



## SNOHOMISH/SKAGIT FOREST STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION

# Small Forest Landowner Attitudes Towards Timber Harvesting And Financial Return

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Several organizations provided key support for this study.





## Purpose of the study:

- To better understand the values, interests, and education needs of family forest owners
  - Ownership values
  - Topics of interest
  - Education delivery preferences
  - Demographics
- To use this data to improve Extension education programs
  - Increased Engagement
  - More significant impacts



A survey was conducted in Fall of 2007.

- Sent to family forest owners in Northwest Washington
- Included Individuals & Families only
- Recipient list based on:
  - WFFA Membership
  - County assessor records



### WSU Snohomish County Extension Forest Stewardship Survey

#### Part I: Property Ownership Values

Please help us to better understand what values are of greatest importance to you as a rural property owner. Rate the importance of your ownership values by circling the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 = very important; 4 = somewhat important, 3 = undecided, 2 = somewhat unimportant, 1 = very unimportant.

Personal residence	1 2 3 4 5	Aesthetic enjoyment	1 2 3 4 5
Maintaining a healthy ecosystem	1 2 3 4 5	Privacy/Rural lifestyle	1 2 3 4 5
A sound financial investment	1 2 3 4 5	Personal attachment to the land	1 2 3 4 5
Income from timber harvest	1 2 3 4 5	A place for wildlife	1 2 3 4 5
Personal recreation	1 2 3 4 5	Satisfaction from owning land	1 2 3 4 5
Family legacy	1 2 3 4 5	Other: _____	1 2 3 4 5

Of the values above, which single value is of greatest importance to you? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Part II: Forestry Education Topics

Please help us identify the forestry education topics of greatest priority to you. Rate your interest in each topic by circling the appropriate number on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 = very interested, 4 = somewhat interested, 3 = undecided, 2 = somewhat disinterested, 1 = very disinterested

<b>Climate change</b> Forests and carbon storage; Carbon credit markets; Biomass to energy; Maintaining a healthy forest in a changing climate.	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Forest inventory</b> Determining what's in your forest (species mix, timber volume, tree size and density, understorey plants, etc); Using common tree measurement tools; Using inventory to assess forest health and management opportunities	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Estate planning</b> How to plan a future for your forest beyond your lifetime; Minimizing estate taxes; Transferring land to your heirs	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Forest management</b> Understanding forest growth and development; Silvicultural activities (thinning, pruning, etc); Establishing management objectives; Developing a management plan	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Fire</b> Reducing the risk of catastrophic fire in your forest; Protecting your home from wildfire	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Forest mapping</b> Mapping your forest with affordable hand tools, GPS technology; Accessing online property data	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Forestry assistance</b> Where to go for help; Making use of available resources for forestry education and technical assistance	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Forest roads</b> How to properly build, maintain, and decommission forest roads; Minimizing the environmental impacts from forest roads; Forest road regulations	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Forest certification</b> Understanding forest certification systems specific to family forest landowners	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Forest safety/security</b> Trespassing, illegal dumping, illicit drug operations, and other security issues in your forest	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Forest finance</b> How to make financially sound forest management decisions; Purchasing and financing forestland; Assessing forestland value	1 2 3 4 5	<b>Forest taxes</b> Understanding forest taxes, land designations, and tax relief/incentive programs specific to forest landowners	1 2 3 4 5
<b>Forest health</b> Assess the health of your forest; Identifying and reducing damage from harmful forest diseases and insects	1 2 3 4 5		

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2,915 Surveys were sent to valid addresses.

- 127 WFFA Members
- 959 landowners enrolled in forestry current use taxation program (100% sample)
- 1829 landowners who pay the DNR fire protection assessment (random sample)

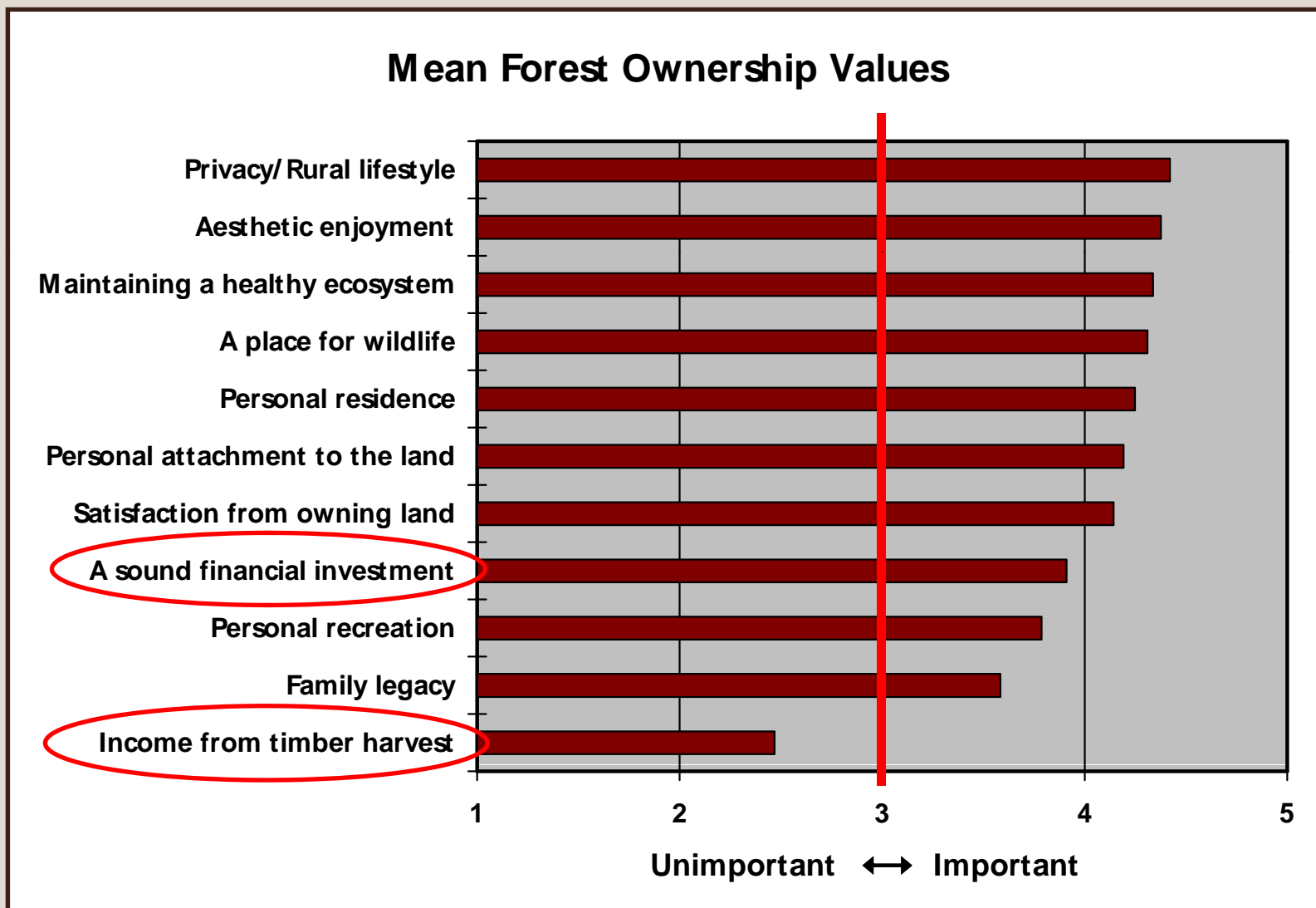


The response rate was excellent.

- Total Response rate was 36% (1,053)
- Usable Response rate was 35% (1,024)
  - 59% for WFFA (76)
  - 40% for current use group (384)
  - 31% for fire protection group (564)



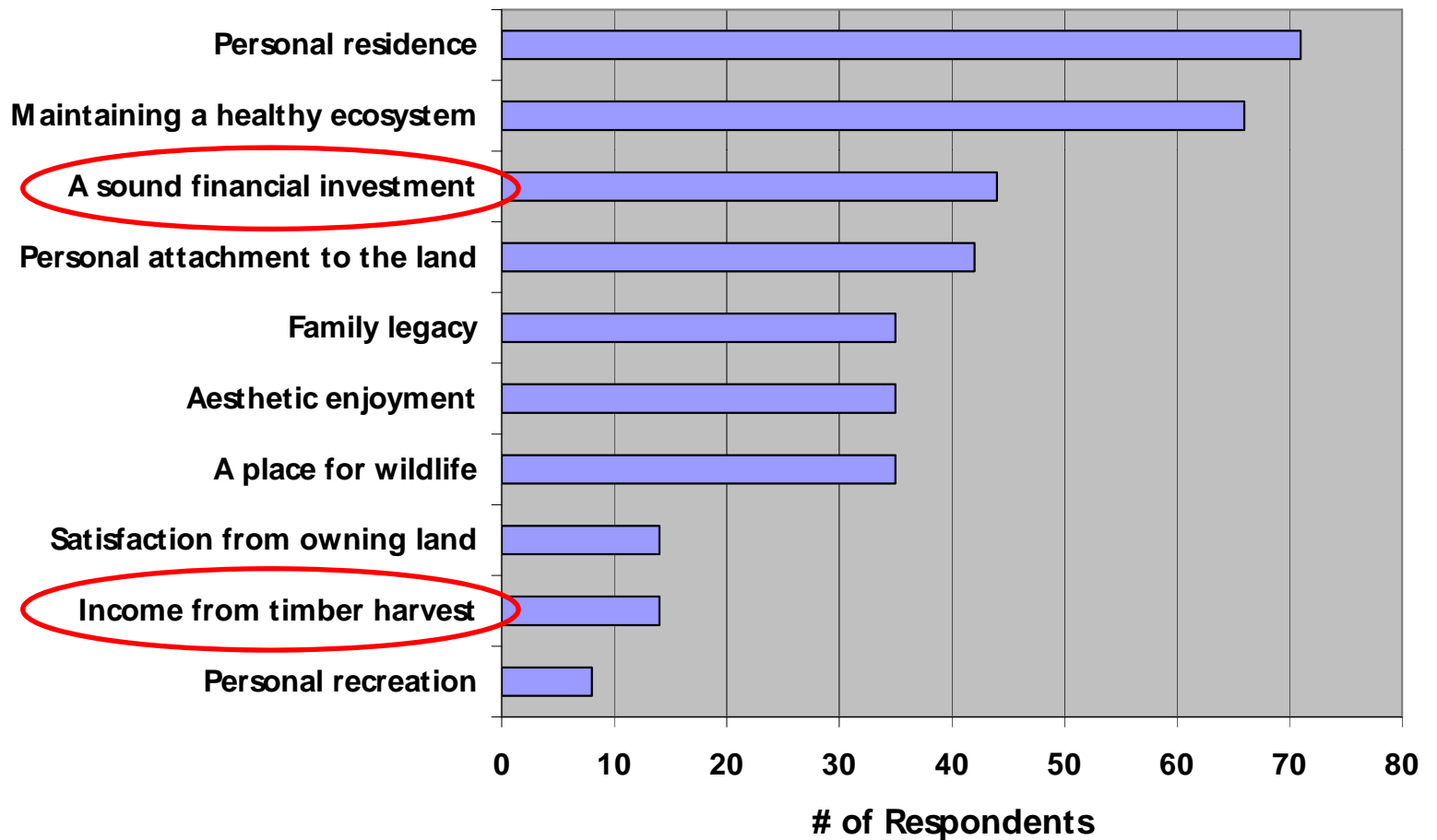
Respondents ranked a series of forest ownership values.





Respondents also identified their #1 ownership value.

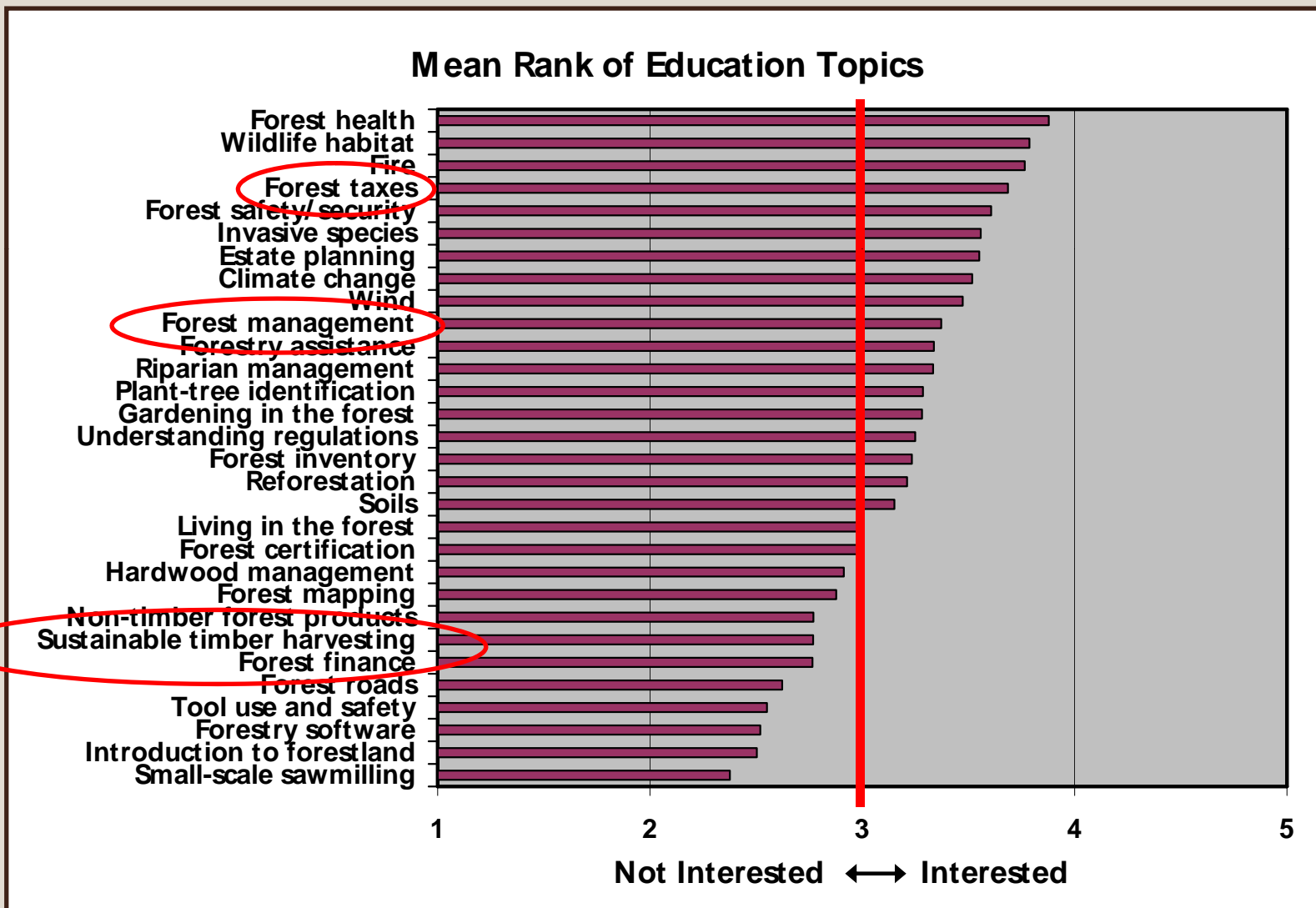
### Top Priority Ownership Values







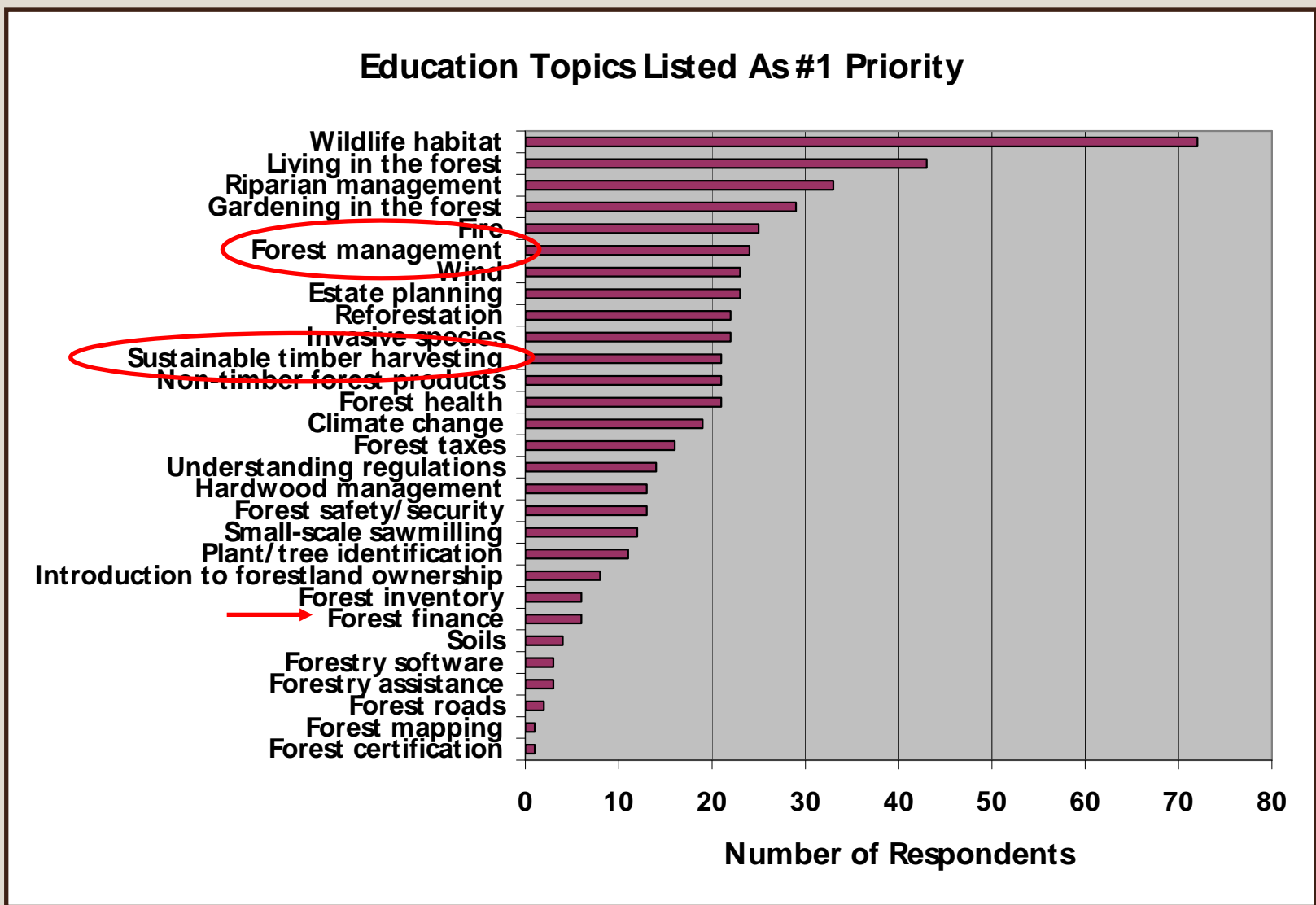
Respondents ranked their interest in 30 education topics.





Respondents also identified their #1 education topic of interest.

Education Topics Listed As #1 Priority



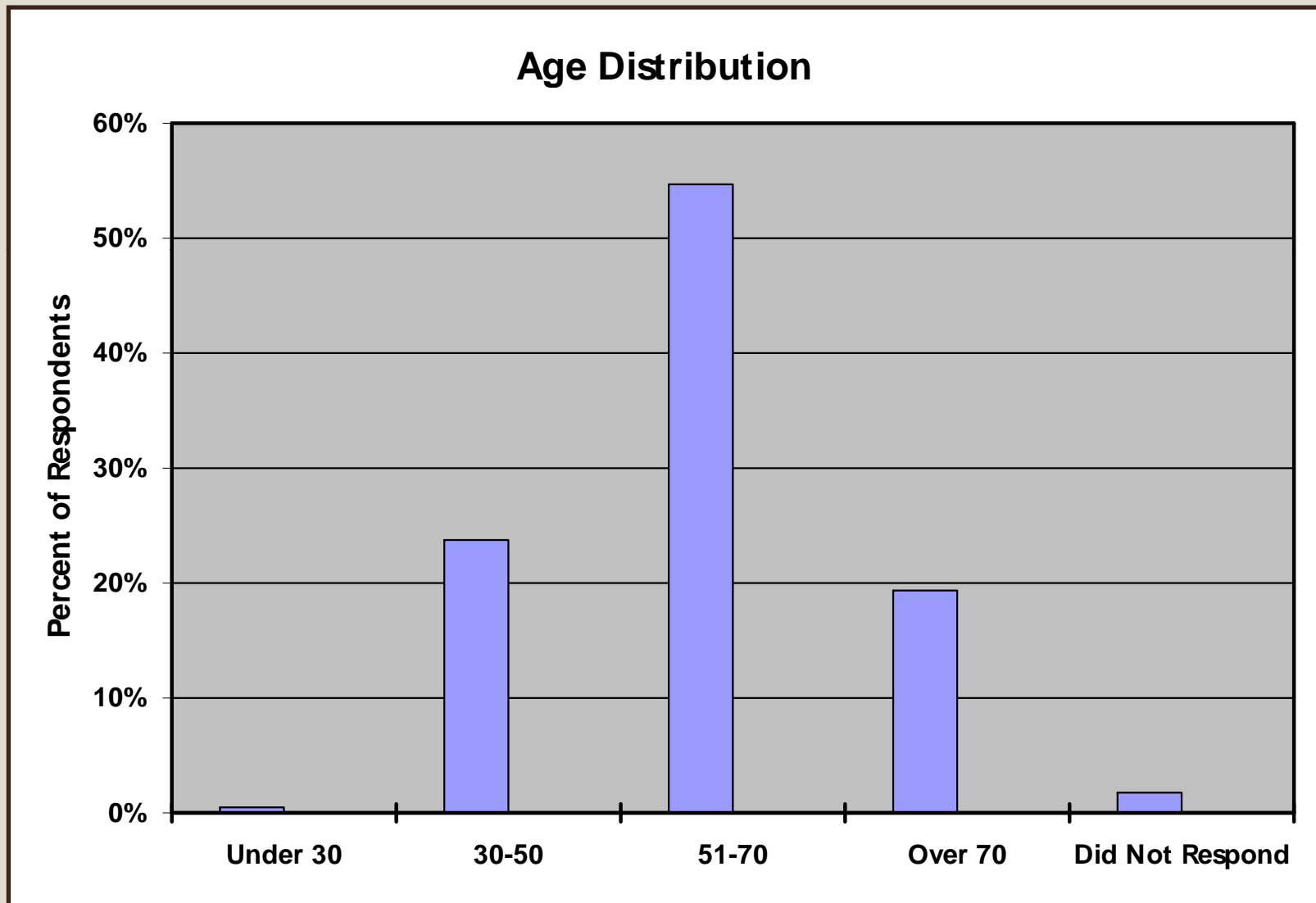


## Are there demographic differences?

- Age
- Location (county)
- Acreage
- Length of ownership
- Etc.

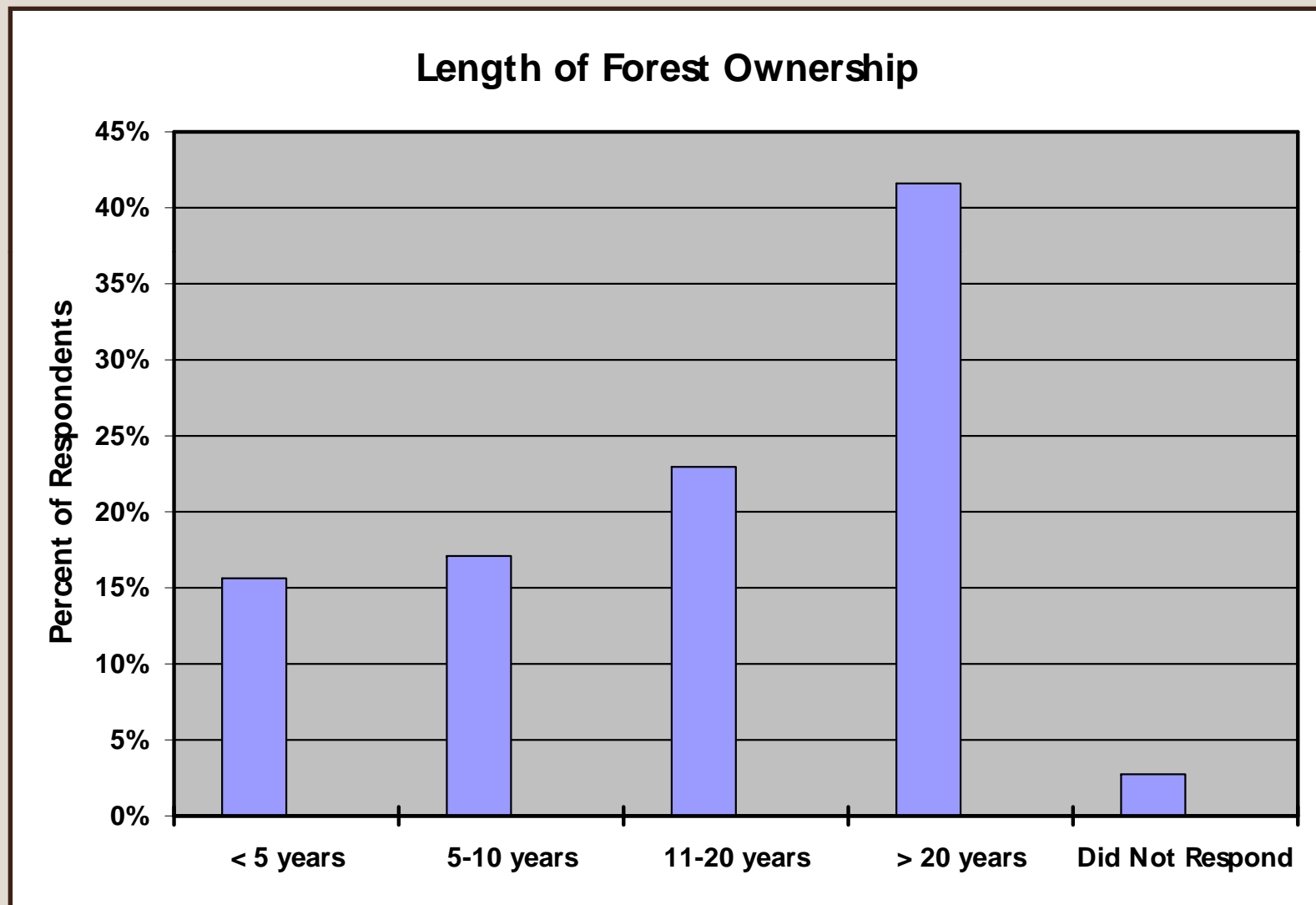


## Age distribution of respondents.



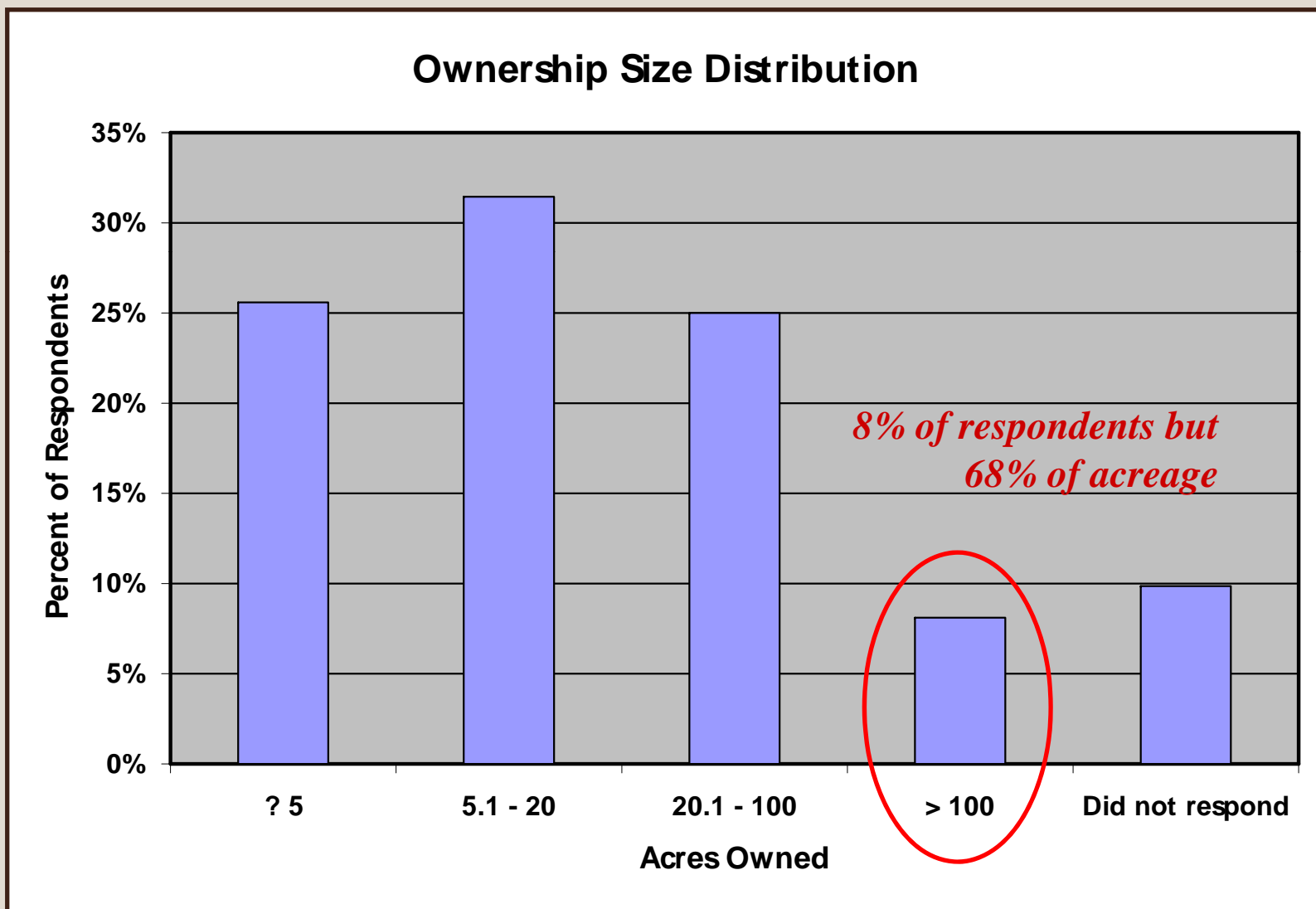


## Length of ownership distribution.



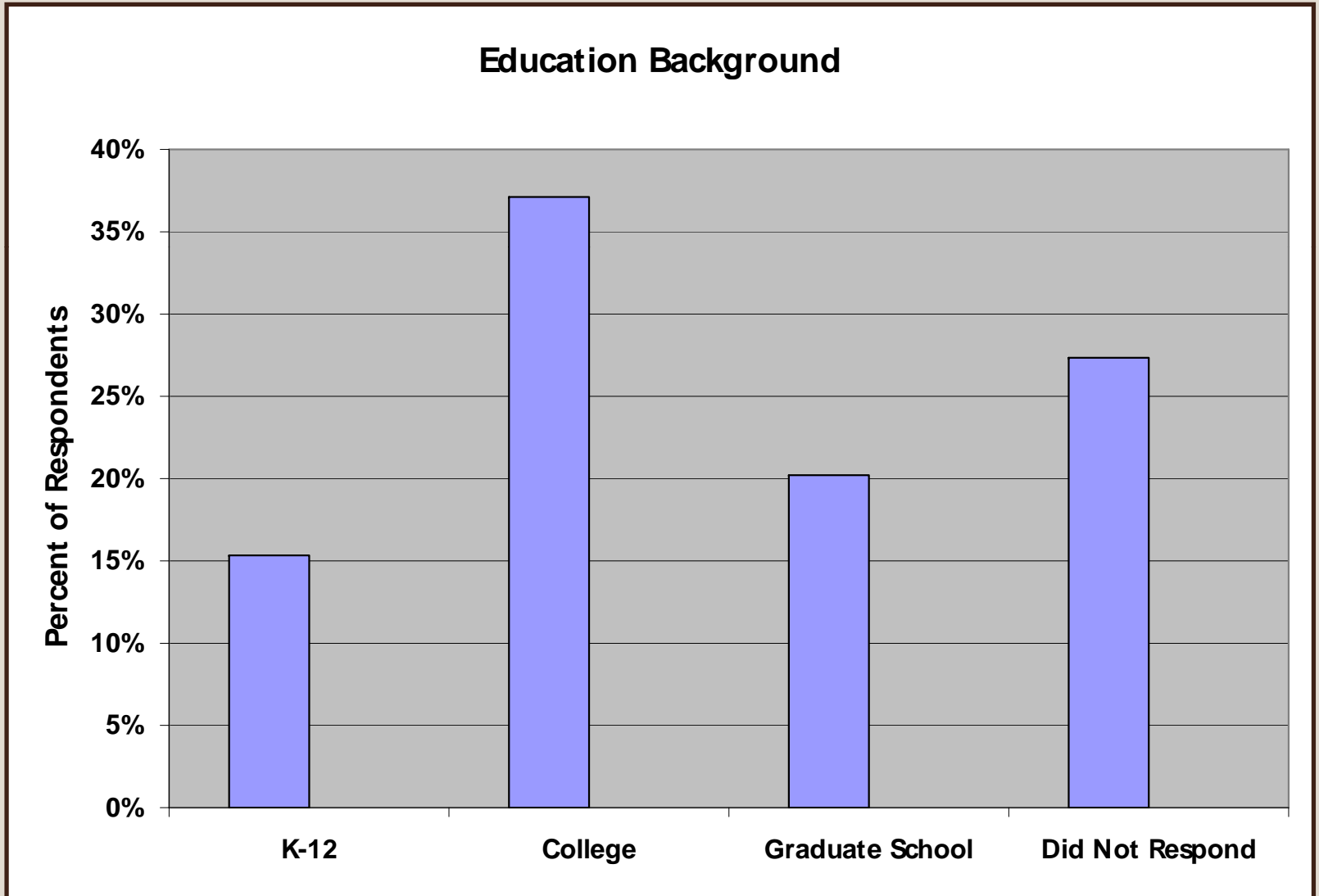


## Distribution of ownership size.





## Education background distribution.





## Biggest differences were observed between:

- Larger vs. smaller acreage
- Resident vs. absentee landowners
- There were not as noticeable of differences between other groups.
  - Low differences between age groups and length of land tenure
  - Hardly any geographic difference





## Top 5 ranked values by ownership size:

### 0 – 20 Acres

1. Privacy/Rural Lifestyle
2. Personal residence
3. Aesthetic enjoyment
4. Maintaining a healthy ecosystem
5. A place for wildlife

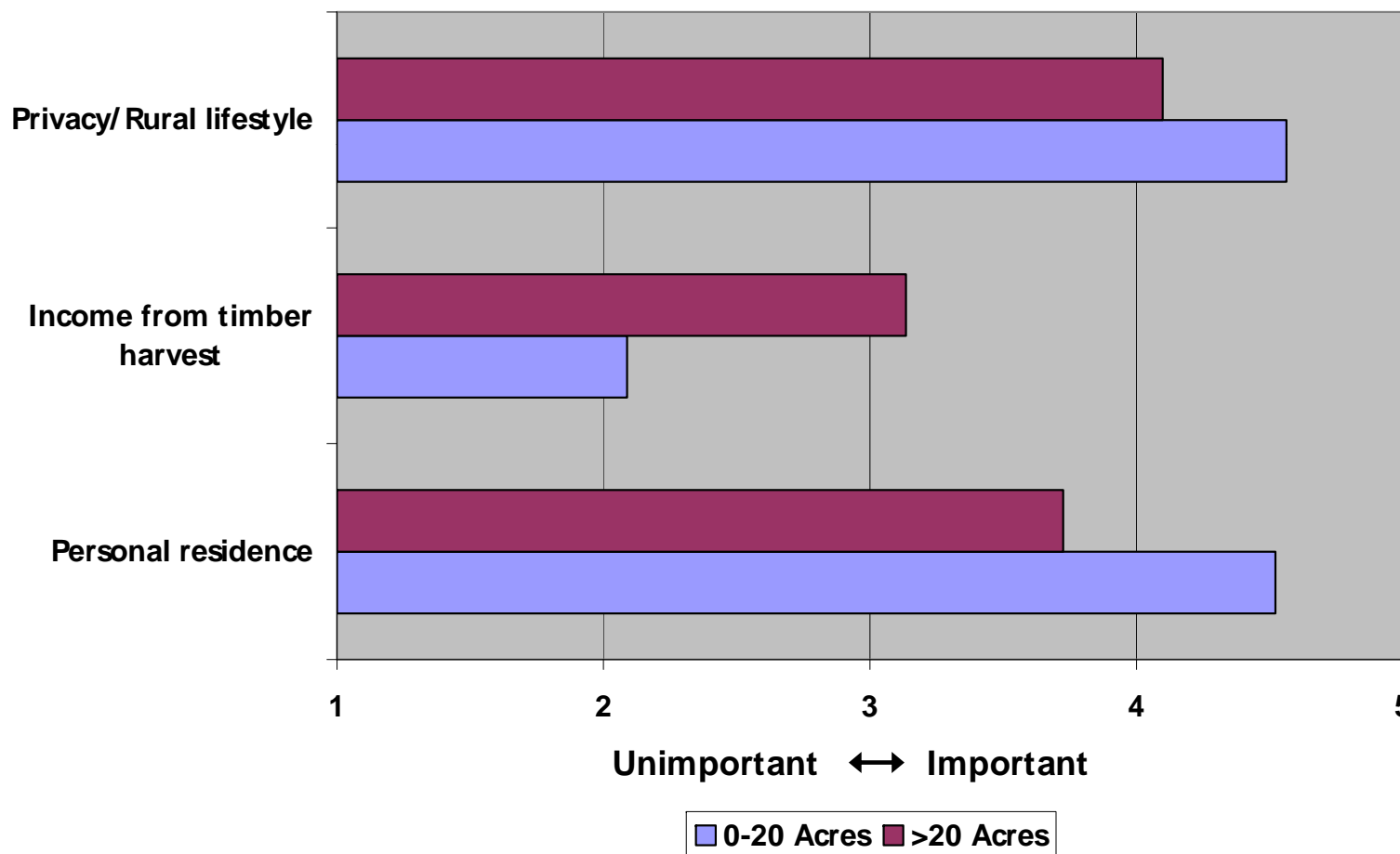
### > 20 Acres

1. Aesthetic enjoyment
2. Maintaining a healthy ecosystem
3. Personal attachment to the land
4. A place for wildlife
5. Satisfaction from owning land



There was noticeable difference in mean ranking for 3 ownership values.

Comparison of Selected Ownership Values by Ownership Size





## Top 5 ranked topics by ownership size:

### 0 – 20 Acres

1. Wildlife habitat
2. Forest health
3. Fire
4. Invasive species
5. Forest taxes

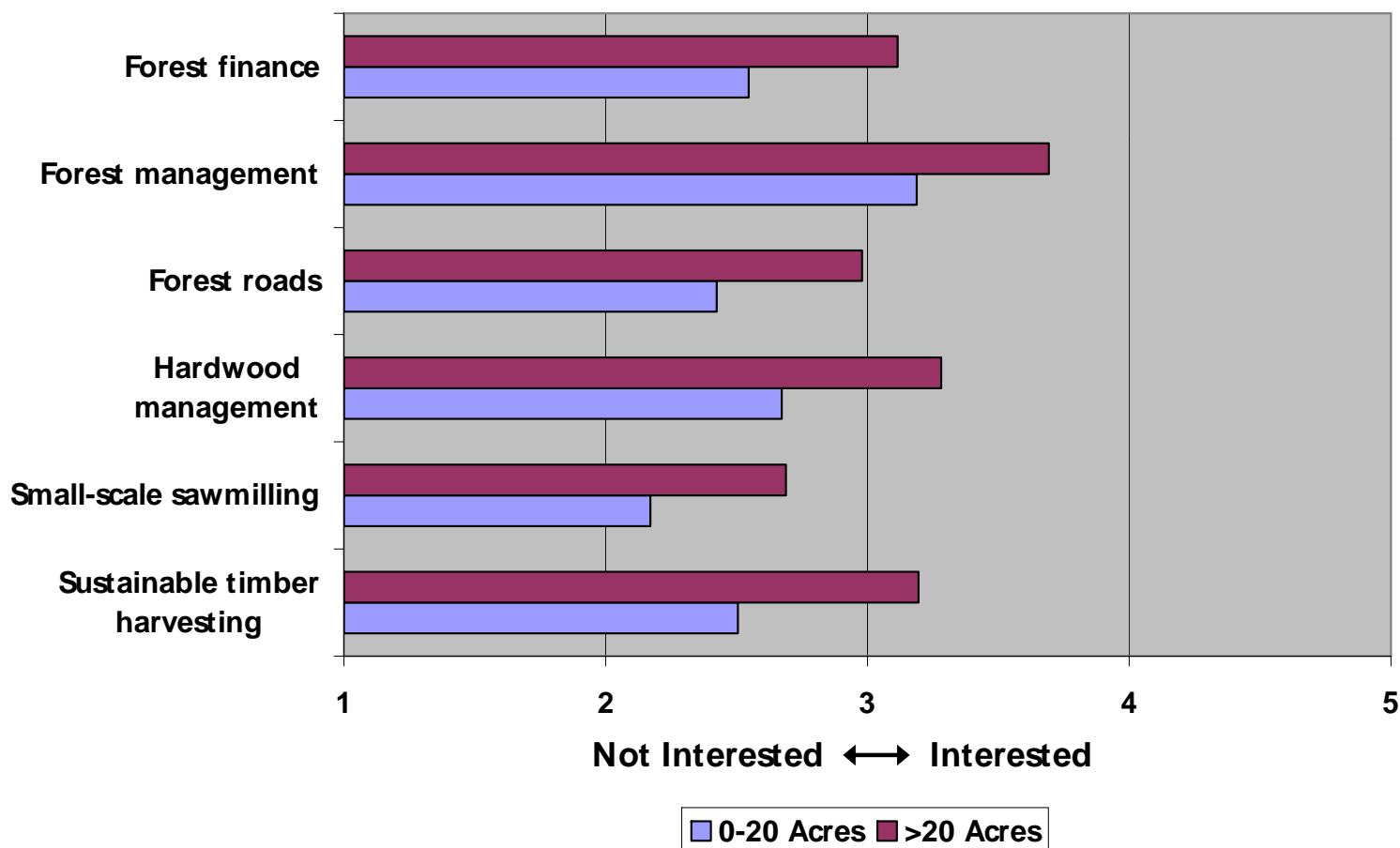
### > 20 Acres

1. Forest health
2. Forest taxes
3. Forest safety/security
4. Estate planning
5. Fire



There was noticeable difference in mean ranking for several education topics

Comparison of Selected Education Topics By Ownership Size





## Top 5 ranked topics for resident vs. absentee landowner:

### Resident

1. Forest health
2. Fire
3. Wildlife habitat
4. Forest taxes
5. Invasive species

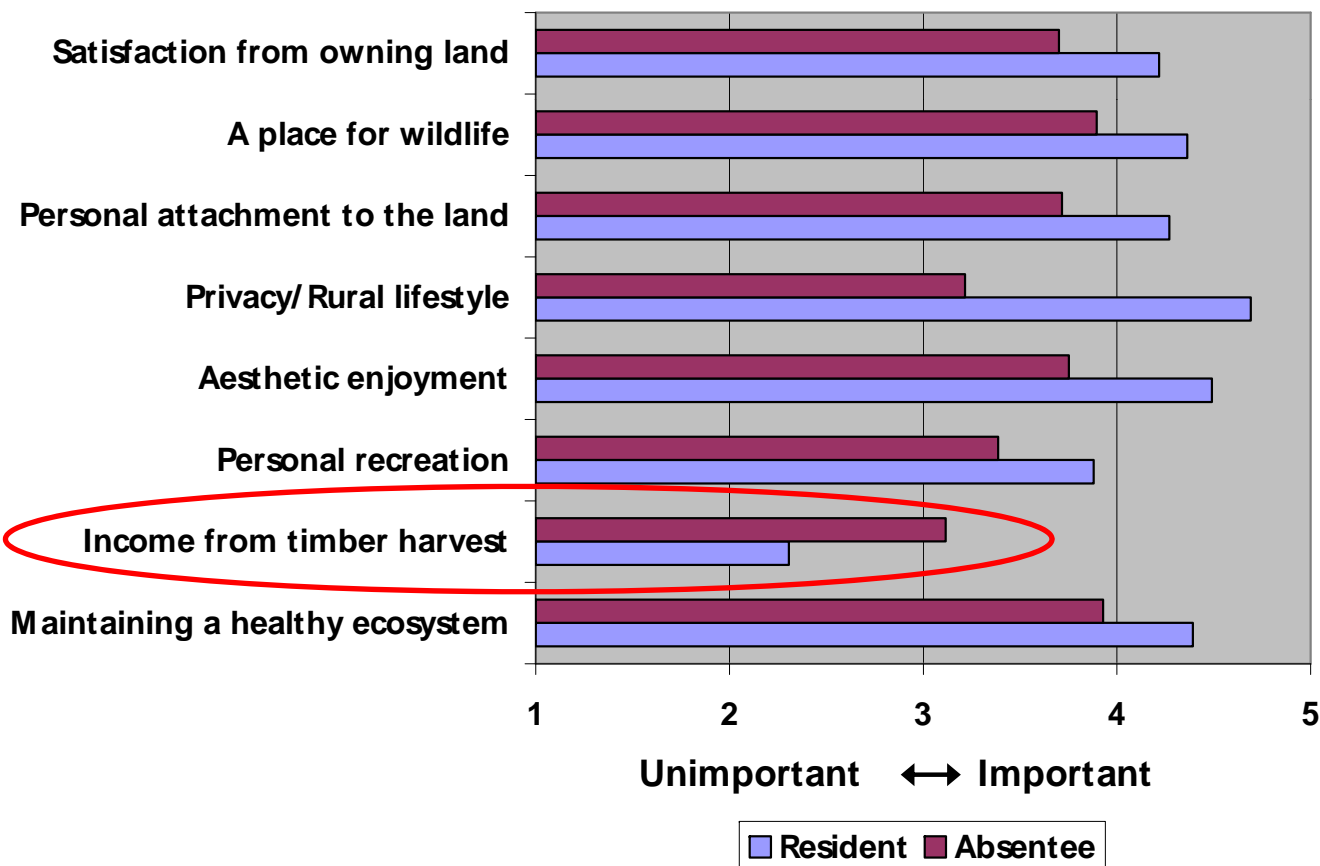
### Absentee

1. Forest health
2. Forest safety/security
3. Forest taxes
4. Forest management
5. Wildlife habitat



There was noticeable difference in mean ranking for several values.

### Comparison of Selected Ownership Values Between Resident and Absentee Landowners





## Does economics matter to family forest owners?

- Non-market values dominate responses
- Little expressed interest in timber harvest or forest finance as a topic
- However, other factors indicate that money matters
  - High interest in taxes and estate planning
  - Interest in timber harvest and finance may follow other interests
- Size matters



## What will the future bring?

- A generational transition is underway
- Will the next generation be driven by the same non-market values?
  - Will conversion increase?
  - Will those who keep the land be more interested in market values?
  - Ecosystem services markets





## How do we approach outreach for these topics?

- Outreach is important
  - The larger (more interested) landowners control significant acreage (8% of the people but 68% of the land)
  - There is evidence that money matters
  - Sustaining “working forests” requires addressing economics
- Possible outreach approaches
  - Connect with other topics like forest health
  - Creative delivery methods