



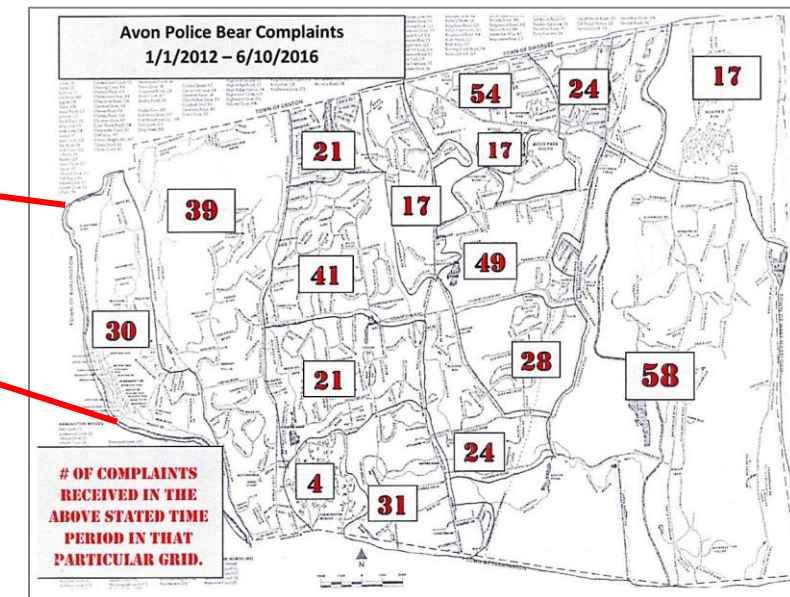
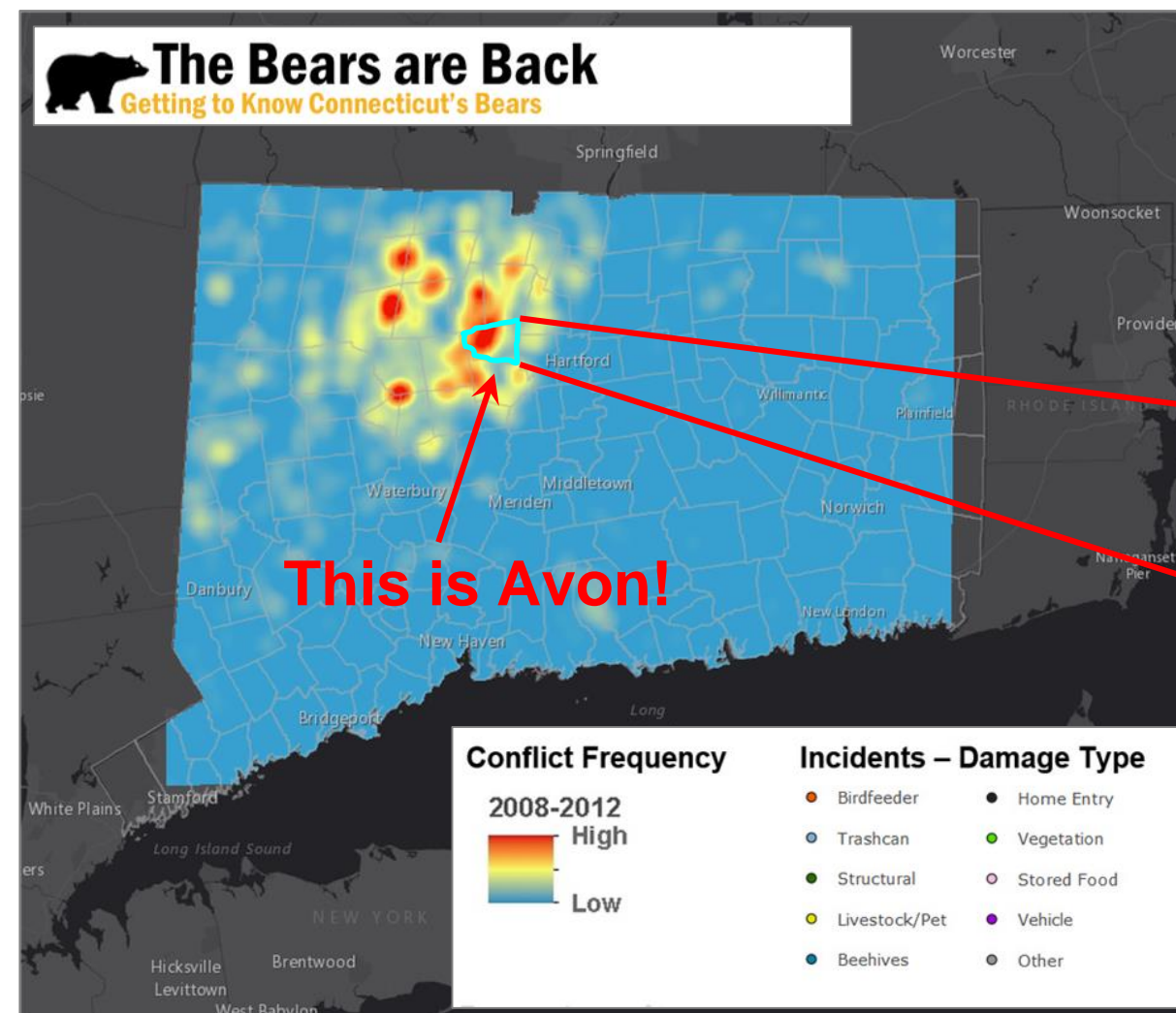
# Avon Bear Aware



Avon black bears (*Ursus americanus*) make the news! From left to right, bear spotted at Avon resident's back porch featured in NBC26 news, mother bear and two cubs in Arch Road neighborhood, Avon in Hartford Courant, bear taking a stroll on Avon bike path in NBC CT, black bear knocked over a bird feeder in my friends backyard (high school news), and more pictures of the bear from Avon resident's porch in NBC26 news.

## Issue

- Number of human-black bear conflicts are increasing in Northwestern Hartford county.
- In 2017, there were 5623 recorded bear sightings in CT, 511 occurred in Avon alone (3/7/2017 to 10/18/2017).<sup>1</sup>
- Accordingly, our goals were to:
  - Gauge Avon public awareness of increasing black bear population & human-bear conflict.
  - Gauge Avon public awareness of proper protocols for bear safety and reporting.
  - Create educational materials on CT bear population & bear safety to be distributed at Avon High School.



(Left) Avon is a hotspot for bear-human interactions.<sup>2</sup> (Right) Zoomed in map of Avon showing the number of police bear complaints by town grid.<sup>3</sup>

## The Survey & Results

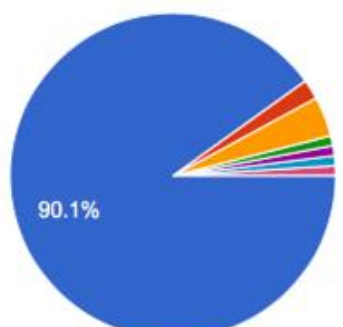
- We created a Google Form survey to gauge awareness of CT's black bear population, human-bear conflicts, and bear safety.
- Survey was sent out to students from Avon High School between 2/25/18 and 3/4/18.
- 106 people took this survey.

### Major Findings:

95% of people who took the survey have seen a black bear in Avon & primarily in their yard.

Only 41% of people knew that Avon had highest black bear density in CT, but > 50% were aware that human-bear conflicts ↑:

If yes where?  
101 responses

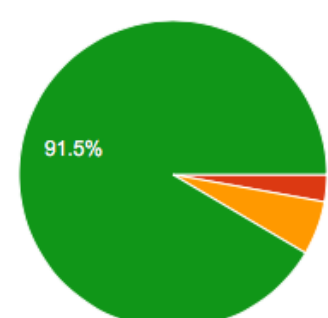


- In my backyard or neighborhood
- While walking or hiking in CT woods or nature park
- In or near the road while driving in CT
- All of the above
- Near the road, in my neighborhood, at AMS
- Both my backyard and on the road
- In my friends backyard

Yet, 82% have not reported their black bear sightings.

Fortunately, most appeared to know proper safety procedures.

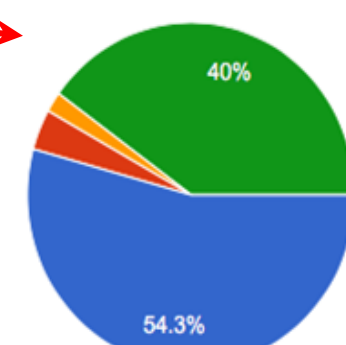
If you encounter a bear, what should you do?  
106 responses



- Attempt to distract the bear with food
- Get close and take a picture to report it
- Run away as quickly as you can
- Back away slowly, never turning your back

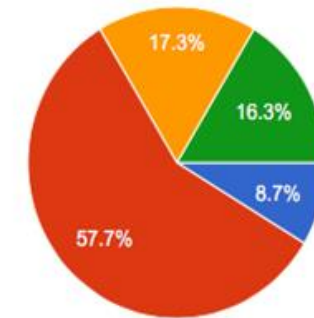
Yet, < 13% feel very aware of human-bear conflicts & 94% didn't know about the "Bear Dos & Don'ts" page on avonct.gov.

How has the rate of human-bear conflicts changed in Avon since 2000?  
105 responses



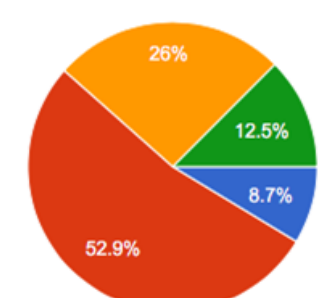
- Increased
- Decreased
- Stayed the same
- I don't know

Which do you think has contributed most to this change in human-bear conflicts?  
104 responses



- Increased use of hiking trails and forested land for recreational outdoor activities
- Increased housing development mixed with natural forest habitat
- Poor trash storage practices
- Climate change causes shorter bear hibernation cycles

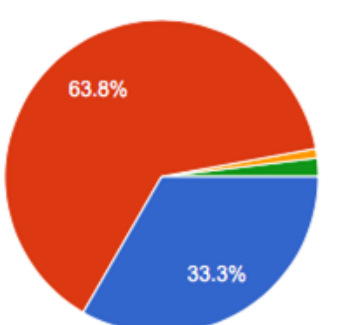
What would you rate your level of awareness of human-black bear conflicts in Avon?  
104 responses



- Not aware
- Somewhat aware
- Moderately aware
- Very aware

42.5% experienced property damage from a black bear

Which one of these is a precaution to keep you and your property safe from black bears?  
105 responses



- Close trash cans left outside
- Put away bird feeders from March through November
- Feed the bear
- Leave pet food out at night

## Next Steps

Local and state agencies have plentiful resources for bear awareness and safety education. The community, however, needs to be made more aware of these resources and how to access them.

The next step of this project is to improve communication of bear safety and facilitate more information to town planners and developers about minimizing bear conflict.

1. Connecticut Black Bear Sightings Tally, <http://www.depdata.ct.gov/wildlife/sighting/bearsight.asp>, accessed at January 2018.
2. Map adapted from UConn CLEAR Story Map: The Bears are Back: Getting to Know Connecticut's Bears, <http://clear3.uconn.edu/viewers/bears/>, accessed at July 2017.
3. Avon Police Department Bear Protocol, [http://www.avonct.gov/sites/avonct/files/file/memo\\_from\\_sgt\\_gannon\\_re\\_bear\\_protocol\\_06\\_14\\_16.pdf](http://www.avonct.gov/sites/avonct/files/file/memo_from_sgt_gannon_re_bear_protocol_06_14_16.pdf), accessed at March 2018.

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