Pennsylvania Deer Hunters’ Attitudes Regarding Opening Day of the Season

Conducted for the Pennsylvania Game Commission

2022
Acknowledgments

Responsive Management would like to thank Coren Jagnow, Research and Education Division Chief and Human Dimensions Specialist of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, for her input, support, and guidance on this project.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted for the Pennsylvania Game Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) to determine resident deer hunters’ participation in and attitudes regarding opening day of the regular firearms deer season. The study entailed a probability-based, scientific telephone survey of resident Pennsylvania deer hunters 18 years old and older.

As a condition of taking the survey, hunters had to have hunted deer during the regular firearms season at least once during the 2017 or 2018 seasons (when opening day was the Monday after Thanksgiving) and at least once during the 2019, 2020, or 2021 seasons (when opening day was the Saturday after Thanksgiving). (Note that “2021 season” really means the current 2021-2022 hunting season; however, for simplicity, the survey and this report only refer to the year of the fall season when the regular firearms season occurred when referring to each hunting season.) This ensured that those surveyed had the opportunity to hunt both Monday openers and Saturday openers at some point in the past 5 years, thus providing insight into how the change in opening day may have impacted their hunting participation and attitudes. The Commission provided the license sample to include hunters who met this condition, and a screener question at the beginning of the survey further verified that hunters met this condition before the full survey was administered.

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 in their proper proportions). Additionally, telephone surveys, relative to mail or online surveys, allow for more scientific sampling and data collection, provide higher quality data, obtain higher response rates, are more timely, and are more cost-effective. 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.

The telephone survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the Commission, and as noted above the sample of Pennsylvania resident deer hunters was provided by the Commission. The interviews were conducted using Responsive Management’s computer-assisted telephone interviewing system. The survey was conducted in November and December 2021, and Responsive Management obtained a total of 2,009 completed questionnaires.

The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management. The breakdowns of age, gender, and license type in the survey results closely match those in the sample database, so weighting of the results was not necessary. Throughout this report, findings of the telephone survey are reported at a 95% confidence interval (or higher). For the entire sample of Pennsylvania resident hunters 18 years old and older, the sampling error is at most plus or minus 2.18 percentage points.
DEER HUNTING PARTICIPATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

Among those who hunted in the current firearms deer season, the mean amount was just under 5 days of hunting. Crosstabulations indicate that older hunters and those in the Northcentral and Southeast Regions are more likely than their counterparts to hunt the most days. In another measure of hunting avidity, half of hunters (50%) say their deer hunting has remained about the same over the past 5 years, while more say their hunting has decreased (35%) than say it has increased (15%).

OPENING DAY OF THE REGULAR FIREARMS SEASON

Most Pennsylvania deer hunters (91%) typically hunt on opening day of the regular firearms deer season, and most of those who do not typically hunt opening day (89%) have hunted on opening day in the past. Looking at the two questions combined, only 1% of deer hunters have never hunted on opening day.

Among those who typically hunt or have ever hunted on opening day, a majority (55%) hunt near their residence on opening day, compared to 44% who travel to hunt. Nearly half of those who travel to hunt on opening day (48%) go to a hunting camp. Among all hunters, 21% hunt at a hunting camp on opening day.

Most of those who hunted this season (86%) hunted on opening day; of that group, only 11% said that weather conditions influenced their decision to hunt on opening day. Most of those who hunted on opening day (78%) said nothing else impacted their decision.

Meanwhile, of those who did not hunt on opening day, only 10% said that weather conditions influenced their decision to not hunt. Apart from weather, 40% of this group said not hunting on opening day was due to lack of time and 10% said it was due to age or health. About a quarter of this group (24%) said nothing impacted their decision to not hunt on opening day.

A majority of those who hunted this season (60%) hunted on the Sunday after Thanksgiving (the second day of firearms hunting season).

Most of those who hunted deer in 2020 (84%) hunted on opening day. Among that group, most (94%) said that having opening day on a Saturday did not influence which Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) they hunted that day. Among those who hunted deer in 2020, there is an even split between those who did and did not hunt on the Sunday after Thanksgiving (47% each), the second day of hunting season.

Looking at those who traveled to hunt at a hunting camp on opening day at least once in the past 5 years, half (50%) said the number of people participating in the camp stayed about the same over that time. However, many more said the number of participants decreased (41%) than increased (8%). The same group was asked about the number of camp participants under the age of 40, and the results were more balanced: 56% said it stayed the same, 21% said it
increased, and 21% said it decreased. This suggests that declines in hunting camp participation are primarily due to the exodus of older hunters.

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CHANGE IN OPENING DAY
A majority of Pennsylvania deer hunters (60%) strongly or moderately support having opening day of the regular firearms deer season on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, compared to 27% who strongly or moderately oppose it. Because this is a key question in the survey, these results were crosstabulated by several hunter groups:

- Opposition is higher among hunters 55 and older, compared to their younger counterparts.
- Opposition is higher among those who hunted at a hunting camp on opening day, compared to those who did not. Support is highest among those who traveled to hunt on opening day but not at a hunting camp.
- Support is markedly higher among those who have a child who hunts than those who do not.
- Among the six Commission regions, support is lowest in the Northcentral Region.

Those who support having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving were asked why, in an open-ended question. The top reasons are that they have work obligations on Monday (51% of the group stated this), the Saturday opener provides increased hunting opportunities for themselves and others (48%), and convenience with their child’s school schedule (13%).

Among those who oppose the Saturday opener, the most common reasons are that Monday was the tradition (44% of the group stated this), their setup and enjoyment of hunting camp is rushed (30%), and the opener is too rushed after Thanksgiving (24%).

Nearly all of those who oppose having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving (95%) would prefer to have it on the Monday after Thanksgiving.

A majority of hunters (62%) said that the Saturday opening has not had an impact on their deer hunting in Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, more hunters said it has had a positive impact (25%) than a negative impact (11%).

YOUTH DEER HUNTING
Among those who have a child/children who also hunt deer, two thirds (66%) said the child/children hunted on opening day this season. Of that latter group, 47% said the Saturday opening had no impact on whether the child/children would hunt that day, while 50% said it made their participation on opening day more likely.

The vast majority of those who had a child/children hunt on opening day this season (83%) said that their child’s/children’s school is typically closed on the Monday after Thanksgiving.
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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY
This study was conducted for the Pennsylvania Game Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) to determine resident deer hunters’ participation in and attitudes regarding opening day of the regular firearms deer season. The study entailed a probability-based, scientific telephone survey of resident Pennsylvania deer hunters 18 years old and older. Specific aspects of the research methodology are discussed below.

USE OF TELEPHONES FOR THE SURVEY
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 in their proper proportions). Additionally, telephone surveys, relative to mail or online surveys, allow for more scientific sampling and data collection, as well as higher response rates. If a potential respondent cannot be reached on the first call, subsequent calls are placed on different days of the week and different times of the day to ensure a probability-based, scientifically valid sample. Another advantage of telephone surveys, relative to mail or online surveys, is that they provide higher quality data because of the clarification that a live interviewer provides for any questions in the survey. Also, telephone surveys provide a much faster turnaround time and lower costs compared to mail surveys.

Furthermore, telephone surveys allow respondents who cannot or will not respond to a mail or online survey to participate. Mail and online surveys systematically exclude those who have difficulty reading. In 2016, the U.S. Department of Education’s National Institute of Literacy estimated that up to 43% of the general population of the United States cannot read beyond a “basic level,” suggesting that many might be reticent to complete a mail or online survey they must read to themselves. In addition, those with poor or limited internet service or who are intimidated by technology may be reticent to complete a survey online. In a telephone survey, however, a live interviewer reads the survey questions, clarifies them if necessary, and assists the respondent with completing the survey, making it an excellent option to reduce bias and increase response rates for the survey.

Finally, telephone surveys also have fewer negative effects on the environment than do mail surveys because of the reduced use of paper, reduced energy consumption for delivering and returning the questionnaires, and reduced quantity of material to be disposed of after the survey.

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

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN
The telephone survey questionnaire was developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the Commission, based on the research team’s familiarity with hunting surveys and outdoor recreation in general. Responsive Management conducted pre-tests of the questionnaire to ensure proper wording, flow, and logic in the survey.
SURVEY SAMPLE

The sample of Pennsylvania deer hunters was provided by the Commission, and it consisted of Resident Adult Hunting License and Resident Senior Hunting License holders. The Commission sent two databases: one covering license sales from June 14 to November 8, 2021, and the second database covering license sales from November 9 to December 9, 2021. The final survey dataset closely matched these sample proportions; therefore, weighting the results to adjust for sample proportions was not necessary. The tabulation below shows the comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparison of Database Ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage in first dataset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage in second dataset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage in second dataset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey was not stratified by geographic region, although some results were crosstabulated by the Commission regions shown below.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Regions

As a condition of taking the survey, hunters had to have hunted deer during the regular firearms season at least once during the 2017 or 2018 seasons (when opening day was the Monday after Thanksgiving) and at least once during the 2019, 2020, or 2021 seasons (when opening day was the Saturday after Thanksgiving). (Note that “2021 season” really means the current 2021-2022 hunting season; however, for simplicity, the survey and this report only refer to the year of the fall season when the regular firearms season occurred when referring to each hunting season.) This ensured that those surveyed had the opportunity to hunt both Monday openers and Saturday openers at some point in the past 5 years, thus providing insight into how the change in opening day may have impacted their hunting participation and attitudes. The Commission provided the two license sample databases to include hunters who met this condition, and a screener question at the beginning of the survey further verified that hunters met this condition before the full survey was administered.
TELEPHONE SURVEY DATA COLLECTION AND QUALITY CONTROL
As previously noted, the interviews were conducted using Responsive Management’s CATI system, which utilizes software for telephone data collection. 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 instrument was programmed so that the CATI system branched, coded, and substituted phrases in the survey based on previous responses to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data collection. The software also allowed for error checks during the interview to help ensure that the data were accurate and valid.

Responsive Management has interviewers who have been trained according to the standards established by the Council of American Survey Research Organizations. The Survey Center Managers conducted project briefings with the interviewers prior to the administration of this survey. The Survey Center Managers and statisticians monitored the data collection, including monitoring of the actual telephone interviews without the interviewers’ knowledge, to evaluate the performance of each interviewer and ensure the integrity of the 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 2,009 completed questionnaires.

INTERVIEWING DATES AND TIMES
Telephone surveying times were Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Saturday from noon to 7:00 p.m., and Sunday from 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., local time. A five-callback design was used to maintain the representativeness of the sample, to avoid bias toward people easy to reach by telephone, and to provide an equal opportunity for all to participate. When a respondent could not be reached on the first call, subsequent calls were placed on different days of the week and at different times of the day. The survey was conducted in November and December 2021.

DATA ANALYSIS
The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management. The breakdowns of age, gender, and license type in the survey results closely match those in the sample database, so weighting of the results was not necessary. The comparisons are shown in the tabulation on the following page.
Comparisons of Sample and Survey Datasets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage in Commission’s License Sample</th>
<th>Percentage in Completed Surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65 years old or older</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 64 years old</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years old</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years old</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 34 years old</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>License Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Adult</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Senior</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On questions that asked respondents to provide a number (e.g., days hunted), the graph shows 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 if the graph only shows ranges of numbers. Note that the calculation of means used the precise numbers that the respondents provided.

**SAMPLING ERROR**

Throughout this report, findings of the telephone survey are reported at a 95% confidence interval (or higher). For the entire sample of resident Pennsylvania hunters 18 years old and older, the sampling error is at most plus or minus 2.18 percentage points. This means that if the survey were conducted 100 times on different samples that were selected in the same way, the findings of 95 out of the 100 surveys would fall within plus or minus 2.18 percentage points of each other. Sampling error was calculated using the formula described below, with a sample size of 2,009 and a population size of 741,586 resident Pennsylvania hunters 18 years old and older.

**Sampling Error Equation**

\[
B = \sqrt{\frac{N_p(0.25)}{N_s}} \left( \frac{1.96}{N_p - 1} \right)
\]

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


*Note:* This is a simplified version of the formula that calculates the maximum sampling error using a 50:50 split (the most conservative calculation because a 50:50 split would give maximum variation).
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENTATION OF RESULTS IN THE REPORT

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

- 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.
- 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.”
- Some closed-ended questions are in a scale, such as a continuum from strongly support to strongly oppose.

Data analysts read through all of the open-ended hunter responses and assigned them into response categories so that the results could be presented in quantitative “Multiple Responses Allowed” graphs. Overall, analysts categorized over 6,300 hunter responses.
DEER HUNTING PARTICIPATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

Among those who hunted in the current firearm deer season, the mean amount was just under 5 days of hunting. Crosstabulations indicate that older hunters and those in the Northcentral and Southeast Regions are more likely than their counterparts to hunt the most days.

In another measure of hunting avidity, half of hunters (50%) say their deer hunting has remained about the same over the past 5 years, while more say their hunting has decreased (35%) than say it has increased (15%).
Days hunted deer among those who hunted deer in 2021.

- **Hunted more than 10 days this season**
  - Northwest (n=211):
    - 5%
  - Southwest (n=354):
    - 7%
  - Northcentral (n=168):
    - 6%
  - Southcentral (n=312):
    - 7%
  - Northeast (n=204):
    - 6%
  - Southeast (n=421):
    - 3%

- **Hunted 6 to 10 days this season**
  - Northwest (n=211):
    - 19%
  - Southwest (n=354):
    - 22%
  - Northcentral (n=168):
    - 23%
  - Southcentral (n=312):
    - 27%
  - Northeast (n=204):
    - 19%
  - Southeast (n=421):
    - 22%

- **Hunted 4 or 5 days this season**
  - Northwest (n=211):
    - 34%
  - Southwest (n=354):
    - 33%
  - Northcentral (n=168):
    - 25%
  - Southcentral (n=312):
    - 34%
  - Northeast (n=204):
    - 26%
  - Southeast (n=421):
    - 34%

- **Hunted 3 days or fewer this season**
  - Northwest (n=211):
    - 39%
  - Southwest (n=354):
    - 38%
  - Northcentral (n=168):
    - 41%
  - Southcentral (n=312):
    - 46%
  - Northeast (n=204):
    - 41%
  - Southeast (n=421):
    - 48%

*Mean days*
- Northwest (n=211): 4.88
- Southwest (n=354): 4.81
- Northcentral (n=168): 5.21
- Southcentral (n=312): 4.87
- Northeast (n=204): 4.84
- Southeast (n=421): 5.16

Overall, would you say your participation in deer hunting in Pennsylvania has increased, remained about the same, or decreased in the past 5 years?

- **Increased**
  - Northwest (n=211): 15%
  - Southwest (n=354): 20%
  - Northcentral (n=168): 23%
  - Southcentral (n=312): 22%
  - Northeast (n=204): 20%
  - Southeast (n=421): 23%

- **Remained about the same**
  - Northwest (n=211): 50%
  - Southwest (n=354): 52%
  - Northcentral (n=168): 51%
  - Southcentral (n=312): 52%
  - Northeast (n=204): 51%
  - Southeast (n=421): 52%

- **Decreased**
  - Northwest (n=211): 35%
  - Southwest (n=354): 28%
  - Northcentral (n=168): 24%
  - Southcentral (n=312): 24%
  - Northeast (n=204): 28%
  - Southeast (n=421): 23%

*Mean days*
- Northwest (n=211): 4.88
- Southwest (n=354): 4.81
- Northcentral (n=168): 5.21
- Southcentral (n=312): 4.87
- Northeast (n=204): 4.84
- Southeast (n=421): 5.16
In an open-ended question, those whose hunting increased in the past 5 years most commonly said it was because they had more free time in general (36% of the group stated this), they had more time with their children or their children started hunting (14%), and the addition of Saturday and/or Sunday to the hunting season (13%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percent (n=299)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had more time</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had more time with children / children started hunting</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition of Saturday and/or Sunday to hunting season</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy it / interest increased</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More archery hunting allowed / allowed crossbows / doing more archery</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had good access / better skills</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanted to get food</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More days in season (did not mention Saturday or Sunday)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More deer available</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer deer / takes longer to get deer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-related reason</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have people to go with (other than children)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better quality deer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became interested in another type of hunting (other than archery)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know / no answer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Those whose hunting decreased in the past 5 years most often said it was because of age or health (30% of the group stated this), a lack of free time (also 30%), and a lack of deer (17%).
The Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) typically hunted by deer hunters are shown below.

In which WMUs do you typically hunt deer during the regular firearms season in Pennsylvania? (Respondent could select up to 3 WMUs.)
OPENING DAY OF THE REGULAR FIREARMS SEASON
Most Pennsylvania deer hunters (91%) typically hunt on opening day of the regular firearms deer season, and most of those who do not typically hunt opening day (89%) have hunted on opening day in the past. Looking at the two questions combined, only 1% of deer hunters have never hunted on opening day.

![Graph showing percentages of deer hunters by hunting habits.]

Among those who typically hunt or have ever hunted on opening day, a majority (55%) hunt near their residence on opening day, compared to 44% who travel to hunt.

![Graph showing percentages of deer hunters by hunting location.]

Pennsylvania Deer Hunters’ Attitudes Regarding Opening Day of the Season
Nearly half of those who travel to hunt on opening day (48%) go to a hunting camp. Among all hunters, 21% hunt at a hunting camp on opening day.
Most of those who hunted this season (86%) hunted on opening day; of that group, only 11% said that weather conditions influenced their decision to hunt on opening day. Meanwhile, of those who did not hunt on opening day, only 10% said that weather conditions influenced their decision to not hunt.
Did weather conditions impact or influence your decision to not hunt on opening day of the regular firearms deer season this year? (Asked of those who did not hunt on opening day.)

- Yes: 10
- No: 90

Percent (n=234)
Most of those who hunted on opening day this season (78%) said that nothing apart from weather impacted their decision to hunt on opening day. (Note that this result is somewhat in contrast to later survey questioning, in which most of those who support or oppose the Saturday opener gave specific reasons for their support or opposition.)
Among those who did not hunt on opening day, 40% said it was due to lack of time and 10% said it was due to age or health (these reasons are independent from weather considerations). About a quarter of this group (24%) said nothing impacted their decision to not hunt on opening day.

**Did anything else impact or influence your decision to not hunt on opening day of the regular firearms deer season this year? If yes, what else impacted or influenced your decision? (Asked of those who did not hunt on opening day.)**

- Lack of time: 40
- Age / health: 10
- Crowding: 6
- Did archery / got deer in archery season: 5
- Does not like Saturday opener: 5
- Less interest: 2
- Regulatory reasons / timing of season (did not mention Saturday): 2
- COVID-related reason: 2
- Poor behavior of other hunters: 1
- Lack of access: 1
- Other: 5
- No / no answer: 24

Percent (n=234)
The WMUs hunted on opening day are shown below, among those who did so.
A majority of those who hunted this season (60%) hunted on the Sunday after Thanksgiving (the second day of firearms hunting season).

Most of those who hunted deer in 2020 (84%) hunted on opening day.
Most of those who hunted on opening day in 2020 (83%) said that nothing impacted their decision to do so.
Among those who hunted in 2020 but not on opening day, the most common reasons for not hunting that day are a lack of time (26%) or having hunted or getting a deer during archery season (16%); 17% said that nothing impacted the decision.
Among those who hunted on opening day in 2020, most (94%) said that having opening day on a Saturday did not influence which WMU they hunted that day.

**Did holding the opening day of the regular firearms deer season on a Saturday in 2020 impact or influence which WMU you hunted on that day in any way? (Asked of those who hunted on opening day in 2020.)**

- Yes: 6
- No: 94
- Do not know: 1

Percent (n=1578)

**Can you please tell me how it impacted or influenced which WMU you hunted? (Asked of those who indicated that the Saturday opener in 2020 impacted which WMU they hunted.)**

Multiple Responses Allowed

- Saturday provided more options: 24
- Had to or could go to closer spot: 22
- Able to go to camp / travel farther: 16
- Too rushed to get to usual WMU / camp: 13
- Crowding caused the change: 10
- Family commitments on Saturday caused the change: 2
- Other: 3
- Do not know / no answer: 10

Percent (n=87)
Among those who hunted deer in 2020, there is an even split between those who did and did not hunt on the Sunday after Thanksgiving (47% each), the second day of hunting season.
Looking at those who traveled to hunt at a hunting camp on opening day at least once in the past 5 years, half (50%) said the number of people participating in the camp stayed about the same over that time. However, many more said the number of participants decreased (41%) than increased (8%). The same group was asked about the number of camp participants under the age of 40, and the results were more balanced: 56% said it stayed the same, 21% said it increased, and 21% said it decreased. This suggests that declines in hunting camp participation are primarily due to the exodus of older hunters.
ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CHANGE IN OPENING DAY

A majority of Pennsylvania deer hunters (60%) strongly or moderately support having opening day of the regular firearms deer season on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, compared to 27% who strongly or moderately oppose it. Because this is a key question in the survey, these results were crosstabulated by several hunter groups:

- Opposition is higher among hunters 55 and older, compared to their younger counterparts.
- Opposition is higher among those who hunted at a hunting camp on opening day, compared to those who did not. Support is highest among those who traveled to hunt on opening day but not at a hunting camp.
- Support is markedly higher among those who have a child who hunts than those who do not.
- Among the six Commission regions, support is lowest in the Northcentral Region.

Also, support/opposition was crosstabulated by the month of license purchase in 2021 and the number of years the hunter bought a license in the past 5 years (note that most hunters bought a license all 5 years). These last two crosstabulations are based on the Commission’s sample database, not survey results, and are shown following the other crosstabulations.

Do you support or oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support/Opposition</th>
<th>Percent (n=2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly support</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately support</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither support nor oppose</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately oppose</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly oppose</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60% *  

* Apparent discrepancy is due to rounding of numbers on graph; calculations are made on unrounded numbers.
Do you support or oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving?

- **Strongly support**
  - 55 years old or older (n=938): 51%
  - 35 to 54 years old (n=838): 47%
  - 18 to 34 years old (n=190): 47%

- **Moderately support**
  - 55 years old or older (n=938): 15%
  - 35 to 54 years old (n=838): 15%
  - 18 to 34 years old (n=190): 13%

- **Neither support nor oppose**
  - 55 years old or older (n=938): 12%
  - 35 to 54 years old (n=838): 11%
  - 18 to 34 years old (n=190): 8%

- **Moderately oppose**
  - 55 years old or older (n=938): 11%
  - 35 to 54 years old (n=838): 9%
  - 18 to 34 years old (n=190): 16%

- **Strongly oppose**
  - 55 years old or older (n=938): 14%
  - 35 to 54 years old (n=838): 15%
  - 18 to 34 years old (n=190): 23%

---

Do you support or oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving?

- **Strongly support**
  - Hunts at a hunting camp on opening day (n=418): 47%
  - Does not hunt at a hunting camp on opening day (n=1591): 34%

- **Moderately support**
  - Hunts at a hunting camp on opening day (n=418): 16%
  - Does not hunt at a hunting camp on opening day (n=1591): 15%

- **Neither support nor oppose**
  - Hunts at a hunting camp on opening day (n=418): 12%
  - Does not hunt at a hunting camp on opening day (n=1591): 10%

- **Moderately oppose**
  - Hunts at a hunting camp on opening day (n=418): 13%
  - Does not hunt at a hunting camp on opening day (n=1591): 8%

- **Strongly oppose**
  - Hunts at a hunting camp on opening day (n=418): 16%
  - Does not hunt at a hunting camp on opening day (n=1591): 27%
Do you support or oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving?

- Strongly support: 34%
- Moderately support: 16%
- Neither support nor oppose: 13%
- Moderately oppose: 11%
- Strongly oppose: 18%

Survey responses categorized by activity on opening day:

- Hunts at hunting camp on opening day (n=418)
- Travels to hunt on opening day but not at camp (n=456)
- Hunts near residence on opening day or does not hunt on opening day (n=1135)

Has child who hunts deer (n=410)

Does not have child who hunts deer (n=1599)
Do you support or oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving?

Northwest (n=252)
Southwest (n=431)
Northcentral (n=194)
Southcentral (n=356)
Northeast (n=250)
Southeast (n=490)
Do you support or oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving?

Month of license purchase in 2021:
- June (n=534)
- July (n=824)
- August (n=90)
- September (n=82)
- October (n=93)
- November (n=152)
- December (n=3)

Do you support or oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving?

Number of years purchased license in past 5 years:
- 2 (n=29)
- 3 (n=60)
- 4 (n=280)
- 5 (n=1640)
In addition, the graphs on this page and the next show several demographic characteristics combined on one graph (the text box below describes how to interpret these demographic analyses graphs). As shown below, the hunter groups most likely to strongly or moderately support having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving include those whose deer hunting increased in the past 5 years, female hunters, those with a child who also hunts deer, and those in the middle age category (35 to 54 years old).

This graph looks at support for having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. The striped bar shows that 60% of hunters strongly or moderately approve of the Saturday opening.

Groups above the patterned bar are more likely to hold this opinion than are hunters overall; e.g., 71% of those whose deer hunting increased in the past 5 years strongly or moderately support having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Conversely, those groups below the striped bar are less likely to support this opening day.

For example, those who hunted more than 10 days this season (46%) are less likely to support the Saturday opening than are hunters overall.
Conversely, hunter groups most likely to strongly or moderately oppose having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving include those who hunt at a hunting camp on opening day, those who hunted more than 10 days this season, Northcentral Region residents, those 55 or older, and those whose deer hunting decreased in the past 5 years.

Percent of each of the following groups who strongly or moderately oppose having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving:

- Hunts at a hunting camp on opening day: 40%
- Hunts more than 10 days this season: 39%
- Resides in Northcentral Region: 34%
- 55 years old or older: 33%
- Deer hunting decreased in past 5 years: 33%
- Hunts 6 to 10 days this season: 30%
- Resides on farm or ranch: 30%
- Does not have child who hunts deer: 29%
- Resides in Southeast Region: 29%
- Does not typically hunt on opening day: 29%
- Hunts 4 or 5 days this season: 29%
- Resides in rural area not on farm or ranch: 28%
- Resides in Northwest Region: 28%
- Male: 28%
- Resides in Southcentral Region: 28%
- Resides in small city or town: 27%
- Overall: 27%
- Typically hunts on opening day: 27%
- Resides in large city or urban area: 27%
- Deer hunting remained about the same in past 5 years: 26%
- Resides in Southwest Region: 25%
- Resides in suburban area: 25%
- Hunted 3 days or fewer this season: 24%
- Does not hunt at a hunting camp on opening day: 24%
- 18-34 years old: 24%
- Resides in Northeast Region: 24%
- 35-54 years old: 22%
- Deer hunting increased in past 5 years: 21%
- Has child who hunts deer: 21%
- Female: 18%
Those who support having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving were asked why, in an open-ended question. The top reasons are that they have work obligations on Monday (51% of the group stated this), the Saturday opener provides increased hunting opportunities for themselves and others (48%), and convenience with their child’s school schedule (13%). Those in the middle age bracket (35 to 54 years old) were more likely than their counterparts to cite work obligations on Monday. Additional crosstabulations by the number of days hunted, participation in a hunting camp, and having children who hunt are shown on the following pages.
What are the main reasons you support the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving? (Asked of those who support the Saturday opener.)

- Work obligations on Monday / would need vacation
  - Hunted more than 10 days this season (n=46)
  - Hunted 6 to 10 days this season (n=211)
  - Hunted 4 or 5 days this season (n=307)
  - Hunted 3 days or fewer this season (n=444)

- Increased hunting opportunities

- Child's school schedule

- Other
  - Hunts at hunting camp on opening day (n=206)
  - Travels to hunt on opening day but not at camp (n=300)
  - Does not hunt or travel to hunt on opening day (n=695)

- Do not know

Multiple Responses Allowed
What are the main reasons you support the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving? (Asked of those who support the Saturday opener.)

- Work obligations on Monday / would need vacation: 54% (Has child who hunts deer), 49% (Does not have child who hunts deer)
- Increased hunting opportunities: 46% (Has child who hunts deer), 49% (Does not have child who hunts deer)
- Child's school schedule: 22% (Has child who hunts deer), 10% (Does not have child who hunts deer)
- Other: 5% (Has child who hunts deer), 3% (Does not have child who hunts deer)
- Do not know: 8% (Has child who hunts deer), 3% (Does not have child who hunts deer)

Multiple Responses Allowed
Among those who oppose the Saturday opener, the most common reasons are that Monday was the tradition (44% of the group stated this), their setup and enjoyment of hunting camp is rushed (30%), and the opener is too rushed after Thanksgiving (24%). Interestingly, the youngest hunters are most likely to state that Monday was the tradition. Additional crosstabulations are shown by the number of days hunted, participation in a hunting camp, and having children who hunt.

What are the main reasons you oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving? (Asked of those who oppose the Saturday opener.)

- Monday was tradition: 44%
- Setup / enjoyment of hunting camp is rushed: 30%
- Too rushed after Thanksgiving: 24%
- Over harvest / hurts deer population: 8%
- Hurts local businesses: 5%
- Other: 6%
- Do not know: 5%

What are the main reasons you oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving? (Asked of those who oppose the Saturday opener.)

- Monday was tradition: 56%
- Setup / enjoyment of hunting camp is rushed: 22%
- Too rushed after Thanksgiving: 22%
- Over harvest / hurts deer population: 7%
- Hurts local businesses: 4%
- Other: 7%
- Do not know: 2%

Multiple Responses Allowed
Percent (n=543)

55 years old or older (n=314)
35 to 54 years old (n=184)
18 to 34 years old (n=45)
What are the main reasons you oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving? (Asked of those who oppose the Saturday opener.)

- Monday was tradition
- Setup / enjoyment of hunting camp is rushed
- Too rushed after Thanksgiving
- Over harvest / hurts deer population
- Hurts local businesses
- Other
- Do not know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday was tradition</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setup / enjoyment of hunting camp is rushed</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too rushed after Thanksgiving</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over harvest / hurts deer population</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurts local businesses</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple Responses Allowed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hunts at hunting camp on opening day</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travels to hunt on opening day but not at camp</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not hunt or travel to hunt on opening day</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the main reasons you oppose the regular firearms deer season opening day being on the Saturday after Thanksgiving? (Asked of those who oppose the Saturday opener.)

- Monday was tradition
- Setup / enjoyment of hunting camp is rushed
- Too rushed after Thanksgiving
- Over harvest / hurts deer population
- Hurts local businesses
- Other
- Do not know

Multiple Responses Allowed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Has child who hunts deer (n=85)</th>
<th>Does not have child who hunts deer (n=466)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday was tradition</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setup / enjoyment of hunting camp is rushed</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too rushed after Thanksgiving</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over harvest / hurts deer population</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurts local businesses</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nearly all of those who oppose having opening day on the Saturday after Thanksgiving (95%) would prefer to have it on the Monday after Thanksgiving.

A majority of hunters (62%) said that the Saturday opening has not had an impact on their deer hunting in Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, more hunters said it has had a positive impact (25%) than a negative impact (11%).
YOUTH DEER HUNTING

One fifth of hunters (20%) have a child under 18 who also hunts deer; this is most common among hunters in the 35- to 54-year-old age range.

Are you a parent, stepparent, or guardian of any children under the age of 18 who also hunt deer?

- Yes: 20%
- No: 79%
- Do not know: 1%

Has at least one child under 18 who also hunts deer.

- Has child who hunts deer:
  - 55 years old or older (n=938): 6%
  - 35 to 54 years old (n=838): 18%
  - 18 to 34 years old (n=190): 37%

- Does not have child who hunts deer:
  - 55 years old or older (n=938): 94%
  - 35 to 54 years old (n=838): 63%
  - 18 to 34 years old (n=190): 82%
Among those who have a child/children who also hunt deer, two thirds (66%) said the child/children hunted on opening day this season. Of that latter group, 47% said the Saturday opening had no impact on whether the child/children would hunt that day, while 50% said it made their participation on opening day more likely.
The vast majority of those who had a child/children hunt on opening day this season (83%) said that their child’s/children’s school is typically closed on the Monday after Thanksgiving.
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The following demographic data were collected by the survey: county of residence, type of residential area (urban-rural continuum), gender, and age.

What county do you live in? (Part 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Percent (n=2009)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adams</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegheny</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedford</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berks</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blair</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambria</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarion</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearfield</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dauphin</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elk</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayette</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulton</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntingdon</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniata</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lackawanna</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What county do you live in? (Part 2)

- Lancaster: 4.1%
- Lawrence: 0.9%
- Lebanon: 1.8%
- Lehigh: 1.3%
- Luzerne: 3.0%
- Lycoming: 1.4%
- McKean: 0.5%
- Mercer: 1.3%
- Mifflin: 0.8%
- Monroe: 1.1%
- Montgomery: 2.4%
- Montour: 0.4%
- Northampton: 1.6%
- Northumberland: 0.9%
- Perry: 1.5%
- Philadelphia: 0.6%
- Pike: 0.4%
- Potter: 0.3%
- Schuylkill: 2.2%
- Snyder: 0.8%
- Somerset: 1.2%
- Sullivan: 0.1%
- Susquehanna: 0.5%
- Tioga: 0.5%
- Union: 1.0%
- Venango: 1.3%
- Warren: 1.2%
- Washington: 1.7%
- Wayne: 0.5%
- Westmoreland: 4.0%
- Wyoming: 0.6%
- York: 3.3%
- Not currently a...: 0.1%
- Do not know: 1.7%
Do you consider your place of residence to be a large city or urban area, a suburban area, a small city or town, a rural area on a farm or ranch, or a rural area not on a farm or ranch?

- Large city or urban area: 6%
- Suburban area: 16%
- Small city or town: 28%
- Rural area on a farm or ranch: 13%
- Rural area not on a farm or ranch: 35%
- Do not know / refused: 2%
Are you...?

- Male: 96%
- Female: 4%

May I ask your age?

- 65 years old or older: 25%
- 55-64 years old: 21%
- 45-54 years old: 20%
- 35-44 years old: 22%
- 25-34 years old: 9%
- 18-24 years old: Less than 0.5%
- Refused: 1%
- Do not know: 1%

Mean: 53.63

Note that the survey was limited to those 18 or older.
ABOUT RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT

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

Responsive Management has conducted research for every state fish and wildlife agency and every federal natural resource agency, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Coast Guard, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. Additionally, we have also provided research for all the major conservation NGOs including the Archery Trade Association, the American Sportfishing Association, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Dallas Safari Club, Ducks Unlimited, Environmental Defense Fund, the Izaak Walton League of America, the National Rifle Association, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation, the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited, and the Wildlife Management Institute. Other nonprofit and NGO clients include the American Museum of Natural History, the BoatUS Foundation, the National Association of Conservation Law Enforcement Chiefs, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, and the Ocean Conservancy. As well, Responsive Management conducts market research and product testing for numerous outdoor recreation manufacturers and industry leaders, such as Winchester Ammunition, Vista Outdoor (whose brands include Federal Premium, CamelBak, Bushnell, Primos, and more), Trijicon, Yamaha, and others. Responsive Management also provides data collection for the nation’s top universities, including Auburn University, Clemson University, Colorado State University, Duke University, George Mason University, Michigan State University, Mississippi State University, North Carolina State University, Oregon State University, Penn State University, Rutgers University, Stanford University, Texas Tech, University of California-Davis, University of Florida, University of Montana, University of New Hampshire, University of Southern California, Virginia Tech, West Virginia University, Yale University, and many more.

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

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