

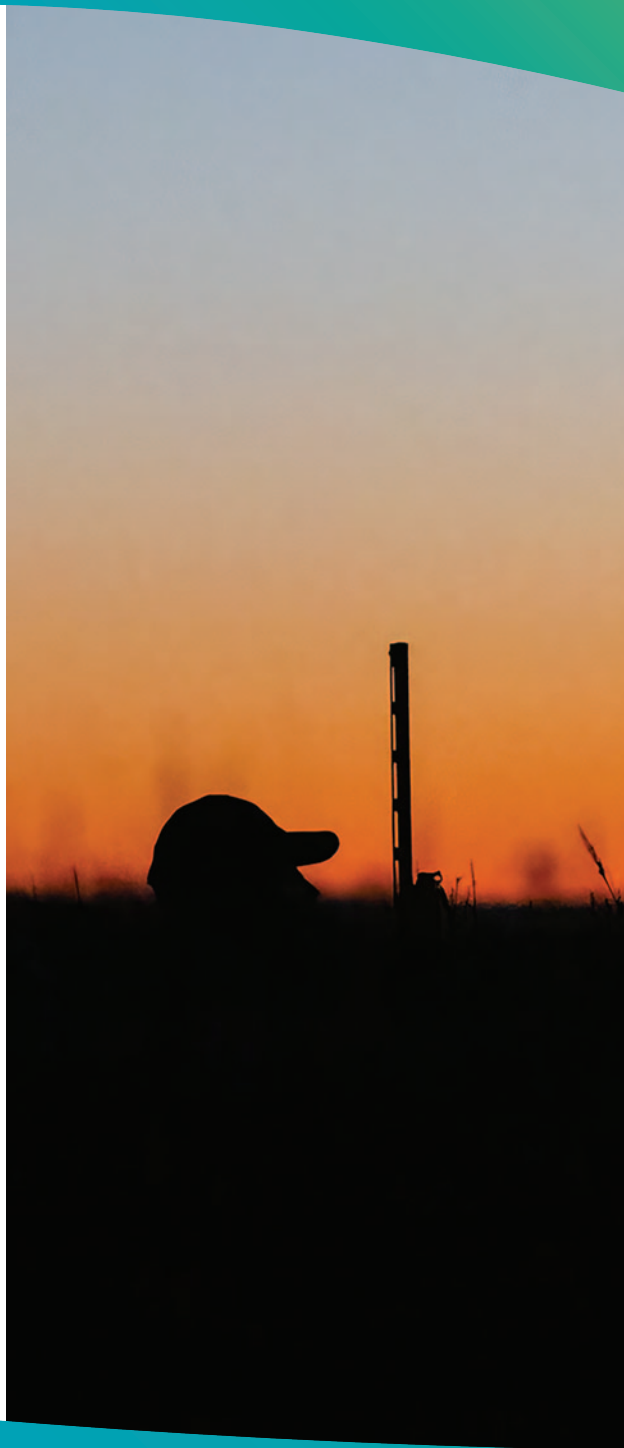


# The Value of Shooting

The economic,  
environmental and social  
impact of shooting in the UK

by Cognisense





Habitat management and conservation are carried out on **7.6m** hectares as a result of shooting

Shooting is worth **£3.3bn** to the UK economy

**620,000** people are actively involved in shooting related activities

## Main findings

- Shooting is worth **£3.3bn** annually to the UK economy (GVA).
- Shooting generates **£9.3bn** of wider economic activity in the UK economy.
- Shooting activities generate the equivalent of **67,000** full-time jobs.
- Shooters spend **£4.4bn** on their UK-based supply chain each year.
- Shooting providers and volunteers carry out conservation work to the value of **£500m**, equivalent to **26,000** full-time jobs and **14m** workdays each year.
- **293,000** people are involved in game shooting.
- **620,000** individuals are actively involved in shooting-related activities.
- Habitat management and conservation are carried out on **7.6m** hectares as a result of shooting.
- Half of shooting providers create or maintain cover for game and wildlife and/or feed songbirds over the winter gap.
- **Three out of four** people who take part in shooting say that it is important to them and their personal wellbeing.

# About the survey

This report presents the findings of independent research into the economic, environmental and social impact of shooting sports in the UK. It was commissioned by 24 organisations involved with shooting and the countryside and undertaken by Cognisense, a market research and data analytics firm.

This report is a follow-up to the 2014 survey, also titled The Value of Shooting, carried out by PACEC, which was commissioned to investigate the economic, environmental and social contribution of shooting sports to the UK.

The 2014 survey was itself a follow-up to Shooting Sports, the report on a survey produced in 2006 when PACEC was commissioned to investigate the economic and environmental effects of live quarry shooting. Not all the data gathered for the 2023 Value of Shooting report is directly comparable with the earlier studies, as different parameters and methodology were applied.

This new research focuses specifically on surveying those who participate in shooting activities, provide shooting for others, or are involved in the trade.

This report focuses on three main areas of interest:

- shooting's economic and societal benefits;
- the benefit to the environment, rural management and conservation; and
- the benefit to participants' wellbeing and health and the provision and promotion of game as food.

During the survey period, in the latter half of 2022, a total of 12,084 questionnaires were completed by 11,227 participants (93 per cent of the total), 703 providers of shooting opportunities (6 per cent of the total) and 154 traders (c. 1 per cent of the total).

The scale of the research means its findings can be regarded as statistically robust. The vast majority of respondents are shotgun or firearm certificate holders, of which there are around 650,000 in the UK, or 1 per cent of the total population, according to the Home Office, Police Scotland and Police Service for Northern Ireland.

This figure does not include the significant numbers of individuals who support shooting (such as beaters, pickers-up, drivers, shooting range officials etc.) but do not hold any firearm, shotgun or air rifle certificates. Conversely, there will be some certificate holders who do not actively participate in shooting for various reasons. On average, then, the figure is likely to closely represent the number of people actively involved in shooting in the UK.

The 2023 report also includes qualitative data reflecting participants' perception of the benefits shooting-related activities bring to their physical and mental health and overall sense of well-being.



The **Value**  
of Shooting







## Definitions

As a form of shorthand it has been occasionally necessary in the report to use everyday words or phrases to denote a more technical concept. These are the more important definitions:

**Avian pests/predators:** Birds such as pigeons and corvids which cause problems for agriculture and conservation.

**Beater:** Person who flushes wild game during a shooting day.

**Contribution in Kind (CIK):** value of unpaid support.

**Club:** Typically a group of more than 10 people shooting a variety of quarry or targets over fixed pieces of land. The distinction between club and syndicate in this study rests with the perception of the providers and participants who filled in questionnaires.

**Corvid:** Bird from the crow family.

**Cover crops:** Crops (such as kale and millet) planted on shoots to provide gamebirds with food and shelter.

**Deer stalking:** Shooting deer for management, crop protection, conservation and food.

**Driven game:** Form of shooting in which upland and lowland gamebirds are flushed over standing Guns.

**Full Time Equivalents (FTE):** The number of full-time employees that could have been employed if the reported number of hours

worked by part-time employees was worked by full-time employees. This statistic is calculated by dividing the "part-time hours paid" by the standard number of hours for full-time employees then adding the resulting quotient to the number of full-time employees.

**Gamekeeper:** A person who works on a farm or estate to look after game species, their habitats, and the other wildlife that shares them. They may rear birds for release into the wild for shooting purposes.

**Gross Value Added (GVA):** The standard monetary measure of the value of economic activity attributed to one sector. In broad terms it comprises of wages (compensation of employees) and profits (gross operating surplus).

**Gun (with a capital G):** A shooter of any type of quarry (not just game – a wider definition than in colloquial use).

**Gundog:** Dog specially bred and trained for locating, flushing and retrieving shot game.

**Pest control:** The control of pest species using a gun in the context of shooting sports activities, and crop protection.

**Picker-up:** Person who retrieves shot game with the aid of gundogs.

**Quarry species:** A legally shootable bird/animal which has an open season. Bird species commonly regarded as pests, e.g. woodpigeon are shootable for crop protection/other reasons under general licences.

**Reared/released birds:** Gamebirds released into the wild by the shooting provider for shooting purposes.

**Rural land:** All land in the UK which is not defined as urban, i.e. not in a settlement of 10,000 or more people (Defra definition).

**Shooting participants:** Those who take part in shooting sports (live quarry, clay pigeon, or target shooting), and either pay to do so, or do so for nothing. Many providers are also participants.

**Shooting providers:** An organisation/business (with employees and/or members) or individual who performs services (either paid or voluntary) which give rise to opportunities for shooting sports.

**Stalker:** Person who shoots deer for management, crop protection, conservation and food.

**Suppliers:** A range of firms/individuals which supply shooting providers and participants with related goods and services.

Potential suppliers include: shooting agencies (sales), accommodation, shooting training, land management services, reared game (for release).

**Syndicate:** Typically a group of people shooting game over fixed or varying pieces of land. The distinction between club and syndicate in this study rests with the perception of the providers and participants.

**Target shooting:** Includes clay shooting, full and small bore rifle shooting, air rifle and pistol shooting.

**Walked-up game:** Form of shooting in which the shooter flushes gamebirds as he/she walks over the shooting ground.

## Economic value – a detailed look at the Value of Shooting

Shooting makes a significant contribution to the UK economy, both directly through spending on goods and services, and in a wider context through the supporting tiers of commercial and voluntary activity that service the shooting community.

Considering the damage to the global economic picture caused by the Covid pandemic and the subsequent cost of living crisis, closely followed by issues related to avian influenza, shooting in the UK is in robust shape.

The latest survey has been able to cast the net wider than in previous reports, to take account of

the economic contribution of the full range of participants, providers, traders, support workers both paid and voluntary, and associated supply chains. This comprehensive approach has resulted in a detailed account of the value of shooting to the UK economy and comprises the following three metrics.

**GVA (Gross Value Added)** – wages and profits.

**Supply chain** – supply chain expenditure is an indirect impact economic activity, as shooting providers and traders purchase from other firms or individuals in their supply chain.

**CIK (Contribution in Kind)** – value of unpaid support.

## Case study

### The large supplier

The Sportsman Gun Centre is the UK's largest gun shop, mail order and internet company, supplying to both trade and retail markets. Founded in 1971, with a head office in Devon and branches in Wales and Dorset, the Sportsman Gun Centre supplies the full range of guns, ammunition, shooting accessories and country clothing. The company employed 52 people in 2022.

Turnover that year was in excess of £21m, around £5m of which was retail through the stores and online/mail order sales, and the rest through distribution and wholesale trade with most of the key international names in manufacture of shooting equipment. The company also exclusively represents many of the top shooting brands for the UK market including ATA Arms, Hatsan, Steyr, CZ Rifles and FX Airguns.

Owner-partner Aboo Cattran said the company had flourished during lockdown and the immediate aftermath of the Covid pandemic. "A lot of people found themselves at home with plenty of time and money to spend on country pursuits," he explained.

Since then the company has grown, now employing 61 people and increasing sales, especially in the distribution arm of the business.







# Shooting is worth £3.3bn a year

Shooters spend money on guns, ammunition, sporting clothing and accessories, travel, hospitality and payment to shooting providers. The providers buy materials and services. All this economic activity supports a nationwide supply chain of manufacturers, importers, wholesalers and retailers required to service it.

Providers and retailers employ a wide range of staff, largely sourced locally. And of course, a significant amount of shooting activity relies on the involvement of an army of volunteers and unpaid workers who all contribute to the local economy.

## Gross Value Added

Research shows that in 2022 shooting directly contributed £3.3bn of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy and supported 67,000 FTE jobs.

## Supply chain expenditure

Shoot providers spent an estimated £5.7bn on their UK-based supply chain. The indirect GVA generated by shoot providers is estimated at almost £1.5bn in 2022. Almost 550,000 jobs were generated by shoot providers.

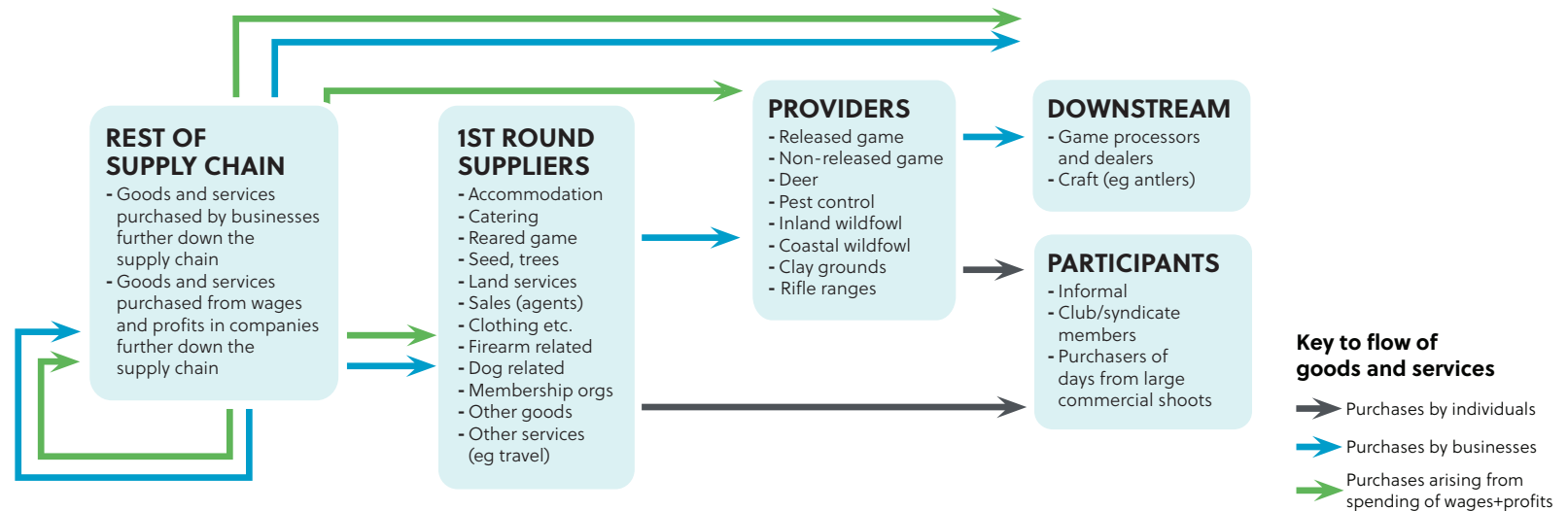
However, many of these were voluntary or unpaid (c. 260,000) and many others were part-time, such as beaters and pickers-up, who are only required on shoot days. They do, however, represent much-needed casual employment in rural areas, particularly for those at the edges of the working population, the young and retired.

Participants, i.e. those who go shooting, were estimated to spend £4.4bn on their UK-based supply chain.

## Contribution in Kind

The research has been able to quantify the value of voluntary or unpaid support to shooting activities, known as a 'Contribution in Kind' (CiK), and based on equivalent earnings; this element was worth £2.1bn in 2022.

Overall, the figures indicate that in the UK, including both the tangible GVA, employment and wage impact, and the intangible impact of CiK, shooting activities generated the equivalent of 173,000 full-time jobs and £9.3bn of economic activity.









## Employment

Shooting would not take place without the support of a huge number of people beyond those who actually pull the trigger. The survey shows that 2.3m people were involved in some form of shooting-related employment in the UK in 2022. This number includes those, for example, employed in shooting retail and other shooting-related businesses.

The split between formal paid employment and unpaid support was relatively even with 1.1m (48 per cent) in paid employment and 1.2m (52 per cent) who were unpaid. Some were employed full-time, and some for a very small proportion of the year, such as on shoot days (for example, beaters and pickers-up, game cart drivers, shooting range helpers etc.).

This underlines the very significant proportion of the sport that relies on unpaid help.

## Case study

### The moorland keeper

Gamekeeper Bernard Moss is the sporting manager for shooting estates in North Yorkshire covering 28,000 acres, including Farndale and Bransdale. Moorland accounts for 21,000 acres, the remainder is lowland shooting. Annually, the estates put on around 120 driven shooting days, including 30 grouse days. Although, says Bernard, when you add in walked-up shooting, falconry and dog training events, the number of active days is nearly 200. This provides significant local employment.

“On a grouse day, we have an average of eight Guns, each paying in the region of £3,000 a day. A grouse day employs around 35 people from the local community.

“We also run two shoot lodges where Guns can stay overnight; these also require staff, including a full-time chef. Overall the estates employ 18 people directly.”

All this adds up to around 4,500 work days a year on the shoots, plus hundreds more in hospitality. “In addition the estates buy grain and food from local farmers, and processed game from local suppliers to give to the Guns.”

Bernard pointed out the estates’ contribution to the environment: “We carry out our own wader surveys, and a project funded by National Parks to monitor curlew breeding, behaviour and distribution, using satellite tagging.

“We also plant hedgerows and 40 acres of wild bird food to help birds through the winter, which wouldn’t happen if there was no shooting here.”

## Employee jobs, full-time equivalent employee jobs and earnings estimates from provider activity in the UK

	Earnings (£M)			FTEs		
	Earnings (£M)	CiK (£M)	Total (£M)	Paid	Unpaid	Total
Gamekeepers	£350	£370	£720	10,700	11,400	22,100
Shoot/estate managers	£310	£1,010	£1,320	3,900	12,900	16,800
Beaters and pickers-up	£310	£150	£450	9,400	4,500	13,900
Estate/farm workers	£60	£40	£100	1,800	1,300	3,100
Administration	£50	£150	£200	600	1,900	2,500
Other management/leadership	£20	£110	£140	300	1,400	1,700
Range conducting/safety officers	£0	£30	£40	100	1,000	1,100
Other	£130	£220	£350	2,100	3,500	5,600
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,230</b>	<b>£2,080</b>	<b>£3,320</b>	<b>29,000</b>	<b>38,000</b>	<b>67,000</b>

**Note:** Figures are rounded to the nearest 1,000 for employees and £10m for earnings and therefore may not add to the totals.

FTEs = full-time equivalents - i.e. workers on a 38-hour working week, CiK = contribution in kind - i.e. voluntary work that is valued at the minimum wage.



## Types of shooting

In the UK, shooting takes two principal forms, using shotguns, rifles and airguns:

- live quarry shooting, including pest control
- target shooting

Most providers of live quarry shooting offer more than one type, generally driven game but sometimes also less formal types of shooting, such as walked-up and pest control. Live quarry shooting can be provided in various ways.

A group may form a syndicate to rent shooting rights over a piece of land – a club may perform a similar function – or an individual may reach an agreement directly with a landowner. Or landowners may run shoots themselves, either letting days on a commercial basis or paying an agent to take on this role. Many shoots are arranged on an informal basis where the landowner simply invites guests, family and

friends to shoot over the property. Coastal wildfowling is typically carried out through clubs that may shoot over large areas of estuary and shoreline.

For the target shooting disciplines, in addition to the large number of established, commercially run clay shooting grounds and clubs – which typically include coaching facilities and are available to people of all abilities – there are large numbers of smaller informal clay pigeon shoots that are arranged on an occasional basis by groups of friends, clubs or syndicates.

Target shooting with rifles and airguns is largely conducted on established ranges, often managed by clubs. However, there is a huge network of less formal airgun participation.



### Estimated number of participants by shooting discipline in the UK

Target/live quarry	Discipline	Number of participants	% of participants
Target disciplines	Clay target	366,000	66%
	Air rifle and pistol	106,000	19%
	Small-bore rifle shooting	104,000	19%
	Full-bore rifle shooting	97,000	18%
	Other	90,000	16%
Live quarry disciplines	Game shooting	293,000	53%
	Pest and predator control	255,000	46%
	Deer management/stalking	120,000	22%
	Wildfowling/inland duck and goose shooting	95,000	17%
<b>Total</b>		<b>553,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Note:** Numbers add to more than 100%, as participants are active in more than one discipline.

### The spread of shooting

Of the 553,000 active participants in shooting, 66 per cent were involved in clay target shooting and 53 per cent were involved in game shooting during 2022. Broadly speaking, two-thirds of active shooters mainly took part in target shooting (366,000 clay pigeon and 307,000 rifle or air rifle shooting) and more than half (293,000) took part in gamebird shooting. Just under half (255,000) undertook pest control. Around a fifth participated in air rifle and pistol, small-bore and full-bore target shooting. Around 120,000 people went deer stalking and 95,000 went wildfowling.

Of course, many shooters enjoy several disciplines. For example, gamebird and wildfowl shooters will undertake pest control and will shoot at clay grounds in the summer, and deer stalkers will practise at rifle target ranges.

## Shoot providers

Shooting providers delivered almost 10 million shooting days for participants and non-participants during 2022. Almost two thirds of the participation in shooting days was by shooters (6.3m) and a third by non-shooters (3.6m). 57 per cent of shooting days were on targets and 43 per cent on live quarry.

Some providers offer more than one type of shooting. Seven out of ten providers (47,000 out of 65,000) offered opportunities for game shooting. Pest and predator control and deer management/stalking were tied in second place, offered by just over a third of providers. Less than one in five provided duck and goose shooting.

Most opportunities were for live quarry; around a quarter of providers offered clay pigeon

shooting and a fifth offer other target shooting. Grouse and wild boar shooting opportunities were more limited.

Around one-third of shooting days involved live quarry, and two-thirds involved various forms of target shooting, which reflects the lower-volume and seasonal nature of live quarry days.

Clay target shooting was the most popular discipline in terms of target shooting, and overall. Around a fifth of providers offered full-bore, small-bore, air rifle and pistol target shooting.

Four-fifths of those who provided shooting opportunities did so recreationally.



## Case study

### The pheasant shoot

Kevin Childs is the headkeeper of the Three Valleys and Llanforda shoots and he said: "Our team consists of six keepers, two rearing field technicians, a cook, three hosts and the game cart driver. On an average shoot day, you will find a brimming bothy of 15-18 beaters, and a picking up squad of 10 handlers, not forgetting the 30 plus wagging Labradors and spaniels.

"Although we rear our own birds, we purchase the chicks from a game farm less than three miles away, and our game dealer who collects throughout the season twice weekly is also based on the Powys/Shropshire Border.

"It is company policy to employ and source locally, therefore the vehicles are serviced and maintained at the local garage. Feed, equipment and fuel are all purchased via the merchants in Oswestry. Our properties, land and woodland are managed and maintained by local specialists – from chimney sweeps and window cleaners to builders and forestry workers, we seek to provide opportunities to local tradespersons.

"Llanforda is home to woodland and parkland walks. We are committed to inclusion of the whole community and we have opened a historical circular walking route through the estate.

"The team have started work on the rejuvenation and rewilding of three pools and the woodland habitat, with a view to re-establishing our natural water meadows and the wildlife within it. We are adding to the 30 existing bird boxes that we have placed around the estate. The longer-term initiative is to add guided wildlife walks, and invite guests and children from local schools to an afternoon or evening's education on conservation and wildlife."





## Target shooting

Two-thirds of respondents said they took part in some form of target shooting, which includes clay shooting, full and small bore rifle shooting and air rifle and pistol shooting. Exactly half of the shooting community participated in target shooting occasionally (less than once a fortnight) and almost two-fifths did so regularly (fortnightly or more frequently).

Clay pigeon shooting was the most popular discipline with 366,000 participants. The 21st century has seen great success for British clay shooters at the Olympics. In 2000 Richard Faulds took Double Trap gold in Sydney and Ian Peel won silver in Men's Trap. At London 2012 Peter

Wilson won Double Trap gold, and Steve Scott, Ed Ling and Matt Coward-Holley delivered bronze medals in 2016 and 2021 in Rio and Tokyo respectively.

From a provider viewpoint, of the target disciplines, clay pigeon shooting was again the most popular, with 17,000 providers. Around a fifth provided target shooting (full-bore, small-bore, air rifle and pistol). And shooting providers delivered 3.9m clay, rifle, air rifle and pistol shooting days in 2022.

This equates to more than two-fifths of the total 9.8m shooting days delivered by providers.



## Case study

### The clay shooting ground

Barbury Shooting School is a popular facility that has been operating on a 35-acre site near Swindon, Wiltshire, since 1983.

It is open seven days a week for practice sessions, tuition, and corporate events. As well as clay shooting, the school offers activities including archery, air rifle shooting and simulated game days. It was the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association (CPSA) Ground of the Year in 2023 and regularly hosts major CPSA championships, as well as being popular with recreational clay shooters.

Managing director Huw Stephens, himself an accomplished competition clay shooter, with sporting titles under his belt, said: "2022 was a year of massive growth in all areas of the business. Clay shooting is becoming a popular lifestyle choice for more people. But you've got to be doing a good job and spending money on the ground or people won't come. We do invest quite heavily in improving the facilities here."

The business employs around 30 people, more than half aged under 25. Apart from on-site shooting, Barbury also sells shotguns, rifles, ammunition and accessories, and has its own sporting agency, arranging mostly driven days around the UK and elsewhere.



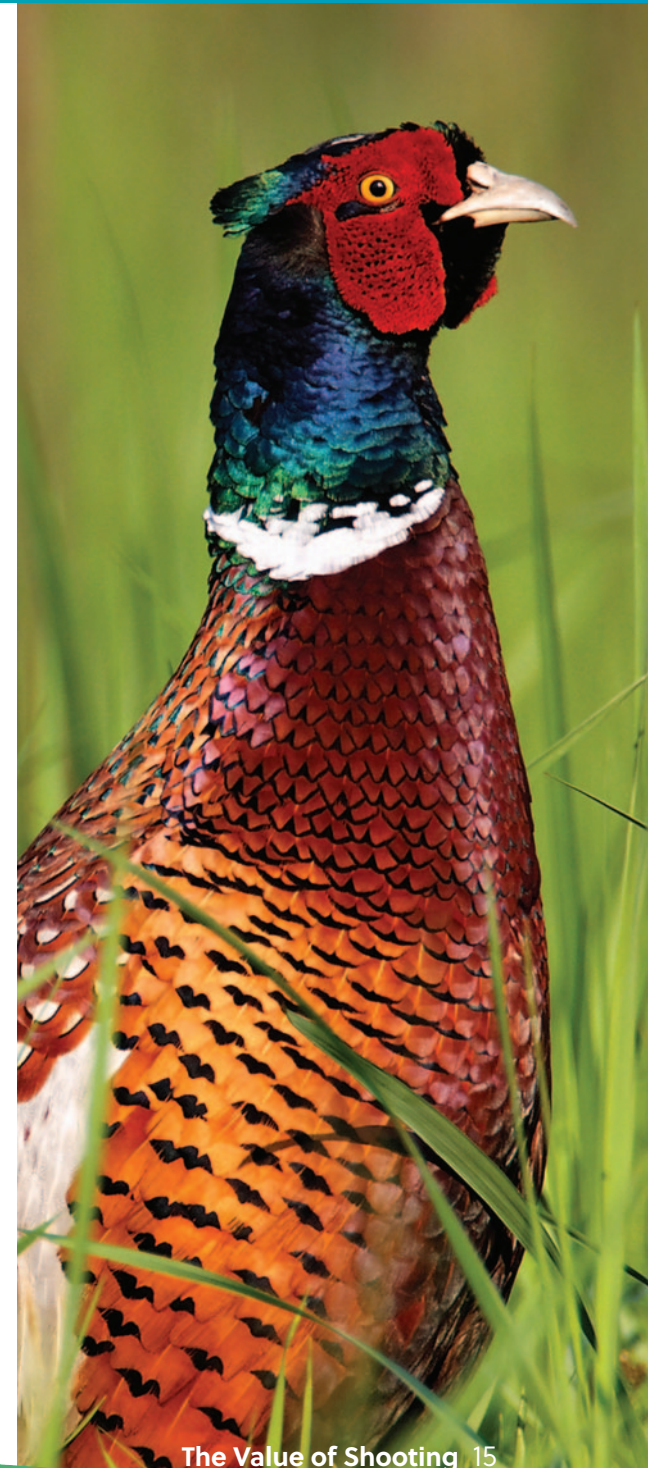
## Live quarry shooting

It is estimated that the total number of all game, wildfowl and pest species taken during 2022 was 17.6m, which averages 32 head per active participant in shooting activities in the UK.

Three-quarters of the total were game species and of these, 65 per cent were gamebirds (mostly pheasant – see table), 6 per cent were wildfowl (the vast majority mallard) and 4 per cent deer, roe making up the largest bag. This amounts to 11.4m game birds, 1.1m wildfowl and 681,000 deer.

Of the pest species, the majority were woodpigeon (around 2.5m birds).

In terms of gamebirds, the vast majority taken were pheasants (75 per cent of the gamebird bag and 49 per cent of the overall bag), with partridges accounting for 22 per cent of the gamebird bag and 14 per cent of the total. Just 2 per cent were grouse.



### Estimated number of gamebirds taken in the UK

Species		% of gamebirds	% of overall bag
Pheasant	8,560,000	75%	49%
Partridge (red-legged and grey)	2,550,000	22%	14%
Grouse	220,000	2%	1%
Other	120,000	2%	0%
<b>Total gamebirds</b>	<b>11,450,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>65%</b>

**Note:** Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10,000.

## Conservation

Habitat management and wildlife and conservation activity by the shooting community has a significant beneficial impact on the countryside.

Furthermore, farmers who appreciate shooting are encouraged to improve biodiversity, and in consequence where shooting takes place there is likely to be a more biodiverse countryside.

Additionally, shooting rents can provide a substantial contribution towards the costs of conservation work.

There are approximately 24.5m hectares of land in the UK, 93 per cent of which is rural. Around 7.6m hectares are subject to habitat and wildlife management and other conservation work carried out as a result of shooting.

Nearly all shooting providers, particularly game syndicates, wildfowling clubs, grouse moor managers and deer management operations, carry out extensive conservation work to benefit both quarry species and the wider ecosystem.

Providers reported that they carry out a broad range of activities. Two-thirds controlled pests and predators to protect wildlife, and around half managed woodlands, cover crops, or put out feed for songbirds over the winter months when other food is scarce.

Some providers invested heavily in environmental improvements, spending more than £50,000. The mean average is £10,000.

The table opposite illustrates the key activities undertaken by providers on land that they managed for shooting in 2022.



## Case study

### The gamekeeping college

Sparsholt College in Hampshire offers a wide portfolio of land-related training to more than 5,000 students each year. Sparsholt began its training of gamekeepers and river keepers in 1973 when it was recognised that traditional skills were being increasingly 'professionalised' and that training led to better adoption of new 'best practices'.

Full-time courses are organised with a common core which then supports specialisms in game and wildlife management, fisheries management and countryside conservation. Although game shooting provides many with their career goal, the shooting elements of courses are also intended to supply skilled staff into roles associated with pest management, removal of invasive species, protection of rare species and the protection of trees/forestry.

Teaching includes subjects as diverse as the Deer Stalking Certificate of Competence and traditional hedge-laying. Specialist facilities at the campus include an indoor and outdoor rifle range, a deer herd and a game larder with a butchery unit. Industry-related support ensures that information taught, and equipment used, is up to date and at the forefront of current developments.

Students typically go on to work on private estates, or with employers such as the state forestry agencies, The National Trust and land sector agencies across the world.



### Activities carried out by providers, % of total, UK

	% of providers
Controlling pest and predators to protect wildlife	65%
Woodland management	53%
Creating or maintaining cover	51%
Putting out feed for songbirds over winter	48%
Litter picking	44%
Creating or maintaining conservation areas	43%
Hedgerow management/maintenance	41%
Making homes for other wildlife	41%
Putting up bird nest boxes	37%
Other informal wildlife monitoring	32%
Pond/wetland restoration or management	30%
Controlling or clearing invasive plant species	30%
Providing data on what you have shot	29%
Formal bird surveys	29%
Wildlife monitoring through use of trail cameras	27%
Woodland creation	27%
Hedgerow creation	18%
Managing waterways	16%
Moorland management	12%
Pond/wetland creation	12%
Putting up mammal nest boxes	10%
Rewetting/restoring peatland	10%
Other formal wildlife surveys	10%



## Conservation continued...

While the majority of shooting related conservation work, by area, focuses on moorland and woodland, smaller sized projects are equally important. Defra has stated that priority habitats require positive management to enhance their conservation status and such developments as hedgerow and pond creation can be vital.

Research by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) shows that woodland managed for shooting rather than for commercial timber production provides richer and more varied habitat. In the wide rides required for shooting, there can be four times as many butterflies as on woodland edge. Their research also shows that where there is game shooting on a farm, there are significantly higher levels of woodland management compared with farms without game shooting. Clearly this shows the benefits for conservation for woodlands that come with game shooting.

A much more extensive range of conservation work, including pest and predator control, survey and bag returns, clearing rides, planting game crops and building nest boxes etc. is carried out by volunteers. When this is added to the paid conservation work carried out by providers, the CiK value of conservation work carried out in 2022 was estimated at £500m, equivalent to 26,000 full-time jobs.

Both the participant and provider elements of the survey recorded how many days were allocated to carrying out various forms of conservation activities during 2022. The most common activity for both was pest and predator control, accounting for more than a fifth of conservation effort by the shooting community.



Land used for shooting is shared with a range of other recreational countryside activities. In 2022, over 60 per cent of shooting land was also used for hiking, rambling and dog walking, over 40 per cent for nature watching and 38 per cent for horse riding.

In the following pages we examine the value of shooting to the health and personal wellbeing of participants, and this is closely linked to conservation and care for the environment. Almost three-quarters of participants engaged in conservation or habitat improvement activities over the last year for their own personal enjoyment or fulfilment. The majority of participants and providers felt that it was:

- personally fulfilling or enjoyable;
- the right thing to do;
- would protect the environment for future generations; or
- that it is an integral part of the management of shooting.

These responses underline the voluntary but personally satisfying nature of the vast majority of conservation and habitat improvement activity undertaken by the shooting community.





## Controlling pests

Species such as rats and crows attack both songbirds and gamebirds, stealing their eggs and eating their young. Left uncontrolled, pests and predators can damage biodiversity and they can also have a serious economic effect.

In effect, shooting provides a huge army of conservationists – people who actually go out into the countryside, work to improve it and invest a huge amount of their own time and money on projects.

In preserving and enhancing habitat for wildlife, shooting sustains the natural beauty of the countryside. This is something from which everyone can benefit. Whether you go to the countryside for recreation or simply view it from the window of a car or train, the landscape which you enjoy owes much to the care of people who shoot.

The work carried out by shoot providers often complements that of other conservation organisations, with whom they frequently work in partnership, and it is often undertaken in addition to the work of the landowner.

Two-thirds of providers and nearly half of all respondents carry out pest and predator control. In 2022 they took 2.5m woodpigeons, essentially to protect crops, 710,000 corvids, 360,000 rats, 110,000 mustelids and 50,000 foxes. Other pests taken (eg. grey squirrels) accounted for a further 250,000.



# Health, wellbeing and social cohesion

In 2019, The Institute for Global Prosperity stated: *“Prosperity isn't just about improving GDP. You also need to fight inequality, promote social cohesion, safeguard the environment, and provide education, health and decent employment, giving people hope for the future.”* And shooting plays a vital role in meeting these requirements. Three out of four of those who took part in a shooting related activity in 2022 agreed that it was important to them and their personal wellbeing and that they would lose something important if they were not involved. To emphasise the way participants value

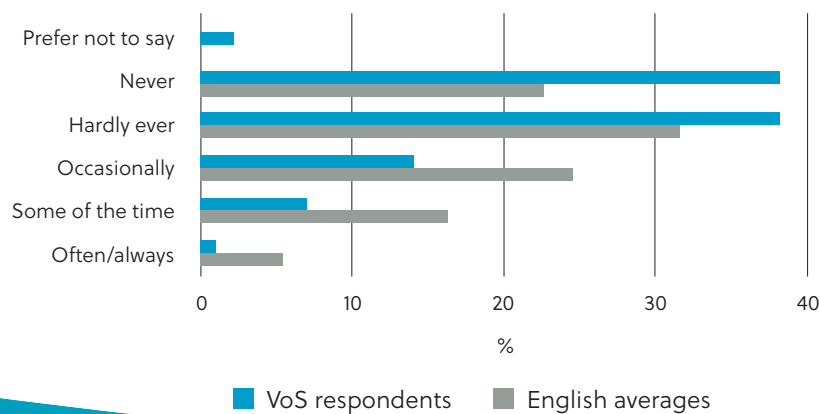
shooting as a part of their lives, more than 80 per cent of people said they had also encouraged friends to become involved.

Three out of four people who were involved in shooting in 2022 carried out conservation work voluntarily, saying they found it enjoyable and the right thing to do for environmental reasons. Nine out of ten said exercise and getting out in the fresh air and being part of a community with a shared purpose, along with relating to nature and the environment, were key factors in their involvement.

## Fighting loneliness

Four out of five shooters surveyed belonged to a syndicate or group and most agreed that it enabled them to engage with others in the community, and to refocus and maintain links to their heritage. The benefit to mental health was also highlighted, with loneliness less of an issue for shooters than the average citizen. Three quarters said they never, or hardly ever, felt lonely, while the corresponding figure for the whole of the UK was just over half. This is clear evidence of the greater opportunities among the shooting community to engage with others and maintain closer social bonds.

Frequency of feeling lonely vs English average (2018 data)





## The wider benefits

While these statements cannot be measured in monetary terms, it is clear that shooting is important to participants for a wide range of social, community and health-based reasons.

This is a crucial aspect of shooting, as it is proven that high levels of wellbeing directly affect good health, increasing lifespans by 4-10 years. There is also strong evidence that increased physical activity improves the wellbeing of people in general, and older people in particular.

Shooting is part of a diverse multifunctional recreational use of our countryside. Over 60 per cent of shooting land is also used for hiking, rambling and dog walking, over 40 per cent for nature watching and 38 per cent for horse riding. That means many non-shooting members of the public receive the health and wellbeing benefits that come from the habitat creation and management provided because of shooting.

These are just some of the benefits of shooting highlighted in the report:

- exercise;
- being outdoors in the fresh air;
- being part of nature, rather than just a watcher;
- engaging with like-minded individuals;
- gathering and eating food;
- being part of a local community with a shared purpose;
- refocusing away from the day-to-day;
- pursuing excellence; and
- maintaining links to local heritage.

### A social hub

In the dark months of winter when daylight hours are in short supply the local syndicate shoot often provides light at the end of the tunnel and is part of the fabric of many rural communities across the UK. When shoot day comes, Guns, beaters, pickers-up and all other participants gather together in the knowledge they will be spending a day in the great outdoors with friends old and new. Everybody will get plenty of

exercise, game will be harvested, the working Gundogs will do what they do best and their pure job satisfaction will be evident. When the shooting ceases and the sun sets, the local pub will enable the social cohesion to extend beyond the shooting field, while also putting money back into the economy. The numbers here reinforce what anybody who enjoys shooting sports already knows. It's good for the mind and body.

## Case study The village pub

Matt Thompson is the landlord of the Blue Bell in Belmesthorpe in Rutland and knows all about the importance of shooting to social cohesion and wellbeing. "Having been involved in running pubs in rural shooting communities for many years I know how important it is for people to gather among friends with a shared interest. Not only is the shoot day itself something for everyone to look forward to in the winter when daylight hours are short, it's obvious when they arrive in the pub after the shooting that they have loved it. Regardless of the number of birds shot or how bad the weather was, the smiles tell you everything you need to know. The syndicates around here are not big commercial enterprises. They are made up of people who all live locally and rely on the shoot for recreation in the winter months. But it's not just in the winter that the participants benefit from the shoot. All year round we see

the same faces gathering in the pub for social occasions, live music, summer barbecues and pub quizzes. The people who shoot together are friends for life.

"Whether it's the younger generation joining in for the first time, experienced Guns who have seen it all before, or some of the more senior campaigners from the beating line, the sense of camaraderie is obvious. In small rural villages there's no doubting the value of gathering like this. Life can be lonely in these communities, but having something to look forward to and knowing you will be meeting friends old and new at the weekend is invaluable.

"From behind the bar it's blatantly obvious that shooting delivers friendship, a sense of purpose, plenty of tasty wild game and more laughter than an episode of Friends."

## Putting healthy food into the food chain

The vast majority of respondents (83 per cent) said they ate game meat. Around one in three ate game meat very occasionally (defined as less than once a month) and more than a quarter of respondents ate game meat regularly (defined as once a fortnight or more).

The data shows that 95 per cent of game, rabbits and woodpigeon shot entered the UK food chain in 2022.

It is estimated that £59m was generated from the sale of meat by shoot providers and participants, four-fifths of that by shooting providers and one-fifth by individuals.

Venison generated the majority of income (59 per cent), followed by other game, which includes pheasants, partridges and grouse, etc. Ducks, wild boar, rabbits and woodpigeons accounted for only 10 per cent.



## Case study The game chef

Mark Kempson has been manning the stoves at London restaurant Kitchen W8 since it opened in 2009. He has held onto the Michelin star Kitchen W8 was awarded in 2011, and in 2024 he was awarded the Eat Game Awards Best Chef crown. He has many reasons why we should all eat more game: "Game meat is one of the most versatile ingredients around and deserves to be on more menus and shopping lists than it currently is. There are many reasons to eat game: higher levels of nutrients; green credentials (free range, additive free, more sustainable and low carbon footprint); leanness (fewer saturated fats); cost (much lower than grass-fed heritage breed meat); and how good it tastes. Many people haven't actually tried game, fearing the flavour is strong and it's difficult to cook. As a chef who loves game, I'm keen to dispel these misconceptions. Swapping chicken for pheasant or partridge and beef for venison are both great ways to start.

"Grouse, hare and wildfowl are for the more adventurous. There are many ways in which game can be used; traditional roasts, warm salads, pies, meatballs, tacos and the rest. And the best way to get started is have a go and take a risk. I think brining game birds before cooking makes a real difference, giving the meat a succulence that more fatty meats naturally have. A good meat thermometer is essential, and the same rules apply with pheasant and partridge as they do with chicken. Venison, grouse and wildfowl should be cooked medium rare like beef. For larger cuts, I'd go low and slow. Resting the meat is important. It's good to remember that what grows together goes together, so game pairs particularly well with hedgerow fruits, autumn roots and earthy mushrooms... but that shouldn't discourage creativity."

### Income from meat sales, providers and participants

	Income (£M)		Total income from meat sales (£M)	% of total meat sales
	Providers (£M)	Participants (£M)		
Venison	£28	£7	£35	59%
Game meat sales	£16	£2	£18	31%
Wild duck	£2	£0	£2	3%
Wild boar	£1	£1	£2	3%
Rabbit	£1	£0	£1	2%
Woodpigeon	£1	£0	£1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£49</b>	<b>£10</b>	<b>£59</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Social media use

Almost half of respondents said they used social media to find out facts and information about shooting and follow shooting-related news and events. More than two-thirds engaged in shooting-related groups and more than a quarter commented, discussed and used the platforms to build new connections to those in the shooting community. WhatsApp was the most commonly used form of social media by respondents and also the most commonly used to communicate about shooting.

YouTube was the most commonly used for activities other than to communicate about shooting, which is likely to reflect viewing patterns in relation to programmes such as Fieldsports Britain as an example, or other content such as instructional videos on shooting topics. Newer platforms such as TikTok were less commonly used.

Fewer than one in ten used social media for work, to reach out beyond the shooting community or to promote shooting and its benefits. These findings reflect a high level of social (rather than commercial) engagement across social media platforms.





## Case study

### The picker-up

A photographer by trade, Tim Scrivener lives in Lincolnshire and loves nothing more on a winter's day than picking up with his team of five Labradors and two spaniels: "I was out 59 days last season on two shoots. One is a syndicate, with a couple of let days and some dog trials. On the other shoot they have 16 syndicate days and 16 let days.

"Apart from the initial cost of buying a puppy, I have to spend money on my pick-up truck which I wouldn't have if it wasn't for the dogs. It has custom-fit dog boxes in the back which are a significant investment, but vital for this role. Obviously I have to fill it with diesel, insure it and keep it on the road, via the local garage. I think I probably keep the UK dog lead industry in business because of the number I lose every season, and I buy a lot of training dummies. I have all my own clothing to pay for, including a new pair of boots every two years because I simply wear them out.

"Then there are vet costs which seriously mount up with seven working dogs, and of course the cost of food which I manage very carefully. I feed a mix of raw tripe and kibble, sourced from local suppliers, and it costs £60 a week. I do get paid for my time but ultimately if I wasn't picking up, then I wouldn't have the Gundogs.

"I love the whole process, from the joy of buying a pup and seeing the potential, to training them and solving problems along the way. I watch them develop and then ultimately when they deliver that first retrieve on shoot day, it's pure job satisfaction. But there's more to it than that. The social benefits of shooting are immeasurable. One of my fellow pickers-up is an older gentleman whose wife is not very well, and the two days a week he gets out with the dogs on the shoot are a great pressure release for him. We talk regularly throughout the year but those days in the field are invaluable. We all have a great time on shoot days and then gather in the local pub later for the debrief."

Shooting plays a vital role for so many people in rural life: "I have a health issue at the moment, and I am having an operation soon. I've never had an operation before and I'm concerned about it, but I'm just thinking of September and when one of the dogs finds that first partridge down the hedgerow. It takes my mind off the operation and gives me something to focus on."





## Hospitality

People involved in shooting sports, mostly participants (ten per cent providers or traders), spent three million nights away while shooting in the UK in 2022. Two-thirds of these were paid nights away, benefiting the accommodation and hospitality sector. The total economic benefit of this is put at supporting 11,000 jobs and generating £330m GVA, two-thirds in the food and accommodation sector and one-third in travel. The travel and tourism expenditure generated by the three million nights away is estimated at £800m.

## Case study

### The sporting hotel

The picturesque Scottish Borders is known for its wide range of shooting opportunities, and Dryburgh Abbey Hotel sits bang in the middle of this sporting heartland, tucked into a loop of the legendary River Tweed. Shoots in the local area provide a range of opportunities for days in the field. There is also deer stalking, pigeon shooting, a clay ground and plenty of fishing in the area.

Because the hotel is run by people who enjoy shooting, they know exactly what is required. The hotel has been the formal accommodation provider for the spaniel, cocker and retriever championships in recent years and there is plenty of space in the 10-acre grounds for exercising dogs. Not surprisingly Dryburgh Abbey has won the Country Sports Hotel of the Year in the Scottish Hotel Awards six years in a row, and the way the hotel works with local shooting providers and in turn then provides employment demonstrates the contribution shooting makes to the local economy.



## Where do people shoot in the UK?

Considered from a geographical perspective, England benefited most from the economic activity generated at c. 89 per cent, with c. £7.8bn of economic activity, c. £2.9bn of direct GVA and almost 130,000 jobs. Scotland accounted for almost 10 per cent of overall activity with c. £760m of economic impacts and 14,100 jobs. Wales generated 2 per cent of the overall economic impact (£190m and 3,000 jobs) and Northern Ireland less than 1 per cent (£50m and 700 jobs).

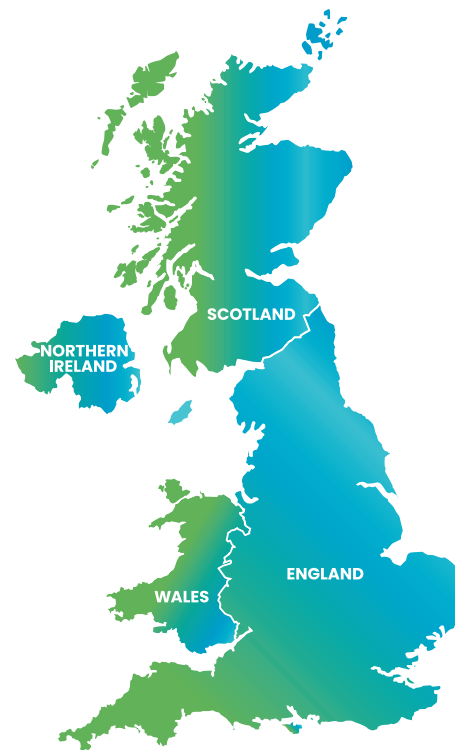
England accounted for 85 per cent of shooting days and 82 per cent of non-shooting days during 2022. Scotland accounted for 10 per cent of shooting days and 14 per cent of non-shooting days, while Wales accounted for 4 and 3 per cent respectively. Northern Ireland reported a very low proportion, at just 0.4 per cent, which was much lower than might be expected given the

proportion of the population who hold firearm certificates and will, in part, be driven by lower response rates.

It should be noted these estimates are residence based – i.e. the data is based on the location of the provider, rather than the area in which the shooting activities take place.

England benefited from 88 per cent of the societal impact of shooting, Scotland just under 10 per cent, Wales 2 per cent, and Northern Ireland 1 per cent.

England contributed the most in terms of conservation effort, at 91 per cent. Scotland accounted for five per cent of conservation activity, Wales 3 per cent and Northern Ireland 1 per cent.



	Total shooting days	Active shooting participants	Direct GVA	Total economic value of shooting activities, not including voluntary conservation		Value of voluntary conservation activity		Total value of shooting sports activity including conservation	
	(m)		(£m)	(£m)	FTE	(£m)	FTE	(£m)	FTE
England	8,278	439,000	2,900	7,800	129,100	450	23,400	8,250	152,500
Wales	322		60	190	3,000	10	500	200	3,500
Scotland	1,172	68,000	340	760	14,100	20	1,000	780	15,100
Northern Ireland	52	46,000	10	50	700	10	500	60	1,200
<b>UK</b>	<b>9,836</b>	<b>553,000</b>	<b>3,300</b>	<b>8,800</b>	<b>146,700</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>26,000</b>	<b>9,300</b>	<b>172,700</b>

**Note:** Figures may not add up due to rounding.







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The consortium was made up of partners (providing funding) and supporter organisations.

**The partner organisations are:**

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) – Eat Wild (EW) – The British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC)  
The Countryside Alliance (CA) – The Country Land & Business Association (CLA) – The Game Farmers' Association (GFA) – GunsOnPegs (GoP)  
The Gun Trade Association (GTA) – The Moorland Association (MA) – The National Gamekeepers' Organisation (NGO)  
Scottish Association for Country Sports (SACS) – Country Sport Scotland (CSS) – Scottish Land & Estates (SL&E)  
UK Practical Shooting Association (UKPSA)

**The supporting organisations are:**

The Association of Professional Shooting Instructors (APSI) – The British Deer Society (BDS) – The Clay Pigeon Shooting Association (CPSA)  
The Fifty Calibre Shooting Association (FCSA) – The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) – The Historical Breechloading Smallarms Association (HBSA)  
The National Rifle Association (NRA) – The National Small-bore Rifle Association (NSRA) – The Preparatory Schools' Rifle Association (PSRA)  
The Vintage Arms Association (VAA)

