



Photo courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and International Hunter Education Association

# BOOSTING HUNTING PARTICIPATION AMONG HUNTER EDUCATION GRADUATES



SPORTSMEN'S  
ALLIANCE  
FOUNDATION



INTERNATIONAL  
HUNTER EDUCATION  
ASSOCIATION U.S.A.



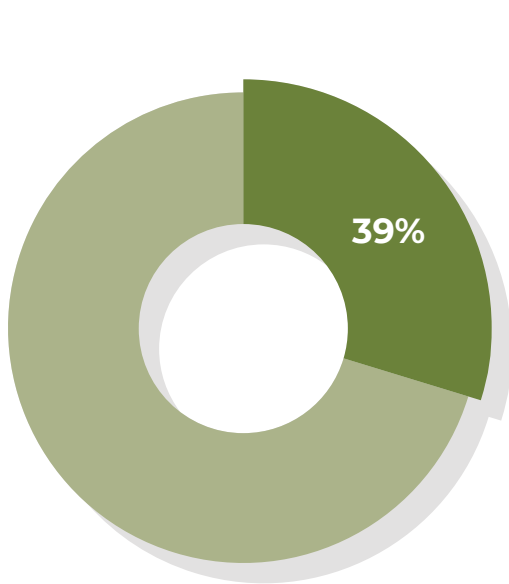
# INTRODUCTION

## Background

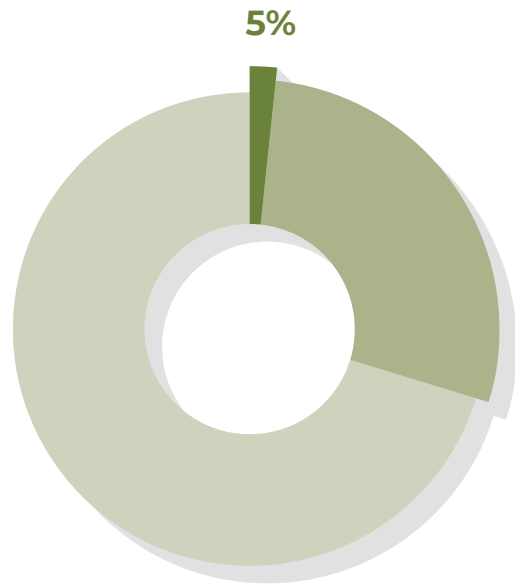
This report explores how to help hunter education graduates become life-long hunters. The results were developed after a series of focus groups and surveys. Fully detailed results are available from the Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation and the International Hunter Education Association.

### Don't assume every hunter education graduate is a hunter!

- Graduating from hunter education does not always lead to a license purchase
- Over 1/3 of hunter education graduates do not purchase a license in the 7 years after graduation
  - But only 5% of hunter education graduates did not intend to hunt prior to taking the course



Over 1/3 of graduates don't buy a hunting license



Of graduates who don't buy a hunting license, only 5% don't intend to hunt



This means 34% of all graduates intend to hunt but never purchase a license. Why?

How can hunter education programs be adjusted so graduates become long-time license buyers?

# MOTIVATIONS MATTER

## The motivations to take hunter education can vary.

Treating all students the same means we will connect with some students while overlooking others. The temptation is to teach to the average student, but this student may not actually exist. To help understand what students want from hunter education, graduates were segmented into four unique personas based on their motivations for taking hunter education.

### Locavores

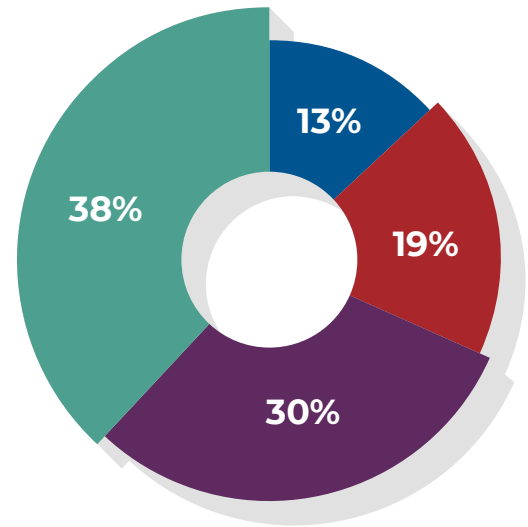
The largest segment, these students are motivated to take hunter education to begin hunting for their own food. They want to be self-reliant and harvest sustainable, often local and organic meat.

### Legacy Hunters

What most will think of when they think of hunter education students. These students are generally from hunting families or communities and take the course to satisfy legal requirements.

### Curious Students

The least interested in hunting, this segment takes the course more out of curiosity than an immediate desire to hunt. These students often include parents and others wanting to accompany a student through the program.



### Reactivators

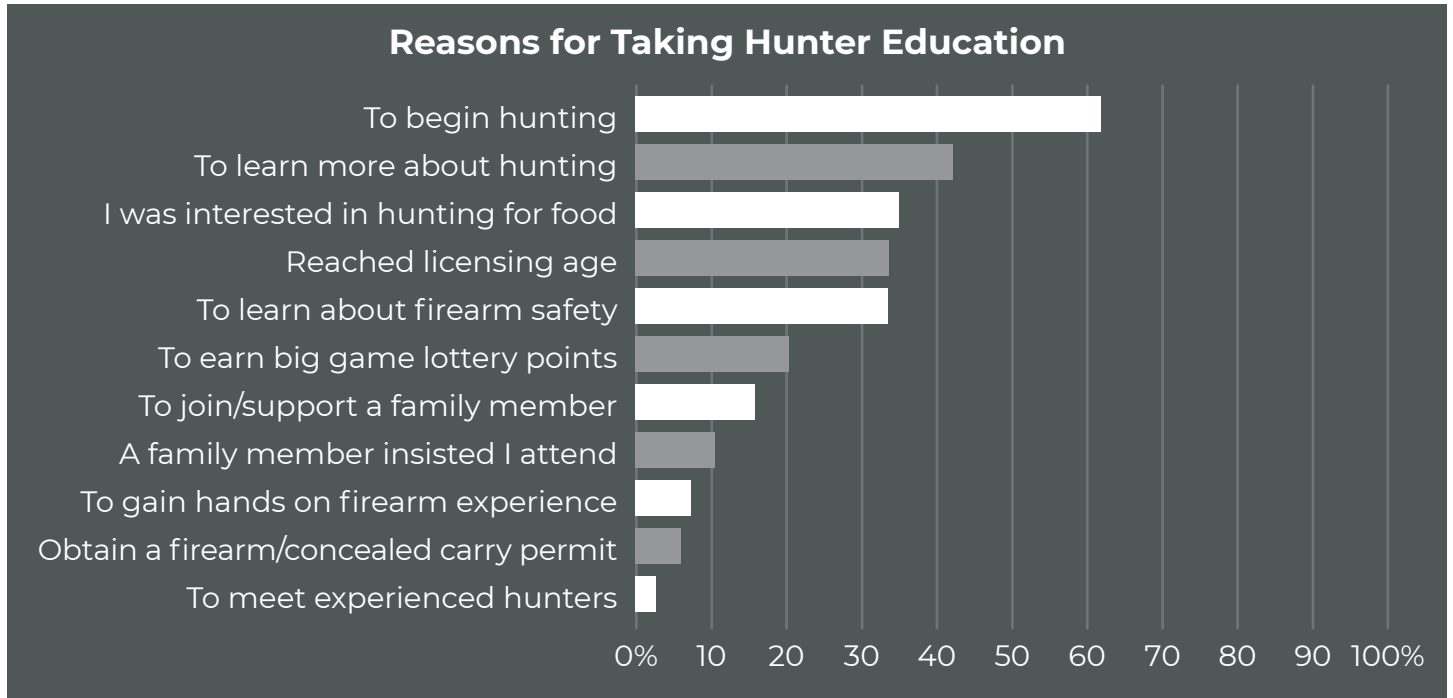
People with prior hunting experience who need to take the course to begin hunting again. Their experience may be limited to following hunters one or two times when very young, but interest was planted at that time.

**Treating all students the same means we will connect with some students while overlooking others. The temptation is to treat all students the same, but their motivations to take hunter education vary.**

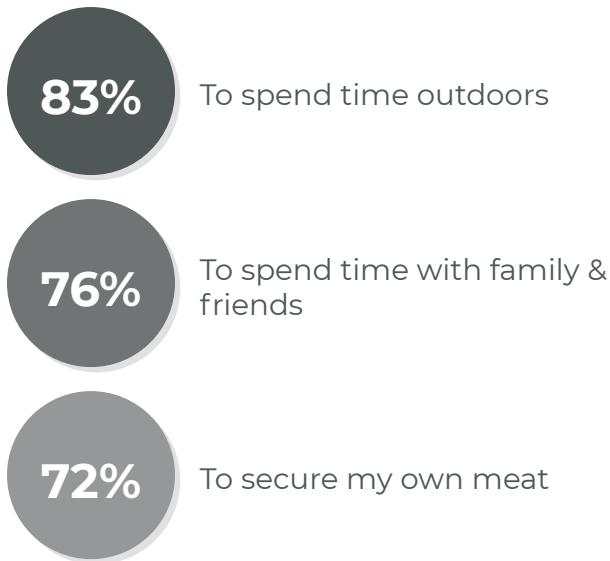
# THE AVERAGE STUDENT

## Overview

The average student does not represent what all graduates want. By targeting the middle, we miss large groups of people on either end. The average student is for comparison purposes only.



### Top Hunting Motivations



### They Want to Learn More About



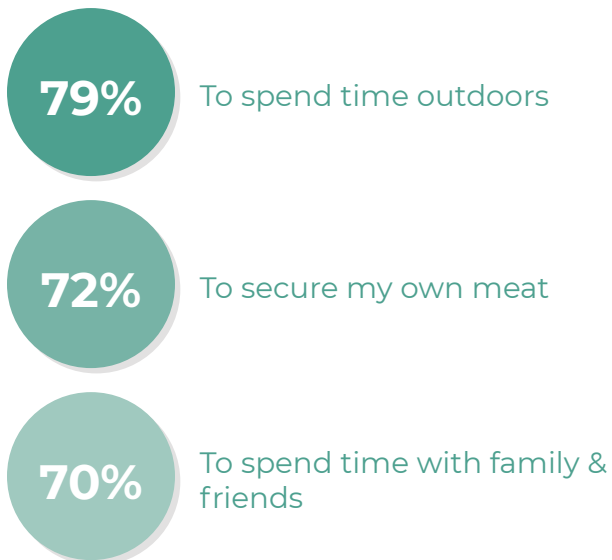
# LOCAVORES | 38%

## Segment Overview

- The largest segment, containing 38% of graduates, and “low hanging fruit” for the hunter education community
- Though 100% intended to hunt, only two-thirds have been observed buying a license in the years immediately after graduation, indicating a need for greater support and instruction
- They are attracted to hunting to secure their own meat, and less likely to see hunting as a tradition and a lifestyle



### Top Hunting Motivations



### They Want to Learn More About

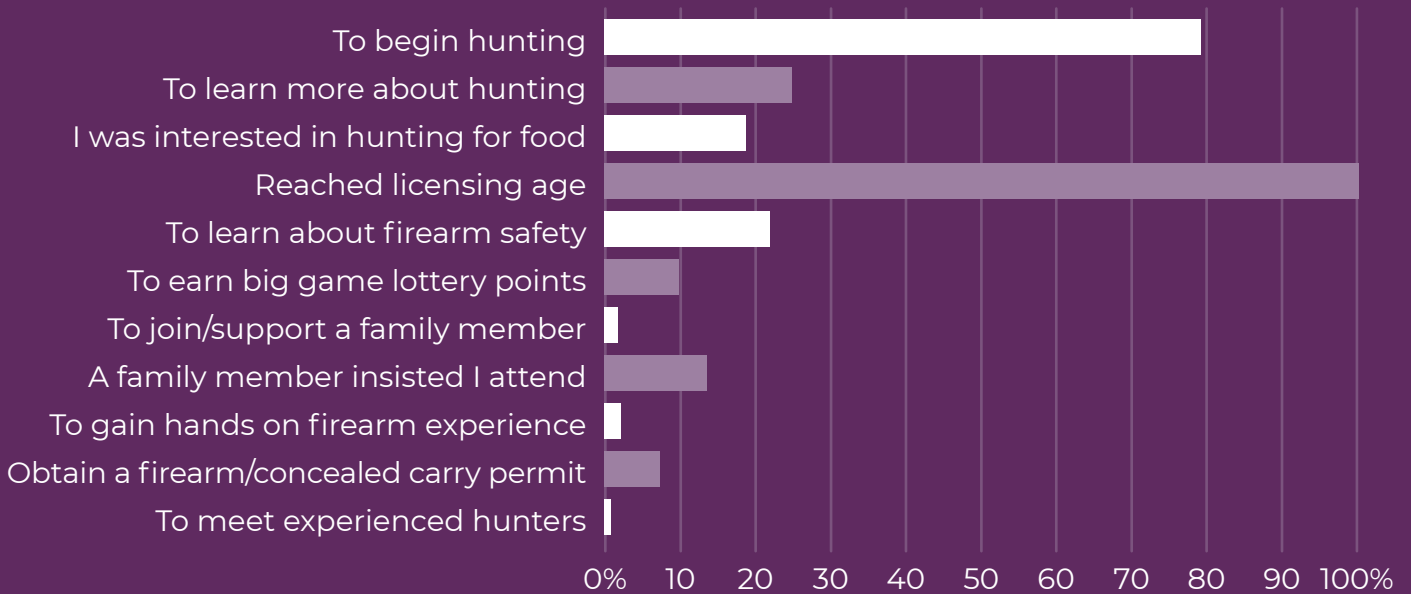


# LEGACY HUNTERS | 30%

## Segment Overview

- Typically in their teen years, this is the stereotypical student. Their needs are largely met, as only 9% do not purchase a license
- Legacy hunters take hunter education because they've reached the age where they need it to continue hunting
- They hunt to spend time outdoors and spend time with family and friends
- More than any other segment, the Legacy Hunter comes from a hunting family and community. They need less support than the other segments to become a life-long hunter

## Reasons for Taking Hunter Education



## Top Hunting Motivations



## They Want to Learn More About



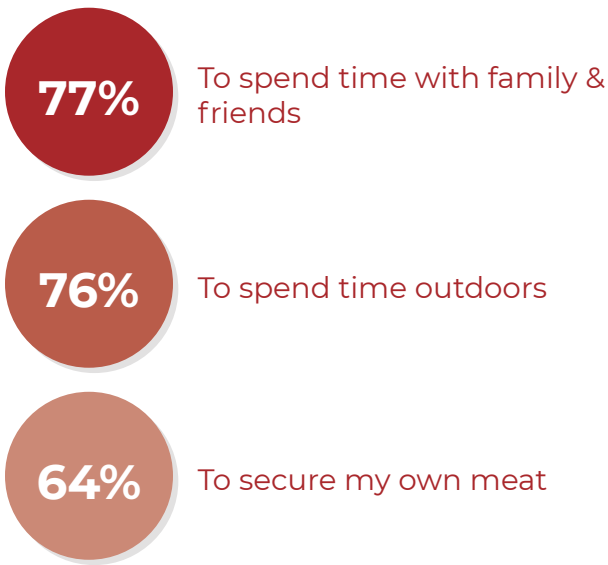
# CURIOUS STUDENTS | 19%

## Segment Overview

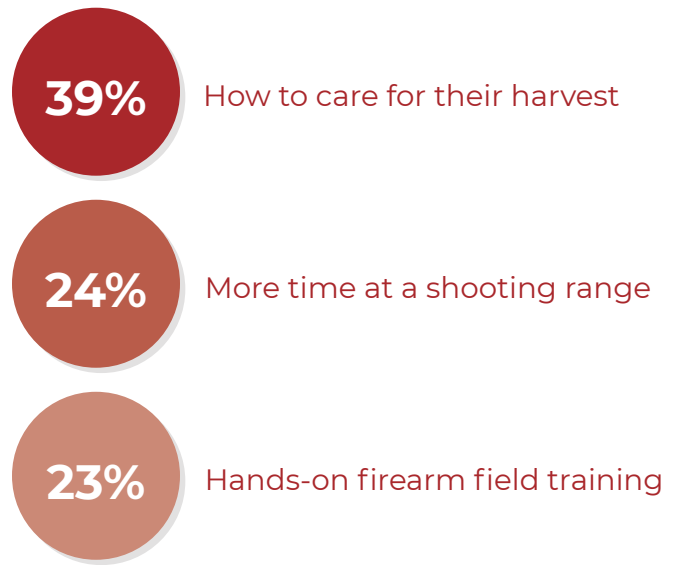
- They have the lowest post-graduation engagement, and the least interest in hunting
- They take hunter education to learn about hunting, about firearm safety, and to support family
- Don't overlook this segment. They often provide the means and support for other new hunters and can become hunting's public champions



## Top Hunting Motivations



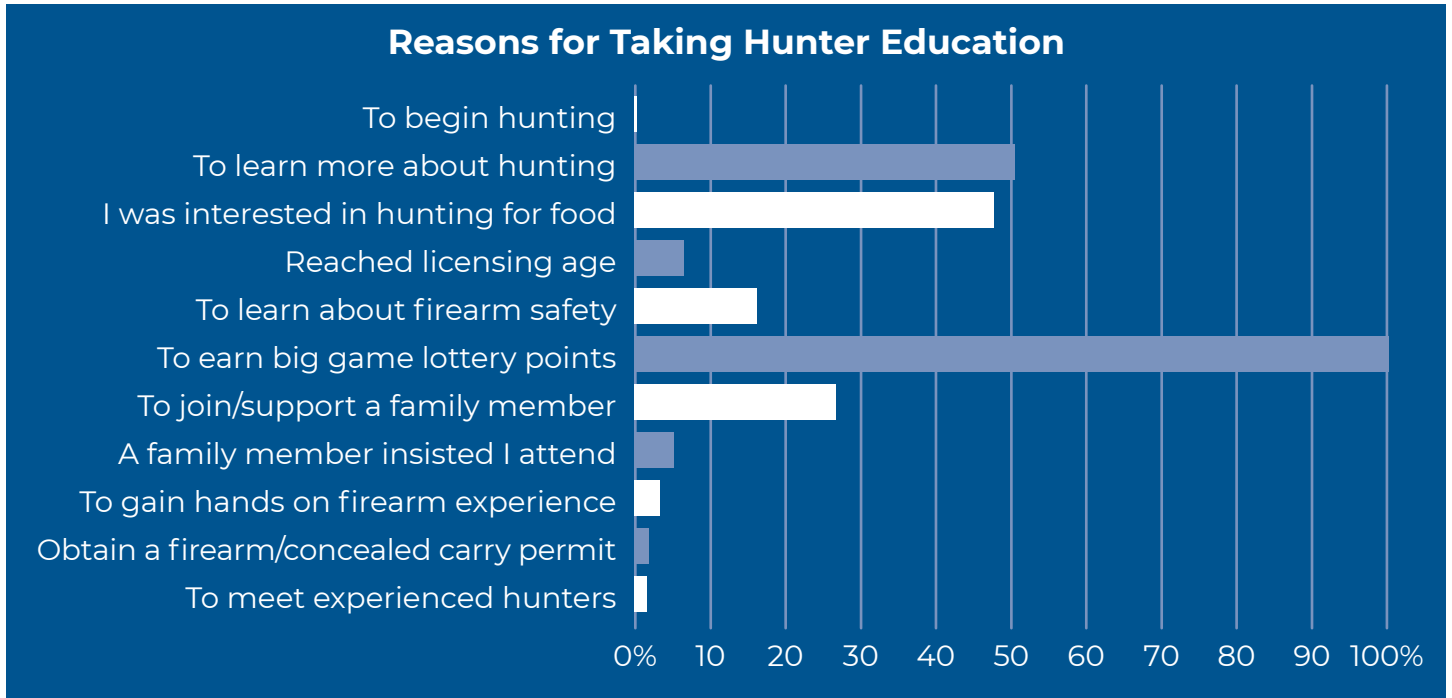
## They Want to Learn More About



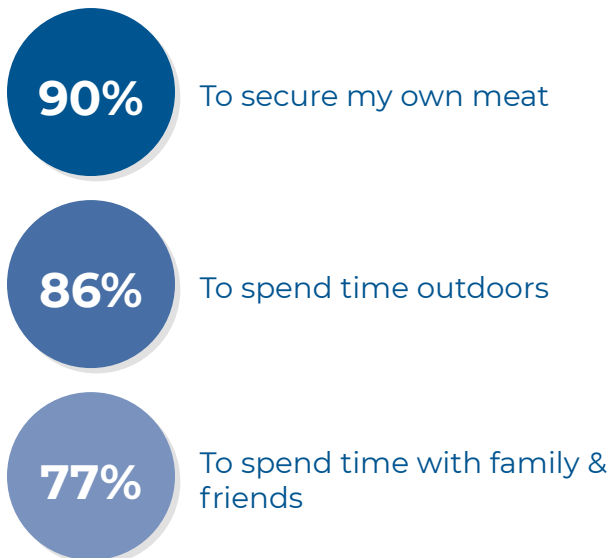
# REACTIVATORS | 13%

## Segment Overview

- With 92% buying licenses, this segment is the most engaged in hunting post-graduation
- The most experienced prior to taking hunter ed, 69% had hunted or accompanied hunters at some point in life
- They take hunter education to earn points in big game lotteries, to learn more about hunting, and support family members



### Top Hunting Motivations



### They Want to Learn More About



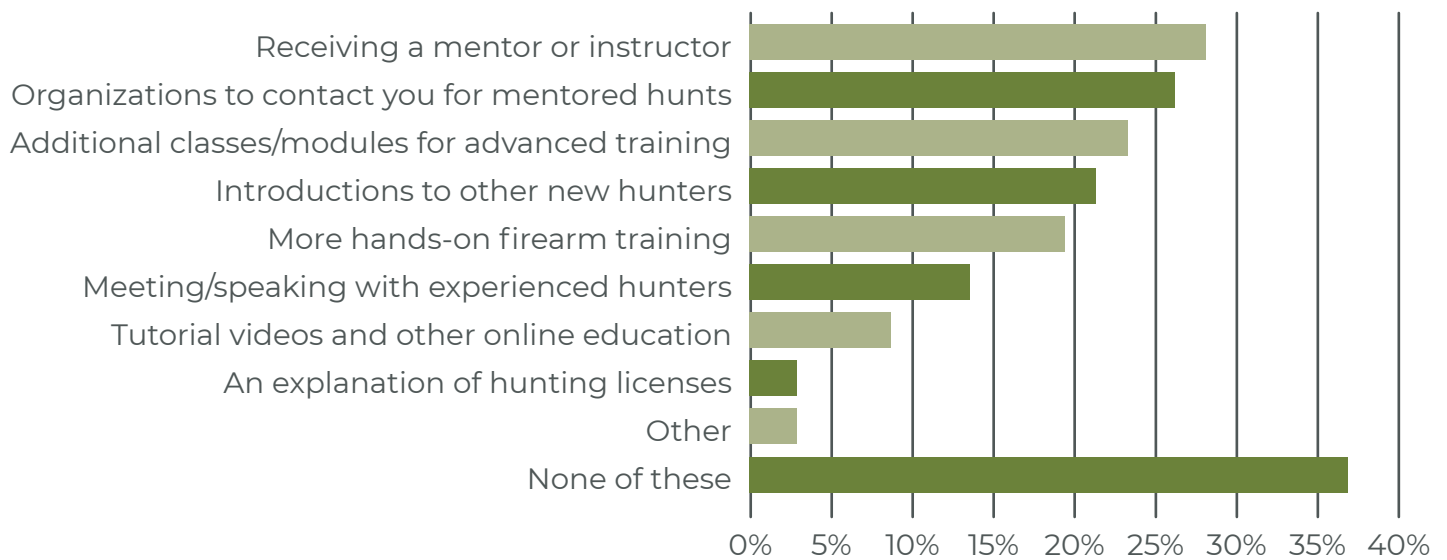


# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Marketing is a never-ending process

- Multiple state agencies had no ability to contact graduates if they did not buy a license. Hunter education programs should collect and maintain students' contact information – and permission to communicate with them
- Maintain contact with graduates, especially those who do not purchase a license. Students need help bridging the gap, whether through continued education or social support
- While many non-hunters said that additional post-graduation support would have increased their likelihood of hunting, there are some graduates for whom additional support would not help. 38% of non-hunters indicated that there was no kind of post-graduation support that would have encouraged them to purchase a license.

For Graduates Who Have Not Yet Hunted, They Desire...

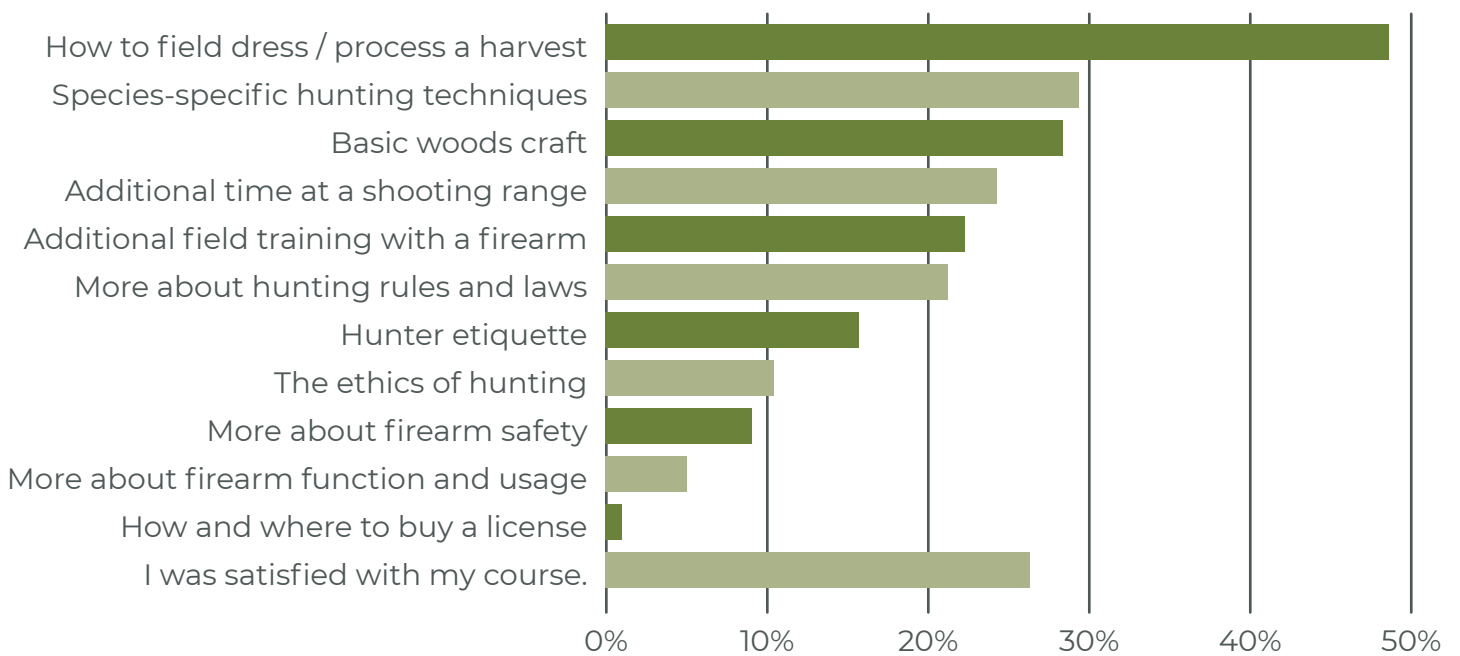


## RECOMMENDATIONS (cont.)

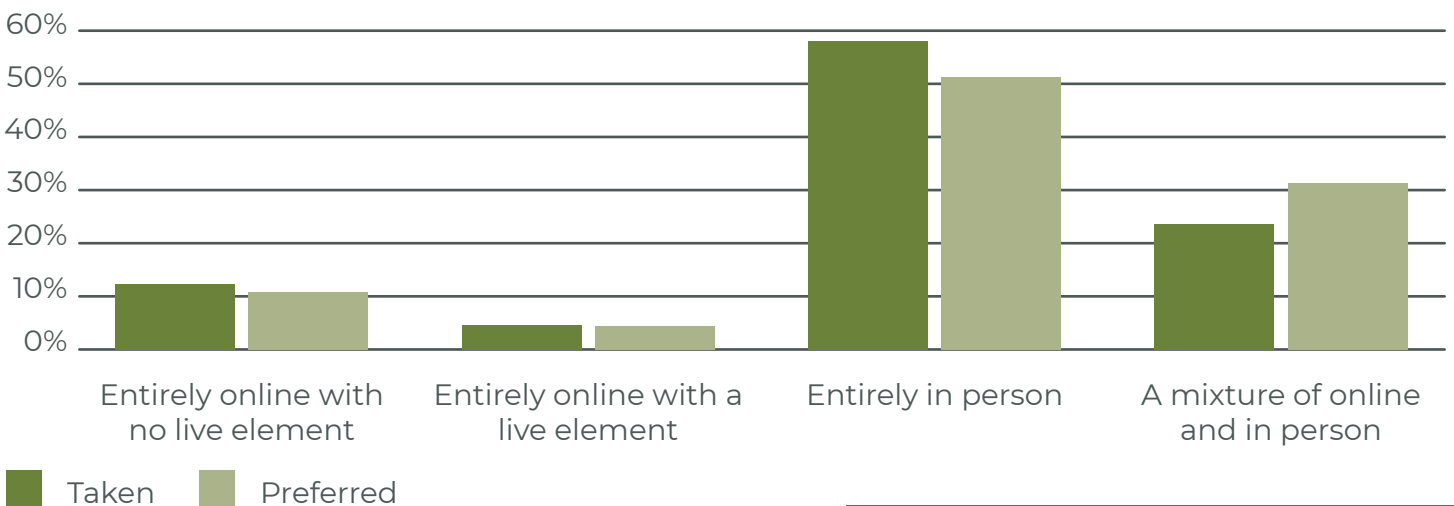
### Communicate with students when they first register and direct them toward courses or modules that focus on their interests

- Students from every segment had topics they wished were covered in more detail in their hunter education course
  - Only a quarter of graduates were satisfied with their course
  - Caring for harvest and basic woods craft were commonly cited, and the highest rated among Locavores who are our low hanging fruit
- Elective online modules can help bridge the knowledge gap
  - “Additional classes/modules for advanced training” was a common desire among non-hunters
  - Modules can be made evergreen, and not impose a long-term burden on instructors

Additional Hunter Education Topics of Interest



Class Format Taken vs. Preferred



## RECOMMENDATIONS (cont.)

### Work with national, state, and local hunting organization to identify and provide mentors

- Three of the top five methods of post-graduate support involved introductions. Graduates who did not hunt want be introduced to:
  1. Mentors or instructors
  2. Organizations that could contact the graduate regarding mentored hunts
  3. Other new hunters
- The desire for mentors has been identified in other recent Wildlife Management Institute research as well
- The limits on agency resources makes partnerships critical. Agencies will not be able to maintain enough mentors to assign one to each graduate
  - Partnerships should be cultivated with outside organizations to provide either individual or group mentorship
  - Hunter education programs should emphasize helping new hunters to build a social circle of hunters
- Please remember that students enter hunter education for different reasons. Successfully teaching towards the range of motivations should result in a higher percentage of students ultimately purchasing hunting licenses on a regular basis

## METHODOLOGY

The recommendations presented are derived from a multi-step analysis of 2014 hunter education graduates from 14 states. Their license purchases were tracked over the subsequent six years to establish patterns. Graduates were then surveyed about their experience. The results were used to define the personas. For more information, and to see the detailed findings, please review the full report available online from the [International Hunter Education Association](http://www.thea-usa.org).



Photo courtesy of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and International Hunter Education Association



This report was produced by Southwick Associates with assistance from D.J. Case and Associates on behalf of the Sportsman's Alliance Foundation and the International Hunter Education Association. Detailed results are available online from the Sportsmen's Alliance Foundation and the International Hunter Education Association. Please direct questions regarding content and recommendations to Southwick Associates ([Rob@SouthwickAssociates.com](mailto:Rob@SouthwickAssociates.com)).

This project was funded by Multi-State Conservation Grant #F20AP00171, awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies through the Wildlife Restoration Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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