

SHEEP POPULATIONS, HUNTERS, AND HARVEST

a summary on current status and trends

21 November 2014, Anchorage



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The information provided will be used to:

- Provide a resource for the Board of Game to develop regulations for the management and allocation of sheep harvest.
- Complement the information collected in the Alaska Sheep Hunter User Survey conducted by Dr. Todd Brinkman.
- Present information to help sheep hunters and others prepare proposal comments for the Board of Game.



The information addresses these concerns:

Management

- Hunter concerns about crowding
- Guide / Transporter / Resident hunter reported conflicts
- Public desire to change or modify sheep hunt management strategies

BOG Proposals

- To restrict nonresident hunting or expand resident opportunity
- To create additional drawing hunts or limit nonresidents to draw hunts
- To limit access and change bag limits and seasons



The report summarizes the following:

- Sheep population status
- Hunter and harvest numbers
- Hunting opportunities and access
- Harvest trend and characteristics
- Guide / commercial activities



RESIDENCY is divided into two categories

RESIDENTS – includes residents of Alaska who:

- do not hire commercial services
- hire transporters (state regulated)
- hire air taxis (FFA regulated)
- hire guides

NONRESIDENTS – includes nonresidents who:

- are citizens of the United States
- are not citizens of the United States
- Hire a guide and/or other commercial services
- hunt with second degree kindred relatives



The data are divided into 4 time periods

- **1972-1980** Pre-ANILCA - leading up to the loss of 25% of AK sheep hunting opportunity; ADF&G began formally collecting statewide sheep harvest information
- **1981-1988** Post-ANILCA - leading up to the 1988 Owsichek Decision that eliminated exclusive guide use areas in AK; the beginning of full-curl bag limit regulation
- **1989-2000** Post Owsichek Decision and statewide implementation of full-curl bag limit; there were declines in sheep hunter numbers during this period
- **2001-2013** Continued decline in sheep hunter numbers, sheep population declines in several areas due to severe weather events; new draw permit hunts in central Chugach Mountains; any-ram draw hunts offered for the first time



The data are also divided into eight major Sheep Range Areas

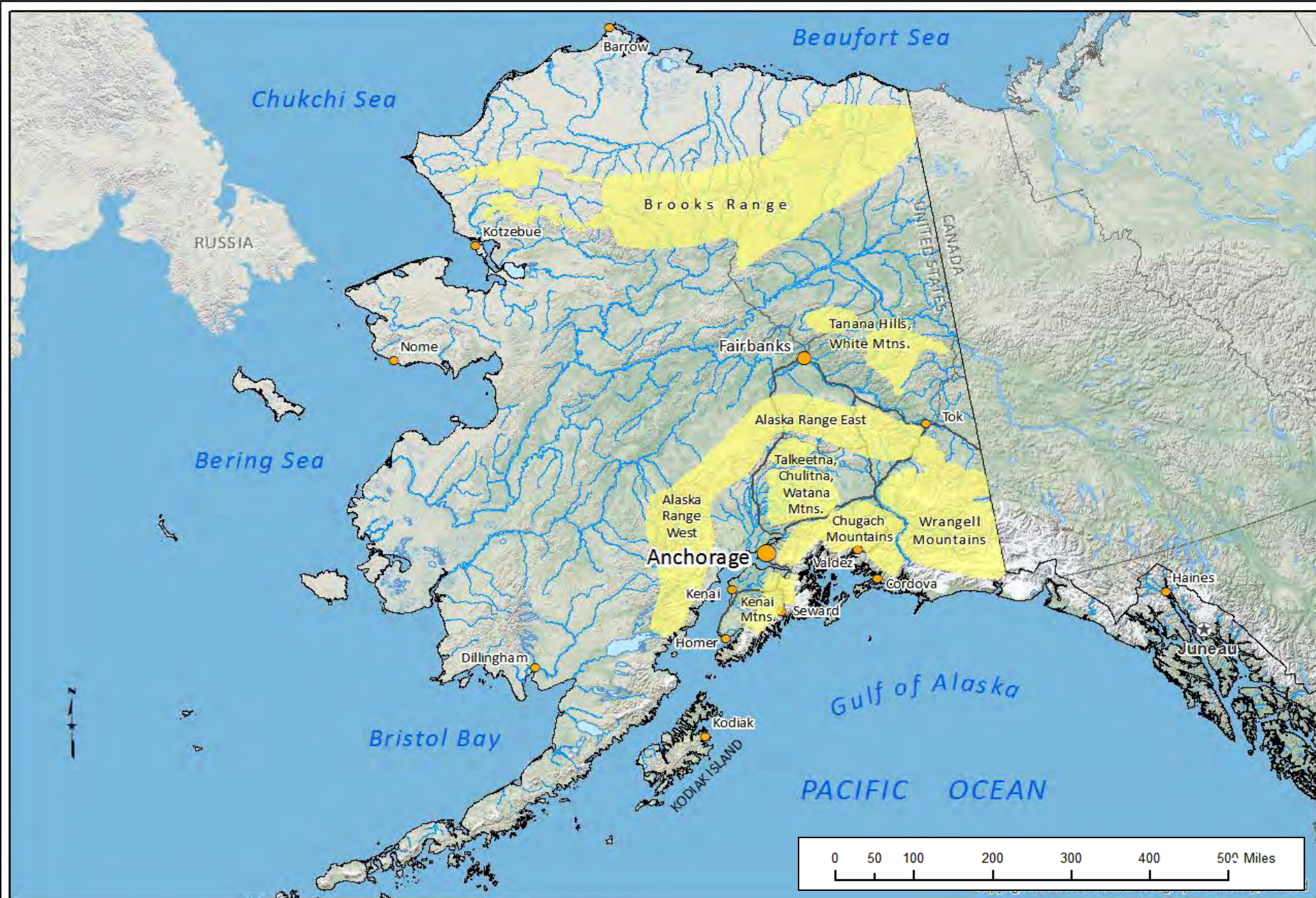
- Alaska Range EAST
- Alaska Range WEST
- Brooks Range
- Chugach Mountains
- Kenai Mountains
- Talkeetna Mountains, Chulitna-Watana Hills
- Tanana Hills, White Mountains
- Wrangell Mountains



A black and white photograph of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a silver, futuristic-looking object, possibly a camera or a small robot, is positioned on a rocky, uneven ground. The object has a rounded, metallic body with horizontal ridges and a small, rectangular display or sensor on its front. The background shows a deep valley with steep, rocky slopes. The mountains in the distance are covered in snow, and the sky is bright and clear. The overall scene is rugged and high-altitude.

Where are sheep found in Alaska?

Eight major sheep range areas in Alaska



A high-altitude mountain landscape, likely in the Andes. The foreground shows the blue metal structure of a cable car or gondola, with cables extending across the frame. The terrain is rocky and sparsely vegetated. In the distance, a herd of llamas is visible on a slope. The sky is clear and blue.

What about the populations?

Sheep Population trends across Alaska:

Survey and Inventory Report Area

Population Trend

Kenai Peninsula

Decreasing

Alaska Range west

Unknown

South Wrangell Mountains

Stable or Increasing

Chugach Mountains

Stable at low levels

Mentasta, Nutzotin, and N. Wrangells

Stable or Decreasing

Tok Management Area

Stable or Decreasing

Talkeetna Mtns., Chulitna-Watana Hills

Stable at low levels

Delta Controlled Use Area

Stable

N. AK Range, E. of Nenana Riv., W. of Delta Riv.

Stable

White Mountains

Stable

Tanana Hills

Stable

Western Brooks Range

Decreasing

Central Brooks Range

Decreasing

Eastern Brooks Range

Decreasing

1990

56,740 (53,900-62,400)

2000

50,850 (48,300-55,900)

2010

45,010 (42,800-49,500)

How many sheep hunters are there in Alaska?



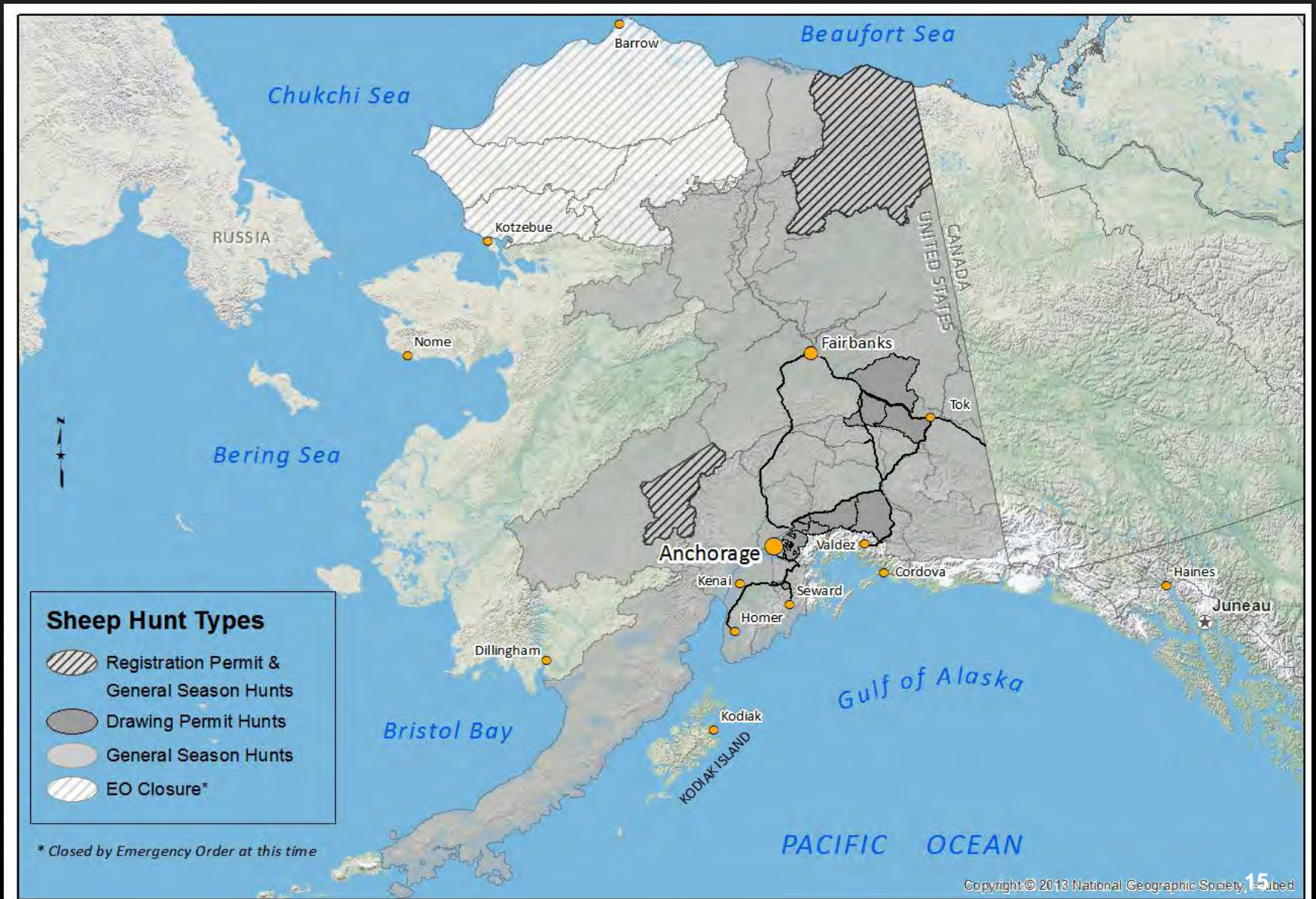
The total number of sheep hunters has been declining over the last 20 years.



Where are the sheep hunting opportunities?



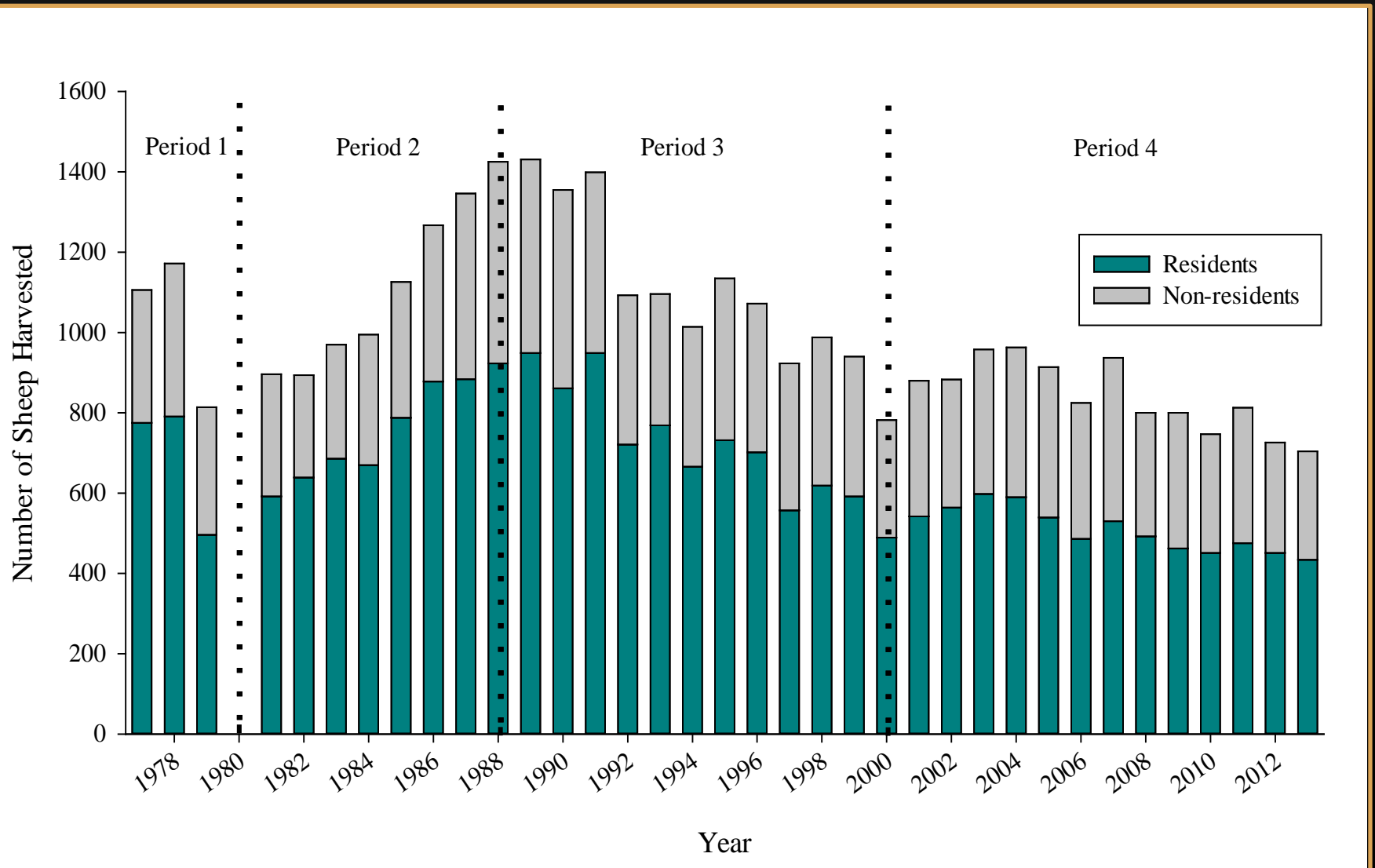
Sheep Hunt Types (opportunities) in Alaska



How many sheep are harvested?



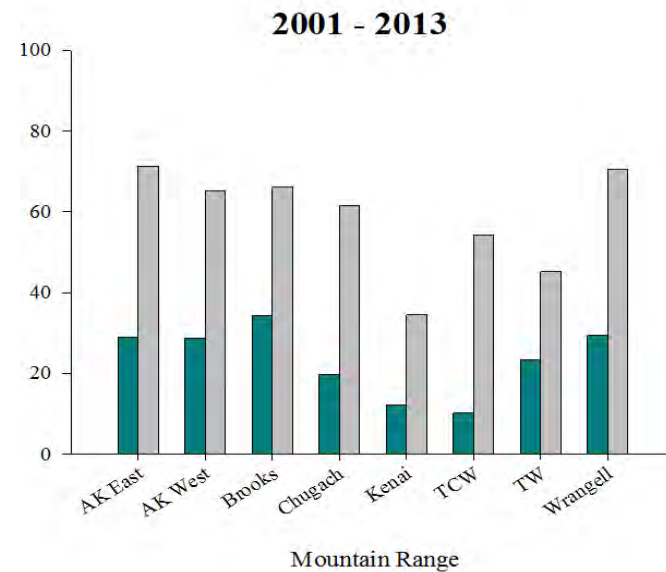
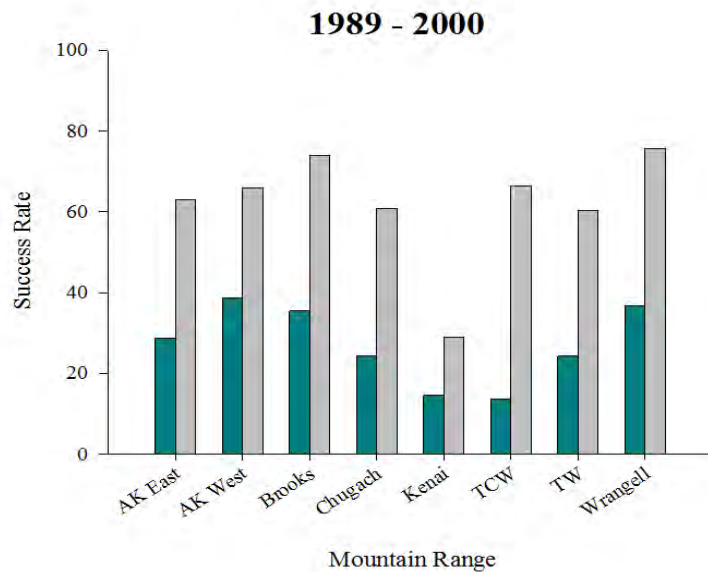
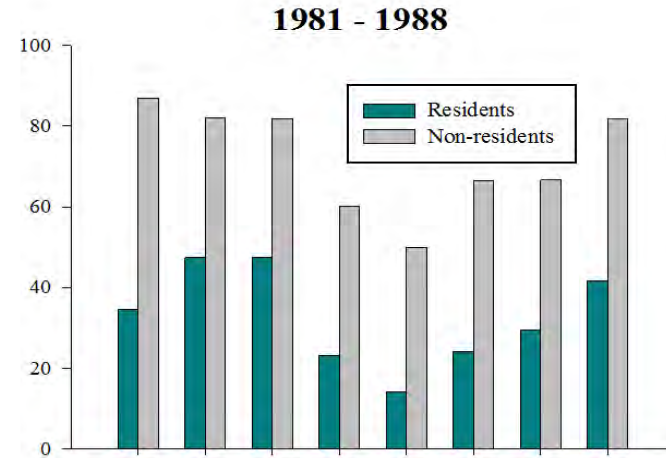
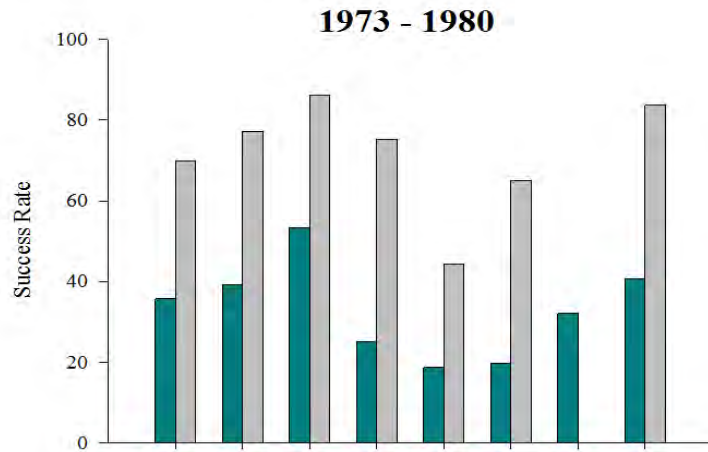
The total sheep harvest has also been declining for over 20 years.



What kind of success rates did we see?



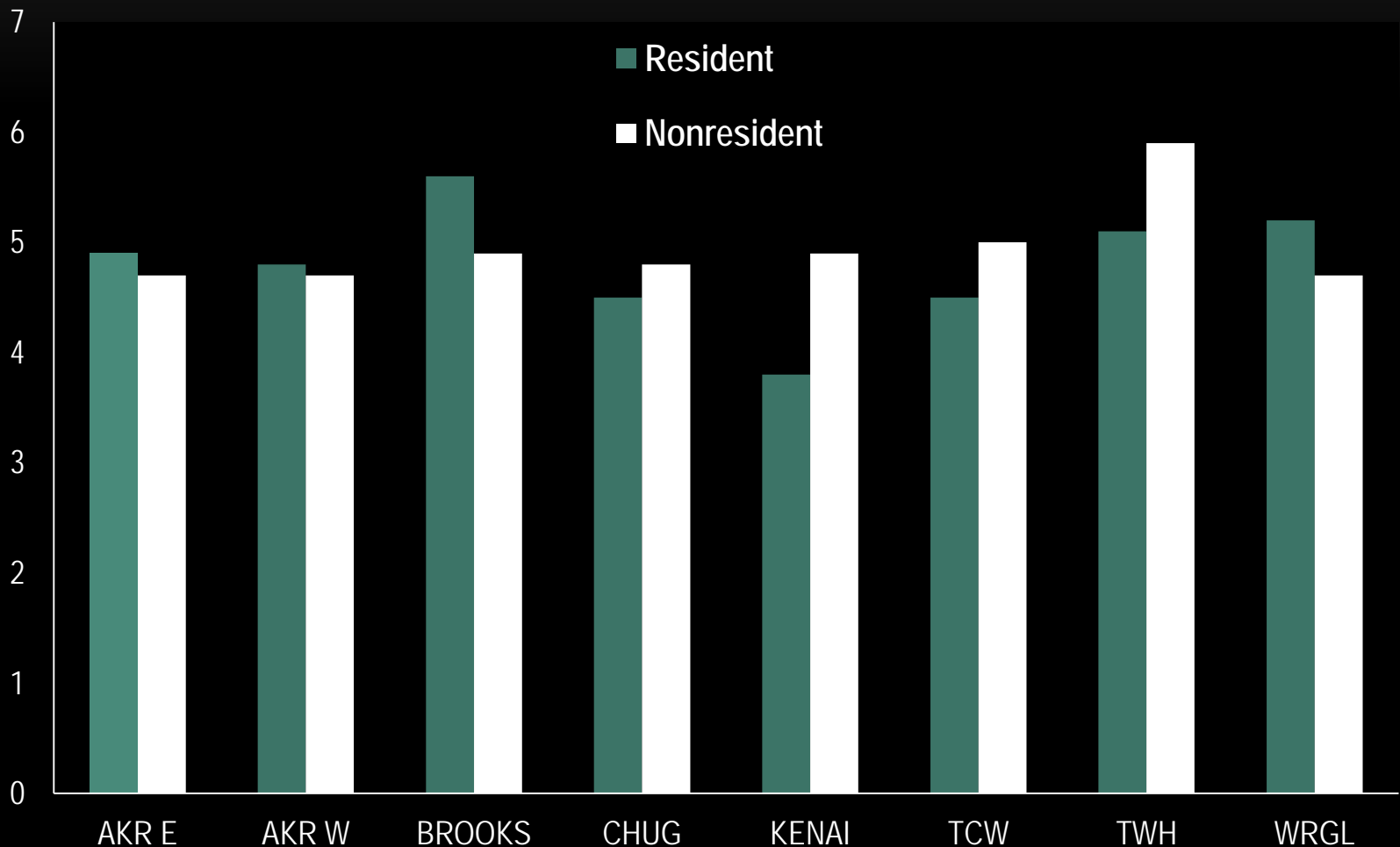
Nonresident success rates are most often twice that of residents.



How many days did it take to harvest a sheep?

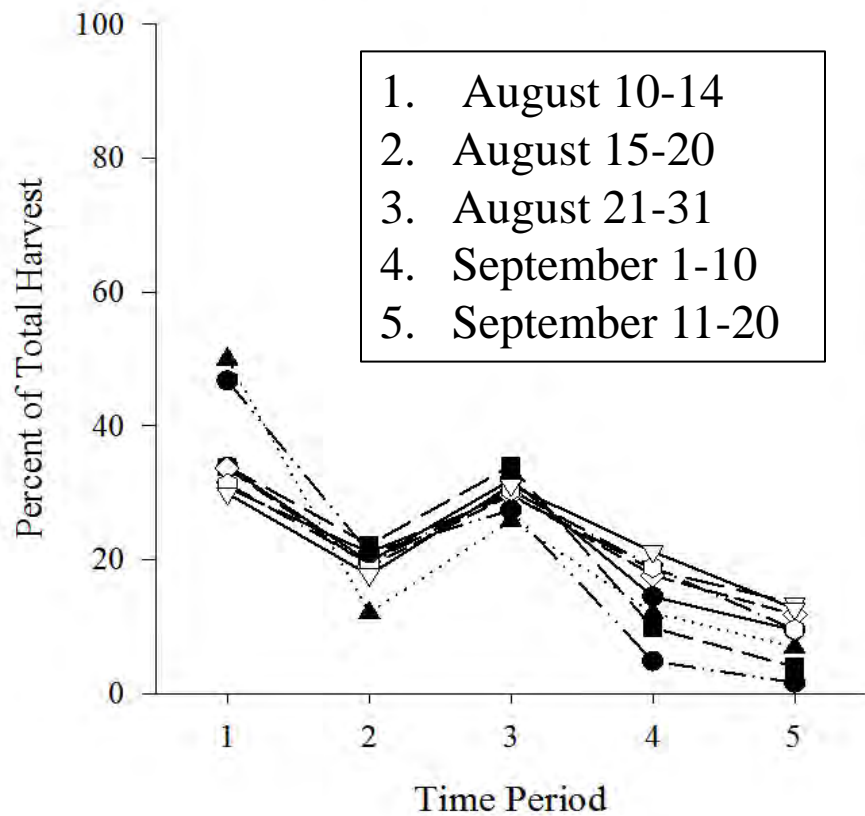


There is not a lot of difference in the number of days hunted for successful hunters.

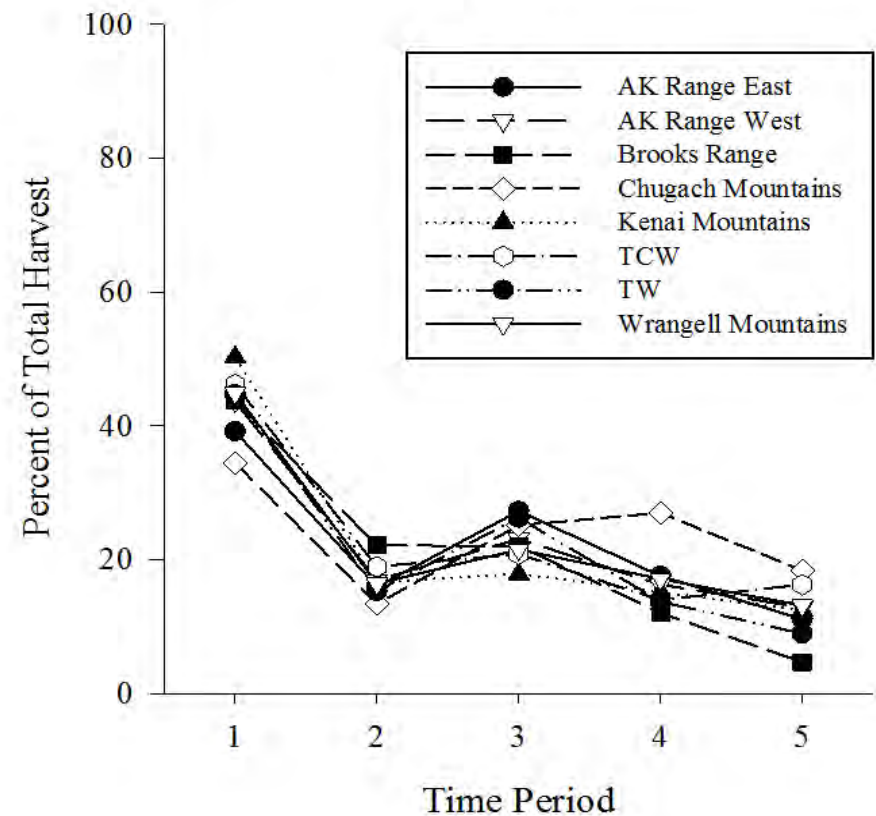


Most of the harvest occurs in the first 10 days for both residents and nonresidents.

Nonresidents



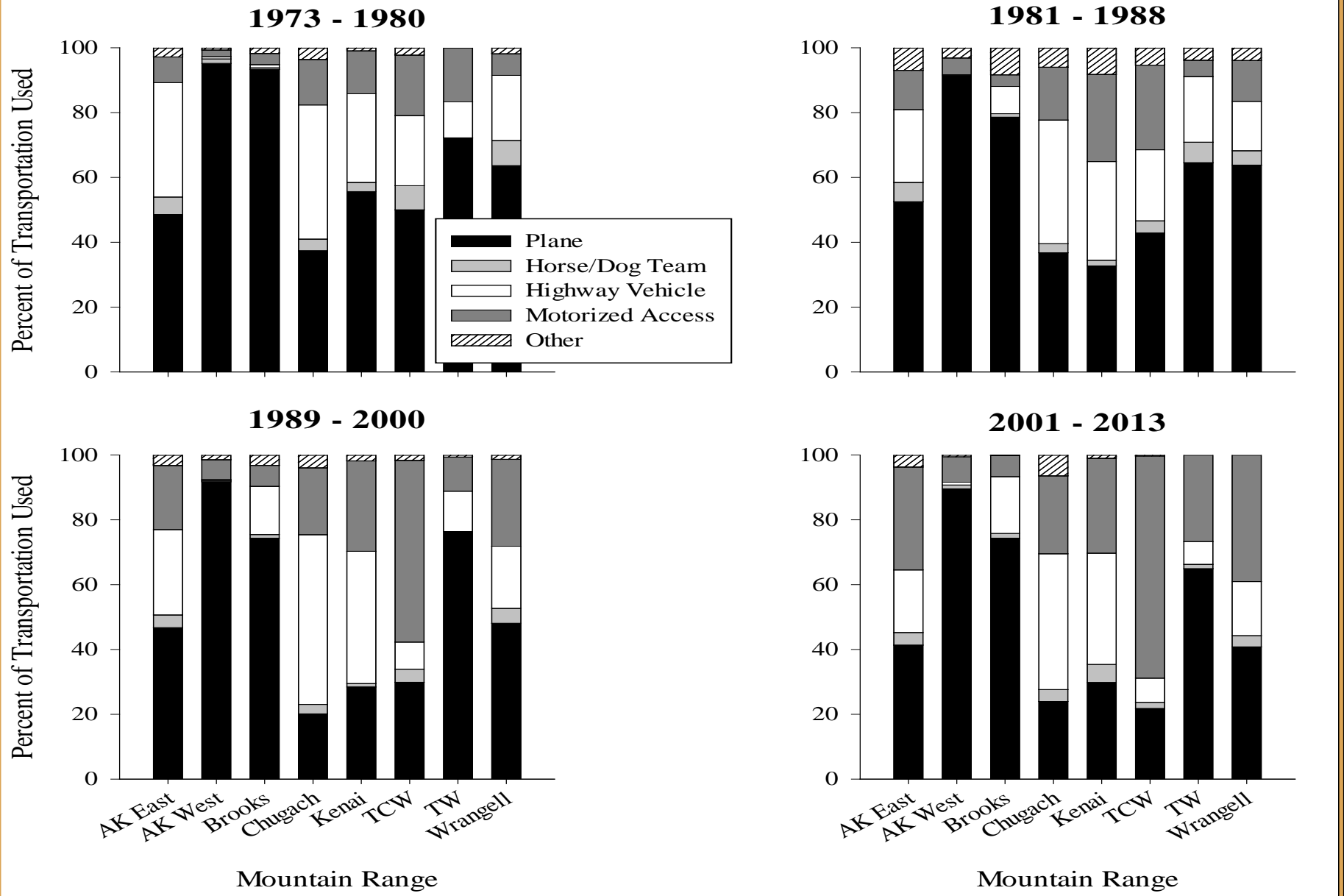
Residents



How do sheep hunters get to the place where they start walking?

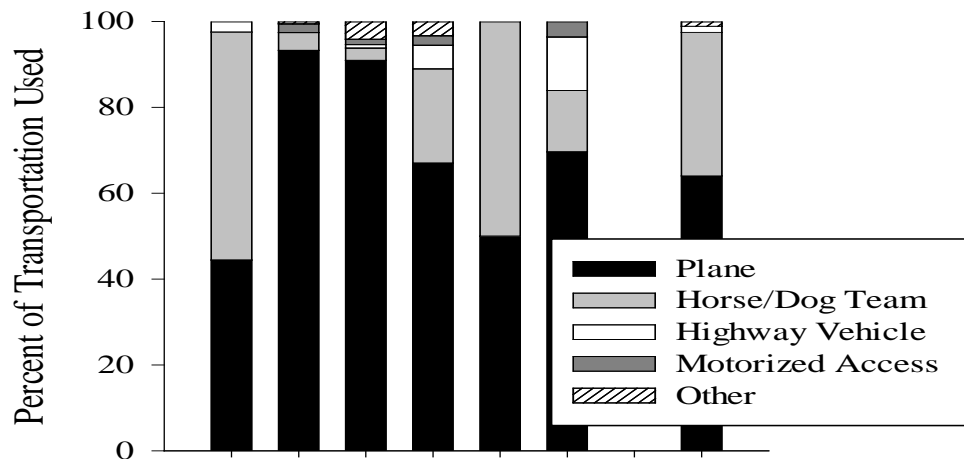


Residents use planes, ORVs, highway vehicles.

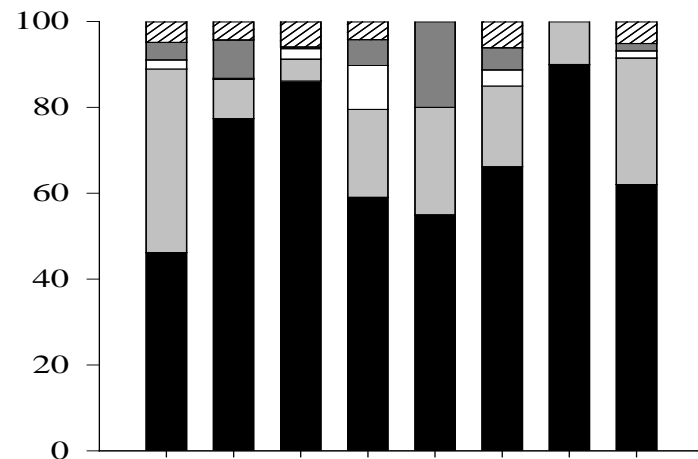


Nonresidents use planes and horses.

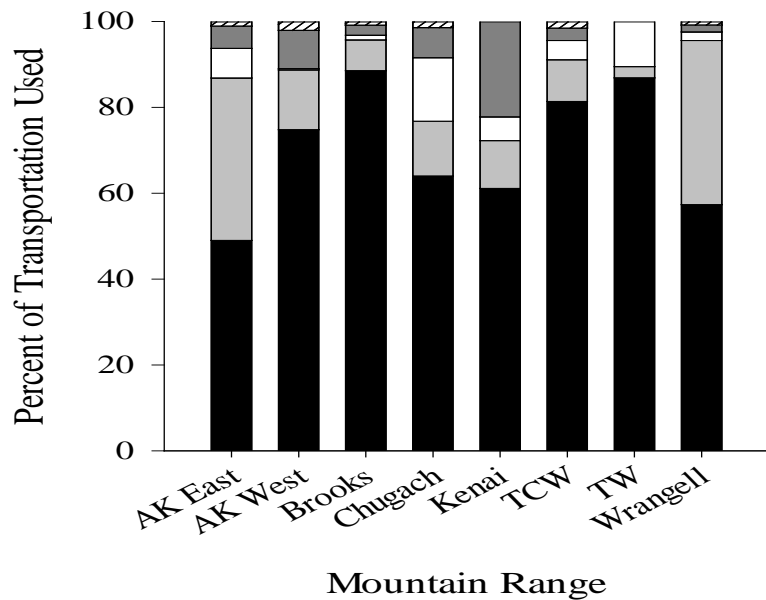
1973 - 1980



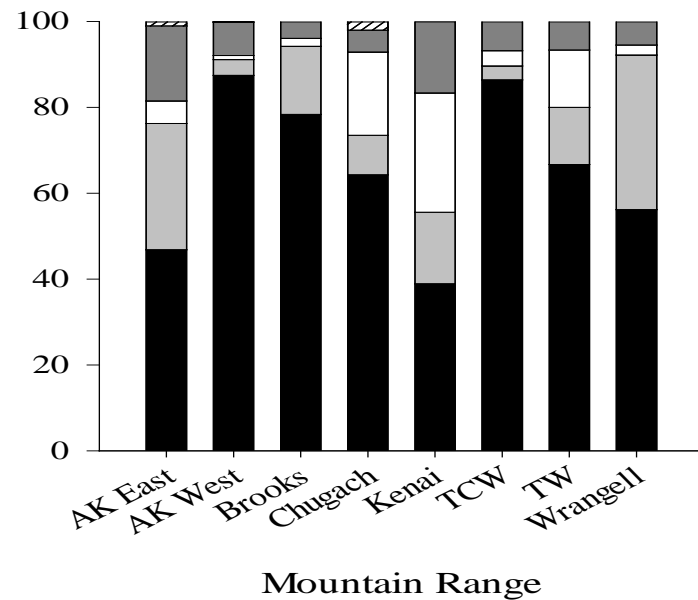
1981 - 1988



1989 - 2000



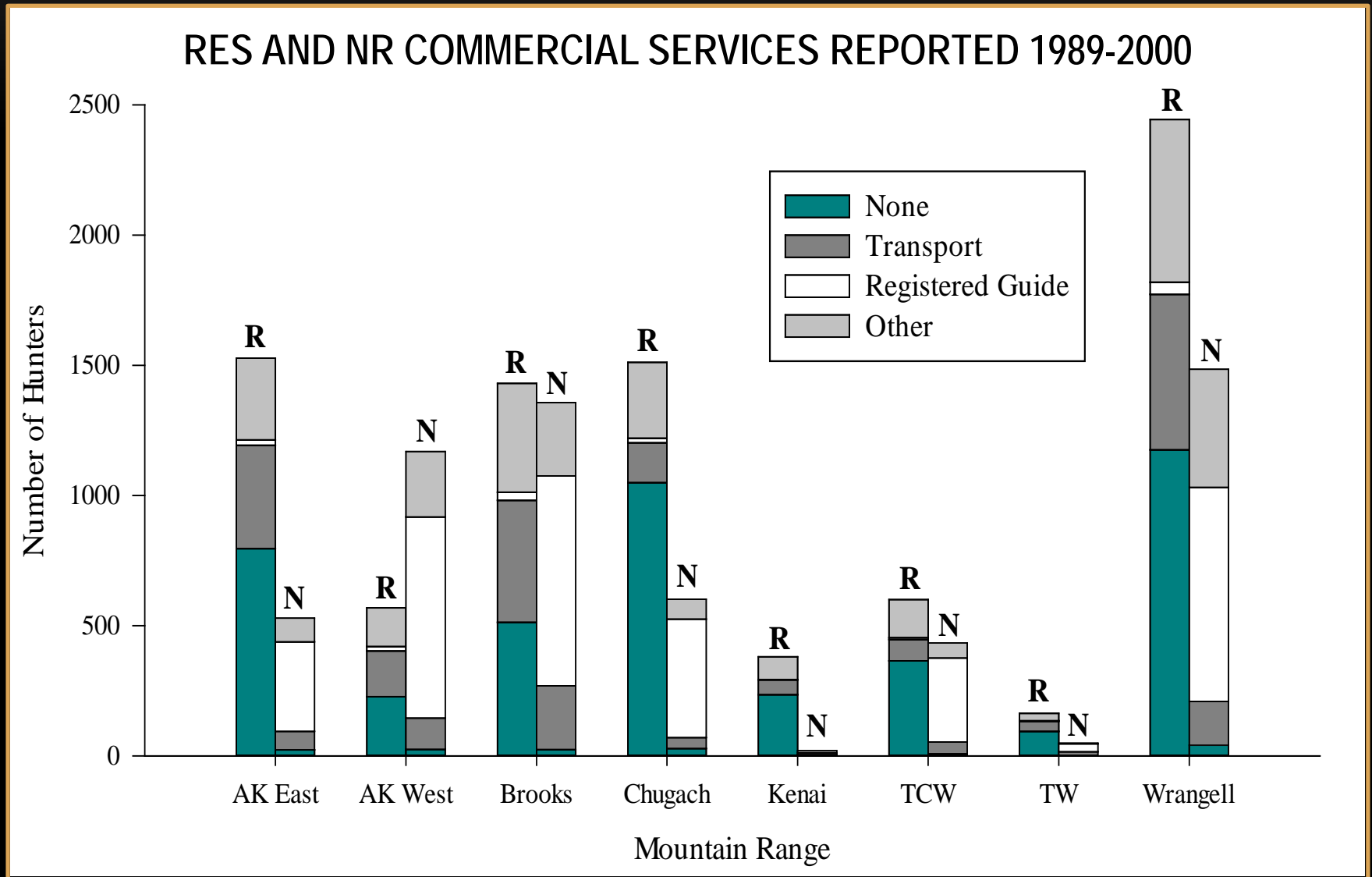
2001 - 2013



So what kind of commercial services do sheep hunters use?

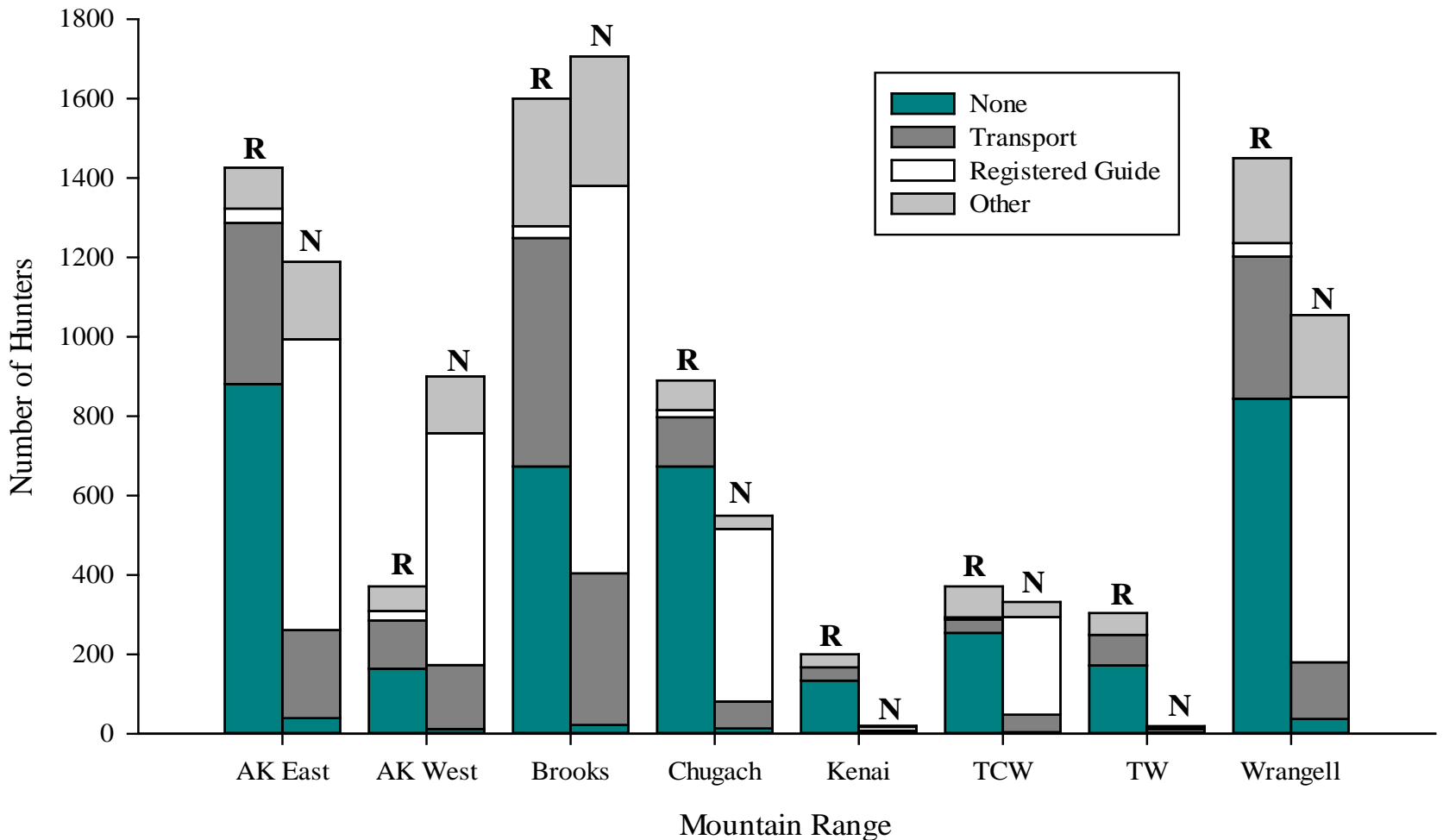


Nonresidents typically hire guides and/or other commercial services.



The majority of residents do not use commercial services.

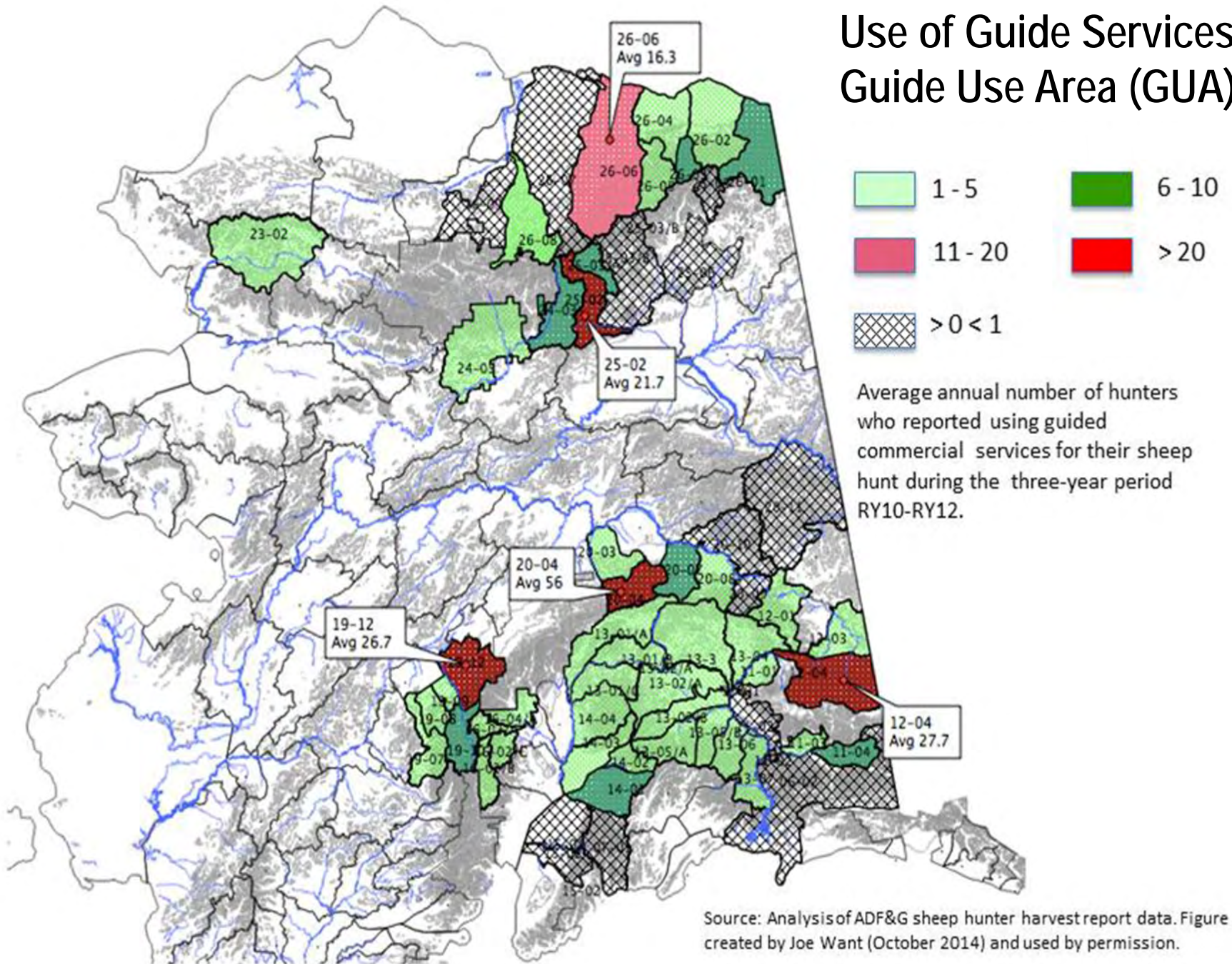
RES AND NR COMMERCIAL SERVICES REPORTED 2001-2013



Where are sheep hunters reporting guide services?



Use of Guide Services by Guide Use Area (GUA)



Source: Analysis of ADF&G sheep hunter harvest report data. Figure created by Joe Want (October 2014) and used by permission.

Non residents hunting with second-degree-kindred relatives

- Most of the range areas show NR sheep hunters reporting guides 70% or more of the time
- Other commercial use categories such as lodge/camp and other services are not well defined
- For the Tok Management Area (TMA), 20 to 25% of the NR draw applicants intend to hunt with relatives



SUMMARY

- Sheep populations in Alaska are currently considered to be stable or decreasing
- For over twenty years, there have been declines in the total number of hunters and number of sheep harvested
- Nonresident sheep hunter success rates are most often twice that of residents although there is very little difference in the number of days hunted between residents and nonresidents
- Over half of the total harvest occurs in the first 10 days of the season with a majority of this occurring in the first 5 days



SUMMARY *continued*

- Nonresident sheep hunters reported using airplanes and horses more often than other methods for access
- Residents reported using airplanes the most with ORVs and highway vehicles also used more often for access
- Most nonresident hunters hire guides and/or other commercial services while the majority of residents do not
- Residents that use commercial services hire transporters more than all other types



QUESTIONS ?



NEXT STEPS

- Review Board of Game Proposals **NOW - 30 JAN**
- Review Survey and Sheep Reports **15 DEC – 30 JAN**
- Prepare comments **NOW - 30 JAN**
- ADF&G Advisory Comm. meetings **NOW – 12 FEB**
- Submit Written Comments **NOW – 30 JAN**
- Attend Board of Game Meeting **13 FEB – 20 FEB**

Thank You

