

Spring Turkey Harvest Report 2014

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Abstract

A total of 41,815 turkeys were harvested during the 2014 spring turkey hunt. The spring season was comprised of 6 hunting periods in 7 turkey management zones, 17 state parks and Fort McCoy. The uncorrected success rate for permit holders was 20%, based on a total of 210,496 permits issued. Hunter success rates of 20% or above occurred in 2 of the 7 major hunting zones. Highest success rates per hunting period occurred in the first period of the season. Ninety percent of the harvested males were adults, up from 73% in the 2013 harvest. One hunting incident occurred during the spring season; the accident involved the hunter mistaking another individual for game.

Methods

Harvest information was obtained through mandatory registration of harvested turkeys. All turkey hunters are required to report their harvest with 24 hours of the kill via phone-in registration or via the DNR website. All registered birds are given a confirmation number which the hunter must retain until the bird is consumed. Registration records were then compiled and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

Hunting Zones

Wisconsin is divided into 7 Turkey Management Zones (TMZ) with similar timber, agriculture, ownership, and hunter and turkey densities (Figure 1). Twelve state parks and Fort McCoy allow limited access for turkey hunting as well. Most parts of the state have some amount of turkey activity during the year.

Permit Levels

Permit levels in each zone are decided upon by the DNR Turkey Committee. Consideration is given to the following when permits levels are set: previous hunter success rates, turkey population and distribution within a zone, square miles of turkey range (i.e., square miles of timber), recruitment, winter severity, and hunter interference rates (Table 1).

A total of 210,496 permits were issued in 2014 compared to 217,798 in 2013 and 201,984 in 2012. A total of 140,803 applications were received for the spring hunt. There were 135,902 permits issued via a drawing/preference process to these applicants by mail. A total of 4,901 applicants did not get a permit through the drawing process. These applicants either applied for oversubscribed zones or restricted their choices to the first 3 hunt periods where there were more applicants than permits. One zone was oversubscribed in 2014.

This was the eighth year that leftover permits were sold (\$10 for resident, \$15 for non-residents) over the counter (OTC) at WDNR license sales locations on a first-come, first-served basis at a rate of one permit per day. This continued until all permits available for a zone were issued or the season closed. A total of 74,270 permits were issued this way.

Permit Selection

All applicants were required to pay a \$3 application fee for a spring turkey permit application to enter the preference drawing. Preference for permits was given first to landowners (up to 30% of permits available per zone/time period combination), followed by residents who applied for but did not receive a permit in the spring of 2013, other residents, and finally non-residents. Applications were randomly selected, but first choice zone and time period of all applicants within each preference category were issued available permits before second, third, fourth, etc. choices were filled.

Age Ratio

Adult gobblers comprised 91% of the 2014 spring turkey harvest (Table 2). This proportion is higher than the 2013 level of 73% and is not typical of year of "normal" recruitment during which harvests comprised of 70% adults. The change in the percent adults in the 2014 harvest did match with an increase in recruitment in 2012 and poor recruitment in 2013, meaning there were many two year old gobblers and fewer jakes available for harvest. Hunters being more selective in harvesting turkeys in the spring and selecting adult toms may have affected this ratio as well.

Harvest and Success Rates

The 2014 spring turkey harvest was 41,815 birds taken (Figure 1, Table 3). This was 11% more than the 37,804 killed in 2013 and well short of the record harvest total for the state of 52,880 take in 2008. The hunter success rate of 20% was higher than last year's 17% and close to the long-term average.

Good hunter success rates (defined as above 20%) occurred in 2 of the 7 main turkey zones open to spring hunting (Table 4). TMZ 2 and 3 were the only one above 20% and had the hunter success rates of 23% and 20%, while all other TMZs were between 11-19%. The highest success rates per period occurred in the first period of the season, at 25%. While the winter of 2014 was long and hard, spring arrival was normal with slightly below-average temps and above-average rainfall. A more normal weather pattern returned to the state for the latter hunting periods. These periods had more normal spring phenology, and there may have been increased breeding behavior during these later periods. Recruitment was below normal in 2013 and below 2012 levels and parts of the state may have had reduced turkeys numbers.

A statewide youth turkey hunt was held for the eighth time in the spring of 2014. This was the fifth spring of the mentored hunting law, which allows youth ages 10 and older to hunt without a Hunter's Education card as long as they were accompanied by an 18 year or older adult. All youth ages 10-15 that had obtained a Hunter's Ed card or were a mentored hunter, and held a valid turkey permit and license were eligible to hunt. Youth were restricted to the zone of their valid turkey permit but the permit could be from any time period. The hunt occurred on the 11th-12th of April, with 1,929 turkeys being harvested (Table 3). All unused permits were still valid for the zone and time period of issuance.

Accidents

There was one hunting accident during the 2014 spring turkey hunt; 2 in 2013 and 3 in 2012. The accident involved one hunter mistakenly shooting someone when they thought they were shooting at a turkey. Turkey hunting continues to be a very safe sport with less than 3 accidents per 100,000 permits.

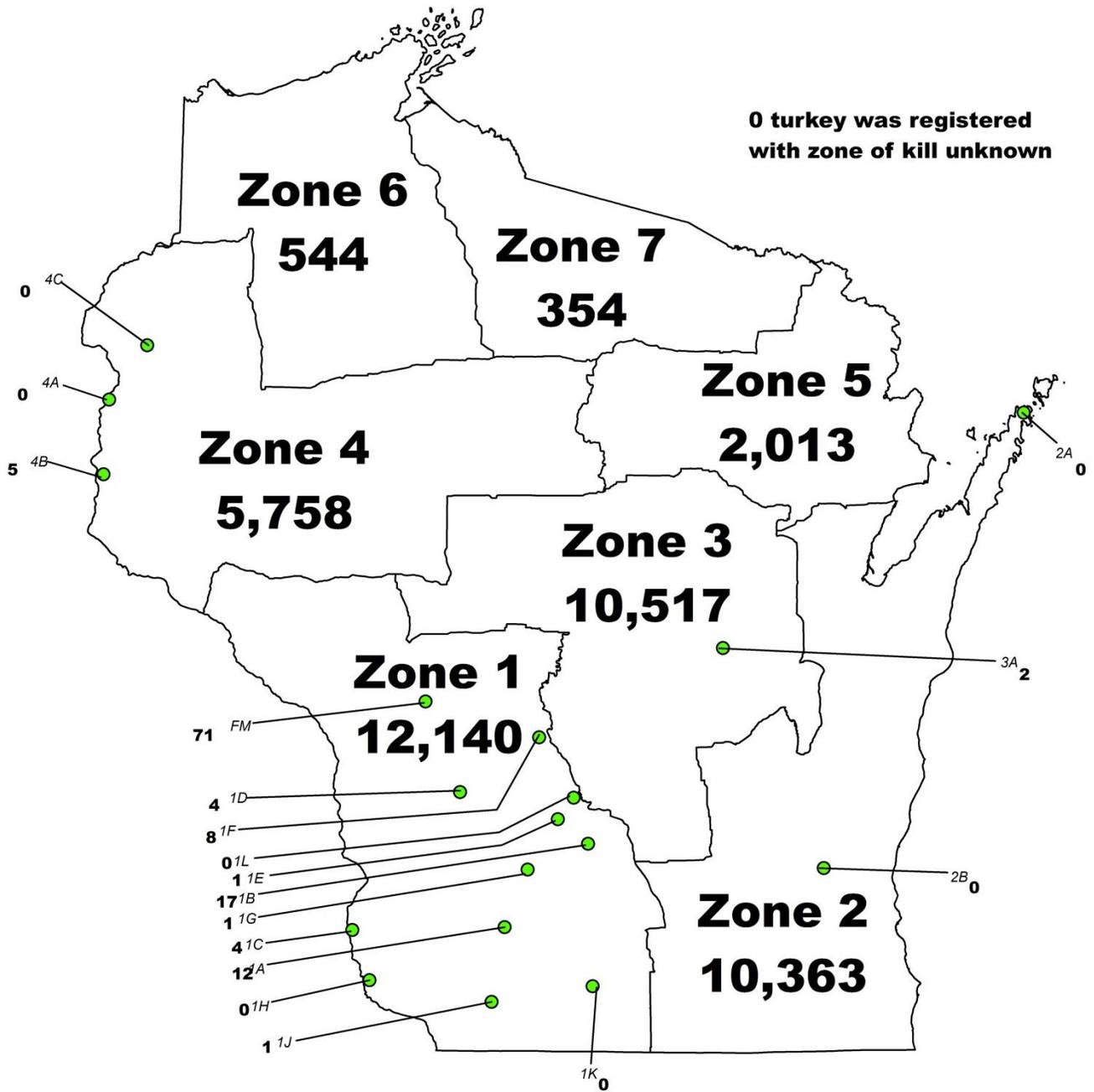


Figure 1. Spring Turkey harvest by zone, 2014.

Table 1. Total number of spring turkey permits issued, 1994-2014.

Zone	1994 ^a	1995 ^a	1996 ^a	1997 ^a	1998 ^a	1999 ^a	2000 ^a	2001 ^a	2002 ^a	2003 ^a	2004 ^a	2005 ^a	2006 ^a	2007 ^a	2008 ^a	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	50,299	44,661	48,117	54,265	56,983	59,534	67,476	68,990	68,434	68,820	71,764	72,303	71,806	70,893	70,167	70,068	68,806	67,152	59,875	66,061	62,903
2	5,252	5,497	7,005	8,562	10,057	11,017	13,496	15,496	16,656	18,600	22,616	23,850	27,022	28,857	29,729	34,196	34,344	34,198	40,797	41,999	45,000
3	9,852	10,630	12,558	19,460	22,193	27,007	32,859	44,858	50,102	52,800	56,896	59,100	59,215	59,876	60,390	59,694	56,273	54,611	48,898	54,430	51,826
4	2,978	4,603	5,309	7,106	8,384	10,901	14,031	16,558	18,701	21,890	26,143	28,524	30,076	31,632	33,032	34,909	35,295	34,908	31,974	34,914	31,287
5	2,652	2,803	2,504	2,806	2,845	3,094	3,564	4,688	5,408	6,300	8,510	9,303	9,463	10,055	10,722	11,989	12,087	11,994	11,654	11,998	11,132
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,350	2,011	2,763	4,200	4,510	4,495	4,499	4,500	4,327
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,203	1,200	1,500	2,400	2,400	2,400	3,602	3,600	3,348
FM	222	235	0	449	463	463	610	555	555	0	482	510	510	510	384	398	351	325	392	296	324
Total	71,255	68,429	75,493	92,648	100,925	112,016	132,036	151,145	159,856	168,410	186,411	193,590	200,645	205,034	208,687	217,854	214,066	210,083	201,691	217,798	210,496

^a Data was compiled from "old" turkey zone information**Table 2. Percent of the harvest composed of adult gobblers, 1994-2014.**

Zone	1994 ^a	1995 ^a	1996 ^a	1997 ^a	1998 ^a	1999 ^a	2000 ^a	2001 ^a	2002 ^a	2003 ^a	2004 ^a	2005 ^a	2006 ^a	2007 ^a	2008 ^a	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	73	59	72	72	67	63	75	79	72	75	78	86	71	73	78	84	80	77	82	73	90
2	75	62	64	72	66	63	68	77	69	73	79	86	75	78	80	87	81	78	84	76	89
3	70	55	70	71	70	68	76	80	73	76	76	87	68	75	81	84	77	76	81	72	91
4	71	61	67	63	61	55	71	75	72	77	76	86	71	73	81	88	83	79	81	69	93
5	63	48	45	61	53	56	66	70	68	83	75	82	71	76	83	86	81	75	82	76	91
6													75	69	79	87	80	75	78	76	90
7													76	75	77	83	83	77	81	75	86
FM																89	90	85	88	79	90
Statewide	74	59	70	71	68	65	74	79	72	76	78	87	72	75	81	86	80	77	82	73	91

^a Data was compiled from "old" turkey zone information

Table 3. The 2014 spring turkey harvest by zone and time period.

Zone	Success rates are uncorrected for nonparticipation.															
	A		B		C		D		E		F		Special Hunts		Total	
	Kill	% Success	Kill	% Success	Kill	% Success	Kill	% Success	Kill	% Success	Kill	% Success	Learn to Hunt	Youth Hunt	Kill	% Success
01	3,300	27%	2,446	20%	2,090	17%	1,737	14%	1,260	14%	607	14%	155	545	12,140	19%
02	2,016	27%	1,865	25%	1,700	23%	1,356	18%	1,421	19%	1,149	15%	285	571	10,363	23%
03	2,669	25%	2,181	21%	1,955	19%	1,452	14%	1,032	16%	569	17%	192	467	10,517	20%
04	1,187	20%	1,050	18%	926	16%	907	19%	725	16%	626	14%	99	238	5,758	18%
05	386	19%	416	21%	361	18%	266	13%	261	16%	183	12%	56	84	2,013	18%
06	122	16%	122	16%	101	13%	75	10%	73	10%	31	5%	5	15	544	13%
07	61	10%	77	13%	74	12%	54	9%	51	9%	28	8%	2	7	354	11%
01A	2	17%	4	33%	4	31%	1 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	1	12	32%
01B	6	40%	4	27%	6	40%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	1	17	38%
01C	3	38%	1	13%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	4	15%
01D	3	25%	1	8%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	4	11%
01E	0	0%	1	20%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	1	7%
01F	3	14%	5	24%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	8	13%
02A	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	0	0%
03A	0	0%	1	17%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	1 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	2	11%
04A	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	0	0%
04B	3	38%	1	13%	0	0%	1 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	5	21%
04C	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	0	0%
01G	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	1 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	1	20%
01H	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	0	0%
01J	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	1	17%
01K	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	0	0%
01L	0	#DIV/0!	0	0%	0	#DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0 #DIV/0!	0	0	0	0%
02B	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0%
FM	29	35%	22	22%	1	3%	7	18%	2	8%	10	25%	0	0	71	22%
Unks	0	0%		0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0%
Total	9,790	25%	8,198	21%	7,218	18%	5,856	15%	4,827	16%	3,203	15%	794	1,929	41,815	20%

Table 4. Hunter success rates (percent successful) for 1994-2014.

Zone	1994 ^a	1995 ^a	1996 ^a	1997 ^a	1998 ^a	1999 ^a	2000 ^a	2001 ^a	2002 ^a	2003 ^a	2004 ^a	2005 ^a	2006 ^a	2007 ^a	2008 ^a	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	18%	23%	24%	22%	27%	29%	28%	25%	24%	24%	24%	22%	21%	22%	23%	22%	22%	18%	20%	17%	19%
2	18%	21%	22%	22%	25%	29%	29%	28%	27%	32%	32%	31%	29%	28%	30%	30%	28%	25%	26%	21%	23%
3	17%	23%	27%	26%	31%	32%	31%	26%	24%	24%	24%	22%	22%	25%	24%	22%	19%	18%	21%	17%	20%
4	17%	20%	21%	22%	31%	31%	29%	28%	27%	26%	27%	26%	27%	30%	28%	28%	23%	18%	19%	15%	18%
5	10%	14%	14%	16%	18%	23%	26%	24%	24%	20%	22%	21%	21%	24%	25%	22%	20%	18%	19%	17%	18%
6													28%	25%	26%	21%	19%	18%	17%	14%	13%
7													19%	20%	22%	15%	17%	16%	16%	12%	11%
FM Total	30%	41%		25%	32%	32%	29%	28%	25%	0%	25%	28%	22%	24%	33%	27%	26%	20%	28%	33%	22%
Statewide	18%	22%	24%	23%	28%	30%	29%	26%	25%	25%	25%	24%	23%	25%	25%	24%	22%	19%	21%	17%	20%

^a Data was compiled from "old" turkey zone information

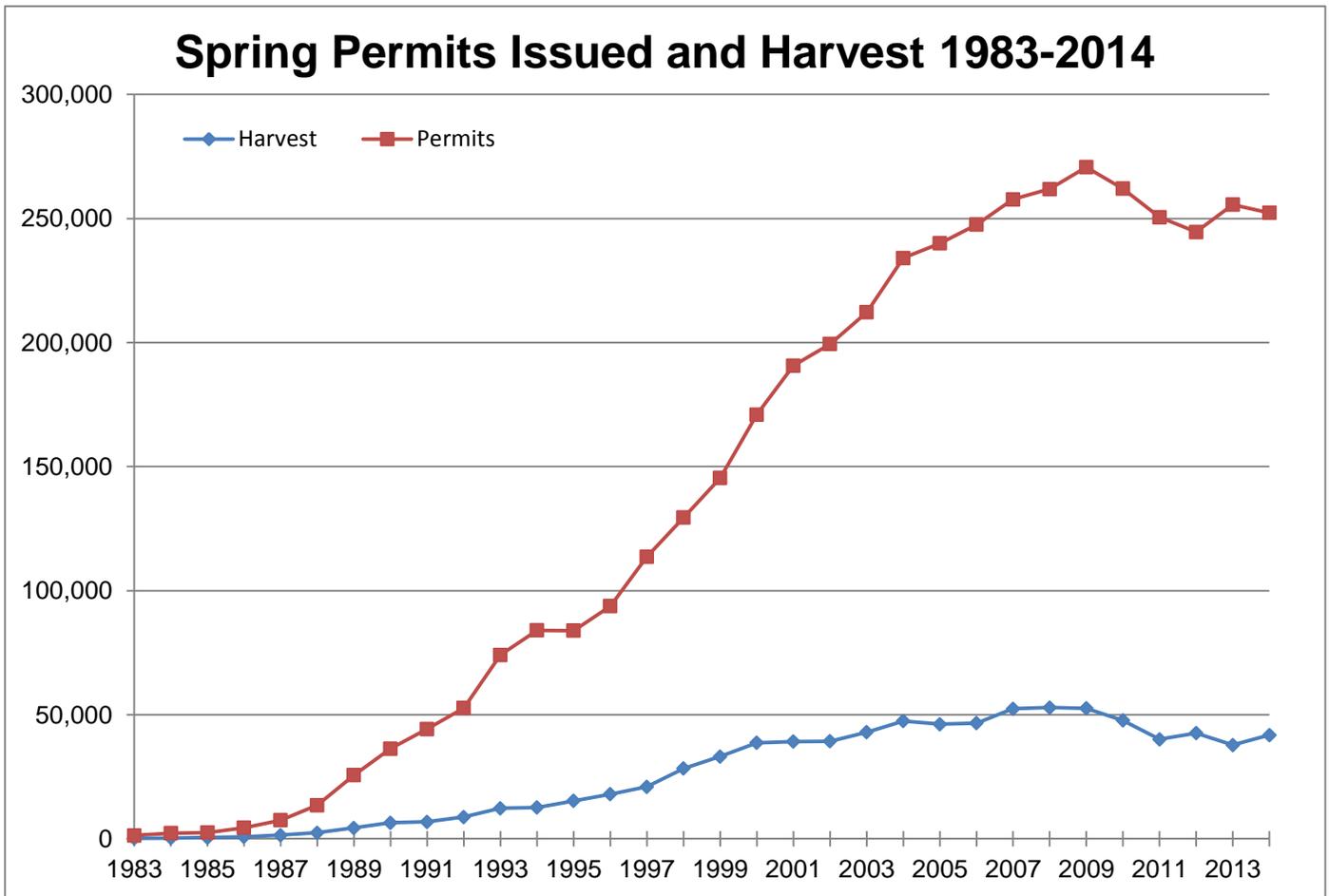


Figure 2. *Spring turkey permits issued and harvest, 1983-2014.*

Table 5. *Historical number of permits issued, harvest, and permit success for spring turkey hunting, 1983-2014.*

Year	Permits	Harvest	Permit Success
1983	1,200	182	15.2%
1984	1,950	303	15.5%
1985	2,025	496	24.5%
1986	3,675	793	21.6%
1987	6,040	1,478	24.5%
1988	11,070	2,486	22.5%
1989	21,280	4,400	20.7%
1990	29,877	6,465	21.6%
1991	37,414	6,846	18.3%
1992	43,925	8,798	20.0%
1993	61,767	12,316	19.9%
1994	71,420	12,637	17.7%
1995	68,588	15,323	22.3%
1996	75,812	18,000	23.7%
1997	92,734	20,992	22.6%
1998	101,141	28,338	28.0%
1999	112,256	33,168	29.5%
2000	132,318	38,686	29.2%
2001	151,522	39,211	25.9%
2002	160,101	39,336	24.6%
2003	169,277	42,970	25.4%
2004	186,608	47,477	25.4%
2005	193,826	46,183	23.8%
2006	200,869	46,662	23.2%
2007	205,306	52,428	25.5%
2008	208,972	52,880	25.3%
2009	218,133	52,581	24.1%
2010	214,356	47,722	22.3%
2011	210,384	40,133	19.1%
2012	201,984	42,612	21.1%
2013	217,798	37,804	17.4%
2014	210,496	41,815	19.9%