

Meet Demand by Building/Enhancing Shooting Ranges with Excise Taxes

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Prepared for:

NSSF[®]
The Firearm Industry
Trade Association

By:



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Executive Summary

This report provides feedback from state wildlife agencies' shooting range managers regarding how NSSF and the shooting sports industry can best support states' efforts to expand and operate public shooting ranges. Conducted in the Summer of 2023, 33 states responded. Top-level insights and recommendations include:

1. 85% of state wildlife agencies own or operate ranges 100% under their control and management. 61% of states partner with other agencies or organizations to construct or operate public ranges.
2. The Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration program, which generates funds for state wildlife agencies through the excise tax on firearms and ammunition, is a critical source for providing recreational shooting opportunities to the public. On average, states report 75% of their shooting range budgets are funded by these excise tax dollars.
 - i. The next largest source of funds are fees paid by range users, which only support 13% of state shooting range budgets.
 - ii. To receive these excise tax-based funds, states must provide matching funds, commonly cash, time donated by volunteers and similar in-kind contributions from outside sources. Over one third of state agencies depend in part on range volunteers to meet match requirements.
3. States continue to expand public range opportunities, with 80% reporting efforts underway to build new ranges or expand current ranges. 92% reported plans for additional construction and expansion in the next three years:
 - i. Most of these new opportunities will be outside ranges, with only 4% of expansion to include indoor ranges.
 - ii. In the next three years, on average, states expect to expand their range capacity, measured by the number of lanes, bays, traps and similar, by 36%.
4. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 meaning the most severe issues, the top barriers and challenges for states to expand public shooting opportunities in order are:
 - i. Land and places to build new ranges (average score = 6)
 - ii. Noise issues (average score = 4)
 - iii. Financial resources to operate and maintain current ranges (O&M) and financial resources for construction & operations (average score = 4.2 and 3.8, respectively)

A handful of states also shared that range staffing is a barrier along with support for ranges and firearms in general across the public landscape outside of the agency.

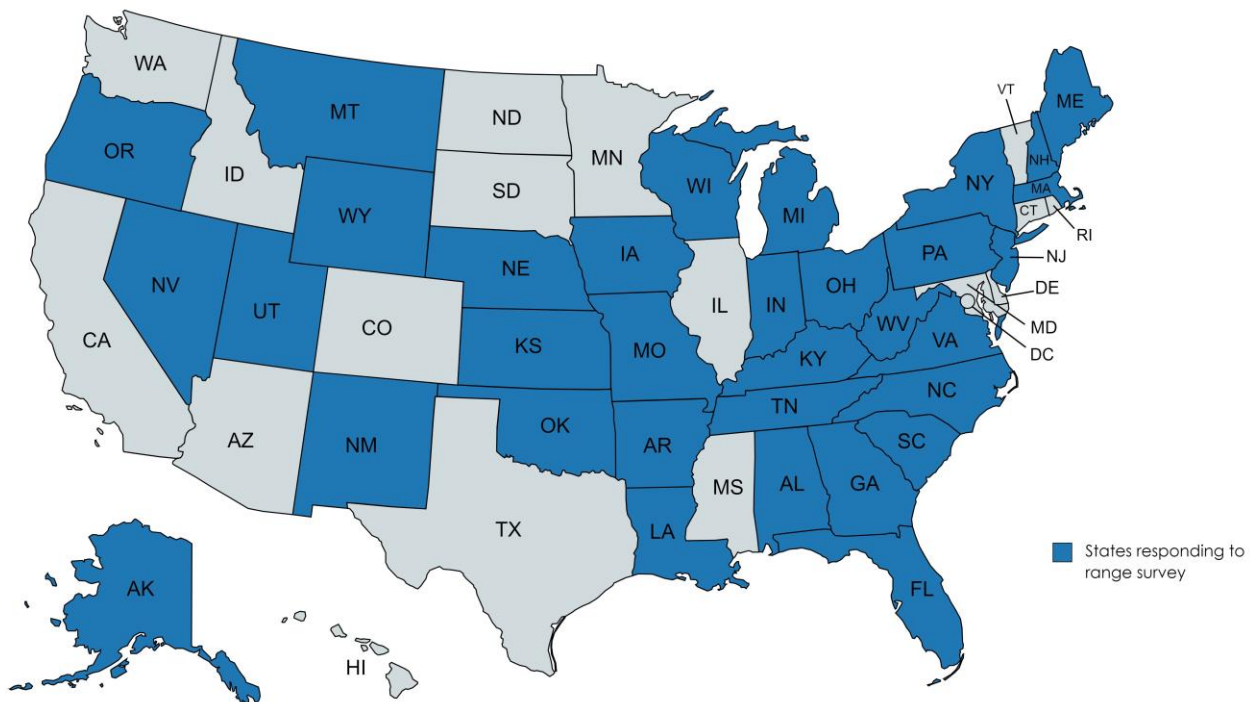
5. State wildlife agencies report the greatest public demand exists for suburban or urban ranges, followed by outdoor handgun opportunities and both traditional and long-range rifle opportunities.
6. Suburban/urban ranges were rated as the most difficult or impossible type of range they can offer though demand is high, followed by long-range, indoor handgun and indoor rimfire opportunities.
7. The resources most sought by state range managers from outside partners, in order, are places to locate new ranges, financial and political support.
8. Services and resources NSSF and industry could provide that are of greatest interest, in order, are financial and marketing/promotions (tied), lead management, plus experts to consult on operations and management.

Please review the report for the full details, needs and issues reported by state wildlife agencies' shooting range administrators.

Results

Agency range experts from 33 states all across the nation, a 66% response rate, provided insights through this survey.

Figure 1. Map of participating states



Created with mapchart.net

Figure 2. Distribution of range ownership and management structures across the nation (N=33)

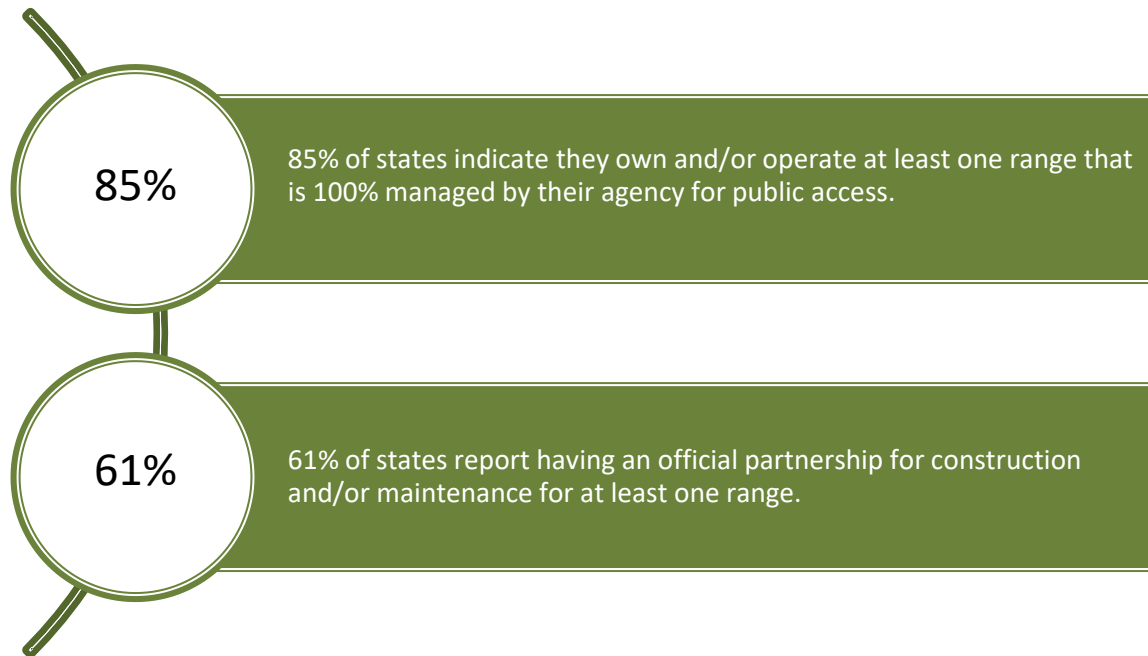


Figure 3. How many ranges does your agency...? (N=33)

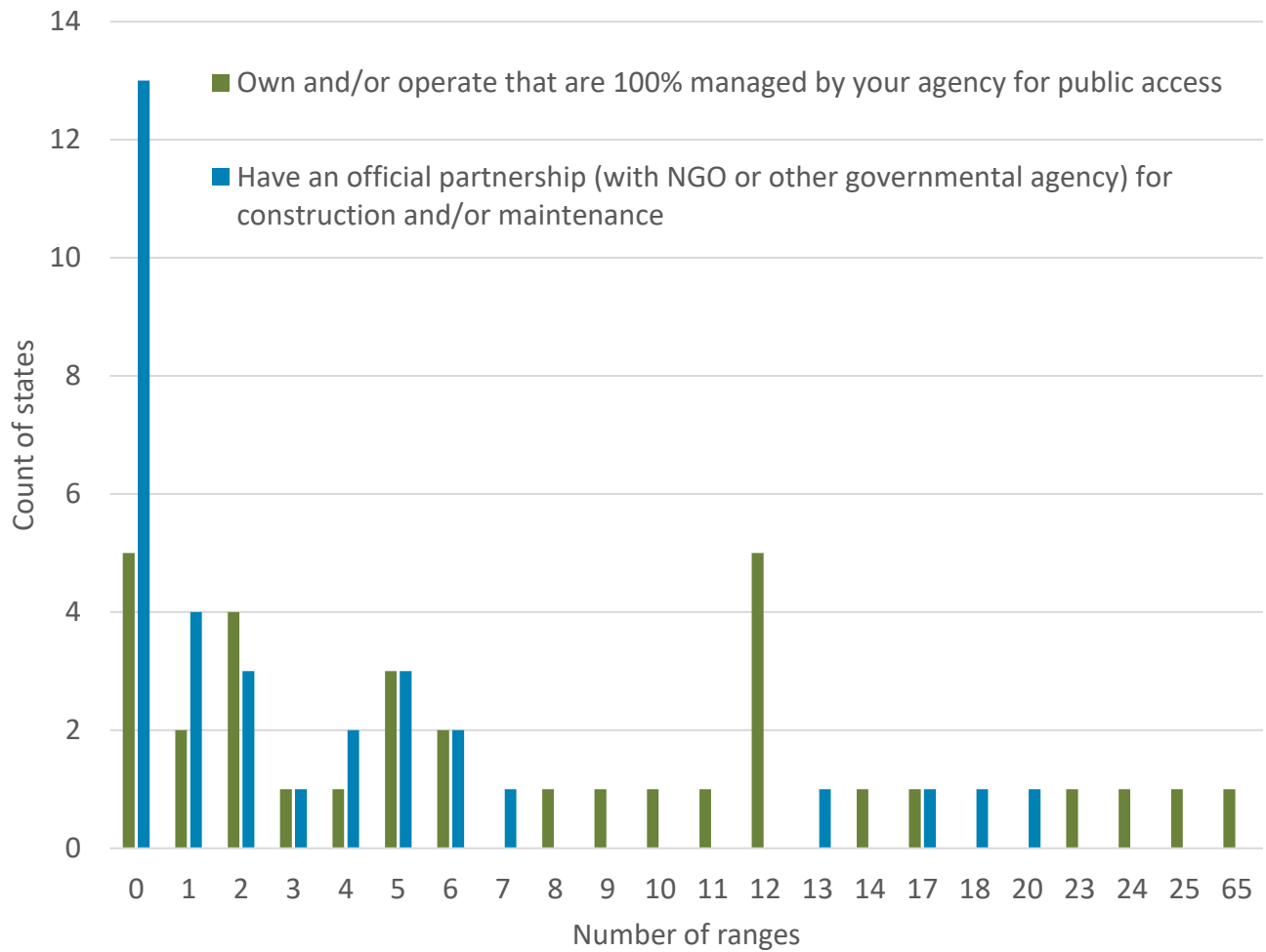
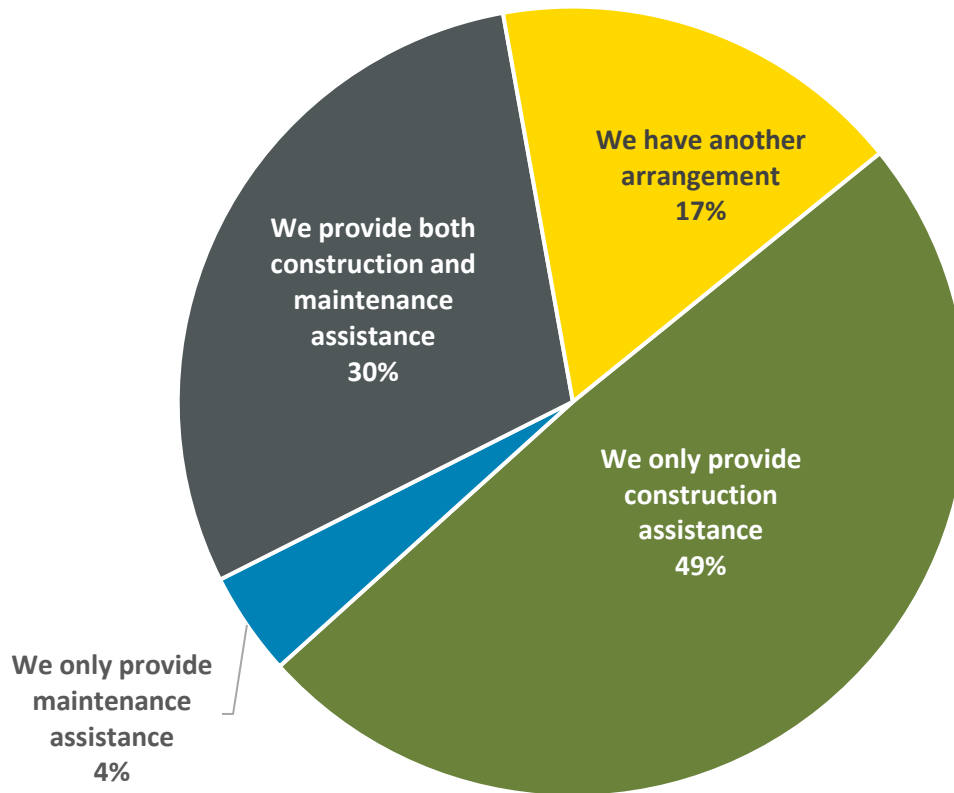


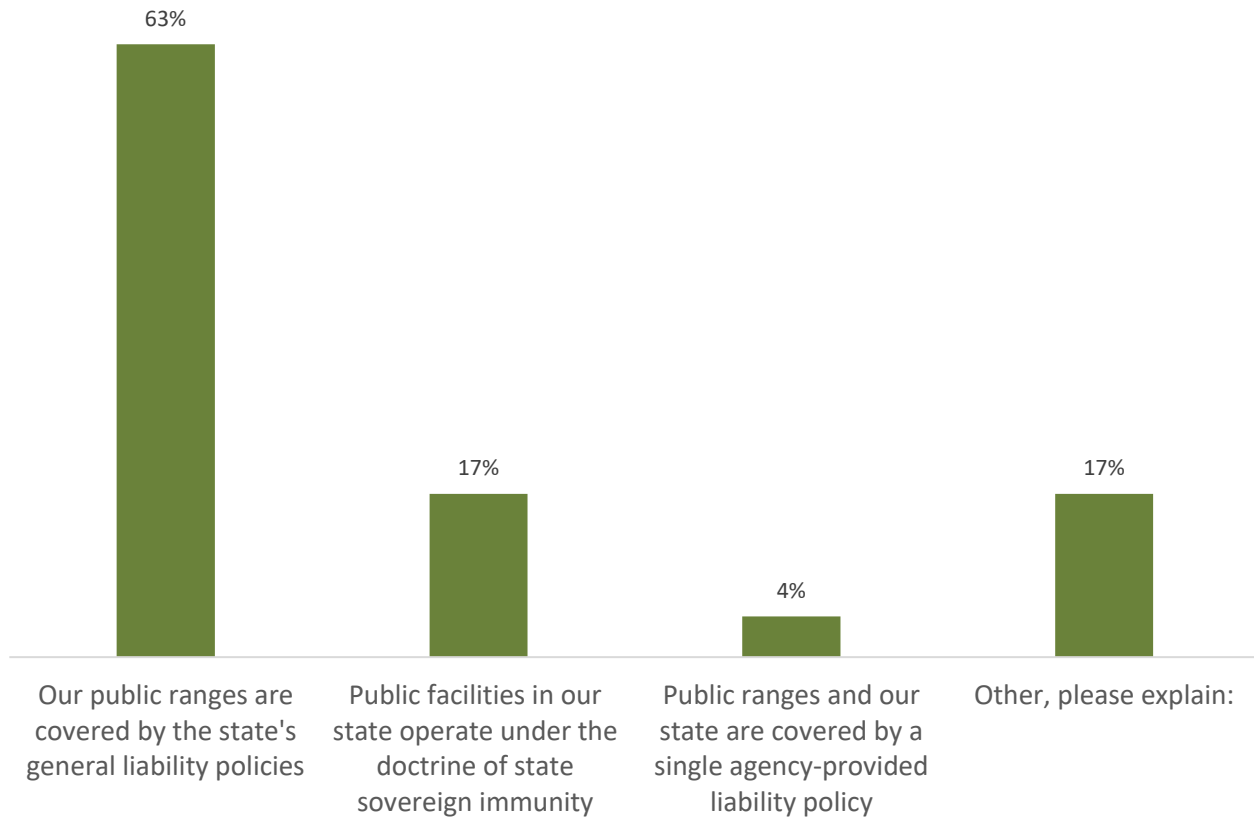
Figure 4. Regarding the ranges your agency operates in partnership with others, roughly what percent fit the following categories? (N=20)



Among the 17% of respondents indicating they have another arrangement, they say the following:

- Some ranges we help with funding but leave the labor and maintenance to the range
- Law enforcement use
- We pay lease and they pay construction and maintenance
- Mostly we provide construction, and they provide the maintenance, however we do replace targets and help with structural maintenance on the archery parks and some maintenance on forest service property
- Lease agreement

Figure 5. Which statement best describes your agency's range liability coverage? Please choose only one. - Selected Choice (N=24)



Note: Information provided by states selecting 'Other' were: 1) Ranges are responsible for their own policy, 2) state is self-insured, and 3) a statute of limited liability, but for our ranges run by volunteer friends groups, they purchase their own insurance.

Figure 6. Considering all agency ranges, whether fully or partially constructed and/or maintained by your agency, what proportion best fits with the following descriptions? (N=27)

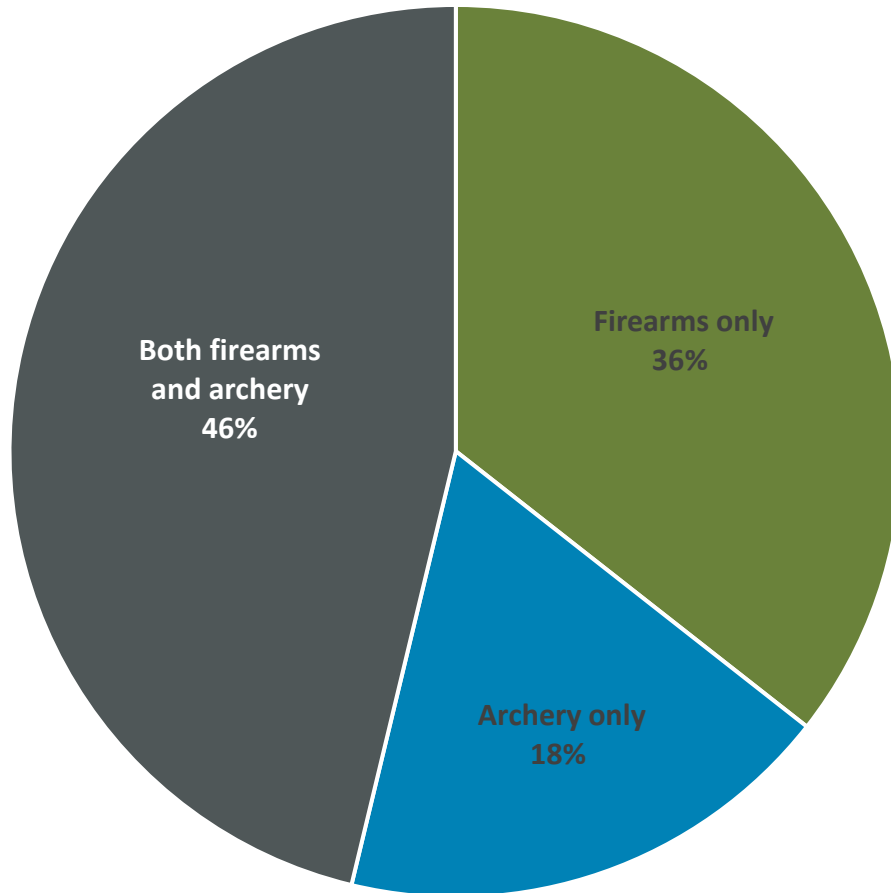


Figure 7. What percent of ranges offer the following types of shooting activities? (N=26)

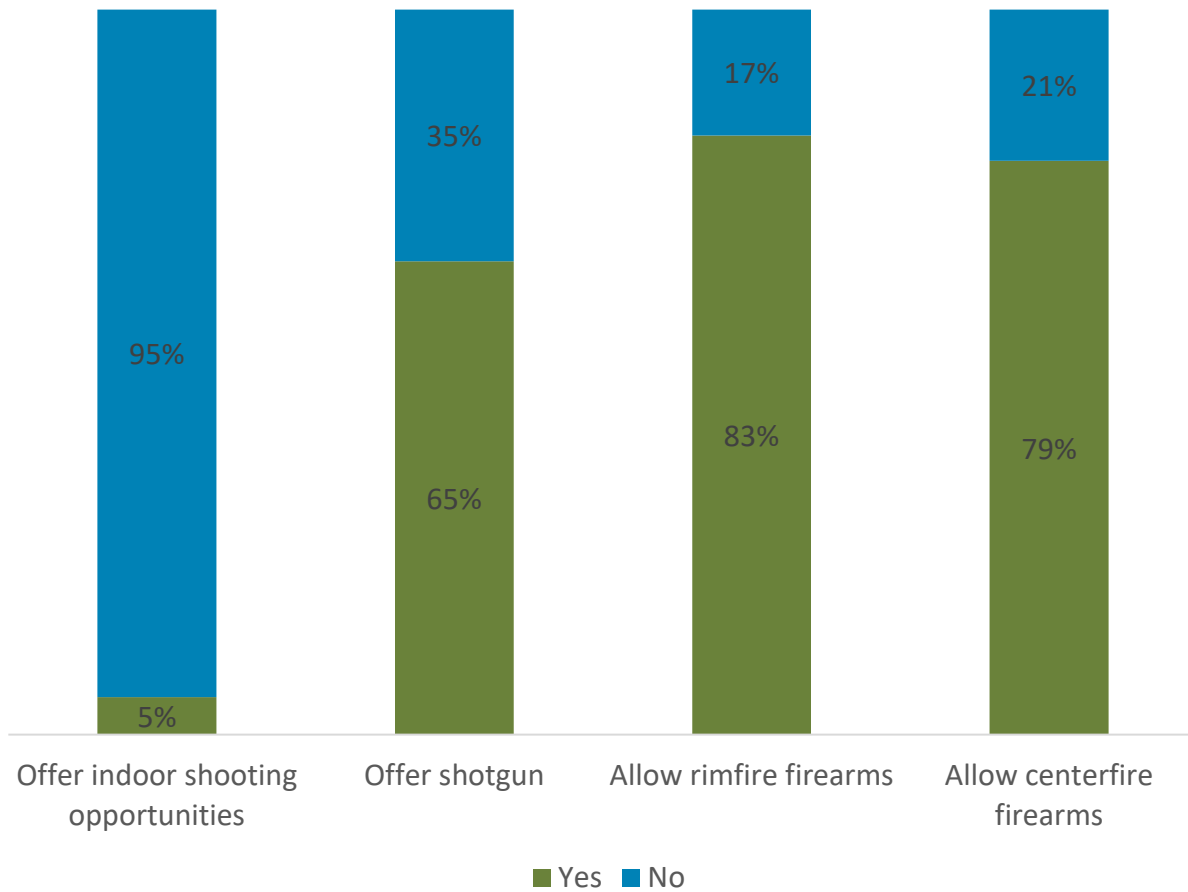


Figure 8. Please check which of the following efforts are engaged at any of your ranges or by your agency. (n=33)

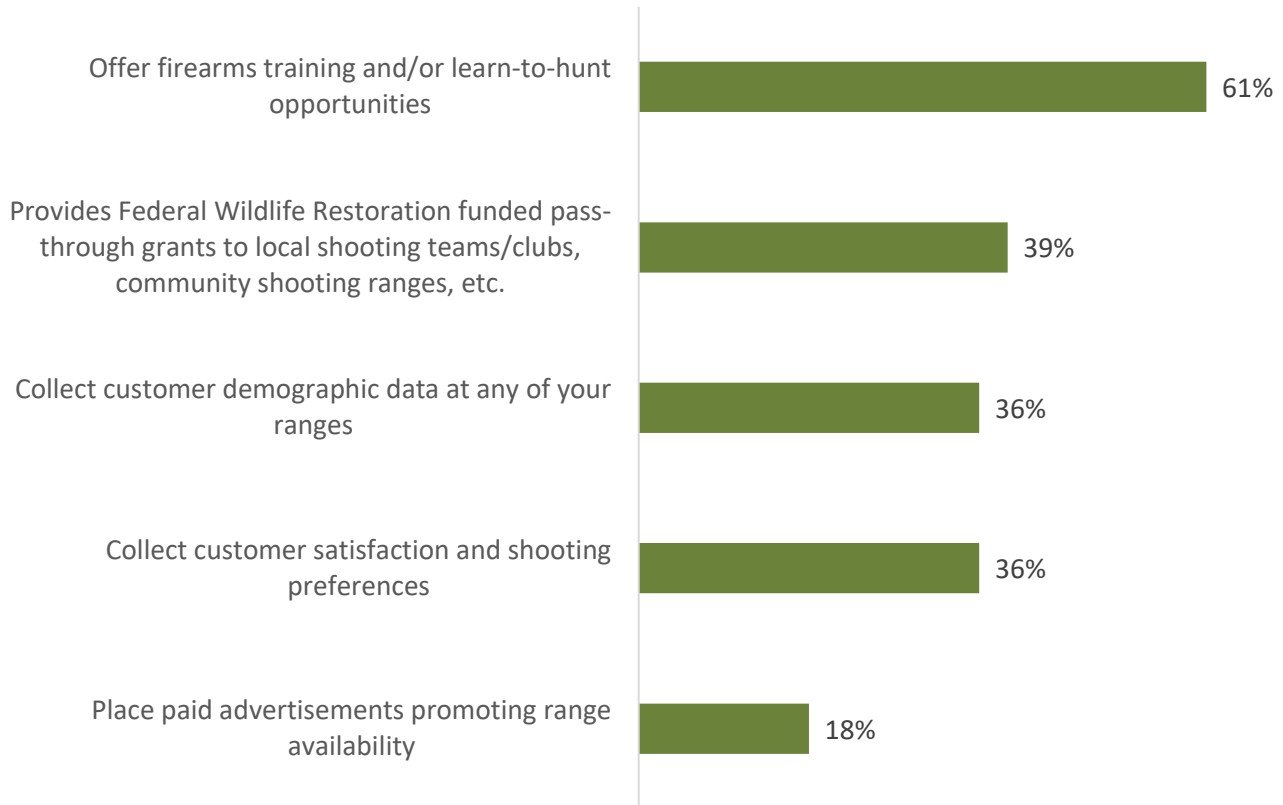


Table 1. Please describe the greatest barriers and challenges your state agency has experienced with pass-through grants for shooting opportunities. (N=11)

- Designing a pass-through grant program that follows all federal rules/laws and ensures recipients are aware of, and follow, all federal funding rules/laws
Finding quality applicants in areas in need of firearms ranges
- Most of our ranges in TN are funded with federal dollars with a 90-10 grant and then with small range improvements each year with small internal grants
- Funding amounts, internal policies, and engineer or contractor issues.
- Willing to participate by private organizations because of perceived problems with public access.
- Town and local permitting process that have held up projects, requiring several amendments and administration challenges.
- Staffing to oversee the grant completion/submittal/construction process.
- Finding partners who you know will meet all compliance requirements and that you are not worried that they might default, leaving the agency on the hook for the funds.
- Finding willing partners. Grants staffing.
- Finding willing partners to fund the remainder of construction costs and M/O costs associated with the range project. Appropriate land availability is another major issue.
- Knowing how much \$ to place into the 90/10 basket ahead of time.....
- Internal contract process is cumbersome and time consuming
staffing to process grants and follow-up on final reports
- Staff to administer/manage those pass through grants

Figure 9. Percent of ranges, fully or partially owned or operated by your agency, which charge a fee for public use and the proportion of operating expenses covered. (N=33)

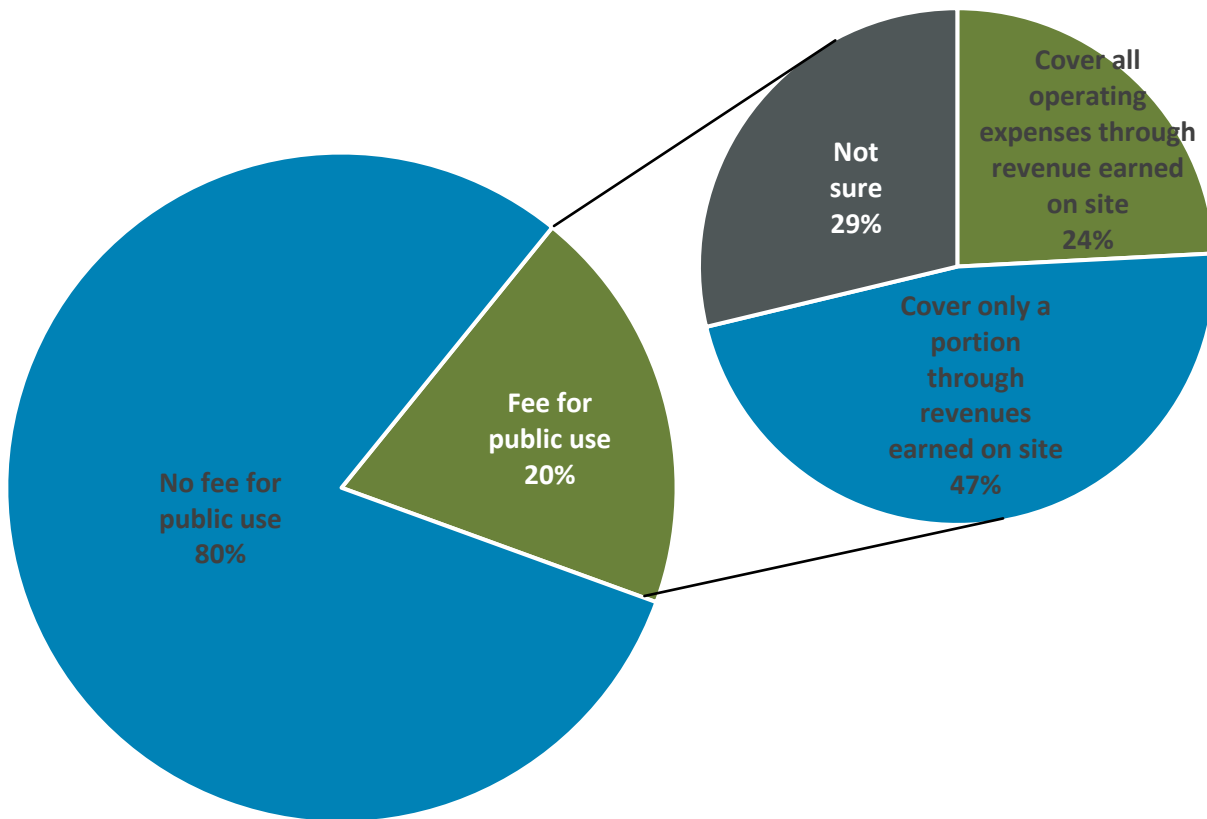
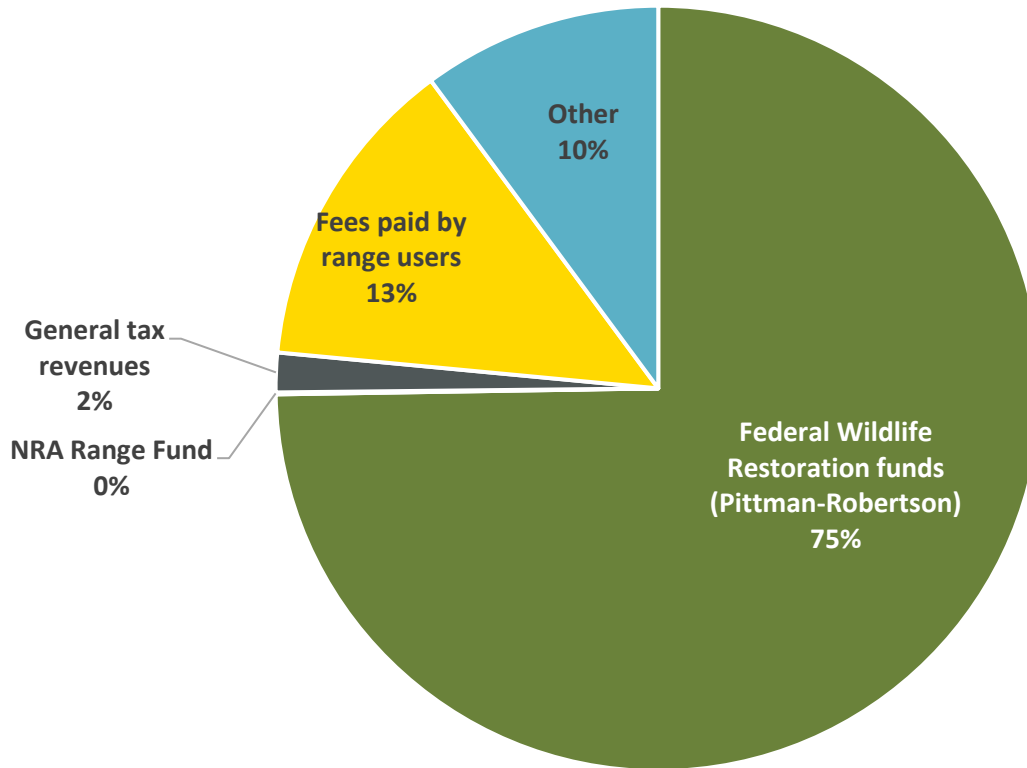
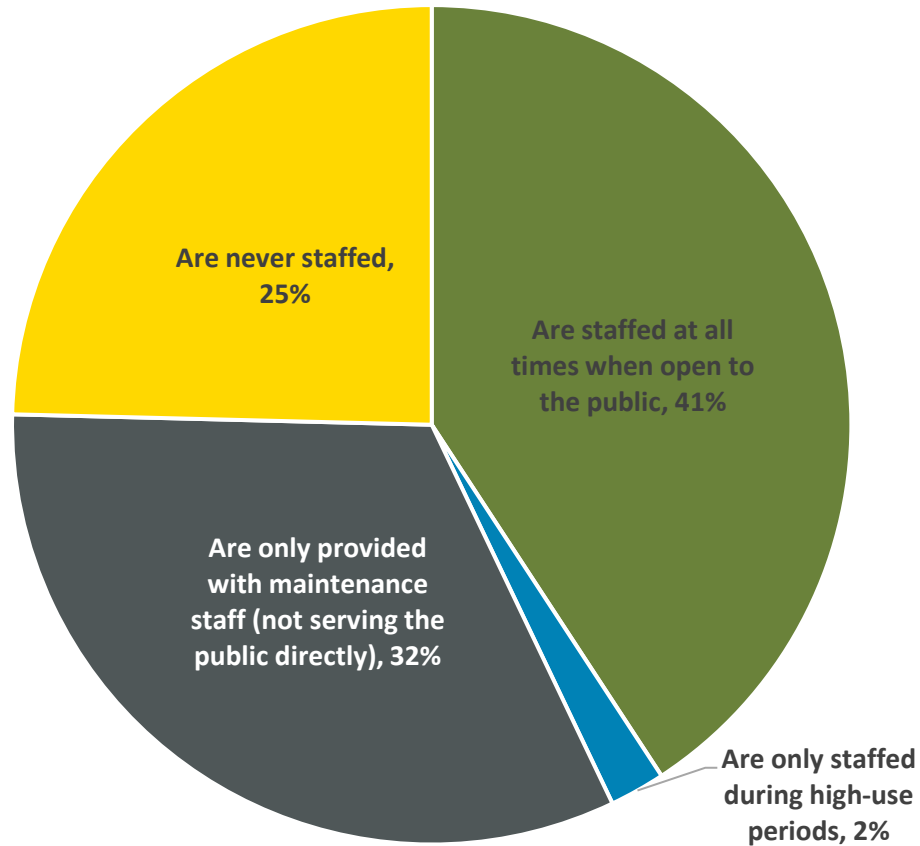


Figure 10. What percent of your agency's range operating budget is derived from... (N=24)



Note: Information provided by the states selecting 'Other' included license sales, volunteer range safety officer time, Parks funding, and state dollars.

Figure 11. Roughly what percent of ranges fit each of the following categories? (N=26)



Note: One third of states report at least some of their ranges are staffed fully or partially by unpaid staff of volunteers. Of those agencies, 50% submit their hours as in-kind match for range grant dollars.

Figure 12. Please rate the barriers and challenges facing your agency in developing or expanding ranges on a scale from 0 = 'Not a barrier or challenge' to 10 = 'A significant barrier or challenge'.

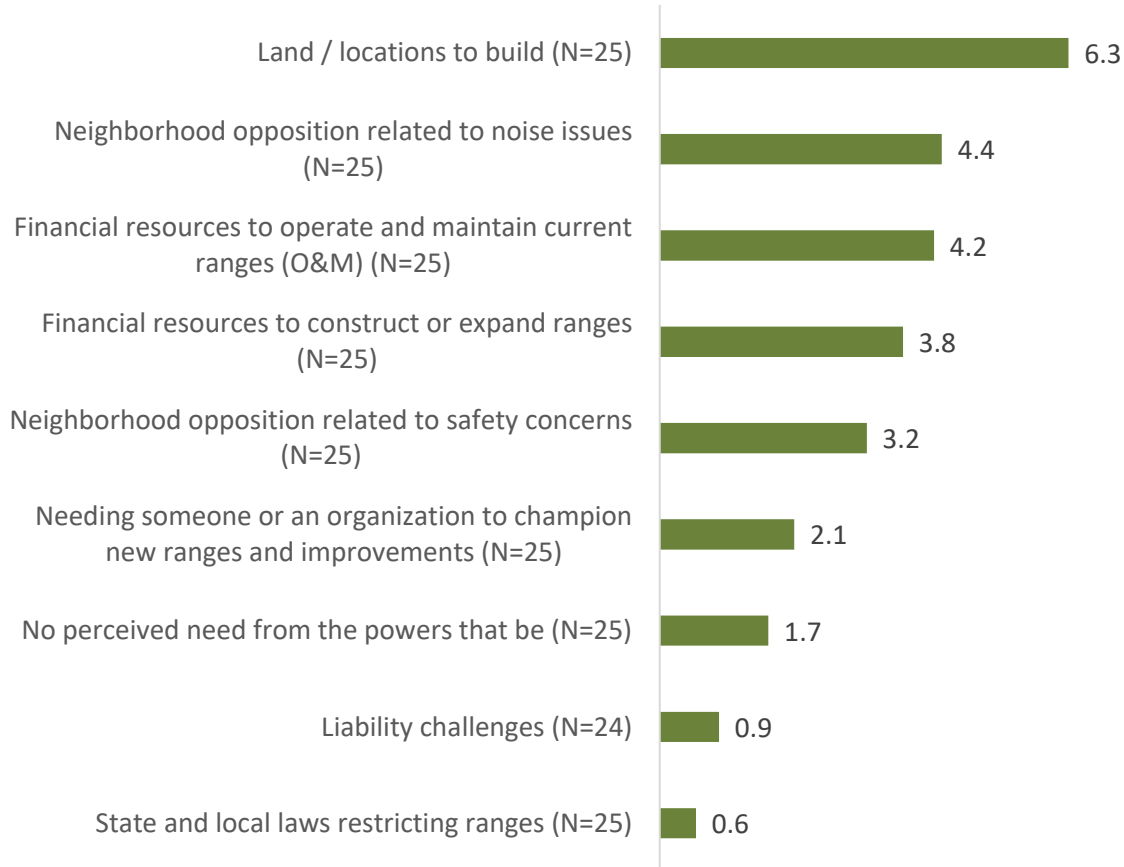
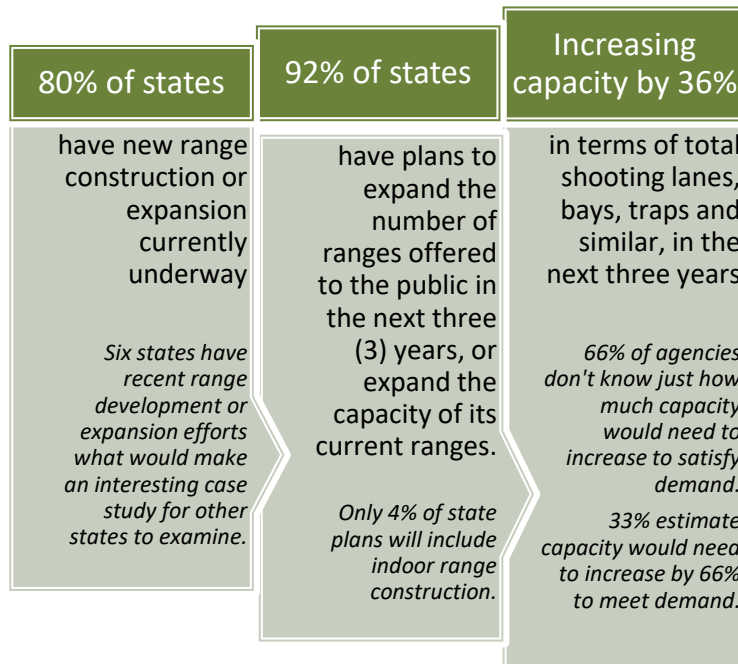


Figure 13. Existing and planned construction or expansion at ranges fully or partially owned or operated. (N=25)



Note: States also shared the following related to understanding capacity and relative demand in their states:

- It varies by region of the state. Some areas meet demand, others do not.
- There are several holes in the state that need to be filled with shooting ranges. My goal is to have on with in 30 minutes of every hub city in TN.
- Many of Maine's public still shoot in gravel pits on private property with open access, so it is hard to measure capacity, except that when the public is provided a reasonably priced or free place to shoot that is safe, welcoming, and family friendly, it is ready adopted and utilized.
- We implemented a customer survey on range needs of our customers and learned most are shooting currently on private land and need a rang within 40 miles to be effective for them
- Trap, skeet and sporting clays facility needs
- We are hoping to have a better idea after a few surveys and focus groups of our shooters
- Urban areas are likely underserved

Figure 14. Which of the following expansion approaches will your agency undertake within the next three (3) years? Check all that apply. (N=23)

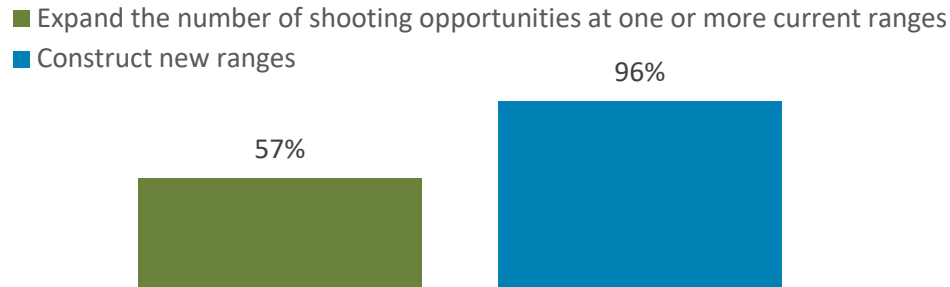
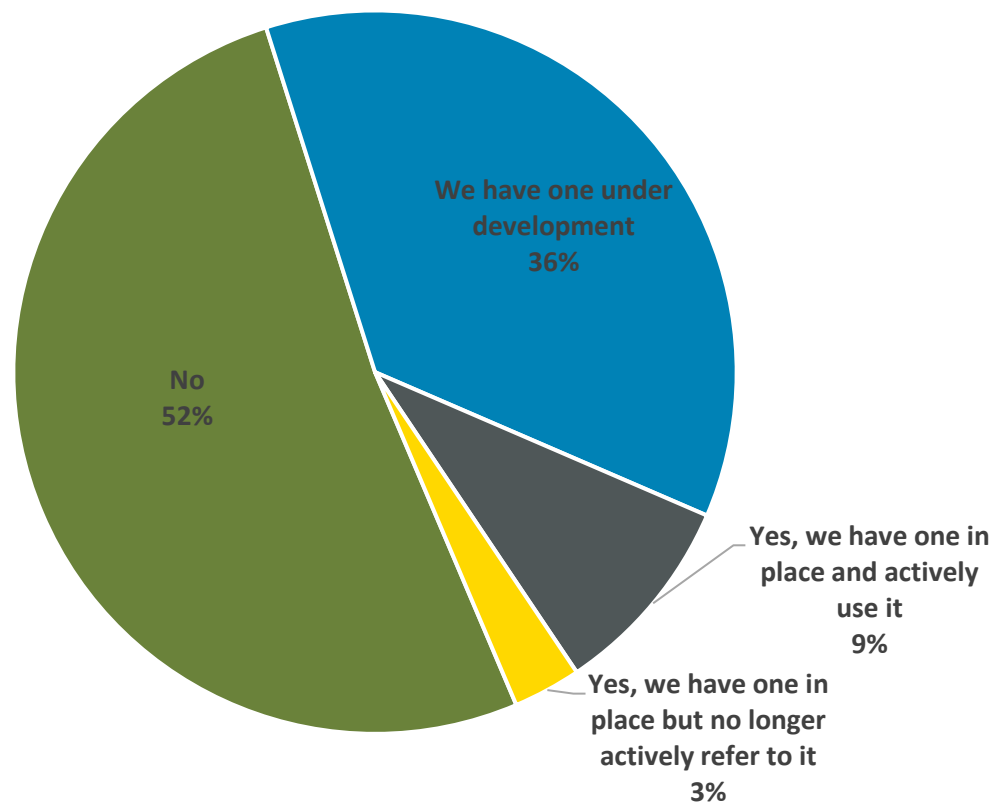


Figure 15. Prevalence of strategic plan development (N=33)



Note: The majority (75%) of strategic plans in place are dedicated solely to ranges and target shooting, with the remainder being part of a broader R3 or general agency strategic plan. All states report their plan has been effective, relative to its original intent.

Figure 16. Regardless of the ability for the public or private sector to offer it, please rate the public demand for these various types of shooting opportunities on a scale of 0='No demand' to 10='Significant demand'.

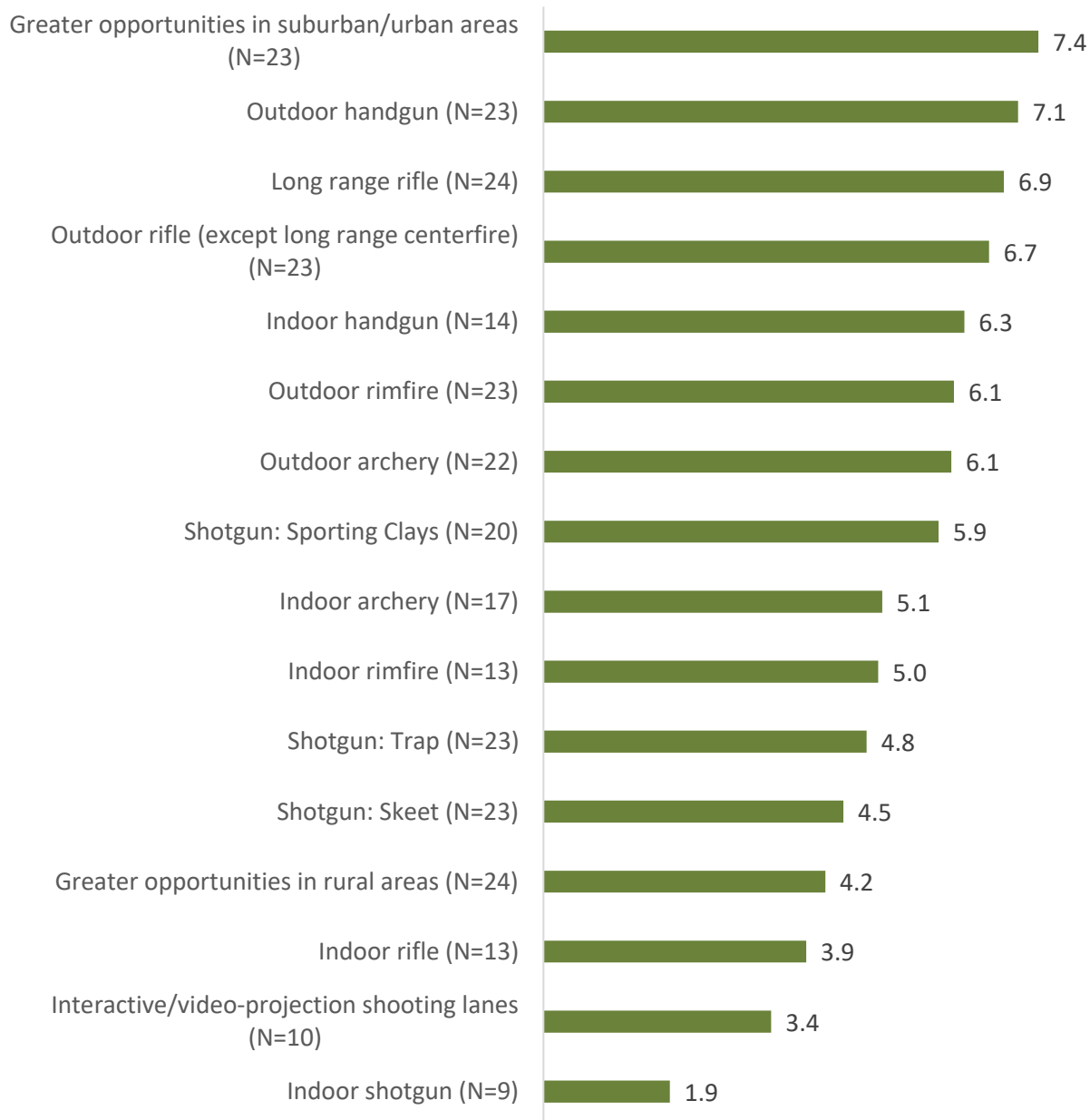
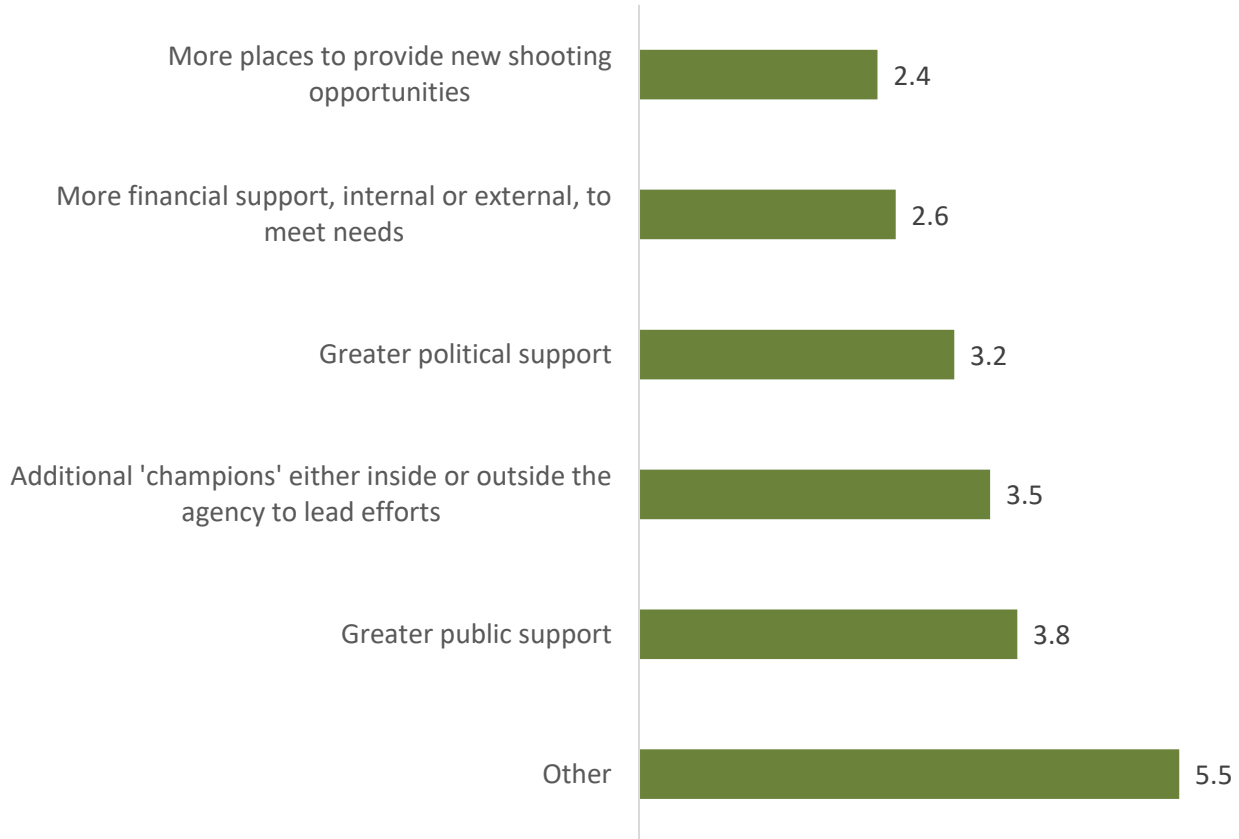


Figure 17. What types of shooting ranges would your agency like to offer but find it difficult or impossible to do so? Please rate on a scale from 0 = "No difficulties" to 10 = "Significant difficulties".



Figure 18. Please rank which resources would be the most valuable in helping an agency reach their strategic plan's goals. Drag to reorder and place your top preferences to the top of the list. (N=22)



Note: Information provided by five states selecting 'Other' were: 1) staffing and 2) guidance from USFW for pass-through grants.

Figure 19. Whether your agency has a strategic plan in place or not, please check which of the following resources would be of interest to your agency in improving and expanding your range program, if available. (N=23)

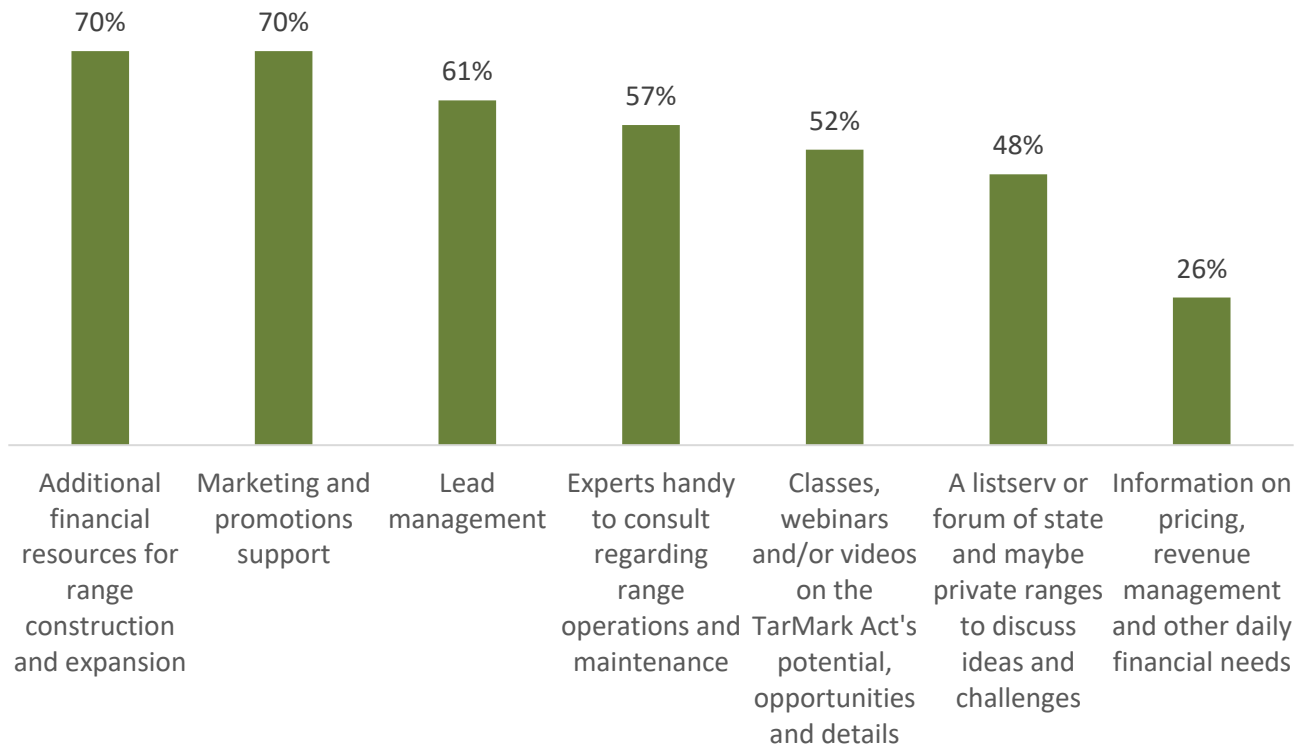


Figure 20. To which level are there concerns, either within the agency or from the public, about competing with private ranges? (N=25)

