

# Fishing through the Pandemic in Nebraska

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and Matt Gruntorad

*Pathways:: Recruitment, Retention,  
Reactivation*



The image is a COVID-19 social distancing flyer from the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. It features a blue background with white and yellow text. At the top left is a white tree icon. In the top right corner is the NJ logo with the text "NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF Fish and Wildlife". The word "SOCIAL DISTANCING" is written in large, bold, white letters across the center. Below this, there are four sections with icons and text: "FISH LOCAL" (location pin icon), "BE SAFE" (key and person icon), "BE ADAPTIVE" (clock icon), and "STAY HOME" (house icon). A blue banner at the bottom reads "6 Feet of Social Distance" with a line drawing of two people separated by a fishing rod's length. At the bottom right is a QR code labeled "TROUT STOCKED LOCATIONS".

COVID-19

**SOCIAL DISTANCING**

**FISH LOCAL**  
Stay close to home. Keep your fishing trip short.  
Avoid high-traffic destinations.

**BE SAFE**  
Avoid crowds and groups. Keep a distance of **6** feet or  
more from others, including staff stocking fish.  
Advise children not to wander into the personal space of  
other anglers.

**BE ADAPTIVE**  
Move quickly through parking lots and paths.  
If crowded, choose a different fishing location or time to visit.

**STAY HOME**  
If you're not feeling well, stay home.

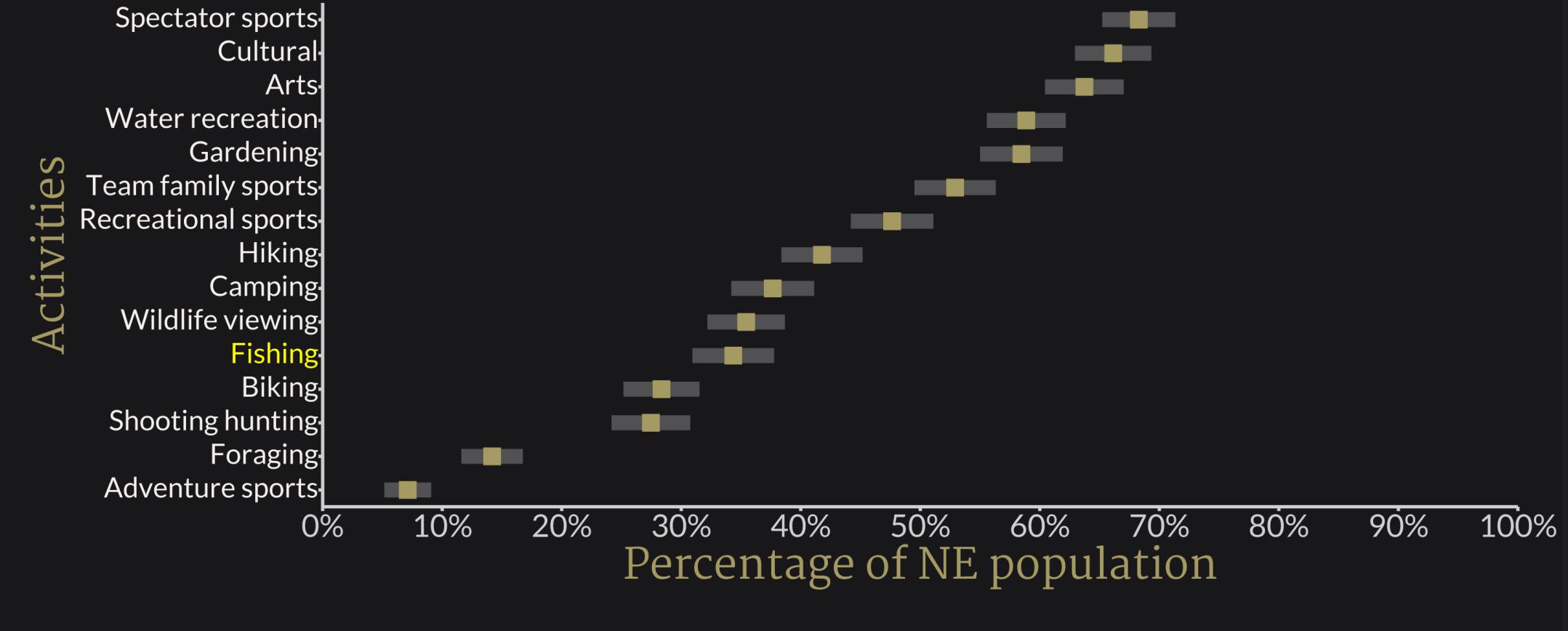
**6 Feet of Social Distance**

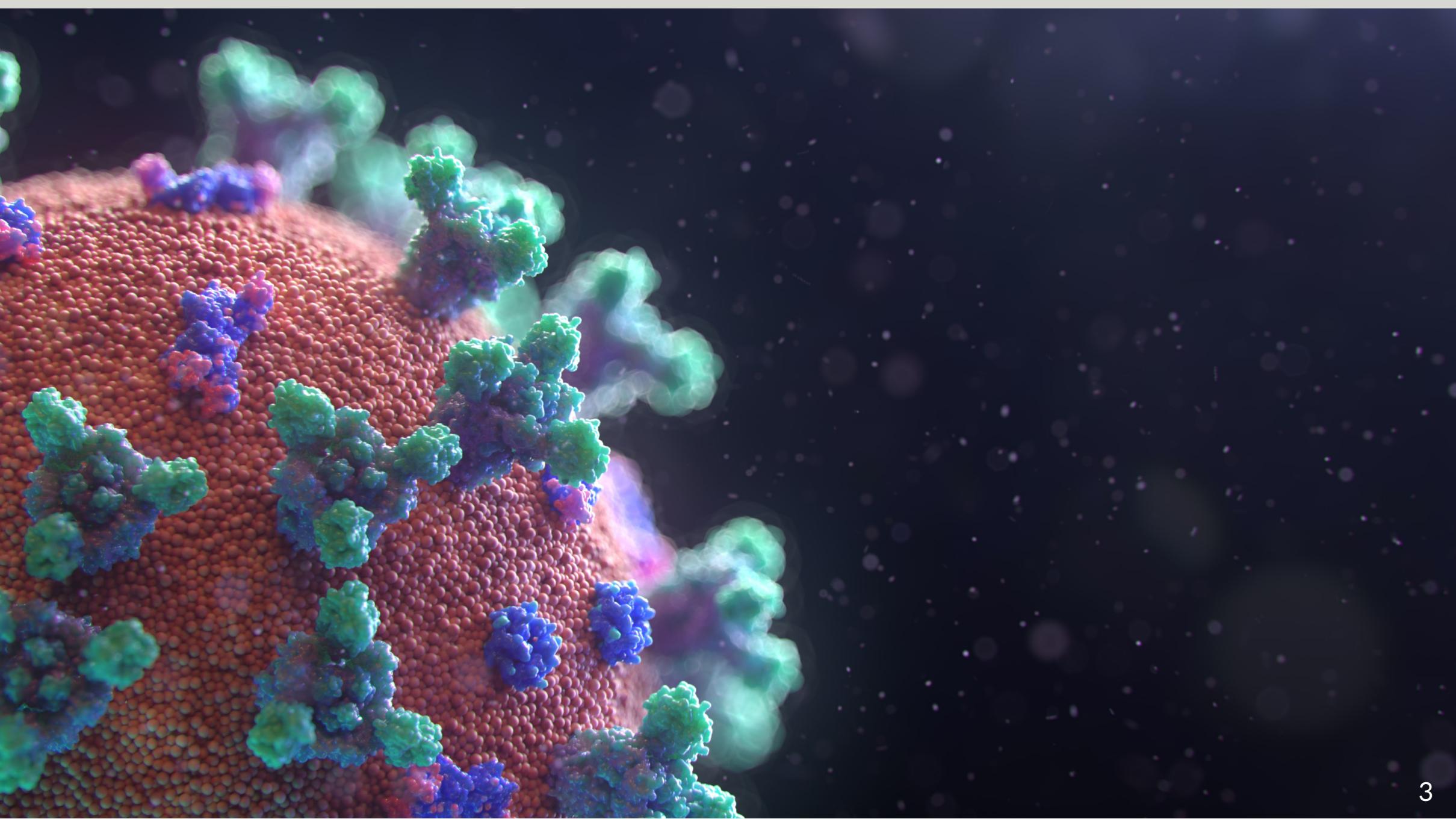
- ONE FISHING ROD LENGTH -

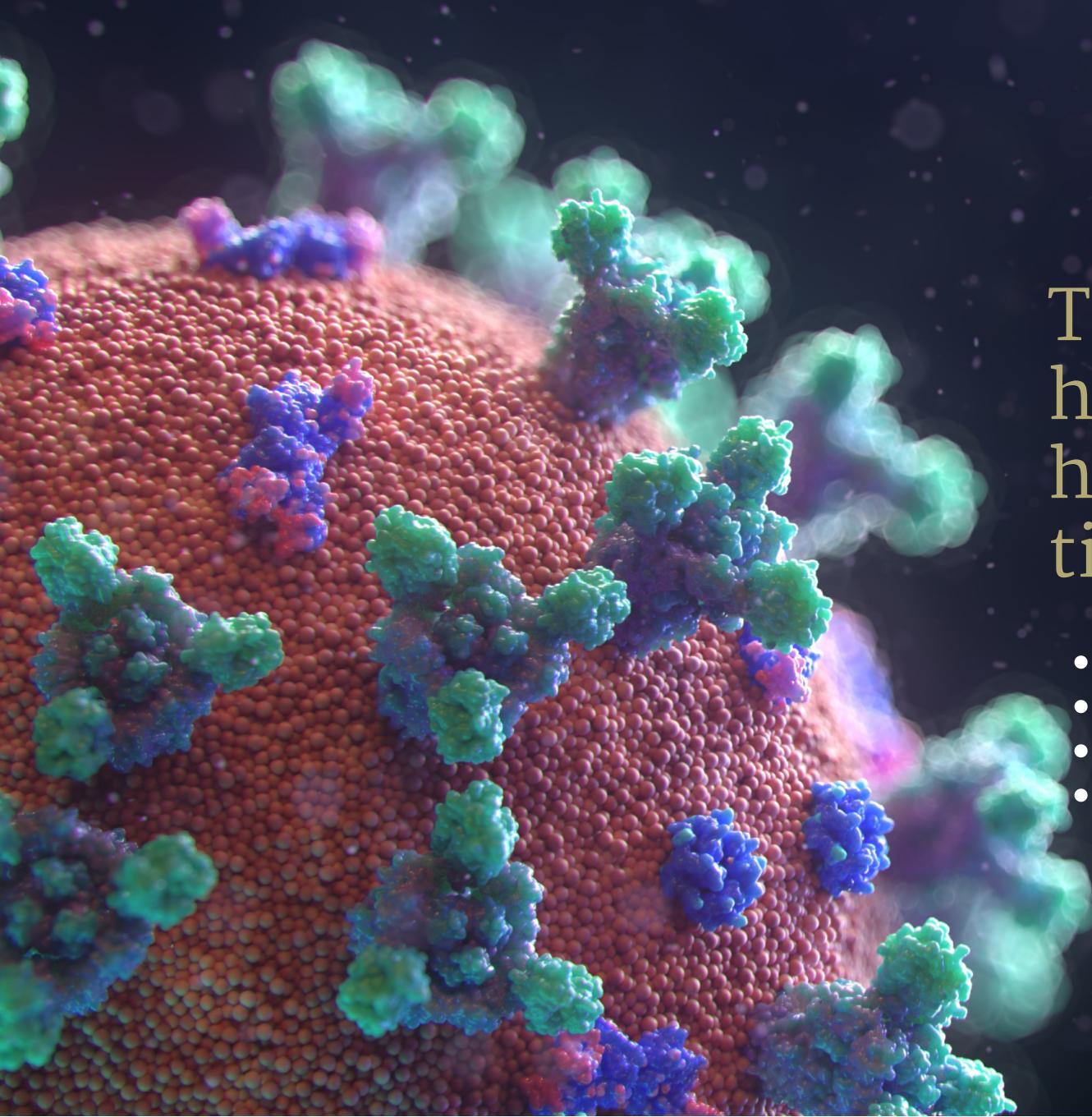
For additional information visit:  
[www.NJFishandWildlife.com](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com)

TROUT STOCKED LOCATIONS

# Recreational budget in 2019







The Covid pandemic had profound effects on how we used our spare time

- travel ceased or restricted
- canceled many of our usual activities
- changed our work schedules
- disrupted gathering in groups

How did the pandemic influence  
fishing in Nebraska?

# Fishing in Nebraska

Everyone 16 and older needs a permit to fish legally in Nebraska.

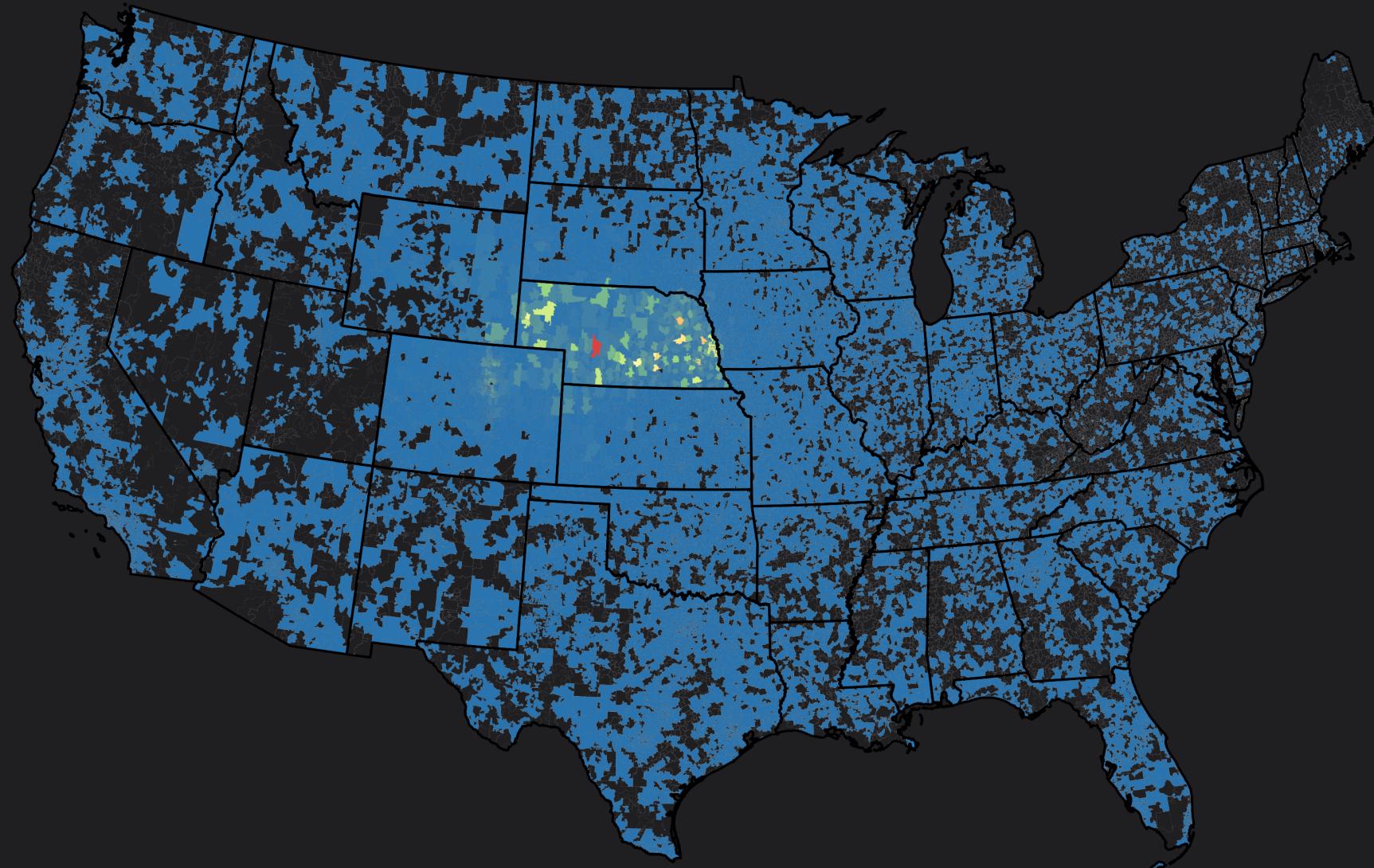
Many options available:

- resident and non-resident
- single-day to lifetime permits
- can be combined with hunting permits

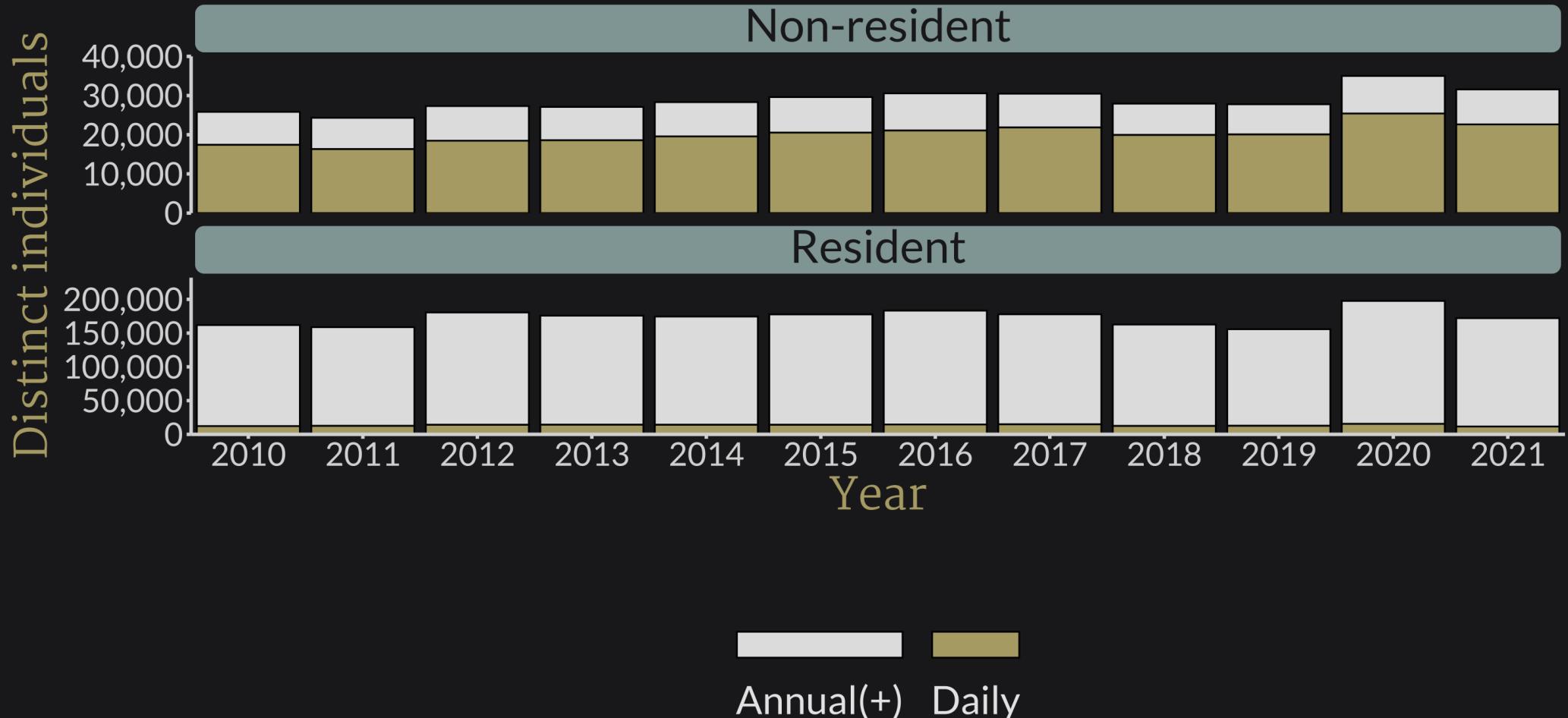
Permit purchases can help inform the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* of fishing in Nebraska



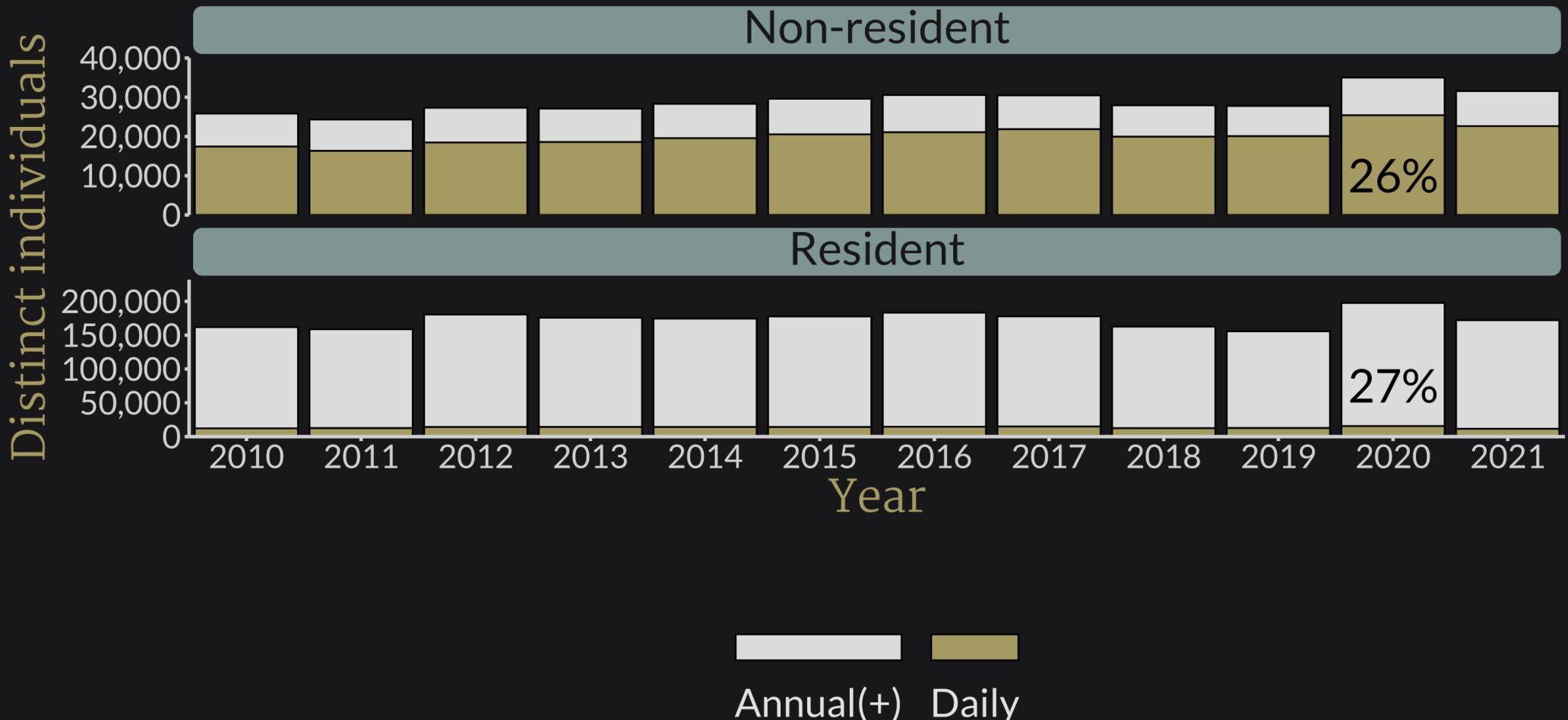
# Anglers fish NE from all over



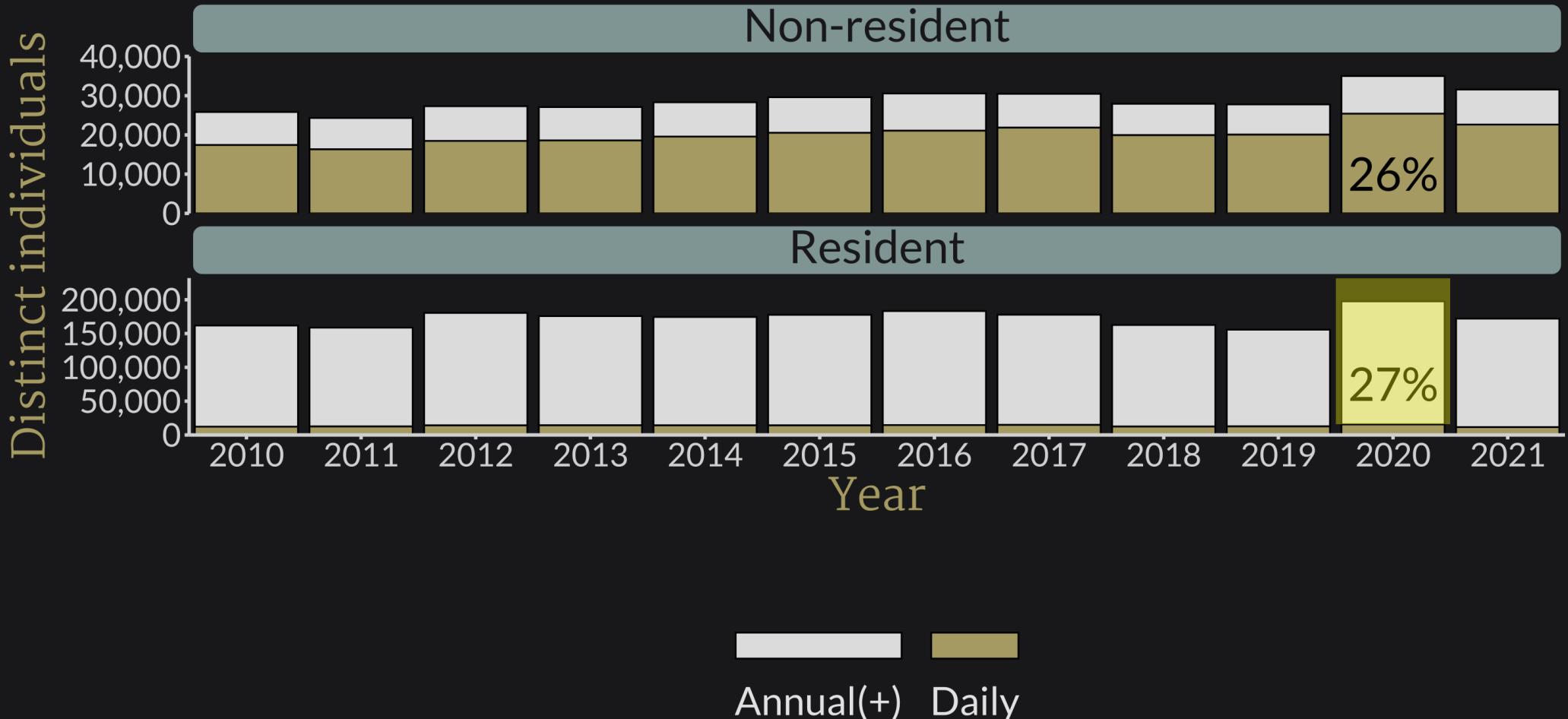
# Trends across the years



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**Kearney**  
**SANDHILL CRANE**  
**CAPITAL OF THE WORLD**

Who were these additional  
anglers that showed up in 2020?

# Classifying anglers into the 3 R's



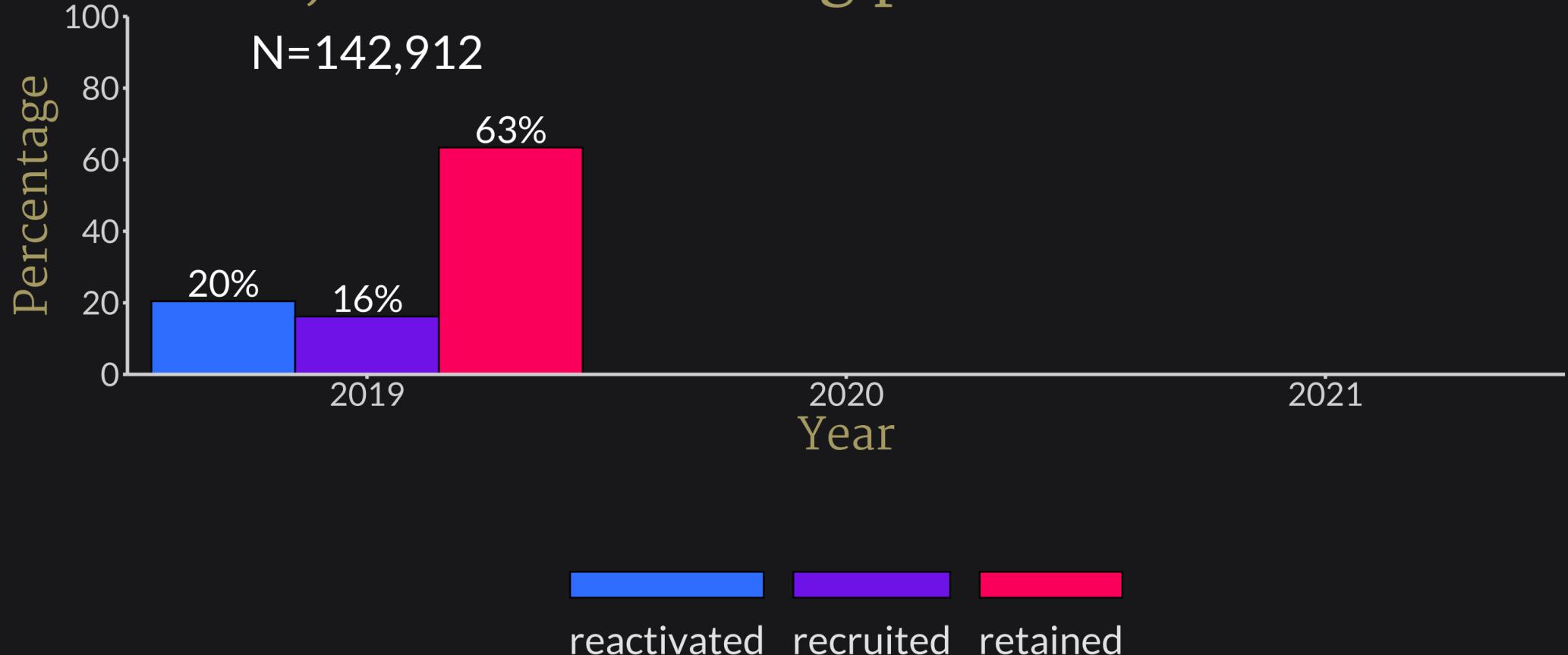
Recruited

Reactivated

Retained

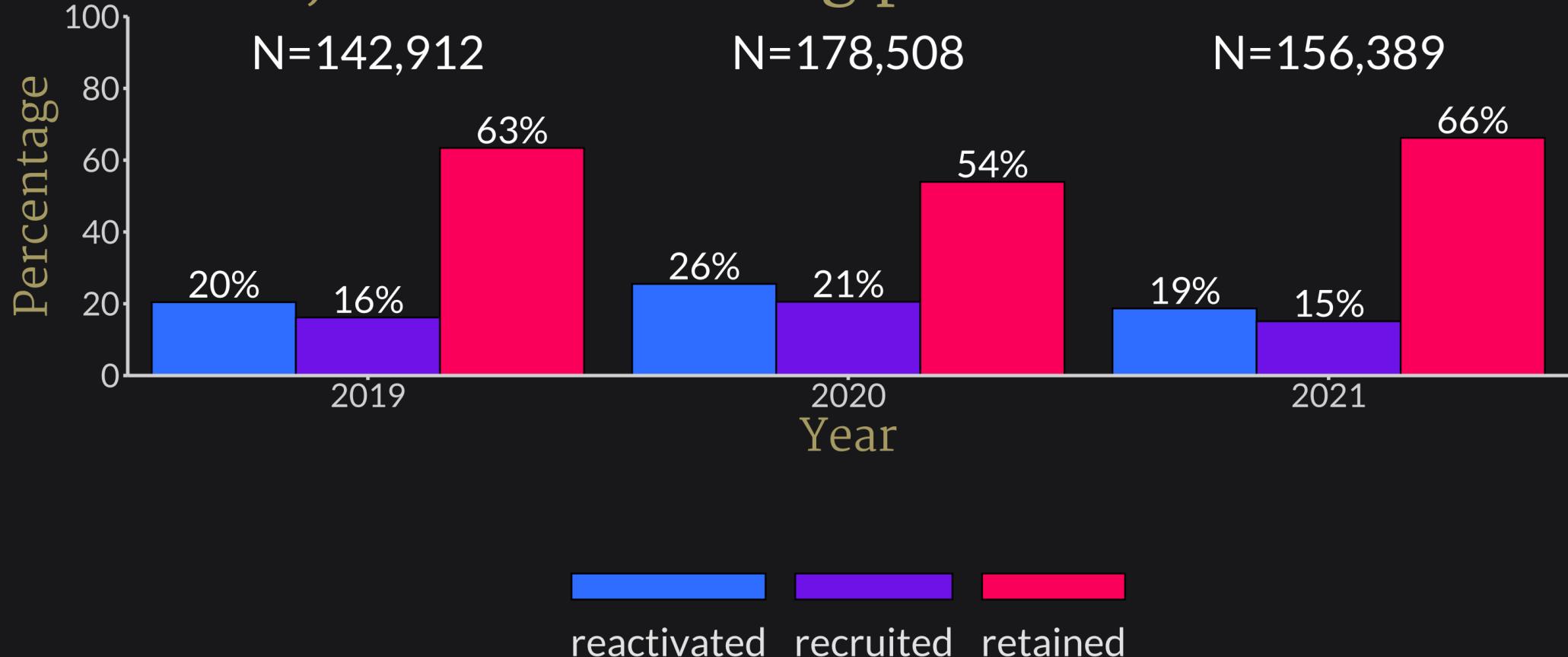
# R3 types by year

Resident, annual+ fishing permits

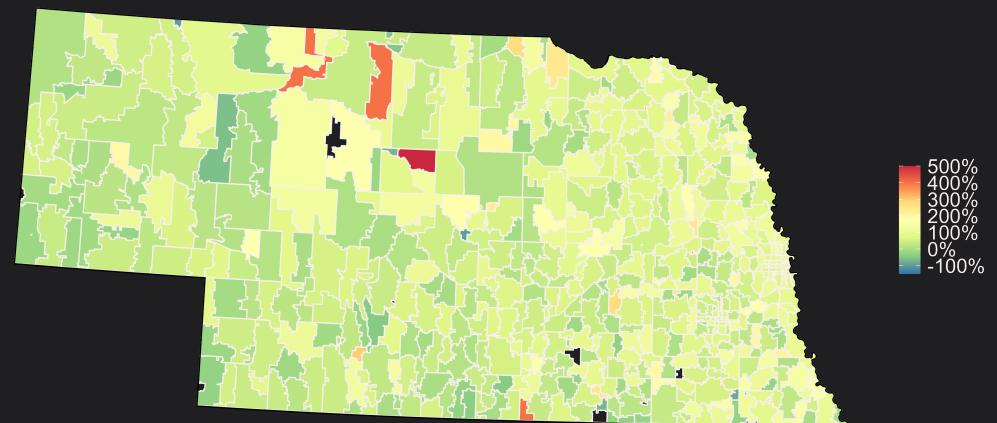
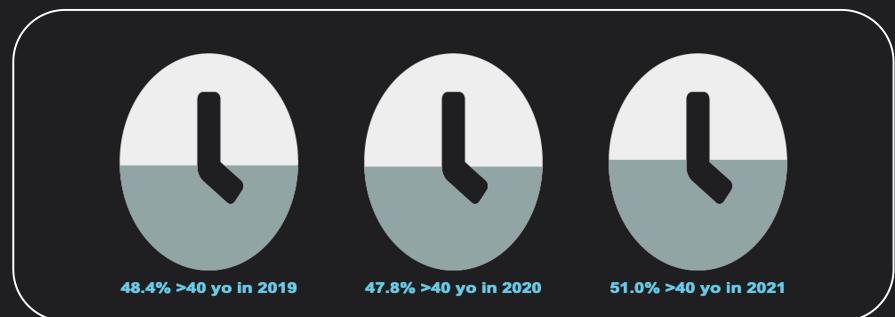


# R3 types by year

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# Angler characteristics



# The *whys*

Broadly, there were no large shifts in the characteristics of who was fishing

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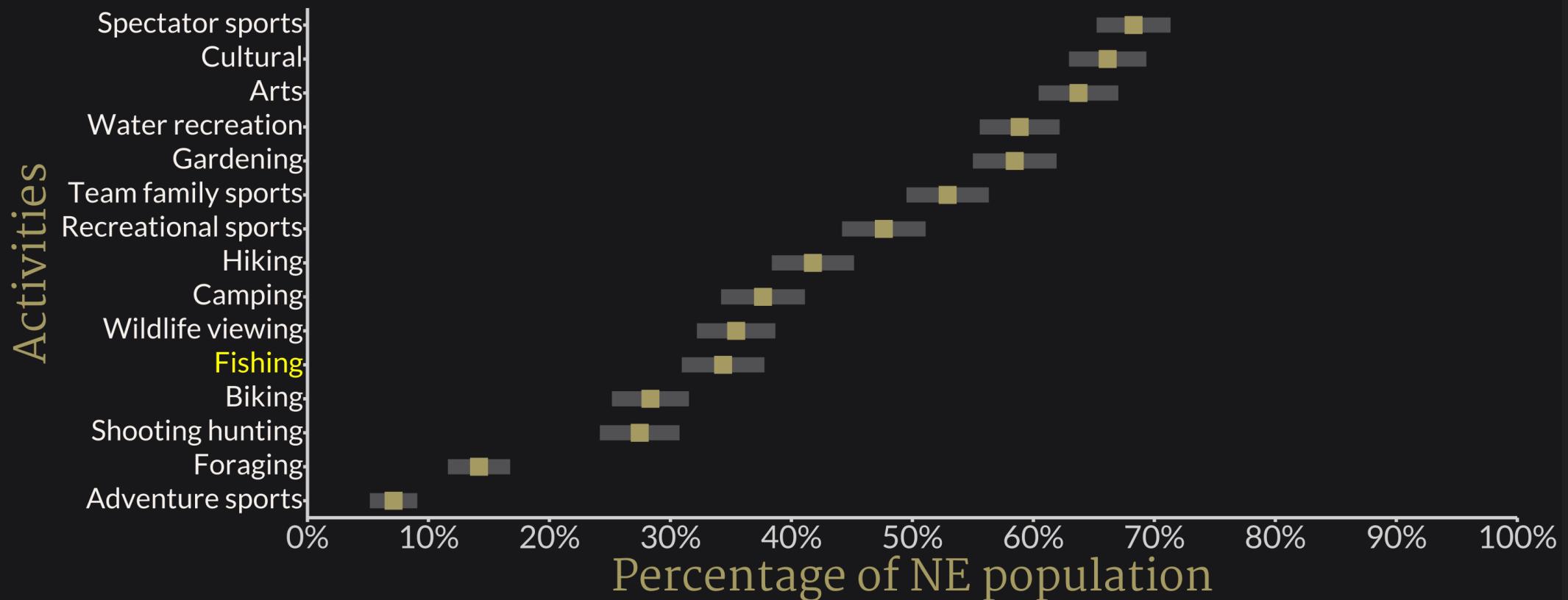


New anglers were sent a survey that sought to get at the *whys*

# The most important *whys*



# Disruption of the recreational landscape



# Take home points

- Covid pandemic brought a record number of new anglers to NE waters
  - Primarily those that had lapsed
  - Many stayed in 2021
- Positive for funding sportfish restoration and aquatic habitat improvements
- Many of the reasons *why* were similar to other outdoor recreational activities: family and friends, outdoors, nature
  - The pandemic decreased the amount of competing activities

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