areas in the country). Others stressed the importance that wildlife plays in their children's lives, while a few people discussed the importance of deer as a source of healthy meat for many residents.

4.2. MAJOR ISSUES FACING WYOMING'S WILDLIFE AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Participants were asked by the moderator in a nonspecific, open-ended question what they saw as the major issues currently facing Wyoming's wildlife. On this topic, participants from multiple focus groups indicated that large carnivore management (i.e., wolves and grizzly bears) is an important issue in Wyoming that demands attention. Several people questioned the wisdom of reintroducing wolves to Wyoming (a decision that had been made, according to some, by people "not from Wyoming") while others commented on wolves' effect on elk and deer herds.

Another topic frequently addressed by participants across several of the groups was access: this issue was alternately discussed in the context of hunting and fishing access, access to land for hiking and wildlife viewing, and specific problems with access, such as public land being blocked by private land (or private landowners). The fact that many participants immediately mentioned access as an issue facing wildlife is notable, given that most of these comments dealt with the effect of access issues on recreationists and not necessarily on wildlife—this suggests that access may be a pervasive concern among many.

Additional issues mentioned, either directly or indirectly related to wildlife, included poaching, the perception of a decreasing deer population (which at least a few participants attributed in part to excessive hunting pressure in certain areas), and the need for increased management of wildlife habitat. In general, the majority of participants across the five locations seemed to assume that active wildlife management is integral to the health and sustainability of many different species.

In a separate question, participants were asked about the most important issues pertaining to Wyoming's natural environment. On this topic, a number of participants mentioned pollution and littering: this was generally discussed in the context of water regulation and management as well as littering in and around camping areas and on hiking trails (some people called for more enforcement of littering laws). Other topics included the obligation for Game and Fish to coordinate with federal resource agencies (especially on management efforts spanning state and federal lands in Wyoming) and to balance natural resource extraction efforts in the state with the interests of wildlife and conservation in general.

4.3. MAJOR ISSUES FACING WYOMING'S RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Participants were asked what they saw as the major issues facing hunting, fishing, trapping, boating, hiking, and wildlife viewing in Wyoming (each activity was asked about separately). In general, there tended to be more discussion on issues related to hunting and fishing, perhaps because these activities tend to be viewed as more “actively managed” by Game and Fish and, as a result, touch on a number of related issues (species management, terrestrial and aquatic habitat, regulations, interactions with landowners, etc.).

HUNTING

The cost of hunting licenses was discussed by a few hunters across the groups, sometimes with the observation that middle-income people are being “priced out of hunting” in Wyoming. Also prominently mentioned was the Game and Fish website, described by a handful of participants as rather poorly designed and not user-friendly—a few people mentioned that the process for purchasing a license online or looking up hunt areas on the website is not as convenient and simple as it should be. Some people talked about crowding from other hunters in general hunt areas, with a few comments addressing crowding from nonresidents specifically. Other comments addressed confusion from draw areas, especially the concept of a single hunting area having different numerical designations depending on the species being hunted.

There was also discussion about the ratio of resident and nonresident licenses, permits, and tags issued, with a number of hunters commenting that higher-priced nonresident privileges bring in more revenue for the agency than do resident privileges, and that this price difference may incentivize Game and Fish to offer more licenses, permits, and tags to nonresidents. Landowners affecting hunting access and other access issues were again discussed rather extensively by hunters across the five focus groups.

A number of participants across the groups commented on the perceived complexity of Wyoming's hunting regulations, especially big game hunting regulations. Some noted that the regulations seemed unnecessarily complex and are therefore counterproductive to encouraging prospective hunters to take up the sport (it was mentioned that newcomers are less familiar with long-standing regulations and may be put off by the apparent complexity). Regarding licensing, a notable number of hunters expressed frustration at seldom drawing tags for big game hunts—some hunters in the groups again speculated that Game and Fish may offer more tags to nonresidents in order to generate maximum funding for the agency.

FISHING

While access difficulties were also said to affect fishing for some residents, the degree of frustration did not appear as pronounced as it was for hunting. One key access issue mentioned was water bodies that are owned by multiple stakeholders (e.g., a private landowner owning a portion of an otherwise public river). Some anglers in the groups expressed frustration with fishing regulations (although again, not to the extent of the apparent frustration with hunting regulations), while a few others questioned the management of non-native fish populations (on this topic, several people questioned the money and effort spent to eliminate certain non-native species in order to bring back native species in some areas).

TRAPPING

As a whole, participants had less to say about trapping than about many of the other activities. There were fewer active trappers in the focus groups than hunters and anglers, although a number of participants personally knew other individuals who trapped. Apart from access issues and the occasional theft of an animal trap, there were few major concerns raised about trapping in Wyoming.

BOATING

One issue related to boating in Wyoming was discussed to varying degrees in each group: Game and Fish's required invasive species decal. A notable number of participants felt that it is unnecessary to require the inspection (and decal) for kayaks and other small non-motorized craft, or for watercraft that are used exclusively on Wyoming waters (i.e., not used on any out-of-state waters). Some people commented that the inspection process by Game and Fish is scattershot and seemingly randomly enforced at times, with a few people suggesting that the program does not seem likely to prevent the spread of invasive species as a result. Others mentioned confusion in trying to learn from Game and Fish's website which decals are required and when.

Another boating issue brought up related to interactions between personal watercraft (PWC) operators and other types of boaters: a number of boaters and anglers in the groups mentioned instances in which PWC operators had approached them too fast or too close (or both) or had behaved in an otherwise discourteous manner. Such mentions would often lead into a discussion about the need for more education on recreational etiquette and ethics.

HIKING

Most hikers in the groups expressed appreciation for the extensive and picturesque opportunities for hiking in Wyoming. Like the other activities, discussions on hiking also touched on access issues to some extent, with some participants commenting that access roads in their areas have deteriorated or have been closed in recent years. A few people in the Riverton group mentioned the presence of ATV riders on secluded and otherwise quiet hiking trails (some claimed that ATVs have become more prevalent in hiking areas). A consistent point of concern in the Gillette and Cody groups was the need for hikers to be prepared for potential encounters with bears.

Finally, a small number of people touched on the concept of requiring hikers (and other non-consumptive users) to contribute funding for the maintenance of hiking opportunities, similar to how hunters and anglers help fund Game and Fish activities through license purchases. Note that some of these people said they were unsure of what a hiker funding model should look like or how it could be enforced—a few people mentioned state and national park fees on this topic.

WILDLIFE VIEWING

Many comments on the topic of wildlife viewing were positive, focusing mainly on Wyoming's abundant and diverse wildlife viewing opportunities. A few people in each of the groups noted that some wildlife viewers (particularly those from out of the state) seemingly do not have the proper respect for the animals they are viewing (e.g., they attempt to capture inappropriate or dangerous photos or attempt to closely interact with or touch wildlife). It was mentioned that such inappropriate behavior can result in injury or property damage that could otherwise be avoided through responsible behavior and reasonable precautions.

4.4. ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

This section looks at priorities of Game and Fish, its vision statement, how well it performs, among other topics.

GENERAL GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PRIORITIES

Following the discussion on issues related to specific outdoor recreational activities, participants were asked about major issues and priorities that should be addressed by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. In these discussions, participants across the five locations suggested a number of priority areas on which Game and Fish should focus. In emphasizing the need for Game and Fish to generate revenue to fund its management and enforcement activities, a number of participants recommended the strategic issuance of tags for people to hunt overpopulated species in specific regions throughout the state. Many people emphasized the importance of management focused on the ecosystem as a whole, meaning the management of both game and nongame species (including large carnivores); at the same time, others said that game species represented a higher priority. Several participants remarked about the interconnectedness of wildlife management and Wyoming's natural environment, with a few people suggesting that hunting and fishing regulations are written by Game and Fish employees who are far removed from the field. Others commented about the general need to maintain healthy habitat for all species.

Numerous participants noted that there are too few game wardens to adequately address the state's enforcement needs. A few participants called for harsher penalties for poaching—an issue that many participants noted is ongoing throughout the state. Overall, participants suggested that Wyoming game wardens are doing the best they can to enforce laws, given fairly limited resources (manpower and otherwise). As a result, some participants suggested the need for recreationists to “self-enforce” while in the field as responsible and ethical recreationists. In connection, a few participants suggested increased education efforts to encourage vigilance and reporting as necessary among hunters, anglers, and other recreationists.

At least a few participants in almost every focus group noted difficulty with purchasing licenses online through Game and Fish's website. One participant in Rock Springs plainly stated that Game and Fish has lost “an entire generation of people” due to the complexity of the agency's online license purchasing system (this participant seemed to be referring to older residents less familiar with online purchases). On the subject of tags, one participant in Riverton suggested designating a few areas for “pioneer tag owners” (i.e., hunters of a certain age), including women who may have difficulty packing out an entire animal over a long distance on foot. Regarding the big game tag draw process, one person suggested a rotating schedule to disqualify people who had a drawn a tag one year from applying again the very next year—this recommendation stemmed from frustration over observing some people drawing tags year after year while others fail to draw a tag many years in a row.

Once again, the issue of access pervaded the discussions in every focus group. The general consensus seemed to be that access is worse for hunters than it is for anglers, hikers, and other outdoor recreationists. (Note that Section 4.5 covers access issues in more detail.) Another major issue brought up in several groups was the perception that landowners receive compensation from Game and Fish for property damage from deer or elk and then limit access to their properties to only those hunters who are willing to pay exorbitant fees for the privilege to hunt

on them (this was sometimes referred to as “double-dipping” because of the two sources of money for landowners). A few hunters throughout the groups said that landowners who received compensation for damage done by wildlife should be obligated to allow hunters in general onto their properties to thin the herds.

Multiple participants noted the widespread deadwood in Wyoming’s forests as a fire hazard. They emphasized the need for logging and the removal of excess deadwood, thereby allowing more undergrowth. A few people also expressed concern over the perceived mismanagement of Russian olive and sagebrush.

A number of participants across the five groups indicated that Game and Fish’s most important priorities center on wildlife management and conservation of the state’s fish and wildlife resources. Along with this, many people affirmed that quality wildlife-related recreational opportunities will only be possible if the state’s natural resources are well managed.

GAME AND FISH VISION STATEMENT

In general, participants were ambivalent about the wording of Game and Fish’s vision statement. Overall, most people were generally favorable toward the statement, “Wyoming is home to an abundant and diverse array of wildlife and wildlife habitat which plays an integral part in the State’s culture, economy and quality of life.” However, a number of participants questioned the second statement: “The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is dedicated to providing world-renowned hunting, angling, and other wildlife-based recreational opportunities.” Some participants recommended omitting the phrase, “world-renowned,” with some people suggesting that this wording too heavily emphasized Wyoming as a tourist destination for out-of-state hunters and anglers; others simply questioned whether it is accurate to describe Wyoming’s hunting and fishing opportunities today as “world-renowned.” A few others questioned the phrase, “stakeholder engagement,” wondering how Game and Fish defines “stakeholder,” as well as the phrase, “science based management,” seemingly distrustful of the potentially impermanent nature of science.

CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

The majority of participants were strongly approving of Game and Fish’s performance as an agency. There seemed to be an assumption among many participants that Game and Fish is doing the best it can with a limited budget. The perception of a limited budget seemed to stem from the often-observed lack of a more widespread game warden presence throughout the state. Others framed their comments in terms of Game and Fish’s ability to work within constraints and through challenges imposed by federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A small number of people drew a contrast between Game and Fish game wardens (who spend a great deal of time in the field) and office-based administrators (often perceived as lacking intimate knowledge of Wyoming’s wildlife and natural environment).

One important reason for participants’ general appreciation for the work of Game and Fish was interaction with agency game wardens, biologists, and other personnel. Despite a few exceptions, most people who had interacted with Game and Fish personnel spoke of the experiences in positive terms, often describing wardens as courteous, friendly, helpful, and prompt in replies and responses. A very small number of participants in a few of the groups had experienced negative interactions with wardens; it was suggested by a few people that younger, more inexperienced wardens (who may have “more to prove”) are more likely to be aggressive or

rude, while older, more experienced wardens are more likely to be laid back, friendly, and approachable in the field.

Two criticisms of Game and Fish's performance were insufficient coverage by game wardens (some attributed this to insufficient funding for the agency) and a relative lack of communication about agency programs, accomplishments, and initiatives. For some people, this lack of communication came down to experiences on the personal level, with a few people mentioning instances in which they had to wait for long periods for a response from a Game and Fish employee or from a field office. Others requested more proactive outreach on Game and Fish's part, especially by communicating and explaining to the Wyoming public (and recreationists in particular) budgetary and regulatory decisions that affect outdoor recreation and wildlife.

IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Discussions regarding the importance of the Game and Fish's efforts to provide wildlife-based recreational opportunities tended to focus mostly on ways of making it easier for residents to hunt and fish. Key suggestions included making more hunting tags and licenses available to residents (and potentially minimizing efforts to attract nonresidents hunters and anglers) and simplifying regulations. A few people suggested other ideas for reinforcing the link between residents and Wyoming's natural environment, such as stewardship initiatives that would allow people to assist with land improvements while also creating access opportunities.

Participants were asked what should be done to improve other recreational opportunities besides hunting and fishing, and a number of comments addressed the need for improvements to Game and Fish's website as well as trail and road maintenance to ensure accessibility for others, such as hikers and wildlife viewers. Additionally, a few people suggested outreach and programmatic initiatives geared toward youth.

IMPORTANCE OF RECRUITING NEW RECREATIONISTS

In discussions regarding the importance that Game and Fish make efforts to recruit new recreationists (particularly hunters and anglers), many participants appeared supportive of the general concept of getting children outdoors (whether hunting, fishing, hiking, or in other activities). Suggestions included making it easier for young and prospective sportsmen to obtain hunting and fishing licenses, increasing the availability of hunter safety courses, continuing to improve public access, and (again), improving Game and Fish's website as a go-to source of information. Note, however, that at least a handful of people across the groups suggested that Game and Fish should concentrate first and foremost on the management and well-being of the state's fish and wildlife resources and not necessarily on the recruitment of new recreationists.

Also during these discussions, a few people returned to concerns about private landowners effectively being allowed to control hunting opportunities for certain sought-after species. This lack of access has a deleterious effect on recruitment of new participants.

INTERACTIONS WITH GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

As previously discussed, many participants across the five groups who had had personal contact with game wardens and other Game and Fish personnel spoke quite positively about these experiences. Only a very small number of participants shared stories about negative encounters (interestingly, two focus group participants in separate locations who spoke somewhat negatively about their interactions with game wardens were both former law enforcement officers themselves).

Game and Fish personnel were specifically commended by a number of people for being easy to contact, especially by telephone (several people mentioned examples of game wardens who had provided their personal mobile phone numbers to recreationists so as to be easily reachable). A few people in the Cody focus group said that they had better luck getting questions answered through the main Game and Fish office in Cheyenne rather than through smaller regional offices.

LICENSING REQUIREMENTS AND REGULATIONS

A number of hunters and anglers in the groups had moderate concerns about the perception of rising costs of hunting and fishing licenses; there was also concern about the sheer number of licenses, tags, and stamps required for certain hunting and fishing activities. At the same time, at least a few people said that they would be willing to pay higher prices for resident licenses and tags if it meant better chances of being drawn for certain hunts. One person in the Cheyenne group mentioned some moderate difficulty in trying to figure out the decal requirements for kayaks.

Many participants indicated that hunting and fishing regulations are too complex (it was generally agreed that hunting regulations are more complicated and harder to understand than fishing regulations, although a number of participants had comments about the latter as well). Interestingly, some people seemed to appreciate the complicated nature of regulations, feeling that it is incumbent on hunters and anglers to figure them out as part of the privilege of hunting and fishing in Wyoming. Indeed, several people in the Cody focus group commented that complex regulations help to “weed out” hunters who do not care enough to go to the trouble of studying the regulations. There was support for the simplification of regulations, especially for hunting, as well as simplification of the process of purchasing licenses via the Game and Fish website.

4.5. OPINIONS ON ACCESS ISSUES IN WYOMING

Access was a prevalent topic of discussion in each focus group. The prevailing concern among hunters seemed to be the restriction of access to public land by private land owned by ranchers and other landowners. Hunters across the five groups commonly described instances of inadvertent or unintended trespassing as a result of needing to cross private land in order to reach public land. Along these lines, there were numerous stories from hunters about confrontations and other encounters with ranchers and landowners whose lands prevented direct access to nearby public land (landowners were often described as being unwilling to allow access through their properties to adjacent Bureau of Land Management areas or other public lands).

A further source of frustration was the observation by hunters in some of the groups that some landowners charge high fees in exchange for the privilege of hunting big game species on their lands (trophy deer and elk were commonly named as examples). It was mentioned that landowners occasionally also receive compensation from the state for property damage caused

by wildlife—the focus group discussions suggest that many hunters, already frustrated by a scarcity of access, are further frustrated at the notion of landowners making money off wildlife on lands that remain inaccessible to most hunters.

There was more satisfaction with fishing access in Wyoming, although a number of participants commented about the need for easements in areas where private land prevents shoreline fishing along lakes, streams, and rivers—it was noted that many anglers do not own boats and so must fish from the shoreline or not at all.

A lack of public access was also said to affect hiking and wildlife viewing in some areas, especially in places where public roads have been closed due to a lack of maintenance (some participants noted that certain areas are now accessible only by horseback). Also, a number of participants communicated concern about the prospect of federal lands being transferred or sold to state or private entities (it was speculated that such scenarios would result in even less access).

It is noteworthy that public access, especially access for hunting, was a top-of-mind issue of concern for many participants, so much so that access was often brought up by participants in seemingly unrelated discussions (the initial discussion on issues facing Wyoming's wildlife and natural environment, for example).

4.6. KNOWLEDGE OF AND OPINIONS ON AGENCY FUNDING

Many participants seemed aware that at least some of Game and Fish's funding comes from hunting and fishing licenses. Some participants called for greater transparency on Game and Fish's part with regard to its funding sources and annual expenditures. In response to this, several people noted that this information is readily available online. Regardless, some felt that Game and Fish should be more proactive in communicating such information, rather than simply making it available online (it was mentioned that the agency's website does not make it easy to find the information).

There were multiple ideas about funding. Most participants thought that hunting and fishing opportunities in Wyoming should continue to be funded by hunters and anglers. Regarding other recreational opportunities, there were differing opinions as to whether non-consumptive recreational activities (e.g., hiking, wildlife viewing, boating) should be funded by the participants of these activities themselves, through another funding mechanism such as the state's general fund, or through the agency's current dedicated mechanism of hunting and fishing licenses. Some participants liked the idea of a wider variety of residents (i.e., people other than just hunters and anglers) helping to fund Game and Fish's management work, while others worried that a wider funding base could end up restricting access to certain activities (i.e., because a diverse population of recreationists could feel equally entitled to the same resources). Some people suggested instituting excise taxes on hiking and wildlife viewing equipment (e.g., binoculars) in the same way that such taxes are charged on hunting and fishing equipment and then redistributed to the states as federal aid.

The discussion on Game and Fish funding also touched on the agency's Aquatic Invasive Species Program. While most participants seemed to appreciate the intent behind the program, a handful of people across the groups suggested that because Game and Fish relies on volunteer participation in boat inspections, the program is unlikely to be completely successful in preventing the spread of invasive species. A few people suggested exempting the purchase of a

decal from watercraft whose small size should not require an inspection, as well as watercraft that are used exclusively on Wyoming's waterways (see the earlier section on issues related to boating for comments addressing these suggestions). While participants' comments suggested generally strong awareness of the program itself, few participants seemed aware of the amount spent on the program annually, or that the program is run entirely by Game and Fish.

5. GENERAL POPULATION AND HUNTER / ANGLER SURVEY RESULTS

The results that follow are from a scientific, probability-based random sampling survey of the general population (i.e. residents statewide), as well as nonresident hunters and nonresident anglers. The analyses were conducted on several groups, including residents statewide, resident hunters, nonresident hunters, resident anglers, nonresident anglers, and wildlife viewers. The methodology is discussed in full in Chapter 12, "Methodology."

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

PARTICIPATION

Participation in hunting and fishing is robust in Wyoming.

About a third of residents had purchased a hunting license within the past 5 years, and nearly half had purchased a fishing license in that time.

Other activities with robust participation include hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing.

Nearly three fourths had hiked, about two thirds had camped, and about two thirds had gone wildlife viewing.

Public lands are of great importance for both hunting and fishing in Wyoming.

A large majority of hunters use mostly public land, and an even larger majority of anglers access their fishing mostly through public land.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

The viability of wildlife populations, poaching, and wolf management were important concerns of residents when asked about Wyoming's fish and wildlife.

Access is an important concern of hunters. Invasive species is a top concern of both anglers and boaters. Access is also a concern of wildlife enthusiasts who do not hunt, trap, or fish.

ACCESS

Rating of access was asked about directly for several activities. The best ratings are for access to view wildlife and to hike. There appears to be room for improvement regarding fishing and hunting: although a majority give access ratings of *excellent* or *good* to these activities, in both cases the *good* ratings exceed the *excellent* ratings.

Maintaining roads and keeping them open were common ways that residents think access can be improved.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

The typical Wyoming resident is knowledgeable about Game and Fish: nearly three quarters say that they know *a great deal* or *a moderate amount* about the agency.

Hunters/trappers/anglers have, of course, robust knowledge levels, but even a majority of those who do not hunt, trap, or fish say that they know *a great deal* or *a moderate amount*.

SATISFACTION WITH THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Satisfaction is high with the agency: 90% of residents are satisfied, including 62% who are *very satisfied*.

Satisfaction is high across various user groups: more than 90% of hunters and anglers (both resident and nonresident) are satisfied, and just under 90% of non-hunting/non-trapping/non-fishing wildlife viewers are satisfied.

The perception that there is not enough law enforcement is a leading reason for dissatisfaction, exceeding reasons related to habitat or fish/wildlife management.

OPINIONS ON THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

The agency enjoys high ratings of credibility among the general public, hunters, and anglers.

Among residents, 95% rated the agency credible, with 79% rating it *very credible*. Hunters, anglers, and wildlife viewers give similarly high ratings of credibility.

The conservation and protection of wildlife, habitat, and natural resources was the top-named benefit that the Game and Fish Department provides. Additionally, providing opportunities for hunting, fishing, and viewing wildlife are important benefits that were named. Rounding out this list of perceived benefits is the provision of information and education about fish and wildlife.

The majority of residents agree that Game and Fish balances fish and wildlife management with opportunities for hunting and fishing. Listening to the public and incorporating feedback into agency decision-making was one aspect that could be improved, according to the percent who agree that they do this well.

When the survey asked about influences on the agency, politics was seen by residents as the top influence. Landowners and resident hunters were also perceived as having high levels of influence. In the middle of the ratings on this was scientific fish and wildlife methods, and lowest on the list was nonresidents.

Environmental/conservation groups and the energy industry are perceived as having about the same level of influence, and both are in the middle of the ranking of influences.

PRIORITIES OF THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Residents' top priorities are the protection of fish and wildlife by the enforcement of laws, the protection of Wyoming's waters from invasive species, and the management and maintenance of Wildlife Habitat Management Areas.

Residents' best performance ratings are given to the Game and Fish Department's efforts at providing fishing opportunities, protecting fish and wildlife by the enforcement of laws, and the issuing of licenses.

Note that the protection of fish and wildlife showed up in the top three in importance and performance. This comparison of importance and performance is the topic of the next item.

When comparing the ratings of importance and performance, those efforts rated highly important are the same ones, in general, that are rated highly in performance. In other words, the ratings of performance are generally commensurate with the importance residents place on the efforts.

OPINIONS ON LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

The large majority of hunters and anglers agree that the hunting and fishing regulations and licensing requirements are clear and easy to understand.

Hunters rated the clarity of both the hunting regulations and the hunting licensing requirements, and anglers did the same regarding fishing: of the four ratings, no less than 88% agreed that the regulations/requirements are clear and easy to understand (agreement ranged from 88% to 96%).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The Internet, including the Game and Fish website, are the most important sources of fish and wildlife information among residents, and more so among hunters and anglers.

In a direct question, two thirds of residents indicated visiting the Game and Fish website at some time. Of course, visitation is even higher among hunters and anglers.

The large majority of those who visited the website agreed that the information was easy to find.

The only concern might be that, although 82% overall agreed that the information was easy to find, agreement was fairly evenly divided between *strongly* agree and *moderately* agree, suggesting that the latter group's visitation was not completely smooth.

FUNDING

Among the general public, less than half named hunting and fishing licenses as a source of Game and Fish funding—suggesting that a majority are unaware, perhaps, that this is an important funding source and are not giving due credit to hunters and anglers for this funding. Furthermore, more than a quarter of residents named general taxes, which is not a source of funding.

A low percentage of residents, as well as hunters and anglers, named excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, which is an important source. One might have expected that a higher

percentage of hunters and anglers would have mentioned excise taxes on their equipment (at most, 6% named it).

More than three quarters of residents, hunters, and anglers agree that elected officials should explore options for new funding sources to help pay for fish and wildlife conservation in Wyoming.

The first analysis shown for each question is the statewide data run of residents' (i.e., the general population's) results. Next, data are shown regionally, based on the region of residence (the regional breakdown is fully explained in Chapter 12, "Methodology"). A third analysis is conducted of resident and nonresident hunters (based on license purchase rather than actual participation); and a fourth is of resident and nonresident anglers (based on license purchase rather than actual participation). Next, consumptive users' data were analyzed (*consumptive* referring to those who had hunted, trapped, or fished) versus everybody else (i.e., every person who did not hunt, trap, or fish, sometimes referred to as *non-consumptives*). Lastly, *wildlife viewers* who did not hunt, trap, or fish are shown (sometimes referred to as *non-consumptive wildlife viewers*; they are not the same as non-consumptives referred to above because they specifically went *wildlife viewing*).

5.1. PARTICIPATION IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

Nearly half of Wyoming residents (48%) have purchased a Wyoming fishing license within the past 5 years, and about a third (30%) have purchased a hunting license in that time; trapping is also shown (2%) (Figures 5.1.1 through 5.1.3).

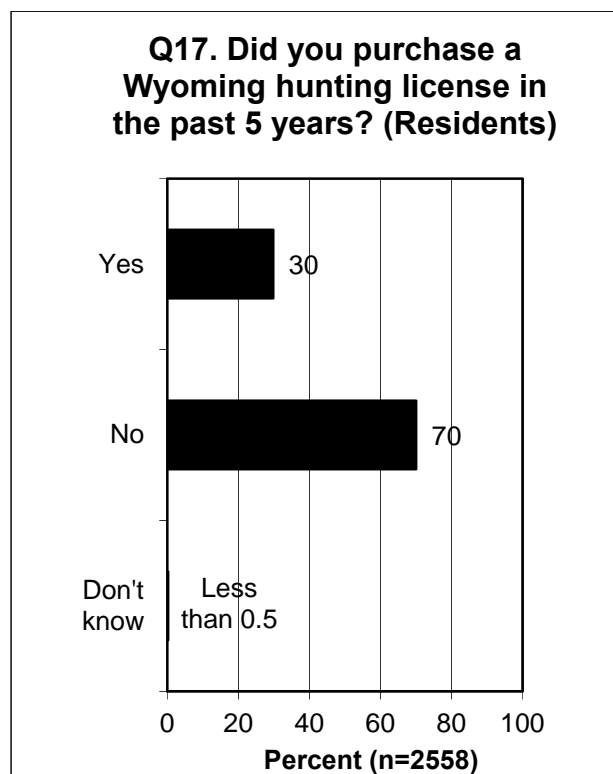


Figure 5.1.1. Purchase of Hunting Licenses by Residents

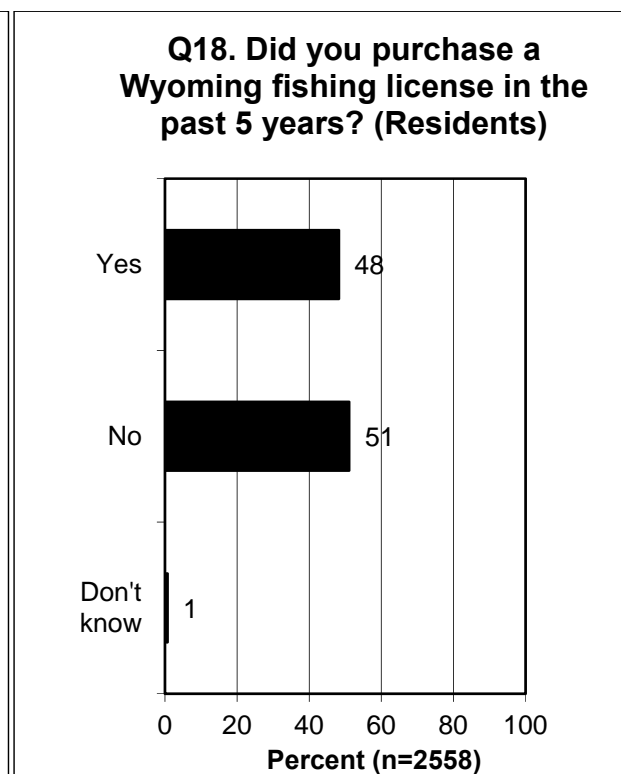


Figure 5.1.2. Purchase of Fishing Licenses by Residents

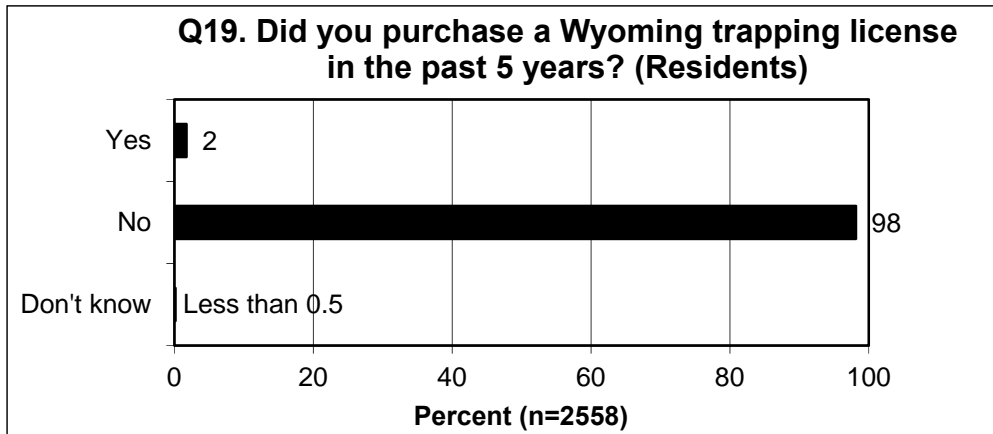


Figure 5.1.3. Purchase of Trapping Licenses by Residents

These results are also shown tabulated for the eight regions (Tables 5.1.1 through 5.1.3). Pinedale and Green River residents have the highest rates of hunting license purchasing, while Pinedale has the highest rate of fishing license purchasing.

Table 5.1.1. Regional Rates of Hunting License Purchasing

Q17. Did you purchase a Wyoming hunting license in the past 5 years? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Yes	17%	30%	35%	41%	39%	36%	27%	24%
No	83%	70%	65%	58%	60%	63%	72%	76%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Table 5.1.2. Regional Rates of Fishing License Purchasing

Q18. Did you purchase a Wyoming fishing license in the past 5 years? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Yes	38%	47%	50%	61%	46%	52%	51%	46%
No	61%	52%	50%	38%	53%	47%	48%	53%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Table 5.1.3. Regional Rates of Trapping License Purchasing

Q19. Did you purchase a Wyoming trapping license in the past 5 years? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Yes	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	2%
No	99%	97%	97%	97%	98%	99%	98%	98%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Next, these results are examined among non-consumptive users (i.e., those who viewed wildlife but who did not hunt, trap, or fish). Figure 5.1.4 shows hunting license purchasing, and Figure 5.1.5 shows fishing license purchasing; note that none bought a trapping license, so no graph is presented for this. It appears that some in the sample had purchased a license without engaging in the sport (either hunting or fishing).

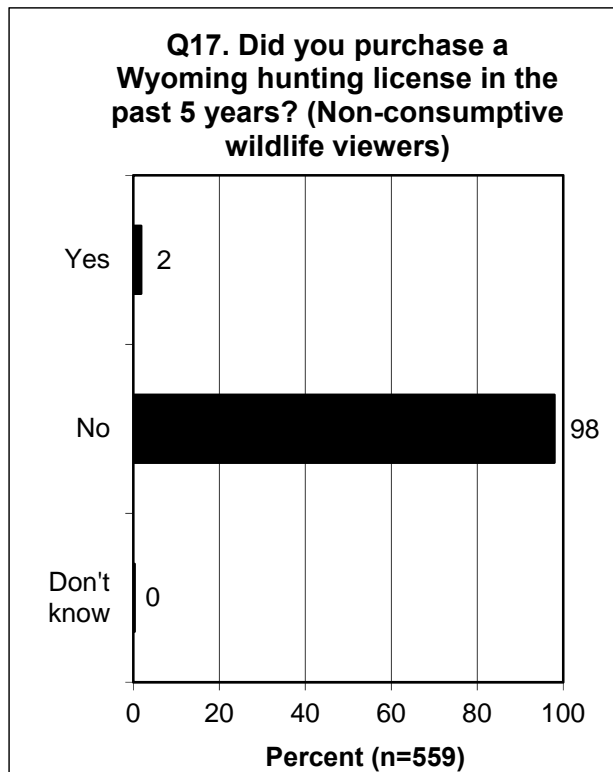


Figure 5.1.4. Purchase of Hunting Licenses by Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

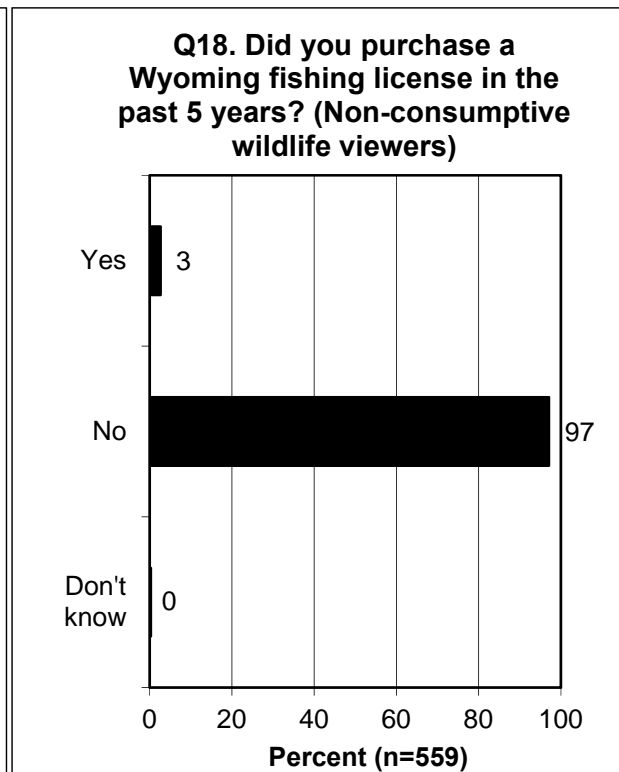


Figure 5.1.5. Purchase of Fishing Licenses by Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

In addition to exploring Wyoming residents' license purchasing, the survey explored participation in eight outdoor activities within the previous 5 years. Large majorities had gone hiking (72% had done so), camping (67%), and wildlife viewing (65%), and a slight majority had gone fishing (52%) (Figures 5.1.6 through 5.1.13). The regional results are tabulated, as well (Tables 5.1.4 through 5.1.11).

The graphs also show those outdoor activities in which a large percentage of participants are avid—they went all 5 of the past 5 years. A large portion of hikers, wildlife viewers, and campers are avid, as measured by going all 5 years. Anglers, too, have a high proportion going every year.

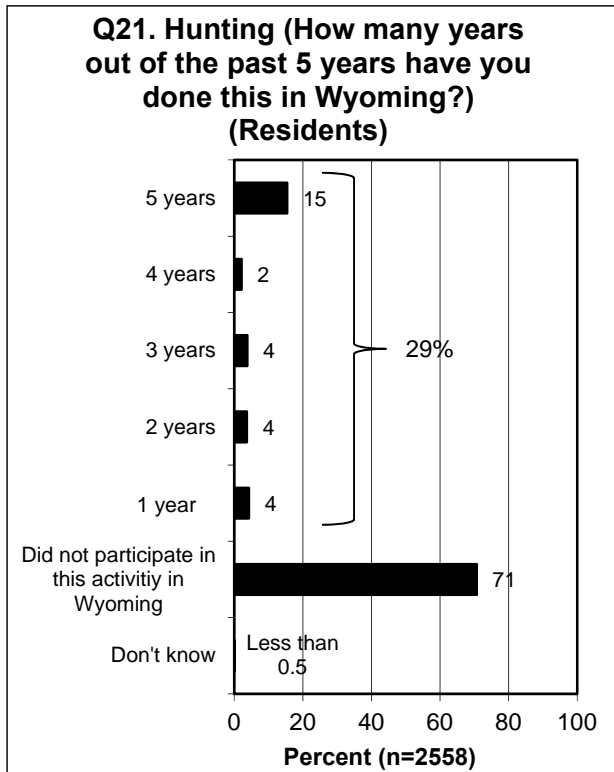


Figure 5.1.6. Hunting Participation Among Residents

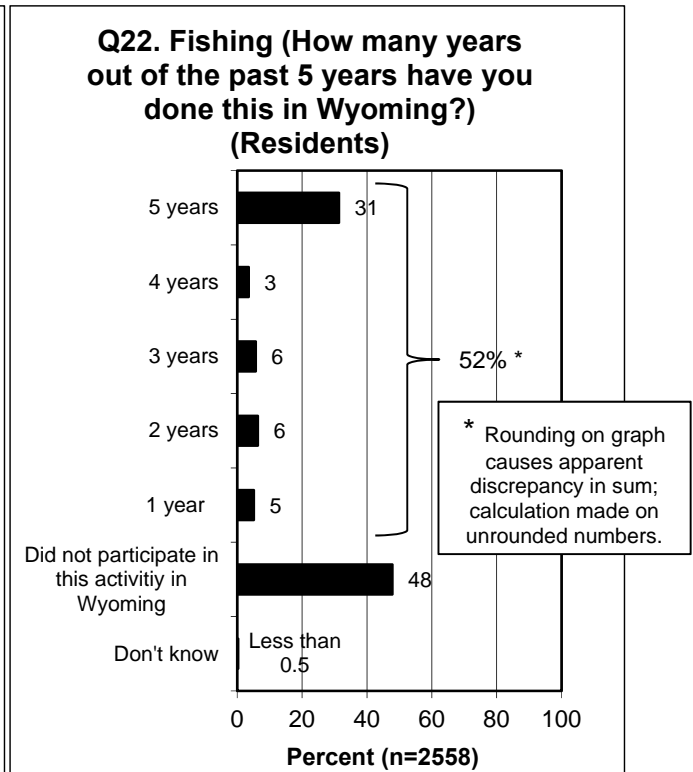


Figure 5.1.7. Fishing Participation Among Residents

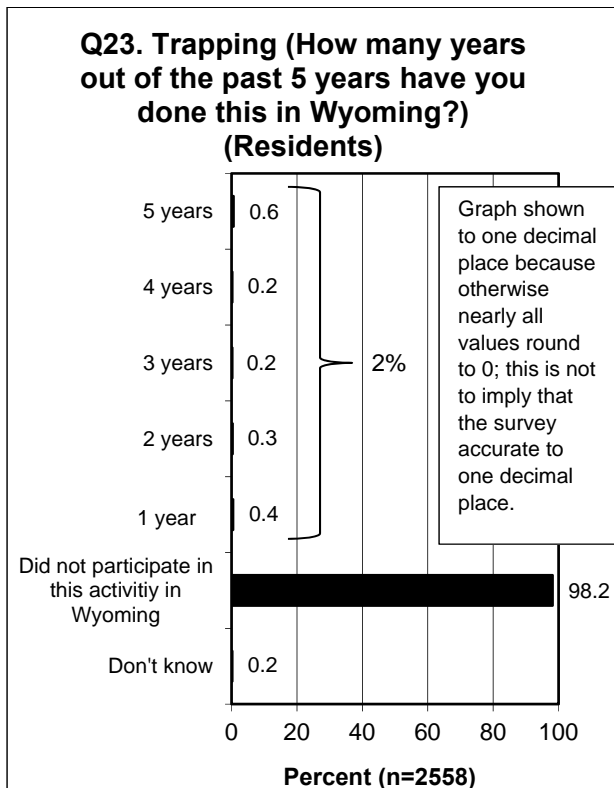


Figure 5.1.8. Trapping Participation Among Residents

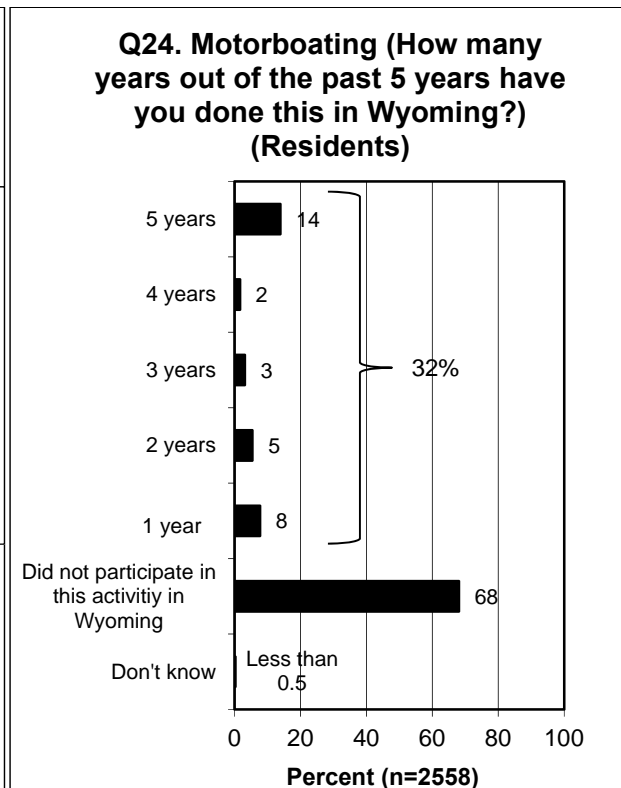


Figure 5.1.9. Motorboating Participation Among Residents

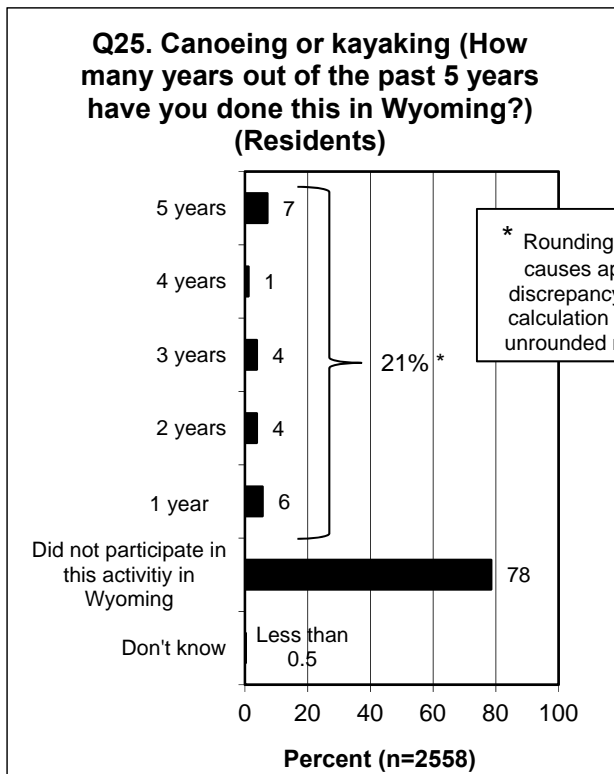


Figure 5.1.10. Canoeing/Kayaking Participation Among Residents

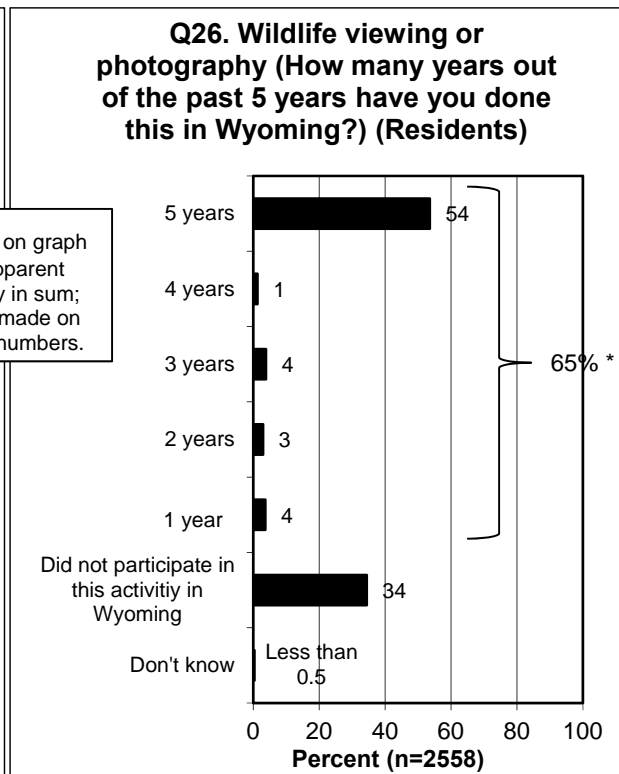


Figure 5.1.11. Wildlife Viewing Participation Among Residents

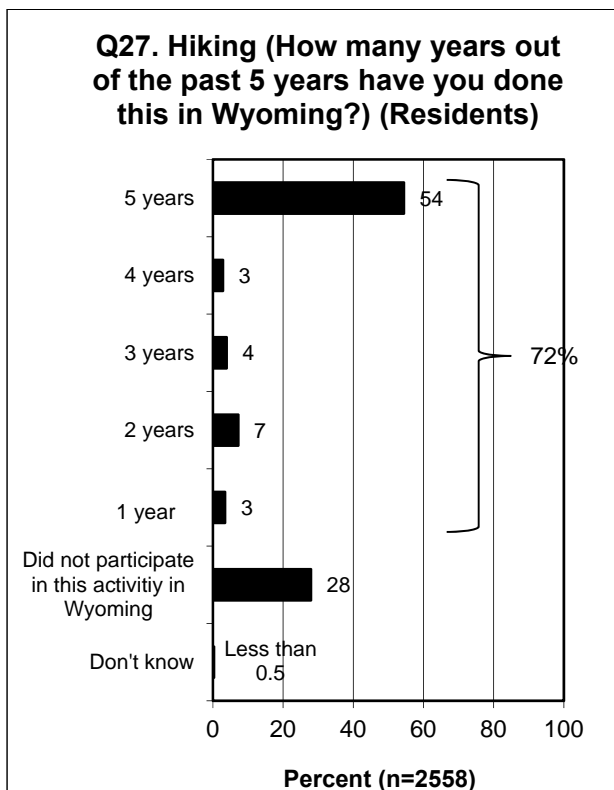


Figure 5.1.12. Hiking Participation Among Residents

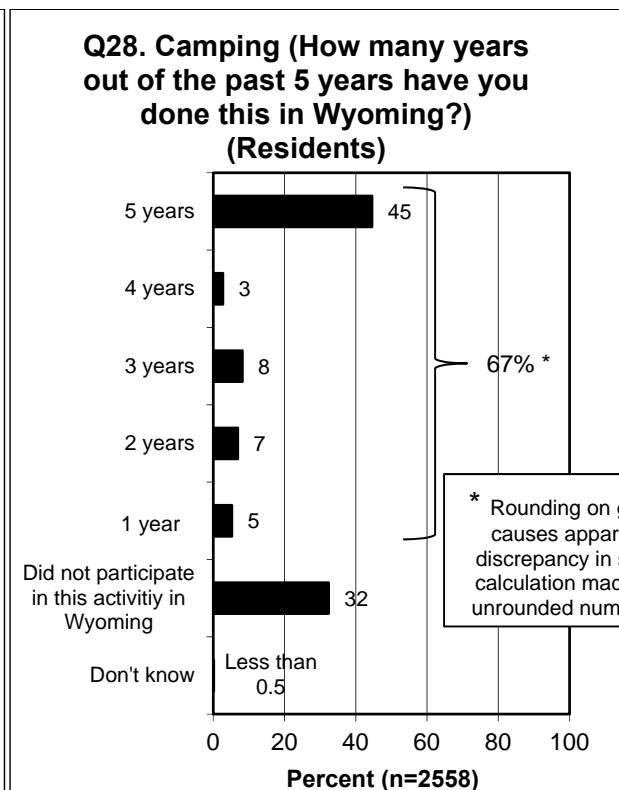


Figure 5.1.13. Camping Participation Among Residents

Table 5.1.4. Regional Participation in Hunting

Q21. Hunting (How many years out of the past 5 years have you done this in Wyoming?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
5 years	9%	19%	22%	24%	21%	18%	14%	11%
4 years	1%	4%	2%	4%	4%	3%	1%	1%
3 years	2%	3%	2%	3%	5%	6%	3%	3%
2 years	3%	2%	5%	3%	2%	3%	4%	5%
1 year	3%	2%	2%	6%	4%	5%	4%	5%
Did not participate in this activity in Wyoming	81%	69%	67%	60%	63%	65%	73%	76%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 5.1.5. Regional Participation in Fishing

Q22. Fishing (How many years out of the past 5 years have you done this in Wyoming?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
5 years	27%	33%	29%	43%	31%	32%	36%	28%
4 years	4%	3%	3%	6%	2%	4%	4%	3%
3 years	5%	8%	5%	5%	4%	9%	5%	5%
2 years	7%	4%	6%	8%	4%	6%	4%	9%
1 year	2%	4%	9%	5%	8%	4%	6%	4%
Did not participate in this activity in Wyoming	56%	49%	48%	34%	51%	44%	44%	50%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 5.1.6. Regional Participation in Trapping

Q23. Trapping (How many years out of the past 5 years have you done this in Wyoming?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
5 years	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
4 years	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3 years	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2 years	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
1 year	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Did not participate in this activity in Wyoming	99%	97%	98%	97%	98%	99%	98%	98%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 5.1.7. Regional Participation in Motorboating

Q24. Motorboating (How many years out of the past 5 years have you done this in Wyoming?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
5 years	18%	12%	14%	22%	15%	16%	17%	10%
4 years	4%	2%	0%	1%	3%	0%	2%	1%
3 years	4%	3%	3%	6%	3%	3%	5%	2%
2 years	6%	5%	4%	8%	6%	6%	6%	5%
1 year	10%	5%	8%	6%	7%	8%	6%	10%
Did not participate in this activity in Wyoming	58%	74%	70%	57%	66%	67%	64%	72%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Table 5.1.8. Regional Participation in Canoeing or Kayaking

Q25. Canoeing or kayaking (How many years out of the past 5 years have you done this in Wyoming?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
5 years	29%	4%	7%	13%	7%	5%	8%	5%
4 years	4%	0%	5%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
3 years	6%	5%	4%	2%	4%	7%	1%	3%
2 years	9%	3%	5%	11%	5%	3%	4%	2%
1 year	9%	9%	3%	6%	6%	5%	4%	6%
Did not participate in this activity in Wyoming	44%	79%	76%	66%	77%	80%	81%	82%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%

Table 5.1.9. Regional Participation in Wildlife Viewing or Photography

Q26. Wildlife viewing or photography (How many years out of the past 5 years have you done this in Wyoming?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
5 years	72%	55%	58%	66%	55%	45%	49%	55%
4 years	3%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%	0%
3 years	3%	7%	4%	2%	3%	2%	2%	6%
2 years	2%	3%	5%	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%
1 year	3%	4%	2%	5%	2%	5%	3%	4%
Did not participate in this activity in Wyoming	17%	29%	28%	24%	35%	43%	42%	31%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Table 5.1.10. Regional Participation in Hiking

Q27. Hiking (How many years out of the past 5 years have you done this in Wyoming?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
5 years	80%	49%	52%	60%	51%	51%	53%	57%
4 years	3%	4%	3%	2%	2%	4%	3%	2%
3 years	1%	7%	4%	6%	7%	4%	3%	2%
2 years	3%	5%	9%	6%	5%	7%	6%	10%
1 year	3%	3%	2%	5%	4%	5%	5%	2%
Did not participate in this activity in Wyoming	10%	33%	30%	22%	30%	29%	29%	26%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

Table 5.1.11. Regional Participation in Camping

Q28. Camping (How many years out of the past 5 years have you done this in Wyoming?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
5 years	59%	37%	50%	50%	54%	48%	45%	37%
4 years	5%	3%	3%	3%	5%	1%	3%	2%
3 years	5%	9%	4%	4%	9%	10%	6%	9%
2 years	8%	6%	5%	6%	6%	6%	7%	8%
1 year	3%	4%	8%	7%	2%	2%	7%	7%
Did not participate in this activity in Wyoming	20%	40%	29%	31%	23%	33%	33%	36%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Next, resident and nonresident hunters and anglers are examined regarding activities they have done in the past 5 years in Wyoming. These samples are based on purchasing a license, not participation—hunters and anglers are in these groups because they *purchased a license*. Their most popular activities (other than the obvious of hunting and fishing) are camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing/photography (Figures 5.1.14 through 5.1.29). Note that a small percentage of hunters and anglers had purchased a license but did not participate in their sport.

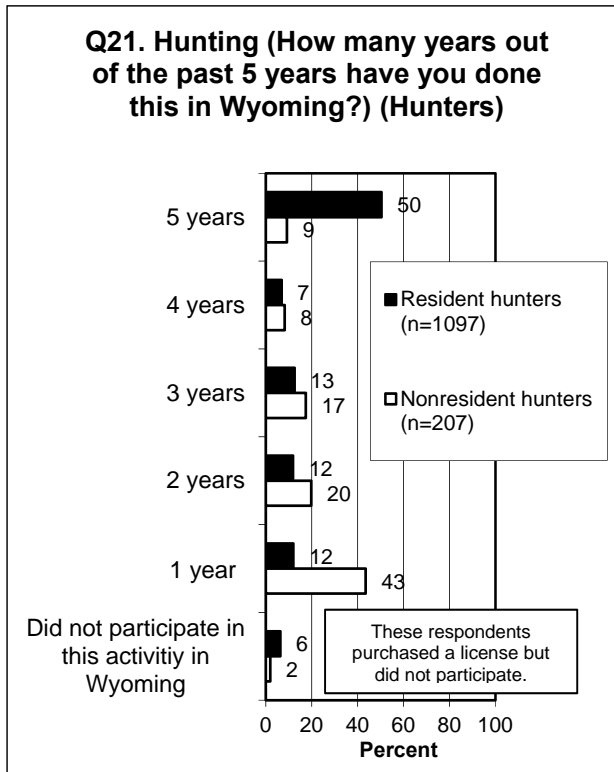


Figure 5.1.14. Hunting Participation Among Hunters

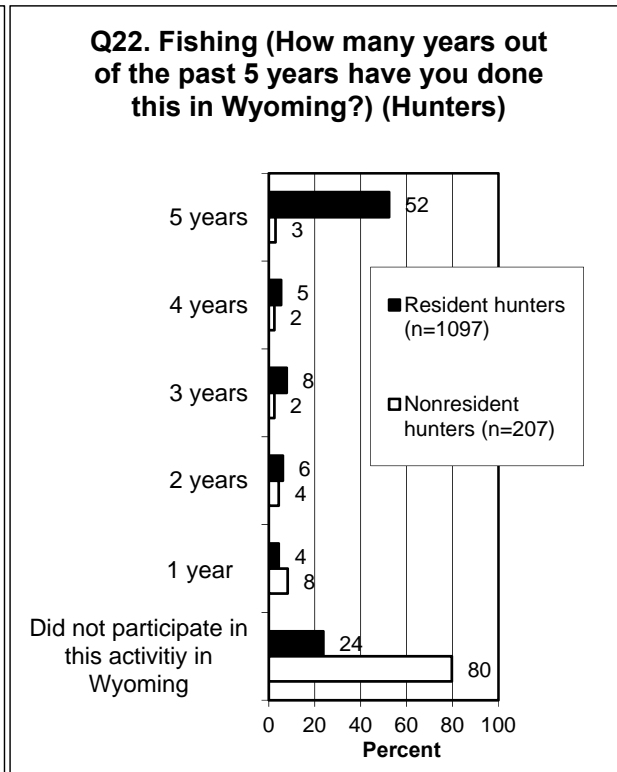


Figure 5.1.15. Fishing Participation Among Hunters

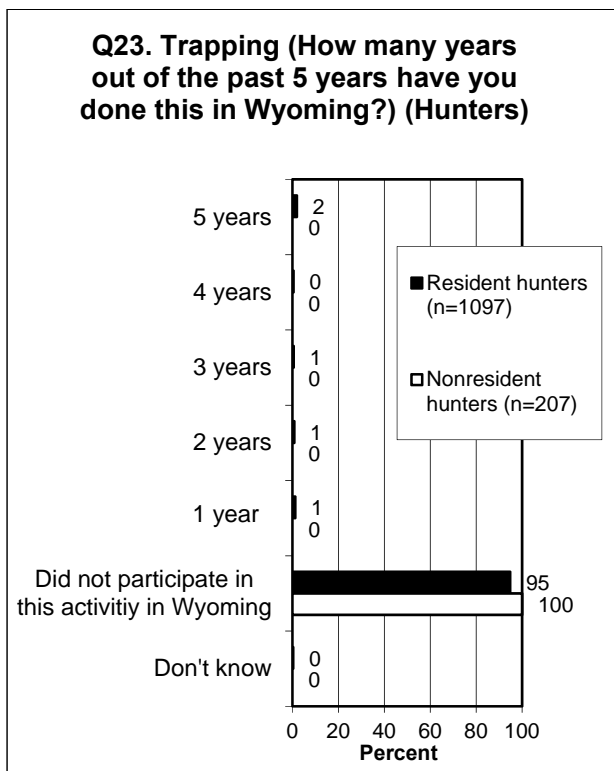


Figure 5.1.16. Trapping Participation Among Hunters

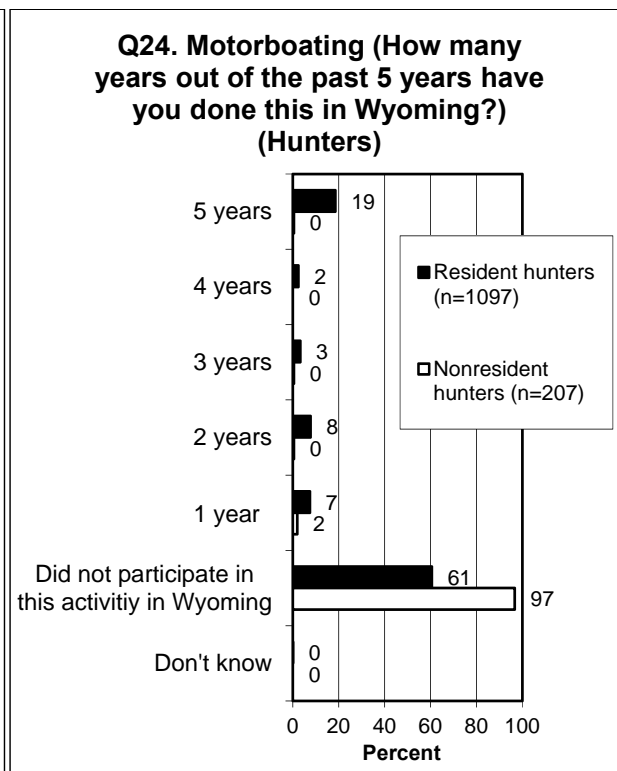


Figure 5.1.17. Motorboating Participation Among Hunters

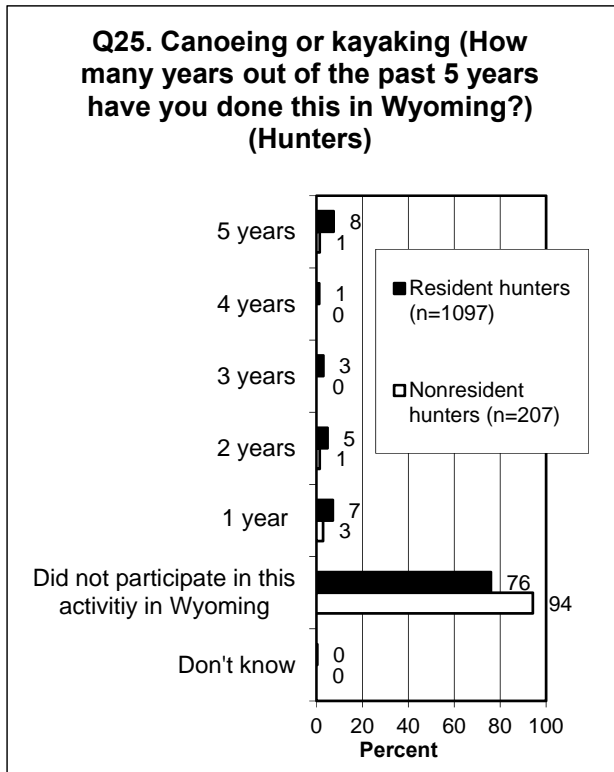


Figure 5.1.18. Canoeing/Kayaking Participation Among Hunters

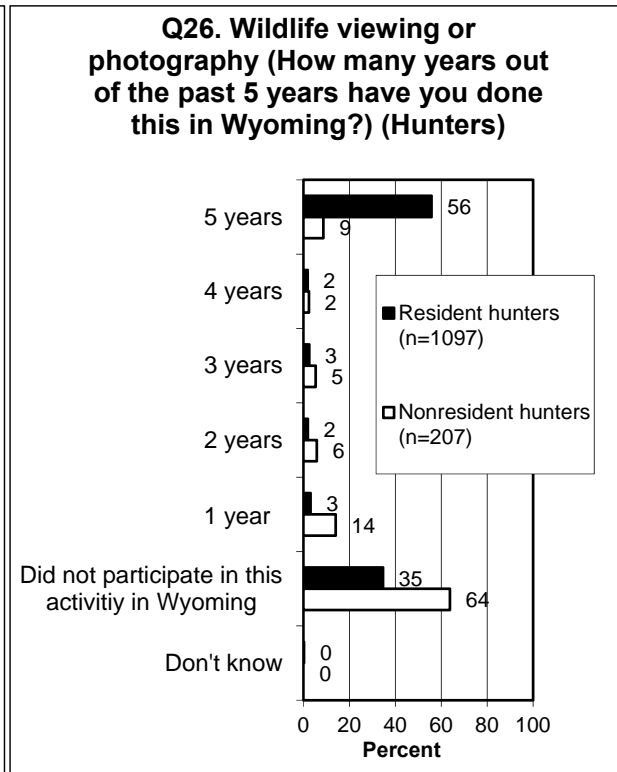


Figure 5.1.19. Wildlife Viewing Participation Among Hunters

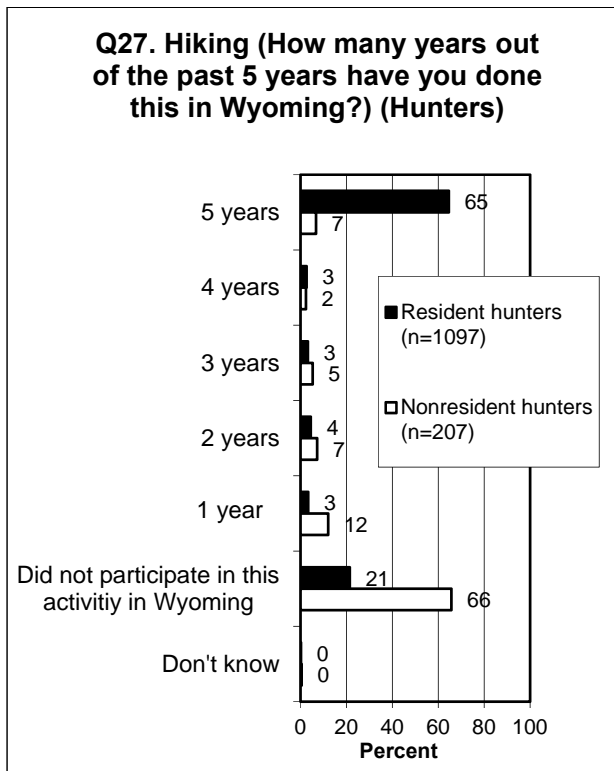


Figure 5.1.20. Hiking Participation Among Hunters

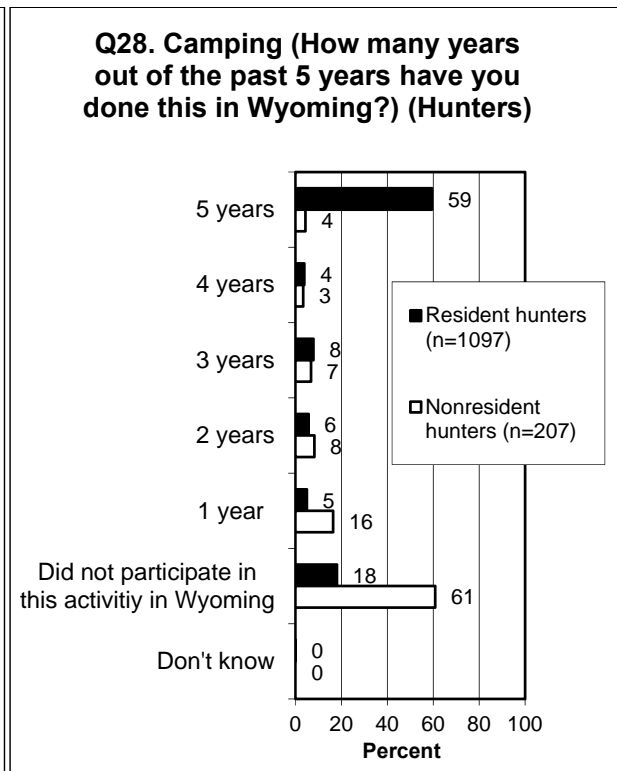


Figure 5.1.21. Camping Participation Among Hunters

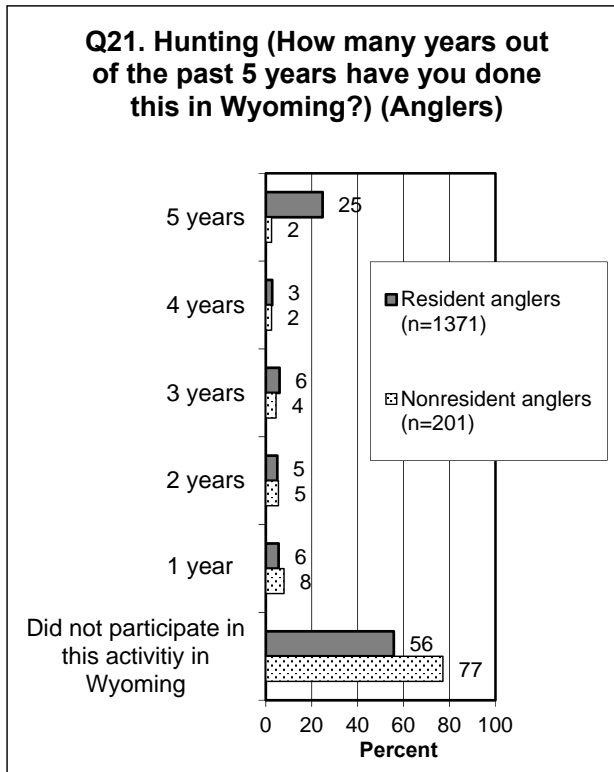


Figure 5.1.22. Hunting Participation Among Anglers

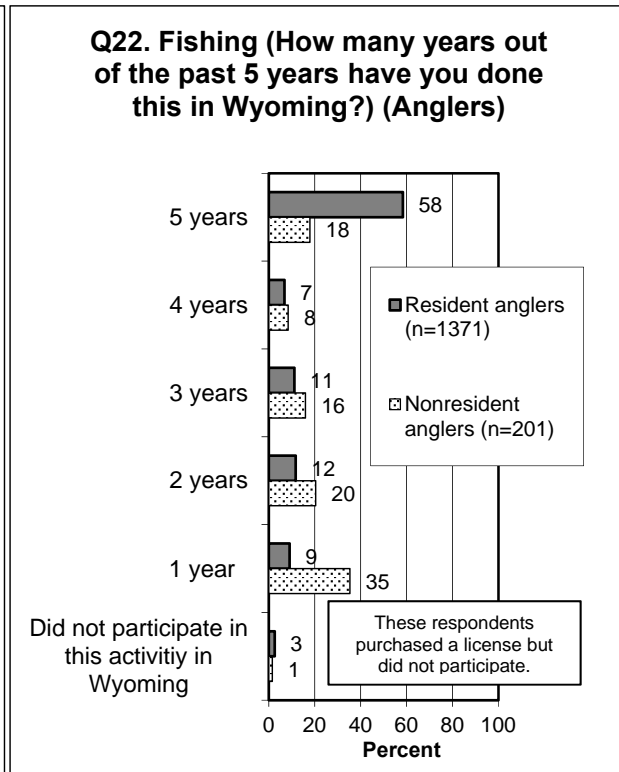


Figure 5.1.23. Fishing Participation Among Anglers

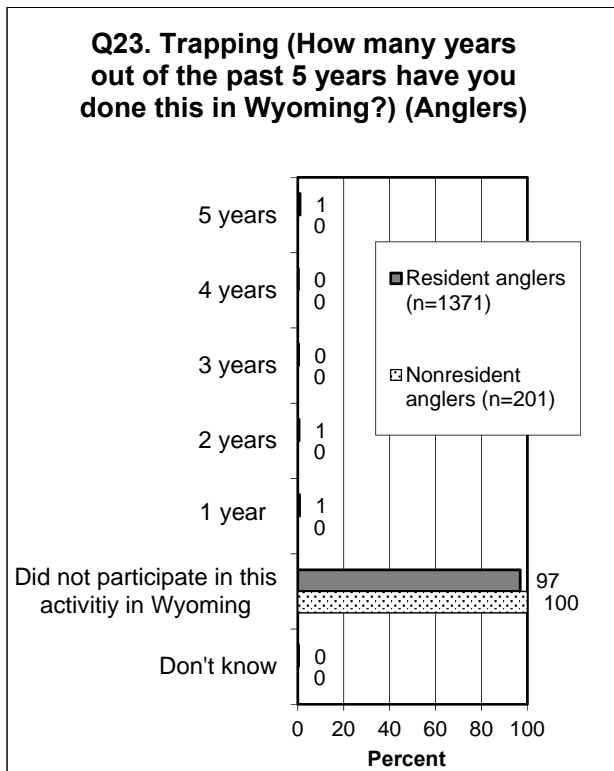


Figure 5.1.24. Trapping Participation Among Anglers

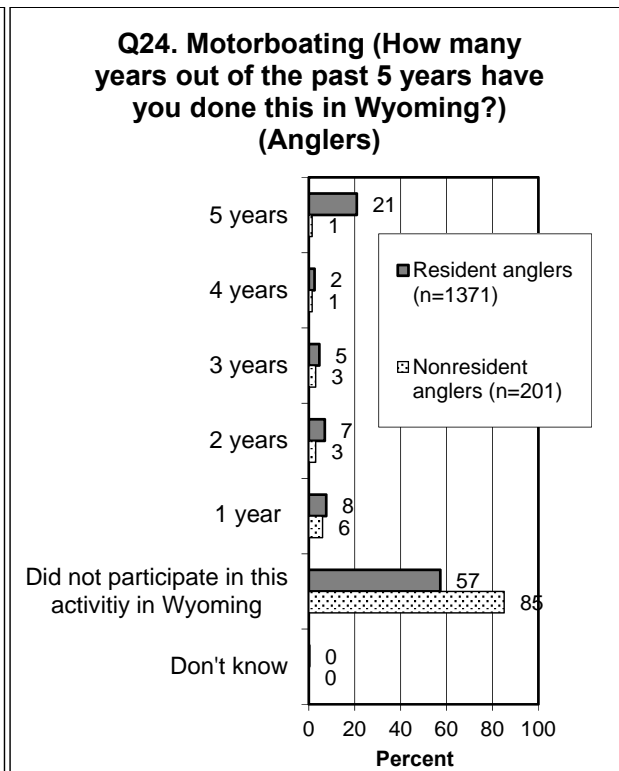


Figure 5.1.25. Motorboating Participation Among Anglers

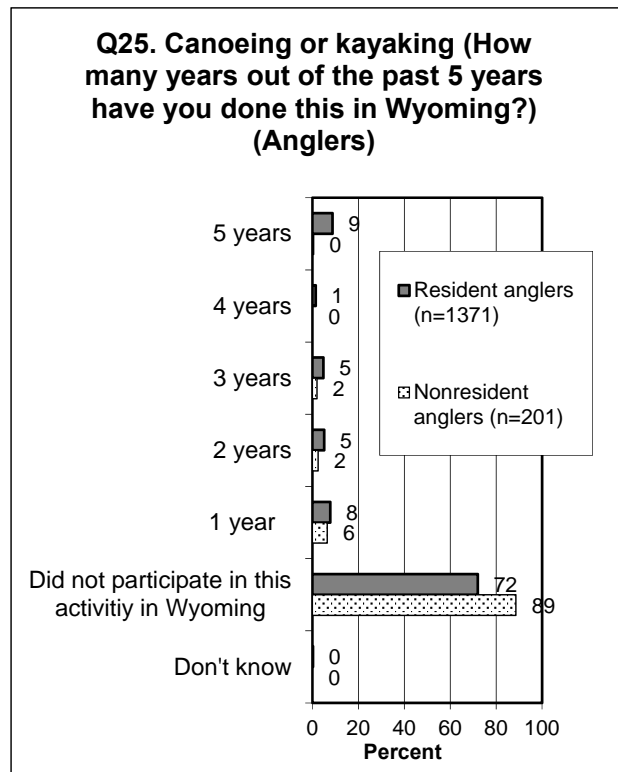


Figure 5.1.26. Canoeing/Kayaking Participation Among Anglers

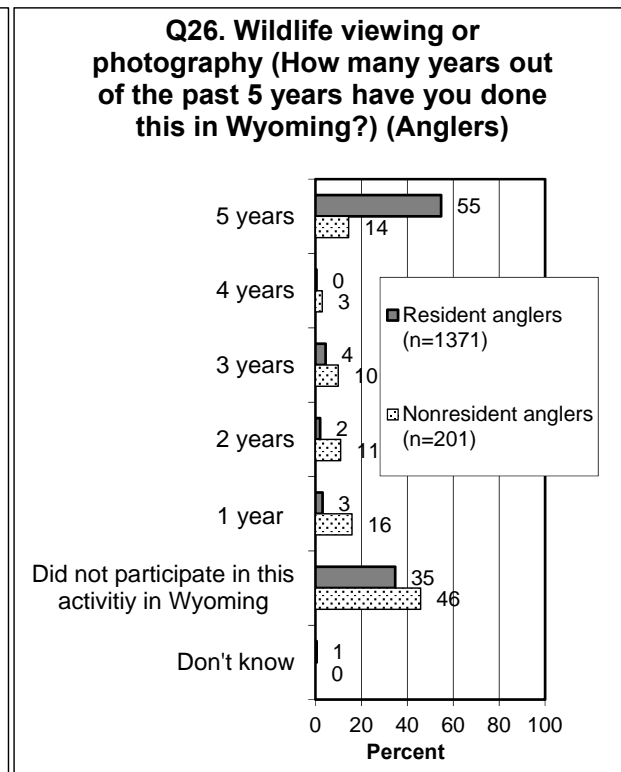


Figure 5.1.27. Wildlife Viewing Participation Among Anglers

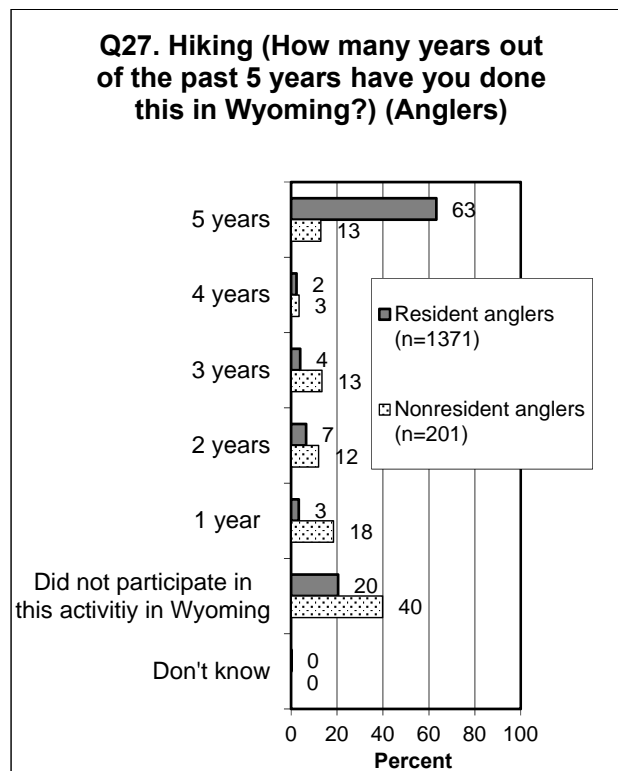


Figure 5.1.28. Hiking Participation Among Anglers

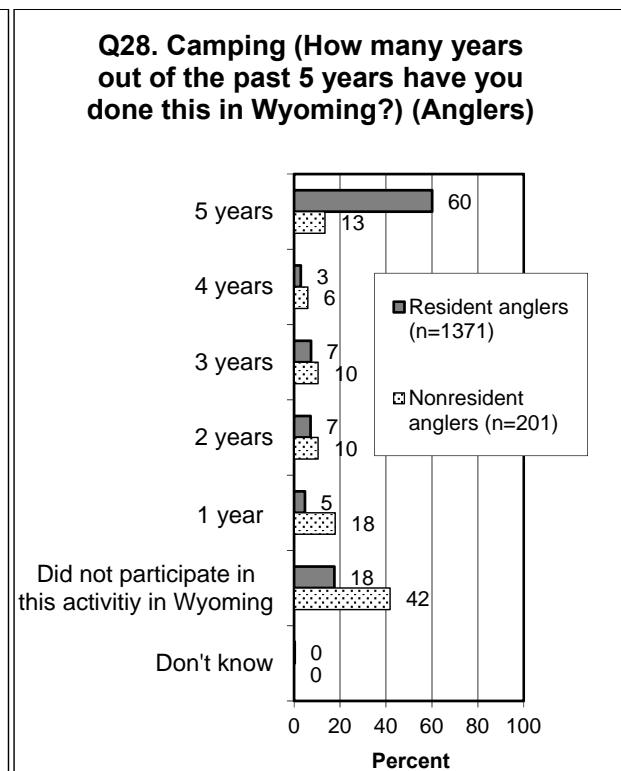


Figure 5.1.29. Camping Participation Among Anglers

The following pages contain the results among those who hunted, trapped, or fished (note that many of the respondents both hunted and fished) versus those who did not hunt, trap, or fish (Figures 5.1.30 through 5.1.37). Compared to their counterparts, hunters/trappers/anglers have a higher rate of participation in everything except wildlife viewing; for this latter activity, they have about the same rate of participation as those who did not hunt/trap/fish.

Results are then shown among the non-consumptive wildlife viewers—those who viewed or photographed wildlife but did *not* hunt, trap, or fish (Figures 5.1.38 through 5.1.42). This group has a relatively high rate of participation in hiking (74% of this group went hiking) and camping (54%).

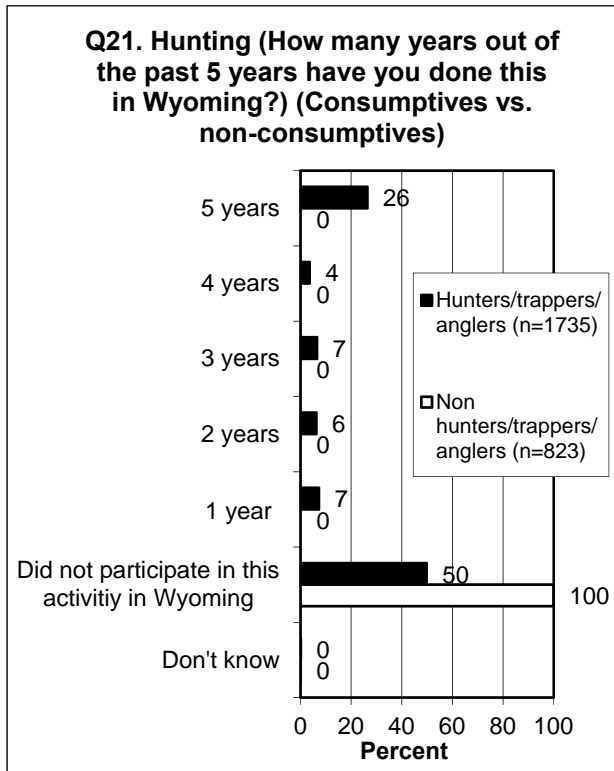


Figure 5.1.30. Hunting Participation Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

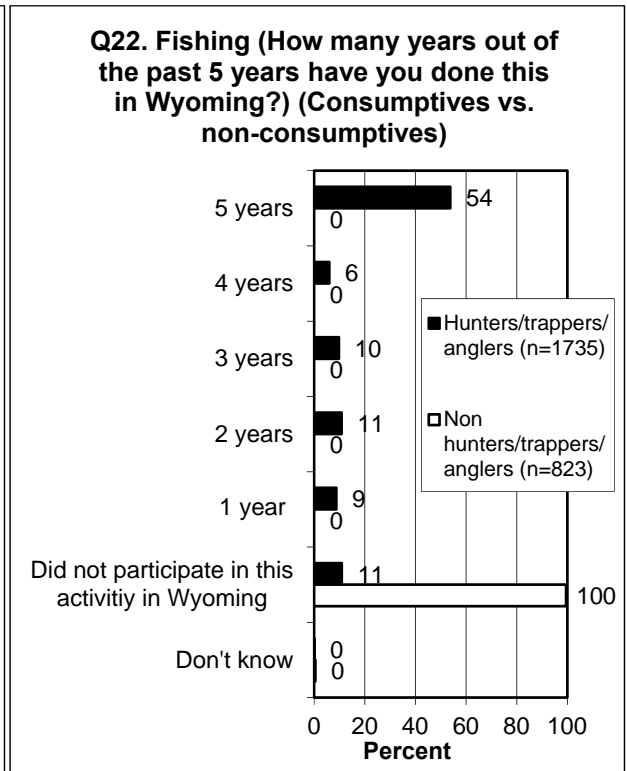


Figure 5.1.31. Fishing Participation Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

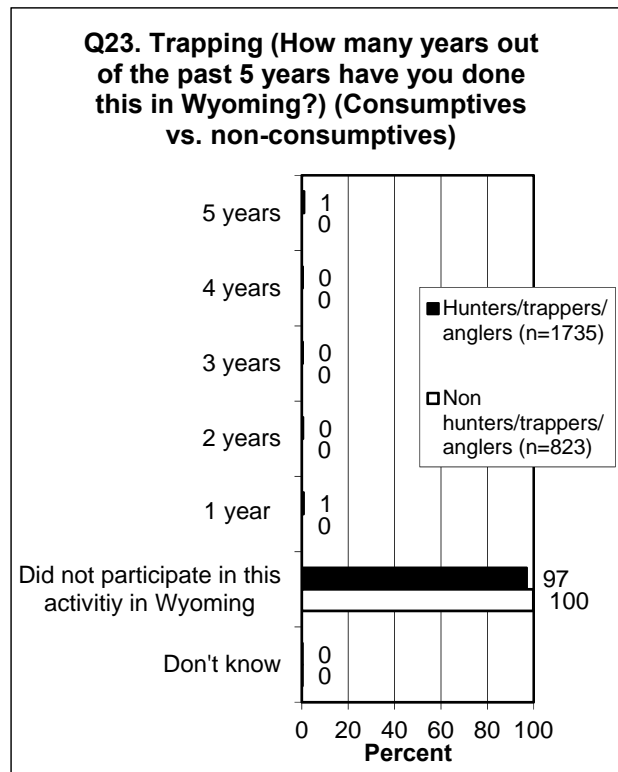


Figure 5.1.32. Trapping Participation Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

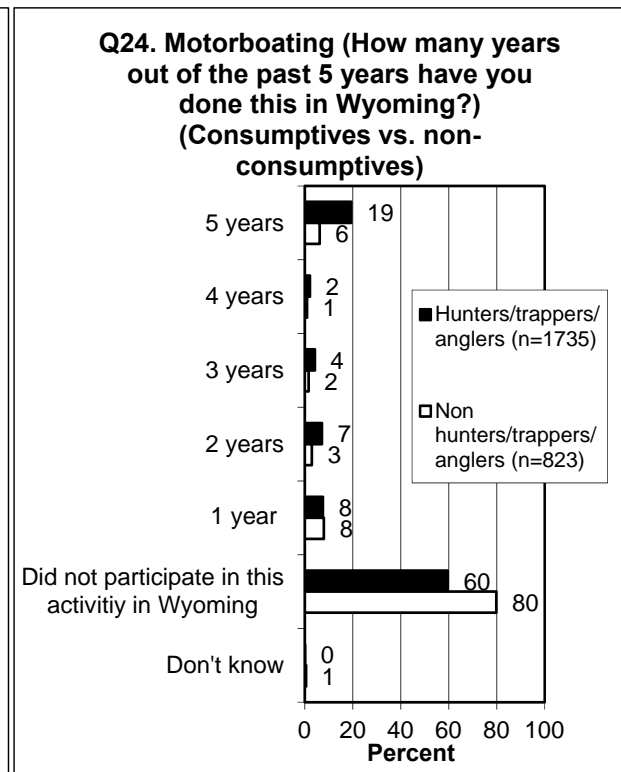


Figure 5.1.33. Motorboating Participation Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

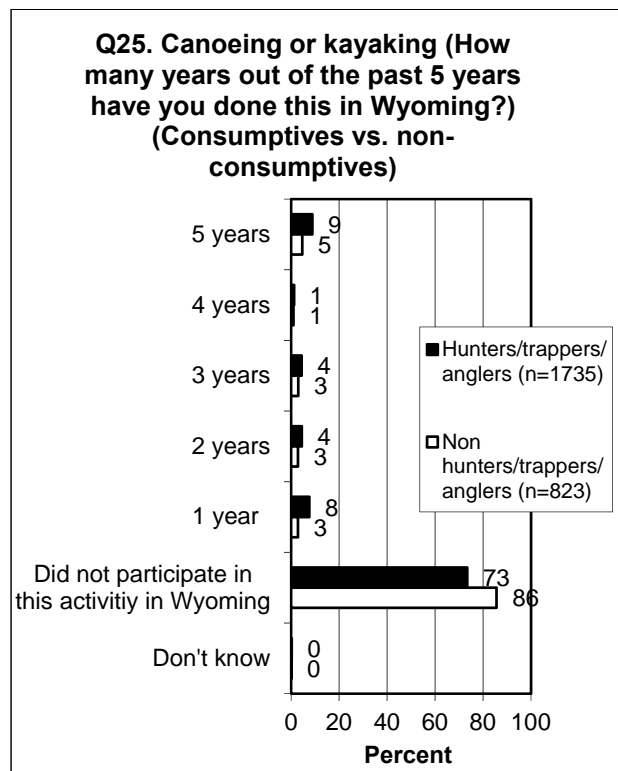


Figure 5.1.34. Canoeing/Kayaking Participation Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

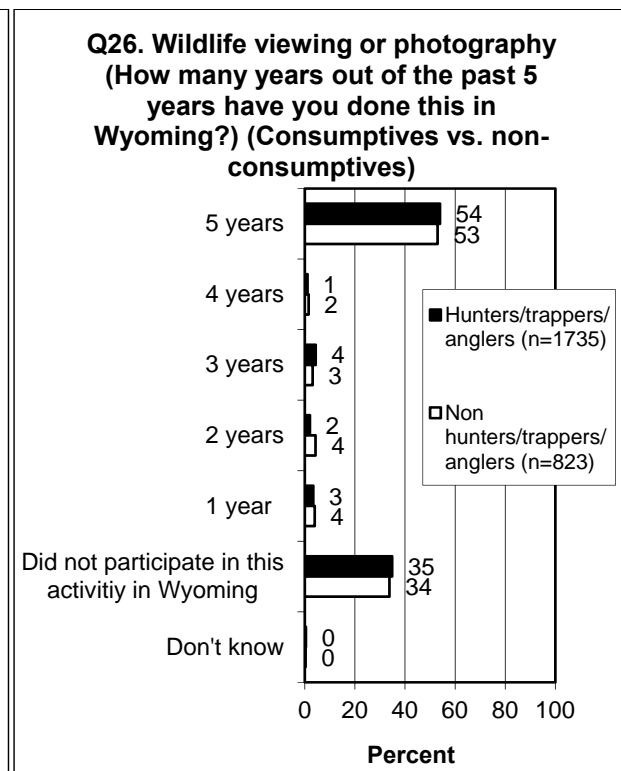


Figure 5.1.35. Wildlife Viewing Participation Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

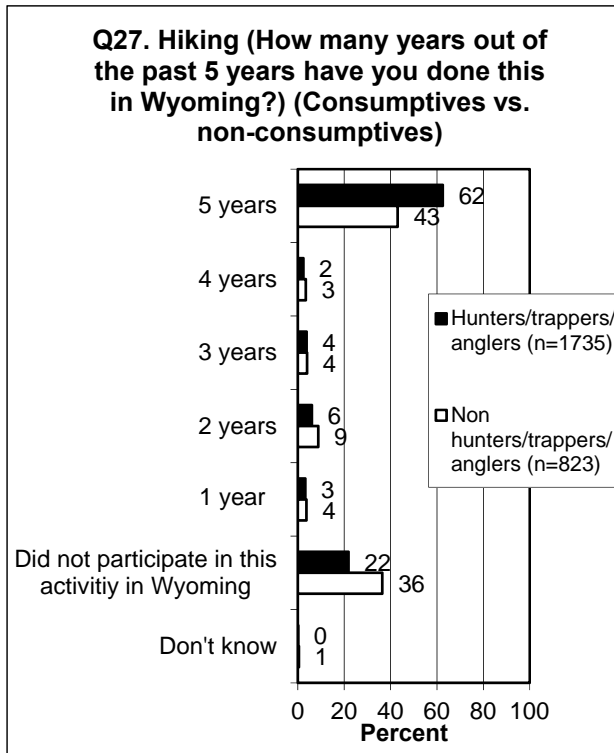


Figure 5.1.36. Hiking Participation Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

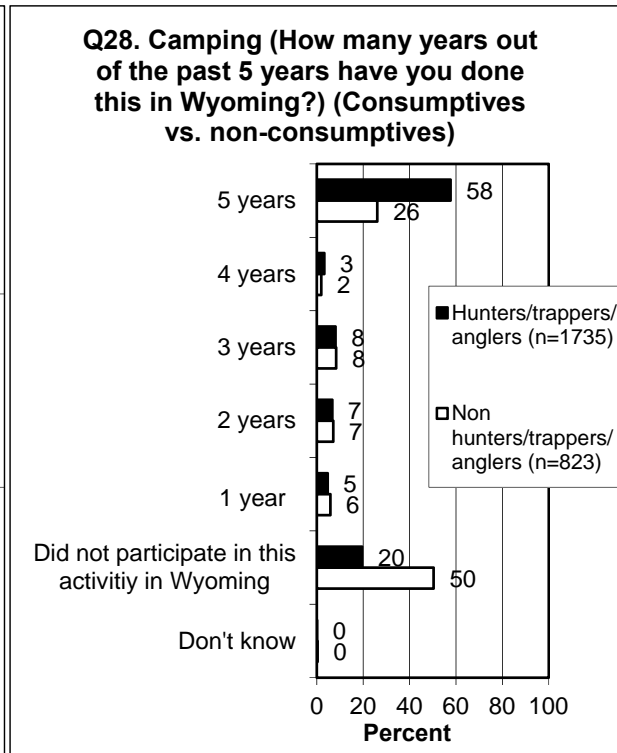


Figure 5.1.37. Camping Participation Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

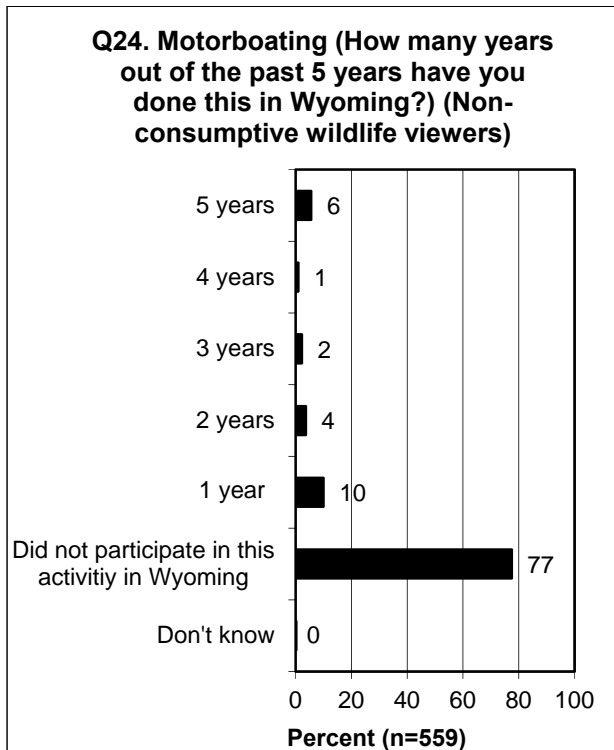


Figure 5.1.38. Motorboating Participation Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

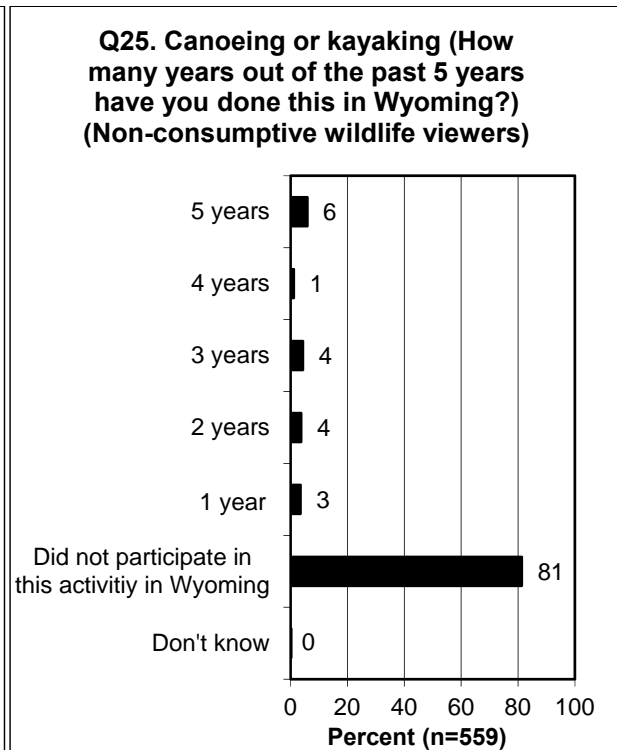


Figure 5.1.39. Canoeing/Kayaking Participation Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

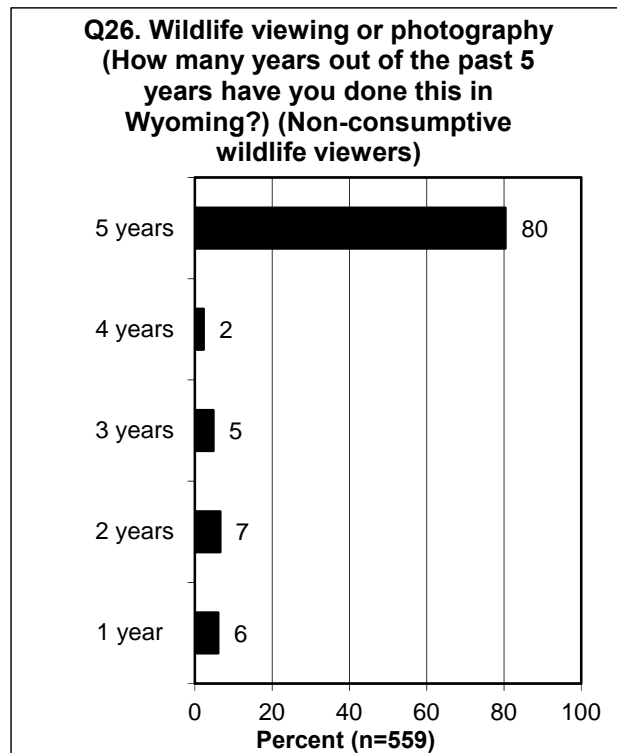


Figure 5.1.40. Wildlife Viewing Participation Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

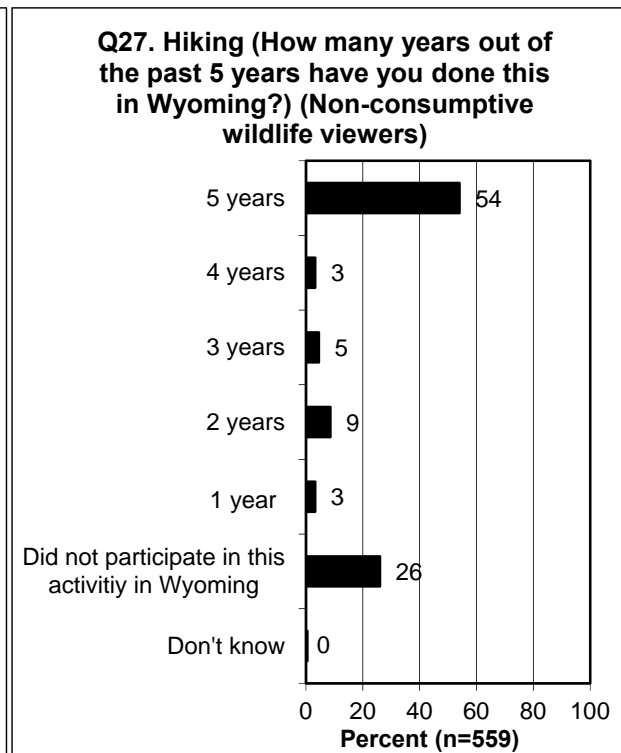


Figure 5.1.41. Hiking Participation Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

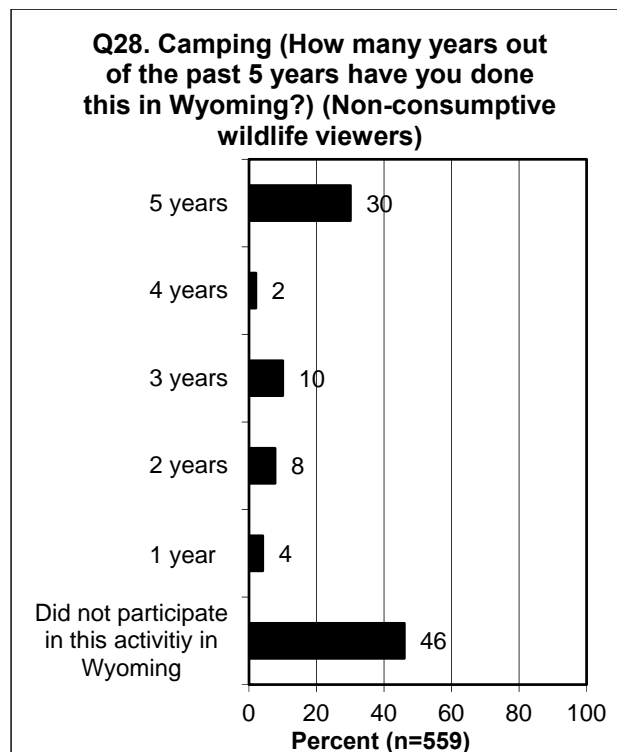


Figure 5.1.42. Camping Participation Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

The last question in this section asked if respondents had engaged in these activities outside of Wyoming within the past 5 years. Figure 5.1.43 shows residents' activities outside of Wyoming; most commonly, they had gone hiking (32%) or camping (28%) out of the state.

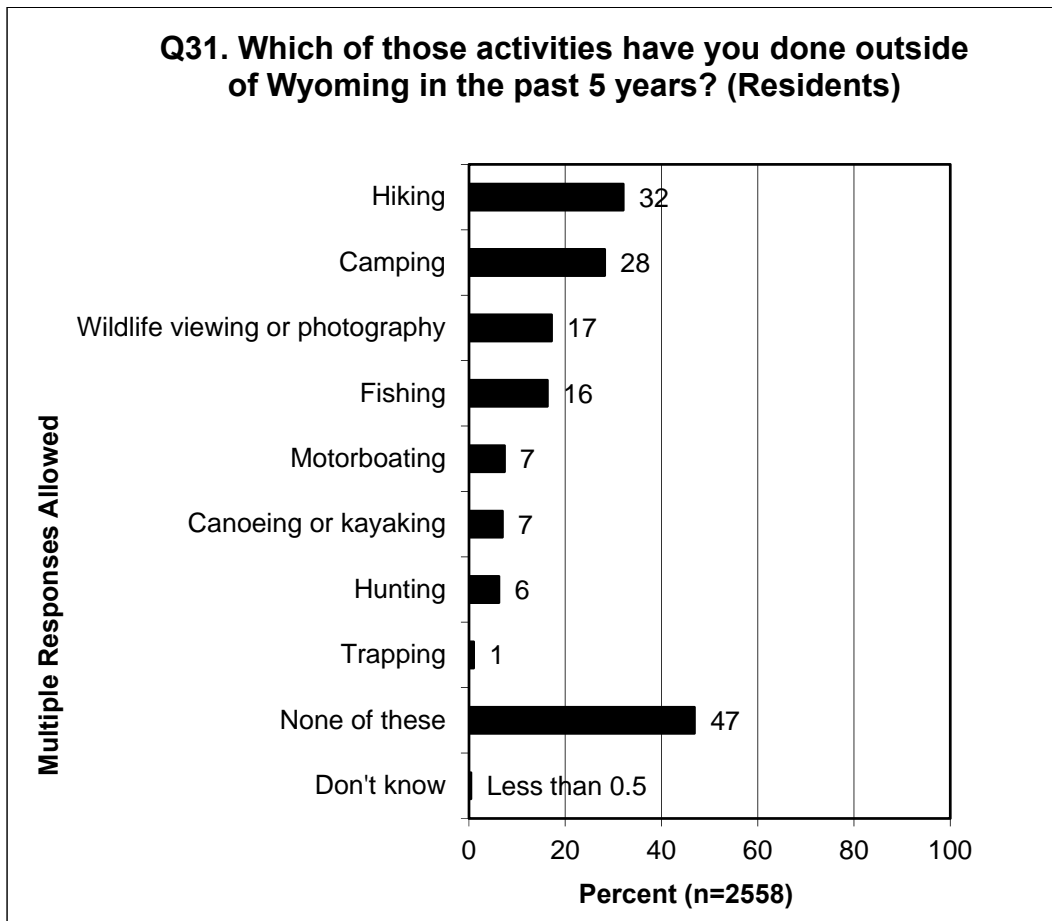


Figure 5.1.43. Participation in Activities Outside of Wyoming Among Residents

Table 5.1.12 shows regional results for this question; residents of the Jackson Region are the most likely to have done any of these activities out of state. Figures 5.1.44 and 5.1.45 show results among hunters and anglers. Hunters/trappers/anglers are shown in Figure 5.1.46, and wildlife viewers who do not hunt, trap, or fish are shown in Figure 5.1.47.

Table 5.1.12. Regional Participation in Activities Outside of Wyoming

Q31. Which of those activities have you done outside of Wyoming in the past 5 years? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Hiking	58%	28%	29%	32%	31%	34%	26%	35%
Camping	52%	22%	21%	33%	38%	30%	26%	24%
Wildlife viewing or photography	29%	16%	14%	21%	17%	16%	16%	17%
Fishing	22%	18%	11%	24%	17%	18%	14%	16%
Motorboating	16%	7%	7%	12%	9%	7%	7%	6%
Canoeing or kayaking	18%	8%	6%	9%	9%	5%	5%	7%
Hunting	7%	7%	7%	13%	5%	8%	6%	5%
Trapping	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%
None of these	22%	54%	55%	45%	42%	42%	55%	45%
Don't know	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%

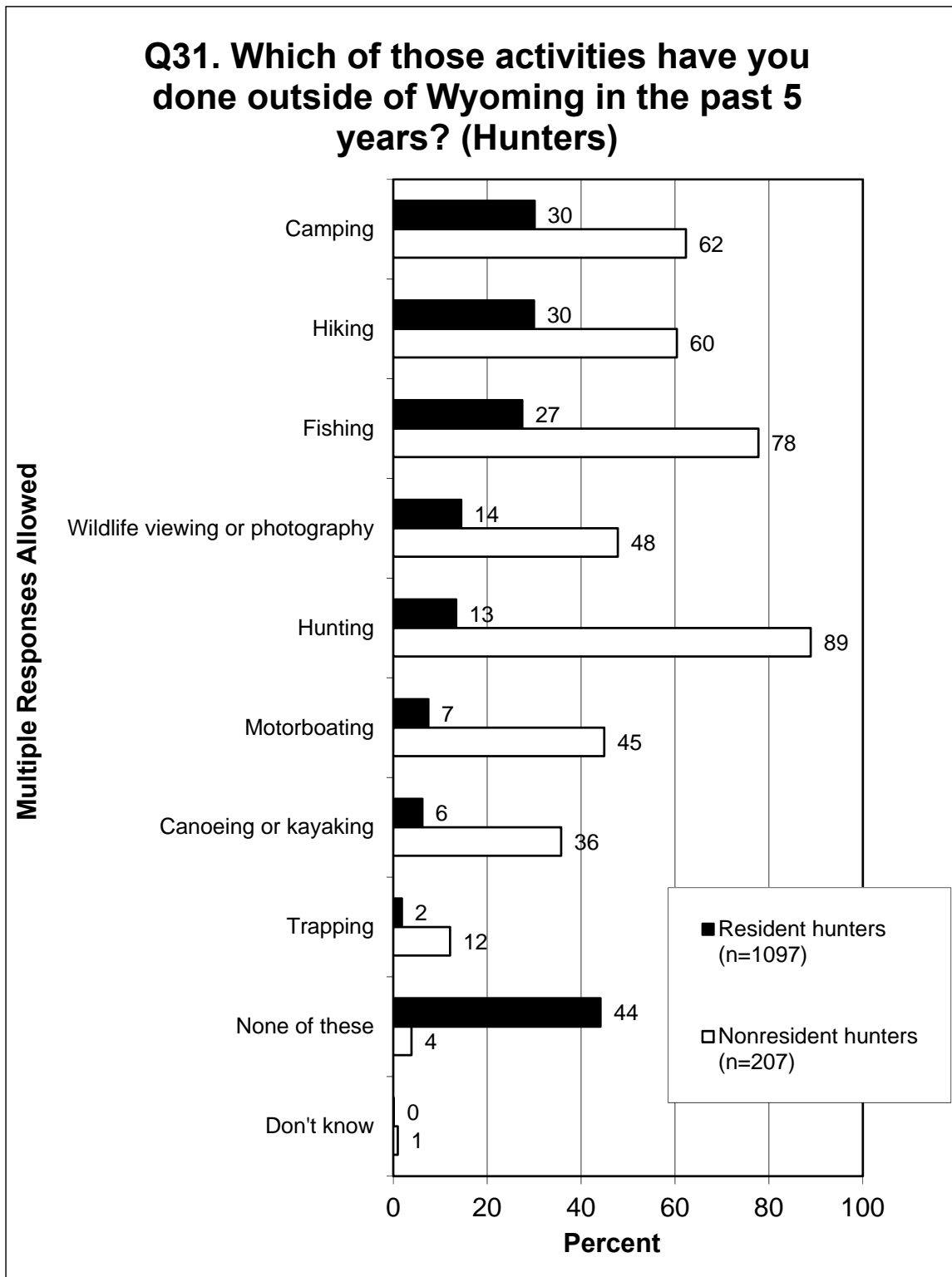


Figure 5.1.44. Participation in Activities Outside of Wyoming Among Hunters

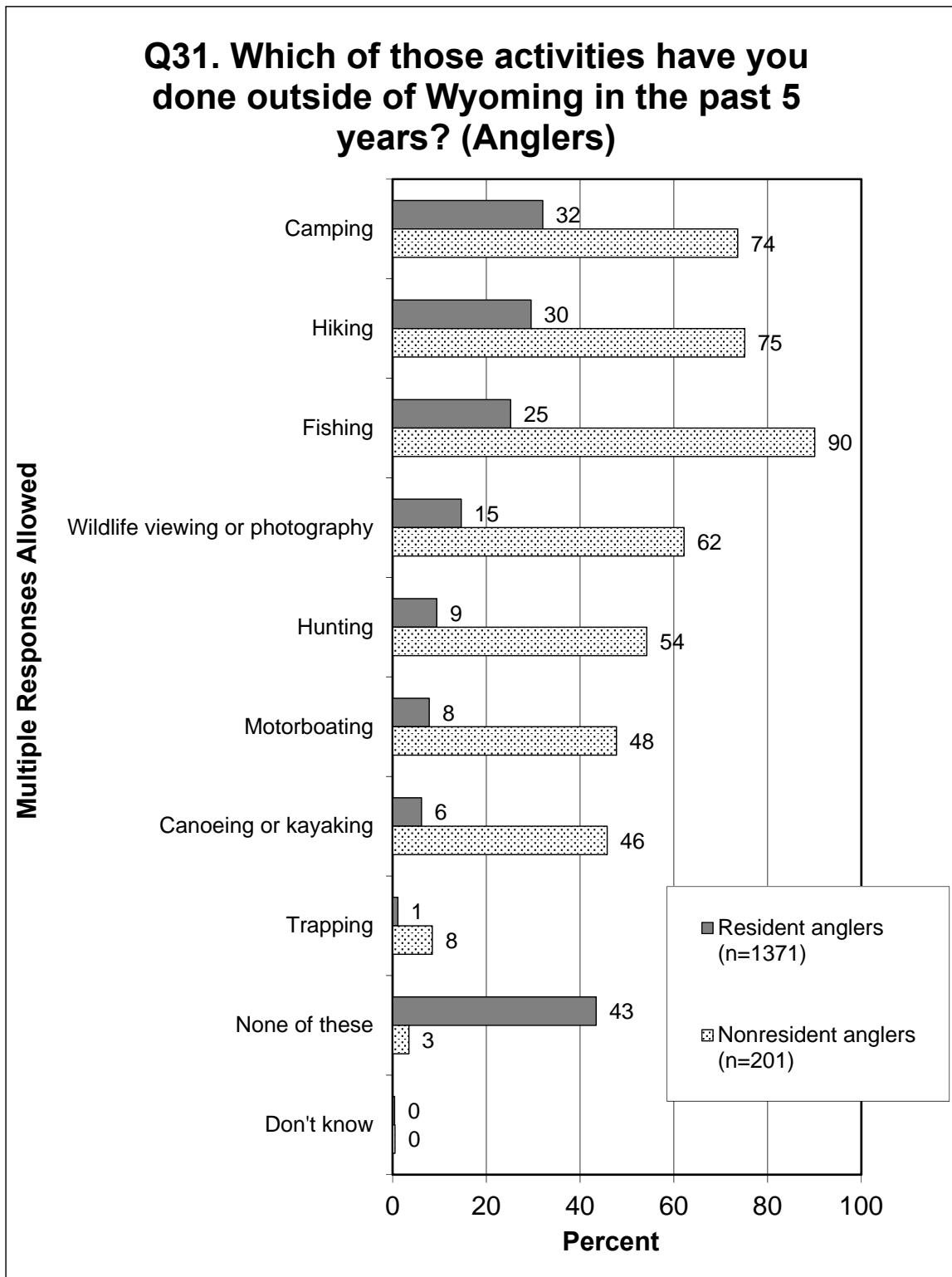


Figure 5.1.45. Participation in Activities Outside of Wyoming Among Anglers

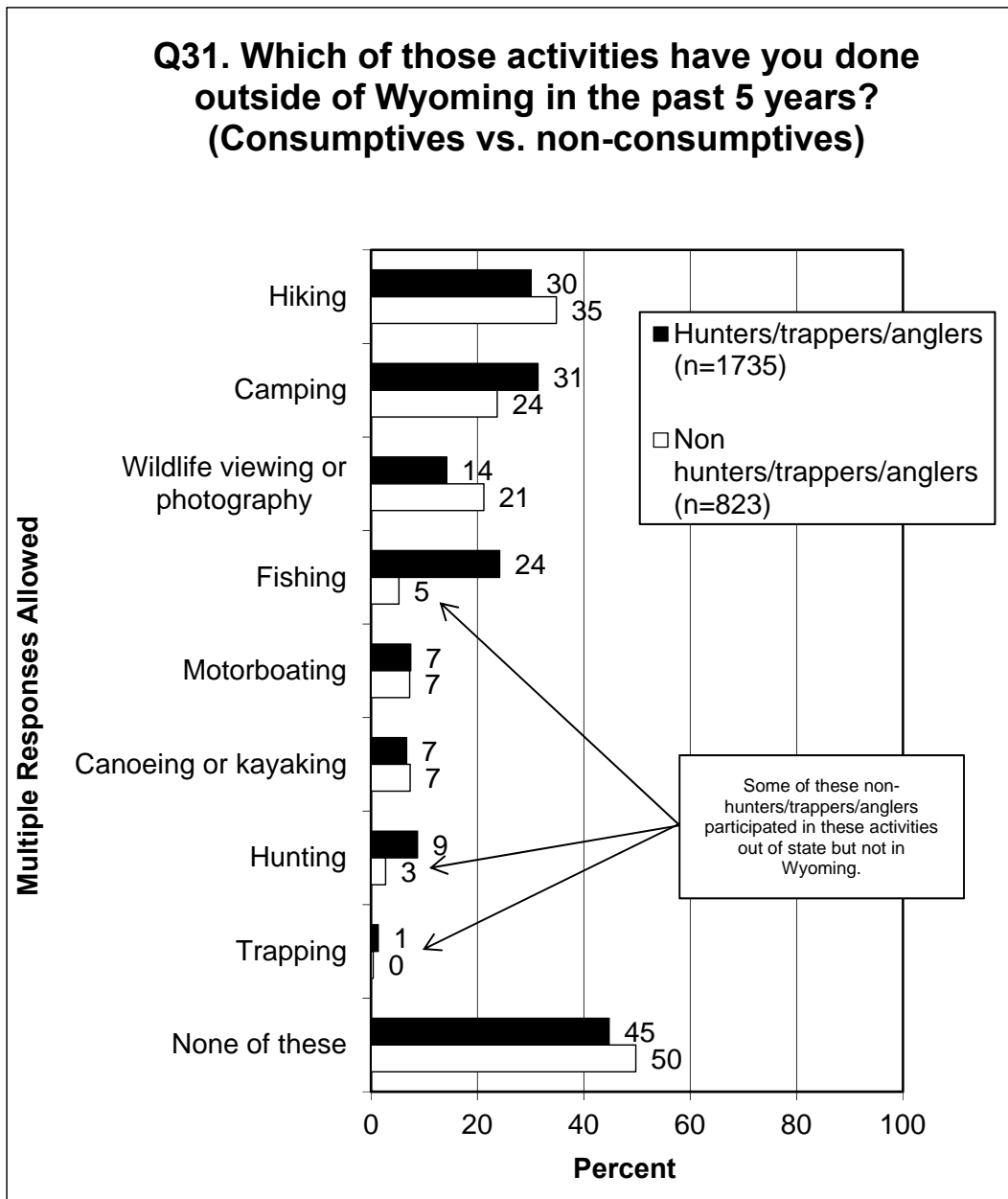


Figure 5.1.46. Participation in Activities Outside of Wyoming Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

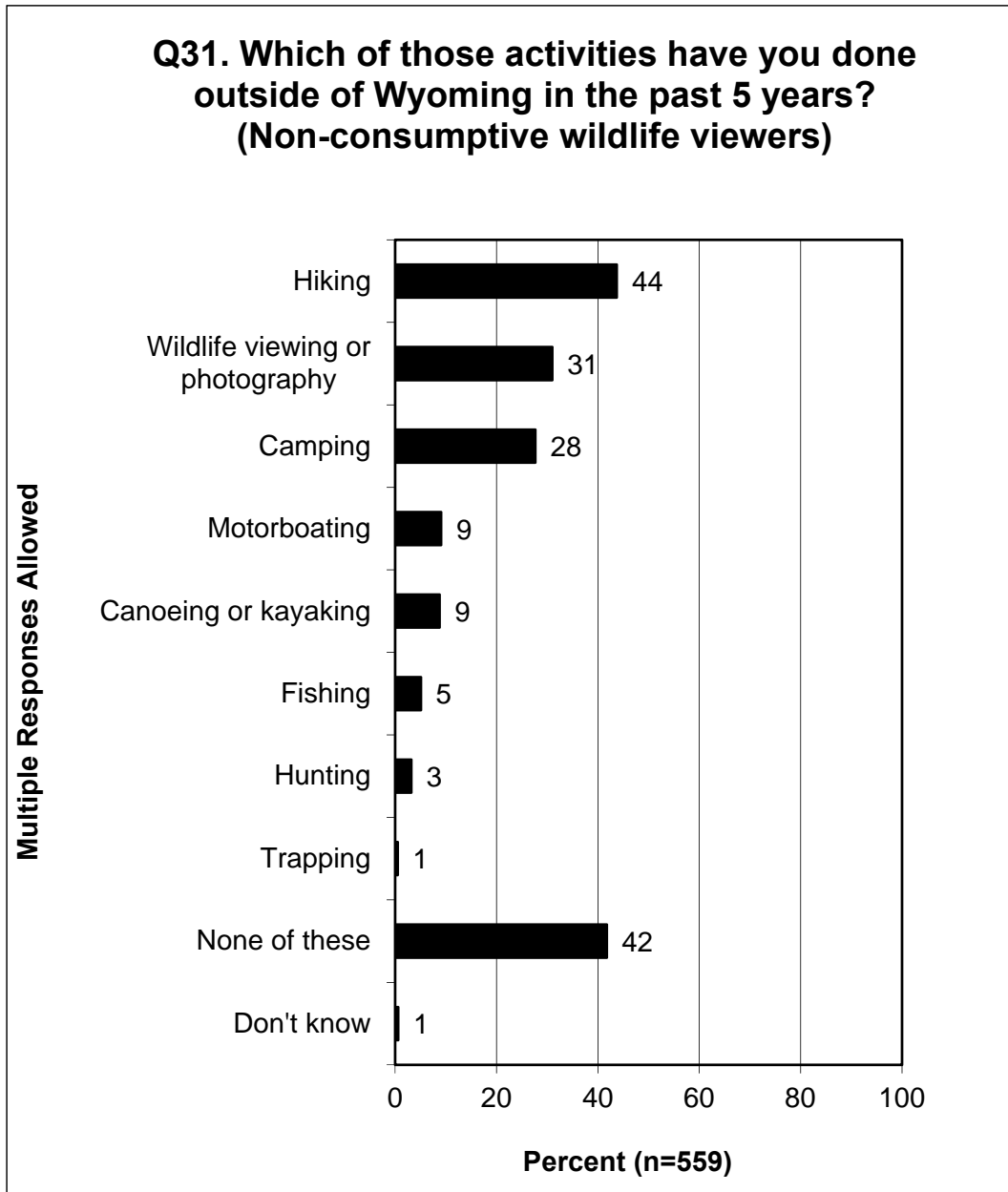


Figure 5.1.47. Participation in Activities Outside of Wyoming Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

5.2. LOCATIONS AND TYPES OF LAND USED FOR RECREATION

Those who hunted or fished were asked about hunting or fishing on public or private land. For both groups of recreationists, public land predominates. The large majority of hunters (88%) hunt on public land mostly or at least half the time (Figure 5.2.1), and 96% of anglers access their waters through public land mostly or at least half the time (Figure 5.2.2). Regionally, the highest public land use is among Jackson Region residents, followed by Lander and Green River (Table 5.2.1). Public land use for fishing access is nearly ubiquitous (Table 5.2.2).

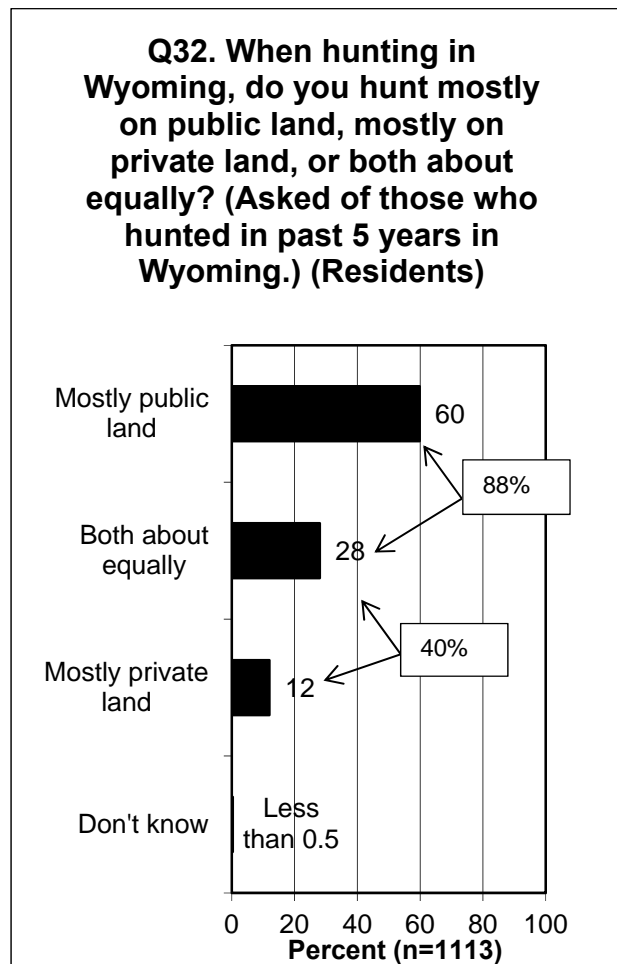


Figure 5.2.1. Hunting on Public or Private Land, Survey of Residents

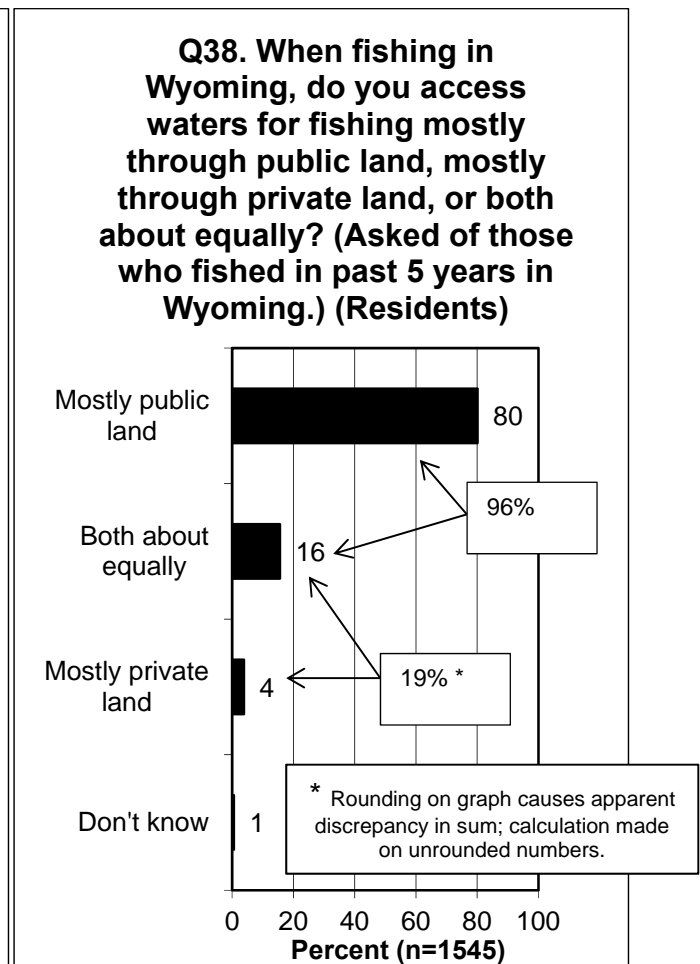


Figure 5.2.2. Fishing Access Through Public or Private Land, Survey of Residents

Table 5.2.1. Hunting on Public or Private Land, Regionally

Q32. When hunting in Wyoming, do you hunt mostly on public land, mostly on private land, or both about equally? (Asked of those who hunted in past 5 years in Wyoming.) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Mostly public land	81%	49%	74%	71%	74%	49%	51%	60%
Both about equally	14%	40%	22%	22%	19%	36%	33%	24%
Mostly private land	5%	12%	4%	7%	6%	14%	16%	15%
Any public	95%	88%	95%	93%	94%	86%	84%	84%
Any private	19%	51%	26%	29%	26%	51%	49%	39%
Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

Table 5.2.2. Fishing Access Through Public or Private Land, Regionally

Q38. When fishing in Wyoming, do you access waters for fishing mostly through public land, mostly through private land, or both about equally? (Asked of those who fished in past 5 years in Wyoming.) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Mostly public land	85%	74%	82%	71%	78%	73%	87%	81%
Both about equally	14%	17%	18%	22%	19%	22%	10%	13%
Mostly private land	1%	8%	0%	7%	2%	4%	2%	5%
Any public	99%	91%	99%	93%	97%	95%	97%	94%
Any private	14%	26%	18%	29%	21%	26%	12%	18%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

The results among hunters and anglers are shown in Figures 5.2.3 through 5.2.6. Public land predominates, particularly regarding fishing access. Nonetheless, a substantial percentage of nonresident hunters use mostly private land for their hunting in Wyoming (29% use it mostly, and another 17% use private land about half of their Wyoming hunting time—a sum of 46%).

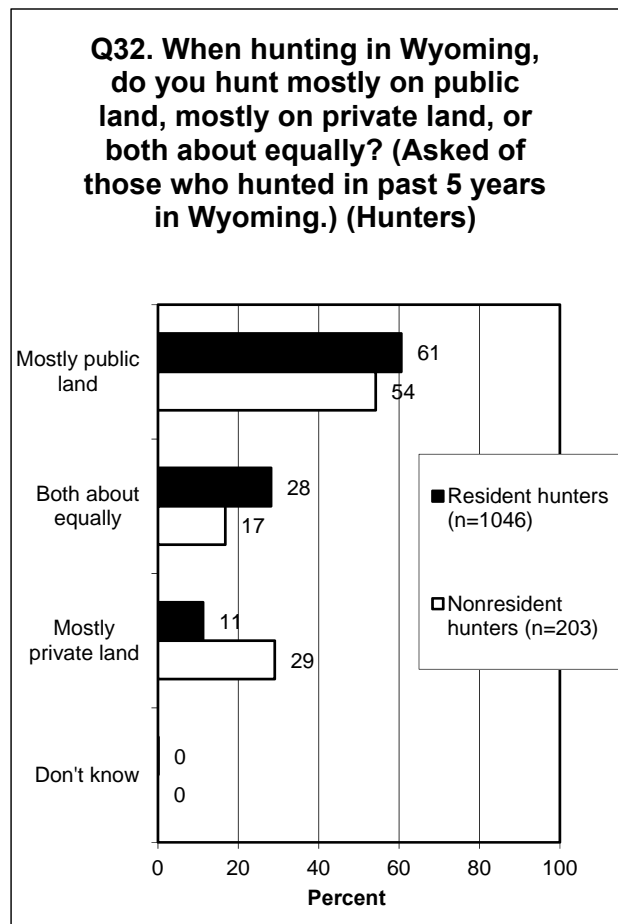


Figure 5.2.3. Hunting on Public or Private Land, Hunters

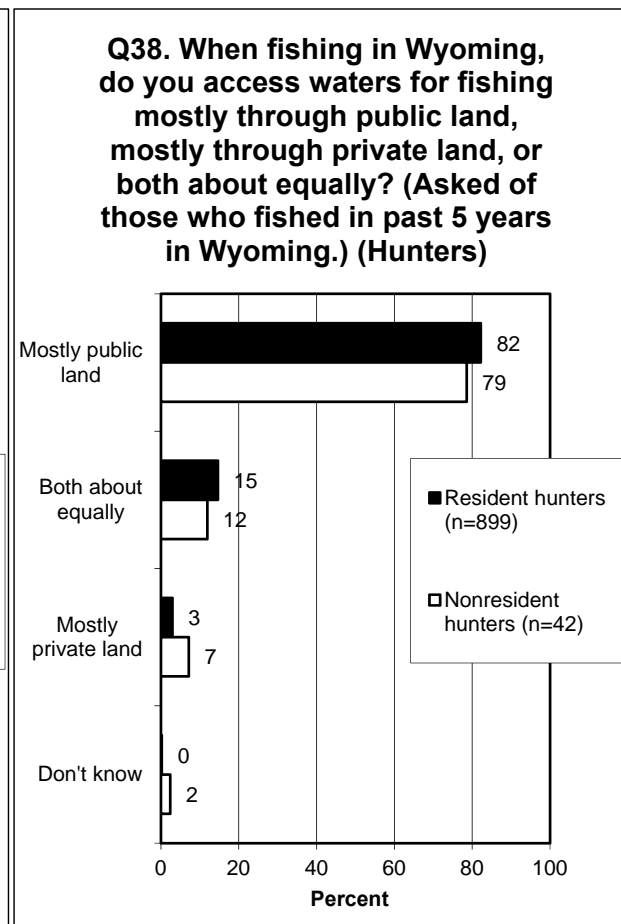


Figure 5.2.4. Fishing Access Through Public or Private Land, Hunters

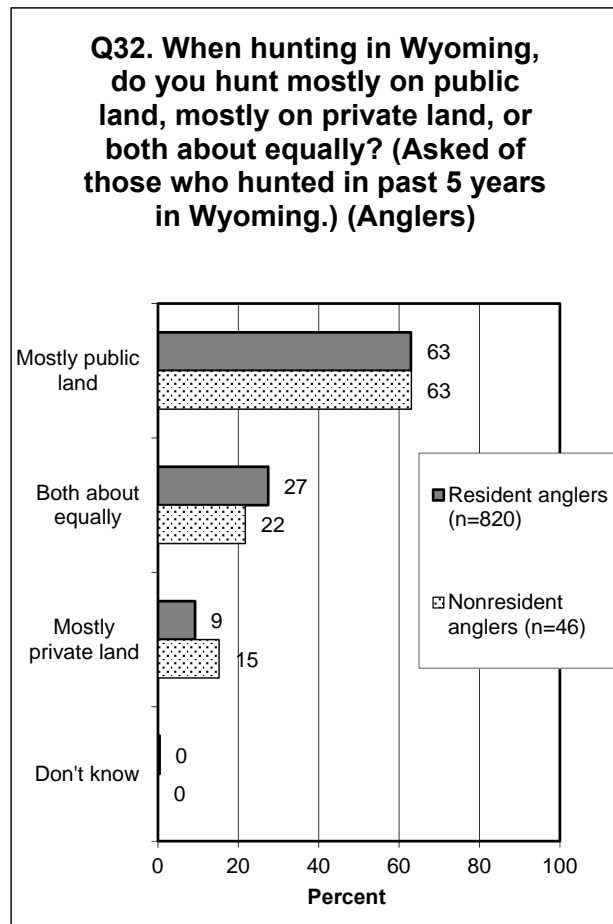


Figure 5.2.5. Hunting on Public or Private Land, Anglers

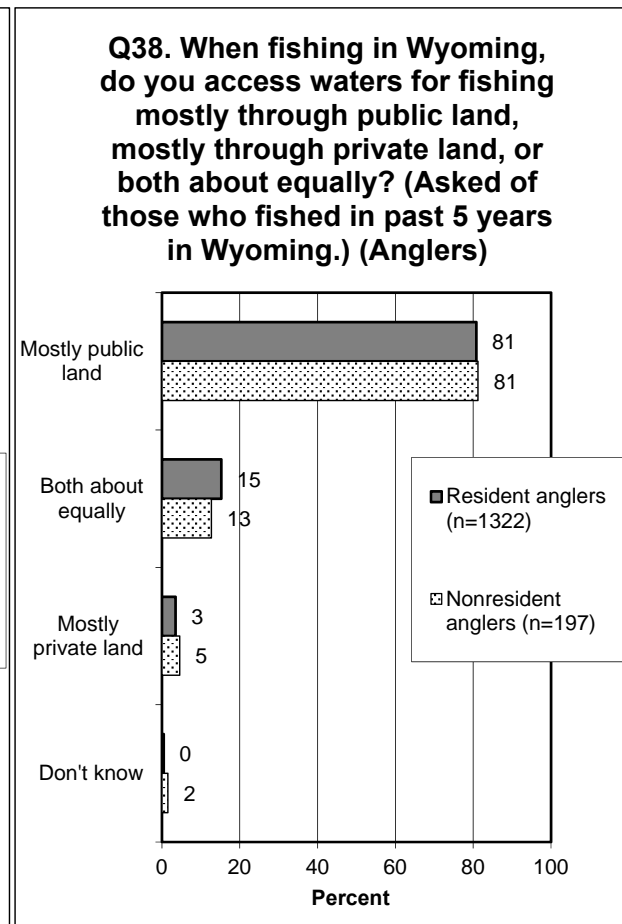


Figure 5.2.6. Fishing Access Through Public or Private Land, Anglers

The survey explored travel distances. Residents who hunt travel a mean of 79.0 miles, with a median of 50 miles (Figure 5.2.7). Anglers in the resident survey travel slightly less: a mean of 56.0 miles, and a median of 40 miles (Figure 5.2.8). Regional results are shown in Table 5.2.3 and 5.2.4.

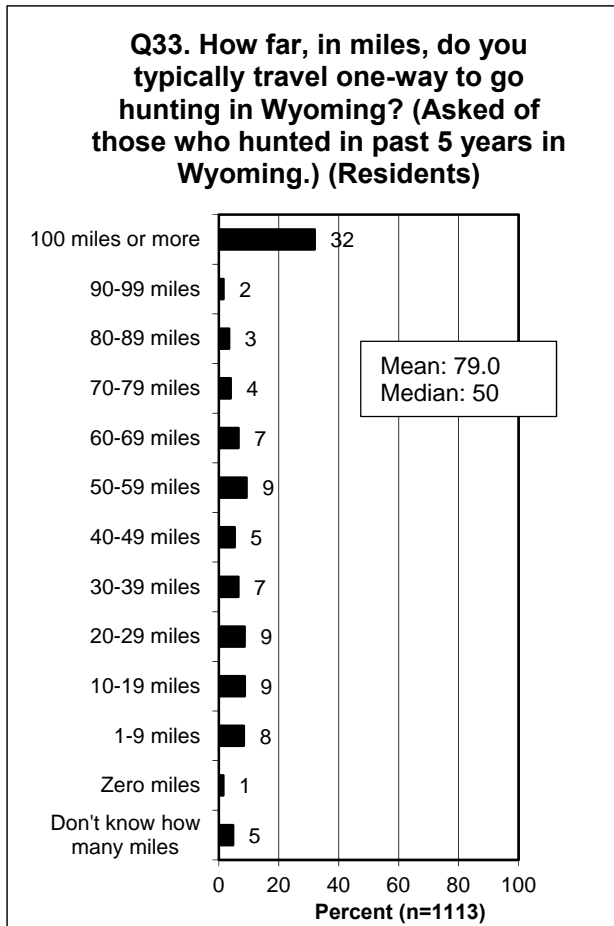


Figure 5.2.7. Miles Residents Travel to Hunt

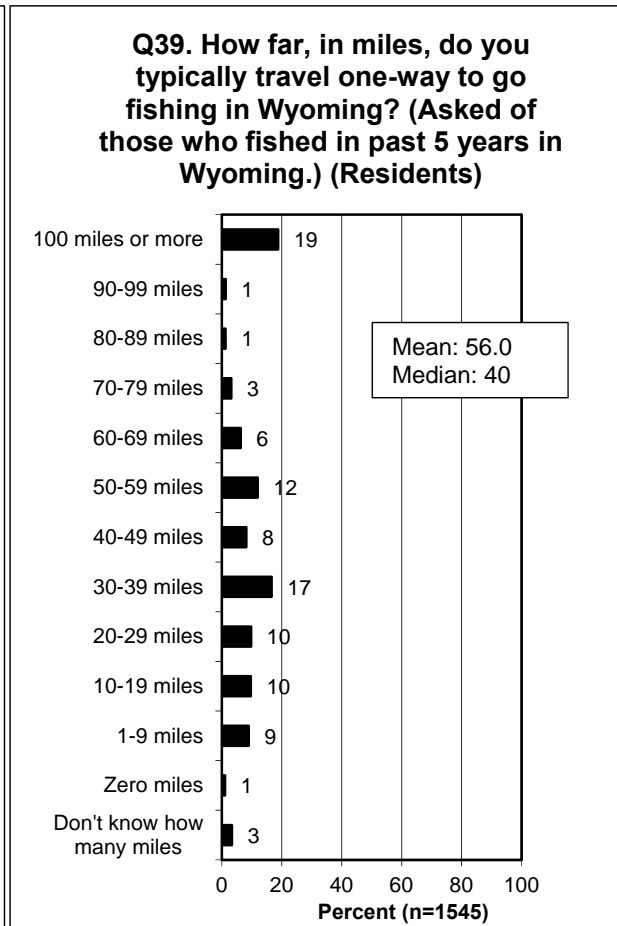


Figure 5.2.8. Miles Residents Travel to Fish

Table 5.2.3. Miles Residents Travel to Hunt, Regionally

Q33. How far, in miles, do you typically travel one-way to go hunting in Wyoming? (Asked of those who hunted in past 5 years in Wyoming.) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
100 miles or more	4%	19%	29%	10%	33%	23%	38%	44%
90-99 miles	2%	2%	1%	1%	3%	2%	0%	2%
80-89 miles	0%	4%	4%	0%	3%	5%	2%	4%
70-79 miles	2%	5%	4%	0%	1%	7%	4%	4%
60-69 miles	6%	5%	6%	2%	9%	9%	10%	2%
50-59 miles	8%	16%	8%	5%	12%	10%	6%	7%
40-49 miles	5%	6%	5%	9%	4%	5%	6%	5%
30-39 miles	9%	11%	14%	18%	3%	8%	7%	2%
20-29 miles	16%	6%	9%	18%	10%	7%	4%	11%
10-19 miles	26%	11%	6%	22%	8%	8%	4%	9%
1-9 miles	17%	10%	9%	12%	7%	9%	12%	4%
Zero miles	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	4%	1%	2%
Don't know how many miles	5%	2%	4%	3%	6%	4%	6%	5%

Table 5.2.4. Miles Residents Travel to Fish, Regionally

Q39. How far, in miles, do you typically travel one-way to go fishing in Wyoming? (Asked of those who fished in past 5 years in Wyoming.) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
100 miles or more	8%	14%	13%	5%	19%	14%	15%	29%
90-99 miles	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
80-89 miles	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%	5%	0%	0%
70-79 miles	5%	8%	2%	1%	2%	4%	1%	3%
60-69 miles	4%	5%	3%	1%	7%	2%	9%	8%
50-59 miles	8%	14%	9%	4%	15%	10%	11%	13%
40-49 miles	5%	4%	5%	3%	5%	10%	13%	8%
30-39 miles	10%	14%	21%	4%	11%	19%	26%	13%
20-29 miles	11%	5%	15%	19%	13%	11%	11%	6%
10-19 miles	20%	13%	16%	31%	10%	8%	6%	7%
1-9 miles	21%	14%	8%	26%	11%	10%	4%	6%
Zero miles	5%	3%	3%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Don't know how many miles	1%	3%	1%	3%	4%	5%	2%	4%

The results among hunters and anglers are shown in Figures 5.2.9 through 5.2.12. Hunters generally travel farther than anglers.

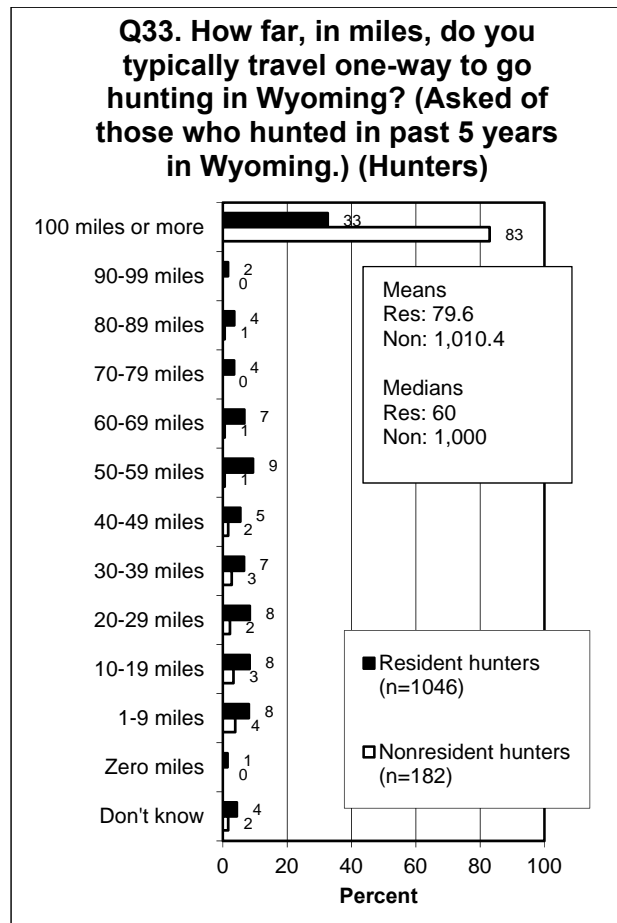


Figure 5.2.9. Miles Residents Travel to Hunt, Hunters

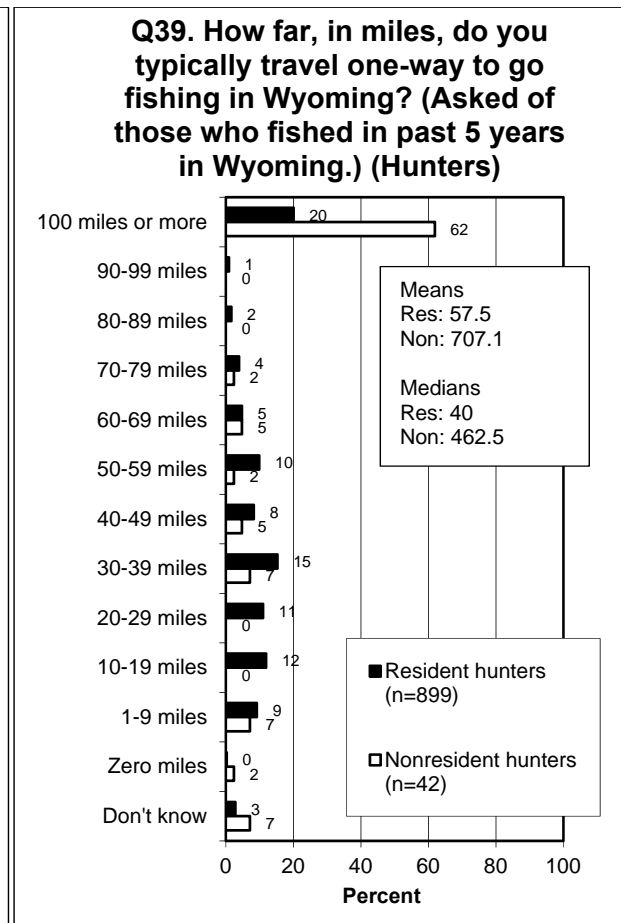


Figure 5.2.10. Miles Residents Travel to Fish, Hunters

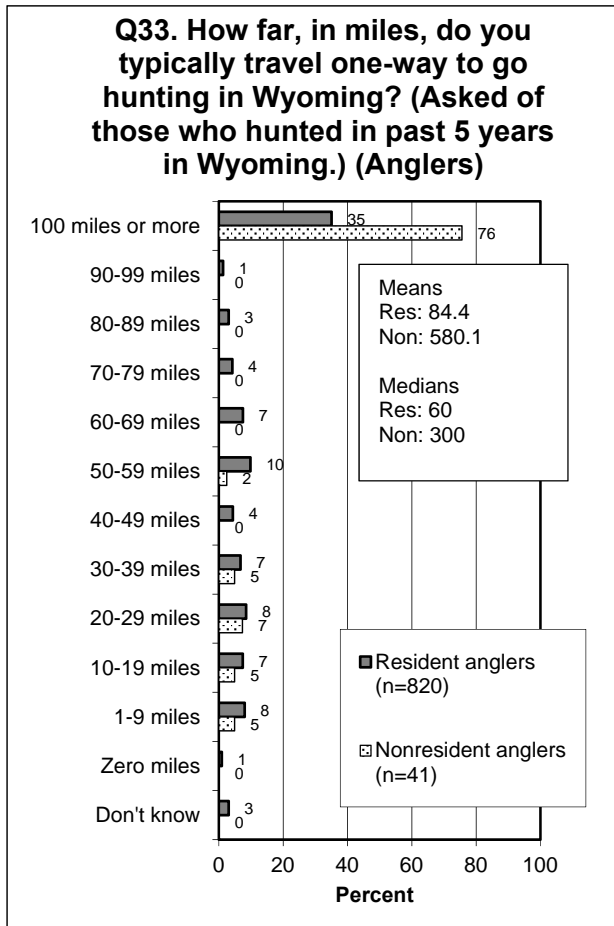


Figure 5.2.11. Miles Residents Travel to Hunt, Anglers

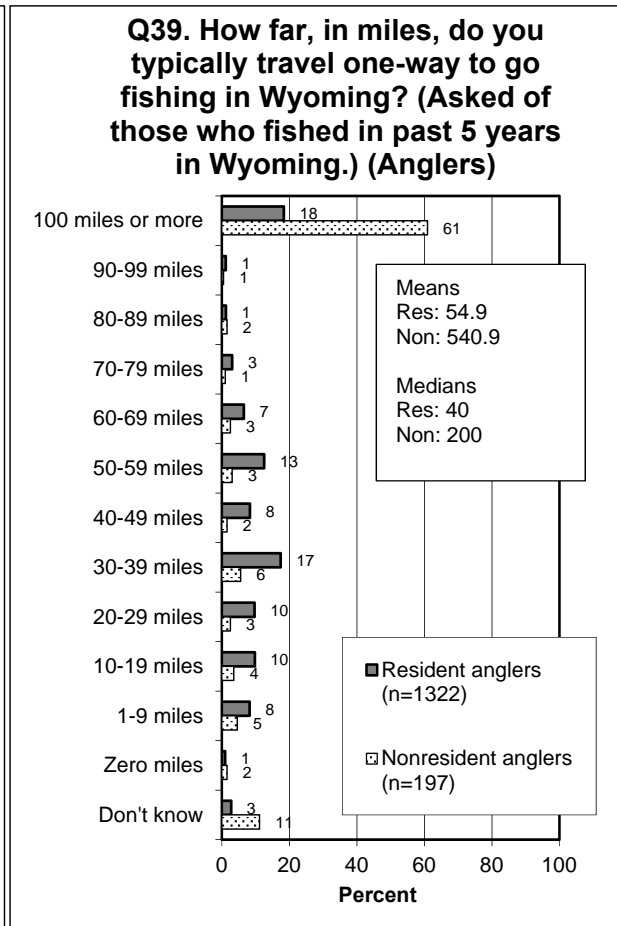


Figure 5.2.12. Miles Residents Travel to Fish, Anglers

5.3. ISSUES OF CONCERN

The biggest concerns among residents regarding Wyoming's fish and wildlife are the viability of wildlife populations, poaching, and the management of wolves (Figure 5.3.1). Also shown are results regionally (Table 5.3.1), results among hunters (Figure 5.3.2) and anglers (Figure 5.3.3), results among hunters/trappers/anglers collectively (Figure 5.3.4), and results among non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.3.5).

Regarding issues pertaining to hunting, residents most commonly name access (Figure 5.3.6). Also shown are results regionally (Table 5.3.2), results among hunters (Figure 5.3.7) and anglers (Figure 5.3.8), results among hunters/trappers/anglers collectively (Figure 5.3.9), and results among non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.3.10).

Invasive species as an issue is the most commonly named fishing issue, according to residents (Figure 5.3.11). Also shown are results regionally (Table 5.3.3), results among hunters (Figure 5.3.12) and anglers (Figure 5.3.13), results among hunters/trappers/anglers collectively (Figure 5.3.14), and results among non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.3.15).

As with fishing issues, the most commonly named boating issue is invasive species (Figure 5.3.16). Also shown are results regionally (Table 5.3.4), results among hunters (Figure 5.3.17) and anglers (Figure 5.3.18), results among hunters/trappers/anglers collectively (Figure 5.3.19), and results among non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.3.20). Also shown are boaters' results on this question, who most commonly name invasive species and access (Figure 5.3.21).

Residents' top concern regarding educational programs of the Game and Fish Department is that more are needed in schools (Figure 5.3.22). Also shown are results regionally (Table 5.3.5), results among hunters (Figure 5.3.23) and anglers (Figure 5.3.24), results among hunters/trappers/anglers collectively (Figure 5.3.25), and results among non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.3.26).

Finally, the top issues confronting wildlife enthusiasts who do not hunt, fish, or trap, as perceived by residents, are dissemination of information and access (Figure 5.3.27). Also shown are results regionally (Table 5.3.6), results among hunters (Figure 5.3.28) and anglers (Figure 5.3.29), results among hunters/trappers/anglers collectively (Figure 5.3.30), and results among non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.3.31).

Only the statewide residents' graphs show values of more than 0 but less than 0.5 (which would round to 0) as "Less than 0.5"; on all other graphs, values such as these are rounded to 0.

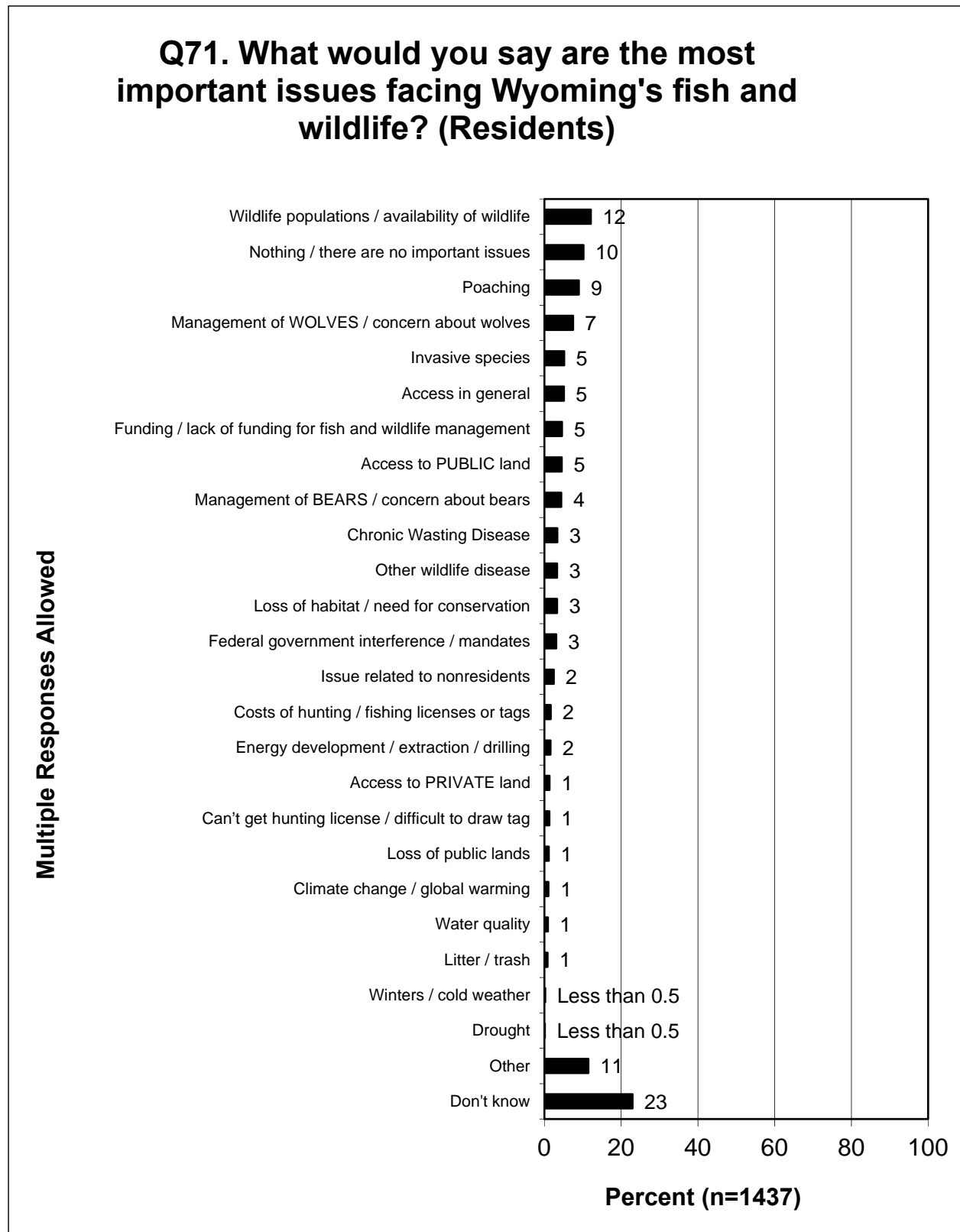


Figure 5.3.1. Fish and Wildlife Issues, Residents

Table 5.3.1. Fish and Wildlife Issues, Regionally

Q71. What would you say are the most important issues facing Wyoming's fish and wildlife? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Wildlife populations / availability of wildlife	21%	11%	16%	17%	10%	9%	8%	15%
Nothing / there are no important issues	7%	8%	16%	14%	7%	18%	12%	7%
Poaching	3%	5%	8%	4%	15%	10%	9%	9%
Management of WOLVES / concern about wolves	14%	14%	12%	19%	9%	9%	6%	3%
Invasive species	17%	7%	5%	8%	3%	6%	4%	4%
Access in general	5%	3%	1%	3%	5%	7%	7%	4%
Funding / lack of funding for fish and wildlife management	3%	8%	5%	3%	7%	6%	3%	3%
Access to PUBLIC land	3%	0%	1%	1%	1%	6%	3%	8%
Management of BEARS / concern about bears	7%	12%	10%	10%	2%	5%	4%	1%
Chronic wasting disease	4%	3%	5%	7%	1%	6%	5%	2%
Other wildlife disease	3%	5%	4%	6%	1%	5%	6%	1%
Loss of habitat / need for conservation	14%	1%	7%	2%	4%	2%	1%	3%
Federal government interference / mandates	1%	3%	2%	4%	0%	7%	4%	3%
Issue related to nonresidents	2%	2%	2%	6%	3%	2%	1%	4%
Costs of hunting / fishing licenses or tags	1%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%
Energy development / extraction / drilling	3%	1%	5%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Access to PRIVATE land	3%	1%	0%	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%
Can't get hunting license / difficult to draw tag	0%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Loss of public lands	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%
Climate change / global warming	5%	0%	4%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Water quality	0%	4%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Litter / trash	0%	0%	2%	0%	4%	1%	0%	0%
Winters / cold weather	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Drought	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	10%	15%	12%	10%	14%	8%	12%	11%
Don't know	18%	16%	15%	17%	24%	22%	25%	26%

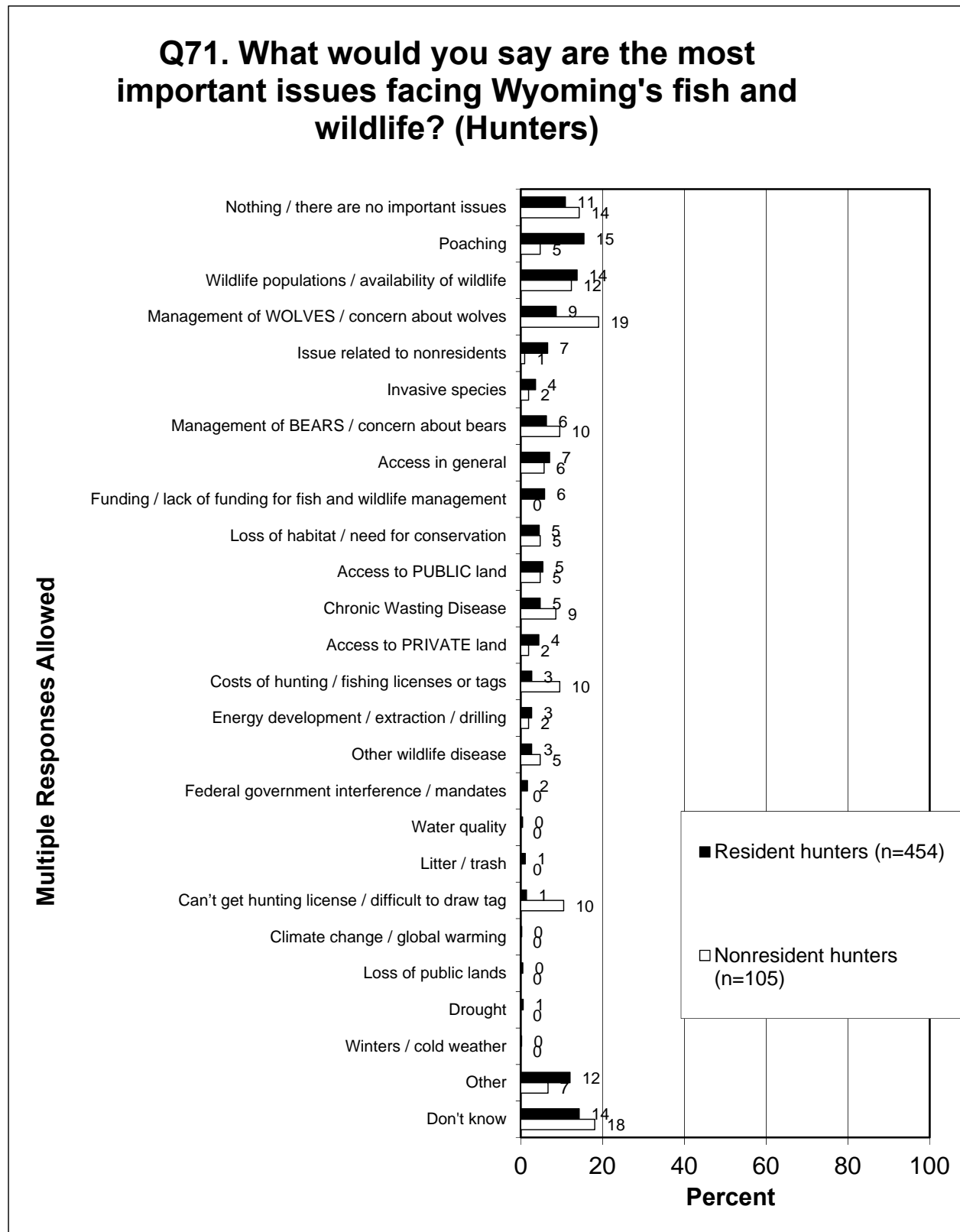


Figure 5.3.2. Fish and Wildlife Issues, Hunters



Figure 5.3.3. Fish and Wildlife Issues, Anglers

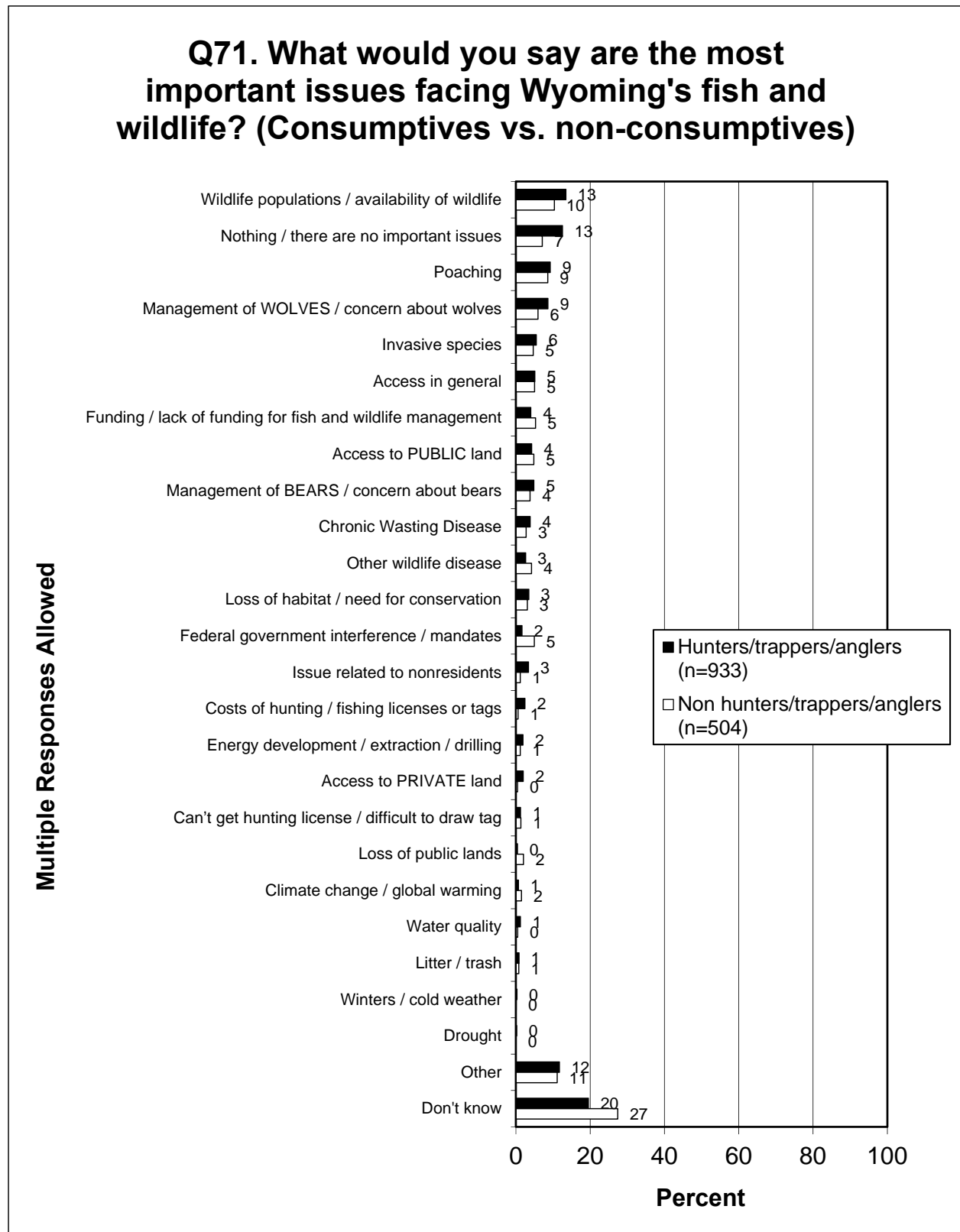


Figure 5.3.4. Fish and Wildlife Issues, Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

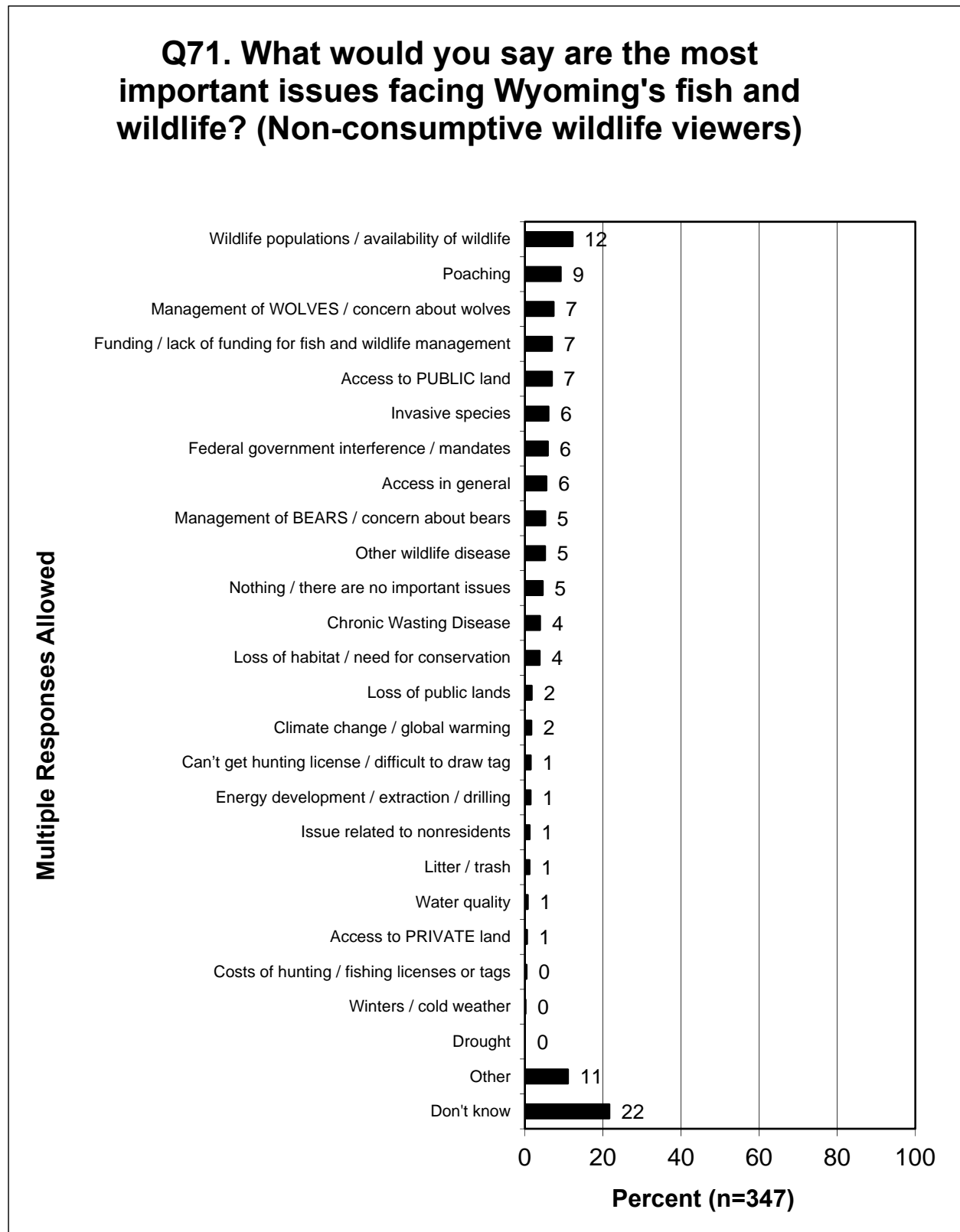


Figure 5.3.5. Fish and Wildlife Issues, Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

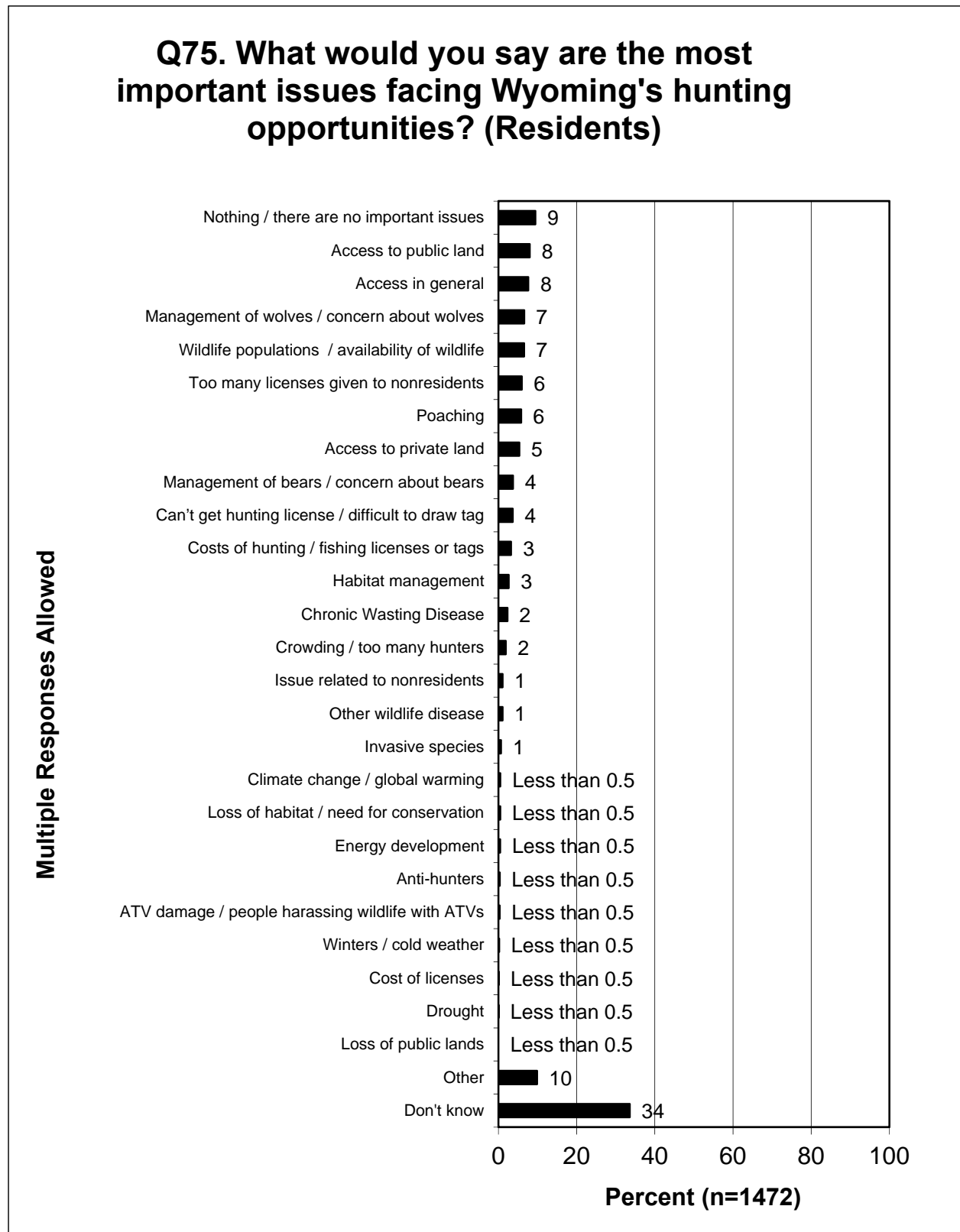


Figure 5.3.6. Hunting Issues, Residents

Table 5.3.2. Hunting Issues, Regionally

Q75. What would you say are the most important issues facing Wyoming's hunting opportunities? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Nothing / there are no important issues	12%	10%	7%	14%	14%	8%	13%	6%
Access to public land	4%	6%	6%	5%	4%	9%	9%	11%
Access in general	7%	9%	5%	7%	5%	12%	9%	7%
Management of wolves / concern about wolves	10%	11%	14%	17%	7%	5%	4%	5%
Wildlife populations / availability of wildlife	7%	7%	6%	9%	9%	3%	6%	7%
Too many licenses given to nonresidents	3%	7%	8%	6%	9%	4%	5%	5%
Poaching	3%	6%	16%	8%	7%	6%	4%	4%
Access to private land	1%	7%	2%	2%	2%	8%	6%	6%
Management of bears / concern about bears	6%	7%	8%	12%	1%	4%	2%	3%
Can't get hunting license / difficult to draw tag	2%	7%	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%	2%
Costs of hunting / fishing licenses or tags	1%	3%	9%	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Habitat management	3%	2%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%	4%
Chronic wasting disease	1%	2%	1%	5%	0%	1%	4%	3%
Crowding / too many hunters	1%	4%	1%	3%	4%	1%	1%	1%
Issue related to nonresidents	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other wildlife disease	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Invasive species	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Climate change / global warming	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Loss of habitat / need for conservation	0%	1%	4%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Energy development	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Anti-hunters	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
ATV damage / people harassing wildlife with ATVs	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Winters / cold weather	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Cost of licenses	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Drought	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Loss of public lands	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	10%	9%	7%	9%	14%	15%	7%	8%
Don't know	42%	24%	25%	25%	28%	33%	31%	41%

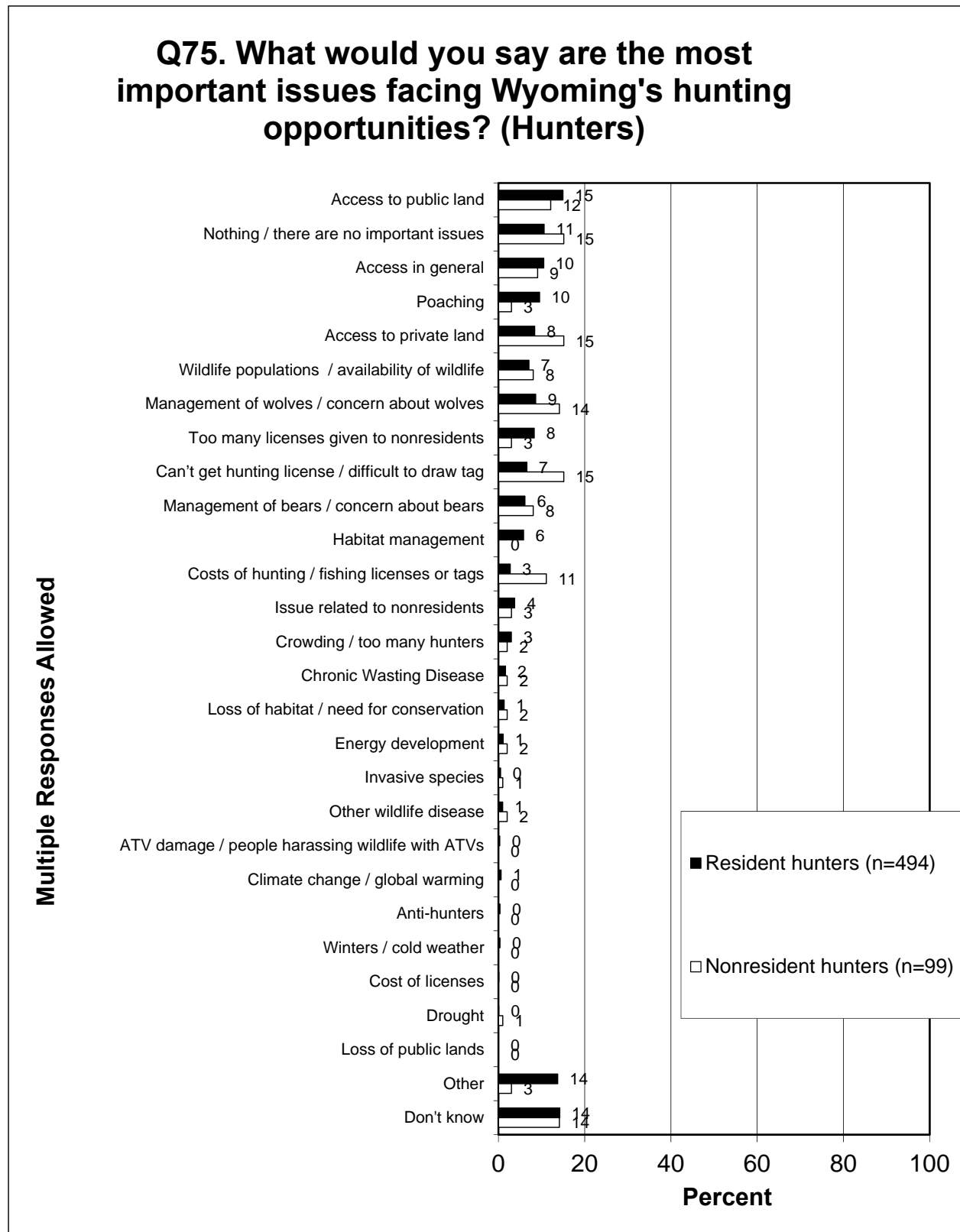


Figure 5.3.7. Hunting Issues, Hunters

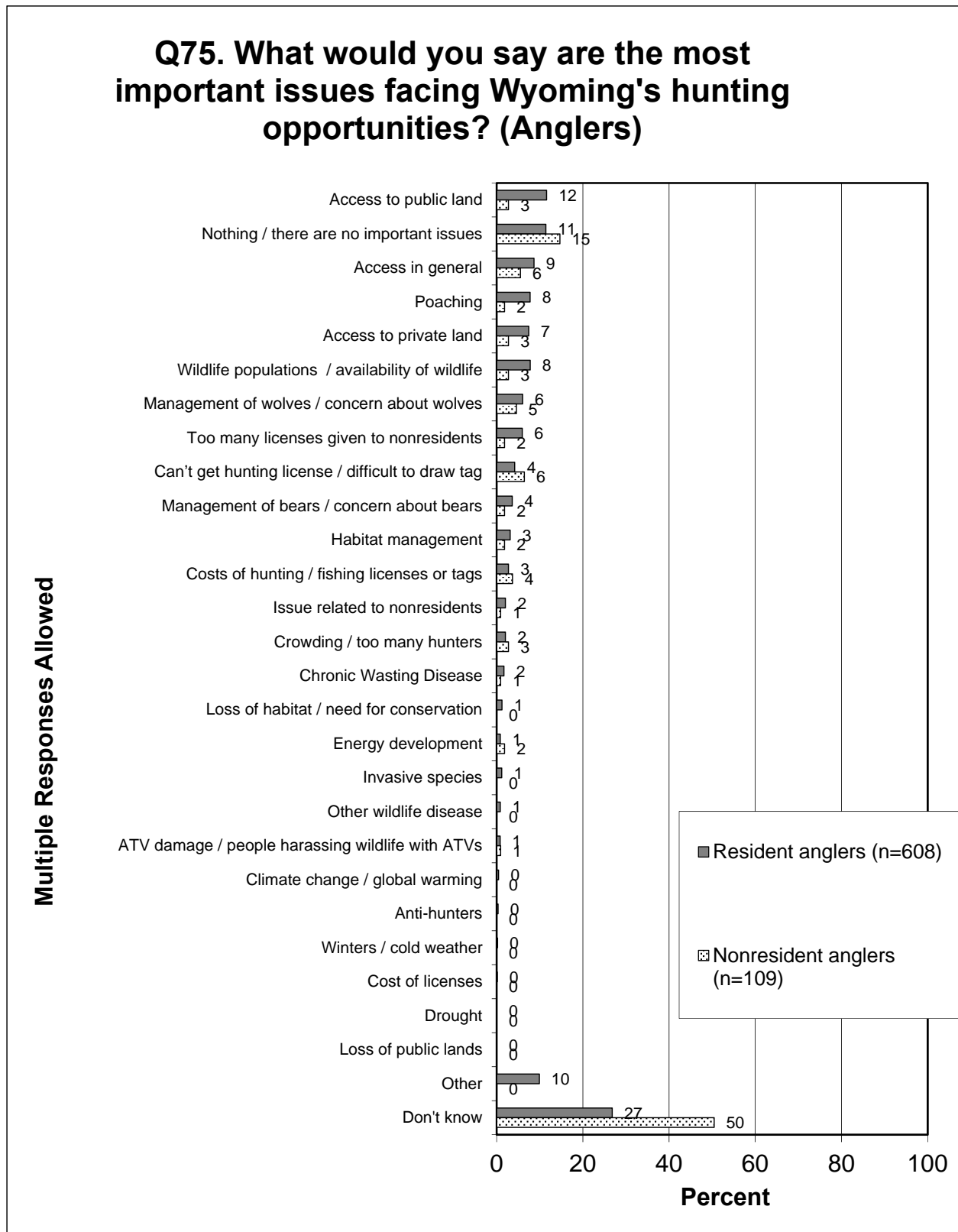


Figure 5.3.8. Hunting Issues, Anglers

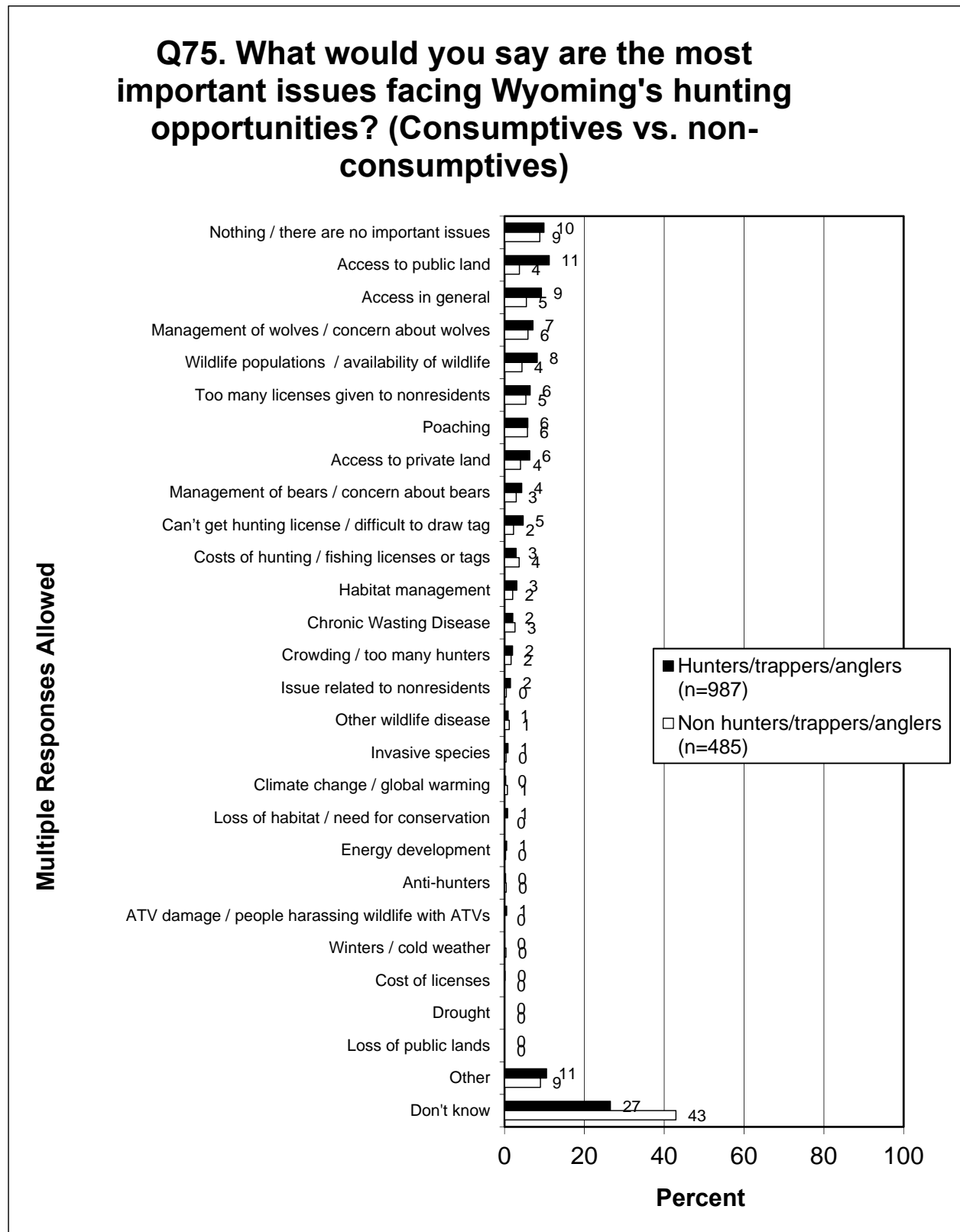


Figure 5.3.9. Hunting Issues, Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

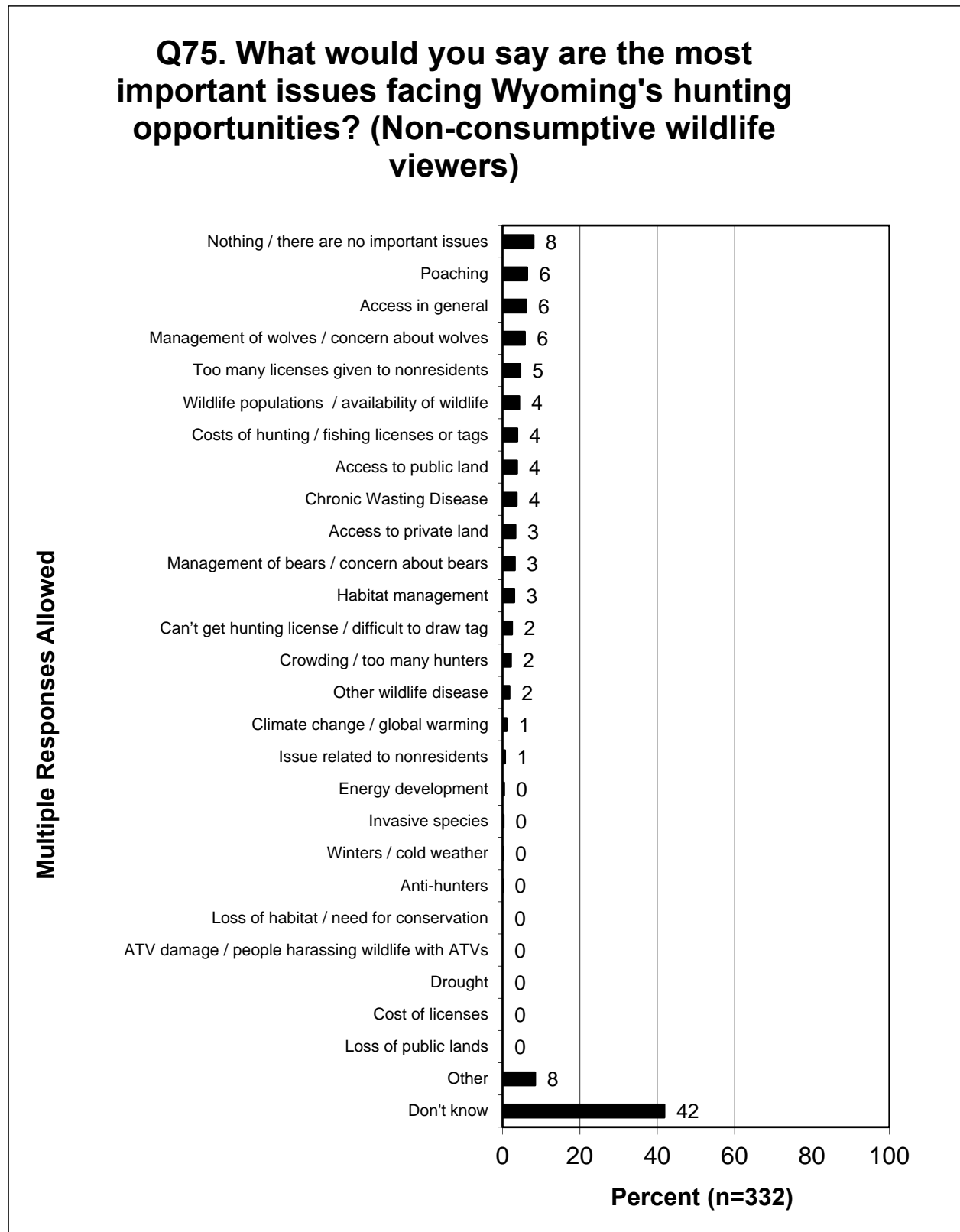


Figure 5.3.10. Hunting Issues, Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

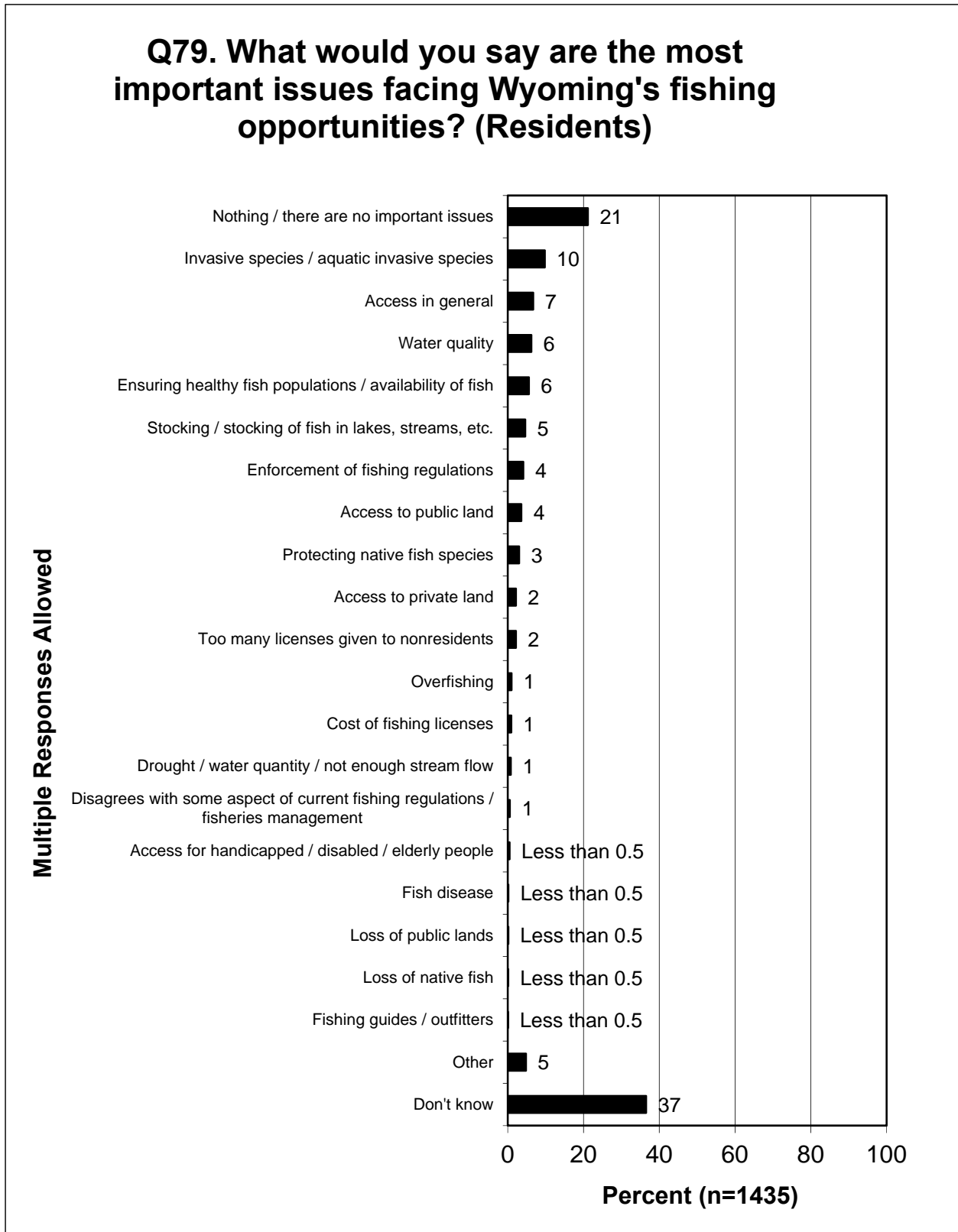


Figure 5.3.11. Fishing Issues, Residents

Table 5.3.3. Fishing Issues, Regionally

Q79. What would you say are the most important issues facing Wyoming's fishing opportunities? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Nothing / there are no important issues	22%	21%	23%	22%	20%	20%	28%	17%
Invasive species / aquatic invasive species	9%	12%	12%	16%	9%	14%	7%	9%
Access in general	5%	9%	5%	9%	6%	9%	4%	8%
Water quality	6%	8%	4%	8%	5%	7%	4%	7%
Ensuring healthy fish populations / availability of fish	4%	8%	5%	0%	5%	9%	4%	5%
Stocking / stocking of fish in lakes, streams, etc.	3%	7%	4%	4%	7%	6%	4%	3%
Enforcement of fishing regulations	3%	3%	1%	1%	6%	2%	3%	6%
Access to public land	8%	4%	1%	2%	2%	1%	5%	5%
Protecting native fish species	7%	4%	3%	2%	6%	2%	2%	2%
Access to private land	3%	1%	0%	3%	1%	1%	3%	3%
Too many licenses given to nonresidents	1%	2%	2%	3%	1%	1%	6%	1%
Overfishing	2%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Cost of fishing licenses	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Drought / water quantity / not enough stream flow	0%	1%	3%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Disagrees with some aspect of current fishing regulations / fisheries management	1%	2%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Access for handicapped / disabled / elderly people	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Fish disease	1%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Loss of public lands	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Loss of native fish	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Fishing guides / outfitters	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	3%	5%	5%
Don't know	40%	28%	35%	27%	40%	32%	34%	41%

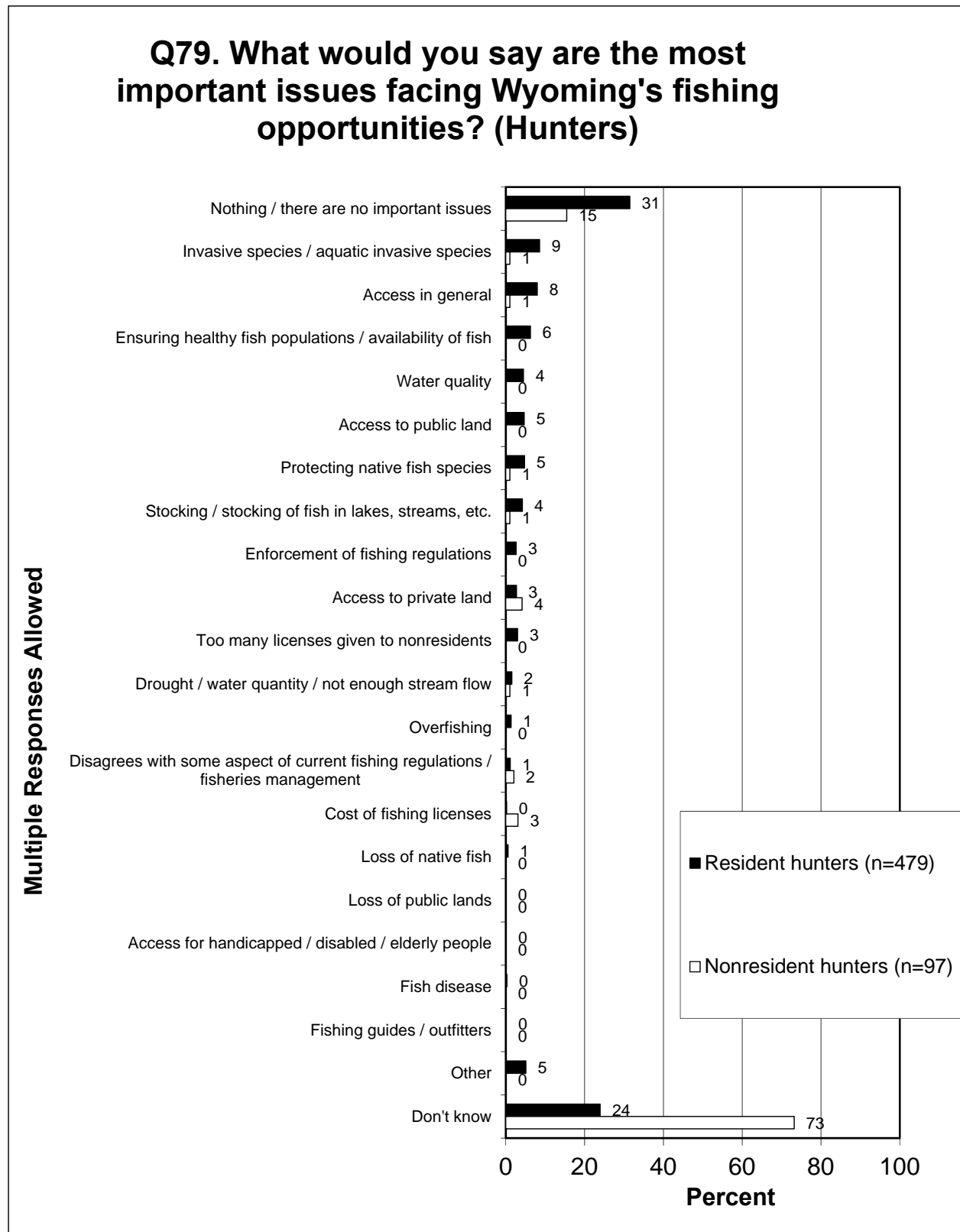


Figure 5.3.12. Fishing Issues, Hunters

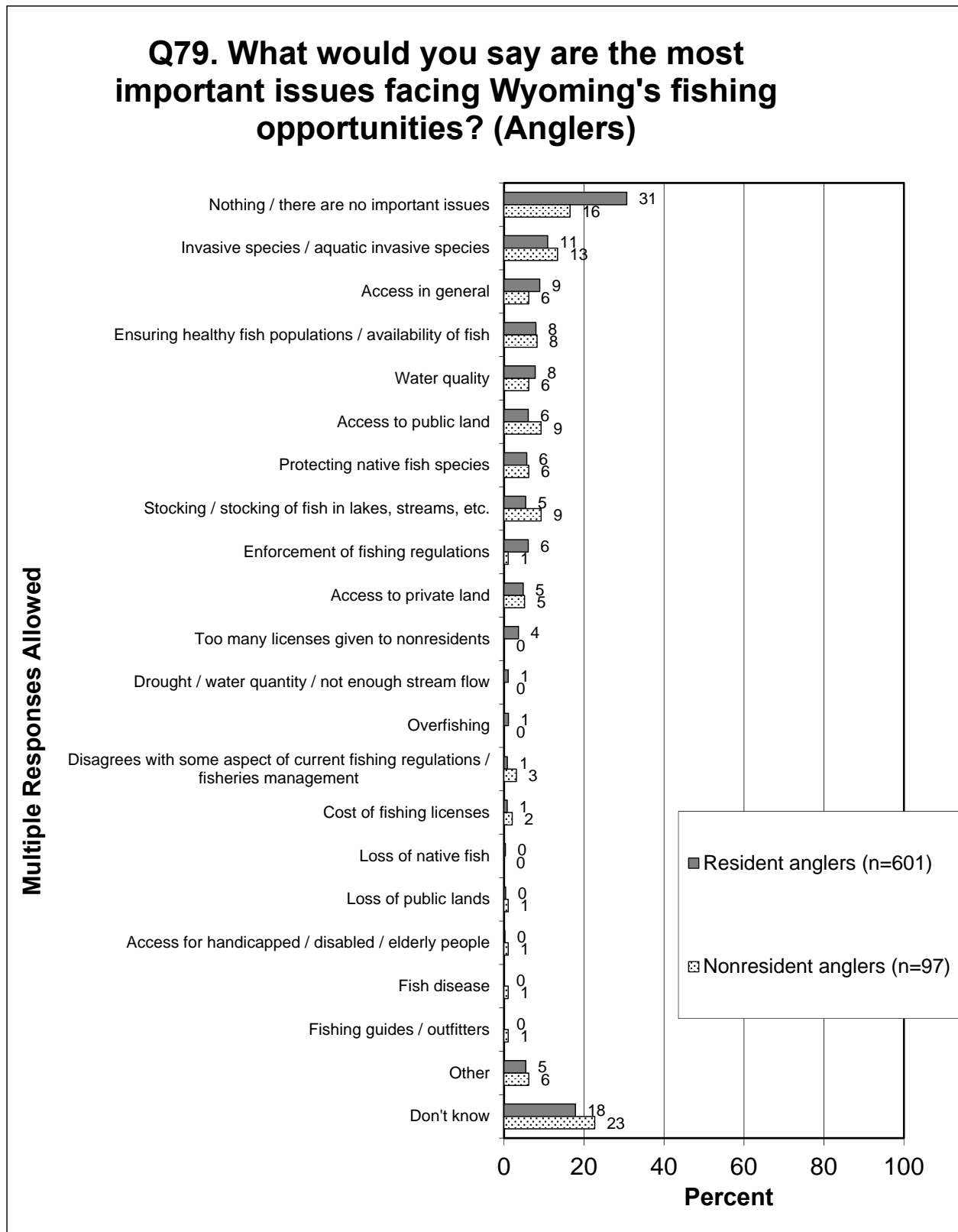


Figure 5.3.13. Fishing Issues, Anglers

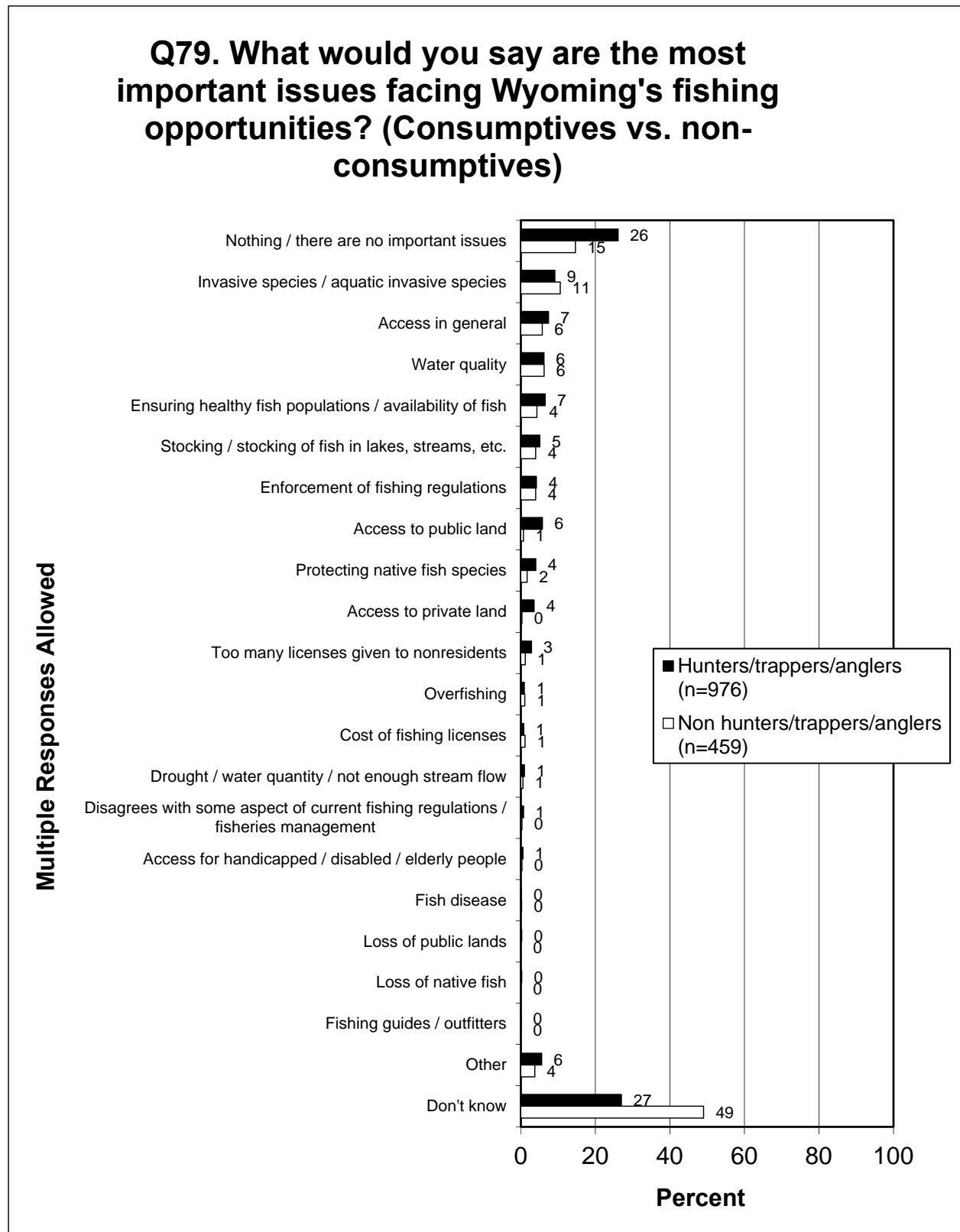


Figure 5.3.14. Fishing Issues, Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

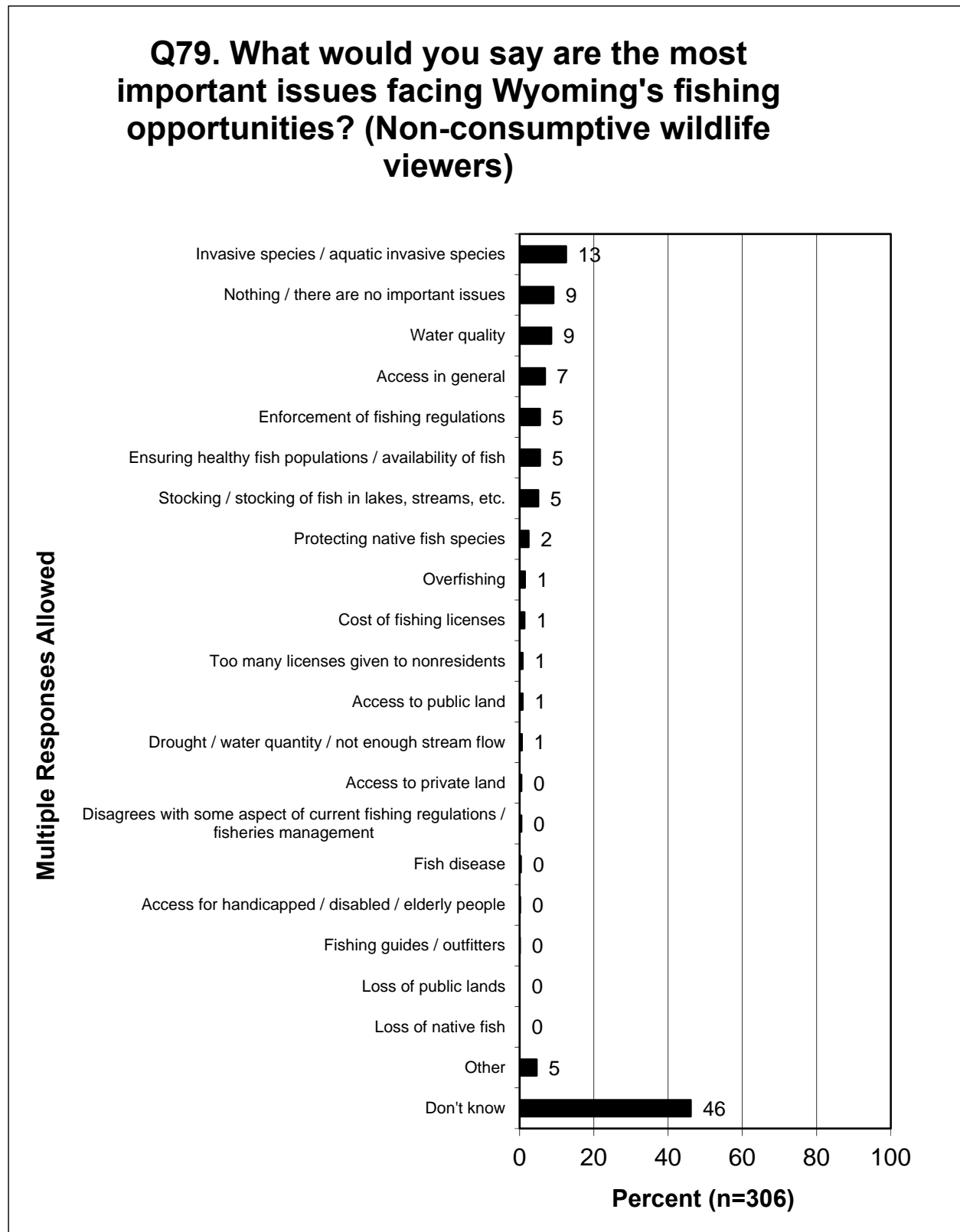


Figure 5.3.15. Fishing Issues, Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

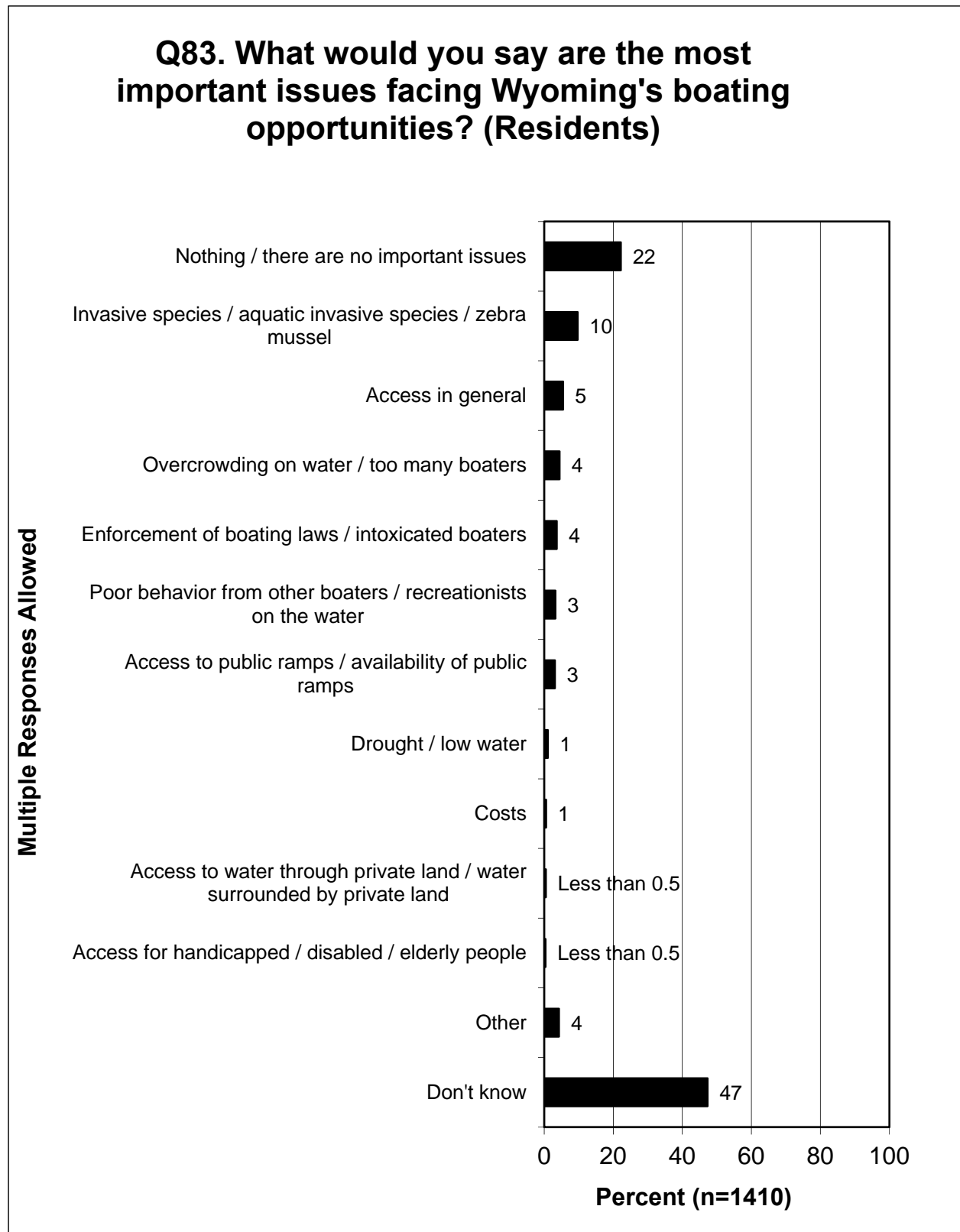


Figure 5.3.16. Boating Issues, Residents

Table 5.3.4. Boating Issues, Regionally

Q83. What would you say are the most important issues facing Wyoming's boating opportunities? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Nothing / there are no important issues	21%	26%	25%	27%	21%	25%	29%	16%
Invasive species / aquatic invasive species / zebra mussel	17%	8%	12%	11%	12%	11%	7%	9%
Access in general	9%	8%	5%	3%	4%	8%	4%	5%
Overcrowding on water / too many boaters	3%	4%	2%	3%	1%	5%	6%	5%
Enforcement of boating laws / intoxicated boaters	3%	2%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	5%
Poor behavior from other boaters / recreationists on the water	1%	3%	1%	4%	5%	4%	5%	2%
Access to public ramps / availability of public ramps	2%	3%	2%	8%	1%	3%	4%	4%
Drought / low water	0%	3%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%
Costs	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%
Access to water through private land / water surrounded by private land	6%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Access for handicapped / disabled / elderly people	0%	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	5%	4%	3%	3%	5%	4%	6%	4%
Don't know	41%	43%	49%	39%	51%	43%	41%	54%

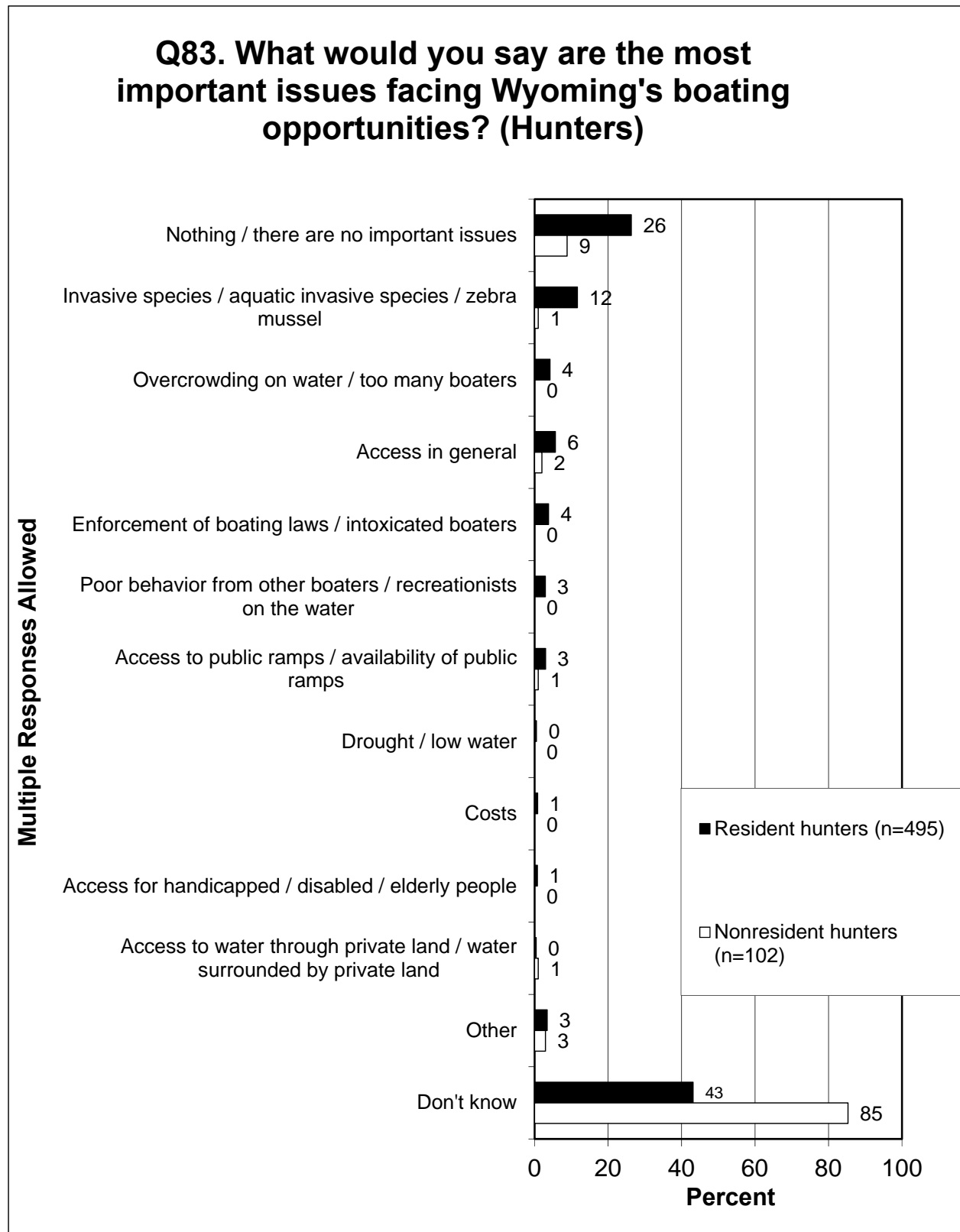


Figure 5.3.17. Boating Issues, Hunters

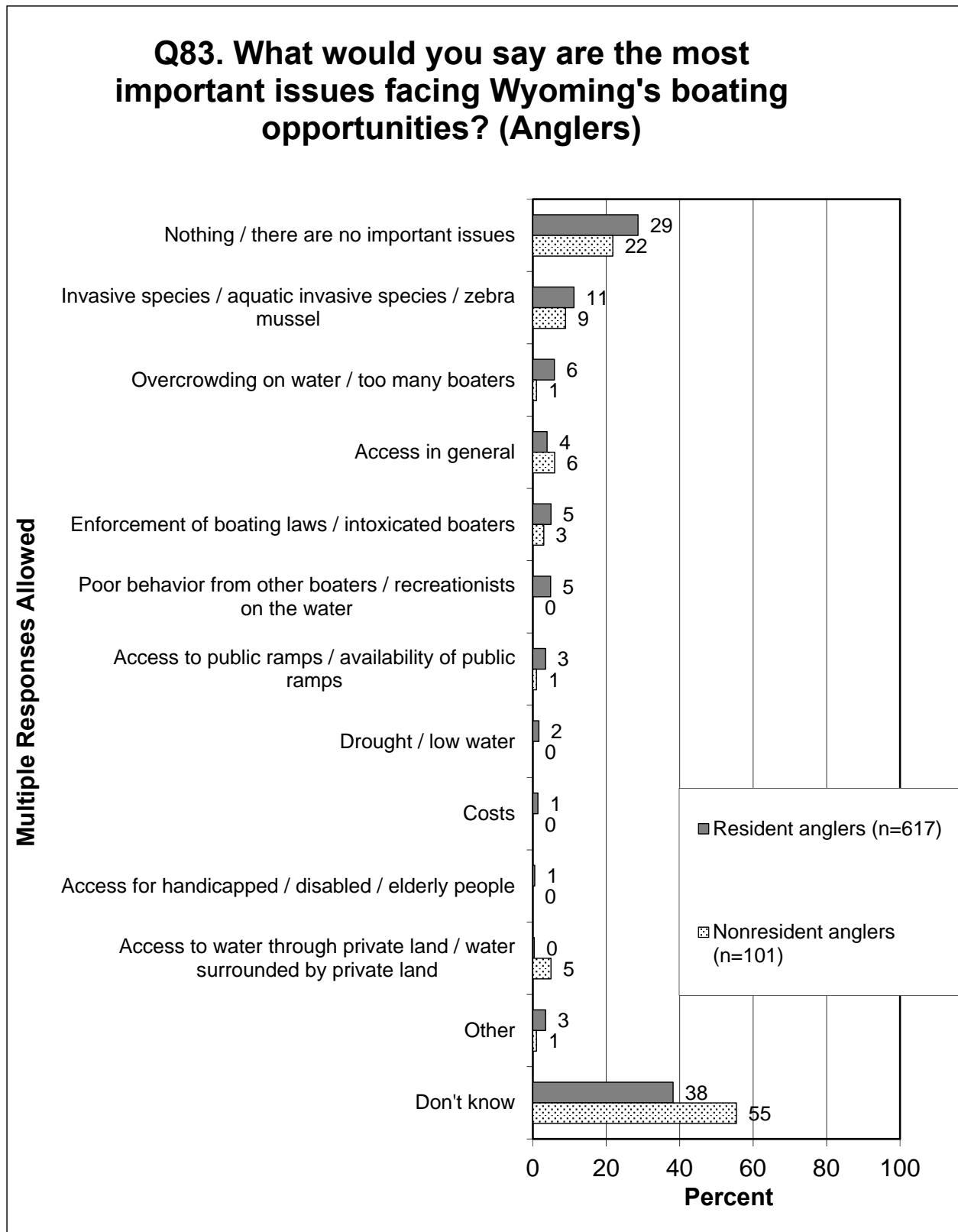


Figure 5.3.18. Boating Issues, Anglers

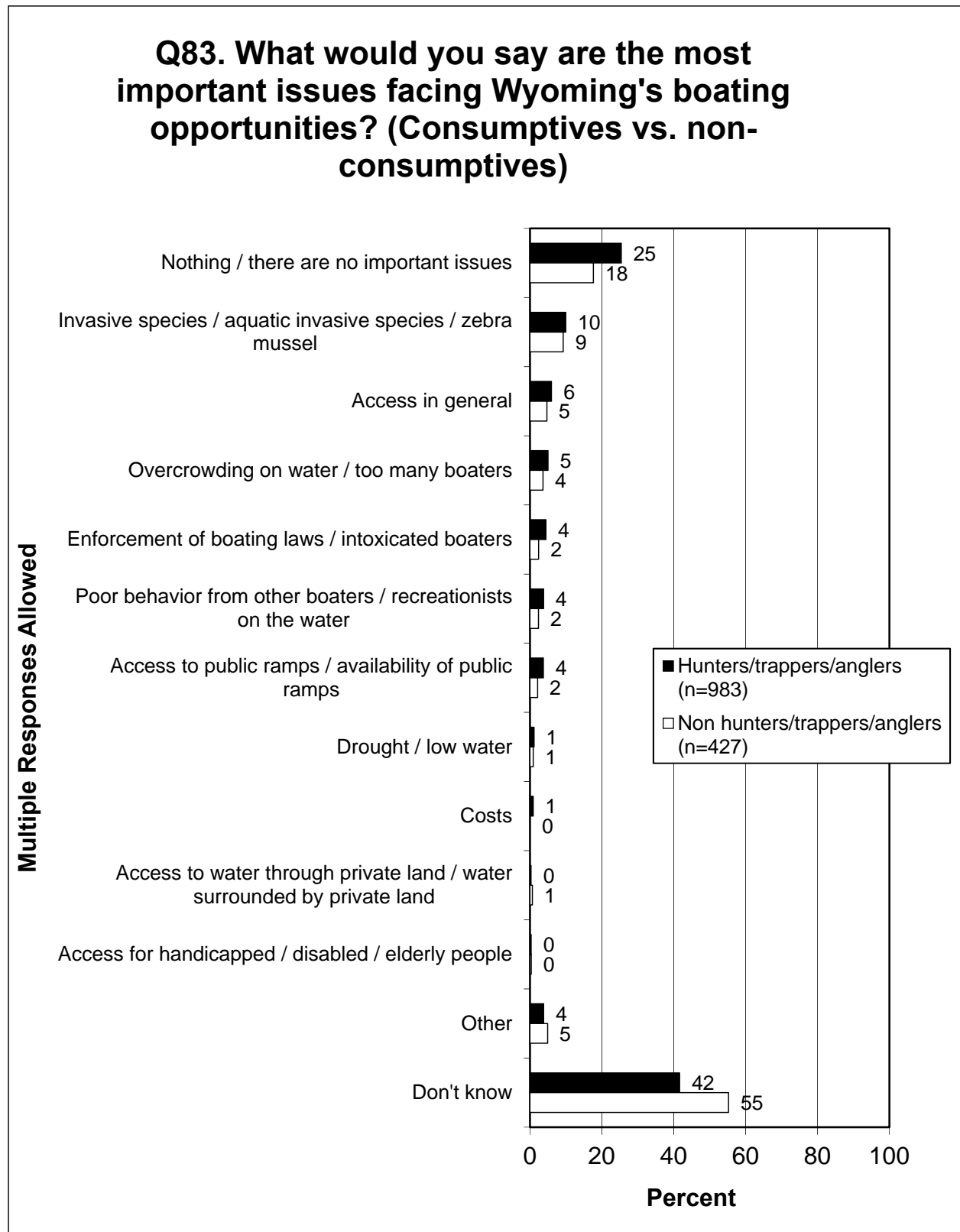


Figure 5.3.19. Boating Issues, Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

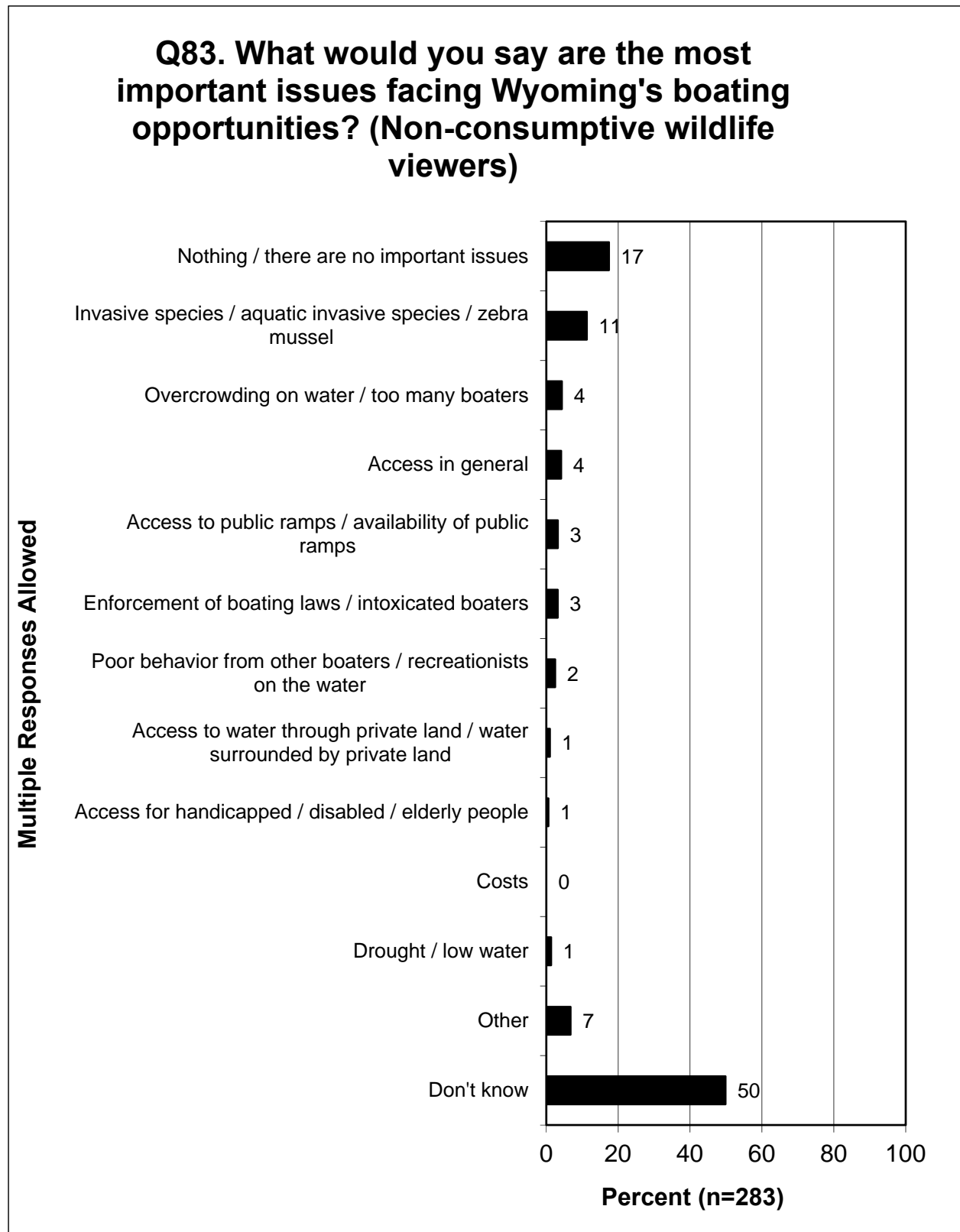


Figure 5.3.20. Boating Issues, Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

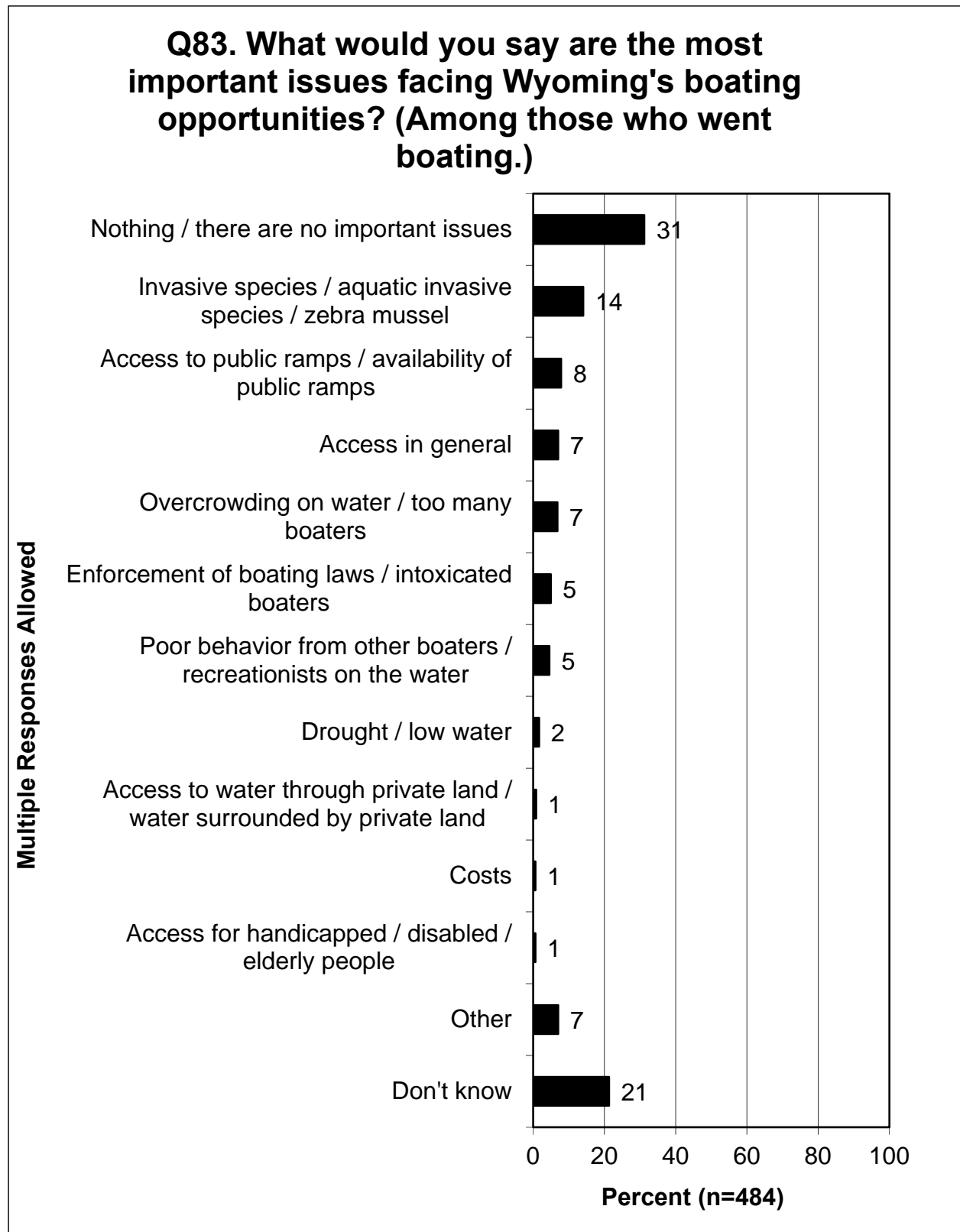


Figure 5.3.21. Boating Issues, Among Boaters

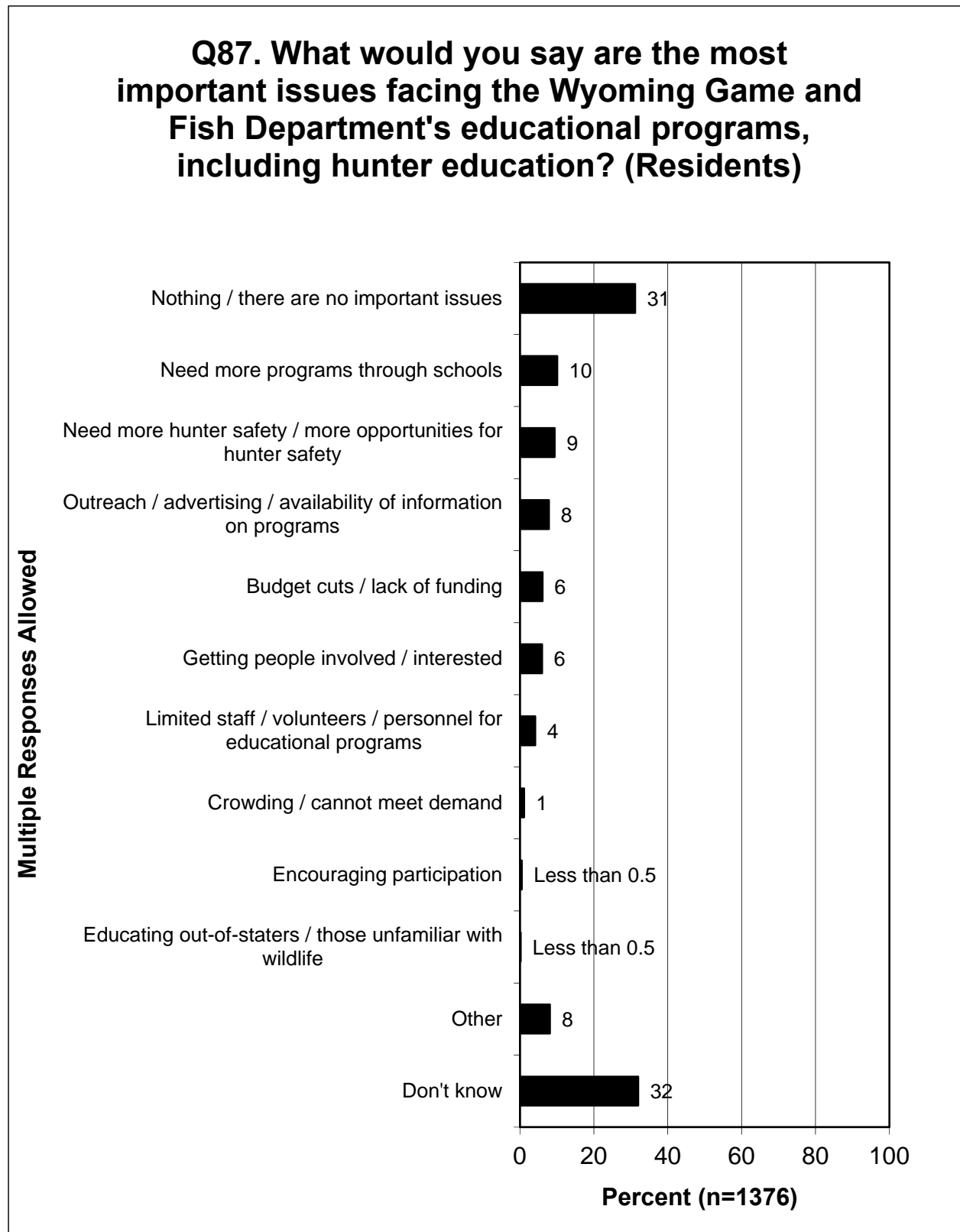


Figure 5.3.22. Issues With Educational Programs, Residents

Table 5.3.5. Issues With Educational Programs, Regionally

Q87. What would you say are the most important issues facing the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's educational programs, including hunter education? (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Nothing / there are no important issues	18%	29%	31%	22%	31%	42%	34%	27%
Need more programs through schools	10%	11%	5%	9%	12%	15%	9%	9%
Need more hunter safety / more opportunities for hunter safety	13%	11%	13%	8%	6%	9%	13%	7%
Outreach / advertising / availability of information on programs	13%	7%	7%	6%	7%	2%	7%	11%
Budget cuts / lack of funding	10%	5%	6%	6%	7%	5%	9%	4%
Getting people involved / interested	3%	5%	4%	11%	4%	4%	5%	9%
Limited staff / volunteers / personnel for educational programs	2%	5%	4%	6%	4%	7%	6%	1%
Crowding / cannot meet demand	0%	1%	0%	0%	5%	0%	1%	1%
Encouraging participation	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Educating out-of-staters / those unfamiliar with wildlife	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	19%	5%	8%	12%	9%	5%	8%	9%
Don't know	31%	34%	32%	32%	35%	28%	28%	35%

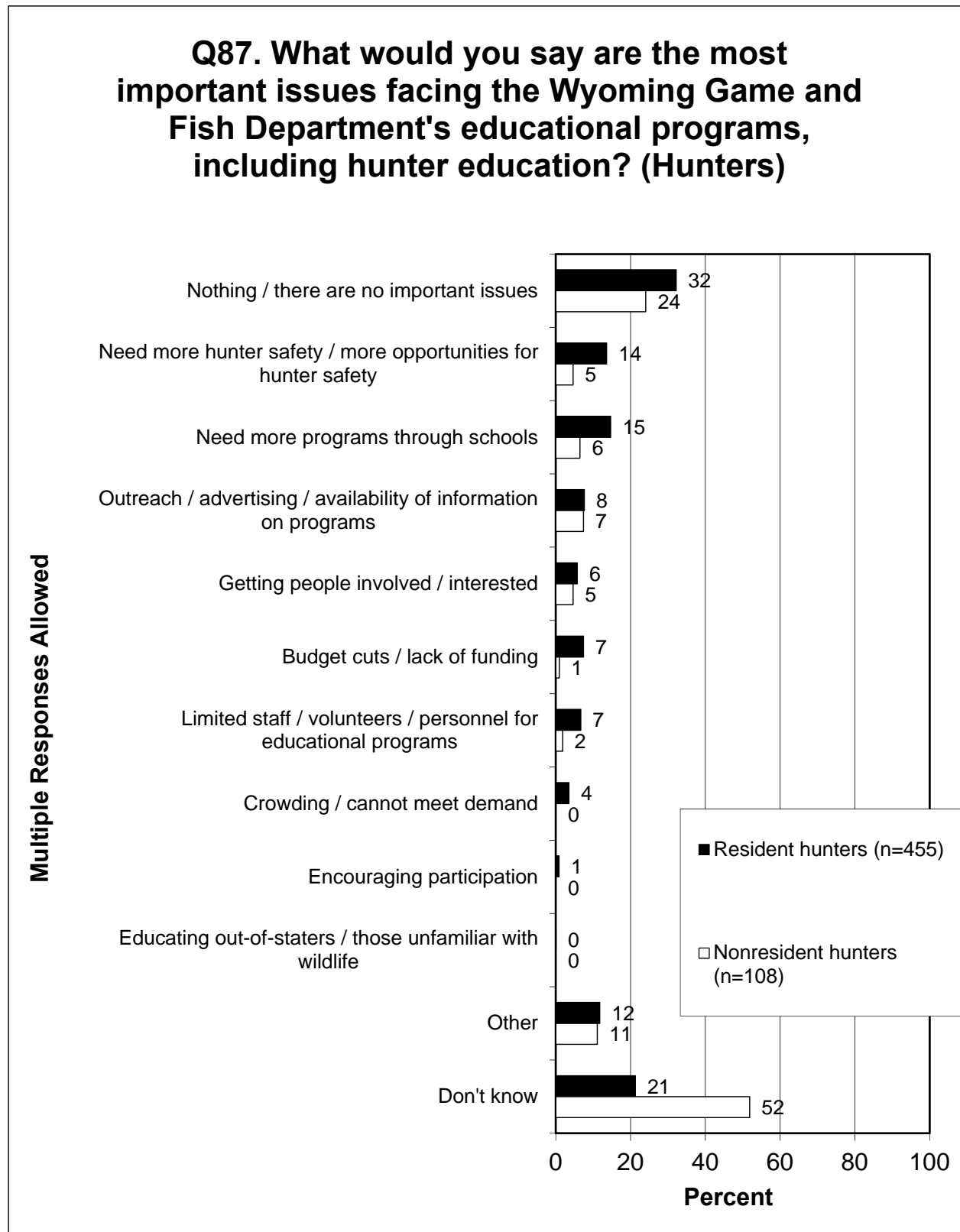


Figure 5.3.23. Issues With Educational Programs, Hunters

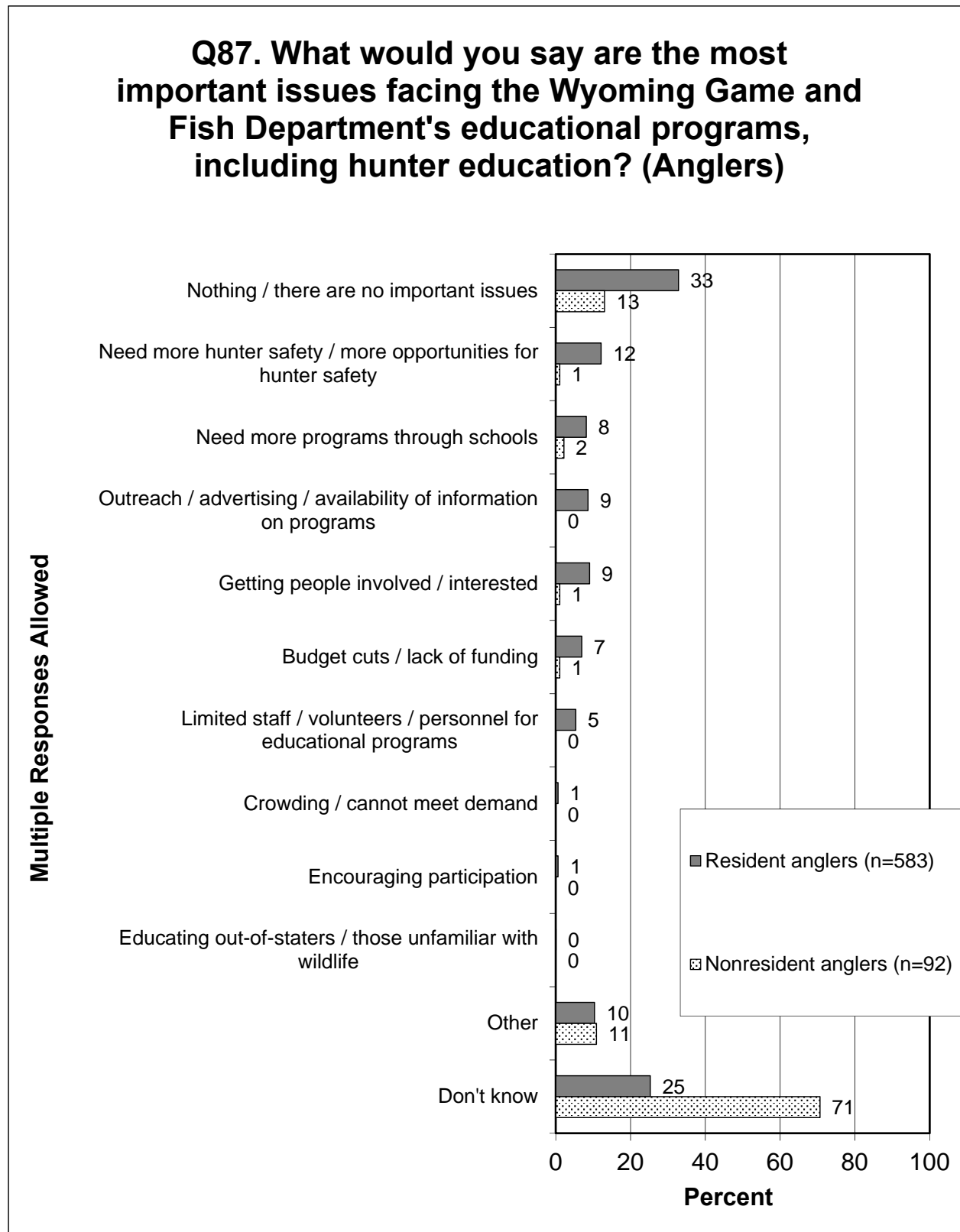


Figure 5.3.24. Issues With Educational Programs, Anglers

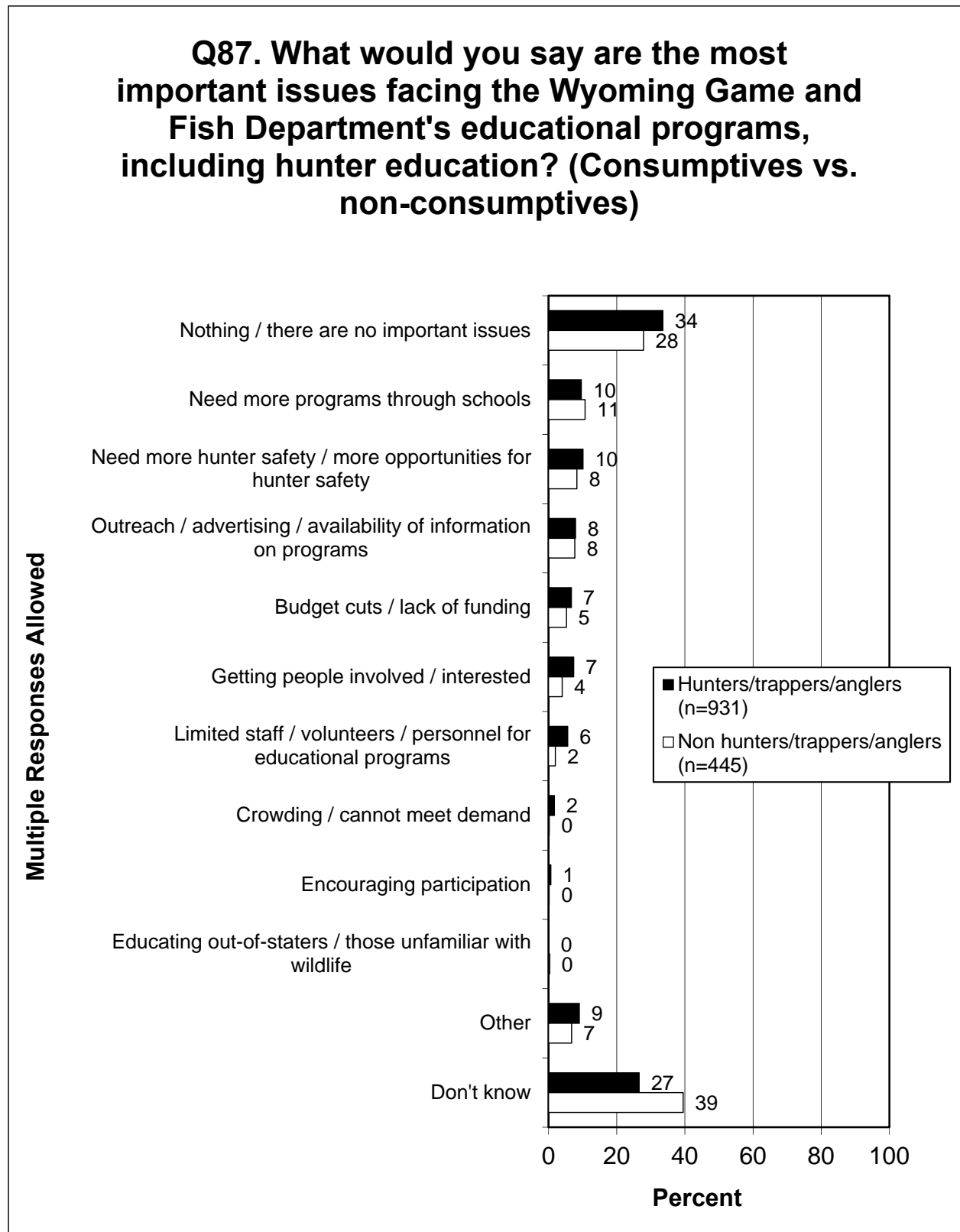


Figure 5.3.25. Issues With Educational Programs, Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

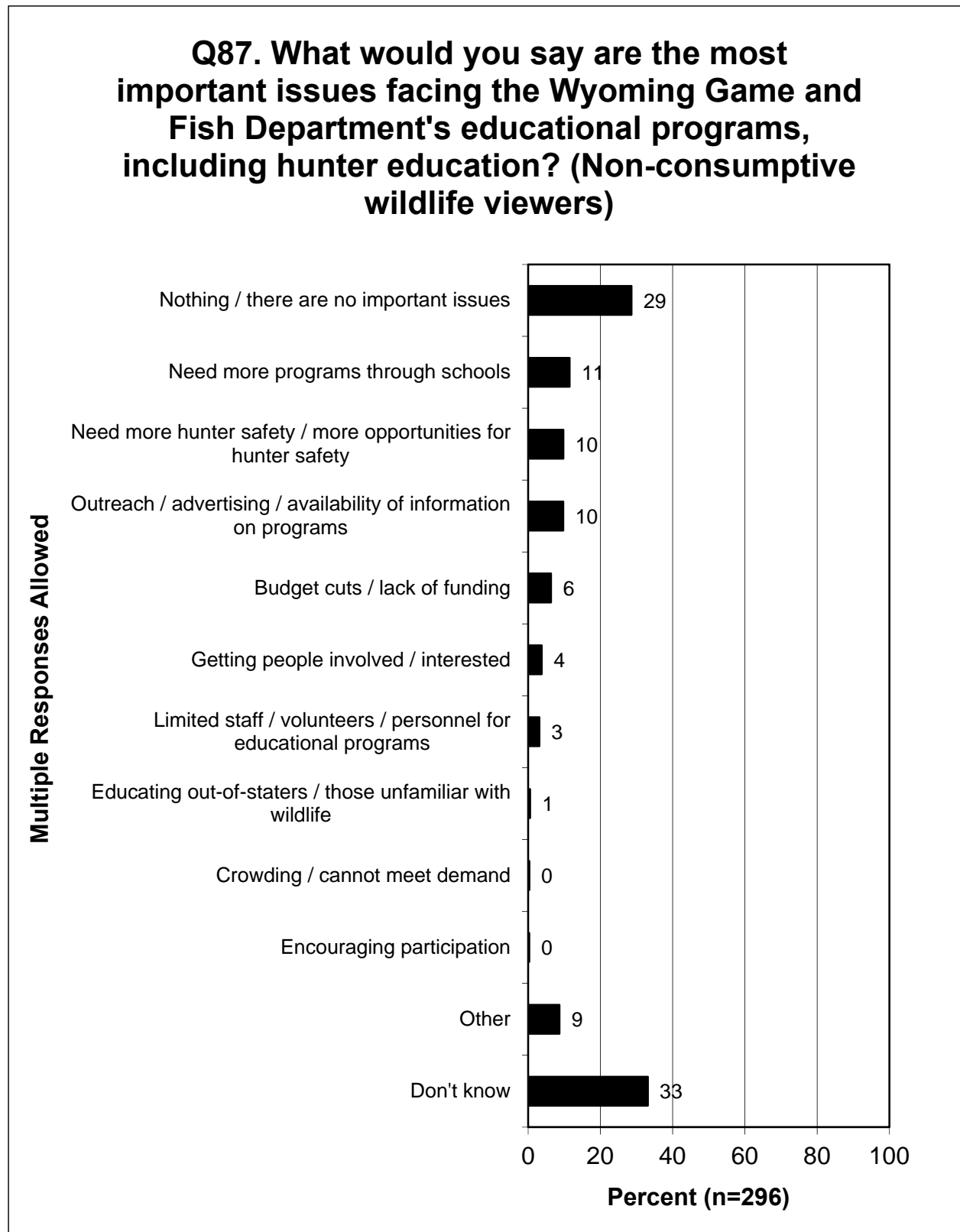


Figure 5.3.26. Issues With Educational Programs, Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

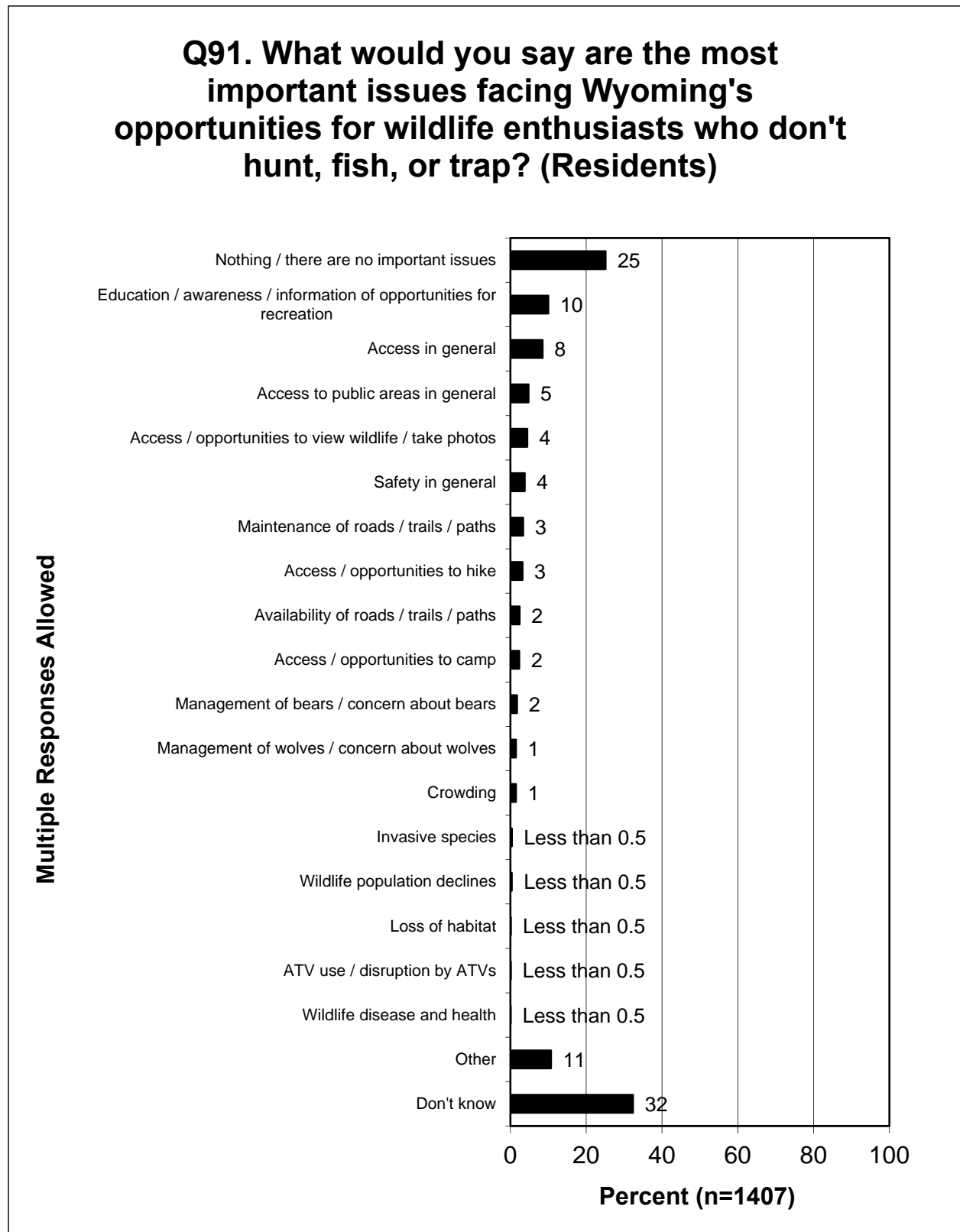


Figure 5.3.27. Issues for Wildlife Enthusiasts Who Do Not Hunt, Fish, or Trap, Among Residents

Table 5.3.6. Issues for Wildlife Enthusiasts Who Do Not Hunt, Fish, or Trap, Regionally

Q91. What would you say are the most important issues facing Wyoming's opportunities for wildlife enthusiasts who don't hunt, fish, or trap? (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Nothing / there are no important issues	17%	26%	27%	27%	20%	33%	22%	26%
Education / awareness / information of opportunities for recreation	12%	9%	9%	8%	10%	11%	8%	11%
Access in general	13%	9%	9%	10%	10%	9%	10%	6%
Access to public areas in general	8%	3%	3%	6%	8%	5%	4%	4%
Access / opportunities to view wildlife / take photos	9%	5%	7%	3%	4%	5%	4%	3%
Safety in general	8%	4%	4%	2%	3%	2%	4%	4%
Maintenance of roads / trails / paths	1%	6%	2%	5%	5%	4%	2%	3%
Access / opportunities to hike	10%	5%	3%	1%	3%	6%	1%	2%
Availability of roads / trails / paths	2%	2%	6%	5%	5%	5%	1%	0%
Access / opportunities to camp	6%	3%	1%	0%	4%	5%	1%	1%
Management of bears / concern about bears	3%	4%	4%	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Management of wolves / concern about wolves	3%	2%	3%	6%	2%	1%	2%	0%
Crowding	5%	1%	2%	3%	0%	1%	1%	2%
Invasive species	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Wildlife population declines	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Loss of habitat	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
ATV use / disruption by ATVs	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Wildlife disease and health	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	16%	13%	11%	5%	10%	6%	13%	11%
Don't know	26%	27%	28%	33%	37%	23%	36%	35%

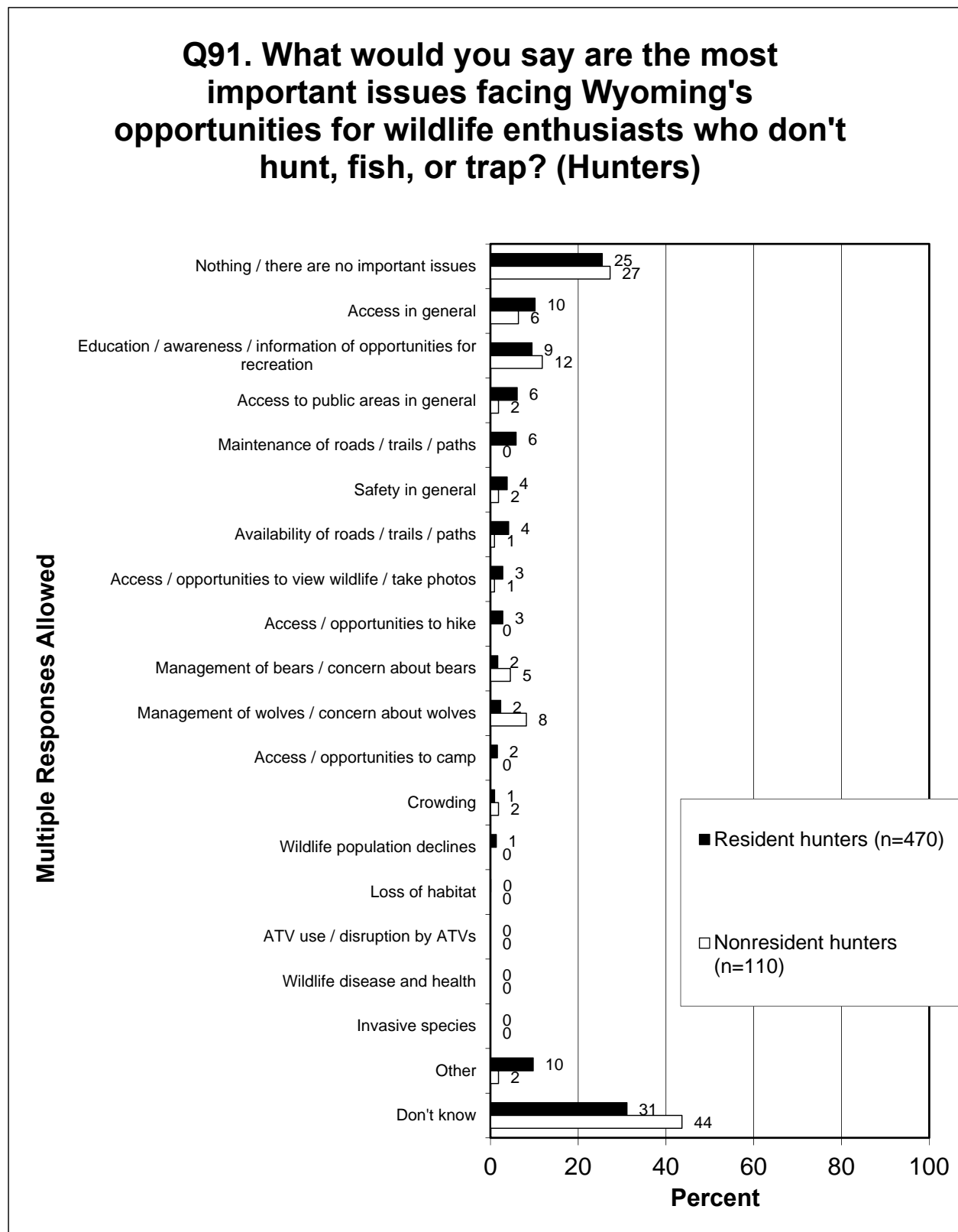


Figure 5.3.28. Issues for Wildlife Enthusiasts Who Do Not Hunt, Fish, or Trap, Among Hunters

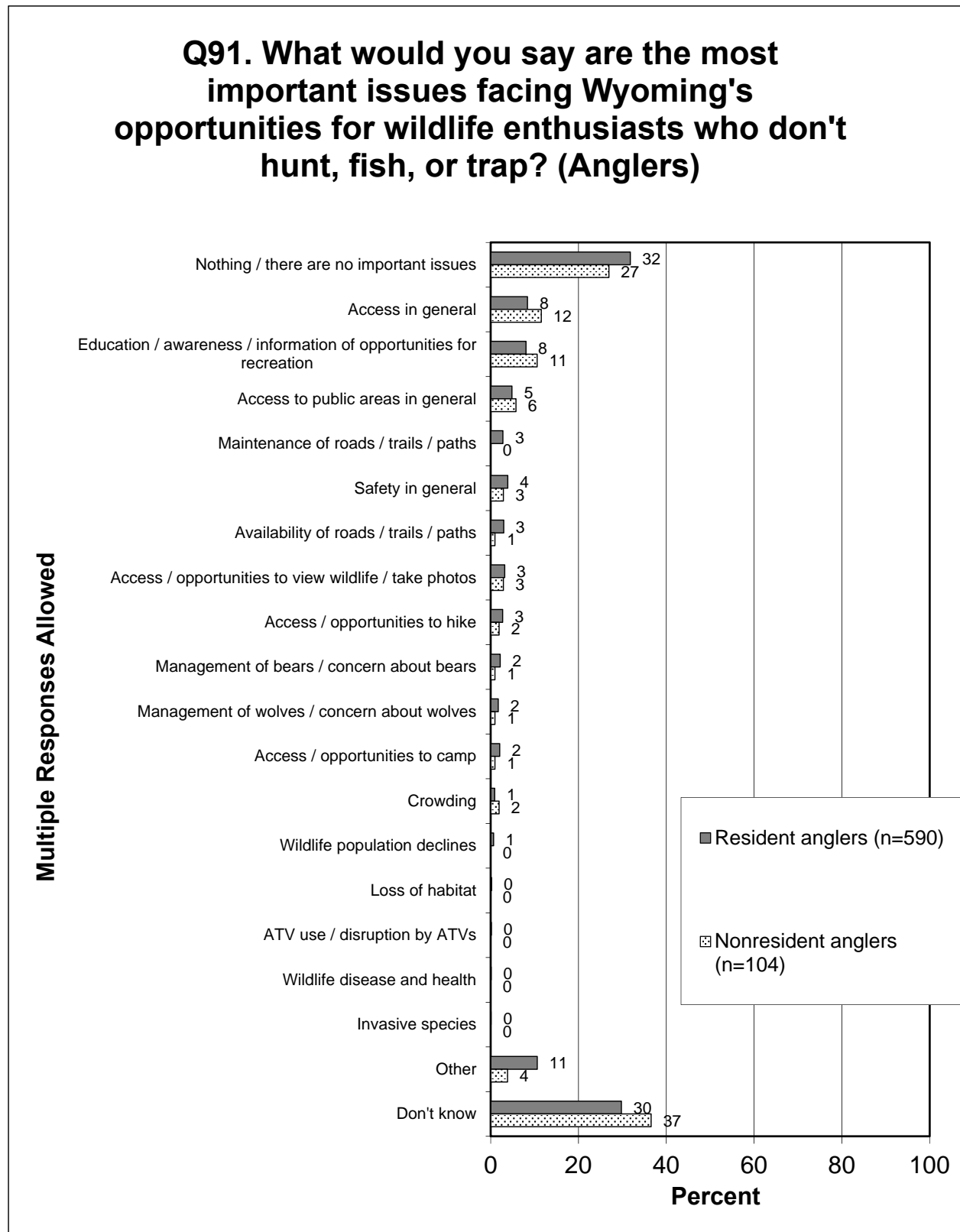


Figure 5.3.29. Issues for Wildlife Enthusiasts Who Do Not Hunt, Fish, or Trap, Among Anglers

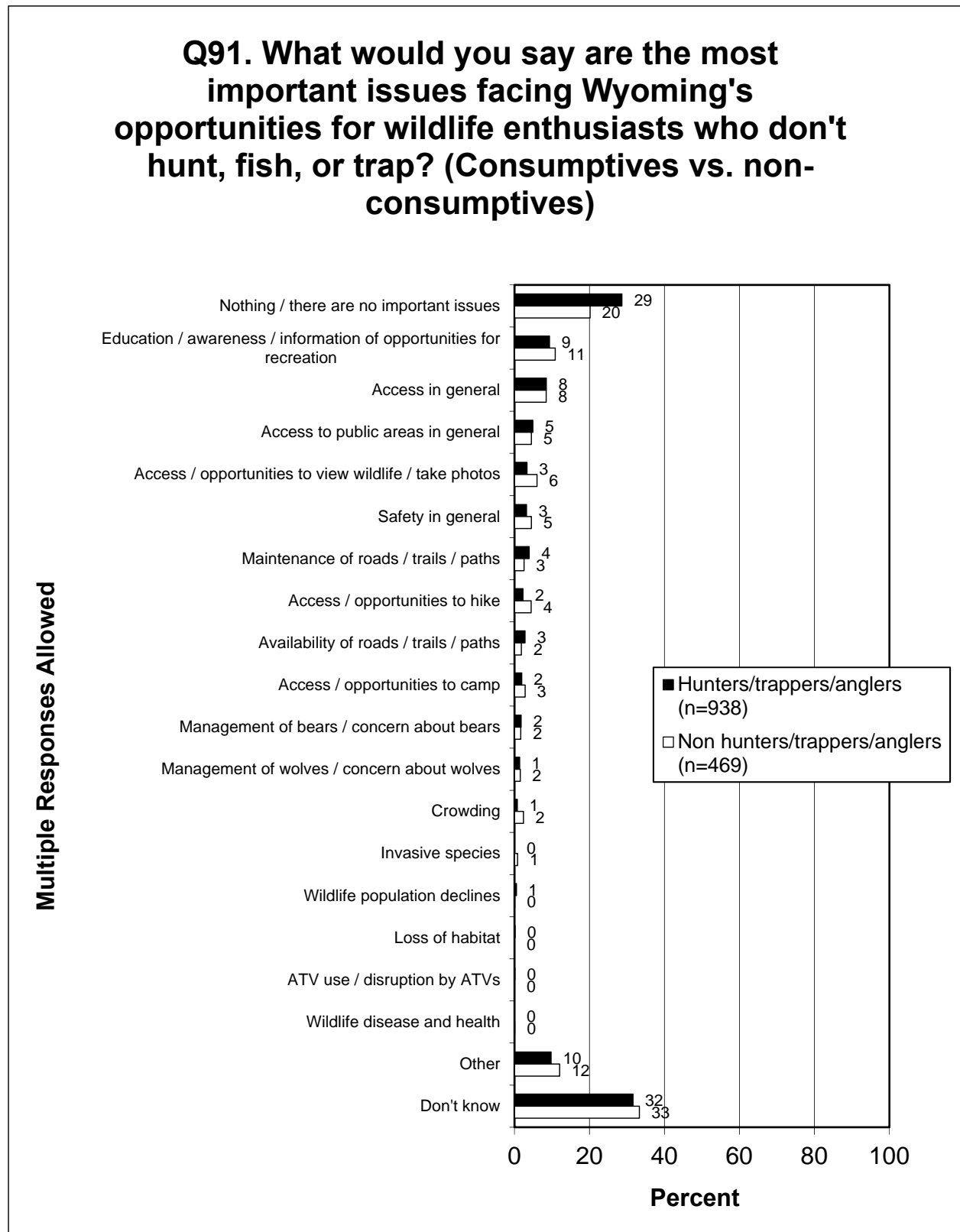


Figure 5.3.30. Issues for Wildlife Enthusiasts Who Do Not Hunt, Fish, or Trap, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

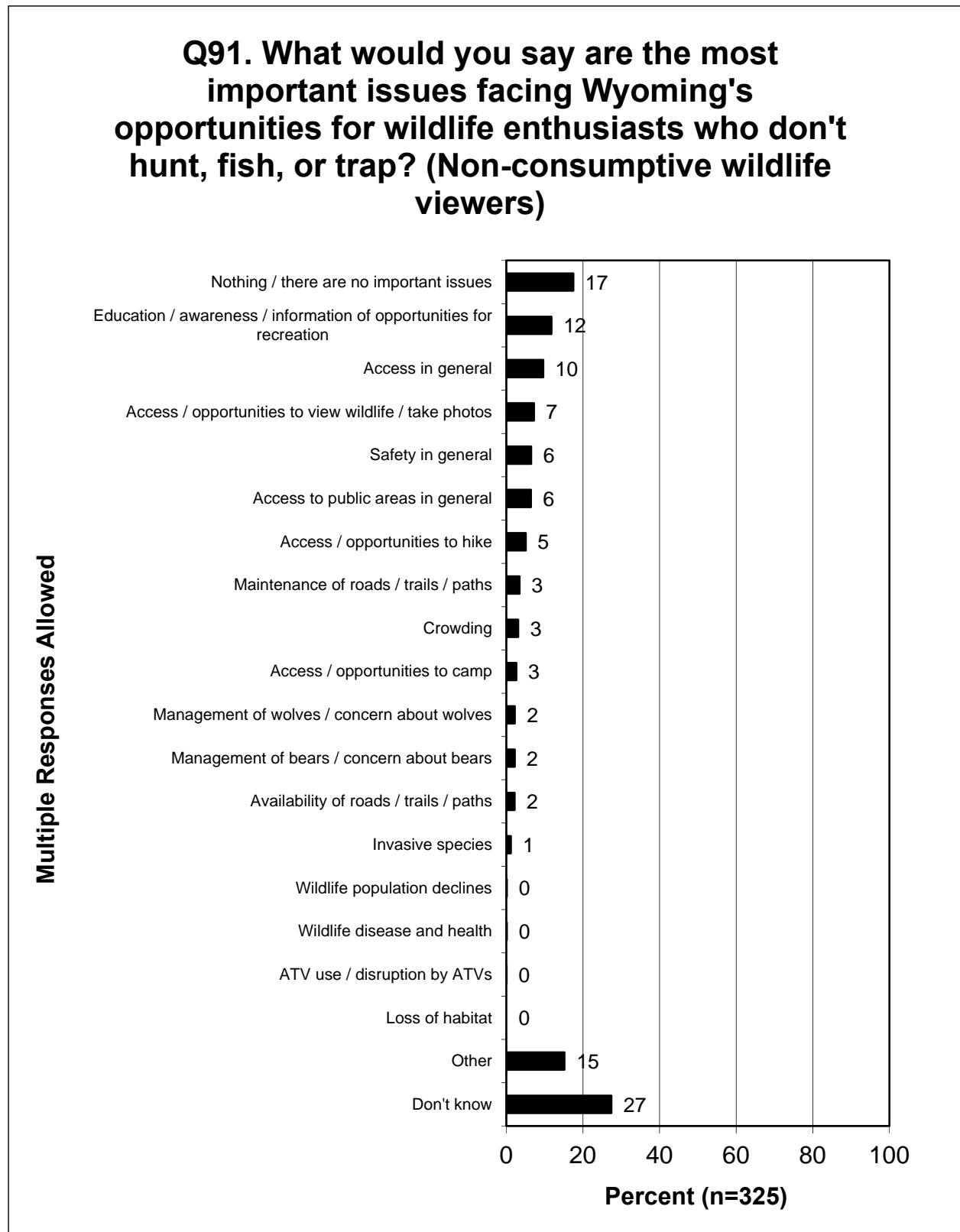


Figure 5.3.31. Issues for Wildlife Enthusiasts Who Do Not Hunt, Fish, or Trap, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

5.4. ACCESS

Access for viewing wildlife and hiking get highly positive ratings, with a majority rating each as *excellent*, and more than 90% rating each as either *excellent* or *good* (Figure 5.4.1). Both types of boating, camping, and fishing make up a middle tier—all with from 41% to 49% giving a rating of *excellent*. Hunting access has the highest percentage giving a rating in the lower end of the scale (*fair* or *poor*). Regional ratings are shown in Tables 5.4.1 through 5.4.8. Note that only those who participated in the activity were asked about access for that activity, which is why the n-value has a range of 56 to 1803.

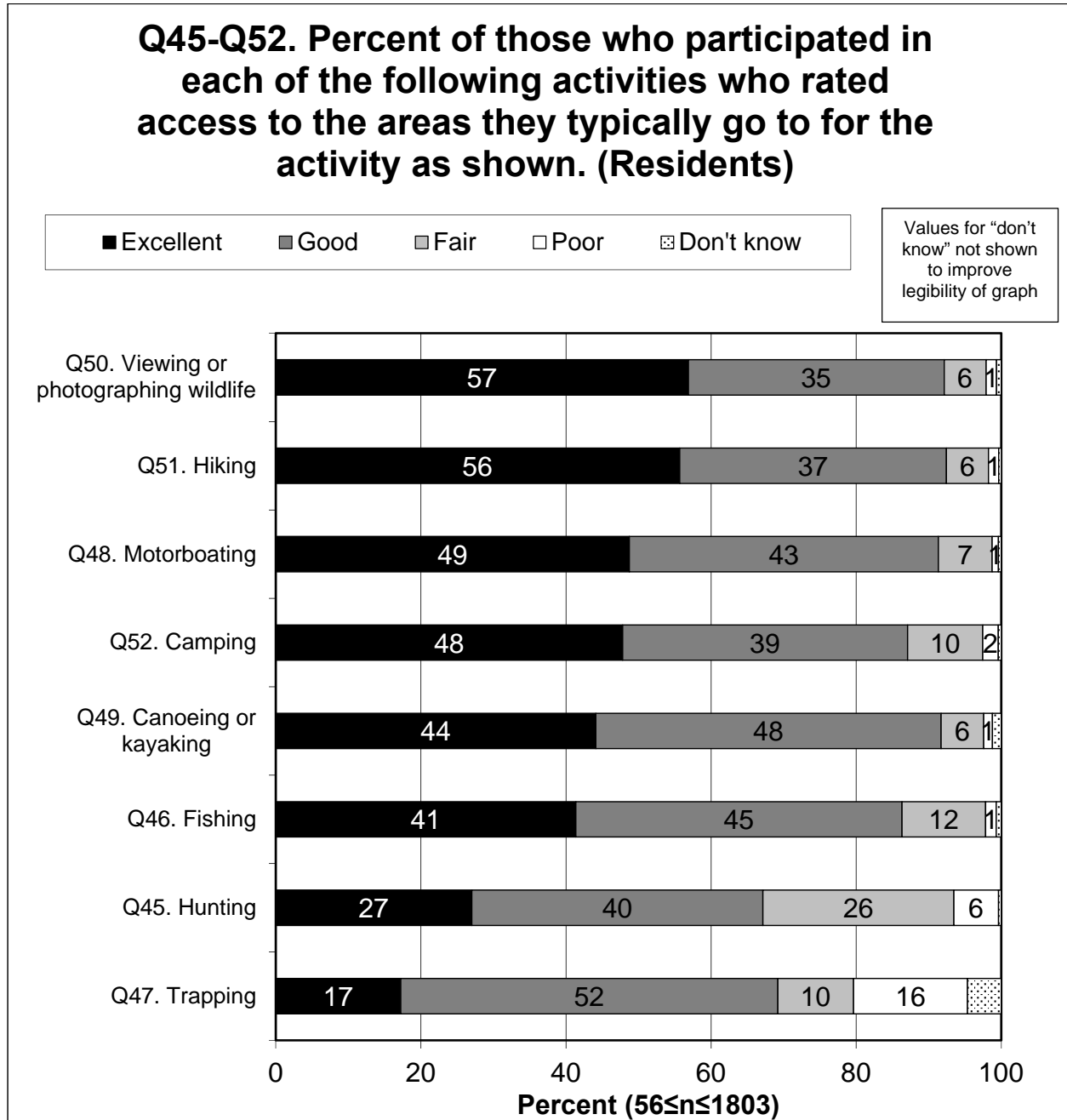


Figure 5.4.1. Ratings of Access Among Recreationists, Resident Survey

Table 5.4.6. Ratings of Access for Viewing or Photographing Wildlife, Regionally

Q50. How would you rate access to the areas where you typically view or photograph wildlife in Wyoming? (Asked of those who viewed/photographed wildlife in Wyoming in the past 5 years.) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Excellent	75%	58%	57%	64%	49%	55%	55%	58%
Good	22%	31%	34%	32%	39%	39%	35%	36%
Fair	2%	7%	6%	4%	10%	5%	7%	4%
Poor	0%	3%	2%	0%	2%	0%	2%	1%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%

Table 5.4.7. Ratings of Access for Hiking, Regionally

Q51. How would you rate access to the areas where you typically go hiking in Wyoming? (Asked of those who hiked in Wyoming in the past 5 years.) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Excellent	72%	52%	65%	63%	47%	57%	56%	55%
Good	26%	36%	31%	31%	42%	39%	33%	39%
Fair	2%	8%	4%	6%	10%	4%	9%	4%
Poor	0%	3%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%
Don't know	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%

Table 5.4.8. Ratings of Access for Camping, Regionally

Q52. How would you rate access to the areas where you typically go camping in Wyoming? (Asked of those who camped in Wyoming in the past 5 years.) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Excellent	62%	44%	55%	50%	46%	48%	45%	47%
Good	29%	42%	34%	36%	39%	41%	43%	39%
Fair	7%	11%	9%	11%	11%	11%	11%	10%
Poor	2%	3%	2%	2%	3%	0%	1%	3%
Don't know	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%

The ratings among the hunter and angler samples are shown in Figures 5.4.2 through 5.4.5. When looking at the results, keep in mind that nonresidents have small sample sizes for some activities (because only those who did the activity were asked). Trapping was dropped from the nonresident graphs because no nonresidents had done it.

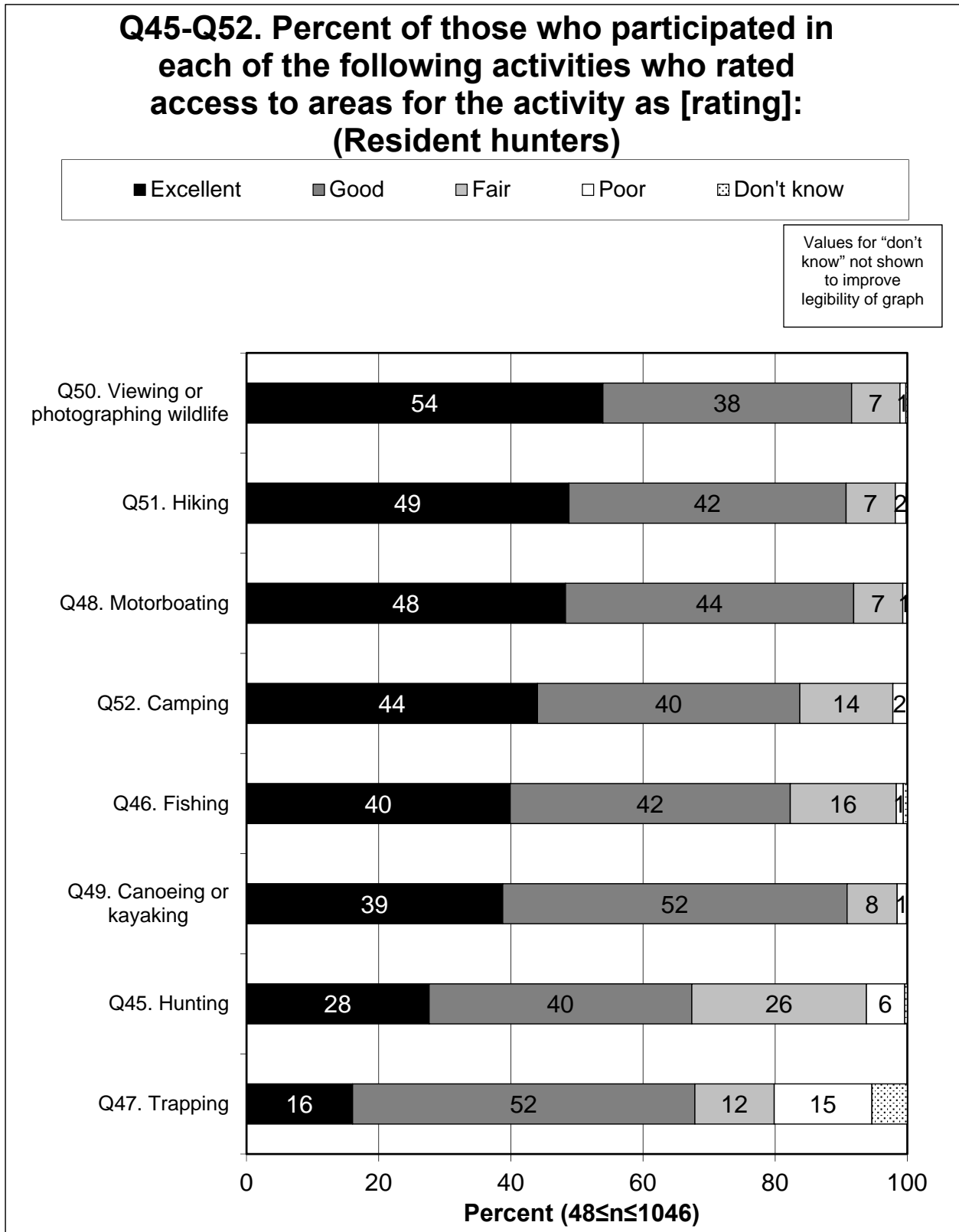


Figure 5.4.2. Ratings of Access Among Recreationists, Resident Hunters

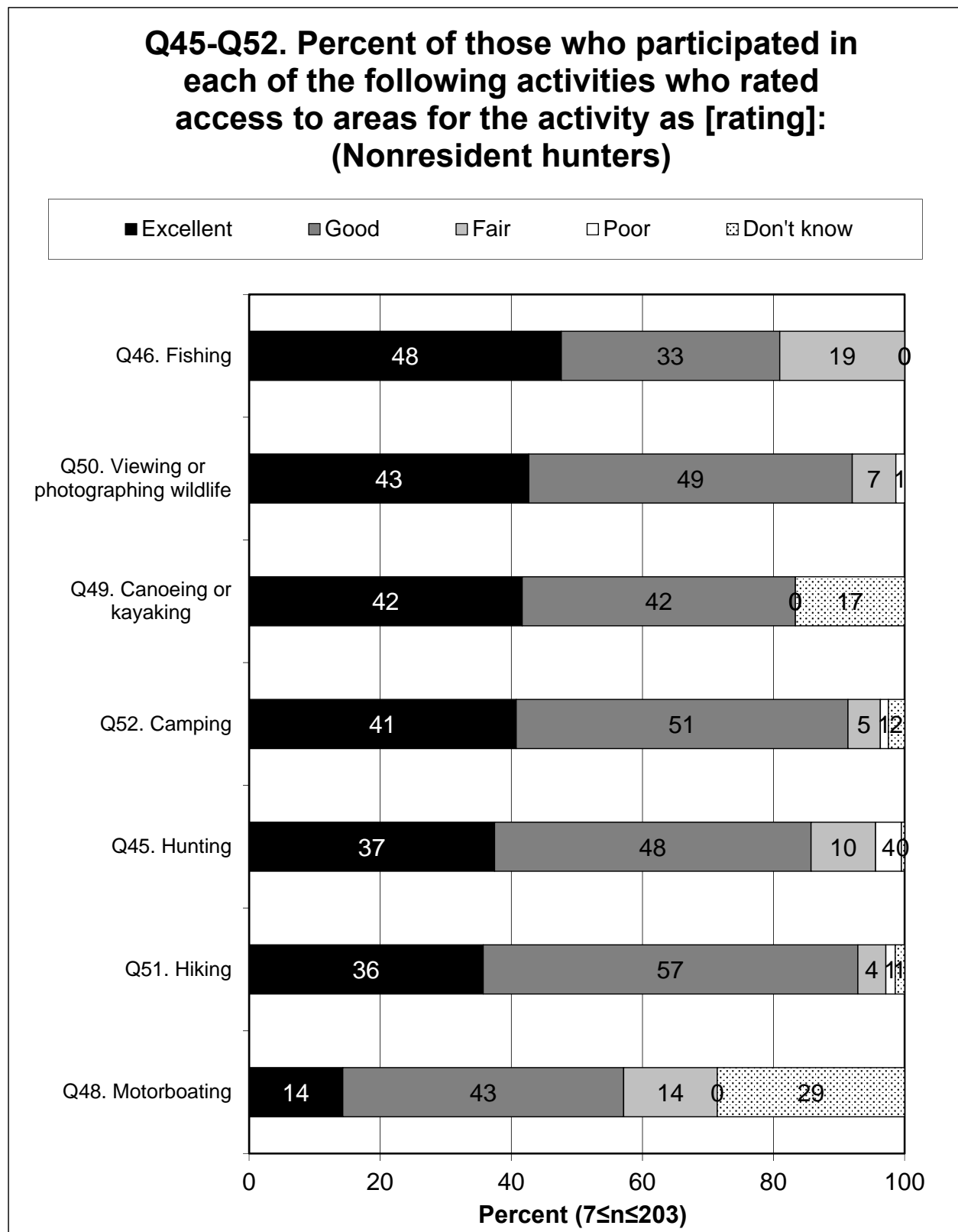


Figure 5.4.3. Ratings of Access Among Recreationists, Nonresident Hunters

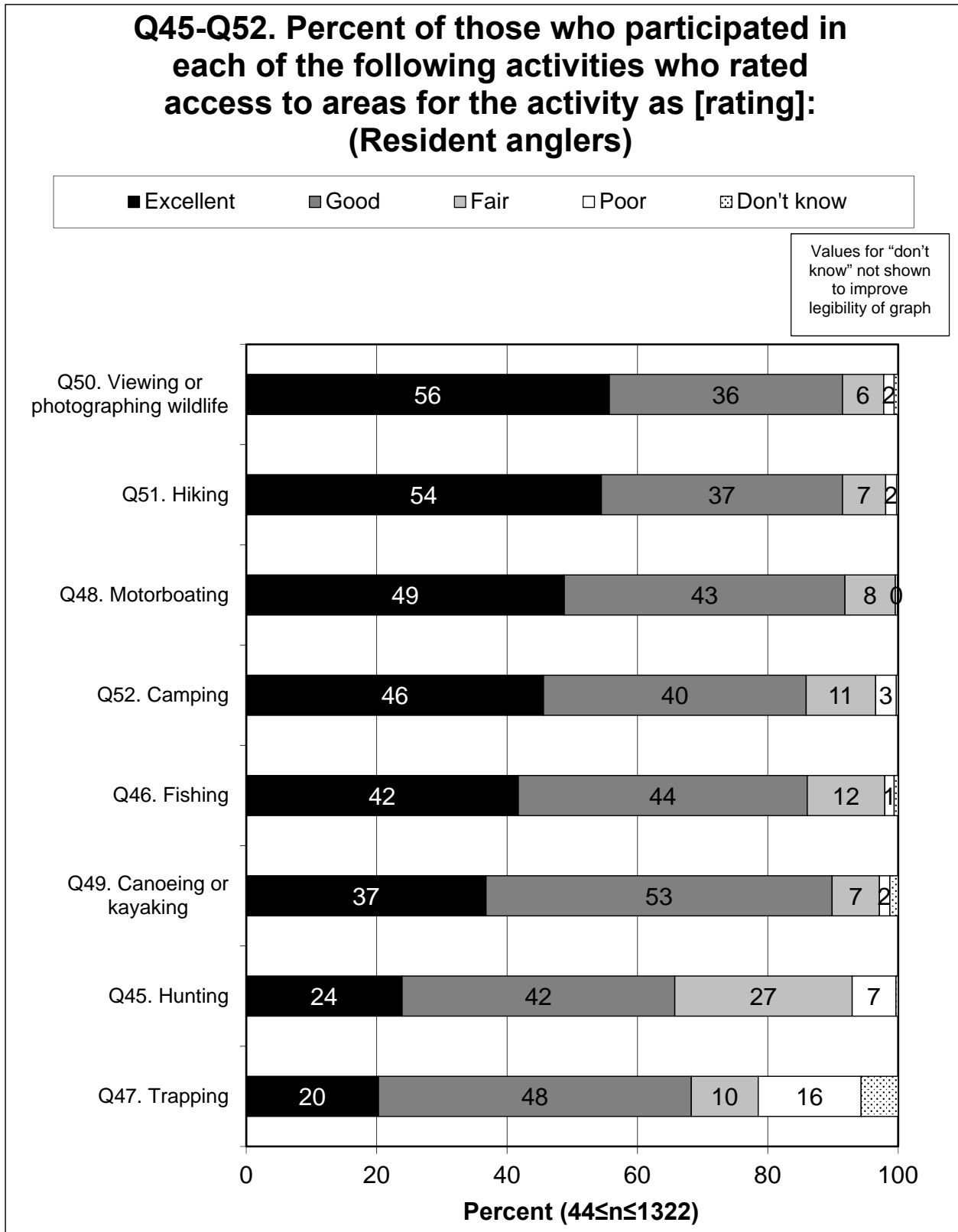


Figure 5.4.4. Ratings of Access Among Recreationists, Resident Anglers

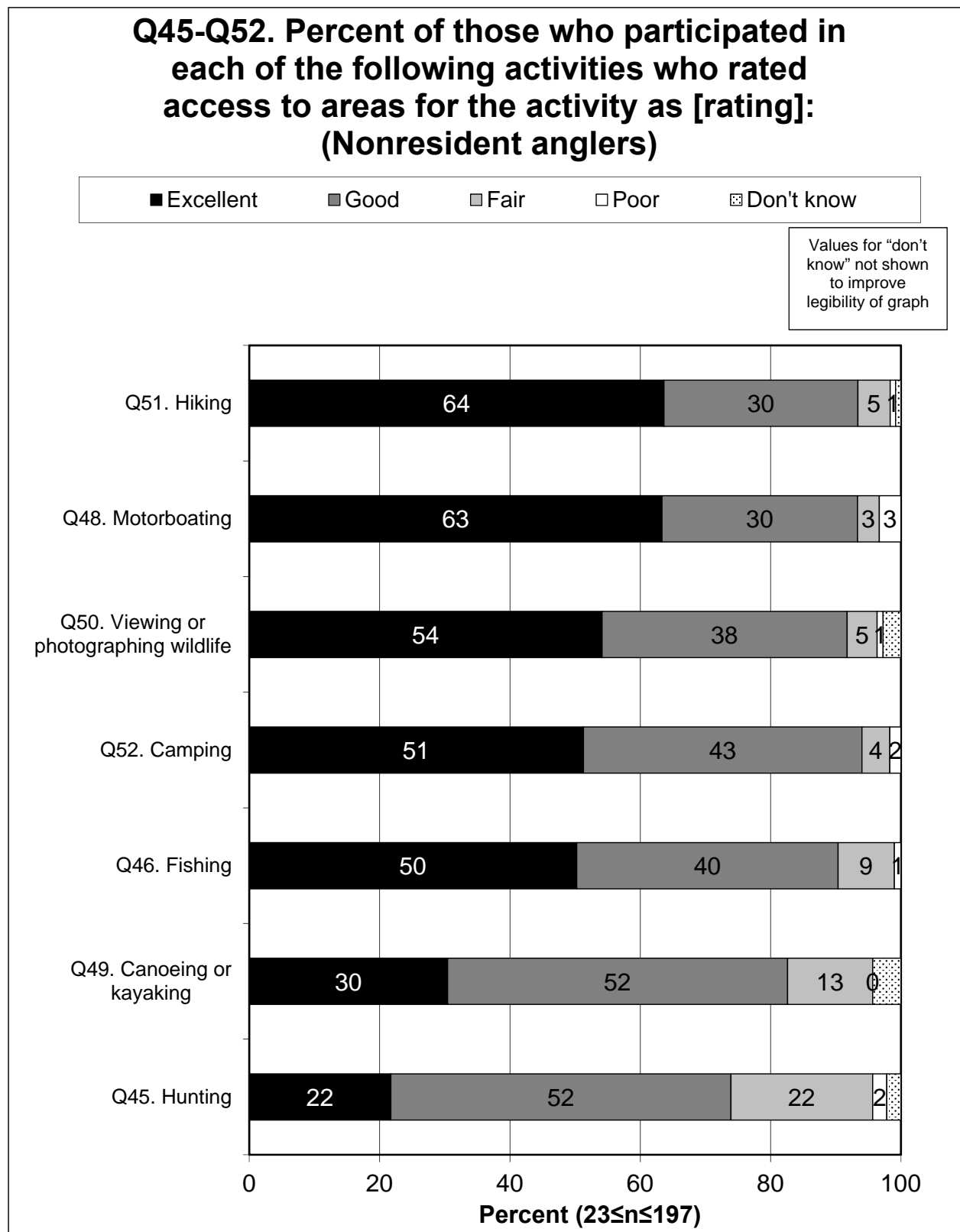


Figure 5.4.5. Ratings of Access Among Recreationists, Nonresident Anglers

Hunters/trappers/anglers give positive ratings to access for wildlife viewing and hiking (Figure 5.4.6). Those who did not participate in hunting, trapping, or fishing give positive ratings to access to all of the remaining activities, particularly canoeing/kayaking, hiking, and wildlife viewing (Figure 5.4.7). The results among wildlife viewers who did not hunt, trap, or fish are shown in Figure 5.4.8.

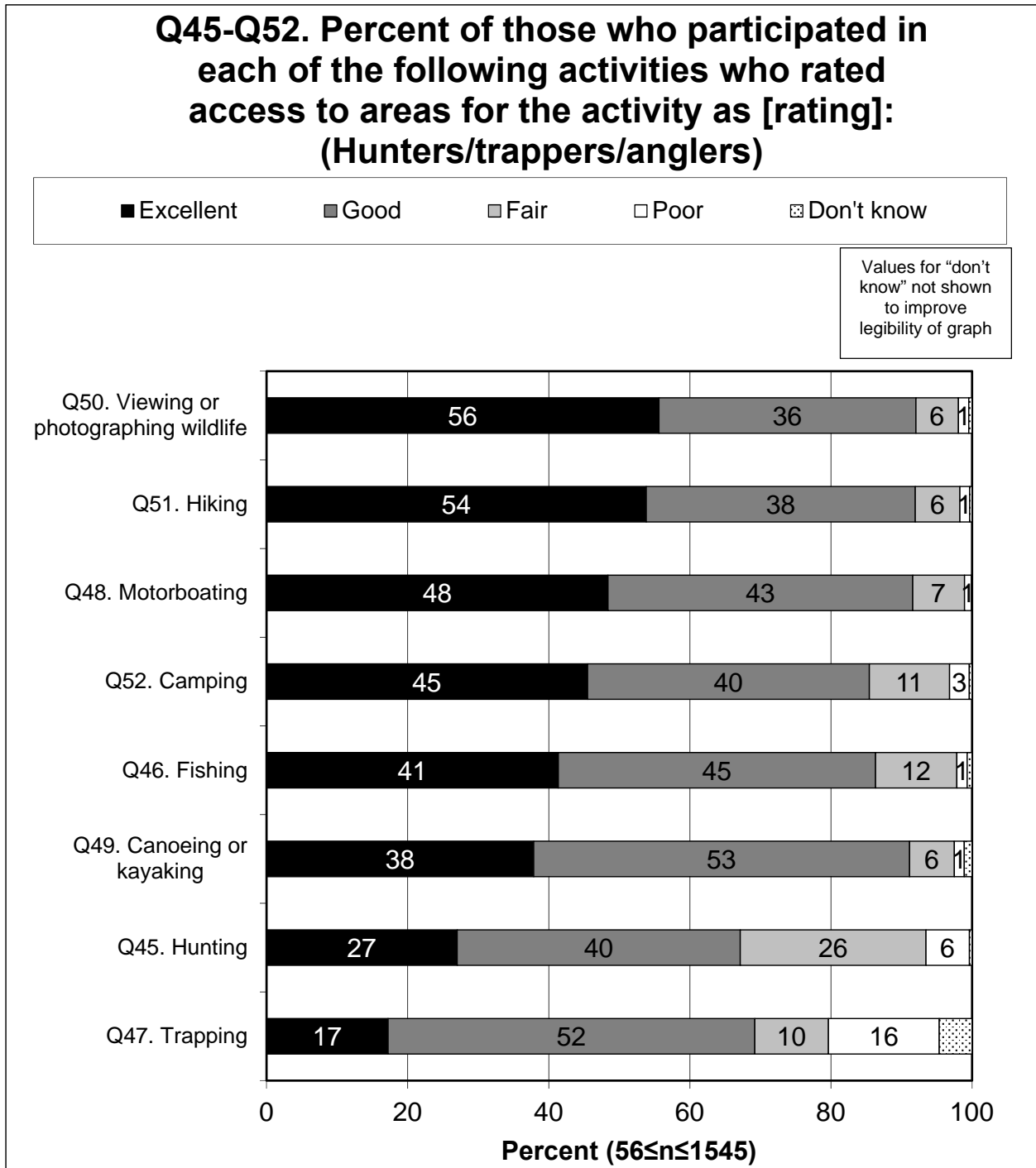


Figure 5.4.6. Ratings of Access Among Recreationists, Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

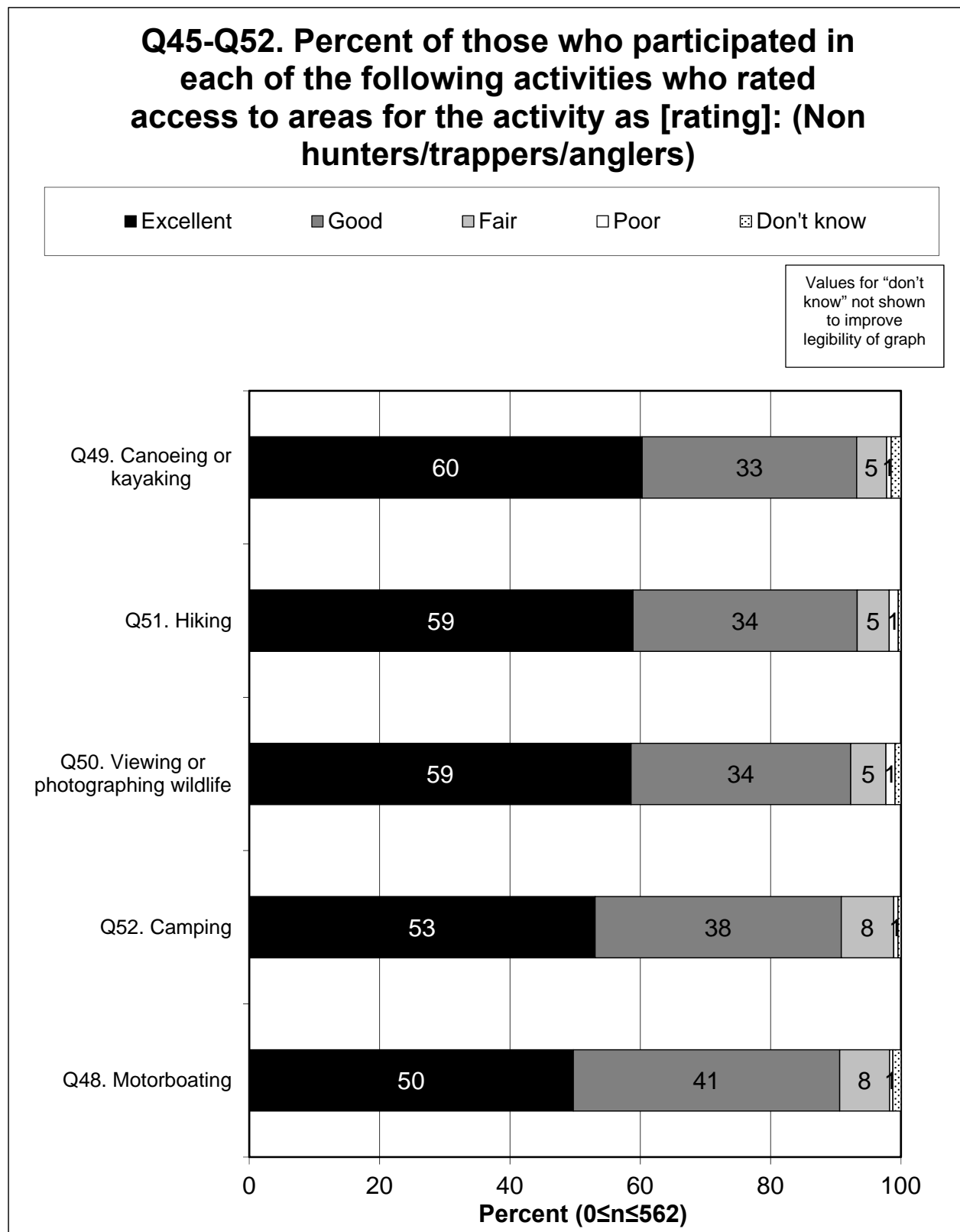


Figure 5.4.7. Ratings of Access Among Recreationists, Those Who Do Not Hunt, Trap, or Fish

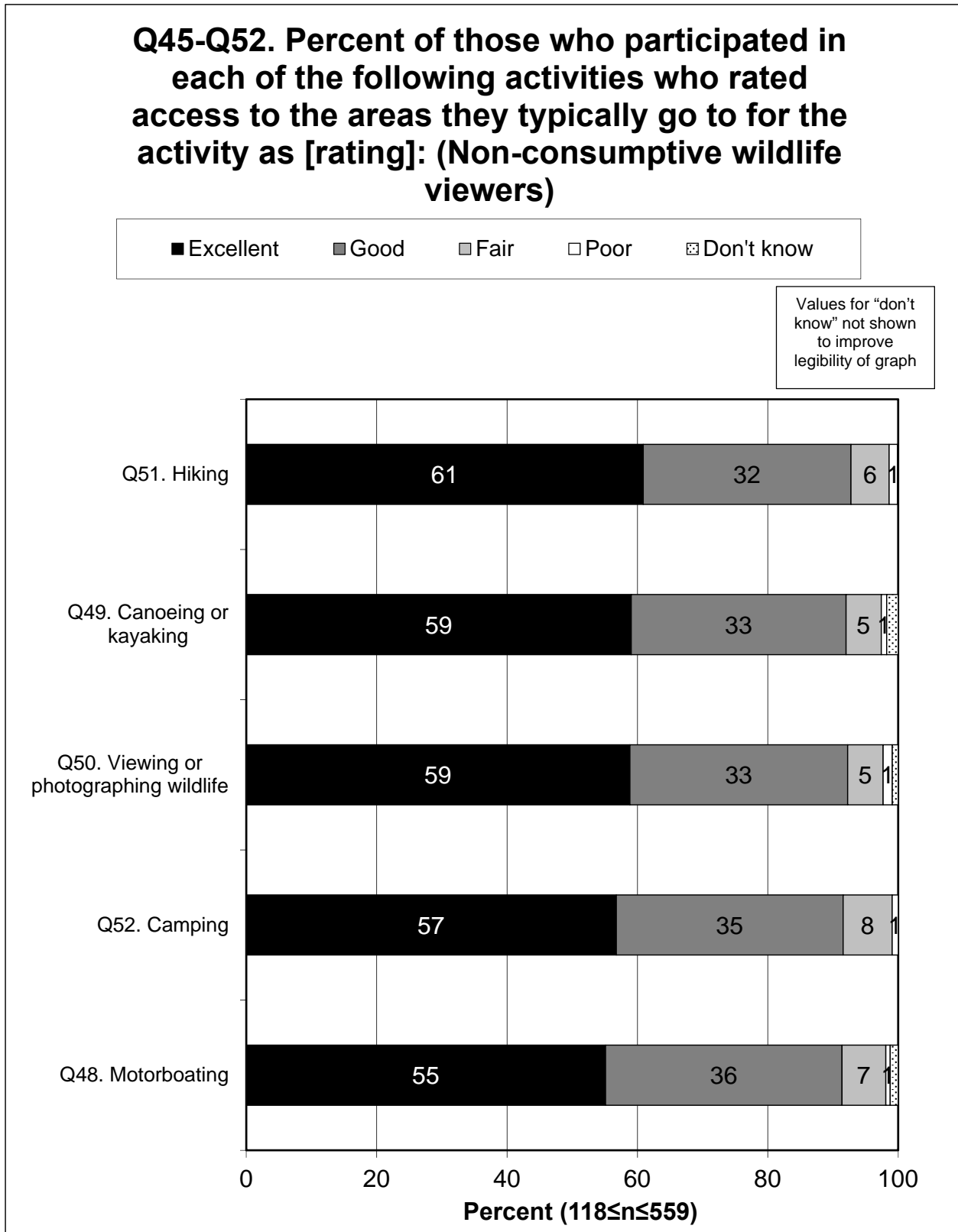


Figure 5.4.8. Ratings of Access Among Recreationists, Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

Maintenance of existing roads, keeping roads open, and providing more access to public land are the three ways that residents say would improve access in Wyoming, in an open-ended question (Figure 5.4.9). Also worth noting are the provision of roads through areas landlocked by private land, the provision of more access to federal land, and the provision of more disabled access.

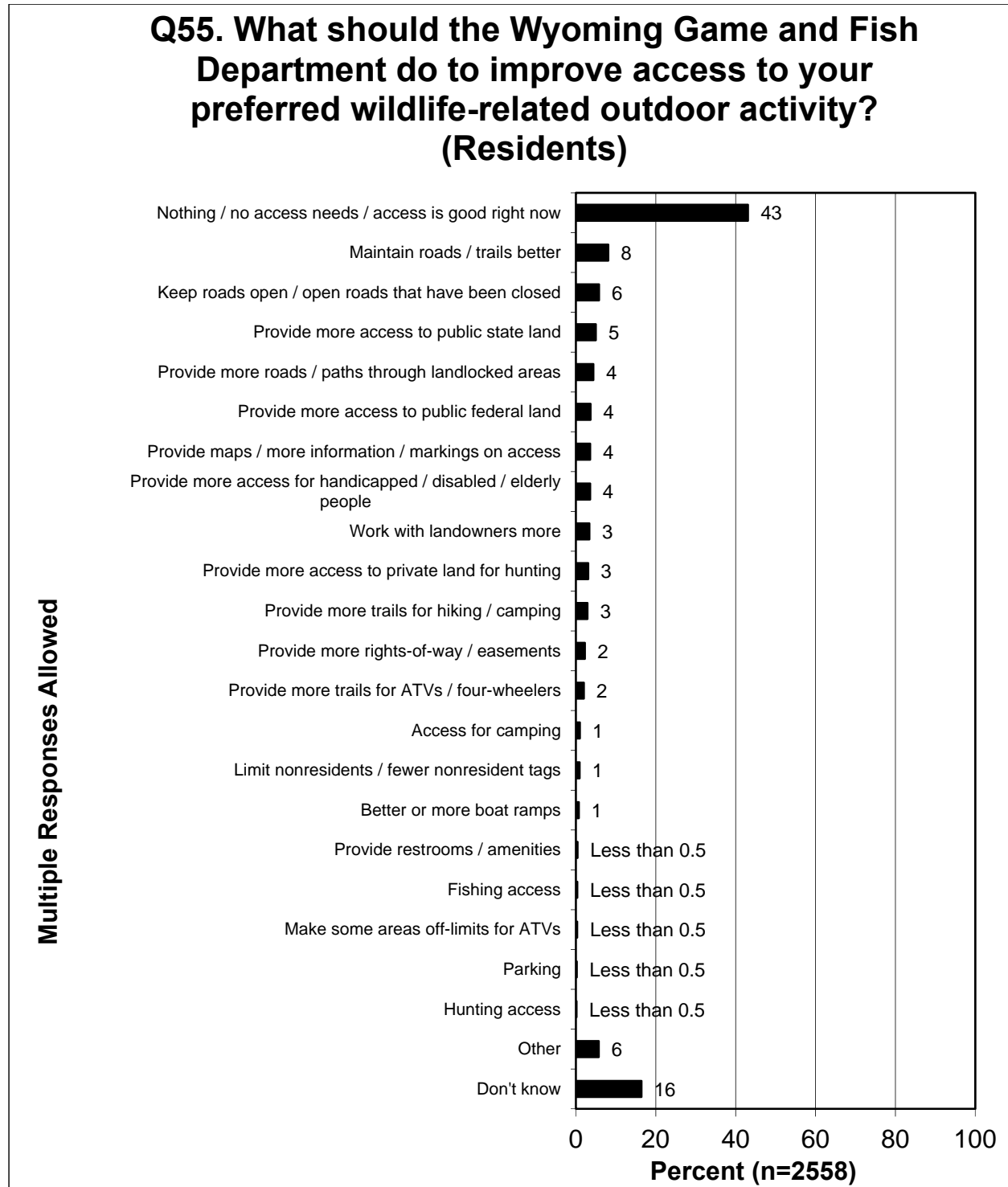


Figure 5.4.9. Things the Game and Fish Department Could Do To Improve Access, Among Residents

Table 5.4.9 shows the regional results regarding things that could be done to improve access. Maintenance of existing roads is particularly an issue among Pinedale and Green River residents. Figures 5.4.10 and 5.4.11 show results among hunters and anglers. The rest of the results for this question are shown in Figure 5.4.12 (consumptives vs. non-consumptives) and Figure 5.4.13 (non-consumptive wildlife viewers).

Table 5.4.9. Things the Game and Fish Department Could Do To Improve Access, Regionally

Q55. What should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department do to improve access to your preferred wildlife-related outdoor activity? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Nothing / no access needs / access is good right now	50%	45%	51%	43%	40%	43%	42%	42%
Maintain roads / trails better	9%	7%	6%	16%	15%	6%	5%	8%
Keep roads open / open roads that have been closed	7%	8%	6%	11%	11%	2%	3%	5%
Provide more access to public state land	3%	5%	4%	4%	8%	6%	4%	4%
Provide more roads / paths through landlocked areas	1%	3%	4%	6%	4%	6%	6%	3%
Provide more access to public federal land	4%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Provide maps / more information / markings on access	3%	5%	3%	3%	4%	7%	5%	1%
Provide more access for handicapped / disabled / elderly people	0%	7%	4%	2%	4%	2%	3%	4%
Work with landowners more	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	6%	4%	3%
Provide more access to private land for hunting	1%	4%	2%	4%	2%	6%	3%	3%
Provide more trails for hiking / camping	2%	4%	2%	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Provide more rights-of-way / easements	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	3%	1%
Provide more trails for ATVs / four-wheelers	2%	3%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Access for camping	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Limit nonresidents / fewer nonresident tags	0%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Better or more boat ramps	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Provide restrooms / amenities	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Fishing access	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Make some areas off-limits for ATVs	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Parking	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Hunting access	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	12%	5%	5%	5%	7%	5%	6%	5%
Don't know	9%	10%	13%	11%	12%	15%	20%	21%

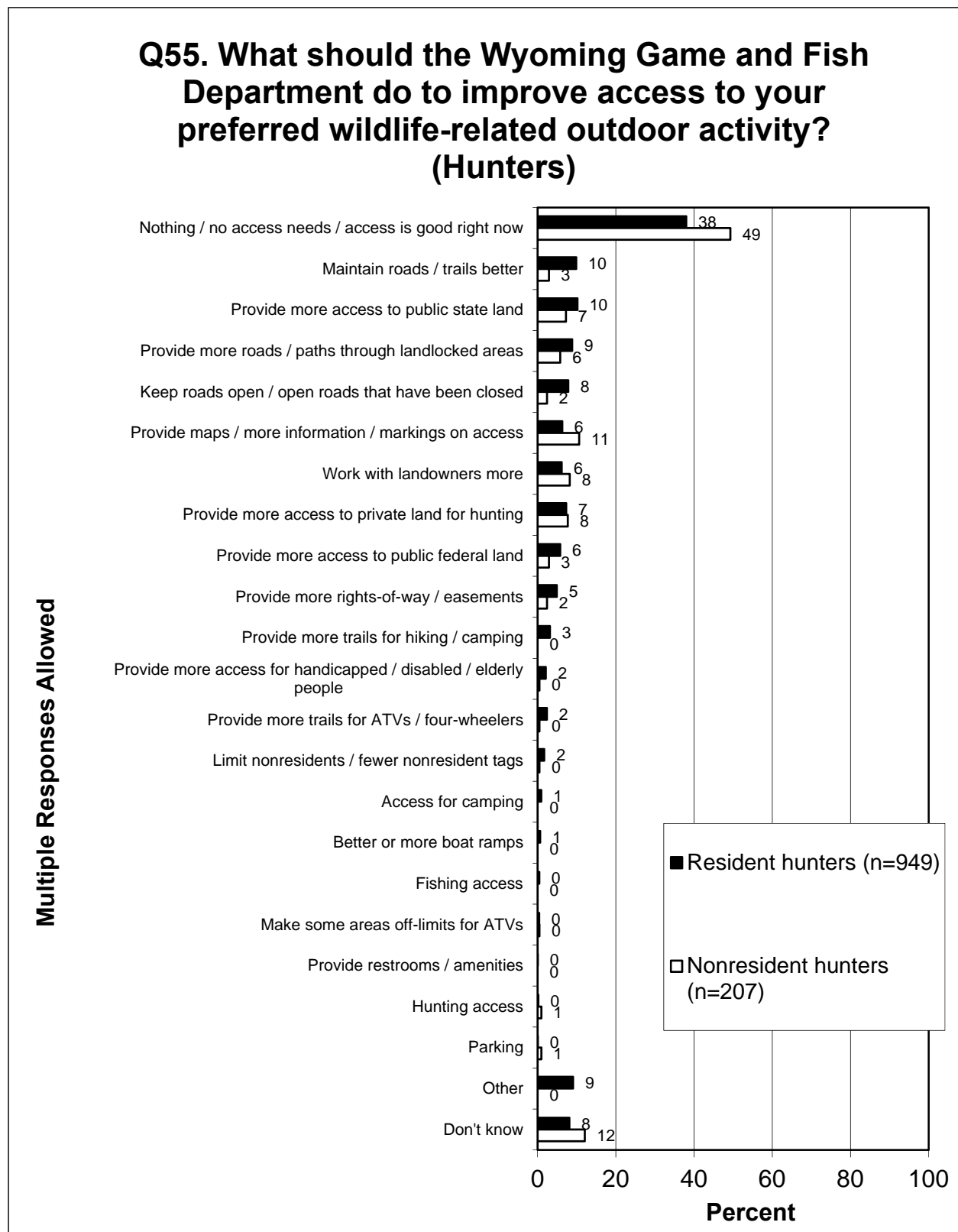


Figure 5.4.10. Things the Game and Fish Department Could Do To Improve Access, Among Hunters

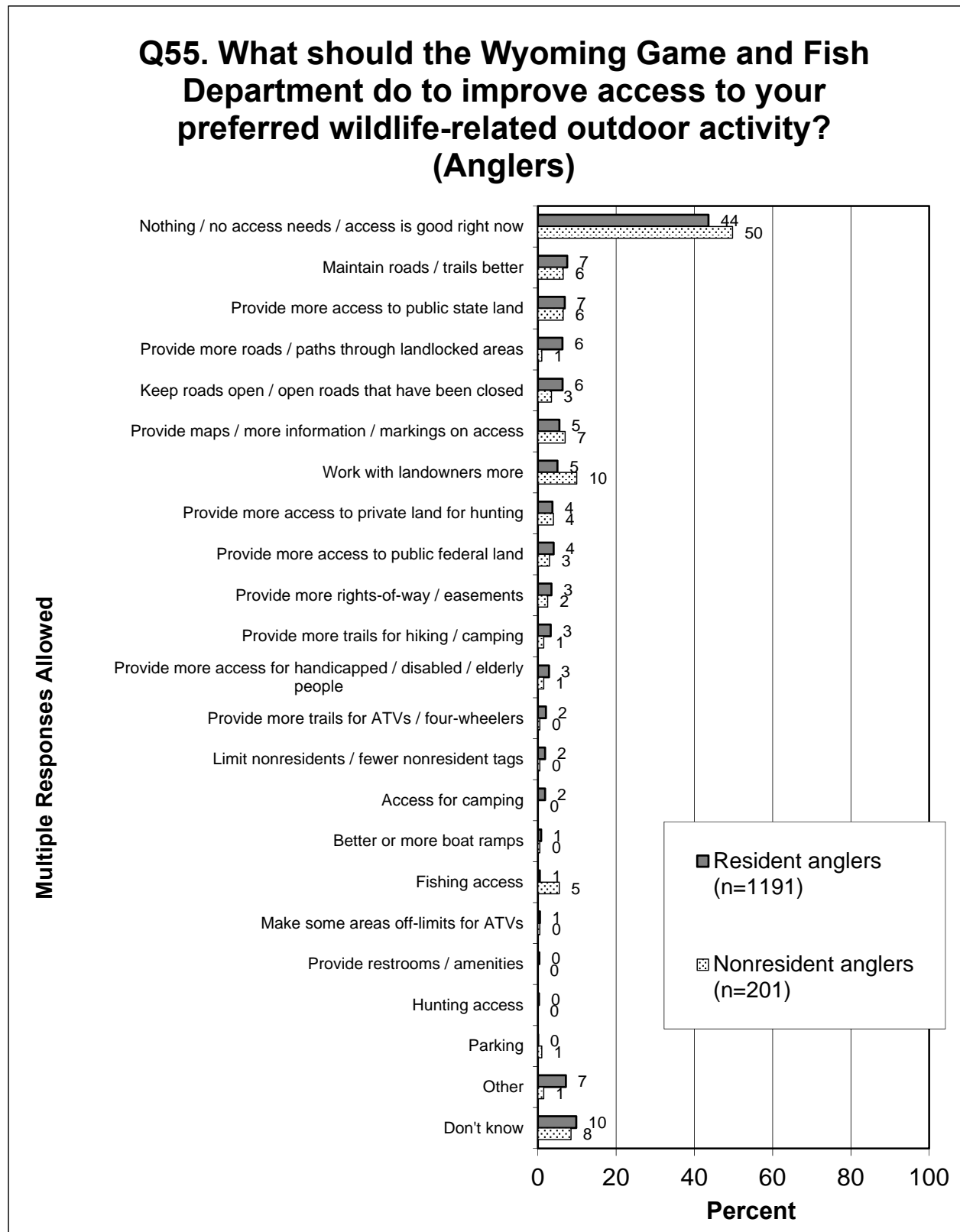


Figure 5.4.11. Things the Game and Fish Department Could Do To Improve Access, Among Anglers

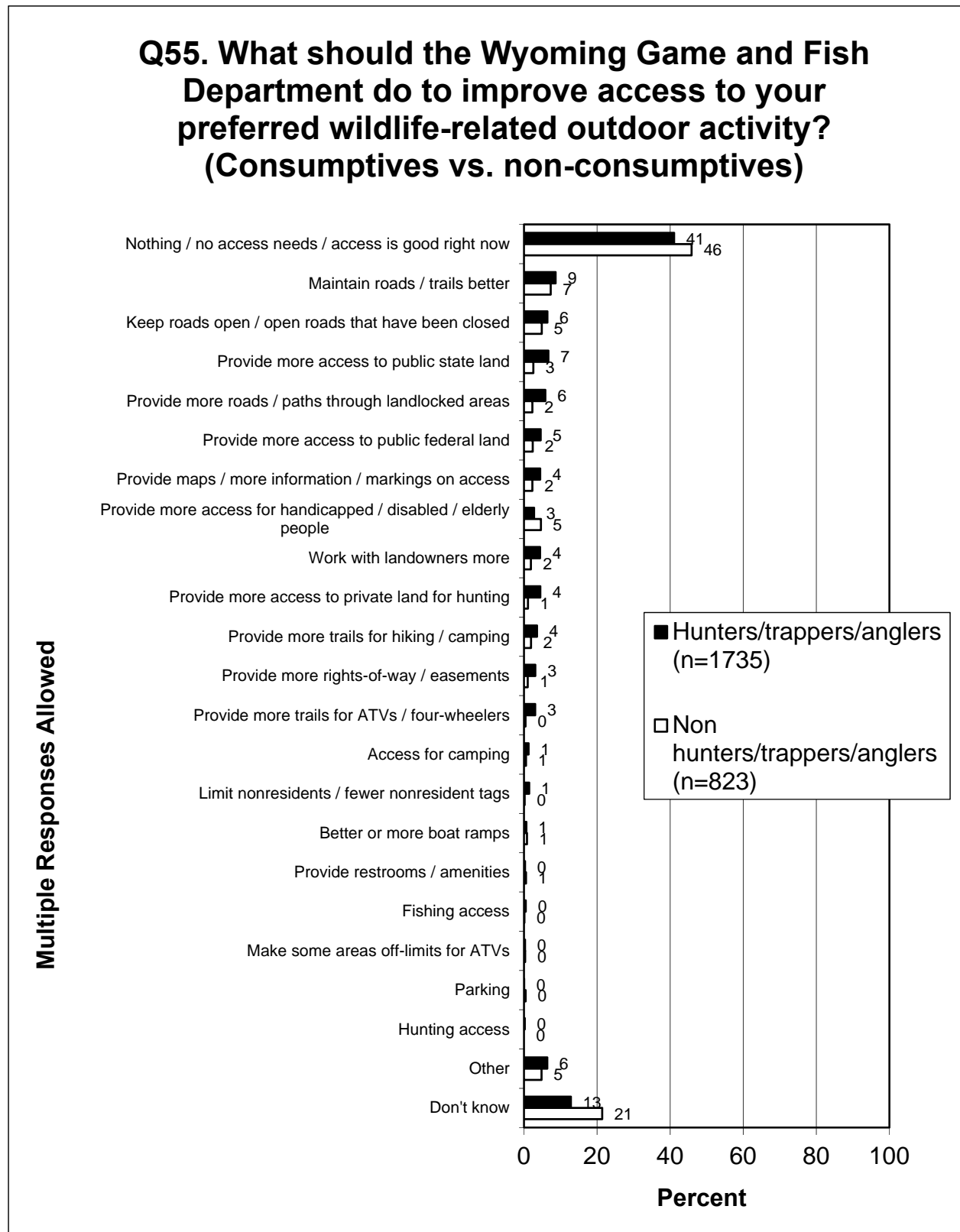


Figure 5.4.12. Things the Game and Fish Department Could Do To Improve Access, Consumptives Vs. Non-Consumptives

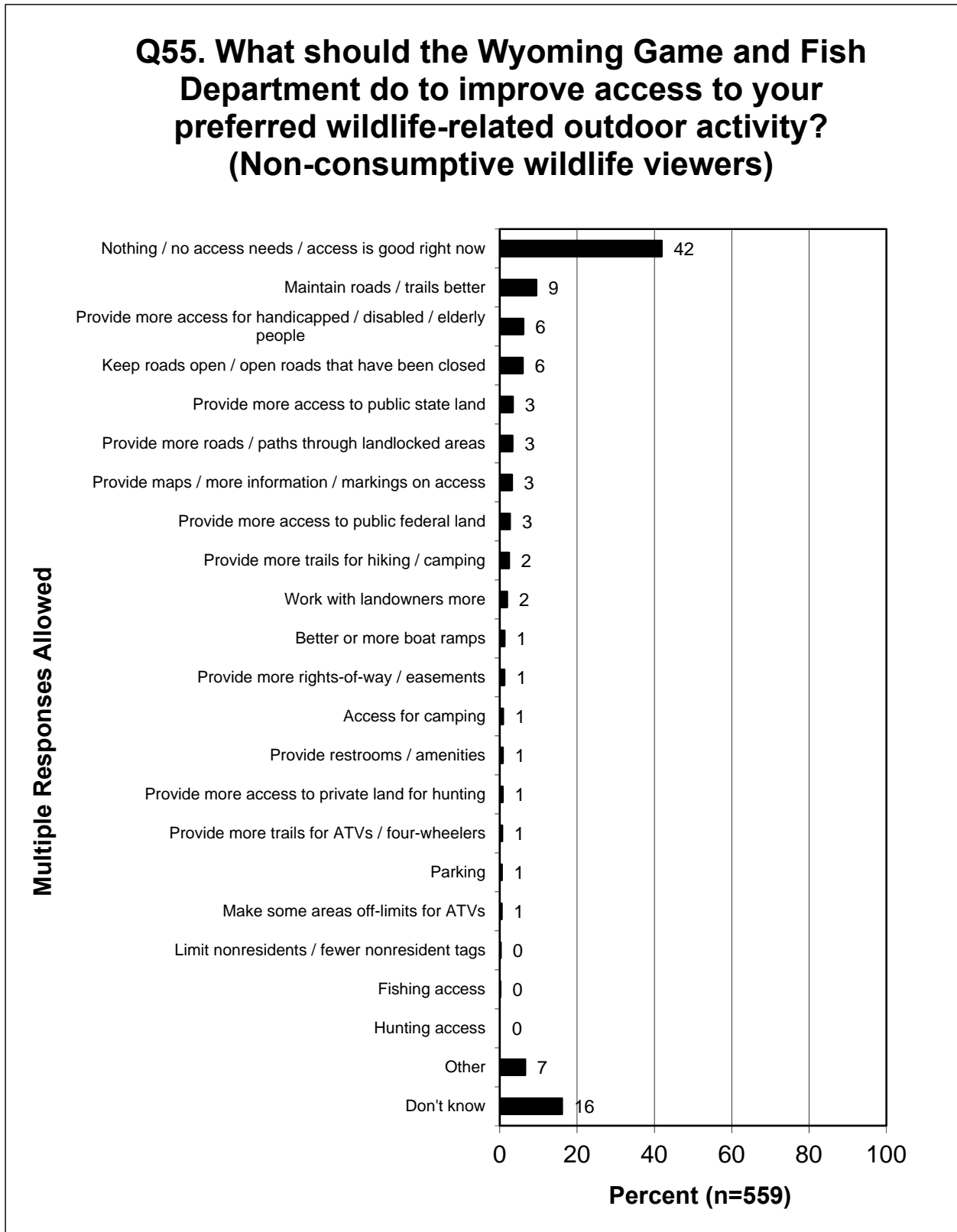


Figure 5.4.13. Things the Game and Fish Department Could Do To Improve Access, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

5.5. KNOWLEDGE OF THE WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

About three quarters of residents (73%) say that they know *a great deal* or *a moderate amount* about the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Figure 5.5.1). Pinedale Region residents have the highest percentage who say that they know *a great deal*; otherwise, the regions are not largely different when looking at *a great deal* or *a moderate amount* combined (Table 5.5.1). Not surprisingly, resident hunters and anglers are more knowledgeable than nonresidents; nonetheless, a majority of nonresident hunters and anglers know at least *a moderate amount* (Figures 5.5.2 and 5.5.3).

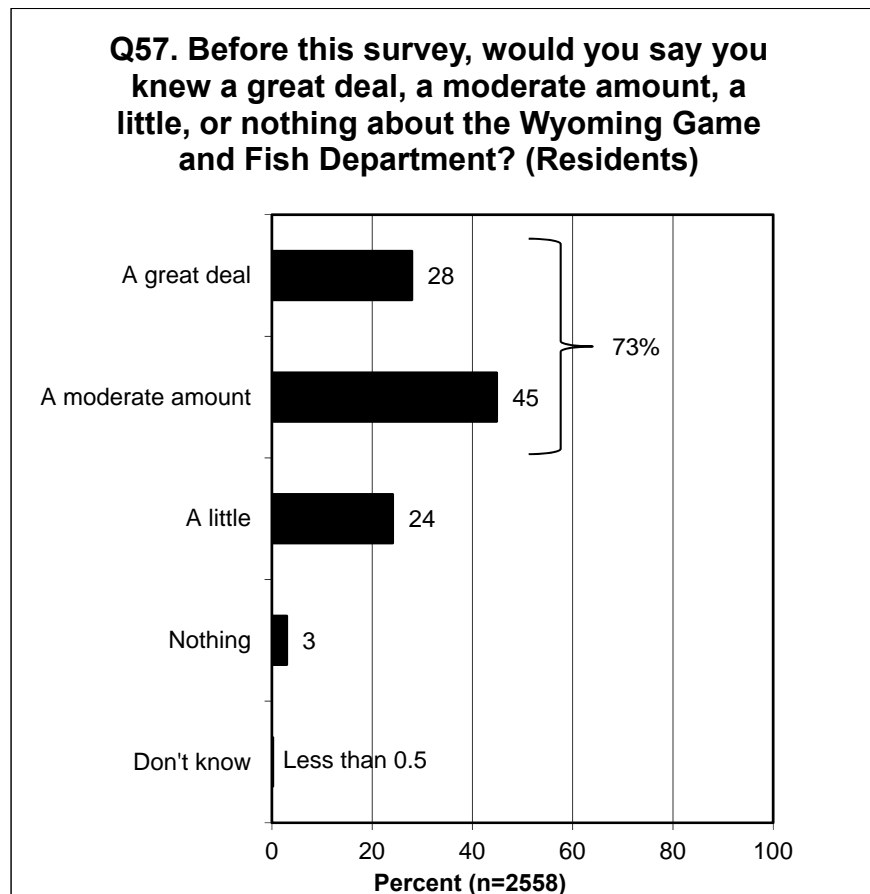


Figure 5.5.1. Knowledge Level Regarding the Game and Fish Department Among Residents

Table 5.5.1. Regional Knowledge Level Regarding the Game and Fish Department Among Residents

Q57. Before this survey, would you say you knew a great deal, a moderate amount, a little, or nothing about the Wyoming Game and Fish Department? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	25%	34%	32%	42%	26%	28%	28%	26%
A moderate amount	47%	38%	37%	35%	45%	46%	46%	48%
A little	27%	25%	28%	22%	27%	23%	22%	24%
Nothing	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	3%	4%	3%
Don't know	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

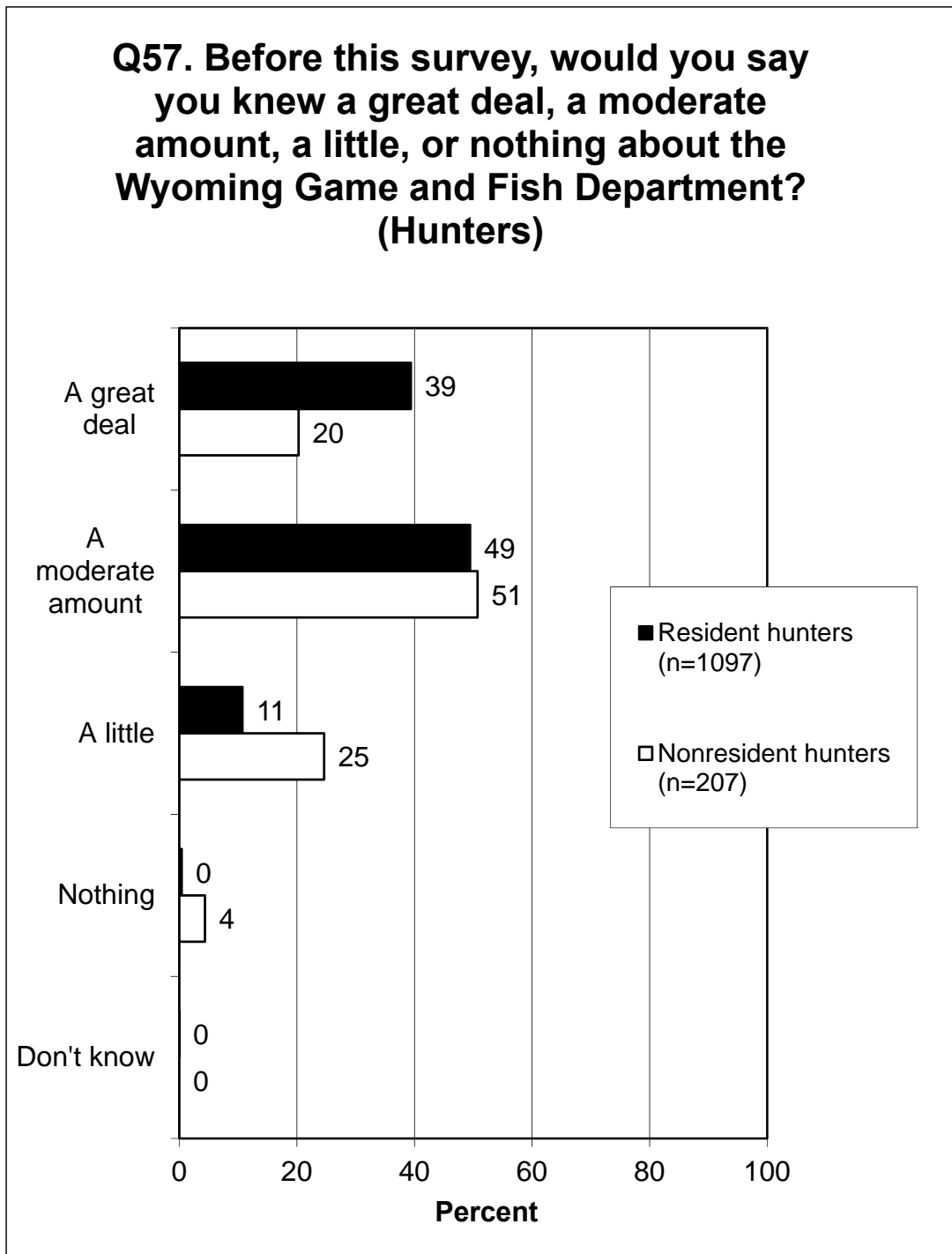


Figure 5.5.2. Knowledge Level Regarding the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters

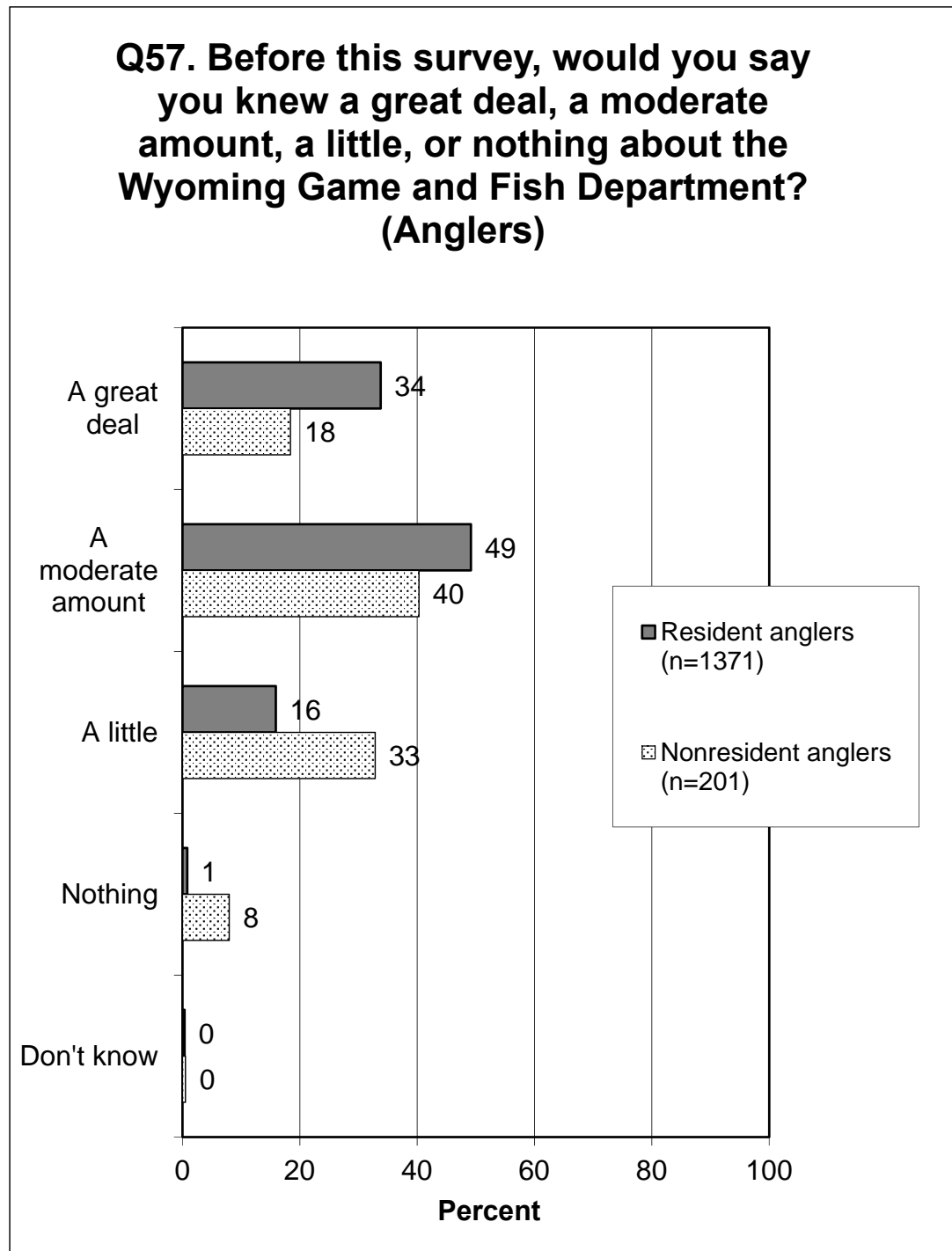


Figure 5.5.3. Knowledge Level Regarding the Game and Fish Department Among Anglers

Knowledge levels are shown among the hunter/trapper/angler group and among those who did not do any of those three activities (Figure 5.5.4). Not surprisingly, the former group has a higher level of knowledge of the Game and Fish Department. Figure 5.5.5 shows knowledge among wildlife viewers who did not hunt, trap, or fish.

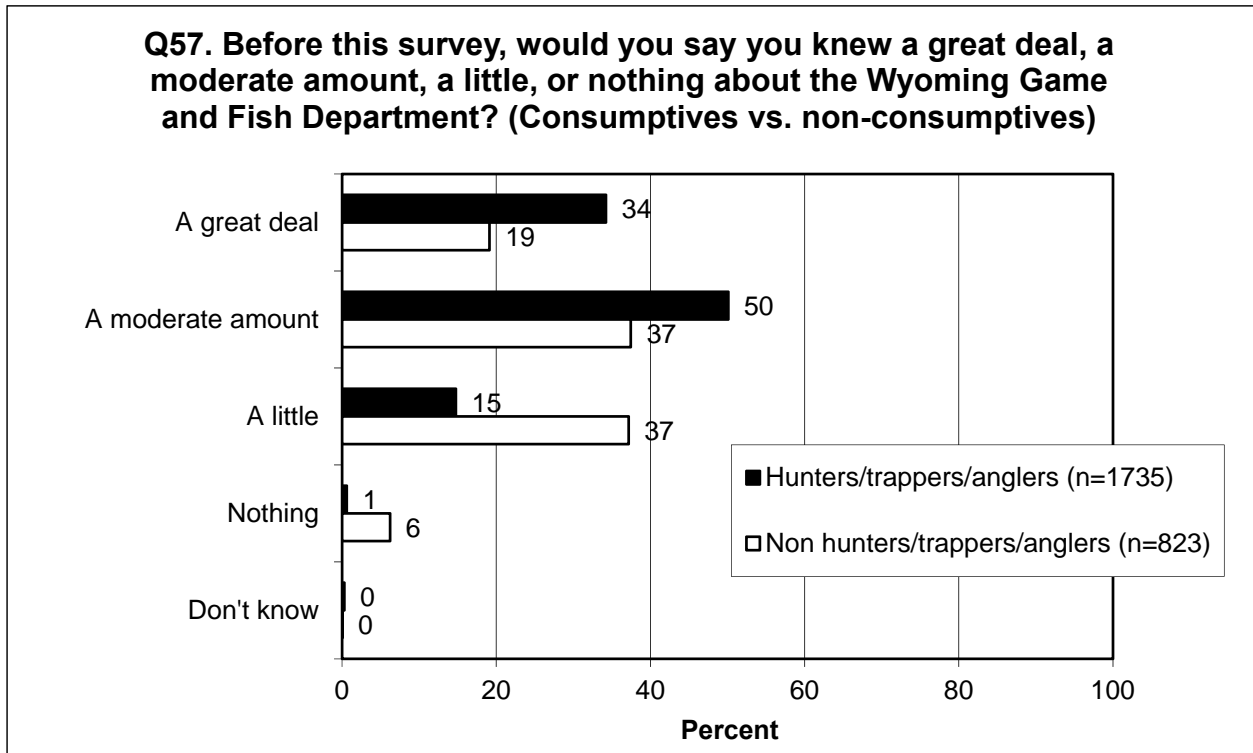


Figure 5.5.4. Knowledge Level Regarding the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

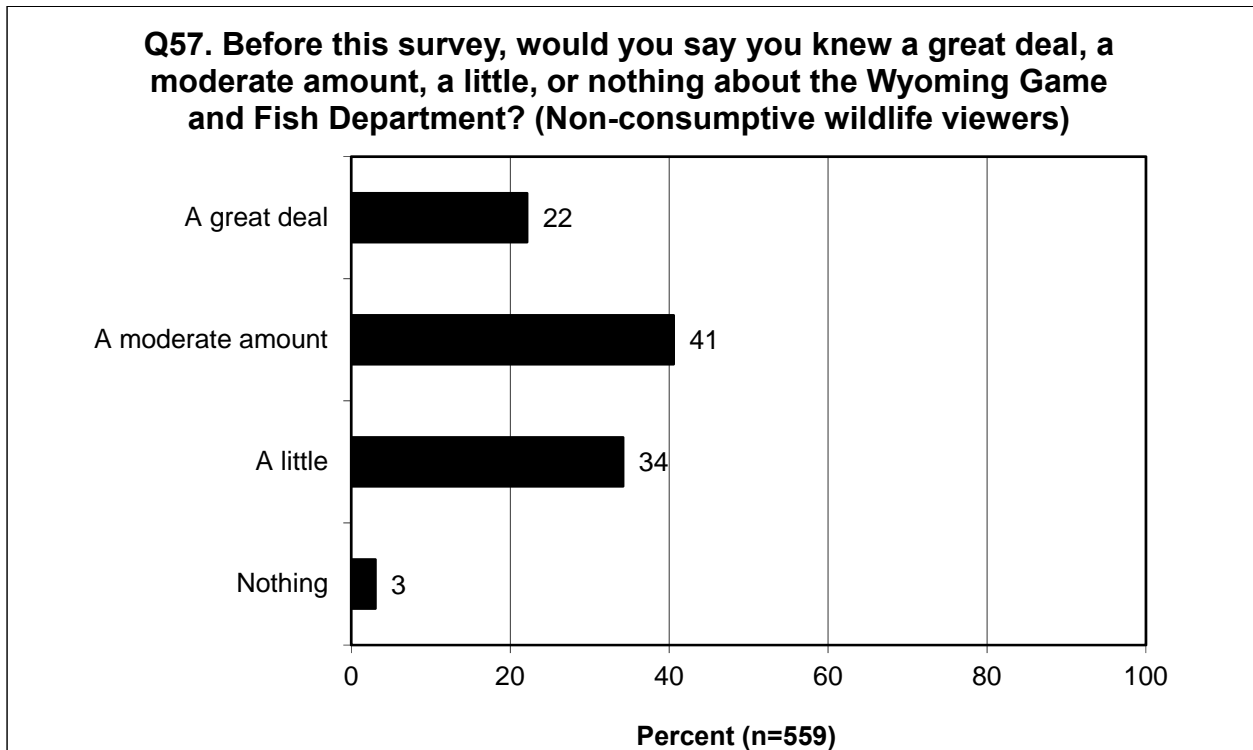


Figure 5.5.5. Knowledge Level Regarding the Game and Fish Department Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

5.6. SATISFACTION WITH THE WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Satisfaction levels are high among residents: 90% are very or somewhat satisfied with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Figure 5.6.1). Although all regions have satisfaction levels of 85% or more, it is worth noting that residents of the Cody, Lander, and Pinedale Regions have relatively more, compared to the other regions, giving the *somewhat* satisfied response at the expense of *very* satisfied (Table 5.6.1). Resident and nonresident hunters and anglers are also highly satisfied, although hunters have slightly more in the *somewhat* satisfied response rather than the *very* satisfied response, compared to anglers (Figures 5.6.2 and 5.6.3). The last satisfaction results are shown in Figures 5.6.4 and 5.6.5.

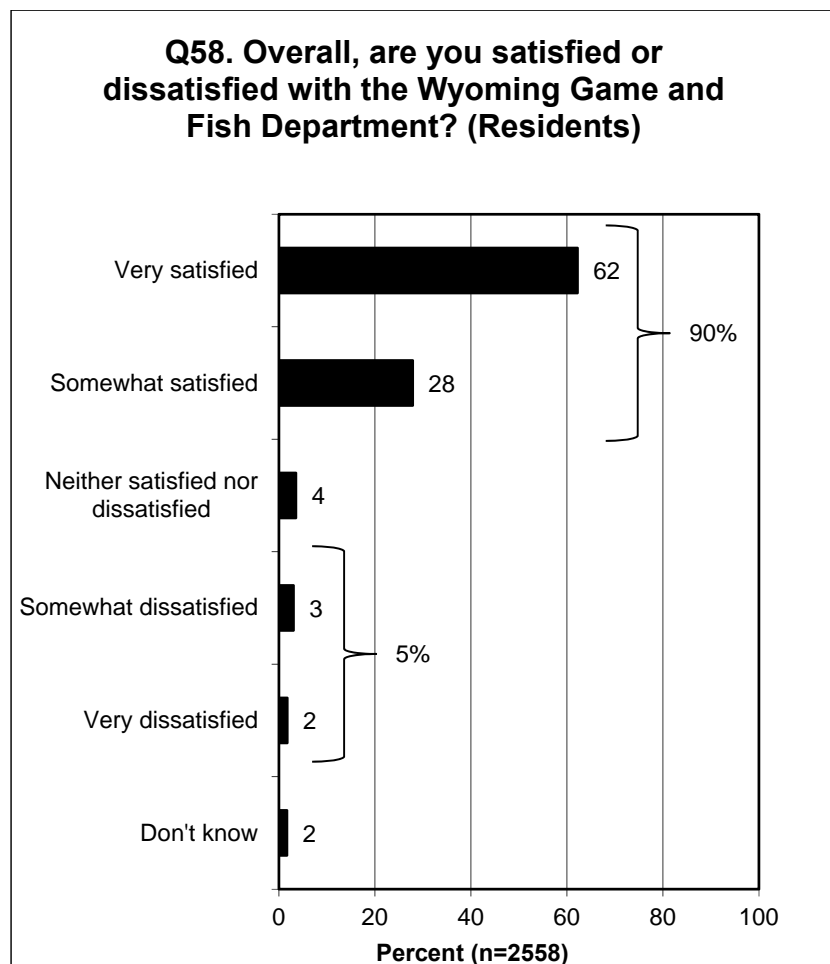


Figure 5.6.1. Satisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Residents

Table 5.6.1. Satisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Residents Regionally

Q58. Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Very satisfied	64%	56%	55%	55%	63%	64%	60%	66%
Somewhat satisfied	21%	32%	35%	34%	26%	29%	29%	25%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10%	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Somewhat dissatisfied	1%	3%	3%	4%	3%	2%	4%	3%
Very dissatisfied	2%	3%	1%	3%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Don't know	2%	2%	2%	0%	2%	0%	2%	2%

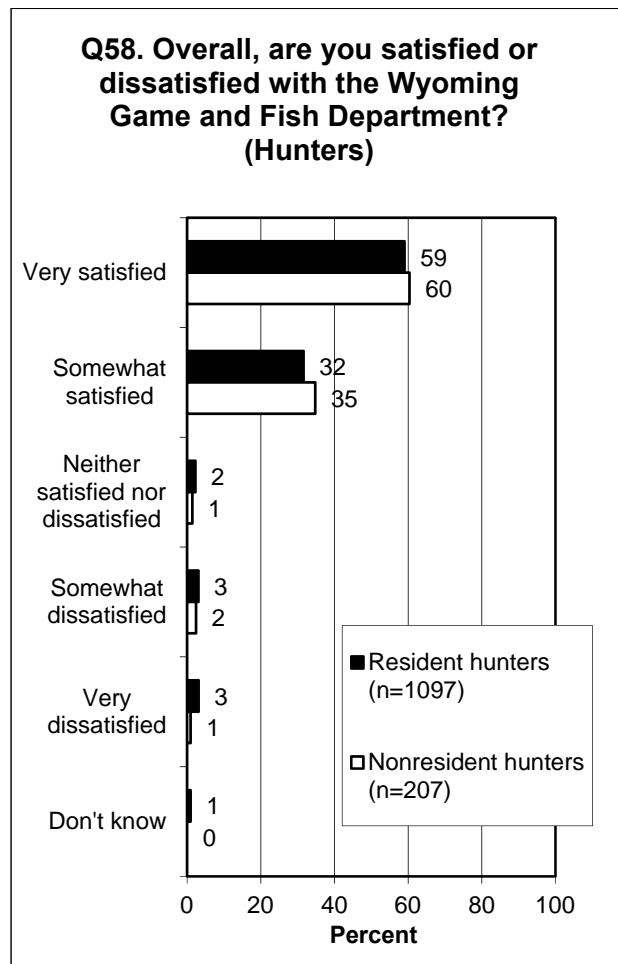


Figure 5.6.2. Satisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters

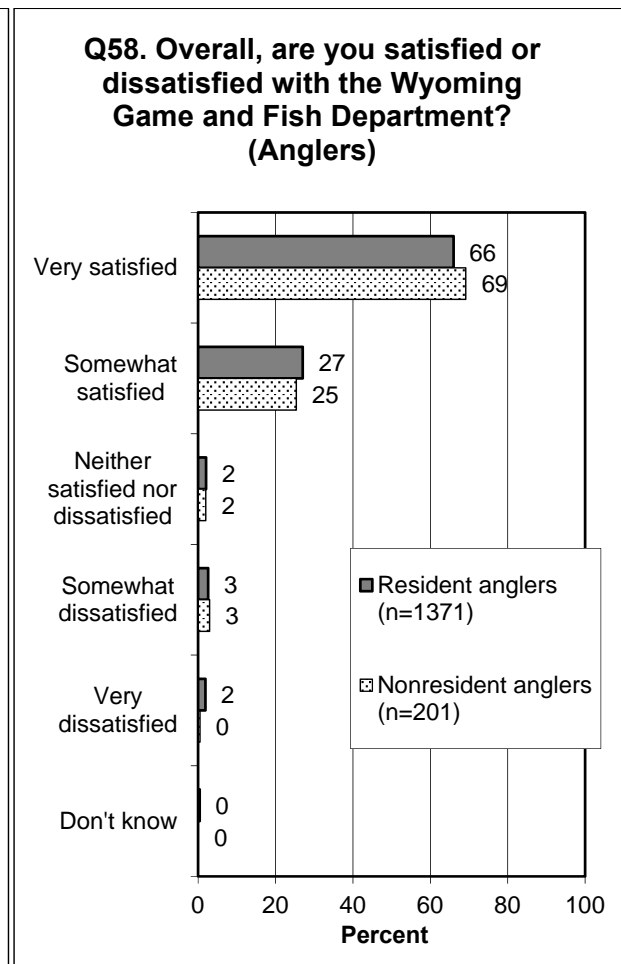


Figure 5.6.3. Satisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Anglers

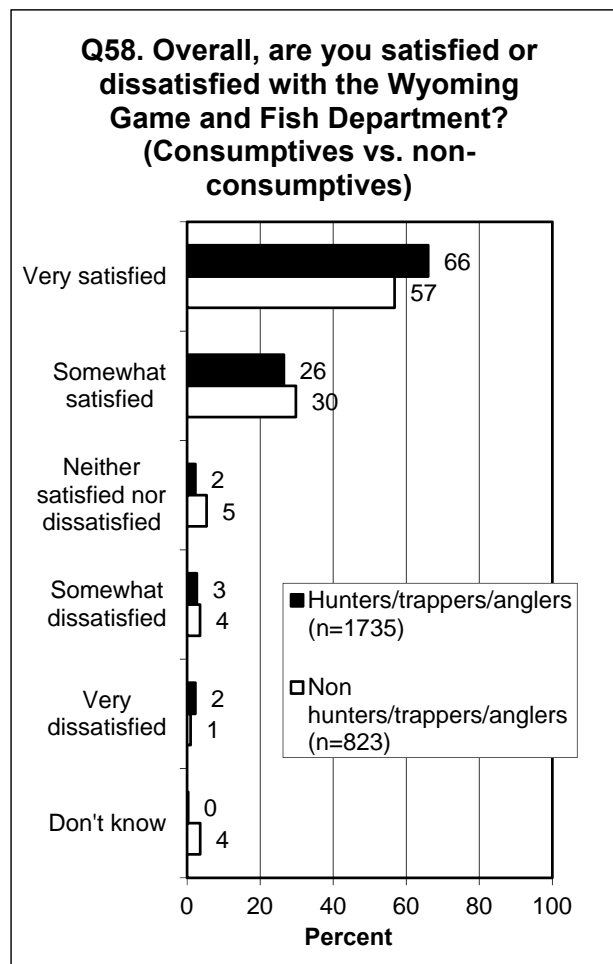


Figure 5.6.4. Satisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

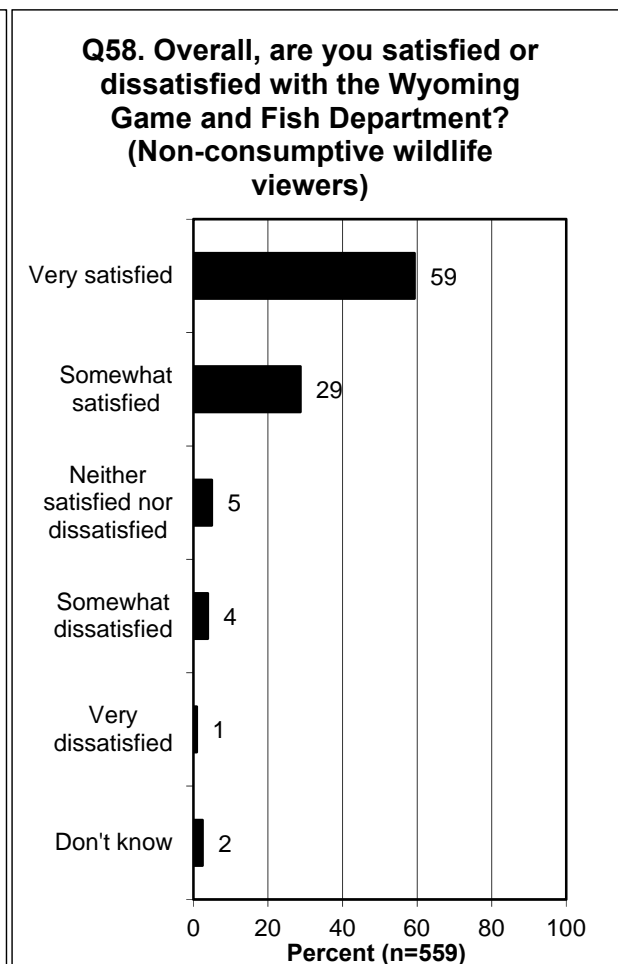


Figure 5.6.5. Satisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

Those who were dissatisfied were asked, in an open-ended question, to give the reasons for their dissatisfaction. Note that the sample sizes are low because only those who were dissatisfied were asked the question, so relatively small amounts of the sample got the question. Figure 5.6.6 shows residents' reasons for being dissatisfied; common reasons include the perception that there is not enough enforcement or the perception that the agency does a poor job with conserving state lands. Table 5.6.2 shows regional results, and Figures 5.6.7 and 5.6.8 show results among the hunters and anglers who were dissatisfied. Finally in this section, Figure 5.6.9 shows hunters/trappers/anglers compared to those who did not hunt/trap/fish, and Figure 5.6.10 shows non-consumptive wildlife viewers.

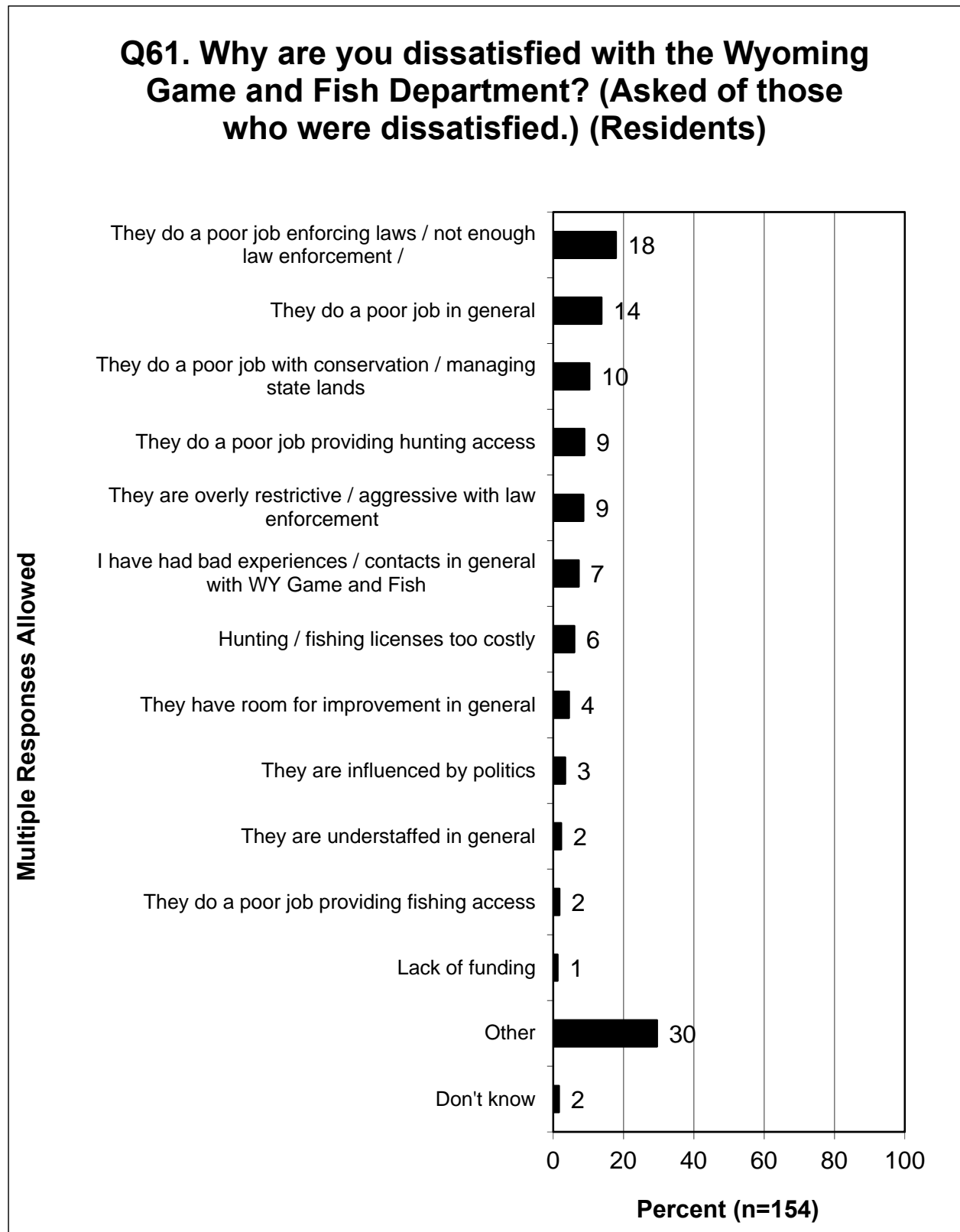


Figure 5.6.6. Reasons for Dissatisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Residents

Table 5.6.2. Reasons for Dissatisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Regionally

Q61. Why are you dissatisfied with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department? (Asked of those who were dissatisfied.) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
They do a poor job enforcing laws / not enough law enforcement /	0%	6%	19%	24%	18%	0%	22%	28%
They do a poor job in general	2%	11%	9%	4%	3%	16%	19%	19%
They do a poor job with conservation / managing state lands	15%	8%	13%	28%	5%	0%	25%	4%
They do a poor job providing hunting access	0%	9%	3%	14%	19%	4%	16%	0%
They are overly restrictive / aggressive with law enforcement	0%	22%	7%	4%	0%	0%	10%	11%
I have had bad experiences / contacts in general with WY Game and Fish	29%	11%	5%	9%	2%	4%	8%	8%
Hunting / fishing licenses too costly	8%	1%	13%	1%	9%	7%	6%	5%
They have room for improvement in general	0%	3%	0%	5%	18%	0%	4%	0%
They are influenced by politics	22%	2%	10%	7%	2%	0%	3%	4%
They are understaffed in general	20%	0%	10%	3%	0%	11%	0%	0%
They do a poor job providing fishing access	0%	1%	5%	1%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Lack of funding	0%	1%	0%	6%	0%	0%	4%	0%
understaffed in field positions	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
I don't hear much about them	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Heard / read bad things about Wyoming Game and Fish	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	40%	26%	13%	21%	48%	57%	33%	8%
Don't know	4%	0%	0%	4%	8%	0%	0%	0%

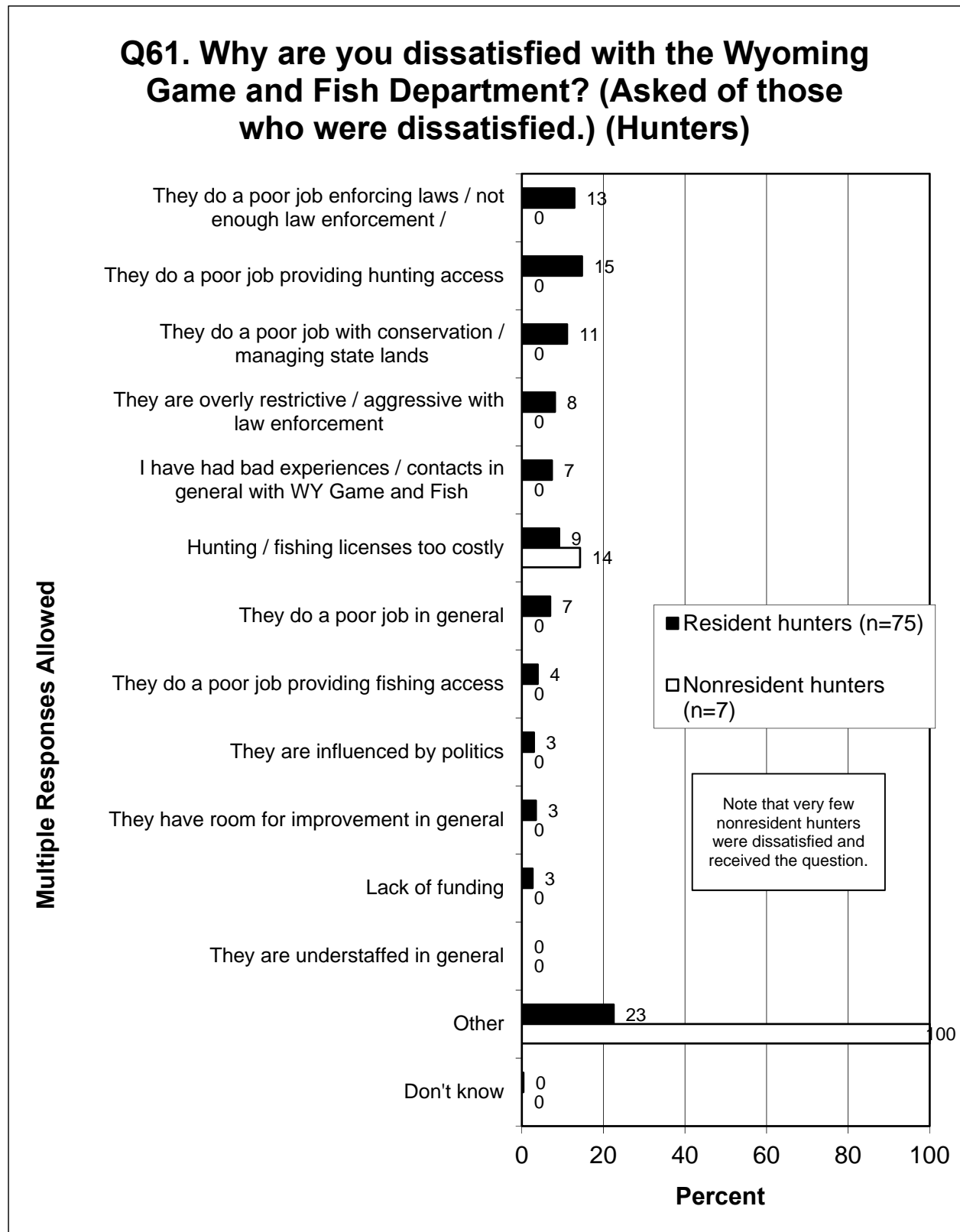


Figure 5.6.7. Reasons for Dissatisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters

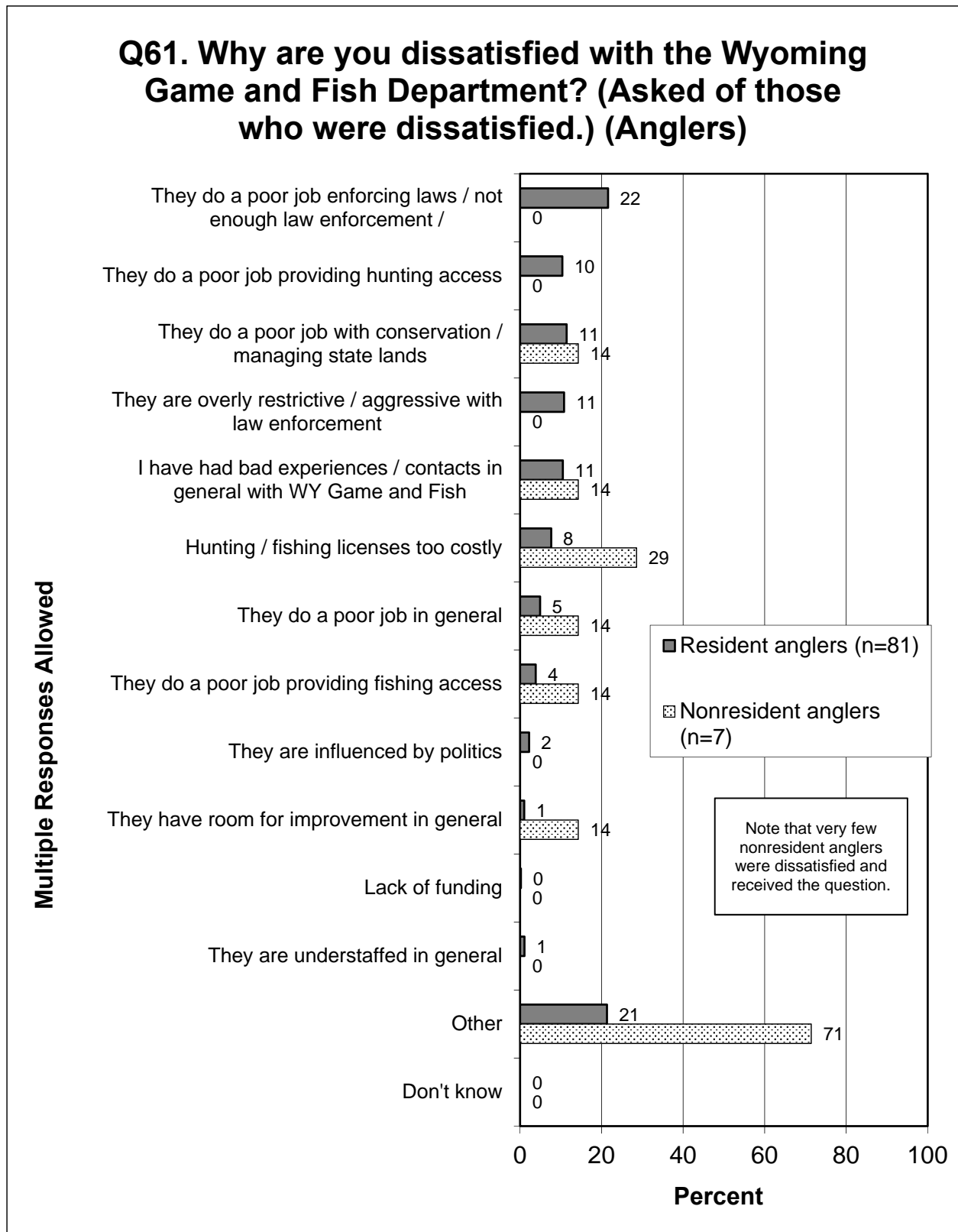


Figure 5.6.8. Reasons for Dissatisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Anglers

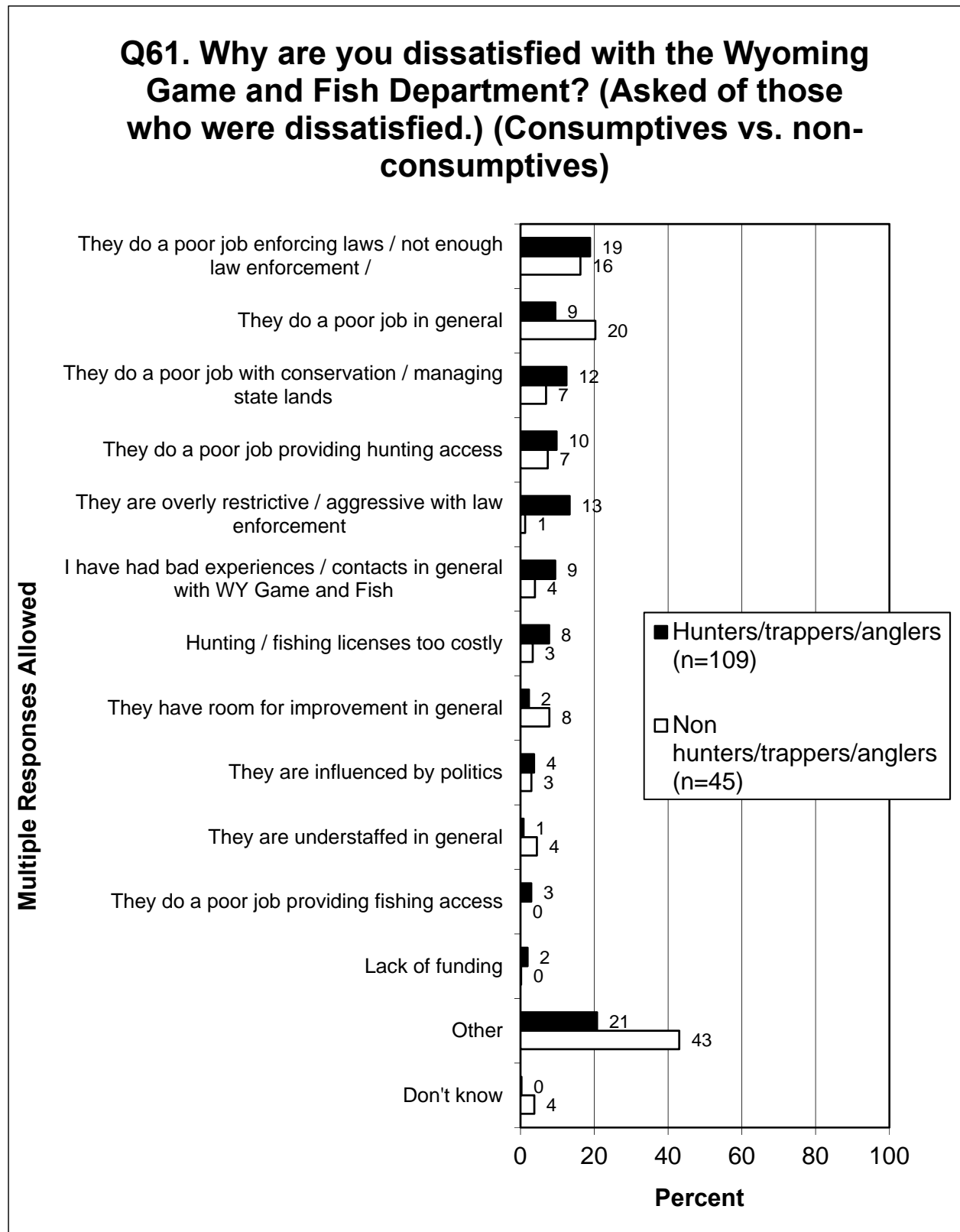


Figure 5.6.9. Reasons for Dissatisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

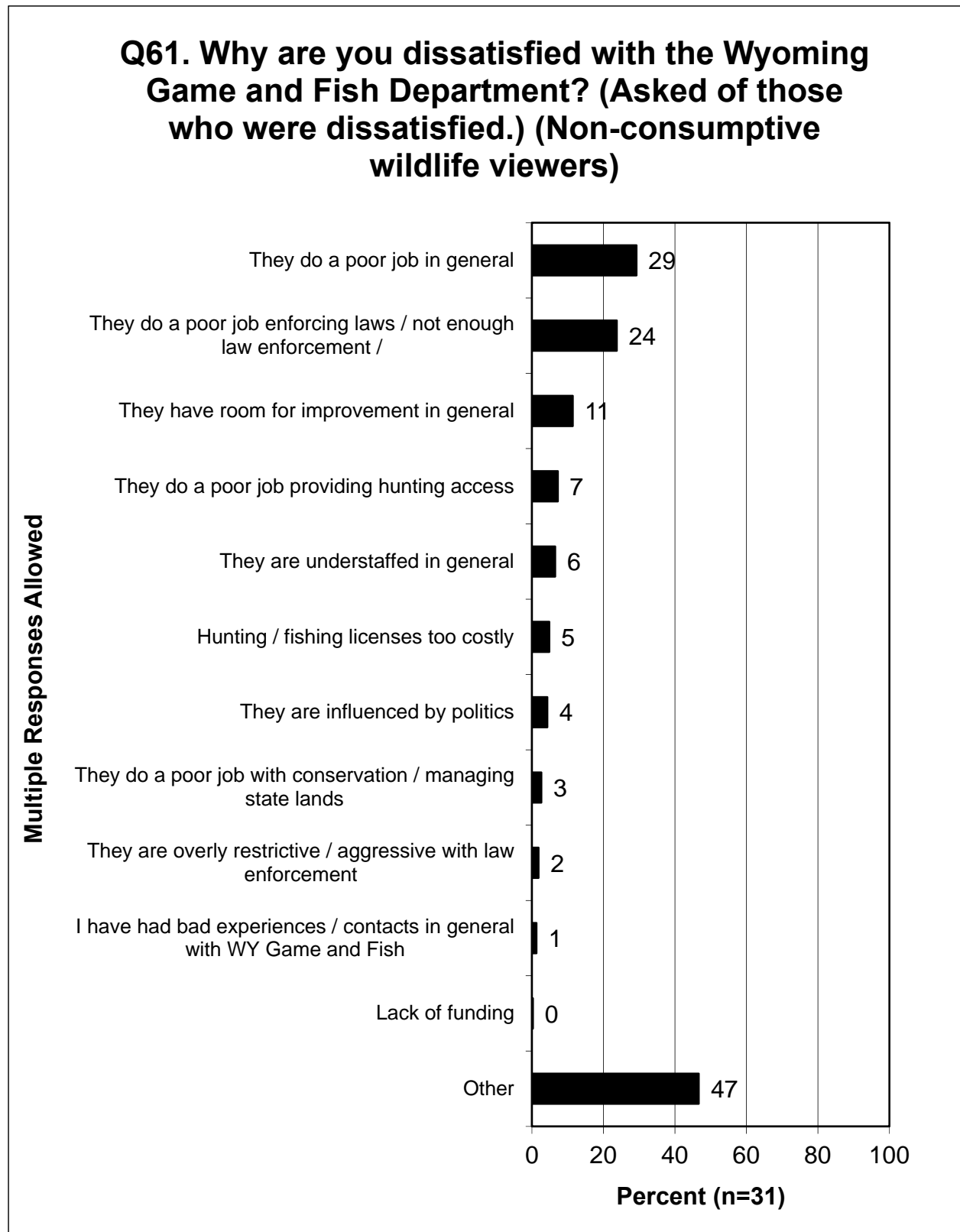


Figure 5.6.10. Reasons for Dissatisfaction With the Game and Fish Department Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

5.7. OPINIONS ON THE WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

Figure 5.7.1 shows that the Game and Fish Department has high credibility among residents overall (79% say *very credible*, and 95% say *very* or *somewhat credible*) and in all of the regions (Table 5.7.1). Note that the Green River and Laramie Regions have particularly high percentages giving ratings of *very credible*. Among hunters and anglers, credibility ratings are high, as well (Figures 5.7.2 and 5.7.3). Both the groups in the hunter/trapper/angler graph (Figure 5.7.4) and the single group in the non-consumptive wildlife viewer graph (Figure 5.7.5) also give positive ratings of credibility.

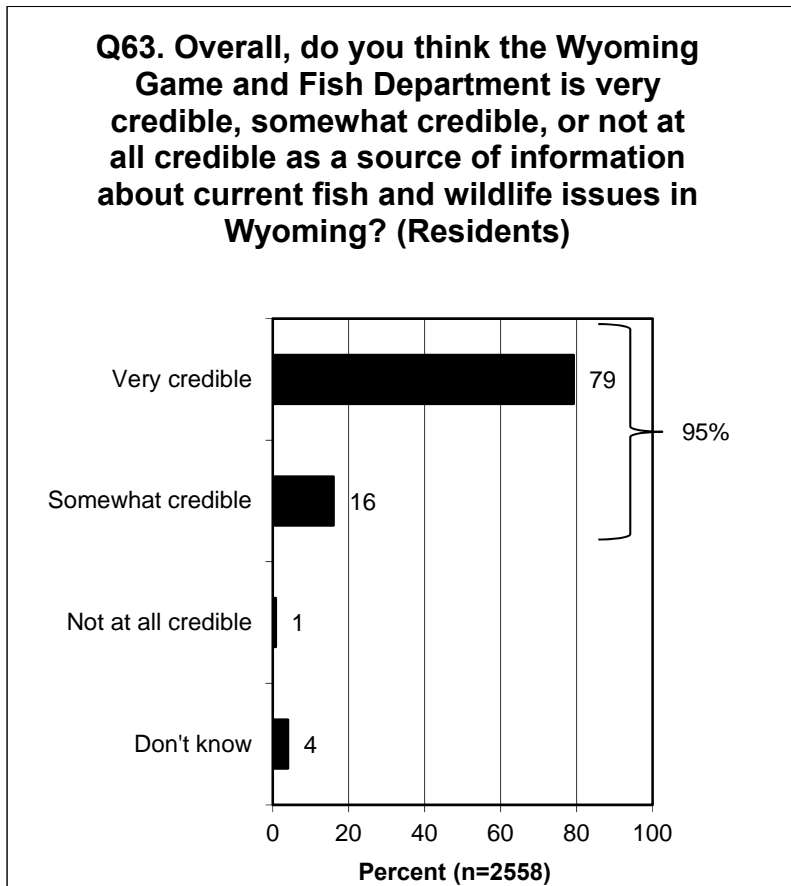


Figure 5.7.1. Perceived Credibility of the Game and Fish Department Among Residents

Table 5.7.1. Perceived Credibility of the Game and Fish Department Among Residents Regionally

Q63. Overall, do you think the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is very credible, somewhat credible, or not at all credible as a source of information about current fish and wildlife issues in Wyoming? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Very credible	75%	73%	76%	74%	82%	73%	79%	85%
Somewhat credible	20%	19%	18%	23%	11%	24%	17%	12%
Not at all credible	1%	4%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Don't know	5%	4%	6%	2%	7%	3%	4%	3%

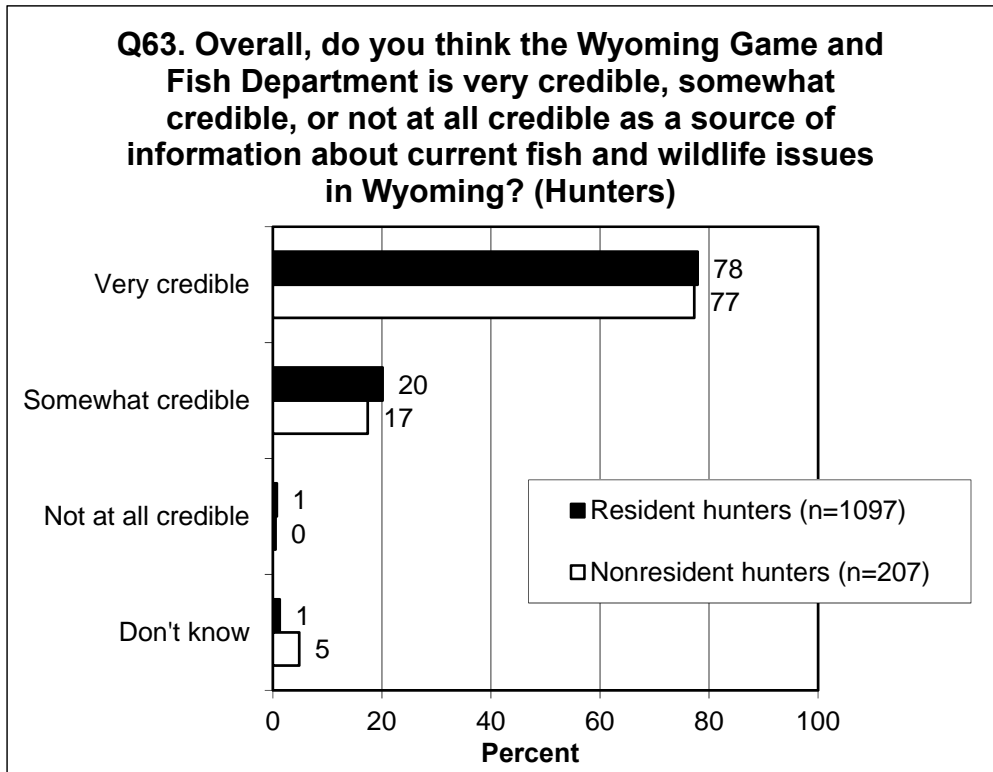


Figure 5.7.2. Perceived Credibility of the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters

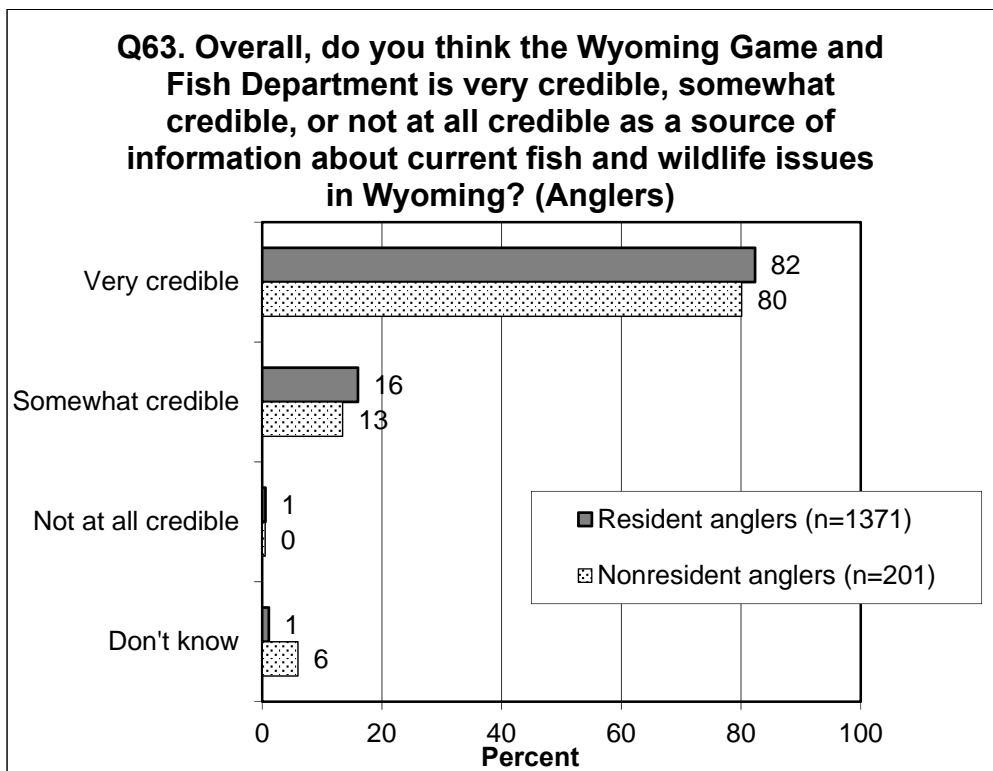


Figure 5.7.3. Perceived Credibility of the Game and Fish Department Among Anglers

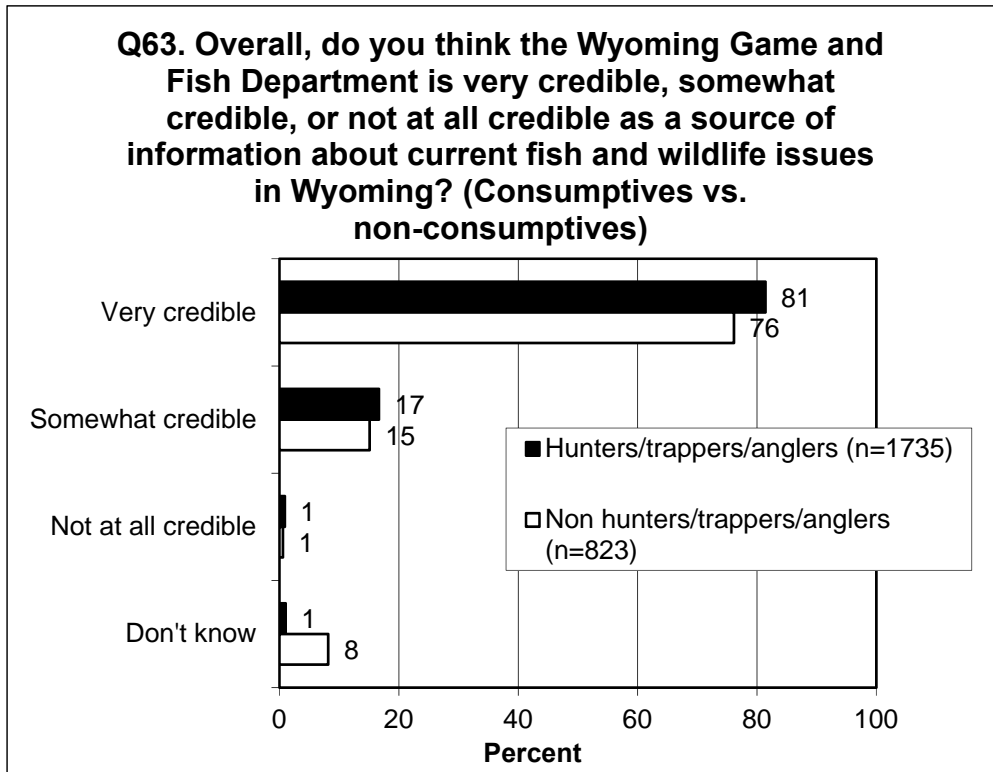


Figure 5.7.4. Perceived Credibility of the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

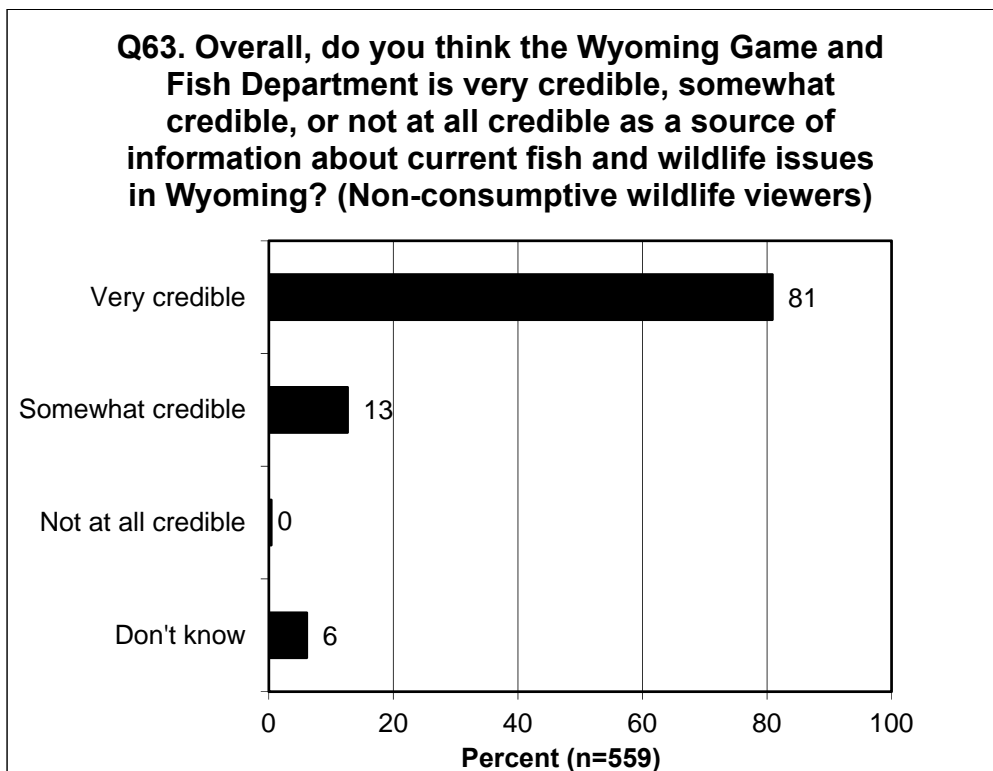


Figure 5.7.5. Perceived Credibility of the Game and Fish Department Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

The survey explored the benefits of Game and Fish, and the top perceived benefit among residents is the conservation and protection of natural resources (29% say this is a benefit), followed by the opportunity to fish (19%) and the opportunity to hunt (16%) (Figure 5.7.6). Regional results from the survey of residents is shown in Table 5.7.2.

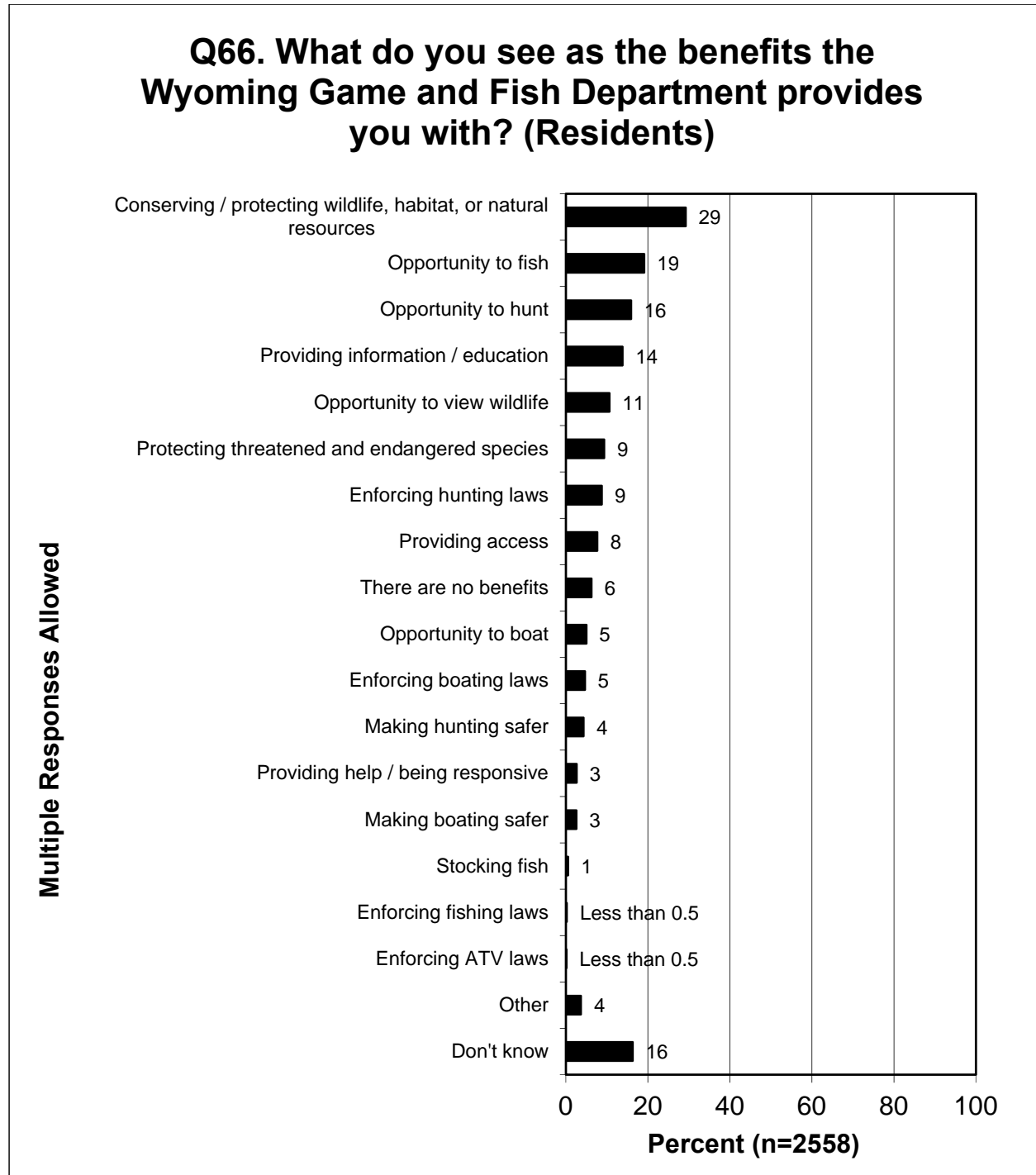


Figure 5.7.6. Perceived Benefits of the Game and Fish Department Among Residents

Table 5.7.2. Perceived Benefits of the Game and Fish Department Among Residents Regionally

Q66. What do you see as the benefits the Wyoming Game and Fish Department provides you with? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Conserving / protecting wildlife, habitat, or natural resources	37%	25%	34%	29%	27%	35%	28%	27%
Opportunity to fish	16%	23%	18%	23%	14%	22%	22%	17%
Opportunity to hunt	12%	19%	21%	20%	15%	16%	13%	16%
Providing information / education	17%	12%	9%	12%	19%	17%	11%	13%
Opportunity to view wildlife	17%	9%	10%	13%	10%	7%	12%	11%
Protecting threatened and endangered species	12%	9%	11%	12%	7%	10%	11%	8%
Enforcing hunting laws	5%	8%	11%	8%	8%	11%	11%	7%
Providing access	11%	8%	12%	4%	4%	9%	4%	10%
There are no benefits	4%	8%	4%	7%	6%	4%	8%	6%
Opportunity to boat	8%	3%	5%	7%	6%	6%	5%	4%
Enforcing boating laws	4%	2%	4%	2%	4%	4%	8%	4%
Making hunting safer	3%	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	6%	4%
Providing help / being responsive	1%	2%	3%	5%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Making boating safer	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%	5%	2%
Stocking fish	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Enforcing fishing laws	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Enforcing ATV laws	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	1%	4%	6%	5%	1%	5%	5%	3%
Don't know	14%	14%	14%	14%	22%	14%	12%	19%

The results among hunters and anglers are presented in Figures 5.7.7 and 5.7.8. Then the results of hunters/trappers/anglers versus those who do not do those activities are shown in Figure 5.7.9, and the results among non-consumptive wildlife viewers are included in Figure 5.7.10.

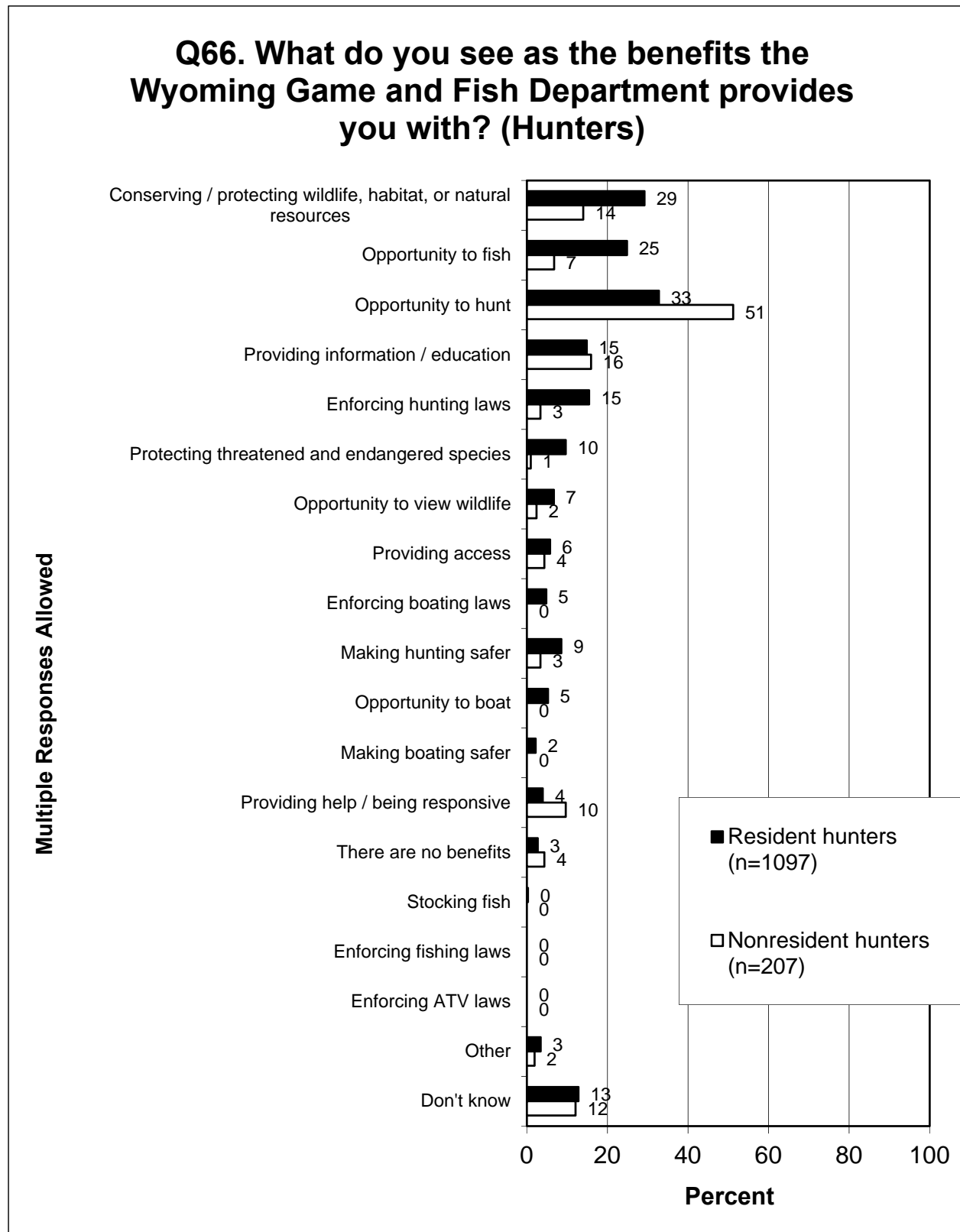


Figure 5.7.7. Perceived Benefits of the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters

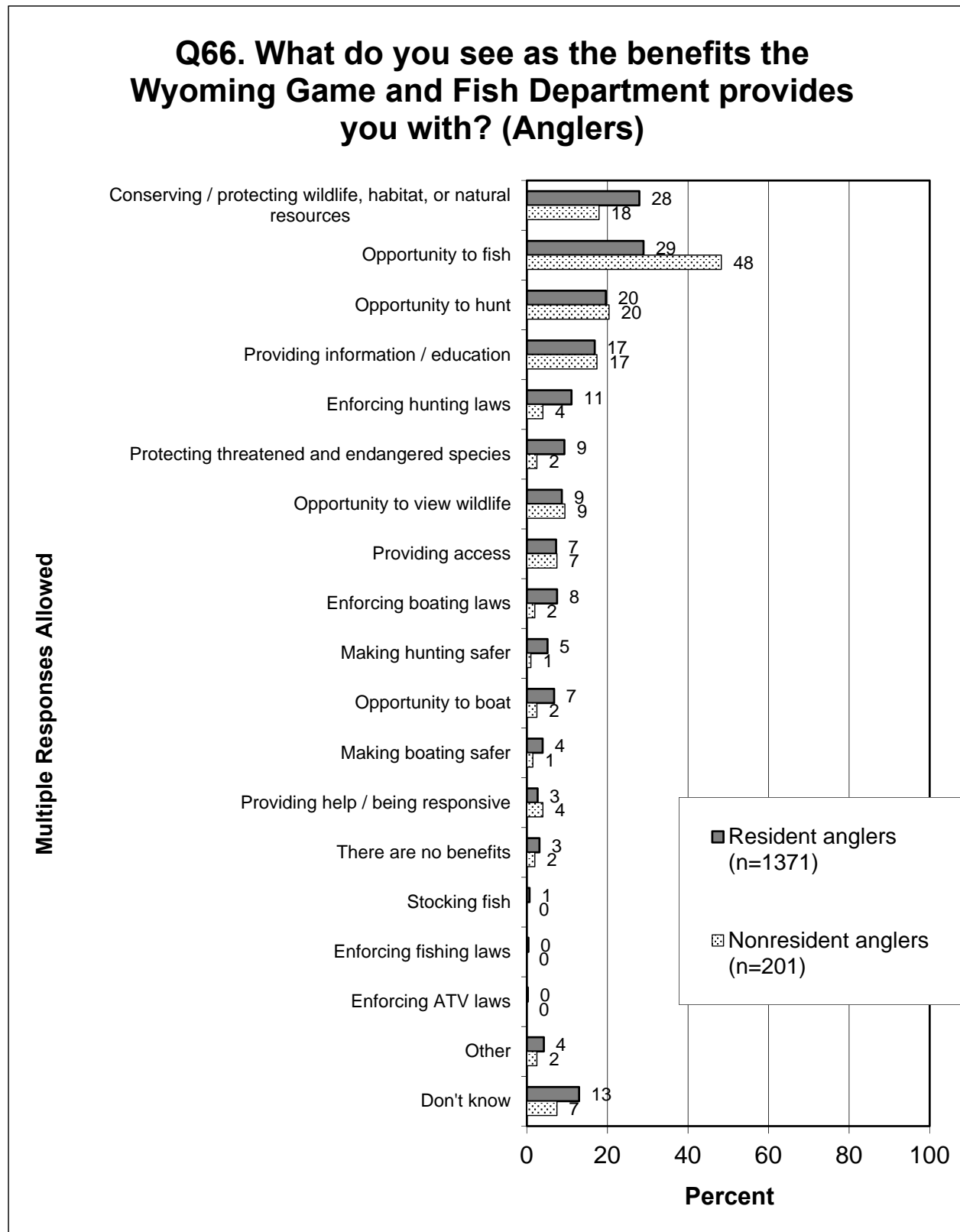


Figure 5.7.8. Perceived Benefits of the Game and Fish Department Among Anglers

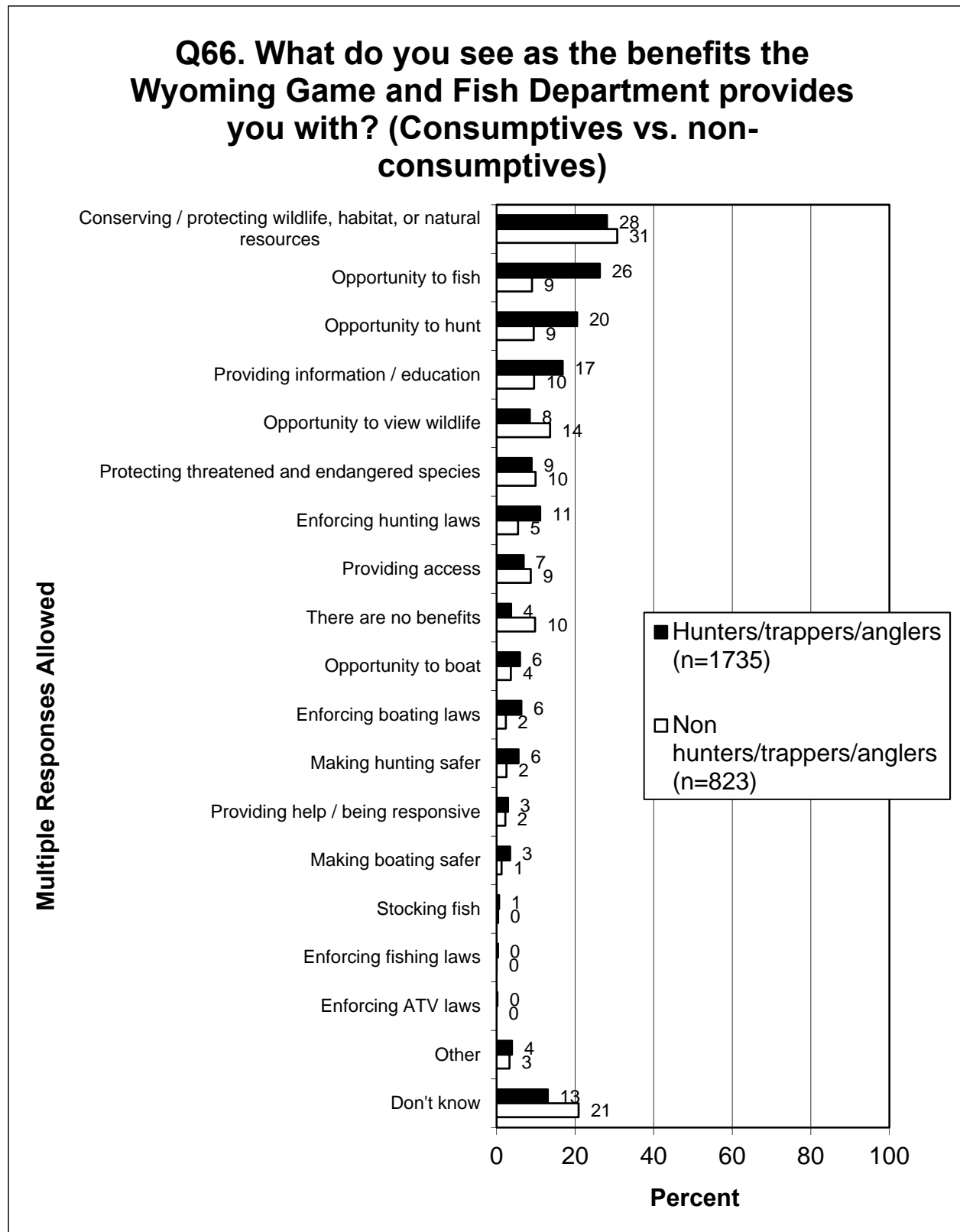


Figure 5.7.9. Perceived Benefits of the Game and Fish Department Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

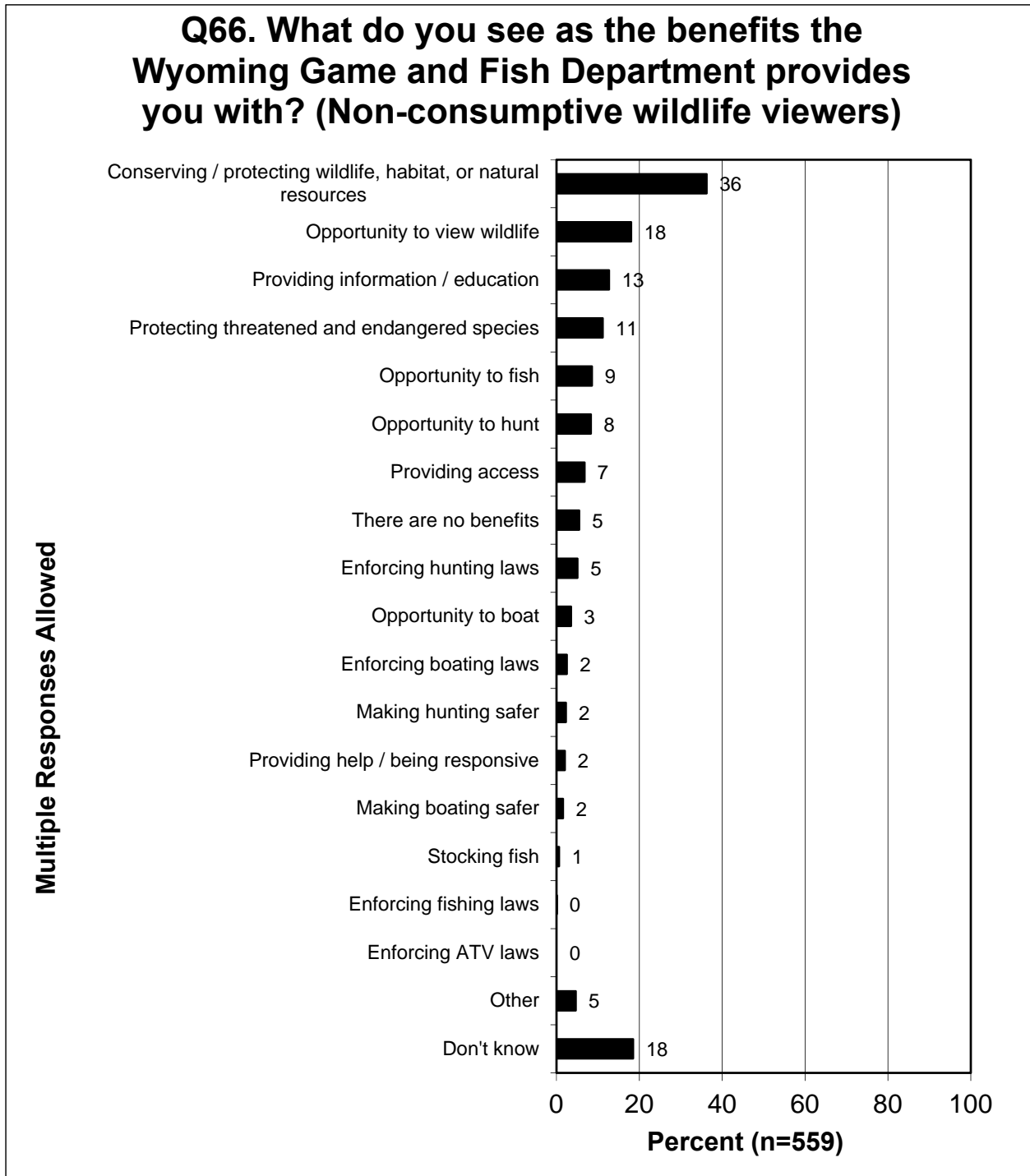


Figure 5.7.10. Perceived Benefits of the Game and Fish Department Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

Next in this section, a series of statements were made to respondents, who indicated if they agreed or disagreed with each of them. The statements pertained to how well the Game and Fish Department does its work, particularly regarding how well it balances all of the various interests with which it must contend. Figure 5.7.11 shows that agreement is high that Game and Fish effectively balances fish and wildlife management with providing hunting and fishing

opportunities. While agreement is high that Game and Fish should be given more resources, it is also high that the Game and Fish Department is doing enough to conserve the states fish and wildlife populations. Tables 5.7.3 through 5.7.7 show regional results on these questions. (To help eliminate respondent fatigue, each respondent was asked a randomly chosen three of the five questions, which is why the n-value shows a range.)

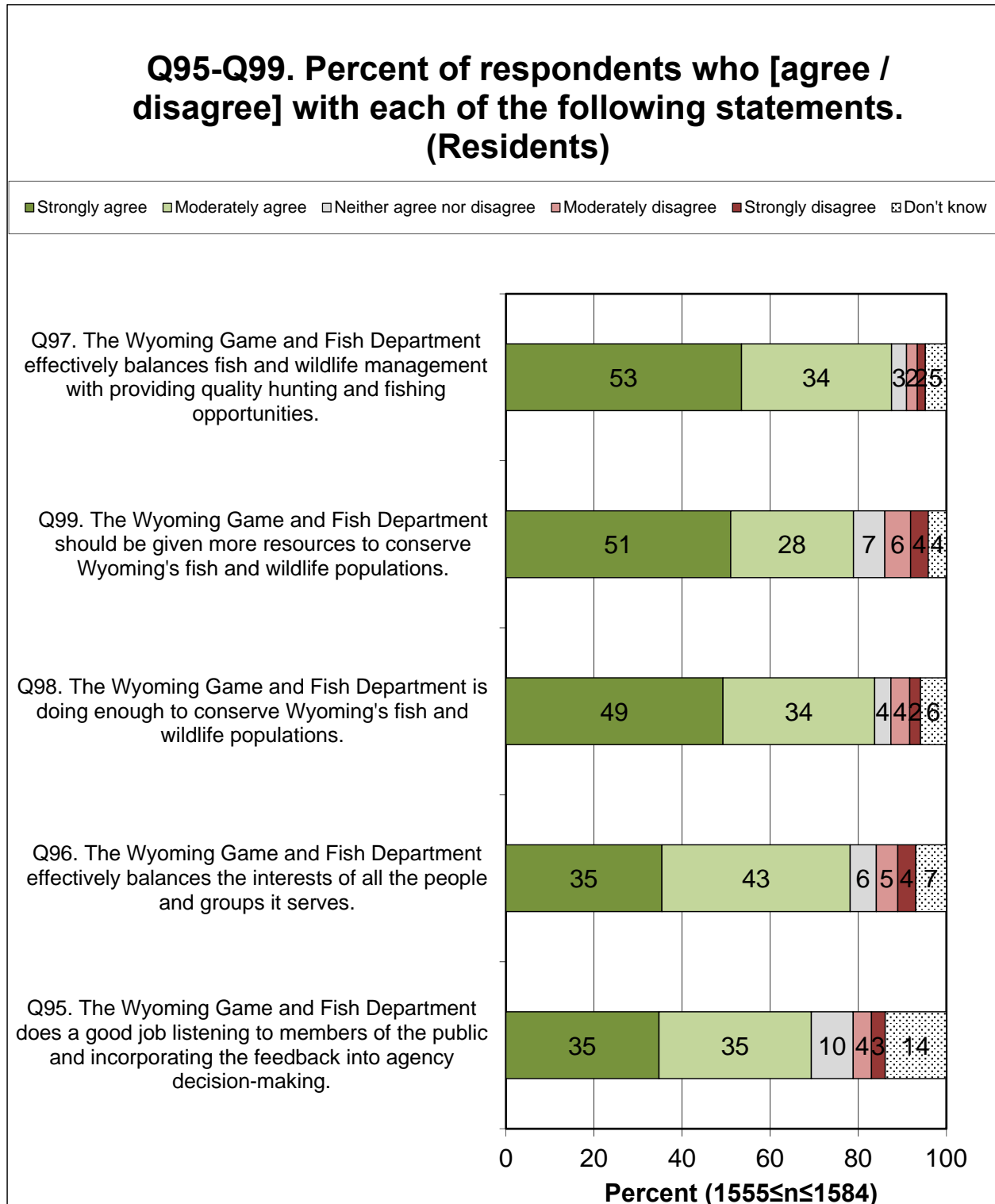


Figure 5.7.11. Residents’ Opinions on Statements About the Game and Fish Department

Table 5.7.3. Opinion Among Residents Regarding Game and Fish Department's Responsiveness, Regionally

Q95. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department does a good job listening to members of the public and incorporating the feedback into agency decision-making. (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	34%	31%	33%	32%	32%	34%	40%	34%
Moderately agree	28%	35%	42%	39%	33%	34%	29%	38%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%	11%	6%	7%	8%	12%	10%	8%
Moderately disagree	4%	8%	4%	5%	8%	4%	4%	1%
Strongly disagree	1%	8%	4%	6%	6%	3%	2%	1%
Don't know	16%	8%	11%	10%	13%	12%	14%	17%

Table 5.7.4. Opinion Among Residents Regarding Balancing Interests of Groups Served, Regionally

Q96. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department effectively balances the interests of all the people and groups it serves. (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	35%	30%	35%	30%	40%	40%	37%	33%
Moderately agree	40%	49%	44%	49%	36%	47%	40%	43%
Neither agree nor disagree	9%	5%	4%	4%	2%	4%	7%	8%
Moderately disagree	4%	6%	6%	6%	9%	3%	5%	3%
Strongly disagree	3%	4%	3%	5%	8%	3%	3%	4%
Don't know	8%	7%	8%	7%	5%	3%	8%	9%

Table 5.7.5. Opinion Among Residents Regarding Balancing Interests of Wildlife and Hunting/Fishing, Regionally

Q97. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department effectively balances fish and wildlife management with providing quality hunting and fishing opportunities. (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	58%	49%	47%	53%	56%	58%	55%	51%
Moderately agree	31%	43%	44%	39%	30%	33%	28%	35%
Neither agree nor disagree	1%	2%	3%	1%	4%	3%	5%	3%
Moderately disagree	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%	2%	4%	2%
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	3%	1%
Don't know	7%	2%	4%	3%	5%	2%	5%	7%

Table 5.7.6. Opinion Among Residents Regarding Conserving Fish and Wildlife Populations, Regionally

Q98. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is doing enough to conserve Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations. (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	37%	34%	47%	48%	43%	59%	53%	51%
Moderately agree	40%	43%	37%	32%	37%	29%	33%	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	6%	11%	3%	3%	2%	6%	3%	1%
Moderately disagree	7%	5%	7%	6%	8%	3%	5%	2%
Strongly disagree	4%	3%	1%	5%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Don't know	6%	4%	4%	5%	8%	2%	3%	9%

Table 5.7.7. Opinion Among Residents Regarding the Game and Fish Department’s Being Given More Resources, Regionally

Q99. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department should be given more resources to conserve Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations. (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	57%	42%	54%	52%	55%	43%	57%	51%
Moderately agree	24%	29%	22%	23%	32%	28%	22%	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	3%	7%	9%	5%	4%	7%	7%	9%
Moderately disagree	9%	11%	7%	8%	3%	15%	3%	2%
Strongly disagree	2%	8%	4%	4%	3%	4%	6%	3%
Don't know	6%	2%	4%	9%	3%	3%	5%	4%

Figures 5.7.12 through 5.7.21 show results among hunters and anglers. In general, resident hunters and anglers have higher percentages agreeing than do nonresident hunters and anglers. Figures 5.7.22 through 5.7.26 show the comparison of consumptives and non-consumptives, and Figure 5.7.27 presents the results among non-consumptive wildlife viewers.

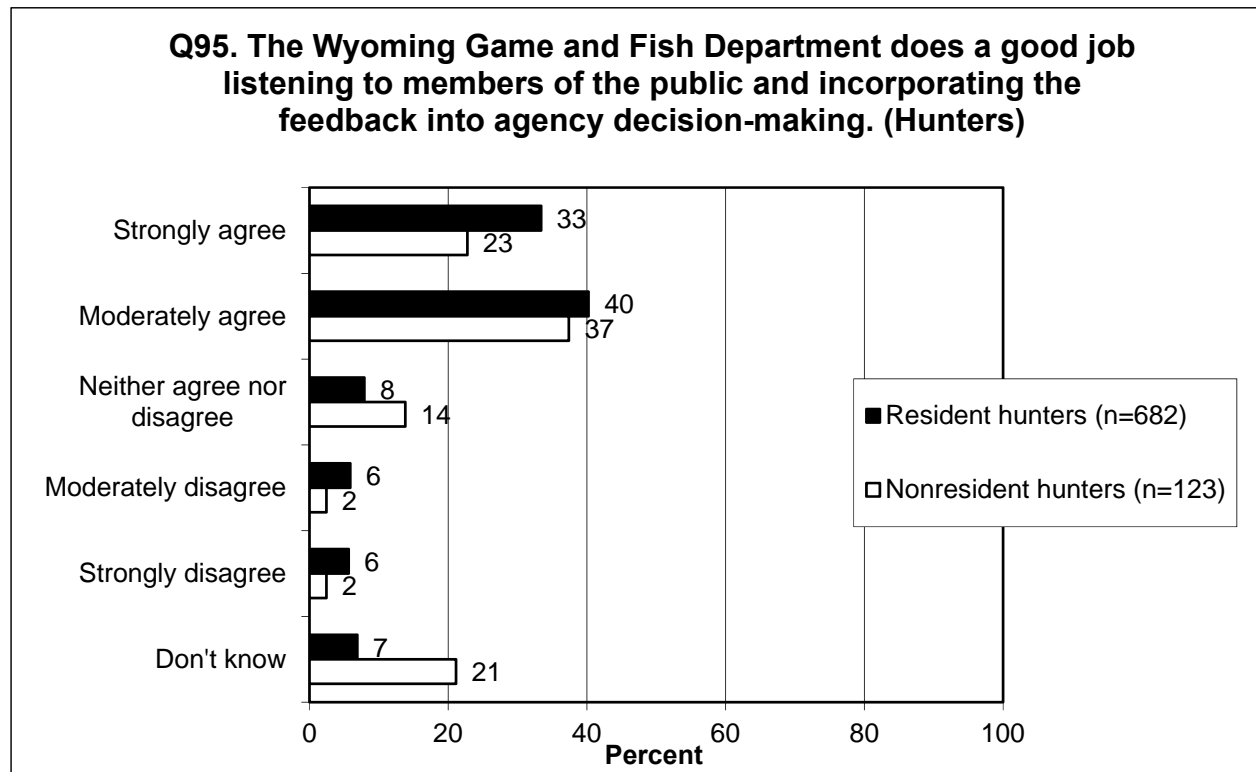


Figure 5.7.12. Opinion Regarding Game and Fish Department’s Responsiveness, Hunters

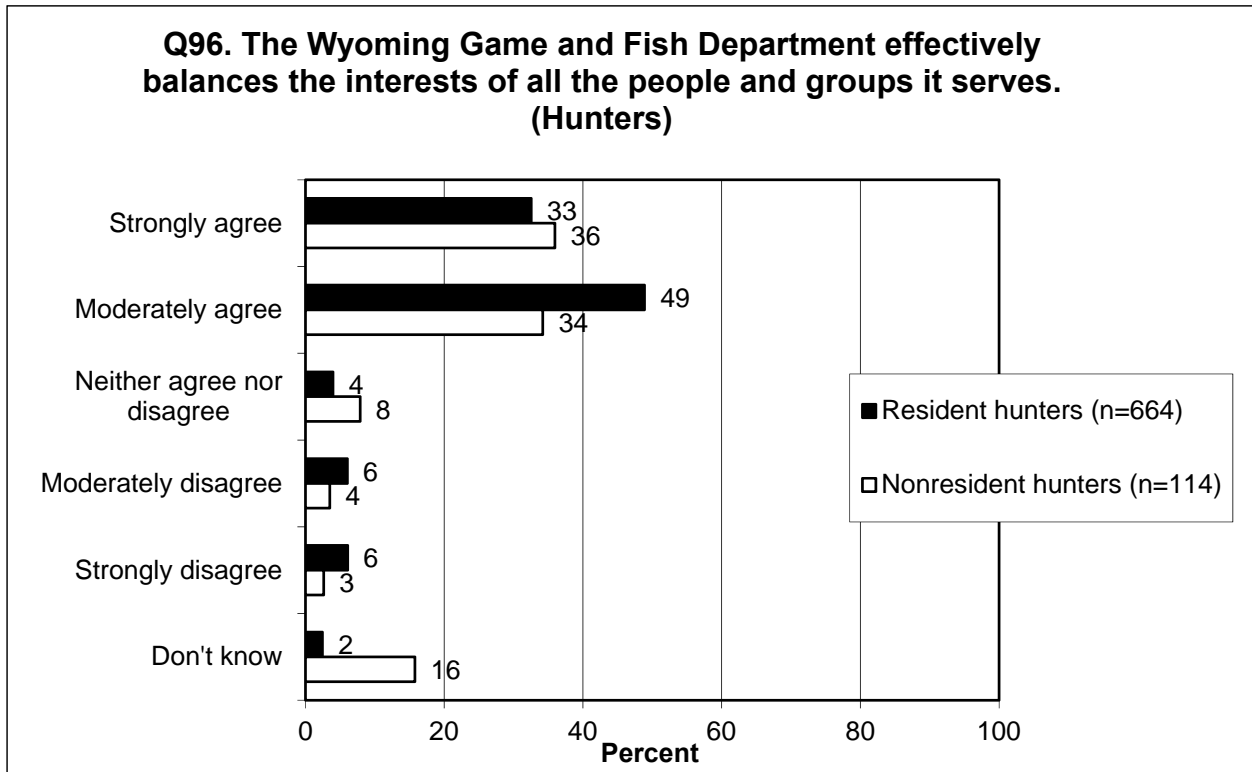


Figure 5.7.13. Opinion Regarding Balancing Interests of Groups Served, Hunters

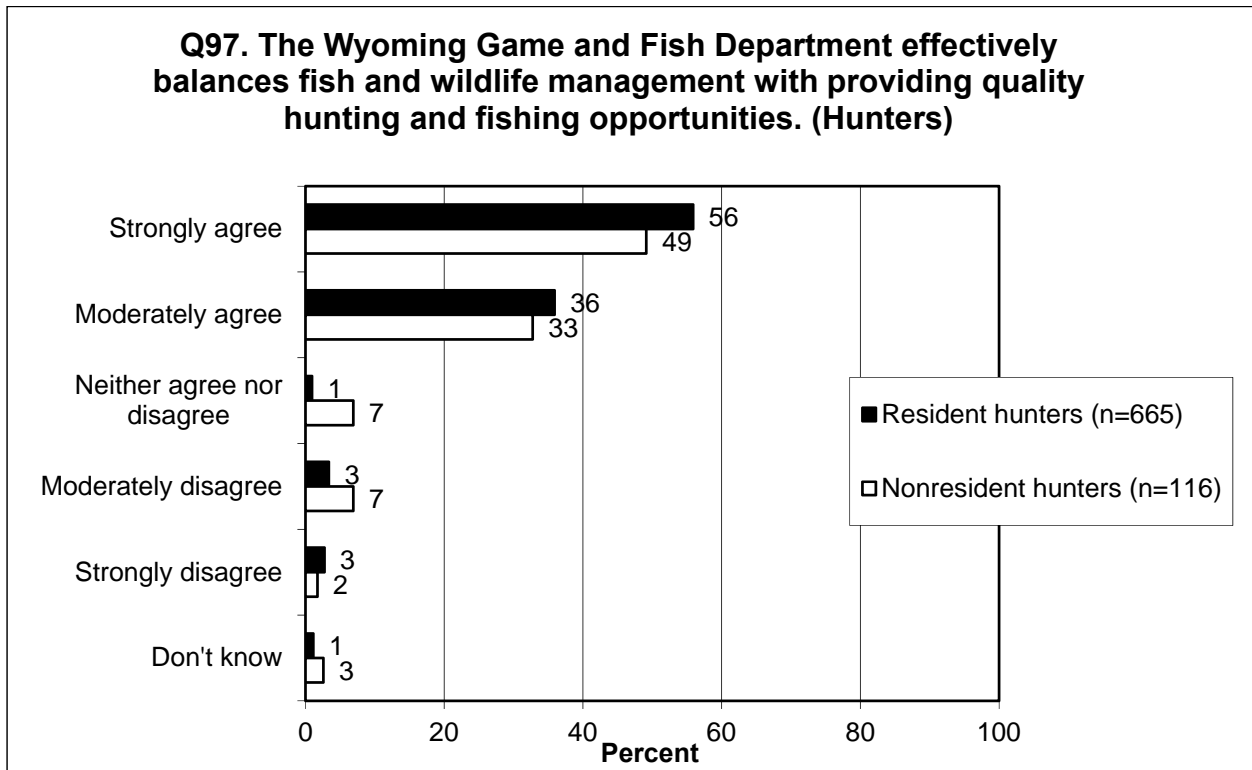


Figure 5.7.14. Opinion Regarding Balancing Interests of Wildlife and Hunting/Fishing, Hunters

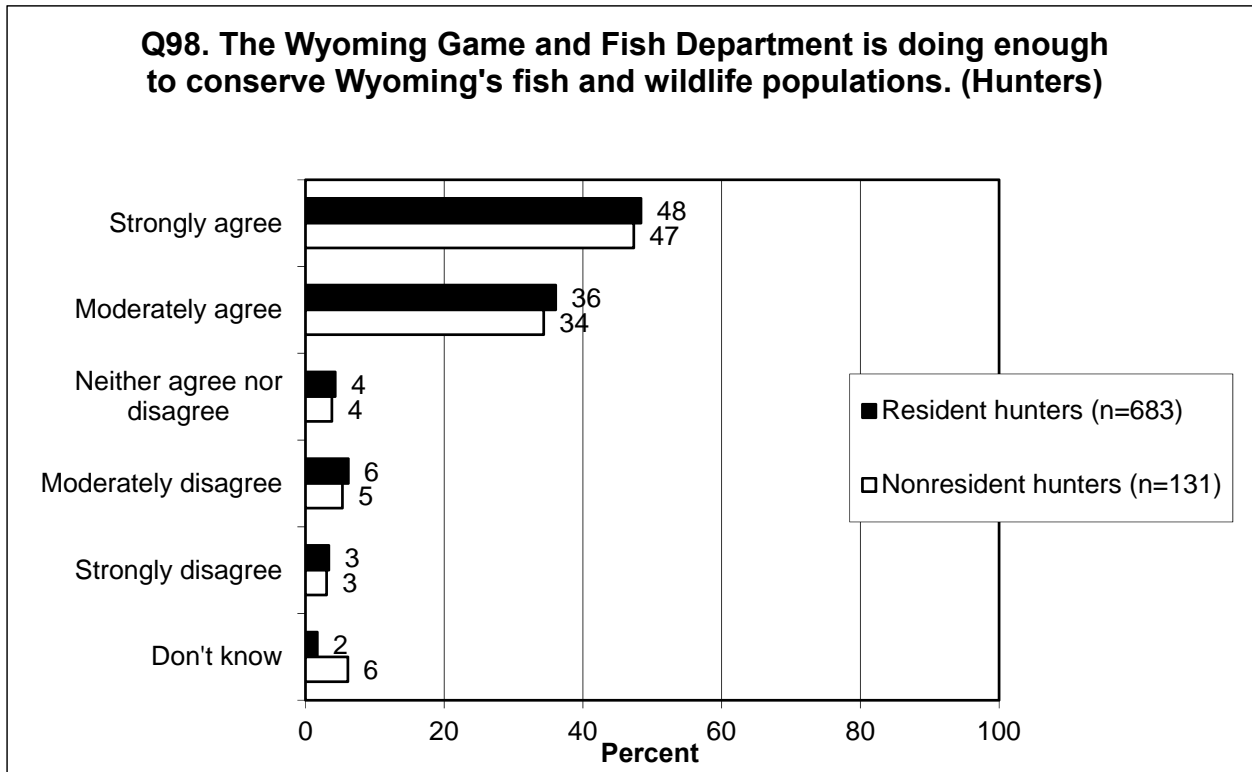


Figure 5.7.15. Opinion Regarding Conserving Fish and Wildlife Populations, Hunters

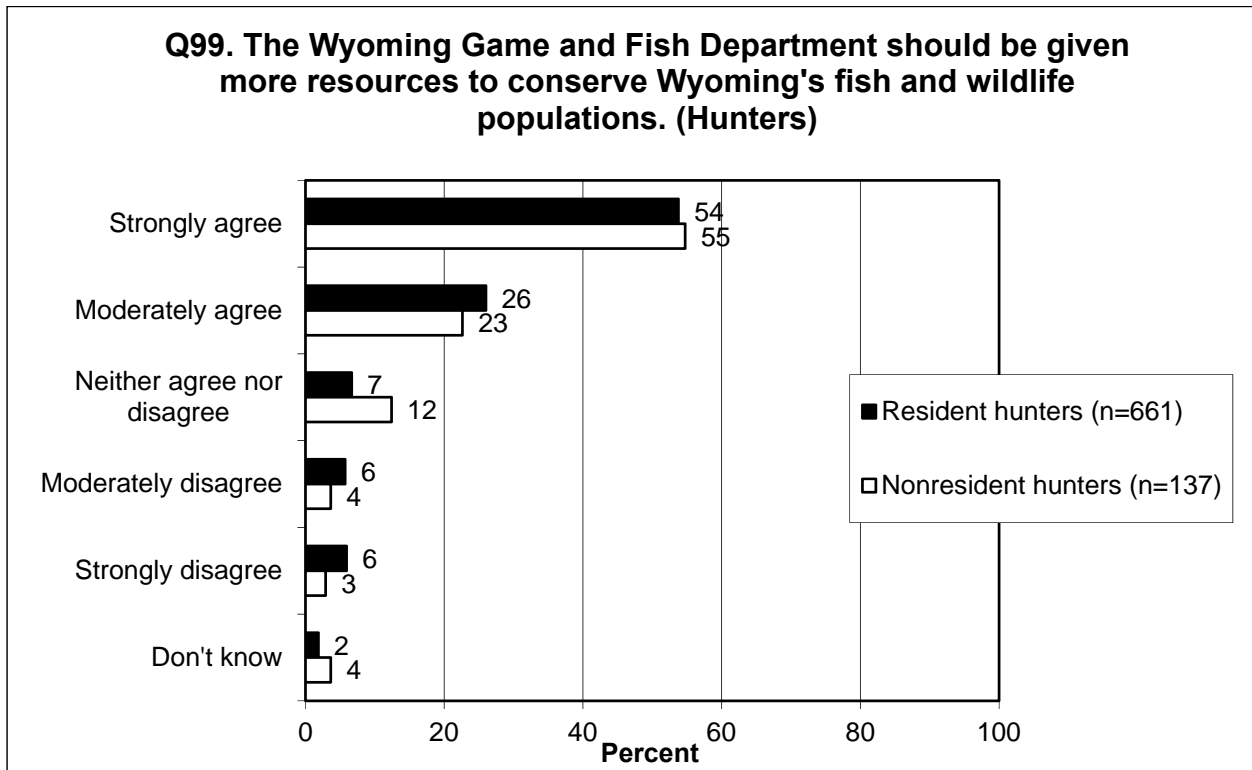


Figure 5.7.16. Opinion Regarding the Game and Fish Department's Being Given More Resources, Hunters

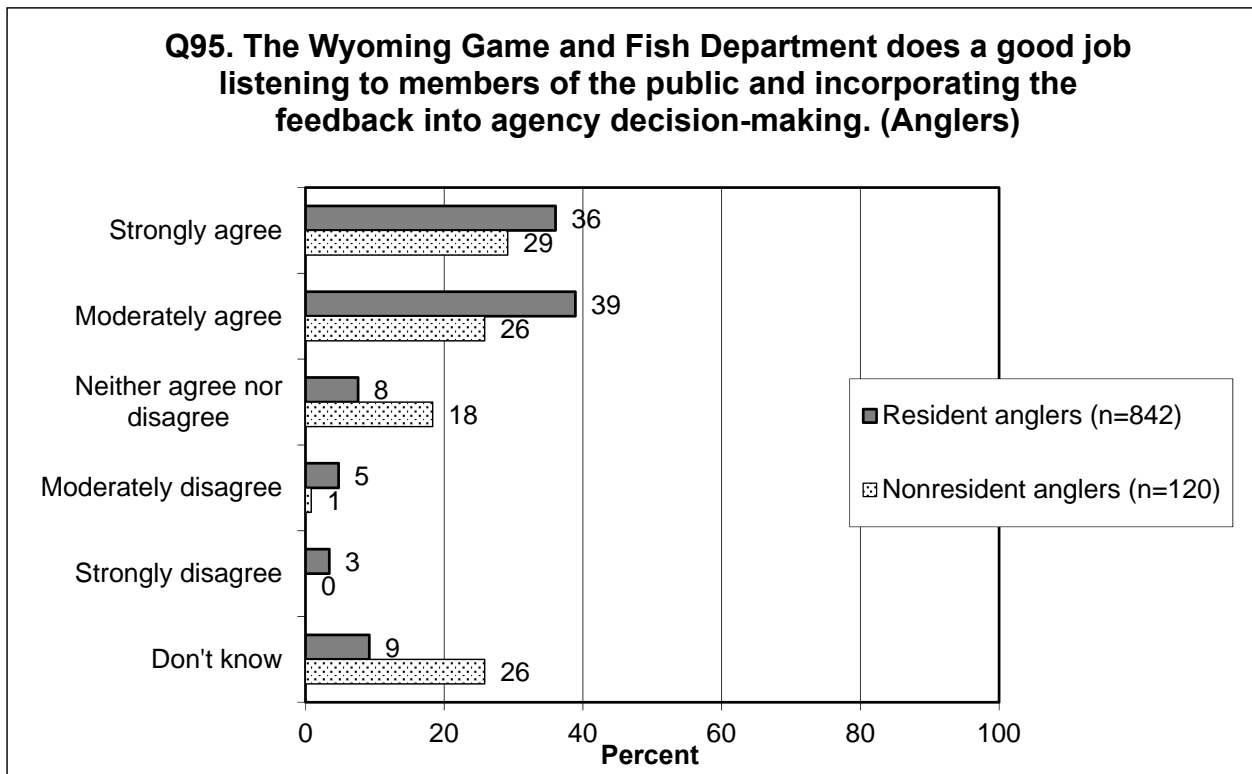


Figure 5.7.17. Opinion Regarding Game and Fish Department's Responsiveness, Anglers

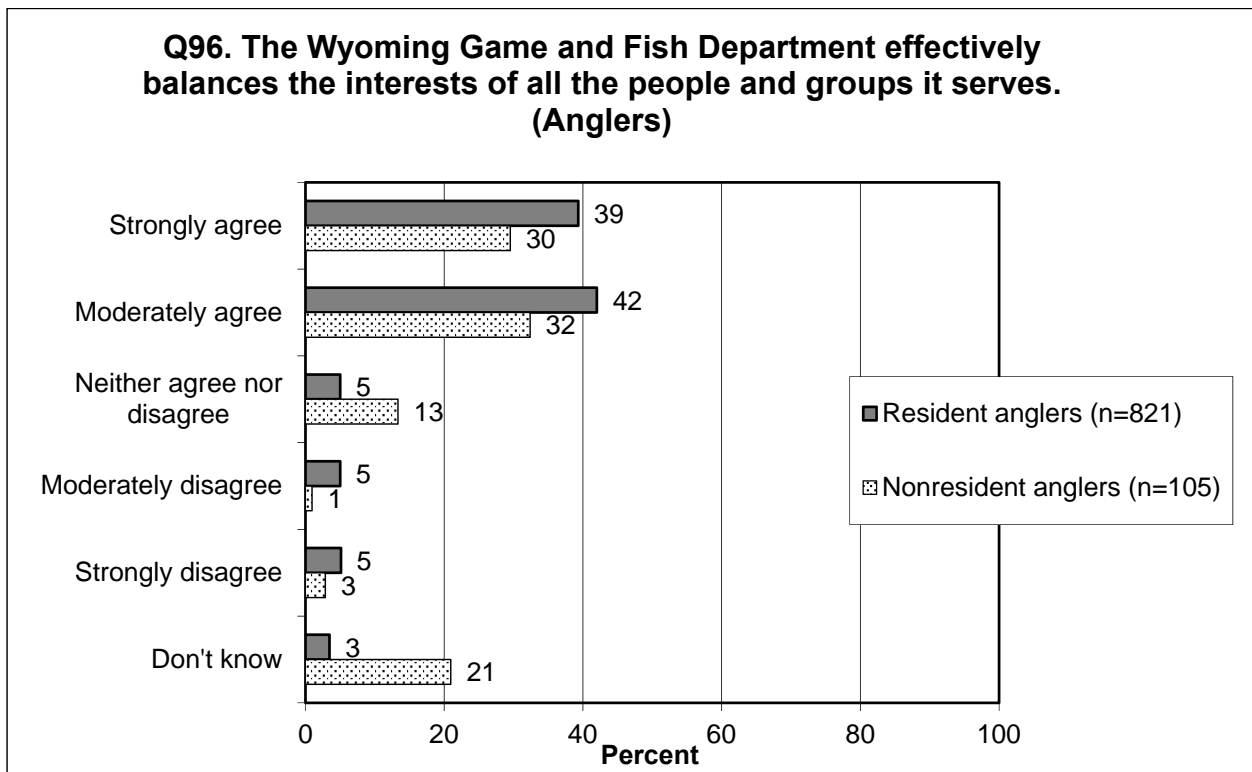


Figure 5.7.18. Opinion Regarding Balancing Interests of Groups Served, Anglers

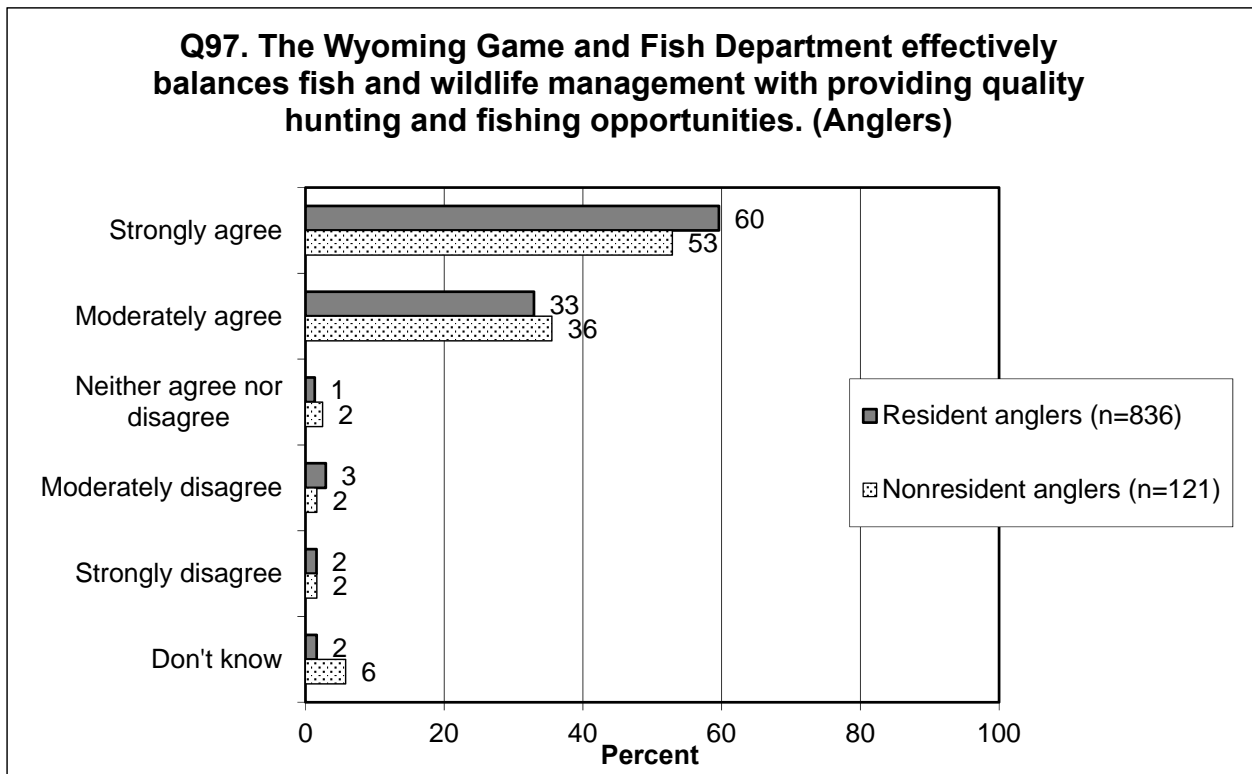


Figure 5.7.19. Opinion Regarding Balancing Interests of Wildlife and Hunting/Fishing, Anglers

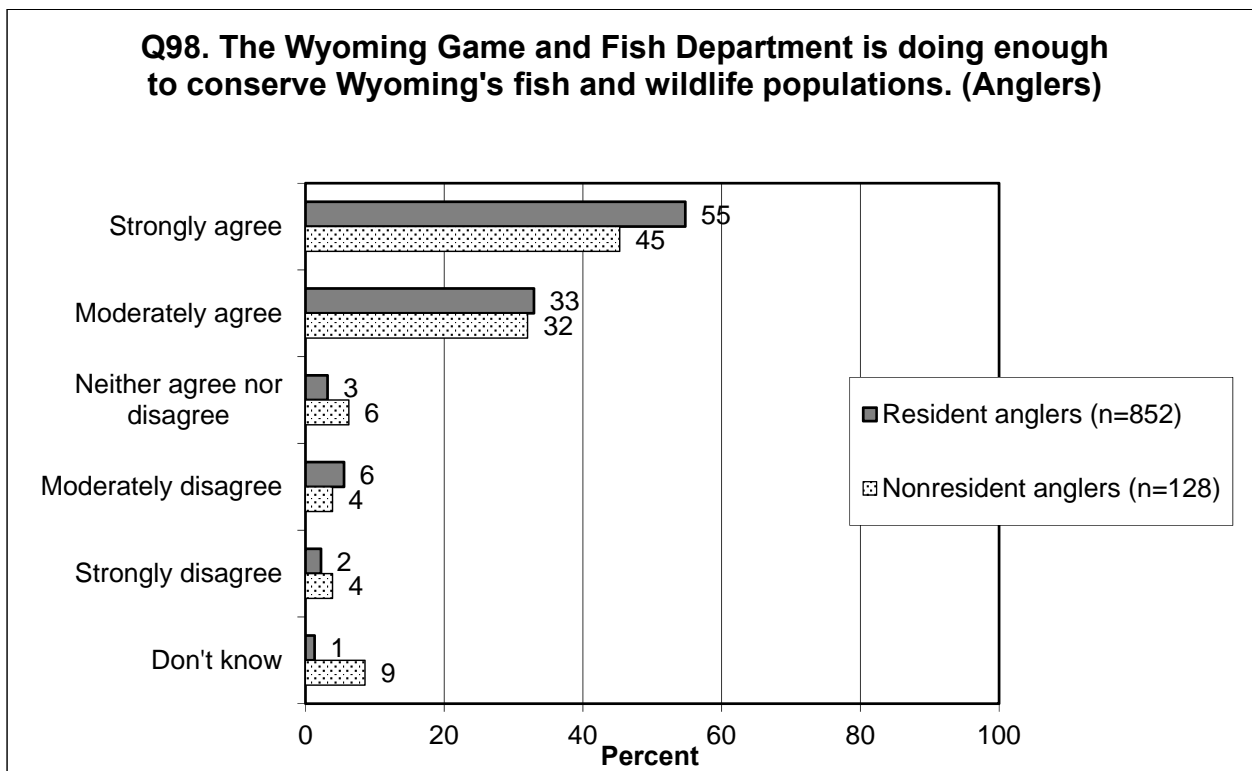


Figure 5.7.20. Opinion Regarding Conserving Fish and Wildlife Populations, Anglers

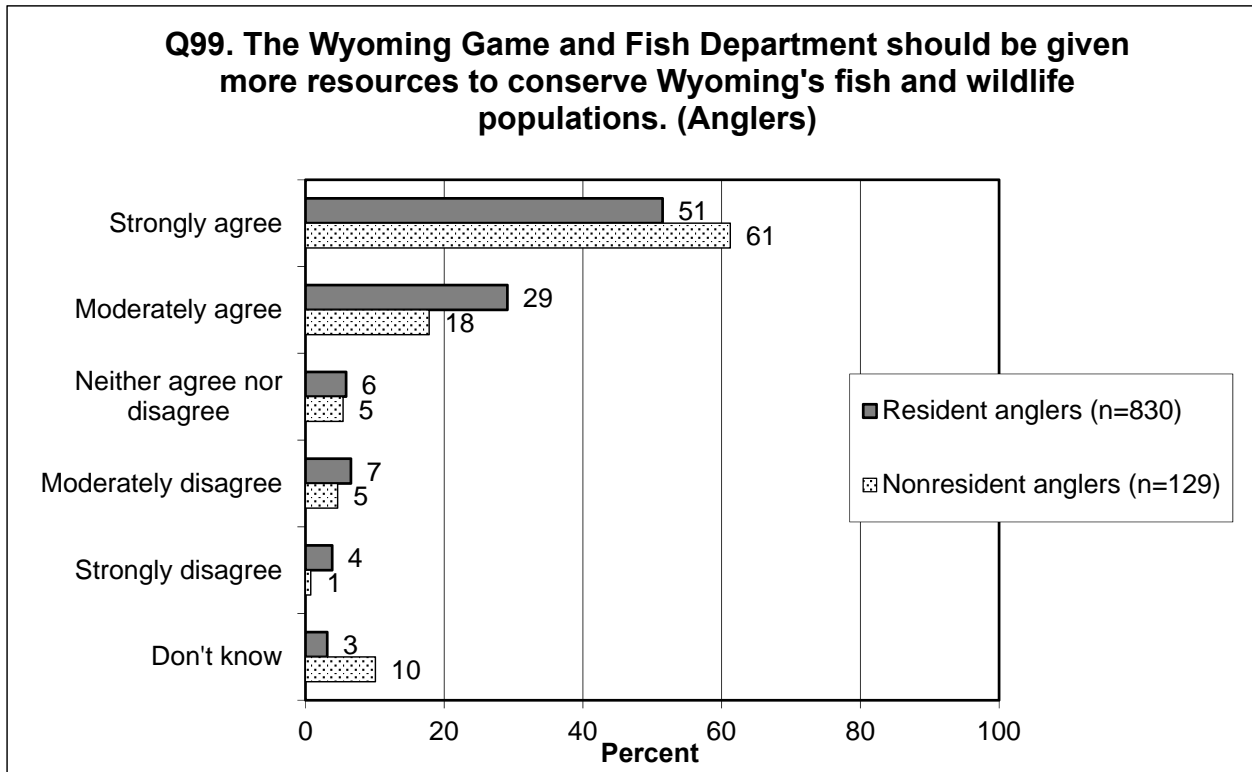


Figure 5.7.21. Opinion Regarding the Game and Fish Department's Being Given More Resources, Anglers

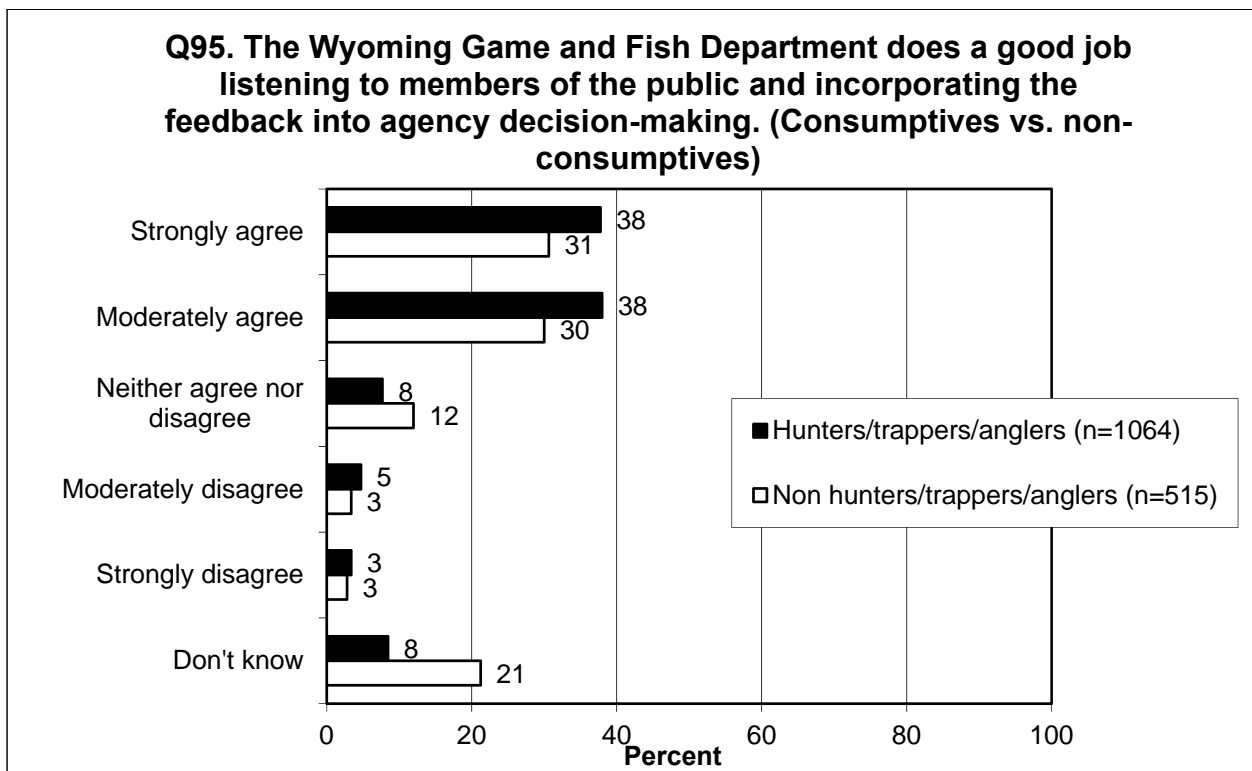


Figure 5.7.22. Opinion Regarding Game and Fish Department's Responsiveness, Consumptives

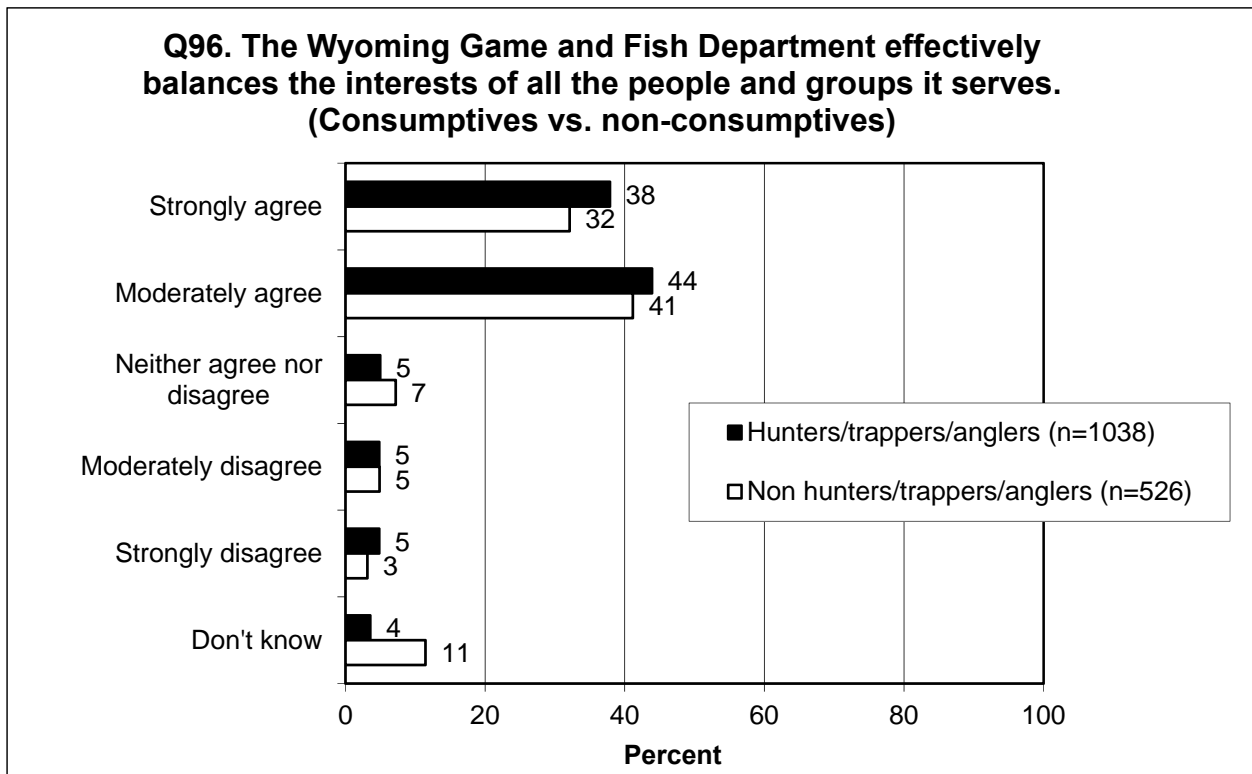


Figure 5.7.23. Opinion Regarding Balancing Interests of Groups Served, Consumptives

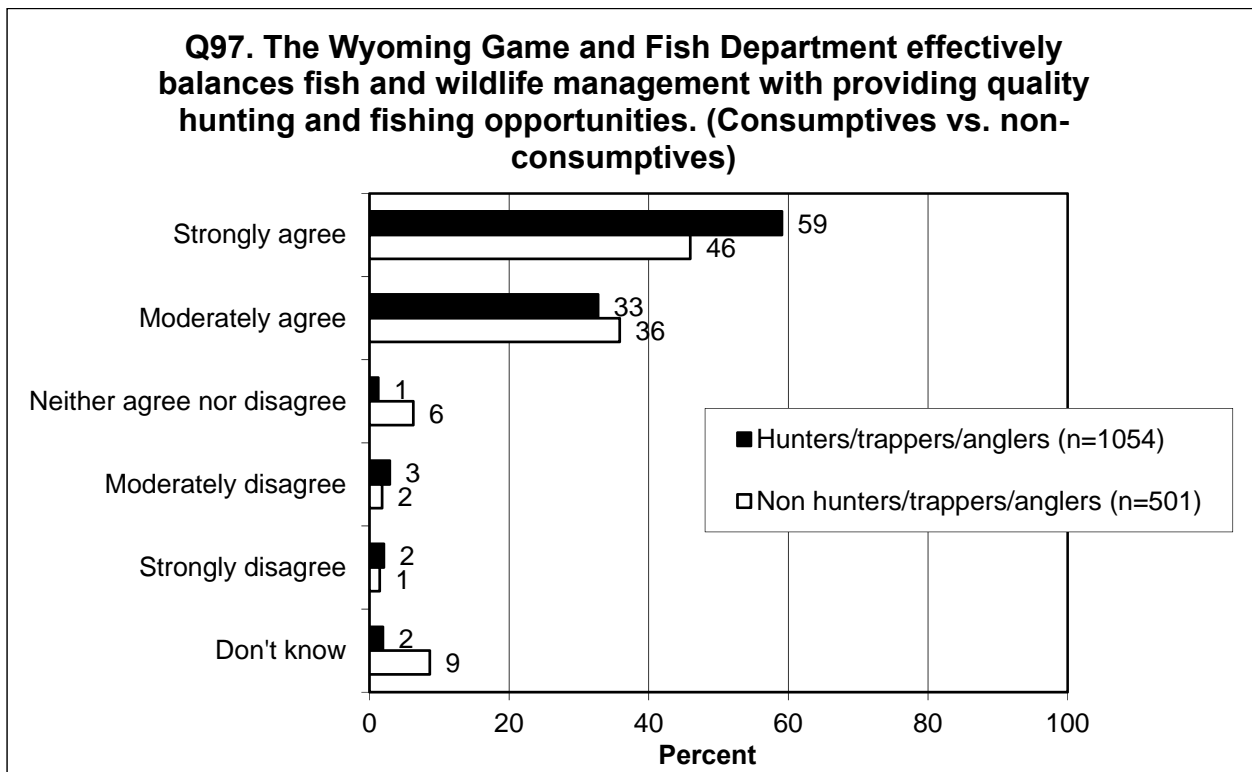


Figure 5.7.24. Opinion Regarding Balancing Interests of Wildlife and Hunting/Fishing, Consumptives

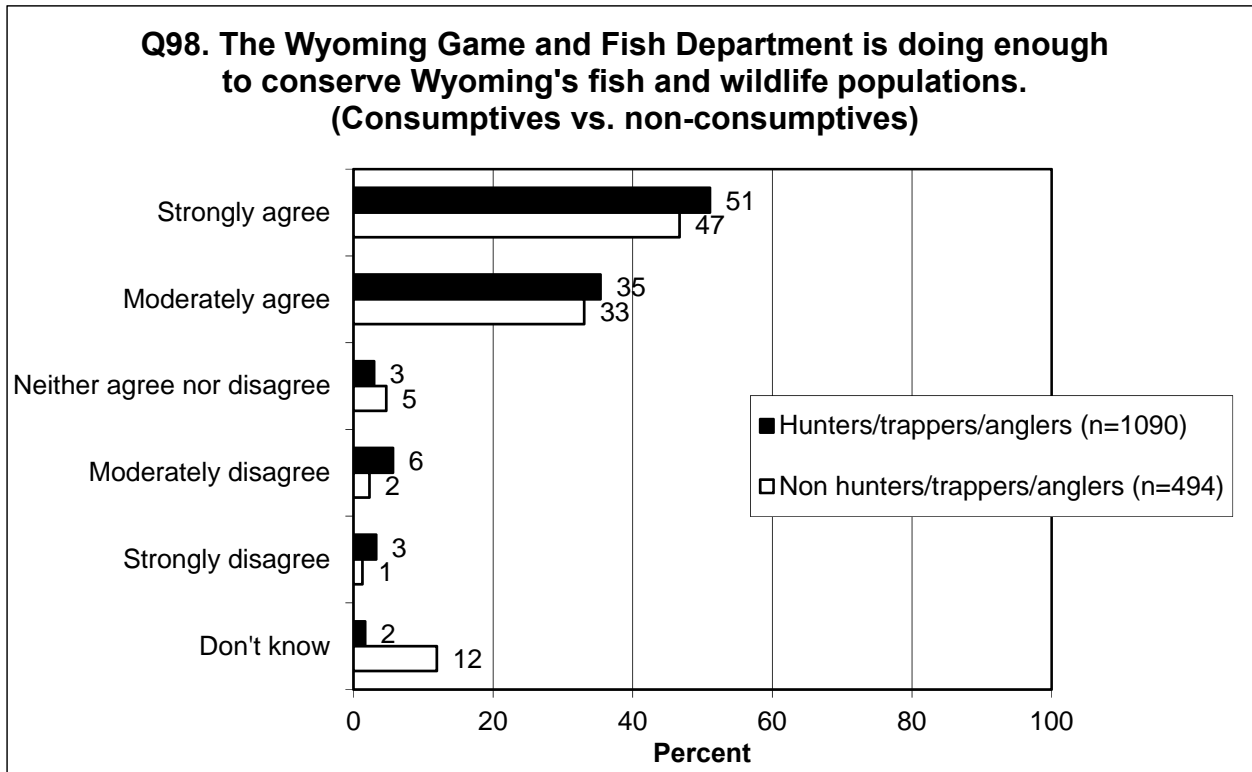


Figure 5.7.25. Opinion Regarding Conserving Fish and Wildlife Populations, Consumptives

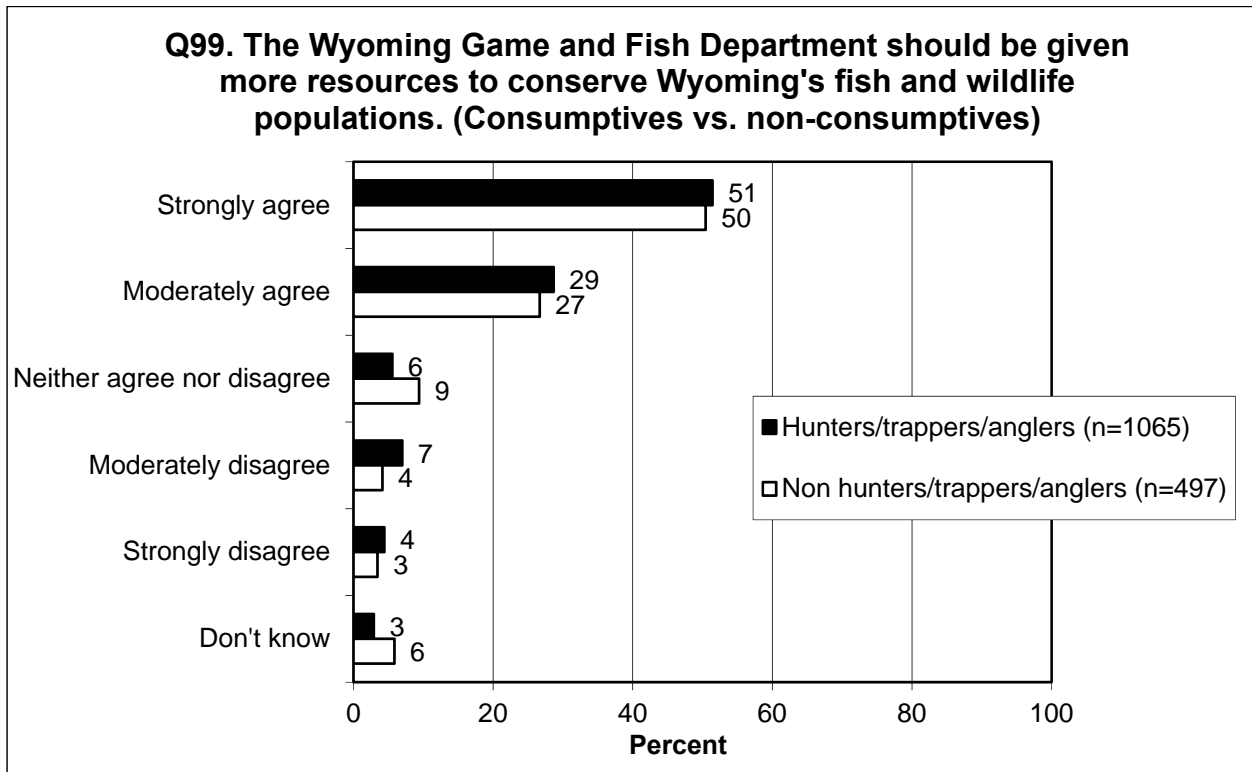


Figure 5.7.26. Opinion Regarding the Game and Fish Department's Being Given More Resources, Consumptives

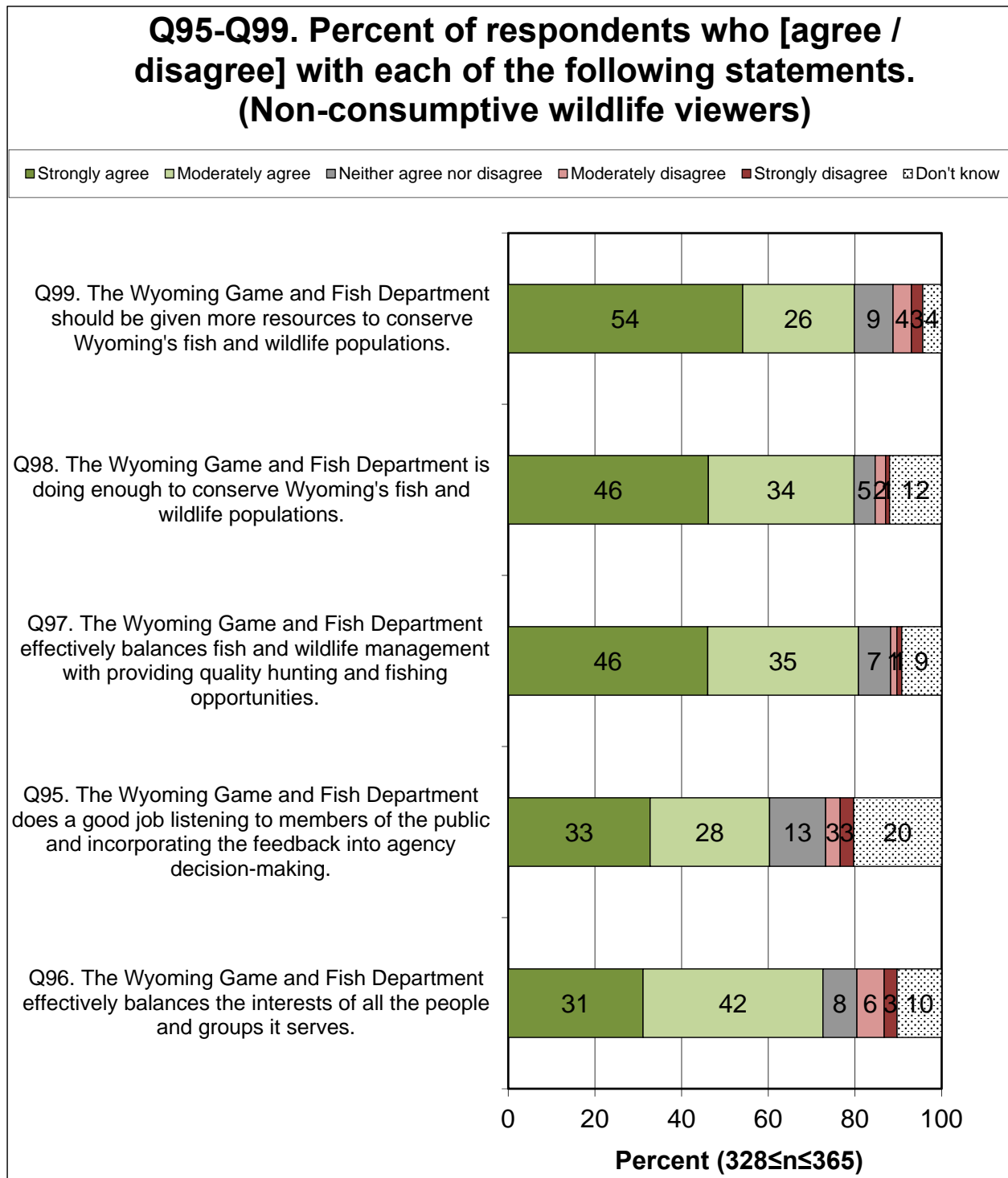


Figure 5.7.27. Residents’ Opinions on Statements About the Game and Fish Department

The last part of this section looks at the series of questions about entities that may influence the work of the Game and Fish Department. As shown in Figure 5.7.28, politics is, unfortunately, perceived to be one of the top influences. Also high on the list are landowners, resident hunters, scientific fish and wildlife methods, and resident anglers. Note that the graph is ranked by the

percentage saying *a great deal*. The ranking would be different if done on a combination of *a great deal* and *a moderate amount*; in that ranking, the top influences are perceived to be resident hunters and landowners. (To help eliminate respondent fatigue, each respondent was asked a randomly chosen six of the eleven questions, which is why the n-value shows a range.)

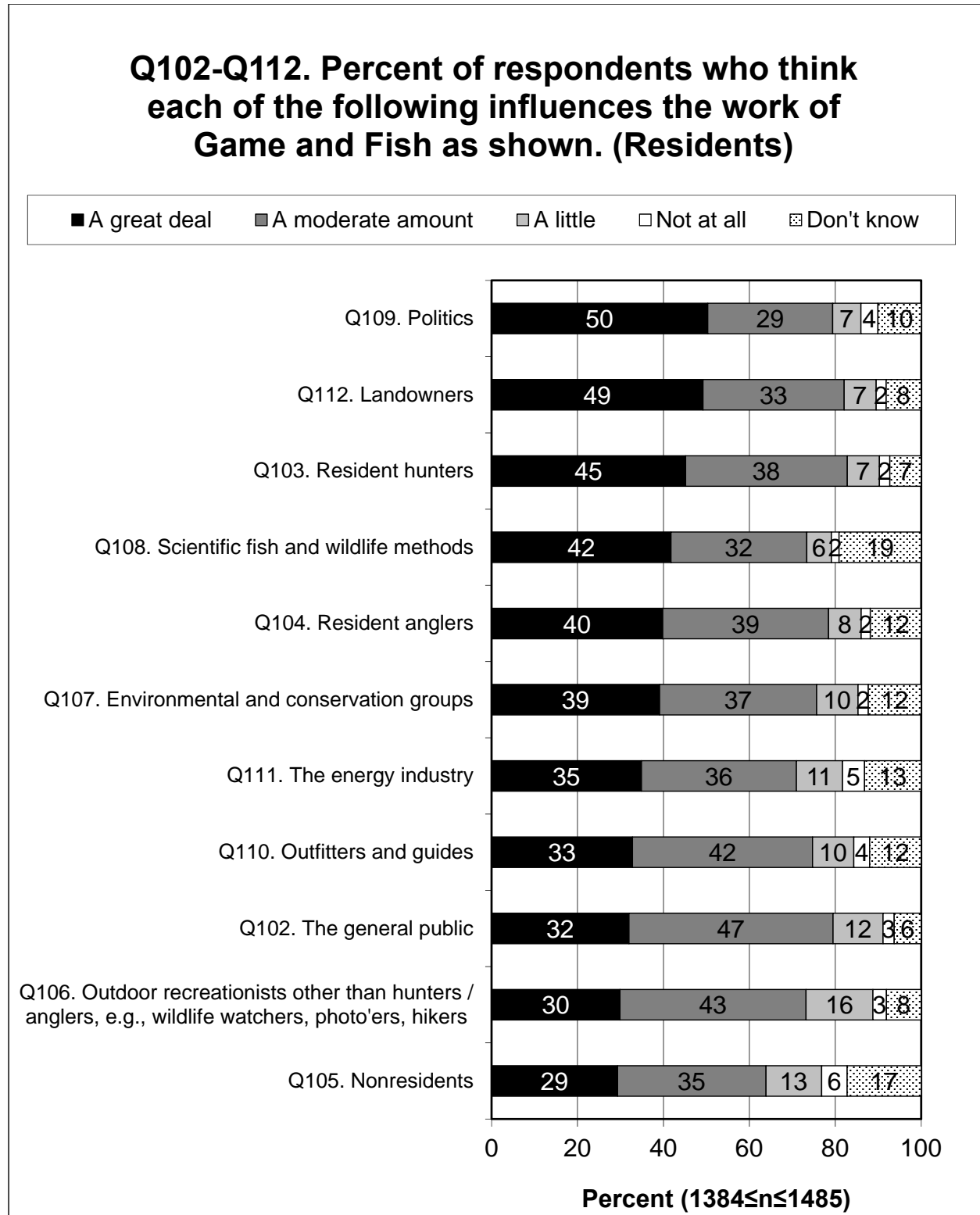


Figure 5.7.28. Residents' Perceptions of Influences on the Game and Fish Department

Results are presented regionally for each of the questions individually in this series (Tables 5.7.8 through 5.7.18). Among the interesting findings, Cody Region residents have the highest percentage saying that nonresidents influence Game and Fish *a great deal*, and they also have the highest percentage saying that politics have *a great deal* of influence. Jackson Region residents have the highest percentage who say that scientific fish and wildlife methods influence Game and Fish *a great deal*.

Table 5.7.8. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of the General Public

Q102. The general public. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	28%	29%	38%	28%	33%	27%	33%	33%
A moderate amount	54%	48%	42%	51%	43%	57%	47%	46%
A little	10%	17%	13%	11%	15%	8%	10%	11%
Not at all	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%
Don't know	6%	3%	5%	6%	7%	7%	6%	7%

Table 5.7.9. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Resident Hunters

Q103. Resident hunters. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	49%	46%	50%	40%	45%	44%	48%	42%
A moderate amount	34%	39%	37%	42%	37%	42%	34%	37%
A little	5%	8%	8%	6%	6%	8%	9%	7%
Not at all	0%	3%	2%	4%	5%	2%	3%	2%
Don't know	12%	4%	3%	8%	7%	3%	6%	12%

Table 5.7.10. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Resident Anglers

Q104. Resident anglers. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	45%	31%	47%	32%	35%	38%	46%	40%
A moderate amount	35%	43%	33%	47%	40%	40%	35%	39%
A little	7%	8%	10%	10%	10%	9%	6%	6%
Not at all	1%	3%	2%	1%	4%	1%	2%	2%
Don't know	13%	15%	7%	9%	11%	11%	11%	14%

Table 5.7.11. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Nonresidents

Q105. Nonresidents. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	18%	39%	29%	20%	31%	27%	29%	30%
A moderate amount	35%	29%	33%	29%	35%	40%	40%	30%
A little	23%	13%	14%	26%	12%	9%	11%	15%
Not at all	6%	3%	9%	7%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Don't know	17%	16%	15%	18%	16%	17%	15%	20%

Table 5.7.12. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Other Outdoor Recreationists

Q106. Outdoor recreationists other than hunters / anglers, e.g., wildlife watchers, photographers, hikers. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	32%	29%	32%	26%	25%	26%	31%	33%
A moderate amount	35%	41%	35%	51%	46%	43%	50%	42%
A little	19%	20%	21%	14%	17%	18%	7%	16%
Not at all	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%	2%	1%	3%
Don't know	11%	5%	8%	6%	6%	11%	11%	7%

Table 5.7.13. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Environmental and Conservation Groups

Q107. Environmental and conservation groups. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	40%	44%	45%	36%	42%	39%	43%	33%
A moderate amount	33%	38%	31%	43%	31%	37%	38%	38%
A little	13%	4%	12%	6%	11%	15%	6%	9%
Not at all	3%	3%	2%	4%	6%	1%	2%	2%
Don't know	11%	11%	10%	11%	10%	8%	10%	18%

Table 5.7.14. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Scientific Fish and Wildlife Methods

Q108. Scientific fish and wildlife methods. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	51%	45%	41%	39%	42%	45%	38%	40%
A moderate amount	30%	26%	31%	32%	33%	31%	36%	30%
A little	7%	8%	6%	4%	7%	7%	2%	7%
Not at all	1%	2%	3%	4%	3%	0%	3%	1%
Don't know	11%	19%	18%	21%	15%	17%	21%	22%

Table 5.7.15. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Politics

Q109. Politics. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	47%	58%	47%	48%	51%	50%	51%	48%
A moderate amount	37%	23%	28%	26%	31%	27%	31%	29%
A little	6%	10%	9%	7%	8%	10%	4%	5%
Not at all	3%	1%	2%	4%	4%	3%	5%	5%
Don't know	6%	8%	14%	14%	6%	10%	9%	13%

Table 5.7.16. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Outfitters and Guides

Q110. Outfitters and guides. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	40%	39%	27%	32%	35%	31%	32%	31%
A moderate amount	45%	39%	44%	36%	42%	42%	42%	43%
A little	6%	7%	9%	13%	9%	11%	13%	8%
Not at all	4%	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%	3%	4%
Don't know	6%	11%	15%	16%	11%	11%	11%	14%

Table 5.7.17. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of the Energy Industry

Q111. The energy industry. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	32%	37%	25%	35%	38%	33%	36%	35%
A moderate amount	33%	38%	35%	33%	30%	30%	41%	39%
A little	14%	10%	15%	12%	14%	17%	11%	5%
Not at all	3%	4%	9%	9%	5%	7%	4%	5%
Don't know	18%	10%	15%	11%	13%	13%	9%	16%

Table 5.7.18. Regional Perceptions Among Residents Regarding the Influence of Landowners

Q112. Landowners. (How much of an influence does this have on the work of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
A great deal	35%	55%	42%	44%	50%	43%	53%	51%
A moderate amount	45%	27%	44%	34%	27%	44%	32%	30%
A little	8%	10%	6%	8%	11%	10%	6%	5%
Not at all	2%	4%	1%	7%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Don't know	11%	4%	7%	7%	10%	2%	7%	12%

The results are also shown among resident and nonresident hunters (Figures 5.7.29 through 5.7.39) and resident and nonresident anglers (Figures 5.7.40 through 5.7.50), among consumptives and non-consumptives (Figures 5.7.51 through 5.7.61), and among non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.7.62).

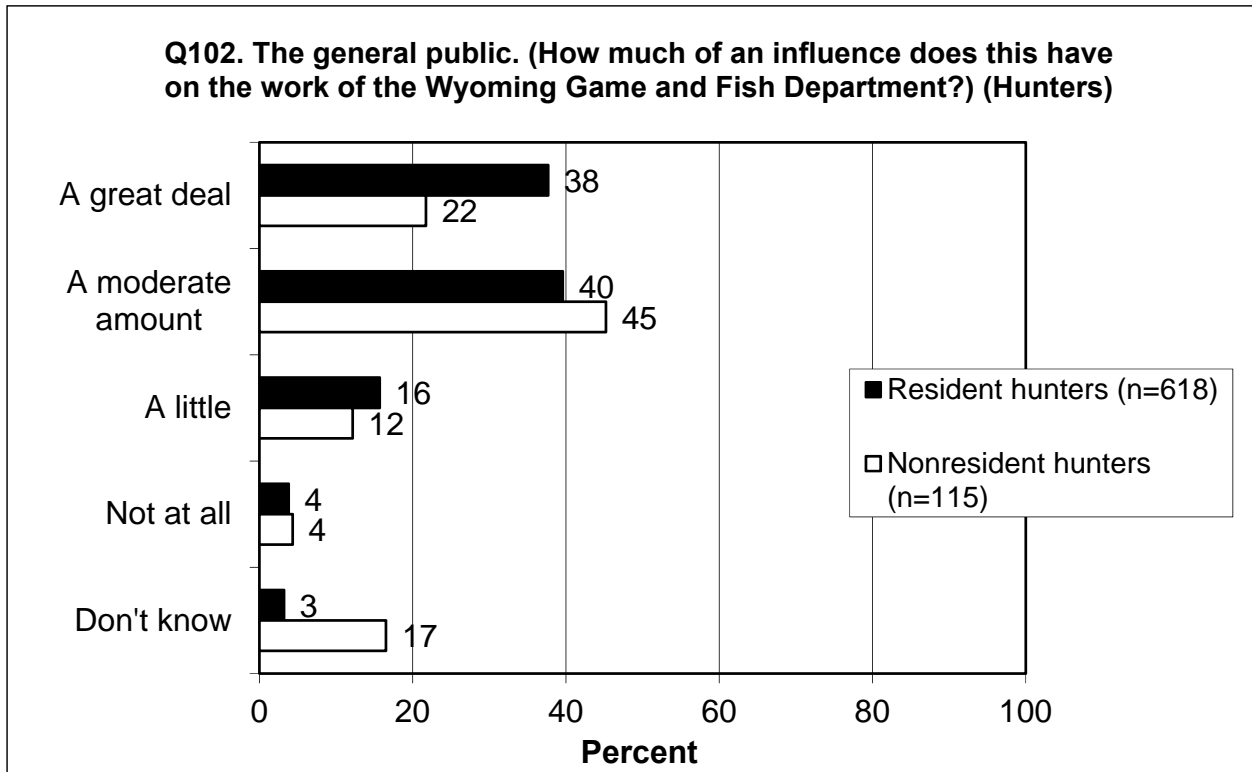


Figure 5.7.29. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of the General Public

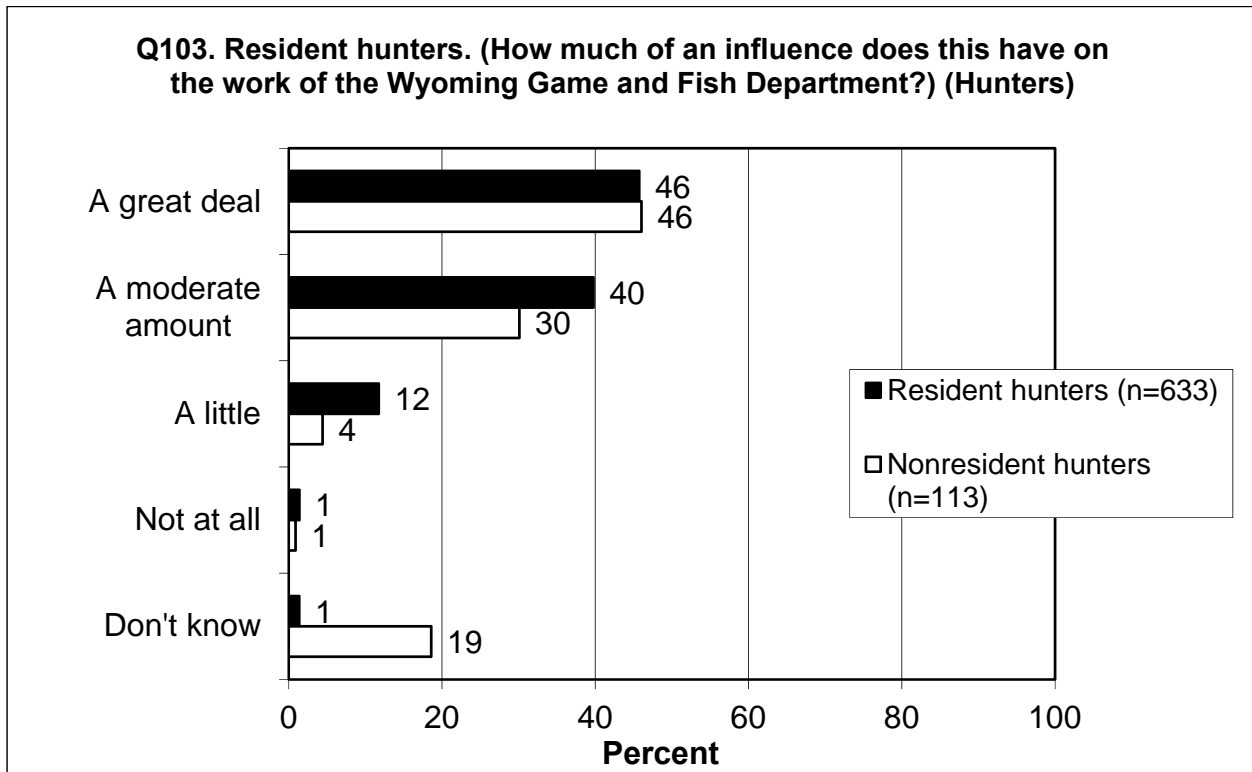


Figure 5.7.30. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Resident Hunters

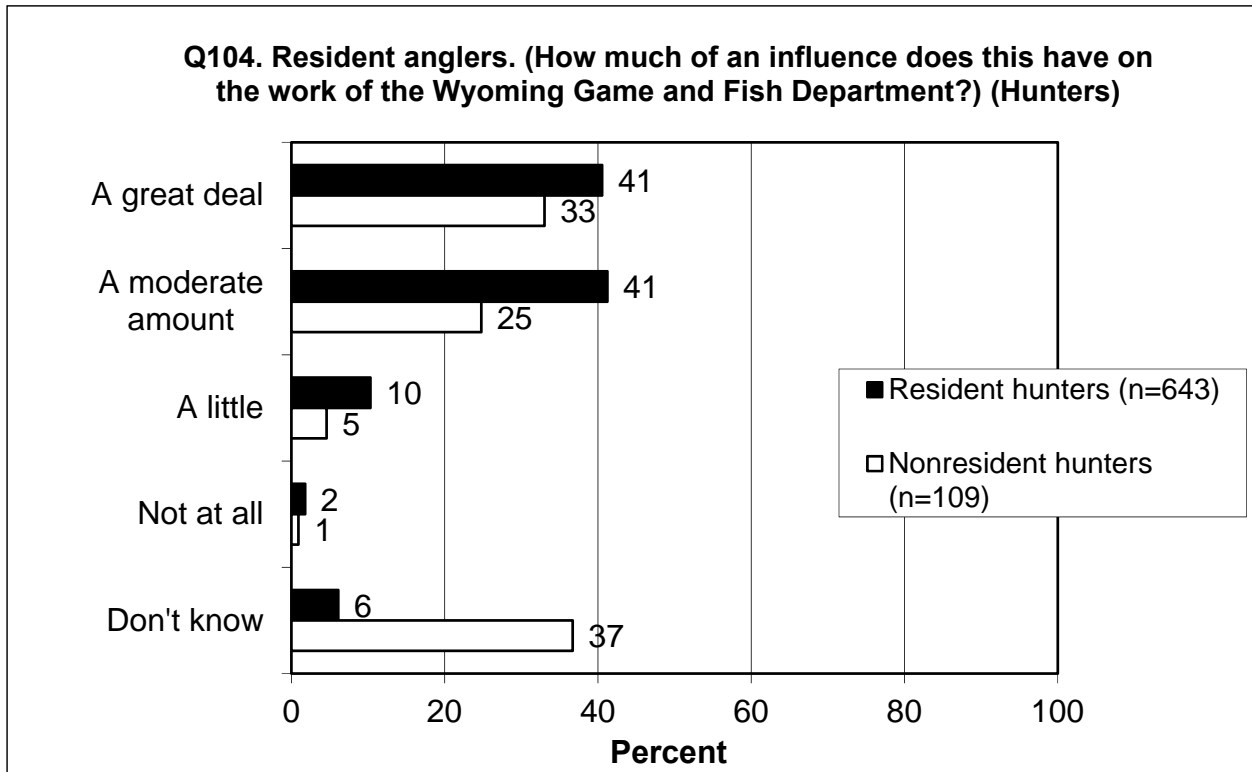


Figure 5.7.31. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Resident Anglers

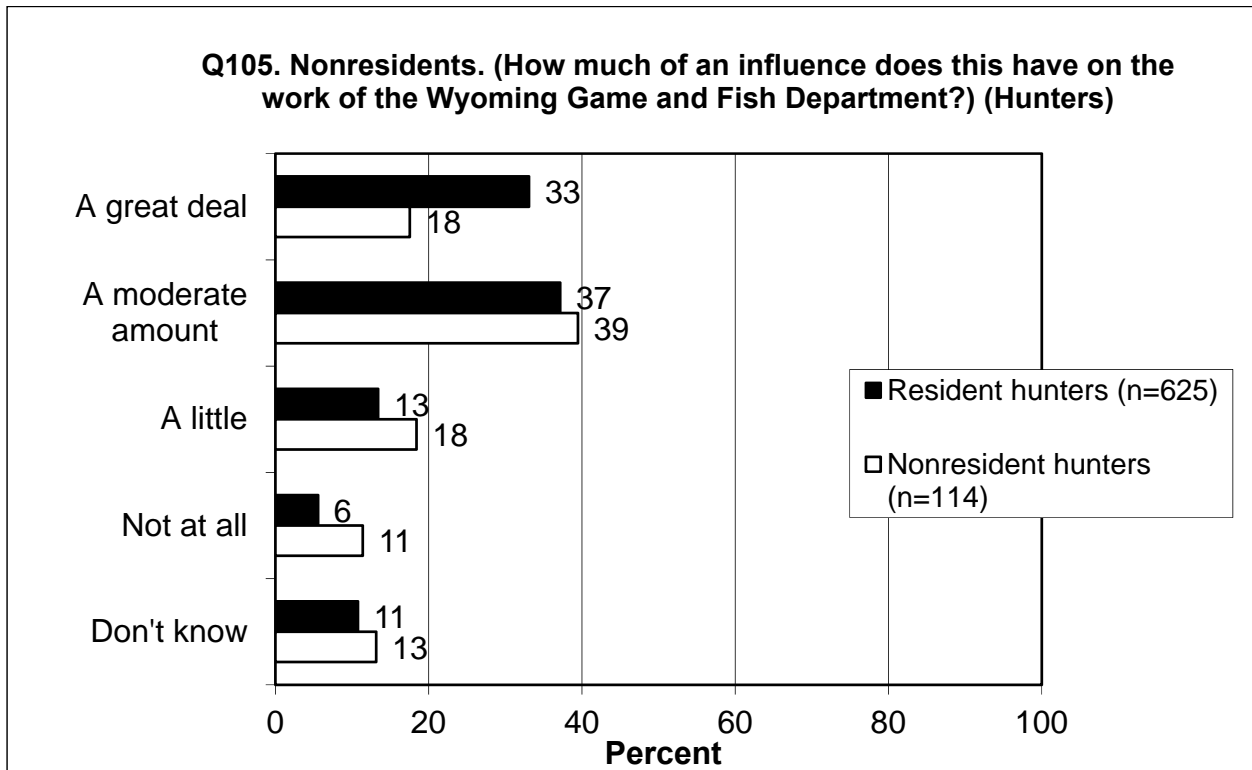


Figure 5.7.32. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Nonresidents

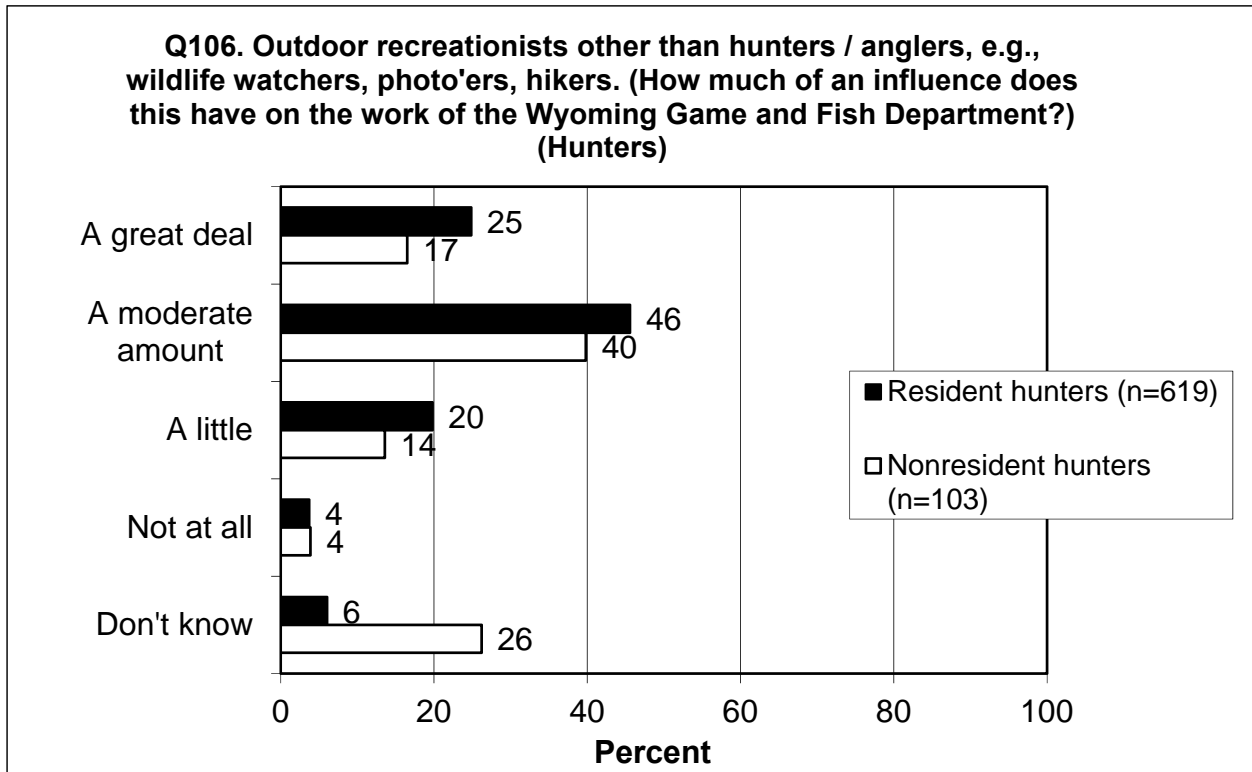


Figure 5.7.33. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Other Outdoor Recreationists

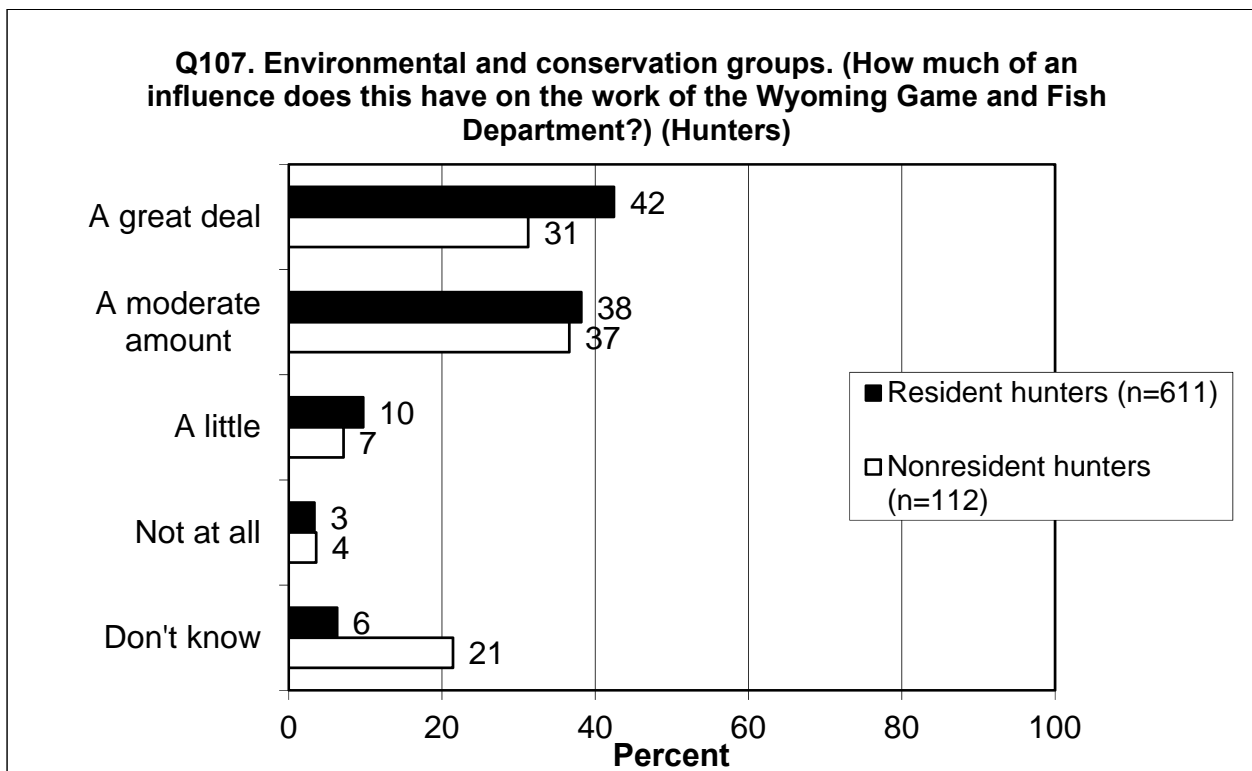


Figure 5.7.34. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Environmental and Conservation Groups

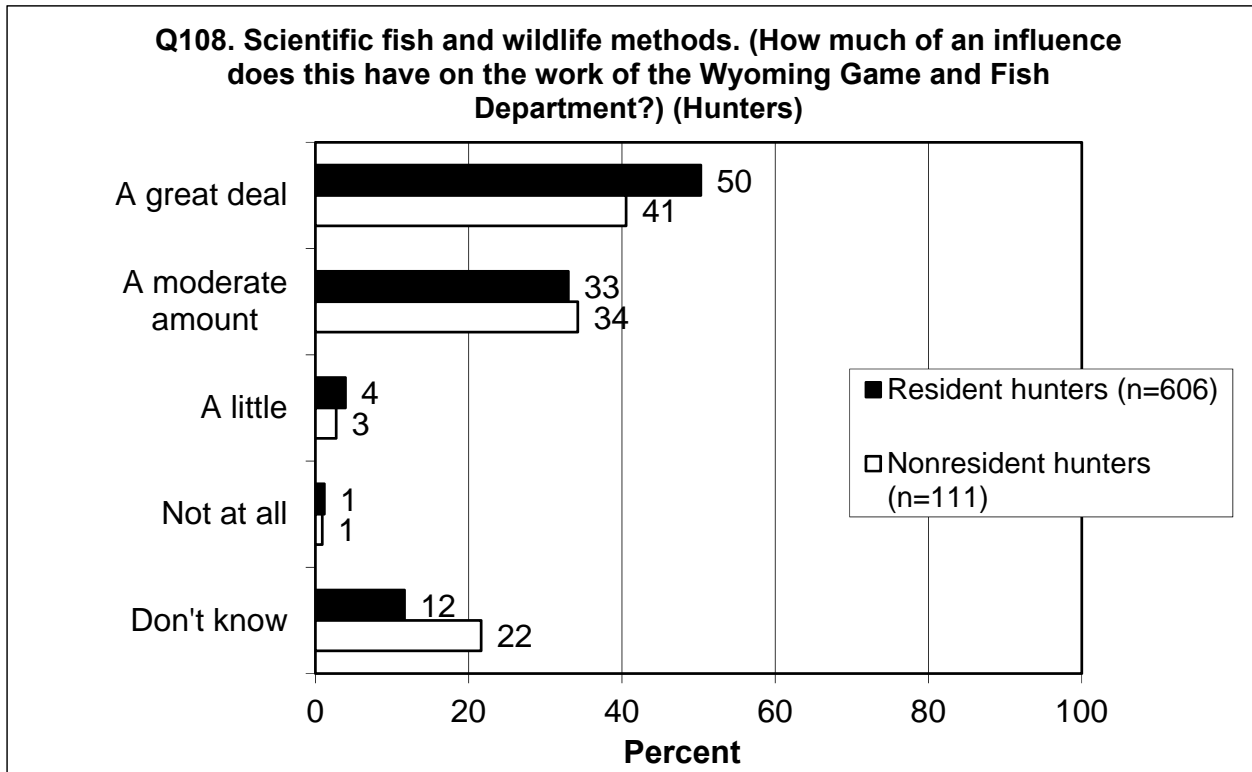


Figure 5.7.35. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Scientific Fish and Wildlife Methods

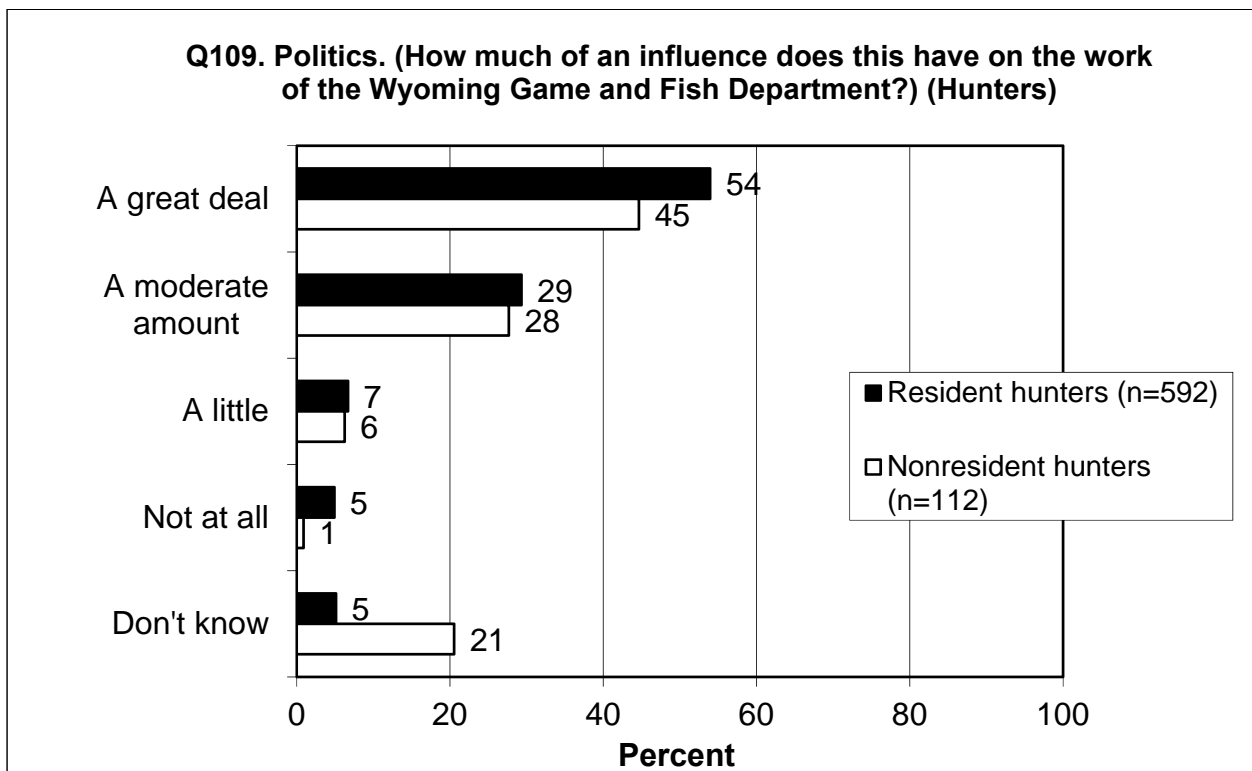


Figure 5.7.36. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Politics

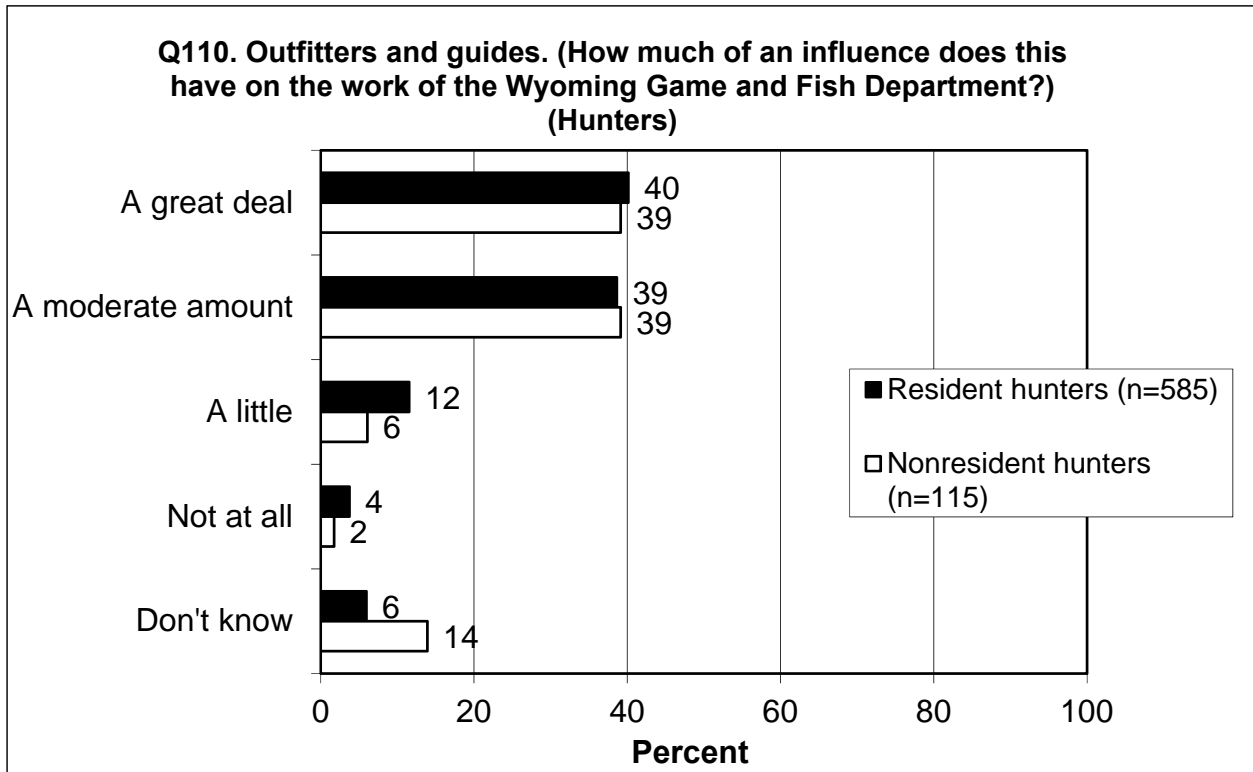


Figure 5.7.37. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Outfitters and Guides

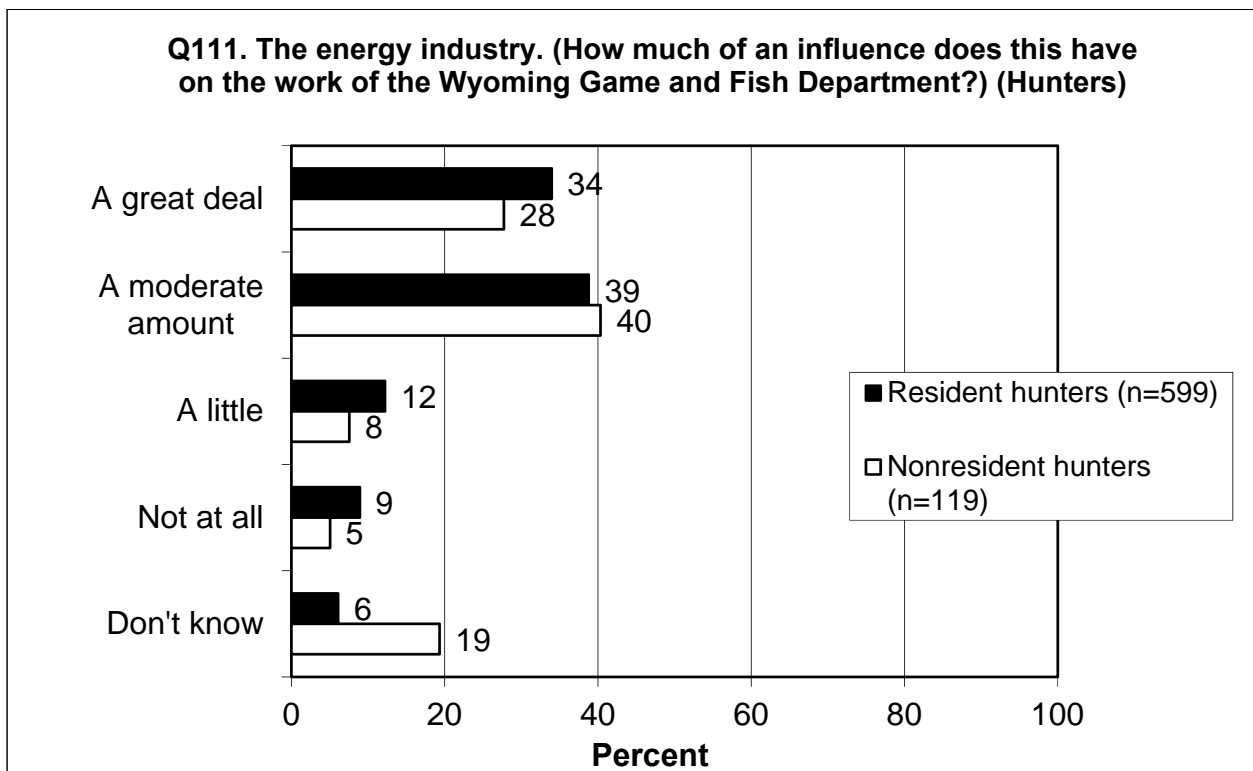


Figure 5.7.38. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of the Energy Industry

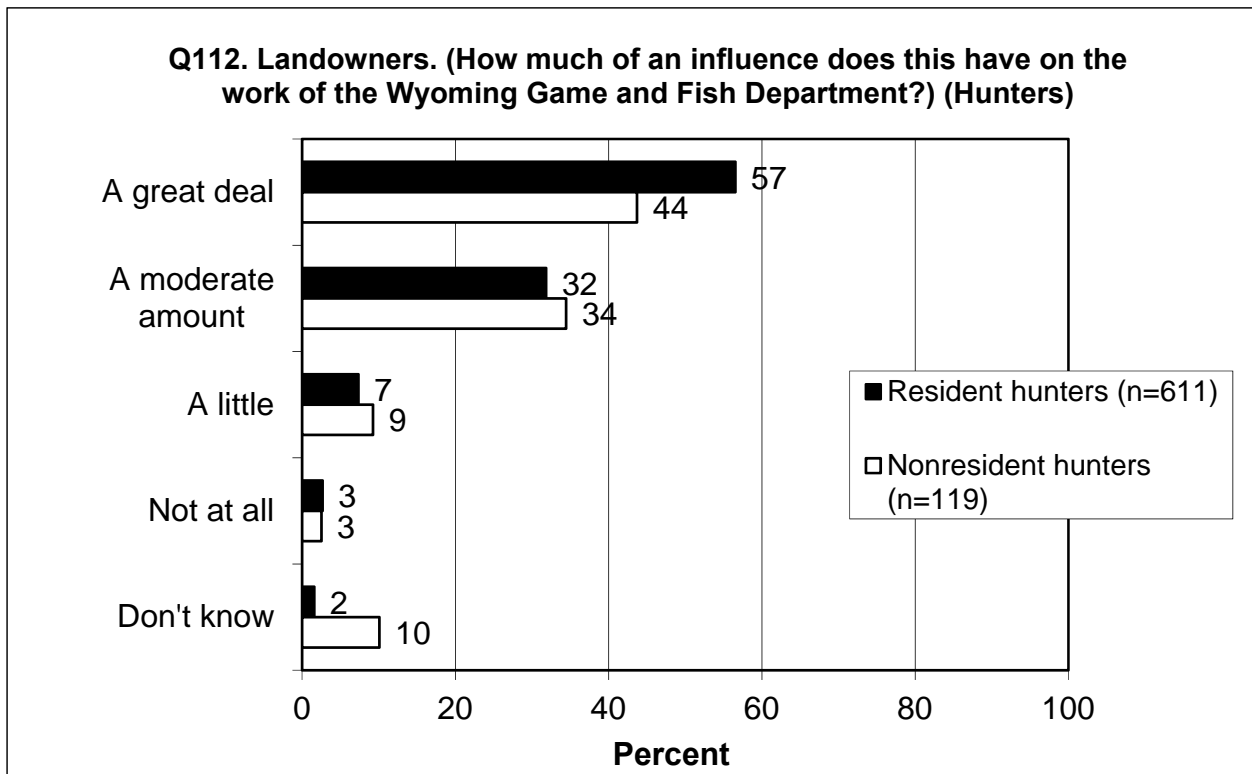


Figure 5.7.39. Perceptions Among Hunters Regarding the Influence of Landowners

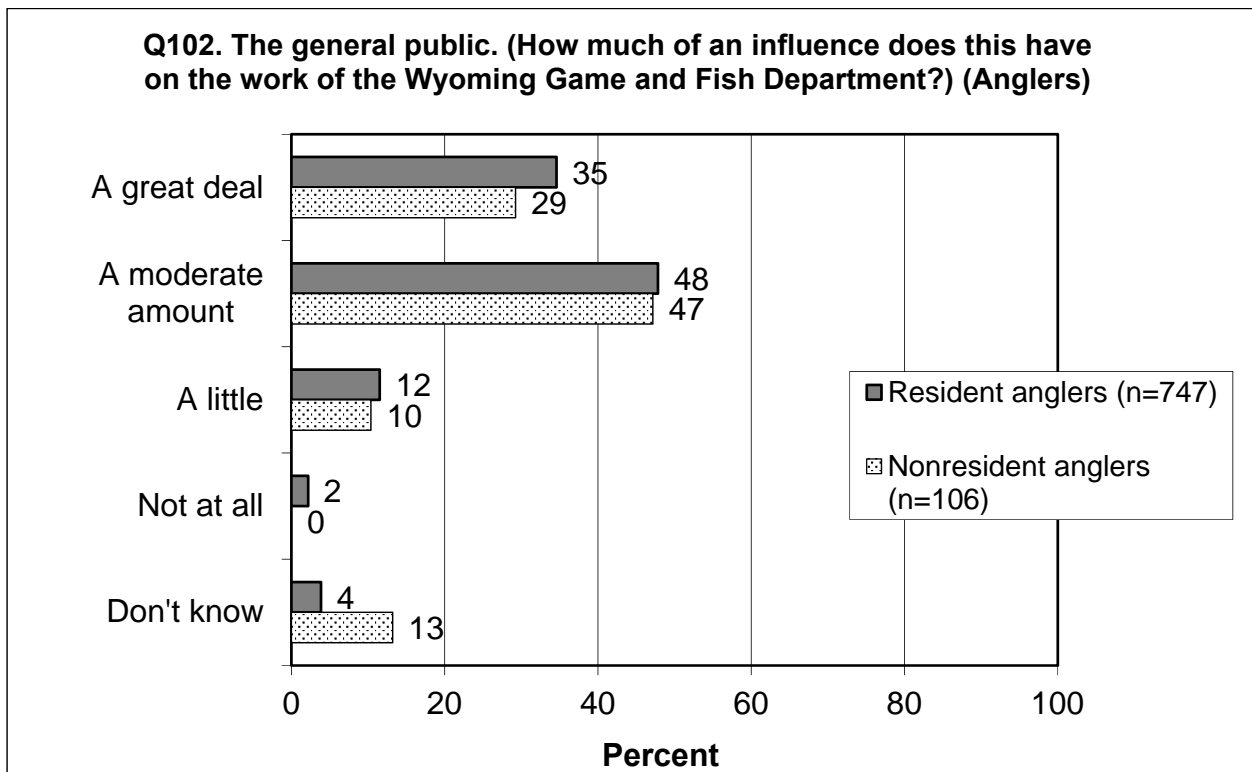


Figure 5.7.40. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of the General Public

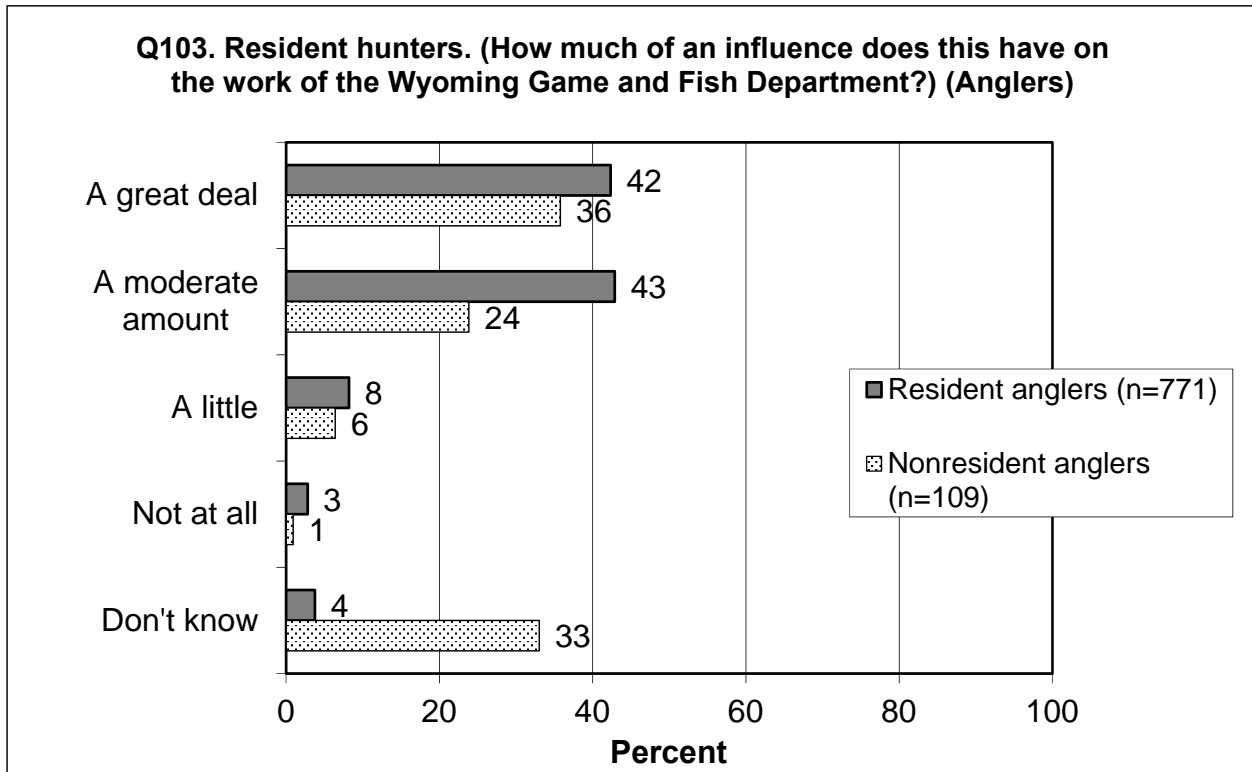


Figure 5.7.41. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Resident Hunters

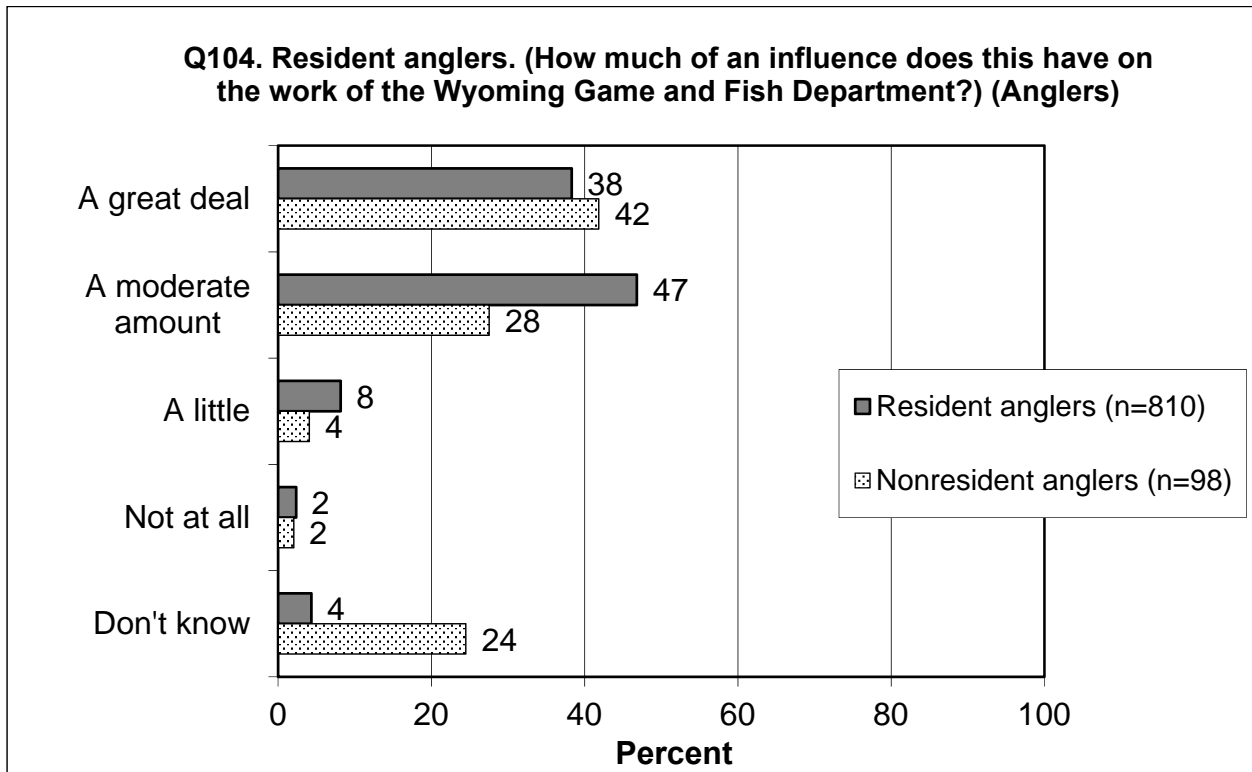


Figure 5.7.42. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Resident Anglers

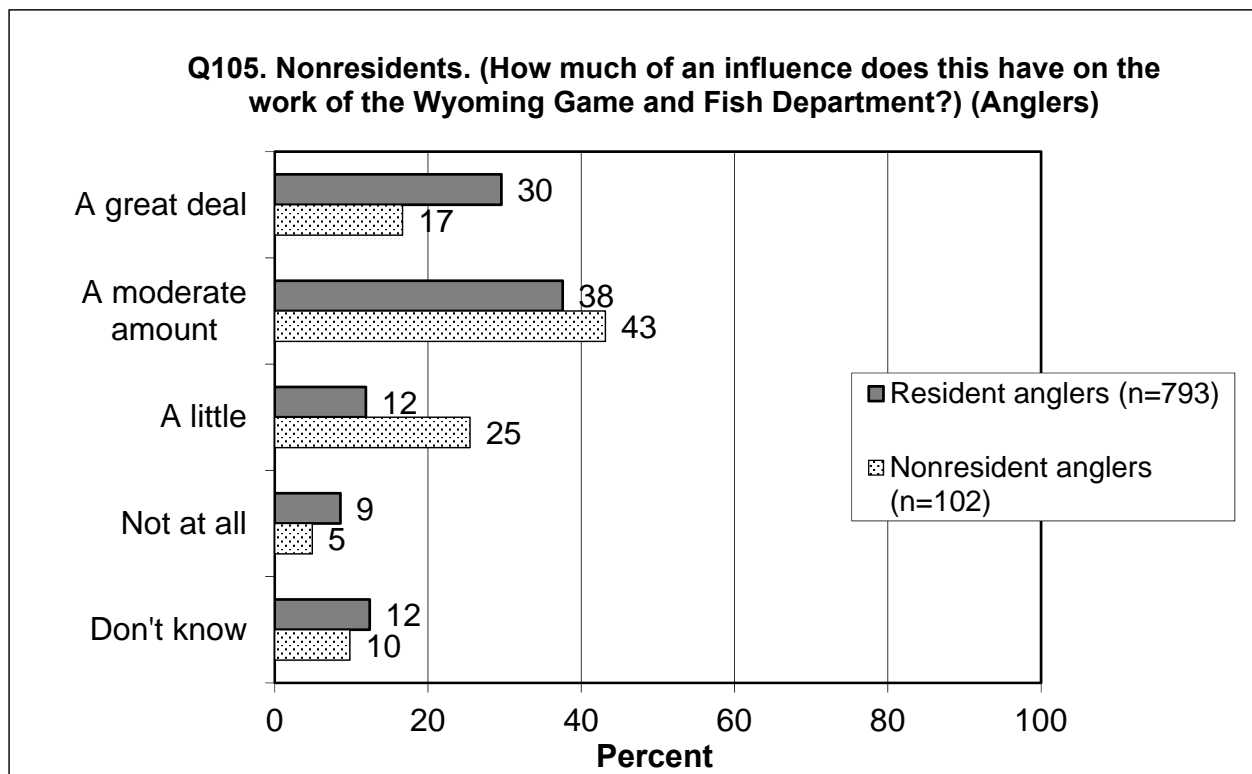


Figure 5.7.43. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Nonresidents

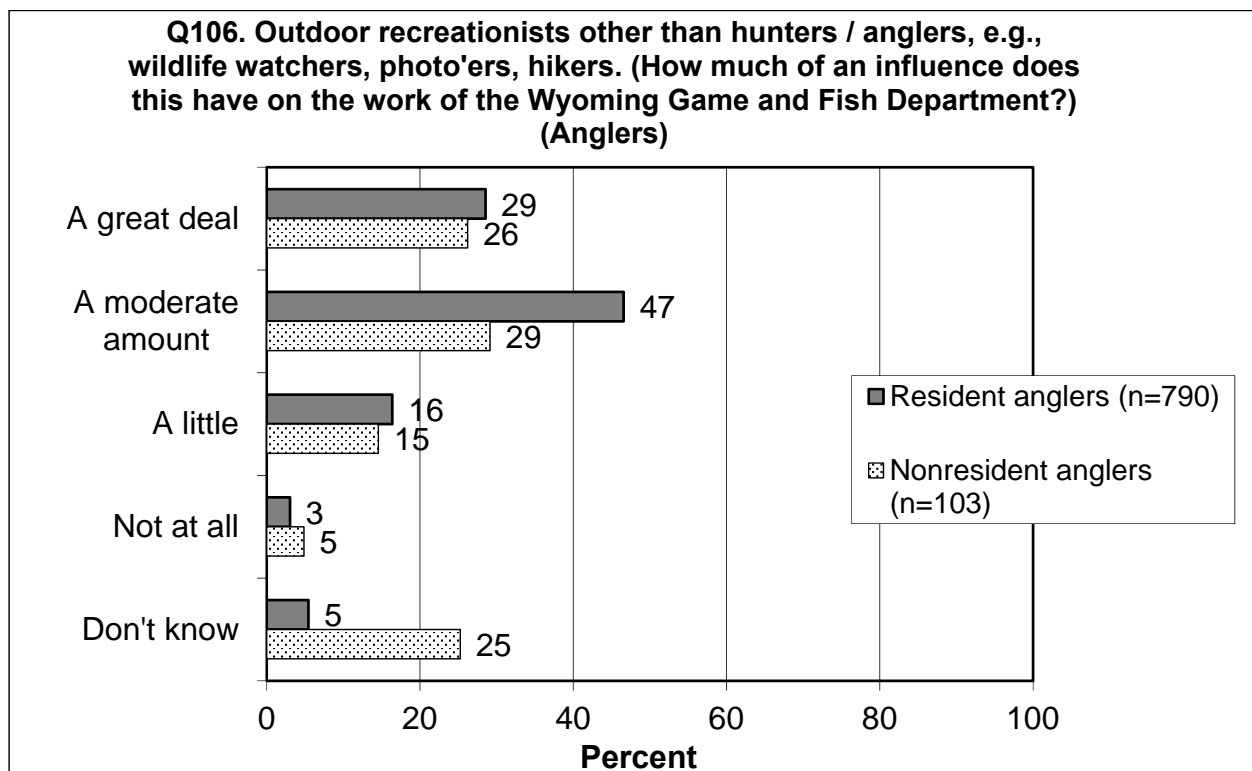


Figure 5.7.44. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Other Outdoor Recreationists

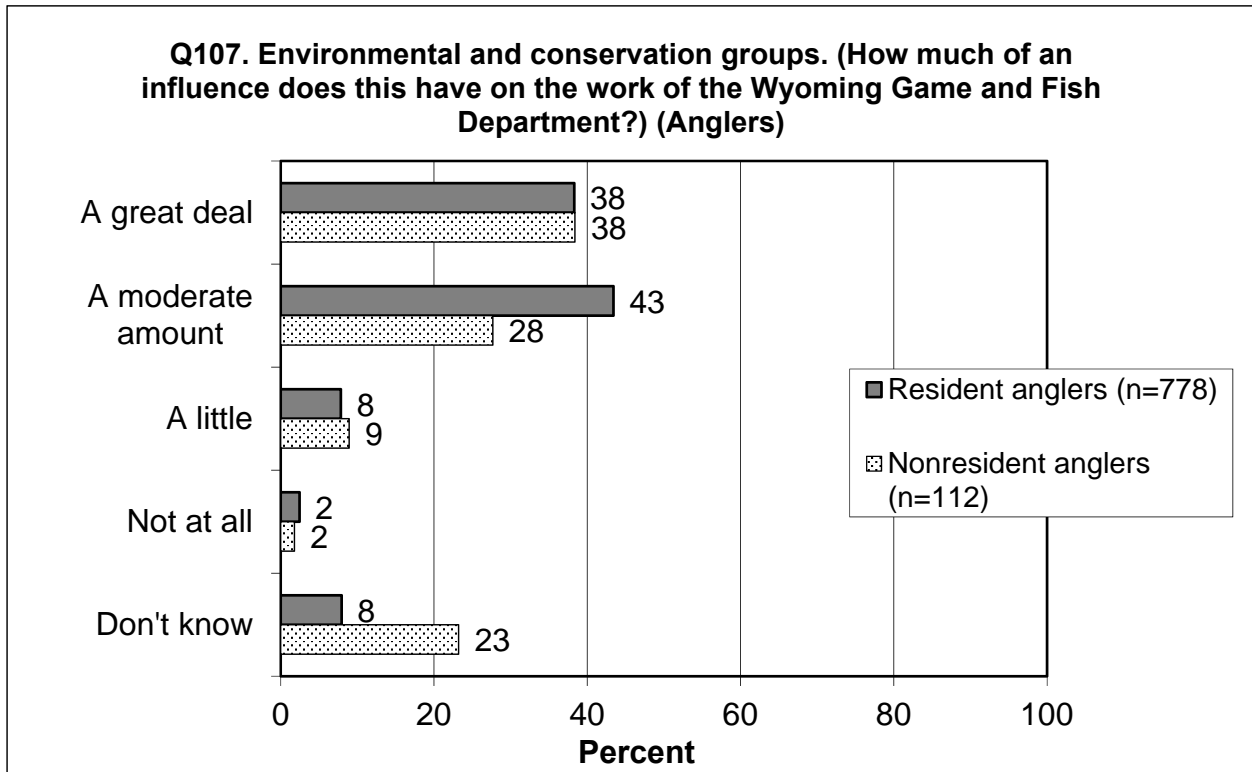


Figure 5.7.45. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Environmental and Conservation Groups

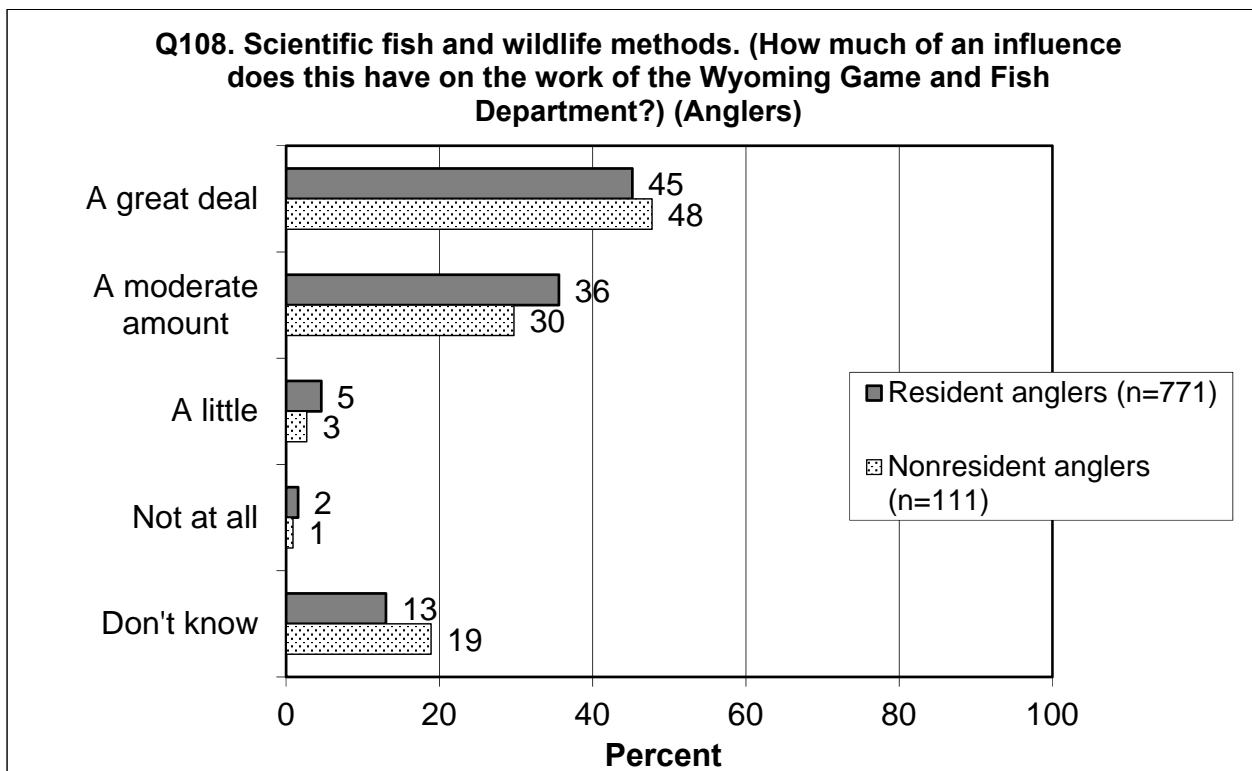


Figure 5.7.46. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Scientific Fish and Wildlife Methods

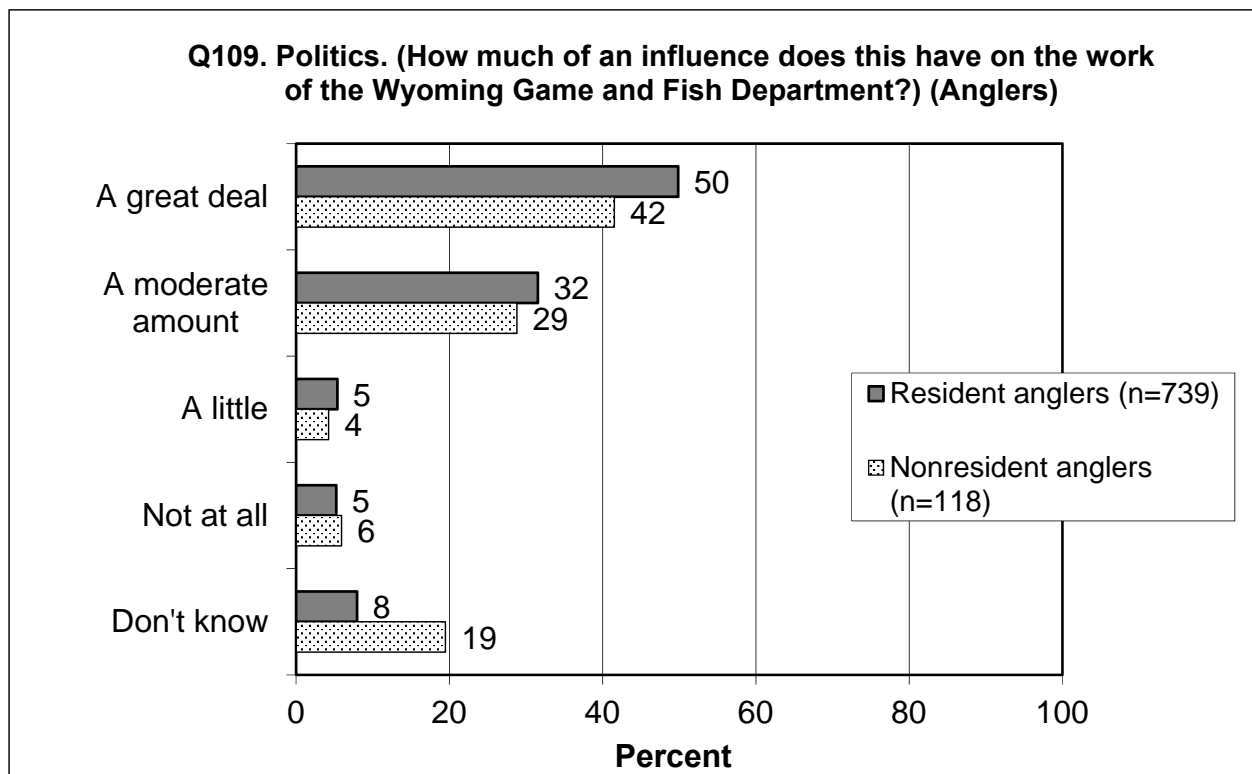


Figure 5.7.47. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Politics

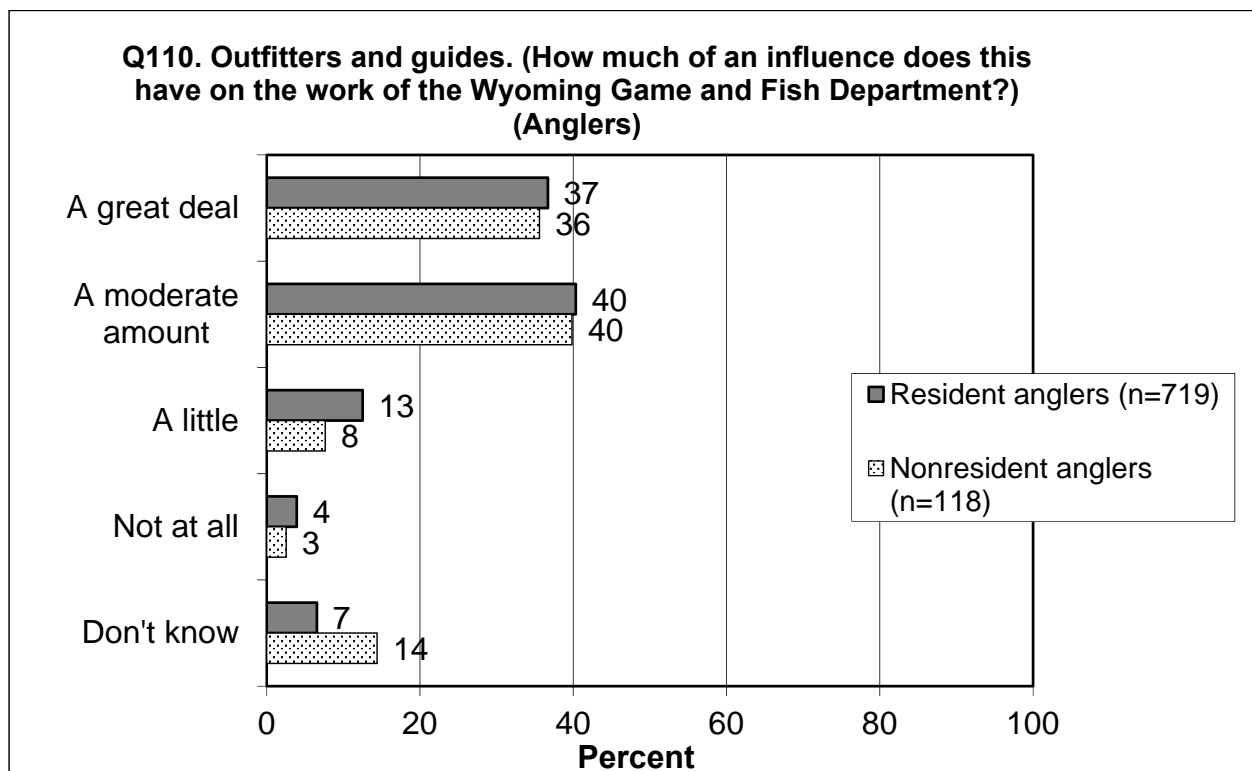


Figure 5.7.48. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Outfitters and Guides

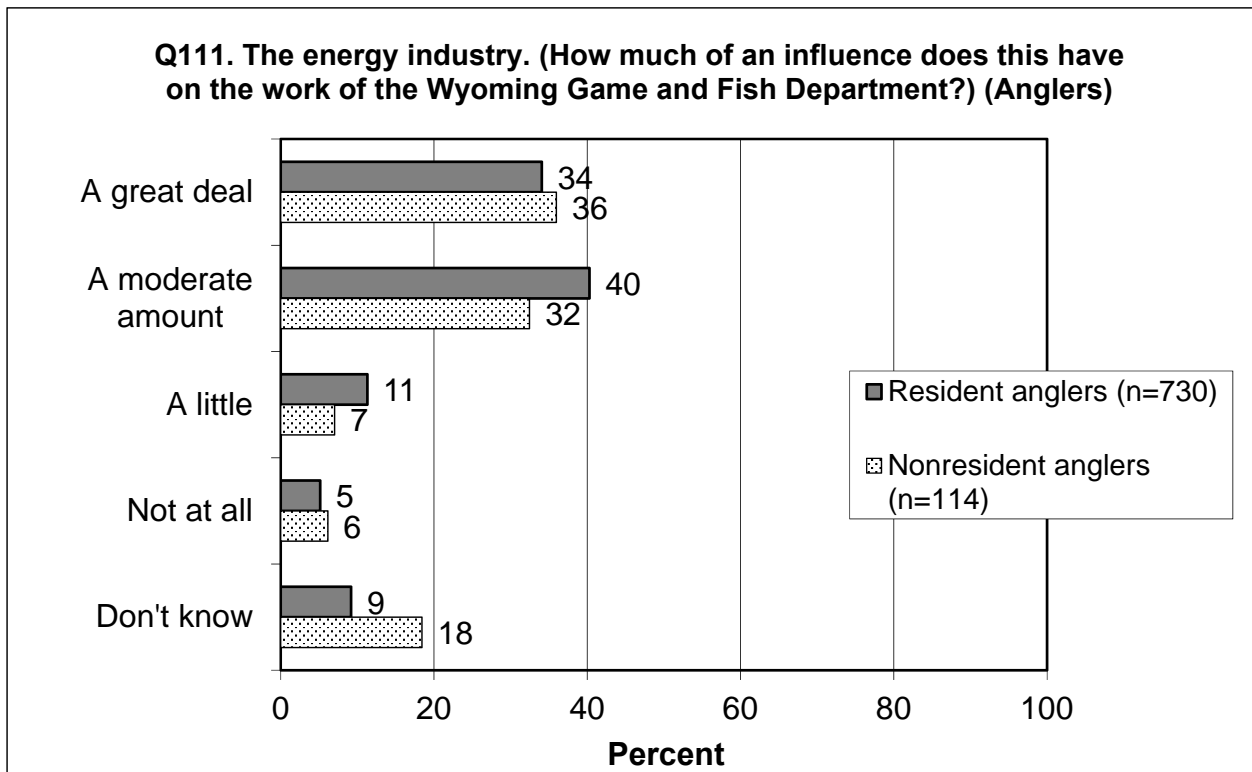


Figure 5.7.49. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of the Energy Industry

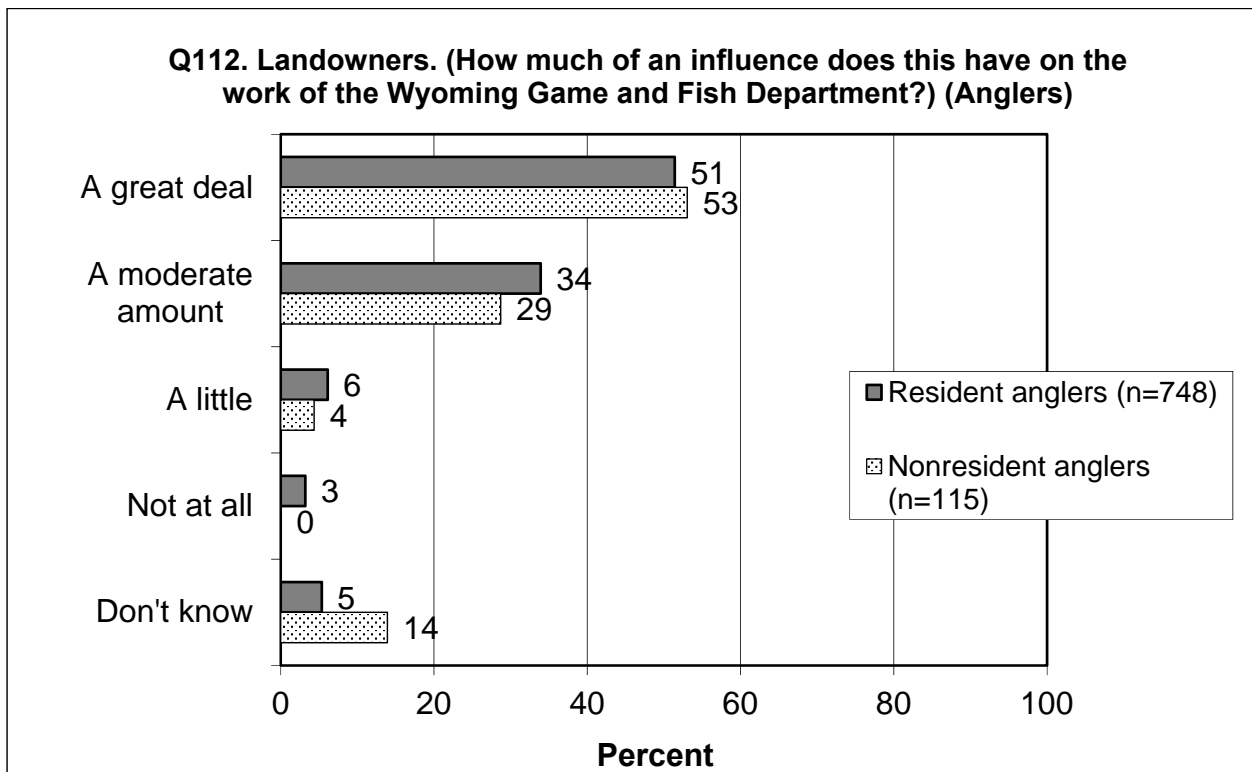


Figure 5.7.50. Perceptions Among Anglers Regarding the Influence of Landowners

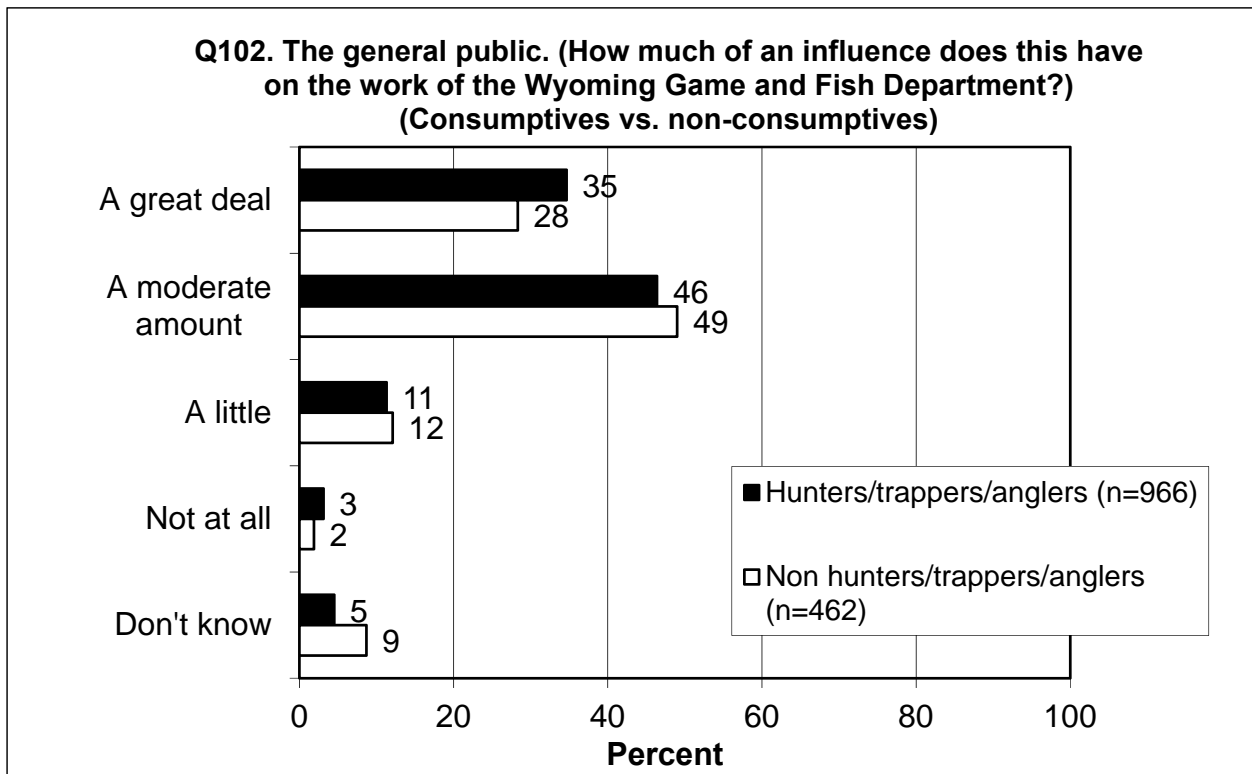


Figure 5.7.51. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of the General Public

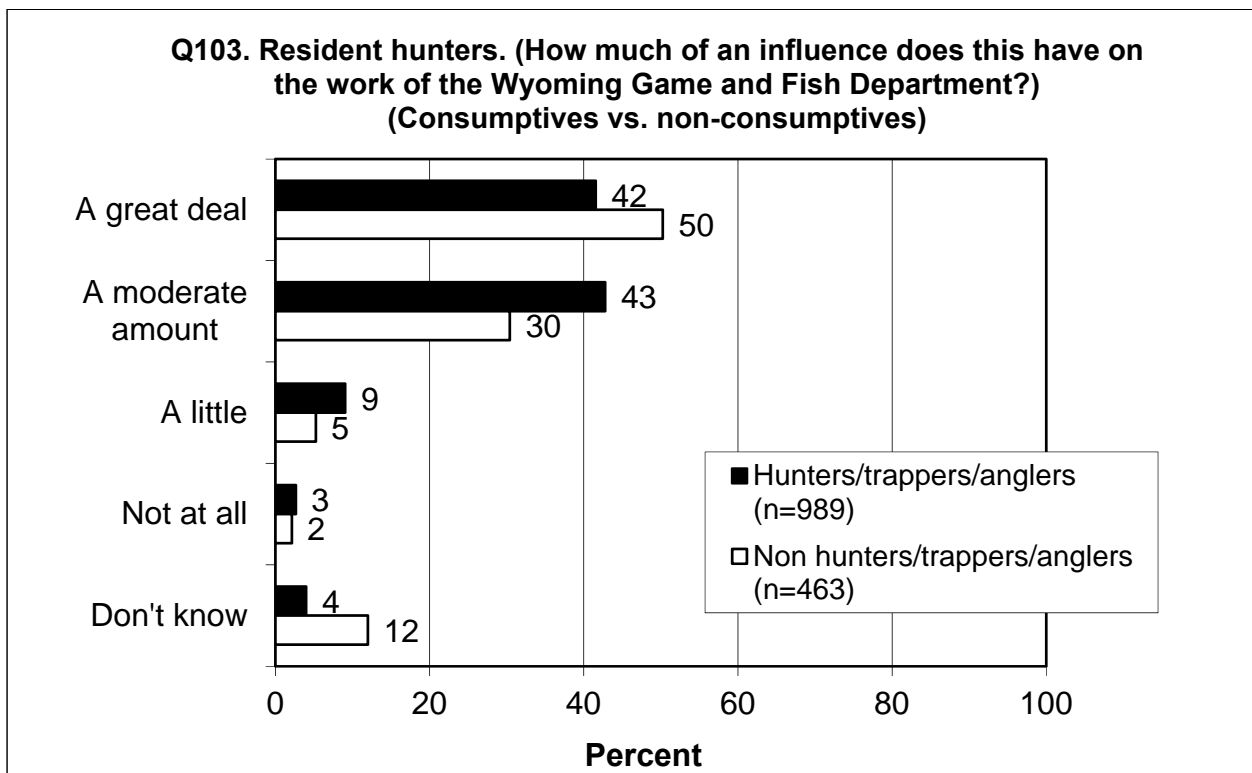


Figure 5.7.52. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Resident Hunters

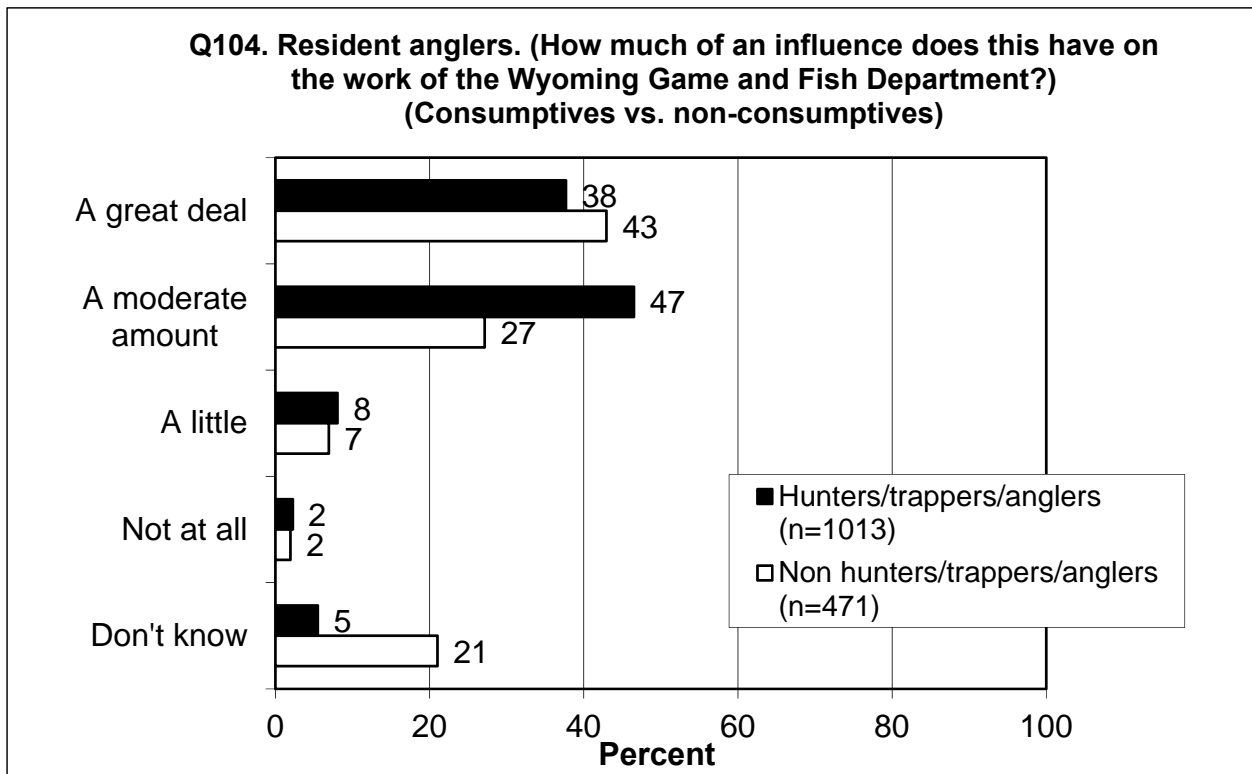


Figure 5.7.53. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Resident Anglers

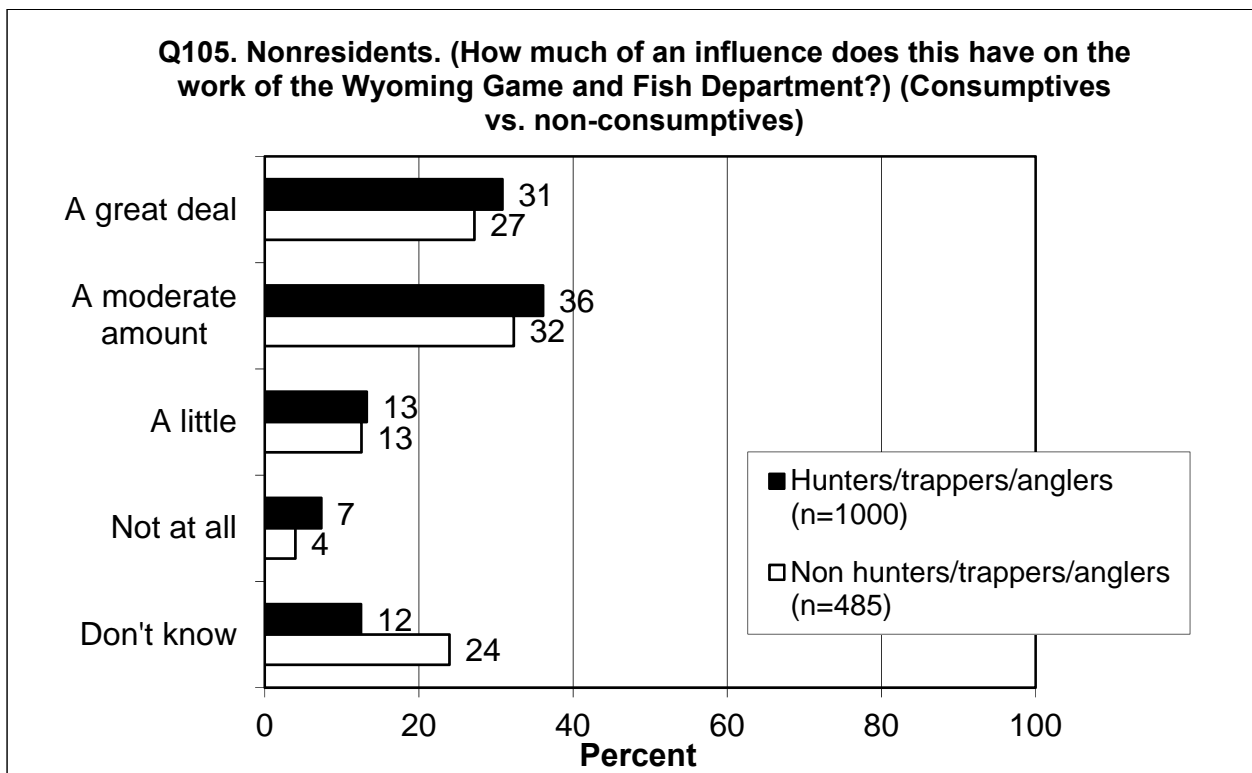


Figure 5.7.54. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Nonresidents

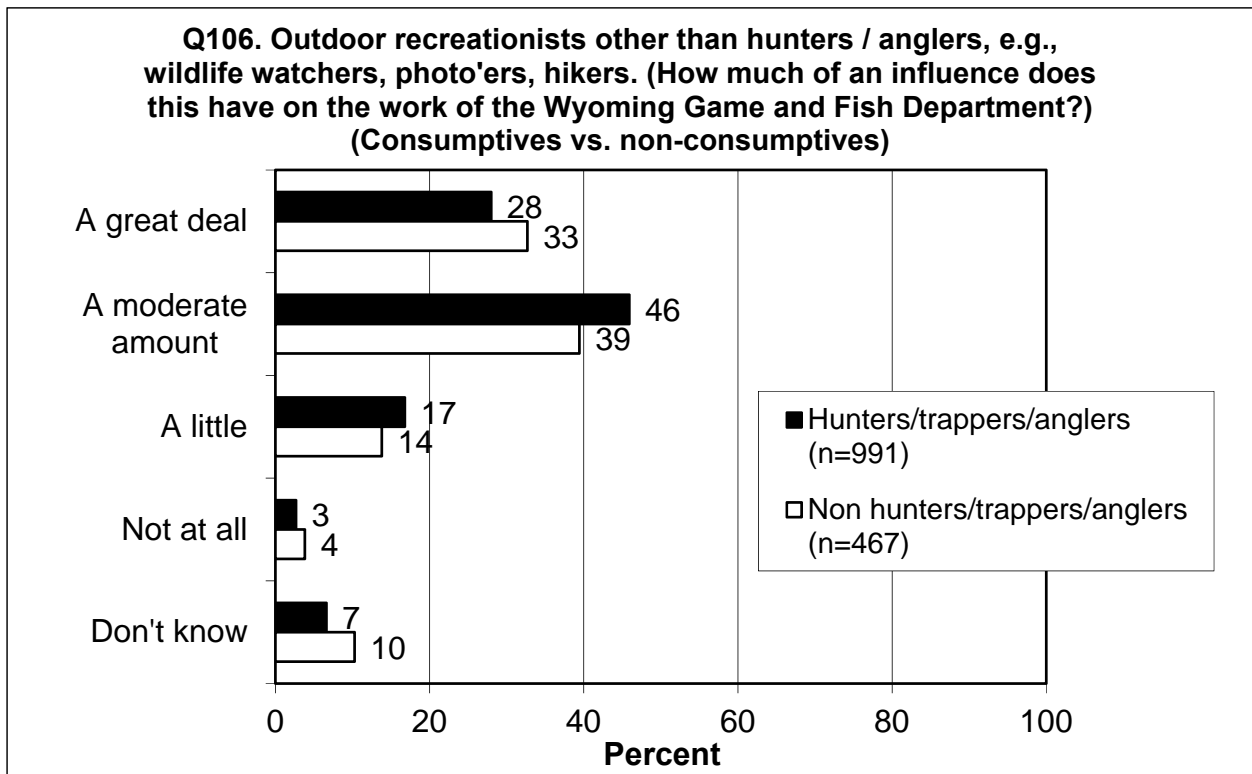


Figure 5.7.55. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Other Outdoor Recreationists

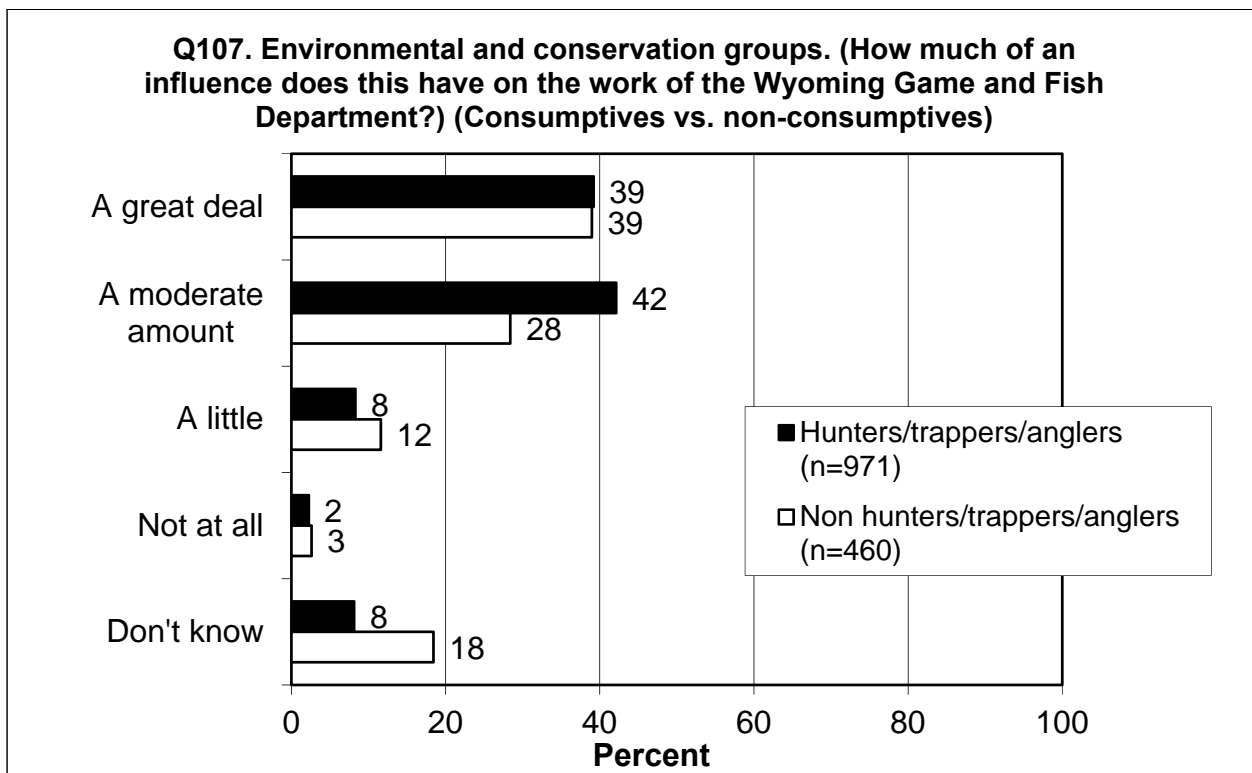


Figure 5.7.56. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Environmental and Conservation Groups

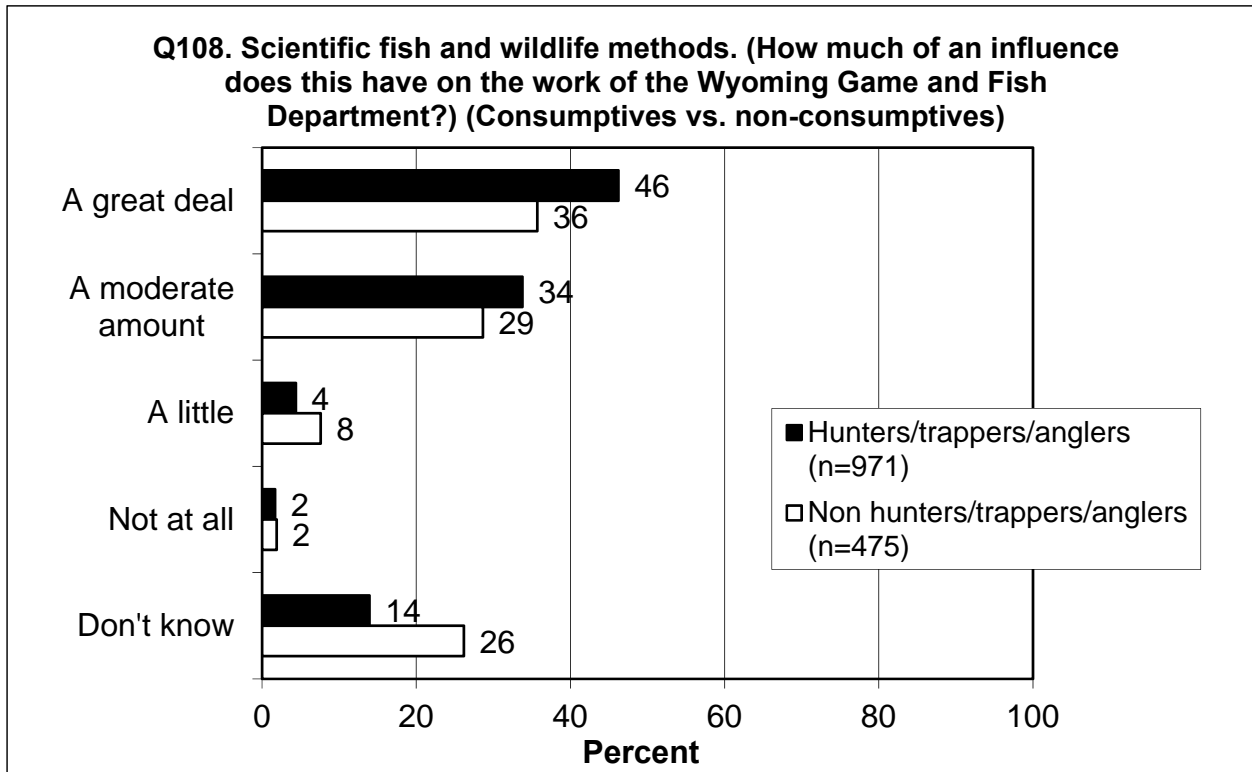


Figure 5.7.57. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Scientific Fish and Wildlife Methods

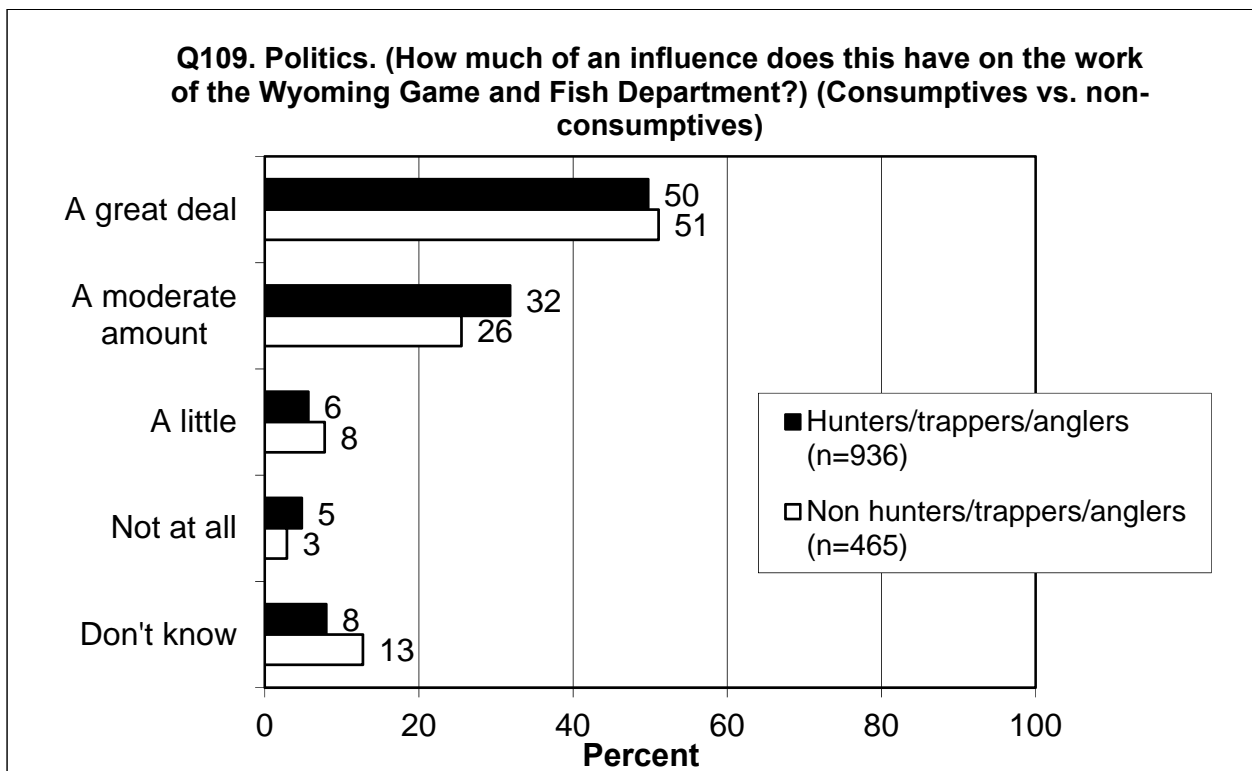


Figure 5.7.58. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Politics

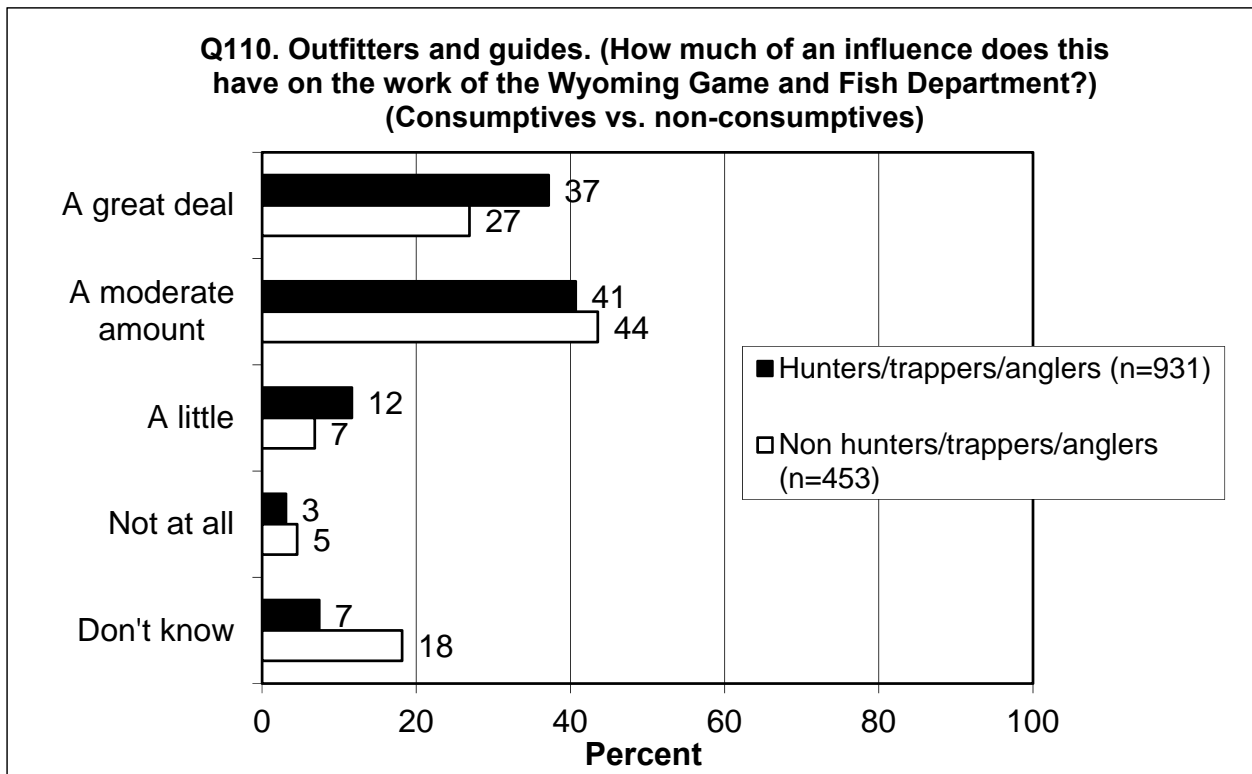


Figure 5.7.59. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Outfitters and Guides

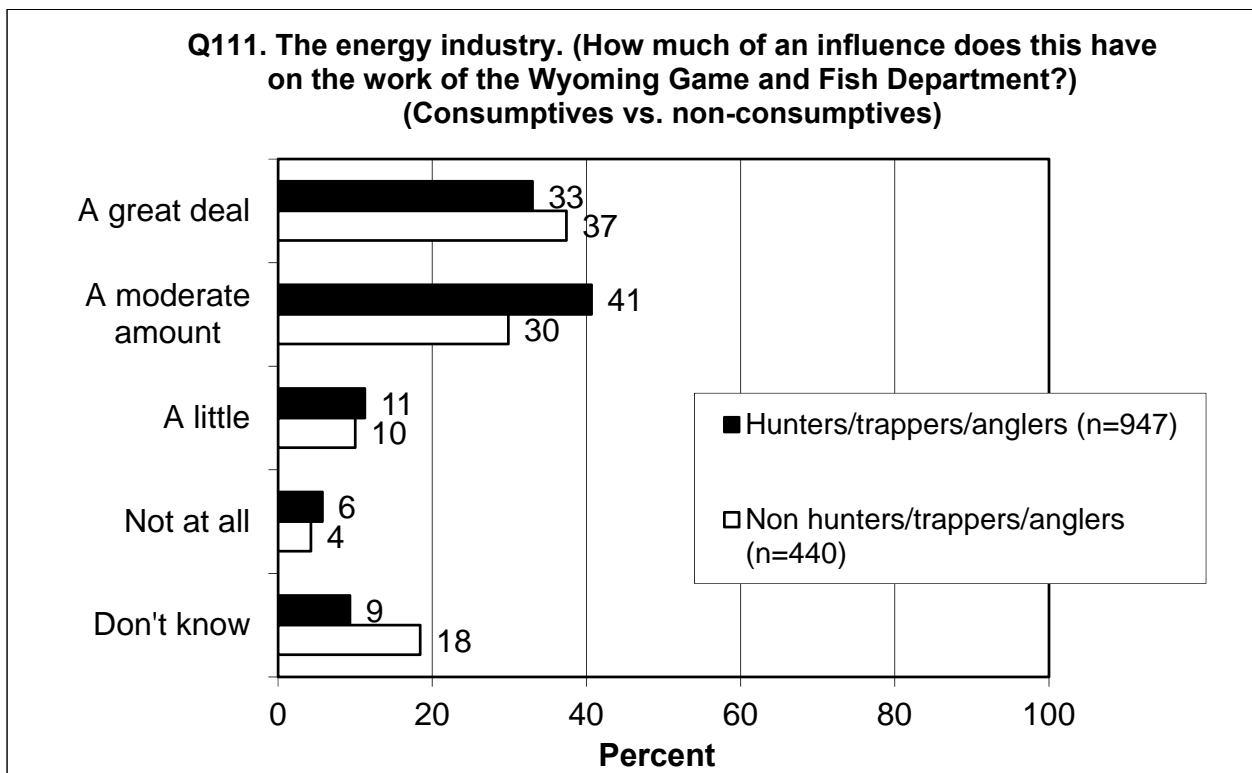


Figure 5.7.60. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of the Energy Industry

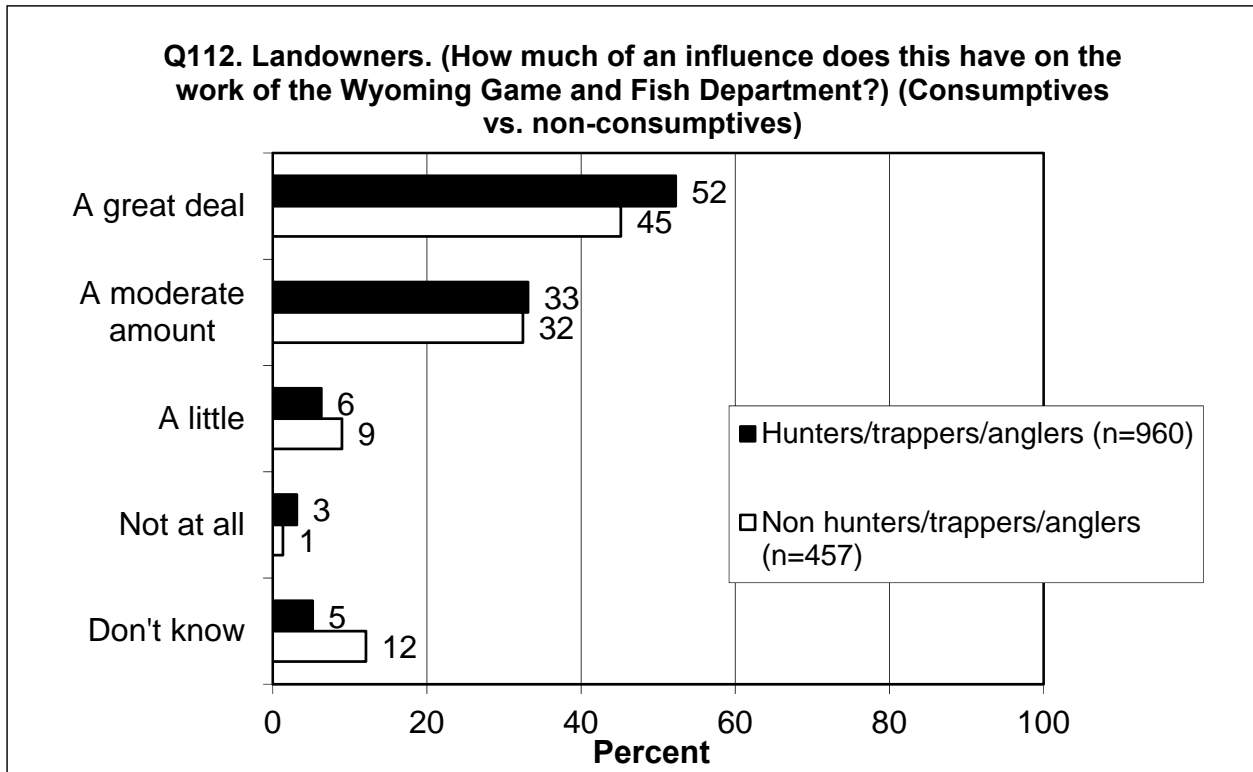


Figure 5.7.61. Perceptions Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers Regarding the Influence of Landowners

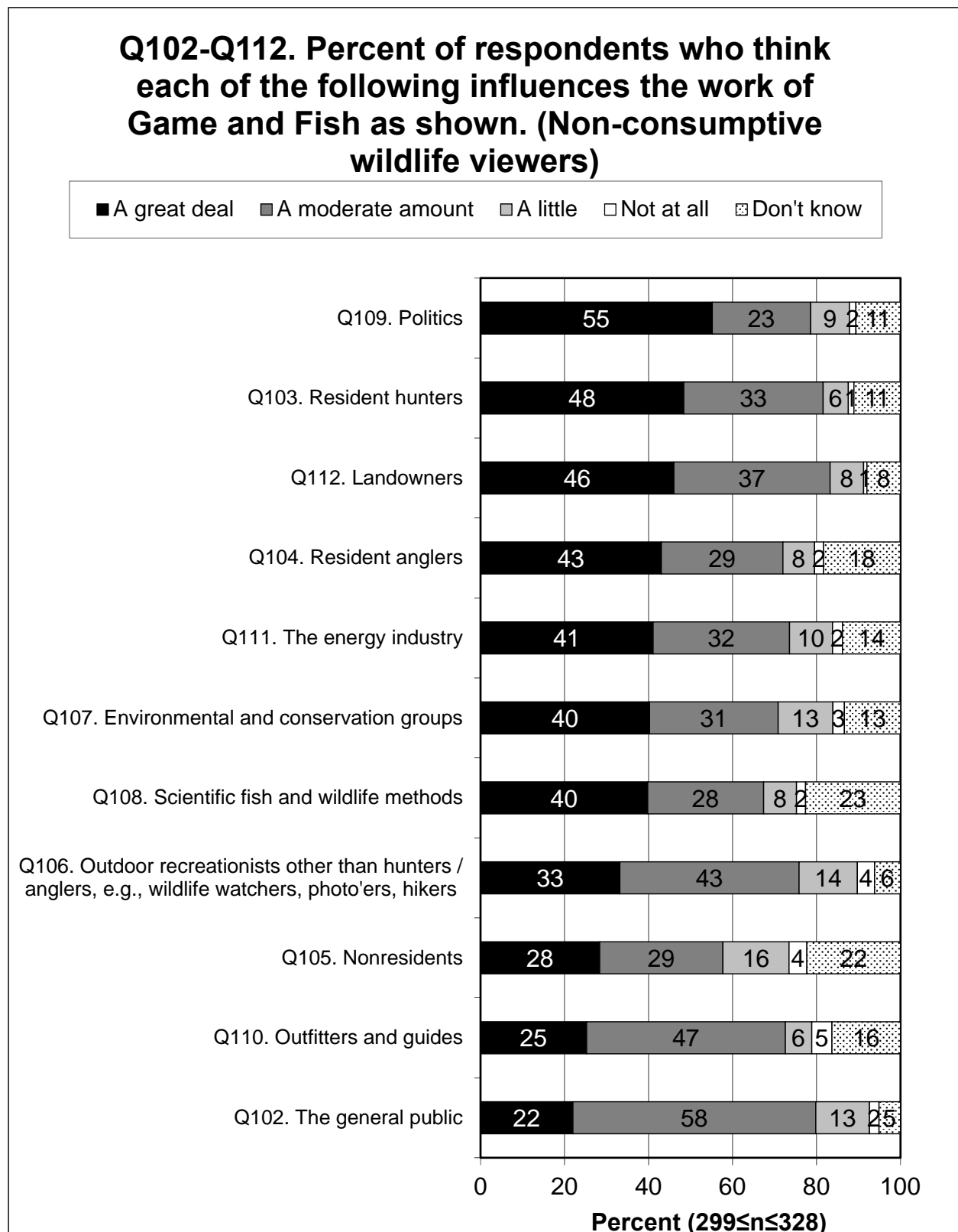


Figure 5.7.62. Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers' Perceptions of Influences on the Game and Fish Department

5.8. PRIORITIES OF THE WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

This section looks at two series of questions. Each series asked about 27 efforts of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. In the first series, the survey asked how *important* each effort should be for Game and Fish; in the second series, the survey asked how well Game and Fish *performed* at each effort.

The questions used a 0 to 10 rating scale, with 0 being not at all important and 10 being extremely important for the importance questions, and 0 being a poor job and 10 being an excellent job for the performance questions. Each effort in the importance series is meant to be looked at relative to its counterpart in the performance series.

Ideally, each effort would be rated a 10 in importance and a 10 in performance, but such a result would ignore real world opinions on the efforts (residents might not realize that an effort is important, for instance) as well as real world constraints on resources that the Game and Fish Department has at its disposal to carry out all its efforts. In other words, the series prompts people to prioritize the efforts.

There are several ways to look at the data, based on the discussion above. The first way is to calculate the mean score of importance for each effort and then rank the efforts. This shows exactly what the public's priorities are—what is important to them and what they want Game and Fish to do.

The second way to look at the data mirrors the first one, but it looks at the performance of Game and Fish at the efforts: a ranking is made of the mean performance ratings. This shows which efforts Game and Fish are perceived to be performing better than others.

The third way of analyzing the data is to compare the ratings of importance and performance. Given real world constraints, some efforts are simply going to have a higher priority than others, so the performance of some are going to be better than the performance of others. However, the ideal situation is that the efforts that are not performed as well as others are those that are not considered as important. In other words, an agency would hope to do particularly well at those efforts considered most important by the public. Therefore, the comparison uses a scatterplot, which will be explained in more detail shortly.

This section looks at the results of all three ways to analyze the data among residents overall. It then looks at the results regionally, among hunters and anglers, among consumptives collectively, and then among non-consumptive wildlife viewers.

In the graphs, the following item is truncated because of space limitations:

Maintaining continuous development / assessment of technologies for law enforcement, including wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory.

RESIDENTS OVERALL

Figure 5.8.1 shows the mean ratings of importance of the efforts among residents overall. Their top efforts are ecological—protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing laws and regulations, and protecting the state’s waters from aquatic invasive species. Both of these have mean ratings of more than 9.0. Fortunately for Game and Fish, both of these efforts that are considered highly important are also in the top of the performance ratings (Figure 5.8.2). Also note that all items have a mean importance rating well above the midpoint (5), so Game and Fish are not engaged in efforts deemed useless by the public.



Figure 5.8.1. Ratings of Importance of Game and Fish Department Efforts

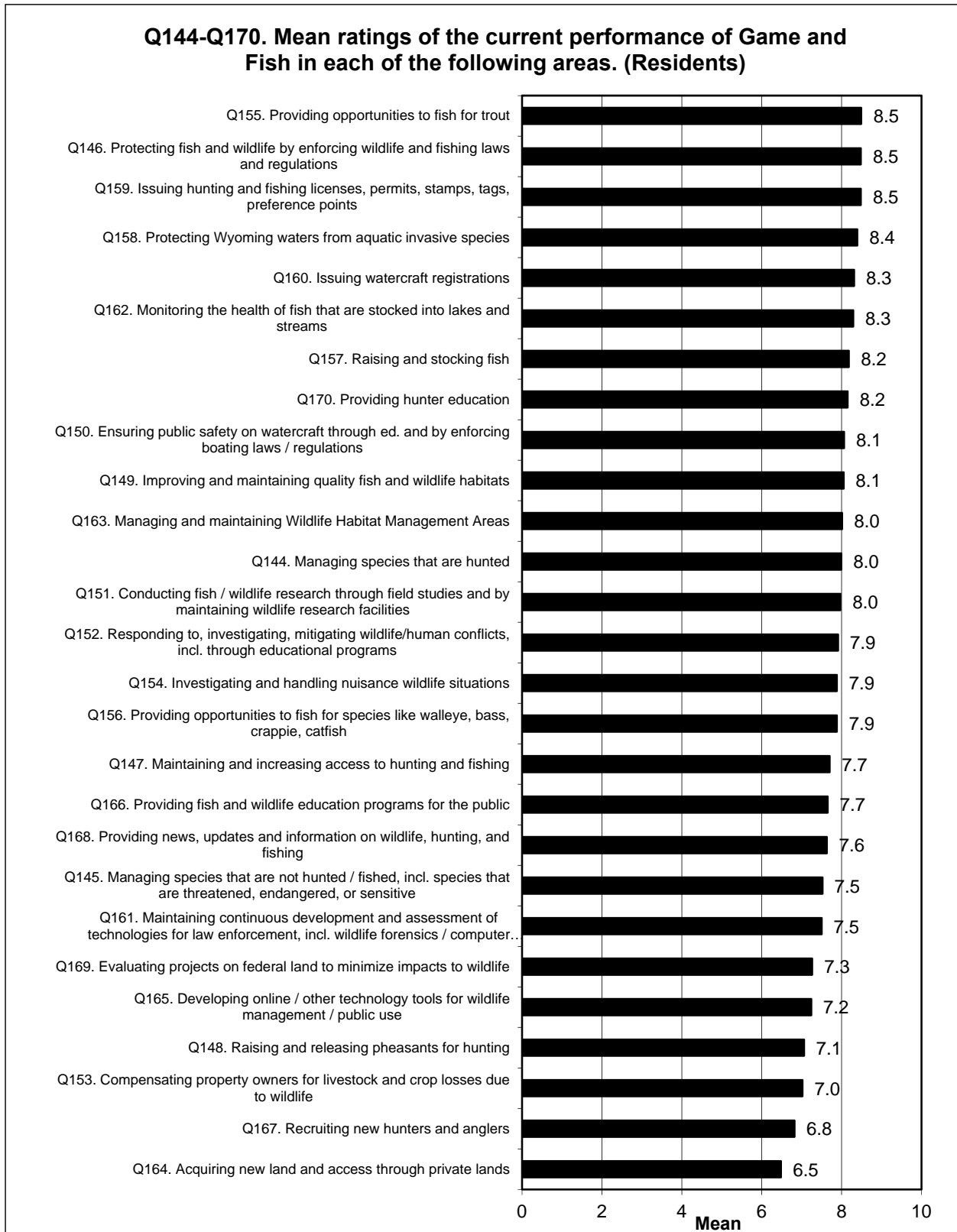


Figure 5.8.2. Ratings of Performance of Game and Fish Department Efforts

The results of the two rankings above were tabulated, and the difference was calculated for each effort (Table 5.8.1). The difference is the importance rating minus the performance rating, so that a positive difference means that the Game and Fish Department is performing the effort at a lower level than the effort's importance rating, which is generally not good to do. A negative difference means that the effort is being given a performance rating that exceeds its importance rating, which generally is desirable for an agency. Regardless, as long as the difference, positive or negative, is not great, efforts are being performed commensurate with their importance. In this regard, the Game and Fish Department is doing fairly well, as no effort is being given an importance rating that greatly exceeds its performance rating.

Table 5.8.1. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance Among Residents

Statewide	Importance	Performance	Difference
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.0	8.0	1.0
Managing species that are hunted	8.9	8.0	0.9
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. threatened, endangered, sensitive	8.4	7.5	0.9
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.9	8.1	0.9
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.3	6.5	0.9
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.3	8.5	0.8
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.5	7.7	0.8
Responding to, investigating, mitigating WL/human conflicts, incl. thru ed. programs	8.7	7.9	0.8
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.1	7.3	0.8
Providing hunter education	8.9	8.2	0.8
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.1	8.4	0.7
Conducting fish / wildlife research thru field studies / maintaining WL research facilities	8.6	8.0	0.6
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.2	7.6	0.6
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.6	8.1	0.5
Maintain. continuous development / assessment of techs for LE, incl. WL forensics / computer forensic lab	8.0	7.5	0.5
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.2	7.7	0.5
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.7	8.3	0.4
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.0	7.9	0.2
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.5	0.2
Raising and stocking fish	8.3	8.2	0.1
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.4	7.2	0.1
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.6	6.8	-0.2
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.7	7.1	-0.3
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.1	8.3	-0.3
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.6	7.0	-0.5
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.4	7.9	-0.5
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	7.9	8.5	-0.6

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

A way to visually look at the data from Table 5.8.1 is in a scatterplot (Figure 5.8.3). One axis shows the mean importance rating, and the other axis shows the performance rating (similar to a Cartesian Plane in geometry). A line shows where the importance and performance ratings are equal. Each effort is represented by a dot. The first observation about this analysis is that all the efforts are in quadrant I, which is high importance and high performance, as one would presumably want. It would not be good to have efforts in quadrant II (because their importance would be rated higher than their performance) or quadrant IV (because, although being performed well, they would not be considered important) or quadrant III (because, worst of all, no efforts would be considered important, and the agency would be considered to be doing a bad job at them regardless of how unimportant they were). Therefore, it is noted that all efforts are in quadrant I.

Secondly, those items rated the highest in importance are generally those being performed the best—no item is very far from the diagonal line. This second observation again, presumably, is what one would want. In other words, the efforts are generally being performed commensurate with their importance.

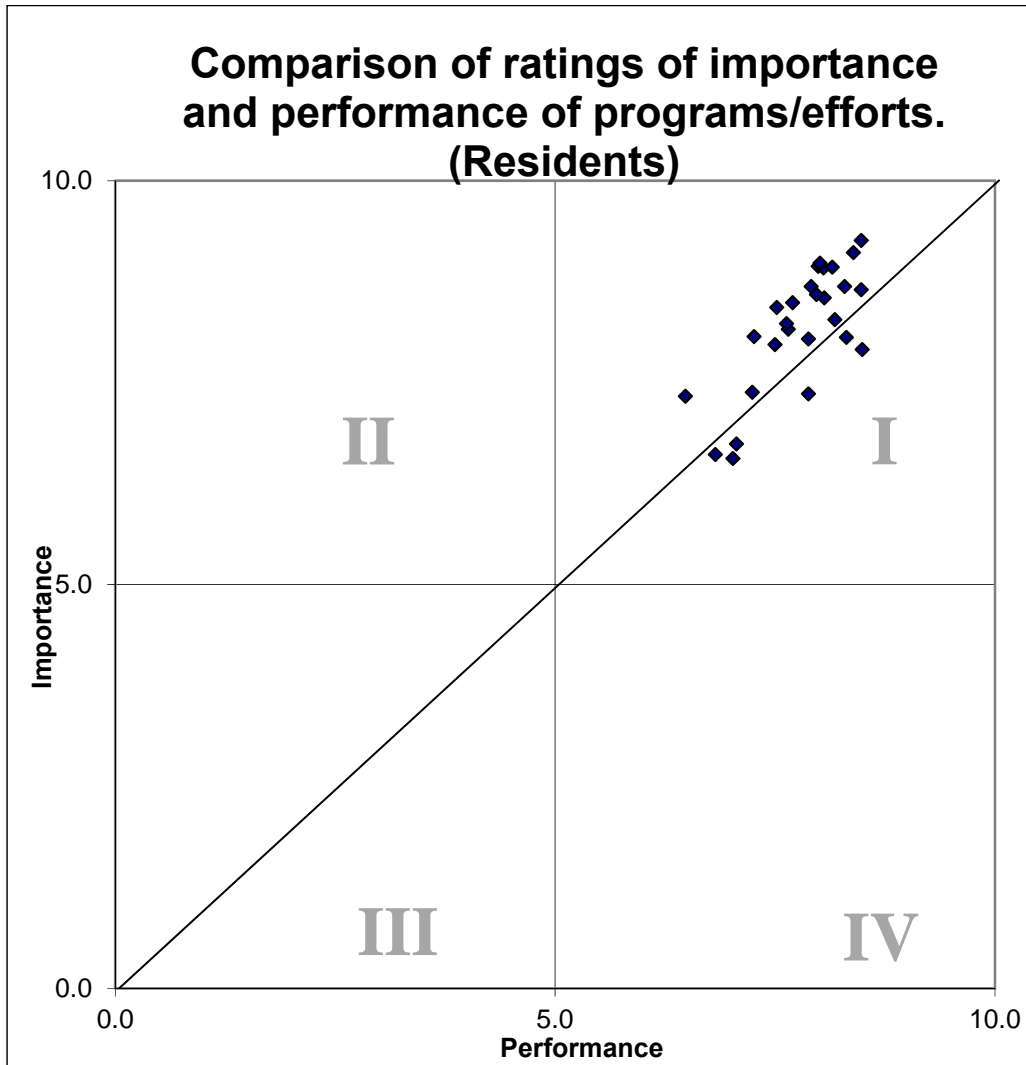


Figure 5.8.3. Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Residents

REGIONAL DATA

A table shows each region's ratings of importance and performance, as well as the difference between the two, for each effort (Tables 5.8.2 through 5.8.9). Each table is ranked from those efforts with the greatest positive difference (where importance exceeds performance—in other words, where performance has to catch up to the importance rating) to the greatest negative difference (where performance is rated higher than the importance).

Table 5.8.2. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Jackson Region

Jackson	Importance	Performance	Difference
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.3	6.5	1.8
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.6	6.9	1.7
Managing species that are hunted	8.9	7.3	1.6
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.5	8.2	1.3
Providing hunter education	8.7	7.4	1.3
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.1	7.9	1.2
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.8	6.7	1.2
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	8.8	7.9	1.0
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.7	7.8	0.9
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	9.0	8.2	0.9
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.5	7.6	0.9
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.6	7.9	0.7
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.7	8.3	0.4
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.0	7.7	0.3
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.1	8.0	0.1
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.4	7.3	0.1
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	7.7	7.7	0.0
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.0	8.1	-0.1
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.6	8.7	-0.1
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.2	8.5	-0.3
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	7.5	8.1	-0.6
Raising and stocking fish	7.4	7.9	-0.6
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	4.8	5.4	-0.7
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	7.5	8.6	-1.2
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.1	7.5	-1.4
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	4.9	6.4	-1.4
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	5.8	7.2	-1.5

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.3. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Cody Region

Cody	Importance	Performance	Difference
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.8	7.3	1.5
Providing hunter education	8.9	7.5	1.4
Managing species that are hunted	9.0	7.8	1.2
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.2	8.1	1.1
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.8	7.8	1.0
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.3	8.3	1.0
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.1	7.2	0.9
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	7.9	7.0	0.9
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	7.9	7.2	0.8
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.2	7.5	0.7
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.0	0.7
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	8.6	7.9	0.7
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.1	7.5	0.6
Raising and stocking fish	8.8	8.2	0.6
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	6.8	6.3	0.5
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.0	7.5	0.5
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.1	7.8	0.3
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.1	7.8	0.3
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.5	7.3	0.3
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	7.5	7.3	0.2
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.0	5.9	0.1
Issuing watercraft registrations	7.9	7.9	0.0
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.4	8.4	0.0
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.6	6.6	0.0
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.5	7.8	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.3	8.8	-0.5
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.5	7.1	-0.6

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.4. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Lander Region

Lander	Importance	Performance	Difference
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.0	8.1	0.9
Managing species that are hunted	8.8	8.1	0.8
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	8.9	8.2	0.8
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.4	7.6	0.8
Providing hunter education	8.9	8.0	0.8
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.3	8.6	0.7
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.1	7.4	0.7
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.6	7.9	0.7
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.7	8.1	0.7
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.2	7.6	0.7
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.1	7.3	0.7
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.6	8.1	0.4
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.8	8.4	0.4
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.1	7.7	0.4
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.5	8.2	0.4
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.1	7.8	0.4
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.2	7.8	0.3
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.1	8.0	0.2
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	6.9	6.7	0.2
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.4	7.2	0.2
Raising and stocking fish	8.1	8.0	0.1
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.3	6.5	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	7.7	8.0	-0.3
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	7.0	7.3	-0.3
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.8	7.2	-0.4
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.0	8.4	-0.4
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.3	7.9	-0.6

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.5. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Pinedale Region

Pinedale	Importance	Performance	Difference
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.5	7.0	1.5
Managing species that are hunted	9.1	7.9	1.2
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	8.9	7.7	1.1
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.6	7.6	1.0
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.0	8.0	1.0
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.2	8.3	0.9
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	7.9	7.0	0.9
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	6.8	6.0	0.9
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.0	7.2	0.8
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.2	7.5	0.7
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	7.7	7.0	0.7
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.6	7.9	0.7
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.0	7.4	0.6
Providing hunter education	8.8	8.2	0.6
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	7.8	7.4	0.4
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	7.5	7.1	0.4
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.0	7.8	0.2
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	6.9	6.7	0.2
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	7.4	7.2	0.2
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.9	8.7	0.1
Raising and stocking fish	7.9	8.0	0.0
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	5.5	5.6	-0.1
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	6.9	7.1	-0.2
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.5	6.8	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	7.9	8.2	-0.3
Issuing watercraft registrations	7.8	8.3	-0.4
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	5.7	6.5	-0.8

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.6. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Green River Region

Green River	Importance	Performance	Difference
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	8.9	7.6	1.3
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.4	6.0	1.3
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	9.0	7.8	1.2
Managing species that are hunted	9.2	8.2	1.0
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.6	7.6	1.0
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	9.0	8.0	0.9
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.7	7.9	0.8
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.1	7.3	0.8
Providing hunter education	9.1	8.3	0.8
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.3	8.6	0.7
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.1	8.4	0.7
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.5	7.8	0.7
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.2	7.6	0.6
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.5	8.0	0.5
Raising and stocking fish	8.2	7.6	0.5
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.3	0.5
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.2	7.8	0.5
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.2	7.8	0.4
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	7.0	6.6	0.4
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.6	8.3	0.3
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	7.7	7.4	0.3
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.9	6.9	0.0
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.3	7.5	-0.2
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.1	8.4	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	6.9	7.5	-0.6
Issuing watercraft registrations	7.6	8.4	-0.9
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.1	7.2	-1.2

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.7. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Sheridan Region

Sheridan	Importance	Performance	Difference
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.8	7.3	1.5
Providing hunter education	8.9	7.7	1.3
Managing species that are hunted	9.1	8.2	1.0
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.9	7.9	1.0
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.7	7.7	1.0
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.0	8.2	0.8
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.1	6.3	0.8
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.0	7.4	0.7
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.0	0.7
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.8	8.0	0.7
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.1	7.4	0.7
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	7.9	7.1	0.7
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.0	8.4	0.6
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.0	8.4	0.6
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.8	6.2	0.6
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.5	8.0	0.5
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	7.9	7.4	0.5
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.6	8.2	0.4
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.1	7.7	0.4
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.4	8.1	0.3
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	7.1	7.0	0.1
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.2	8.2	0.0
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.2	7.3	0.0
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.9	7.2	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.4	7.6	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.0	8.3	-0.4
Raising and stocking fish	8.2	8.5	-0.4

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.8. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Casper Region

Casper	Importance	Performance	Difference
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.9	7.0	1.0
Managing species that are hunted	8.6	7.7	0.9
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.3	7.4	0.9
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.9	8.1	0.9
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.3	7.5	0.8
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.5	8.7	0.8
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	7.9	7.2	0.7
Providing hunter education	9.0	8.3	0.7
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.8	8.3	0.5
Raising and stocking fish	8.9	8.4	0.5
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.0	8.5	0.5
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.4	7.8	0.5
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.3	7.8	0.5
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.1	8.7	0.4
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.7	8.3	0.4
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.3	8.0	0.3
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.6	8.4	0.2
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.5	0.2
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.9	8.6	0.2
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.7	6.6	0.1
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.0	8.1	-0.1
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.6	8.7	-0.1
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.6	6.9	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	8.0	8.3	-0.3
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.4	7.8	-0.4
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.8	7.4	-0.5
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	7.9	8.6	-0.6

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.9. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Laramie Region

Laramie	Importance	Performance	Difference
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.1	7.8	1.3
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.8	7.6	1.2
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.5	8.5	1.0
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.9	7.9	0.9
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.0	7.0	0.9
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.2	7.3	0.9
Managing species that are hunted	9.0	8.2	0.8
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	9.0	8.2	0.8
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.6	7.8	0.8
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.2	6.5	0.8
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.8	8.2	0.7
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.5	6.8	0.7
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.7	8.1	0.6
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	8.9	8.3	0.6
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.5	7.8	0.6
Providing hunter education	8.9	8.5	0.4
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.1	7.8	0.3
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.7	8.5	0.2
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	7.8	7.9	-0.1
Raising and stocking fish	8.0	8.1	-0.1
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.0	8.2	-0.2
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.5	6.8	-0.3
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.6	9.0	-0.4
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	7.2	7.8	-0.6
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.4	8.0	-0.7
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	7.8	8.6	-0.8
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.5	7.3	-0.9

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

HUNTER DATA

Tables 5.8.10 and 5.8.11 show the mean ratings for hunters. The scatterplots created from the data in Figures 5.8.4 and 5.8.5 show that nonresidents' ratings are generally more spread out when compared to residents.

Table 5.8.10. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Resident Hunters

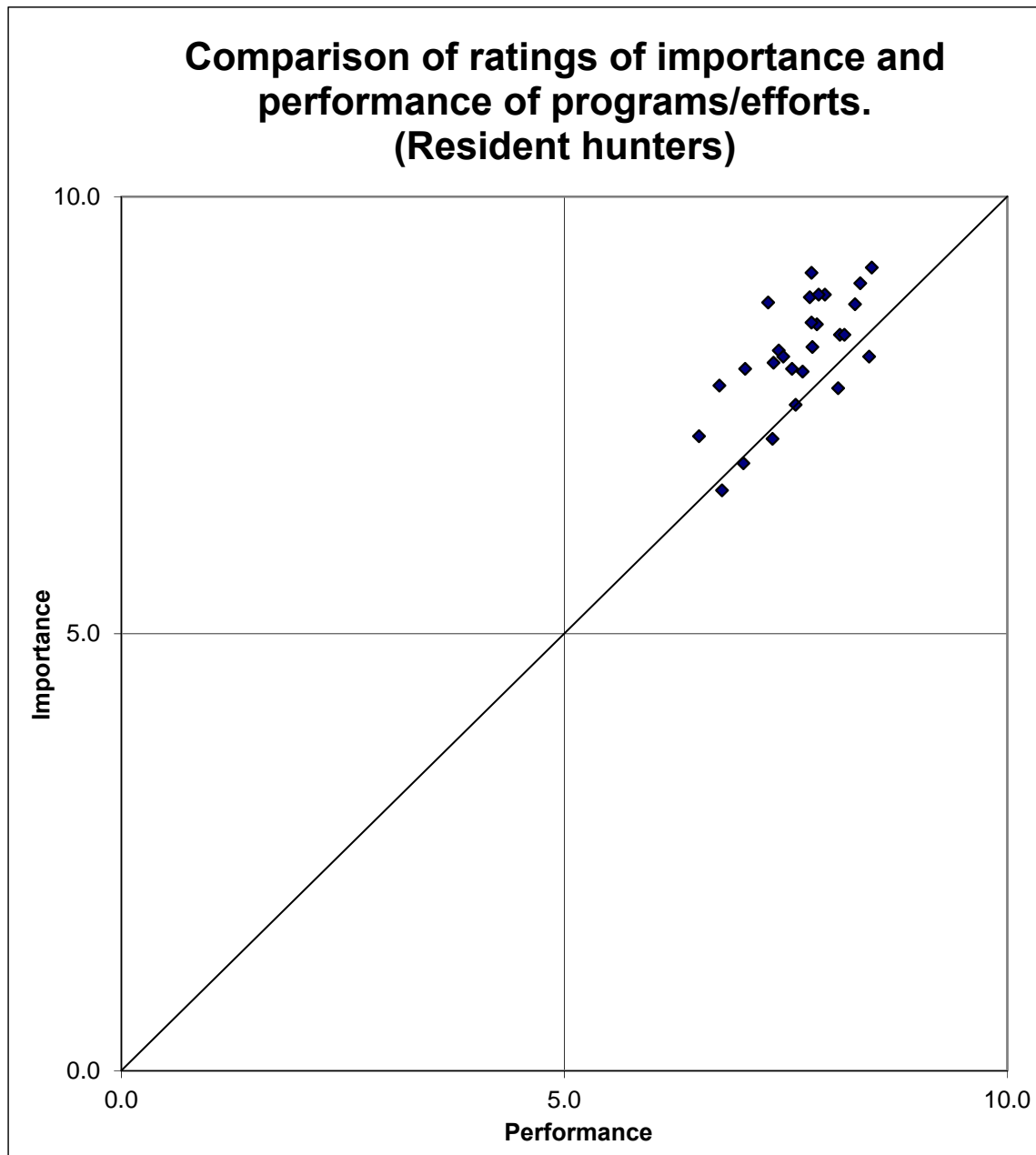
Resident Hunters	Importance	Performance	Difference
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.8	7.3	1.5
Managing species that are hunted	9.1	7.8	1.3
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	8.9	7.8	1.1
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.8	6.8	1.1
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.0	7.0	1.0
Providing hunter education	8.9	7.9	1.0
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.9	7.9	0.9
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.2	7.4	0.8
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.6	7.8	0.8
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.2	8.5	0.7
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.5	7.9	0.7
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.0	8.3	0.7
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.1	7.4	0.7
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	7.3	6.5	0.7
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.2	7.5	0.7
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.3	7.8	0.5
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.0	7.6	0.5
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.8	8.3	0.5
Raising and stocking fish	8.4	8.1	0.3
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.0	7.7	0.3
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.4	8.2	0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.6	7.6	0.0
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	7.0	7.0	-0.1
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.6	6.8	-0.1
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.2	7.4	-0.1
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.2	8.4	-0.3
Issuing watercraft registrations	7.8	8.1	-0.3

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.11. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Nonresident Hunters

Nonresident Hunters	Importance	Performance	Difference
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.5	6.9	1.6
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	8.5	6.9	1.6
Managing species that are hunted	9.4	8.2	1.3
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.9	7.7	1.2
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	9.0	7.9	1.1
Providing hunter education	8.6	7.5	1.1
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	8.9	7.9	1.0
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.5	5.6	0.9
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.2	7.4	0.9
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.1	8.4	0.8
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.5	6.7	0.8
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.1	7.3	0.8
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	9.1	8.4	0.7
Issuing watercraft registrations	7.6	6.9	0.7
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.3	7.6	0.6
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.0	8.5	0.5
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	7.5	7.0	0.5
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	7.8	7.4	0.4
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.1	7.7	0.4
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	7.9	7.6	0.3
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.2	8.0	0.2
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	7.7	7.6	0.2
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.5	7.4	0.2
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.5	7.6	-0.1
Raising and stocking fish	7.8	8.1	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.2	8.6	-0.4
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.6	7.2	-0.6

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.



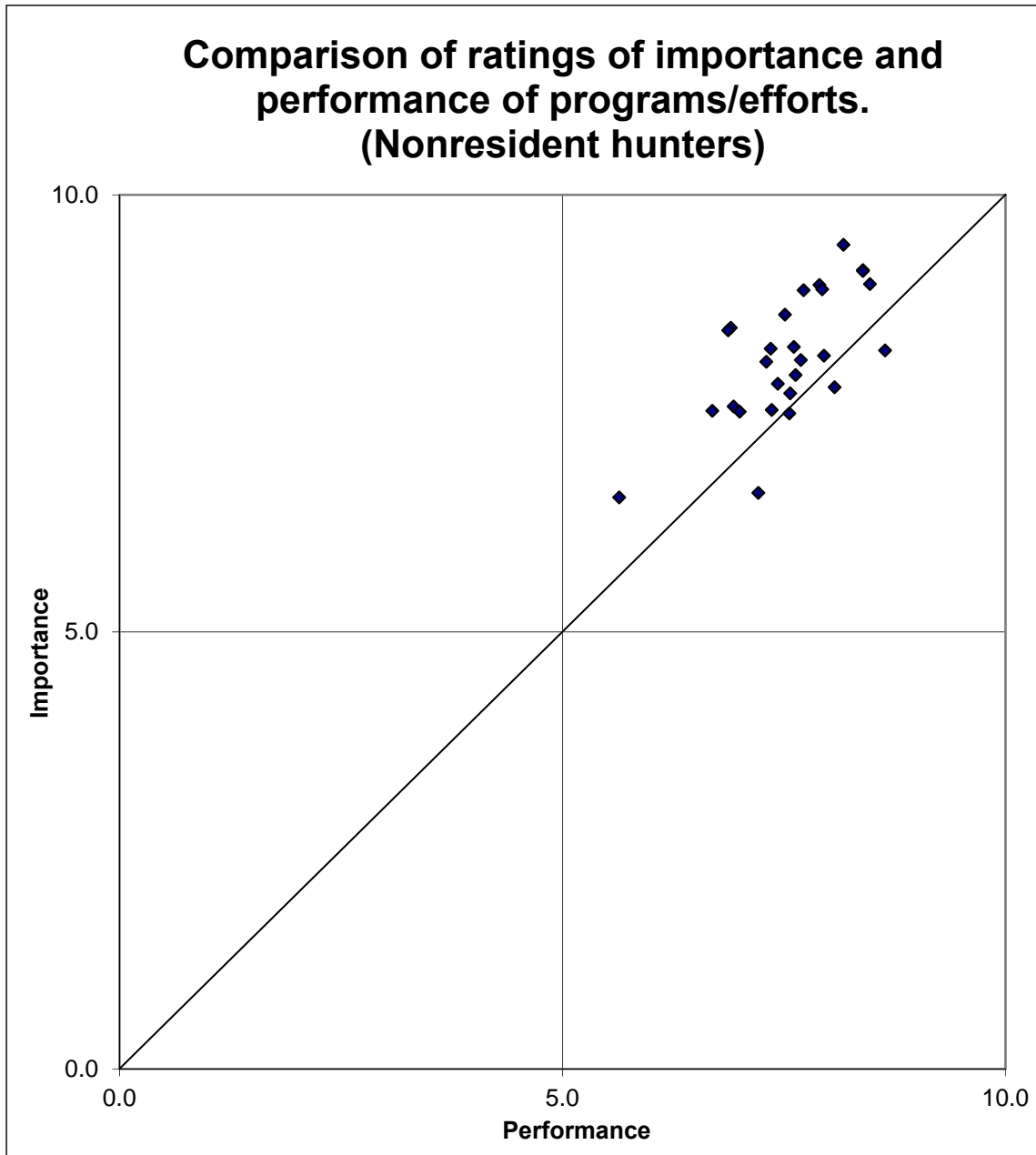


Figure 5.8.5. Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Nonresident Hunters

ANGLER DATA

Anglers' mean ratings are presented in Tables 5.8.12 and 5.8.13. The scatterplots of the angler data (Figures 5.8.6 and 5.8.7), like the hunter scatterplots, show that nonresidents' ratings are generally more spread out when compared to residents.

Table 5.8.12. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Resident Anglers

Resident Anglers	Importance	Performance	Difference
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.8	6.4	1.4
Managing species that are hunted	9.1	8.0	1.1
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.7	7.6	1.1
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.7	7.6	1.1
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.0	7.9	1.1
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.9	8.0	0.9
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.7	7.8	0.9
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.3	8.5	0.9
Providing hunter education	9.0	8.2	0.9
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.3	8.5	0.8
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.6	7.8	0.8
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.1	7.3	0.8
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.5	7.9	0.6
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.1	7.5	0.6
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.9	8.4	0.6
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.1	7.5	0.6
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.2	7.8	0.4
Raising and stocking fish	8.7	8.4	0.3
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.1	7.9	0.2
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.5	0.2
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.3	7.2	0.1
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	7.0	7.0	0.0
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.7	6.8	0.0
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.7	7.8	-0.1
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.0	8.3	-0.2
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.2	8.5	-0.3
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.5	6.9	-0.4

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.13. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Nonresident Anglers

Nonresident Anglers	Importance	Performance	Difference
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.4	7.6	1.8
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.5	6.9	1.6
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	8.1	6.6	1.4
Managing species that are hunted	8.9	7.8	1.2
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.3	8.1	1.2
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.6	7.4	1.2
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	9.0	7.9	1.1
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.6	7.6	1.0
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	8.9	7.9	0.9
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.3	7.5	0.8
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.5	7.9	0.6
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.5	7.9	0.6
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	7.9	7.5	0.4
Providing hunter education	8.2	7.8	0.4
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.0	7.6	0.3
Raising and stocking fish	7.8	7.6	0.2
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.7	6.5	0.2
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	7.9	7.7	0.2
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.7	8.6	0.1
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.5	7.5	0.0
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.3	7.3	0.0
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.3	8.5	-0.2
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	7.8	8.2	-0.4
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	7.7	8.1	-0.4
Issuing watercraft registrations	7.4	8.0	-0.6
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.4	7.1	-0.7
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.7	7.6	-0.9

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

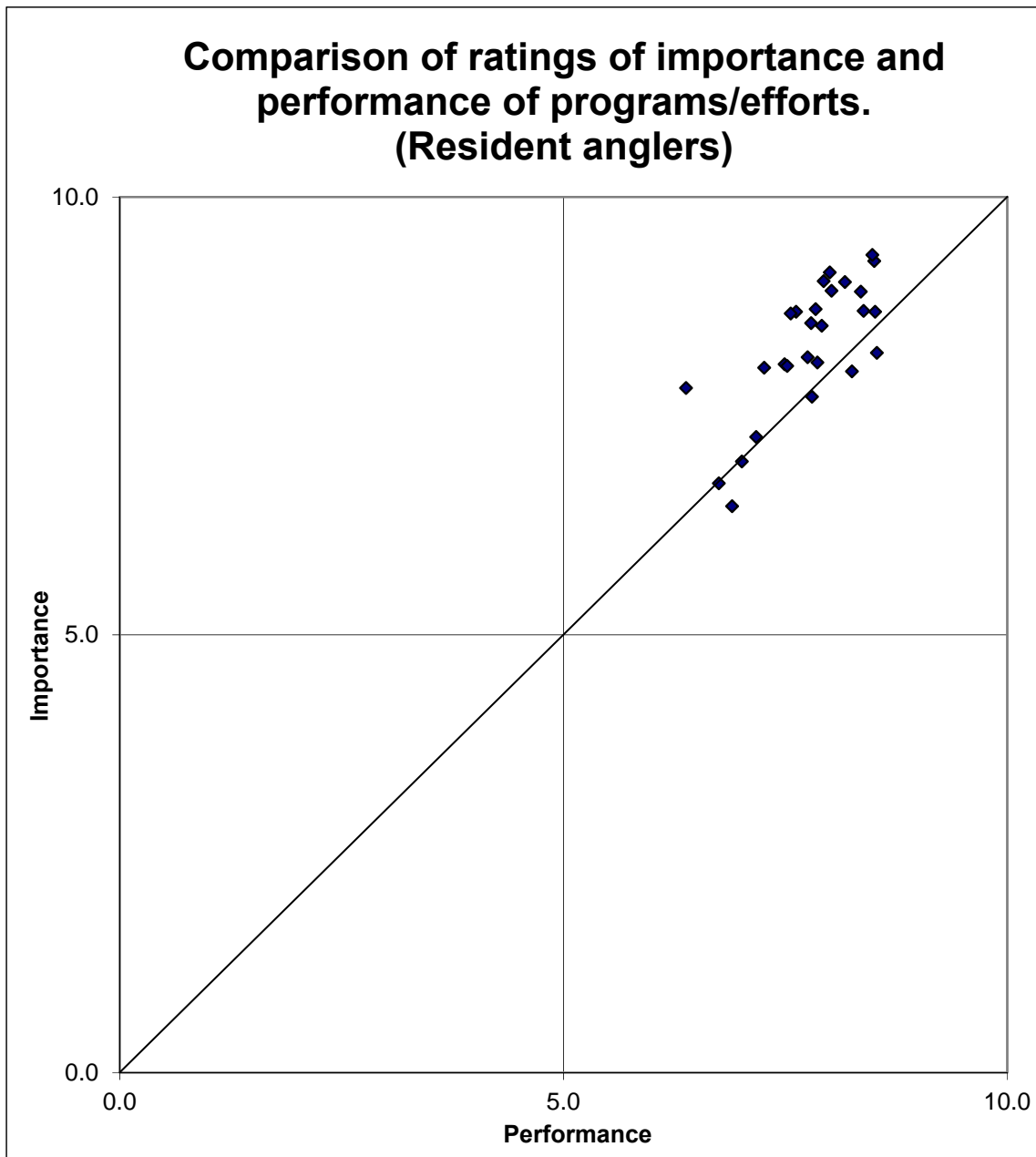


Figure 5.8.6. Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Resident Anglers

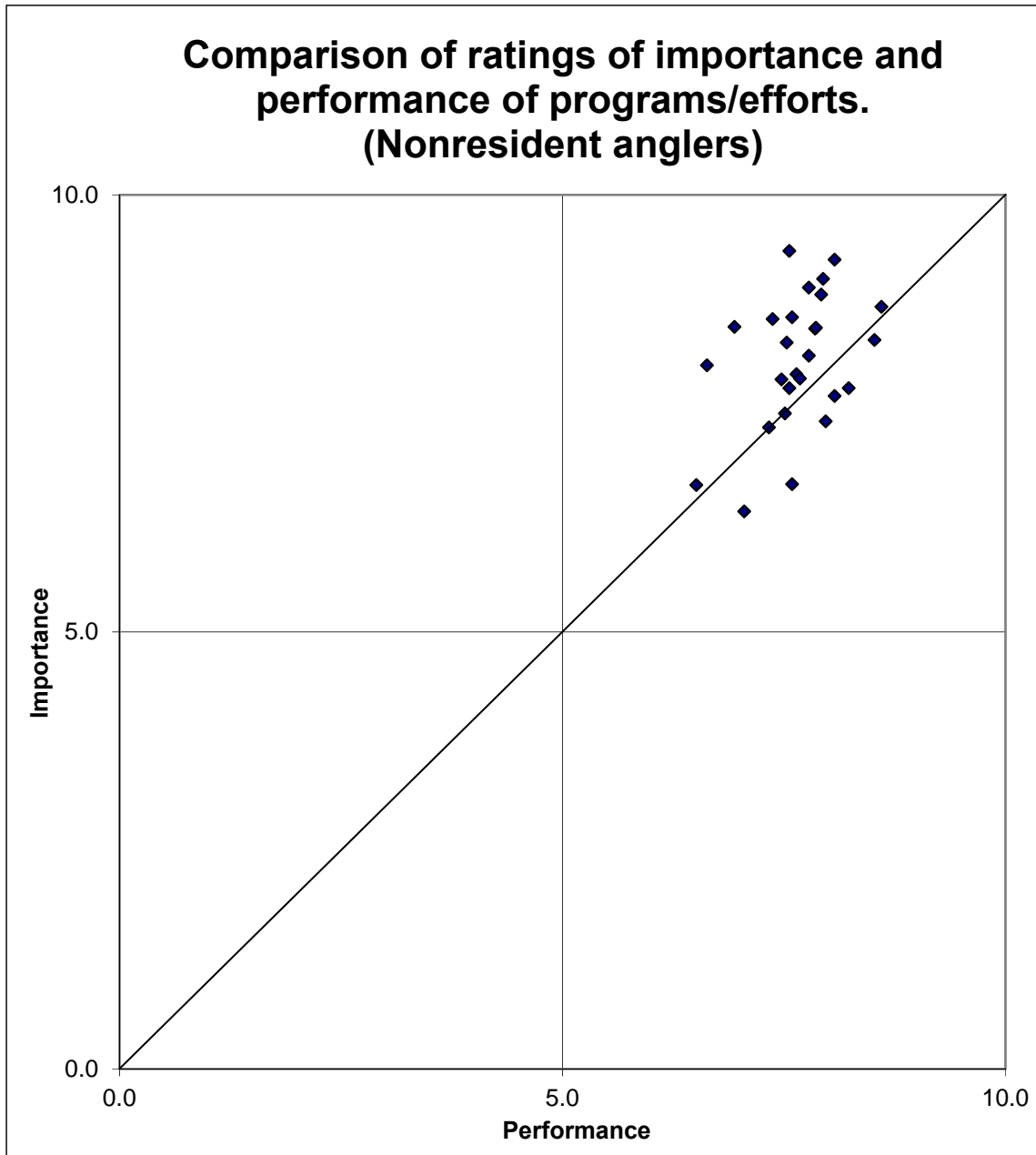


Figure 5.8.7. Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Nonresident Anglers

HUNTER/TRAPPER/ANGLER AND NON-CONSUMPTIVE DATA

The mean ratings for hunters/trappers/anglers and those who did not do any of those three sports are presented in Tables 5.8.14 and 5.8.15. Scatterplots are also presented from the data (Figures 5.8.8 and 5.8.9).

Table 5.8.14. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

Hunters/trappers/anglers	Importance	Performance	Difference
Managing species that are hunted	9.1	8.0	1.1
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.5	7.6	0.9
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.2	8.5	0.7
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.6	7.5	1.1
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	7.0	7.0	0.0
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.9	8.0	0.9
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.4	7.9	0.5
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.5	7.8	0.7
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.6	7.8	0.8
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.5	6.8	-0.3
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.0	7.8	0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.2	8.5	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	7.6	7.8	-0.1
Raising and stocking fish	8.5	8.3	0.2
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.1	8.4	0.7
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.5	0.2
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.0	8.3	-0.3
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	8.1	7.6	0.5
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.7	8.3	0.5
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.0	7.9	1.1
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.7	6.6	1.1
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.2	7.2	0.0
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.1	7.5	0.6
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.8	6.7	0.1
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.2	7.8	0.4
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.0	7.3	0.7
Providing hunter education	9.0	8.1	0.9

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

Table 5.8.15. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Non-Consumptives

Non hunters/trappers/anglers	Importance	Performance	Difference
Managing species that are hunted	8.8	8.0	0.8
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.3	7.4	0.9
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.3	8.5	0.9
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.3	8.0	0.3
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	6.3	7.1	-0.8
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	9.0	8.2	0.8
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.8	8.4	0.4
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.8	8.3	0.5
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.9	8.2	0.7
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.6	7.5	-0.9
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	8.0	8.1	0.0
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	7.5	8.6	-1.1
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	6.9	8.1	-1.2
Raising and stocking fish	8.0	7.9	0.0
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.1	8.3	0.8
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.5	0.2
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.2	8.4	-0.1
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	7.8	7.4	0.4
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.7	8.3	0.3
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.0	8.2	0.8
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	6.9	6.3	0.6
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.6	7.3	0.4
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.2	7.9	0.4
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.4	7.0	-0.6
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.3	7.5	0.8
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.2	7.2	1.0
Providing hunter education	8.9	8.2	0.6

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

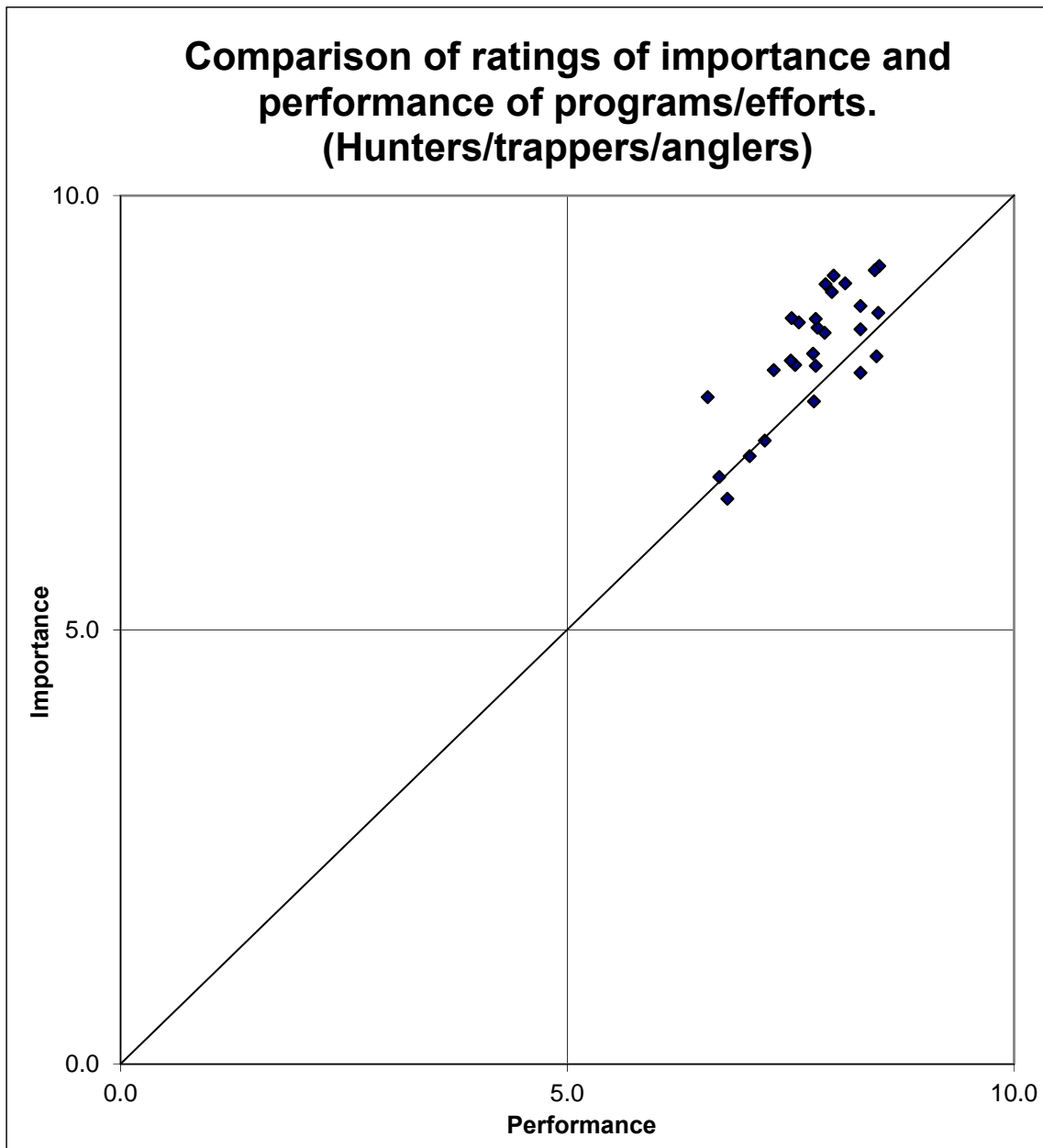


Figure 5.8.8. Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

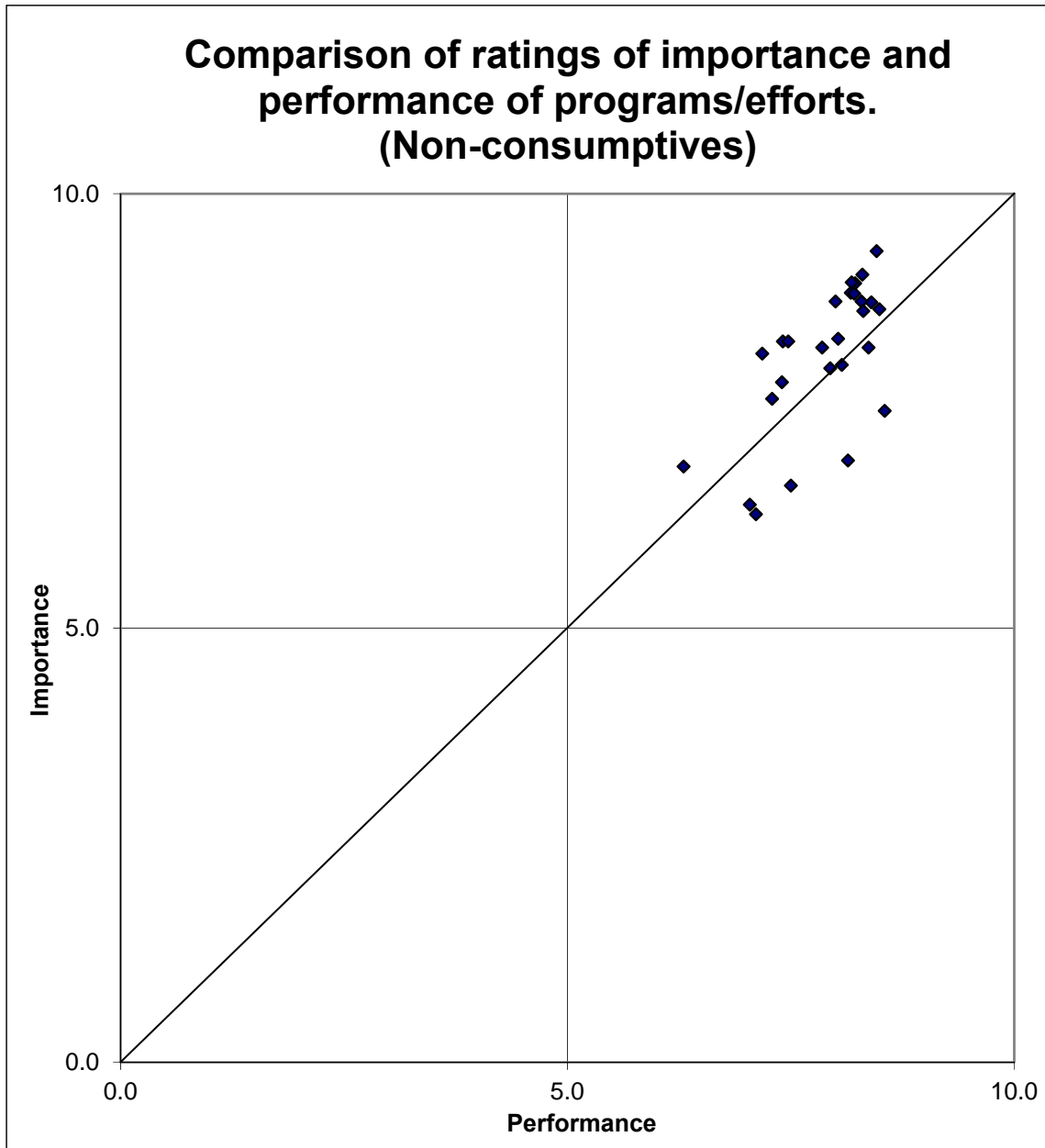


Figure 5.8.9. Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Non-Consumptives

DATA FOR NON-CONSUMPTIVE WILDLIFE VIEWERS

The last set of data shows the mean ratings for wildlife viewers who do not hunt, trap, or fish (Table 5.8.16 and Figure 5.8.10).

Table 5.8.16. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance, Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers	Importance	Performance	Difference
Managing species that are hunted	8.9	7.8	1.1
Managing species that are not hunted / fished, incl. species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.4	7.4	1.0
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.3	8.2	1.1
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.1	7.8	0.3
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	5.9	6.8	-0.8
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	8.9	8.0	0.9
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through ed. and by enforcing boating laws / regulations	8.5	8.1	0.4
Conducting fish / wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.6	8.2	0.5
Responding to, investigating, mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, incl. through educational programs	8.7	8.0	0.7
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	6.3	7.0	-0.7
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	7.8	7.8	0.0
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	7.3	8.6	-1.2
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	6.5	8.0	-1.5
Raising and stocking fish	7.8	7.8	0.0
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	9.1	8.2	0.9
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	8.7	8.5	0.2
Issuing watercraft registrations	8.3	8.6	-0.3
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, incl. wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	7.7	7.2	0.5
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.6	8.4	0.3
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.2	8.1	1.0
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	7.0	6.1	0.9
Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	7.7	7.2	0.5
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.4	7.7	0.7
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	6.5	6.9	-0.4
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	8.4	7.5	0.9
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.4	7.2	1.2
Providing hunter education	9.0	8.3	0.7

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

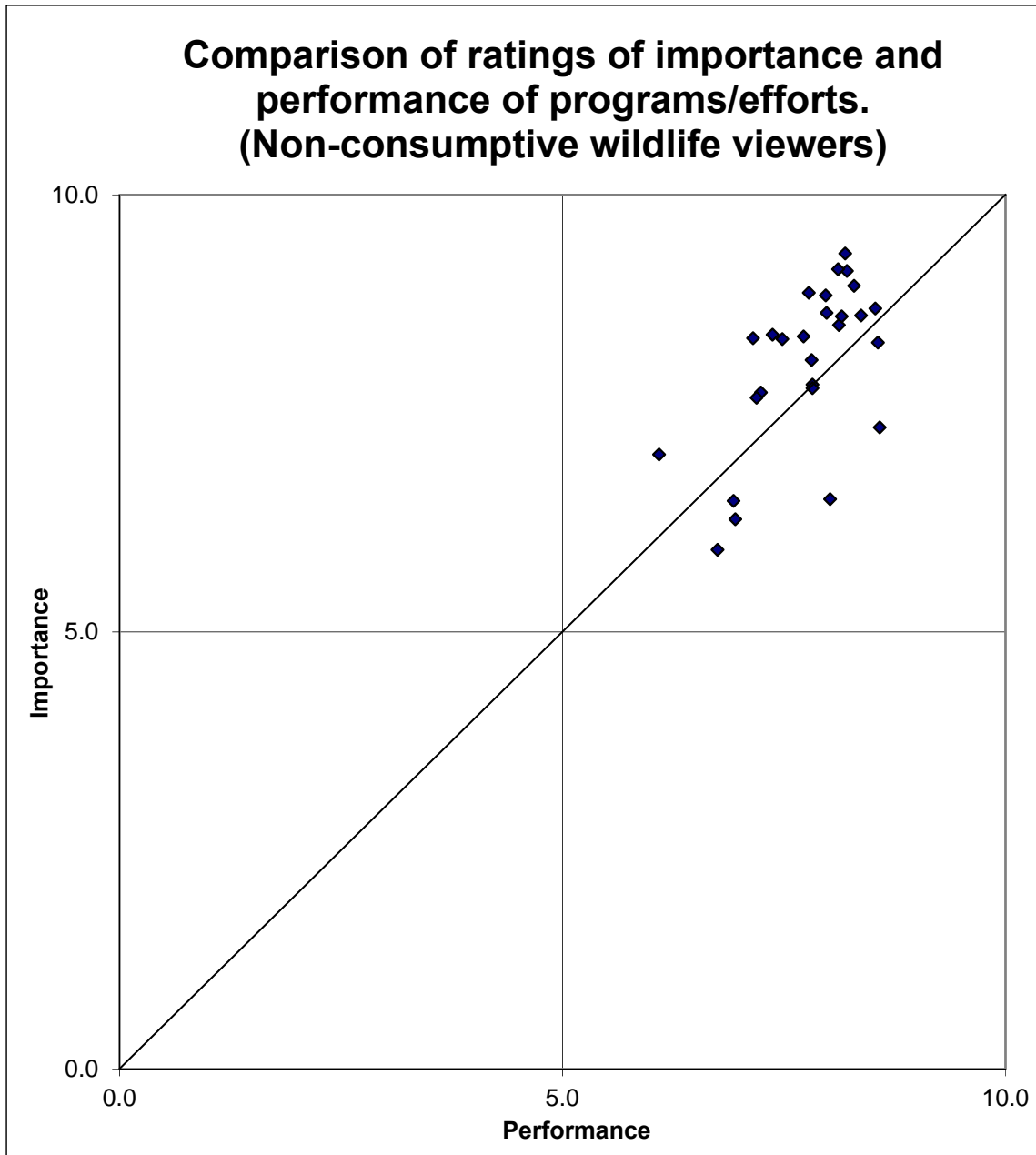


Figure 5.8.10. Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

5.9. OPINIONS ON LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

The survey asked about the clarity of Wyoming’s hunting and fishing regulations and their licensing requirements (two questions about hunting among those who hunted, and two about fishing among those who fished), and this section looks at hunting first. In general, hunters’ ratings of the clarity of the regulations and licensing requirements are positive (Figures 5.9.1 and 5.9.2). Nonetheless, about a quarter of hunters only *moderately* agree rather than *strongly* agree with the statements. Regional data are shown in Tables 5.9.1 and 5.9.2.

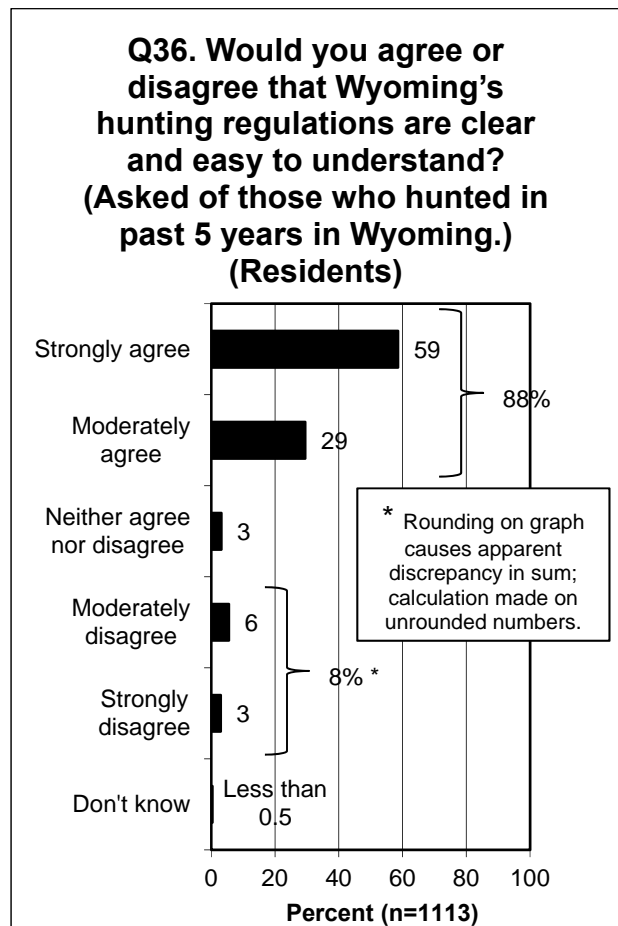


Figure 5.9.1. Perceptions of the Clarity of Hunting Regulations Among Residents

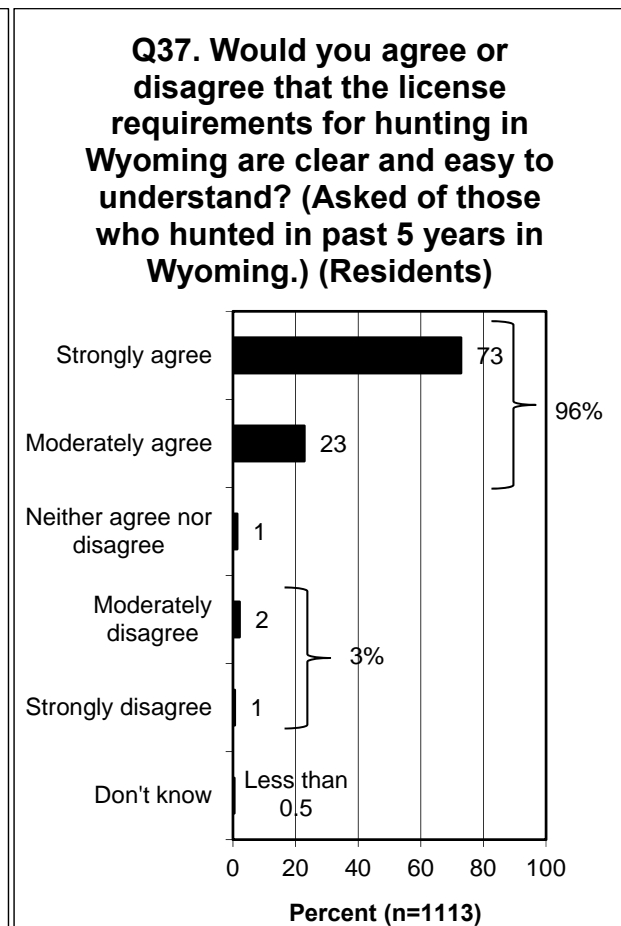


Figure 5.9.2. Perceptions of the Clarity of Hunting Licensing Requirements, Among Residents

Table 5.9.1. Perceptions of the Clarity of Hunting Regulations, Regionally

Q36. Would you agree or disagree that Wyoming’s hunting regulations are clear and easy to understand? (Asked of those who hunted in past 5 years in Wyoming.) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	70%	42%	59%	51%	66%	52%	63%	61%
Moderately agree	20%	40%	31%	35%	28%	35%	22%	28%
Neither agree nor disagree	0%	2%	6%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Moderately disagree	5%	6%	1%	7%	1%	7%	8%	7%
Strongly disagree	4%	11%	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	1%
Don't know	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%

Table 5.9.2. Perceptions of the Clarity of Hunting Licensing Requirements, Regionally

Q37. Would you agree or disagree that the license requirements for hunting in Wyoming are clear and easy to understand? (Asked of those who hunted in past 5 years in Wyoming.) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	77%	76%	73%	64%	79%	68%	72%	71%
Moderately agree	19%	16%	22%	29%	16%	27%	25%	26%
Neither agree nor disagree	0%	0%	4%	0%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Moderately disagree	2%	5%	0%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Don't know	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%

Anglers' ratings of the clarity of the regulations and licensing requirements are also positive, and are slightly better than hunters' ratings (Figures 5.9.3 and 5.9.4). Regional data are shown in Tables 5.9.3 and 5.9.4.

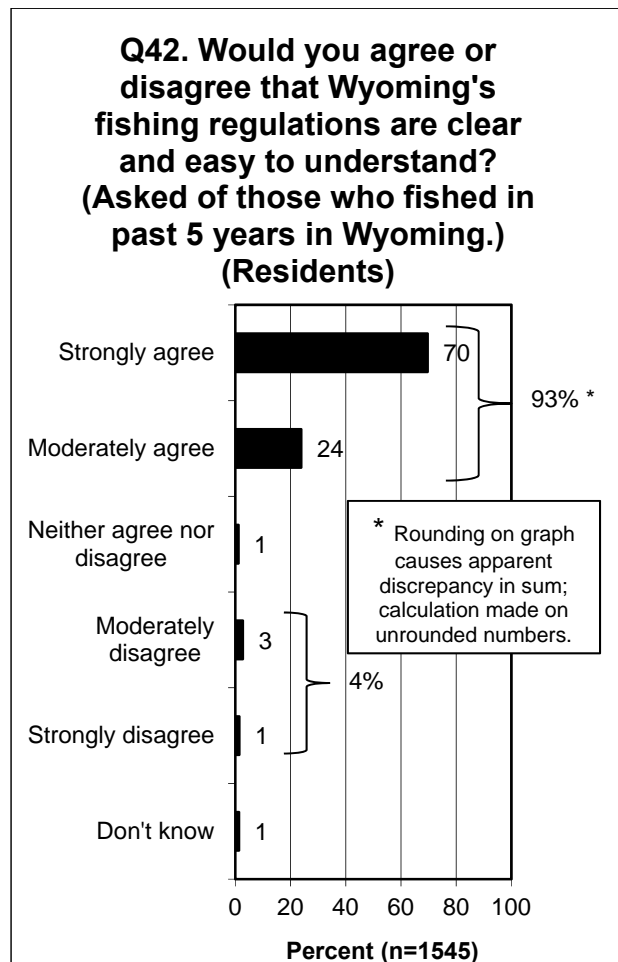


Figure 5.9.3. Perceptions of the Clarity of Fishing Regulations Among Residents

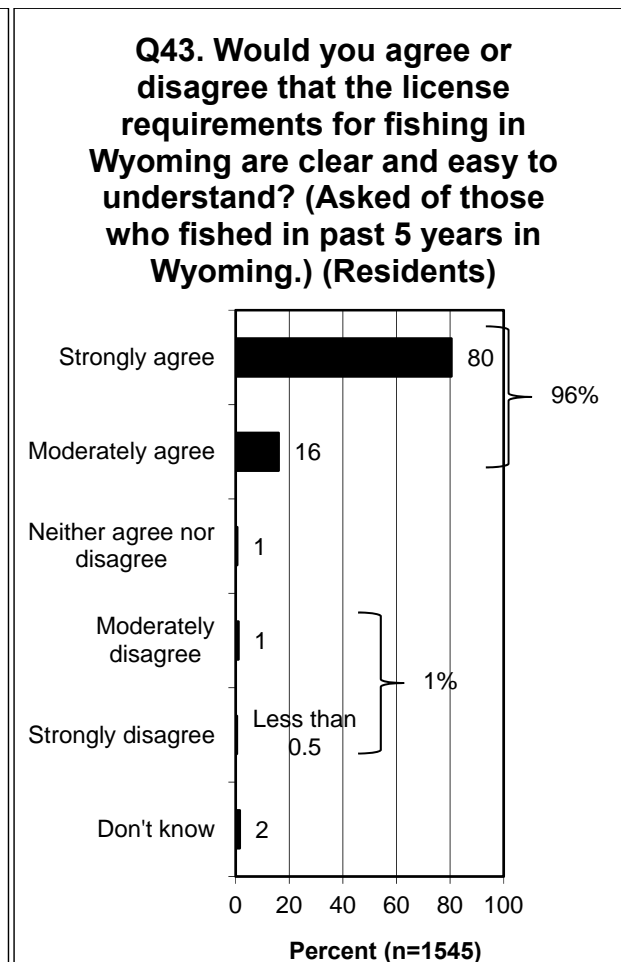


Figure 5.9.4. Perceptions of the Clarity of Fishing Licensing Requirements, Among Residents

Table 5.9.3. Perceptions of the Clarity of Fishing Regulations, Regionally

Q42. Would you agree or disagree that Wyoming's fishing regulations are clear and easy to understand? (Asked of those who fished in past 5 years in Wyoming.) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	70%	58%	62%	60%	71%	72%	74%	71%
Moderately agree	24%	33%	33%	28%	20%	23%	20%	23%
Neither agree nor disagree	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%
Moderately disagree	2%	4%	1%	5%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Strongly disagree	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Don't know	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%	1%	1%	1%

Table 5.9.4. Perceptions of the Clarity of Fishing Licensing Requirements, Regionally

Q43. Would you agree or disagree that the license requirements for fishing in Wyoming are clear and easy to understand? (Asked of those who fished in past 5 years in Wyoming.) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	74%	73%	75%	74%	79%	80%	83%	84%
Moderately agree	22%	22%	19%	20%	15%	17%	15%	13%
Neither agree nor disagree	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Moderately disagree	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Strongly disagree	0%	1%	3%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	2%	1%	3%	4%	2%	1%	2%	1%

5.10. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT'S WEBSITE AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

The most basic question asked respondents, in an open-ended format that allowed any top-of-mind answer, to say where they typically look for information on wildlife, fish, and related outdoor recreation in Wyoming. Internet sources predominate, including the Game and Fish Department website (Figure 5.10.1). Nonetheless, direct contact with agency personnel is relatively high in the ranking. Regional results are shown in Table 5.10.1.

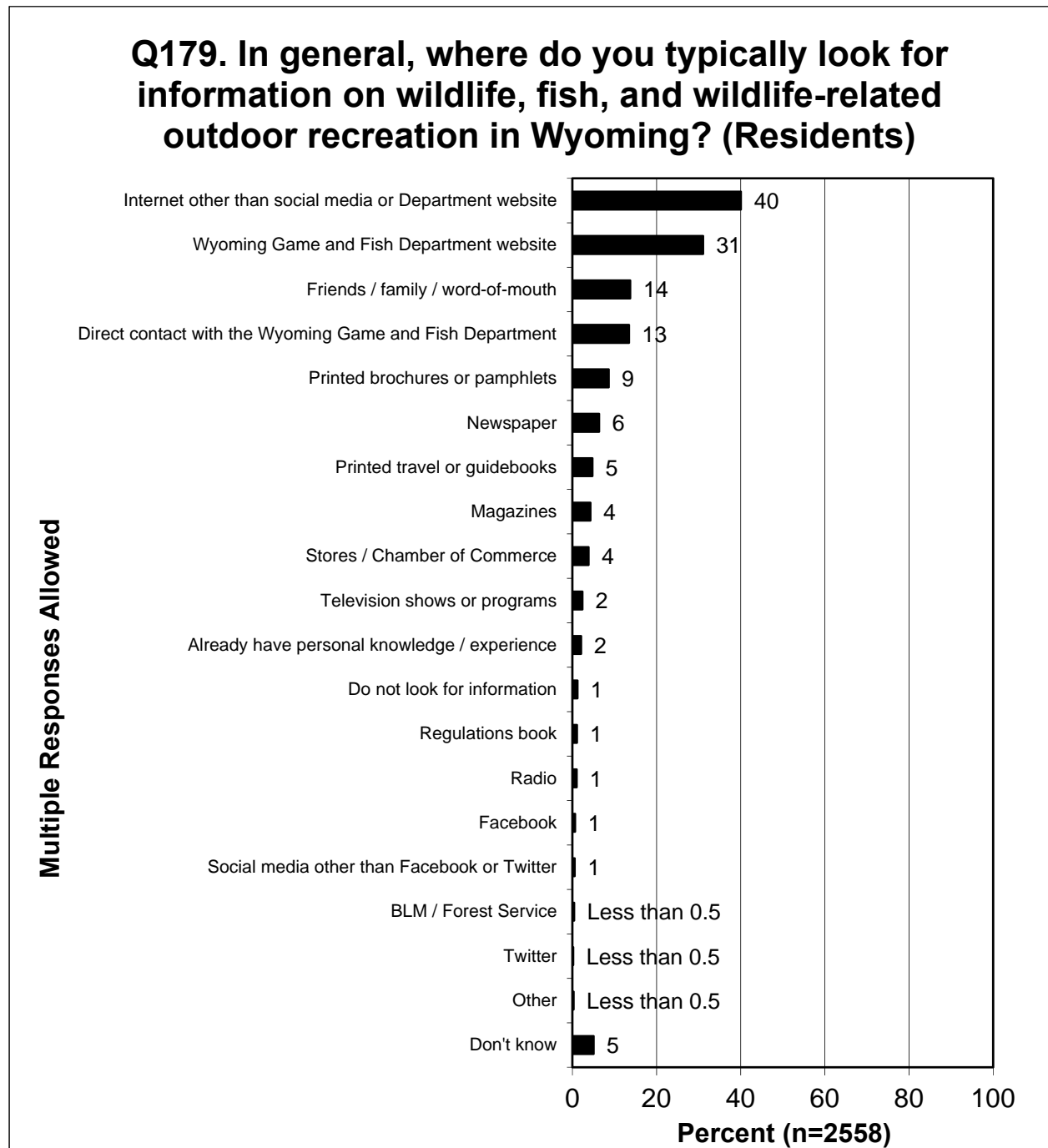


Figure 5.10.1. Sources of Information Among Residents

Table 5.10.1. Sources of Information Among Residents, Regionally

Q179. In general, where do you typically look for information on wildlife, fish, and wildlife-related outdoor recreation in Wyoming? (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Internet other than social media or Department website	47%	36%	33%	33%	41%	43%	36%	44%
Wyoming Game and Fish Department website	27%	27%	32%	28%	27%	35%	33%	31%
Friends / family / word-of-mouth	14%	18%	23%	17%	14%	13%	13%	11%
Direct contact with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department	19%	12%	16%	28%	16%	14%	13%	11%
Printed brochures or pamphlets	4%	11%	7%	9%	9%	8%	9%	9%
Newspaper	10%	7%	7%	7%	7%	5%	7%	5%
Printed travel or guidebooks	2%	5%	3%	3%	3%	5%	7%	5%
Magazines	3%	4%	7%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Stores / Chamber of Commerce	2%	2%	6%	2%	5%	4%	4%	3%
Television shows or programs	1%	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%	3%	3%
Already have personal knowledge / experience	2%	3%	1%	4%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Do not look for information	0%	3%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Regulations book	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Radio	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	2%
Facebook	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%
Social media other than Facebook or Twitter	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	1%	1%
BLM / Forest Service	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Twitter	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Other	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	6%	8%	6%	7%	4%	3%	5%	5%

The results among hunters and anglers are shown in Figures 5.10.2 and 5.10.3). The data run of consumptives is next (Figure 5.10.4), followed by non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.10.5).

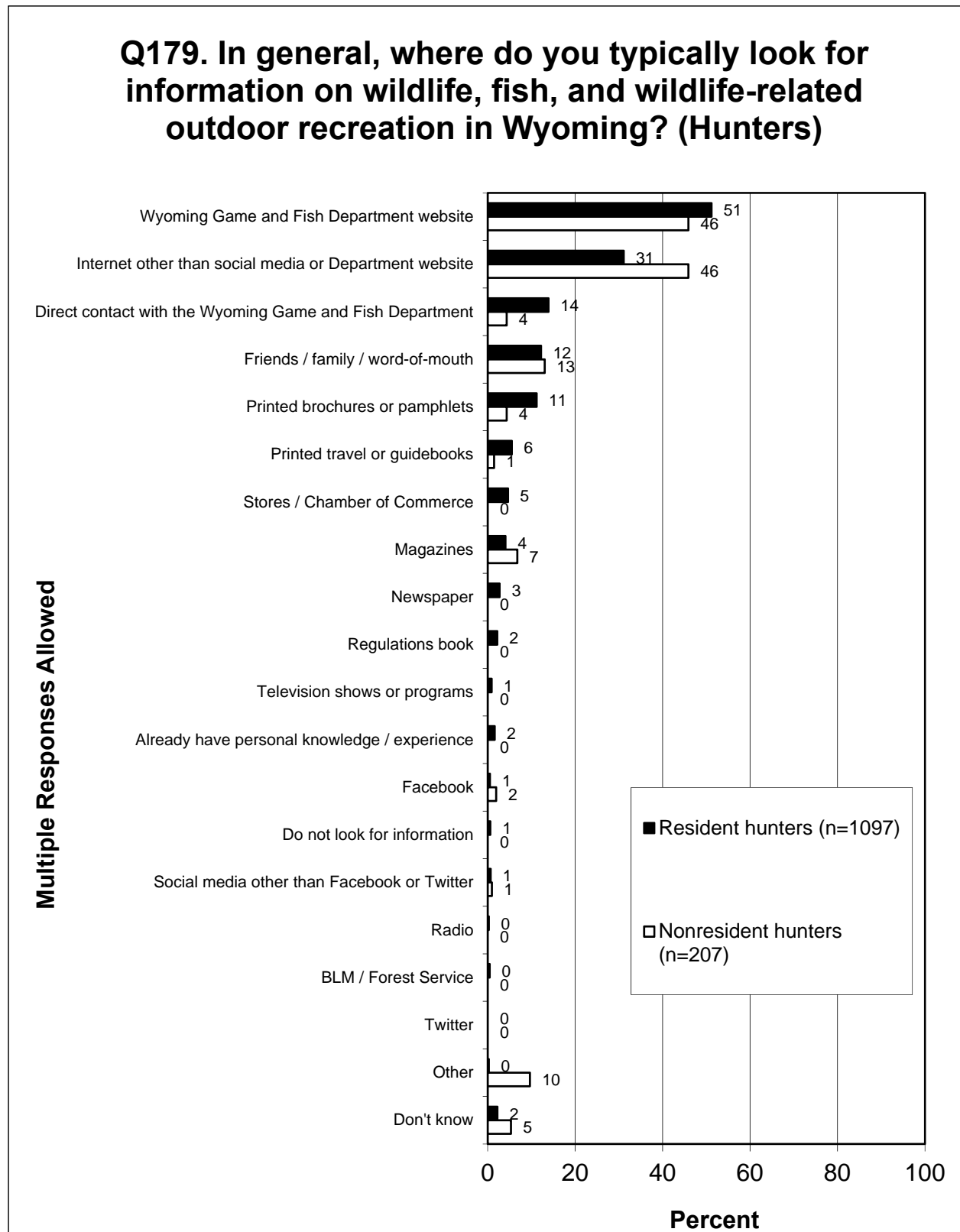


Figure 5.10.2. Sources of Information Among Hunters

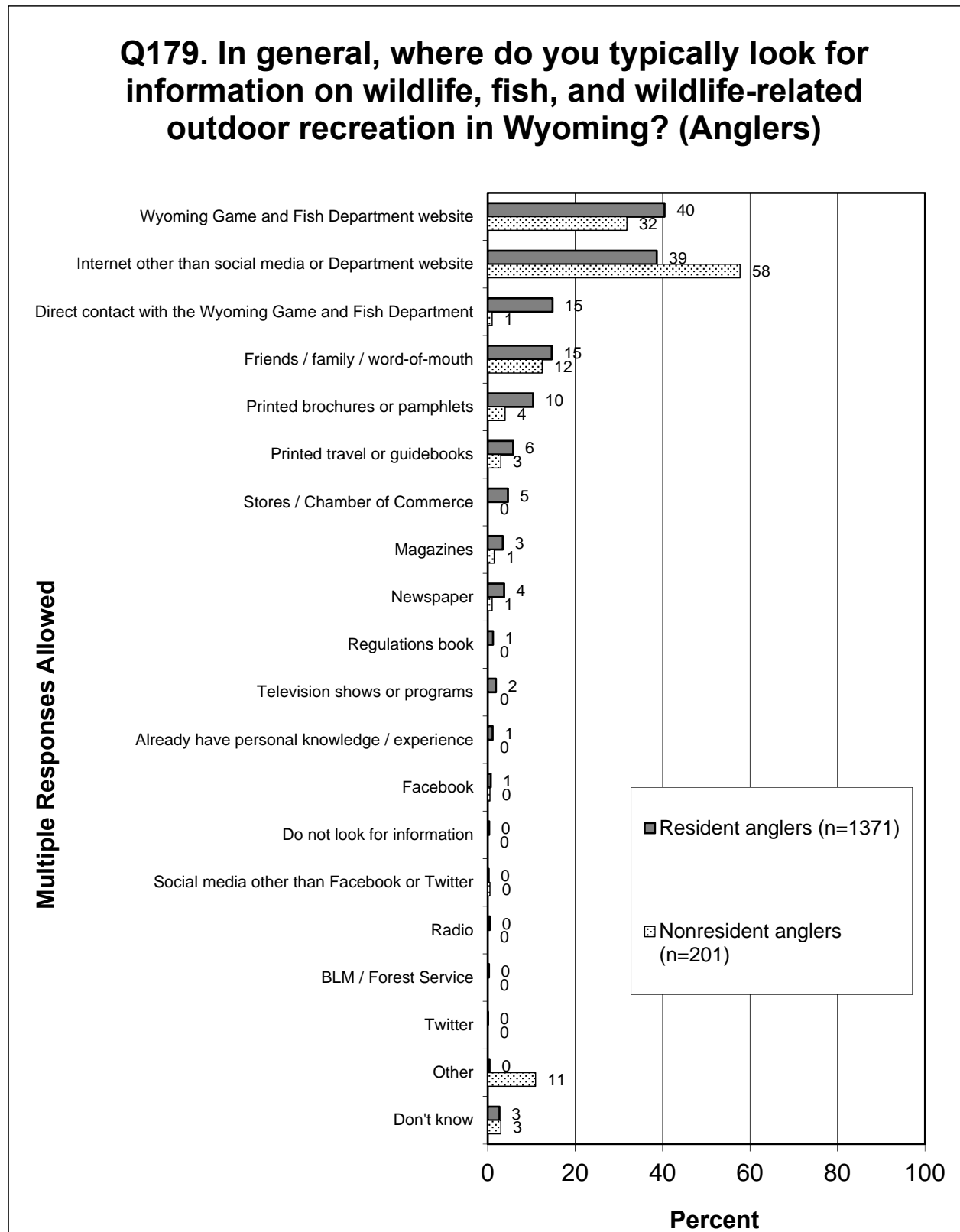


Figure 5.10.3. Sources of Information Among Anglers

Q179. In general, where do you typically look for information on wildlife, fish, and wildlife-related outdoor recreation in Wyoming? (Consumptives vs. non-consumptives)

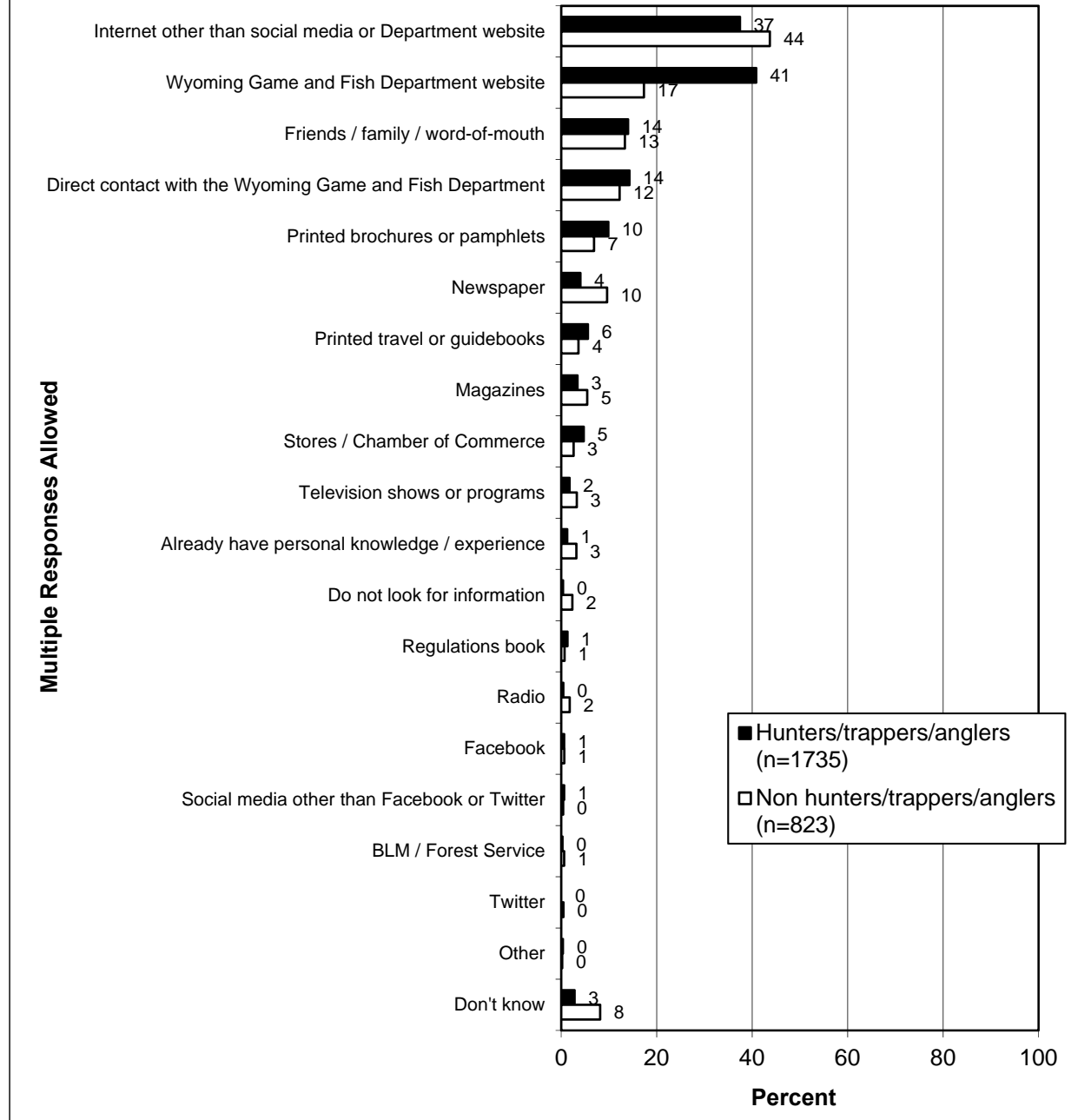


Figure 5.10.4. Sources of Information Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

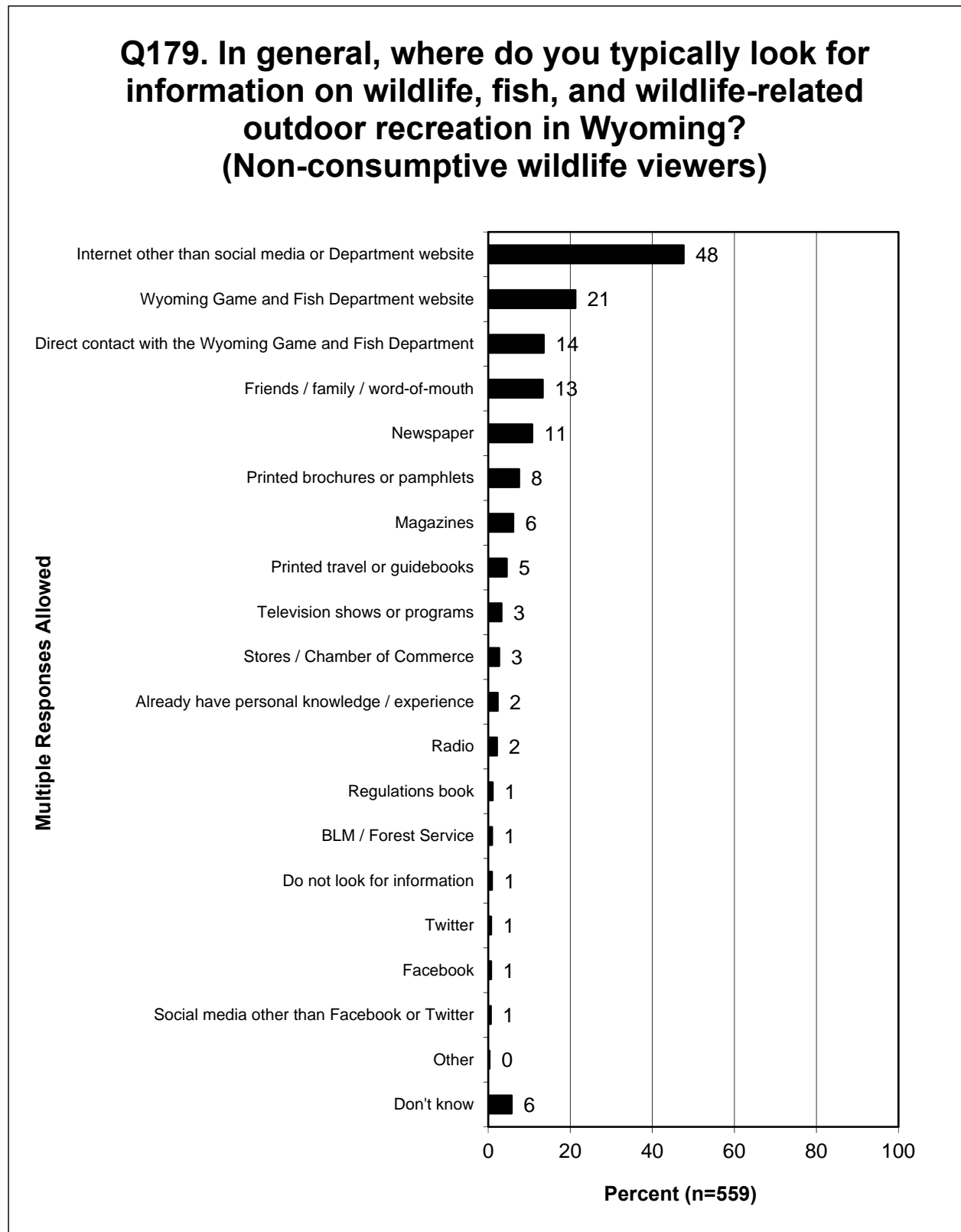


Figure 5.10.5. Sources of Information Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

Regardless of responses to the open-ended question above, all respondents were asked if they had ever visited the Wyoming Game and Fish Department website. Two thirds of residents have visited the website at some time (Figure 5.10.6). Visitation is particularly high among residents of the Lander and Sheridan Regions (Table 5.10.2). Results are also included for hunters and anglers (Figures 5.10.7 and 5.10.8), consumptives vs. non-consumptives (Figure 5.10.9), and for non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.10.10).

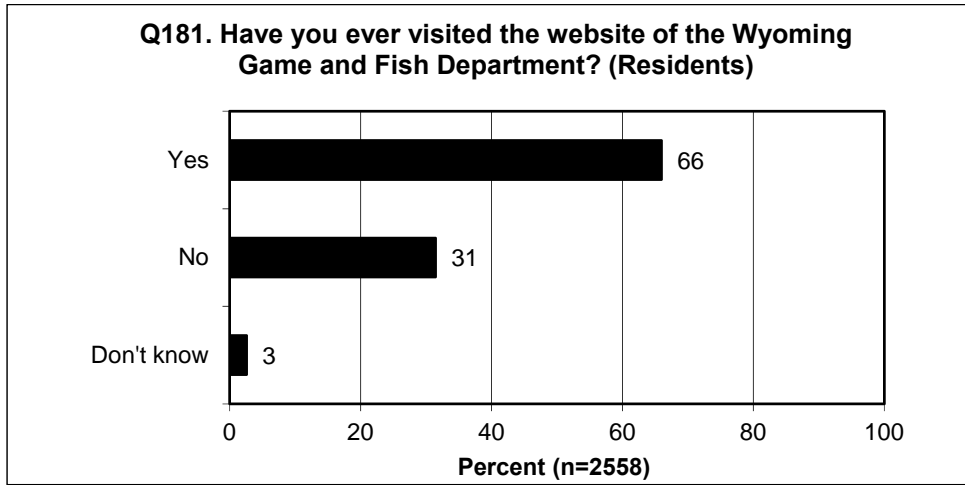


Figure 5.10.6. Visitation to the Game and Fish Department's Website Among Residents

Table 5.10.2. Visitation to the Game and Fish Department's Website, Regionally

Q181. Have you ever visited the website of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Yes	64%	57%	71%	66%	68%	72%	65%	64%
No	33%	41%	27%	32%	31%	26%	34%	31%
Don't know	3%	2%	2%	2%	1%	3%	1%	4%

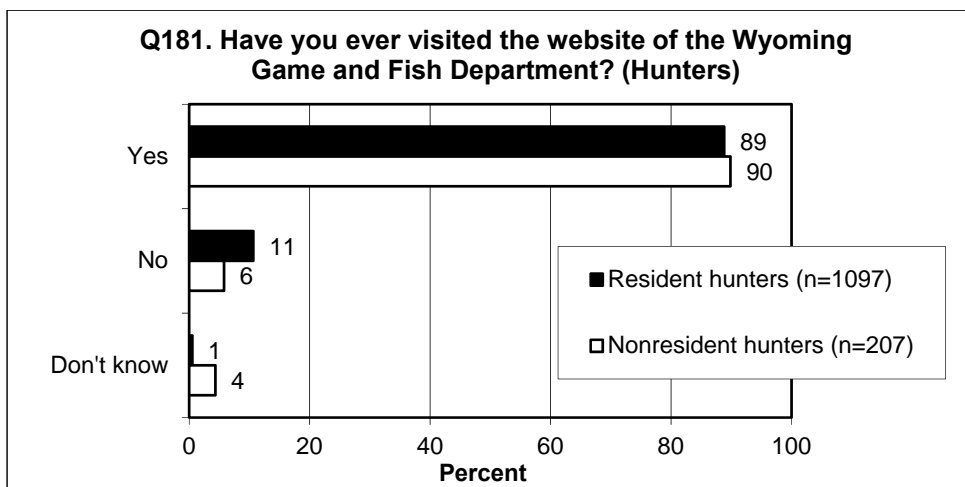


Figure 5.10.7. Visitation to the Game and Fish Department's Website Among Hunters

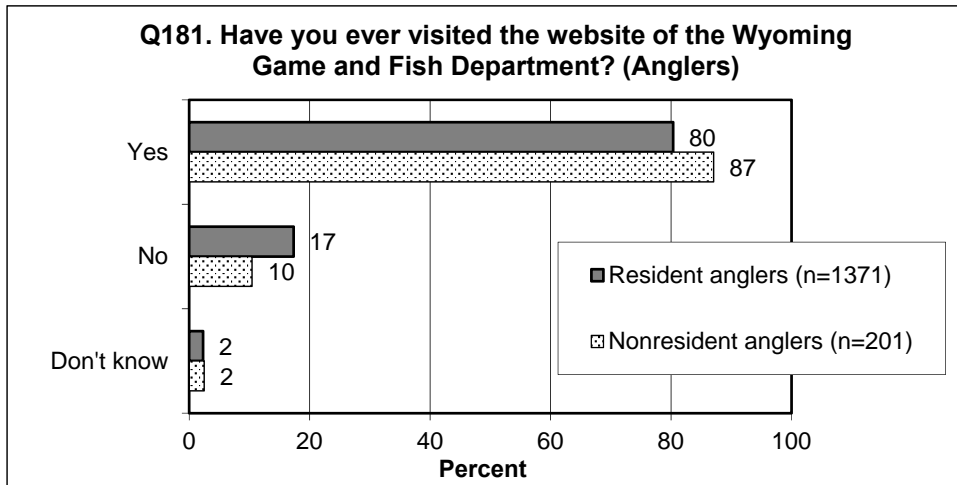


Figure 5.10.8. Visitation to the Game and Fish Department’s Website Among Anglers

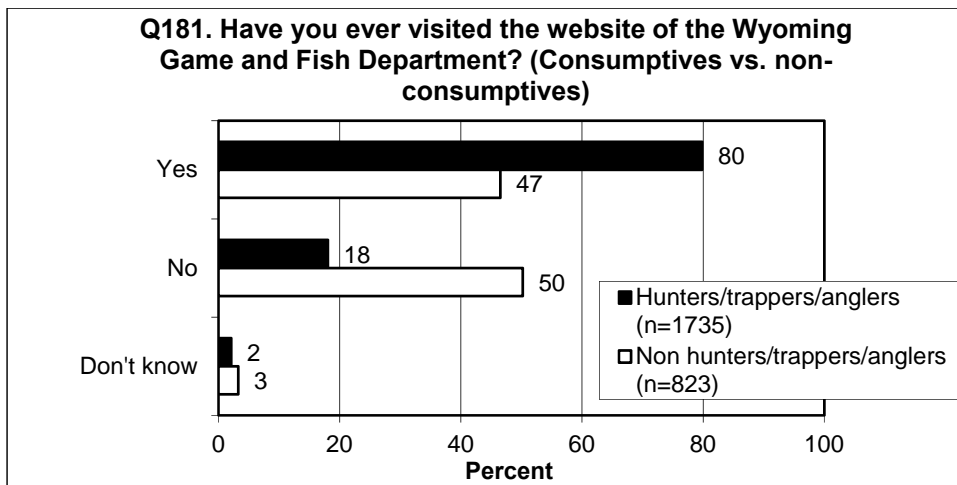


Figure 5.10.9. Visitation to the Game and Fish Department’s Website Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

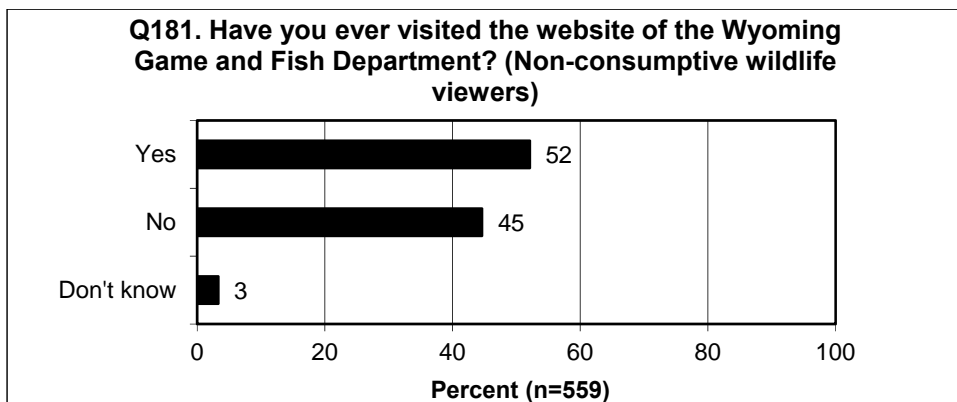


Figure 5.10.10. Visitation to the Game and Fish Department’s Website Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

A follow-up question asked whether website visitors were able to obtain the information that they were seeking. Among residents who visited the site, 82% agree that the information was “easy to find” (Figure 5.10.11). Regional results are shown in Table 5.10.3.

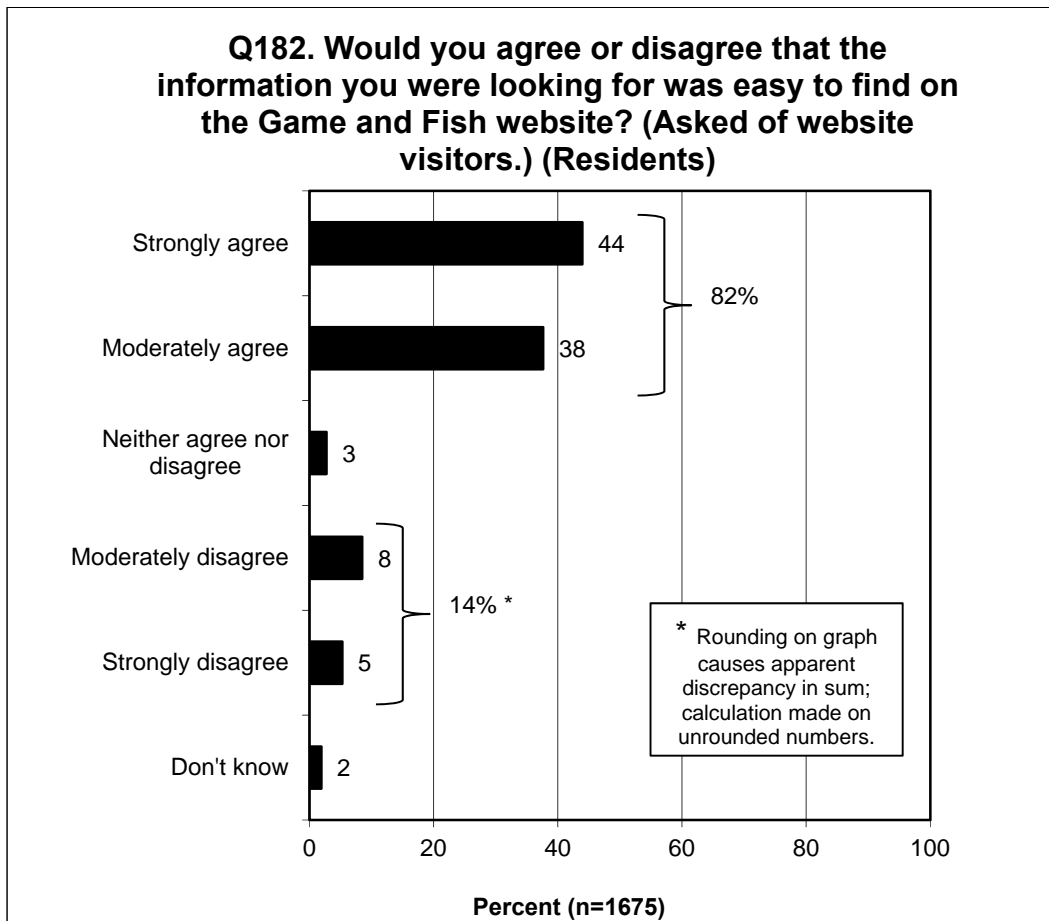


Figure 5.10.11. Ease of Finding Information on the Website, Among Residents

Table 5.10.3. Ease of Finding Information on the Website, Regionally

Q182. Would you agree or disagree that the information you were looking for was easy to find on the Game and Fish website? (Asked of website visitors.) (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	41%	41%	49%	42%	50%	47%	43%	40%
Moderately agree	41%	33%	36%	39%	31%	36%	39%	43%
Neither agree nor disagree	7%	3%	3%	4%	3%	2%	4%	1%
Moderately disagree	6%	13%	4%	8%	12%	5%	8%	9%
Strongly disagree	2%	7%	6%	6%	3%	6%	6%	5%
Don't know	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%	1%

Results of the follow-up question are also shown for hunters (Figure 5.10.12), anglers (Figure 5.10.13), hunters/trappers/anglers collectively (Figure 5.10.14), and for non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.10.15).

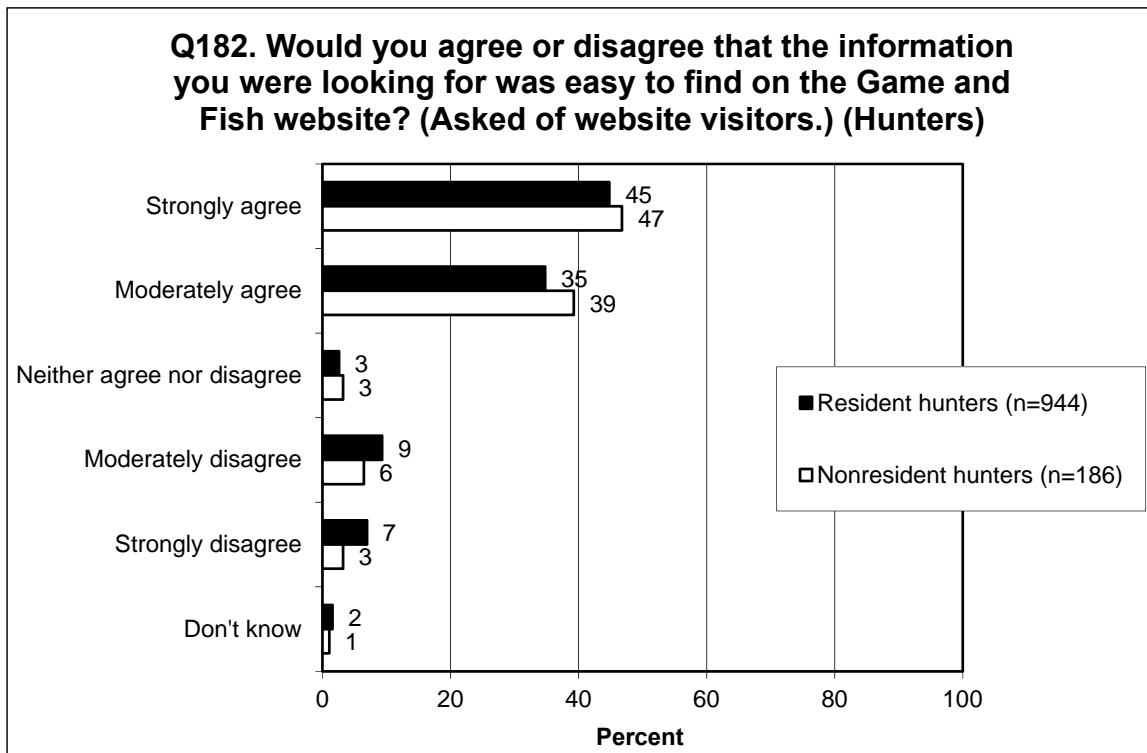


Figure 5.10.12. Ease of Finding Information on the Website, Among Hunters

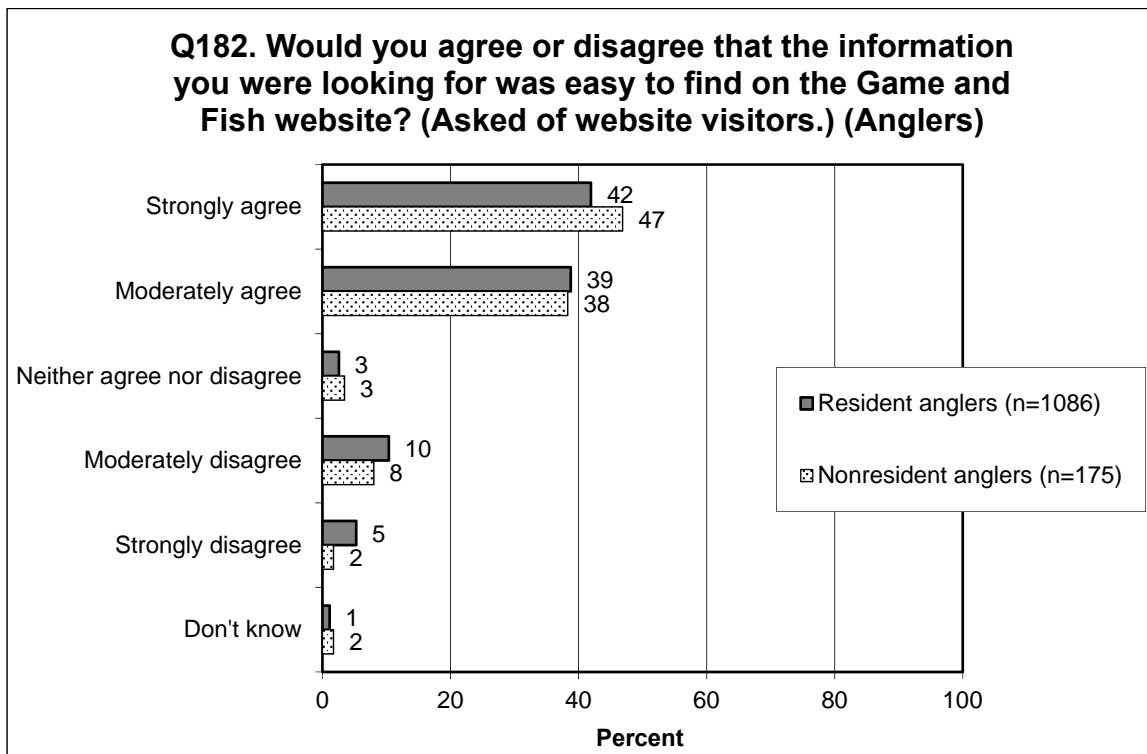


Figure 5.10.13. Ease of Finding Information on the Website, Among Anglers

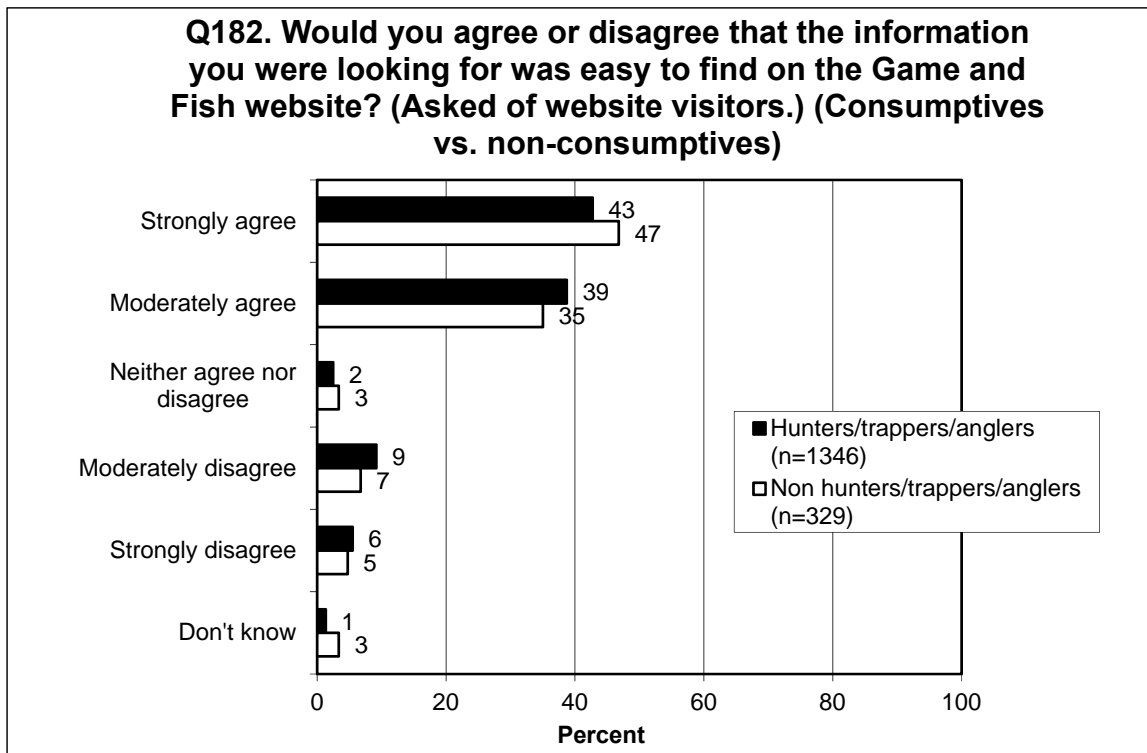


Figure 5.10.14. Ease of Finding Information on the Website, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

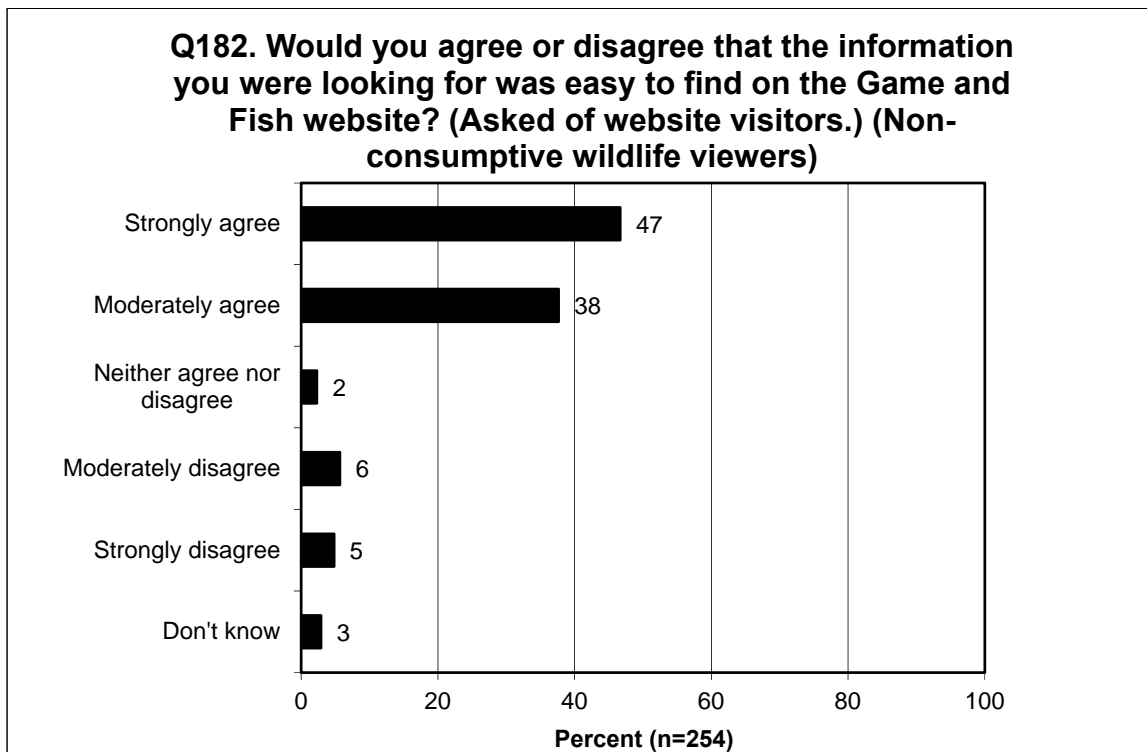


Figure 5.10.15. Ease of Finding Information on the Website, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

In follow-up, a second question, asked in an open-ended format, asked website users who disagreed that the information was easy to find to say what information they were seeking. Commonly named among residents overall were hunting license information, maps/access information, and hunting regulations (Figure 5.10.16). Regional information is shown in Table 5.10.4.

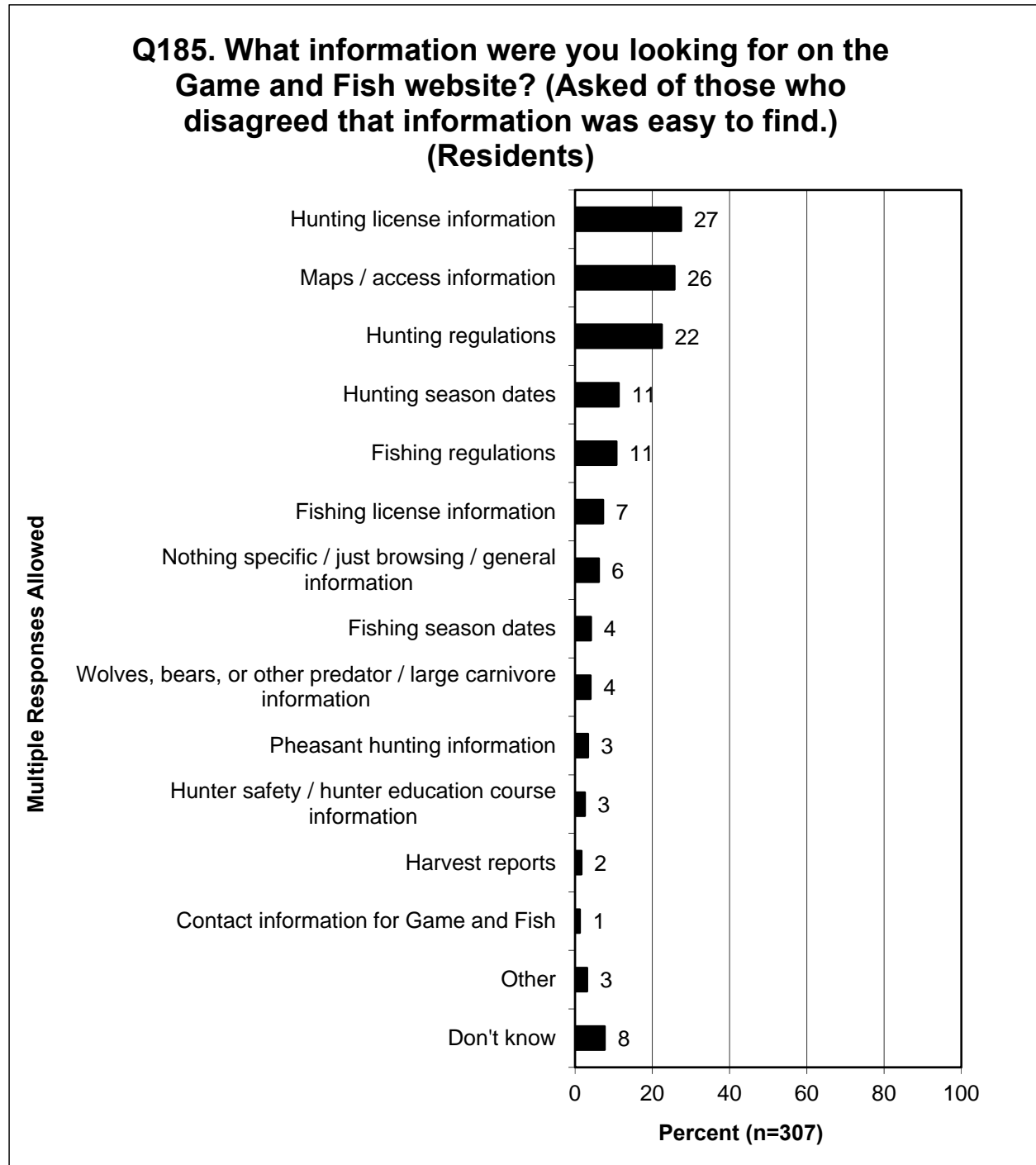


Figure 5.10.16. Information Sought on the Website, Among Residents

Table 5.10.4. Information Sought on the Website, Among Residents Regionally

Q185. What information were you looking for on the Game and Fish website? (Asked of those who disagreed that information was easy to find.) (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Hunting license information	20%	31%	40%	30%	32%	26%	25%	25%
Maps / access information	25%	21%	25%	25%	24%	45%	30%	19%
Hunting regulations	17%	27%	41%	34%	24%	25%	17%	19%
Hunting season dates	0%	7%	29%	9%	9%	2%	6%	18%
Fishing regulations	41%	22%	9%	10%	11%	17%	5%	5%
Fishing license information	20%	4%	3%	16%	13%	1%	8%	7%
Nothing specific / just browsing / general information	1%	14%	5%	12%	6%	7%	9%	2%
Fishing season dates	20%	3%	2%	6%	9%	1%	0%	5%
Wolves, bears, or other predator / large carnivore information	6%	4%	7%	7%	2%	14%	3%	1%
Pheasant hunting information	0%	1%	6%	0%	0%	12%	0%	4%
Hunter safety / hunter education course information	0%	3%	0%	12%	0%	4%	8%	0%
Harvest reports	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	3%	2%	2%
Contact information for Game and Fish	0%	3%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Other	7%	8%	0%	2%	1%	1%	5%	3%
Don't know	4%	3%	3%	1%	0%	16%	6%	12%

Hunters' responses are shown in Figure 5.10.17, while anglers' responses are presented in Figure 5.10.18. Results for this question are also shown for consumptives (Figure 5.10.19) and non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.10.20); some of these questions have low sample sizes because so few qualified for the question (they had to have visited the website *and* disagreed that the information they were looking for was easy to find).

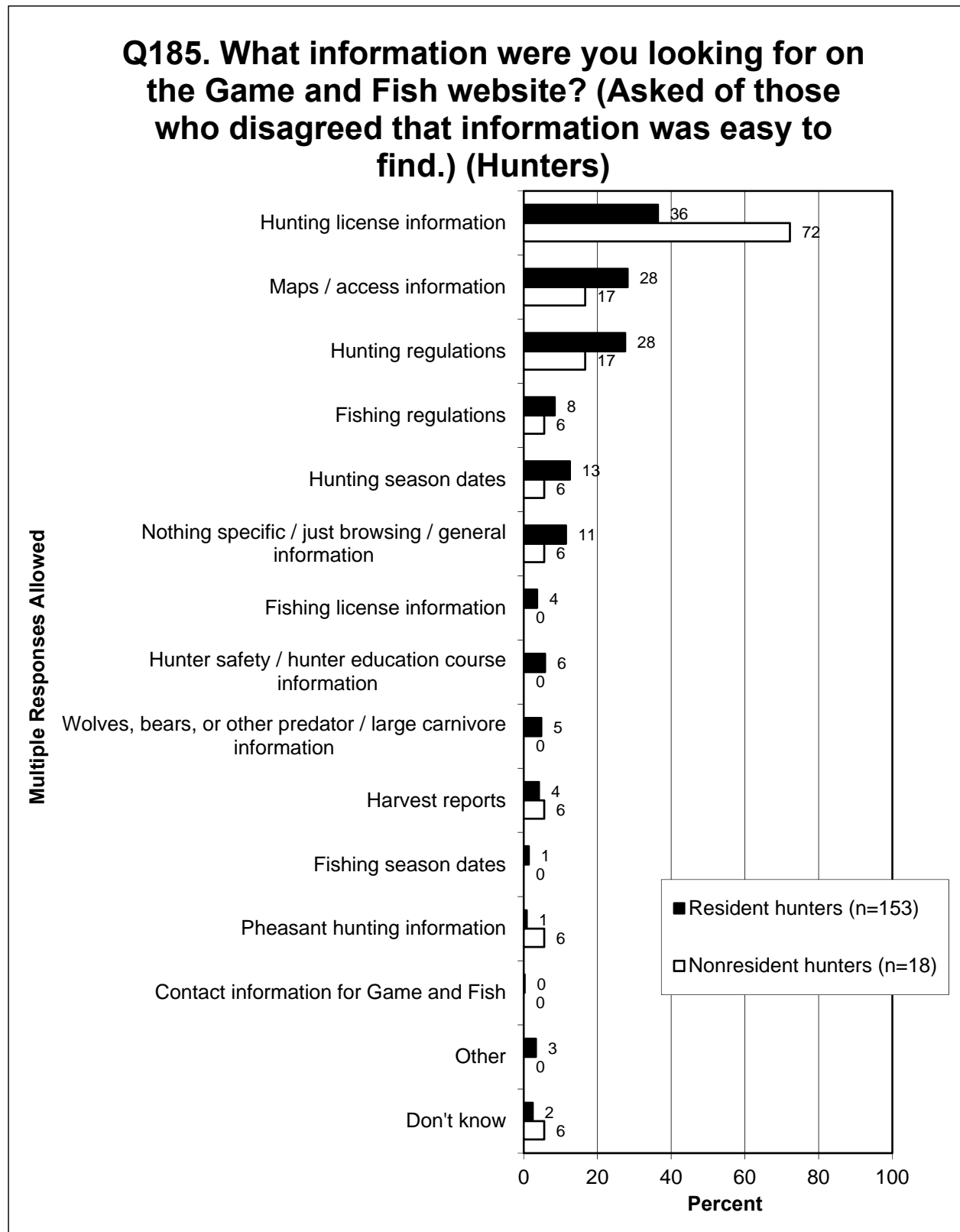


Figure 5.10.17. Information Sought on the Website, Among Hunters

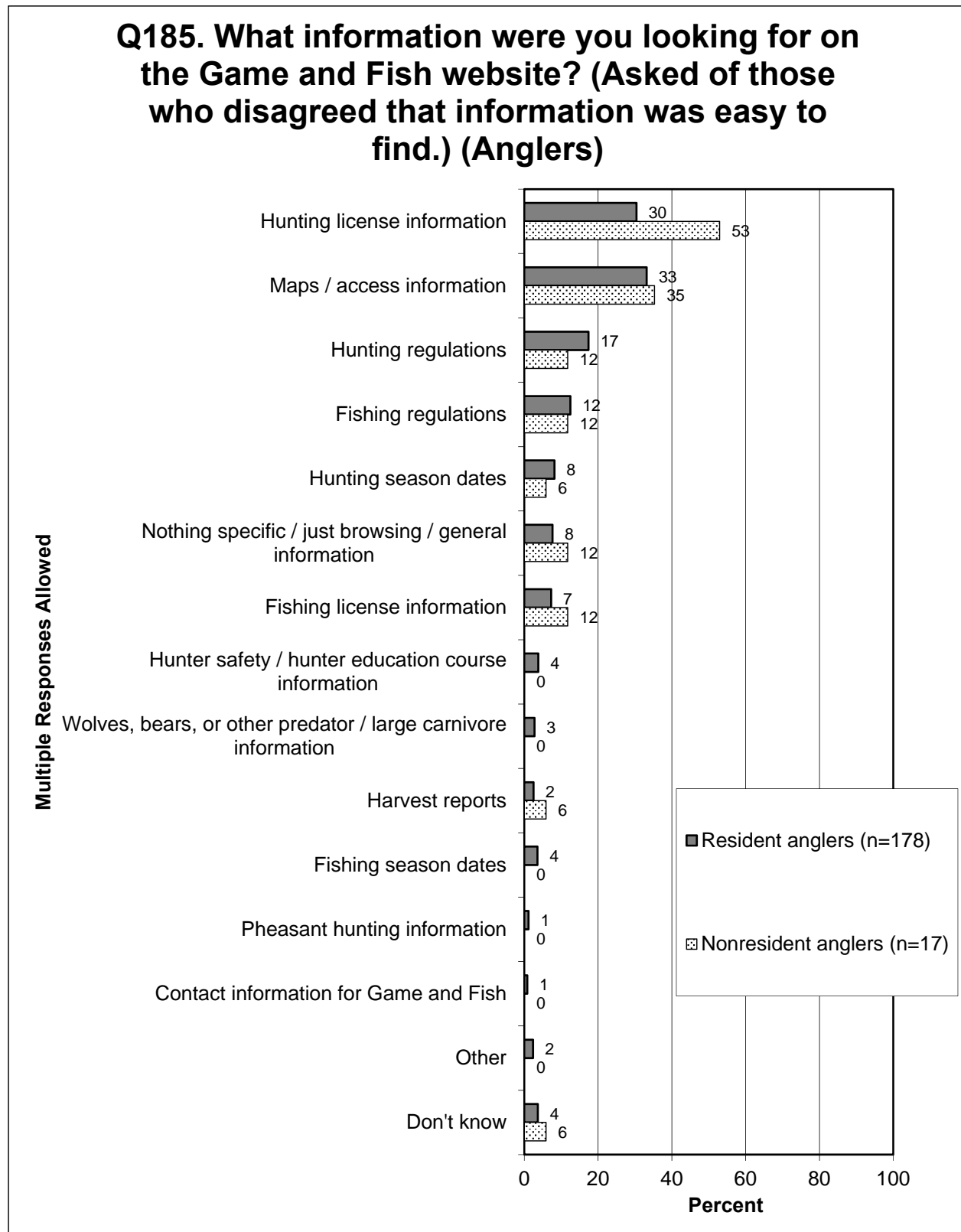


Figure 5.10.18. Information Sought on the Website, Among Anglers

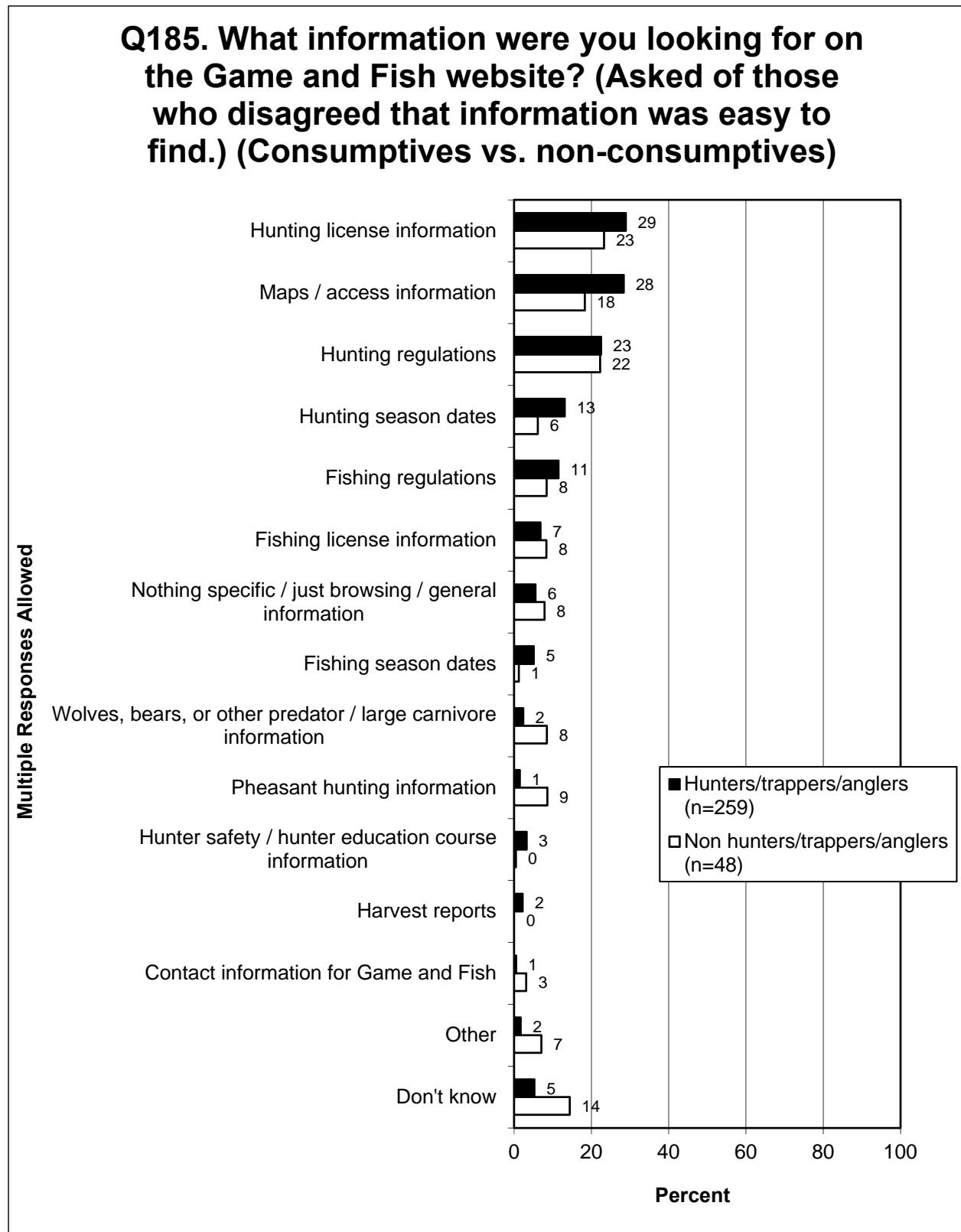


Figure 5.10.19. Information Sought on the Website, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

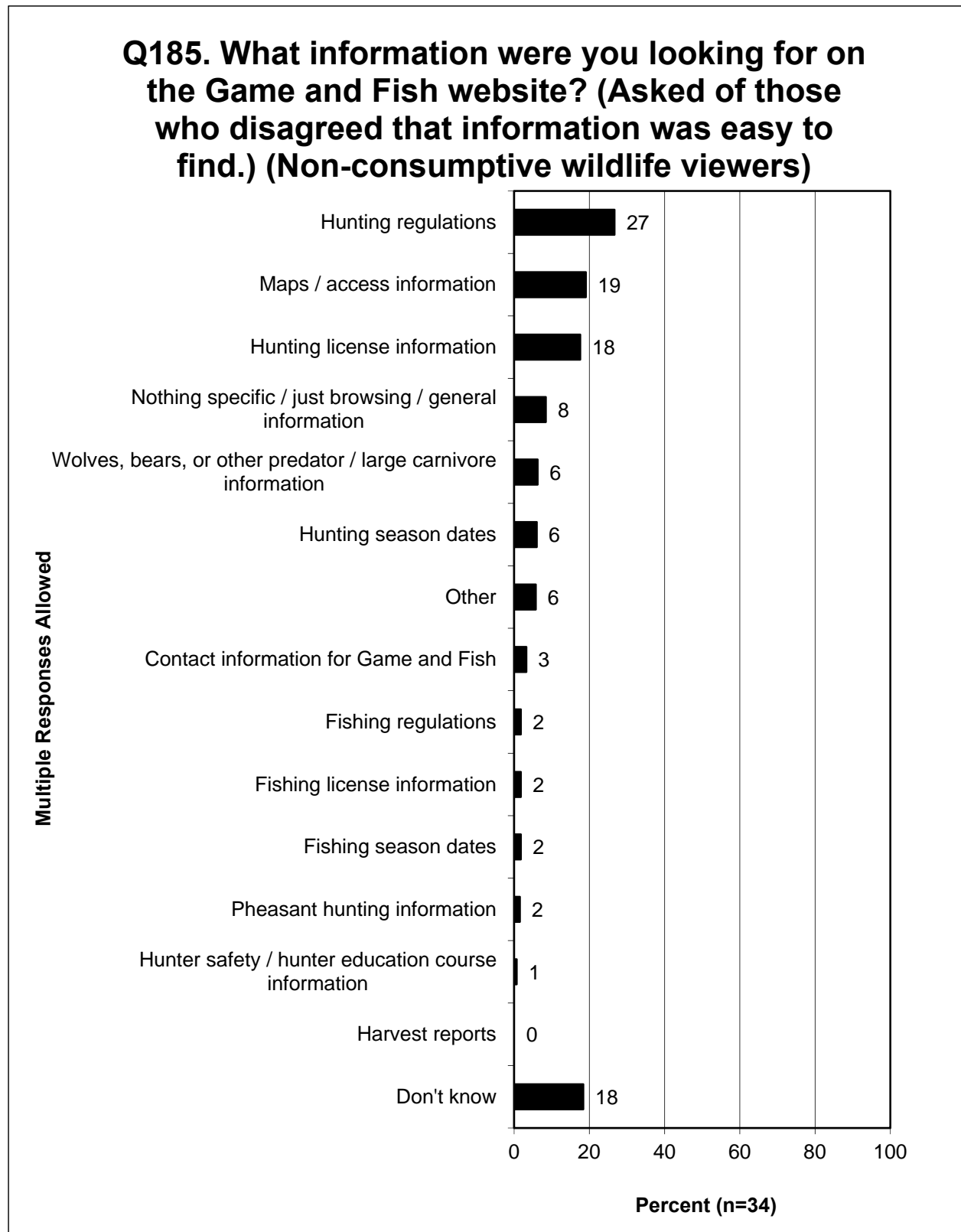


Figure 5.10.20. Information Sought on the Website, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

A final question in this section asked respondents to name any topics about which they would like information, in an open-ended format. Access and hunting/fishing information top the list (Figure 5.10.21). The regional results are shown in Table 5.10.5.

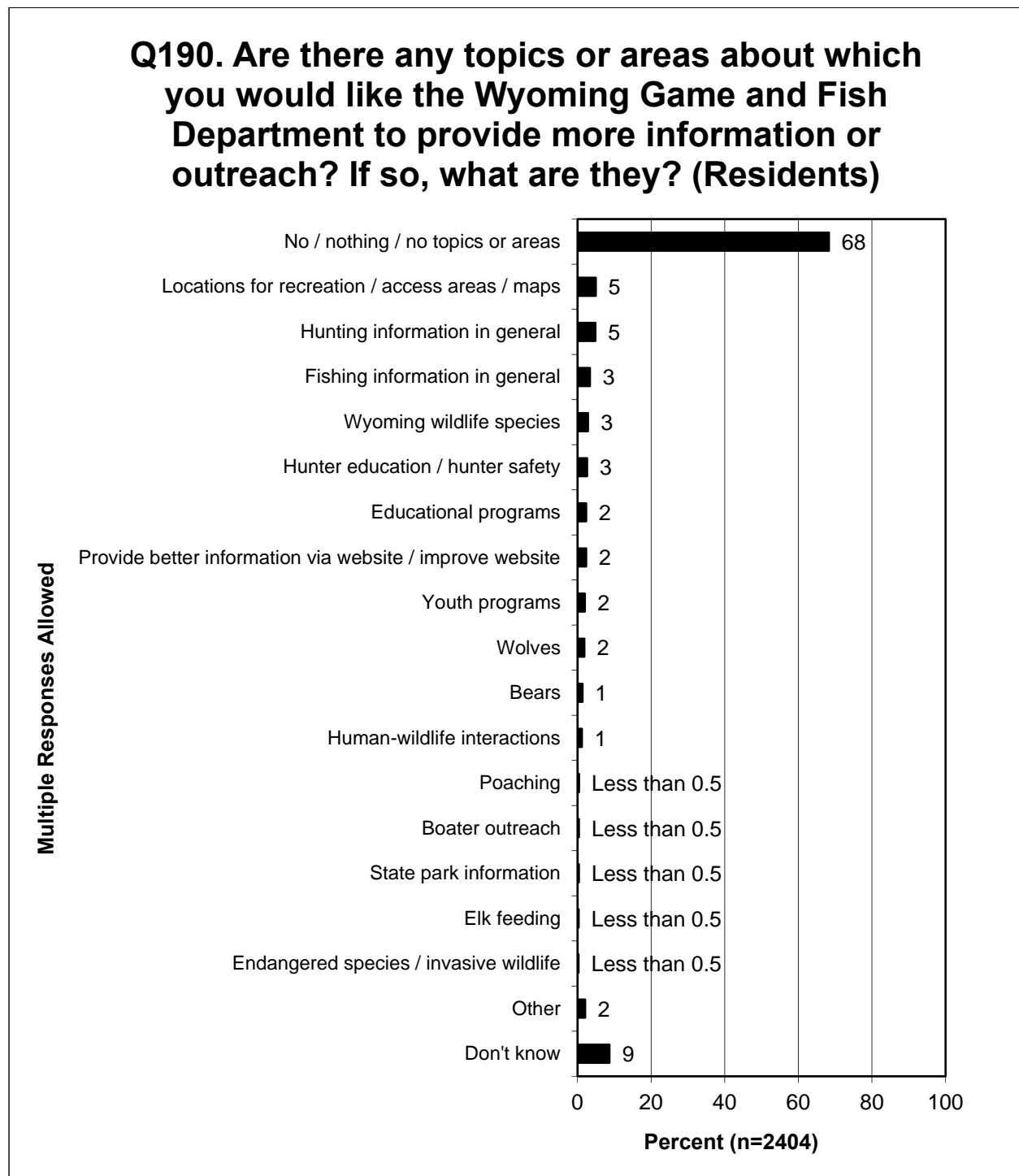


Figure 5.10.21. Topics of Interest, Among Residents

Table 5.10.5. Topics of Interest, Among Residents Regionally

Q190. Are there any topics or areas about which you would like the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to provide more information or outreach? If so, what are they? (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
No / nothing / no topics or areas	64%	65%	67%	73%	67%	75%	69%	67%
Locations for recreation / access areas / maps	6%	6%	5%	2%	4%	3%	7%	5%
Hunting information in general	7%	4%	2%	3%	5%	3%	5%	6%
Fishing information in general	1%	3%	3%	1%	1%	3%	2%	6%
Wyoming wildlife species	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Hunter education / hunter safety	1%	1%	3%	2%	4%	4%	2%	2%
Educational programs	6%	1%	3%	4%	1%	0%	3%	3%
Provide better information via website / improve website	1%	3%	2%	1%	1%	2%	4%	3%
Youth programs	2%	1%	4%	1%	3%	1%	3%	2%
Wolves	2%	4%	2%	4%	2%	2%	3%	1%
Bears	3%	3%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Human-wildlife interactions	3%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%
Poaching	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Boater outreach	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
State park information	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Elk feeding	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Endangered species / invasive wildlife	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	1%	2%	3%	1%	2%	1%	3%	2%
Don't know	6%	12%	9%	7%	9%	7%	8%	9%

The results among hunters (Figure 5.10.22), anglers (Figure 5.10.23), consumptives (Figure 5.10.24), and non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.10.25) are presented on the following pages.

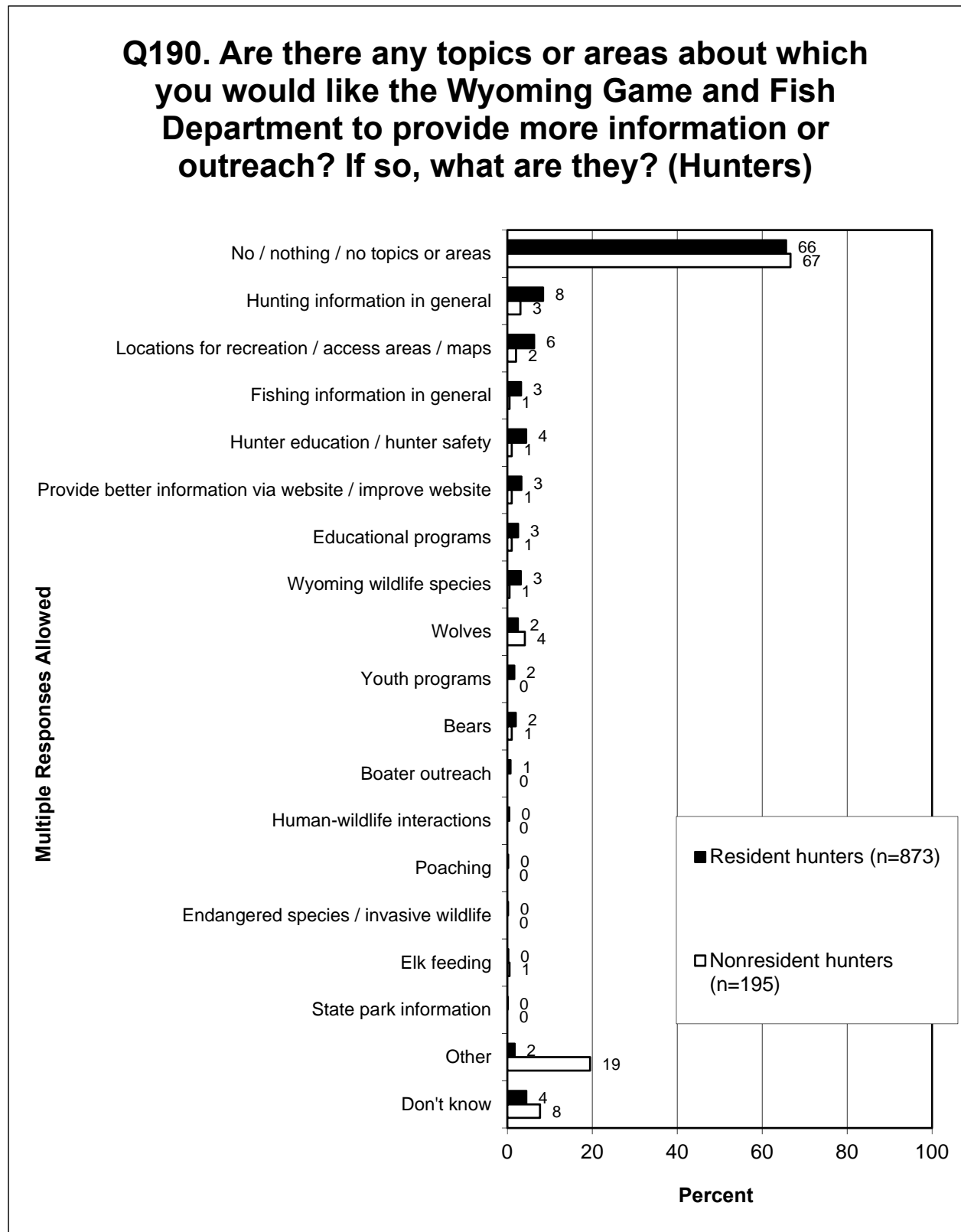


Figure 5.10.22. Topics of Interest, Among Hunters

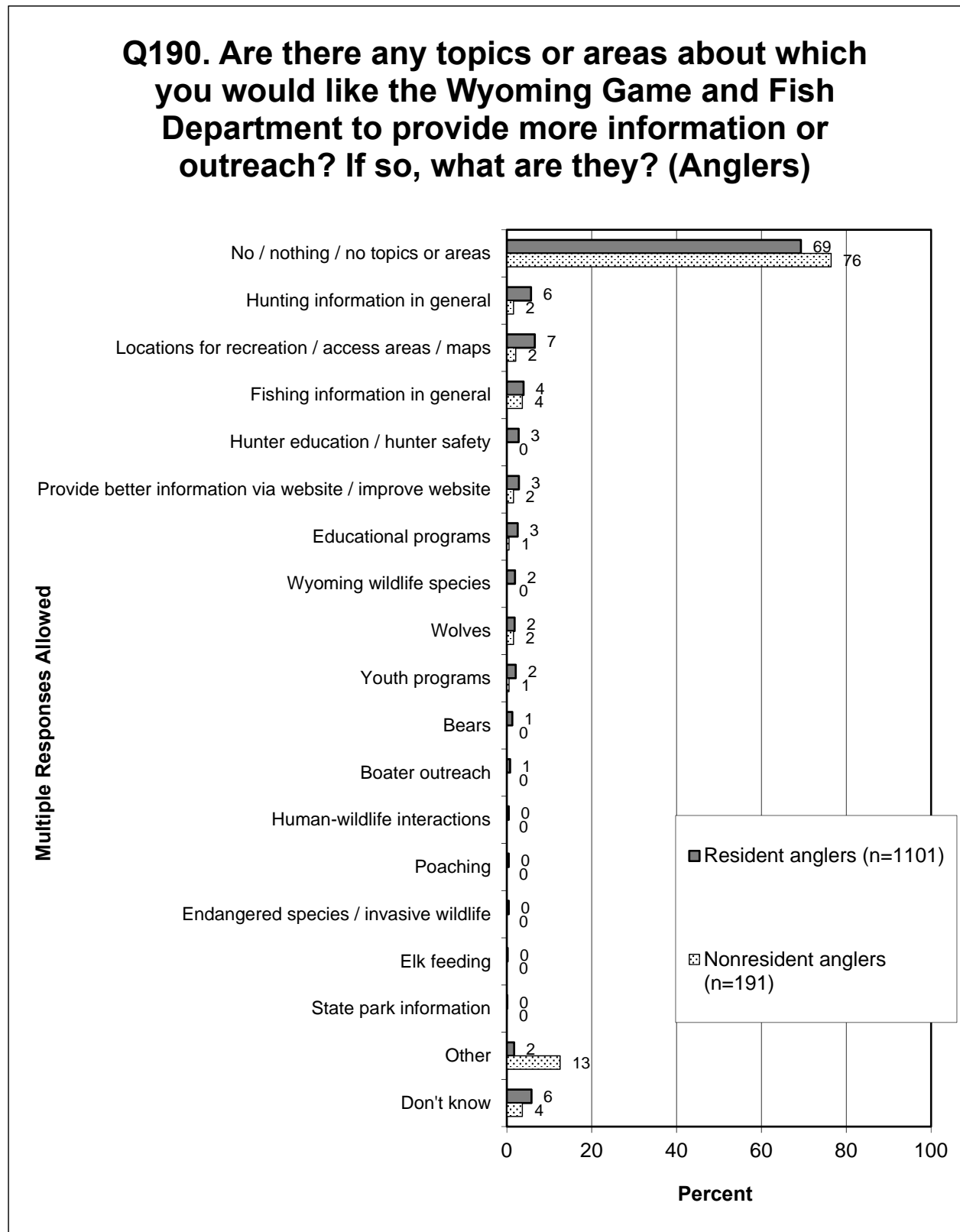


Figure 5.10.23. Topics of Interest, Among Anglers

Q190. Are there any topics or areas about which you would like the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to provide more information or outreach? If so, what are they? (Consumptives vs. non-consumptives)

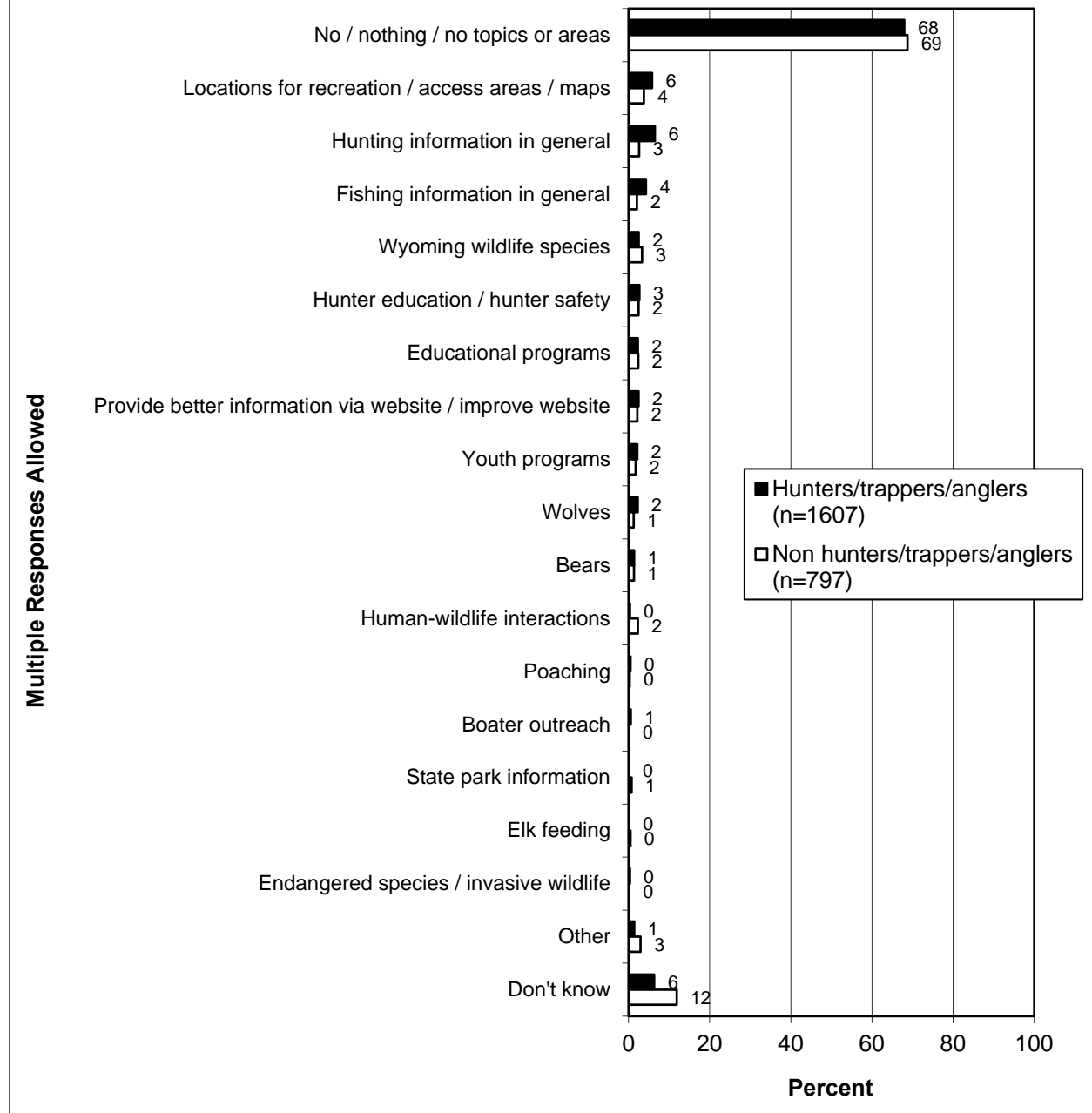


Figure 5.10.24. Topics of Interest, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

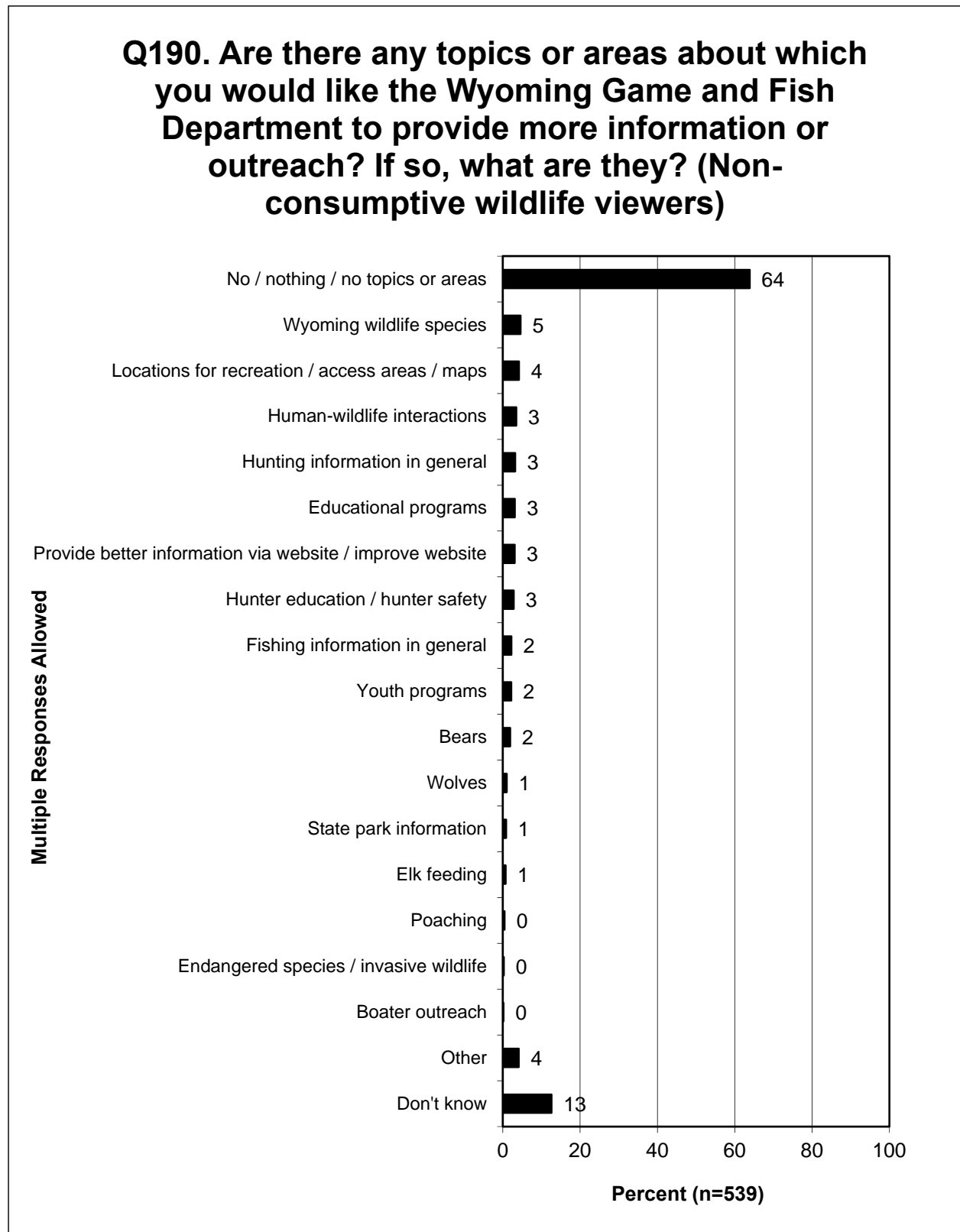


Figure 5.10.25. Topics of Interest, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

5.11. FUNDING ISSUES

The survey asked, in an open-ended question, how respondents think the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is funded. A bit under half of residents (44%) knew that Game and Fish is funded, in part, by fishing and hunting licenses (Figure 5.11.1). Many responses related to general tax revenues, which are generally not used for funding Game and Fish.

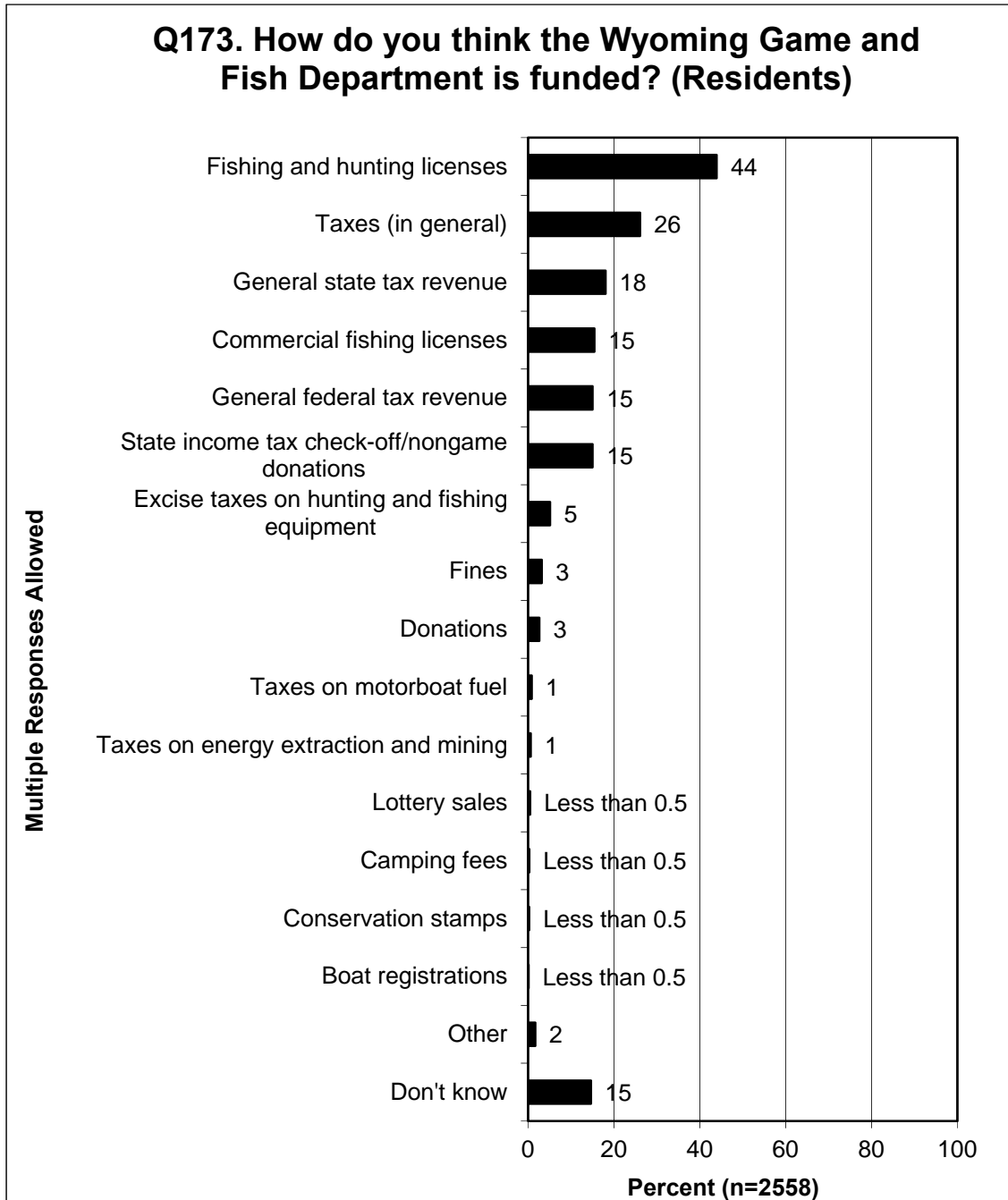


Figure 5.11.1. Perceived Funding Sources of Game and Fish, Among Residents

In the regional results, residents of the Pinedale, Sheridan, Cody, and Green River Regions have the highest percentage naming fishing and hunting licenses as a funding source for the Game and Fish Department (Table 5.11.1).

Table 5.11.1. Perceived Funding Sources of Game and Fish, Among Residents

Q173. How do you think the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is funded? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Fishing and hunting licenses	37%	47%	42%	51%	47%	49%	42%	41%
Taxes (in general)	28%	26%	26%	24%	27%	35%	25%	22%
General state tax revenue	21%	20%	20%	15%	15%	17%	21%	16%
Commercial fishing licenses	13%	16%	18%	19%	17%	14%	13%	16%
General federal tax revenue	20%	18%	15%	11%	16%	9%	18%	14%
State income tax check-off/nongame donations	19%	12%	19%	15%	12%	14%	13%	17%
Excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment	4%	5%	2%	8%	5%	4%	6%	6%
Fines	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	5%	3%	2%
Donations	3%	1%	2%	2%	1%	7%	2%	2%
Taxes on motorboat fuel	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Taxes on energy extraction and mining	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Lottery sales	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Camping fees	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Conservation stamps	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Boat registrations	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	4%	2%
Don't know	13%	12%	14%	13%	19%	8%	14%	17%

Among the hunter groups, *nonresident* hunters have a slightly higher percentage who named fishing and hunting licenses as a source of funding (Figure 5.11.2). This holds true among anglers, as well: *nonresident* anglers have a higher percentage, compared to resident anglers, who named fishing and hunting licenses as a funding source (Figure 5.11.3).

Not surprisingly, hunters/trappers/anglers collectively are more likely to name fishing and hunting licenses as a funding source (Figure 5.11.4). What is perhaps noteworthy is that more than a third of those who do *not* hunt, trap, or fish nonetheless named fishing and hunting licenses as a source of funding. This means, though, that a substantial portion of the general public do *not* know that hunters, trappers, and anglers play an important funding role. The final graph for this question shows non-consumptive wildlife viewers (Figure 5.11.5).

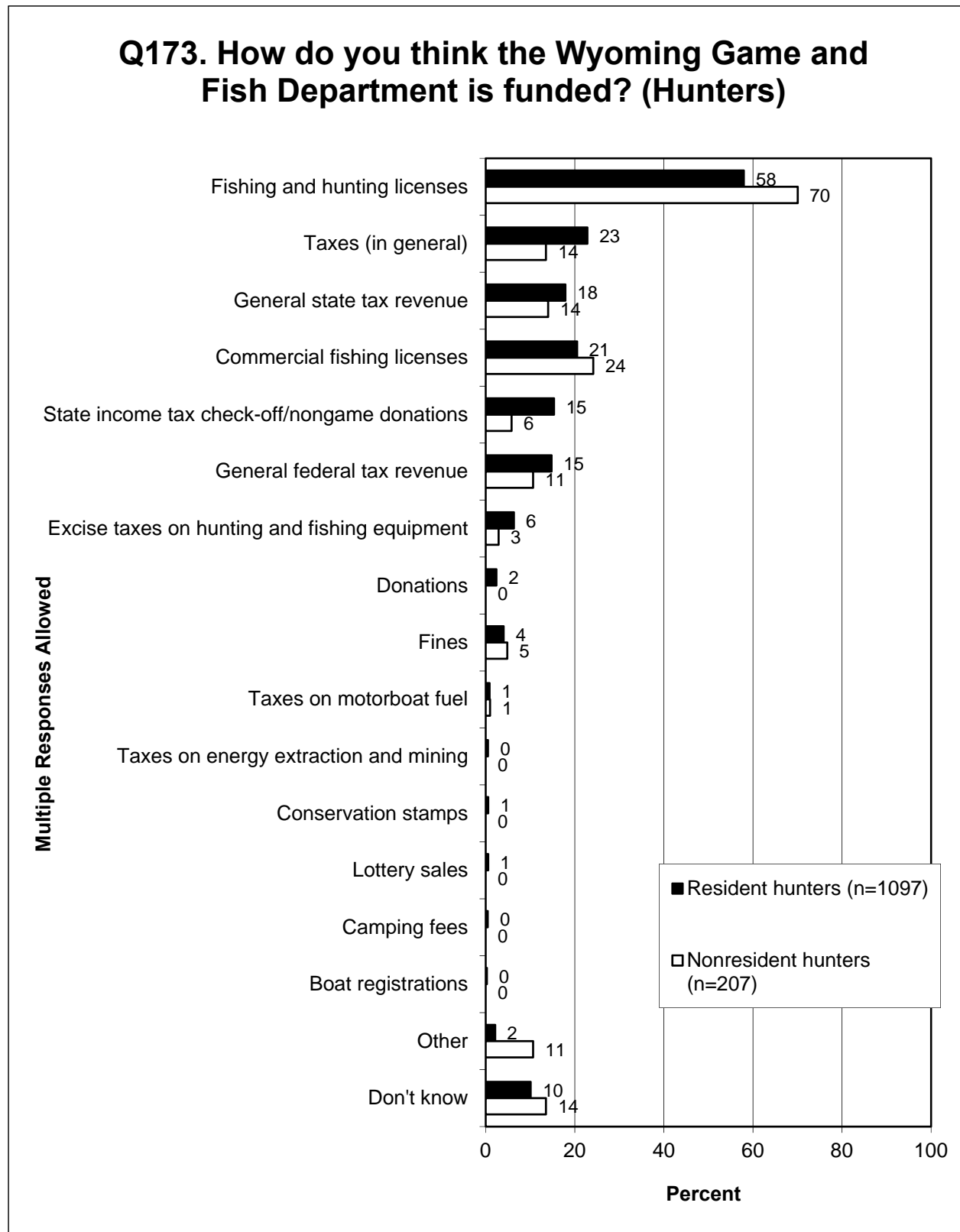


Figure 5.11.2. Perceived Funding Sources of Game and Fish, Among Hunters

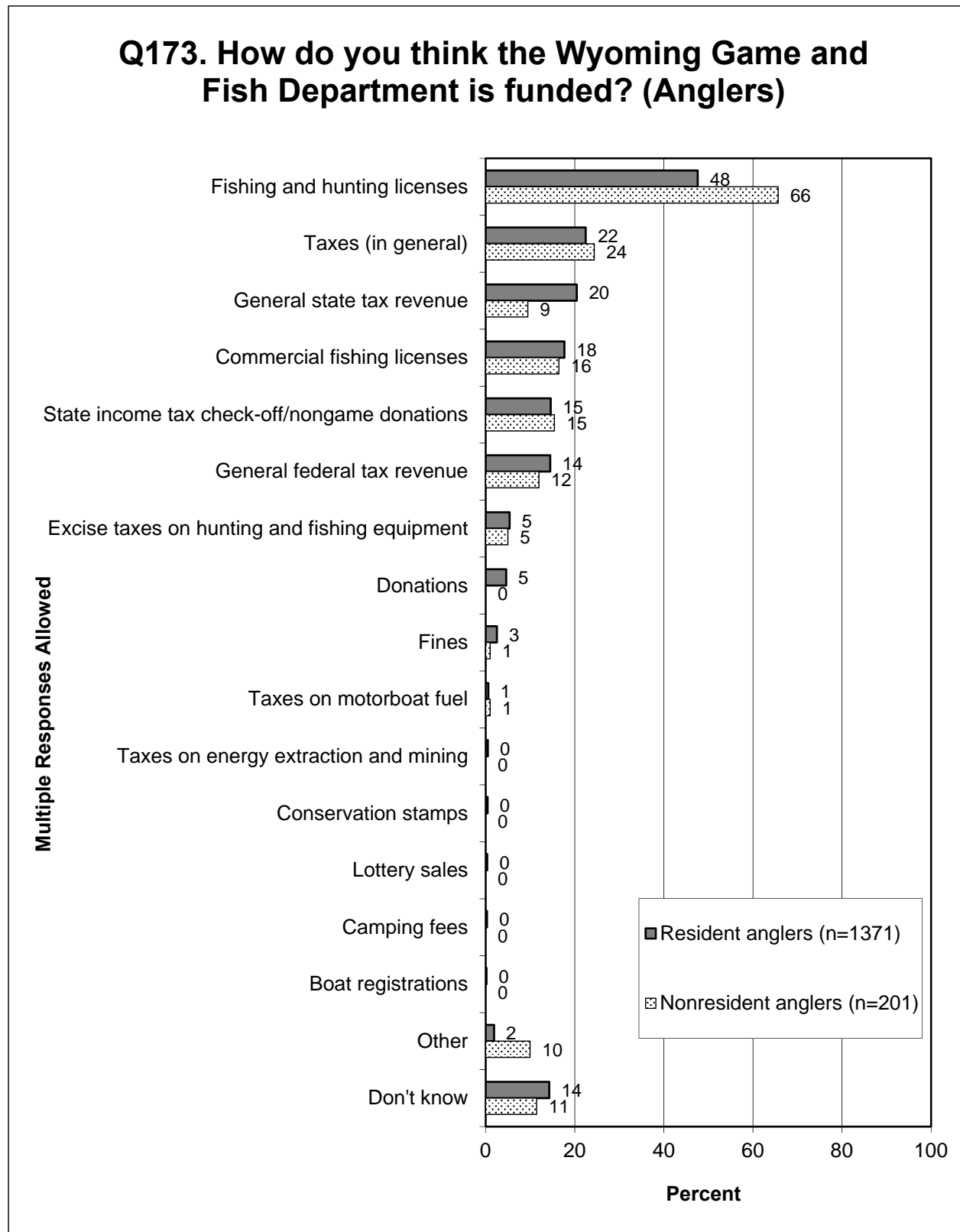


Figure 5.11.3. Perceived Funding Sources of Game and Fish, Among Anglers

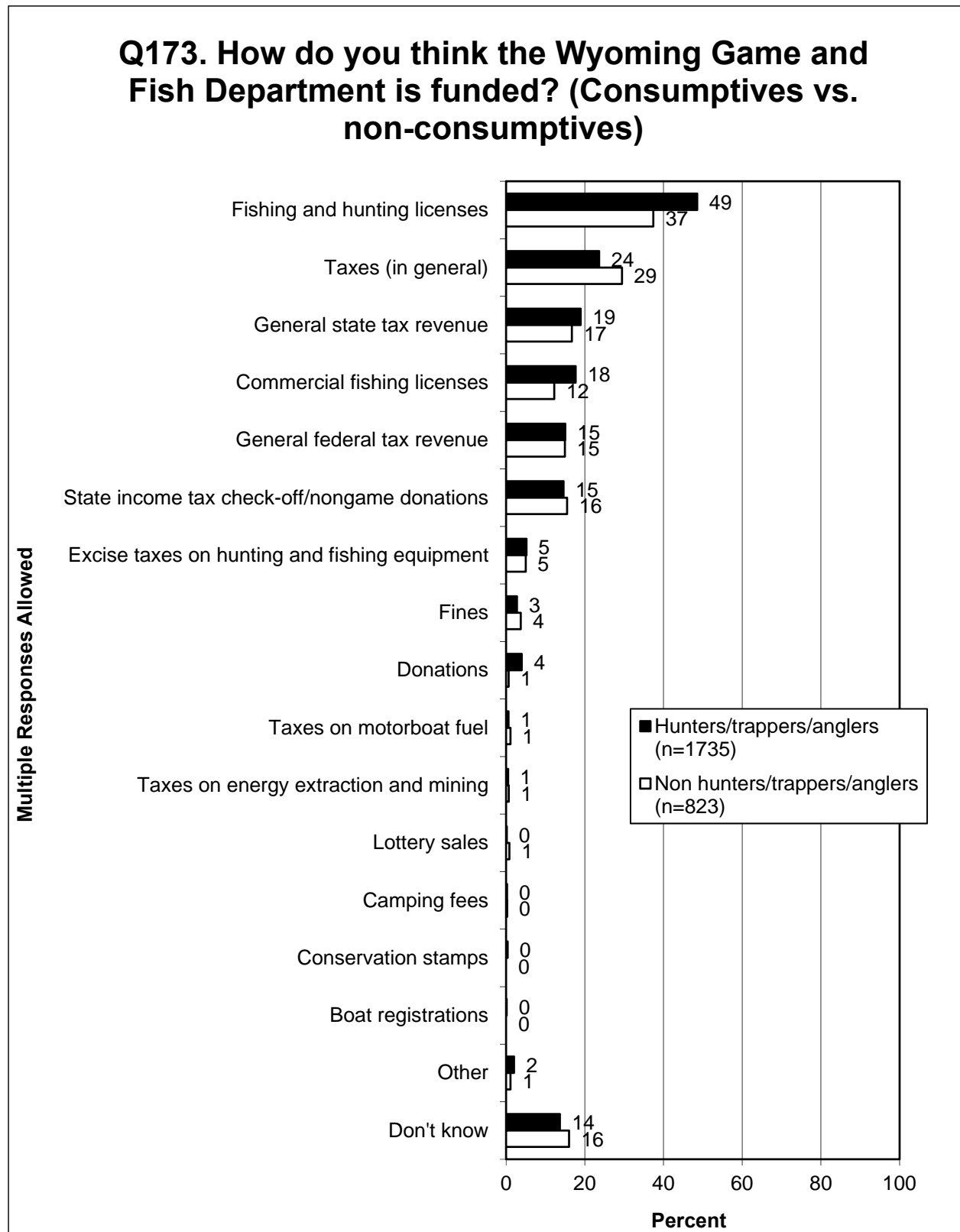


Figure 5.11.4. Perceived Funding Sources of Game and Fish, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

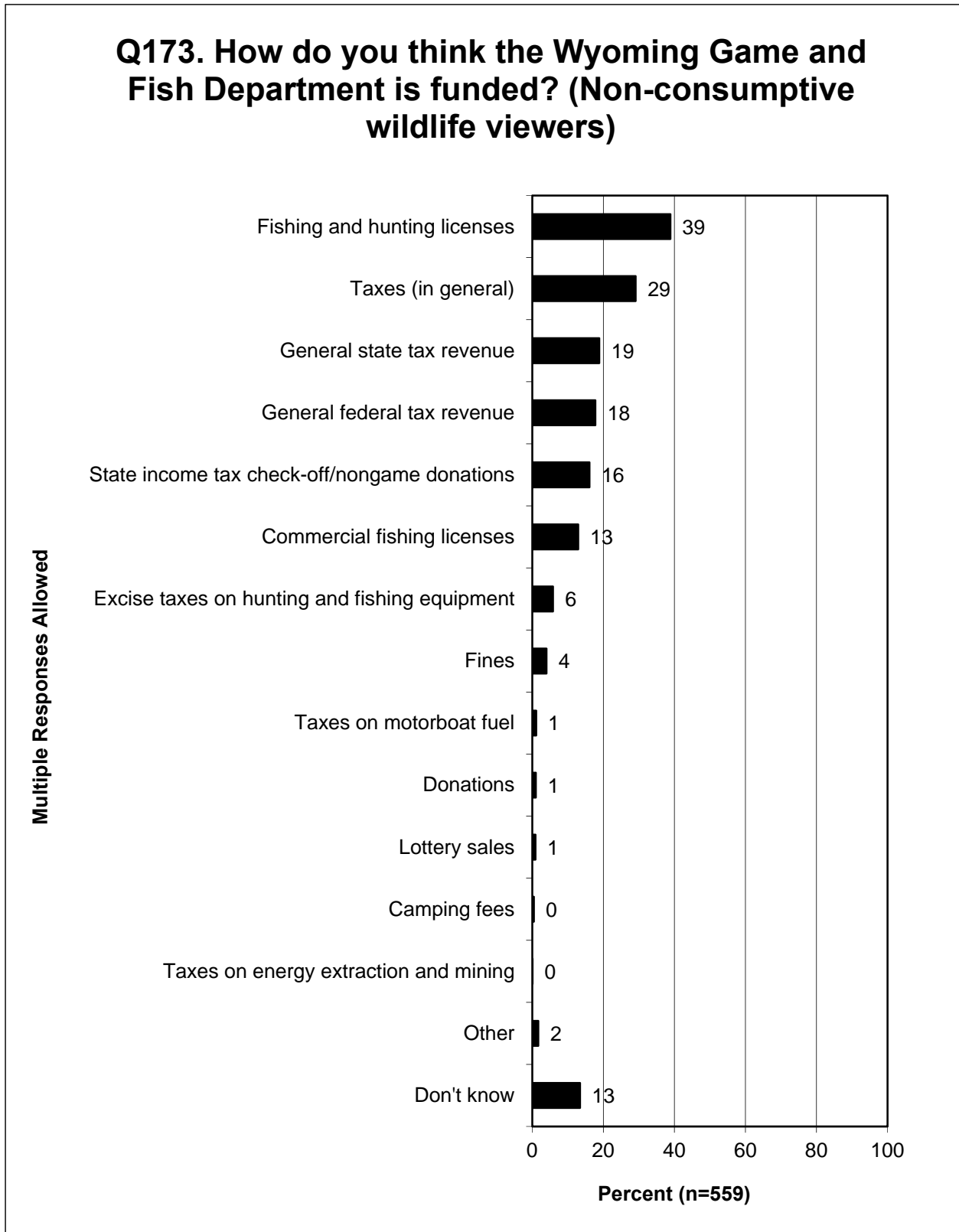


Figure 5.11.5. Perceived Funding Sources of Game and Fish, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

Following the question above, which was asked in an open-ended format and divulged no information to the respondent, the survey informed respondents of the following:

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is responsible for managing over 800 species of wildlife. Fewer than 100 of these are game animals. Historically, the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and conservation stamps, application fees, and Federal excise taxes have funded nearly all wildlife management in Wyoming.

Then the survey asked directly if respondents thought that elected officials should explore options for new funding sources to help pay for conservation. Overwhelmingly, residents agree (78%) rather than disagree (13%) that officials should do so (Figure 5.11.6). This agreement is high across all the regions, with both Green River and Laramie Regions having a majority who *strongly* agree (Table 5.11.2).

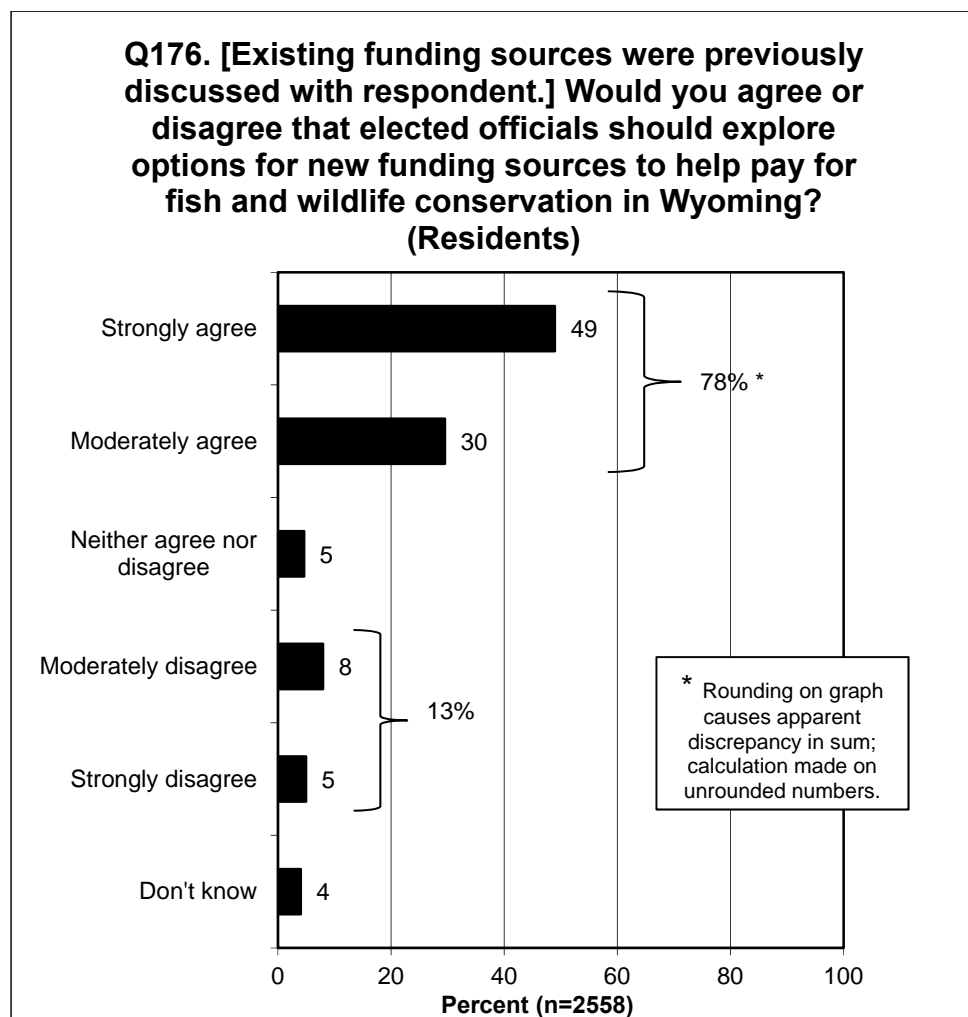


Figure 5.11.6. Residents' Opinion on the Game and Fish Department's Exploring Funding Options

Table 5.11.2. Regional Opinion on the Game and Fish Department's Exploring Funding Options

Q176. [Existing funding sources were previously discussed with respondent.] Would you agree or disagree that elected officials should explore options for new funding sources to help pay for fish and wildlife conservation in Wyoming? (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Strongly agree	46%	45%	48%	47%	53%	45%	48%	51%
Moderately agree	29%	30%	31%	28%	29%	32%	27%	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	6%	3%	4%	4%	4%	5%	6%	5%
Moderately disagree	10%	8%	8%	8%	5%	10%	8%	8%
Strongly disagree	5%	7%	5%	8%	7%	5%	5%	3%
Don't know	5%	5%	4%	6%	2%	2%	6%	4%

Agreement is relatively stable—with a large majority agreeing—across all of the groups shown in Figures 5.11.7 through 5.11.10.

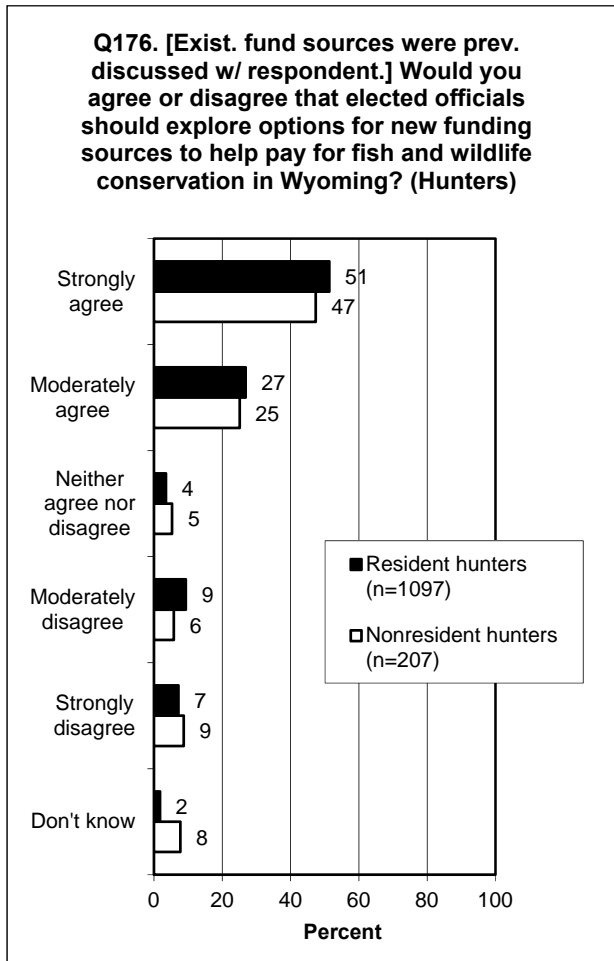


Figure 5.11.7. Hunters' Opinions on the Exploration of New Funding Options

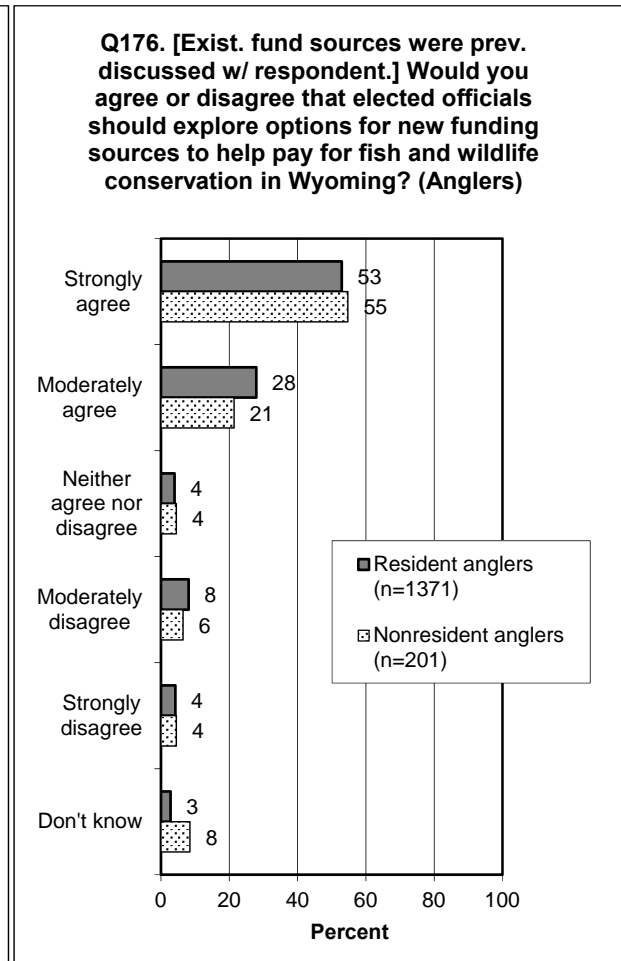


Figure 5.11.8. Anglers' Opinions on the Exploration of New Funding Options

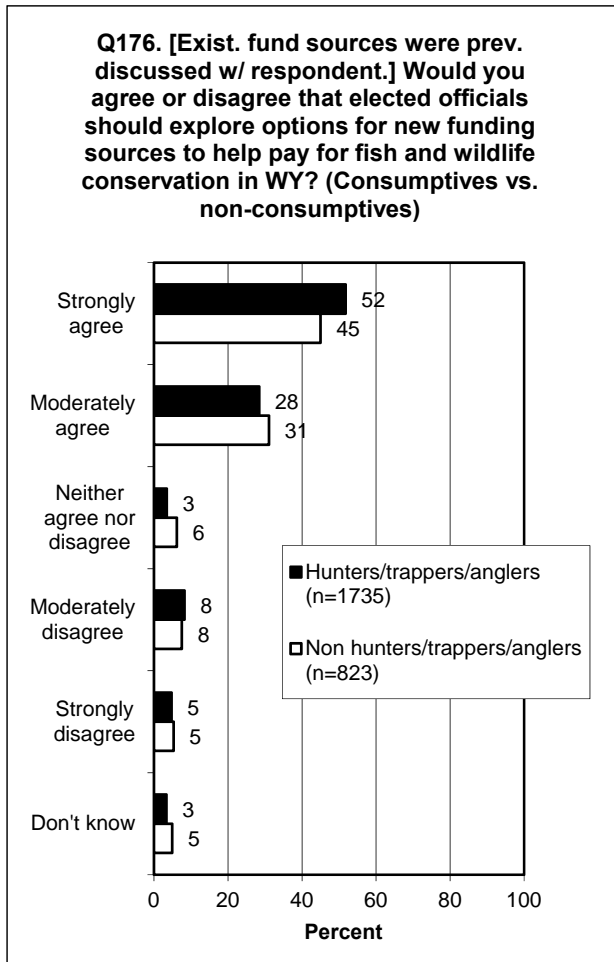


Figure 5.11.9. Consumptives' Opinions on the Exploration of New Funding Options

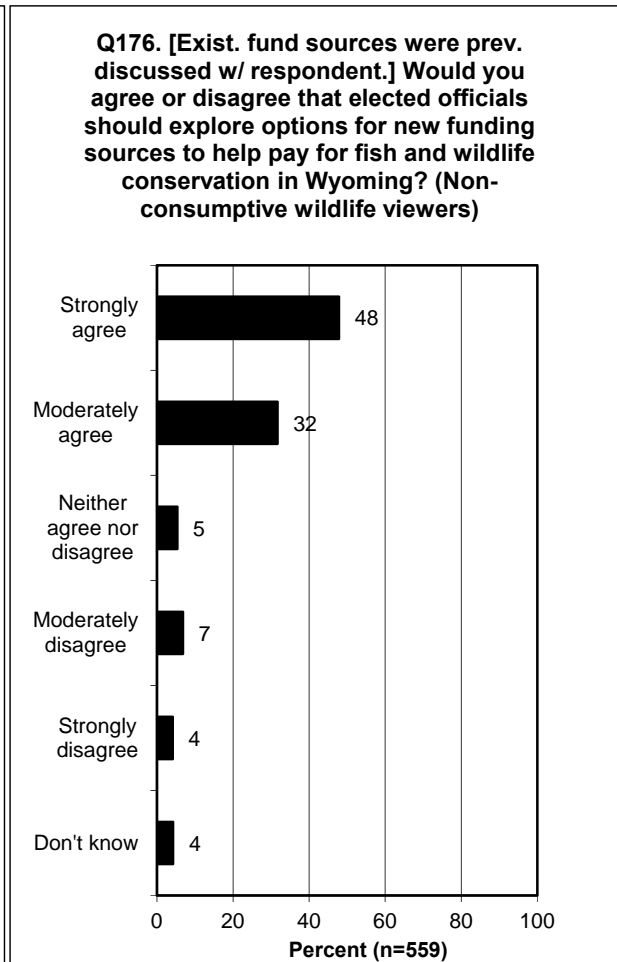


Figure 5.11.10. Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers' Opinions on the Exploration of New Funding Options

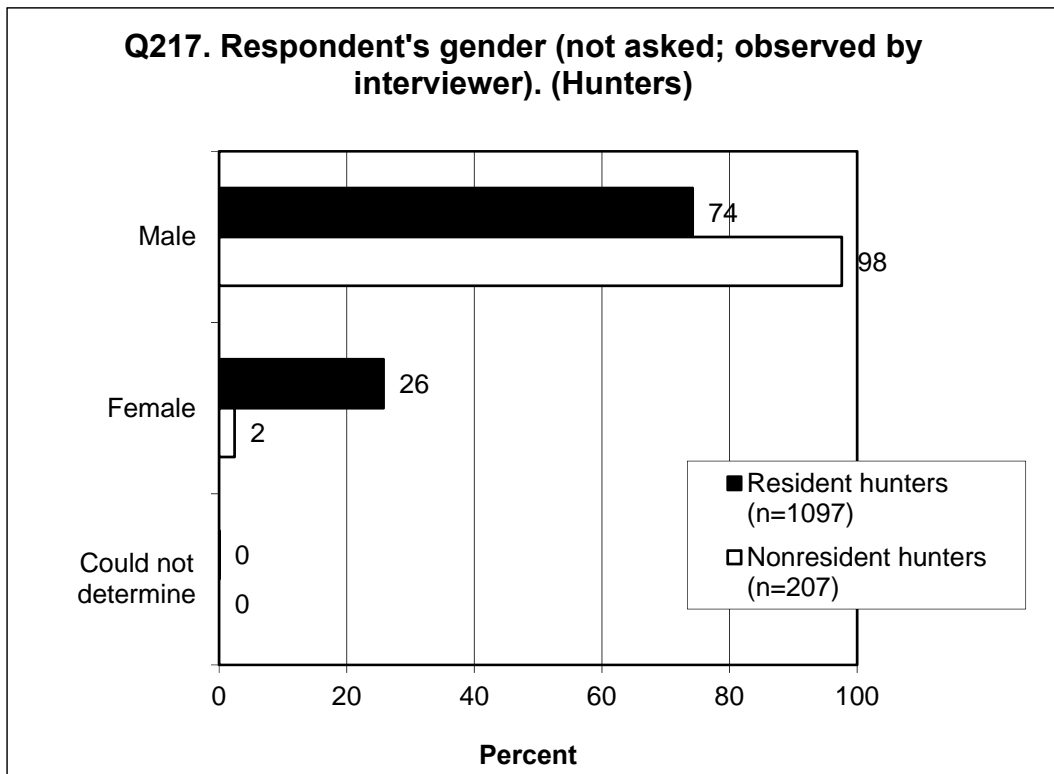


Figure 5.12.2. Gender, Among Hunters

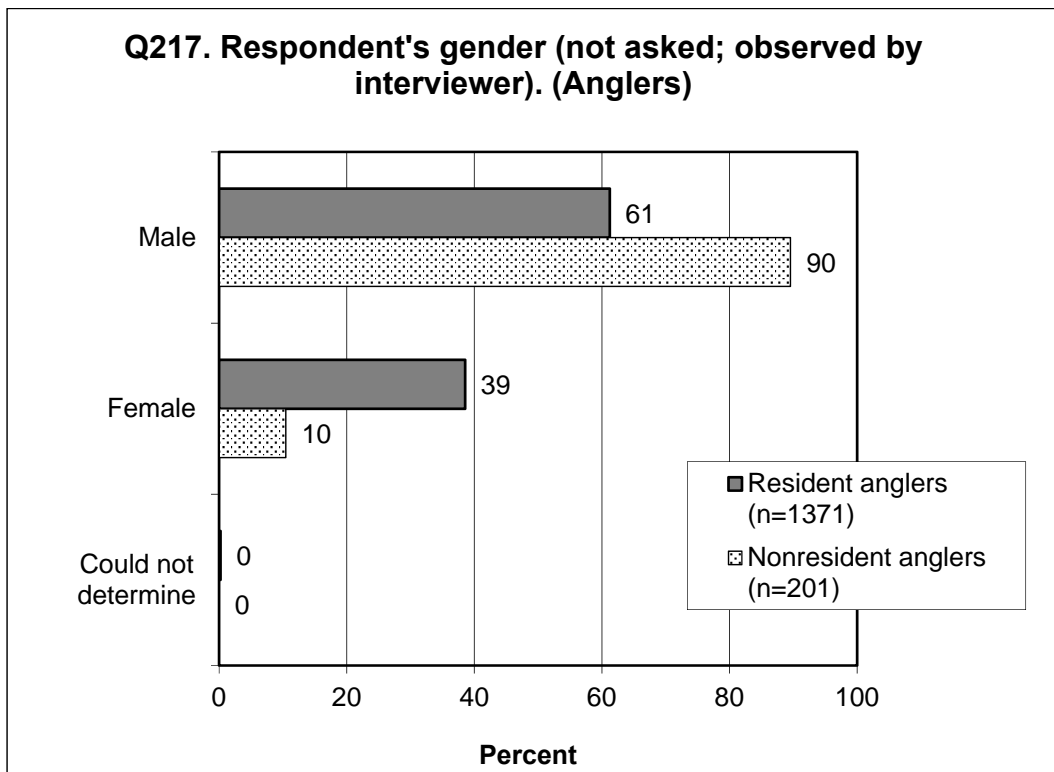


Figure 5.12.3. Gender, Among Anglers

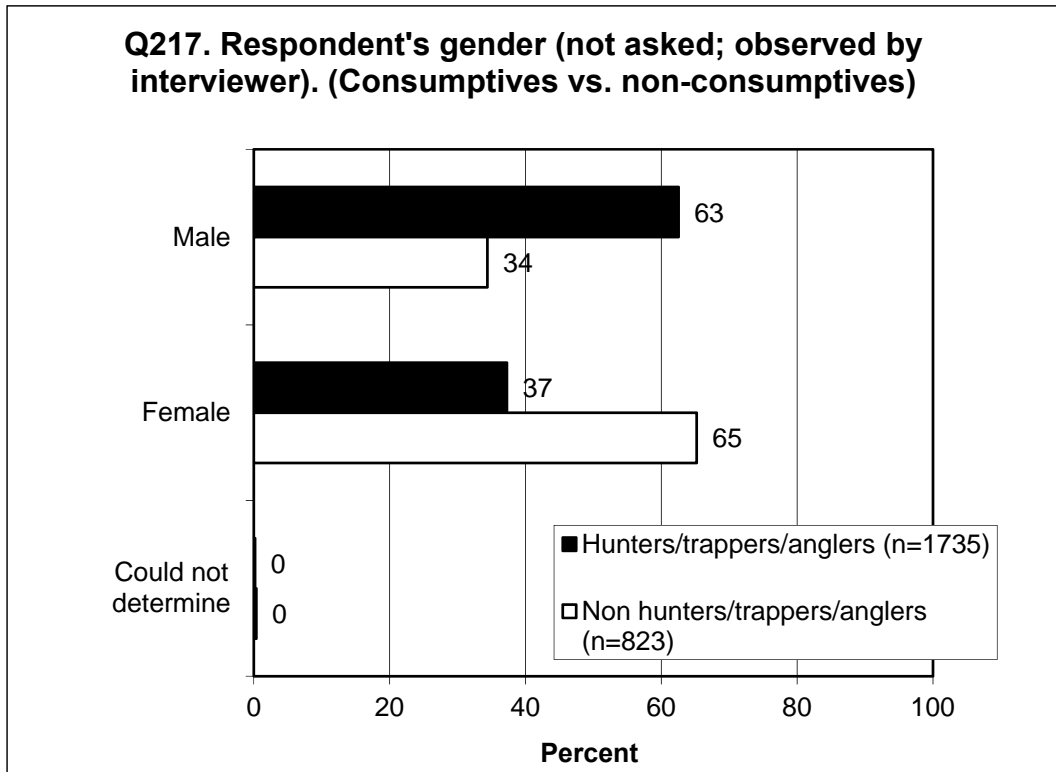


Figure 5.12.4. Gender, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

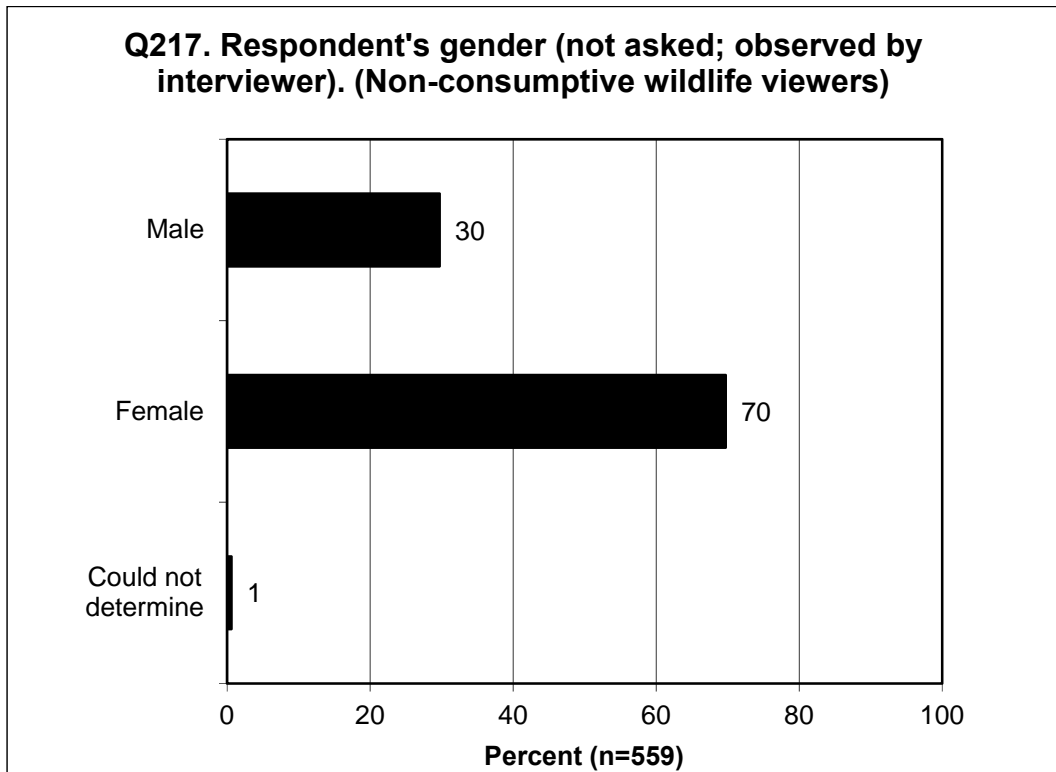


Figure 5.12.5. Gender, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

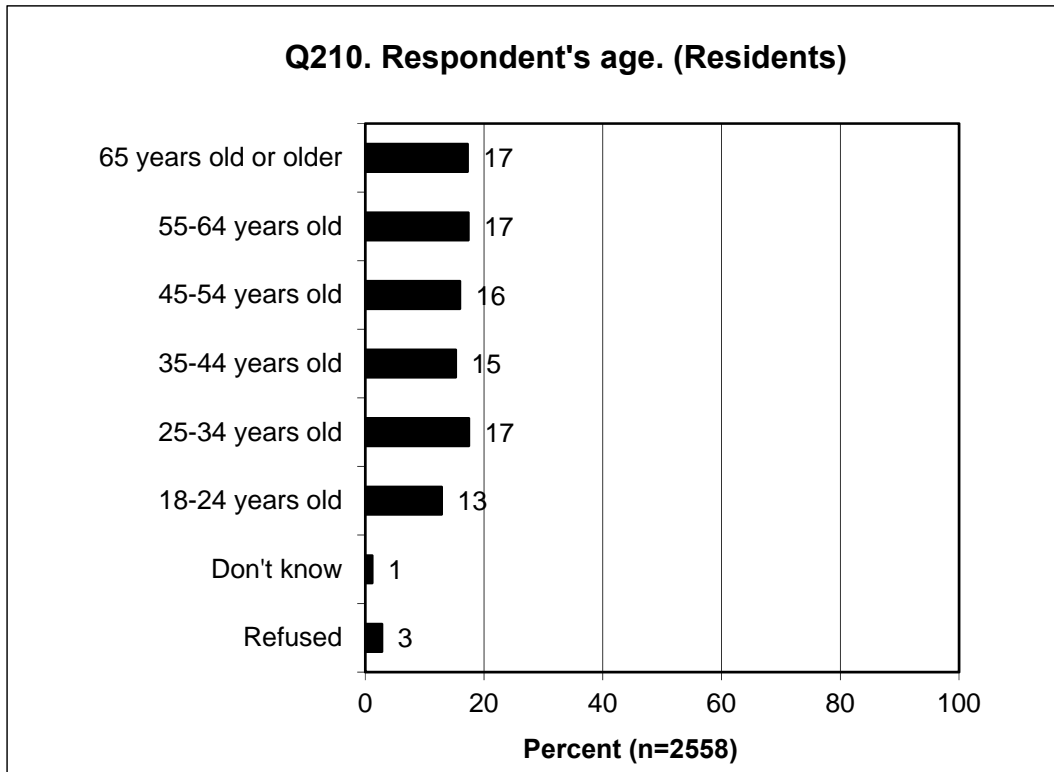


Figure 5.12.6. Respondent’s Age, Among Residents

Table 5.12.2. Respondent’s Age, Regionally

Q210. Respondent's age. (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
65 years old or older	14%	25%	21%	17%	15%	15%	17%	17%
55-64 years old	15%	19%	19%	18%	18%	18%	19%	15%
45-54 years old	16%	16%	15%	18%	17%	17%	17%	14%
35-44 years old	19%	12%	14%	17%	18%	17%	15%	14%
25-34 years old	25%	14%	15%	16%	18%	19%	17%	17%
18-24 years old	7%	10%	11%	8%	11%	11%	11%	18%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Refused	3%	2%	5%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%

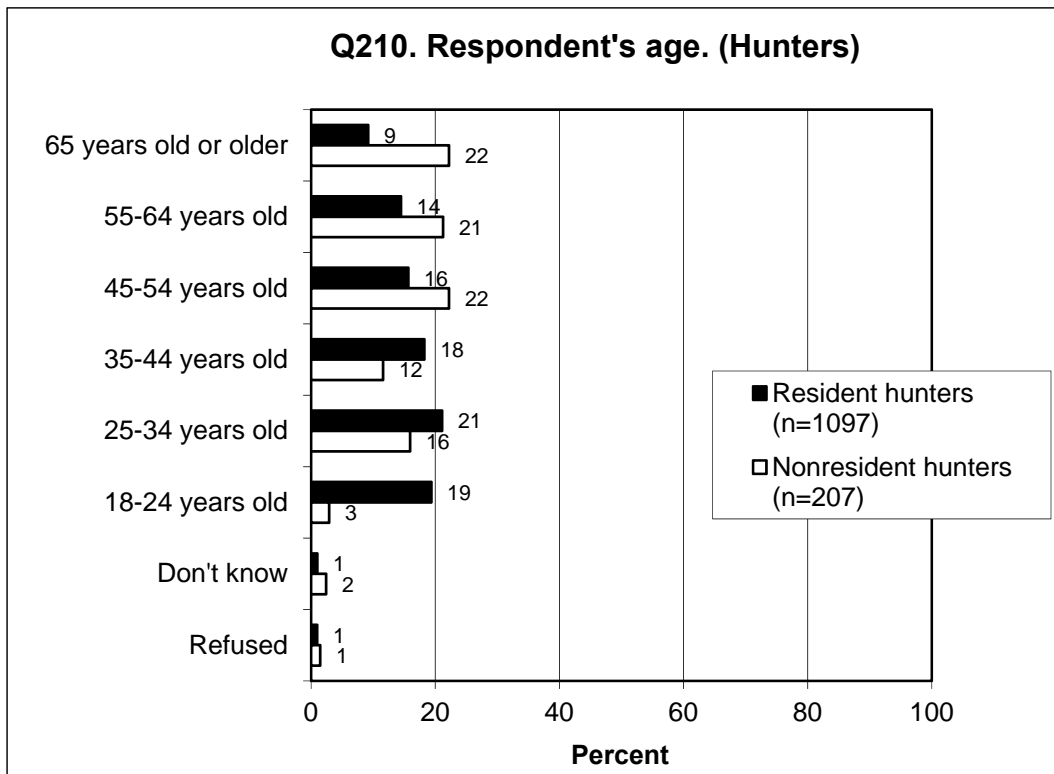


Figure 5.12.7. Respondent's Age, Among Hunters

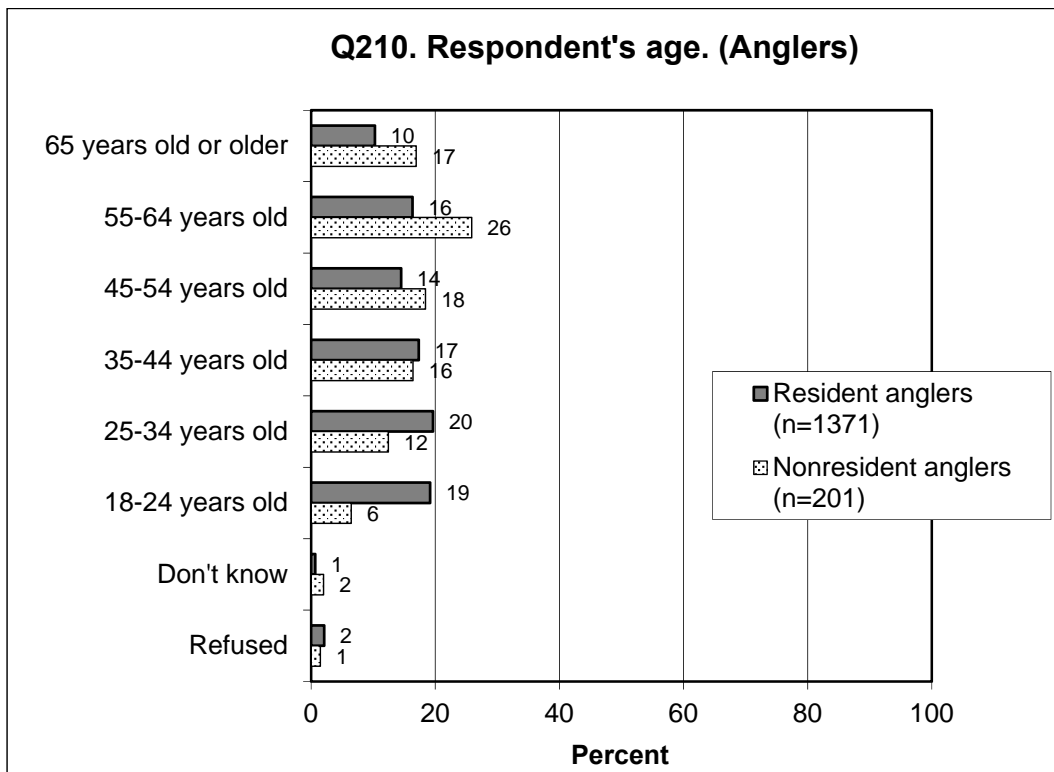


Figure 5.12.8. Respondent's Age, Among Anglers

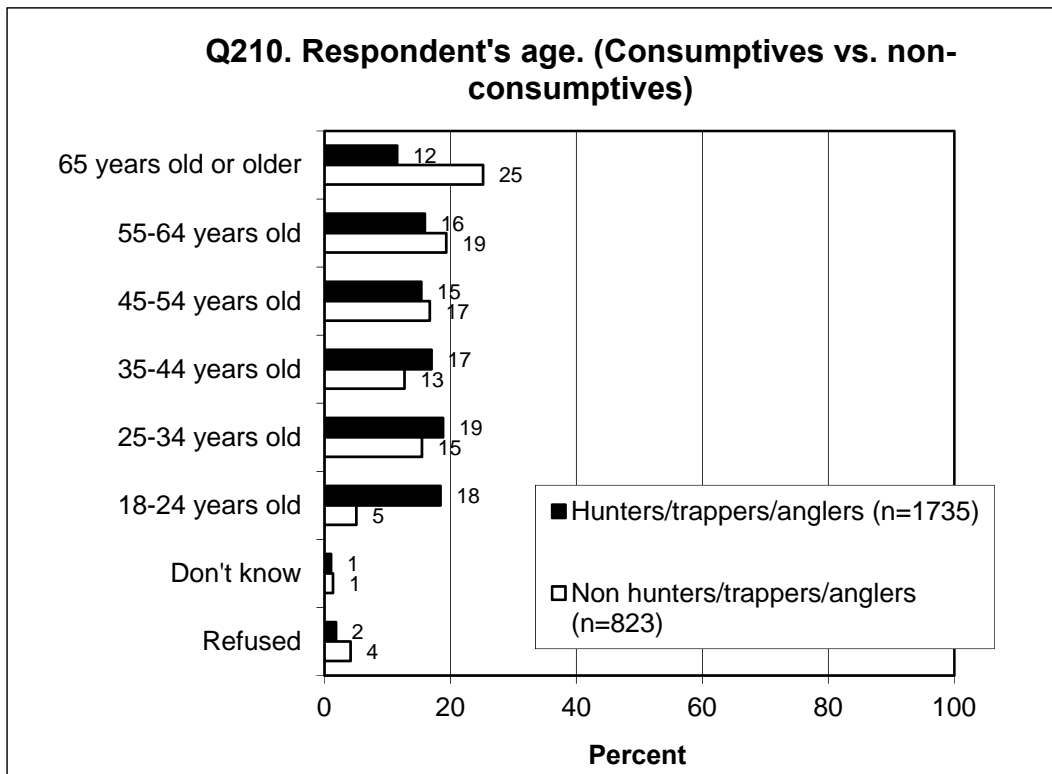


Figure 5.12.9. Respondent's Age, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

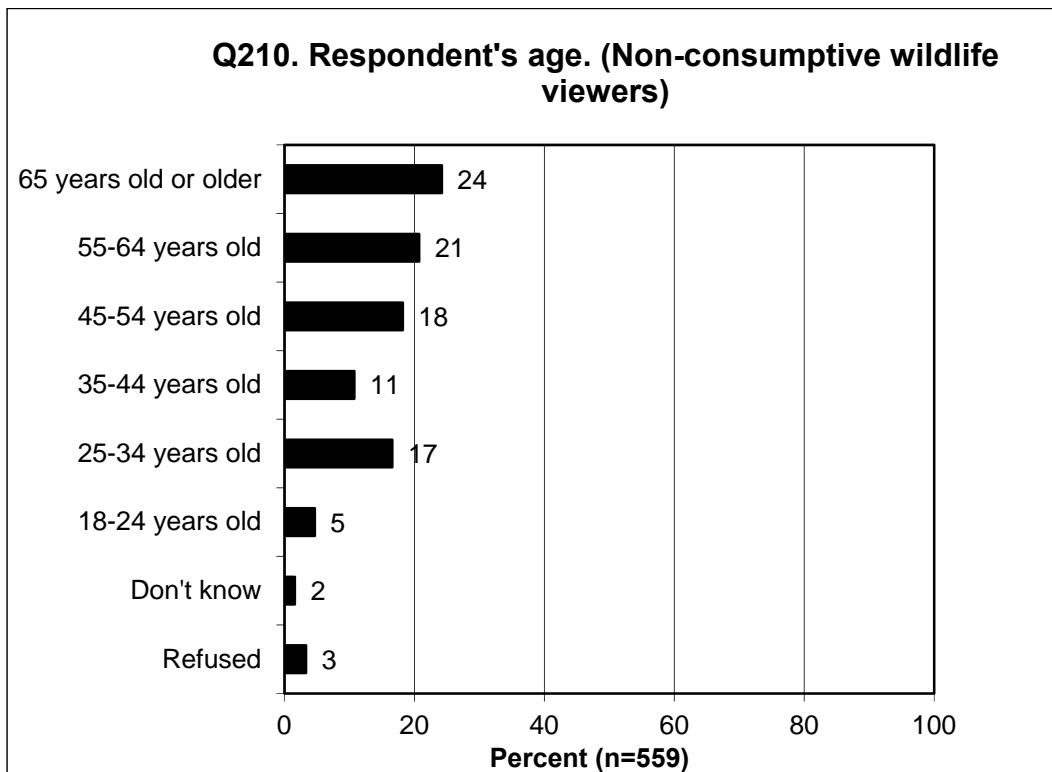


Figure 5.12.10. Respondent's Age, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

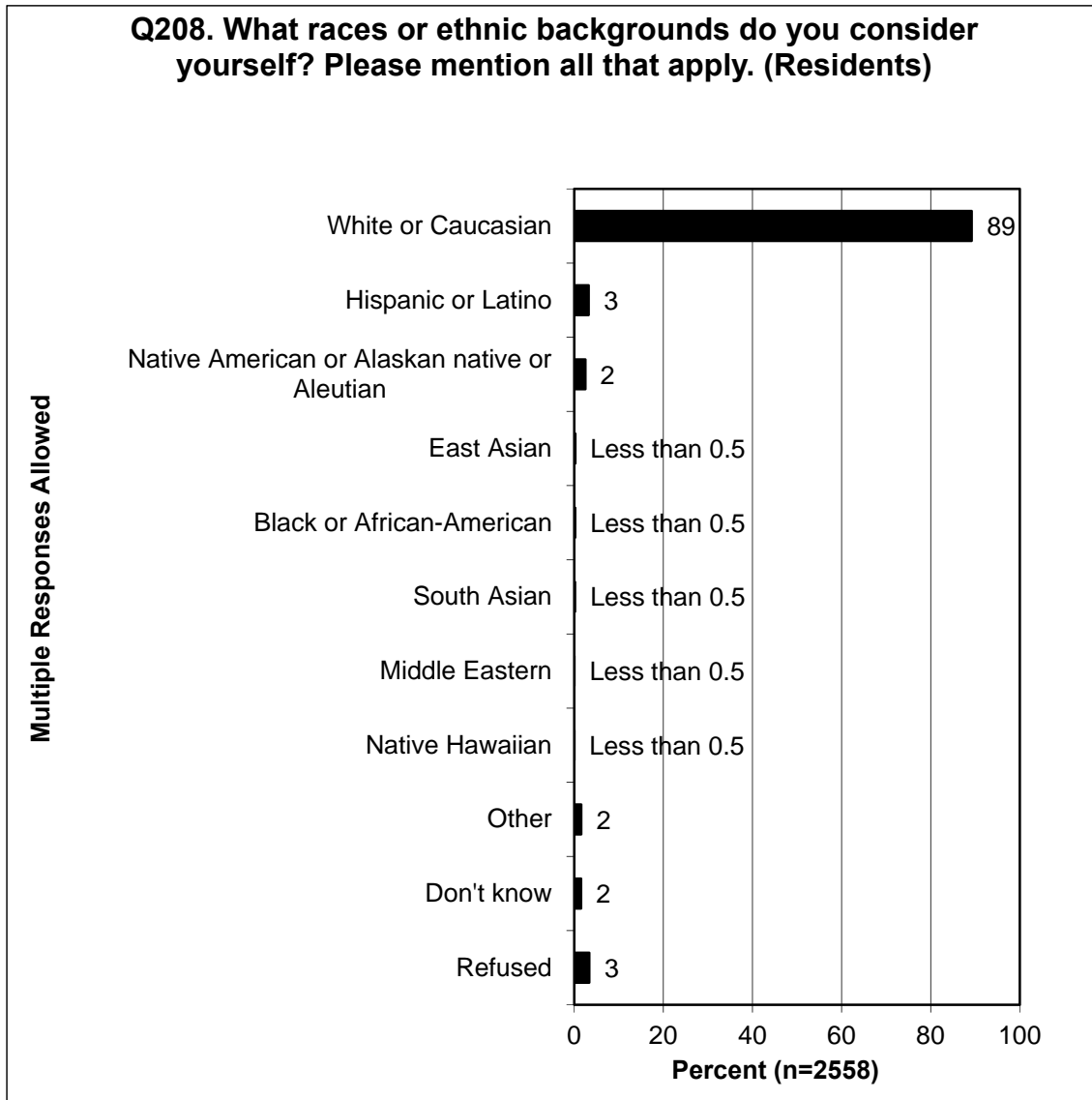


Figure 5.12.11. Ethnicity, Among Residents

Table 5.12.3. Ethnicity, Among Residents Regionally

Q208. What races or ethnic backgrounds do you consider yourself? Please mention all that apply. (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
White or Caucasian	91%	89%	85%	94%	92%	92%	90%	87%
Hispanic or Latino	4%	5%	2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	4%
Native American or Alaskan native or Aleutian	2%	1%	8%	0%	0%	2%	2%	4%
East Asian	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Black or African-American	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
South Asian	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Middle Eastern	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	1%	1%	3%	0%	1%	1%	3%	1%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Refused	4%	3%	4%	4%	3%	2%	4%	3%

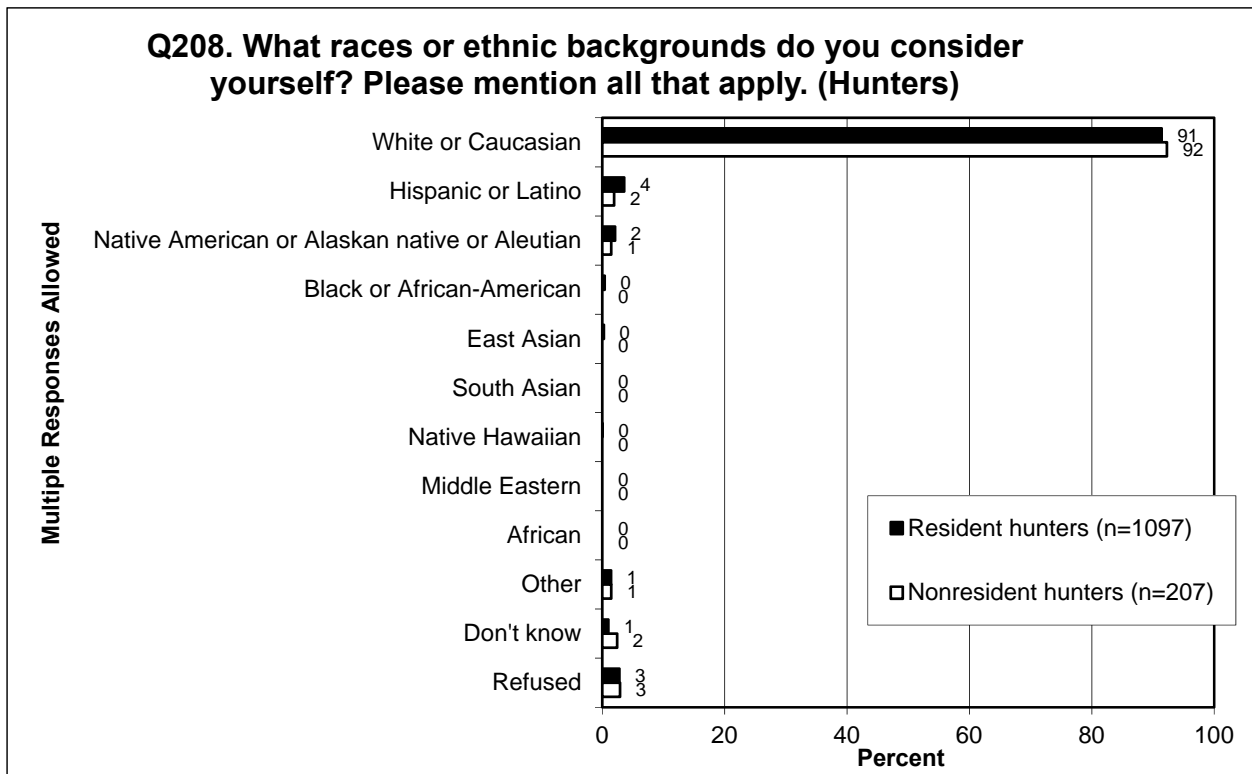


Figure 5.12.12. Ethnicity, Among Hunters

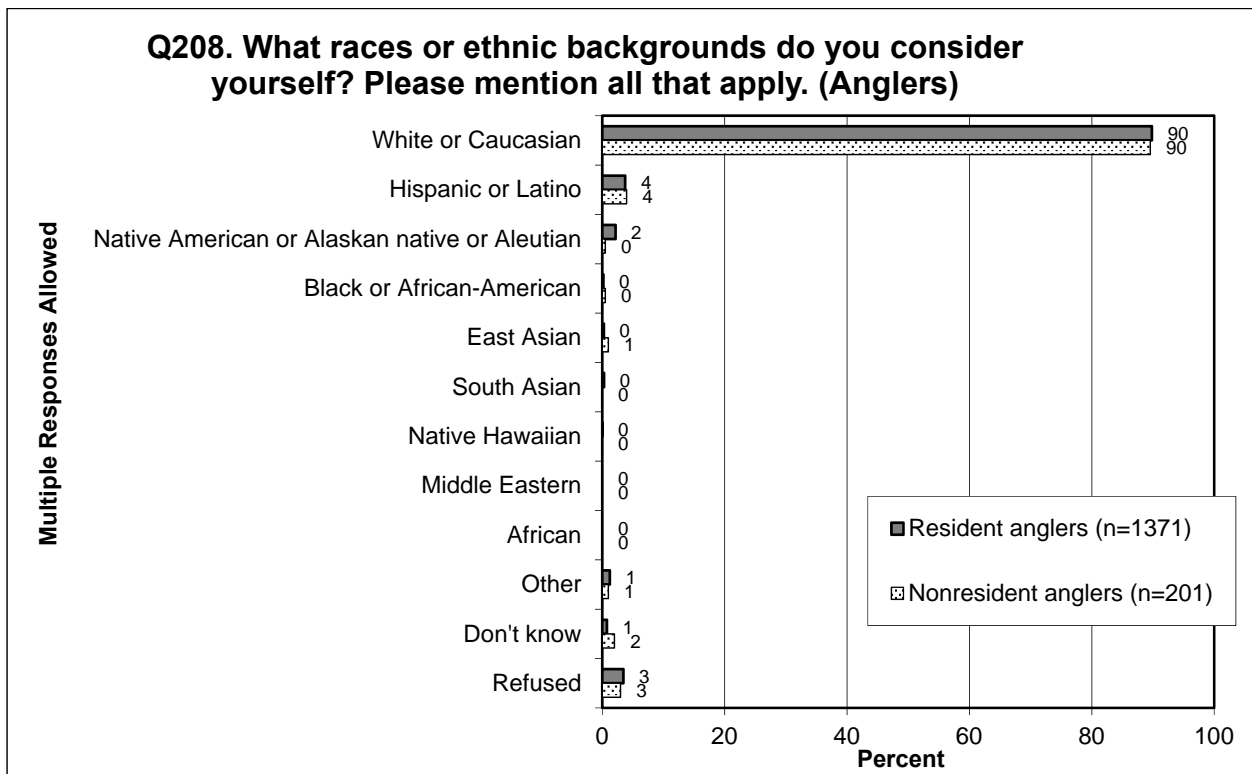


Figure 5.12.13. Ethnicity, Among Anglers

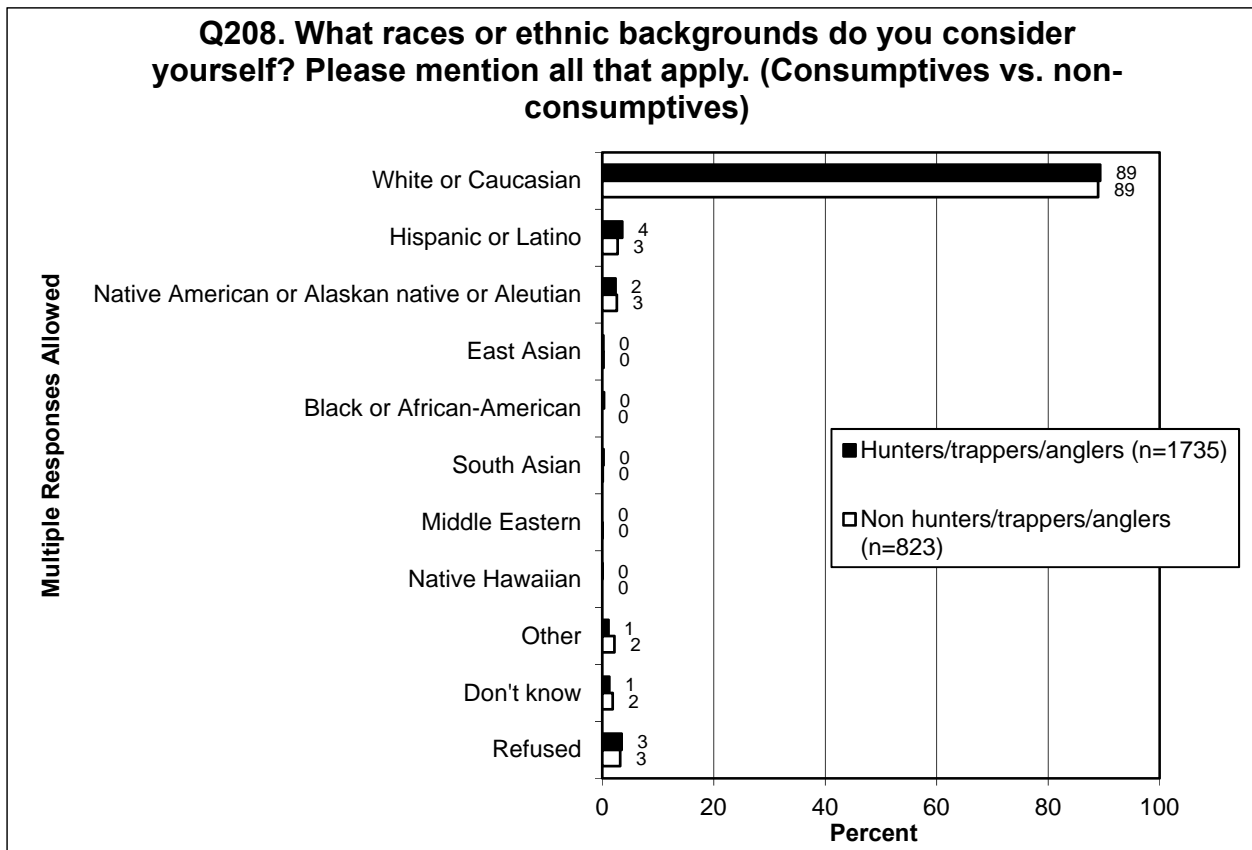


Figure 5.12.14. Ethnicity, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

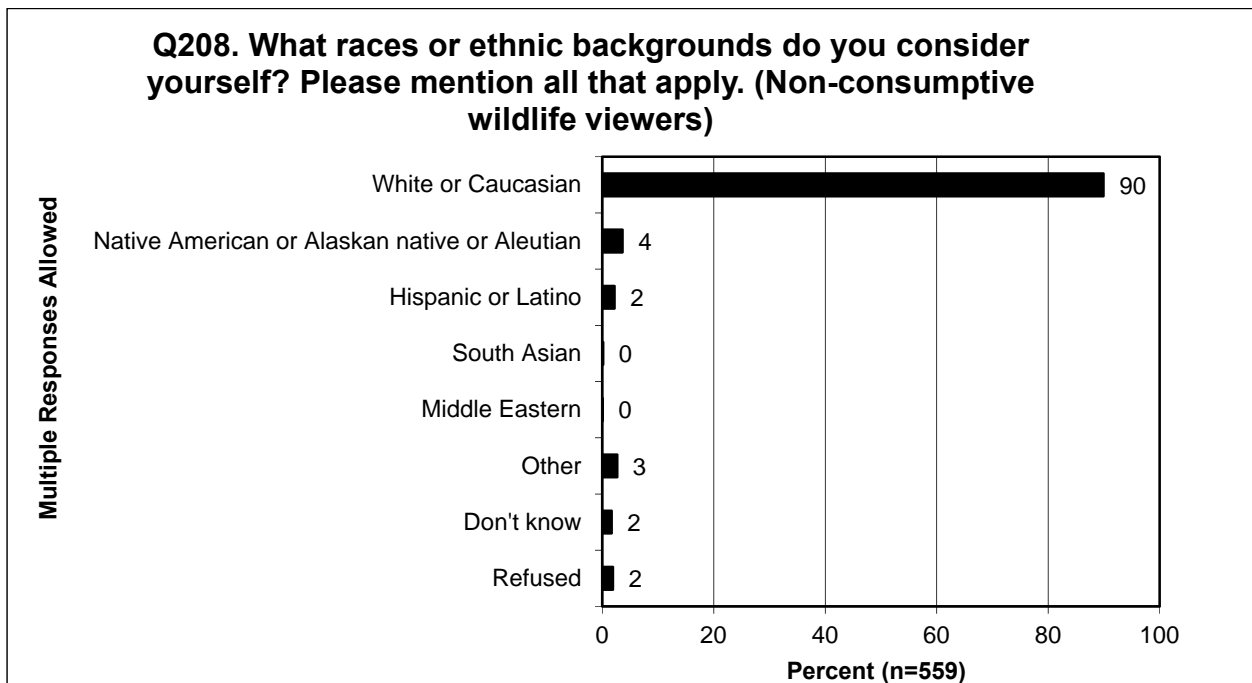


Figure 5.12.15. Ethnicity, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

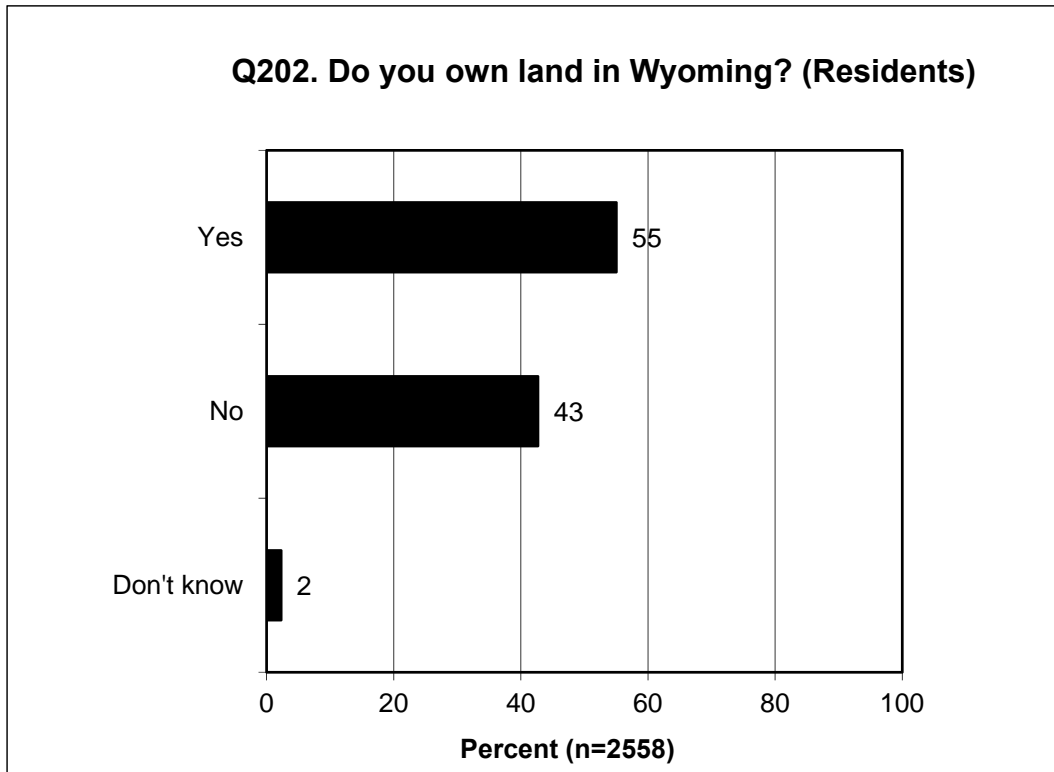


Figure 5.12.16. Ownership of Land, Among Residents

Table 5.12.4. Ownership of Land, Regionally

Q202. Do you own land in Wyoming? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Yes	55%	66%	63%	72%	60%	56%	50%	50%
No	44%	31%	34%	25%	39%	43%	49%	47%
Don't know	1%	2%	3%	3%	1%	2%	2%	3%

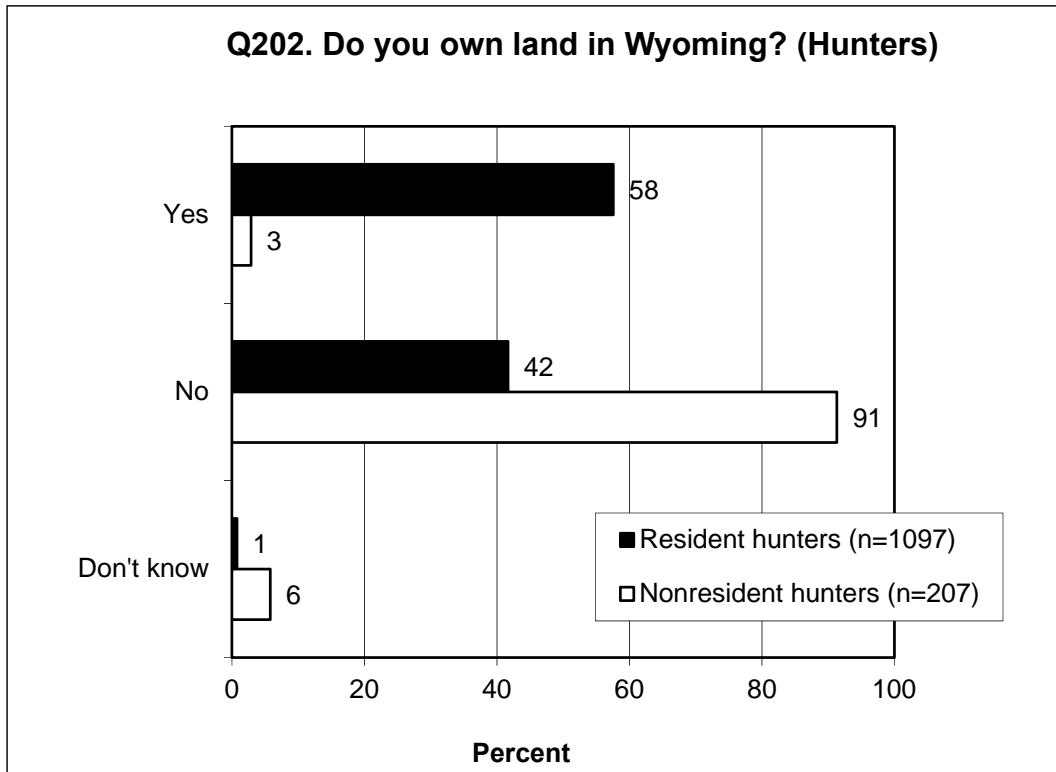


Figure 5.12.17. Ownership of Land, Among Hunters

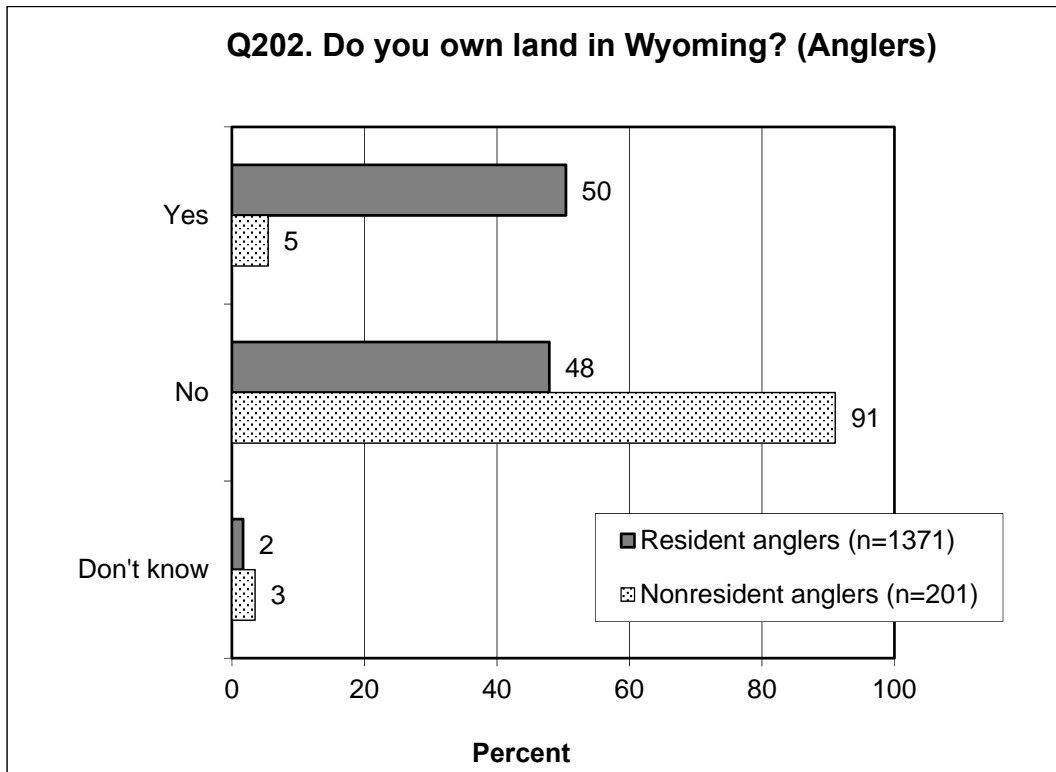


Figure 5.12.18. Ownership of Land, Among Anglers

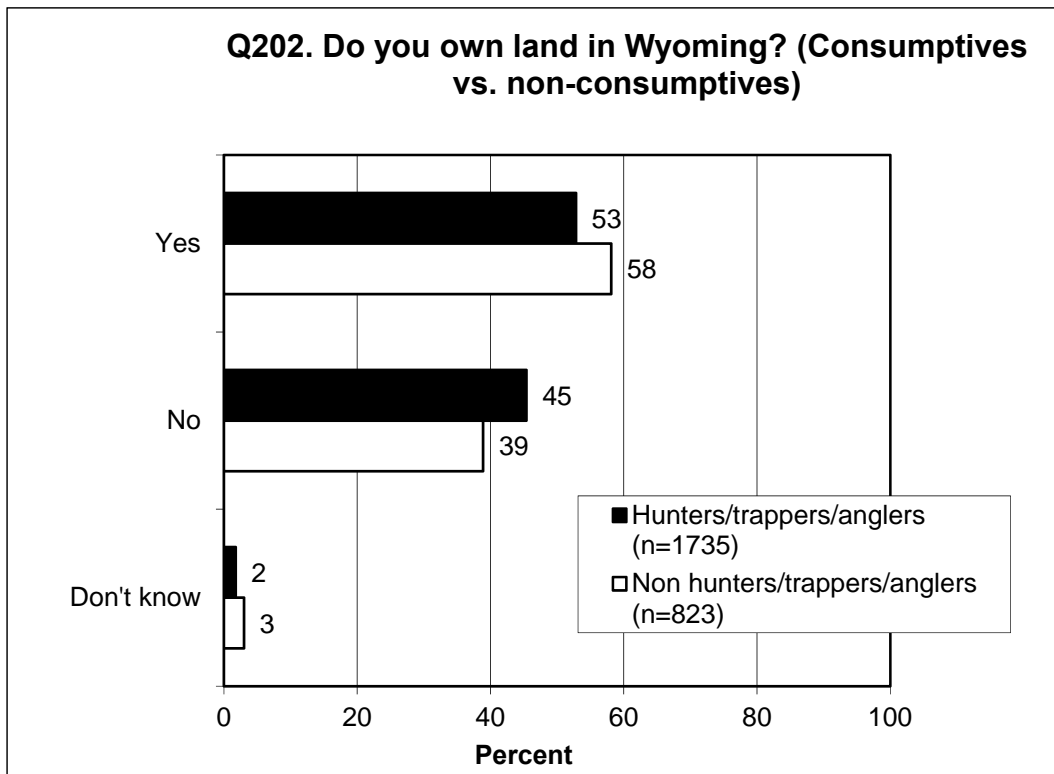


Figure 5.12.19. Ownership of Land, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

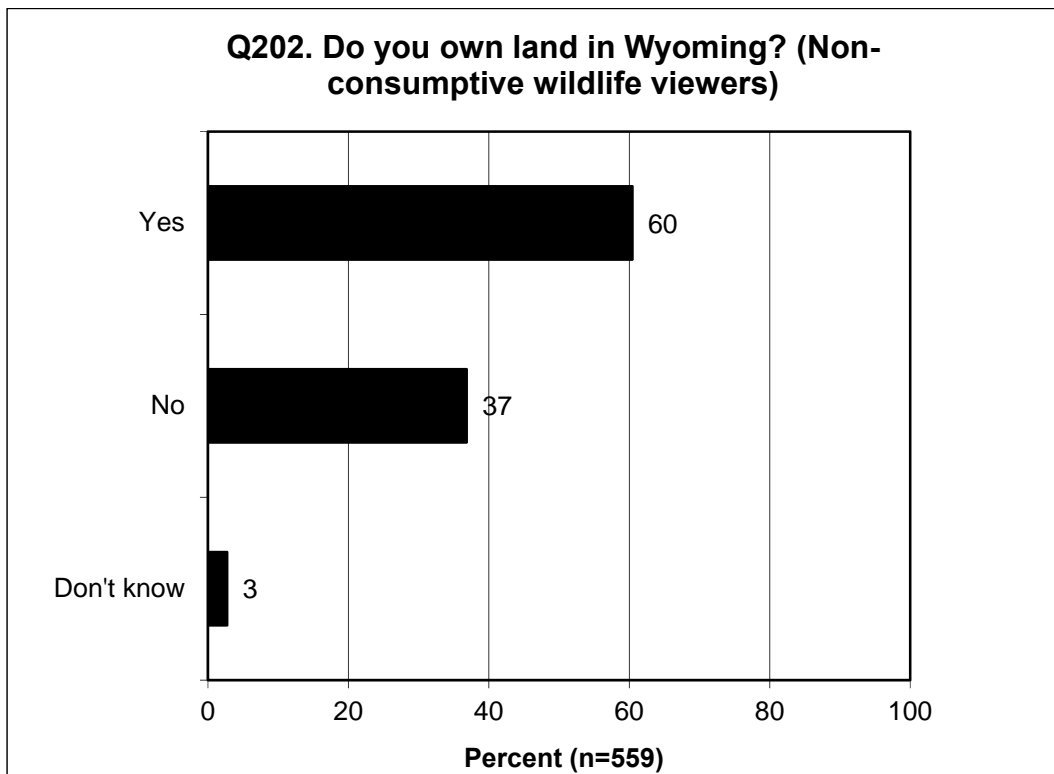


Figure 5.12.20. Ownership of Land, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

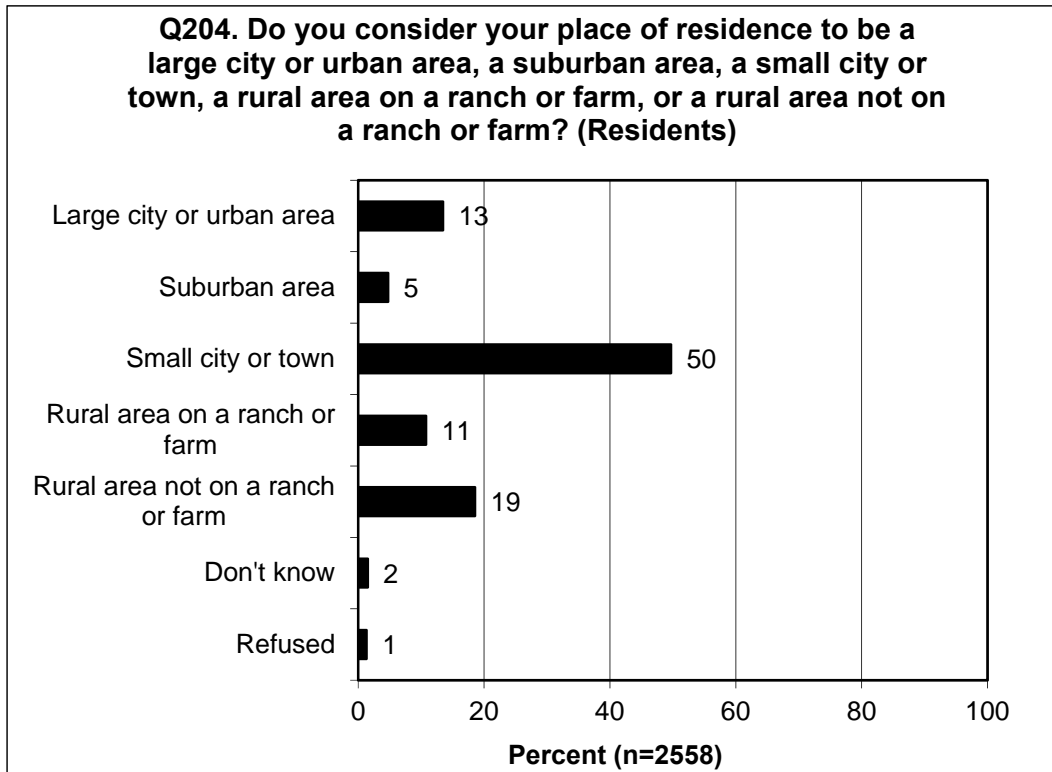


Figure 5.12.21. Residential Character, Among Residents

Table 5.12.5. Residential Character, Regionally

Q204. 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 ranch or farm, or a rural area not on a ranch or farm? (Residents)

	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Large city or urban area	2%	1%	3%	1%	5%	11%	23%	21%
Suburban area	4%	0%	1%	1%	6%	3%	5%	7%
Small city or town	57%	52%	54%	36%	57%	58%	44%	45%
Rural area on a ranch or farm	8%	22%	15%	16%	9%	9%	9%	9%
Rural area not on a ranch or farm	27%	23%	23%	43%	22%	16%	17%	15%
Don't know	1%	2%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%
Refused	2%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%

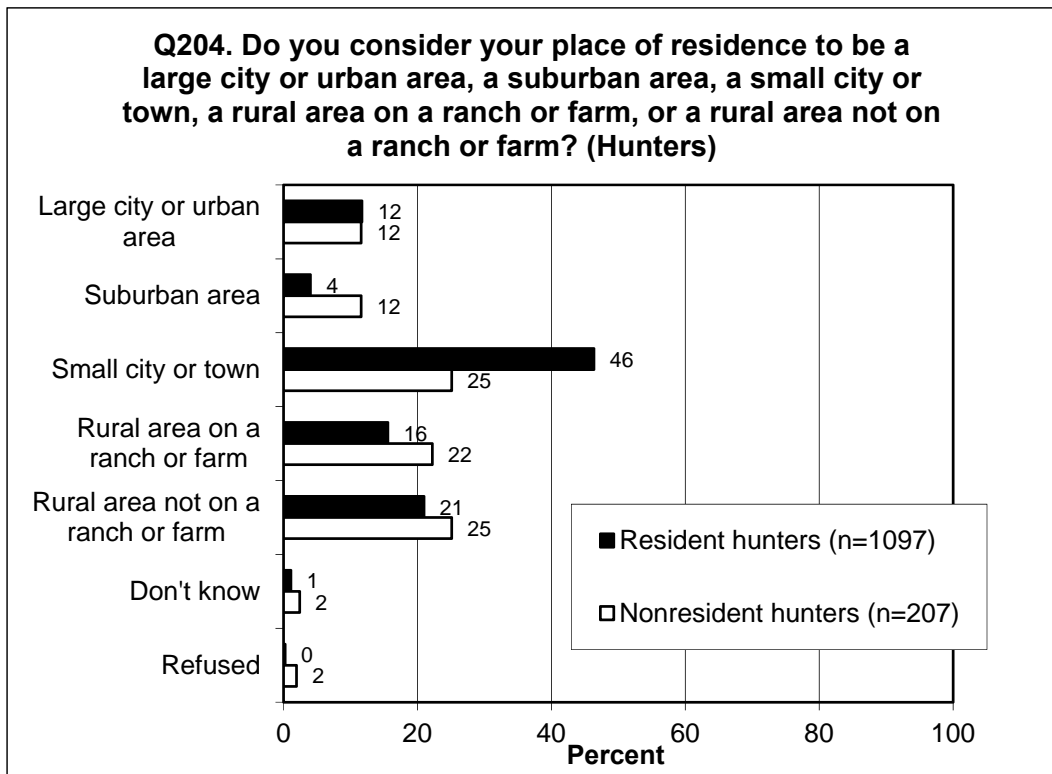


Figure 5.12.22. Residential Character, Among Hunters

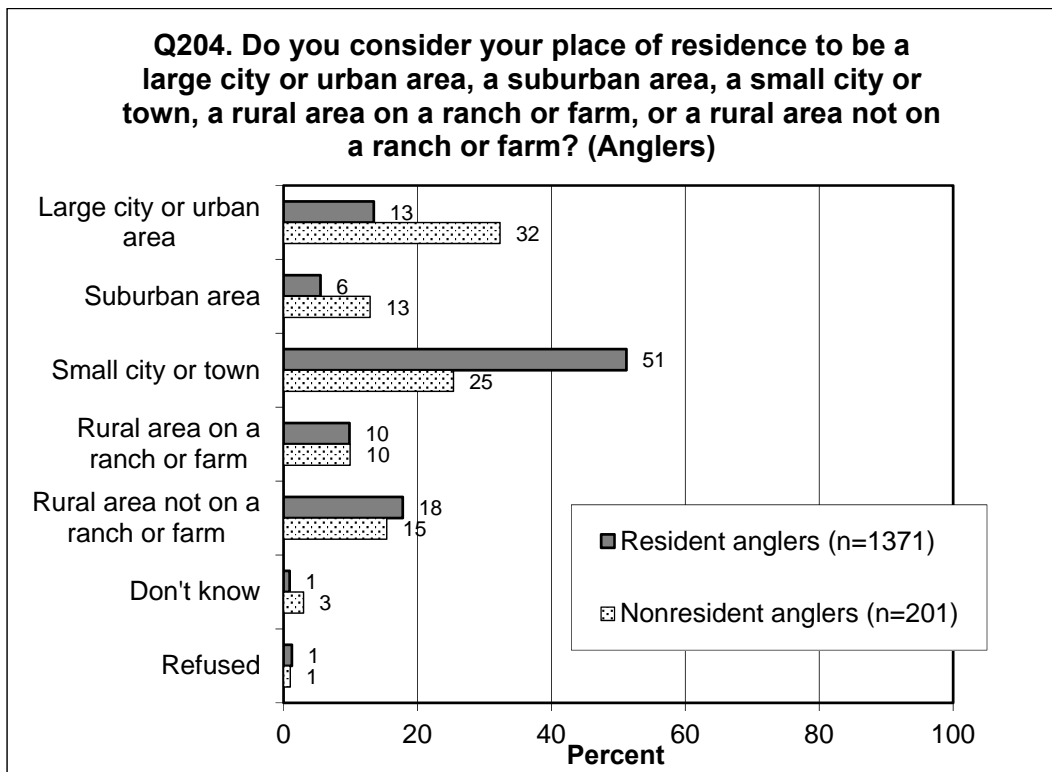


Figure 5.12.23. Residential Character, Among Anglers

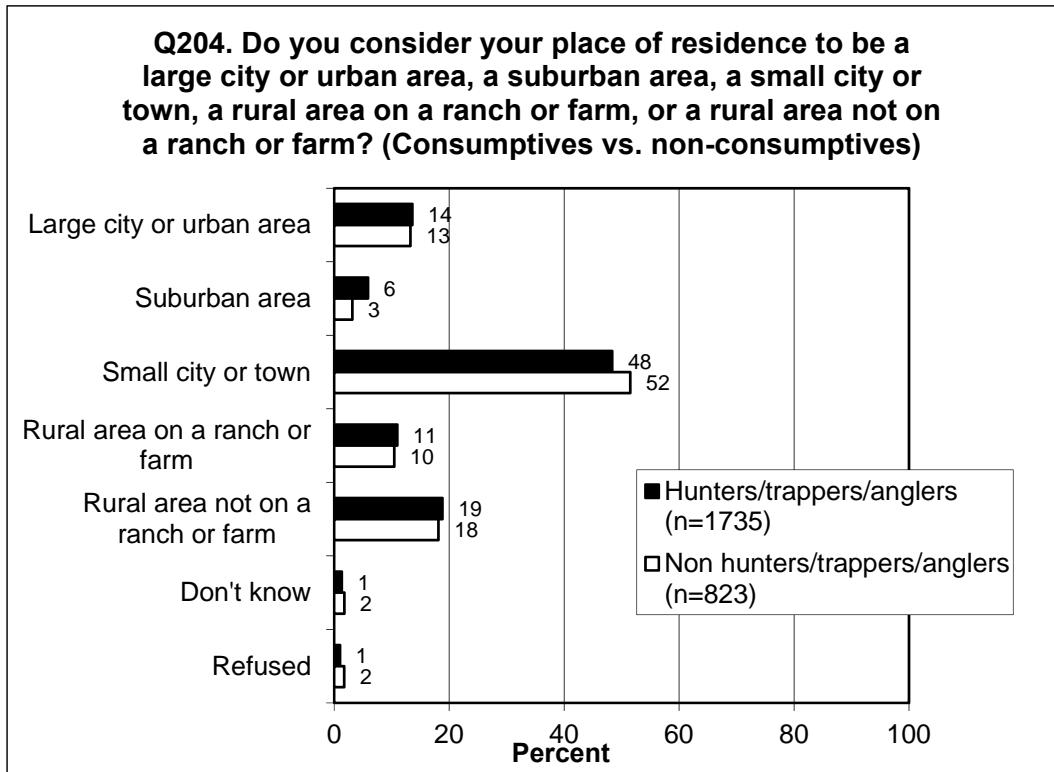


Figure 5.12.24. Residential Character, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

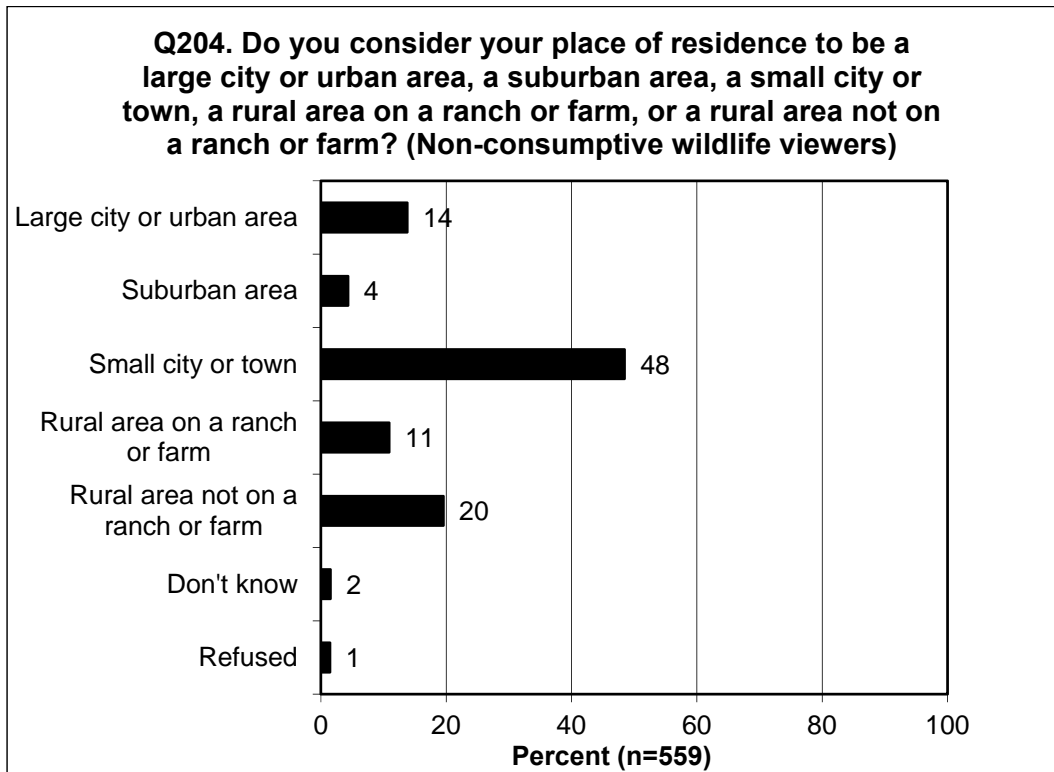


Figure 5.12.25. Residential Character, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

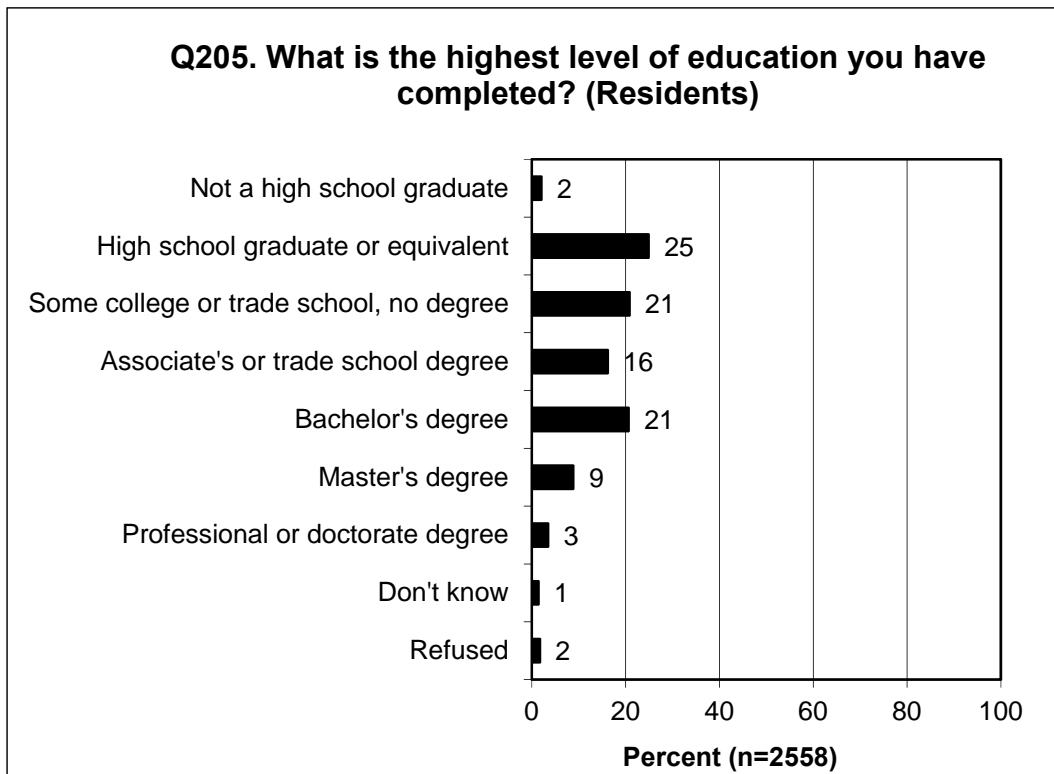


Figure 5.12.26. Educational Levels, Residents

Table 5.12.6. Education Levels, Regionally

Q205. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Residents)								
	Jackson	Cody	Lander	Pinedale	Green River	Sheridan	Casper	Laramie
Not a high school graduate	1%	3%	1%	1%	5%	2%	1%	2%
High school graduate or equivalent	16%	24%	27%	27%	36%	22%	26%	21%
Some college or trade school, no degree	10%	22%	18%	18%	16%	28%	25%	19%
Associate's or trade school degree	7%	17%	14%	12%	17%	18%	14%	17%
Bachelor's degree	39%	20%	22%	26%	17%	18%	20%	21%
Master's degree	19%	8%	10%	9%	7%	7%	8%	10%
Professional or doctorate degree	5%	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	3%	6%
Don't know	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%
Refused	2%	1%	3%	3%	1%	2%	2%	2%

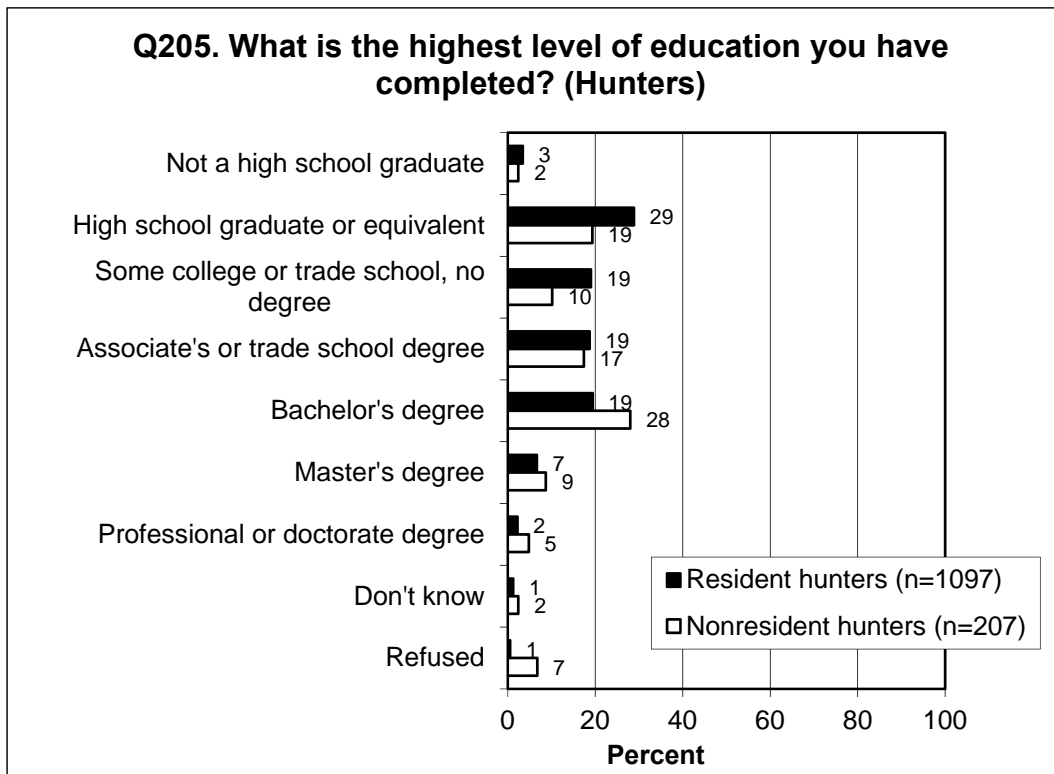


Figure 5.12.27. Educational Levels, Among Hunters

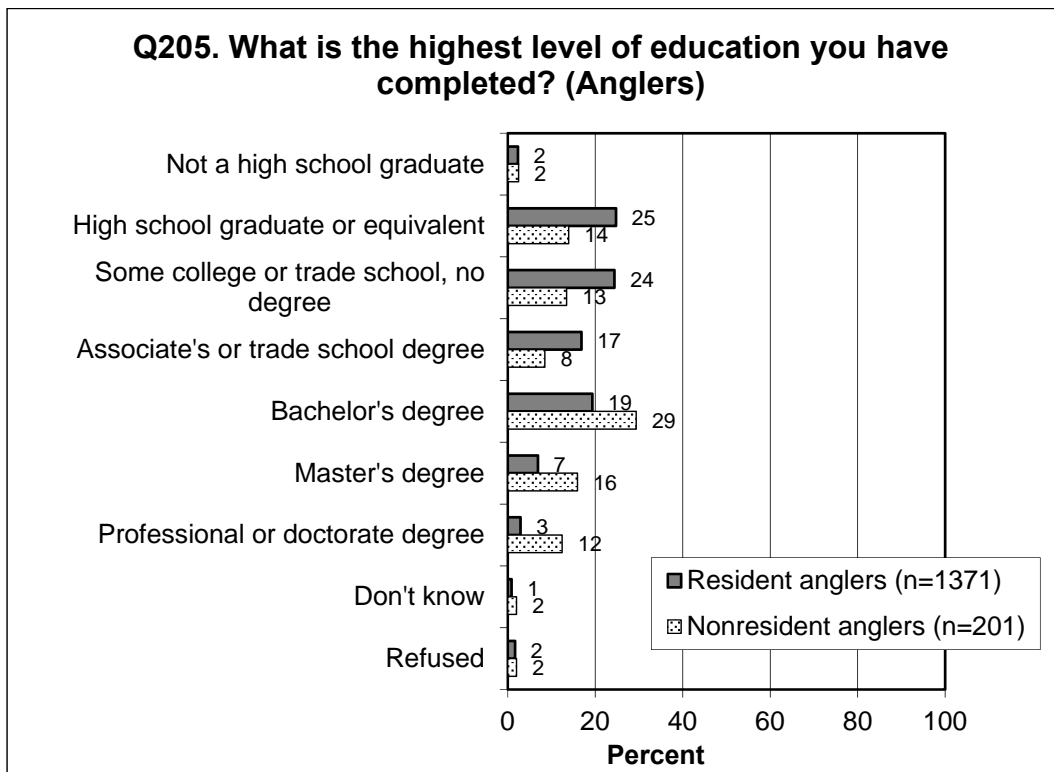


Figure 5.12.28. Educational Levels, Among Anglers

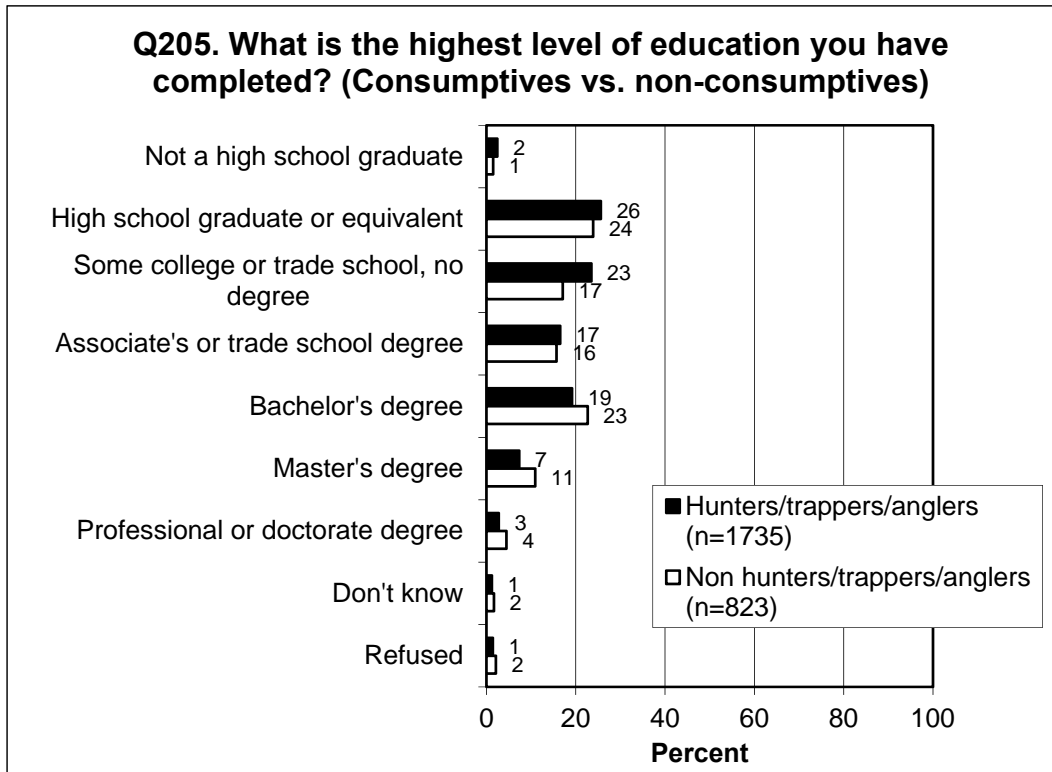


Figure 5.12.29. Educational Levels, Among Hunters/Trappers/Anglers

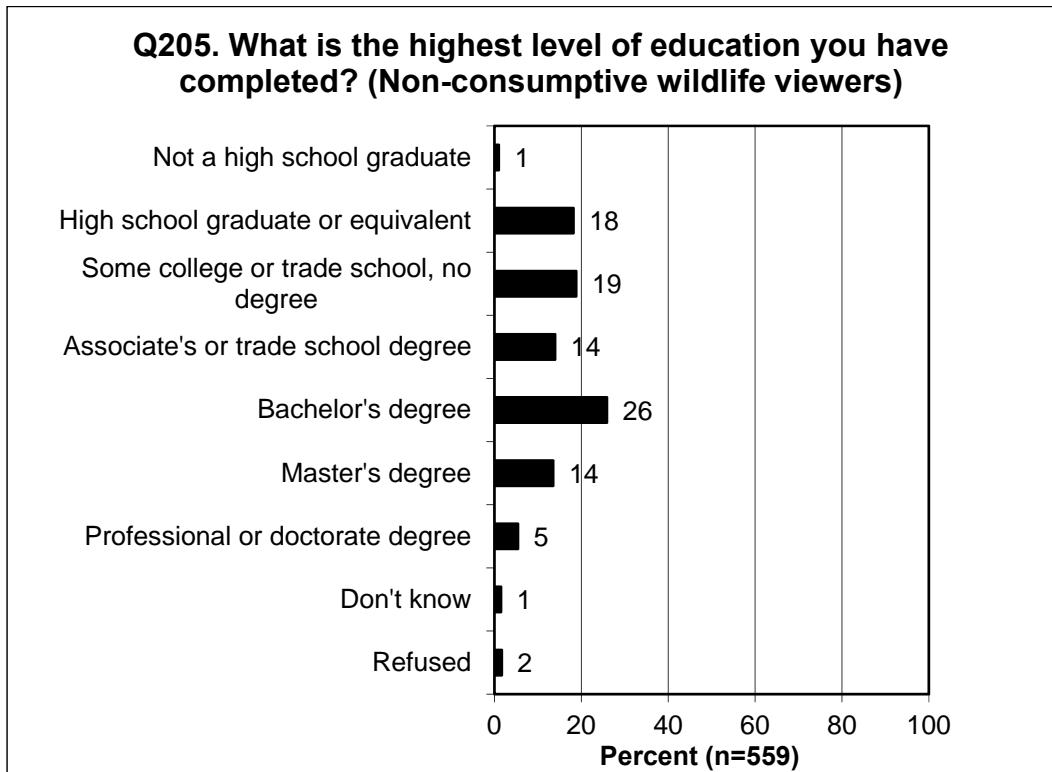


Figure 5.12.30. Educational Levels, Among Non-Consumptive Wildlife Viewers

6. EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Employees were administered a survey that included questions about their job satisfaction, their opinions on entities that may or may not influence the agency, the importance of various Game and Fish efforts, and the performance of Game and Fish at those efforts, as well as other questions. The methodology is discussed in full in Chapter 12, "Methodology."

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Satisfaction with their overall job is high among employees (91% are satisfied).

Although overall satisfaction is high, those who are satisfied are fairly evenly distributed between being *very* satisfied and *somewhat* satisfied, meaning that this latter group could be more satisfied.

Regarding various aspects of their job, employees are most satisfied with their work environment. The area in which they are not as highly satisfied is communications. This includes inter- and intra-divisional communications.

Employees perceptions of their opportunities for training and professional development are positive, as are their perceptions of how well the agency retains employees. Less positively perceived is transparency in decision-making (which is related to communication, which was cited above as being not as good as it could be).

The overwhelming majority of employees rate the Game and Fish Department in the top half of the scale at conserving fish and wildlife: 93% give a rating of *excellent* or *good*.

The caveat to this positive rating is that these 93% are about evenly divided between *excellent* and *good*, meaning that for the latter, the efforts could be rated higher.

Employees' highest priorities are for managing species that are hunted, improving habitats, issuing licenses, and protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing laws.

Regarding performance, the top-rated efforts pertain to fishing and boating, as well as two items already discussed as being highly important: managing species that are hunted, and issuing licenses and related products.

Employees also rate the priority of providing education highly.

Employees generally feel that the agency balances fish and wildlife management and providing fishing and hunting opportunities. There is less agreement that the agency balances the interests of all groups it serves.

Employees think that politics and landowners have the biggest influence on the work of Game and Fish. They also attribute outfitters and guides as having a high level of influence. In the middle of their ranking is scientific fish and wildlife methods.

Some feel that special interests have a disproportionate influence on agency decisions.

Certain groups are said to dominate public meetings and influence management decisions, particularly politicians, outfitters, ranchers (livestock producers), the agricultural industry, the energy industry, and large landowners in general.

Employees overwhelmingly agree that elected officials should explore options for new funding sources.

Many feel that non-consumptive recreationists should contribute in some way to habitat and wildlife management. There are concerns that youth apathy will eventually result in decreased funding from license sales.

Leadership should trust employee input and micromanage less.

Many employees stated that decisions are made top-down, with little input from field personnel or subject matter experts in the specific units or programs.

In this survey, many of the questions were open-ended, and many employees gave quite detailed responses to the questions; the analysis includes a qualitative look at these responses. Although there was good information in the responses, to protect anonymity, the report cannot show the verbatim comments, as use of colloquialisms and so forth could compromise anonymity. In all, there were 5,140 comments provided by Game and Fish employees to the 30 open-ended questions.

6.1. EMPLOYEES' SATISFACTION WITH ASPECTS OF THEIR JOB

A series of questions asked employees about satisfaction or dissatisfaction with various aspects of their job, and one of the questions in the series asked about their job "overall." This most basic question has positive results: 91% are satisfied, while only 5% are dissatisfied (Figure 6.1.1).

However, note that a substantial portion of those who are satisfied are only *somewhat* satisfied.

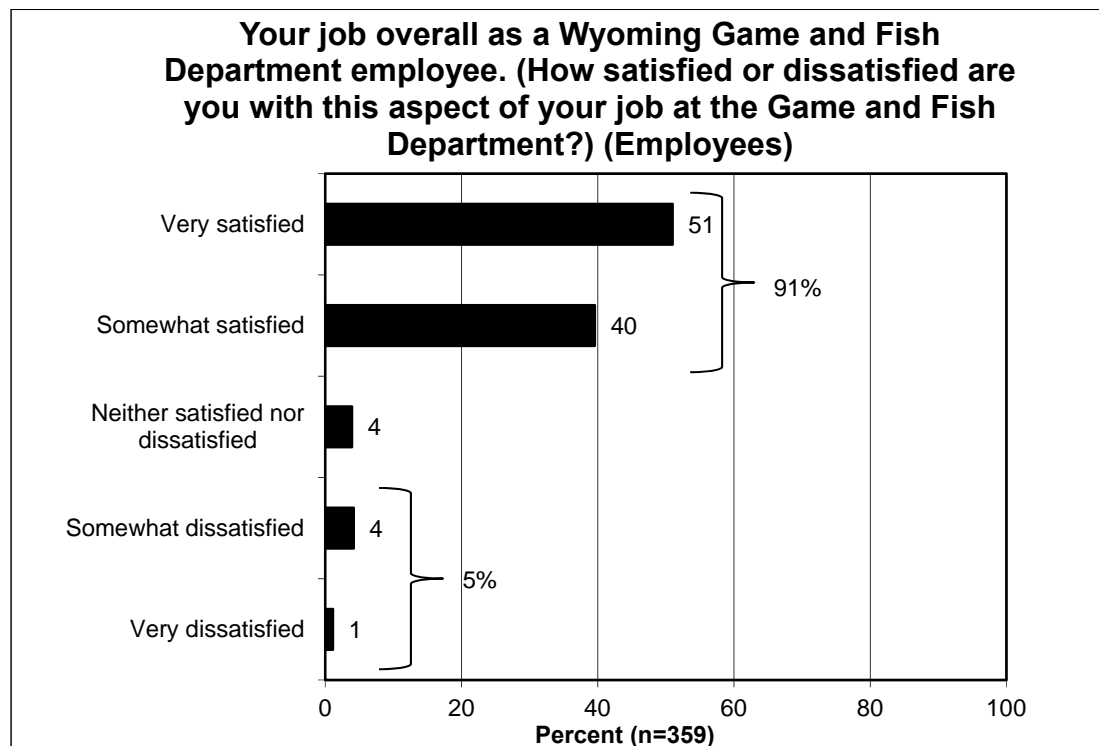


Figure 6.1.1. Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction With Their Job Overall, Employees

The entire series of questions (of which the above was one) is shown in Figure 6.1.2, which shows that satisfaction is high for employees' jobs overall and for their work environment. Nonetheless, at the bottom of the ranking are the two items pertaining to communication: one is communication within the employee's division, and the second is communication within the Game and Fish Department as a whole—both of these have at least 20% of employees saying that they are dissatisfied with this aspect of their job at Game and Fish.

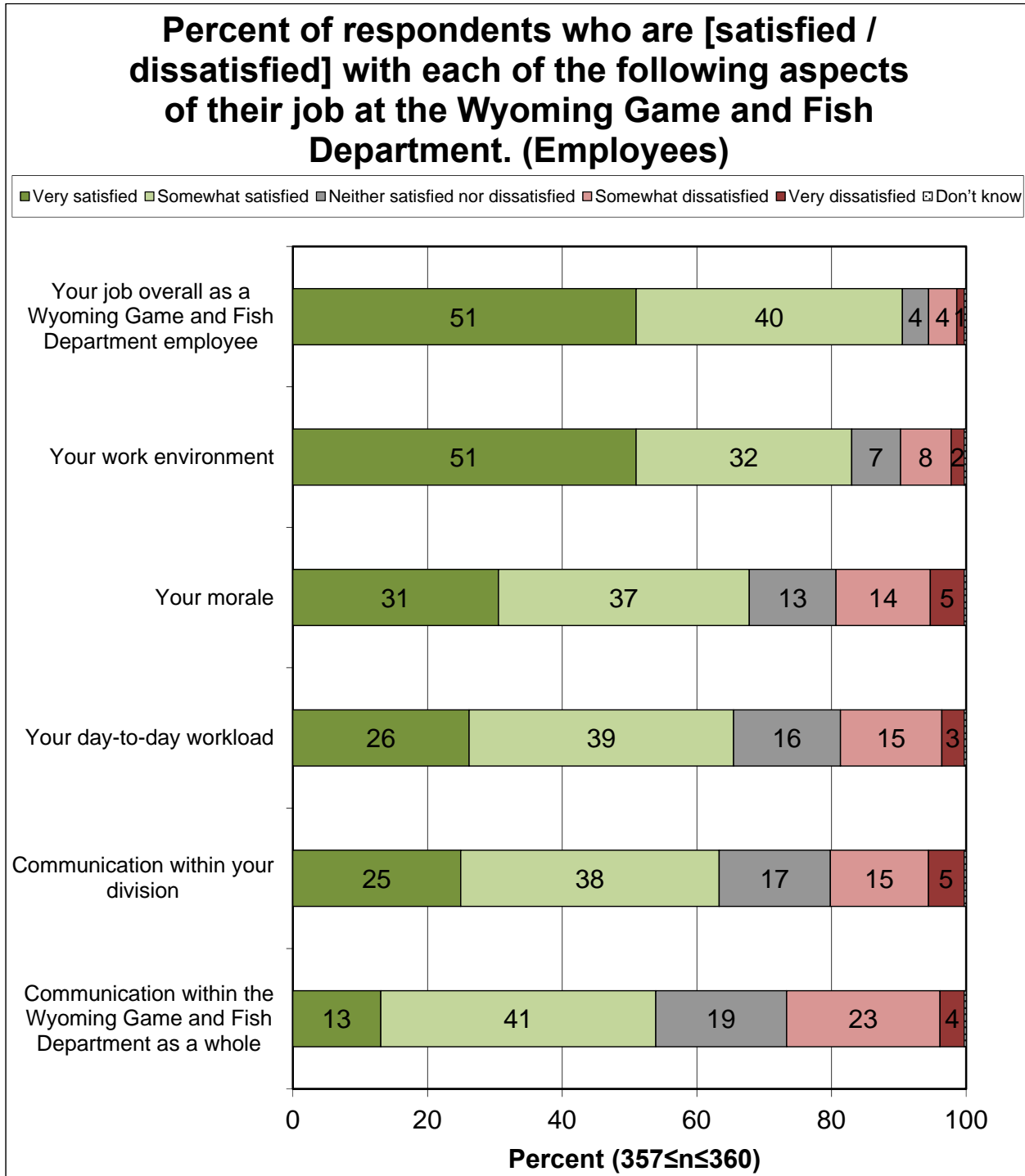


Figure 6.1.2. Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction With Various Aspects of Their Job, Employees

Follow-up questions, open-ended in format, asked about their reasons for giving the ratings that they did. As indicated previously, the full verbatim responses cannot be shown because they could compromise the anonymity of respondents. Instead, comments are summarized and paraphrased.

YOUR JOB OVERALL AS A WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE

Among those who expressed satisfaction with their job overall (91% of Game and Fish employees), many expressed pride in helping to conserve the abundant natural resources of Wyoming and in serving the public at large. They find the work rewarding and feel that it is making a difference, and many said that their coworkers are also committed and passionate about serving the needs of the state's habitat, fish and wildlife populations, and outdoor recreationists. Some employees indicated that they like being challenged by the variety of duties, they are autonomous (not micromanaged), and they feel that their opinions are respected by their supervisors or others in leadership. There were many exclamations that this is "the best job ever."

At the other end of the spectrum, dissatisfied employees (5% of Game and Fish employees) frequently stated that they have increasingly burdensome workloads and are expected to do more with less. More and more time is spent on process and paperwork; a few employees stated that they are not doing the job that was described to them at the beginning of their employment. Also, it was noted that Game and Fish operates like a collection of isolated groups, rather than one unified entity, and information sharing between divisions or regions is poor. Many who have a contracted (non-permanent) status do not feel appreciated by management and cannot make long-term plans without employment security. "Job shadowing" was eliminated, but some employees felt that the practice provided valuable training and insight into other agency tasks. In addition, there were comments that certain individuals have an overbearing management style and have criticized or ridiculed employees in front of coworkers and even the public.

YOUR WORK ENVIRONMENT

Those satisfied with their work environment (83% of Game and Fish employees) most frequently stated that they enjoy their time outdoors in the beautiful landscape of Wyoming, or that they have a nice balance between their time in the office and their time outdoors. Employees also indicated that they have great coworkers, teachers, and supervisors; they are respected to get the job done without micromanagement; they have the flexibility to work from home; and that they are provided with the equipment or technology needed to be successful.

Those dissatisfied with their environment (10% of Game and Fish employees) most often attributed this to overbearing supervisors, potentially unqualified people being promoted, and a culture of working under a fear of making mistakes. Also noted was a hoarding of information within groups, an evaluation program that fosters competition rather than teamwork, and the presence of disgruntled or slacking coworkers that affect overall morale. In addition, some employees noted physical aspects of the work environment that are substandard, such as small or outdated buildings, temperature control, slow or outdated computers, and a lack of amenities in the bathrooms and kitchen.

YOUR DAY-TO-DAY WORKLOAD

Employees who expressed satisfaction (65%) stated that their workload is manageable, they have reliable support from coworkers and supervisors, they enjoy the challenge, the variety of work makes the days go by quickly, and that improved technology has removed some of the busy work.

On this question, 18% of Game and Fish employees expressed dissatisfaction, with many stating that they feel overwhelmed or burned out by the workload. Their responsibilities keep increasing without any work being removed, or positions being added, and some employees noted that they are never caught up so it is difficult to feel any satisfaction. Some employees feel they are always in crisis management mode. There are perceptions that overtime is expected of employees and that vacation time is frowned upon. It was stated that a lack of prioritization can add to the problem as well.

Note that several employees on both sides of the satisfaction spectrum indicated that their workload can vary greatly depending on the season.

YOUR MORALE

Many employees said they have high morale at Game and Fish (68% of employees expressed satisfaction). They have great coworkers, strong support from supervisors, an opportunity for self-directed work, and they find the job rewarding and challenging overall. There were a number of comments that leadership (either immediate supervisors or those higher up) has improved over the past 5 or 10 years.

In contrast, dissatisfied employees (totaling 19%) stated that leadership has gotten worse in recent years: there is little appreciation by leadership, certain supervisors and coworkers are rude or difficult, top-down management stifles creativity, and some positions are celebrated more than others (favoritism toward the Wildlife Division was frequently mentioned). Some feel that the agency values its image and marketing over sound wildlife management. Non-permanent employees in particular are not seen as being valued by leadership (this was noted by permanent employees as well, not just those under short-term contracts). Many employees feel burned out by their workloads. The public was also mentioned as a contributor to low morale; employees described many constituents as entitled "know-it-alls," with many who have an anti-government attitude that leads to hostile encounters.

COMMUNICATION WITHIN YOUR DIVISION

Numerous employees indicated that communication is excellent within their division (63% expressed satisfaction), although many said it is more difficult with other divisions or Game and Fish entities. Communication within the regions received many favorable comments as well. Some employees mentioned that information seems to flow through the appropriate channels as needed, and some said there have been noticeable improvements in recent years. It was also noted that field personnel communicate well with each other.

Employees who are dissatisfied with communication in their division (20%) provided several reasons for this: decisions are made with no explanation or input (the discontinuation of job shadowing was mentioned as an example), upper management is rarely seen in the division, important emails get lost in a flurry of unimportant ones, and their division seems disconnected from the decisions and actions of the headquarters office in Cheyenne. There were comments that leadership seems to view and use information as power, and that it is hard to be transparent to the public without being in the loop.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT AS A WHOLE

Employees satisfied with communication as a whole (54%) often stated that it has improved in recent years and that important items receive more focus. It was noted that Game and Fish is small, so it is easy to reach others for collaboration and assistance, and it is easy to contact supervisors, division chiefs, and the Director's office when necessary. Some stated that videos, webinars, emails, and meetings are informative without being too numerous, and these varied mechanisms also make it easy and efficient to get information out to the public.

On the other hand, many employees dissatisfied with communication as a whole (27%) stated that communication is one of Game and Fish's biggest weaknesses. There were several comments that each region operates like a separate agency, that communication between divisions needs to be improved at all levels, that decisions from Cheyenne are often discovered long after the fact, that employees outside of the Wildlife Division are rarely consulted, and that employees are told little about hirings and firings. Some employees are reluctant to offer opinions to leadership out of fear of reprisal. It was stated that this job attracts people with autonomy, who tend to not be great communicators.

6.2. OPINIONS ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF WORKING FOR THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

In the survey, five statements about employees' work environment were made, and employees were asked if they agreed or disagreed with each. All except one statement has a majority agreeing with it, including that Game and Fish provides adequate opportunities to engage in training and professional development (72% agree) and that Game and Fish does an adequate job retaining employees (65%) (Figure 6.2.1). At the bottom is one that pertains to communication—less than a majority agree (47%) that there is adequate transparency in decision-making.

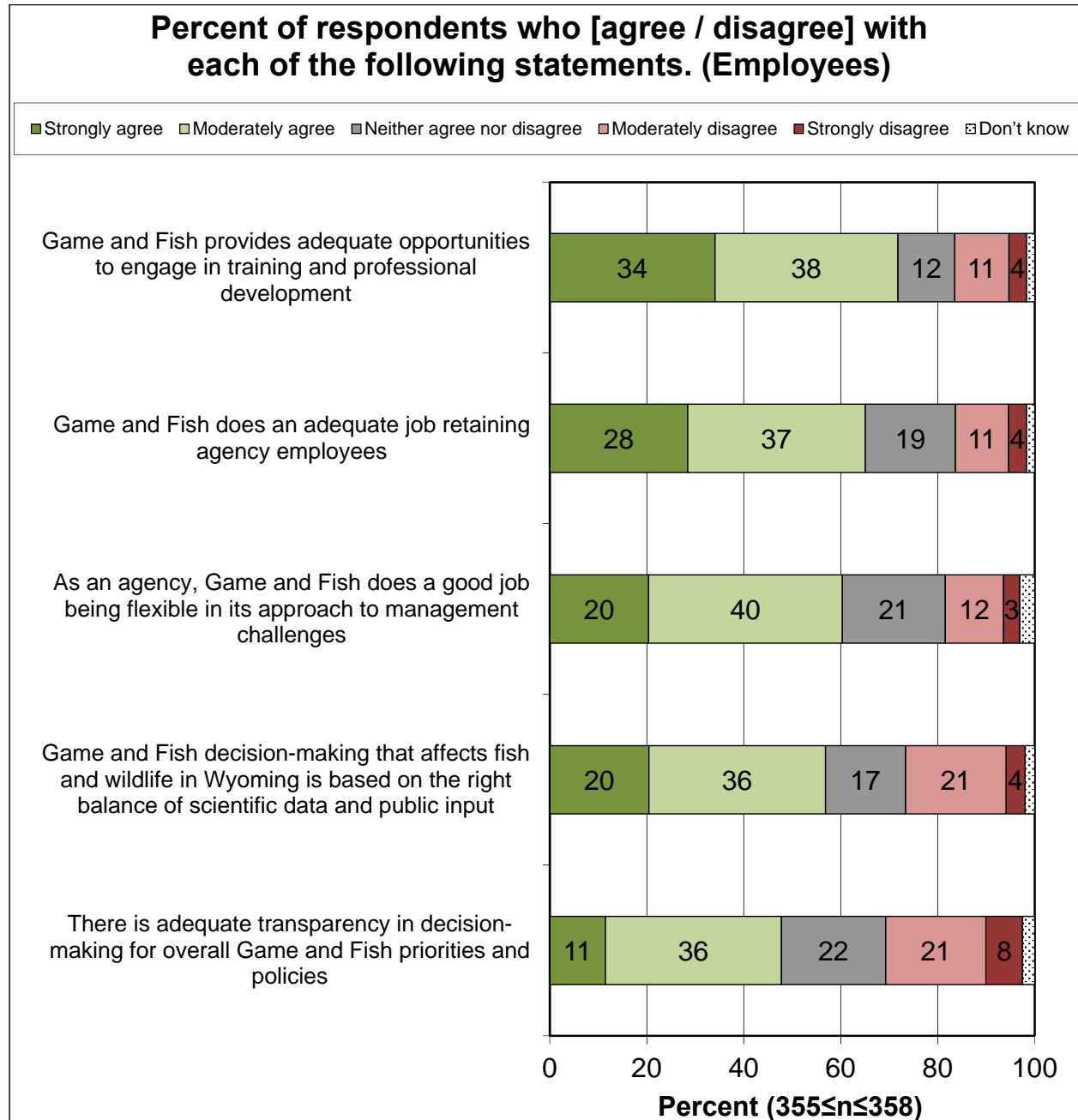


Figure 6.2.1. Agreement or Disagreement With Statements About Their Work Environment, Employees

Follow-up questions, in an open-ended format, asked those who disagreed with each statement to give their reasons. Again, as indicated previously, the full verbatim responses cannot be shown because they could compromise the anonymity of respondents. The questions that were asked are shown in bold, followed by the discussion of the results.

Why do you disagree that Game and Fish provides adequate opportunities to engage in training and professional development? (15% of employees gave this answer.) Employees in this category said that mentoring and training are practically nonexistent at the agency; this includes training on dealing with the public. Some indicated that they have been denied training and professional development requests. Contracted employees in particular are not trained. Others noted that the agency is restrictive on travel, and many said their workload is too high to take time for training. Some are concerned that Game and Fish is falling behind on current technology and wildlife surveying methods.

Why do you disagree that there is adequate transparency in decision-making for overall Game and Fish priorities and policies? (29% of employees gave this answer.) Several employees stated that they learn about decisions long after the fact, many of which are contrary to subject matter experts' recommendations. It was noted that a select few individuals make all the decisions, and it is difficult to communicate decisions to the public without knowing the reasons behind them. Again, some employees said that only the Wildlife Division seems to have any input to agency leadership. Some said that special interest groups like outfitters and ranchers push policy, rather than local, regional, and field personnel.

Why do you disagree that Game and Fish does a good job being flexible in its approach to management challenges? (15% of employees gave this answer.) Employees in this group said that the agency has an "always did it this way" mentality, with entrenched policies and routines resulting in inertia. This especially applies to funding; alternative funding sources to hunting and fishing licenses have been discussed but not aggressively pursued. It was stated that decisions are made top-down and too often are based on the political expedience of appeasing "squeaky wheels"—outfitters and ranchers in particular—rather than being based on science-based recommendations or the goal of serving the public at large.

Why do you disagree that Game and Fish decision-making that affects fish and wildlife in Wyoming is based on the right balance of scientific data and public input? (25% of employees gave this answer.) Many employees expressed concern that Game and Fish too often gives in to public pressure over the scientific recommendations of its staff. Special interests tend to dominate public meetings, resulting in favoritism toward the loudest voices: outfitters, livestock producers, the agricultural industry, and the energy industry. Political interference is also seen as having too much influence. On the other hand, several employees indicated that scientific recommendations often trump public concerns, and that the balance of these interests has improved over the past decade.

Why do you disagree that Game and Fish does an adequate job retaining agency employees? (15% of employees gave this answer.) Employees frequently stated that the agency has difficulty retaining quality contracted employees, who do not receive the benefits of permanent employees and cannot rely on stable employment under the system of short-term contracts (it was suggested that other agencies are grateful to Game and Fish for training employees that are now theirs). Other reasons for employee turnover were given: poor

management, excessive workloads, stagnant wages, and no chance for advancement unless the employee has connections.

6.3. OPINIONS ON PRIORITIES AND PERFORMANCE OF THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT AND ITS EFFORTS

Ratings of the job that the Game and Fish Department does are positive. The large majority of employees give a rating in the top half of the scale: 45% say *excellent*, and 48% say *good*, a sum of 93% (Figure 6.3.1). However, as with ratings of satisfaction, a substantial portion are not in the highest rating (*excellent* here, *very satisfied* in the aforementioned satisfaction question) in favor of the second-level rating (*good* here, *somewhat satisfied* in the satisfaction question).

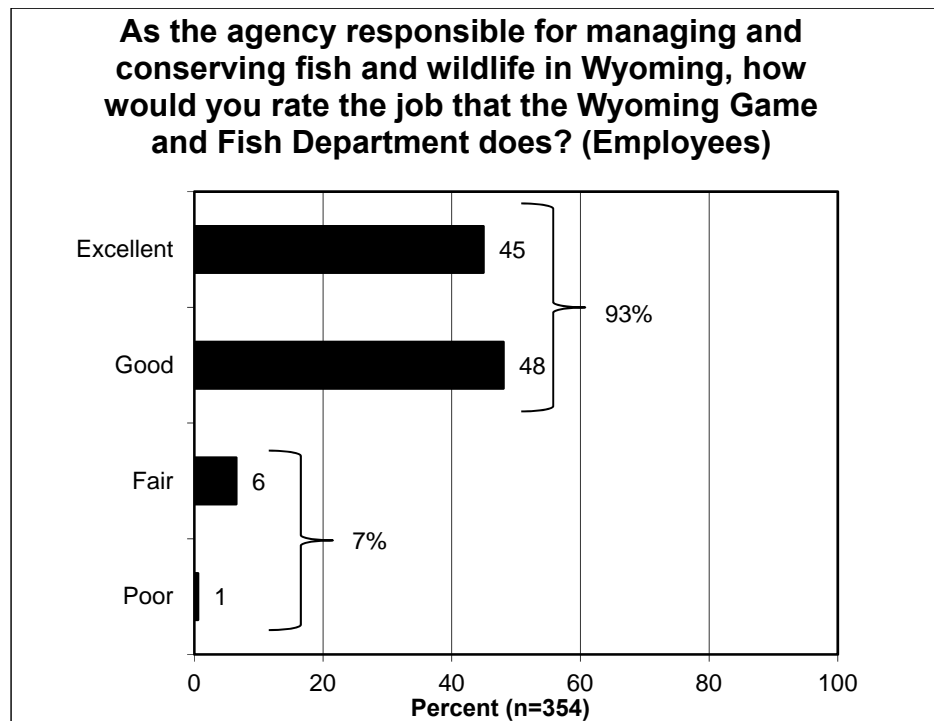


Figure 6.3.1. Ratings of Performance of Game and Fish as a Whole, Employees

A follow-up question asked employees to say what Game and Fish should do to improve its performance. This was an open-ended question to which any response could be given. Note that the full verbatim responses cannot be shown because they could compromise the anonymity of respondents. The most frequent suggestions by employees included prioritizing wildlife habitat needs over political pressure (“show more backbone”), reducing the micromanagement of employees and top-down decision-making, and working to conserve all wildlife species, not just harvestable game. To that last point, there were many comments that Game and Fish needs to acquire funding sources other than license fees. It was noted that transparency on agency decisions and informing the public on agency funding (i.e., not from taxes) can result in greater public interest in conserving Wyoming’s natural resources. Internally, there were several suggestions: long-time contracted employees should be hired full-time with benefits, the agency should create a human dimensions position, leadership should reduce micromanagement and trust field staff, and the agency should stop hiring inexperienced people to high positions. Other

suggestions include simplifying regulations (reducing obstacles to recruitment), improving the website, expanding outreach and hunter education, and staffing and improving the call center.

Employees rated the importance of various efforts of the Game and Fish Department and its performance at those efforts. This parallels the survey of residents discussed in Chapter 5 of this report (see “5.8. Priorities of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department”), and the analysis is conducted in the same way. In total, 27 efforts were rated.

Identical to the resident survey, the questions used a 0 to 10 rating scale, with 0 being *not at all* important and 10 being *extremely* important for the importance questions, and 0 being a *poor* job and 10 being an *excellent* job for the performance questions. Each effort in the importance series is meant to be looked at relative to its counterpart in the performance series.

The following explains the analysis; if you have already read the analogous part regarding the resident survey in Chapter 5, you can skip to the discussion of the results of Figure 6.3.2 below. In a rating structure like this, where importance and performance are rated, the ideal is for each effort to be rated a 10 in importance and a 10 in performance, but such a result would ignore real world opinions on the efforts (employees might not realize that an effort is important, for instance) as well as real world constraints on resources that the Game and Fish Department has at its disposal to carry out all its efforts. In other words, the series prompts employees to prioritize the efforts.

There are several ways to look at the data, based on the discussion above. The first way is to calculate the mean score of importance for each effort and then rank the efforts. This shows exactly what employee’s priorities are—what is important to them and what they want Game and Fish to do.

The second way looks at the performance of Game and Fish at its efforts: a ranking is made of the mean performance ratings. This shows which efforts Game and Fish are perceived by employees to be performing better than others.

The third way of analyzing the data is to compare the ratings of importance and performance among employees. Given real world constraints, some efforts are simply going to have a higher priority than others, so the performance of some are going to be better than the performance of others. However, the ideal situation is that the efforts that are not performed as well as others are those that are not considered as important. In other words, an agency would hope to do particularly well at those efforts considered most important by its employees. Therefore, the comparison uses a scatterplot, with one axis showing importance and the other axis showing performance (which will be explained in more detail shortly).

In the graphs, the following item is truncated because of space limitations:

Maintaining continuous development / assessment of technologies for law enforcement, including wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory.

Figure 6.3.2 shows the mean ratings of importance of the efforts among employees. Their top efforts have a mix of ecological and recreational, with those that directly relate to the benefit of wildlife and those that directly address the provision of hunting and fishing opportunities. Five

items are at 9.0 or higher: managing species that are hunted, improving habitats, issuing licenses and associated products, enforcing laws, and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas.

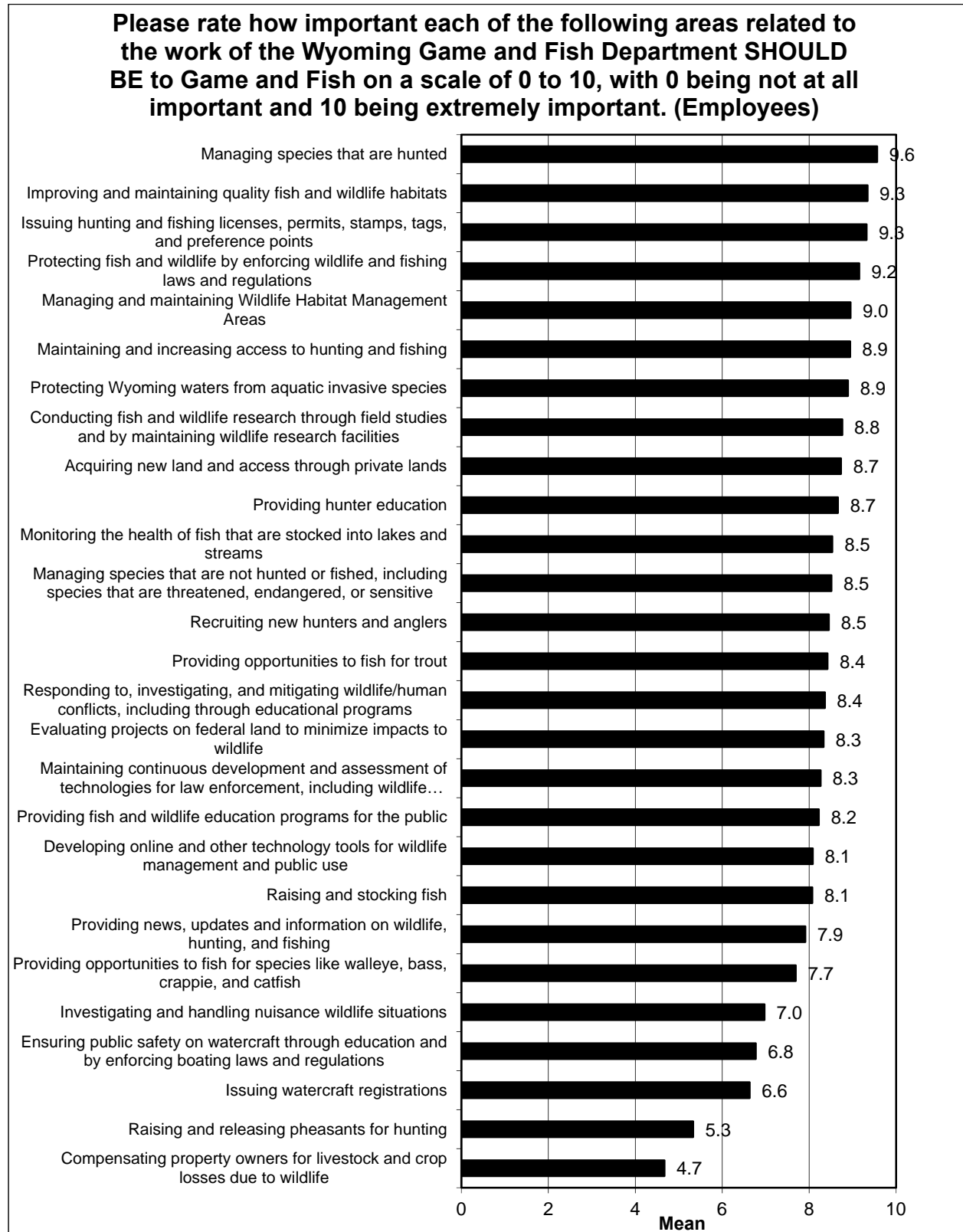


Figure 6.3.2. Importance of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Employees

Game and Fish employees then rated the performance of these efforts (Figure 6.3.3). The top-rated efforts pertain to fishing and boating, as well as two items already discussed as being highly important: managing species that are hunted, and issuing licenses and related products.

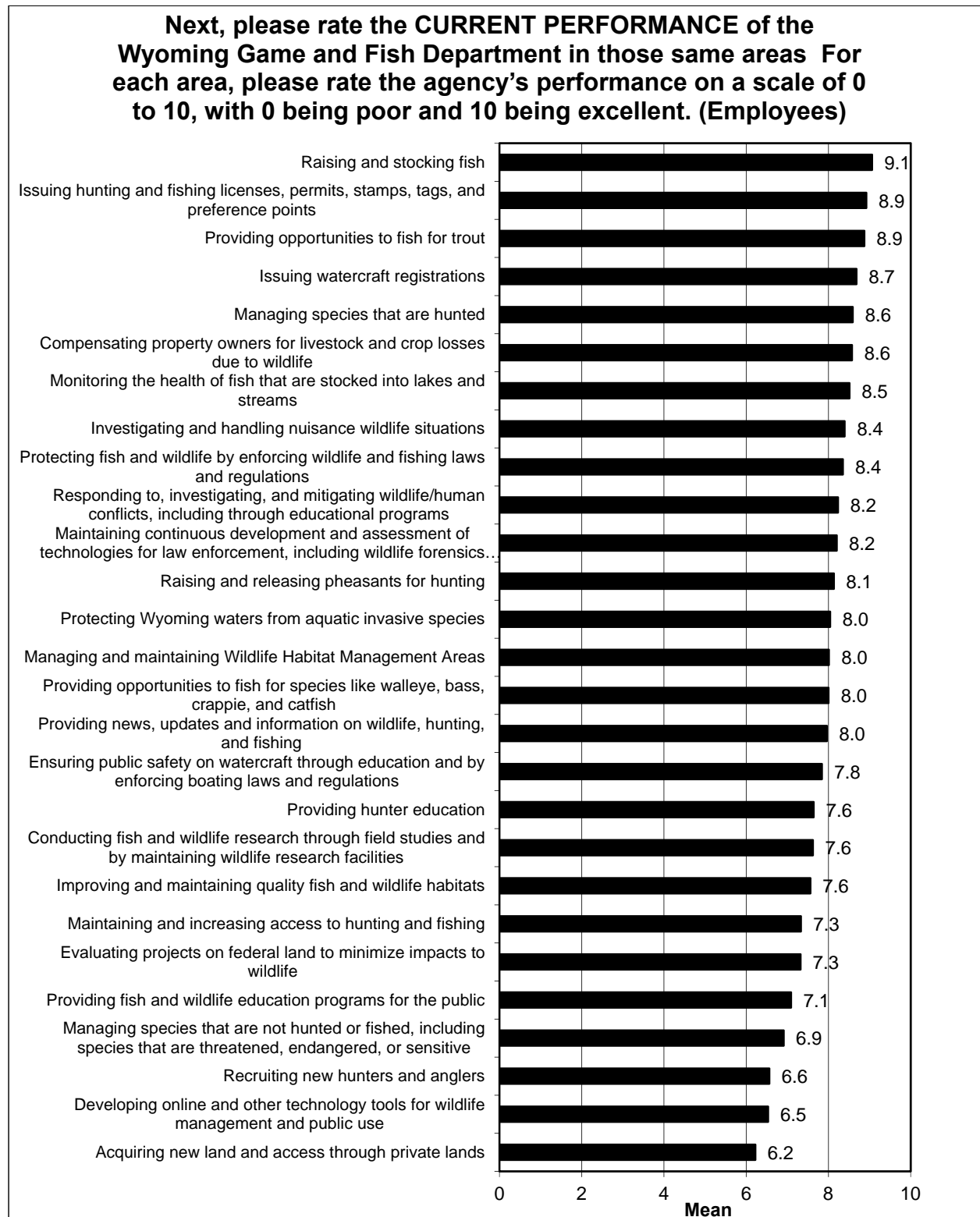


Figure 6.3.3. Ratings of Performance of Game and Fish Efforts, Employees

The results of the two rankings above were tabulated, and the difference was calculated for each effort (Table 6.3.1). The difference is the importance rating minus the performance rating, so that a positive difference means that the Game and Fish Department is performing the effort at a lower level than the effort's importance rating, which is generally not good to do. A negative difference means that the effort is being given a performance rating that exceeds its importance rating, which generally is desirable for an agency. Regardless, as long as the difference, positive or negative, is not great, efforts are being performed commensurate with their importance. The Game and Fish Department has some efforts low in performance that are more highly rated—those at the top of Table 6.3.1.

Table 6.3.1. Difference in Ratings of Importance and Performance Among Employees

Employees	Importance	Performance	Difference
Acquiring new land and access through private lands	8.7	6.2	2.5
Recruiting new hunters and anglers	8.5	6.6	1.9
Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	9.3	7.6	1.8
Developing online and other technology tools for wildlife management and public use	8.1	6.5	1.6
Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	8.9	7.3	1.6
Managing species that are not hunted or fished, including species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	8.5	6.9	1.6
Conducting fish and wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	8.8	7.6	1.1
Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	8.2	7.1	1.1
Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	8.3	7.3	1.0
Managing species that are hunted	9.6	8.6	1.0
Providing hunter education	8.7	7.6	1.0
Managing and maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	9.0	8.0	0.9
Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	8.9	8.0	0.9
Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	9.2	8.4	0.8
Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, and preference points	9.3	8.9	0.4
Maintaining continuous development and assessment of technologies for law enforcement, including wildlife forensics and a computer forensic laboratory	8.3	8.2	0.1
Responding to, investigating, and mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, including through educational programs	8.4	8.2	0.1
Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes and streams	8.5	8.5	0.0
Providing news, updates and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing	7.9	8.0	0.0
Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, and catfish	7.7	8.0	-0.3
Providing opportunities to fish for trout	8.4	8.9	-0.4
Raising and stocking fish	8.1	9.1	-1.0
Ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations	6.8	7.8	-1.1
Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	7.0	8.4	-1.4
Issuing watercraft registrations	6.6	8.7	-2.1
Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	5.3	8.1	-2.8
Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	4.7	8.6	-3.9

Tables show values rounded to one decimal place; note that differences were calculated on unrounded numbers.

A visual look at the data in Table 6.3.1 is in a scatterplot (Figure 6.3.4). One axis shows the mean importance rating, and the other axis shows the performance rating (similar to a Cartesian Plane in geometry). A line shows where the importance and performance ratings are equal. Each effort is represented by a dot. An inset or close-up view (with foreshortened axes, going from 4.0

to 10.0 rather than the entire scale) is shown in Figure 6.3.5. The scatterplot suggests that a few efforts currently rated highly in importance do not have commensurate levels of performance (area A in Figure 6.3.5), and a few efforts are being performed well but are not considered as important by employees (area B in Figure 6.3.5). The midpoint axes are of a heavier line weight in Figure 6.3.5.

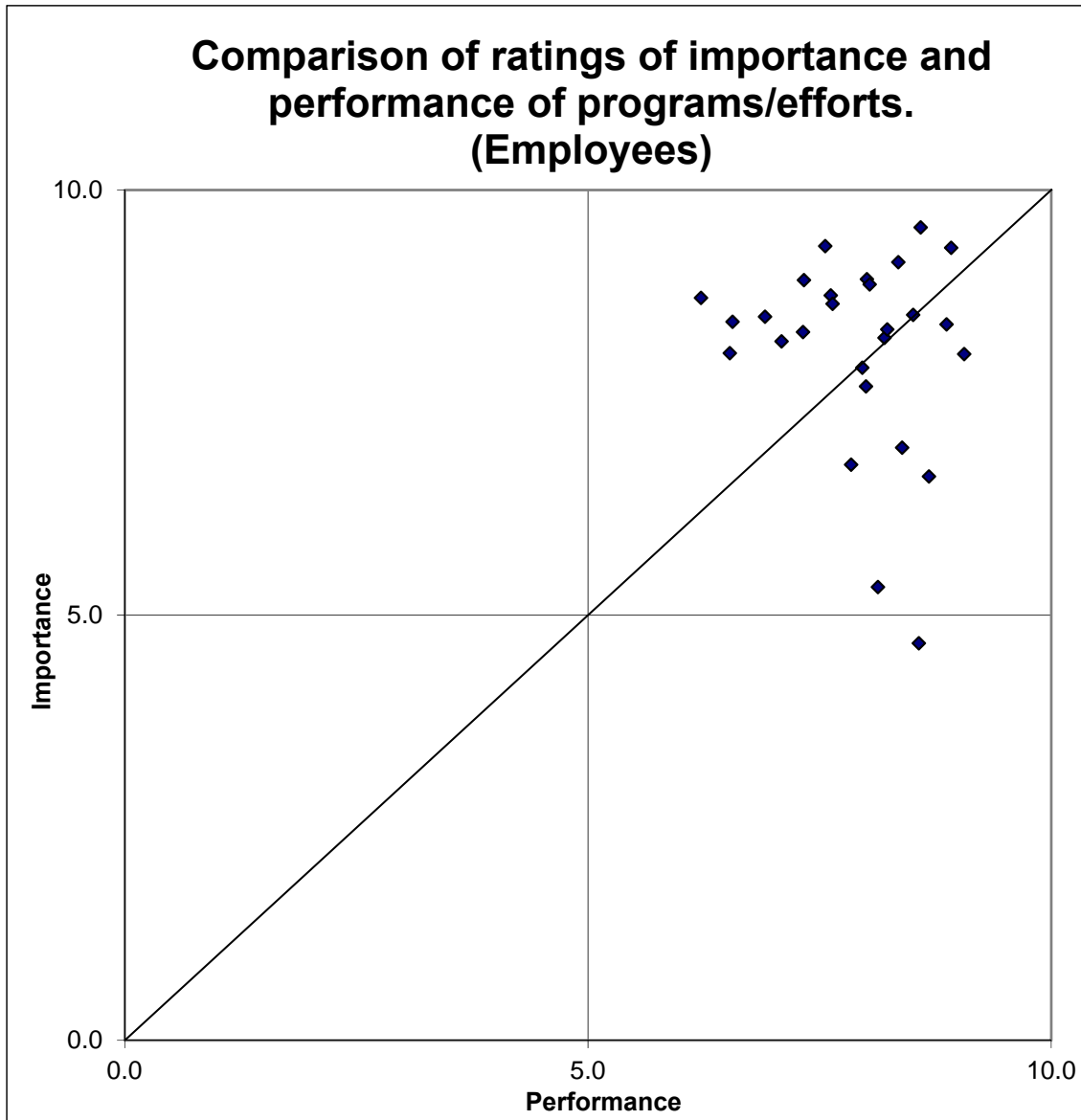


Figure 6.3.4. Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Employees

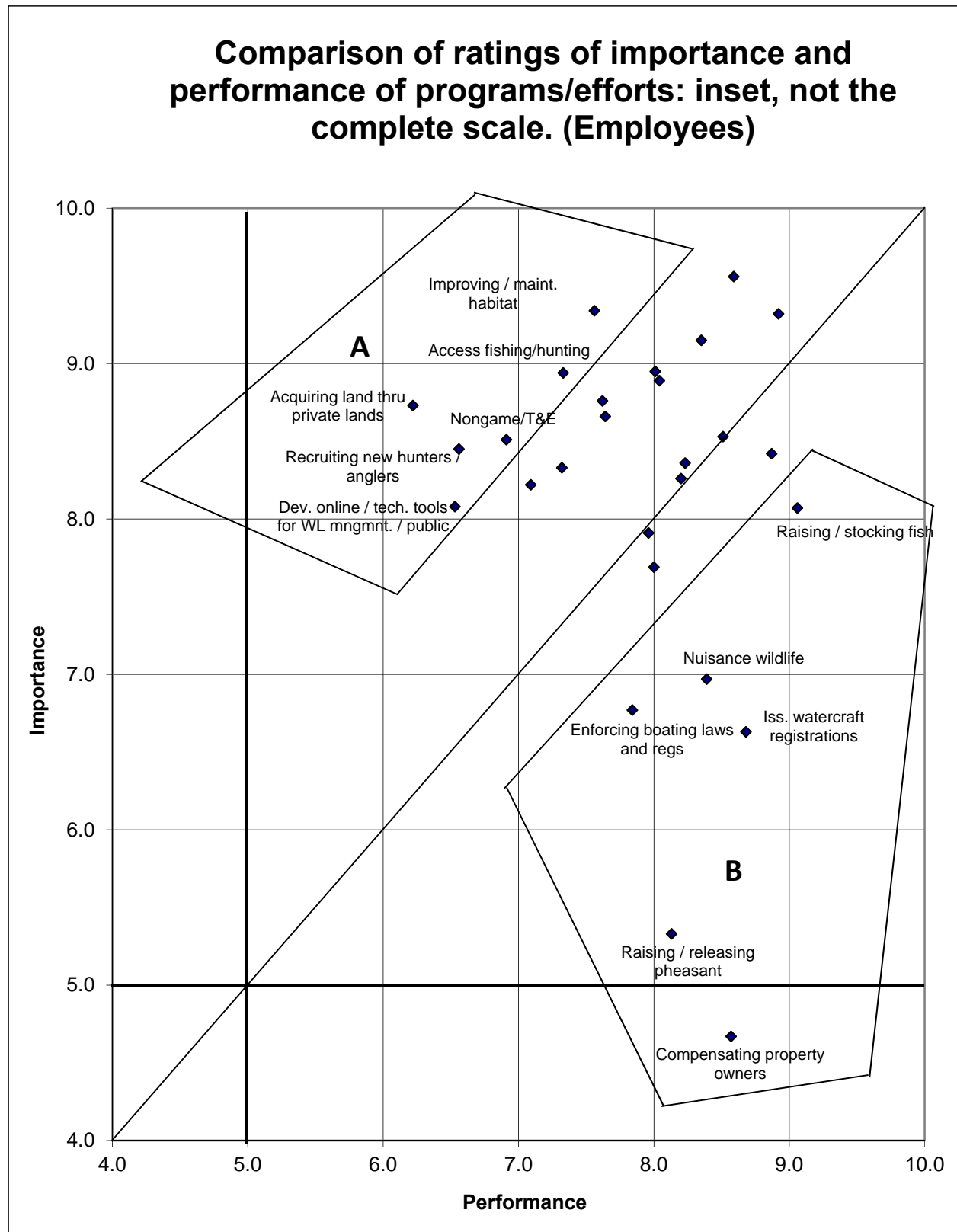


Figure 6.3.5. Inset of Scatterplot of Importance and Performance Ratings of Game and Fish Department Efforts, Among Employees

Questions asked employees to rate the priority of three education and outreach efforts: fish and wildlife education programs for youth, fish and education programs for adults, and outreach to those who do not hunt or fish (Figures 6.3.6 through 6.3.8). The highest priority among employees was given to education programs for youth.

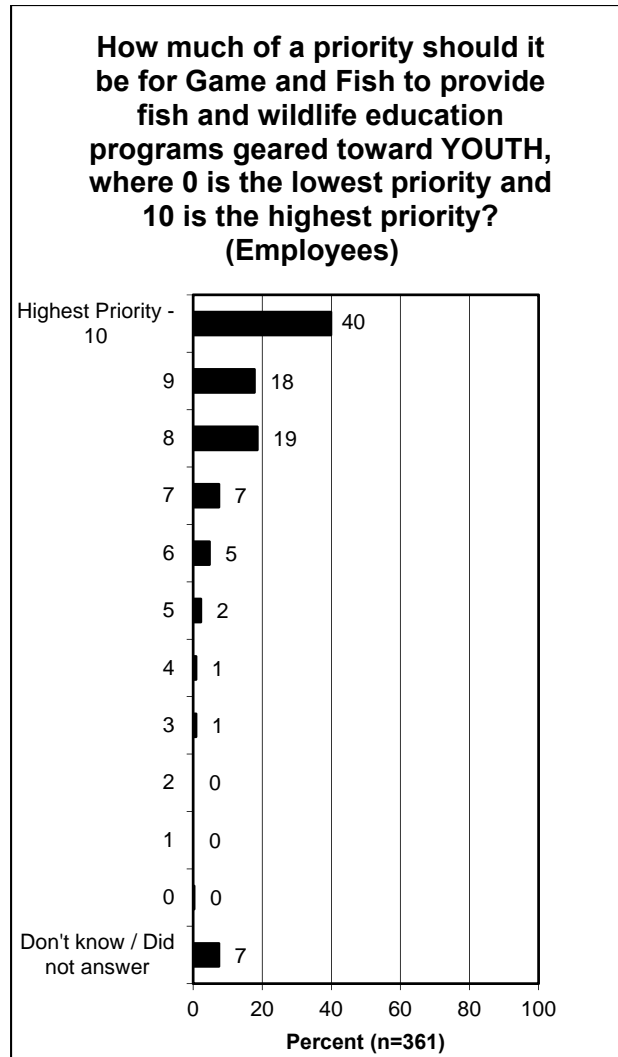


Figure 6.3.6. Opinion on the Priority of Fish and Wildlife Programs for Youth, Among Employees,

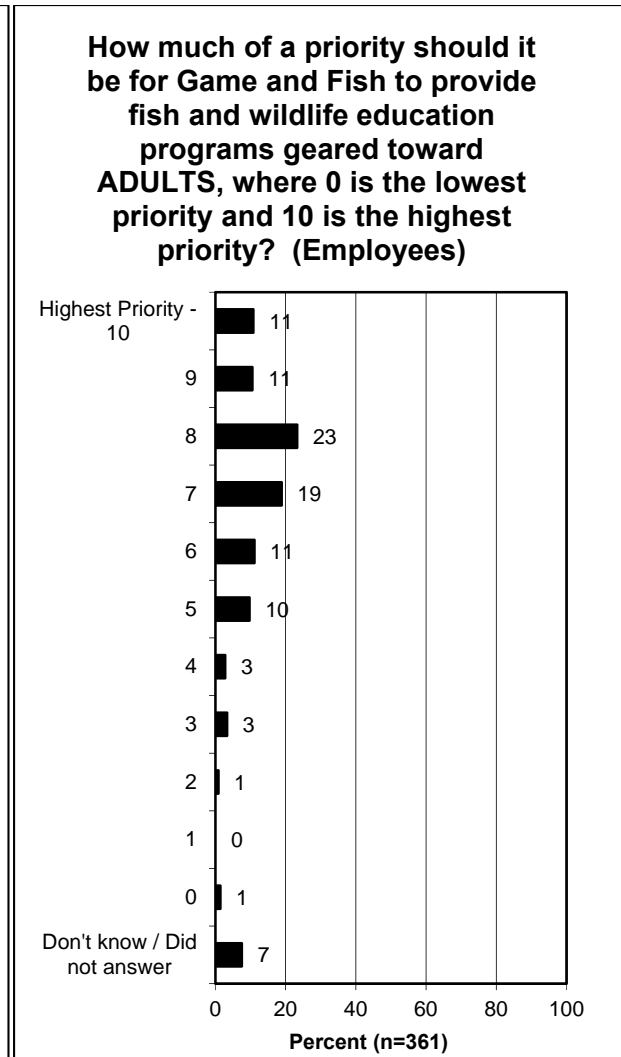


Figure 6.3.7. Opinion on the Priority of Fish and Wildlife Programs for Adults, Among Employees

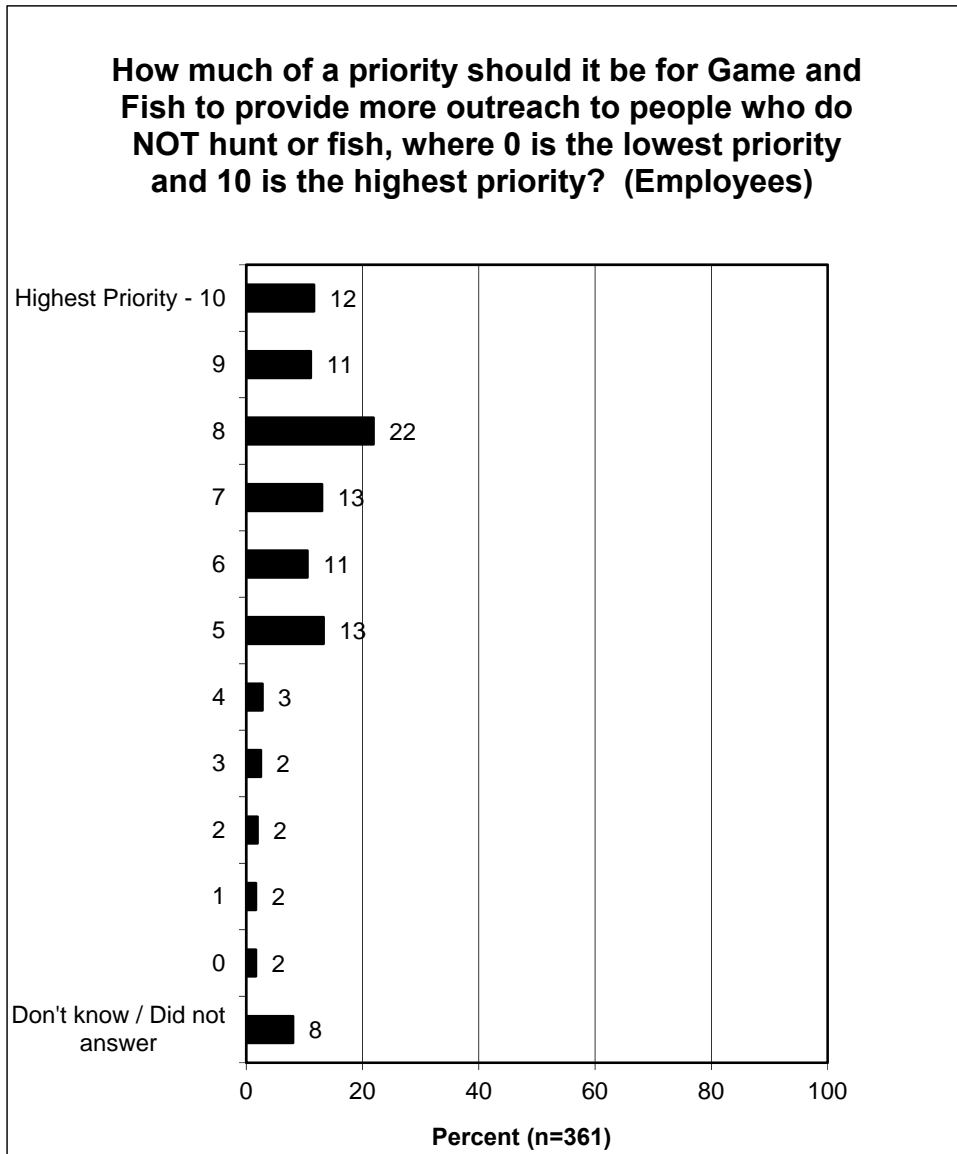


Figure 6.3.8. Opinion on the Priority of Outreach to Those Who Do Not Hunt or Fish, Among Employees

6.4. OPINIONS ON THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT AND ITS INFLUENCES

Six statements about the Game and Fish Department were presented to employees. The statements pertained to how well Game and Fish balances various interests, how well it conserves natural resources, to how well it communicates to the public, and whether it should be given more resources. Two statements are at the top, both with more than 80% agreeing that Game and Fish should be given more resources and that Game and Fish effectively balances fish and wildlife management with providing hunting and fishing opportunities (Figure 6.4.1).

The second tier—both having 73% agreeing—is made up of the statements that Game and Fish is doing enough to conserve fish and wildlife populations and that Game and Fish listens to the public.

The highest disagreement is that Game and Fish effectively balances the interests of all groups it serves (more than a quarter of employees disagree).

Follow-up questions in an open-ended format allowed employees to expand on their responses to the agreement-disagreement series of statements. Note that the full verbatim responses cannot be shown because they could compromise the anonymity of respondents. However, a synopsis of the comments for each of the questions is included below and then continued following the aforementioned Figure 6.4.1).

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department does a good job listening to members of the public and incorporating the feedback into agency decision-making. (73% of employees agree, 10% disagree.)

Employees who agree with the statement stated that the agency makes a good effort to engage the public and incorporate realistic suggestions into its policies. They also stated that public outreach has improved over the years, and that Game and Fish has gotten better at sharing information that support its decisions. Not all employees agree that this is a good thing, however, as many stated that the agency listens too much to the public over its own scientific data. Much of the input comes from those with self-serving agendas, and the “squeaky wheels” at the meetings include outfitters, ranchers, the agricultural industry, and the energy industry. It was noted that feedback comes disproportionately from the disgruntled public, whereas satisfied constituents tend to be quiet. Many employees feel that the agency needs to find ways to engage the silent majority.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department effectively balances the interests of all the people and groups it serves. (57% of employees agree, 27% disagree.)

Employees stated that Game and Fish makes a good faith effort to hear all sides, but it is not possible to force people to participate. Public input tends to be dominated by those who want change, and again it was noted that special interests like outfitters and industry have the loudest voices. Some indicated that hunters and anglers fund the agency, so it is fair for these groups to have more influence with Game and Fish decisions than non-contributors. It was suggested that if there is a way for non-consumptive recreationists and nongame conservationists to contribute to conservation efforts, these groups would have more influence on management decisions.

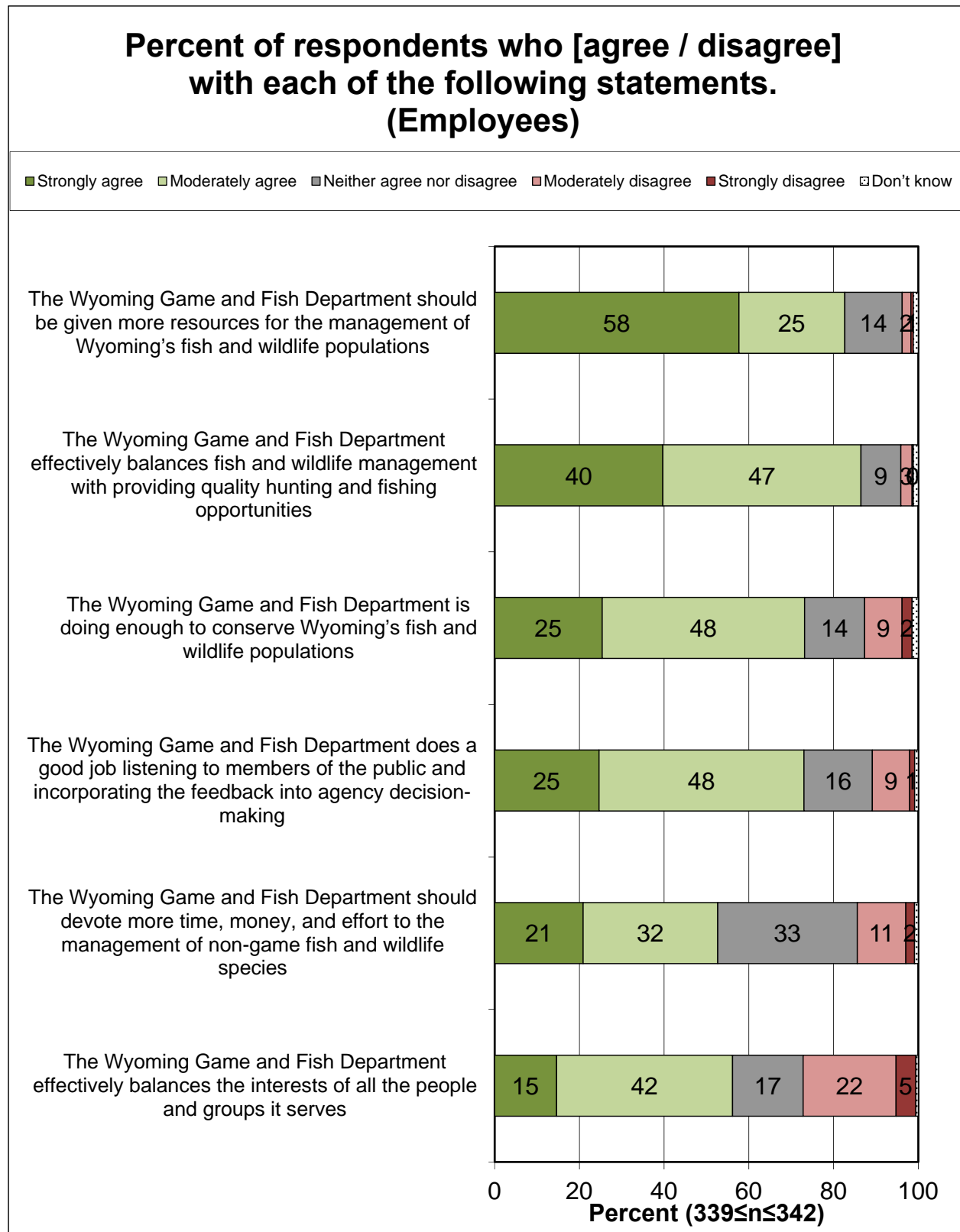


Figure 6.4.1. Agreement or Disagreement With Statements About the Game and Fish Department's Accommodation of All Constituents, Employees

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department effectively balances fish and wildlife management with providing quality hunting and fishing opportunities. (87% of employees agree, 12% disagree.)

Employees largely agree with this statement, indicating that Wyoming is known for its quality hunting and fishing opportunities (it was said that this is where the department shines). There were several who feel that the agency focuses on recreation more than fish and wildlife management, although many agree with this priority because it is the funding source. Some suggested that Game and Fish manages the game species well (those that draw more funding), but does not pay much attention to nongame species. Also, there are concerns that the agency will have less control over resource management with more land being privatized. Some specific comments include: feeding grounds should be eliminated, the agency needs to watch moose populations, some areas should be limited quota to increase the trophy potential, too many female tags have been issued to accommodate landowners, and the agency needs to watch for performance point creep.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is doing enough to conserve Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations. (73% of employees agree, 11% disagree.)

There is a lot of agreement with this statement, with some indicating that the agency is doing great work with its available funds (it was stated that the agency is "the best in the western U.S., no debate"). It was noted that Game and Fish has had success recovering grizzly bears, wolves, and black-footed ferrets. Some indicated that the agency can never do enough; there will always be threatened species and changing conditions. Others would like to see more efforts on behalf of nongame fish and wildlife. To that end, there was a suggestion that new funding sources such as state wildlife grants could help provide increased attention to these species. More generally it was suggested that relationships and partnerships are needed to protect and improve habitat. Industry can make these goals difficult; some employees feel that Game and Fish needs to advocate more for the resource. Other obstacles mentioned are that large-scale energy developments are beyond agency control, and the agency is constrained by anti-government forces in the legislature and public.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department should be given more resources for the management of Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations. (83% of employees agree, 16% disagree.)

There was emphatic agreement with this statement. Employees stated that wildlife is the best thing about Wyoming and a huge part of the state's economy; to that last point it was stated that the agency should be receiving funding from tourism. Some employees stated that more funding would be most valuable in land acquisition, some indicated that certain wildlife populations need more attention, and some stated that money should be used for more personnel (and for hiring contracted employees full-time) to reduce heavy workloads, improve morale, and get more law enforcement in the field. Several employees indicated that non-consumptive users should help with funding in some way, as they currently enjoy the resources being supported by hunters and anglers. Outreach and education about the agency's current funding model could help garner political and public support for alternative funding. It was cautioned, though, that taking money from the state general fund would bring more political oversight and interference.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department should devote more time, money, and effort to the management of nongame fish and wildlife species. (53% of employees agree, 13% disagree.)

There was substantial agreement with this statement. Employees noted that all species are part of the ecosystem and there is little or no information on many of them. It was noted that the agency should at least monitor population trends, as often a species will be ignored until it becomes threatened or endangered. Many stated that it is important for non-consumptive users to fund conservation efforts for these species. There were some disagreements with this statement, however, with some employees stating that Game and Fish is doing a good job with overall species management and should not spend more time on nongame. Also, it was stated that habitat work that benefits game also benefits nongame.

A series of questions asked about how much influence eleven entities had on the work of Game and Fish, some presumably good (scientific fish and wildlife methods), and some presumably bad (e.g., politics), but most that could not easily be described as a “good” or a “bad” influence. As shown in Figure 6.4.2, two entities make up the top tier, both with 72% saying the entity has a *great deal* of influence, and both with more than 90% saying a *great deal* or a *moderate amount*: politics and landowners. Third in the ranking is outfitters/guides—with a majority saying this entity has a great deal of influence. (The ranking is by the percentage saying a *great deal*.)

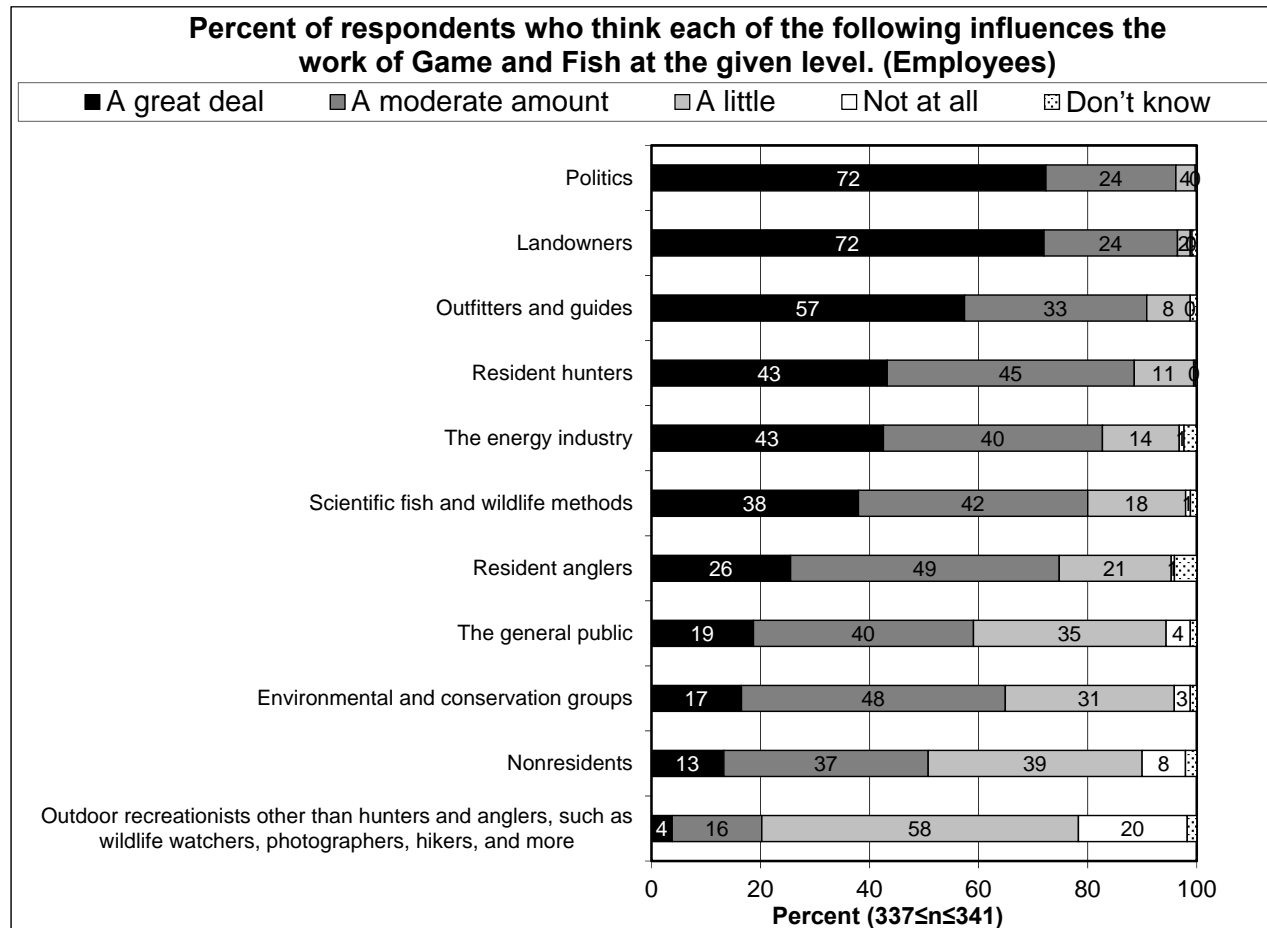


Figure 6.4.2. Perceived Influences on Game and Fish, Employees

Also in Figure 6.4.2, resident hunters are perceived to have about the same influence as the energy industry, making up a middle tier that also includes scientific fish and wildlife methods. Below these are resident anglers in the ranking.

Two other questions, which were open-ended, asked employees to name any factors (groups, concepts, issues, etc.) that ought to have less influence, and any that should have more influence. The full verbatim responses on these questions cannot be shown because they could compromise the anonymity of respondents.

The analysis looks at any groups, concepts, or issues that employees feel should have less influence. Some employees stated that agency priorities are redirected if someone contacts a friend at the Governor's office, the Game and Fish Director's Office, the Game and Fish Commission, or the legislature; they went on to state that when special interests result in top-down decisions, it can have negative consequences on wildlife, employee morale, and the public trust. Special interests that were cited as having too much influence include politicians, outfitters, ranchers (livestock producers), the energy industry (extraction or wind and solar), the agricultural industry, and large landowners in general. Also, there were concerns raised about the Federal government's pro-development priorities at the expense of environmental conservation. It was suggested that Game and Fish spends a disproportionate amount of time trying to please the non-scientific public and those with a narrow focus on single species. Anti-hunters are seen as having a loud voice, although some employees said that they hope the survey associated with this research will show the anti-hunting group to be in a minority.

Continuing the look at responses about less influence, regarding the agency itself, employees suggested that the Wildlife Division is valued most by leadership, and Game and Fish can be too slanted toward law enforcement over other tasks. Also, some believe that the agency focuses too much on providing hunting and fishing opportunities compared to the efforts on management of habitat and fish and wildlife populations. Finally, some suggested that the Director's Office should have a reduced role in making decisions for the specific branches. It is important to note, however, that a lot of employees answered "no" to this question or stated that Game and Fish is doing a good job in considering and evaluating the various influences.

Likewise, employees talked about groups, concepts, or issues that should have more influence. The most frequent response to this question is that Game and Fish should always prioritize habitat and wildlife management decisions backed by scientific data. The agency is seen as focusing too much on hunters and anglers but needs to reach more non-consumptive wildlife enthusiasts. This includes better communication to the public of the scientific rationale behind agency decisions, which can increase public support and get more of the public invested in the health of Wyoming's habitat and fish and wildlife populations. Regarding the agency, several employees indicated that the IT and fiscal divisions are undervalued; communication and education units are also seen as support services. In addition, employees stated that subject matter experts within specific sections or programs should be more involved in decision-making rather than have all decisions come from headquarters. It was again stated that quality contracted employees should be hired full-time. Also, this question resulted in several specific suggestions for more focus from the agency, which include: disease impacts, future funding methods, advances in technology, native species restoration, kid-friendly fisheries and hunting opportunities, consultation of scientific papers and research from other agencies, and wolves as a

threat to big game. Note that many employees answered “no” to this question or stated that Game and Fish is doing a good job in considering and evaluating the various influences.

6.5. COMMUNICATIONS WITH AND OUTREACH TO THE PUBLIC

Two open-ended questions make up this section on communication with and outreach to the public. The first asked employees to name any topics or areas for which Game and Fish should be providing more information or outreach. Note that the full verbatim responses cannot be shown because they could compromise the anonymity of respondents.

Are there any topics or areas about which Game and Fish should be providing more information or outreach to the public? If so, what are they?

Employees stated that the agency should be transparent to the public about how decisions are made with scientific backing. This information will maintain or increase public support for agency decisions, such as how and why fishing and hunting seasons and quotas are set, how the public's actions affect wildlife, the role of diseases or invasive species, where agency funding is used, the role of climate change on wildlife populations, and which changes require legislative action. Many feel that Game and Fish should communicate the agency's priorities, responsibilities, and accomplishments, and should compile information on the agency's work and make it readily available to the public. More specifically, suggestions for outreach or information include: access maps, recreation opportunities in general, fishing and stocking reports, how the license draw works, constraints to Game and Fish management (including federal overreach), hunter education (including school programs), agency funding (targeted to non-consumptive recreationists in particular), predator information, and Endangered Species Act rules and regulations. Note, however, that several employees do not think the agency should increase its outreach efforts, stating that there is already too much and the amount of information may be overwhelming to the public.

The second open-ended question in this section asked employees to say what Game and Fish can do differently to better engage and educate people about fish and wildlife management and wildlife-related outdoor recreation. Again, note that the full verbatim responses cannot be shown because they could compromise the anonymity of respondents.

What can Game and Fish do differently to better engage and educate people about fish and wildlife management and wildlife-related outdoor recreation?

A lot of employees responded that Game and Fish is doing a good job of making agency personnel and information available to the public. Otherwise, there were numerous suggestions: the agency should be involved in more community events, not just those at the larger towns; hold events that are not related to hunting or fishing; provide live, online Q-and-A sessions; reinstate the annual hunting and fishing exposition; partner with non-government organizations; provide better web resources for different user groups; reach out to minorities and other non-traditional groups; train employees to communicate with the public for unified messaging; require more regional hunting and fishing check stations and dispense the information to the public; offer a class on population management and the reasons behind quotas and seasons; provide free youth events; promote agency success stories; emphasize the locavore aspects of hunting and fishing; create a human dimensions position; and provide local classes to certify “citizen scientists” who can assist with local wildlife surveys. Also, there were suggestions to rename the agency to something like Division of Wildlife because the current name implies that the agency is not concerned with nongame species.

A third question in this section asked about the priority that should be given to people who do not hunt or fish. A large majority give a rating of the midpoint or higher, with nearly a quarter giving it a rating of 9 or 10 (Figure 6.5.1).

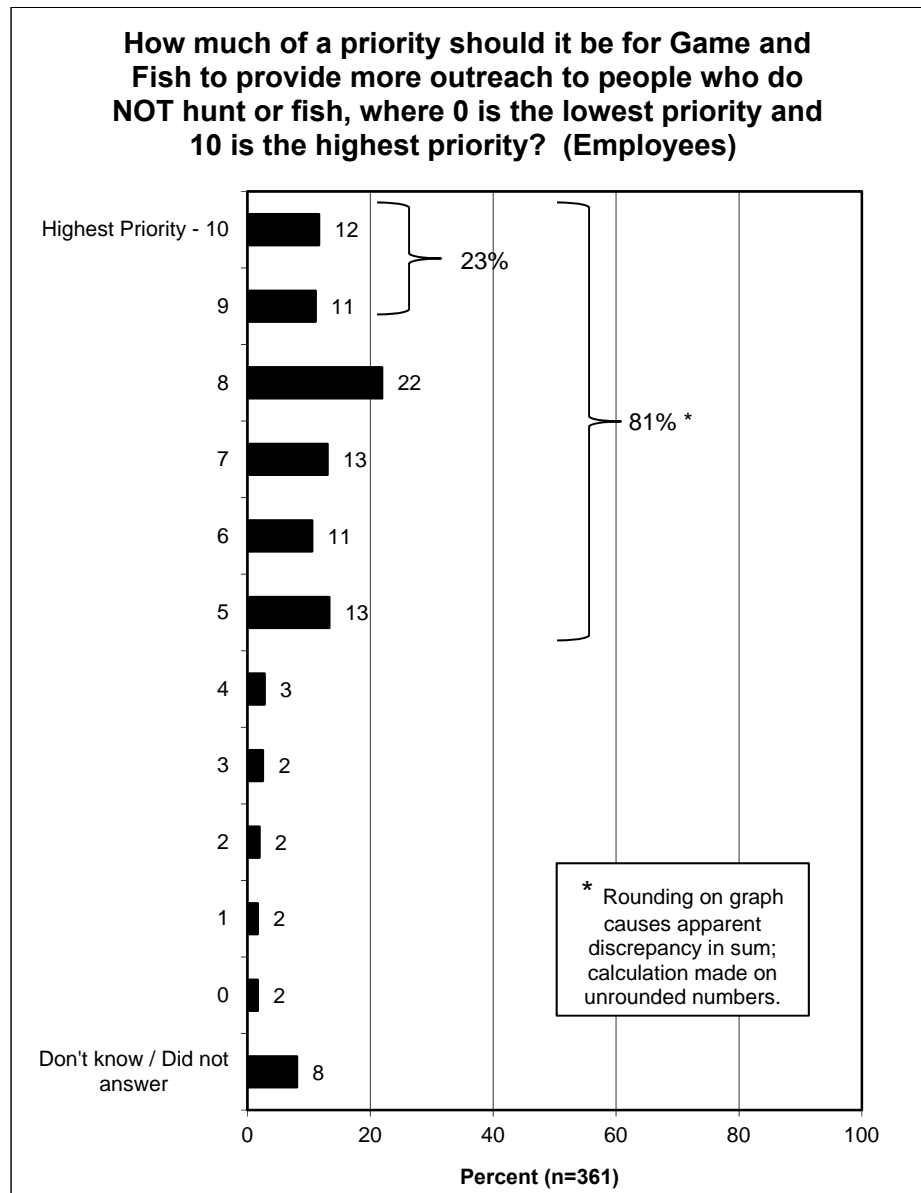


Figure 6.5.1. Perceived Priority That Should Be Given to Those Who Do Not Hunt or Fish, Among Employees

6.6. AGENCY FUNDING

The large majority of employees (91%) feel that elected officials should explore options for new funding sources for the Game and Fish Department (Figure 6.6.1). A follow-up question presented seven possible funding options/sources to employees and asked them to check those that should be considered to pay for fish and wildlife conservation in Wyoming, and employees could also write in any others that they felt should be considered (Figure 6.6.2). By far, the top were a tax on outdoor equipment other than hunting, shooting, and fishing items, with 75% of employees saying this should be considered, and lottery funds (71% saying this should be considered). Figure 6.6.2 shows the full results, including those written in under the “other” option.

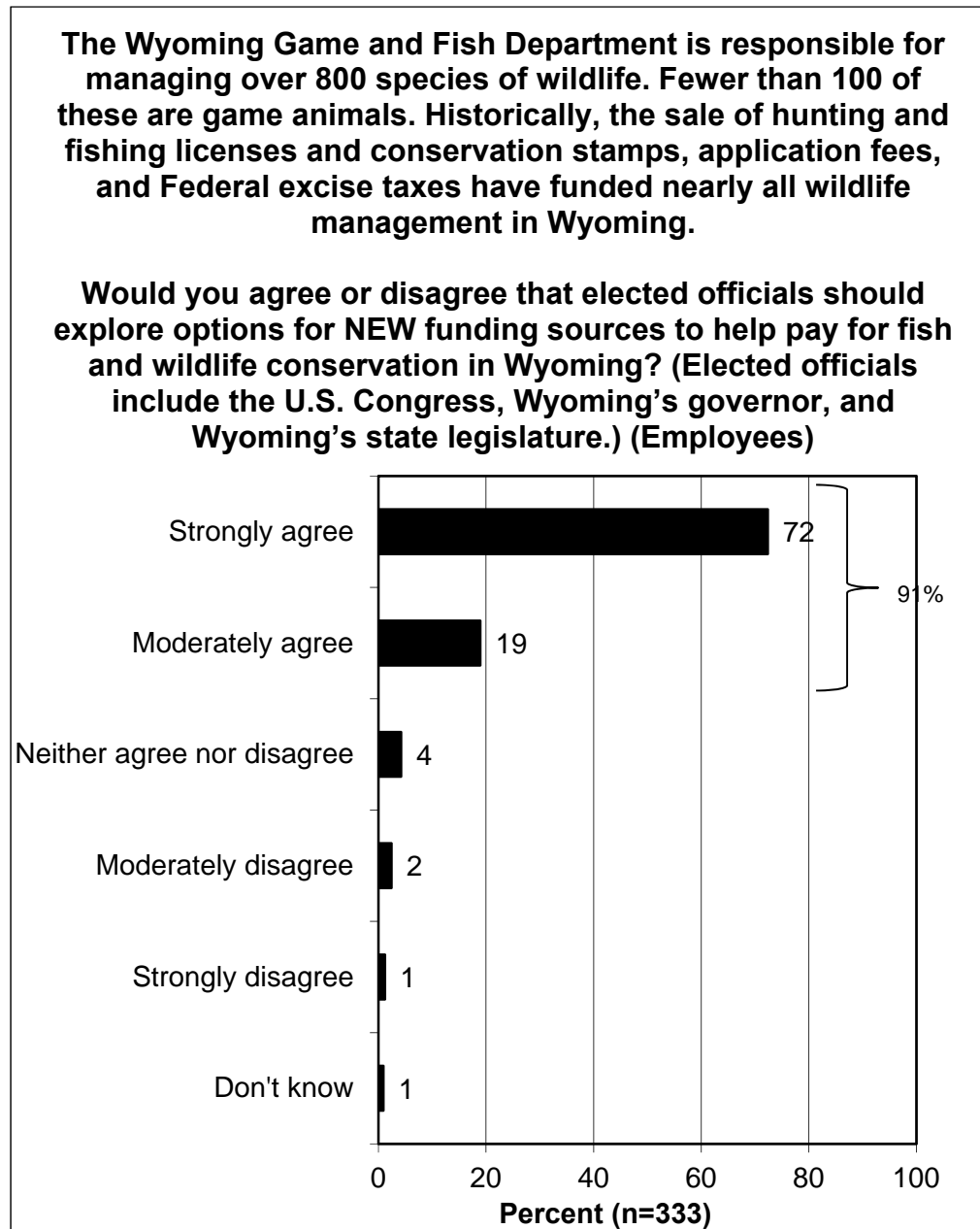


Figure 6.6.1. Opinion on Exploration of New Funding Sources, Employees

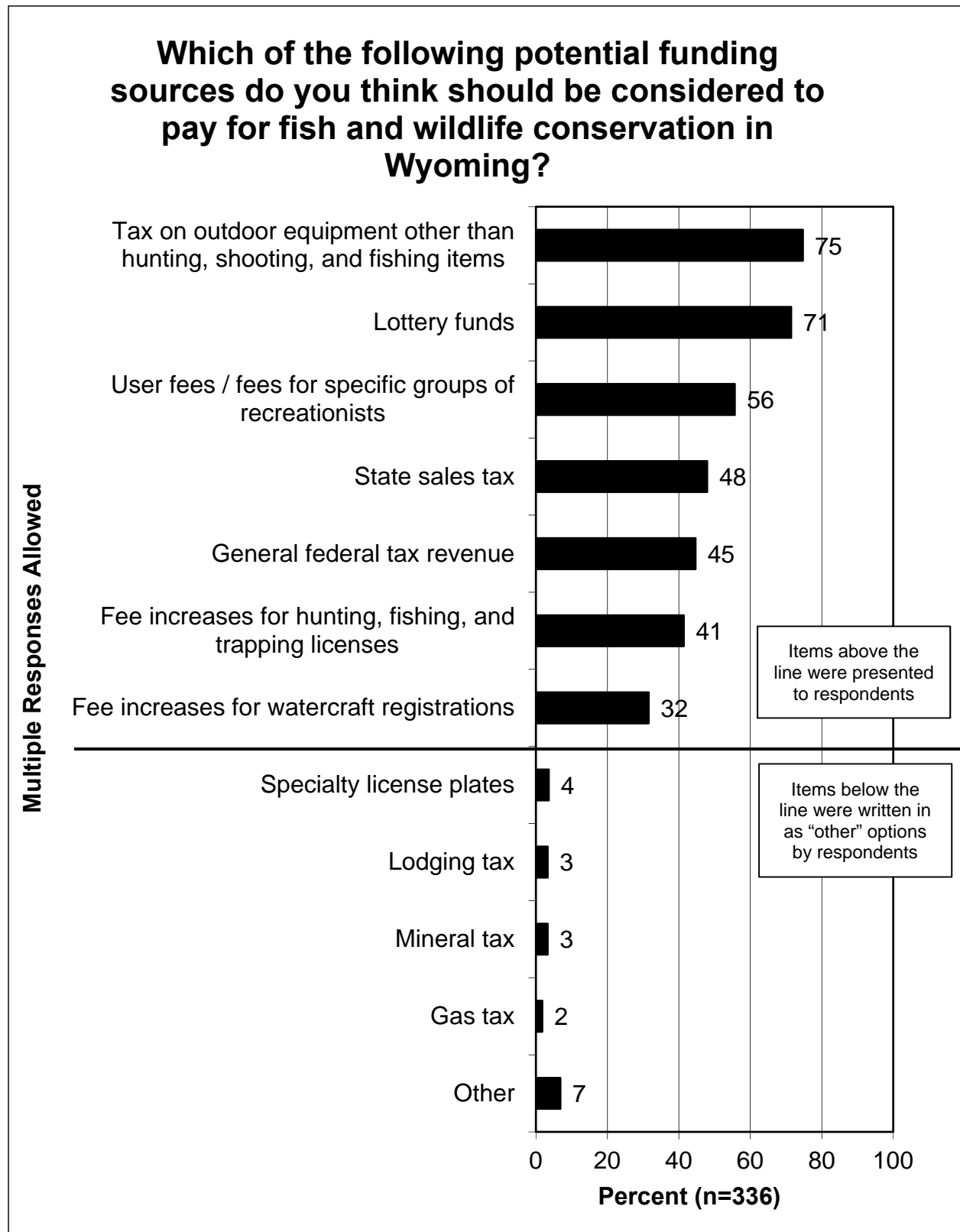


Figure 6.6.2. Potential Funding Sources to Consider, Employees

6.7. ISSUES PERTAINING TO OUTDOOR RECREATION AND ACCESS

A series of open-ended questions asked employees to name the most important issues regarding fish and wildlife, hunting, fishing, and so forth. Note that the full verbatim responses cannot be shown because they could compromise the anonymity of respondents.

ISSUES FACING WYOMING'S FISH AND WILDLIFE

Habitat loss was mentioned most frequently by employees; threats include climate change, energy development, urban development, fragmentation, livestock overgrazing, and loss of migration corridors. Fish and wildlife populations are of concern as well, due to issues like overhunting and overfishing, diseases (chronic wasting disease in particular), aquatic invasive species, and water supply and water quality. Employees noted the political pressure to transfer public land to private interests, particularly from the current federal administration. Agency funding is also a major issue—hunting and fishing participation fund conservation in Wyoming, so the reduction in access from special interests and landlocked public land, and less interest in participation from youth, are of great concern to many Game and Fish employees. The difficulty in drawing a tag was mentioned as a frustration to hunters, who may reduce their participation as a result. The balance of wildlife was noted as well, with employees stating that the mule deer population is low and that elk are overpopulated.

ISSUES FACING WYOMING'S HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

Employees stated that hunting access is challenged by outfitters and ranchers (“hunters are getting priced out”) and the privatization of public lands. Many also said wildlife populations are threatened by disease, poaching, predation, and habitat loss through climate change, energy extraction, development, and fragmentation. The level of hunting participation was also noted as a concern due to the aging hunting population, youth apathy, frustration over drawing tags, complex regulations, and anti-hunting sentiment (it was stated that gun violence is hurting the image of hunters). It was stated that public access is an issue in the eastern part of the state, while predators and hunting pressure are issues in the western part of the state.

ISSUES FACING WYOMING'S FISHING OPPORTUNITIES

Aquatic invasive species and access were mentioned most frequently by Game and Fish employees. Access is considered compromised by private ownership along rivers and streams, with many employees stating that changes to the stream access law are needed. Employees also mentioned water quality concerns due to pollution and resource extraction, as well as water supply concerns due to diversions toward water developments, housing, and irrigation (climate change was noted as a threat to both water quality and water supply). The future of fishing participation was noted as well, with concerns raised about youth apathy due to a lack of mentors and fishing education/outreach. Other issues noted by employees include funding, illegal stocking, poaching, overharvesting, complex regulations, license increases, lack of information on good fishing spots, diversity in fisheries, and boater/angler conflicts.

ISSUES FACING WYOMING'S BOATING OPPORTUNITIES

Employees often mentioned aquatic invasive species as an important boating issue, with many concerned that AIS can be brought into Wyoming by nonresident boaters. There were many mentions about access as well: new or maintained ramps and docks are needed, and private landowners control a lot of river bottom access. Water levels are a concern due to diversions of water to water developments, housing, and irrigation. Other issues noted by employees include a

complex watercraft registration process, excessive fees, boaters who drink alcohol or use drugs, crowding (from nonresidents or overall), boating safety and education, conflicts between boaters and anglers, and conflicts between motorized and non-motorized boaters. Regarding the last item, some employees indicated that more non-motorized waterways should be designated in the state. Finally, some employees questioned why boating was even under the purview of Game and Fish, which they believe should focus solely on fish and wildlife management.

ISSUES FACING THE WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Employees most frequently stated that funding is an issue, adding that education is typically the first item to get cut. A lack of trained or quality instructors is another major issue; employees indicated that the agency has an over-reliance on volunteers. It was noted that hunter education is not considered a priority by Game and Fish leadership, but it should be, as youth apathy could be a serious threat to future agency funding. Employees expressed concern over a lack of role models to continue the hunting tradition, and hunting faces considerable competition for youth attention from sports, other school activities, and electronics. It was stated that Game and Fish should more clearly communicate the hunter education opportunities that are available, and that courses should be available to lower income students (e.g., free courses in the school system). Course content should emphasize fair chase and ethics and convey that hunters are conservationists—such information could help overcome any predispositions against hunting. Also, some employees said that recruitment efforts should target non-hunting adults as well, especially since they have available income, unlike most youth.

ISSUES FACING WYOMING'S OPPORTUNITIES FOR WILDLIFE ENTHUSIASTS WHO DO NOT HUNT, FISH, OR TRAP

Employees commonly stated that access is a major issue for non-consumptive users, particularly due to transfer of public lands and habitat loss due to land development and the energy industry. The agency should educate these users on the accomplishments of Game and Fish and the recreational opportunities available to them, as well as how hunters and anglers fund these opportunities. Many employees stated that non-consumptive users will have a greater voice in management decisions if they contribute financially to the agency's efforts; funding outside of "hook and bullet" sources was frequently mentioned as key to the agency's future success. (Indeed, several employees stated that they don't care about these constituents because they don't contribute any funding.) Many issues noted as important for hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities were listed here as well: disease, invasive species, climate change, user group conflicts (misuse of ATVs was singled out), and overcrowding in parks.

An open-ended question posed to employees asked about priorities for improving access in general, as shown below.

What should be the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's top priorities for improving access to the public's wildlife-related outdoor activities?

Many employees referred to the "Access Yes!" program as a successful access program that should be continued with increased funding, if possible, as it must compete with outfitters for private land. Sportsmen's clubs or other non-government organizations could be funding partners in acquiring access for recreationists. Game and Fish employees also stated that the agency should be a staunch advocate for wildlife when negotiating with housing and energy developers. Landlocked public areas were frequently mentioned, with employees stating that easements

(“corner crossings”) are needed throughout Wyoming. In addition, employees stated that Game and Fish should only pay landowners for wildlife damages if their land is open to hunters. Likewise, the agency should demand access from landowners who benefit from its spending on stream or habitat restoration. Other suggestions related to access include: oppose transfer of public lands, fund maintenance of existing public access (infrastructure and personnel), create a map-based information system on species and seasons, restrict overuse of ATVs, provide access for the handicapped, purchase land (not rent) when possible, and advocate for a revised stream access law. However, it is important to note that many employees stated that Wyoming has plentiful access for outdoor recreationists.

6.8. CHARACTERISTICS OF WYOMING EMPLOYEES

The survey asked employees to indicate the division in which they work (Figure 6.8.1), their age (Figure 6.8.2), and the number of years that they had worked at the agency (Figure 6.8.3).

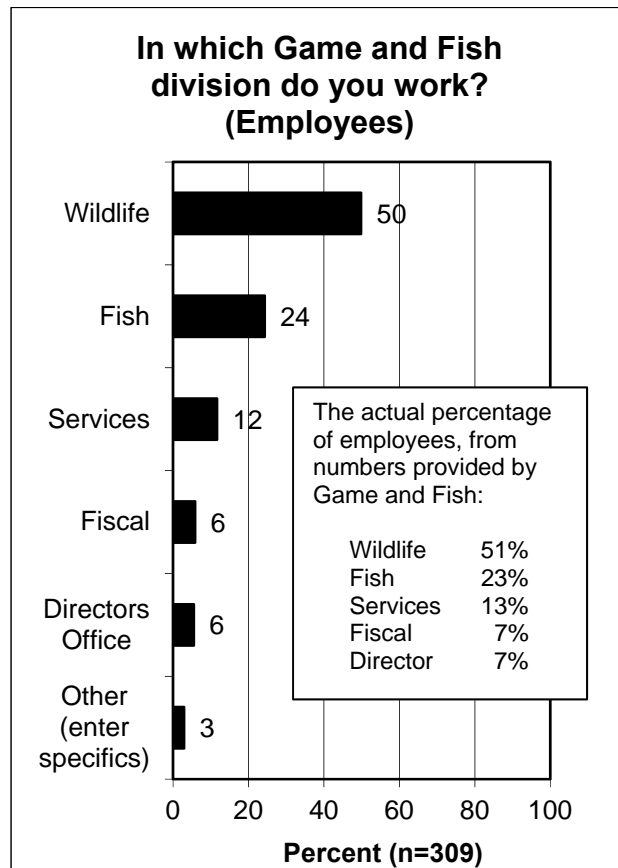


Figure 6.8.1. Division of Employment

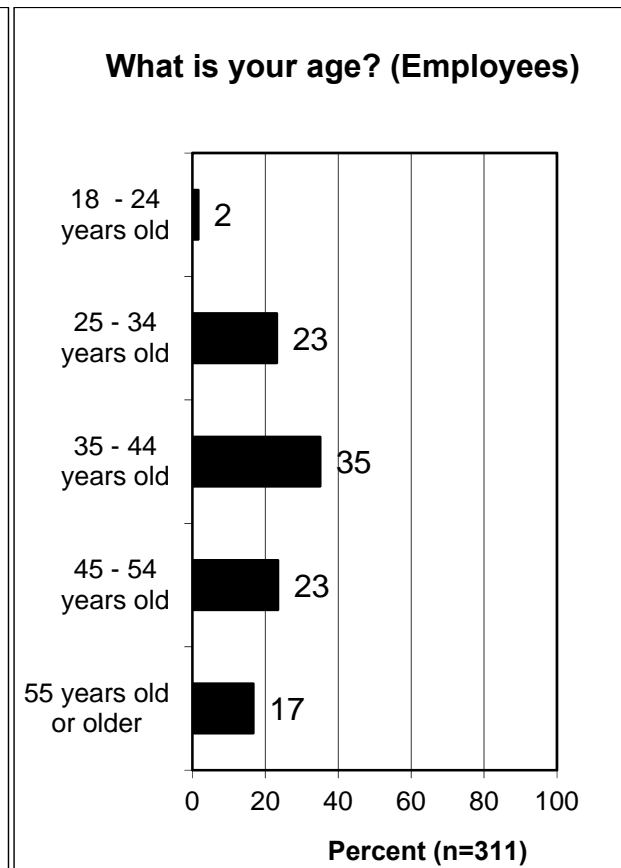


Figure 6.8.2. Employee's Age

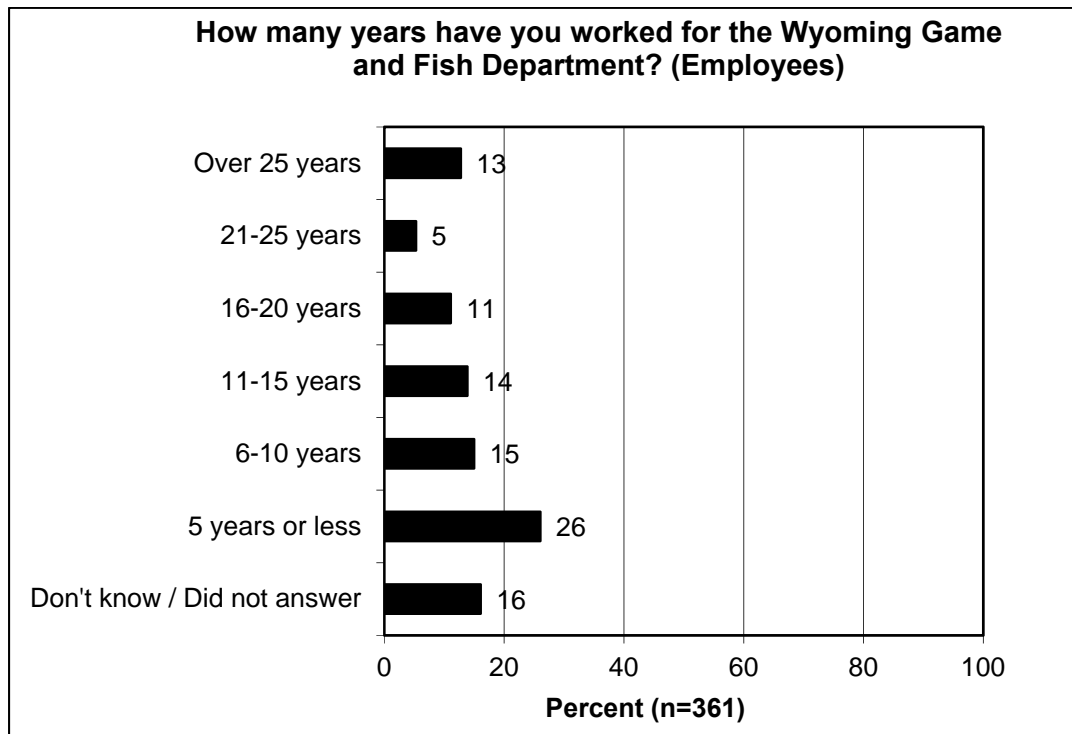


Figure 6.8.3. Years Working at Game and Fish

6.9. EMPLOYEES' END COMMENTS

The survey allowed employees to give any other comments that they thought might contribute to the overall discussion.

Do you have any additional comments regarding the future direction of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department?

Many employees stated that Game and Fish is doing a great job and that they are proud to be contributing to the health of Wyoming's natural resources. Employees provided a variety of suggestions for this open-ended question, including instituting mandatory harvest reporting for all big game, always prioritizing resources over public or internal opinion ("don't cave to outfitters and ranchers"), moving to paperless licenses, seeking alternative funding for nongame species, instituting a sales tax on ATVs, avoiding seeking money from the legislature (this was stated multiple times), giving full-time employment status to quality contracted workers, informing the state and local media about Game and Fish projects, closing feeding grounds, simplifying hunting and fishing regulations, and focusing more on upland game birds and waterfowl (it was said that Wyoming could become a nationally recognized bird hunting destination). Regarding internal issues, it was stated that leadership needs to trust its employees more (e.g., vehicles have GPS to track employees' whereabouts), divisions need to share information and get along better, and the agency has very little diversity in its workforce. There was a mixture of optimism and pessimism with this research effort, with some employees looking forward to the results but others concerned that it will result in a strategic plan that just sits on a shelf. Also, there were complaints that this survey did not address safety issues.

7. COMPARISON OF GENERAL POPULATION AND EMPLOYEE RESULTS

The telephone survey of the general population and the online survey of Game and Fish employees include a number of identical questions. This chapter presents the responses by the public and by employees side-by-side for comparison, because it is important to observe how the opinions and attitudes of Game and Fish employees regarding the influences, priorities, and performance of the agency match up to the opinions and attitudes of the constituents they serve. The methodology is discussed in full in Chapter 12, "Methodology."

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

On a number of issues Game and Fish employees appear to be more critical of the agency than the general population is. This was reflected in certain questions regarding agency effectiveness and influences, but not in a series that had direct ratings of performance. Major findings from the comparisons in this chapter are shown below.

Game and Fish employees are more critical than the public about the agency's effectiveness in balancing the interests of all the groups it serves.

The general population (35%) was much more likely than employees (15%) to *strongly agree* with this statement, whereas employees much more often selected *moderately disagree* or a neutral response.

Game and Fish employees, compared to the public, less often agree that the agency is doing enough to conserve Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations.

About half of the general population (49%) *strongly* agrees with this statement, compared to 25% of Game and Fish employees.

Most Game and Fish employees (96%) think that politics influences the agency's work.

This compares to 79% of the public who thinks that. Breaking it down, 72% of employees said that politics influences the agency *a great deal* and 24% said it does *a moderate amount*. Other factors that employees, more so than the public, think influence the agency's work are outfitters and guides, the energy industry, and landowners.

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, are overwhelmingly more likely to say the agency is influenced by outdoor recreationists other than hunters and anglers.

Nearly a third of the public (30%) thinks this group influences the agency *a great deal* and 43% said it does *a moderate amount*; this compares to only 4% and 16% of employees, respectively. Other factors that the general population, more so than Game and Fish employees, thinks influence the agency's work are the general public, nonresidents, and environmental and conservation groups.

Game and Fish employees overwhelmingly support options for new funding sources.

In all, 72% of employees *strongly agree* with the concept and 19% *moderately agree*, for a total of 91%. The general population also agrees, although support is markedly lower (49% and 30%, respectively).

Game and Fish employees, compared to the public, ranked outdoor recreation issues higher in priority.

The two groups ranked the priority of 27 areas of work related to the agency. Some of the most striking differences related to issues concerning outdoor recreation. For example, “acquiring new land and access through private land” was ranked 9th on the list by employees but 24th by the public. Also, “recruiting new hunters and anglers” was ranked 13th by employees but 26th by the public. This latter difference suggests that employees value the funding provided by new hunters and anglers, whereas the public may not be aware of this funding connection. Also, the public may have the mindset that they do not want more crowding or competition in their places of recreation. Other categories ranked notably higher by employees include “issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points” and “maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing.”

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, ranked boating issues higher in priority.

The category “ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations” was ranked 11th by the public and 24th by employees, and “issuing watercraft registrations” was ranked 18th by the public and 25th by employees.

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, ranked education and nuisance wildlife issues higher in priority.

Categories that were ranked higher on the public’s list include “protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species”; “providing hunter education”; “responding to, investigating, and mitigating human/wildlife conflicts, including through educational programs”; “providing news, updates, and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing”; and “investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations.”

The agency’s performance is rated favorably by both the general population and Game and Fish employees.

Although earlier comparisons in this chapter suggested that employees are more critical of the agency than are the public at large, performance ratings of the 27 categories were generally high and comparable between the two groups. In fact, employees have markedly higher ratings than the public regarding “raising and stocking fish,” “raising and releasing pheasants for hunting,” and “compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife.” Note, however, that these categories were ranked at and near the bottom in the Game and Fish employees’ list of priorities.

7.1. COMPARISONS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

The first comparisons are for a series of five statements in which respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with each. The statements pertained to how well Game and Fish balances various interests, how well it conserves natural resources, to how well it communicates to the public, and whether it should be given more resources.

The primary takeaway from this series is that Game and Fish employees are markedly more critical of the agency than the general population is. Each statement and a discussion of the results follow.

- *“The Wyoming Game and Fish Department does a good job listening to members of the public and incorporating the feedback into agency decision-making.”*
 - The percentages in overall agreement are close between the surveys, although the general population is more likely to *strongly agree* with the statement: 35% selected this, compared to 25% of Game and Fish employees.
- *“The Wyoming Game and Fish Department effectively balances the interests of all the people and groups it serves.”*
 - The general population (35%) was much more likely than employees (15%) to *strongly agree*, whereas employees much more often selected *moderately disagree* or a neutral response.
- *“The Wyoming Game and Fish Department effectively balances fish and wildlife management with providing quality hunting and fishing opportunities.”*
 - Overall agreement was the same between the groups (87% of each group *strongly* or *moderately agree*), albeit with more strong agreement from the public. Few from either group disagree with the statement.
- *“The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is doing enough to conserve Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations.”*
 - The general population agrees with the statement more often than Game and Fish employees do, particularly those who *strongly agree* (49% public; 25% employees).
- *“The Wyoming Game and Fish Department should be given more resources to conserve Wyoming's fish and wildlife populations.”*
 - Game and Fish employees agree slightly more often than the general population does.

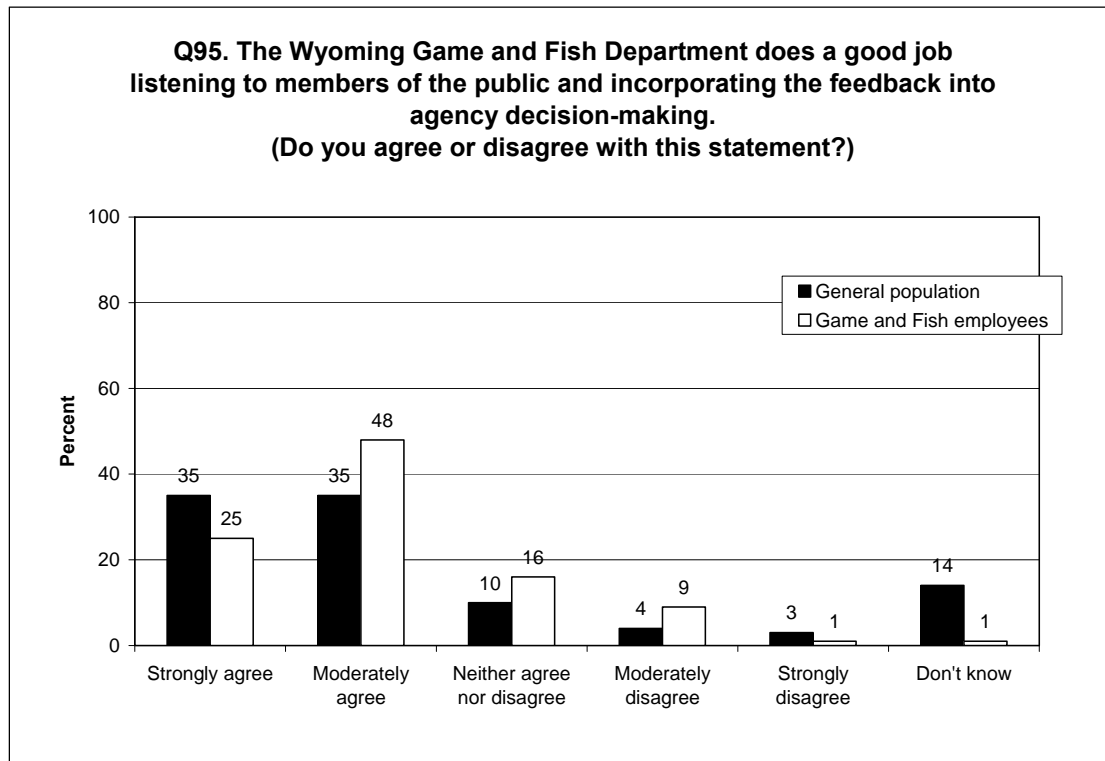


Figure 7.1.1. Comparisons of Opinions Regarding Feedback

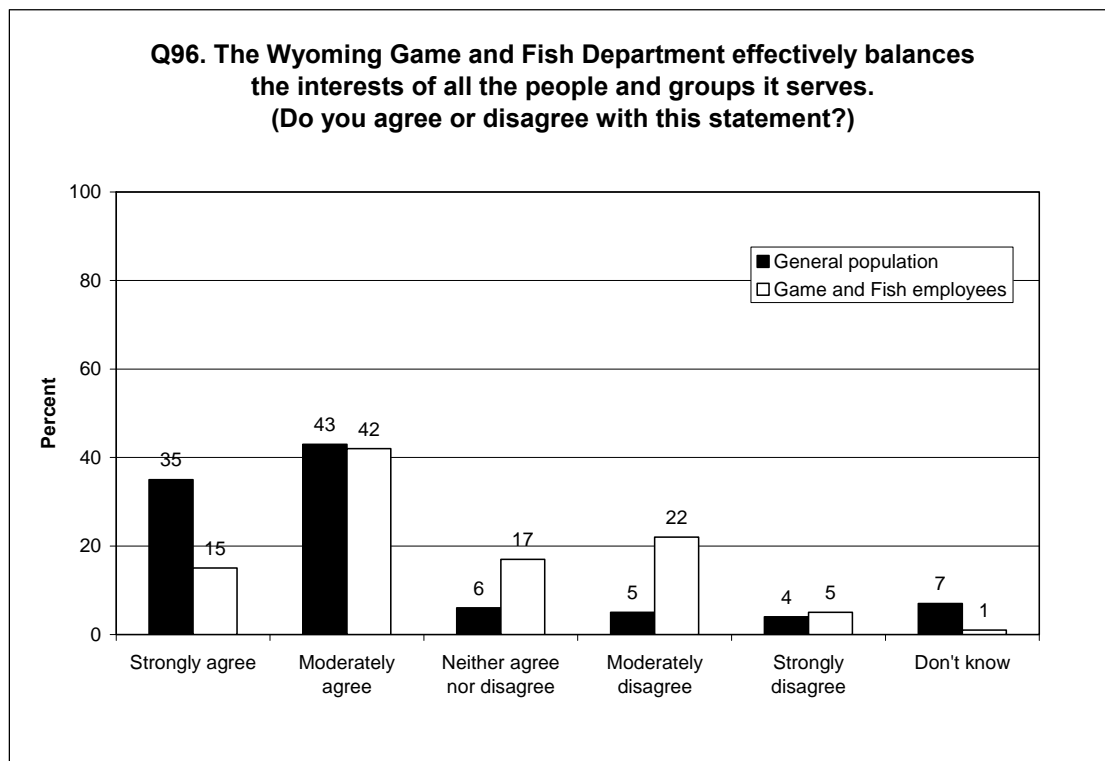


Figure 7.1.2. Comparisons of Opinions Regarding Balancing Interests

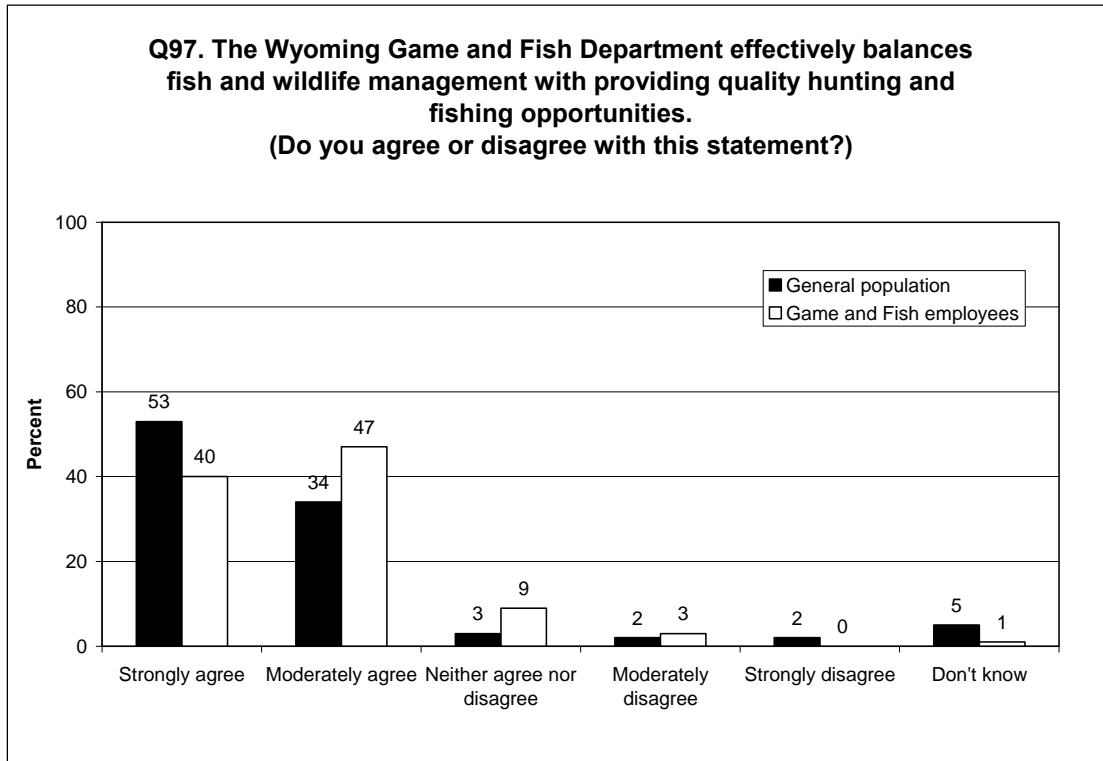


Figure 7.1.3. Comparisons of Opinions Regarding Balancing Management and Opportunities

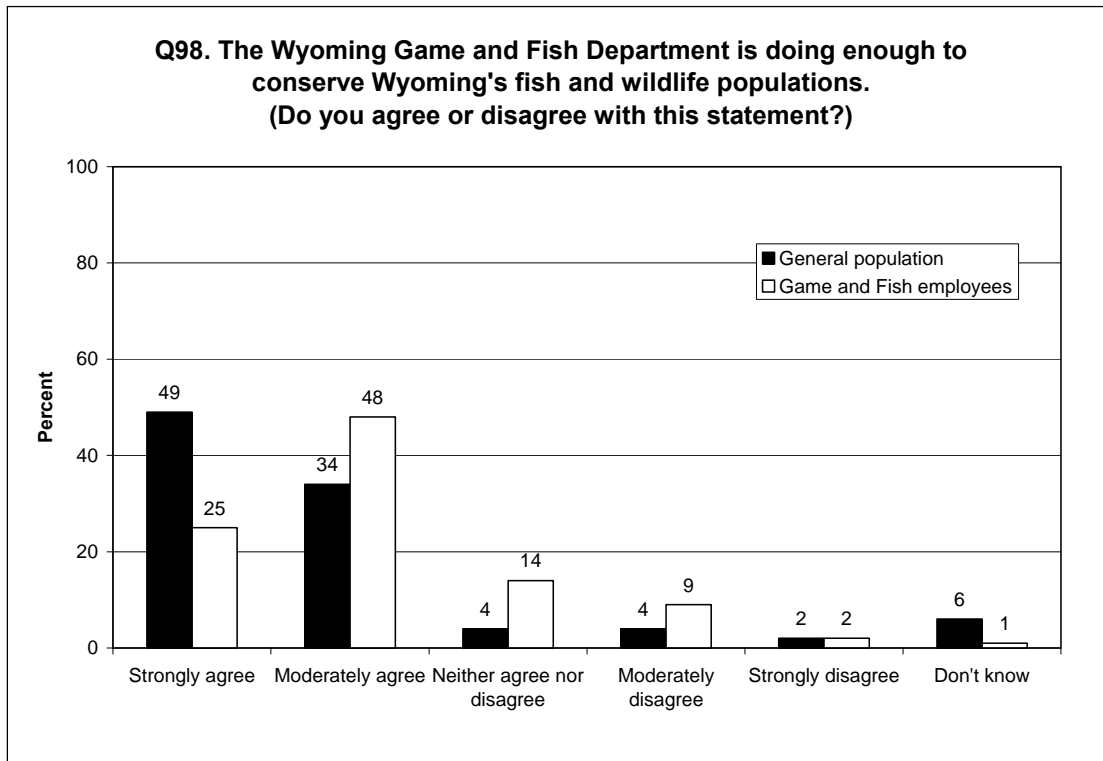


Figure 7.1.4. Comparisons of Opinions Regarding Conservation of Fish and Wildlife Populations

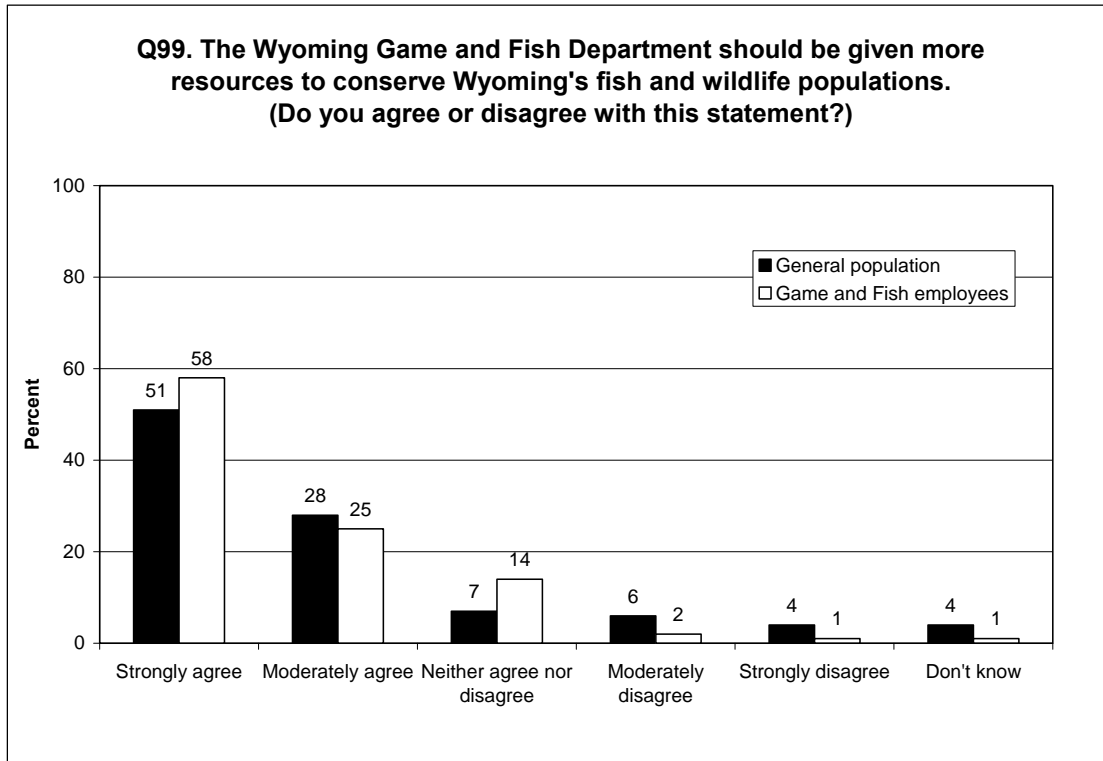


Figure 7.1.5. Comparisons of Opinions Regarding More Resources for Game and Fish

7.2. COMPARISONS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT INFLUENCES ON THE AGENCY

Respondents in the two surveys were provided a series of eleven entities and asked how much they think each influences the work of Game and Fish. Responses were in the spectrum of *a great deal*, *a moderate amount*, *a little*, or *not at all* (or don't know). Again it appears that Game and Fish employees, compared to the general population, are more critical of the agency. The results are shown in Figures 7.2.1 through 7.2.11, but particular attention is called to some of the individual graphs below.

Although most categories cannot be easily described as a "good" or "bad" influence, some judgments can be made. For example, it is generally agreed that political influence should not be a deciding factor in Game and Fish priorities. In this instance, 96% of Game and Fish employees said that politics influence their work *a great deal* or a *moderate amount*, compared to 79% of the public (Figure 7.2.8). The percentages cited below are for *a great deal* and *a moderate amount* responses combined.

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, are overwhelmingly more likely to say the agency is influenced by outdoor recreationists other than hunters and anglers (73% public; 20% employees) (Figure 7.2.5). Also, compared to employees, the public more frequently said the agency is influenced by the general public (79% public; 59% employees) (Figure 7.2.1), by nonresidents (64% public; 50% employees) (Figure 7.2.4), and by environmental and conservation groups (76% public; 55% employees) (Figure 7.2.6).

Game and Fish employees, compared to the general population, more frequently said the agency is influenced by politics (96% employees; 79% public) (Figure 7.2.8), by outfitters and guides (90% employees; 75% public) (Figure 7.2.9), by the energy industry (83% employees; 71% public) (Figure 7.2.10), and by landowners (96% employees; 82% public) (Figure 7.2.11).

Figure 7.2.12 shows a comparison of the series of questions on one graph. It shows the percentages who said that the entity has *a great deal* of influence on the agency, ranked by the residents' results. It shows that both residents' and employees' top named entities are politics and landowners, but employees' have a much higher percentage naming these entities. Employees also have a much higher percentage naming outfitters and guides as having *a great deal* of influence. On the other hand, residents have a much higher percentage, compared to employees, saying that environmental and conservation groups have *a great deal* of influence.

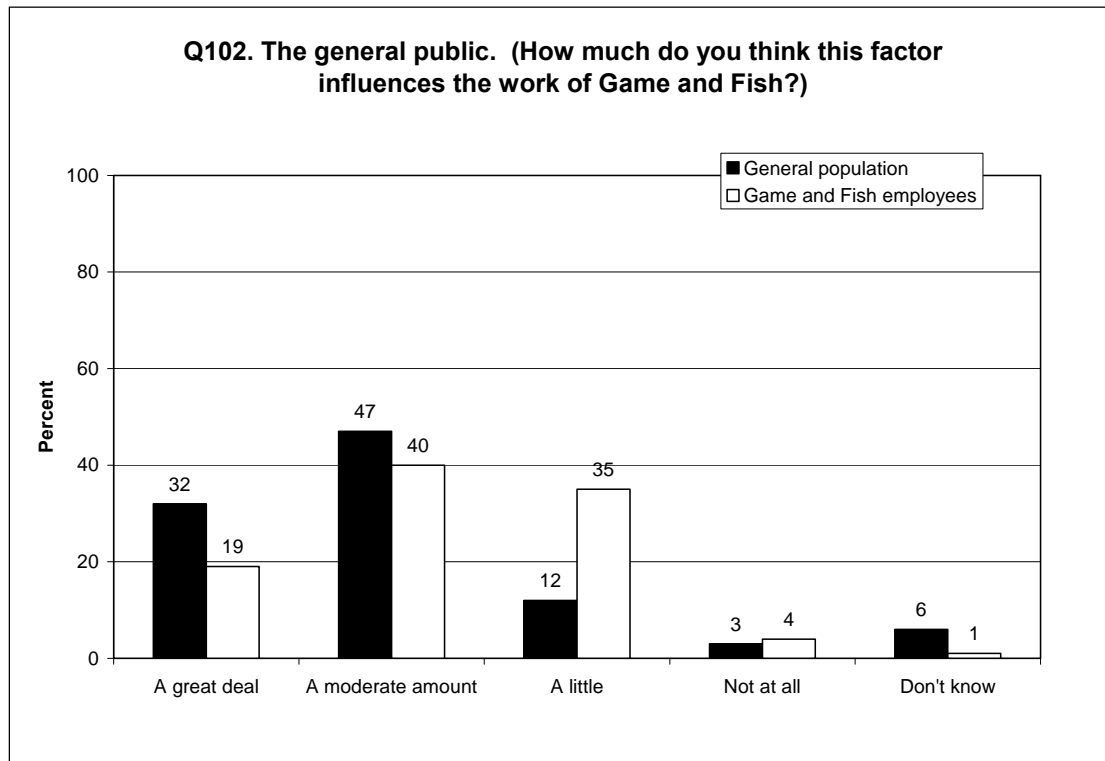


Figure 7.2.1. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of the General Public

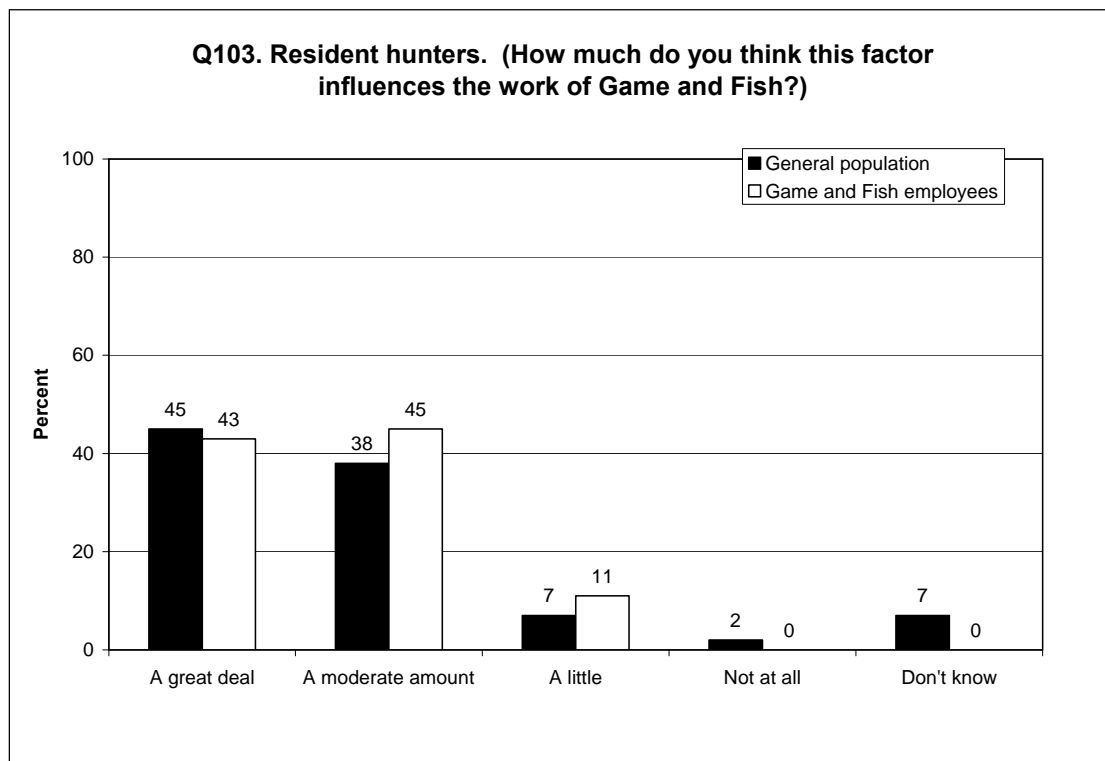


Figure 7.2.2. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Resident Hunters

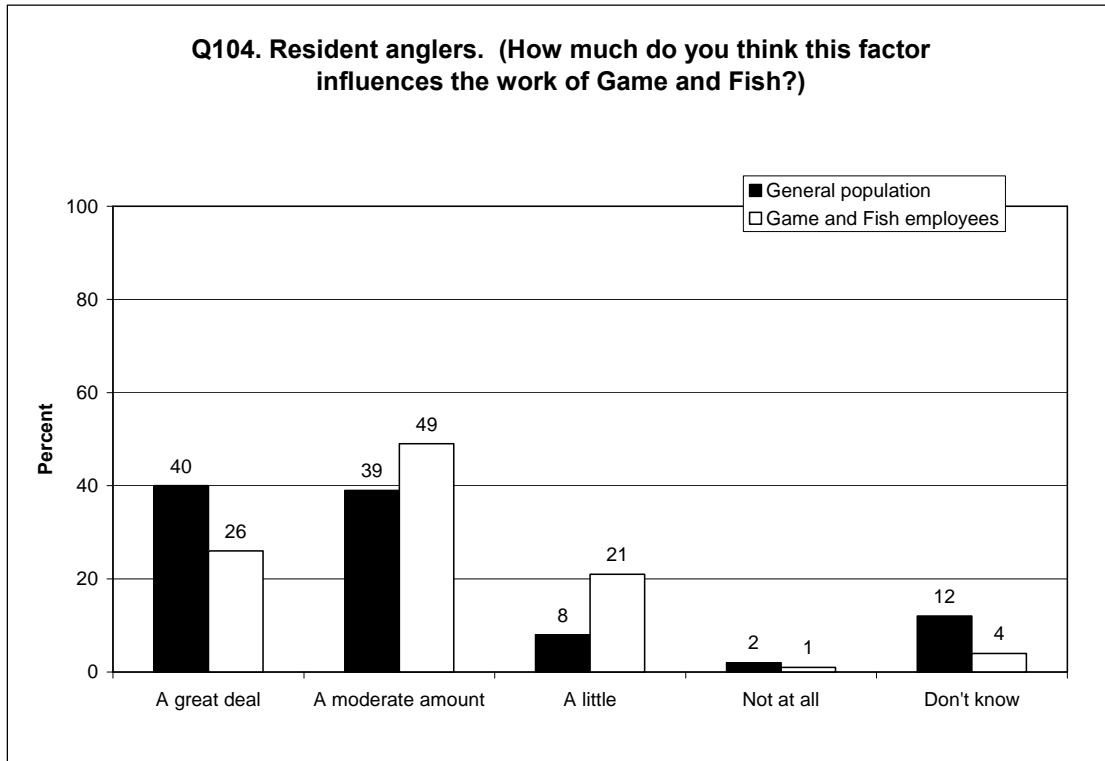


Figure 7.2.3. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Resident Anglers

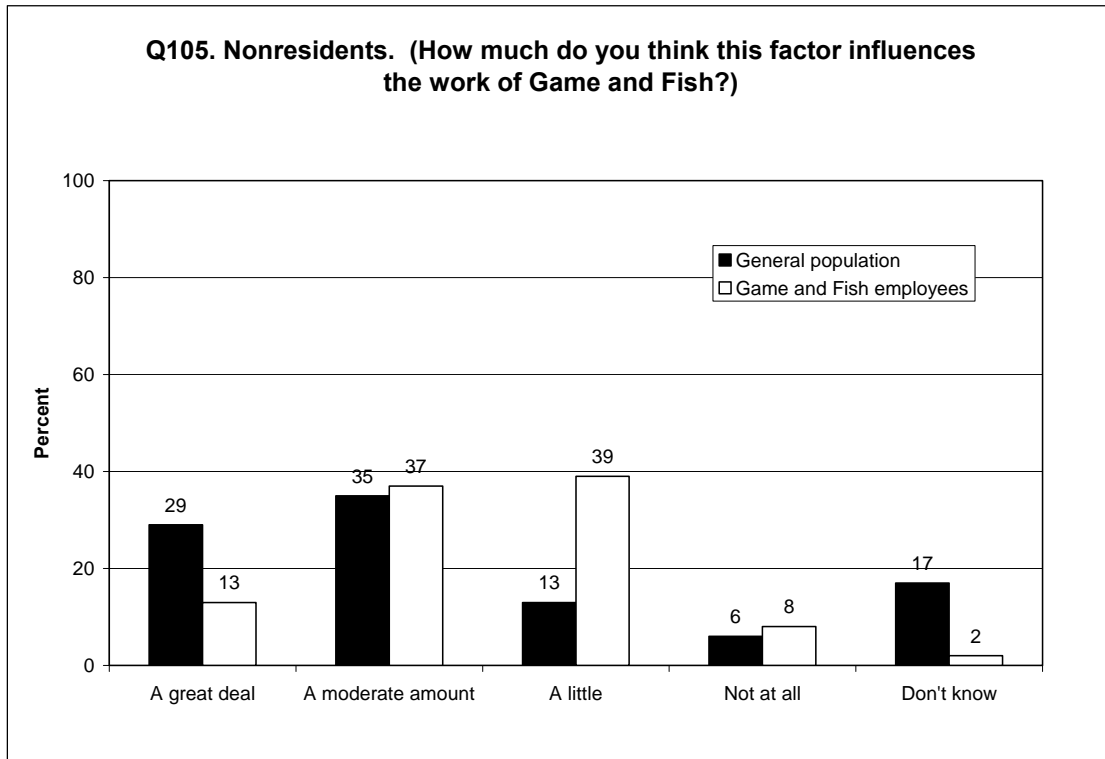


Figure 7.2.4. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Nonresidents

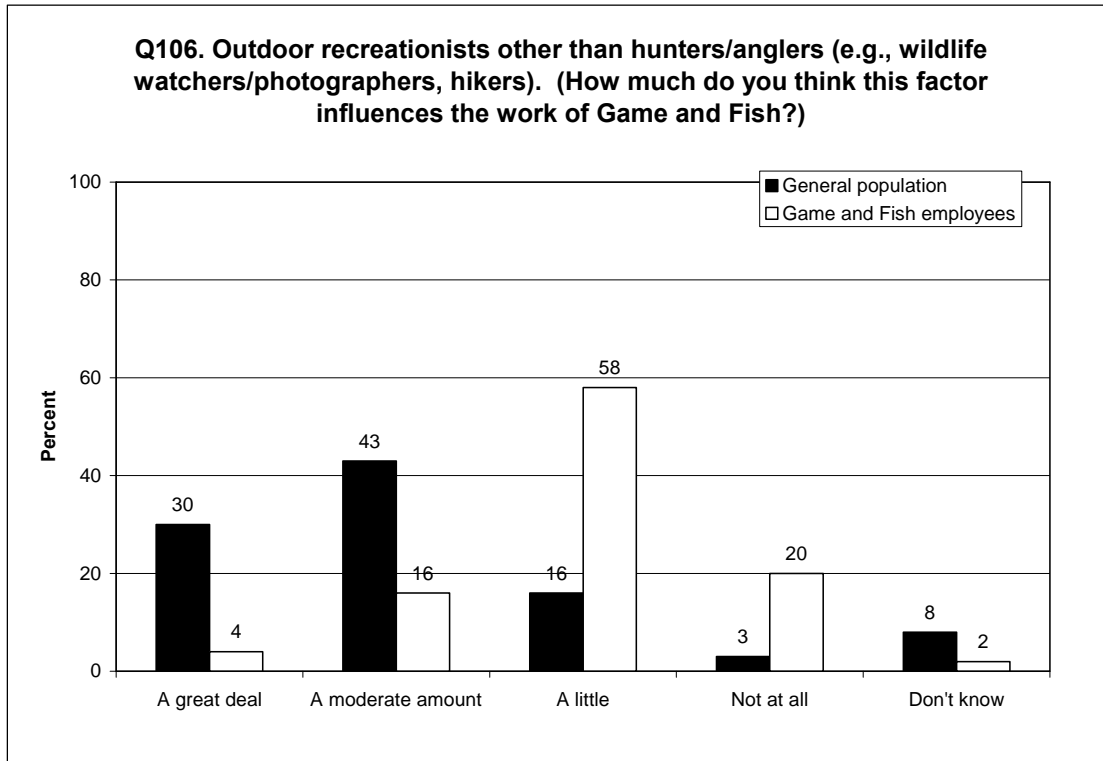


Figure 7.2.5. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Non-Hunting/Non-Fishing Outdoor Recreationists

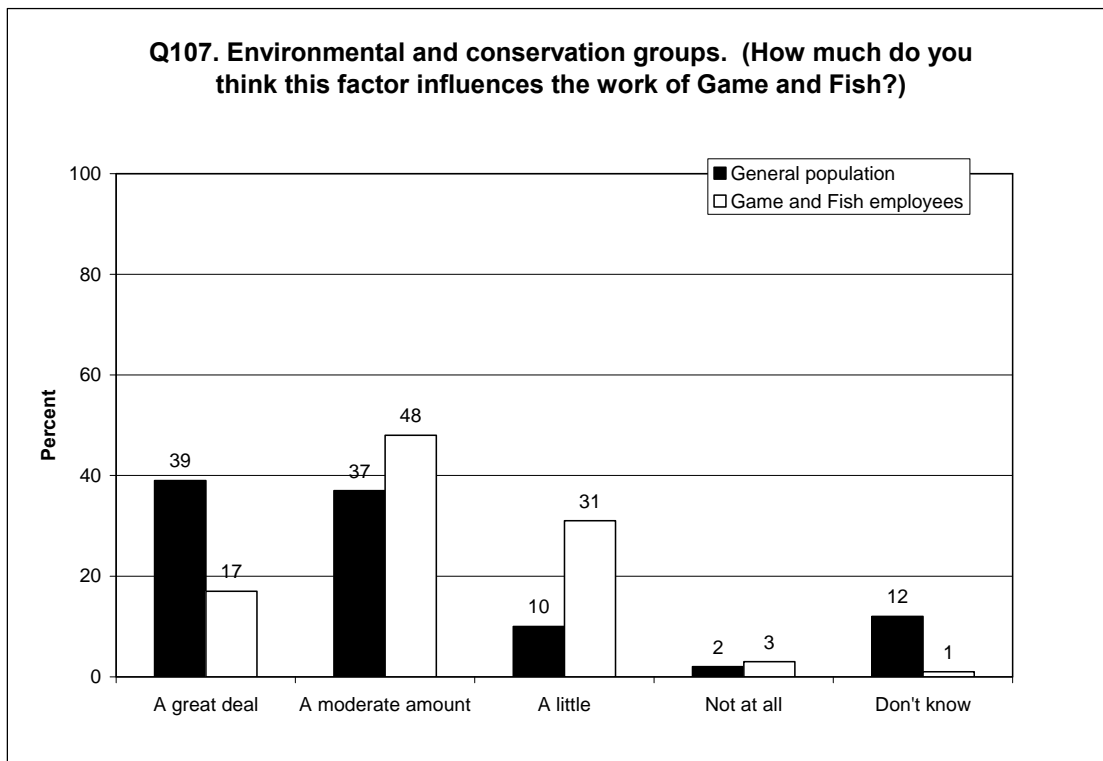


Figure 7.2.6. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Environmental and Conservation Groups

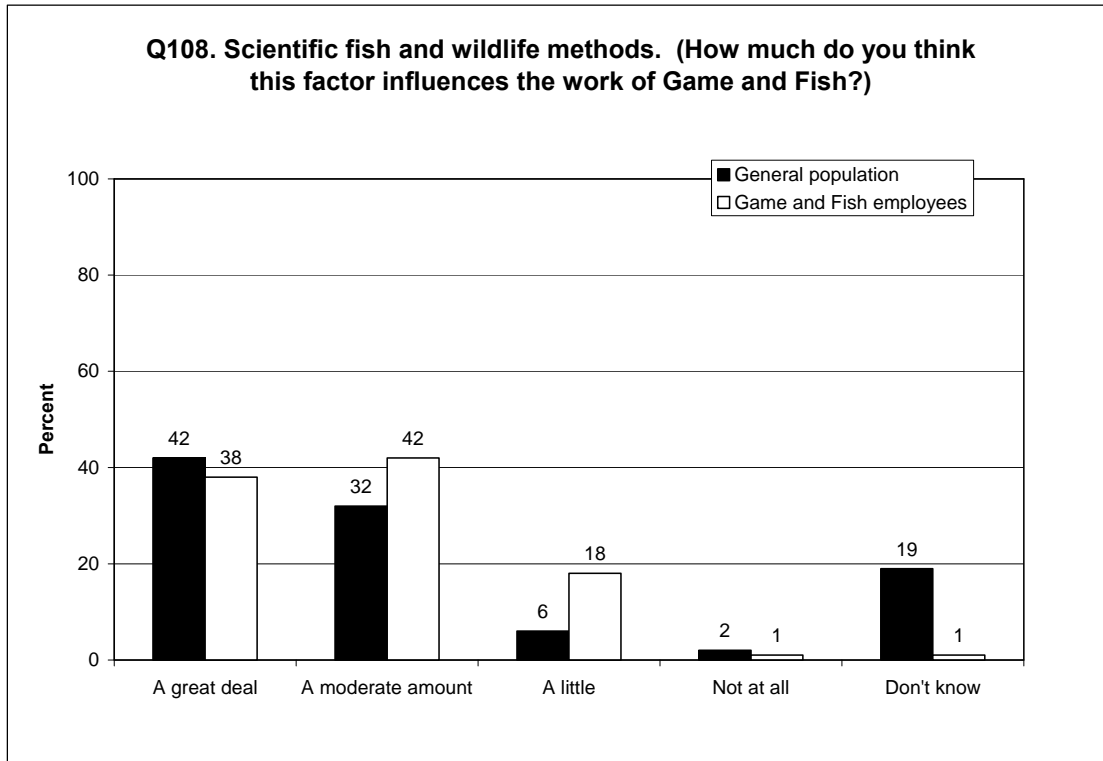


Figure 7.2.7. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Scientific Fish and Wildlife Methods

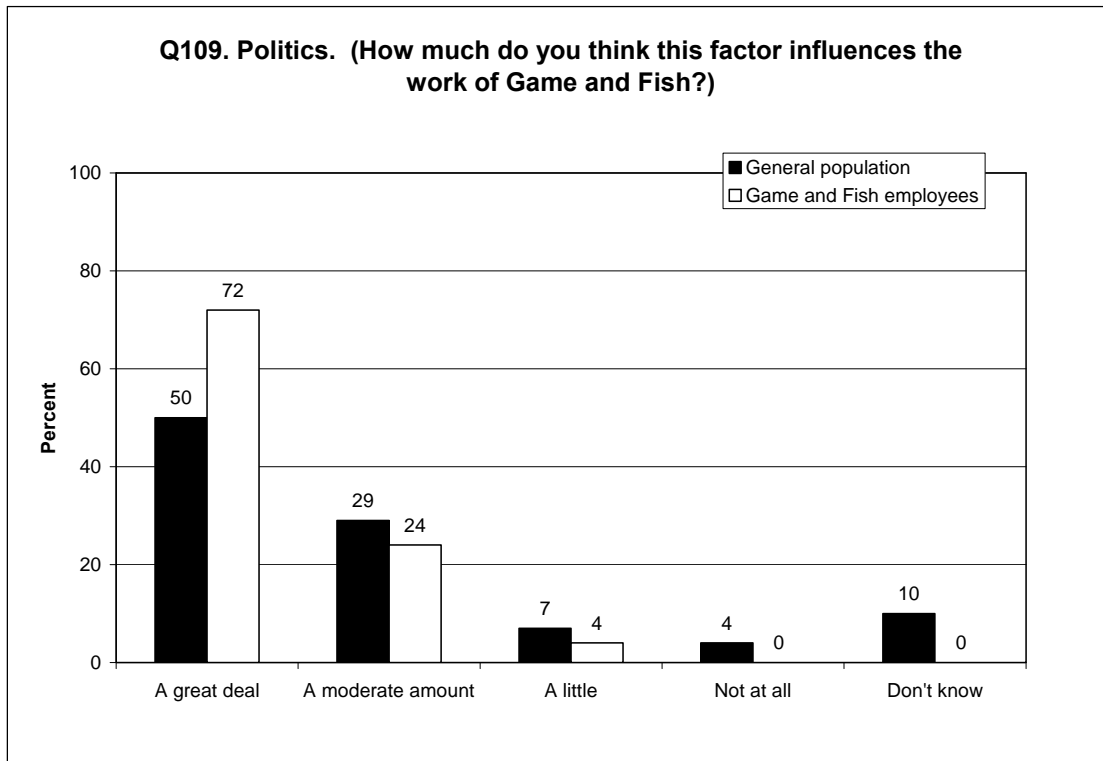


Figure 7.2.8. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Politics

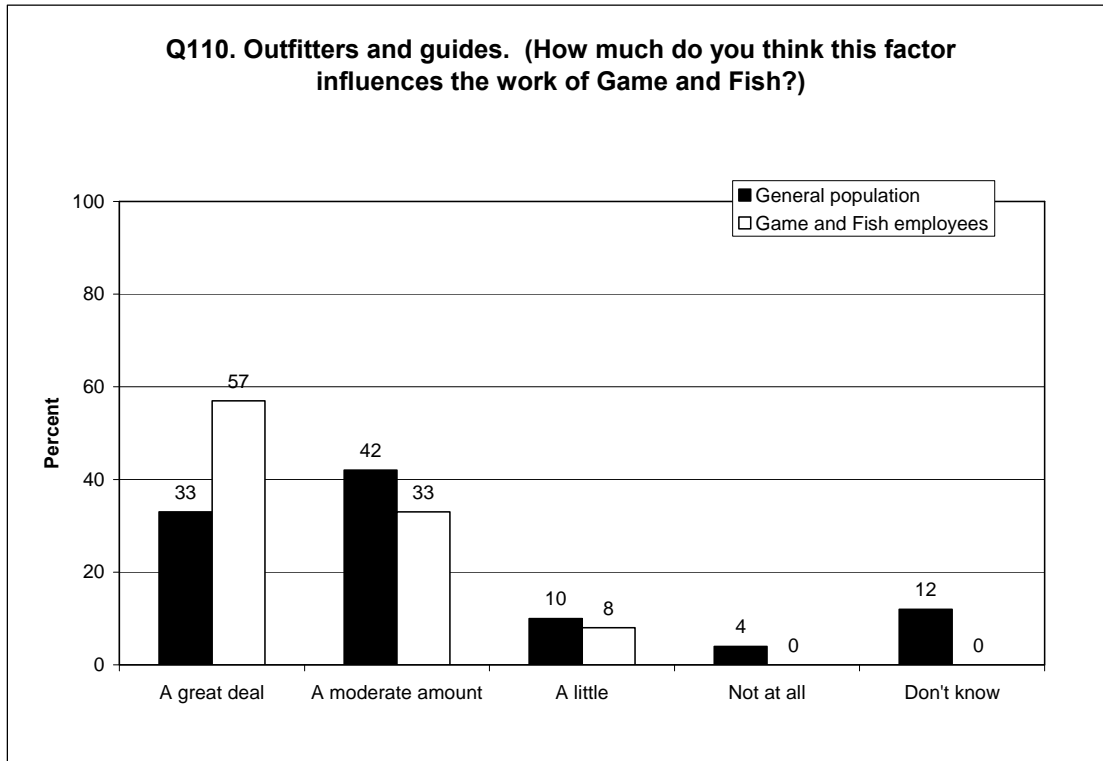


Figure 7.2.9. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Outfitters and Guides

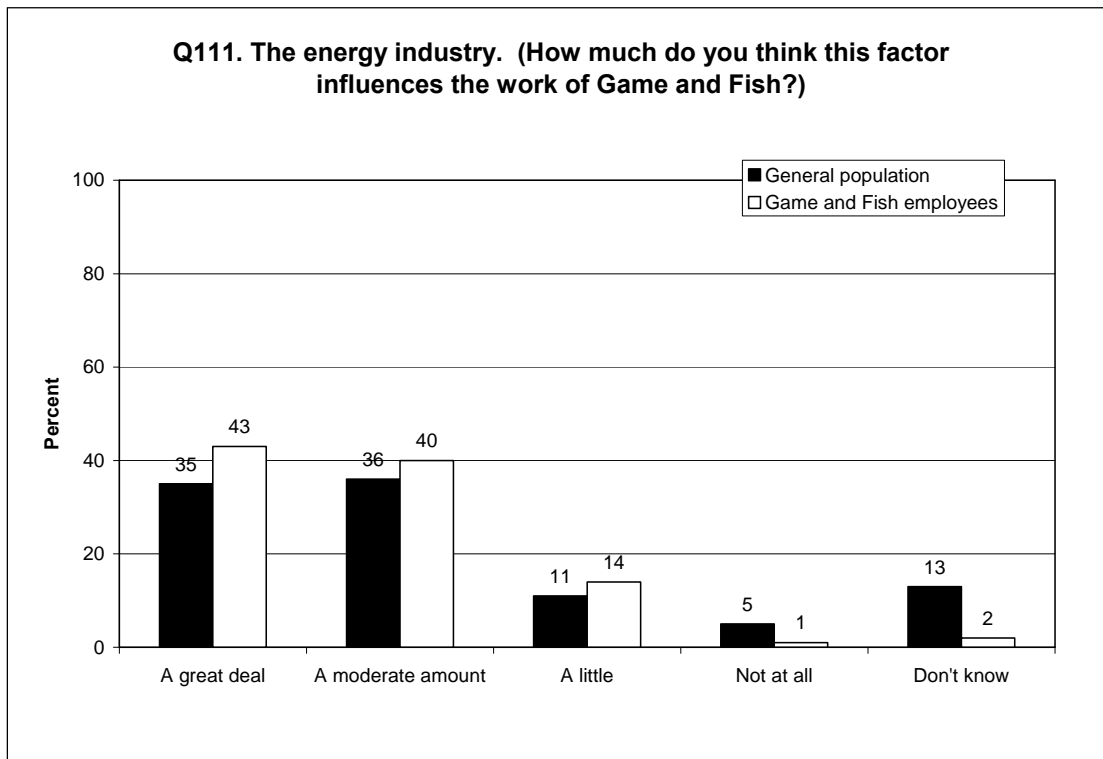


Figure 7.2.10. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of the Energy Industry

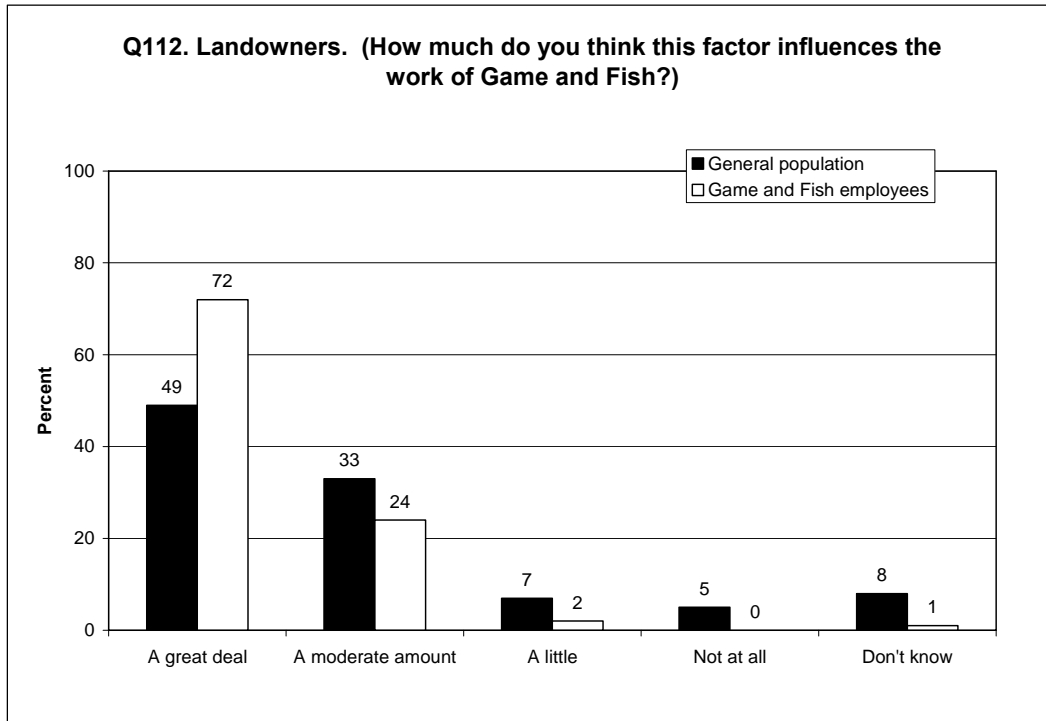


Figure 7.2.11. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influence of Landowners

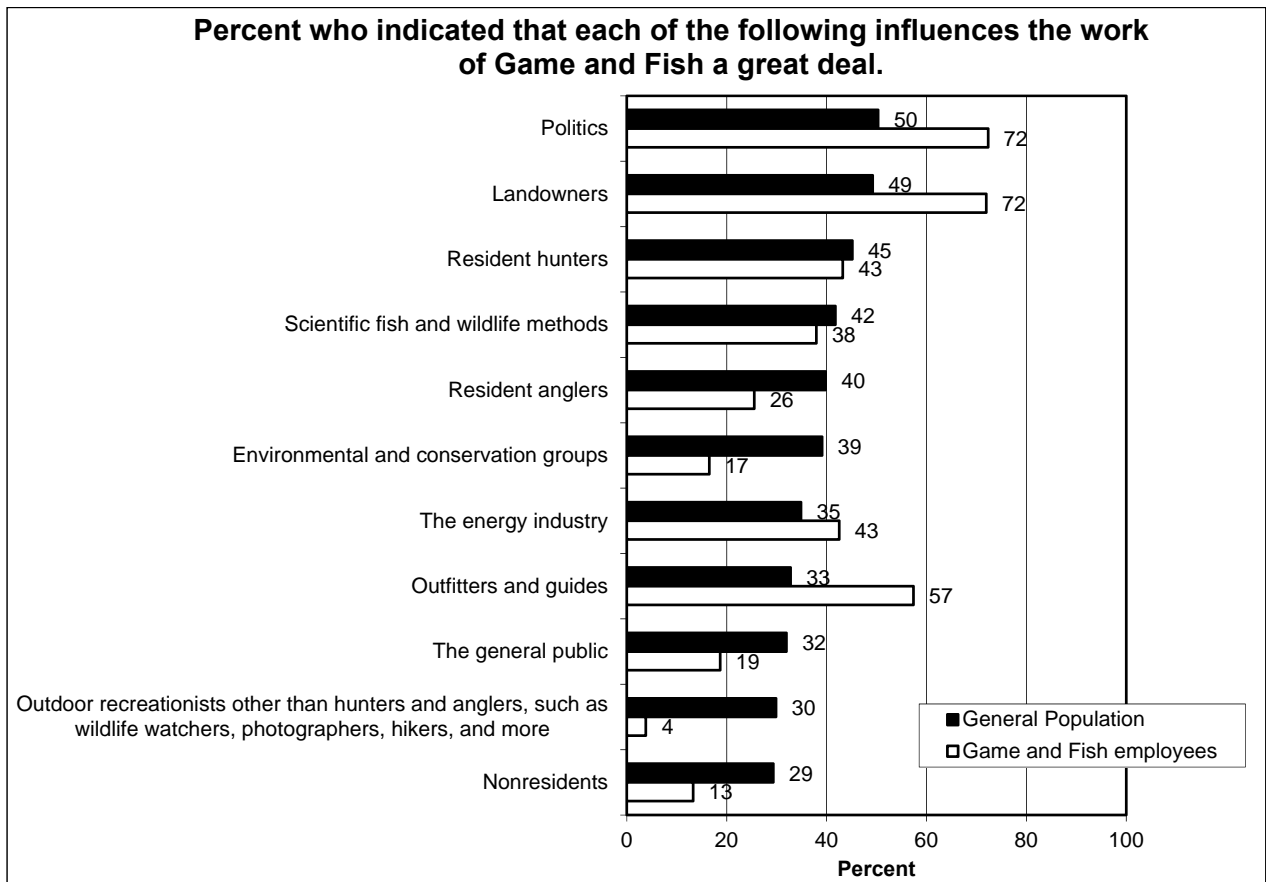


Figure 7.2.12. Comparisons of Opinions on the Influences as a Whole

7.3. COMPARISONS OF QUESTION ABOUT NEW FUNDING

Respondents were asked if they agree or disagree that elected officials should explore new funding options to help pay for fish and wildlife management in Wyoming. A strong majority of Game and Fish employees (72%) *strongly agree* with the statement, compared to 49% of the general population (Figure 7.3.1).

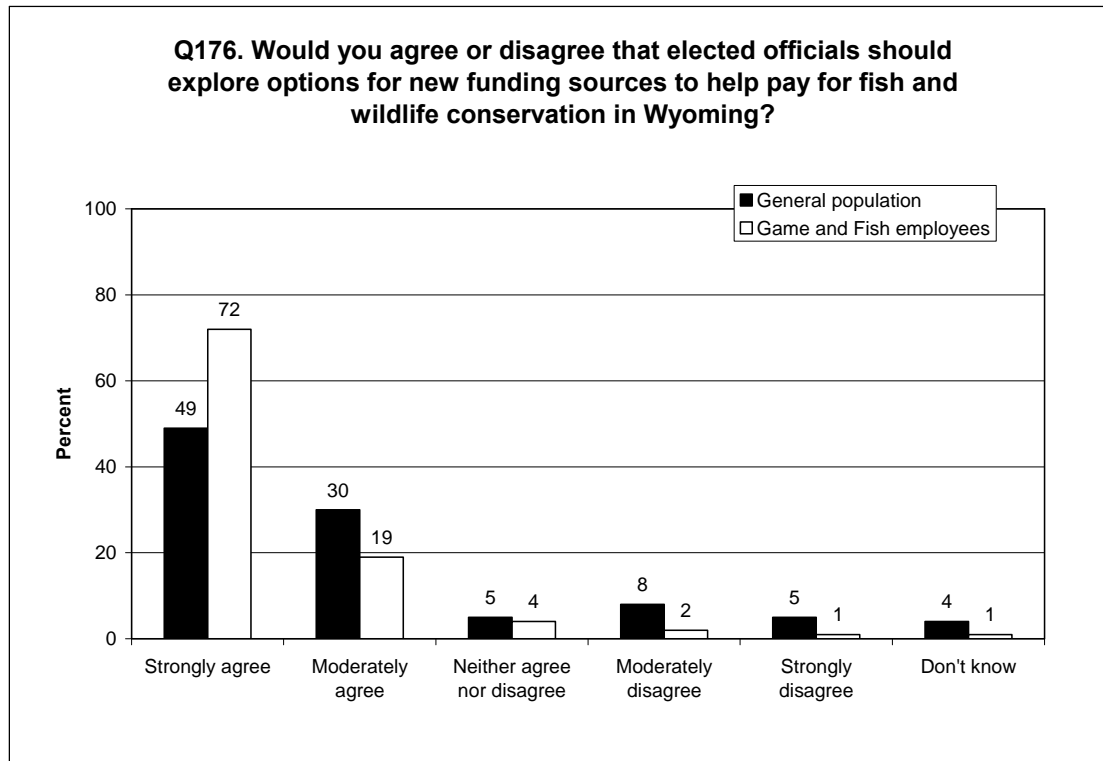


Figure 7.3.1. Comparisons of Opinions on New Options for Funding

7.4. COMPARISON OF QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE OF EFFORTS

Survey respondents were read a list of 27 categories related to the work of Game and Fish (actually a randomized portion of the list, to mitigate excessive survey length) and were asked to rate how important each should be to the Game and Fish Department, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important. Comparisons of mean ratings by the general population and by Game and Fish employees are shown in Figures 7.4.1 through 7.4.3.

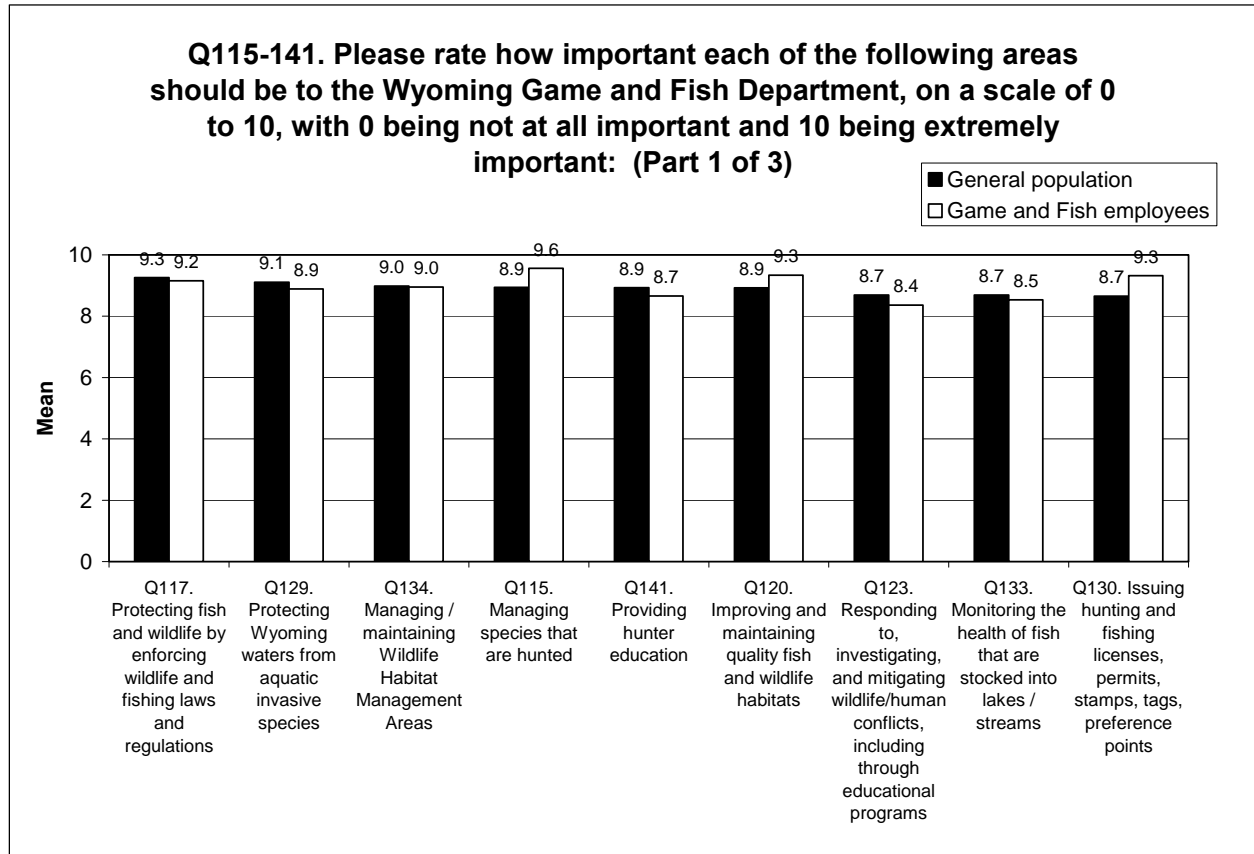


Figure 7.4.1. Comparison of Importance Placed on Game and Fish Department Efforts, Part 1

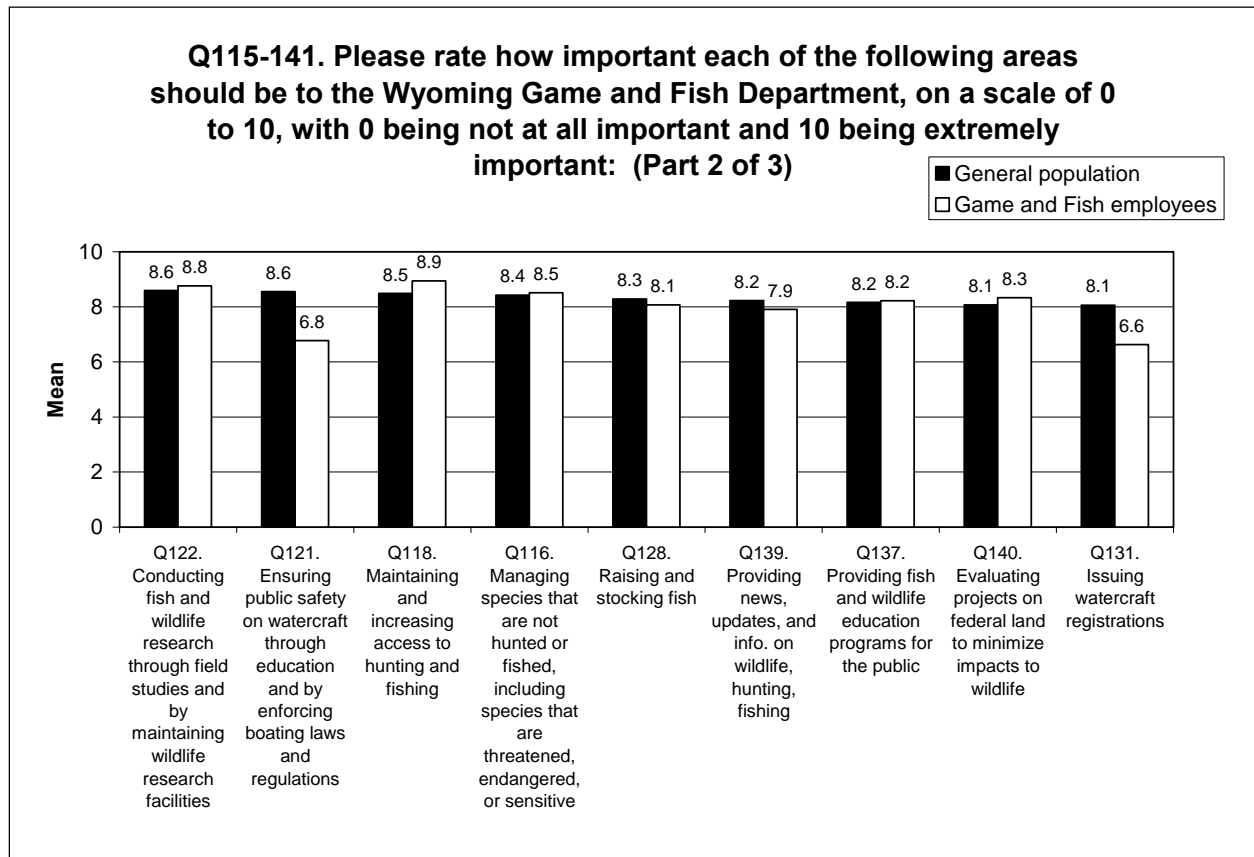


Figure 7.4.2. Comparison of Importance Placed on Game and Fish Department Efforts, Part 2

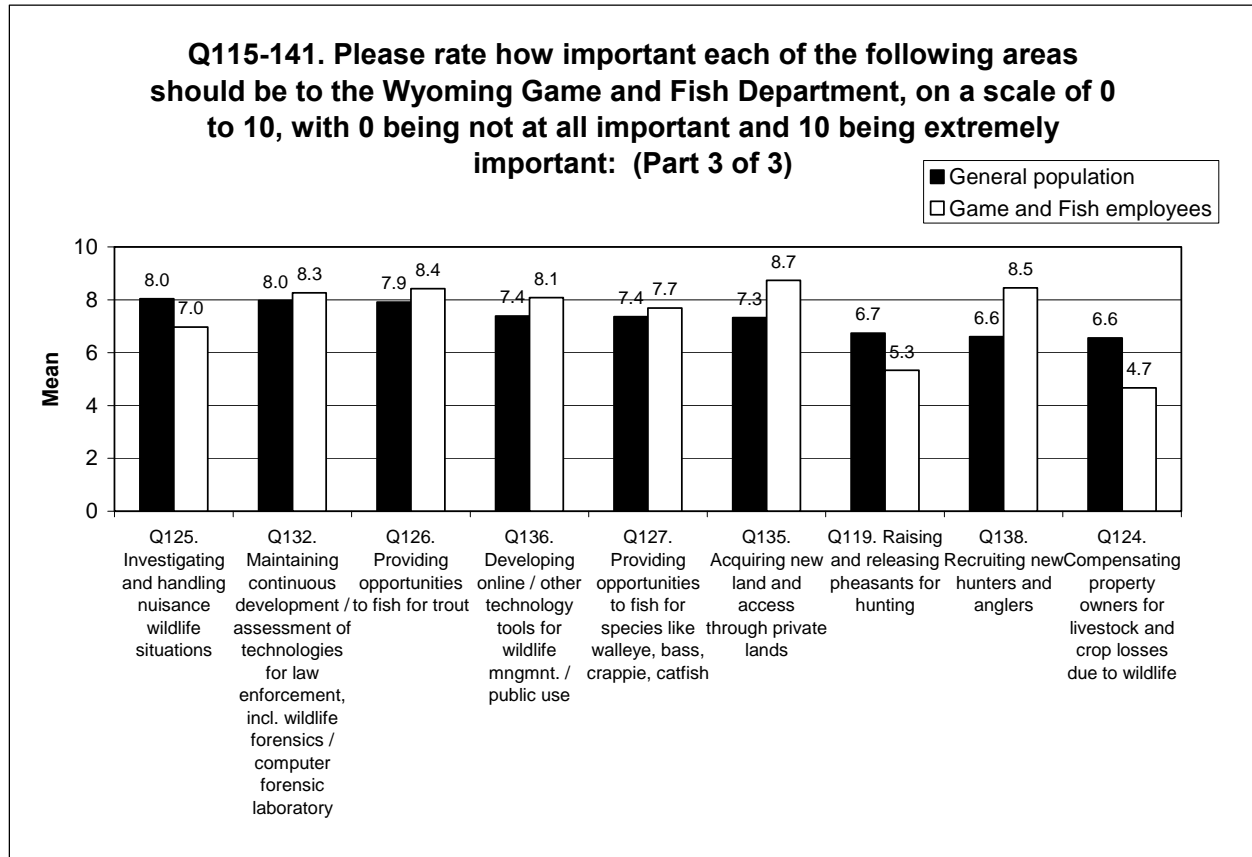


Figure 7.4.3. Comparison of Importance Placed on Game and Fish Department Efforts, Part 3

Perhaps a better way to visualize the differences in priorities between the two groups is shown in Figure 7.4.4. A ranking of the priority of the 27 items by employees is shown alongside a ranking of the public’s priority of the efforts, with lines connecting the equivalent items between the two lists. A horizontal line depicts an equal ranking (this only occurs on the bottom ranking for each group, for “compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife”), while a steep incline or decline reflects a substantial difference in priorities between the groups.

Generally, Game and Fish employees place more importance than the general public does on providing opportunities for outdoor recreation. This is most apparent in the rankings of “acquiring new land and access through private lands” (ranking of 9th by employees and 24th by the public, out of the 27 areas) and “recruiting new hunters and anglers” (ranking of 13th by employees and 26th by the public).

On the other hand, the general population has higher rankings than Game and Fish employees on boating issues, especially “ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations” (ranking of 24th by employees and 11th by the public) and “issuing watercraft registrations” (ranking of 25th by employees and 18th by the public). The public also had higher rankings for education and nuisance wildlife issues.

Game and Fish Employees		General Population	
1	Managing species that are hunted	Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	1
2	Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	2
3	Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	Managing / maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	3
4	Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	Managing species that are hunted	4
5	Managing / maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	Providing hunter education	5
6	Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	6
7	Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	Responding to, investigating, and mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, including through educational programs	7
8	Conducting fish and wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes / streams	8
9	Acquiring new land and access through private lands	Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	9
10	Providing hunter education	Conducting fish and wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	10
11	Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes / streams	Ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations	11
12	Managing species that are not hunted or fished, including species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	12
13	Recruiting new hunters and anglers	Managing species that are not hunted or fished, including species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	13
14	Providing opportunities to fish for trout	Raising and stocking fish	14
15	Responding to, investigating, and mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, including through educational programs	Providing news, updates, and information on wildlife, hunting, fishing	15
16	Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	16
17	Maintaining continuous development / assessment of technologies for law enforcement, including wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	17
18	Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	Issuing watercraft registrations	18
19	Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	19
20	Raising and stocking fish	Maintaining continuous development / assessment of technologies for law enforcement, including wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	20
21	Providing news, updates, and information on wildlife, hunting, fishing	Providing opportunities to fish for trout	21
22	Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	22
23	Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	23
24	Ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations	Acquiring new land and access through private lands	24
25	Issuing watercraft registrations	Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	25
26	Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	Recruiting new hunters and anglers	26
27	Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	27

Figure 7.4.4. Comparison of Rankings of the Priority of Game and Fish Department Efforts

Finally, the same 27 categories related to the work of Game and Fish were read to respondents, who were asked to rate the *performance* by Game and Fish regarding each of the categories (0 to 10 scale). Comparisons of the mean ratings by each group are shown on Figures 7.4.5 through 7.4.7.

In this series, the overall mean ratings are favorable. Employees have markedly higher ratings than the public regarding “raising and stocking fish,” “raising and releasing pheasants for hunting,” and “compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife.” Note, however, that these categories were ranked at and near the bottom in the Game and Fish employees’ list of priorities, as shown previously.

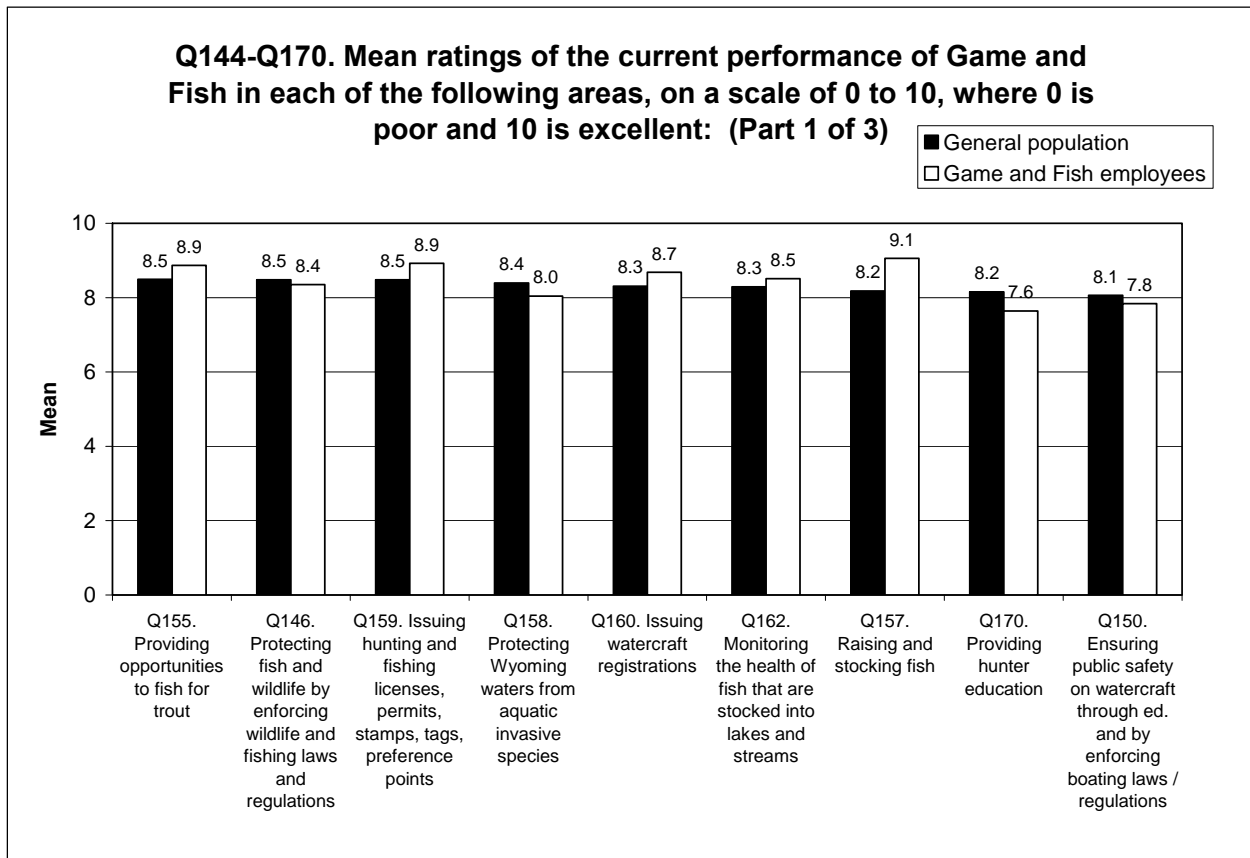


Figure 7.4.5. Comparison of Performance of the Game and Fish Department Efforts, Part 1

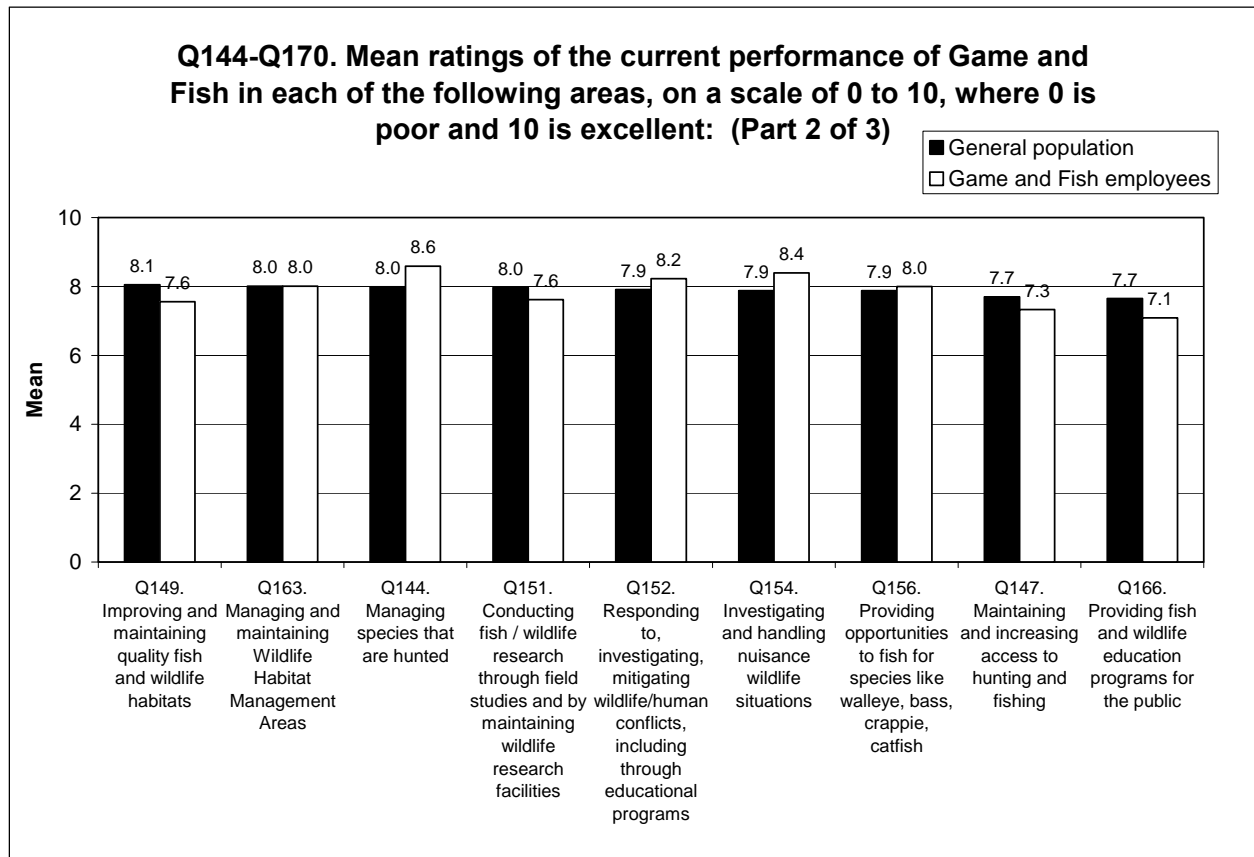


Figure 7.4.6. Comparison of Performance of the Game and Fish Department Efforts, Part 2

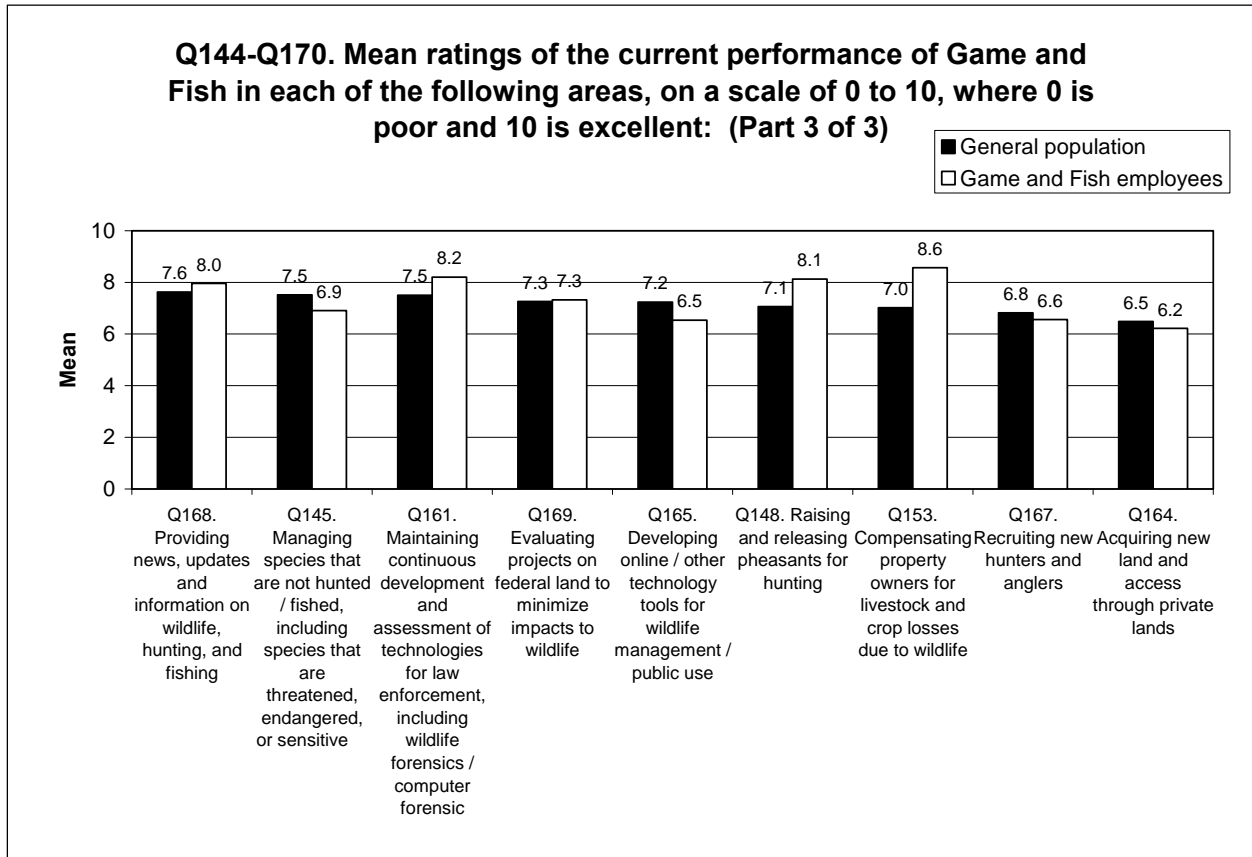


Figure 7.4.7. Comparison of Performance of the Game and Fish Department Efforts, Part 3

8. POST-SURVEY FOCUS GROUPS

Five focus groups were conducted after the surveys had been administered. These focus groups were conducted with a diverse selection of Wyoming residents in Laramie, Casper, Sheridan, Worland, and Jackson from February 5 through 10, 2018. The methodology is discussed in full in Chapter 12, “Methodology.”

While the points highlighted below do not illustrate the full range of comments and feedback offered by focus group participants, they delineate the most often and thoroughly discussed issues across all five of the focus groups. Verbatim quotations are included with the post-survey focus groups (quotations were not included with the pre-survey focus groups because they had been released previously to Game and Fish under separate cover).

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Overall, focus group participants indicate they have a favorable view of Game and Fish. Many participants view Game and Fish as doing a good job with fish and wildlife management while also balancing the various needs and requests of their respective constituencies.

While most participants tend to think Game and Fish is doing the best job possible, given budgetary and personnel limitations, they also would like to see Game and Fish pursue additional funding sources to increase its budget and overall effectiveness, preferably without taking additional federal money.

One of the most often discussed requests, which arose in almost every conversation across all five focus groups, is for Game and Fish to provide more educational opportunities for the general public, including for largely untapped demographic groups such as women and youth.

In tandem, there are many requests for more information regarding aquatic invasive species, regulatory and policy decision-making rationale, and contact information.

Almost any time in focus group conversations where participants responded that they would require more information on a specific topic in order to offer an informed comment, the discussion turned to the need for Game and Fish to provide more education and information to Wyoming residents concerning issues related to licensing, aquatic invasive species, regulations, poaching, and outdoors skills, among many other topics.

Multiple participants also request that Game and Fish streamline its educational and informational outreach by increasing its use of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) and by developing and promoting outdoors-skills development for youth and the general public.

In addition to providing more education and information, many participants request more advertising (via newspaper, television, and social media) and outreach (via local events, public meetings, etc.) to develop their knowledge base.

Most participants, with the exception of those in Jackson, feel that Game and Fish should open a hunting season on grizzly bears to responsibly manage the growing population.

Unlike the issue with wolves, focus group participants tend to view grizzlies as native to and belonging in Wyoming.

Some participants, with the exception of most in Jackson, feel that Game and Fish should promote a “shoot-on-sight” policy with wolves. Other participants across multiple focus groups who do not feel as strongly about a shoot-on-sight policy still favor a hunting season for wolves. Multiple participants across all focus groups (including Jackson) also note that landowners who kill wolves to protect their livestock should not be penalized. Due to the perception that the initial wolf reintroduction involved a species of wolf that is not native to Wyoming, many focus group participants seem to view wolves in general as unwelcome in the state.

Most focus group participants think that land access in Wyoming has improved, but also assert that Game and Fish can and should continue to promote additional access to public land by working with landowners. Additionally, a number of participants note examples of federal land with closed trails and roads due to an apparent lack of maintenance. These participants indicate that better partnerships between Game and Fish and federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management) could help promote better road and trail maintenance and provide more access to federal public lands as a result.

Most participants understand that license fees are higher for nonresidents and therefore make up an important revenue source for Game and Fish. But participants also struggle with the practical impacts of increasing visitation from nonresidents (recreational pressure, irresponsible behavior, etc.).

8.1. OPINIONS ON HUNTING AND FISHING REGULATIONS

Overall, focus group participants' thoughts on Wyoming's hunting and fishing regulations were mixed. Whereas some found the regulations to be clear and easily understood, others from across multiple focus groups found them to be confusing in their wording and unnecessarily complex. A few participants from Laramie viewed the complexity of the regulations as necessary to help discourage poaching; they claim the regulations attempt to cover every issue from every conceivable perspective, which makes them complicated for the typical hunter or angler to read, understand, and practice. Overall, it seemed that the regulatory complexity was more often discussed in terms of hunting and hunting access-related issues than about fishing. Many participants observed that the boundary lines between public and private land are difficult to understand in the regulations without an accompanying GPS system.

Some participants who suggested that the regulations are fairly easy to understand cautioned that they may perceive that to be the case because they have lived in Wyoming for their entire lives (or for many years) and are extremely familiar with the regulations in general. It was suggested that newcomers to Wyoming's hunting or fishing could easily find the regulations to be confusing, misleading, or complicated. One focus group participant suggested that the regulations be rewritten to include a section that summarizes main points for the beginner, while getting into the “fine print” later in the regulations.

I think that the hunting regulations would be confusing for me because I don't hunt. I don't really understand the lottery system.... So, I guess, as a layperson it's confusing, but I haven't really taken the time to understand. —Laramie resident

The booklet of regulations [for] fishing is a little intimidating. But it's usually broken down by species, and it's usually not too big of a deal. I would say, probably for novice fisher folks, they [regulations] probably could be a little confusing. But if you've been at it for awhile, I think they're fine. —Laramie resident

I think that it [hunting regulations] is a complicated subject because there are so many ways that people try to poach animals. They [Game and Fish] are trying to be specific for those [situations].... So, they [the regulations] are extensive because they have to cover all of these things. I think that to simplify would be to start off with what a novice would need to know and then get into the more specific things, so that you [first] get the most basic things.... But, is it confusing? It is, because they have to cover every subject. —Laramie resident

I think that they're really simple. If you can afford a GPS, you get that little card, put it in there, and it tells you what area you're in. It tells you everything. It's pretty simple. —Casper resident

If you read it [the regulations], you can pretty much find what you're looking for. The website's something else.... The booklet [of regulations] is okay, but you do have to read it. —Casper resident

The regulations themselves I don't believe are that complicated. You do have to actually read them; you can't scan them and understand everything. You actually have to read it. —Casper resident

Some of it may be language level. Why in the world would a general public document use the word "promulgate"? —Sheridan resident

I can get through the regulations fine because I've been here forever. But I would assume that folks that aren't used to it, it would be very difficult. It seems like lawyer writing: too wordy. —Sheridan resident

Families that have been doing it [hunting in Wyoming] for generations already know it [the regulations]. —Sheridan resident

I don't have a problem with them [the regulations]. I read through the book every year and carry it with me, which helps. —Worland resident

I don't have any concern with the hunting or fishing regulations. They seem pretty user-friendly to me. —Worland resident

It didn't seem confusing or overly burdensome at all. It seemed clear—where they needed to be, when they needed to be, what they could get. The regulations were there. —Jackson resident

I do hunt and I don't feel like they're always exactly clear.... Just the verbiage of the regulations: I read it one way, thinking it was open to public land... my cousin read the same thing and [thought differently]. I literally had to call in and have them walk me [through it]. It was just one word—on or off—and depending upon the perspective you were reading it from, I could have been out there [unintentionally] hunting something that was illegal. There could definitely be some work on the verbiage. —Jackson resident

8.2. OPINIONS ON ACCESS FOR RECREATION

Many participants noted that access has improved due to both the walk-in areas and hunter management areas. Across focus groups, various participants cited these two programs as directly resulting in improved access for recreation in Wyoming.

The most noteworthy access issue identified by some participants related to public land that is inaccessible because it is surrounded by privately held land that the public cannot legally cross. There is considerable frustration over this issue, with a few observing that not even the government can access its own BLM-held land without trespassing on private land. While some participants noted that Game and Fish continues to coordinate with private landowners and ranchers to increase access, the overall sentiment seemed to be that more should be done to make such public lands accessible. Jackson participants noted that access might be a more important issue in other regions, since most of the land immediately surrounding Jackson is federal land, rather than a mixture of public and private land, and is therefore easier to access without the potential to inadvertently cross into privately held land.

It seems like they've [Game and Fish] been doing a lot more agreements with ranchers and property owners. The landowner agrees to provide access to the public with x number of stipulations.... I've seen where landowners have granted access, and then their land got torn up and they say, "We're done." —Laramie resident

I think there's a lot less roads you can go play on than what there used to be. I don't know if that's Game and Fish or the Forest Service. —Laramie resident

I think this is land management, more than anything. With all the incidents of fires and such, why don't they clean it up a little bit, so there's not a fire risk? It's a deterrent to everything we're talking about: to have so much dead, dry wood laying around everywhere. And yet, nobody's allowed to do anything with it. —Laramie resident

Absolutely [access has improved]. That walk-in... has opened up a lot of areas where they didn't let you in to hunt [before].... If you're nice and polite to the rancher or farmer, most of them are pretty good. —Casper resident

I think the walk-ins have improved, but there's some big chunks of public ground that are totally inaccessible. I'll give you one example: Elk Mountain. Almost that whole mountain is public ground, except it's surrounded by private. Those kind of things I still think there should be a... process for legal access for the public.... There's some places that 40 acres along a creek block 10-, 20-, or 30,000 acres, and there's no way to get into it.... Somewhere along the line, the government ought to be able to get access into the property it owns.... It used to be, every several miles, there had to be an access into the forest. —Casper resident

Their signage has made a huge difference. Their public accesses are marked extremely well. The biggest thing, with me, is [that] not every area, just because it's marked, has a public access. If you don't find it and go into their regulations and look up those specific areas, you can [illegally] tread in an area. —Sheridan resident

The Access Yes! program... has helped. Access has [also] increased because of the acreage they've purchased or land that landowners have donated. —Sheridan resident

The access roads seem to be better, when you're driving back into some of those places. And the signage has definitely been a lot better. —Sheridan resident

I've used the hunter management areas for my hunting.... It's nice to go on a private ranch and to camp and hunt there. I think they've done a lot to help the farmers and to give us the right information so that we can hunt and harvest the game there. I think they've [Game and Fish] done a good job to get access to private lands. —Worland resident

I totally agree. Both the walk-in areas and the hunter management [areas] have helped a lot. —Worland resident

I'm confused because that's not their [Game and Fish] land, unless they're working with a partner to be helping with those access points. If you're on a national forest or a park, or it's federally-owned. So, how do they fit in with the access [issue]? —Jackson resident

Here, we are backed up against the national forest in so many places, that the Forest Service manages those areas. —Jackson resident

8.3. OPINIONS ON ACCESS FOR NON-CONSUMPTIVE ACTIVITIES

Focus group participants noted that Forest Service roads have closed down in the past few years. There was some conversation about paying a fee for trail use and increasing fees for entry into Yellowstone National Park—it was thought that these mechanisms could assist Game and Fish in providing more opportunities to access trails and other lands for non-consumptive activities. There were also a few suggestions to curtail motorized access, with some participants noting that damage to terrain from motorized vehicles takes a lot longer to fix than damage from some other activities. One participant suggested improving advertising to target young adults and young families with children who are looking for venues in which to explore the outdoors.

It should be noted that access difficulties were least common in Jackson, and some of these participants opposed the idea of fees for trail use.

We put in public access roads for the Forest Service—multi-purpose roads. I would bet two thirds of the roads that I surveyed in now are closed and blocked, not allowing people to get back into the forest. That's happened all over, on all the forests. It basically started turning about 30 years ago. We don't do multi-purpose roads now.... There's all kinds of roads in this state, that I know of, that went back in 20, 30, 40 miles where they logged. All that ground becomes almost off-limits unless you're on horseback. You're not going to go hunting back there. So, if you want to do something, do something about the federal grounds—that's 50 percent of our property. —Casper resident

There are thousands of miles of existing Forest Service roads that are blocked at the bottom. If you want to do something about access, take on the federal government; demand access to our public roads. It takes millions of dollars to build those roads. The timber purchase never pays enough for the roads to actually go in. —Casper resident

I think the trail system that you were talking about.... Maybe the ticket is hooking up with Pheasants Forever and [other groups].... The trail system is a great idea. You're going to find very few people here who don't like to go walk. —Sheridan resident

I might suggest more advertising of that. Families with young people [are] trying to do more active things together. The more they know about that, [the better].... Education and awareness is just a big part of that. —Sheridan resident

Somebody said something about really jacking up the prices into Yellowstone. Those of us who are using the land should contribute.... We're all in this together, and I think people in Wyoming are open to that [educating people to know what goes into maintaining the areas and access]. —Sheridan resident

We have not had a problem finding access to hike, camp, or do what we want to do. But, one concern that we do have is that some of the wilderness trails are not maintained. Sometimes, a tree has fallen over the trail, so a person has to create another trail, causing damage to the wilderness or decreasing access that way. —Worland resident

I agree. I don't usually have a lot of problem [with] having access. I ride my horses a lot on the trails in the Bighorns.... But there are a lot of blow-downs.... I'm not sure exactly who's supposed to be maintaining that outside of the Forest Service.... People who have big ranches—it's nice when they allow access for hunting, fishing, and walking areas. But, I guess you would have to limit it—you can't just open up your place for people to come hang out and camp on it. So, to me, I think they're gracious in that they do let us in to hunt and to fish. But I wouldn't necessarily expect them to open their private land to camping and things like that. —Worland resident

Motorized access needs to be especially thought through before you just allow that everywhere. —Jackson resident

When we were preparing for the eclipse, we saw some things with access to public land.... It's easier if someone creates a campfire somewhere that they shouldn't to mitigate that than if someone starts driving [a motorized vehicle] somewhere that they shouldn't. I think I'm also for limiting motorized traffic in different access points. —Jackson resident

There was talk at some point about charging hikers about being on the trail.... I don't think it's been completely put to bed.... I am not for that. I'd sooner we raise the cost of something else that helps with whatever they need to raise the money for. But to pay to go on a hike? There's something very strange about that. —Jackson resident

The bike pathway... when it follows the elk refuge... never really made sense on how that was threatening wildlife when you're three feet away from the road and it's dangerous. —Jackson resident

8.4. OPINIONS ON MAINTENANCE OF TRAILS AND ROADS

An issue related to access was the maintenance of trails and roads across the state. Some participants thought that such maintenance has not been kept up with, while some others seemed satisfied with the state of maintenance of trails and roads. There was some concern in terms of the importance of keeping public roads and trails public rather than selling them to private entities, which would likely further restrict public access. Across the focus groups, there was a general perception that Game and Fish operates on a budget that limits the agency from engaging in road and trail maintenance to the degree that the public would like to see. Some focus group participants also expressed concern that the use of motorized vehicles on trails and roads can damage roads and create ruts in areas where no roads should be. Several participants noted the long-term damage that off-road use of vehicles can cause to land.

When the snow is as deep as this room is, that's pretty hard to maintain those roads. —Laramie resident

There's so many roads up there that have so little funding, they can't maintain them all [especially through the winters]. —Laramie resident

Game and Fish should be able to close down [certain roads] until calving season is over—give them a chance. —Laramie resident

I think the main thing that they [Game and Fish] would focus on if it's about roads is about access to lakes. If they're taking fish from the fish hatcheries and they're stocking these lakes, they want people to have access to the lakes and they want the revenue as well. As far as [access for] wildlife, that would be the Forest Service, because wildlife is everywhere. —Laramie resident

I would prefer Game and Fish to put more effort into understanding and knowing population levels than maintaining roads throughout the state. —Laramie resident

Personally, I'm concerned if a lot of the public land gets sold to private interests. I wonder, going forward, if that's going to be a bigger concern. —Laramie resident

I wholeheartedly concur on that. There's a whole public lands movement in the state: help keep the public lands public instead of selling them off for other private use. I am unnerved by the trend towards selling to corporations; I do think it is important for Game and Fish, and the state generally, to make available public lands. —Laramie resident

In this area, they've done a lot of closures in the last 2 years.... I think the access program that they've done has really helped a lot. Whether you're a walker, fly fisherman, bird hunter, bow hunter, or anything else, I think that's really been a key strategy point for us. —Sheridan resident

You're talking about a humongous area without a lot of eyes on it. It's frustrating to me when you do see a Game and Fish post "Closed" on a hunter management area and you see tracks right around it [the sign]. I think they do their best, but I don't know how often people get penalized for not abiding by the law. There's just no way to have somebody out there always patrolling it. —Sheridan resident

The Game and Fish doesn't have a lot to do with the trails and the roads per se, for taking care of it. But BLM and Forest Service does.... That special use permit gets Forest Service and BLM in trouble a lot, because if you lease it, then you're allowed so many special permits. —Sheridan resident

I don't have a problem the way it is. —Worland resident

I think it's fine the way it is. —Worland resident

I haven't found a problem with it. I think road maintenance needs to stay with the entity that has jurisdiction over that in the first place. —Worland resident

We don't have a problem with it. —Worland resident

We struggle with gates being closed a lot on our place, on the BLM allotment and the roads are never maintained. So, when the ruts get so deep, people just move over and start a new place; so, it's getting to be where the land is getting really tore up. The BLM doesn't want us to go in there and do the roads ourselves, which I'd be willing to do. —Worland resident

Some of my hunting friends are frustrated about some people creating roads by using four wheelers where roads should not be. It's having an adverse affect on the geography by creating ruts and rivers. I don't know who's responsible for enforcing that; I assume Game and Fish, but I'm not sure. —Worland resident

8.5. KNOWLEDGE OF AND OPINIONS ON GAME AND FISH

The overall consensus across focus groups regarding why people are not more knowledgeable about Game and Fish was that people generally only get in touch with Game and Fish for their specific activity of choice, be it hunting, fishing, hiking, or other outdoor recreational activities. Many focus group participants commented that residents will not seek services from Game and Fish for which they have no personal use. Thus, many focus group participants indicate that their knowledge of Game and Fish is limited to the agency's influence over the particular outdoor recreational activities in which they participate (it was mentioned that this is likely to be the case for most individuals across Wyoming).

Along these lines, one of the major points of discussion across all five focus groups is the need for more education from Game and Fish for Wyoming residents. The implication is that residents' knowledge about Game and Fish would increase if Game and Fish were to take a more intentional and proactive approach to its outreach and education initiatives. Findings related to education and outreach are discussed in greater depth later in this chapter, in the section "Information and Education from Game and Fish."

I'm guessing that they [residents] interact in the one area [of Game and Fish] that they're interested in. You don't really pay attention to the other areas. —Laramie resident

[With a] grandfather taking [his] grandsons hunting, they're going to get their information from grandpa. But when it comes down to it, they're not going to know those are Wyoming Game and Fish rules. —Laramie resident

[For] a lot of us, that's just how we were brought up: make sure you get your fishing license, follow the regs; we just don't think that much about it. —Laramie resident

I don't think they're interested. I think all they care about is that they have good fishing, that they have good hunting, and they have good access. Other than that, I don't think they really care. —Casper resident

I don't think they care why it's good as long as it is [good]. —Casper resident

I'd be willing to bet that 90 percent of the people in the state of Wyoming don't realize that the Game and Fish is divided up into biologists, fish biologists, wardens, researchers, and administrators. I bet they really don't know that, and really don't care, unfortunately. —Casper resident

I'm not a hunter and don't ride trails. I have this tiny portion I use Game and Fish resources for: fishing. I can't think of the last time I went to the website; I get the fishing license and my husband knows all the rules. We catch and release. You go to what you need, pull that [information], and that's it. —Sheridan resident

People who don't do a lot besides specifically fishing probably say "moderately," because that's what they feel. People don't even know all the stuff that Game and Fish does...research, fishing, hunting, wildlife management. They do a lot of things. —Sheridan resident

Most people probably just care about what the limit is and all the other stuff [they don't think about]. —Sheridan resident

I feel they don't know about it if they don't have a need for it. Most people just do what they want to do. —Worland resident

I think it's human nature for people to not be concerned with something until they need to be. So, if things are going okay, then they're not worried about it. —Worland resident

I think, unless you really have to interact [with Game and Fish], you don't really take the time to find out more. I do know they have a large territory to patrol and protect. There's not enough of them [game wardens].... It's a tough job. —Jackson resident

I feel like we're a good-ole-boys' state. I feel like why we don't know about [Game and Fish] is for that reason. They're not the group of people that stands up and says, "This is who I am." They just do what they do; they just work. —Jackson resident

I really am in awe of them, actually. I think they have a hard job and I think, with what they're given and what little money they're given, they do an amazing job protecting the state. —Jackson resident

We do know so little about them. Obviously, they have a regulatory function and an enforcement function. But, generally, they are very positive in their interactions with the public. —Jackson resident

8.6. JACKSON'S OPINIONS ON BEARS AND WOLVES

The two most commonly discussed issues of importance regarding wildlife were the management of bears and the management of wolves. It was noteworthy that, compared to participants in the other focus groups, Jackson participants seemed the most opposed to the killing of grizzly bears and wolves.

Overall, Jackson participants tended to comment that humans have further encroached into the natural habitats of bears and wolves. With a few exceptions, their recommendations for dealing with the increased bear and wolf populations focused on prevention, that is, keeping them away from domestic areas as much as possible without killing them. Jackson participants were willing to concede that private landowners who manage livestock should be allowed to protect their herds from large carnivores, but many Jackson participants opposed hunting seasons for bears and wolves, as well as a shoot-on-sight policy for wolves.

8.7. OPINIONS ON BEARS

Across focus groups, with the exception of Jackson, there was a general consensus that the grizzly bear population has increased enough to justify a hunting season. While many Jackson residents agreed that the number of grizzly bears in Wyoming has increased, some participants remained unwilling to support a hunting season for the species. On the other hand, many participants in the other four focus groups were strongly supportive of a hunting season for grizzlies, with some saying that Game and Fish is obligated to take population control measures.

Some individuals noted that bears are becoming more of a threat for hunters, since they (bears) seem to know they will not be shot. Some perceive that it is becoming more commonplace, for the sake of safety, to field dress large game in pairs, with one person attending to the game while the other hunter stands on the lookout for approaching bears that may attempt to take the game. Among participants who advocated for a hunting season on grizzlies, some of them were quick to point out that they do not want grizzlies to be eradicated; rather, they want the population to be thinned and for the bears to become “educated” to the reality that they can be hunted—it was thought that a hunting season for grizzly bears would help to minimize aggressive behavior from bears.

You see in the news all the time [how] they've got a problem bear they relocate it and it keeps coming back, [so] they finally put it down. —Laramie resident

It's been working pretty well [management by Game and Fish].... The bear, if he's attacking private property, then the owner of the property has the right to defend himself. —Laramie resident

The grizzlies kill all those calves. They'll follow a pregnant mother down. When the cow has the calf, the grizzly comes and takes the calf. They may be the most damaging, at least, as the wolf. —Casper resident

If you do go out there [bear hunting], you need to go with someone that's going to walk back-to-back with you on any trail, because those bears will run for the gut pile after they hear the gun go off. —Casper resident

There's no way we're going to hunt them this year, but bears are going to have to be hunted. They have populated to the point that, if you don't hunt them [they'll destroy livestock and wildlife] populations. —Casper resident

I think there are enough bears out there now that... they're really accelerating their numbers each year. —Casper resident

I think the bears definitely should be a certain season. The wolves I think definitely should be [considered as] varmints.... Once they step their foot out of the park, I think they should be open game, year round.... I lived in Cody when they were reintroduced. It was not a good idea. It was scary. —Sheridan resident

I'd love to see a hunting season on grizzlies, not to kill all the grizzlies, but to also educate those grizzlies.... The Wyoming grizzly bear is a lot more predacious because they can be hunted [elsewhere]. Now, if you shoot something in grizzly country, it's like a dinner bell for grizzlies, because they know we can't do anything to them. —Sheridan resident

I think they should do exactly what they're planning to do: let us hunt them [grizzlies] in a managed fashion. —Worland resident

I totally agree with that. The state now has control over the grizzly bears, [so] they definitely need to thin some of those bears down in the western area. —Worland resident

It's been a long time coming with the grizzly bears, but it's high time [for them] to be hunted again, in a managed fashion—nobody wants to see them wiped out—but I do think they're getting so conditioned to hunting and the easy access to gut piles, that they're very dangerous in certain areas.... I know in some areas, if you're gutting an elk, one guy's gutting an elk and the other's standing watch [for bears]. So, it's time that they be hunted, just like the wolves, in a managed fashion—their numbers controlled. —Worland resident

I'd be okay with hunting permits for grizzlies, only in the areas where they put the bad bears—way far in the back—bears that have had issues with people. —Jackson resident

Not all wolves are going to be aggressive; not all bears in a neighborhood are going to be attacking.... If there's been a kill on livestock by a wolf, that wolf is trapped and killed. Grizzlies that are aggressive and hurt somebody—it's taken care of.... I'd rather see the wildlife managers addressing the problem of predators rather than have just a blanket [solution by allowing hunting of them]. —Jackson resident

If it's on a private ranch, that's one thing. But, a lot of where they want to control wolves is on public land, where the cattle are grazed. That's my land too, and I have much more interest in seeing wolves and bears there than I do in [seeing] some rancher's cattle there. —Jackson resident

I think it's hard, too, because where we live, compared to other places in Wyoming, we are pushing the boundaries with our sprawl and we're going into the habitats.... [Certain areas locally] are right where they're [wolves and bears] living.... I think that's something that you accept when you choose to purchase land here—understanding that you may start seeing more [when living in or around] those migratory patterns. —Jackson resident

8.8. OPINIONS ON WOLVES

Overall, focus group participants were concerned that wolves are destroying elk populations and altering their migration patterns; many participants said they opposed the reintroduction of wolves. A considerable number of participants noted that Wyoming's wolf reintroduction had involved a larger, more aggressive, non-native species—this was mentioned in contrast to the species of wolf that had apparently originally lived in Wyoming.

Many focus group participants were in support of a hunting season for wolves or a blanket shoot-on-sight policy across the state. As mentioned earlier, there were some in the Jackson focus group who took issue with the concept of killing wolves indiscriminately as a management strategy. One Jackson participant stated that he would like to see wolves on public land; this participant further suggested that this view was just as legitimate as the view of another citizen who desires that wolves be shot on public land.

Overall, there seemed to be greater animosity toward wolves than toward grizzly bears. Grizzly bears, while considered to be a threat to hunters and some wildlife populations, were perceived as “belonging” to Wyoming, whereas the species of wolf that has been introduced to Wyoming is usually viewed as nonnative and unwelcome.

All those wolves that they transplanted in Yellowstone, they didn't stay put. —Laramie resident

Around here, it's not an issue. There's a lot of really fired up people in my hometown in Lander. Personally, you get into politics here, sadly, but it bugs me that people are so fired up and want to kill them all. Granted, I don't live there and I'm not a rancher.... I would be on the side of... reintroducing and enjoying the wildlife. I know that's one-half of Wyoming. —Laramie resident

I think they should be introduced; I would love to see a wolf in the wild. I'm not a huge fan of looking at animals in the zoo; I love seeing them in nature. —Laramie resident

The wolf issue is probably the most serious issue we have right now. I know ranchers that have lost a lot of livestock to wolves. I spent 5 years in the northwest territory in Canada. The wolves up there are by no means an endangered species.... They are horrible creatures. —Casper resident

The introduction of the wolf [in] this area is a wolf that was bred and raised in the northern area where animals are larger. So, you bring back a breed of wolf to an area where the game is smaller—our moose and elk [aren't] as big—and they are just ravaging and moving on to larger animals such as cows. They're bred to be more aggressive, so they go after a larger game animal. —Casper resident

The hunting season is excellent. Keeping the hunting season going is required, and out of the hunt areas and out of the park, like he said, kill them [wolves]. They're a dangerous animal, too, to ranchers at least. —Casper resident

I think on the wolves, they had good intentions, but they went about it all wrong. First off, the kind of wolf that they put in the park isn't the kind of wolf that was here [previously]. We had a... southern, more docile, way less aggressive [wolf]. This north face Alaska wolf is a killing machine.... I haven't seen a wolf yet that's under 90 pounds. —Sheridan resident

Wolves, they're a nuisance. I think they should be shot on sight. I really don't have an opinion on grizzlies; I've never had to deal with them. —Sheridan resident

I would have been okay, if they were going to reintroduce them [wolves], to reintroduce the species that was [originally] here. —Sheridan resident

On the Southern Bighorn, the wolves were chasing the elk around. By the end of the season, there were no elk left, because the wolves were chasing them around. —Worland resident

I think it's a good plan, if they're [wolves] going to range further out [of Yellowstone] where there's more livestock, they should be able to be shot on site. You shouldn't have to call anybody or track anybody if they're preying on your cattle. You should be able to treat them just like coyotes. —Worland resident

If anything, we should be pushing people to be doing things on their property to not draw those animals to their property, like feeding elk on their property, having proper trash [maintenance]. —Jackson resident

Not all wolves are going to be aggressive; not all bears in a neighborhood are going to be attacking.... If there's been a kill on livestock by a wolf, that wolf is trapped and killed. Grizzlies that are aggressive and hurt somebody—it's taken care of.... I'd rather see the wildlife managers addressing the problem of predators rather than have just a blanket [solution by allowing hunting of them]. —Jackson resident

Wolves are a pack. So, if the hunter does get a tag and a wolf is killed, they could be changing the whole dynamic of the pack. That could go a good way or a bad way. Whereas, grizzlies are more territorial: they're lonely creatures. —Jackson resident

As much as I don't think we should be licensing hunts for wolves or grizzlies, I have less issue with hunting wolves than I do with the rest of the state, which is shoot-on-sight and treat them as vermin. I think that's despicable, that our state has gone that direction after reintroducing them and then protecting them for so many years, and now we're "shoot on sight" in 90 percent of the state. —Jackson resident

If it's on a private ranch, that's one thing. But, a lot of where they want to control wolves is on public land, where the cattle are grazed. That's my land too, and I have much more interest in seeing wolves and bears there than I do in [seeing] some rancher's cattle there. —Jackson resident

8.9. OPINIONS ON HUNTING

A major issue in the discussion about hunting had to do with the ratio of resident to nonresident hunting tags that are issued by Game and Fish. Generally, focus group participants recommended either maintaining or decreasing the number of nonresident tags that are issued. It was also observed that, as an agency, Game and Fish is likely heavily reliant upon nonresident tags—this recognition of nonresident tags as an important agency funding mechanism was the reason that some participants were wary about calling for a decrease in nonresident tag sales. On this topic, many participants expressed a desire for Game and Fish to secure as much funding as possible in order to be maximally effective in its management duties.

Another hunting issue concerned the recruitment of new audiences into hunting: across focus groups, there was discussion about ways to further engage both women and youth in hunting.

Don't change the amount of out-of-staters we get.... Don't increase it. —Casper resident

To me, it makes sense that out-of-stater hunt [fees] should be substantially higher, since that's a bigger prize to catch. So, it makes sense that people in state could have first go at it.... With animals like wolves, where populations have become an issue, I can see where in-state and out-of-state prices would be a lot closer together. Cheaper licenses would be a good way to manage game populations. —Casper resident

I think that [Game and Fish] needs to really start looking at the next generation of hunters, male and female. We have way too few female hunters at this point.... A viable option might be to try to get [younger people] out into the field [with a] mentor. —Worland resident

I think there's a vast untapped market as far as promoting women in hunting, especially younger women. That might be a market that they might want to tap into a little bit more.... We [residents] probably should have preference over the out-of-staters. If they're hurting for funds, maybe they should raise the out-of-state fees.... It's not like those people coming here [to hunt from out of state] are lacking in funds. But I think those in state should have more tags allotted to them than the out-of-staters. —Worland resident

We feel like the out-of-staters pay for a large amount of our Wyoming Game and Fish money and also contribute to our economy—hotels, food, gas. We feel like, as Wyoming residents, we have a lot of opportunity, so the out-of-staters contribute financially to our access and our opportunities in Wyoming. —Worland resident

[At a particular recent event,] it seemed like 70 percent to 90 percent of the hunters were from out of state.... It seems to me like there's an inordinate number of out-of-state permits. —Worland resident

Perhaps maybe a media campaign to promote fair chase, ethical hunting, etc. —Worland resident

Do you know what the percentage is, of one to the other [resident to nonresident hunters]? —Jackson resident

I'd be curious to know what percentage of the revenue that 20 percent of out-of-state licenses represents. Because if it is necessary to keep the price down for people locally, to have it be so expensive for out-of-state, then if they're [Game and Fish] really relying on that 20 percent to bring in a lot of the revenue for Fish and Game [sic], then I think it's probably worth it to charge people more who don't live here. —Jackson resident

They're not coming for the meat; they have the money to spend for fun. And maybe we can use the money to build infrastructure or pay for the Fish and Game wildlife rangers and hire more [of them]. If you are going to kill five animals, why not jack up the price and use [it] to protect the environment? —Jackson resident

Many of these questions and comments are resting on a foundation, so I want to address that in the form of a question. Do the Wyoming hunters feel as if there's not enough [resident tags] to go around? —Jackson resident

This year, a lot of them probably did [feel that way]. I heard a lot of people that usually get elk [tags] didn't this year. —Jackson resident

There have been a couple of really bad mortality years, so they adjust the numbers [of tags available] for that. I want to say I've heard about 50 percent. Incredible. So, if that happens, they're going to reduce the number of tags for next year. —Jackson resident

They found a wolf cave in a lot of those areas. Animals are pretty smart and are not going to hang around an area where they're going to be high prey. A lot of the population of the elk has moved, unfortunately. —Jackson resident

8.10. OPINIONS ON POACHING

The most commonly suggested method of discouraging poaching was to increase fines (many participants thought that existing penalties for poaching needed to be steeper to effectively deter people from poaching). In particular, some participants indicated that fines for poaching should considerably exceed the sum of fees associated with hunting. One individual from Casper suggested basing poaching fines on the market value of the trophy animal that was poached. Overall, those who offered comments on poaching tended to agree that current fines are not steep enough to effectively deter poachers. Additionally, a number of participants commented that the current Game and Fish game warden presence in the field is insufficient for discouraging poachers. Thus, steeper monetary penalties were viewed as a good alternative to a more ubiquitous law enforcement presence.

It's [poaching] hard to regulate; it's near impossible to regulate. Look at the size of Wyoming. I guarantee you, one out of 10 people in Wyoming is probably a poacher: one in 20 at a minimum. It's as simple as you get those people that live in the mountains... [doing] subsistence poaching. There's a little bit more leeway with that than with trophy poaching. —Casper resident

A couple of people have mentioned the cost for poaching—it's not [high] enough. The fines need to go way up. You have to deter people. If they came here from out of state [to hunt], they probably have plenty more than that little dribble of \$500 or \$5,000—that doesn't mean anything to them. They'll poach it. —Casper resident

If your license costs a lot of money and then the fine for poaching is only a little bit more than that, it's like, "I could either buy a license for \$1,000 or possibly get a poaching fine for a little bit more if I get caught." It wouldn't be that big of a difference to them. —Casper resident

He said that a big elk is worth \$100,000 on the market. What you do is make a fine on the market value of the trophy [that's been poached]. —Casper resident

There are just not enough game wardens to keep a good hand on poaching. They cracked down on it, and they've got that poaching hotline, but there just isn't enough officers to keep an eye on everything.... The hotline does help. —Worland resident

The rules are set in place for a reason and they should be across the board. What's good for one person is good for all.... Hunting up here on the mountain... I like to think that we pretty much police ourselves.... I don't have a problem calling and reporting the wrongdoing.... If it's a blatant issue, I don't have a problem calling Game and Fish [and reporting it], and following it up. But I also have to agree that the number of out-of-staters that are hunting [is creating] pure congestion.... I'm all for the fair chase, simply because I've been called one too many times by individuals who own and operate places (say) around Texas and offer doing a hunt.... I'm not going to go sit in a blind and you chase animals to me. That's not considered hunting to me. —Worland resident

As far as poaching goes, cops can't be everywhere at all times. More crimes get solved by a vigilant citizen who sees it, reports it, and it's followed up on. Some of the Game and Fish investigations take a long time.... Sometimes rewards are an incentive to report things. I think citizens actually do solve more crimes by reporting what they see, because you just can't have a cop on every corner. —Worland resident

8.11. OPINIONS ON AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Many focus group participants called for more education of the general public concerning aquatic invasive species, including the species categorized as invasive, what they look like, how to prevent their spread, and how they can negatively affect Wyoming waters. Along with more education, some participants suggested a streamlining of the process to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species: it was recommended that people be able to obtain an aquatic invasive species sticker, have a vessel checked, and obtain educational material in a single location.

Overall, many participants seemed aware of the zebra mussel and Game and Fish efforts to prevent its spread in Wyoming. Some focus group participants perceived there to be no zebra mussel presence at all in the entire state. Overall, focus group participants seemed to think that Game and Fish is doing a good job preventing zebra mussels from entering the state. Participants tended not to be as knowledgeable about other examples of aquatic invasive species; in general, it was thought that it would be greatly difficult for Game and Fish to eradicate a species that has already found its way into Wyoming waters.

I think the boats that are coming in-state, they should put them through a wash: like a carwash for boats. —Laramie resident

It seems very difficult to rid a lake of an invasive species. —Laramie resident

I guess you focus your efforts on prevention. —Laramie resident

They [zebra mussels] get into a body of water and just take over everything, choke everything, eat everything.... They're trying to keep them out. —Laramie resident

Last I heard, we didn't have any [zebra mussels] in Wyoming.... If you had a bunch of people at the borders checking every type of watercraft that came through.... That's a huge amount of money. —Laramie resident

They only inspect boats that have been sitting in the waters as they travel through the state. But then there's things like four-wheelers... that are in standing water that can collect the same small specimens and track them from area to area and spread them. They don't inspect any of that.... It's not just boats that can spread it. —Casper resident

Maybe it's education, too. If people knew it [aquatic invasive species] was a problem. —Casper resident

There's still zero [zebra] mussels in our state. They're in every single bordering state, which is not a great thing, because they'll probably eventually be here, but whatever they're [Game and Fish] doing, they must be doing a pretty good job of it, because there's still zero. —Sheridan resident

When you stop at their check points, it's fast. Done—on with your day. —Sheridan resident

They do a good job and it's [the check station] efficient, it sounds like. —Sheridan resident

I think it would make sense to [inspect] any boating coming from out of state at the border. Once they get in, you have no idea where they're going to go. There's not a Game and Fish officer at every single lake or body of water, nor could there be.... If you're going to be effective at all [to prevent aquatic invasive species] from getting into our waters, that would be the best way to do it. —Worland resident

Media campaigns to increase awareness of the issue, the consequences, the dangers. When we have to renew our license for our boat, we get a mussel pamphlet with that renewal. On the signs, maybe [include] some quick bullet points that people see, maybe when the wardens do the quick boat checks—just educating people as they go through. —Worland resident

Who introduced lake trout to Jackson Lake? Was it the state or just [a person]? It does matter if the topic of conversation is are we going to trust the state to make the right decisions if it was the state in fact that screwed this up. It would be important to know.

—Jackson resident

One of the big things now is, if you catch a lake trout, you do not release it.... I read a story that in Yellowstone, they go out and net them. I think the state is doing the best they can to kill [them] off. It's an uphill battle. I don't know for sure if they're working [on it] as hard as they can. Do they actually encourage people to catch them and kill them?

—Jackson resident

I wish they had more resources to do more prevention as opposed to already having it [lake trout]. Let's keep the things that we don't have at bay. I get a little confused when I get my kayak permit. There are two different ones you need from two different places.... I wish they could have more people enforcing, being at the boat launches and other places, to keep some of that at bay.

—Jackson resident

Part of [the confusion] is it's more than one agency involved. It's Game and Fish, Park Service with the permits.... So, it's different agencies.

—Jackson resident

It would be nice to have an agency center where you could get everything there.... Maybe one agency needs to do both: check your boat and sell a sticker all at the same time.

—Jackson resident

I wish there could be a way where you could only have one sticker, and checkpoints that are closer to boat ramps, and more people helping with prevention.

—Jackson resident

I heard they put the lake trout in to help remove scum off the bottom. Now, we have a problem with the lake trout. So, introducing something else to get rid of the lake trout—this is almost insanity, doing the same thing over and over again.

—Jackson resident

Do people even understand what an “invasive species” is—what that definition really means?

—Jackson resident

Maybe people need to watch films before they put their kayak in the lake, or before they get their aquatic invasive species sticker.... Why can't you take your aquatic invasive species sticker, micro-chip it, and then catch people if they don't stop for inspection? We don't see Game and Fish using that kind of technology.

—Jackson resident

It'd be awesome if, at my water check [station], I could slide my card and pay for my sticker. Maybe using some modern technology to make the process a little faster for the person.

—Jackson resident

Education's definitely a key thing.... I'm clueless, to be honest, of what you all are talking about. I rarely pick up a newspaper.... Doing stuff like this does get me more motivated to learn, but it is easier when it's put in your face rather than [seeking] it out.... I do care, but I don't really know what the big problem is.... I'm a person that needs [to have the issue] in my face, and when it is, I do care. If it's not there, I don't know what to care about. —Jackson resident

8.12. OPINIONS ON WATER QUALITY

Many participants seemed satisfied with the water quality in Wyoming. There was some discussion among participants about the danger of landowners allowing cattle to graze near water sources, although few people offered potential solutions to this issue. In general, most sentiments toward water quality were favorable or neutral.

I don't know if there's anything they [Game and Fish] really can do [for water quality]; water's water. —Laramie resident

We'd have to get rid of every cow in the state, and that's not going to happen. —Laramie resident

To clean up water, you'd have to change the industries across the county. So, I don't know if it's a lost cause, but it sure seems like it. —Laramie resident

I'm not super dissatisfied with water quality.... It's a case where if they [Game and Fish] are doing something [to improve water quality], I'm ignorant of it. It seems to be working. —Laramie resident

It's Wyoming. Used to be, you could go anywhere in the mountains and be fairly confident that you could drink the water. You'd better not now. —Casper resident

I don't even know how you get rid of Giardia. I think you're stuck with it. —Casper resident

I think our water's actually pretty dang clean for the most part. Giardia's an issue. —Casper resident

All things considered, we do have pretty clean water, although [in] some of the mountain areas, the ranchers let their livestock run on public land, sometimes they let too many animals loose in water areas. Cows don't care where they go, and you know that's contaminating the water. —Casper resident

Game and Fish might be able to manage the waters a little bit, but I think that's also your legislators. —Casper resident

The water is pretty good quality, so I don't know. —Sheridan resident

It might depend on the years; if the water levels are lower, it [water quality] might be different. —Sheridan resident

We're pretty lucky, as far as water quality, right next to the mountain. It isn't much of an issue. —Sheridan resident

As soon as I got into Montana, there was a mandatory inspection of all watercraft. I think that's a good idea. —Worland resident

8.13. IMPORTANCE-PERFORMANCE RATIOS

Some focus groups were asked to discuss why individuals surveyed in the Wyoming general population survey rated the importance of various issues higher than they rated Game and Fish performance in those areas. Representative comments on those topics have been included below to provide insight into additional issues besides those primarily discussed across the focus groups.

COMMENTS ON MANAGING AND MAINTAINING WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT AREAS

That runs back into two subjects: the game wardens and the people that go to those areas. You run into those people, and it could be as simple as trash. People just don't care. That's where a lot of problems comes. —Casper resident

I know they've done some things like controlled burns and logging, getting rid of junipers and sage brush.... So, I know they keep doing things like that. The problem is that it's expensive. —Casper resident

They say that wind farms are the investment of our future.... But where's this coming in with [wildlife]? Animals are being killed; it's not just eagles and hawks, but it's bats. —Casper resident

Right now, more people are employed in windmills than in coal, uranium, and oil combined. —Casper resident

I bet you they'd make a whole lot more energy and destroy a whole less of everything if they'd go solar instead of go 150 feet high [with windmills].... If you want renewable, go solar. —Casper resident

I would say that partnering with the other groups is a big part of it. —Sheridan resident

I think a lot of those hunter management areas are [a lot of] private land... they have to get permission slips [for hunters].... The public probably wants to get into these hunter management areas.... I think they're [Game and Fish] doing a fine job with these hunter management areas, especially since it isn't their land—they're just trying to work with these landowners. —Sheridan resident

I'm not aware of any problems of how the wildlife management areas have been handled. —Worland resident

I guess I would have to have a little more information on what all is entailed in the management and maintenance of these wildlife habitat management areas to comment on how well they're doing that job. —Worland resident

COMMENTS ON MANAGING SPECIES THAT ARE HUNTED

I think they ought to put elk on the preference points, like they do moose. I'd really like to get one more big bull elk.... Some people in some of the wildlife areas think they let way too many permits for the number of animals. Certain areas, you just know there aren't that many animals [on that land]. You've got to balance making the money [with reasonable herd numbers]. —Casper resident

One rancher [I know] did his own personal survey and found that the more coyotes he killed, the more coyote babies seemed to be born. The more seasons he couldn't stay on them as much, they quit having so many babies. [It's] natural selection. It's just like the wolves. There's going to be as many of them as they can put out, and what we do with them isn't going to change it a dad-gum bit. —Casper resident

Can't let too many people in one area; there won't be anything left. So many tags per each area. —Sheridan resident

It seems that the hunting areas get a lot of attention by the Game and Fish in my opinion. That's a lot of their income, of course. So, I think they probably handle that pretty good. —Worland resident

I don't know if they [Game and Fish] do as good a job [managing hunted species] as they used to. We used to see planes flying over all the time... counting elk and basing their hunting numbers on the number of elk.... We don't see any of that anymore. I don't know how you judge how many elk should be taken from an area if you don't know those things. —Worland resident

I know they fly to check the elk and a few others every fall or after the first of the year. They're out counting deer in the areas in the fall too. I figure they do a pretty good job of it. —Worland resident

COMMENTS ON MANAGING SPECIES THAT ARE NOT HUNTED, INCLUDING SPECIES THAT ARE THREATENED, ENDANGERED, OR SENSITIVE

Like the black-footed ferret? —Casper resident

If you had a limited amount of money... would black-footed ferrets really be where you want to spend millions of dollars? —Casper resident

When you find them [nongame species] where they are and they're doing well, just leave them alone. —Casper resident

[It's] just like the environmentalists telling us we can't drill in the national forest, because it'll interfere with the wildlife. Really? Watch them all graze right next to the [drilling equipment]. Come on, guys.... They only have so much money, and until we can find a way we can fund them, there's going to be not a lot they can do with the nongame species. —Casper resident

Part of it's incidental, don't you think? If they protect the moose, sheep, or deer habitat, the other part of the ecosystem benefits. It's a secondary result, which I think is fine.

—Casper resident

That's, I think, where a lot of the politics is involved. They [Game and Fish] do everything they can, probably, within their power, to make sure that they manage the black-footed ferret, the Wyoming toad, the Peregrine falcon. I think they do a pretty good job because, I think, that might be a political push on those species. The Wyoming people probably value the elk, the deer, the antelope, the bear, the mountain lion more than the black-footed ferret, the Wyoming toad—those things that Game and Fish probably don't need to spend as much time on. Whereas the Game and Fish says, "They're all our resources, whether it brings money or not." —Sheridan resident

As a species management organization, that's their [Game and Fish] job.... Perhaps they [people] get irritated by the amount of time they're spending managing these species.

—Sheridan resident

They [Game and Fish] probably don't give as much attention to the nongame species. I'm sure there's people that bird watch or whatever. I'm sure they just don't get as much attention. The Game and Fish get a lot of complaints, I'm sure, about hunting.

—Worland resident

They [Game and Fish] don't pay as much attention to it [managing nongame species] and nobody complains. —Worland resident

COMMENTS ON IMPROVING AND MAINTAINING QUALITY FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITATS

With the fishing, I think a lot of the professionals in the fishing industry and maybe a lot of local fishermen feel like Game and Fish puts a lot of their emphasis on the hunting aspect of it, versus the fishing. I've fished my entire life and I may have been checked once, maybe twice.... Wyoming Game and Fish needs to work well with BLM.... The Game and Fish doesn't allow a lot of these fishing companies to have a voice.... [My brother] would like to see them take a little more advice from those that are in it [fisheries] every day. —Sheridan resident

I think this question goes along with the question [about needing to] have enough information to make an informed judgment about that. —Worland resident

I don't think it's a specific enough question. It's a pretty broad question. —Worland resident

I agree with both of them: maybe not enough information and maybe narrow down the scope of the question to get some better answers. —Worland resident

COMMENTS ON PROTECTING WYOMING WATERS FROM AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

No idea why [the perceptions do not match]. —Sheridan resident

Lack of information on the public's part again. —Sheridan resident

I think maybe they couldn't put their boat in the water. —Sheridan resident

They think they're wasting a lot of money and effort and time [and] it's probably already here; it's just so minute. How many miles of rivers and lakes that cannot be probed? You won't know until the population [of zebra mussels] is so heavy it won't be worth stopping.... I would agree that they have definitely done above what I would expect them to do. With the effort that they're putting out, they're keeping them from coming in on the boats. We're surrounded by states that's got them [zebra mussels]. But then [if] we get them, whose fault is it? —Sheridan resident

The perception is we're just spending too much time and money on it. —Sheridan resident

COMMENTS ON EVALUATING PROJECTS ON FEDERAL LAND TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO WILDLIFE

I don't think they can do much about it.... The Forest Service has all these antiquated rules. They will not recognize wildlife as any priority on their land. I think they do a little bit, maybe, for the bighorn sheep for grazing. But it's the only exception.... You don't really work with them. They don't really care what you think [as a landowner], and they don't care about the elk, the deer. They make me put cows on [my] Forest Service allotment, and I don't want to. But I have no choice. The BLM's different, because it's a lease, not a permit.... I've never had a problem with them [BLM] or the state, but the Forest Service don't care. So, evaluating stuff on that—what are you going to do about it? —Casper resident

How much does the Game and Fish get support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? They don't! And those two should be on the same page. —Casper resident

I think [it's] the politics of dealing with the federal government, because they've got the same problem the rest of us do. —Casper resident

The federal government doesn't live here; they don't understand the various issues [of being in Wyoming]. —Casper resident

I've dealt with them [federal government], and I [think it's] a problem. All this forest you can't get to—access—it's a problem. They're blocking it off, every day, even more. —Casper resident

Every ridge, every valley, every direction you want to go, there's a road. It was the gas guys; they were after that gas and nothing was going to stop them.... The land's ruined; it's devastated. That should have been something that the Game and Fish [addressed]. They should have a say in that... even though it's private property.... Also, that game is ours [not just the landowner's] and it's theirs [Game and Fish] to manage for us.... They work for us; they're managing for us and there should be accountability. —Sheridan resident

Our oil and gas and coal industries in Wyoming has a lot of effect on the land.... About 5 years ago wind energy became huge.... They [Game and Fish] put together a task force and did a pretty good job of stepping in and [addressing issues]... and they ended up rerouting it to a different spot. —Sheridan resident

8.14. OPINIONS ON GAME AND FISH AUTONOMY AND RELATIONSHIPS TO CONSTITUENCIES AND LEGISLATURE

Some focus group participants emphasized the need for better partnerships between Game and Fish and other federal agencies like the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Participants viewed such partnerships as potentially benefiting Wyoming residents in terms of access, education, wildlife management, and law enforcement. Many focus group participants seemed to have a positive impression of Game and Fish and the quality of the work the agency carries out; participants were also supportive of the agency's balance of various constituents and groups of influence, especially given the limited resources—monetary and otherwise—with which Game and Fish is perceived to be operating. It is likely that participants' emphasis on the need for Game and Fish to develop better relationships with federal agencies is motivated by the perception that such relationships would lessen the management burden on Game and Fish.

Focus group participants seemed uncertain as to the extent that politics factors into Game and Fish decision-making. A number of participants noted their uncertainty by stating that they would need more information about Game and Fish political involvement to provide an informed comment (one participant indicated that she would require a more specific definition of what is meant by “politics” in the context of the focus group discussion). Regardless, participants implied multiple times throughout the discussions that political influence exerted over Game and Fish on the part of another agency, individual, or group would not be beneficial either to Game and Fish or to the groups it serves—particularly residents and Wyoming fish and wildlife.

COMMENTS ON GAME AND FISH RELATIONSHIPS TO ITS CONSTITUENCIES

I think, for the money they have, they do a pretty good job. —Laramie resident

All 500,000 [residents] should be happy in Wyoming. That's a lot of land for half a million people. —Laramie resident

Considering what they've [Game and Fish] got to work with and how much [land] they've got to cover, overall, they're making pretty efficient use of the resources they've got. They're doing the best they can. Sometimes they can't do better because their hands are tied. —Laramie participant

I don't think they're [consumptive versus non-consumptive outdoor recreation] mutually exclusive. I think they definitely complement each other as opposed to being separate activities. I think they [Game and Fish] can manage them together; I don't think this should be an either-or proposition. —Laramie resident

I've been to a couple of public forums. I don't know what came after the fact... but they certainly listened to everybody and ran the meeting well.... One was [about] wolves back in the day. —Laramie participant

I would like to see the Game and Fish get money to operate other than through licenses.... On Interstate 80, on any given time of the day or night, there are 5,000 trucks on that highway. They've been talking about putting a third lane on Interstate 80. Why don't we charge those truckers about 5 or 10 bucks to cross the state of Wyoming on that highway? —Casper resident

[Game and Fish should] do like everybody else—cut [their] costs. —Casper participant

If you ask somebody that's Trout Unlimited, they're going to complain about [there being] not enough trout in the state. If you ask somebody from Walleye Unlimited, there won't be enough walleye.... They [Game and Fish] have to balance everything. —Casper participant

If you do call out to Game and Fish with a question, you're going to get passed around to 12 different people and still never get an answer. —Casper participant

Back east, if they come in and claim a damage, and you have 35,000 acres and the deer are just wiping out my haystacks, they'll pay you for your damage. But then, they also expect you to let hunters on there.... Part of the problem is, there's so much land that's private that that really makes it tough because we have x amount of hunters [and] x amount of open property.... [Hunters] were getting hammered on this access [issue]. If they went to every public piece of property in the state of Wyoming... [and allowed] eminent domain... we're going to be able to get to it [public land] legally. They're starting to do that, because they're paying [landowners] for property. Them [Game and Fish] working with the bigger landowners is giving the public what they want. —Sheridan resident

Again, the ratio of in-state opposed to out-of-state hunters have dropped dramatically. There is a large amount of potential hunters [young hunters] that I don't know I would trust with a gun.... And there's young women. We used to have a safety day and Game and Fish was there. Maybe that's another approach where you can start working on a mentoring program. —Worland resident

I haven't heard any news about any groups being underserved. —Worland participant

I agree with that. They have public meeting that we have gone to. I agree that there aren't always a lot of people that go to them. People are real quick to complain, but they don't want to show up for the meetings and tell their opinion. —Worland participant

I think the Wyoming Game and Fish is doing a wonderful job of trying to balance their services and trying to serve every need equally. —Worland resident

I've had nothing but good experiences with [Game and Fish].... They've been very up front with us and I think they do a good job with that part of it at least.... I think they need more game wardens to help. —Worland resident

COMMENTS ON THE INFLUENCE OF LANDOWNERS ON GAME AND FISH

I don't think they [landowners] should have any more [influence on Game and Fish] than I do. —Laramie participant

When there's money involved in lease payments, I'm sure that comes into play. I don't know how Game and Fish deals with that. There's still money exchanging hands. —Laramie participant

I think the Game and Fish tries to work with ranchers very well.... I would say [the influence is positive].... You have so much private land and private landowners think they will outfit and make that money [by restricting] access to some of those areas... that's also the landowner's right to do that. —Sheridan participant

Like what I was saying earlier, people don't typically have a concern unless it affects them directly. When sheep are killed on their property, then it becomes an issue, and that's when they contact Game and Fish. I think that the people that own the land are the ones that have issues. They're going to be more likely to want to get somebody involved. —Worland resident

I think [this] goes back to the question of access. They [Game and Fish] have a lot of contact with the landowners, and I think they do a good job with it. If you are having problems, then they're facilitating... a walk-in area, or [emphasizing] open this up to more hunting to ease [landowners'] overgrazing and such of the wildlife on their land.... Some of these larger ranches don't allow any hunting whatsoever, but they still want to be paid for the damages that the livestock do. Overall, the Game and Fish are probably doing a fairly good job of trying to balance the damage caused by the wildlife on private property with getting hunters access to harvest some of those animals to ease that burden on the landowner. I really don't know if in fact they [landowners] are exerting greater influence on the Game and Fish than they should. I really couldn't say. —Worland resident

COMMENTS ON THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICS ON GAME AND FISH

[Politics] is going to have to [influence Game and Fish]. It's where their [Game and Fish] funding comes from—it comes from the top. —Laramie participant

I don't know that Game and Fish is subsidized by the state at all. It's all license fees. —Laramie participant

I think politics does play a role, and I would say it's not just [in] Wyoming. Any more, just about everything you get into has got something [political]. —Sheridan participant

I am not aware of how politics play a part. —Worland resident

The Wyoming Game and Fish tries to stay pretty apolitical and science-based with their decision-making. —Worland participant

I would have to have a little more information on how they define politics to have a comment one way or another. They are a state-funded agency... but again, without knowing a little bit more about how they're defining politics, I really can't comment on that [how much politics is influencing the work of Game and Fish]. —Worland resident

I agree with the gentleman that said, politically... this state is kind of one-sided. But, how it enters Game and Fish I'm not really aware of, to tell you the truth. [Politics] seems to get into everything. —Worland participant

It would behoove the Wyoming Game and Fish to be objective and use data to support their decisions, rather than politics, because in this state it could be so [politically] one-sided, it would be un-objective to me [for them to be influenced by politics]. —Worland resident

8.15. OPINIONS ON GAME AND FISH FUNDING

Many focus group participants suggested that Game and Fish should be looking for additional funding sources on an ongoing basis. Some qualified this by indicating that they do not want the federal government to have more control over Game and Fish and its decision-making. The discussions suggest that many people support additional funding sources for the agency out of a desire to improve wildlife management efforts across the state. A few participants even indicated that they would be willing to pay additional or slightly higher fees if they knew such fee increases would go toward the Game and Fish budget.

In connection to funding, there were a few focus group participants who indicated the need for more communication from Game and Fish regarding regulatory and policy decisions that seem to conflict with the preferences expressed in public meetings and other venues for public input. The underlying issue seemed to be one of accountability—focus group participants requested more details as to why regulatory and policy decisions are made, on the basis that Game and Fish is presumably “working” for the residents of Wyoming (i.e., being funded by residents). Overall, since it is observed to be public knowledge, there was not much emphasis on the need for Game and Fish to report annual expenditure details. Rather, more emphasis was placed on the agency’s ability to proactively communicate with Wyoming residents—especially hunters and anglers—about why certain management decisions are made. Despite interest in additional funding for the agency, focus group participants communicated generally positive impressions of the current job that Game and Fish is doing to manage wildlife in Wyoming.

So that's why any hunter or angler should have as much right to say what they want to Wyoming Game and Fish as any landowner. Because they're basically their employers. —Laramie resident

[After explaining Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson] I had no idea that federal [excise] tax was there. —Laramie resident

Which is the unfortunate reason that politicians are going to be involved. —Laramie resident

Yeah [Game and Fish should do more to educate the public about their funding situation]. —Laramie resident

Maybe if people are [more] aware of that, it will raise awareness of how to utilize the resources available to them [the public] through them [Game and Fish]. —Laramie resident

Does it matter? We already have a pretty positive view of Game and Fish. It's cool that they're funded that way—makes you feel better about the state budget. —Laramie resident

I would be okay with a minor increase in use fees or those types of things, provided that I knew it was at least going to be used in the state. —Laramie resident

Where are they going to look for it [extra funding]? —Laramie resident

I think they're doing pretty well.... Fishing, hunting—those are the things they primarily look over. Why not have those be the primary sources of financial support? —Laramie resident

I wouldn't mind paying a tax if I knew where it was going and it was something—an issue—that I cared about. I wouldn't mind. —Laramie resident

I think [Game and Fish] should always be looking for funding opportunities. —Laramie resident

A lot of the complaints come from non-hunters and non-fishers. The management of our game species is so important. It would not be out there for people to view—photographers, wildlife viewers, the general public—if it wasn't for the hunting and fishing people. So it'd be good to educate them [the general population in Wyoming], I suppose. —Sheridan resident

It comes down to the transparency thing again—letting us know what you're doing and why and where. I think people should know that. —Sheridan resident

This is the way they've [Game and Fish] always done it— have a public meeting and then do this. I think the public just wants to know [why certain decisions are made]. —Sheridan resident

I think explaining the management [of] wildlife is important. —Sheridan resident

They used to have a program where they would turn around and put all the game that was harvested illegally—that was captured by the Game and Fish Department—up for auction. All that money used to go to the Game and Fish program.... They did away with that program about 5 years ago. All that [illegal] game that is captured today is incinerated.... It seems like, to me, that is a waste. If they're going to look for other funding, rather than going to the federal government, I would almost rather see them do that [use illegal game as a funding source]. —Sheridan resident

I do not want them [Game and Fish] to go take it [funding] from somewhere else, because obviously everybody's fighting for money. They [Game and Fish] already do a pretty good job from the money they get.... [Fishing guides] should have to be licensed and have to pay a fee to be a guide. They're making money on our waters and fisheries.... Wyoming is the only state in the nation that does not do that. —Sheridan resident

I would think it would be very obvious that [Game and Fish funding comes from fishing and hunting]. It surprises me that under 50 percent knew that. That blows me away. That's one reason that they have a lot of nonresident permits, because that's where they get the big bucks. It's an expensive venture to manage the wildlife and the fisheries. —Worland resident

I agree with that.... It think if it's that important for you to know [Game and Fish funding sources and salaries], you're going to do the research to find out.... And it's public record, so you should be able to find that out. I'm not sure the average citizen really even cares. —Worland resident

Obviously, if there are other options for funding sources, they should try to pursue that. I don't know exactly what that would be, but I'd be all for it. —Worland resident

I agree with that. If there was some other funding they could come up with—I'm not sure what it'd be—the people that hunt and fish need to support their sport. That makes sense to me. —Worland resident

I think we'd all feel better if we know we could come up with different ways to fund things so they [Game and Fish] could do their job better. —Worland resident

We need to find as many revenue sources as possible in order to do what the Wyoming Game and Fish vision would be. —Worland resident

8.16. OPINIONS ON INFORMATION AND EDUCATION FROM GAME AND FISH

Across all focus groups and throughout most topics of conversation within each group, there was considerable emphasis on the need for Game and Fish to improve its communication regarding the range of management activities the agency provides for Wyoming; how residents can help to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in the state; and the Game and Fish budget, including how its revenue sources and spending priorities affect regulatory decisions. Specifically, there were many comments regarding how the agency may use education to increase community engagement throughout Wyoming (e.g., through schools, 4-H, Rotary Clubs, and other local programs).

Comments on the need for Game and Fish to improve communication variously addressed the importance of clear and concise hunting and fishing regulations; streamlined processes for obtaining the aquatic invasive species stickers, information, and checks; and more proactive explanations of policy and regulatory decisions that seem to contradict public preference. Many participants emphasized the need to expand hunter safety education, even for those populations whose members do not hunt—on this topic, some people reasoned that nearly every Wyoming household contains at least one firearm, and that “hunter safety equals gun safety.”

Focus group participants also commented on the need for Game and Fish to further integrate technology into its information dissemination, educational initiatives, and community engagement. In addition to suggesting the regular use of social media for promotion and education, focus group participants suggested including videos at checkpoints (and other pertinent locations) related to important management issues such as deterrence of aquatic invasive species and safe conduct around bears and other potentially aggressive species.

Also, some participants noted that simply providing information alone—especially related to hunting and outdoor skills—would not be sufficient. They claimed that Game and Fish also needs to provide opportunities for people to practice such skills by getting involved in related activities. An example was building a campfire: instruction alone is one thing, but to truly master the practice, one must head into the woods and actually build a fire at some point to gain the practical experience. As such, there were multiple suggestions for mentoring programs related to outdoor skills.

Throughout the group discussions, it was not uncommon for participants to refrain from offering a definitive stance or opinion on the basis that more information on the topic would be needed. This often resulted in requests for Game and Fish to provide more information on policy and regulatory decisions, and more agency-sponsored education on outdoor recreation, wildlife management, and similar subjects directed at the Wyoming general population.

COMMENTS ON INFORMATION

I think the communication part [is important]: who's responsible for this activity? Or, interagency [response] would be really nice... at least for the general issues like roads and phone numbers and [whom to] contact for specific [things]. —Laramie resident

On the regulations, it would be good to have a checklist: just the normal, basic things that you really need to know. —Laramie resident

Simple as radio shows. It could be a radio talk show, a commercial, a YouTube video on how to build a blind—little tiny things that tie right back into you guys [Game and Fish]. It's like a no-brainer thing. Do all these little tiny things. —Casper resident

Get on social media—burn it up. It's cheap. —Casper resident

I might suggest more advertising of [non-consumptive outdoor recreational activities]. Families with young people [are] trying to do more active things together. The more they know about that, [the better].... Education and awareness is just a big part of that.

—Sheridan resident

Do people even understand what an “invasive species” is—what that definition really means? —Jackson resident

Maybe people need to watch films before they put their kayak in the lake, or before they get their aquatic invasive species sticker.... Why can't you take your aquatic invasive species sticker, micro-chip it, and then catch people if they don't stop for inspection? We don't see Game and Fish using that kind of technology. —Jackson resident

If they're [Game and Fish] going to do it [advertising], please make it modern and in this century, so that people will want to look at it, instead of putting out an ad that looks like 1990 showed up again. Or, like a dumb video—like [with] a flip-phone in your video. —Jackson resident

[Put things out] on Twitter, Facebook, [other social media]. —Jackson resident

Small-town newspapers are hungry for copy, for material. Just give them an enticing topic and they will use it to fill the space. —Jackson resident

A paper picks up anything—they're always looking for things [to feature]. —Jackson resident

If we had a sign... at the front [of a check station, park entrance, or trail] that says, “Go to this app to see information.” You could have it and maybe have a little blurb about bears, wolves, fishing... a little app like that about what you should know when you fish, [etc.]. —Jackson resident

COMMENTS ON EDUCATION

From my standpoint, hunter safety education is really important because I would like to not get shot while I'm out. —Laramie resident

You have all these students from out of town who have no idea what the heck they're doing. They go up to the mountains and want to do a fire. Great! But you've got to know what you're doing first. You've got to have that water with you, just in case. If they don't know what they're doing, that's going to cause problems. —Laramie resident

I remember taking Hunter's Education as part of P.E. in junior high. It was just part of growing up in Wyoming.... From an education standpoint, that was huge.... There are many avenues [Game and Fish] could co-op with. —Laramie resident

Maybe map-reading [lessons]; they should teach [students] to read a map. —Laramie resident

I don't think it [hunter safety] is required in the schools anymore. —Laramie resident

Where are they going to get the money to do all these education programs if [their budget is] already being cut? —Laramie resident

I would agree. I would love it if hunter safety was taught in school. —Laramie resident

Almost every house in Wyoming... has at least one high-powered rifle and who knows how many handguns. —Laramie resident

Hunter safety is gun safety. —Laramie resident

It's not just hunter safety; it's gun safety. —Laramie resident

The youth [education] is going to help everybody. —Laramie resident

It [hunter safety] benefits everybody; we're all safer if we all know what the hell we're doing. —Laramie resident

The Rotary Club—those kind of things—that's the [kind of] thing the Game and Fish could look into for local networking. These clubs and affiliations have access to kids that Game and Fish can work together with them to get them involved. —Casper resident

I'd like to see more involvement with the Game and Fish coming to elementary schools, or even high schools, and educating the youth. I think it would be really beneficial, especially teaching kids about poaching and things like that—very important issues, while they're still at a young and teachable age. —Casper resident

Kids automatically learn from the adults they're with. I think we've had a few generations of adults that haven't had much connection with the outdoors. So, I think there needs to be a lot more done with the adults. —Casper resident

If people don't have much experience hunting, it's almost frightening—it's overwhelming.... This education thing [is important]. I think there's a lot of people who'd like to do it, but they're not really sure where to go [for training]. We've got hunter safety, but what about hunter training? It may be even kind of fun to do. There's lots of guys that know a lot about it who might be happy to share a few skills. There's camping—it's pretty easy, if you know what to do. But if you don't—it's a major task. —Casper resident

They can teach them all they want in classrooms, but they [Game and Fish] have to get them [kids, students] involved. They have to get their hands dirty. They have to get them involved to know what this is like. A lot of these kids don't have dads or fathers or uncles that are out there teaching them these regulations. Therefore, it's going to be up to Game and Fish to get their hands on these children while they're young to teach them these traits they need to know. —Casper resident

It's a darned hard job they have.... The number of animal species they [Game and Fish] have to deal with. The public doesn't know about that. I hadn't known about that. They have to manage all of them, not just for hunters, but for everybody. They really have a huge task to deal with. It's education again: letting the people know what it is they do.
—Casper resident

Maybe it's education, too. If people knew it [zebra mussels] was a problem. —Casper resident

You can watch a video about it, but to actually get out and set up a tent and start a fire is a different story. —Casper resident

I don't think it trumps it.... Public opinion might be, "We don't need to have this." If Game and Fish would be more transparent about it and say, "No, we're not going to do this and this is why" [that would be good]. —Sheridan resident

That, too, could be part of an education policy. If they come up with some kind of new research that the general public should know about, that needs to be disseminated.
—Sheridan resident

It's not that the public disagrees; it's that we feel like we're being put in a box. We go and give a public opinion and never see any results from that. Okay, what bearing did that have on this decision? I definitely think the education part of it is huge. —Sheridan resident

I think it's going to be almost impossible to [completely] eradicate them.... I am hearing about a real lack of education on the part of Game and Fish. What are we talking about with "aquatic invasive species"? Is it weeds or fish? Is it in-state or out-of-state? Can Game and Fish undertake a bigger education effort that not only benefits us but really grabs the people from out of state that doesn't appreciate the delicate environmental balance that we have in this part of the state? —Jackson resident

I think it's about time that they are thoroughly inspecting boats. It's more work for the boater, but I think it was a good start. I think they're trying to get some education out with the little pamphlet they give you when you get your sticker. Public forums would be a way to get more information out. —Jackson resident

Why not have some sort of education tool, some sort of screen, that people can be watching while they're sitting in those lines [for a national park entrance stations, check stations, etc.].... You have a captive audience. —Jackson resident

We all go through the motions with the whole invasive species thing [sticker, etc.], but I don't see it as something that really checks things out well. I really like the idea, "Watch this film—this is what can happen to your lakes and rivers." Once you've watched the film, you get your sticker and can go on. —Jackson resident

Why can't these apps include educational information as well? "Did you know we now have lake trout in Jackson Lake? This is an invasive species. This is what an invasive species is and this is what we're doing about it." —Jackson resident

Those are all opt-in technologies. You have to download the app and then pull it up to get the information. How do you get that information out to people who are going to [remote] lakes [etc.]? I think it has to come from education from getting your permit. —Jackson resident

Education's definitely a key thing. If they could get more [information]... I'm clueless, to be honest, of what you all are talking about. I rarely pick up a newspaper.... Doing stuff like this does get me more motivated to learn, but it is easier when it's put in your face rather than [seeking] it out.... I do care, but I don't really know what the big problem is.... I'm a person that needs [to have the issue] in my face, and when it is, I do care. If it's not there, I don't know what to care about. —Jackson resident

We live in a world today where people are super-busy and me-oriented. So, make it mandatory for people to get educated to get their boat on the lake. —Jackson resident

8.17. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES ACROSS FOCUS GROUPS

While not intended to be comprehensive, this section identifies a few key similarities and differences among the five focus groups.

KEY SIMILARITIES AMONG FOCUS GROUPS

Overall, all five focus groups presented a positive view of Game and Fish and the work the agency does on behalf of residents, recreationists, and fish and wildlife throughout Wyoming. There were consistent comments about Game and Fish being short-staffed, especially in relation to the state's law enforcement needs, including the prevention of poaching.

While many focus group participants perceived access in Wyoming to be acceptable, many also noted that there is room for continued improvement in terms of access to public land.

Participants across all five locations emphasized the need for Game and Fish to improve and broaden its educational efforts in schools and elsewhere, its public information outreach via social media and local involvement, and its overall presence and outreach with the Wyoming general public. Many participants saw these three issues (education, information, engagement) as avenues for creating a safer, more robust outdoor culture and ethos across the state.

Regarding wolves, participants across all five focus groups suggested that wolves have become very populous and do not stay in Yellowstone National Park—instead, the perception is that wolves range considerably farther from their original reintroduction points. Most participants across the groups agreed that landowners should be legally permitted to defend their property and livestock from destructive carnivores by shooting them if necessary.

Regarding grizzly bears, most focus group participants agreed that the grizzly bear population appears to have increased dramatically to a self-sustaining level. At the same time, Wyoming residents viewed grizzly bears as being native to the state and were therefore more accepting of their presence than the presence of wolves.

Many participants in all five focus groups commended the efforts of Game and Fish in working to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in Wyoming.

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FOCUS GROUPS

While participants in the Laramie, Casper, Sheridan, and Worland groups talked extensively about access issues, people in the Jackson focus group had less to say. According to those in the Jackson group, substantial nearby access to federal lands helps to minimize problems that affect areas in which there is more of a mix of public and private land.

Regarding wolves, the Jackson focus group participants were the most reticent to support hunting of wolves or a shoot-on-sight policy for wolves. Note that while some in this group said they would allow an exception for landowners protecting livestock, most others said that wolves should be permitted to roam public lands in the state—it was suggested that Game and Fish should remain responsible for addressing nuisance issues with the species. On the other hand, most participants from the Laramie, Casper, Sheridan, and Worland groups favored allowing wolf hunting.

Regarding grizzly bears, Jackson participants were also the most reticent to consider the opening of a hunting season, whereas most participants from Laramie, Casper, Sheridan, and Worland again favored a hunting season to responsibly manage the grizzly bear population.

In general, Jackson residents were more outspoken about perceived human encroachment into wolf and bear habitat; as a result, these participants were more likely to emphasize the importance of preventative measures to keep wolves and bears out of neighborhoods and away from personal property.

Regarding aquatic invasive species, Casper participants emphasized the need for greater public education and outreach to build awareness. Some Sheridan participants suggested that the zebra mussel is not in Wyoming and has not yet become a problem in the state. Worland residents emphasized the need for more consistency in checking boats and overall enforcement at boat check stations as well as increasing public awareness about the issue. Jackson residents emphasized a need to increase education about aquatic invasive species in general, with more focus on prevention rather than management after the fact.

9. POST-SURVEY PUBLIC MEETINGS

This section discusses the results of the ten public meetings that were held in (listed in chronological order of the meeting dates) Cheyenne, Laramie, Casper, Lander, Gillette, Green River, Sheridan, Pinedale, Cody, and Jackson. For full details of the methodology and structure of the public meetings, see Chapter 12 of this report.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Through an analysis of the public meetings, 31 distinct topics are covered in the report, which emerged as primary areas of concern among meeting attendees.

In addition, analysis of most public meetings warranted an “other” category. Funding, agency performance, and equity (or the balancing of various stakeholders’ interests) emerged as the top areas of discussion.

Not every topic was mentioned in every meeting, nor were the topics discussed given equal attention in each meeting.

In part, this is due to the eight distinct Game and Fish management regions, with each region having its own wildlife, geography, and concerns. In addition, however, some meetings attracted larger audiences of guides, non-consumptive users, or anglers, while other meetings attracted larger numbers of hunters and other groups.

The order and importance of particular topics is often indicative of the makeup of each meeting’s attendees.

For example, introducing a muzzleloader/primitive weapon hunting season was only mentioned in two meetings, and only briefly in one of those meetings. In the Gillette public meeting, however, the introduction of a muzzleloader/primitive weapon season was the most mentioned topic. With this level of interest in hunting, one could safely assume that the Gillette public meeting had a relatively large number of hunters in attendance.

Funding was the most frequently discussed topic in the meetings overall, being the only topic that was mentioned in all ten public meetings. Most funding discussion focused on the need to find alternate sources of funding in order to avoid becoming overly reliant on sportsmen to fund Game and Fish. A smaller portion of conversations about funding focused on public desire for transparency in funding sources.

Discussions of Game and Fish performance, which represented the second most addressed topic, indicated that most interactions with Game and Fish staff were positive. Most attendees expressed strong approval of Game and Fish, as well as a high level of trust in decision-making associated with the 5-year strategic plan.

Equity was one of the greatest themes throughout the entirety of the public meeting process. Issues in regard to licensing, access, consumptive vs. non-consumptive users, and habitat all seemed to relate to the public’s desire to have all constituents equally represented by Game and Fish.

9.1. PUBLIC MEETINGS: STATEWIDE RESULTS

The meetings were held in cities and towns throughout Game and Fish's eight management regions (Figure 9.1.1). Game and Fish staff attended each meeting and took notes on the concerns raised, and all input was used in the development of this report. Therefore, any comment that is not specifically addressed in this report was, nonetheless, heard and considered by Game and Fish staff in attendance.

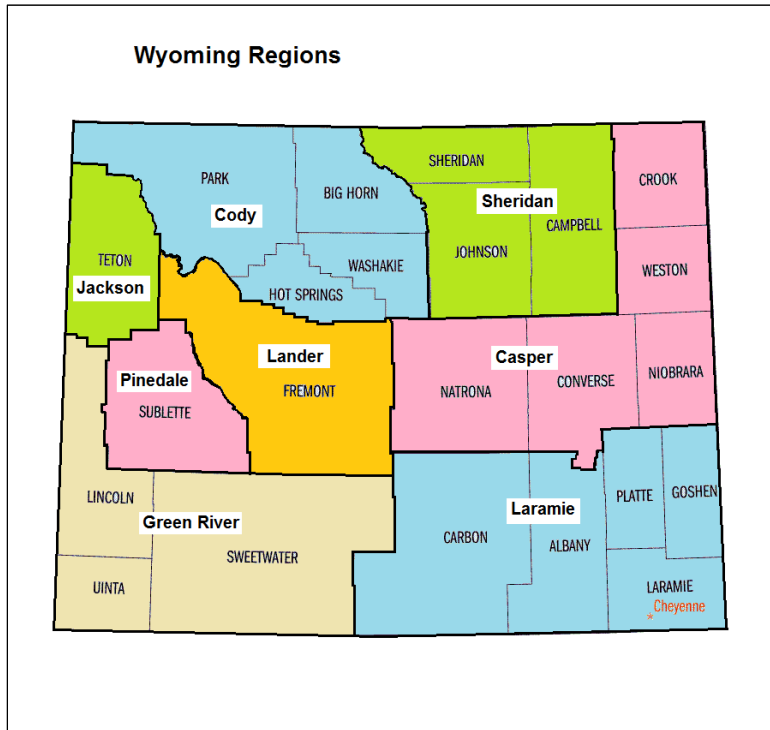


Figure 9.1.1. Wyoming Game and Fish Department Management Regions

When assessing the results of the public meetings, note that public meetings generally attract only the most avid and dedicated constituents, and the meetings convened for this study would appear to be no exception. Many in attendance identified as hunters and anglers, but there were also attendees who identified as non-consumptive outdoor recreationists. Meeting attendance varied from approximately 20 attendees in Cheyenne, Pinedale, and Cody to nearly 50 in Casper and Jackson. The approximate attendance was as follows:

- Cheyenne: 20
- Laramie: 40
- Casper: 50
- Lander: 35
- Gillette: 25
- Green River: 30
- Sheridan: 25
- Pinedale: 20
- Cody: 20
- Jackson: 50

Each meeting is discussed in detail in this section. Further, each major topic is detailed, starting with the most frequently addressed topic in each meeting and moving to topics that received less attention. Regardless of location, some topics such as Game and Fish performance, funding, licensing, and access dominated the meetings, but it should be noted that some groups focused on topics that ranked lower in overall mentions.

Analysis revealed 31 distinct topics from the public meetings. In order to be classified as a priority topic, more than one meeting's attendees needed to discuss the issue. In each individual public meeting analysis, topics are ordered in terms of their perceived importance to the group, (i.e., how many times the topic was mentioned in that particular meeting). In terms of overall importance, however, the topics are ranked by the number of meetings that addressed the topic. The order of importance of topics is the order in which they are discussed below.

Funding was the only topic mentioned in every Wyoming public meeting, although many other topics were discussed in most meetings. Interestingly, after a review of other research, some topics that initially seemed to be public priorities were less popular in terms of overall mentions in the public meetings. Aquatic invasive species, for example, received less attention than expected, as did hunter education, which survey respondents suggested should be one of the top priorities for Game and Fish. The most common themes from all the meetings by topic can be seen below, followed by an analysis of each specific meeting.

FUNDING

Most comments on the topic of funding were related to either finding new forms of funding or being more transparent with the public about all aspects of funding. Most meeting attendees felt that non-consumptive users needed to be more involved in funding Game and Fish, rather than having funding rely so heavily on sportsmen.

GAME AND FISH PERFORMANCE

Nearly all comments about Game and Fish performance indicated that public perception of Game and Fish was extremely positive. Most meeting attendees agreed that decisions were based on sound scientific data. Further, attendees felt that Game and Fish worked to include the voices of all constituents and stakeholders. Suggestions on how Game and Fish could improve related mostly to transparency, focusing more on nongame wildlife management, and being even more inclusive of non-consumptive users.

ACCESS

Access issues were almost exclusively described as issues of congestion and overcrowding. Some attendees described guides, all terrain vehicle (ATV) users, and lack of consideration of disabled hunters' and anglers' access needs as barriers. Walk-in access was praised as a great addition to hunting and fishing areas, but some confusion about walk-in regulations was noted.

HABITAT

It was clear from an analysis of public meeting comments that habitat and migration corridor protection was a priority to many. In addition, many felt that collaboration between nonprofits, government organizations, and private landowners could lead to better protection of valuable habitat.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Most discussion about partnerships and collaborations centered around the need to work with other government agencies and nonprofits in order to accomplish Game and Fish objectives. Further, meeting attendees felt that Game and Fish needed to focus on recruiting volunteers in order to further involve the public in wildlife management and conservation.

GENERAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

There was a clear consensus that public meeting attendees felt education of all types should be a priority for Game and Fish. Many mentioned the need for sharing information and data with the public in order to keep people informed of all aspects of Game and Fish management.

CROSSBOW HUNTING SEASON

Use of crossbows in hunting is a topic of much debate among Game and Fish constituents. An analysis of public meeting feedback, however, indicates that there is more support for maintaining crossbow hunting than opposition. In particular, attendees addressed the benefits of crossbows for disabled individuals, children, and the elderly. There was some discussion about whether to maintain crossbows in archery season or move their use to rifle season, but no clear preference was revealed.

REGULATIONS

There was some discussion about increasing regulations on ATV use. In addition, some attendees felt that Game and Fish needed to be reactive rather than proactive when making judgments about seasons that related to weather. Fishing regulations were specifically mentioned as being easy to understand in all but one of the meetings that discussed fishing regulations. There was a fair amount of conversation about implementing mandatory harvest surveys and punishing those who do not comply through license loss or fines.

BEARS

Though it was clear that meeting attendees felt that grizzly bear numbers had increased, it was less clear how the public felt about management of the increased bear population. A fair number of attendees described issues with grizzlies while hunting, but still opinions were divided. Some felt that only nuisance/problem bears should be hunted, others felt that grizzly hunting should be prohibited, and others supported a general or tag hunt for grizzlies. Attendees mentioned the need to educate the public, perhaps through classes or guided hunting trips, in order to ensure that sows were not being hunted.

GAME AND FISH AUTONOMY / RELATIONSHIP WITH LEGISLATURE

Game and Fish autonomy was promoted throughout most meetings. Comments suggested that legislative interference in Game and Fish decision-making led to less science-based management. Attendees also felt that where legislature was included in decision-making, legislators need to take responsibility for their part in decisions and regulations.

LANDOWNERS / PRIVATE LAND PROJECTS

Opinions of landowners and private land projects were mixed. Some felt that private landowners had too much power and influence over Game and Fish, while others felt that private landowners need more support from Game and Fish. There seemed to be a clear request from meeting attendees that landowners collaborate with Game and Fish and open private property to hunting, wildlife management, and especially habitat protection.

NONGAME WILDLIFE

Meeting attendees overwhelmingly thought that nongame wildlife needed more Game and Fish attention. Only one meeting included comments opposing the use of funding from hunting and fishing licenses for nongame wildlife management. One species was brought up in this category more than any other: the black-footed ferret, and how to continue funding its protection.

SMALL GAME

The small game species discussed most often was sage grouse. The decline in sage grouse populations and exposure to disease was mentioned in several meetings.

RESIDENT / NONRESIDENT TAG ALLOCATION

Issuing of tags of all types to nonresidents has created some tension between resident and nonresident hunters. Although those who attended public meetings seemed to fully understand the benefit of maintaining nonresident licenses and tags in terms of funding for Game and Fish, there were still many comments about feelings of inequity over tag allocation for residents and nonresidents. Comments seemed to suggest that being able to show that residents are always receiving more tags, and ending the practice of giving Commissioner tags to nonresidents, might remedy this situation.

FISHING

The comments from all public meetings suggest that a larger proportion of hunters, in comparison to anglers, attended the public meetings. Still, there were a fair amount of fishing comments throughout the meetings. Many fishing comments qualified as access issues, as well, so the access category holds important information about the opinions of anglers. Anglers specifically mentioned Sloans Lake as an example of fishing education that should be replicated. In addition, there were several comments about a decline in water quality throughout the state and a lack of fish overall. Some anglers were also concerned about the increase in walleye leading to smaller numbers of trout in some waterways.

PARTICIPATION AND R3

By far the most frequent comment on participation and R3 (referring to recruitment, retention, and reactivation) was that recruitment needs to be focused on youth. Many also felt that one way to approach youth recruitment was to teach hunter education in schools, whether as a mentoring program, an after-school program, or an actual class during school hours. Many comments suggested that anglers, hunters, and all other outdoor recreationists feared the end of sportsmen's activities without a push for youth recruitment.

WOLVES

As with bears, many public meeting attendees perceived an increase in the number of wolves in the state. Some mentioned encountering wolves while hunting. Opinions on how to manage the state's wolf population varied from allowing trophy hunting to having an open season to prohibiting wolf hunting altogether. Most attendees agreed, regardless of their stance on management, that wolves were becoming an issue deserving more attention.

PREFERENCE POINTS

Opposition to nonresident preference points was nearly unanimous in all meetings. In general, regardless of resident status, support for preference points was scant. A small number of comments suggested there was some support for preference points for resident hunters.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The majority of attendees in all meetings agreed that there should be more wardens. There were, however, comments that suggested that wardens had high levels of support, at least among those who attended the public meetings.

HUNTER ETHICS / HUNTER EDUCATION

Across all public meetings, attendees agreed that hunter education needs to be taking place in schools in order to involve more youth. In addition to education comments, there was some discussion about hunters being more cognizant of the feelings and opinions of non-hunters by covering up their harvest when transporting it.

EXPAND AGENCY CONSTITUENCY

Most comments on this topic were about getting non-consumptive users more involved in the activities of Game and Fish. Some comments also stressed the importance of getting nonresidents more involved through surveying and opinion polling.

DISEASE CONCERNS

There were a substantial number of comments that expressed concern over the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD), particularly among elk. Some attendees expressed concern that feeding grounds were aiding in the spread of CWD.

LICENSING

Attendees in several meetings felt that Game and Fish was selling too many nonresident licenses and should focus on satisfying residents before moving to others. There were some comments about details of hunting license requirements being vague or overly complicated. Pricing of licenses drew varied comments, with some thinking the prices should be increased and others thinking prices needed to be reduced to recruit new hunters and anglers. Comments also indicated that the public feels that predator licenses should be more expensive.

GUIDES / OUTFITTERS

Comments about guides and outfitters were diverse. Some attendees felt that guides and outfitters had too much influence on Game and Fish decision-making. Other attendees felt that the insights of guides and outfitters, as individuals who spent a great deal of time witnessing issues associated with Game and Fish, were being neglected. There was some concern that there are too many guides and outfitters in Wyoming and that this is the primary cause of overcrowding in the field.

GAME AND FISH WEBSITE

Comments about the Game and Fish website very clearly indicated support for a redesign of the website. Some commented that the website is not user-friendly. Specifically, license details and maps were named as features of the website that the public felt were not successful.

TRAPPING

There were a small number of comments that suggested that Wyoming's trapping laws be rewritten. Attendees shared personal experiences with trapping accidents and felt very strongly that changes need to be made with trapping regulations. Some attendees felt that trapping should end altogether, while others felt that updating practices and regulations and requiring additional education would solve trapping-related problems.

MANAGING FOR TROPHY VS. OPPORTUNITY / QUALITY VS. QUANTITY

Some public meeting attendees felt that trophy management had become too much of an influence on the decisions of Game and Fish and had resulted in lapsed attention on other types of management. Several attendees felt that trophy hunting should be done in designated areas with increased fees.

TECHNOLOGY IN HUNTING

The use of technology in hunting—namely drones, planes, scopes, and tracking devices—was largely opposed by the attendees of public meetings. Most felt that the use of technology abandoned notions of fair chase and created an environment in which game numbers would be depleted at a rate that endangered some species. (Note that currently it is illegal in Wyoming to use aircraft—including drones—to scout for animals from August 1 to January 31 or to assist in taking game.)

POACHING

Public meeting attendees felt that poaching was a major issue in Wyoming. Most attendees suggested that poaching be made a felony offense and that fines associated with poaching be increased dramatically. In addition, some attendees proposed that individuals who report poaching be rewarded with tags, licenses, or monetary incentives.

MUZZLELOADER SEASON

There was minor support for a muzzleloader/primitive weapon season in a few of the meetings, with the exception of the Gillette public meeting, where the topic monopolized much of the conversation. Attendees who supported introducing a muzzleloader season argued that it would result in more funding.

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS)

AIS was an issue of concern for some public meeting attendees. Some felt that too much funding was being dedicated to AIS inspections inside the state, when the focus should be on the borders of the state. Some meeting attendees felt that Game and Fish had focused too heavily on inspecting large water vessels and not enough energy had been put into inspecting small watercraft, such as float tubes. Other attendees felt that the damage from AIS was irreparable, and that continued efforts had become a waste of time, energy, and funds.

9.2. INDIVIDUAL PUBLIC MEETING ANALYSES

These public meeting analyses are presented for each of the ten meeting locations. They are discussed in the chronological order in which the meetings were held.

CHEYENNE

The Cheyenne public meeting took place on Monday, February 5 at Laramie Community College. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 20 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Hunter Ethics / Hunter Education

Hunter education and the need for an ethical foundation in all courses was the most frequently mentioned topic in the Cheyenne public meeting. Attendees expressed a desire to reinforce concepts of fair chase in hunter education, particularly in terms of youth education. Attendees suggested that schools offer hunter education courses in order to recruit youth into outdoor recreation activities and to establish a consistent format for educating future hunters.

Funding

Finding alternate sources of funding was a common theme in all of the public meetings, and Cheyenne was no exception. In Cheyenne, the public expressed a willingness to help fund conservation of nongame species through the sale of stickers and stamps. In addition, some suggested starting a club, in which non-consumptive users could pay membership dues and contribute to Game and Fish funding.

Access

Access issues in Cheyenne related to two primary areas of concern: access for disabled individuals and walk-in access regions. Several members of the public expressed concern that disabled individuals could not access all walk-in locations. Walk-in access areas, which attendees felt improved access to private lands for many sportsmen and outdoor recreationists, ultimately limited access for many with disabilities. Walk-in access areas were described as rarely wide enough for ATVs or other vehicles used for assistance. In addition to these issues, there was some discussion about inconsistent regulations with regard to walk-in access, which could also be interpreted as a regulations issue. Attendees felt that permission slips for walk-ins were overly complicated and varied dramatically depending on the landowner or region in which the area was located.

Regulations

Attendees requested Game and Fish implement more ATV regulations in order to protect areas in which ATVs were used. Further, there was mention of convoluted regulations for both hunting and fishing.

Licensing

There was a clear consensus among those in attendance in Cheyenne that equal numbers of resident and nonresident licenses should be issued each year. Additionally, some attendees felt regulations associated with licenses had become vague, and suggested a menu on the Game and Fish website that clearly conveyed all aspects of a particular license. Finally, the licensing discussion ended on a positive note, with several in attendance commending Game and Fish for maintaining and encouraging youth licensure for hunting and fishing.

Disease Concerns

There was some concern over CWD in the Cheyenne meeting. Attendees felt that educating outdoorsmen on the signs and symptoms of CWD could help prevent the spreading of the disease. One attendee felt that the CWD test had been extremely useful, but agreed that many still need additional education.

Game and Fish Website

Attendees expressed frustration with the Game and Fish website. One constituent specifically noted that the website was particularly unfriendly to first-time visitors. Attendees also felt that website maps were difficult to understand.

Habitat

Several in attendance felt that Game and Fish had not made habitat enough of a priority. At least one attendee, however, felt that Game and Fish had done a better job than federal agencies in prioritizing habitat protection for Wyoming's nongame species.

General Education and Outreach

Attendees felt that the public needed more education opportunities in order to better understand the value of wildlife and public lands. As with hunter education, attendees felt general wildlife education should focus on ethics.

Bears

Cheyenne attendees felt that grizzly bears had become a nuisance in Wyoming, and that a grizzly bear hunting season was overdue.

Landowners / Private Land Projects

Attendees reported feeling that landowners are too influential on the decisions of Game and Fish. It was recommended that more landowners participate in the "Access Yes!" program and similar private land projects in order to create the perception of a more reciprocal relationship between landowners and Game and Fish.

Resident / Nonresident Tag Allocation

In contrast to several other groups that will be discussed later in this analysis, at least one Cheyenne attendee felt that the number of tags being given to nonresident hunters should not decline, as nonresident hunters' financial contribution to Game and Fish is integral to its success. Other attendees countered this opinion, and contributed that nonresident tag allocation is far too high and creates a sense of inequity with residents.

Participation and R3

Youth recruitment was undoubtedly the primary recommendation in terms of finding techniques for continuing traditions of sportsmen, outdoor recreationists, and conservationists. Some attendees felt that college students should be the focus of recruitment campaigns, as their age maintains the push for youth recruitment, while they are able to contribute more financially than younger participants.

Partnerships and Collaborations

One attendee felt that Game and Fish should extend and advertise more volunteering opportunities as a means of getting the public involved in wildlife management in their state.

Game and Fish Performance

General approval of Game and Fish seemed to be high among those who attended the Cheyenne public meeting. At least one specific staff member from Downar Bird Farm was mentioned as being particularly helpful.

Crossbow Hunting Season

Cheyenne attendees did not show a clear opinion on the use of crossbows in hunting, but at least one comment suggested that archers may not be particularly adept at expressing their needs and opinions, and thus Game and Fish should make sure archers' voices are heard.

Game and Fish Autonomy / Relationship With Legislature

Attendees felt that legislature should not be involved in the Game and Fish decision-making process.

Fishing

The 2017 Sloans Lake fishing education program was noted as a great success by those in attendance.

Law Enforcement

Attendees expressed a need for more wardens, especially during the Springer special hunt, which is considered dangerous by some.

Other

Only one topic from the Cheyenne meeting did not fit into any of the established categories: there was some discussion about the need to maintain bird farms. As mentioned above, the Downar Bird Farm was mentioned as an effective example.

LARAMIE

The Laramie public meeting took place on Monday, February 5 at Laramie Plains Civic Center. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 40 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Game and Fish Performance

Laramie attendees spent a fair amount of time discussing the performance of Game and Fish. Nearly all comments were positive. Attendees mentioned seeing wardens and other staff in the field, seeing an increase in hiring, and having extremely positive experiences with staff in regional offices. Still, there were some requests for Game and Fish to be more present in order to acquire more firsthand knowledge of the issues associated with hunting, fishing, and other types of outdoor recreation. Overall, however, the perception of Game and Fish was clearly one of a successful and approachable organization.

Habitat

Tree cutting being conducted by the United States Forest Service (USFS) was mentioned as a major threat to habitat protection in the Laramie meeting, and a request to Game and Fish to work with USFS to find better solutions was extended by attendees. Growing populations and increased traffic were also mentioned as potential threats to habitat protection. Attendees discussed the importance of not allowing changes as a result of urbanization to interfere with migration corridors and endanger game and nongame species alike. The energy industry was also mentioned as a potential threat to habitat protection.

Nongame Wildlife

Laramie meeting attendees discussed the need for nongame wildlife management more than most other groups. There was some discussion of the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) being a great tool for nongame wildlife management, as long as an appropriate number of biologists are involved in the implementation of plans.

Funding

As with all other meetings, the Laramie attendees felt that Game and Fish needs to find alternate sources of funding. The nongame topic continued in the funding conversation, as some attendees felt that funding for nongame management had been neglected and was in need of attention. Further, attendees felt the SWAP required new funding sources in order to be successful. A few attendees suggested giving a percentage of lottery sales to Game and Fish, while others felt that Game and Fish should impose a tax on all types of outdoor recreation tools and equipment as a means of new funding.

Landowners / Private Land Projects

Laramie attendees commented that landowners had an unfair amount of influence over the decisions of Game and Fish. Attendees further expressed that Game and Fish might be missing opportunities to work directly with landowners by not creating new private land projects and by not supplying the necessary resources to ensure landowners were able to conduct wildlife management on their property. Finally, some in attendance were concerned that landowners were not receiving education on large carnivore management.

Crossbow Hunting Season

Comments on the use of crossbows in hunting were divided. Some attendees felt that crossbows should be permitted during archery season, while others felt that the accuracy and technology involved in the use of crossbows should relegate their use to rifle season only.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Some attendees felt collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was essential for protection of migration corridors. Other comments suggested that although collaboration, in theory, was a great practice, Game and Fish was dangerously close to catering to special interest groups rather than their constituents.

Access

Laramie attendees reported great satisfaction with walk-in access areas.

General Education and Outreach

Attendees felt that wildlife education, in addition to hunter education, should be mandatory in schools.

Regulations

At least one attendee felt that Game and Fish should end its practice of predicting weather and ending seasons accordingly, in favor of waiting for bad weather and ending the season in response to the weather.

Bears

Several attendees felt that the number of grizzly bears in Wyoming had increased, but also felt that the priority of residents and Game and Fish should be to coexist with the animals, rather than turning to a grizzly hunting season.

Game and Fish Autonomy / Relationship With Legislature

As in almost every other aspect of the research in this report, the Laramie public meeting attendees felt that the legislature had too much influence on the decisions of Game and Fish. Attendees felt that Game and Fish deserved autonomy in all decisions, but especially those relating to wildlife management.

Wolves

As with bears, many attendees perceived that there had been an increase in wolves statewide; again, attendees generally supported coexistence with the animals without hunting them.

Preference Points

Laramie attendees agreed that preference points were a problem, making it nearly impossible for some to hunt certain animals, while others (frequently nonresidents) repeatedly received tags as a result of their purchase of preference points.

Law Enforcement

All Laramie feedback indicated positive attitudes toward Game and Fish.

Game and Fish Website

Again, attendees felt that the Game and Fish website was not user-friendly and called for it to be redesigned.

Other

The only comment in the Laramie meeting that did not correspond with any of the established topics was from an attendee who felt that the Landscape Vegetation Analysis (LaVa), being conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, was potentially harmful to Wyoming wildlife. According to attendees, although the analysis may ultimately contribute to the health of vegetation, in the short-term the LaVa program is endangering wildlife habitat in Wyoming.

CASPER

The Casper public meeting took place on Tuesday, February 6 at the Casper Game and Fish Department. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 50 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Funding

Casper attendees frequently mentioned the need for diversified sources of funding for Game and Fish. Attendees agreed that depending on hunters and anglers for funding was leaving Game and Fish in a precarious position. In addition, some attendees felt that Game and Fish's reliance on hunters for funding is driving up prices of hunting licenses and equipment and making hunting a less viable sporting choice for people with lower incomes. Attendees suggested implementing more tourism taxes in order to supplement funding from sportsmen.

Regulations

There were several important issues mentioned in the Casper meeting relating to concerns with regulations. First, attendees felt that there should be more restrictions on where ATV riders are able to go. Second, there was some discussion about fishing regulations being in need of simplification and updating. Finally, there were multiple comments about introducing mandatory harvest surveys for hunters. Some attendees suggested instituting fines or implementing license suspension for noncompliance.

Access

Most access discussion in the Casper meeting centered on "corner hopping" issues. Most who commented on corner hopping felt there should be more flexibility in how people are able to access public lands. Further, attendees felt that Game and Fish needed to work with private landowners to find ways to help recreationists gain access to landlocked public land. Attendees also felt that Whitewater Park needs to permit floating through the bypass in order to facilitate access to other areas, and that mountain streams in general are in need of more access.

Hunter Ethics / Hunter Education

As with nearly every group, the Casper attendees felt that hunter education courses needed to be taught in schools. This group added that, if instituting a class during school hours was too complicated, Game and Fish could work with special groups such as 4-H clubs to create after-school hunter education programs.

Habitat

Attendees felt that habitat protection needed to be a major priority for Game and Fish. Further, attendees felt landowners need more support and assistance from Game and Fish in order to protect habitat on private property.

Partnerships and Collaborations

According to attendees at the Casper meeting, Game and Fish could benefit from expanding their use of volunteers. Also, attendees felt that collaborating with 4-H clubs might help in the recruitment of volunteers.

Fishing

Fishing comments in the Casper meeting were mostly related to water quality. Attendees mentioned the North Platte River specifically as having poor water quality, as well as a lack of fish overall. In addition, general comments were made about the need for cleaning and protecting bodies of water statewide. Finally, there was some discussion about the perceived lack of trout in Wyoming rivers, and the danger of large walleye populations outnumbering and overwhelming the trout that are present. Specifically, the Miracle Mile was described as a body of water with an overwhelming number of walleye.

General Education and Outreach

Attendees felt there was a need for increased outreach and research on behalf of Game and Fish. Attendees also felt that the public deserved more education on all elements of Game and Fish operations—at least a few people suggested that Game and Fish should share new information with the public as it learns it. This, in turn, will aid the public in understanding the needs of wildlife management in the state and ultimately the role of the public in helping Game and Fish protect and manage wildlife.

Resident / Nonresident Tag Allocation

Attendees felt that the prices of nonresident tags should be increased, while the number of tags issued—especially those for moose and sheep—should be reduced. Attendees also felt that residents should have more input on tag pricing and allocation.

Disease Concerns

It was clear that CWD was of great concern to many Casper meeting attendees. What was less clear was how attendees felt about Game and Fish's response to CWD-related threats. Some asserted that Game and Fish has not done enough and has been essentially ineffective at combating the threat. In contrast, some felt that Game and Fish was responding extremely well and introducing useful preventative measures.

Guides / Outfitters

Attendees felt that regulations for guides and outfitters should be stricter than those imposed on sportsmen. Further, attendees felt that guides and outfitters needed increased education, specifically about trout beads.

Game and Fish Performance

As with all other meetings, the comments pertaining to the performance of Game and Fish were positive in the Casper meeting. Specific comments indicated that Game and Fish was doing a good job working with disabled anglers and on predator management.

Crossbow Hunting Season

Attendees felt that restrictions on crossbow hunting could have a negative impact on recruitment. Some indicated that youth were particularly interested in crossbow use and any restrictions might prevent youth from hunting.

Game and Fish Autonomy / Relationship With Legislature

Some felt that politics and the legislature were far too influential on the decisions of Game and Fish. Attendees felt that Game and Fish needed more autonomy in terms of decision-making.

Landowners / Private Land Projects

Although most meeting attendees expressed concern over the level of influence private landowners have on Game and Fish, Casper meeting attendees felt landowners do not have enough support from Game and Fish.

Participation and R3

There was some concern that there are not enough adults who are willing to work with youth and serve as mentors for youth who are interested in outdoor recreation.

Preference Points

Casper attendees felt strongly that the preference point system should end.

Law Enforcement

Some attendees felt there were not enough game wardens where they were most needed.

Managing for Trophy vs. Opportunity / Quality vs. Quantity

Some attendees felt that trophy management has become too important to Game and Fish and has caused attention to lapse in other important management areas.

LANDER

The Lander public meeting took place on Tuesday, February 6 at Fremont County Library. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 35 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Funding

Funding was an extremely important topic in the Lander meeting. Again, the primary focus was on finding alternate forms of funding. One attendee mentioned finding a way to tax non-consumptive users in order to increase funding. The need for increased funding in general was also addressed. Attendees suggested increasing hunting license prices, increasing the prices of antelope and deer tags, and charging more for ATV hunting. Limited quota drawings were mentioned as a potential cause of financial hardship for Game and Fish. Attendees felt limited quota drawings should be restructured in order to bring more funding to Game and Fish.

Participation and R3

As with most other meetings, attendees felt the focus of recruitment should be on youth. Some attendees felt that the creation of youth-only hunting and fishing areas could increase youth interest in outdoor recreation.

Crossbow Hunting Season

The topic of crossbow hunting prompted mixed responses from Lander public meeting attendees. Some attendees expressed strong support for the use of crossbows in hunting, listing their potential benefit to children and disabled individuals as the primary reason they should remain in use. Other attendees mentioned feeling disappointed that Game and Fish had gotten involved in the crossbow debate at all. Still others mentioned being completely opposed to the use of crossbows in hunting.

General Education and Outreach

Attendees felt there had been a lot of missed opportunities to educate the public on various topics. Attendees suggested holding statewide courses to educate the public on wildlife management and habitat protection. In addition, some felt that simply posting survey results in easily accessed locations could help increase public education and awareness of key Game and Fish concerns. Another suggestion from those in attendance was to involve youth more in all forms of data collection in order to promote more investment in wildlife, as well as research findings.

Nongame Wildlife

Lander public meeting comments suggested that the public is concerned that nongame management has been neglected. Attendees commented that nongame wildlife needs to be a focus for Game and Fish, and that “less charismatic” species need to be prioritized.

Resident / Nonresident Tag Allocation

Some felt that there were not enough moose and sheep tags going to residents. Most who commented on the topic felt that the price of resident tags needs to be increased and that there should be “native tags” that are available only to residents, such as college students, who reside outside of the state but maintain residence in Wyoming.

Licensing

Comments on hunting license pricing varied. Some attendees suggested increasing the price of resident licenses, while others felt that continued increases in resident license prices would lead to a decline in license purchases overall. One attendee suggested conducting an income analysis of hunters in order to get a better idea of what hunters are actually able to spend on licenses.

Technology in Hunting

Lander meeting attendees felt that technology had become too present in hunting and was affecting concepts of ethical hunting and fair chase.

Game and Fish Autonomy / Relationship With Legislature

Attendees expressed confusion regarding the relationship between Game and Fish and legislature, particularly in regard to who was responsible for which decisions. Attendees felt that the legislature should not be involved in any science-based management that Game and Fish conducts.

Access

The comments about access in the Lander meeting were about walk-in access areas. Attendees generally expressed satisfaction with walk-in access areas, and suggested that Game and Fish find more walk-in access areas for public use.

Habitat

Attendees felt that focusing on habitat would help create connections between hunters, anglers, and non-consumptive users. Some mentioned that all outdoor recreationists were concerned about habitat and migration corridor protection, and as such Game and Fish could use this shared concern to encourage collaboration.

Regulations

One attendee felt that elk hunting in limited quota regions should be limited to archery only. Further, attendees suggested extending the hunting season in regions with minimal numbers of hunters.

Preference Points

Attendees were concerned that preference points were making it more difficult for youth hunters to participate and that this would lead to a decline in recruitment of new hunters over time.

Expand Agency Constituency

Attendees felt that non-consumptive users needed to be considered more often in Game and Fish decisions. Some suggested that finding common ground, such as conservation, would allow Game and Fish to expand its constituency and involve more groups in all aspects of the agency's work.

Hunter Ethics / Hunter Education

Attendees felt that hunter education needs to be more of a priority for Game and Fish. As was the case in other meetings, it was suggested that there be more hunter education in schools. In terms of hunter ethics, at least one attendee requested that hunters cover their harvest when transporting them from one location to another. It was argued that leaving the harvest uncovered and in view of the general public was creating unnecessary tension between hunters and non-consumptive members of the community.

Bears

Although attendees agreed that the number of grizzly bears in Wyoming had increased, attendees still requested that Game and Fish limit bear hunting to problem bears only and increase the price of bear hunting tags dramatically.

Game and Fish Performance

The perception of Game and Fish performance in this meeting was largely positive. Some attendees felt that Game and Fish was doing a great job attracting people to Wyoming through superior game and nongame management. Some commented that all game populations were declining, which was possibly indicative of some errors in Game and Fish's management techniques. Another attendee expressed concern that Game and Fish was beginning to be influenced by politics, rather than science and proven management techniques.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Attendees in Lander felt that Game and Fish could be more effective by creating partnerships and collaborations with more nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations.

Wolves

Attendees felt that the price of tags for wolves should be increased.

Trapping

There was some concern that trapping regulations had become too relaxed. Attendees suggested issuing fewer trapping licenses and instituting stricter regulations on issued licenses.

Managing for Trophy vs. Opportunity / Quality vs. Quantity

One attendee suggested imposing additional fees for hunting in areas that were used for trophy hunting.

Fishing

There was some discussion about closing fishing season during spawning periods.

Small Game

One attendee suggested the sale of bird tags, while another attendee requested that more funding be used on pheasant habitat. It was further suggested that less funding be put toward bird farms.

GILLETTE

The Gillette public meeting took place on Wednesday, February 7 at CAM-PLEX Event Center. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 25 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Muzzleloader Season

There were numerous comments in the Gillette public meeting about the introduction of a muzzleloader or primitive weapon season. Although this topic is only mentioned in one other meeting, it was, interestingly, the most mentioned topic in the Gillette meeting.

Funding

Related to the desire for a primitive weapon season, one attendee suggested the introduction of such a season would bring an increase in funding. In addition, non-consumptive users suggested creating a stamp that they could buy in order to contribute to Game and Fish funding.

Crossbow Hunting Season

Some attendees felt that crossbows were too advanced to be used during archery season. They suggested instead that crossbows be moved to rifle season and archery be consumed by a larger primitive weapon season. Some attendees argued that crossbows needed to be available to children and the disabled throughout all seasons.

Game and Fish Website

A number of attendees in Gillette felt that the Game and Fish website was extremely difficult to navigate and needed to be made more user-friendly.

Preference Points

As in other meetings, Gillette meeting constituents felt that preference points were making it nearly impossible for children to be drawn for tags. Others argued that the point system should be updated, but not completely eliminated. Some also argued that preference points should be offered with sheep and moose tags.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Attendees felt that some of the road closure issues that have affected migratory corridors could be remedied through collaboration with other government and nonprofit organizations. Further, attendees felt that the inclusion of volunteers could greatly benefit Game and Fish.

Bears

There was some discussion in the Gillette meeting about the need for distinction between black and grizzly bears. Attendees felt that some of Game and Fish's statements about bears were not specific enough to the particular type of bear (grizzly or black bear) and could potentially confuse those without education on the different species.

Participation and R3

Attendees felt Game and Fish should be pushing to recruit more youth into hunting and fishing, and suggested lowering the minimum age for entry when possible as a means of getting more youth involved.

Managing for Trophy vs. Opportunity / Quality vs. Quantity

Some attendees felt that there should be specific areas designated for trophy hunting, especially for wolf and bear trophy hunting.

Game and Fish Performance

Those who attended the Gillette meeting felt that Game and Fish was doing a great job in nearly all aspects of the organization. There was only one comment that offered a suggestion as to how Game and Fish could improve. An attendee described his perception of a dramatic increase in the population of mule deer in Mycroft, but upon reporting this information to Game and Fish, hunters in the region had been issued whitetail tags. This situation suggested to some constituents that Game and Fish was not necessarily listening to the needs of the public.

Access

Attendees suggested that corners needed to be clearly defined through flags or comparable indicators in order to reduce corner cutting issues and increase access.

General Education and Outreach

There was some discussion about educating non-consumptive users on wolf and bear interactions.

Game and Fish Website

Attendees felt that the regulations portion of the Game and Fish website was overly complicated and should be restructured in a more user-friendly way.

Law Enforcement

There was an extremely positive perception of game wardens among those who attended the Gillette meeting.

Disease Concerns

Some attendees expressed concern that CWD was going to spread to the elk population.

GREEN RIVER

The Green River public meeting took place on Wednesday, February 7 at Western Wyoming Community College. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 30 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Game and Fish Performance

The most frequently mentioned topic in the Green River meeting was Game and Fish performance. The majority of attendees felt that Game and Fish staff were doing an excellent job. The number one suggestion that emerged through the discussion of Game and Fish performance was the need to maintain and increase communication between Game and Fish and the public. Some attendees expressed concern that Game and Fish was more interested in the opinions of special interest groups than the average Wyoming hunter. In terms of comments that related specifically to wildlife management, attendees felt that game animals were diminishing and that more Game and Fish energy should be spent on monitoring herd size and health.

Funding

Funding was another common topic in the Green River meeting. Most attendees agreed that Game and Fish needed to find some method for including non-consumptive users in funding. Suggestions included adding a value tax to outdoor recreation activities, such as guide services, dude ranch visits and activities, guided rafting trips, and other non-consumptive activities. In addition to seeking funding opportunities from non-consumptive users, attendees suggested other ways to increase funding and curb spending, such as increasing the price of predator licenses, increasing the price of fishing licenses, advertising the number of elk in the state to bring in new

hunters, discontinuing the practice of providing Game and Fish staff with housing, and ceasing publication of the *Wyoming Wildlife* magazine. Some attendees also mentioned the need for Game and Fish transparency in terms of funding sources.

Regulations

Attendees agreed that harvest surveys should be mandatory for all hunters, and that failure to comply should result in fines and forfeiture of licenses. In addition, Green River participants felt that some changes to hunting seasons were needed, such as the shortening of the pronghorn season and the elimination of dual openings in order to prevent region swapping and overcrowding.

Resident / Nonresident Tag Allocation

Attendees agreed that nonresidents should be paying substantially higher prices for all types of licenses. In addition, attendees felt that increasing the prices of nonresident licenses would result in residents feeling more valued by Game and Fish. Attendees mentioned the issuing of Commissioner tags to nonresidents as a potential barrier to equitable allocation of tags between residents and nonresidents.

Poaching

Attendees of the Green River public meeting made several comments about poaching. Most attendees felt that poaching should be considered a felony offense. Further, attendees agreed that those who report poaching should be rewarded; suggestions for rewards included free hunting licenses or Commissioner tags.

Hunter Ethics / Hunter Education

As was the case in most meetings, there was support for teaching hunter education in schools. Several attendees felt that current hunter education programs were too complicated and not as readily available as the public would like.

Game and Fish Autonomy / Relationship With Legislature

Attendees agreed that the legislature has too much influence on Game and Fish decisions and should not be involved in science-based decisions. Specifically, legislative decisions on reducing funding for aquatic invasive species research and management were mentioned. Attendees also felt that the legislature should provide more support for Game and Fish.

General Education and Outreach

Green River meeting attendees felt that there needed to be more land management education available throughout Wyoming. Attendees also requested that all data collected by Game and Fish be available to the public. At least one attendee appreciated the online forum as a means for gathering public input, and felt that something similar should be maintained in order to keep open lines of communication between Game and Fish and the public. Attendees felt that public meetings and planning meetings could see an increase in attendance if they were conducted online and with more updated technology.

Access

Attendees mentioned overcrowding as an impediment to access. Some attendees felt that a split season or defined deer regions could help to resolve overcrowding issues.

Habitat

Habitat protection was addressed as an issue of concern for Green River meeting attendees.

Landowners / Private Land Projects

There was some concern in the meeting that Game and Fish is not working with private landowners enough, and that there should be more focus on supporting and encouraging wildlife management on private lands.

Law Enforcement

There was a general perception throughout the Green River meeting that poaching had become more of a problem because of a decline in the number of game wardens throughout the field.

Fishing

A few anglers in the Green River meeting reported extremely positive interactions with Game and Fish staff. Some attendees mentioned water quality issues throughout the state.

Partnerships and Collaborations

While attendees of the Green River meeting were not as concerned with Game and Fish fostering collaboration and partnerships, some commented that, compared to some of the federal resource agencies, Game and Fish did not adequately inform the public of the agency's role in fish and wildlife management. Attendees felt that roles needed to be clearly defined so that the public could remain aware of which agencies are responsible for certain duties.

Crossbow Hunting Season

Attendees felt that Game and Fish should remain neutral in the crossbow debate.

Nongame Wildlife

Some attendees felt that pelican management needed to be more of a priority.

Preference Points

As with many of the other meetings, preference points were named as an ineffective Game and Fish program.

Licensing

Attendees felt that the cost of predator licenses should be increased.

SHERIDAN

The Sheridan public meeting took place on Thursday, February 8 at Best Western Sheridan Center. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 25 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Funding

The Sheridan public meeting attendees mentioned funding more than any other topic. Most agreed that diversity in funding should be an important goal of Game and Fish. Suggestions for funding included having funding banquets, organizing public support days and events, selling stamps to non-consumptive users, and charging ATV users an additional fee for the use of ATVs in hunting.

Crossbow Hunting Season

There was support for crossbow hunting throughout the Sheridan meeting. Some suggested that crossbow hunting should be allowed only at the end of December.

Game and Fish Performance

Attendees reported a relatively high level of satisfaction with Game and Fish's performance. However, some attendees felt that Game and Fish should be more supportive of wardens.

Access

Rivers were specifically listed as areas with access issues. Attendees also mentioned that there should be more areas that are accessible only for youth anglers and hunters.

Regulations

Attendees felt that Game and Fish wardens should allow corner hopping.

Bears

Sheridan meeting attendees felt that there is a need for more education on the differences between black bears and grizzly bears. In addition, there were some comments recommending greater funding for bear protection.

Landowners / Private Land Projects

Comments about private landowners addressed ways to gain more funding from landowners or incentives for landowners who are willing to take part in managing wildlife herds on their properties.

Participation and R3

Again, the primary recommendation for increasing participation and encouraging recruitment was to engage more youth in hunting and fishing. In addition, some felt that a mentoring program in schools would further help recruit youth.

Game and Fish Website

Several Sheridan attendees echoed comments from residents in several of the other meetings that the Game and Fish website was not user-friendly and needed some major changes.

Habitat

Some attendees felt that tree cutting taking place in the French Creek area is endangering valuable habitat.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Some attendees felt that Game and Fish's work with the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management on road closures was a great example of collaboration.

Nongame Wildlife

Several Sheridan meeting attendees felt that more funding needs to be dedicated to nongame species, particularly the black-footed ferret.

Wolves

Opinions expressed on managing wolves seemed to indicate the need for more funding and protection.

Disease Concerns

Attendees felt that the CWD threat was increasing as a result of wildlife interaction on feed grounds. Many in attendance felt Game and Fish should be working to end the use of feed grounds and prevent CWD however possible.

Guides / Outfitters

Some meeting attendees felt that the number of elk tags allocated for outfitters should be increased.

Aquatic Invasive Species

AIS were of concern to some in attendance in Sheridan. The primary concern was the lack of inspection on small watercraft, such as float tubes. Attendees agreed that AIS were a major concern for many residents throughout Wyoming.

Muzzleloader Season

Some Sheridan meeting attendees supported a muzzleloader season separate from rifle season.

Fishing

Some attendees felt that fish skin tags were problematic.

Small Game

Some attendees said that the small game survey was ineffective and that submitting blood samples was problematic, as postal workers often refuse to collect packages that appear to have blood on them, even when they are informed that the packages contain wildlife samples for Game and Fish.

PINEDALE

The Pinedale public meeting took place on Thursday, February 8 at Hampton Inn and Suites. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 20 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Funding

Funding was the primary topic of interest in the Pinedale public meeting. Outside of some comments about being transparent with the public about sources of funding, attendees also offered suggestions for alternate forms of funding, as well as suggestions for how to curb current spending. In terms of alternate funding, attendees suggested increasing fees for nonresidents for all outdoor recreation activities and selling a stamp that would cover the costs of regulating and enforcing commercial boat use. In terms of curbing spending, some suggested that all Game and Fish construction be outsourced in order to utilize less expensive labor. In addition, attendees suggested fewer restrictions on horn hunting in order to profit more from the practice.

General Education and Outreach

Those in attendance at the Pinedale meeting felt that education should be a top priority for Game and Fish. Attendees noted that promoting all kinds of education for youth would help encourage more involvement in the practices of Game and Fish. Some attendees suggested that planning meetings include members of the media in order to ensure dissemination of content to individuals who are unable to be involved in meetings themselves.

Bears

Many attendees felt that bears have become a major concern for hunters. Some commented that bears have a negative impact on feed grounds, and that this issue needs to be addressed by Game and Fish.

Game and Fish Performance

All comments about the performance of Game and Fish were positive. Multiple attendees felt that Game and Fish was doing an excellent job overall, especially in terms of working with the public and responding to the needs of the public.

Regulations

Attendees felt that regulations for deer hunting were easy to follow, but that elk regulations were too complicated. Some felt that limiting the areas in which elk hunting was permitted might help simplify regulations. Attendees also reported satisfaction with the new regulations book.

Landowners / Private Land Projects

Attendees agreed that private landowners should be encouraged to open their properties to hunters and anglers. Some suggested that landowners receive compensation, such as additional support from Game and Fish or free hunting and fishing licenses for cooperating with Game and Fish. Some in attendance feared that conservation easements might be limiting control from landowners and creating unnecessary access issues.

Aquatic Invasive Species

There was a fair amount of discussion involving AIS in the Pinedale public meetings. Members of the public felt that AIS should be an area of focus at state borders rather than throughout the state. There was some concern that inspecting vessels that only moved within the state represents a waste of time and money. Other attendees felt that AIS-related issues were beyond a solution.

Wolves

Attendees felt that wolves were causing problems for hunters, particularly in feed grounds.

Access

Some attendees argued that access issues were the result of a surplus of Teton guides and outfitters congesting areas in Pinedale. Others felt that many access issues stem from an increase in ATV use.

Game and Fish Autonomy / Relationship With Legislature

Attendees agreed that the legislature needs to take more responsibility for decisions that are made through joint effort with Game and Fish.

Technology in Hunting

Some attendees were concerned about the use of technology in hunting and expressed interest in Game and Fish and the legislature working together in order to maintain fair chase hunting techniques.

Licensing

Pinedale public meeting attendees felt that deer, elk, and antelope license prices need to be increased. There was also some discussion about instituting an early horn hunting license.

Guides / Outfitters

Guides in the Pinedale meeting felt that they could be better utilized by Game and Fish, as they spend more time than many others in the field, and thus have more firsthand experience with many of the priority issues discussed in meetings. Some suggested conducting guide-only public meetings.

Fishing

Guides and anglers in attendance at the Pinedale meeting requested that fishing license prices be reduced, especially when fishing with a guide. Some attendees felt that Wyoming's fishing regulations were easy to understand and user-friendly.

Habitat

Attendees felt that habitat projects should be launched in small regions and then thoroughly evaluated before they are implemented throughout the state.

Crossbow Hunting Season

Pinedale attendees agreed that crossbows were useful for many hunters and should not be regulated.

Small Game

Some were concerned that sage grouse are facing potential disease threats leading to a decline in their numbers.

Resident / Nonresident Tag Allocation

Attendees agreed that Game and Fish and Wyoming, in general, benefit financially from the sale of nonresident tags, and as such nonresidents should have a voice in Game and Fish decisions. They countered, however, that Wyoming residents should never be under the impression that nonresidents have more influence than residents over Game and Fish decision-making.

Participation and R3

Keeping with the theme of all meetings, Pinedale attendees felt that recruitment should be focused on youth in order to create new generations of outdoors enthusiasts.

Law Enforcement

Some attendees worried there are not enough game wardens to ensure adequate enforcement of regulations.

Poaching

Some attendees felt that antler poaching is a major issue that needs to be addressed by Game and Fish.

Other

There were a few comments in the Pinedale meeting that qualified as “other.” First, there was mention of the need to have bison reintroduced to the Great Basin. In addition, there was discussion about Game and Fish working to help prevent outdoor recreationists from damaging archeological sites.

CODY

The Cody public meeting took place on Friday, February 9 at Buffalo Bill’s Irma Hotel. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 20 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Nongame Wildlife

Protection of nongame species was one of the most frequently mentioned topics in the Cody public meeting. There was some concern that nongame management was not prioritized by Game and Fish, and that too many nongame management decisions are dictated by politics rather than science. A specific nongame wildlife issue mentioned in the meeting included concern for wintering wildlife competing with livestock for food. Some attendees felt that funding for nongame species should not be coming from hunting and fishing license revenue.

Small Game

Concern was expressed about the perception of a declining sage grouse population.

Bears

There were a number of questions in the Cody meeting about grizzly bear hunting; attendees requested a timeline for the introduction of seasons and a breakdown of potential regulations. In addition, attendees suggested the use of a tag system similar to the current bison tag system. Some attendees also suggested that grizzly bear hunting be allowed only with guides in order to ensure sows are identified and protected.

Funding

Cody meeting attendees felt that Game and Fish needed to find alternate sources of funding. Many suggested finding ways to include non-consumptive users in funding, as well as ways to bring in more funds from nongame species. In addition, attendees feared that tag sales were likely to decline in the near future, as there seemed to be a decrease in game species throughout the state. In terms of curbing spending, some attendees did not understand why Game and Fish was funding brucellosis testing when that responsibility should fall on livestock owners.

Access

Attendees agreed that crowding had become an issue in many areas. Willwood was specifically mentioned as an area with access issues. Some attendees felt access issues were the result of poor game management on behalf of Game and Fish.

Landowners / Private Land Projects

Most Cody attendees felt that Game and Fish needs to work with private landowners to protect migration corridors and to better manage wildlife on private land. Some felt that private landowners who work with Game and Fish should be given tags and free licenses for contributing to the protection of habitat and wildlife.

Participation and R3

Again, Cody meeting attendees felt recruitment efforts should be targeting youth. Some attendees even cautioned that a lack of focus on recruiting youth could result in the end of hunting and fishing in Wyoming.

Game and Fish Performance

Attendees agreed that Game and Fish was doing an excellent job in most fields, but some attendees felt that Game and Fish needs to focus more on being transparent with the public and its stakeholders in order to help constituents understand the motivation behind decisions. Some attendees were concerned that politics has too much influence on Game and Fish decisions.

Licensing

Some in attendance at the Cody meeting felt that lowering hunting and fishing license prices might bring more youth to the sports. There was some discussion about allowing individuals over 65 to purchase lifetime "senior" licenses.

Trapping

The Cody meeting included a fair amount of comments about trapping. Most agreed that trapping regulations were outdated and doing unnecessary harm to wildlife. Some Cody attendees offered stories of trapping accidents they had witnessed.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Attendees felt that collaboration with other government and nonprofit agencies could aid in habitat and migration corridor protection.

General Education and Outreach

Some in attendance felt that the online forum created by Responsive Management offered a great opportunity to communicate with others, but should include more questions about trapping and birds, and should encourage commenters to identify themselves as residents or nonresidents.

Habitat

Attendees felt strongly that Game and Fish needs to focus on the protection of habitat and migration corridors.

Regulations

Some felt that general elk season in Cody needed to be replaced with limited quotas.

Game and Fish Autonomy / Relationship With Legislature

Some attendees suggested that Game and fish be allowed more autonomy in its decision-making.

Resident / Nonresident Tag Allocation

There was some frustration expressed in relation to the issuing of Commissioner tags to nonresidents.

Wolves

Attendees felt that buffalo movement could be attributed to a perceived increase in the wolf population.

Preference Points

Cody meeting attendees felt that only residents should be accumulating preference points.

Disease Concerns

CWD was a concern for attendees in Cody. There was some discussion about feed grounds being a potential breeding ground for the disease.

Poaching

Attendees felt that fines need to be higher for poaching and punishment more severe overall.

Other

There were some comments about disabled veterans not having enough hunting opportunities. Though these comments could potentially fall into other categories—access, crossbow hunting, regulations, etc.—those who commented on the topic spoke more generally about the need for Game and Fish to focus on all aspects of hunting for disabled individuals.

JACKSON

The Jackson public meeting took place on Saturday, February 10 at the National Museum of Wildlife Art. The meeting lasted slightly more than 2 hours and was attended by approximately 50 members of the public and several members of Game and Fish staff. Any topic that was not mentioned in this meeting is not included in the meeting description below. After a brief description of research findings, the discussion was opened to attendees. After a period of public comments and questions, Game and Fish and Responsive Management staff were able to answer questions and address issues that had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Below are the topics

of discussion from the meeting, with more frequently discussed topics being addressed before those that were less frequently mentioned.

Funding

Jackson public meeting attendees agreed with most other meeting attendees that Game and Fish is in need of alternate sources of funding. Some suggested implementing tourist taxes and fees associated with outdoor recreation activities in order to acquire more funding.

Habitat

According to those in attendance, habitat protection needs to be prioritized by Game and Fish. Many perceived an increase in road kill and a decline in the protection of migratory corridors, and felt that increased funding and attention on habitat protection could improve this situation.

Trapping

Trapping was a frequent topic in the Jackson public meeting. Some attendees felt that regulations should require traps be set more than 100 yards from trails. Others felt trapping should be prohibited altogether in Wyoming. Some commented that bear baiting should not be permitted.

Bears

Attendees commented that grizzly bear hunting should be limited to nuisance bears only and should not be extended into a general bear hunting season.

Resident / Nonresident Tag Allocation

Some attendees felt that too many nonresident tags were being issued. Some attendees said they were willing to pay higher prices in order to shift tag allocation in favor of Wyoming residents.

Wolves

The Jackson meeting attendees seemed to have more to say about wolves than residents in many other meetings. Some attendees felt that wolves were driving elk into neighborhoods and suburban areas and depleting moose numbers.

General Education and Outreach

Some noted that the public should be made aware of the health of wildlife populations and herd numbers. Attendees felt that some species were declining, and without information and education from Game and Fish, the potential existed for Game and Fish to be blamed for the perception of declining wildlife populations.

Hunter Ethics / Hunter Education

Attendees felt there should be more education on the signs and symptoms of CWD. In addition, attendees felt that there should be more education in order to encourage safe and modern trapping methods.

Game and Fish Performance

As in the other meetings, Game and Fish performance was described in positive terms throughout the Jackson meeting.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Attendees expressed a desire for more public meetings in order to encourage more partnerships with the public and public groups.

Crossbow Hunting Season

Some Jackson meeting attendees felt that crossbows offer increased opportunities for children, the elderly, and disabled individuals to hunt and, as such, should be permitted during all hunting seasons.

Game and Fish Autonomy / Relationship With Legislature

Attendees explained that Game and Fish had high approval among the public and should not risk compromising that approval by allowing the legislature too much influence on agency decision-making.

Small Game

There was discussion about the perception of declining numbers of sage grouse throughout the state.

Expand Agency Constituency

Attendees felt that nonresidents and non-consumptive users needed to be included in surveys and research. Further, attendees felt that these groups need to have voices in the construction of the strategic plan.

Guides / Outfitters

A number of Jackson meeting attendees felt that guides and outfitters have too much influence on the decisions of Game and Fish.

Technology in Hunting

Some attendees voiced disapproval of the use of technology in hunting, with some people feeling that drones, scopes, and planes defied the concept of fair chase.

10. PUBLIC FORUM

The public forum was a website comprising a homepage and six discussion pages. The six forum discussion categories were wildlife and wildlife viewing; hunting; fishing; boating; hunter education, educational programs, and communication; and “other” Wyoming Game and Fish topics (the “other” allowing any pertinent topic that forum contributors felt was not covered in the five established categories). The methodology is discussed in full in Chapter 12, “Methodology.”

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

GAME AND FISH FUNDING

Contributors to the online public forum wanted Game and Fish to explore funding sources that include non-consumptive outdoor recreationists.

They promoted this concept in terms of Game and Fish adjusting to the changing outdoor recreational activities; many forum contributors said that people are increasingly interested in wildlife viewing, wildlife photography, hiking, camping, and other kinds of non-consumptive outdoor recreation. Such wildlife consumers wanted better representation in Game and Fish management and regulatory decision-making.

Many forum contributors wanted Game and Fish to increase nonresident hunting fees.

While some were wary that a steep nonresident fee increase could discourage nonresidents from hunting in Wyoming and therefore decrease Game and Fish funding, many advocated for it nonetheless.

Some in the fishing and hunting forums advocated for nonresident guide fees that would permit Wyoming guides to remain competitive and provide another income stream for Game and Fish.

ACCESS

Contributors across multiple forum sections discussed access. Anglers were concerned for the access of streams in which the state owns the waters but landowners own the stream beds and banks.

Hunters were concerned that large tracts of public land are inaccessible because they are landlocked by private land that landowners will not permit hunters to pass through to access public land.

Non-consumptive outdoor recreationists such as hikers and wildlife viewers were concerned about the apparent increases in road and trail closures on public land due to a perceived lack of maintenance.

Their concern was heightened by having observed some recreationists who use motorized vehicles (such as ATVs) to breach closed public trails and roads and have created ruts and changes in geography that are difficult to restore.

LARGE CARNIVORE MANAGEMENT—WOLVES AND BEARS

Many contributors, especially in the hunting and wildlife viewing forums, discussed the management of wolves and grizzly bears; however, there was no consensus.

Reasons for supporting the hunting of wolves included that wolves were felt to thin elk herds too much, that wolves were felt to change elk migration patterns, and that landowners could lose money because hunters would not lease land on which the wolves had depleted the elk and deer.

Those who advocated for hunting grizzly bears tended to view the species with greater amicability than they did wolves, but they still believed that grizzlies need to be re-educated as to acceptable boundaries between themselves and human populations.

Nobody seemed to argue that grizzly populations are too high (as many advocates for wolf hunting argued was the case with wolf populations), but they often noted that grizzly populations have stabilized and that a hunting season can be opened on them.

One reason for opposing the hunting of both wolves and grizzlies was the perceived economic incentive of wildlife viewing related to these species specifically.

Thinning their populations could result in less tourism, meaning less funding within the state.

Some opposition to hunting wolves and grizzly bears was expressed as a rights issue—essentially, the right to view wolves and bears is just as valid as the right to hunt them.

Some participants claimed that the rights issue can be resolved by giving wildlife viewers and other non-consumptive recreationists a “seat at the management table.”

Some expressed an opposition to the hunting of wolves because they felt that the wolf population could become a key management tool in thinning elk herds that become infected with CWD.

Another reason to oppose hunting wolves that was expressed is that human encroachment into wildlife habitat does not necessarily mean the species should be extirpated in that area.

Those who opposed hunting grizzlies thought it is poor management to allow a hunting season just because the species has achieved a self-sustaining population.

As for bears presenting a threat to Wyoming neighborhoods and more rural human populations, some opposed to hunting grizzlies advocated for more bear-friendly community efforts, noting that human encroachment onto grizzly territory has been increasing.

TRAPPING

Multiple contributors to the hunting and wildlife viewing forums commented on trapping. The vast majority of these contributors opposed the current state of trapping in Wyoming, on the grounds that trapping causes undue and prolonged suffering to wildlife.

Some contributors who opposed trapping expressed concern about family pets.

Those in the forum who opposed trapping generally suggested one of two preferred outcomes: a total statewide ban on trapping, or new restrictions to make current Wyoming trapping regulations and laws more stringent.

EDUCATION

Contributors to the hunting, boating, and other issues forums all commented on the need to increase educational and training opportunities for young and inexperienced hunters and non-consumptive outdoor recreationists.

Boaters' comments regarding education/instruction centered on boating etiquette and proper behavior, especially for boating and non-boating anglers and other recreationists on or near the water.

Some felt education on hunter ethics has not kept pace with the rise in hunting technology: this was commonly mentioned in terms of crossbows and scopes, especially as the latter may encourage hunters to take shots from too far away.

Some comments advocated for updating hunter safety instruction to reflect considerations of such hunting technology. It was thought that increased attention to this technology would be particularly meaningful to younger and less experienced hunters, who may be the most intent on harvesting game.

This analysis focuses on issues of concern that were most frequently addressed in each topic section of the forum. The analysis focuses on the variety of opinions that were represented in issues that were most frequently addressed; it does not make any quantitative evaluations of the forum because the intent of the forum was to obtain the variety of opinions that existed, not to obtain quantitative data. Note that, just because a particular topic is not mentioned or does not have a designated category, this does not mean the topic was not reviewed and considered by the researchers. The forum was closed for analysis on February 26, 2018; as such, all observations in this report reflect that end-date.

10.1. WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE VIEWING

The following issues were addressed in the approximate order of frequency in which they appear in the wildlife and wildlife viewing forum. The three most discussed issues in the forum are trapping; the management of large carnivores, specifically wolves and grizzlies; and the need to seek additional Game and Fish funding through non-consumptive outdoor recreation. Other issues addressed to a lesser degree in this forum include access, more focus on nongame species and management, concern over the elk feed grounds across the state, upland bird hunting, and trophy hunting.

TRAPPING

Trapping was one of the most often discussed topics in the wildlife and wildlife viewing forum. Many in this forum opposed trapping, either calling for regulatory reform or for a statewide ban on trapping, which is perceived by some to be an outdated and cruel form of taking game. Many contributors also noted the accidental trapping of family pets and other wildlife for which the traps or snares were not intended. In these accounts, accidental trapping is perceived as leading to extensive and unnecessary suffering on the part of the animal.

Most contributors to the trapping discussion opposed it to one degree or another. Some called for a full and immediate statewide ban on trapping while others called for Game and Fish to consider substantial reforms to trapping, noting that many animals end up in traps that should not. They suggested shorter intervals for required trap checks, more specific tracking on individual traps so that Game and Fish and other outdoor recreationists can easily identify and locate the owner of specific traps, and increasing the required distance from roads and other public venues where traps may legally be set. Regardless of the specific recommendations, almost everyone who commented on trapping in this forum opposed it on ethical grounds (again, because they feel that animals suffer unnecessarily).

LARGE CARNIVORE MANAGEMENT: WOLVES AND BEARS

One of the most addressed issues in this forum concerned the management of wolves and grizzly bears. Many contributors were clear in their request that they not be hunted. There were few in the wildlife forum who advocated for hunting seasons on wolves and grizzly bears.

There were many participants in the wildlife and wildlife viewing forum who self-identified as non-hunters but who said they enjoy wildlife viewing and photography. Some argued that, from a funding standpoint, a live wolf is more valuable than one that has been hunted and killed. Many of these commenters expressed delight in being able to see wolves, grizzly bears, and all manner of Wyoming wildlife alive in their natural habitats throughout the state. Some expressed concern that grizzly bears are a particularly delicate population and that Game and Fish should not be in a hurry to promote a grizzly bear hunting season.

Wildlife viewers and others who spoke out against hunting wolves and grizzlies in the forum asserted that they (the wildlife viewers) have just as much right to enjoy these natural resources—wolves and grizzly bears—as do hunters. Some in this forum claimed that hunting wolves and/or grizzly bears is a poor management decision in general, or that population levels for grizzly bears are too unstable to permit hunting. Others claimed that wolves and grizzlies have lived among elk, deer, and moose populations much longer than humans have and that there is a resultant natural balance of wildlife populations that occurs outside of human management efforts. As such, some claimed that Game and Fish management of these species either through

hunting or other population-thinning efforts is unnecessary and monetarily wasteful. They claimed that the “natural rhythm” of the food chain will, over time, balance itself in spite of humans’ varying perceptions of wildlife populations. There was little apparent concern for how wolf and grizzly bear populations might negatively affect cattle herds or the safety of hunters who are field dressing game.

Note that some contributors in the online forum discussed their views on wolves and grizzly bears as if management of the two species represented a single issue (of course, the hunting of each species represents two separate management issues). It seemed that contributors viewed the wolf/grizzly bear discussion within the larger issue of large carnivore management in general.

FUNDING

Wildlife viewers and other non-consumptive outdoor recreationists were vocal in this forum about the need for Game and Fish to seek alternate funding through additional fees associated with their own outdoor activities—a tax on themselves, essentially. Much of this commentary seemed to center on the perception that Game and Fish has traditionally focused largely on hunting and fishing opportunities and game management. Some contributors noted their perception of a decreasing hunting population and an increasing non-consumptive outdoor recreation population (this was sometimes discussed in terms of a national trend)—along these lines, some commenters asserted that the future of funding for Game and Fish will not be based strictly on revenues from hunting and fishing license fees, but, perhaps more comprehensively, on fees from non-consumptive outdoor recreation as well.

Many self-identified non-consumptive recreationists were vocal about wanting “a seat at the table”: not only contributing to the overall Game and Fish revenue stream, but also having a say in regulatory decisions, including the allocation of agency funding. Many contributors suggested the need for Game and Fish to change its funding base to better reflect the increasing non-consumptive outdoor recreation population.

ACCESS

Although the conversation on access was not as extensive in this section as in the hunting section, there was still concern from a non-consumptive outdoor recreational perspective. Some were aware of and concerned about the privatization of public lands. Many of those who commented on the issue of access to public lands in this section also advocated a fee structure of some kind for non-consumptive outdoor recreation in the state as an additional means by which to fund Game and Fish. The perception seemed to be that the more funding Game and Fish has, the better it will be able to perform its job of improving access for all manner of outdoor recreation across the state. There was also some apparent frustration over landowners and ranchers who intentionally block public access roads.

NONGAME MANAGEMENT

In connection with expanding the Game and Fish funding base, there was also a sentiment expressed that Game and Fish should place greater emphasis on managing nongame species. This request often came from individuals who self-identified as wildlife viewers and/or photographers, some of whom suggested that Game and Fish should be more interested in supporting wildlife viewing and less invested in hunting and fishing. Some other wildlife viewers thought that large carnivore management had much to do with stabilizing nongame populations.

ELK FEED GROUNDS

There was some concern that elk feed grounds are counter-productive to promoting healthy migration patterns and robust elk populations across the state. Some commenters were wary that high-density elk populations on feed grounds have the potential to breed life-threatening diseases such as CWD. Some contributors asserted that elk feed grounds are not an effective management tool, even if they are intended to minimize damage to landowner properties.

UPLAND BIRD HUNTING

Comments on upland bird hunting suggested that Game and Fish should do more to manage and advertise its upland game bird population. Some claimed that it is an underutilized resource that could be more fully enjoyed by hunters if it were developed more thoroughly.

TROPHY HUNTING

Some contributors in this forum called for de-emphasizing trophy hunting and placing greater emphasis on subsistence hunting—hunting for food. A few contributors indicated that trophy hunting weakens the gene pool and can have a long-term negative affect on species that are hunted for trophies. There were even a few contributors who noted that they regularly hunt for food only, rather than trophies.

While some viewed trophy hunting as an ethical violation, others saw no problem with it, especially if hunters hunt for both the trophy and the meat. There was some frustration over the idea of nonresident hunters coming to the state to trophy hunt—some commenters indicated that out-of-state visitors do not care as much about preserving wildlife and habitat as do Wyoming residents.

10.2. HUNTING

The following issues were addressed in the approximate order of frequency in which they appeared in the hunting forum. The three most discussed topics in the hunting forum were access, funding, and issues associated with nonresident hunting. Other issues addressed to a lesser degree in this forum included large carnivore management, hunting season structure, general wildlife management, and others. Analysis of all comments yielded 25 major topics as primary areas of concern among those who commented in the hunting forum.

ACCESS

Access was a major topic in the hunting forum. A large portion of access comments suggested that overcrowding has become a major concern for Wyoming hunters. Some commenters felt that the surplus of guides and outfitters in the state, along with the nonresidents they accompany, are the primary reason for overcrowding, while others felt that landowners' unwillingness to allow passage to landlocked public land is to blame.

Most comments about access centered on private landowners and their lack of cooperation in allowing public access to lands managed in part through taxpayer dollars. Many in the hunting forum suggested that allowing corner hopping onto landlocked public land might ease some of the access issues that hunters are experiencing. Additional comments pointed out an increase in the number of hunting licenses being sold and the sale of general tags as a potential cause of overcrowding. While the overall sentiment seemed to suggest considerable difficulties with public access, some commenters commended the Access Yes! program as a worthwhile initiative.

FUNDING

Many commenters in the hunting forum urged Game and Fish to find alternate funding sources. Some contributors requested that Game and Fish refrain from using revenues from hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses on projects focusing on non-consumptive users and nongame wildlife. Commenters throughout the hunting forum offered suggestions for diversity in funding. Suggestions included offering an Access Yes! stamp, increasing the price of bird and pheasant licenses and stamps, offering a state duck stamp, selling antler collection stamps or licenses, working with the legislature to tax outdoor recreation activities and equipment, and finding more ways to include non-consumptive users in funding Game and Fish. Including non-consumptive users was the most popular recommendation, as many felt that, in addition to aiding in funding, more contribution from non-consumptive users would result in greater overall buy-in to Game and Fish management decisions.

NONRESIDENT ISSUES

Many comments in the hunting forum addressed the perception of growing tension between nonresident and resident hunters in Wyoming. Most often, resident hunters commented that there are too many tags and licenses going to nonresidents. This practice, some argued, is driving up the prices of tags and licenses as a whole and could ultimately turn hunting into a sport exclusively for the wealthy. Some commenters suggested giving the bulk of tags and licenses to residents and then apportioning remaining tags and licenses to nonresident hunters. There was widespread concern among resident hunters that the number of nonresident tags being issued is likely to increase in the near future. Resident hunters saw this as a disadvantage to them because they anticipate a corresponding reduction in the availability of resident tags. In spite of all of these concerns, residents also acknowledged the considerable amount of funding that nonresident hunting licenses provide to Game and Fish.

SEASONS

There was a fair amount of discussion about the initiation of a muzzleloader/primitive weapon season in Wyoming. Some felt the season would be best placed early in the general hunt season, specifically targeting elk. Others felt that a muzzleloader/primitive weapon season should be added to the end of the general hunting season.

In addition, many commenters felt strongly about transitioning mule deer from a general hunt season into a statewide limited quota. Comments throughout the hunting forum revealed concern about the perception of a declining mule deer population in Wyoming; some comments suggested ways to approach the issue through hunting season changes. Some suggested a simple shift in the season, resulting in increased hunting in early fall in order to prevent later winter herd thinning and starvation. Some commenters articulated a desire to remove multi-week seasons and end the two-week break between archery and firearm seasons.

GENERAL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Comments about general wildlife management covered a number of subjects. There were a substantial number of comments about the decline in the mule deer population and how to create management strategies that help replenish numbers. Some suggested closing down particularly depleted units for a period of time to allow herds to rebound, rather than resorting to limited quota hunts.

Overall, multiple contributors suggested improving management for all game species. Suggestions included re-examining limited quota area licenses according to projected game populations, considering a temporary hunting blackout on certain areas, re-examining the season schedule each year, continuing to support bird farms and the elk feeding regions, limiting ATV and other motorized access, and requiring hunters to take and submit game blood samples to Game and Fish for biological analysis.

LARGE CARNIVORE MANAGEMENT: WOLVES AND BEARS

Comments related to management strategies for large carnivores, particularly wolves and grizzly bears, were mixed. In general, there were two arguments in the hunting forum. First, some thought that wolf and bear hunting would promote a responsible thinning of these species that would enable elk and other populations to rebound or flourish across the state. The rationale among contributors was that these carnivores—wolves in particular—are damaging elk populations and migratory patterns across the state. The solution offered was to thin the wolf population in order to reduce potential damage to elk populations.

Grizzly bear comments expressed less concern for grizzlies' impact on other species and more concern about grizzly-human interactions. The consensus for those who wanted a grizzly season was that the population should be thinned while boundaries are reestablished to protect human populations. In contrast, those opposed to wolf and bear hunting claimed that, from the perspective of revenue, live wolves and bears are of greater value to Wyoming (from a wildlife viewing standpoint, it was thought that many tourists may come to Wyoming to view these large carnivores in nature).

Those opposed to the hunting of wolves also noted that wolves could be a management tool for elk and deer populations that suffer from CWD. Contributors who noted this emphasized that wolves often thin herds by going after the weakest animals in those populations, which would reasonably be elk or deer infected with CWD.

CROSSBOWS

Among archery hunters, there was considerable frustration over the proposition that crossbows be excluded from archery season. A number of contributors noted that crossbows provide an inclusive alternative for youth, disabled individuals, and elderly hunters. Those in the hunting forum who expressed opposition to the use of crossbows indicated concern over the advantage of technology associated with crossbows—namely the increased shooting distance.

LANDOWNERS / PRIVATE LAND PROJECTS

Contributors to the hunting forum were concerned about the perceived level of influence private landowners have over Game and Fish decisions. In even greater abundance, however, were comments about landowners' perceived control over public lands. Many commenters agreed that landowners who receive subsidies for wildlife damage and management should be obligated to allow hunting on their land. In addition, contributors felt strongly that not allowing the public to pass through private land to access portions of landlocked public land is unethical and should warrant fines or some form of punishment.

TECHNOLOGY IN HUNTING

Some hunting forum contributors were concerned that technological advances that are being used in hunting present an ethical dilemma. Although contributors noted the rise in quality technology, some also indicated that taking such long-range game shots, as permitted by current technology, poses a serious ethical problem for hunting. Contributors suggested that Game and Fish should revisit regulations surrounding long-range shooting of game animals in Wyoming, given the advances in hunting technology (e.g., improved scopes, drones, cameras).

TRAPPING

There was a fair amount of discussion about trapping in the hunting forum. Many commenters advocated for eliminating trapping altogether, on the grounds that the practice is unnecessarily cruel. By contrast, some contributors recommended increased education and an updated set of trapping regulations, including moving traps more than 100 yards from trails and increasing the frequency with which traps are to be checked to help mitigate unnecessary death of accidentally trapped wildlife.

TROPHY HUNTING

In terms of the discussion about trophy hunting, some felt that trophy-specific licenses could be sold at more expensive rates. Others suggested managing certain areas specifically for trophy hunting and charging an additional fee for access in order to bring in more funding for Game and Fish. In addition, some commented that Wyoming has the best trophy hunting in the country and should be taking advantage of this distinction.

OUTREACH

Contributors suggested that public meetings be conducted in an online format in order to be more inclusive of residents who are unable to travel or make time for in-person meetings. Some argued that current public meetings are monopolized by guides and outfitters, which shifts Game and Fish management and regulations in favor of guides, outfitters, and nonresidents. Commenters also argued that more hunters and anglers should be included in surveys and research to get a better understanding of the needs and opinions of all who hunt and fish in Wyoming.

REGULATIONS

There was some concern from contributors that regulations have become overly complicated and are in need of simplification. In addition, some specific regulations were mentioned in the hunting forum. The most frequently mentioned regulation that commenters felt should be changed was the rule requiring nonresidents to be accompanied by outfitters or guides when in wilderness areas. In addition, contributors mentioned ceasing the use of two-way communication devices while hunting, implementing a mandatory harvest survey (with a penalty for noncompliance), lowering the minimum age for hunting in order to include more youth, declaring more hunting areas archery-only, and continuing to allow the use of game cameras.

TAG ALLOCATION

The majority of discussion about tag allocation focused on the proportion of residents and nonresidents being awarded tags. That being said, some other tag-related issues were discussed in the hunting forum. Some mentioned the need for issuing weapon-specific tags, while others felt that tags should be issued for smaller, more specific areas. Other issues included a request for premium deer tags, a reduction in the number of tags being issued overall, and the implementation of a waiting period after a tag is drawn.

PREFERENCE POINTS

The topic of preference points was a source of some debate in the hunting forum. Contributors felt that nonresidents should not be allowed to accrue preference points. In terms of who should be receiving preference points, however, some suggested extending the ability to purchase preference points to youth under the minimum hunting age and residents only. Others felt that preference points should be eliminated altogether.

OUTFITTERS AND GUIDES

Throughout the forum, there was a fair amount of discussion about the relationship between outfitters and guides and Game and Fish. Several contributors felt strongly that the influence on Game and Fish by outfitters and guides is too great and that these groups need to be regulated. Specifically, participants mentioned not allowing outfitters and guides to receive tags and implementing regulations that require these groups to pay a fee per animal harvested. Further, there was some speculation that these groups are the driving force behind the potential increase in nonresident tag allocation and hunting licenses. Contributors cautioned Game and Fish that increasing tag allocation and license sales to nonresidents as a result of only outfitter and guide input could lead to a conflict of interest, as well as increased resident mistrust of Game and Fish.

GAME AND FISH PERFORMANCE

Most comments about Game and Fish performance clearly indicated that public opinion related to Game and Fish is overwhelmingly positive. Some contributors requested that Game and Fish focus less on managing for guides and outfitters, while others requested that Game and Fish be more transparent overall—in funding, management choices, tag allocation, and other aspects of decision-making.

LICENSES

There were a few comments related directly to Game and Fish's issuing of licenses: some suggested that lifetime licenses should be made available to nonresident senior citizens. Other commenters were concerned that too many licenses are being issued overall and are leading to depletion of resources.

PARTNERSHIPS / COLLABORATION

There was some indication from hunting forum contributors that Game and Fish needs to maintain collaborative partnerships with other organizations. The Boone and Crocket Club, Safari Club International, the state legislature, and individual constituent groups were variously mentioned.

PARTICIPATION / R3

Nearly all comments about participation focused on the importance of recruiting and retaining youth hunters. Some contributors felt that using a conservation-centric learning model when educating youth would be likely to lead to life-long participation.

HABITAT

Habitat discussion in the hunting forum focused on the need to prioritize the protection of wildlife habitat. Several commenters expressed concern over the lack of habitat and migration corridor protection, leading to increased instances of road collisions with wildlife.

POACHING

According to comments in this forum, poaching is a major issue in Wyoming. Contributors urged Game and Fish to work with the legislature to increase fines for poaching and classify poaching as a felony rather than a misdemeanor.

HUNTING OPPOSITION

There was a small but persistent group of forum participants who opposed hunting entirely. The primary argument against hunting centered on the concept that wildlife is worth more to Game and Fish alive rather than dead. Some contributors pointed out that selling a hunting license or issuing a tag results in only one instance of financial gain, while wildlife viewing and photography can be sustained over a longer period, resulting in more financial gain.

UPLAND BIRD HUNTING

Several forum contributors noted that Game and Fish should dedicate more attention to upland bird hunting. Some commenters felt that upland bird hunting in Wyoming has been sorely overlooked as a potential source of funding. Although some were reticent to bring more nonresident hunters into the state, they felt that better advertising of bird hunting opportunities could potentially increase tourism and ultimately lead to more revenue for Game and Fish.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Contributors clearly expressed a need for more law enforcement overall, as well as stricter penalties for wildlife violations.

10.3. FISHING

Contributors to the fishing forum focused upon four main areas: access to streams, guides and outfitters, stream flow regulations, and nonresident and resident fees. Additional areas that were mentioned included overcrowding, trophy and subsistence fishing, and creel limits and size regulations.

ACCESS

Similar to the access issue in other forums, contributors' comments on fishing access focused on gaining entry to public lands that are currently blocked by private lands. Some contributors to the access discussion indicated that it is unfair that private landowners, who understandably want to make money from their own land, are allowed to block access to public land. One commenter suggested the use of easements as a solution to this issue.

Another access issue included perceived conflicts between floaters—anglers who fish streams or rivers from a boat—and waders. It was said that floaters will sometimes fish where waders are casting, which creates an issue. The perception expressed was that waders are limited to the areas where they can fish; as a result, when floaters fish near them, waders have very little accessible water on which to cast. One contributor suggested expanding areas for waders and restricting a few additional areas where floaters can fish.

NONRESIDENT ISSUES

There was some discussion on the cost of resident and nonresident fees. Some commenters opposed and some supported raising nonresident fees. Those opposed claimed that the fees are high enough already, whereas supporters viewed increased nonresident fees as a way to bolster Game and Fish revenue. One contributor suggested increasing fees for both residents and

nonresident anglers, noting that Game and Fish can use the revenue increases. A few people were apprehensive, thinking that such fee increases—either for residents or nonresidents—could discourage people from fishing in Wyoming, which could adversely affect overall agency funding.

Some contributors expressed frustration that there are no apparent regulations on or fees for nonresident guides, claiming that they can take as many in-state guiding trips as they want each year and that they do not have to have a license or pay any accompanying out-of-state fees to guide in Wyoming. Some commenters on this issue requested that nonresident guides be required to pay considerable guide fees (e.g., boat ramp fees, licenses, taxes) to run their operations in Wyoming. They noted that this could become a viable funding source for Game and Fish and allow resident Wyoming guides to remain competitive in the market. Additionally, a few suggested that there may need to be a limit on the number of nonresident guide trips—possibly on a stream-by-stream basis—that can be offered to customers per year. This too would provide greater opportunities for resident guides to profit.

REGULATIONS

There were a few comments on in-stream flow regulations. Most contributors who commented on stream flow indicated their disappointment that some streams dry up every year for one reason or another (e.g., cattle use, irrigation). They advocated for a required year-round minimum regulation on in-stream flow levels, noting the importance of these streams to the overall health of fisheries statewide. Some indicated that in-stream flow regulations would serve to further protect related habitat.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Many contributors suggested improving Wyoming's fisheries by modifying trout stocking, creel limits, and size restrictions; managing for trophy and subsistence fishing; or addressing the issue of overcrowding on fisheries during some parts of the year. A few contributors noted their desire that Game and Fish focus on restoring native trout statewide rather than simply restocking trout. Also, some suggested modifying creel limits and size restrictions depending upon the particular fishery, fish species populations, and number of licenses. Others, however, did not see the need for additional creel limits and size restrictions, but emphasized that Game and Fish continue to manage fisheries for both trophy and subsistence fishing. A few contributors noted their opposition to trophy fishing, but others seemed to support it when it is considered along with subsistence fishing. There was also some discussion of overcrowding within certain fisheries. In addition to suggestions for improvement, some contributors noted that Game and Fish is doing a good job overall in managing Wyoming's fisheries.

10.4. BOATING

While there were fewer comments in the boating forum, the most frequently discussed issues are summarized below. A number of contributors noted that boating in Wyoming is perceived to be good, and this sentiment may explain the relatively small number of contributors to this forum.

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

There was some mention of the aquatic invasive species program to deter zebra mussels from entering the state. A few noted that they would like to see more consistent inspection and enforcement within this program.

ACCESS

The primary frustration with access among contributors to the boating forum related to fishing in streams in which the state owns the waters while the landowner owns the stream beds and land on either side of the waters. Many noted the impracticality of this for anglers who would like to fish such waters and requested some kind of regulatory change on the issue.

EDUCATION

One contributor saw a need to raise awareness through education of boater safety and etiquette, having observed instances in which boaters were unaware of nearby anglers and other recreationists in the water who were negatively affected by the boat's wake. Another contributor also emphasized the need for boater education in the use of lifejackets and other personal safety issues.

10.5. HUNTER EDUCATION, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, AND COMMUNICATION

Similar to the boating forum, there were fewer comments on the education forum than for the wildlife and hunting forums. Archery, hunter ethics, and youth education were among the most discussed issues.

ARCHERY

A number of contributors emphasized the need for Game and Fish to create an archery education program. One contributor noted an increase in animal carcasses in the field directly after archery season, which he attributed to the concomitant lack of archery education along with the steep rise in sophisticated archery hunting technology. Within an archery education program, he requested an ethics education component for bow and crossbow hunters as well.

HUNTER ETHICS

In addition to wanting to include an ethics component in formalized archery education, a number of contributors requested greater coverage of hunter ethics in general through hunter education programs. Reasons for having an ethics component in hunter education programs included more recent technological improvements that allow hunters to take shots from extended ranges, and the presence of advanced AR-style weapons for which additional firearm education would be beneficial.

Such education, according to one contributor, should include lessons on weapon types and weapon choice so that younger and new hunters are fully aware of the capabilities of each firearm type—this would in turn allow them to make responsible, ethical shooting decisions in the field. In other words, new and returning hunters alike need to learn about the new capacities of taking game from longer ranges—including the ethical implications of extended-range game shooting—and the need to learn about the advanced capacities (for the sake of safety) of firearms more recently released in the hunting market. One contributor even mentioned that Game and Fish should require a firearms qualification course that prospective youth hunters would need to pass to certify their firearm skills before beginning to hunt. As mentioned previously, similar educational initiatives were also requested for archery hunting, with the emergence of high-powered scopes and crossbows (among other technology advancements).

YOUTH EDUCATION

While not addressed directly, one thread of commentary spanning multiple posts in this forum included the need to further involve and recruit young hunters. The motivation for additional education often traced itself to young and inexperienced hunters who require guidance, mentorship, skills development, and knowledge of hunting practices and ethics. Some contributors suggested the creation of mentoring programs, additional educational initiatives in schools, the updating of current hunter safety programs to include greater ethics and weapons choice components that are more relevant to current hunting technologies, and additional fee exceptions for young hunters.

10.6. OTHER WYOMING GAME AND FISH TOPICS

The primary topics covered in this section were all repeated, to one degree or another, in other forums within the public input website. The major issues within this forum are detailed below and illustrate some of the overlap with issues covered in the other forums. The most-addressed issues included Game and Fish funding sources, the spread of CWD, and concern over political influence over Game and Fish.

FUNDING

Funding for Game and Fish was a consistently discussed issue in this forum. Some contributors suggested multiple ways that Game and Fish can increase its funding: increasing nonresident tag fees; selling specialty Wyoming wildlife, conservation, and outdoor recreation license plates; selling a shed antler gathering license; offering preference points for deer and elk; sponsoring an annual fundraising event; requiring a Wyoming tourism sales tax that goes to Game and Fish; and using contributions from the general fund for Game and Fish.

Based on the amount of conversation alone on this particular forum about funding Game and Fish, it became apparent that it is an important issue among contributors.

DISEASE CONCERNS

One contributor to this forum identified CWD as a threat to Wyoming deer and elk populations. He suggested the use of wolves and mountain lions as a management tool to prevent or curtail the spread of CWD throughout the state. The use of large carnivores to manage the spread of CWD was addressed in the wildlife and hunting forums as well, so it bears noting in this section.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE

A few contributors to this forum reflected on the degree to which Game and Fish is influenced by political concerns. The central question was whether Game and Fish makes its management decisions on the basis of political influence or on the basis of biological, data-driven, science-based factors. The underlying assumption among contributors to this conversation was that Game and Fish should avoid decision-making that is influenced and/or informed by politics and political issues and should instead be motivated to make management, enforcement, regulatory, and other decisions on the basis of science, fact, and data.

11. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is in an enviable position as a governmental agency. Game and Fish enjoys high levels of support and satisfaction among residents and also has high credibility ratings among the Wyoming public. The program areas on which Game and Fish currently focuses are considered important to Wyoming residents; residents also feel that the agency is largely doing a good job in each of these areas. In fact, one of the key takeaways from this study is that the extensive data collection uncovered no “red flag” issues or areas warranting immediate concern: the public generally approves of the job the agency is doing and considers its work important. For their own part, Game and Fish employees, while mindful of certain areas for improvement, are likewise mostly satisfied with the status of the agency and its work.

In general, the main outputs of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department—healthy fish and wildlife populations and habitat, and quality fish and wildlife-related recreational opportunities—are regarded by Wyoming residents as extremely important. Wyoming’s fish and wildlife resources are an important reason why residents choose to live in the state—these resources are regularly described as being central to the state’s identity. Indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that the health of the state’s fish and wildlife resources and the continued availability of unique wildlife-related outdoor recreational opportunities contribute substantially to the overall quality of life in Wyoming.

While there are high levels of public support for both Game and Fish and its mission, most residents and employees feel that, with additional resources, the agency could be doing even more to effectively manage the state’s natural resources and address conservation issues (the public and employees also overwhelmingly feel that the agency should seek additional funding). The agency’s current management challenges are many; some of the most prominent concerns include habitat loss and fragmentation, aquatic invasive species, poaching, a shortage of wildlife law enforcement officers, increased visitation from nonresidents, increases in the bear and wolf populations, and a steady demand for quality hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing experiences. These issues add to pressure on Game and Fish to remain a high-performing agency.

Apart from various individual issues, the research identified notable (though not overwhelming) concern that Game and Fish focuses too heavily on game species and consumptive users (hunters, anglers, and trappers) and not enough on nongame species (which make up the majority of Wyoming’s wildlife) and non-consumptive users. A notable segment of residents and employees believe that Game and Fish should broaden its management efforts to better account not only for the state’s roughly 700 nongame fish and wildlife species but also opportunities for the portion of residents who value wildlife but do not hunt, fish, or trap.

Some residents may perceive that Game and Fish prioritizes game species and consumptive users over nongame and non-consumptive users because the residents observe (firsthand in the field or through media) that the agency works mostly on hunting- and fishing-related projects. Others may have knowledge of the agency’s funding model: given that hunters and anglers, through their purchases of licenses and excise taxed-equipment, are the primary funders of the agency, many people believe, approvingly or not, that these audiences tend to benefit the most from the agency’s programs and efforts.

Despite these findings, a more important point is that virtually all Wyomingites who provided input for the study (whether in the survey, focus groups, public meetings, or forum) want Game and Fish to remain well funded into the future; the survey, for example, showed that large majorities of residents and employees support alternative funding mechanisms for Game and Fish. But there is also no shortage of ideas from the public on how Game and Fish should be spending its budget: the combined data point to a number of management areas that residents feel may need more attention. Still, that the public wants Game and Fish to do more as an agency is a manifestation of residents' overwhelming approval of the work Game and Fish has done and continues to do.

With strong ratings from residents in terms of credibility, program priorities, and current performance, there is no overwhelming mandate for Game and Fish to drastically veer from its present course. However, the research also makes clear that residents want Game and Fish to go even further in the fulfillment of its mission—the challenge over the next 5 to 10 years will be in determining the extent to which Game and Fish expands the scope of its priorities.

Given the research findings, there are several directions in which the agency may head:

1. Continue on the current path, treating game species and consumptive recreational opportunities as the agency's de facto top priorities.
2. Move toward a model of comprehensive wildlife management, expanding the agency's focus to more fully include nongame species.
3. Move toward a model of comprehensive management for both wildlife and recreationists: increase efforts within current Game and Fish programs while also working to bring into the fold residents who do not hunt, fish, or trap.

On one hand, hunting and fishing will likely always be central to Wyoming's cultural identity. Declining national participation trends have caused some agencies to begin hedging their bets by moving to embrace more diversified constituencies (such as by ramping up nature programs in non-hunting urban areas), but Wyoming's hunting and fishing rates remain strong. And there is little direct comparison between Wyoming and more populous or urban states where the connection between people and nature is tenuous.

On the other hand, it is unlikely that Wyoming will remain unchanged forever. Demographic shifts may be accompanied by changes in the wildlife values orientations of the population. A 2005 study conducted by Colorado State University and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (Stinchfield, H.M.; A.A. Dayer; T.L. Teel; M.J. Manfredo; and A.D. Bright. 2005. State report for Wyoming from the research project titled *Wildlife Values in the West: Project Report No. 69*. Project Report for Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Fort Collins, CO: Colorado State University, Human Dimensions in Natural Resources Unit) found that about half of Wyoming residents regarded wildlife with a utilitarian mindset (believing that wildlife exists for human use), while the other half of the state held mutualist or pluralist views (either wholly or partially thinking about wildlife in familial, emotional terms). On the national scale, the last decade has seen a shift away from utilitarian values in favor of mutualist beliefs, and this same trend may play out in Wyoming as well (albeit, perhaps, over a longer timeline). (An update of the wildlife values study, which will show how attitudes have shifted in each state since 2005, is currently underway.) In this sense, a move toward a more comprehensive system of management of wildlife and/or recreationists may be a prudent approach to long-term

planning. At any rate, the obligation for Game and Fish over the next 5 to 10 years will be to balance priorities by widening, but not shifting, the scope of its management efforts.

Following are the planning recommendations from Responsive Management based on interpretation of the various components of the human dimensions research, including the scientific surveys, focus groups, public meetings, and online public input forum. As these recommendations do not account for all biological, ecological, legislative, and budgetary-related considerations, they should be viewed strictly as suggestions developed by the researchers for the strategic planning committee to consider. Again, they are intended as initial recommendations developed from Responsive Management's interpretation of both the qualitative and quantitative data.

PLANNING FUTURE GAME AND FISH MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

Recommendation: Develop a white paper exploring the costs and benefits of expansion to comprehensive fish and wildlife management, including greater emphasis on nongame species management.

As mentioned above, the research found notable concern among a segment of residents, stakeholders, and employees that the Wyoming Game and Fish Department focuses too narrowly on game species. This concern would appear to reflect an ongoing debate within the agency and among some members of the public concerning the future direction of Game and Fish—illustrative of one aspect of this debate, some people question the very name of the agency, pointing out that the term “game” ought to be replaced with the word “wildlife” to more accurately describe the agency’s complete management purview. While there is widespread recognition that the management of game species makes up a crucial component of the work of Game and Fish, feedback throughout the data collection about the agency’s balance of game and nongame management would seem to warrant further exploration of this topic. As discussed in the previous section, an agency-wide shift toward comprehensive wildlife management, including higher prioritization of nongame species, may also represent a forward-looking approach to stakeholder engagement and continued public support for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Recommendation: Consider adding nongame biologist positions.

In line with the previous recommendation, there may be a need for additional nongame biologist positions within the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. A recurring theme throughout the research concerned the importance of Game and Fish being proactive rather than reactive in its planning for and management of species such as the black-footed ferret—it was also sometimes mentioned that state wildlife action plans must be capably supported by dedicated biologists if they are to be successful. The survey results appear to confirm the need for increased management attention to nongame species: both residents and agency employees rate the importance of managing nongame species higher than the agency’s current performance in the same area. Also, in a direct question, a slight majority of agency employees agree that Game and Fish should devote more time, money, and effort to the management of nongame fish and wildlife species (note that this sentiment was echoed by many members of the public throughout the public meetings and focus groups).

Recommendation: Improve outreach to non-consumptive constituents.

Like most fish and wildlife agencies, Game and Fish maintains a fairly strong working relationship with hunters, anglers, and trappers in the state, but a somewhat weaker relationship with non-consumptive stakeholders such as wildlife viewers and hikers. In planning for the future, the agency should take steps to maintain a closer connection to these constituents. This recommendation stands apart from traditional recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) objectives—the implication here is not that these audiences necessarily need to be brought into the fold of active participation in hunting, fishing, and trapping. Rather, the obligation is for Game and Fish to enlist the support of these individuals by encouraging them to engage with the agency and become regular participants in the public input process. As a general goal, Game and Fish should communicate that Wyoming’s wildlife belongs to all state residents, consumptive and non-consumptive users alike.

Both the qualitative and quantitative research found solid support for this recommendation. For example, in addition to being supported in some employees’ responses to the qualitative assessment, this recommendation is supported by the results to a question from the employee survey that asked respondents to rate on a scale of 0 (lowest priority) to 10 (highest priority) the importance that Game and Fish provide more outreach to people who do not hunt or fish. In response, a solid majority of employees gave a rating of 7 or higher.

Also noteworthy is the fact that the online input forum and, in most locations, the public meetings tended to attract much more involvement from hunters and anglers than from non-consumptive members of the public (it was pointed out by several people that Game and Fish public meetings are usually assumed to be venues dedicated to discussion on hunting and fishing regulations or similar topics aimed squarely at consumptive audiences). Yet many of those who attended the meetings and/or commented in the forum emphasized their desire to see more involvement from a broader range of Wyoming residents in Game and Fish public feedback and planning initiatives.

Recommendation: Commit to basing fish and wildlife policies and management decisions on science, rather than politics.

There is much evidence indicating that both residents and agency employees believe that political concerns influence or even interfere with the work of Game and Fish. When the survey asked about influences on the agency, “politics” (a generic term that was left undefined for respondents) was seen by residents as having the most influence on the work of Game and Fish—it must be noted that politics well exceeded the perceived influence of scientific fish and wildlife methods and the general public. Similarly, Game and Fish employees think that politics and landowners have the most influence on the work of Game and Fish (once again, scientific fish and wildlife methods end up in the middle of their ranking of influences).

While it is certainly true that politics will always be a reality of management through state governance, Game and Fish should nonetheless work to minimize the extent to which politics dictates or influences fish and wildlife policy. In some cases, interference from politics may lead to decisions being made from the “top down” as a way to appease particularly vocal stakeholders or constituents; according to some employees, agency priorities have been redirected on the basis of a request or complaint from a single person of influence (such as when a call is made to the

office of the governor, Game and Fish director, Game and Fish Commission, or the legislature). In the data, both residents and agency employees described the perceived political influence of entities such as ranchers and the agricultural industry, the energy industry, and outfitters and guides. According to some employees, political interference can be particularly damaging to public trust and governmental transparency: employees are sometimes left trying to explain why a management decision is made that seems to contradict science or public preference.

A number of residents throughout the focus groups and public meetings commented on the need for Game and Fish to remain autonomous in its decision-making, with some people further recommending that the state legislature be kept out of management decisions and policies affecting fish and wildlife. In short, there is a desire in Wyoming for trained and knowledgeable scientists to address science-related issues—residents want assurances that decisions are being made in the best interests of the resources. When the legislature is responsible for management decisions, such as changes to regulations, Game and Fish should attempt to educate the public as to why this is the case. In general, it is recommended that Game and Fish work with the legislature to the extent possible to minimize the level of political influence on fish and wildlife management. Equally important is an agency-wide commitment to the principle of “science-based management” as articulated in the Game and Fish vision statement.

EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE FUNDING MECHANISMS

Recommendation: Develop a white paper on how to increase agency funding through existing and new mechanisms.

Wyoming residents are invested in the future success of Game and Fish, and they recognize that the agency will be effective only if it is supported by dedicated, reliable funding sources. The research reflects broad support for the idea of securing new funding for Game and Fish: in the survey, overwhelming majorities of both residents and employees agreed that elected officials should explore options for new funding sources to help pay for fish and wildlife conservation in the state; in the focus groups, public meetings, and forum, there were many comments echoing this sentiment and also suggesting ideas for potential new funding sources for the agency.

There are two approaches to exploring additional funding for Game and Fish. The first approach entails changes to existing mechanisms in order to generate more revenues from them, such as increases to current license or tag fees. The second approach entails the creation of entirely new mechanisms. Either scenario may require legislative approval.

A question from the Game and Fish employee survey asked respondents about potential funding sources that ought to be considered to help pay for fish and wildlife conservation in Wyoming. It is noteworthy that many of the responses imply funding that would come at least partially from non-consumptive audiences: at the top of the ranking of employees' preferences for new funding sources is a tax on outdoor equipment other than hunting, shooting, and fishing items, followed by lottery funds. The list is rounded out by user fees for specific recreationist groups, a state sales tax, general federal tax revenue, and fee increases for hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses and watercraft registrations.

Members of the public also weighed in extensively on this topic throughout the data collection, and many of their ideas would seem to warrant further exploration in a formal white paper. While the resident survey did not ask respondents about potential new funding sources that should be considered, the following list reflects some of the concepts proffered by residents in

the focus groups, public meetings, and online forum (note that some of these overlap with the items from the employee survey, although the ideas below are listed in no particular order):

- Tax on all wildlife-related outdoor recreation equipment (binoculars, tents, etc.).
- Fee increases for current hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses (note that some people advocate raising fees only for nonresidents).
- Registration fee for canoes and kayaks.
- Licenses or stamps for shed antler hunting.
- Licenses to hunt bears and/or wolves.
- Premium-priced licenses for hunt areas managed specifically for trophy animals.
- Access Yes! stamp fees.
- Conservation stamp specifically designated for non-consumptive users.
- Fee requirement for the use of ATVs in hunting and fishing.
- Fee requirement for hunting and fishing guides and outfitters (note that some people advocate charging fees only for nonresident guides and outfitters).
- Optional license plates designated for specific groups of recreationists such as hunters, anglers, or general wildlife enthusiasts; note that Wyoming is currently considering an optional license plate whose proceeds will be used to prevent vehicle-animal collisions along wildlife migration corridors (see Rosenfeld, A. 2018. “New Wyoming ‘wildlife’ license plate would fund efforts to stop animal collisions.” Casper Star-Tribune. Retrieved March 4, 2018, at http://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/new-wyoming-wildlife-license-plate-would-fund-efforts-to-stop/article_21a9aad0-bec3-56f7-8a24-ef7cbce0c5c1.html).
- Nonrefundable fee (rather than a refundable deposit) for hunters who apply for tags (again, some people say that this measure should apply only to nonresidents).

It should be noted that some people were skeptical about the concept of fee increases for existing hunting and fishing privileges; while this was a fairly commonly mentioned suggestion in terms of agency funding, some residents nonetheless expressed concern that, if license fees become too high, hunting and fishing in Wyoming could become too expensive for the average resident to take part in (a wholly undesirable outcome, according to these individuals, would be for hunting and fishing to become the exclusive pastimes of the wealthy).

A formal white paper on alternative funding could assess in detail each of the measures asked about in the employee survey as well as the major ideas suggested by residents. A white paper could also evaluate measures that have been enacted in other states to help pay for fish and wildlife conservation, such as a portion of a state sales tax (e.g., one-eighth of one-percent). In any event, the major takeaway is that the research reflects strong support for new funding mechanisms—now may be the optimal time to begin moving in this direction.

ENHANCING CURRENT GAME AND FISH PROGRAMS

Recommendation: Use the survey comparisons of residents and employees to reexamine program priorities heading into the future.

Some of the most important insights from the survey results come from the comparison of resident and Game and Fish employee opinions on the 27 Game and Fish program areas—these comparisons, as well as the supplemental breakdowns by individual audiences, will help to clarify agency priorities over the next 5 to 10 years. While public opinion alone should not

dictate fish and wildlife policy, the comparisons are nonetheless quite useful in terms of revealing what residents and employees feel are the most pressing management needs.

While there are many important takeaways from these comparisons, some of the key findings include the following:

Game and Fish employees, compared to the public, ranked outdoor recreation issues higher in priority.

Some of the most striking differences related to issues concerning outdoor recreation. For example, “acquiring new land and access through private land” was ranked 9th on the list by employees but 24th by the public. Also, “recruiting new hunters and anglers” was ranked 13th by employees but 26th by the public. This latter difference suggests that employees value the funding provided by new hunters and anglers, whereas many residents may not be aware of this funding connection. Also, the public may have the mindset that they do not want more crowding or competition in their places of recreation. Other categories ranked notably higher by employees include “issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points” and “maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing.”

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, ranked boating issues higher in priority.

The category “ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations” was ranked 11th by the public and 24th by employees, and “issuing watercraft registrations” was ranked 18th by the public and 25th by employees.

The general population, compared to Game and Fish employees, ranked education and nuisance wildlife issues higher in priority.

Categories that were ranked higher on the public’s list include “protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species”; “providing hunter education”; “responding to, investigating, and mitigating human/wildlife conflicts, including through educational programs”; “providing news, updates, and information on wildlife, hunting, and fishing”; and “investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations.”

The full comparison of Game and Fish program priority rankings is shown on the next page.

Game and Fish Employees		General Population	
1	Managing species that are hunted	Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	1
2	Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	2
3	Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	Managing / maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	3
4	Protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations	Managing species that are hunted	4
5	Managing / maintaining Wildlife Habitat Management Areas	Providing hunter education	5
6	Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	Improving and maintaining quality fish and wildlife habitats	6
7	Protecting Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species	Responding to, investigating, and mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, including through educational programs	7
8	Conducting fish and wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes / streams	8
9	Acquiring new land and access through private lands	Issuing hunting and fishing licenses, permits, stamps, tags, preference points	9
10	Providing hunter education	Conducting fish and wildlife research through field studies and by maintaining wildlife research facilities	10
11	Monitoring the health of fish that are stocked into lakes / streams	Ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations	11
12	Managing species that are not hunted or fished, including species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	Maintaining and increasing access to hunting and fishing	12
13	Recruiting new hunters and anglers	Managing species that are not hunted or fished, including species that are threatened, endangered, or sensitive	13
14	Providing opportunities to fish for trout	Raising and stocking fish	14
15	Responding to, investigating, and mitigating wildlife/human conflicts, including through educational programs	Providing news, updates, and information on wildlife, hunting, fishing	15
16	Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	16
17	Maintaining continuous development / assessment of technologies for law enforcement, including wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	Evaluating projects on federal land to minimize impacts to wildlife	17
18	Providing fish and wildlife education programs for the public	Issuing watercraft registrations	18
19	Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	19
20	Raising and stocking fish	Maintaining continuous development / assessment of technologies for law enforcement, including wildlife forensics / computer forensic laboratory	20
21	Providing news, updates, and information on wildlife, hunting, fishing	Providing opportunities to fish for trout	21
22	Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	Developing online / other technology tools for wildlife management / public use	22
23	Investigating and handling nuisance wildlife situations	Providing opportunities to fish for species like walleye, bass, crappie, catfish	23
24	Ensuring public safety on watercraft through education and by enforcing boating laws and regulations	Acquiring new land and access through private lands	24
25	Issuing watercraft registrations	Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	25
26	Raising and releasing pheasants for hunting	Recruiting new hunters and anglers	26
27	Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	Compensating property owners for livestock and crop losses due to wildlife	27

Comparison of Rankings of the Priority of Game and Fish Department Efforts

Recommendation: Increase the number of game wardens in the field and consider making penalties for poaching more severe.

The data reflect a strong desire for an increased Game and Fish law enforcement presence in the field. In the resident survey, the top Game and Fish priority out of a list of 27 was protecting fish and wildlife by enforcing wildlife and fishing laws and regulations (this was the fourth ranked item in the employee survey). To add to these findings, in the focus groups and some of the public meetings, there seemed to be broad agreement that Wyoming game wardens are spread thin in the field (some people remarked about the importance of recreationists “self-policing” for this very reason). Throughout the research, many people recommended that Game and Fish hire more game wardens.

One important reason for the desire for a greater law enforcement presence in Wyoming is poaching. At the moment, poaching would appear to be a top issue of concern among the Wyoming public: it was mentioned by residents as a top issue in several of the open-ended survey questions and was also addressed throughout the focus groups and public meetings. As part of the effort to reinforce law enforcement efforts, it is recommended that Game and Fish work with the state legislature to increase penalties for poaching, especially amounts for fines and minimum jail sentences for poachers. One interesting finding from the public feedback is that, because of a perception that the penalties for poaching are not severe enough, some people believe that would-be poachers are not effectively deterred from perpetrating the crime (a few people commented that fines for poaching are barely costlier than the amount for a license and tag for certain species). On this topic, a number of people recommended that any poaching violation in Wyoming be automatically classified as a felony rather than a misdemeanor.

Recommendation: Recognize the need for Game and Fish communication regarding equity in resident and nonresident recreational opportunities.

A contentious issue with compelling arguments on both sides concerns the balance of hunting and fishing opportunities made available to Wyoming residents versus the opportunities made available to nonresidents. Almost all residents seem to acknowledge the importance of nonresidents from an economic standpoint. Yet there remains frustration (sometimes bordering on animosity) over the perception that nonresidents enjoy “first pick” of sought-after hunting tags and similar opportunities—many Wyomingites simply feel that the state’s fish and wildlife resources belong, first and foremost, to residents of Wyoming. While frustration over the allocation of tags varies by species, region, and hunt area, the research identified notable dissatisfaction among residents over perceived inequity in tag allocation, especially the assumption that more tags go to nonresidents than residents. (At least a few people complained that a breakdown of the number of tags issued to residents and nonresidents is not readily available from Game and Fish.)

Short of introducing new measures to shift “first pick” back to residents (or to give residents a better chance at obtaining their desired hunting privileges), Game and Fish should recognize this issue as a public information and communication obligation. Ongoing dialogue with resident hunters and anglers will be essential—as with many other topics addressed in the research, residents desire first and foremost to be engaged in the decision-making process.

While definitive solutions may not come easily, the research identified a number of suggestions from residents to address equity in opportunity. Some residents feel that Game and Fish should simply reduce the number of licenses and tags that are sold to nonresidents, while others recommended ending the practice of issuing “Commissioner” tags to nonresidents. One recurring suggestion was for Game and Fish to simply charge residents the same amount for licenses and tags as nonresidents, but to offer these opportunities to residents first; following the initial sales and drawings for residents, the remainder would become available to nonresidents. An alternative suggestion was to initially offer licenses and tags at a premium cost to residents who are willing to pay the higher fees; after this initial round, the licenses and tags could then be offered to nonresidents as well as residents who declined to take part in the premium cost round.

In any event, an important takeaway on this topic may be that a notable segment of the Wyoming resident hunting population is willing to pay more in order to have a better chance at obtaining their preferred licenses and tags—this scenario may represent a promising option for alternative funding for the agency.

Recommendation: Continue to work on the major issues affecting satisfaction with access.

The overall impression from the research is that access for recreational activities in Wyoming is an issue that has been improved but not solved entirely. In focus group discussions and open-ended survey questions, many Wyoming residents named access as a top issue of concern affecting outdoor recreation. In general, access challenges most often affect trapping, hunting, and fishing, in that order (other activities, such as hiking, camping, boating, and wildlife viewing, have good rates of satisfaction with access). Fortunately, the data suggest that access initiatives enacted by Game and Fish over the last decade or so, such as the “Access Yes!” program, have largely helped to alleviate access concerns to some degree (throughout the research, there were scattered comments of appreciation directed at the agency’s walk-in hunting, walk-in fishing, and hunter/landowner assistance programs).

There is no “silver bullet” solution to access challenges in Wyoming—Game and Fish will simply need to work to address the individual issues in various areas and by various recreationist groups (the many crosstabulations and regional breakdowns run on the access questions from the survey will be essential in this regard). Broadly speaking, some of the most pressing access concerns in the state as a whole include the maintenance of existing roads, the need to keep roads open, and the provision of more access to public land in general. Also worth noting are the provision of roads through areas landlocked by private land, the provision of more access to federal land, and the provision of more disabled access.

One item of note is that a portion of residents appear to be confused about the extent to which Game and Fish is involved in securing or improving access to activities like wildlife viewing, hiking, and camping (in actuality, much of the access work for these activities is handled by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management). As with many issues, an important aspect of the agency’s continuing work on access will be communication and public information.

Recommendation: Commit to more partnerships.

Game and Fish should commit to exploring and maximizing partnerships to accomplish conservation work in Wyoming. In the data collection, both Game and Fish employees and

members of the public were strongly supportive of having the agency partner and collaborate with other entities to accomplish management goals. Some of the recurring suggestions included R3 and stewardship initiatives through local clubs and nonprofits (especially popular were potential partnerships designed to connect young people to wildlife and habitat management) and access projects coordinated by Game and Fish and the Forest Service and/or Bureau of Land Management (even though many people acknowledge the challenges inherent in such collaborations).

Partnerships and collaborations are commonly seen as an effective way to leverage limited funds and secure buy-in from a larger network of organizations whose goals and objectives overlap with those of Game and Fish (e.g., wildlife migration corridor protection). Commonly mentioned potential partners included Boy Scouts of America, 4-H, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Safari Club International, and the Boone and Crockett Club. Separate from these entities, Game and Fish should, of course, continue to partner with private landowners to facilitate access for recreational activities.

Recommendation: Expand Game and Fish-sponsored educational initiatives, including hunter safety.

There is notable interest from the public in Game and Fish-sponsored educational programs and initiatives. Many people in the focus groups and public meetings commented about the value of educational programs that involve biologists and other knowledgeable Game and Fish personnel interacting with the public (the Outdoor Expo was cited several times)—it was often suggested that these types of initiatives can help to engage people in wildlife and the outdoors in a meaningful way, as well familiarize them with the work of Game and Fish (some said that programs involving Game and Fish staff help to solidify residents' support for the agency).

In general, there is more importance attached to educational opportunities directed at youth. Many people in the focus groups and public meetings liked the concept of offering such programs through schools specifically. The Game and Fish employee survey asked respondents how much of a priority fish and wildlife education programs geared toward youth should be, and an overwhelming majority of respondents gave a rating of 8 or higher (0 was lowest priority and 10 was highest priority). On a corresponding question about similar programs for adults, a little less than half of employees gave a rating of 8 or higher.

Hunter safety makes up its own distinct component of the agency's educational offerings. The research reflects strong demand for hunter safety education in Wyoming ("providing hunter education" was the 5th highest priority in residents' ranking of the 27 agency program areas). On this topic, many people in the public input venues emphasized the need to expand hunter safety to include even those who do not hunt: many people reasoned that because firearms are commonplace in Wyoming, standardized instruction on safe handling should be widely available to all residents. Given the credibility of Game and Fish in the eyes of the public, it seems that many people feel that agency-sponsored hunter safety and other types of outdoor education should be part of the state culture. Once again, partnerships with NGOs, private clubs, and national organizations may play an important role in helping to coordinate educational programs.

Recommendation: Develop a hunter ethics program.

In line with the research results on law enforcement, poaching, and the need for self-policing among recreationists in the field, many Wyomingites believe that Game and Fish should take a clear public stand on the importance of hunter ethics. A number of comments in the focus groups and public meetings addressed egregious instances of poor hunter behavior, such as property damage, poor shot placement by rifle hunters or bowhunters when harvesting animals, unsafe behavior involving firearms, and failure to remove animal carcasses from the field. Many people objected to such behavior from a moral or ethical standpoint, with others pointing out that a lack of ethical behavior from hunters jeopardizes the future of hunting: hunting-related controversy and negative attention will inevitably affect public opinion on hunting and make it harder for responsible and ethical participants to safeguard the activity into the future.

While there is understanding that ethical behavior is covered to some degree in current hunter safety courses, many people appear to view the topic as important enough to address by itself. Game and Fish may therefore wish to consider a stand-alone program that highlights the Wyoming tradition of ethical and responsible hunter behavior in the field (or a similar theme).

ENHANCING THE GAME AND FISH WORK EXPERIENCE**Recommendation: Solicit more input and feedback from field personnel.**

The data collection with Game and Fish employees suggests a need for agency leadership to solicit more input and feedback from field personnel and other “hands on” employees with specific expertise on the relevant topics—it follows that leadership should strive to trust employee input and minimize micromanagement. It was sometimes mentioned by employees that important management decisions are made in a top-down manner, with not enough regard for input received from personnel who may be subject matter experts in specific units or programs.

Recommendation: Commit to hiring quality contracted workers as full-time employees.

Game and Fish employees frequently recommended that the agency increase its efforts to bring on contracted workers as full-time employees. This can reduce turnover, because these workers, while highly trained and knowledgeable in specific areas, currently do not receive full benefits and cannot make long-term plans when on annual contracts. Following this recommendation may help to alleviate workload concerns and gaps in training: most employees say they have large and/or increasing workloads, and a number of employees mentioned that valuable training exercises like job shadowing have been discontinued. A further frustration among employees comes from the sense that contracted workers who receive good training during their time with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department often end up leaving the agency for other jobs.

Recommendation: Consider empathy training for agency leadership and management training for employees who are promoted to leadership positions.

There is some evidence to suggest that there may be a need for standardized empathy training for agency leadership to ensure fairness and consistency in the treatment of employees. As is inevitable in any large organization, day-to-day interactions and workplace culture are sometimes dictated by “the way things have always been done.” Establishing standards and expectations for mutual respect and professionalism will help to ensure productivity and positivity in the workplace.

Another training need concerns management training for employees who are promoted from field positions to management positions. Often this is the case with employees who possess strong backgrounds in science (allowing them to excel in field positions) but who are less familiar with managing teams of people. Again, the availability of specialized training in this area will help to ensure consistent standards among all employees.

Recommendation: Work to improve communication within agency divisions and throughout Game and Fish as a whole.

Two areas in which notable percentages of Game and Fish employees are dissatisfied are communication within their division and communication throughout Game and Fish as a whole. It is recommended that Game and Fish leadership work to ensure continuous and productive communication throughout the regions, as well as between the regional field offices and agency leadership in Cheyenne. To improve communication within divisions, it is recommended that a variety of methods and opportunities for communication and idea sharing be made available to employees; formal and informal communication among coworkers should be encouraged.

Recommendation: Consider a white paper on internal agency improvements based on suggestions from the employee survey results.

While the Game and Fish employee survey findings are largely positive, many of the open-ended results contain detailed and thoughtful suggestions for agency improvements; these suggestions address employee morale, the agency’s use of technology, intra-agency communication, and various policies and protocols related to individual Game and Fish topics. Many of these suggestions fall outside the scope of this project and the expertise of the research team. However, Game and Fish may wish to evaluate these suggestions separately in the form of a white paper to ensure that potentially useful ideas are properly considered.

ENGAGING WITH RESIDENTS AND IMPROVING PUBLIC OUTREACH**Recommendation: Close the feedback loop—commit to continual public updates on how and why management decisions are made.**

Gathering public input is important, but it is also essential to keep people informed about how and why management decisions are made. When a management decision is made following the gathering of public input, the agency should update residents on what they found in the public input process and why the decision was made. Throughout the data collection, it was noteworthy that many residents, while generally quite approving of the work of Game and Fish in most areas, strongly desired more information from the agency as to the “how” and “why” of agency

management decisions. In the public meetings, it was not uncommon for some residents to mention that Game and Fish has sought out public input previously, only to later enact a policy or approach that seems at odds with apparent public preference. This perceived disconnect highlights the importance that Game and Fish continually provide the public with information on its programs and initiatives. Comments throughout the public meetings also demonstrated the range of issues about which residents desire more information (disease risks, season changes, tag allotments, preference points, regulations, general agency management priorities, and so forth).

Some residents advocate the use of more modern technology to deliver updates to the public. However, while resources like social media channels, smartphone apps, and online public meetings should certainly be considered and implemented when it makes sense to do so, it is also important to recognize that a large segment of the Wyoming population still prefers to receive information through traditional media sources such as newspapers, television, direct mailings, and in-person public meetings. Game and Fish must be careful not to become overly reliant on a narrow approach to digital communication and outreach, especially as such an approach may risk alienating an older cohort of stakeholders.

Recommendation: Work to improve public understanding of the role of private landowners in wildlife management and habitat conservation.

The research indicates that landowners in Wyoming are widely perceived as having a major influence on the work of Game and Fish, and there appear to be mixed feelings about this: some residents readily point out the important role landowners play in habitat conservation and wildlife management, while others express frustration over the perception that ranchers and other landowners enjoy preferential treatment from Game and Fish or reap a disproportionate share of benefits (monetary and otherwise) from the agency.

While Game and Fish has taken positive steps to reinforce the connection between private landowners and recreational opportunities in the state (e.g., the hunter/landowner assistance and walk-in hunting programs), the data suggest that there is likely more work to be done to ensure good relationships between landowners and the public. Consider that a number of residents and even some Game and Fish employees feel that landowners who receive compensation from the agency in exchange for damage to livestock or property should be obligated to leave open their lands for hunting. Additionally, some residents worry about the practice of allowing landowners to charge expensive fees for access rights to their properties (again, this was discussed in the context of concern that hunting may soon become an activity reserved only for the wealthy). At the other end of the spectrum, at least a few landowners in the focus groups suggested that members of the public may not appreciate the perspectives of ranchers dealing with property damage, pressure to allow hunting, and obligations related to habitat and wildlife management.

The implication is that Game and Fish will need to continue to play a mediator role when it comes to access rights and recreational opportunities on private lands.

Recommendation: Enhance communications and outreach on bear and wolf management issues and policy decisions.

While opinions vary by region, the management of bears and wolves in Wyoming is a persistent topic of concern among residents. Regarding bears, some residents advocate for an open hunting season on bears, while others recommend allowing the harvest of only nuisance or problem bears (alternatively, some recommending allowing bear hunting as a temporary means of thinning the population and reestablishing boundaries). Regarding wolves, there were numerous comments about preventing wolves from altering elk migration patterns (among other concerns).

Game and Fish has recently collected substantial public input for its bear management plan; the agency will likely conduct similar outreach on wolf management following the removal of wolves from the endangered species list in 2017. In line with the earlier recommendation regarding the importance of keeping the public updated on agency management decisions, it is essential that Game and Fish remain proactive in its delivery of information regarding large carnivores. The data collection indicates that, on the resident side, the management of these species can be fraught with contention and emotion—Game and Fish should remain engaged with constituencies throughout Wyoming when it comes to bear- and wolf-related management decisions and considerations.

Recommendation: Enhance communications and outreach on aquatic invasive species management.

Another important topic of concern is the protection of Wyoming waters from aquatic invasive species (in the resident survey, this was the 2nd ranked item in the list of 27 Game and Fish program areas). The qualitative research found a variety of opinions on the topic, with residents variously recommending increased inspection and enforcement at boat ramps statewide, a more targeted approach to inspection and enforcement in specific areas, expansion of inspections to include smaller items such as float tubes, and more focus on interstate waterways and areas near the border of the state. In general, there was a desire for more public education on aquatic invasive species so that residents themselves can better help to address the issue.

Once again, the provision of steady information from Game and Fish on this topic will be essential—the data clearly indicate that residents desire assurances that the problem is being dealt with.

Recommendation: Consider redesigning the Game and Fish website, with a goal of simplifying navigation.

Despite encouraging results from the survey (82% of Game and Fish website visitors agree that the information they were looking for was easy to find), complaints about the Game and Fish website persisted across many of the public meetings and focus groups. The primary complaint seems to be that information on the site requires too many clicks to locate (again, despite the survey finding); many people recommend that Game and Fish make the website more user-friendly, with simpler navigation. Note that if the Game and Fish website is redesigned, it may be worth determining how to systematically gather feedback from the public (e.g., in public meetings or focus groups) before the proposed new product is finalized.

Recommendation: Disseminate information on how Game and Fish is funded.

There is a need to provide more information to the public about how the Wyoming Game and Fish Department is funded. In the survey, less than half of residents knew that Game and Fish is funded, in part, by hunting and fishing licenses, and only a very small percentage correctly named excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment as a further funding source. (Many people believe that general tax revenues are used to fund Game and Fish.)

A larger point that must be communicated in information about Game and Fish funding is that essential biological and ecological projects affecting Wyoming fish and wildlife are possible only through dedicated agency funding. Increasing the public's understanding of how Game and Fish is funded (and, as importantly, how it is *not* funded) will be essential to initiating a larger dialogue about alternative funding sources for the agency. Generating more public awareness of the agency's specific funding mechanisms may also help to alleviate some of the concern that the agency caters to hunters and anglers (i.e., if residents understand that hunters and anglers fund the majority of the agency through their license and excise taxed-equipment purchases).

Recommendation: As a messaging goal, communicate that Game and Fish is centrally involved in all wildlife-related outdoor recreation activities in Wyoming.

As previously mentioned, Wyoming has extremely high levels of participation in wildlife-related outdoor recreation: more than half of all Wyoming residents purchase a hunting or fishing license over a 5-year period, and substantial percentages go hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, and boating. Despite these engaged constituencies, about a quarter of residents say they know only a little or nothing about the agency (residents in general are more likely to say they know *a moderate amount* about Game and Fish rather than *a great deal*).

A general message of importance for the state of Wyoming is that without Game and Fish, there would be few or no quality wildlife-based recreational opportunities (Game and Fish not only ensures the sustainability of these activities but keeps them at a world-renowned level in terms of quality and availability). It is recommended that the Game and Fish promotional messaging emphasize the fact that Wyoming residents' participation in and enjoyment of wildlife-related outdoor recreation—whether consumptive or non-consumptive—is possible only because of the dedicated efforts of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Recommendation: Strive to proactively address concerns related to trapping.

The public engagement with Wyoming residents for this project suggests that a notable segment of people have ethical and safety-related concerns about recreational trapping in the state. Recent high-profile trapping-related incidents covered extensively in local media (e.g., pets being injured in traps) appear to have substantially increased concern about trapping among some members of the public.

On this contentious topic, it is useful to keep in mind that Americans' attitudes toward animals exist on a spectrum ranging from dominionistic values (the idea that animals exist for human use) to animal welfare values (the idea that animals may be used but only without undue pain and suffering) to animal rights values (the idea that animals may not be used by humans at all). To ensure public acceptability, trapping must be seen as humane—egregious examples of

accidents and injuries related to trapping give the opposite impression. The danger is that such examples will move the public's view of trapping as a humane activity to an unacceptably cruel activity. Recall that in the Colorado State University wildlife values study cited earlier in this section, more than ten years ago, around half of the Wyoming public held mutualist or pluralist views toward wildlife; if the national trend is a reliable indicator, Wyoming residents' attitudes may have continued moving in the direction of an emotional, familial conception of wildlife.

Game and Fish should attempt to allay public unease about trapping, ideally from both the trapper and non-trapper perspectives. On the trapper side, Game and Fish may wish to review the best practices and safety information communicated to Wyoming trappers through Game and Fish-sponsored education courses, keeping in mind that recreational trapping seems to be subject to increased scrutiny these days. On the non-trapper side, Game and Fish may need to take additional steps to inform the public about how recreational trapping is regulated and managed in Wyoming and the requirements that are intended to prevent injuries and accidents. Consider that some people in the focus groups and meetings recommended that Game and Fish require more frequent checks of traps, or a requirement that traps be kept farther from paths or other high-use areas in the field.

It is important to keep in perspective both the relatively small percentage of Wyoming residents who take part in recreational trapping versus the rather persistent concerns of another segment of the population. Declining public support for recreational trapping may jeopardize the future of the activity altogether, and it could also tarnish the reputation of hunting, especially if activist groups (including from out of state) seize on the opportunity to conflate trapping with hunting. Again, the obligation for Game and Fish will be to position trapping (both through actual regulation and public information) as a humane, safe, and scientific solution for wildlife management.

Recommendation: Ensure that scientific, probability-based human dimensions data collection is always a part of the Game and Fish public input process.

Public support for fish and wildlife agencies is often strong but silent, as was revealed to be the case in this study. In the absence of current public opinion data based on random samples of residents, agencies usually hear only from stakeholders who are the most dissatisfied. The reality is that scientific, representative surveys of the public often help to confirm that the large majority of state residents approve of their state agency's performance and support its programs.

The loudest constituents do not always reflect the majority. People with particularly strong opinions at both ends of the spectrum (e.g., animal rights groups at one end and sportsmen's organizations at the other) tend to be some of the most passionate constituents at public meetings and in online forums—but the substance of the commentary from these factions often is at odds with findings from scientific surveys and focus groups, which entail probability-based random samples of the population under study. Game and Fish must remain wary of stakeholders with an agenda. Organized groups and special interests can cherry pick statistics and “stack the deck” at public input venues, giving the impression that the position of the group is the most important or commonly held one. The challenge for Game and Fish is how to weigh comments from public meetings and other self-selected venues that are in direct opposition to survey data that reflect what the public actually thinks and wants.

Reliable assessments of public opinion must make use of the full range of research techniques. Human dimensions data collection can include scientific surveys and focus groups of randomly selected individuals, but also non-scientific avenues such as public meetings and online forums—these latter techniques are important in that they provide opportunities for *all* residents to lend input. The differences in input from scientific and non-scientific methods can be stark, with the latter sometimes showing higher levels of salience and dissatisfaction. However, nonrandom methods of input are important for measuring the saliency of various issues as well as satisfaction among those who provide input; these methods also protect the agency from the charge that input is limited only to a small number of residents (e.g., the idea that only a small percentage of the total population has been surveyed as part of the data collection). While the data from each source must be considered in the proper perspective, the totality of data (and the fact that residents have multiple opportunities to provide input) is nonetheless important. Relying only on non-scientific assessments of public opinion, such as commission meetings, public meetings, letters and phone calls to agency leadership, and non-scientific Internet surveys that are open to anyone, can lead to management decisions that do not reflect actual mainstream views and preferences.

Similarly, citizen workgroups should be used in addition to, not in place of, scientific data. While agency projects often rely on workgroups to provide input, deference must always be given to data from representative samples of constituents—workgroups must remain data-driven.

To conclude, it is critical that the Wyoming Game and Fish harness its credibility as an agency when managing fish and wildlife and communicating with the public.

12. METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses each of the six methods of obtaining input from the public and Game and Fish employees:

1. An online qualitative assessment (Game and Fish employees)
2. Pre- and post-survey focus groups (the general public, including hunters, anglers, and other recreationists)
3. A scientific telephone survey of three samples
 - a. Wyoming residents (the general public; note that this included resident hunters and anglers in the proportion that they occur in a general population sample)
 - b. Nonresident hunters (this sample is solely of nonresidents because the sample of Wyoming residents contained resident hunters)
 - c. Nonresident anglers (again, note that the sample of Wyoming residents contained resident anglers)
4. An employee survey (Game and Fish employees)
5. Public meetings (the general public); administered after the survey
6. An online public forum (the general public)

12.1. QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

To help lay the groundwork for the subsequent data collection and ultimate development of a strategic plan, Responsive Management and Game and Fish developed and administered a qualitative questionnaire to key agency personnel, external stakeholders, and policy makers. Because the questionnaire consisted solely of open-ended questions, it was intended as a *qualitative* rather than *quantitative* look at employee and stakeholder opinions; in this way, it differed from a true quantitative survey. This questionnaire was implemented electronically, with a link to it distributed via email to potential respondents using a database of email addresses provided by the Game and Fish Department. Responsive Management submitted follow-up messages as needed to encourage participation.

Survey respondents were presented with a brief series of open-ended questions, in which no answer set was provided to respondents; rather, they could answer with anything that came to mind in narrative form. In all, 223 completed questionnaires were submitted by internal employees (defined here as permanent and non-permanent Wyoming Game and Fish Department employees) and stakeholders (this group includes Wyoming Game and Fish Commissioners, members of the Governor's Fish and Wildlife Task Force, and directors of other Wyoming state agencies). This qualitative assessment was administered in October and November 2017.

The input was not tallied quantitatively; rather, the results were used to help formulate the content of the focus group discussion guides, the survey of residents and recreationists, and the survey of employees. Issues and concerns that were raised in the qualitative assessment, in other words, were considered in the formulation of the subsequent data collection methods.

12.2. FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

Five focus groups were conducted in November 2017 in Cheyenne, Rock Springs, Riverton, Gillette, and Cody. These focus groups were conducted *prior* to the telephone survey and other data collection in order to help identify topics for the survey and other data collection methods. This series of focus groups was followed by five focus groups conducted *after* the survey and other material had been collected; the post-survey focus groups were conducted to help confirm

the findings of the survey and place them into context. The second round of focus groups was conducted in Laramie, Casper, Sheridan, Worland, and Jackson in February 2018.

FOCUS GROUP OVERVIEW

Each focus group consisted of 9-12 residents who engaged in one or several forms of outdoor recreation relevant to Game and Fish, including hunting, fishing, trapping, boating, hiking, and wildlife viewing/photography (note that most group participants engaged in more than one of the activities, meaning many hunters also fished, many boaters also hiked, and so forth).

Additionally, most groups included at least one landowner of 10 acres or more, with some groups having several landowners. Responsive Management recruited participants to ensure a wide variety of ages and roughly equal representation from both males and females.

The use of focus groups is an accepted research technique for the qualitative exploration of attitudes, opinions, perceptions, motivations, constraints, and behaviors. Focus groups provide researchers with insights, new hypotheses, and understanding through the process of interaction. Focus groups allow for extensive open-ended responses to questions; probing; follow-up questions; group discussion; and observation of emotional responses to topics—aspects that cannot be measured in a quantitative survey. Qualitative research provides researchers with a more detailed understanding of the topics or issues of concern in the study.

FOCUS GROUP LOCATIONS AND HOST FACILITIES

The focus groups locations were chosen to be in geographically diverse areas across Wyoming: Cheyenne, Rock Springs, Riverton, Gillette, and Cody (in the pre-survey focus groups) and Laramie, Casper, Sheridan, Worland, and Jackson (in the post-survey focus groups). Host facilities and reservations were coordinated by Responsive Management in consultation with Game and Fish; facilities included hotel conference rooms. Responsive Management ensured that each focus group room was set up appropriately, including seating, recording equipment, and food arrangements. Dinner was provided to focus group participants, and each group lasted approximately 2 hours.

The pre-survey focus groups were in the locations on the dates shown below:

- Cheyenne (November 6, 2017)
- Rock Springs (November 7, 2017)
- Riverton (November 8, 2017)
- Gillette (November 9, 2017)
- Cody (November 10, 2017)

The post-survey focus groups were in the locations on the dates shown below:

- Laramie (February 5, 2018)
- Casper (February 6, 2018)
- Sheridan (February 8, 2018)
- Worland (February 9, 2018)
- Jackson (February 10, 2018)

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT RECRUITING

Responsive Management recruited general population residents for each focus group using a random sample of residents in each of the ten locations, as well as databases of hunting and fishing license holders provided by the Game and Fish Department. Responsive Management recruiters contacted potential participants by telephone, e-mail, and mail. Those who expressed interest in taking part in the study were given a brief summary of the focus group topic, screened using a screener questionnaire, and, if qualified, confirmed for attendance. The screener ensured that the focus group participants met the criteria established for each specific group, as well as applicable age requirements.

Confirmed participants were e-mailed or mailed (by personal preference) a confirmation that included the date, time, and location of the focus group, as well as a map and directions to the focus group facility. Each participant was offered a reminder call the day before the focus group and provided a telephone number for directions or last-minute questions. To encourage participation, a monetary incentive was given to participants.

During the recruiting process, the recruiting manager maintained a progress table for each focus group that included participant name, address, contact telephone number, and essential participant characteristics. Each focus group's target was approximately 10 to 12 people. The recruiting manager ensured that all confirmation e-mails or letters were sent promptly to participants and that reminder telephone calls were made, as necessary, the day before the focus group. Reminder calls and interaction with potential participants helped ensure their attendance, resulting in quality participation.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE AND MODERATOR

Prior to the focus groups, detailed and carefully structured discussion guides were written. The guide includes questions that the moderator uses to elicit discussion about various topics. While the guide provides structure, the discussion is allowed to go wherever it goes and can jump around in the discussion guide. The moderator ensures, however, that the discussion does not completely leave the discussion guide topics. In such an instance, the moderator steers the discussion back to pertinent topics using the discussion guide.

Note that the discussion guide helps ensure consistency in the topics being covered—each group covered every topic in the guide. The discussion guide included top-of-mind questions as well as more specific questions addressing opinions on and attitudes toward outdoor recreation, wildlife management, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and other pertinent topics.

As stated above, each focus group was moderated by one of Responsive Management's trained moderators. The moderators, through the use of the discussion guide, kept the discussions within design parameters without exerting a strong influence on the discussion content. In this sense, the focus groups were non-directive group discussions that exposed the spontaneous attitudes, insights, and perceptions of Wyoming residents and outdoor recreationists regarding the management of outdoor recreation and wildlife in the state. All focus group discussions were recorded for analysis.

FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS

Responsive Management conducted qualitative analyses of the focus groups through direct observation of the discussions by the moderators. A second stage of the analysis was the subsequent observation and analysis of the recordings by other researchers. The organization and development of findings entailed a third review of the focus groups as part of the overall qualitative analysis.

12.3. TELEPHONE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

For the survey, telephones were selected as the preferred sampling medium because of the almost universal ownership of telephones among Wyoming residents and nonresident hunters and anglers (both landlines and cell phones were called). Additionally, telephone surveys also have better representation of the general population than do surveys that are read by the respondent (i.e., mail and Internet surveys) because the latter systematically exclude those who are not literate enough to complete the surveys or who would be intimidated by having to complete a written or Internet survey—by an estimate of the U.S. Department of Education’s National Institute of Literacy (2016), up to 43% of the general population read no higher than a “basic level,” suggesting that they would be reticent to complete a survey that they have to read to themselves. Finally, telephone surveys also have fewer negative effects on the environment than do mail surveys because of reduced use of paper and reduced energy consumption for delivering and returning the questionnaires.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The telephone survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Game and Fish and Responsive Management, based on the research team’s familiarity with outdoor recreation and wildlife management issues. Responsive Management conducted pre-tests of the questionnaire to ensure proper wording, flow, and logic in the survey. One questionnaire was used for all samples (Wyoming resident general population, nonresident hunters, and nonresident anglers).

SURVEY SAMPLES

The sample of Wyoming residents was obtained from Survey Sampling International, a firm that specializes in providing scientific samples for surveys. The sample was stratified into the eight regions that approximated the Game and Fish management regions (Figure 12.3.1). The survey entailed obtaining at least 312 completed interviews in each region for a total of at least 2,500 statewide.

The samples of nonresident hunters and nonresident anglers were provided by the Game and Fish Department. At least 200 completed interviews in each sample were obtained.

Within each region and within the nonresident hunter and angler samples, a probability-based selection process was used to ensure that each eligible respondent had an approximately equal chance of being selected for the survey.

Results of the resident survey were weighted by age and gender, as well as by hunting and fishing participation, so that each regional sample was representative of its entire region. For statewide results, the regions were weighted to be in the proper proportions so that the entire sample was representative of Wyoming residents (18 or older) as a whole—in other words, the regions were properly proportioned in the statewide sample.

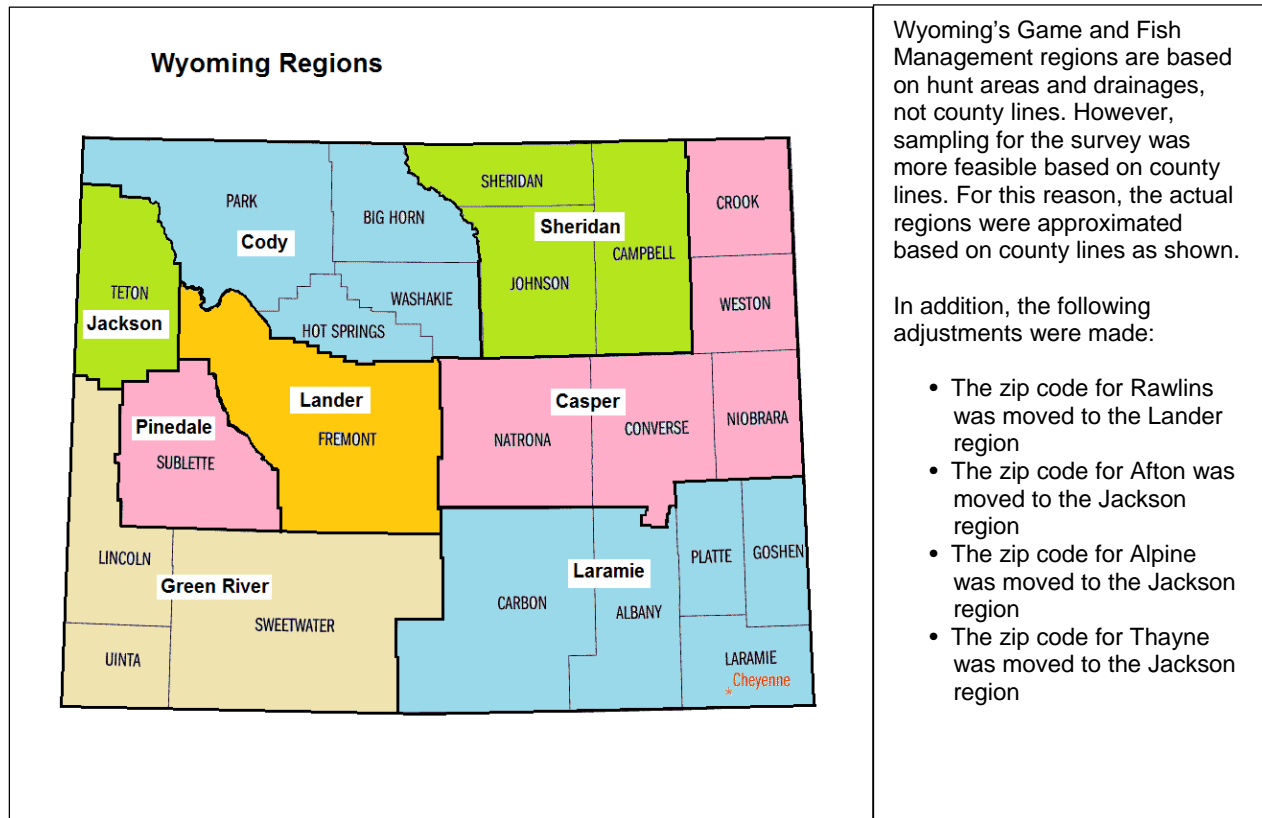


Figure 12.3.1. Wyoming Game and Fish Department Approximated Management Regions

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWING FACILITIES

A central polling site at the Responsive Management office allowed for rigorous quality control over the interviews and data collection. Responsive Management maintains its own in-house telephone interviewing facilities. These facilities are staffed by interviewers with experience conducting computer-assisted telephone interviews on the subjects of hunting, fishing, outdoor recreation, and natural resources.

To 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 a project briefing 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 questionnaire.

INTERVIEWING DATES AND TIMES

Telephone surveying times are Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturday from noon to 5:00 p.m., and Sunday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., local time. A five-callback design was used to maintain the representativeness of each sample, to avoid bias toward people easy to reach by telephone, and to provide an equal opportunity for all to participate. When a

potential 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 telephone survey was administered in January and February 2018.

TELEPHONE SURVEY DATA COLLECTION AND QUALITY CONTROL

The software used for data collection was Questionnaire Programming Language (QPL). The survey data were entered into the computer as each interview was being conducted, eliminating manual data entry after the completion of the survey and the concomitant data entry errors that may occur with manual data entry. The survey questionnaire was programmed so that QPL branched, coded, and substituted phrases in the survey based on previous responses to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data collection.

The Survey Center managers and statisticians monitored the data collection. This includes monitoring of the actual telephone interviews without the interviewers' knowledge to evaluate the performance of each interviewer and ensure the integrity of the data. The survey questionnaire itself contained error checkers and computation statements to ensure quality and consistent data. After the surveys were obtained by the interviewers, the Survey Center managers and/or statisticians checked each completed survey to ensure clarity and completeness. Responsive Management obtained a total of 2,558 completed interviews with Wyoming residents, 207 completed interviews with nonresident hunters, and 201 completed interviews with nonresident anglers.

ANALYSIS OF TELEPHONE SURVEY DATA

The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management. Three samples were surveyed, but the analysis of the data allowed for additional groupings of respondents, as explained below.

The first analysis is the statewide data run of results from the sample of residents. This consists of the eight regional samples that were properly proportioned in an overall statewide sample.

The second analysis is the regional breakdown of residents' results, based on the region of residence.

The third analysis is conducted of resident and nonresident hunters; and the fourth analysis is of resident and nonresident anglers. For both of these analyses, resident hunters and anglers were from among the resident sample, while the nonresident hunters and anglers are simply from the nonresident license database provided by Game and Fish.

The fifth analysis looked at all residents who had hunted, trapped, or fished combined into a single "consumptive" sample and compared them to everybody else from the sample of residents (i.e., those who did not hunt, trap, or fish).

The sixth analysis was of *wildlife viewers* who did not hunt, trap, or fish, again from the resident sample. This sample differs from the non-consumptives above in that these people had to have gone wildlife viewing; the non-consumptive group above included those who did not go wildlife viewing, including some who did none of the activities.

A note about “consumptives” and “non-consumptives” as used in this report:

“Consumptives” applies to hunting, trapping, and fishing. In this report, as discussed in item #5 above, one data run was made of those who had a *license to hunt, trip, or fish* (not on whether they had actually hunted, trapped, or fished). Therefore, “consumptives” refers to holders of licenses that allowed hunting, trapping, or fishing. On the graphs, consumptives are also identified as “hunters/trappers/anglers”; note that this is based on having a license.

“Non-consumptives” refers, in this report, to anybody who did not hold a hunting, trapping, or fishing license. This includes those who viewed wildlife or did any of the other activities that were asked about in the survey, as well as those who did *none* of the activities about which the survey asked questions. Because this all-encompassing data run (i.e., it was consumptives compared to *everybody else*) included those who did no wildlife-associated recreation, the last data analysis run discussed above (item #6) was conducted. It looks at those who specifically *viewed wildlife* as one of their activities but did not hunt, trap, or fish. The graphs and tables, therefore, always indicate that this last data run is of *non-consumptive wildlife viewers*.

Finally, the use of these terms does not imply that other wildlife-associated and outdoor recreation does not have an impact on wildlife and fish; any outdoor activity, such as wildlife viewing, camping, or hiking, can affect wildlife and habitat in the area and can change the behaviors of wildlife. Rather, the terms in this report are used strictly as indicated above to define specific data runs.

On questions that asked respondents to provide a number (e.g., age), the graphs and/or tables may show ranges of numbers rather than the precise numbers. Nonetheless, in the survey each respondent provided a precise number, and the dataset includes this precise number, even when the graphs and/or tables show only ranges of numbers. Note that the calculation of means and medians used the precise numbers that the respondents provided.

12.4. EMPLOYEE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Concurrent with the scientific telephone survey of Wyoming residents, nonresident hunters, and nonresident anglers, Responsive Management conducted an online survey of Game and Fish employees. Prior to this survey, employees had been sent a short assessment with open-ended questions about the general strengths and weaknesses of the agency (i.e., a SWOT analysis as previously mentioned in Chapter 2). The results of that qualitative analysis were used in part to develop this survey, which is *quantitative* in nature and covered more specific areas. This survey largely mirrored the telephone survey of Wyoming residents and nonresident recreationists. (Note that Chapter 7 shows a comparison of these survey results side-by-side so that opinions and attitudes of Game and Fish employees can be compared to and contrasted against those of the public they serve.)

Responsive Management provided assurances at the outset that all employees' responses would be kept completely confidential. Data are only reported in the aggregate; individual responses are never associated with a respondent's name or position. Confidentiality is always a concern with internal surveys like this, so open-ended responses are never presented verbatim. Rather, these responses are analyzed for content and then quantified according to recurring themes and concepts. It should also be noted that all questions in the survey were optional—a respondent could continue on with the survey if he or she chose to leave a question blank.

The survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Game and Fish and Responsive Management. The database of employee email addresses was provided by Game and Fish. Emails were sent to all on the list, and employees had the option of taking the survey. The emails included a link to the survey, and the survey could only be taken through this email link. In other words, it was not possible for just anybody surfing the Internet to come across the survey. Also, a globally unique identifier tied to each email address ensured that each person could take the

survey only once. Online surveys are acceptable for closed groups, such as agency employees. Responsive Management obtained a total of 361 questionnaires by Game and Fish employees.

12.5. PUBLIC MEETING METHODOLOGY

For this study, Responsive Management planned, coordinated, and facilitated ten regional public meetings with the general public and Game and Fish stakeholders. The purpose of the public meetings was to provide an open forum for input and feedback, an opportunity for two-way dialogue between the agency and its constituents, and a means of identifying issues of interest or concern with regard to outdoor recreation and wildlife management in Wyoming. These meetings were also intended to help reinforce transparency and encourage public investment in decision-making. Game and Fish personnel attended each meeting in uniform and answered some questions that meeting attendees had; they otherwise observed the meetings.

PUBLIC MEETING LOCATIONS

The public meetings were advertised ahead of time, held in a public or publically accessible site, and were open to anybody who wished to attend. The public meetings were planned to occur near every Game and Fish regional office, as well as in Cheyenne and Gillette. Dates of the meetings were coordinated based on the optimal times in each region. The locations and dates of the public meetings are listed below.

- Cheyenne (February 5, 2018)
- Laramie (February 5, 2018)
- Casper (February 6, 2018)
- Lander (February 6, 2018)
- Gillette (February 7, 2018)
- Green River (February 7, 2018)
- Sheridan (February 8, 2018)
- Pinedale (February 8, 2018)
- Cody (February 9, 2018)
- Jackson (February 10, 2018)

PUBLIC MEETING FACILITATION AND LOGISTICS

Each meeting was facilitated by Responsive Management staff and began with a brief presentation that included an overview of the research being conducted for the Game and Fish Department by Responsive Management, a summary of results of the research to that point, guidelines for conducting public meetings, and an introduction of Game and Fish staff in attendance. Rules for public input were then explained to the attendees, which included the requirement that only one person speak at a time, a time limit for speaking during the meeting, the restriction of open debate and challenges to other members of the audience, and adherence to the established topics of the meeting. The public meetings generally lasted about 2 hours. Some comments from attendees were followed by responses from Game and Fish personnel who were present at each public meeting.

The public meetings were held in several different types of facilities: one meeting was held in a library, one in a museum auditorium, one in a Game and Fish regional office, two in community colleges, two in event centers, and three meetings were held in hotels. The public meeting schedule was distributed around the state several weeks prior to the meetings. The public

meeting schedule was also posted on Game and Fish's website and social media platforms. Responsive Management also publicized the meeting schedule via the online public forum devoted to gathering public input on the 5-year strategic plan.

REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE PUBLIC MEETINGS

In considering the findings of the public meetings, it is important to note that these opportunities for public input generally appeared to attract only the most avid and dedicated Game and Fish constituents. For instance, consider that many meeting attendees self-identified as longtime hunters or anglers.

Likewise, it is important to note that, unlike the random selection process that determined participation in the surveys, the public meetings were open to anyone. It was possible for the same individuals to make multiple comments throughout each public meeting.

As such, while the issues and concerns raised in the public meetings are certainly worth noting, it would be incorrect to extrapolate the degree of concern or insistence voiced in some of these public meetings onto the wider population. The Game and Fish Department should bear in mind that remarks in the public meetings may only represent the opinions of a particularly engaged subset of Wyoming's general population, both hunters and anglers and those engaged in non-consumptive outdoor activities.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC MEETINGS

This report was not intended to record every single comment or concern relating to issues that were raised in the public meetings. Rather, this report's goal was to convey the general feelings of the public meetings and to discuss some of the broad topics raised to help Game and Fish in its decision-making process regarding its 5-year strategic plan.

As discussed above, it would be inappropriate to draw any kind of *quantitative* conclusions based on the comments made in the public meetings, as these remarks represent only the interests and opinions of a particularly engaged subset of Wyoming's population. At the same time, the comments are undoubtedly worth considering because they reflect the positions of potentially influential opinion leaders in the community.

12.6. PUBLIC FORUM METHODOLOGY

To gather additional qualitative data and to provide a further opportunity for Wyoming residents and recreationists to comment on study topics, in addition to the public meetings, the researchers developed an online "Public Forum" featuring open-ended discussion threads. The public forum was launched in December 2017. The forum was maintained on a dedicated website (www.wildlifeforum.org) that included background information on the project, the research process and team, and pertinent study topics. Responsive Management advertised the forum website during all other components of the human dimensions research: at the end of each telephone survey, at all public meetings, and at all focus groups (during focus group recruitment efforts, even those ineligible to participate were informed of the public forum). Likewise, Game and Fish undertook a campaign to invite the general public to participate in the forum through social media, through email to its constituents, and through its website. All forum comments posted before March 2018 were reviewed and analyzed for this summary report. Forum comments posted after March 2018 will be reviewed by Game and Fish and the strategic planning team.

The homepage of the website (Figure 12.6.1) included a brief description of the strategic planning research, a listing of the public meetings, and a statement that comments can be posted until June 2018. The website will be maintained past this date, however, and will eventually be the location for the final research report and strategic plan.

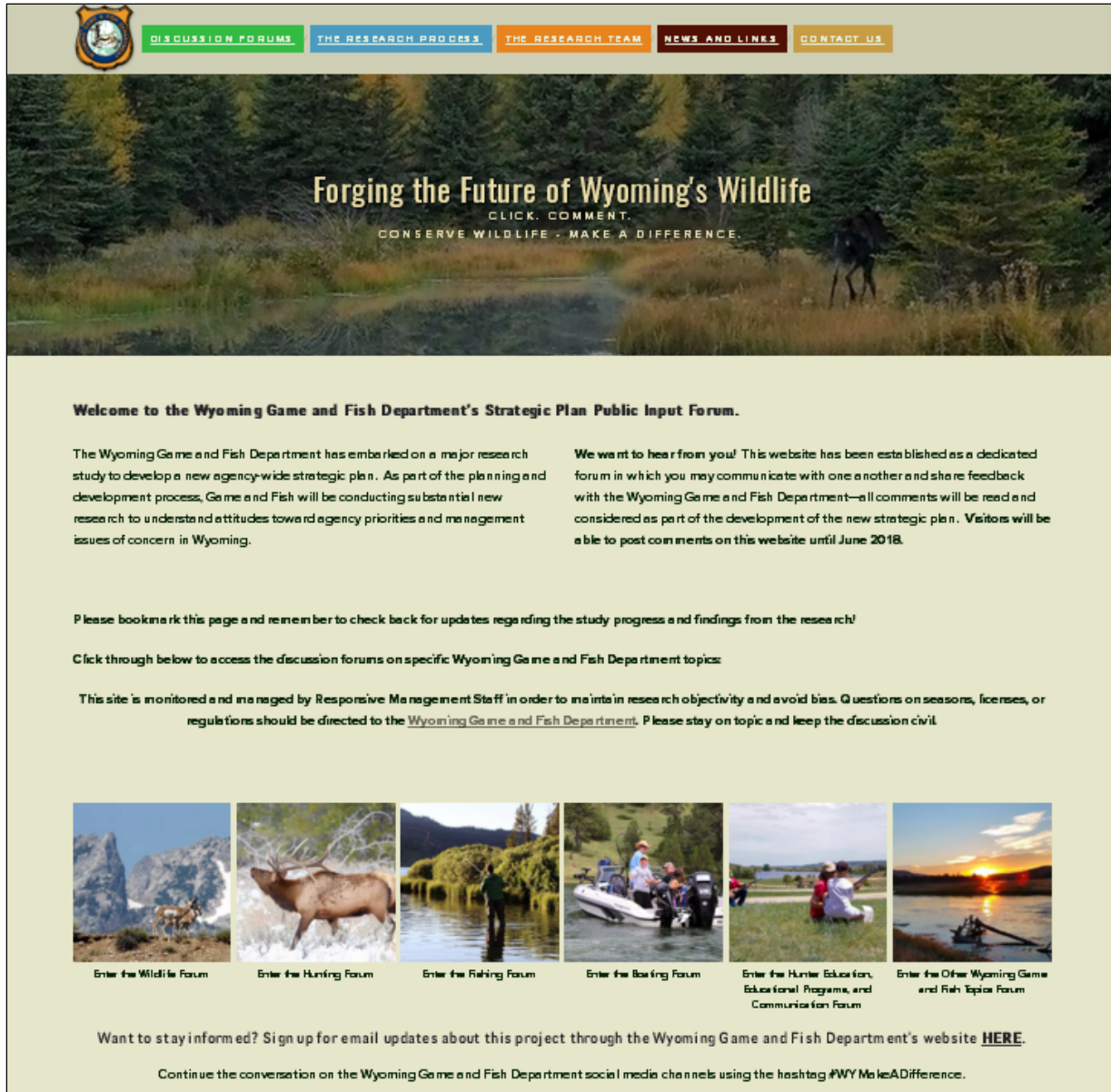


Figure 12.6.1. Public Forum Homepage

The public forum was designed to solicit public input on a wide range of topics; therefore, there were six separate forums on the website that could be accessed from the homepage:

- Wildlife and Wildlife Viewing
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Boating
- Hunter Education, Educational Programs, and Communication
- Other Wyoming Game and Fish Topics

The introduction to each forum included a few basic questions to initiate the discussion, although online contributors were not limited to these questions and could provide any comment that they wished. Contributors were free to comment within each forum, either posting their initial or subsequent thoughts or responding to the comments of other contributors.

Responsive Management's analysis of the forum content includes consideration of the number of comments overall, the number of unique participants contributing to the discussion, and the most frequently discussed topics addressed in the comments. For each forum, the introductory questions and a screenshot of the webpage are shown.

WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE VIEWING

The webpage for this topic is shown in Figure 12.6.2. The questions that were included on this page are as follows:

- What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to nongame wildlife and/or wildlife viewing? Why?
- What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related specifically to large carnivore/predator management (large carnivores in Wyoming include wolves, grizzly and black bears, and mountain lions)? Why?
- What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to nongame wildlife and/or wildlife viewing and working with those that are primarily interested in wildlife viewing? Why?
- What changes, if any, would you like to see over the next 5 to 10 years in Wyoming?

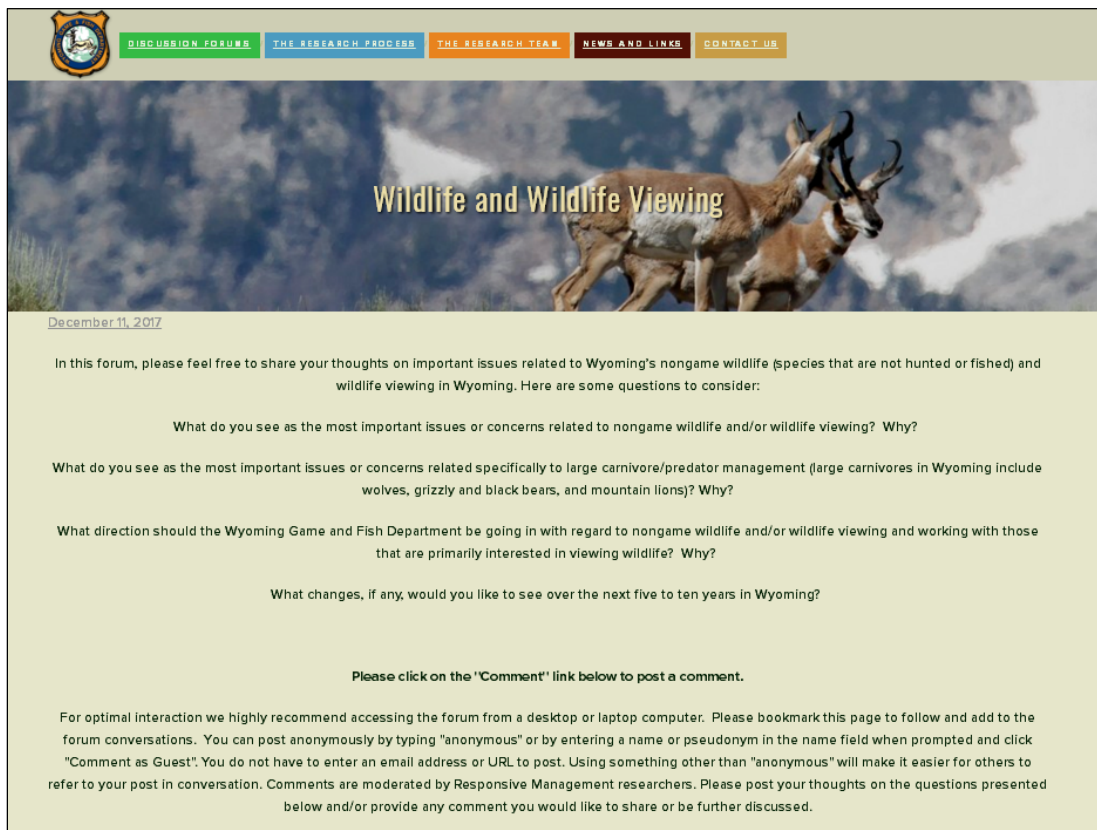
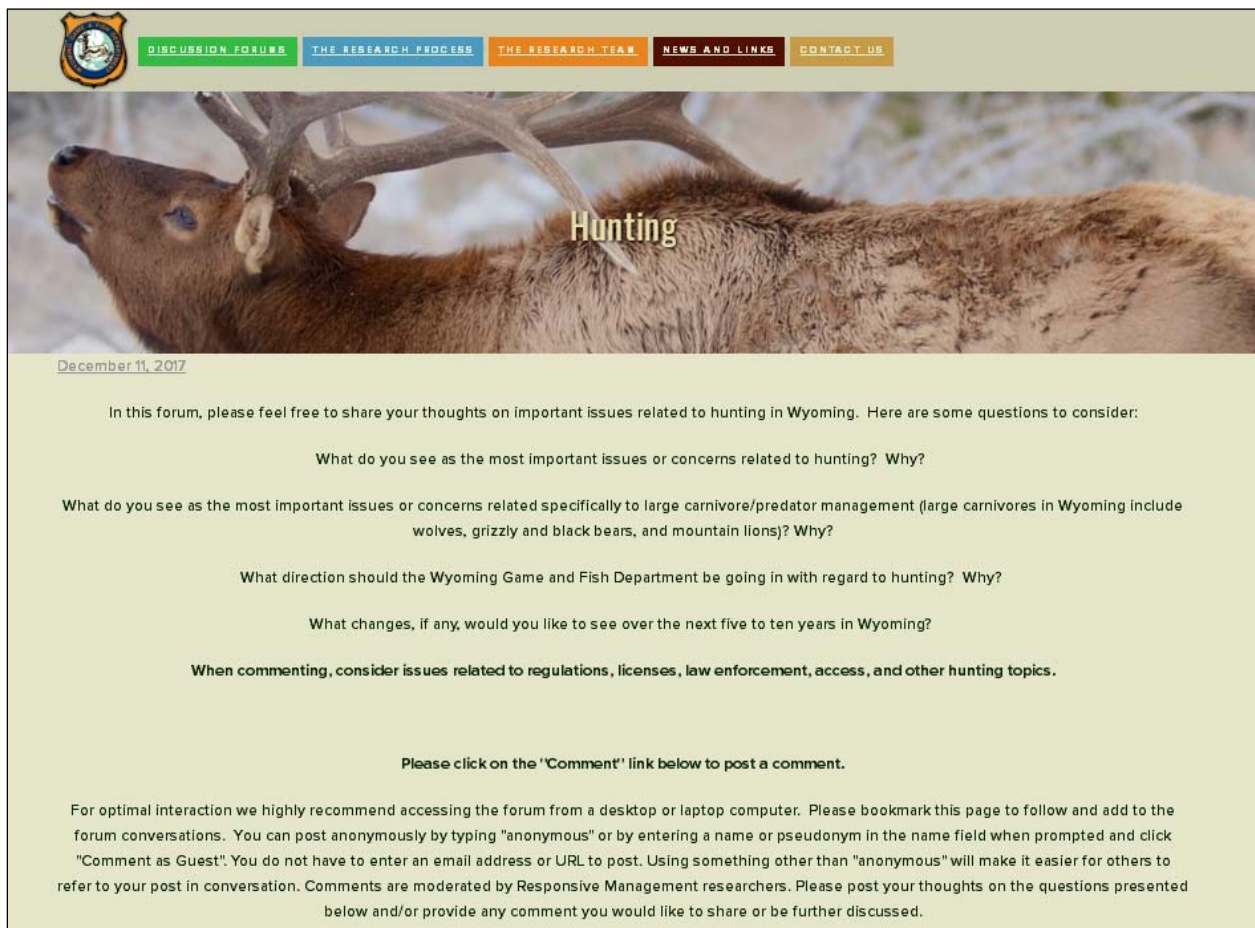


Figure 12.6.2. Public Forum Page for Wildlife and Wildlife Viewing

HUNTING

The webpage for this topic is shown in Figure 12.6.3. The questions that were included on this page are as follows:

- What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to hunting? Why?
- What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related specifically to large carnivore/predator management (large carnivores in Wyoming include wolves, grizzly and black bears, and mountain lions)? Why?
- What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to hunting? Why?
- What changes, if any would you like to see over the next 5 to 10 years in Wyoming?
- **When commenting, consider issues related to regulations, licenses, law enforcement, access, and other hunting topics.**



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Hunting

December 11, 2017

In this forum, please feel free to share your thoughts on important issues related to hunting in Wyoming. Here are some questions to consider:

What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to hunting? Why?

What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related specifically to large carnivore/predator management (large carnivores in Wyoming include wolves, grizzly and black bears, and mountain lions)? Why?

What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to hunting? Why?

What changes, if any, would you like to see over the next five to ten years in Wyoming?

When commenting, consider issues related to regulations, licenses, law enforcement, access, and other hunting topics.

[Please click on the 'Comment' link below to post a comment.](#)

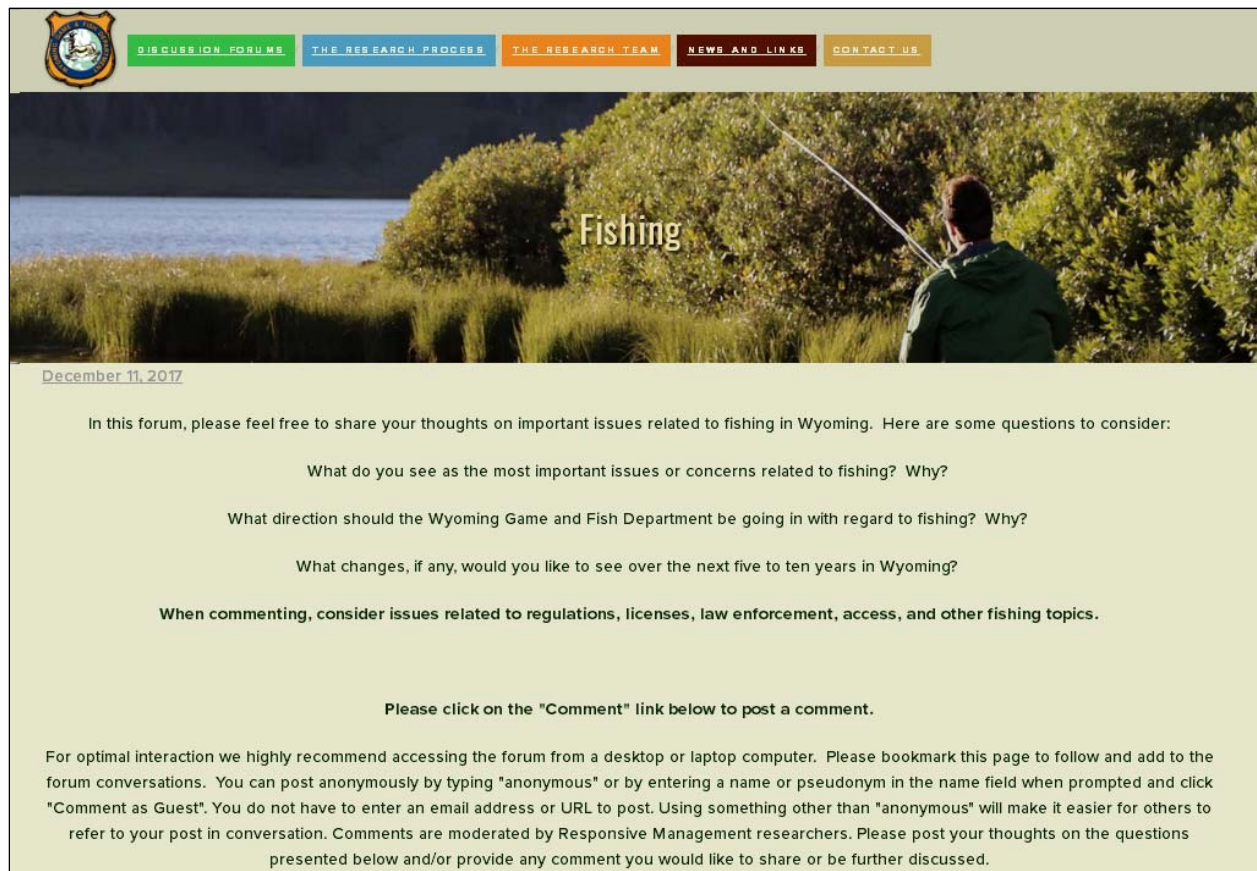
For optimal interaction we highly recommend accessing the forum from a desktop or laptop computer. Please bookmark this page to follow and add to the forum conversations. You can post anonymously by typing "anonymous" or by entering a name or pseudonym in the name field when prompted and click "Comment as Guest". You do not have to enter an email address or URL to post. Using something other than "anonymous" will make it easier for others to refer to your post in conversation. Comments are moderated by Responsive Management researchers. Please post your thoughts on the questions presented below and/or provide any comment you would like to share or be further discussed.


Figure 12.6.3. Public Forum Page for Hunting


FISHING

The webpage for this topic is shown in Figure 12.6.4. The questions that were included on this page are as follows:

- What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to fishing? Why?
- What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to fishing? Why?
- What changes, if any would you like to see over the next 5 to 10 years in Wyoming?
- **When commenting, consider issues related to regulations, licenses, law enforcement, access, and other fishing topics.**



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 Fishing

December 11, 2017

In this forum, please feel free to share your thoughts on important issues related to fishing in Wyoming. Here are some questions to consider:

What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to fishing? Why?

What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to fishing? Why?

What changes, if any, would you like to see over the next five to ten years in Wyoming?

When commenting, consider issues related to regulations, licenses, law enforcement, access, and other fishing topics.

Please click on the "Comment" link below to post a comment.

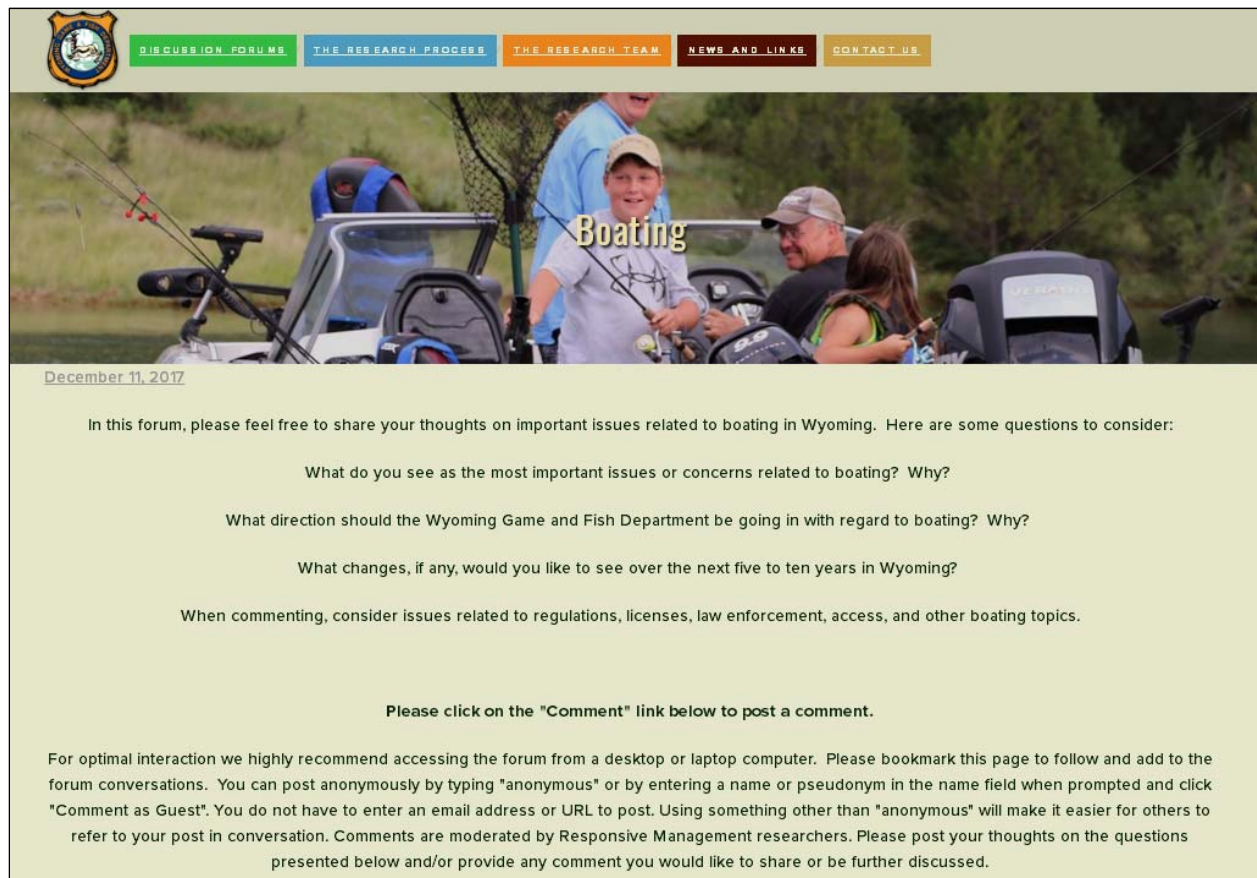
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Figure 12.6.4. Public Forum Page for Fishing

BOATING

The webpage for this topic is shown in Figure 12.6.5. The questions that were included on this page are as follows:

- What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to boating? Why?
- What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to boating? Why?
- What changes, if any would you like to see over the next 5 to 10 years in Wyoming?
- **When commenting, consider issues related to regulations, licenses, law enforcement, access, and other boating topics.**



December 11, 2017

In this forum, please feel free to share your thoughts on important issues related to boating in Wyoming. Here are some questions to consider:

What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to boating? Why?

What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to boating? Why?

What changes, if any, would you like to see over the next five to ten years in Wyoming?

When commenting, consider issues related to regulations, licenses, law enforcement, access, and other boating topics.

Please click on the "Comment" link below to post a comment.

For optimal interaction we highly recommend accessing the forum from a desktop or laptop computer. Please bookmark this page to follow and add to the forum conversations. You can post anonymously by typing "anonymous" or by entering a name or pseudonym in the name field when prompted and click "Comment as Guest". You do not have to enter an email address or URL to post. Using something other than "anonymous" will make it easier for others to refer to your post in conversation. Comments are moderated by Responsive Management researchers. Please post your thoughts on the questions presented below and/or provide any comment you would like to share or be further discussed.

Figure 12.6.5. Public Forum Page for Boating

HUNTER EDUCATION, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, AND COMMUNICATION

The webpage for this topic is shown in Figure 12.6.6. The questions that were included on this page are as follows:

- What educational programs do you think the Wyoming Game and Fish Department should be offering the public?
- Are there any educational programs or communication initiatives currently run by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department that you like or think are particularly effective? Which programs?
- How could the Wyoming Game and Fish Department better reach you with stories about wildlife, hunting, and fishing?
- What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to hunter education courses, other educational programs, and communication initiatives? Why?
- What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to hunter education courses, other educational programs, and communication initiatives? Why?
- What changes, if any would you like to see over the next 5 to 10 years in Wyoming?

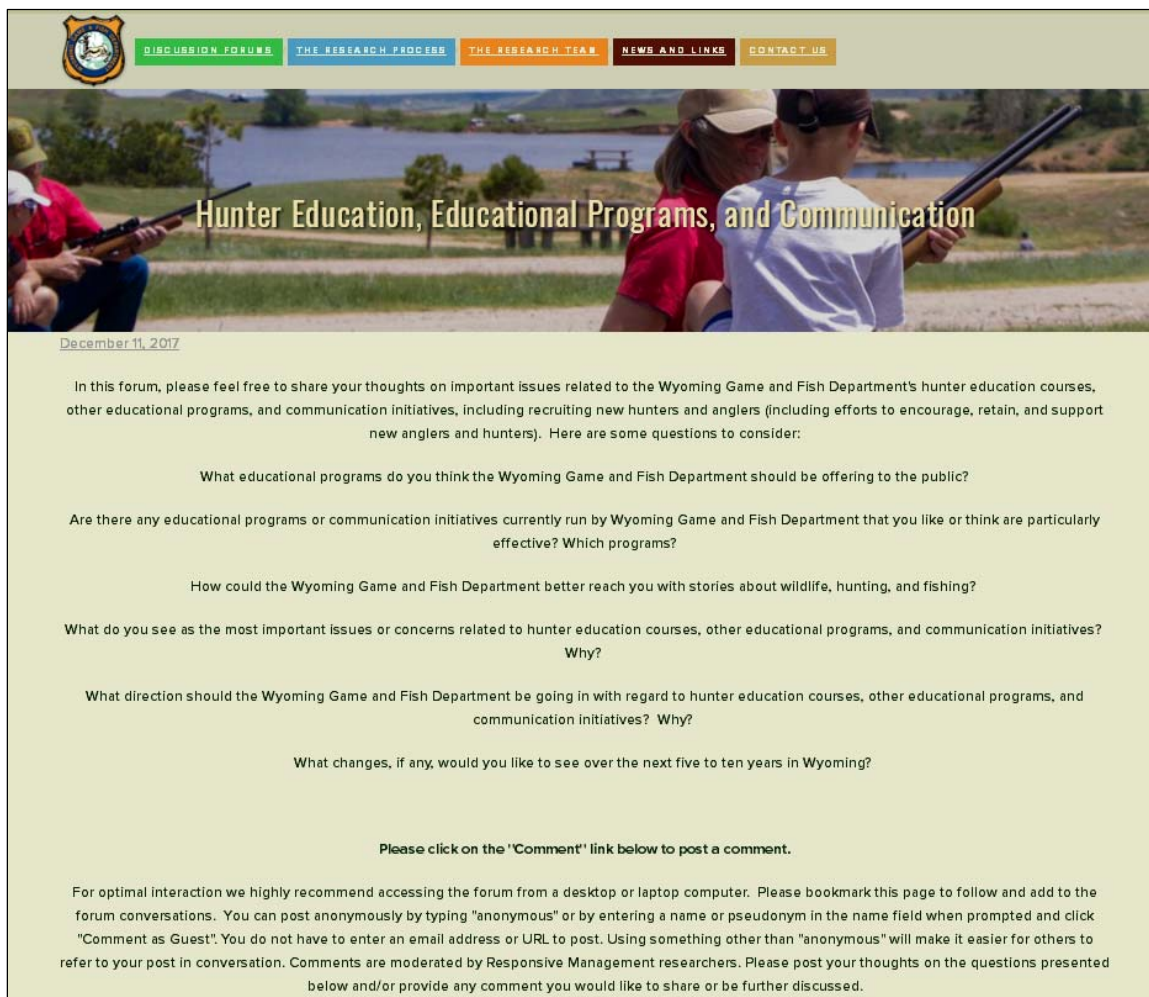
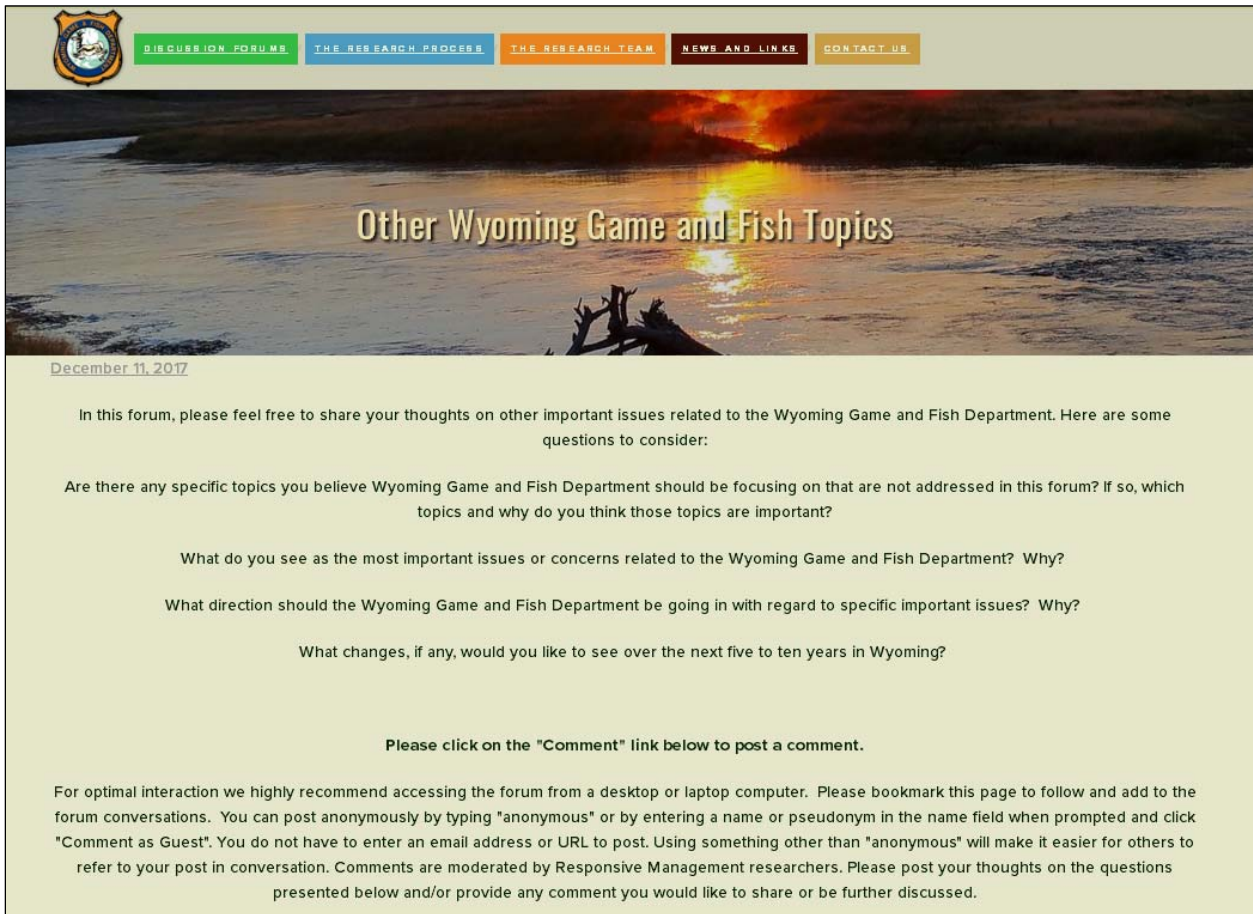


Figure 12.6.6. Public Forum Page for Education Programs and Communications

OTHER WYOMING GAME AND FISH TOPICS

The webpage for this topic is shown in Figure 12.6.7. The questions that were included on this page are as follows:

- Are there any specific topics you believe the Wyoming Game and Fish Department should be focusing on that are not addressed in this forum? If so, which topics and why do you think those topics are important?
- What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department? Why?
- What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to specific important issues? Why?
- What changes, if any would you like to see over the next 5 to 10 years in Wyoming?



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Other Wyoming Game and Fish Topics

December 11, 2017

In this forum, please feel free to share your thoughts on other important issues related to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Here are some questions to consider:

Are there any specific topics you believe Wyoming Game and Fish Department should be focusing on that are not addressed in this forum? If so, which topics and why do you think those topics are important?

What do you see as the most important issues or concerns related to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department? Why?

What direction should the Wyoming Game and Fish Department be going in with regard to specific important issues? Why?

What changes, if any, would you like to see over the next five to ten years in Wyoming?

Please click on the "Comment" link below to post a comment.

For optimal interaction we highly recommend accessing the forum from a desktop or laptop computer. Please bookmark this page to follow and add to the forum conversations. You can post anonymously by typing "anonymous" or by entering a name or pseudonym in the name field when prompted and click "Comment as Guest". You do not have to enter an email address or URL to post. Using something other than "anonymous" will make it easier for others to refer to your post in conversation. Comments are moderated by Responsive Management researchers. Please post your thoughts on the questions presented below and/or provide any comment you would like to share or be further discussed.

Figure 12.6.7. Public Forum Page for Other Topics

Responsive Management



Specializing in Survey Research on Natural Resource and Outdoor Recreation Issues

Responsive Management has conducted...

- Twenty-eight years of continuous human dimensions research only on natural resource and outdoor recreation issues
- More than 1,000 research studies
- Almost \$60 million in research
- Studies in all 50 states and 15 countries worldwide
- Research for every state fish and wildlife agency
- Research for most federal resource agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Coast Guard, and National Marine Fisheries Service
- Research for many NGOs, including the National Wildlife Federation, National Shooting Sports Foundation, National Rifle Association, Archery Trade Association, Izaak Walton League, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, SCI, Dallas Safari Club, and many more
- Research for numerous outdoor recreation industry leaders, such as Winchester, Vista Outdoor (which includes Bushnell, Primos, Federal Premium, etc.), Trijicon, Yamaha, and many others
- Data collection for the nation's top universities:
Auburn 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, and many others

Responsive Management conducts:

- Multi-modal surveys
- Telephone surveys
- Mail surveys
- Personal interviews
- Park/outdoor recreation intercepts
- Web-based surveys (when appropriate)
- Focus groups
- Needs assessments
- Literature reviews
- Data collection for researchers and universities

Responsive Management develops:

- Marketing plans
- Communication plans
- Outreach plans
- Economic analysis
- Program evaluations
- Policy analysis
- Public relations plans

