



2020 Waterfowl Hunter Attitude Survey Report

Preliminary Results

3/26/2021

Suggested Citation

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Data Limitations

Results presented in this report derive from survey responses obtained as of 3/26/2021. We estimate that this is roughly half of the potential responses obtained at study completion. Data are provisional and subject to revision.

Background

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) periodically conducts surveys of waterfowl hunters to understand their satisfaction with waterfowl hunting in Minnesota, their waterfowl hunting behaviors, and their attitudes toward waterfowl hunting management and regulations. This report details the preliminary results of a survey of Minnesota waterfowl stamp purchasers conducted in the winter and spring of 2021, in reference to the 2020 waterfowl hunting season.

Topics detailed in this preliminary report of results include hunters' attitudes toward changes to teal hunting opportunities, legal waterfowl shooting hours, goose bag limits, over-water hunting regulations, use of spinning wing decoys, and use of trolling motors on wildlife management areas. The study also assessed hunters' preferences for waterfowl season dates, and attitudes toward youth hunting weekend, and expansion of Sandhill crane hunting opportunity in Minnesota.

Methods

Sample Selection

We selected a stratified random sample of Minnesota waterfowl hunters (n=6,864) in four study strata (n=1,716 each) corresponding to hunters' place of residence within the North, Central, and South waterfowl hunting zones, and the seven county twin-cities metro area. Hunters were included in the sample frame if they were age 18 or older at the time the sample was drawn, and had purchased a 2020 Minnesota waterfowl hunting stamp. Hunters aged 65+ are not required to purchase a waterfowl hunting stamp, and are therefore only captured in the sample frame if they purchased one voluntarily. We estimate waterfowl hunters aged 65+ are roughly 3% of the waterfowl hunting population.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in three rounds, through postal mail. In the first two rounds, hunters received a letter that directed them to a website to complete the questionnaire online. In third round, not reported in these data, non-responding hunters received a paper copy of the survey, along with a postage-paid self-addressed return envelope.

Response Rate

As of 3/26/2020, 1,223 hunters had completed the questionnaire online. A further 180 pieces of mail were returned undeliverable. After removing undeliverable mail from the sample frame, this represents an effective response rate of 18%

Weighting

We weighted results according to proportional representation of respondents by categories of age and the population of hunters residing in the geographic study strata. This process allows for the estimation of hunters' preferences at the population level. Table 1. contains a summary of the weighting schedule applied to the data.

Table 1. Weighting schedule for preliminary results

Weight Category	Population #	Population %	Respondent #	Respondent %	Weight
North 18-27	4740	6.6	35	0.02838605	2.333474407
North 28-37	3355	4.7	55	0.04460665	1.051048072
North 38-52	3714	5.2	81	0.065693431	0.790040991
North 53+	3878	5.4	133	0.107866991	0.502399164
Central 18-27	6024	8.4	34	0.02757502	3.052803078
Central 28-37	4885	6.8	36	0.02919708	2.338055478
Central 38-52	4995	7.0	68	0.055150041	1.265666615
Central 53+	4458	6.2	130	0.105433901	0.590866621
South 18-27	3520	4.9	35	0.02838605	1.732875509
South 28-37	2910	4.1	56	0.04541768	0.895360038
South 38-52	3159	4.4	62	0.050283861	0.877911385
South 53+	3036	4.2	139	0.112733171	0.37633942
Metro 18-27	5314	7.4	37	0.03000811	2.474643089
Metro 28-37	5883	8.2	69	0.055961071	1.469070042
Metro 38-52	5548	7.8	89	0.072181671	1.074086333
Metro 53+	6141	8.6	174	0.141119221	0.608110628

Results are provisional and subject to revision

Results

Attitudes toward Current and Future Waterfowl Hunting Regulations

Hunters indicated their support or opposition to several existing waterfowl hunting regulations, and potential changes. Minnesota, at the time of survey, splits the state in three waterfowl hunting zones; North, Central, and South. On average, waterfowl hunters were either supportive (38%) or neutral (46%) toward this system. Few waterfowl hunters opposed using three waterfowl hunting zones (16%).

Legal shooting hours for waterfowl end at 4pm during the first part of Minnesota's waterfowl hunting season. When asked their attitude toward this regulation, 51% of hunters indicated that they oppose ending shooting hours at 4pm, while 20% were neutral and 30% supported ending legal shooting at 4pm during the first part of the season.

Waterfowl hunters must conceal themselves in vegetation during the regular waterfowl hunting season. That is, they cannot hunt over open-water. Hunters, on average, are split in their support (33%), neutrality (31%), and opposition (37%) to this regulation.

The use of motorized decoys is restricted during the first part of the waterfowl hunting season in Minnesota. When asked their attitudes toward this restriction, 58% of waterfowl hunters indicated they opposed it, while 20% were neutral, and 22% supported it.

Motorized decoys are not allowed on MDNR controlled wildlife management areas (WMAs). More than half of hunters (54%) were opposed to this restriction. A further 27% of hunters indicated neutrality toward restricting the use of motorized decoys on WMAs, and 20% supported it.

Overwater goose hunting is restricted in several locations in Minnesota during the September season. Hunters were asked their support or opposition to relaxing these restrictions. Hunters were, mostly neutral (42%) or supportive (38%) of the change. Slightly less than one-fifth of hunters (19%) opposed the change.

Hunters were asked about their attitudes toward establishing a special military veteran waterfowl hunting season, similar to the existing youth waterfowl hunting weekend. Hunters were, on average, supportive (61%) of the proposition.

The current dark goose bag limit in Minnesota is 3 birds per person per day during the regular season. Hunters were asked to indicate their support or opposition to increasing this daily bag to 5 bird per person per day. On average, hunters were either supportive (51%) or neutral (40%) toward the proposed bag increase. A small minority (9%) opposed the change.

Electric trolling motors are not allowed on WMAs in Minnesota. A little over two-fifths of hunters (41%) support a change to the regulations to allow trolling motors on WMAs, while roughly one third of hunters oppose or are neutral toward such the change respectively.

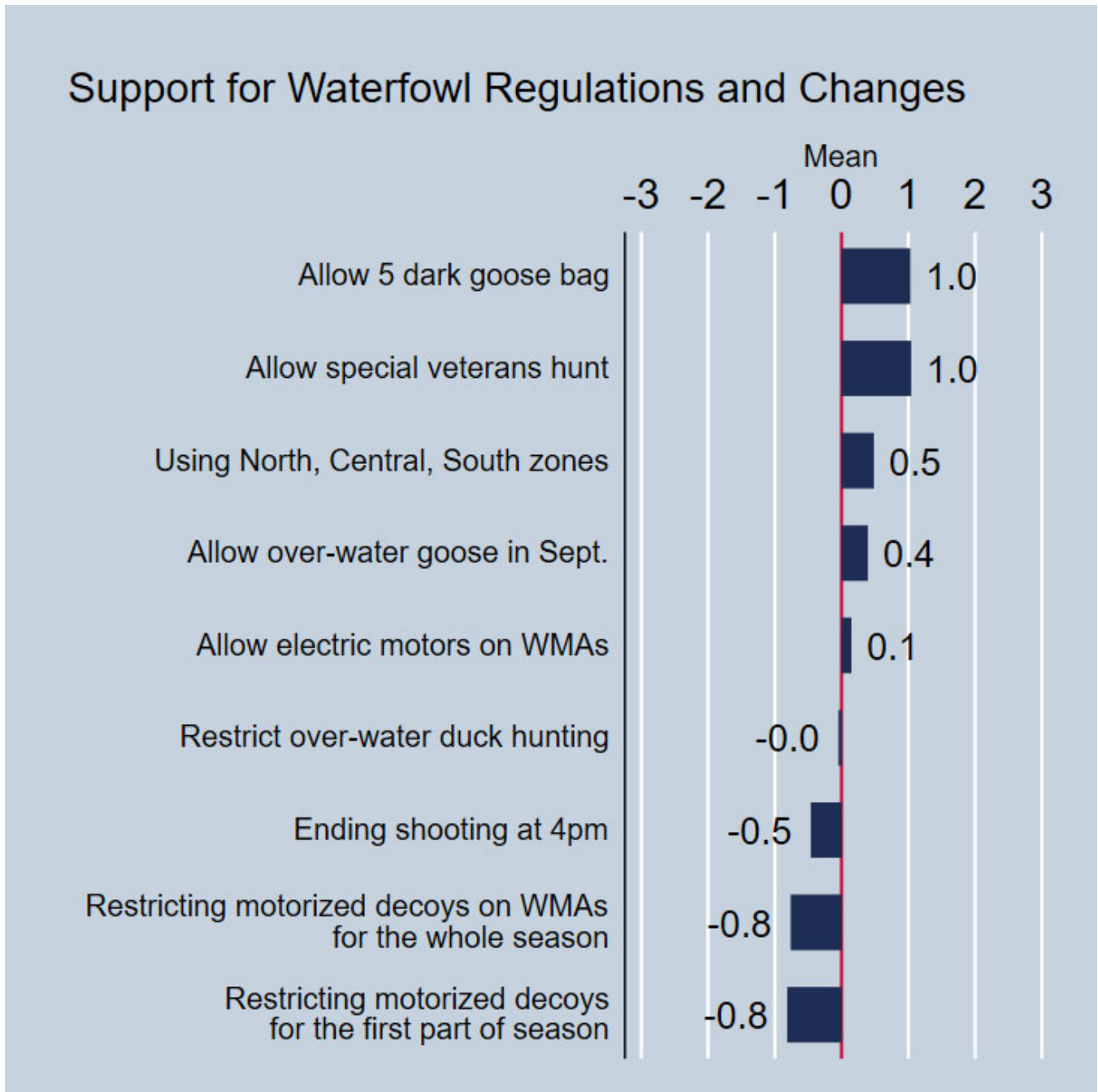
Results summarizing attitudes toward existing and proposed water fowl hunting regulations are summarized in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for regulations and regulation changes

	Oppose	Neutral	Support	M(SD)
Using a North, Central, and South duck zone during the waterfowl season	16	46	38	4.5 (1.6)
Ending shooting hours at 4pm for the first part of Minnesota's waterfowl season	51	20	30	3.5 (2.0)
Restrictions on open water hunting (must be in concealing vegetation) during the regular waterfowl season	37	31	33	4.0 (1.9)
Restricting the use of motorized decoys for the first part of Minnesota's waterfowl season	58	20	22	3.2 (1.9)
Restricting the use of motorized decoys on wildlife management areas (WMAs) for the entire duck season	54	27	20	3.2 (1.9)
Allowing overwater goose hunting in Sept. (currently restricted in NW MN, Carlos Avery WMA, Swan Lake area)	19	42	38	4.4 (1.8)
Allowing special active duty military/veterans hunt (like Youth Waterfowl Weekend)	21	18	61	5.0 (2.1)
Allowing 5 dark goose bag limit the entire season	9	40	51	5.0 (1.6)
Allowing motors/electric motors on more WMAs	29	31	41	4.2 (1.9)

- **Results are provisional and subject to revision**
- Values are the percent of respondents selecting either strongly/moderately/slightly support or oppose, and neutral respectively
- Responses recorded on a scale where 1 = strongly oppose, 2 = moderately oppose, 3 = slightly oppose, 4 = neutral, 5 = slightly support, 6 = moderately support, 7 = strongly support
- Values are rounded to the nearest percent and rows may sum between 99 and 101

Figure 1. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for existing and new regulations



Results are effects coded such that -3 = strongly oppose, +3 = strongly support, and 0 = neutral. Mean values with a negative sign indicate that respondents, on average, oppose that option. Mean values with a positive sign indicate that respondents, on average, support that option.

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Expanding Sandhill Crane Hunting Opportunity

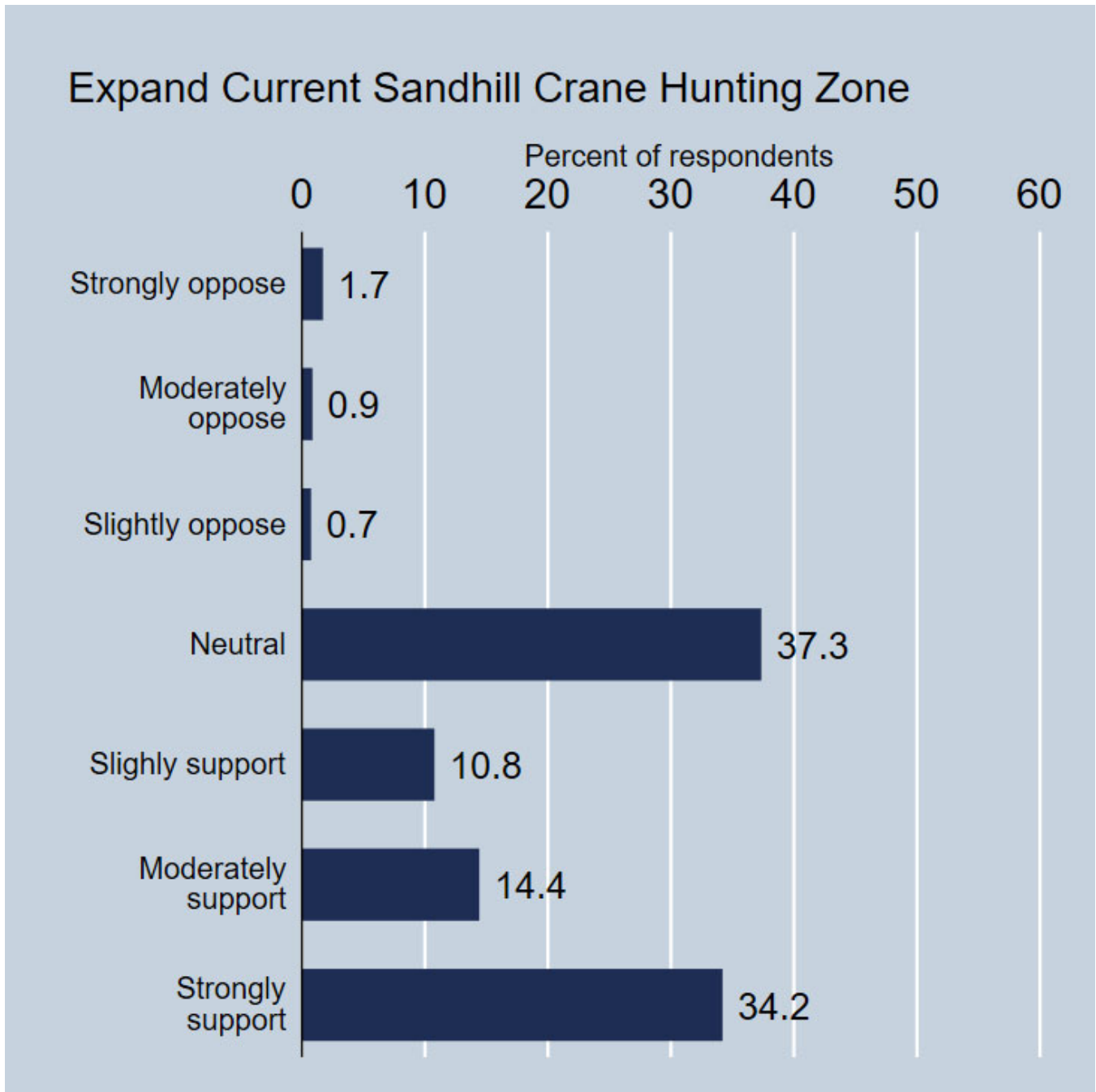
Waterfowl hunters were asked to report their attitudes toward expanding the current Sandhill crane hunting zone and establishing a new Sandhill crane hunting zone in central Minnesota. Hunters, on average supported (59%) both propositions. Results of hunters’ attitudes toward Sandhill crane hunting regulation changes are summarized in Table 3 and Figures 2 and 3.

Table 3. Minnesota waterfowl hunters’ preference for Sandhill crane hunting regulations

	Oppose	Neutral	Support	M(SD)
Expand the size of the current crane zone	3	37	59	5.3 (1.5)
Expand Sandhill crane hunting to a new hunting zone in the central/eastern part of the state	4	38	59	5.4 (1.5)

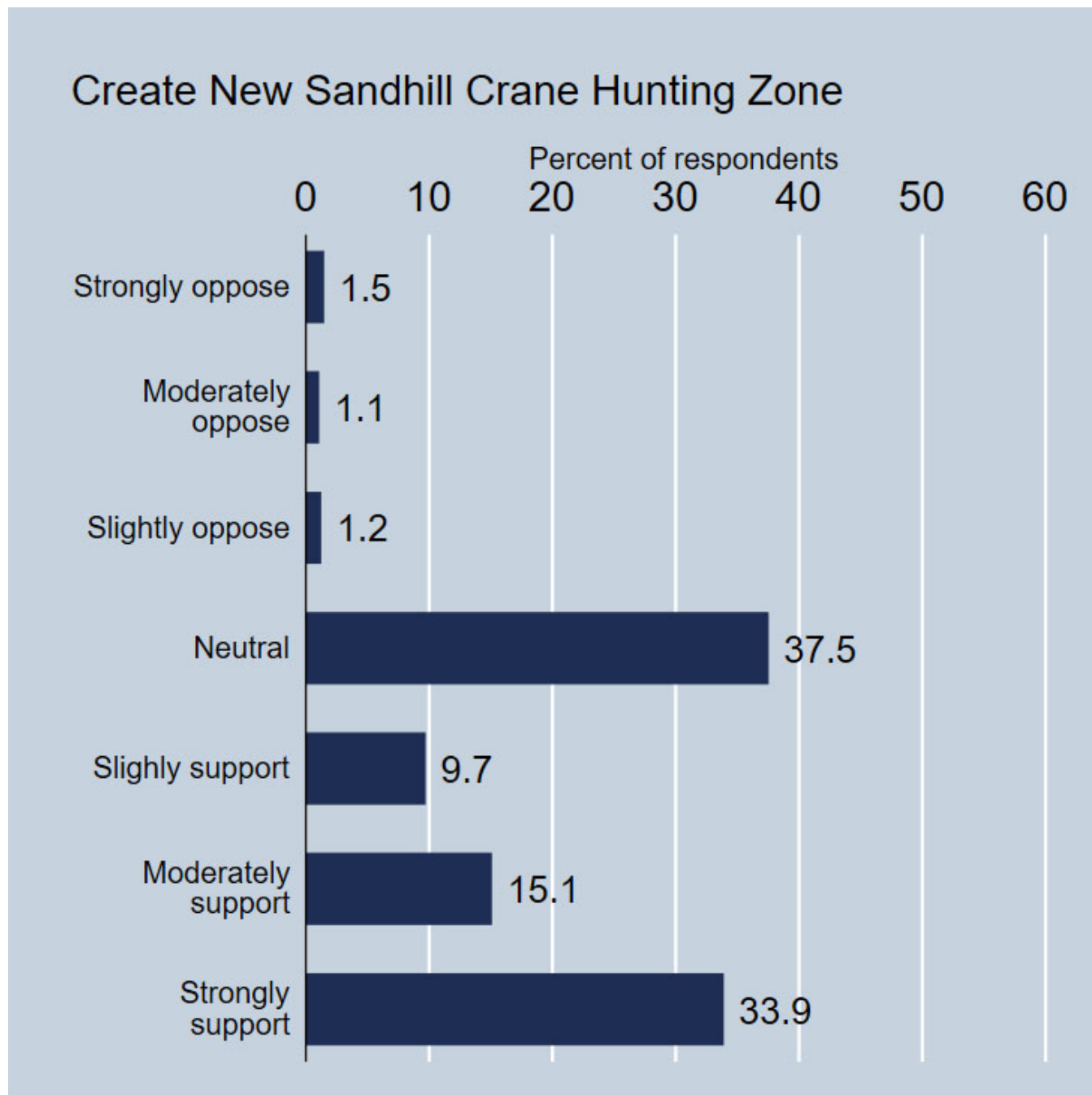
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Figure 2. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for expanding the current Sandhill crane hunting zone



Results are provisional and subject to revision

Figure 3. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for creating a new Sandhill crane hunting zone



Results are provisional and subject to revision

Attitudes toward Teal Hunting Opportunity

Early Teal Season

Minnesota does not currently have an early teal hunting season. Waterfowl hunters were asked to indicate their support or opposition to establishing such a season, and their preference for the length of a hypothetical early teal season. A near majority of hunters (47%) indicated support for establishing an early teal season, while 35% opposed. A further 17% expressed neutrality toward the proposition (Table 4 and Figure 4). Commensurate with the percent of hunters that opposed establishing a season, 30% expressed a preferred length of zero days. The smallest percent of hunters expressed preference for the maximum length of a hypothetical season (17%). The remaining hunters split between preferences for a 5-day season (24%) and a 9-day season (28%) (Table 5 and Figure 5).

Table 4. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for establishing a teal hunting season

	Oppose	Neutral	Support	M(SD)
What is your level of <u>support for a special September teal-only season</u> in Minnesota?	35	17	47	4.3 (2.2)

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Table 5. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' preference for length of a potential teal hunting season

	0 Days	5 Days	9 Days	16 Days
If a special September teal-only season is created, how many days should it be?	30	24	28	17

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- Values are rounded to the nearest percent and rows may sum between 99 and 101

Bonus teal Harvest

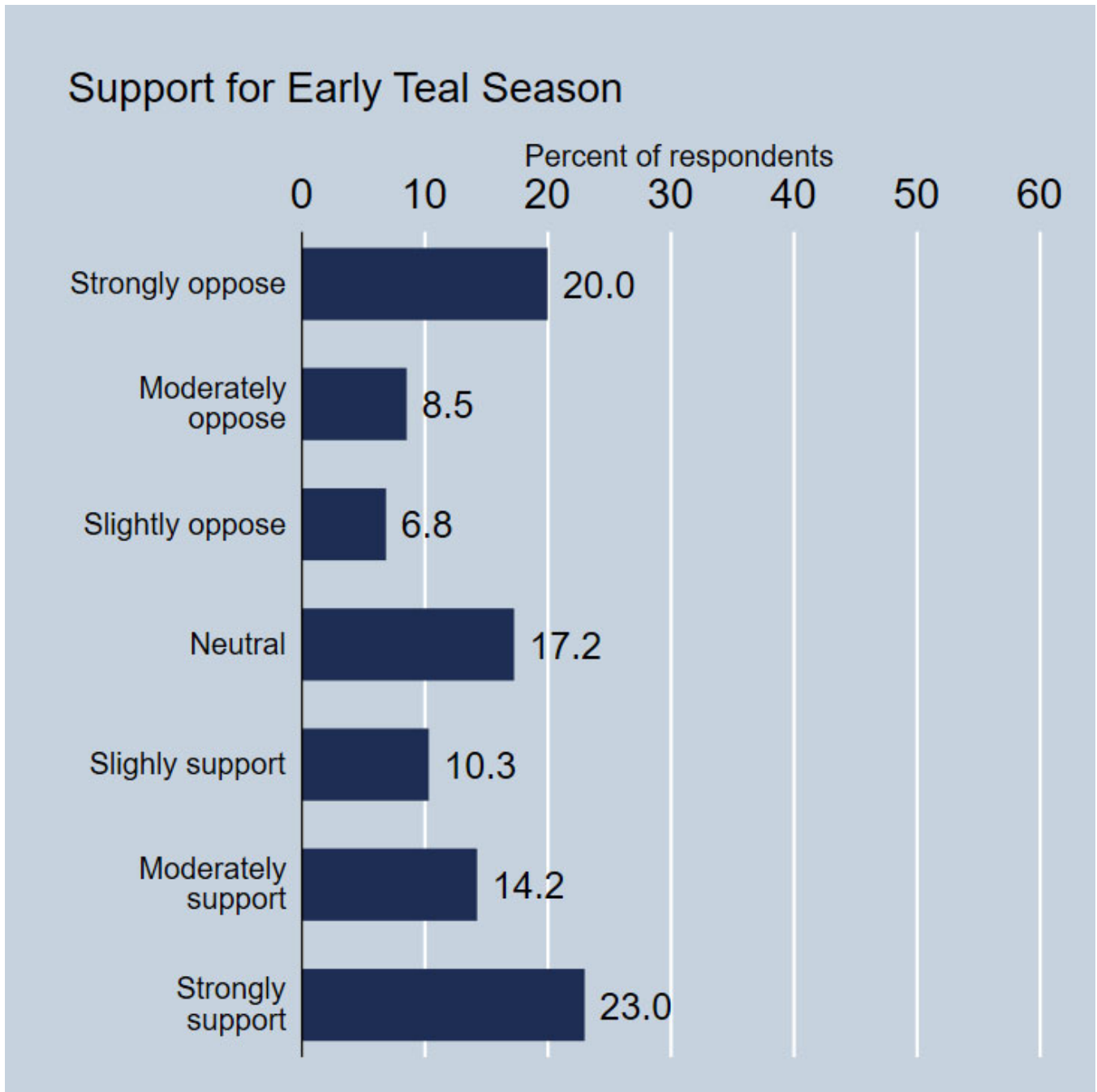
If not holding an early teal season, states are allowed to increase the blue-winged teal bag limit for the first 16 days of the regular waterfowl hunting season under federal waterfowl management rules. Hunters were supportive of this proposition in Minnesota. More than 60% supported the idea of allowing increased harvest of blue-winged teal during the early part of the regular waterfowl hunting season (Table 6 and Figure 6).

Table 6. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for adding a 2 blue-winged teal bonus

	Oppose	Neutral	Support	M(SD)
What is your level of support for 2 blue-winged teal bonus bag limit during the first 16 days of the regular duck season in Minnesota?	16	23	61	5.0 (1.8)

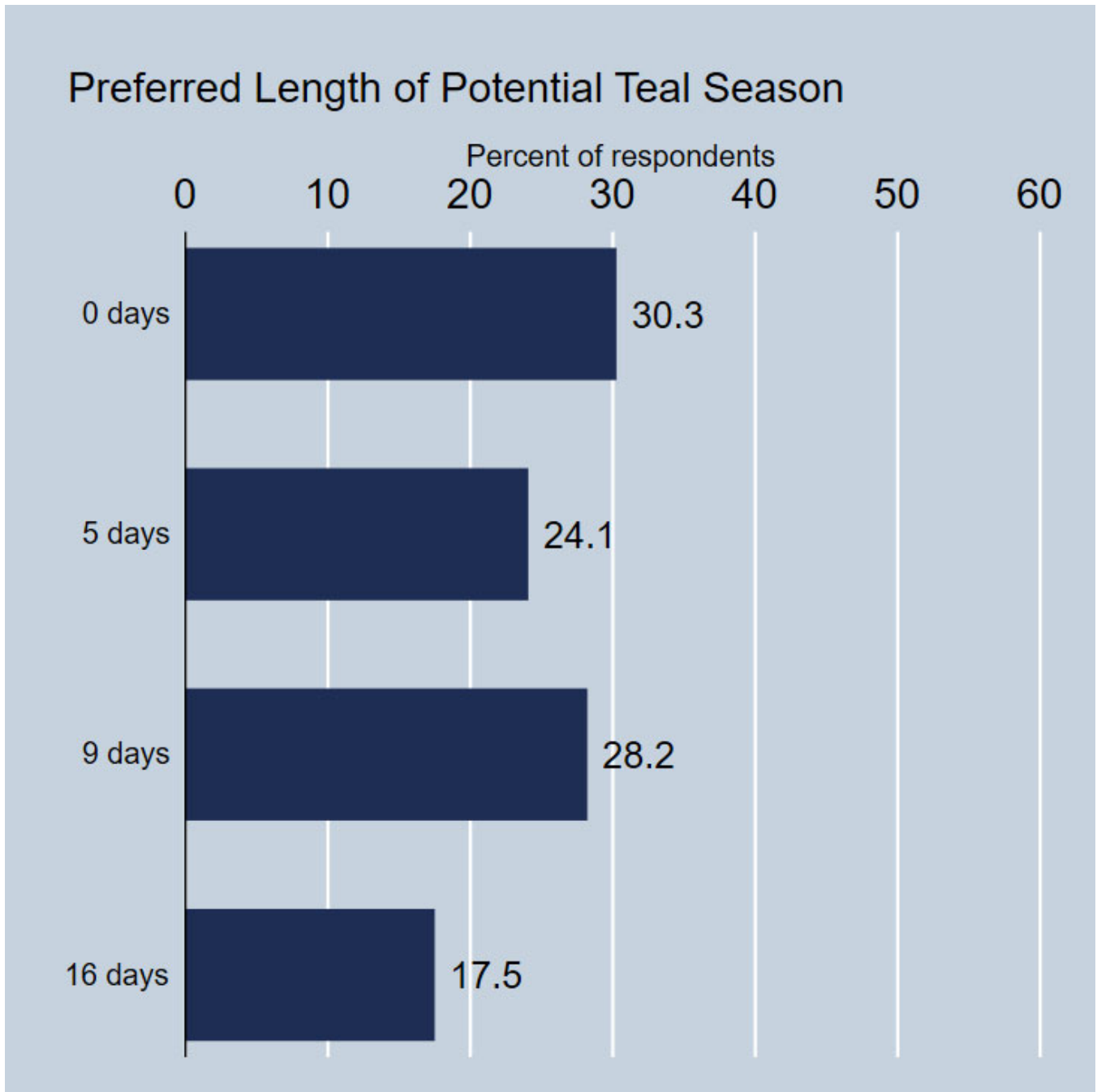
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Figure 4. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for establishing an early teal season



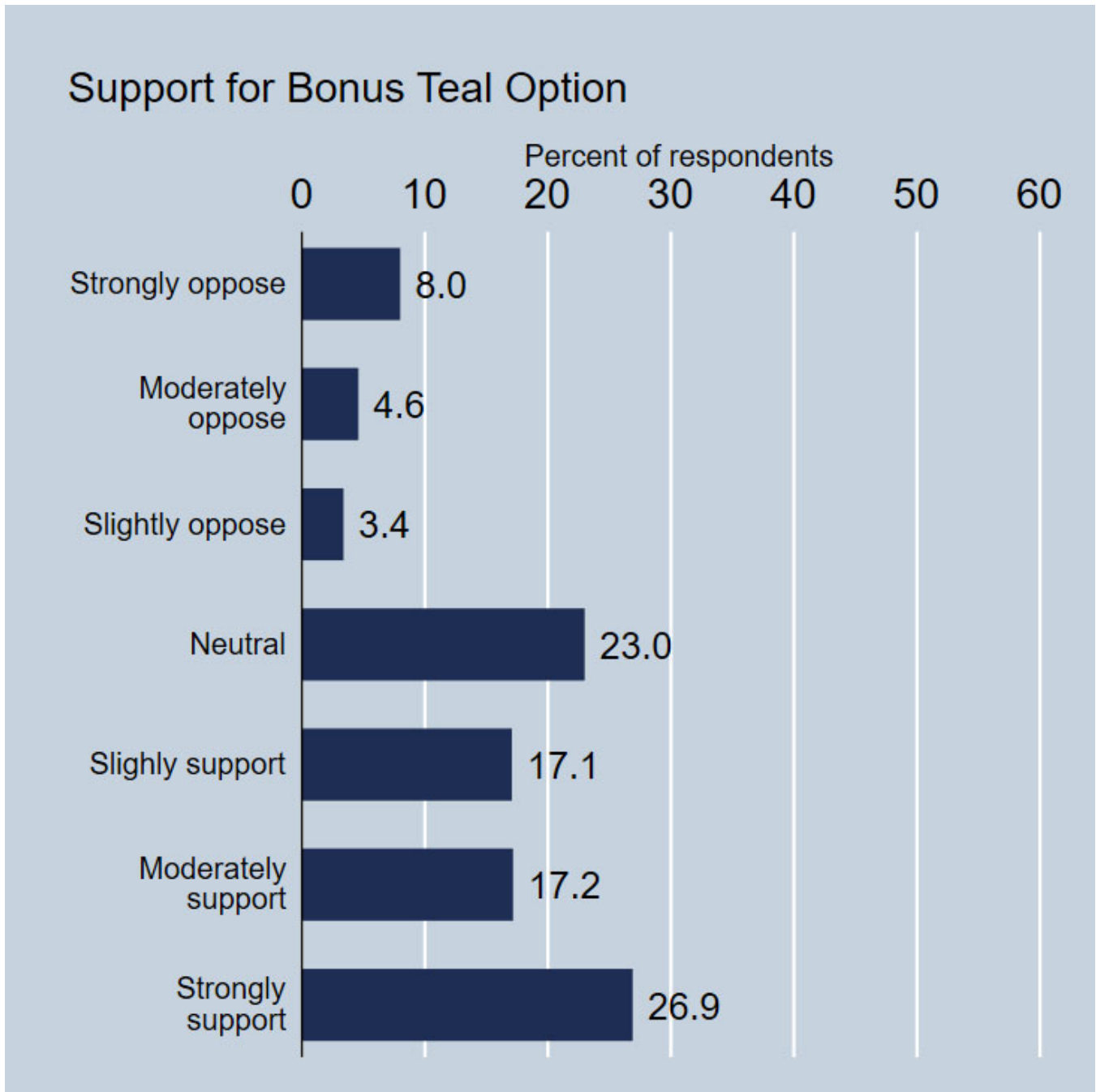
Results are provisional and subject to revision

Figure 5. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' preference for length of a potential early teal season



Results are provisional and subject to revision

Figure 6. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for adding a 2 blue-winged teal bonus



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Attitudes toward Waterfowl Hunting Season Dates and Zones

Opening Day Preference

Hunters indicated their preference for three waterfowl season opening day alternatives; the Saturday nearest September 24th, the Saturday nearest October 1st, and no preference. A clear majority (57%) preferred the option for the Saturday nearest September 24th. Around a third (30%) preferred the historic opening date of the Saturday nearest October 1st, and 13% had no preference (Table 7 and Figure 7).

Table 7. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for adding a 2 blue-winged teal bonus

	Saturday nearest September 24 th	Saturday nearest October 1 st	No preference
Date preference	57	30	13

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Season Split Preference

Waterfowl hunters were asked to indicate the zone where season dates are the most important to them (Table 9), and their preferred season split. Hunters indicating that the North zone was most important to them expressed a preference for no split (79%). Hunters in the Central zone were more split about the season split with 37% preferring no split, and 42% preferring a short split. South zone hunters expressed a preference for a longer split at 48% (Table 9).

Table 8. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' most important zone, with respect to the timing of the season opener

	North	Central	South	No preference
In which area of the state is the timing of open waterfowl hunting and season dates most important to you?	29	42	23	7

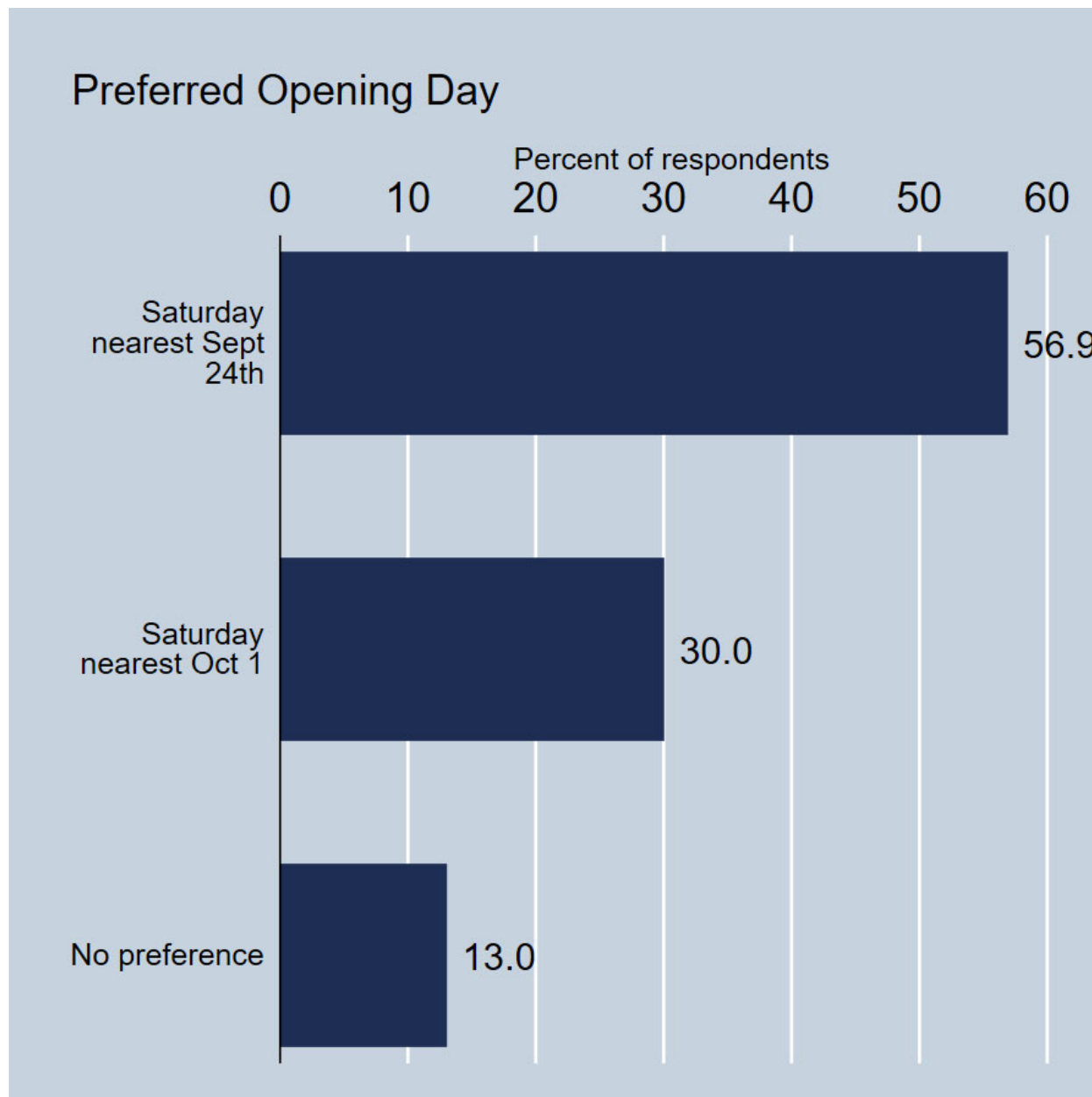
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Table 9. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' preference for season dates

What is your preference for season dates in 2021?	Sept 25-Nov 23	Sept 25-Oct 3, Oct 9-Nov 28	Sept 25-Oct 3, Oct 16-Dec 5	No preference
North zone hunters	79	11	7	4
Central zone hunters	37	43	9	10
South zone hunters	25	16	48	11
Hunters with no preference	21	14	8	58

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Figure 7. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for adding a 2 blue-winged teal bonus



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Attitude toward Youth Waterfowl Weekend

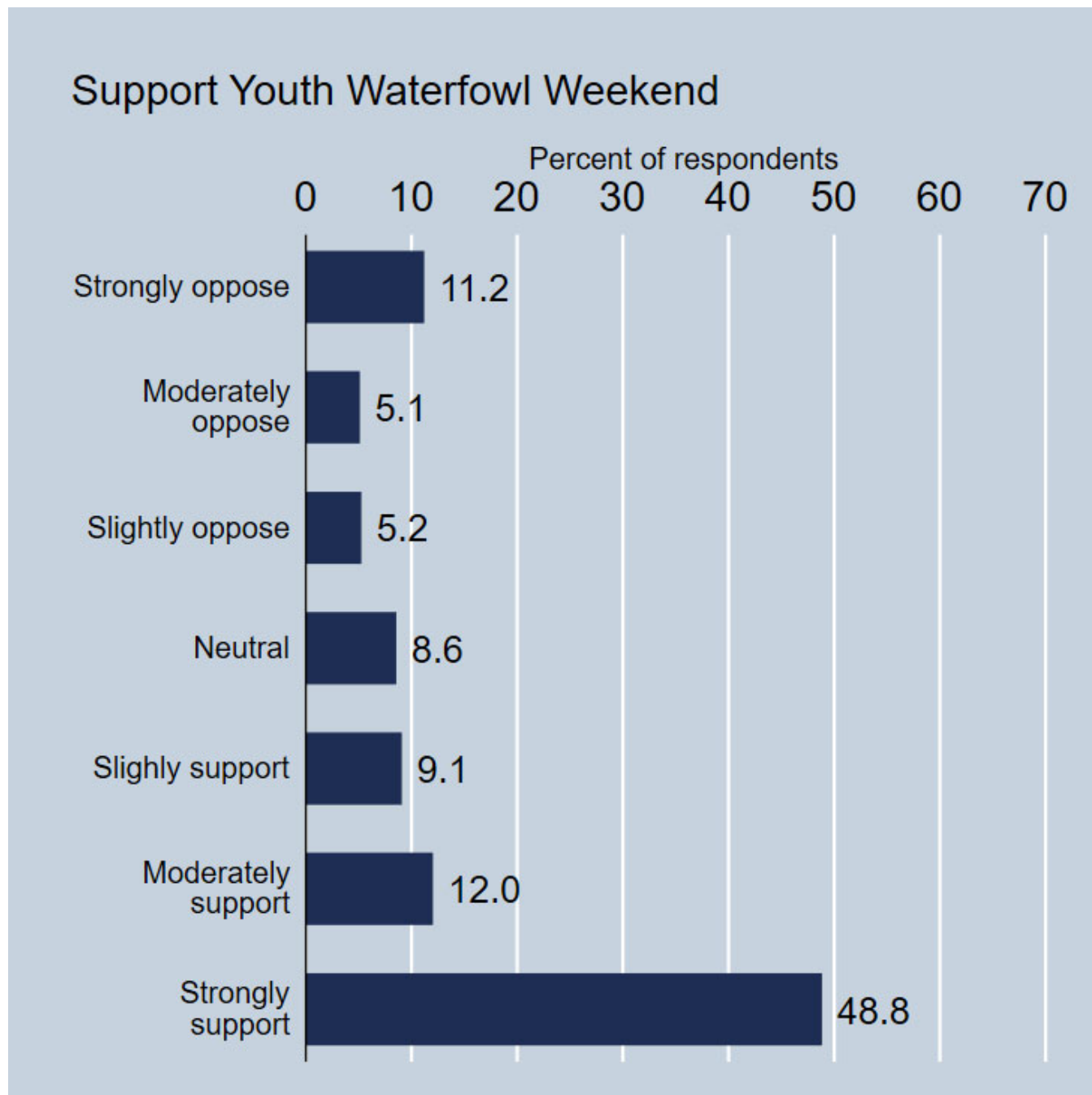
Minnesota currently holds a youth waterfowl hunting weekend prior to the regular waterfowl hunting season. Hunters' were asked to indicate their support or opposition to this season. The vast majority of hunters demonstrated support for holding the youth waterfowl hunting weekend (70%). A further 20% of hunter opposed the season, and 9% were neutral (Table 10 and Figure 8).

Table 10. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for youth waterfowl weekend

	Oppose	Neutral	Support	M(SD)
Do you support or oppose the concept of Youth Waterfowl Hunting Weekend?	22	9	70	5.3 (2.1)

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Figure 8. Minnesota waterfowl hunters' support for youth waterfowl weekend



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