

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project №: W-15-R
Title of Job: Fall 2019 Turkey Hunter Survey

Job: E2



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The fall turkey hunter survey is conducted each year at the end of the fall season. The season closed on 31 January 2020. The objective of the survey is to obtain information on the fall turkey harvest and success, and to assess characteristics of the hunt and hunters (e.g., satisfaction). This year's survey was available to hunters 22 March through 6 April 2020, inclusive. A summary of hunter harvest and success is provided in a separate report, *2019 Fall Wild Turkey Harvest*.

Caveats. The fall Wild Turkey Hunter Survey samples primarily fall turkey hunters who provided valid email addresses at the time they purchased their permit(s). Additionally, the survey is also available on the Game & Parks website to anyone who wishes to complete it. Although the website version is promoted through various media avenues, participation is low. As such, the results might be biased and not strictly generalizable to the population of all fall turkey hunters. For the fall 2019 season, however, 70.8% of unique permit buyers provided an email address.

Interpretations. As in past years, most non-resident respondents were from Colorado, followed by Minnesota and Illinois, and 17% of these non-residents were at one time in the past residents of Nebraska. Few (2%) of resident respondents indicated that they had hunted turkeys in another state, but 14% of non-residents had, mostly in Kansas, Colorado, and Missouri. Respondents ($n = 785$) spent 3,580 days afield (4.6 days per responding hunter). The majority of respondents, regardless of residency, were not pursuing a particular subspecies of turkey while hunting in Nebraska, but 32% of non-residents did report they were hunting for Merriam's turkeys. Most residents (97%) and non-residents (96%) reported that they would hunt Nebraska again given their experiences during the 2019 fall season. Of those who would not, turkey numbers were cited as a significant issue. As for why they chose to hunt turkeys in Nebraska, availability of permits (59%) and turkey population abundance (66%) were cited as important reasons regardless of residency. Having friends or family in Nebraska was also an important factor for non-resident respondents. In general, respondents did not feel that they encountered too many hunters while hunting (64%), were satisfied with the number of turkeys they saw (30%), were neutral with regards to the amount of public land available (46%), and were, overall, satisfied with their fall turkey hunt (30%). There were only minor differences among administrative districts.

Take-home Message. Although declining in popularity, fall turkey hunting remains a satisfying experience for most hunters, but regional differences are starting to become apparent, likely due to changes in turkey abundance.

Snap WebHost service. An initial invitation to participate was sent to 3,696 (70.8%) of unique permit buyers on 22 March 2020, of which 3,529 were deliverable. A follow-up reminder was sent on 30 March 2020 to hunters who received the first invitation, but failed to respond. In addition to the email invitations, the survey was also available to hunters via the NGPC website, and promotional posts to agency social media were made on the date the initial invitations were sent and on the date the follow-up reminder was sent. The survey was closed to all participants on 6 April 2020, at which time 785 responses had been received, for a raw response rate of 22.2%. The responding hunters represented 901 individual permits, for a permit response rate of 25.5%. Each survey respondent represented 5.80 fall 2019 fall permit buyers.

Results. Below are figures and tables that summarize hunter responses to survey questions. In most cases, the results are presented for residents, non-residents, and all hunters combined.

Table 1. Minimum, maximum, mean, and median time (in minutes) participants took to complete the fall 2019 survey.

Descriptive Statistics						
	Total	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Standard Error of the Mean
Duration of interview	785	0.52	1463.03	7.67	4.9	1.89

Table 2. Top ten states of residence for non-resident respondents (*n* =149) during the 2019 fall season.

State of residence		
Colorado	52	35%
Minnesota	9	6%
Illinois	7	5%
Virginia	7	5%
Missouri	5	3%
Pennsylvania	5	3%
Texas	5	3%
Alaska	4	3%
California	4	3%
Iowa	4	3%

Table 3. Number and percent of non-resident hunters who reported being a Nebraska resident as some point in the past.

Were you ever a resident of the state of Nebraska?		
Yes	24	17%
No	119	83%

Table 4. Among Nebraskans, the top ten counties of residence and number of respondents (*n* = 636).

In which Nebraska county do you reside?		
Douglas	100	16%
Lancaster	96	15%
Sarpy	57	9%
Buffalo	26	4%
Adams	23	4%
Lincoln	23	4%
Scotts Bluff	19	3%
Hall	18	3%
Saunders	13	2%
Cass	12	2%

Table 5. Reported number and percent of total permit by type (regular, youth) of permits purchased for the fall 2019 season overall, and by resident and non-resident respondents.

Overall	Resident	Non-resident
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Number of Permits	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
Youth Permits	667	102	16	541	82	13	126	20	3
	85%	13%	2%	85%	13%	2%	85%	13%	2%
Regular/Landowner	108	587	90	86	483	67	22	104	23
	14%	75%	11%	14%	76%	11%	15%	70%	15%

Table 6. Number and percent of residents and non-residents (and overall) who indicated they hunted turkeys in states other than Nebraska during the 2019 fall season.

Did you hunt turkeys during the fall 2018 season <i>in any other state?</i>	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
Yes	33 4%	13 2%	20 14%
No	749 96%	621 98%	128 86%

Table 7. Top ten states where respondents who hunted in other states reported hunting. Due to low response rates to this question ($n = 23$) responses are not displayed by residency.

State		
Kansas	5	22%
Colorado	2	9%
Missouri	2	9%
Pennsylvania	2	9%
South Dakota	2	9%
Virginia	2	9%
Illinois	1	4%
Iowa	1	4%
Minnesota	1	4%
New Jersey	1	4%

Table 8. Number and percent of resident and non-resident respondents who reported going afield to hunt during the fall 2019 turkey season.

Did you hunt turkeys in Nebraska during the fall 2019 season?	Overall	Resident	Non-residents
Yes	636 81%	517 81%	119 80%
No	149 19%	119 19%	30 20%

Table 9. Number of respondents, total days hunted, and days hunted per respondent for all hunters indicating they hunted during the 2019 fall turkey season.

How many days did you hunt turkeys in Nebraska in the fall of 2019?	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
Total Responses	785	636	149
Total Days	3580	3053	527
Days per Hunter	4.6	4.8	3.5

Table 10. Top ten counties and number of respondents for the harvest of the respondents' first turkey during the 2019 fall turkey season by residency.

Overall (n = 290)			Resident (n = 221)			Non-resident (n = 69)		
Lincoln	20	7%	Lincoln	15	7%	Dawes	6	9%
Dawes	17	6%	Dawes	11	5%	Custer	5	7%
Custer	12	4%	Cass	9	4%	Keith	5	7%
Cass	11	4%	Buffalo	7	3%	Lincoln	5	7%
Cherry	10	3%	Custer	7	3%	Cherry	4	6%
Keith	10	3%	Sarpy	7	3%	Frontier	4	6%
Buffalo	8	3%	Saunders	7	3%	Hayes	4	6%
Frontier	8	3%	Boyd	6	3%	Holt	3	4%
Holt	8	3%	Cherry	6	3%	Banner	2	3%
Knox	7	2%	Lancaster	6	3%	Brown	2	3%

Table 11. Top ten counties and number of respondents for the harvest of the respondents' second turkey during the 2019 fall turkey season by residency.

Overall (n = 142)			Resident (n = 105)			Non-resident (n = 37)		
Lincoln	17	12%	Lincoln	13	12%	Dawes	5	14%
Dawes	12	8%	Dawes	7	7%	Lincoln	4	11%
Custer	9	6%	Custer	6	6%	Cherry	3	8%
Cherry	6	4%	Saunders	5	5%	Custer	3	8%
Holt	6	4%	Buffalo	4	4%	Frontier	3	8%
Frontier	5	4%	Holt	4	4%	Hayes	3	8%
Saunders	5	4%	Cass	3	3%	Holt	2	5%
Buffalo	4	3%	Cherry	3	3%	Unknown	1	3%
Cass	3	2%	Keith	3	3%	Cedar	1	3%
Hayes	3	2%	Wheeler	3	3%	Chase	1	3%

Table 12. Top counties and number of respondents for the harvest of the respondents' third and fourth turkey during the 2019 fall turkey season. Responses could not be broken down by residency because of the low number of respondents who reported harvesting 3 (n =19) or 4 (n =13) turkeys.

Third turkey (n = 19)			Fourth Turkey (n = 13)		
Dawes	4	21%	Custer	3	23%
Custer	3	16%	Boone	2	15%
Boone	2	11%	Dawes	2	15%
Frontier	2	11%	Frontier	2	15%
Lincoln	2	11%	Unknown	1	8%
Unknown	1	5%	Arthur	1	8%
Arthur	1	5%	Chase	1	8%
Chase	1	5%	Hayes	1	8%
Douglas	1	5%			
Hayes	1	5%			

Table 13. Number and percent of resident and non-resident respondents who reported pursuing a particular sub-species of wild turkey during the 2019 fall season. Hunters were allowed to select more than one sub-species, so responses will not equal Total Respondents.

Subspecies	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
Total Respondents	627	510	117
Eastern	46 7%	34 7%	12 10%
Merriam's	119 19%	82 16%	37 32%
Rio Grande	14 2%	8 2%	6 5%
No particular subspecies	477 76%	406 80%	71 61%

Table 14. Age and sex distribution of the fall 2019 reported turkey harvest by residency.

	Overall					Resident					Non-resident				
	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
Adult males (toms)	420 75%	105 19%	34 6%	- -	1 0%	353 77%	83 18%	23 5%	- -	- -	67 66%	22 22%	11 11%	- -	1 1%
Juvenile males (jakes)	465 86%	50 9%	19 4%	4 1%	1 0%	392 87%	38 8%	15 3%	3 1%	1 0%	73 81%	12 13%	4 4%	1 1%	- -
Adult hens	434 80%	65 12%	42 8%	3 1%	1 0%	372 82%	50 11%	31 7%	2 0%	1 0%	62 70%	15 17%	11 12%	1 1%	- -
Juvenile hens	478 95%	16 3%	9 2%	- -	- -	400 95%	12 3%	8 2%	- -	- -	78 94%	4 5%	1 1%	- -	- -
Unknown age and sex	471 97%	9 2%	4 1%	1 0%	- -	398 97%	7 2%	4 1%	- -	- -	73 96%	2 3%	- -	1 1%	- -

Table 15. Resident and non-resident respondents' harvest and days spent afield by segment of the season for the fall 2019 season.

Period of season	Overall		Resident		Non-resident	
	Days	Harvested	Days	Harvested	Days	Harvested
September 15-30	282	32	254	25	28	7
October 1-31	612	87	557	77	55	10
November 1-15	514	62	430	46	84	16
November 16-24	361	61	301	47	60	14
November 25-30	168	17	159	14	9	3
December 1-31	398	42	335	34	63	8
January 1-31	310	40	274	29	36	11

Table 16. Number of resident and non-resident respondents who reported harvesting 0-4 turkeys on public land or on private land where permission was required during the 2019 fall turkey season.

How many turkeys did you harvest on...	Overall					Resident					Non-resident				
	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4	0	1	2	3	4
...private land where permission was required?	373 59%	130 20%	113 18%	7 1%	13 2%	316 61%	98 19%	87 17%	6 1%	10 2%	57 48%	32 27%	26 22%	1 1%	3 3%
...land open to public hunting?	601 94%	16 3%	18 3%	- -	1 0%	491 95%	16 3%	10 2%	- -	- -	110 92%	- -	8 7%	- -	1 1%

Table 17. Number and percent of resident and non-resident respondents who would or would not hunt in Nebraska again given their experiences during the fall 2019 season.

Will you hunt turkey in Nebraska again given your experiences in the fall 2019 season?	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
Yes	611 97%	498 97%	113 96%
No	20 3%	15 3%	5 4%

Figure 1. Word cloud summarizing free responses from respondents who indicated that they would not hunt in Nebraska again given their experiences during the 2019 fall season (Appendix 1 for complete list).

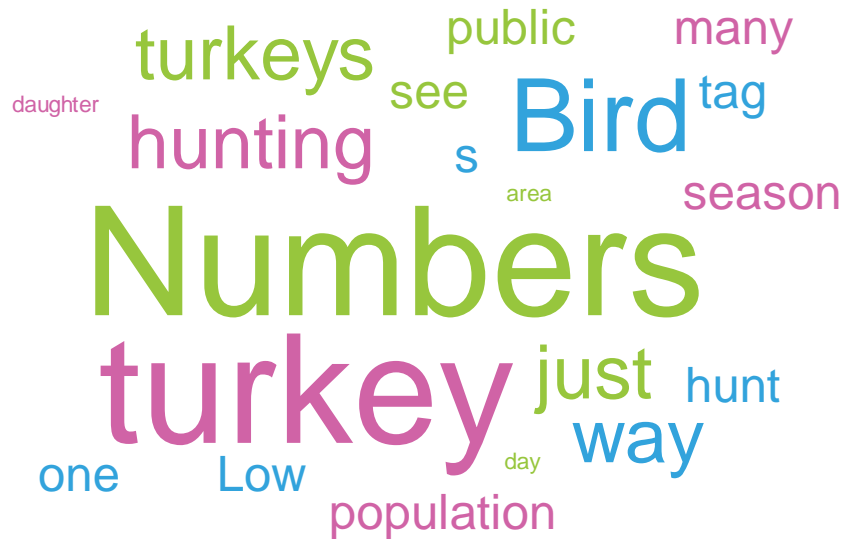


Figure 2. Distribution of overall respondents’ turkey hunting experience in years as of 2019.

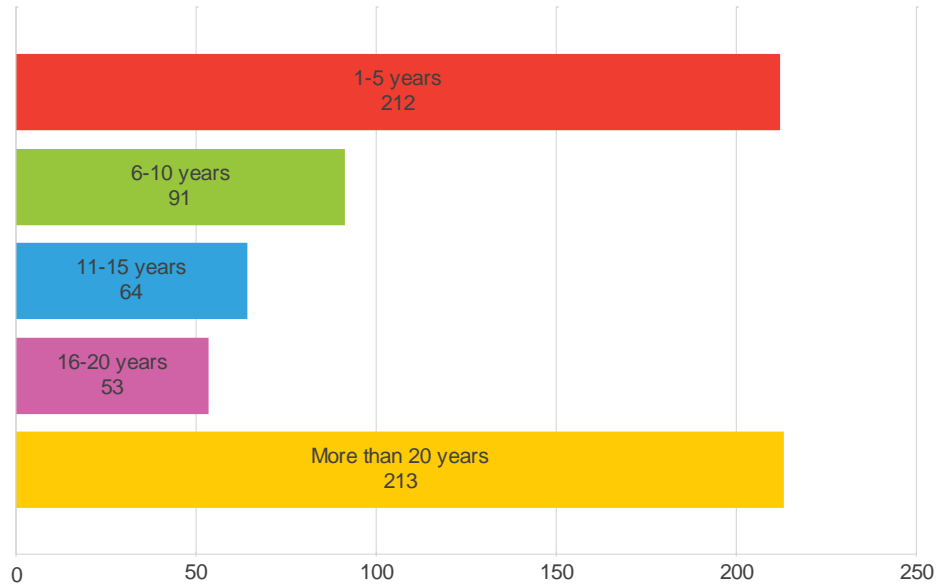


Table 18. Resident and non-resident respondents’ reasons for hunting wild turkey in Nebraska during the 2019 fall season. Options with >50% support are highlighted.

Select all the factors that influence your decision to hunt wild turkeys in Nebraska in the fall 2019	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
Availability of Public Land to hunt	214 34%	182 36%	32 27%
Family and/or friends who live in state	261 41%	192 38%	69 58%
Ability to hunt a different sub-species of turkey	70 11%	42 8%	28 24%
Availability of permits	374 59%	293 57%	81 68%
Permit costs	225 36%	188 37%	37 31%
Number of permits allowed per hunter	227 36%	176 35%	51 43%
Hunter success rate	187 30%	142 28%	45 38%
Turkey population abundance	412 66%	332 65%	80 67%
Other	71 11%	62 12%	9 8%

Figure 3. Word cloud of significant terms from the free responses received for “Other,” about why hunters chose to hunt turkey in Nebraska during the 2018 fall season (Appendix 2 for complete list).



Table 19. Resident and non-resident respondent agreement with statements related to their hunting experiences in Nebraska during the 2019 fall season. The agreement score for each item with the highest frequency of selection by respondents is highlighted.

	Overall (see Fig. 4)					Resident (see Fig. 5)					Non-resident (see Fig. 6)				
	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
"I saw too many hunters"	407	101	103	11	12	320	85	91	10	9	87	16	12	1	3
	64%	16%	16%	2%	2%	62%	17%	18%	2%	2%	73%	13%	10%	1%	3%
"I was satisfied with the number of turkeys seen"	67	67	141	165	193	57	56	118	138	145	10	11	23	27	48
	11%	11%	22%	26%	30%	11%	11%	23%	27%	28%	8%	9%	19%	23%	40%
"I was satisfied with the amount of land open to public hunting"	75	97	288	101	71	66	85	226	82	55	9	12	62	19	16
	12%	15%	46%	16%	11%	13%	17%	44%	16%	11%	8%	10%	53%	16%	14%
"Overall I was satisfied with the quality of my hunting experience"	29	63	153	201	187	25	53	130	165	141	4	10	23	36	46
	5%	10%	24%	32%	30%	5%	10%	25%	32%	27%	3%	8%	19%	30%	39%

Figure 4. Overall respondent disagreement or agreement with statements characterizing their hunting experience during the 2019 fall turkey season.

Overall respondent disagreement/agreement with the following statements.

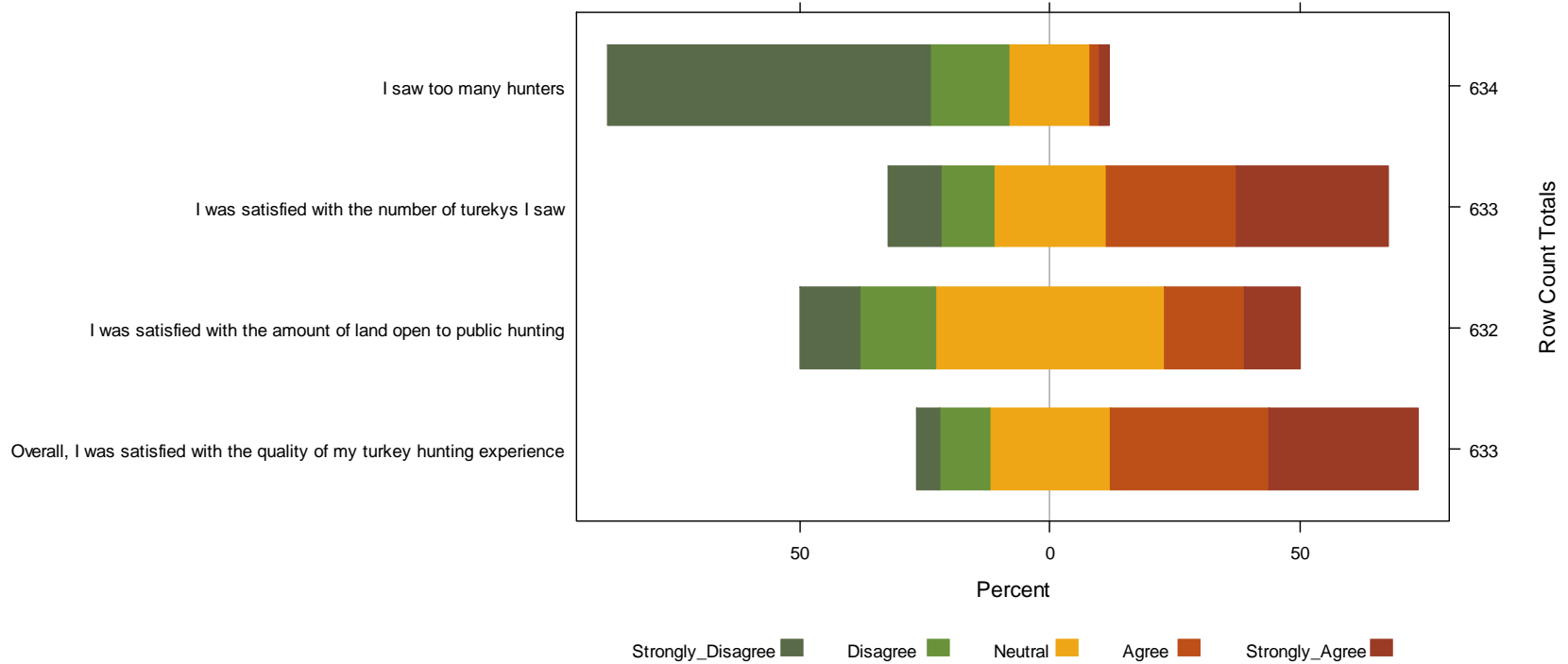


Figure 5. Resident respondent disagreement or agreement with statements characterizing aspects of their hunting experiences during the 2019 fall turkey season.

Resident respondent disagreement/agreement with the following statements.

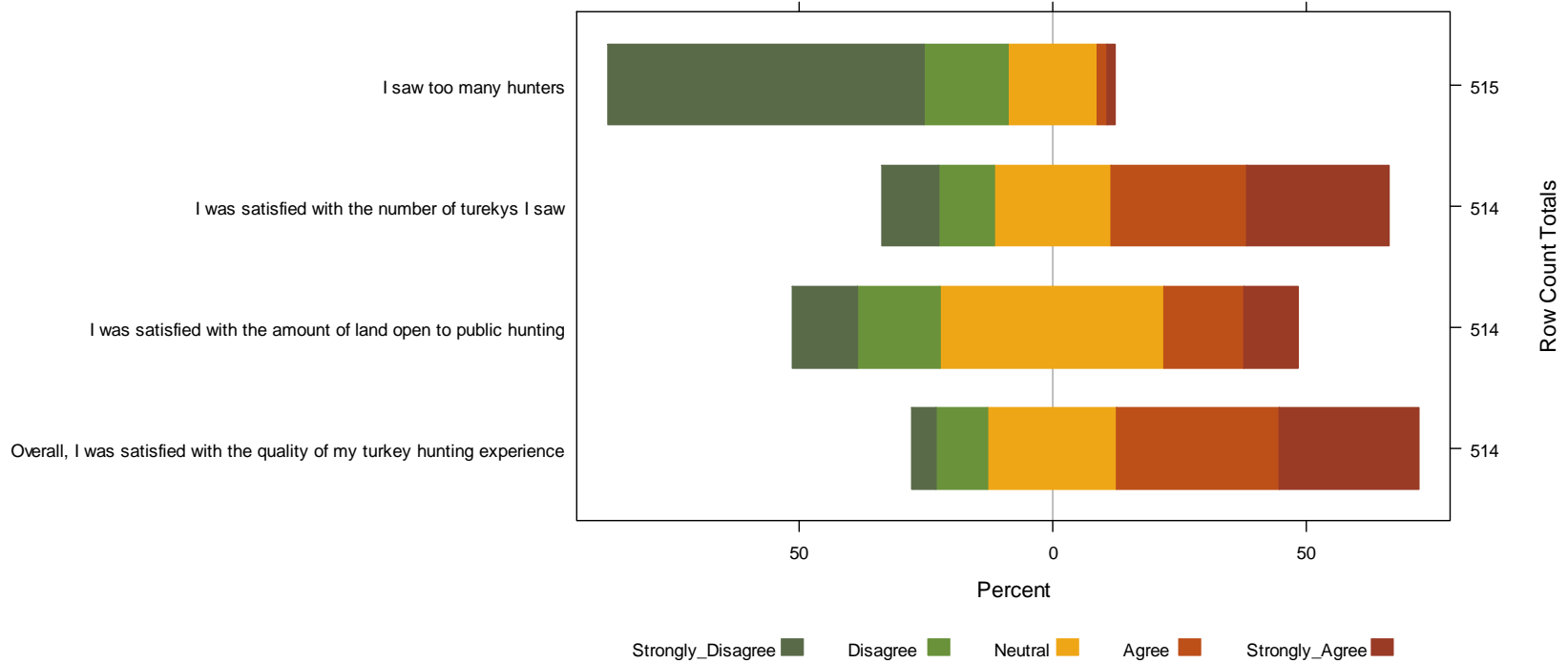


Figure 6. Nonresident respondent disagreement or agreement with statements characterizing aspects of their hunting experiences during the 2019 fall turkey season.

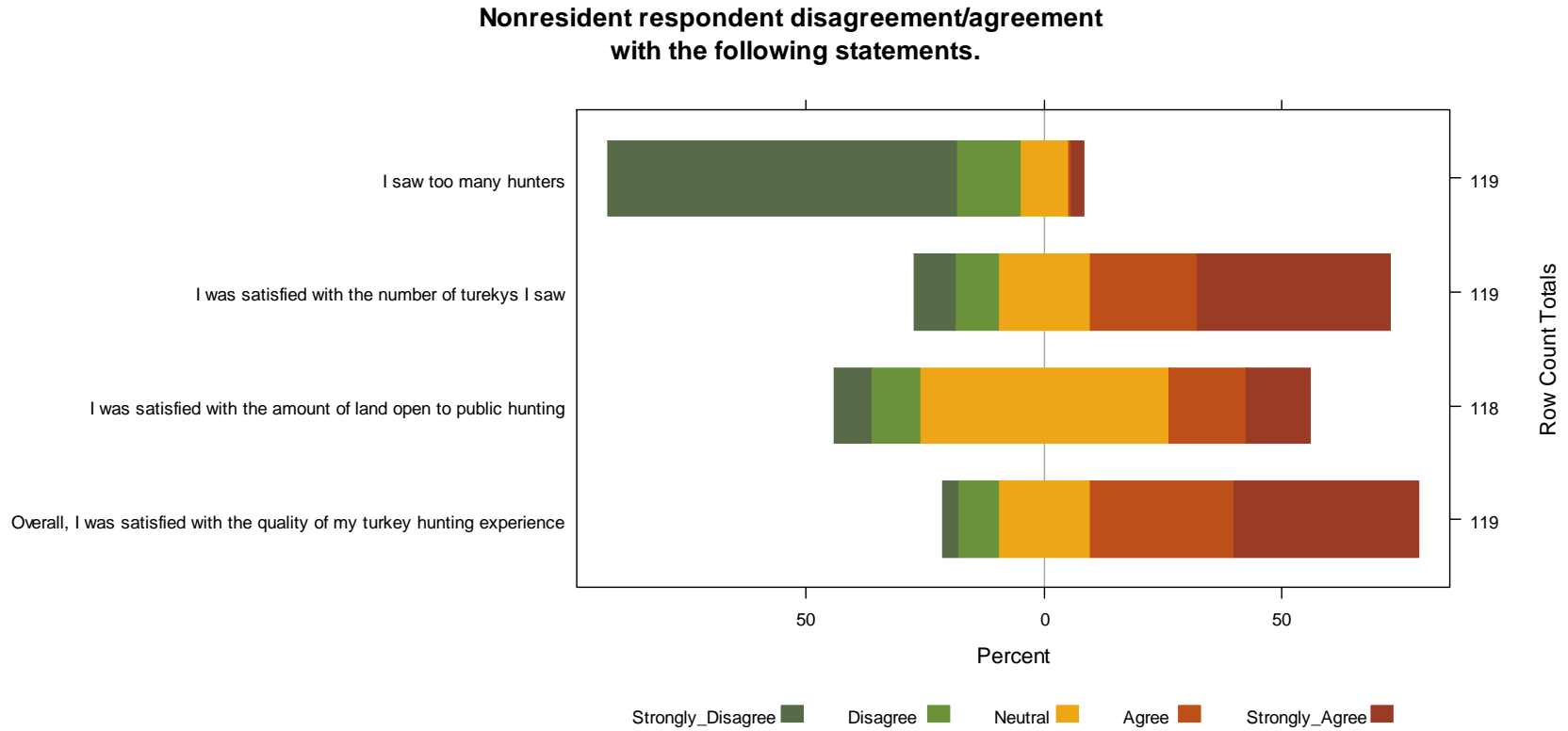


Table 20. Respondents agreement with the statement, “I saw too many hunters,” by Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Wildlife Administration Districts. Agreement was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) and based on 289 total respondents. The most frequent selections are highlighted for each district.

District	"I saw too many hunters."						
	Number of respondents	Average Score	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
Northeast	78	1.38	57 73.1%	12 15.4%	9 11.5%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Northwest	52	1.65	34 65.4%	6 11.5%	9 17.3%	2 3.8%	1 1.9%
Southeast	57	1.49	38 66.7%	10 17.5%	9 15.8%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Southwest	102	1.70	64 62.7%	13 12.7%	21 20.6%	0 0.0%	4 3.9%

Table 21. Respondents agreement with the statement, “I was satisfied with the number of turkeys I saw,” by Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Wildlife Administrative Districts. Agreement was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) and based on 289 total respondents. The most frequent selections are highlighted for each district.

District	"I was satisfied with the number of turkeys I saw."						
	Number of respondents	Average Score	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
Northeast	78	4.12	1 1.3%	4 5.1%	17 21.8%	19 24.4%	37 47.4%
Northwest	52	4.12	2 3.8%	4 7.7%	4 7.7%	18 34.6%	24 46.2%
Southeast	57	3.88	2 3.5%	3 5.3%	14 24.6%	19 33.3%	19 33.3%
Southwest	102	4.13	4 3.9%	5 4.9%	15 14.7%	28 27.5%	50 49.0%

Table 22. Respondents’ agreement with the statement, “I was satisfied with the amount of land open to public hunting,” by Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Wildlife Administrative Districts. Agreement was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) and based on 289 total respondents. The most frequent selections are highlighted for each district.

"I was satisfied with the amount of land open to public hunting."							
District	Number of respondents	Average Score	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
Northeast	78	2.97	6 7.7%	14 17.9%	43 55.1%	6 7.7%	9 11.5%
Northwest	52	3.04	6 11.5%	7 13.5%	23 44.2%	11 21.2%	5 9.6%
Southeast	57	2.97	11 19.3%	4 7.0%	25 43.9%	10 17.5%	7 12.3%
Southwest	102	2.93	8 7.8%	18 17.6%	56 54.9%	13 12.7%	7 6.9%

Table 23. Respondents agreement with the statement, “Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of my turkey hunting experience,” by Nebraska Game & Parks Commission Wildlife Administrative Districts. Agreement was measured on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) and based on 289 total respondents. The most frequent selections are highlighted for each district.

"Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of my turkey hunting experience."							
District	Number of respondents	Average Score	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree
Northeast	78		0 0.0%	2 2.6%	11 14.1%	25 32.1%	40 51.3%
Northwest	52		1 1.9%	4 7.7%	5 9.6%	21 40.4%	21 40.4%
Southeast	57		2 3.5%	2 3.5%	8 14.0%	16 28.1%	28 49.1%
Southwest	102		4 3.9%	2 2.0%	15 14.7%	36 35.3%	45 44.1%

Table 24. Where non-resident respondents stayed while hunting in Nebraska during the 2019 fall turkey season.

Where did you stay while hunting turkeys in Nebraska?	Non-resident responses and percent
Hotel/Motel	28 24%
Commercial campground (e.g., KOA) or hunting lodge	6 5%
Public camping sites/lodge (e.g., State Parks)	8 7%
Private residence of family or friends	65 56%
Personal home	6 5%
Other	4 3%

Figure 7. Word cloud for “Other” responses to where respondents stayed while hunting turkey in Nebraska during the 2019 fall season (Appendix 3 for complete list).



Figure 8. Percentage of responding hunters who indicated they accompanied various groups of hunters in the field during the 2019 fall turkey season.



Table 25. Numbers of youth, novice, women, and apprentice hunters that respondents reported taking into the field during the 2019 fall turkey season.

Type of hunter	Number
Youth hunters less than 16 years old	104
New adult hunters at least 16 years old	56
Women	68
Apprentice license holders	16

Appendix 1. Unedited list of all responses received for the reason respondents would not return to Nebraska to hunt fall turkeys again in the future (see Table 17, Figure 1).

Numbers are way down.
Too difficult on public land
no turkeys
Low numbers
Bird numbers are way down! Compared to 2012, only 20-25% of the turkey population remains.
not many birds
Because of the poorly crafted hunting survey I'm asked to complete.
The fall season was very challenging. We honestly didn't see a single turkey. We aren't inexperienced and have had success in the past- our bird numbers in the area we hunt just aren't good. We do plan to try new area this spring so our flock can hopefully build numbers back up.
Turkey numbers are way down.
We were not welcome by locals that harvest. And drove off Turkey and baited them on to privet ground. Talked to local sheriff and just told use it thought ant it
Just bought the tag to be able to bring my youth daughter up their to hunt.
Cannot explain the drop in ranch turkey flocks. Saw only two hens in one location on one day. No response to calls and old roosts abandoned. Planning to focus on Virginia's eastern this year.
Not many on public lands. Lots on private. Pressure from other hunting season hunters made it hard.
No fucking turkeys around
over all turkey #'s are down in s.w. Nebraska.
prefer grouse pheasant & quail
Price is too high per tag. Can purchase turkeys cheaper than they can be hunted.
I buy a permit in the off chance I well see one when I am upland bird hunting. It hasn't worked out.
The bird numbers are too low. I'm not comfortable harvesting a bird when the population needs to recover

Appendix 2. Unedited list of responses for why respondents chose to hunt in Nebraska for the fall 2019 turkey season (see Table 18, Figure 3).

Always wanted to try.
I Live in nebraska i know some people that would let me hunt
accommodations
Resident
Live here and own land , am out during archery deer season
Didn't have enough time to go out more than the one trip I did take.
Close to home
Access to private land with permission, otherwise i would not hunt
I sometimes carry a slinged shotgun and would consider shooting an oportune turkey on a deer hunt
just like to hunt turkeys
My main decision to hunt Turkey is to be outdoors.
Eating
simply to have a Thanksgiving Turkey from my own land - a tradition every year
Just had a youth tag in case we saw a turkey when out rifle deer hunting on public land
I buy a fall turkey permit just incase I run into turkeys while upland bird hunting
just like to hunt turkeys
My family owns approximatley 100 acres on the Platte River.
I feed them on my land! That is why.
Trying to teach grandson to hunt
I own land.
I just like turkey hunting and I live here
Mrat
I own property in nebraska
I just like to hunt
Land owner
Adrenaline rush, great source of food for the family.
For the time being, you can still hunt private land without paying. That is going to end soon.
we own a small ranch in Nebraska
Great private land along Elkhorn River to hunt with no competition
To bring my daughter.
Bonus target of opportunity while bowhunting deer; I rarely target fall turkey specifically.
Non/ resident land owner
Private land with turkeys
Great to get out of the house.
Permits too costly. I eat only what I hunt. Store birds are cheaper
just to spend more time in the outdoors
side hunt while hunting grouse & pheasant
Meat

Appendix 2. Continued

A friend of mine who owns land invited me to hunt his property.
Deer hunting overlaps with the season
Have a piece of land that we hunt on
Hunt turkeys in the fall while archery deer hunting
Time availability
Own land with turkeys and the availability of Landowner tags.
Enjoyment the Outdoors
very good sport
wanted to hunt
Someone to take me I am 11
Want to try to harvest my own game.
Good people
Availability of private land to hunt
Finding time
Food
Thrill of turkey hunting
It's where I live.
I live here
land owner permits
Just like hunting
I'm an avid archery deer hunter so I have a turkey tag with me just in case one comes by.
we live here
opportunity to hunt turkey during pheasant season
I own land
They live on my ranch
if i see a turkey during deer season i will take it as long as it is in season and time
Really enjoy turkey hunting
I am primarily pursuing whitetails, but will harvest a turkey if given the opportunity.

Appendix 3. Unedited list of responses for “Other” places non-resident respondents stayed while hunting turkeys in the fall 2019 turkey season (see Table 24, Figure 7).

Air B&B
Air B&B
Rented a house
Community center