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March 30, 2010

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NSSF/Harris Poll: Target Shooting, Home Defense Top-ranked

NEWTOWN, Conn.— A new National Shooting Sports Foundation poll conducted by Harris Interactive found that more Americans are target shooting now than six months ago, and that “home and personal defense” were the main reasons Americans recently purchased firearms.

The poll also showed that 43 percent of respondents, which equates to nearly 98 million people, expressed some level of interest in participating in the shooting sports or hunting.

“Last year was a banner year for lawful firearm sales, and the results of this poll suggest the desires for personal security and recreation were drivers of most of those purchases,” said Steve Sanetti, president of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, trade association for the firearms industry. “The poll also reaffirms something we’ve known for a long time—that many millions of Americans want to try target shooting or hunting and are just waiting for an invitation from an experienced shooter to go to the range or afield. So, firearms owners, what are you waiting for? Make that invitation and share the enjoyment of recreational shooting or hunting with someone eager to go.”

The online survey was conducted March 16-18 by Harris Interactive, which performs periodic surveys for NSSF on shooting and hunting participation. The questions were asked of general population adults 18 and over.

Findings from the NSSF/Harris poll include:

- Some 18.4 million Americans “currently participate” in handgun target shooting and 14.8 million in rifle target shooting, an increase from the 16.8 million and 13.9 million, respectively, from an NSSF poll conducted by Harris Interactive last September.
- Participation in the shotgun sports of “skeet/trap” and “sporting clays” was 4.2 million in each of those categories.
- In response to a question about why Americans made their most recent firearm purchase, 40 percent of respondents said “home protection” followed by 36 percent citing “personal protection.” Target shooting (30 percent) and hunting (28 percent) came next.
- The main barrier to people going target shooting more often? “Cost of ammunition” was cited by 50 percent of the respondents, followed by “not enough free time” (43 percent).
- The survey highlighted the power of a personal invitation to motivate an individual to go target shooting or hunting. Some 45 percent of respondents said an “invitation from friend or family” would most encourage them to participate, ranking this personal interaction far ahead of all forms of advertising.
- Once invited by a friend or family member, respondents said they would want to . . .
 - Shoot a handgun at the range (77 percent)
 - Shoot a rifle at the range (69 percent)
 - Go plinking (55 percent)
 - Fire shotguns at clay targets (54 percent)
 - Take a self-protection class (54 percent)
 - Go hunting for various game species, which was cited by an average of 25 percent of respondents.