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AMERICAN PUBLIC ATTITUDES

And Awareness About Regulated Trapping





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Introduction

Responsive Management™



This study was conducted for the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) by Responsive Management during 2016 to determine public opinion on regulated trapping and trapping issues. The study entailed a scientific telephone survey of 200 residents of three states (n = 600): Connecticut, Indiana, and Wisconsin. The entire report is at: <https://tinyurl.com/public-attitudes-trapping-2016>.

Awareness of Regulated Trapping

Most people (just over half of Connecticut residents, about three quarters of Indiana and Wisconsin residents) are aware that people trap in their state, and similar proportions are aware that the state regulates trapping. Furthermore, in Indiana and Wisconsin, a majority of residents are aware that their state fish and wildlife agency (the actual name of the agency was used in the question wording) regulates and manages trapping in their state, but only about a third of Connecticut residents are aware of this.

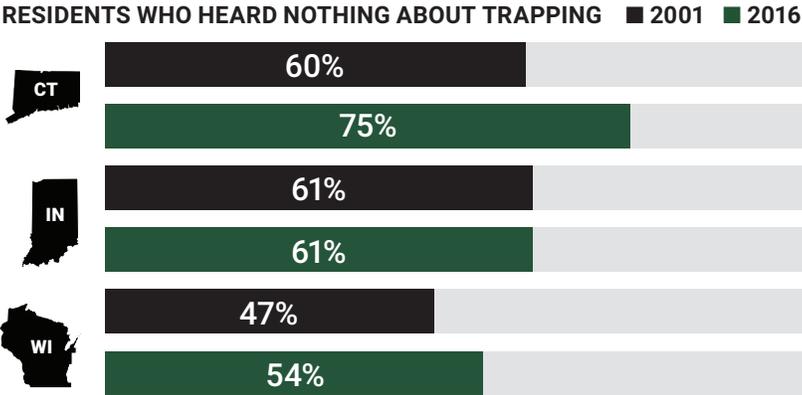


COVER IMAGE:
Trappers make a set. Trapping provides many benefits to society, animal populations, and habitats, and has a high approval rating from the public.

PHOTO BY DAVID DENTON

TRAPPING AWARENESS

Residents, in general, are not hearing much about trapping — either good or bad. A majority have heard nothing at all in the past year. In direct questions about whether they had heard positive things in the past 12 months, no more than 10% of residents of any state answered in the affirmative, and almost identical results occurred when residents were directly asked about negative things.



MOST COMMON SOURCES OF INFO IN 2016 (positive and negative)



#1: Television



#2: Internet



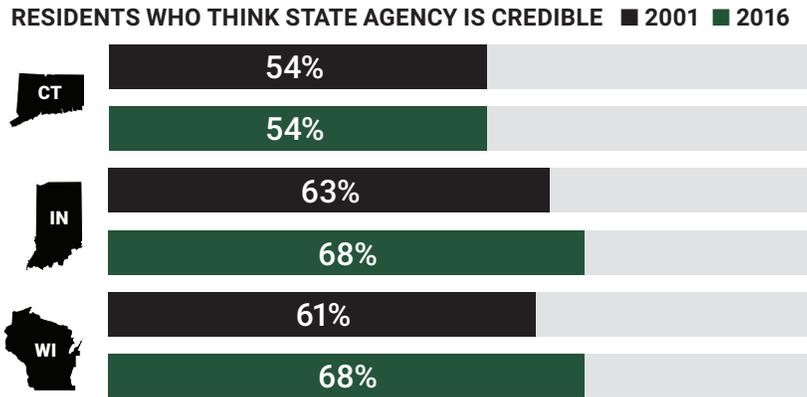
#3: Newspapers

Credibility of Information Sources

Residents generally have positive opinions about their state's fish and wildlife agency. Residents more often give positive ratings than negative ratings, by about 3 to 1, to their state's fish and wildlife agency at managing trapping. Also, a large majority of each state are very/somewhat confident that their state agency is properly managing the state's wildlife. The trends show little marked difference between the two survey years on these questions. State fish and wildlife agencies, compared with other sources of information, are by far considered the most credible sources.

TRUSTING WILDLIFE AUTHORITIES

Each state fish and wildlife agency (the actual name of the agency was used in the question wording) has a majority of residents in the state saying that the agency is credible.



Familiarity With Trappers

DO YOU KNOW, OR ARE YOU, A TRAPPER?

About a third of residents from Connecticut and half of residents from Indiana and Wisconsin say they have known a trapper or someone who has trapped wild animals (or they have done so themselves).

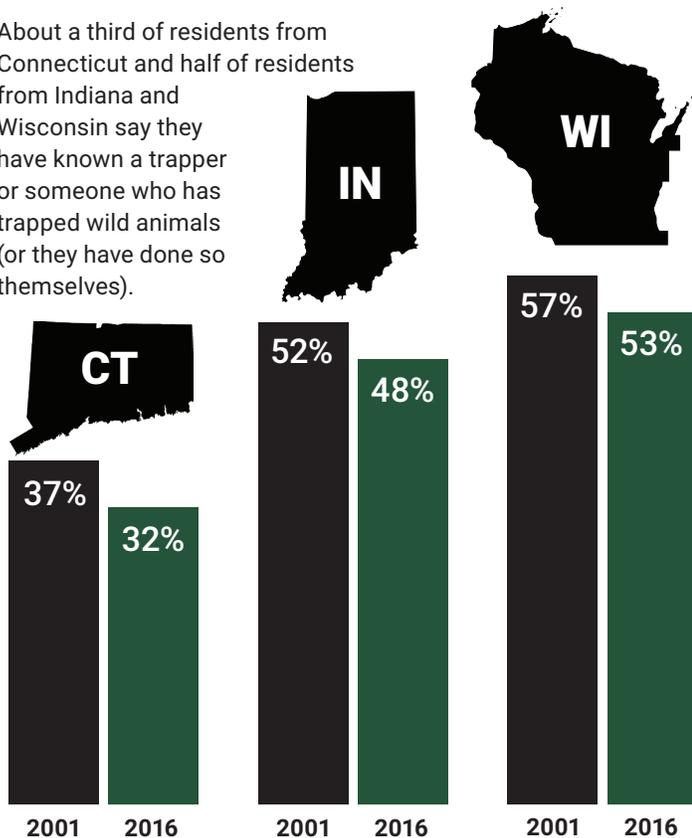


PHOTO BY DAVID DENTON

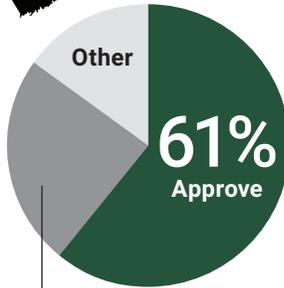
A trapper removes a beaver from a swamp in North Carolina. Trapping is a skill that can be passed down among generations.

Approval of Regulated Trapping

In our 2016 survey, approval of trapping far exceeds disapproval of trapping in each state. For 2016, even larger majorities agree that people should have the freedom to choose to participate in regulated trapping if they want to (64% in CT, 82% in IN, 79% in WI).

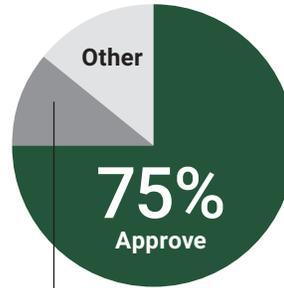
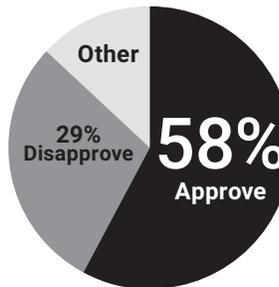


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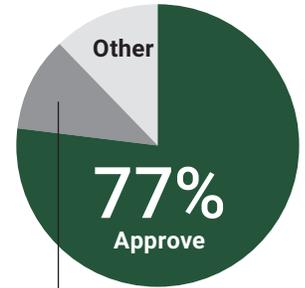
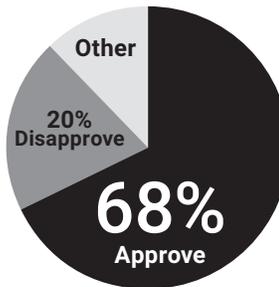
24% Disapprove

2001 DATA FOR CT



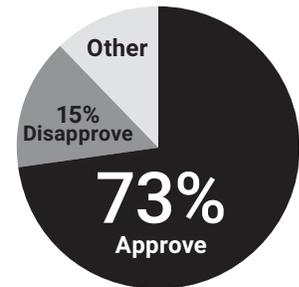
11% Disapprove

2001 DATA FOR IN



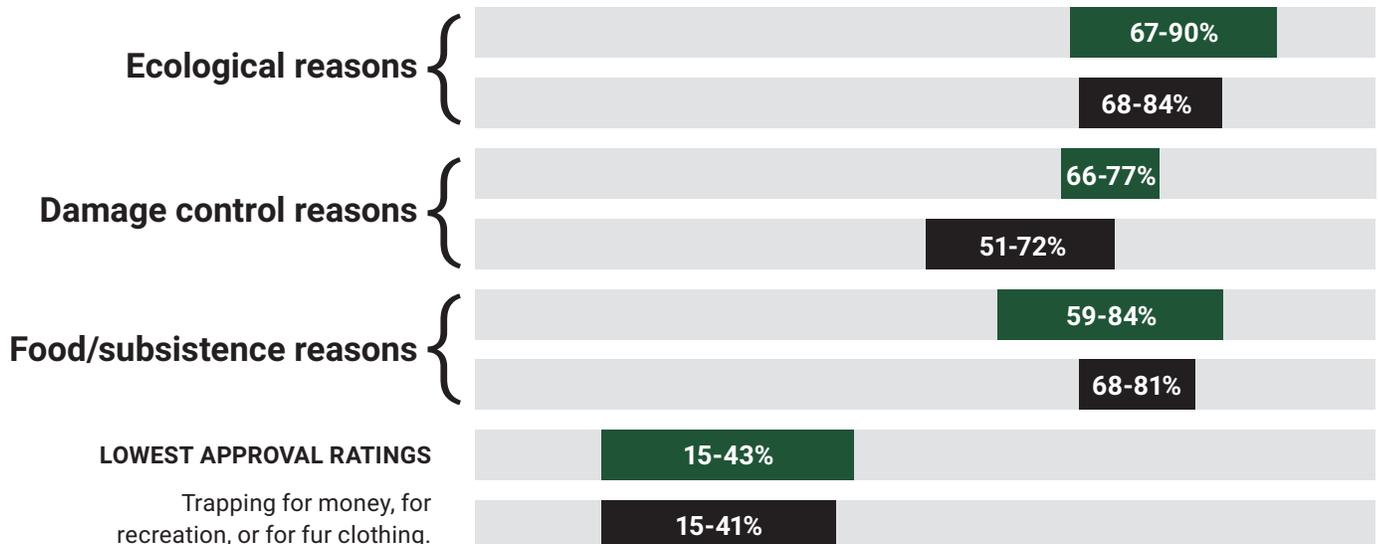
11% Disapprove

2001 DATA FOR WI



HIGHEST APPROVAL RATINGS ON REASONS FOR TRAPPING

■ 2001 ■ 2016



Attitudes on Animal Welfare



PHOTO BY BRYANT WHITE

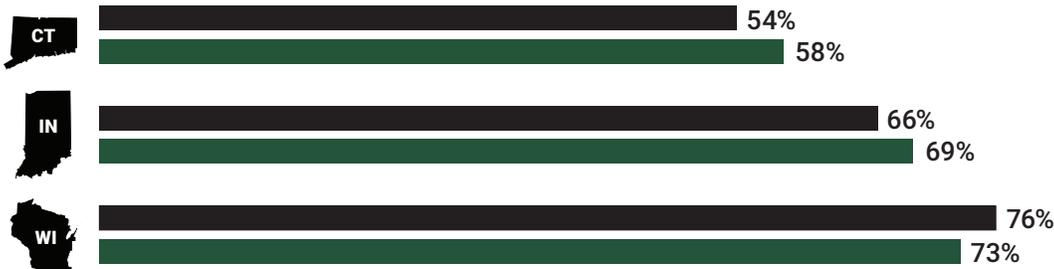
Trappers set a cage trap in hopes of capturing an Arctic Fox on St. George Island, Pribilof Islands, Alaska. Arctic Fox are trapped for human-wildlife conflict resolution, protection of ground nesting seabirds, and fur harvest.

Residents in general agree that regulated trapping is okay if animals that are accidentally caught can be released, and they agree (to a lesser extent) that trapping is okay if the animals die quickly and without undue pain. However, residents are less likely to agree, compared to the above questions, that trapping is more humane today than it was 10 years ago because of improvements in traps.

Residents are generally not aware about efforts to improve traps to make them more humane, but when informed of efforts to do so, residents are more supportive of trapping. They are also more supportive of trapping when told that the whole animal is used. Some residents disapprove of trapping and are not swayed by arguments in favor of trapping — the arguments tended to make “approvers” more approving and the “undecided” more approving, but made only a small part of the “disapprovers” more approving.

% OF RESIDENTS WHO AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ■ 2001 ■ 2016

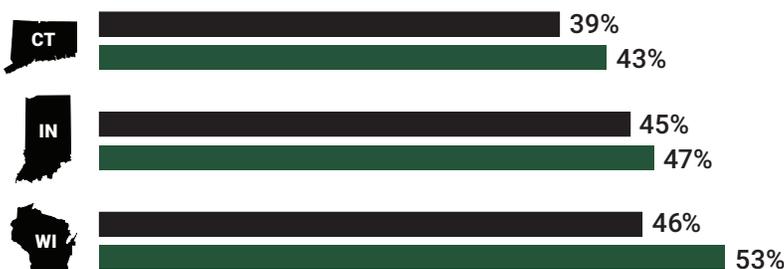
I think regulated trapping is okay if the animals die quickly and without undue pain.



I think regulated trapping is okay if animals that are accidentally caught can be released.



Because of improvements in traps, trapping is more humane today than it was 10 years ago.



Misperceptions of Trapping

The 2016 survey found that there are many residents of the three survey states who have damaging misperceptions about regulated trapping in their state. This is similar to the results found in 2001.

MISPERCEPTION #1

A majority of residents of **Connecticut (56%)** and **Wisconsin (53%)** and a near majority of **Indiana residents (45%)** agree that, today, regulated trapping can cause wildlife species to become endangered or extinct. **This, of course, is a misperception.**

MISPERCEPTION #2

About a third of each state's residents agree that "endangered species are frequently used to make fur clothing" (ranging from 29% to 33%). **This is another misperception.**



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Fur pelts — sometime perceived as luxury items — are used by people of all cultures for clothing like coats, hats, mittens, and blankets. Fur is also used in the decorative arts, such as rugs, wall hangings, moccasins, brushes, and felt.

Human-Wildlife Conflicts



PHOTO BY TOM HARRISON

of residents paid for nuisance wildlife removal in the past two years. Raccoons are, by far, the animals that most commonly cause problems in all three states. The ranking differs slightly from state to state, but other common species that cause problems are squirrel, deer, coyote, woodchuck/groundhog, opossum, rabbit, various bird species, skunk, chipmunk, and bear. Damage to gardens and getting into garbage lead the list of problems that they cause. The trends analysis found little marked difference between survey years on any of these questions.

40% to 46% of residents in the three states say they have had problems with wild animals or birds within the past two years, and 4% to 5%

Majorities in the three states support trapping to address nuisance problems.

% SUPPORT

