

# Vermont Residents' Attitudes Toward Furbearer Management

Presented to the Senate Natural Resources Committee

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Executive Director, Responsive Management

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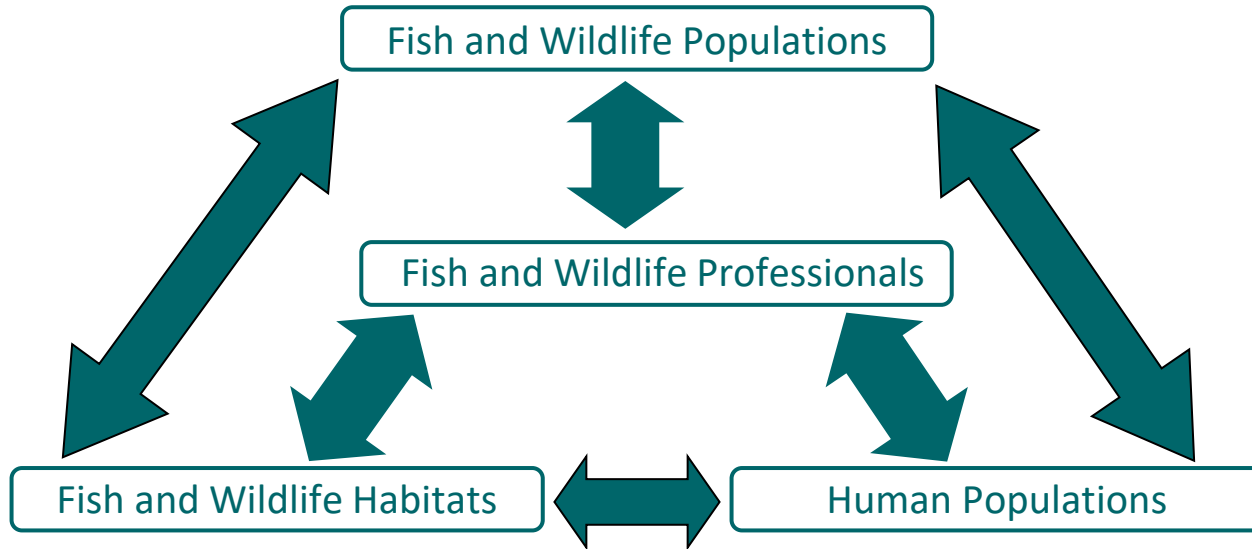
# Presentation Overview

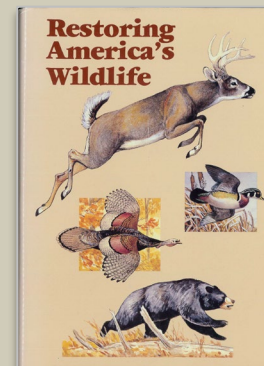


- **About Responsive Management**
- **Things to Keep in Mind**
- **Vermont Residents' Attitudes Toward Furbearer Management**



# Focus of Fish and Wildlife Management





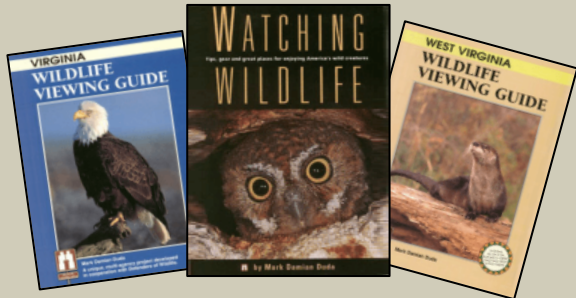
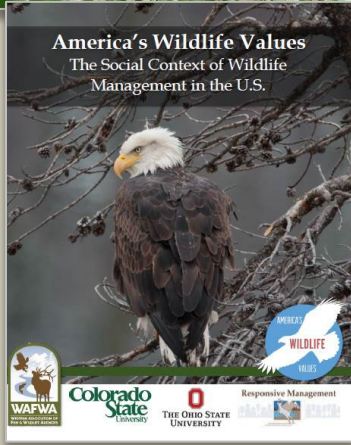
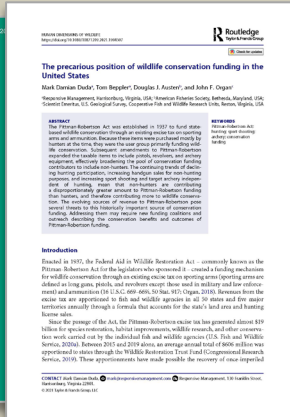
# About Responsive Management

# About Responsive Management

- **Research firm specializing in natural resource and outdoor recreation issues**
- **33 years of continuous survey research projects**
- **More than 1,000 survey projects on natural resource issues**
- **Research in 50 states and 15 countries**
- **Research conducted for every state fish and wildlife agency and federal resource agency**
- **Research for all major NGOs, including RBFF, NSSF, ASA, ATA, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, and more**
- **Research for industry leaders, such as Winchester Ammunition, Vista Outdoor (Bushnell, Primos, Federal Premium, etc.), Trijicon, Yamaha Motor, and more**



# About Responsive Management





# About Responsive Management

- **Data collection for the nation's top universities:** Auburn University, Clemson University, Colorado State University, Duke University, George Mason University, Michigan State University, Mississippi State University, North Carolina State University, Oregon State University, Penn State University, Rutgers University, Stanford University, Texas Tech, University of California-Davis, University of Florida, University of Montana, University of New Hampshire, University of Southern California, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Tech, West Virginia University, Yale University, and many more

The Virginia Commonwealth University L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs has considered Responsive Management our go-to provider of high-quality phone surveys for many years. We chose them every time they have capacity because we can rely on them to provide the most cost-effective, high-quality phone surveys of the many such providers that we have tried over the years.

They provide a full range of services, including **sound methodological advice** and **questionnaire review** on the front-end, the **highest quality of data collection** based on monitoring of recorded interviews, and data cleaning and weighting on the back end. We often do not have access to a methodologist, so we rely on the team at Responsive Management to provide us with **feedback about the integrity of our survey instrument, making sure that we do not ask biased or leading questions.** They do this each and every time, always catching something that we have missed.

– Mary A. Moore

Director of Field Research | Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory  
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs | Virginia Commonwealth University



Yale University



RUTGERS



PennState

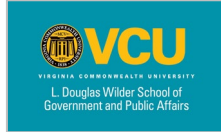


# Recent Examples of Telephone Methodological Accuracy

Virginia Commonwealth University

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Biden voters more likely to be voting against Trump than for Biden, VCU Wilder School poll finds**

*The former vice president's double-digit lead in Virginia remains stable heading into Election Day.*

RICHMOND, Va. (Oct. 29, 2020) — While Democrat Joe Biden remains ahead by double digits in Virginia, his voters are more likely to see the choice as a vote against President Donald Trump than a vote for Biden, according to a new statewide poll conducted by the Center for Public Policy at the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Biden voters are equally as likely to say their vote is an anti-Trump choice as they are to saying it is pro-Biden, each with 49%. Independent voters are more likely to view their choice of Biden as a vote against Trump with 60%, compared to 41% of Democrat Biden voters. Trump voters are more likely to feel their vote is for Trump, with 77%, and only 20% saying their vote is against Biden.

## Virginia presidential results

Democrats **held** this seat

CANDIDATE	VOTES	PCT.
Joe Biden <b>DEM</b> ✓	2,413,568	<b>54.4%</b>
Donald Trump* <b>GOP</b>	1,962,430	<b>44.2%</b>

100% of expected vote in [unclear] incumbent



## Virginia governor results

CANDIDATE

PCT.

Youngkin <b>GOP</b> ✓	<b>50.6%</b> 1,663,596
McAuliffe <b>DEM</b>	<b>48.7%</b> 1,600,116

100% of expected vote in [unclear]



# Things to Keep in Mind

# Things to Keep in Mind:



- ✓ **Definition of Bias**
- ✓ **Importance of Probability-based Sampling**
- ✓ **Importance of Neutral, Non-leading Questions**
- ✓ **Importance of Keeping Things in Perspective**
- ✓ **Importance of Not Shooting the Messenger**



**Bias:** the systematic exclusion of a subset of the population due to a particular attribute.

# Importance of Probability-based Sampling



Credit: PETA



Credit: Little Outdoor Giants | Outdoor Life



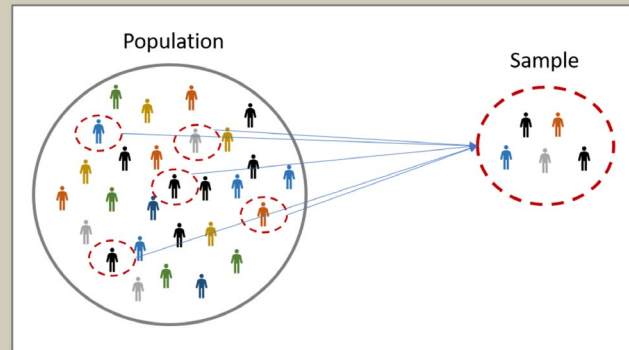
**“Do you approve or disapprove of regulated trapping?”**

## Importance of Probability-based Sampling (continued)



“Sampling public opinion is like sampling soup: One spoonful can reflect the taste of the whole pot, if the soup is well-stirred.”

—George Gallup



Credit: Omniconvert

## Importance of Neutral, Non-leading Questions



- ✓ “Do you support or oppose...”
- ✓ “Do you agree or disagree...”
- ✓ “Please rate on a scale of 0 to 10...”



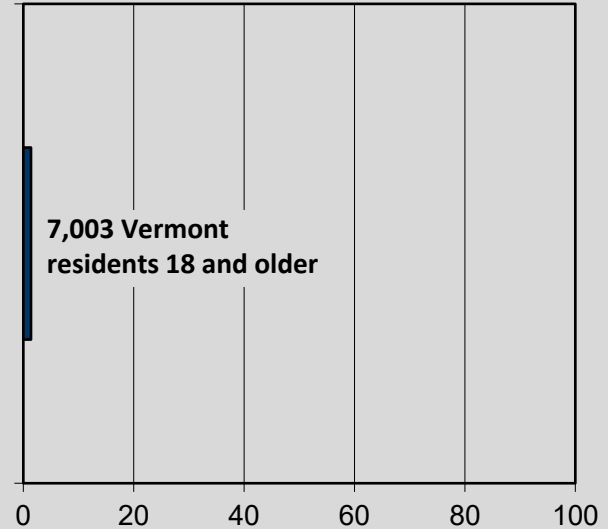
# Importance of Keeping Things in Perspective



How credible or not credible would you say the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is in general?

Not at all credible

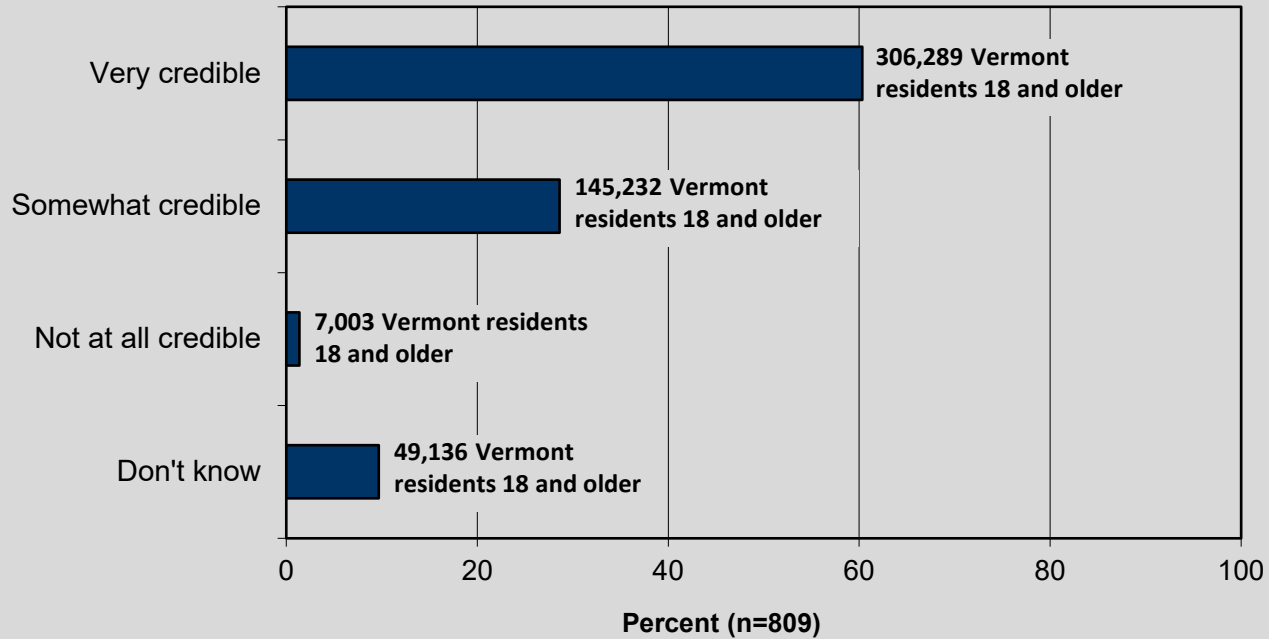
7,003 Vermont residents 18 and older



Percent (n=809)

# Importance of Keeping Things in Perspective (continued)

How credible or not credible would you say the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is in general?



# Input at public meetings often does not reflect the actual attitudes and opinions of the public and/or stakeholders.



**Comparing a Convenience Sample Against a Random Sample of Duck Hunters**  
MARK G. ALESSI AND CRAIG A. MILLER  
Human Dimensions of Wildlife: An International Journal  
Volume 17, Issue 2, 2012

**Abstract**  
State wildlife agencies frequently host public meetings to gather feedback from stakeholders. We investigated differences between duck hunters attending public open houses and duck hunters statewide regarding changes in the regulatory framework for duck hunting seasons in Illinois. We addressed this gap in the surveys to investigate potential differences between attendees at the open houses and a random sample of statewide hunters in Illinois. Open-house participants hunted near family members' open-house participants and harvested more mallards than mallard participants. Additionally, open-house participants hunted significantly more coots than mallard participants and had been hunting for more years. [It is important that state and federal wildlife agencies consider these findings about the state's duck hunters and improve their public meetings to better address the needs of the public.](#)

## The loudest constituents may not always reflect the majority.



- Comments at public meetings and in online forums tell a different story than probability-based random samples

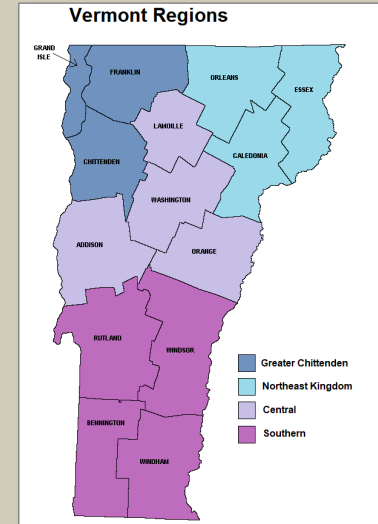
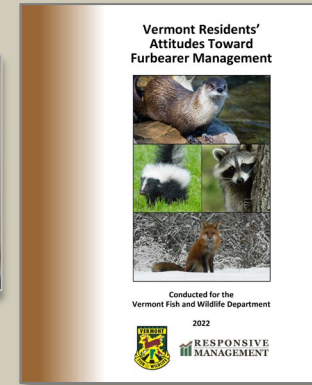
## Importance of Not Shooting the Messenger

The messenger  
requests that he  
please not be shot.

# **Vermont Residents' Attitudes Toward Furbearer Management**

# Study Methodology

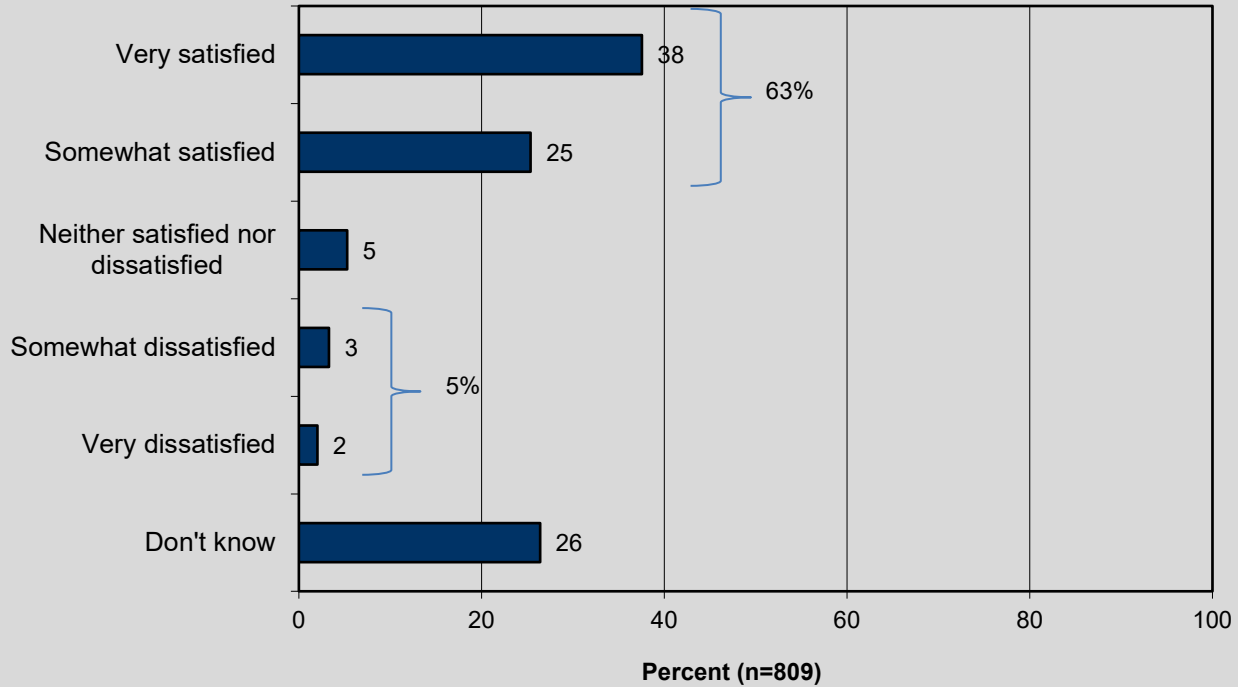
- Survey conducted to determine residents' attitudes toward the Department, its management of furbearer species, and trapping in general
- Survey instrument developed cooperatively by Responsive Management and the Department
- Scientific, probability-based telephone survey of Vermont residents 18 and older (n = 809)
- Sample included both landlines and cellular phones in their proper proportions
- Sampling plan entailed representative sample of residents statewide; sample also stratified by the Department's four regions
- Data weighted by age and gender; regions weighted to match proper proportions in the statewide analysis
- 95% confidence interval
- Sampling error for overall sample of adult Vermont residents: +/- 3.44 percentage points
- Survey administered in October 2022



# Attitudes Toward the Department

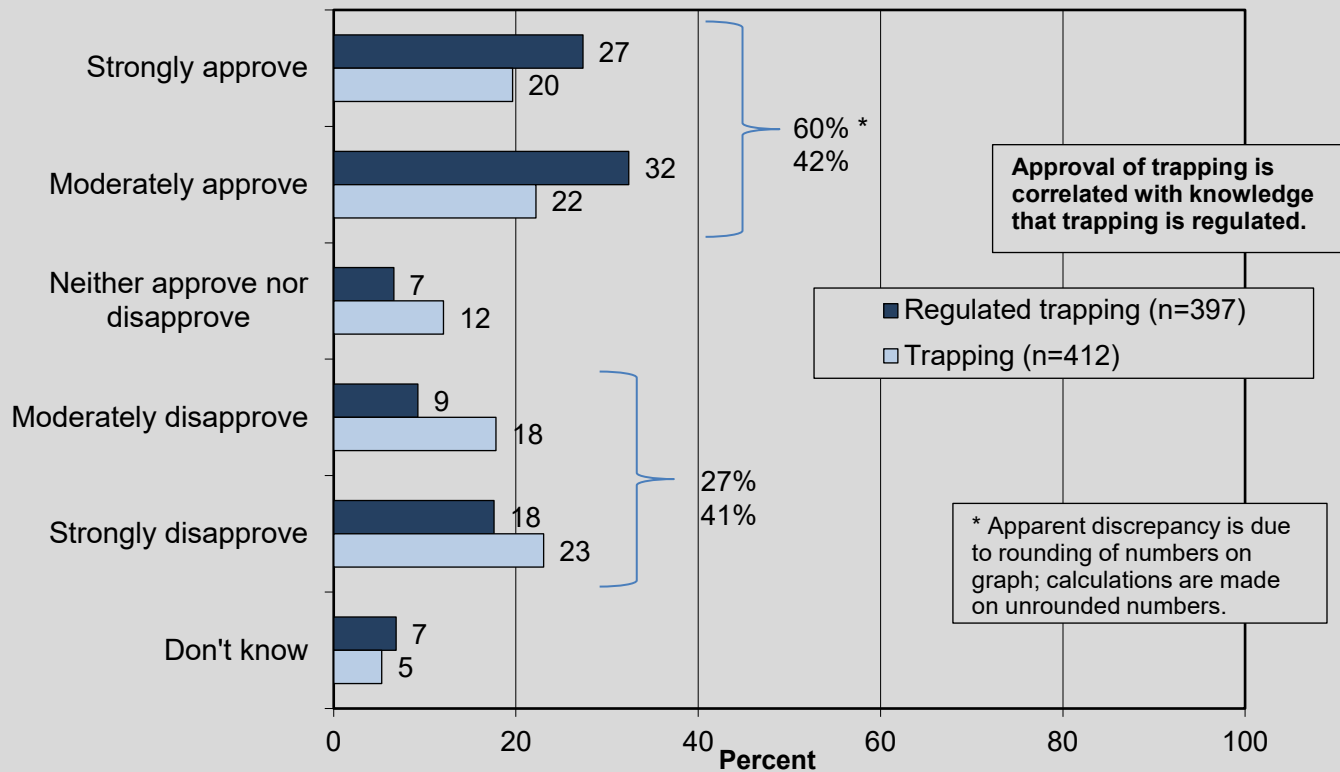


## Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department as a governmental agency in Vermont, or do you not know?

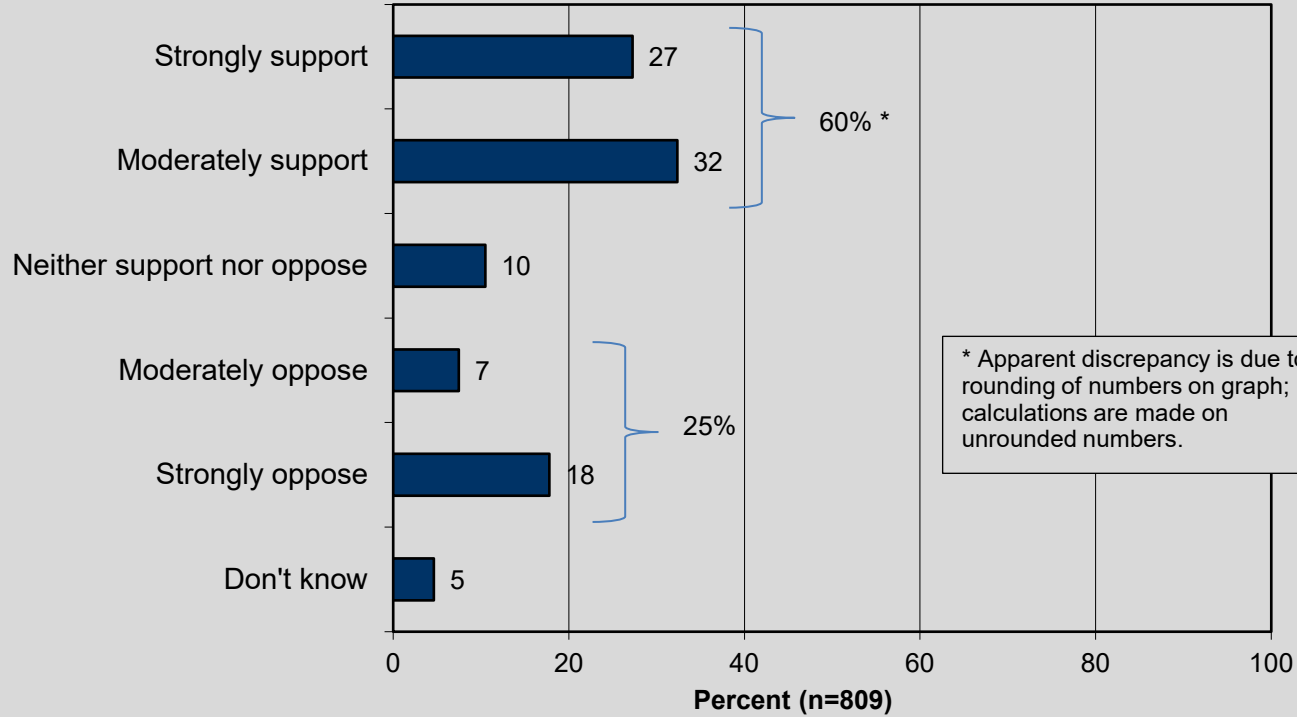


# Attitudes Toward Trapping

## Do you approve or disapprove of [regulated trapping / trapping] in Vermont?

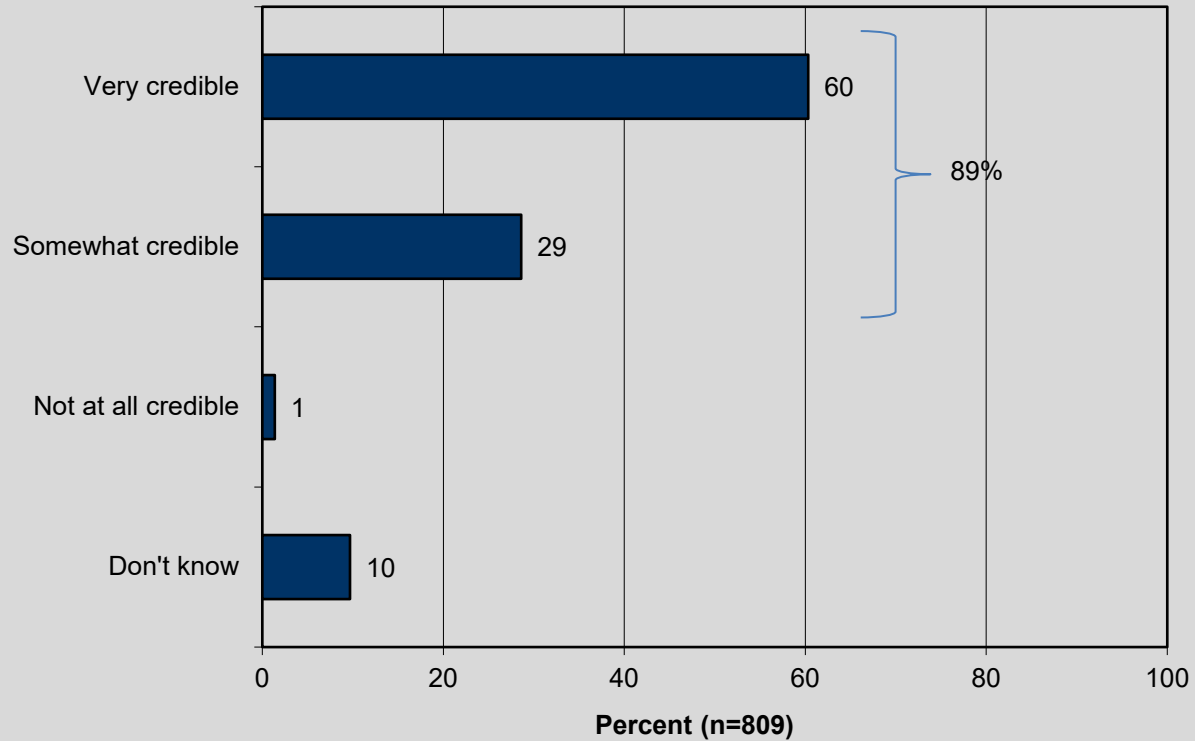


**Regardless of your personal opinion on trapping, do you support or oppose the right of others to participate in trapping in Vermont if they want to do so?**



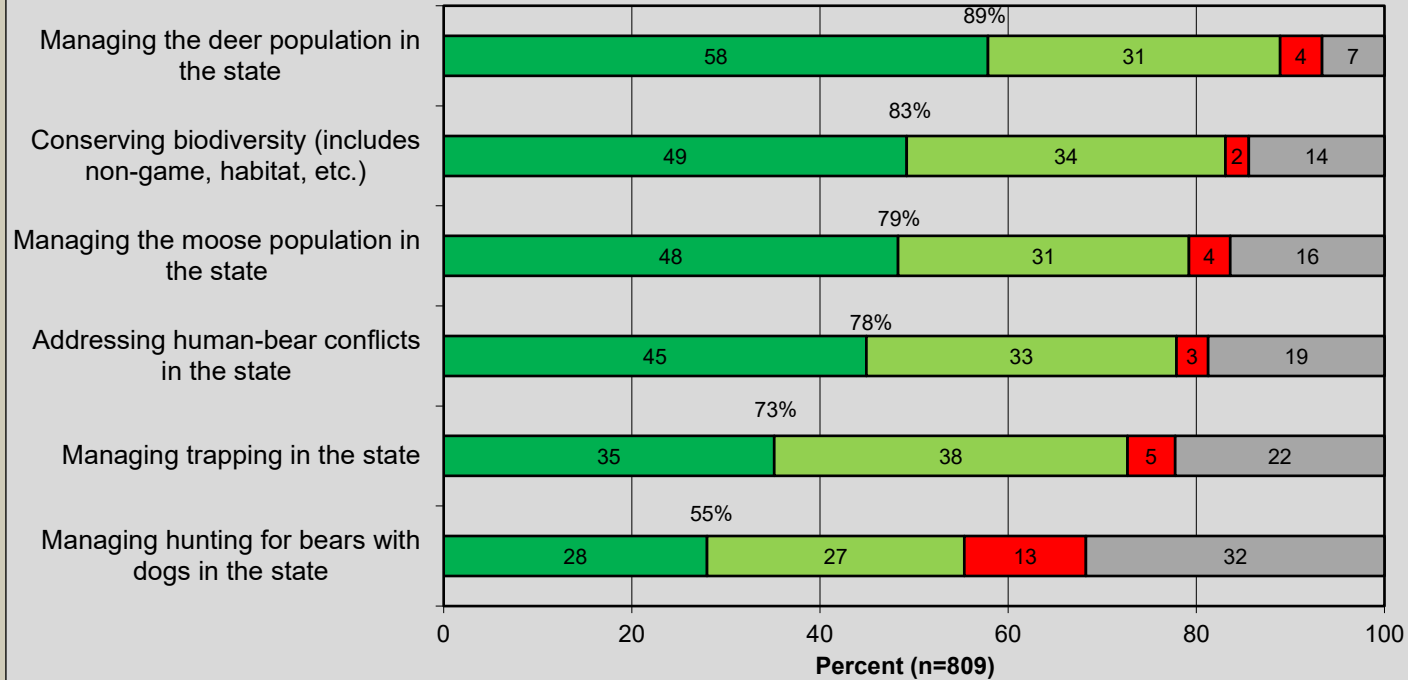
# Credibility of the Department

### How credible or not credible would you say the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is in general?



## On these issues, how credible or not credible would you say the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is?

■ Very credible    
 ■ Somewhat credible    
 ■ Not at all credible    
 ■ Don't know

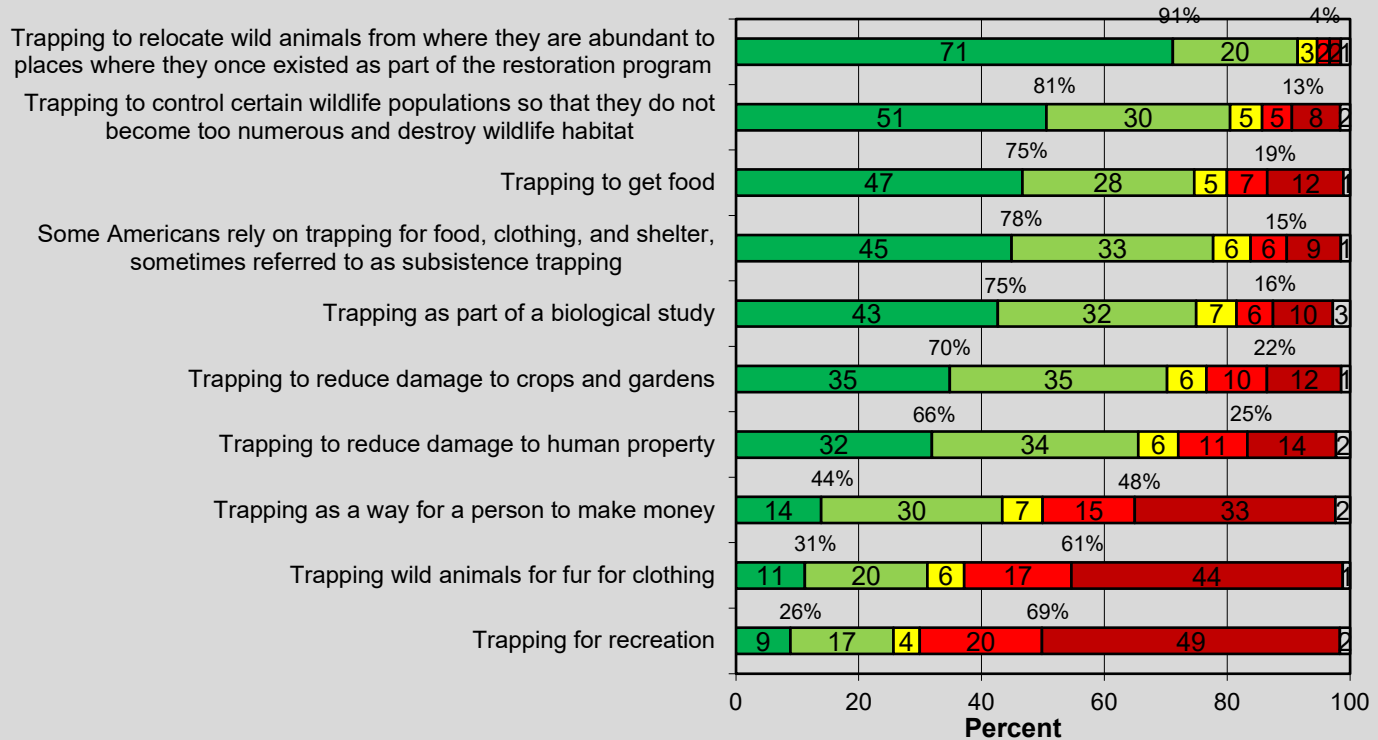


# Approval and Disapproval of Various Reasons to Trap



## Percent who approve or disapprove of trapping for each of the following reasons:

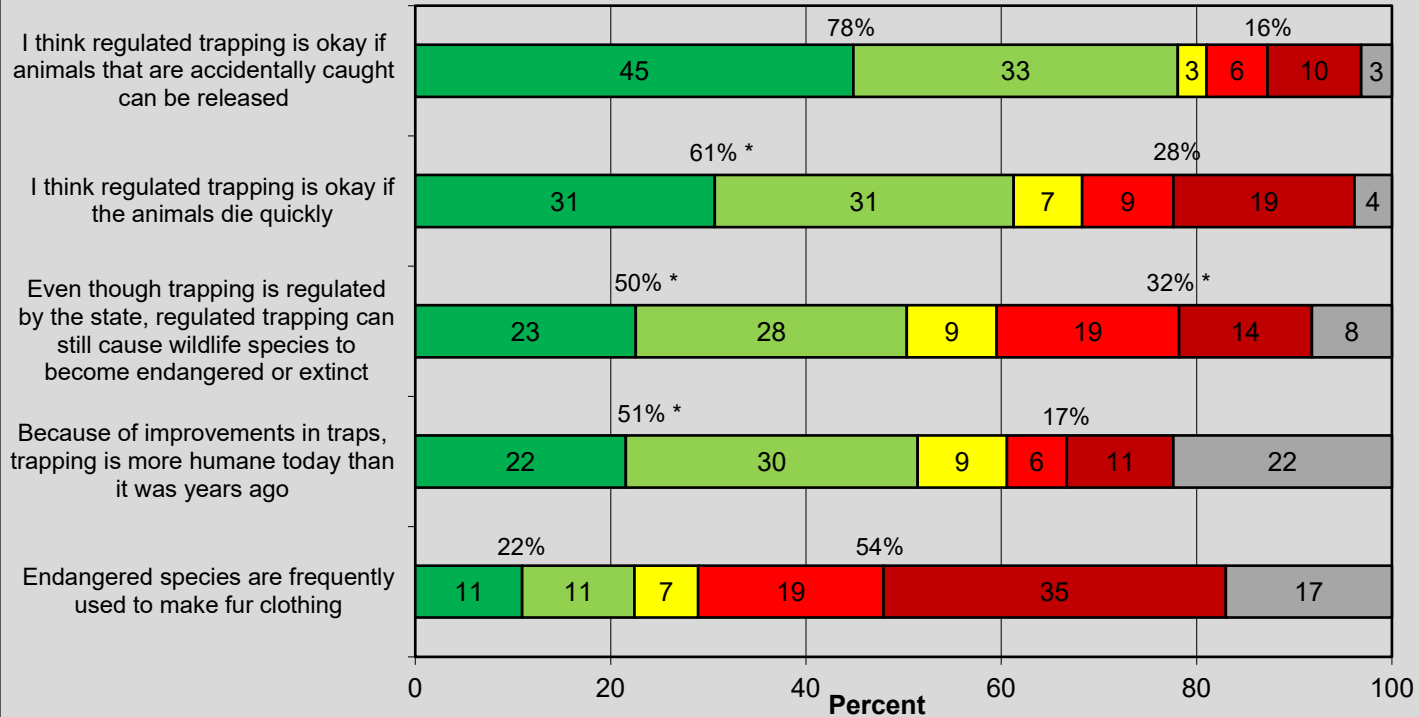
■ Strongly approve   
 ■ Moderately approve   
 ■ Neither   
 ■ Moderately disapprove   
 ■ Strongly disapprove   
 ■ Don't know



# Factors Affecting Attitudes Toward Trapping

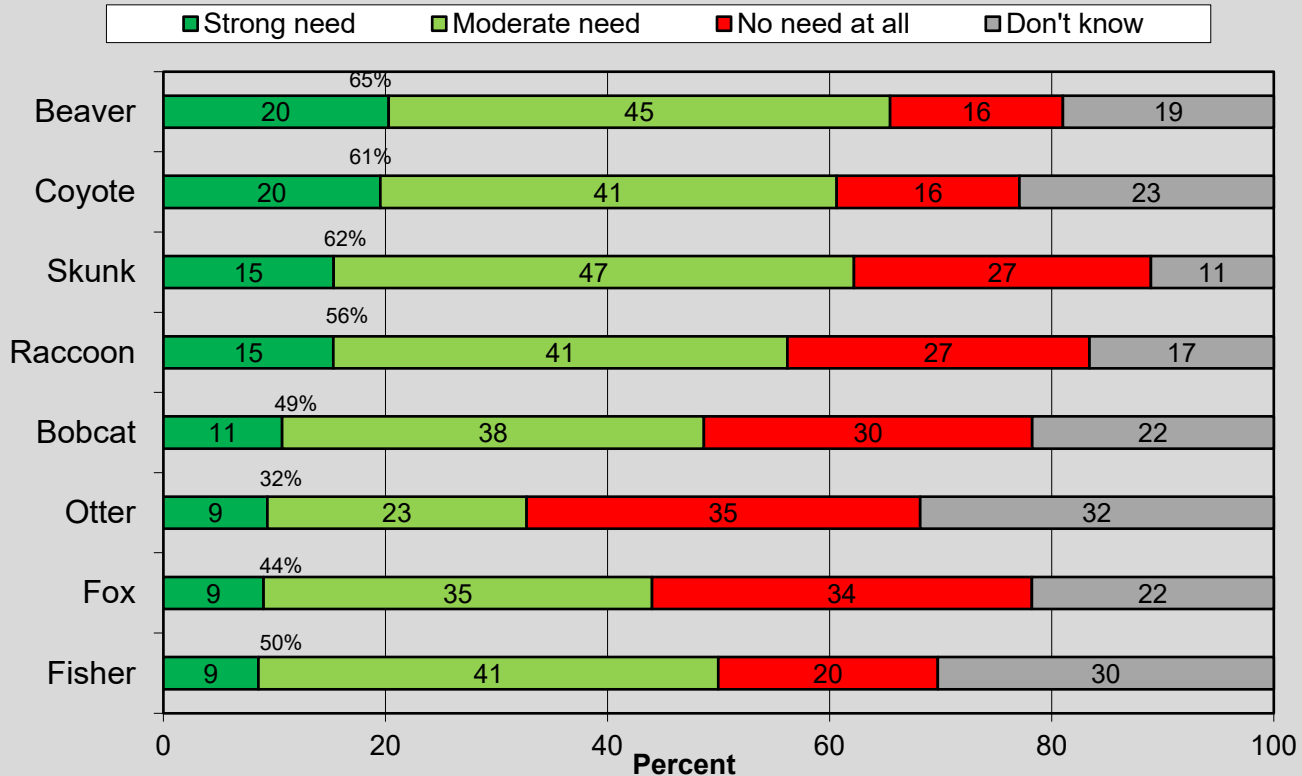
## Percent who agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

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

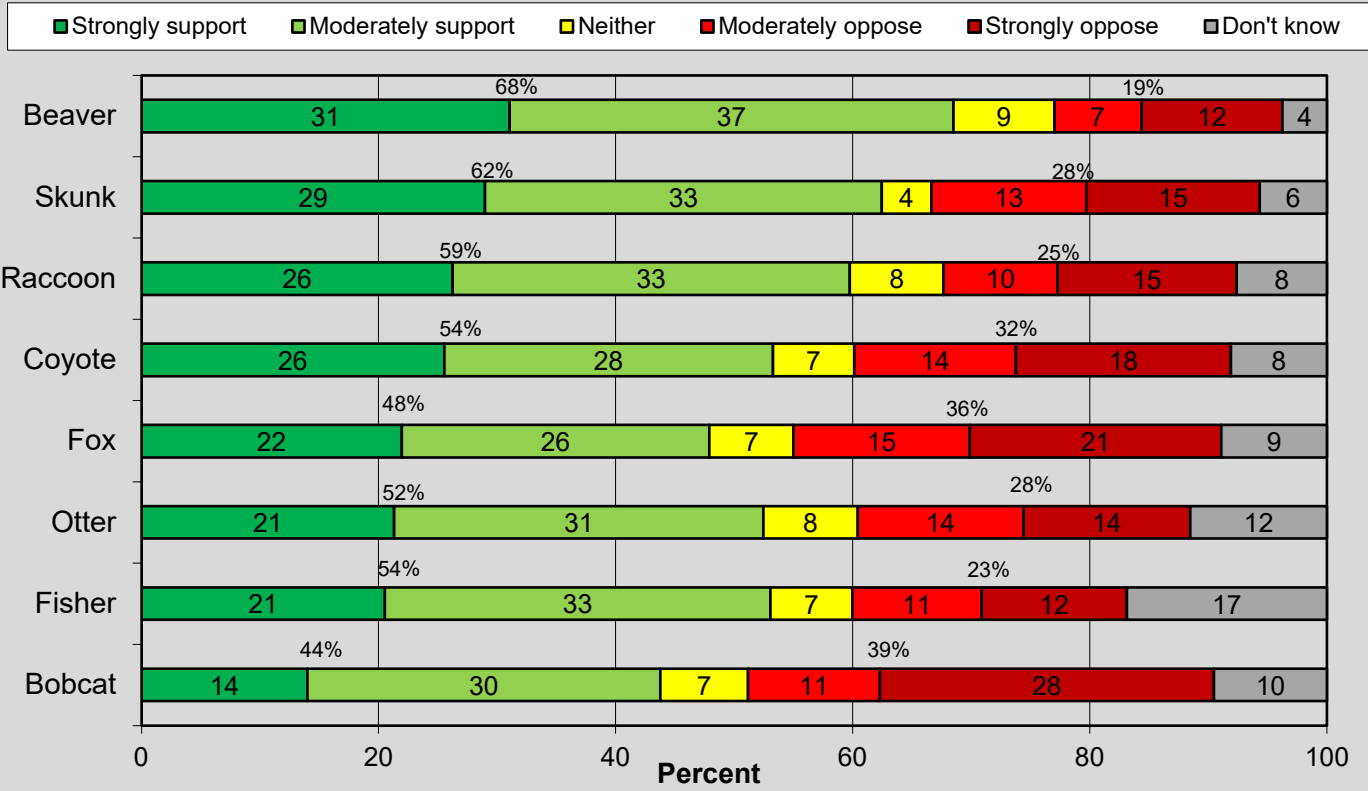


# Attitudes Toward Furbearer Species

## How much of a need is there for management of [species] populations in Vermont?



## Percent who support or oppose regulated trapping as a method to manage the following species populations:





Questions?

[mark@responsivemanagement.com](mailto:mark@responsivemanagement.com)

Photo credit: BRB Travel Blog