

# KENTUCKY'S HUNTER EDUCATION STUDENT ATTITUDE SURVEY

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The purpose of this survey was to determine the attitudes of students before they have completed a 10 hour hunter education class, and to determine the change of attitudes, if any, of the students after they have completed this class.

The total survey is composed of 30 questions; 15 on a pre-test and a like amount on a post-test. In both cases the questions are divided into 3 categories, wildlife, hunting and hunters. Each category had five questions. The questions on each test were the same, but on the post-test the questions were reordered.

This survey was conducted at 3 summer camps operated by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. When campers arrived on Monday, they were given the pre-test and after the campers had completed the 10 hours of training, they were asked to complete the post-test just before leaving camp. Approximately 6,000 plus campers were surveyed. The survey forms were sorted into 4 different groups, 1st year campers boys, 1st year camper girls, 2nd year camper boys, and 2nd year camper girls. All comparisons and conclusions were made from an equal number of each group randomly selected from the overall sample group. The number of samples used was determined by the number of 2nd year male and female campers surveys which could be used. Three hundred forty four 2nd year boy campers and a like number of 1st year boy campers were used. One hundred eighty three 2nd year girl campers and a like number of 1st year girl campers were used. Each survey form was checked and each question was given a positive, negative, or undecided response.

In the 4 groups into which the samples were divided, there was an increase in the percent of positive responses in all questions except 3, 6, and 8 (Table 1). All of these questions refer to wildlife. Several things could explain this. It is possible that the influence our program had on their attitudes was not strong enough to over-ride another influence such as television. I believe we are giving the students the information that should positively influence their attitudes, but they are not accepting it. Possibly we are not emphasizing the plight of wildlife to the degree we should.

If I am reading this response correctly, and I believe I am, most young people think that life for a wild animal involves no natural struggle for existence, unless man as a hunter enters the picture. This is normally the picture that is portrayed by television wildlife programs. The percentages of positive responses for question number 10 varied between 55.2 percent and 59.6 percent. The percentages of positive responses for question number 5 (pre-test) varied between 5.5 percent and 7.1 percent. This would indicate that a high percentage of students believed that hunters are the reason for the decline of wildlife numbers, and that loss of habitat has little effect on wildlife numbers.

In the post-test we saw an increase in the positive response to both questions 5 and 10. For question number 10 (post-test) positive response varied between 65.7 and 67.7 percent and for question number 5 (post-test) between 9.3 percent and 16.6 percent. We apparently are convincing a greater number of students of the importance of habitat to wildlife, but not enough. Again we need more emphasis in this area. The largest change of positive response in the category of wildlife questions comes in questions number 14. This would indicate that we are doing a good job of convincing students that wildlife is a natural resource that must be used wisely. The key word is used. Wildlife cannot be stockpiled as some natural resources can.

Table 1. Questions used in Kentucky's hunter education Student Attitude Survey.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Hunting can teach you a lot about wildlife.
  2. Hunting for sport or fun should be outlawed.
  3. In nature, many wildlife live a hard life, suffer and often die a cruel death.
  4. Hunters are people that enjoy killing wildlife just for the sake of killing.
  5. Hunting for sport or fun has caused some wildlife to become fewer in number.
  6. Wildlife is a natural resource like water, forests and coal and should be used wisely.
  7. Hunters have very little respect for laws made to protect wildlife.
  8. Wild animals spend most of their time struggling to survive.
  9. Hunting wildlife for food should be the only type of hunting allowed.
  10. The loss of food and homes (habitat) for wildlife has been the main cause of us having fewer numbers of wildlife.
  11. Hunters are people that enjoy being a part of the out-of-doors.
  12. All hunting should be outlawed.
  13. Many hunters want to learn as much as possible about wildlife because they respect wildlife.
  14. Wildlife is a natural resource like water, forest, and coal and should be left alone.
  15. Hunters have provided more help for wildlife through the money they spend on hunting and the taxes they pay on hunting equipment than any other group.
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<sup>1</sup>All questions were answered by circling one of 5 choices: Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly disagree.

According to all information available to me, sport hunting has never caused the decline of any species of wildlife. Question number 5 refers to sport hunting as being the cause of the decline in wildlife numbers. The greatest majority of students agree with this statement. If the student agrees with this statement, he is responding negatively. The percentage of negative responses on this question on the pre-test varied between 82.5 percent (1st year girls) and 86.6 percent (1st year boys). If we look at the same question on the post test, the percentages of negative responses varied between 67.4 percent (2nd year boys) and 76.5 percent (1st year girls). In all 4 categories surveyed, we found a decrease in the percentages of negative responses. We have to a certain extent had some positive influence on some of the students, but not enough. This would indicate that we need to place more emphasis on the importance of sport hunting and its relationship to a sound wildlife management program.

The majority of students feel that sport hunting should not be banned (question number 2), yet a majority of students are giving a negative answer to question number 9. Thus, they are advocating hunting for the purpose of securing food only. Although we place heavy emphasis on hunters making use (for food) of any animal that they take while sport hunting, we do not advocate hunting for the purpose of securing food only. If we did, we would be promoting market hunting which could decimate wildlife populations, which almost happened at the turn of the century. Because of the emphasis we place on making use of any wildlife harvested, students I believe are misunderstanding this statement. Therefore, in the future, we need to clarify the difference between the use of an animal harvested while sport hunting as opposed to hunting only for the purpose of securing food.

Table 2. Percent of 1st year campers giving a positive, negative, or undecided response to Kentucky's hunter education Student Attitude Survey (a summary of 3 years of data).

Question Number	Pre-Test			Post-Test		
	Positive	Negative	Undecided	Positive	Negative	Undecided
—Boys—						
1	80.5	11.3	8.1	88.6	7.3	4.1
2	45.4	37.2	17.4	48.5	32.9	18.6
3	63.4	16.8	19.8	67.4	21.8	10.8
4	71.2	20.6	8.1	80.5	9.9	9.6
5	6.1	86.6	7.3	14.2	74.4	11.3
6	89.8	5.0	5.2	89.2	5.5	5.2
7	43.3	33.1	23.6	62.8	23.3	13.9
8	65.1	19.2	15.7	61.0	22.1	16.9
9	22.4	63.9	13.7	48.0	36.0	16.0
10	59.6	19.2	21.2	65.7	12.2	22.1
11	77.9	7.3	14.8	88.1	8.4	3.5
12	75.0	13.4	11.6	86.0	6.4	7.6
13	62.5	14.0	23.5	70.9	15.4	13.7
14	47.7	27.6	24.7	66.6	18.0	15.4
15	45.4	21.2	33.4	72.7	13.4	13.9
—Girls—						
1	84.7	4.9	10.4	85.2	5.5	9.3
2	32.8	48.6	18.6	53.6	37.7	8.7
3	73.2	9.3	17.5	68.3	16.9	14.8
4	69.4	14.8	15.8	80.3	9.3	10.4
5	7.1	82.5	10.4	9.3	76.5	14.2
6	88.5	2.7	8.7	91.8	3.8	4.4
7	35.0	37.7	27.3	63.4	10.2	16.4
8	62.3	16.9	20.8	55.2	25.7	19.1
9	23.0	57.9	19.1	43.7	39.9	16.4
10	55.2	18.0	26.8	66.7	7.1	26.2
11	79.8	4.4	15.8	85.2	7.1	7.7
12	64.5	14.2	21.3	86.3	4.9	8.7
13	63.4	14.2	22.4	71.0	10.4	18.6
14	30.0	32.8	37.2	67.2	16.4	16.4
15	33.3	18.0	48.6	69.4	9.8	20.8

More than 80 percent of all students surveyed agree with the philosophy hunting can teach you a lot about wildlife (Question #1). This is consistent with the idea hunters, as a group, are more knowledgeable about wildlife than any other group.

The category of questions referring to hunters showed an increase in positive responses from the pre-to post-test. Question #7 had one of the lower percentages of positive

**Table 3. Percent of 2nd year campers giving a positive, negative or undecided response to Kentucky's hunter education Student Attitude Survey (a summary of 3 years of data).**

Question Number	Pre-Test			Post-Test		
	Positive	Negative	Undecided	Positive	Negative	Undecided
—Boys—						
1	85.4	7.3	7.3	90.7	3.2	6.1
2	48.3	36.0	15.7	53.8	33.1	13.1
3	66.0	17.1	16.9	63.7	24.1	12.2
4	84.6	8.7	6.7	86.0	7.6	6.4
5	6.7	85.8	7.5	16.6	67.4	16.0
6	90.1	4.7	5.2	89.5	6.7	3.8
7	52.9	23.8	23.3	75.0	17.2	7.8
8	55.2	25.6	19.2	48.8	27.0	24.1
9	30.2	54.7	15.1	52.6	34.0	13.4
10	58.7	18.3	23.0	66.0	13.7	20.3
11	80.2	7.8	12.0	88.7	6.1	5.2
12	88.7	2.9	8.4	90.7	4.1	5.2
13	75.0	7.8	17.2	80.2	9.9	9.9
14	63.4	16.3	20.3	81.4	10.2	8.4
15	60.2	13.6	26.2	77.3	10.8	11.9
—Girls—						
1	86.3	7.1	6.6	90.2	2.7	7.1
2	46.4	31.2	22.4	53.6	28.9	17.5
3	63.9	19.7	16.4	59.5	26.8	13.7
4	77.1	8.7	14.2	83.6	4.4	12.0
5	5.5	86.3	8.2	15.3	71.0	13.7
6	91.8	2.2	6.0	91.2	3.3	5.5
7	57.9	18.6	23.5	71.0	12.6	16.4
8	44.3	29.5	26.2	47.0	32.8	20.2
9	28.4	49.2	22.4	53.0	31.1	15.9
10	59.6	13.1	27.3	67.7	11.5	20.8
11	83.1	4.9	12.0	89.6	6.0	4.4
12	78.7	10.4	10.9	89.1	1.6	9.3
13	69.9	7.7	22.4	74.9	9.8	15.3
14	48.1	24.6	27.3	71.6	10.4	18.0
15	48.6	13.1	38.3	74.9	12.0	13.1

responses. I believe this can be attributed to the amount of publicity game law violators receive. This quite often gives the impression that even though there are game laws, hunters pay no attention to them. Anti-hunting groups like to reinforce the idea that hunters ignore game laws. We know from experience that a very small percentage of

hunters violate game laws.<sup>1</sup> When we look at the same question on the post-test, we see a definite increase in the percentage of positive answers. Therefore, we are having very good success in getting the correct point to the students and they are accepting it. Question number 15 deserves some comment. For years, hunters have been contributing money in many ways to insure the welfare of wildlife, but they have not been very vocal about their contributions. In the last few years, preservationists and anti-hunting groups have been using expensive media campaigns to inform the public of their contributions to wildlife. When, in fact, it has been very small in comparison to what hunters have done and often their money has been directed in areas that benefit wildlife very little—ie. expensive media campaigns against hunters and hunting. When we look at the increase in percentage of positive responses on question number 15, we see a positive influence of student's attitudes as to who are the real "Friends of Animals".

Questions 4, 11 and 13 deal with the student's attitudes toward hunters and how hunters view wildlife and hunting. Student responses on the pre-test show a high percentage of positive responses and an even higher percent on the post-test. This indicates that the majority of students have a good attitude toward hunters and this also indicates they believe that the actual taking of game is only a small part of the overall outdoor experience enjoyed by the person that hunts.

This survey proves our program is effective and is influencing a clear majority of our students in a positive direction. Those students that return to camp for the second year are receiving additional influence. This survey has also indicated where our program is strong and where it is weak. With improvements in these areas our students will be better informed and better able to approach and confront those people that are anti-hunting in a factual or scientific manner.

It is my opinion that these students are the people that will insure the existence of wildlife for the future, because they know the importance of hunters and hunting to wildlife survival.

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<sup>1</sup>In 1978 there were 317,812 hunting and hunting related licenses sold in Kentucky. For the same year 1,934 citations were written for hunting & fishing related violations. This figures to be 0.6 percent.