

Increasing Cultural Acceptance for Hunting and Target Shooting

Determining why Americans' Attitudes Toward Hunting and
Target Shooting have Declined.

FULL REPORT



Conducted by Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation
and Responsive Management under
Multistate Conservation Grant F24AP00305

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and Target Shooting have Declined.**

2024 - 2025

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Note: This is the full report. An Executive Summary and other materials are available at www.OutdoorStewards.org

This project was funded by Multistate Conservation Grant F24AP00305, a grant awarded from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration fund, and jointly managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.



EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

This project was conducted by the Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation (OSCF) and Responsive Management under Multistate Conservation Grant F24AP00305 to determine the reasons for recent declines in Americans' approval of hunting and target shooting.

Since 1995, Responsive Management, with help from organizations like Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation, has tracked public opinion on the two activities through periodic trend surveys. **The latest national trend survey found statistically significant declines in the percentages of residents who said they approved of the activities since 2021. Specifically, overall approval of legal hunting declined from 80.8% in 2021 to 75.7% in 2024 (a drop of 12,916,901 U.S. residents), while approval of legal recreational shooting went from 81.0% to 76.4% over the same period (a drop of 11,650,538 U.S. residents).** Both decreases are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

Diminishing public approval of hunting is also showing up on the state level, with recent surveys of residents in Arizona, Maine, Pennsylvania, and Washington echoing the national approval trends.

Demographic analyses also reveal troubling undercurrents in the approval trends. For example, several groups that have traditionally hunted and supported hunting in high numbers, such as rural residents, West and Midwest Region residents, males, and White residents, showed higher declines in approval than their demographic counterparts in recent years. Additionally, approval of hunting among Hispanic/Latino Americans decreased substantially. As this group had a relatively low approval percentage to begin with, and Hispanic residents are one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population, this finding marks a particular area of concern. Regarding the trend in approval of sport shooting since 2021, approval declined the most among young adults, rural residents, and males.

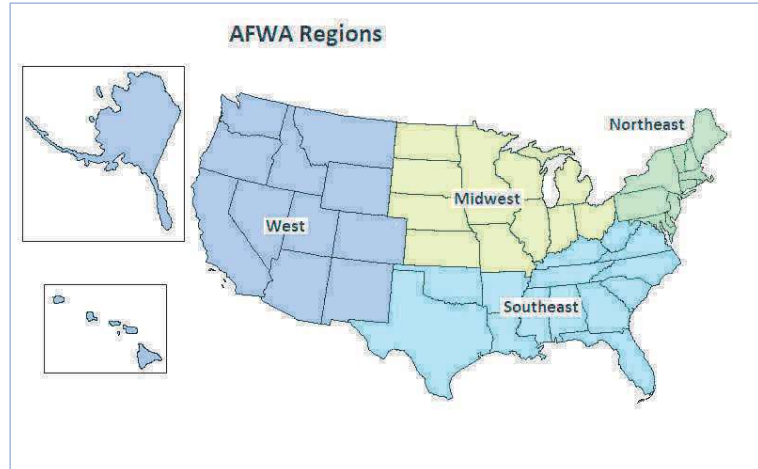
Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation is leading the effort to maintain and increase cultural acceptance for hunting and target shooting. Participation in hunting and target shooting depends first and foremost on reliable cultural support, and hunters and target shooters are key funding sources for state fish and wildlife agencies, the conservation of wildlife and their habitat, and the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities. The results from this project are intended to help the community reinforce cultural support for hunting and target shooting through public messaging and outreach campaigns based on the latest data reflective of Americans' attitudes, opinions, and concerns. For the purposes of this report, the terms 'Sport Shooting' and 'Target Shooting' are interchangeable.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this project included three major components:

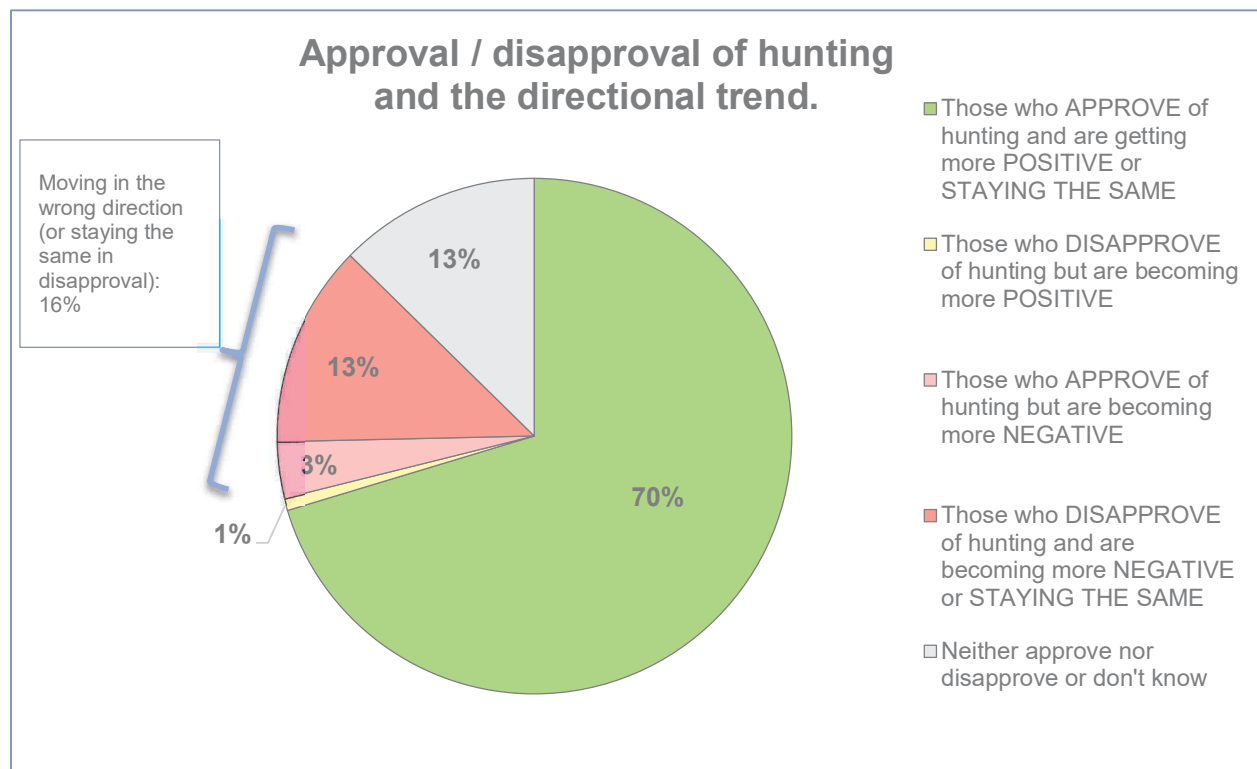
1. A research review entailing analysis and crosstabulations of existing survey data to identify where approval is in the most decline to help identify communities for enhanced messaging.

2. A series of four focus groups with general population U.S. residents, representing each of the four Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) regions (shown in the map at right).
3. A scientific, probability-based multimodal survey of the U.S. general population. Responsive Management obtained 2,065 completed survey questionnaires, including 1,555 among the general population and an oversample of 510 completed questionnaires from people whose opinion of hunting and/or target shooting has become more negative in the past few years. (The survey was stratified to obtain at least 500 completed surveys within each of the four AFWA regions.)



While this project focused specifically on the reasons driving declines in approval of hunting and target shooting, it is worth keeping in mind that most Americans today continue to approve of the two activities. However, attitudes are not fixed: notable percentages of people say they are becoming either more positive or more negative in their views of the two activities. Survey respondents were asked whether their opinion of hunting and sport shooting has become more positive, more negative, or stayed about the same over the past few years. Paired with the data on their current level of approval or disapproval, the results show the relative size of the segments moving in either direction.

Currently, 16% of Americans are negative or are becoming more negative in their opinion of hunting: this includes both people who currently approve of hunting but are becoming more negative (3%) and people who currently disapprove and are becoming even more negative or are just staying the same in their disapproval (13%) (see graph on the following page).



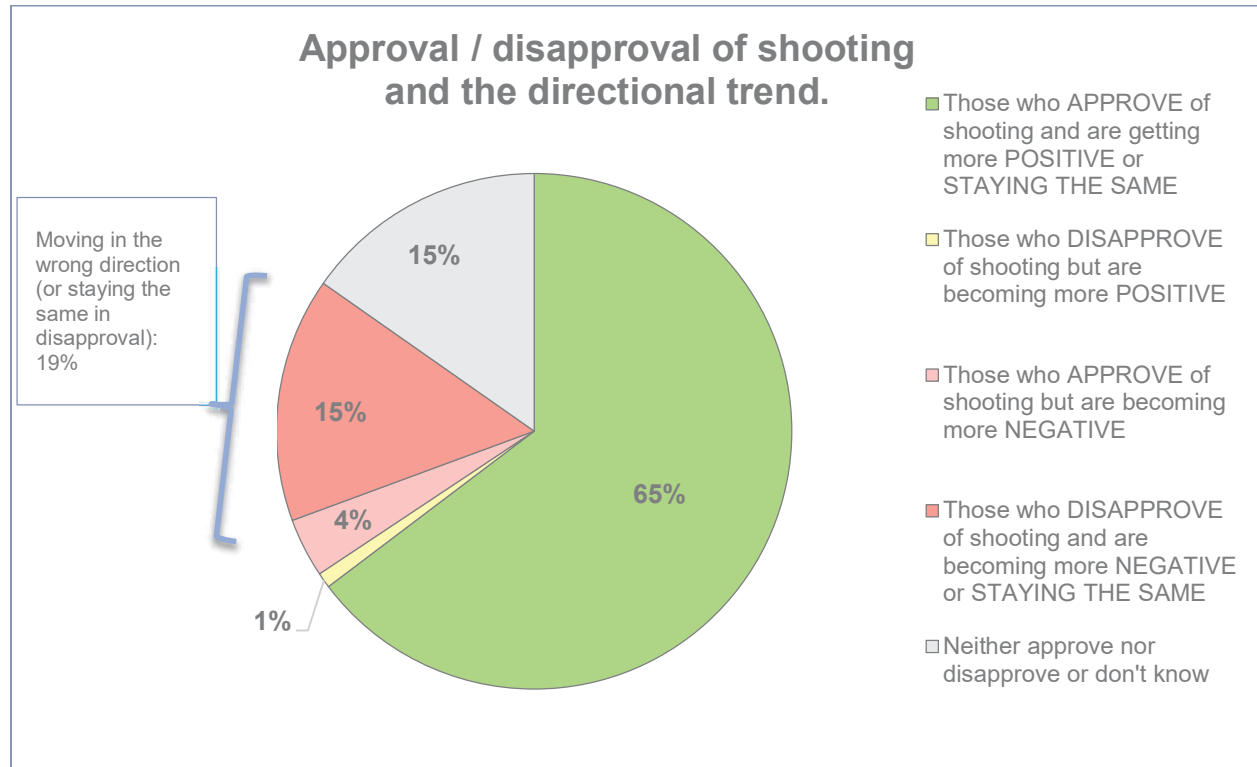
Those who *currently approve* of hunting but are becoming *more negative* are:

- More male than female, and skew to the older age brackets.
- Less likely than the general population to have children in the household.
- Less likely than the general population to live in a small city or town (they are more urban/suburban *and* more rural).
- About half Democratic and a third Republican (the rest being not aligned).
- About the same ethnically and educationally as the general population.

Those who *currently disapprove* of hunting and are becoming *more negative* (or are staying the same) are:

- Much more female than male.
- More likely to Black or Hispanic than the general population.
- Much more Democratic than Republican.
- About the same in age, having children in the household, the residential area in which they live, and in education.

Meanwhile, 19% of Americans are negative or becoming more negative in their opinion of target shooting. This segment includes 4% who currently approve of sport shooting but are becoming more negative and 15% who currently disapprove and are getting more negative or staying the same in their disapproval.



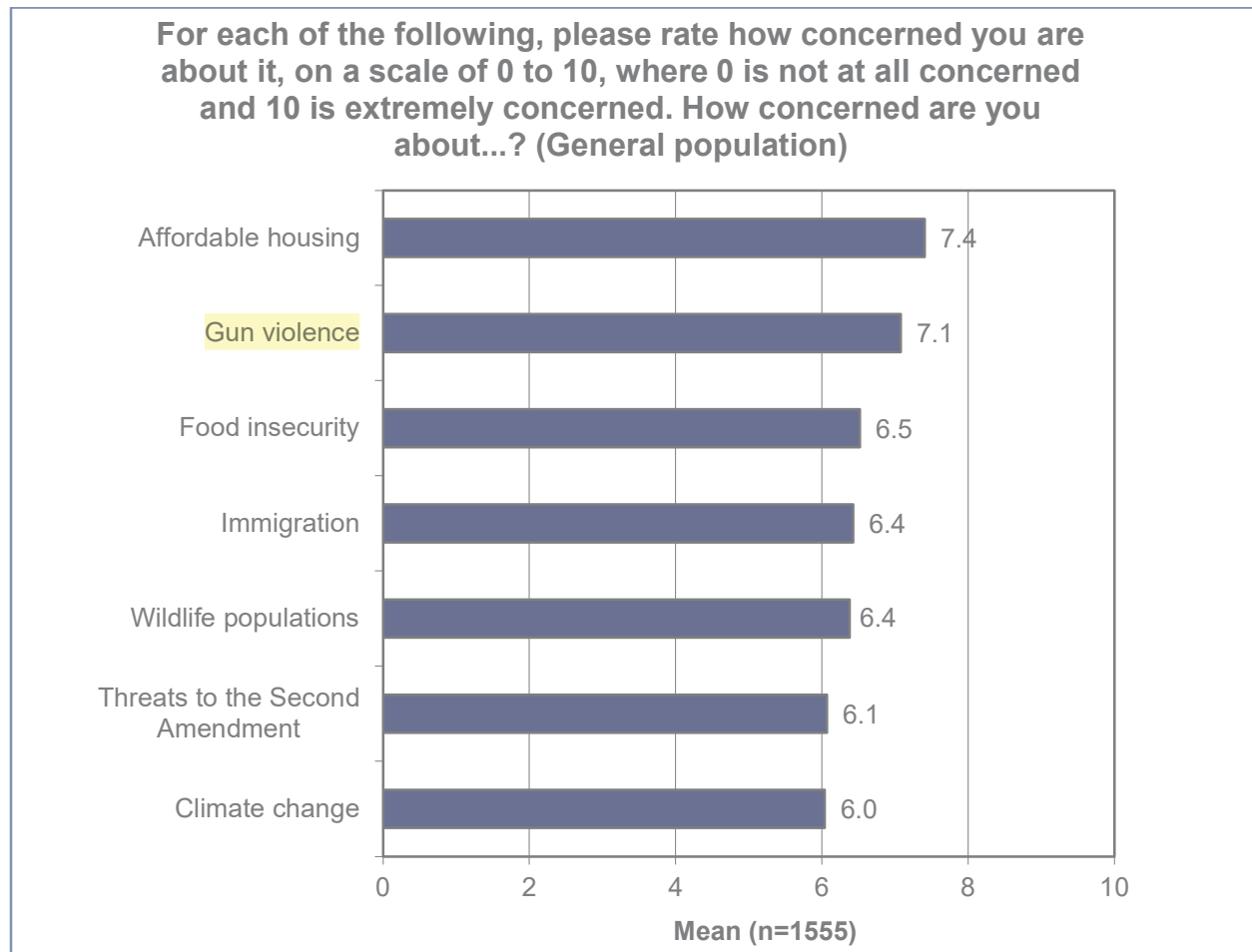
Those who *currently approve* of target shooting but are becoming *more negative* are:

- Much older than the general population.
- Much less likely to have children in their household compared to the general population.
- Much more likely to be Black or Hispanic than the general population.
- Much less likely to live in a large urban area but more likely to live in a small city or town (they are about the same regarding suburban or rural residence).
- Much more educated than the general population.
- About three quarters Democratic but only about an eighth Republican.
- About the same in gender.

Finally, those who *currently disapprove* of shooting and are becoming *more negative* (or are staying the same) are:

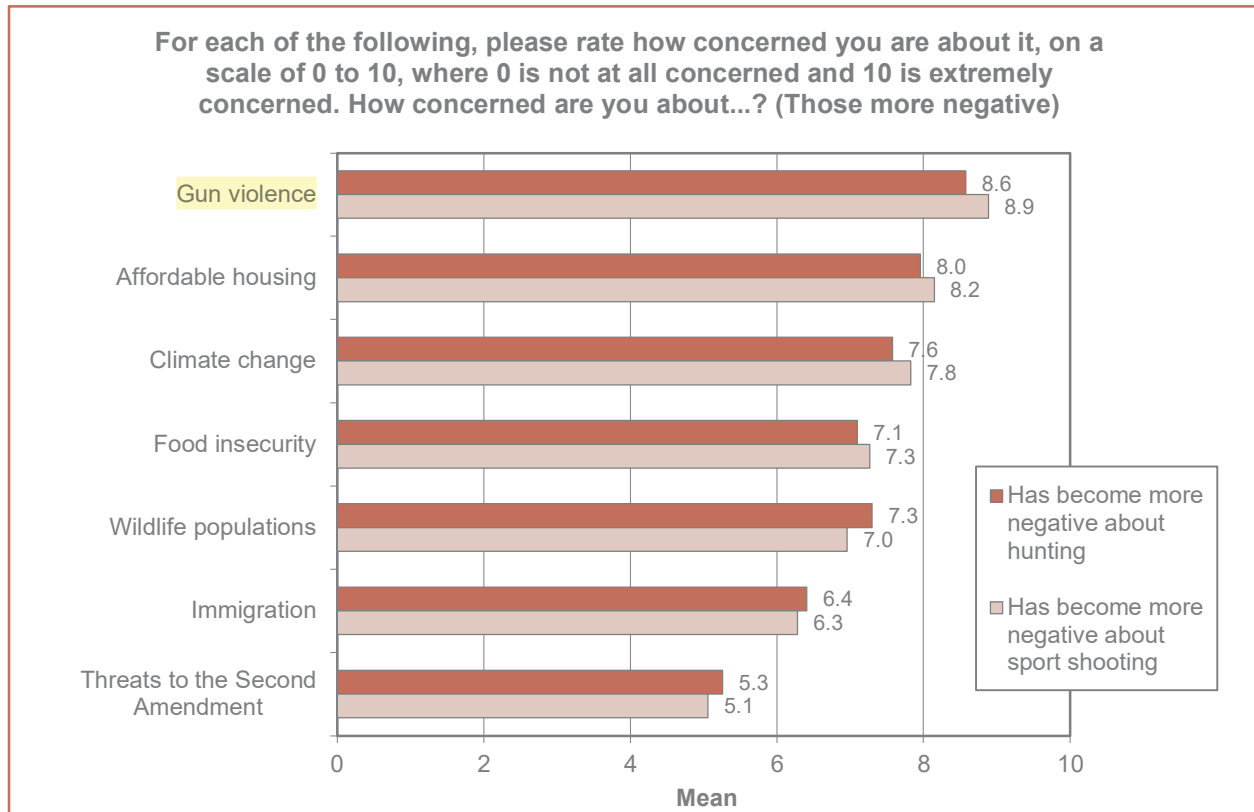
- Much more female than male (by about 3 to 1).
- Much more Black and Hispanic than the general population.
- Much more likely to be urban or suburban and less likely to live in a small city or town, compared to the general population (they are about the same regarding rural living).
- About half Democratic and a fifth Republican.
- About the same in age, in having children in the household, and educationally.

Gun violence is a general issue of concern for many Americans. Before looking specifically at hunting and target shooting, the survey examined concern about general social issues affecting the country. Here, gun violence ranked second in the overall list—behind only affordable housing, but ahead of food insecurity, immigration, wildlife populations, threats to the Second Amendment, and climate change.



This concern was also observed in the focus groups, where a number of participants mentioned uneasiness with firearms or worries about gun violence when describing their feelings about hunting and target shooting. Given the relative prevalence of shootings and other crimes involving guns in American society today, it is not unreasonable to expect that firearm-related concerns might also color perceptions of activities that involve firearms, namely hunting and target shooting.

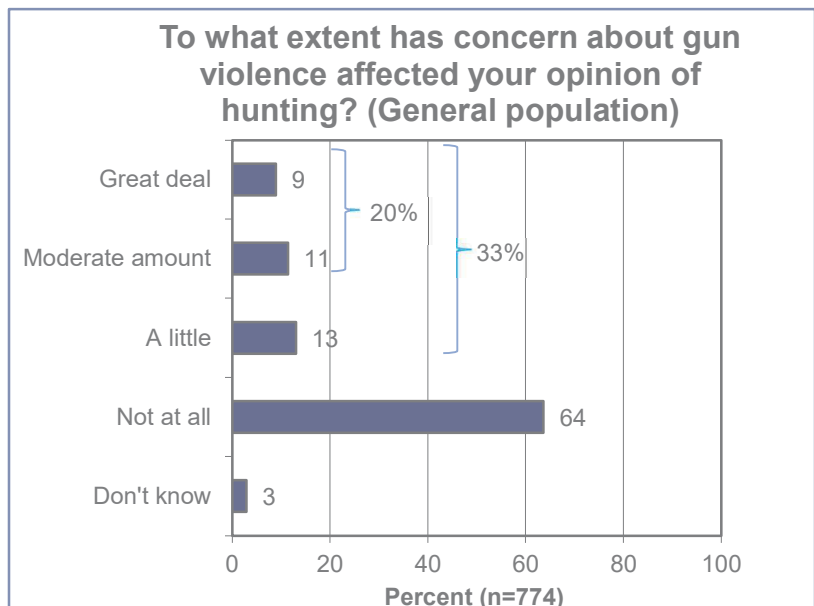
Among the segment of the public who have become more negative about hunting and/or target shooting in recent years, gun violence is an even greater concern, being the top issue among the seven about which the survey asked.



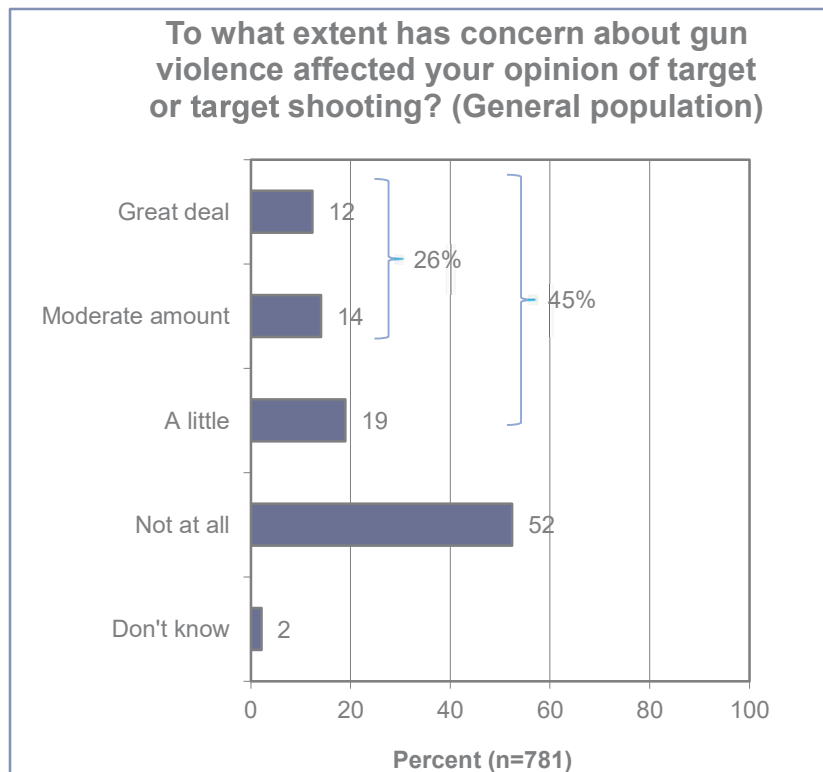
Concern about gun violence strongly influences approval of hunting and target shooting.

A substantial percentage of Americans have had their opinion on hunting affected by gun violence: 20% say that gun violence has affected their opinion of hunting a *great deal* or a *moderate amount*. Furthermore, this 20% of the general population are more likely than *any other demographic or attitudinal group* to have become more negative about hunting and target shooting in recent years.

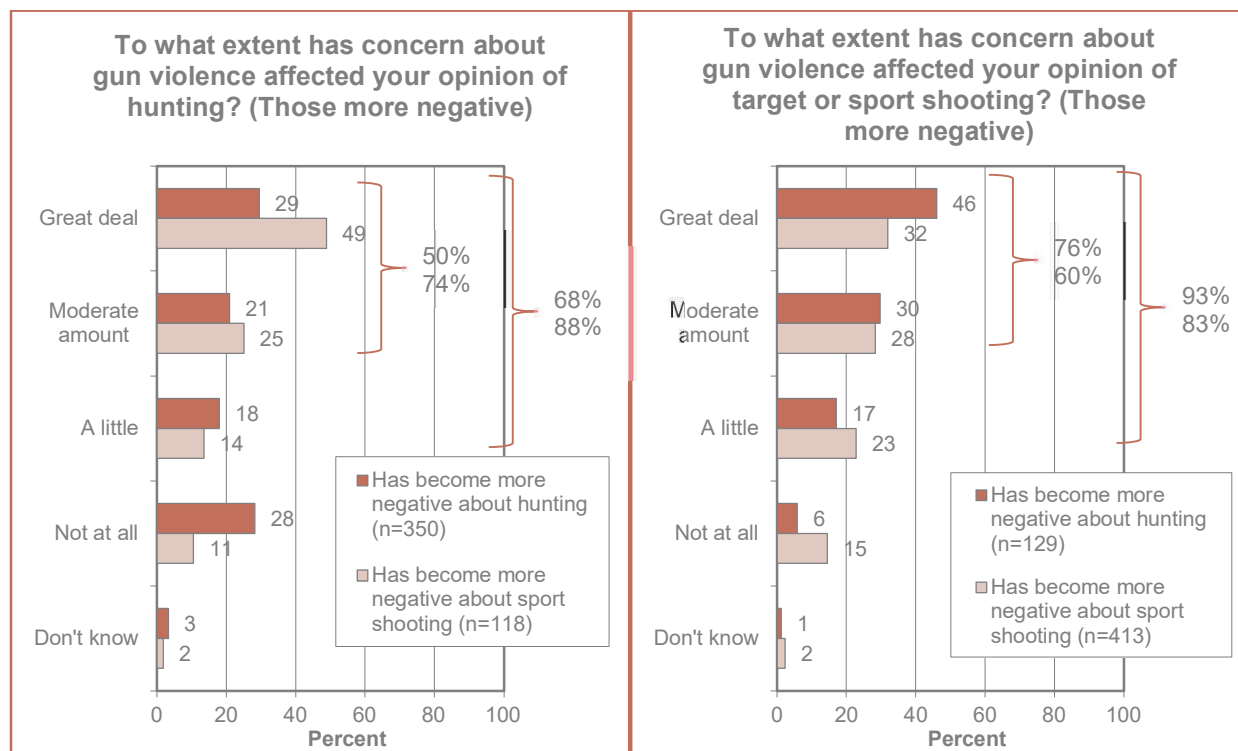
Adding in those whose opinion has been affected *a little*, 33% of Americans have had their opinion of hunting affected to some degree by gun violence.



Likewise, a substantial percentage of Americans have had their opinion on sport shooting affected by gun violence. Overall, 26% say that gun violence has affected their opinion a *great deal* or a *moderate amount*, and 45% of Americans have had their opinion of target shooting affected to some degree by gun violence.



Among Americans whose opinions of hunting and/or target shooting have become more negative over the past few years, the impact of gun violence on their attitudes toward the two activities is even greater, as shown in the graph below.



Disagreement (55%) exceeds agreement (31%) that mass shootings in the United States have negatively affected opinion of recreational activities that involve the use of firearms.

However, 31% is not an insubstantial percentage, especially when considered in light of the extent to which approval of hunting and target shooting has declined in recent years. This finding again reinforces the prominence of gun violence as a factor affecting cultural support for hunting and target shooting.

Whether someone personally knows a hunter and/or sport shooter is a major influence in how they feel about the two activities. Consistent with past research,¹ people who personally know a hunter or target shooter are more likely to approve of the activities, just as people who do *not* know one of these people are more likely to disapprove of the activities. The same tendency holds true for personal experience with hunting, sport shooting, and general use of firearms (more personal experience correlates with greater approval, and vice versa). The social dimension of trust based on familiarity and personal experience cannot be overemphasized. On this point, it is worth keeping in mind that there are many more sport shooters and firearm owners than hunters in the United States (according to the 2022 *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, there are 46.2 million target shooters in the U.S., compared to 14.4 million hunters). As hunting participation continues to decline, the average American will be more likely to personally know a target shooter (or firearm owner) than someone who hunts.

The most common reasons that opinions on hunting have become more negative are people's feelings that animals should not be killed and that hunting should not be done for recreation or for sport. Other important reasons include the perception that hunting worsens problems with firearms, that hunters poach or behave recklessly, and the belief that hunting causes species to become endangered.

The most common reason that opinions on target shooting have become more negative in the past few years is the perception that firearms are linked to violence—by far the top reason.

Consistent with past guidance² regarding the importance of talking about hunting as a “legal, regulated” activity, hunting must be presented as safe and regulated. To break the association of hunting with gun violence, the R3 community must emphasize the aspects of hunting that relate to safety and regulation. This is especially important in “outward facing” materials designed for public consumption among non-hunters. Qualitative analyses of both the focus group comments and responses to open-ended survey questions suggest that disapproval of hunting could be lessened if people are convinced that hunters do not behave recklessly or dangerously (again, the benefit of personally knowing a hunter or hearing from someone who does is hugely impactful in this regard in terms of correcting misperceptions).

Photos of hunters posing with harvested game, even when done respectfully, can turn people against hunting. The survey presented a dozen negative statements about hunting to see which ones have the most agreement among the general public (i.e., which ones are the most problematic for the hunting community). The statement with the most agreement among general population Americans is, “Posting a photo of an animal that has been hunted does not show respect for wildlife”: 40% of Americans *strongly* or *moderately* agree with this. Among people who have become more negative about hunting in recent years, the percentage in agreement with the statement is 77%.

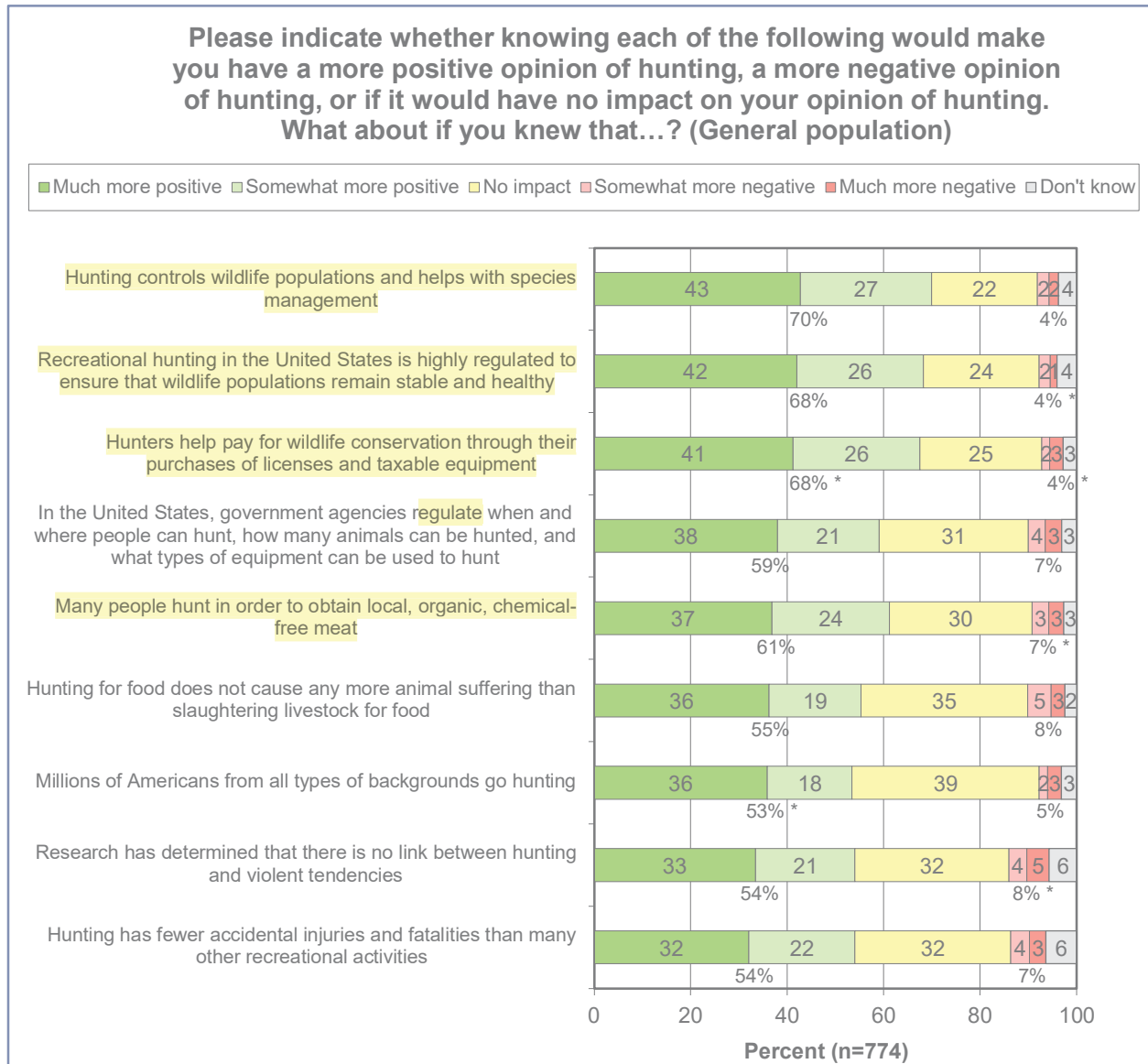
The finding suggests a conundrum: many hunters are fond of taking “trophy” photos of the animals they hunt, yet much of the non-hunting public disapproves of such photos.

Some guidance in the hunting community has focused on ways to make these images more palatable or inoffensive, such as by avoiding showing blood and eschewing “dominating” poses or gestures. The research for this project suggests that even these careful considerations may not matter to many non-hunters. The mere posting of the photo—*any* trophy photo—is likely to increase feelings of opposition to hunting.

An illustrative finding comes from one of the hunting focus groups: the moderator showed participants an image of a female hunter posing with a harvested turkey; the photo was deliberately chosen to be as inoffensive as possible (there were no signs of blood anywhere on the animal, the hunter was smiling, and the image consisted largely of a visually appealing nature scene). The reaction to the image was mostly (but not completely) negative. Some stated that this is exactly why they do not like hunting. One person stated that they do not take a “selfie” when they buy a turkey at a grocery store. The implication is that it is not enough that photos of hunters with harvested animals avoid showing blood or suggesting an overly dominionistic view of wildlife—again, for some people, *any* photo of a hunter with a dead animal is offensive and unnecessary, and this may be a direct cause of their dislike of hunting.

Messaging to increase cultural support for hunting should especially focus on correcting two key misperceptions: that wildlife does best when it is left alone, and that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some wildlife species to become endangered. These incorrect statements had relatively high levels of agreement among general population Americans, with 37% in agreement with each one. (More worryingly, about three quarters of those who have become more negative about hunting in recent years agree with the two statements.) Outreach directed at non-hunters should communicate that regulated hunting is a key form of wildlife management (such as to prevent or mitigate the overpopulation of and overbrowsing by deer in many areas) and that hunting is strictly regulated by government agencies specifically to ensure the health and sustainability of wildlife populations.

Other messaging concepts to increase approval of hunting should highlight the role of hunting in conservation and wildlife management. Among general population U.S. residents, the concepts most likely to increase positive opinions toward hunting are that hunting controls wildlife populations and helps with management, that recreational hunting is regulated to ensure wildlife populations are not harmed, and that hunters help pay for conservation.



* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

Residents who have become more negative about hunting in recent years, meanwhile, place a high degree of importance on the regulated aspects of hunting, especially insofar as regulations set forth by government agencies help to ensure the health and sustainability of wildlife populations (see graph on the following page).

Please indicate whether knowing each of the following would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting. What about if you knew that...? (Has become more negative about hunting)

■ Much more positive ■ Somewhat more positive ■ No impact ■ Somewhat more negative ■ Much more negative □ Don't know



* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

Many Americans feel that target shooting is a potentially unsafe activity, and there is also concern about the widespread availability of firearms in the United States. Among eight negative statements about target shooting presented to survey respondents, three had a majority of Americans in agreement: that there are better and safer recreational activities than shooting a gun, that easy access to guns is why the country has a gun violence problem, and that target shooting is an expensive hobby (this last statement breaks from the safety theme). The findings related to safety and gun violence generally mirror results from the focus groups, in which a number of participants fixated on the safety aspects of target and sport shooting (some people recommended greater safety certification measures for firearm owners and target shooters, while others wondered why people engage in potentially unsafe activities involving firearms in the first place).

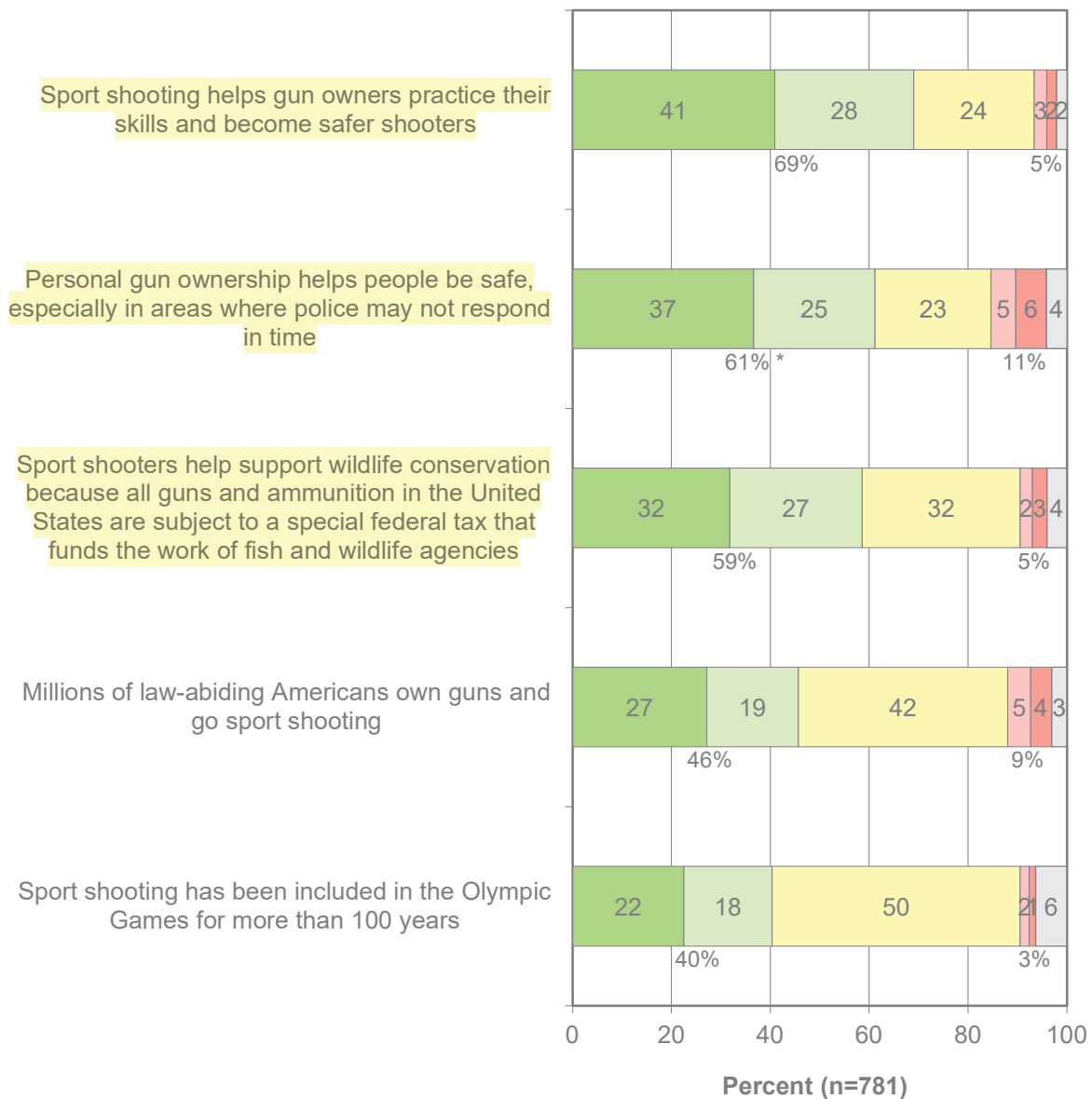
Once again, among the segment of Americans whose opinion of target shooting has become more negative in the past few years, concern about safety and gun violence is even more pronounced. Overwhelming majorities of these residents agree with four statements in the list focusing on safety and firearm-related violence or crime: that there are better and safer recreational activities than shooting a gun (88% agree); that easy access to guns is why the United States has a gun violence problem (87%); that more guns in American society means more crime in general (80%); and that there is a good chance that guns used for legal target shooting purposes are also used to commit crimes (71%).

The messages most likely to have a positive effect on opinions of target/sport shooting emphasize safety and preparedness through proper training, as well as sport shooters' role in helping to fund conservation efforts through their purchases. In the general population resident results, the top-ranked positive messages are that target shooting helps gun owners improve their skills and become safer shooters, that personal gun ownership helps people be safe, and that sport shooters help support wildlife conservation because all guns and ammunition in the United States are subject to a special federal tax that funds the work of fish and wildlife agencies (see graph on the following page).

Among residents who have become more negative about target shooting, the messages deemed most effective at encouraging a positive view of the activity are largely the same, with one exception: the top-ranked message among this group is that personal gun ownership helps people be safe, especially in areas where police may not respond in time (see graph two pages hence).

Please indicate whether knowing each of the following would make you have a more positive opinion of target/sport shooting, a more negative opinion of sport shooting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of target/sport shooting. (General population)

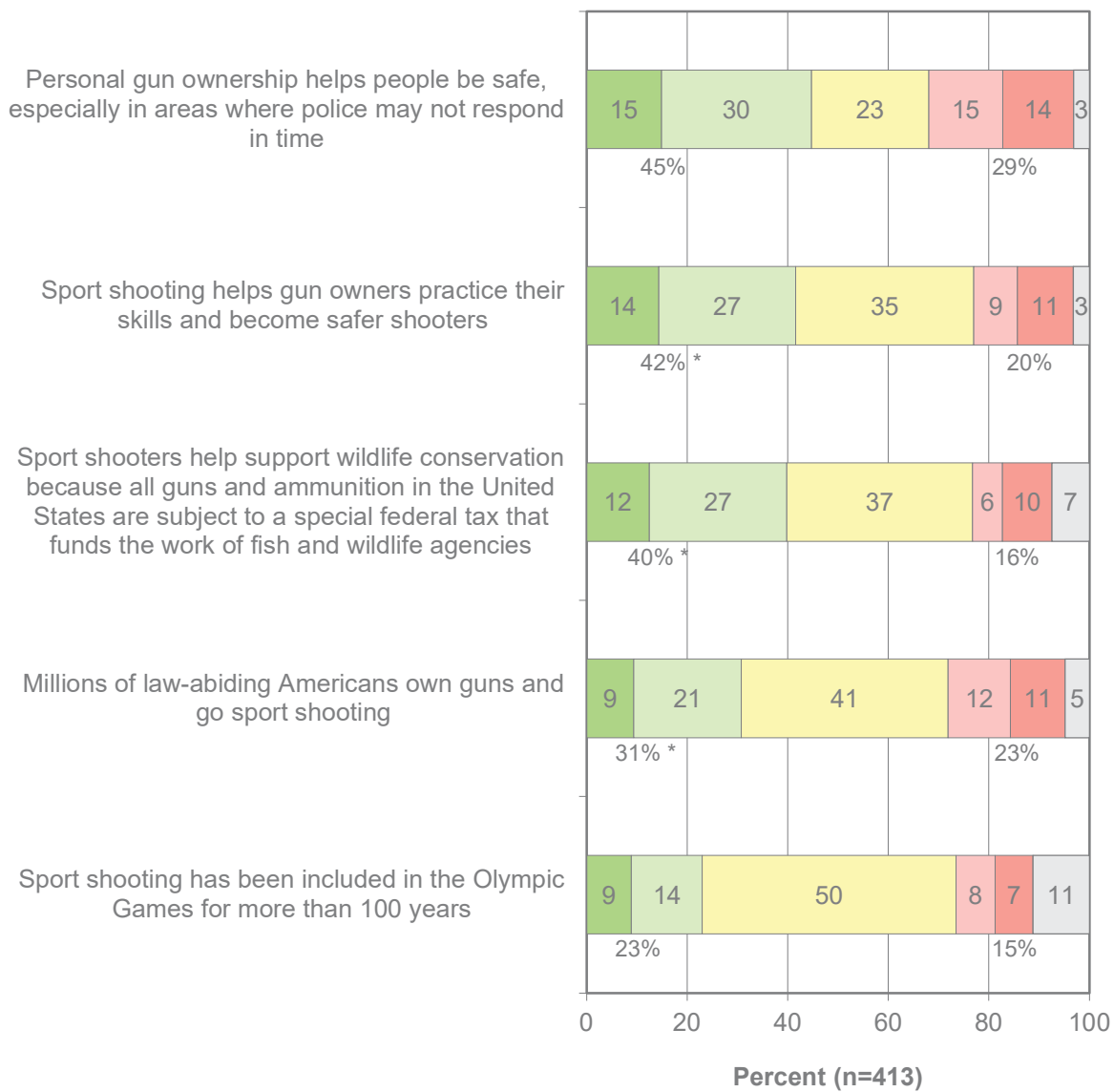
■ Much more positive ■ Somewhat more positive ■ No impact ■ Somewhat more negative ■ Much more negative ■ Don't know



* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

Please indicate whether knowing each of the following would make you have a more positive opinion of target shooting, a more negative opinion of target shooting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of target shooting. What about if you knew that...? (Has become more negative about target shooting)

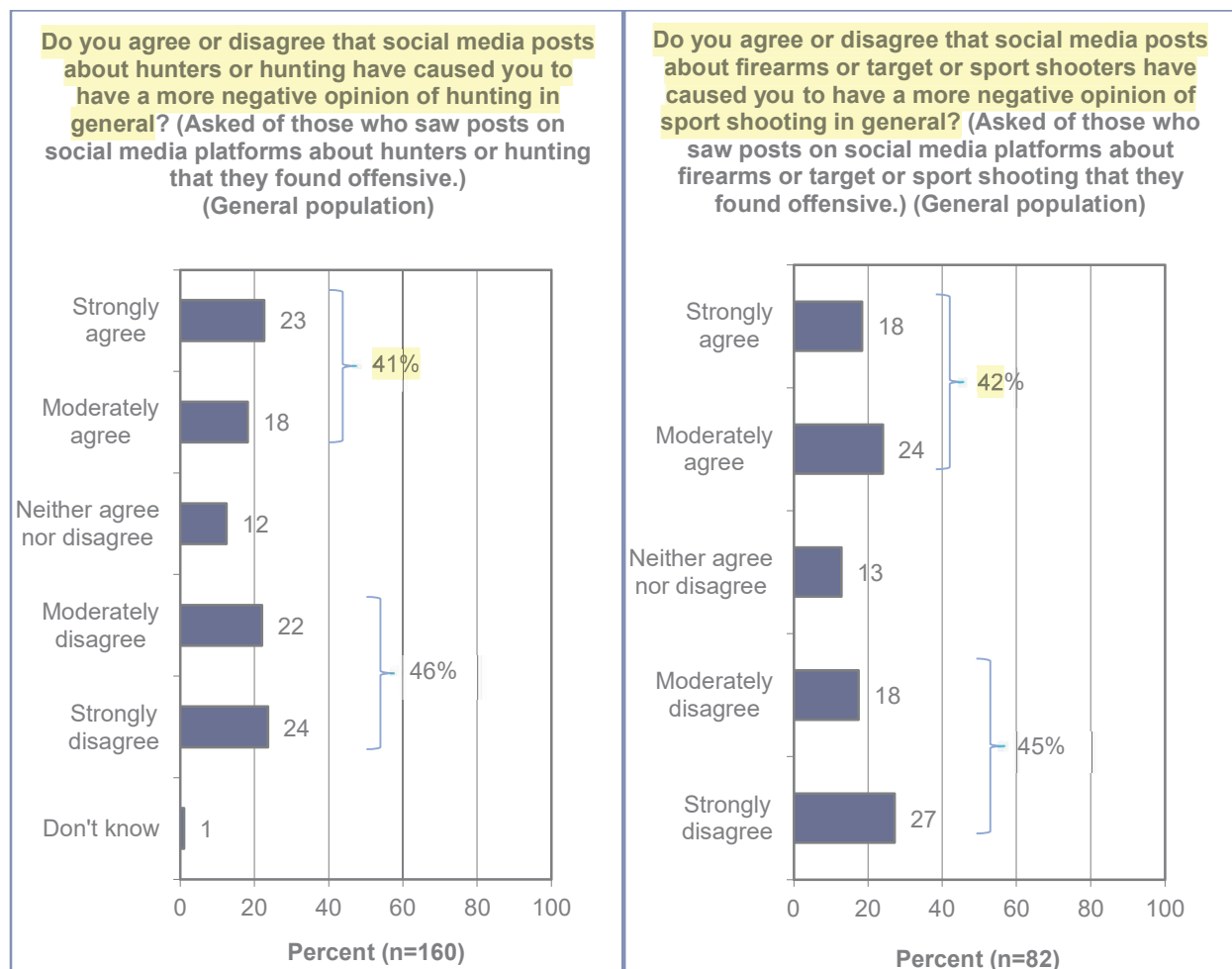
■ Much more positive ■ Somewhat more positive ■ No impact ■ Somewhat more negative ■ Much more negative ■ Don't know



* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

Social media posts about hunting and target shooting that are perceived as offensive may be having an impact on public approval of the two activities. Based on comments made by several focus group participants on this topic, the research team set out to examine the issue quantitatively. Among U.S. general population residents, a quarter (25%) have seen a post about hunting or hunters that they found offensive. A smaller percentage (14%) have seen a post about firearms or target/sport shooters that they found offensive. (Rates are higher among people who have become more negative about the two activities in recent years.) Facebook is by far the most commonly named source of offensive posts, followed by Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X (Keep in mind that Facebook is used by more people than the other platforms).

A little under half of those who saw posts about hunting that they regarded as offensive (41%) agreed that the posts prompted a more negative opinion of hunting in general. The parallel question about firearms or target shooting found similar results: 42% agreed that the posts prompted a more negative opinion of target shooting in general. (Once again, residents who have already become more negative in their opinions of hunting and target shooting in recent years are more polarized, with large majorities of these groups in agreement. Note that these graphs show the general population results, not the results from these subgroups.)



The danger in social media posts that are perceived as offensive is that negative reactions can grow exponentially depending on the extent to which such posts are shared, referenced, quoted, or recirculated online—this gives them a potential reach that far exceeds just a single person feeling offended. In other words, the impact can be extensive and long-lasting (take, for example, the viral spread of the Cecil the Lion trophy hunting story from 2015— a decade+ later, there are more social media platforms and therefore more ways for such stories to spread quickly online).

Social media posts depicting the food benefits of hunting may encourage some non-hunters to see hunting in a positive light. In the survey, those who saw offensive social media posts about hunting were asked how their opinion would be impacted if they saw an image of a family consuming the meat from a hunted animal: 38% responded that they would have a *much more or somewhat more* positive opinion of hunting. Similarly, a number of focus group participants expressed approval of the concept of hunting specifically for the meat, which they contrasted with hunting for a trophy or hunting for sport—two motivations that were met with stark disapproval from most focus group participants.

Finally, the influence of social media should not be underestimated in terms of its potential impact on cultural support for hunting and target shooting. The survey found that more than half of Americans (55%) use social media platforms daily. Additionally, social media apps or websites top the list of sources from which U.S. residents get their news.

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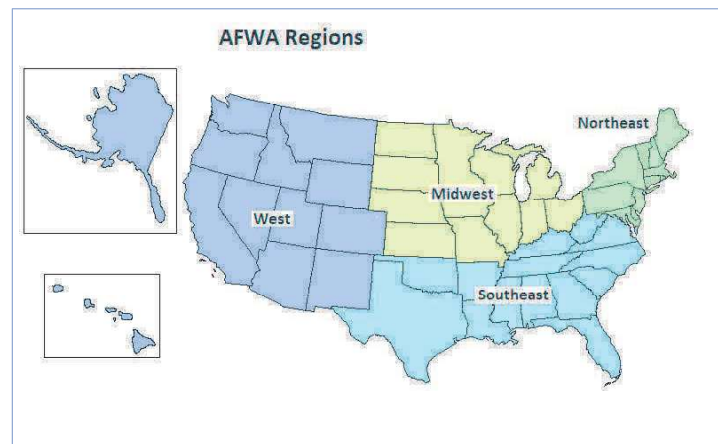
INTRODUCTION

There is agreement that the R3 (Recruit, Retain, Reactivate) community should focus on maintaining and increasing cultural acceptance for hunting and target shooting. Robust participation levels in hunting and target shooting are key funding sources for conservation efforts, including the funding of state fish and wildlife agencies, the maintaining of pristine natural areas and habitat, and the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Since 1995, Responsive Management, with the assistance of organizations like OSCF, has tracked public opinion on hunting and target shooting through periodic trend surveys.³ Yet, alarmingly, the latest national survey of Americans regarding their approval of legal hunting and recreational target shooting found statistically significant declines in the percentages of residents who approve of the activities since 2021. **Looking at national survey numbers, overall approval of legal hunting declined from 80.8% in 2021 to 75.7% in 2024 (a drop of 12,916,901 U.S. residents), while approval of legal recreational shooting went from 81.0% to 76.4% over the same period (a drop of 11,650,538 U.S. residents).** Both decreases are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. These national results are not an anomaly, either. Diminishing public support for hunting is also showing up on the state level, with surveys of residents in AZ, ME, PA, and WA echoing the national trends in terms of overall support.⁴

These troubling results demonstrate that there is a distinct and pressing need for the R3 community to determine the reasons for the declining cultural support for hunting and target shooting and to reinforce public messaging and outreach campaigns meant to strengthen public acceptance of hunting and target shooting. To that end, this study has been conducted in three phases:

1. Analysis and crosstabulations of existing survey data to identify where approval is in the most decline to help identify communities for enhanced public opinion messaging.
2. A series of four focus groups with general population U.S. residents, representing each of the four Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) regions (shown in the accompanying map).
3. A scientific, probability-based multimodal survey of U.S. residents, stratified to obtain 500 completed surveys within each of the four AFWA regions.



This report starts with the analysis of existing Responsive Management survey data. It then discusses the focus group results followed by the new survey results. A wrap-up chapter summarizes the overall results. The final chapter of the report details the methodology.

* R3 is shorthand for recruitment, retention, and reactivation.

1. RESEARCH AND REVIEW OF EXISTING HUNTING AND SPORT SHOOTING DATA

This chapter provides a review of existing trend data but does not include the 2024 survey data, as that survey was still underway at the time of this writing. Therefore, this chapter examines the trends through 2023 and looks in particular at a comparison of 2019, 2021, and 2023 data through the use of cross-tabulations to help identify the audiences that have shown the most decline in their support of legal hunting and target/sport shooting. ***Authors note: the results from the 2024 survey showed a continued decline in the general populations approval of hunting and target shooting. It is recommended all outdoor related organization take action.**

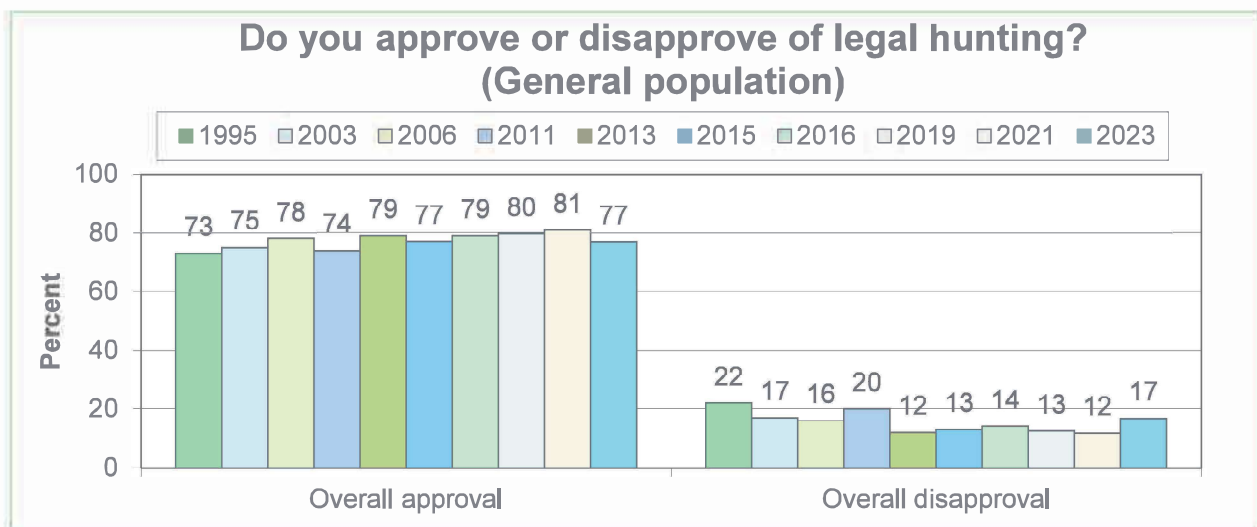
In this context, sport shooting encompasses any recreational or target shooting (with target shooting furthermore widely defined to include plinking, such as shooting cans off of a fence in the back yard). While the report will primarily use the term, sport shooting, some of the survey and focus group results used the terms, “recreational shooting” or “target shooting,” and are reported using those terms.

First, the decrease in cultural support of hunting in the U.S. population will be discussed, followed by a section on the national decline in sport shooting support. Following a look at national trend data, approval of hunting trends in Arizona, Maine, Pennsylvania, and Washington will be discussed.

NATIONAL DATA

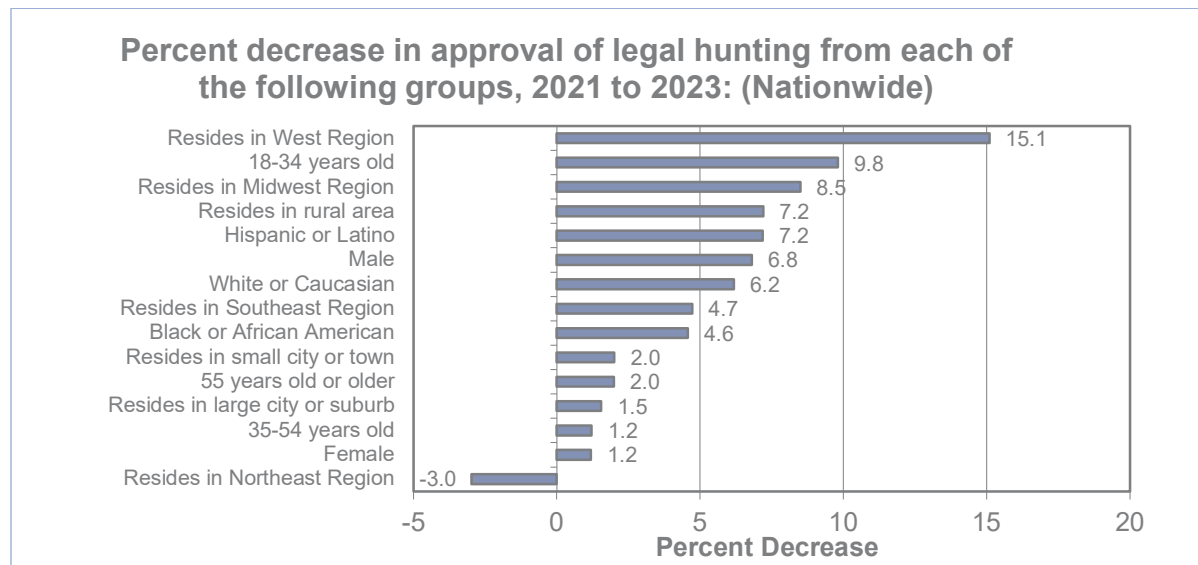
Hunting data are examined first, followed by target/sport shooting.

Hunting The national trend graph below shows approval and disapproval of legal hunting going back to 1995. Apart from a drop in 2011, the decline between 2021 and 2023 is the largest since Responsive Management started measuring this attitude nationwide. Note also that disapproval increased from 12% in 2021 to 17% in 2023; this is the largest increase in disapproval that has been measured in these trends analyses. Both of the changes from 2021 to 2023 are statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$).



Next, demographic crosstabulations are shown to determine where approval has decreased the most. The tabulation below shows support for hunting in 2021 and 2023 broken out by age, gender, race/ethnicity, type of residential area (urban-rural continuum), and U.S. region. The groups are shown in descending order of the percent decline in support. Note that all calculations were made on unrounded numbers. For a visual comparison, a graph of the decreases is shown as well.

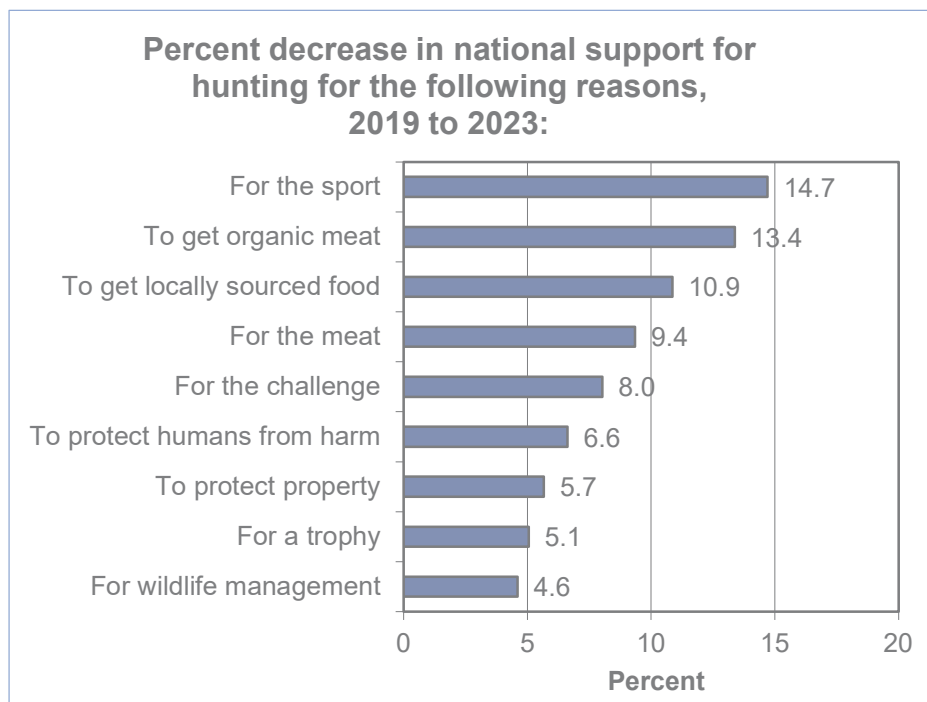
Overall approval of legal hunting by U.S. residents (%)			
Demographic Group	2021	2023	% Change
Resides in West Region	88.9	73.8	-15.1
18-34 years old	78.4	68.6	-9.8
Resides in Midwest Region	88.9	80.4	-8.5
Resides in rural area	92.2	85.0	-7.2
Hispanic or Latino	68.7	61.5	-7.2
Male	89.9	83.1	-6.8
White or Caucasian	87.9	81.7	-6.2
Resides in Southeast Region	82.6	77.9	-4.7
Black or African American	69.1	64.5	-4.6
Resides in small city or town	81.7	79.7	-2.0
55 years old or older	83.0	81.0	-2.0
Resides in large city or suburb	74.5	73.0	-1.5
35-54 years old	81.0	79.8	-1.2
Female	72.2	71.0	-1.2
Resides in Northeast Region	71.7	74.6	+3.0



The most precipitous decline in hunting approval occurred in the West Region, dropping 15% over the 2-year period. Large decreases were observed among young adults and within the Midwest Region as well. Clearly, the R3 community needs to reach out to these groups with messaging about the conservation benefits of hunting. Some of these results are somewhat surprising: groups that have traditionally hunted and supported hunting in high numbers, such as rural residents, males, and Whites, showed greater declines than their demographic counterparts. Also, Hispanic Americans had a large decrease in approval; as this group had a

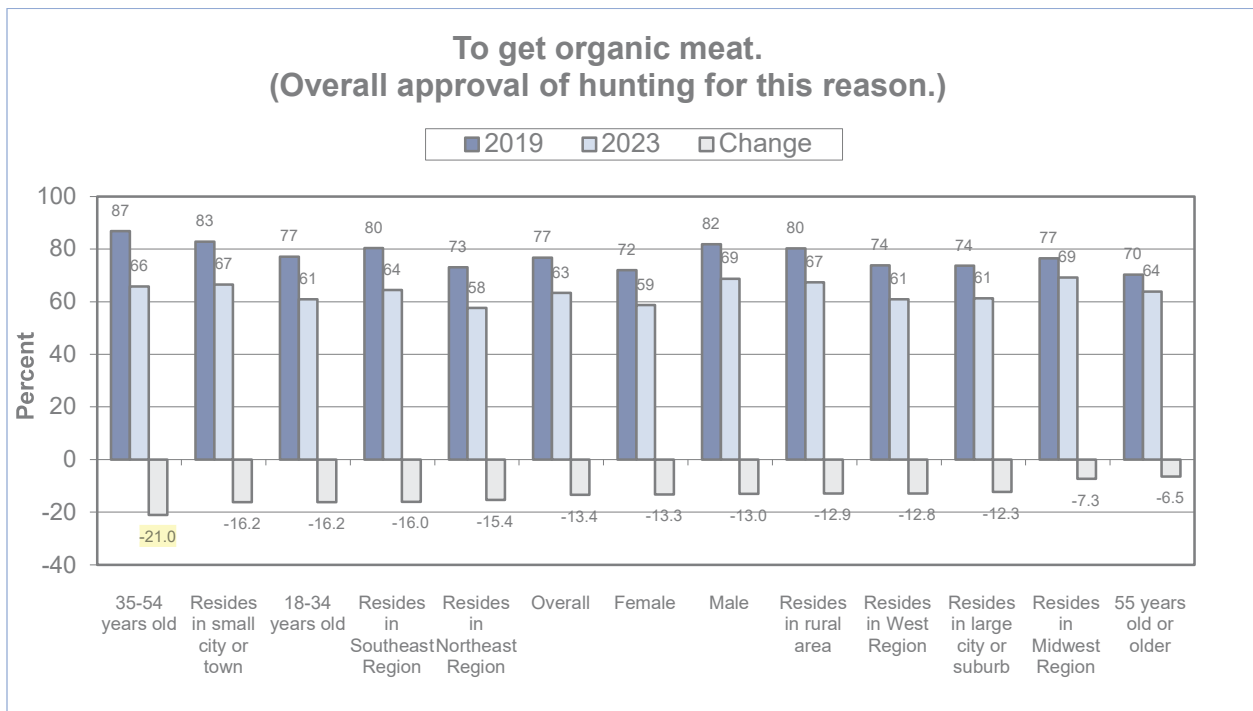
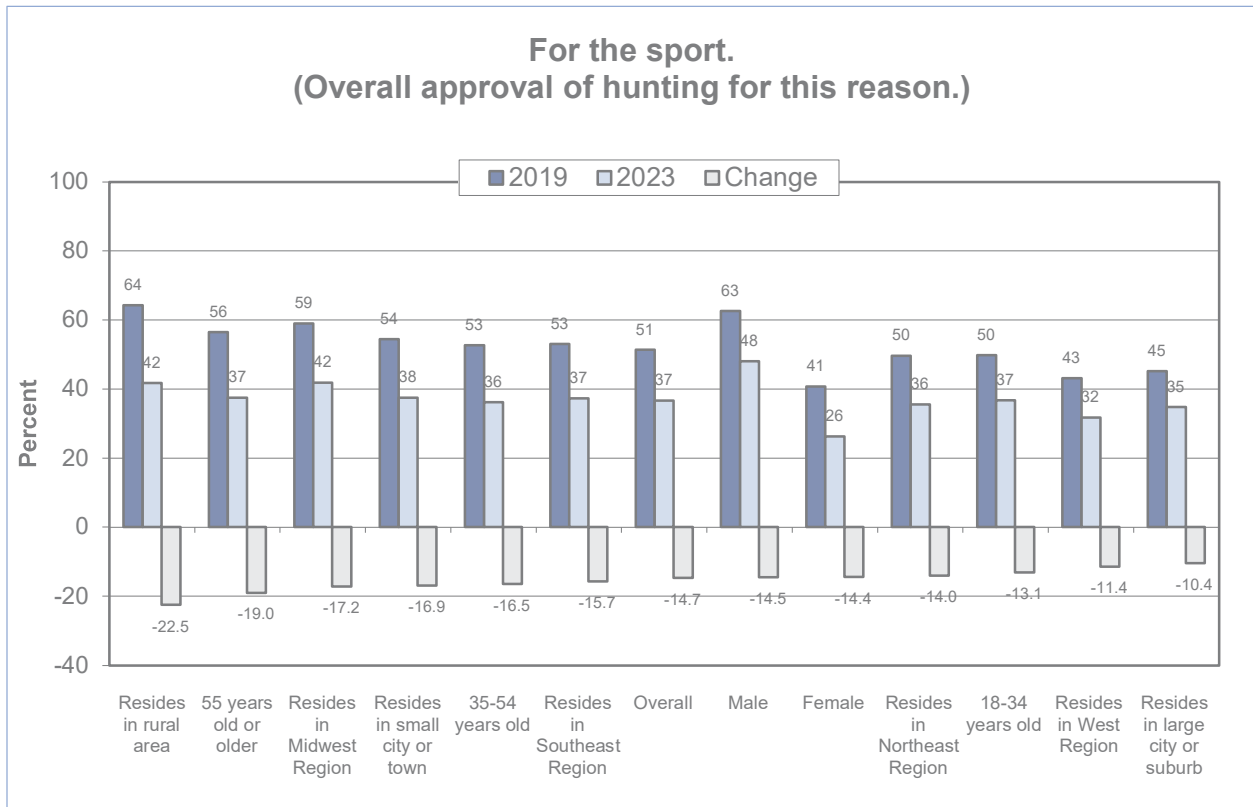
relatively low approval percentage to begin with, reaching this demographic group will be a challenge. On the other hand, approval of hunting increased in the Northeast Region.

The motivations for hunting are examined next. Every reason for hunting listed in the surveys has decreased in overall approval from 2019 to 2023. The largest decline in support for hunting was for hunting for the sport. This had just over half of Americans in support in 2019, but not much more than a third in 2023. The next largest declines in hunting support were to get organic meat and to get locally sourced food, which may indicate that the locavore movement is losing some popularity. The graph is followed by a table showing the approval percentages in 2019 and 2023.

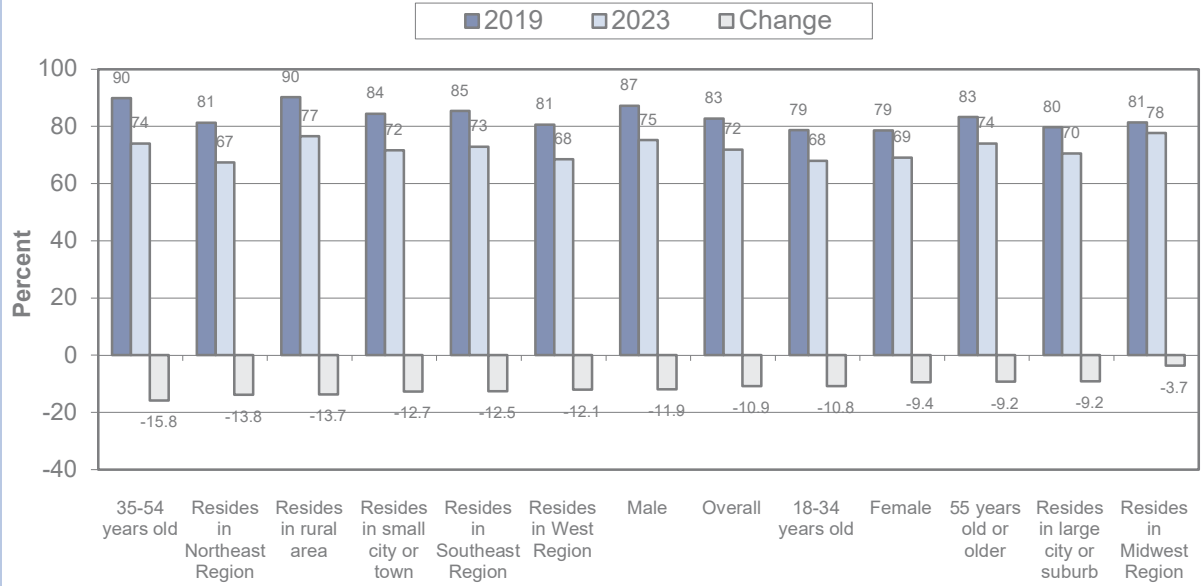


Overall approval of hunting by U.S. residents for the following reasons (%)			
Reason	2019	2023	% Change
For the sport	51.3	36.6	-14.7
To get organic meat	76.8	63.4	-13.4
To get locally sourced food	82.7	71.9	-10.9
For the meat	84.1	74.7	-9.4
For the challenge	40.8	32.8	-8.0
To protect humans from harm	84.4	77.7	-6.6
To protect property	74.5	68.8	-5.7
For a trophy	29.1	24.1	-5.1
For wildlife management	81.9	77.3	-4.6

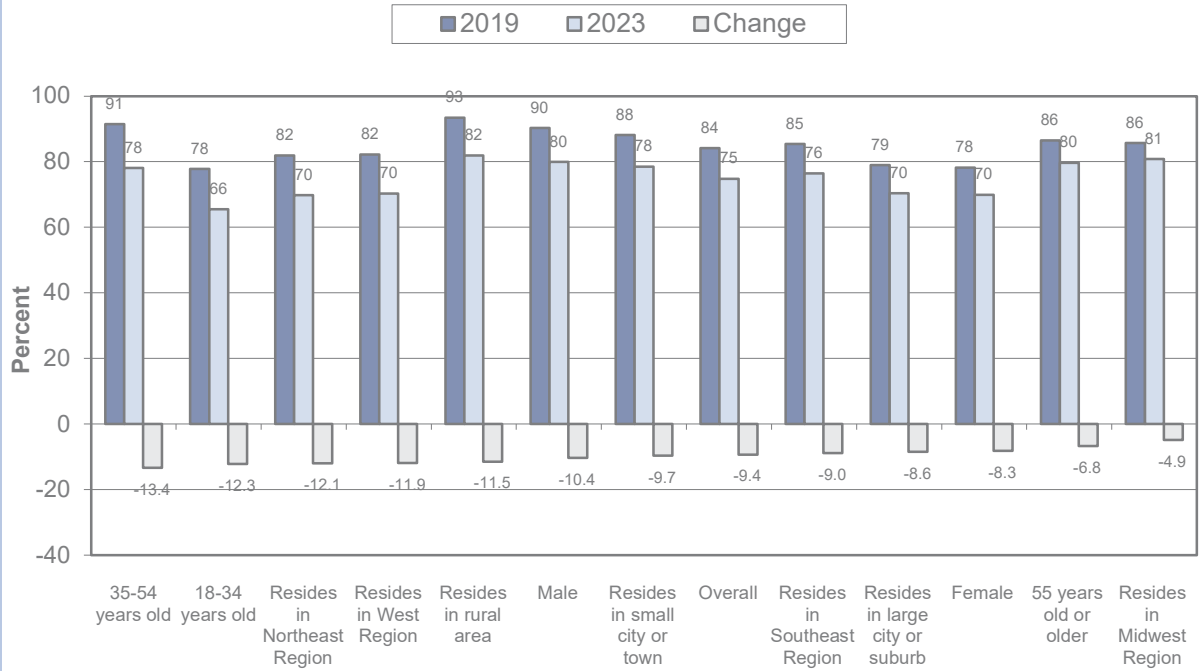
The following pages show demographic crosstabulations of the reasons for hunting. The largest decreases in approval for meat-related reasons occurred among middle-aged adults (35 to 54 years old), while rural residents had the largest drops in approval of hunting for the sport or for the challenge. These graphs are presented horizontally from the largest decrease on the left to the smallest decrease (or largest increase) on the right. Also, in the trend graphs throughout this chapter, percentages of approval are rounded to the integer, while the percent change is shown to one decimal place.

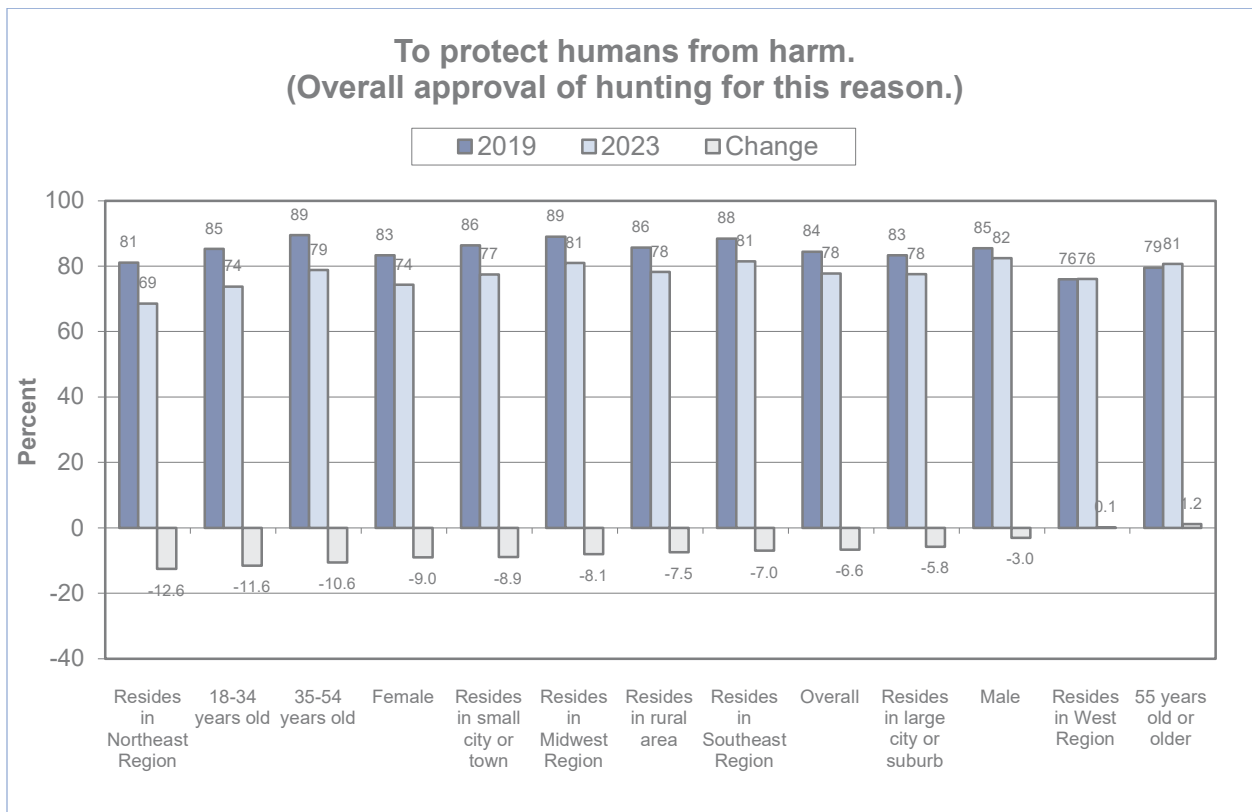
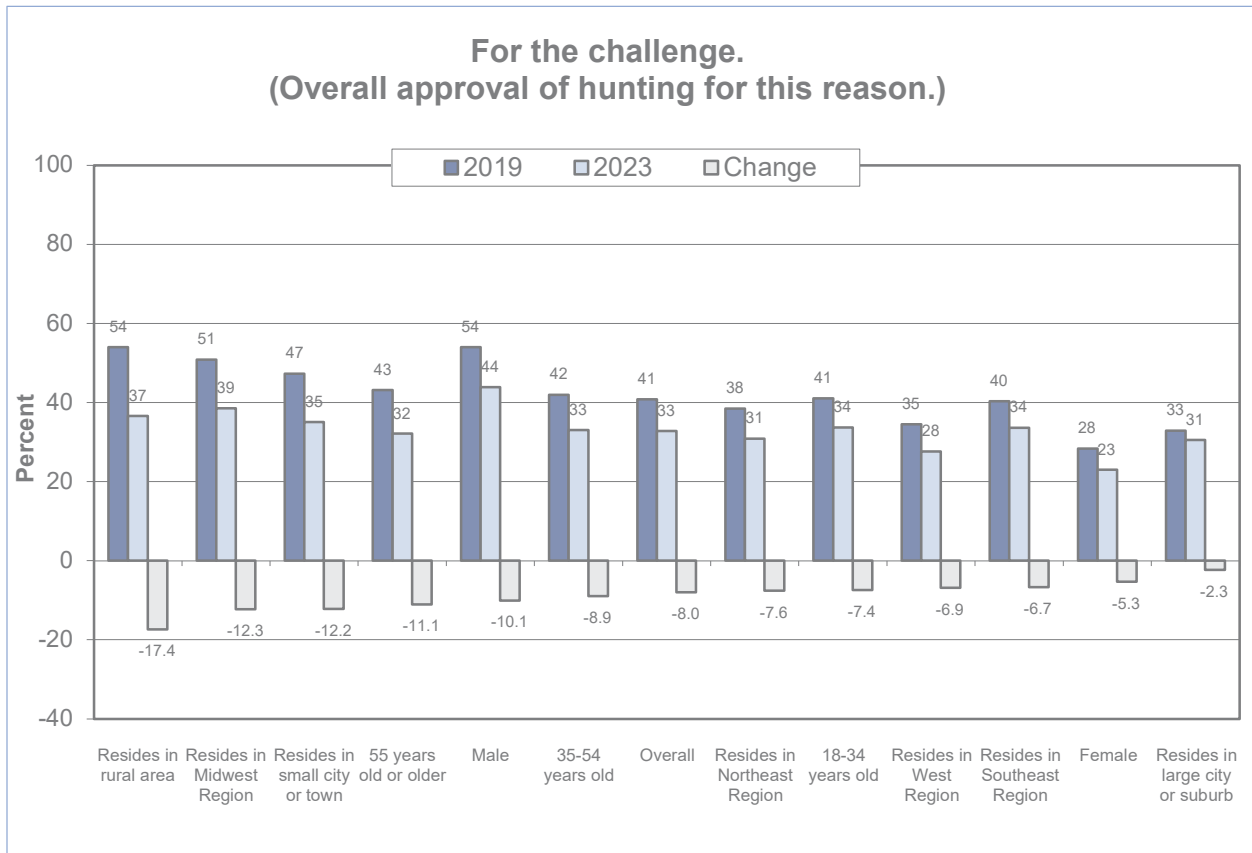


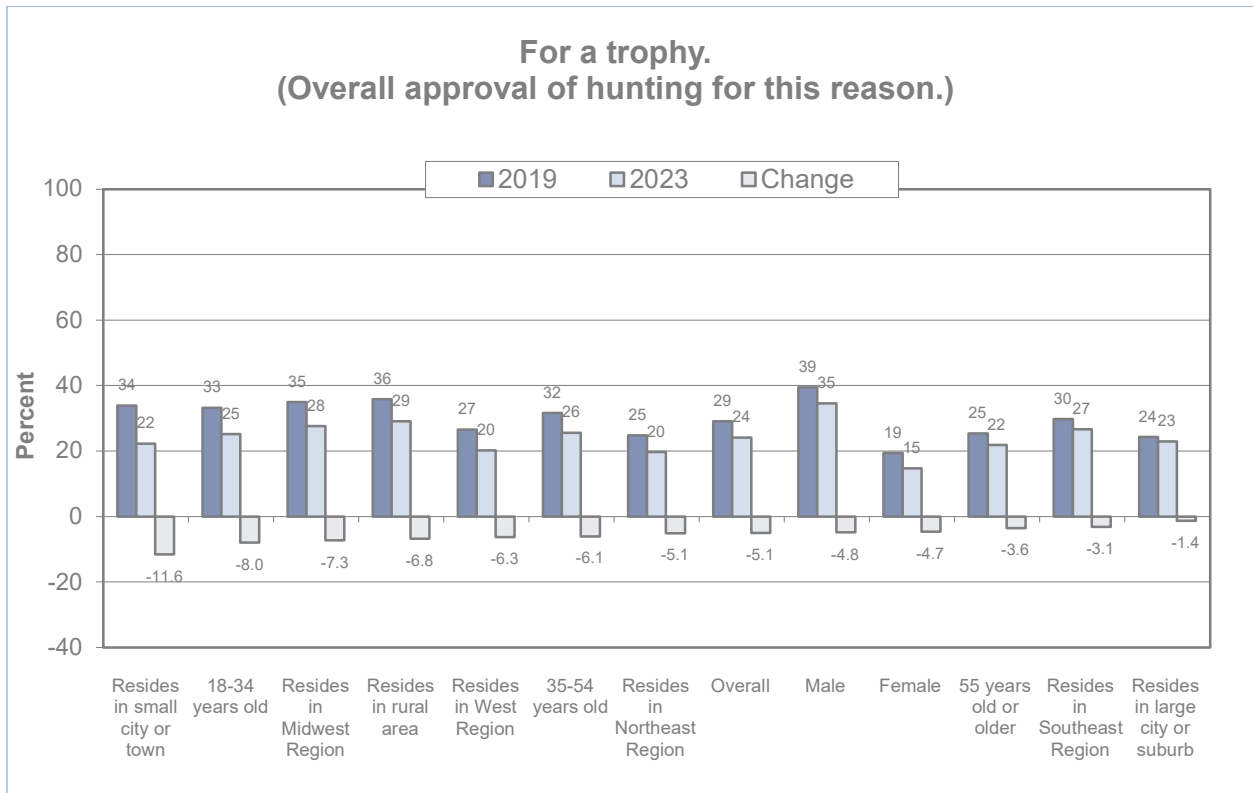
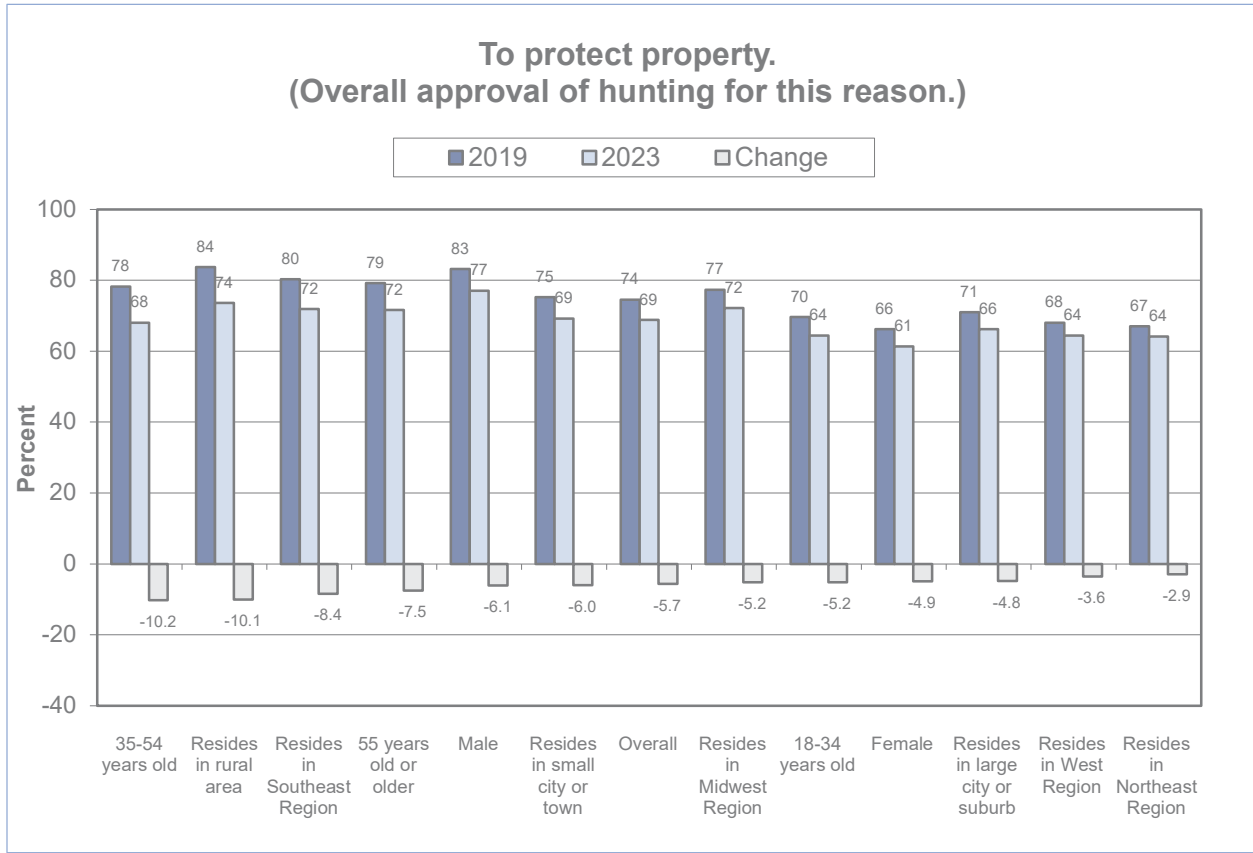
To get locally sourced food. (Overall approval of hunting for this reason.)

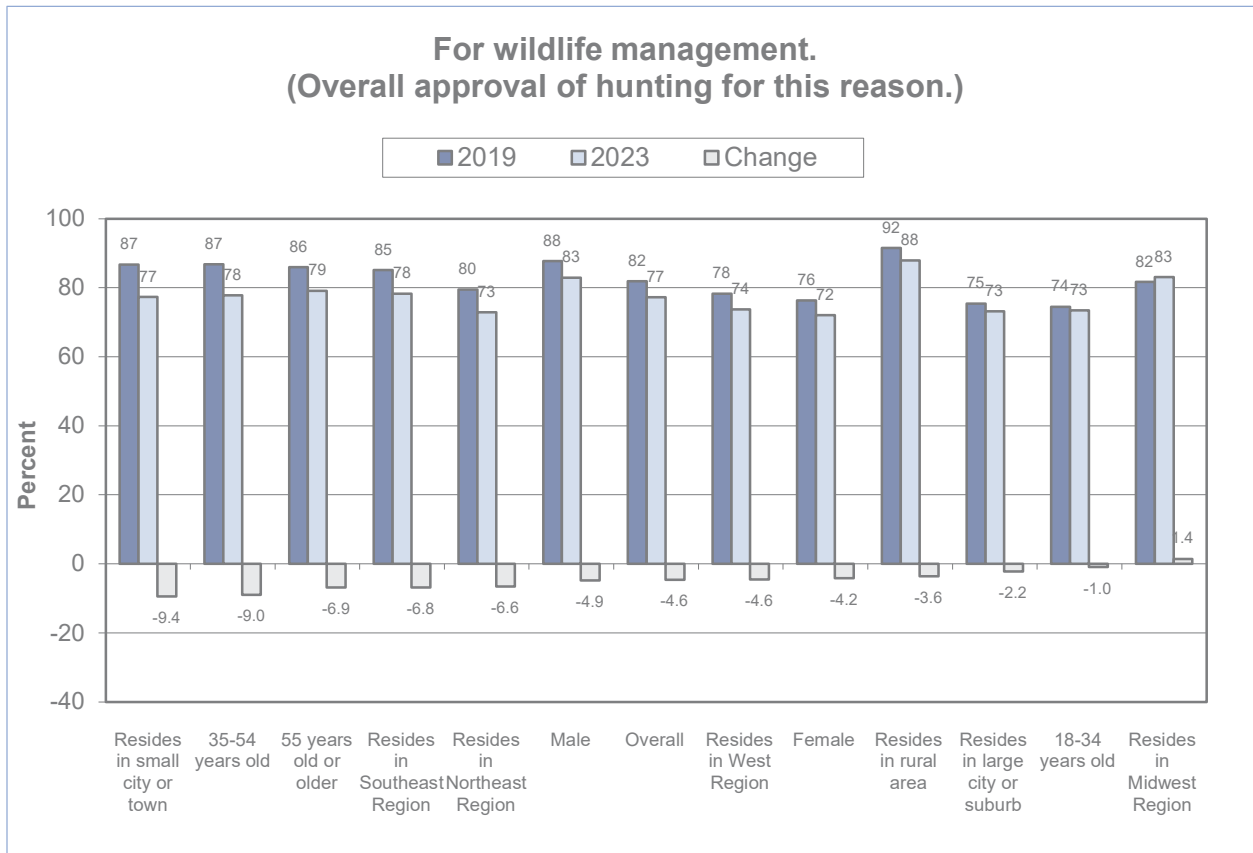


For the meat. (Overall approval of hunting for this reason.)





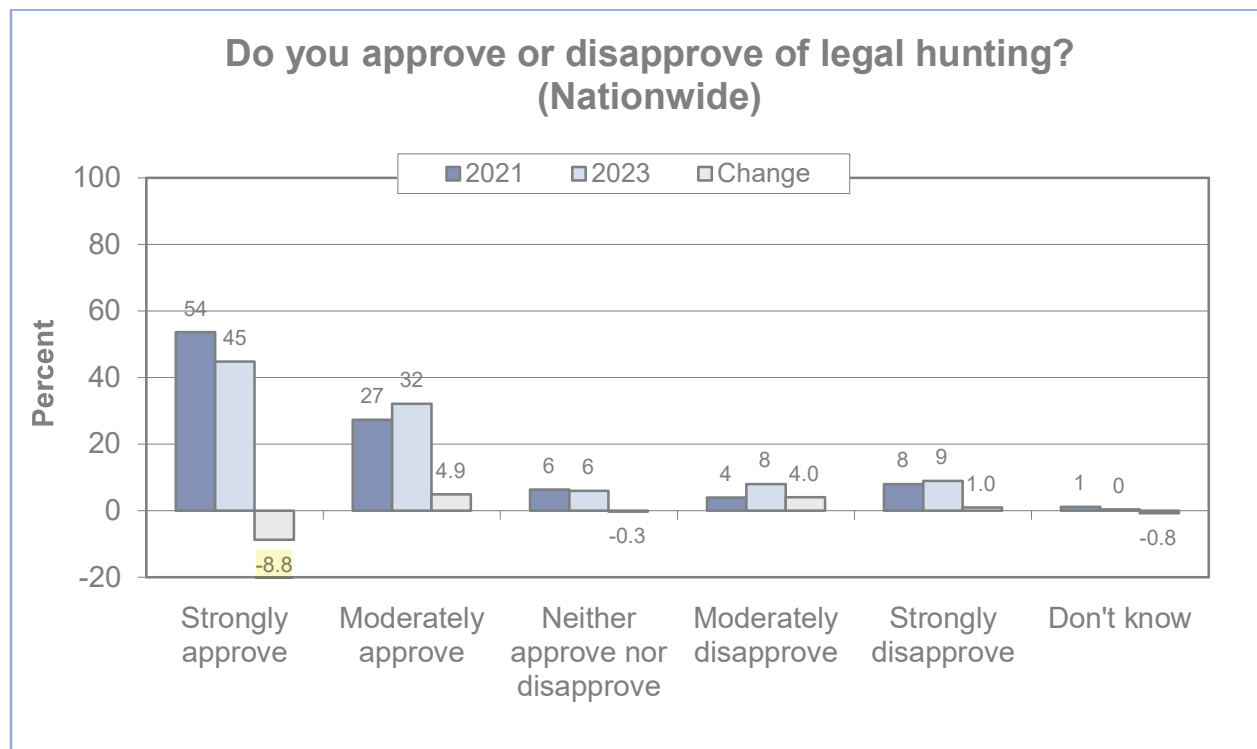




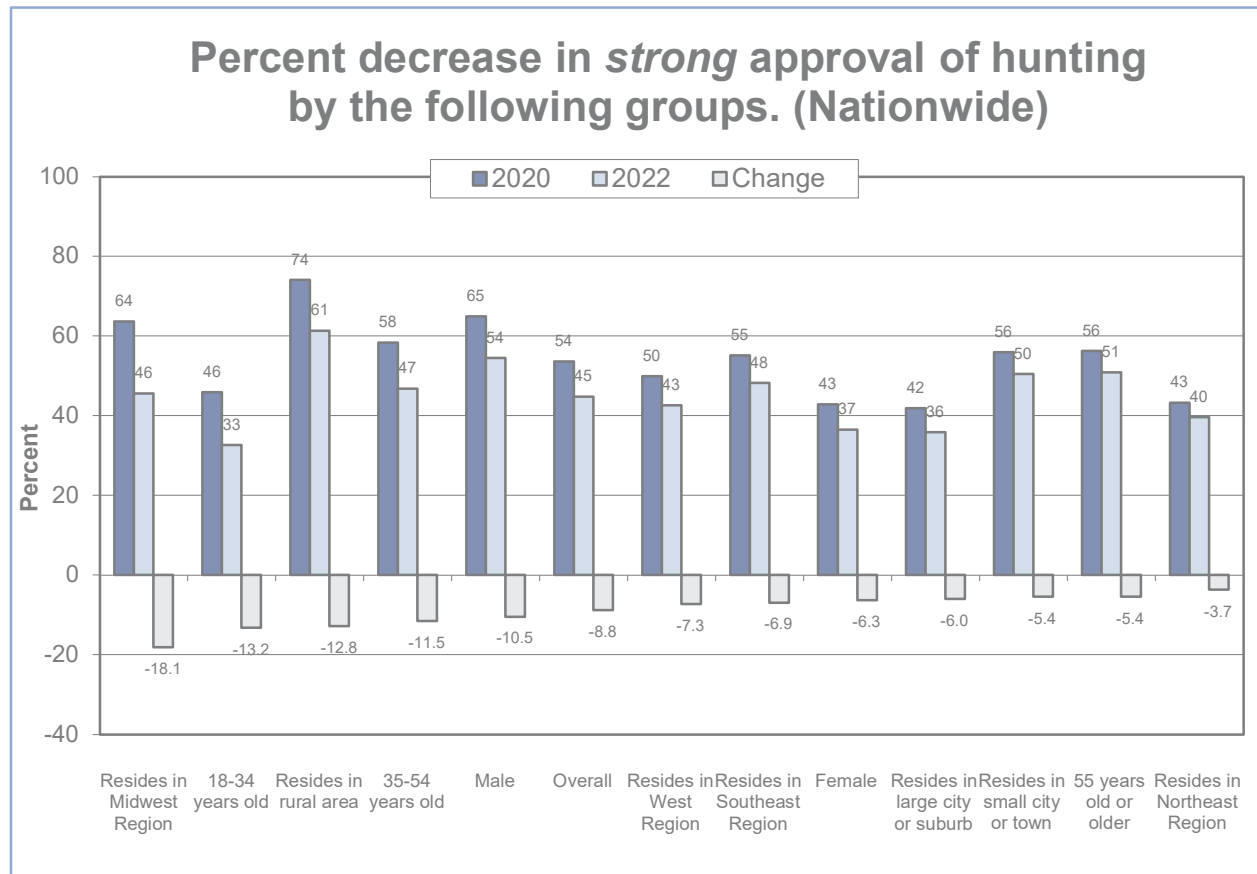
The percentages of approval discussed in this chapter represent the combined percentages of *strongly* and *moderately* approve; likewise, disapproval percentages represent *strongly* and *moderately* disapprove combined. However, the following trend graph shows all the responses given for this question. As shown, much of the decrease in strong approval has shifted to moderate approval as well as disapproval, with little change in neutral or don't know responses. It would seem less difficult to increase the strength of someone's approval than to reverse the attitude of someone who disapproves of hunting.

It should be noted that the "approval of hunting" questions in these surveys provided the following response options:

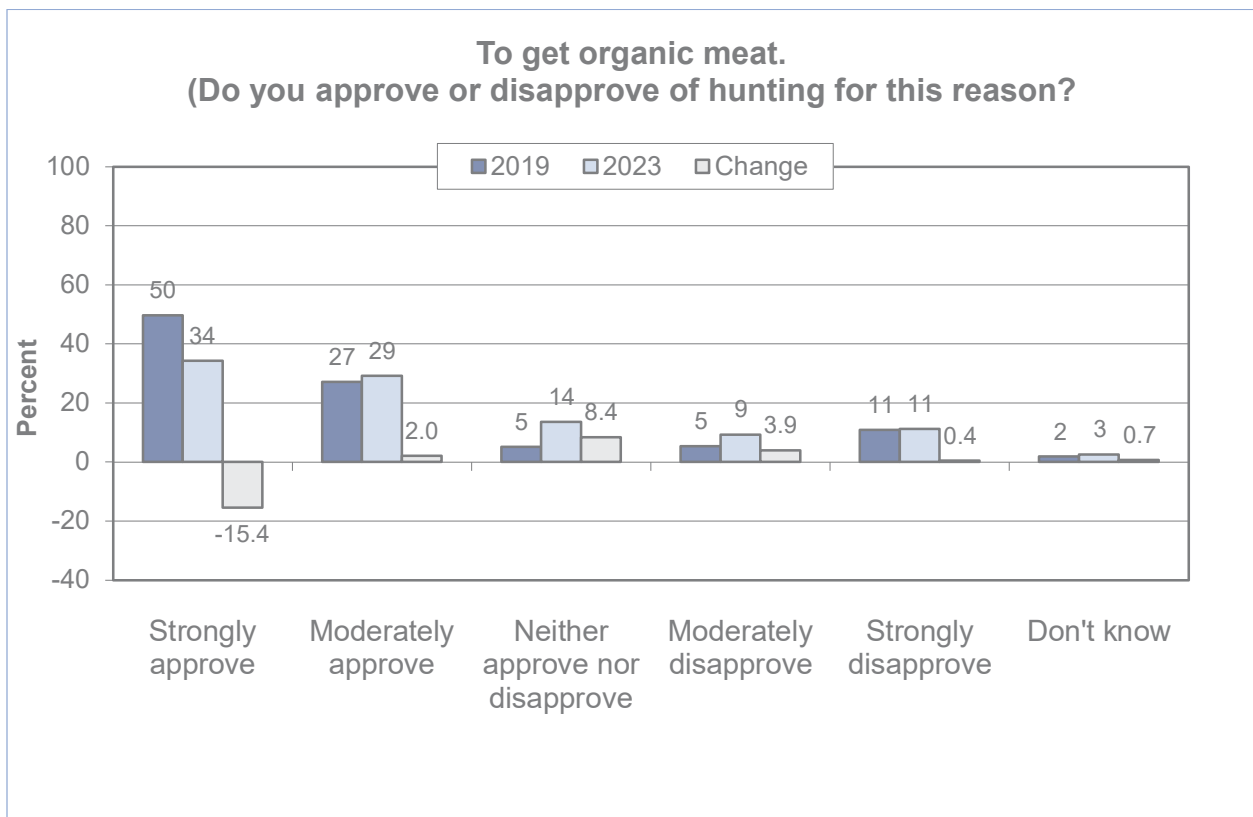
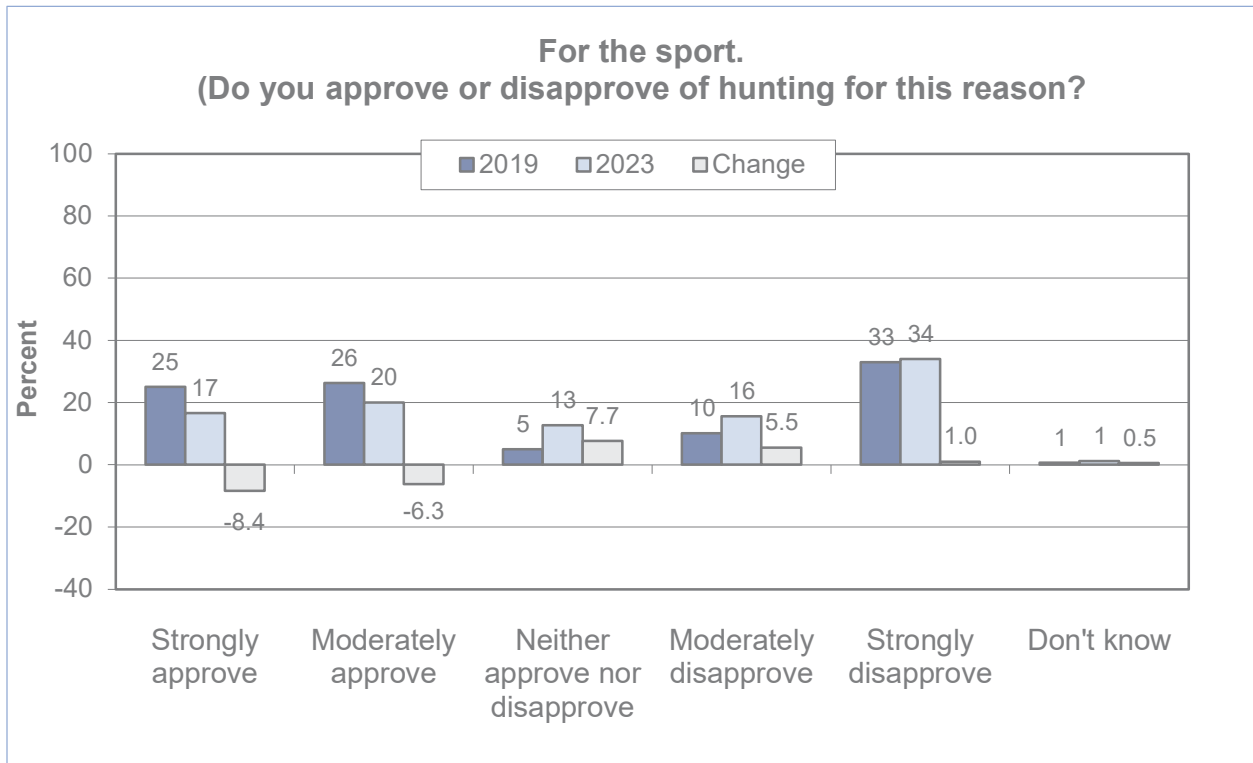
- Strongly approve
- Moderately approve
- Neither approve nor disapprove
- Moderately disapprove
- Strongly disapprove
- Don't know

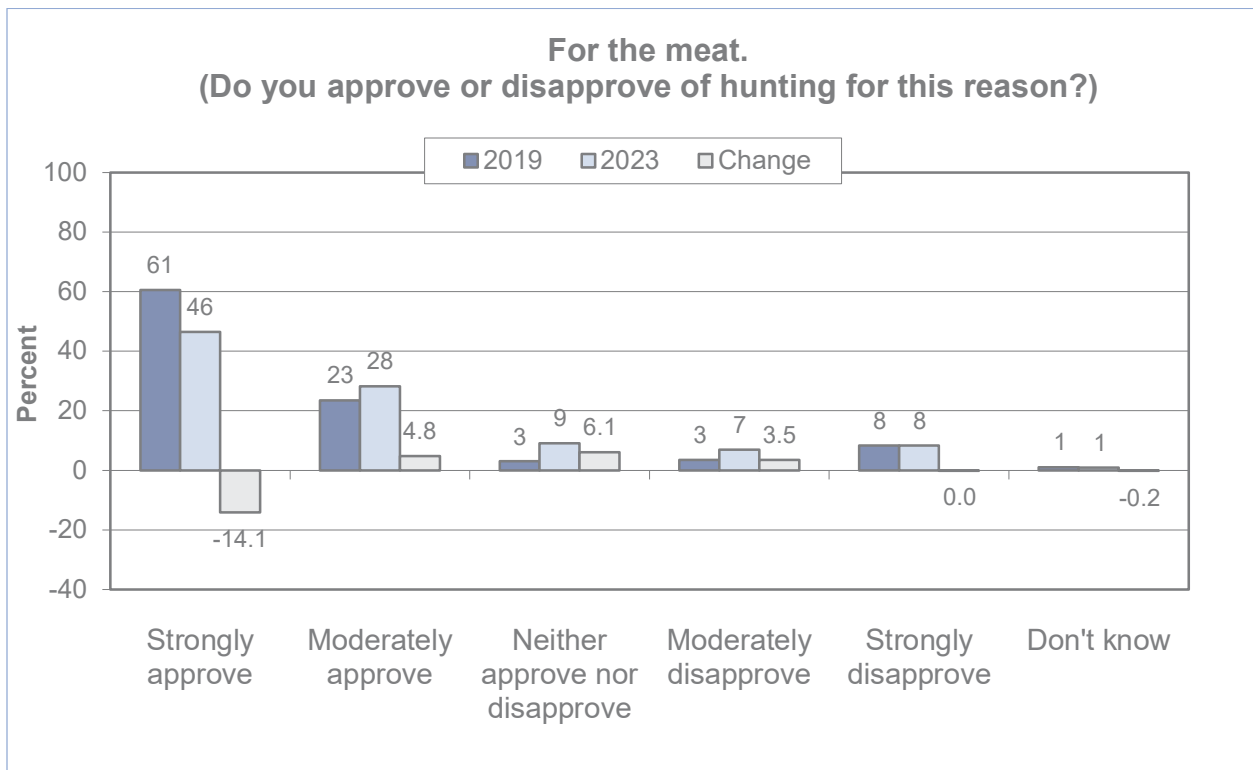
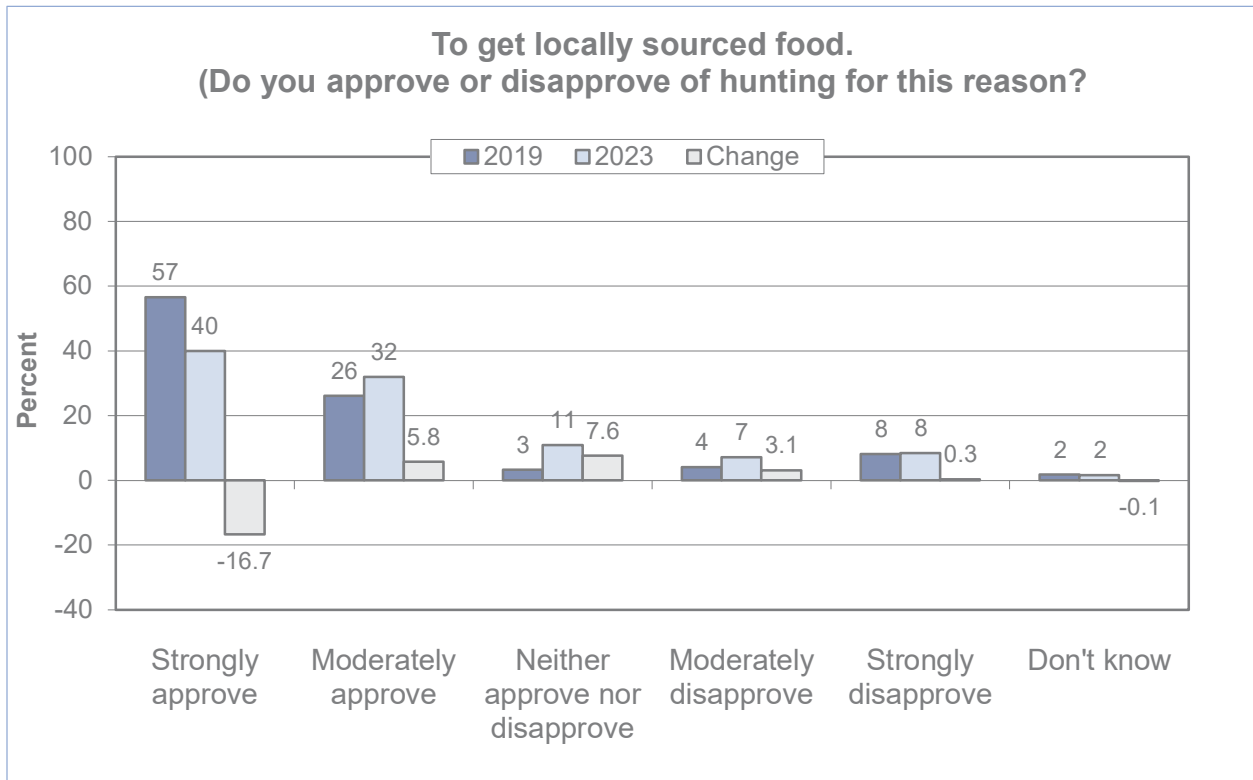


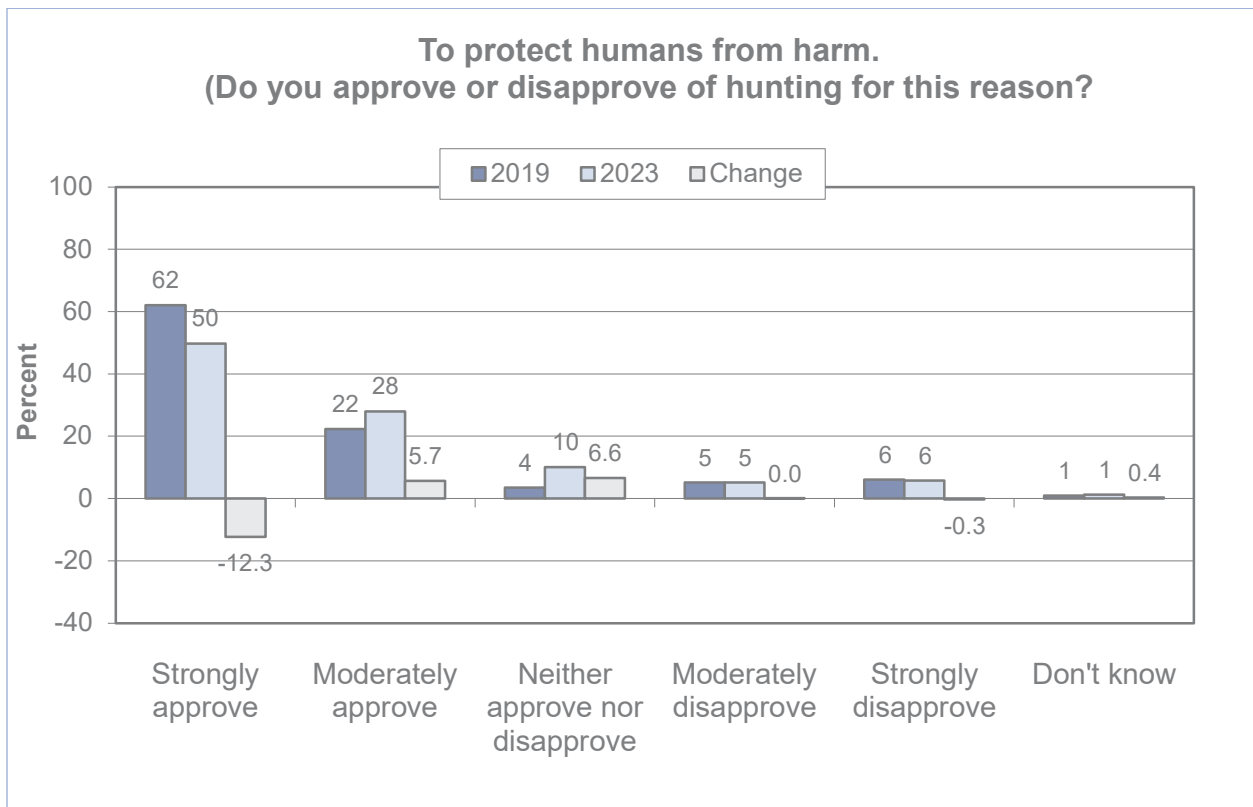
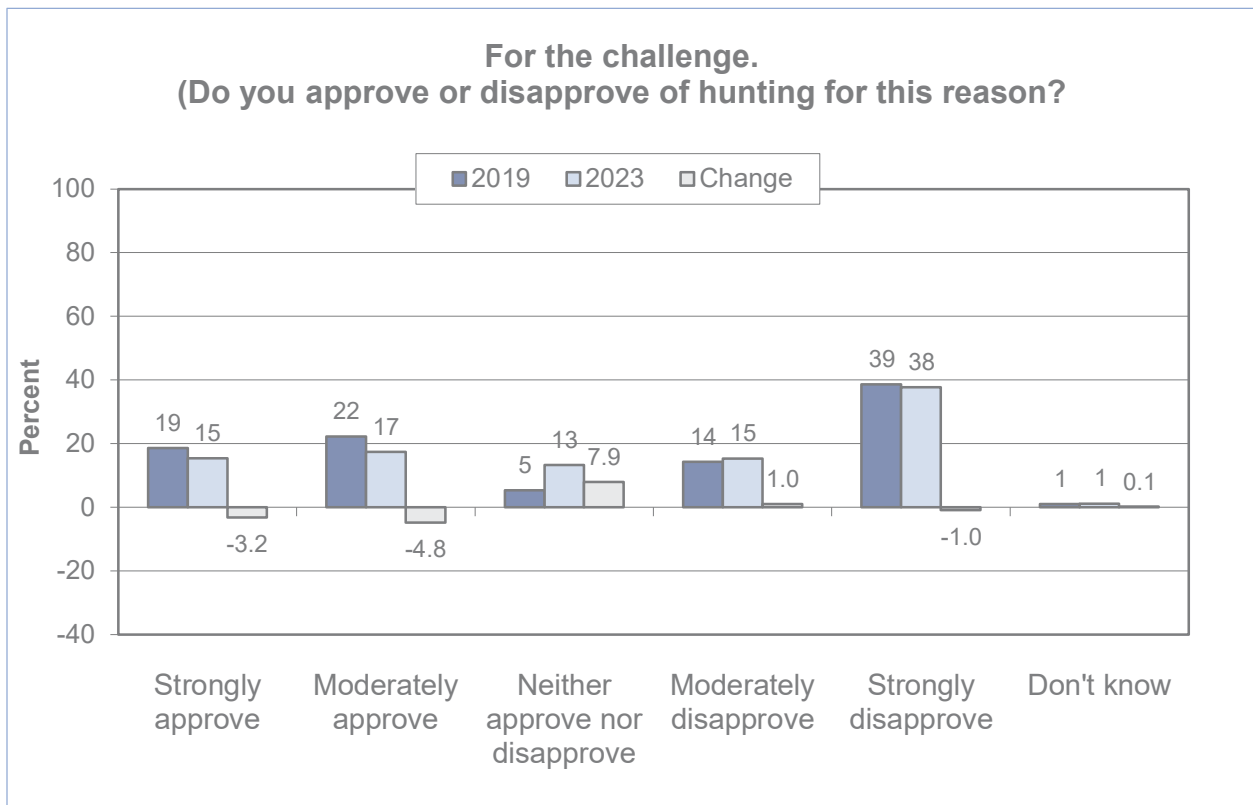
A demographic crosstabulation of the decrease in *strong* approval of hunting is shown. Strong approval decreased the most among Midwest Region residents, young and middle-aged adults, rural residents, and males—all with a decrease over 10%. With the exception of young adults, these groups are traditionally among the most likely to hunt or support hunting, so the large decline in strong support among these groups is concerning.

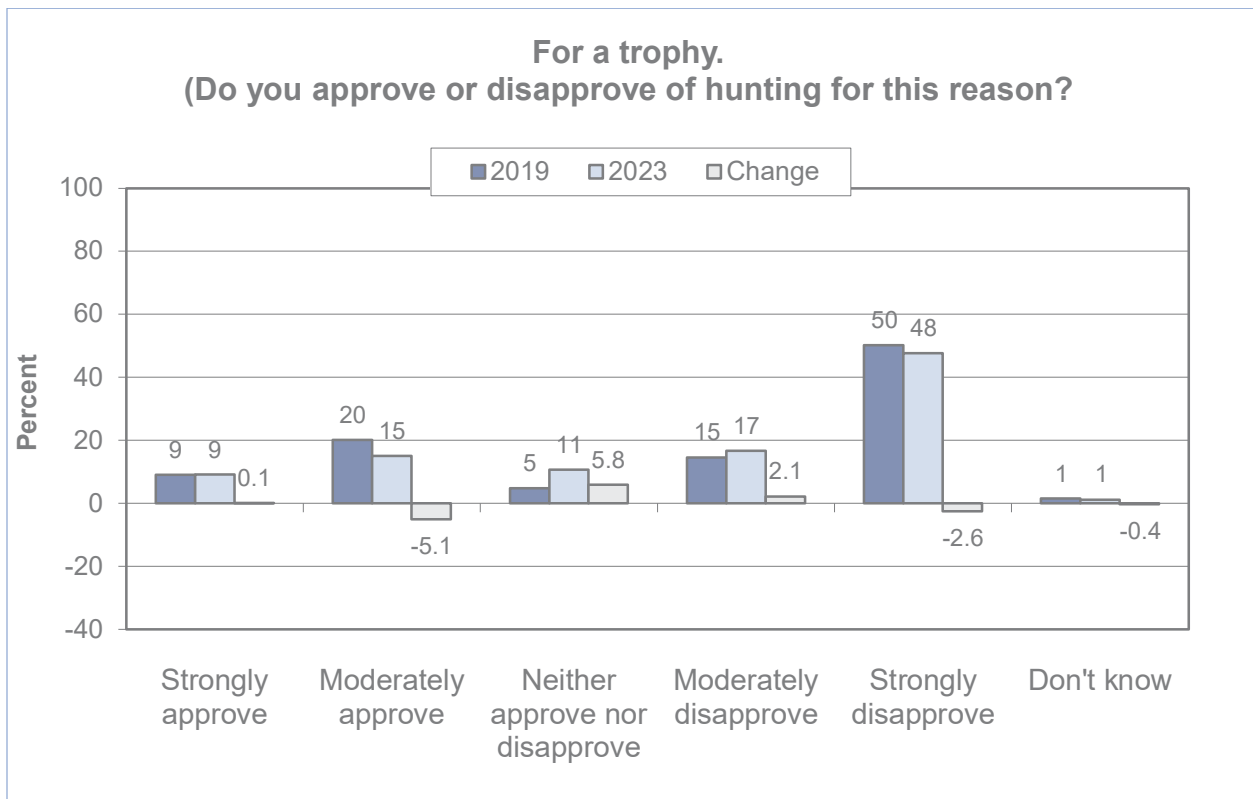
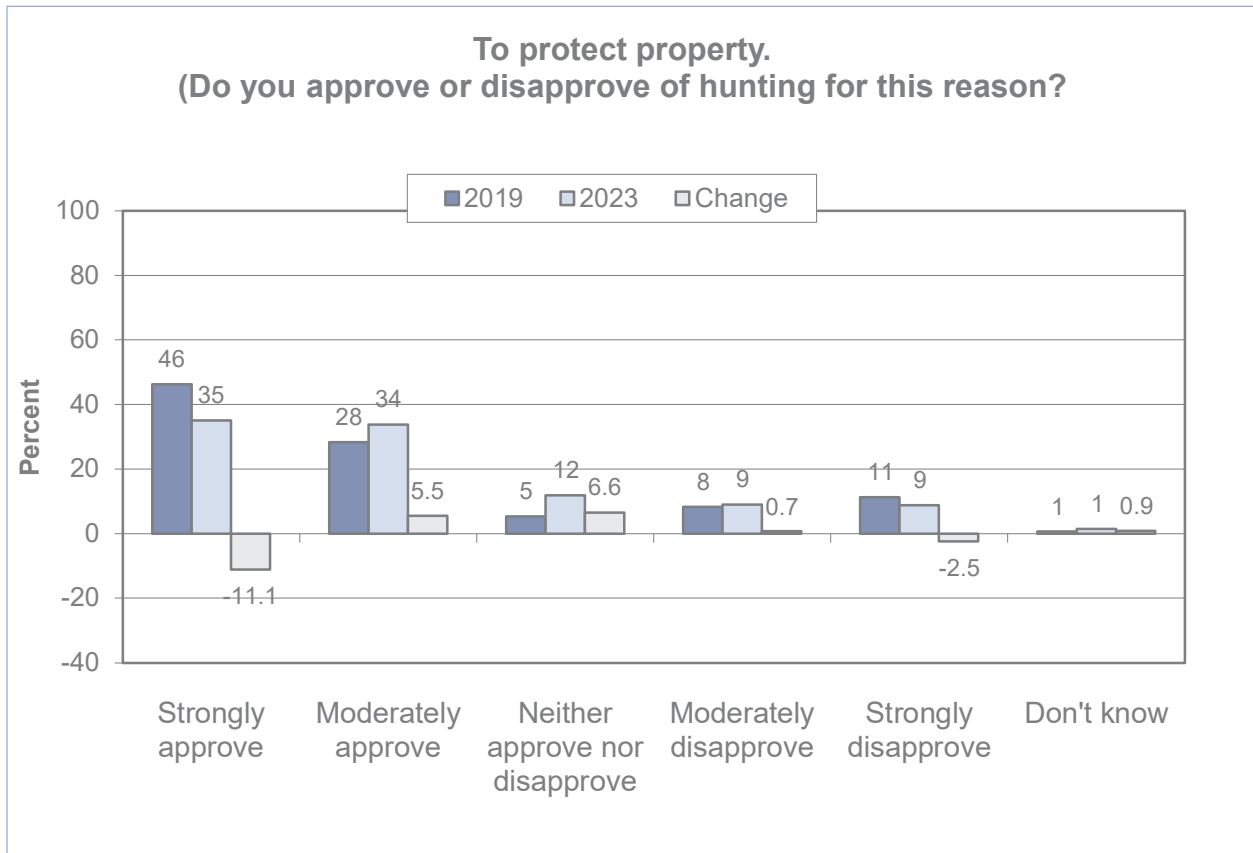


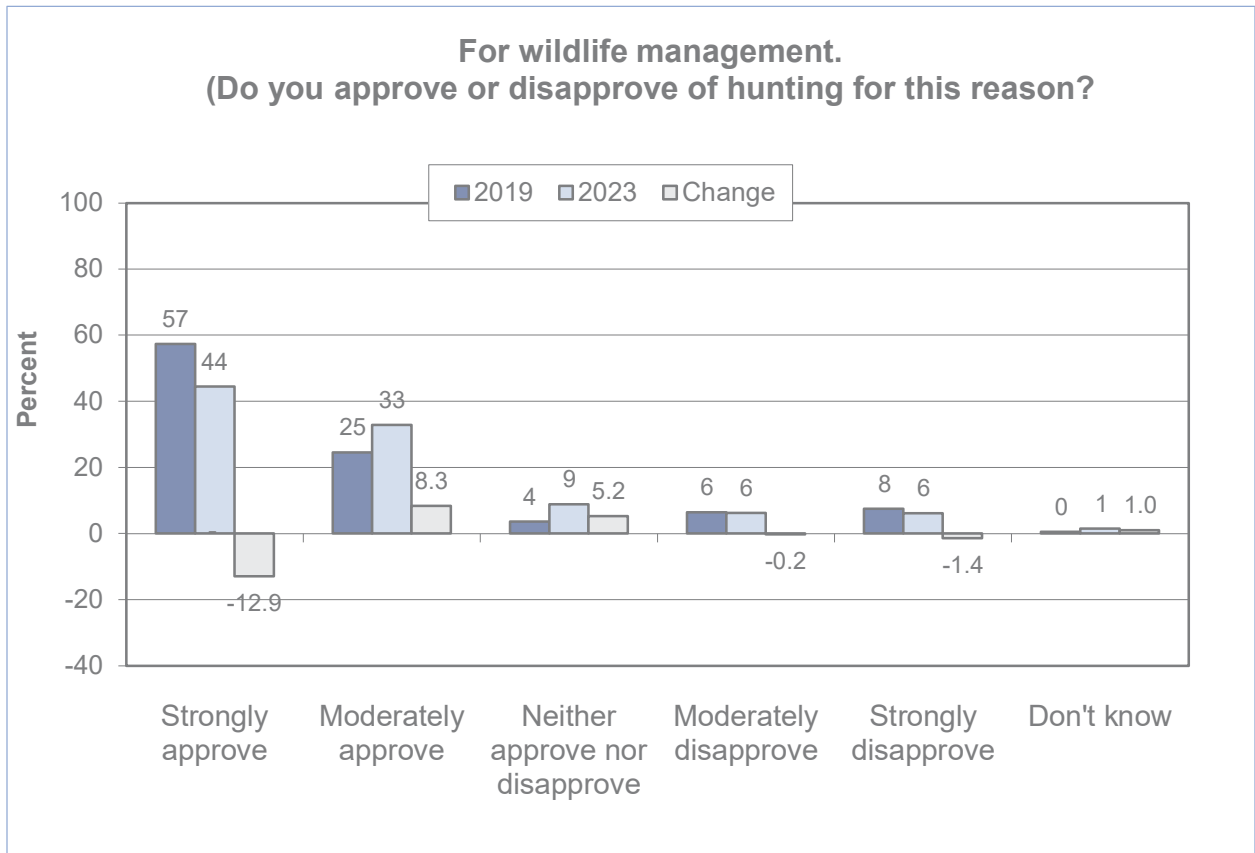
The following pages show the full response sets for each question about approval of the reason for hunting. The interesting thing to note is that the decreases in strong or overall approval correlate to increases in neutral responses rather than spikes in disapproval. As was suggested above for the overall approval percentages, R3 efforts may have more effectiveness in strengthening approval or convincing apathetic people to see the benefits of hunting, as opposed to attempts in reversing negative attitudes toward the activity.



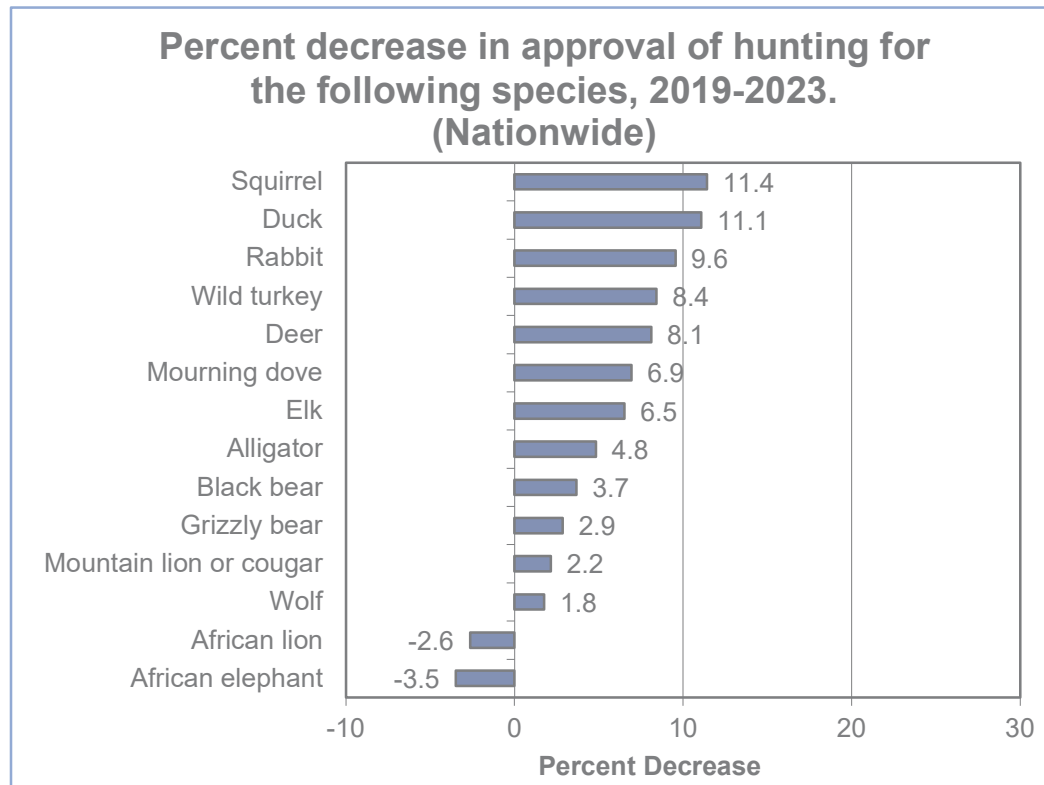






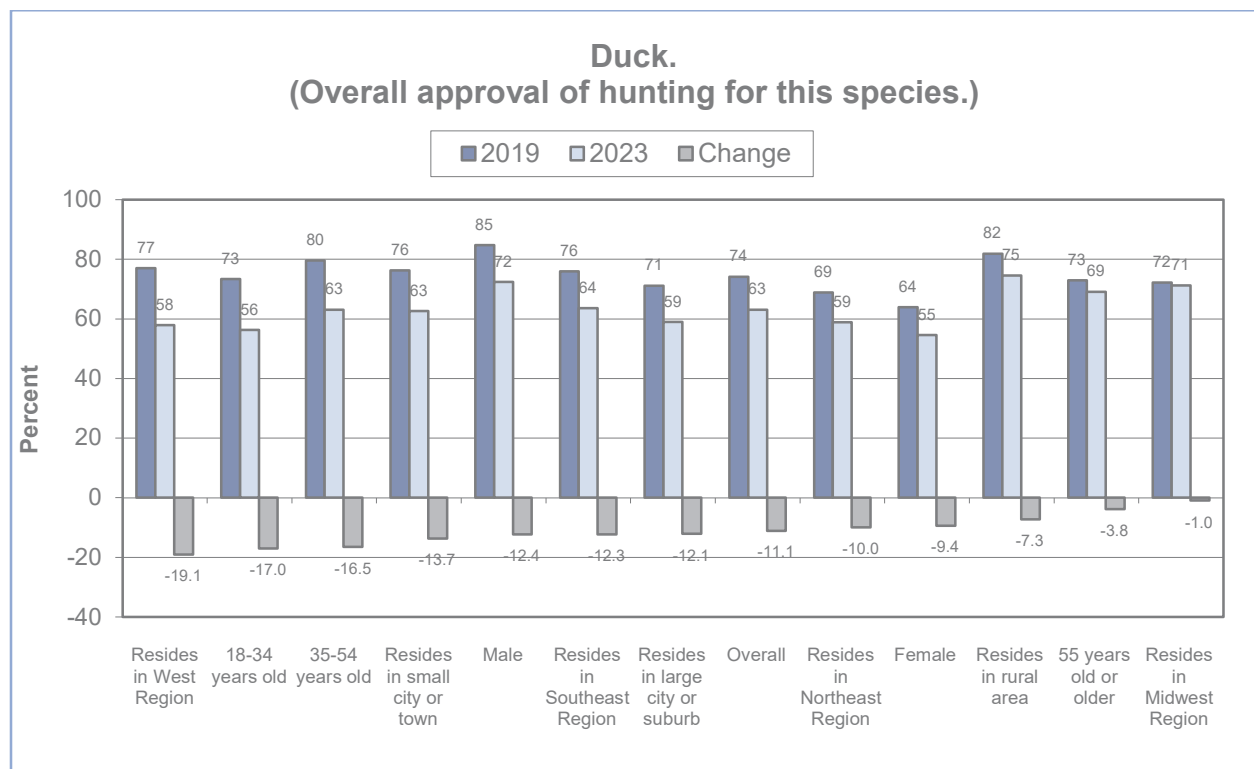
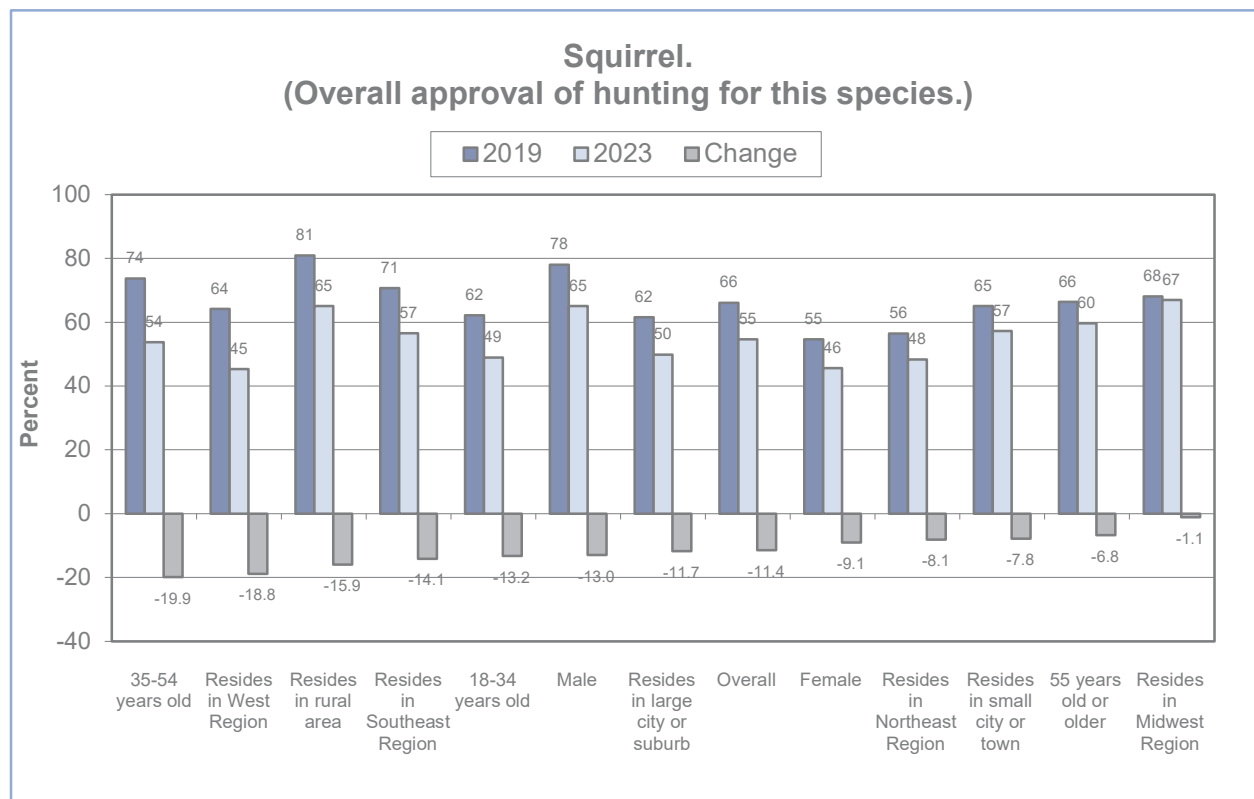


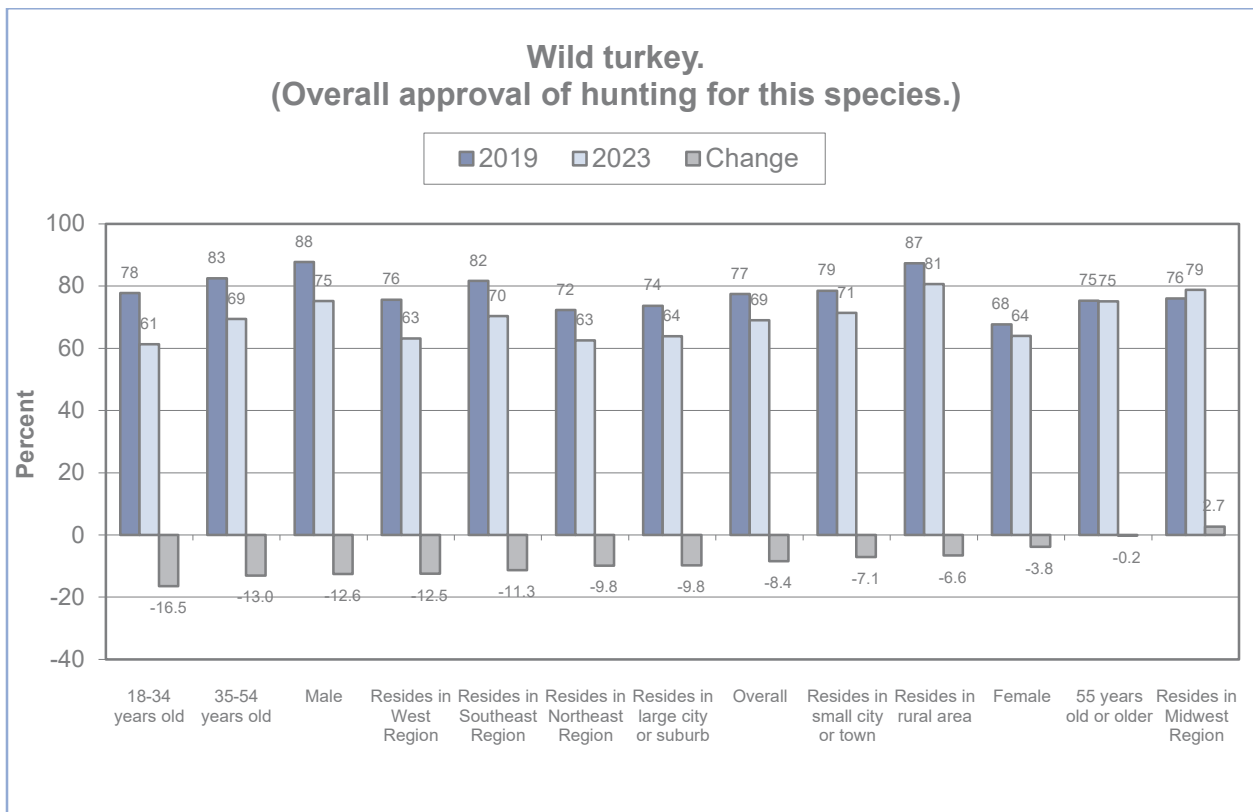
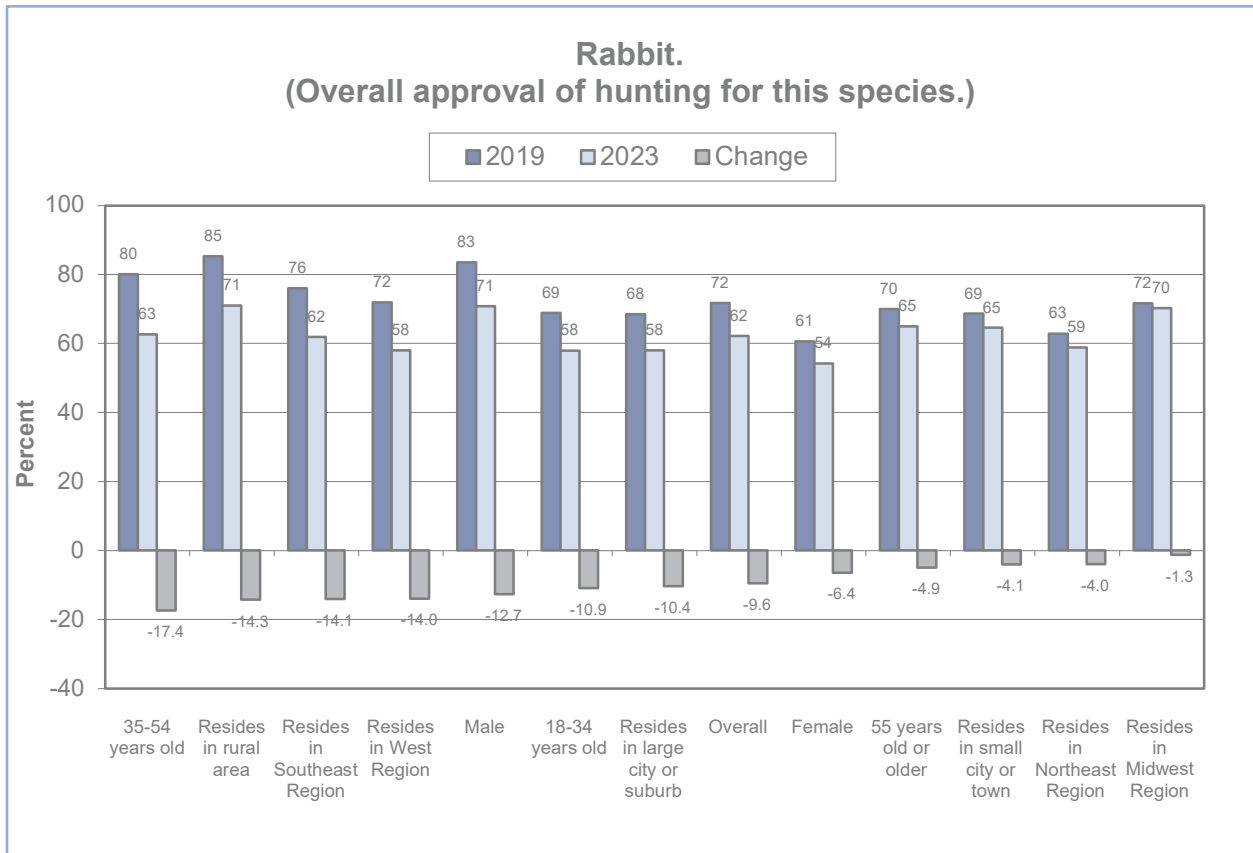
Next, approval or disapproval of hunting for 14 species is examined. The largest decreases in approval were for hunting squirrel and duck, followed by rabbit, wild turkey, deer, mourning dove, and elk. There were small increases (which show up as negative values in the graph) in approval for hunting African elephant and lion, although approval of hunting for these species remains very low.

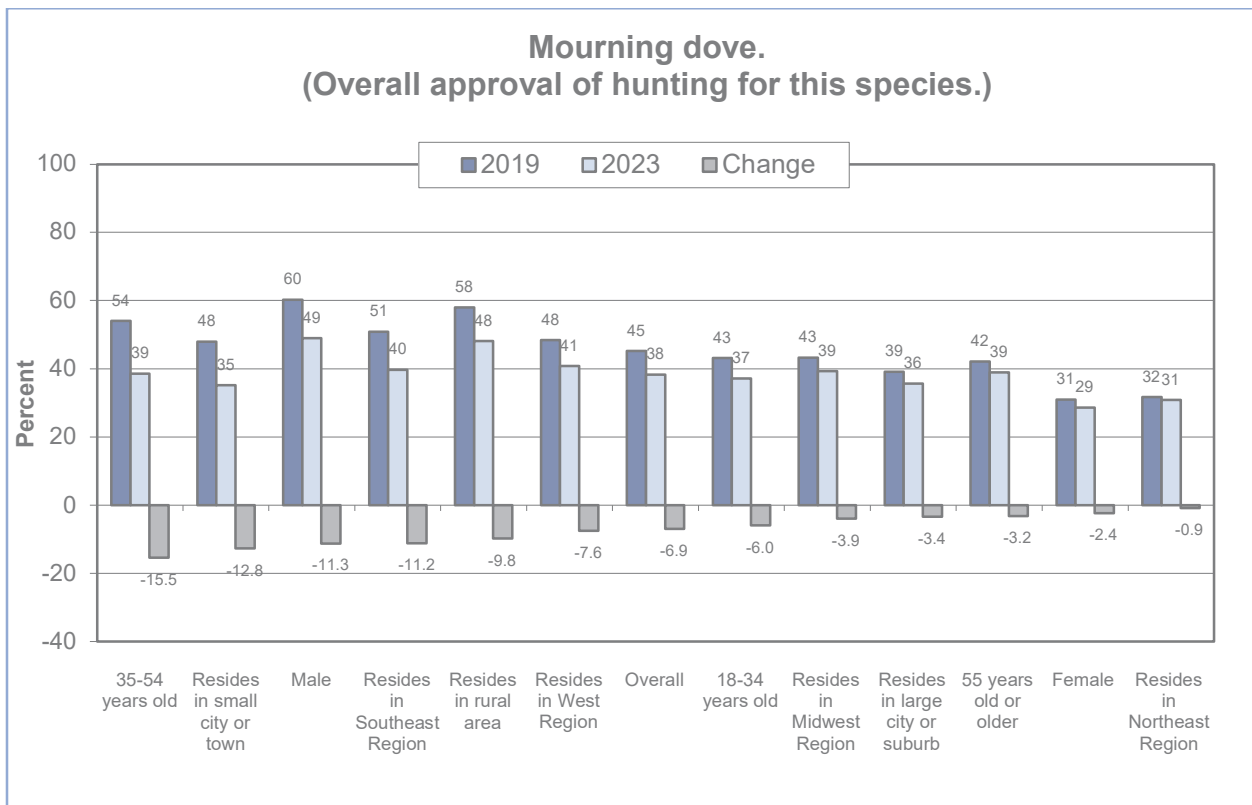
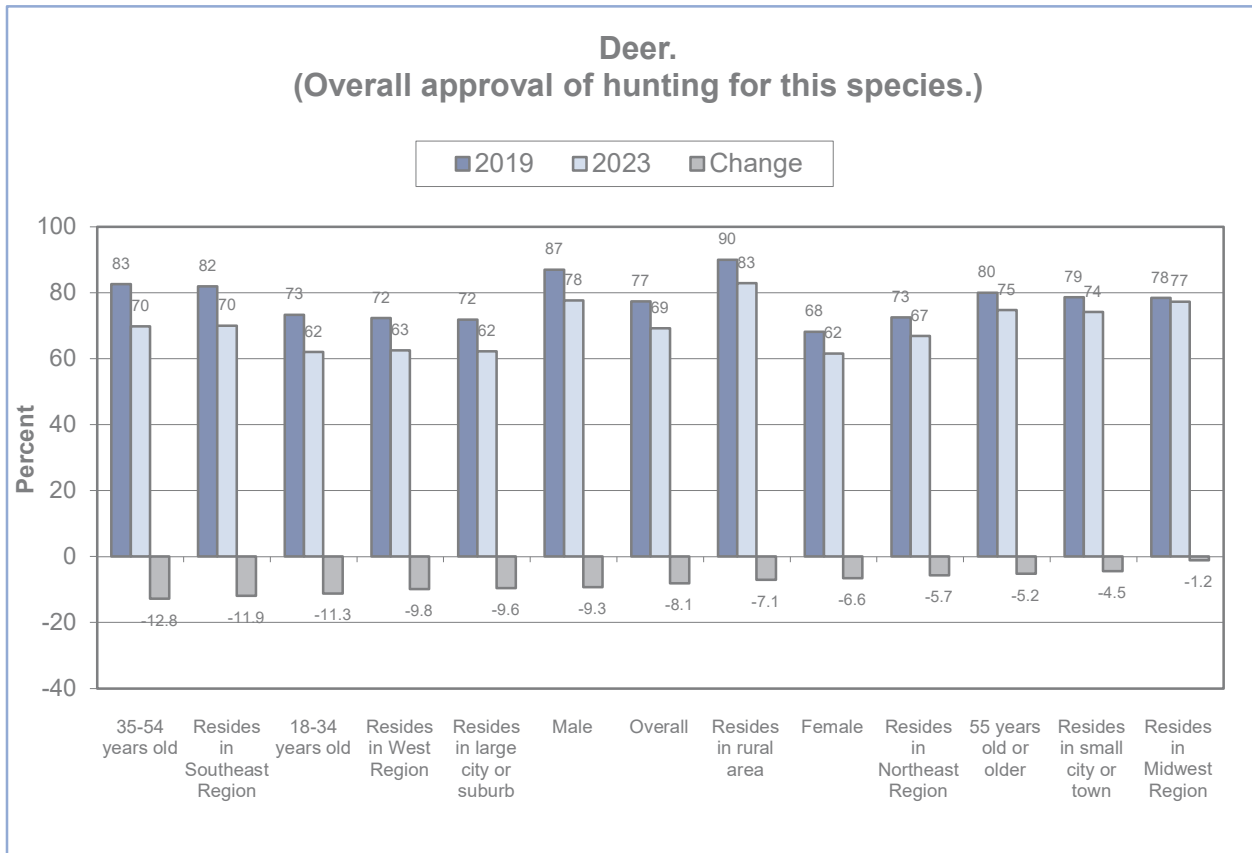


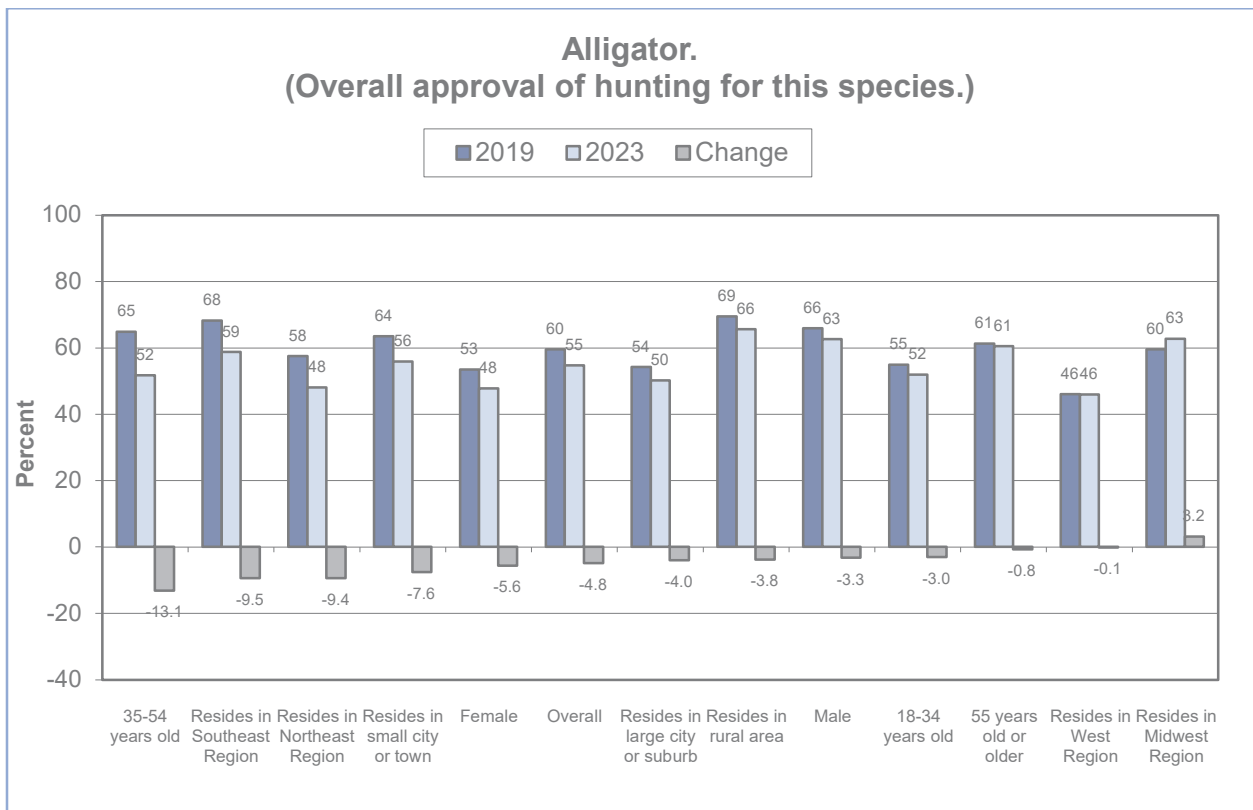
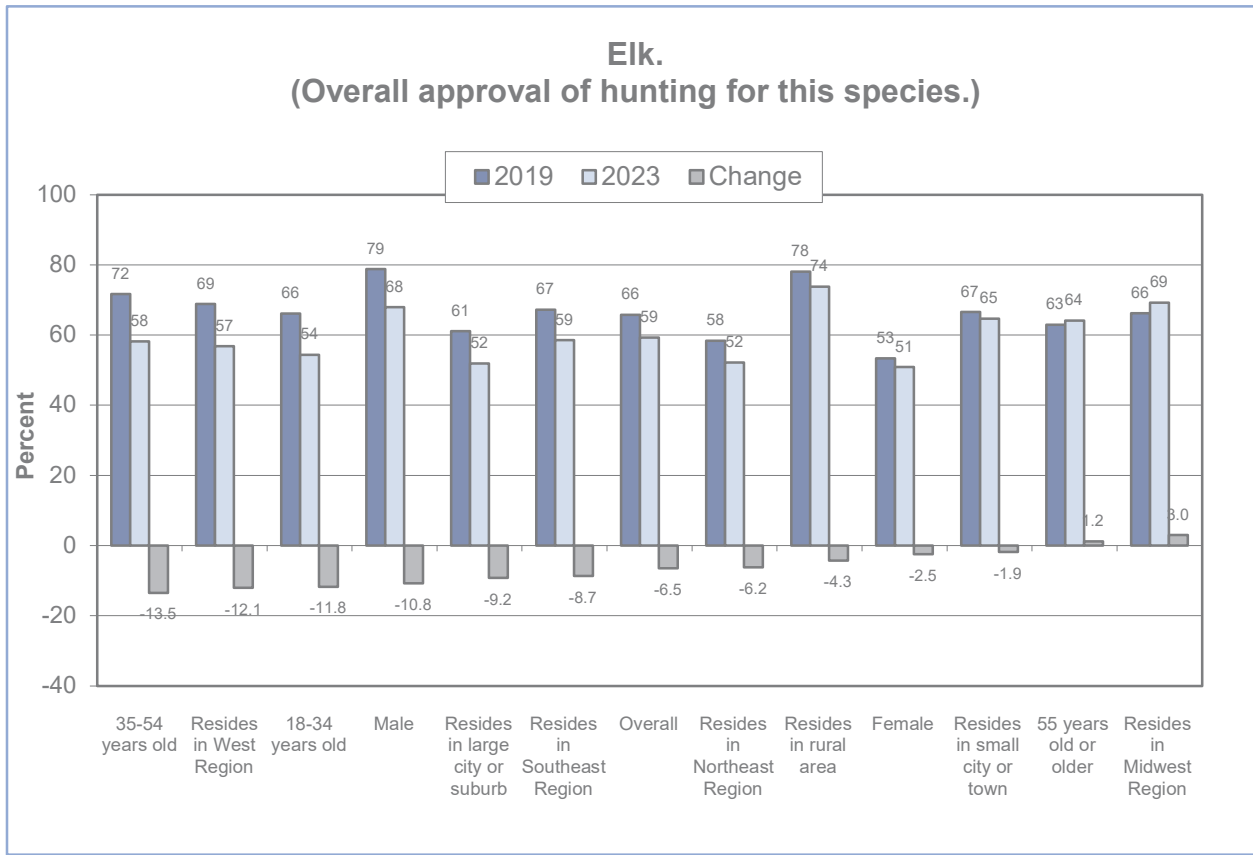
Overall approval of hunting for the following species among U.S. residents (%)			
Species	2019	2023	% Change
Squirrel	66.0	54.6	-11.4
Duck	74.1	63.0	-11.1
Rabbit	71.8	62.2	-9.6
Wild turkey	77.5	69.1	-8.4
Deer	77.3	69.2	-8.1
Mourning dove	45.2	38.3	-6.9
Elk	65.8	59.3	-6.5
Alligator	59.5	54.7	-4.8
Black bear	45.1	41.4	-3.7
Grizzly bear	41.0	38.2	-2.9
Mountain lion or cougar	39.0	36.8	-2.2
Wolf	39.5	37.7	-1.8
African lion	14.3	17.0	+2.6
African elephant	6.9	10.4	+3.5

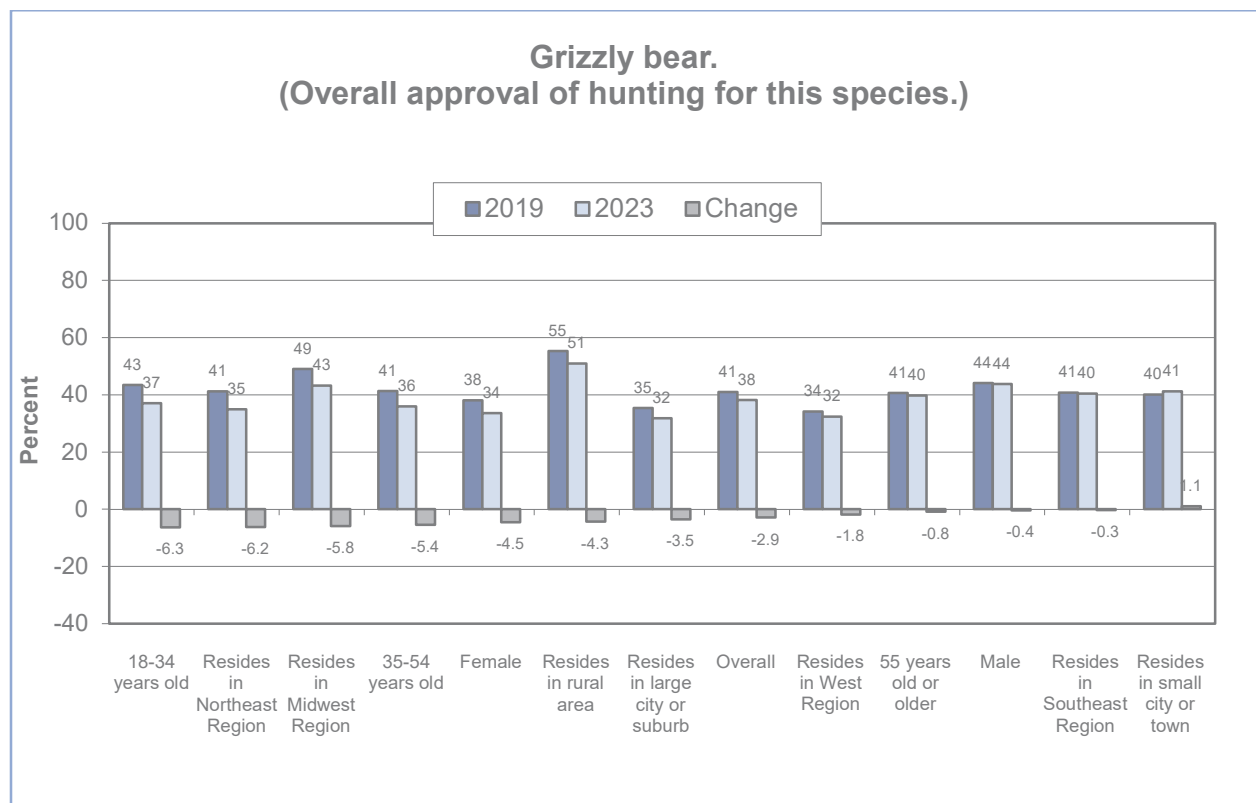
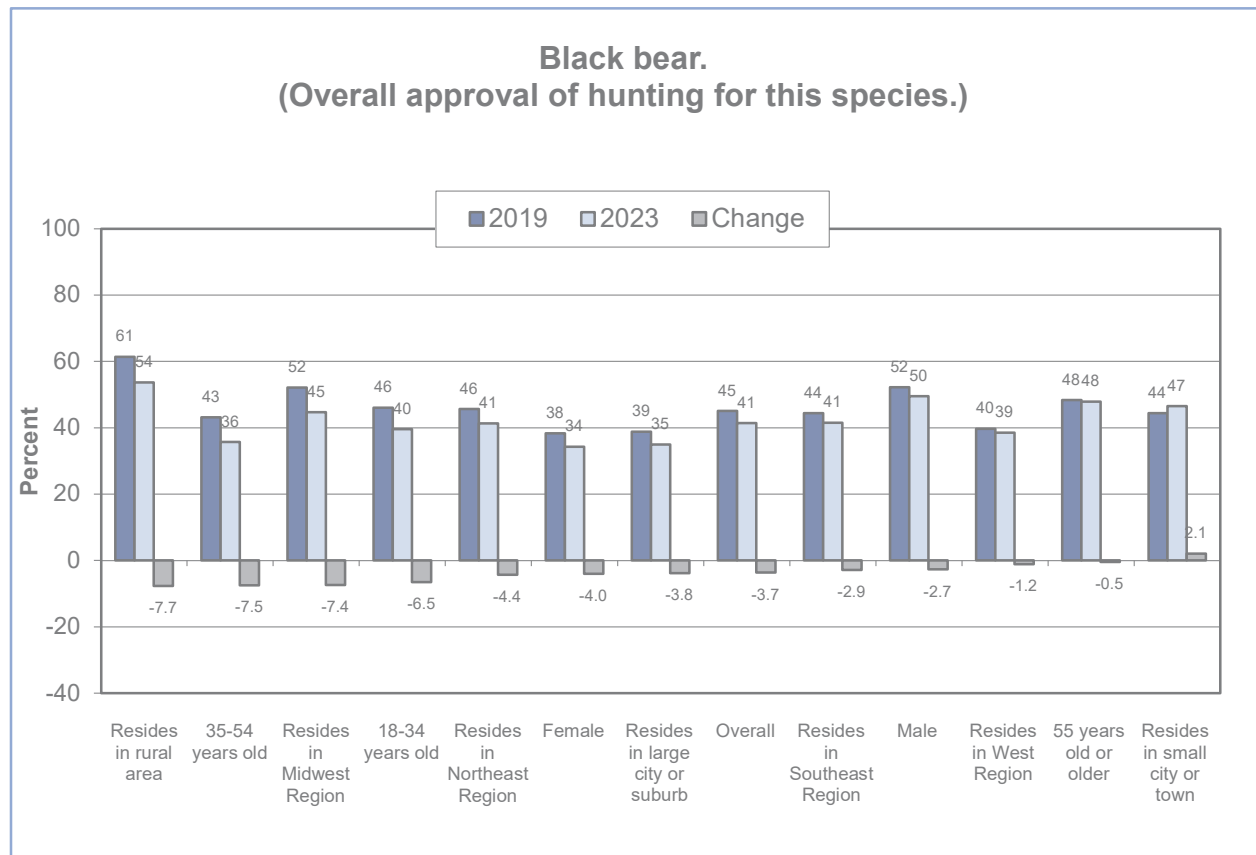
Demographic crosstabulations of these results are shown on the following pages. Results are varied in general, although middle-aged adults often had large decreases in approval.

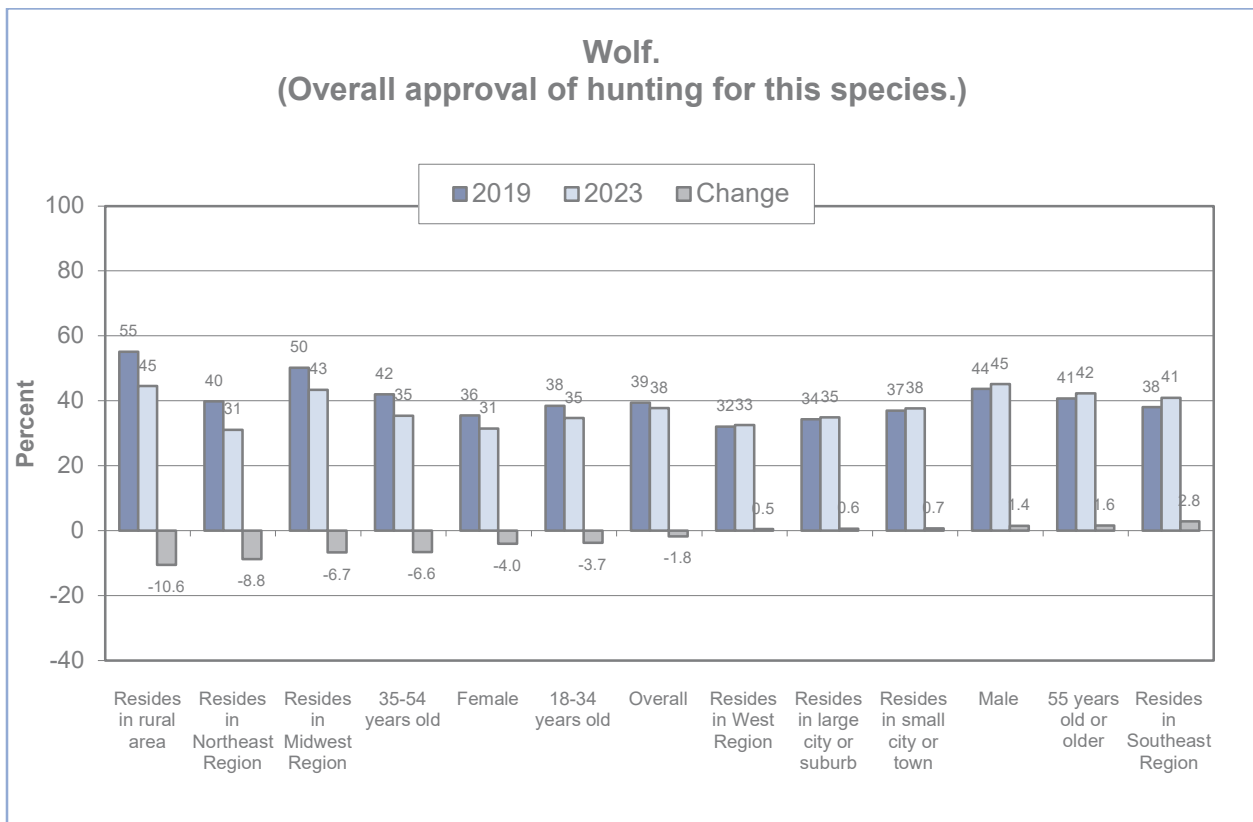
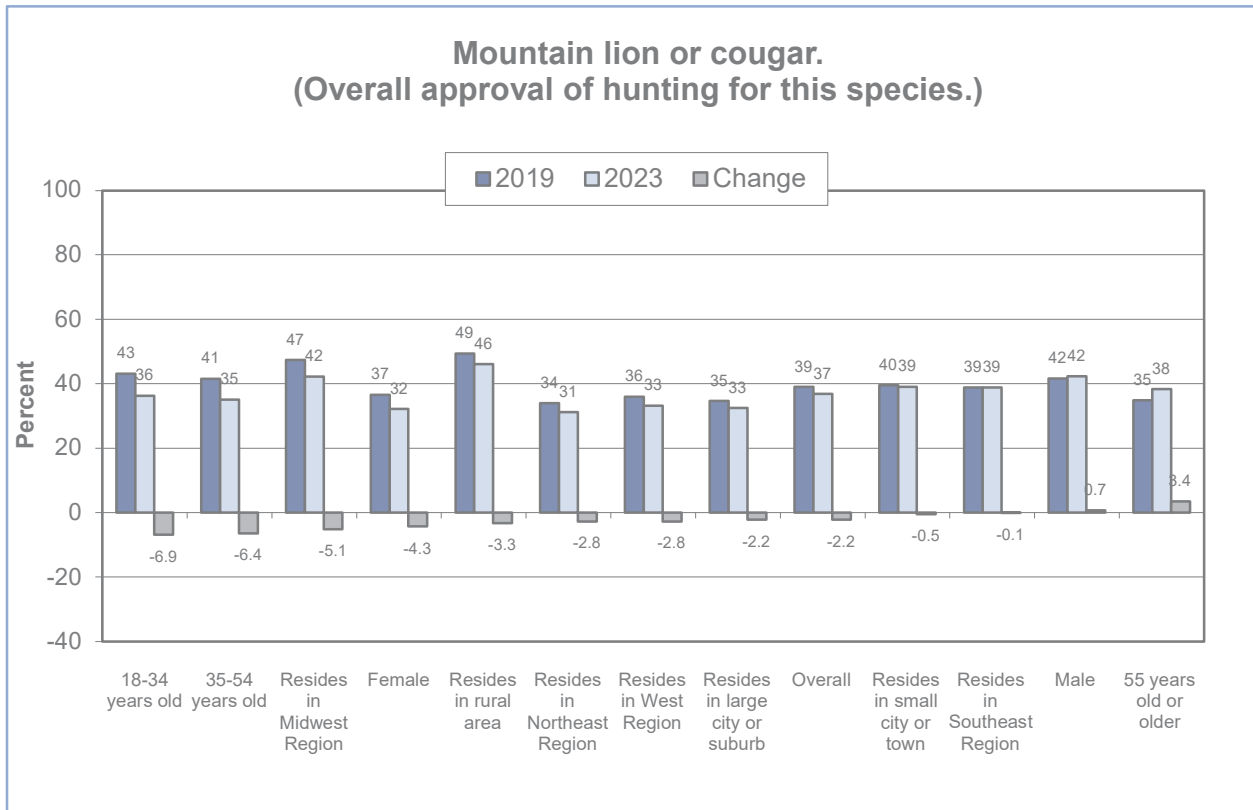


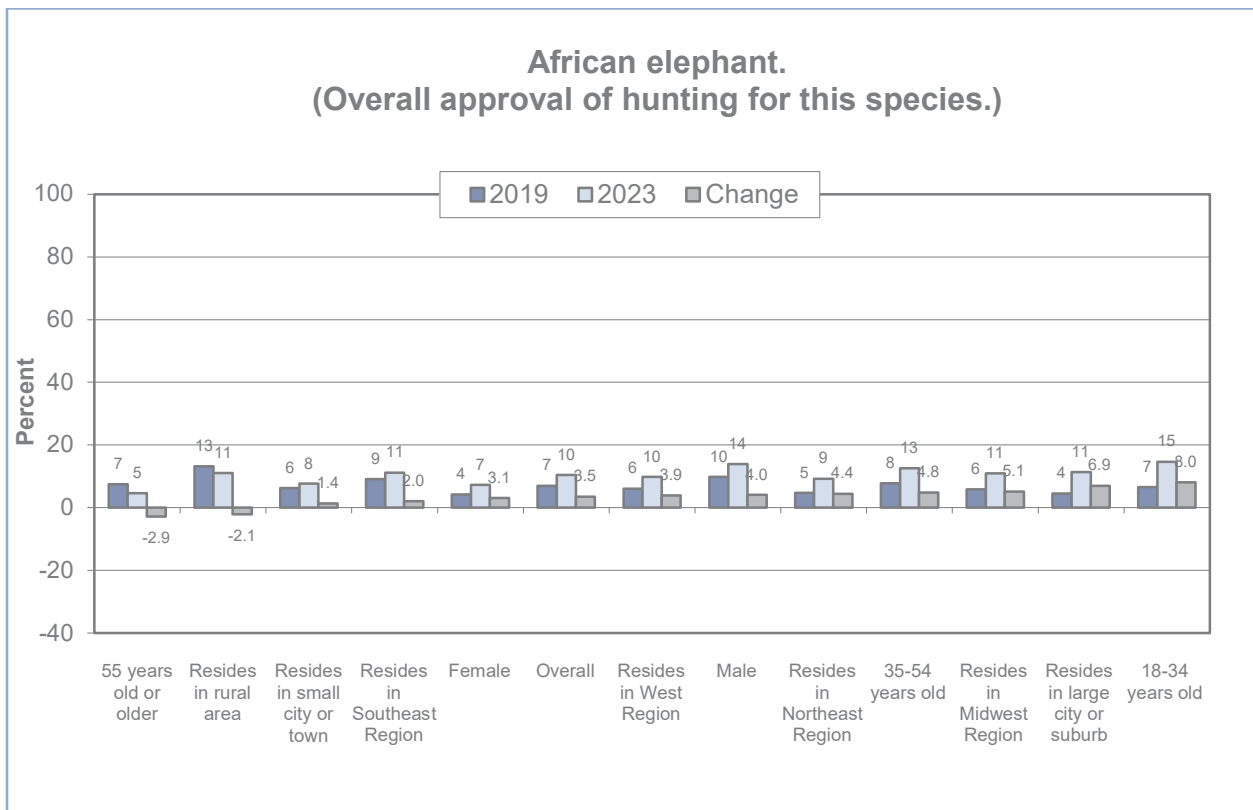
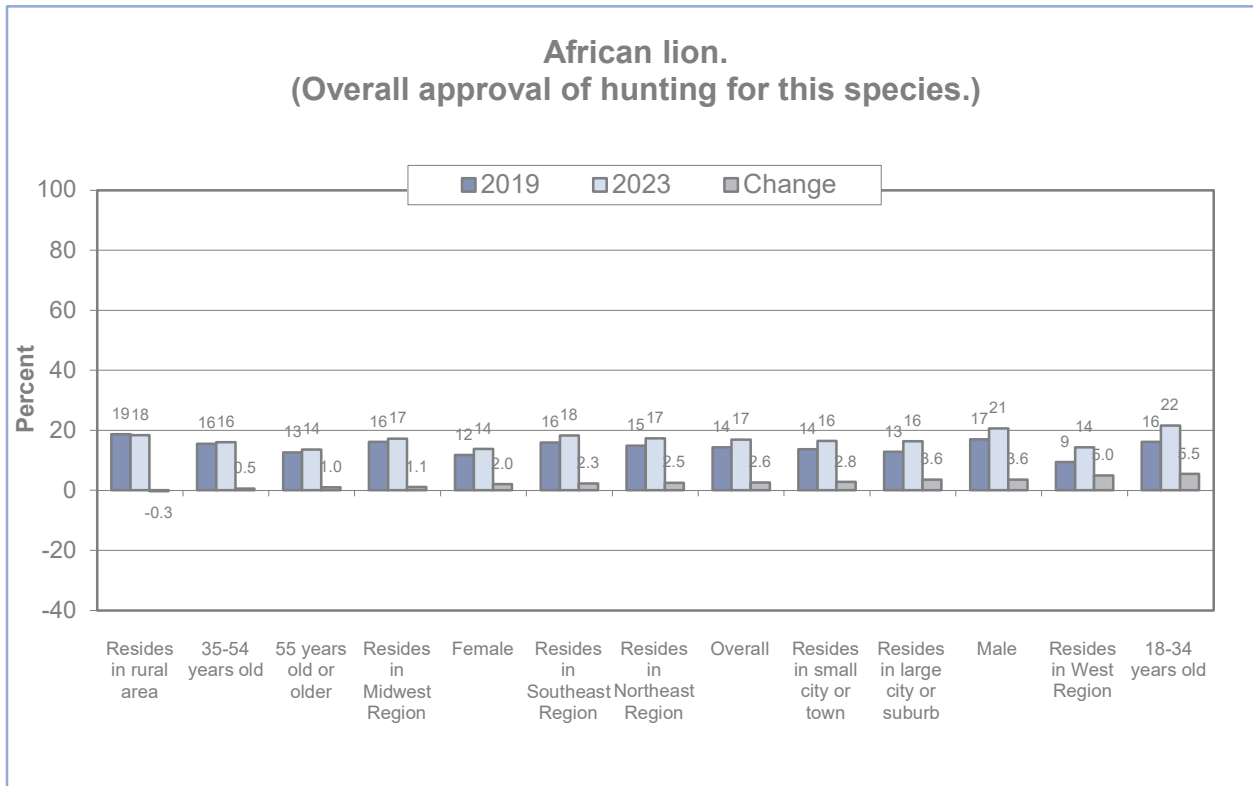




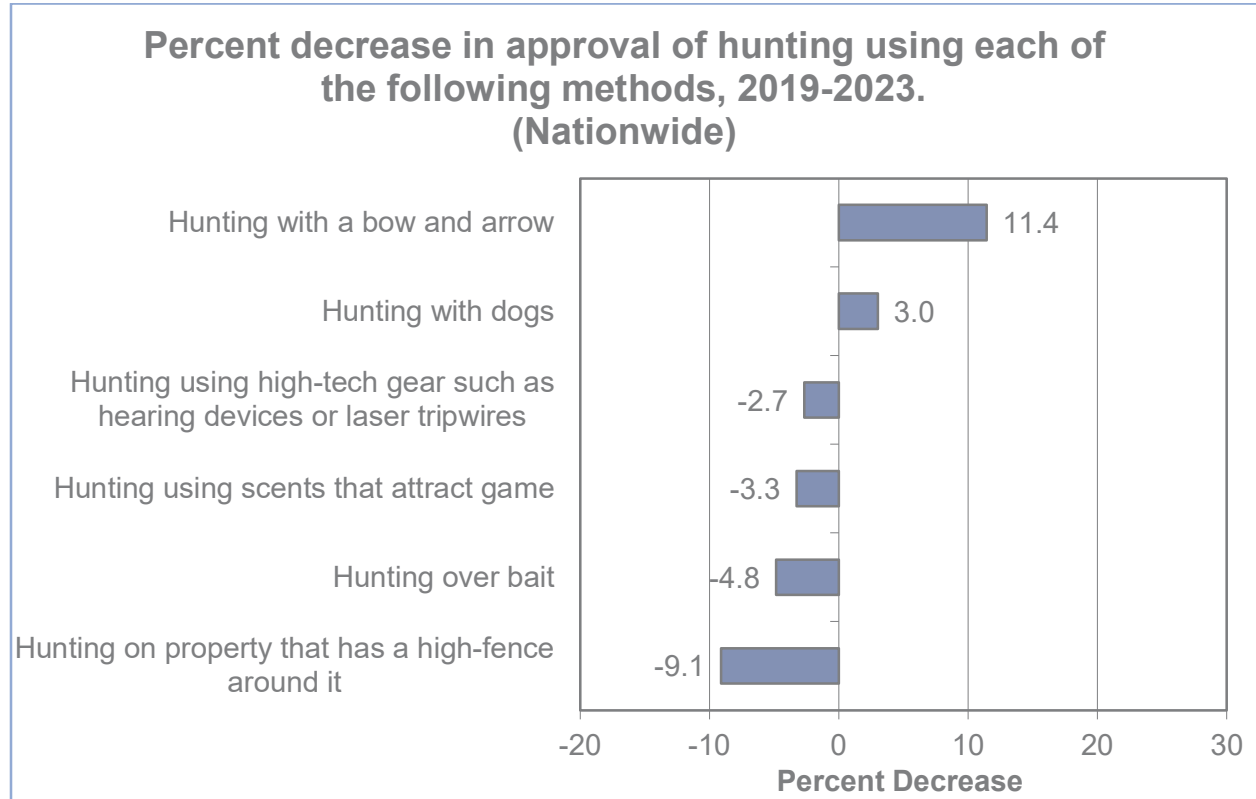






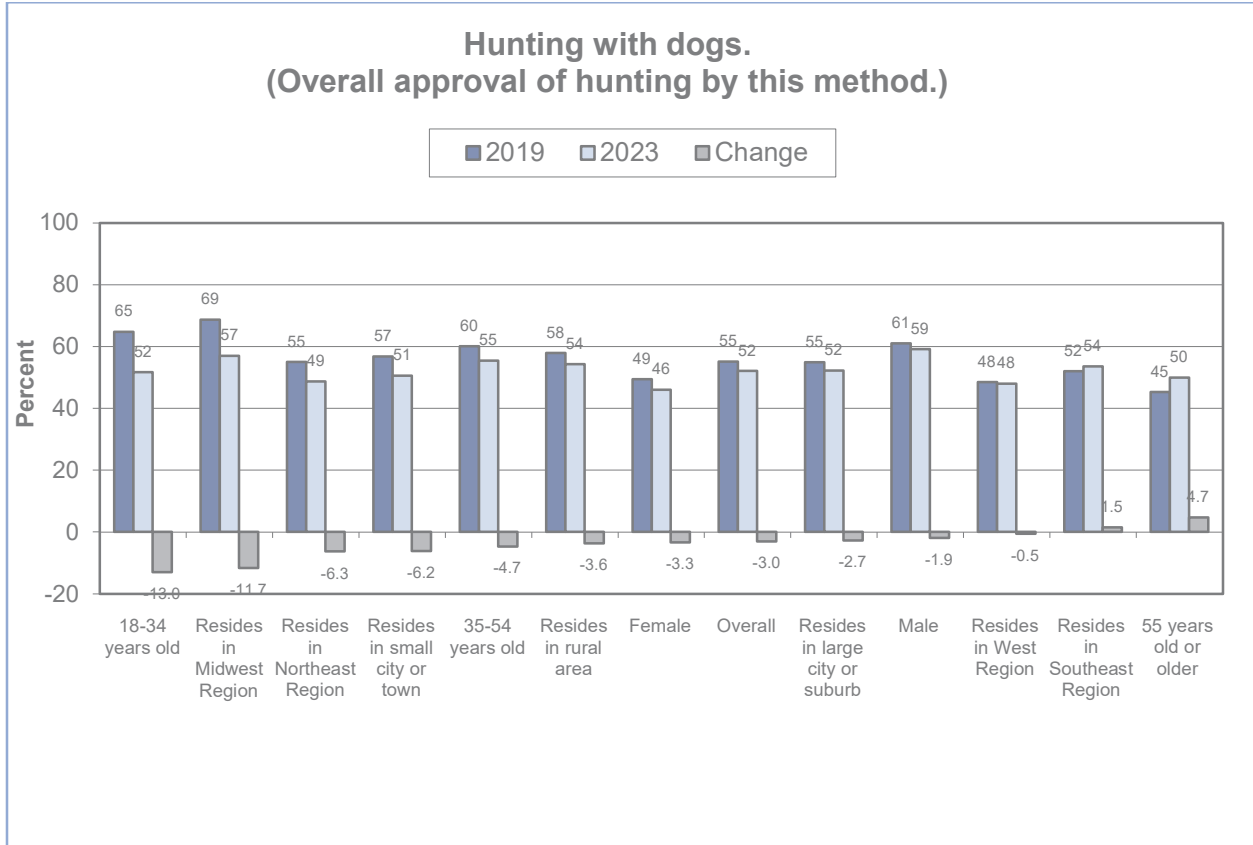
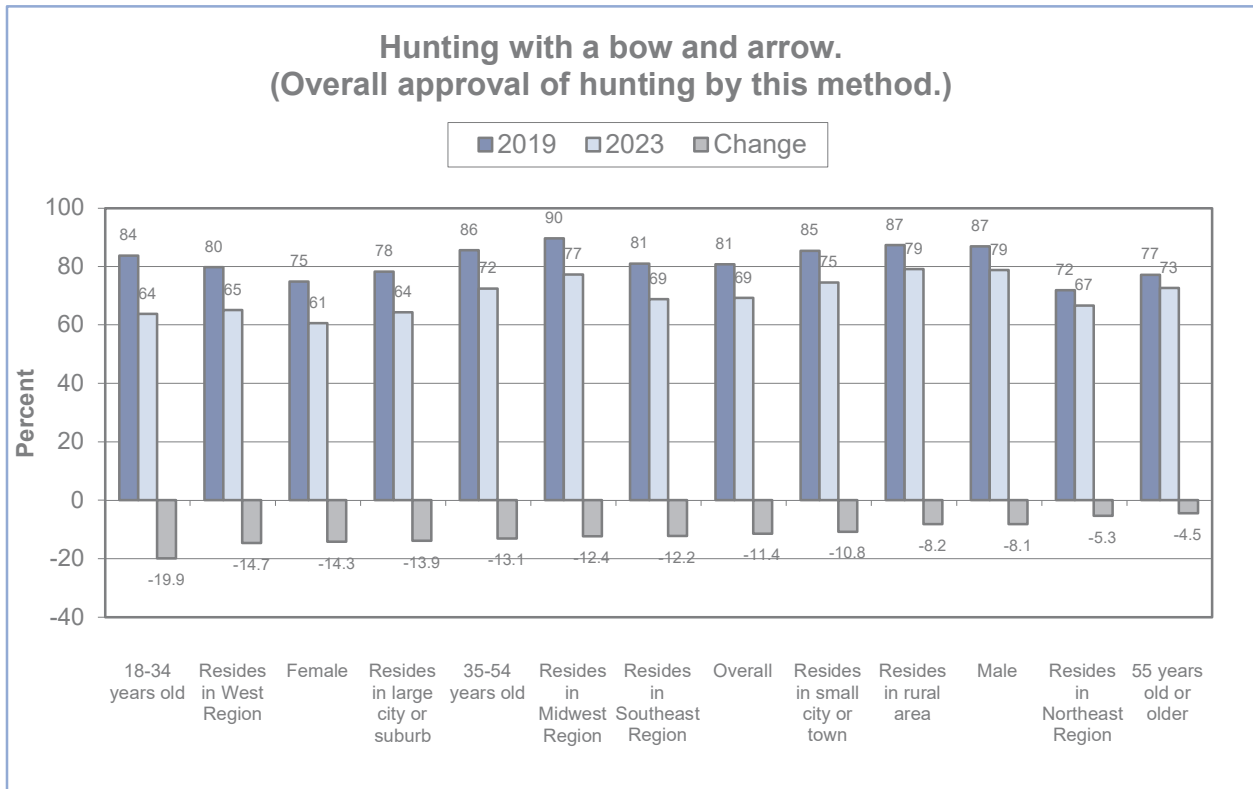


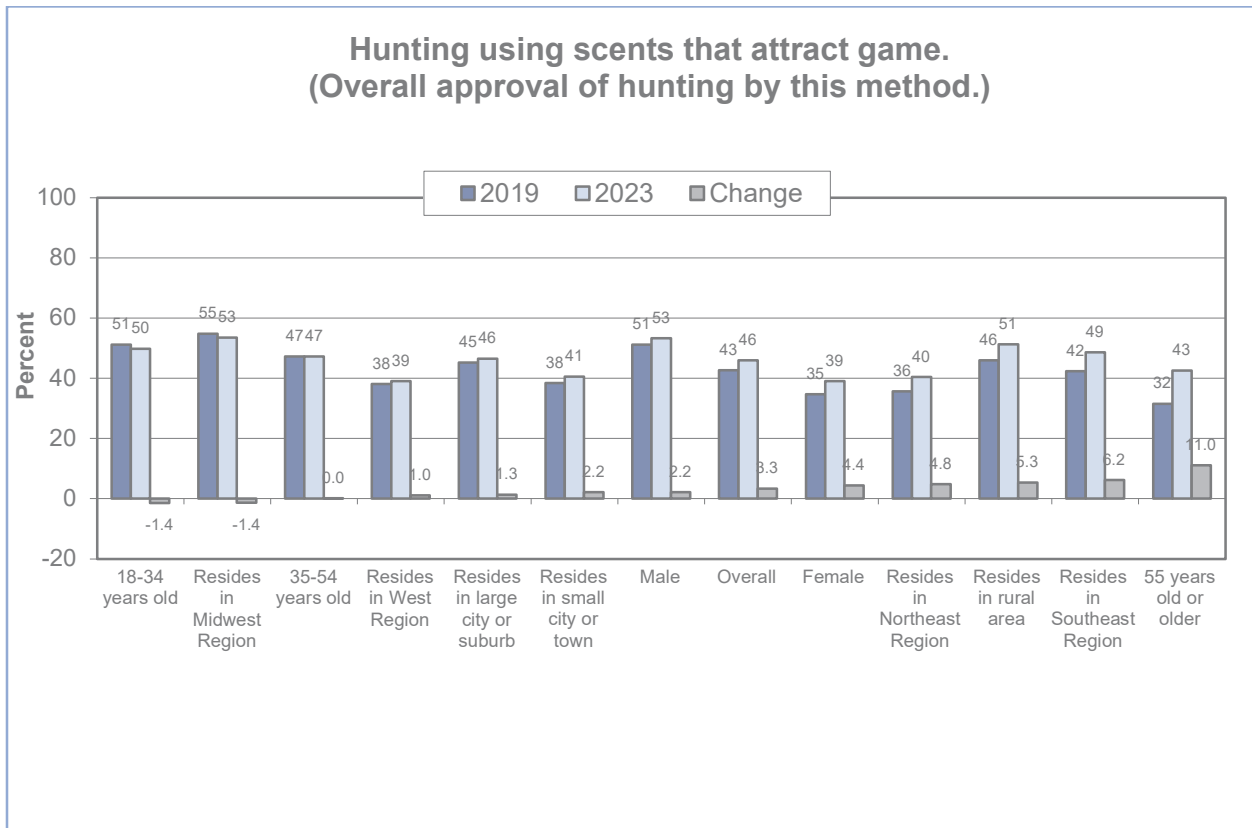
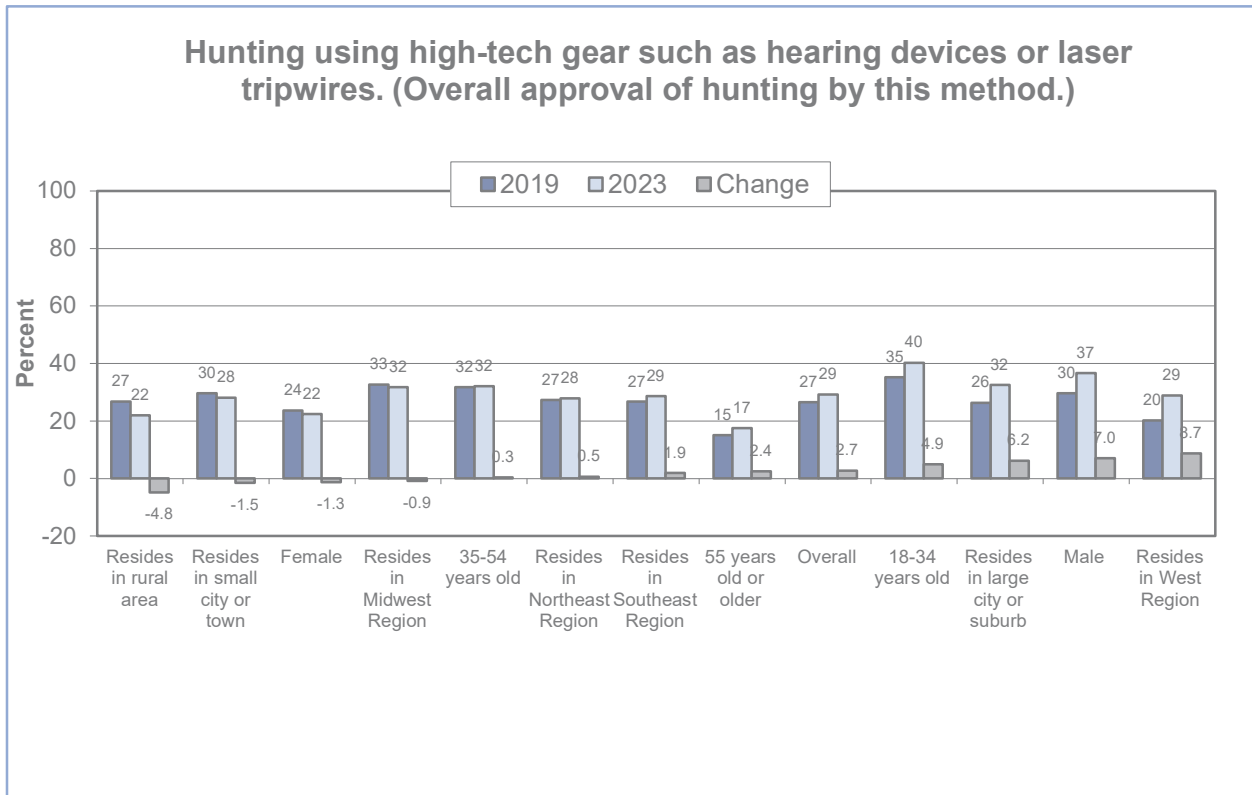
Next, approval of hunting by six different methods is discussed. There was a large decrease in approval of bowhunting (11.4%), followed by hunting with dogs (3.0%). Interestingly, approval of the other four methods has increased (which show up as negative values in the graph) since 2019, although approval of those methods remains relatively low.



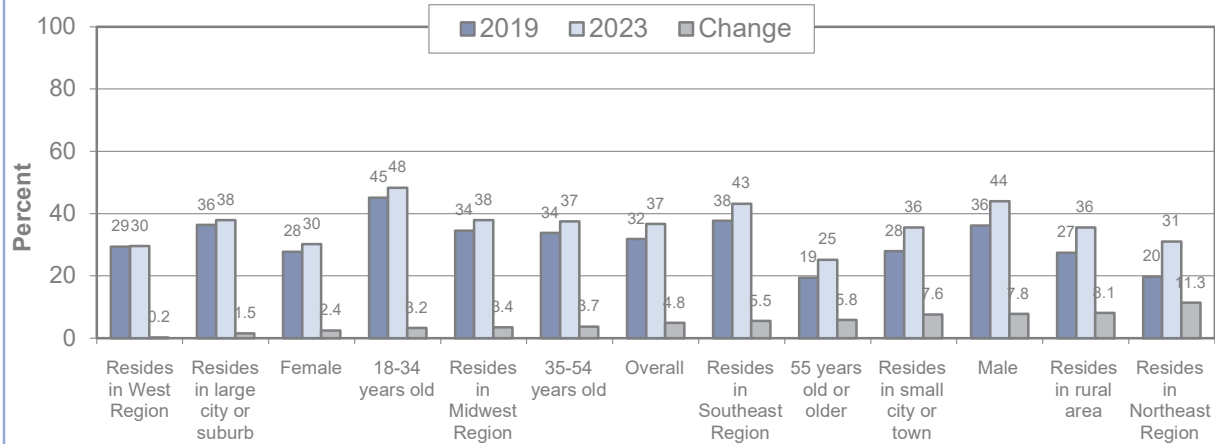
Overall approval of hunting using each of the following methods by U.S. residents (%)			
Method	2019	2023	% Change
Hunting with a bow and arrow	80.7	69.3	-11.4
Hunting with dogs	55.1	52.1	-3.0
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	26.5	29.2	2.7
Hunting using scents that attract game	42.6	45.9	3.3
Hunting over bait	31.8	36.7	4.8
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	20.1	29.2	9.1

Crosstabulations are shown on the following pages. Young adults tended to have the largest swings in attitude, having the largest decrease in approval of bowhunting, hunting with dogs, and hunting with scents and largest increase in approval of high-fence hunting.

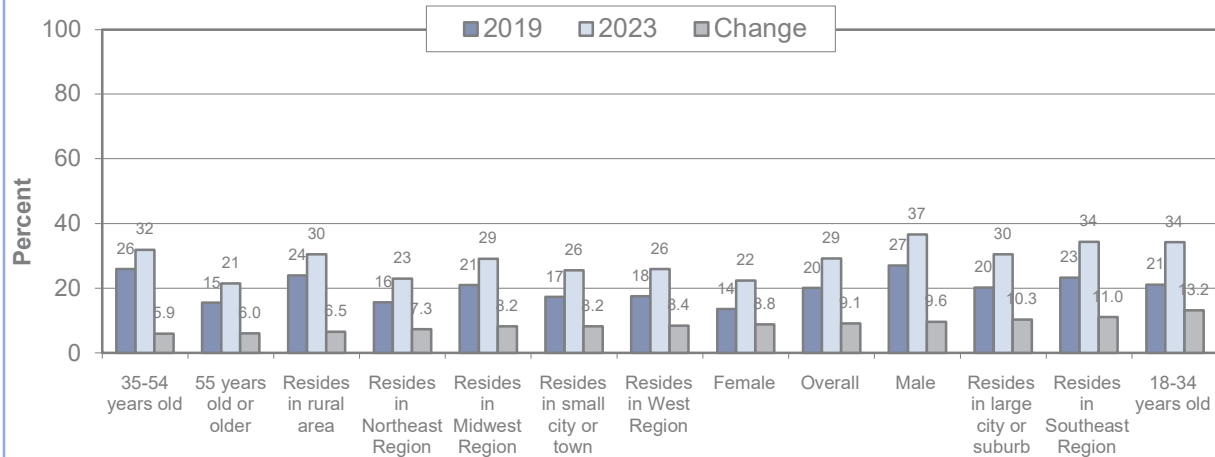




Hunting over bait. (Overall approval of hunting by this method.)



Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it. (Overall approval of hunting by this method.)



Finally in this section on national approval of hunting, the following table shows all the preceding data in descending order of decreases in approval. All crosstabulations are comparisons between 2019 and 2023 surveys, whereas nationwide numbers are comparisons between 2021 and 2023 surveys and are denoted with an asterisk (*).

Reasons for hunting, species hunted, and methods crosstabulated by all demographic groups, Nationwide, 2019-2023		
Reason, Species, or Method	Demographic Group	% Change
For the sport	Resides in rural area	-22.5
To get organic meat	35-54 years old	-21.0
Hunting with a bow and arrow	18-34 years old	-19.9
Squirrel	35-54 years old	-19.9
Duck	Resides in West Region	-19.1
For the sport	55 years old or older	-19.0
Squirrel	Resides in West Region	-18.8
For the challenge	Resides in rural area	-17.4
Rabbit	35-54 years old	-17.4
For the sport	Resides in Midwest Region	-17.2
Duck	18-34 years old	-17.0
For the sport	Resides in small city or town	-16.9
Duck	35-54 years old	-16.5
For the sport	35-54 years old	-16.5
Wild turkey	18-34 years old	-16.5
To get organic meat	Resides in small city or town	-16.2
To get organic meat	18-34 years old	-16.2
To get organic meat	Resides in Southeast Region	-16.0
Squirrel	Resides in rural area	-15.9
To get locally sourced food	35-54 years old	-15.8
For the sport	Resides in Southeast Region	-15.7
Mourning dove	35-54 years old	-15.5
To get organic meat	Resides in Northeast Region	-15.4
Nationwide*	Resides in West Region	-15.1
For the sport	Overall	-14.7
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Resides in West Region	-14.7
For the sport	Male	-14.5
For the sport	Female	-14.4
Rabbit	Resides in rural area	-14.3
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Female	-14.3
Squirrel	Resides in Southeast Region	-14.1
Rabbit	Resides in Southeast Region	-14.1
For the sport	Resides in Northeast Region	-14.0
Rabbit	Resides in West Region	-14.0
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Resides in large city or suburb	-13.9
To get locally sourced food	Resides in Northeast Region	-13.8
To get locally sourced food	Resides in rural area	-13.7
Duck	Resides in small city or town	-13.7
Elk	35-54 years old	-13.5
For the meat	35-54 years old	-13.4
To get organic meat	Overall	-13.4
To get organic meat	Female	-13.3
Squirrel	18-34 years old	-13.2
Alligator	35-54 years old	-13.1
For the sport	18-34 years old	-13.1
Hunting with a bow and arrow	35-54 years old	-13.1
To get organic meat	Male	-13.0
Wild turkey	35-54 years old	-13.0
Hunting with dogs	18-34 years old	-13.0

Reasons for hunting, species hunted, and methods crosstabulated by all demographic groups, Nationwide, 2019-2023		
Reason, Species, or Method	Demographic Group	% Change
Squirrel	Male	-13.0
To get organic meat	Resides in rural area	-12.9
To get organic meat	Resides in West Region	-12.8
Deer	35-54 years old	-12.8
Mourning dove	Resides in small city or town	-12.8
To get locally sourced food	Resides in small city or town	-12.7
Rabbit	Male	-12.7
To protect humans from harm	Resides in Northeast Region	-12.6
Wild turkey	Male	-12.6
To get locally sourced food	Resides in Southeast Region	-12.5
Wild turkey	Resides in West Region	-12.5
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Resides in Midwest Region	-12.4
Duck	Male	-12.4
To get organic meat	Resides in large city or suburb	-12.3
Duck	Resides in Southeast Region	-12.3
For the challenge	Resides in Midwest Region	-12.3
For the meat	18-34 years old	-12.3
For the challenge	Resides in small city or town	-12.2
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Resides in Southeast Region	-12.2
Duck	Resides in large city or suburb	-12.1
Elk	Resides in West Region	-12.1
To get locally sourced food	Resides in West Region	-12.1
For the meat	Resides in Northeast Region	-12.1
Deer	Resides in Southeast Region	-11.9
To get locally sourced food	Male	-11.9
For the meat	Resides in West Region	-11.9
Elk	18-34 years old	-11.8
Squirrel	Resides in large city or suburb	-11.7
Hunting with dogs	Resides in Midwest Region	-11.7
For a trophy	Resides in small city or town	-11.6
To protect humans from harm	18-34 years old	-11.6
For the meat	Resides in rural area	-11.5
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Overall	-11.4
Squirrel	Overall	-11.4
For the sport	Resides in West Region	-11.4
Wild turkey	Resides in Southeast Region	-11.3
Mourning dove	Male	-11.3
Deer	18-34 years old	-11.3
Mourning dove	Resides in Southeast Region	-11.2
Duck	Overall	-11.1
For the challenge	55 years old or older	-11.1
Rabbit	18-34 years old	-10.9
To get locally sourced food	Overall	-10.9
Elk	Male	-10.8
To get locally sourced food	18-34 years old	-10.8
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Resides in small city or town	-10.8
To protect humans from harm	35-54 years old	-10.6
Wolf	Resides in rural area	-10.6
For the meat	Male	-10.4
Rabbit	Resides in large city or suburb	-10.4
For the sport	Resides in large city or suburb	-10.4
To protect property	35-54 years old	-10.2
For the challenge	Male	-10.1
To protect property	Resides in rural area	-10.1
Duck	Resides in Northeast Region	-10.0

Reasons for hunting, species hunted, and methods crosstabulated by all demographic groups, Nationwide, 2019-2023		
Reason, Species, or Method	Demographic Group	% Change
Wild turkey	Resides in Northeast Region	-9.8
Deer	Resides in West Region	-9.8
Mourning dove	Resides in rural area	-9.8
Nationwide*	18-34 years old	-9.8
Wild turkey	Resides in large city or suburb	-9.8
For the meat	Resides in small city or town	-9.7
Deer	Resides in large city or suburb	-9.6
Rabbit	Overall	-9.6
Alligator	Resides in Southeast Region	-9.5
To get locally sourced food	Female	-9.4
For wildlife management	Resides in small city or town	-9.4
Duck	Female	-9.4
Alligator	Resides in Northeast Region	-9.4
For the meat	Overall	-9.4
Deer	Male	-9.3
To get locally sourced food	55 years old or older	-9.2
Elk	Resides in large city or suburb	-9.2
To get locally sourced food	Resides in large city or suburb	-9.2
Squirrel	Female	-9.1
To protect humans from harm	Female	-9.0
For wildlife management	35-54 years old	-9.0
For the meat	Resides in Southeast Region	-9.0
For the challenge	35-54 years old	-8.9
To protect humans from harm	Resides in small city or town	-8.9
Wolf	Resides in Northeast Region	-8.8
Elk	Resides in Southeast Region	-8.7
For the meat	Resides in large city or suburb	-8.6
Nationwide*	Resides in Midwest Region	-8.5
Wild turkey	Overall	-8.4
To protect property	Resides in Southeast Region	-8.4
For the meat	Female	-8.3
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Resides in rural area	-8.2
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Male	-8.1
Squirrel	Resides in Northeast Region	-8.1
Deer	Overall	-8.1
To protect humans from harm	Resides in Midwest Region	-8.1
For the challenge	Overall	-8.0
For a trophy	18-34 years old	-8.0
Squirrel	Resides in small city or town	-7.8
Black bear	Resides in rural area	-7.7
For the challenge	Resides in Northeast Region	-7.6
Alligator	Resides in small city or town	-7.6
Mourning dove	Resides in West Region	-7.6
To protect property	55 years old or older	-7.5
Black bear	35-54 years old	-7.5
To protect humans from harm	Resides in rural area	-7.5
For the challenge	18-34 years old	-7.4
Black bear	Resides in Midwest Region	-7.4
To get organic meat	Resides in Midwest Region	-7.3
Duck	Resides in rural area	-7.3
For a trophy	Resides in Midwest Region	-7.3
Nationwide*	Resides in rural area	-7.2
Nationwide*	Hispanic or Latino	-7.2
Wild turkey	Resides in small city or town	-7.1
Deer	Resides in rural area	-7.1

Reasons for hunting, species hunted, and methods crosstabulated by all demographic groups, Nationwide, 2019-2023		
Reason, Species, or Method	Demographic Group	% Change
To protect humans from harm	Resides in Southeast Region	-7.0
Mourning dove	Overall	-6.9
Mountain lion or cougar	18-34 years old	-6.9
For the challenge	Resides in West Region	-6.9
For wildlife management	55 years old or older	-6.9
For wildlife management	Resides in Southeast Region	-6.8
Nationwide*	Male	-6.8
Squirrel	55 years old or older	-6.8
For a trophy	Resides in rural area	-6.8
For the meat	55 years old or older	-6.8
For the challenge	Resides in Southeast Region	-6.7
Wolf	Resides in Midwest Region	-6.7
Wolf	35-54 years old	-6.6
For wildlife management	Resides in Northeast Region	-6.6
To protect humans from harm	Overall	-6.6
Wild turkey	Resides in rural area	-6.6
Deer	Female	-6.6
Elk	Overall	-6.5
Black bear	18-34 years old	-6.5
To get organic meat	55 years old or older	-6.5
Rabbit	Female	-6.4
Mountain lion or cougar	35-54 years old	-6.4
For a trophy	Resides in West Region	-6.3
Grizzly bear	18-34 years old	-6.3
Hunting with dogs	Resides in Northeast Region	-6.3
Grizzly bear	Resides in Northeast Region	-6.2
Elk	Resides in Northeast Region	-6.2
Nationwide*	White or Caucasian	-6.2
Hunting with dogs	Resides in small city or town	-6.2
To protect property	Male	-6.1
For a trophy	35-54 years old	-6.1
To protect property	Resides in small city or town	-6.0
Mourning dove	18-34 years old	-6.0
Grizzly bear	Resides in Midwest Region	-5.8
To protect humans from harm	Resides in large city or suburb	-5.8
To protect property	Overall	-5.7
Deer	Resides in Northeast Region	-5.7
Alligator	Female	-5.6
Grizzly bear	35-54 years old	-5.4
For the challenge	Female	-5.3
Hunting with a bow and arrow	Resides in Northeast Region	-5.3
Deer	55 years old or older	-5.2
To protect property	Resides in Midwest Region	-5.2
To protect property	18-34 years old	-5.2
Mountain lion or cougar	Resides in Midwest Region	-5.1
For a trophy	Resides in Northeast Region	-5.1
For a trophy	Overall	-5.1
Rabbit	55 years old or older	-4.9
To protect property	Female	-4.9
For the meat	Resides in Midwest Region	-4.9
For wildlife management	Male	-4.9
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Resides in rural area	-4.8
For a trophy	Male	-4.8
Alligator	Overall	-4.8

Reasons for hunting, species hunted, and methods crosstabulated by all demographic groups, Nationwide, 2019-2023		
Reason, Species, or Method	Demographic Group	% Change
To protect property	Resides in large city or suburb	-4.8
Hunting with dogs	35-54 years old	-4.7
Nationwide*	Resides in Southeast Region	-4.7
For a trophy	Female	-4.7
For wildlife management	Overall	-4.6
Nationwide*	Black or African-American	-4.6
For wildlife management	Resides in West Region	-4.6
Hunting with a bow and arrow	55 years old or older	-4.5
Grizzly bear	Female	-4.5
Deer	Resides in small city or town	-4.5
Black bear	Resides in Northeast Region	-4.4
Grizzly bear	Resides in rural area	-4.3
Elk	Resides in rural area	-4.3
Mountain lion or cougar	Female	-4.3
For wildlife management	Female	-4.2
Rabbit	Resides in small city or town	-4.1
Wolf	Female	-4.0
Black bear	Female	-4.0
Alligator	Resides in large city or suburb	-4.0
Rabbit	Resides in Northeast Region	-4.0
Mourning dove	Resides in Midwest Region	-3.9
Nationwide*	Overall	-3.9
Black bear	Resides in large city or suburb	-3.8
Duck	55 years old or older	-3.8
Alligator	Resides in rural area	-3.8
Wild turkey	Female	-3.8
Wolf	18-34 years old	-3.7
To get locally sourced food	Resides in Midwest Region	-3.7
Black bear	Overall	-3.7
Hunting with dogs	Resides in rural area	-3.6
For wildlife management	Resides in rural area	-3.6
To protect property	Resides in West Region	-3.6
For a trophy	55 years old or older	-3.6
Grizzly bear	Resides in large city or suburb	-3.5
Mourning dove	Resides in large city or suburb	-3.4
Hunting with dogs	Female	-3.3
Mountain lion or cougar	Resides in rural area	-3.3
Alligator	Male	-3.3
Mourning dove	55 years old or older	-3.2
For a trophy	Resides in Southeast Region	-3.1
To protect humans from harm	Male	-3.0
Hunting with dogs	Overall	-3.0
Alligator	18-34 years old	-3.0
To protect property	Resides in Northeast Region	-2.9
Black bear	Resides in Southeast Region	-2.9
Grizzly bear	Overall	-2.9
African elephant	55 years old or older	-2.9
Mountain lion or cougar	Resides in Northeast Region	-2.8
Mountain lion or cougar	Resides in West Region	-2.8
Hunting with dogs	Resides in large city or suburb	-2.7
Black bear	Male	-2.7
Elk	Female	-2.5
Mourning dove	Female	-2.4
For the challenge	Resides in large city or suburb	-2.3
For wildlife management	Resides in large city or suburb	-2.2

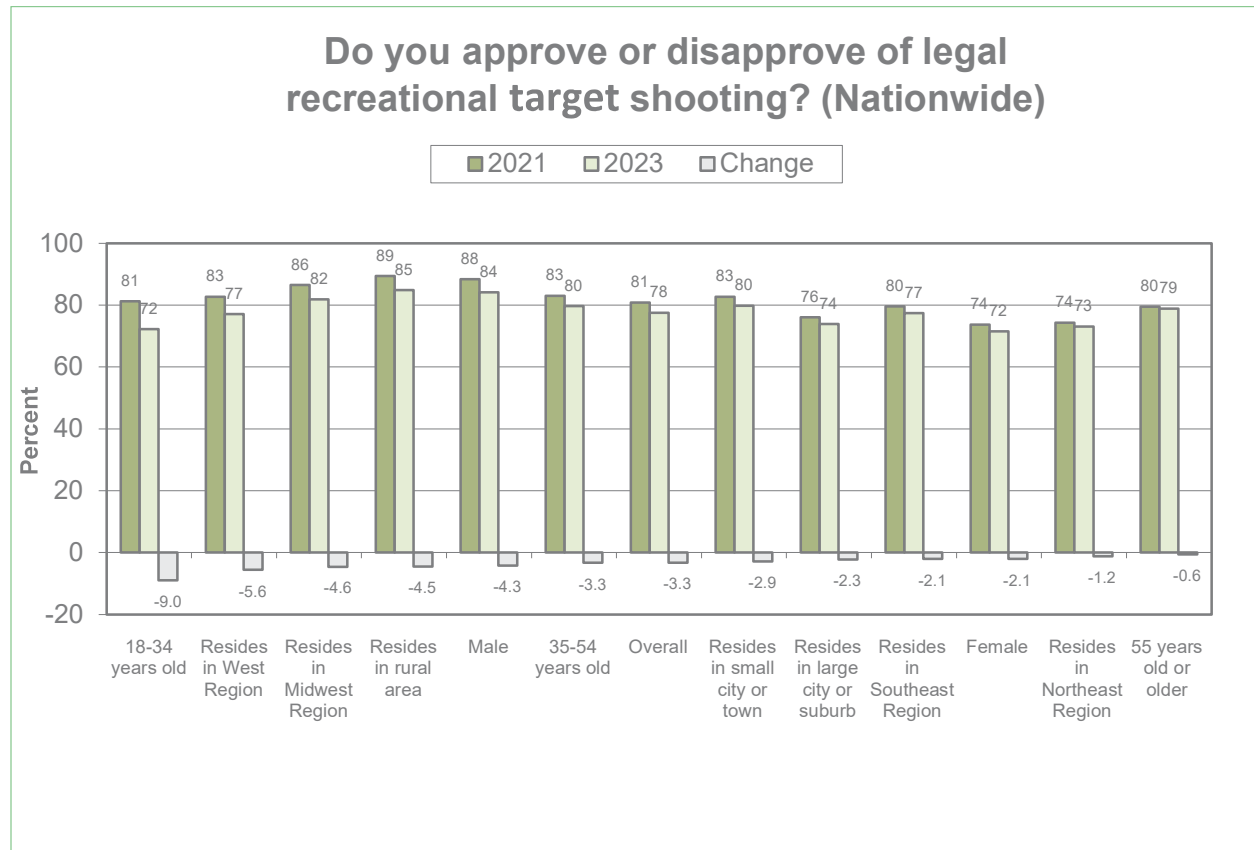
Reasons for hunting, species hunted, and methods crosstabulated by all demographic groups, Nationwide, 2019-2023		
Reason, Species, or Method	Demographic Group	% Change
Mountain lion or cougar	Resides in large city or suburb	-2.2
Mountain lion or cougar	Overall	-2.2
African elephant	Resides in rural area	-2.1
Nationwide*	Resides in small city or town	-2.0
Nationwide*	55 years old or older	-2.0
Hunting with dogs	Male	-1.9
Elk	Resides in small city or town	-1.9
Grizzly bear	Resides in West Region	-1.8
Wolf	Overall	-1.8
Nationwide*	Resides in large city or suburb	-1.5
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Resides in small city or town	-1.5
Hunting using scents that attract game	18-34 years old	-1.4
Hunting using scents that attract game	Resides in Midwest Region	-1.4
For a trophy	Resides in large city or suburb	-1.4
Rabbit	Resides in Midwest Region	-1.3
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Female	-1.3
Nationwide*	35-54 years old	-1.2
Nationwide*	Female	-1.2
Black bear	Resides in West Region	-1.2
Deer	Resides in Midwest Region	-1.2
Squirrel	Resides in Midwest Region	-1.1
Duck	Resides in Midwest Region	-1.0
For wildlife management	18-34 years old	-1.0
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Resides in Midwest Region	-0.9
Mourning dove	Resides in Northeast Region	-0.9
Grizzly bear	55 years old or older	-0.8
Alligator	55 years old or older	-0.8
Mountain lion or cougar	Resides in small city or town	-0.5
Hunting with dogs	Resides in West Region	-0.5
Black bear	55 years old or older	-0.5
Grizzly bear	Male	-0.4
Grizzly bear	Resides in Southeast Region	-0.3
African lion	Resides in rural area	-0.3
Wild turkey	55 years old or older	-0.2
Alligator	Resides in West Region	-0.1
Mountain lion or cougar	Resides in Southeast Region	-0.1
Hunting using scents that attract game	35-54 years old	0.0
To protect humans from harm	Resides in West Region	0.1
Hunting over bait	Resides in West Region	0.2
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	35-54 years old	0.3
Wolf	Resides in West Region	0.5
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Resides in Northeast Region	0.5
African lion	35-54 years old	0.5
Wolf	Resides in large city or suburb	0.6
Mountain lion or cougar	Male	0.7
Wolf	Resides in small city or town	0.7
African lion	55 years old or older	1.0
Hunting using scents that attract game	Resides in West Region	1.0
African lion	Resides in Midwest Region	1.1
Grizzly bear	Resides in small city or town	1.1
To protect humans from harm	55 years old or older	1.2

Reasons for hunting, species hunted, and methods crosstabulated by all demographic groups, Nationwide, 2019-2023		
Reason, Species, or Method	Demographic Group	% Change
Elk	55 years old or older	1.2
Hunting using scents that attract game	Resides in large city or suburb	1.3
For wildlife management	Resides in Midwest Region	1.4
African elephant	Resides in small city or town	1.4
Wolf	Male	1.4
Hunting with dogs	Resides in Southeast Region	1.5
Hunting over bait	Resides in large city or suburb	1.5
Wolf	55 years old or older	1.6
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Resides in Southeast Region	1.9
African elephant	Resides in Southeast Region	2.0
African lion	Female	2.0
Black bear	Resides in small city or town	2.1
Hunting using scents that attract game	Resides in small city or town	2.2
Hunting using scents that attract game	Male	2.2
African lion	Resides in Southeast Region	2.3
Hunting over bait	Female	2.4
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	55 years old or older	2.4
African lion	Resides in Northeast Region	2.5
African lion	Overall	2.6
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Overall	2.7
Wild turkey	Resides in Midwest Region	2.7
African lion	Resides in small city or town	2.8
Wolf	Resides in Southeast Region	2.8
Nationwide*	Resides in Northeast Region	3.0
Elk	Resides in Midwest Region	3.0
African elephant	Female	3.1
Alligator	Resides in Midwest Region	3.2
Hunting over bait	18-34 years old	3.2
Hunting using scents that attract game	Overall	3.3
Hunting over bait	Resides in Midwest Region	3.4
Mountain lion or cougar	55 years old or older	3.4
African elephant	Overall	3.5
African lion	Resides in large city or suburb	3.6
African lion	Male	3.6
Hunting over bait	35-54 years old	3.7
African elephant	Resides in West Region	3.9
African elephant	Male	4.0
Hunting using scents that attract game	Female	4.4
African elephant	Resides in Northeast Region	4.4
Hunting with dogs	55 years old or older	4.7
Hunting using scents that attract game	Resides in Northeast Region	4.8
African elephant	35-54 years old	4.8
Hunting over bait	Overall	4.8
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	18-34 years old	4.9
African lion	Resides in West Region	5.0
African elephant	Resides in Midwest Region	5.1
Hunting using scents that attract game	Resides in rural area	5.3
Hunting over bait	Resides in Southeast Region	5.5
African lion	18-34 years old	5.5
Hunting over bait	55 years old or older	5.8
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	35-54 years old	5.9

Reasons for hunting, species hunted, and methods crosstabulated by all demographic groups, Nationwide, 2019-2023		
Reason, Species, or Method	Demographic Group	% Change
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	55 years old or older	6.0
Hunting using scents that attract game	Resides in Southeast Region	6.2
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Resides in large city or suburb	6.2
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Resides in rural area	6.5
African elephant	Resides in large city or suburb	6.9
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Male	7.0
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Resides in Northeast Region	7.3
Hunting over bait	Resides in small city or town	7.6
Hunting over bait	Male	7.8
African elephant	18-34 years old	8.0
Hunting over bait	Resides in rural area	8.1
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Resides in Midwest Region	8.2
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Resides in small city or town	8.2
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Resides in West Region	8.4
Hunting using high-tech gear such as hearing devices or laser tripwires	Resides in West Region	8.7
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Female	8.8
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Overall	9.1
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Male	9.6
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Resides in large city or suburb	10.3
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	Resides in Southeast Region	11.0
Hunting using scents that attract game	55 years old or older	11.0
Hunting over bait	Resides in Northeast Region	11.3
Hunting on property that has a high-fence around it	18-34 years old	13.2

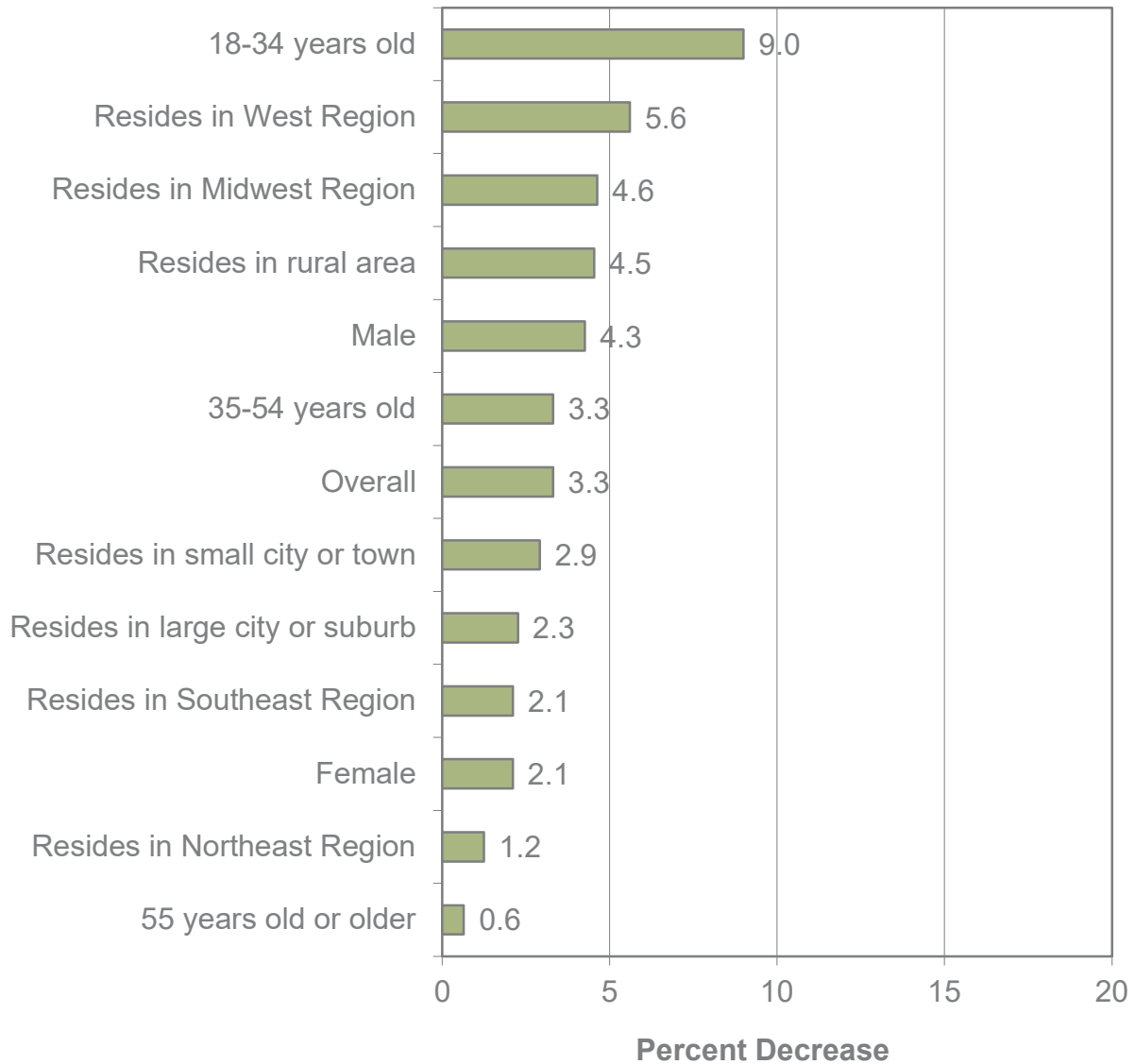
Target/Sport Shooting

Some national trend data are available regarding approval of recreational shooting. The decrease in overall approval of 3.3% since 2021 is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Approval declined more among young adults, West and Midwest Region residents, rural residents, and males than among U.S. residents overall.



Overall approval of recreational shooting by U.S. residents (%)			
Demographic Group	2021	2023	% Change
18-34 years old	81.3	72.3	-9.0
Resides in West Region	82.7	77.1	-5.6
Resides in Midwest Region	86.5	81.9	-4.6
Resides in rural area	89.4	84.9	-4.5
Male	88.4	84.2	-4.3
35-54 years old	83.1	79.7	-3.3
Overall	80.8	77.5	-3.3
Resides in small city or town	82.7	79.8	-2.9
Resides in large city or suburb	76.1	73.9	-2.3
Resides in Southeast Region	79.6	77.4	-2.1
Female	73.7	71.6	-2.1
Resides in Northeast Region	74.3	73.1	-1.2
55 years old or older	79.5	78.9	-0.6

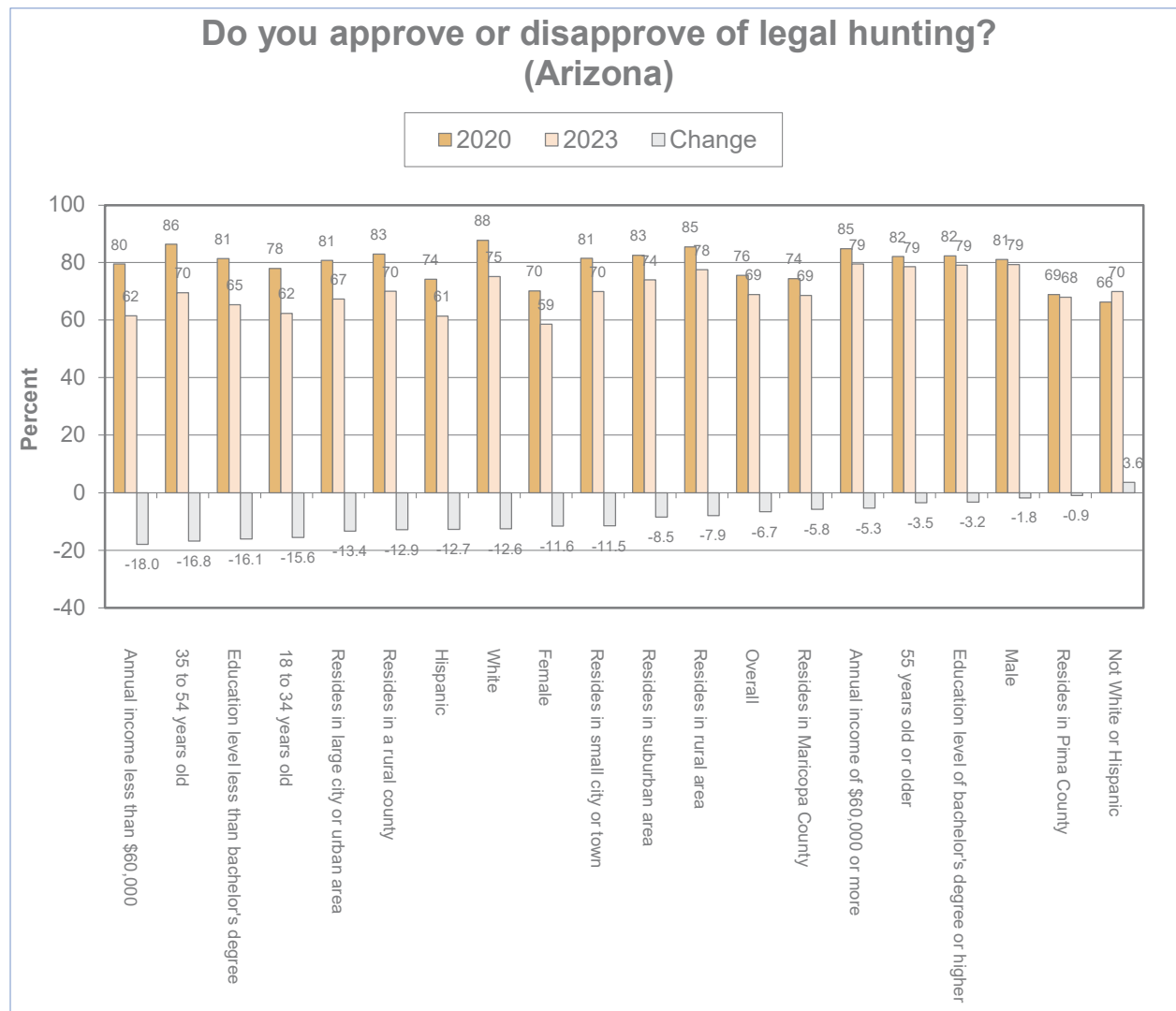
Percent decrease in approval of recreational shooting from each of the following groups, 2021-2023. (Nationwide)



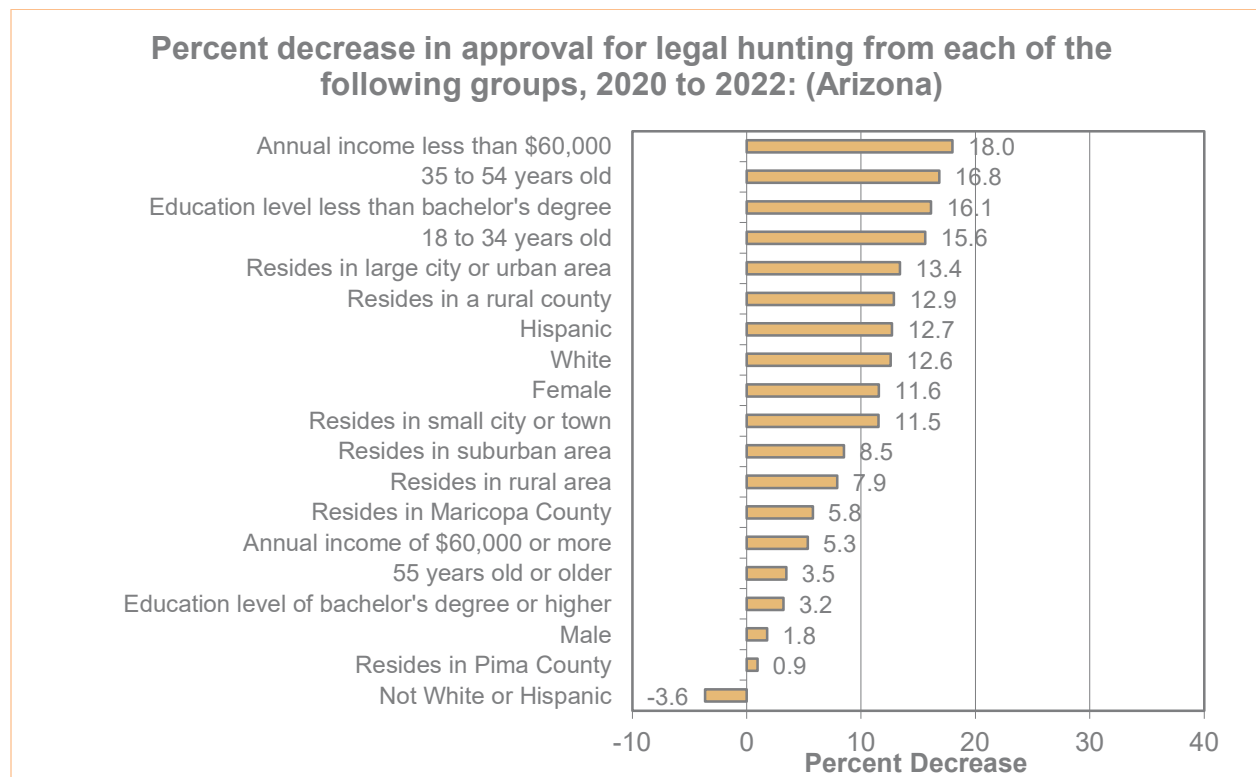
ARIZONA

Along with national data, trend data were available for Arizona, Maine, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

Among Arizona residents overall, approval of hunting decreased by 6.7% since 2020. The largest decreases were among those in the lower income category, middle-aged adults, those in the lower education category, and young adults. At the other end of the spectrum, there was an increase (which shows up as negative values in the graph) in approval among Arizona residents who are not White or Hispanic. A table of these results is shown on the following page.

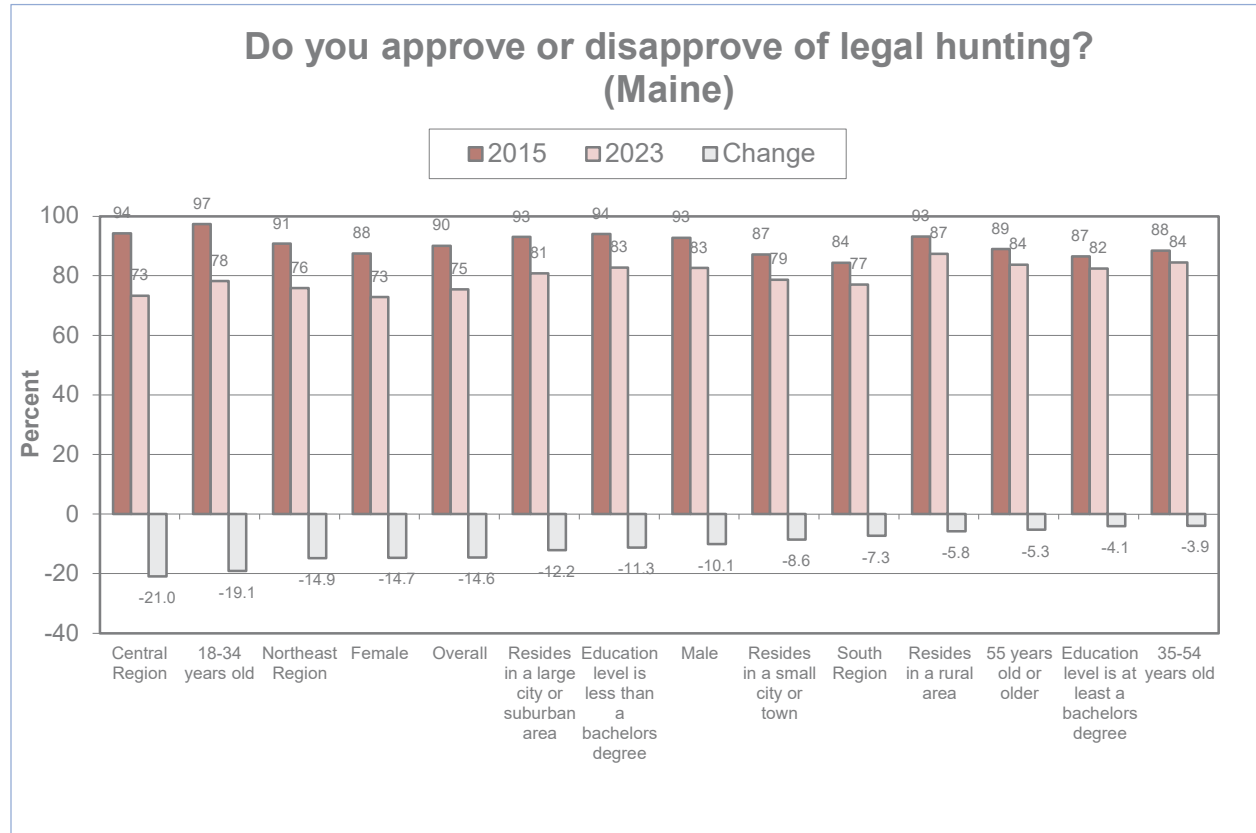


Overall approval of legal hunting by Arizona residents (%)			
Demographic Group	2020	2023	% Change
Annual income less than \$60,000	79.5	61.5	-18.0
35 to 54 years old	86.3	69.5	-16.8
Education level less than bachelor's degree	81.4	65.3	-16.1
18 to 34 years old	78.0	62.3	-15.6
Resides in large city or urban area	80.8	67.4	-13.4
Resides in a rural county	83.0	70.1	-12.9
Hispanic	74.2	61.4	-12.7
White	87.7	75.1	-12.6
Female	70.1	58.5	-11.6
Resides in small city or town	81.4	69.9	-11.5
Resides in suburban area	82.5	74.0	-8.5
Resides in rural area	85.4	77.5	-7.9
Overall	75.5	68.8	-6.7
Resides in Maricopa County	74.4	68.6	-5.8
Annual income of \$60,000 or more	84.8	79.5	-5.3
55 years old or older	82.1	78.6	-3.5
Education level of bachelor's degree or higher	82.3	79.1	-3.2
Male	81.1	79.3	-1.8
Resides in Pima County	68.9	68.0	-0.9
Not White or Hispanic	66.3	69.9	3.6



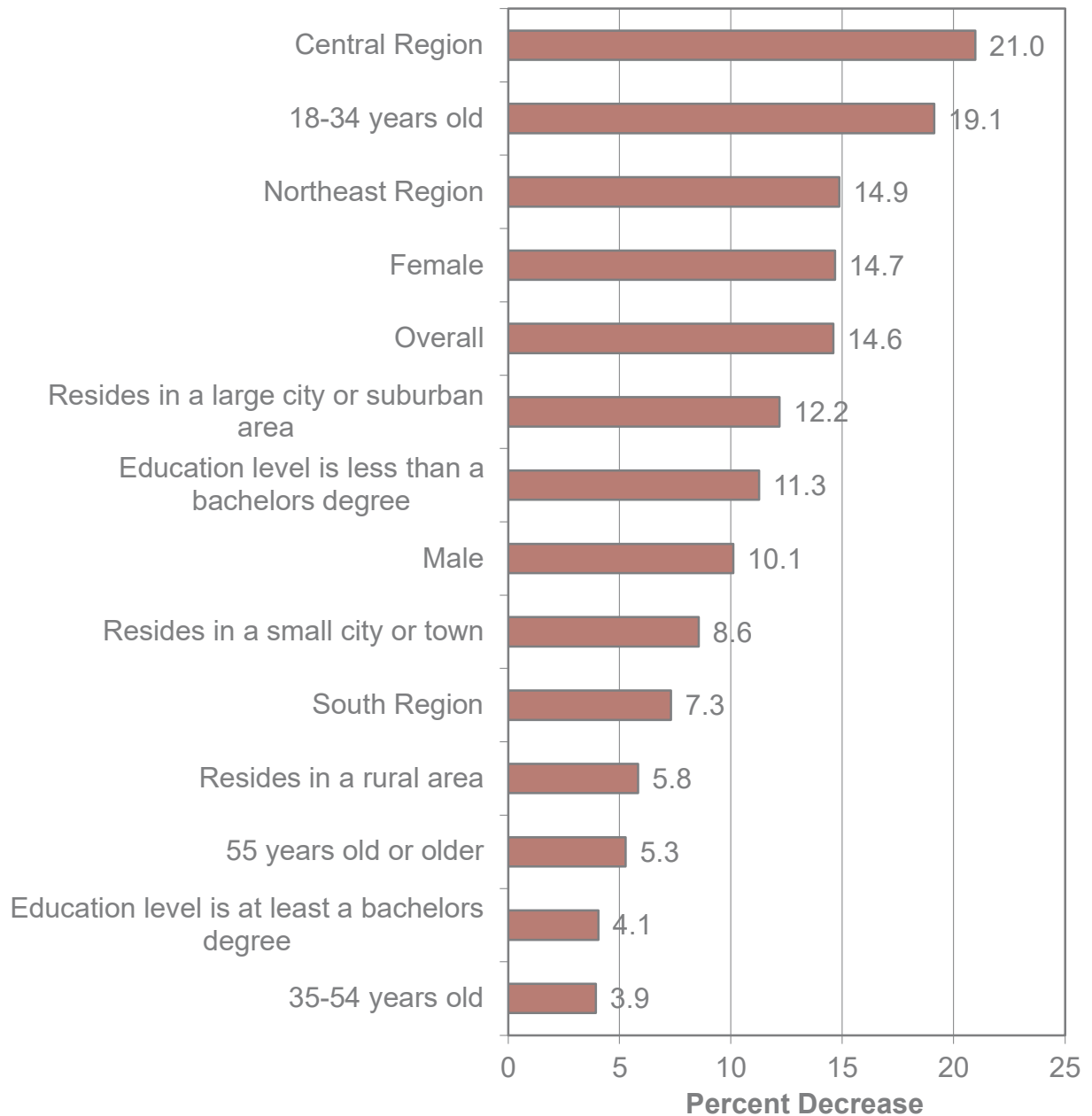
MAINE

Among Maine residents, overall approval of hunting decreased by 14.6% between 2015 and 2023. By far the largest decreases occurred among Central State Region residents and young adults. There were large decreases among Northeast State Region residents and females as well.



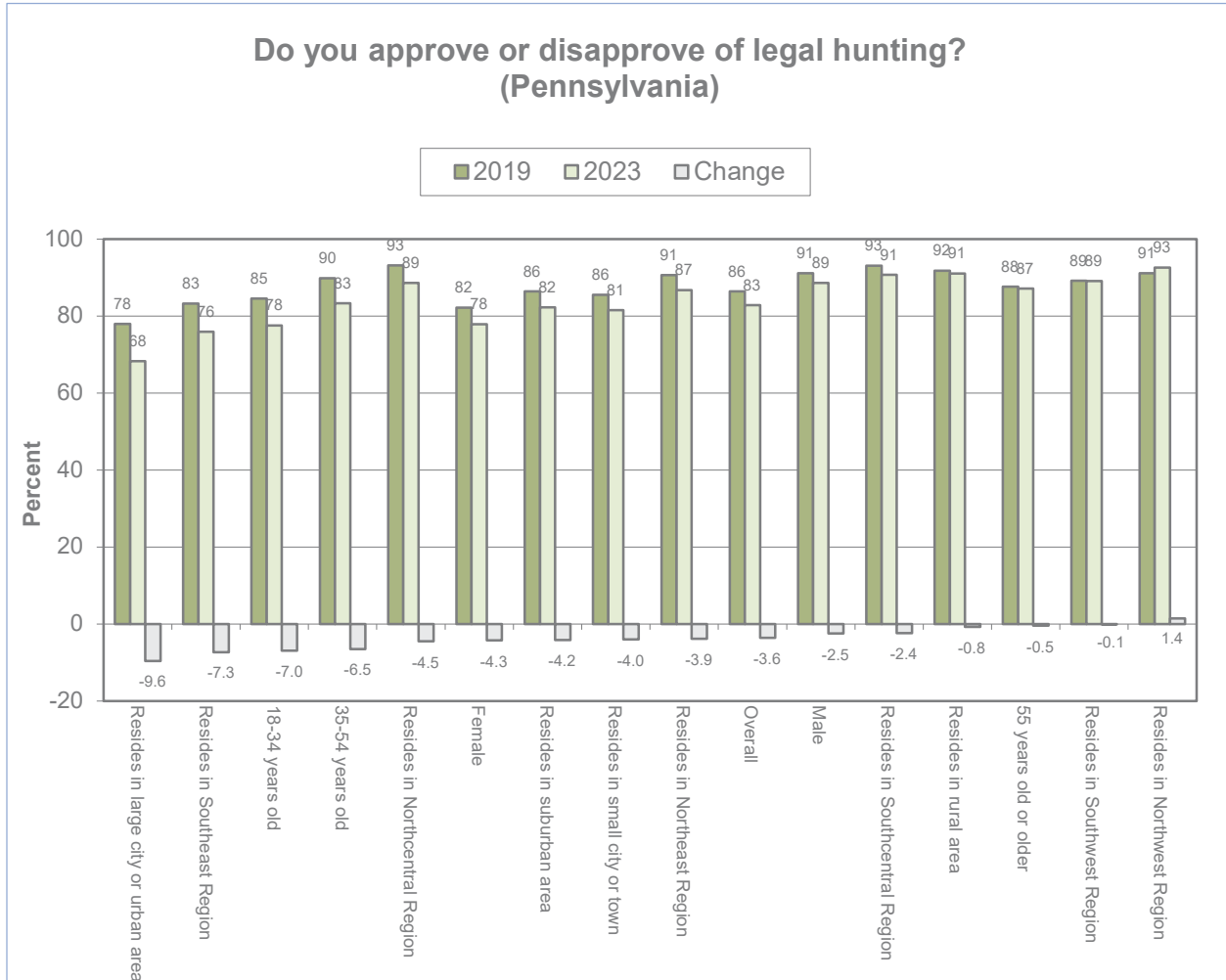
Overall approval of legal hunting by Maine residents (%)			
Demographic Group	2015	2023	% Change
Central Region	94.3	73.3	-21.0
18-34 years old	97.4	78.2	-19.1
Northeast Region	90.7	75.9	-14.9
Female	87.5	72.8	-14.7
Overall	90.0	75.4	-14.6
Resides in a large city or suburban area	93.0	80.8	-12.2
Education level is less than a bachelor's degree	94.0	82.7	-11.3
Male	92.7	82.6	-10.1
Resides in a small city or town	87.2	78.6	-8.6
South Region	84.3	77.0	-7.3
Resides in a rural area	93.2	87.3	-5.8
55 years old or older	89.0	83.7	-5.3
Education level is at least a bachelor's degree	86.5	82.5	-4.1
35-54 years old	88.4	84.5	-3.9

**Percent decrease in approval for legal hunting
from each of the following groups,
2015 to 2023: (Maine)**

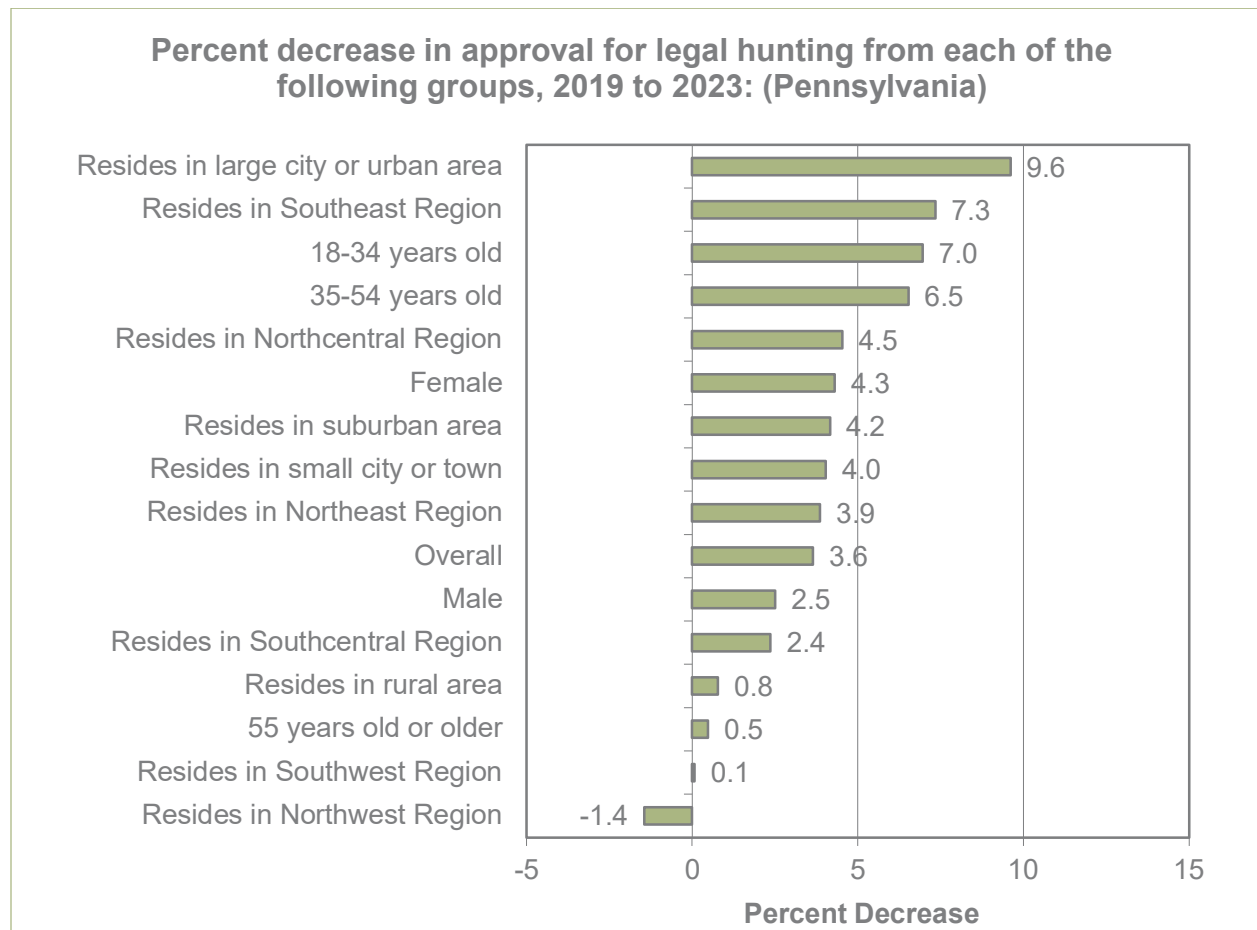


PENNSYLVANIA

Overall approval of hunting decreased by 3.6% among Pennsylvania residents. The largest decreases were among urban residents, Southeast State Region residents, and those under 55 years of age. A table of these results is on the following page.

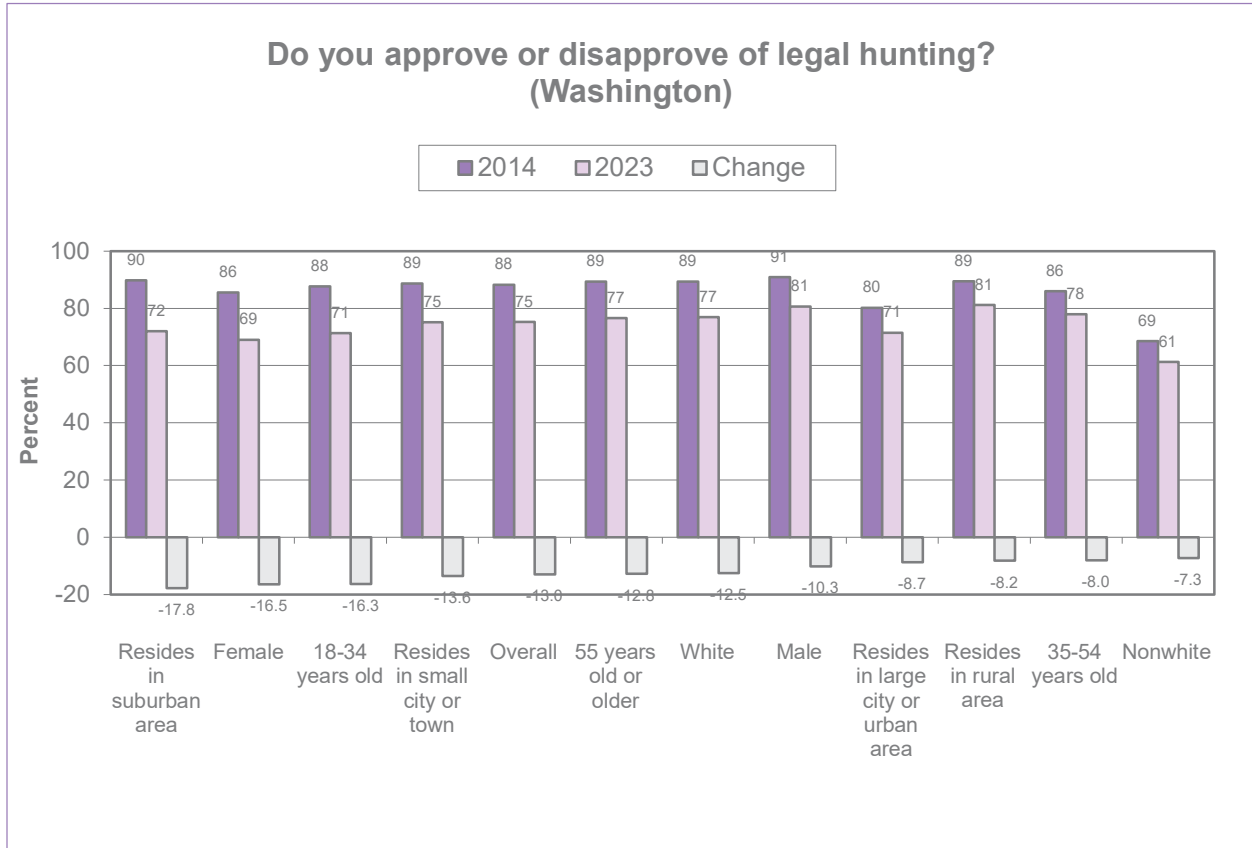


Overall approval of legal hunting by Pennsylvania residents (%)			
Demographic Group	2019	2023	% Change
Resides in large city or urban area	77.9	68.3	-9.6
Resides in Southeast Region	83.2	75.9	-7.3
18-34 years old	84.5	77.6	-7.0
35-54 years old	89.8	83.3	-6.5
Resides in Northcentral Region	93.1	88.6	-4.5
Female	82.1	77.8	-4.3
Resides in suburban area	86.4	82.2	-4.2
Resides in small city or town	85.5	81.5	-4.0
Resides in Northeast Region	90.6	86.7	-3.9
Overall	86.4	82.8	-3.6
Male	91.1	88.6	-2.5
Resides in Southcentral Region	93.1	90.7	-2.4
Resides in rural area	91.8	91.0	-0.8
55 years old or older	87.6	87.1	-0.5
Resides in Southwest Region	89.1	89.1	-0.1
Resides in Northwest Region	91.1	92.6	+1.4



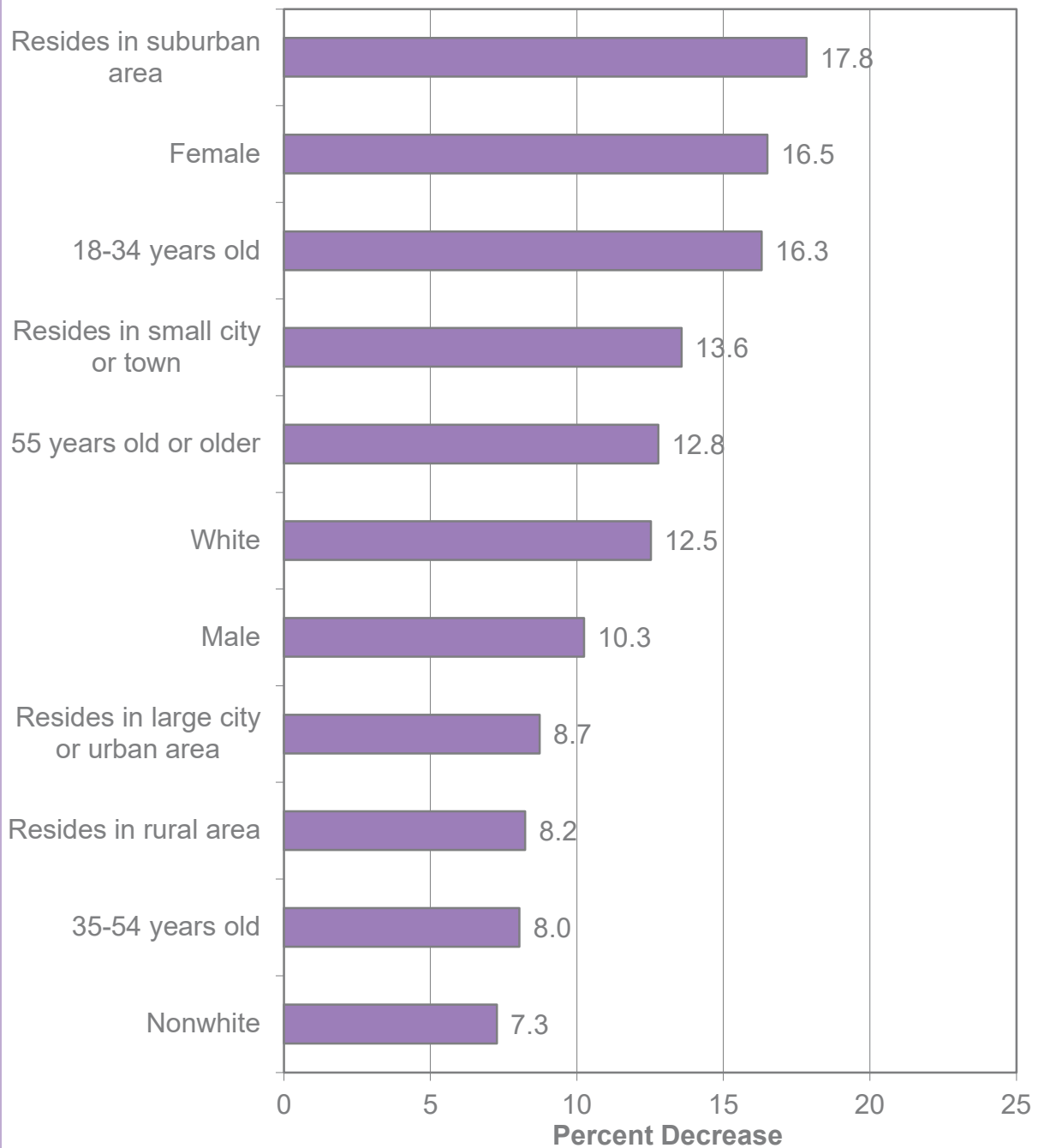
WASHINGTON

Overall approval of hunting among Washington residents decreased by 13.0% between 2014 and 2023. Approval decreased more among suburban residents, females, young residents, and small city or town residents than among residents overall.



Overall approval of legal hunting by Washington residents (%)			
Demographic Group	2014	2023	% Change
Resides in suburban area	89.8	72.0	-17.8
Female	85.6	69.0	-16.5
18-34 years old	87.6	71.3	-16.3
Resides in small city or town	88.7	75.1	-13.6
Overall	88.2	75.2	-13.0
55 years old or older	89.3	76.6	-12.8
White	89.4	76.9	-12.5
Male	90.9	80.6	-10.3
Resides in large city or urban area	80.2	71.4	-8.7
Resides in rural area	89.4	81.2	-8.2
35-54 years old	86.0	78.0	-8.0
Nonwhite	68.5	61.2	-7.3

**Percent decrease in approval for legal hunting
from each of the following groups, 2014 to 2023:
(Washington)**



CHAPTER SUMMARY

The primary findings within this chapter are summarized below:

- From 2021 to 2023, overall approval of hunting by U.S. residents decreased by 4% and overall disapproval increased by 5%. Both of these changes are statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$).
- The decrease in overall approval is driven by a decrease in *strong* approval. This decrease corresponds to increases in *moderate* approval as well as disapproval, with little change in neutral or don't know responses. It would seem less difficult to increase the strength of someone's approval than to reverse the attitude of someone who disapproves of hunting.
- By far, the most precipitous decline in hunting approval occurred in the West Region, dropping 15% over the 2-year period. Meanwhile, the only major demographic group in the U.S. to show an increase in hunting approval consisted of residents from the Northeast Region. Now, approval of hunting is slightly higher in the Northeast Region than the West Region, with both at about three quarters approval.
- Several groups that have traditionally hunted and approved of hunting in high numbers, such as rural residents, West and Midwest Region residents, males, and Whites, showed higher declines in approval than their demographic counterparts.
- Hunting approval among Hispanic Americans decreased substantially. As this group had a relatively low approval percentage to begin with, reaching this demographic group will be a challenge.
- Looking at hunting motivations, approval of hunting for the sport decreased the most (15%) between 2019 and 2023. Also, there were large decreases in approval of hunting to get organic meat and to get locally sourced food, which suggests that the locavore movement may be fading in popularity.
 - The largest decreases in approval of hunting for meat-related reasons occurred among middle-aged adults (35 to 54 years old).
 - The largest decreases in approval of hunting for the sport and for the challenge occurred among rural residents.
 - The decreases in strong or overall approval for each reason correlate to increases in neutral responses rather than spikes in disapproval. The R3 effort might be able to focus on strengthening approval or convincing apathetic people to see the benefits of hunting more than trying to reverse negative attitudes toward the activity.
- Regarding species hunted, there were large decreases in approval of hunting for squirrel, duck, and rabbit. There were small increases in approval for hunting African elephant and lion, although those approval percentages remain very low.

- Similar to the previous statement, the least popular methods of hunting (high-fence hunting, using high-tech gear, using bait) had increases in approval. There was a large decrease in approval of bowhunting.
- Within all four states examined (Arizona, Maine, Pennsylvania, and Washington), young adults (18 to 34 years old) consistently showed large decreases in approval.
- The decrease in overall approval of recreational shooting (3%) between 2021 and 2023 is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Approval declined more among young adults, West and Midwest Region residents, rural residents, and males than among U.S. residents overall.

2. FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS: "GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION"

Focus groups are a form of qualitative data collection entailing structured discussions with small groups of participants about their opinions and attitudes toward various issues. The full methods for the focus group data collection are included in the final chapter. For this project, a total of four focus groups were conducted, including two on hunting and two on sport shooting. This chapter is divided into various themes that emerged from the focus groups. The findings of the researchers are followed by verbatim quotations from the focus group participants. Many of the issues discussed in the hunting focus groups apply to the sport shooting focus groups as well.

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES AND DECLINING SUPPORT FOR HUNTING

Although support for hunting overall has declined, quantitative surveys by Responsive Management show that Americans are much more comfortable with hunting for meat or for wildlife management than hunting for sport or for a trophy; in general, the two focus groups on hunting reinforce those findings.

- **Disapproval of hunting is often based on an association with gun violence.**

The focus groups suggest that many people associate hunting with firearms and, in turn, firearms with violence; comments suggest that general exhaustion with firearms-related crime (mass shootings, robberies, homicides, domestic violence, etc.) may contribute to disapproval of hunting. Some participants explicitly linked hunting to gun violence in their comments, with some mentioning examples of mass shootings and other incidents involving firearms. Participants noted that gun owners are 'Guilty by Association' due to gun violence.

"We've proven that we cannot handle guns responsibly in this country. Things have to change." —Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

"Mass shootings have become so common, people are tired of it.... People want sensible gun control and sensible laws.... They think hunters/hunting, they think guns.... Their opinion of hunting goes down because of that." —Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

"In Chicago, there is a lot of killing. You equate guns with killing and hunting is also killing." —Midwest/West hunting group participant

- **Some people feel that hunting is inhumane.**

A participant stated that there is no humane way to kill, while another said it is inhumane to kill a living thing for sport. It may be the case that ads from animal rights groups have had an influence on some people's views on hunting. Additionally, a few participants rejected the idea of hunting as a form of wildlife management on the basis that wildlife populations can take care of themselves without any kind of human intervention (a few people also noted that human development and urbanization have reduced habitat for wildlife).

"I don't think humans should have the privilege of deciding if a living creature dies or lives. Humans are the cause of overpopulation. We've taken away natural habitats from tons of animals." —Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

"The ecosystem will take care of itself." —Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

- **It was suggested that some hunters are unsafe and potentially prone to violence.**

Some participants suggested that there is something is wrong with people who enjoy killing animals, and that humans should not have dominion over animals.

"I feel like the NRA and some of these people are so into guns and killing animals. There is a big correlation between that and people's thrill with guns..., people who are criminals and start with animals before becoming a murderer." —Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

- **Mass shootings and other high-profile incidents involving gun-related crime may encourage some people to take a firmer anti-hunting position.**

The focus group discussions suggest that people who associate hunting with gun violence may become more entrenched in their opposition after observing more instances of gun violence.

- **Some people feel that hunting is unnecessary in modern society.**

Several participants indicated that there is simply no need for hunting in this day and age; people are able to obtain meat at grocery stores, and there are other recreational activities that do not involve the killing of animals or shooting of firearms.

"I don't see the point in hunting. I don't understand hunting at all."
—Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

- **Social media has a polarizing effect on many cultural and political issues, including firearms.**

There were indications that social media may be driving increased polarization of attitudes toward hunting: those mildly opposed to hunting (or ambivalent about hunting) may be pushed into strong opposition or disapproval by inflammatory social media posts of hunters posing with dead animals, or posts showing unpopular examples of trophy hunters (e.g., Cecil the Lion). It was noted that a typical social media post will only show one side of a topic.

- **Photographs of harvested animals on social media are off-putting to many people.**
In one of the hunting focus groups, the moderator showed participants an image of a female hunter posing with a harvested turkey; the photo was deliberately chosen to be as inoffensive as possible (there were no signs of blood anywhere on the animal, the hunter was smiling, and the image consisted largely of a visually appealing nature scene). The reaction to the image was mostly (but not completely) negative. Some stated that this is exactly why they do not like hunting. **One person stated that they do not take a “selfie” when they buy meat at a grocery store.** The implication is that it is not enough that photos of hunters with harvested animals avoid showing blood or suggesting an overly dominionistic view of wildlife—for some people, *any* photo of a hunter with a dead animal is offensive and unnecessary, and this may be a direct cause of their dislike of hunting. A hunter in one of the focus groups stated that he is not in favor of posting pictures with harvested animals; instead, this hunter recommended showing the end result of hunting in the form of a family eating turkey.

“Trophy hunting is horrible. People should be ashamed of themselves to go hunt and kill for the trophy.” —Midwest/West hunting group participant, in reaction to the photograph

- **Many focus group participants conflated hunting and sport shooting.**
Participants had a difficult time keeping the concepts of hunting and sport shooting separate, with some people appearing to think of hunting as a subcategory of sport shooting. The focus groups suggested other terminology issues as well. For example, some people seemed to believe that the term “hunting” implied poaching. Others assumed that “hunting” results in harm to wildlife populations. Similarly, some people were not clear on the meaning of “sport shooting,” with some interpreting it as “going out and shooting animals.”
- **Methods of hunting that seem to violate the principle of “fair chase” are particularly unpopular.**
Some people mentioned scopes and other hunting equipment as examples of gear that gives the hunter an unfair advantage.

“It’s a moral thing. It’s cruel to hunt an animal with a big gun. Not a bow and arrow. You have this gun with a scope that you can kill this innocent animal from a mile away. It isn’t fair.” —Midwest/West hunting group participant

- **Hunting is seen by some as an expensive hobby for the elite, with little diversity among hunters.**

One participant commented that he had never met a Black hunter in his life. Another suggested that hunting is an activity for “rich White men.”

“Check off any metric of diversity; when I think of hunting, I think White men, especially old, middle-aged White men.” —Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

“I associate hunting with a certain group of people, who typically are very narrow-minded.” —Midwest/West hunting group participant

- **Several participants did not see a connection between hunting and the economy or conservation.**

After the moderator read statements about hunting and its contributions to the economy and to conservation efforts, several participants appeared skeptical. The statements seemed misleading to them, and they did not see the correlation. There was often a basic lack of understanding about how hunting could be a form of conservation if it entailed the killing of animals.

“It seems contradictory if you care about animals and then kill them.”
—Midwest/West hunting group participant

- **Some people equate trophy hunting with poaching.**

Quantitative surveys typically emphasize “legal hunting” in opinion questions, but in the focus groups, hunting was discussed as a general term (this was done to more closely approximate the way that laypeople refer to hunting in real-world conversations). With this in mind, several comments suggested that some participants equated trophy hunting with poaching.

- **The focus groups suggest the effects of generational change, with young people being less likely to go hunting, more likely to be concerned with environmental causes, and more likely to be vegetarians or vegans.**

“I think Millennials, Gen Z, they are much more proactive environmentally, in general.”
—Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

“There are a lot more vegans and vegetarians.” —Midwest/West hunting group participant

- **If hunting participation continues to decline, people will become even less likely to personally know a hunter.**

People who know a hunter are more likely to approve of hunting and to believe that hunters are safe and responsible. Fewer people personally knowing a hunter means that potentially harmful stereotypes will be allowed to proliferate; in particular, damaging social media posts may fill the vacuum of information about hunting.

POSITIVE MESSAGING ABOUT HUNTING

The moderator asked focus group participants if they had seen positive messages about hunting, or if they had any suggestions about what might make hunting more appealing to people.

- **People who personally know a hunter are much more likely to view hunting favorably.** Those with family or friends who hunt have firsthand experience and familiarity with hunters, including their adherence to safe and responsible practices while hunting. Also, those who know hunters are more likely to understand the correlation between hunting and its economic and conservation benefits. In a positive example, one participant described uncles who only hunt animals that they can eat themselves or give to others.

“Hunters are some of the best conservationists out there. They’re in tune with the environment. They have a good understanding of resource management, whether that’s an animal, a fish, a forest, or a stream.” —Midwest/West hunting group participant

- **Hunting for food is generally accepted by Americans.** Many participants, even those who do not like hunting, stated that they understand the need to hunt for food. One had taken a trip to Alaska and observed how hunters used every part of the animal.

“Wild meat is pure protein.” —Northeast/Southeast hunting group participant

- **Wildlife management through hunting is more accepted than hunting for sport.** For example, many people understand that it is unsafe when deer become overpopulated in suburban areas, and hunting can help to mitigate this overpopulation. It was also noted that hunting can be a means of reducing the spread of wildlife disease.
- **Some people understand hunting as a tradition that can be passed down to future generations.** One focus group participant stated that continuing the tradition of hunting is important in remote areas where organized sports or other recreational activities may not be a feasible option.
- **Visual evidence of industrial meat or factory farm conditions may help promote hunting as a humane alternative.** A participant recommended juxtaposing the overpopulated living conditions of animals in factory farms with game species living in the wild.
- **Ads in support of hunting featuring children or families may be particularly effective.** Messages with families hunting together may help to “demystify” hunting, particularly if the ads focus on safe gun handling and storage.

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES AND DECLINING SUPPORT FOR TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

Conflation of sport shooting with hunting may be somewhat common: even in the focus groups in which sport shooting was the topic, many participants talked about hunting. In general, concerns with firearms dominated all four focus groups, hunting and target shooting alike.

- **As with hunting, disapproval of target/sport shooting is often based on an association with gun violence. i.e. "Guilty by Association".**

The groups suggest that mass shootings and crime involving guns make some people more likely to disapprove of any recreational activity that involves firearms.

"It's definitely affected the way I look at guns and made me much more cautious in my own life and wanting to see so much more control over people."

—Midwest/West shooting group participant

"Police officers shoot people they aren't supposed to; the point is that guns are dangerous." —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **Many people feel that America simply has too many guns.**

Related to this, several people mentioned the need for background checks for purchasers of firearms, the imperative to address mental illness, and the need to provide gun safety refresher courses.

"There are other non-lethal ways to protect your family." —Midwest/West shooting group participant

"It's an overall feeling that guns have changed the nature of the society that [children] are growing up in." —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

"I'm still for hunting but would prefer more control over gun laws. I live near Sandy Hook." —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **Some people think that target shooters and firearm owners in general are likely to be unsafe.**

One participant suggested that shooters are more opinionated and aggressive than other people. Another knew someone who died from playing with firearms in high school. One told a story about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder involving a person who slept with a gun under his pillow, who then shot the TV when he heard gunfire on a show.

- **Some people assume that there are no safety rules or regulations in place for target shooters.**

"I could buy a gun but wouldn't have any idea what to do with it. There should be some kind of regulations to be able to participate in this endeavor." —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **Some people feel that there are better and safer hobbies than shooting a gun.** Similarly, a few people suggested that more parents are steering their children away from any recreational activities involving guns.

“There are so many other things for children to do.” —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **Participants generally did not associate sport shooting with the economy or conservation.**

“Not unless you ask the military.” —Midwest/West shooting group participant

“I don’t see the connection.” —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **As with hunting, some people view target/sport shooting as expensive and elitist.** One participant compared sport shooting to horseback riding as an example of another activity that is primarily for privileged or wealthy individuals.

“Bullets are so expensive and have only gotten more expensive.” —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **Some people are skeptical of the National Rifle Association (NRA), which in turn impacts their views on firearms and sport shooting activities.**

Some participants described the NRA as an unreliable source of information and a group that has been unsupportive of shooting victims; others mentioned that the NRA tends to oversimplify complex problems by reflexively advocating for Second Amendment rights regardless of the circumstances.

“They harass people who are trying to advocate for gun control measures, like smear campaigns.... They intimidate people.... They have a lack of accountability.... They don’t support gun reform. They’re more focused on helping companies sell more guns.”

—Midwest/West shooting group participant

- **As with hunting, social media posts involving firearms or target shooting can be polarizing** . Some participants indicated that social media algorithms may increase unease or outrage about gun violence by showing more posts on these topics in response to increased user engagement. Participants also suggested that social media algorithms may push people further toward the extreme ends of public opinion and away from the middle (i.e., the mindset of being open to multiple viewpoints).

- **Most focus group participants had not seen ads in support of target shooting, nor any celebrity endorsements related to firearms or target/sport shooting.**
On this topic, it was mentioned that sport shooting is missing a “hook” to get people to pay attention to it.

“There are no MVPs [of sport shooting]. The hook is getting people to watch somebody do something they are really good at.” —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **It was suggested that declines in approval of target shooting in the West Region of the United States may be political in nature or access-related.**
A participant saw sport shooting as a conservative tradition, noting that many areas of the West tend to be more liberal. Another participant stated that there are few shooting ranges in the Western United States.
- **The presence of children in ads may persuade people to think about gun control.**
Children talking about surviving a school shooting and images of children getting off a bus were suggested as powerful visual elements in support of gun safety measures.
- **It was suggested that “shooter” video games have desensitized some people and caused them to lose perspective on firearms and firearm safety.**

“Call of Duty and game stuff has made people lose respect for firearms and the seriousness of having a firearm.” —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **When participants were asked to define target/sport shooting, the definitions ranged widely— there appeared to be no agreed-upon definition of the term.**
For example, some participants considered hunting to be a sport shooting activity.

POSITIVE MESSAGING ABOUT TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

Despite reservations about gun violence as an issue that may color perceptions of sport shooting, many participants in the focus groups did not appear to disapprove of recreational target shooting activities.

- **Target practice for self-defense was viewed favorably in general.**
Target shooting for self-defense was not controversial in the focus groups, although some suggested that people should rent firearms at the range rather than become firearm owners (referring to the general feeling that there are too many firearms in the county). Distrust of police also appeared to inform some of the comments about self-defense.

“People feel they need to protect themselves.” —Midwest/West shooting group participant

“Highlight the importance of self-defense. Police don’t show up.” —Midwest/West shooting group participant

- **Target practice to improve hunting skills is seen as a positive thing, as such practice can ensure quick, clean kills that minimize any suffering on the part of the animal.**

“Target practice to improve hunting accuracy.” —Midwest/West shooting group participant

- **Education and instruction on gun safety, including proper storage, was seen as critical.**

“Just like a pencil it’s a tool. Education. Guns are tools. Education is important to learn to use a tool properly. Education is the only solution.” —Midwest/West shooting group participant

- **People who personally know target/sport shooters are more likely to think of shooters as being safe and responsible.**

Comments in the focus groups reinforce quantitative findings showing that those who personally know sport shooters are more likely to approve of sport shooting in general.

“Everyone I know who does it is not careless with it. They enjoy it and the challenge of it.” —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **Some view target shooting as a safe and controlled activity, compared to hunting, which is seen as more dangerous.**

“Gun ranges are highly controlled areas; hunting is dangerous.” —Northeast/Southeast shooting group participant

- **In response to a lack of messaging in support of target/sport shooting, it was suggested that the activity may benefit from messaging campaigns that feature or center on celebrity spokespersons.**

It was mentioned that the Olympics show sport shooting in a positive and entertaining light, so the 2024 Summer Olympics may be a good opportunity for positive marketing of sport shooting. In addition, one participant said he enjoyed behind-the-scenes footage of Keanu Reeves training with firearms for his role in the *John Wick* movies; similar presentations may have a positive impact as well.

3. SURVEY RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of a scientific, probability-based multimodal survey of the U.S. general population, variously referred to as U.S. residents or Americans in the body of the report. The survey was carried out by telephone and online, and the final sample was fully representative of U.S. residents overall. Responsive Management obtained 2,065 completed survey questionnaires (1,555 among the general population and 510 in an oversample of those more negative about hunting and/or target/sport shooting). A detailed look at the survey methods and analyses methods are included in the last chapter, “Study Methodologies.”

Before showing the results, the below discussion serves as a guide on how to interpret the survey data.

The questionnaire included several types of questions:

- Single response questions: Some questions allow only a single response.
- Multiple response questions: Other questions allow respondents to give more than one response or choose all that apply. Questions that allow more than a single response are indicated on the graphs with the label, “Multiple Responses Allowed.”
- Open-ended questions are those in which no answer set is presented to the respondents; rather, they respond with anything that comes to mind from the question.
- Closed-ended questions have an answer set from which to choose.
- Scaled questions: Some closed-ended questions (but not all) are in a scale, such as those that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
- Series questions: Many questions are part of a series, and the results are primarily intended to be examined relative to the other questions in that series (although results of the questions individually can also be valuable). Typically, results of all questions in a series are shown together.

Graphs typically show results rounded to the nearest integer; however, all data are stored in decimal format, and all calculations were performed on unrounded numbers. For this reason, some graphs may not sum to exactly 100% because of this rounding on the graphs. On some graphs, the “don’t know” responses (as well as refused, etc.) are not shown for legibility, particularly at percentages of 1% or less, although they remain in the data. The sum of all the percentages shown may not total to 100% on some of these graphs, as well. Rounding may also cause apparent discrepancies of 1 percentage point between the graphs and the reported results of combined responses (e.g., when “strongly agree” and “moderately agree” are summed to determine the total percentage that agree).

Some graphs that show 0 as the percentage giving a response are rounded from some number above 0 but less than 0.5. In these instances, the overall national graphs sometimes show that the number is “Less than 0.5”; however, this was not done to the regional graphs because they become too cluttered with the extra wording. Therefore, on those regional graphs, some of the values shown as 0 are actually some positive number less than 0.5 rather than a true 0.

In addition to graphs depicting the results of the individual survey questions, the report includes special graphs that show how various demographic groups (e.g., males, those living in the Northeast Region), participatory groups (e.g., those who participated in hunting at some time in their lives), and opinion groups (e.g., those who approve of hunting) respond to certain questions, hereinafter referred to as *demographic analyses graphs*.

Most of the variables need no explanation, but a few variables require some discussion.

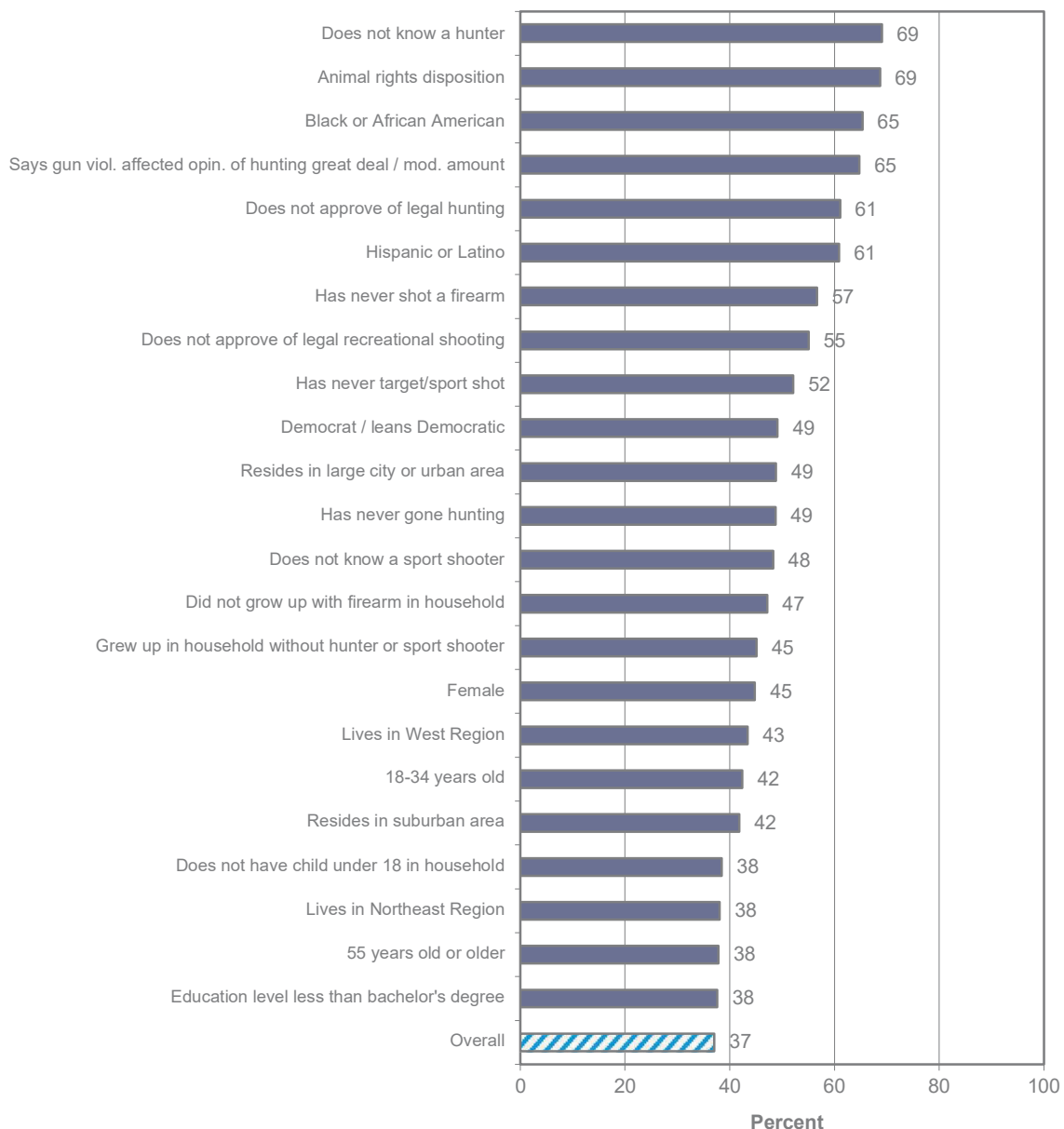
- The analyses include a regional breakdown, using the four AFWA regions as defined in the Introduction to this report (see page 1).
- The variables include political affiliations/leanings. These were gleaned from two questions. The first question asked whether the respondent was a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent. Those who did not respond with either Democrat or Republican were then asked if they were closer to the Democratic or Republican party. The results were then put together as shown in the graphs. Note that the order of Democrat and Republican were randomized in the survey to ensure that there would be no bias in the question order—half the sample got the question as “a Democrat, a Republican, or an Independent,” and the other half got the question as “a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent.” This applies to the follow-up question, as well.
- One of the survey questions pertained to an animal rights/animal use continuum. The terms used to refer to these dispositions are shown in parentheses. The percentages do not sum to 100% because 8% do not know where to place themselves on the continuum.
 - Animals have rights like humans and should not be used in any way. (Animal rights disposition.) This encompasses 13% of Americans.
 - Animals can be used by humans, as long as the animal does not experience undue pain and suffering. (Animal welfare disposition.) This encompasses 71% of Americans.
 - Animals can be used by humans regardless of the animals’ welfare or rights. (Dominionistic disposition.) This encompasses 8% of Americans.

Not all the questions were analyzed in this way; questions chosen for these demographic analyses are those deemed to be of the most interest or utility. Because there are so many variables examined, the demographic analyses graphs are always in two parts. The example that follows explains how to interpret these graphs. (Although used as an example, this graph shows actual data from this survey.)

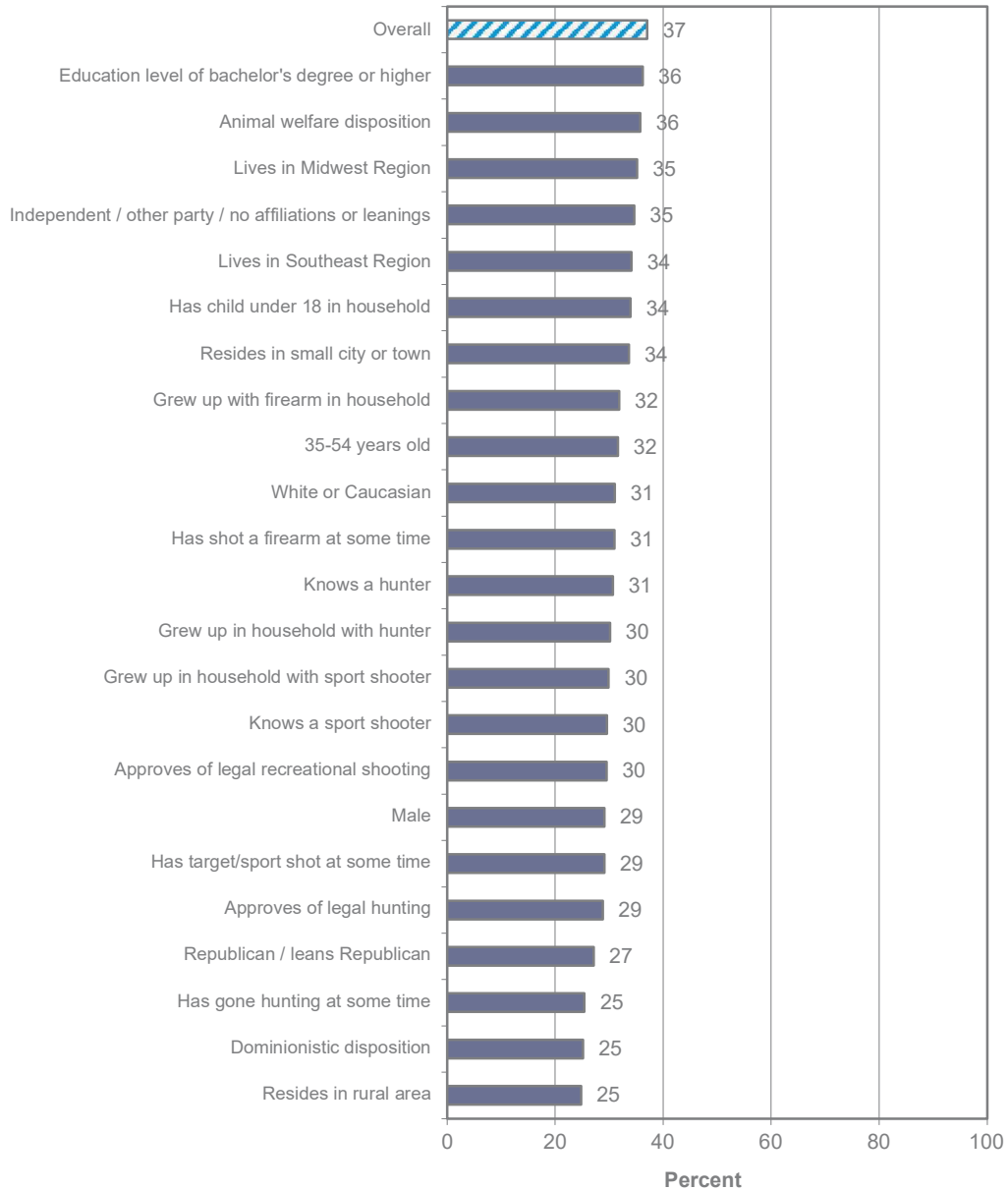
The example shows the percentage who agree that hunting causes some species to become endangered. Among Americans overall, 37% think that hunting causes some species to become endangered, as shown by the patterned bar at the bottom of the first graph and at the top of the second graph. Those groups shown above the overall bar have a higher percentage saying that hunting causes some species to become endangered—in other words, they are more likely to hold this opinion. Meanwhile, those groups below the overall bar have a lower percentage saying that hunting causes some species to become endangered, compared to Americans overall.

In the demographic analyses graphs, when one group is above the overall bar on the first graph (for instance, in this example, Democrat / leans Democratic), its counterpart or one of its counterparts (in this instance, Republican / leans Republican) will be below the overall bar on the second graph. The distance from the overall bar matters, as well. If a group is close to the overall bar (for instance, the education variable in this example), then the group should not be considered markedly different from Americans overall. A rule of thumb is that the difference should be 5 percentage points or more for the difference to be noteworthy.

Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some wildlife species to become endangered: (General population) (Part 1)



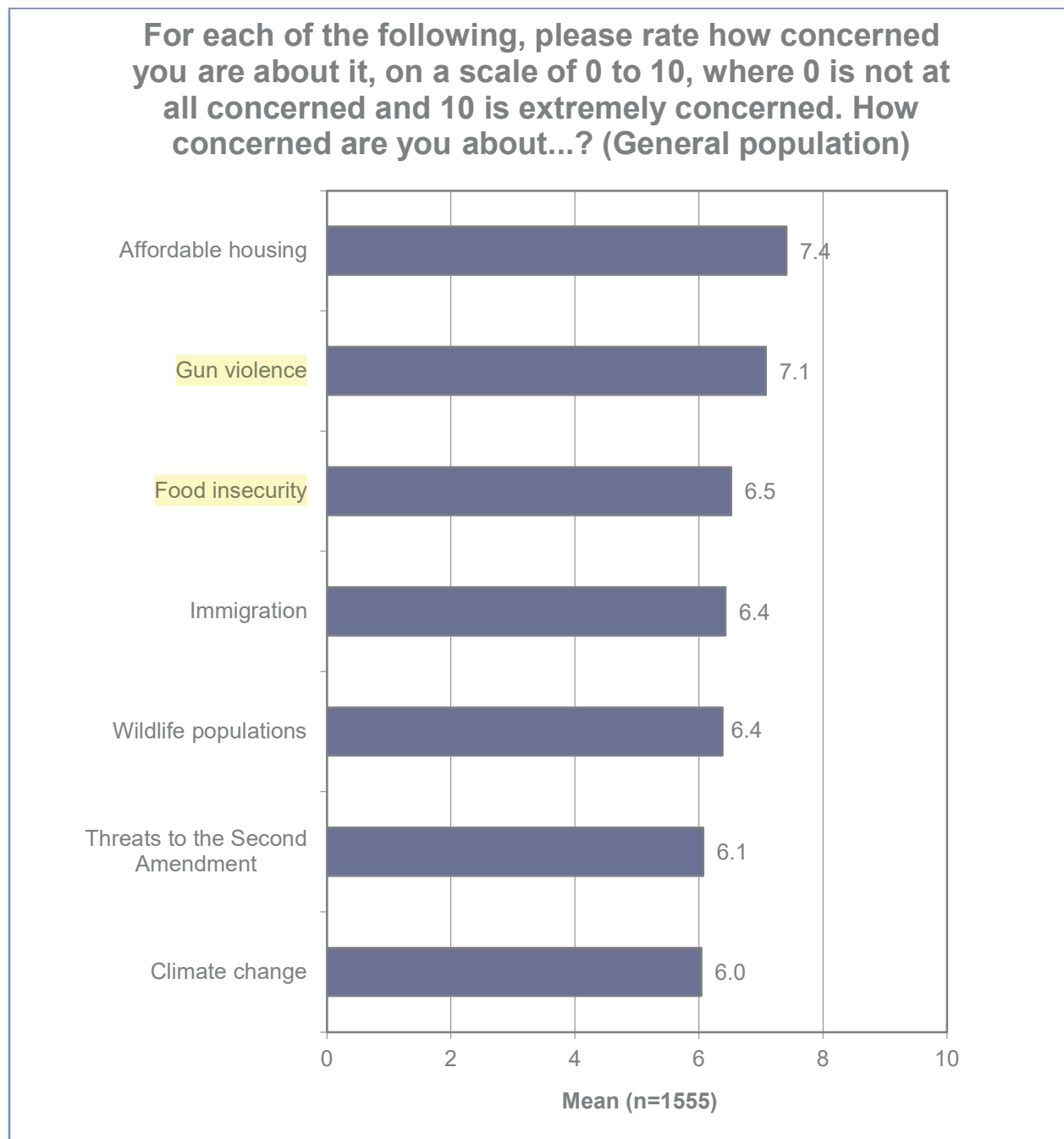
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some wildlife species to become endangered: (General population) (Part 2)



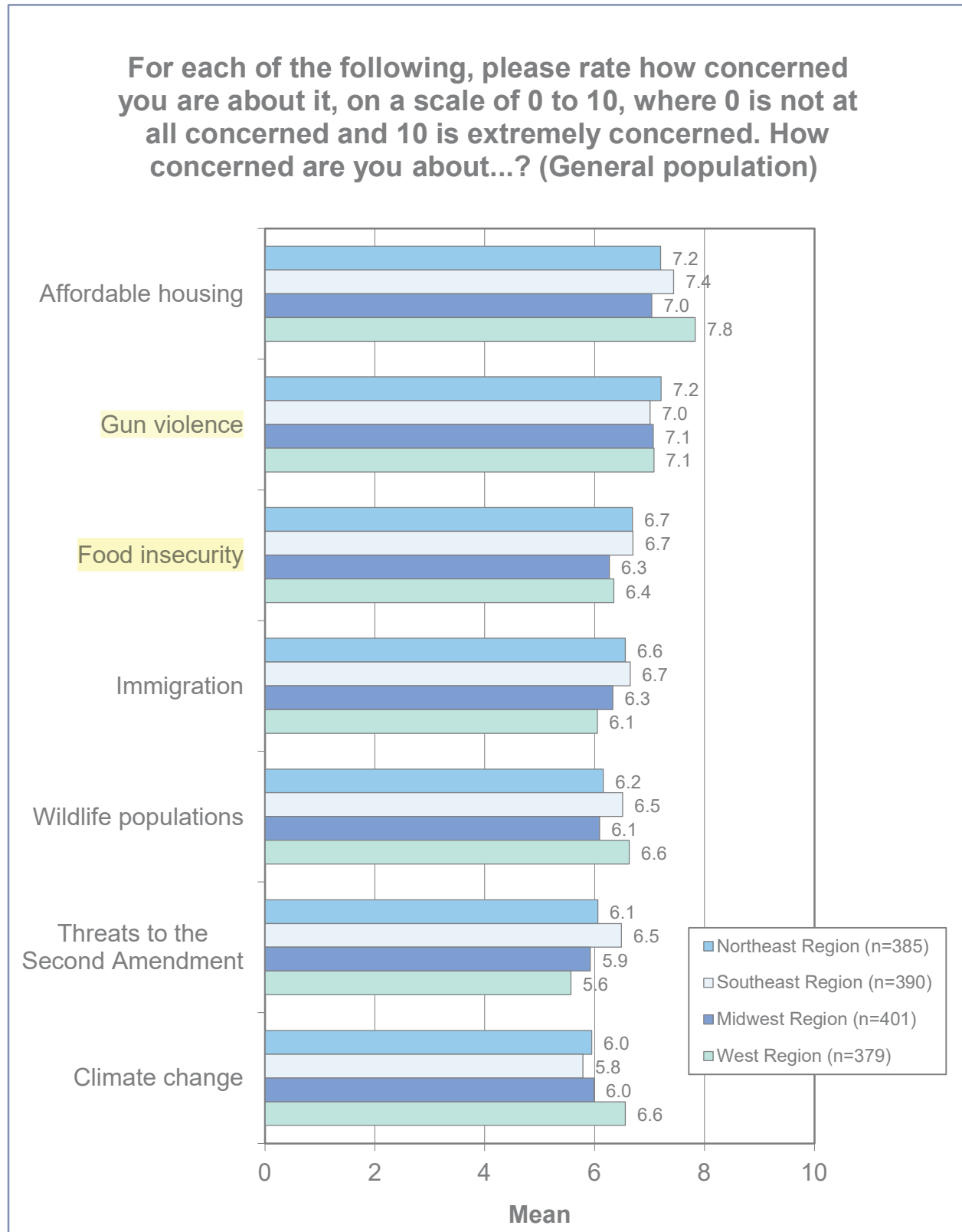
Finally, a word about the layout of the graphs in the report: For each question or set of questions, overall graphs are shown first. These are followed by regional crosstabulations, based on the aforementioned AFWA regions. These are followed in turn by the demographic analyses graphs (for those questions analyzed this way) and then the data run of those more negative about hunting or sport shooting. The report is organized thematically, rather than in the order of the questions in the survey.

CONCERNS ABOUT GENERAL SOCIAL ISSUES

The primary purpose of these questions was to determine where various issues fall in the overall mindset of Americans—where, for instance, concern about wildlife populations ranks relative to affordable housing or immigration. In the list of seven issues, concern about wildlife populations is relatively low, as is the concern about threats to the Second Amendment. These are much lower than concerns about gun violence (the second ranked issue). At the top is affordable housing.

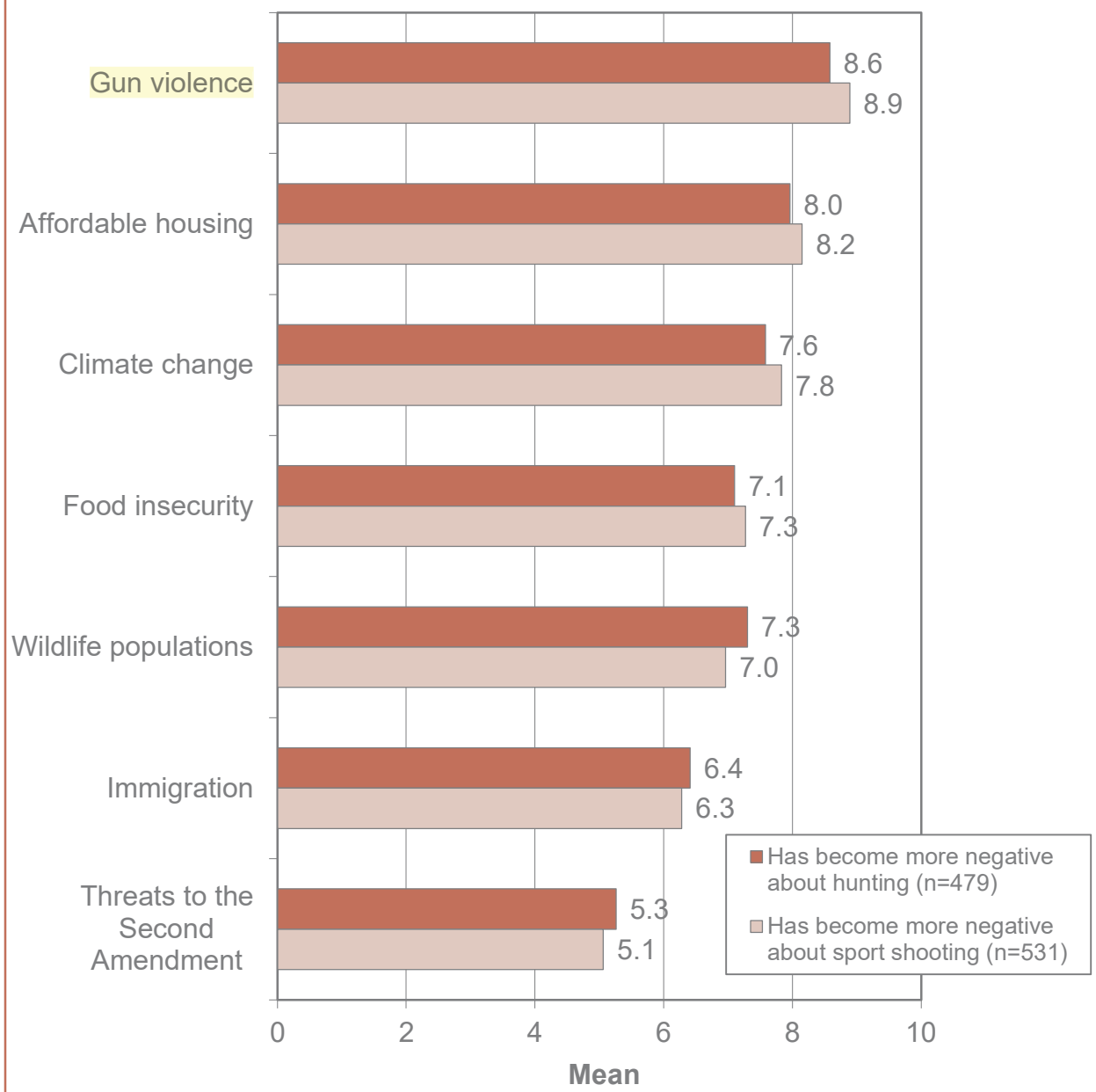


In the regional results, no region has consistently higher mean ratings or consistently lower mean ratings.



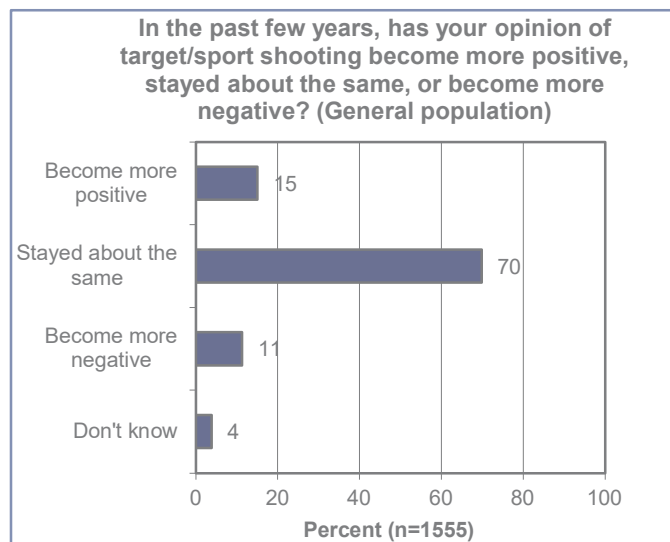
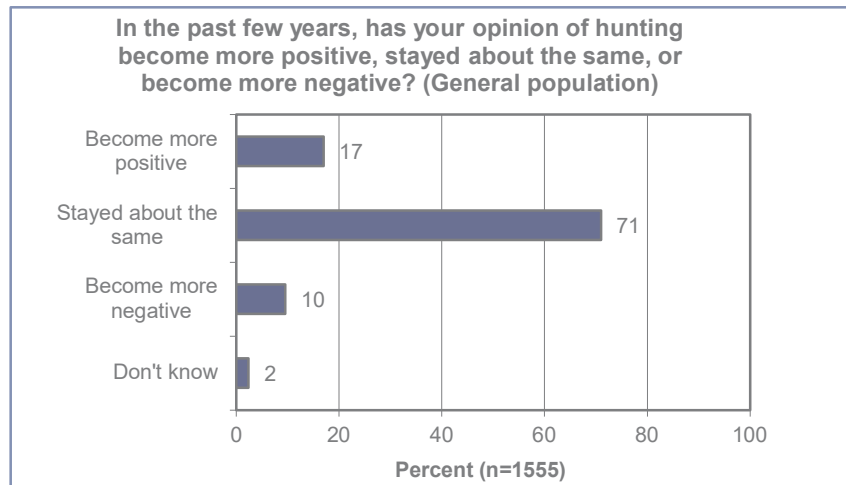
Those who are more negative give higher ratings to gun violence compared to the general population overall. Those who are more negative also give higher ratings to wildlife populations, but they give lower ratings to threats to the Second Amendment.

For each of the following, please rate how concerned you are about it, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all concerned and 10 is extremely concerned. How concerned are you about...? (Those more negative)

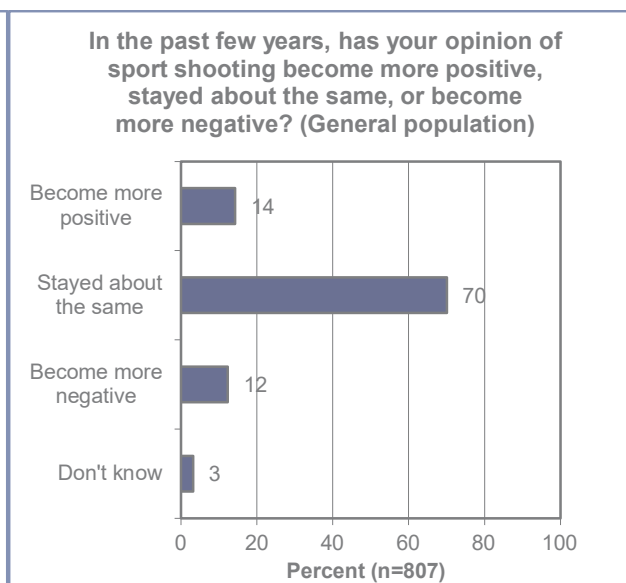
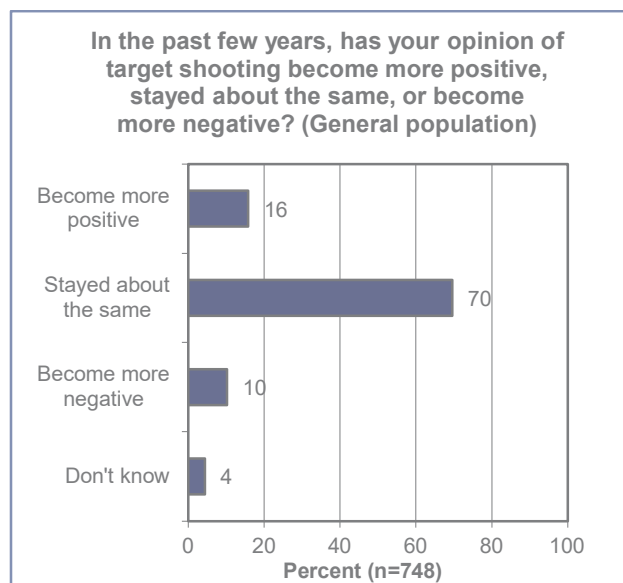


TRENDS IN APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

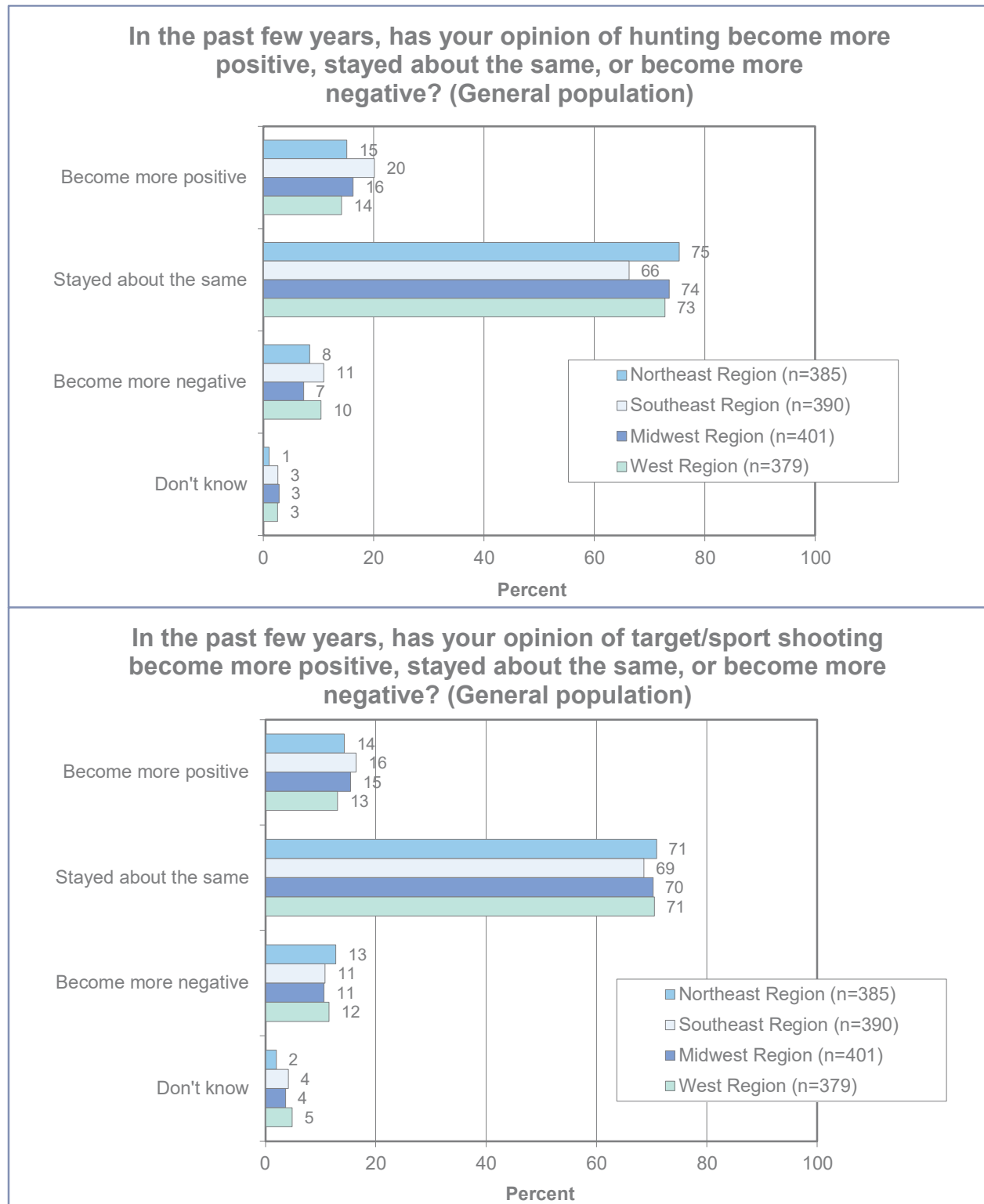
Most commonly, Americans say that their opinion of hunting has stayed about the same over the past few years—more than two thirds say this. Otherwise, they are split, with 17% having a more positive opinion and 10% having a more negative opinion over the past few years.



The survey specifically looked at shooting using two terms: sport shooting and target shooting. In looking at the two questions combined, most Americans (70%) say that their opinion of target/sport shooting has stayed about the same over the past few years. As with hunting, opinions are otherwise fairly evenly split, with 15% having a more positive opinion and 11% having a more negative opinion over the past few years. (Graphs are also included for “target shooting” on its own and “sport shooting” on its own. The results are not greatly different.)



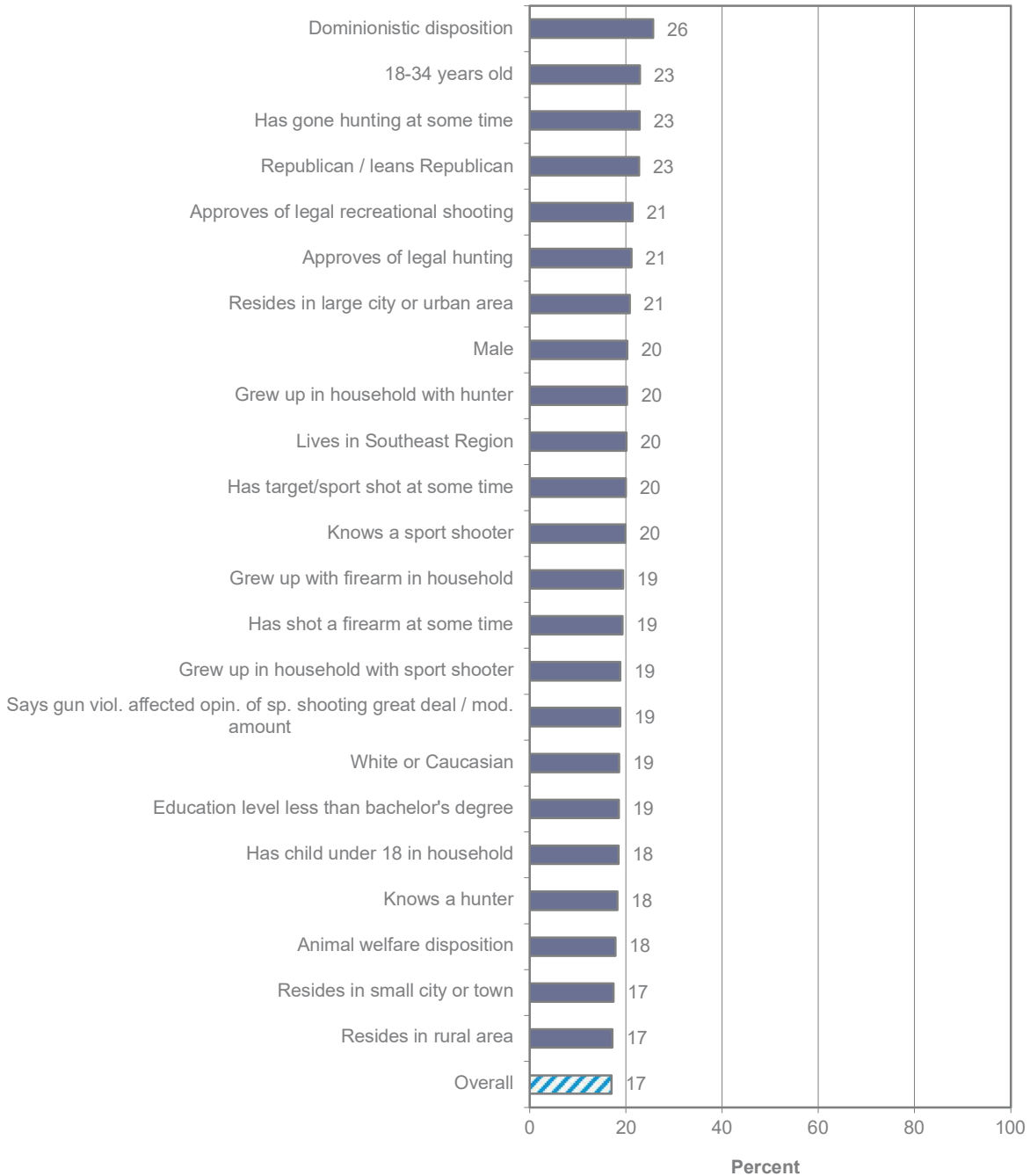
Residents of the Southeast Region are the most likely to have changed their opinion of hunting.



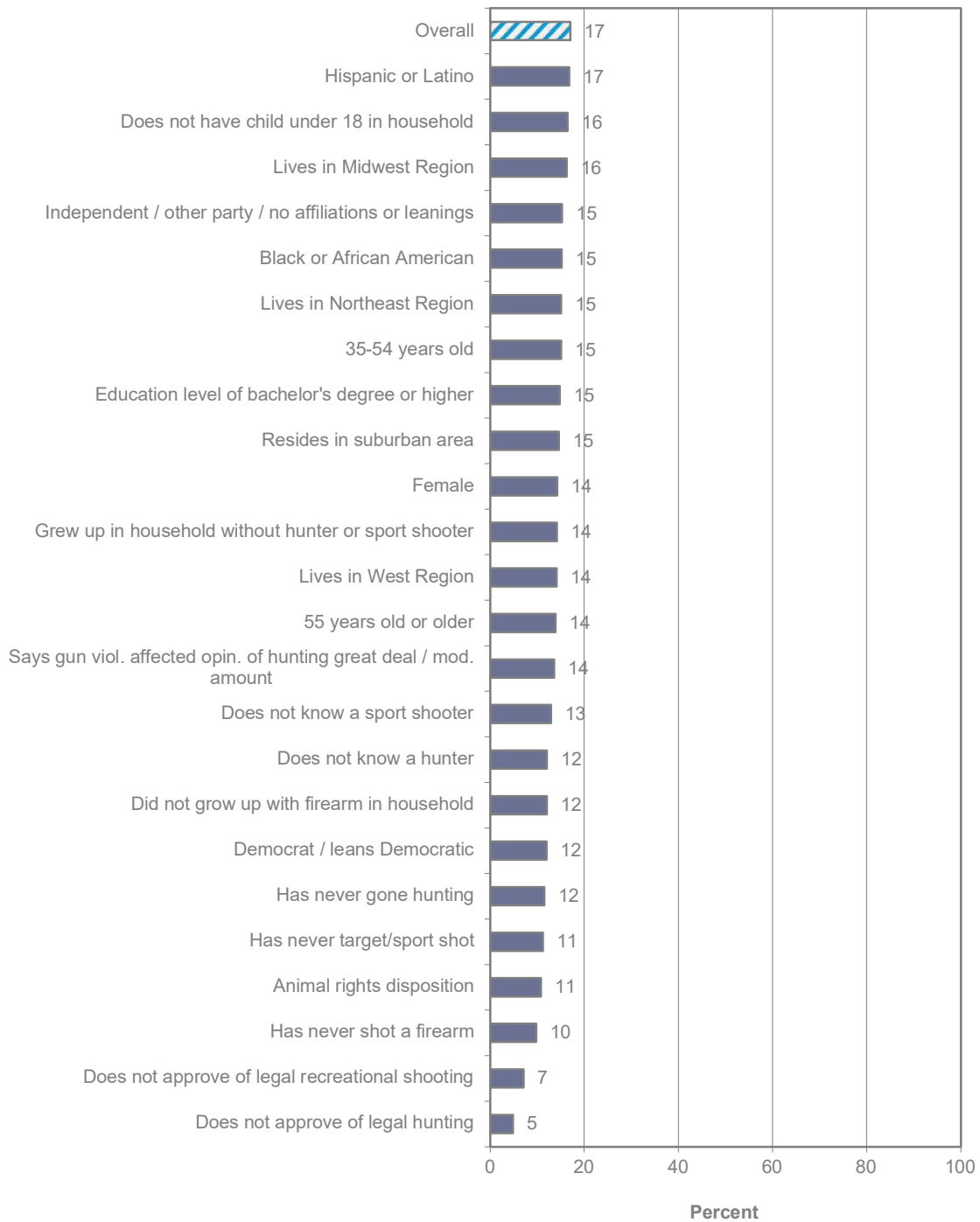
Note that these questions were used for some of the crosstabulations that appear in this report.

Demographic analyses graphs show four groups with a markedly higher percentage saying that their opinion of hunting has become more positive, compared to the general population overall. Those groups are those with a dominionistic disposition, young people, those who have hunted at some time, and Republicans.

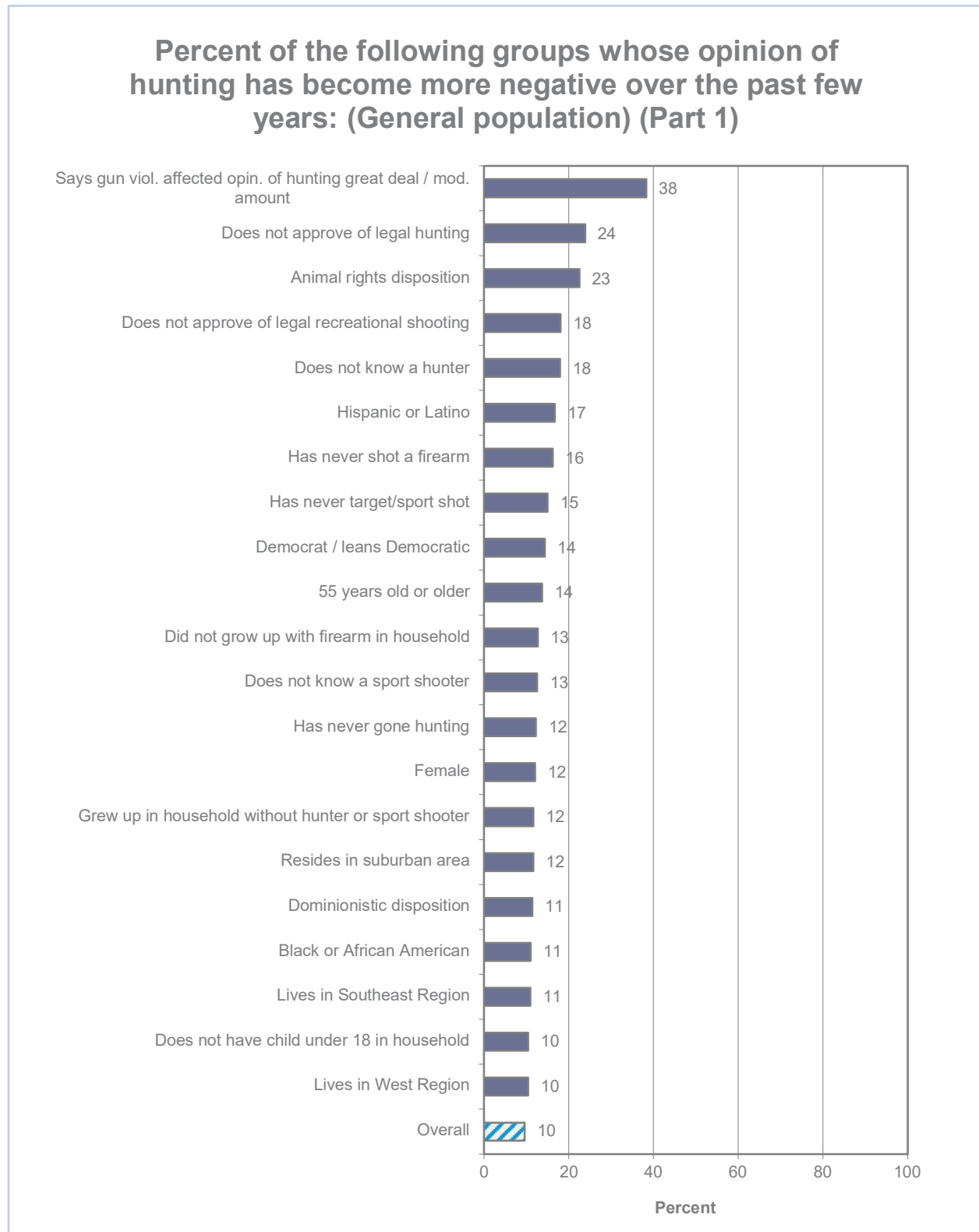
Percent of the following groups whose opinion of hunting has become more positive over the past few years: (General population) (Part 1)



Percent of the following groups whose opinion of hunting has become more positive over the past few years: (General population) (Part 2)



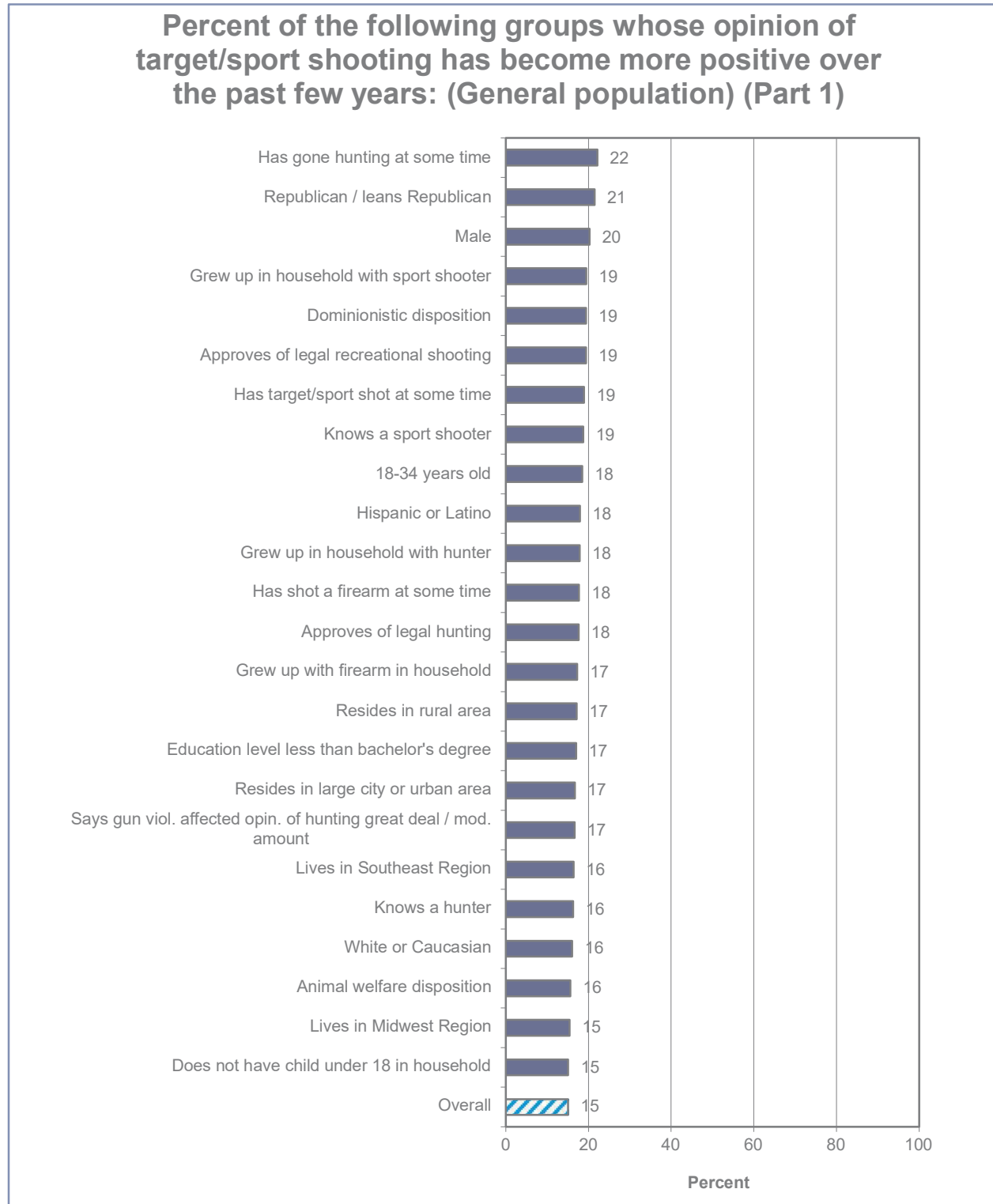
Those groups at 15% or higher have a markedly greater likelihood of having a more negative opinion of hunting, among them being those whose opinion was affected by gun violence, those who do not know a hunter, and those who have never shot a firearm.



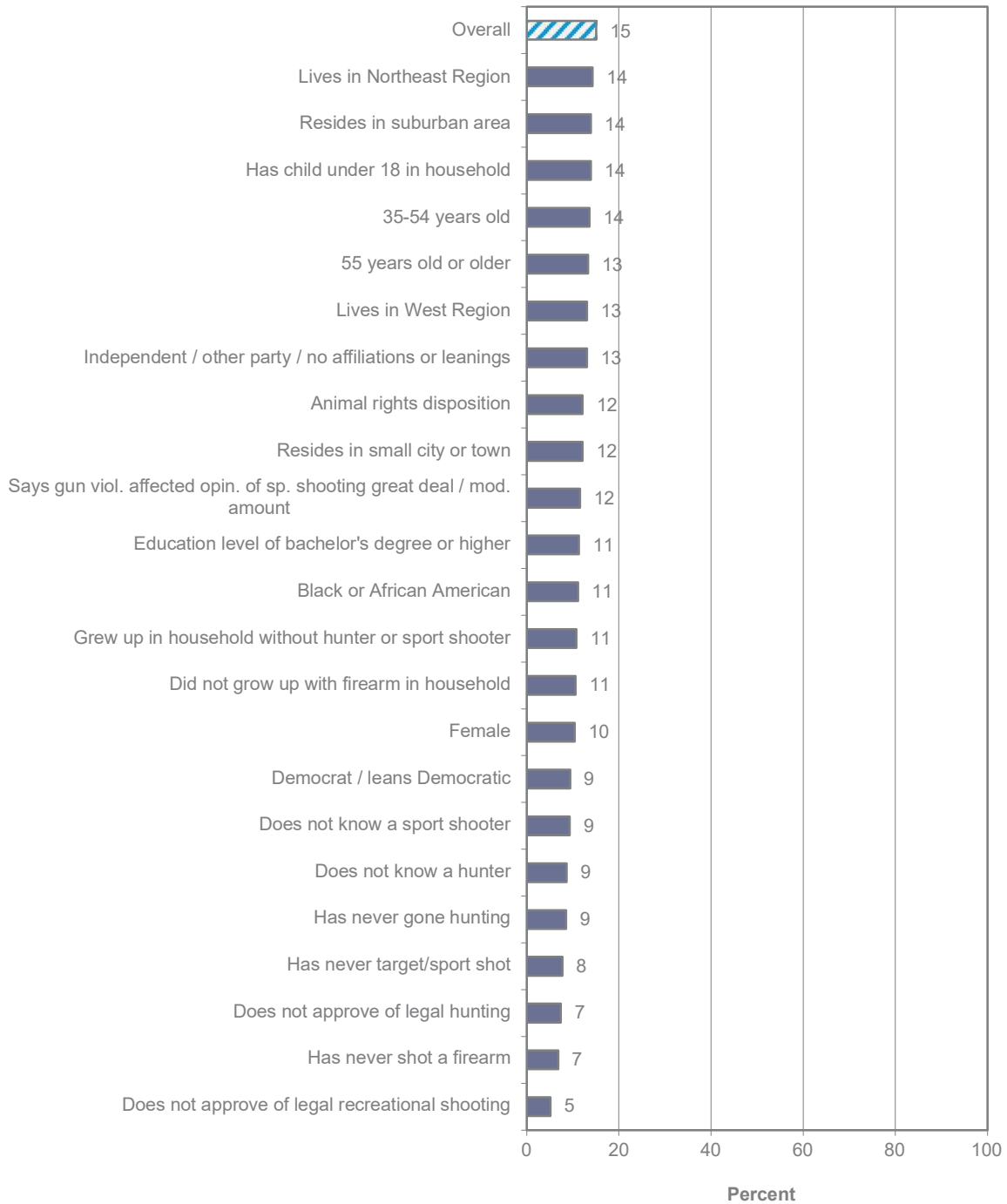
Percent of the following groups whose opinion of hunting has become more negative over the past few years: (General population) (Part 2)



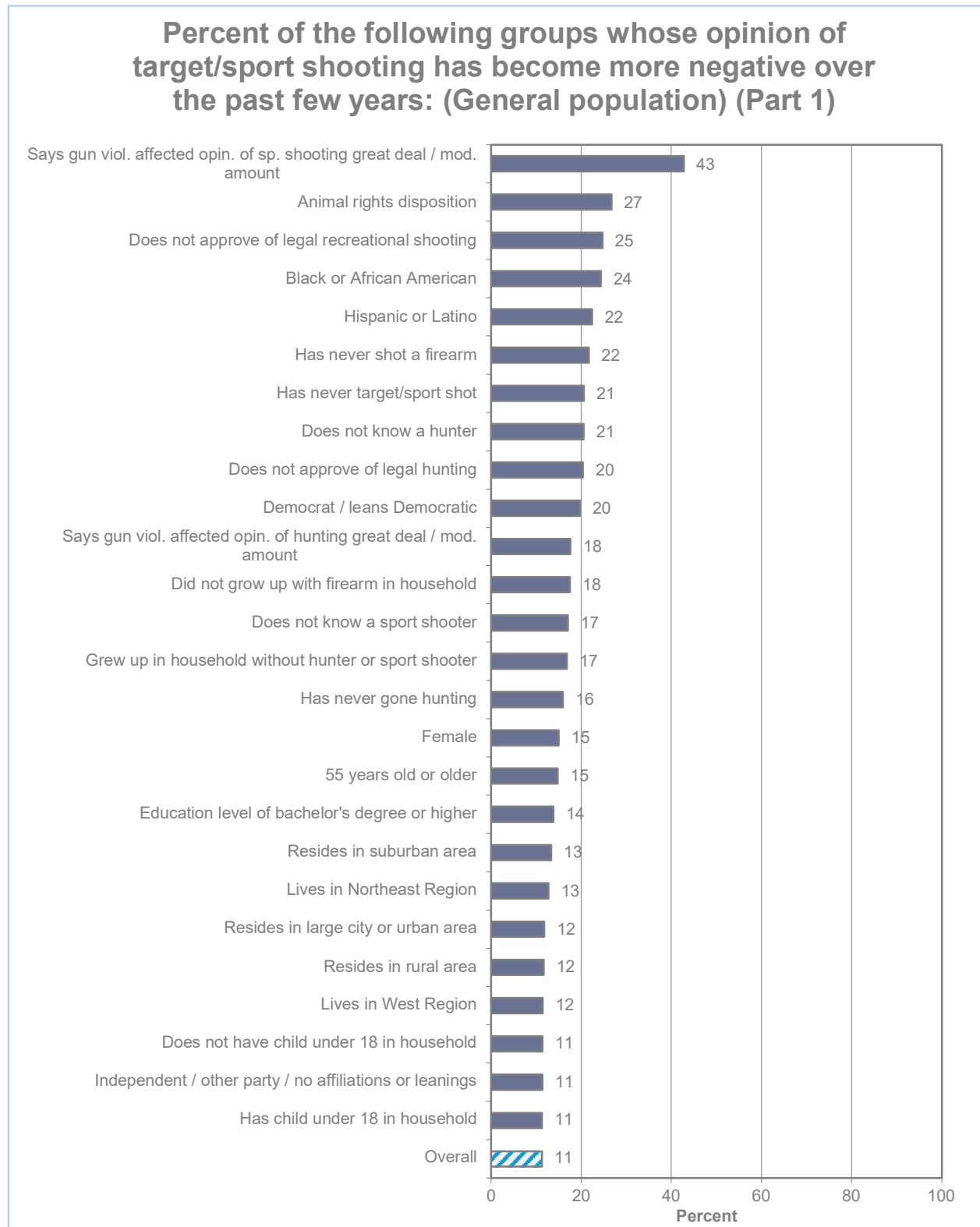
This demographic analyses graph shows the groups with a markedly higher percentage saying that their opinion of target/sport shooting has gotten more positive. At the top are those who have hunted, Republicans, and males. The graph on the next page shows those groups at a lower percentage saying their opinion has gotten more positive.



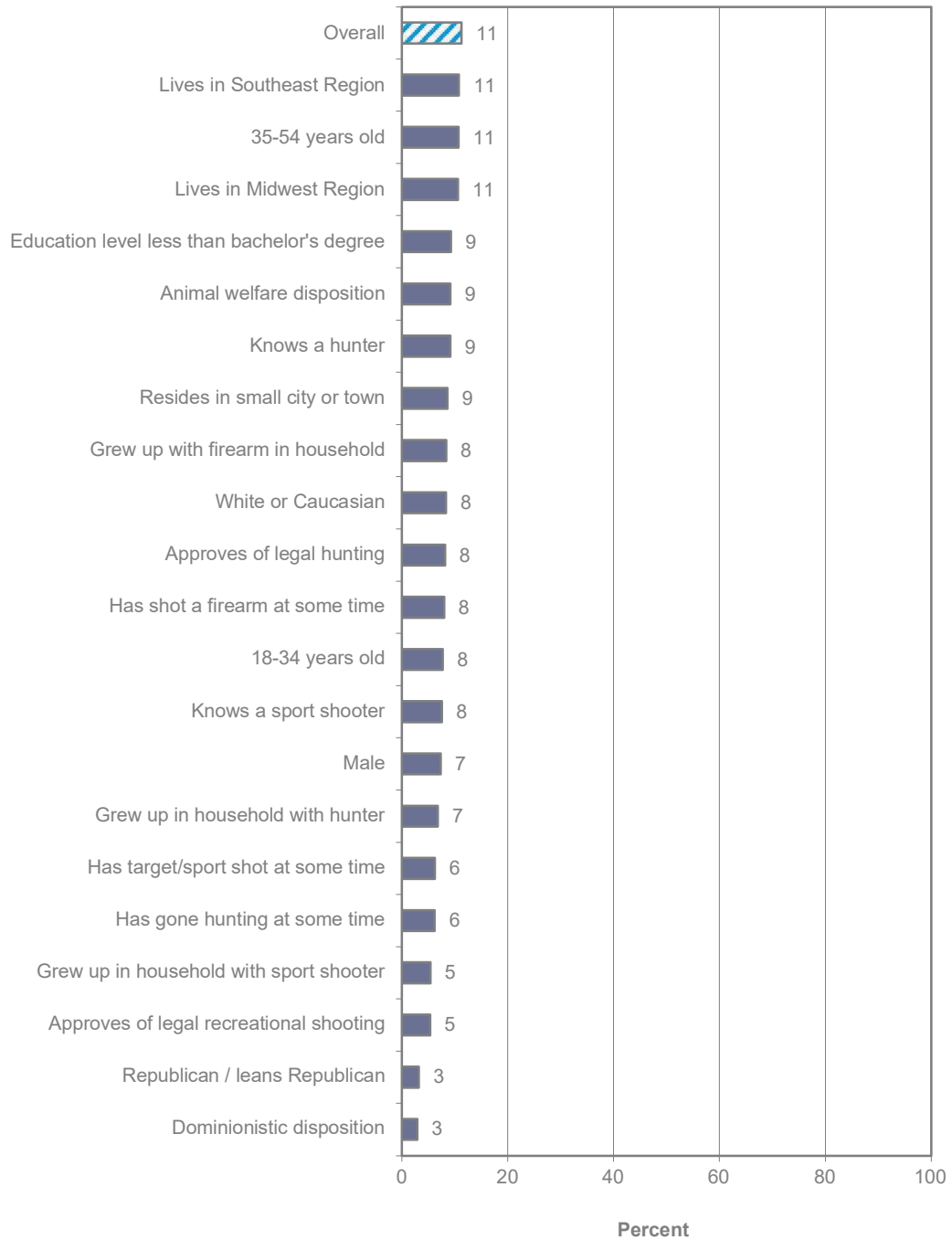
Percent of the following groups whose opinion of target/sport shooting has become more positive over the past few years: (General population) (Part 2)



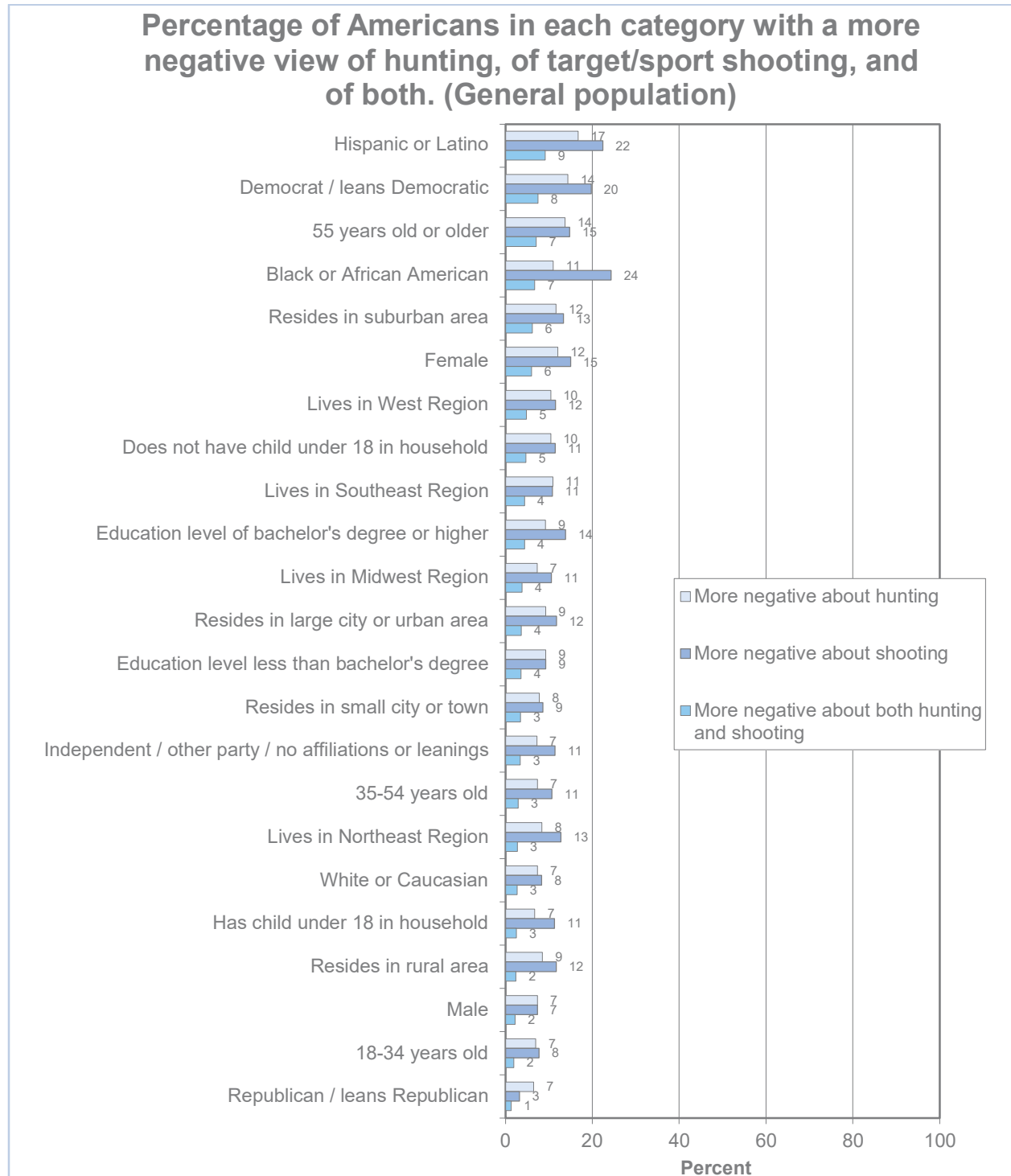
The final pair of demographic analyses graphs in this section shows the percentages of the groups whose opinion on target/sport shooting has become more negative. Those who say that gun violence has affected their opinion a great deal or moderate amount are at the top.



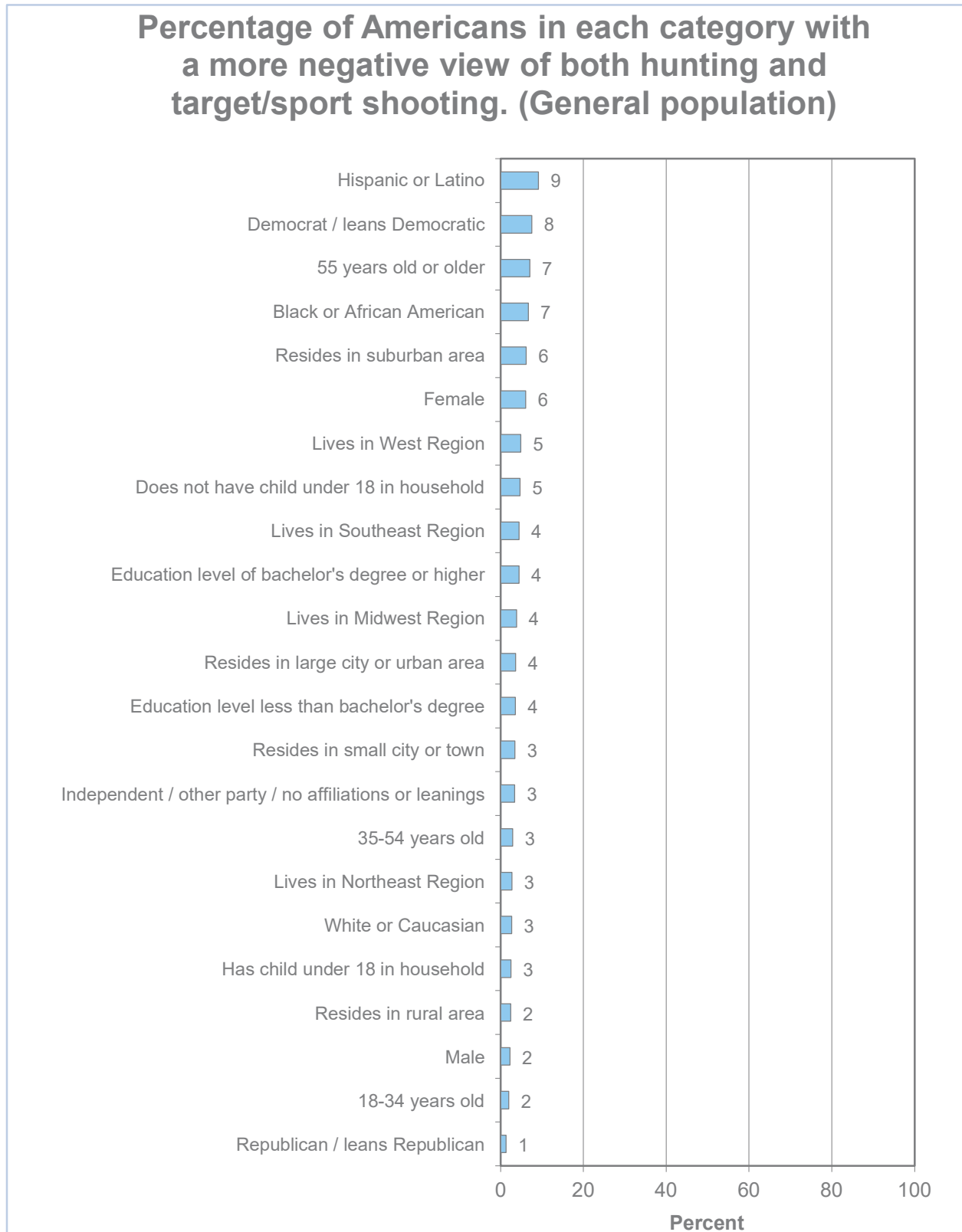
Percent of the following groups whose opinion of target/sport shooting has become more negative over the past few years: (General population) (Part 2)



Two more graphs show the percentage of various demographic groups who have become more negative about hunting, target shooting, or both. The first graph shows all three together at one glance. It is ranked by the “both” bars. To read the graph: it shows, for instance, that 17% of Hispanics have a more negative opinion on hunting, 22% of Hispanics have a more negative opinion on sport shooting, and 9% of Hispanics have a more negative opinion on both hunting and target shooting. Overall, 10% of the general population have a more negative opinion of hunting, 11% have a more negative opinion of sport shooting, and 4% have a more negative opinion of both.

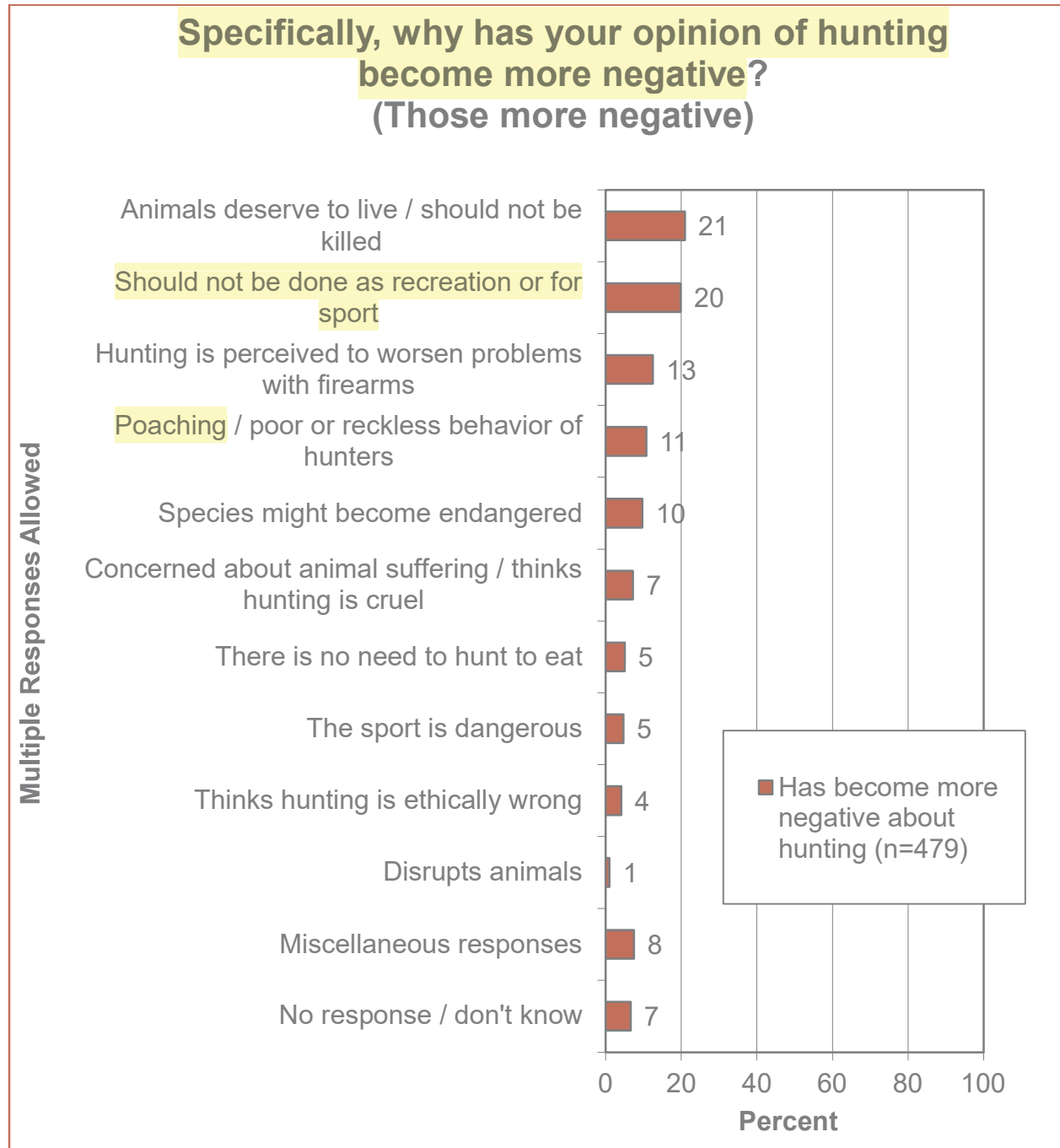


This graph shows the demographic characteristics of those who have a more negative opinion of both hunting and sport shooting. Overall, 4% have a more negative opinion of both.



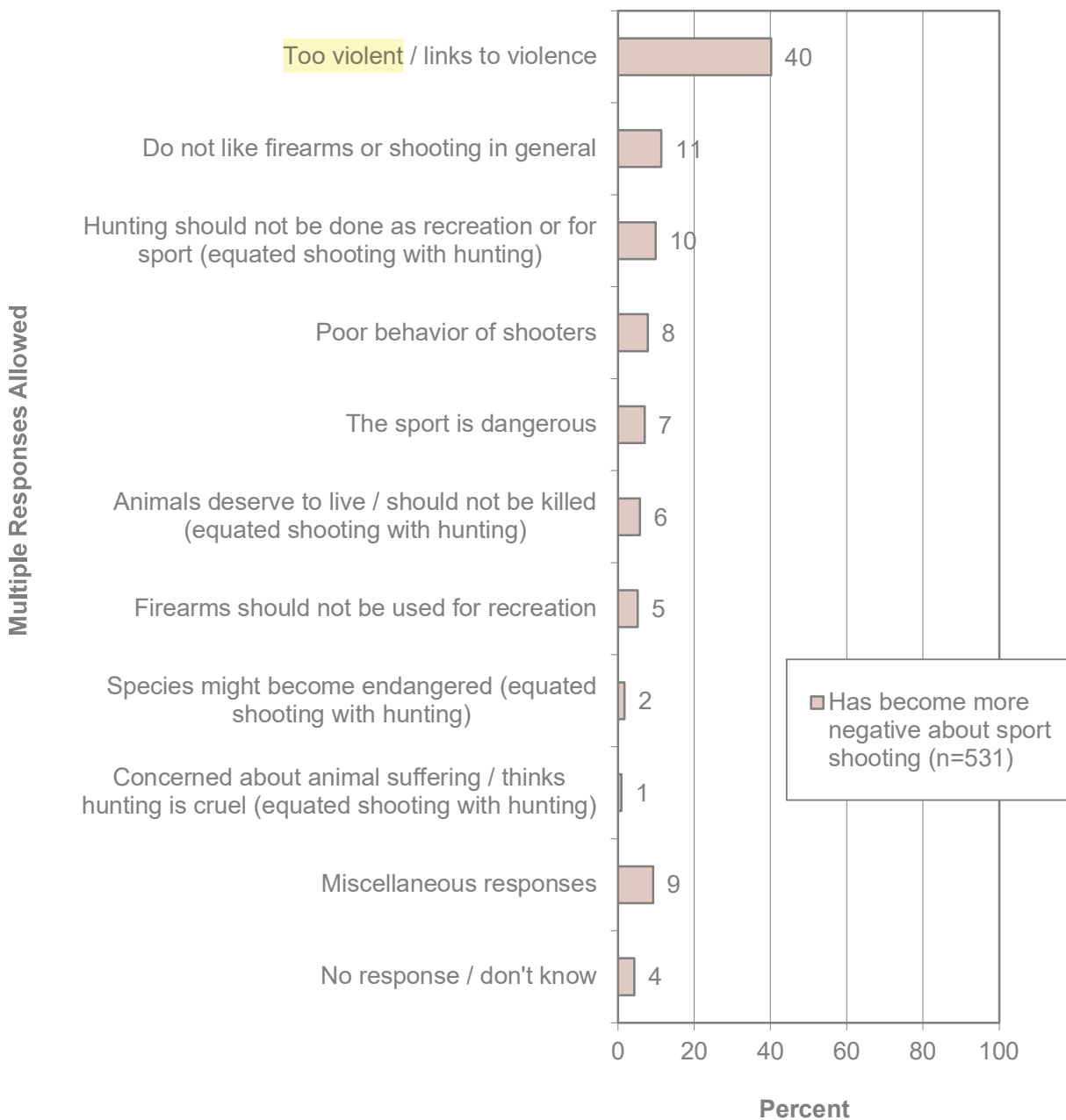
REASONS FOR NEGATIVE OPINIONS OF HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

Follow-up questions asked about reasons that opinion on hunting and target/sport shooting had become more negative, among those giving that response. The most common reasons that opinions on hunting have declined are people’s feelings that animals should not be killed and that hunting should not be done for recreation or sport (i.e., it should be done for utilitarian reasons, the primary one being for meat). Three other reasons make up a second tier: hunting is perceived to worsen problems with firearms, people have seen evidence of poaching or reckless behavior of hunters, and the feeling that species might become endangered.

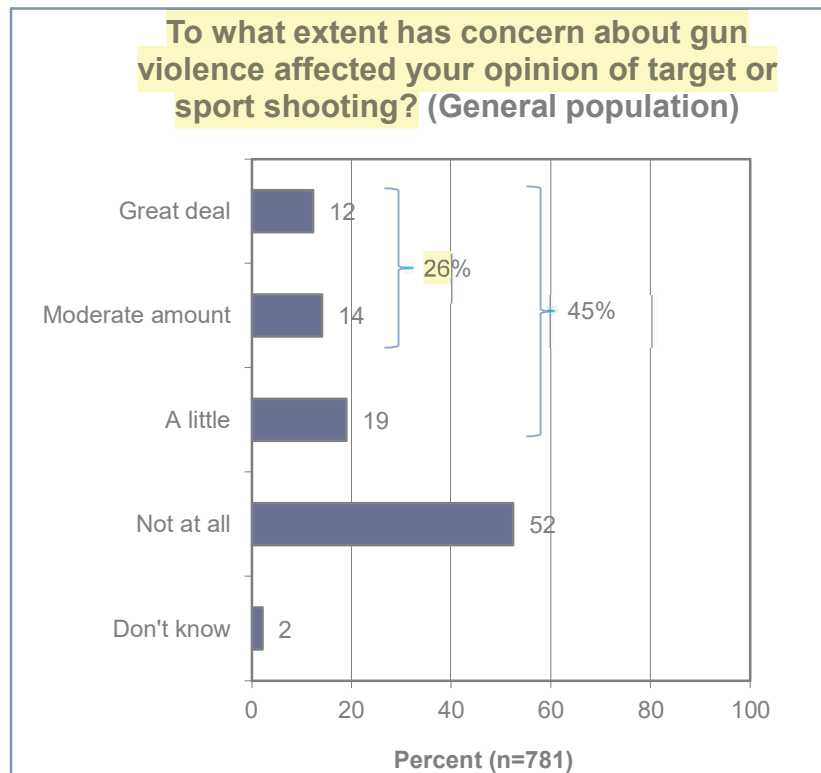
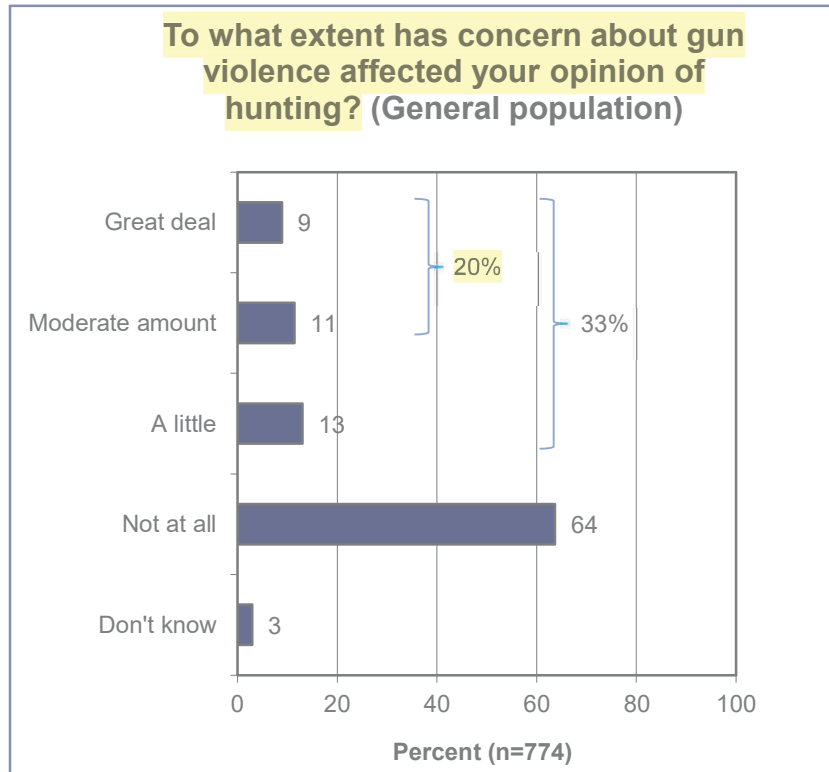


The most common reason that opinions on target/sport shooting have become more negative in the past few years is the perception that firearms are linked to violence—by far the top reason.

Specifically, why has your opinion of target/sport shooting become more negative? (Those more negative)

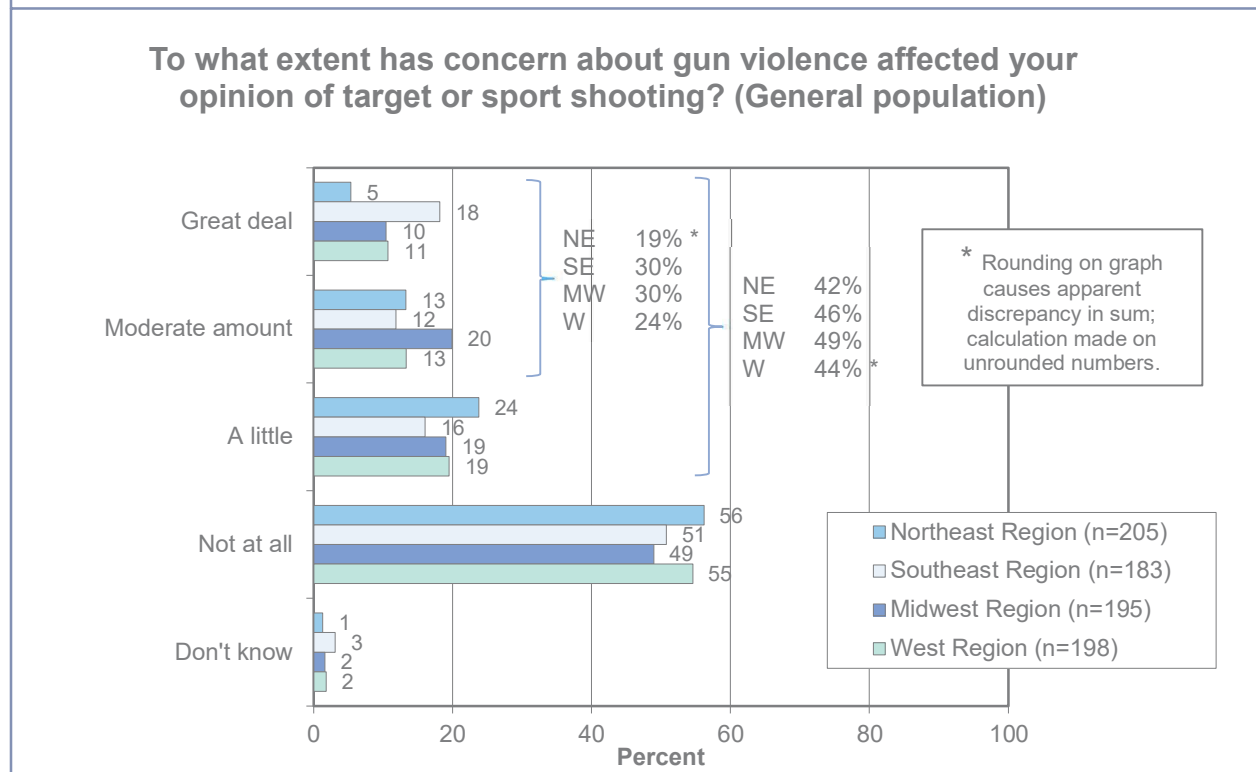
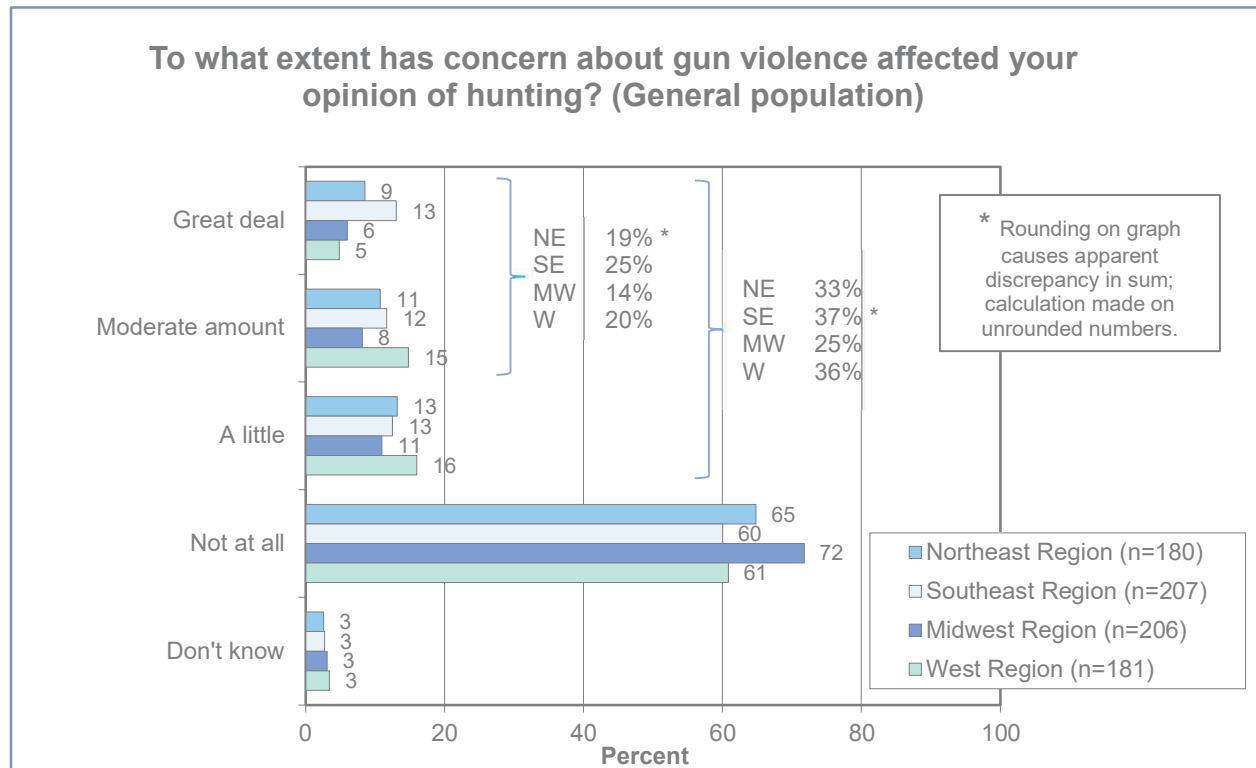


A substantial percentage of Americans have had their opinion on hunting affected by gun violence: 20% say that gun violence has affected their opinion a *great deal* or a *moderate amount*. Adding in those whose opinion has been affected a *little*, 33% of Americans have had their opinion of hunting affected to some degree by gun violence.

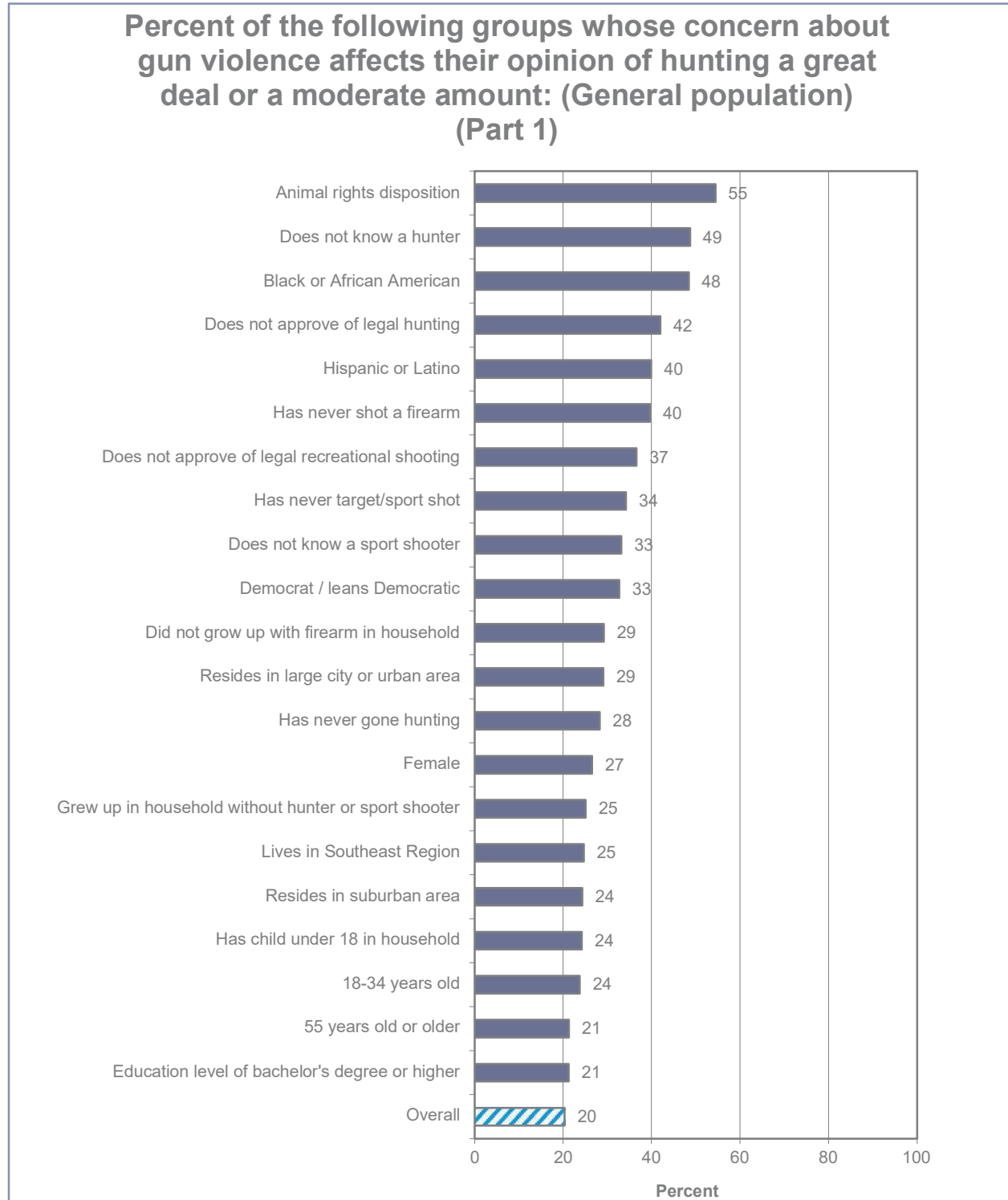


Likewise, a substantial percentage of Americans have had their opinion on sport shooting affected by gun violence. Overall, 26% say that gun violence has affected their opinion a *great deal* or a *moderate amount*, and 45% of Americans have had their opinion of sport shooting affected to some degree by gun violence.

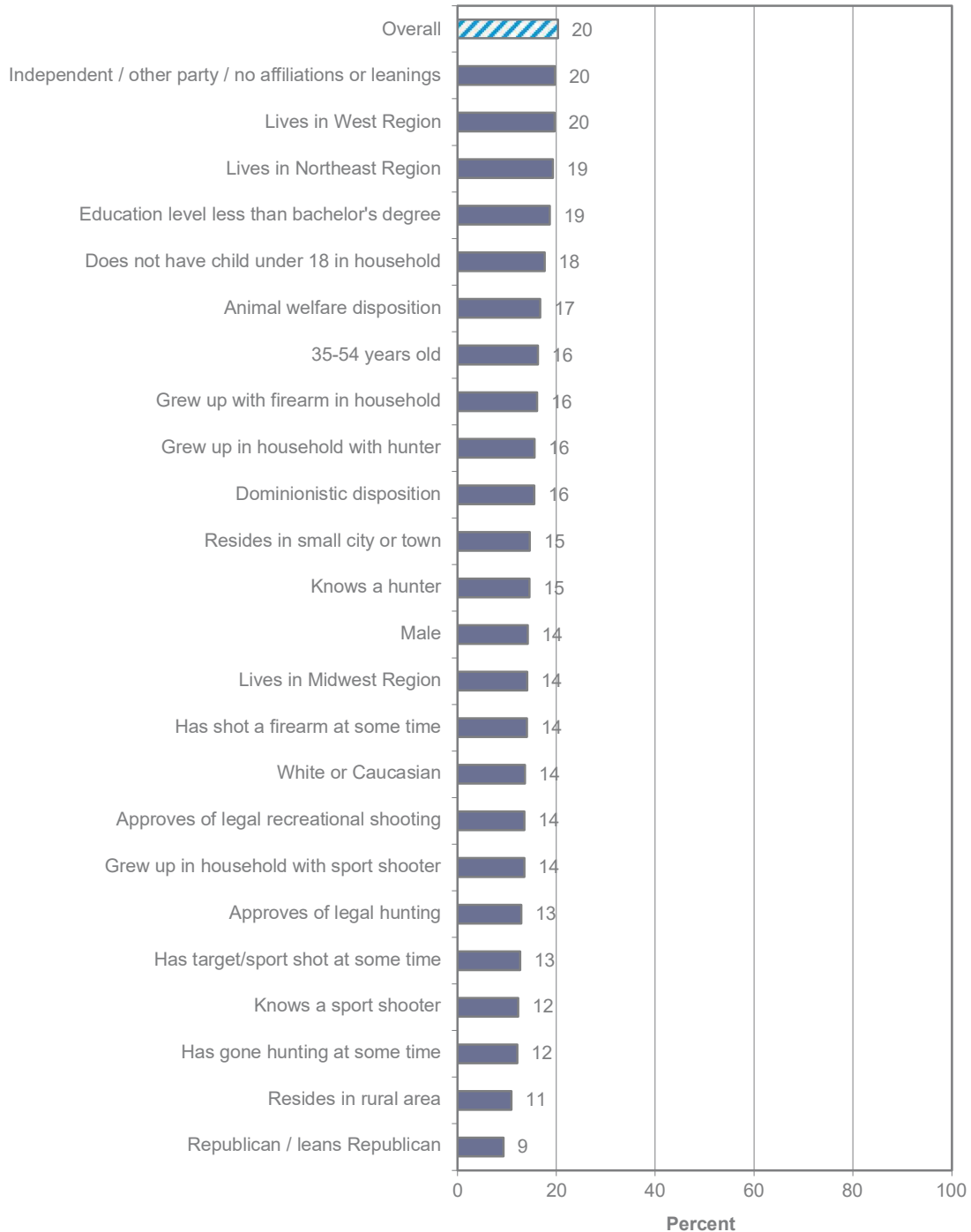
Regionally, the Midwest has the lowest percentage of residents whose opinion on hunting is affected by gun violence. Meanwhile, Northeast Region residents have the lowest percentage of residents whose opinion on target/sport shooting is affected by gun violence.



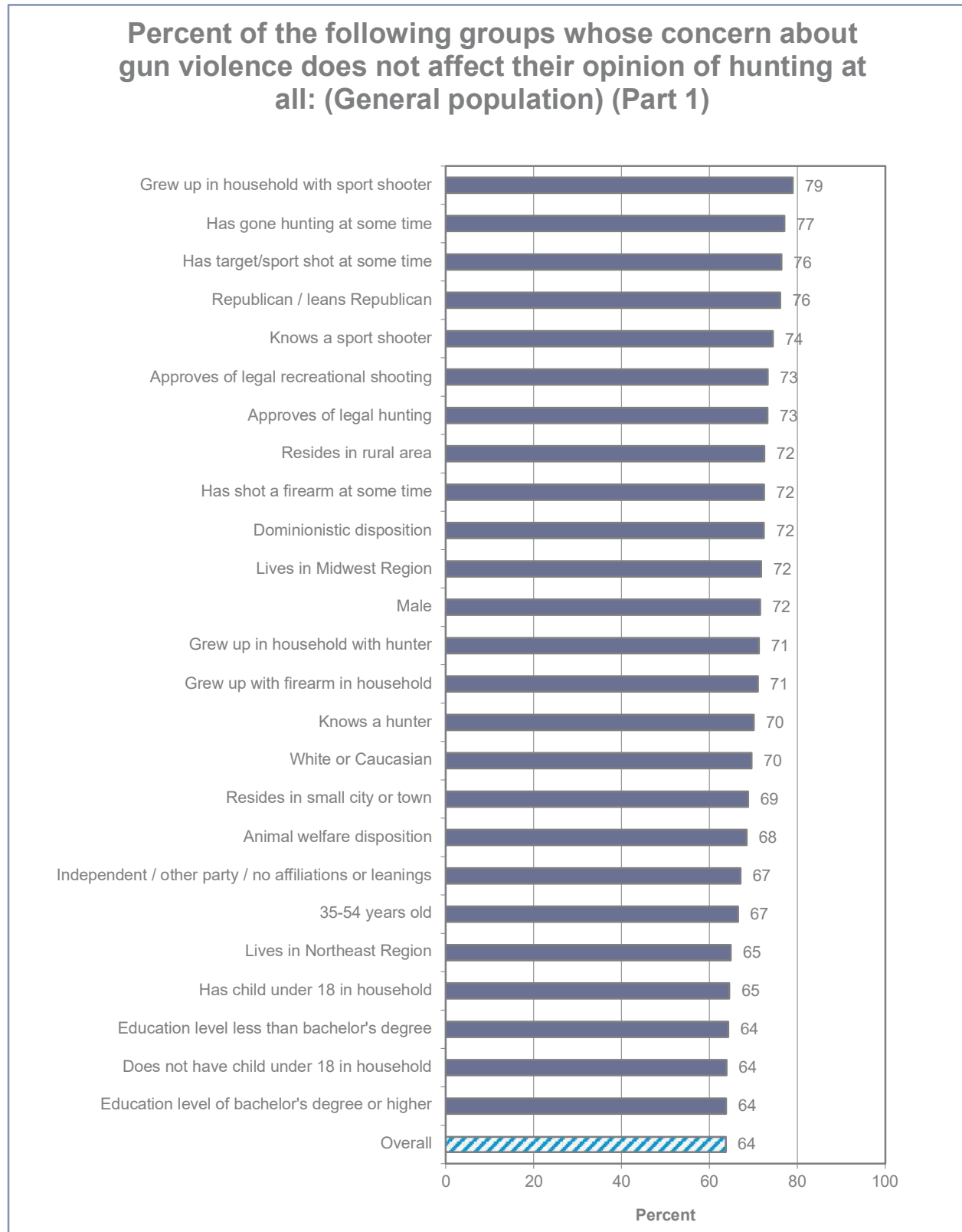
Those whose opinion of hunting has been affected *a great deal* or *a moderate amount* by gun violence are the focus of these two graphs. Among the groups more likely to hold this viewpoint are those with an animal rights disposition, those who do not know a hunter, and Blacks/African Americans. Nonetheless, all groups at 25% or higher are markedly more likely than the general population to hold this opinion.



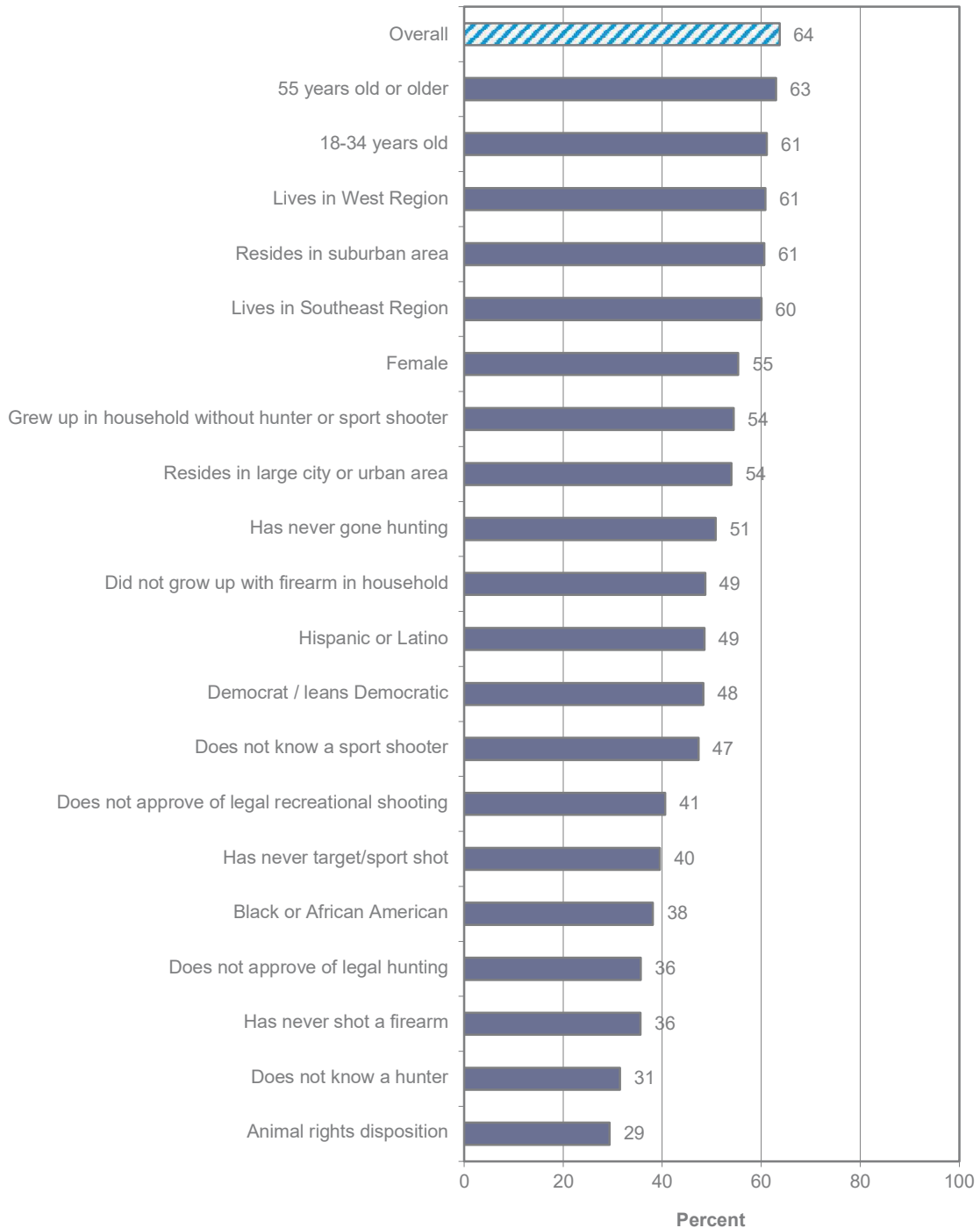
**Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence affects their opinion of hunting a great deal or a moderate amount: (General population)
(Part 2)**



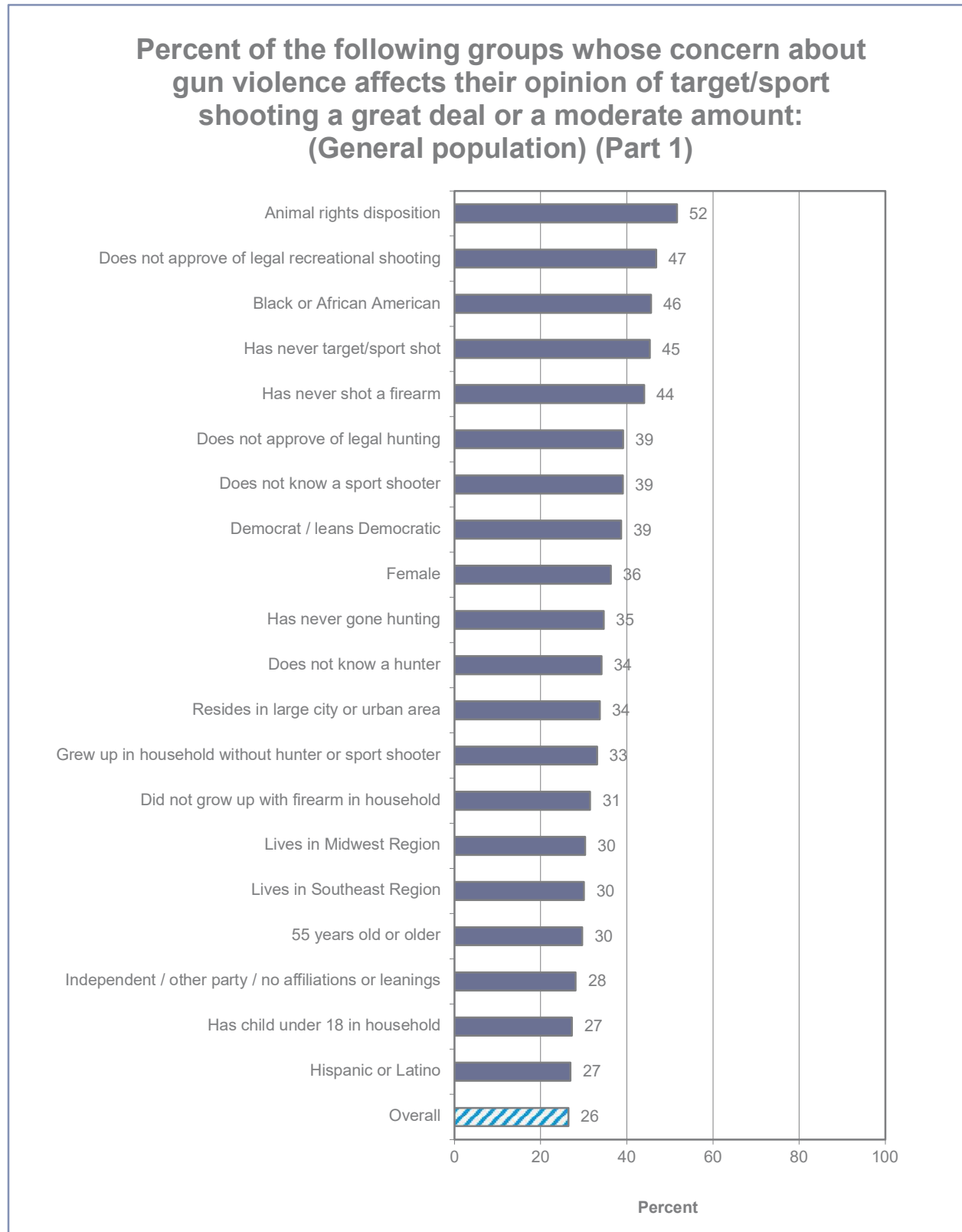
At the other end of the spectrum are those whose opinion on hunting is not affected by gun violence, as shown in these demographic analyses graphs.



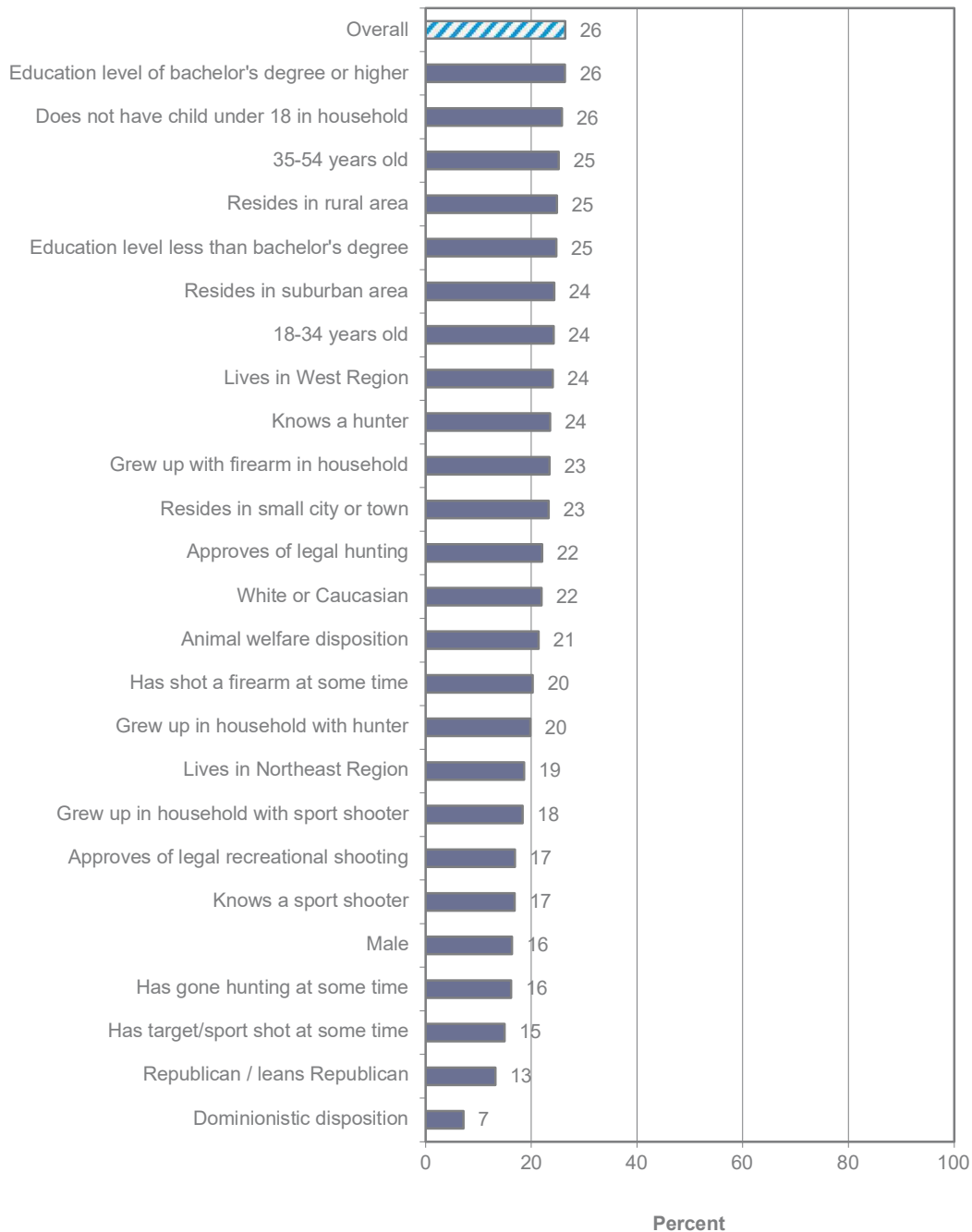
Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence does not affect their opinion of hunting at all: (General population) (Part 2)



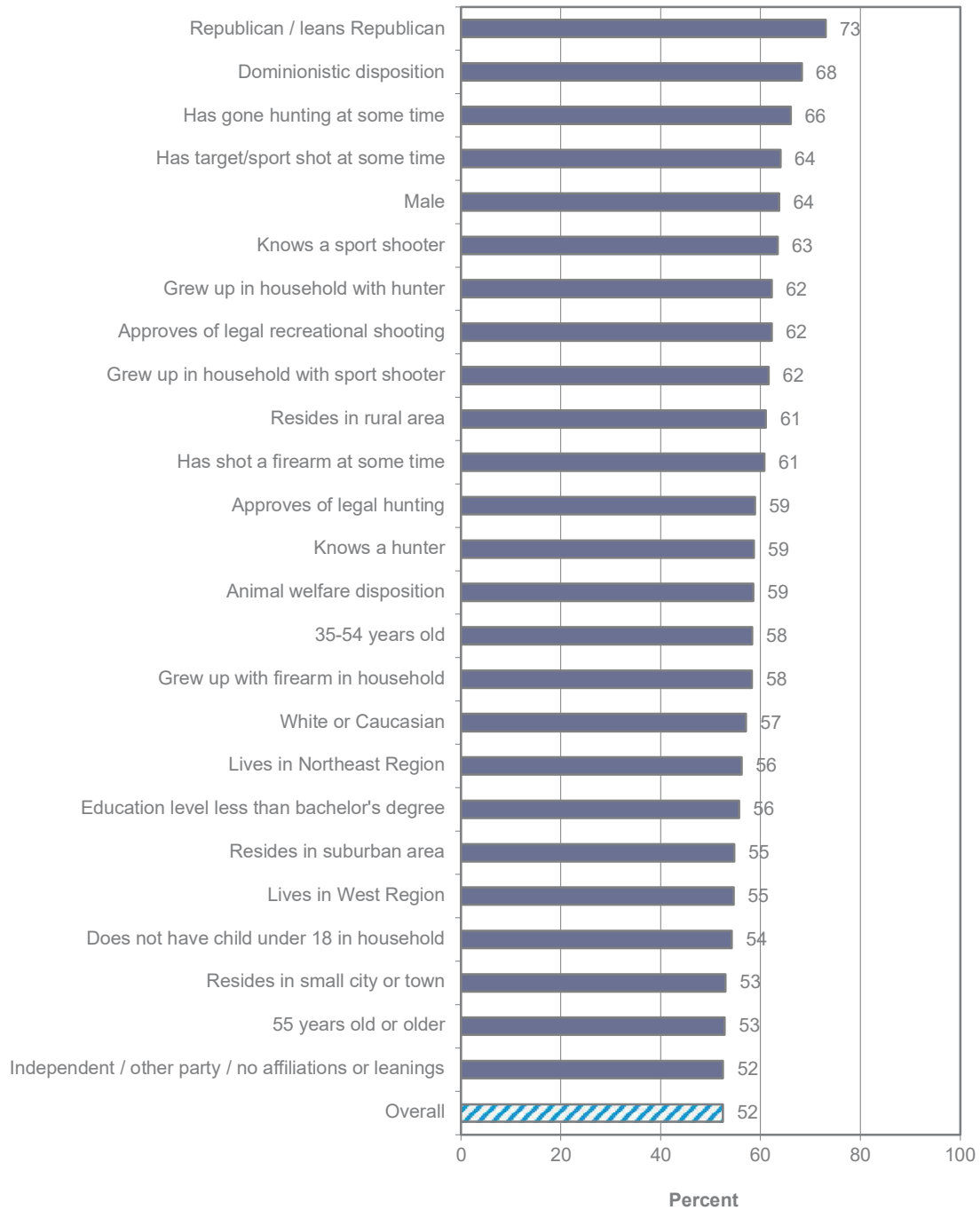
Analogous demographic analyses were run on the effect of gun violence on opinion of sport shooting, with similar results.



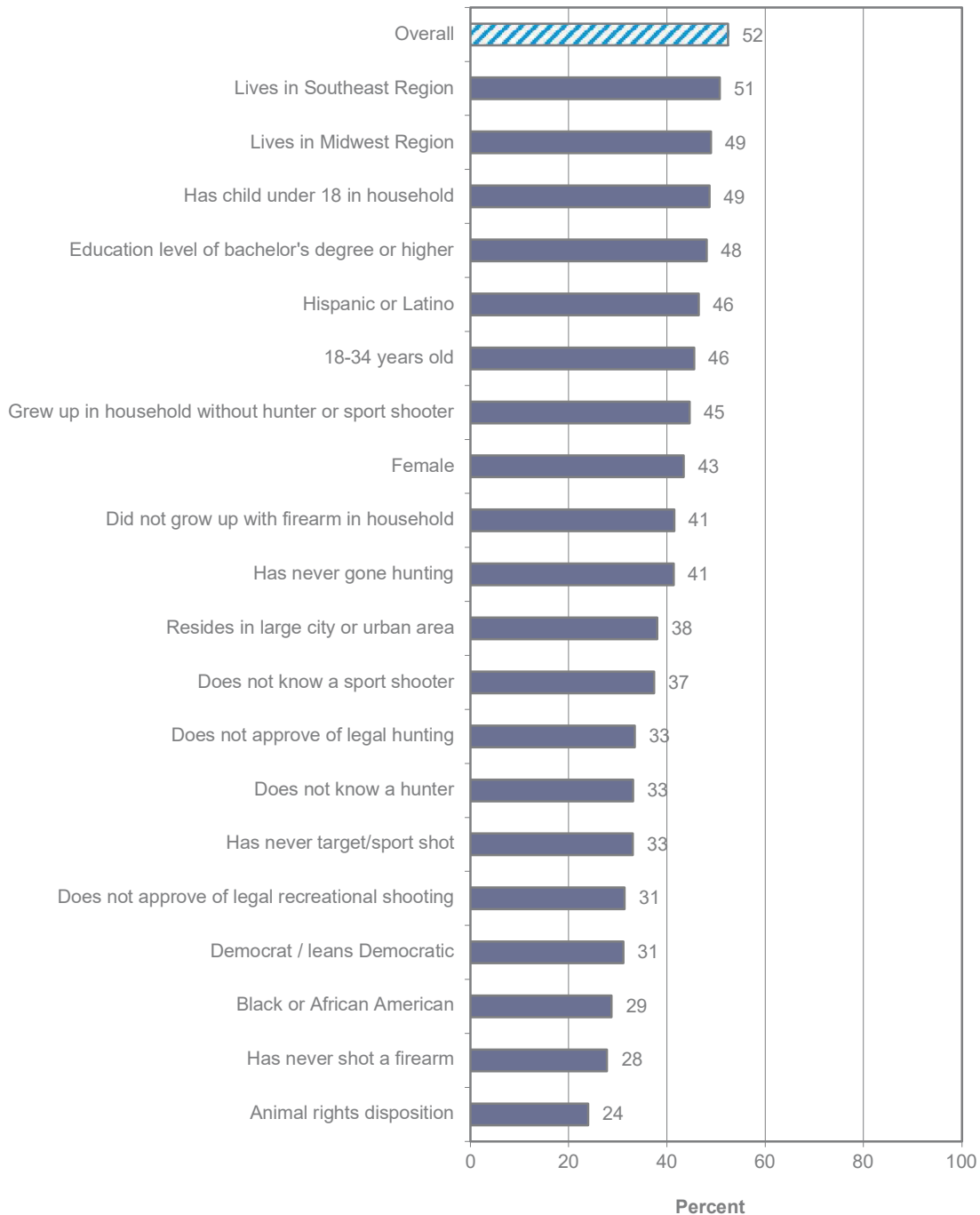
**Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence affects their opinion of target/sport shooting a great deal or a moderate amount:
(General population) (Part 2)**



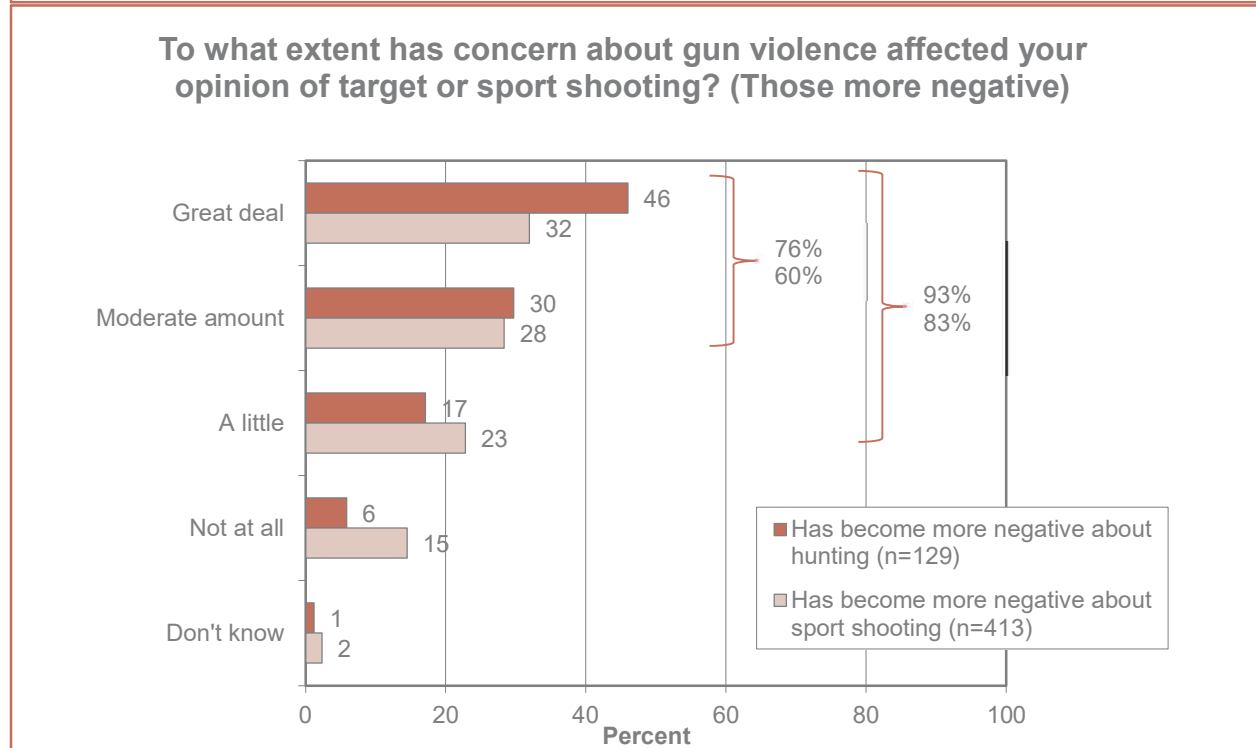
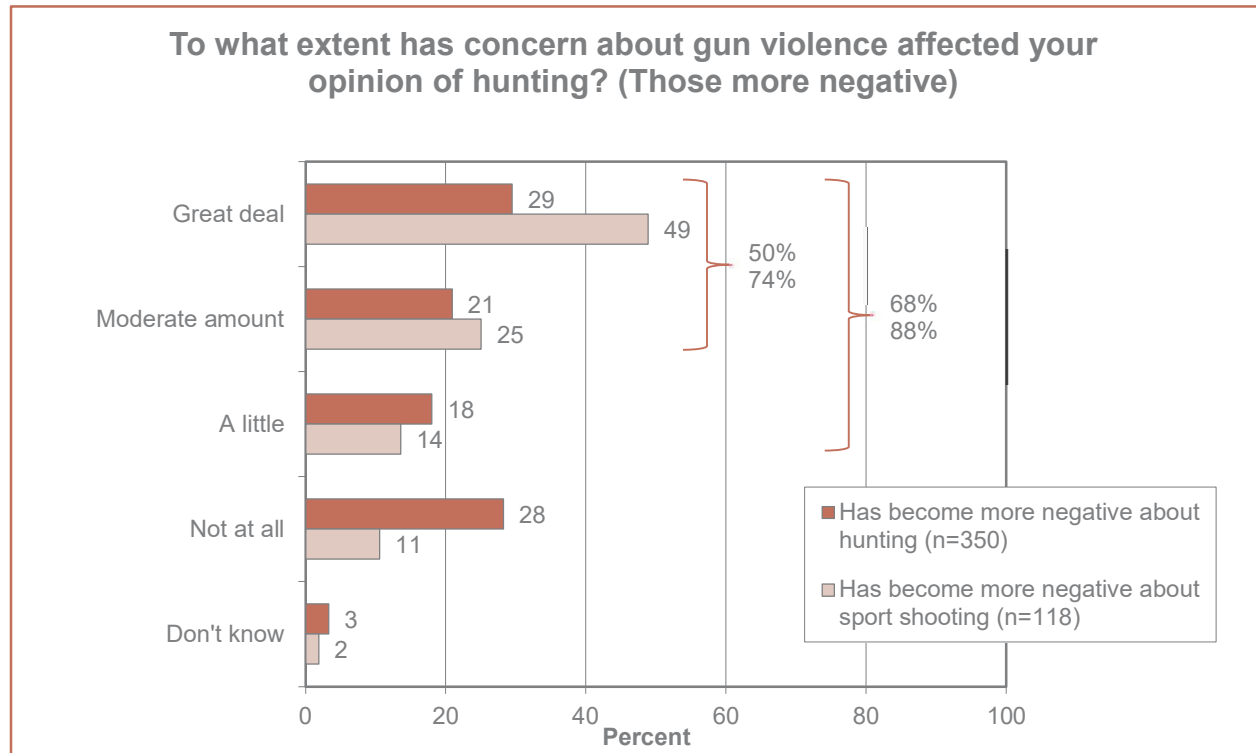
Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence does not affect their opinion of target/sport shooting at all: (General population) (Part 1)



**Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence does not affect their opinion of target/sport shooting at all:
(General population) (Part 2)**

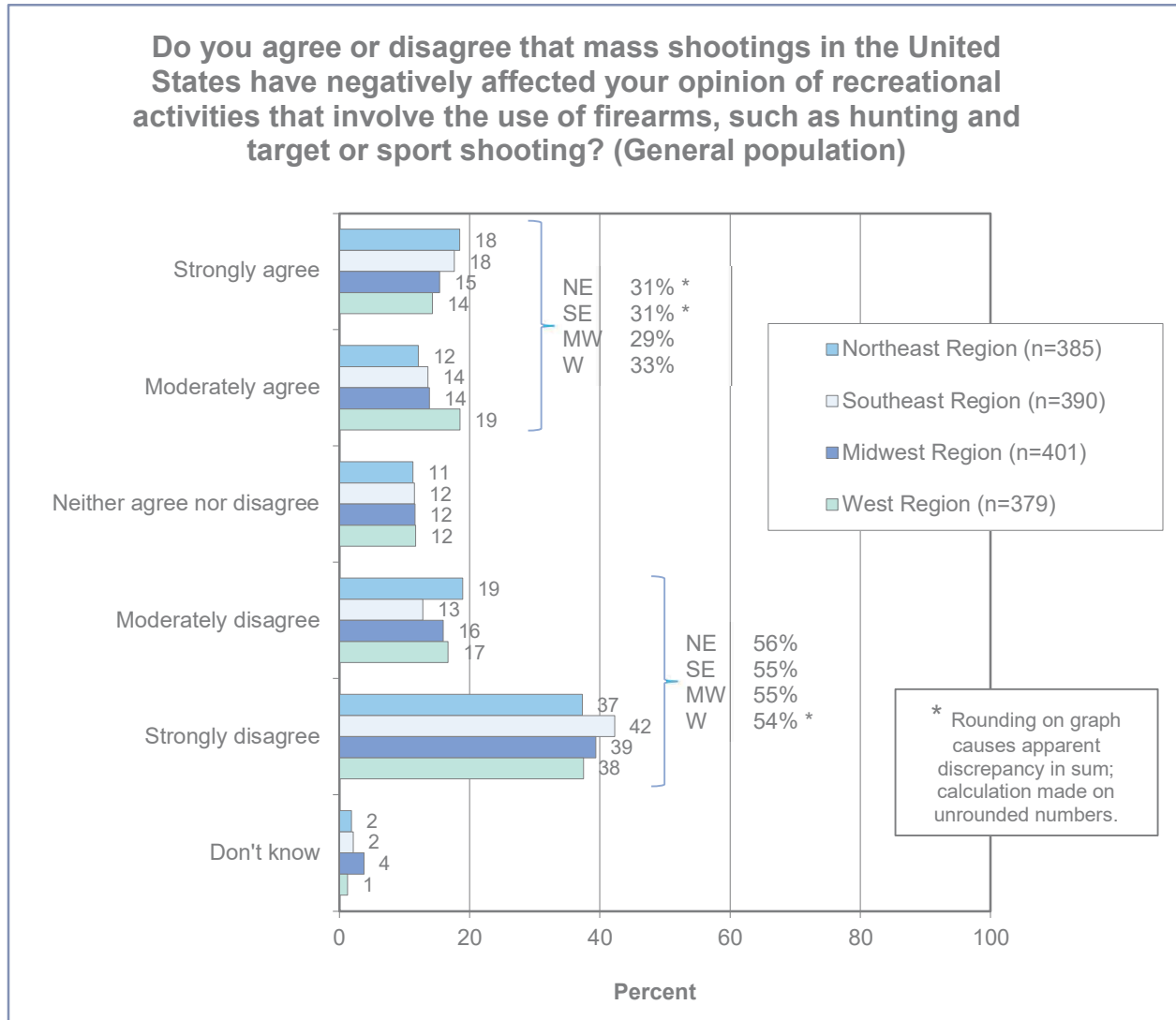
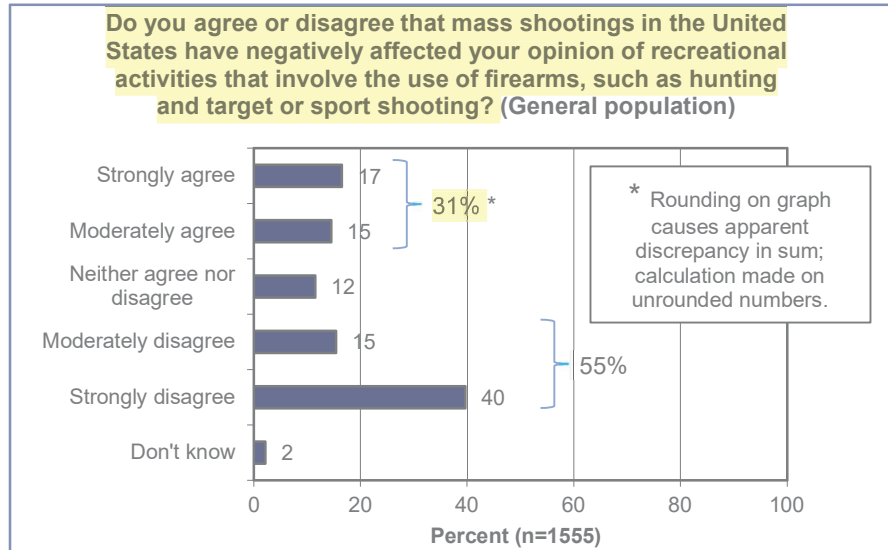


Gun violence is much more likely to have affected the opinions of people with more negative views of hunting and sport shooting, compared to the general population.

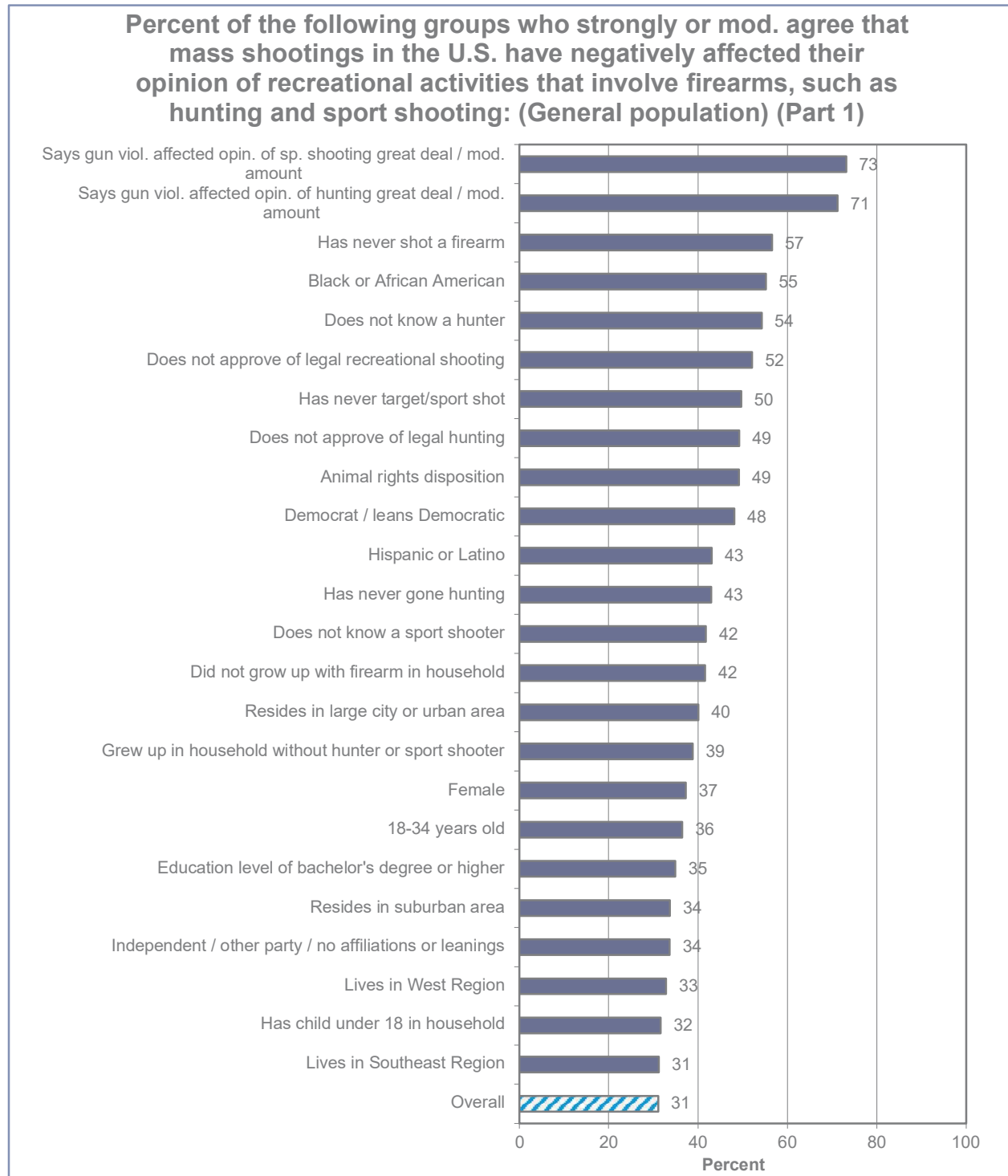


Disagreement exceeds agreement that mass shootings in the United States have negatively affected opinion of recreational activities that involve the use of firearms: 55% disagree, which is more than the 31% who agree.

The regions do not markedly differ from one another on this question.



The groups most likely to agree that mass shootings in the United States have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve firearms include, in addition to those who say that gun violence has affected their opinion of hunting and target/sport shooting, those who have not shot a firearm, those ethnically Black/African American, and those who do not personally know a hunter. This list is not exhaustive, as every group at 36% or higher are markedly more likely to agree.

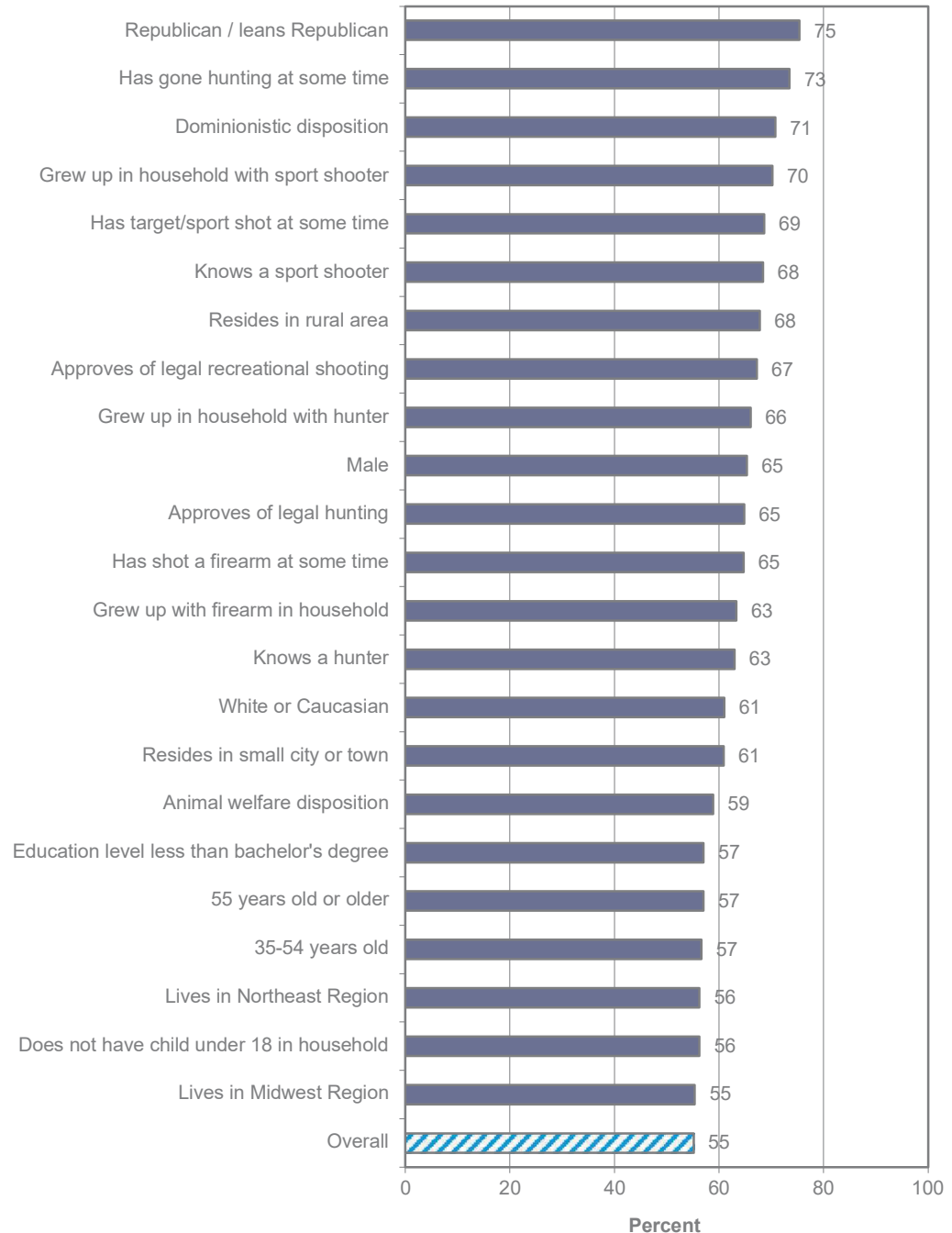


**Percent of the following groups who strongly or mod. agree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve firearms, such as hunting and sport shooting:
(General population) (Part 2)**

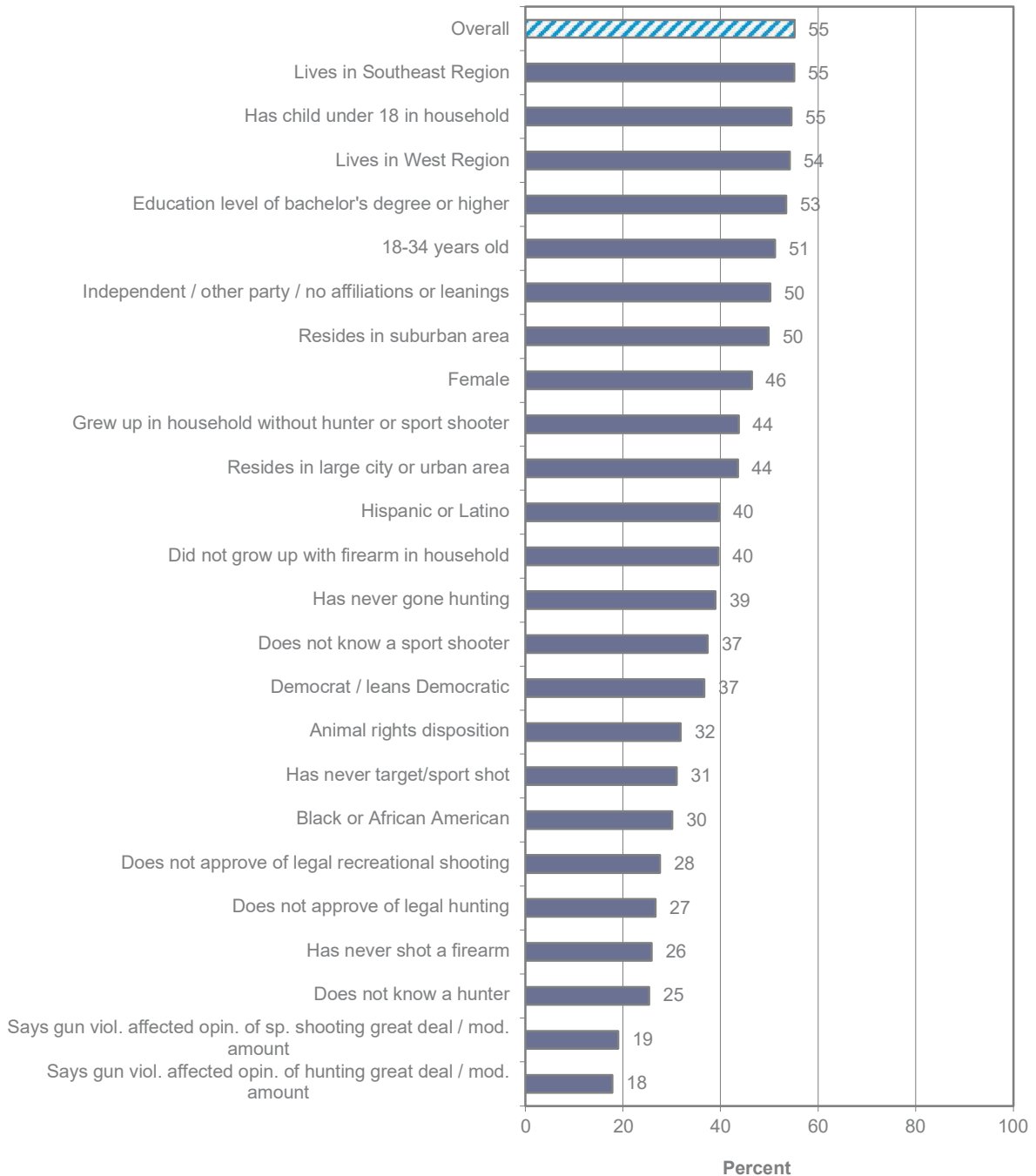


On the other hand, those groups little affected by mass shootings include Republicans, hunters, and those with a dominionistic disposition, among others.

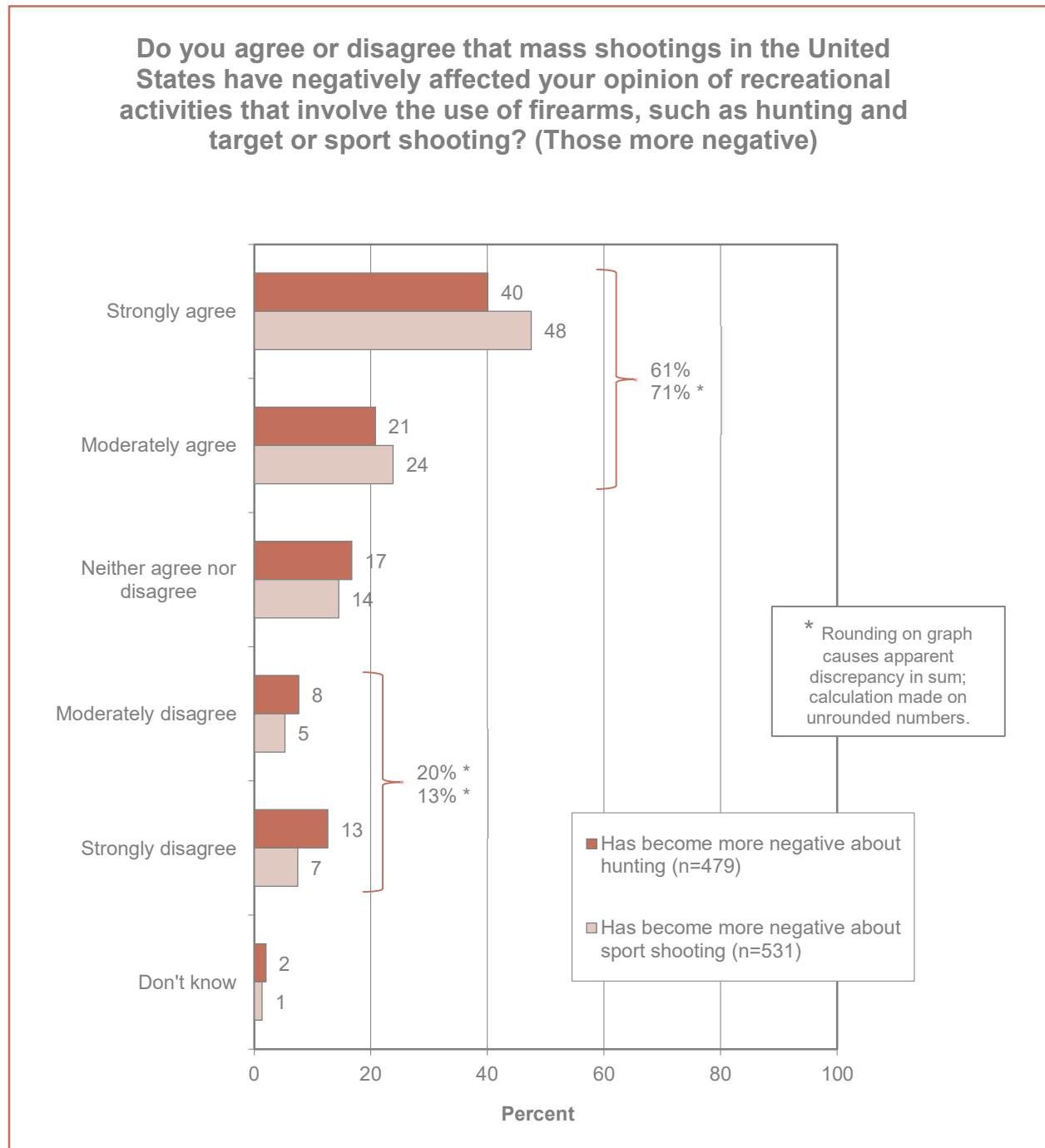
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately disagree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve firearms, such as hunting and sport shooting: (General population) (Part 1)



Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately disagree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve firearms, such as hunting and sport shooting: (General population) (Part 2)



Those whose views are more negative are much more likely than the general population to agree that mass shootings in the United States have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve the use of firearms.



Another way to examine negative opinions is to look at what things could be done to improve people's opinions of hunting and target shooting. Because the open-ended responses were so varied and so nuanced, quantitative analyses could not be conducted. Nonetheless, a qualitative look at the open-ended responses suggests the following about hunting:

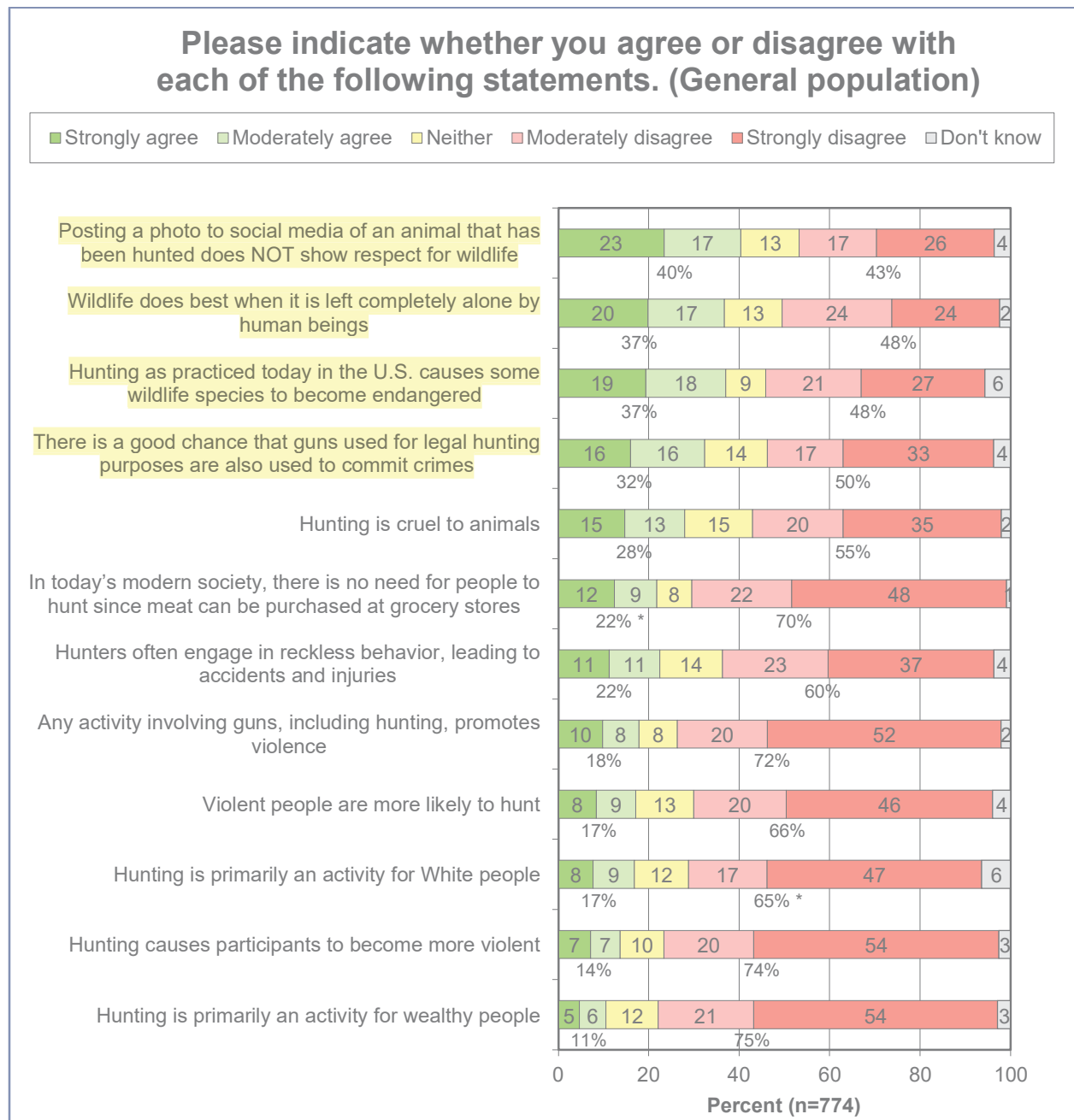
- Many would have a better perception of hunting if trophy hunting were minimized. Hunting for food is much more acceptable than hunting for sport or fun.
- Eliminating poor, boorish behavior by hunters would improve many people's opinions of the sport.
- Ensuring fair chase was mentioned several times.
- The use of AR-platform rifles was repugnant to some.
- In the end, many people indicated that there is nothing that would improve their opinion of hunting.

The following shows some of the more common suggestions to make sport shooting more acceptable:

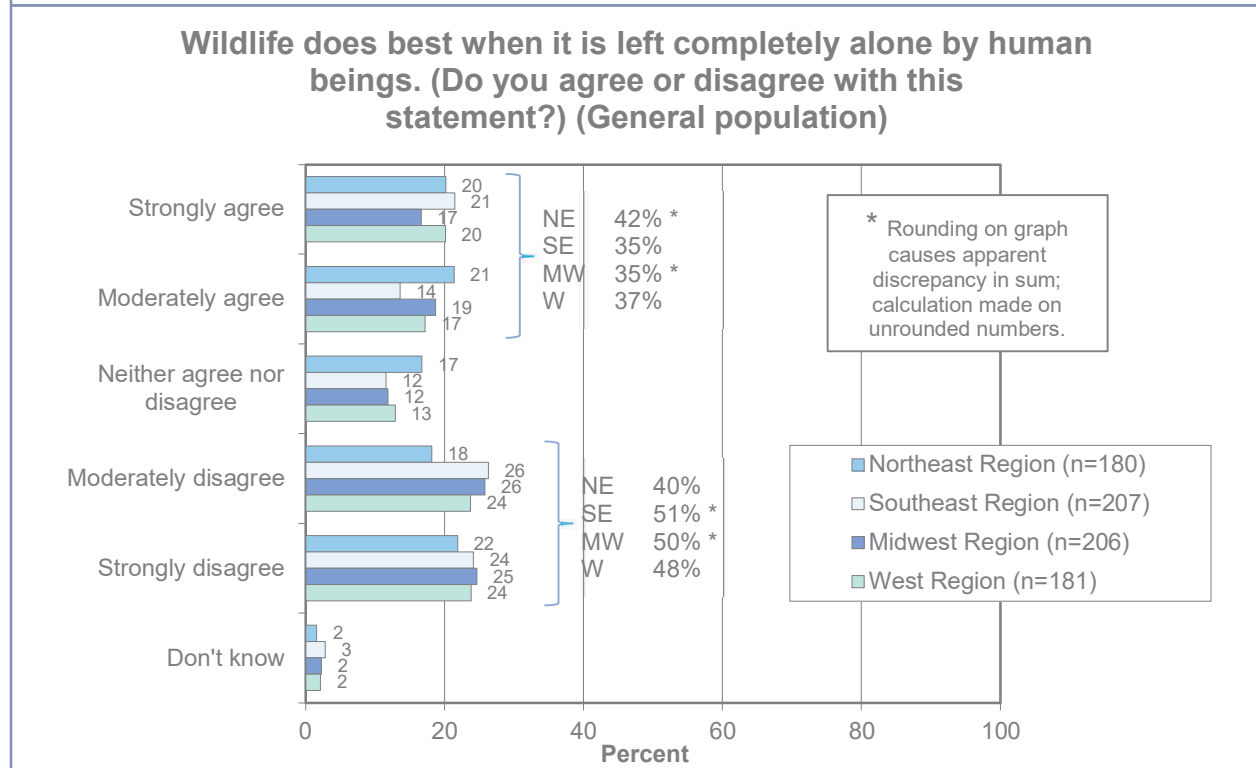
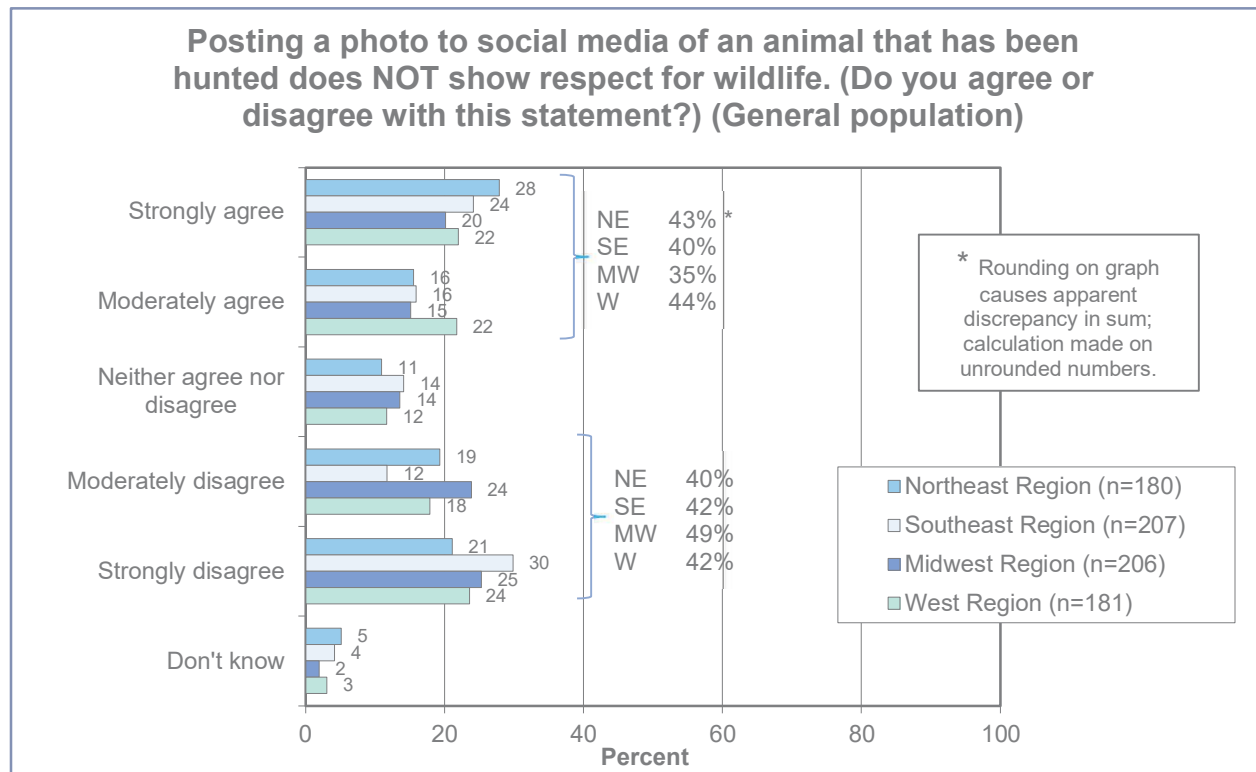
- Eliminating poor behavior and rudeness by target shooters would improve many people's opinions of the sport. This included not leaving trash around after a shooting session.
- Many felt that there needs to be tighter gun control laws; several mentioned some sort of licensing to own a firearm or at a minimum better background checks for mental illness.
- As with opinions on hunting, many indicated that there is nothing that would improve their opinion of target shooting.

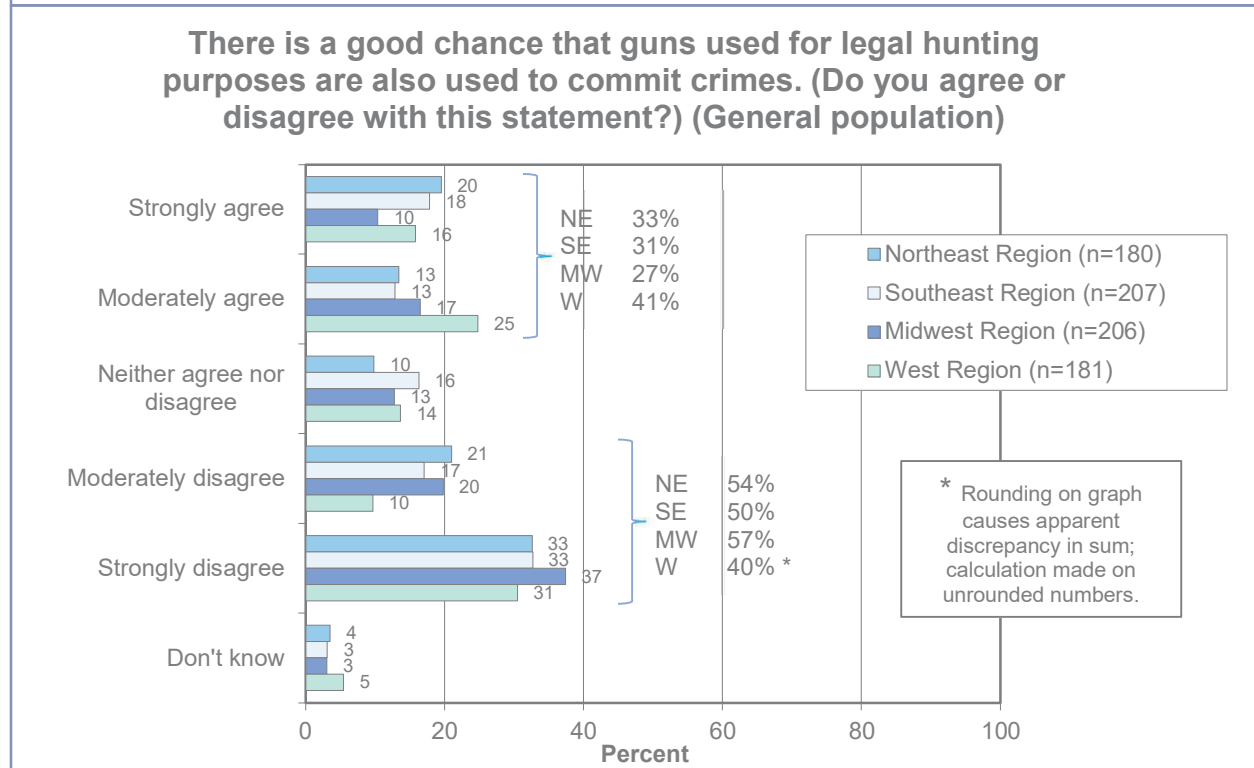
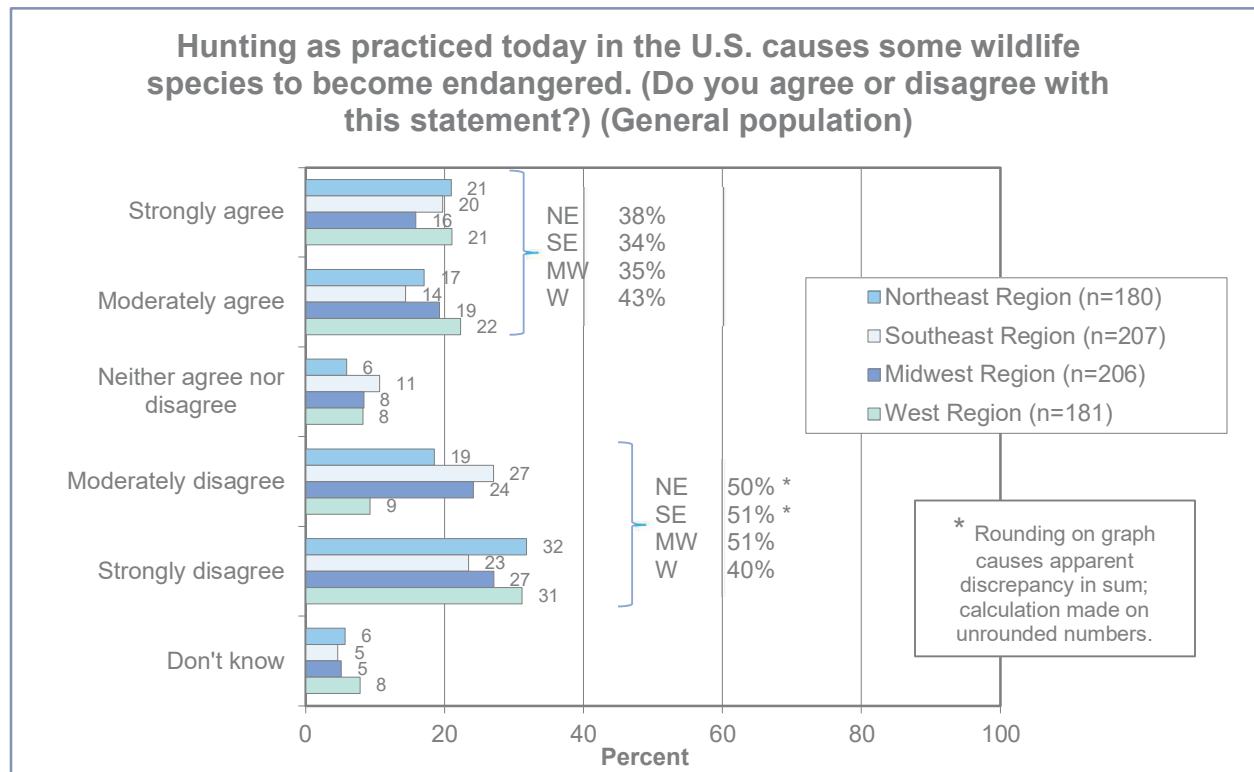
OPINIONS ON STATEMENTS ABOUT HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

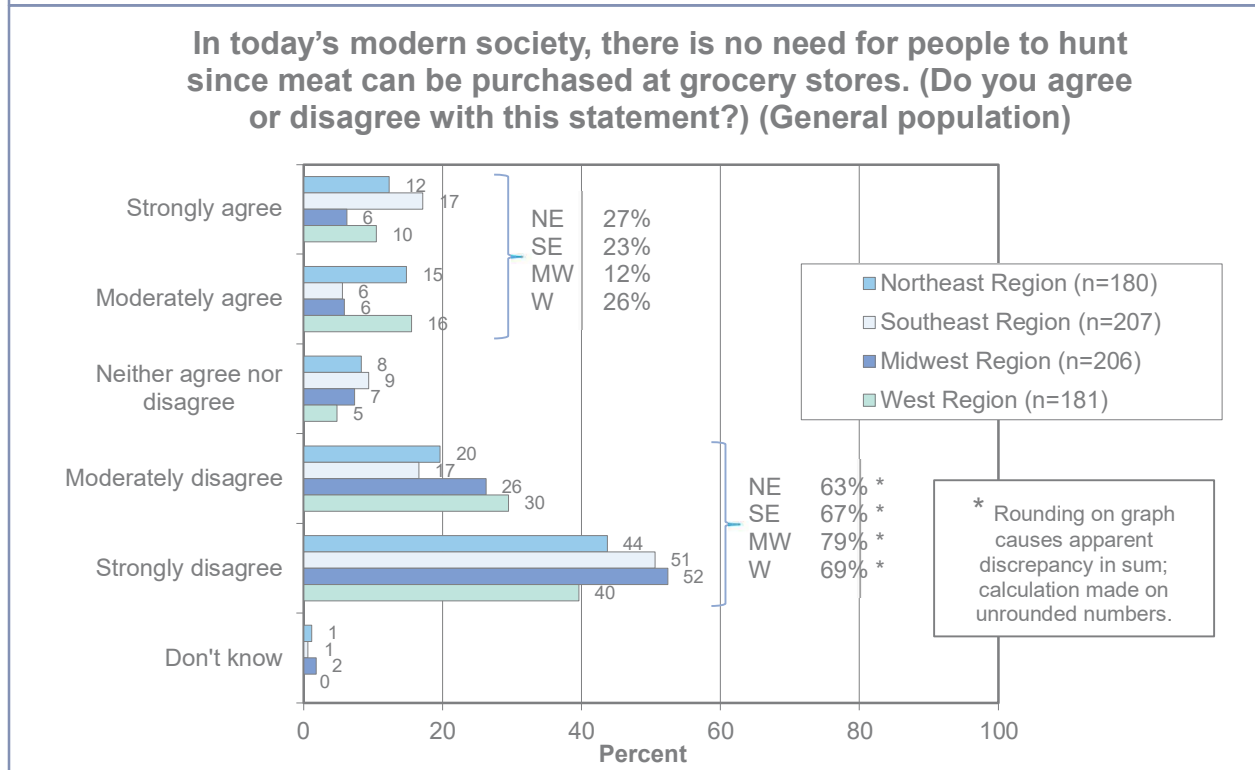
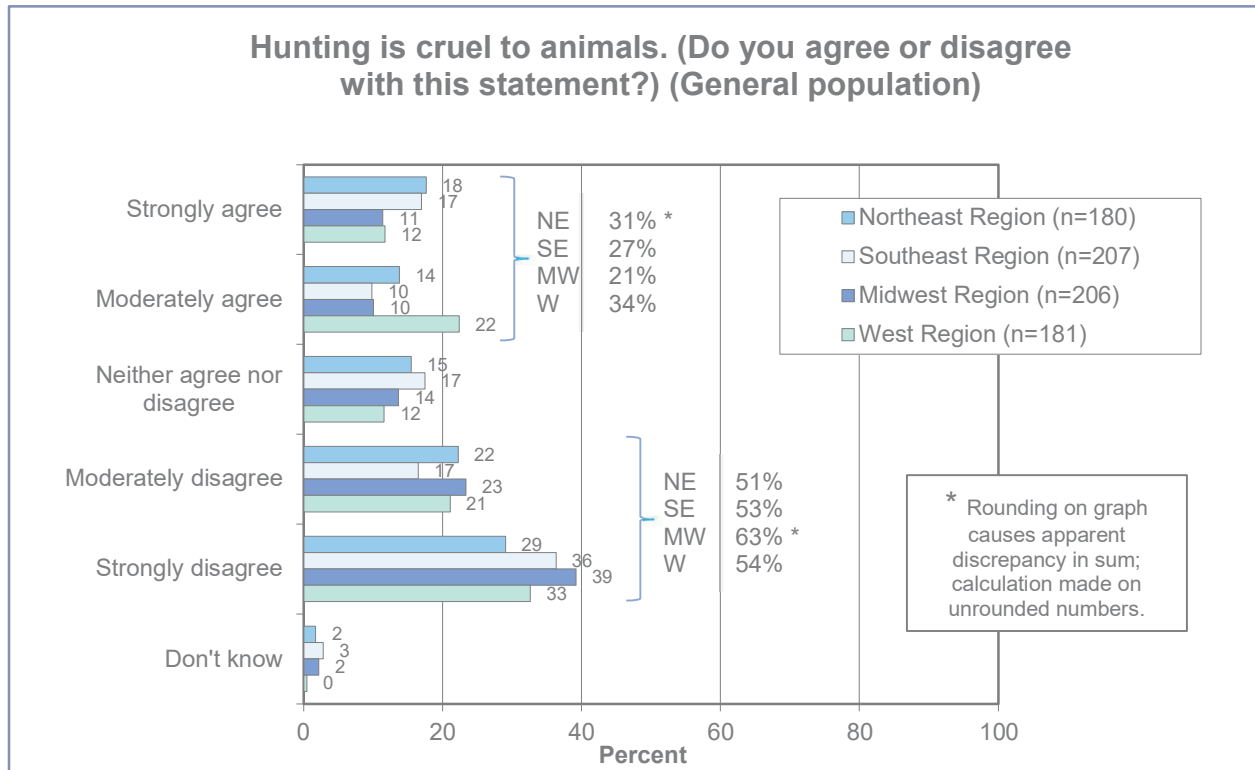
The survey presented a dozen negative statements about hunting to see which ones have the most agreement among the general public—which ones are the most problematic for the hunting community. At the top with the most agreement are that posting a photo of an animal that has been hunted does not show respect for wildlife, that wildlife does best when left completely alone, and that hunting causing some species to become endangered—each with 37% or more agreeing. (The graph is ranked by the *strongly* agree response. The sums of *strongly* and *moderately* for both agree and disagree are shown below each bar.) Regional graphs follow for each individual question, followed by a summary of the regional results for the entire series.

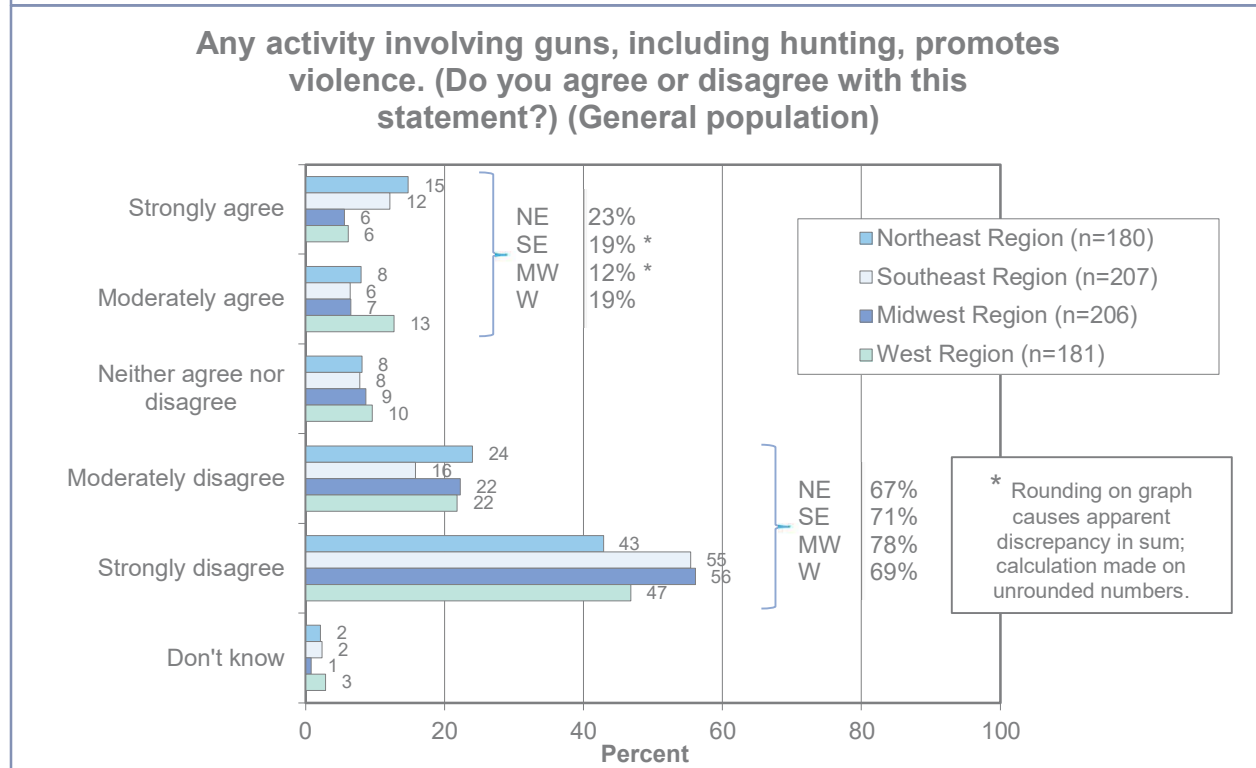
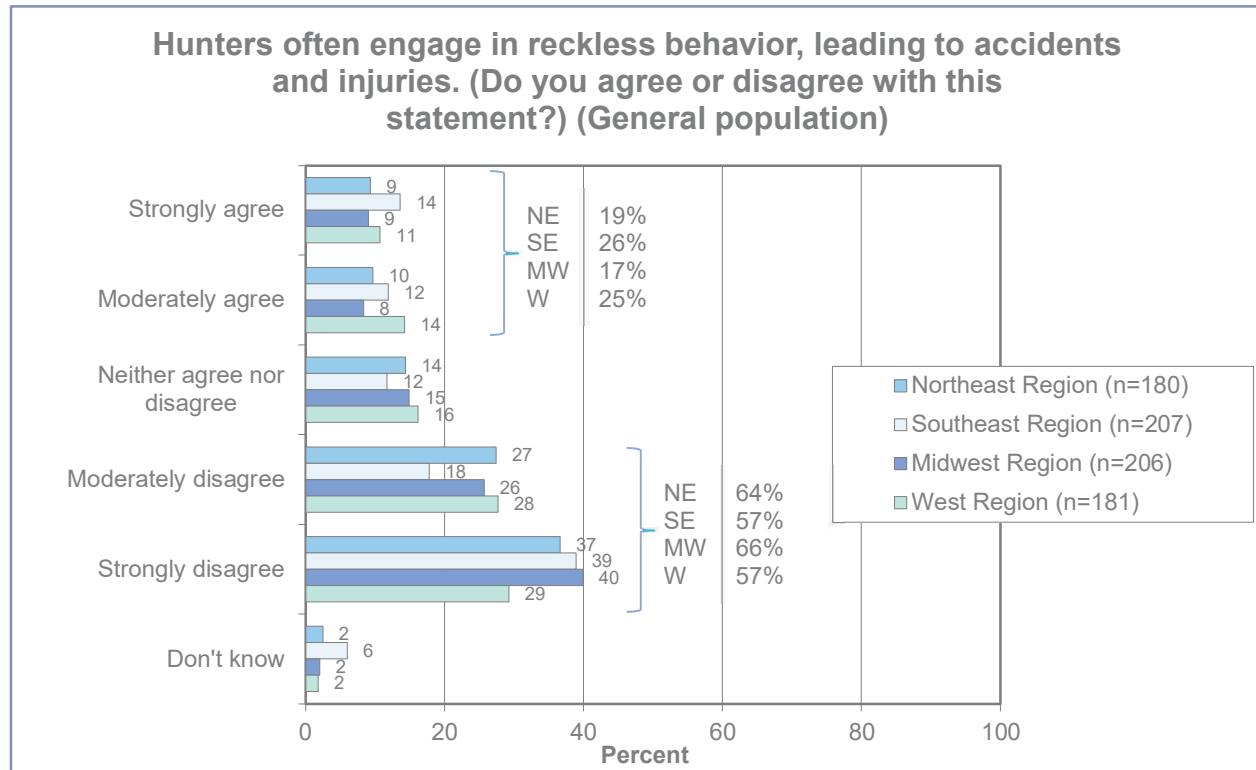


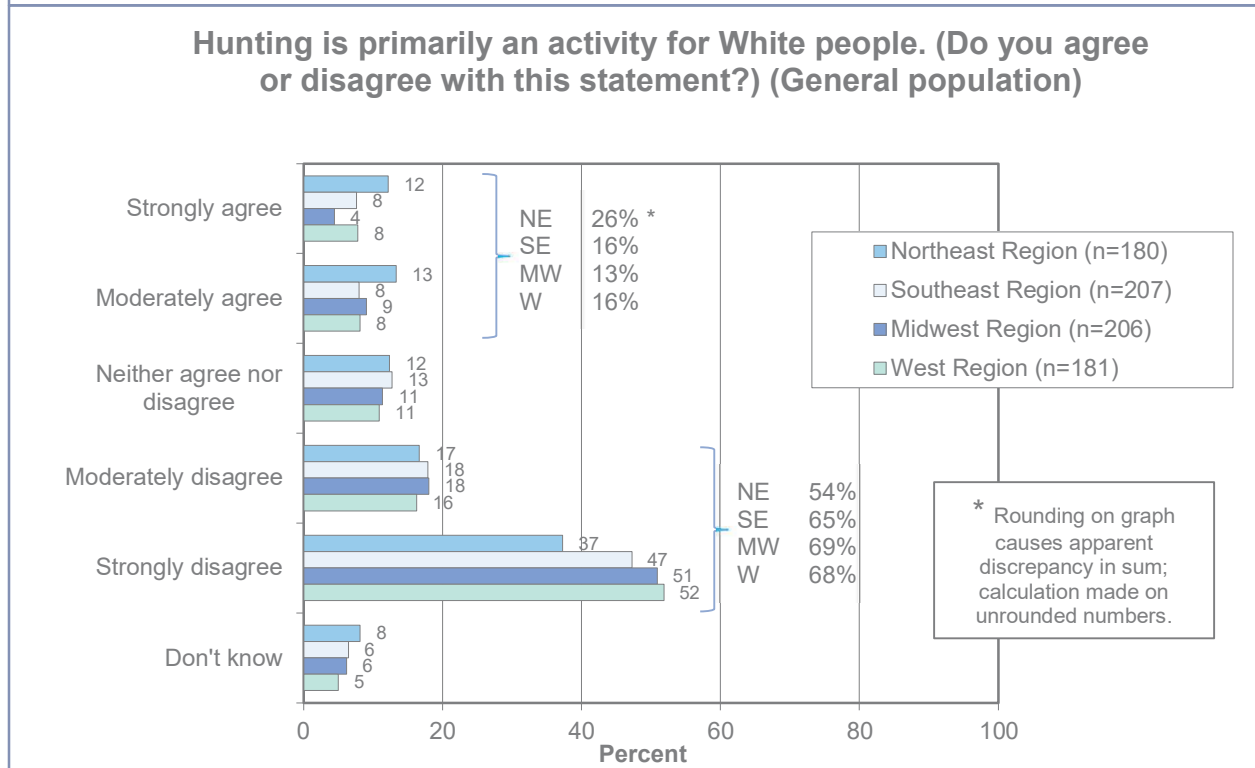
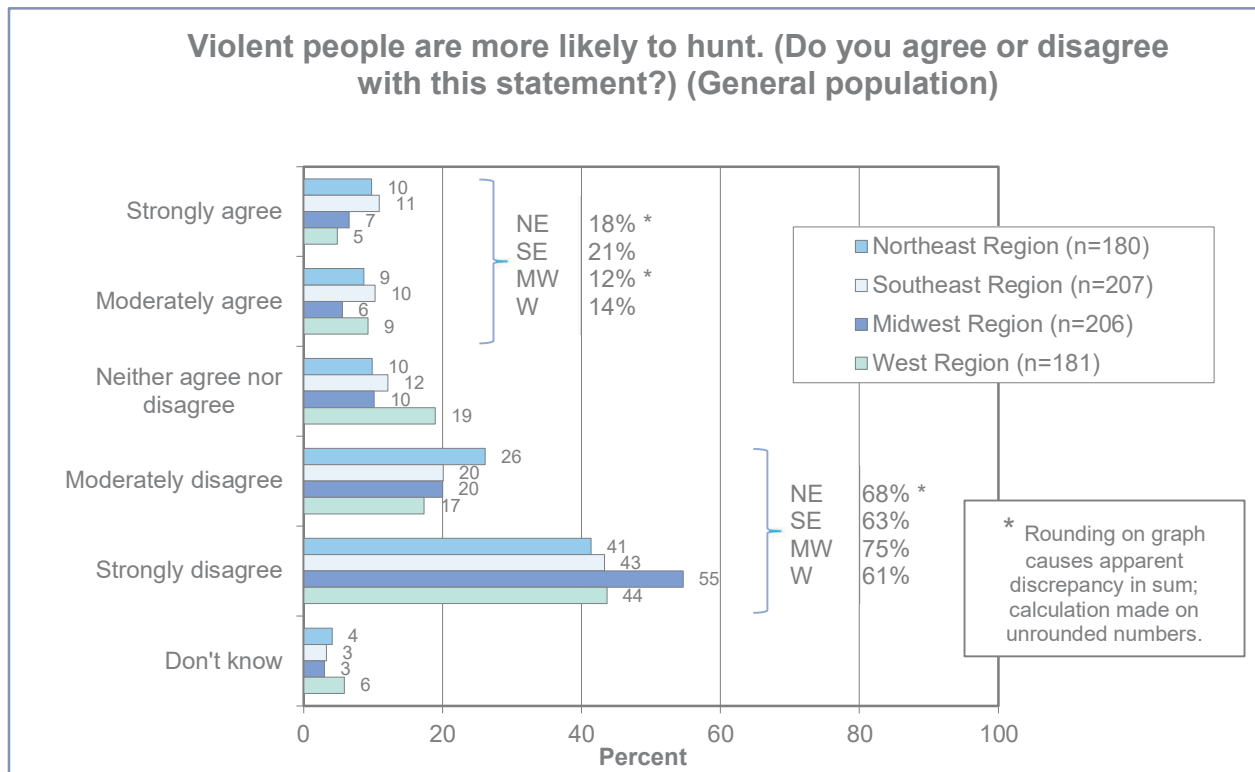
* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

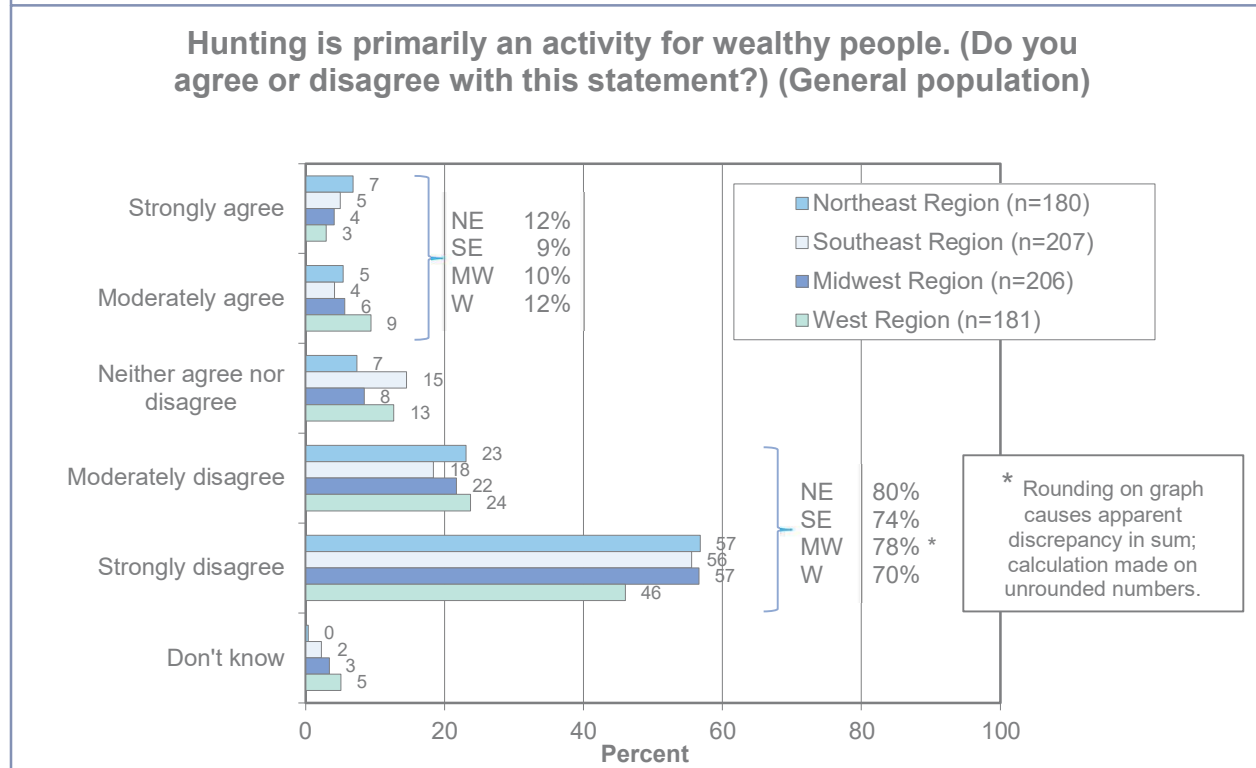
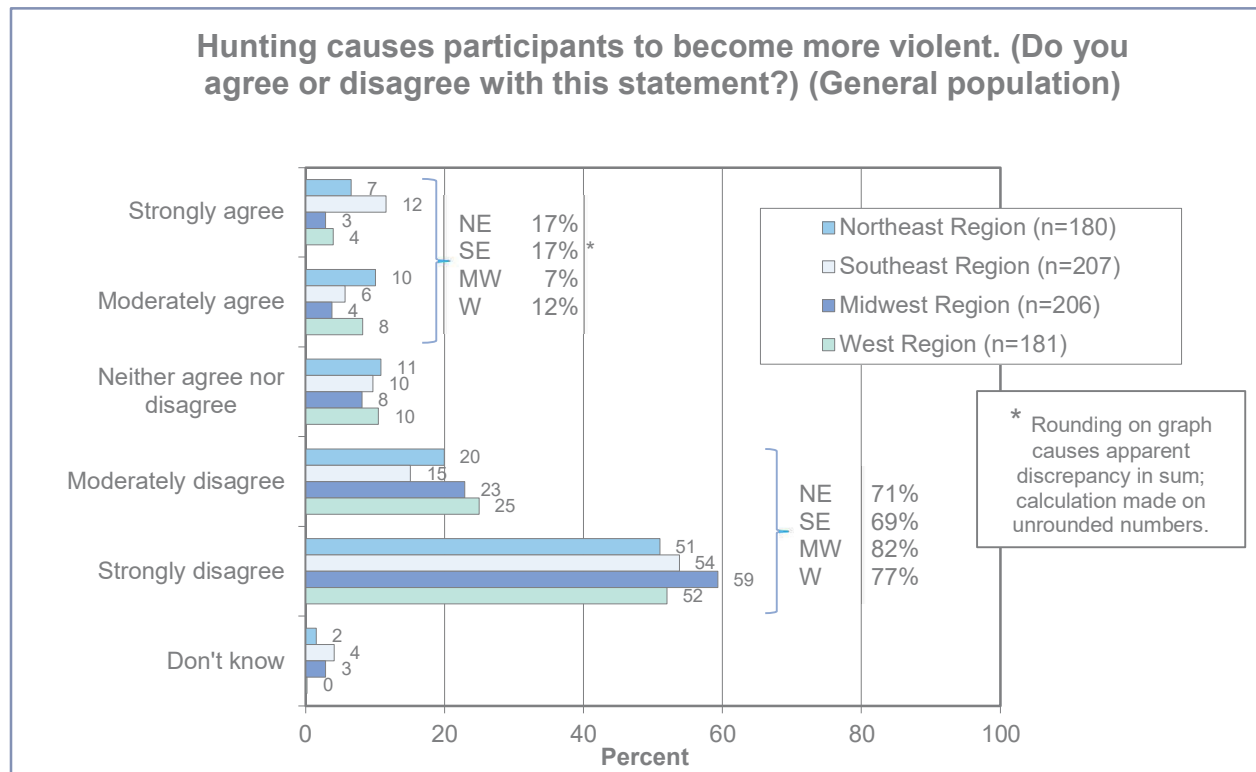












To summarize the regional results regarding negative statements about hunting:

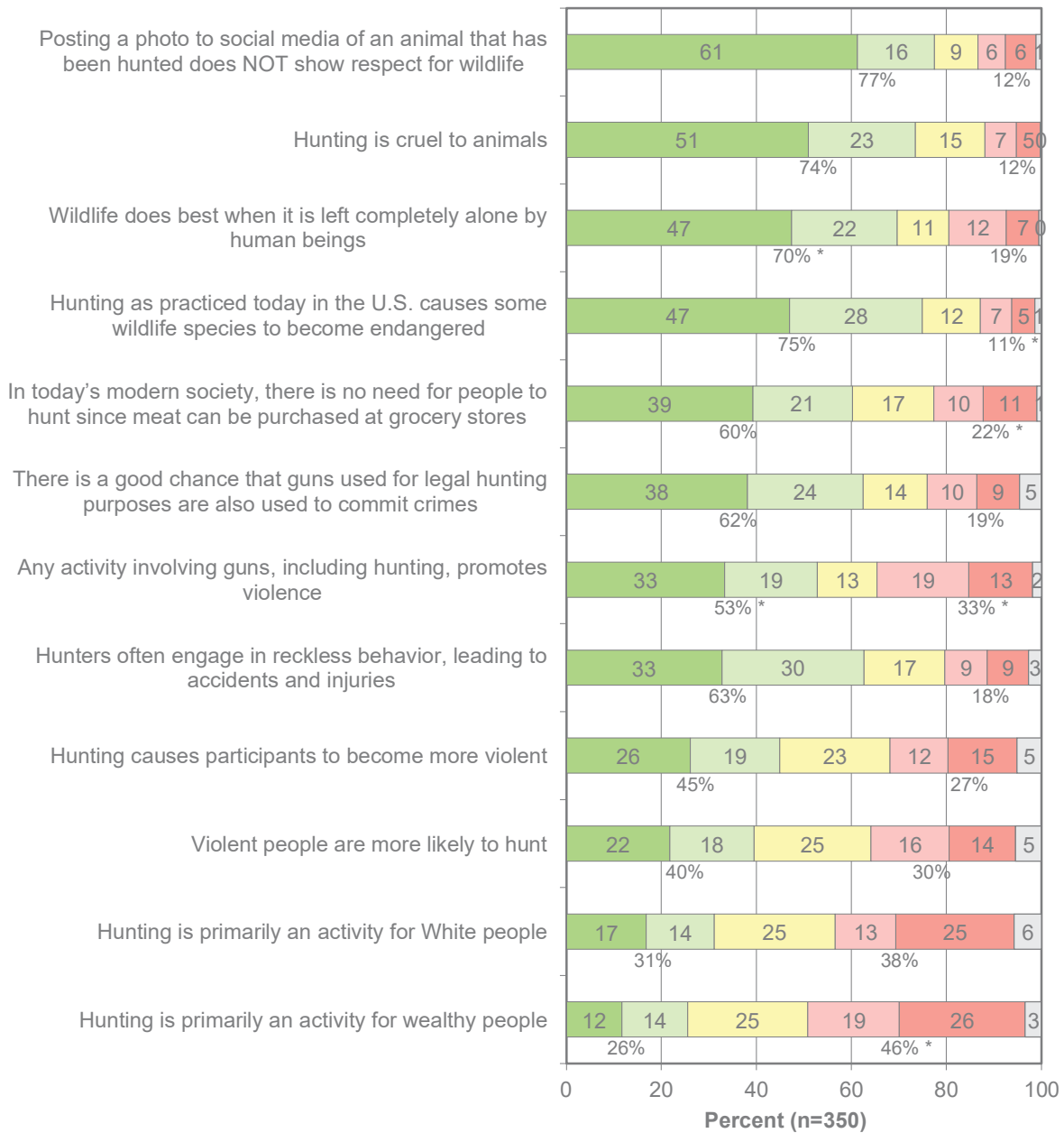
- Northeast and West Region residents are often the highest in agreement with the statements.
- Midwest Region residents are often the lowest in agreement with the statements.
- Midwest Region residents are often the highest in disagreement with the statements.
- Northeast and West Region residents are often the lowest in disagreement with the statements.

The next graphs show this series among those whose opinion of hunting has become more negative and the same for sport shooting. Compared to the general population, agreement is much higher for all of the items among those whose opinions have become more negative. Note that the actual ranking is similar in many instances. For instance, both those who have a more negative view of hunting and those who have a more negative view of sport shooting give the most agreement to posting a photo on social media of an animal that has been killed—the top item for both groups.

These graphs start on the next page so that they can have a full page for display. The graphs are ranked by the *strongly* agree response. The sums of *strongly* and *moderately* for both agree and disagree are shown below each bar.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Has become more negative about hunting)

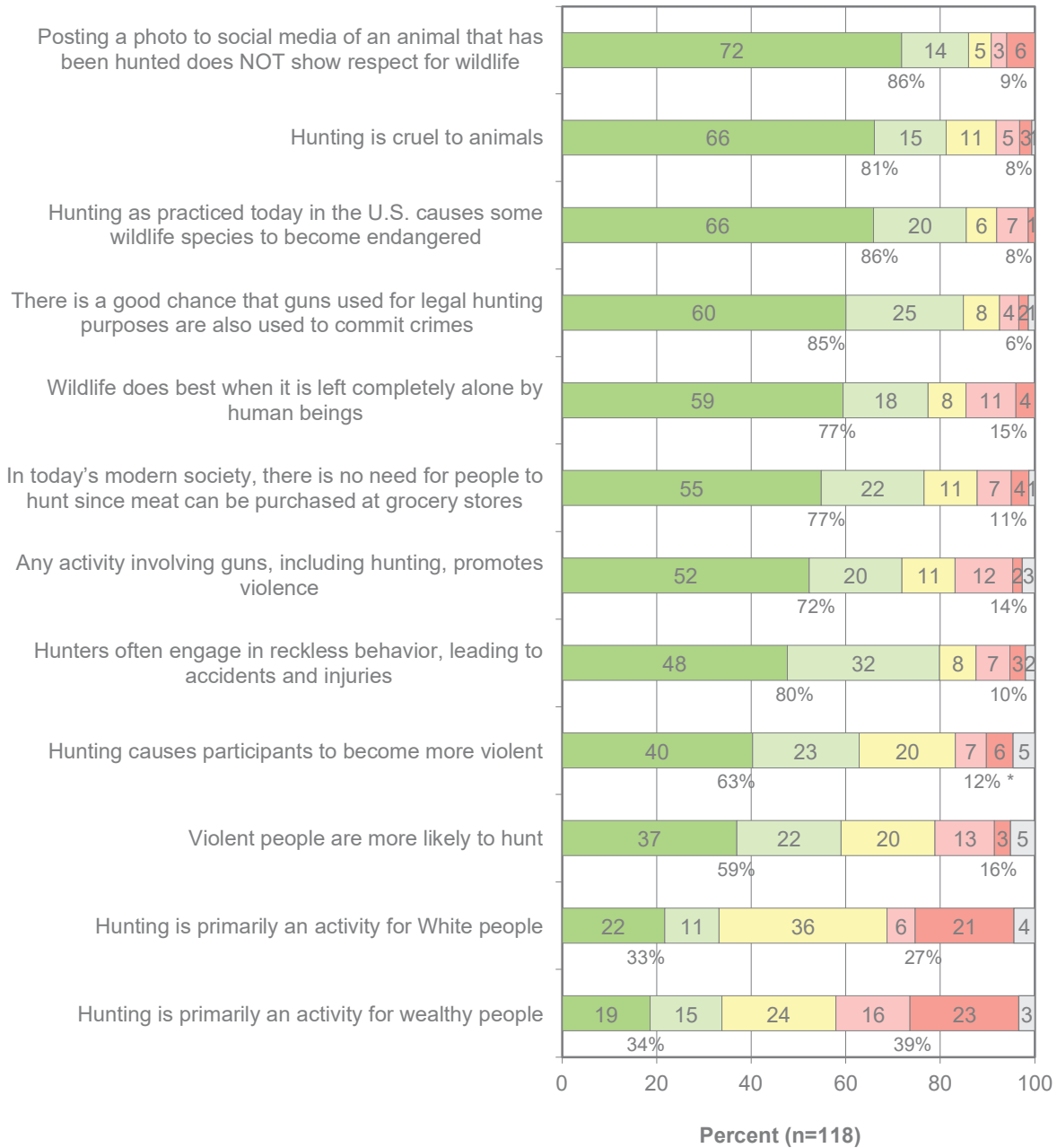
■ Strongly agree
 ■ Moderately agree
 ■ Neither
 ■ Moderately disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Don't know



* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

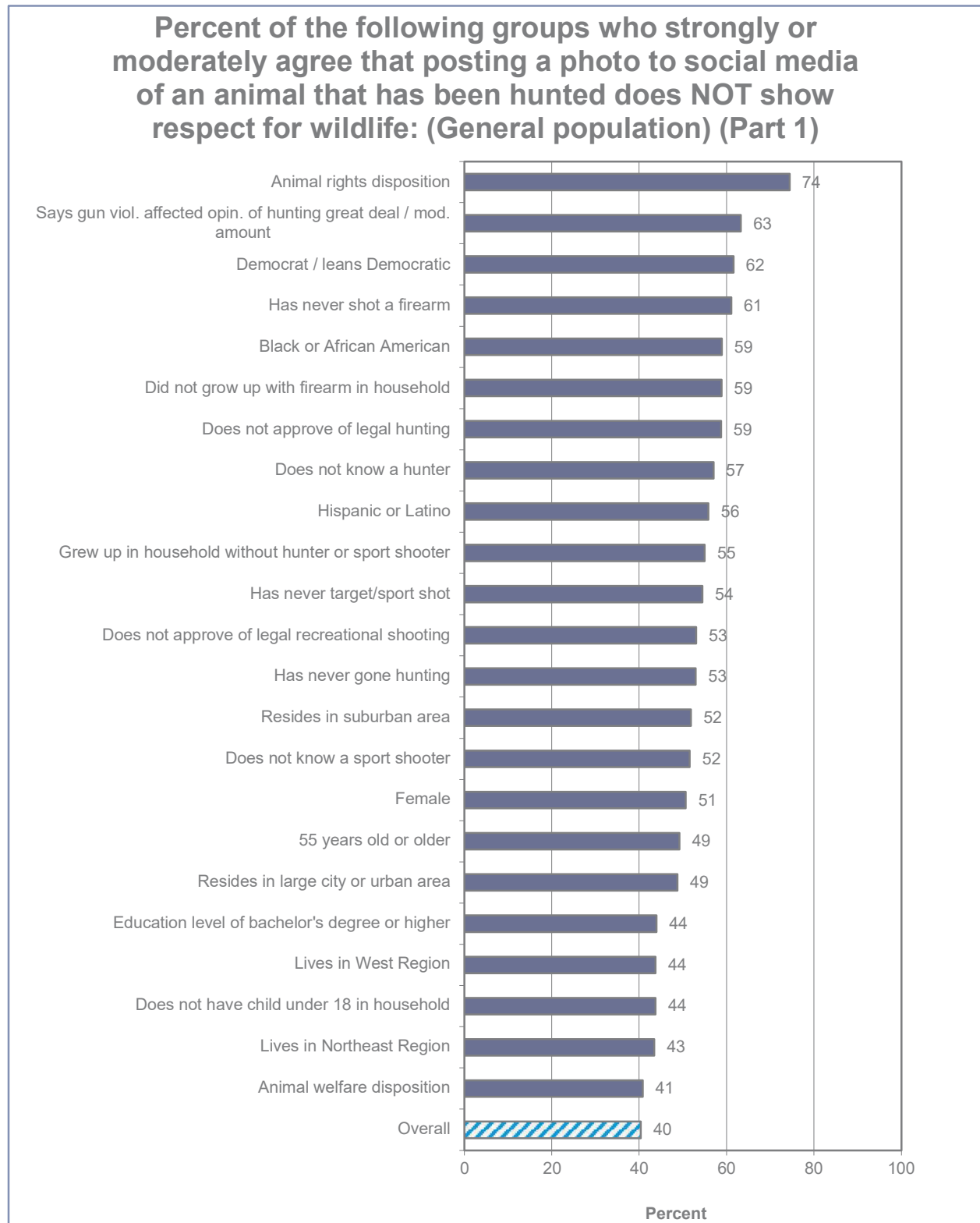
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Has become more negative about sport shooting)

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Moderately agree
 ■ Neither
 ■ Moderately disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Don't know

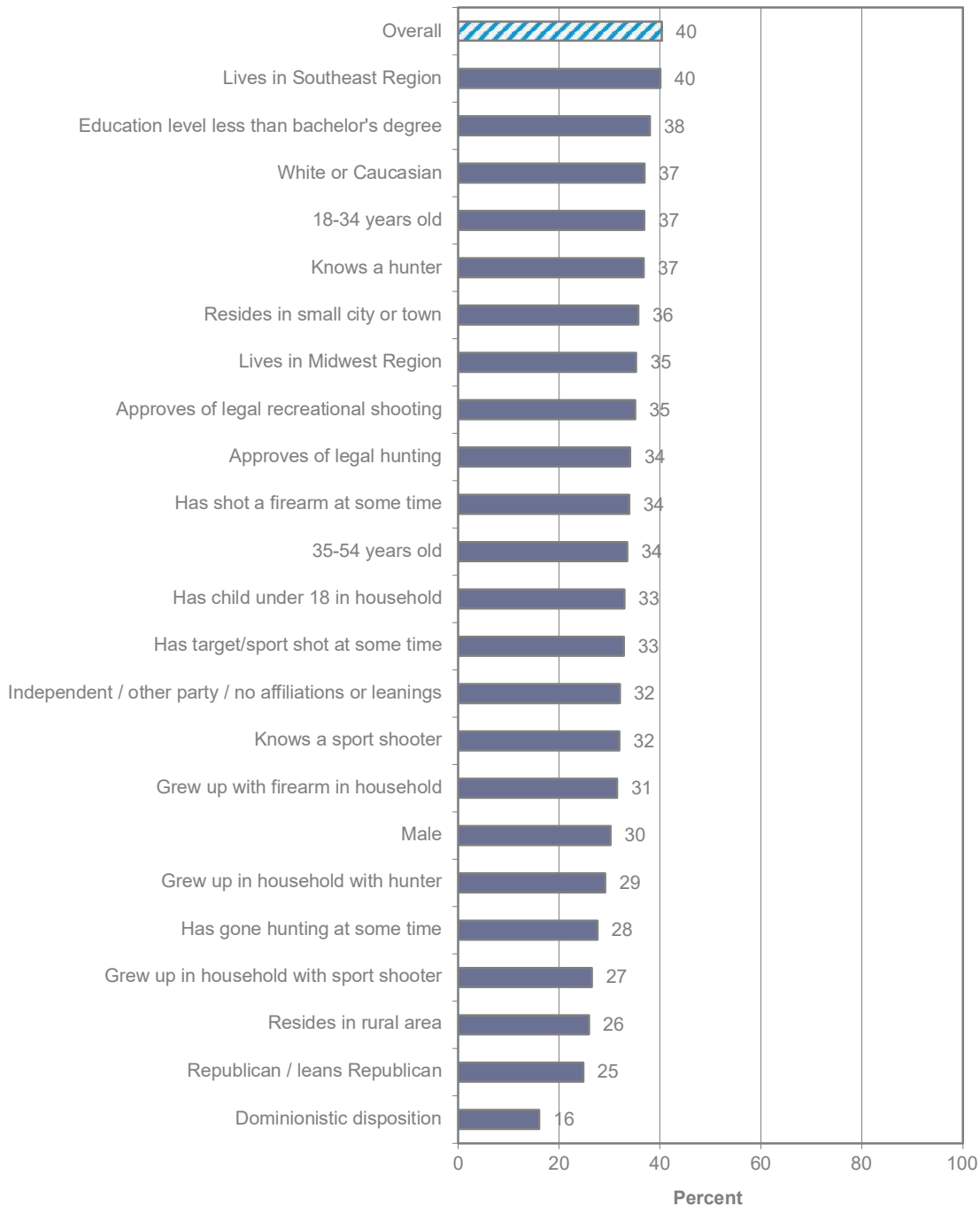


* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

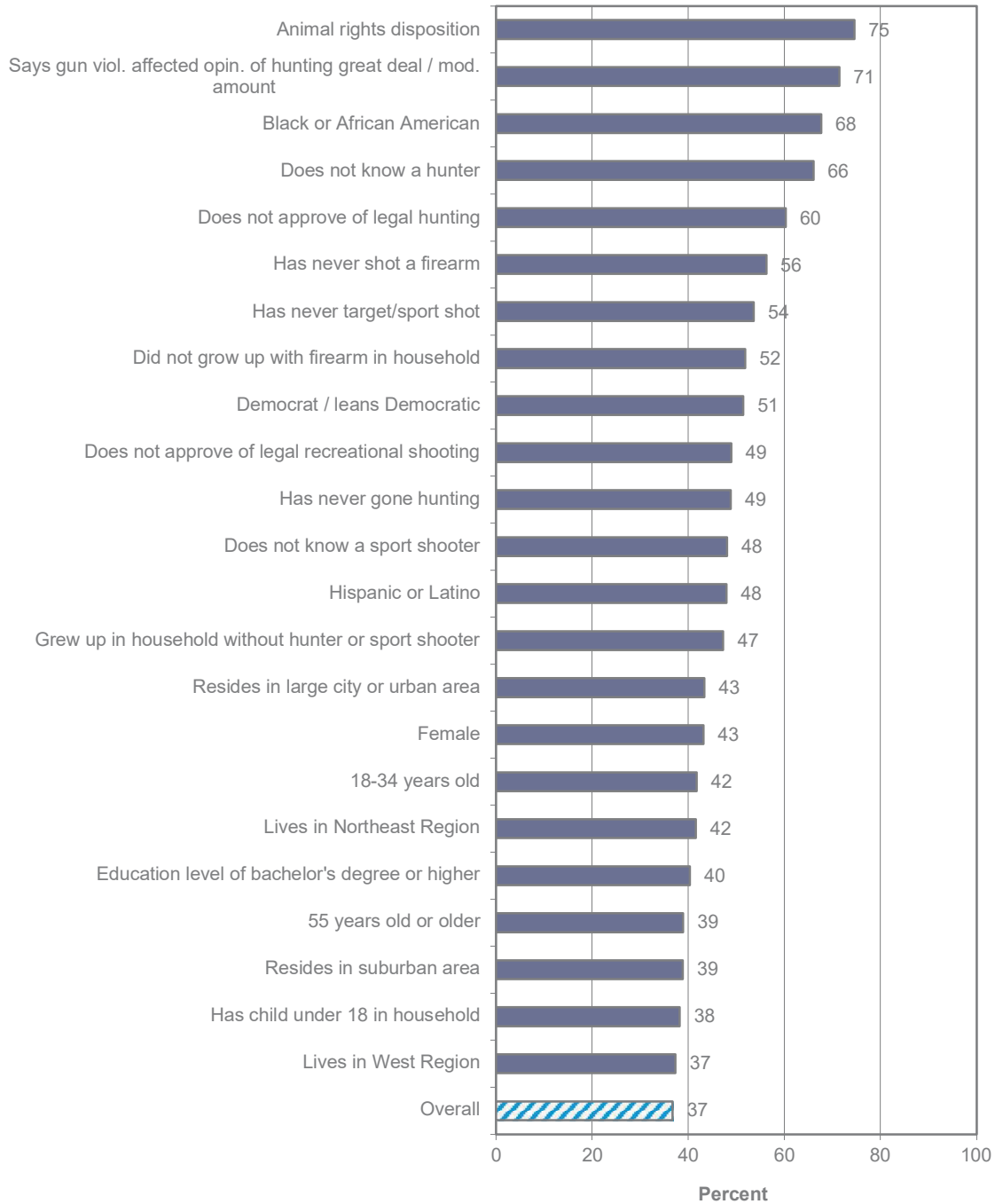
Demographic analyses were run on some of the questions in this series, as shown in the graphs that follow. (Not all the questions were run in the demographic analyses, as results from one to another would be similar. The four that were run give a flavor of the entire series.)



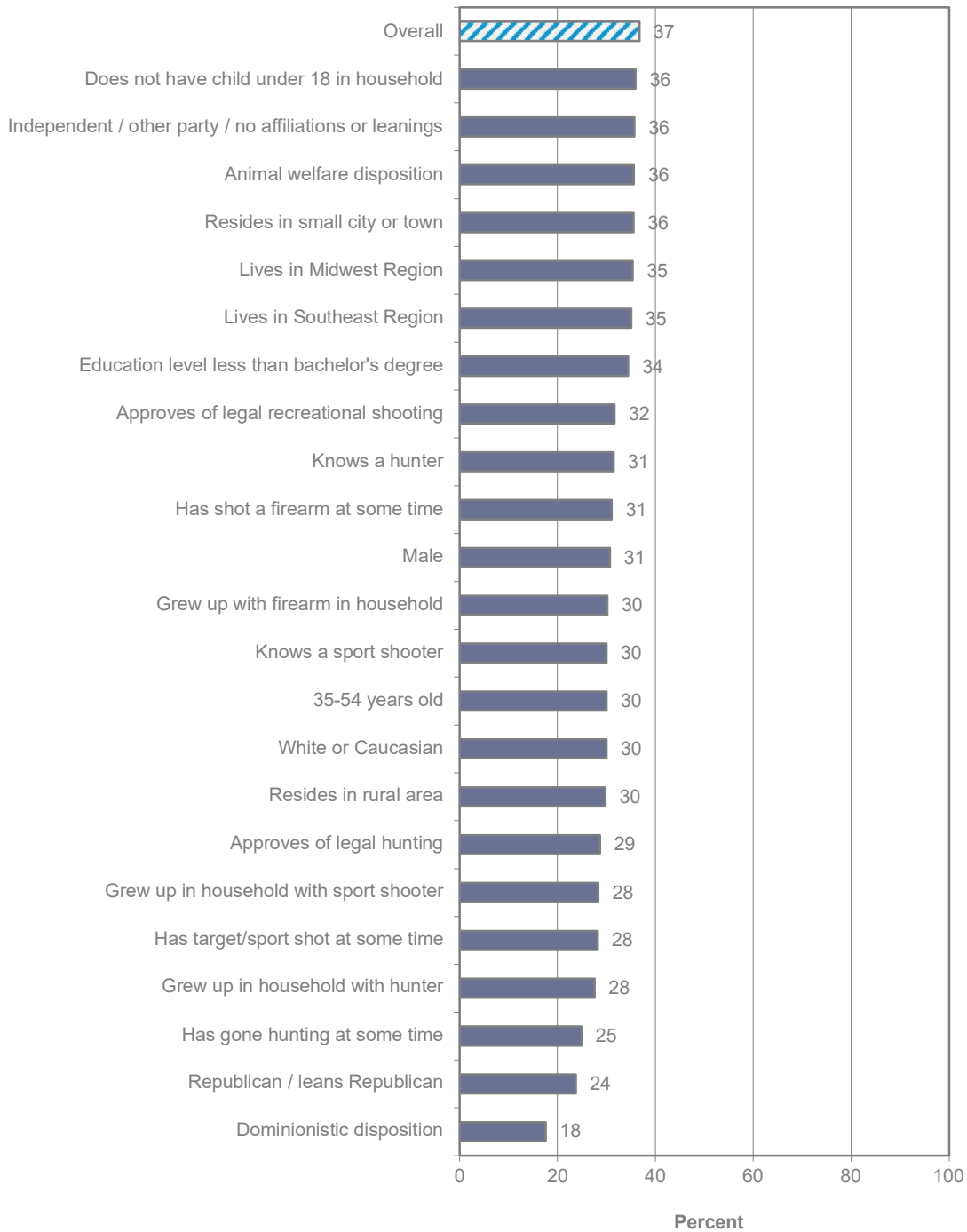
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that posting a photo to social media of an animal that has been hunted does NOT show respect for wildlife: (General population) (Part 2)



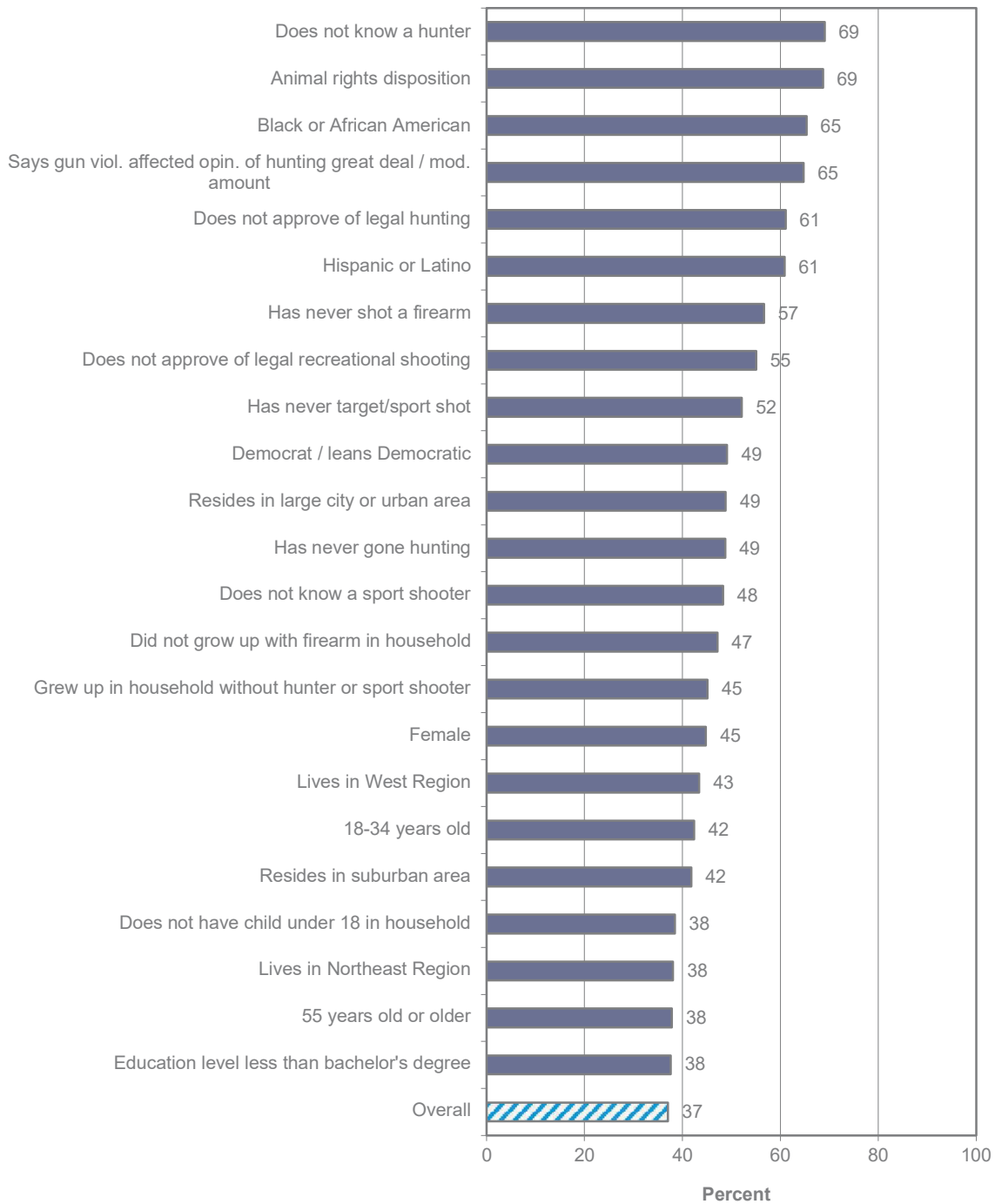
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that wildlife does best when it is left completely alone by human beings:
(General population) (Part 1)**



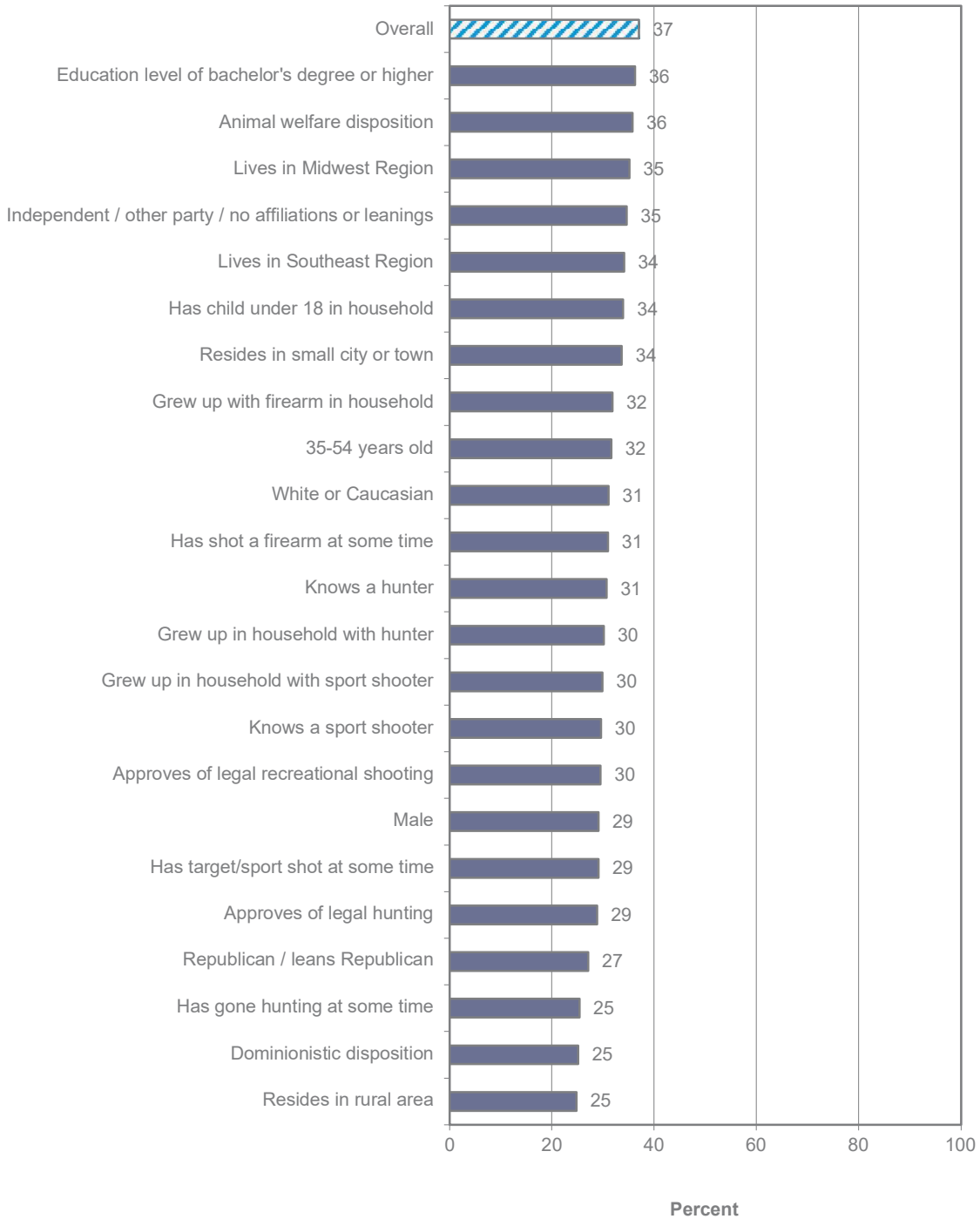
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that wildlife does best when it is left completely alone by human beings:
(General population) (Part 2)**



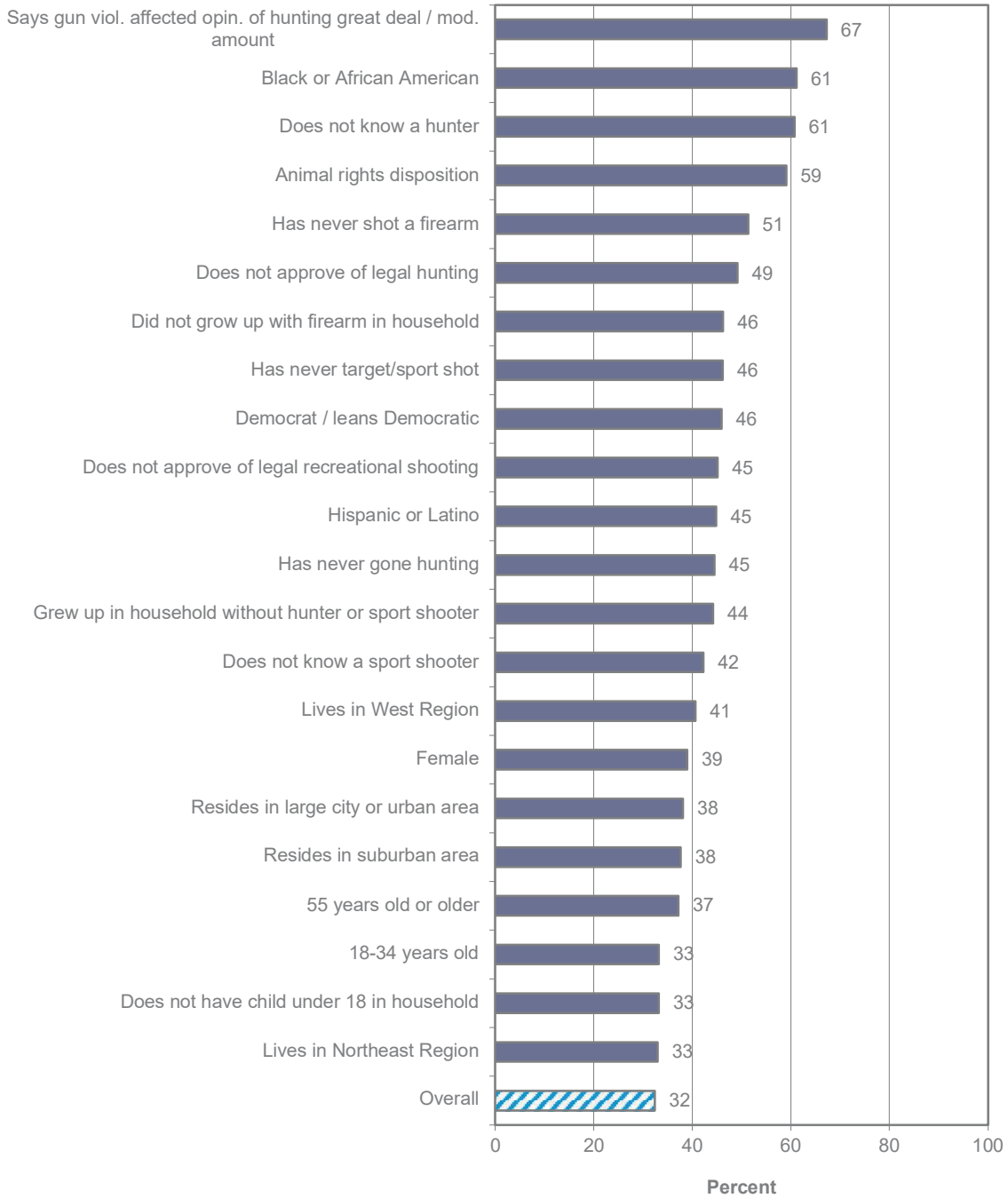
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some wildlife species to become endangered: (General population) (Part 1)



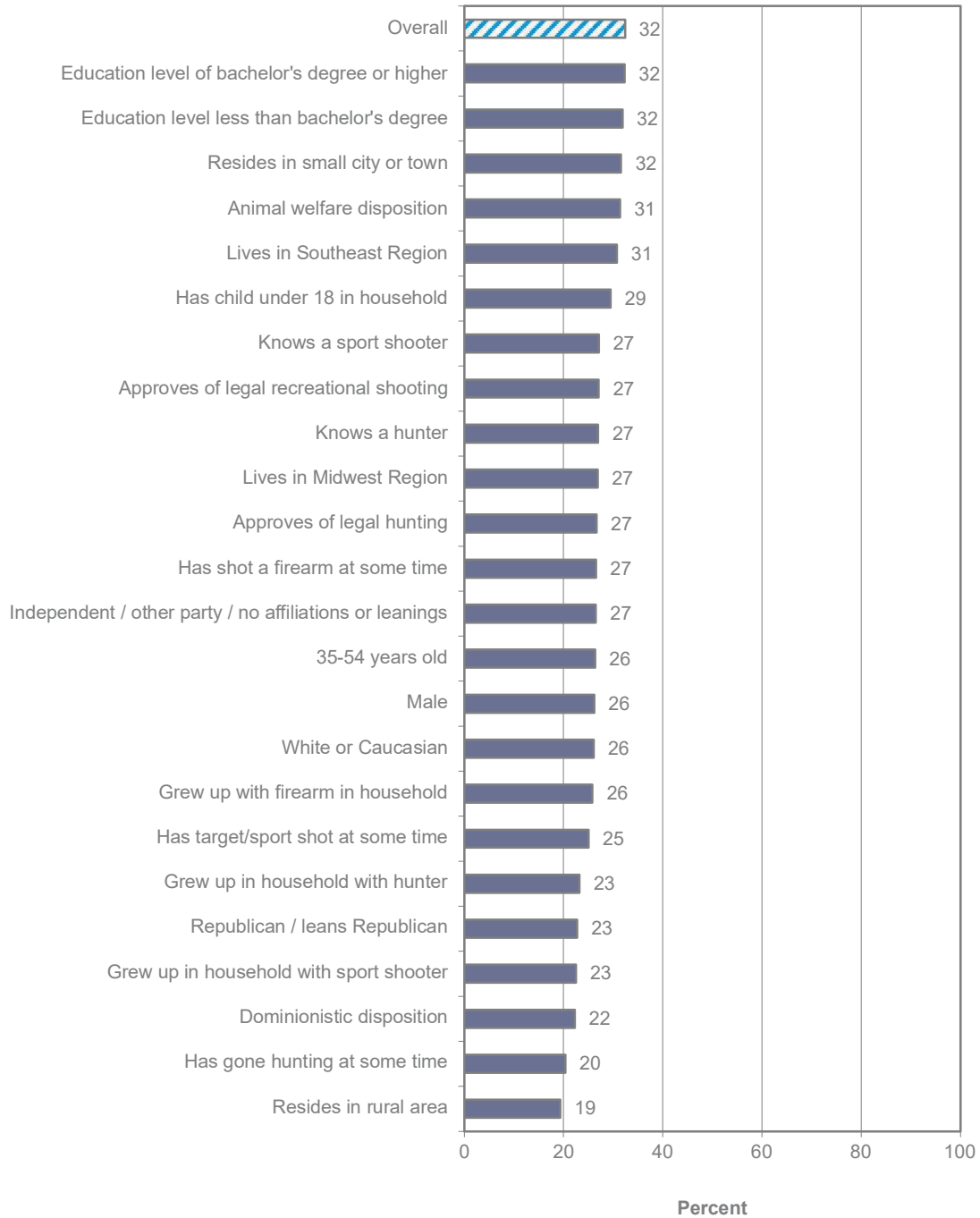
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some wildlife species to become endangered: (General population) (Part 2)



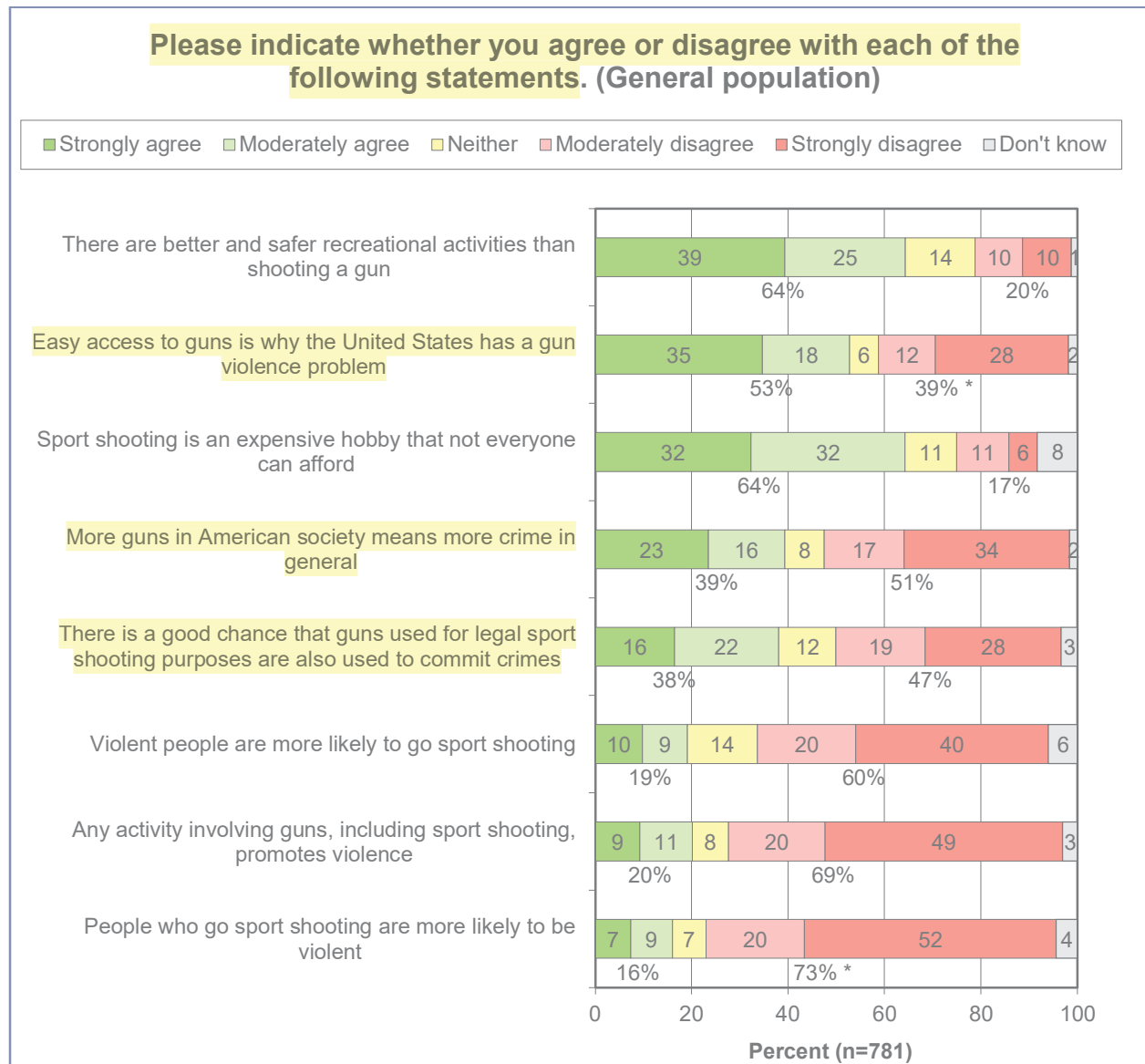
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that there is a good chance that guns used for legal hunting purposes are also used to commit crimes: (General population) (Part 1)



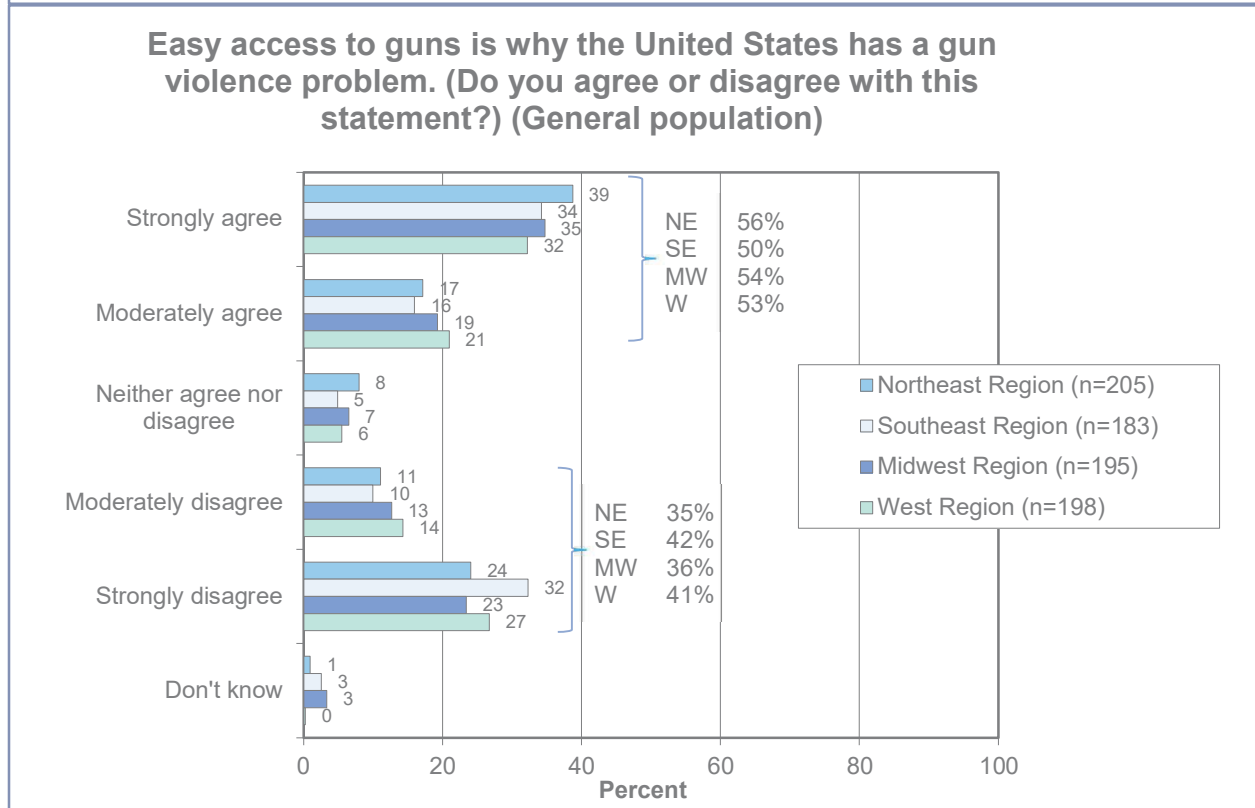
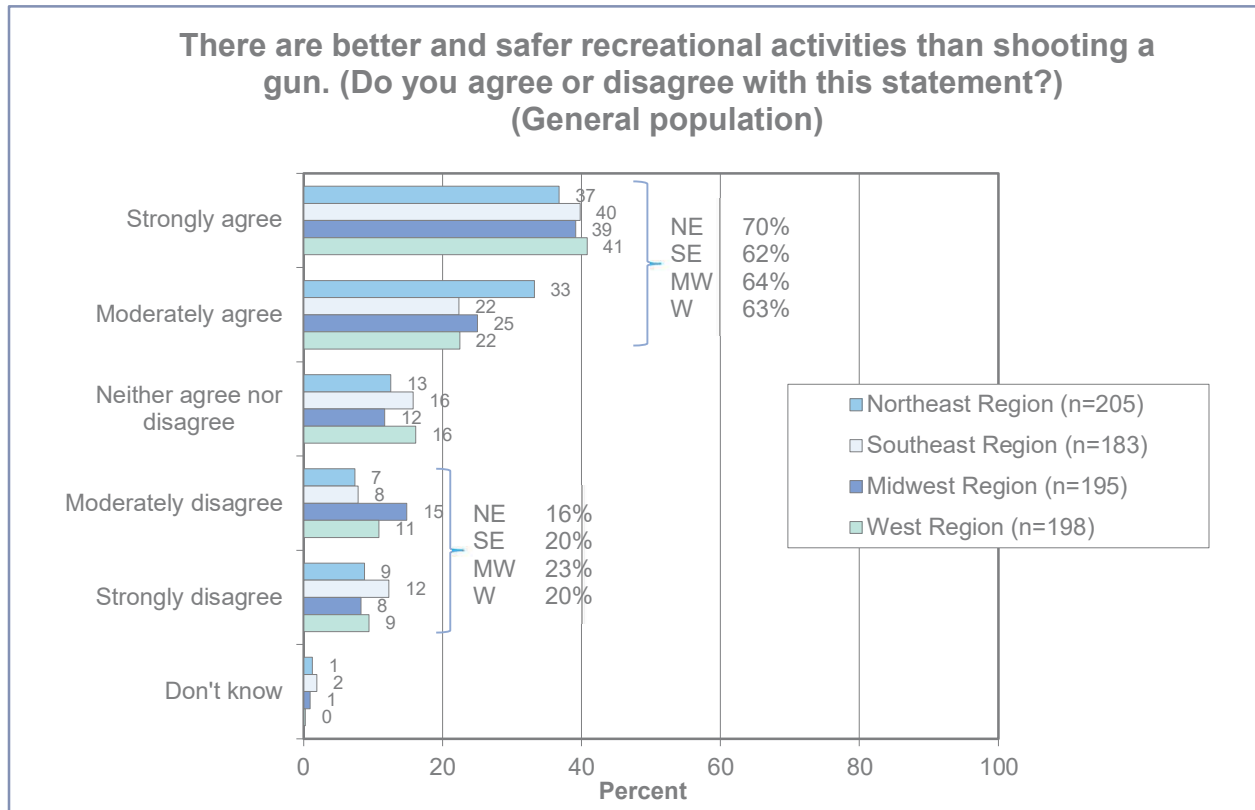
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that there is a good chance that guns used for legal hunting purposes are also used to commit crimes: (General population) (Part 2)

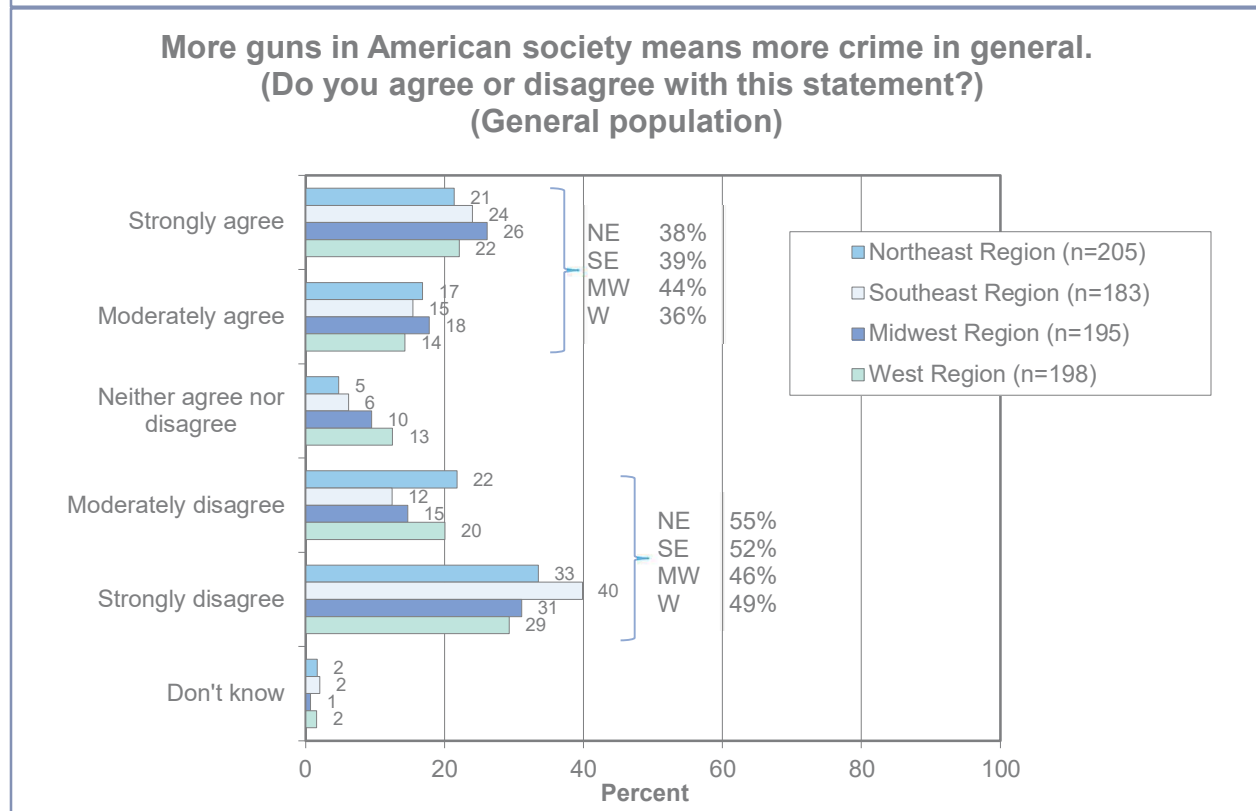
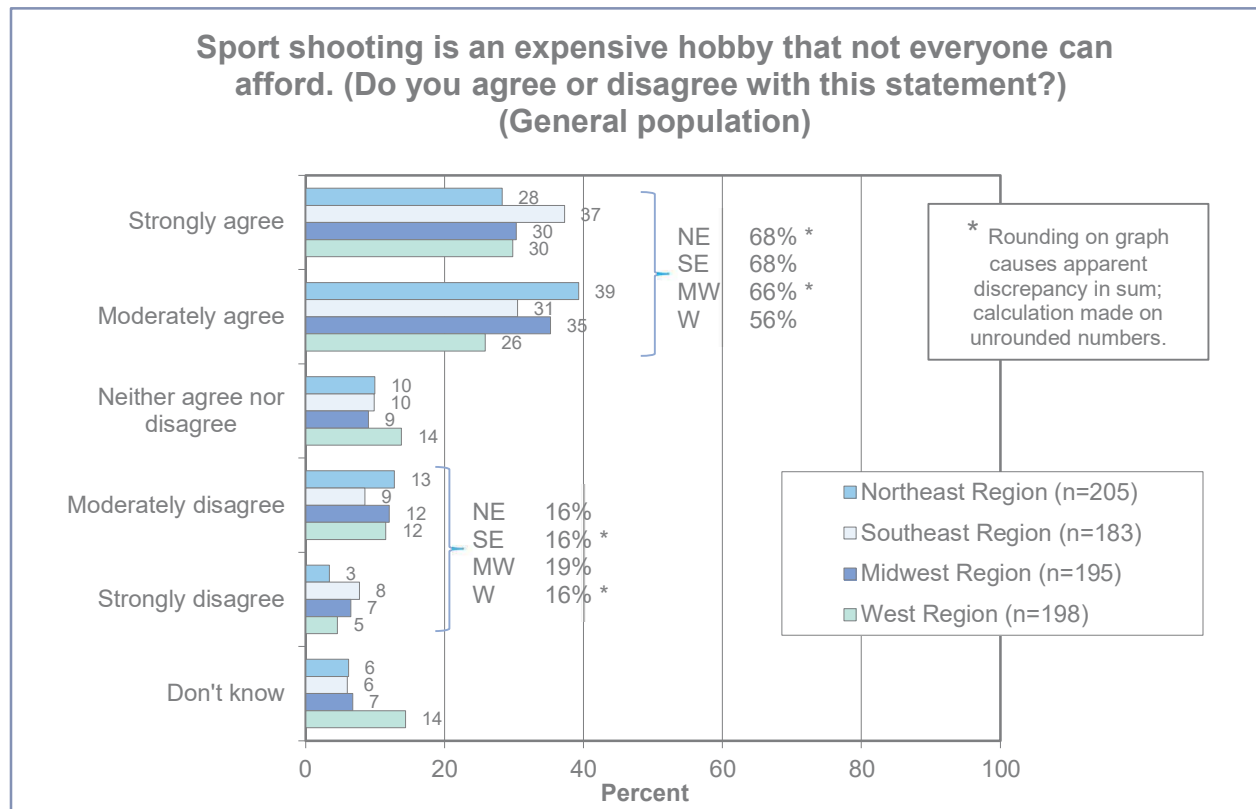


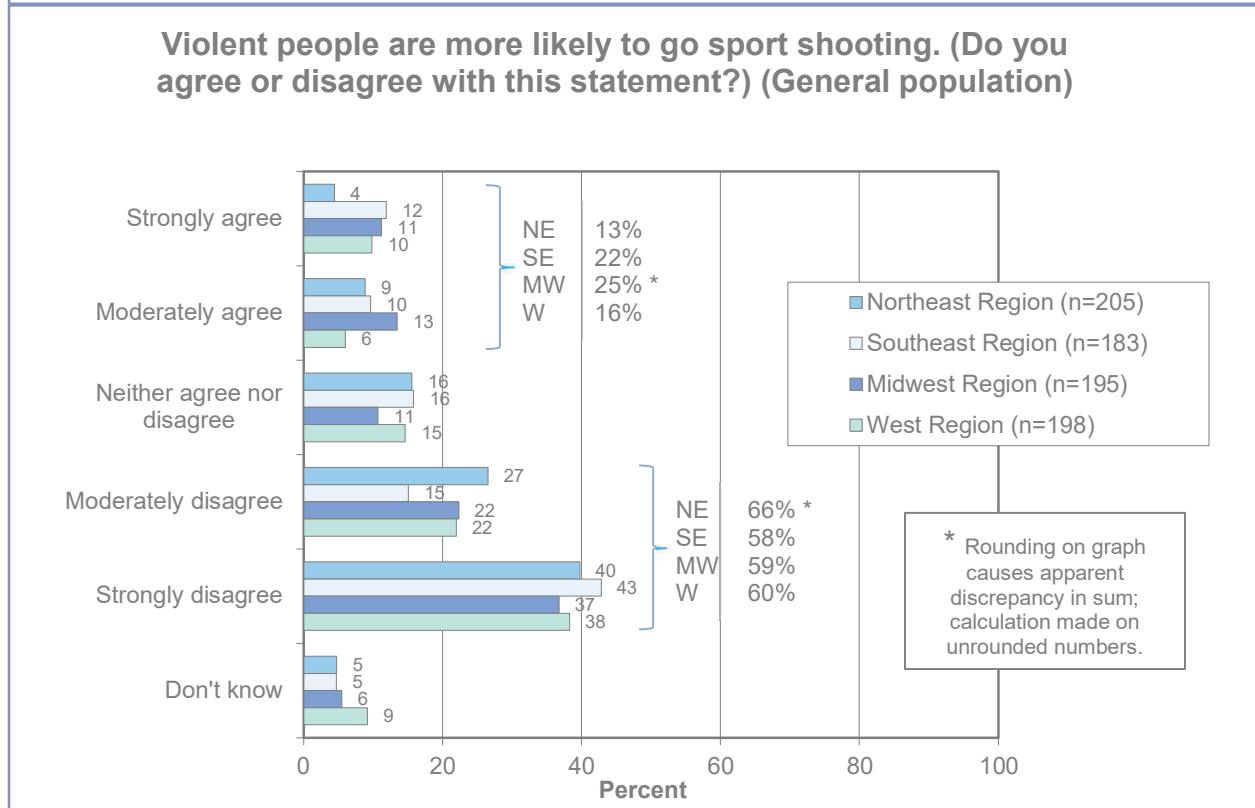
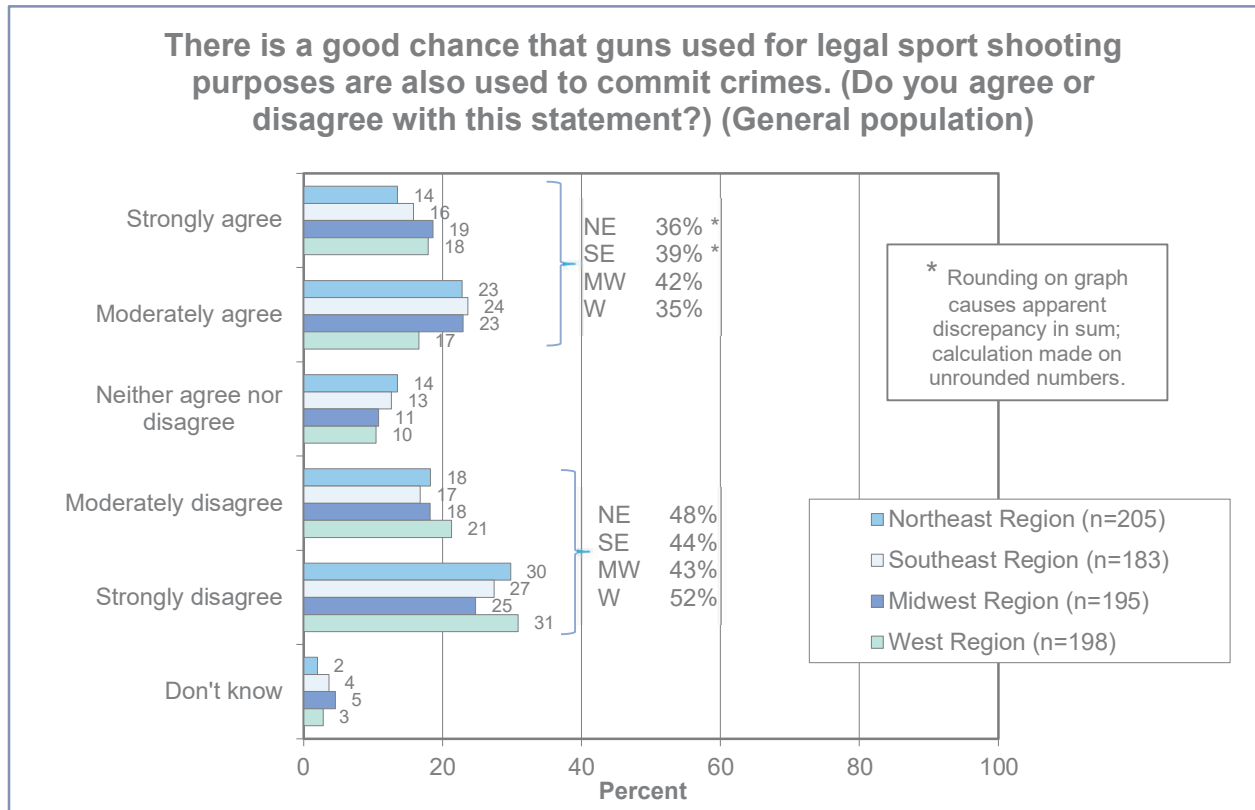
As was done with hunting, negative statements about target/sport shooting were presented to respondents. (Prior to the opinion questions on target/sport shooting, the following information was presented to survey respondents: For the remainder of the survey, the term sport shooting will be used to refer to any recreational shooting, target shooting, plinking, or practice for self-defense.) The most problematic (those with the most agreement) are that there are better and safer activities, that easy access to guns is why the country has a gun violence problem, and that sport shooting is an expensive hobby—all with a majority agreeing. (The graph is ranked by the *strongly agree* response. The sums of *strongly* and *moderately* for both agree and disagree are shown below each bar.) Regional graphs follow for each individual question, followed by a summary of the regional results for the entire series.

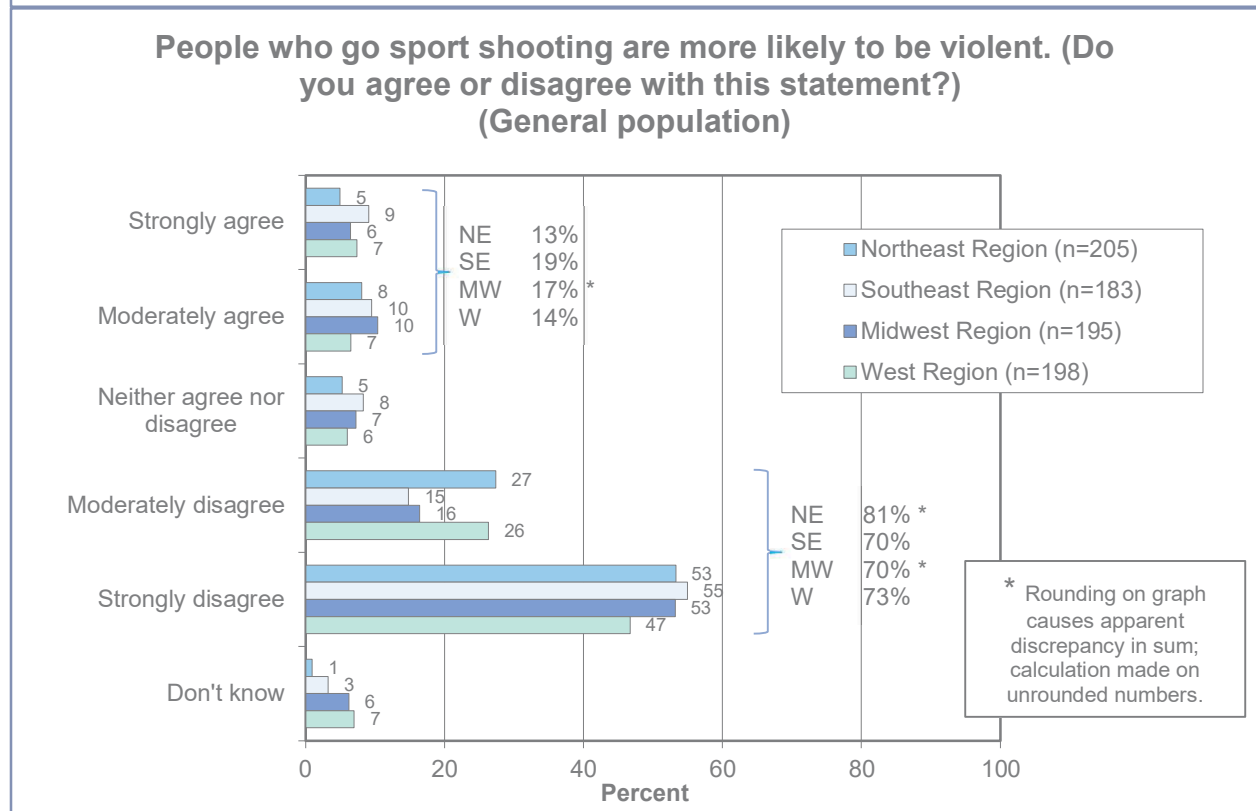
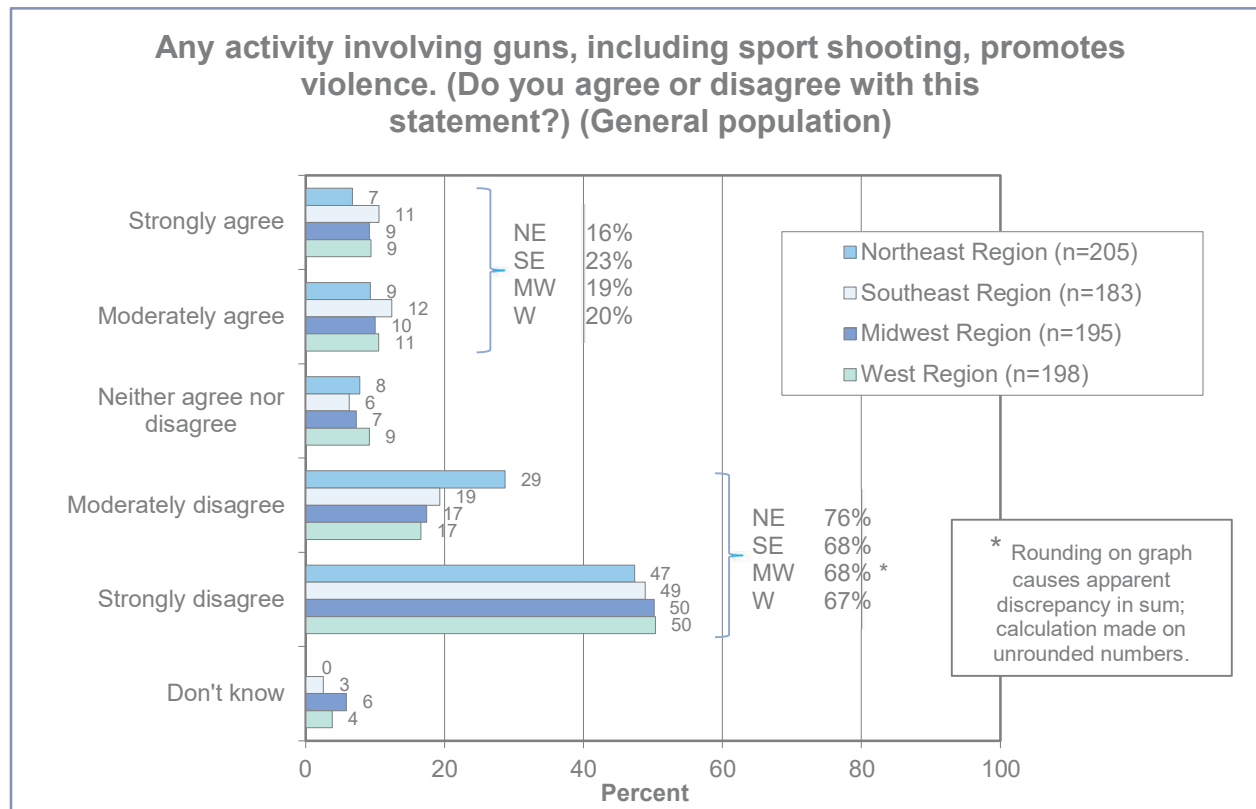


* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.









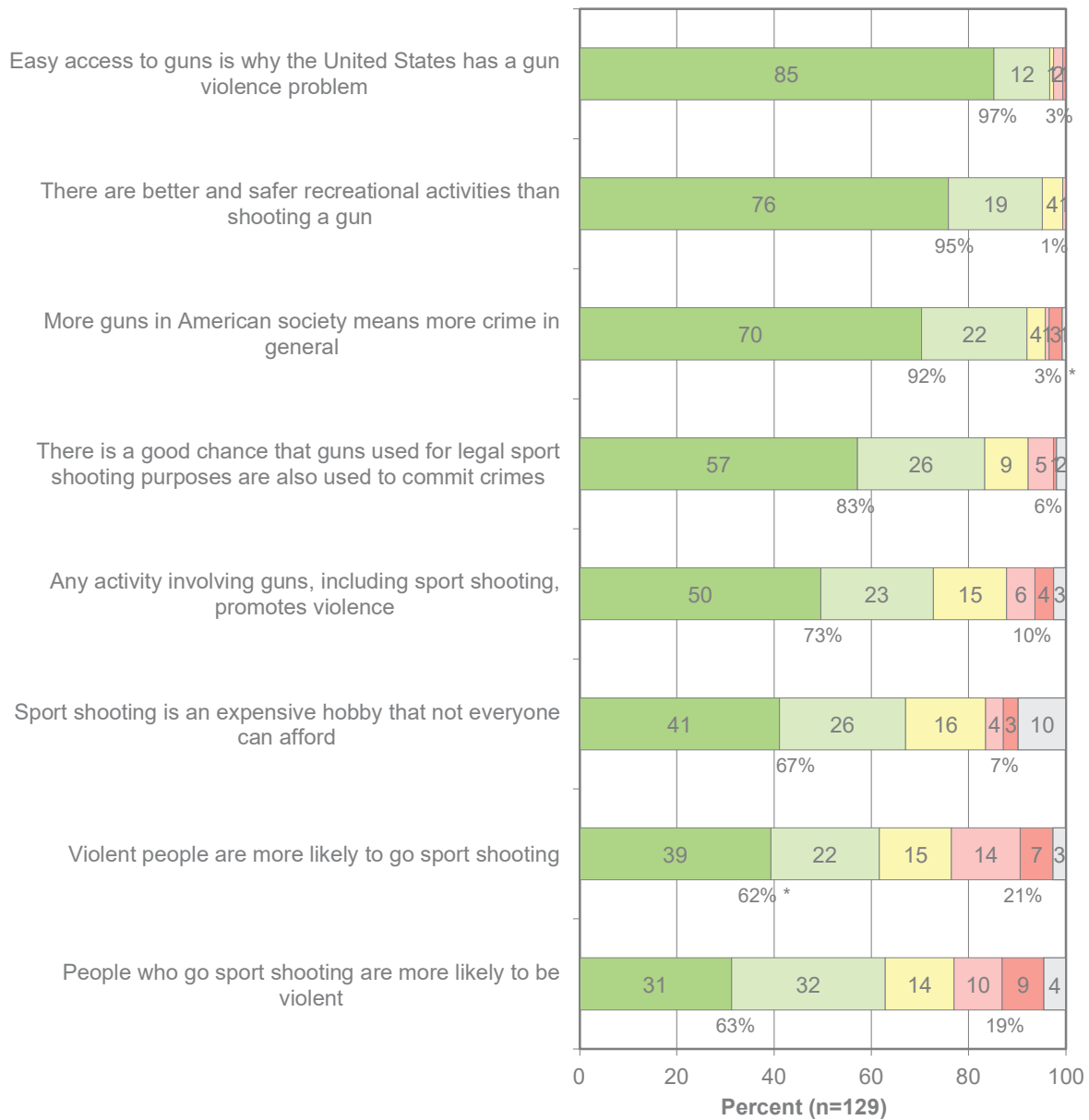
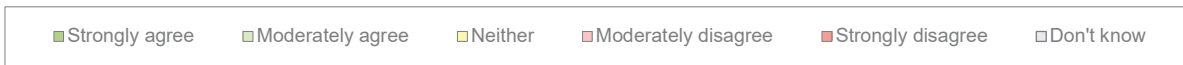
To summarize the regional results regarding negative statements about target/sport shooting:

- Midwest Region residents are often the highest in agreement. West Region residents were never the highest in agreement.
- Northeast and West Region residents were often the lowest in agreement with the statements about target/sport shooting.
- Northeast Region residents were most commonly the highest in disagreement.
- Quite often, there was little difference in regions that were low in disagreement. Otherwise, Midwest Region residents were often often the lowest in disagreement.

The next graphs show this series among those whose opinion of hunting has become more negative and the same for sport shooting. Again, compared to the general population, agreement is much higher for all of the items among those whose opinions have become more negative.

These graphs start on the next page so that they can have a full page for display. The graphs are ranked by the *strongly* agree response. The sums of *strongly* and *moderately* for both agree and disagree are shown below each bar.

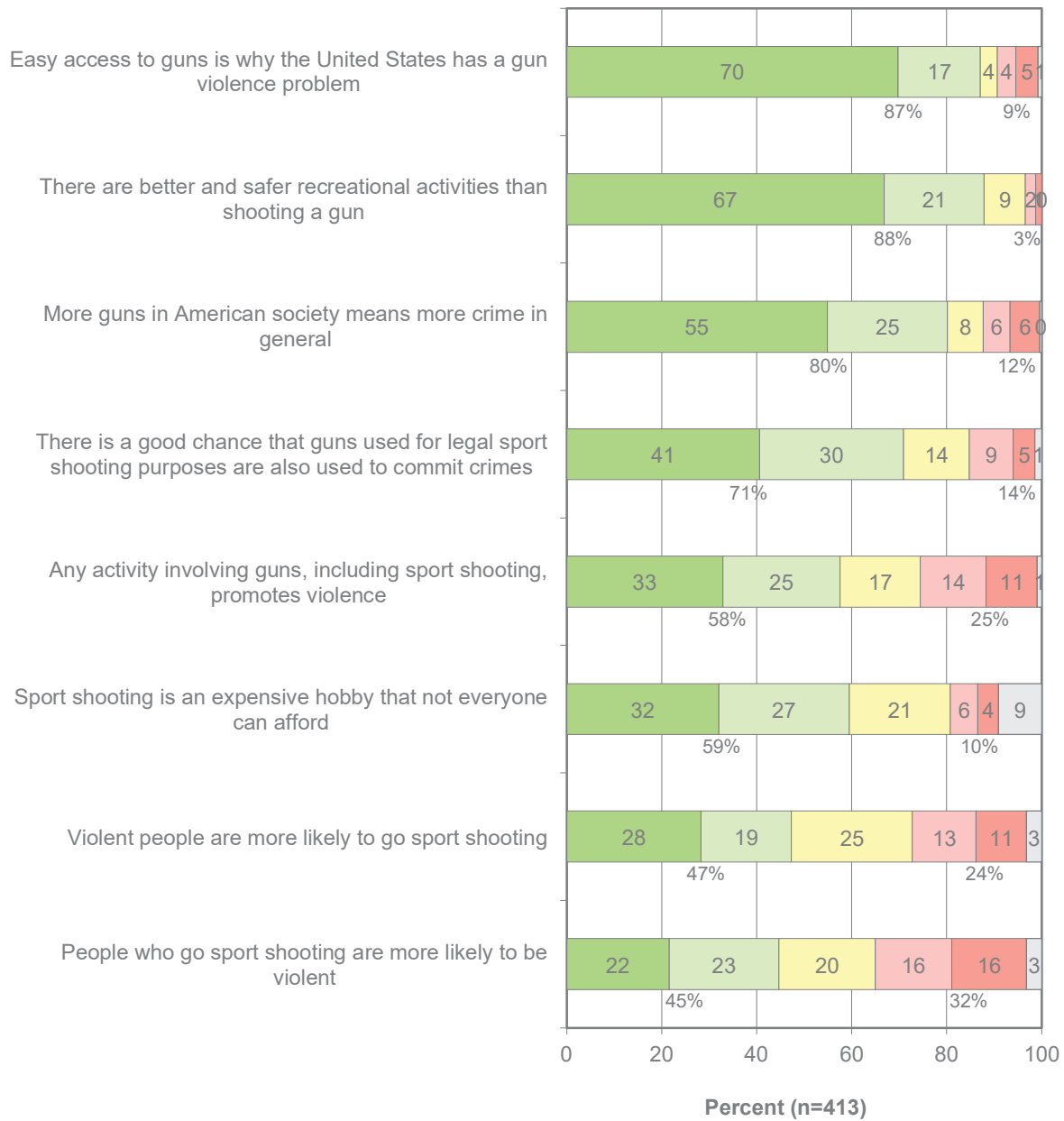
Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Has become more negative about hunting)



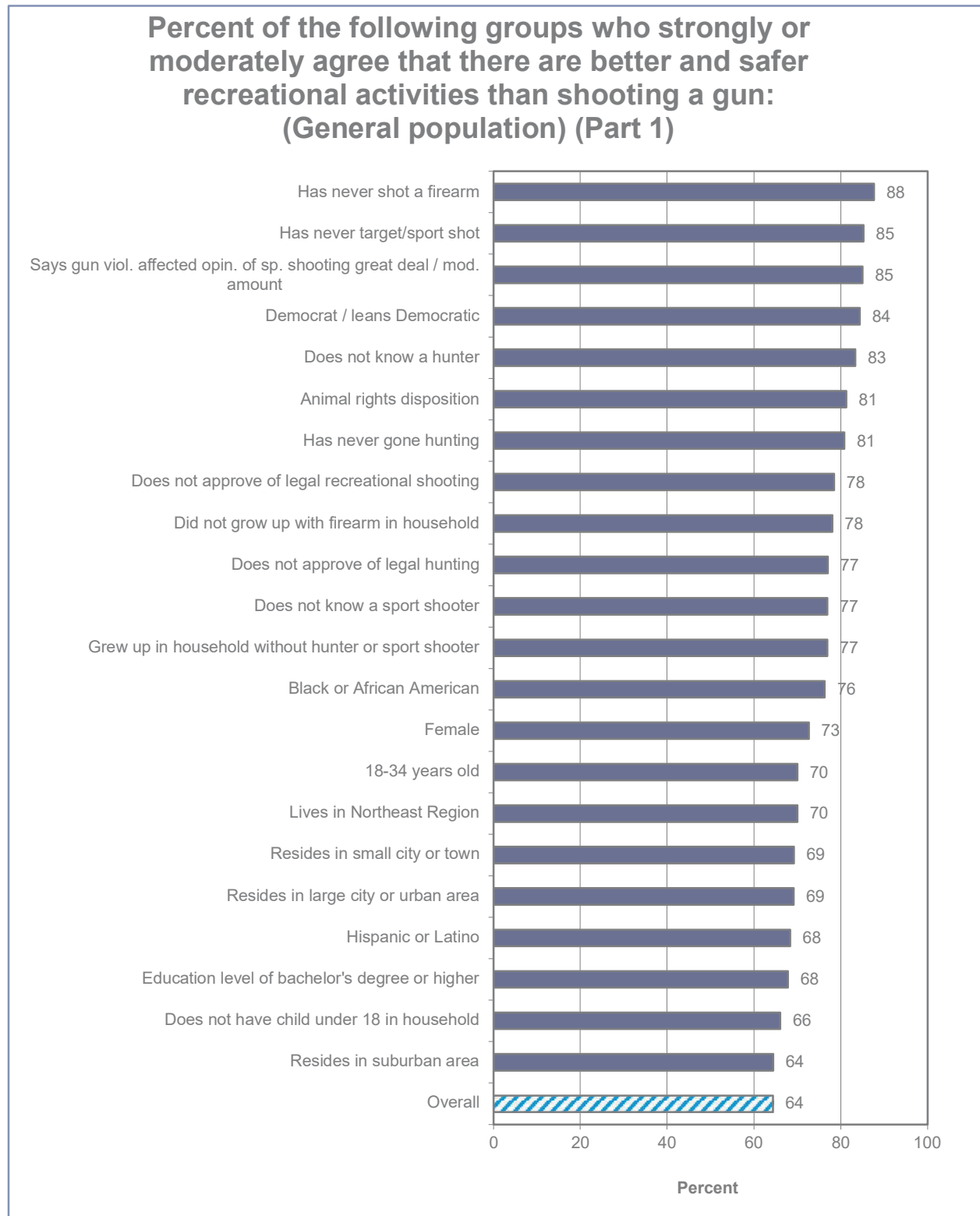
* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Has become more negative about sport shooting)

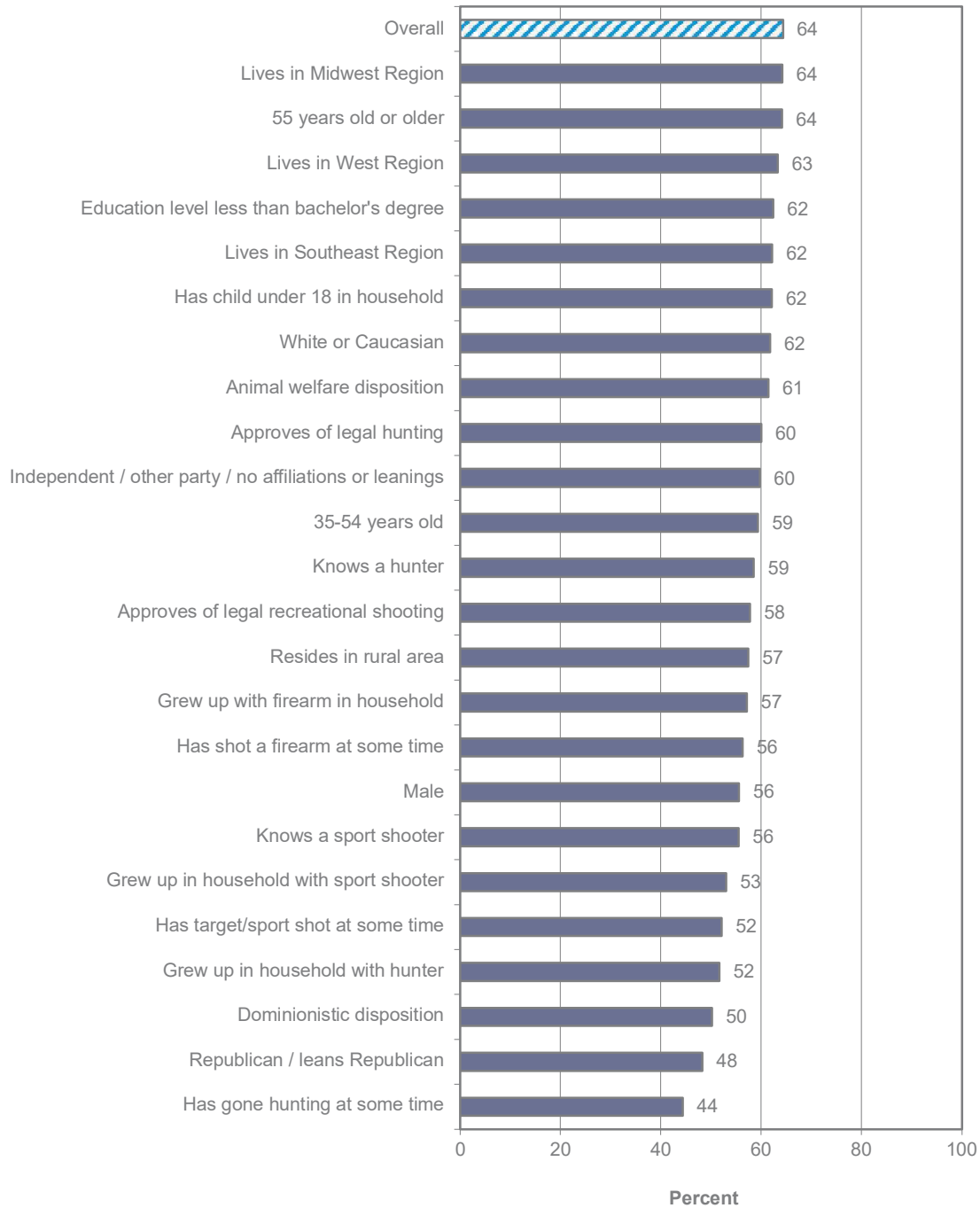
■ Strongly agree
 ■ Moderately agree
 ■ Neither
 ■ Moderately disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Don't know



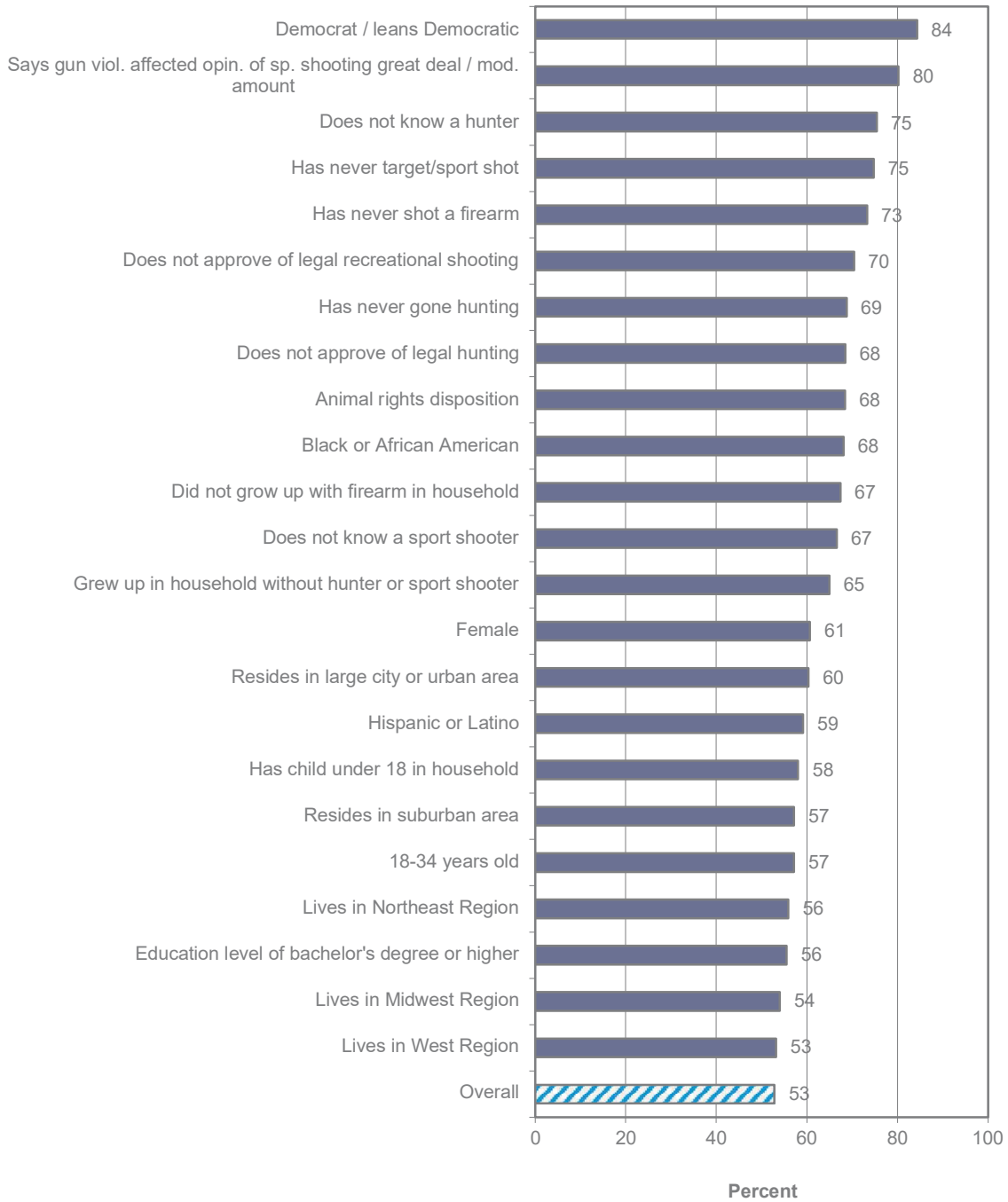
Demographic analyses were run on some of the questions in this series, as shown in the graphs that follow. (Not all the questions were run in the demographic analyses, as results from one to another would be similar. The three that were run give a flavor of the entire series.)



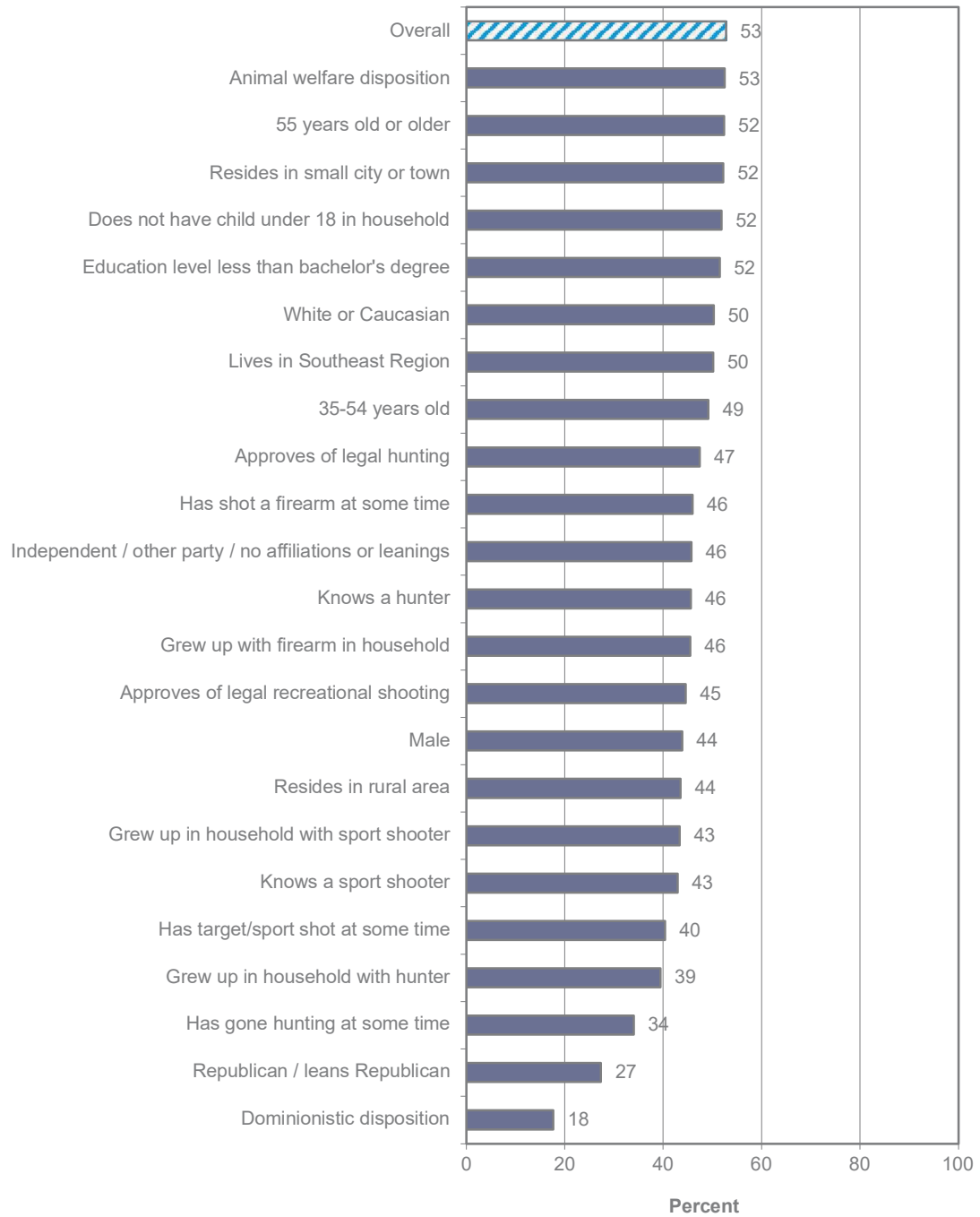
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that there are better and safer recreational activities than shooting a gun:
(General population) (Part 2)**



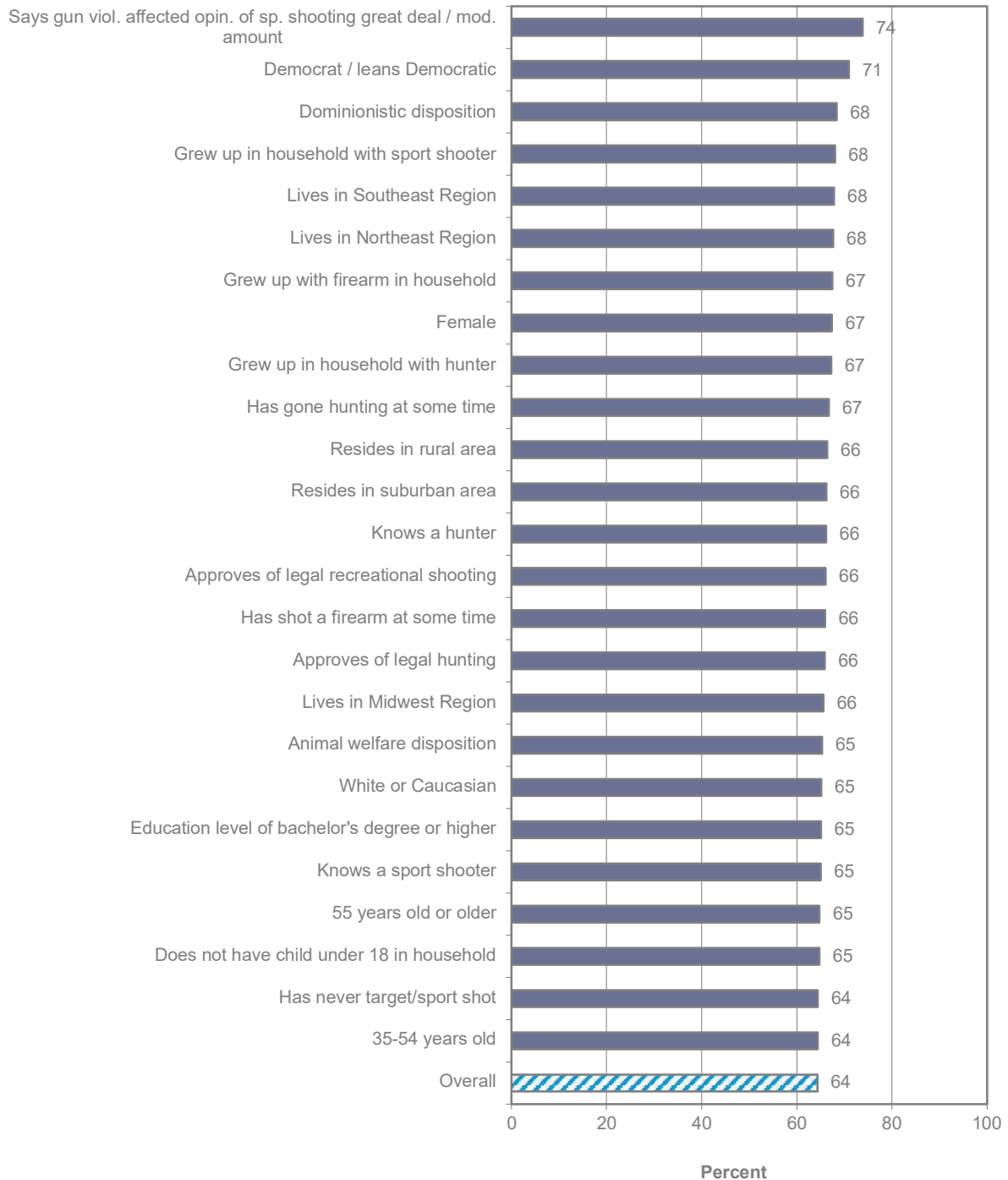
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that easy access to guns is why the United States has a gun violence problem: (General population) (Part 1)



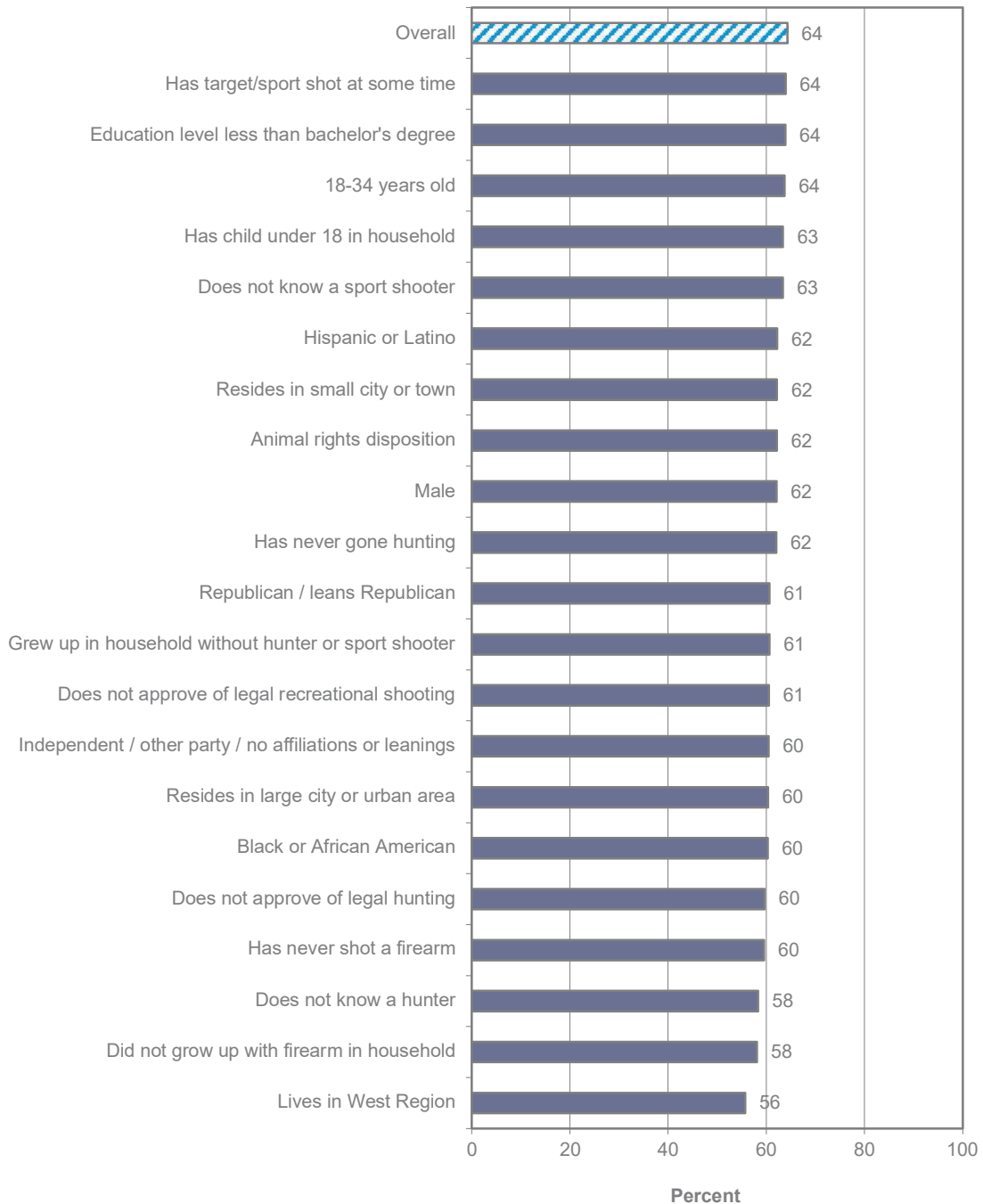
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that easy access to guns is why the United States has a gun violence problem: (General population) (Part 2)



**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that sport shooting is an expensive hobby that not everyone can afford:
(General population) (Part 1)**

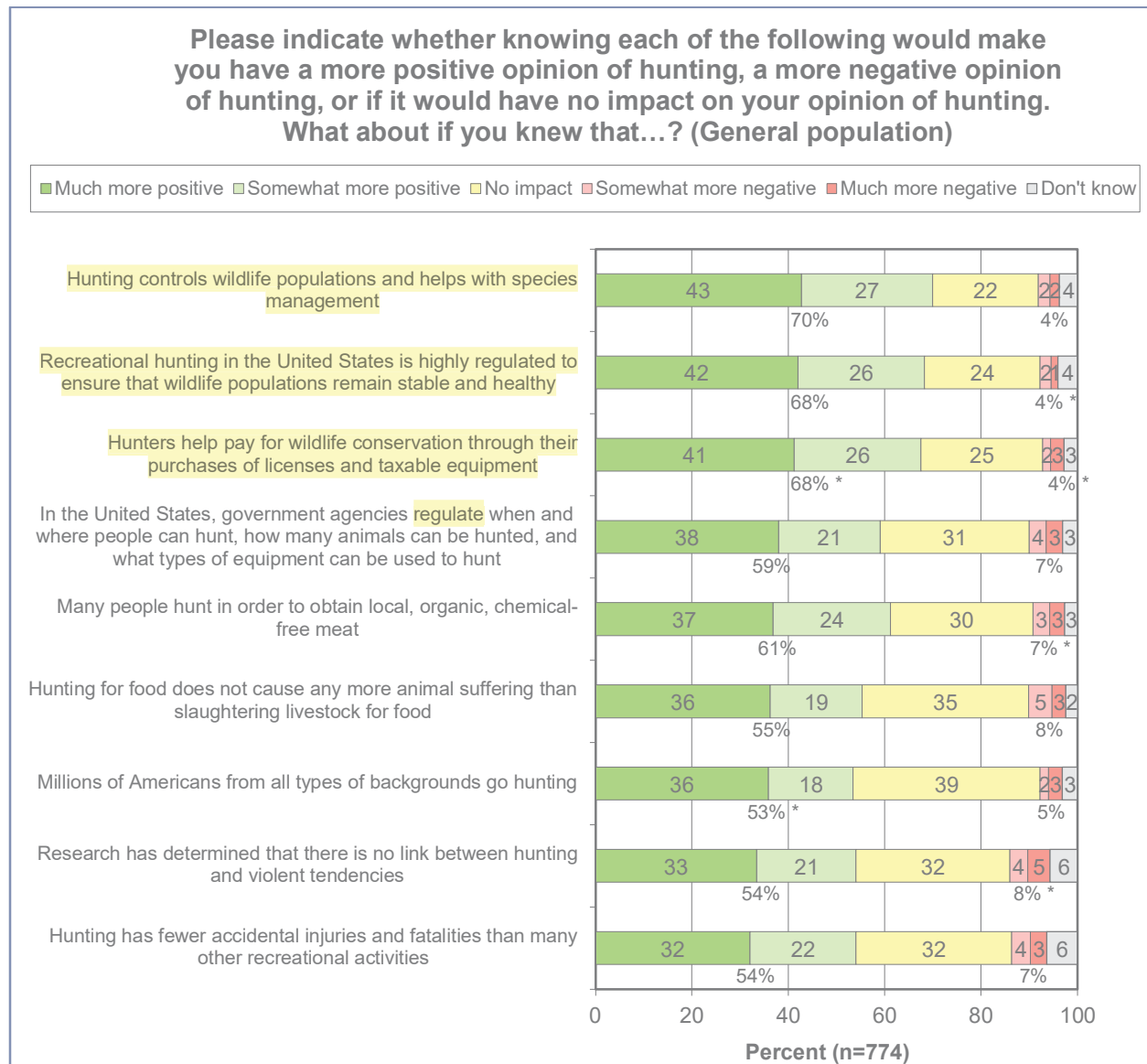


**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that sport shooting is an expensive hobby that not everyone can afford:
(General population) (Part 2)**



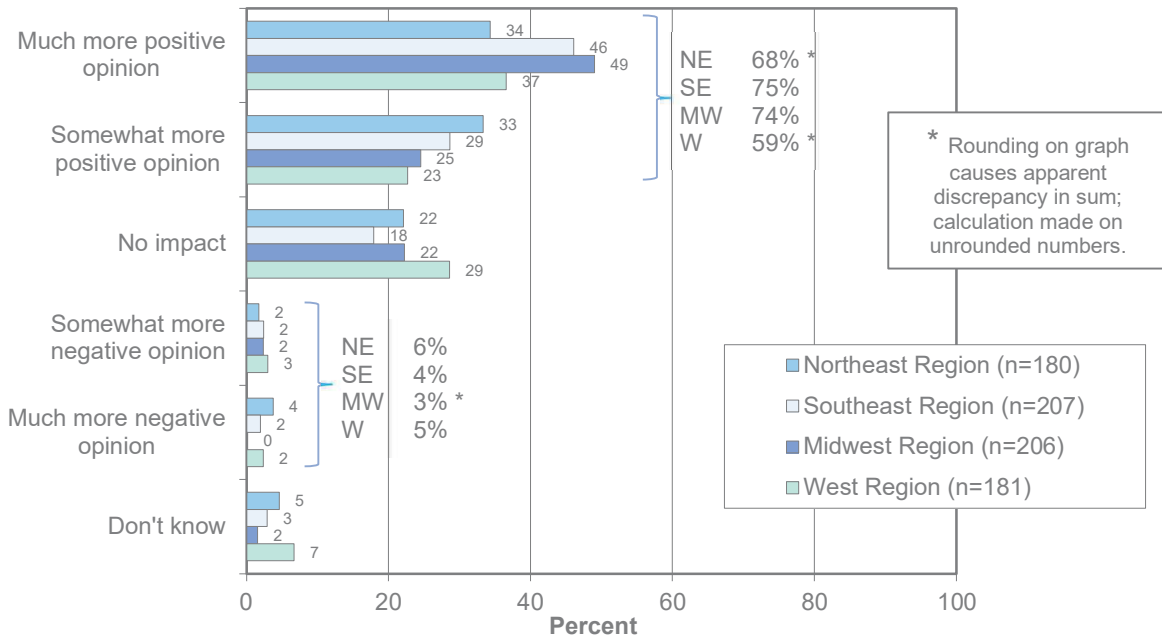
CHANGES IN OPINIONS ON HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

The survey also presented positive statements about hunting to respondents. For each, respondents were asked to say if knowing the fact would make their opinion of hunting more positive or more negative (or have no effect). Those that would have the most positive effect on opinion are that hunting controls wildlife populations and helps with management, that recreational hunting is regulated to ensure wildlife populations are not harmed, and that hunters help pay for conservation—all with more than two thirds in agreement. (The graph is ranked by the *much more* positive response. The sums of *much more* and *somewhat more* for both positive and negative are shown below each bar.) Regional graphs follow for each individual question, followed by a summary of the regional results for the entire series.

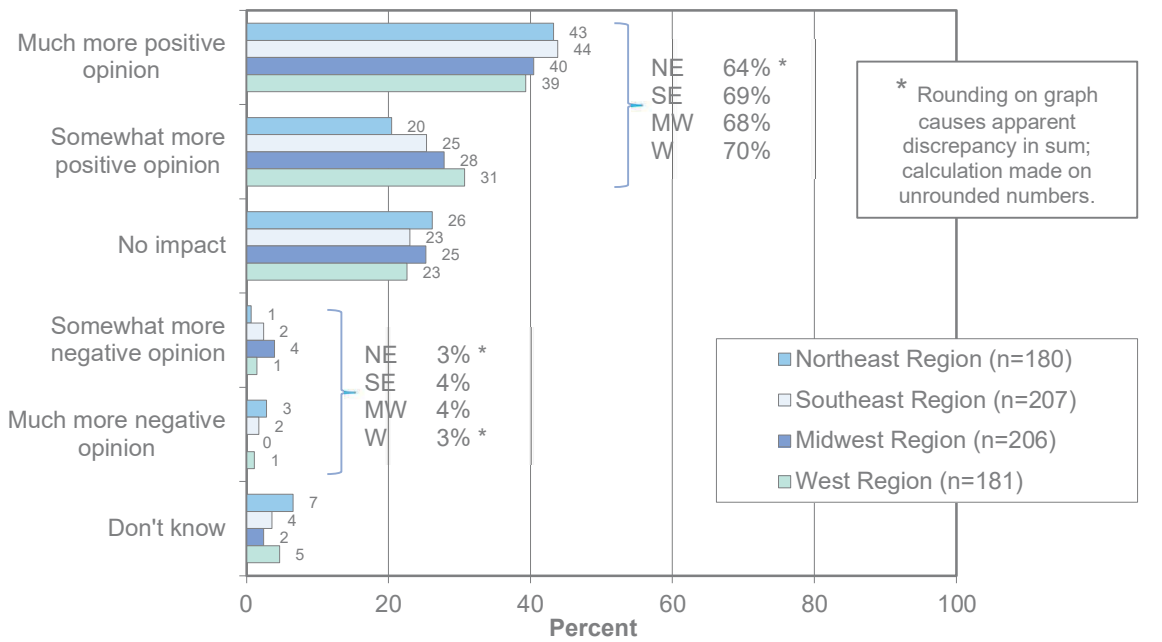


* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

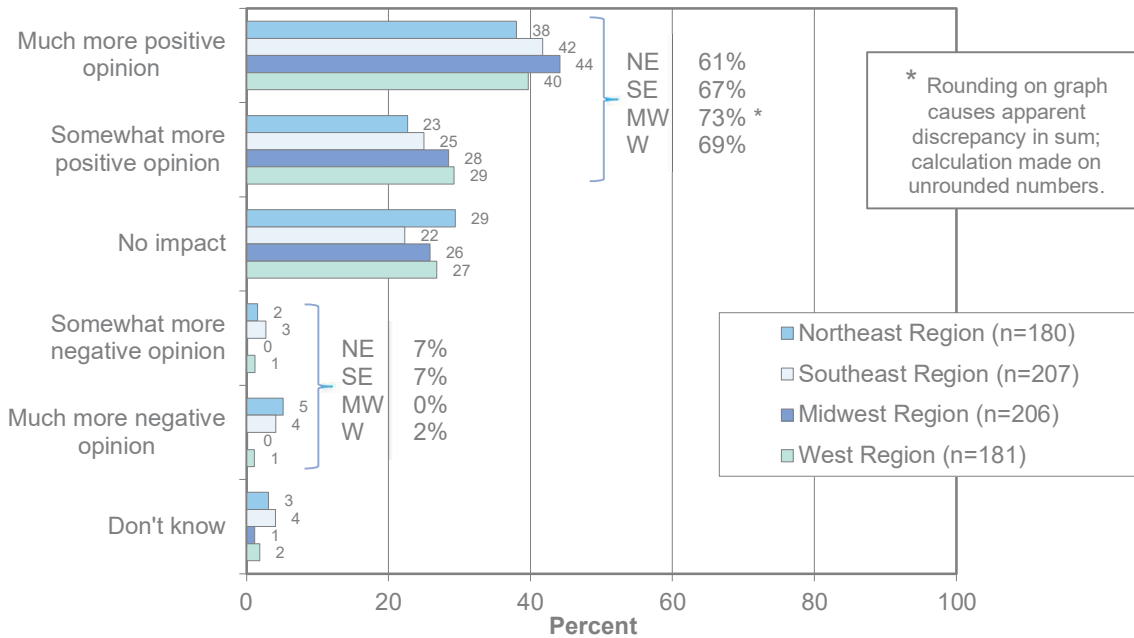
Hunting controls wildlife populations and helps with species management. (Please indicate whether knowing this would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting.) (General population)



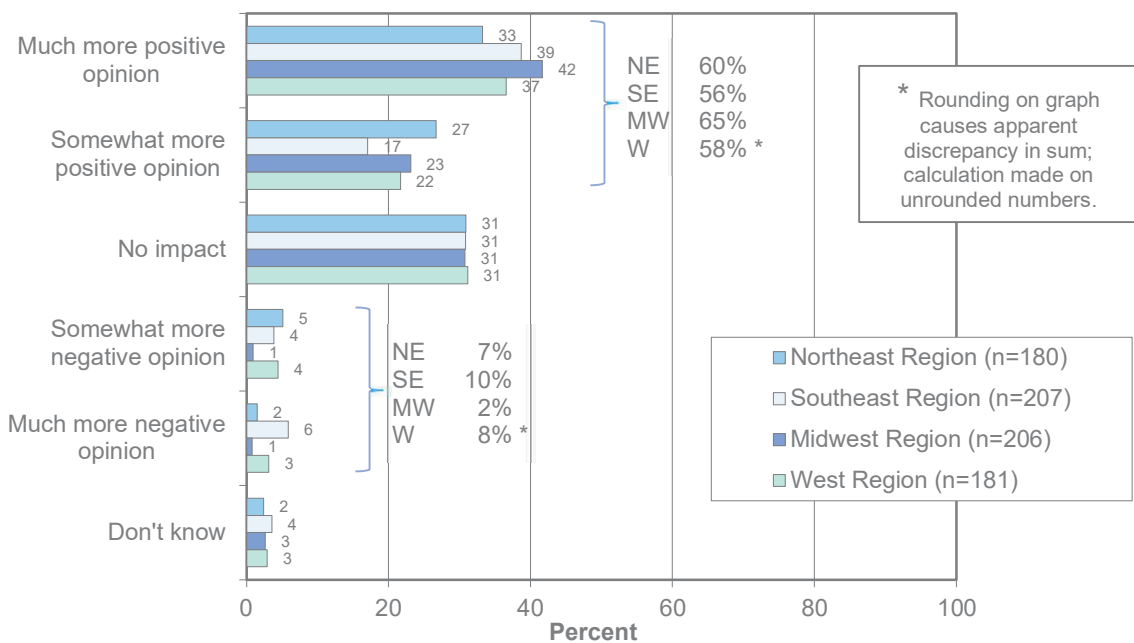
Recreational hunting in the United States is highly regulated to ensure that wildlife populations remain stable and healthy. (Please indicate whether knowing this would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting.) (General population)



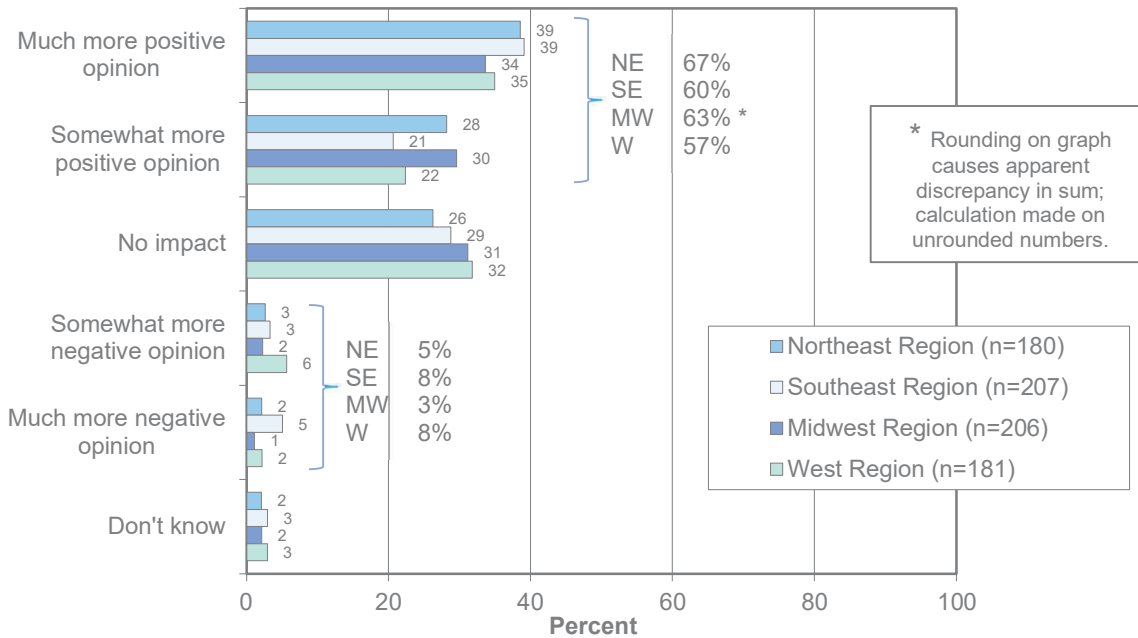
Hunters help pay for wildlife conservation through their purchases of licenses and taxable equipment. (Please indicate whether knowing this would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting.) (General population)



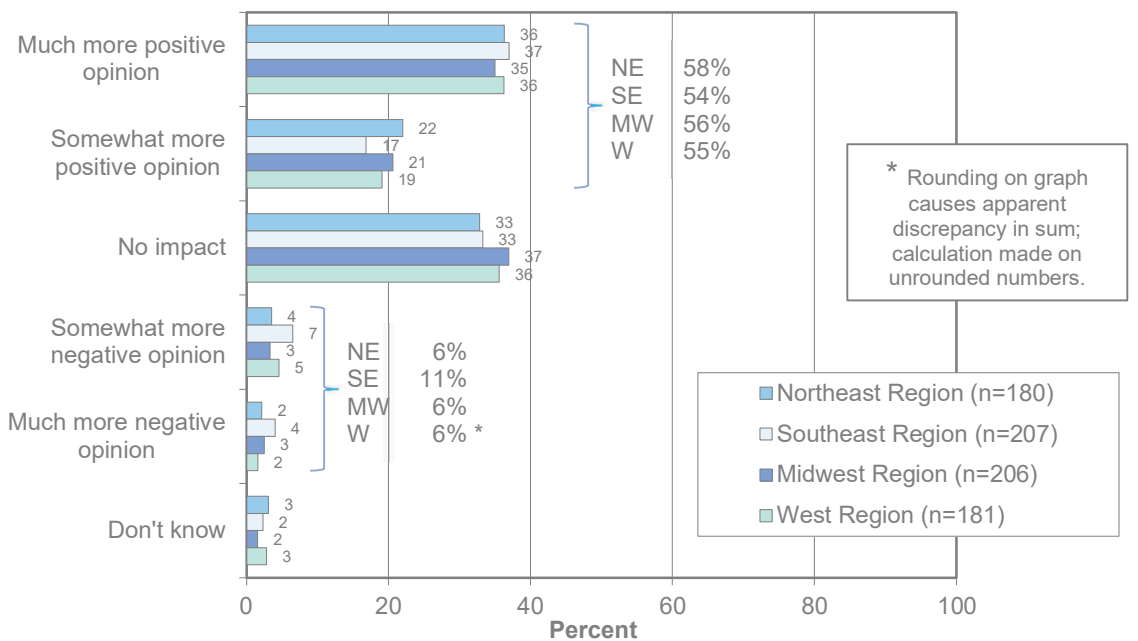
In the United States, government agencies regulate when and where people can hunt, how many animals can be hunted, and what types of equipment can be used to hunt. (Please indicate whether knowing this would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting.) (General population)

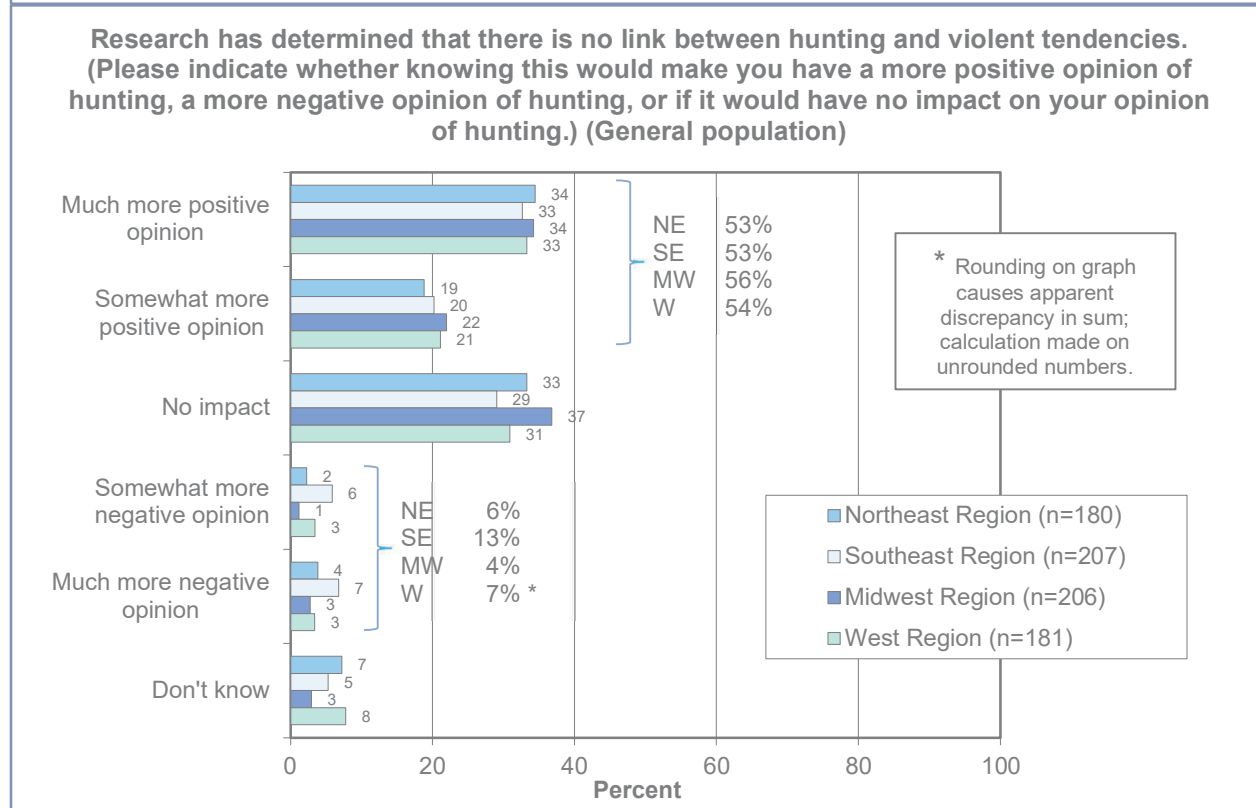
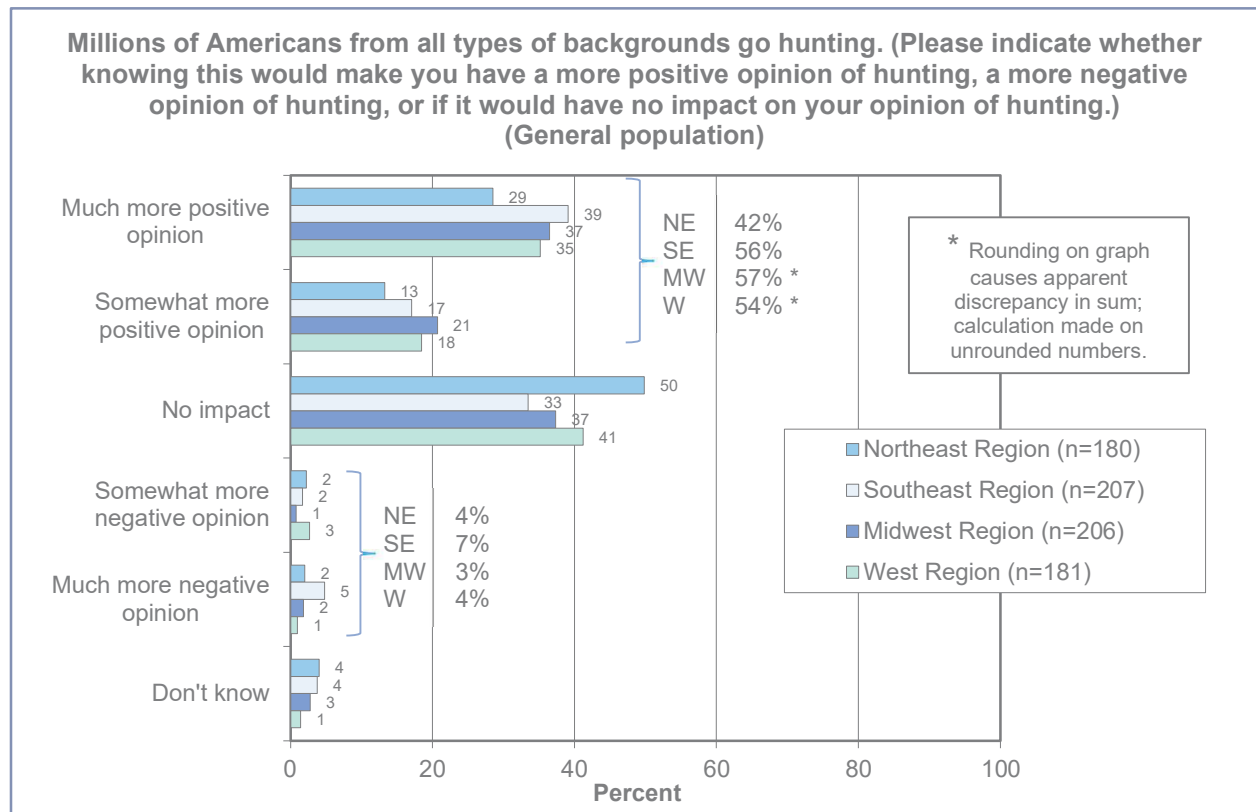


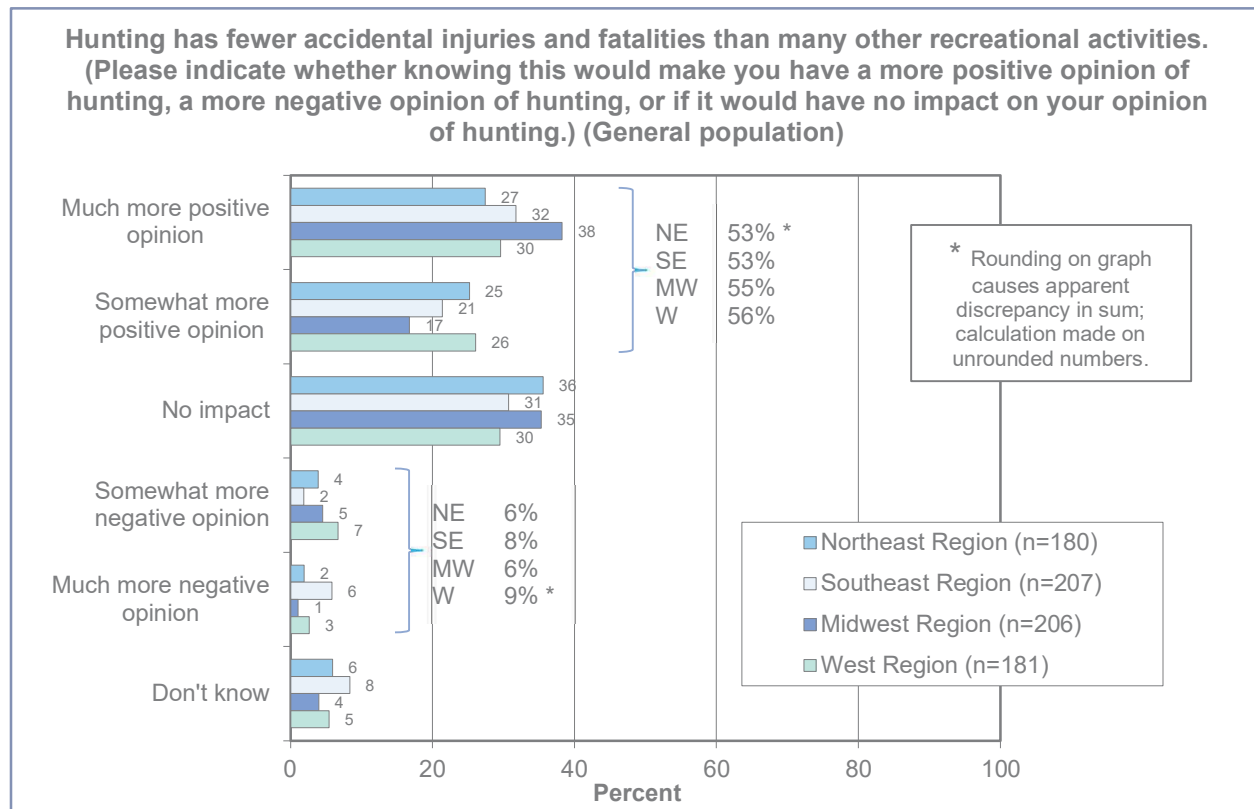
Many people hunt in order to obtain local, organic, chemical-free meat. (Please indicate whether knowing this would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting.) (General population)



Hunting for food does not cause any more animal suffering than slaughtering livestock for food. (Please indicate whether knowing this would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting.) (General population)







There was not as much regional variation on these positive statements about hunting as there was on the previously shown negative statements about hunting. Nonetheless, there were some differences:

- The Midwest had a relatively high percentage of positive responses on several of the statements.
- The Northeast had a relatively low percentage of positive responses on several of the statements.
- The Southeast had a generally higher percentage of negative responses than the other regions.
- The Midwest had generally lower percentage of negative responses than the other regions.

The following two graphs show this series among those whose opinion of hunting (first graph) and sport shooting (second graph) has become more negative. Compared to the general population results, none of the statements are as effective in encouraging acceptance of hunting. The *much more positive* and *somewhat more positive* responses have smaller percentages (among the general population, they range from 53% to 70%, while in the graphs that follow, they range from 21% to 49%). Meanwhile, the *no impact* and both the negative response percentages are larger among those whose opinion has become more negative.

These graphs are ranked by the *strongly agree* response. The sums of *strongly* and *moderately* for both agree and disagree are shown below each bar.

Please indicate whether knowing each of the following would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting. What about if you knew that...? (Has become more negative about hunting)

■ Much more positive ■ Somewhat more positive ■ No impact ■ Somewhat more negative ■ Much more negative □ Don't know



* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

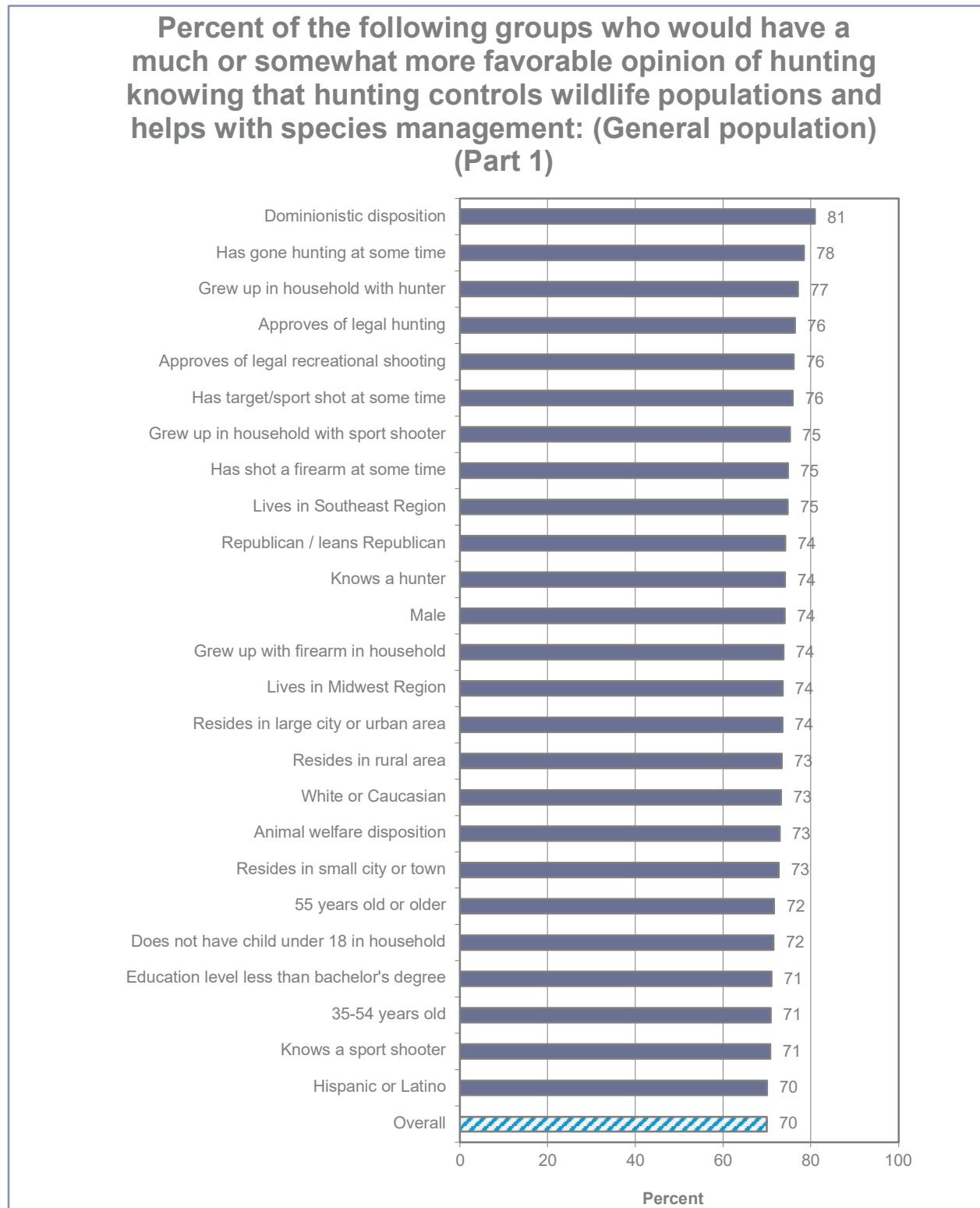
Please indicate whether knowing each of the following would make you have a more positive opinion of hunting, a more negative opinion of hunting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of hunting. What about if you knew that...? (Has become more negative about sport shooting)

■ Much more positive ■ Somewhat more positive ■ No impact ■ Somewhat more negative ■ Much more negative □ Don't know

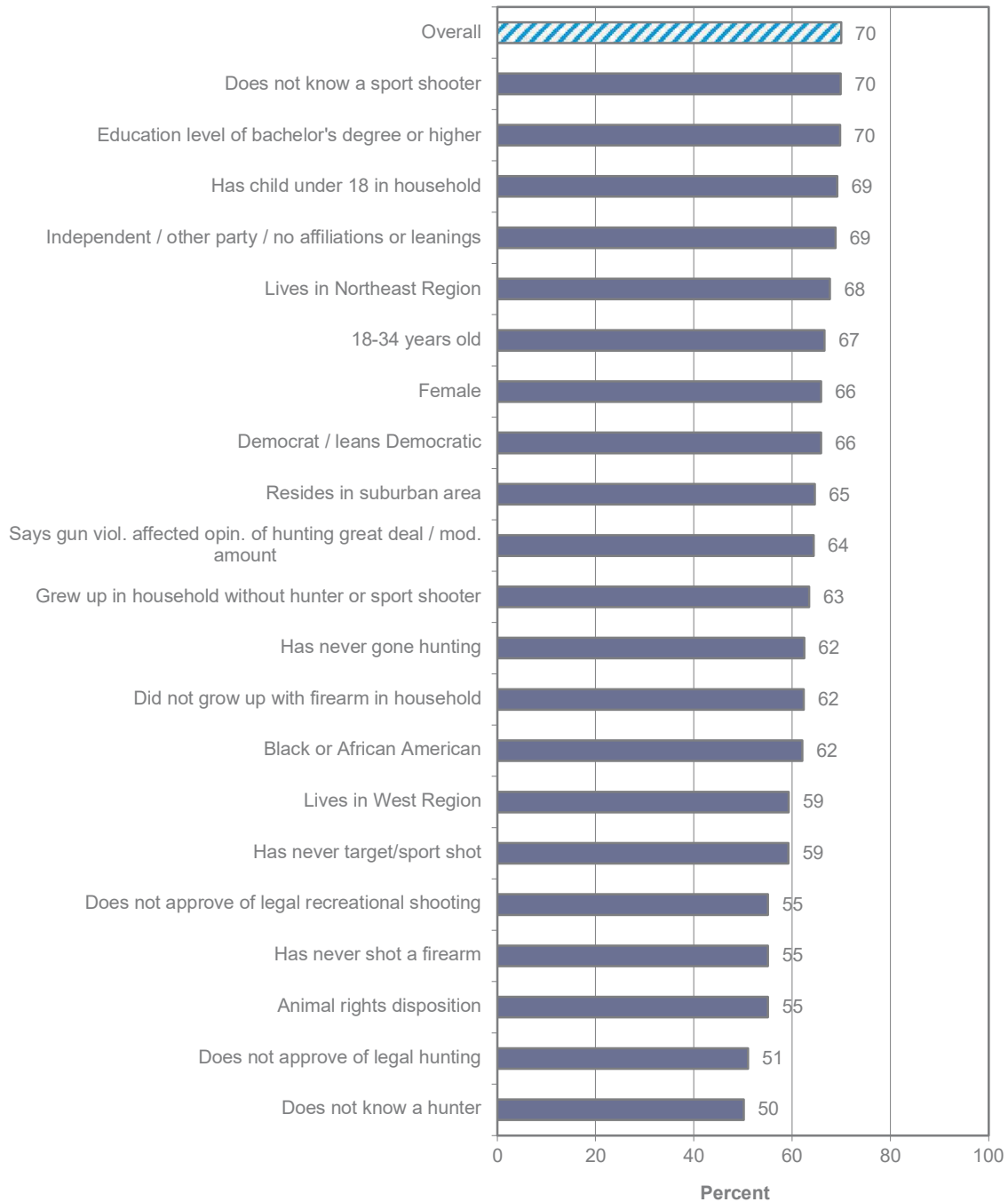


* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

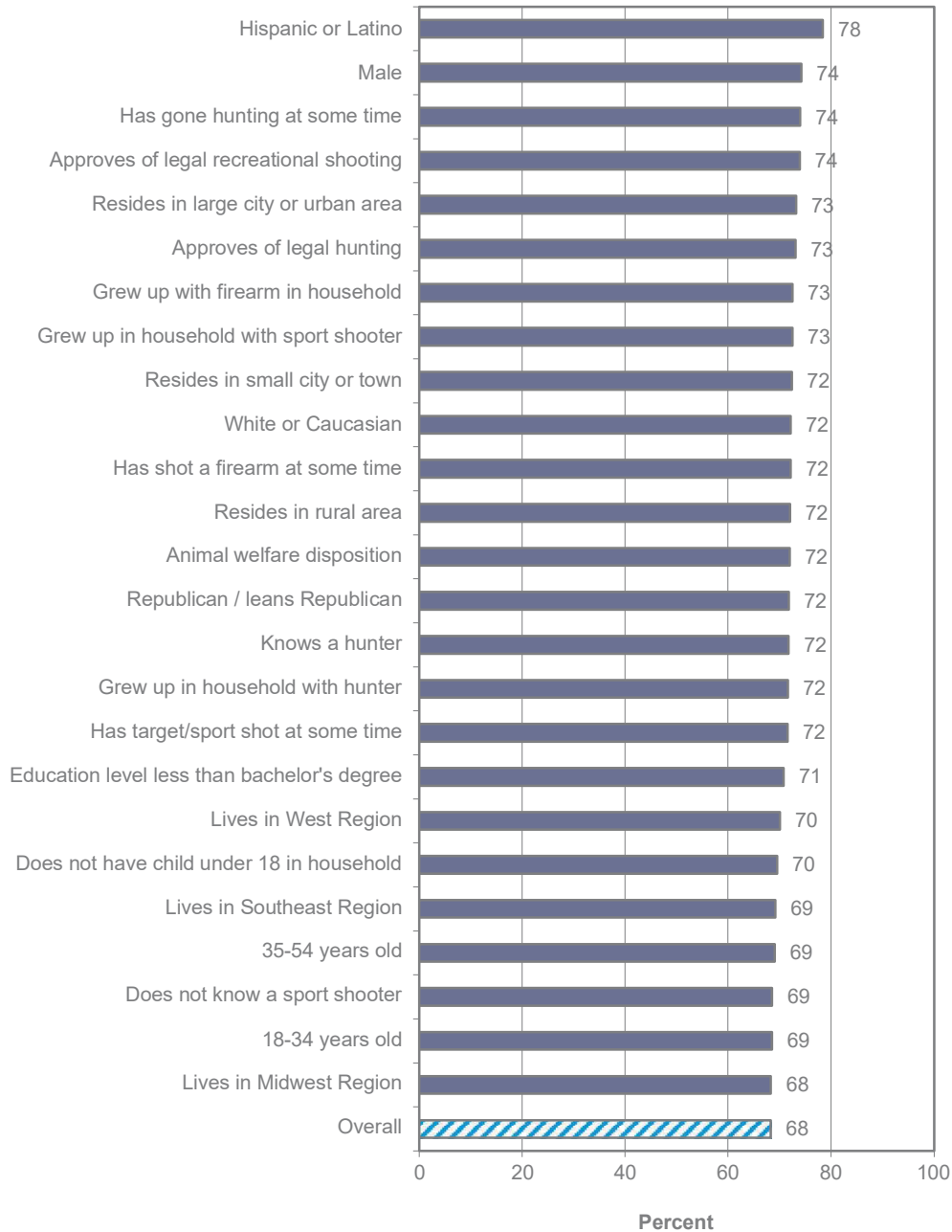
Demographic analyses were run on some of the questions in this series, as shown in the graphs that follow. (Not all the questions were run in the demographic analyses, as results from one to another would be similar. The three that were run give a flavor of the entire series.)



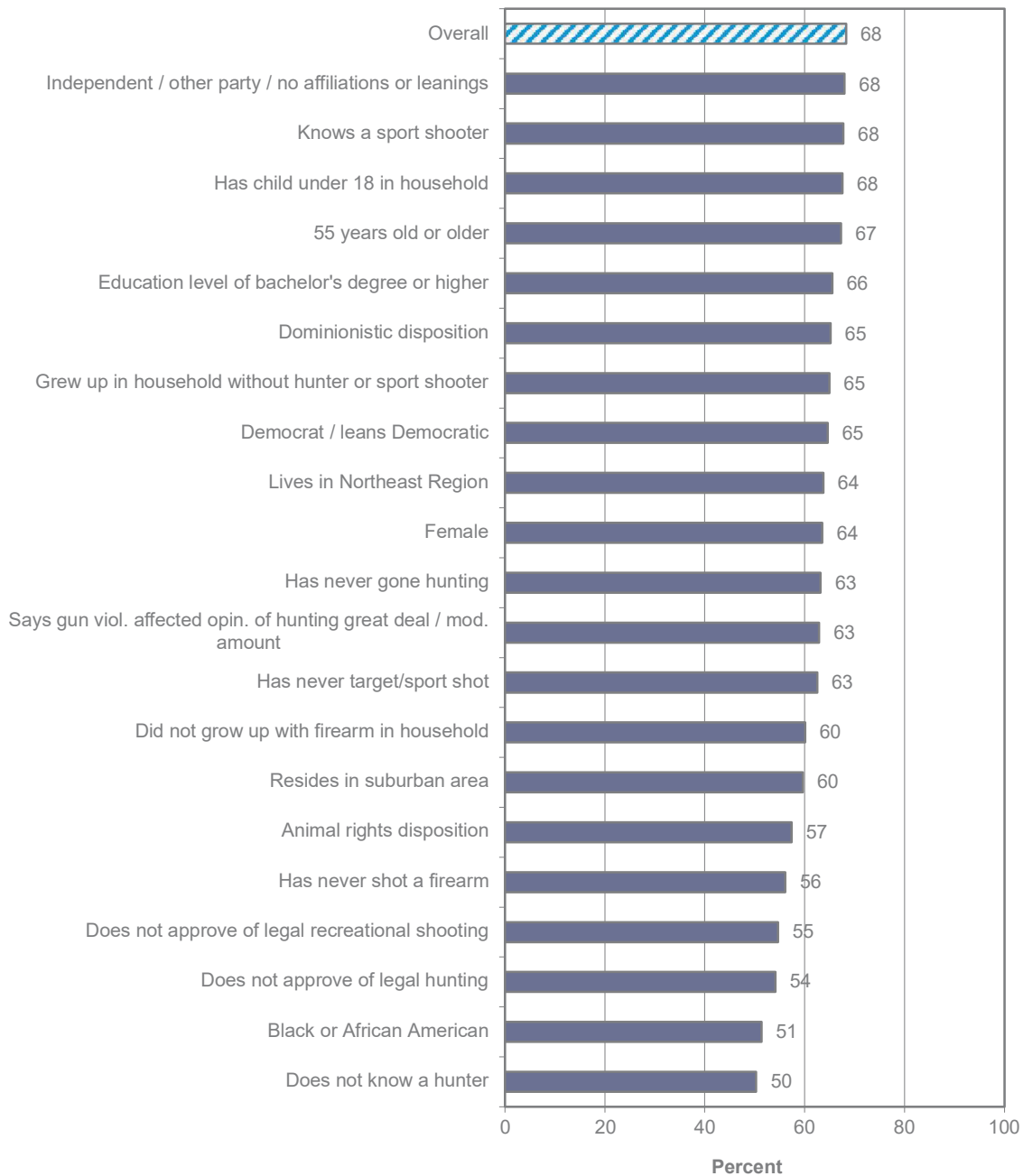
**Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting knowing that hunting controls wildlife populations and helps with species management: (General population)
(Part 2)**



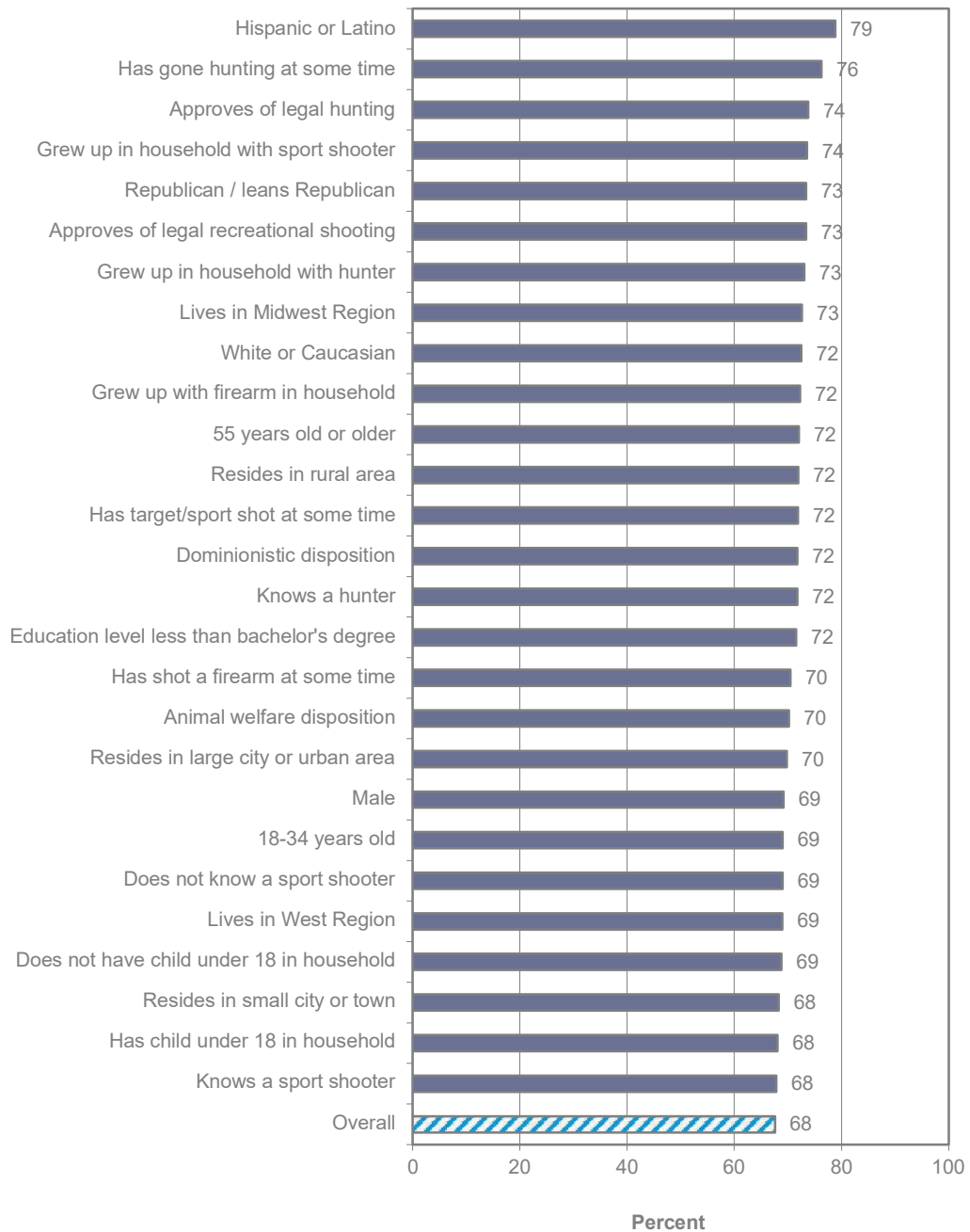
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting in the United States knowing that it is highly regulated to ensure that wildlife populations remain stable and healthy: (General population) (Part 1)



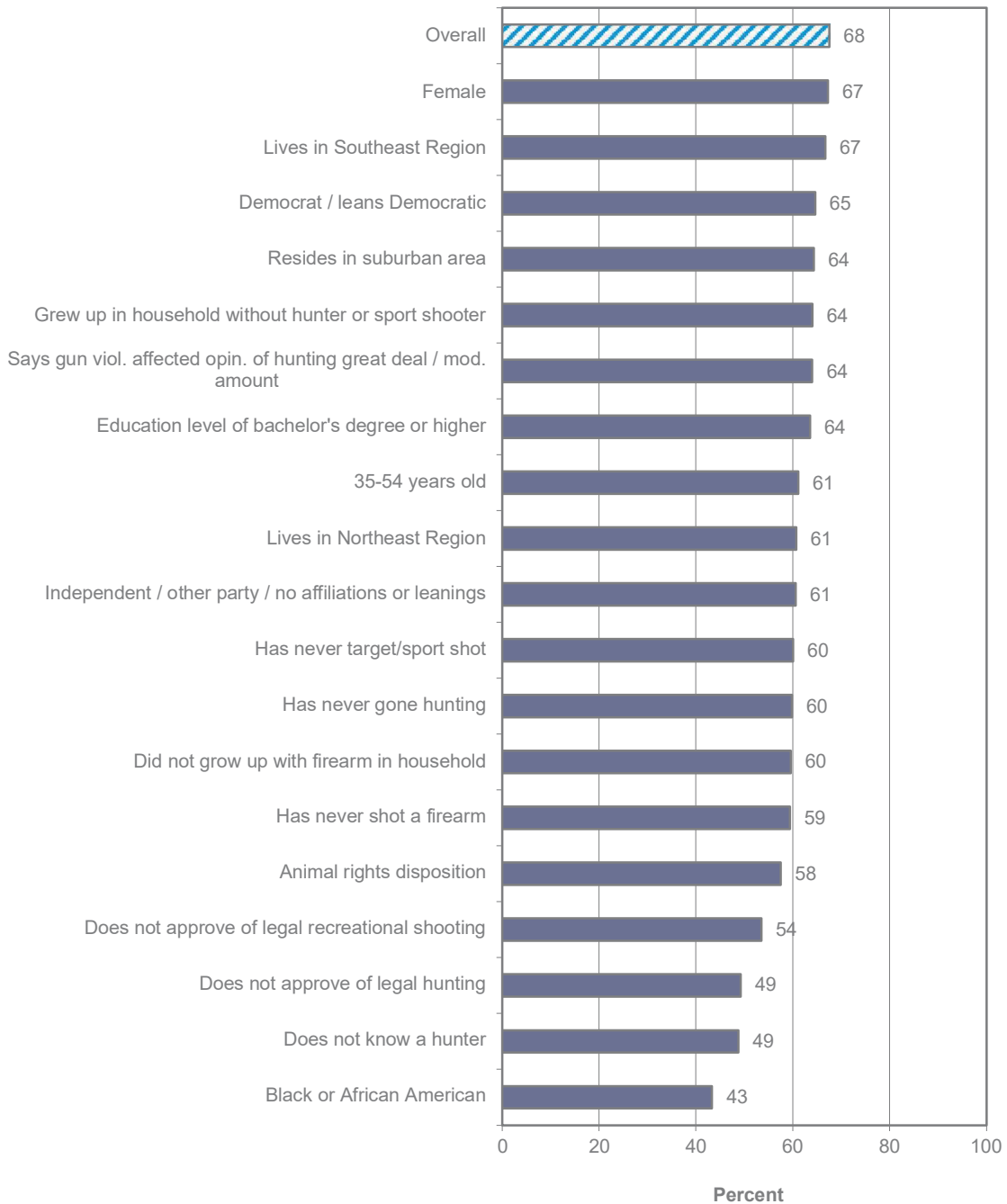
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting in the United States knowing that it is highly regulated to ensure that wildlife populations remain stable and healthy: (General population) (Part 2)



Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting knowing that hunters help pay for wildlife conservation through their purchases of licenses and taxable equipment: (General population) (Part 1)

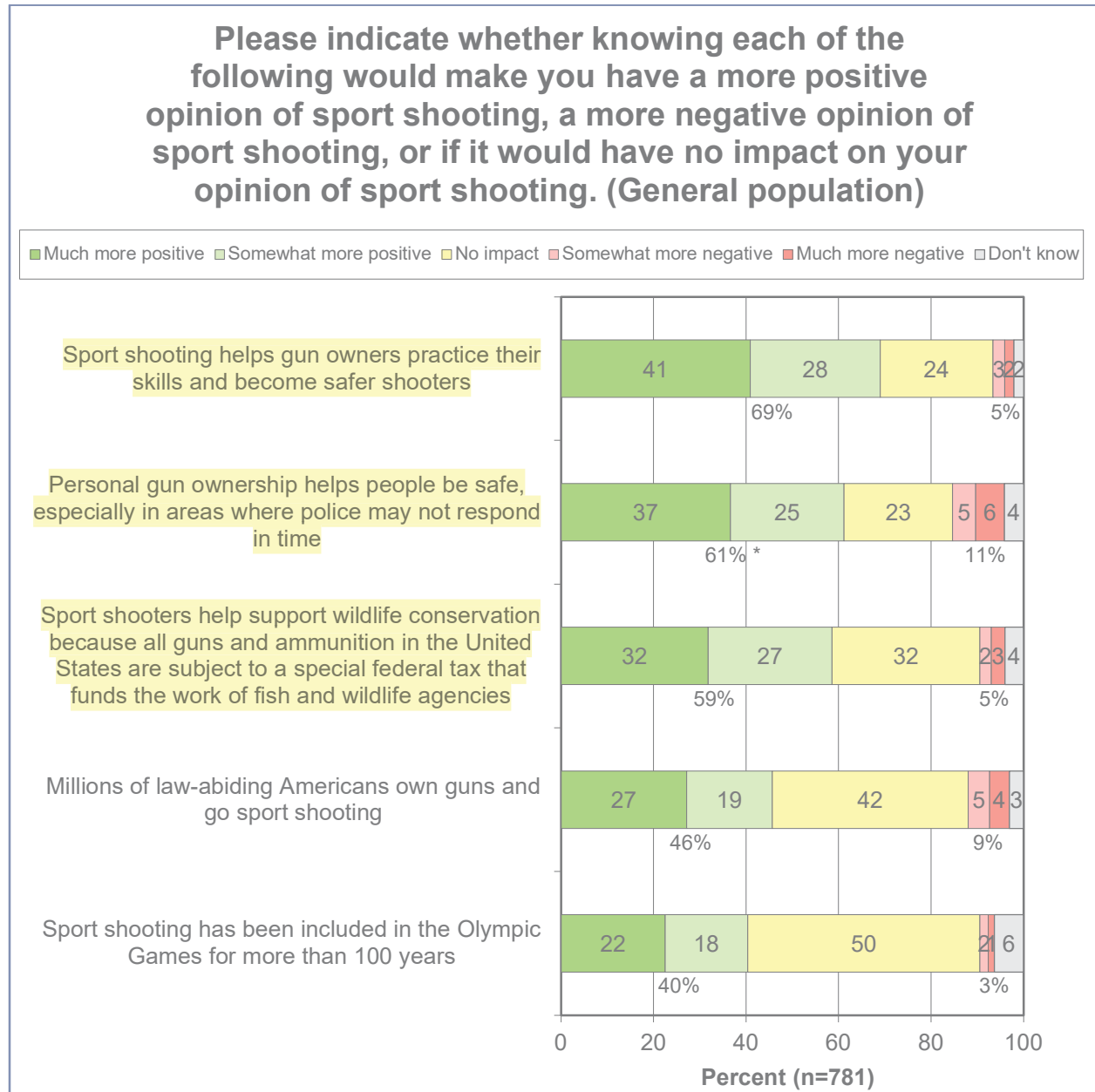


Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting knowing that hunters help pay for wildlife conservation through their purchases of licenses and taxable equipment: (General population) (Part 2)

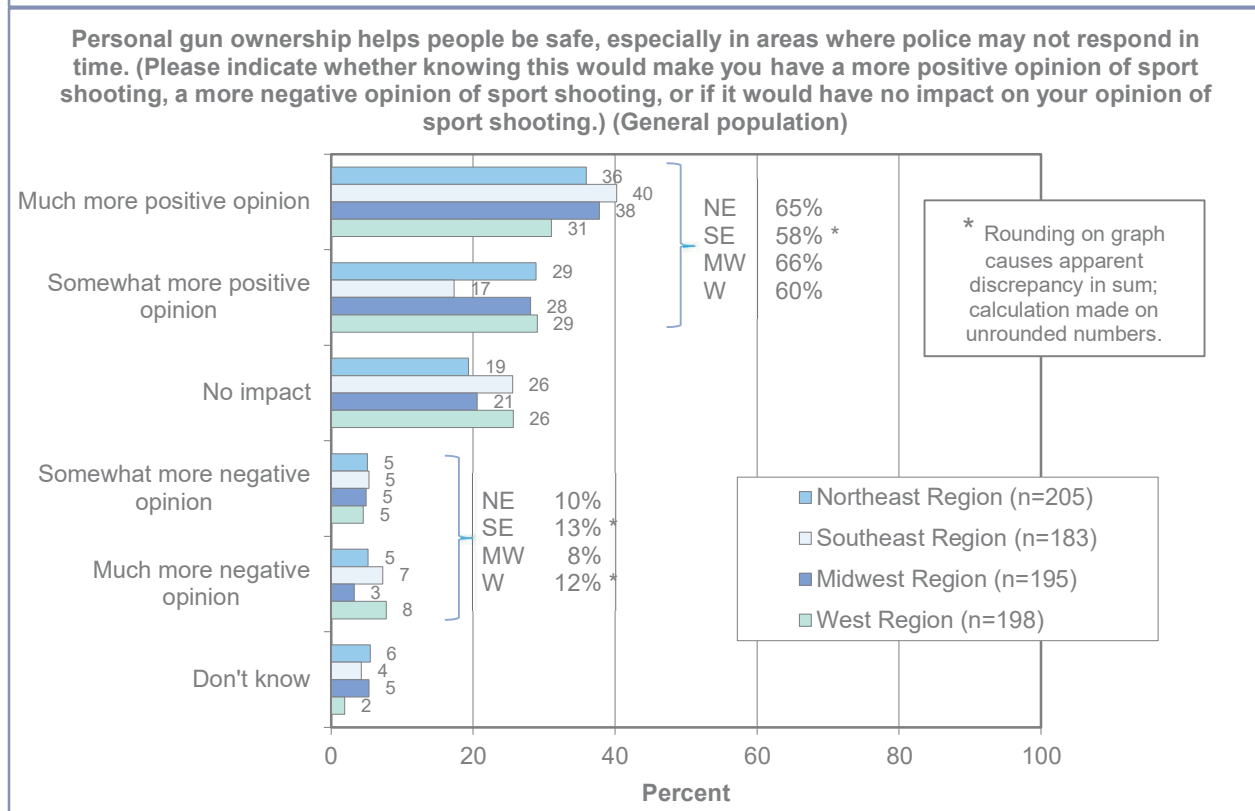
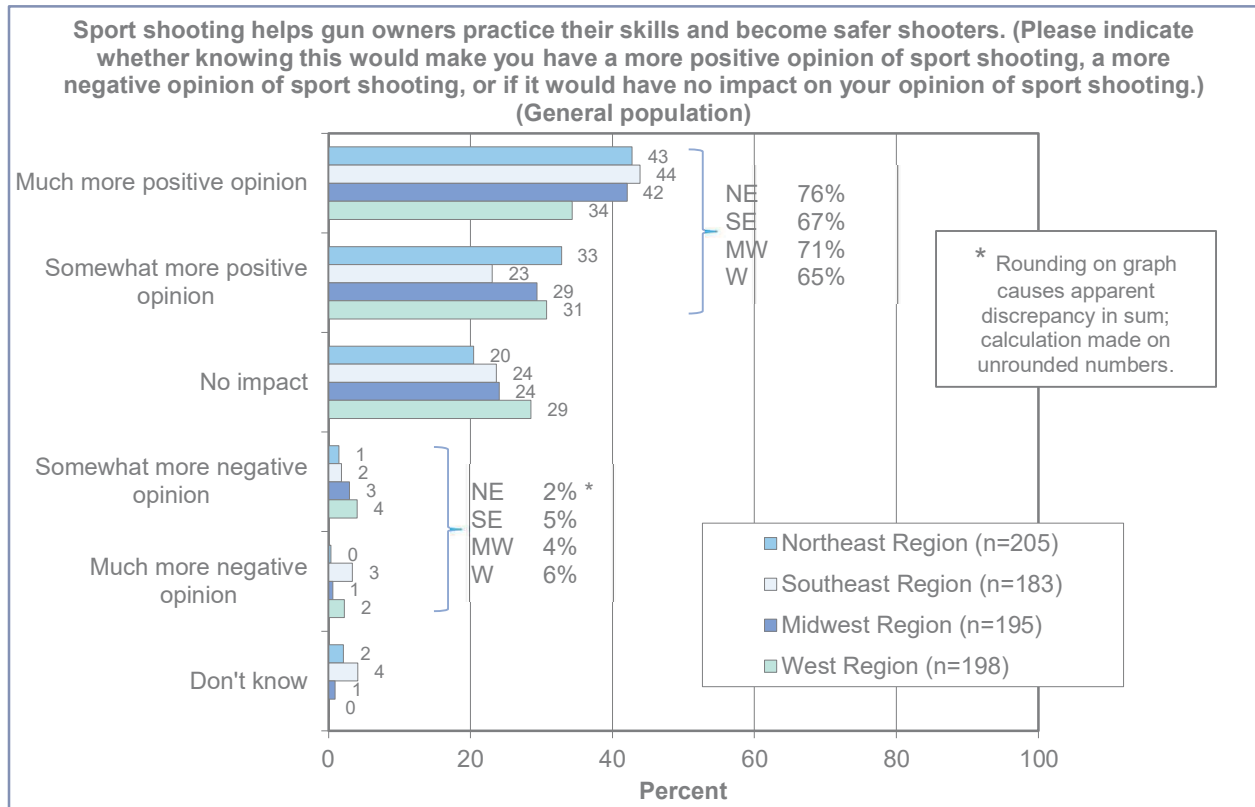


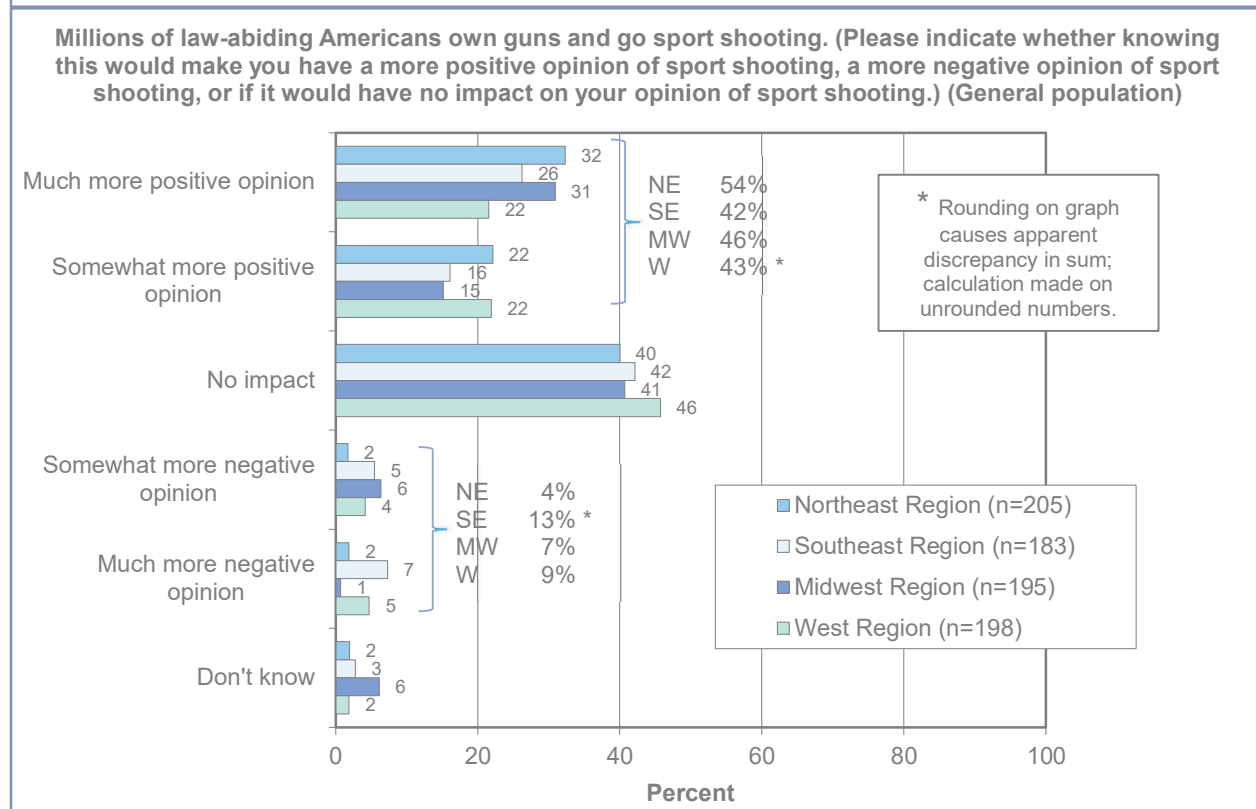
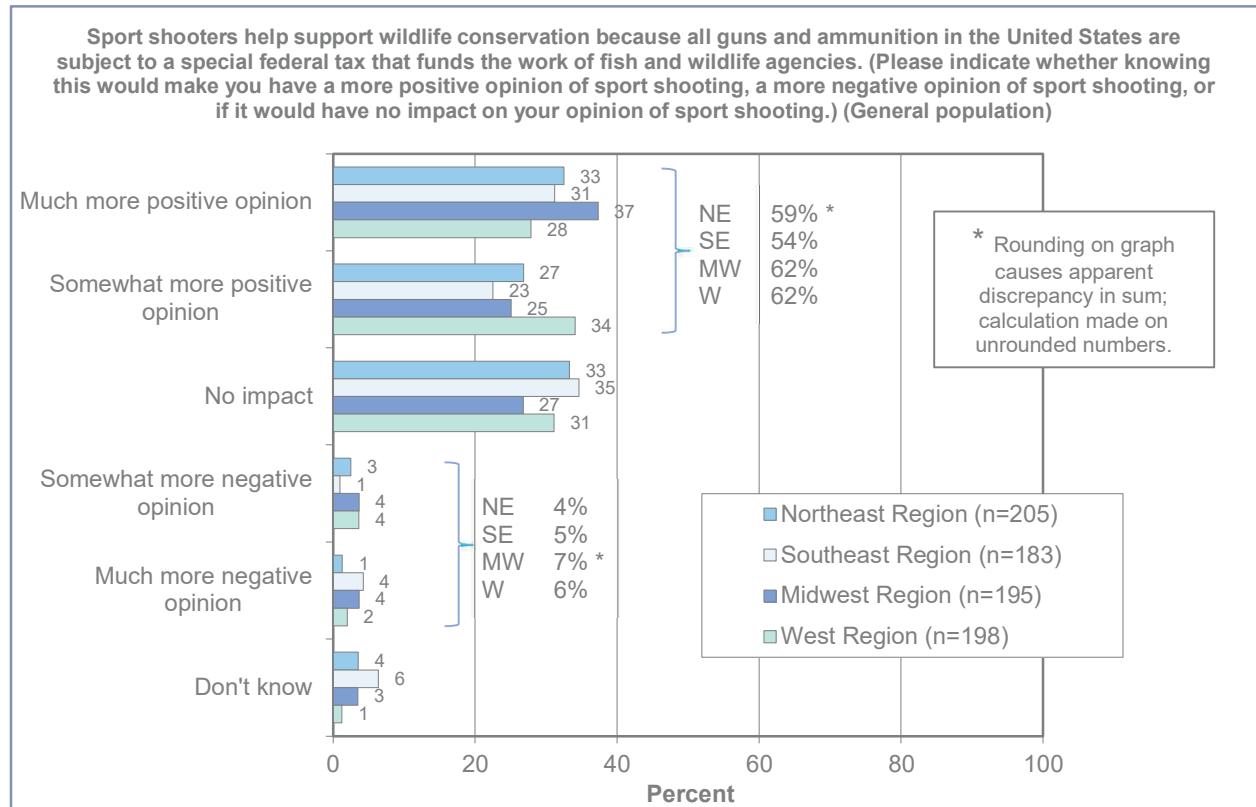
Finally in this section, the survey also tested positive messages about target/sport shooting.

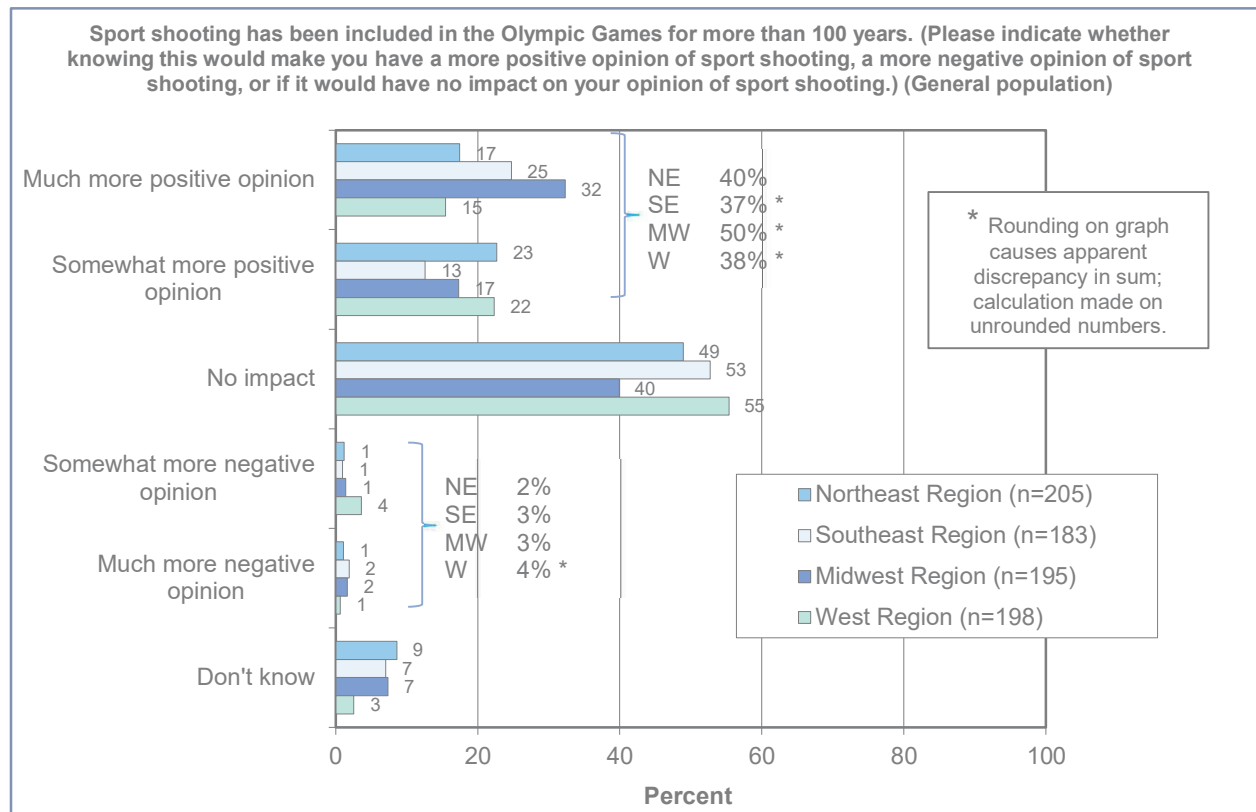
Those that would have the most positive effect on opinion are that sport shooting helps gun owners improve their skills and become safer shooters, that personal gun ownership helps people be safe, and that sport shooters support conservation through excise taxes—all having a majority agreeing. (The graph is ranked by the *much more* positive response. The sums of *much more* and *somewhat more* for both positive and negative are shown below each bar.) Regional graphs follow for each individual question, followed by a summary of the regional results for the entire series.



* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.







There was some regional variation on these positive statements about sport shooting:

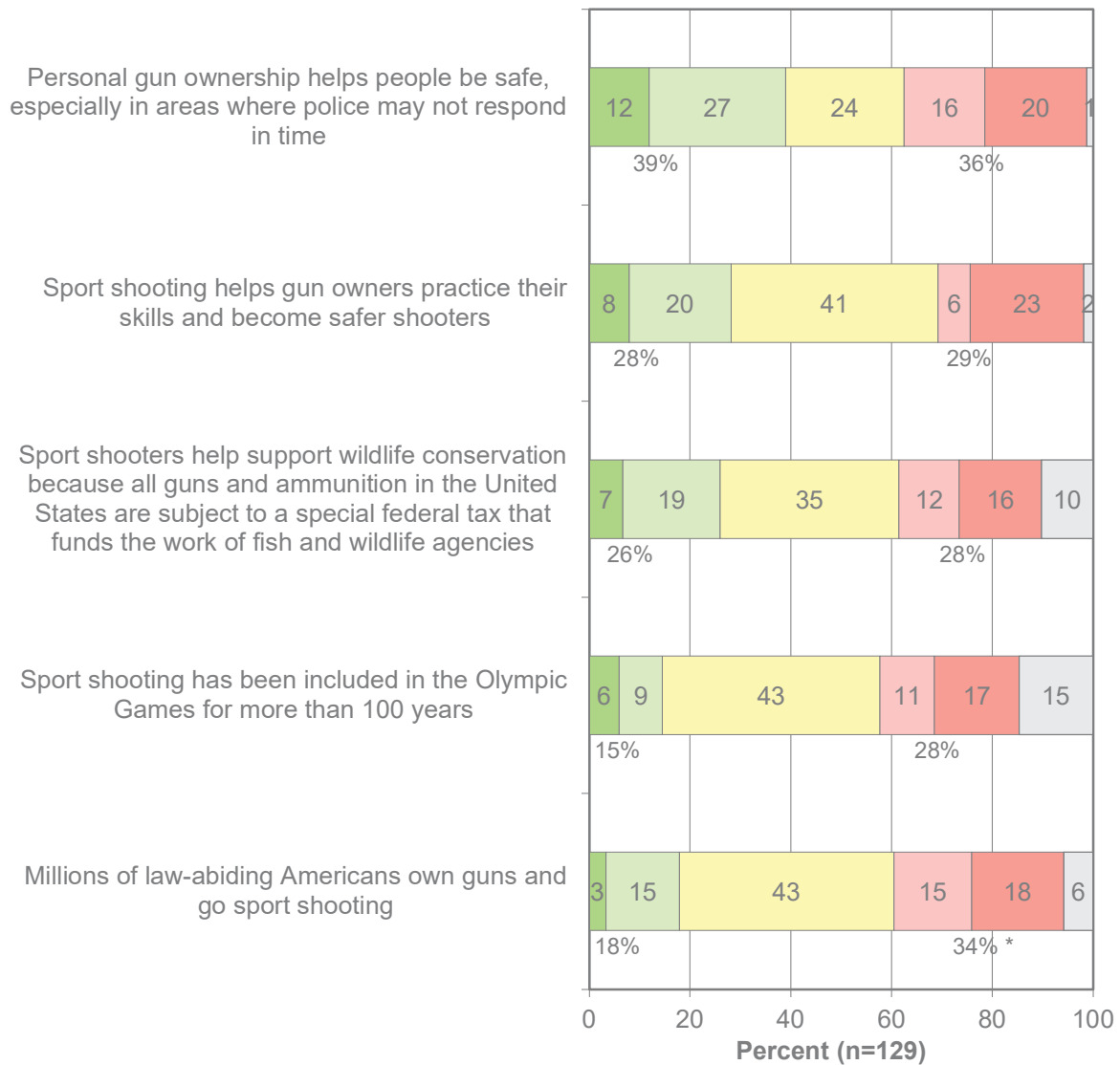
- The Northeast and Midwest Regions had relatively high percentages of positive responses on these statements.
- There was not much variation in percentages with negative responses, which tended to be consistently low among the regions.

The next graph shows this series among those whose opinion of hunting has become more negative, followed by the graph among those whose opinion of sport shooting has become more negative. Again, compared to the general population results, none of the statements are as effective in encouraging acceptance of sport shooting.

These graphs start on the next page. These graphs are ranked by the *strongly* agree response. The sums of *strongly* and *moderately* for both agree and disagree are shown below each bar.

Please indicate whether knowing each of the following would make you have a more positive opinion of sport shooting, a more negative opinion of sport shooting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of sport shooting. What about if you knew that...? (Has become more negative about hunting)

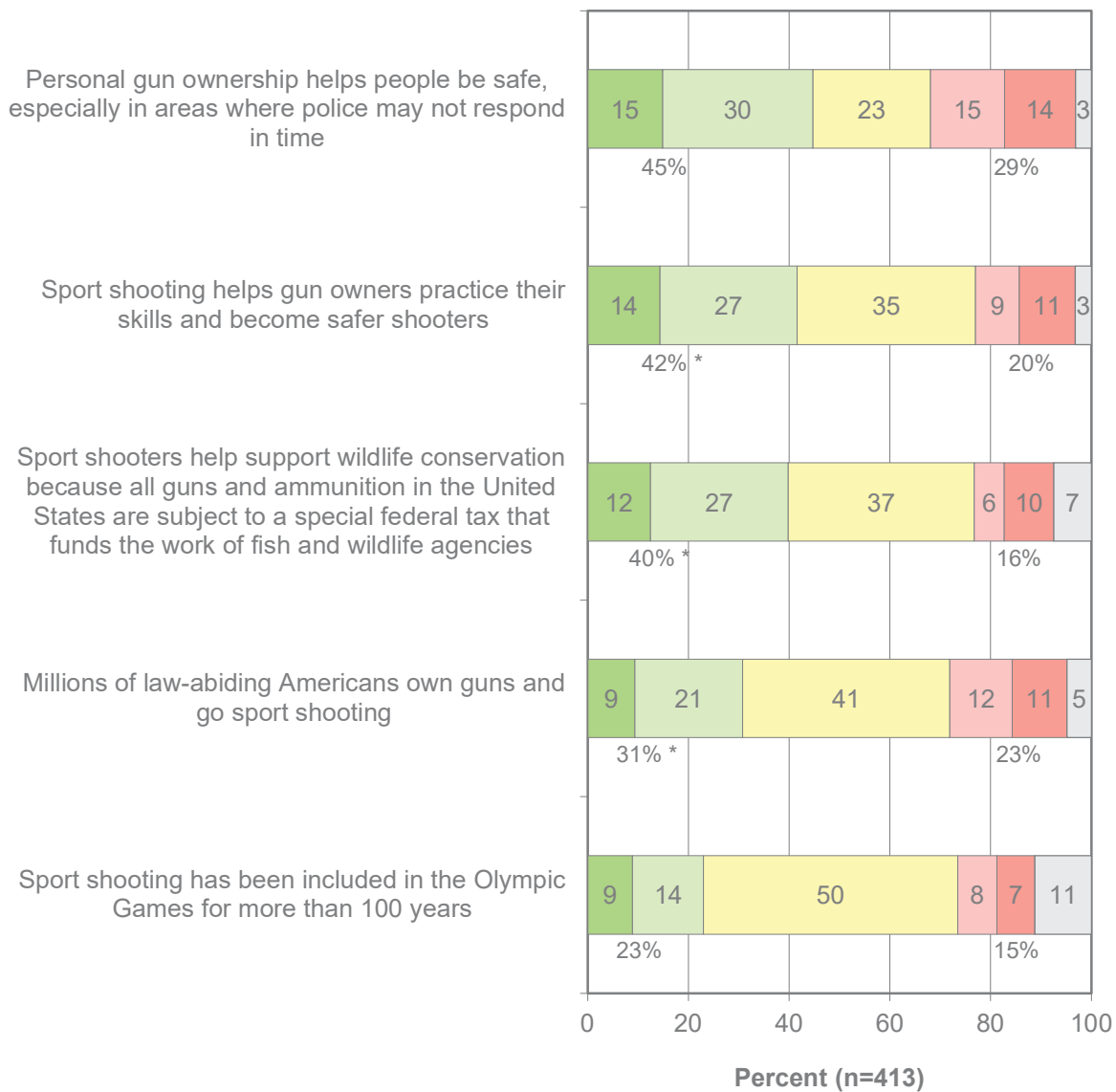
■ Much more positive ■ Somewhat more positive ■ No impact ■ Somewhat more negative ■ Much more negative □ Don't know



* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

Please indicate whether knowing each of the following would make you have a more positive opinion of sport shooting, a more negative opinion of sport shooting, or if it would have no impact on your opinion of sport shooting. What about if you knew that...? (Has become more negative about sport shooting)

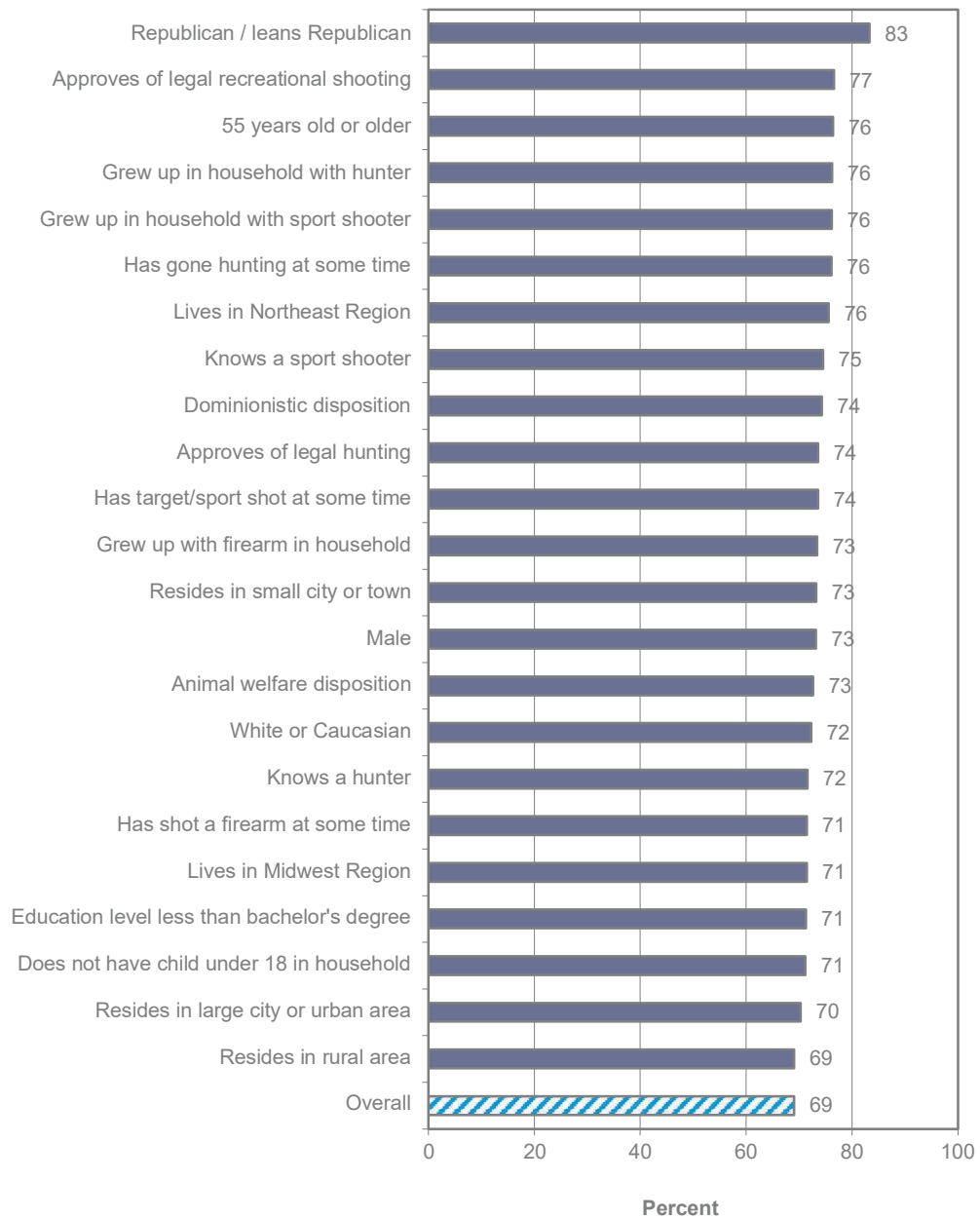
■ Much more positive ■ Somewhat more positive ■ No impact ■ Somewhat more negative ■ Much more negative ■ Don't know



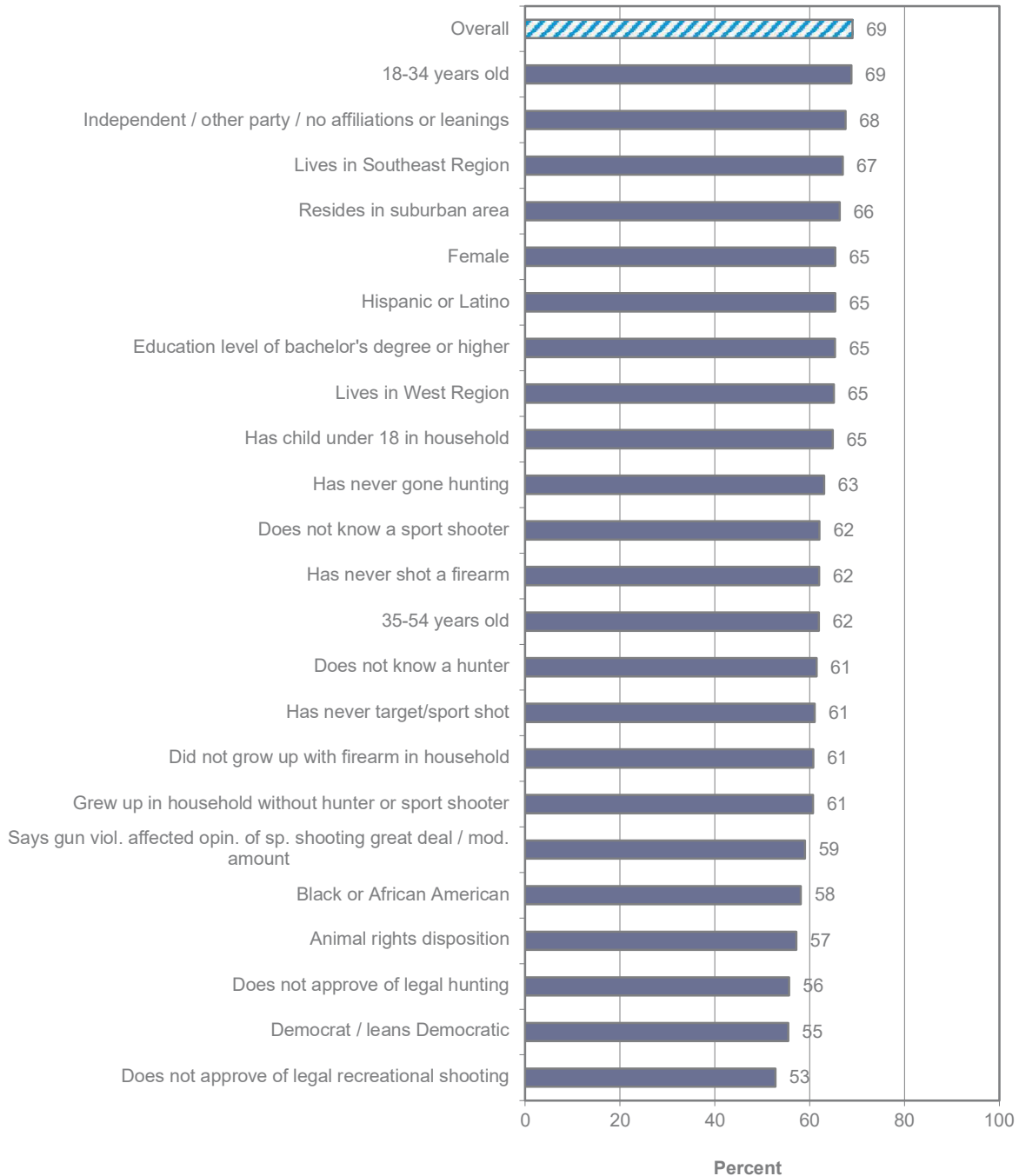
* Rounding on graph causes apparent discrepancy in sum; calculation made on unrounded numbers.

Demographic analyses were run on some of the questions in this series, as shown in the graphs that follow. (Not all the questions were run in the demographic analyses, as results from one to another would be similar. The two that were run give a flavor of the entire series.)

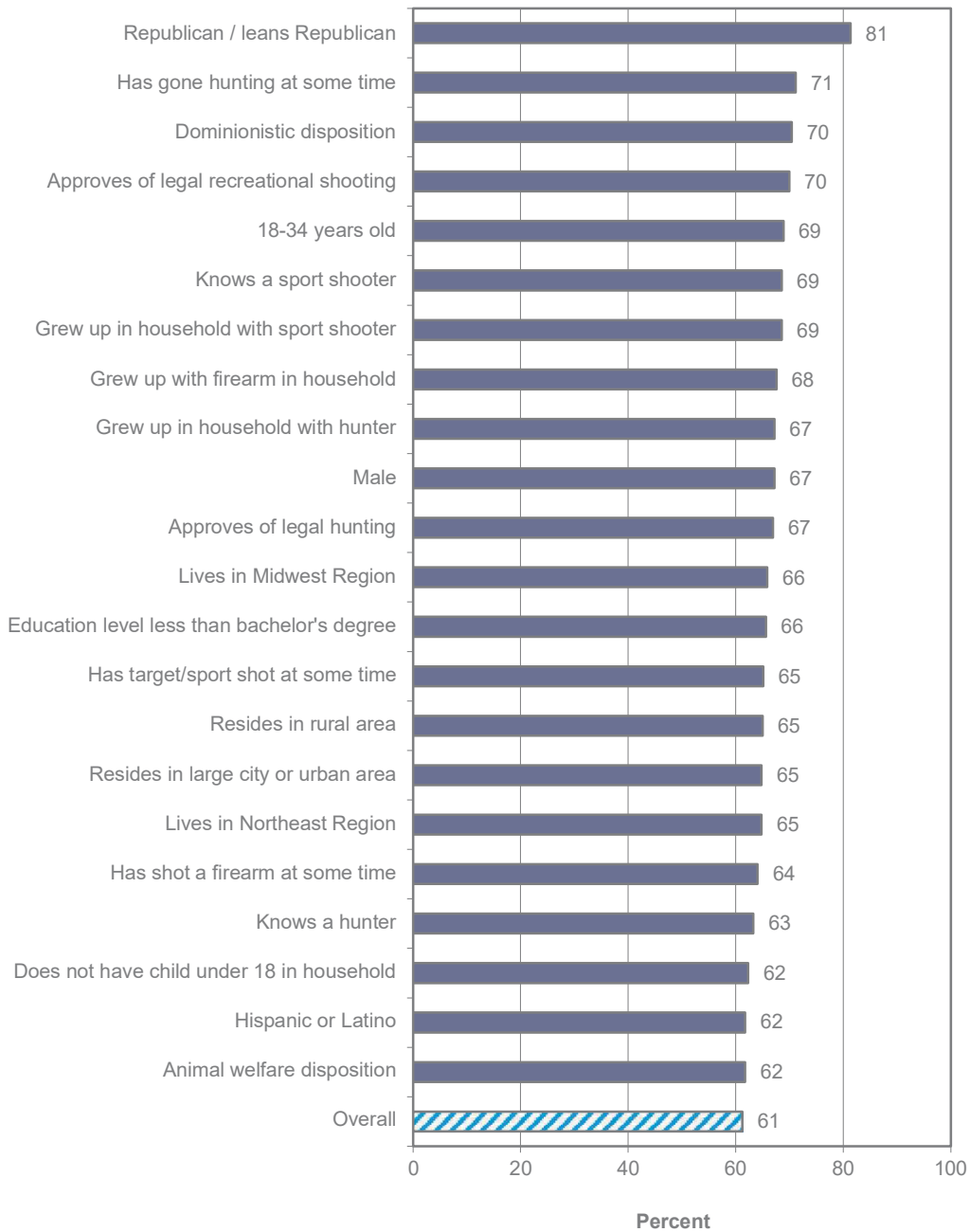
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of sport shooting knowing that it helps gun owners practice their skills and become safer shooters: (General population) (Part 1)



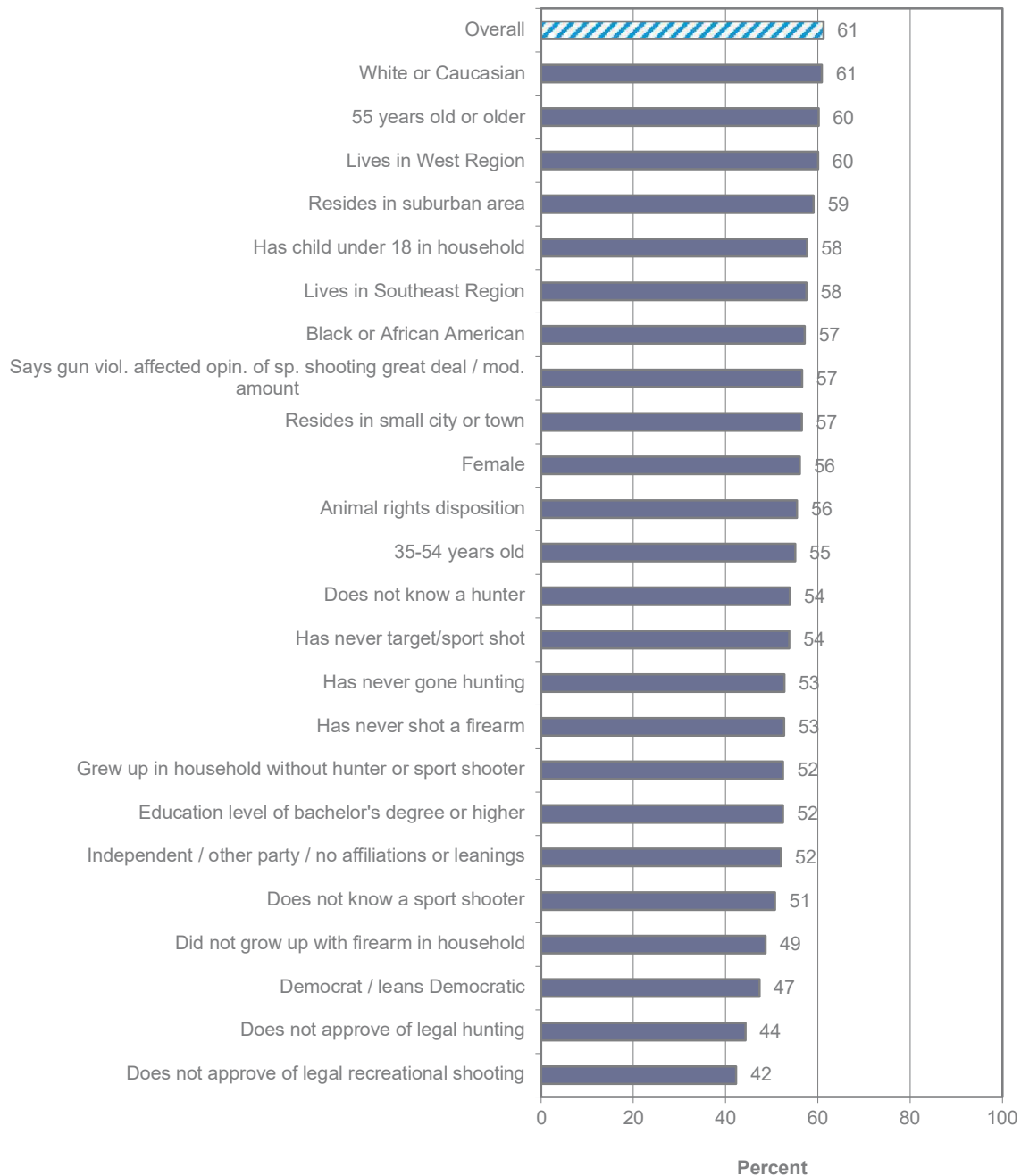
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of sport shooting knowing that it helps gun owners practice their skills and become safer shooters: (General population) (Part 2)



Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of sport shooting knowing that personal gun ownership helps people be safe, especially in areas where police may not respond in time: (General population) (Part 1)

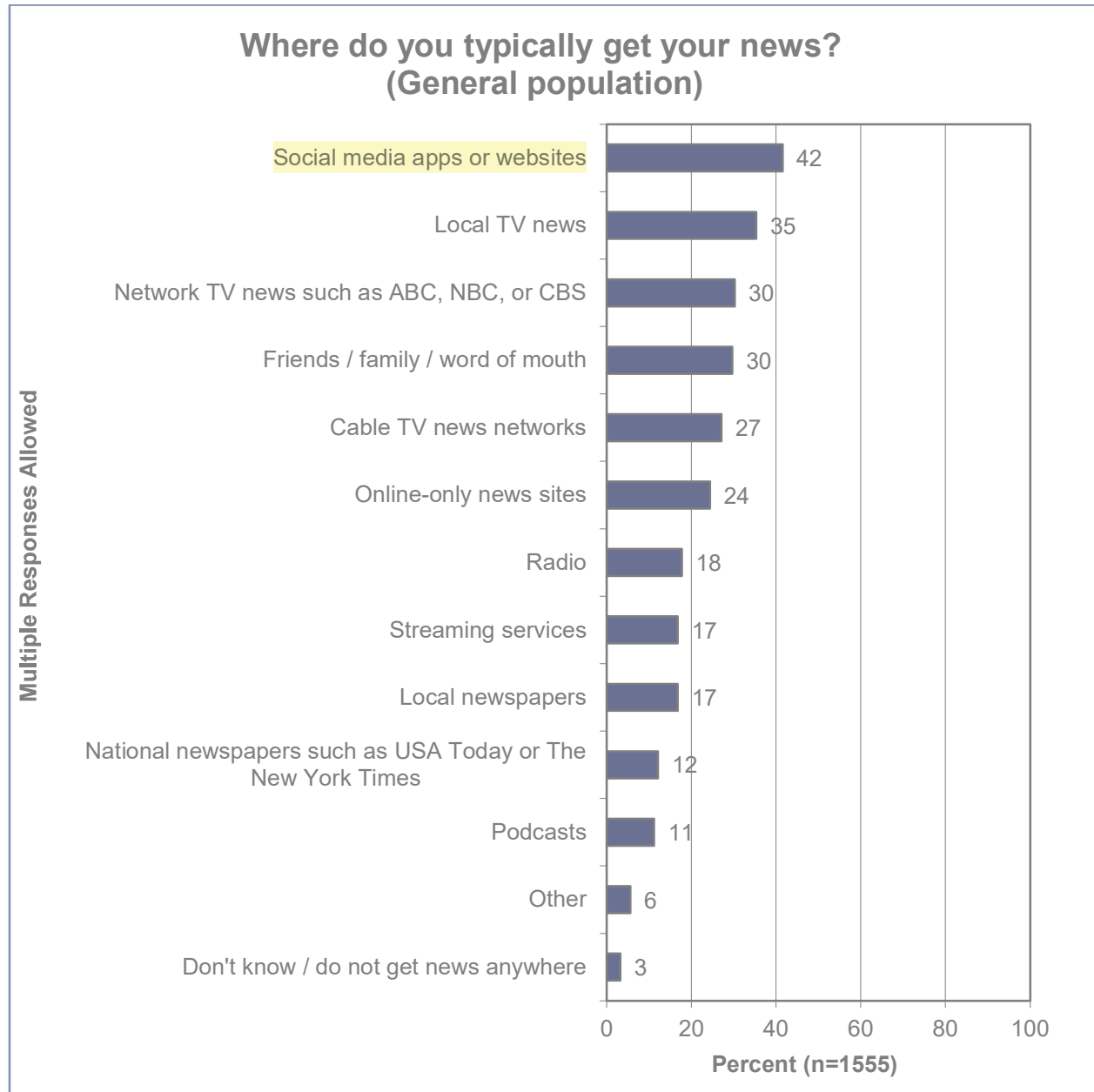


Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of sport shooting knowing that personal gun ownership helps people be safe, especially in areas where police may not respond in time: (General population) (Part 2)

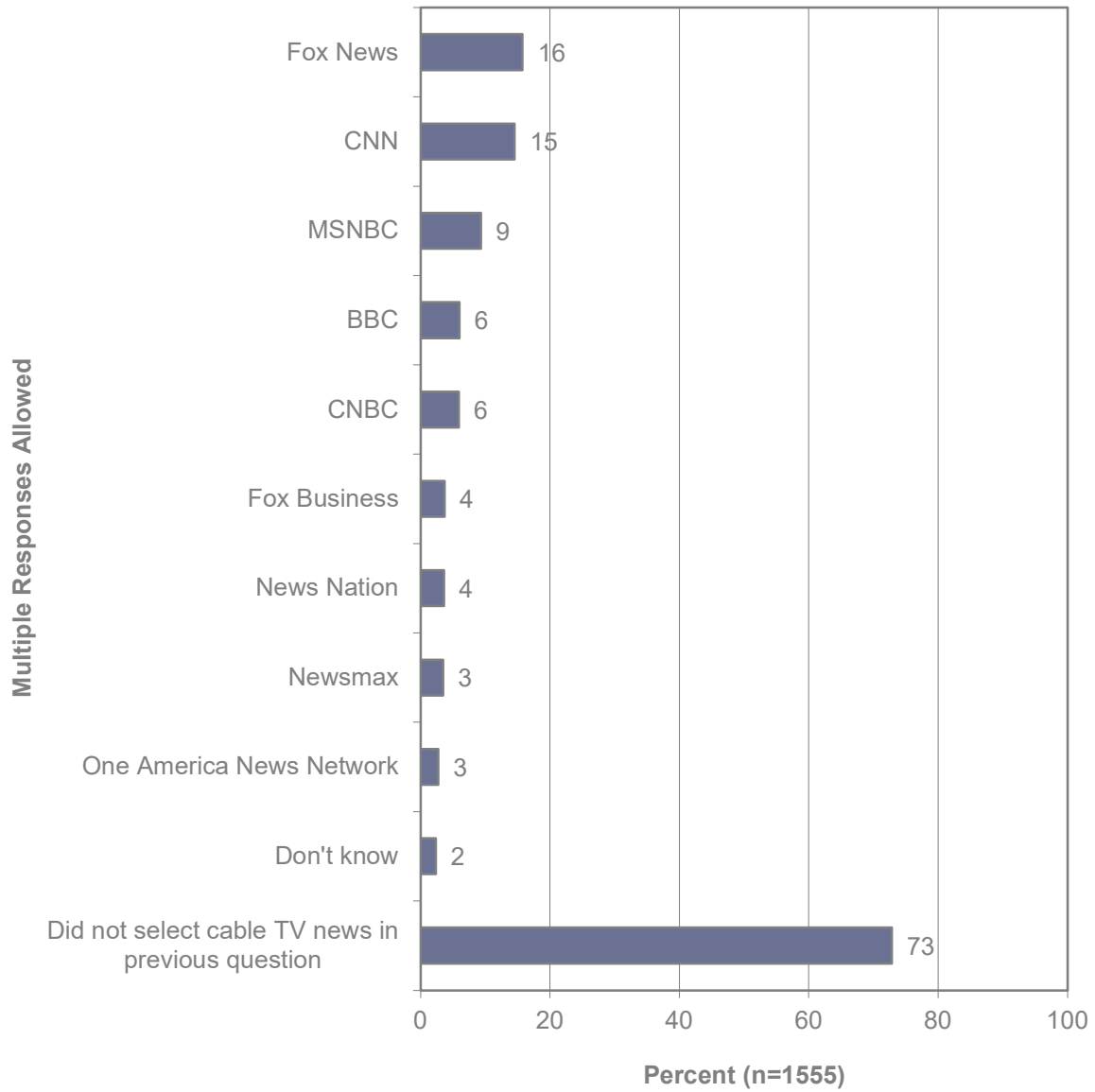


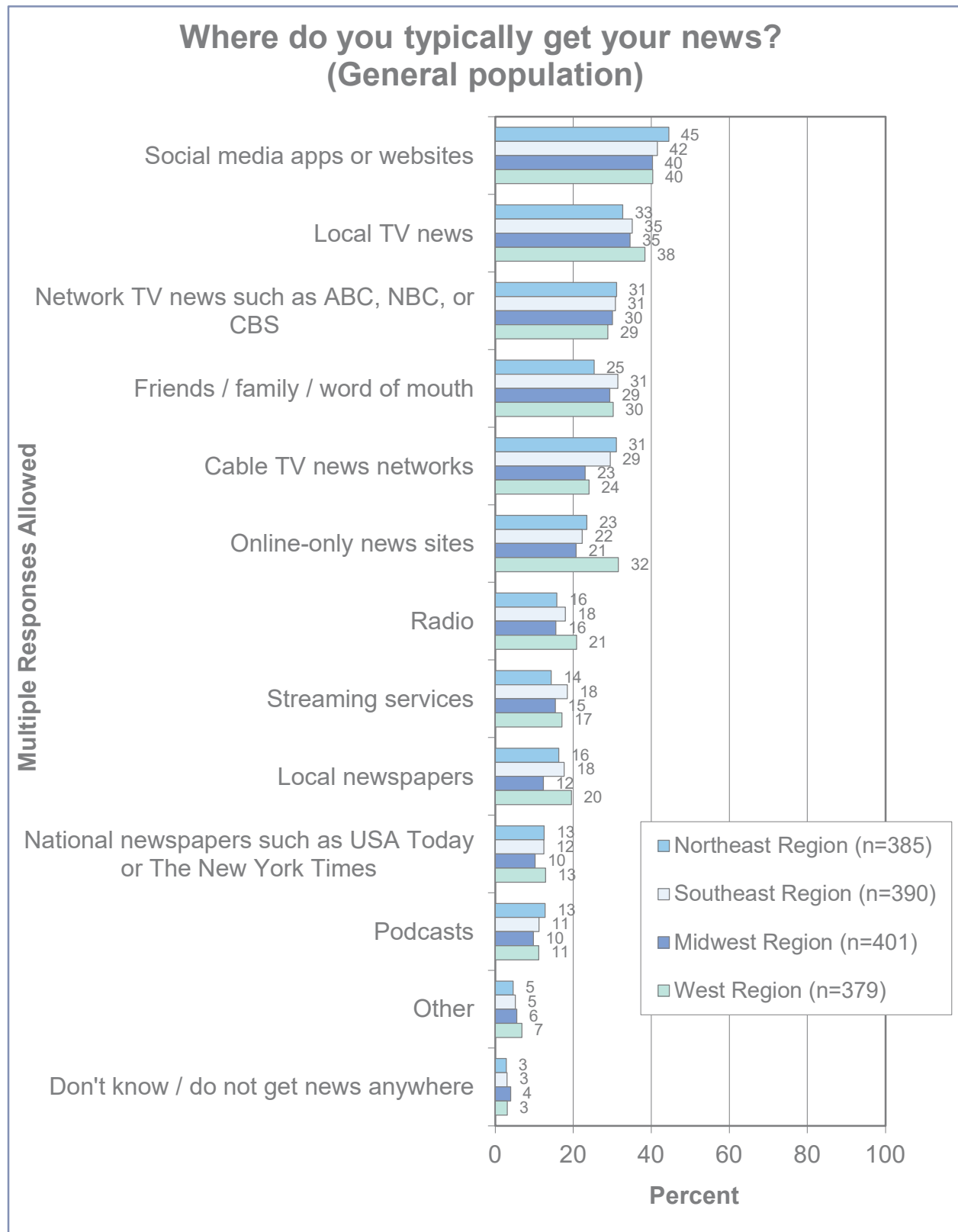
INFORMATION SOURCES AND HOW THEY AFFECT OPINIONS ON HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

Social media apps and local TV news are the most common sources of news in the United States. Of those who get their news from major television networks, the top two sources of news are Fox News and CNN, running neck and neck for the top spot. Regional results follow the overall results; there are no consistent regional differences.



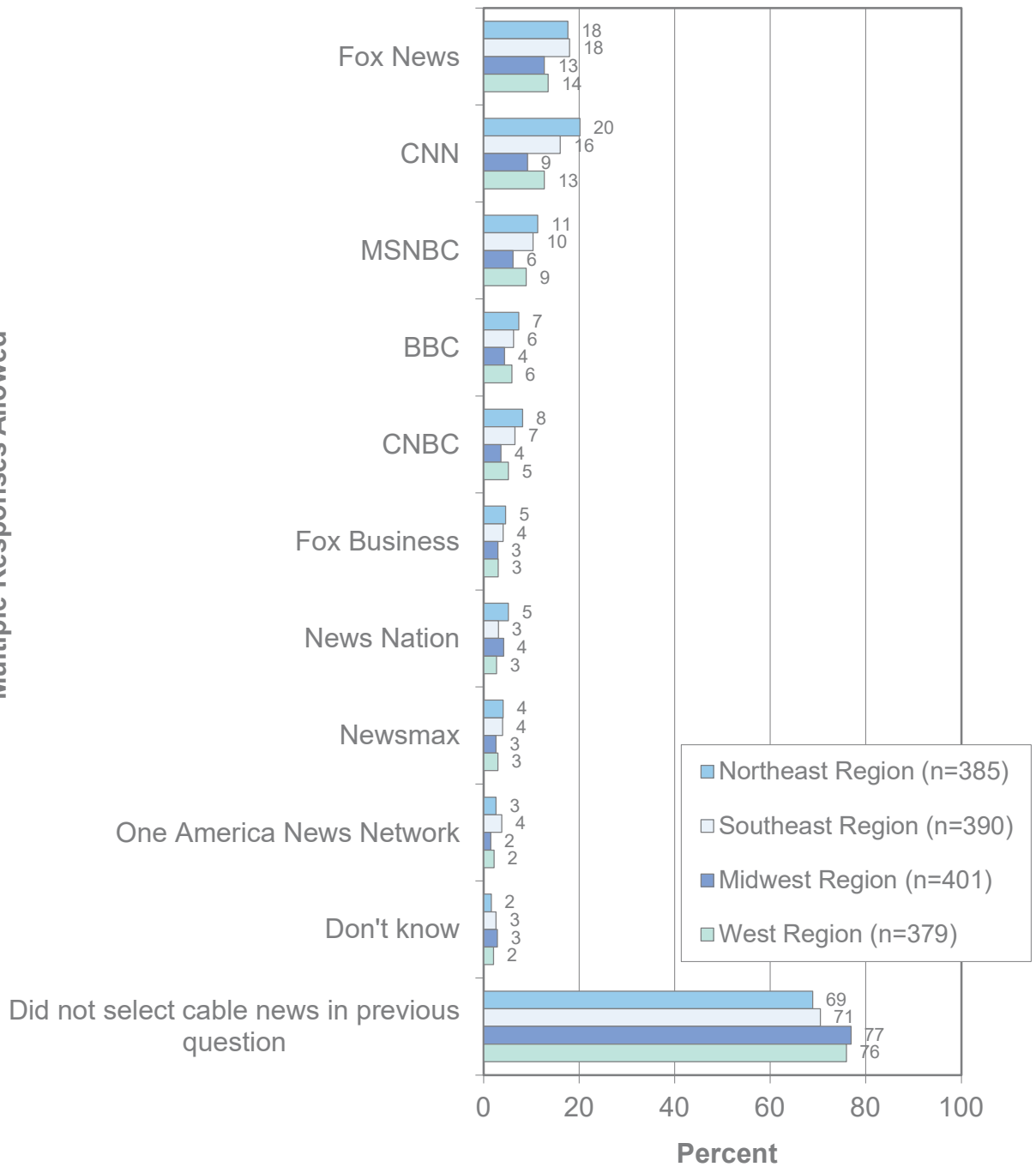
You indicated that you typically get your news from cable TV news networks. Specifically, which ones? (General population)



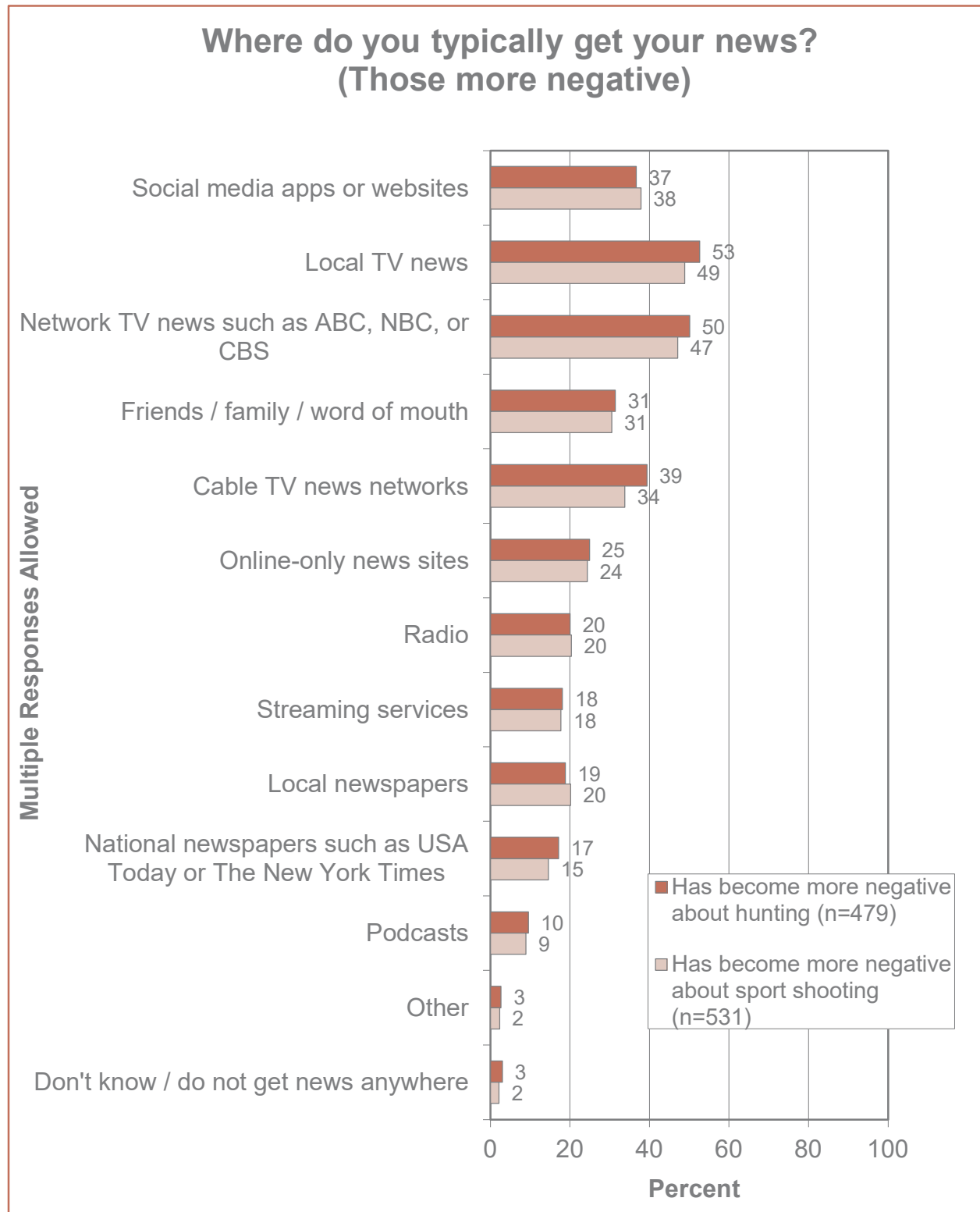


You indicated that you typically get your news from cable TV news networks. Specifically, which ones? (General population)

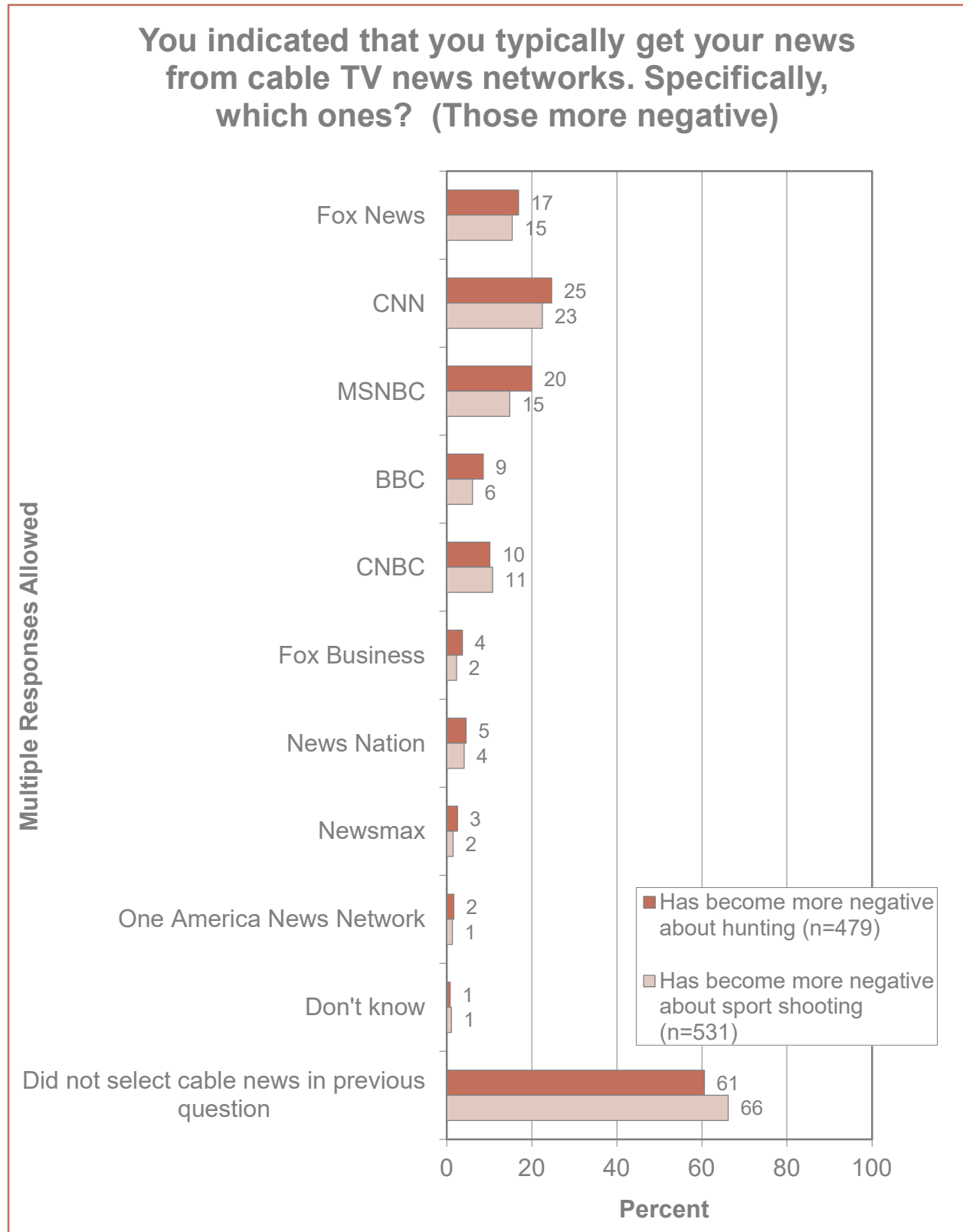
Multiple Responses Allowed



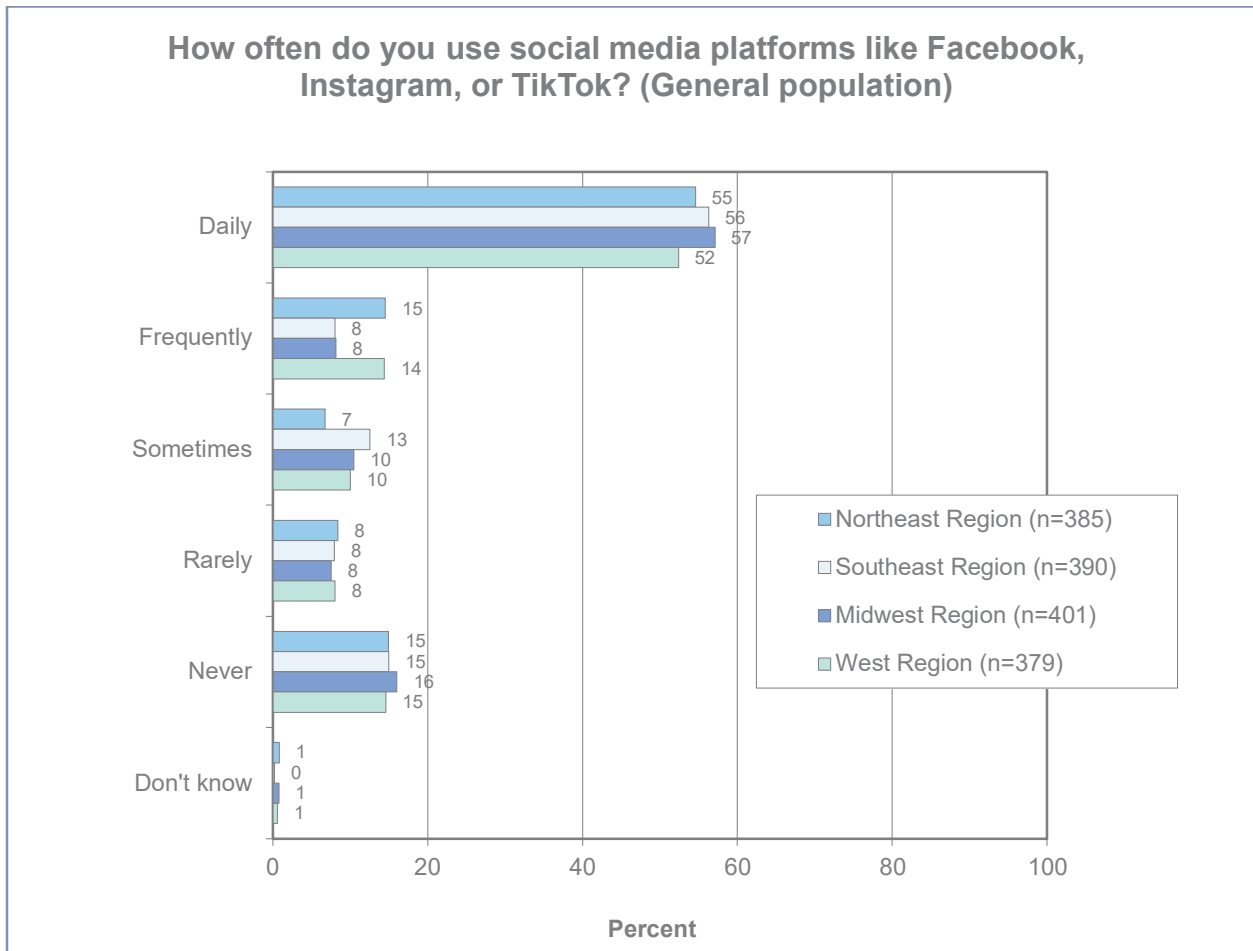
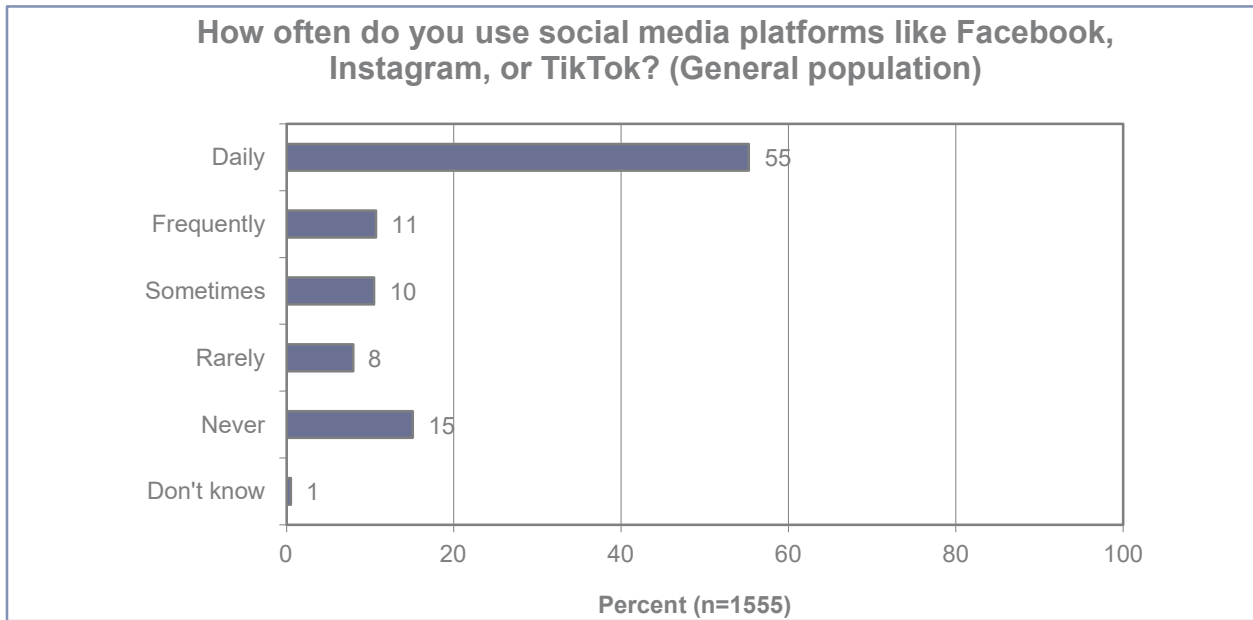
The most popular news sources for those with more negative opinions on hunting and target/sport shooting are local TV news and network TV news. They depend on social media apps or websites much less compared to the general population.



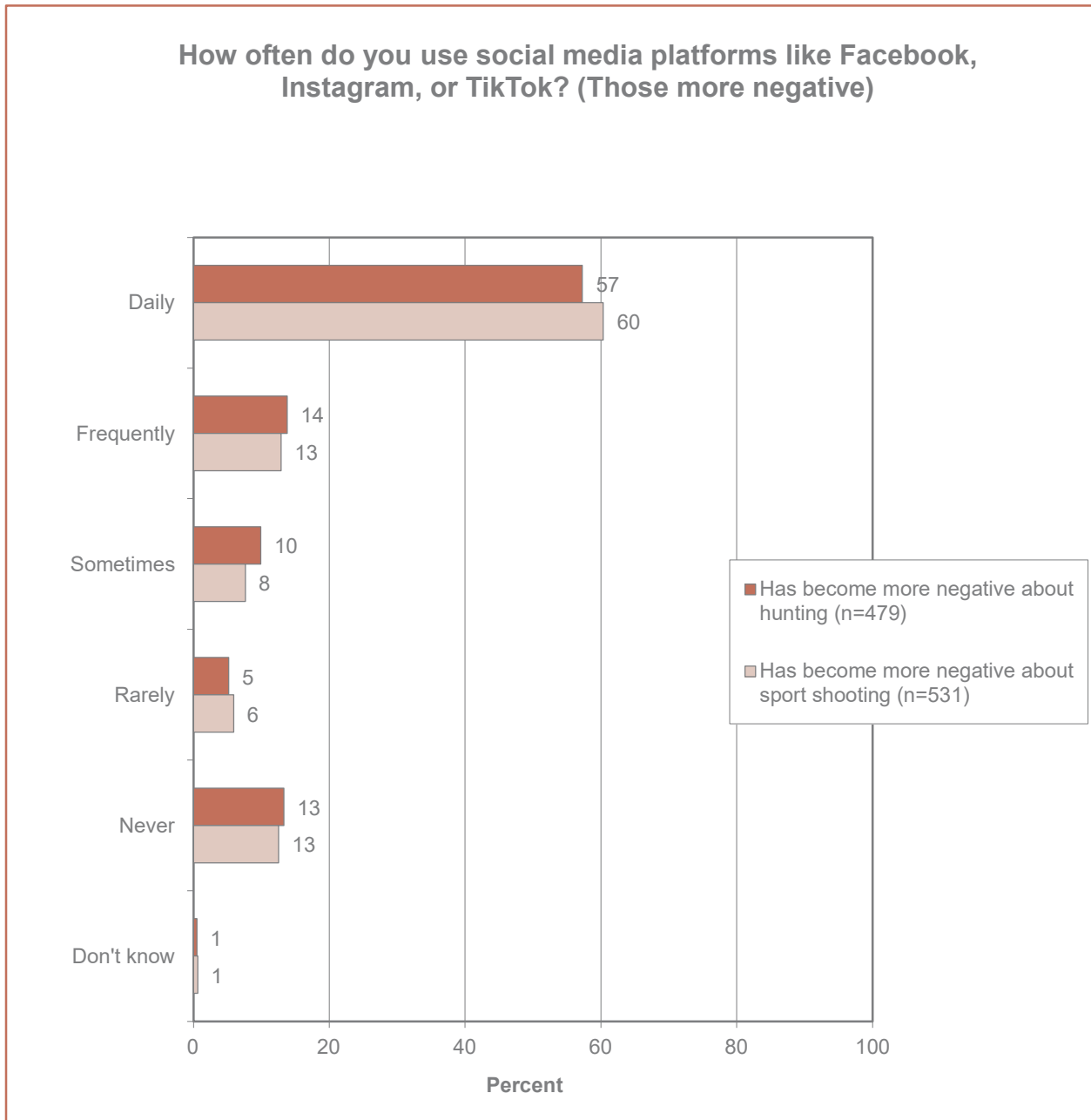
For those with more negative opinions on hunting and sport shooting, the top cable news sources are CNN and MSNBC.



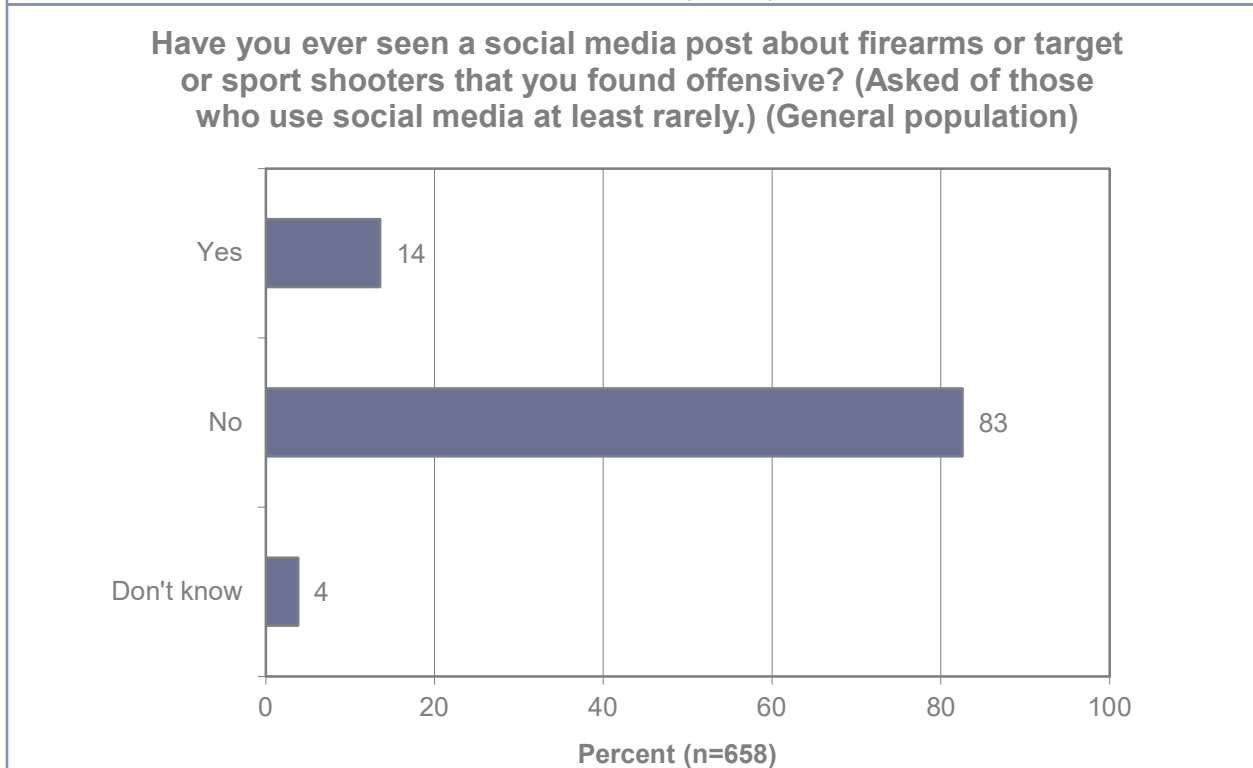
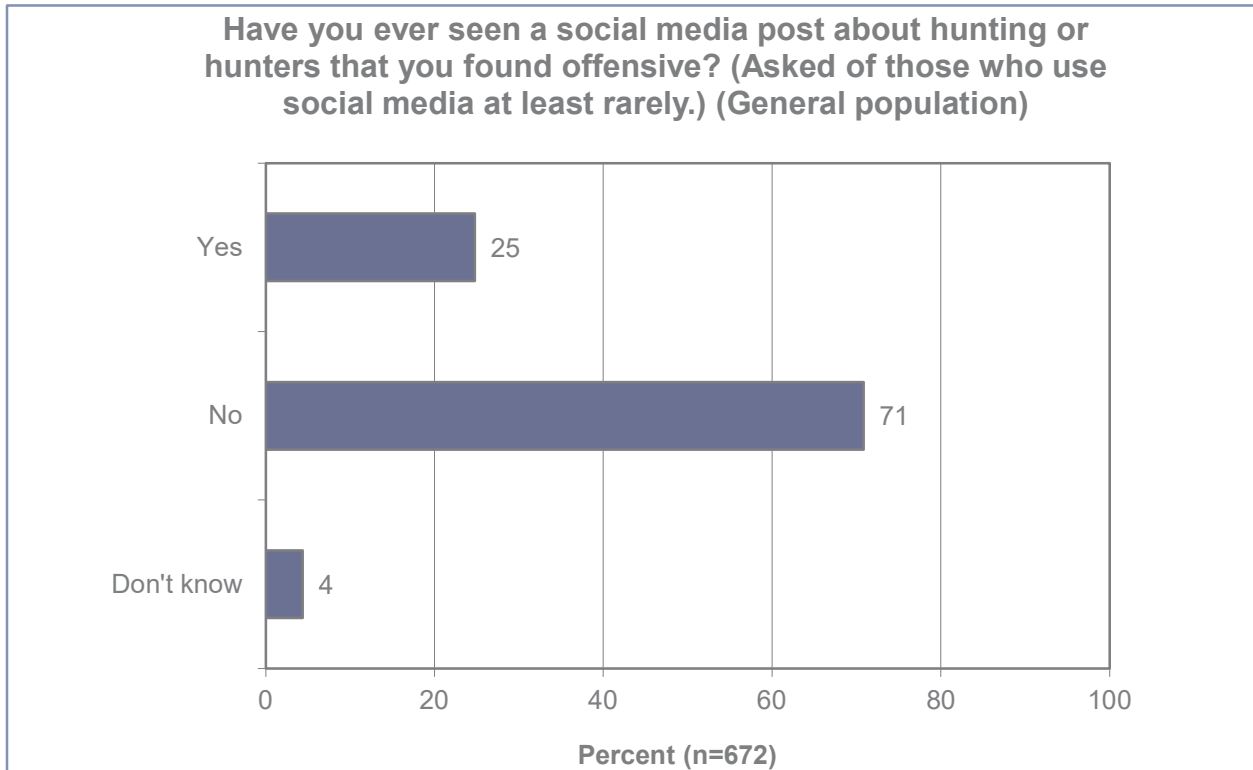
The majority of Americans report that they use social media platforms daily (55% do so). At the other end, 15% never use social media. The regions do not markedly differ from one another.



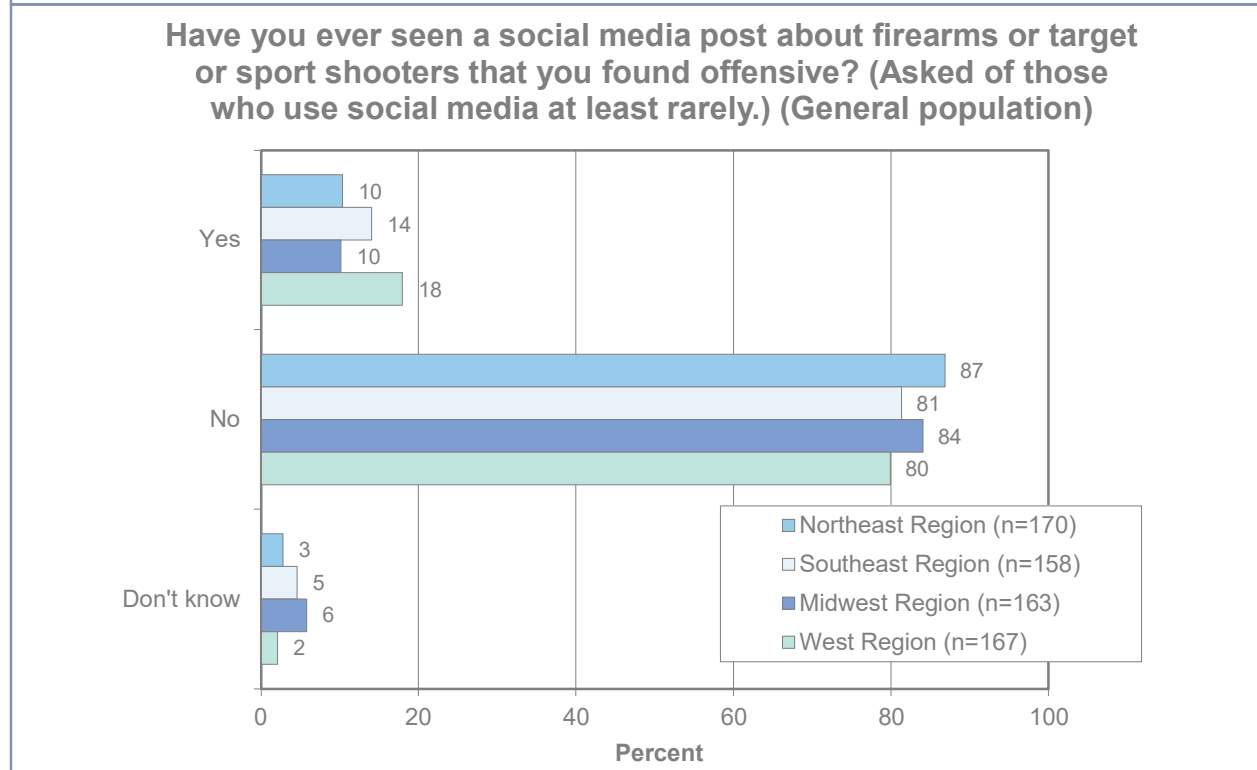
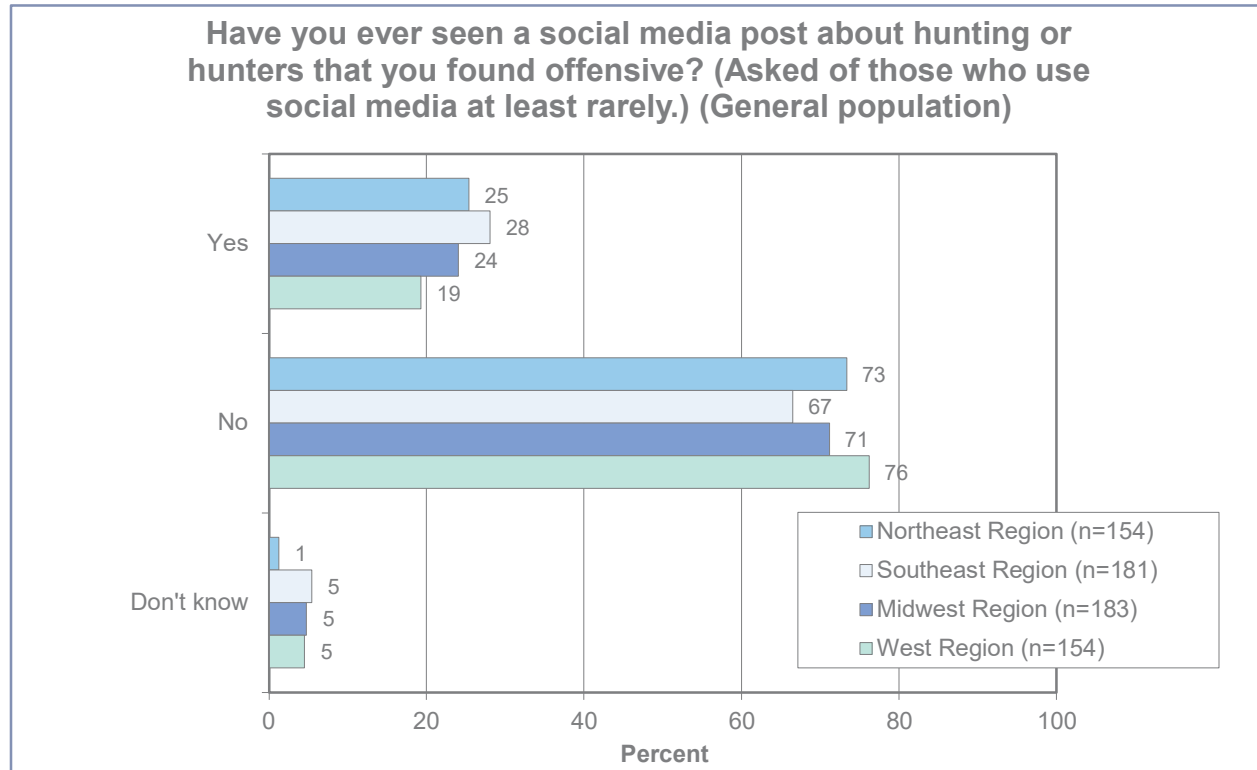
The results among those with more negative views of hunting and target/sport shooting are much like the results among the general population.



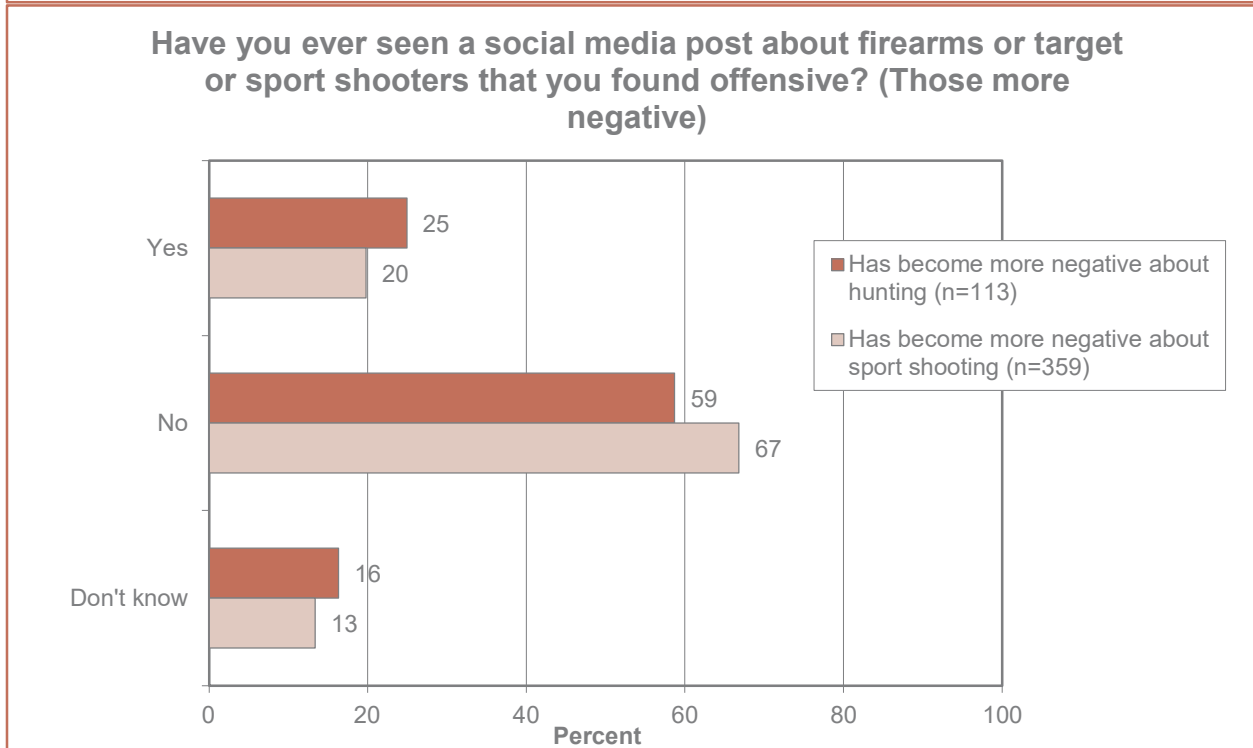
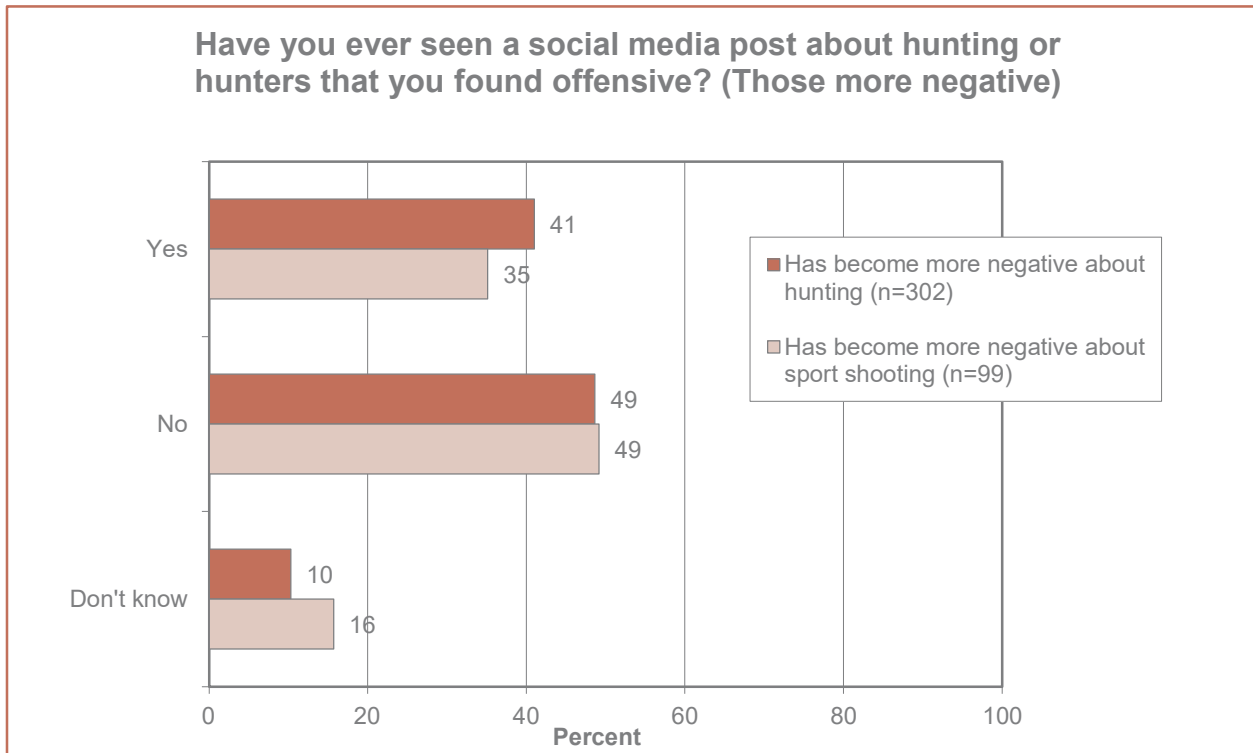
Of those who use social media, a quarter (25%) have seen a post about hunting or hunters that they found offensive. A smaller percentage (14%) have seen a post about firearms or target or sport shooters that they found offensive.



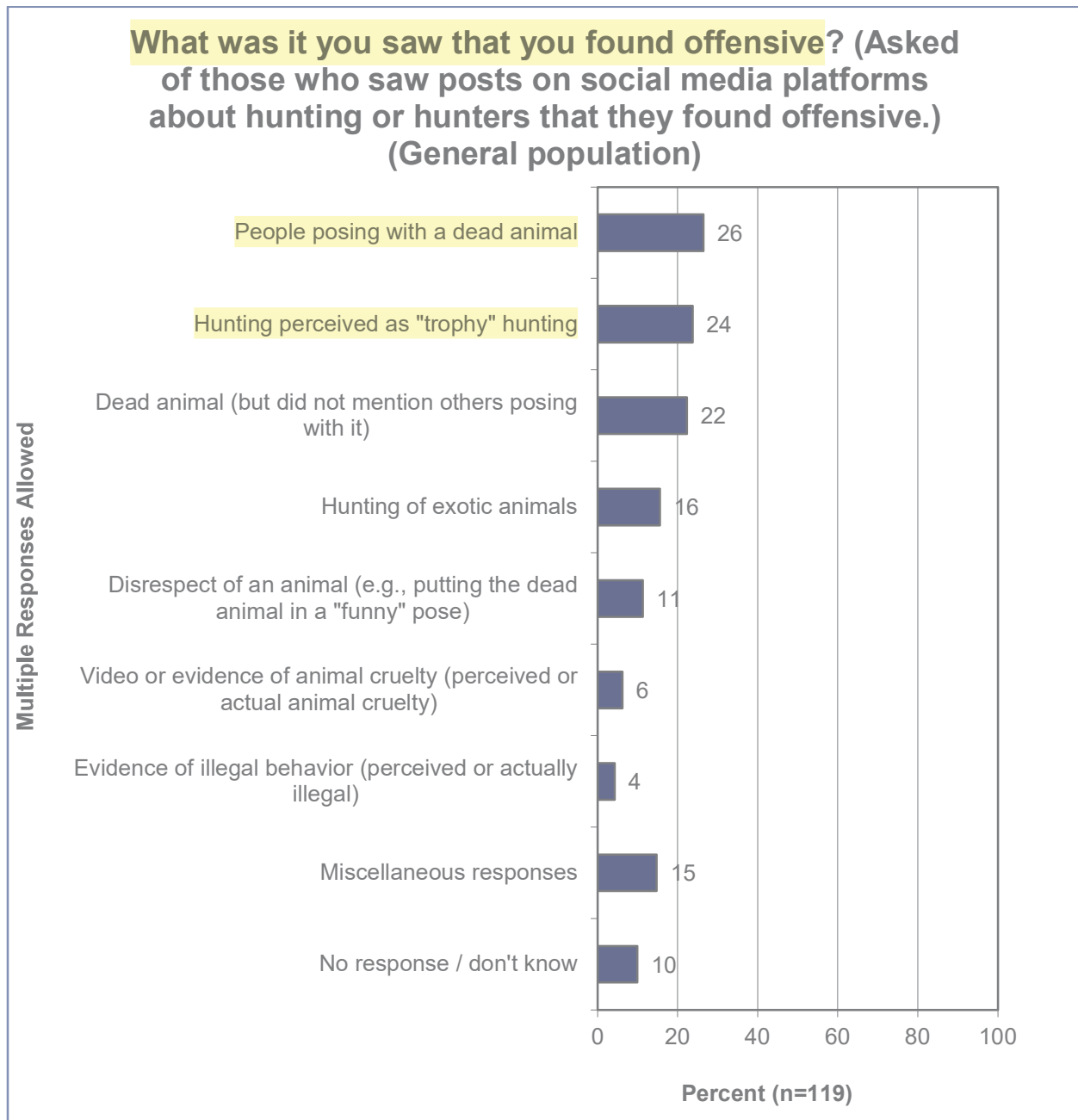
Southeast Region residents are the most likely to see a hunting-related social media post that they felt was offensive. West Region residents are the most likely to see the same regarding target/sport shooting.



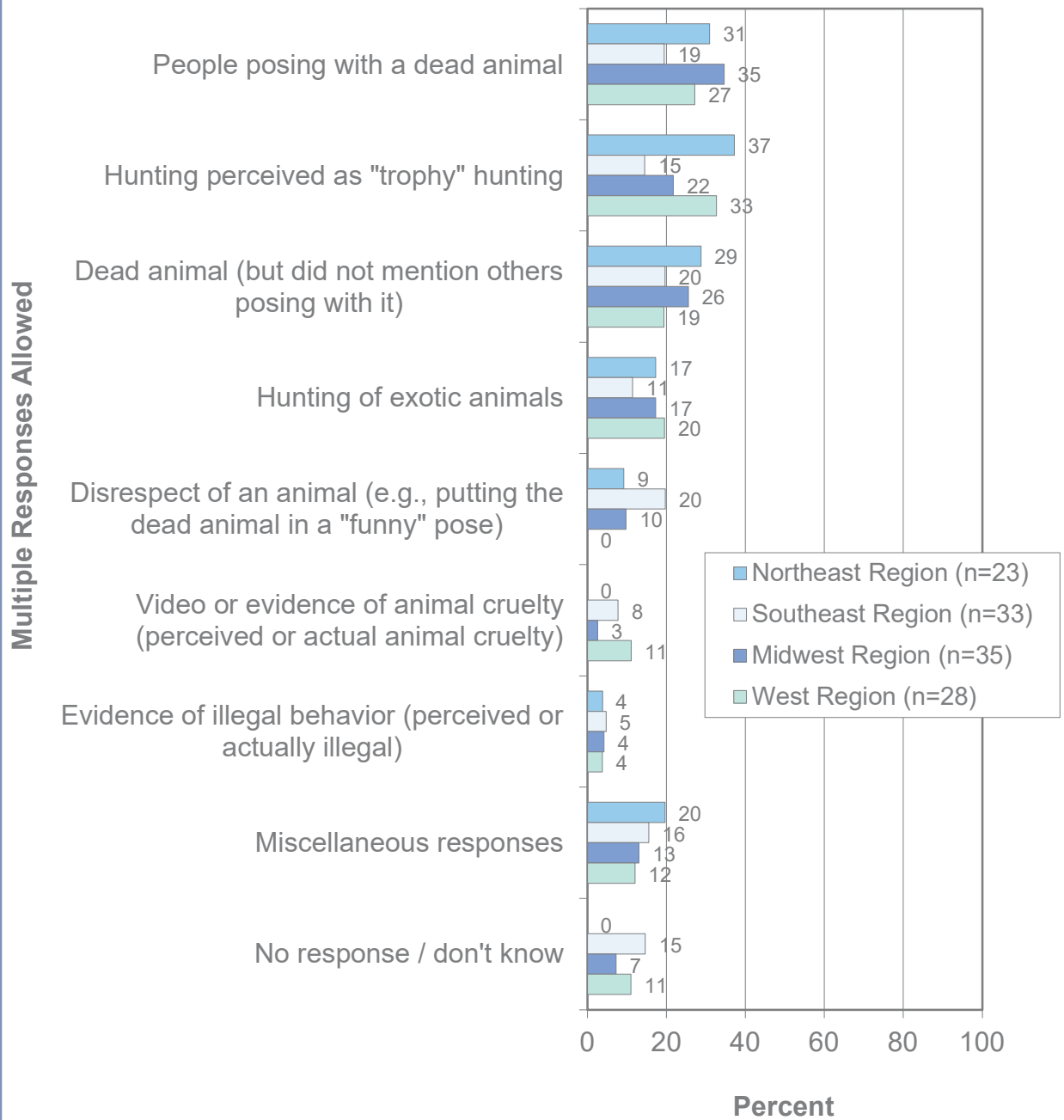
Those with more negative opinions of hunting and target/sport shooting are considerably more likely to have seen posts that they found offensive, compared to the general population.



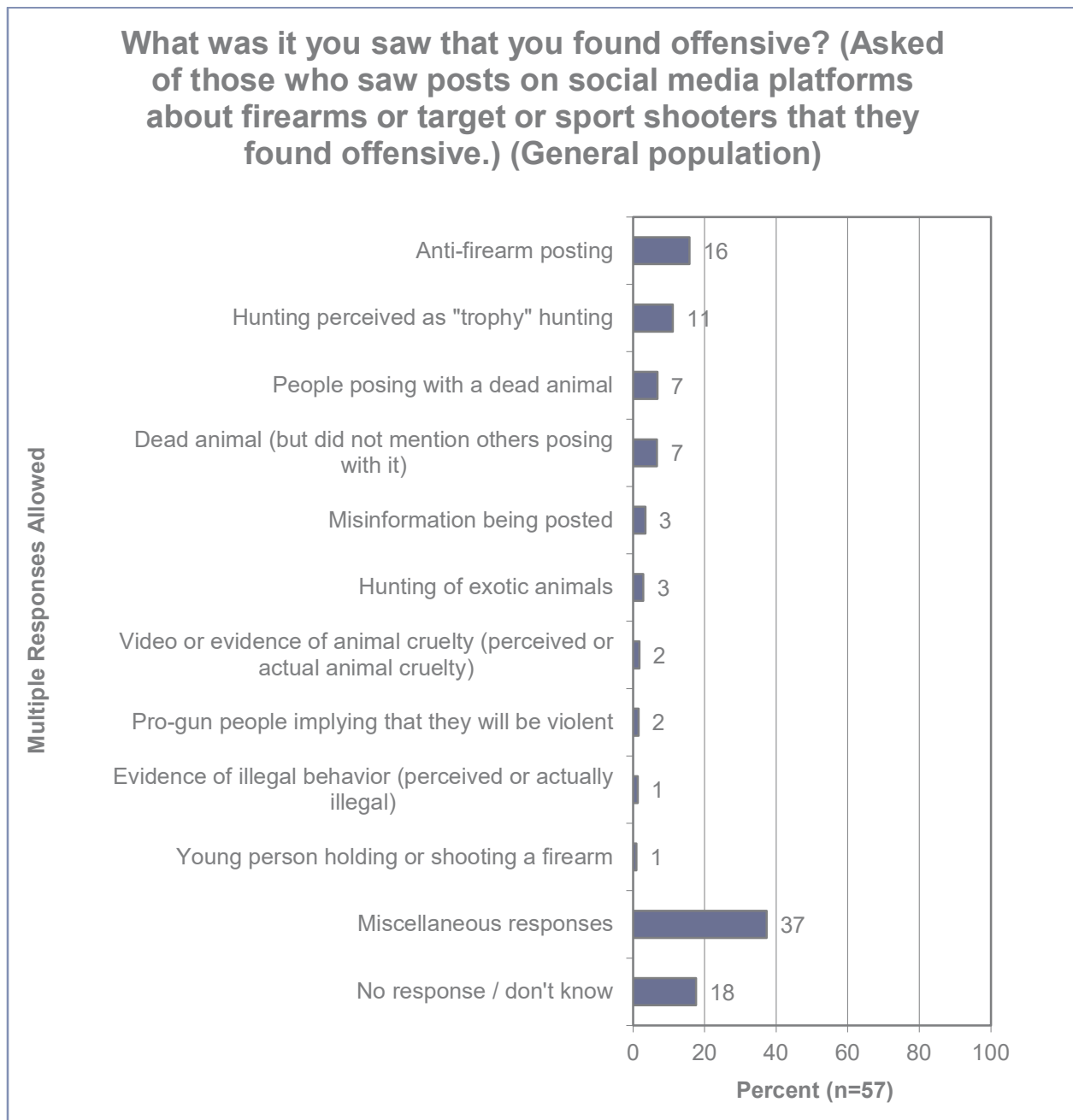
An open-ended question asked respondents who had seen social media posts that they found offensive about hunting to say what they had seen. The top category was photographs of hunters posing with dead animals, and the third category in the ranking was dead animals without mentioning the hunter posing with them (although some most likely meant this—in the categorization, it could not be determined if those who mentioned dead animals meant it to mean with the hunter posing next to it or not). The second ranked item was anything that suggested trophy hunting (as opposed to hunting for food, for instance). All three of those categories had more than 20% of the respondents who got the question naming it. The regional graph is also shown, but note that the sample sizes are small because the question was asked of only those who saw posts that they felt were offensive.



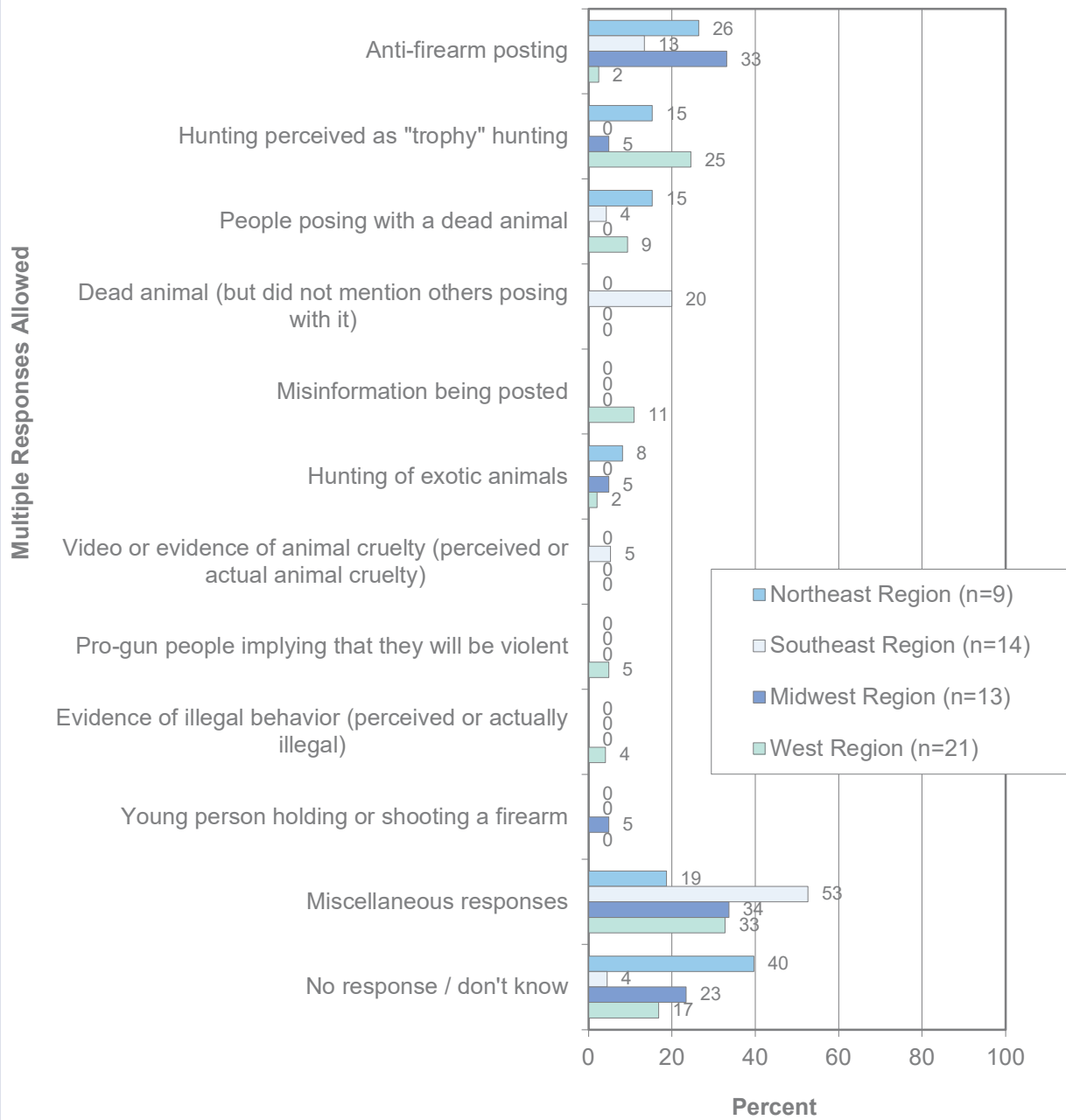
**What was it you saw that you found offensive?
(Asked of those who saw posts on social media
platforms about hunting or hunters that they
found offensive.) (General population)**



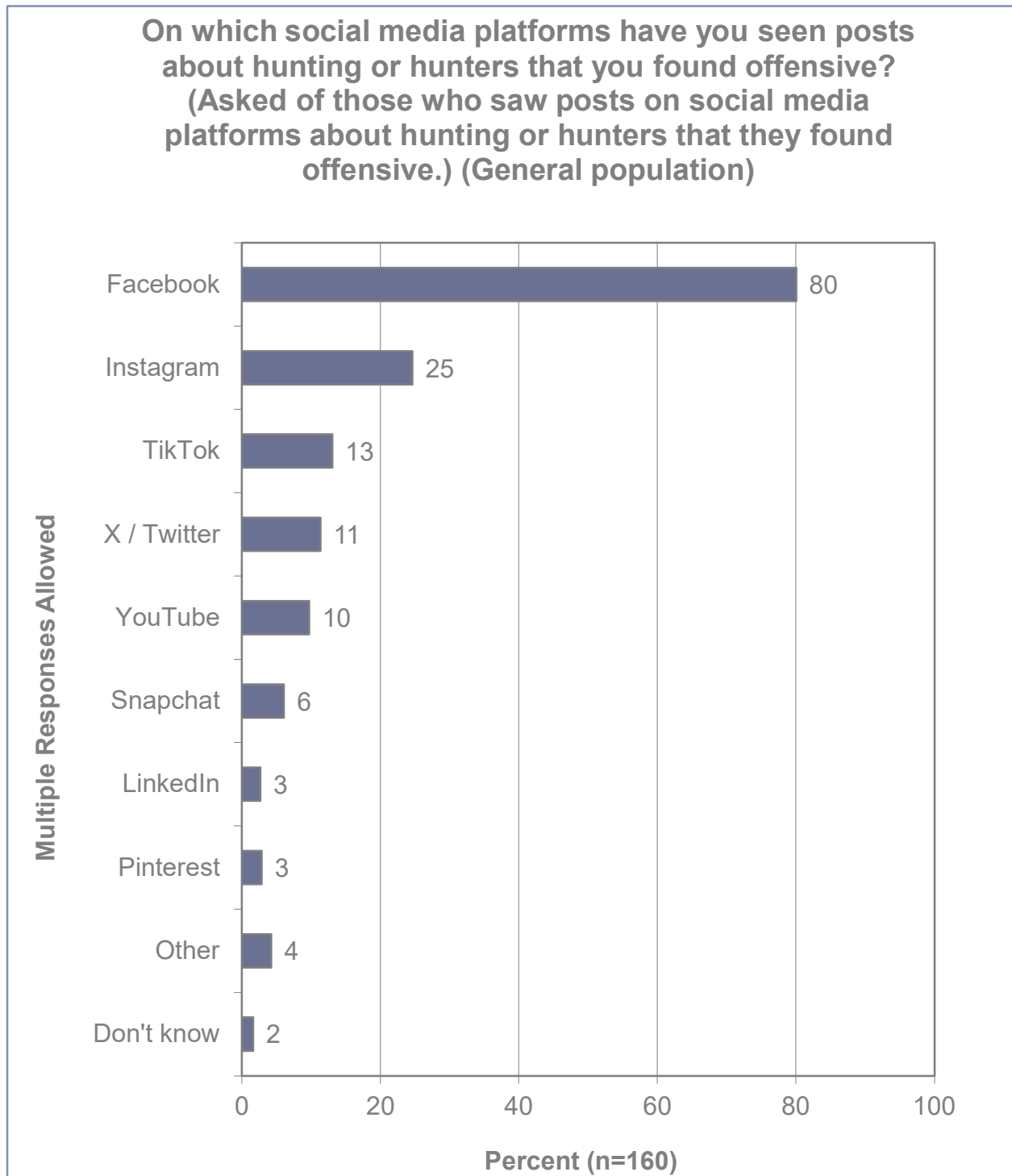
In the open-ended question regarding posts that were deemed offensive about firearms or target/sport shooting, the tone was somewhat different than the question about offensive hunting posts. Most of those who saw offensive hunting posts were not favorable toward hunting. However, the top offensive posts about firearms or target/sport shooting were anti-firearm posts. In other words, the offense was felt among those in favor of firearms and target/sport shooting. After that top category, however, were anti-firearm/anti-hunting categories—trophy hunting, hunters posing with dead animals, or dead animals in general. These latter categories show that many people conflate sport shooting with hunting. The regional graph is shown; it too has small sample sizes.



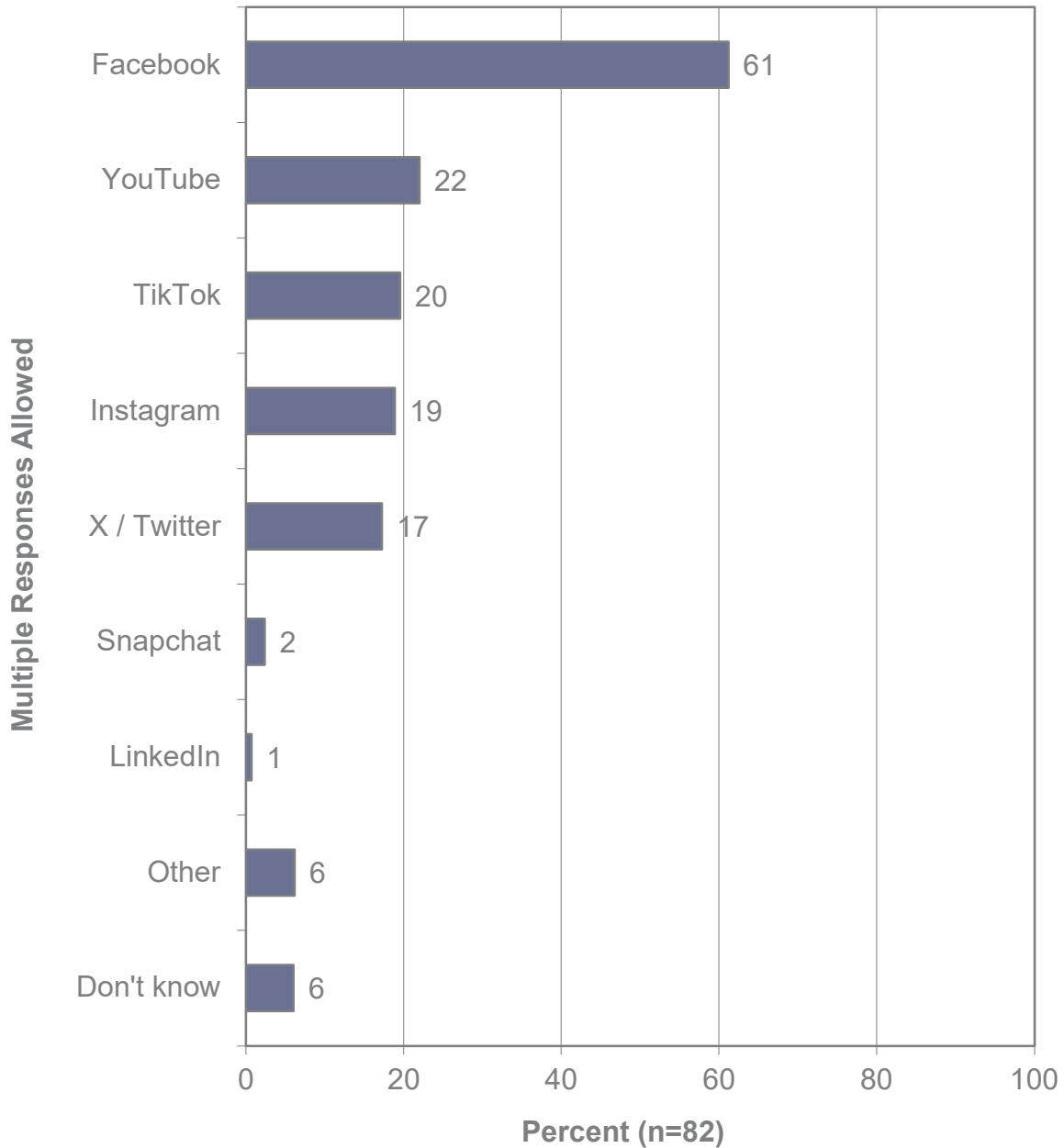
**What was it you saw that you found offensive?
 (Asked of those who saw posts on social media
 platforms about firearms or target or sport
 shooters that they found offensive.)
 (General population)**



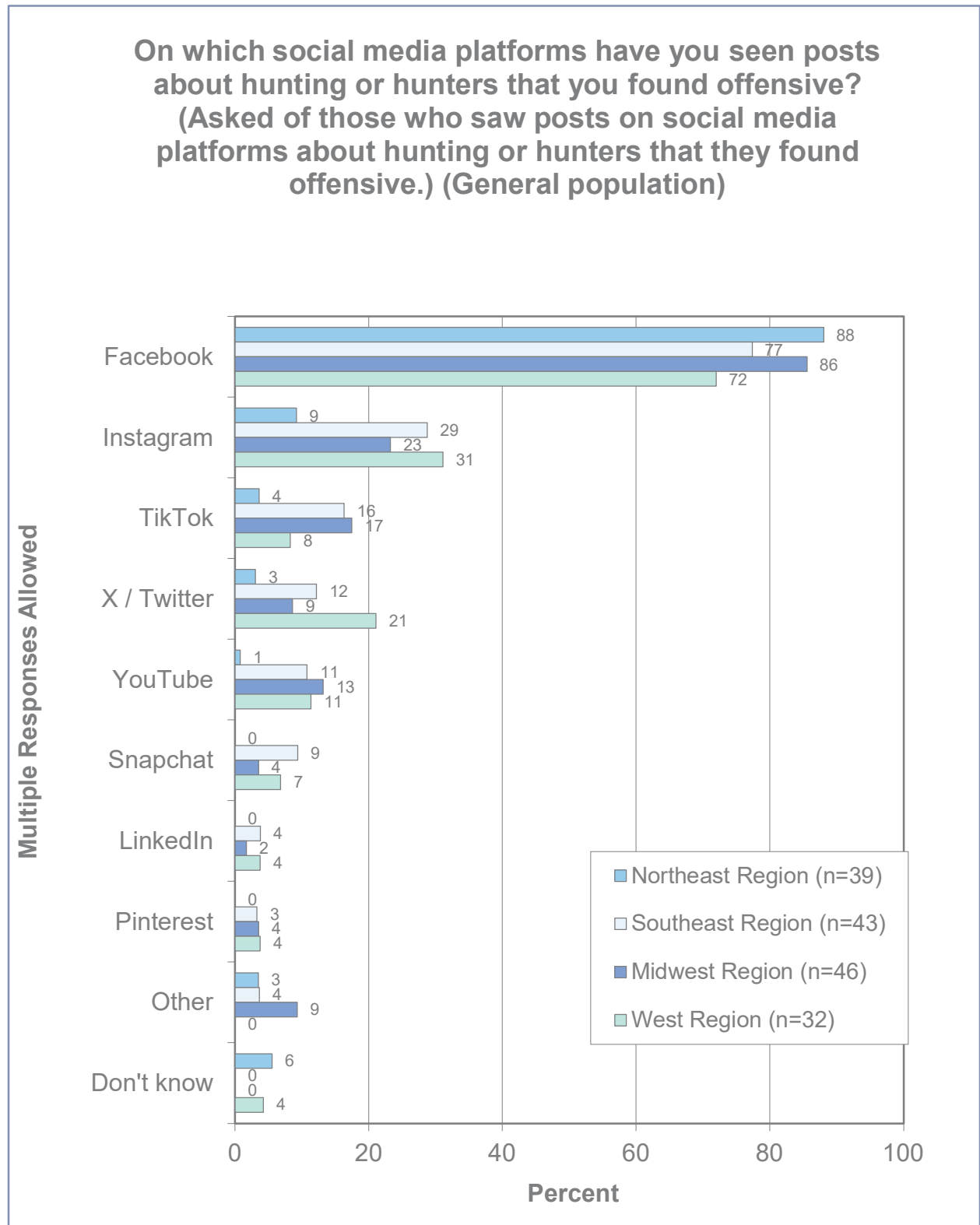
Facebook is by far the most commonly named source of offensive posts, followed by Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, X/Twitter, and YouTube in a second tier. Note that this does not necessarily mean that Facebook more commonly has such posts compared to the other social media platforms, as Facebook is simply used by more people than are the other platforms. The hunting-related graph is on this page; the shooting-related graph is on the next page.



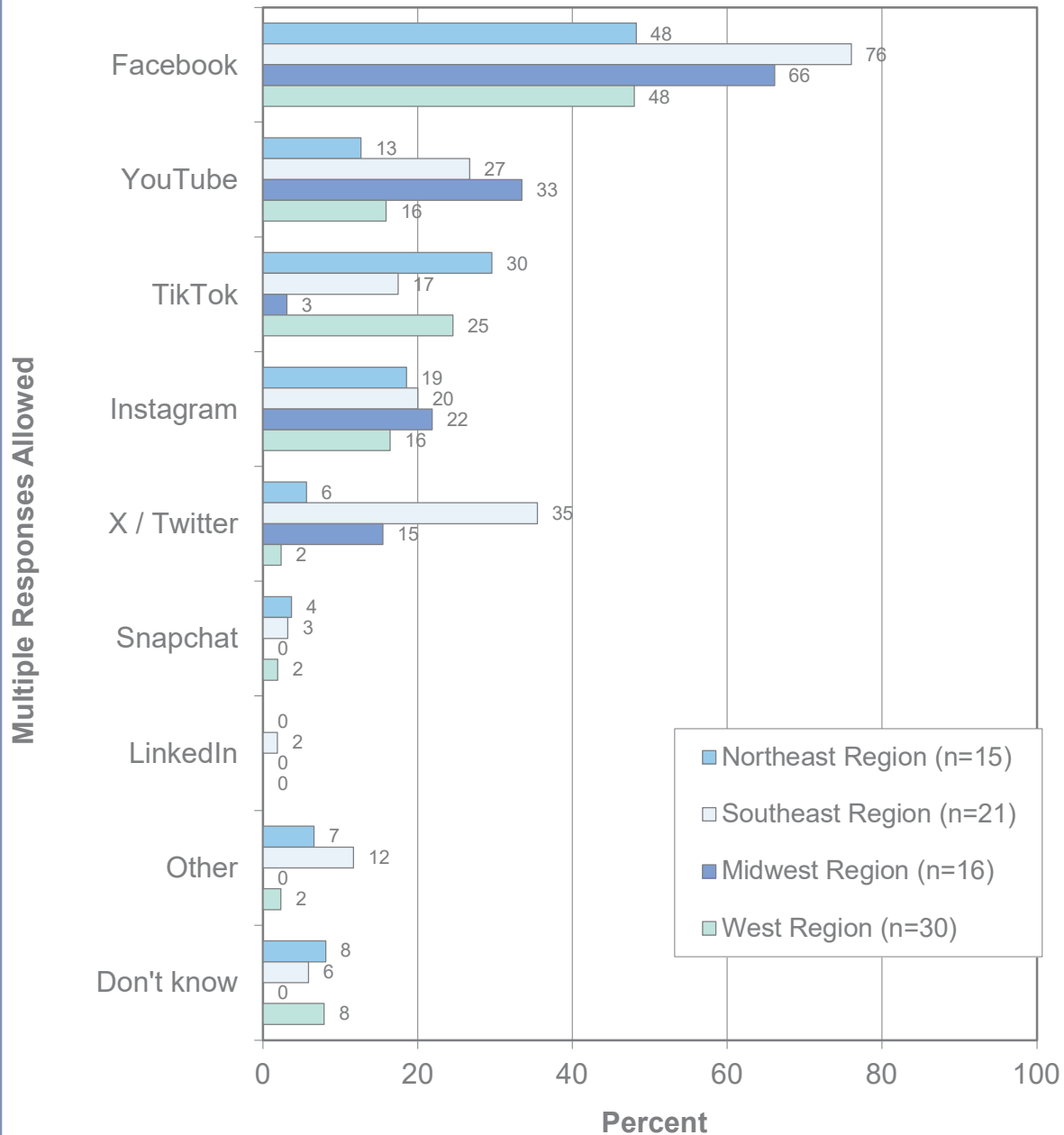
On which social media platforms have you seen posts about firearms or target or sport shooters that you found offensive? (Asked of those who saw posts on social media platforms about firearms or target or sport shooters that they found offensive.) (General population)



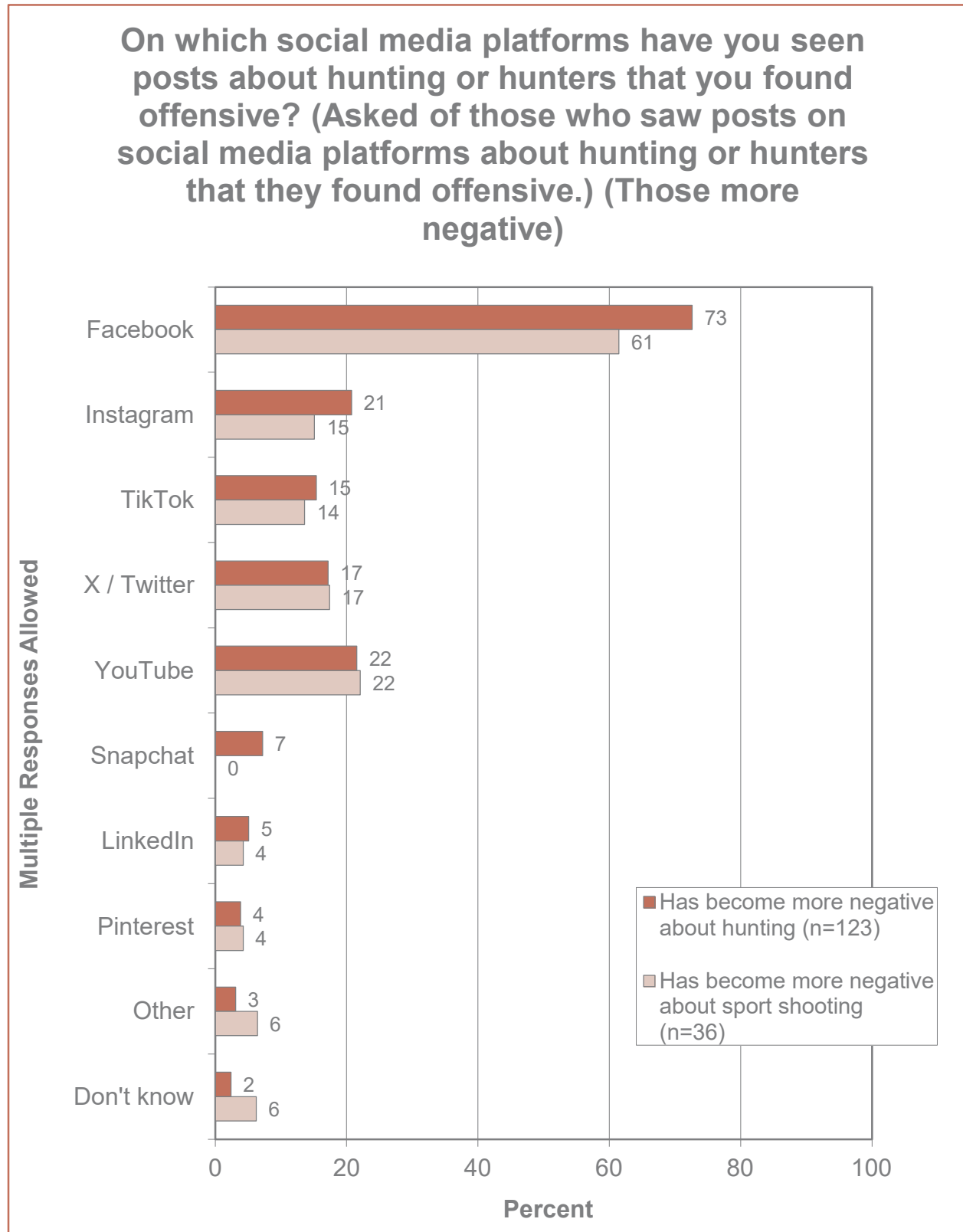
The regions do not have robust sample sizes because the question was a follow-up that asked only those who saw things that they found offensive; nonetheless, the results are shown below and on the next page.



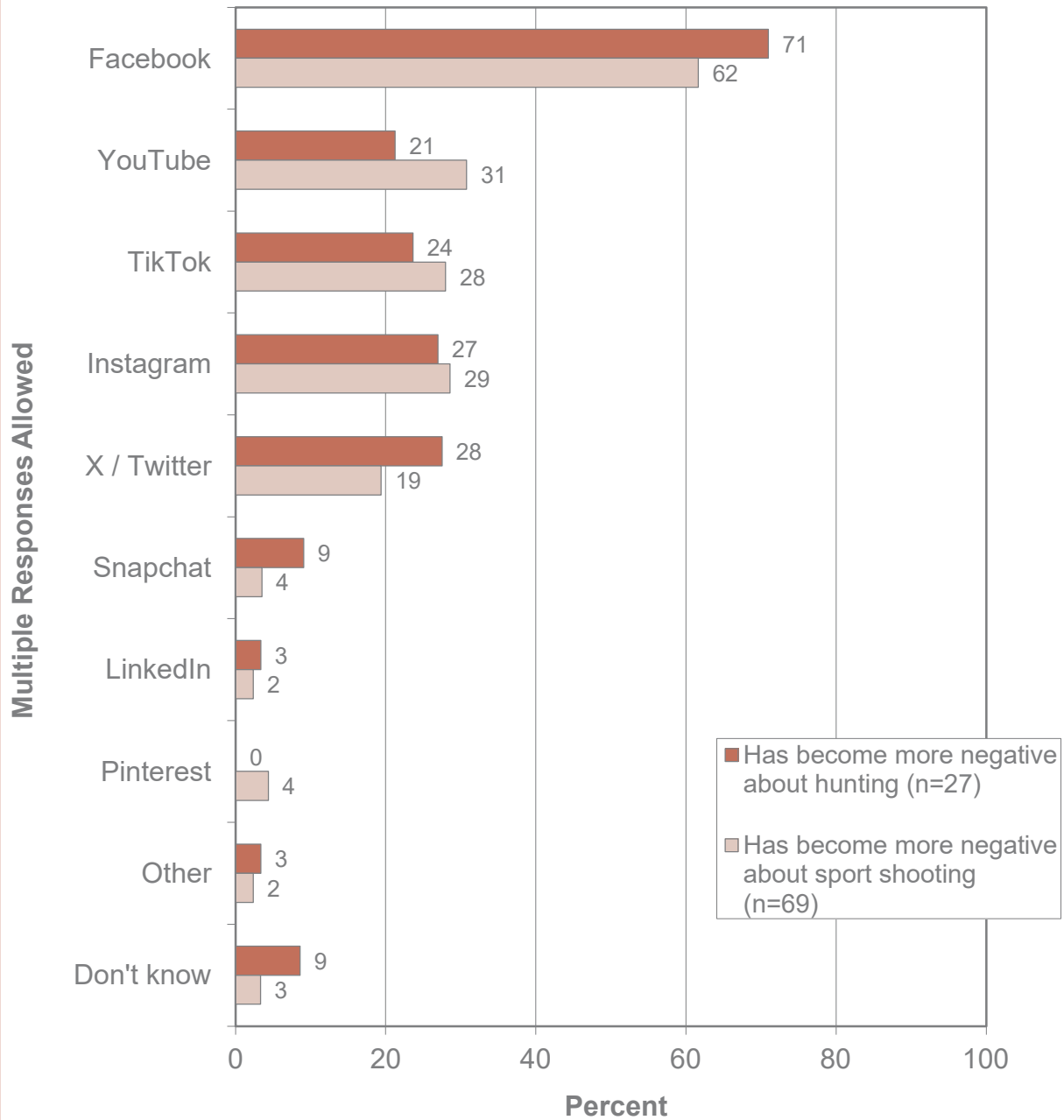
On which social media platforms have you seen posts about firearms or target or sport shooters that you found offensive? (Asked of those who saw posts on social media platforms about firearms or target or sport shooters that they found offensive.) (General population)



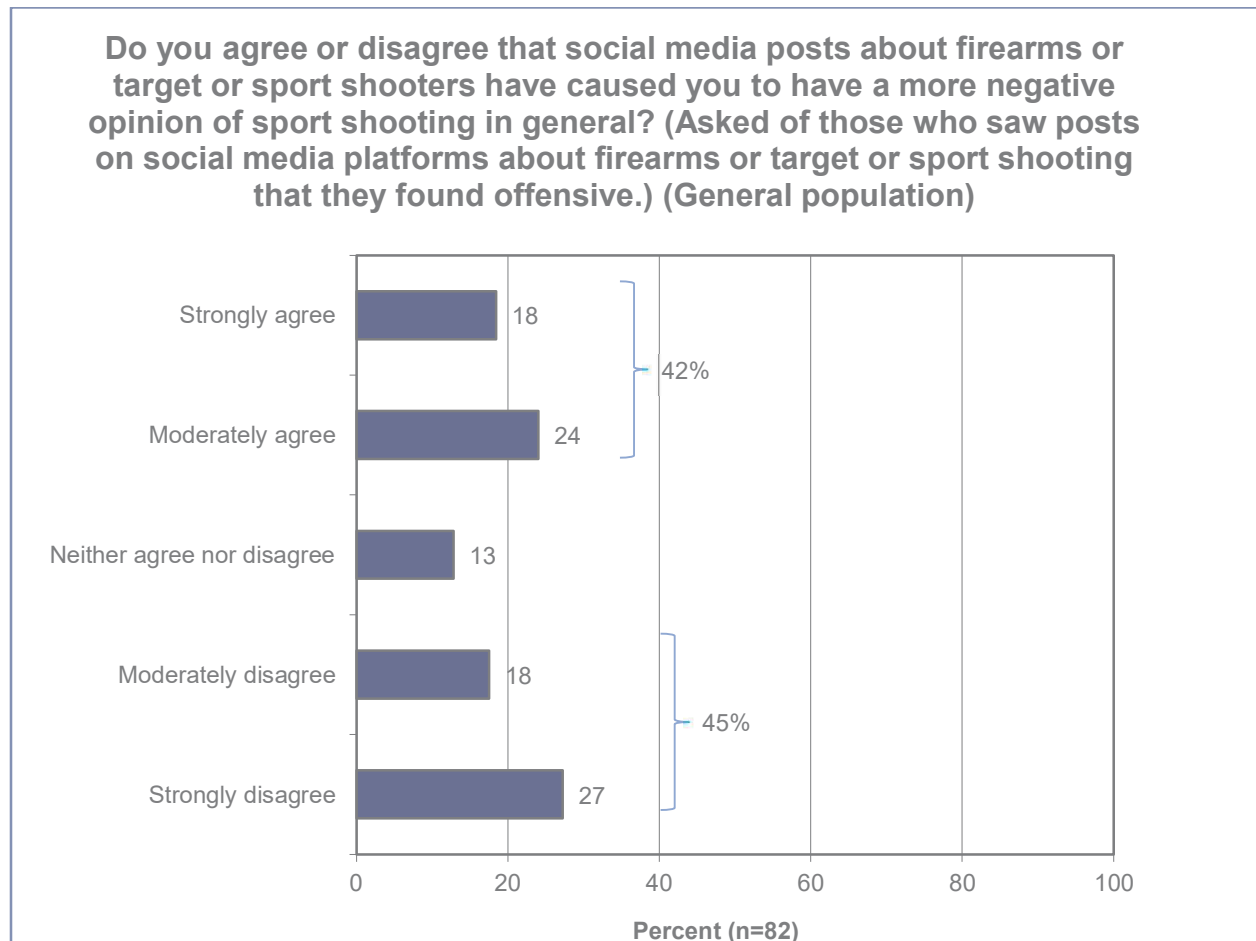
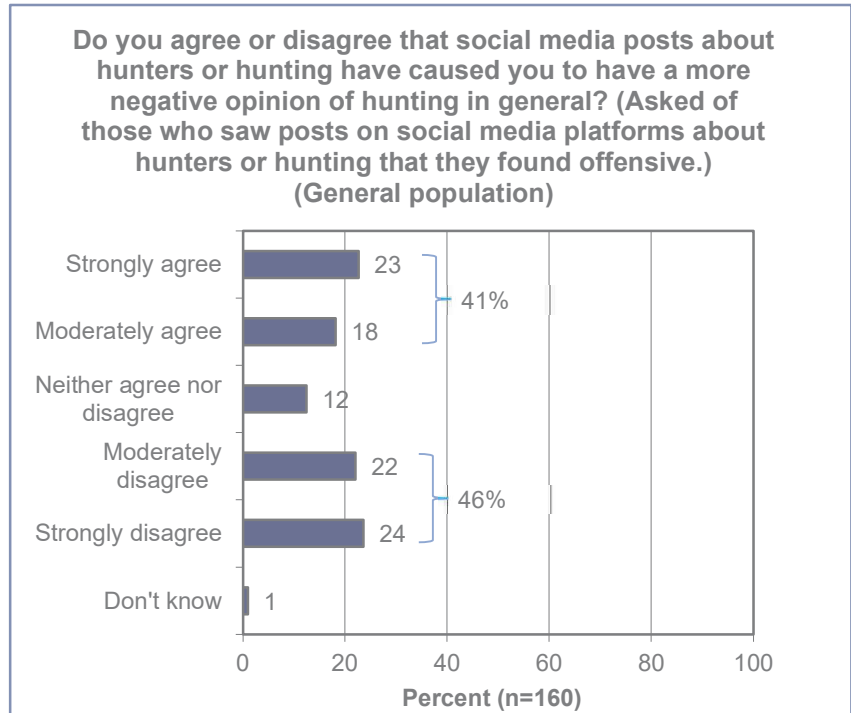
Facebook is the most common source of offensive posts on hunting and sport shooting among those whose opinions are more negative about hunting and sport shooting.



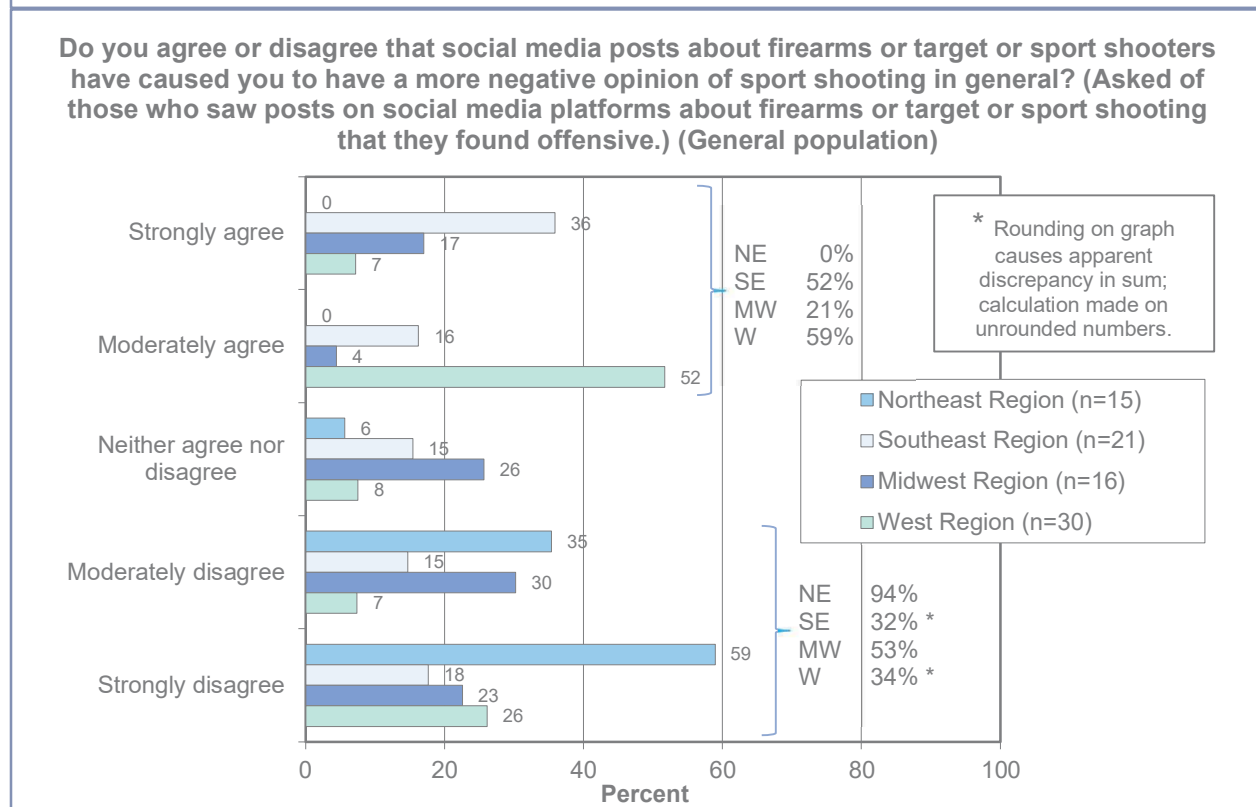
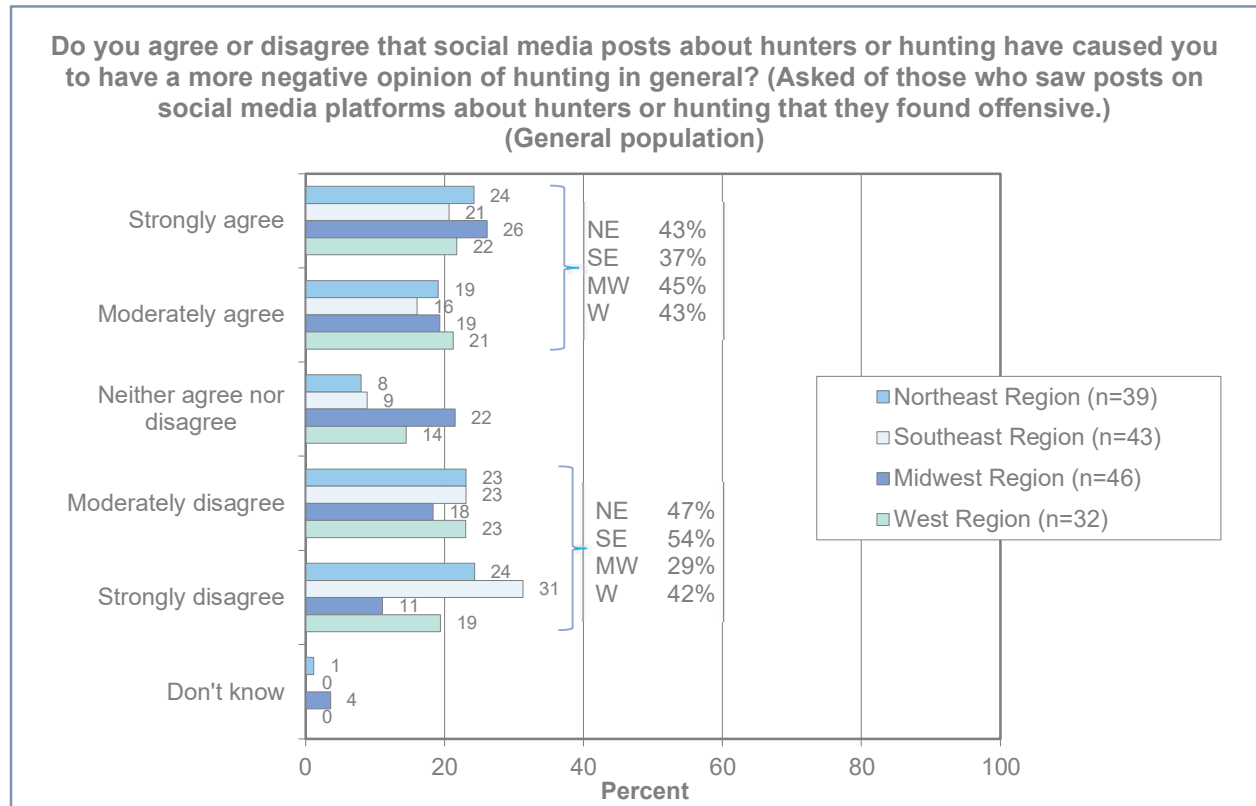
On which social media platforms have you seen posts about firearms/target/sport shooters that you found offensive? (Asked of those who saw posts about firearms or target or sport shooters that they found offensive.) (Those more negative)



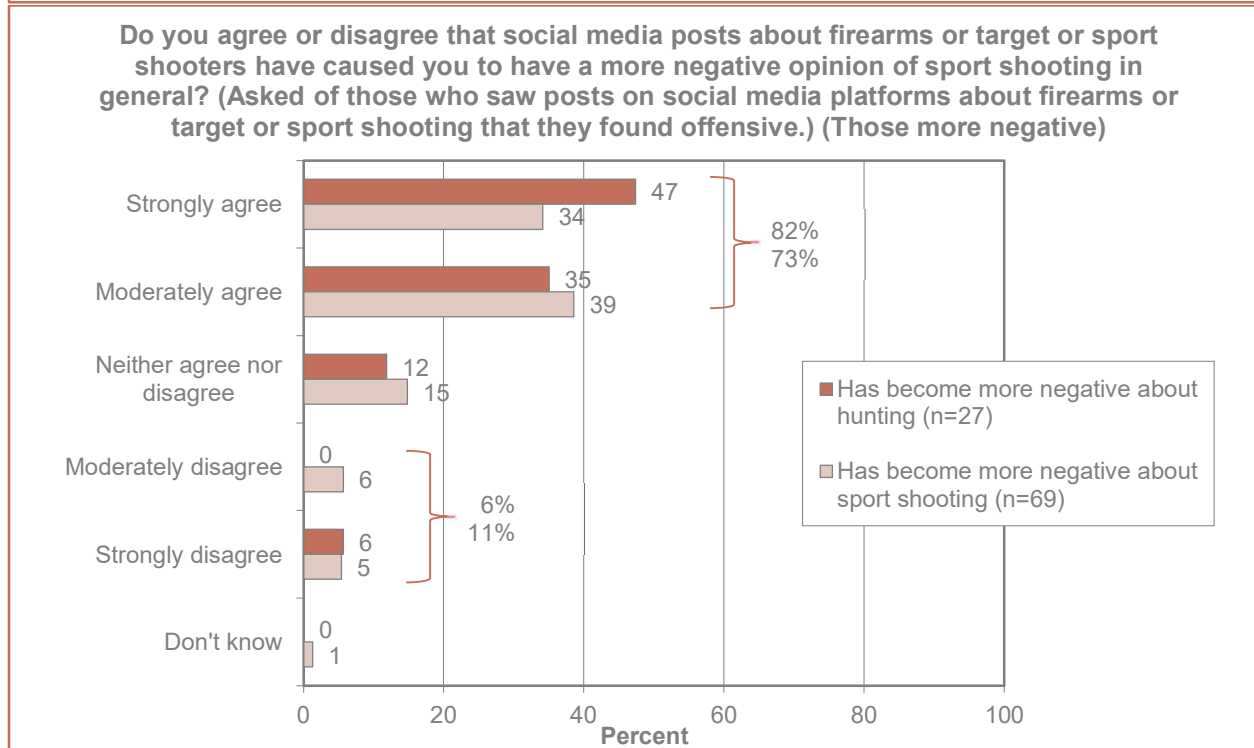
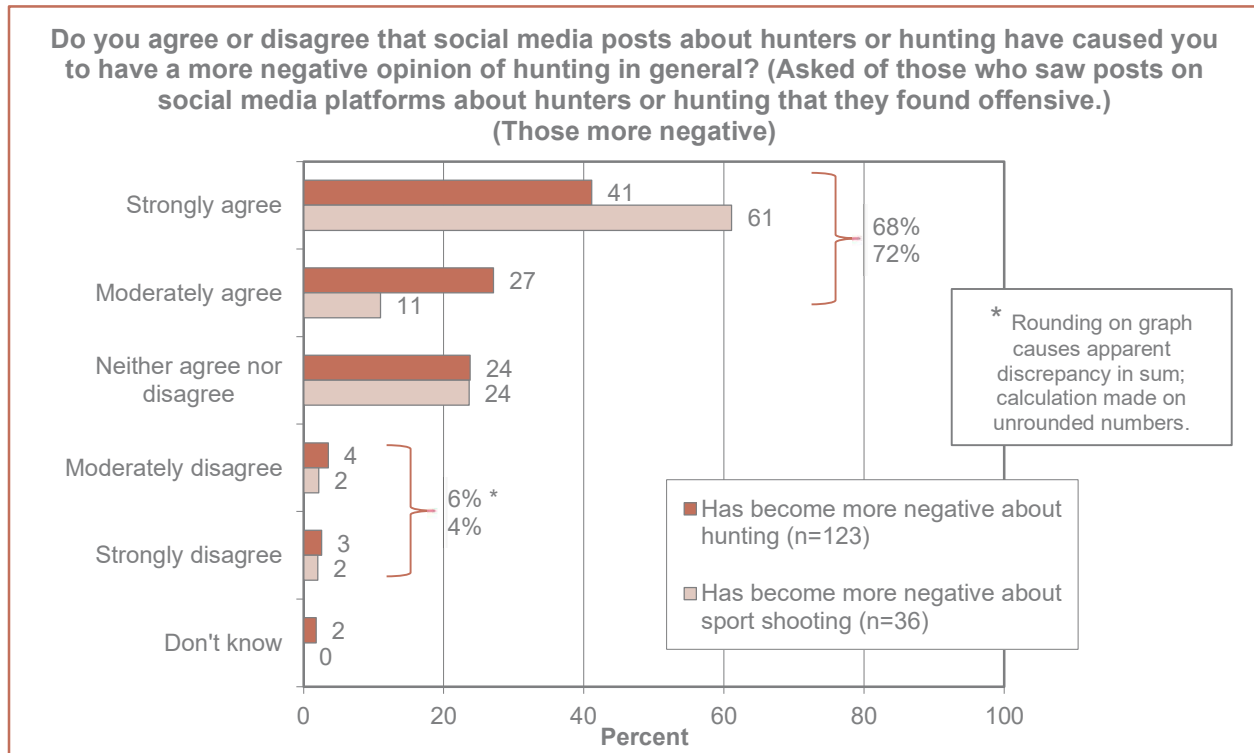
A little under half of those who saw posts that they regarded as offensive about hunting or hunters (41%) agreed that the posts prompted a more negative opinion of hunting in general. The parallel question about firearms or target/sport shooting found similar results: 42% agreed that the posts prompted a more negative opinion of sport shooting in general.



The regional crosstabulations are included, but note that they have low sample sizes because so few got these follow-up questions, particularly the question about target/sport shooting.

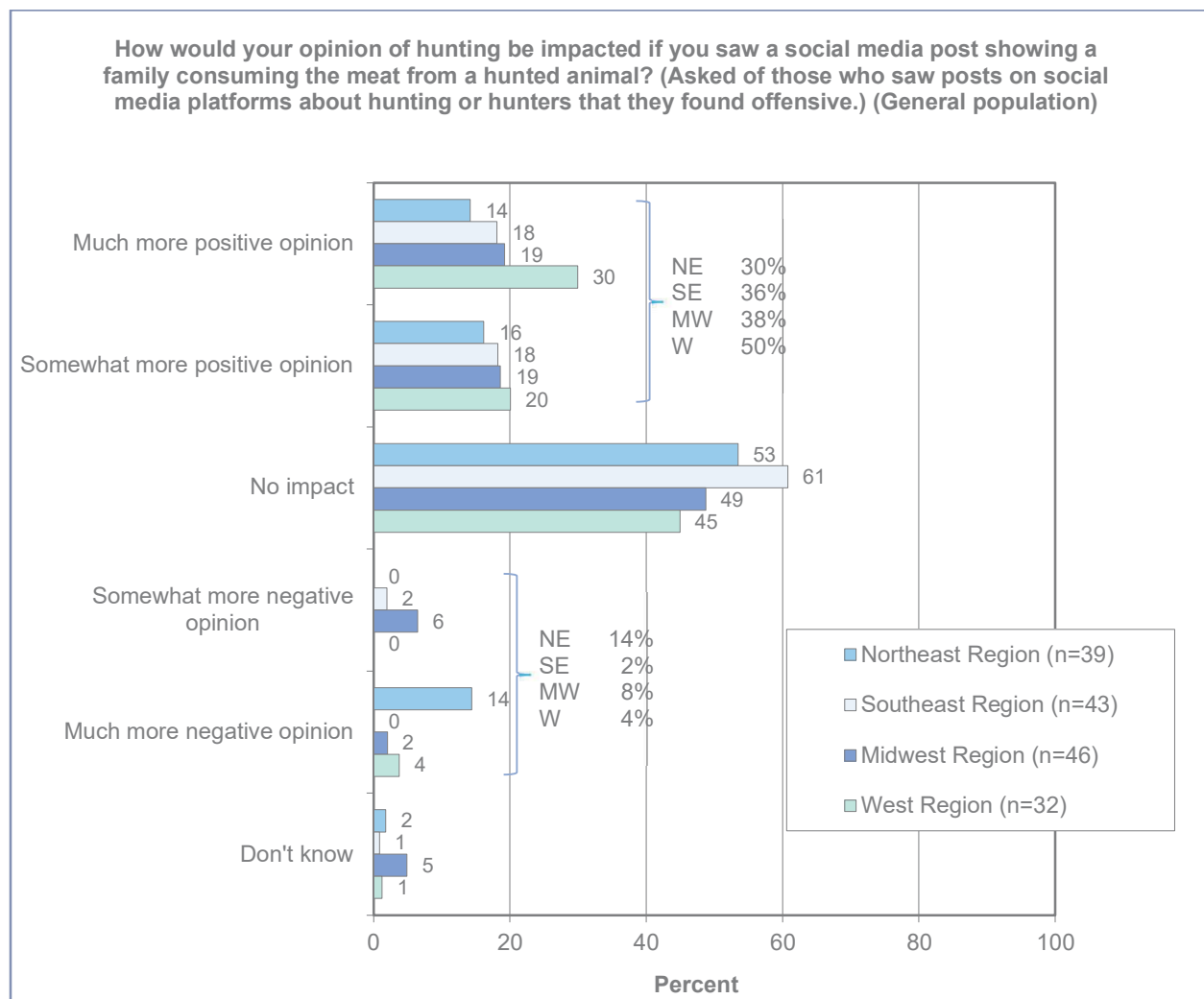
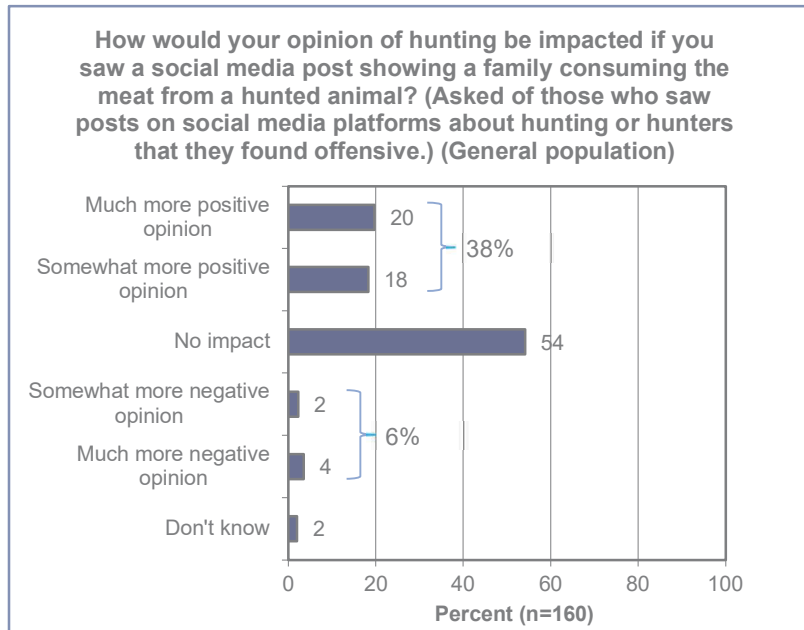


On these questions, agreement is higher among those more negative than among the general population. On both questions, large majorities agree.



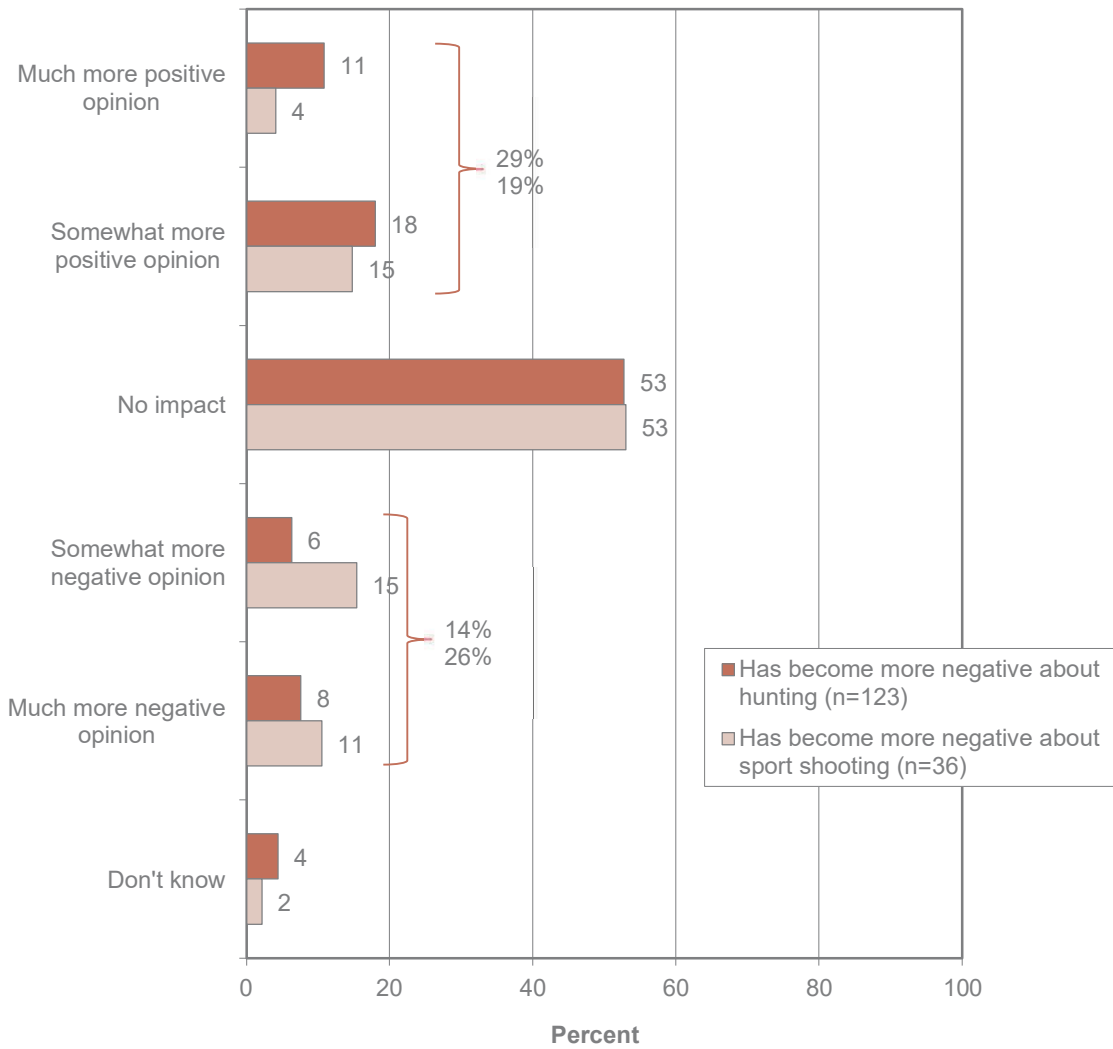
A follow-up question to those who saw offensive posts about hunting or hunters suggests that social media posts showing a family consuming meat from a hunted animal would encourage a more positive opinion of hunting: 38% say that they would have a *much more* or *somewhat more* positive opinion. (Sport shooting did not have a parallel question to this.)

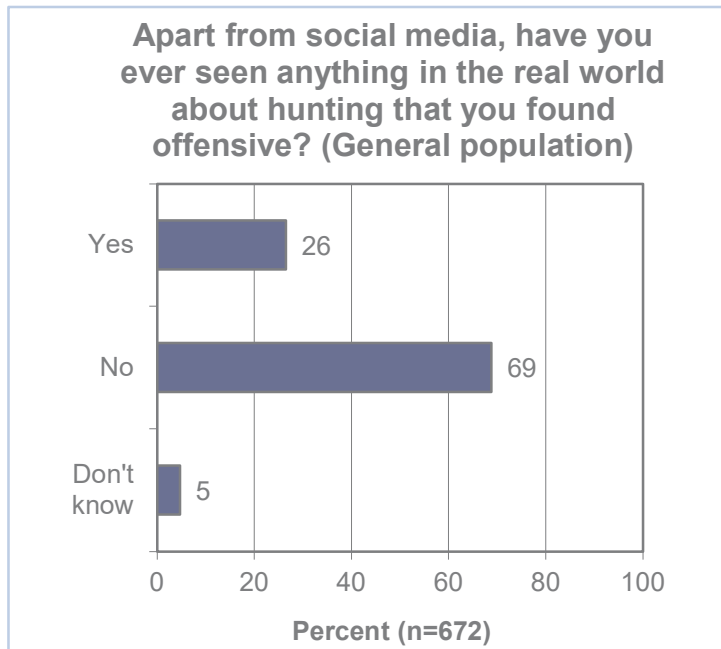
Regionally, West Region residents have the most positive reaction, but note that the sample sizes are small because so few got this follow-up question.



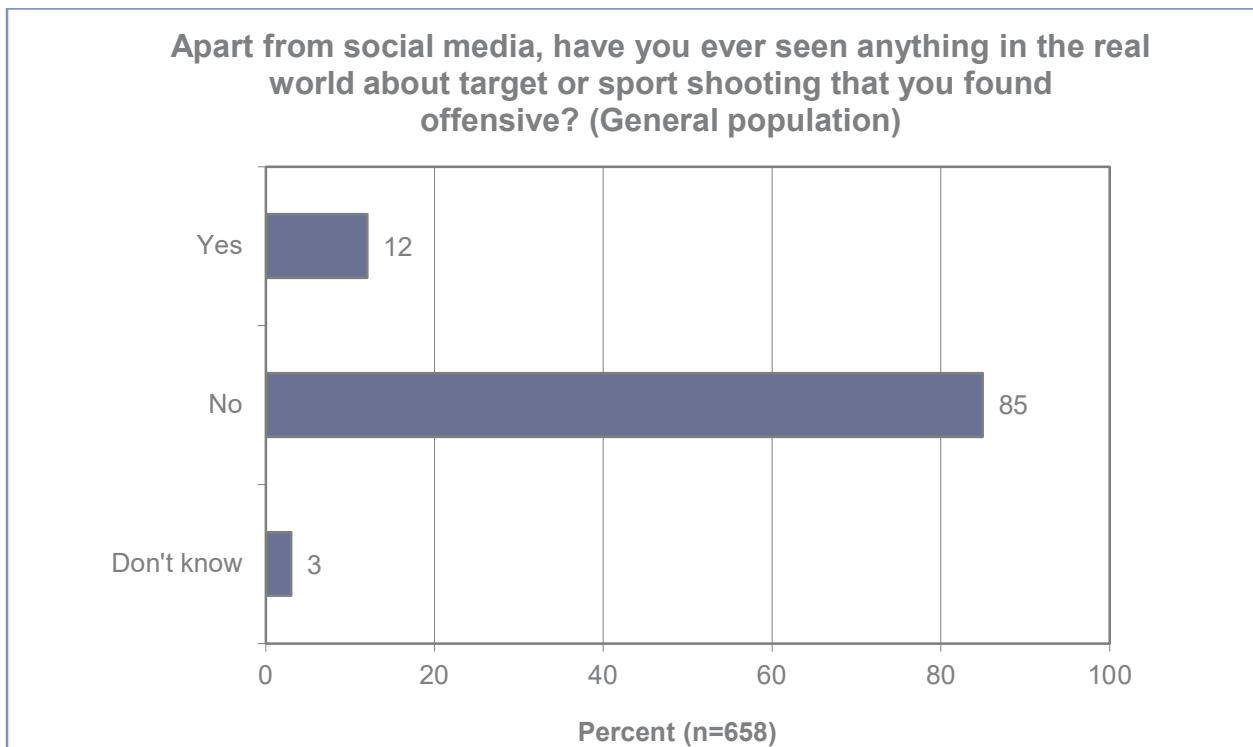
Relative to the general population, those whose opinions on hunting and target/sport shooting have become more negative are less likely to react positively to a social media post showing a family consuming the meat from a hunted animal.

How would your opinion of hunting be impacted if you saw a social media post showing a family consuming the meat from a hunted animal? (Asked of those who saw posts on social media platforms about hunting or hunters that they found offensive.) (Those more negative)

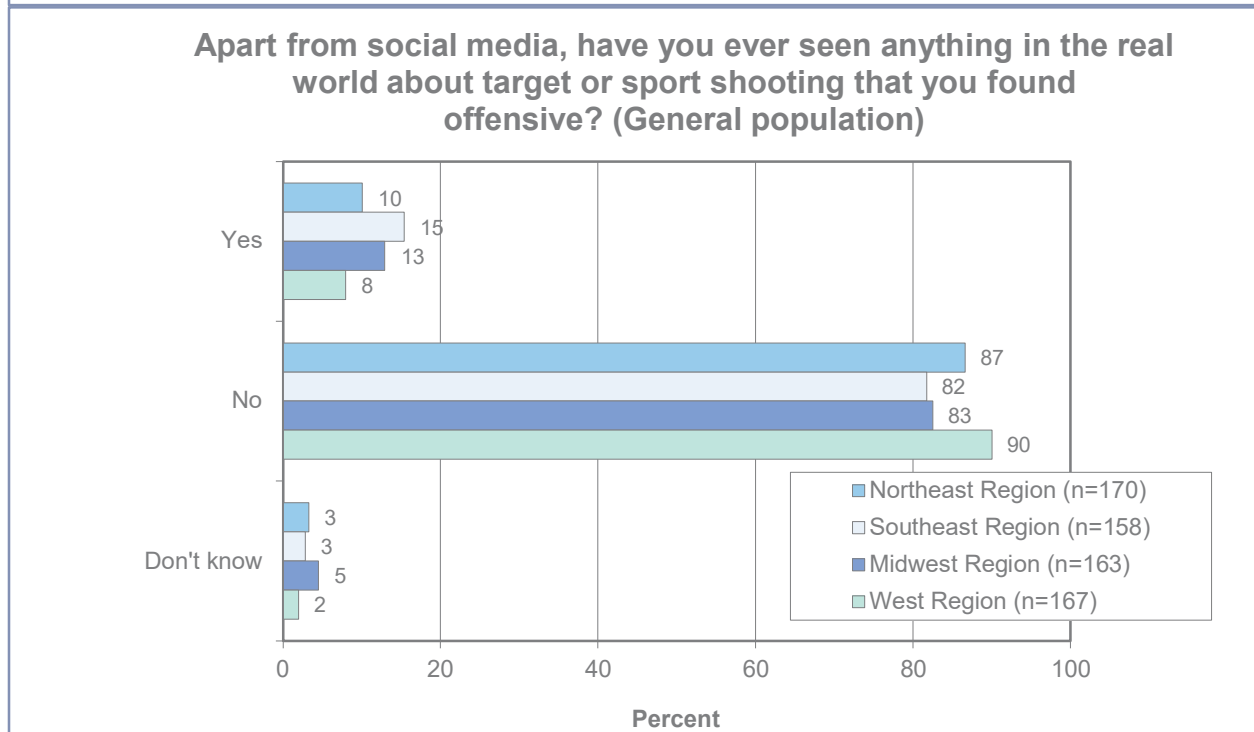
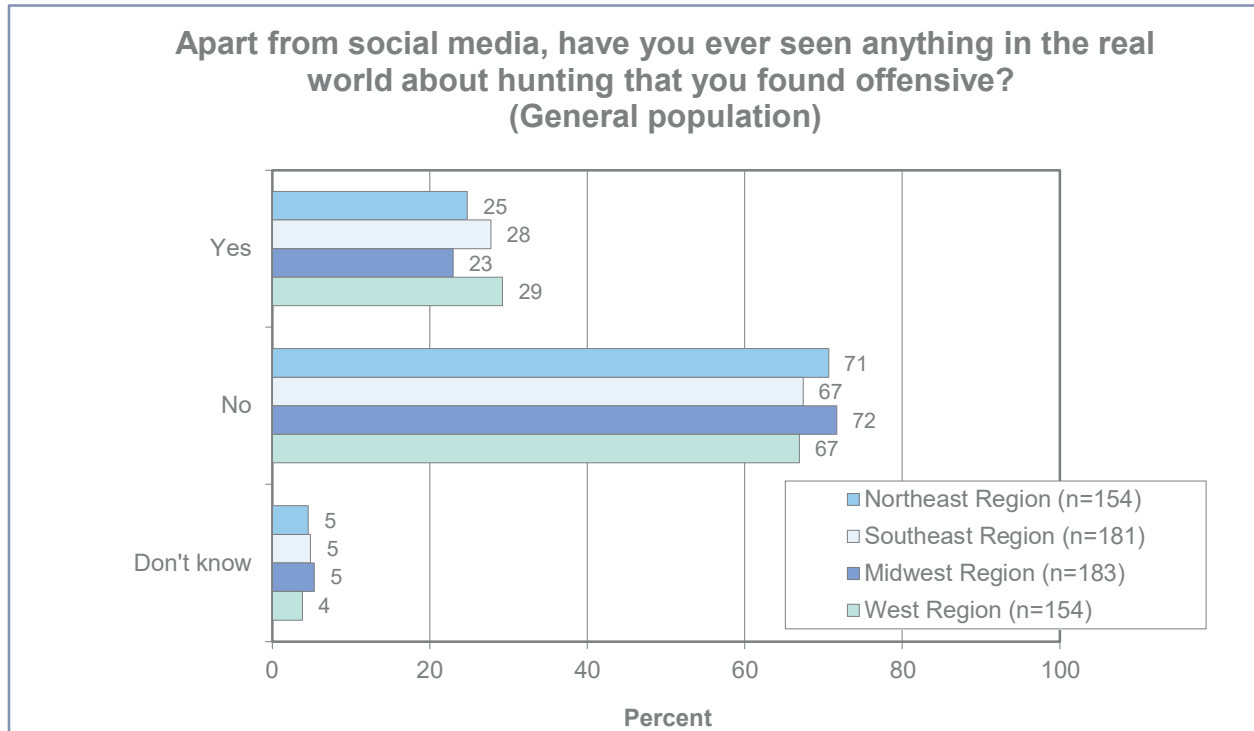




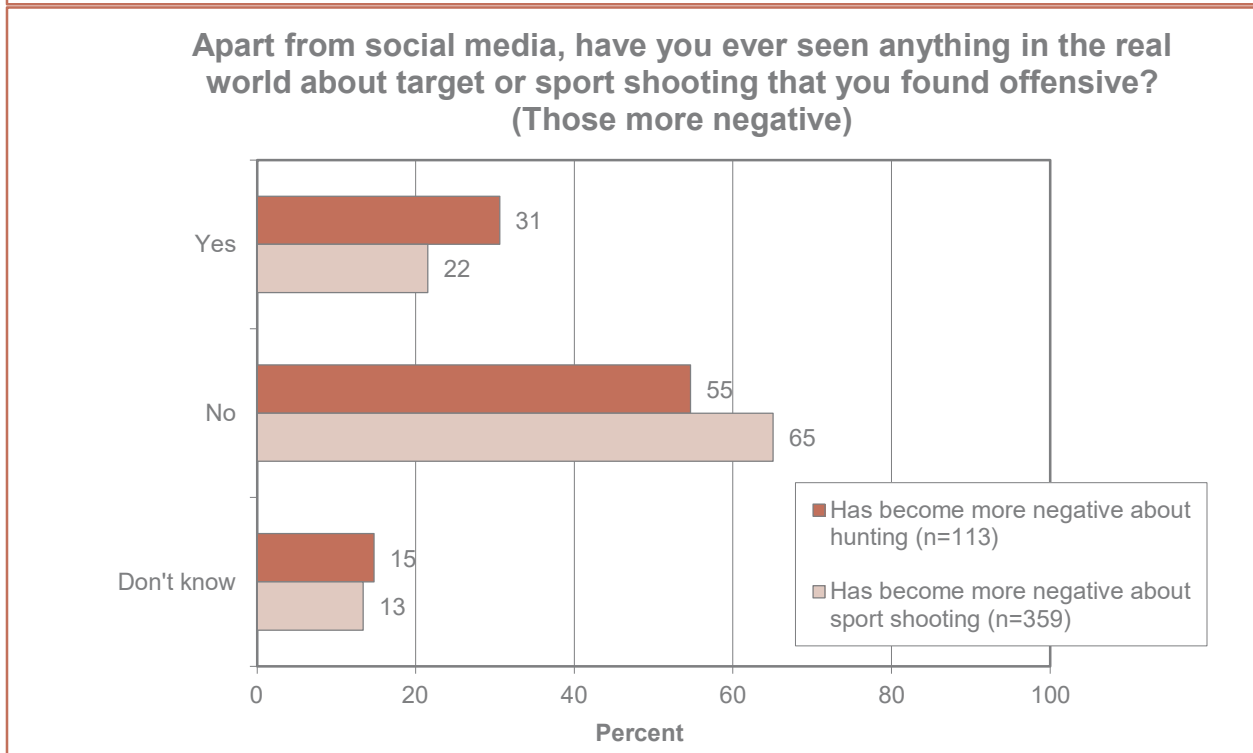
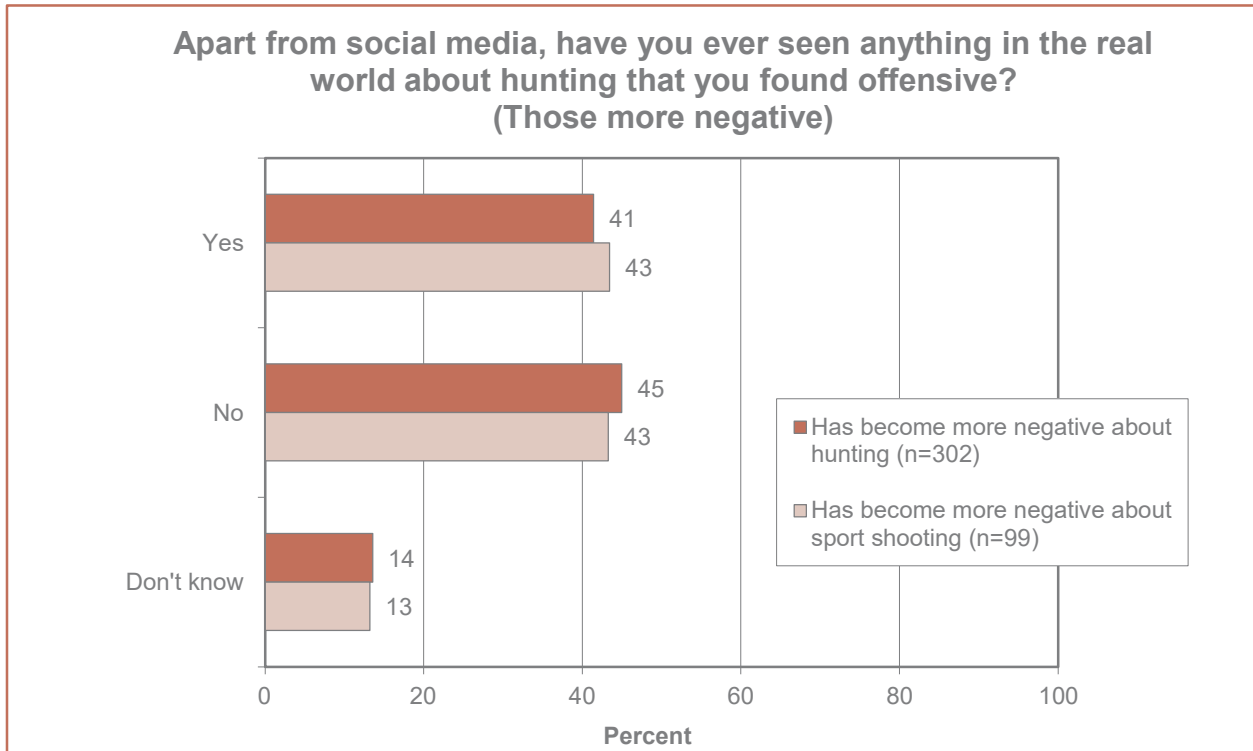
Among Americans overall, 26% feel that they have seen things in the real world (as opposed to online posts) that they found offensive about hunting, and 12% feel that same way about target or sport shooting.



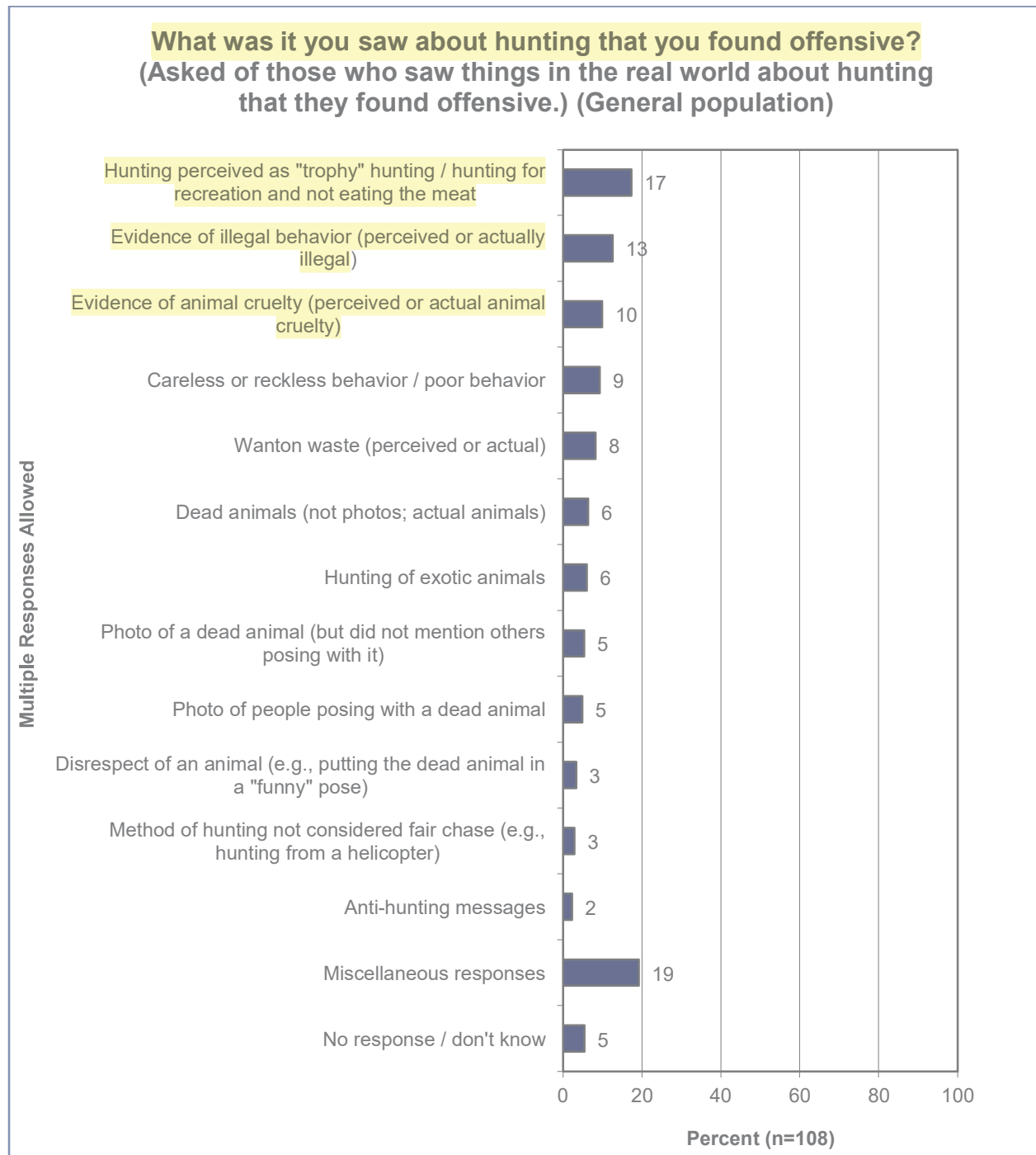
Regionally, West and Southeast Region residents are the most likely to have seen something in the real world (as opposed to online) about hunting that they found offensive. Southeast Region residents are the most likely to have seen something in the real world about target/sport shooting that they found offensive.



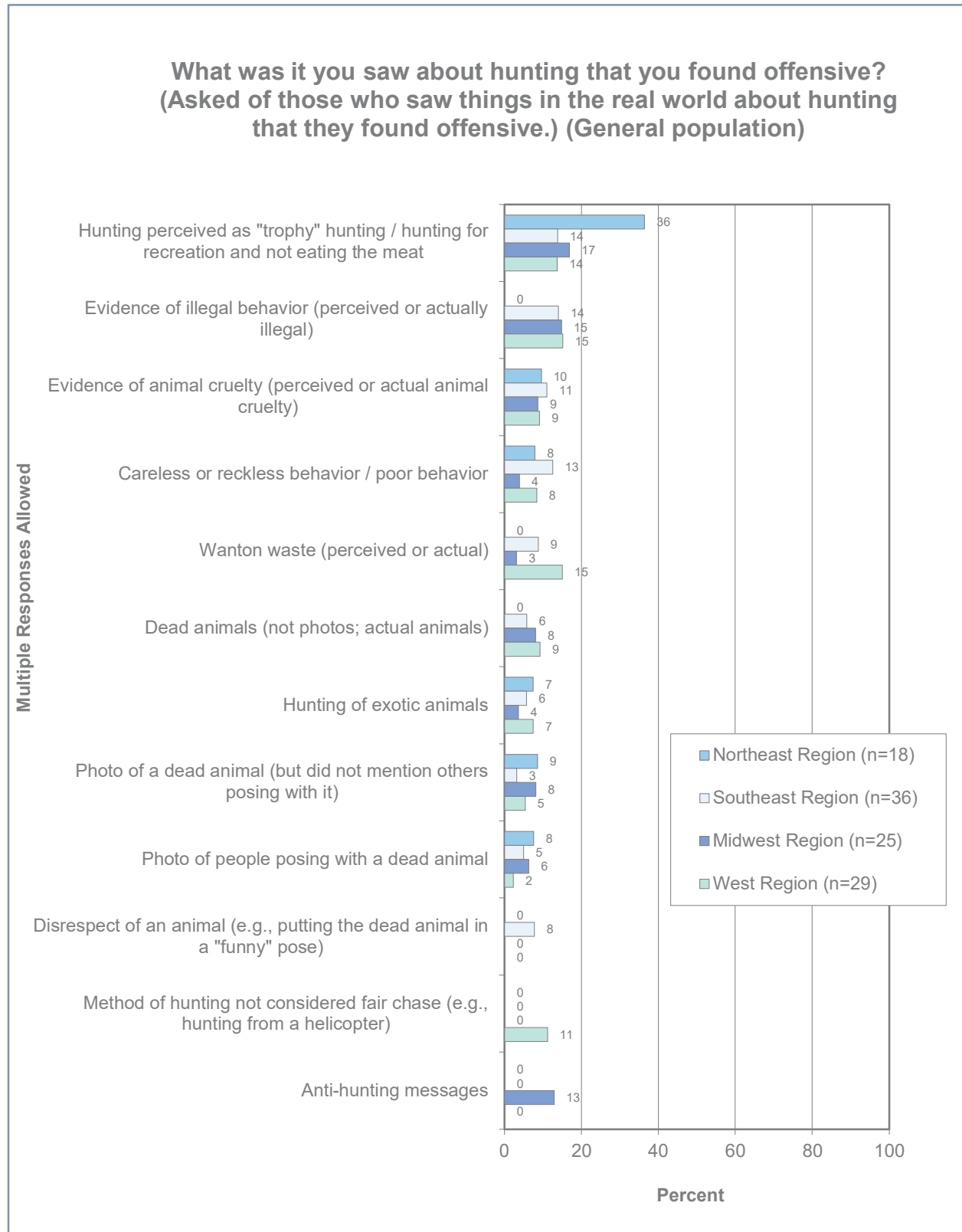
Those whose views have become more negative about hunting and target shooting, compared to the general population, are much more likely to say that they saw things in the real world (as opposed to online) about hunting and target/sport shooting that they found offensive.



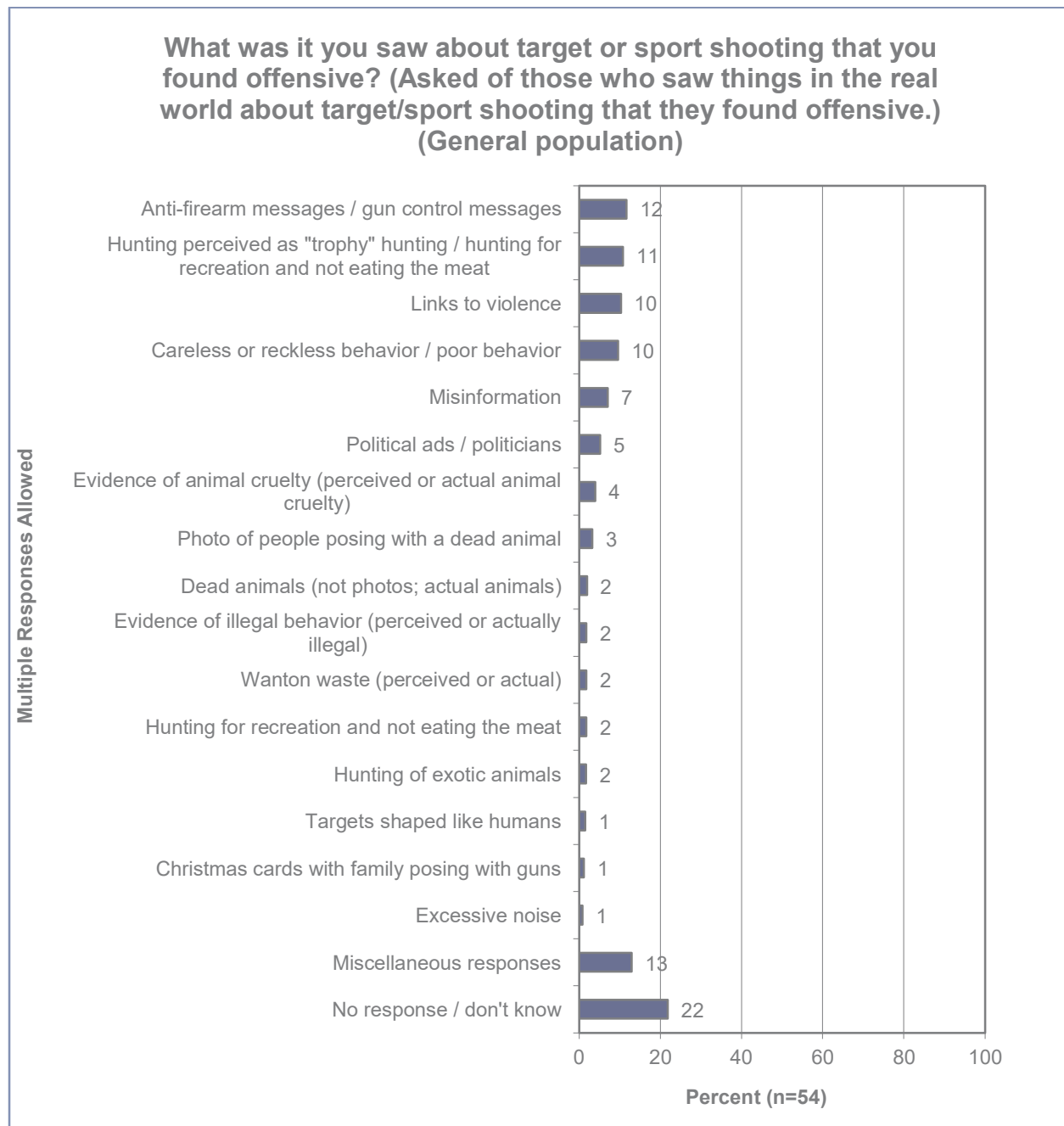
The most offensive things about hunting were those that made the observer equate the observed hunting to *trophy* hunting—very broadly defined by the observer to include any hunting done for recreation rather than for a more utilitarian purpose (such as for meat or for population control). Substantial percentages also mentioned illegal behavior, animal cruelty, wanton waste, and careless/reckless behavior.



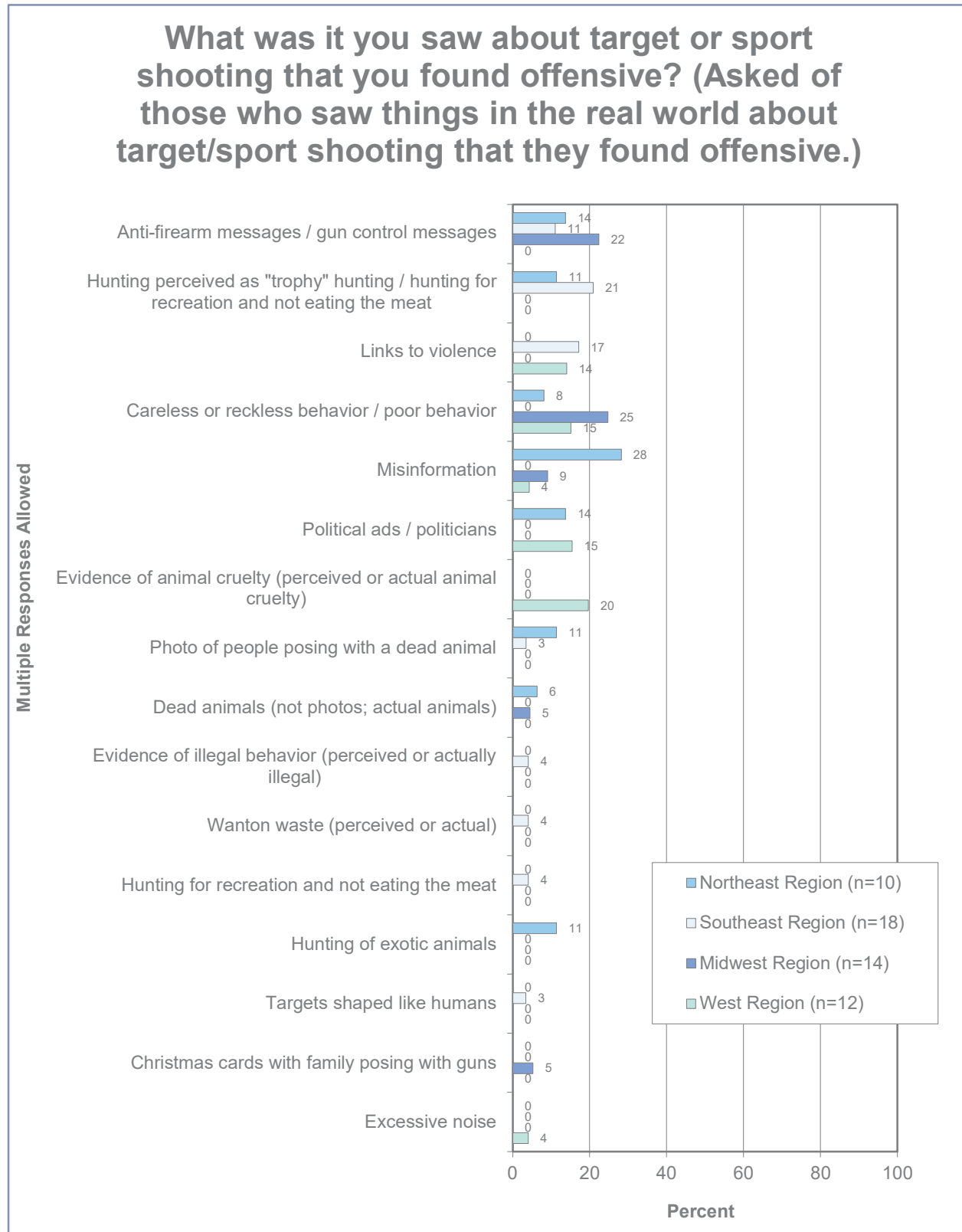
For legibility, the categories of “miscellaneous responses” and “no response/don’t know” are not shown on this regional graph.



Offensive things that people had seen pertaining to target or sport shooting included careless/reckless behavior—the same as with hunting. However, another category mentioned was anti-shooting messages—some respondents felt that those messages were wrong. Some respondents mentioned misinformation, complaints that could come from either side of the debate, as both sides of the gun control issue accuse the other of misinformation. Finally, some people equate sport shooting with hunting: despite clear wording that asked about “target or sport shooting,” some people gave hunting-related responses to the question. For instance, 11% of these respondents mentioned hunting being perceived as trophy hunting in response to the negative things that they had seen about target or sport shooting.

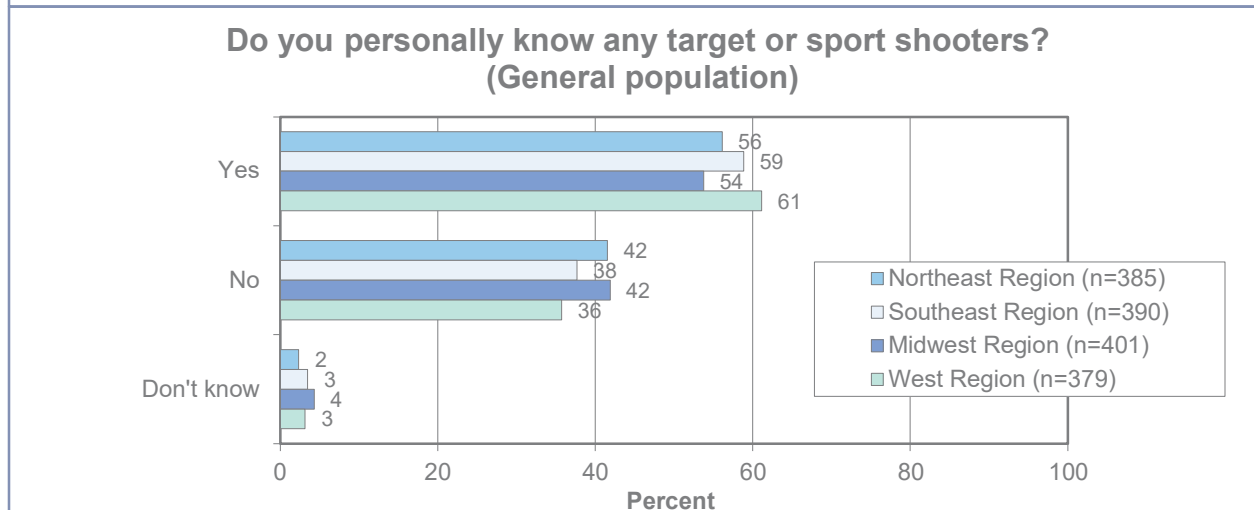
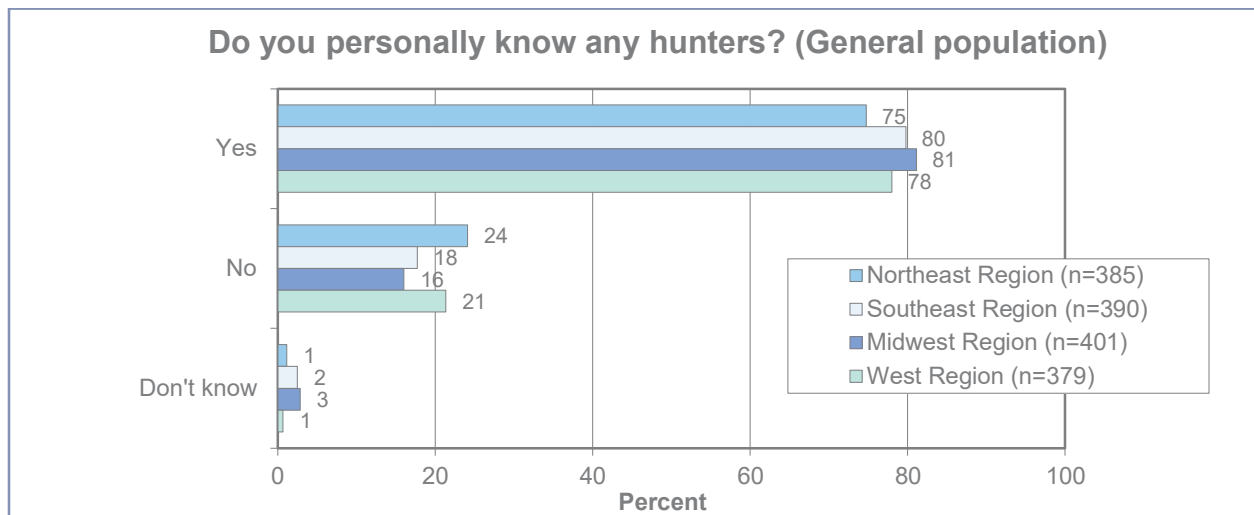
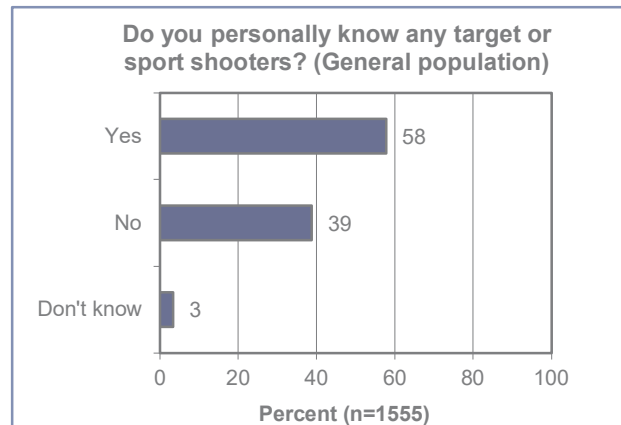
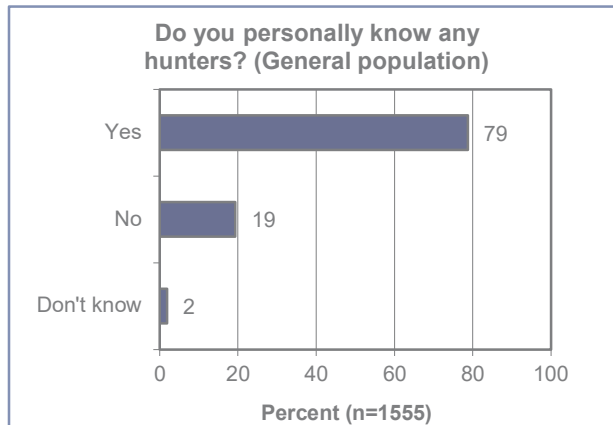


For legibility, the categories of “miscellaneous responses” and “no response/don’t know” are not shown on this regional graph.

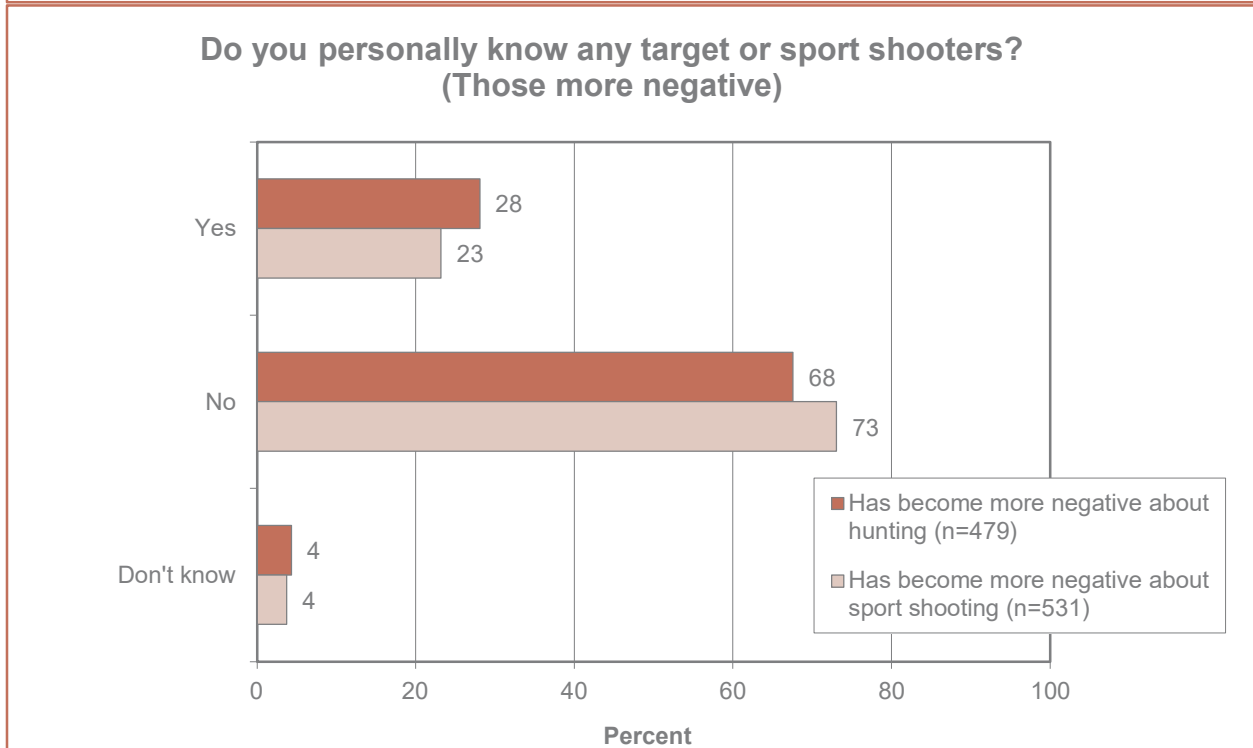
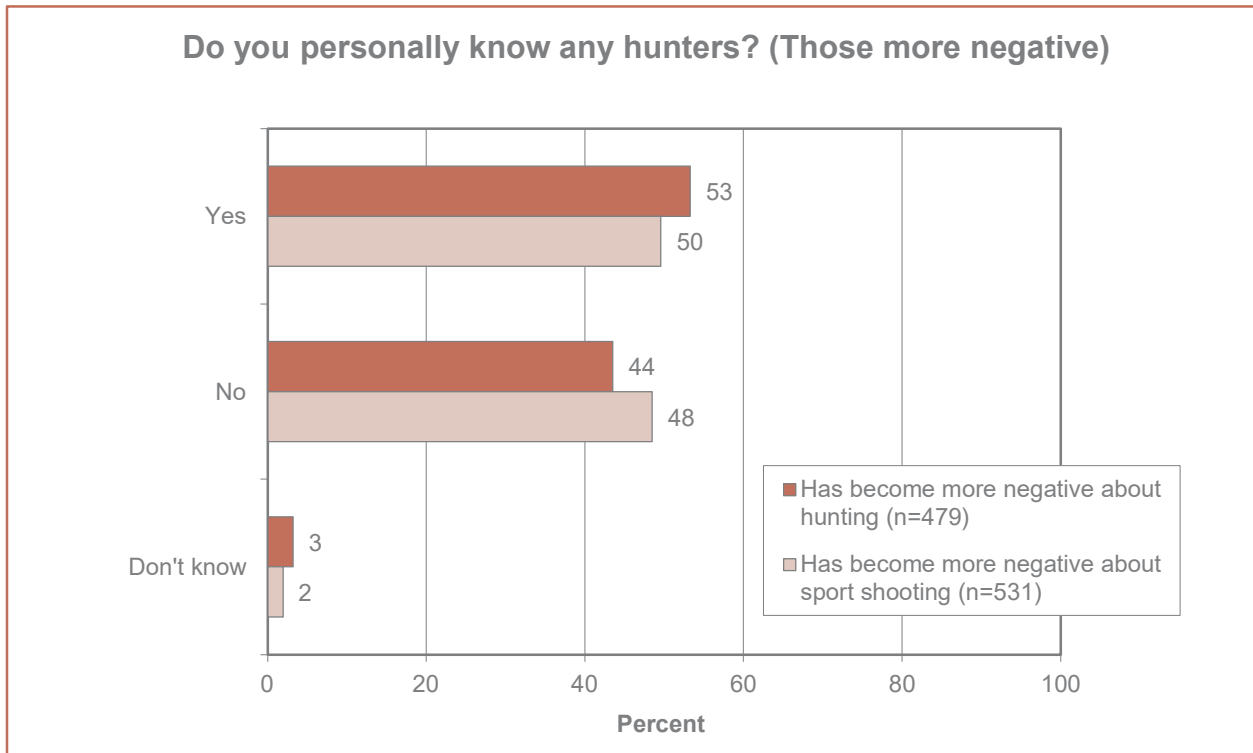


KNOWING HUNTERS AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTERS

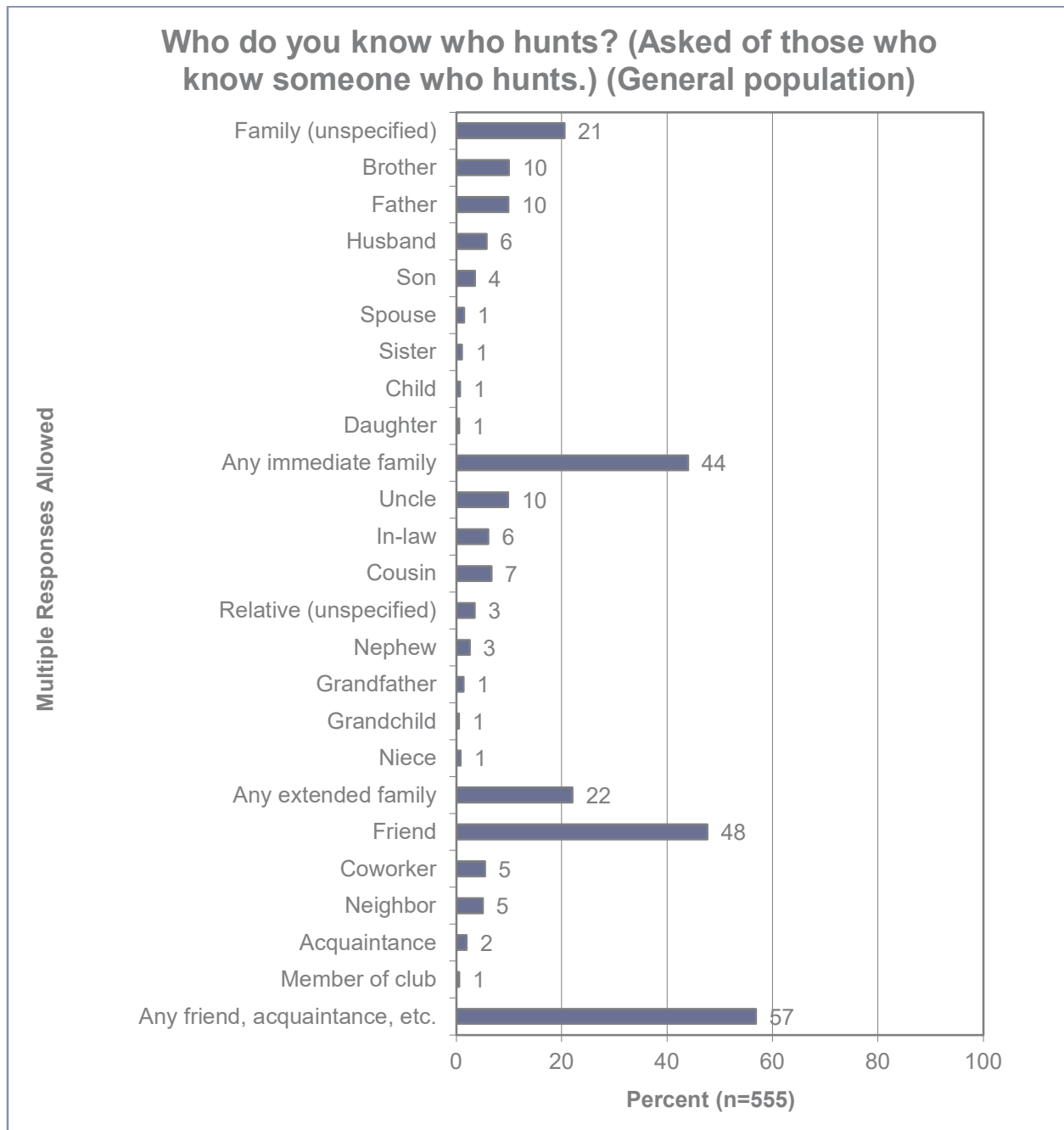
A large majority of Americans (79%) know a hunter, while a bit more than half (58%) know a target or sport shooter. Regionally, Midwest and Southeast Region residents are the most likely to know a hunter; West and Southeast Region residents are the most likely to know a target/sport shooter.



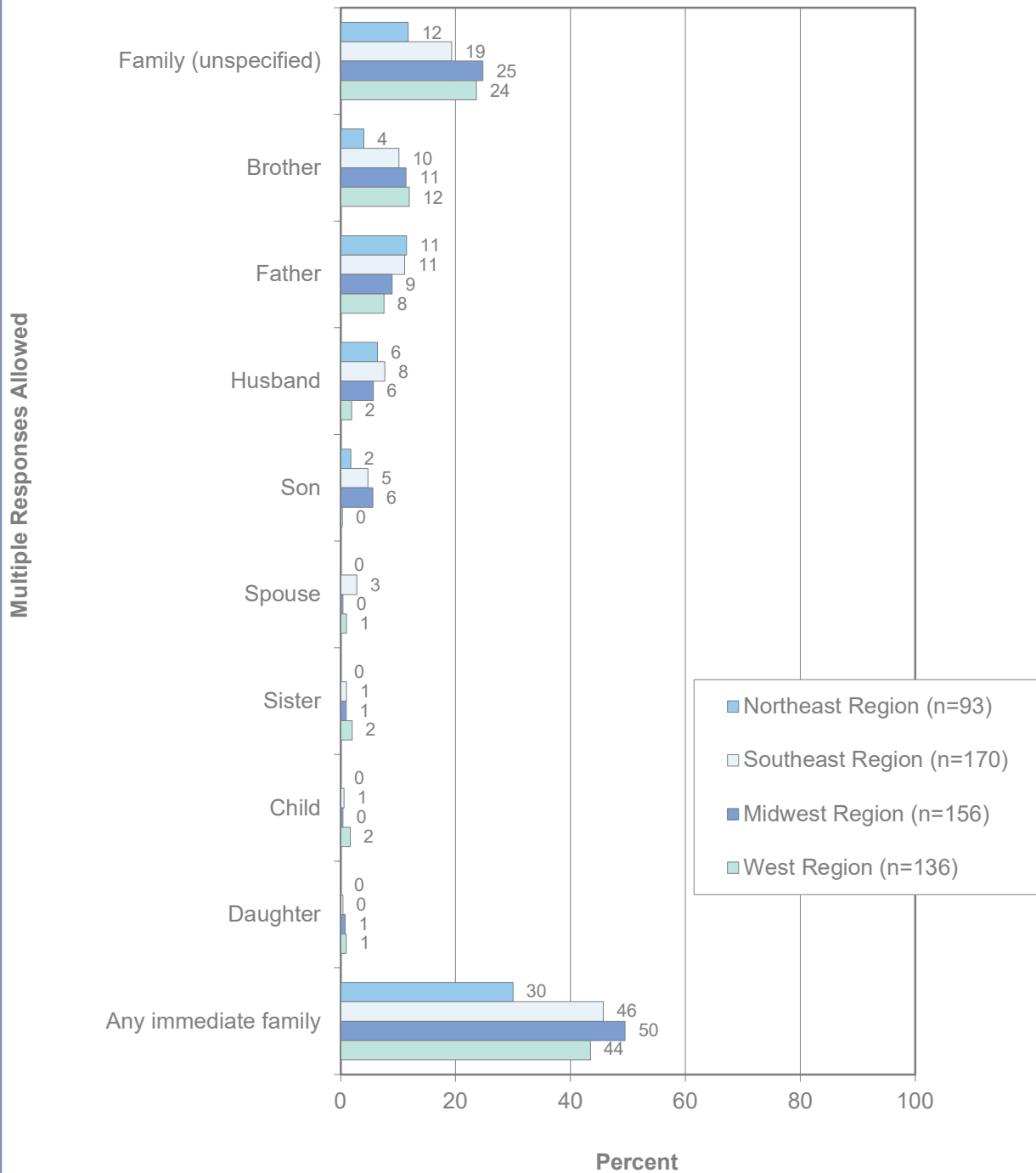
Those with more negative views, compared to the general population, are less likely to personally know any hunters or target/sport shooters.



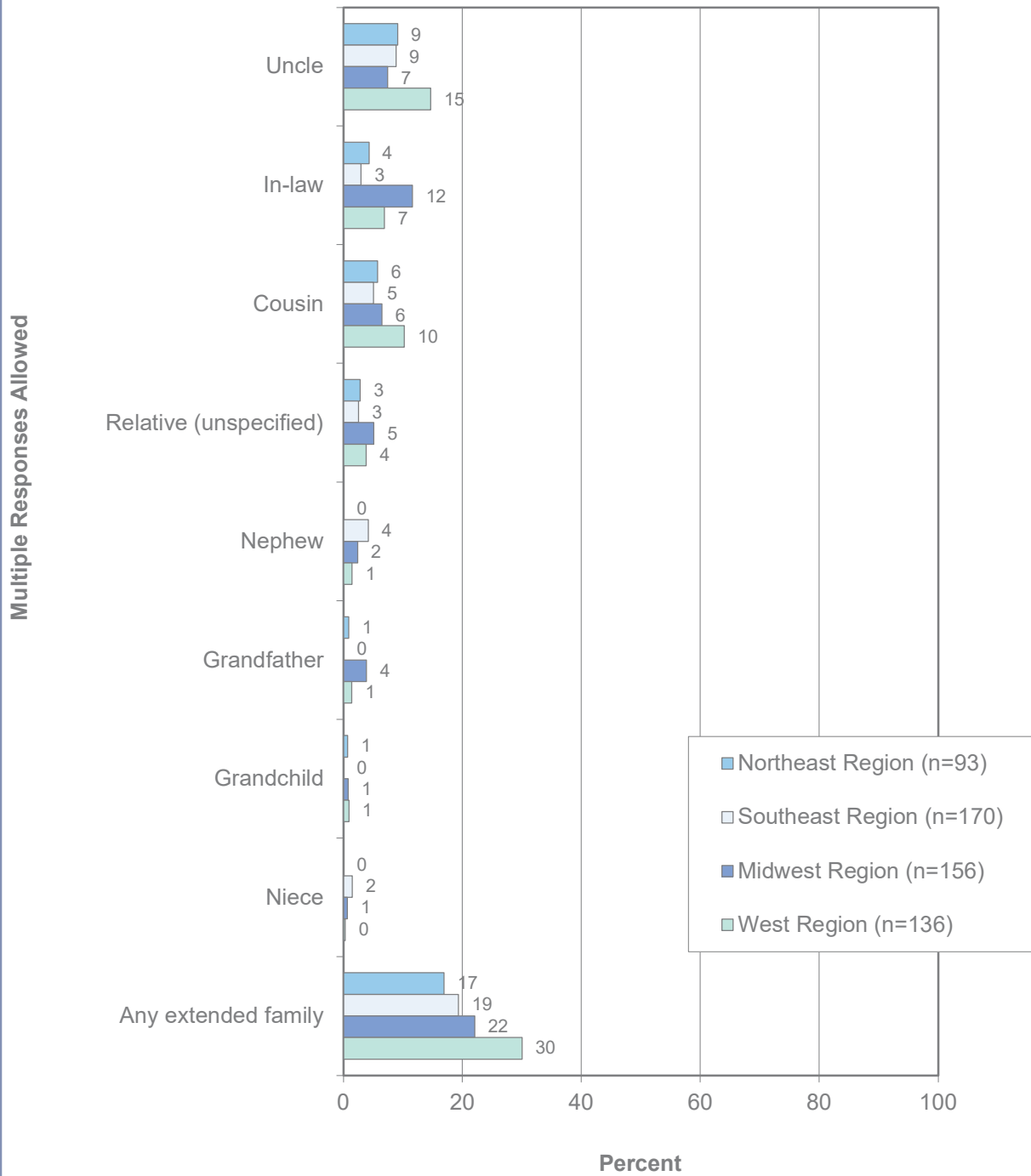
The graphs that follow show the hunters and target shooters that people indicated knowing. Immediate family and friends have robust percentages. The graphs show immediate family members first, followed by extended family and then friends/acquaintances. In this categorization, those who simply said “family” in the open-ended question were categorized as immediate family, while those who said “relatives” were categorized as extended family. Because the questions were open-ended, this categorization may not be perfect but was thought to reflect the most likely scenarios.



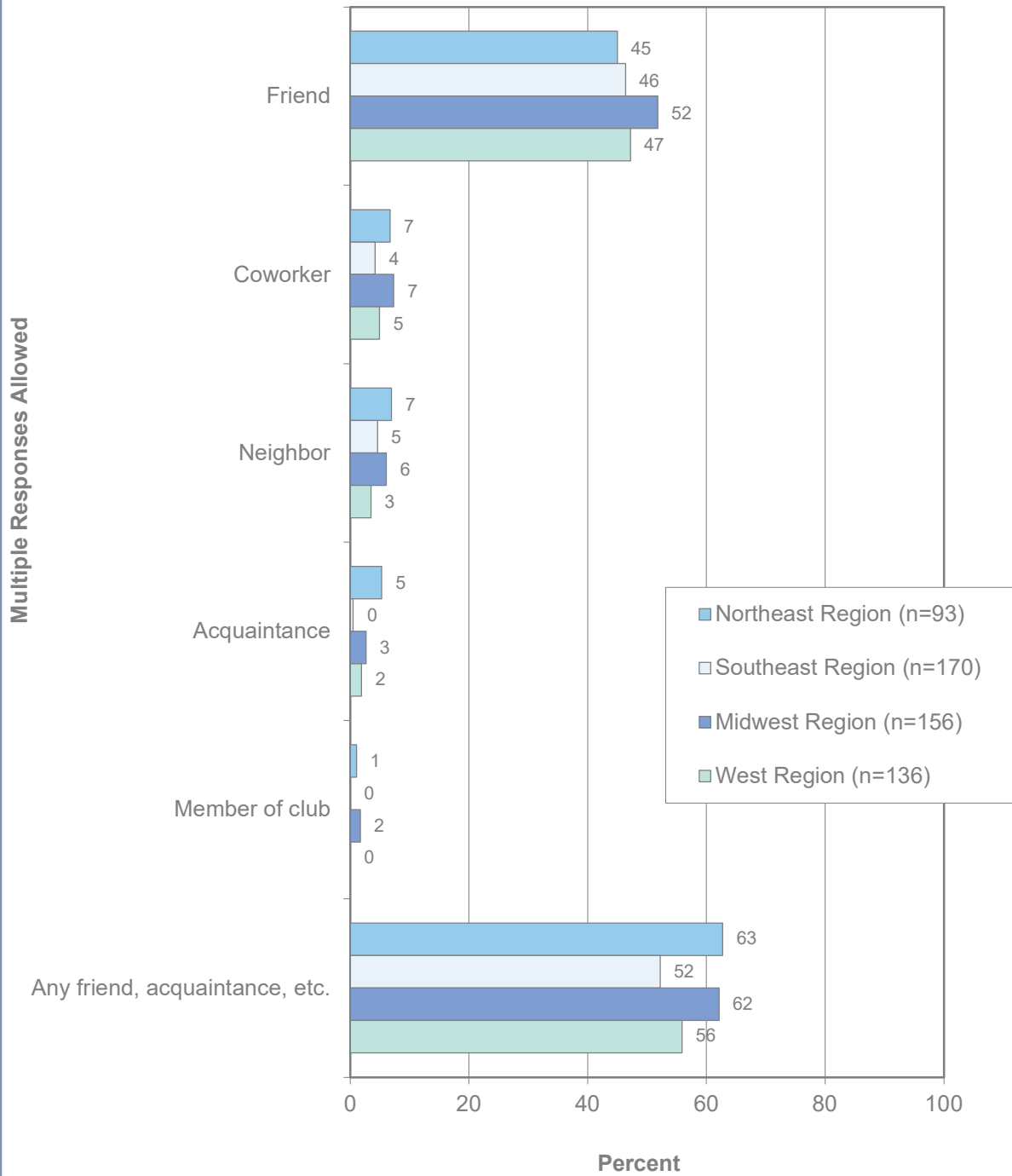
Who do you know who hunts? (Asked of those who know someone who hunts.) (General population) (Part 1)



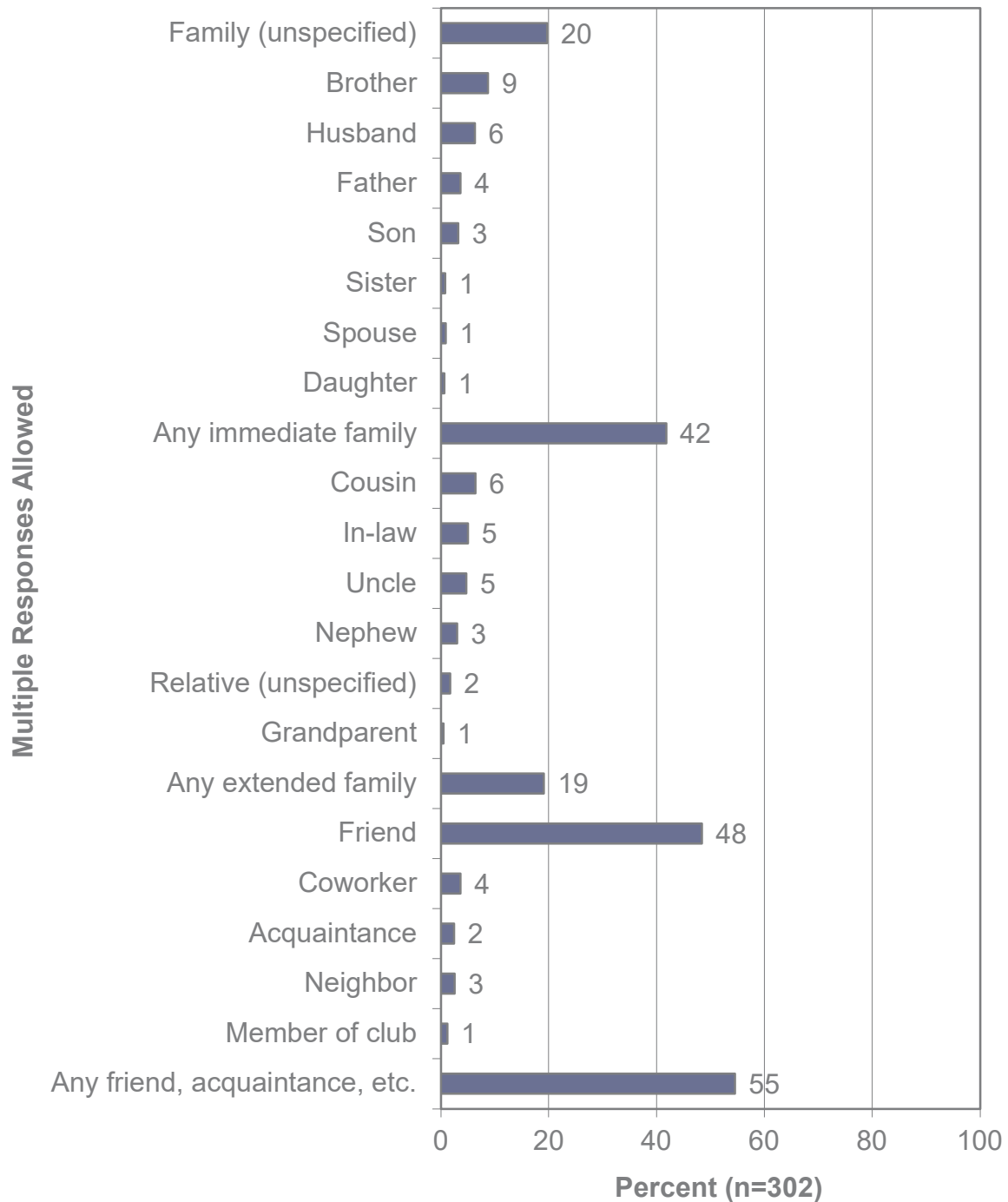
Who do you know who hunts? (Asked of those who know someone who hunts.) (General population) (Part 2)



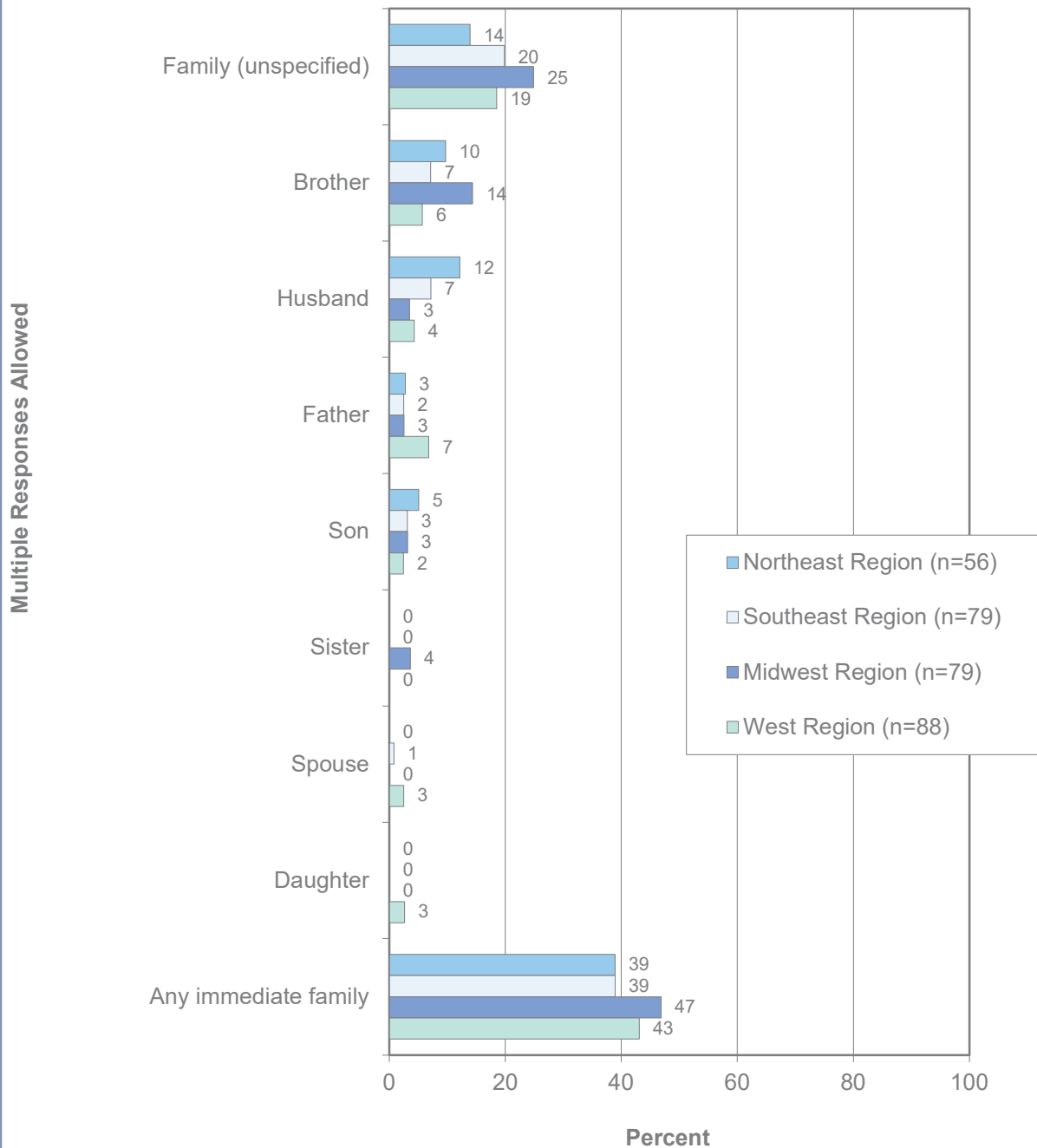
Who do you know who hunts? (Asked of those who know someone who hunts.) (General population) (Part 3)



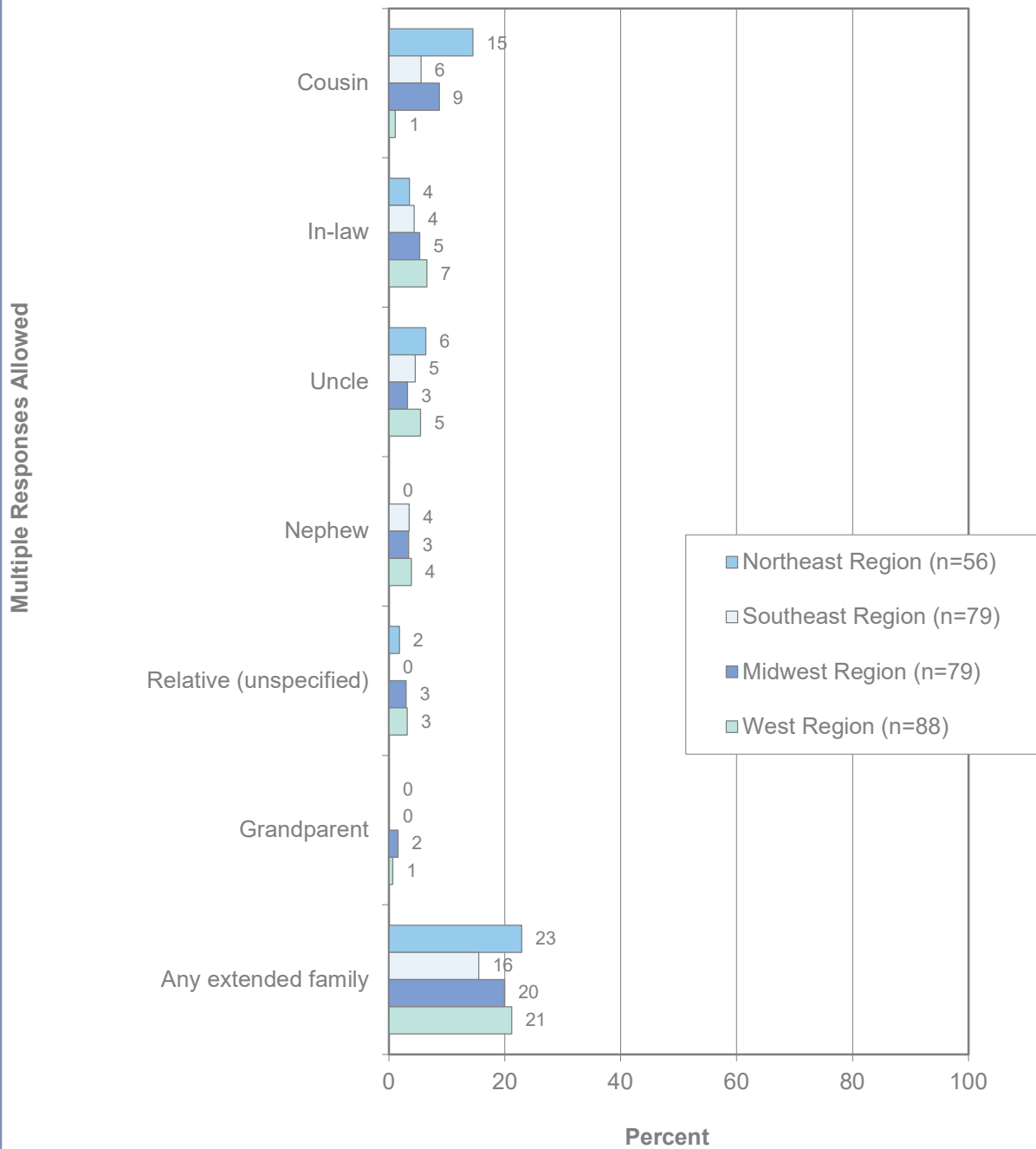
Who do you know who goes target or sport shooting? (Asked of those who know someone who shoots.) (General population)



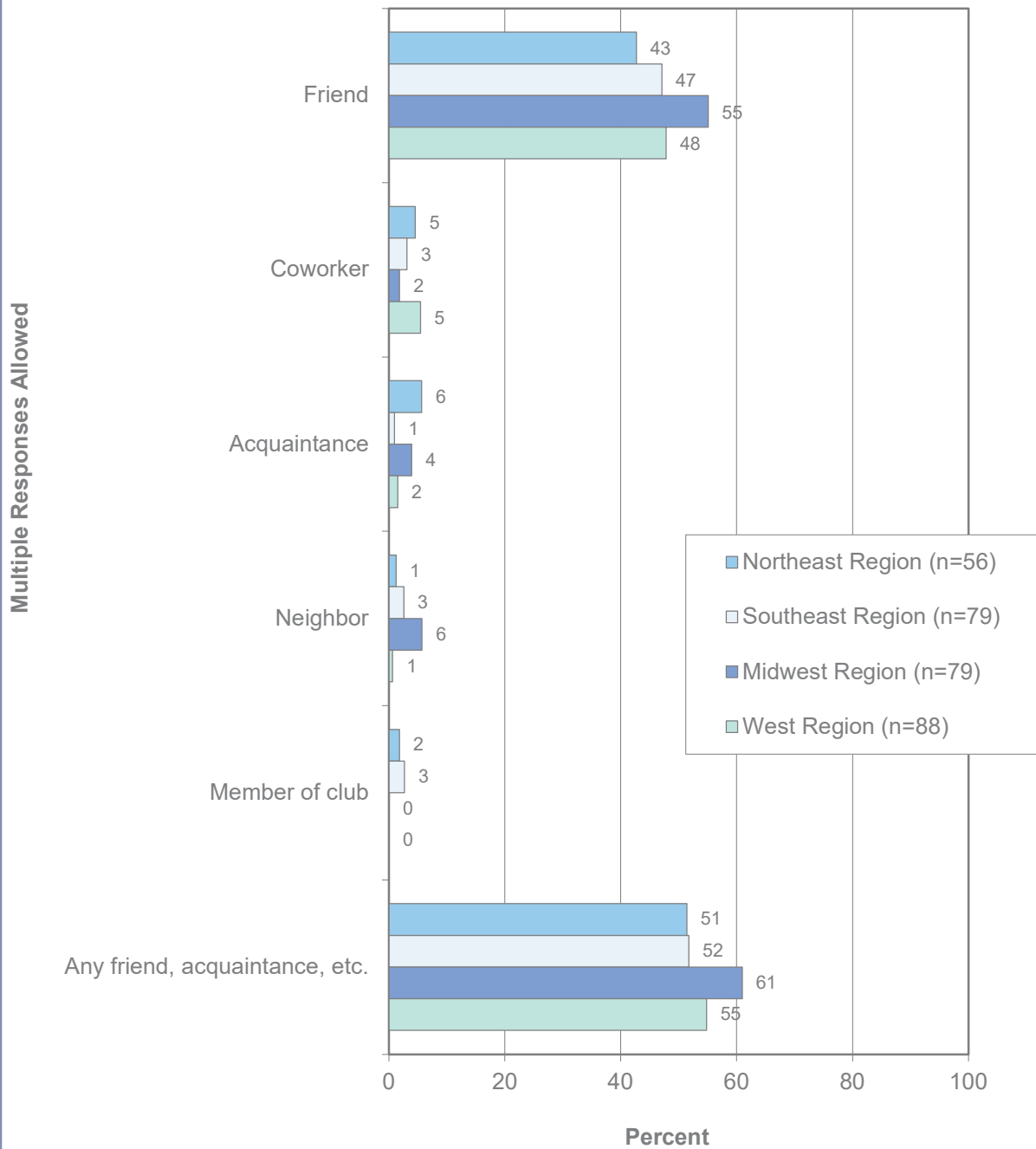
Who do you know who goes target or sport shooting? (Asked of those who know someone who shoots.) (General population) (Part 1)



Who do you know who goes target or sport shooting? (Asked of those who know someone who shoots.) (General population) (Part 2)



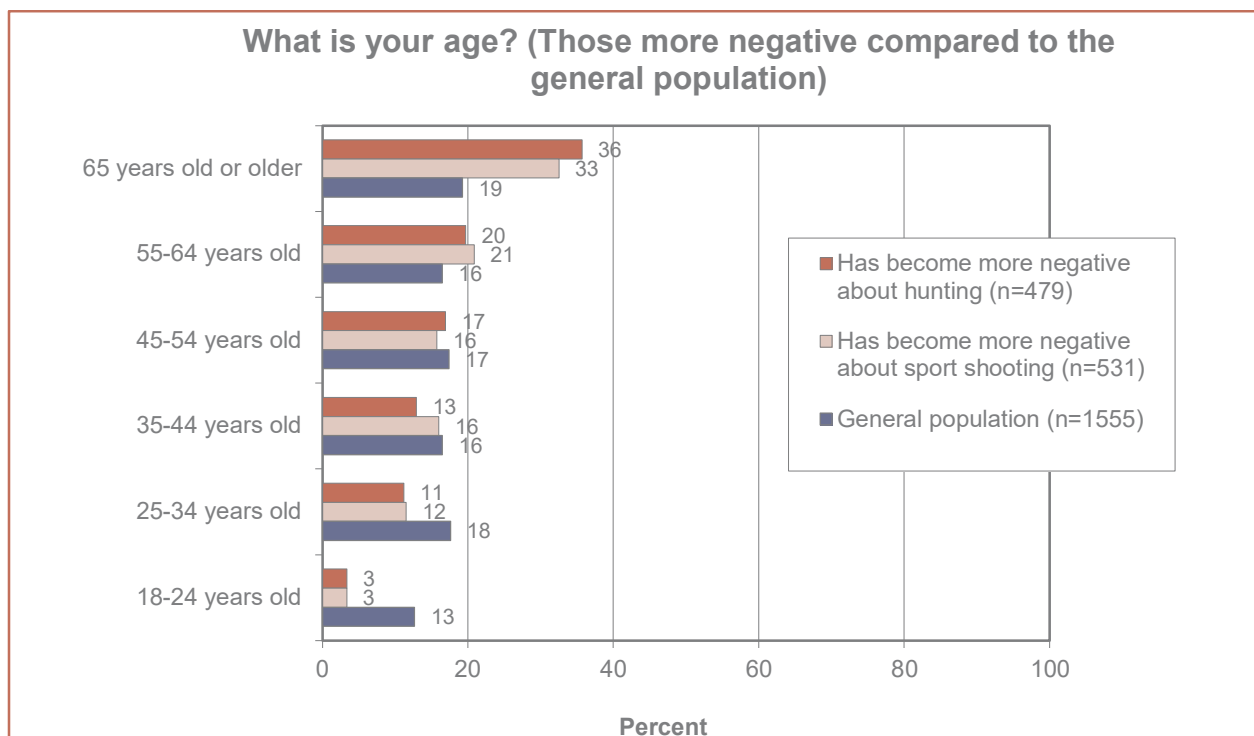
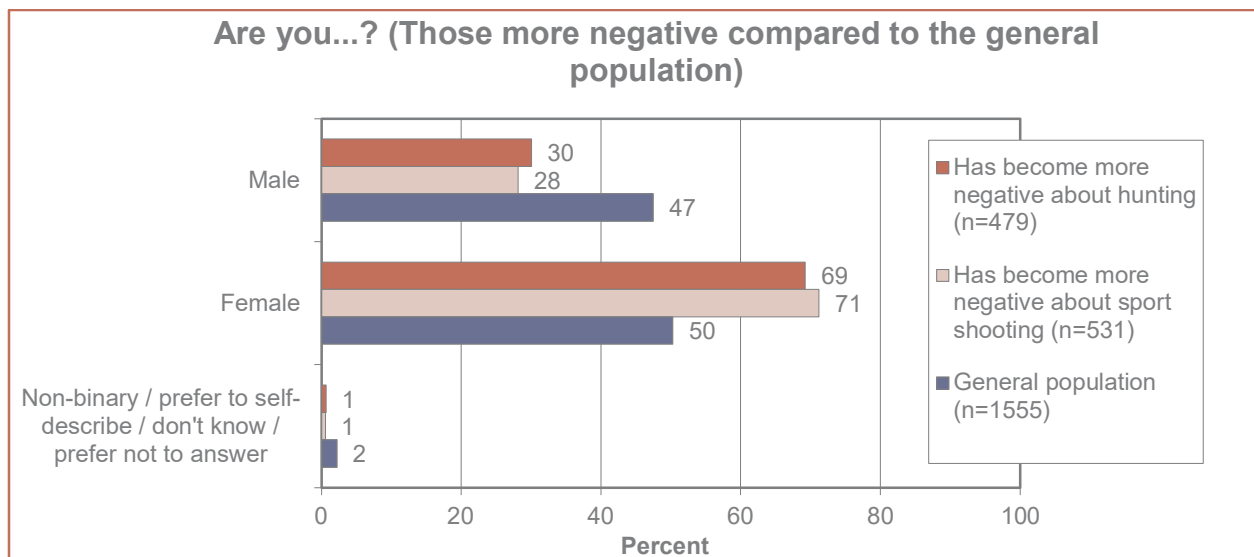
Who do you know who goes target or sport shooting? (Asked of those who know someone who shoots.) (General population) (Part 3)



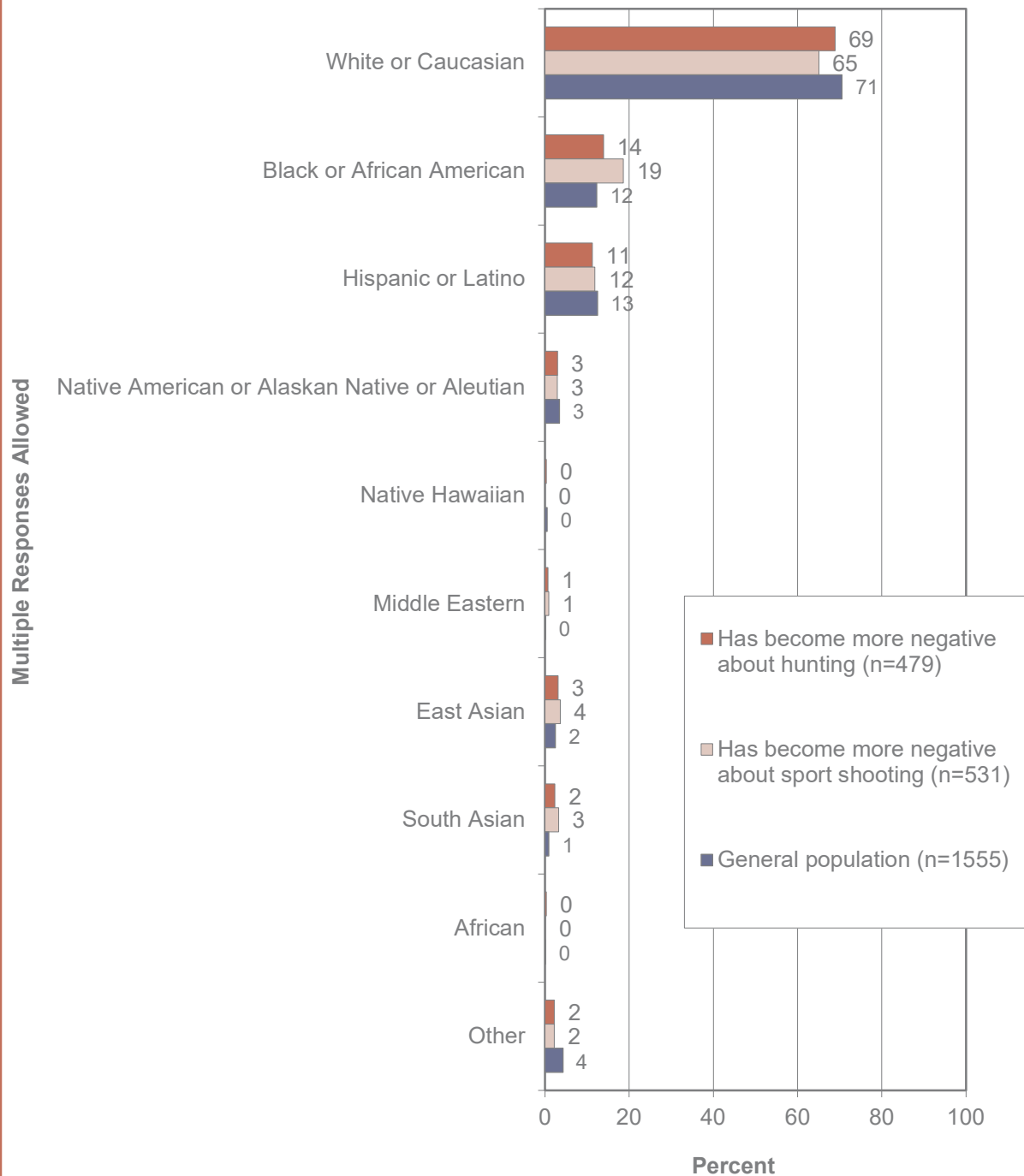
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WITH MORE NEGATIVE OPINIONS

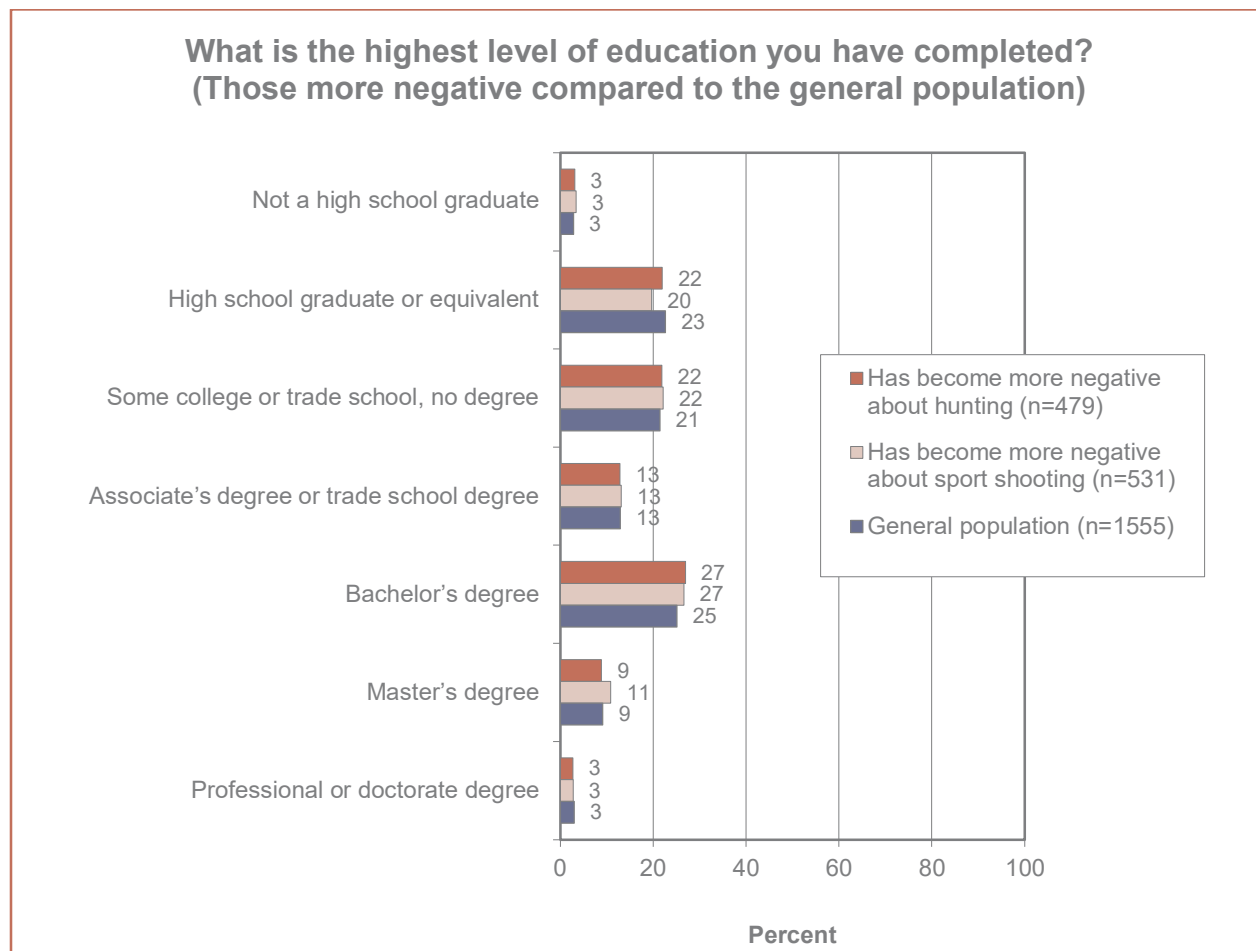
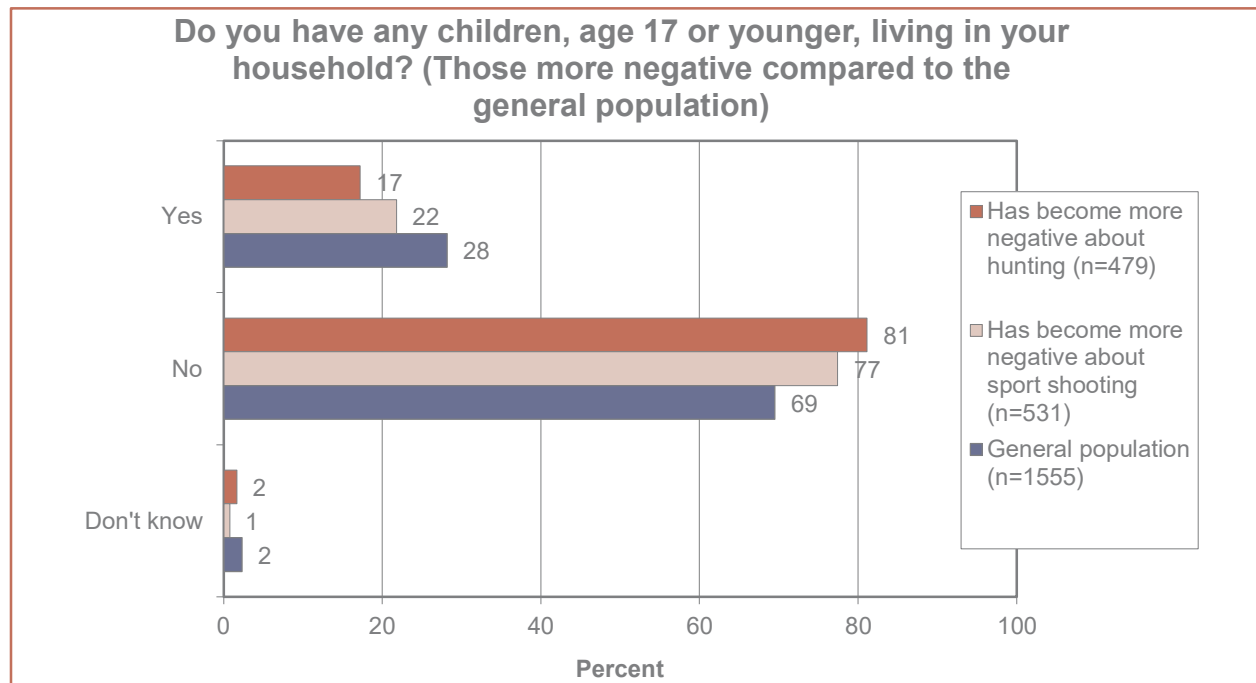
Of interest in this project is the makeup of those with more negative opinions on hunting and target/sport shooting. This section delves into this by showing the demographic information that was gathered in the survey. Among the findings, those with more negative views:

- Are more female than the general population.
- Tend to skew more to the older age groups compared to the general population.
- Are not much different ethnically than the general population.
- Are less likely to have children in their household compared to the general population.
- Are about the same as the general population in education level.
- Tend to be more urban/suburban than the general population.

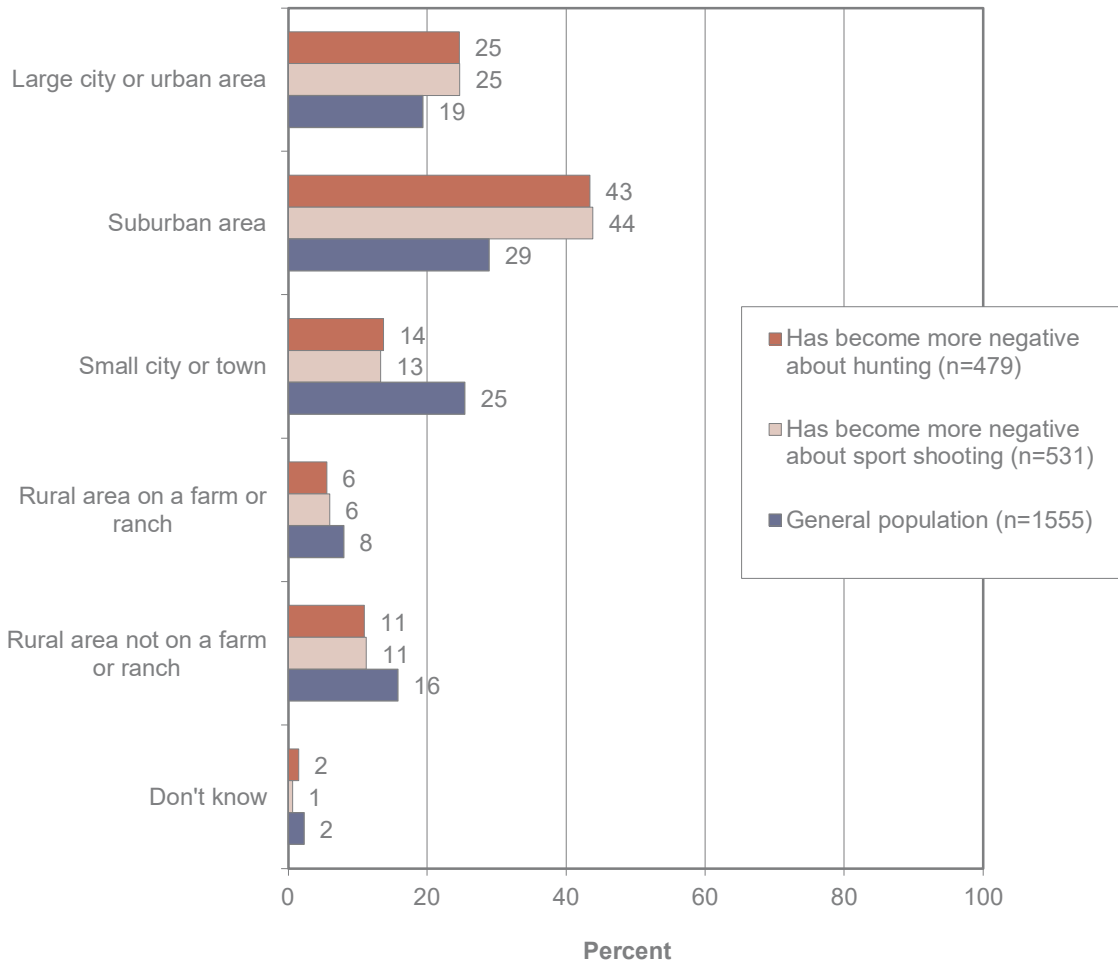


What races or ethnic backgrounds do you consider yourself? (Those more negative compared to the general population)



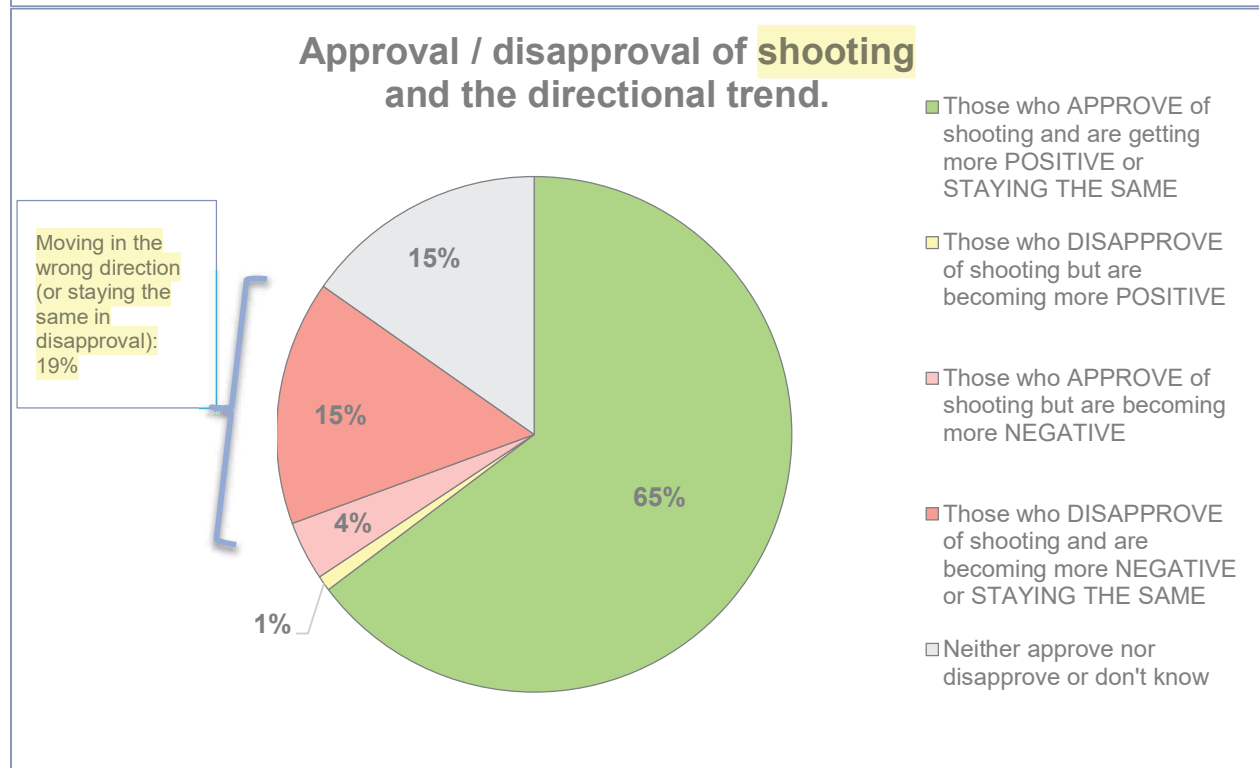
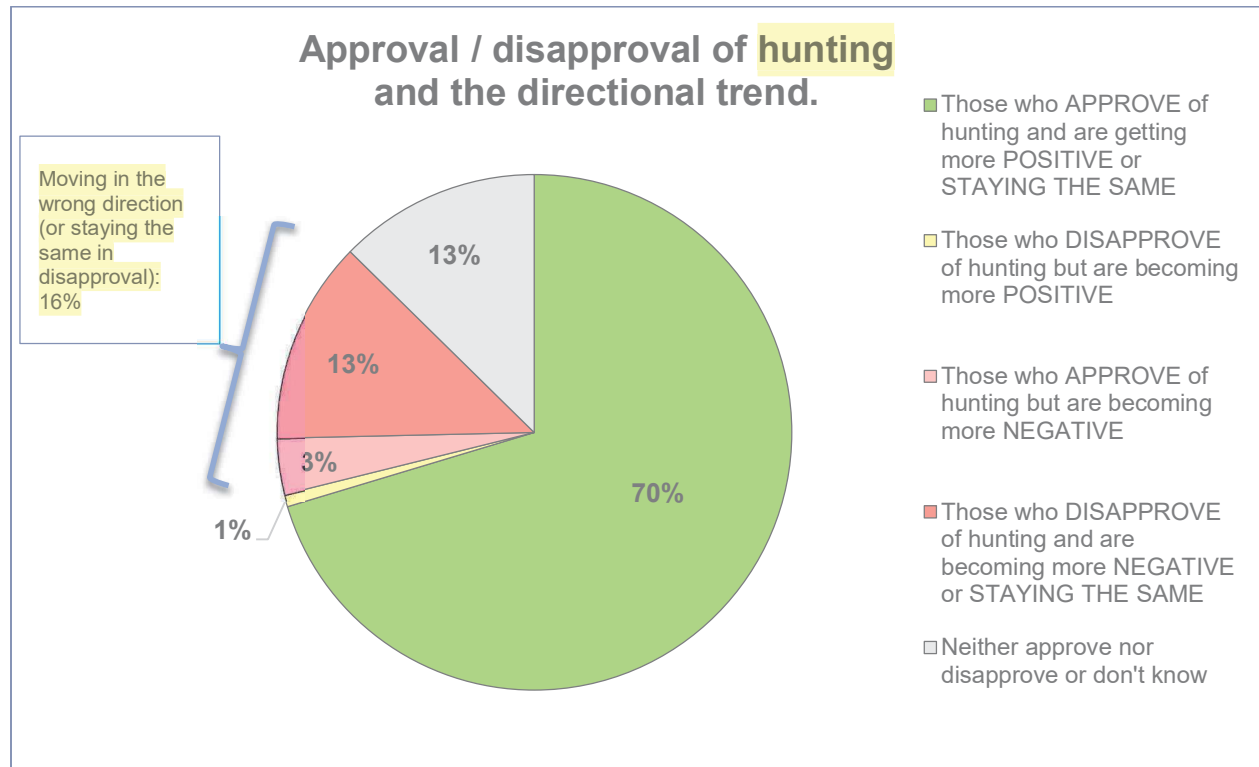


Do you consider your place of residence to be a large city or urban area, a suburban area, a small city or town, a rural area on a farm or ranch, or a rural area not on a farm or ranch? (Those more negative compared to the general population)



DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF APPROVAL/DISAPPROVAL AND DIRECTIONAL GROUPS

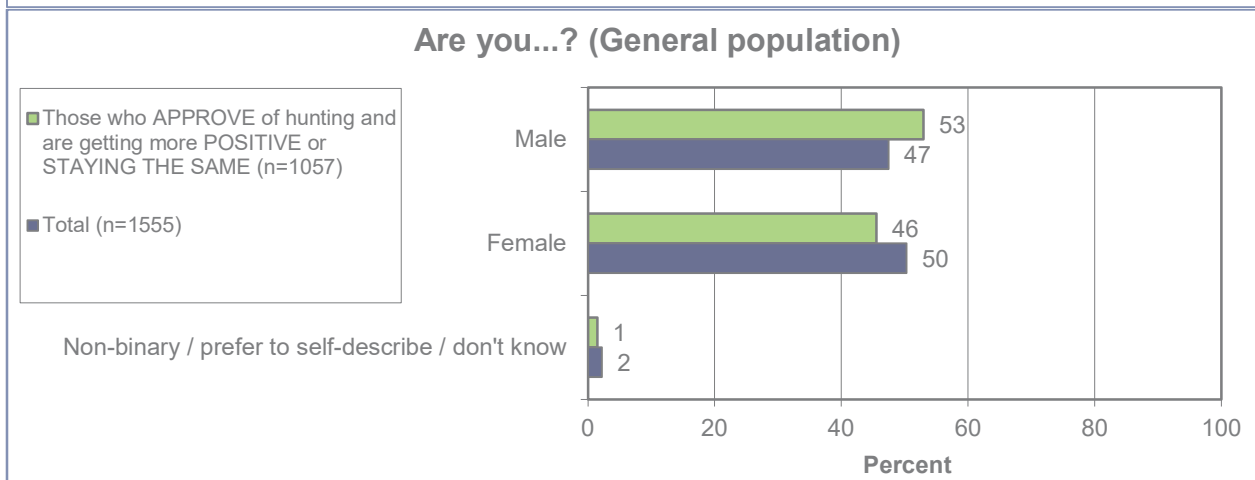
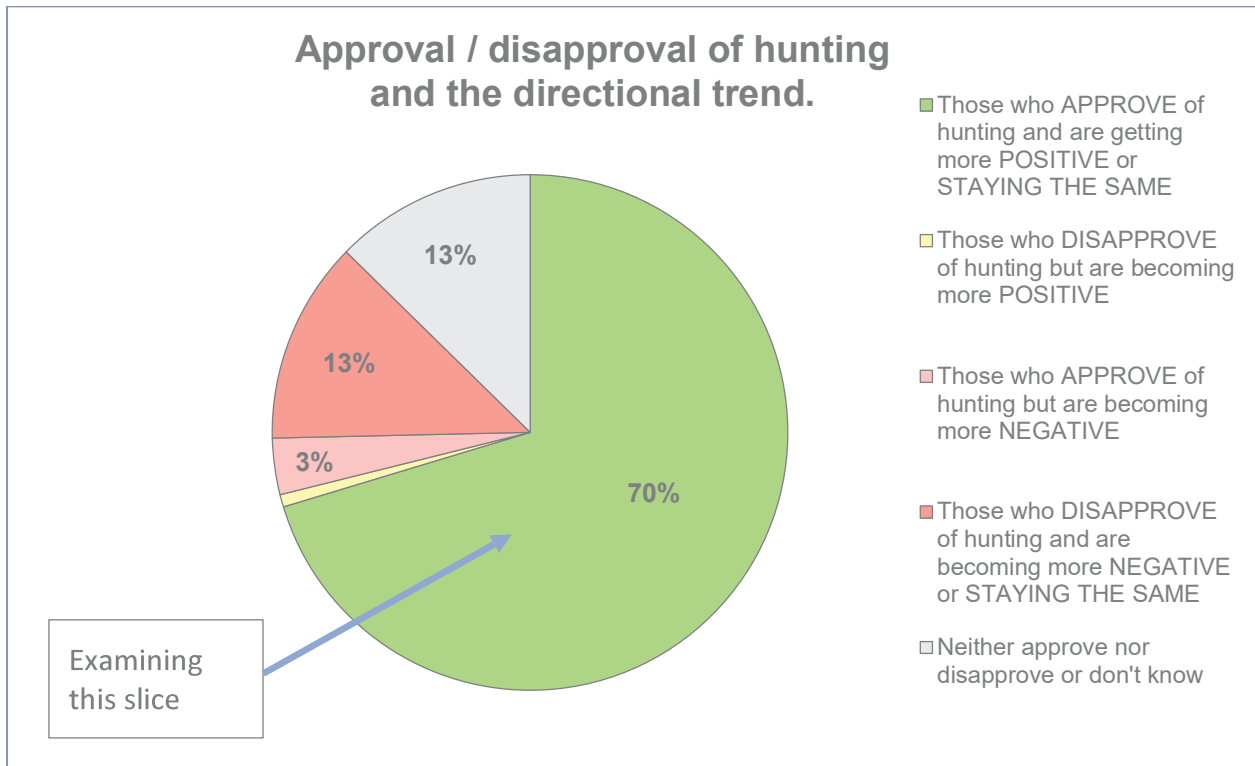
Other groups could be defined by approval or disapproval of hunting and shooting combined with the direction in which they are moving. These groups are defined as shown in the pie graphs. The green and red segments are explored further (the yellow segment was too small for this analysis.)

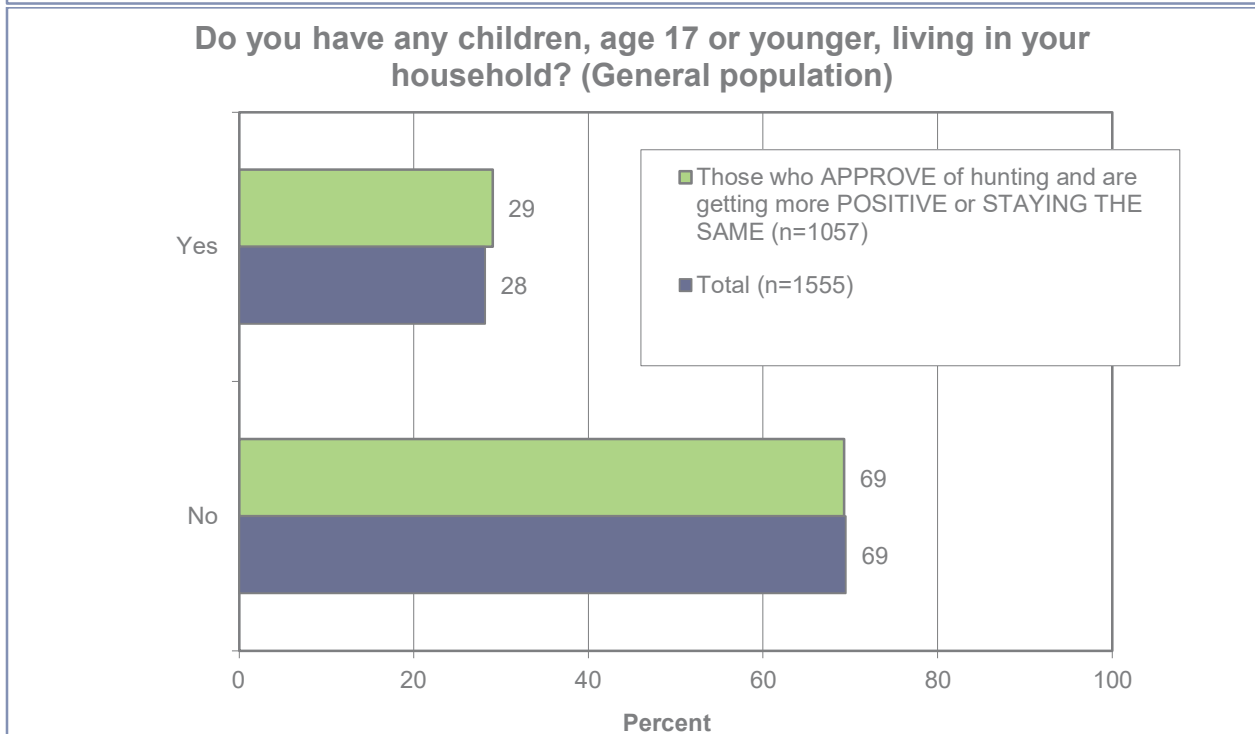
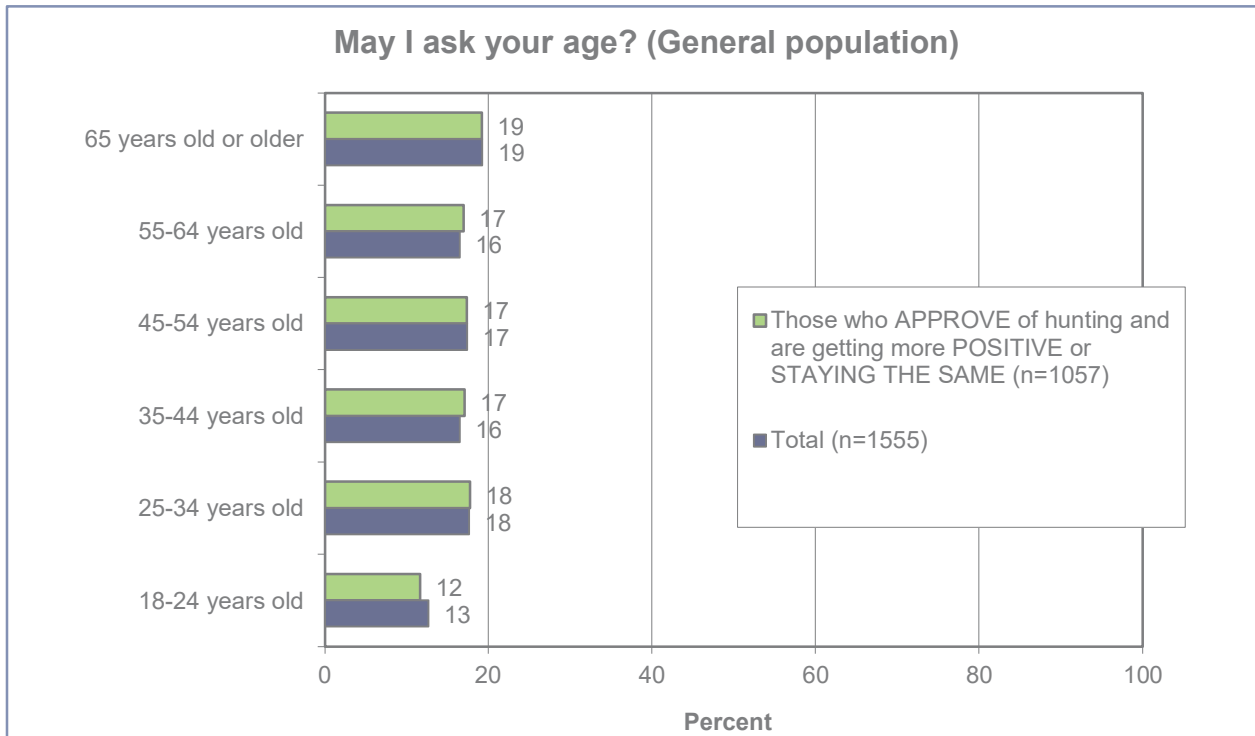


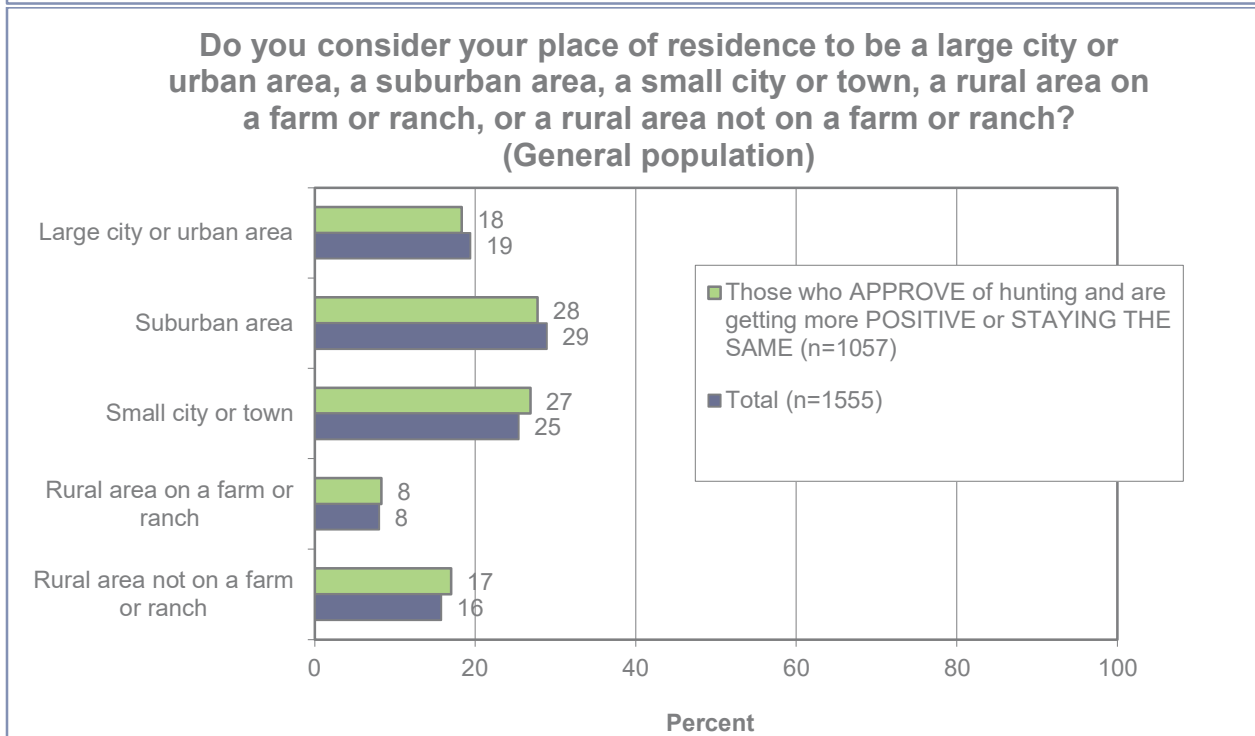
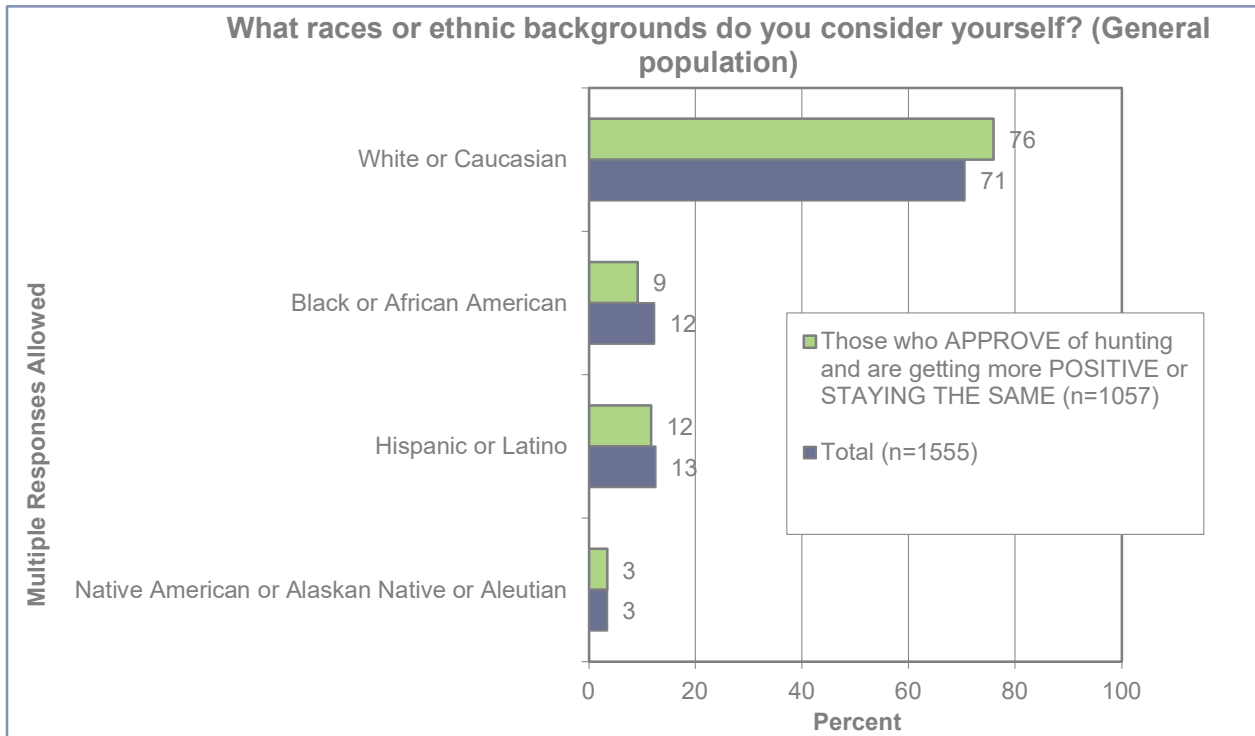
Currently Approve of Hunting, Becoming More Positive or Staying the Same

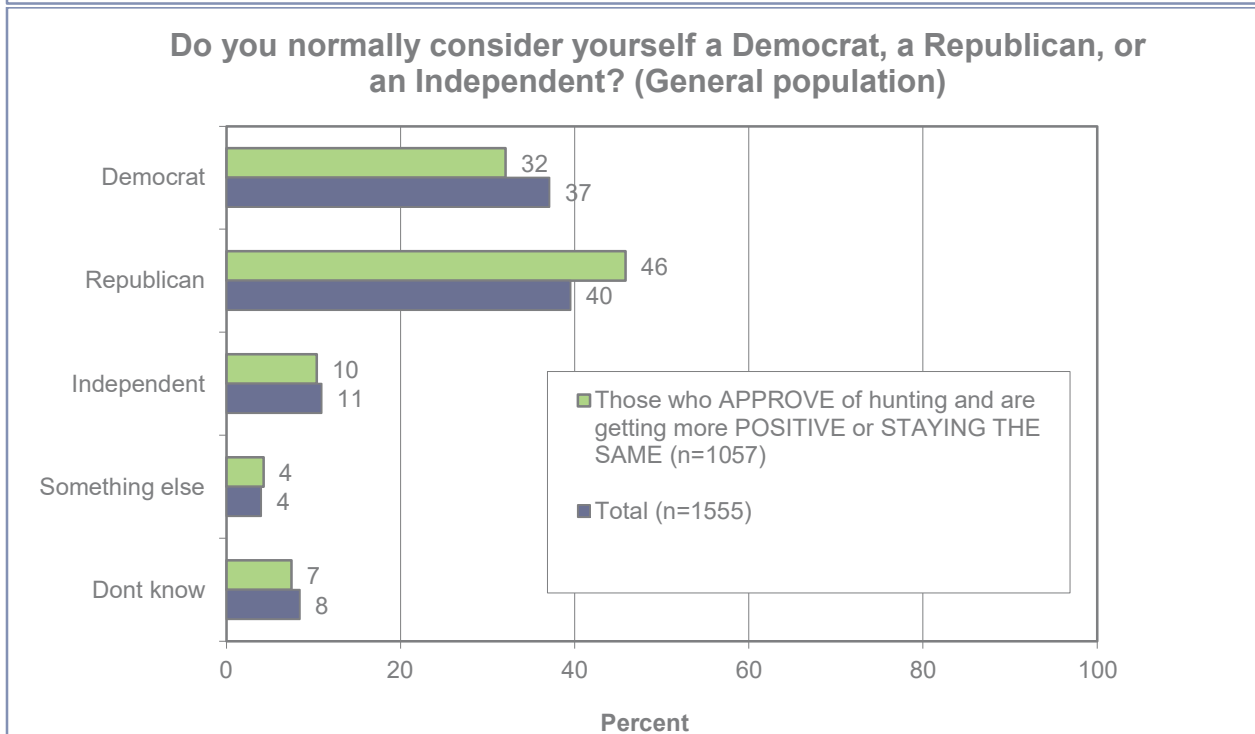
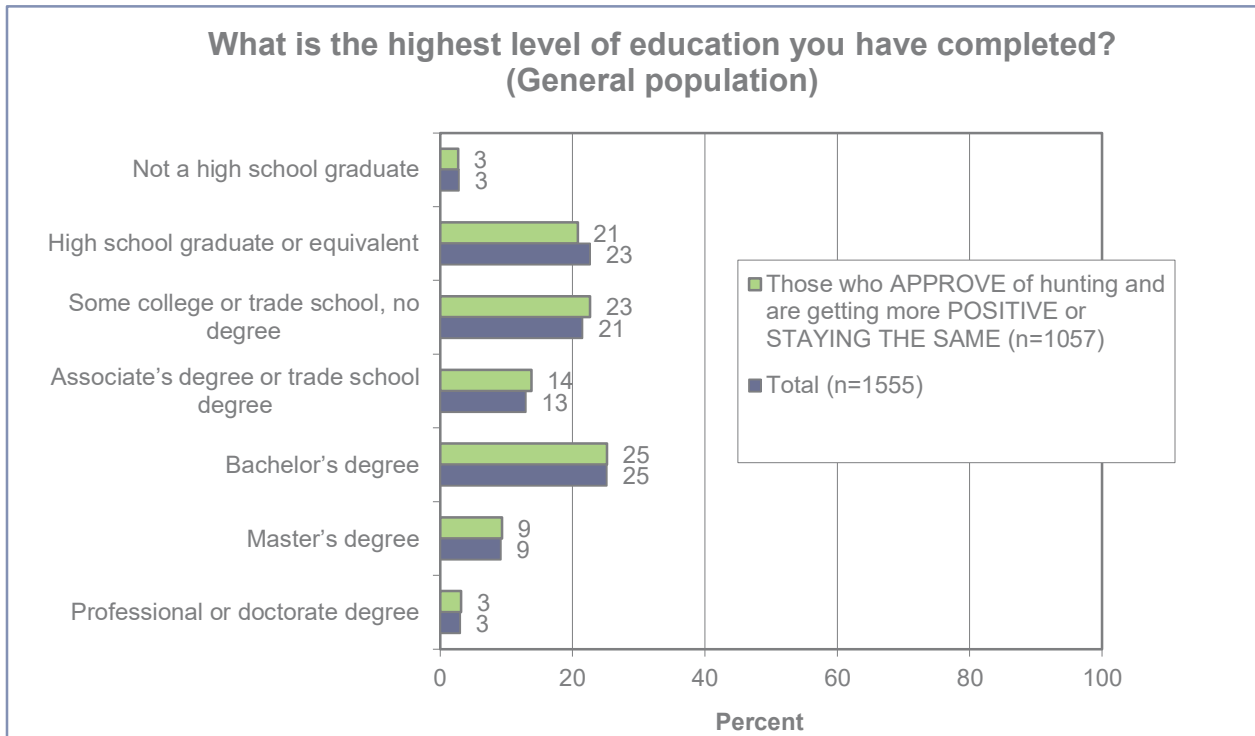
As shown on the next few pages of graphs, those who *currently approve* of hunting and are becoming *more positive* (or staying the same) are:

- Slightly more male than female.
- Slightly more White than the general population.
- About half Republican and a third Democratic (the rest being not aligned).
- About the same in age, in having children in the household, ethnically, in residential area in which they live, and in education.





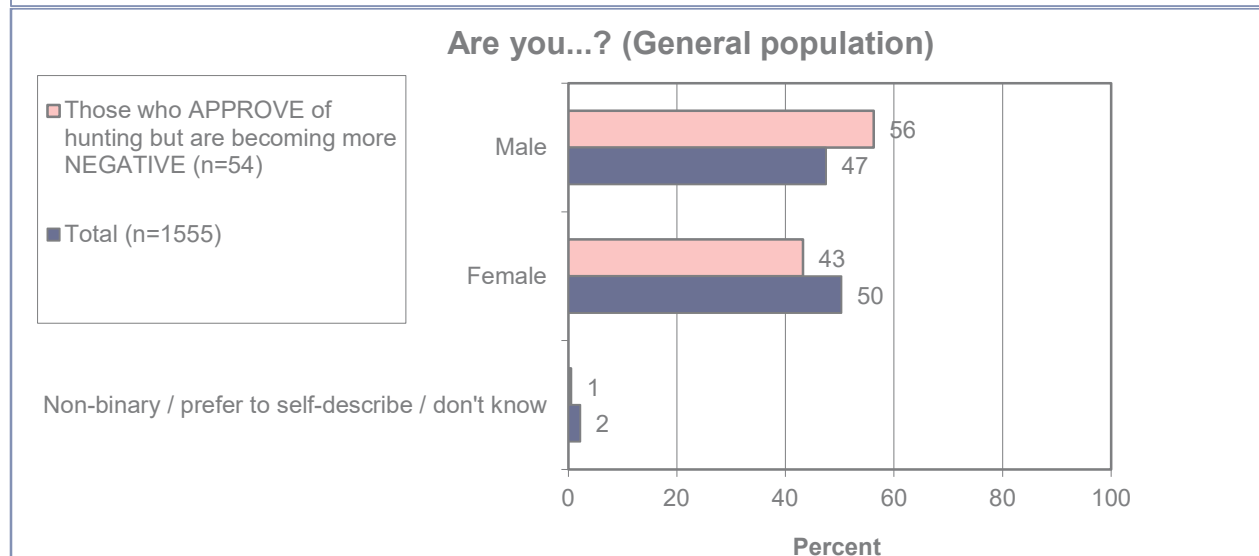
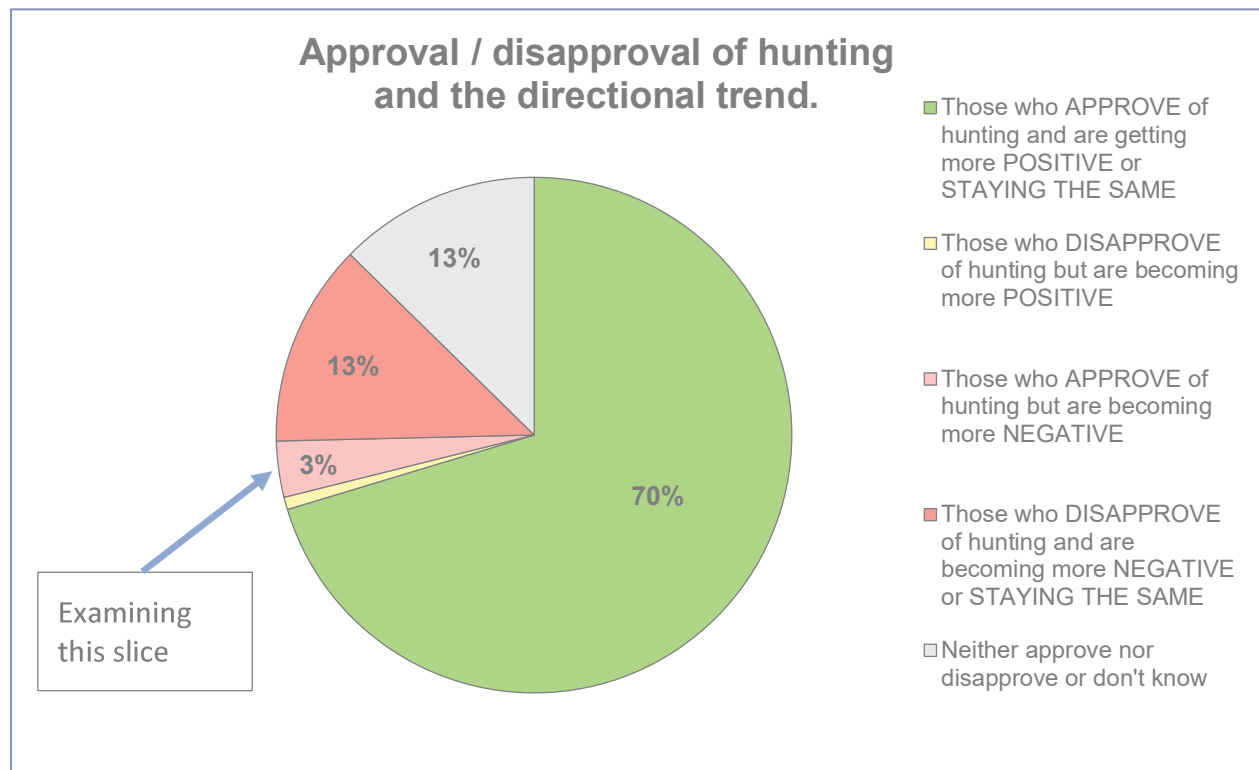


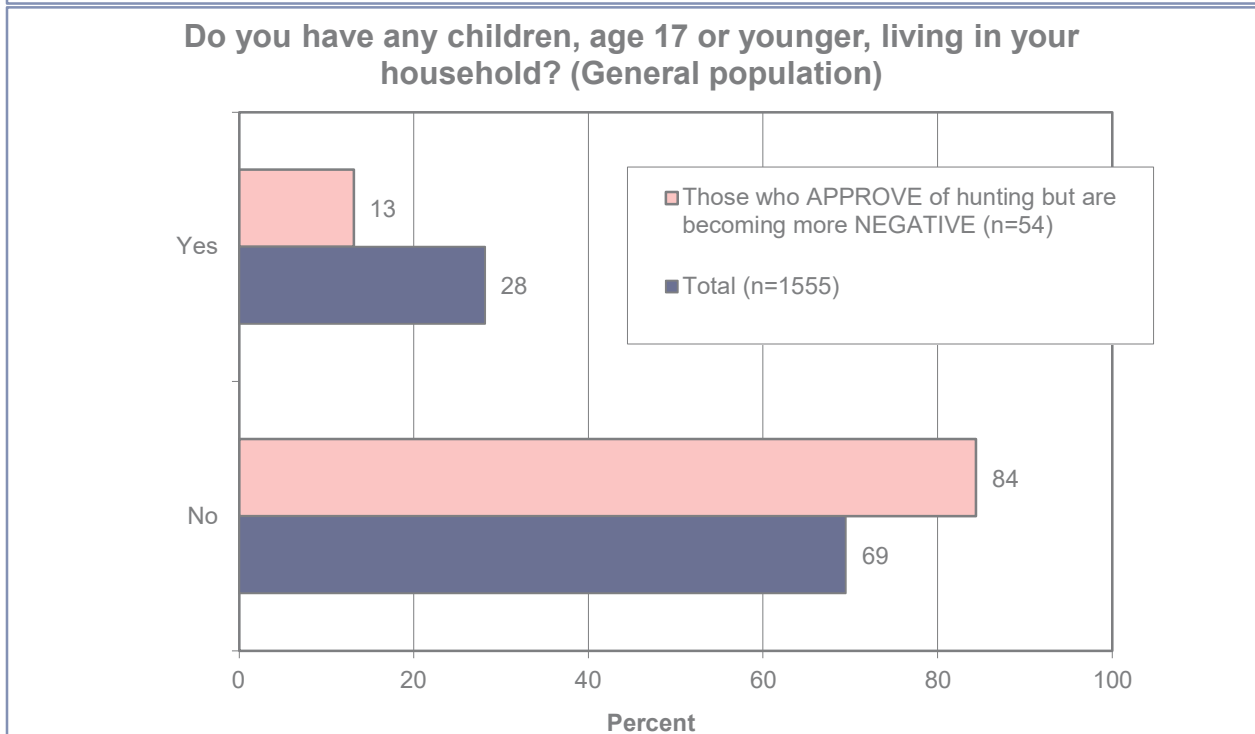
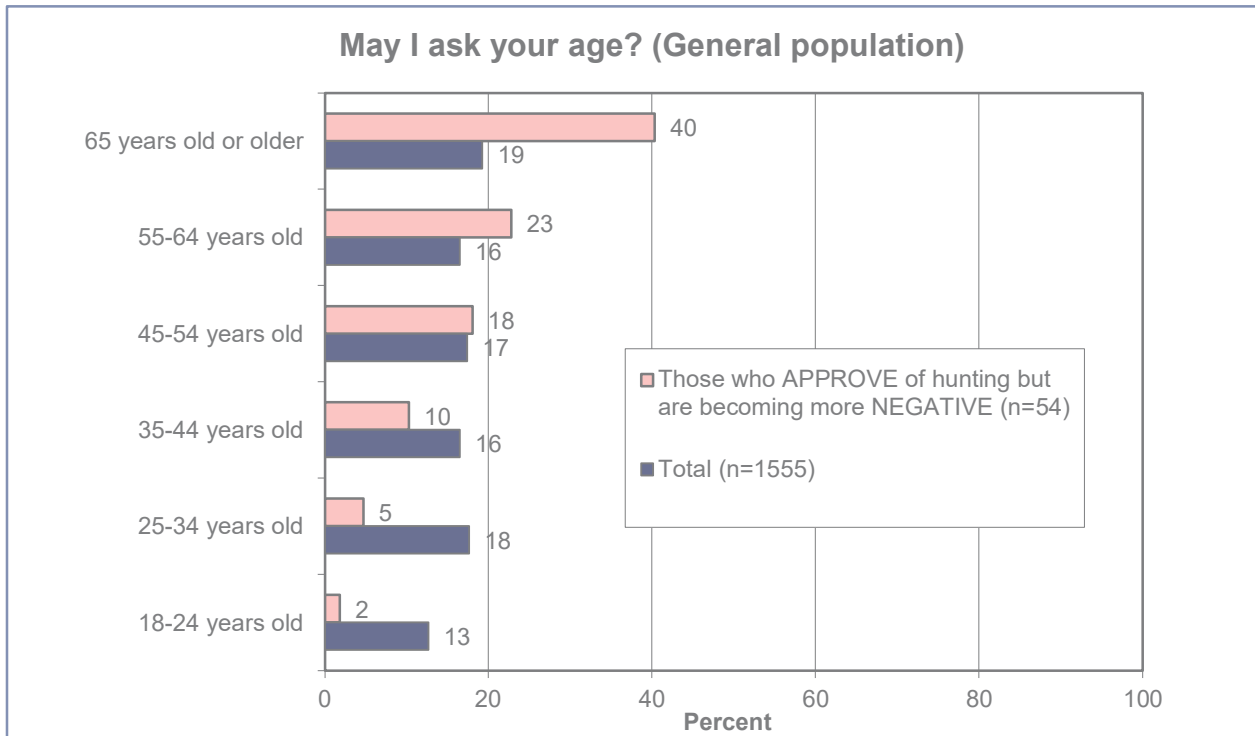


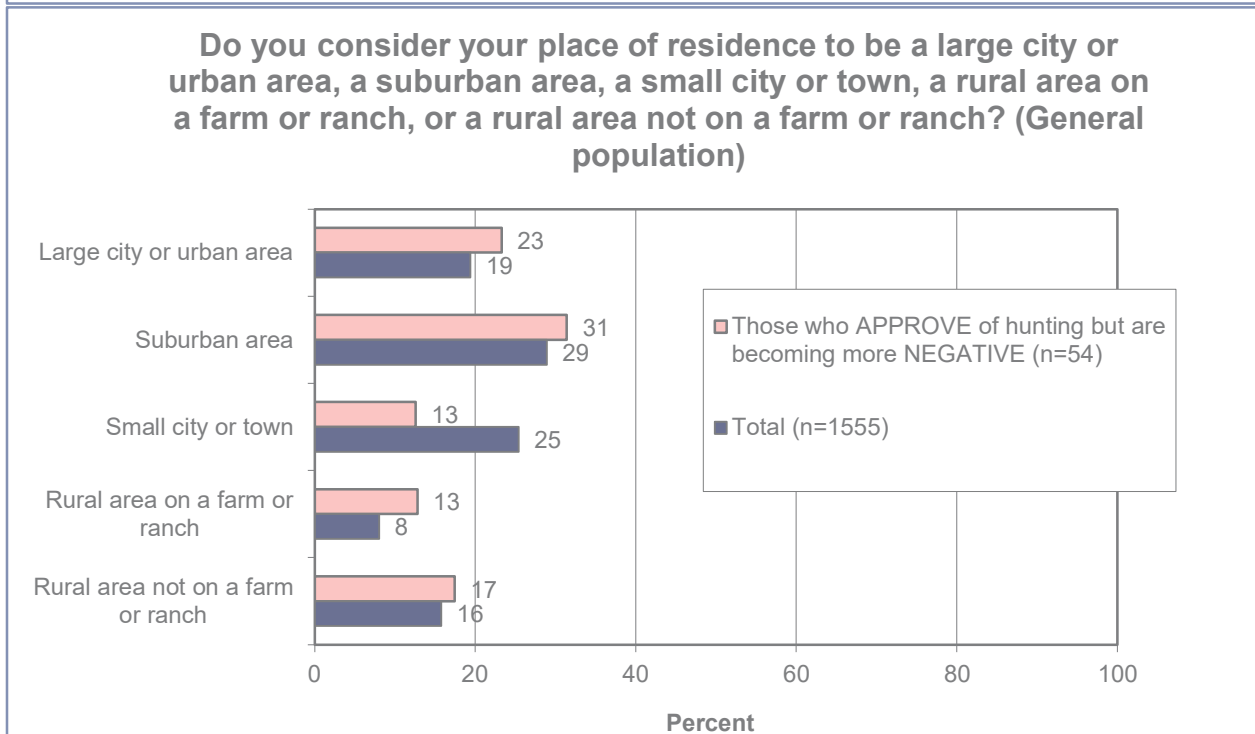
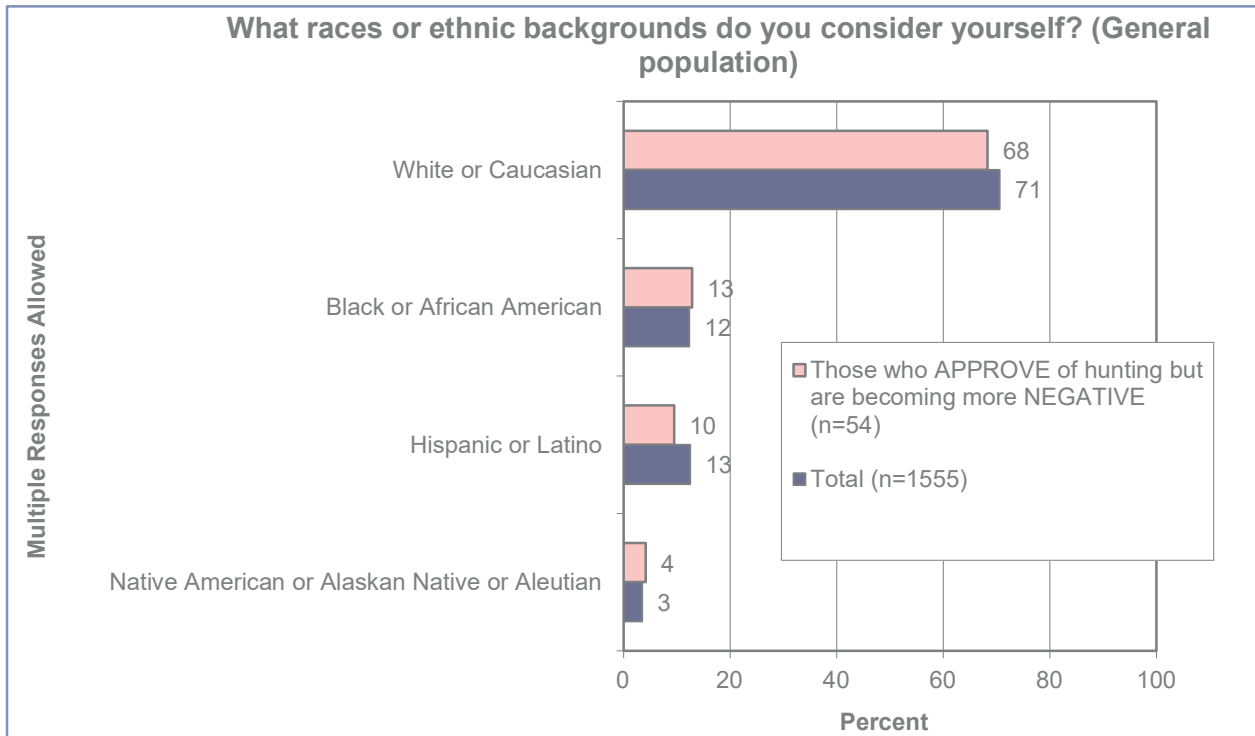
Currently Approve of Hunting, Becoming More Negative

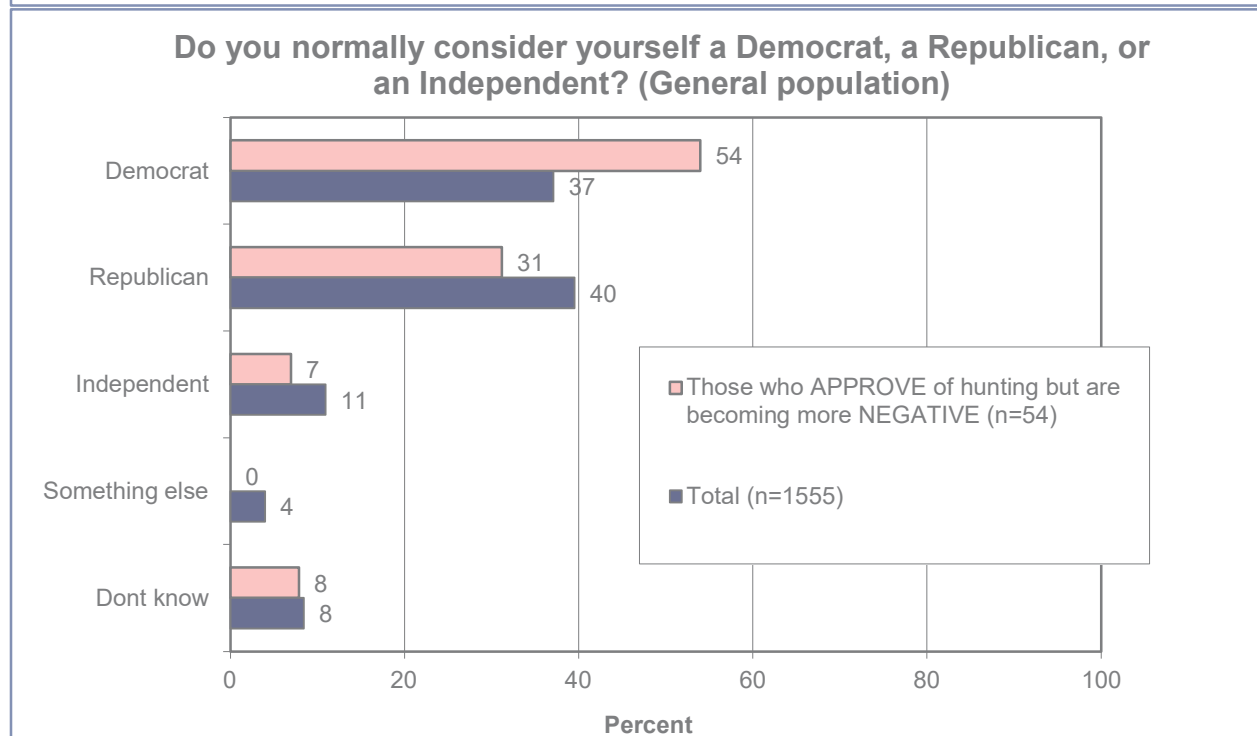
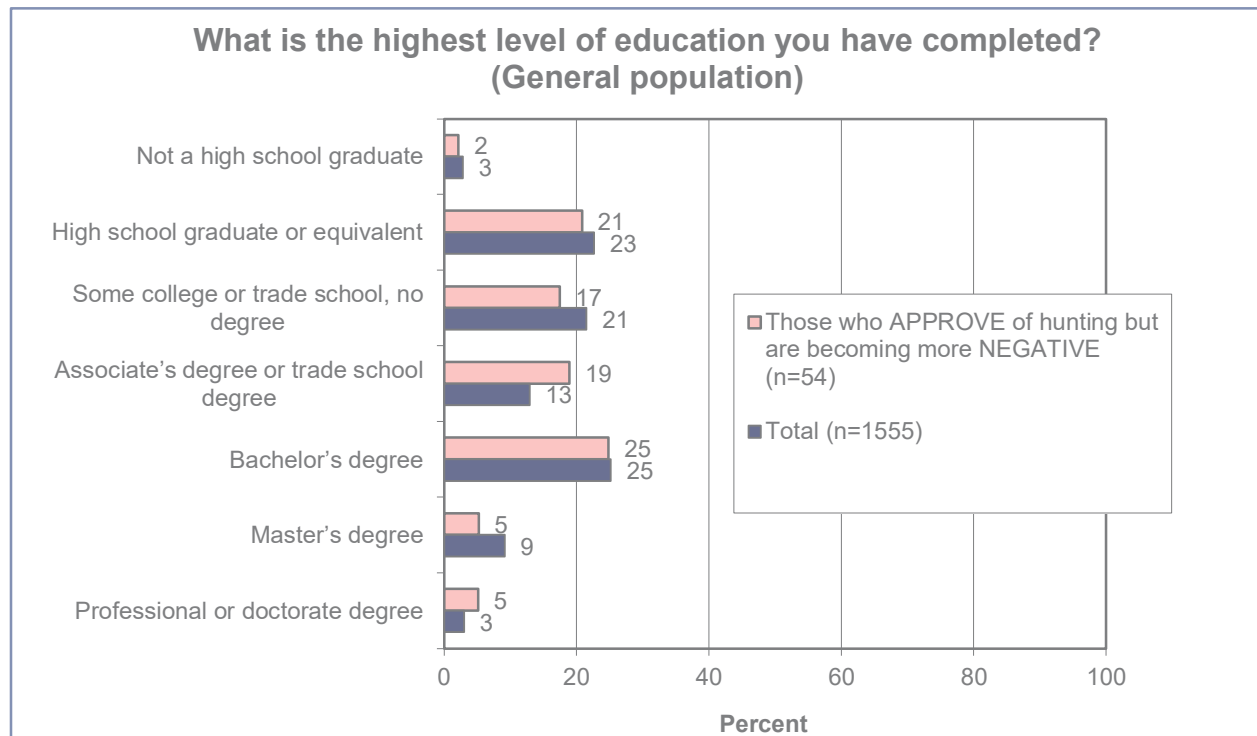
As shown on the next few pages of graphs, those who *currently approve* of hunting but are becoming *more negative* are:

- More male than female, and skew to the older age brackets.
- Less likely than the general population to have children in the household.
- Less likely than the general population to live in a small city or town (they are more urban/suburban *and* more rural).
- About half Democratic and a third Republican (the rest being not aligned).
- About the same ethnically and educationally as the general population.





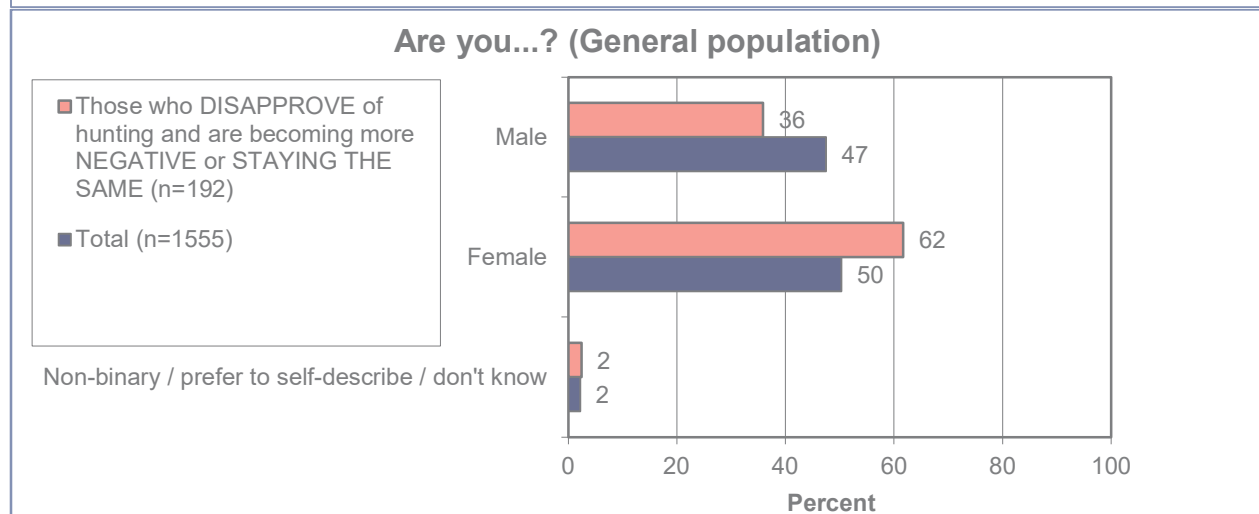
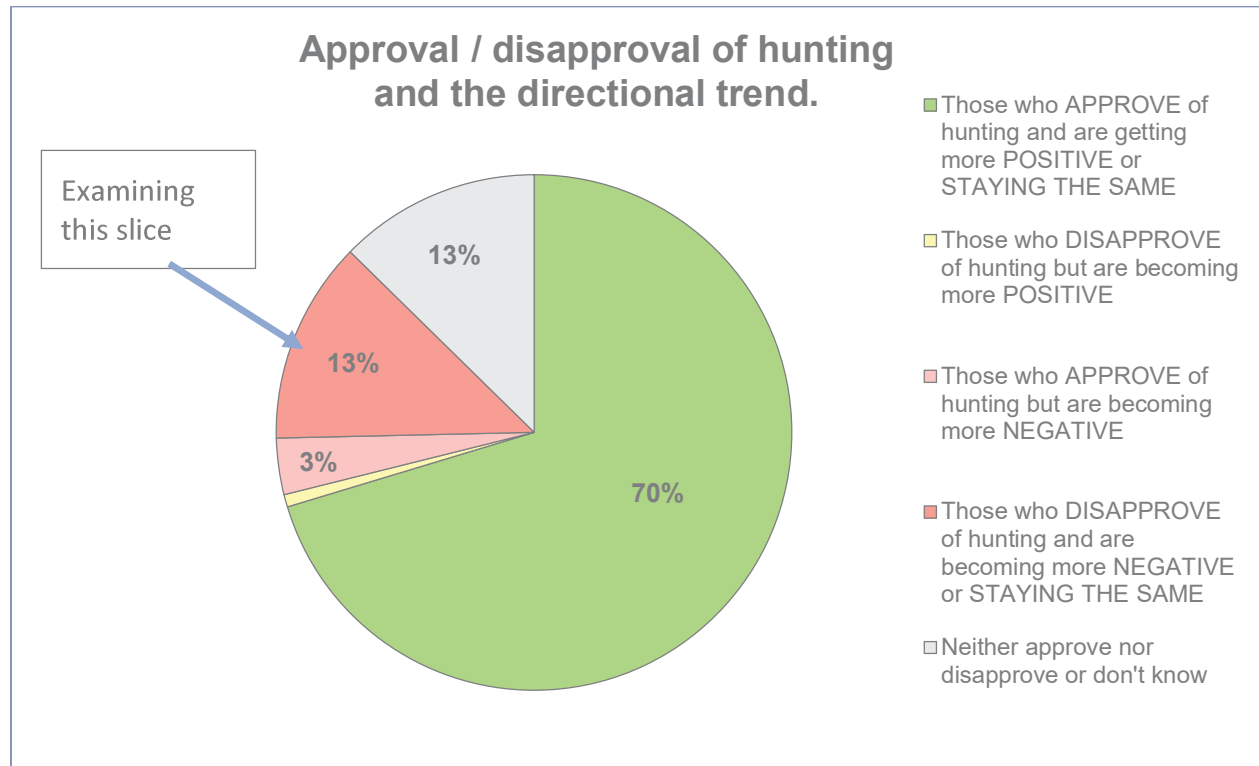


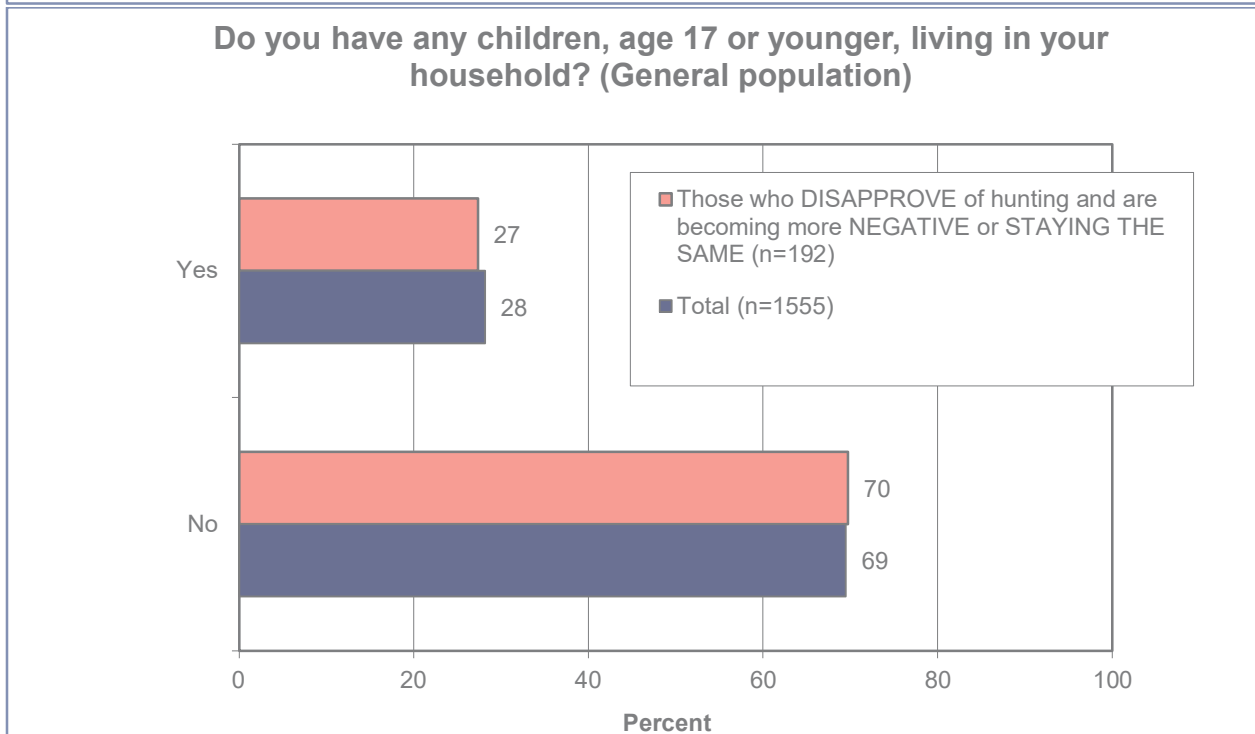
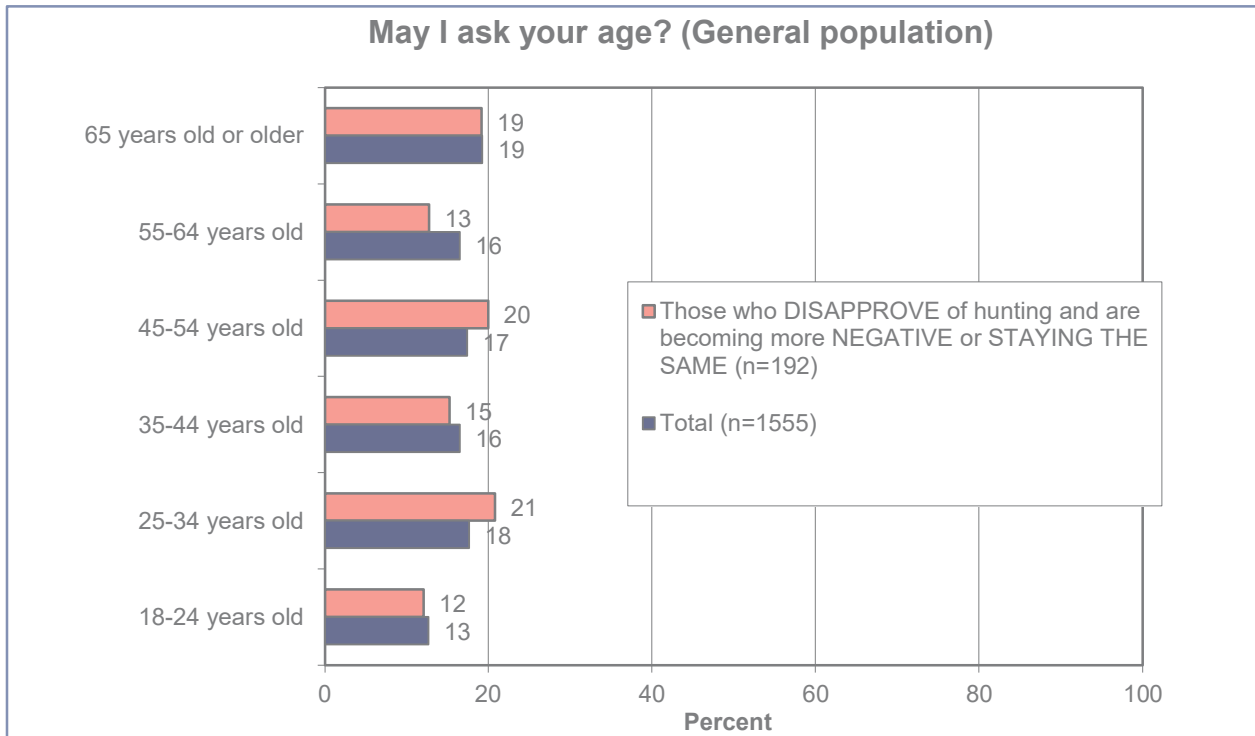


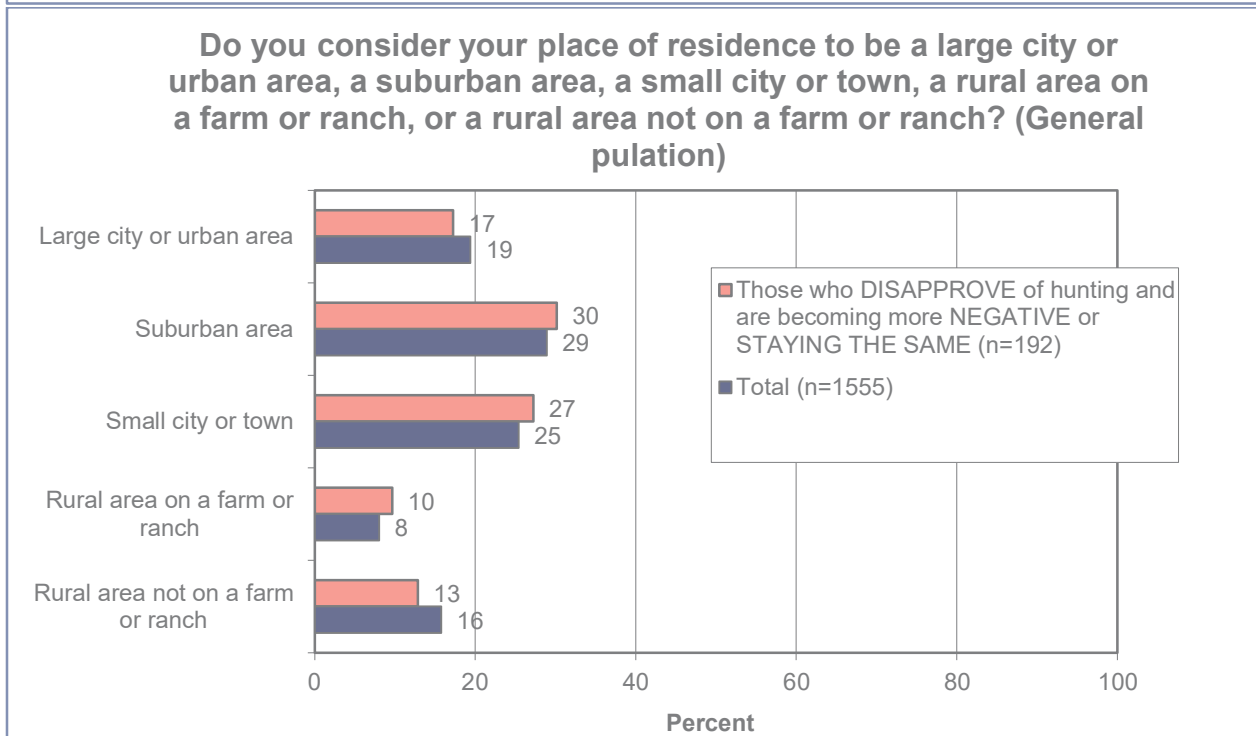
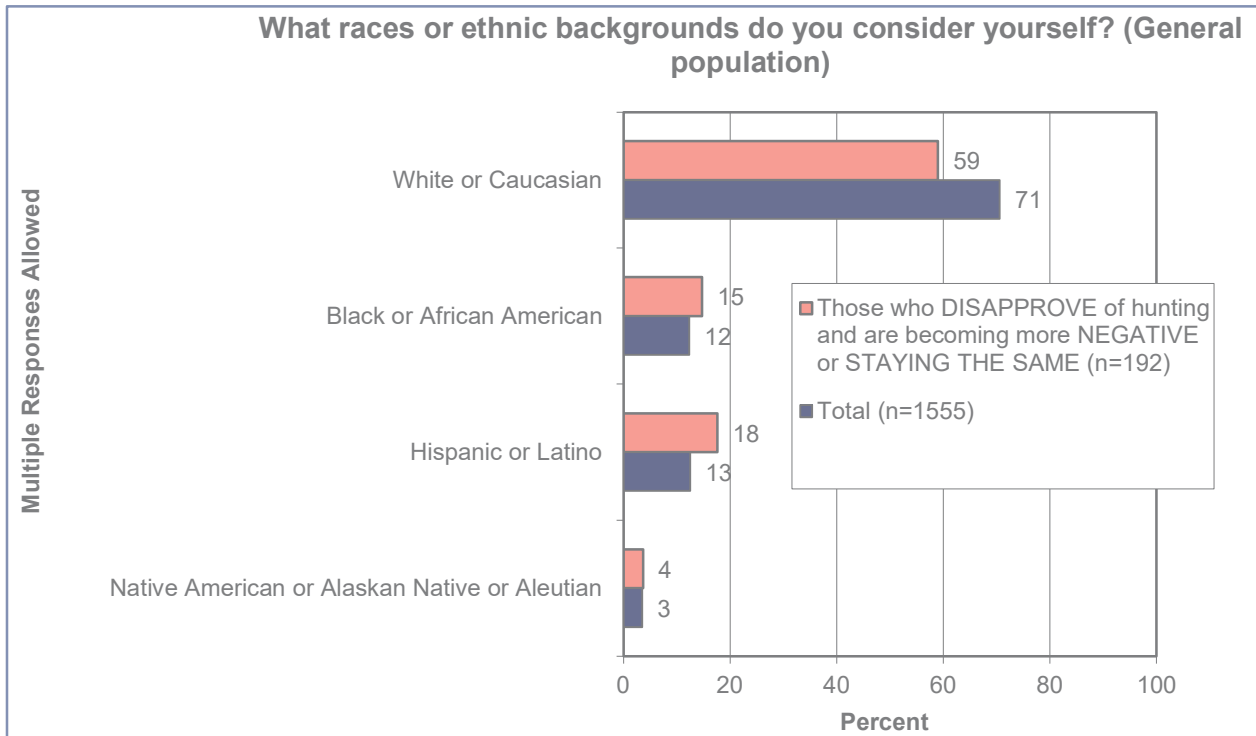
Currently Disapprove of Hunting, Becoming More Negative or Staying the Same

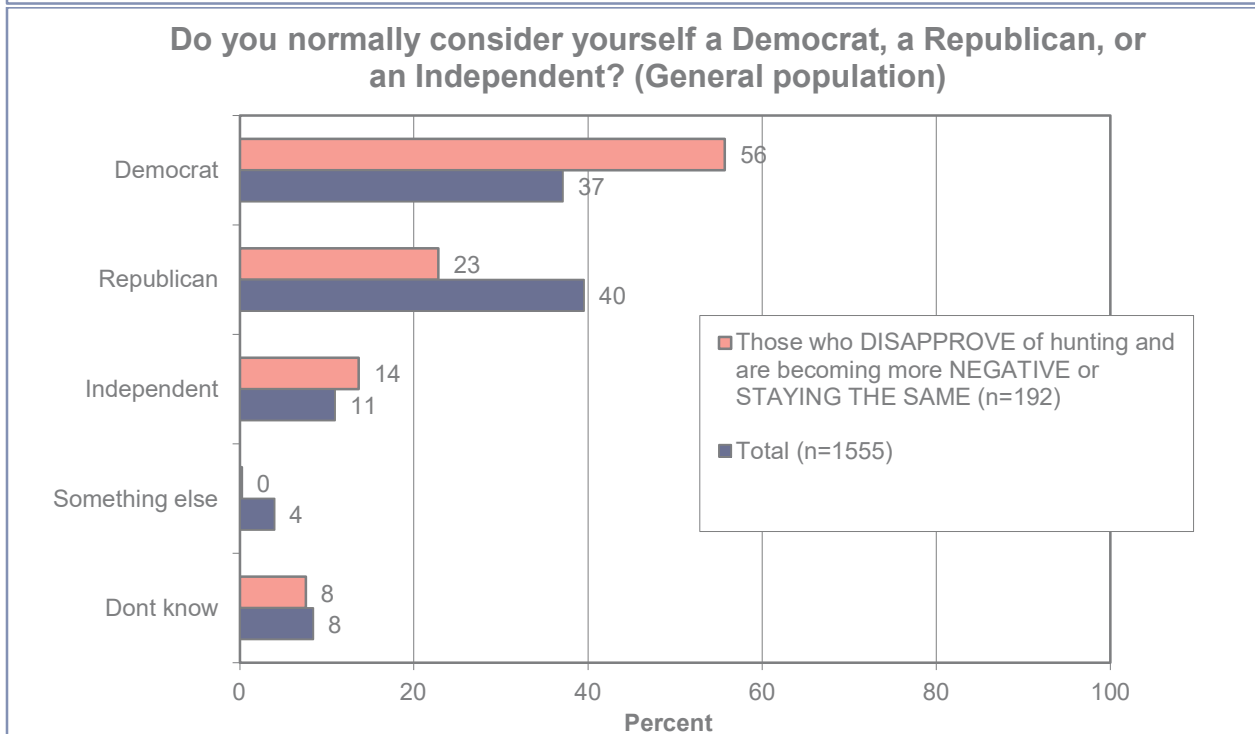
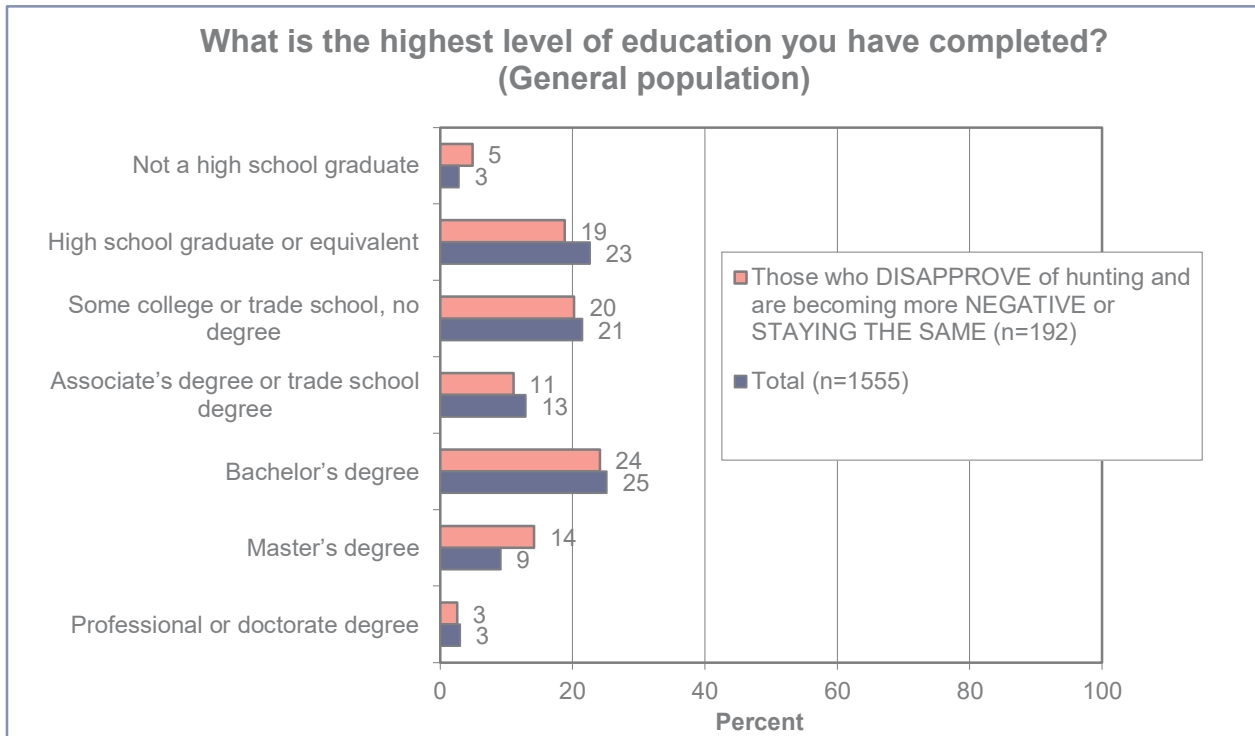
As shown on the next few pages of graphs, those who *currently disapprove* of hunting and are becoming *more negative* (or are staying the same) are:

- Much more female than male.
- More likely to Black or Hispanic than the general population.
- Much more Democratic than Republican.
- About the same in age, having children in the household, in the residential area in which they live, and in education.





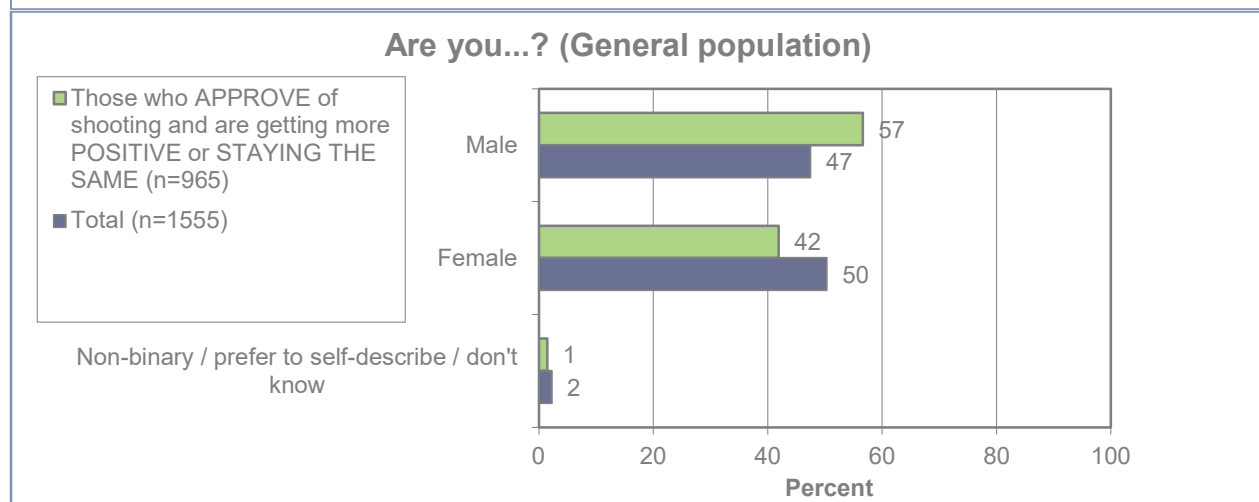
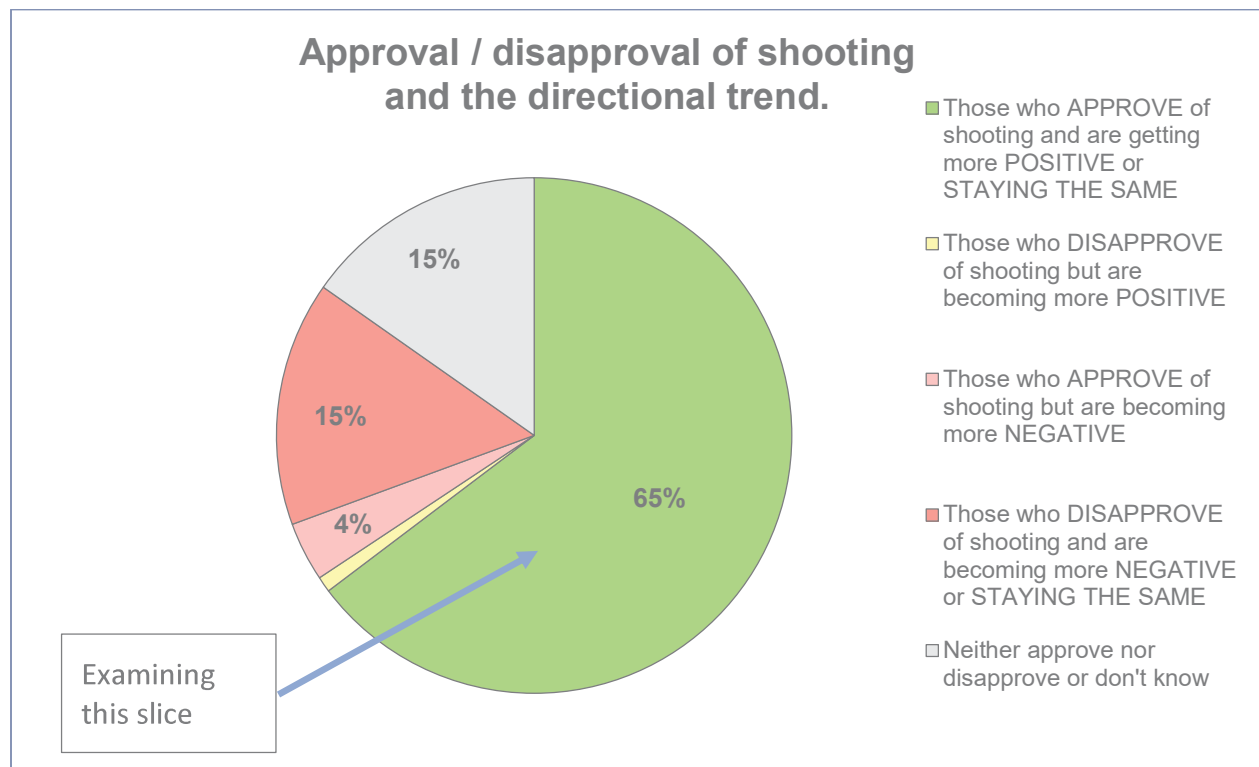


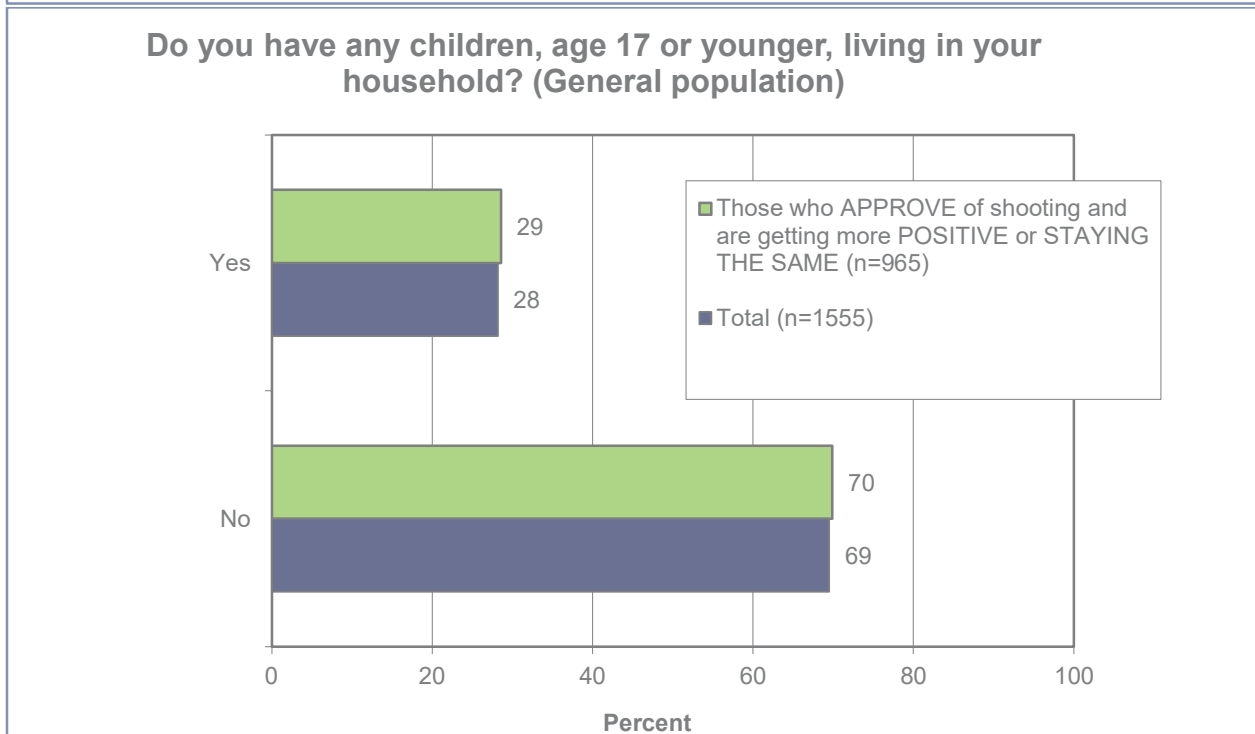
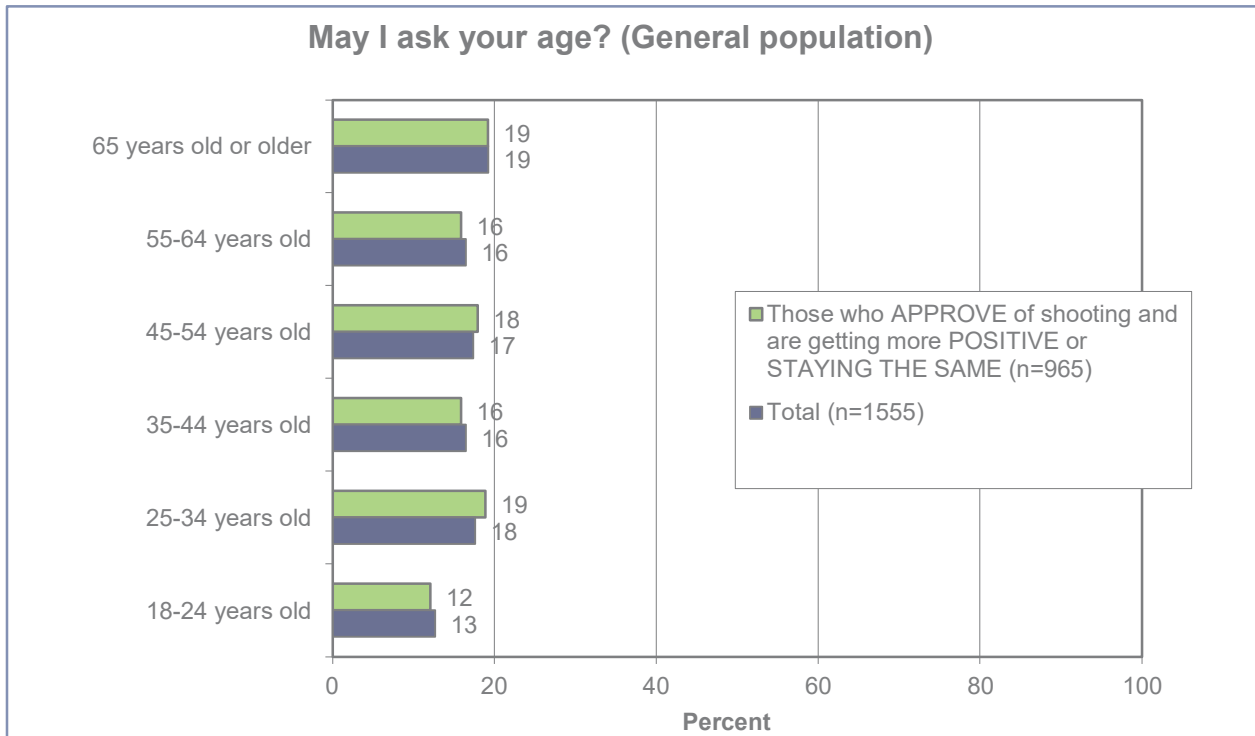


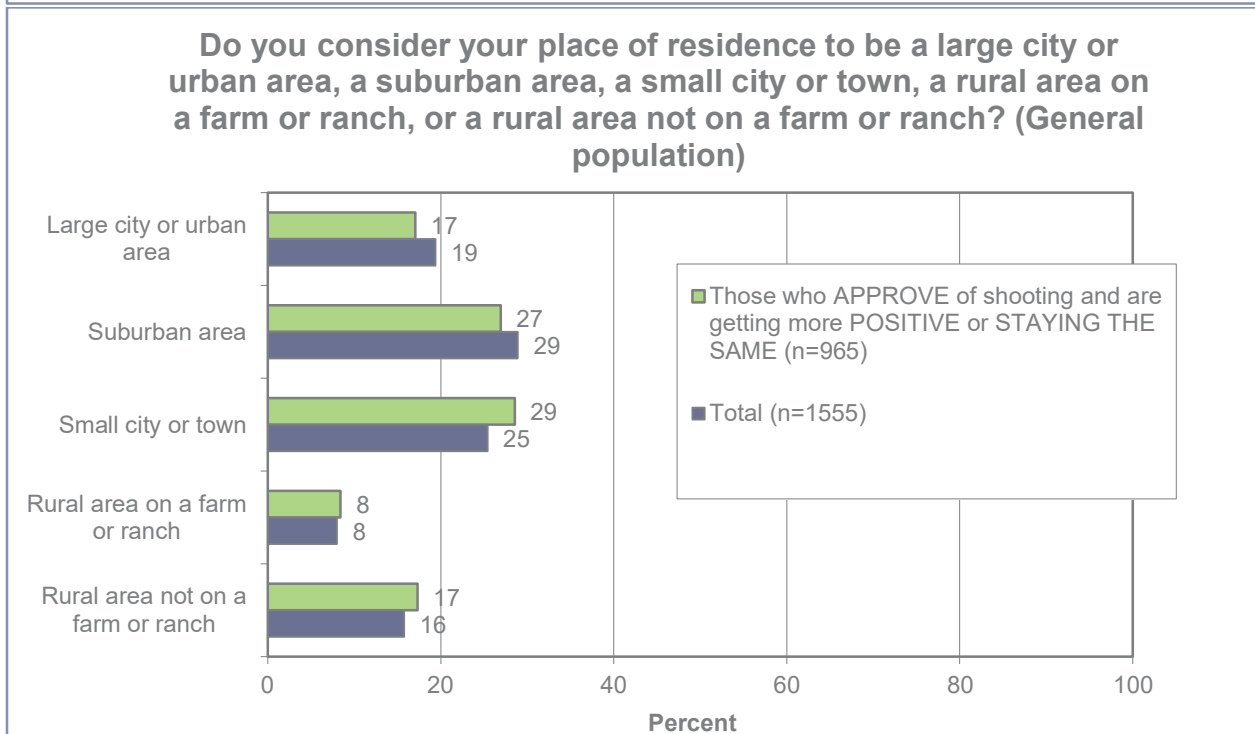
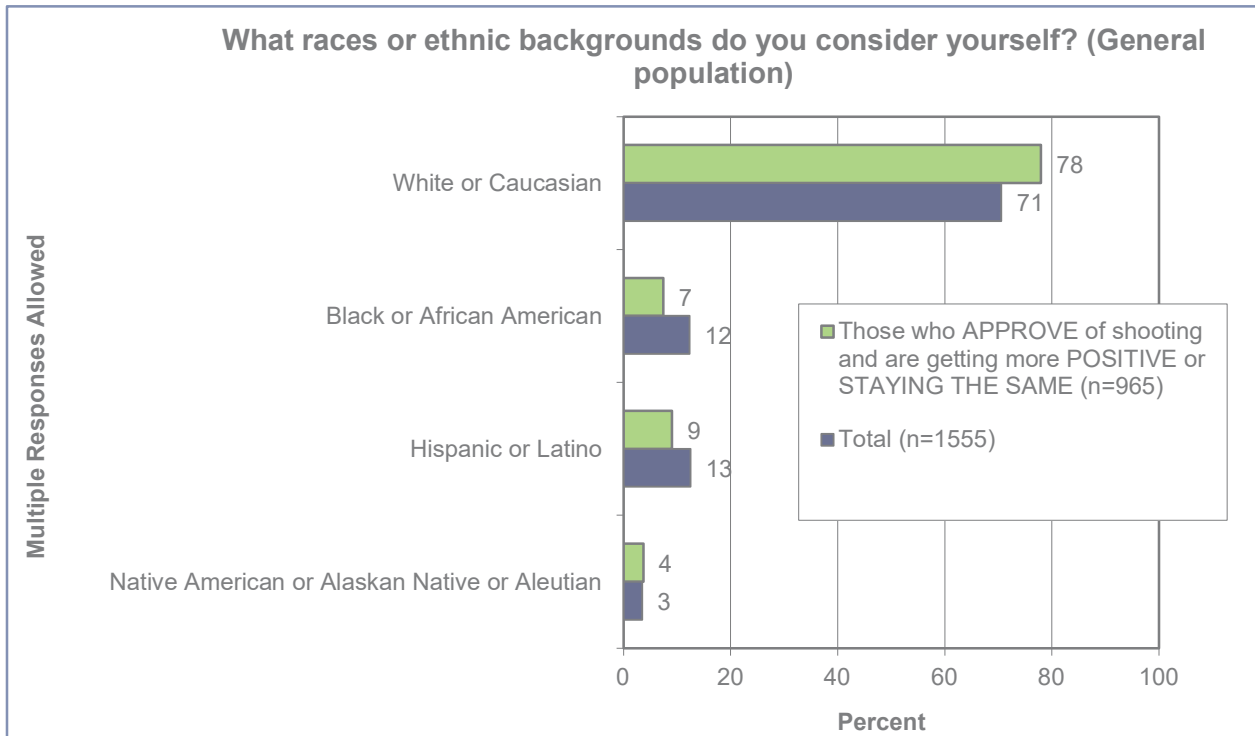
Currently Approve of Target Shooting, Becoming More Positive or Staying the Same

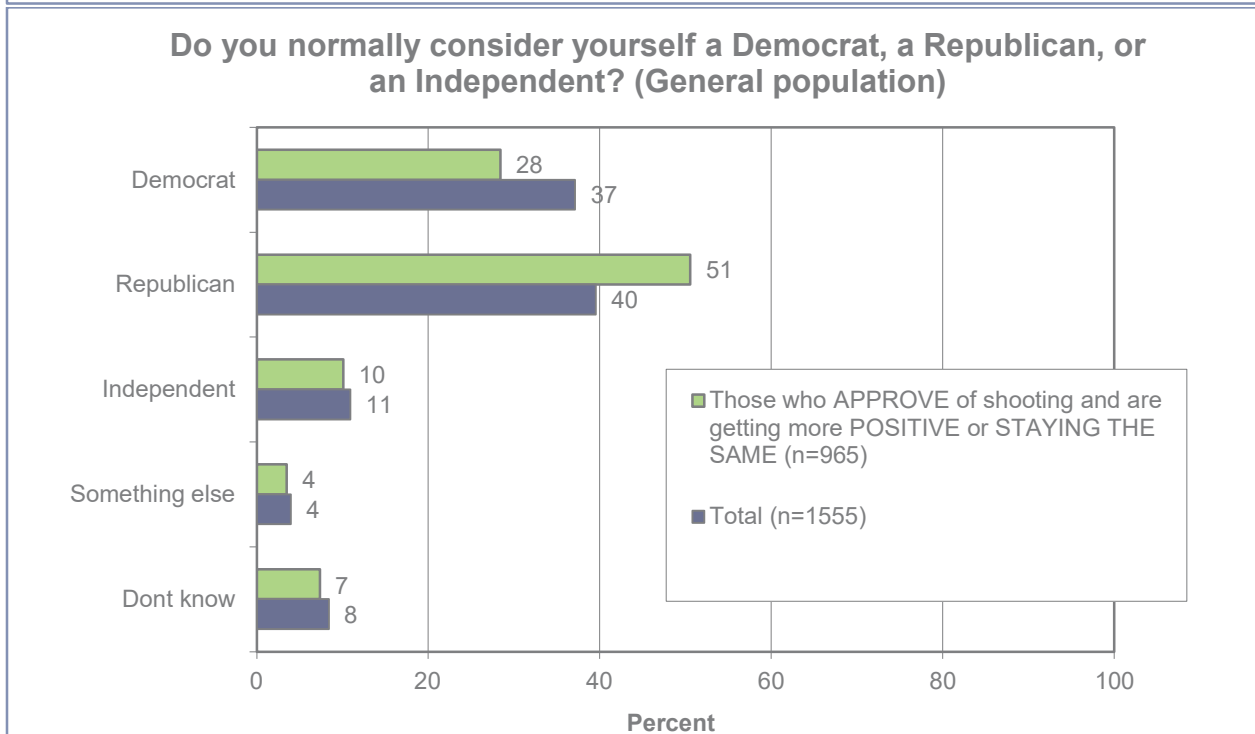
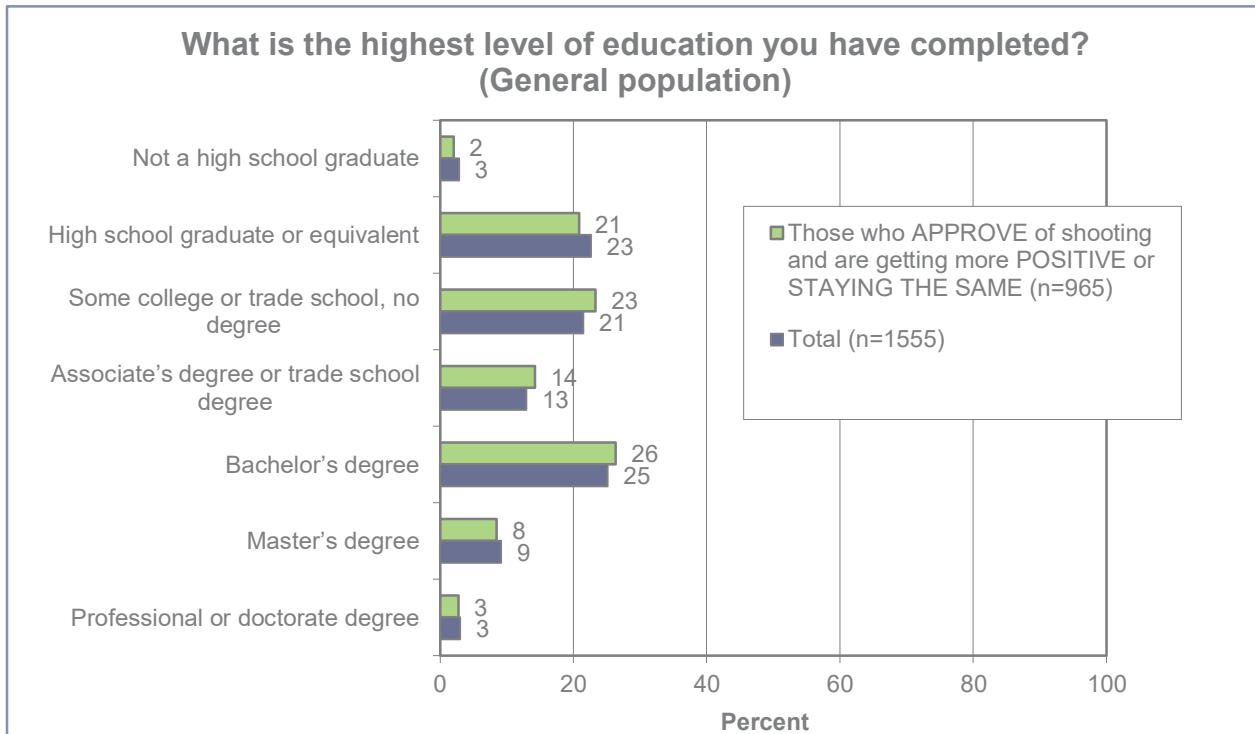
As shown on the next few pages of graphs, those who *currently approve* of shooting and are becoming *more positive* (or staying the same) are:

- Slightly more male than female.
- Slightly more White than the general population.
- About half Republican and a little more than a quarter Democratic (the rest being not aligned).
- About the same in age, having children in the household, in the residential area in which they live, and in education.





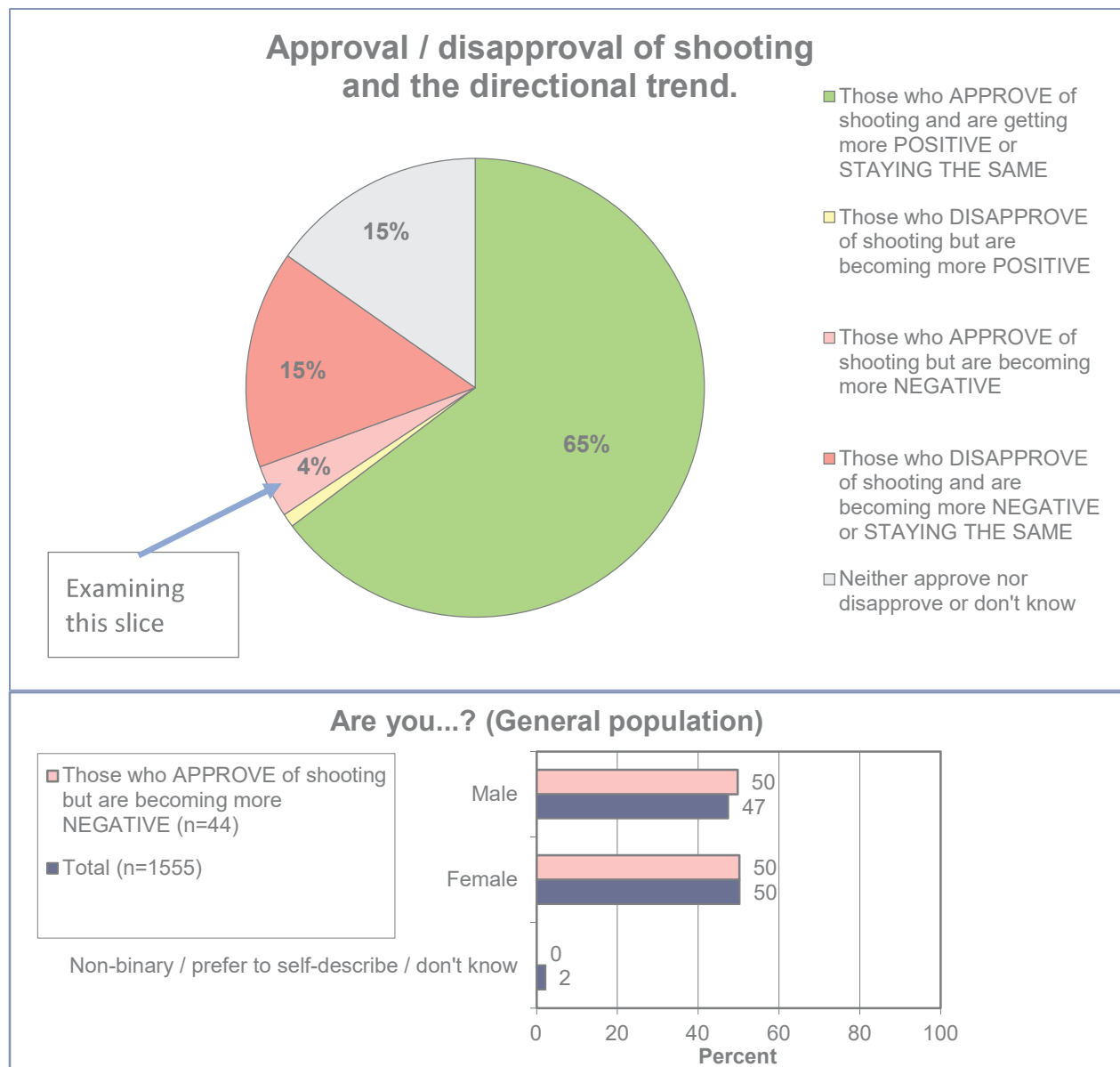


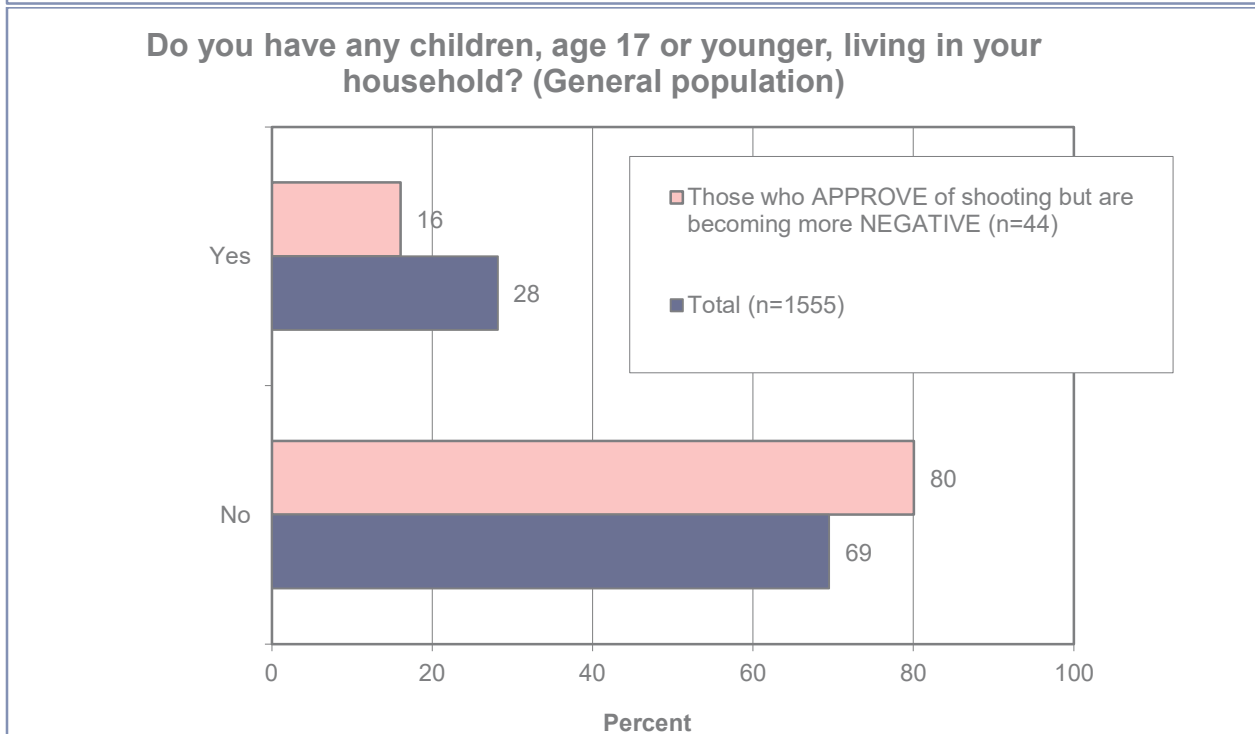
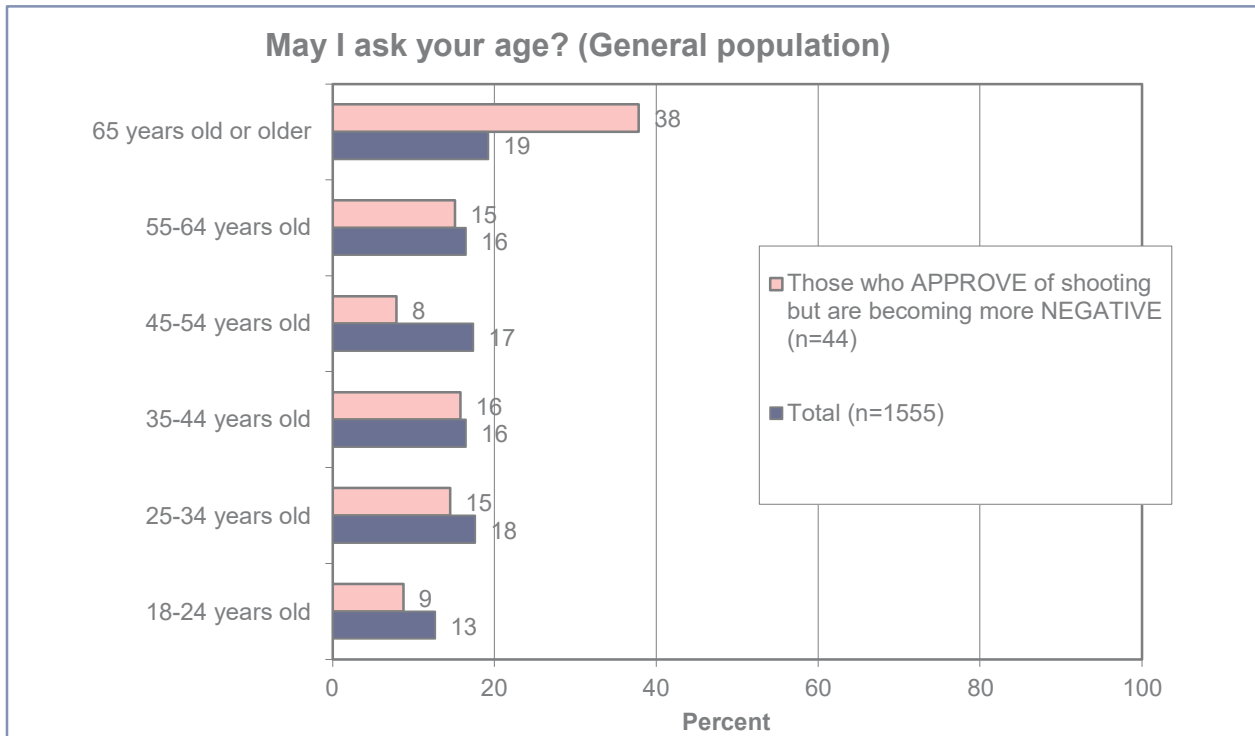


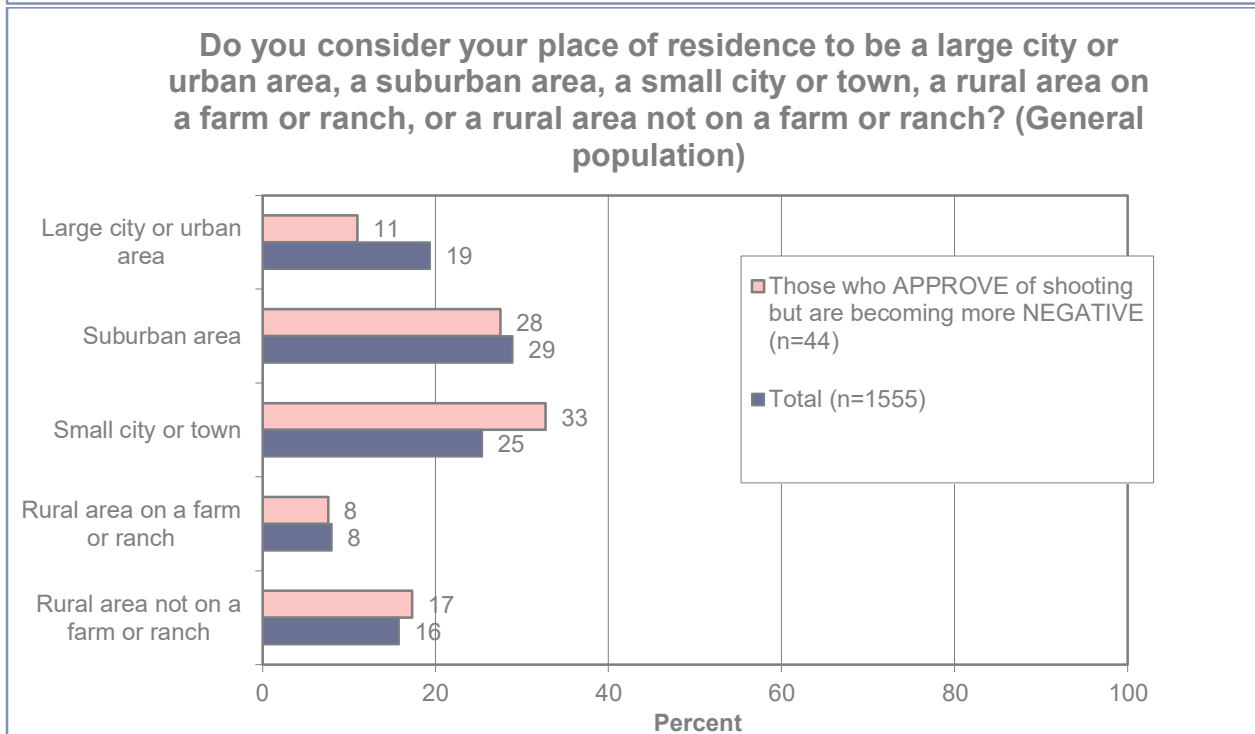
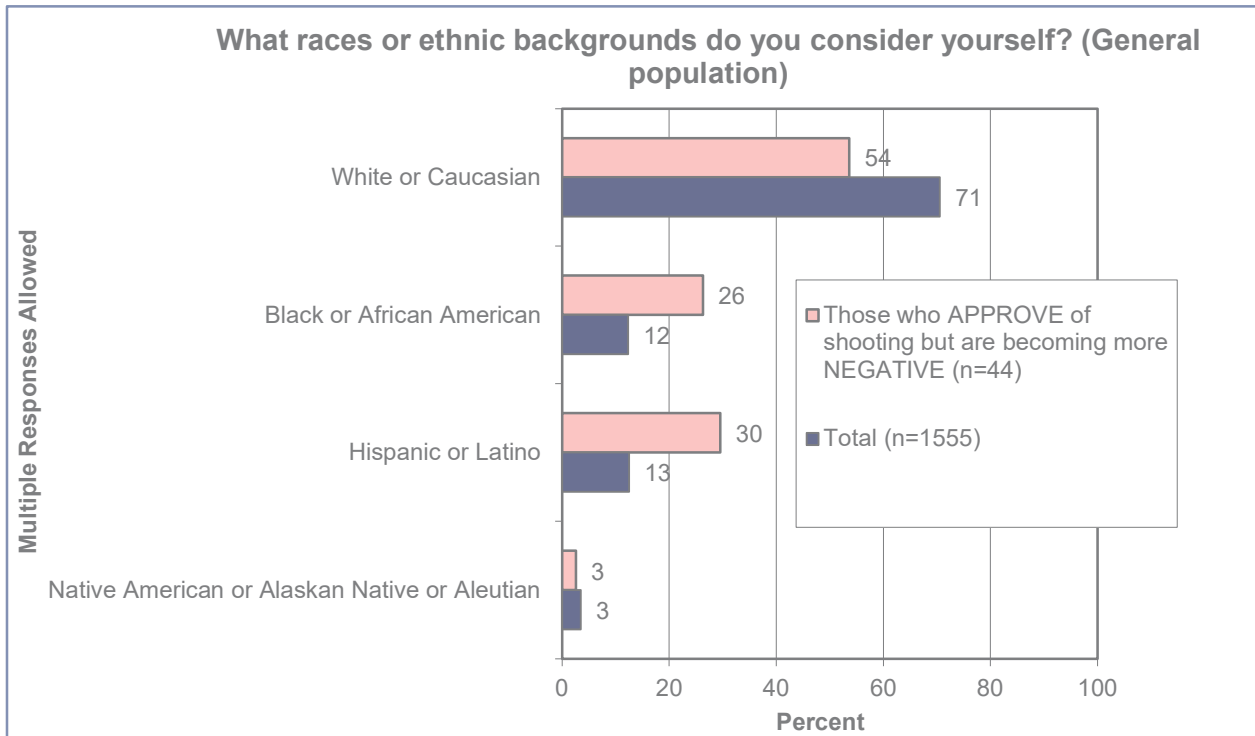
Currently Approve of Target Shooting, Becoming More Negative

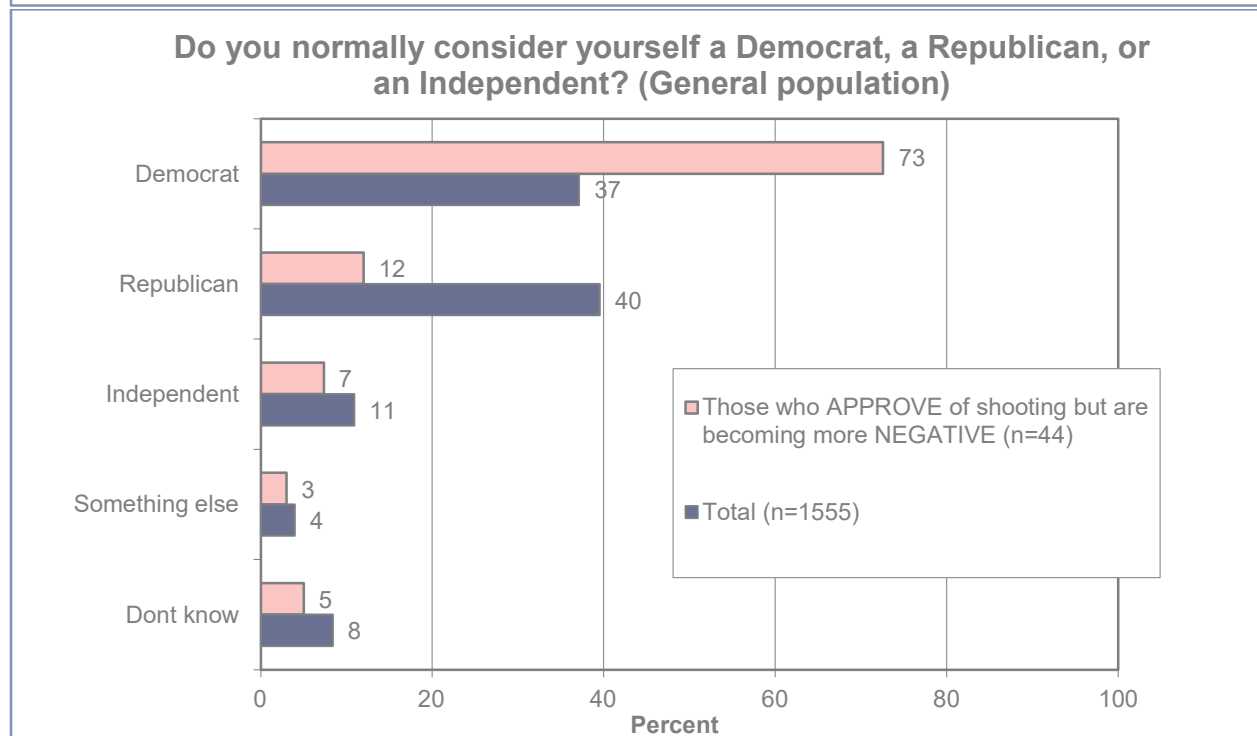
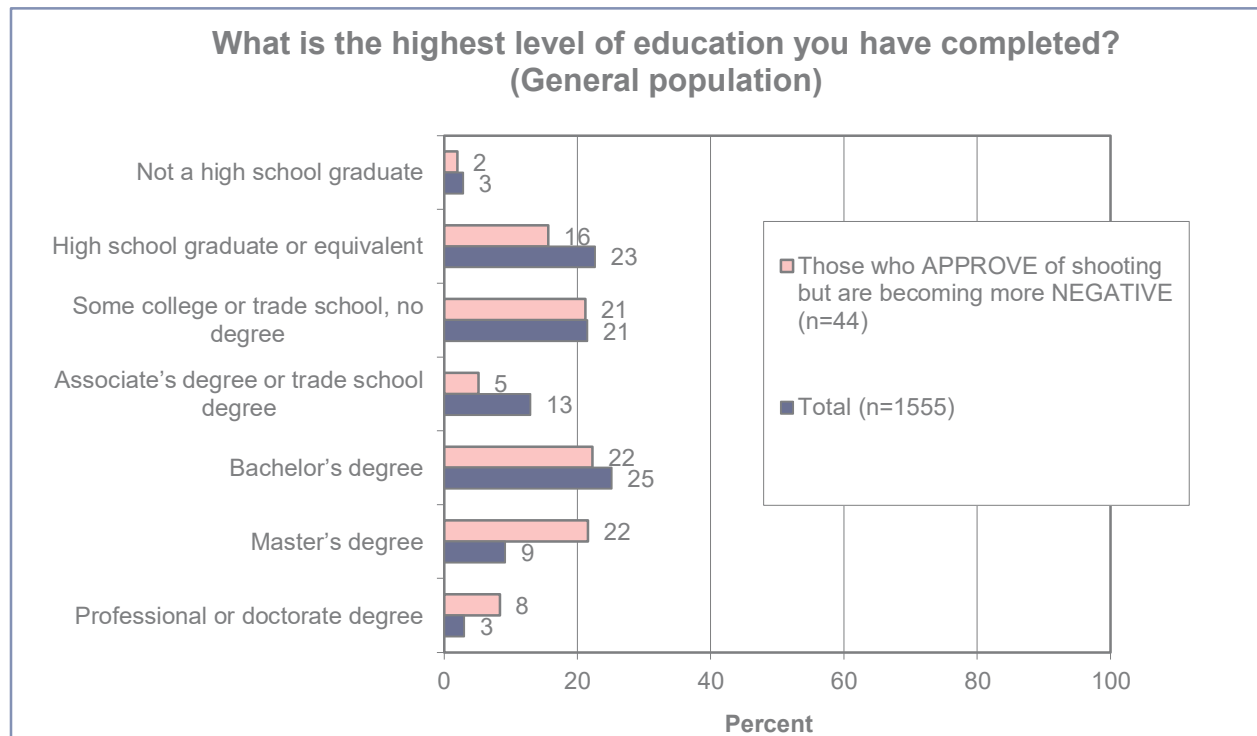
As shown on the next few pages of graphs, those who *currently approve* of shooting but are becoming *more negative* are:

- Much older than the general population.
- Much less likely to have children in their household compared to the general population.
- Much more likely to be Black or Hispanic than the general population.
- Much less likely to live in a large urban area but more likely to live in a small city or town (they are about the same regarding suburban or rural residence).
- Much more educated than the general population.
- About three quarters Democratic but only about an eighth Republican.
- About the same in gender.





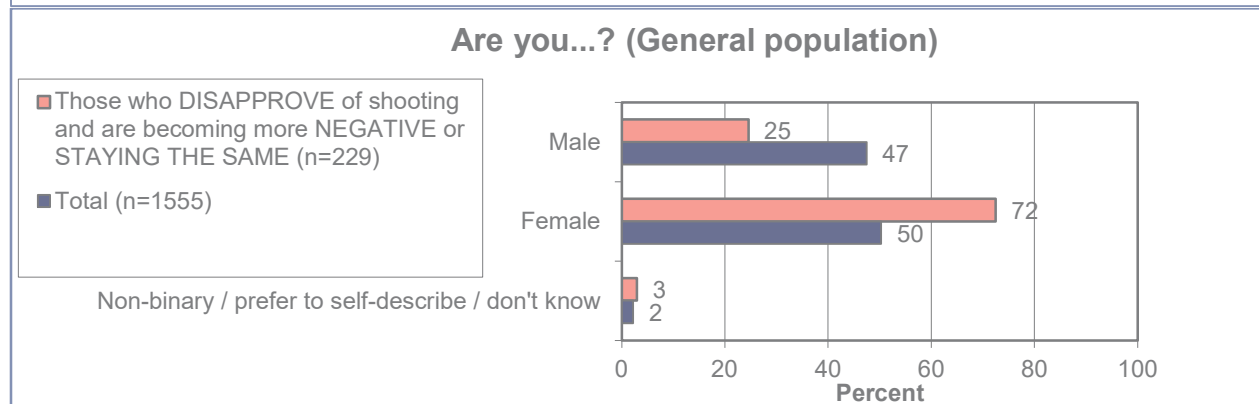
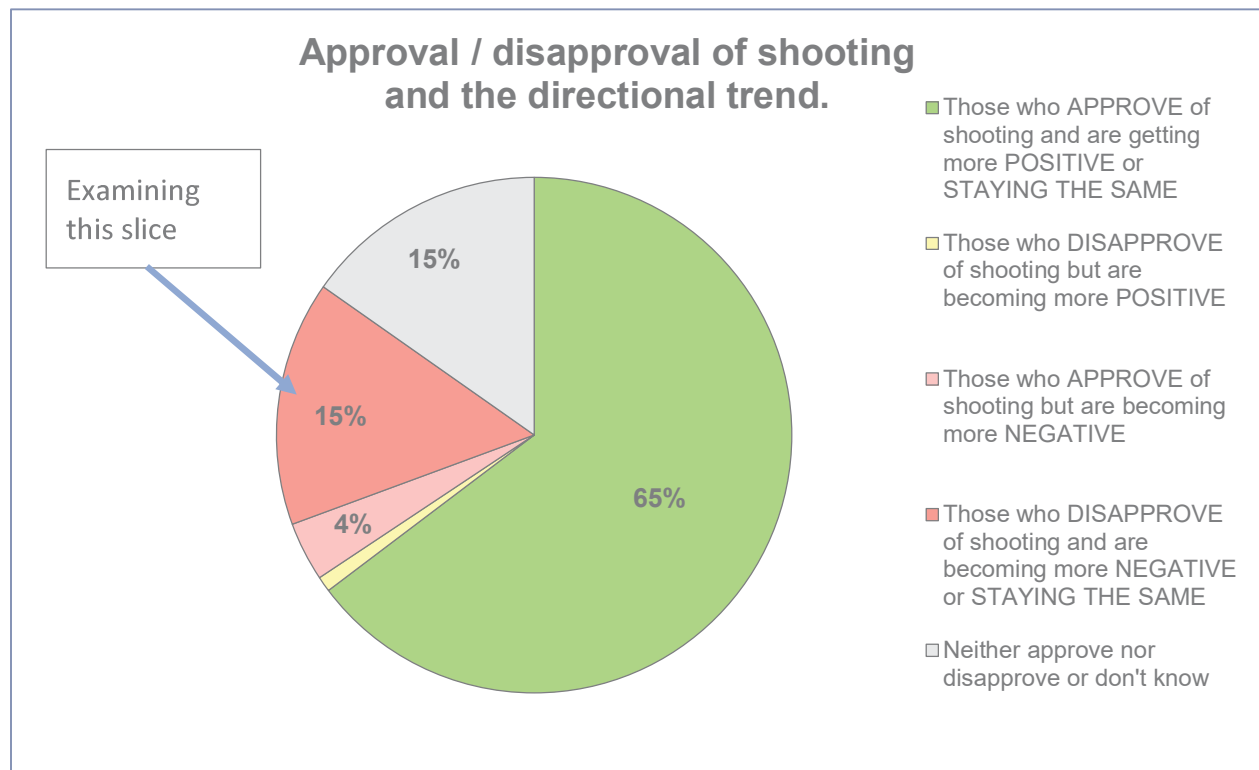


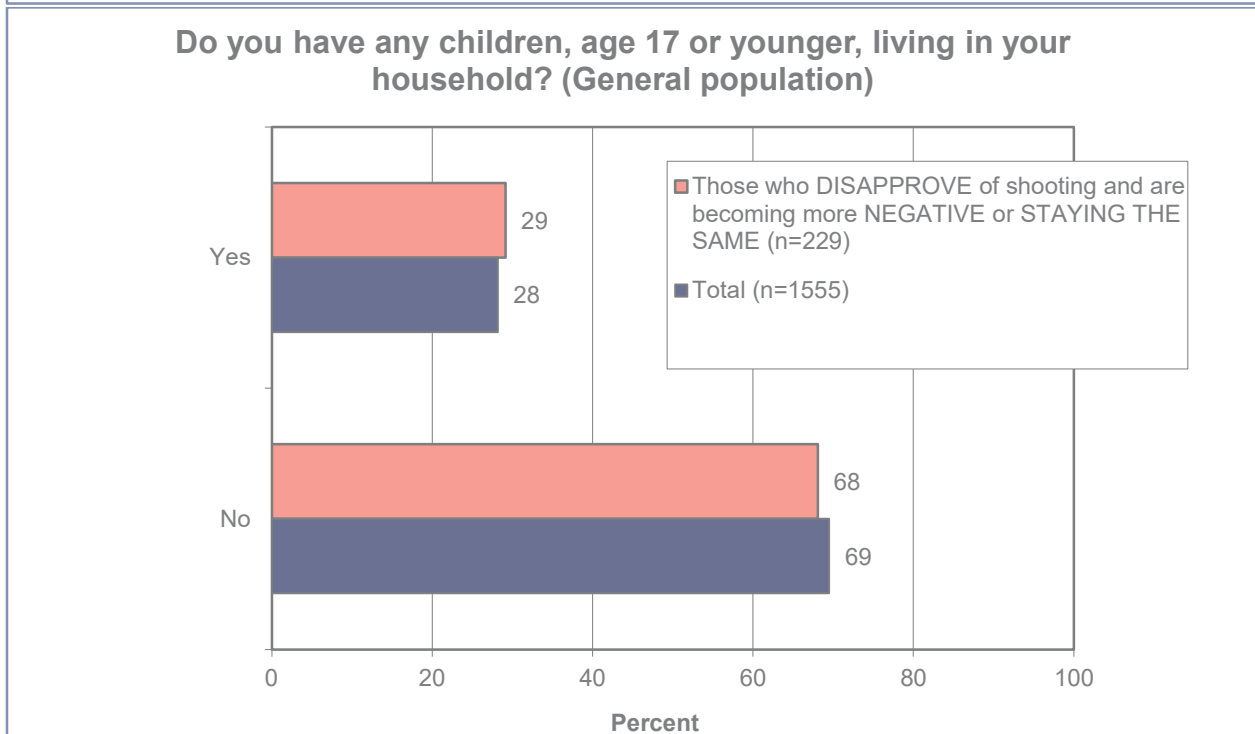
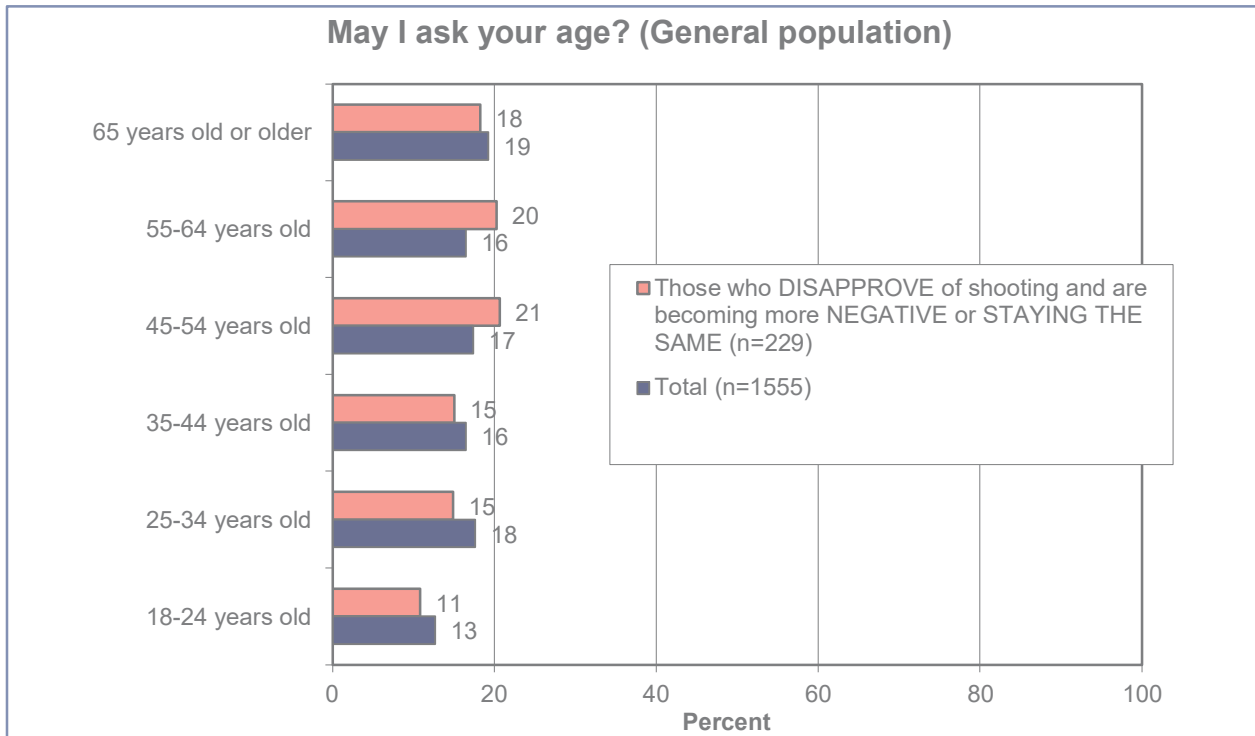


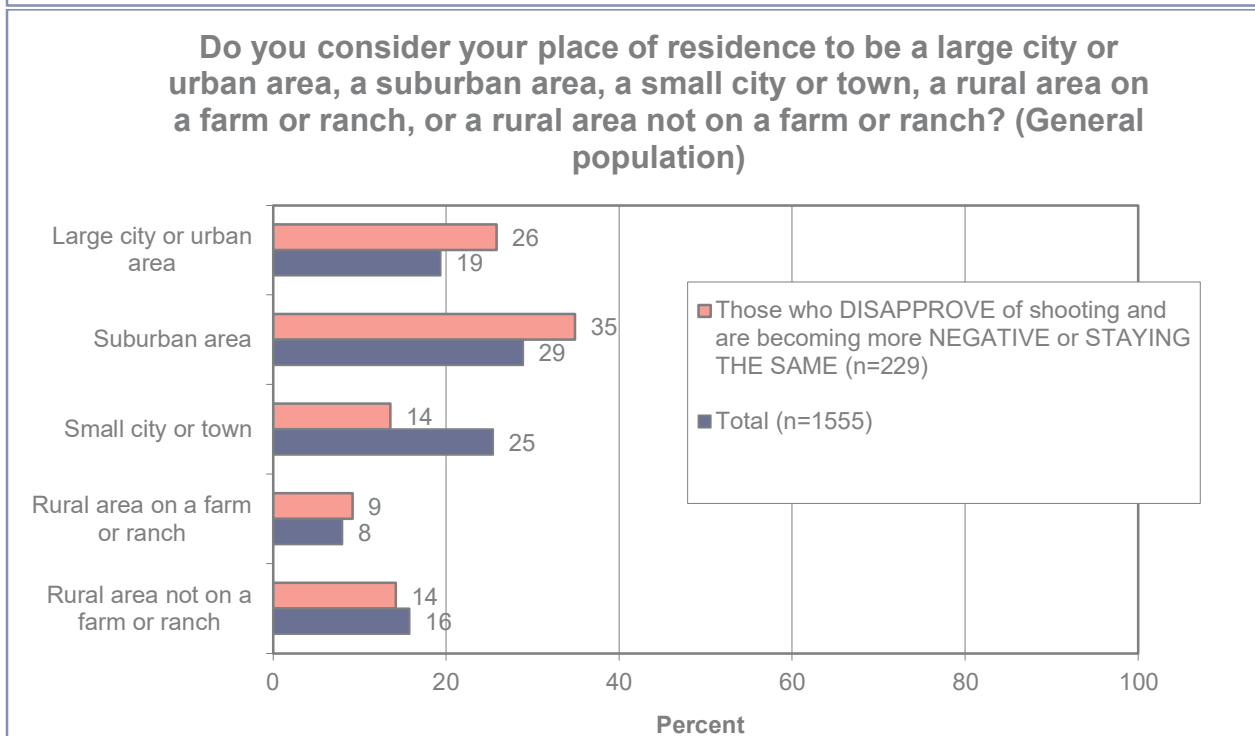
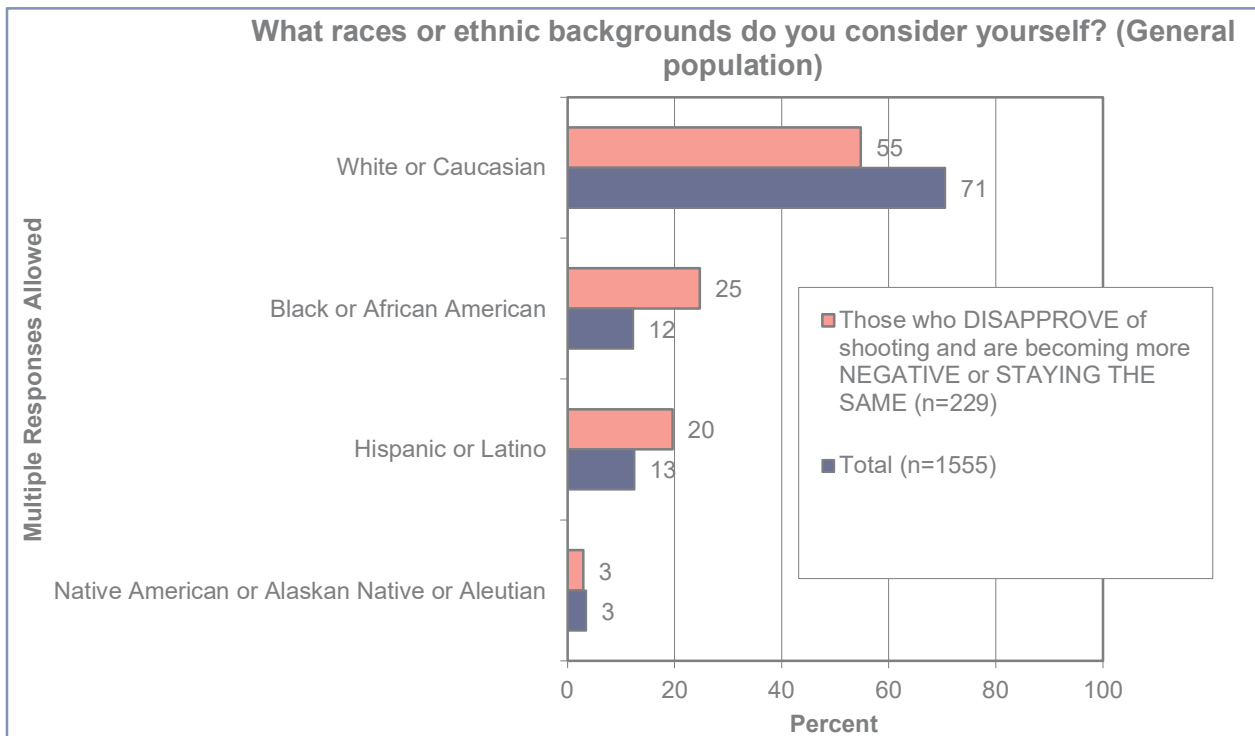
Currently Disapprove of Target Shooting, Becoming More Negative or Staying the Same

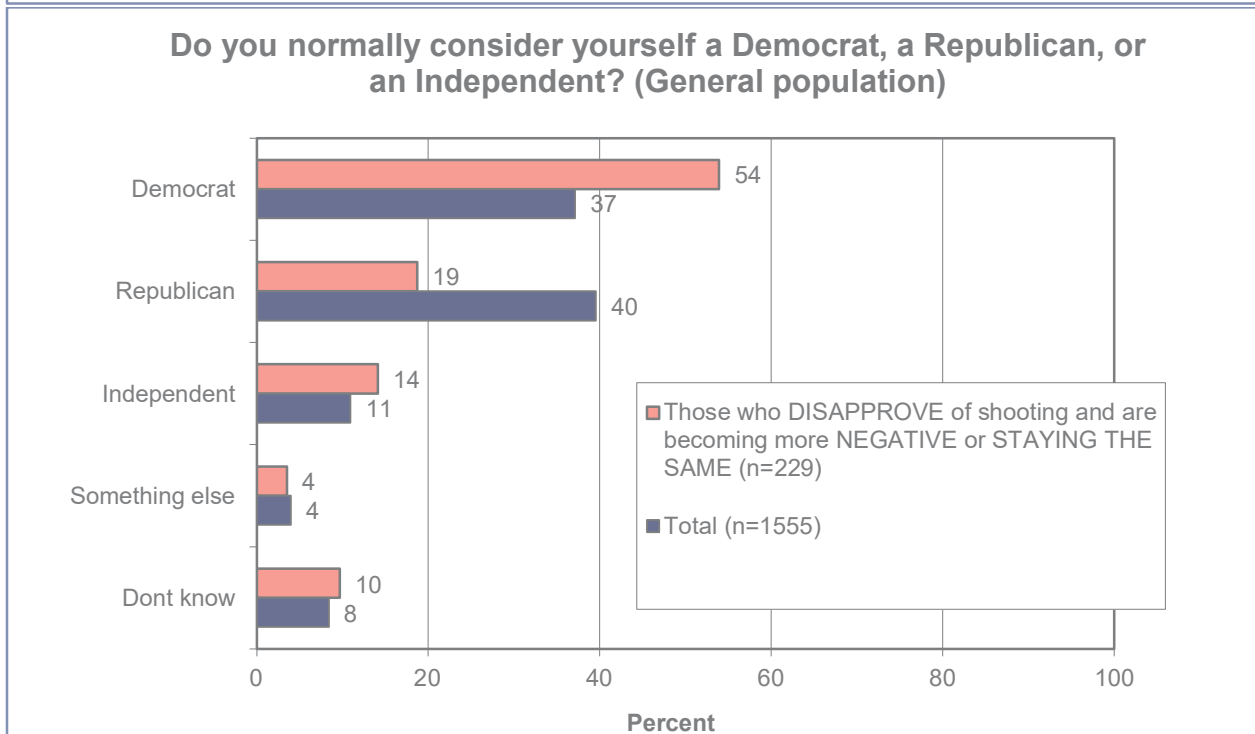
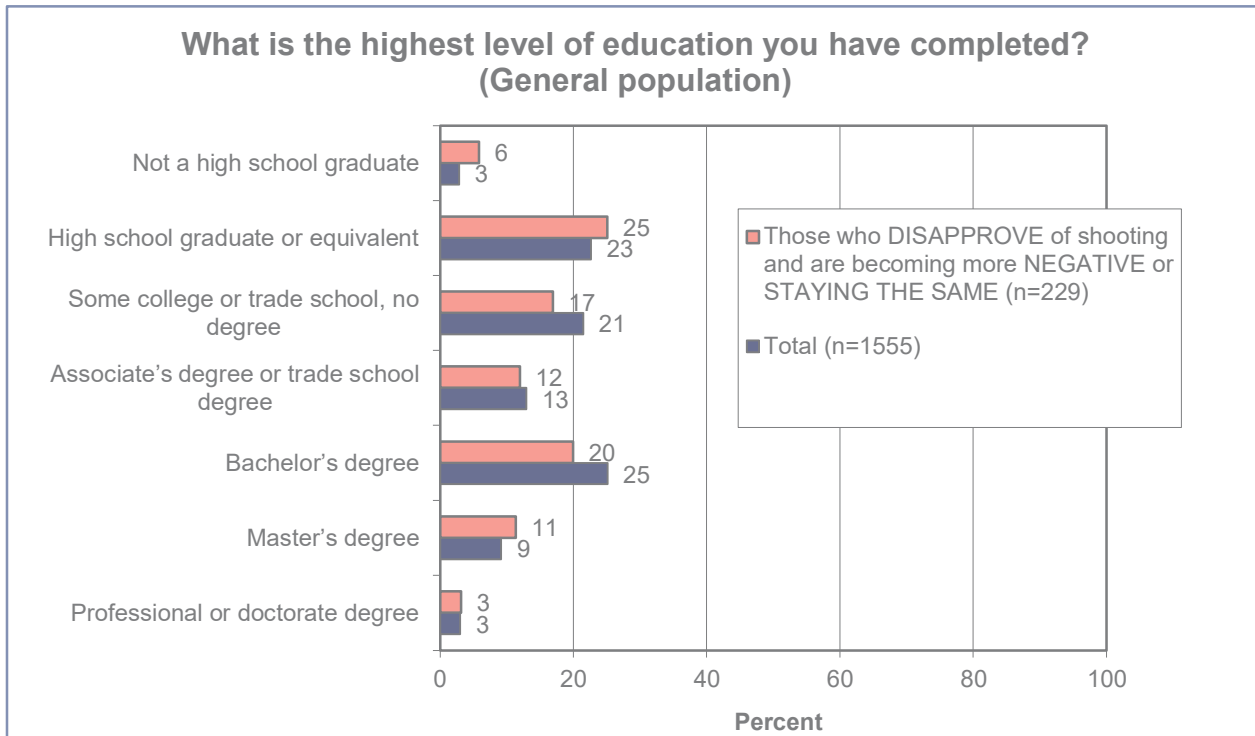
As shown on the next few pages of graphs, those who *currently disapprove* of shooting and are becoming *more negative* (or are staying the same) are:

- Much more female than male (by about 3 to 1).
- Much more Black and Hispanic than the general population.
- Much more likely to be urban or suburban and less likely to live in a small city or town, compared to the general population (they are about the same regarding rural living).
- About half Democratic and a fifth Republican.
- About the same in age, in having children in the household, and educationally.





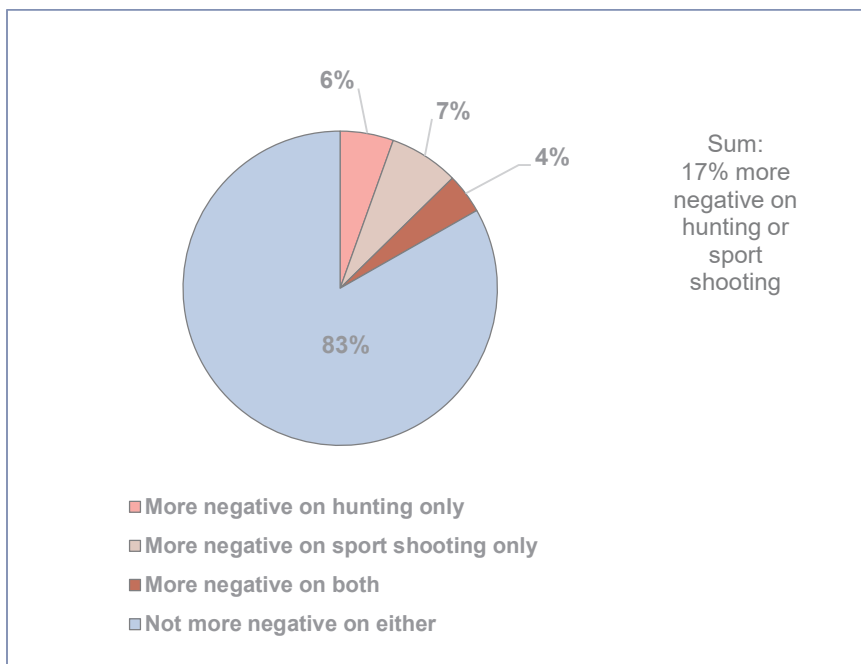




DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSES GRAPHS OF THOSE WITH MORE NEGATIVE OPINIONS

This section includes demographic analyses graphs on a subset of the general population: those whose opinions on hunting or targetshooting have become more negative. Demographic analyses graphs are a way to look at a question among many groups in one graph—at a single glance. The way to interpret them was previously explained on pages 59 to 61 of this report. Note, however, that the explanation shows a demographic analyses graph among the entire general population; the demographic analyses graphs in this section are only among those who have a more negative opinion of hunting or target/sport shooting.

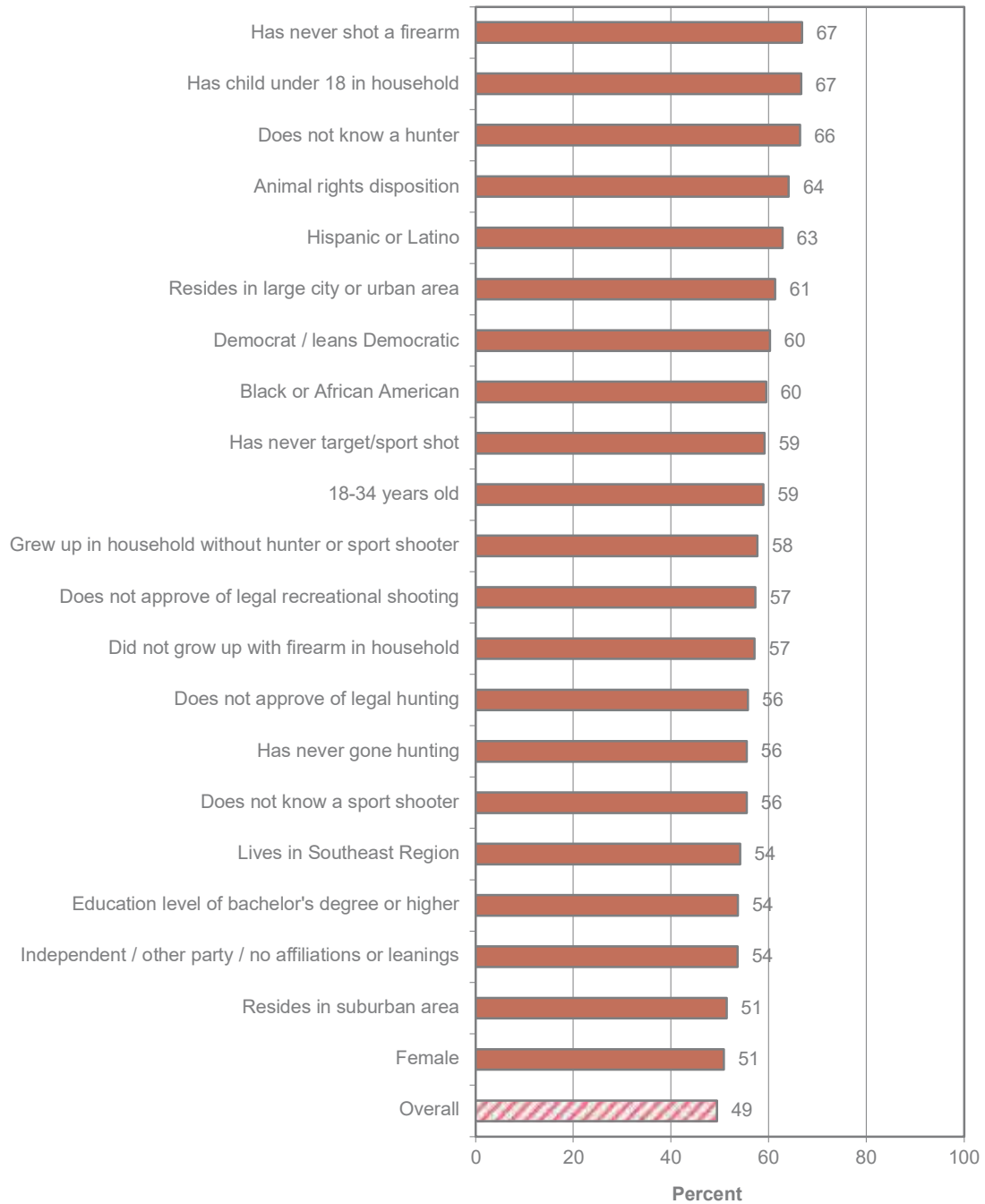
Among the entire general population, 17% said their opinion of either hunting or target/sport shooting became more negative (see the accompanying pie graph). These 17% of the general population were then examined.



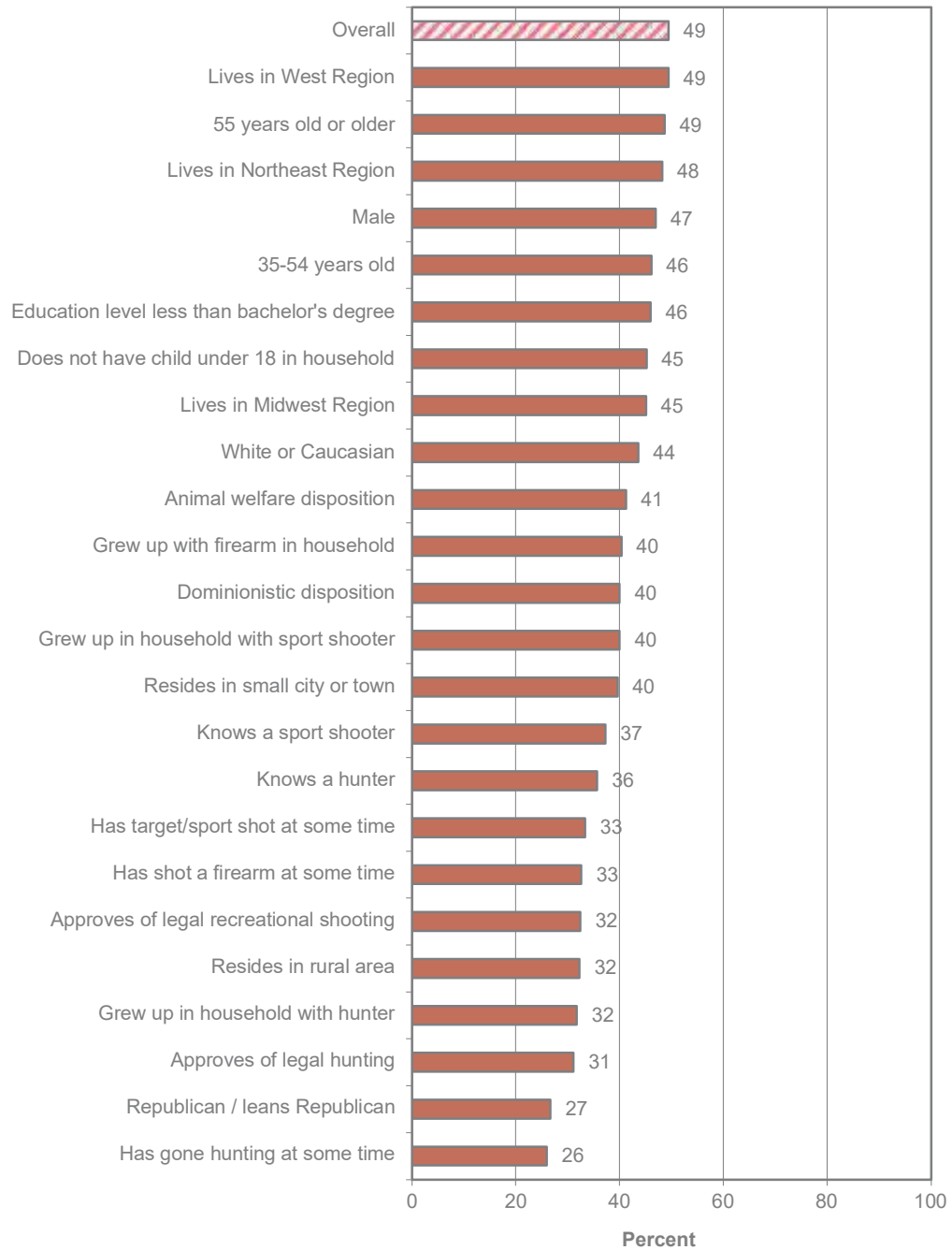
In the graphs that follow, the overall percentage is among *those whose opinions became more negative*, not the overall general population. In the first graph, the overall bar shows that 49% of those who became more negative said that concern about gun violence affects their opinion of hunting *a great deal or a moderate amount*. Note, however, that this represents 8% of the entire general population (17% of 49%).

In short, each of the variables examined are among *those whose opinions became more negative*. For instance, males in these graphs are males *whose opinions became more negative*, not males overall. Please keep this in mind when interpreting these graphs.

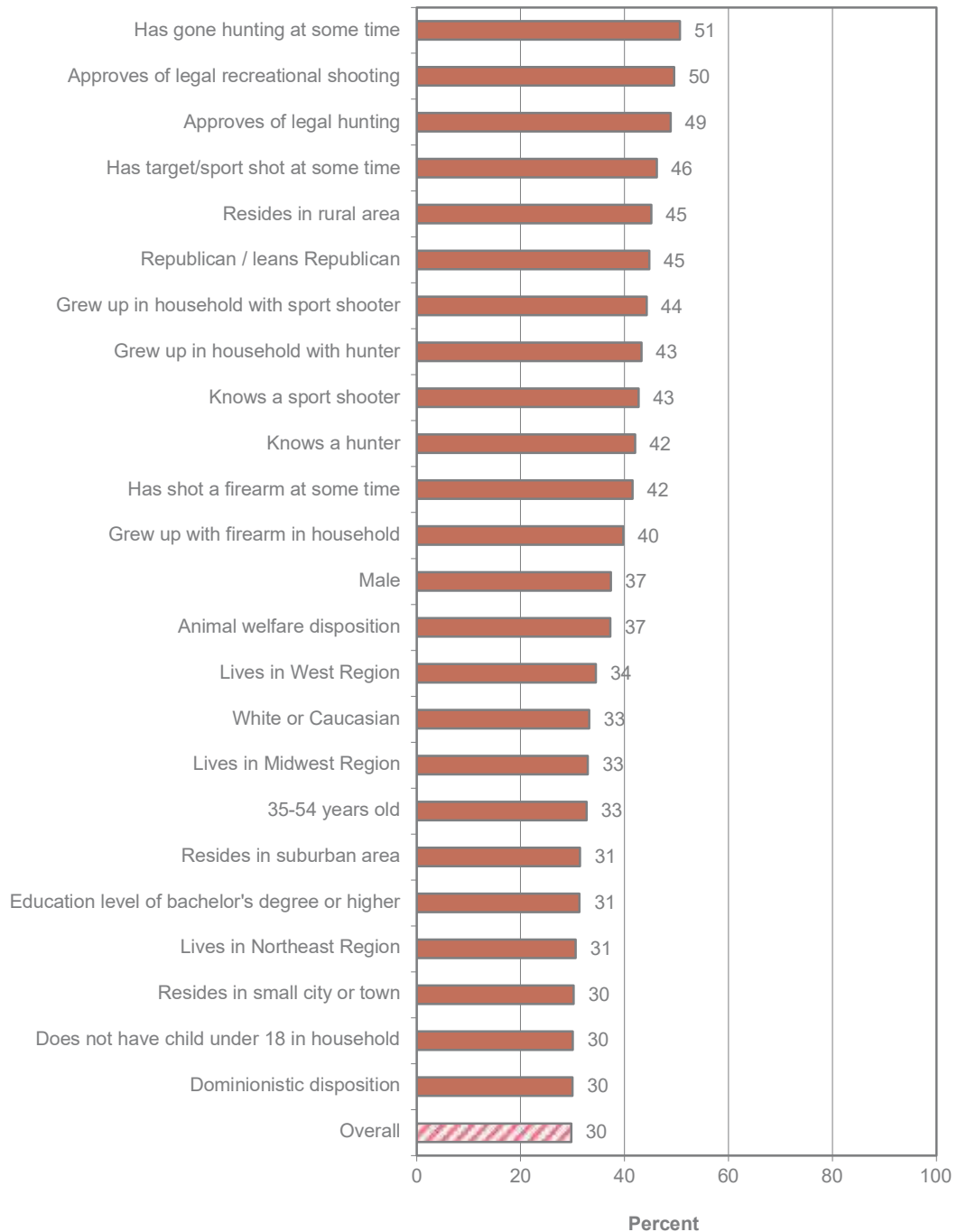
**Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence affects their opinion of hunting a great deal or a moderate amount: (Those more negative)
(Part 1)**



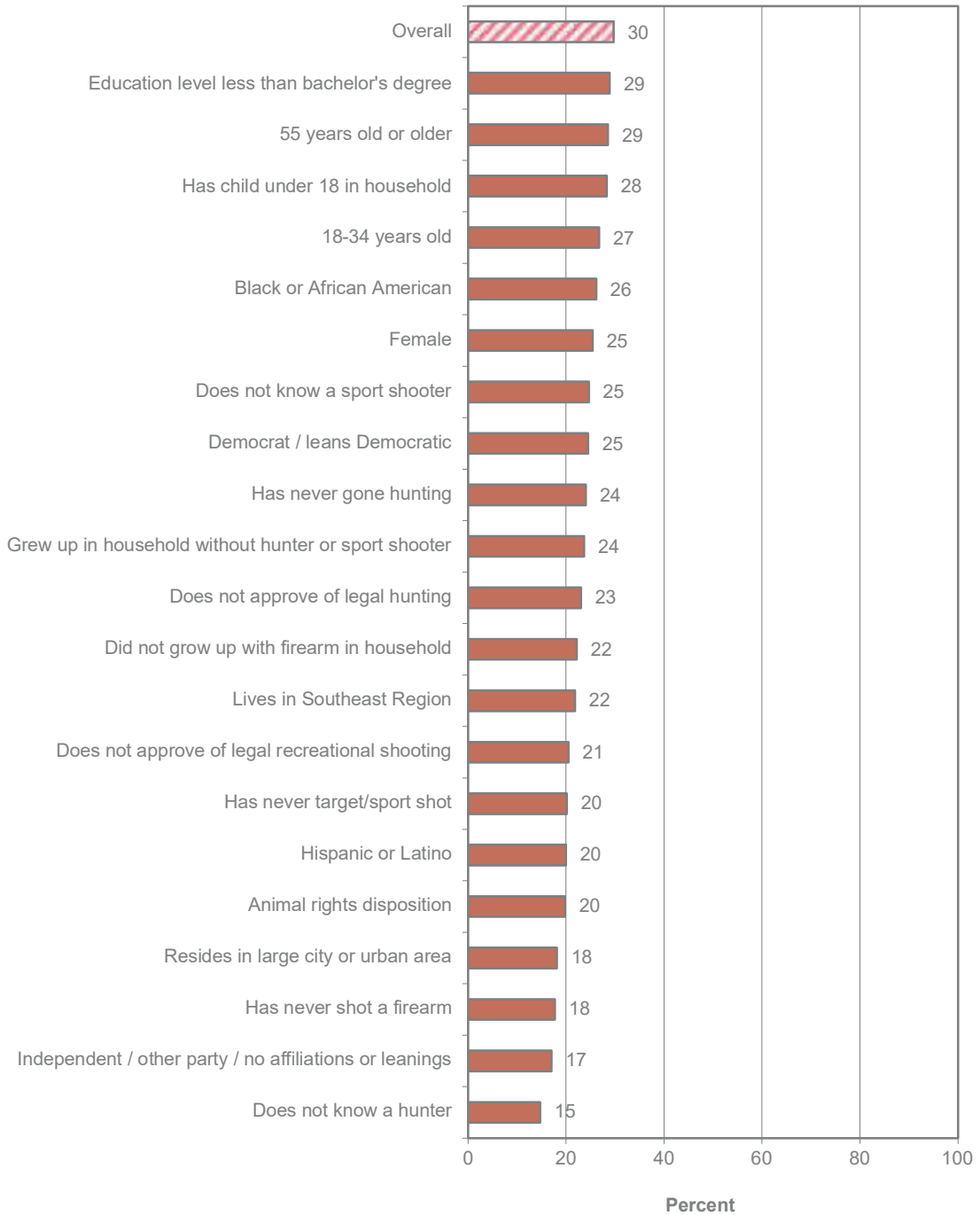
**Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence affects their opinion of hunting a great deal or a moderate amount: (Those more negative)
(Part 2)**



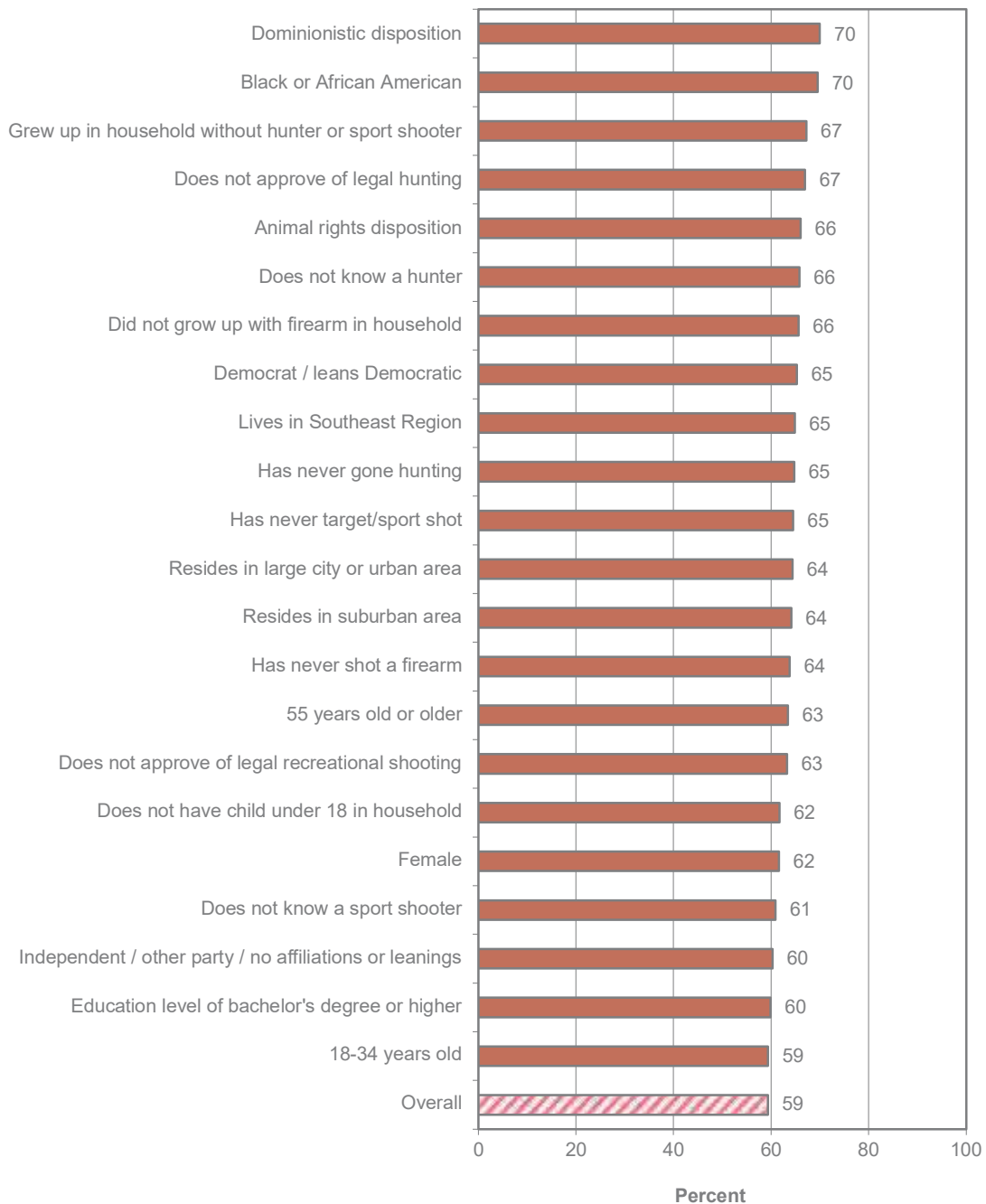
Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence does not affect their opinion of hunting at all: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



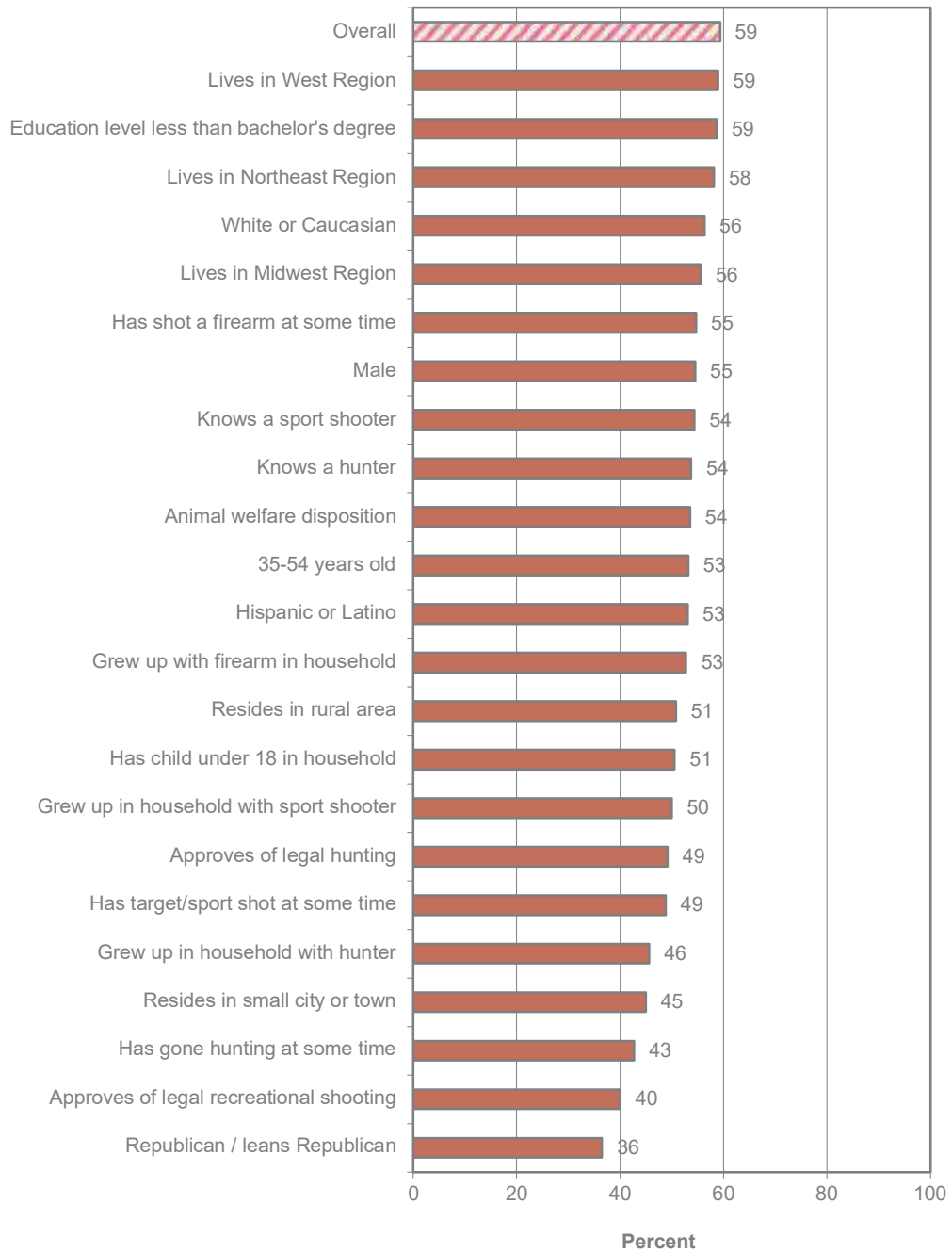
Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence does not affect their opinion of hunting at all: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



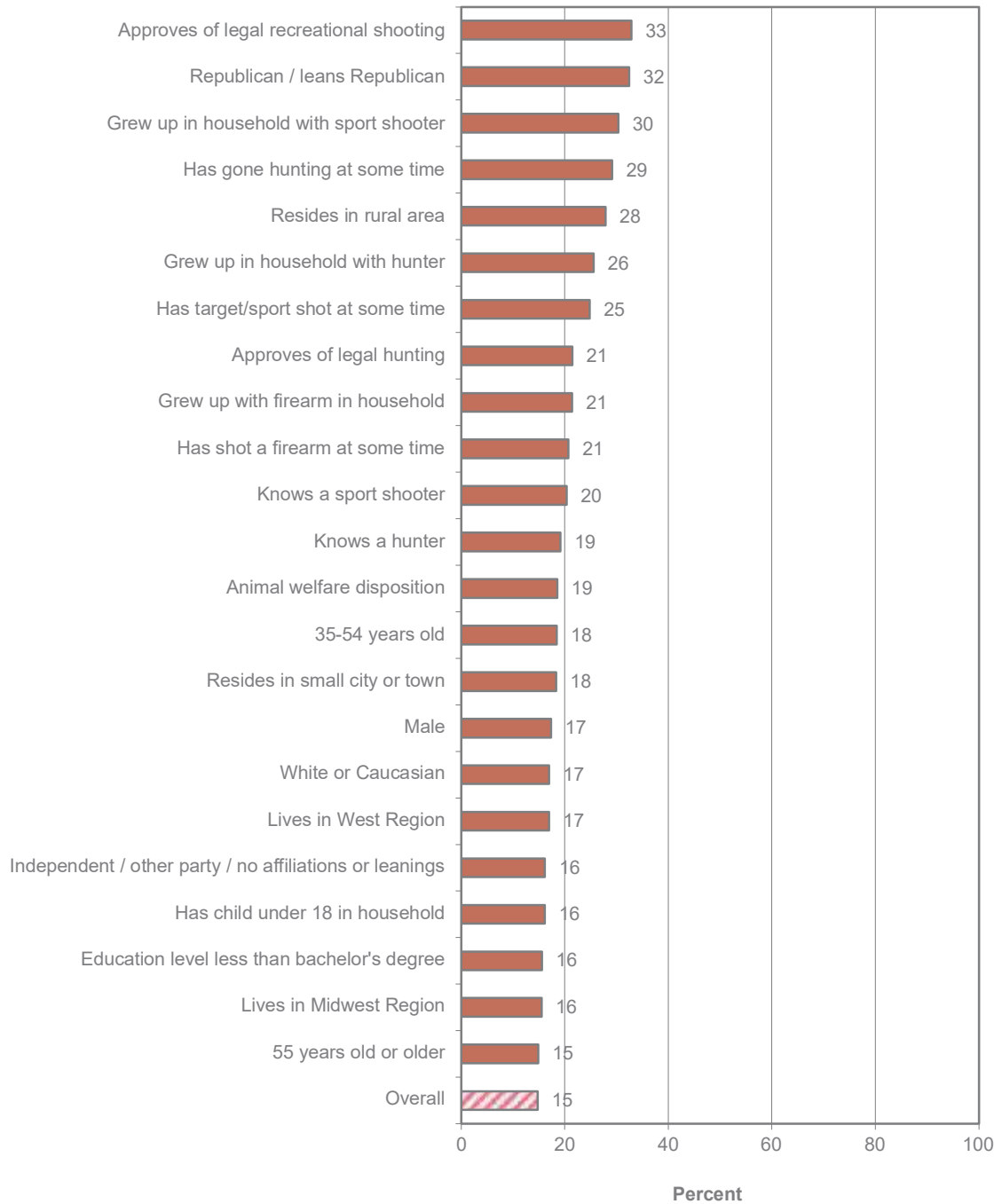
Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence affects their opinion of sport shooting a great deal or a moderate amount: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



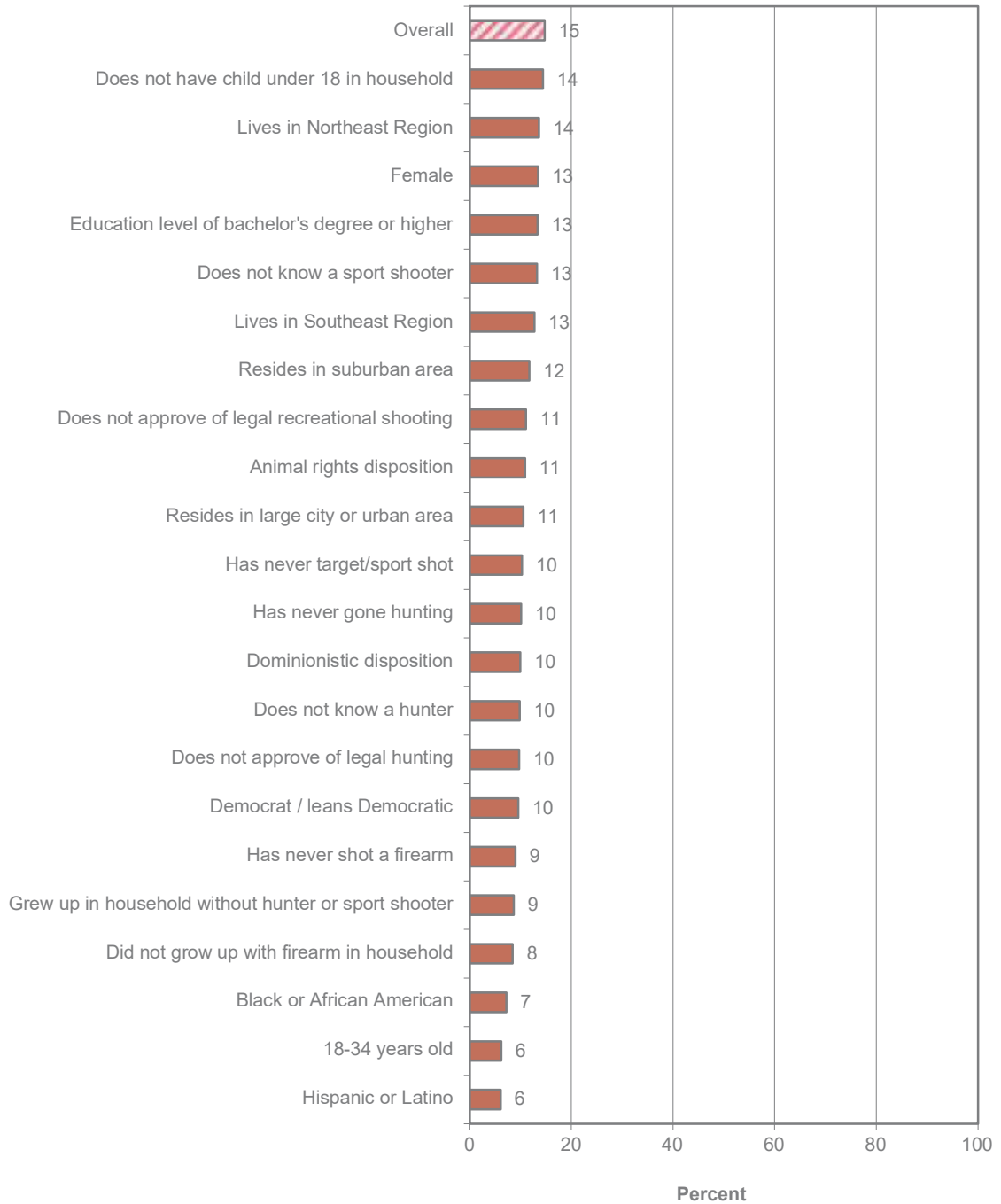
Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence affects their opinion of sport shooting a great deal or a moderate amount: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



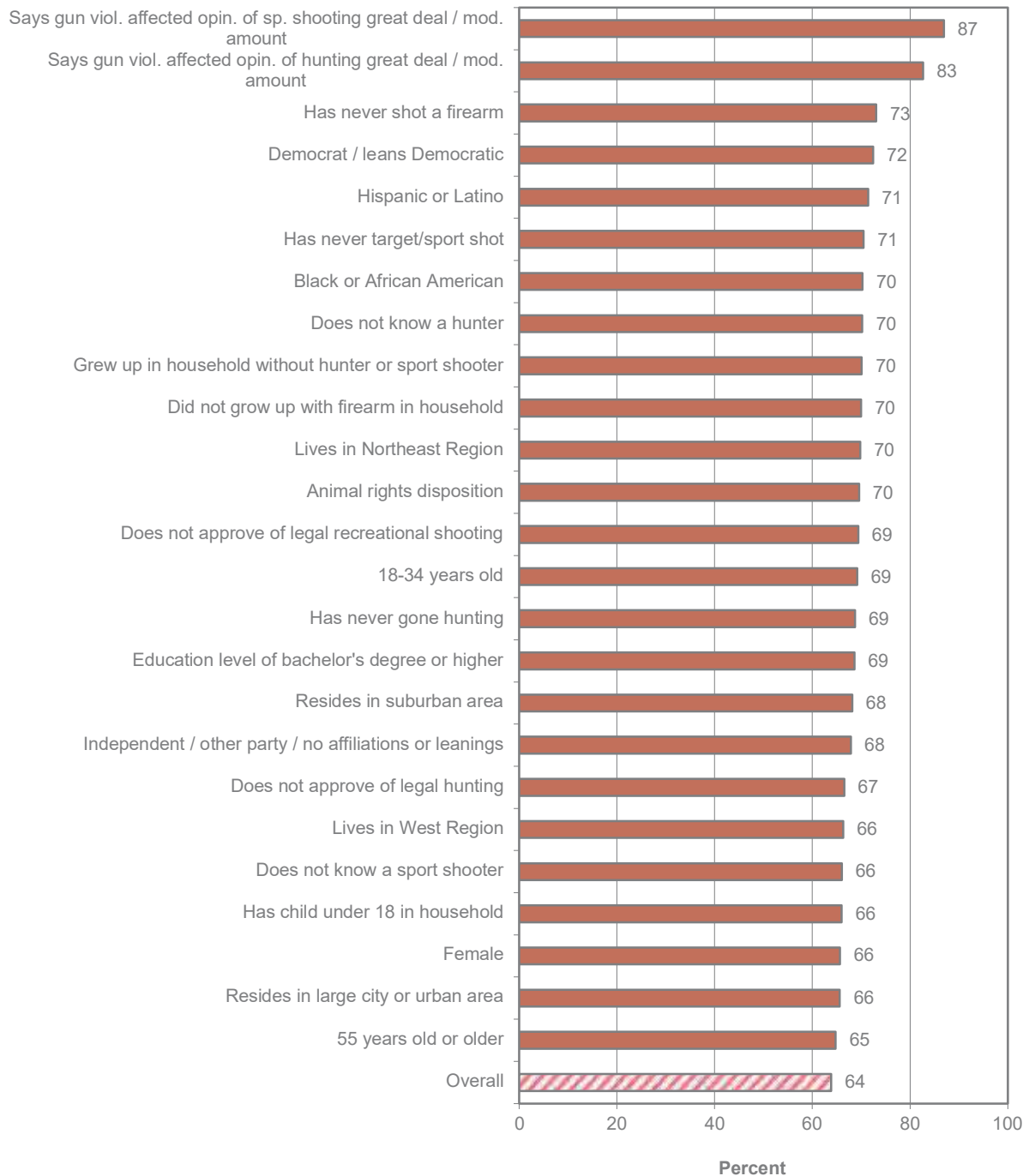
Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence does not affect their opinion of sport shooting at all: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



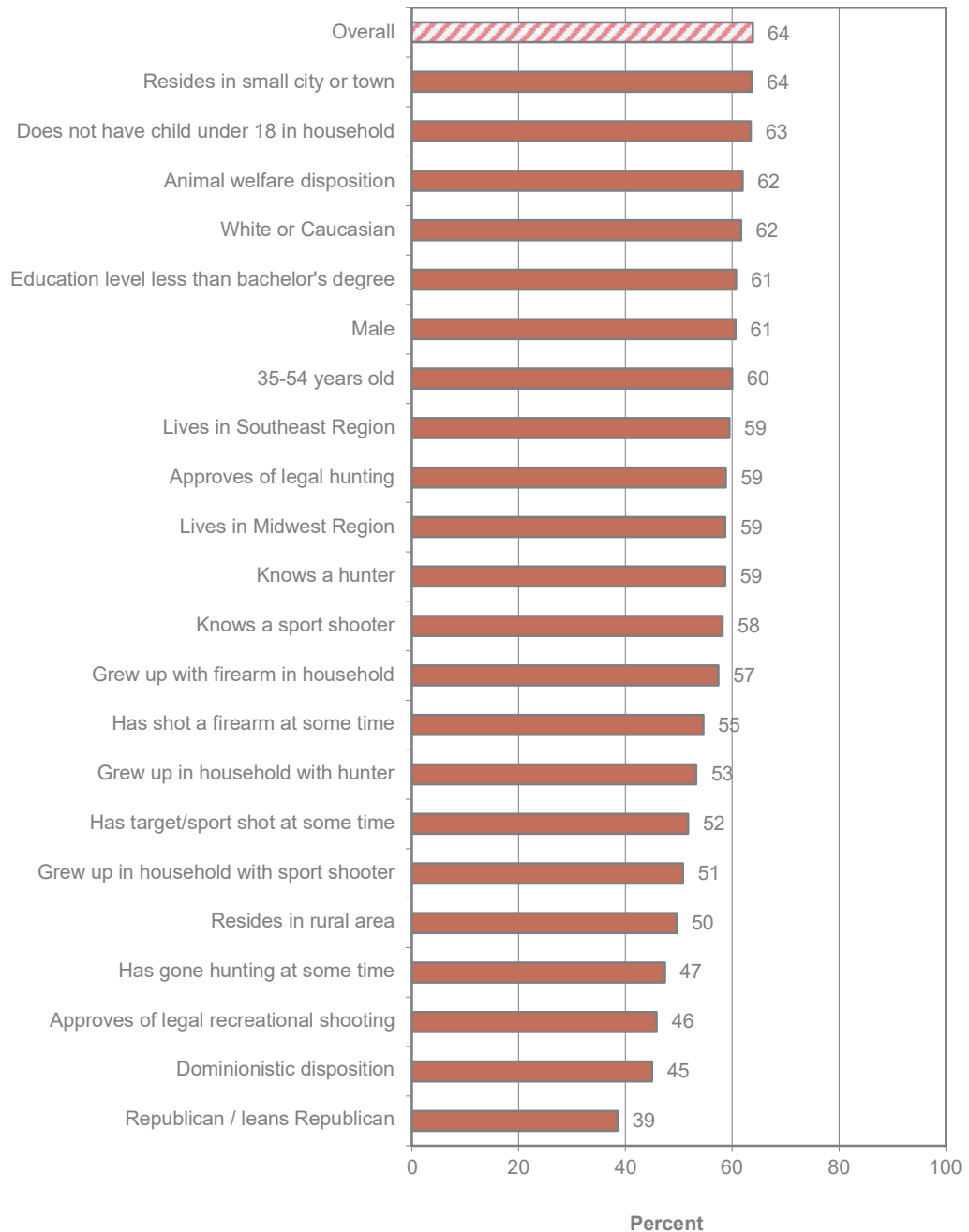
Percent of the following groups whose concern about gun violence does not affect their opinion of sport shooting at all: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



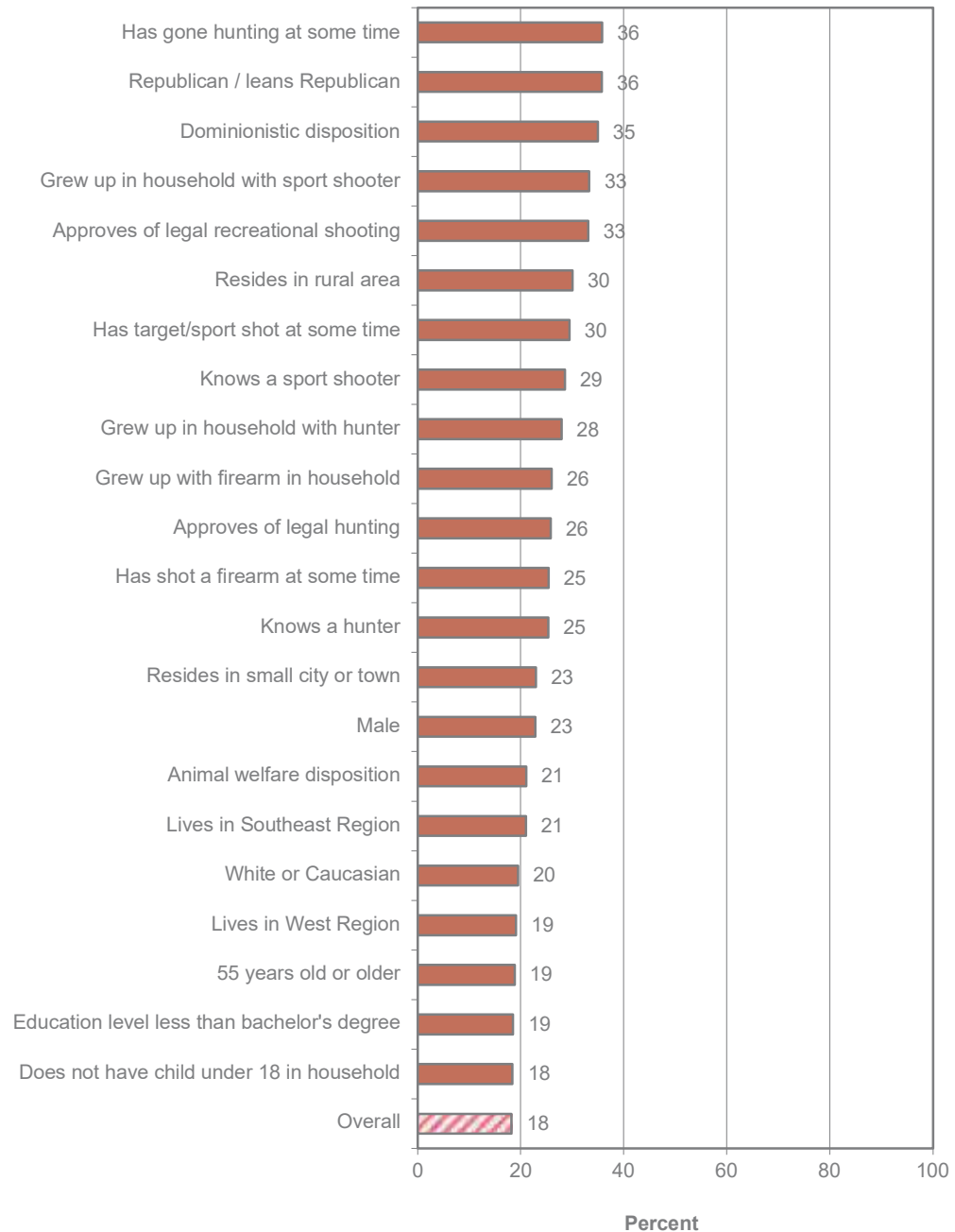
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve firearms, such as hunting and sport shooting: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



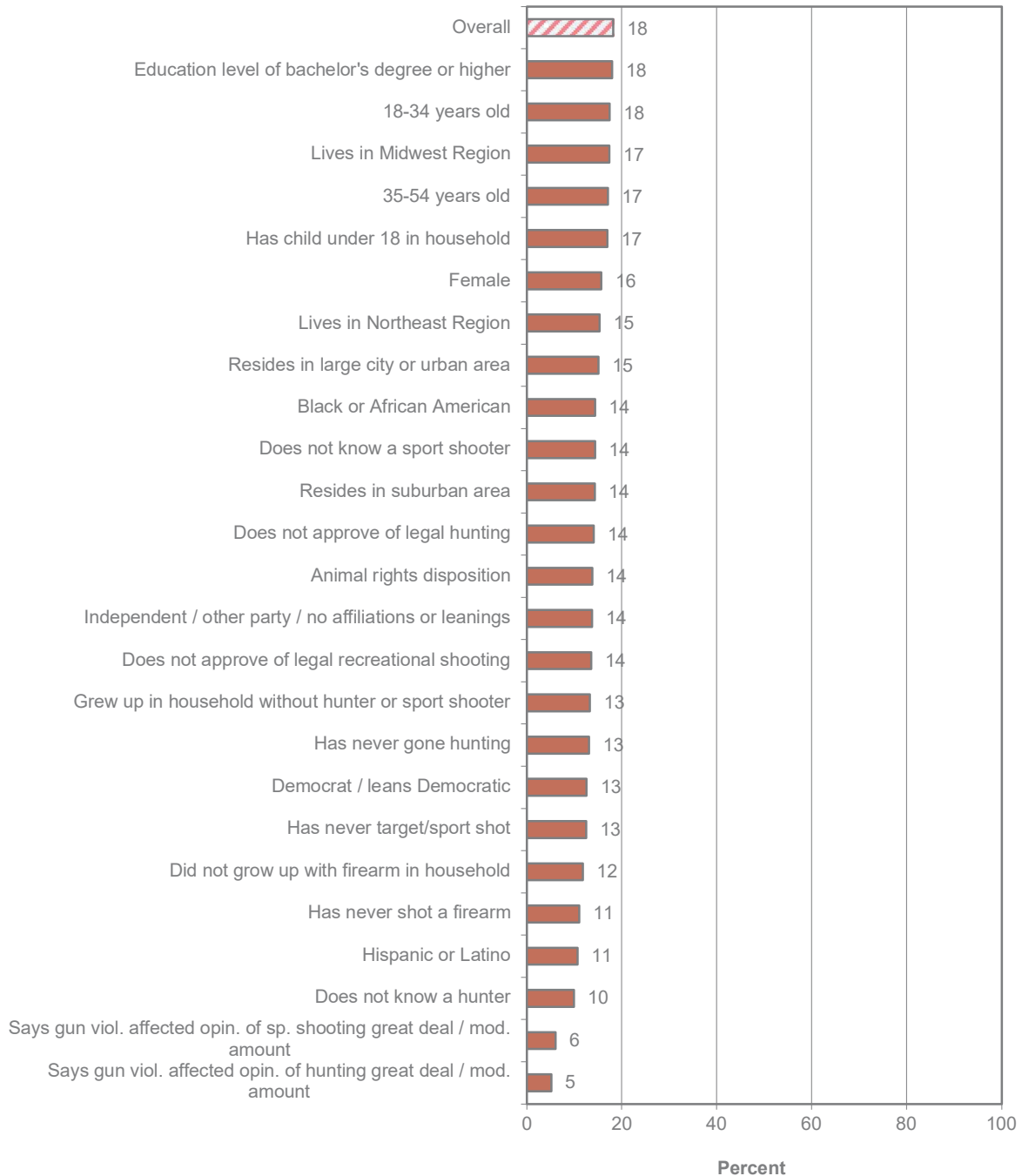
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve firearms, such as hunting and sport shooting: (Those more negative)
(Part 2)**



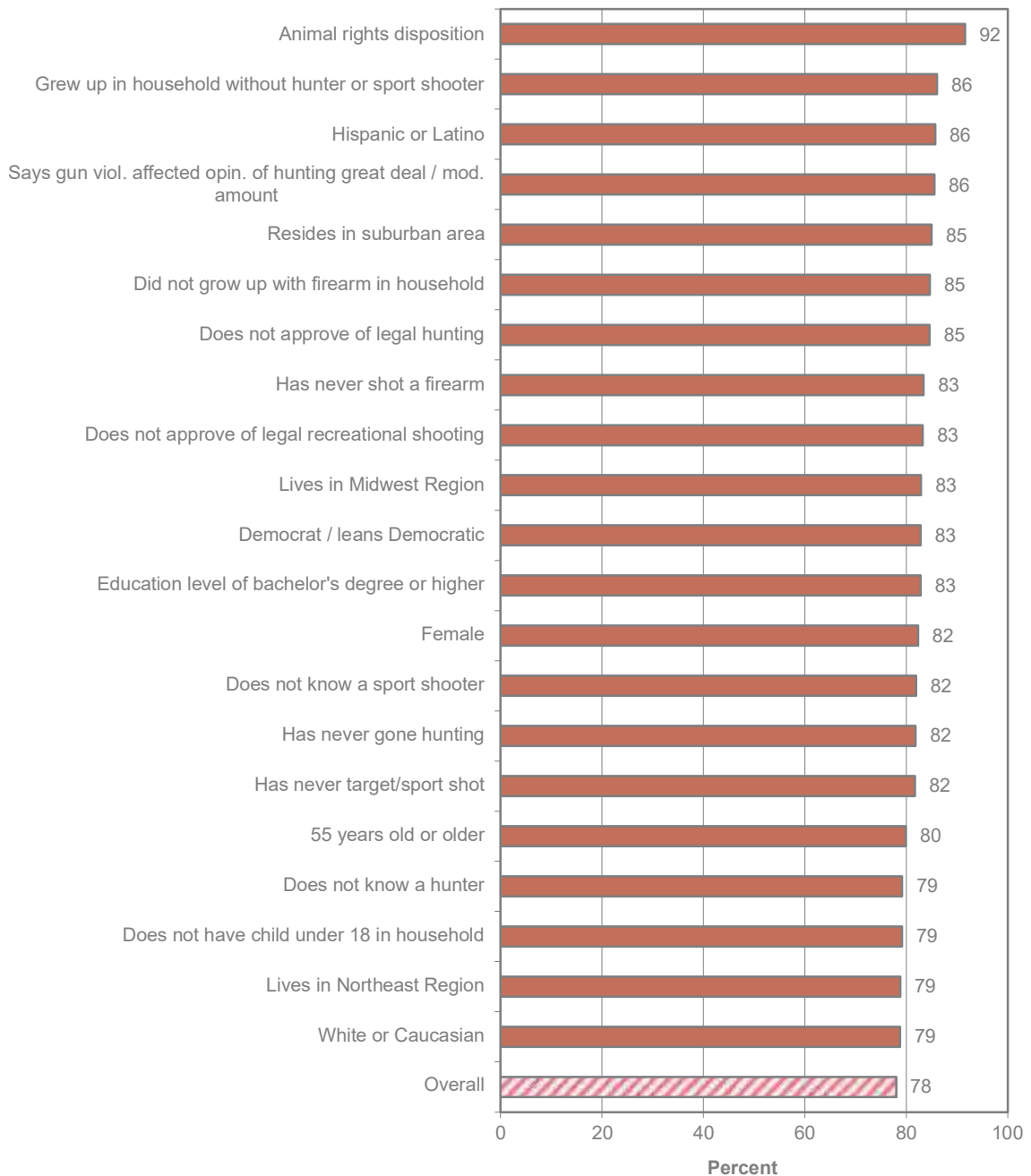
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately disagree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve firearms, such as hunting and sport shooting: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



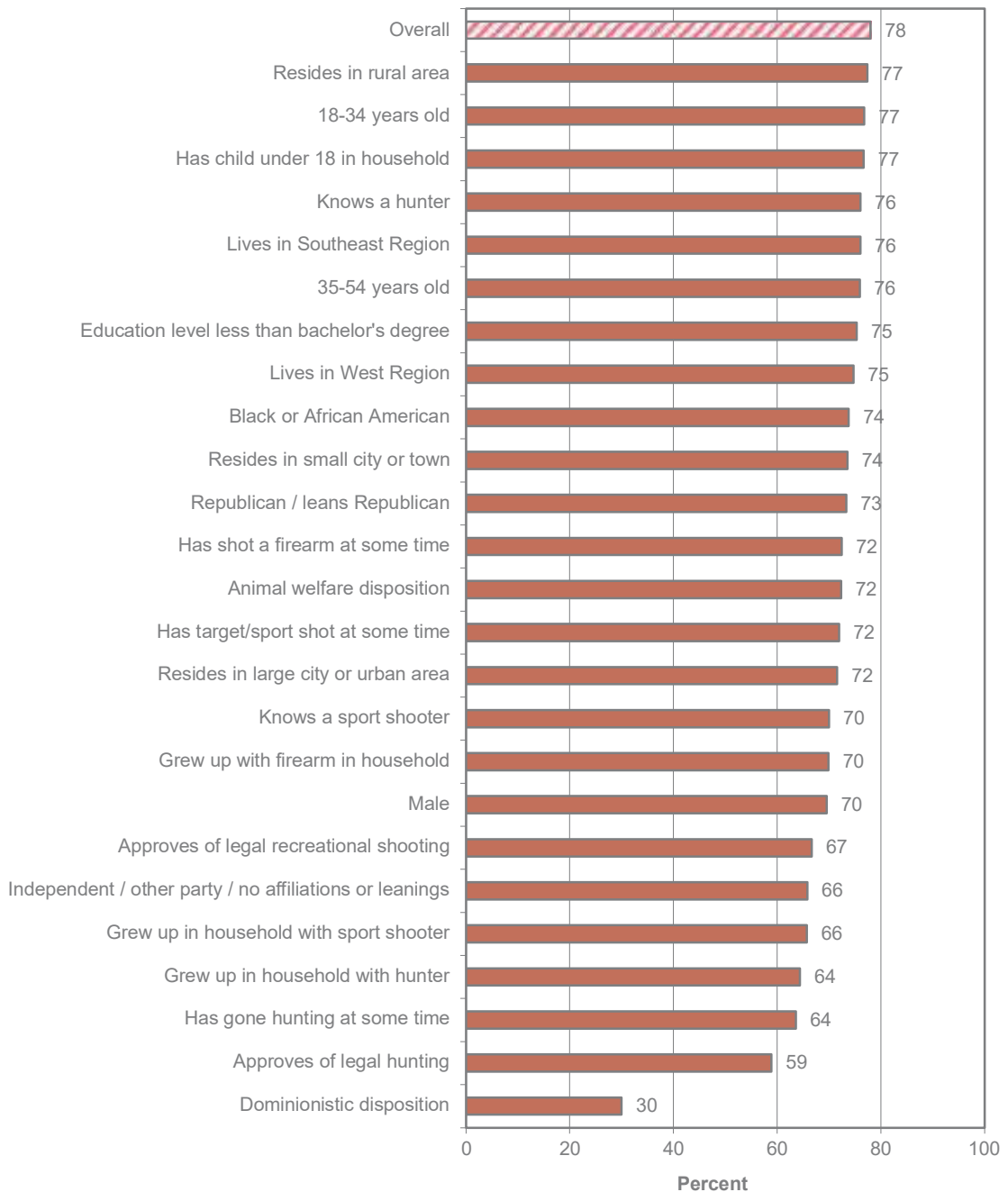
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately disagree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve firearms, such as hunting and sport shooting: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



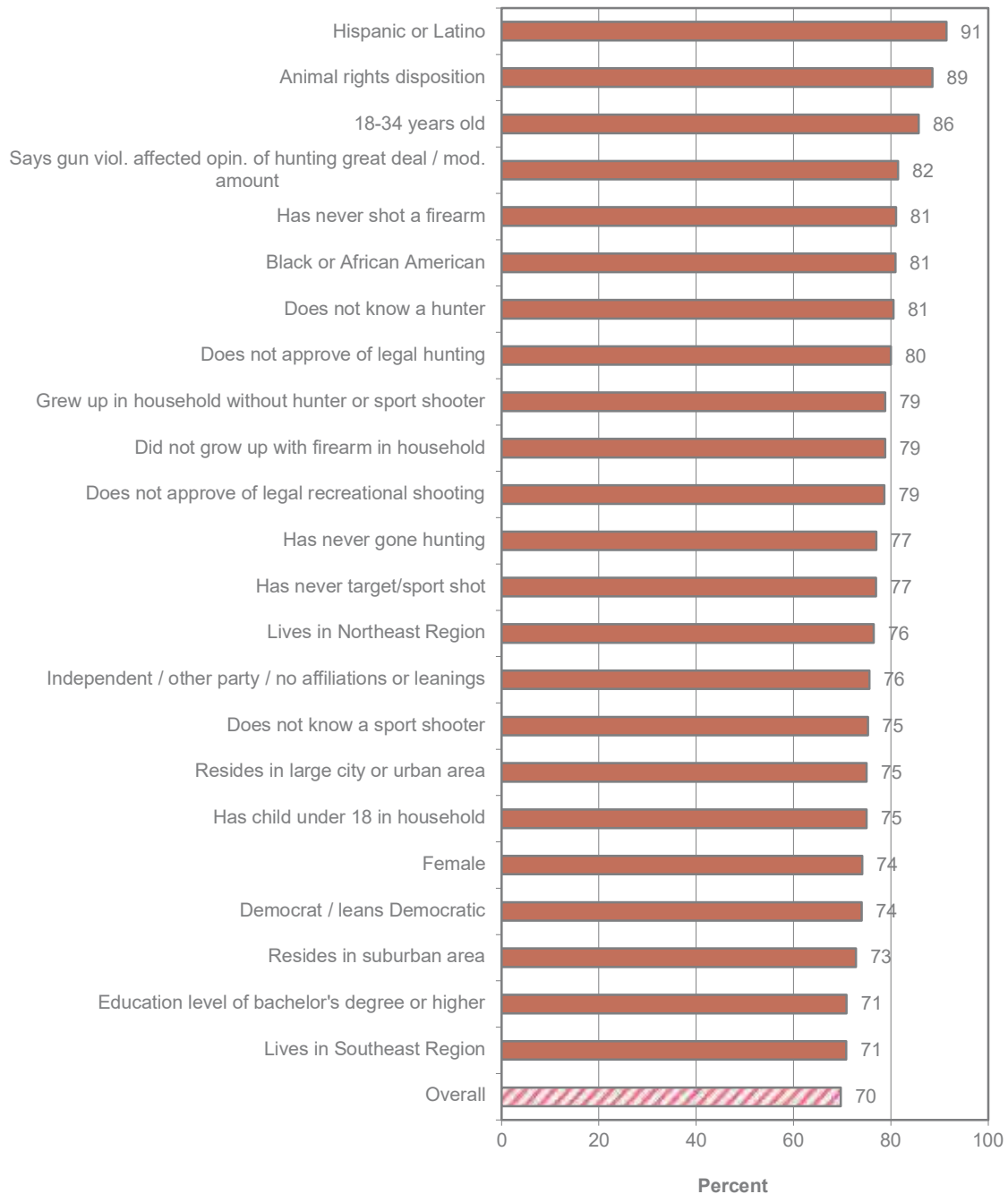
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that posting a photo to social media of an animal that has been hunted does NOT show respect for wildlife: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



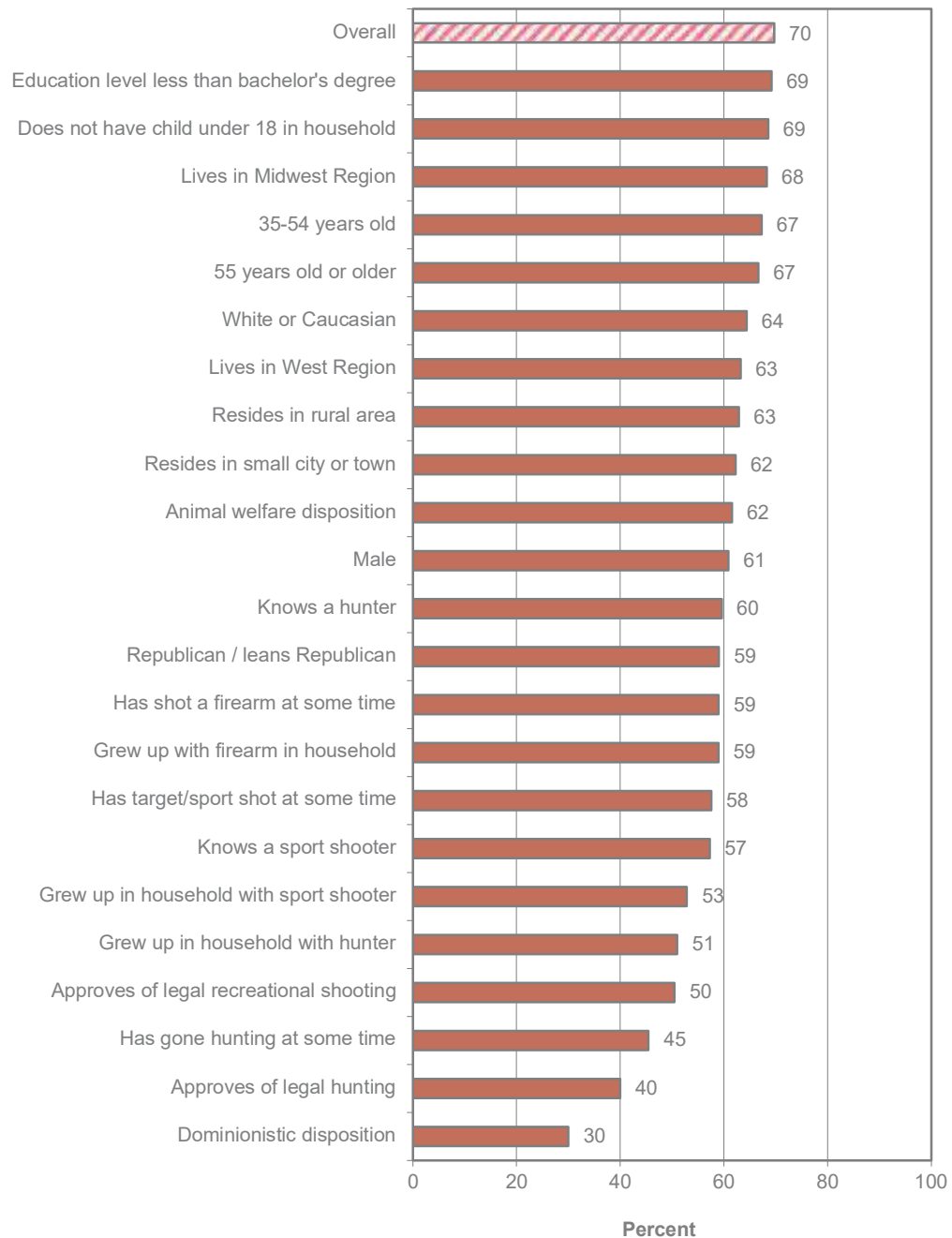
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that posting a photo to social media of an animal that has been hunted does NOT show respect for wildlife: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



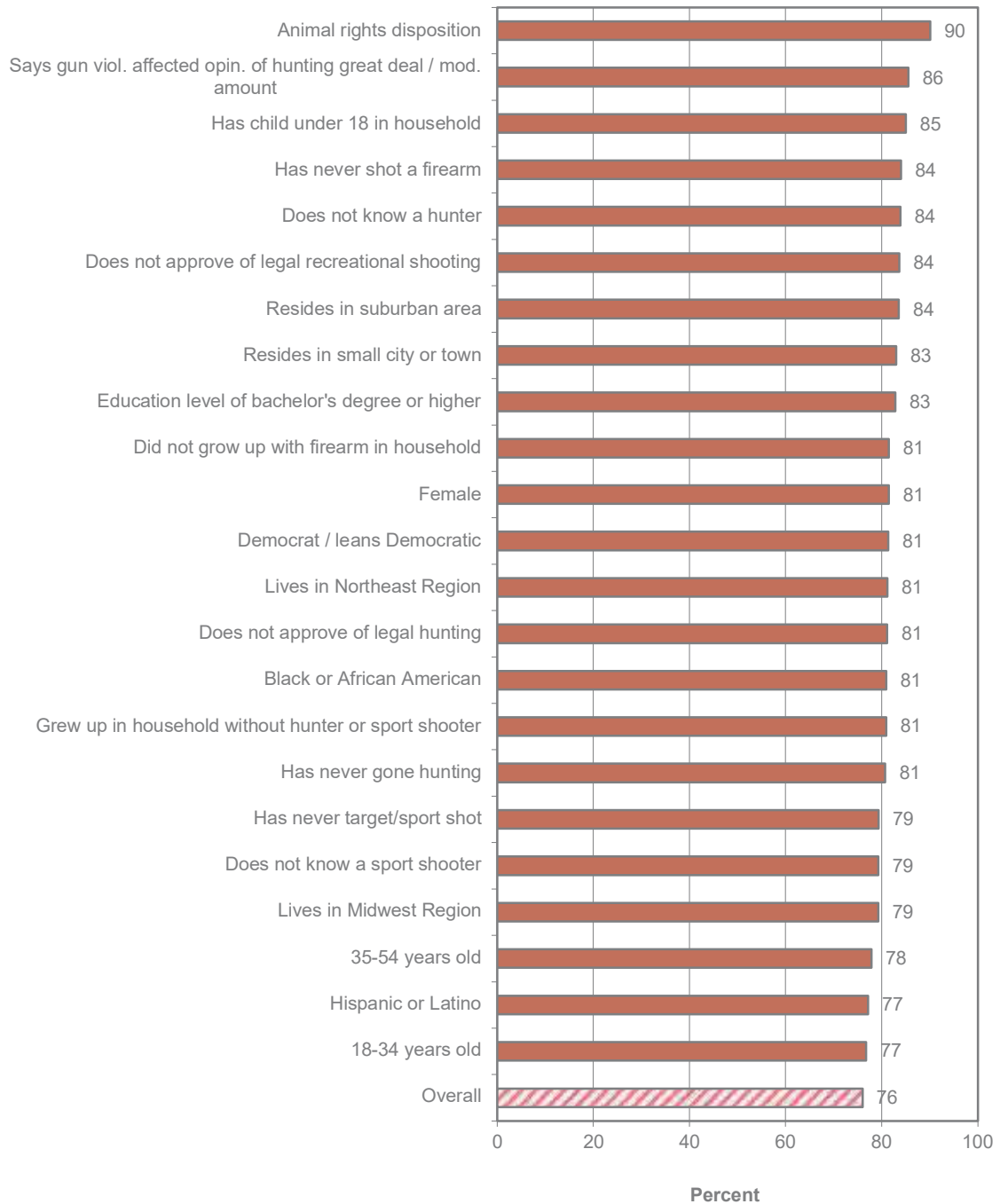
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that wildlife does best when it is left completely alone by human beings:
(Those more negative) (Part 1)**



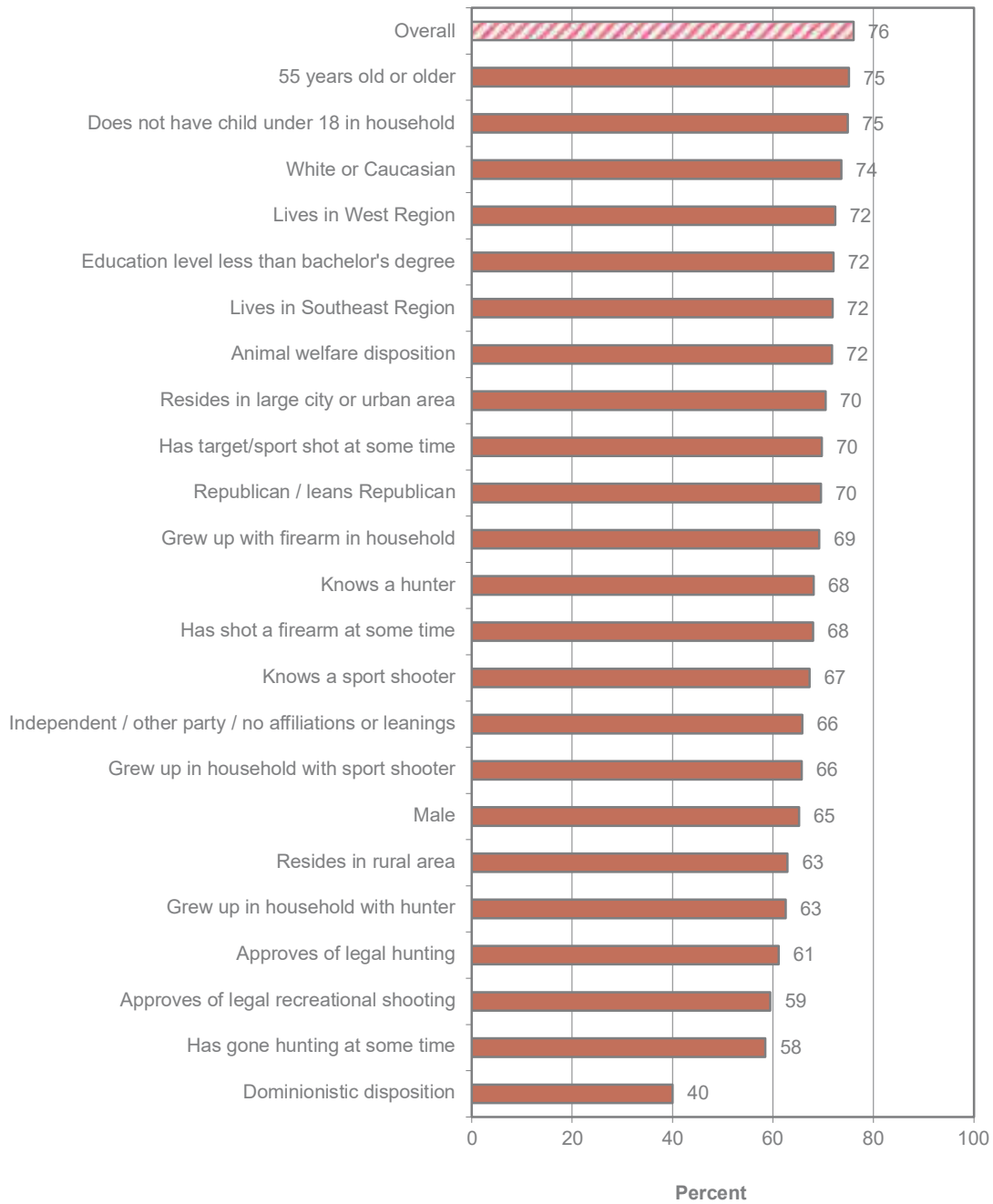
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that wildlife does best when it is left completely alone by human beings:
(Those more negative) (Part 2)**



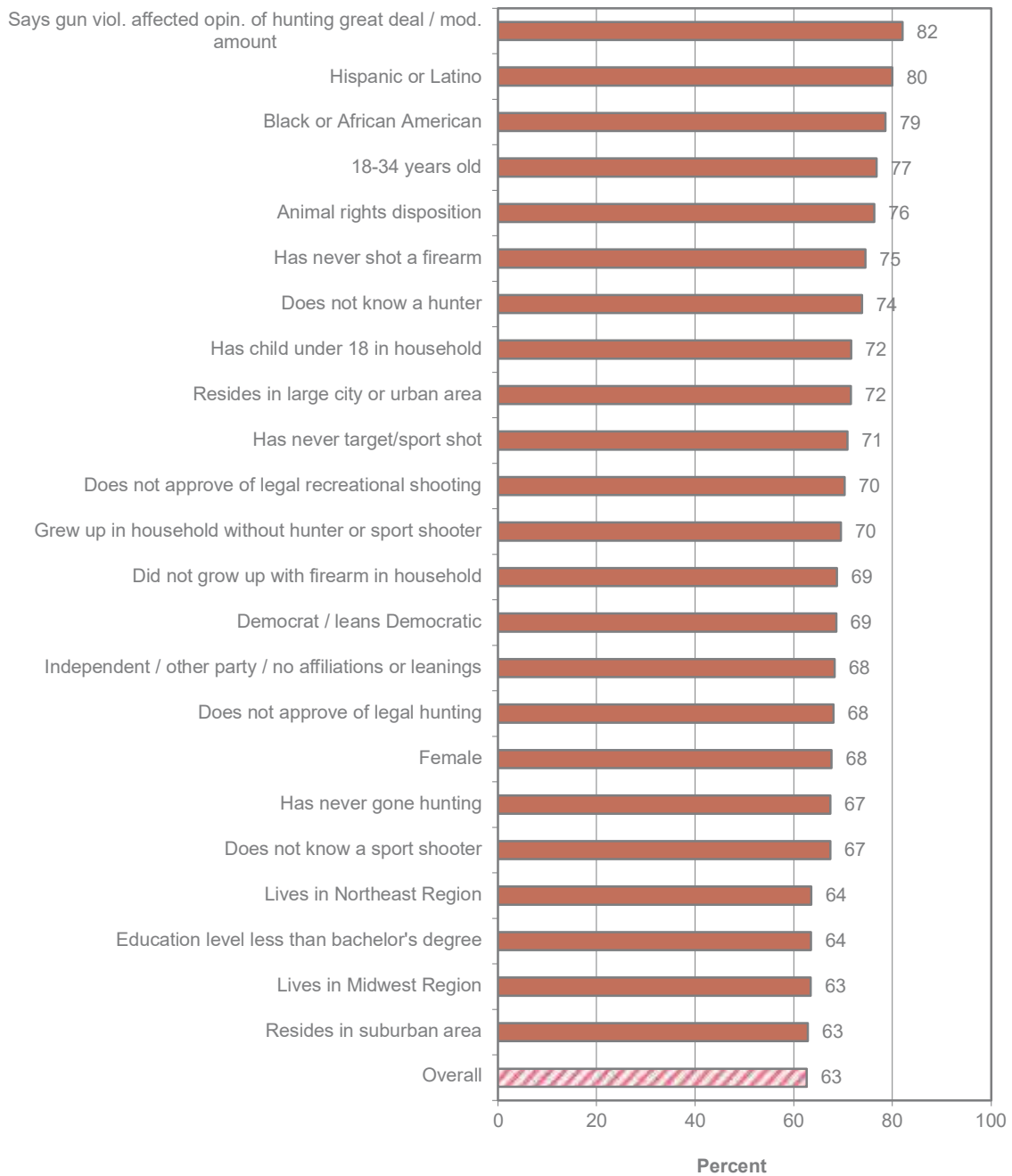
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some wildlife species to become endangered: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



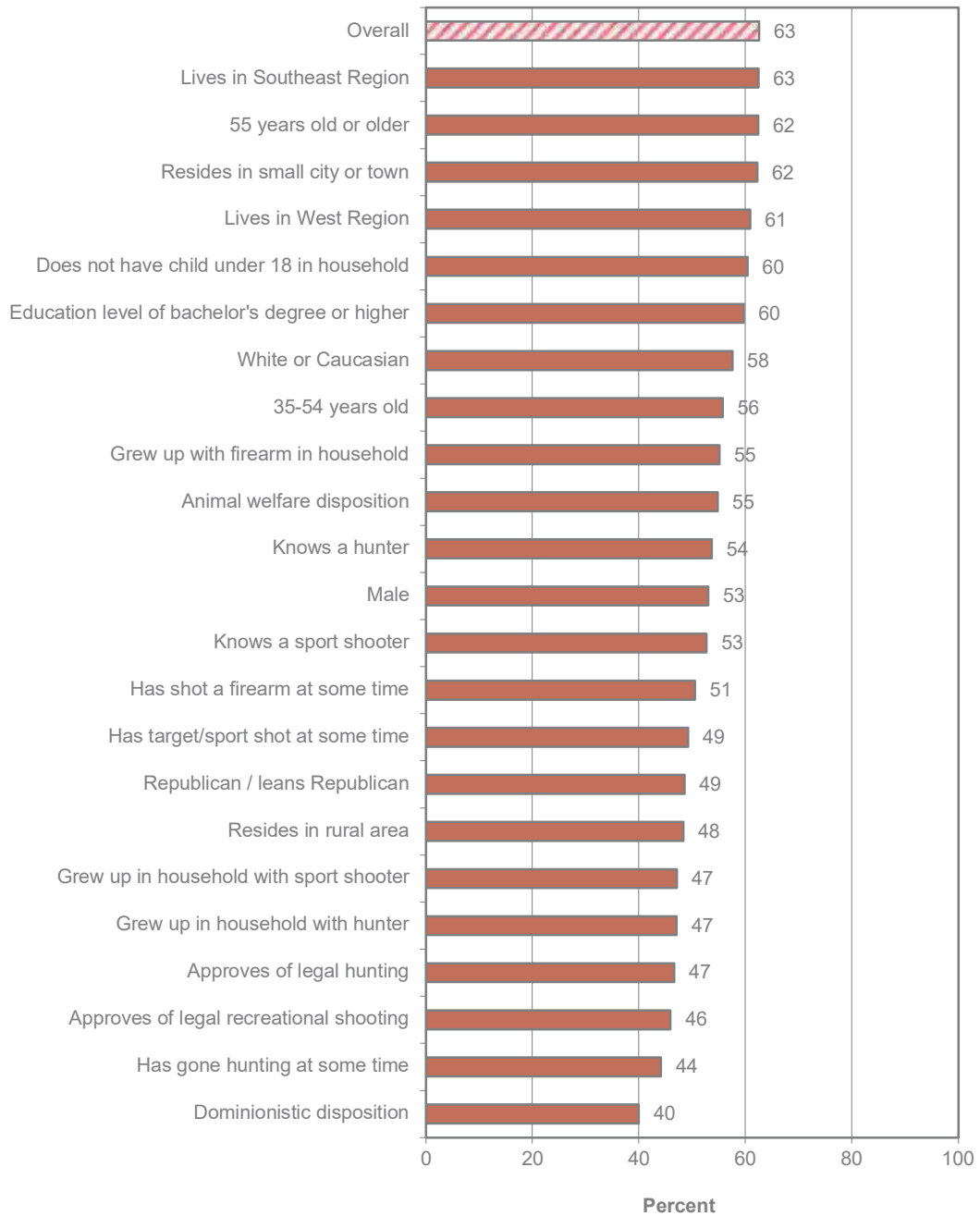
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some wildlife species to become endangered: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



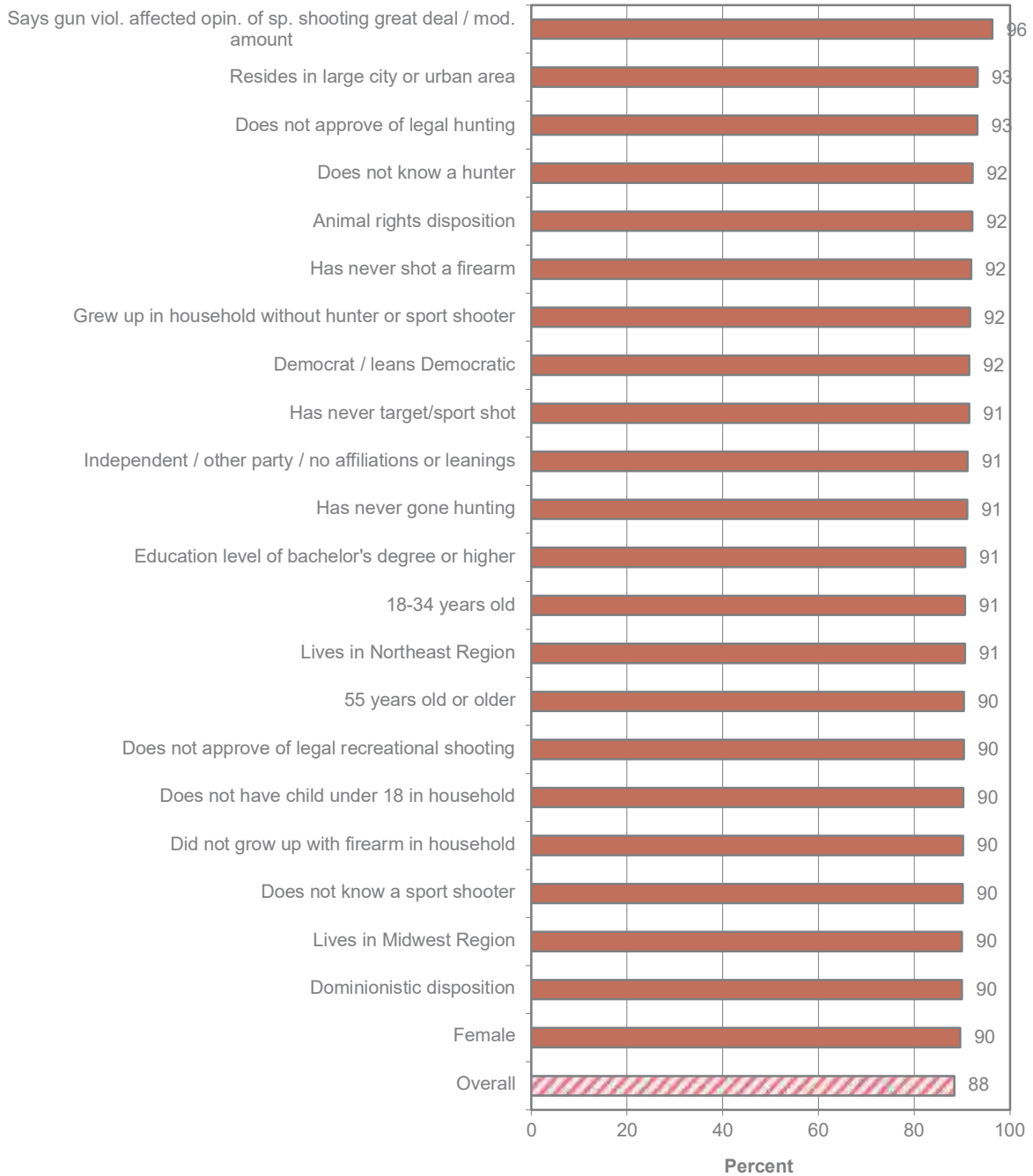
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that there is a good chance that guns used for legal hunting purposes are also used to commit crimes: (Those more negative)
(Part 1)**



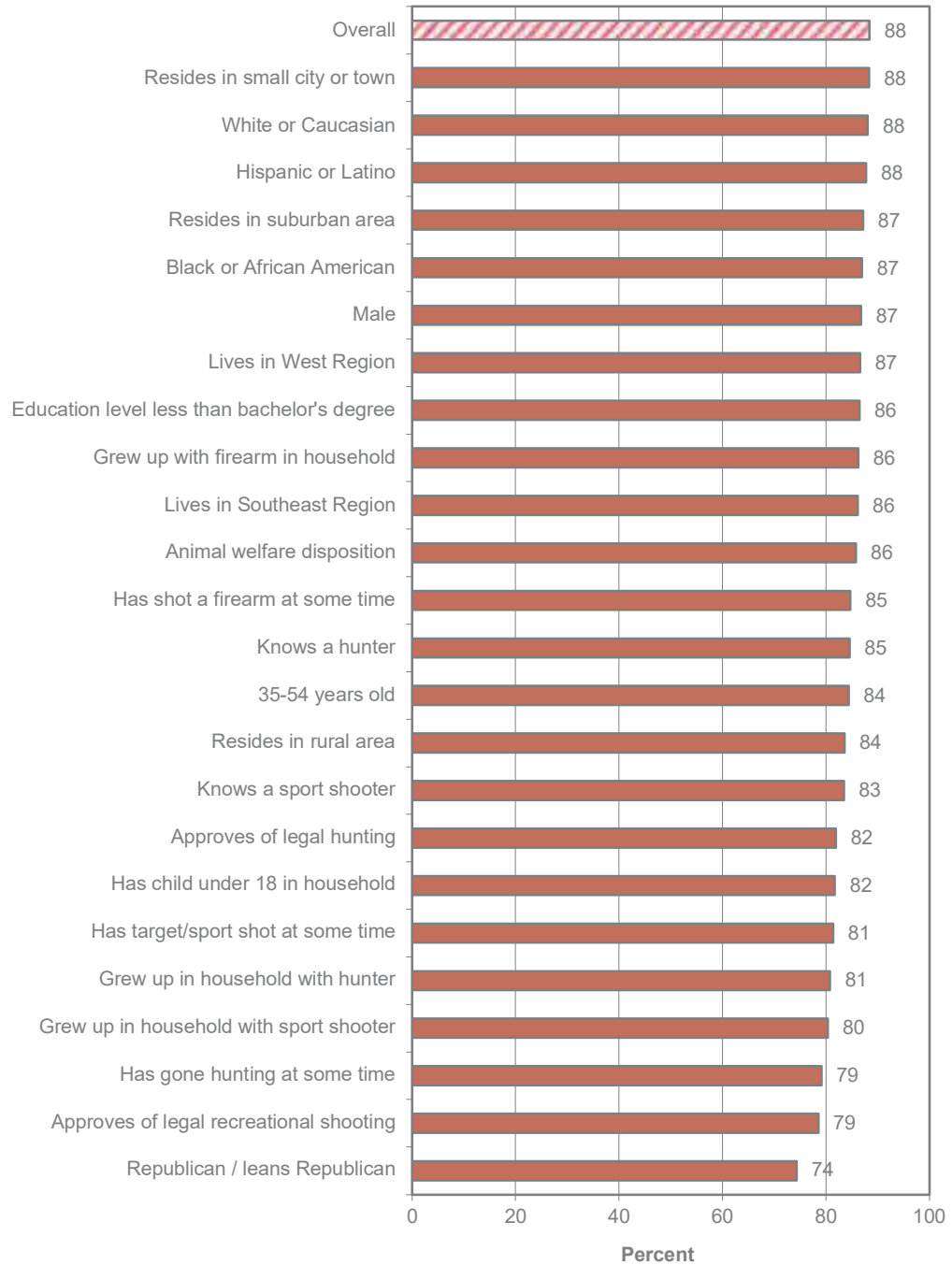
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that there is a good chance that guns used for legal hunting purposes are also used to commit crimes: (Those more negative)
(Part 2)**



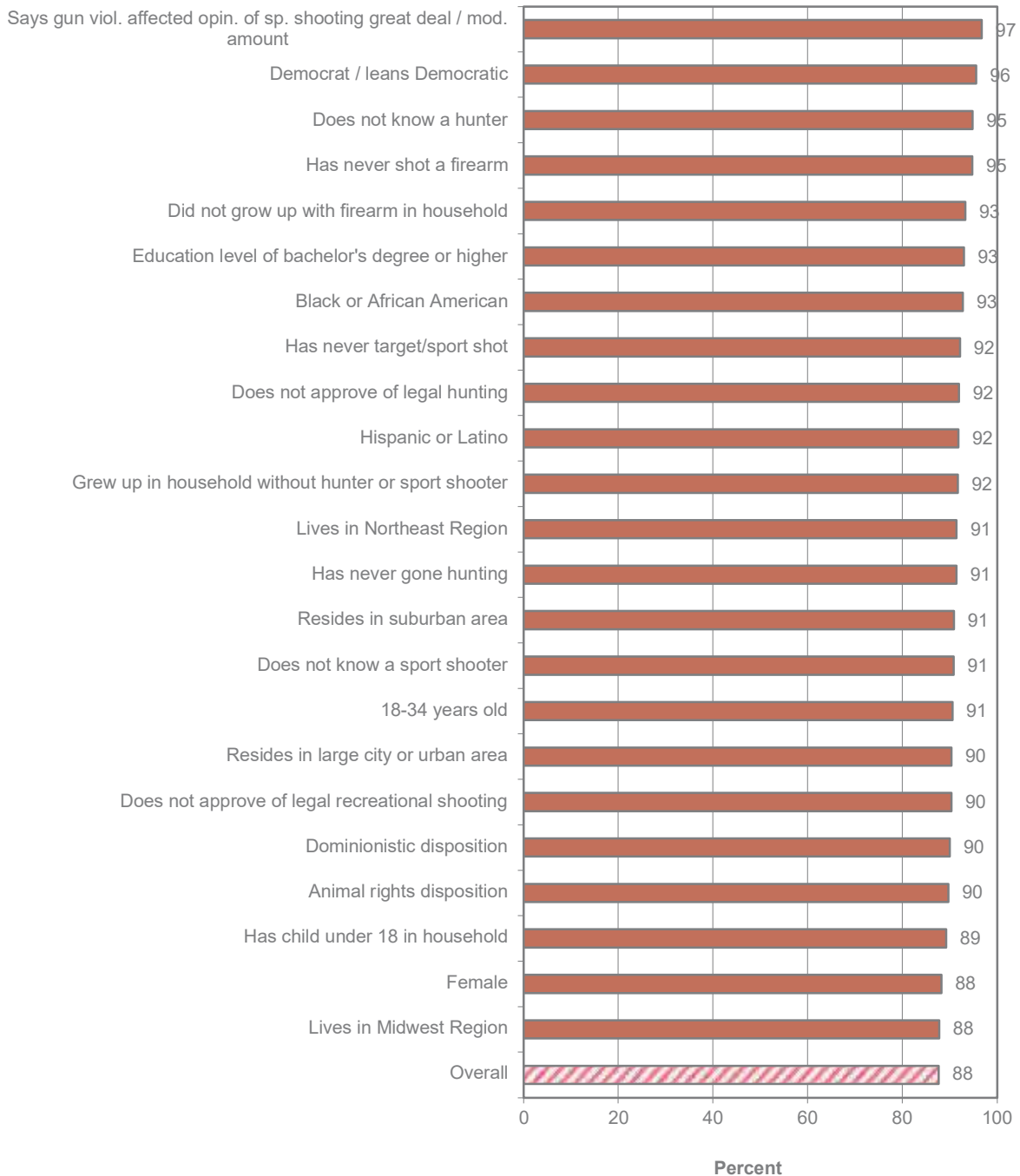
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that there are better and safer recreational activities than shooting a gun:
(Those more negative) (Part 1)**



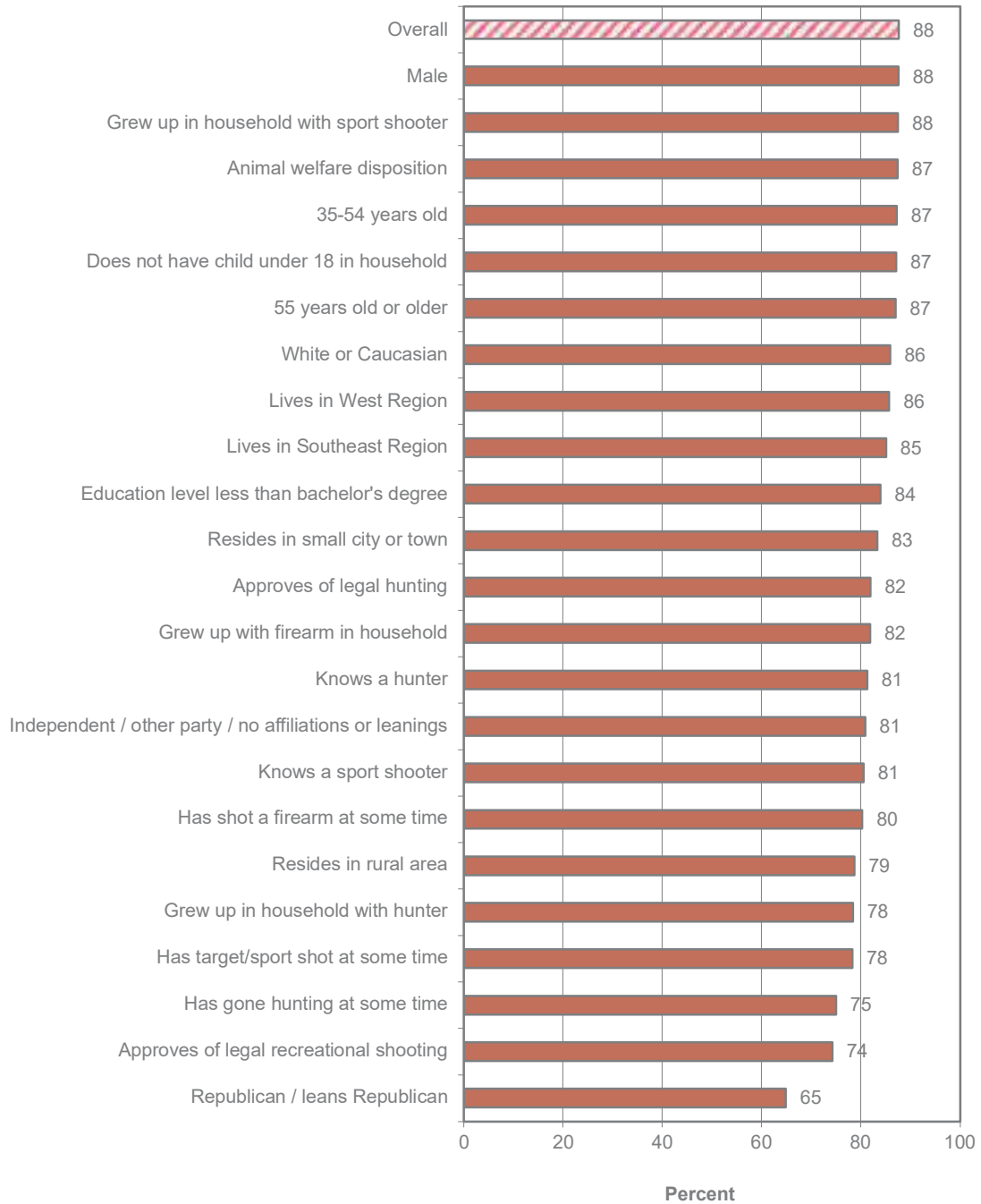
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that there are better and safer recreational activities than shooting a gun:
(Those more negative) (Part 2)**



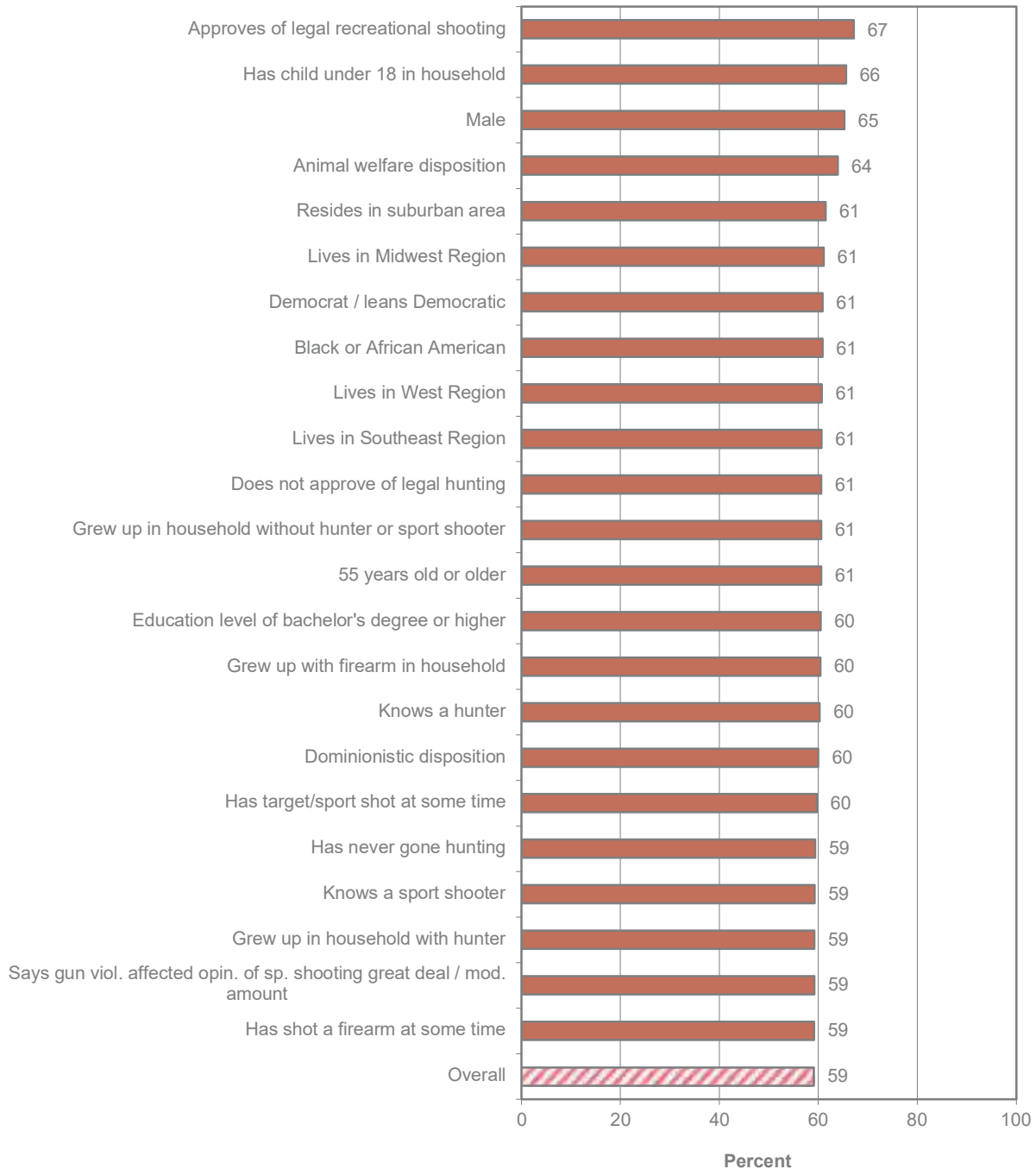
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that easy access to guns is why the United States has a gun violence problem:
(Those more negative) (Part 1)**



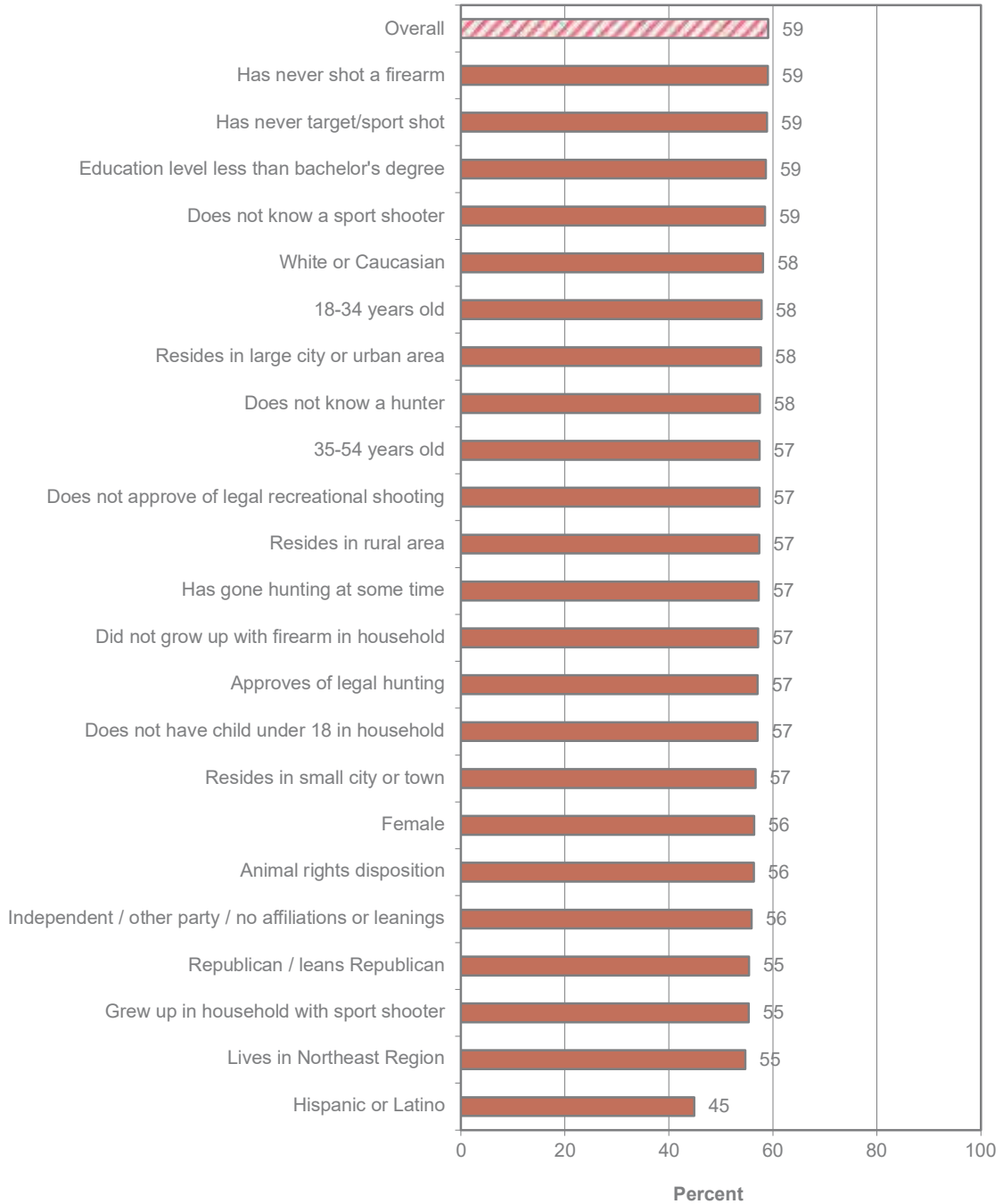
Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that easy access to guns is why the United States has a gun violence problem: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



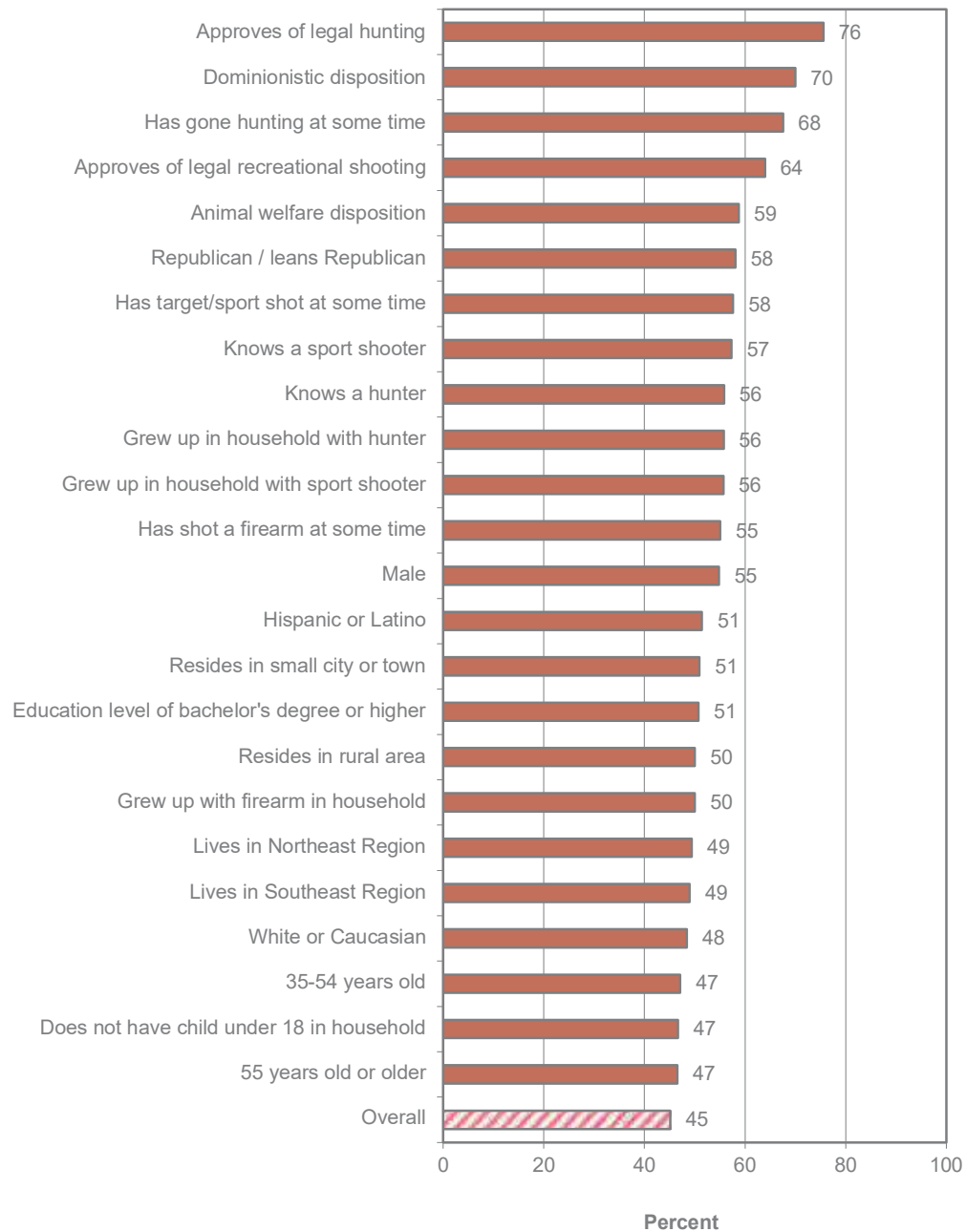
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that sport shooting is an expensive hobby that not everyone can afford:
(Those more negative) (Part 1)**



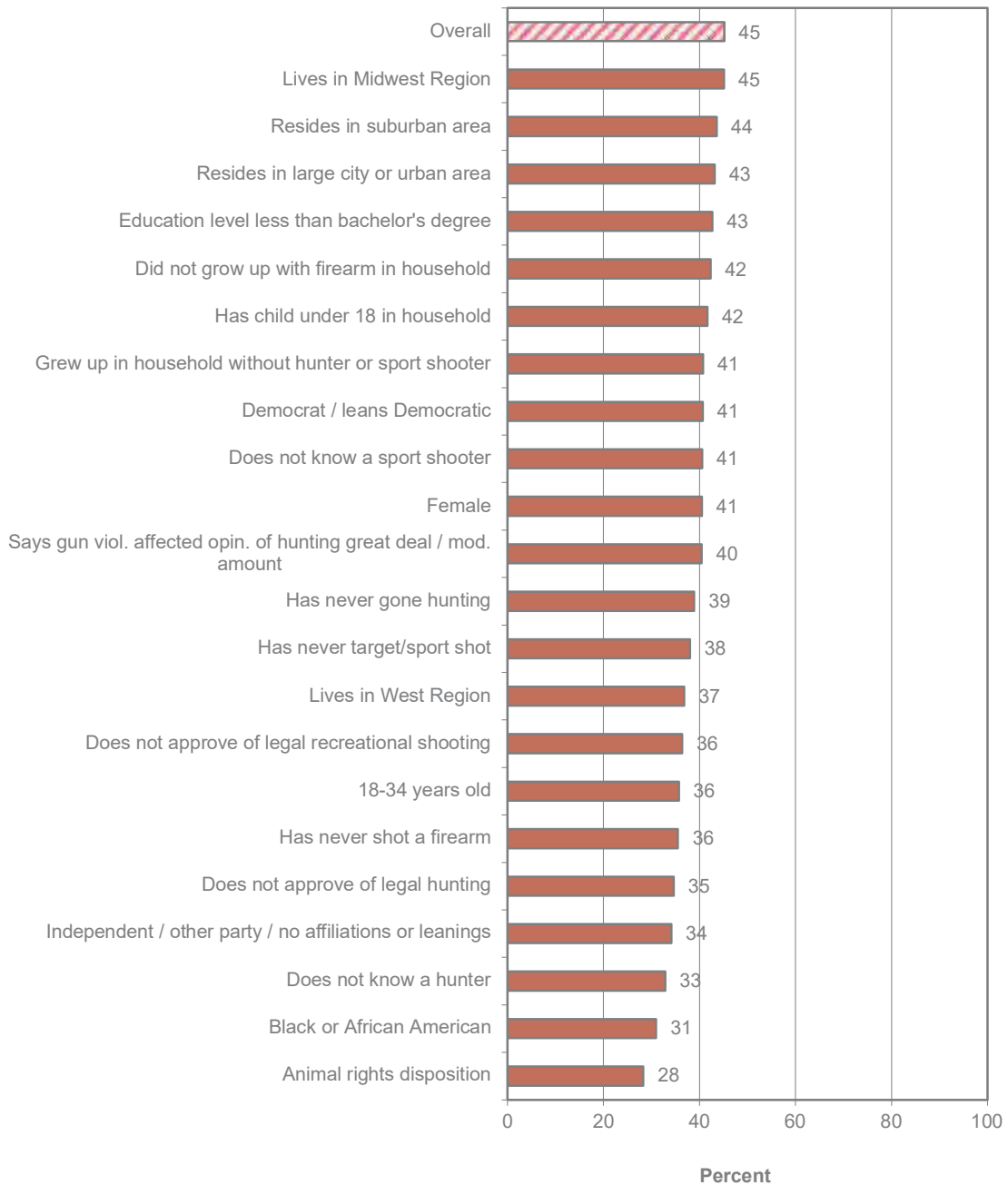
**Percent of the following groups who strongly or moderately agree that sport shooting is an expensive hobby that not everyone can afford:
(Those more negative) (Part 2)**



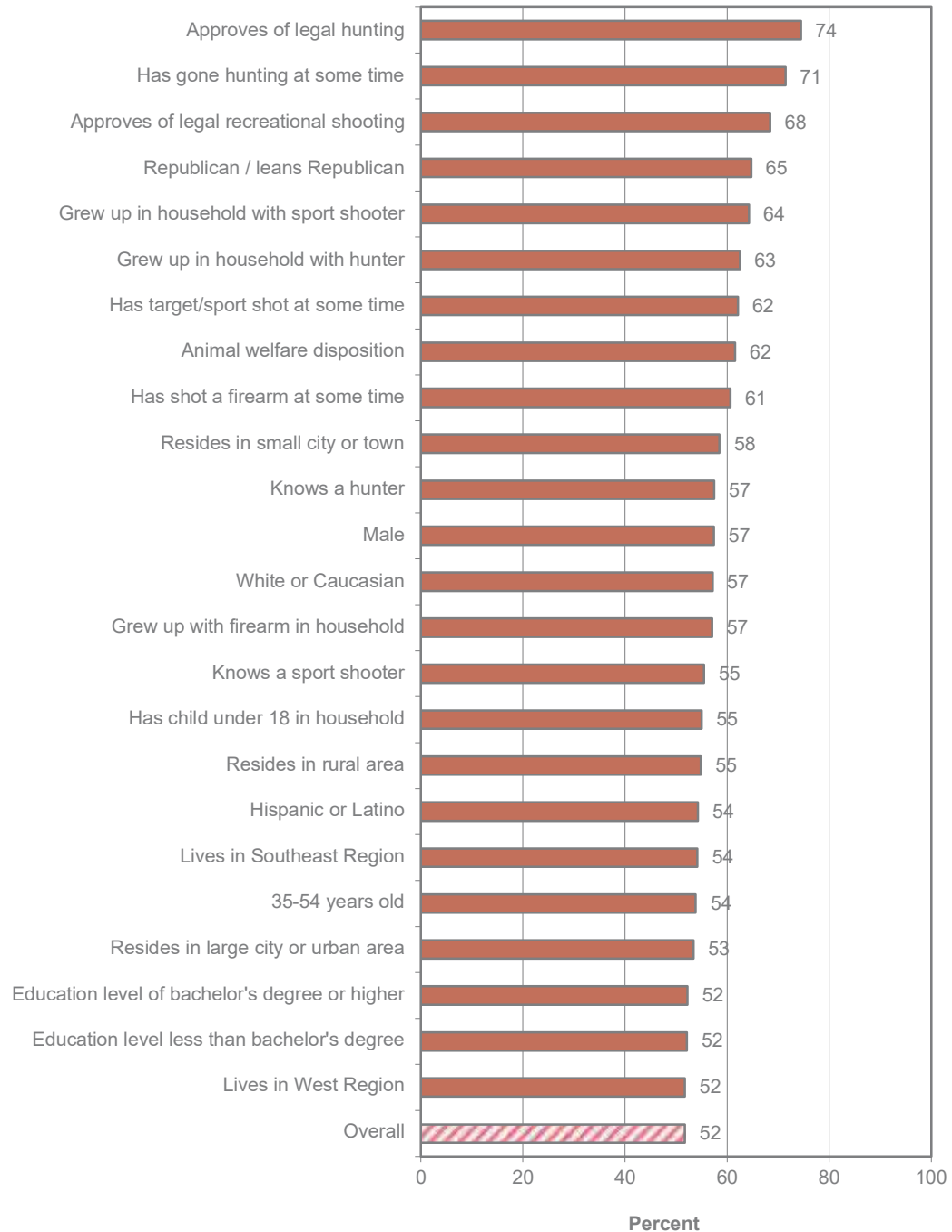
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting knowing that hunting controls wildlife populations and helps with species management: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting knowing that hunting controls wildlife populations and helps with species management: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



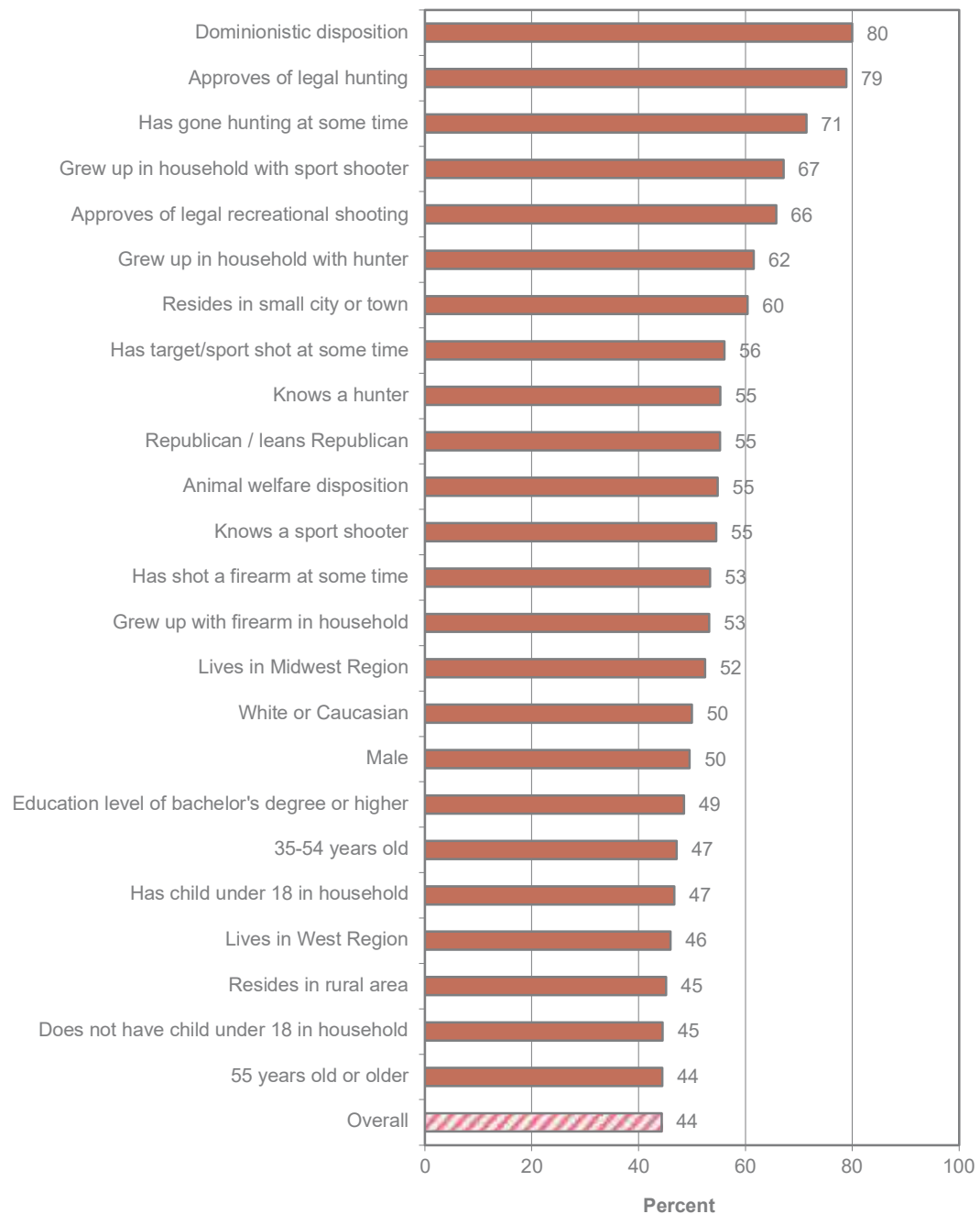
**Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting in the United States knowing that it is highly regulated to ensure that wildlife populations remain stable and healthy: (Those more negative)
(Part 1)**



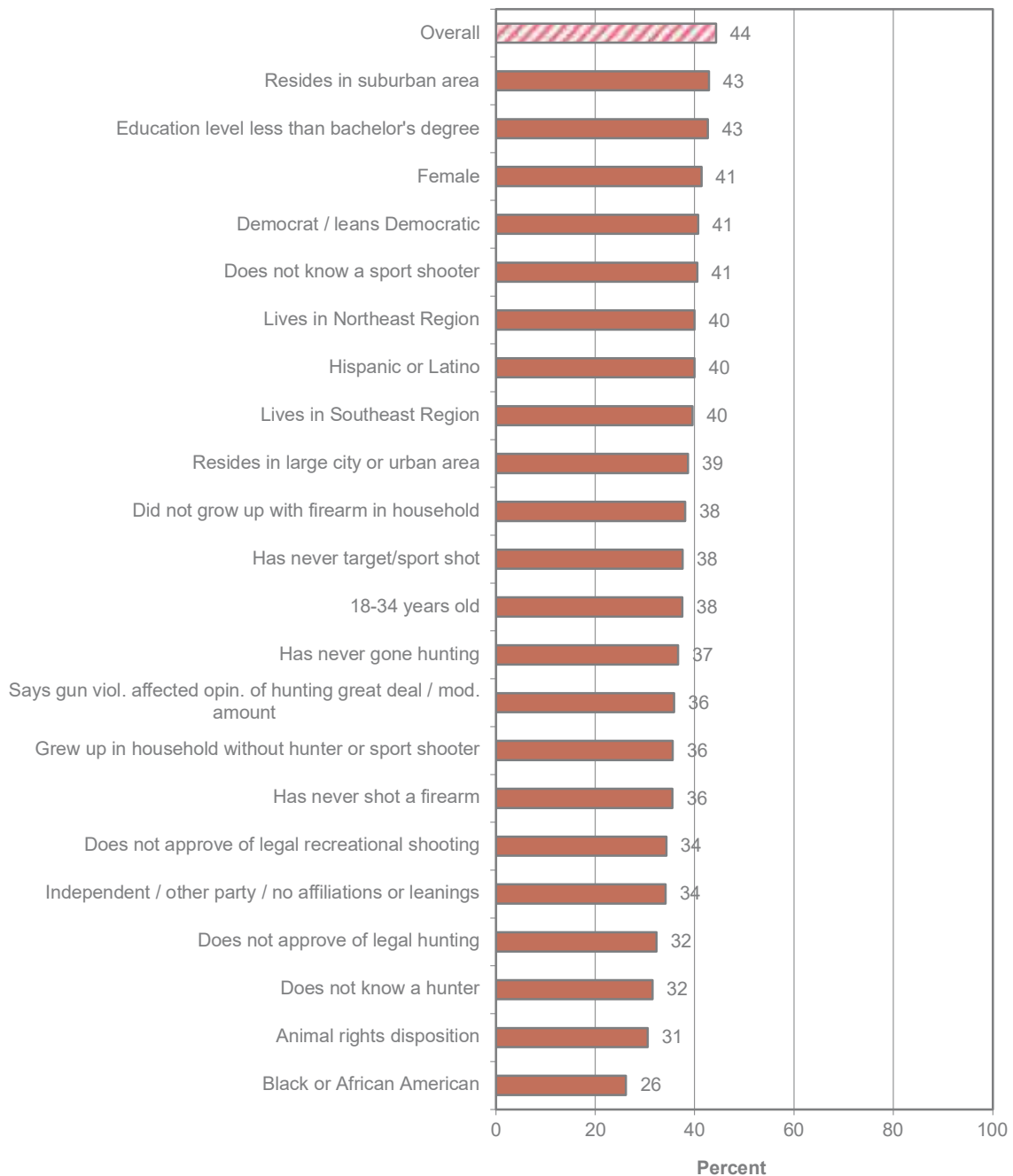
**Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting in the United States knowing that it is highly regulated to ensure that wildlife populations remain stable and healthy: (Those more negative)
(Part 2)**



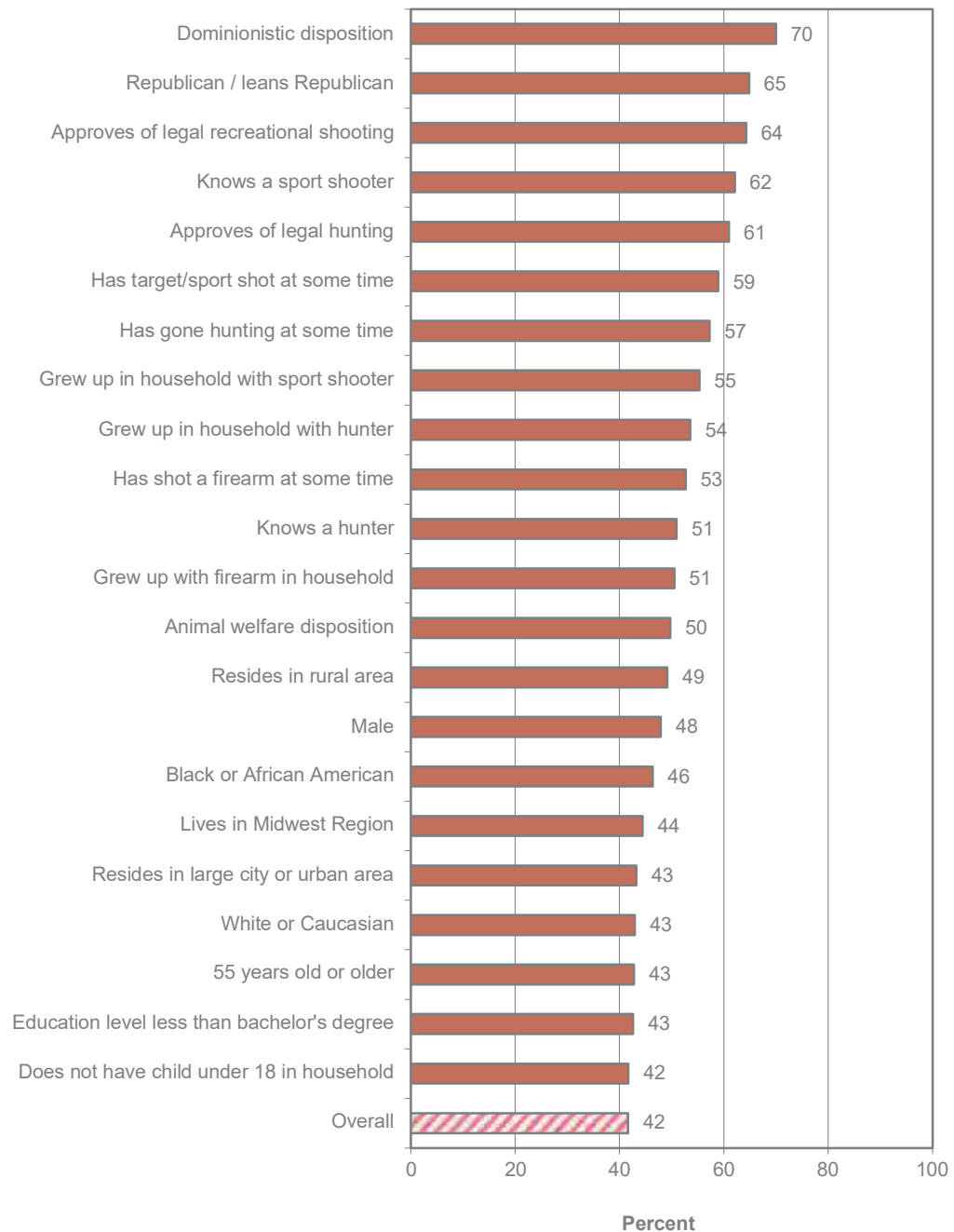
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting knowing that hunters help pay for wildlife conservation through their purchases of licenses and taxable equipment: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



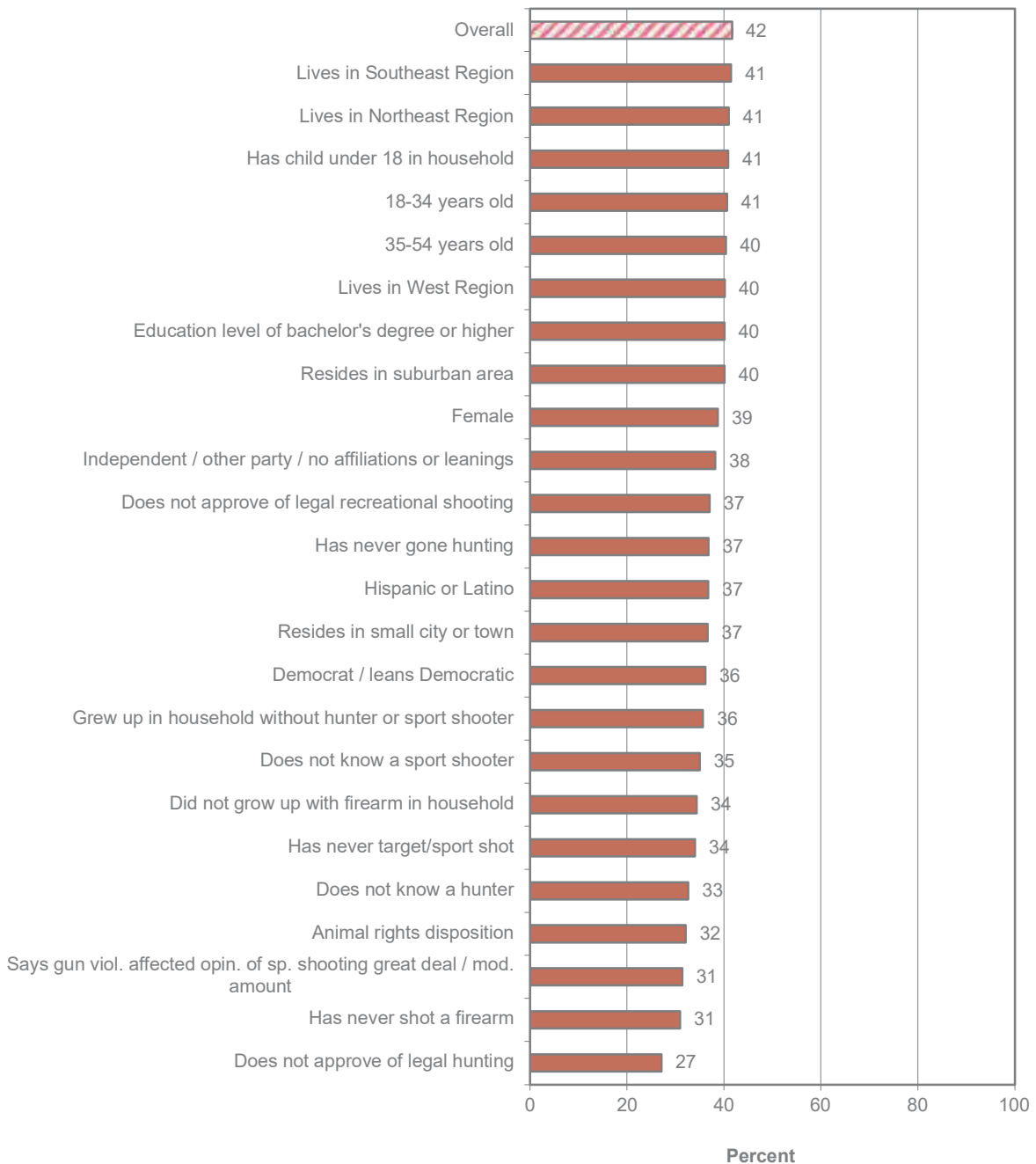
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of hunting knowing that hunters help pay for wildlife conservation through their purchases of licenses and taxable equipment: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



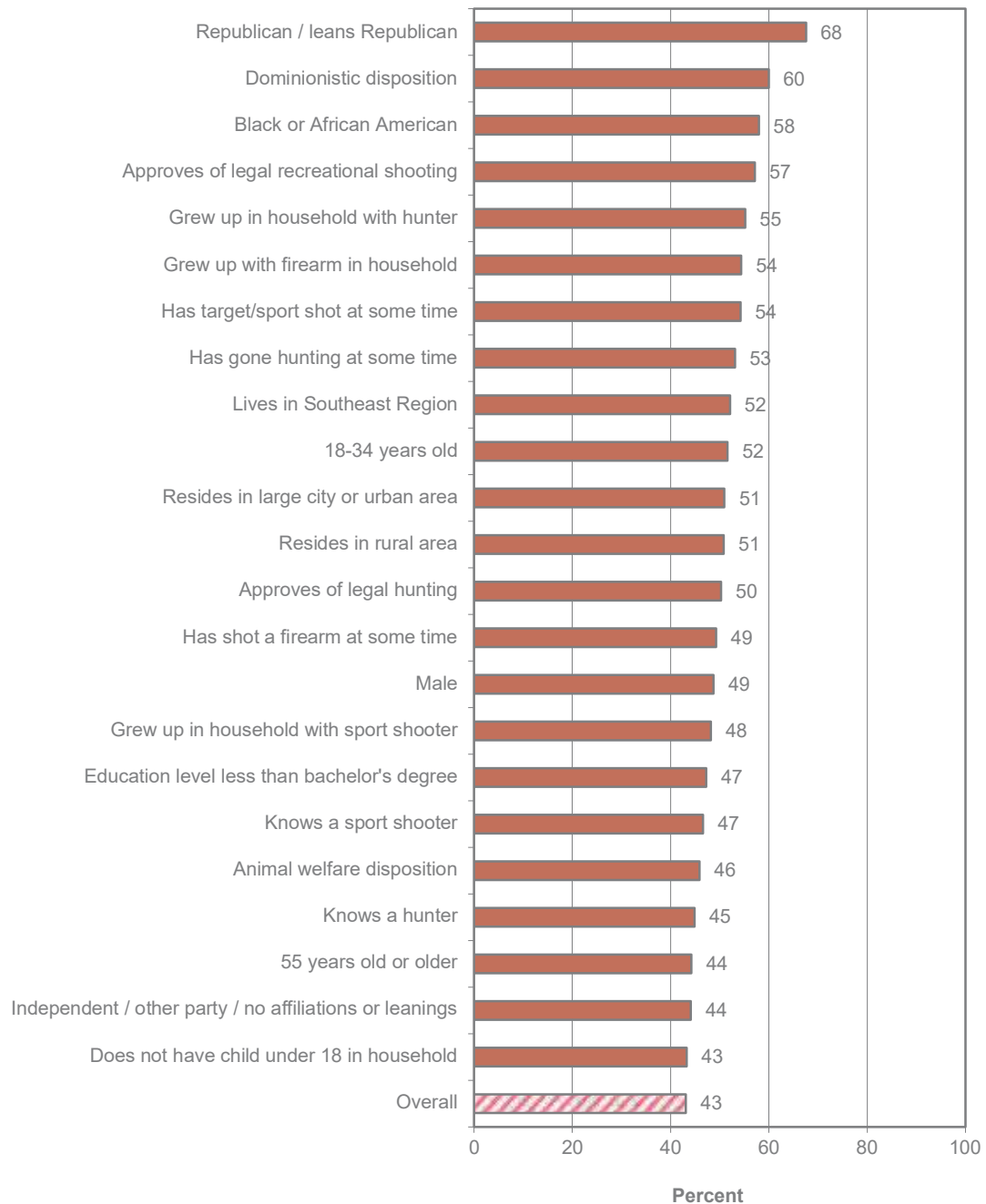
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of sport shooting knowing that it helps gun owners practice their skills and become safer shooters: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



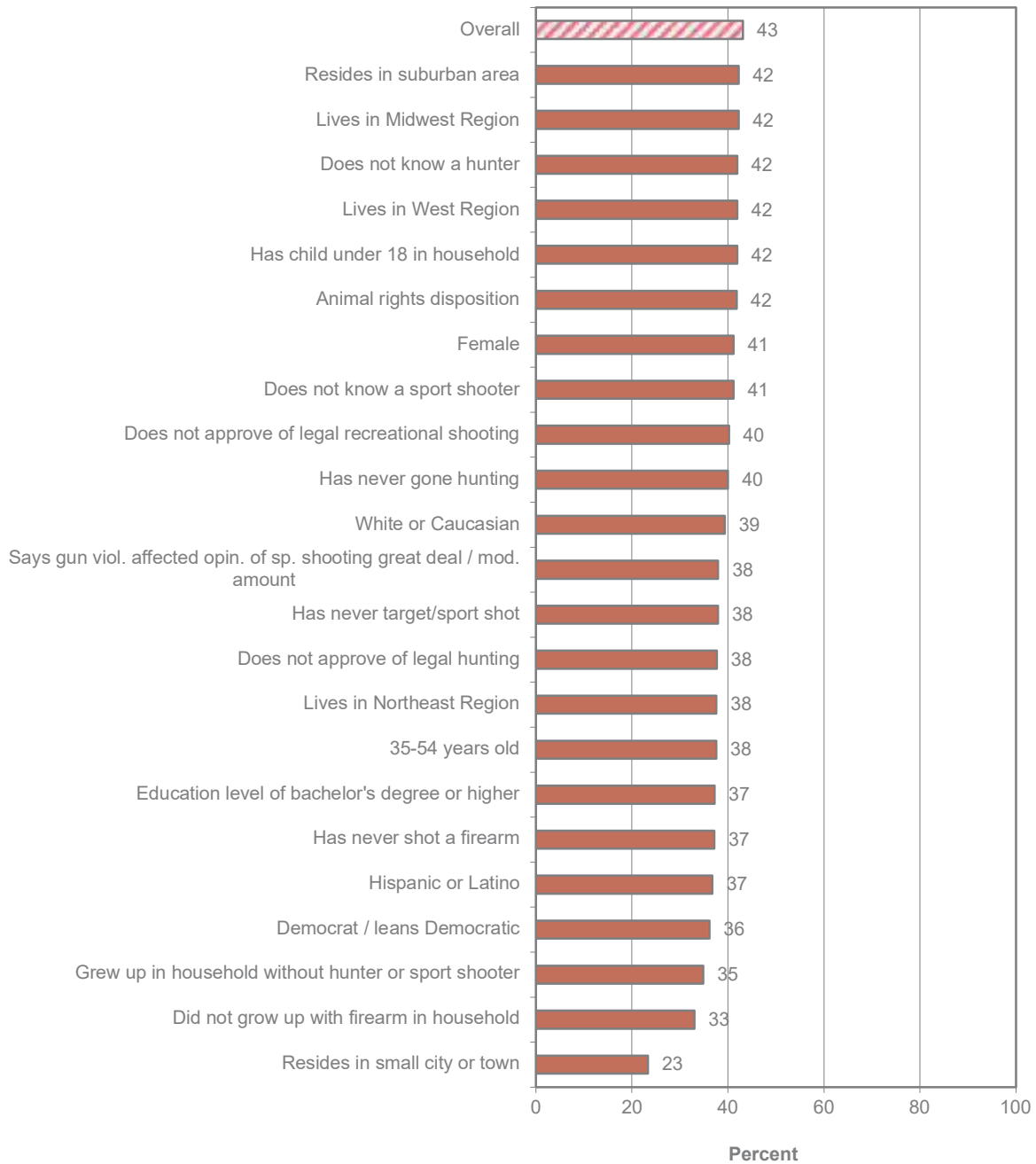
Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of sport shooting knowing that it helps gun owners practice their skills and become safer shooters: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of sport shooting knowing that personal gun ownership helps people be safe, especially in areas where police may not respond in time: (Those more negative) (Part 1)



Percent of the following groups who would have a much or somewhat more favorable opinion of sport shooting knowing that personal gun ownership helps people be safe, especially in areas where police may not respond in time: (Those more negative) (Part 2)



4. RESULTS SUMMARY

This chapter puts the data from the three study efforts together into a unified whole.

APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

- **A review of previous studies shows that approval of legal hunting nationally went down in 2023 compared to several previous studies in 2016, 2019, and 2021—the impetus for this current study.**
 - The 2016 survey found approval of legal hunting at 79%, which rose to 81% in 2021. The 2023 survey, however, found approval down to 77%. Indeed, the decline between 2021 and 2023 is the largest since Responsive Management started measuring this attitude nationwide. Additionally, disapproval increased from 12% in 2021 to 17% in 2023, the largest increase in disapproval that has been measured in the trends analyses going back to 1995. Both of the changes from 2021 to 2023 are statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$).
- **The review of previous studies found the largest drops in approval from 2021 to 2023 among West Region residents, people 18 to 34 years old, and Midwest Region residents.**
 - West Region residents' approval dropped from 88.9% to 73.8% in the two studies.
 - Approval among 18- to 34-year-olds dropped from 78.4% to 68.6%.
 - Midwest Region residents' approval dropped from 88.9% to 80.4% over those years.
- **For every reason that hunters go hunting, the review of previous studies found that approval nationally dropped between 2019 and 2023.**
 - The table below shows the drop in approval of hunting for each reason.

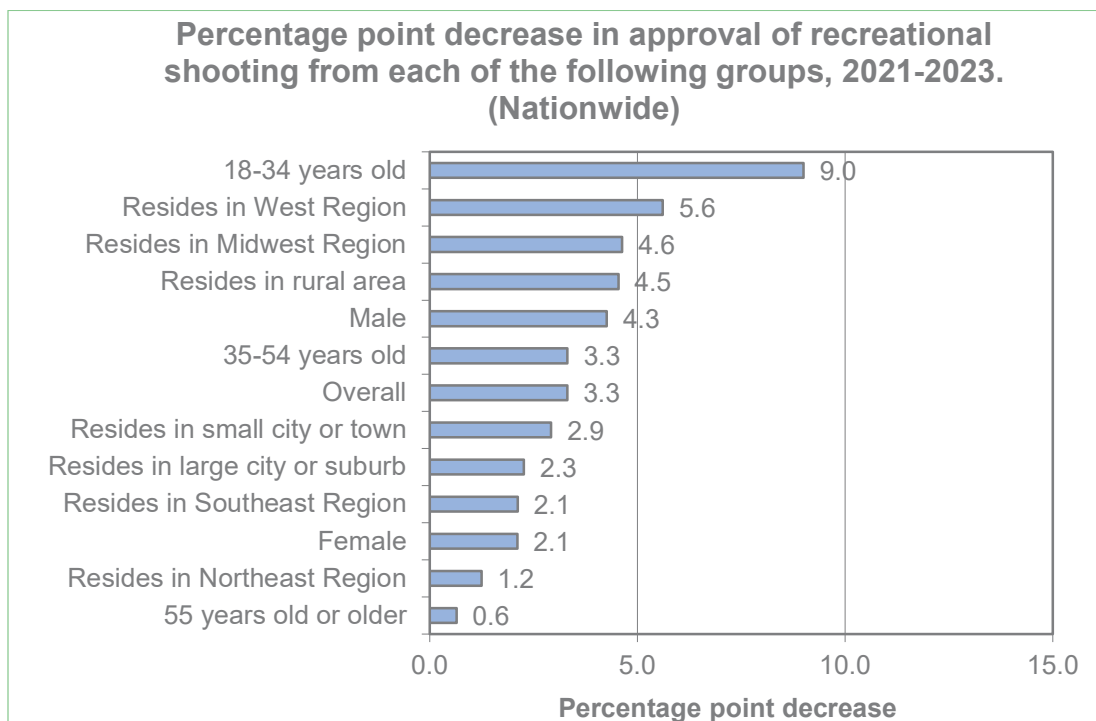
Overall approval of hunting by U.S. residents for the following reasons (%)			
Reason	2019	2023	% Change
For the sport	51.3	36.6	-14.7
To get organic meat	76.8	63.4	-13.4
To get locally sourced food	82.7	71.9	-10.9
For the meat	84.1	74.7	-9.4
For the challenge	40.8	32.8	-8.0
To protect humans from harm	84.4	77.7	-6.6
To protect property	74.5	68.8	-5.7
For a trophy	29.1	24.1	-5.1
For wildlife management	81.9	77.3	-4.6

- **Likewise, the approval of hunting for nearly all species asked about dropped between 2019 and 2023 in these nationwide surveys.**
 - Approval dropped by more than 5 percentage points for hunting squirrel, duck, rabbit, wild turkey, deer, mourning dove, and elk.

- **In addition to the drop in overall (i.e., *strong* and *moderate*) approval of hunting, the review of previous studies found a shift from *strong* approval to *moderate* approval.**
 - The comparison of the 2021 and 2023 surveys found that *strong* approval dropped from 54% to 45% while *moderate* approval increased from 27% to 32%. This still represents an overall drop.

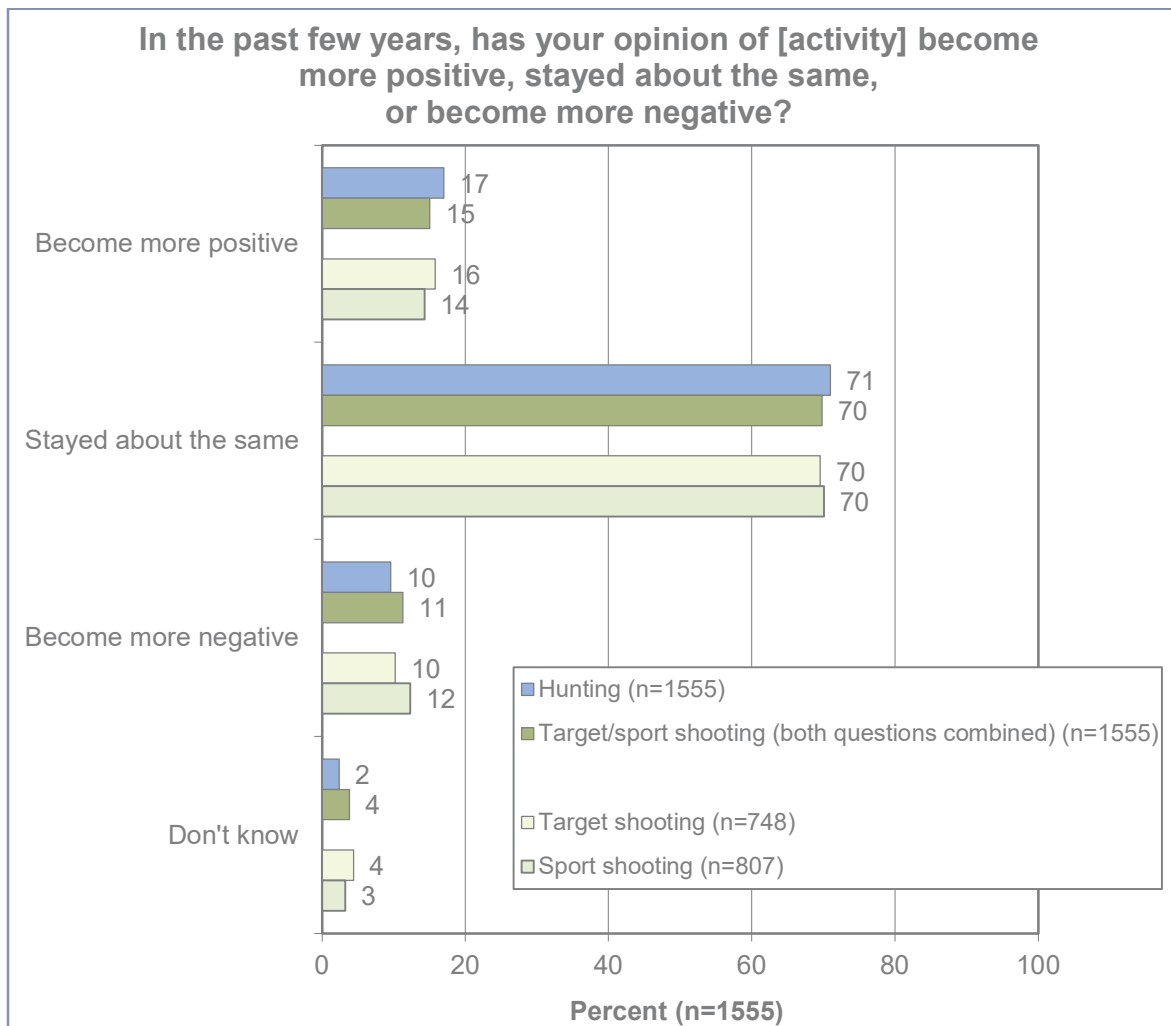
- **Sport shooting approval, as well, declined. Approval of legal recreational shooting fell nationally by 3.3% between 2021 and 2023.**
 - This drop is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$).
 - Approval declined more among young adults, West and Midwest Region residents, rural residents, and males than among U.S. residents overall.

- **The review of previous studies showed that the largest drops in approval of recreational shooting from 2021 to 2023 were among young U.S. residents and West and Midwest Region residents.**
 - Approval among those who are 18 to 34 years old fell from 81% to 72%.
 - West Region residents' approval of shooting dropped from 83% to 77%, while Midwest Region residents' approval dropped from 87% to 82% between the two surveys.



SELF-ASSESSED TRENDS IN APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

- While the large majority of Americans say their opinions of hunting and target/sport shooting have stayed about the same or become more positive, 10% say that their opinion has become more negative about hunting, and 11% say the same about target/sport shooting.
 - In the survey, a random half received the wording as *target shooting*, while the other half received the wording as *sport shooting*. The results were nearly identical.



- Residents of the Southeast Region are the most likely to have changed their opinion on hunting. (Change in opinion on target/sport shooting is about the same in each region.)
 - In the survey, 31% of Southeast Region residents did not stay the same in their opinion of hunting, compared to no more than 25% of any other region. For this reason, residents of the Southeast Region have the highest percentage becoming more positive and becoming more negative.

- **In the U.S., Hispanic/Latino residents, Democrats/those leaning Democratic, older residents, and females are the demographic groups most likely to have a more negative opinion of hunting or target/sport shooting over the past few years.**
 - The survey found that 17% of Hispanic/Latino residents, 14% of Democrats/those who lean Democratic, and 14% of older residents (55 years old and older) say that their opinion on hunting has become more negative, compared to 10% of U.S. residents overall.
 - The survey also found that 24% of Black/African American residents, 22% of Hispanic/Latino residents, 20% of Democrats/those who lean Democratic, and 15% of females say that their opinion on target/sport shooting has become more negative, compared to 11% of U.S. residents overall.

REASONS FOR NEGATIVE OPINIONS OF HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

- **An important finding of this study was that a substantial percentage of people equate sport shooting with hunting, which then colors their opinion of sport shooting itself.**
 - Rather than thinking of hunting and sport shooting separately, many focus group participants and survey respondents conflated the two.
 - For instance, some focus group participants had a difficult time keeping the concepts of hunting and sport shooting separate in the discussions when questions were directed specifically at one or the other.
 - Likewise, in open-ended responses about why their view of *sport shooting* had become more negative, survey respondents gave *hunting*-related reasons (e.g., I am against killing animals).
- **The survey and focus groups for this study found that disapproval of hunting was often based on an association with gun violence (including mass shootings).**
 - Of those whose opinion on hunting had become more negative, one of the top reasons given was that hunting is perceived to worsen problems with firearms. Additionally, a direct question about this found that 20% of Americans say that gun violence has affected their opinion of hunting *a great deal or a moderate amount*.
 - Three groups who particularly say that concern about gun violence affects their opinion of hunting *a great deal or a moderate amount* are Black/African American residents, Hispanic/Latino residents, and Democrats/those leaning Democratic.
 - Among those who became more negative about hunting, 50% say that gun violence affects their opinion of hunting *a great deal or a moderate amount*.
 - The focus groups suggested that many people associate hunting with firearms and, in turn, firearms with violence. Some appeared to become entrenched in their opposition after hearing of mass shootings.

- **The survey and focus groups also found that disapproval of hunting was often based on the perceived inhumaneness of hunting, that it was being done for recreation or sport, and the poor behavior of some hunters including poaching.**
 - In the survey, the top reasons for a worsening opinion of hunting (among those with a more negative opinion) was the feeling that animals should not be killed, that hunting should not be done as recreation or a sport, and the poor behavior of hunters (including poaching).
 - Many focus group participants were against killing animals for sport. In the survey, one of the top reasons for becoming more negative about hunting is that those respondents felt that animals deserve to live/not be killed in general. The second most common response in the survey for becoming more negative about hunting is the feeling that hunting should not be done for recreation or sport.
 - Some focus group participants equated hunting with poaching—they see poaching as a subset of hunting. (Generally, ethical hunters, meanwhile, will not refer to poaching as hunting.) Many cited stories they had read or heard of hunting accidents caused by careless behavior. In the survey, many of those more negative about hunting attributed it to poor behavior of hunters, including specifically poaching.

- **Photographs of harvested animals on social media are off-putting to many people.**
 - In the survey where a list of statements were presented to which respondents could agree or disagree, the highest agreement (at 40%) was that “posting a photo to social media of an animal that has been hunted does not show respect for wildlife.”
 - Among those who have become more negative about hunting, 77% agreed with the statement.
 - In one focus group, the moderator showed participants an image of a female hunter posing with a harvested turkey; the photo was deliberately chosen to be as inoffensive as possible (there were no signs of blood anywhere on the animal, the hunter was smiling, and the image consisted largely of a visually appealing nature scene). The reaction to the image was mostly negative.

- **Anything perceived as sport hunting is negatively viewed by many people.**
 - Focus group participants and survey respondents both showed their distaste for trophy hunting—which they said was any hunting for fun or sport or to get something to hang on the wall.
 - As mentioned previously, many survey respondents who were more negative attributed it to their belief that hunting should not be done as recreation or sport.

- **Negative views of hunting are also tied to perceptions of a lack of fair chase.**
 - Focus group participants mentioned scopes and other advanced hunting equipment that they feel give hunters an unfair advantage.

- **Some have negative views of hunting because they think that legal hunting endangers some species.**
 - In the survey, 37% of Americans agreed with the statement, “Hunting as practiced today in the U.S. causes some wildlife species to become endangered.”
 - Among those who have become more negative about hunting, 75% agreed with the statement.
- **Hunting also suffered from the perception, in the focus groups, that hunting is a sport for the elite and wealthy.**
 - One focus group participant even said that hunting was for “rich White men.”
- **The focus groups highlighted a generational change: there was evidence that young people nowadays are less likely to go hunting and more likely to be vegetarian. There also appears to be a less utilitarian view of animals.**
 - Although second-hand evidence, many focus group participants mentioned the lower participation rate in hunting nowadays and that they knew many more young people who are vegetarian now than when they were growing up.
- **Sport shooting’s acceptance is also hampered by the perceived link between the sport and gun violence.**
 - The top reason given, by far, for having a more negative opinion of target/sport shooting is its links to violence. Also, the survey found that 26% of Americans say that gun violence has affected their opinion of target/sport shooting *a great deal or a moderate amount*.
 - Those with particularly high percentages saying that concern about gun violence affects their opinion of target/sport shooting *a great deal or a moderate amount* are Black/African American residents, Democrats/those leaning Democratic, and females.
 - Among those who became more negative about target/sport shooting, 60% say that gun violence affects their opinion of target/sport shooting *a great deal or a moderate amount*.
 - The focus groups found that mass shootings and crime involving guns make people more likely to disapprove of any recreational activity that involves firearms.
- **Mass shootings in the U.S. negatively affect Americans’ opinions on recreational shooting.**
 - In the survey, about a third of Americans (31%) agree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve the use of firearms.
 - This percentage is higher than Americans overall among Black/African American residents (55%), Democrats/those leaning Democratic (48%), Hispanic/Latino residents (43%), residents of large cities/urban areas (40%), and females (37%).
 - Among those whose opinion of hunting has become more negative, 61% agree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve the use of firearms; among those whose opinion of target/sport shooting has become more negative, 71% agree that mass shootings in the U.S. have negatively affected their opinion of recreational activities that involve the use of firearms.

- **The perceived poor behavior of sport shooters is a reason for negative views of the sport.**
 - Some focus group participants felt that sport shooters tended to be more aggressive and angry about issues than non-shooters.
- **The perception that sport shooting is more dangerous than other sports was common in the focus groups.**
 - Nearly two thirds of Americans (64%) agreed that “there are better and safer recreational activities than shooting a gun.”
 - No actual injury statistics were cited when focus group participants cited the danger of sport shooting.
- **As with hunting, some people view sport shooting as expensive and elitist.**
 - One focus group participant compared sport shooting to horseback riding as an example of another activity that is primarily for privileged or wealthy individuals.
- **The focus groups found evidence that social media has a polarizing effect on opinions about firearms and related activities.**
 - Some participants mentioned Cecil the Lion, whose killing made the rounds of social media.
 - It was also noted by focus group participants that a typical social media post will only show one side of a topic.
- **The focus groups found evidence that the NRA has a negative effect on opinions about firearms, hunting, and sport shooting.**
 - Some focus group participants described the NRA as unreliable for information and callous about gun shooting victims. They indicated that the NRA undertakes “smear campaigns” and tends to oversimplify complex issues.

FACTORS THAT PLAY A ROLE IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

- **Hunting for food is highly accepted.**
 - About a third of those who saw social media posts about hunting that they found offensive indicated that seeing a post showing a family consuming meat that had been obtained through hunting would improve their view of hunting.
 - In the focus groups, even those generally opposed to hunting accepted hunting when it was done for food.

- **Ecological reasons—primarily the management of deer populations—for hunting are highly accepted.**
 - When positive statements were presented as reasons for encouraging people to be more positive about hunting, 70% indicated that they have a more positive opinion of hunting knowing that hunting controls wildlife and helps with species management, and 68% said the same about knowing that hunters help pay for wildlife conservation through license fees and excise taxes.
 - Many focus group participants understood that deer overpopulation creates problems for the ecosystem, can lead to more vehicle accidents, and can lead to spread of wildlife disease.

- **One way to try to elicit more support for hunting and sport shooting is to point out the link between these sports and conservation (through Pittman-Robertson). However, some focus group participants were skeptical about the link, even when it was pointed out to them.**
 - Many focus group participants felt that the statements linking conservation with these sports were intentionally misleading.
 - One focus group participant said, “It seems contradictory if you care about animals and then kill them.”

- **Hunting as an alternative to factory farming showed promise as an encouragement for people to be more accepting of hunting.**
 - One focus group participant recommended juxtaposing the overpopulated living conditions of animals in factory farms with game species living in the wild.

- **Target shooting to practice self defense was more acceptable than recreational shooting, among many focus group participants.**
 - Many focus group participants acknowledged that people should have the opportunity to protect themselves.

- **Target shooting to improve skill was generally seen as positive when it was linked to cleaner hunting kills, which lessen animal suffering.**
 - In the focus groups, the wounding and slow death of animals was discussed as a negative thing about hunting, while more skilled hunters were seen as lessening this problem.

- **One finding of the survey was that Americans, when asked what could improve their opinion of hunting or sport shooting, generally talk about negative aspects of the activities rather than what could be better. In other words, instead of giving a response indicating something positive that could be done, they cited a negative thing that should not be done. For instance:**
 - Many would have a better perception of hunting if trophy hunting were minimized.
 - Eliminating poor, boorish behavior by hunters and sports shooters would improve many people’s opinions of the sports.
 - Unfortunately, many said that nothing would improve their opinion of these activities.

INFORMATION SOURCES AND HOW THEY AFFECT OPINIONS ON HUNTING AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTING

- **Social media is one of the top sources for news among Americans.**
 - In the survey, 42% of Americans say that they typically get news from social media.
- **Television remains a top source of news among Americans.**
 - In the survey, 35% of Americans say that they get news from local TV news, 30% say that they get news from network news programs, and 27% get news from cable stations like CNN. (Note that these are not additive because respondents could give multiple sources.)
- **Of those Americans who use social media, 25% saw offensive posts about hunting, and 14% saw offensive posts about firearms or target/sport shooting.**
 - Generally, these were posts that were negative about the sports, particularly hunting. However, some who saw what they perceived as offensive posts about firearms were anti-firearm messages—in other words, they were offended by the posts that were for gun control or said negative things about firearms or target/sport shooting. Nonetheless, nearly half of those who saw posts that were offensive became more negative about hunting or sport shooting.

KNOWING HUNTERS AND TARGET/SPORT SHOOTERS

- **The survey and focus groups highlighted that people who know a hunter are more likely to be accepting of hunting, compared to those who do not know anybody who engages in it.**
 - In the survey, 18% of those who do not know a hunter said that their opinion of hunting has become more negative over the past few years (this compares to only 10% of Americans overall). Also, 49% of those who do not know a hunter said that gun violence affects their opinion of hunting *a great deal* or *a moderate amount*, compared to 20% among Americans overall.
 - Often, focus group participants who had favorable opinions on hunting talked about family members who hunt; for example, they talked about uncles who gave food obtained through hunting to others.
 - In light of this, it is fortunate that a high percentage of Americans (79%) say that they personally know a hunter.

- **The same can be said about target shooters and shooting as a sport: people who know target shooters were more accepting of sport shooting in the focus group discussions.**
 - In the survey, 17% of those who do not know a sport shooter said that their opinion of target/sport shooting has become more negative over the past few years, while only 11% of Americans overall feel this way. Also, 39% of those who do not know a sport shooter said that gun violence affects their opinion of target/sport shooting *a great deal* or *a moderate amount*, compared to 26% among Americans overall.
 - In the focus groups, whether they knew family or friends who went sport shooting, those who knew a sport shooter tended to be more positive than those who did not about the sport.
 - As with hunting, it is fortunate that a majority of Americans (58%) say that they personally know a target/sport shooter.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE WITH MORE NEGATIVE OPINIONS

Those with more negative opinions on hunting and sport shooting:

- Are more female than the general population.
- Tend to skew more to the older age groups compared to the general population.
- Are less likely to have children in their household compared to the general population.
- Tend to be more urban/suburban than the general population.

CONCERNS ABOUT GENERAL SOCIAL ISSUES

- **A final finding detailed in this section shows where gun violence, wildlife populations, and threats to the Second Amendment rank among issues of concern to Americans. The survey found much more concern about gun violence than it did about wildlife populations or threats to the Second Amendment.**
 - Using a 0 to 10 scale, respondents rated their concern about several issues. Gun violence had a mean concern rating of 7.1, whereas wildlife populations had a mean rating of 6.4 and threats to the Second Amendment had a mean rating of 6.1.
 - Among those who had a more negative opinion of hunting or sport shooting in the survey, gun violence was their top concern of the seven possible concerns asked about. Among those who had become more negative about hunting, the mean rating of concern about gun violence was 8.6; likewise, among those who had become more negative about sport shooting, the mean rating of concern about gun violence was 8.9. These were the highest ratings for these groups.

5. STUDY METHODOLOGIES

Three study efforts were included in this report, and the methods for each are discussed in this chapter.

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF EXISTING RESEARCH

A national survey and four state surveys that Responsive Management had previously conducted were reviewed.⁵ The results as presented in those reports were used, but, more importantly, the existing data from those surveys were further analyzed. (The survey methods for all of those studies are not detailed here, but they followed standard surveying methodology that is the same or similar to the survey methodology described later in this chapter.)

Some of the data were crosstabulated by demographic characteristics, and then trends were examined among each of the demographic groups. The demographic characteristics were:

- Gender.
- Age.
- Ethnicity (White or Caucasian, Black or African American, and Hispanic or Latino).
- Region of residence (based on the four AFWA regions; see map in the next section of this chapter).
- Residential area on the rural-urban continuum.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups entail an in-depth, structured discussion with participants about their opinions and attitudes regarding various issues. These focus groups explored participants' attitudes toward hunting and sport shooting, their thoughts on why cultural support for these activities has been declining in recent years, and opinions on messaging and outreach that might address these attitudes, among other topics. The use of focus groups is an accepted research technique for the qualitative exploration of attitudes, opinions, perceptions, motivations, constraints, and behaviors.

Focus groups allow for extensive open-ended responses to questions; probing, follow-up questions; group discussion; and observation of emotional responses to topics—aspects that cannot be measured in a quantitative survey. Qualitative research sacrifices reliability for increased validity. This means that focus group findings cannot be replicated statistically as a survey can be (i.e., focus groups have low reliability), but focus groups provide a more nuanced understanding of the issues being discussed (i.e., they have high validity). Focus group discussions are recorded for further analysis.

Focus group participants were recruited in consultation with Outdoor Stewards and Responsive Management. People who met the criteria for the focus groups were contacted and given a brief summary of the focus group topics. They were further questioned to verify their eligibility for participation and, if qualified and interested, scheduled for attendance (virtually). OSCF and Responsive Management developed the recruiting parameters.

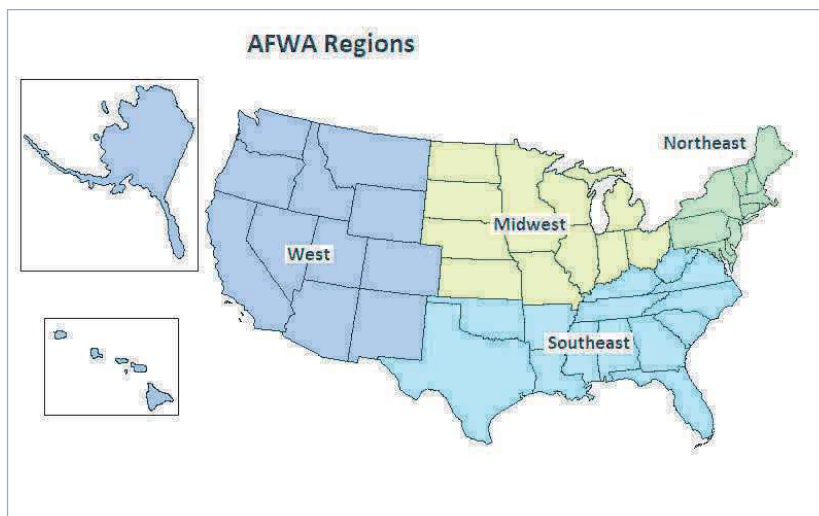
A short screener survey ensured that focus group participants met the following criteria:

- They do not *strongly* approve of hunting AND *strongly* approve of sport shooting.
- Their approval of hunting OR sport shooting has become less favorable in recent years (recruitment was designed to have 2/3 of participants fall into this category).
- Applicants who met the first two criteria were asked *why* they approve or disapprove of hunting and sport shooting, in an open-ended question. Recruiters selected applicants who were reasonably well spoken and able to articulate the reasoning behind their positions.
- Participants could *not* be employed by the following types of businesses or agencies:
 - a marketing, advertising, communications, or political polling business;
 - a state or federal agency related to wildlife, natural resources, or outdoor recreation; or
 - a hunting- or sport shooting-related business.
- No more than one participant within the same occupation in each group.
- Participants were required to have a working webcam and microphone and reliable internet service.

Along with these criteria, recruiters ensured that each focus group included a mix of ages, a mix of ethnicities, and an even gender split (race/ethnicity data were included in the general population database).

An advantage of having virtual focus groups is that participants are not constrained by travel distance to a single focus group facility—in other words, these participants were recruited from various locations across each region. The four main AFWA regions were used as shown:

AFWA Regions	Topic	Date
Northeast / Southeast	Hunting	February 26, 2024
Northeast / Southeast	Sport Shooting	February 27, 2024
Midwest / West	Hunting	February 28, 2024
Midwest / West	Sport Shooting	February 29, 2024



OSCF/Responsive Management ensured that there was follow-up contact with qualified, interested individuals as needed to provide confirmation that included the date and time of the focus group. To encourage participation, a monetary incentive was provided to participants. Responsive Management also ensured that each focus group participant had the necessary computer equipment and internet access to be able to participate, and Responsive Management remained available to the participants for any assistance needed or for any questions prior to the focus groups. The focus groups were scheduled to run approximately 90 minutes each.

Each focus group was conducted using a discussion guide, moderated by one of Responsive Management's trained moderators. Using the discussion guide, the moderator kept the discussions within design parameters without exerting a strong influence on the discussion content. The focus groups were recorded for further analysis.

OSCF/Responsive Management conducted the qualitative analyses in three phases. The first phase was the direct observation of the discussions by the moderator and his or her notes after the focus groups. The second phase of the analysis consisted of transcriptions of the discussions and a review of the recordings and transcriptions by other researchers. The development of findings into the report itself made up the third phase of the focus group analysis.

MULTIMODAL SURVEY

The project entailed a scientific, probability-based multimodal survey of the U.S. general population with an oversample of those more negative in their views about hunting and/or sport shooting. The survey was carried out by telephone and online, and the final general population sample was fully representative of U.S. residents overall. (The oversample was not used in the general population results; the oversample was used in a data analysis run of those more negative in the views.) The details of the survey methodology are discussed below.

Questionnaire Design

The telephone and online versions of the questionnaire were developed cooperatively by the research team. There were slight differences between the telephone and online versions of the questionnaire to accommodate each survey mode, but otherwise the versions were identical. To qualify for the survey, respondents had to be at least 18 years old and live in the United States.

The survey was coded for integration in Responsive Management's computer-assisted telephone interviewing system as well as for the online survey platform. An important aspect of both versions of the survey is that the computer controls which questions are asked so that respondents get the proper follow-up questions. Responsive Management conducted pre-tests of the questionnaires to ensure proper wording, flow, and logic in the survey.

Because the researchers had more questions they wanted to ask than could be asked of a single respondent, the sample was randomly split in some places in the survey so that no single respondent would get every question, thereby shortening the survey for respondents. For this reason, the sample size on some questions that were designed to be asked of everybody is less

than the total sample. Because these questions were asked on a *randomly selected* sub-sample, the results of this half-sample still validly represent all U.S. residents.

Survey Samples

Three samples were obtained for this survey: a sample of wireless phone numbers, a sample of landline phone numbers, and an online sample. The samples were obtained from MSG, a company that specializes in providing scientifically valid samples for surveys.

The sample was stratified by the four AFWA regions previously defined, with a goal of at least 500 completed questionnaires in each region. Within each region, the state goals were based on the population within that region. (The regions were then weighted to be in their proper proportions for overall national results; weighting is explained in the analysis subsection of this chapter.)

Multimodal Survey Administration

As noted, the survey was coded for integration with the computer-assisted telephone interviewing system, but note that the telephone surveys are administered by a live interviewer. Telephone interviews were conducted Monday through Friday from noon to 9:00 p.m., local time, using interviewers with experience conducting computer-assisted surveys about hunting and sport shooting. A five-callback design was used 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 at the time of initial contact, or a callback time was set that was more convenient for the respondent.

Those with a wireless number who could not be reached after five attempts were sent a text message inviting them to participate in the survey online. Those who did not respond to the text were called at least one more time, and then a reminder text was sent to nonrespondents approximately a week after the initial text invitation. The text message provided a link to the online survey's landing page that featuring an introduction with more information and instructions to begin the survey. The text and the landing page are shown below and on the next page.

Text Message Invitation to Participate in the Survey

Hello, [name]. This is Amanda with Responsive Management. Under a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we would like to hear your opinions about outdoor activities in your state, even if you do not participate! Please consider participating in this survey [\[link\]](#).

Landing Page for Online Surveys of the Wireless Phone Sample

This survey is being conducted on behalf of the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#), under a grant with [Responsive Management](#). The purpose of this survey is to find out more about Americans' attitudes about outdoor recreation activities.

Please be assured that the information you provide in the survey is completely confidential and will never be associated with any personal information. Thank you in advance for your time and participation in this important research.

Please click "Next" below to start the survey.

Under direction from Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation the online version of the survey was coded in an online platform by Responsive Management, and the survey was administered to the online sample by MSG.

The survey was conducted in October 2024. Responsive Management obtained 2,065 completed questionnaires (1,555 completed questionnaires for the general population data run and 510 completed questionnaires in the oversample).

Survey Quality Control

For both the telephone and online versions of the survey, the questionnaire was programmed to branch and substitute phrases in the survey based on previous responses to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data collection. The survey questionnaire also contained error checkers and computation statements to ensure quality and consistent data.

Additionally, for quality control, Survey Center managers monitored the telephone interviews in real time and provided feedback to the interviewers. To ensure the integrity of the telephone survey data, Responsive Management has interviewers who have been trained according to the highest industry standards established by the American Association for Public Opinion Research. Methods of instruction included lectures and role-playing. The Survey Center managers and other professional staff conducted briefings with the interviewers prior to the administration of this survey. Interviewers were instructed on type of study, study goals and objectives, handling of survey questions, interview length, termination points and qualifiers for participation, interviewer instructions within the survey questionnaire, reading of the survey questions, skip patterns, and probing and clarifying techniques necessary for specific questions on the survey questionnaires.

For quality control of the online surveys, an additional question developed by Responsive Management and OSCF was used to identify and filter out invalid submittals.

After the surveys were obtained, the Survey Center managers and statisticians checked each completed survey to ensure clarity and completeness. Analysts reviewed all individual survey responses to identify potential invalid submittals, such as online surveys that were completed in an unrealistically brief timeframe, which suggests that respondents were clicking through responses without reading and evaluating the questions. Analysts also checked for the related issue of "straight-lining" of responses, which is when respondents select (for example) the first or same response options throughout the survey. Also, open-ended responses to questions

were used to identify and remove invalid respondents. All completed surveys of questionable quality were removed prior to data analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics as well as proprietary software developed by Responsive Management. The weighting parameters considered the type of survey medium (telephone or online), region of residence, and demographic information so that the final results are fully representative of U.S. residents overall.

The analysis included a breakdown of the general population data by region of residency, based on the four AFWA regions previously defined.

Two data runs were made. The first data run was among the 1,555 of general population survey questionnaires that were obtained. A second data run among those more negative in their views of hunting and/or sport shooting was conducted on those in the oversample plus those in the general population sample who indicated having more negative views. This second data run included 479 who were more negative about hunting and 531 who were more negative about sport shooting.

The analysis of open-ended questions (those questions for which no answer set was provided) entailed having the analysts examine each verbatim response. Specifically, the analysts read through all of the verbatim open-ended responses and assigned them into response categories, at which point the responses could be quantified and presented in “Multiple Responses Allowed” graphs. Overall, analysts categorized several hundred open-ended responses. Some open-ended questions defied categorization and were, instead, analyzed qualitatively. All of the open-ended questions are analyzed and discussed in the Survey Results chapter.

Throughout this report, findings of the survey are reported at a 95% confidence interval. For the entire sample of U.S. residents in the general population data run, the sampling error is at most plus or minus 2.49 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 2.49 percentage points of each other. Sampling error was calculated using the formula described below, with a sample size of 1,555 and a population size of 253,272,570 U.S. adult residents.

Sampling Error Equation (Dillman Method)

$$B = \left(\sqrt{\frac{N_p(.25)}{N_s} - .25} \right) (1.96)$$

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

Derived from formula: p. 206 in Dillman, D. A. 2000. *Mail and Internet Surveys*. John Wiley & Sons, NY.

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).

ENDNOTES

¹ A summary of the research is included in the following:

NRA Hunters' Leadership Forum. 2020. *How to Talk About Hunting: Research-Based Communications Strategies*.

² This guidance is provided in the following:

NRA Hunters' Leadership Forum. 2020. *How to Talk About Hunting: Research-Based Communications Strategies*.

³ The 1995, 2003, and 2006 survey results are taken from the following:

Responsive Management / National Shooting Sports Foundation. 2008. *The Future of Hunting and the Shooting Sports: Research-Based Recruitment and Retention Strategies*. Produced for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Grant Agreement CT-M-6-0. Harrisonburg, VA.

The 2011 results are from survey data obtained by Responsive Management for the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

The 2013 results are from survey data obtained by Responsive Management for the Professional Outdoor Media Association.

The 2015 results are from survey data obtained by Responsive Management for the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the Archery Trade Association.

The 2016 results are from the following:

Responsive Management. 2016. *The American Public's Attitudes Toward Animal Rights, Animal Welfare, and Hunting: Survey Report*.

The 2019 results are from the following:

Responsive Management. 2019. *Americans' Attitudes Toward Hunting, Fishing, Sport Shooting, and Trapping*. Produced for the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

The 2021 results are from survey data obtained by Responsive Management for the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

The 2023 results are from the following:

Responsive Management / Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation. 2023. *Americans' Attitudes Towards Fishing, Target Shooting, Hunting, and Trapping*.

The 2024 results are from the following:

Responsive Management. 2024. *Americans' Attitudes Towards Hunting and Recreational Shooting*. Study conducted for the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports.

⁴ These four studies are:

Responsive Management. 2022. *Arizona Residents' Opinions on the Game and Fish Department and Outdoor Recreation*. Conducted for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Responsive Management. 2023. *Maine Residents' Attitudes Toward Wildlife Management and Their Participation in Wildlife-Related Recreation*. Conducted for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

Responsive Management. 2023. *Pennsylvania Residents' Attitudes Toward Wildlife Management*. Conducted for the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Responsive Management. 2022. *Washington Residents' Attitudes Toward Wildlife Management*. Conducted for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

⁵ The national survey was detailed in:

Responsive Management / Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation. 2023. *Americans' Attitudes Towards Fishing, Target Shooting, Hunting, and Trapping*.

The four state surveys were in these reports:

Responsive Management. 2022. *Arizona Residents' Opinions on the Game and Fish Department and Outdoor Recreation*. Conducted for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Responsive Management. 2023. *Maine Residents' Attitudes Toward Wildlife Management and Their Participation in Wildlife-Related Recreation*. Conducted for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

Responsive Management. 2023. *Pennsylvania Residents' Attitudes Toward Wildlife Management*. Conducted for the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Responsive Management. 2022. *Washington Residents' Attitudes Toward Wildlife Management*. Conducted for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.