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Bear Necessity? Public Approves of Bear Hunt

With New Jersey's bear hunt scheduled to begin in just a few weeks, New Jersey voters generally approve. According to the most recent poll by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind™, 53% of voters agree with allowing bear hunting in their Garden State "if wildlife scientists conclude that bears are exceeding their recommended habitat limits and are destroying private property," while 36% disagree. Another 11% are unsure.

A second version of the question, simply asking voters whether they approve or disapprove of a bear-hunting season for New Jersey, yields similar results: 49% approve and 33% disapprove, a margin of 16 percentage points. But for this simplified version of the question, the percentage of people unsure rises to nearly one-in-five (18%) from just one-in-ten (11%).

"Bear hunting is just not something people think about every day in the most densely populated state in the country," said Peter Woolley, a political scientist and director of the poll. "Many people will decide their views based on whether they think it is a necessity rather than recreation."

Men are significantly more likely than women to approve of bear hunting. Men approve by a wide margin either way the question is asked (64-28 and 61-24), while women split on the questions either way they're asked (44-43 and 38-41).

Voters under 30 disapprove by a margin of two-to-one, while older age categories approve. In fact, voters over 60 approve by a margin of two-to-one.

Voters in the most rural parts of the Garden State are more likely to approve of a bear hunt than people in more developed parts of the state. In the northwest (Sussex, Hunterdon, Warren, Morris and Somerset counties) and south (Cape May, Atlantic, Cumberland, Gloucester, Camden and Salem counties), voters approve by margins of two-to-one.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll of 831 registered voters statewide was conducted by telephone, including both landlines and cell phones, from Oct. 4, 2010, through Oct. 10, 2010. At random, half of respondents (423) were asked one version of the question about approving or disapproving of bear hunting and half (408) were asked another version. The margin of error for each group is +/- 5 percentage points.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>

Video at: <http://hoboken.patch.com/articles/fdu-survey-most-jersey-voters-approve-of-upcoming-bear-hunt#video-3129379>

More video: <http://ridgewood.patch.com/articles/video-ridgewood-divided-over-bear-hunt#video-3105538>

For more information, please call 201.692.7239

Methodology, Questions, and Tables

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone, including both landline and cell phones, from Oct. 4, 2010, through Oct. 10, 2010, using a randomly selected total sample of 831 registered voters statewide. At random each respondent was asked one version of a question about approving or disapproving of bear hunting: 423 respondents were asked version 1 and 408 were asked version 2. The margin of error for a sample of 408 or 423 randomly selected respondents is +/- 5 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers. PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected. Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone-only-households, interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age and gender.

Version 1: Now thinking about New Jersey wildlife including bears, do you agree or disagree with allowing bear hunting in New Jersey if wildlife scientists conclude that bears are exceeding their recommended habitat limits and are destroying private property?

N= 423	All	Men	Wom	Age				NJ region					Nov 2006
				18-29	30-44	45-49	60+	North east	Urban core	North west	Central	South	
Agree	53%	64	44	33	55	52	63	44	41	64	59	56	58%
Disagree	36%	28	43	63	33	37	26	37	49	30	33	31	32%
Unsure	11%	7	14	3	12	12	11	18	10	5	8	13	11%

Version 2: Now thinking about bear hunting in New Jersey in general, do you approve or disapprove of allowing a bear hunting season in New Jersey.

N= 408	All	Men	Wom	Age				NJ region					Oct 2007
				18-29	30-44	45-49	60+	North east	Urban core	North west	Central	South	
Approve	49%	61	38	31	46	53	55	43	46	58	47	53	41%
Disapprove	33%	24	41	62	33	28	25	41	37	23	35	24	44%
unsure	18%	16	21	7	21	19	20	16	17	20	18	23	16%

Regions:

Northeast: Passaic and Bergen counties

Urban Core: Hudson, Essex and Union counties

Northwest: Sussex, Hunterdon, Warren, Morris and Somerset counties

Central: Ocean, Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Middlesex counties

South: Cape May, Atlantic, Cumberland, Gloucester, Camden and Salem counties

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Question Wording and Order

NJ1-NJ6 released Oct. 12, 2010

[INSTRUCTION: AT RANDOM ASK ½ RESPONDENTS NJ7A AND ½ NJ7B]

NJ 7A. Switching topics in New Jersey...Now thinking about bear hunting in New Jersey in general, do you approve or disapprove of allowing a bear hunting season in New Jersey?

Approve
Disapprove
DK/unsure/depends (vol)

NJ7B. Switching topics in New Jersey...Now thinking about New Jersey wildlife including bears, do you agree or disagree with allowing bear hunting in New Jersey if wildlife scientists conclude that bears are exceeding their recommended habitat limits and are destroying private property?

Agree
Disagree
DK/unsure/depends (vol)

Previous Results

Version 2, Oct 2007: Now lastly, thinking about bear hunting in New Jersey... in general, do you approve or disapprove of allowing a bear hunting season in New Jersey?

N=701 likely voters	All	Men	Wom	Dem	Ind	Rep	North east	Northwest	Urban Core	Central	South
Approve	41%	48	35	29	50	57	36	52	36	40	41
Disapprove	44%	38	48	56	40	26	49	33	50	44	42
Neither or unsure	13%	11	14	13	8	13	13	12	11	14	12
depends...	3%	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	2	4

Version 1: November 2006: Now lastly, thinking about New Jersey wildlife including bears, do you agree or disagree with allowing bear hunting in New Jersey if wildlife scientists conclude that bears are exceeding their recommended habitat limits and are destroying private property? [Would that be somewhat or strongly?]

N=577 likely voters	All	Men	Women	Dems	Independents	Reps
Agree strongly	31%	38	25	25	32	36
Agree somewhat	27%	28	25	29	24	29
Neither/unsure	11%	6	16	10	12	13
Disagree somewhat	13%	10	15	15	11	9
Disagree strongly	19%	18	19	21	20	13