



## Arizona Game and Fish Department Trends Study

### The Country's Longest-Running Trends Survey on Attitudes Toward Wildlife

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For almost 30 years, the Arizona Game and Fish Department (the Department) has partnered with Responsive Management on the nation's longest-running trends study on attitudes toward wildlife. Since 1992, Responsive Management has conducted this survey of Arizona residents to measure their participation in wildlife-related recreation and their attitudes toward wildlife-related issues and the Department itself. Findings from the survey have continually helped the agency maintain relevancy by keeping abreast of the values and perceptions of the Arizona general population.

"Arizona has changed over the past 30 years as the state has grown," notes Arizona Game and Fish Department Director Ty Gray. "However, the value people place on wildlife and outdoor recreation has not wavered. This is confirmed each time we conduct the Department's biennial trend survey."

In fact, the latest iteration of the survey detected appreciable results of the Department's recent outreach efforts: the percentage of Arizona residents who give the correct name of the Arizona Game and Fish Department when asked if they know the agency responsible for managing Arizona's wildlife increased 5% since 2018 (from 33% to 38%) ( $p < 0.01$ ), a notable uptick in a state where people move in and out every day, and whose population is increasingly diverse. This increase was not by chance, as the Department has implemented strategic marketing efforts throughout Arizona to increase name recognition of the agency since the last trend survey. In addition to identifying the overall increase in awareness, the survey was able to pinpoint the specific sociodemographic groups and regions most impacted by the campaign.

"The information we get from the survey helps us make informed decisions about

how we can best serve our customers and the citizens of Arizona,” says Gray. “And just like Arizona, the survey has changed over time, too.”

Beyond examining outdoor recreation participation rates and attitudes toward wildlife, the 2020 trend survey included new questions to assess residents’ perceptions of and opinions on the Department, its communications, and its responsibilities—these data are also informing strategic efforts by the Department to increase public awareness of the agency.

“As the Department expands its capacity to support the mission, we want to know more about how our activities align with residents’ attitudes toward wildlife and wildlife-related outdoor recreation,” explains Gray. “The Department’s marketing team worked with Responsive Management during the last survey cycle to include questions relevant to the work the team is doing. The survey results proved invaluable and provided information and feedback the marketing team can incorporate into upcoming large-scale efforts.”

## **Methodology**

The Arizona Game and Fish Department trends study entails a probability-based scientific telephone survey of Arizona residents, ages 18 and older (the sample includes both landline and wireless phone numbers in their proper proportions within the state of Arizona). For the most recent survey, Responsive Management obtained a total of 1,507 completed interviews, with a sampling error that is at most plus or minus 2.5 percentage points. The results are reported at a 95% confidence interval.

The sample was stratified into three areas of Arizona: Maricopa County, Pima County, and all other counties. For statewide results, the data were weighted by county so that the areas were in their proper proportions, based on population estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Because nearly a third of Arizona residents are of Hispanic or Latino descent, the survey was administered in Spanish when necessary—this ensured that every adult resident had an equal chance of completing the survey.

## **Study Highlights**

### ***Participation***

The survey asked about participation in seven outdoor activities. Overall, participation has decreased slightly in the activities from 2018 to 2020, with the exception of wildlife viewing around the home, which increased slightly. Participation, as well as interest in participation among nonparticipants, is highest for wildlife viewing around the home.

Wildlife viewing around the home was the most popular outdoor activity, with half of Arizona residents (50%) having taken a special interest in identifying or observing wildlife at or near their homes in the past 12 months. More than a quarter (28%) had participated in target or recreational shooting, closely followed by the percentage of residents taking a trip to view wildlife (26%).

Boating participation declined from 26% in 2018 to 21% in 2020, making it the only activity for which the change in participation between 2018 and 2020 is a statistically significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). All other differences in the six remaining activities are not statistically significant.

Statistical analyses show that those who had participated in any one of the seven activities are more likely to have participated in another one of the activities.

Respondents were asked about their interest in participating in each activity in which they had not participated. The activity with the highest percentage of nonparticipants being *extremely* or *very* interested is taking a wildlife viewing trip (20% of nonparticipants), followed by boating (17%), fishing (14%), and target or recreational shooting (14%).

### ***Attitudes Toward Hunting***

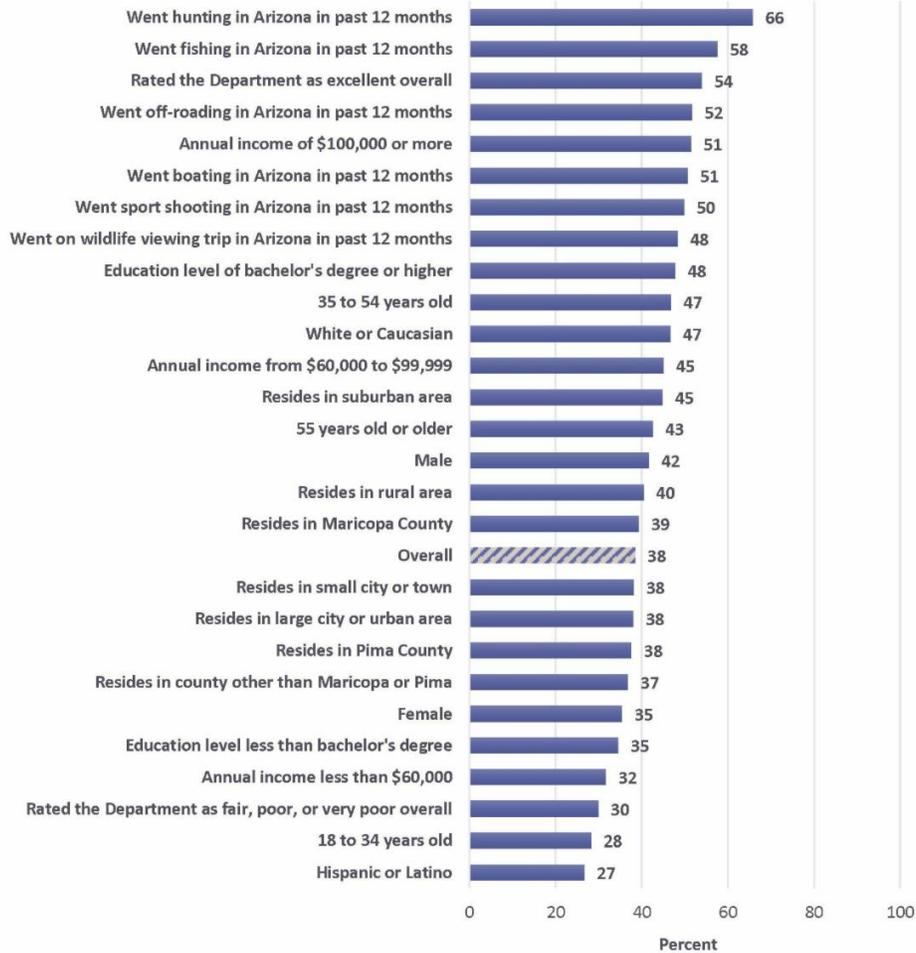
A large majority of Arizona residents (75%) continue to support legal, regulated hunting; meanwhile, 11% oppose it. The percentages in support in 2018 (78%) and 2020 (75%) show no statistically significant difference. Long-term trends show a decline in support since 2014, when support was at 92%. The top reasons given for supporting legal, regulated hunting are the contingency that it be well regulated, for wildlife management/overpopulation control, and for food.

### ***Awareness of and Opinions on the Arizona Game and Fish Department***

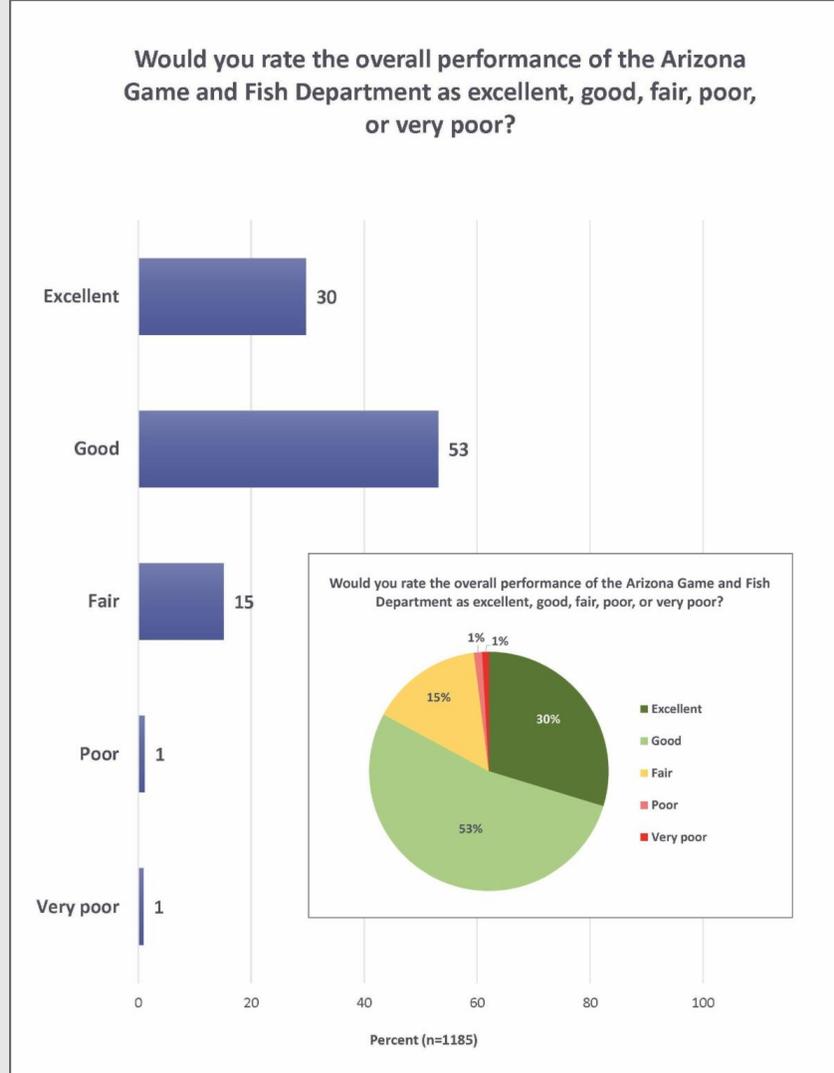
The Department enjoys strong positive ratings among those who feel they have enough knowledge to give a rating or opinion.

A slight majority of Arizona residents (51%) correctly named the Arizona Game and Fish Department (or a close derivative) as the government agency with primary responsibility for managing Arizona's wildlife (as mentioned, over a third—38%—gave the absolutely correct name, an increase over 2018 when 33% of residents knew the correct name, i.e., "the Arizona Game and Fish Department").

**Percent of each of the following groups who correctly named the Department as having primary responsibility for managing Arizona's wildlife resources:**



The Department's overall performance rating is highly positive, with 67% giving a rating of excellent or good, while only 2% give a rating of poor or very poor. When "don't know" answers are excluded, the results are even more positive: 83% give a rating of excellent or good.



As it has since 2006, the survey asked about the credibility of five sources of information on wildlife issues. Credibility remains highest for the Department: when asked to name the most credible source of information on wildlife issues in Arizona from a list of five possible sources, residents most commonly name an employee from the Arizona Game and Fish Department (46%).

Residents were asked to name the main duties or responsibilities of Wildlife Managers. The top response is protecting fish and wildlife/habitat (43% said this), distantly followed by protection of the public/traditional law enforcement (25%), enforcing hunting laws (19%), enforcing fishing laws (15%), and maintaining safety (15%).

### ***Ratings of the Department's Communication and Responsiveness***

Residents were asked how responsive the Department is to questions or requests for information. The overwhelming majority of those who gave an answer other than "don't know" indicated that the Department is responsive to some degree: 20% said the Department is *extremely* responsive, 45% said *very* responsive, and 30% said *somewhat* responsive.

Residents most often agreed that information from the Department is accurate (67% *strongly* or *moderately* agreed with this) and that it is clear and easy to understand (also 67%), while 64% agreed that it is easy to access or obtain and 59% agreed that it is timely.

Reiterating the importance of the survey, Director Gray observes, "The fact we've

been able to keep a pulse on these trends consistently for 30 years has been very valuable, and we are grateful for the support and guidance we've received from Responsive Management on this journey."

[Click here for the full report.](#)



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- Park / outdoor recreation intercepts
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- Needs assessments

- Data collection for researchers and universities
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- Policy analyses

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