



Survey of Deer Hunters – 2025 Season

07/16/2026

Suggested Citation

Lovelace, S., Landon, A.C., & Burr, P. (2026). Survey of deer hunters – 2025 season. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Saint Paul, MN.

Contents

Survey of Deer Hunters – 2025 Season..... 1

 Purpose..... 1

 Methods 2

 Sampling 2

 Data collection..... 4

 Response rate 4

 Weighting 5

Deer hunting participation 6

 Percent of hunters that hunted deer in 2025. 6

 Percent of hunters that participated in each deer season in 2025 7

Firearm and muzzleloader seasons..... 8

 Satisfaction with the 2025 firearm and muzzleloader deer seasons 11

Archery season 14

Deer harvest (all seasons) 18

Location of deer hunting and perceptions of deer populations 23

Perception of crowding 26

Shed Hunting 27

Youth Hunting 32

Early antlerless season 37

Bonus buck opportunity 39

Agency Trust..... 40

 Agency Trust – Geographic Strata..... 41

Involvement in deer hunting..... 44

 Involvement in deer hunting – Geographic Strata..... 46

Non-resident hunters 48

Appendix A. Questionnaire 49

Purpose

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) periodically conducts surveys of hunters to understand their preferences for management, and participation and harvest in hunting seasons. This report details the results of one such survey of Minnesota deer license holders following the 2025 deer season.

Of particular interest this season was support for and attitudes toward the current youth deer hunting season, potential for the availability of a bonus buck tag, and an antlerless deer season. Additionally, a set of questions about shed hunting were asked to provide preliminary data on participation in the activity across the state.

Topics examined in this investigation included:

- 1) Participation in deer hunting
- 2) Location of deer hunting activity (Deer Permit Area), and perceptions of the deer population
- 3) Firearm season participation
 - a. Days hunted during the firearm seasons
 - b. Satisfaction
 - c. Maximum shooting distance using a firearm
- 4) Archery season participation
 - a. Use of crossbows and vertical bows
 - i. Behavior change, because of crossbow regulation changes
 - b. Days hunted during the archery season
 - c. Harvest with archery equipment
 - d. Satisfaction
- 5) Total harvest
- 6) Hunting location by land type
- 7) Shed hunting participation
- 8) Attitudes toward and beliefs about current and hypothetical deer hunting seasons and regulations
 - a. Youth season
 - b. Bonus buck tag
 - c. Antlerless deer season
- 9) Trust in the Minnesota DNR
- 10) Involvement in deer hunting

Methods

Sampling

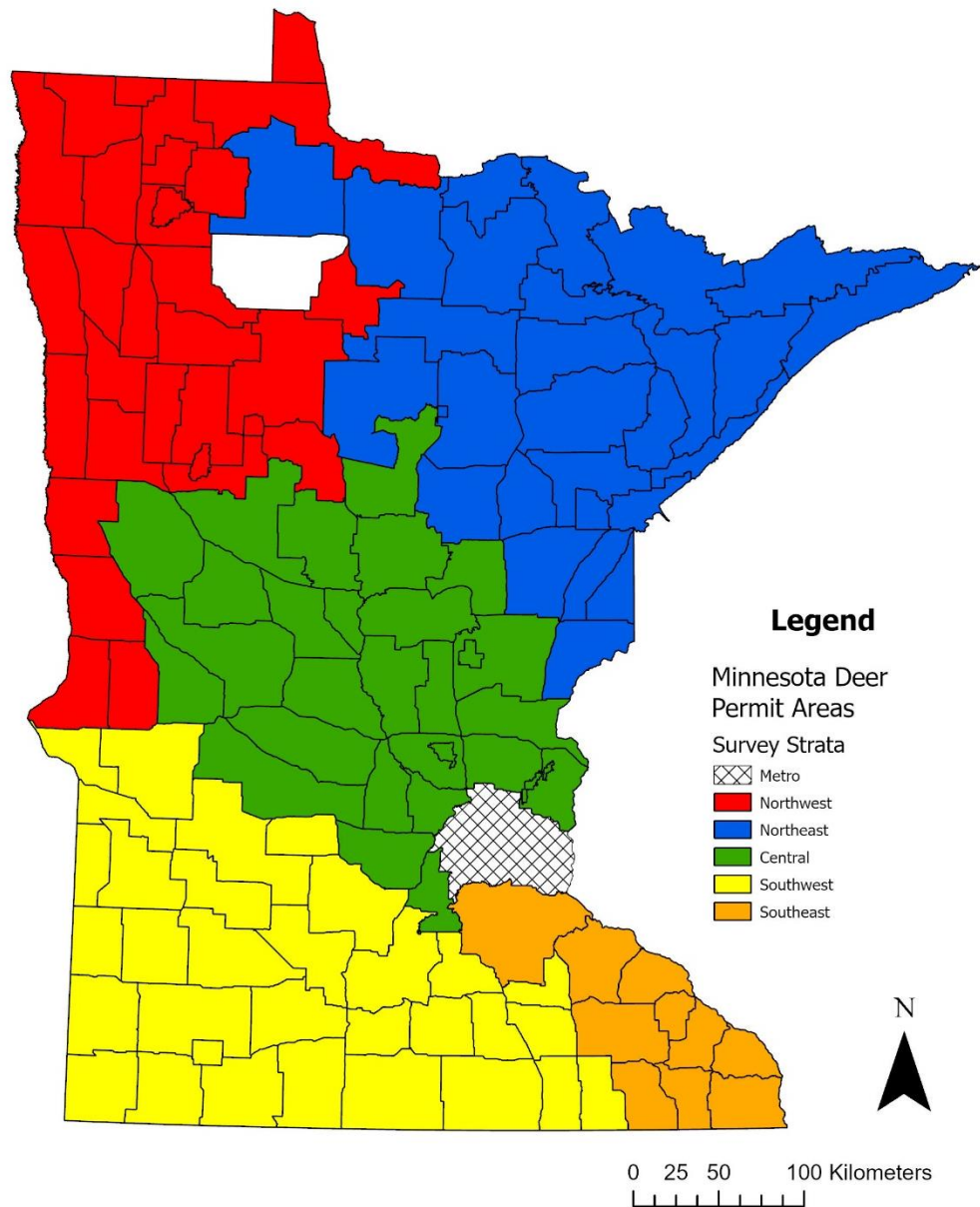
Data were collected in a geographically stratified sample of deer hunting license holders.

The geographic sample was designed to generate estimates for select variables within five geographic strata, and to allow for estimation of select variables at the statewide scale. Hunters were selected for inclusion proportional to their representation in the population of all deer hunters according to their possession of any valid deer hunting license (archery, firearm, muzzleloader) in 2025. This sample allows for estimation of all deer hunters' preferences and behaviors within stratum, but estimates for archery are constrained to the statewide scale. 1,200 hunters were selected within each of the five strata for a total of 6,000. We selected samples necessary to exceed 90% confidence +/- 5% at the stratum scale, and 95% confidence +/- 5% at the statewide scale.

Prior to selecting deer hunters for this study, we excluded anyone selected for inclusion in a former survey of pheasant hunters (n=4,500), turkey hunters (n=7,000), and deer hunters (n=12,000) to reduce survey fatigue across the population of hunters in Minnesota.

A map of geographic survey strata is found in Figure 1. Strata correspond to groups of Deer Modeling Units (DMUs), which are aggregations of Deer Permit Areas (DPAs). DMUs are used by DNR researchers in the modeling of the deer population. We matched the scale of data collection to DMU boundaries to facilitate future efforts to parameterize an integrated deer population model.

Figure 1. Survey strata of the survey sample. Strata correspond to groups of Deer Modeling Units (DMUs), which are aggregations of Deer Permit Areas (DPAs).



Data collection

Selected participants received a customized letter in the mail inviting them to complete the questionnaire online. Non-respondents received up to two additional letters at roughly 3-week intervals. Invitation letters contained both a QR code respondents could scan on a mobile device to reach the questionnaire, and a web-address that could be typed into any browser. Upon reaching the questionnaire respondents were instructed to enter an assigned numeric PIN used to ensure that only selected respondents completed the questionnaire and to adjust mailing lists between rounds.

Response rate

We sent 6,000 invitations to participants, and 1,818 completed at least some portion of the questionnaire. 235 letters were returned undeliverable. After adjusting for undeliverable mail, the total response rate was 32% but ranged from 28% to 33% depending on strata (Table 1). Although not all sampled individuals responded, the final response rate and application of survey weights provide statistical power more than the study design (90% +/- 5% per stratum, and 95% +/- 5% statewide) and support inference to the target population of Minnesota deer hunters.

Table 1. Number of responses and response rate by strata.

Strata	Sample	Undeliverable	Adjusted sample	Completed	Response rate	Adjusted response rate
Northeast	1200	68	1132	331	0.28	0.29
Northwest	1200	36	1164	394	0.33	0.39
Central	1200	48	1152	381	0.32	0.33
Southwest	1200	34	1166	357	0.30	0.31
Southeast	1200	49	1151	355	0.30	0.31
Total	6000	235	5765	1818	0.32	0.32

Weighting

We designed 3 sets of weights to make generalizable estimates at different geographic scales, and for different populations of deer hunters. We created quartiles of age to post-stratify estimates according to the study populations, and account for potential non-response bias.

- **Statewide all hunters** – Weights account for the sampling design (proportion of all hunters represented by the stratum) and age of the respondents. Estimates derived from the geographic sample.
- **Statewide archery hunters** – Weights account for the age of respondents. Estimates derived from the simple random sample.
- **Within stratum all hunters** - Weights account for the sampling design and age of the respondents, within stratum. Estimates derived from the geographic sample.

Deer hunting participation

Percent of hunters that hunted deer in 2025.

We asked respondents if they participated in deer hunting in Minnesota in 2025. Most deer license holders (98%) reported that they had, while 2% of deer license holders reported that they did not. Participation across geographic strata was uniform (Table 2).

Table 2. Percent of deer license holders that participated in deer hunting in Minnesota in 2025 by geographic strata

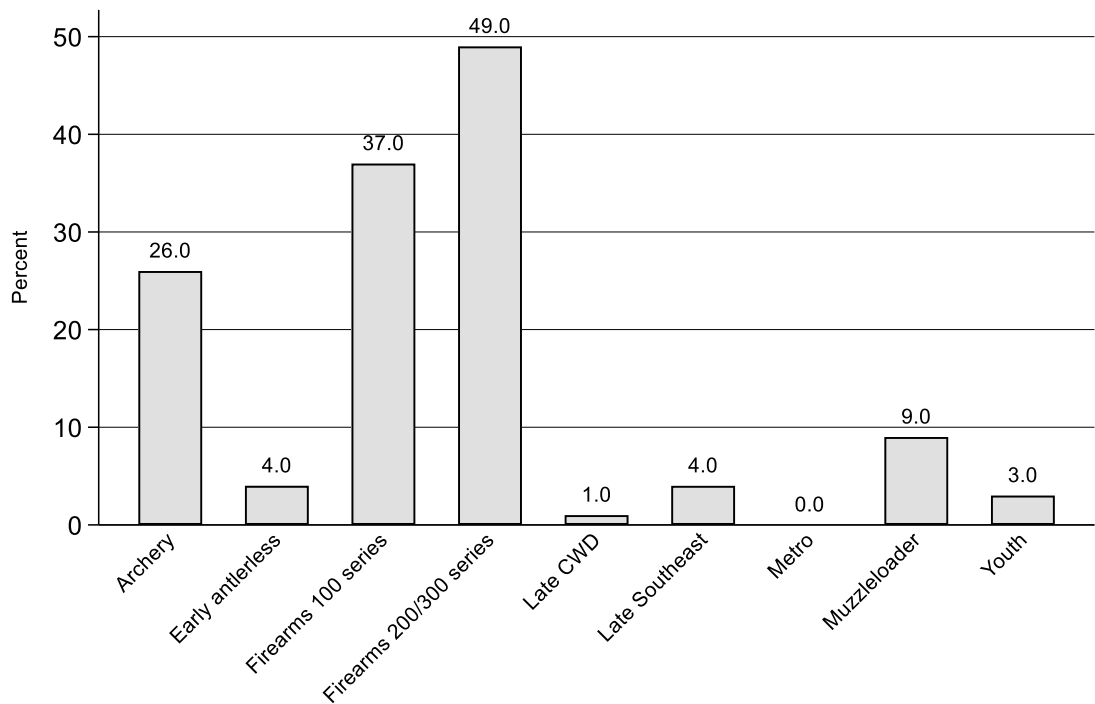
Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Statewide
97%	98%	99%	98%	98%	98%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Percent of hunters that participated in each deer season in 2025

We asked respondents which deer season(s) they participated in in Minnesota in 2025. Most hunters (37%) participated in the firearms 100 series season and firearm 200/300 series (49%) (Figure 2), and 25% of adult deer hunters participated in the archery season. The highest archery (42%) and early antlerless (9%) participation was reported for the southeast region. The Northeast region reported the highest firearms 100 participation (89%), while the Southwest region had the highest firearms 200/300 participation (66%). Participation in the youth season ranged between 2%-4% across all regions (Table 3).

Figure 2. Percent of 2025 deer hunters who hunted in each deer season statewide.



In Figure 2 and Table 3, Firearm 100 Series refers to permit areas 100 series and 604, 679, and 684 (November 8–23, 2025), whereas Firearm 200/300 Series refers to permit areas 200 series and 338, 341, 605, 642–649, 655, 661, 666, and 671 (November 8–16, 2025).

Table 3. Percent of Minnesota deer hunters who hunted in each season by geographic strata in 2025.¹

Season	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast
Archery	15%	18%	28%	28%	42%
Early antlerless	1%	1%	6%	1%	9%
Youth	4%	2%	3%	2%	3%
Firearm 100 series	38%	89%	27%	16%	15%
Firearm 200/300 series	57%	5%	58%	66%	58%
Metro	0%	<1%	0%	0%	0%
Late Southeast	0%	1%	1%	0%	30%
Muzzleloader	9%	3%	10%	18%	9%
Late CWD	<1%	<1%	<1%	0%	12%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Firearm and muzzleloader seasons

We asked respondents that held a firearm license which weapon type they used to hunt in 2025. Most hunters used a rifle (63%), followed by shotgun (37%), muzzleloader (8%), and crossbow (3%; Figure 3). Deer hunters in the Northwest and Northeast regions used a rifle more than any other weapon (91%; 99%). Muzzleloaders had the highest use in the Southeast region (19%). The use of crossbows with a firearms license ranged between 1%-5% across all regions. Shotguns were most used in the Southwest and Southeast regions (91%; 89%) (Table 4).

¹ Percentages within a column may sum to more than 100% because hunters could participate in more than one deer season.

Figure 3. Weapon types used by Minnesota deer firearm license holders in 2025.

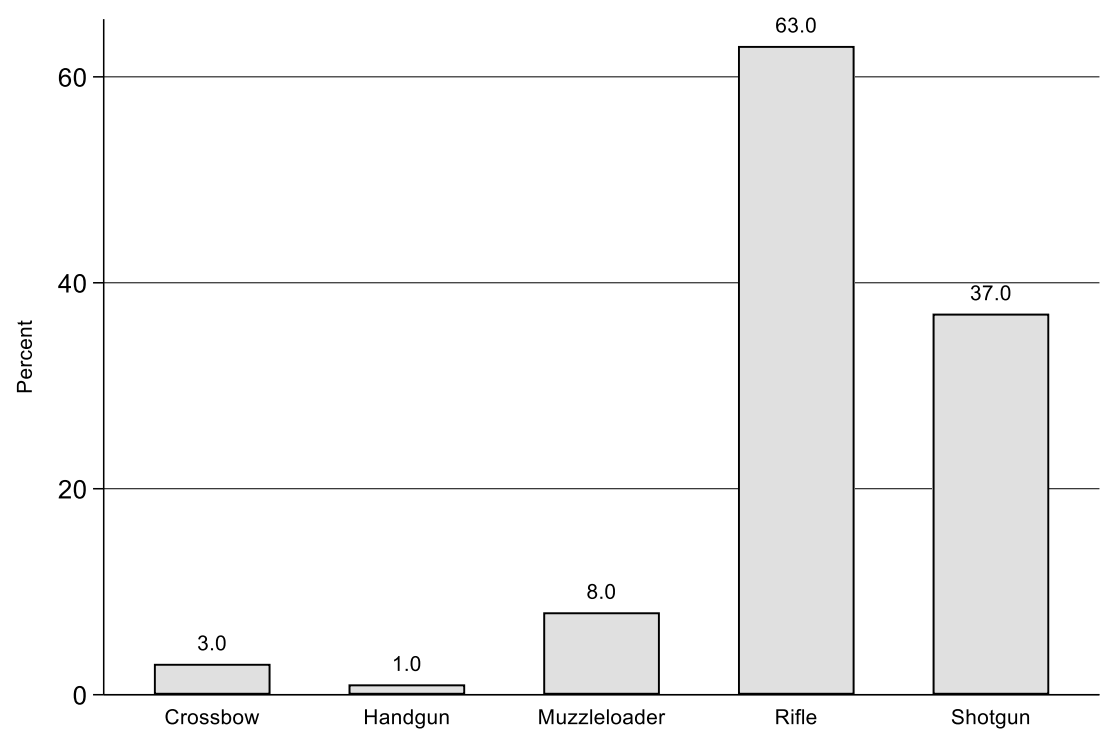


Table 4. Weapon types used by Minnesota deer firearm license holders in 2025 by geographic strata.

	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast
Shotgun	9%	0%	41%	91%	89%
Rifle	91%	99%	62%	4%	3%
Handgun	0%	0%	1%	0%	3%
Muzzleloader	10%	2%	6%	16%	19%
Crossbow	1%	5%	3%	3%	4%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

We asked respondents how many days they spent hunting with a firearm during the firearm deer season in 2025 in Minnesota. Statewide, the mean was 8.44 days, ranging from 6.44 days to 9.67 days amongst the five regions (Table 5). We also asked respondents to report how many days they spent hunting with a muzzleloader during the 2025 muzzleloader deer season. Statewide, the mean was 5.58 days with a range of 4.86 to 6.14 days amongst the five regions (Table 6).

Table 5. Days spent hunting reported by hunters during the firearm deer season in 2025 statewide, and by geographic strata.

Region	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	IQR	Median
Northwest	1	33	9.67	8.82	9	5
Northeast	1	37	9.65	8.75	7	6
Central	1	32	7.81	7.65	5	5
Southwest	1	32	6.44	6.93	3	4
Southeast	1	36	9.16	8.44	9	6
Statewide	1	37	8.44	8.14	6	5

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

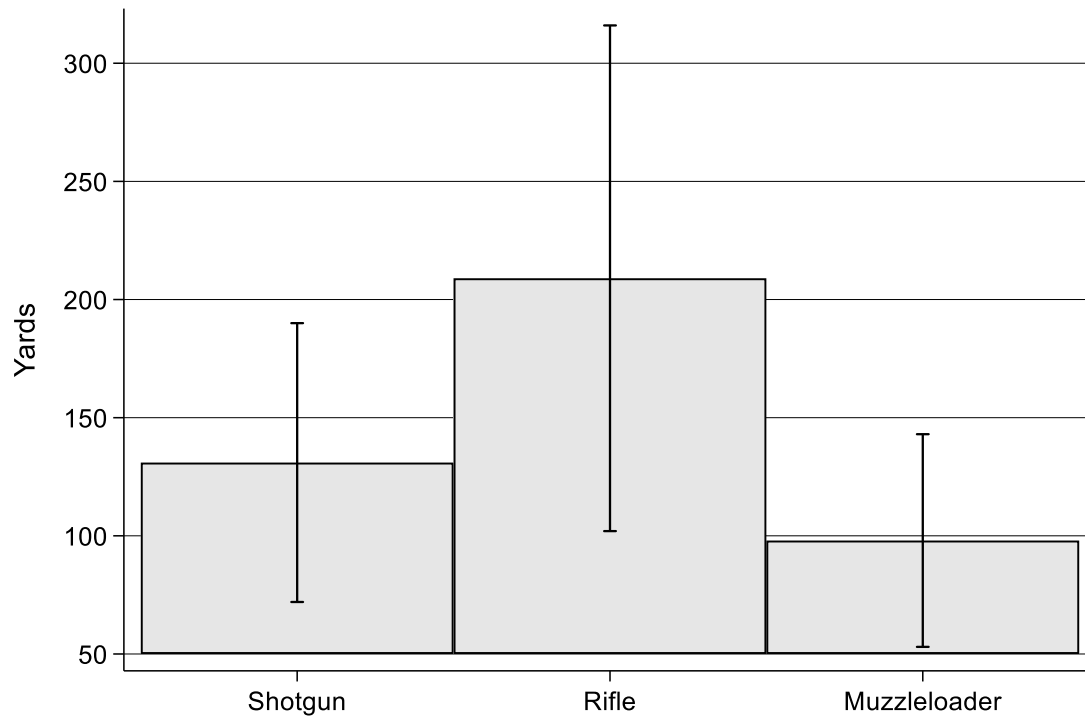
Table 6. Days spent hunting reported by hunters during the muzzleloader deer season in 2025 statewide, and by geographic strata.

Region	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	IQR	Median
Northwest	2	14	6.14	3.53	7	5
Northeast	2	12	5.52	3.47	4	5
Central	1	16	5.80	3.58	5	5
Southwest	1	14	4.86	2.98	3	4
Southeast	1	16	5.52	4.10	4	4
Statewide	1	16	5.58	3.47	4	5

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

We asked firearm license holders to indicate their maximum distance they are comfortable shooting at a deer with a shotgun, rifle, muzzleloader, and handgun. The available options were between 0 yards and 400 or more yards, given in 50-yard increments. Hunters felt comfortable shooting a rifle over a mean distance of 209 yards. Shotguns had the lowest mean maximum distance of 98 yards (Figure 4). Maximum distance using a handgun was measured in the survey; however, results are not reported due to an inadequate sample size for reliable analysis.

Figure 4. Mean maximum distance 2025 firearm licensed deer hunters reported to be comfortable shooting at a deer with a given firearm.



Satisfaction with the 2025 firearm and muzzleloader deer seasons

Firearm and muzzleloader hunters were asked to indicate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the 2025 firearm and muzzleloader deer seasons. Statewide, 57% of hunters reported some level of satisfaction and 29% reported some level of dissatisfaction (Figure 5). If the hunter indicated they were dissatisfied, they were asked to select the primary reason for this dissatisfaction. Low deer numbers accounted for 52% of dissatisfaction, followed by a lack of quality bucks (16%) (Figure 6).

Geographically, “very dissatisfied” was highest in the Northeast region (21% of hunters). The central region has the highest “very satisfied” (26% of hunters), closely followed by all other regions except the Northeast (Table 7). Low deer numbers were the primary source of dissatisfaction in all regions, most prominently in the Northeast, where it accounted for 65% of dissatisfaction. Hunters in the Southeast region were more dissatisfied with competition from other hunters than other regions (Table 8). Between 9% and 19% of hunters indicated “other” for their reason for dissatisfaction and were asked to report what “other” was. Many hunters indicated they did not see a buck to take. Others indicated they were unable to secure a doe tag and therefore could not shoot the doe(s) they saw. The presence of predators such as wolves and coyotes was listed as a reason for dissatisfaction as well.

Figure 5. Satisfaction with the 2025 firearm and muzzleloader seasons in Minnesota.

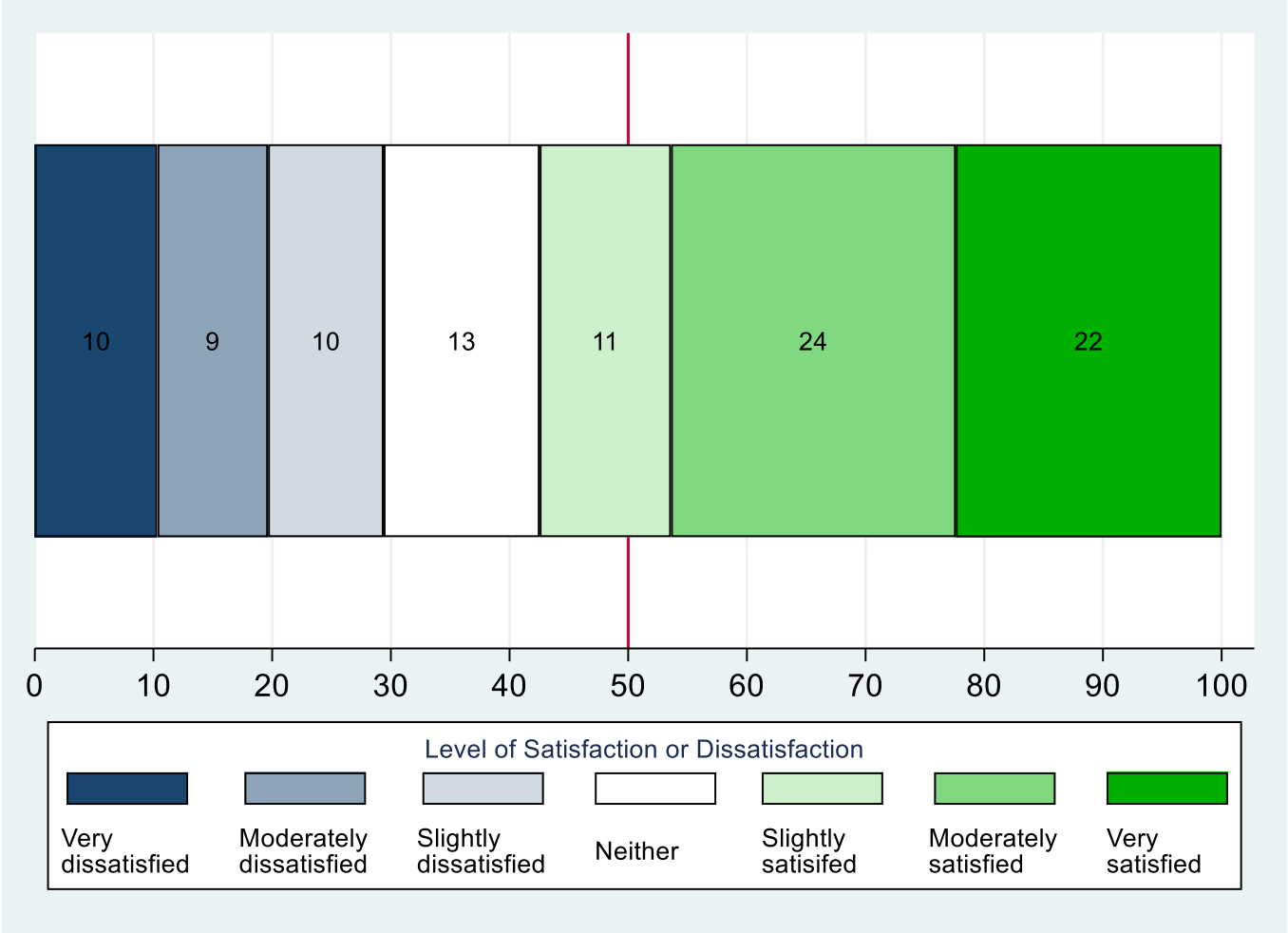


Figure 6. Reason for hunter dissatisfaction with the 2025 firearm and muzzleloader seasons in Minnesota.

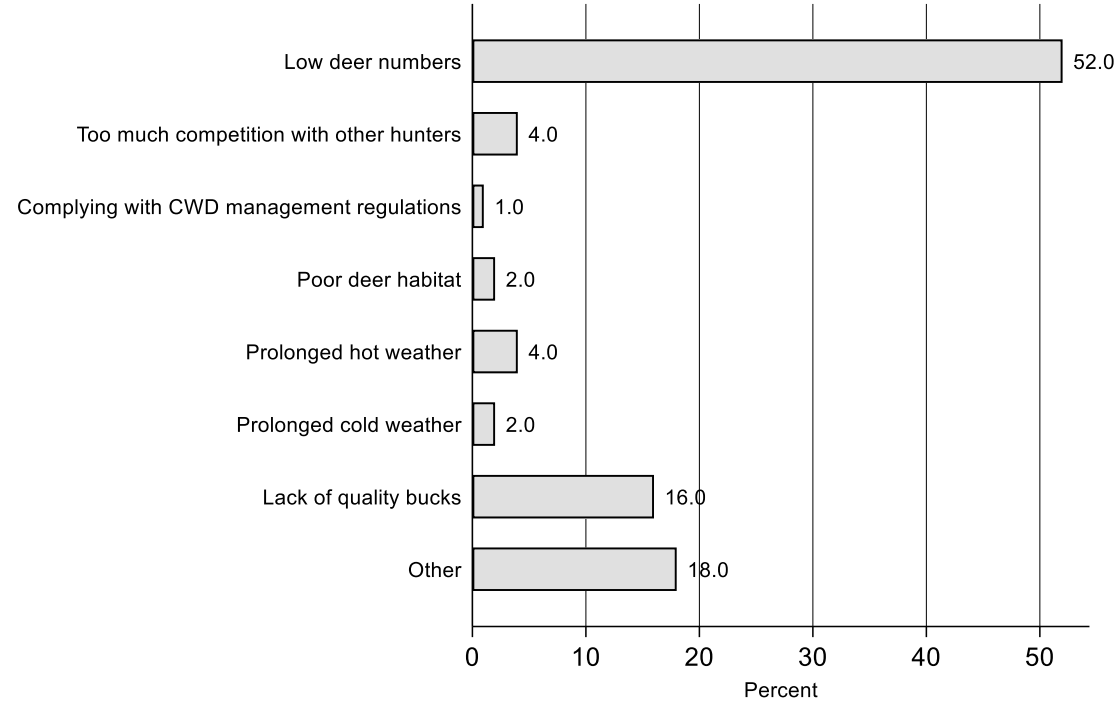


Table 7. Hunter satisfaction with the 2025 firearm and muzzleloader seasons by geographic strata.

	Very dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Slightly Dissatisfied	Neither	Slightly satisfied	Moderately satisfied	Very satisfied
Northwest	8%	10%	12%	13%	10%	25%	21%
Northeast	21%	14%	14%	11%	9%	16%	14%
Central	8%	8%	7%	13%	12%	26%	26%
Southwest	7%	7%	11%	18%	11%	23%	24%
Southeast	7%	8%	10%	9%	13%	29%	25%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of firearm deer license holders within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 8. Reasons for hunter dissatisfaction with the 2025 firearm and muzzleloader seasons by geographic strata.

	Low deer numbers	Too much competition	Complying with CWD regulation	Poor deer habitat	Prolonged hot weather	Sustained cold weather	A lack of quality bucks	Other
Northwest	51%	5%	1%	2%	1%	0%	22%	17%
Northeast	65%	1%	<1%	2%	1%	0%	12%	19%
Central	48%	5%	1%	2%	10%	4%	11%	19%
Southwest	36%	5%	2%	4%	4%	10%	21%	18%
Southeast	35%	13%	5%	2%	3%	3%	32%	9%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of firearm deer license holders within stratum, and age of respondents.

Archery season

We asked 2025 archery deer hunters which weapon(s) they used during the season. In 2025, 59% exclusively used a vertical bow, 34% exclusively used a crossbow, and 7% used both a crossbow and a vertical bow (Figure 7). Crossbow hunters spent a mean of 11 days hunting during the archery season, compared to vertical bow users who spent a mean of 17 days (Table 8). Additionally, we asked archery hunters if their decision to hunt in the 2025 archery season was influenced by the 2023 crossbow regulation change allowing all archery hunters use of a crossbow. 15% indicated that yes, that regulation change influenced their decision to participate. Reported success of exclusive crossbow users (36%) and mixed crossbow-vertical bow users (37%) was similar to that of exclusive vertical bow hunters (32%) (Figure 8).

Of 2025 archery hunters, 67% were some level of satisfied with the archery season, 14% indicated they were neutral, and 24% were some level of dissatisfied (Figure 9). If archery hunters indicated they were dissatisfied, they were asked to indicate the primary reason why. The most commonly reported reason for dissatisfaction was low deer numbers (37%), followed by a lack of quality bucks (26%). The third most common reason was “other” (24%) (Figure 10). Responses in the “other” category included mentions of wolves, limited opportunity, and dissatisfaction with bag limits or restrictions (e.g., bucks-only areas), as well as logistical constraints such as lack of time to hunt.

Figure 7. Weapon type used during the 2025 archery season by archery hunters.

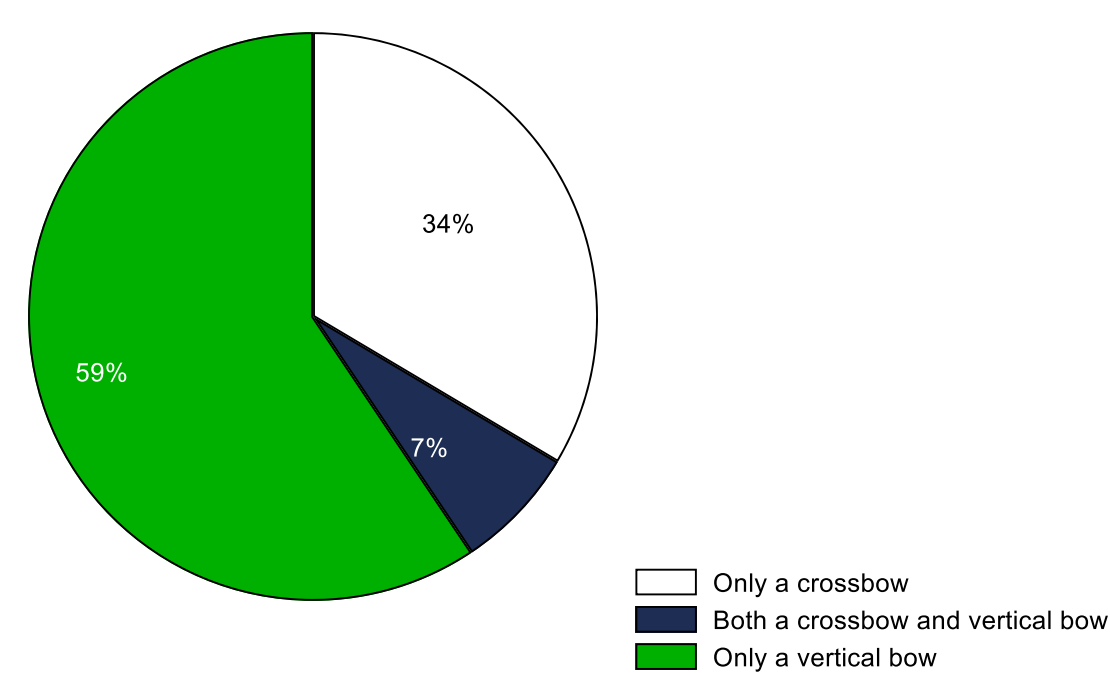


Table 8. Days spent archery hunting reported by hunters with a crossbow and vertical bow during the 2025 archery season.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	IQR	Median
Crossbow	1	75	11.05	10.22	11	8
Vertical bow	1	110	17.34	19.49	14	11

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of archery deer license holders and age of respondents.

Figure 8. Success of archery deer hunters by weapon type.

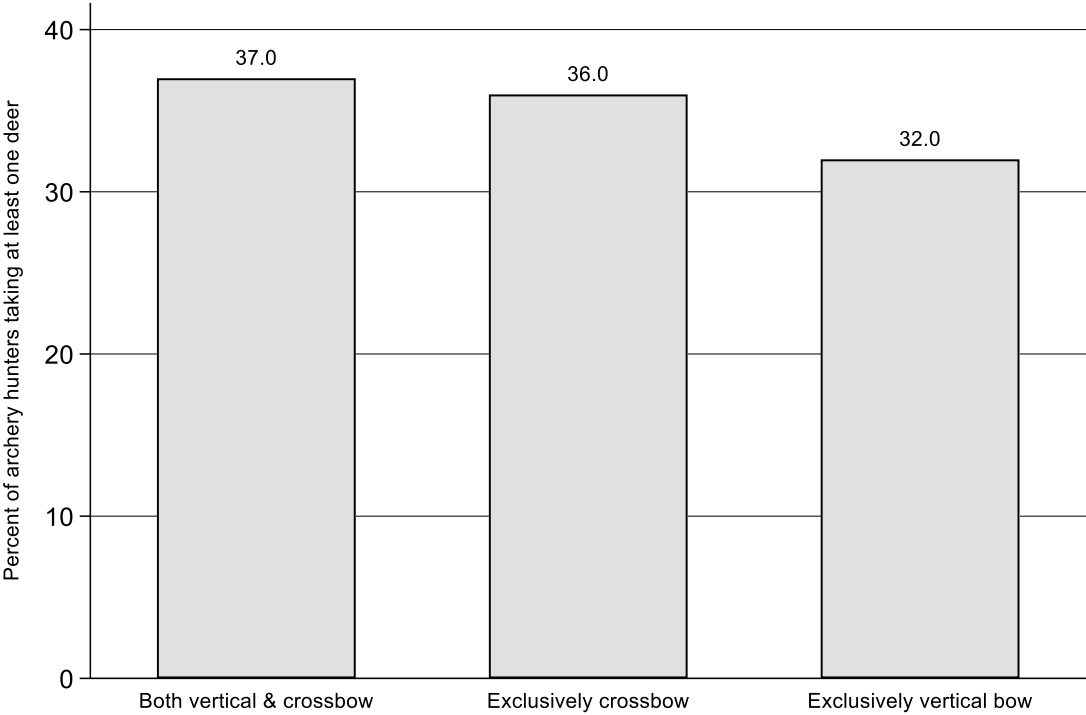


Figure 9. Satisfaction with the 2025 archery deer season in Minnesota.

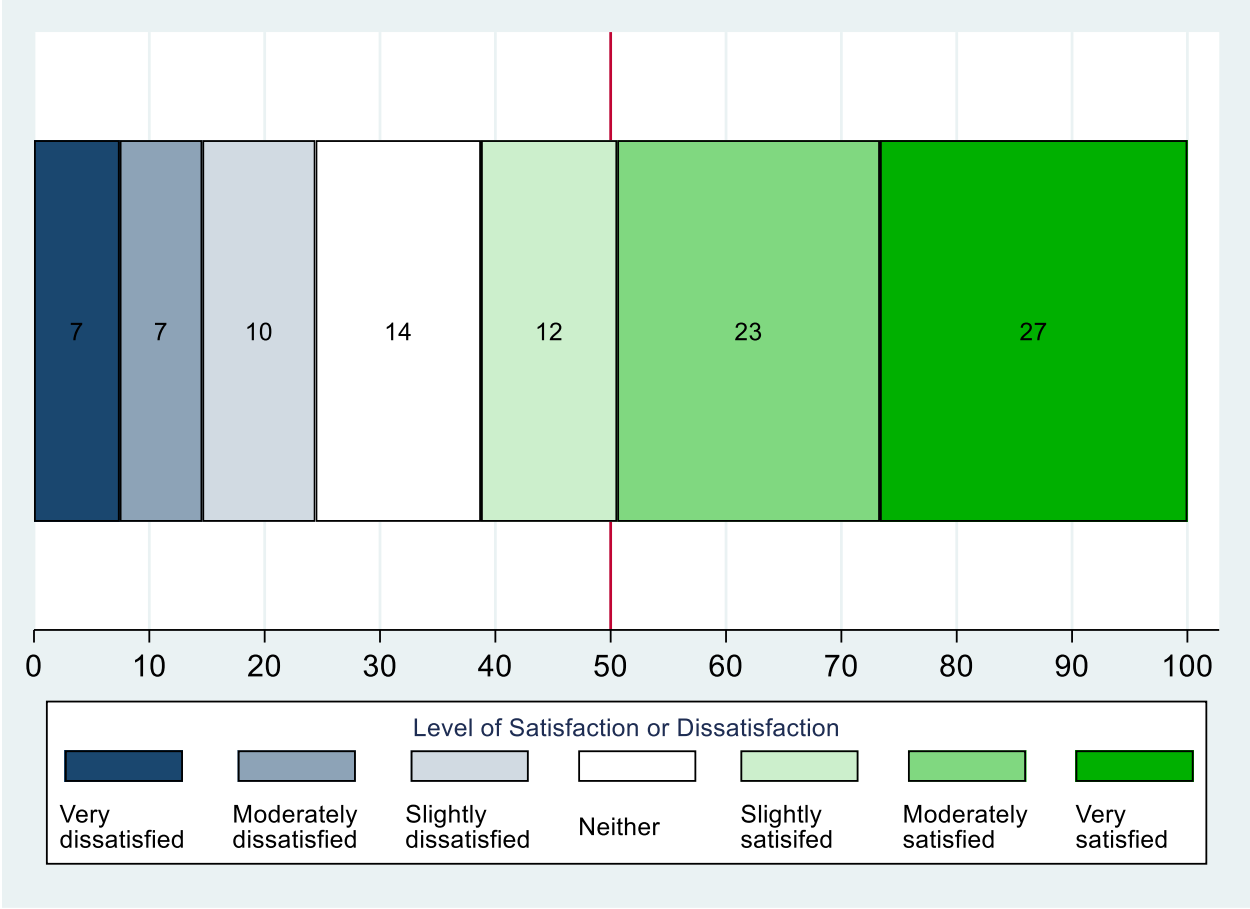
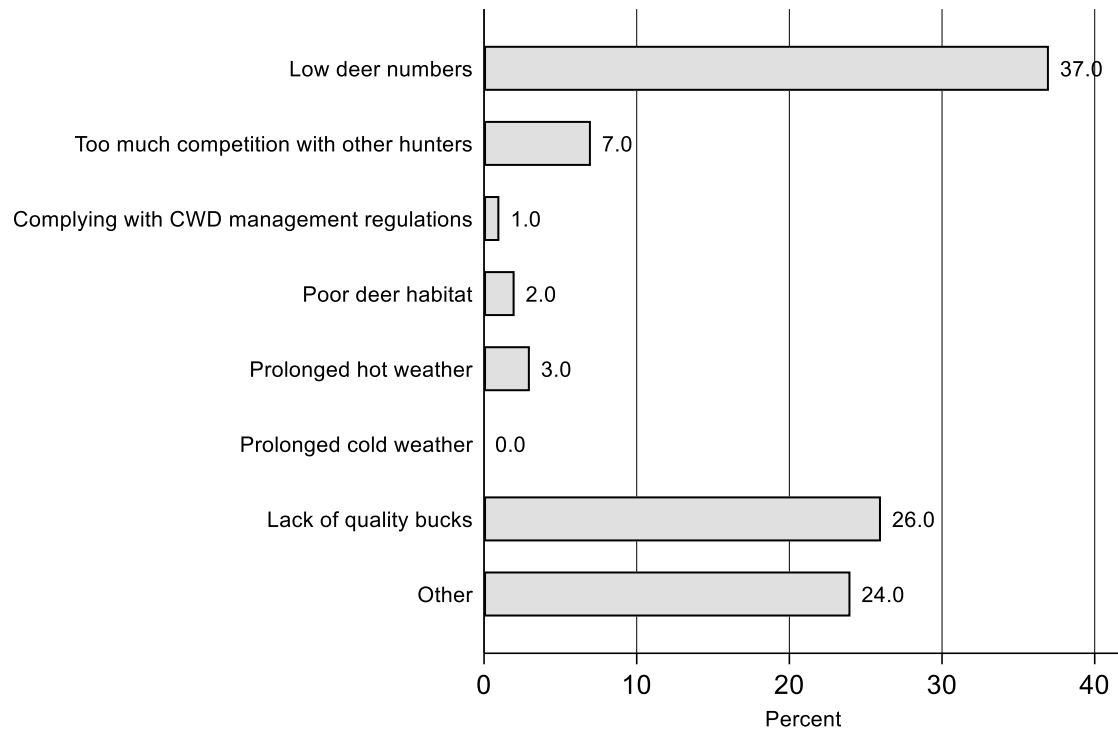


Figure 10. Reason for hunter dissatisfaction with the 2025 archery season in Minnesota.



Deer harvest (all seasons)

Hunters were asked to report if they harvested and antlered or antlerless deer while hunting in 2025, and the numbers of deer they harvested by category. Statewide, 45% of sampled hunters reported taking at least one deer in 2025, with 34% of hunters taking an antlered deer, and 18% taking an antlerless deer (Figure 11). Success rates for antlered deer varied by geographic strata, with most success in the Central region (39%) and the least success in the Northeast region (26%) (Table 9). Across Minnesota's regions, most respondents harvested one deer, with especially high rates in the Northeast (98%) and Southwest (91%), and the lowest in the Southeast (66%). Harvesting two deer was the next most common outcome, ranging from 1%–22%, highest in the Southeast. Harvests of three deer and four or more deer were relatively uncommon statewide, each occurring in only 2–3% of respondents. Overall, the statewide pattern shows that single-deer harvests dominate (84%), with very small proportions taking multiple deer (Table 10).

Statewide, of hunters who successfully harvested at least one antlerless deer, 78% harvested one, 16% harvested two, 4% harvested three, and 1% harvested four or more. The Central (19%) and Southeast (22%) regions had a higher percentage of hunters harvesting two antlerless deer (Table 11).

Hunters were asked to indicate where they dispose of their deer carcass (head, spine, and rib cage). Statewide, 37% disposed of their deer carcass on the land where the deer was harvested, 26% indicated they brought the deer to a meat processor that disposed of the carcass for them, 13% put the carcass in the trash, 8% utilized a DNR provided dumpster, and 7% disposed of their deer carcass on land other than where the deer was harvested (Figure 12). The remaining 9% selected "other" and wrote in items such as burned it, brought it to a

landfill, fed it to dogs, put it out for other wildlife (birds, coyote), and buried it in their garden. This general pattern held across each region, except in the Southeast region where many hunters utilized a DNR provided dumpster to dispose of the carcass (Figure 13).

Figure 11. Reported deer hunter success in 2025 across all seasons.

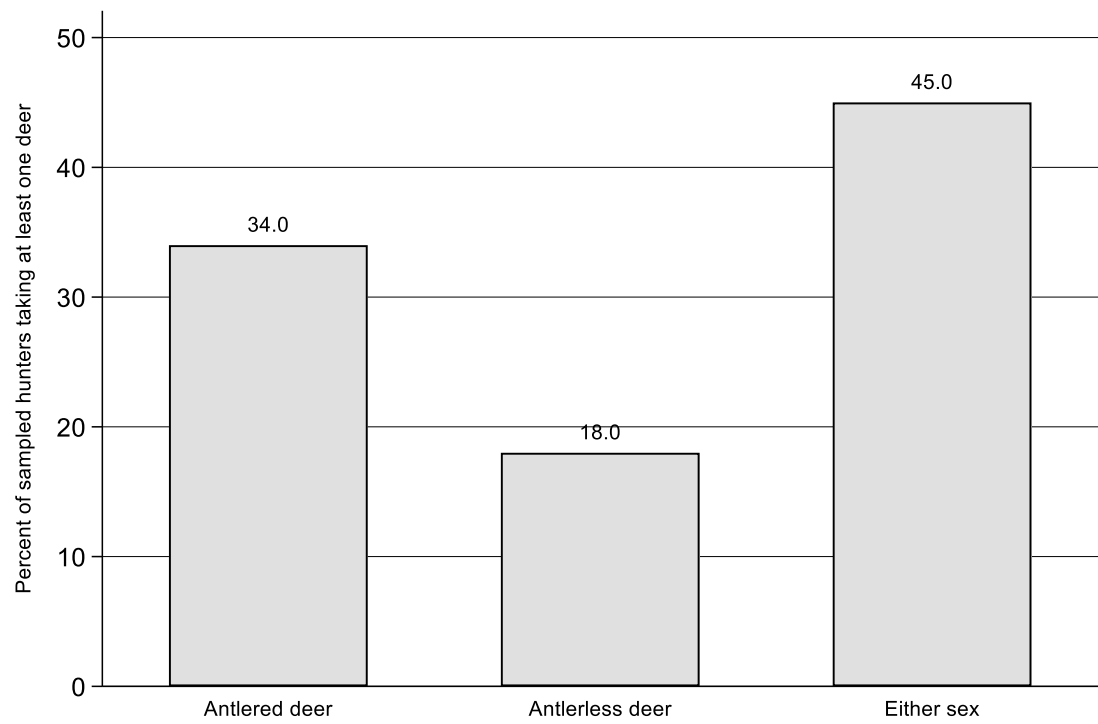


Table 9. Hunter success rate by geographic strata across all seasons.

	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast
Antlered deer	34%	27%	39%	34%	32%
Antlerless deer	14%	8%	21%	16%	29%
Either sex	40%	34%	52%	48%	50%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 10. Percent of successful either-sex deer hunters harvesting 1, 2, 3, or 4 or more either-sex deer statewide and by strata in 2025.

	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Statewide
1 deer	88%	98%	82%	91%	66%	84%
2 deer	9%	1%	13%	5%	22%	11%
3 deer	3%	1%	3%	3%	6%	3%
4 or more deer	1%	0%	2%	1%	6%	2%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 11. Percent of successful antlerless deer hunters harvesting 1, 2, 3, or 4 or more antlerless deer statewide and by strata in 2025.

	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Statewide
1 deer	86%	94%	76%	90%	66%	78%
2 deer	14%	3%	19%	5%	22%	16%
3 deer	0%	3%	4%	4%	7%	4%
4 or more deer	0%	0%	2%	0%	4%	1%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Figure 12. Percent of hunters using different deer carcass disposal methods.

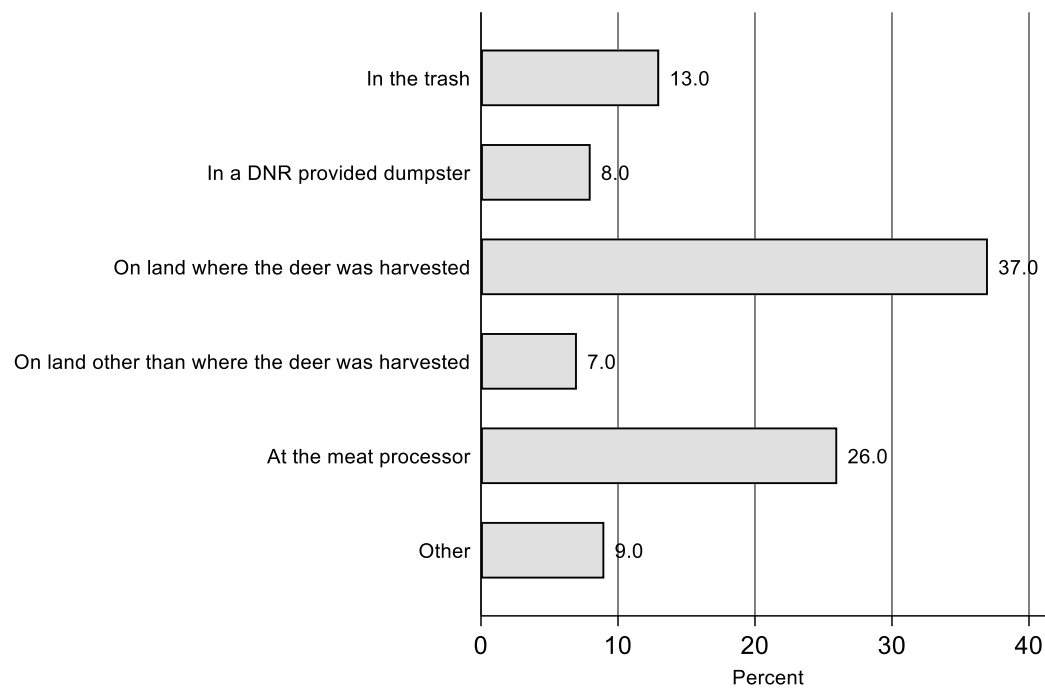
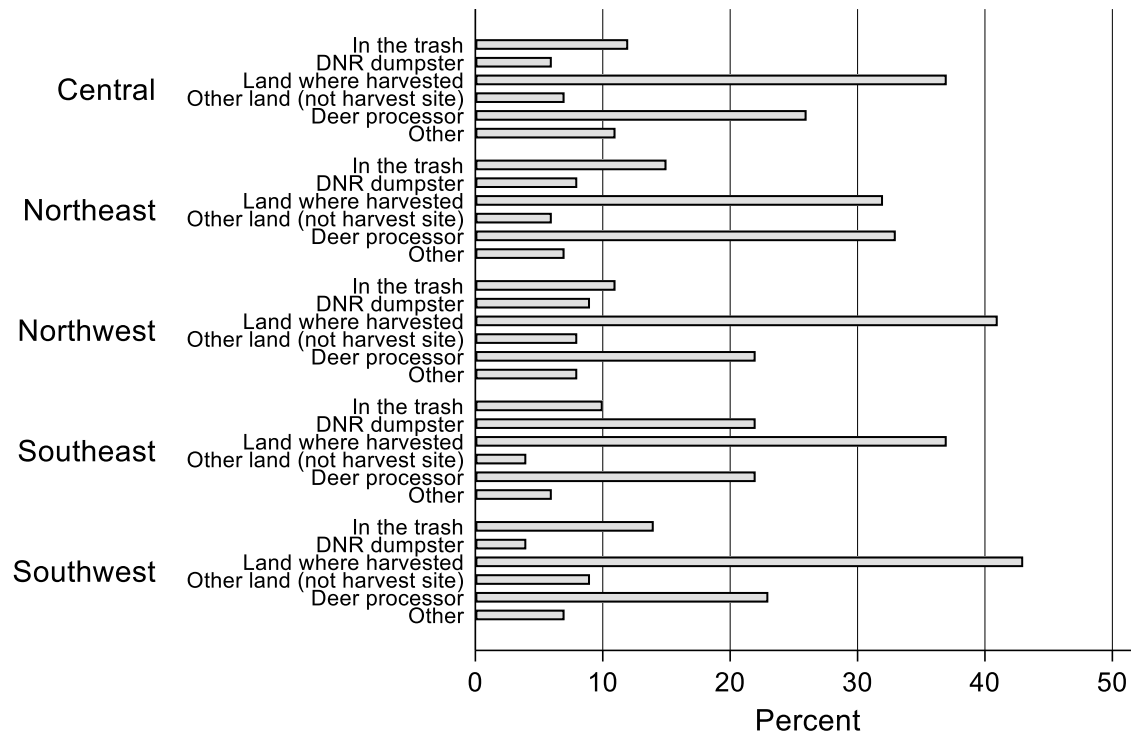


Figure 13. Percent of hunters using different deer carcass disposal methods by geographic strata.



Location of deer hunting and perceptions of deer populations

We asked hunters to report which DPA they hunted most often in 2025. DPAs reported were spread uniformly across the state. Statewide, 49% of hunters indicated that the deer population in their most hunted DPA was about right, while 26% viewed the population as too low, and 13% felt the population was much too low. Very few indicated deer populations were too high (9%) or much too high (3%) (Figure 14). Perceptions of deer population levels varied by strata. Hunters in the Northeast were the most dissatisfied, with 69% reporting that deer populations were too low or much too low, and only 27% believing the numbers were about right. In contrast, the Central, Southwest, and Southeast regions had a more positive outlook, with 50% or more of hunters in each saying the population was “about right.” The Northwest was more mixed, with 44% stating the population was about right and another 49% feeling the population was too low or much too low (Figure 15).

Figure 14. Hunters’ perceptions of the deer population in their most hunted DPA.

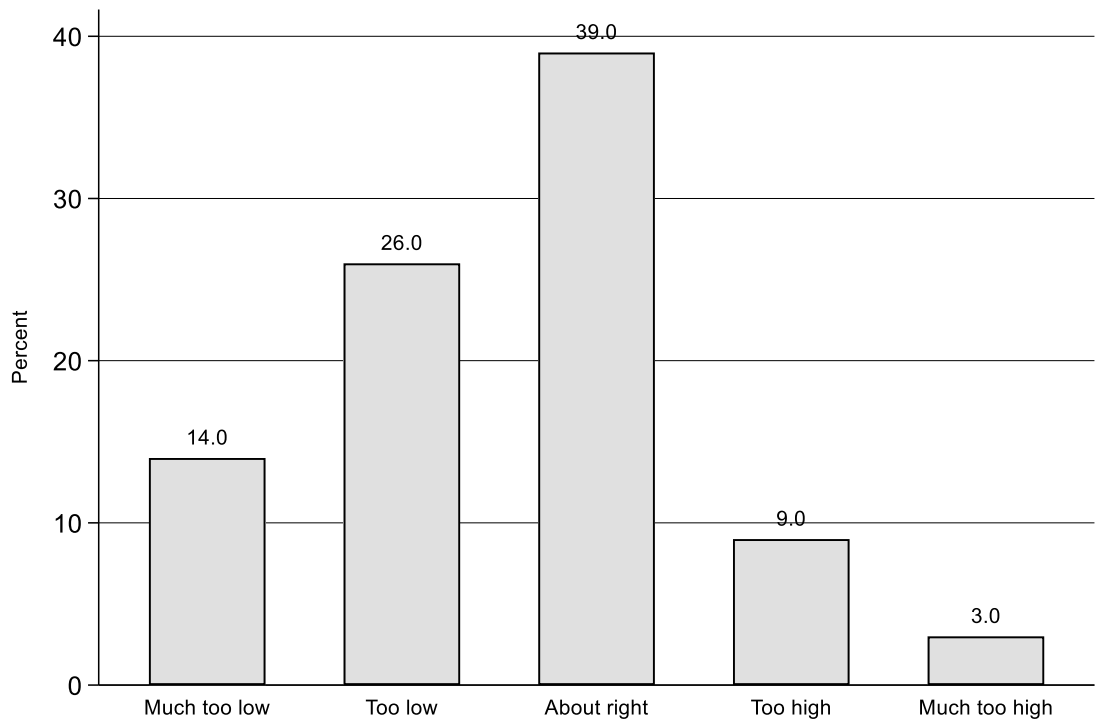
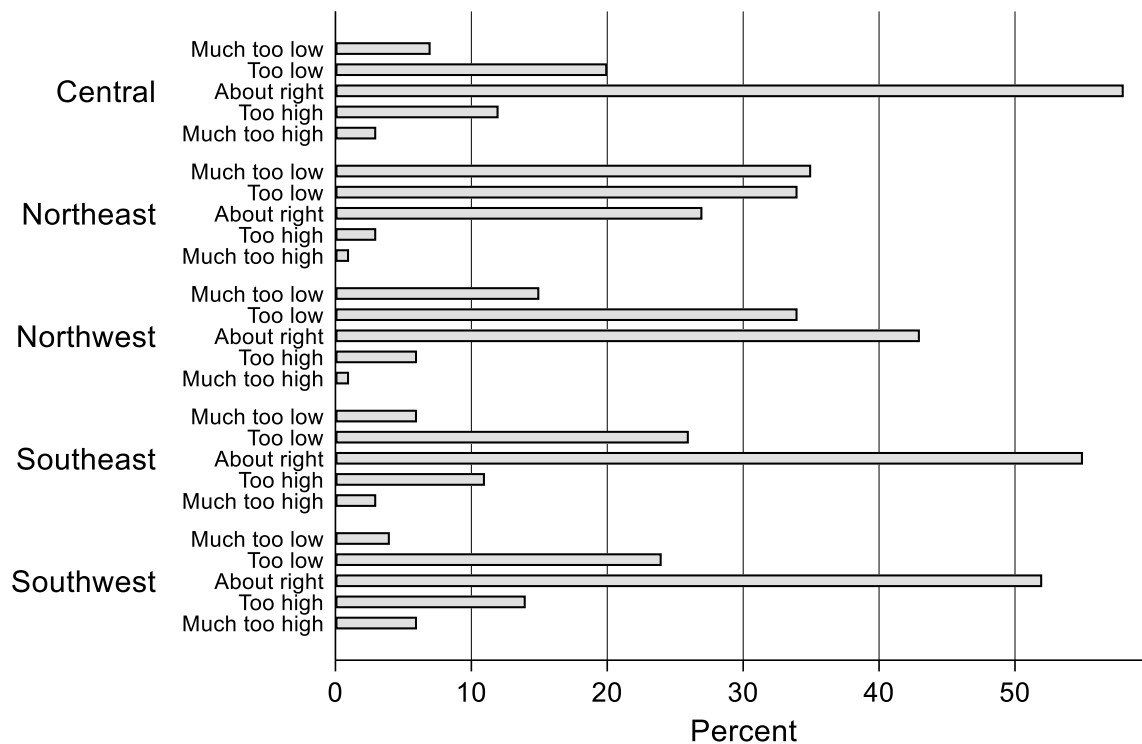


Figure 15. Hunters’ perceptions of the deer population in the DPA they hunt the most by geographic strata.



In 2025, 64% of hunters hunted exclusively on private land, 22% hunted on a mixture of both public and private land, and 14% hunted on exclusively public land (Figure 16).

Hunters in the Southwest (75%) and Southeast (72%) regions were most likely to hunt exclusively on private land, followed closely by the Central (70%). The Northwest and Northeast showed more mixed land use type. In the Northeast, 31% of hunters reported hunting exclusively on public land—the highest of any region—while 30% used both public and private land. Mixed land type users were relatively equal across the state (Table 12).

We asked deer hunters to indicate what percent of their time they hunt on private and public land, if they indicated they hunted on a mixture of the two. Statewide, deer hunters who hunt on both public and private land spend an average of 69% of their time hunting on private land and 31% hunting on public land. The highest public land use split was in the Northeast region (48%) and lowest in the Southwest region (20%) (Table 13).

Figure 16. Percent of deer hunting effort across all seasons, spent on public and private land in Minnesota in 2025.

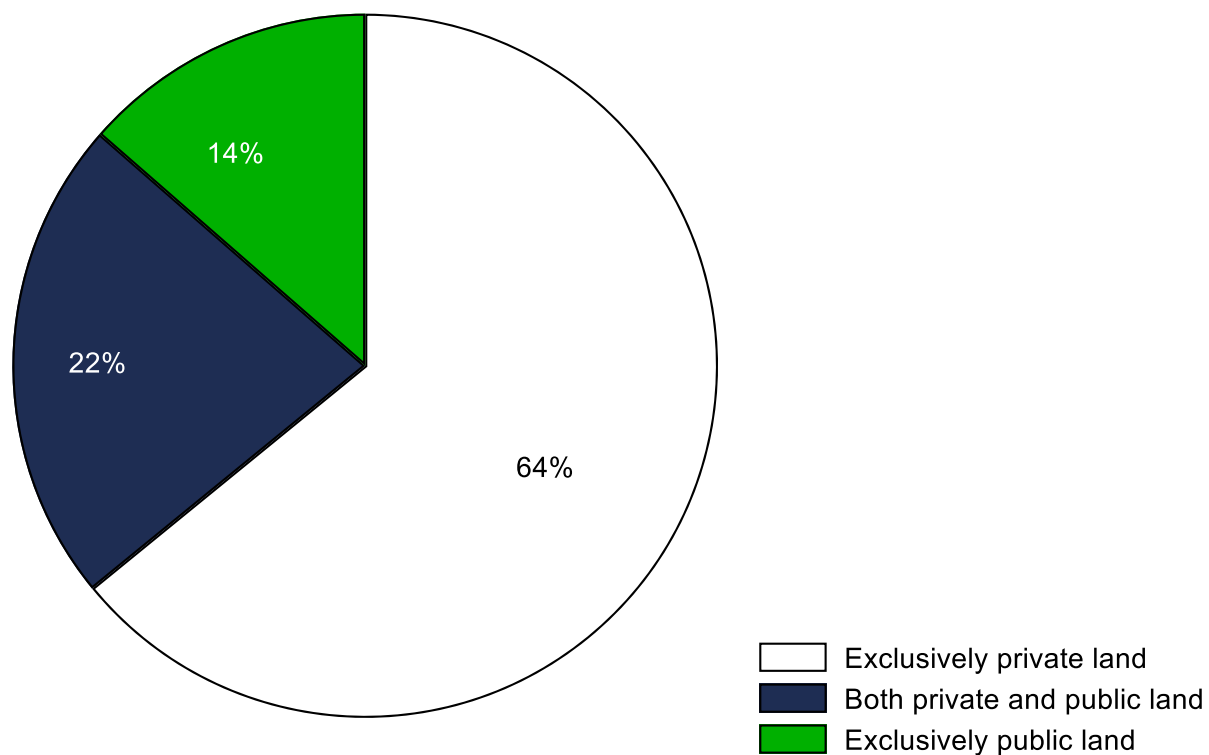


Table 12. Percent of deer hunting effort, across all seasons, spent on public and private land in Minnesota in 2025, by geographic strata.

Land type	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast
Exclusively private land	63%	39%	70%	75%	72%
Both private and public land	23%	30%	20%	20%	22%
Exclusively public land	14%	31%	10%	5%	6%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 13. Mean percent of time spent hunting on private and public land by hunters who hunted on both public and private land statewide and by geographic strata.

Land type	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Statewide
Private	62%	52%	74%	80%	77%	69%
Public	38%	48%	26%	20%	23%	31%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Perception of crowding

Crowding is defined as a negative evaluation of the setting density, or simply how one feels about the number of other people encountered while recreating. Deer hunters were asked to rate the level of crowding they experienced while hunting on a 9-point continuum ranging from 1 (“not at all crowded”) to 9 (“extremely crowded”). Figure 17 displays the percentage of hunters selecting each value on the crowding scale, with higher values indicating greater perceived crowding while hunting. Statewide, respondents reported a mean crowding rating of 2.6. Overall, crowding was not widely reported as a major issue in any region or statewide, with most hunters experiencing low to moderate pressure afield (Table 14; Figure 17).

Figure 17. Hunters’ perceived crowding levels while hunting in Minnesota statewide.

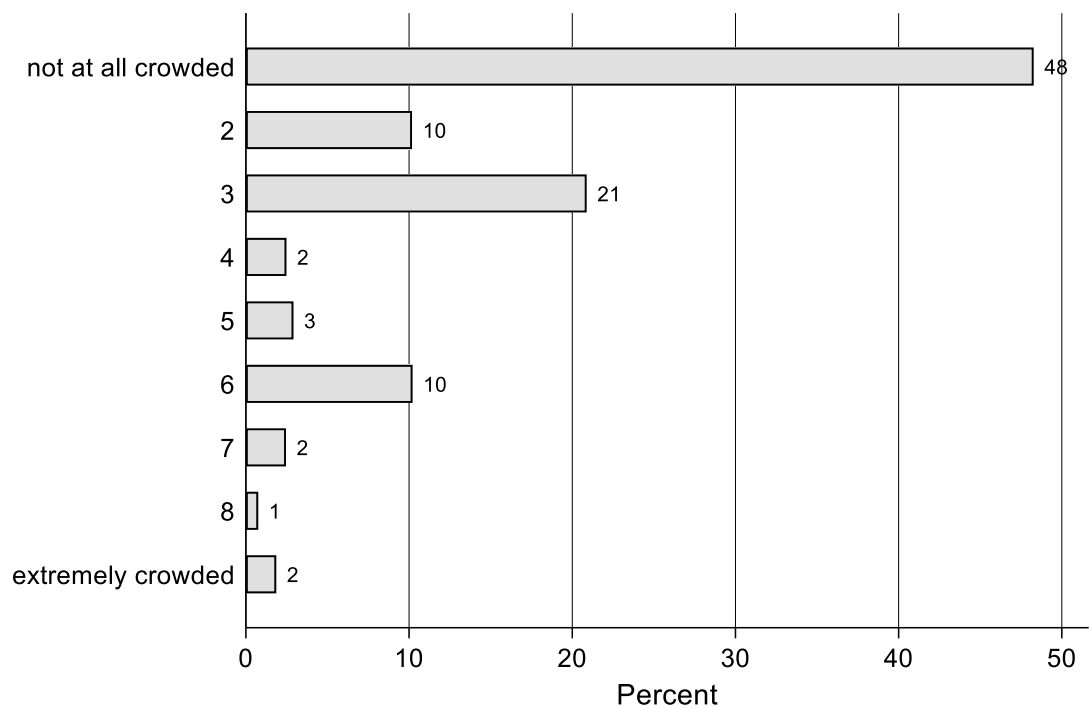


Table 14. Hunters’ perceived crowding levels while hunting in Minnesota statewide by geographic strata.

Strata	Level of crowding								
	Not at all (1)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Extremely (9)
Northwest	49%	12%	17%	2%	5%	9%	2%	1%	2%
Northeast	54%	8%	21%	1%	3%	8%	4%	0%	<1%
Central	47%	11%	21%	3%	2%	12%	2%	1%	2%
Southwest	46%	10%	26%	2%	3%	7%	2%	2%	2%
Southeast	45%	10%	20%	3%	4%	11%	4%	<1%	4%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Shed Hunting

Shed hunting is the recreational activity of searching for and collecting antlers that deer, elk, moose, and other cervids naturally shed each year, typically during late winter and early spring. We asked 2025 deer hunters to

indicate whether they had participated in shed hunting in the state at any time in the last 5 years. 26% reported that they had participated in the activity. Among those shed hunters, 100% reported hunting for deer sheds, 4% reporting hunting for moose sheds, and just 1% indicated they hunted for elk sheds (Figure 18). Participation in elk and moose shed hunting was highest among hunters who hunt in the northern regions, where those species are present (Table 15). Only 10% of shed hunters indicated they used a dog to shed hunt. A majority of shed hunting is done in spring (81%) and winter (18%), which corresponds with the timing of antler shedding in cervids. A little more than half (54%) of shed hunters spend 1-2 days hunting. About a third (30%) spend 3-5 days shed hunting, and 16% spend 6 or more days shed hunting (Figure 19). Most shed hunters participate in the activity on private land only (59%), 29% used a mixture of public and private land, and 12% use public land only (Figure 20). Shed hunters almost exclusively shed hunt on foot without snowshoes (90%) (Figure 21). Most (87%) shed hunters keep or display the sheds they find, and a small percentage (11%) use them for arts and crafts (Figure 22).

Figure 18. Percent of shed hunters that hunted for deer, elk, and moose sheds in Minnesota in the last 5 years.

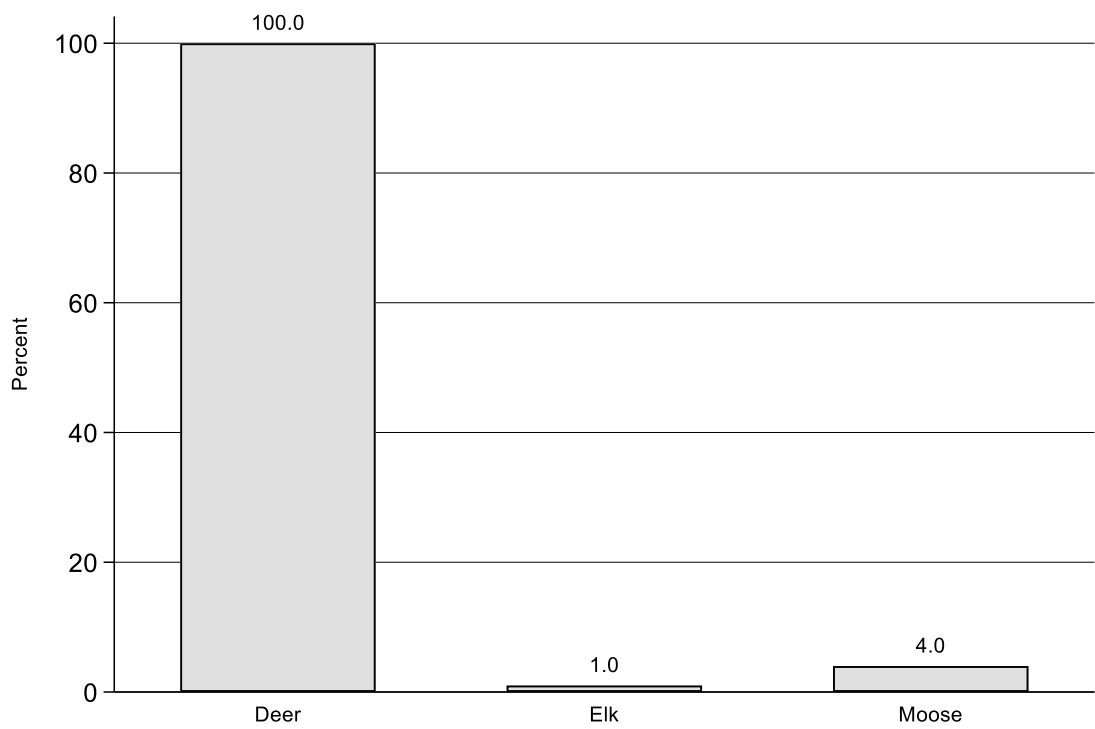


Table 15. Percent of shed hunters that hunted for deer, elk, and moose sheds in Minnesota in the last 5 years statewide and by geographic strata.

Species	Northwest	Northeast	Central	Southwest	Southeast	Statewide
Moose	16%	65%	14%	0%	5%	4%
Deer	15%	13%	44%	13%	14%	100%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents. Additionally, response rates by strata are too low to draw statistically reliable conclusions, but the available responses suggest the following trend.

Figure 19. Percent of shed hunters that went shed hunting 1-2, 3-5, and 6 or more days in 2025.

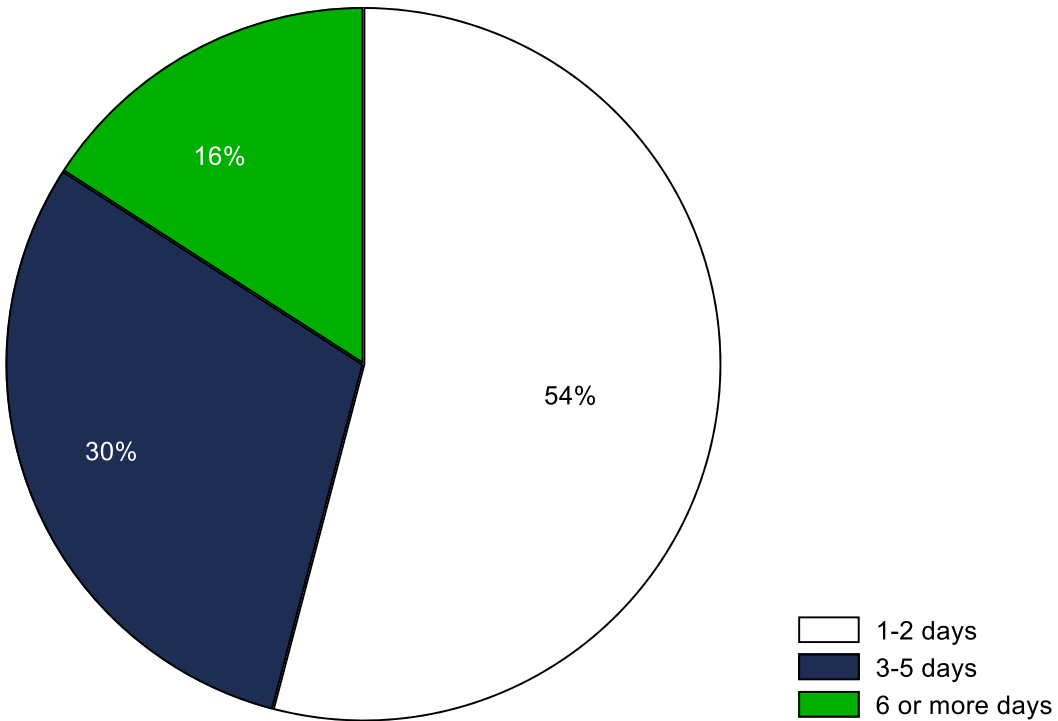


Figure 20. Percent of shed hunters that hunted for sheds on private, public, and a mix of private and public land in 2025.

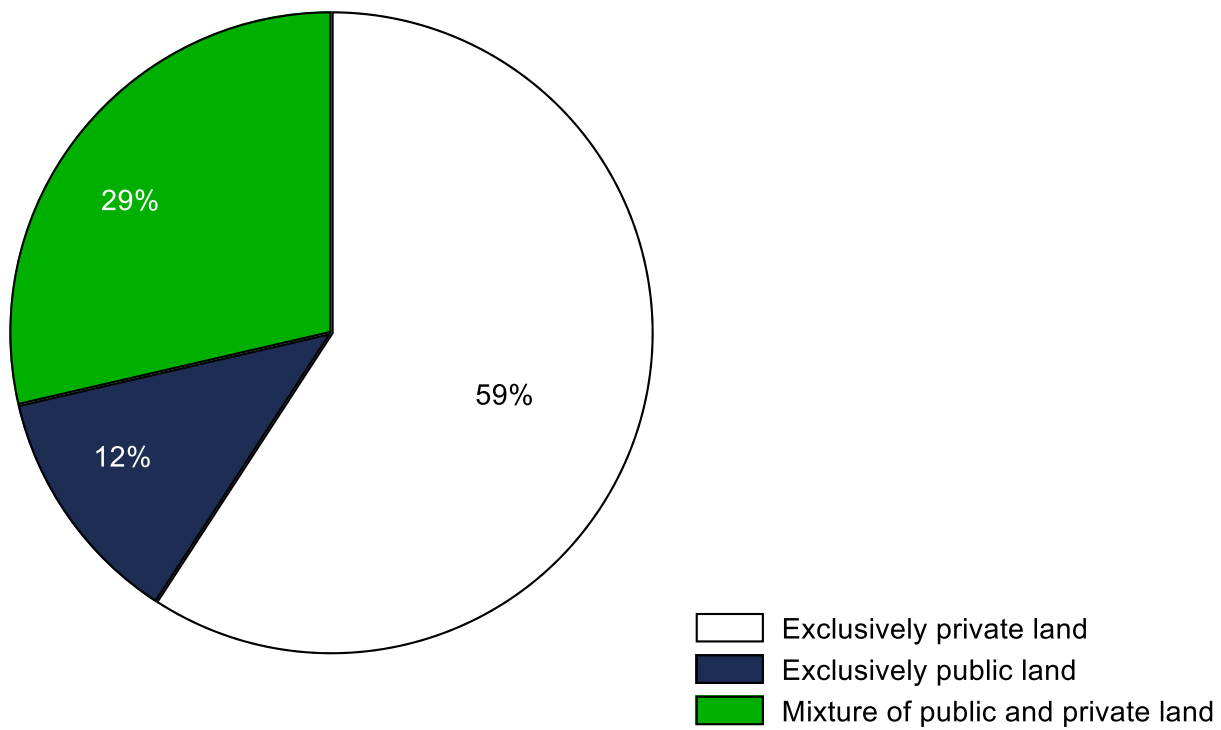


Figure 21. Percent of shed hunters' reported use of collected sheds.

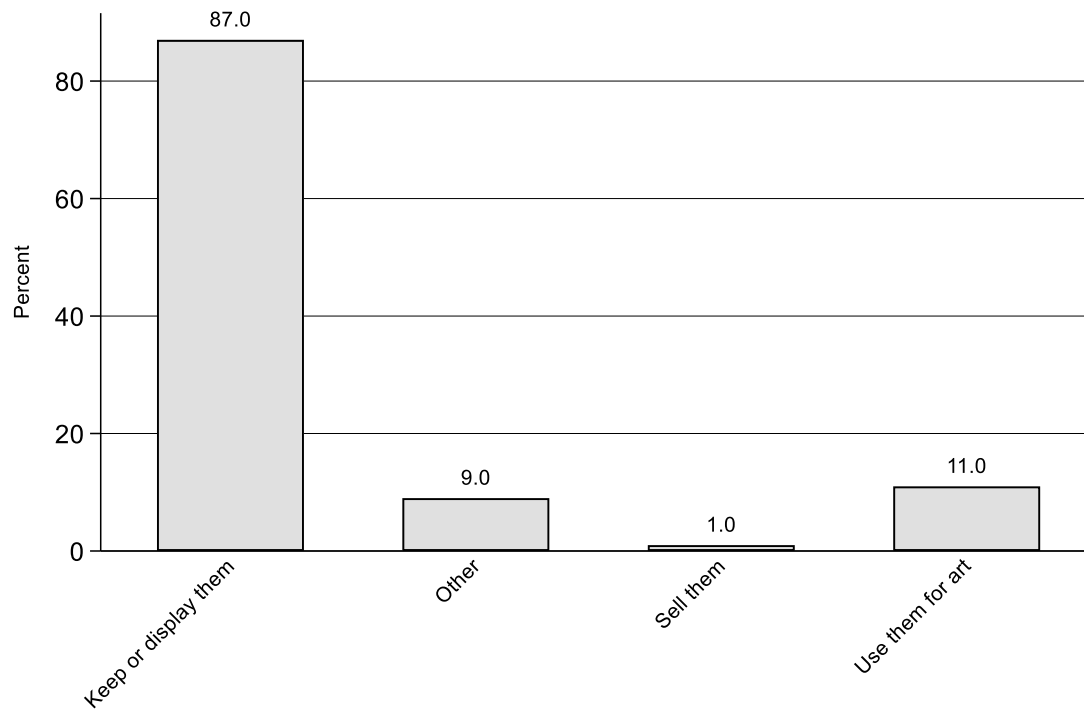
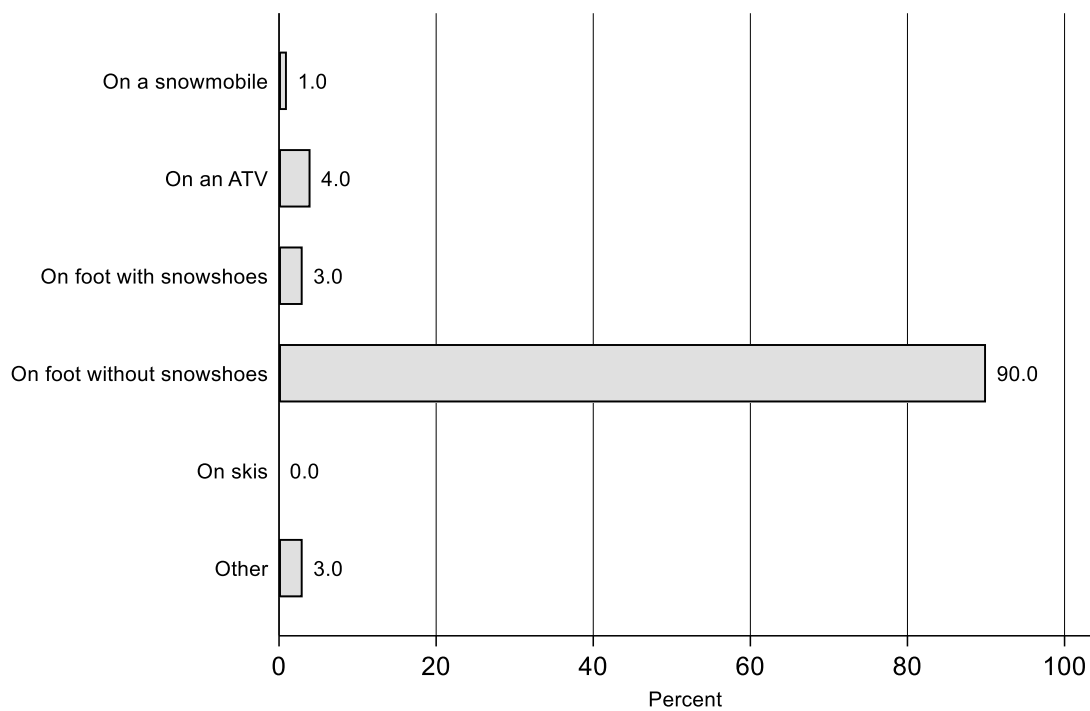


Figure 22. Percent of mode of transportation used to shed hunt.



Youth Hunting

The Minnesota youth deer season was implemented statewide in 2019. Prior to this change, the youth deer season was restricted to specific areas in the northwest and southeast regions of the state. The youth deer season is a four-day season that occurs during the statewide MEA (Minnesota Educators Association) weekend in October. The bag limit for this season is 1 either-sex deer, except in permit areas designated as 'Bucks-only', in which case the deer must be an adult buck. All respondents, regardless of whether they hunted deer in 2025, were asked to indicate their support or opposition for the current youth deer season. A near majority (48%) of hunters strongly supported the youth season statewide, with similarly levels of support across all regions (Figure 23). Hunters were asked to indicate their support or opposition to allowing a youth deer hunter to harvest up to the DPA bag limit during the youth deer season. Statewide, more hunters had some level of opposition (46%) than support (30%). This trend continued by each region, with between 40%-48% of hunters indicating opposition, 20%-31% indicating neutrality, and 27%-35% indicating support, suggesting it may not be a widely supported regulation change (Figure 24).

Hunters were asked a series of questions to gauge their attitudes and opinions around the youth deer season. A large majority of hunters (80% respectively) agreed that the youth hunt helps recruit youth into deer hunting and that it strengthens family and community connections. A majority (73%) agreed the youth season helps ensure the future of hunting and disagreed (57%) that it is unnecessary. However, hunters expressed varying opinions about the impact of the youth hunt on the deer hunting experience. Approximately one third of respondents (31%) disagreed that the youth season reduces the number of bucks available for adult hunters during the regular season, while 39% agreed. Slightly more hunters (47%) disagreed that the youth season reduces the quality of the regular firearms hunting experience. Approximately half of respondents (49% and 46% respectively) disagreed that the youth season interferes with the regular firearms season opener and results in too many deer being harvested before the regular season. Additionally, more hunters agreed (43%) than disagreed (27%) that the youth season has little overall impact on deer populations (Table 16). Support for the youth hunt is generally strong, with many viewing it as important for fostering family connections and recruiting new hunters. However, some concerns remain about its potential impact on the availability of bucks for adult hunters. This consensus held for each of the regions (Figure 25, 26).

Note that response options in Figure 25 were abbreviated as follows: Deer harvest = results in too many deer being harvested before the regular season; Deer population = has little overall impact on deer populations; Future hunting = helps ensure the future of deer hunting in Minnesota; Opener = interferes with the timing of the regular firearms season opener. Response options in Figure 26 were abbreviated as follows: Family = strengthens family and community connections through shared hunting experiences; Is unnecessary = is unnecessary because youth already have enough opportunities to hunt; Recruits youth = helps recruit youth into deer hunting; Reduced number = reduces the number of bucks available for adult hunters during the regular season; Reduced quality = reduces the quality of the regular firearms hunting experience.

Figure 23. Deer hunter support for the current youth season statewide and by geographic strata.

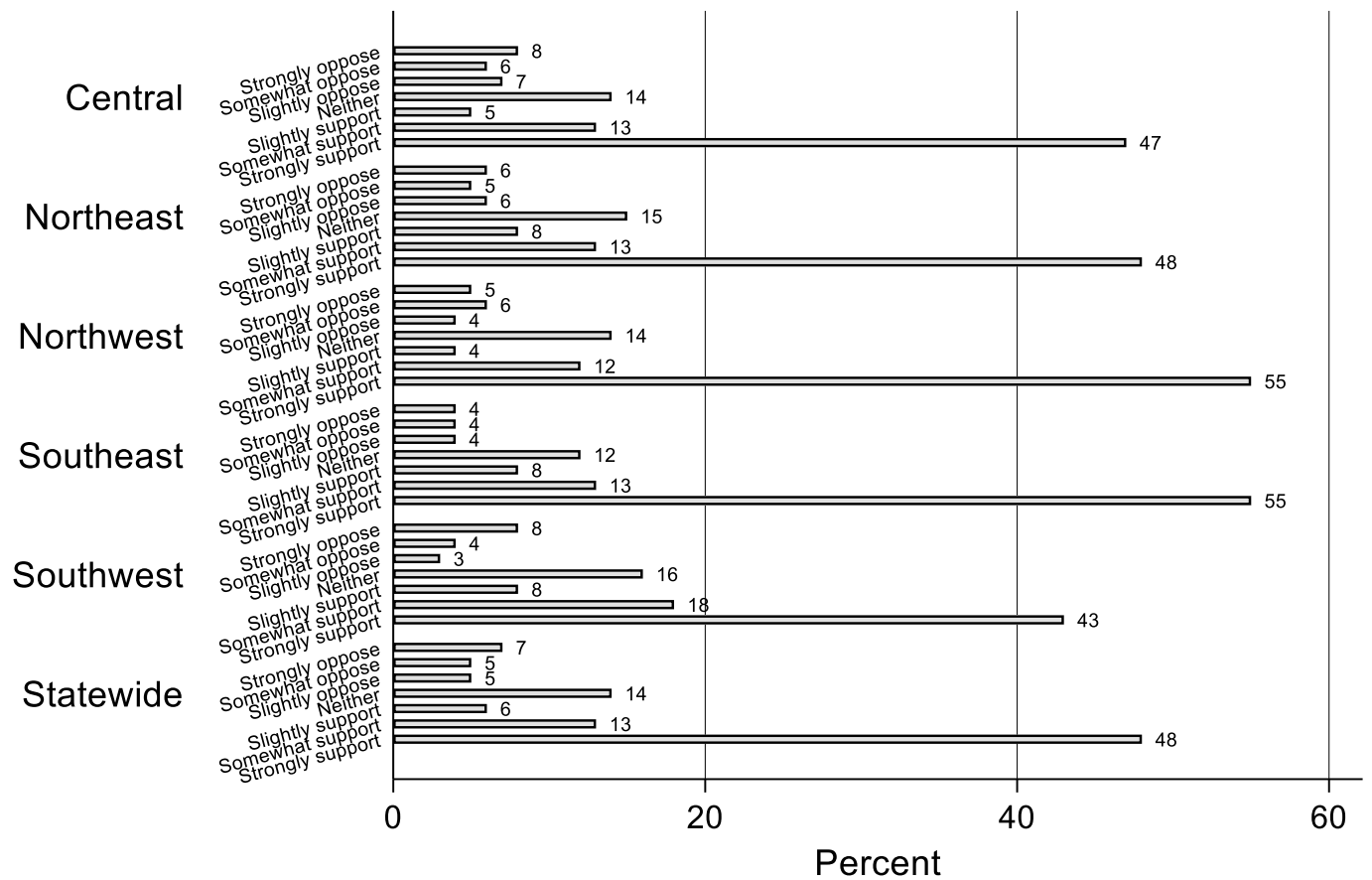


Figure 24. Deer hunter support for allowing a youth deer hunter to harvest up to the deer permit area (DPA) bag limit during the youth deer season statewide and by geographic strata.

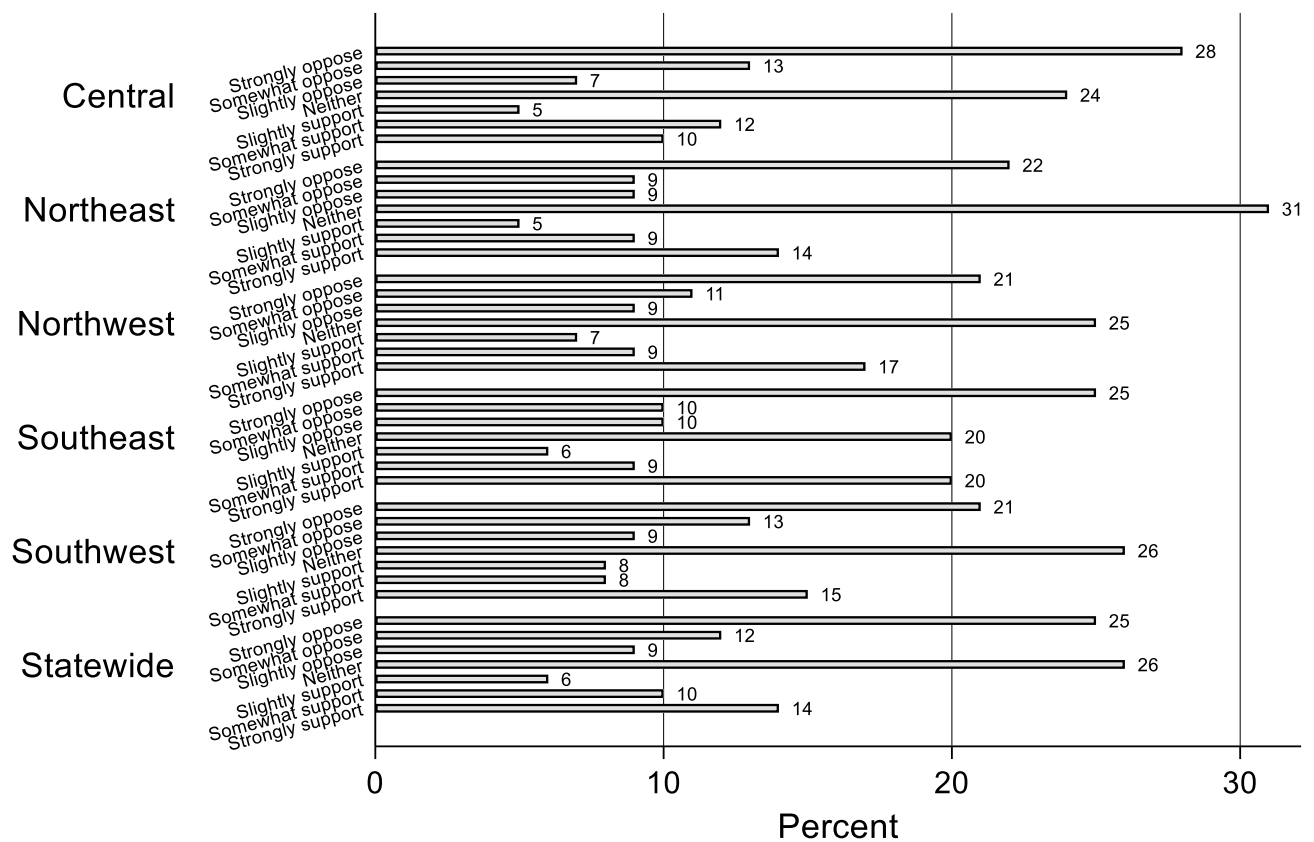


Table 16. Statewide distribution of hunter attitudes toward youth deer season.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Reduces the number of bucks available for adult hunters during the regular season.	10%	14%	7%	30%	20%	12%	7%
Helps recruit youth into deer hunting.	3%	4%	3%	10%	12%	33%	35%
Is unnecessary because youth already have enough opportunities to hunt.	19%	25%	13%	22%	8%	9%	4%
Reduces the quality of the regular firearms hunting experience.	14%	25%	8%	25%	14%	9%	5%
Strengthens family and community connections through shared hunting experiences.	2%	3%	2%	13%	12%	33%	35%
Helps ensure the future of deer hunting in Minnesota.	3%	5%	4%	15%	12%	34%	27%
Has little overall impact on deer populations.	4%	10%	13%	30%	13%	22%	8%
Results in too many deer being harvested before the regular season.	10%	25%	11%	31%	13%	7%	4%
Interferes with the regular firearms season opener (timing).	11%	26%	12%	27%	14%	6%	5%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) statewide, and age of respondents.

Figure 25. Mean values of hunter beliefs on the youth deer season statewide and by geographic strata.

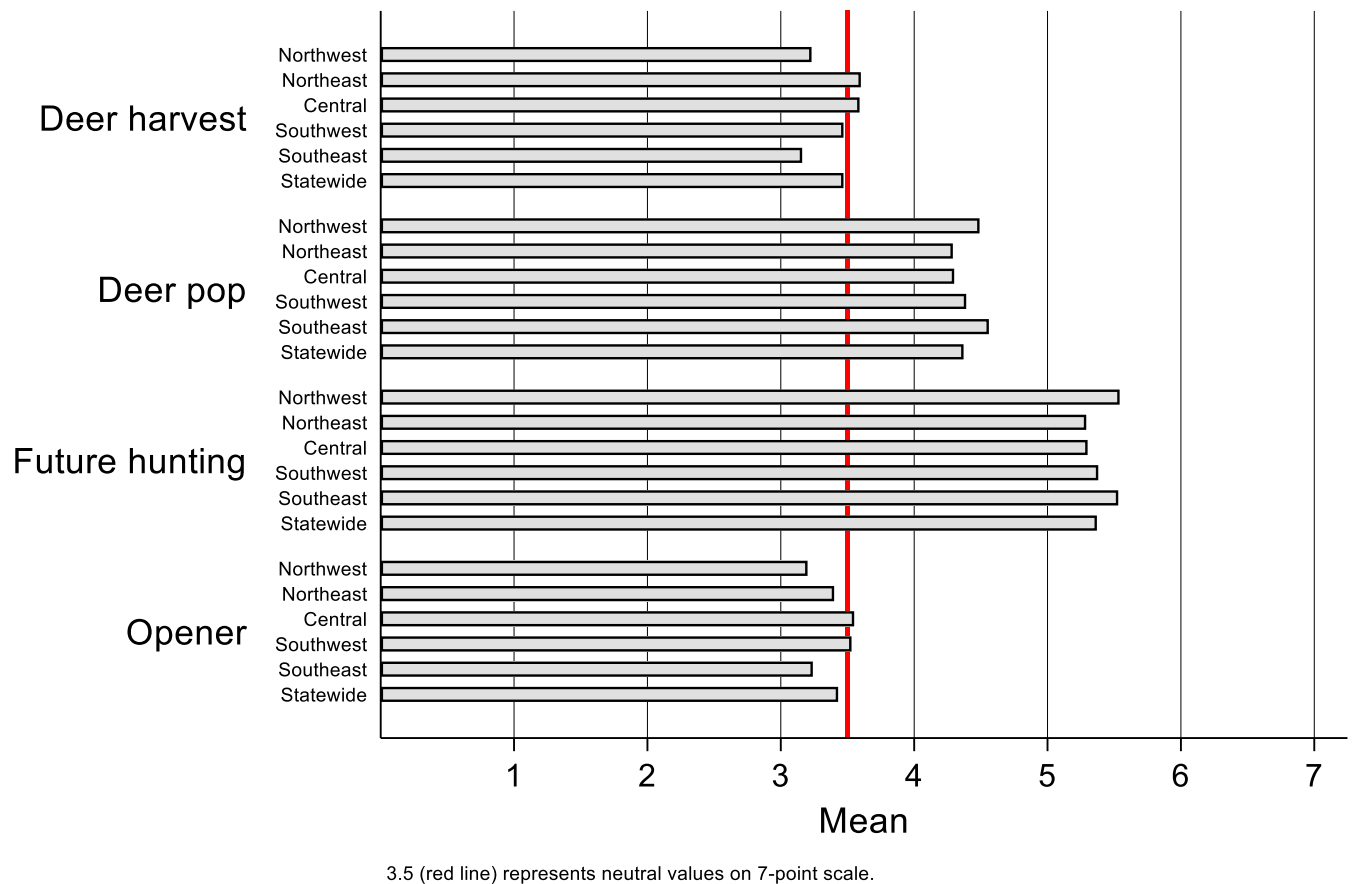
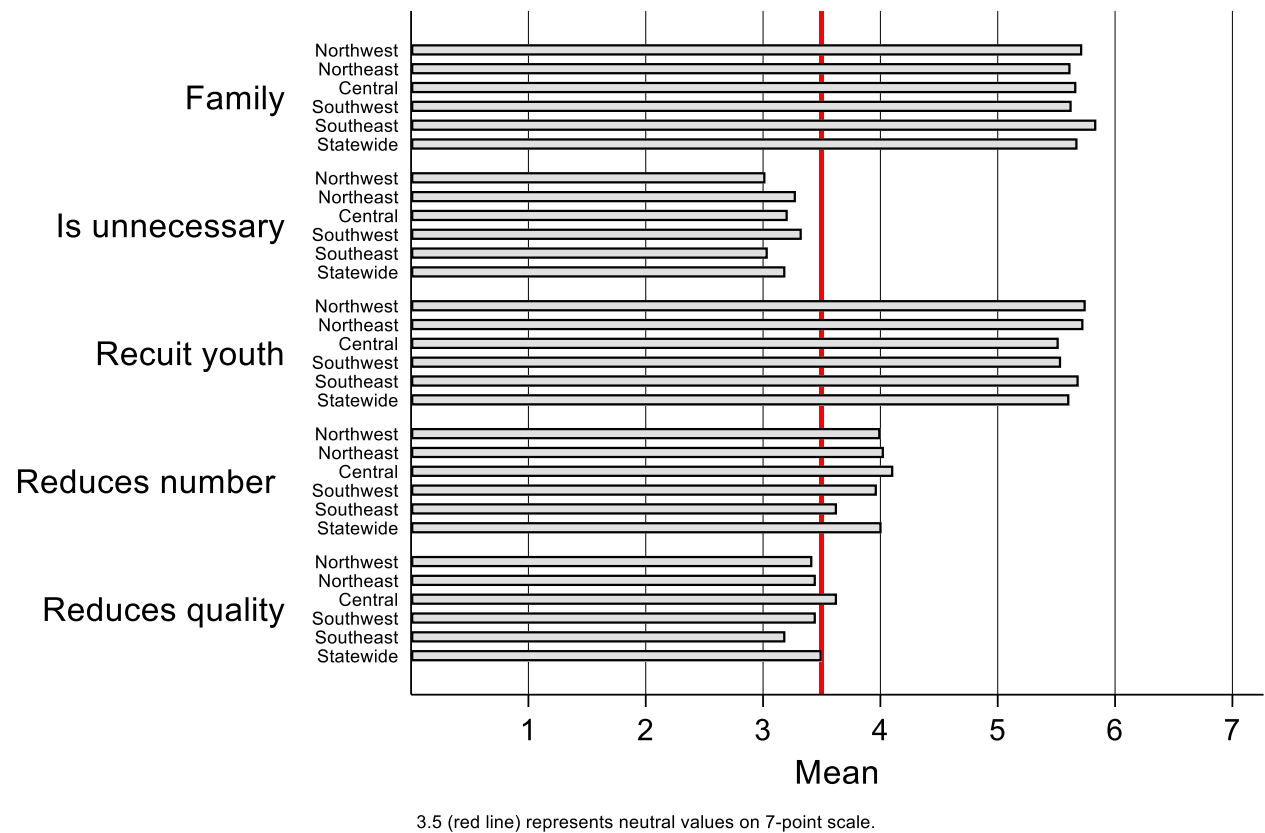


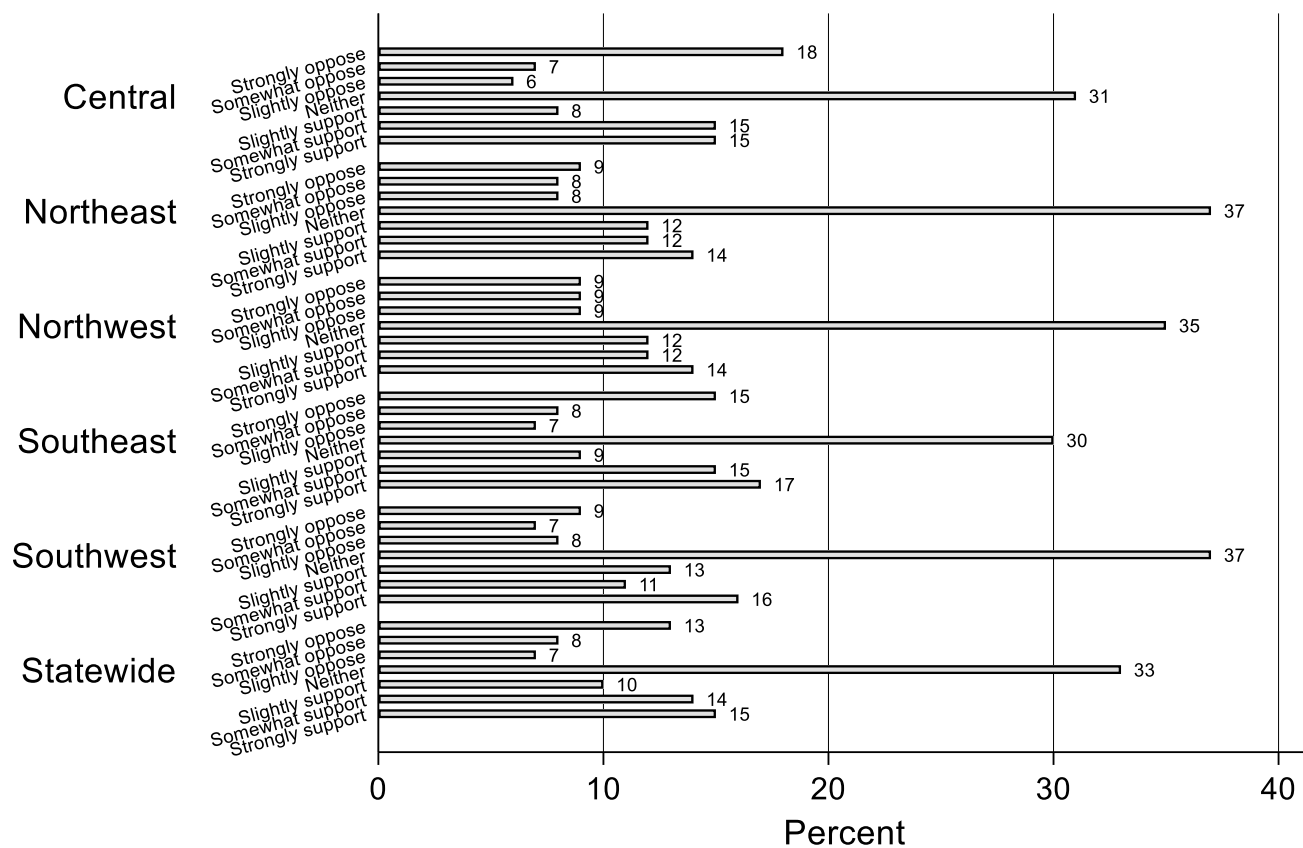
Figure 26. Mean values of hunter beliefs on the youth deer season statewide and by geographic strata.



Early antlerless season

The early antlerless deer season occurs in tandem with the statewide youth deer season but is only implemented in permit areas where deer populations are above population goals. Hunters, regardless of participation in the 2025 deer hunting seasons, were asked to indicate their support or opposition for the implementation of the early antlerless season in Minnesota. Statewide, there was slightly more overall support (39%) than opposition (28%). This statewide trend held across each region, with the most support coming from the Southeast (41%) and Southwest (40%) regions. There was a notable amount of neutrality around the proposed season regionally (Figure 27).

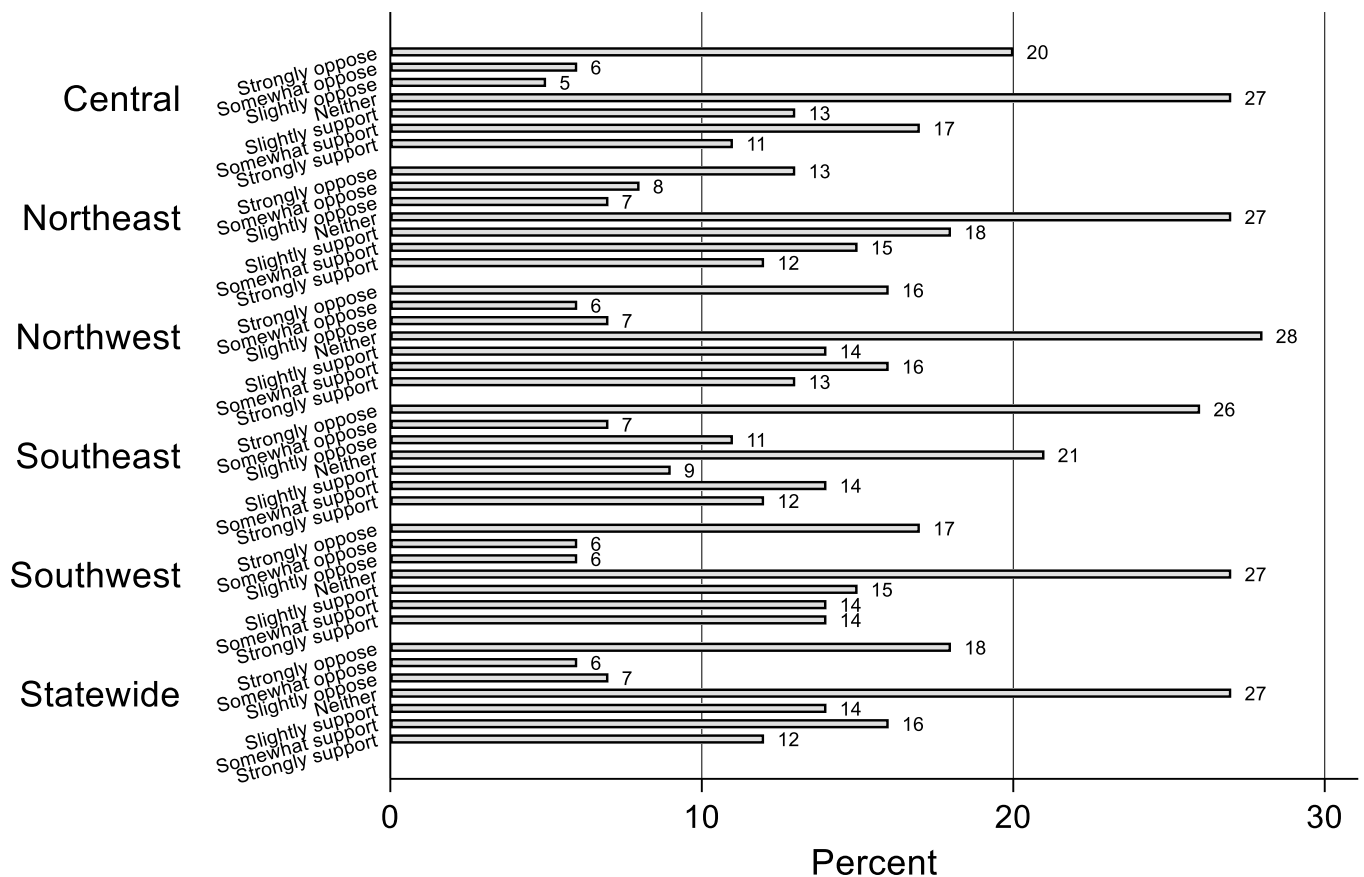
Figure 27. Hunter support for the implementation for an early antlerless season in Minnesota statewide and by strata.



Bonus buck opportunity

Hunters, regardless of participation in the 2025 deer hunting seasons, were asked to indicate their support or opposition for awarding hunters an additional buck tag for a DPA that is above goal, if they first harvest an antlerless deer in that DPA. Statewide, 42% supported the opportunity, while 32% opposed it. This trend held across regions, except in the Southeast region where a higher majority (44%) opposed the bonus buck opportunity (Figure 28).

Figure 28. Hunter support for awarding hunters an additional buck tag for a DPA that is above goal, if they first harvest an antlerless deer in that DPA in Minnesota statewide and by strata.



Agency Trust

Hunters were asked questions regarding their trust in the MNDNR's deer management. Minnesota deer hunters expressed a range of opinions about the MNDNR's performance in deer management, with responses showing cautious trust, moderate satisfaction, and notable skepticism in some areas.

Opinions about the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources were mixed. Roughly 40–45% of hunters expressed positive views regarding the DNR's deer management, transparency, fairness, and decision-making, while about one-third disagreed with these statements. Confidence in DNR staff and biologists was somewhat stronger, with relatively few respondents expressing negative views. Many hunters selected neutral responses across questions, suggesting uncertainty or mixed opinions about the agency's performance and responsiveness to hunters (Table 17).

A trust index was created by averaging responses across six survey items related to trust. The index was calculated by summing the six items found in Table 19 and dividing by the number of items, resulting in a composite score in which higher values indicate greater trust. All regions, except the Northeast region, had a mean trust index above 4. The statewide trust index was 4.2 (Figure 29).

Table 17. Deer hunters' agreement or disagreement with statement regarding their trust in the MNDNR.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
The MN DNR does a good job of managing deer in Minnesota.	12%	11%	13%	21%	18%	18%	7%
The MN DNR is open and honest about things they do and say related to deer management.	10%	8%	12%	30%	14%	18%	9%
The MN DNR can be trusted to make decisions about deer management that are good for the resource.	11%	9%	14%	20%	18%	17%	10%
The MN DNR will make decisions about deer management in a way that is fair.	10%	7%	11%	26%	18%	18%	10%
The MN DNR has deer managers and biologists	6%	3%	6%	40%	16%	17%	12%

who are well-trained for their jobs.

The MN DNR listens to deer hunters' concerns.

12%

11%

12%

27%

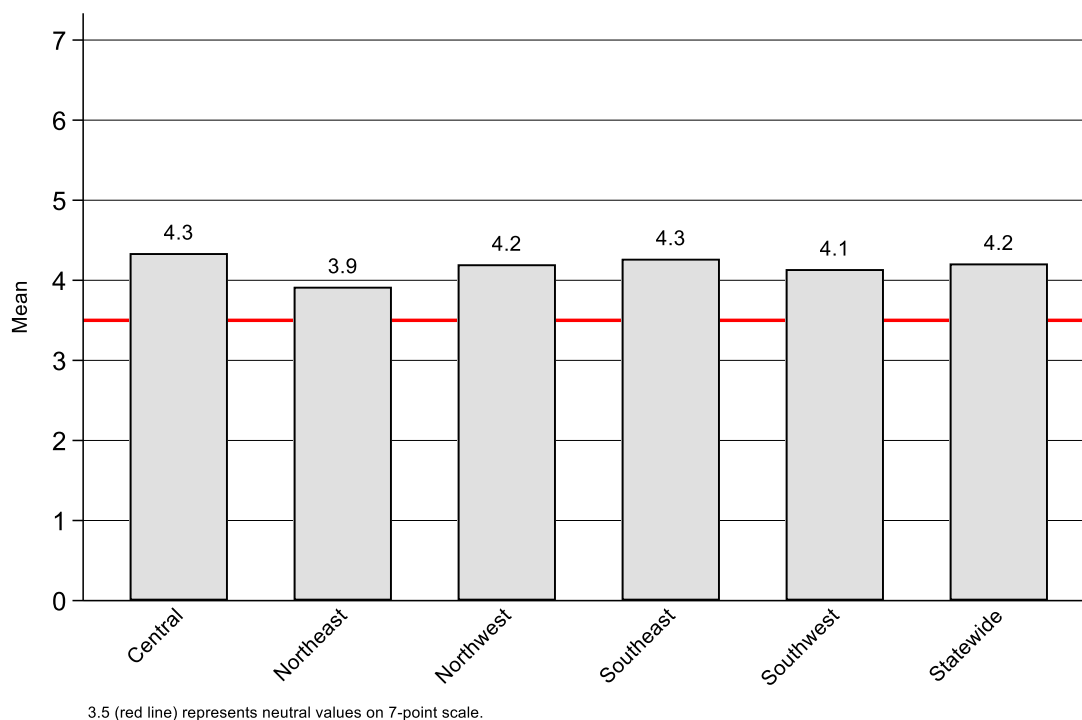
18%

14%

7%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) statewide, and age of respondents.

Figure 29. Mean trust in deer management statewide and by sample strata.



Agency Trust – Geographic Strata

All regions, except the Northeast, expressed the highest agreement that the DNR does a good job at managing deer in Minnesota. The Northeast region indicated less agreement, with over 48% disagreeing (Table 18). All regions, except the Northeast and Southwest, had a higher percentage of agreement responses when asked if the DNR is open and honest about its actions. The Northeast region had more disagreement (40%), and the Southwest region had equal proportions of agreement and neutrality (35%) (Table 19). The Northwest and Central regions had more agreement than the Northeast when asked if the DNR can be trusted to make decisions (Table 20). When asked if the DNR will make fair decisions about deer management, all regions showed a majority agreement and responses were relatively consistent (Table 21). There were mixed responses when asked if the DNR staff are well trained. The Northwest, Central, and Southeastern regions agreed, while the Northeast and Southwest regions indicated more neutrality (Table 22). The Northeast region again stands out with greater disagreement (44%) when asked if the DNR listens to deer hunters' concerns, while the Central (40%) and Southeast (39%) regions have relatively higher agreement (Table 23).

Table 18. Agreement that the Minnesota DNR does a good job of managing deer in Minnesota, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	12%	9%	15%	20%	19%	18%	8%
Northeast	20%	15%	13%	15%	16%	15%	7%
Central	9%	10%	12%	24%	18%	21%	7%
Southwest	12%	11%	14%	22%	17%	15%	8%
Southeast	9%	12%	14%	20%	18%	19%	9%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 19. Agreement that the Minnesota DNR is open and honest about deer management, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	12%	7%	15%	24%	14%	18%	10%
Northeast	13%	12%	15%	22%	12%	15%	11%
Central	8%	7%	10%	33%	13%	21%	8%
Southwest	10%	6%	15%	35%	12%	13%	10%
Southeast	9%	7%	9%	29%	21%	13%	12%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 20. Agreement that the Minnesota DNR can be trusted to make decisions about deer management that are good for the resource, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	12%	8%	14%	21%	19%	15%	10%
Northeast	16%	11%	14%	18%	16%	15%	8%
Central	9%	8%	14%	18%	18%	21%	12%
Southwest	11%	9%	16%	21%	18%	14%	10%

Southeast	9%	10%	13%	25%	19%	14%	10%
-----------	----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 21. Agreement that the Minnesota DNR will make decisions about deer management in a way that is fair, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	11%	6%	12%	24%	19%	17%	10%
Northeast	14%	9%	12%	22%	19%	14%	10%
Central	8%	6%	11%	26%	18%	22%	10%
Southwest	9%	8%	13%	28%	19%	16%	8%
Southeast	7%	9%	10%	29%	20%	16%	9%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 22. Agreement that the Minnesota DNR has deer managers and biologists who are well-trained for their jobs, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	8%	2%	6%	39%	13%	18%	13%
Northeast	9%	4%	7%	41%	15%	12%	13%
Central	5%	2%	5%	40%	18%	18%	13%
Southwest	5%	3%	8%	43%	13%	17%	11%
Southeast	4%	4%	6%	41%	15%	19%	11%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 23. Agreement that the Minnesota DNR listens to deer hunters' concerns, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	14%	6%	12%	28%	16%	17%	5%
Northeast	17%	16%	11%	22%	15%	12%	7%
Central	10%	11%	12%	28%	20%	14%	6%
Southwest	10%	11%	14%	28%	15%	14%	7%
Southeast	12%	9%	11%	29%	19%	12%	8%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Involvement in deer hunting

We asked hunters to indicate their level of involvement in deer hunting through a series of questions. Most respondents strongly enjoy deer hunting, with 44% strongly agreeing that it is one of the most enjoyable activities they do and another 26% moderately agreeing. Many hunters also organize a significant part of their lives around deer hunting, though responses here are more varied: 18% strongly agree, 14% moderately agree, and 23% slightly agree, but a notable portion (17%) neither agree nor disagree (Table 24).

Regarding social connections, a majority feel their friends and family are connected to deer hunting, with 30% strongly agreeing and 24% moderately agreeing. Fewer respondents disagree with this statement, indicating a generally strong social link to hunting (Table 24).

When asked whether participation in deer hunting says a lot about who they are, opinions are more mixed. While 23% strongly agree and 16% moderately agree, a sizeable 23% neither agree nor disagree, showing some ambivalence about identity being tied to hunting (Table 24).

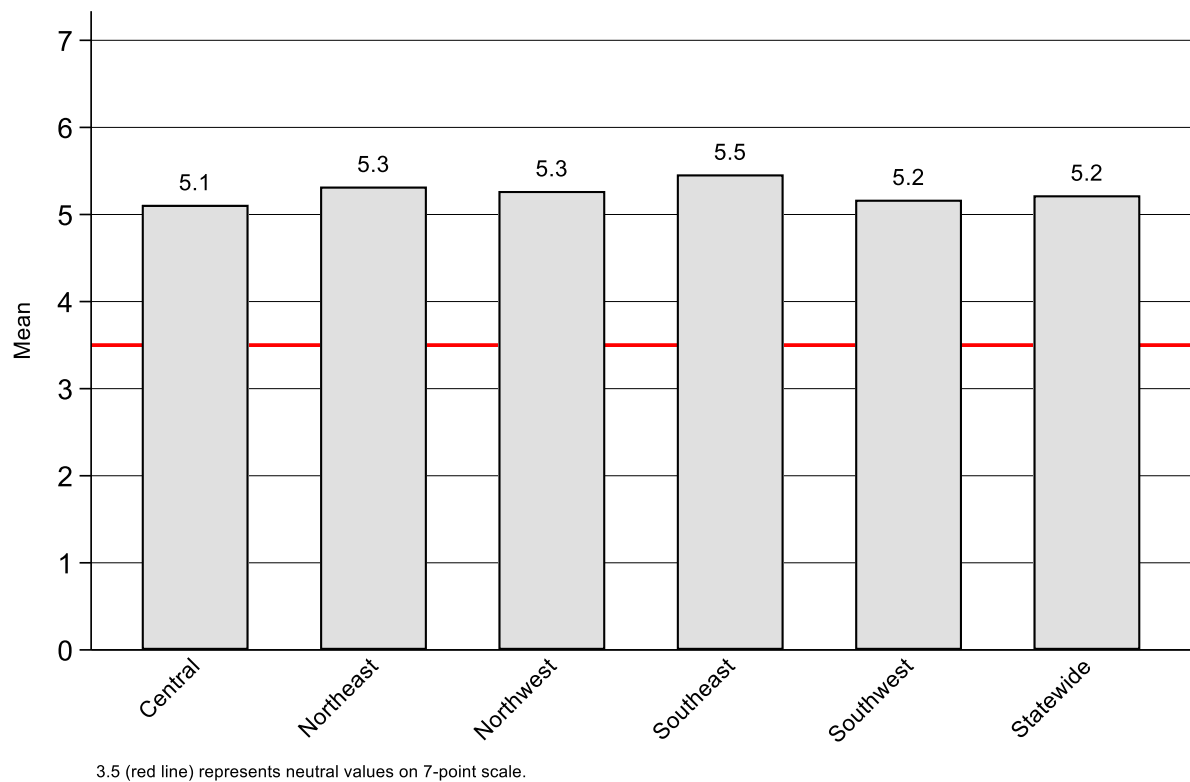
An involvement index was created by averaging responses across four survey items related to involvement. The index was calculated by summing the four items found in Table 26 and dividing by the number of items, resulting in a composite score in which higher values indicate greater involvement. Overall, the data suggests that deer hunting is an important and enjoyable activity for many, often integrated into social circles and personal identity, but with some variation in how strongly individuals connect their sense of self to hunting (Figure 30).

Table 24. Deer hunters' agreement or disagreement with statements regarding their involvement in deer hunting.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Deer hunting is one of the most enjoyable things I do.	1%	1%	4%	8%	16%	26%	44%
I find a lot of my life is organized around deer hunting.	7%	10%	11%	17%	23%	14%	18%
Most of my friends and family are in some way connected to deer hunting.	2%	5%	6%	9%	24%	24%	30%
Participation in deer hunting says a lot about who I am.	3%	4%	6%	23%	25%	16%	23%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer hunting license holders (all seasons) statewide, and age of respondents.

Figure 30. Mean hunting involvement scores statewide and by geographic strata.



Involvement in deer hunting – Geographic Strata

All regions are overwhelmingly positive when asked if deer hunting is one of the most enjoyable things they do (Table 25) and if they find a lot of their life is organized around deer hunting (Table 26). When asked whether most of their friends and family are in some way connected to deer hunting, the Southeast had the strongest agreement (33%), although all regions had strong overall agreement (Table 27). When asked if participation in deer hunting says a lot about who I am, the Southeast region had the highest strong agreement. However, all regions had high overall agreement (Table 28). Across all regions, deer hunting is widely seen as enjoyable and socially important, but its centrality to life and identity varies. The Southeast region had the strongest life organization around deer hunting and that deer hunting says a lot about who they are.

Table 25. Agreement by deer hunters that deer hunting is one of the most enjoyable things I do, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	1%	2%	3%	7%	18%	25%	44%
Northeast	1%	1%	2%	9%	15%	26%	46%

Central	1%	2%	5%	9%	14%	28%	42%
Southwest	1%	1%	2%	10%	22%	22%	42%
Southeast	1%	1%	3%	4%	12%	27%	52%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 26. Agreement by deer hunters that I find a lot of my life is organized around deer hunting, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	7%	8%	9%	16%	25%	17%	17%
Northeast	5%	8%	13%	15%	25%	18%	16%
Central	8%	10%	12%	17%	23%	11%	18%
Southwest	6%	13%	9%	23%	19%	14%	17%
Southeast	6%	6%	8%	15%	21%	20%	24%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 27. Agreement by deer hunters that most of my friends and family are in some way connected to deer hunting, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	1%	4%	4%	10%	25%	24%	32%
Northeast	2%	4%	6%	9%	24%	26%	30%
Central	2%	6%	7%	9%	22%	24%	30%
Southwest	2%	6%	6%	9%	26%	24%	28%
Southeast	2%	6%	6%	7%	23%	24%	33%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Table 28. Agreement by deer hunters that participation in deer hunting says a lot about who I am, by geographic strata.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
Northwest	3%	5%	4%	24%	27%	15%	22%
Northeast	2%	3%	4%	24%	22%	18%	26%
Central	4%	4%	8%	22%	26%	14%	20%
Southwest	4%	4%	6%	23%	23%	17%	22%
Southeast	3%	3%	3%	21%	19%	22%	29%

Note: Estimates are weighted to account for the proportion of deer license holders (all seasons) within stratum, and age of respondents.

Non-resident hunters

Statewide, 6% of respondents indicated they were non-residents. The northwest region had the highest percentage of non-resident hunters (11%), and the central region had the lowest percentage of non-resident hunters (3%) (Table 29).

Table 29. Percent of non-resident deer hunters in 2025 in Minnesota statewide and by geographic strata.

	Statewide (n)	Northwest (n)	Northeast (n)	Central (n)	Southwest (n)	Southeast (n)
Resident	94% (1,596)	89% (234)	96% (304)	97% (701)	90% (204)	90% (153)
Non-resident	6% (105)	11% (28)	4% (12)	3% (25)	10% (23)	10% (17)

Appendix A. Questionnaire

2025 Minnesota Deer Hunter Annual Survey

Dear Deer Hunter,

Thank you for your help with this important study. Results of this effort will inform decisions about deer management in Minnesota, and your voice matters. The survey should take roughly 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. Thank you for your time!

Please enter the PIN you received on your contact letter or email.

Tennessee notice: In accordance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, you are being informed of the following: The information you provide in this survey is being collected for research into deer management in Minnesota. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to answer any questions or to stop completing the survey at any time. The data collected will be used solely for understanding Minnesota deer harvest and hunter preferences. Under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, the information you provide is classified as private. If you have any questions regarding the use of your information or your rights under this Act, you can contact a researcher (DeerHunterSurvey.DNR@state.mn.us). Providing the requested information is not required by law; however, if you choose not to provide the data, it may affect the completion of a study. Thank you for your cooperation! Please advance forward if you consent or stop the survey if you do not.

Deer Hunting in 2025

Q1. Did you hunt deer in Minnesota in 2025? *(Select one.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q2. In which of the following Minnesota deer seasons did you participate in 2025? *(Select all that apply.)*

- ☐ Archery: September 13 - December 31, 2025
- ☐ Early antlerless: October 16 – October 19, 2025
- ☐ Youth hunt: October 16 – October 19, 2025
- ☐ Statewide firearms (100 series, 604, 679, and 684): November 8 - November 23, 2025
- ☐ Statewide firearms (200 series, 338, 341, 605, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 655, 661, 666, and 671): November 8 - November 16, 2025
- ☐ Metro management zone (DPA 601): November 8 – November 30, 2025
- ☐ Late southeast firearms (338, 341, 605, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648 and 649): November 22 - November 30, 2025
- ☐ Muzzleloader: November 29 – December 14, 2025
- ☐ Late CWD hunt: December 19 – December 21, 2025

Firearms and muzzleloader participation

Q3. During the 2025 firearm deer season, which weapon type with a firearm license did you use to hunt? *(Select all that apply.)*

- ☐ Shotgun
- ☐ Rifle
- ☐ Handgun
- ☐ Muzzleloader
- ☐ Crossbow

Q4. How many days did you hunt with a firearm during the firearm deer seasons in Minnesota in 2025? *(Select a number.)*

Days hunted with a firearm ____ days

Q5. How many days did you hunt with a muzzleloader during the muzzleloader deer season in Minnesota in 2025? *(Select a number.)*

Days hunted with a muzzleloader ____ days

Q6. What is the maximum distance you are comfortable using a shotgun to shoot at a deer? *(Select one number.)* 0-400+, 50-yard increments

Q7. What is the maximum distance you are comfortable using a rifle to shoot at a deer? *(Select one number.)*

Q8. What is the maximum distance you are comfortable using a handgun to shoot at a deer? *(Select one number.)*

Q9. What is the maximum distance you are comfortable using a muzzleloader to shoot at a deer? *(Select one number.)*

Q10. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your 2025 firearm and muzzleloader season deer hunting experience? *(Select one.)*

- ☐ Very Dissatisfied
- ☐ Moderately Dissatisfied
- ☐ Slightly Dissatisfied
- ☐ Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- ☐ Slightly Satisfied
- ☐ Moderately Satisfied
- ☐ Very Satisfied

Q11. Which of the following reasons most contributed to your dissatisfaction with the Minnesota deer firearm and muzzleloader hunting seasons in 2025? If your primary reason is not listed, please select other and write it in. *(Select one.)*

- ☐ Low deer numbers
- ☐ Too much competition from other hunters

- Complying with CWD management regulations
- Poor deer habitat
- Prolonged hot weather (poor hunting conditions)
- Sustained cold weather (poor hunting conditions)
- A lack of quality bucks
- Other (text box entry)

Archery participation

Q12. You indicated you hunted during the 2025 archery deer season in Minnesota. While hunting during the 2025 archery season, did you use a crossbow? *(Select one.)*

- Yes, I hunted exclusively with a crossbow.
- Yes, I used both a crossbow and a vertical bow to hunt during the archery season.
- No, I hunted exclusively using a vertical bow.

Q13. How many days did you hunt with archery equipment during the 2025 archery deer season? *(Select the number of days.)*

_____ Days hunted with archery equipment

Q14. Was your decision to participate in the **2025** archery deer season in Minnesota influenced by the regulation change allowing a crossbow to be used by all during this season? *(Select one.)*

- Yes, I would not have participated in archery season without this change.
- No, it did not affect my decision to participate in the archery deer season.

Q15. Did you harvest any deer with a crossbow or vertical bow in Minnesota in 2025? *(Select all that apply.)*

- Yes, I harvested a deer with a crossbow in Minnesota in 2025.
- Yes, I harvested a deer with a vertical bow in Minnesota in 2025.
- No, I did not harvest a deer with archery equipment during archery season in Minnesota in 2025.

Q16. You indicated you harvested deer during the 2025 Minnesota archery season with a vertical bow. How many deer did you harvest with a vertical bow? *(Select one number.)*

Deer harvested with a vertical bow _____

Q17. You indicated you harvested deer during the 2025 Minnesota archery season with a crossbow. How many deer did you harvest with a crossbow? *(Select one number.)*

Deer harvested with a crossbow _____

Q18. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your 2025 deer hunting experience during the archery season? *(Select one.)*

- Very Dissatisfied
- Moderately Dissatisfied

- ☐ Slightly Dissatisfied
- ☐ Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- ☐ Slightly Satisfied
- ☐ Moderately Satisfied
- ☐ Very Satisfied

Q19. Which of the following reasons most contributed to your dissatisfaction with the Minnesota deer archery hunting season in 2025? If your primary reason is not listed, please select other and write it in. *(Select one.)*

- ☐ Low deer numbers
- ☐ Too much competition from other hunters
- ☐ Complying with CWD management regulations
- ☐ Poor deer habitat
- ☐ Prolonged hot weather (poor hunting conditions)
- ☐ Sustained cold weather (poor hunting conditions)
- ☐ A lack of quality bucks
- ☐ Other (text box entry)

Deer harvest all seasons

Q20. Did you harvest any deer in Minnesota in 2025 (across all seasons: firearm, muzzleloader, archery)? Please report both deer that you killed and registered with a tag in your name and deer that a member of your party killed but that you tagged and registered in your name. *(Select all that apply.)*

- ☐ Yes, I harvested an antlered deer.
- ☐ Yes, I harvested an antlerless deer.
- ☐ No, I did not harvest any deer.

Q21. How many antlered deer did you harvest across all seasons in Minnesota in 2025? Please report both deer that you killed and registered with a tag in your name and deer that a member of your party killed but that you tagged and registered in your name. *(Select one.)*

Q22. How many antlerless deer did you harvest across all seasons in Minnesota in 2025? Please report both deer that you killed and registered with a tag in your name and deer that a member of your party killed but that you tagged and registered in your name. *(Select one.)*

Q23. For the most recent deer you killed or tagged in Minnesota, please tell us what you did with the carcass (head, spine, and rib cage). Please select the option that best describes your disposal method. If you used multiple methods to dispose of a carcass, report the one that applies to the majority of the deer including the spinal column. *(Select one.)*

- ☐ In the trash
- ☐ In a DNR-provided dumpster
- ☐ On the land where the deer was harvested

- On land *other* than where the deer was harvested
- At the meat processor who disposes of it for me
- Other (text box)

Location of deer hunting and perceptions of population

Q24. What deer permit area (DPA) did you hunt most often in 2025 in Minnesota? (*Select one.*)

Q25. In thinking about the deer permit area (DPA) you hunt most often, what would you say about the size of the deer population? (*Select one.*)

- Much too low
- Too low
- About right
- Too high
- Much too high

Q26. How much of your deer hunting, across all seasons, did you do on public and private land in Minnesota in 2025? (*Select one.*)

- I hunted exclusively on private land.
- I hunted on a mix of public and private land.
- I hunted exclusively on public land.

Q27. You indicated that you deer hunted on both public and private land in Minnesota in 2025. Approximately what percentage of your hunting occurred on public land, and what percentage occurred on private land? (Please note, your percentages must add to 100%.)

Q28. You indicated you deer hunted on public land in Minnesota in 2025. Which of the following types of public land did you hunt on? (*Select all that apply.*)

- Minnesota DNR Wildlife Management Area (WMA)
- Minnesota DNR Aquatic Management Area (AMA)
- Minnesota DNR State Forest
- U.S. Forest Service National Forest (Chippewa or Superior National Forest)
- Minnesota DNR Scientific and Natural Area (SNA)
- Minnesota DNR State Park
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge or Waterfowl Production Area
- Minnesota DNR Walk-In Access Program Land (WIA)
- County Forest
- Other (please describe)

Q29. How crowded by other hunters did you feel while deer hunting in Minnesota in 2025? (*Select one.*)

Not at all crowded Slightly Crowded Moderately Crowded Extremely Crowded

Shed Hunting

Q30. Shed hunting refers to intentionally looking for antlers that deer, moose, or elk drop naturally during the winter, usually in January and February. Have you shed hunted for any species in Minnesota in the last 5 years? *(Select one.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q31. In the last five years, which of the sheds of the following species have you hunted for in Minnesota? *(Select all that apply.)*

- ☐ Moose antlers
- ☐ Deer antlers
- ☐ Elk antlers

Q32. Have you used a dog to assist you in finding sheds while shed hunting in Minnesota in the last 5 years? *(Select one.)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q33. In what seasons have you hunted for sheds in Minnesota in the last 5 years? *(Select all that apply.)*

- ☐ Winter (December-February)
- ☐ Spring (March-May)
- ☐ Summer (June-August)
- ☐ Fall (September-November)

Q34. How many days do you usually spend shed hunting per year in Minnesota? *(Select one.)*

- ☐ 1-2 days
- ☐ 3-5 days
- ☐ 6 or more days

Q35. Which of the following best describes where you choose to shed hunt? *(Select one.)*

- ☐ I shed hunt exclusively on private land.
- ☐ I shed hunt exclusively on public land.
- ☐ I shed hunt on a mixture of private and public land.

Q36. What do you do with the antlers that you collect? *(Select all that apply.)*

- ☐ I sell them.
- ☐ I use them for art or craft design creations.
- ☐ I keep them/display them.

- Other (text box)

Q37. What mode of transportation do you usually use to shed hunt? *(Select one.)*

- On foot without snowshoes
- On foot with snowshoes
- On a snowmobile
- On skis
- On an ATV
- Other (text box)

We are interested in learning more about your preferences and opinions for potential changes to regulations about deer and deer hunting. Please note, these are hypothetical scenarios, and any data collected in these scenarios is for information purposes only. Collecting data on these issues does not necessarily mean that the MN DNR plans to make this change in the near future.

Youth Season

The youth deer season occurs annually during the Minnesota Educator Academy (MEA) conference when schools are closed (beginning the third Thursday in October and ending that Sunday). Youth hunters may harvest one deer of either sex statewide. In bucks only permit areas, youth may not take antlerless deer, and bonus tags are not valid.

Q38. How much do you support or oppose the existence of the current statewide youth deer season? *(Select one.)*

- Strongly oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Slightly oppose
- Neither support nor oppose
- Slightly support
- Somewhat support
- Strongly support

Q39. How much do you support or oppose a regulation change that would allow a youth deer hunter to harvest up to the deer permit area (DPA) bag limit during the youth deer season (for example: 3 deer in a 3-deer DPA)? Please note that any deer harvested during the youth season would count towards the statewide and DPA bag limits. *(Select one.)*

- Strongly oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Slightly oppose
- Neither support nor oppose
- Slightly support
- Somewhat support
- Strongly support

Q40. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the youth deer season? The youth deer season in Minnesota...

	Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree
reduces the number of bucks available for adult hunters during the regular season.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
helps recruit youth into deer hunting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
is unnecessary because youth already have enough opportunities to hunt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
reduces the quality of the regular firearms hunting experience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strengthens family and community connections through shared hunting experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
helps ensure the future of deer hunting in Minnesota.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
has little overall impact on deer populations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
results in too many deer being harvested before the regular season.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
interferes with the regular firearms season opener (timing).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Early Antlerless

Q41. Currently, a four-day early antlerless season that coincides with the statewide youth season is implemented in some deer permit areas that are above population goals. How much do you support or oppose the implementation of the early antlerless season in Minnesota? *(Select one.)*

- ☐ Strongly oppose
- ☐ Somewhat oppose
- ☐ Slightly oppose
- ☐ Neither support nor oppose
- ☐ Slightly support
- ☐ Somewhat support

- Strongly support

Bonus Buck

Q42. Currently, Minnesota deer hunters may only take one legal buck per year in *most* DPAs, except in some disease management zones, where they may take one legal buck per license. Harvest data from disease management zones shows that very few hunters take more than one legal buck per year despite the opportunity. Similarly, many DPAs are well above goal population densities. Increasing the antlerless harvest may help reduce the population densities in DPAs above goal. How much do you support or oppose awarding hunters an additional buck tag for a DPA that is above goal, if they first harvest an antlerless deer in that DPA? *(Select one.)*

- Strongly oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Slightly oppose
- Neither support nor oppose
- Slightly support
- Somewhat support
- Strongly support

Agency Trust

Q43. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the Minnesota DNR? *(Select one for each statement.)*

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
The MN DNR does a good job of managing deer in Minnesota.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The MN DNR is open and honest about things they do and say related to deer management.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The MN DNR can be trusted to make decisions about deer management that are good for the resource.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The MN DNR will make decisions about deer management in a way that is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The MN DNR has deer managers and biologists who are well-trained for their jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The MN DNR listens to deer hunters' concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Involvement in Deer Hunting

Q44. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about your deer hunting involvement? (*Select one for each statement.*)

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Deer hunting is one of the most enjoyable things I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I find a lot of my life is organized around deer hunting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most of my friends and family are in some way connected to deer hunting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Participation in deer hunting says a lot about who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q45. Were you a *non-resident* deer hunter in Minnesota in 2025? (*Select one.*)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q46. Is this survey being completed by the person it was addressed to? (*Select one.*)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No