

HUNTING SAFETY STATISTICS

2020



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

		2018	2019	2020	5yr avg.
Total Incidents		13	12	22	15.8
Fatal		3	1	3	2.4
Non-fatal		10	11	19	13.2
Self-Inflicted		6	5	13	7.2
Two-Party		7	7	9	8.4
Species Hunted					
Big Game					
	Bear	0	0	0	0
	Deer	8	7	10	7.6
Turkey:					
	Spring	1	1	1	1.4
	Fall	0	0	0	0
Upland/Furbearer					
	Rabbit	0	0	1	0.4
	Squirrel	1	0	3	1.2
	Upland Bird	0	1	1	0.8
	Raccoon	0	0	0	0
	Fox/Coyote	0	1	1	0.8
Waterfowl		2	2	4	2.4
Other					
	Woodchuck	1	0	0	0.2
	Other	0	0	1	0.6
Unknown (general upland game)		0	0	0	0.2
Type of Implement					
Shotgun		5	8	10	7.2
Rifle		7	3	5	6.2
Handgun		1	1	0	0.6
Muzzleloader		0	0	4	0.8
Crossbow		0	0	2	0.4
Bow		0	0	0	0.2
Air Gun		0	0	1	0.2

2020 figures are compiled from preliminary reports and are NOT final. Final investigation reports take months in some cases. Please note that in some of the incidents reported the shooter was participating in an illegal act.

Past 10 Years of Hunting-Related Shooting Incidents Including both big game and small game hunting			
Year	Big Game	Small Game/Other	Total
2011	14	12	26
2012	14	10	24
2013	10	9	19
2014	9	13	22
2015	13	10	23
2016	8	5	13
2017	6	13	19
2018	8	5	13
2019	7	5	12
2020	10	12	22

2020 adds 67,270 safe hunters through online class:

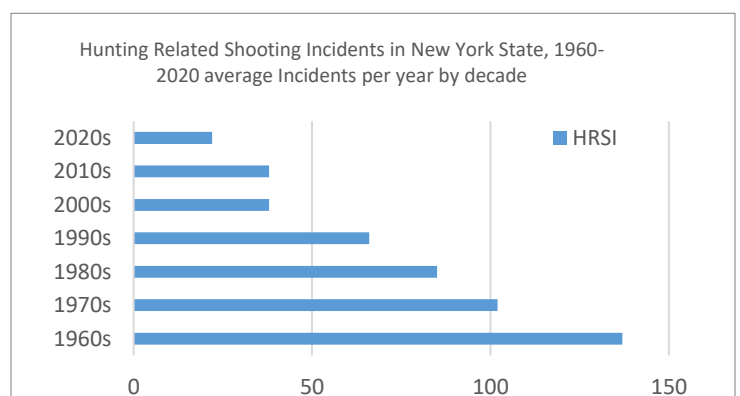
During 2020, New York worked quickly to find a way to certify new hunters as COVID-19 shut down all in-person hunter education courses in early March. With members of the public inquiring daily for hunter education certification ahead of the spring turkey season, DEC released an online version of its required Hunter Education course, which by the end of 2020 saw 67,270 new hunters certified. Despite the large increase of new hunters, New York still experienced a safe hunting season, with 22 personal injury incidents during 2020. Of those 22 incidents, three were self-inflicted fatalities and in each of those cases, the hunter had over 10 years of hunting experience. Thorough investigation of each incident in this report found that none of the 22 recorded incidents involved a person who took the NY online hunter education course.

Of the 22 incidents that occurred in 2020, 13 were self-inflicted and 9 were two-party firearm incidents. Of the 9 two-party firearm incidents, 2 of the victims were wearing hunter orange when shot, and 7 were not. Wearing hunter orange while afield and ensuring it is visible decreases your risk of being injured while hunting.

License sales in 2020 revealed the first big increase in hunting participation in recent years. From 2019 to 2020 hunting license sales increased 11%, bowhunting privileges increased 14%, muzzleloader privileges increased 11%, and junior hunting licenses increased 26%. Since the 1960s, the number of hunters has declined about 20%, while the incident rate has declined almost 80%. The current 5-year average is 2 incidents per 100,000 hunters, compared to 19 incidents per 100,000 hunters in the 1960s. DEC's hunter education curriculum and dedication of thousands of volunteer instructors over more than 60 years has made New York hunting safer than ever.

DEC recommends that hunters participating in any firearm season wear hunter orange while afield and always follow firearm safety rules: (1) treat every firearm as if it is loaded; (2) always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction; (3) keep your finger off the trigger, and outside the trigger guard, until you are ready to shoot; and (4) always be sure of your target and what is in front of it and behind it.

This report includes only shooting-related incidents involving firearms, bows or crossbows. It does not include all incidents and fatalities related to hunting (such as heart attacks).



The Stories behind the Statistics: Hunting-Related Shooting Incidents 2020

What follows are preliminary descriptions of incidents as of 2/8/2021. Some incidents are still under investigation. Some incidents involve a shooter that was participating in an illegal act. More details may be added after investigations are completed in 2021. **FORMAT FOR 2020 DESCRIPTIONS:** *Date (mm/dd) - followed by County and a brief description of incident. Summaries marked with an * were incidents with violations noted. Age and years of hunting experience of the violator is noted at the end of the summary.*

SMALL GAME & NONGAME

- 01/20** - Jefferson. While rabbit hunting, the shooter fired at brown objects that turned out to be his hunting partner's boots, striking victim in the leg, arm, and head. Age 74. Hunting experience: 62 yrs.
- 02/22** - Steuben. Son shot his father in the head and upper body while squirrel hunting. Age 13. Hunting experience: 1 yr.
- 03/28** - Schoharie. Shooter discharged one round striking the victim in the shoulder. Shooter stated that he saw something grey and shot. Shooter had no hunting license or Hunter Safety Certificate. Age 29. Hunting experience: 0 yr.*
- 05/20** - Tompkins. Self-inflicted. Shooter leaned his firearm against tree while shooting at a red squirrel and it slid down and discharged, striking him in the wrist. Age 75. Hunting experience: 60 yrs.
- 10/1** - Columbia. Shooter fired a round at a pheasant, striking a person from another hunting party in the face. Age: 74. Hunting experience: 50 yrs. *
- 10/11** - Essex. Self-inflicted. Shooter slipped and discharged a round into his foot while squirrel hunting. Shooter did not have a NY hunting license (minimum hunting age in NY is 12). Age: 11. Hunting experience: 3 yrs out-of-state*
- 11/28** - Genesee. Self-inflicted. Shooter discharged one round from an air rifle while squirrel hunting, which ricocheted off a rock and hit his leg. Shooter had no hunting license or Hunter Safety Certificate. Age 15. Hunting experience: 0 yrs.

WATERFOWL HUNTING

- 10/17** - Ontario. Shooter discharged a round at waterfowl and struck a person in the face 100 yards away. Age 42. Hunting experience: 26 yrs.
- 10/25** - Genesee. Shooter discharged one round and a pellet struck his father in the face. Age 27. Hunting experience: 16 yrs.
- 10/25** - Seneca. Self-inflicted. Shooter discharged one round into her foot attempting to shoot a goose. Age 42. Hunting experience: 7 yrs.
- 11/06** - Fulton. Shooter discharged two rounds at a goose, which skipped off the water and hit a victim on shore. Victim was not injured. Age 52. Hunting experience: 32 yrs.

TURKEY HUNTING

- 05/8** - Niagara. Shooter discharged one round at 2 hunters as they approached his turkey decoy. Age 59. Hunting experience: 8 yrs. *

BIG GAME HUNTING

- 10/17** - Saratoga. Self-inflicted fatality. Shooter was pulling a loaded muzzleloader out of his vehicle when it discharged and struck him in the abdomen. Age 48. Hunting experience: 10 yrs. *
- 10/31** - St. Lawrence. Self-inflicted. Shooter discharged one round into his foot while tracking a deer. Age 16. Hunting experience: 1 yr.
- 11/07** - Chemung. Self-inflicted. Muzzleloader malfunctioned during discharge, injuring victim's hands. Age 25. Hunting experience: 12 yrs. *
- 11/08** - Stueben. Self-inflicted. Shooter shot himself in the foot while distracted. Age 65. Hunting experience: 53 yrs. *
- 11/21** - Ontario. Shooter and victim were on opposite sides of a field and a deer walked between them. Shooter discharged 3 rounds, one of which struck the victim in the knee. Age 31. Hunting experience: 20 yrs.
- 11/21** - Allegany. Self-inflicted. Shooter discharged a round into his foot while unloading his shotgun. Age 30. Hunting experience: 15 yrs.
- 11/28** - Schoharie. Self-inflicted. Shooter discharged a round into his finger while attempting to clear a jam in his firearm. Age 30. Hunting experience: 15 yrs.
- 12/07** - Onondaga. Self-inflicted fatality. Shooter discharged a crossbow bolt into his chest while hauling a loaded crossbow into his tree stand. Age 40. Hunting experience: 10 yrs. *
- 12/12** - Cayuga. Self-inflicted. Shooter tied a string to the trigger guard of his shotgun and pulled it into his tree stand. Firearm discharged and a slug hit him in the lower leg. Age 42. Hunting experience: 26 yrs.
- 12/21** - Onondaga. Self-inflicted fatality. Shooter discharged a round from his muzzleloader into his neck. Age 59. Hunting experience: 40 yrs.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation | Hunter Education

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