



## Hunting Participation in North Dakota

Responsive Management was commissioned by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department to obtain information about North Dakota residents' and hunters' opinions on, participation in, and interest in hunting. The study was initiated by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department after discussion in the North Dakota Legislature regarding how to maintain the number of hunters in the state and recruit new ones.

The increase in hunting participation in North Dakota contrasted against a backdrop of a nationwide decline in hunting

participation offers researchers important insights into hunting recruitment and retention. In addition, even though North Dakota is enjoying an overall increase in hunting participation, there are concerns over the future of hunting in North Dakota due to broad demographic changes taking place in the state.

When taken together, license data from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service suggest that hunting participation in North Dakota has increased. However, U.S. Census data indicate that North Dakota has lost school-age population in the past 50 years. Because of this, it appears that the state will not gain enough resident hunters at the young end of the age range to replace older resident hunters who will no longer be hunting. Recruiting young people into the sport is therefore vital to maintaining North Dakota's hunting tradition.

The telephone surveys were conducted in July 2008 and included North Dakota residents ages 18 years and older. Some children of the adult respondents were also interviewed, using a separate children's survey. Parents were encouraged to listen in on the interviews. Results of the children's survey included the following:

- A total of 53% say that friends their age think hunting is very cool, and another 44% say their friends think hunting is a little cool; none say that their friends think hunting is not cool at all.



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- The overwhelming majority (93%) have friends who hunt.
- The majority (62%) have seen or heard information outside of school that helped them learn more about hunting or increased their interest in going hunting.

- A substantial percentage (45%) say that a teacher or guest speaker talked to them at school about hunting. Of those, 64% say that the teacher/speaker said good things about hunting, and the rest (36%) say that the teacher/speaker said both good and bad things. None say that the teacher/speaker said only bad things.

- The majority (58%) say that, both in and out of school, they hear more good things about hunting than bad, and another 40% hear both good and bad things; only 2% indicate that they hear more bad things than good.
- The overwhelming majority (98%) agree that it is okay to hunt when it is legal to do so, most of them strongly agreeing (80%).
- A total of 79% agree that hunting is a safe recreational activity, while only 15% disagree (the rest give a neutral answer or say they do not know).

Taken as a whole, the results of both the adult and children's surveys indicate that increased hunting participation in North Dakota is due to a strong hunting culture, low urbanization, and excellent hunting opportunities. However, even in a state like North Dakota, hunting is threatened by changing

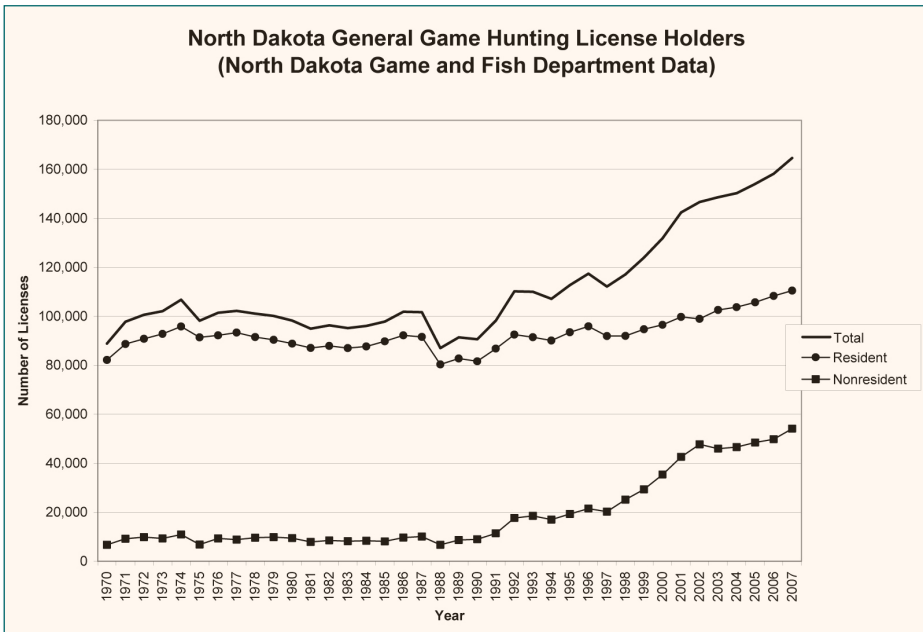
demographics that include fewer youth overall within the state's population.

Previous research has shown that initiation into hunting at a young age is correlated with hunters continuing the sport throughout their lives.

Increasing the initiation of youth into hunting at a young age therefore holds promise for maintaining or increasing the number of North Dakota hunters in the future. Other states have had recruitment success with youth hunting programs, less restrictive licensing requirements, and offering apprenticeship

licenses, and those strategies may work in North Dakota as well. In fact, research published by the Families Afield program found a correlation between less restrictive youth licensing requirements and a higher hunter replacement ratio.

The full report, including detailed results of the adult survey covering such topics as hunting participation and motivation, satisfaction and dissatisfaction with hunting, and opinions on license types, is available at [http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/ND\\_Hunt\\_Report.pdf](http://www.responsivemanagement.com/download/reports/ND_Hunt_Report.pdf) (580K PDF).



*From 1980 to 2006, hunting participation at the national level has shown a steady downward trend, whereas in North Dakota hunting participation has been on the rise. The charts at left and below illustrate the opposing trends by comparing state trends from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department and national trends from Federal Aid data.*

