

# Connecting with outdoors, nature top motivation for Wisconsin hunters, survey finds

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The survey of Wisconsin [hunting](#) and [conservation](#) organization members found the following were either "very motivating" or "extremely motivating" reasons for participating in the activity:

- Spending time outdoors: 98 percent;
- Being close to nature: 92 percent;
- Opportunities to use skills and knowledge: 89 percent;
- Spending time with friends: 86 percent;
- Spending time with family: 81 percent;
- Obtaining meat: 60 percent, and;
- Getting trophy animals: 19 percent.

These findings confirm previous research suggesting that over time hunter motivations have shifted away from achievement-oriented reasons, such as getting trophy animals, and toward other reasons such as

enjoying nature, researchers say. These findings suggest that emphasizing the opportunity to be close to nature to non-hunters potentially interested in participating in hunting may be an effective way to promote and increase interest in hunting.

The survey is part of a larger research initiative called the Hunters Network of Wisconsin, a partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, UW-Extension and UW-Madison, aimed at informing the hunter recruitment and retention efforts of Wisconsin's over 600 hunting organizations.

The percentage of the population that hunts in Wisconsin and nationwide has declined during past decades. Research suggests that this may be partly due to broad societal changes such as urbanization and competing time commitments.

"Our results suggest spending time outdoors and connecting with nature are major motivators for Wisconsin hunters," says Bret Shaw, assistant professor in the Department of Life Sciences Communication at UW-Madison and environmental communication specialist for UW-Extension. "This finding is important because it demonstrates that, in Wisconsin, hunting seems to be an important way to connect our increasingly urban society to the natural world. It also highlights the potential mental and physical benefits of hunting, including being outside, exercise, and stress reduction."

The decline in the number of hunters has been of concern to conservation agencies and hunting organizations across the nation and Wisconsin because hunters play a key role in the conservation and protection of natural resources. Hunting plays an important role in managing the state's wildlife populations at optimal levels to provide recreational opportunity while reducing damage problems such as automobile collisions, forestry damage and controlling the spread of

wildlife diseases.

In addition to conservation, hunting is also a significant element in Wisconsin's economy. The state's approximately 700,000 hunters spend nearly \$1.4 billion in the state, supporting more than 25,000 jobs and contributing more than \$197 million in state and local taxes.

The majority of hunting organization members reported that recruiting new hunters was an important part of their organizational mission, but recognized their efforts were mostly successful with children and relatives of current members, who would most likely become [hunters](#) anyway. Organizations are interested in reaching individuals who are new to hunting through new outreach techniques such as social networking sites and tips on how to get media coverage to promote mentored hunting events.

The survey was conducted by UW-Madison researchers Shaw and Beth Ryan from the Department of Life Sciences Communication. The Hunters' Network of Wisconsin Hunting and Conservation Organization Survey was conducted in three waves during the winter and spring of 2010 and was administered to members of statewide hunting and conservation organizations. Of those surveyed, 199 out of 341 respondents returned surveys for a response rate of 58 percent. Those responding included representatives of 94 different state hunting and [conservation](#) organizations from 52 counties.

**More information:** [www.huntersnetwork.org/](http://www.huntersnetwork.org/)

Provided by University of Wisconsin-Madison

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