

Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project №: W-15-R  
Title of Job: Fall 2021 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 2022. 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 28 February through 14 March 2022, inclusive. A summary of hunter harvest and success is provided in a separate report, *2021 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 2021 season, however, 73.5% of unique permit buyers provided an email address.

**Interpretations.** As in past years, most non-resident respondents were from Colorado, followed by Arkansas and California, and 22% of these non-residents were at one time in the past residents of Nebraska. Few (3%) of resident respondents indicated that they had hunted turkeys in another state, but 19% of non-residents had, mostly in Kansas, Colorado, and Arizona. Respondents ( $n = 482$ ) spent 2,728 days afield (5.7 days per responding hunter). The majority of respondents, regardless of residency, were not pursuing a particular sub-species of turkey while hunting in Nebraska, but 29% of non-residents did report they were hunting for Merriam's turkeys. Most residents (93%) and non-residents (91%) reported that they would hunt Nebraska again given their experiences during the 2021 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 (56%) and turkey population abundance (53%) were cited as important reasons regardless of residency. Having friends or family in Nebraska was also an important factor for non-resident respondents (56%). In general, respondents did not feel that they encountered too many hunters while hunting (74%), were satisfied with the number of turkeys they saw (39%), were neutral with regards to the amount of public land available (43%), and were, overall, satisfied with their fall turkey hunt (50%). Many (39%) non-residents stayed in the private residence of family or friends while hunting in Nebraska.

**Take-home Message.** Although declining in popularity, fall turkey hunting remains a satisfying experience for most hunters, but overall satisfaction appears to be declining potentially due to reductions in turkey abundance.

**Methods.** This year's survey was composed and administered in-house using Snap survey software and Snap WebHost service. An initial invitation to participate was sent to 3,868 (73.5%) of unique permit buyers on 28 February 2022, of which 3,688 were deliverable. A follow-up reminder was sent on 7 March 2022 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 14 March 2022, at which time 482 responses had been received, for a raw response rate of 13.1%. The responding hunters represented 548 individual permits, for a permit response rate of 14.9%. Each survey respondent represented 9.6 fall 2021 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 2021 survey.

	Descriptive Statistics					
	n	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Standard Error of the Mean
Duration of interview	482	1.77	77.4	5.98	4.78	0.22

**Table 2.** Top ten states of residence for non-resident respondents ( $n = 86$ ) during the 2021 fall season.

State of residence	n	%
Colorado	29	34%
Arkansas	5	6%
California	4	5%
Utah	4	5%
Alabama	3	3%
Florida	3	3%
Minnesota	3	3%
Missouri	3	3%
Kansas	2	2%
North Carolina	2	2%

**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?		n	%
	Yes	18	22%
	No	64	78%

**Table 4.** Among Nebraskans, the top ten counties of residence and number of respondents ( $n = 396$ ).

In which Nebraska county do you reside?	n	%
Lancaster	59	15%
Douglas	46	12%
Sarpy	35	9%
Buffalo	25	6%
Hall	17	4%
Adams	12	3%
Lincoln	11	3%
Dawson	10	3%
Washington	10	3%
Cass	8	2%

**Table 5.** Reported number and percent of total permit by type (regular, youth) of permits purchased for the fall 2021 season overall, and by resident and non-resident respondents.

Number of Permits	Overall			Resident			Non-resident		
	0	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	2
Youth Permits	406	64	12	336	51	9	70	13	3
	84%	13%	2%	85%	13%	2%	81%	15%	3%
Regular/Landowner	62	380	40	47	318	31	15	62	9
	13%	79%	8%	12%	80%	8%	17%	72%	10%

**Table 6.** Number and percent of residents and non-residents (and overall) who indicated they hunted turkeys in states other than Nebraska during the 2021 fall season.

Did you hunt turkeys during the fall 2021 season <i>in any other state?</i>	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
Yes	27 6%	11 3%	16 19%
No	455 94%	385 97%	70 81%

**Table 7.** Top ten states where respondents who hunted in other states reported hunting. Due to low response rates to this question ( $n = 18$ ) responses are not displayed by residency.

State		
Colorado	4	22%
Kansas	3	17%
Arizona	1	6%
Arkansas	1	6%
California	1	6%
Georgia	1	6%
Minnesota	1	6%
New York	1	6%
Tennessee	1	6%
Texas	1	6%

**Table 8.** Number and percent of resident and non-resident respondents who reported going afield to hunt during the fall 2021 turkey season.

Did you hunt turkeys in Nebraska during the fall 2021 season?	Overall	Resident	Non-residents
Yes	406 84%	325 82%	81 94%
No	76 16%	71 18%	5 6%

**Table 9.** Number of respondents, total days hunted, and days hunted per respondent for all hunters indicating they hunted during the 2021 fall turkey season.

How many days did you hunt turkeys in Nebraska in the fall of 2021?	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
Total Responses (n)	482	396	86
Total Days	2,728	2343	385
Days per Hunter	5.66	5.92	4.48

**Table 10.** Top ten counties and number of respondents for the harvest of the respondents' first turkey during the 2021 fall turkey season by residency.

Overall (n =155)			Resident (n =116)			Non-resident (n = 39)		
Dawes	18	12%	Dawes	11	9%	Dawes	7	18%
Lincoln	12	8%	Lincoln	9	8%	Lincoln	3	8%
Cherry	8	5%	Cherry	6	5%	Cherry	2	5%
Sheridan	8	5%	Sheridan	6	5%	Dundy	2	5%
Custer	6	4%	Custer	5	4%	Frontier	2	5%
Knox	6	4%	Knox	5	4%	Keith	2	5%
Lancaster	5	3%	Lancaster	5	4%	Madison	2	5%
Webster	5	3%	Cass	3	3%	Red Willow	2	5%
Frontier	4	3%	Douglas	3	3%	Sheridan	2	5%
Cass	3	2%	Harlan	3	3%	Webster	2	5%

**Table 11.** Top ten counties and number of respondents for the harvest of the respondents' second turkey during the 2021 fall turkey season by residency.

Overall (n =70)			Resident (n =53)			Non-resident (n =17)		
Dawes	12	17%	Dawes	7	13%	Dawes	5	29%
Lincoln	6	9%	Lincoln	4	8%	Frontier	2	12%
Harlan	3	4%	Harlan	3	6%	Lincoln	2	12%
Lancaster	3	4%	Lancaster	3	6%	Banner	1	6%
Merrick	3	4%	Merrick	3	6%	Boyd	1	6%
Sheridan	3	4%	Antelope	2	4%	Brown	1	6%
Antelope	2	3%	Cass	2	4%	Franklin	1	6%
Brown	2	3%	Cherry	2	4%	Furnas	1	6%
Cass	2	3%	Custer	2	4%	Madison	1	6%
Cherry	2	3%	Saunders	2	4%	Sheridan	1	6%

**Table 12.** Top counties and number of respondents for the harvest of the respondents' third and fourth turkey during the 2021 fall turkey season. Responses could not be broken down by residency because of the low number of respondents who reported harvesting 3 (n = 13) or 4 (n = 7) turkeys.

Third turkey (n = 13)			Fourth Turkey (n = 7)		
Dawes	4	31%	Dawes	3	43%
Cass	2	15%	Cass	1	14%
Sheridan	2	15%	Douglas	1	14%
Antelope	1	8%	Lancaster	1	14%
Douglas	1	8%	Sheridan	1	14%
Lancaster	1	8%			
Merrick	1	8%			
Pierce	1	8%			

**Table 13.** Number and percent of resident and non-resident respondents who reported pursuing a particular sub-species of wild turkey during the 2021 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	465	380	85
Eastern	37 8%	29 8%	8 9%
Merriam's	87 19%	62 16%	25 29%
Rio Grande	11 2%	8 2%	3 4%
No particular subspecies	352 76%	298 78%	54 64%

**Table 14.** Age and sex distribution of the fall 2021 reported turkey harvest by residency.

Age/Sex Class	Total	Resident	Non-resident
Adult Tom	650 25.7%	554 26.6%	98 21.7%
Juvenile Male (Jake)	547 21.6%	481 23.2%	68 15.0%
Adult Hen	864 34.2%	634 30.5%	226 50.0%
Juvenile Hen	238 9.4%	185 8.9%	53 11.7%
Unknown Sex/Age	230 9.1%	225 10.8%	8 1.7%

**Table 15.** Resident and non-resident respondents' estimated harvest and days spent afield by segment of the season for the fall 2021 season.

Period of season	Overall		Resident		Non-resident	
	Days	Harvested	Days	Harvested	Days	Harvested
September 15-30	443	230	380	163	63	61
October 1-31	445	715	398	605	47	114
November 1-15	464	324	386	199	78	108
November 16-24	358	315	284	271	73	47
November 25-30	331	187	271	154	60	34
December 1-31	340	400	309	361	32	47
January 1-31	346	358	315	325	32	40

**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 2021 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?	332 69%	85 18%	51 11%	6 1%	8 2%	285 72%	61 15%	38 10%	5 1%	7 2%	47 55%	24 28%	13 15%	1 1%	1 1%
...land open to public hunting?	467 97%	10 2%	5 1%	- -	- -	384 97%	8 2%	4 1%	- -	- -	83 97%	2 2%	1 1%	- -	- -

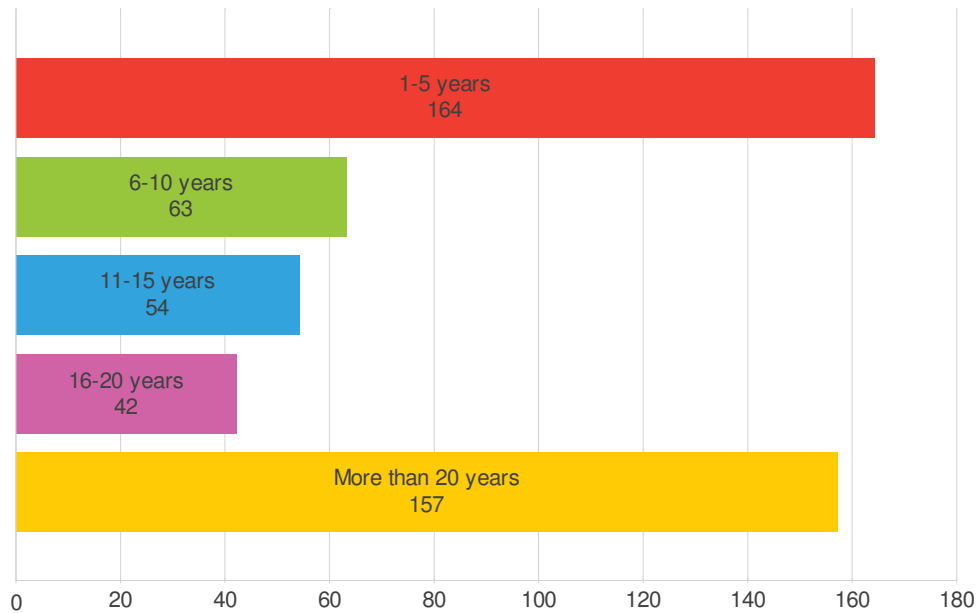
**Table 17.** Number and percent of resident and non-resident respondents who would or would not hunt in Nebraska again given their experiences during the fall 2021 season.

Will you hunt turkey in Nebraska again given your experiences in the fall 2021 season?	Overall	Resident	Non-resident
Yes	441 93%	364 93%	77 91%
No	34 7%	26 7%	8 9%

**Figure 1.** Word cloud summarizing free responses from respondents who indicated that they would not hunt in Nebraska again given their experiences during the 2021 fall season (Appendix 1 for complete list).



**Figure 2.** Distribution of overall respondents' turkey hunting experience in years as of 2021.

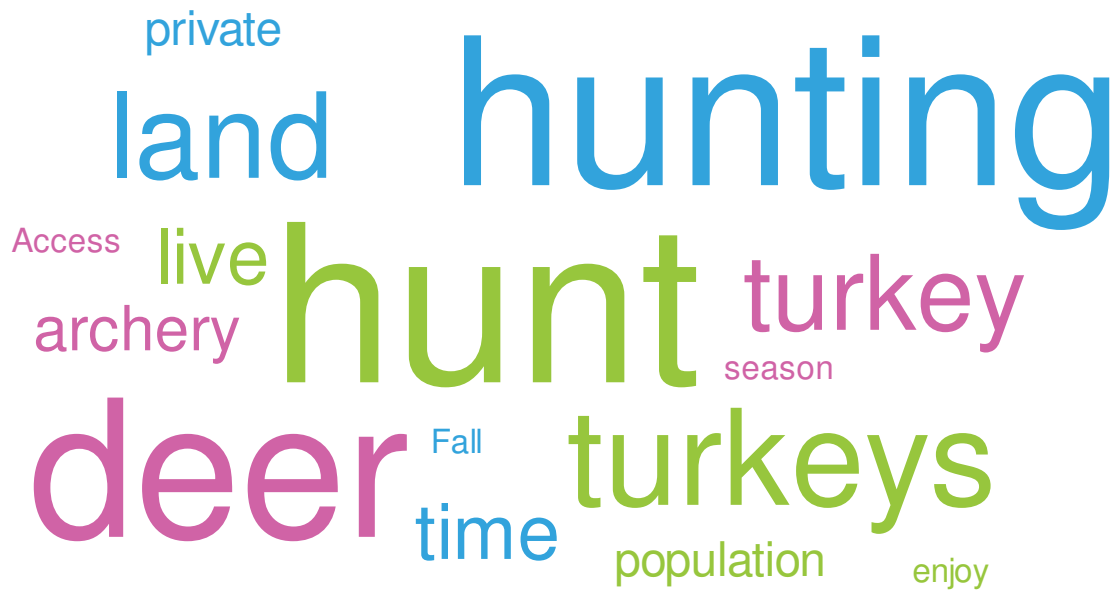


**Table 18.** Resident and non-resident respondents' reasons for hunting wild turkey in Nebraska during the 2021 fall season. Options with >50% support are highlighted.

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	152 32%	129 33%	23 27%
Family and/or friends who live in state	193 41%	145 37%	<b>48</b> <b>56%</b>
Ability to hunt a different sub-species of turkey	55 12%	35 9%	20 23%
Availability of permits	<b>266</b> <b>56%</b>	<b>216</b> <b>56%</b>	<b>50</b> <b>58%</b>
Permit costs	186 39%	157 40%	29 34%
Number of permits allowed per hunter	134 28%	105 27%	29 34%
Hunter success rate	107 23%	89 23%	18 21%
Turkey population abundance	<b>253</b> <b>53%</b>	<b>205</b> <b>53%</b>	<b>48</b> <b>56%</b>
Other	67 14%	59 15%	8 9%



**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 2021 fall season (Appendix 2 for complete list).



**Table 19.** Descriptive statistics on the number of other hunters observed by turkey hunters while afield hunting during the 2021 fall turkey season.

Descriptive Statistics: Number of Hunters Seen				
n	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
467	1007	1	22	2

**Table 20.** Descriptive statistics on the number of turkeys observed by hunters while turkey hunting during the 2021 fall turkey season.

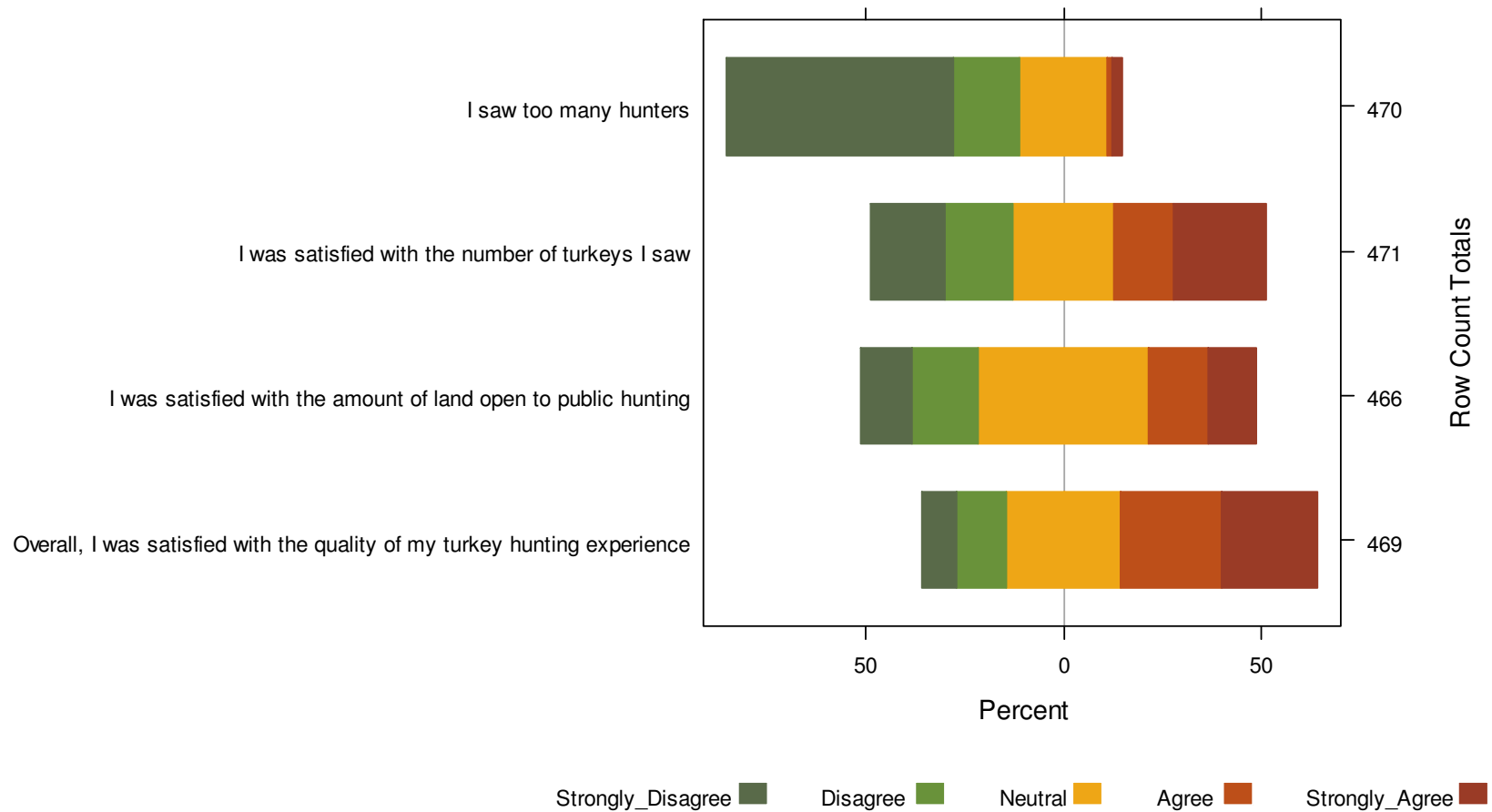
Descriptive Statistics: Turkeys Observed				
n	Sum	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
471	6441	1	52	14

**Table 21.** Resident and non-resident respondent agreement with statements related to their hunting experiences in Nebraska during the 2021 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"	<b>269</b>	80	104	6	11	<b>212</b>	63	95	5	11	<b>57</b>	17	9	1	-
	<b>57%</b>	17%	22%	1%	2%	<b>55%</b>	16%	25%	1%	3%	<b>68%</b>	20%	11%	1%	-
"I was satisfied with the number of turkeys seen"	88	82	<b>119</b>	71	111	80	74	<b>102</b>	54	77	8	8	17	17	<b>34</b>
	19%	17%	<b>25%</b>	15%	24%	21%	19%	<b>26%</b>	14%	20%	10%	10%	20%	20%	<b>40%</b>
"I was satisfied with the amount of land open to public hunting"	60	78	<b>202</b>	70	56	52	73	<b>160</b>	63	37	8	5	<b>42</b>	7	19
	13%	17%	<b>43%</b>	15%	12%	14%	19%	<b>42%</b>	16%	10%	10%	6%	<b>52%</b>	9%	23%
"Overall I was satisfied with the quality of my hunting experience"	40	59	<b>137</b>	118	115	39	50	<b>123</b>	93	80	1	9	14	25	<b>35</b>
	9%	13%	<b>29%</b>	25%	25%	10%	13%	<b>32%</b>	24%	21%	1%	11%	17%	30%	<b>42%</b>

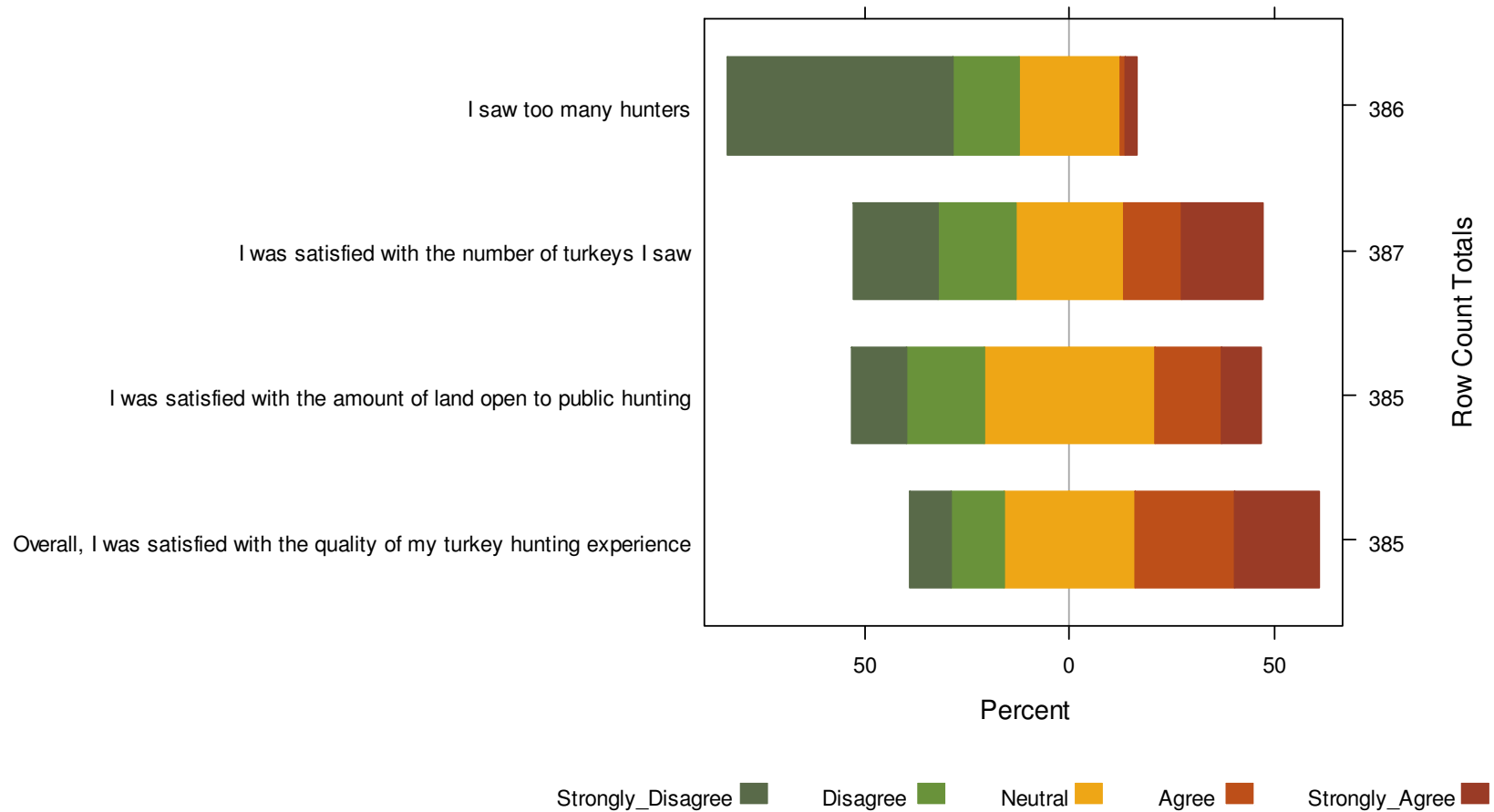
**Figure 4.** Overall respondent disagreement or agreement with statements characterizing their hunting experience during the 2021 fall turkey season.

**Overall respondent disagreement/agreement with the following statements.**



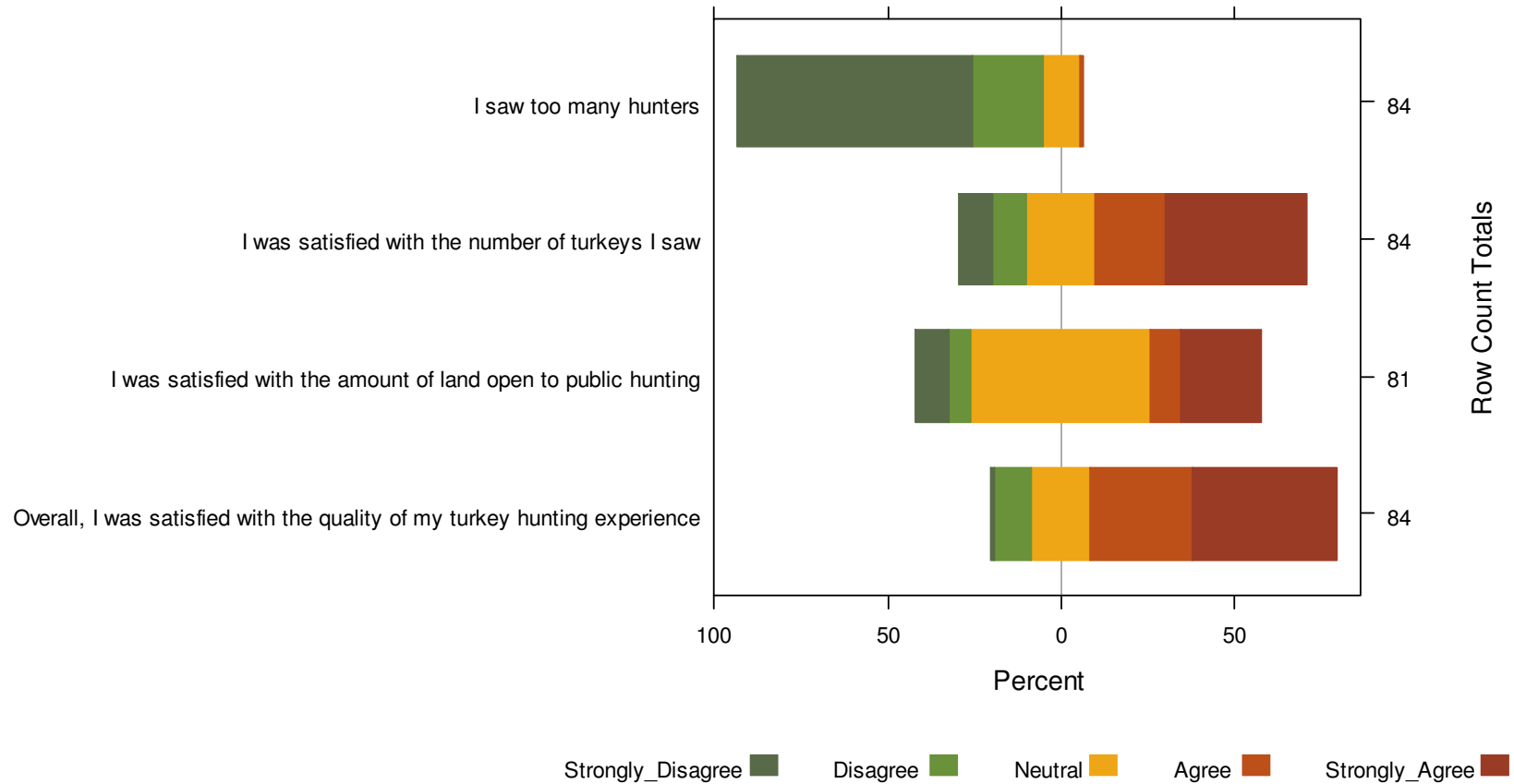
**Figure 5.** Resident respondent disagreement or agreement with statements characterizing aspects of their hunting experiences during the 2021 fall turkey season.

**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 2021 fall turkey season.

**Nonresident respondent disagreement/agreement with the following statements.**



**Table 22.** Where non-resident respondents stayed while hunting in Nebraska during the 2021 fall turkey season.

Where did you stay while hunting turkeys in Nebraska?	Non-resident responses and percent
Hotel/Motel	23 27%
Commercial campground (e.g., KOA) or hunting lodge	5 6%
Public camping sites/lodge (e.g., State Parks)	11 13%
Private residence of family or friends	33 39%
Personal home	3 4%
Other	10 12%

**Figure 7.** Word cloud for “Other” responses to where respondents stayed while hunting turkey in Nebraska during the 2021 fall season (Appendix 3 for complete list).



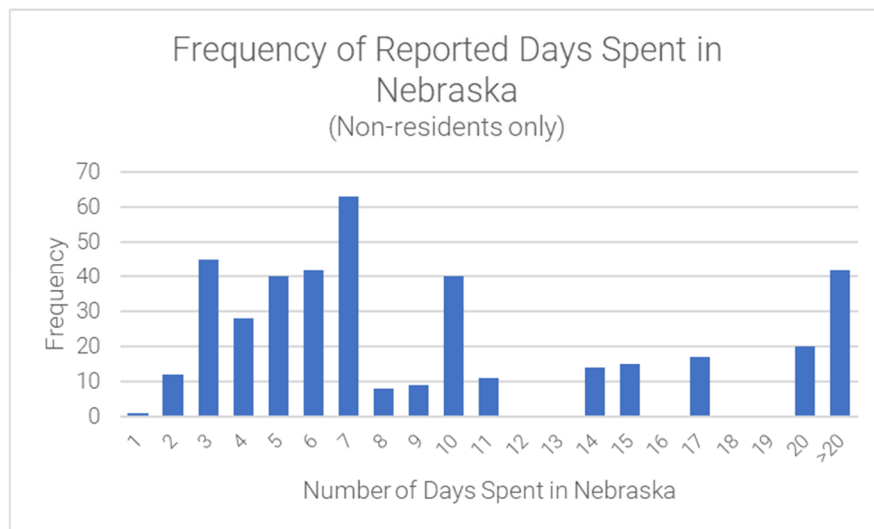
**Figure 8.** Percentage of responding hunters who indicated they accompanied various groups of hunters in the field during the 2021 fall turkey season.



**Table 23.** Numbers of youth, novice, women, and apprentice hunters that respondents reported taking into the field during the 2021 fall turkey season.

Type of hunter	Number
Youth hunters less than 16 years old	75
New adult hunters at least 16 years old	47
Women	42
Apprentice license holders	4

**Figure 9.** Frequency of days non-residents reported staying in Nebraska during their fall 2021 turkey hunt.



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).

If no, why?
Turkey population and noticeably decreased in my area. Want to maintain a decent population for spring hunting.
They were all bunched up on private land. We asked for permission, and none granted.
The property I have permission to hunt the turkeys disappear in the fall.
No turkeys any more, used to be plenty
All birds were on private land bunched up
Super Dry Windy Conditions Been hunting there 28 years Spring or Fall just not the Birds anymore like there used to be. Went Muzzleloader Deer Hunting in December never saw a Turkey!!
We don't see enough of them to spend the money on the license. From ten years back the turkey population is bismal
Move too much. Others hunting bust the roost, turkeys move on to ground that I don't have permission to hunt.
Didn't have time to go out.
Molting
It was a special circumstance where I had a rare opportunity to hunt Whitetailed deer. Since I was on a property that also housed turkeys I bought a Turkey tag just in case.
habitat gone, land hard to find, poachers killing turkeys all over, plastic blowing all over the state
There's often too many people on the public land and I do not have access to private land very often. I am frustrated that my 12yr old son hasn't been able to get a turkey. I have had this problem the last couple of times we've tried this so I'm not sure it's worth our time to continue. We may try again in the future if I feel that I've got a better location. I will admit that I do not know if there is a youth-hunt like the pheasant season has or not.
Not worth the effort
No Tom's. All bobcats
There were no turkeys in all the places I used to hunt, to many pretor
Too many out of state idiots shooting every Turkey, Pheasant, Quail in Nebraska. Landowners are so pissed off at out of state idiots they are shutting off land. Raise the out of state price so in state people can hunt.
Not enough birds
Little opportunity on public, all private is leased or requiring large sums of money.
Stuck on public land and your open fields and waters program is a joke there was cow on some of the property and i will not hunt on land with livestock the other places i don't understand how that stuff made it in the program because there was nothing there strongly considering giving up hunt all together!!!!!!
numbers are terrible
No turkeys



birds are down and way too many people on the public
Numbers are down in my area, predators are up, no fur market so no body is hunting or trapping. Bobcats get them in the trees and nest raiders get the eggs in the nests
Busy
No birds makes it not a good use of my free time
No close public land to my home in south central Nebraska that holds turkeys
From my experiences in the Spring of 19, fall of 20, spring of 21 and then fall of 21. It seems that the population of birds has declined quite a bit over that time. Also, unfortunately during this time the hunter population in the spring has increased dramatically and the increased pressure coupled with decreased bird encounters makes the trip less enjoyable.
No place to hunt
The population needs to rebound before we hunt anymore have 3 Tom tags in spring is a killer on numbers
Very limited numbers along the Republican River. Lowest turkey numbers I have seen in years. Used to look out the window and see hundreds now in a 2 mile stretch of river maybe 30. To many egg eaters.

Appendix 2. Unedited list of responses for why respondents chose to hunt in Nebraska for the fall 2021 turkey season (see Table 18, Figure 3).

I love in NE
I usually hunt turkeys because there are turkeys. Right now the population is very low
I'm hunting deer so I get a turkey permit since I'm out
So I can eat them
I live here and own property
Fall: in case I see turkeys while deer hunting. Spring: Only thing to hunt at that time.
Weather I am seeing g turkeys on the property I hunt
I own land
See them all the time when working cows and fixing fence.
I buy a Turkey permit to have available if the deer hunting is slow.
Coincides with the archery deer season, so I'll harvest one if I get a chance while I'm deer hunting
I live in Northwest Nebraska
close to home
having my dad take me hunting
Lack of pheasants and quail
Enjoyable to hunt and enjoyable to cook and eat
Access to new private land with a good turkey population
Residency
Because I live in NE
Got a permit because I was going to be deer hunting. Never saw turkeys on public land that we hunted
Private land access
My turkey hunting coincides with deer hunting. If I harvest a deer early during firearm, I switch t
When I have time
I live here
Teaching my son to hunt
Like the terrain of the area we hunt.
Rancher that allows a hunt
Hunting is a part of my life and I enjoy the time spent outdoors if I am hunting or not.
Love being in Nebraska
Not going to anymore
I appreciate the challenge turkeys present. It's different from deer hunting
NW Nebraska Governors fall turkey hunt
Season overlapped with archery deer hunt
IAND oWNER
personal land
I like getting out in the woods just to be there

I thought there would be a lot of turkeys but the population is really down
Value the time just being outdoors with my kid and extended family.
Pine Ridge Govenors Turkey Hunt
mountain lion population
resident
Turkey for Christmas or Thanksgiving
During my deer hunt
I like to hunt turkeys
Sometimes they walk past the deer stand
Hunting turkeys is something I could also do during deer rifle season.
Was on archery deer hunt saw lots of turkeys, choose to try and harvest turkey after i harvested my
I am a landowner.
Public land in this state sucks
Availability on private land
Live here
Joy of the outdoors
I hunt them while archery hunting for deer
i purchase to have while i archery whitetail hunt
Could not hunt due to work requirements
Dad could not free up to take me hunting due to work
It's where I live although hunting in a nearby state that manage their natural resources properly
Just enjoy hunting
Access to the private land of friends.
Enjoy seeing turkeys in fall. Always have one arrow dedicated to turkeys while deer hunting.
Spend time with family and friends

Appendix 3. Unedited list of responses for “Other” places non-resident respondents stayed while hunting turkeys in the fall 2021 turkey season (see Table 24, Figure 7).

Owned property
My trip was cancelled due to my contracting COVID 19 the week before my planned trip.
airbnb
camp on private ground, no residence
Lodging provided by deer outfitter
Air BnB
Stayed in Kansas, drove into Nebraska
Camped on a private farm with permission from the land owner
camped at parking area
camper on private land