

Maryland Wild Turkey Hunter Survey - 2025

Results Summary



INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted to assess the preferences and opinions of Maryland's turkey hunters regarding turkey management, population trends, and hunting regulations. It also was designed to obtain information on hunter characteristics and turkey hunting techniques that will allow the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to better manage the turkey resource. Similar surveys of spring turkey hunters were conducted in 2007 and 2017, but this is the first time that hunters participating in any of the three turkey seasons (spring, fall and winter) were surveyed.

The survey was distributed to all hunters who indicated that they hunted turkeys during one of the five most recent DNR annual hunter mail surveys (The hunter mail survey randomly surveys approximately seven percent of license-buyers annually). The 2025 turkey survey was sent electronically to 1,519 hunters who provided an email address with their account. In addition, a printed survey and return envelope was mailed to 331 hunters whose account did not include an associated email address.

RESULTS

A total of 511 surveys were completed and returned. The response rate for the emailed and mailed surveys was 23% and 48%, respectively. Because previous mail survey respondents may have been more likely to respond to this survey, our sample cannot be considered entirely random. Nevertheless, we feel the hunters that responded adequately represented Maryland turkey hunters. About 10,000 hunters usually pursue turkeys annually in Maryland, so our sample represents about 5% of turkey hunters. Below is a summary of the survey responses. Some charts include results from previous surveys for comparison. Appendix 1 shows the survey questions and distribution of all responses. Appendix 2 lists all additional written comments received.

Turkey Populations

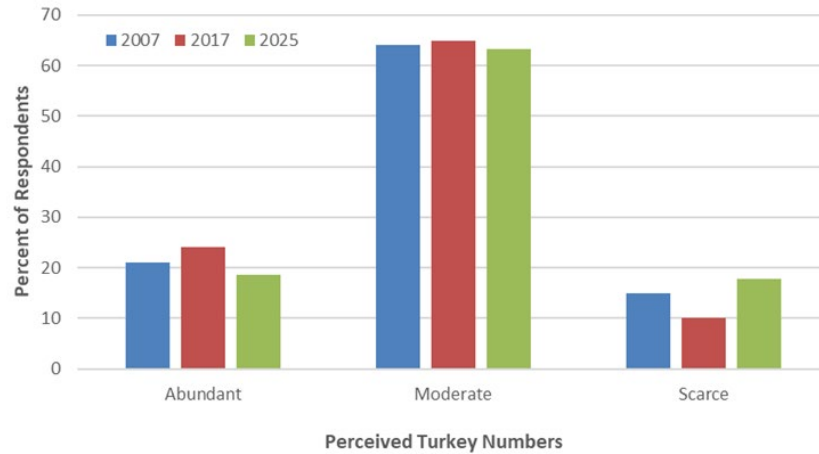
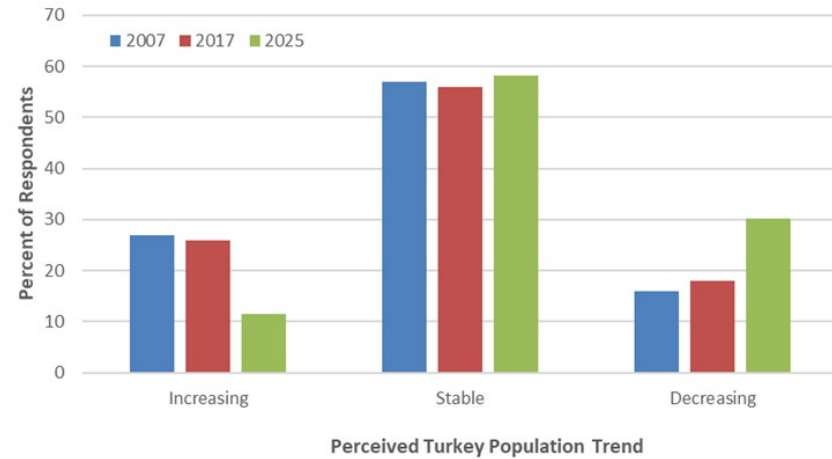
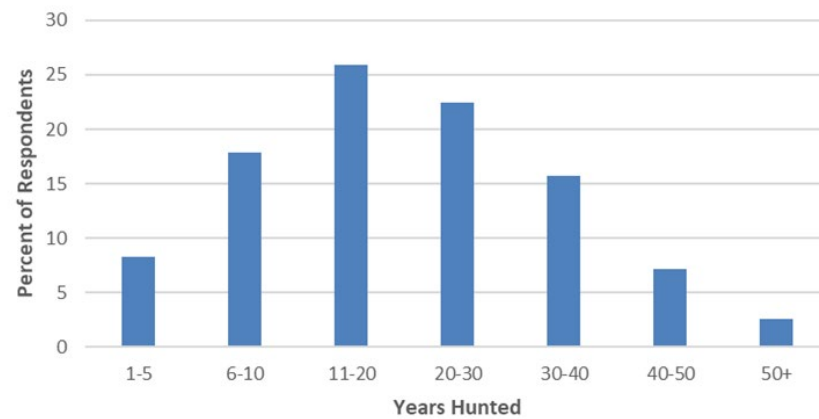
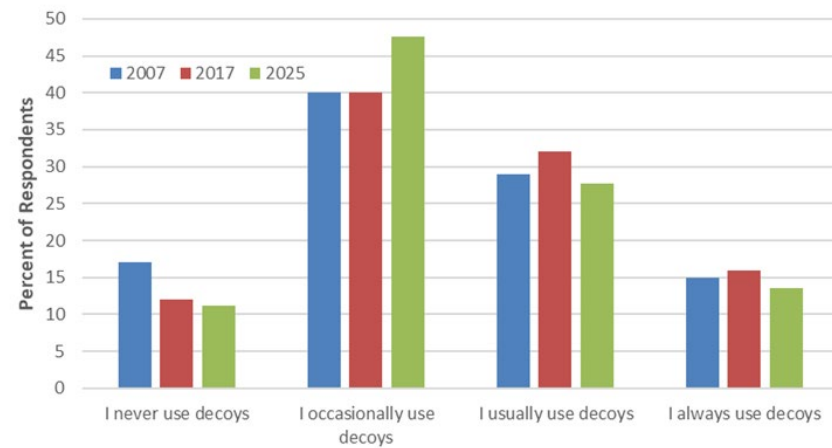
Overall, 82 percent of respondents thought that turkey numbers in the county they hunt most often were "moderate" or "abundant". Most respondents (70%) also felt that the turkey population was "increasing" or "stable" in the county they hunt. However, more hunters felt that populations were "decreasing" in 2025 compared to the 2007 and 2017 surveys.

When responses were summarized regionally, more hunters in Southern region counties perceived populations as abundant and either "stable" or "increasing" than in other regions. Hunters in the Central and Upper Eastern Shore regions were more likely to indicate turkeys were "scarce" in the county they hunted. In the Lower Eastern Shore Region, turkey populations were generally thought to be "moderate" or "abundant" by most hunters, but more hunters perceived a population decrease than they did in other regions.

Spring Season Hunter Characteristics and Behaviors

Most respondents (94%) indicated that they have hunted in the spring season in at least one of the last five years. The average Maryland spring turkey hunter has 23 years of experience, an increase from the 2007 and 2017 surveys when hunters reported 14 years and 16 years of experience, respectively.

About 89 percent of respondents reported using decoys to some extent, with most hunters using them occasionally (48%) or usually (28%). However, only eight percent have ever used decoys or turkey fans to hide behind or to stalk turkeys. Many hunters also (61%) used

Opinions of Turkey Population Size in County Hunted**Opinions of Turkey Population Trend in County Hunted****How many years have you hunted turkeys in the spring season?****Decoy Use**

blinds at least occasionally while turkey hunting. Decoy and blind use have generally remained consistent over time according to previous survey results.

Most hunters preferred 12 gauge shotguns (82%). However, the use of smaller gauges has become more popular, with 13% of hunters using a 20 gauge in 2025 compared to just 5% in 2017. An increasing trend in the number of hunters using non-lead shotshells and smaller shot sizes was also evident when compared to previous surveys.

Spring hunters spent an average of 8.5 days afield during the 2025 season, slightly higher than the 7-8 days per season reported in previous surveys. About 62% of hunters only hunted on private lands and 14% hunted exclusively on public land. Fewer hunters (24%) hunted on both land types throughout the season than in previous surveys.

In the 2025 spring season, 37% of respondents reported harvesting at least one turkey and 10% taking their season bag limit of 2 bearded birds. In 2017, only 30% of respondents were successful. Less than one-third (30%) of hunters hunted in the afternoon when it was legal during the last two weeks of the season, with seven percent of those hunters taking a turkey in the afternoon.

Spring Season Hunter Interference and Safety

Although 58 percent of respondents encountered other hunters at least occasionally in the 2025 season, they reported minimal negative interference and relatively few unsafe encounters. Only 19% felt that other hunters negatively affected their hunting success. Unsafe encounters were less frequent, with 5% of hunters reporting they felt unsafe at some time in the 2025 season.

The type of land that the individual hunted on influenced negative encounters; 12% of hunters that only hunted private land had negative encounters, whereas 36% of public land-only hunters felt that other hunters impacted their success. The number of hunters that experienced unsafe encounters was also higher for public land-only hunters vs. private land-only hunters (7% vs. 2%). Surprisingly, hunters that hunted both private and public lands reported the highest number of unsafe encounters with other hunters. Overall, negative interactions among hunters that used public land were higher in 2025 than in 2017 and 2007. Many written comments mentioned public land overcrowding issues.

Spring Regulation Preferences

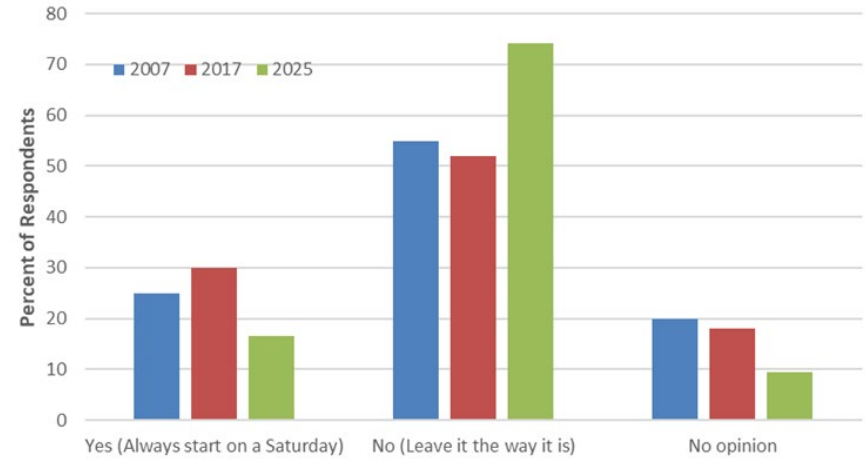
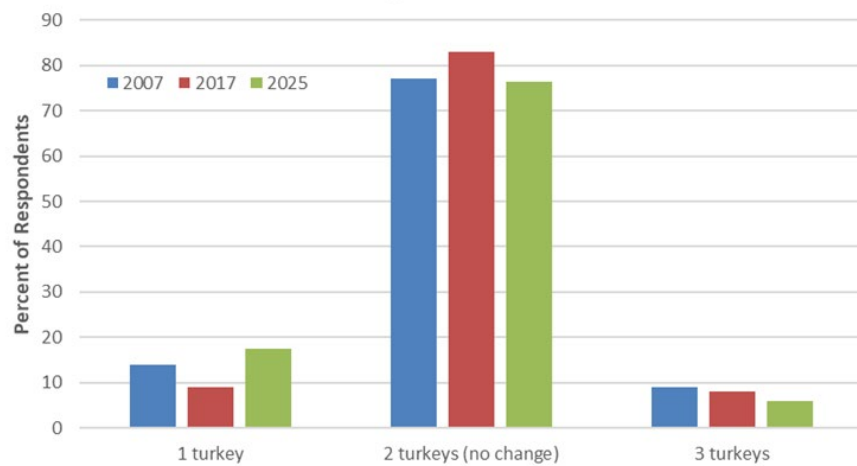
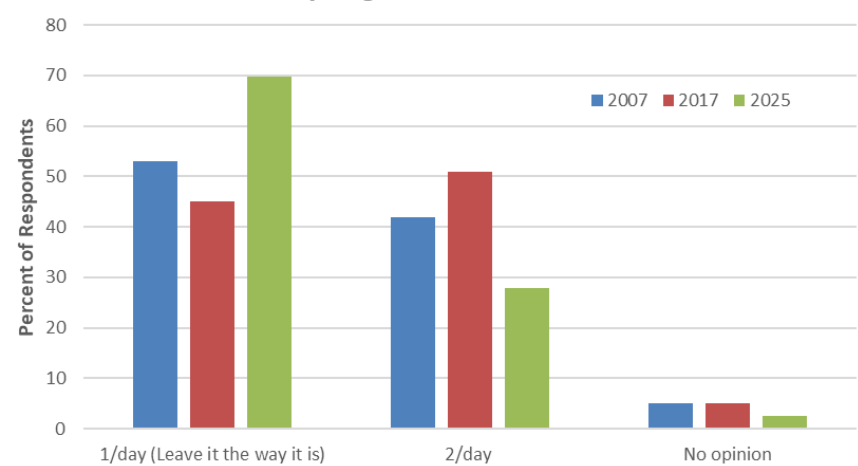
Most hunters (80%) felt the current season length was appropriate. Although 42 percent of hunters would prefer an earlier opening date, 58 percent would prefer the same opening date or a later opening. The majority (74%) preferred to start the season on the “traditional” opening date of April 18 vs. always starting the season on a Saturday.

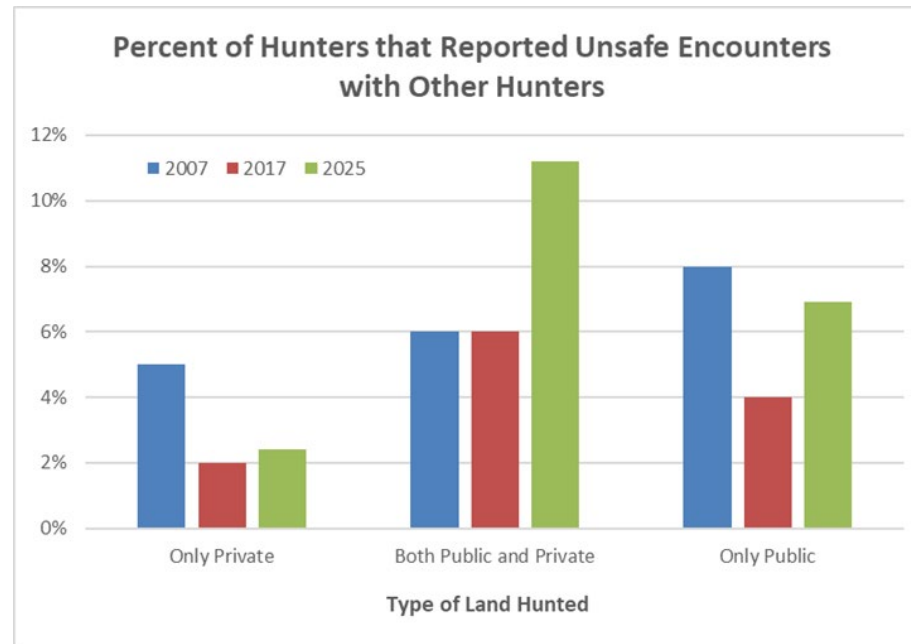
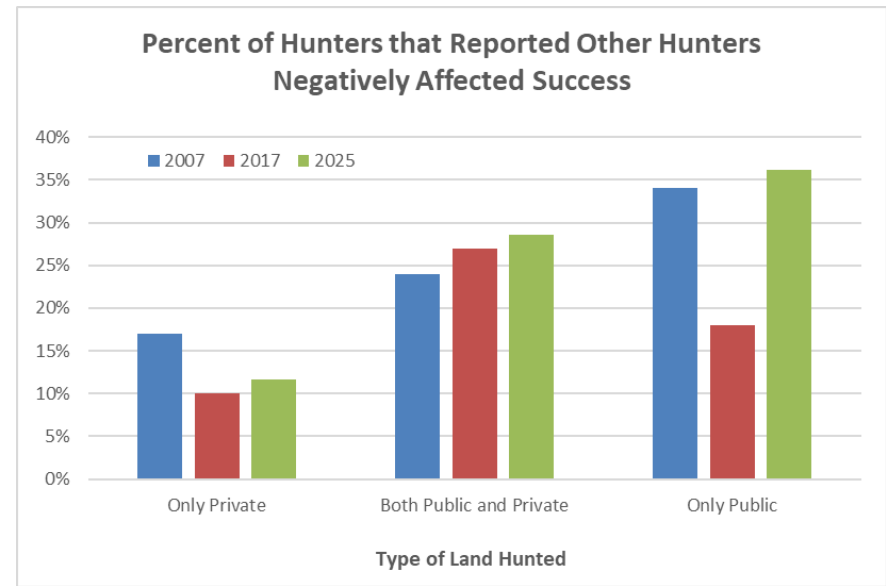
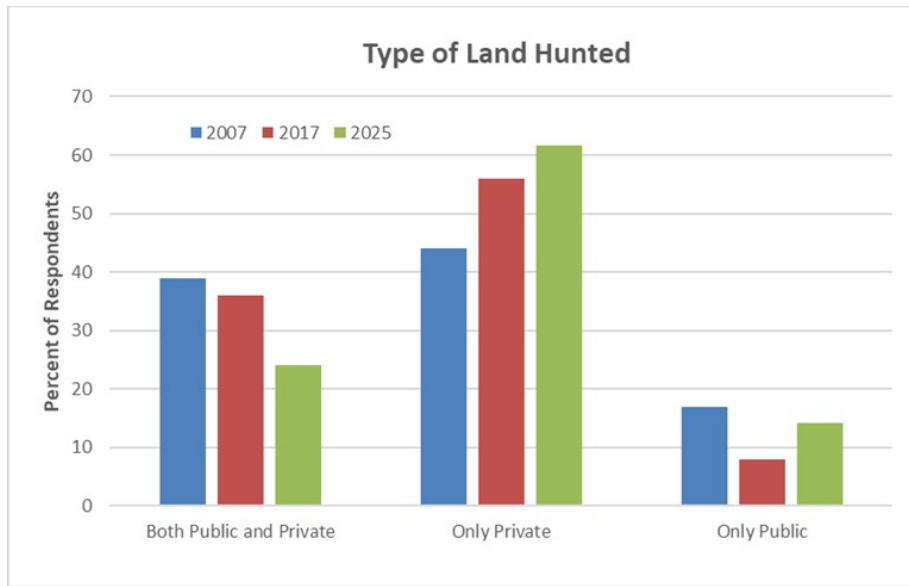
Most hunters (77%) felt that the current spring season bag limit of two turkeys was the best. Hunters also were generally satisfied with a one turkey daily bag limit (70%). A majority of hunters (59%) supported the current season structure that allows all-day hunting for only the last two weeks of the season.

Hunters were asked whether they would support a regulation change to prohibit the harvest of bearded hens. Results were divided with 51% preferring to continue to allow any bearded turkey to be harvested, while 44% thought that only males should be legal. Overall, these results were very consistent with previous surveys, showing overall support for current spring seasons and bag limits.

Miscellaneous Spring Season Results

Only four percent of hunters responded that they observed some type of illegal activity during the 2025 spring turkey season. Trespassing, road hunting, and baiting were the most

The length of the spring season is...?**Always start the season on a Saturday?****Season Bag Limit Preference****Daily Bag Limit Preference**



reported activities. Few hunters (4%) reported flushing a hen from a nest during the 2025 season. Responses to these questions were very similar to previous surveys.

Winter Season

Twenty-four percent of respondents indicated that they hunted in the 3-day winter season during at least one of the last five years. Most winter season hunters hunted with a shotgun (84%). Less than half of the hunters (49%) were specifically targeting turkeys, while the rest were also pursuing other game species during their winter season hunts. A variety of methods were employed, but 63% hunted from stationary locations.

Fall Season

Eighteen percent of respondents hunted during the fall season that is limited to the three western counties. Hunters in the fall preferred to walk and call periodically (55%) rather than sitting at a stationary location (44%). Most fall hunters (58%) were focused on only harvesting a turkey.

While only 18% of fall hunters hunted with a rifle, about half (49%) thought that rifles should continue to be permitted in the fall season. Thirty-six percent felt that rifles should be prohibited. Most fall hunters (78%) preferred a season in early November that did not overlap with bear season.

Turkey Hunting Regulation Preferences

Although DNR was not proposing any major changes at the time of the survey, hunters were asked to express their preferences if more conservative seasons were thought to be necessary in the future. Most hunters (75%) were open to some type of hen harvest restriction. Of the options presented, prohibiting the harvest of hens in the winter season was supported by the most hunters (53%). Prohibiting the harvest of bearded hens in the spring season and eliminating the winter season was supported by 46% and 35% of hunters, respectively.

A high percentage of hunters (82%) were also supportive of changes to reduce gobbler harvest if needed. Reducing the spring season bag limit to one turkey was supported by nearly half of hunters (48%). Some hunters (31%) also felt that prohibiting the harvest of juvenile gobblers (jakes) would be acceptable. Reducing the spring season length and opening the season later were not popular management options.

THANK YOU TO ALL THE HUNTERS THAT RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY!

APPENDIX 1: 2025 Turkey Hunter Survey – Questions and Responses

Percentages may not total to 100 percent due to rounding

1. In which Maryland county do you *most often* hunt turkeys?

Counties grouped into regions. Distribution of regions listed as most often hunted:

- 29%** WESTERN (Garrett, Allegany, Washington)
- 20%** CENTRAL (Frederick, Carroll, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Anne Arundel)
- 18%** UPPER EASTERN SHORE (Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline)
- 17%** SOUTHERN (Prince George's, Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's)
- 17%** LOWER EASTERN SHORE (Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, Somerset)

2. In your opinion, which best describes the number of turkeys in the above county:

- 19%** ABUNDANT
- 63%** MODERATE
- 18%** SCARCE

3. In your opinion, the turkey population in that county is:

- 12%** INCREASING
- 58%** STABLE
- 30%** DECREASING

Percent of respondents who perceived turkey numbers as abundant, moderate, or scarce and population trends as increasing, decreasing, or stable by region listed as hunted most often.

Region	Population Size			Population Trend		
	Abundant	Moderate	Scarce	Increasing	Stable	Decreasing
Western	20%	66%	15%	5%	64%	31%
Central	12%	61%	27%	17%	53%	31%
Upper Eastern Shore	15%	60%	24%	13%	57%	30%
Southern	28%	65%	7%	18%	69%	13%
Lower Eastern Shore	19%	63%	18%	8%	46%	46%

Regions defined as:

Western – Garrett, Allegany, Washington
Central – Frederick, Carroll, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Anne Arundel
Southern – Prince George's, Calvert, Charles, St. Mary's
Upper Eastern Shore – Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline
Lower Eastern Shore – Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, Somerset

4. Have you hunted turkey in the SPRING season in the last 5 years?

- 94%** YES
- 7%** NO

IF HUNTED IN SPRING SEASON:

5. Approximately how many years have you been turkey hunting in the spring season? **AVERAGE = 23 YEARS**

6. Which of the following *best* describes your use of turkey decoys in the spring season:

- 11%** I *never* use decoys
- 48%** I *occasionally* use decoys
- 28%** I *usually* use decoys
- 14%** I *always* use decoys

7. Which of the following *best* describes your use of blinds while turkey hunting while spring turkey hunting:

- 39%** I *never* use a blind
- 41%** I *occasionally* use a blind
- 15%** I *usually* use a blind
- 5%** I *always* use a blind

8. Have you ever hidden behind a decoy or turkey fan as you call or sneak up on a turkey (this is sometimes called “fanning” or “reaping”)?

- 8%** YES
- 92%** NO

9. In your opinion, the length of the current spring turkey hunting season (5 weeks) is:

- 14%** TOO SHORT
- 80%** ABOUT RIGHT
- 6%** TOO LONG

10. The current spring season begins on April 18th and the weekend prior to that is the youth-only hunt days. When would you like the season to begin?

- 42%** EARLIER
- 56%** THE SAME TIME
- 3%** LATER

11. The current spring season always starts on April 18th, regardless of the day of the week. Would you prefer if the season always started on a Saturday?

- 17%** YES (Always start on a Saturday)
- 74%** NO (Leave it the way it is)
- 10%** NO OPINION

12. The current spring season bag limit is 2 turkeys *per season*. Which bag limit would you prefer?

- 18%** 1 turkey
- 77%** 2 turkeys (no change)
- 6%** 3 turkeys

13. Currently, any bearded turkey (hen or gobbler) is legal to harvest. Approximately 5-10% of hens have beards. Would you support a change to prohibit the taking of bearded hens in the spring season?

- 44%** YES (only male turkeys should be legal in spring)
- 51%** NO (Leave it the way it is)
- 5%** NO OPINION

14. The current *daily* bag limit is 1 turkey per day. Would you support a change to allow a person to harvest 2 turkeys in the same day?

- 28%** YES (Hunters should be allowed 2 per day)
- 70%** NO (Leave it the way it is)
- 12%** NO OPINION

15. Which type of shot do you *most often* use when hunting turkeys in the spring?

- 61%** Lead (including copper-plated lead)
- 35%** “Heavier than lead” (e.g. TSS, Hevi-18, etc.)
- 4%** Steel

16. Which shot size do you *most often* use in the spring season?

22% #4
37% #5
16% #6
22% #7 or smaller
4% Blend of sizes

17. Which shotgun gauge do you *most often* use?

82% 12 gauge
13% 20 gauge
5% Other

18. The current shooting hours end at noon during the first 3 weeks of the season and sunset during the last 2 weeks and on the youth days. Would you support a change to allow *all-day hunting* for the *entire* season?

37% YES (Allow all-day hunting the entire season)
59% NO (Leave it the way it is)
4% NO OPINION

19. Did you hunt turkeys during the 2025 Maryland spring season?

86% YES
14% NO

IF HUNTED IN THE 2025 SPRING SEASON:

20. Approximately how many days did you hunt on private and public lands during the 2025 season?

AVERAGE TOTAL DAYS HUNTED = 8.5

38% Hunted at least 1 day on PUBLIC land
86% Hunted at least 1 day on PRIVATE land

62% Hunted ONLY PRIVATE land
14% Hunted ONLY PUBLIC land
24% Hunted BOTH PRIVATE AND PUBLIC land

21. How many turkeys did you harvest in the 2025 spring season?

63% None
27% 1 turkey
10% 2 turkeys

22. Hunting was permitted after noon on youth days and the last 2 weeks of the season. Did you hunt turkeys after noon in 2025?

70% NO
30% YES

If YES, did you harvest a turkey?

7% YES
93% NO

23. How often did you encounter other turkey hunters while spring turkey hunting in 2025?

42% NEVER
44% OCCASIONALLY
11% USUALLY
4% ALWAYS

24. Did you encounter interference from other hunters that you feel negatively affected your turkey hunting success?

19% YES
81% NO

25. Did you have any encounters with other hunters where you felt unsafe?

5% YES
95% NO

Percent of respondents that reported interference from other hunters that negatively affected their success or made them feel unsafe (summarized by type of land hunted)

Type of Land Hunted	Interference Negatively Affected Success?		Unsafe Encounters?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Only Private	12%	88%	2%	98%
Private and Public	29%	71%	11%	89%
Only Public	36%	64%	7%	93%

26. Did you observe any illegal hunting activity during the spring turkey season?

4% YES
96% NO

If YES list activity: *Responses listed as percentage of those that reported illegal activity:*

50% Trespassing
17% Road hunting
11% Baiting
6% Hunter harassment
6% Hunting from UTV
12% Other

27. Did you flush any turkey hens off their nest during the 2025 season?

4% YES
96% NO

If yes, list the date(s): *Distribution by week of season:*

21% 1st Week
14% 2nd Week
14% 3rd Week
21% 4th Week
28% 5th Week

TO ALL:

28. Have you hunted turkeys in the 3-day **WINTER** (January) season in the last 5 years?

24% YES
76% NO

IF HUNTED IN WINTER SEASON:

29. What weapon do you *most often* use while hunting turkeys in the **winter** season?

- 84% Shotgun
- 16% Archery equipment (vertical or crossbow)

30. What type of hunting technique do you *most often* use while turkey hunting in the **winter** season?

- 34% Walk and call occasionally (sometimes called "run-and-gun")
- 36% Sit and wait from a blind or treestand
- 27% Sit and wait, but not from a blind or treestand
- 3% Other

31. Which best describes your motivations to hunt turkeys in the **winter** season?

- 49% I am focused on harvesting only a turkey
- 25% I am primarily interested in turkeys, but will harvest other game if I get a chance
- 25% I am hunting other species (such as deer), but will harvest a turkey if I get a chance

TO ALL:

32. Have you hunted turkeys in the **FALL** season (Garrett, Allegany, and Washington counties only) in the last 5 years?

- 82% No
- 18% Yes

IF HUNTED IN FALL SEASON:

33. What weapon do you *most often* use while hunting turkeys in the **fall** season?

- 69% Shotgun
- 18% Rifle
- 10% Archery equipment (vertical or crossbow)
- 3% Other

34. What type of hunting technique do you *most often* use while turkey hunting in the **fall** season?

- 55% Walk and call occasionally (sometimes called "run-and-gun")
- 23% Sit and wait from a blind or treestand
- 21% Sit and wait, but not from a blind or treestand
- 1% Other

35. Which best describes your motivations to hunt turkeys in the **fall** season?

- 58% I am focused on harvesting only a turkey
- 20% I am primarily interested in turkeys, but will harvest other game if I get a chance
- 22% I am hunting other species (such as deer), but will harvest a turkey if I get a chance

36. The current 9-day **fall** season is timed to occur in early November between bear season and the junior deer weekend. Which would you prefer?

- 78% Keep the season the same
- 22% Move the season earlier by 1 week, even if it overlaps with bear season

37. Hunting turkeys with rifles during the **fall** season is currently permitted but creates safety concerns for some hunters. Would you support a regulation change to prohibit the use of rifles and other single-projectile firearms during the **fall** season?

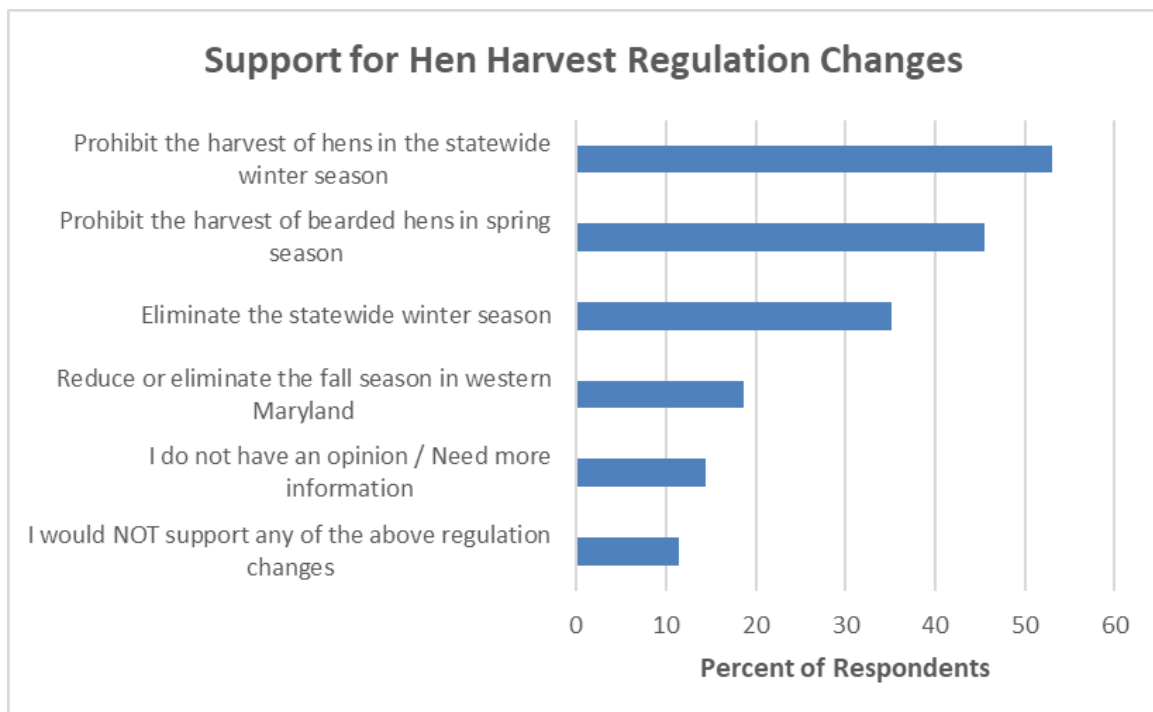
- 36%** Yes, only shotguns or archery equipment should be permitted in the fall season
- 49%** No, continue to allow rifles and other single-projectile firearms in the fall season
- 15%** No Opinion

TO ALL:

MD DNR is NOT proposing any major changes to turkey seasons currently. But if data suggests that a more conservative approach is needed in the future, we would like to know your preferences about possible management options.

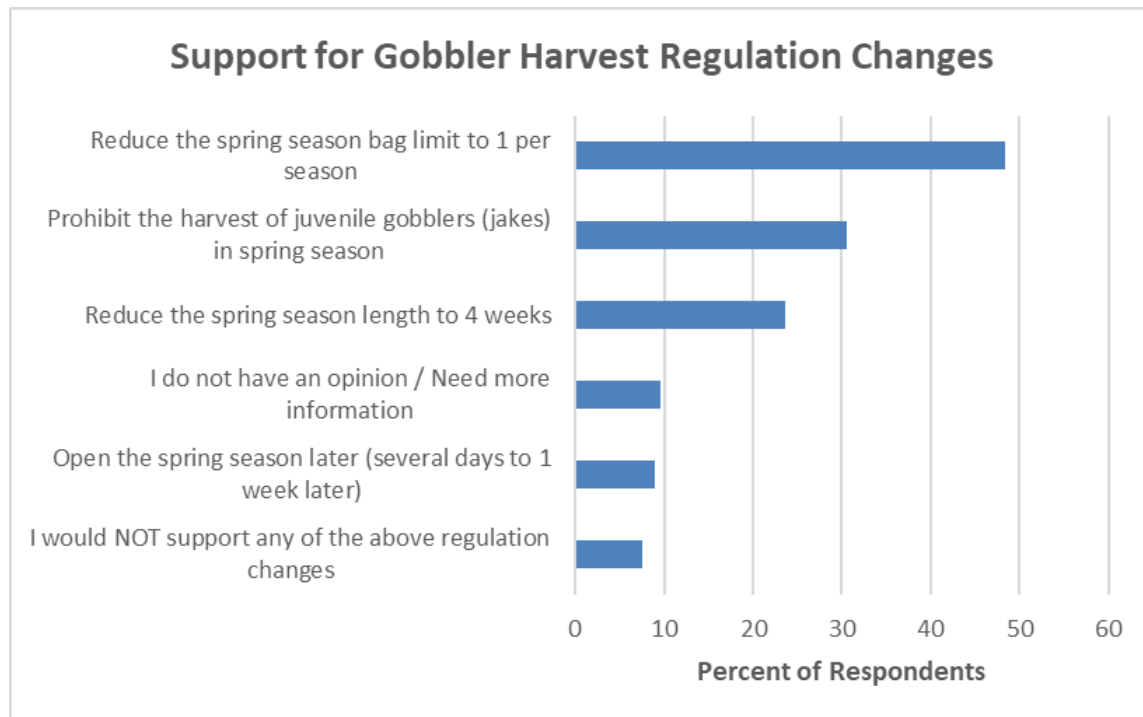
38. If MD DNR thought it was necessary to reduce the harvest of **female** turkeys (hens), which of the following regulation changes would you support? (check all that you support):

- 46%** Prohibit the harvest of *bearded* hens in spring season
- 53%** Prohibit the harvest of hens in the statewide winter season
- 35%** Eliminate the statewide winter season
- 19%** Reduce or eliminate the fall season in western Maryland
- 11%** I would not support any of the above regulation changes
- 14%** I do not have an opinion / Need more information



39. If MD DNR thought it was necessary to reduce the harvest of **male** turkeys (gobblers), which of the following regulation changes would you support? (check all that you support):

- 24%** Reduce the spring season length to 4 weeks
- 9%** Open the spring season later (several days to 1 week later)
- 48%** Reduce the spring season bag limit to 1 per season
- 31%** Prohibit the harvest of *juvenile* gobblers (jakes) in spring season
- 8%** I would not support any of the above regulation changes
- 10%** I do not have an opinion / Need more information



Please list any additional comments you have about turkey hunting in Maryland (ASKED TO ALL RESPONDENTS):

Comments listed in Appendix 2

APPENDIX 2: Comments

*Note -All comments received are categorized, numbered, and listed below. Some comments were shortened for summary purposes.

Regulations (in General)

- 1) Eliminate harvest of hens and jakes.
- 2) I think your turkey season is good.
- 3) No harvest of hens anywhere in state. Western MD no baiting of deer stands in spring.
- 4) I would not support any changes. In Garrett County I have hunted in all types of weather during opening day from blizzards to balmy mornings. Weather is my most deciding factor in how good my hunting is
- 5) We should adopt changes from southern states that have already started to address issues we are just beginning to experience. Shorter hunting season, no decoys in the first 10 days, NO JAKES, no fanning/reaping, no winter/fall seasons, no hens, reduced male limit to 1 per season.
- 6) I have no issues with the rules and regs of any current turkey hunting regulations.
- 7) No hens should be legal, bearded or otherwise.
- 8) Regs are generally sound.
- 9) ...I don't think there's any reason to harvest hens.

Spring Season Bag Limits

- 1) Limiting the spring bag limit to one bird will provide a more enjoyable hunting experience as it would reduce the number of hunters after they filled their tag.
- 2) Prohibit harvest of bearded hens but with number to call if mistake made without penalty. Most guys do not want to kill hen with a beard
- 3) I would suggest 3 bird limit statewide during spring season BUT only allow 2 in 1 county and 1 in another.
- 4) Should limit Jake Harvest to 6-inch beard or longer.
- 5) You COULD if populations warrant, go to a 3 bird limit if no turkey was killed in the fall/winter season BUT with only two birds killed in any one of the 2 new zones.
- 6) We have to keep the population growing. I'd support restrictions to bag limits if needed to improve the numbers. After all, conservation is the key.
- 7) I strongly agree that Jakes should not be taken during any season, unless they're youth hunters.
- 8) Set the limit to 1 turkey a season to reduce the overall number of turkeys harvested.
- 9) I would like to see MD reduce the bag limit to one bird for non-resident hunters. Because MD opens before PA we are bombarded by PA hunters until their season opens and they can come down here and kill two birds with no special tag or stamp. This is getting dangerous on public lands and is a big reason I stopped hunting public until later in the season after other states open.
- 10) Turkey hunting is my passion and populations seem to be stable. I would love to see multiple (2) gobblers harvested on same day and allow the harvest of bearded hens to continue...
- 11) 1 bird bag limit would be ok, only if the following season had a 2 bird limit. To be used in times of declining population.
- 12) I support a three gobbler bag limit in the spring. I do not support the DNR's general policy of reducing tags, both turkey and deer, in an effort to bring in as much money from licenses as possible, while giving away as little subsistence opportunity as possible. There are still some of us who count on wild game for food.
- 13) Allow 2 gobblers in one day - some people travel a long distance to hunt (keep only 2 per season).
- 14) Would be hard for some hunters to know the difference between bearded hens and gobblers. So, why make it illegal.
- 15) I am against shooting hens unless the population can support it which I do not believe it can in Southern Maryland.
- 16) ...and not allow jakes to be harvested.
- 17) As question 14, could we have a window of the last 3 days where we could harvest 2 gobblers for a spring limit of 2...All the years I hunted I only had one time I could have killed 2, but regulations that year was 1 per day.
- 18) I believe a 1 turkey limit for the season will help the population grow.

Spring Season Dates

- 1) The Maryland season comes in 3 weeks too late. This has been a closed topic for 30 years. Seasons throughout the country have changed. Yes hunters are jumping hens off their nest during the later part of the season. Open

the season the third week of March. If you want to keep decreasing hunter numbers, then bring the season in the first of June. Hope this survey brings wise intelligent decisions.

- 2) Consider earlier season in the spring.
- 3) I fully support a shorter season.
- 4) I would like for MD DNR to reduce the spring season length to 4 weeks.
- 5) I would like to see the season be shorten to 4 weeks and open the season 1 week earlier on Eastern Shore, spring is a week or so earlier here, that last two weeks of season can be really warm for hunting.
- 6) Start the season one week sooner.
- 7) Move Md. season opening back one week to avoid excessive early season hunter numbers from Pennsylvania. In Green Ridge, PA hunter numbers significantly exceed Maryland hunters until PA season opens 10-14 days after Md. opening on 18 April.
- 8) The season seems to start to late.
- 9) Also been noticing breeding activity starting as soon as late march so maybe start the season a little earlier like beginning of April.
- 10) Spring season opens 2 weeks late.
- 11) I would like to see the MD spring turkey season split! The eastern zone (zone B deer) starts on the regular date April 18 OR a week earlier and run for the usual 5 weeks. A western zone (zone A deer) starts a week later with the ending also being a week later again with the usual 5 weeks. Again, both seasons would still be 5 weeks but would provide extra time afield if you hunted both zones. I have hunted the mountains extensively and found that the mountains are way behind in the breeding cycle, often with snow in May!!
- 12) Myself and many of my friends would like to see the season start a little sooner. Mild winters have started the breeding activity sooner than April 18.
- 13) Open and close season 1 week earlier.
- 14) It's my observation that "green up" takes place 2 weeks earlier in the mountains of western MD. And it has for at least 10 years. I think that turkey opener should open 4/7 each spring?!
- 15) I love turkey hunting in MD, I do wish the season would start about one week earlier, when the birds seem to be more vocal and more in the "prime" of breeding. But with that being said I do feel they are a fragile species that needs to be managed carefully. If moving the season would jeopardize successful breeding then I would not be for it.
- 16) I would like to see the spring season open 2 weeks earlier.
- 17) I would like to see the season start 2 weeks earlier for the same amount of time in the season. I encountered hens with poults in the last week this year.
- 18) Season should start a week earlier and end sooner, with no change to total weeks allowed. Getting too hot in May.
- 19) The season opens too late. The breeding activity is severely reduced after the first week of the season making the hunting difficult and frustrating. I did not get to hunt the first week at all. I saw turkeys every hunt (4/4) in last few days of April/May but they were not interested in turkey calls due to the breeding winding down... Reduce the season to 4 weeks but start it April 8. That gives time for turkeys to breed, but will make the hunt much better quality.
- 20) One change would be nice, is to allow the last day of turkey season to finish on a Saturday and not during the week.
- 21) Open season one week earlier.
- 22) Love spring season in MD, however I think the season needs to come in at least one to two weeks earlier due to our early spring weather we usually have. The best part of hunting turkeys is the listening to them and not really the harvest! They tend to quiet down later in the season.
- 23) Start Md season the same time PA starts so they don't come down here. I know that contradicts my previous answers, but..they over run our early spring season. So definitely charge them as much as double their current fee.
- 24) Open the spring season in end of March and end in the end of April.
- 25) Would support opening spring gobbler earlier.

Spring Season Hunting Hours

- 1) Consider opening season all day entire season
- 2) Do not allow any all day hunting. Always end it at noon.
- 3) I hunt in the pm but would support strongly no PM turkey hunting reg to protect nesting hens.

Fall Season

- 1) ...reduce the fall season when hens can be harvested.
- 2) I encounter so few fall turkey hunters, especially ones using a rifle, rifle use couldn't possibly be a safety issue. If it's not an issue during the crowded firearms deer season then it's not an issue during turkey season, even on public land like Savage River. I've hunted fall turkey since the mid-s 70'.... I understand it's a niche hunting tradition but there's a dedicated group of us with dedicated rifles who specialize in just that and ask for little else. And please don't mix us in with bear hunters if we're talking about safety.
- 3) The fall /winter season regulations make no sense, can't shoot a hen in the 1 season but you can in the winter season. You can hunt the whole state in the winter season but in the fall season you can only hunt western Md...
- 4) Increase the fall season length to 2 weeks
- 5) It would be nice to have a fall season preceding thanksgiving in Montgomery Co. even if it was only 3 days, a chance to put a bird on the table.
- 6) NO FALL OR WINTER SEASON.
- 7) Most all turkeys I harvest are taken with shotgun. Fall season only for rifles, neighboring states allow rifles - PA changed- more gun laws?
- 8) Allow the fall season to all counties in Maryland.
- 9) Even though rifles are allowed in fall season it should be stressed that if anyone is caught shooting more than one turkey they will lose their license. Some people hit the turkey with a lead shot with a high power rifle and it is usable so they just shoot another.
- 10) I think fall season should be archery only and run with the bow season for deer. You should have to buy a bow tag for this. A lot of other states do this and it works good for the state, state gets more money for the sale of tags and bow hunters get a chance for a fall turkey.
- 11) Please consider a fall season in the entire state. I see large flocks always during the deer season but very few in the spring consider a new limit please, one in fall or spring. Bearded toms only.

Winter Season

- 1) I love winter turkey hunting but am willing to sacrifice it because far too many hunters (based on what I've heard) shoot turkeys off of their corn piles baited for deer. In fact, I'd propose banning baiting for deer altogether because of the hunters who undoubtedly shoot turkeys on these baited areas and for other reasons too.
- 2) Please eliminate the stupid winter season. It is not needed and at that time of the year turkeys are flocked up and hungry and are focusing on feed. I firmly believe a lot of turkeys killed in the winter season are shot over bait put out for deer. I still haven't figured out why someone would want to shoot a gobbler in January when in just three months you are going to be out hoping to hear one gobble.
- 3) You should consider changing the winter season to a whole week or Mon-Sat but leaving the limit the same. Just give us more time to get a turkey.
- 4) I would like to see additional 3-day winter hunt in Montgomery and south. If numbers are stable or on the rise, then the regulations that are currently in place are acceptable

Other Turkey Regulations

- 1) Reaping probably shouldn't be allowed.
- 2) I would support an OPTIONAL \$25 turkey conservation stamp that contributes to research and conservation efforts such as controlled burns and nesting habitat improvement on public lands.
- 3) Open the turkey season to all counties in MD. Spring and Fall.
- 4) I would suggest strongly also that the DNR aggressively discourage the dangerous technique of stalking turkeys. Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts.
- 5) Other states have a turkey stamp, and other species in Maryland (even the exotic sika deer) have a stamp. Maryland should have a required turkey stamp as well for a nominal fee to support turkey research needs and/or habitat.
- 6) I would like to see MD create a turkey stamp like a lot of other states have. The resident fee should be nominal say \$10 and the non-resident maybe \$25. This money should go towards DNR improving habitat and other turkey specific work.
- 7) I think on private land the hanging of a feeder should be allowed in the spring season whereas law would only allow hunters to harvest a bird beyond 100 yards from a feeder...
- 8) Restriction on shot size is nonsense.

Sunday Hunting

- 1) I find it hard for the average person, who works 5 days a week, to have enough time to turkey hunt. I would like to see Sunday hunting an option, even if it's only from sunrise to noon the entire season.
- 2) The only other change I would like to see would be to allow turkey hunting on Sunday statewide. It would open up so much opportunity for people that work or have kids waiting for the weekend to get out in the woods to hunt... PA has finally changed their regulations to allow Sunday hunting and I would like to see MD do the same.
- 3) Frederick county NEEDS to allow Sunday hunting! It is ridiculous that almost every county allows it including every county surrounding Frederick County. It makes no sense how we can Sunday deer hunt but not turkey hunt on Sundays. This has been my complaint every year.... It is time for a change!

Other Regulation Issues

- 1) Stop the baiting of deer. It's making too many coons.
- 2) Lots of out of state hunters come to Maryland to hunt need to raise the out of state license, fee.
- 3) Charge more to Pennsylvania hunters to hunt in Md.
- 4) Seems to be a lot of hunters so I would raise the price of non resident license.
- 5) There should be more junior hunting days to keep the sport alive. The kids are the future.

Turkey Populations

- 1) Seeing & hearing fewer birds during the spring season, also seeing less young turkeys during spring & summer.
- 2) Despite harvest numbers from my observations turkey populations have significantly declined on Maryland's Lower/Mid eastern shore. My friends and I have all observed way fewer turkeys in our travels. This needs to be addressed.
- 3) In the end of January this year I counted 50 on my hill... This is where I feed my cows... I know they are going to become a problem...
- 4) Population is down around the area I live...No poultts observed yet this year, even though hens frequent in yard. Thanks
- 5) The turkey population is definitely down in Garrett County... I don't anticipate a good spring poult survival rate due to the constant rain and cool weather also.
- 6) Bird flu has had an impact on Turkey populations in Caroline and Queen Anne's Counties.
- 7) Population where I live has diminished over the last 5 years!!
- 8) I saw less hens on private farm. I see less flocks in fields everywhere in MD. We had 8 older toms on farm, but less two year olds and jakes
- 9) Turkey numbers seem to be staying the same, or maybe a little less in MD. I think the weather in the spring is the reason.
- 10) While hunting deer in Wicomico, I see lots of turkeys in the fall and winter months. I do not or have not seen many turkeys in the spring while hunting them. Note: I hunt timber only, no fields are present where I hunt.
- 11) Our neighbor had a flock of 96 turkeys last winter. We see hens on our property but no gobblers for several years. Across the river from us we hear gobblers and have seen up to 8 at a time so I think turkeys are plenty around our property.
- 12) The turkey population seems to be decreasing, so I hope something can be done to stop this decline.
- 13) While turkeys are widespread in Maryland there are areas within each county that have higher populations than other areas, so I think your questions about eliminating harvests or limiting harvest on a statewide basis is perhaps not the best approach to balance population goals and provide opportunity for hunters. Unless the turkey population is in decline statewide then I think that targeting areas that are declining or are stressed at the county level may provide a better outcome. Obviously, without the data you have my responses are based solely on my opinion and experience in the field.
- 14) Baiting with corn for deer has drastically hurt turkey nesting success because the unintentional consequences of all the corn is well fed, heavy breeding raccoon, opossum populations. In the leases where we prohibit baiting our nest predators are not elevated thus we have better brood success! The cameras don't lie.
- 15) Population seems to be incredibly stable in the southern portion of the state.
- 16) I don't know what happen to the turkeys in the Liberty Reservoir area not seeing as many like I have seen in the past?
- 17) Turkey numbers in the area I hunt have definitely declined in my lifetime. I do not think hunting pressure is the biggest cause of this although i believe there are more people hunting turkeys than ever before (which is not entirely a bad thing)..

- 18) My hunting group hunts on a 900 acre farm...We estimate that there are 150-175 turkeys on the property, with the population growing each year. A higher bag limit would help us better manage the population. Perhaps a bonus turkey stamp that would permit taking an additional 1 or 2 turkeys?..
- 19) I think there are too many hens in the area I hunt turkeys.
- 20) I count turkeys with my trail cameras on my farm and this year showed significantly lower numbers in birds. Bird flu possibly?
- 21) When i started years ago hunting in Montgomery county for turkeys, I would hear 1 or 2 gobblers on the limb at daybreak. Now I hear 5-10 a morning early on. The hunting was easier when there were less turkeys and decoys were more effective. I hardly ever use them now because it seems it scares the toms but who knows maybe its my terrible calling:)
- 22) I like to hunt Dorchester county but the population the last 5 years has been very low. Do they have any idea why?
- 23) The area that I hunt in Dorchester has way too many turkeys. 2 to 3 huge flocks. Not enough predators. They eat all the corn at our feeders for sika deer. They seem to always be scarce during turkey season. I have a ton of trail cam pictures and that is only what you see on the camera. Extended bag limit in Dorchester!! All the hunters I talk to say the same thing.
- 24) Right in our area it seems as if we have plenty of turkeys and I don't think it would hurt to eliminate a good number more hens at least. In the winter it is not real uncommon to see flocks of 60 or so turkeys, mostly hens. I would say there is a moderate number of gobblers.
- 25) I would like the state to relocate a decent number of turkeys to northern Cecil county (north and west of 95 corridor) so populations can grow.
- 26) The turkey population also seems to be increasing here in St. Mary's County. I found 1 nest in our hay field last year and 2 this year.
- 27) All in all turkey hunting in MD is fruitful. There seems to be the most turkey hunters and least amount of turkeys in my last 14 seasons hunting the eastern shore, public and private, which makes sense. Thanks for a fun season!
- 28) Seen lots of turkeys.
- 29) Turkey pop is declining.

Predators

- 1) I'm not seeing or hearing as many turkeys now on public land as I used to five years ago. Predators probably have more to do with it than anything.
- 2) Coyotes and other predators need to be kept in check.
- 3) It is my belief that Turkey numbers might be declining due to coyote and fox numbers rising. On my family's 150 acre farm in Dunkirk it was common to see 30-40 turkeys in the meadows at once now you're lucky to see 10-15. But coyote and Red Fox numbers are through the roof.
- 4) Coyotes need to be eliminated. They are killing all wildlife and personal pet's.
- 5) MD needs to encourage more trapping and hunting of turkey predators such as Fox, Racoons, and Coyotes. - have an open season on these disruptive predators.
- 6) To many nest raiders including bobcats.
- 7) Too many eagles. Had eagles at the farm before but not any bother. 2025 was different, my hen decoy was knocked down once and buzzed twice in 2 trips. Both Bald and Golden Eagles.
- 8) Put a bounty on foxes and coyotes.
- 9) ...Predation in my opinion is the biggest cause ...We need to get more trappers in the woods and we will see an increase in turkey and other ground nesting bird population.
- 10) Coyotes are killing more turkeys than any other animal.
- 11) I would like to see a reduction of the Coyote population. 30 Years ago, in western Maryland the Turkey population was better off. I would always see them during daytime or flush them off the roost walking in the woods in the dark am not the case lately. Not sure if it's the Coyotes or some other factor in the population reduction.
- 12) I would support research into the effect that large owls, raccoons, foxes, coyotes, are having on the declining populations
- 13) I think the turkey population tends to be mostly affected by predators/nest raiders and in the past few years bird flu.
- 14) Racoons and coyotes are hurting the wild turkey population.
- 15) Seems to be growing pop of bobcats. I suggest bobcat season.
- 16) Allow trapping of coons, skunks, and opossums during the spring season.

- 17) I support increasing trapping season to reduce predation. Also encourage trapping with a bounty on coyotes and possibly raccoon. I see raided nests every year
- 18) I believe there is an overabundance of predators of ground nesting birds and have seen record numbers of raccoons and possums while trapping. There is also a substantial loss of turkey habitat due to all the warehouses being built in Washington county...I believe we also need better managed turkey habitat with the type of areas hens need for nesting and for poults to be able to travel through, find abundant food, and have cover to hide from predators. Coyotes are also a big turkey predator... Turkey populations seemed to have peaked in Maryland in the late 70's and early 80's. I believe another factor that is affecting turkey nesting is mushroom hunters in the woods after noon...
- 19) I believe that the coyotes in Carroll County are getting out of control. They have killed several hens on my property alone. I only have 10 acres. Encourage more coyote hunting. Maybe a bounty for a couple of years. Would help turkeys.
- 20) Your best solution is to build some turkey houses in Md. The same as the Pilgrim Pride chicken houses in WV....Predation is killing the clutches more than ever. We used to have 7-8 poults make the season and survive...studies show that only 3-4 are making it through to be mature. We need a turkey house so they can survive the first year...
- 21) Seeing many more bobcats and coyotes the last few years. I think they have knocked some of the turkey numbers down where I hunt. Never hear or see any grouse anymore. Don't know if they play a part in that either.
- 22) A lot of birds getting killed from coyotes and bobcats. Open a season on cats and bounty on coyotes to help increase bird population.
- 23) Raccoons and fox are eating turkey eggs, fox are eating young turkeys on my property.
- 24) Hunters should be allowed to trap Raccoons, opossums, and skunks year round. A special permit for nest raiders.
- 25) Need more predators killed along with more raccoons and opossums. Promote better nesting sights (no burning fields and forest during nesting time).

Turkey Management / Survey

- 1) Thank you for conducting this survey.
- 2) I think the MD. DNR is doing a good job managing the species.
- 3) Thanks for all you do.
- 4) Thanks for letting me have some input.
- 5) At age 75 I remember when the season was closed in the early 70's due to winter kill. NEVER IN MY WILDEST IMAGINATION did I think that MD DNR could have created such a fantastic success story with the eastern turkey. THANK YOU ALL.
- 6) It ain't Iowa, but it ain't bad.
- 7) Thank you for your hard work.
- 8) Just a thank you for all you do to make hunting possible and enjoyable in MD.
- 9) ...After all getting outdoors and getting the next generation of hunters/ conservationist out to experience and look after these amazing birds is what it should be all about. Thank you for sending these surveys out. Please continue to get hunter input back every year!
- 10) Overall I think MD is doing a decent job of monitoring the turkey population and hopefully if alarming trends start to show they will not wait too late to address them. Thank you for your dedicated work.
- 11) Between the growing hunter competition and the constant trespassing that I deal with, I have pretty much given up turkey hunting. My kids and I didn't even go this year. I'm a lifelong resident of Wicomico county and I can say first hand we need to do something about the overwhelming non resident issues because it is a very big problem for not only the turkeys but the deer also.
- 12) Nice survey!
- 13) Thank you for asking!
- 14) Keep up the good work !! thank you.
- 15) Great to see the comeback of the Wild Turkey. Let's do whatever we can do conserve turkey hunting in Maryland.
- 16) Thank you very much. I am 82 years old and love turkey hunting.
- 17) You folks are doing a good job!! Hard to please everyone.
- 18) I feel like there is a lot of opportunity for betterment of turkey habitat.
- 19) Thank You!

Public Lands

- 1) The first 2 weeks we are swamped with nonresidents, mainly PA hunters, in Garrett county. I would love to see residents have a few days hunting without nonresidents being allowed. It's hard to hunt public the first week or so, there are so many nonresidents. I love our public land hunting but usually have to wait until the nonresidents leave.
- 2) Too many hunters in the woods provides a negative hunting experience to a point where I may stop hunting spring gobbler on public land.
- 3) I would support the few days of the season be for md residents only on public land.
- 4) Public land turkey hunts - especially in Montgomery County - are really hard. First shots on junior day send them all into hiding. Why not have all-ages bow season starting 1 week before any guns (including junior days)?
- 5) On many of the public properties in southern MD ag fields have been left fallow and now have now filled in with dense trees. It would be nice to see some of those areas kept open to add some habitat diversity, especially on the properties that are mostly forested.
- 6) Would like to see more burns on public lands and more habitat management in western Md.
- 7) Other states also limit the first week or two of the season for public lands to residents only. Because Maryland is surrounded by other states such as PA (opens later) and DE and VA (which both open earlier) that start at different times, Maryland experiences an extreme amount of pressure that first week from non-residents on WMAs. By limiting the first week on public to only residents, hunter satisfaction would increase with less pressure, and nonresidents can and would still hunt the rest of the season or choose to hunt private if available to them.
- 8) There is not enough public land in Maryland for hunting.
- 9) The public land in Garrett County is overrun with out of state hunters the first 2-3 weeks of season. It is hard to find a safe, unmolested piece of public land anymore. It is out of control... The woods are becoming less and less safe. I literally encountered hunters about every morning I tried to hunt the first several weeks of season. Maryland DNR should charge much more for out of state turkey hunters and also charge another 100\$ to out of state hunters for the use of Marylands public lands. Things are getting ridiculous.
- 10) I hunt public land in Garrett County.the years during Covid until now I have seen a huge increase in the number of hunters on the state land and a huge decrease in the number of gobblers due to hunting pressure...I would like to see a one bird limit on gobblers on state ground for a few years and a reduction of hen harvest just to hopefully see a rebound. After a rebound in population maybe go back to the current harvest limit. To share the sport, I would rather see 500 hunters get a bird than 250 hunters getting 2. Just my opinion, but thanks for the opportunity to express myself.
- 11) Please reduce the amount of non-resident hunters on public land the first two weeks of the season. It is not safe and is a contributing factor as to why I don't hunt turkey more often.
- 12) Getting crowded. Hunters walking in on hunters already obviously hunting the area and charging in on a gobbling turkey are creating unsafe conditions. I see a truck, I move on!

2025 Spring season

- 1) I did not see any birds on the land I hunt heard a few\n fair away on other farms still enjoyed hunting getting old.
- 2) Saw lots of Jakes more than other years.
- 3) Worst year for hearing any gobblers, seeing a lot of predators.
- 4) I did not hear any gobblers at all. Only saw one hen. Years past there were a lot more gobblers, but in the past 2-3 years I noticed very little. Other hunters I know did much better, harvesting at least 3 toms. Earlier this year before the season started a resident in the area said he saw rather large flocks in a field about 1/2 mile from where I hunted. Where did they go?
- 5) I love the Spring season, but medical issues caused me to miss 2025 Spring hunt.
- 6) This year was different than past years in that we did not get a good acorn crop in 2024 so the birds had to forage in different areas. We found turkeys in different locations than normal.
- 7) Saw turkeys every time I hunted...
- 8) I missed spring turkey season due to a back injury, but did actively watch and listen for them with enjoyment.
- 9) Between fox and forestry. Turkey population on our property decreased greatly. I normally hunt 10-12 times a year. Dissapointed in 2025 spring hunt.
- 10) I had a good season. Lots of turkeys gobbled every hunt. could have killed two more jakes but one jake was enough. had several long beards close but not close enough. The property that I hunt has a lot of turkeys.

Other Comments

- 1) It seems like the gobblers are starting earlier in the last 4or 5 years by 2 weeks.

- 2) I guide vets and kids or whomever. The hunter and situation dictate blinds, decoys, weapon, etc. I prefer no blind or decoy, my muzzleloader and a bird that's not scared to talk.
- 3) I would like to see the wildlife division start a program to encourage hunters to pursue and harvest adult gobblers on purpose in all 23 counties of MD, a so-called MD grand slam for adult gobblers...I really enjoyed hunting and exploring new areas each spring. Thanks for this opportunity.
- 4) We have a good time and usually manage to each get a turkey. I think it is a great opportunity to get outside and enjoy Gods creation. I hope everyone enjoys hunting as much as I do.
- 5) I am 73 years old. Harvest is not as important as outdoor experience. I'm good just to go. It will come to you eventually. Turkey Zen.
- 6) I enjoy it very much.
- 7) Now at 85 I will only hunt turkeys.
- 8) It is funny, I will go deer hunting and see flocks of up to 50 turkeys. Often and if I do not see them, I hear them. Come turkey season they are gone. The last 4 years have not even heard one gobble. Before I would hear 3 or 4 different toms. Obviously turkeys are not staying on the property I hunt...
- 9) I have hunted turkeys sporadically since the season was started around 30 years ago. I have harvested 1 turkey since that time. Not so hot eh? I consider myself a successful hunter of deer and rabbits etc.. What am I doing wrong?
- 10) I have not hunted turkeys for 2 years but enjoy having them around on our farm.
- 11) Quail need more help than turkeys. We need more help for them!"