

Victorian Game Management Authority

Community research 2023

Research report

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FINAL

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I. Executive summary

Background

In 2021, the Victorian Game Management Authority (GMA) conducted a survey of key stakeholders to support its efforts to improve its stakeholder engagement. To provide a holistic picture of stakeholder sentiment and expectations, GMA subsequently engaged ORIMA Research to conduct research with Victorian communities to measure levels of awareness and understanding of GMA and its role among community members, as well as to gain insights into perceptions and attitudes towards GMA and its performance.

The primary objectives of the research were to develop a deeper level of knowledge about the Victorian community's understanding of GMA's role as well as its regulatory functions. GMA also wished to gauge community perceptions around how well it is performing against its regulatory obligations.

The primary target audience was people living in regions where game hunting occurs (n=1,012), as identified by GMA. Those living in other regional areas (n=248) and metropolitan Melbourne (n=435) were also included as secondary audiences.

General awareness and perceptions of game hunting

While general awareness of game hunting reflected the types of game hunting occurring in each region, notable proportions of respondents within each region were not aware of game hunting occurring in their area or were mistaken about the type of game hunting occurring in their area.

Overall, respondents across all regions had relatively low levels of familiarity with various aspects of game hunting. However, those living in hunting regions reported greater awareness of all aspects of game hunting ('fully aware' of 3.3 out of 7 statements, on average) compared to metropolitan Melbourne respondents (1.9).

Respondents perceived the most positive impacts from game hunting to be on economic (49% 'positive' impact among hunting region respondents) and social activity (40%) but perceived more negative impacts from game hunting on the environment (39% 'negative' impact) and safety (37%).

There was low agreement that illegal game hunting (29% of hunting respondents) and breaches to public safety laws related to game hunting (34%) were being adequately addressed. The perceived incidence of illegal hunting occurring was associated with overall perceptions of how effectively game hunting is being managed.

Those aware of GMA (52%) reported more positive perceptions of the general management of game hunting compared to those not aware of GMA (29%) – suggesting that the visibility of the regulator may play a key role in boosting community perceptions about how effectively game hunting is being managed.

Awareness and understanding of GMA

Overall awareness of GMA and understanding of its role was fairly low among those living in hunting regions (41% aware of GMA overall), although it was higher in these regions compared to those living in metropolitan Melbourne (33%).

While the majority of respondents were able to correctly identify aspects of GMA's roles and responsibilities (7 correct answers out of 13, on average), respondents had more difficulty in recognising whether certain misconceptions were part of GMA's role (such as managing game habitats and public land).

There is opportunity to increase awareness of GMA and its functions among those living in hunting regions, and particularly in Geelong (where awareness was lowest).

Perceptions of GMA

Among those aware of GMA, overall satisfaction with GMA's services was fairly low among respondents in hunting regions (44%) – however, this was associated with a significant level of neutral and unsure ratings rather than dissatisfaction, reflecting low engagement and familiarity with GMA generally.

Satisfaction with GMA was higher among those who demonstrated greater familiarity with its functions and those who had more positive perceptions of the impact of game hunting in general.

Respondents were more positive about GMA being fair (63% of hunting region respondents aware of GMA) and making decisions based on the best available advice and evidence (59%) but were relatively less likely to agree GMA is neutral and unbiased in delivering its responsibilities (44%) and was adequately addressing illegal hunting (47%).

These results suggest GMA could improve community perceptions of its services by raising awareness of its work generally, and particularly in relation to addressing illegal hunting and breaches to public safety laws.

Interactions with GMA

Very few community respondents reported having had direct interactions with GMA (only 1% of respondents across all regions). Among those who had direct interactions with GMA, respondents were generally positive about their interactions (68% of respondents from hunting regions) – but were less positive about the timeliness of GMA's response to their requests or submissions (42%).

Current information sources

Respondents living in hunting regions mainly obtained information about game hunting through passive sources (without actively looking for it), and primarily through news channels, including local media reports (53%), State/ national media reports (23%) and online news reports or articles (17%).

Respondents who had seen or heard information most commonly reported seeing/ hearing about game hunting seasons (20% among hunting region respondents – primarily duck season), while a minority also reported exposure to information about responsible hunting (9%) and reporting illegal hunting (8%).

The results suggest that the main information reaching the community is related to duck season and through unofficial channels, which may be more controversial or incomplete compared to GMA's communications.

While only a few hunting region respondents recalled seeing or hearing information from GMA, those who had reported generally positive perceptions of the clarity (76%) and timeliness of information (63%) – although they were less likely to agree that information was objective, fair and balanced (50%).

Information needs

Perceived importance of knowing about game hunting was fairly low, even among those living in regions where game hunting occurs (41% felt it was 'very' important).

Respondents' key information needs were how to report illegal game hunting activity (60%), and where (59%) and when (57%) game hunting is occurring.

Respondents mainly preferred information to be provided on government websites, including Parks Victoria (42%), local council (41%) and the GMA (37%) websites rather than through more direct channels.

Among more direct channels, letterbox drops (26%), brochures/ pamphlets (24%) and email (22%) were preferred.

Conclusions



General awareness and understanding of both game hunting and GMA's roles and responsibilities is fairly low, and the survey results suggest that raising awareness of the GMA's roles and responsibilities will assist in improving perceptions of GMA more broadly.



Only a small minority of respondents had directly interacted with GMA, but those who had were generally positive about their interactions.



Even those living in hunting regions are unlikely to proactively seek information about game hunting and most people receive 'pushed' information passively from unofficial channels (such as news services). To raise awareness and understanding of its role among the broader community, GMA will need to consider how it can cut through the noise about duck season to reach an audience that is unlikely to look for information.



Game hunting is an emotive topic and perceptions of GMA are linked to personal feelings about game hunting in general. Improving understanding of GMA may help to mitigate this effect, as greater familiarity with GMA's role was associated with more positive perceptions of its effectiveness.



Addressing illegal hunting is the most common top of mind concern for community members.

How to report illegal hunting was the most common piece of information respondents felt they needed and the perceived incidence of illegal hunting occurring was associated with overall perceptions of how effectively game hunting is being managed.

II. Background and methodology

Background

The Victorian Game Management Authority (GMA) is an independent statutory authority responsible for the regulation of game hunting in Victoria. It endeavours to improve and promote responsible hunting in Victoria through education, research and enforcement. The GMA is responsible for:

- issuing Game Licences;
- managing open and closed seasons for game species;
- enforcing game hunting laws and taking action against those who do not comply;
- educating hunters on how to hunt legally in Victoria; and
- providing recommendations to government on game and pest management, and animal welfare related issues.

The GMA works with a broad range of stakeholders, from individual game licence holders and hunting bodies to animal conservation organisations and government partner agencies. The GMA interacts with each of these stakeholders in variety of different ways, whether through professional collaboration and partnerships, communication, delivery of services and educational programs, or compliance and monitoring.

In 2021, GMA conducted a survey with key stakeholders to supports its efforts to improve its stakeholder engagement. To provide a holistic picture of stakeholder sentiment and expectations, GMA engaged ORIMA Research to conduct research with Victorian communities to measure levels of awareness and understanding of GMA and its role among community members, as well as to gain insights into perceptions and attitudes towards GMA and its performance.

This research focused on regional communities across Victoria where game hunting primarily occurs, as identified by the GMA. However, data was also collected from regions outside where game hunting primarily occurs as a point of comparison (acknowledging that although hunting may occur in these regions, it is not a common or widespread activity).

Research objectives

The primary objective of this research was to develop a deeper level of knowledge about the Victorian community's **understanding of the GMA's role as well as its regulatory functions**. The GMA also wished to **gauge community perceptions around how well it is performing** against its regulatory obligations. To address these research objectives, the research sought to measure:

- Awareness of the GMA and understanding of its role;
- Perceptions of the GMA's key function areas, particularly:
 - Enforcement activities – including visible presence and effectiveness of compliance and monitoring;
 - Engagement and communications activities – including clarity and effectiveness of communications, information needs and channels;
- Perceptions of GMA as a regulator – including openness and transparency; and

- Incidence and perceptions of any interactions with GMA or its staff.

The results from this research will serve as a baseline measure of community sentiment to allow tracking over time.

Research methodology

Sampling and fieldwork

Survey fieldwork was conducted from 13 February to 3 March 2023. The survey was conducted online with n=1,695 Victorian residents aged 18 years and over. The online survey sample was sourced from a high-quality online panel developed and maintained by the Online Research Unit (ORU).

The primary target audience was people living in regions where game hunting occurs (n=1,012), as identified by GMA. For ease of reference, these respondents are referred to as 'hunting regions' throughout. Those living in other regional areas (n=248) and metropolitan Melbourne (n=435) were also included as secondary audiences. The targets by game hunting regions represented maximum feasibility for each region using an online panel data collection method.

All Victorian residents were in scope to complete the survey (not just those aware of GMA) to:

- obtain accurate measures of current levels of awareness and understanding of GMA; and
- capture perceptions of GMA's function areas (e.g. enforcement, education) even among those not aware of GMA's role in delivering them.

The data was weighted to align the sample proportions for each classification group with its respective population proportions by region, age and gender (based on the 2021 Census data).

Table 1: Sample design

Types of hunting	Region	Achieved (n=)	Target (n=)
-	OVERALL TOTAL	1,695	1,595
Game hunting regions			
Duck, quail	Geelong	312	315
Duck, quail	Shepparton	108	110
Duck, deer	Latrobe – Gippsland	211	205
Quail	North West	110	105
Deer	Hume	147	150
Duck	Warrnambool and South West	124	110
	TOTAL	1,012	995
Other regional			
N/A	Ballarat	125	100
N/A	Bendigo	123	100
	TOTAL	248	200
Metropolitan Melbourne			
N/A	Melbourne	315	300

N/A	Mornington Peninsula	120	100
	TOTAL	435	400

Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was developed and refined in consultation with the GMA's project team. The survey questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

Some questions were designed to allow for responses to be tailored to respondents depending on whether they were aware of the GMA, to collect respondents' perceptions of GMA's function areas even if they were not explicitly aware of GMA's role in delivering them.

Statistical precision

For this survey, overall percentage results for questions answered by a particular number of respondents have a specific degree of sampling error (i.e. confidence interval) at the 95% level of statistical confidence. That is, there is a 95% probability (abstracting from non-sampling error) that the results will be within +/- percentage points (pp) of the results that would have been obtained if the entire target population had responded. For instance, for questions answered by all/ most respondents living in hunting regions, the 95% confidence interval is no greater than +/-3pp. Higher degrees of sampling error apply to questions answered by fewer respondents, such as results for individual regions.

The table below provides indicative confidence intervals for different response sizes within the overall sample by regional groups for this survey.

Table 2: Indicative confidence intervals (+/-) at the 95% confidence level

Region	Total response size (n=)	Indicative confidence intervals (95%)
Grouped regions		
Hunting regions	1,012	±3 pp
Other regional areas	248	±6 pp
Metropolitan Melbourne	435	±5 pp
Individual regions		
Geelong	312	±6 pp
Shepparton	108	±9 pp
Latrobe – Gippsland	211	±7 pp
North West	110	±9 pp
Hume	147	±8 pp
Warrnambool and South West	124	±9 pp
Ballarat	125	±9 pp
Bendigo	123	±9 pp
Melbourne	315	±6 pp
Mornington Peninsula	120	±9 pp

Note: These confidence intervals are upper bound levels based on percentage results of 50%. For higher or lower percentage results, the confidence intervals will be narrower.

The ORU panel's rigorous recruitment approach (offline as well as online) and large size (over 350,000 panel members) means that the panel is broadly representative of the underlying Australian population. However, the panel members were not selected via probability-based sampling methods and hence the use of statistical sampling theory to extrapolate the online panel survey findings to the general population is based on the assumption that a weighted stratified random sample of panel members provides a good approximation of an equivalent sample of the general population.

Presentation of results

Reported percentages are based on the total number of valid responses made to the particular question being reported on. The results reflect the responses of people for whom the questions were applicable. 'Don't know/ unsure' responses have been presented throughout.

For ease of reading, the five-point scales have been condensed and are reported in the form of three-point scales—recording positive, neutral and negative responses. For example, the proportion of respondents who answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree' to a particular question are reported as the proportion who responded as 'agree,' while those who answered 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' are reported as the proportion who responded as 'disagree.' Percentage results throughout the report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Quality assurance

This project was conducted in accordance with the international quality standard ISO 20252, the international information security standard ISO 27001, as well as the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth). ORIMA Research also adheres to the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021 administered by the Australian Data and Insights Association (ADIA).

III. Game hunting in your community

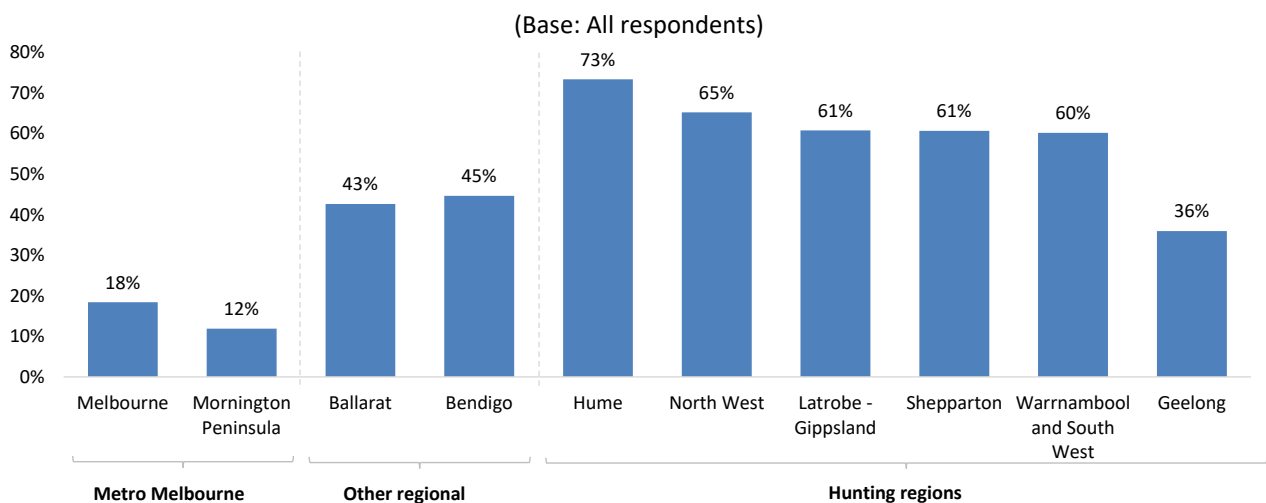
Key take-outs

- While general awareness of game hunting reflected the types of game hunting occurring in each region, significant proportions of respondents within each game hunting region were not aware of or misattributed the type of game hunting occurring in their area. In particular, many thought that duck hunting occurred in their region even if it did not (or was less widespread).
- Respondents perceived the most positive impacts from game hunting to be on economic and social activity, while they identified more negative impacts from game hunting on the environment and safety.
- Only a minority felt game hunting was being managed effectively in their region, and there was very low agreement that illegal game hunting and breaches to public safety laws related to game hunting were being adequately addressed.
- Awareness of GMA and visibility of enforcement and compliance activities was associated with more positive perceptions of how game hunting was being managed in general – suggesting that raising awareness of these activities, and GMA as the regulator, may help to improve community perceptions.

Awareness of game hunting in their region

As would be expected, respondents from hunting regions (57%) were most likely to report that game hunting activity occurs in the area/region they lived in, followed by other regional areas (43%) and metropolitan Melbourne respondents (18%). Among respondents in game hunting regions, those living in Hume (73%) and North West (65%) were most likely to report game hunting activity occurred in their region. Those living in Geelong (36%) were least likely to be aware of game hunting activity in their region. A large proportion of respondents in Bendigo (45%) and Ballarat (43%) thought that game hunting occurred in their region, although hunting is not a common or widespread activity in these regions.

Figure 1: Awareness of game hunting activity in area of residence by individual region



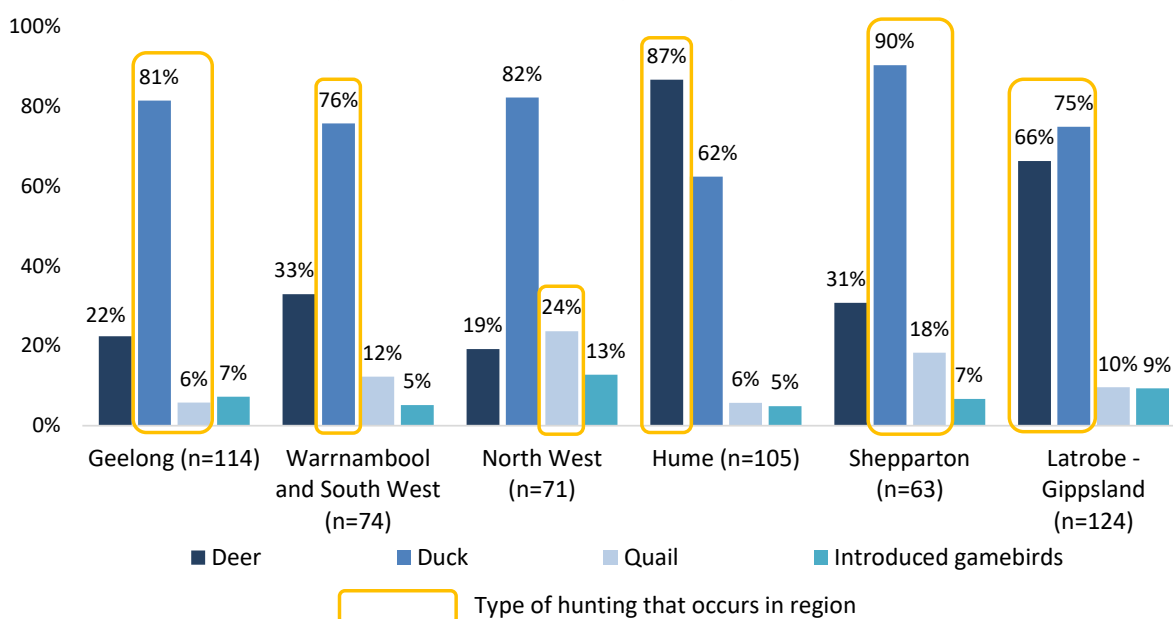
Q4. Does any game hunting activity occur in the area/region you live in?

Among those aware of game hunting activity occurring in the area/ region they live in, most (76%) respondents from hunting regions thought that duck hunting occurred in their area or region, followed by deer (48%). Reported awareness of the types of hunting that occurred in each region generally reflected the actual hunting for that region, although there were notable patterns of misattribution.

For instance, in Hume (where only deer hunting occurs) most (87%) thought that deer hunting occurred in their area, but a sizeable proportion also thought duck hunting (62%) occurred. Those in North West (where only quail hunting occurs) were more likely than other hunting regions to report quail hunting occurred in their area (24%), but respondents were much more likely to incorrectly think duck hunting (82%) occurred in their area.

Figure 2: Types of game hunting reported by respondents in hunting regions

(Base: Respondents aware of hunting occurring in their area or region)



Q6. What type of game hunting occurs in the area(s)/region(s) you live in or visit?

Perceived impact of game hunting

The majority of respondents from hunting regions felt that game hunting did not impact them personally. Respondents from metropolitan Melbourne areas were less likely to report no personal impacts of hunting than those from hunting regions and other regional areas (55%, compared to 62-65%).

Respondents were most positive about the impact of game hunting on economic activity, followed by social activity. Almost half of respondents (49%) living in game hunting regions indicated that game hunting had positive impacts on economic activity, in line with other regional areas (43%) but higher than metropolitan Melbourne (37%). Similarly, those in hunting regions were more likely to report a positive impact from game hunting on social activity (40%, in line with 37% of other regional respondents but higher than 33% of metropolitan Melbourne respondents).

Conversely, respondents perceived more negative impacts from game hunting on the environment and safety. However, lower proportions of respondents living in game hunting regions perceived negative impacts on the environment (39% negative impact, compared to 50% of other regional and

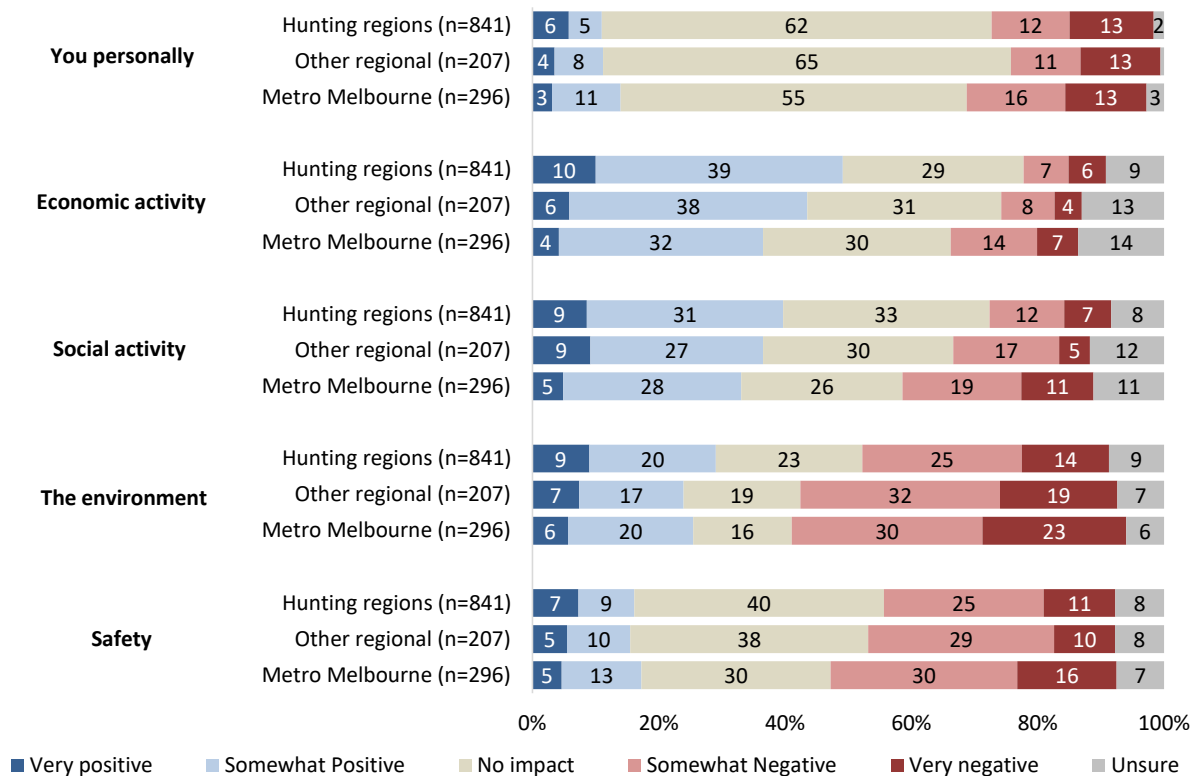
53% of metropolitan Melbourne respondents) and safety (37%, compared to 45% of metropolitan Melbourne respondents) compared to other regions.

Respondents from game hunting regions that were *aware* of GMA were more likely to report a *positive* impact from game hunting across all areas compared to those not aware of the GMA:

- Personal impact of hunting (20% positive impact, compared to 4% of hunting region respondents unaware of the GMA);
- Economic impact of hunting (59%, compared to 41%);
- Social impact of hunting (46%, compared to 35%);
- Environmental impact of hunting (39%, compared to 20%); and
- Impacts of hunting on safety (24%, compared to 9%).

Figure 3: Perceptions of the impact of game hunting by region type

(Base: Respondents aware of game hunting occurring in Victoria)



Q8mr. What impact do you think game hunting has had on...

General perceptions of how game hunting is managed

Among those aware of game hunting occurring in Victoria, respondents from game hunting regions were more likely to agree that decisions about game management are based on the best available expert advice and evidence (39%).

However, respondents had less positive perceptions about illegal game hunting (29%) and breaches to public safety laws related to game hunting (34%) being adequately addressed. However, respondents living in hunting regions were still more likely to agree with these aspects than respondents from metropolitan Melbourne.

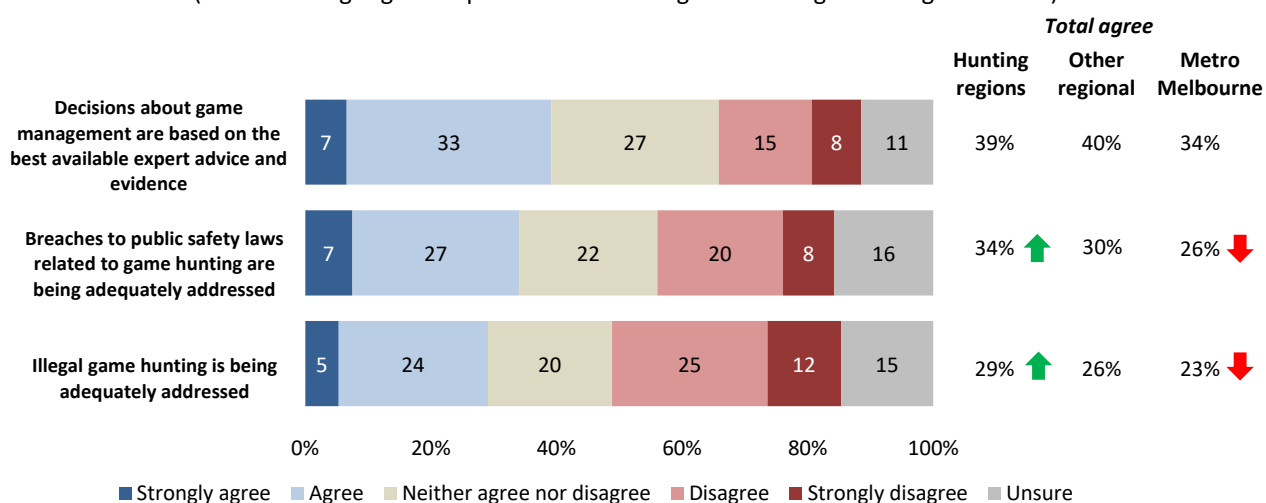
Among those living in hunting regions, awareness of GMA was associated with more positive perceptions of each aspect of game management compared to those not aware of the GMA:

- Decisions about game management are based on the best available expert advice and evidence (47%, compared to 33% of hunting region respondents unaware of the GMA);
- Breaches to public safety laws related to game hunting are being adequately addressed (46%, compared to 25%); and
- Illegal game hunting is being adequately addressed (41%, compared to 19%).

These results suggest that improving visibility of GMA as the regulator may help to improve community perceptions about how effectively game hunting is being managed in general.

Figure 4: General perceptions of game management – hunting regions only (in chart)

(Base: Hunting region respondents aware of game hunting occurring in Victoria)



Q9a-c. Thinking about specific aspects of game management in the area(s)/region(s) you live in or visit, or in Victoria, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

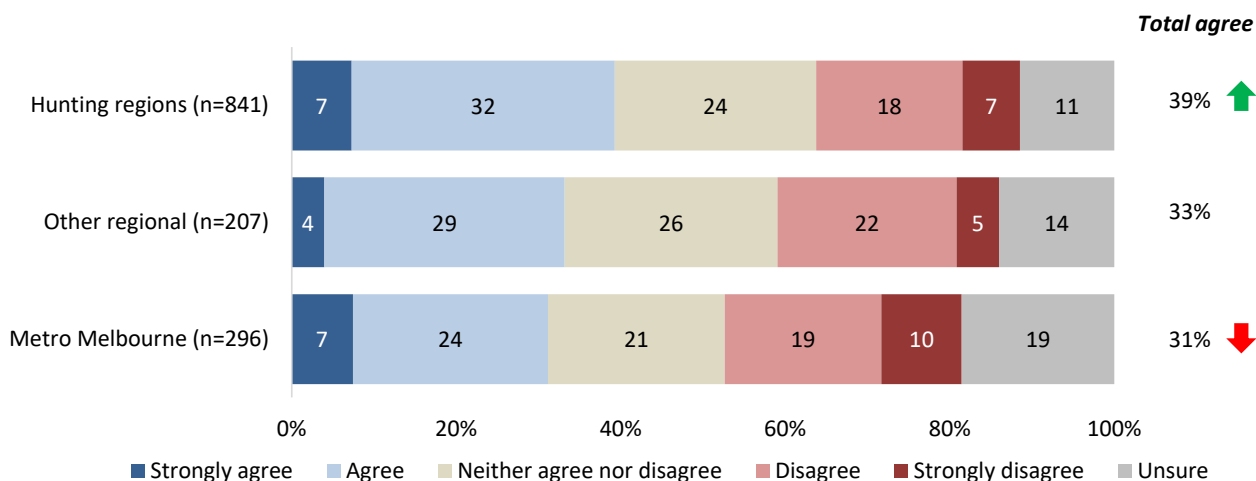
Overall, only a minority (39%) of respondents from hunting regions agreed that game hunting is managed effectively in the area/ region that they live in or visit. Respondents from metropolitan Melbourne (31%) were less likely to agree that game hunting was being managed effectively.

As observed for individual aspects of game management, hunting region respondents who were aware of GMA (52%) were more likely to agree that game hunting was being managed effectively, compared to those not aware of GMA (29%).

Among individual hunting regions, respondents living in Shepparton (48%), Latrobe-Gippsland (44%) and North-West (43%) were most likely to agree that game hunting is being managed effectively. In contrast, those living in Geelong (32%) reported the lowest agreement.

Figure 5: Perceptions of effective game management by region type

(Base: Respondents aware of game hunting occurring in Victoria)



Q10. Overall to what extent do you agree that game hunting is being managed effectively in the area(s)/region(s) you live in or visit?

Qualitative feedback suggests that respondents strongly associate illegal hunting and the laws/restrictions in place to support responsible and sustainable hunting with management of game hunting in general. In addition, respondents’ own feelings about game hunting influence their perceptions of how it is being managed.

Among hunting region respondents who felt game hunting was being managed effectively in their area/ region, the main reasons were that they:

- Had not heard about negative instances of game hunting (13% of those that responded);
- Were aware game hunting was being regulated and controlled in general (6%); or
- Were aware of more specific restrictions and regulations related to game hunting (4%); such as:
 - There are game seasons;
 - There are restrictions on where game hunting can occur;
 - You need a game licence to hunt legally; and
 - There are limits on how much game can be taken at any one time.

Among those who did not feel game hunting was being managed effectively in their area/ region, the main reasons were that they:

- Felt game hunting should be banned altogether (10% of those that responded);
- Perceived that game hunters were often not complying with rules and regulations (9%);
- Did not observe any or sufficiently resourced management of game hunting or enforcement of laws (6%); and
- Relatedly, did not consider that illegal hunting was handled in a timely or effective manner (5%).

IV. General understanding of game hunting

Key take-outs

- Respondents across all regions had relatively low levels of familiarity with game hunting overall. However, those living in hunting regions reported greater awareness of all aspects of game hunting.
- Awareness of GMA was associated with greater familiarity with individual aspects of game hunting.
- While the majority were aware of the requirement to have a game licence to legally hunt game species and that legal hunting can only occur during certain times for some game species, awareness was lower that legal hunting can only occur during the daytime and that game hunting did not include hunting pest species.

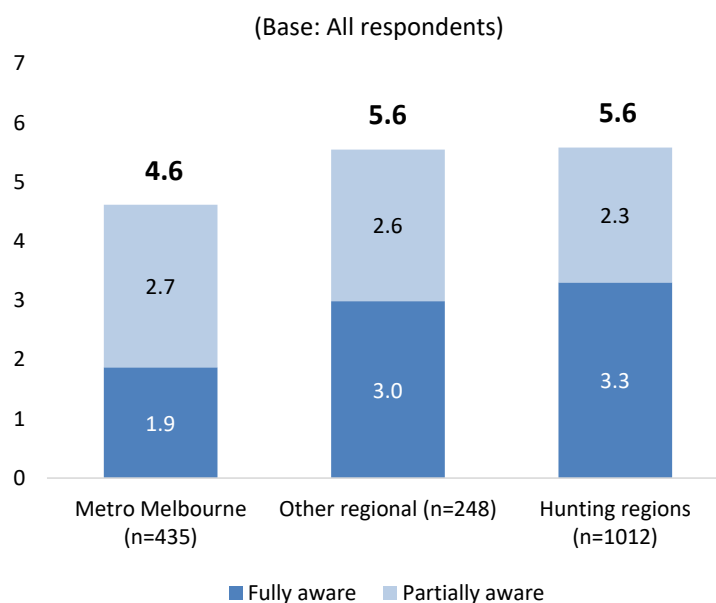
Familiarity with game hunting

Across all regions, familiarity with various aspects of game hunting was relatively low. Those living in game hunting regions reported similar levels of awareness of aspects of game hunting on average ('fully aware' of 3.3 out of 7 statements, on average) to respondents living in other regional areas (3.0), but greater levels of awareness compared to metropolitan Melbourne respondents (1.9).

Respondents from game hunting regions who were also aware of GMA (fully aware of 4.6 statements, on average) were more likely to be fully aware of all aspects of game hunting compared to respondents not aware of the GMA (2.4)

Among the hunting regions, Warrnambool and South-West (fully aware of 3.7 statements, on average), Shepparton (3.6) and Latrobe-Gippsland (3.5) reported the highest levels of awareness of game hunting aspects, while those in Geelong (2.9) reported the lowest.

Figure 6: Awareness of game hunting by region type (average aspects aware of out of 7)



Q13. Before today, to what extent were you aware of the following?

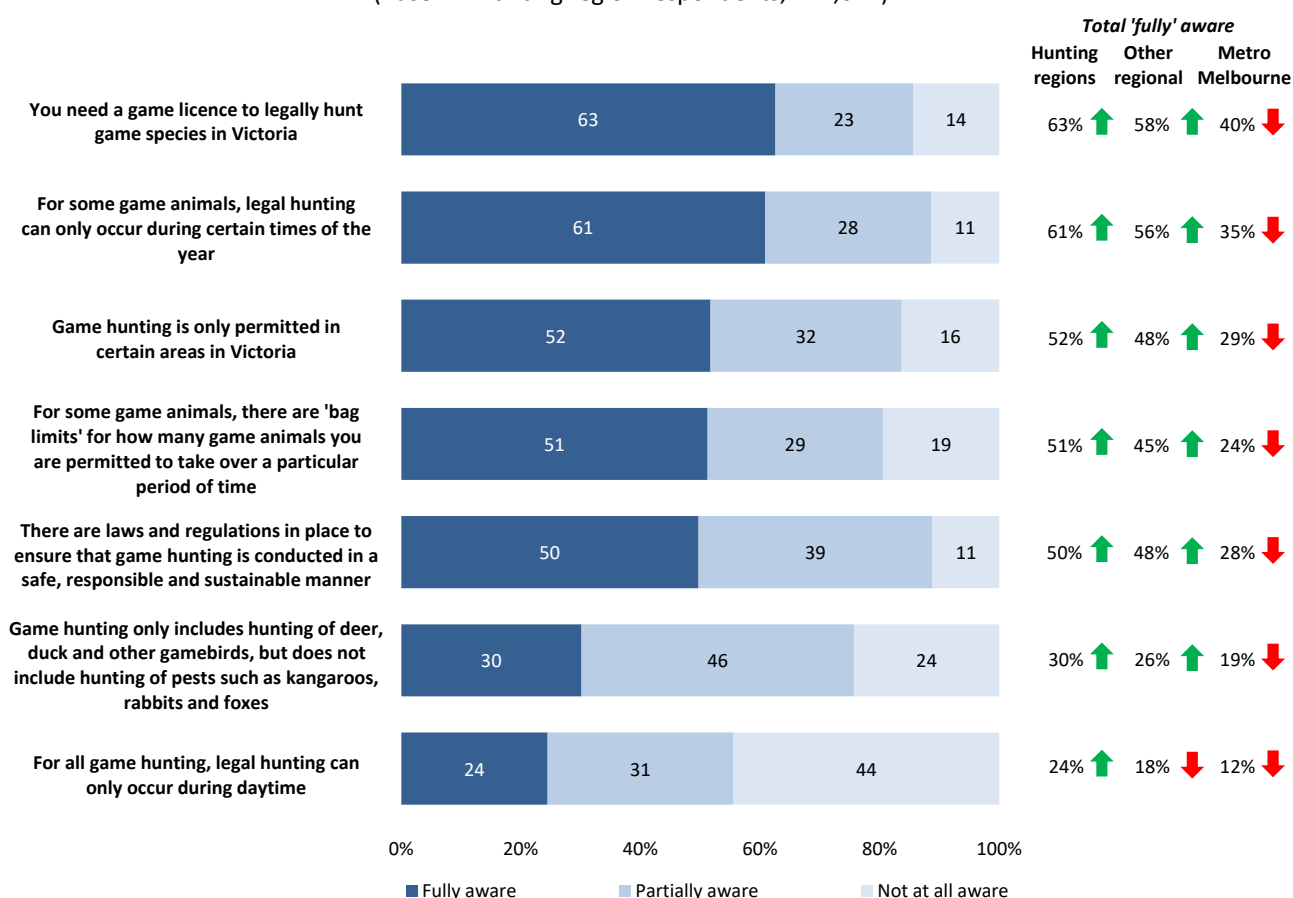
Among respondents living in game hunting regions, awareness was highest that you need a game licence to legally hunt game species in Victoria (63% 'fully' aware) and that for some game animals, legal hunting can only occur during certain times of the year (61%).

In contrast, awareness was lowest that legal game hunting can only occur during the daytime (24% among those living in game hunting regions) and game hunting only included hunting of deer, duck and other gamebirds (30%).

Respondents from game hunting regions and other regional areas were more likely to report that they were fully aware of the various aspects of game hunting compared to respondents from metropolitan Melbourne areas.

Figure 7: Awareness of aspects of game hunting – hunting regions only (in chart)

(Base: All hunting region respondents, n=1,012)



Q13. Before today, to what extent were you aware of the following?

Reporting illegal game hunting

Among those who indicated they would report illegal hunting if they witnessed or were aware of it (37%, n=786), the vast majority of respondents said they would report it to the police (84%, unweighted). Other commonly mentioned channels included DELWP/ DEECA (9%) and their local council (8%).

Only 4% (n=33) of respondents indicated they would report illegal hunting to GMA, similar to the number of respondents who said they would report illegal hunting to Parks Victoria (5%).

V. Awareness and understanding of GMA

Key take-outs

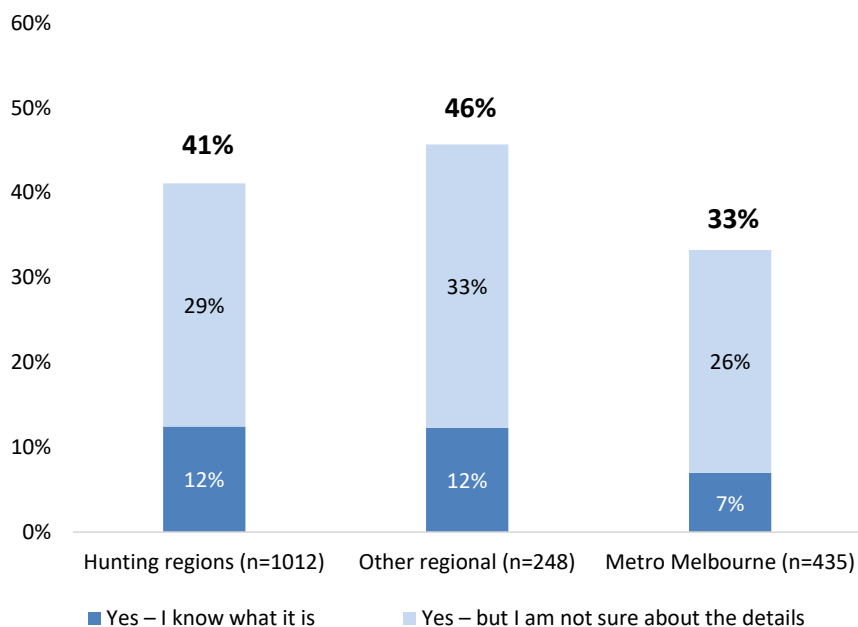
- Overall awareness and understanding of GMA and its role is fairly low among those living in hunting regions, although it is higher in these regions compared to those living in metropolitan Melbourne.
- While the majority of respondents were able to correctly identify aspects of GMA’s roles and responsibilities, respondents had more difficulty in recognising whether misconceptions were part of GMA’s role (such as managing game habitats and public land).
- There is opportunity to increase awareness of GMA and its functions across all hunting regions, and particularly in Geelong (where awareness was lowest).

Overall awareness of GMA

Awareness of GMA among respondents in game hunting regions was fairly low (41% overall). Only a minority (12%) were confident they ‘knew what GMA was’ and 29% had only heard of GMA but were unsure about the details. Awareness was similar to respondents living in other regional areas (46% overall) but higher than metropolitan Melbourne (33%).

Figure 8: Awareness of GMA by region type

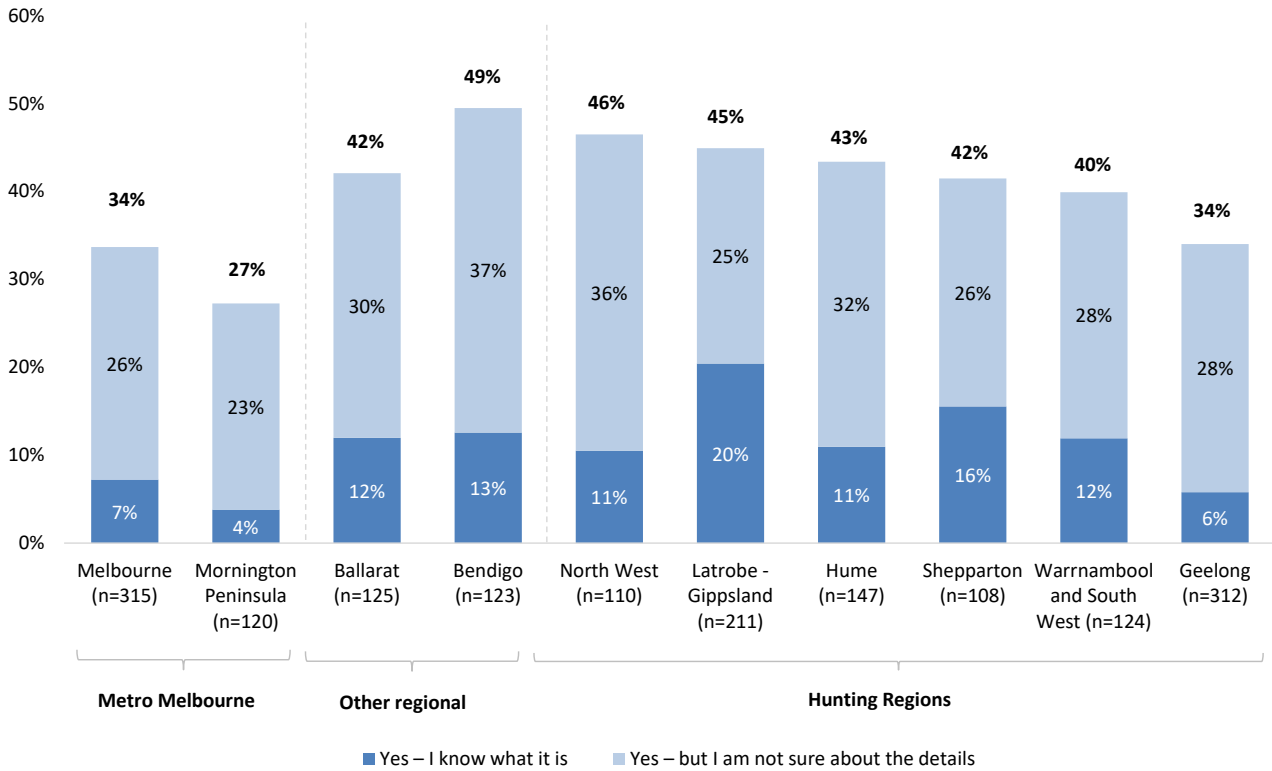
(Base: All respondents)



Q14. Before today, had you heard of the Victorian Game Management Authority (GMA)?

Among the game hunting regions, there were few statistically significant differences in levels of awareness. Respondents in Latrobe-Gippsland (20%) were most likely to report they were **confident** in they knew what GMA was. Awareness of GMA was lowest in Geelong (34% overall).

Figure 9: Awareness of GMA by individual region
 (Base: Respondents aware of game hunting occurring in Victoria)



Q14. Before today, had you heard of the Victorian Game Management Authority (GMA)?

Unprompted understanding of GMA’s role

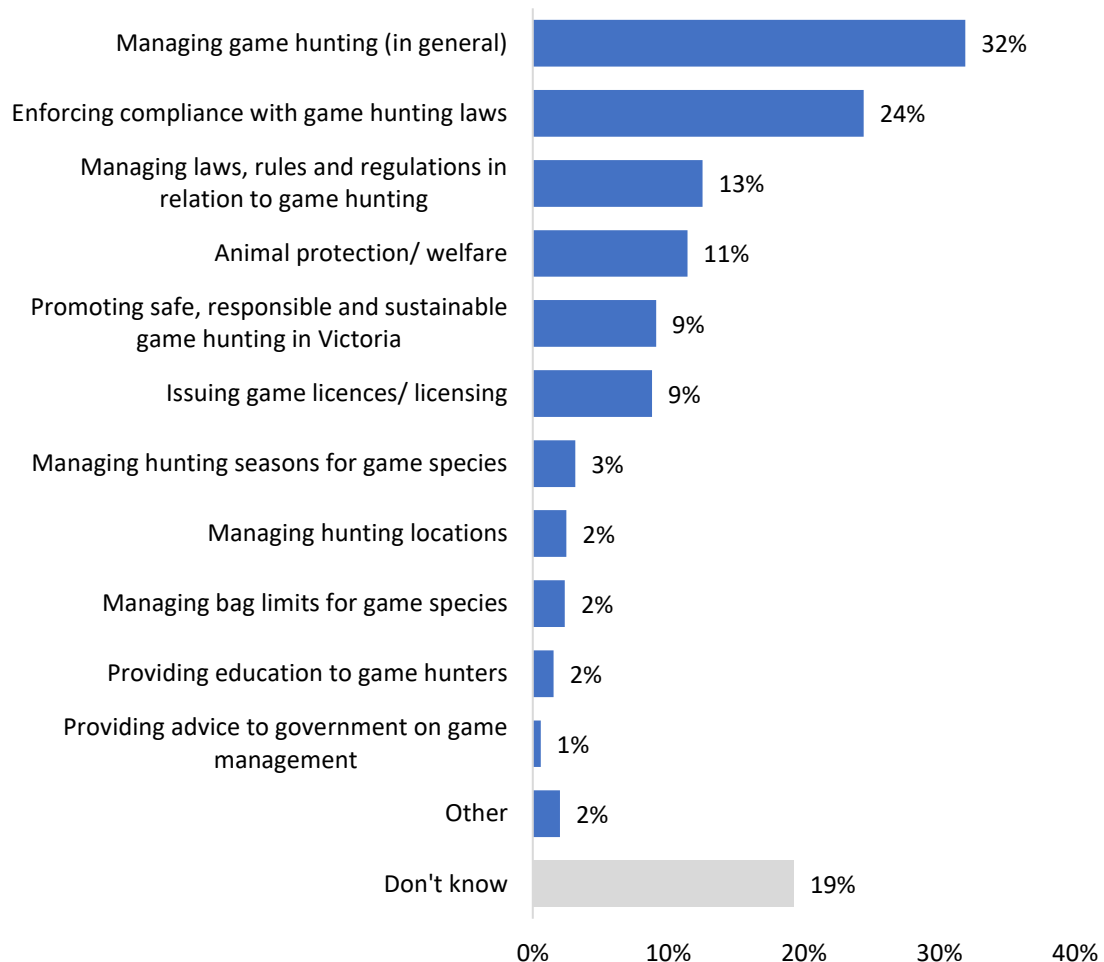
Without prompting, respondents most commonly thought the GMA’s main roles were:

- Game management in general, including regulating game hunting, monitoring game hunting and controlling game hunting (32%, unweighted);
- Enforcing compliance with game hunting laws (24%);
- Managing and developing laws, rules and regulations in relation to game hunting (13%);
- Animal protection/ welfare (11%), including ensuring protected species are not killed and maintaining sustainable population numbers;
- Promoting safe, responsible and sustainable game hunting (9%); and
- Issuing game licences (9%).

A notable proportion of respondents were unsure (19%) about what the GMA’s role was.

Figure 10: Unprompted understanding of GMA’s role

(Base: All respondents, unweighted)



Semi-prompted understanding of GMA’s role

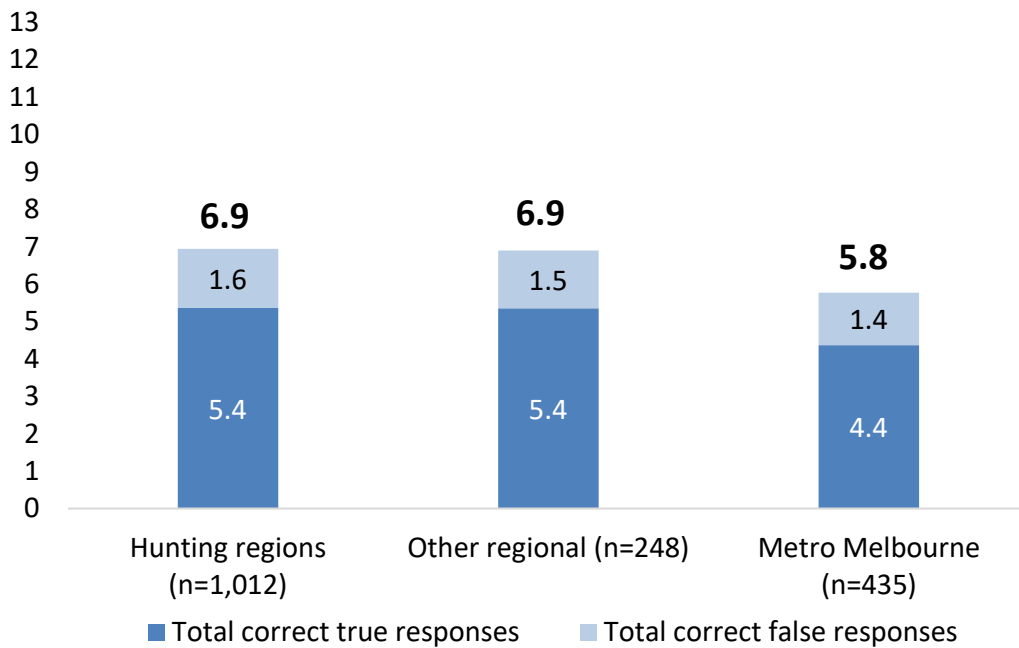
When prompted about whether they thought specific aspects were part of the GMA’s role, on average respondents living in hunting regions selected the correct answers for 6.9 out of 13 statements (53% correct on average). This was in line with respondents living in other regional areas (6.9), and both regions scored higher than those living in metropolitan Melbourne (5.8).

The average number of correct answers was similar between individual game hunting regions (ranging between 6.5 and 7.2 correct answers on average).

Respondents were more likely to correctly identify the roles and responsibilities within the remit of the GMA (5.4 out of 7 aspects among hunting region respondents) but were less likely to correctly identify which aspects were outside GMA’s remit (1.6 out of 6).

**Figure 11: Knowledge of GMA’s role by region type
(average number of correct answers out of 13)**

(Base: All respondents)

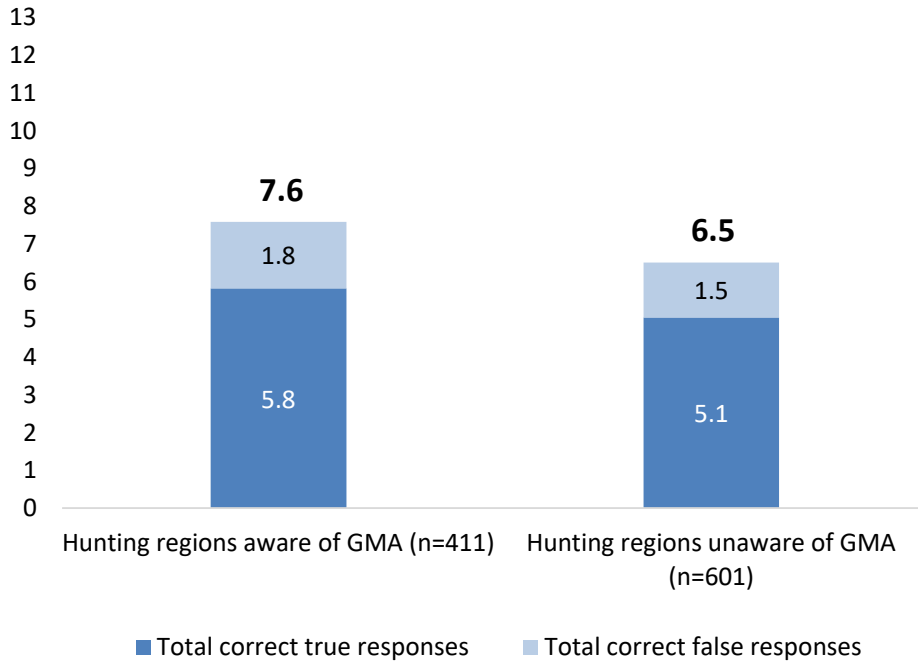


Q16. Please indicate whether you think each of the following are part of the GMA’s role.

As would be expected, respondents from game hunting regions aware of the GMA (7.6) were more knowledgeable about the GMA’s role compared to respondents who were unaware of the GMA (6.5). This result suggests that without prior awareness of GMA, on average respondents were able to ascertain around half of the GMA’s roles and responsibilities through context.

**Figure 12: Knowledge of GMA’s role by awareness of GMA
(average number of correct answers out of 13)**

(Base: Respondents from hunting regions)



Q16. Please indicate whether you think each of the following are part of the GMA’s role.

Respondents living in game hunting regions reported the highest awareness of the GMA’s role in:

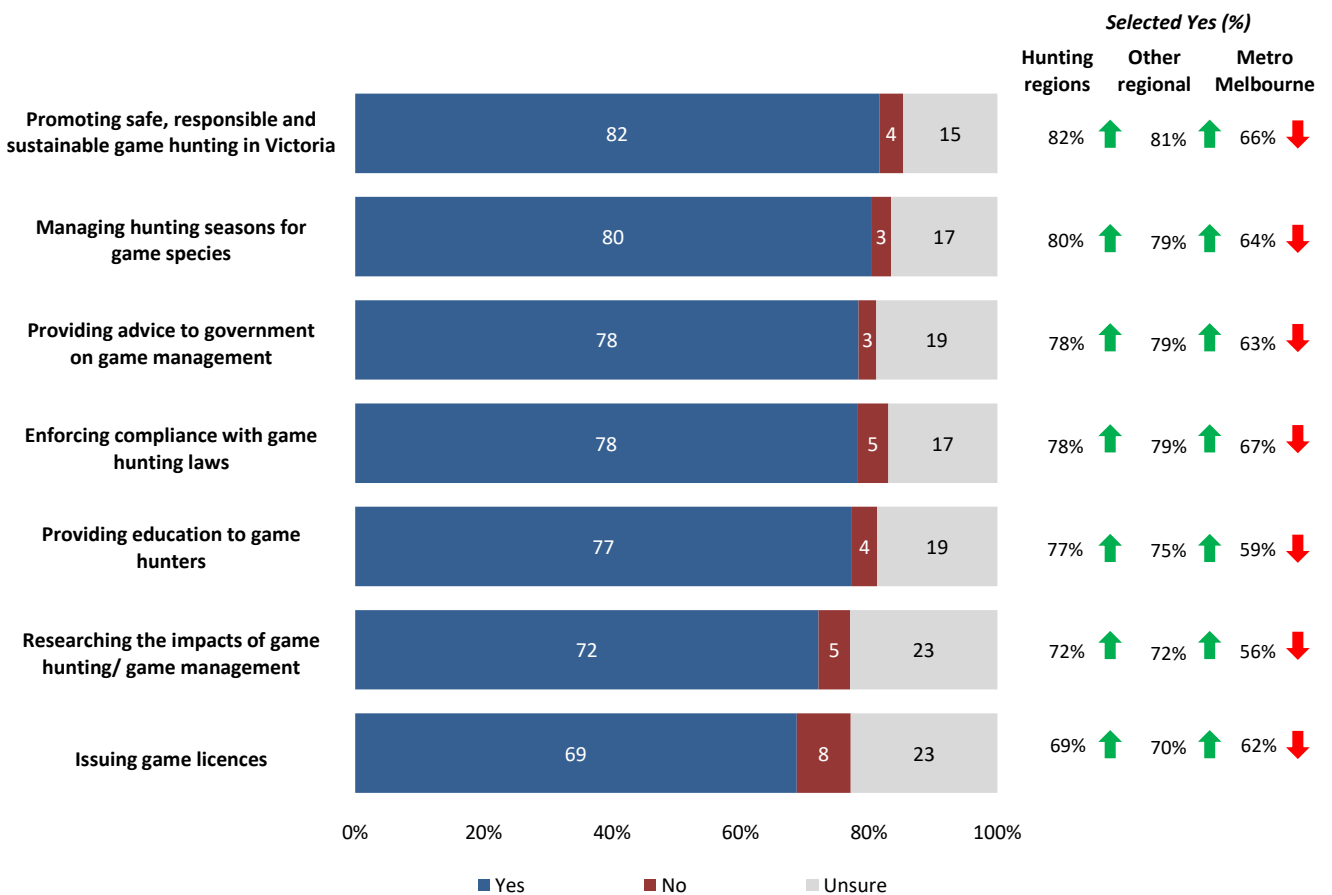
- Promoting safe, responsible, and sustainable game hunting in Victoria (82%);
- Managing hunting seasons for game species (80%); and
- Enforcing compliance with game hunting laws (78%).

In contrast, respondents living in game hunting regions were least likely to be aware of the GMA’s role in issuing game licences (69%).

Awareness of all roles and responsibilities being within GMA’s remit was higher among hunting region (69-82%) and other regional (70-81%) respondents, compared to metropolitan Melbourne (56-67%) respondents.

Figure 13: Correct identification of aspects of GMA’s role – hunting regions only (in chart)

(Base: All hunting region respondents, n=1,012)



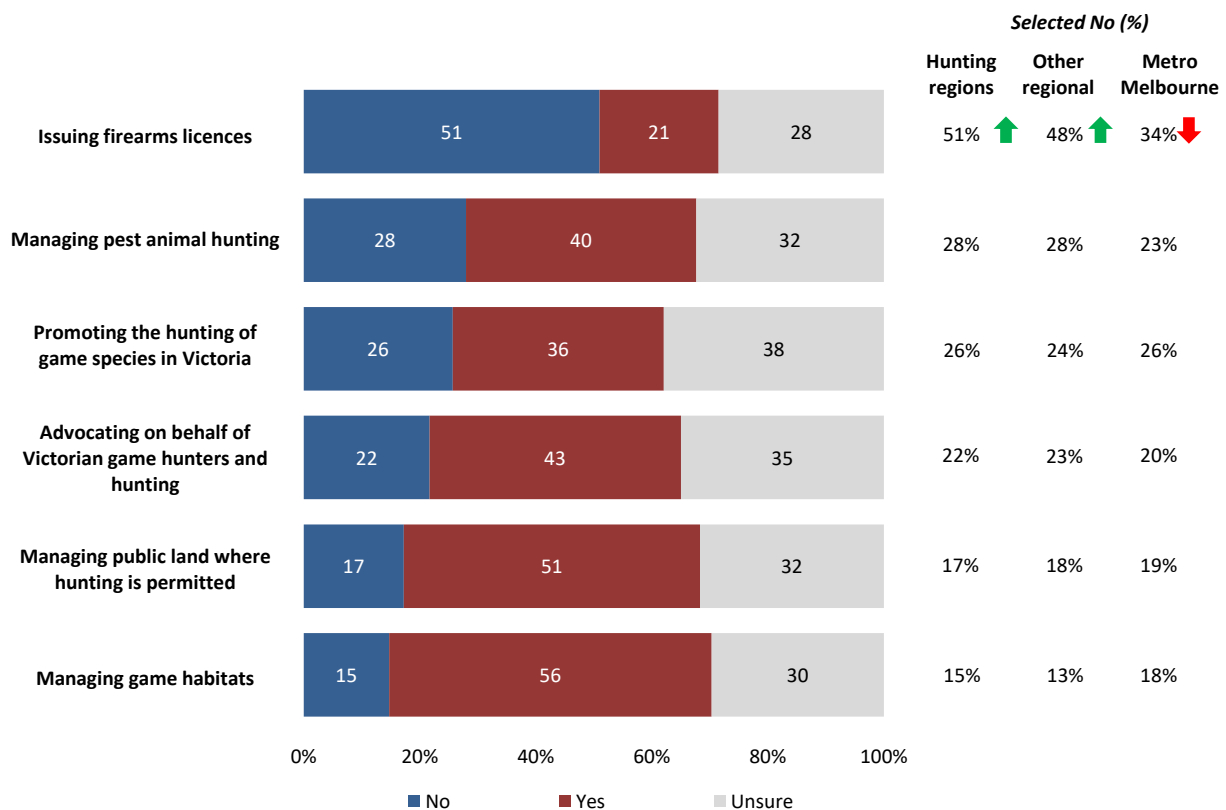
Q16f-k & m. Please indicate whether you think each of the following are part of the GMA’s role?

Compared to aspects that *were* part of GMA’s role, respondents living in game hunting regions reported greater levels of uncertainty around whether misconceptions were part of the GMA’s role. Of the misconceptions listed, these respondents were most likely to wrongly attribute the following roles and responsibilities to the GMA:

- Managing game habitats (56%);
- Managing public land where hunting is permitted (51%); and
- Advocating on behalf of Victorian game hunters and hunting (43%).

Just over half of the respondents (51%) recognised that issuing firearm licenses was not within the remit of the GMA’s roles and responsibilities. Respondents from hunting regions (51%) and other regional areas (48%) were more likely to recognise that issuing firearms licences was outside the GMA’s remit, compared to metropolitan Melbourne respondents (34%).

Figure 14: Misconceptions about GMA’s role – hunting regions only (in chart)
(Base: All respondents)

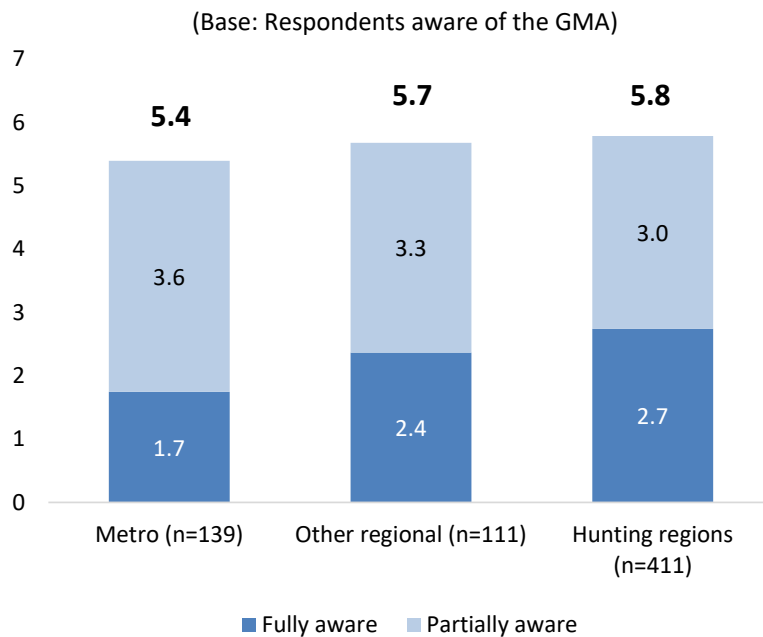


Q16a-e & l. Please indicate whether you think each of the following are part of the GMA’s role?

Prompted awareness and understanding of GMA

Respondents aware of GMA were prompted about their familiarity with a range of aspects about the GMA. Overall, awareness of various aspects of GMA was fairly low. Among respondents aware of GMA, respondents living in hunting regions (2.7 on average out of 7) were fully aware of less than half of the statements about the GMA and its role, although this was higher than respondents from metropolitan Melbourne (1.7). Awareness was similar between respondents from hunting regions (2.7 fully aware on average) and other regional areas (2.4).

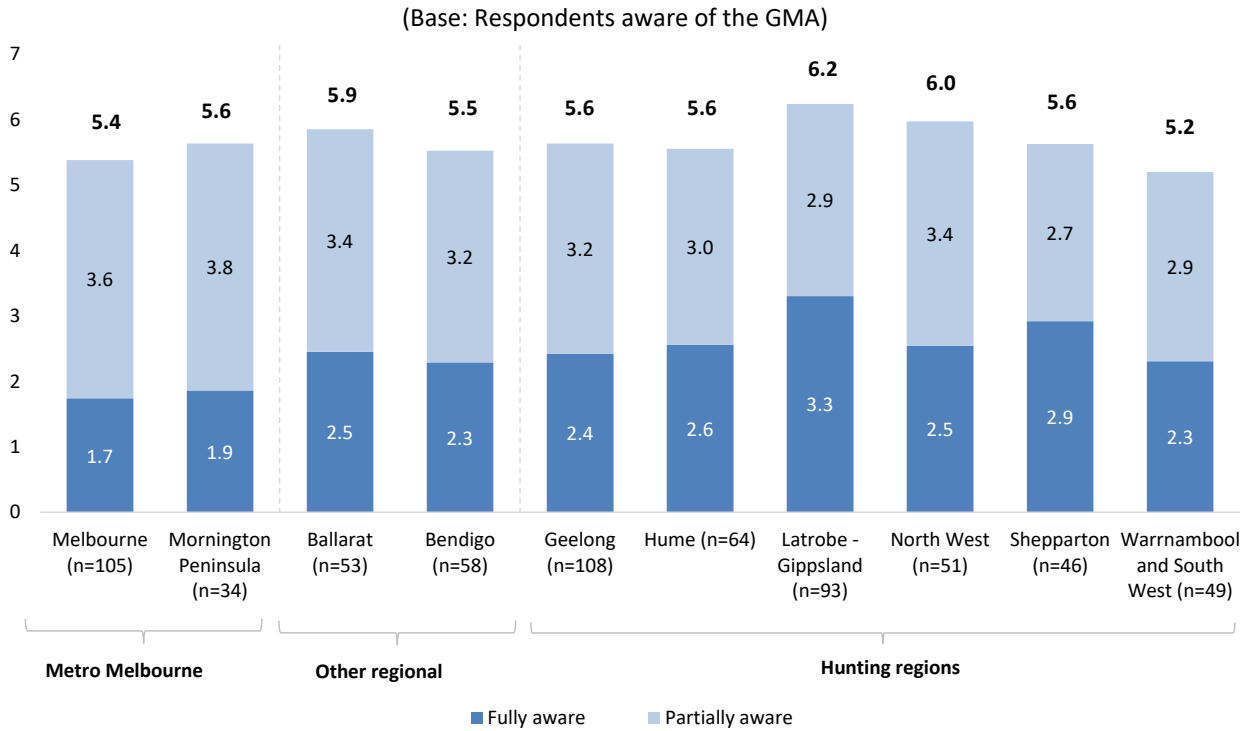
Figure 15: Average (number of aspects out of 7) awareness of GMA’s role by region type



Q17. Below are some statements about the GMA – please read each statement and then we will ask you some questions about the GMA

Across the individual regions, total awareness for statements about the GMA and its role were broadly similar. Reported awareness was slightly higher among respondents living in Latrobe-Gippsland, although this difference was not statistically significant compared to other regions.

Figure 16: Average (number of aspects out of 7) awareness of GMA’s role by individual region



Q17. Below are some statements about the GMA – please read each statement and then we will ask you some questions about the GMA.

Respondents living in game hunting regions were most likely to report ‘full’ awareness that the GMA:

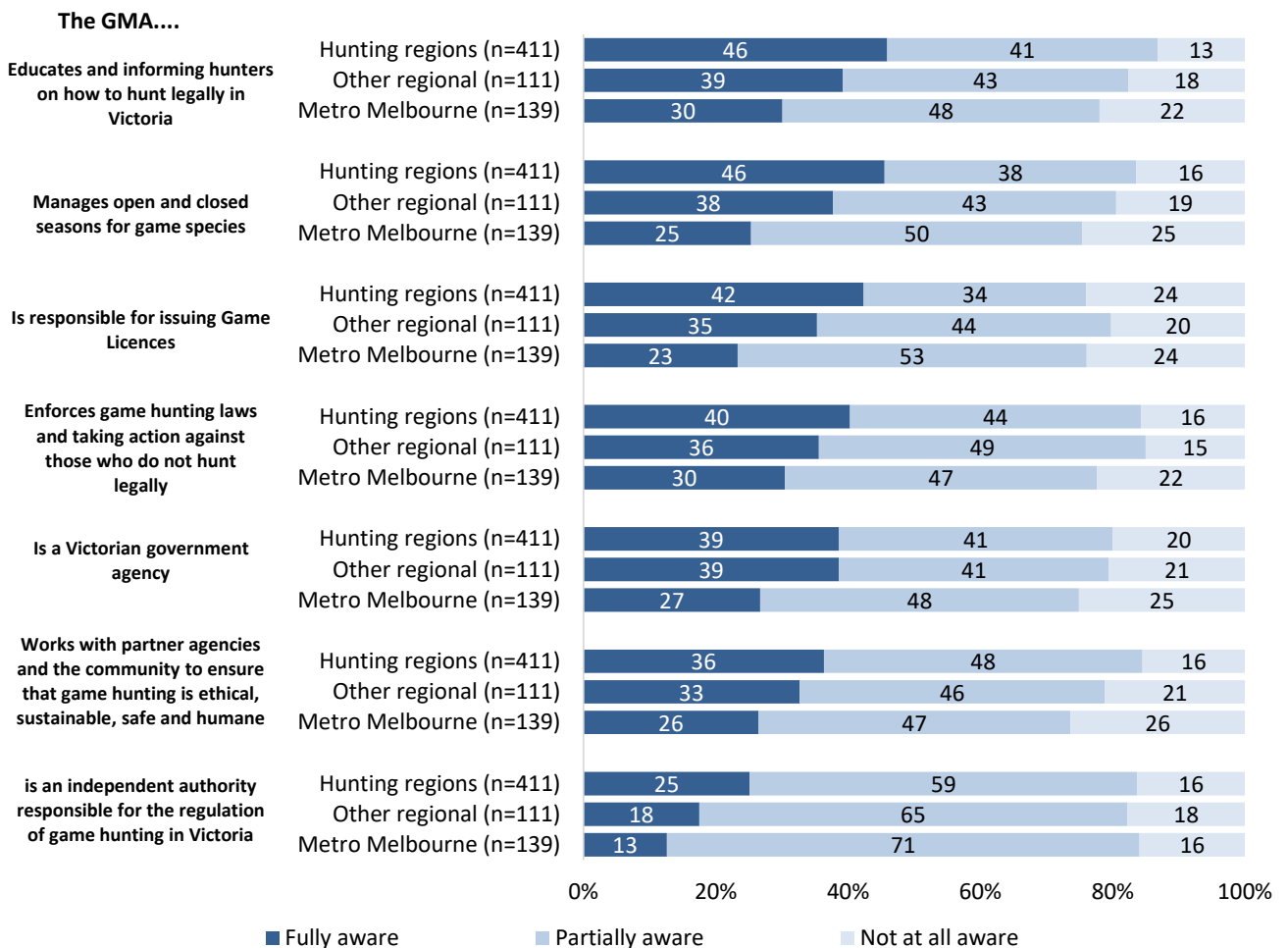
- Educates and informs hunters on how to hunt legally in Victoria (46%);
- Manages open and closed seasons for game species (46%); and
- Is responsible for issuing game licenses (42%).

Respondents were least likely to report being ‘fully’ aware that the GMA is an independent authority responsible for the regulation of game hunting in Victoria (25%).

Respondents living in game hunting regions (25-46% fully aware) reported higher awareness of all statements compared to metropolitan Melbourne respondents (13-30%).

Figure 17: Awareness of GMA’s role by region type

(Base: Respondents aware of the GMA)



Q17. Below are some statements about the GMA – please read each statement and then we will ask you some questions about the GMA.

VI. Perceptions of GMA

Key take-outs

- Overall satisfaction with the GMA's services was fairly low among respondents in hunting regions – however, this was led by more neutral and unsure ratings rather than dissatisfaction, reflecting low engagement and familiarity with GMA generally.
- Perceptions of GMA were more positive among those who demonstrated greater familiarity with its functions and those who had more positive perceptions of the impact of game hunting in general.
- Respondents were more positive about GMA being fair and making decisions based on the best available advice and evidence, but were relatively less likely to agree GMA is neutral and unbiased in delivering its responsibilities and was adequately addressing illegal hunting.
- These results suggest GMA could improve community perceptions of its services by raising awareness of its work generally, and particularly in relation to addressing illegal hunting and breaches to public safety laws.

Among those who reported some awareness of GMA, less than half (44%) of respondents living in hunting regions reported they were satisfied with the GMA's services (in line with 44% of those living in other regional areas and 42% of those living in metropolitan Melbourne who were aware of the GMA). However, notable proportions provided neutral or 'unsure' ratings (43%), reflecting low engagement and familiarity with the GMA generally.

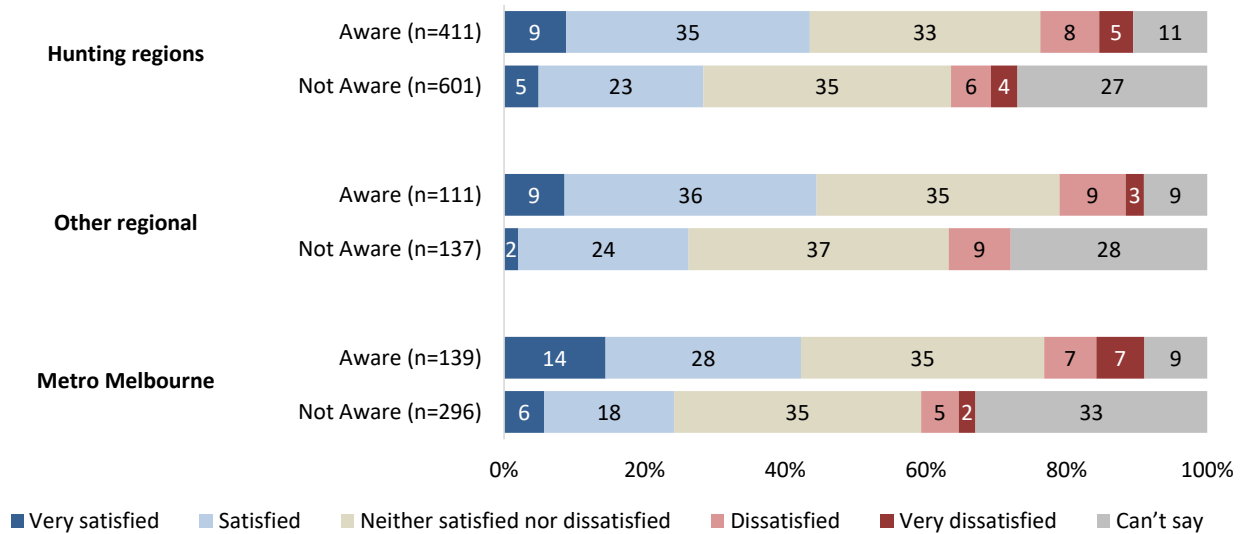
Among hunting regions, satisfaction was highest among respondents living in the North West (53% of those aware of GMA) and Latrobe-Gippsland (47%) – although these results were not statistically significantly different from other regions.

Those aware of GMA who reported greater familiarity with its role reported greater satisfaction with its services overall. Perceptions of the impact of game hunting were also linked to overall satisfaction with GMA (55% of those who reported a positive impact of game hunting on them personally were satisfied with GMA's services, compared to 29% of those who reported a negative impact).

Respondents not aware of the GMA were also prompted about their general impressions of the GMA after reading about some of its functions. However, most of these respondents provided neutral or 'unsure' ratings about their satisfaction with the GMA, reflecting their lack of awareness of GMA.

Figure 18: Overall satisfaction with GMA’s services by region type

(Base: Respondents aware of the GMA)

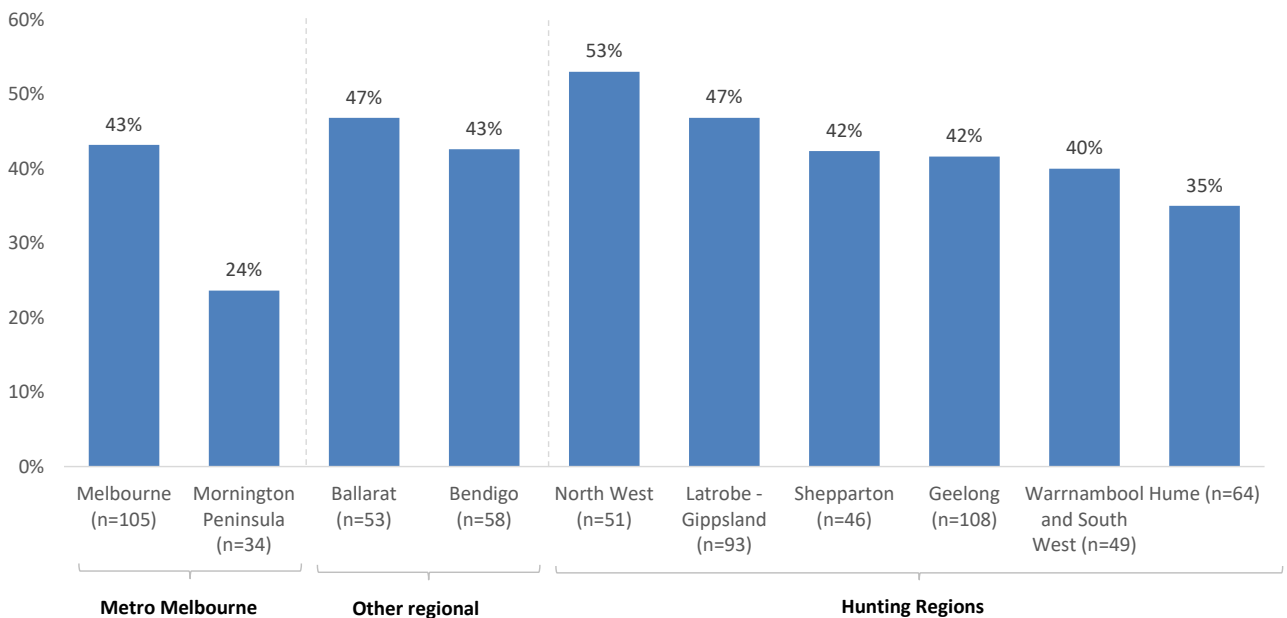


Q18.1. Overall, how satisfied are you with the GMA’s services? We are interested in your impressions even if you have not had any direct contact with the GMA.

Figure 19: Overall satisfaction with GMA’s services by individual region

(% very satisfied or satisfied)

(Base: Respondents aware of the GMA)



Q18.1. Overall, how satisfied are you with the GMA’s services? We are interested in your impressions even if you have not had any direct contact with the GMA.

Among those *aware* of GMA and living in game hunting regions, respondents were most likely to agree they trust GMA:

- To treat people fairly and equally (63%);
 - This level of agreement was higher compared to those aware of GMA living in other regional areas (49%) and metropolitan Melbourne (50%);
- To manage game hunting in Victoria efficiently and effectively (60%); and
- Is making decisions based on the best available expert advice and evidence (59%).

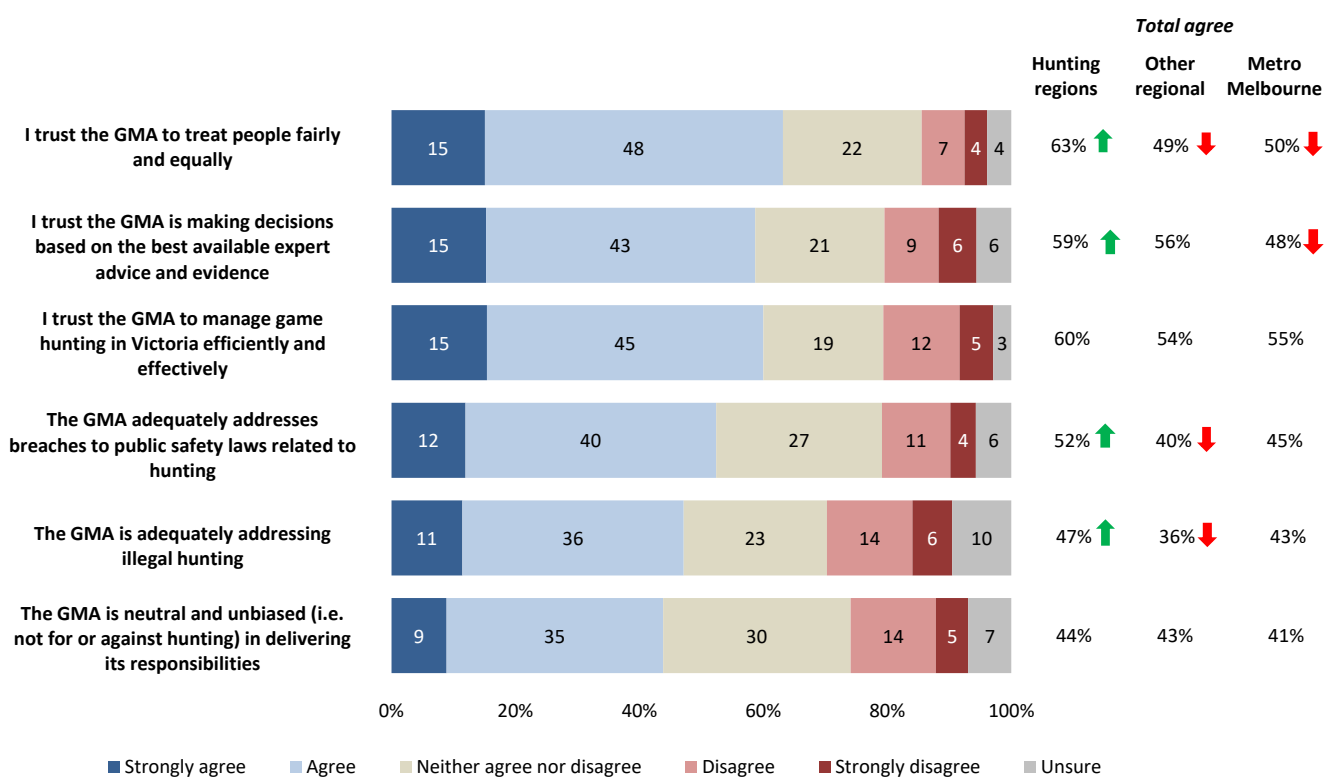
These respondents were relatively less likely to agree that GMA is neutral and unbiased in delivering its responsibilities (44%) and that GMA is adequately addressing illegal hunting (47%). These respondents were also most likely to disagree with these statements (19% and 20%, respectively).

Perceptions of the impact of game hunting were linked to perceptions of the GMA – those who reported a positive impact from game hunting for each aspect were more likely to report positive perceptions of GMA, compared to those who perceived negative or no impact.

Those living in game hunting regions that were *not aware* of GMA were less likely to agree with all statements. However, this was due to greater proportions of those *not aware* providing neutral or ‘unsure’ responses, rather than greater disagreement.

Figure 19: Perceptions of GMA – hunting regions only (in chart)

(Base: Hunting region respondents aware of the GMA, n=1,012)



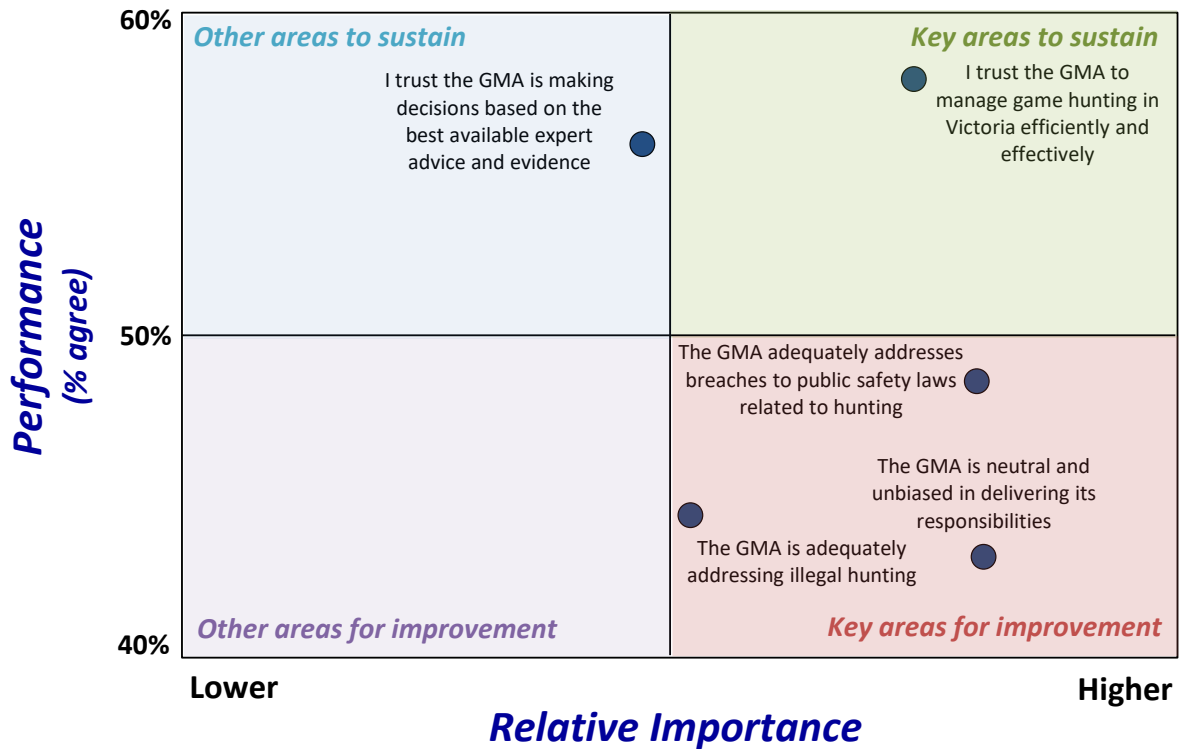
Q18. Please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about the GMA.

For respondents not aware of GMA: Even if you have not heard of the GMA before, we are interested in your general impressions after reading the information on the previous page.

Regression analysis found that among those aware of GMA, most perceptions of GMA (except for GMA treating people fairly and equally) were key drivers of overall satisfaction with GMA. Among these key drivers, the key areas for improvement identified were: being seen to be neutral and unbiased in delivering its responsibilities, adequately addressing breaches to public safety laws related to hunting and adequately addressing illegal hunting.

Figure 20: Key drivers of overall satisfaction

(Base: Respondents aware of GMA, n=661)



VII. Interactions with GMA

Key take-outs

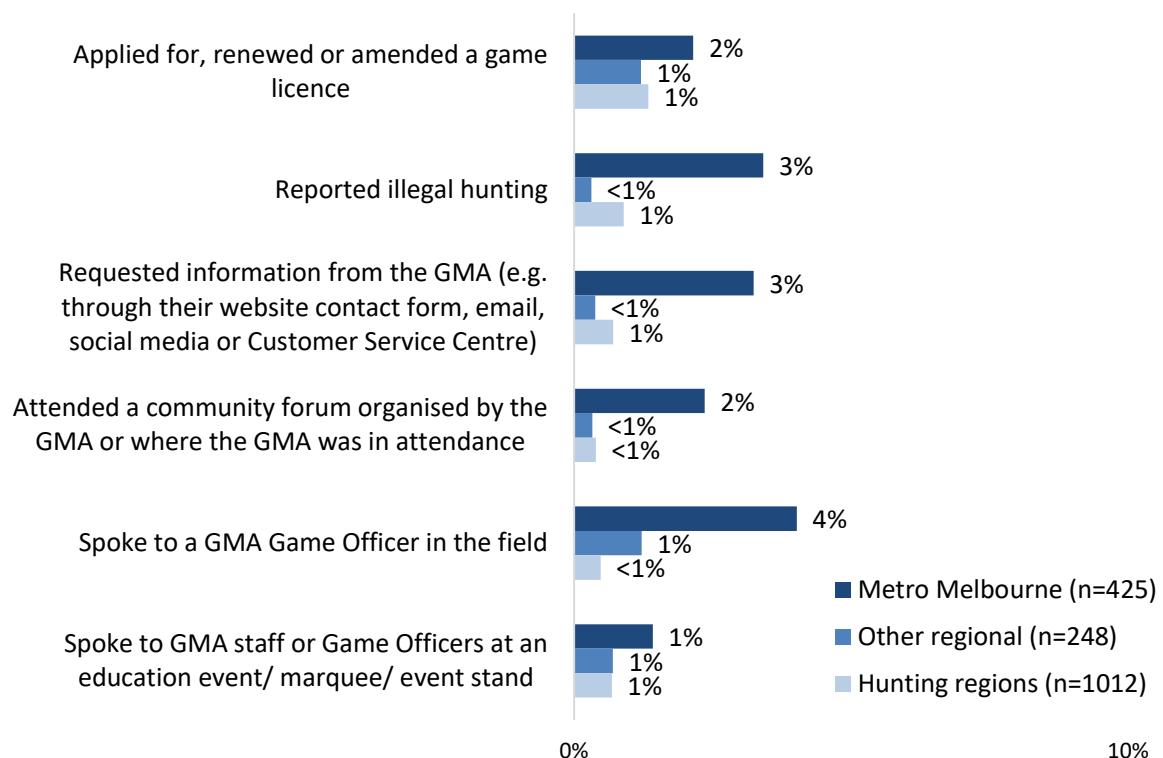
- Very few community respondents reported having had direct interactions with GMA or seen Game Officers conducting compliance activities.
- Among those who had direct interactions with GMA, respondents were generally positive about their interactions – but were less positive about the timeliness of GMA’s response to their requests or submissions.

Very few respondents had seen GMA Game Officers conducting compliance activities in the last 12 months (only 1% of respondents across all regions).

Only a minority of respondents reported having any direct interactions with the GMA in the last 12 months. Metropolitan Melbourne respondents were most likely to report having interactions (12%), compared to those in game hunting regions or other regional areas (4% each). However, this runs counter to expectations given the opportunity for and likelihood of exposure, suggesting a degree of misattribution among Melbourne respondents.

Figure 21: Type of direct interactions with GMA by region type

(Base: All respondents)

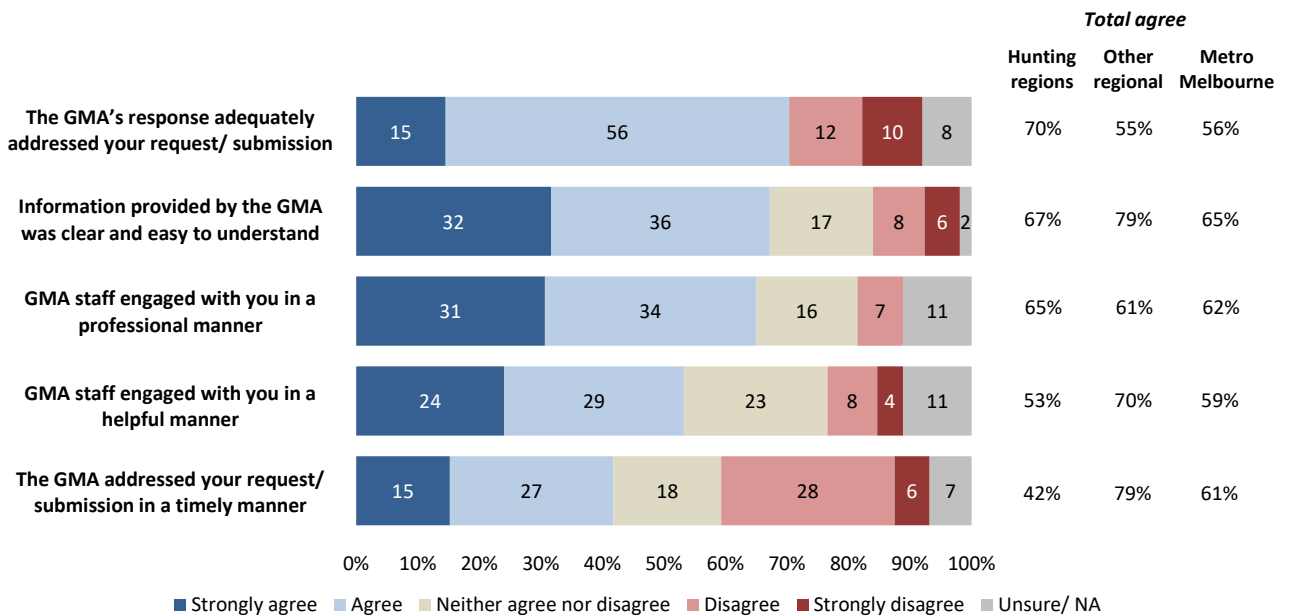


Q30. In the last 12 months, have you had any direct interactions with the GMA?

The majority that interacted agreed that the information provided by GMA was clear and easy to understand (67%) and GMA staff engaged with them in a professional manner (65%). Among those who had reported illegal hunting or requested information from GMA (n=26), most felt that GMA’s response adequately addressed their request/ submission (70%). However, these respondents were less likely to agree that GMA had addressed their request/ submission in a timely manner (42%).

Figure 22: Perceptions of direct interactions with GMA – hunting regions only (in chart)

(Base: Hunting region respondents that had directly interacted with GMA, n=15-37)



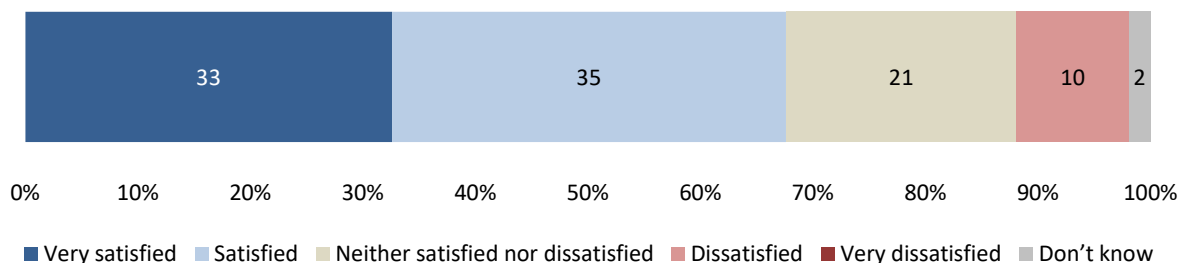
Q31. Thinking about your interactions with the GMA in the past 12 months, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

Note: Please interpret results with caution due to small sample sizes

Among those in hunting regions who had direct interactions with GMA (n=37), the majority were satisfied with their interactions overall (68%, in line with 70% for other regional and 66% for metropolitan Melbourne respondents who had interactions).

Figure 23: Perceptions of direct interactions with GMA – hunting regions only

(Base: Hunting region respondents that had directly interacted with GMA, n=37)



Q31.1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your interactions with the GMA in the past 12 months?

VIII. Current information sources

Key take-outs

- Respondents living in hunting regions mainly get information about game hunting through *passive* sources (without actively looking for it), and primarily through news channels.
- Respondents who had seen or heard information most commonly reported seeing/ hearing about duck season, while a minority also reported exposure to information about responsible hunting and reporting illegal hunting.
- The results suggest that the main information reaching the community is related to duck season and through unofficial channels, which may be more controversial or incomplete compared to GMA’s communications.
- While only a few recalled seeing or hearing information from GMA, those who had reported generally positive perceptions of the clarity and timeliness of information – although they were less likely to agree that information was objective, fair and balanced.

Exposure to information

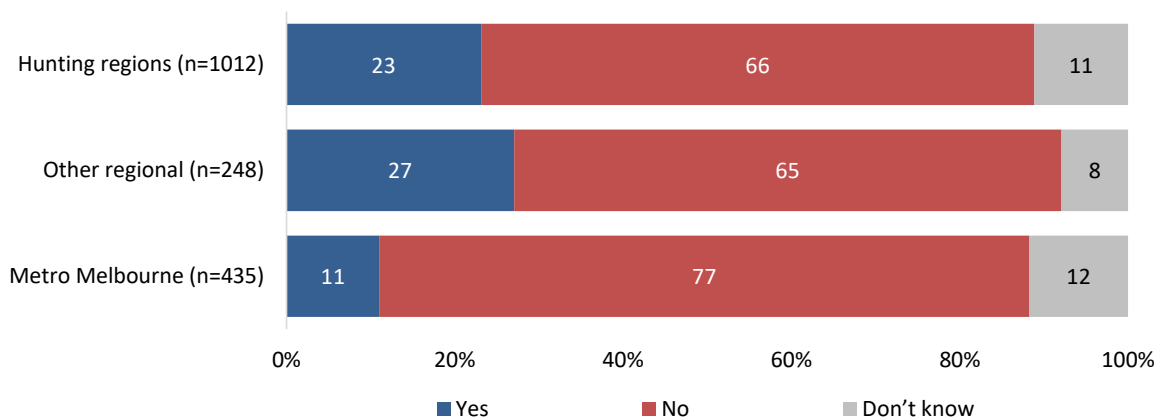
Very few respondents indicated they had *actively* looked for information about game hunting in Victoria in the past 12 months (4% of those living in hunting regions, 6% of those in other regional areas and 2% of those living in metropolitan Melbourne).

Without prompting, around one quarter (23%) of those living in hunting regions had seen or heard information about game hunting in the past 12 months, in line with 27% of those living in other regional areas and 11% of those in metropolitan Melbourne. Those who had seen information about game hunting were more likely to be aware of GMA (59% of those who had seen information, compared to 34% of those who had not).

Among those who had seen information about game hunting (n=352), the vast majority reported they had seen or heard general information about duck season such as announcements about the season opening, bag limits and timing) (54%, unweighted) or calls to ban duck season (18%).

Figure 24: Unprompted exposure to game hunting information by region type

(Base: All respondents)

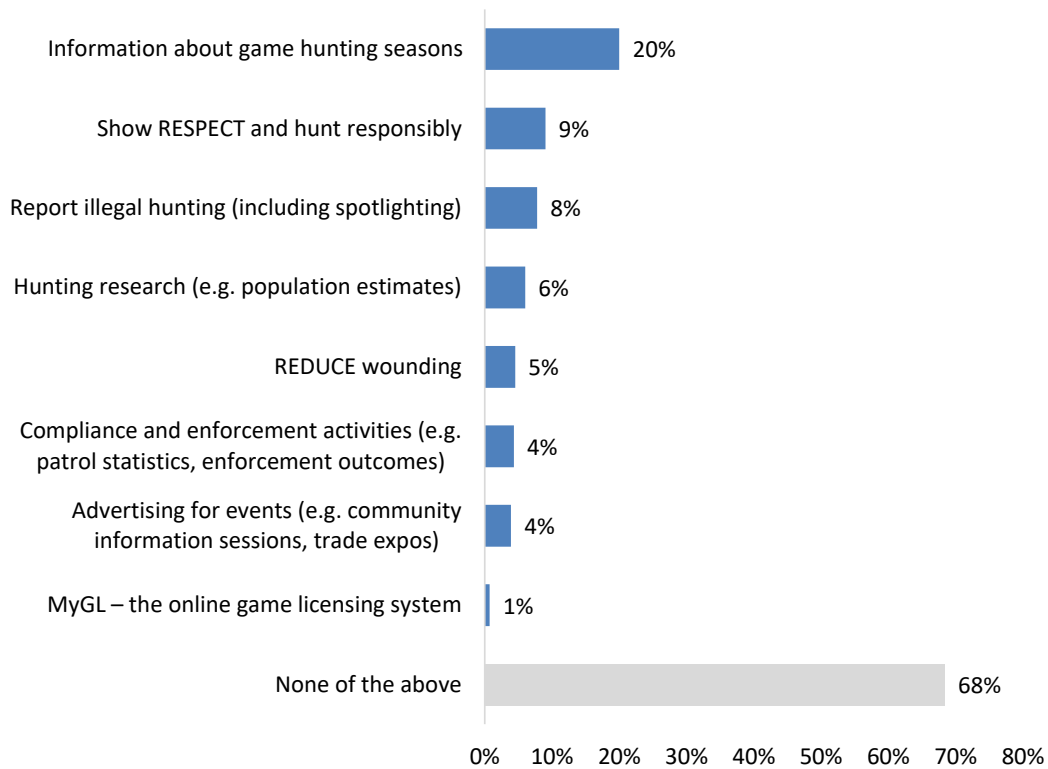


Q19. In the past 12 months, have you seen or heard any information about game hunting in Victoria?

When prompted about whether they had seen or heard specific information about game hunting, 32% of those living in hunting regions (compared to 32% of those in other regional areas and 25% of those in metropolitan Melbourne) had seen or heard information about game hunting in Victoria; most commonly information about game hunting seasons (20%), followed by information about reporting illegal hunting (8%) and show RESPECT and hunt responsibly (9%).

Figure 25: Prompted awareness of game hunting information – hunting regions only

(Base: All respondents living in hunting regions, n=1,012)



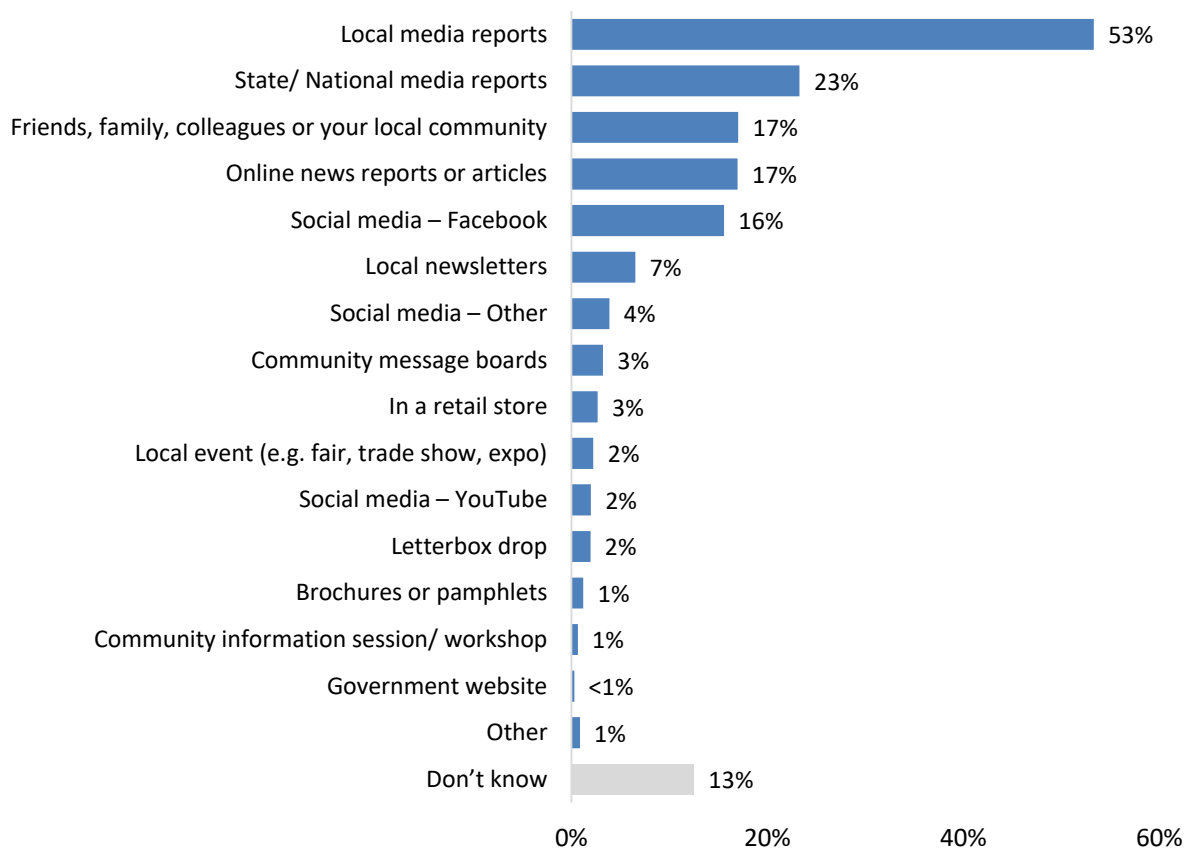
Q20. In the past 12 months, have you seen or heard any game hunting information related to any of the following in Victoria?

Among those who had seen or heard something about game hunting in the past 12 months, news reports were the most common channel of information, specifically local media reports (53%), State/ national media reports (23%) and online news reports or articles (17%). Word of mouth from friends, family, colleagues and local community (17%) and Facebook (16%) were also common channels of information.

These results suggest that most information that respondents see or hear about game hunting is through unofficial channels (e.g. news reports) and related to duck season, which may be more controversial or incomplete compared to GMA’s communications.

Figure 26: Channels where seen/ heard information about game hunting – hunting regions only

(Base: Respondents in hunting regions who had seen/ heard information about game hunting information in Victoria, n=381)

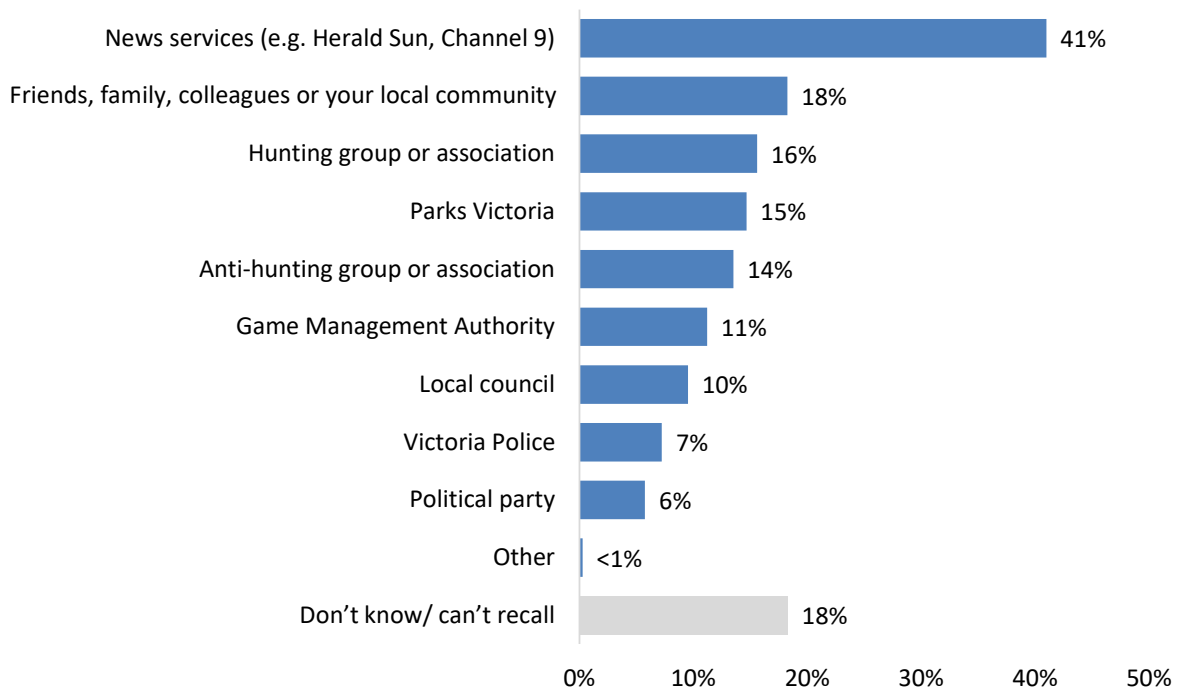


Q21. In the past 12 months, have you seen or heard any game hunting information related to any of the following in Victoria?

Among those in hunting regions who had seen or heard information, respondents most recalled seeing or hearing information from news services (41%). Only a minority (11%) recalled the GMA as the source of information. The proportion who reported seeing information from GMA was similar between individual hunting regions (between 9-14%).

Figure 27: Source of game hunting information – hunting regions only

(Base: Respondents in hunting regions who had seen/ heard information about game hunting information in Victoria, n=381)

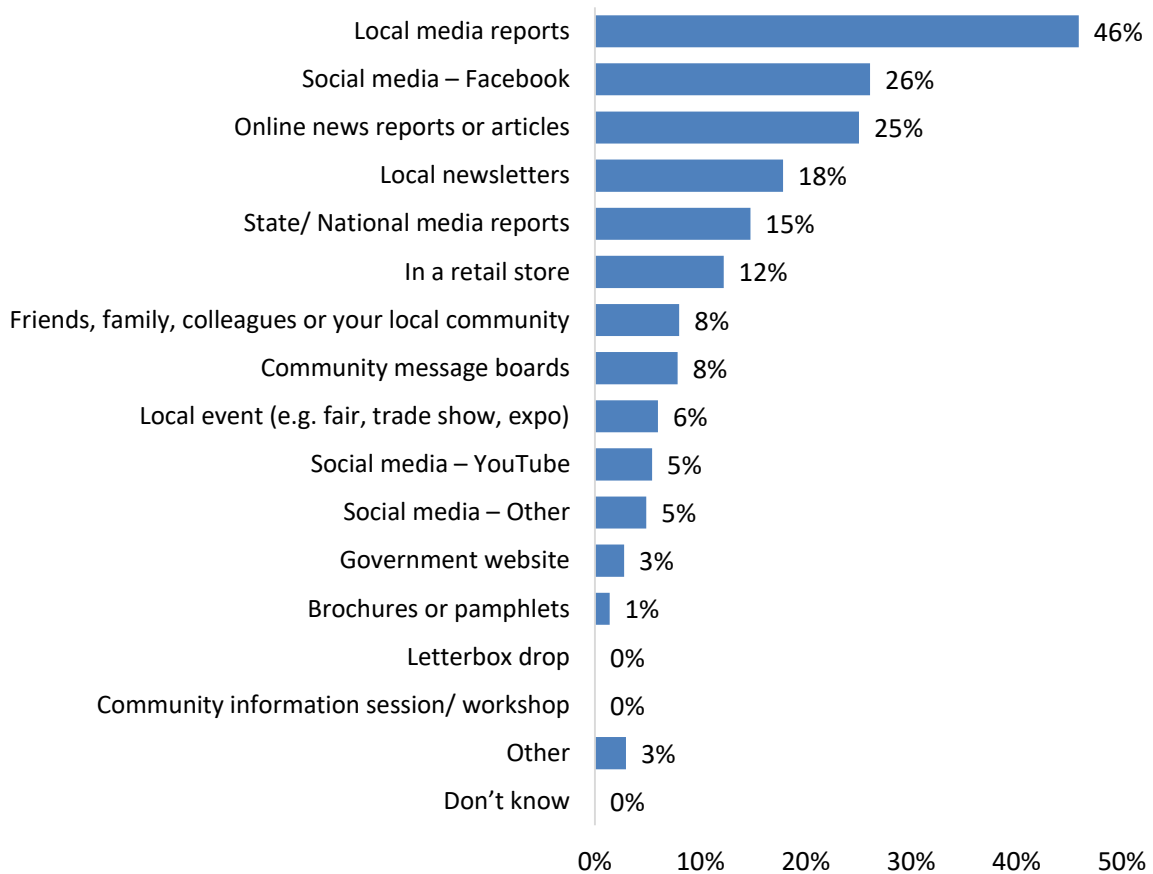


Q22. What was the source(s) of the information you saw or heard?

Exposure to and perceptions of information from GMA

Among those in hunting regions who recalled seeing or hearing information from GMA (n=44), respondents most commonly recalled seeing or hearing information from local media reports (46%), Facebook (26%) and online news reports or articles (25%).

Figure 28: Channels of game hunting information from GMA – hunting regions only
 (Base: Respondents in hunting regions who recalled seeing or hearing information from GMA, n=44)



Q23. Out of the channels you selected, where did you see or hear information from the GMA?

Among those in hunting regions who had seen or heard information from GMA, most agreed the information was clear and easy to understand (76%) and timely (63%). However, respondents were less likely to agree that information was objective, fair and balanced (50%).

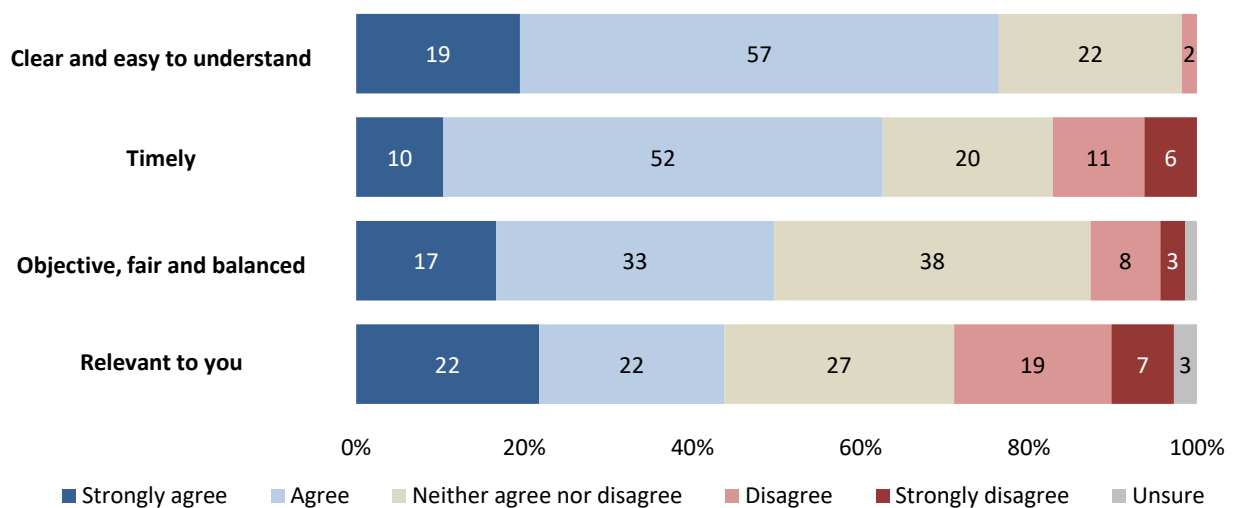
Perceptions of all aspects were more positive for GMA compared to perceptions of information from other sources.

Only a few respondents (n=66) provided further feedback about GMA’s resources and communications. These comments included:

- General positive comments about the information available;
- More information about the benefits of game hunting;
- More information about the risks of game hunting; and
- Providing earlier notice of game hunting seasons.

Figure 29: Perceptions of information seen/ heard from GMA – hunting regions only

(Base: Hunting region respondents who had seen/ heard information from GMA, n=44)



Q24. Thinking about the (Game Management Authority (GMA)) information about game hunting you have seen in the past 12 months, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement that the information provided was...

IX. Information needs

Key take-outs

- Perceived importance of knowing about game hunting was fairly low, even among those living in regions where game hunting occurs.
- Respondents' key information needs were how to report illegal game hunting activity, and where and when game hunting is occurring.
- Respondents mainly preferred information to be provided on government websites, including Parks Victoria, the GMA and local council websites rather than through more direct/ push channels.
- Among more direct channels, letterbox drops, brochures/ pamphlets and emails were preferred.

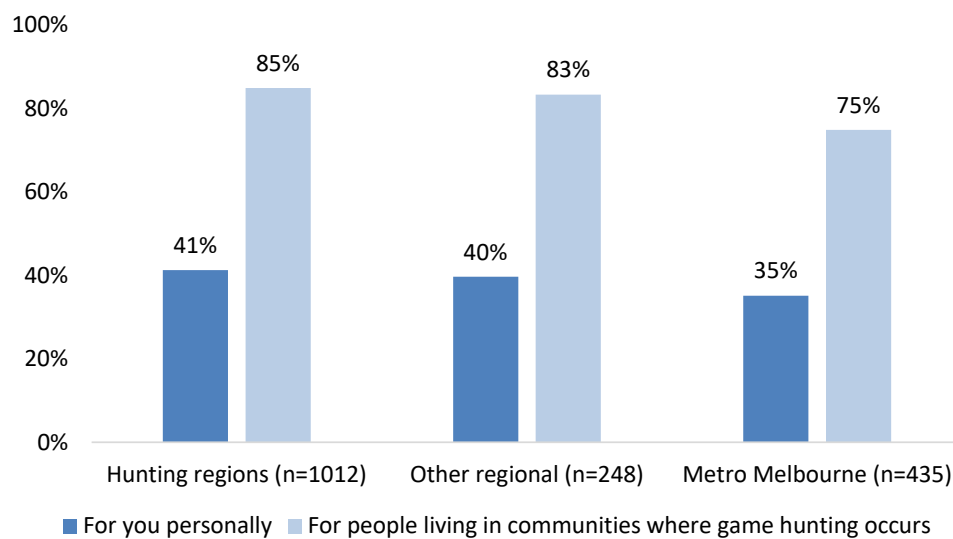
Most respondents felt it was 'very' important (score of 4 or 5) for people living in communities where game hunting occurs to be informed about game hunting in Victoria and how it is managed. However, respondents generally felt it was less important for themselves personally to know about game hunting.

Around four-in-ten respondents in hunting regions (41%) and other regional areas (40%) felt it was important for them personally to know about game hunting, slightly higher compared to Metropolitan Melbourne (35%). Among individual game hunting regions, those living in Shepparton (50%) were slightly more likely to report it was 'very' important for them to know about game hunting, although this difference was not statistically significant.

Those aware of game hunting happening in their region reported greater importance for them personally to be informed (50% 'very' important, compared to 30% of those who did not think game hunting occurred in their region).

Figure 30: Perceived importance of being informed about game hunting by region type (% 'very' important)

(Base: All respondents)

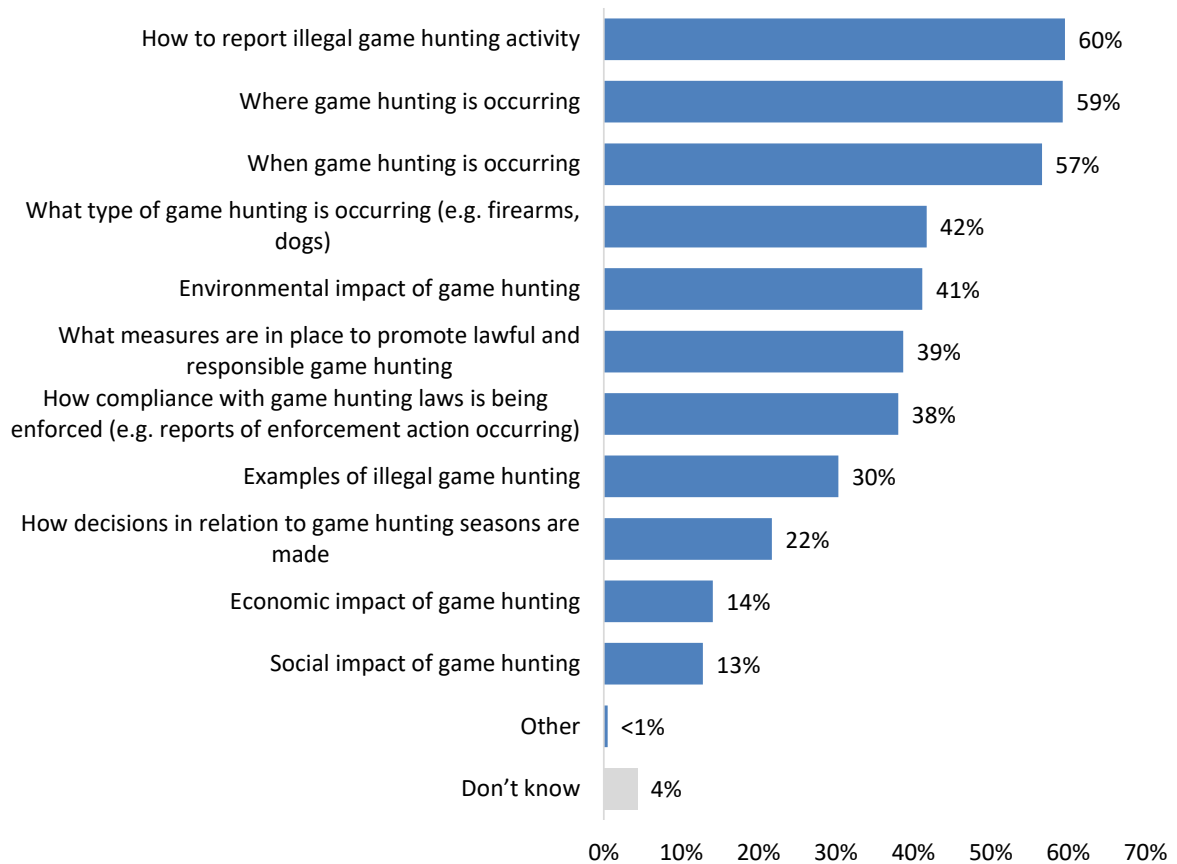


Q32a-b. How important do you think it is to be informed about game hunting in Victoria and how it is managed...

Among respondents in hunting regions who felt it was at least somewhat important for them to be informed about game hunting, the most common things they felt they should know were:

- How to report illegal game hunting activity (60%);
- Where game hunting is occurring (59%); and
- When game hunting is occurring (57%).

Figure 37: Perceived importance of certain types of information– hunting regions only
 (Base: Hunting region respondents who felt it was at least ‘somewhat’ important to know about game hunting)

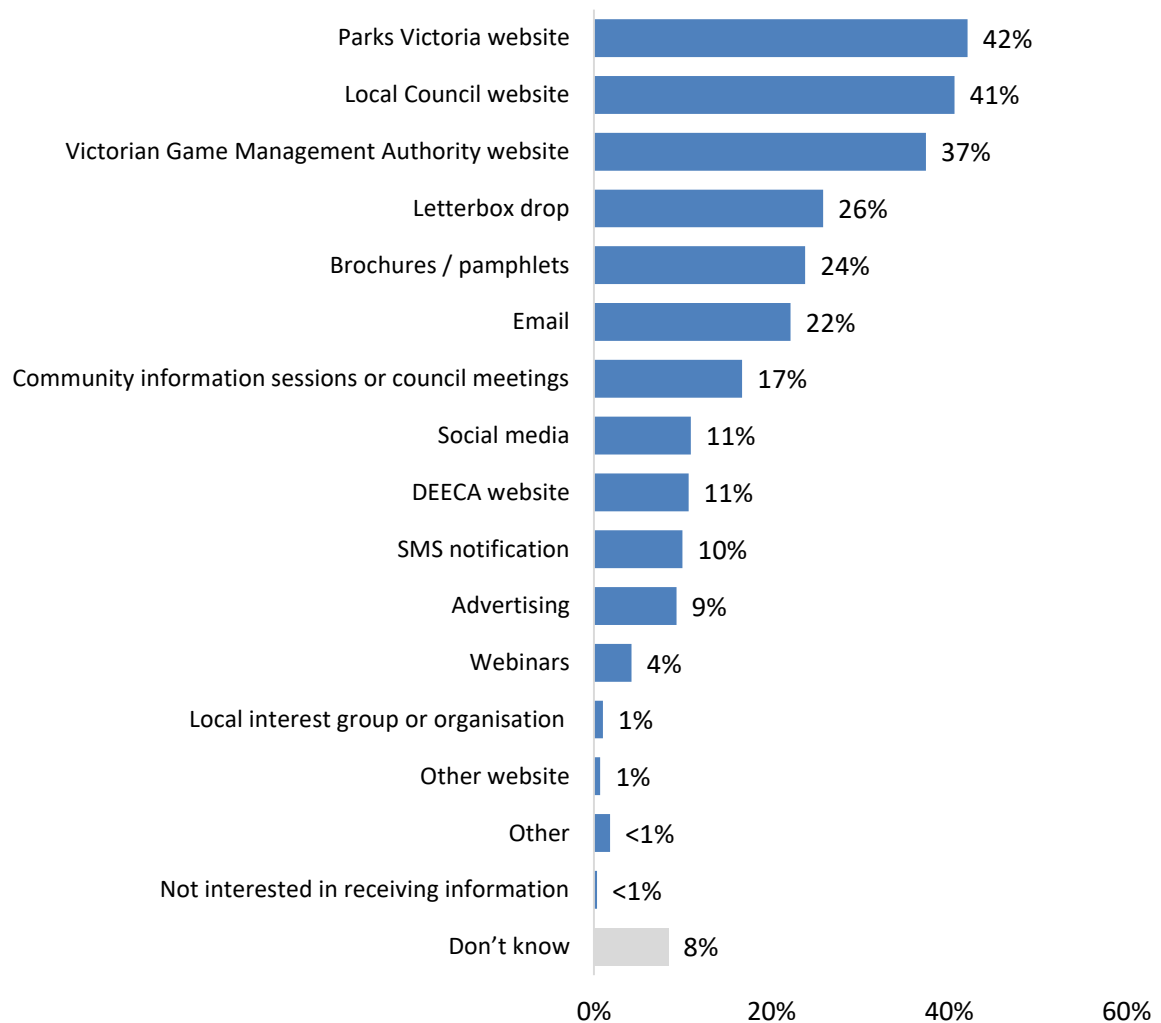


Q33. What information is most important to know?

The most preferred channels for obtaining information about game hunting were the Parks Victoria website (42%), local council websites (41%) and the GMA website (37%) – suggesting that respondents generally preferred self-serve/on-demand information.

Among more active forms of communication, letterbox drop (26%), brochures/ pamphlets (24%) and email (22%) were preferred.

Figure 31: Preferred channels for getting game hunting information – hunting regions only
 (Base: Hunting region respondents who felt it was at least ‘somewhat’ important to know about game hunting)



Q34. How would you like to get this information?

X. Conclusions



General awareness and understanding of game hunting and GMA's roles and responsibilities is fairly low, although awareness was higher among hunting regions compared to metropolitan Melbourne.

Greater familiarity was linked to more positive perceptions of GMA, suggesting that raising awareness of GMA's roles and responsibilities will assist in improving attitudes towards and perceptions of GMA.



Only a small minority of respondents had directly interacted with GMA, but those who had were generally positive about their interactions.

Respondents were most positive about GMA's professionalism and communication, but had less positive perceptions of timeliness.



Even those living in hunting regions are unlikely to proactively seek information about game hunting and most people receive information passively from unofficial channels (such as news services).

On-demand availability of information is sufficient for most community members' needs (i.e. on a website), but most information that people see or hear about game hunting is 'pushed' through unofficial channels.

To raise awareness and understanding of its role among the broader community, GMA will need to consider how it can cut through the noise about duck season to reach an audience that is unlikely to look for information (e.g. by utilising news channels or other direct methods of communication such as letterbox drops and brochures/ pamphlets).



Game hunting is an emotive topic and perceptions of GMA are linked to personal feelings about game hunting in general.

Most information the community sees or hears about game hunting through unofficial channels is related to duck season, which tends to be more controversial and incomplete – and this is likely to also be shaping perceptions of GMA. Perceived impact of game hunting (i.e. positive or negative) was also linked to corresponding perceptions of GMA.

Improving understanding of GMA may help to mitigate this effect, as greater familiarity with GMA's role was associated with more positive perceptions of its effectiveness.



Addressing illegal hunting is the most top of mind concern for community members.

How to report illegal hunting was the most commonly reported piece of information respondents felt they needed and perceived incidence of illegal hunting occurring was associated with overall perceptions about how effectively game hunting was being managed.

The results suggest raising awareness of GMA's compliance and enforcement activities may help to improve community perceptions, as greater visibility of compliance and enforcement activities was associated with more positive perceptions of GMA's effectiveness.
