Results of the 2019 Animal Tracker Survey

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Animal Tracker 2019: Methods & Overview

Many media outlets have hailed 2019 as the “Year of the Vegan.” Certainly new types of meatless burgers are pleasing more and more omnivores, and Millennials appear to be much more interested in going vegan than generations before them. While these changes are positive, progress on animal liberation continues to be slow. The change we seek for animals will very likely take generations to realize. At Faunalytics we know that long-term struggles require similarly long-term perspectives when it comes to strategy and research. That’s why we created the only longitudinal survey dedicated to animal protection issues, now in its twelfth year.

The Faunalytics Animal Tracker is an annual survey of U.S. adults’ attitudes and behaviors with respect to animals and animal advocates. The first survey was conducted in 2008 and included 15 core questions. A subset of five questions has been asked every year since, which means that we collect new data for each question every three years. The questions asked in 2019 were also asked in 2016, 2013, and 2010.

For 2019, we presented the Animal Tracker results in a series of blogs, which follow. The first blog provided the background and methodology of the survey, a brief overview of the latest results, and a deeper dive into the responses to two of the questions. In subsequent blogs, we explored the remaining questions covered in the 2019 survey. You can also explore past Animal Tracker results by reading [our blog series from last year](#), browsing [past reports](#), or using [our graphing tool](#).

2019 Results

Following is a high-level summary of results from the 2019 survey.

Movement’s Goals – A strong majority of respondents expressed support for the goals of the animal protection movement, which are described in the survey as “to minimize and eventually eliminate all forms of animal cruelty and suffering.” Two thirds (68%) of respondents say they support this goal, including 31% who say they “strongly” support it. On the other hand, about a sixth of respondents (16%) say they oppose this goal, including 4% of U.S. adults who say they “strongly” oppose it. Finally, 16% of people responded “do not know.”

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Knowledge – Self-reported knowledge of animal issues is generally low. On average, across the issues studied in the Animal Tracker, a majority of U.S. adults (52%) say they are “not very” or “not at all” knowledgeable about the issue. Only 8% of people (on average) say they are “very knowledgeable.” However, knowledge varies by topic, ranging from a low of 27% who are very/somewhat knowledgeable about horses and dogs used in racing to a high of 74% who are very/somewhat knowledgeable about companion animals. Besides horses/dogs used in racing, there is particularly low self-reported knowledge about animals in laboratories and animals in circuses and rodeos. There is above-average knowledge of animals in pounds and shelters, animals in zoos and aquariums, and animals raised for food.

Importance – Overall, most people believe that protecting animals is important, regardless of species or situation. But that perceived importance differs considerably by situation, based in part on how likely a respondent is to engage in a given activity. On average, across all situations listed in the survey, a majority of U.S. adults (61%) believe that animal welfare is either “very” or “somewhat” important. The vast majority (80%) feel that animal welfare is very/somewhat important when “getting a new pet,” while 72% say the same when “buying food (i.e., meat, dairy, eggs)” and 64% say the same about “buying consumer products.” People are not as likely to think that animal protection is important when voting for a political candidate, attending circuses or rodeos, going hunting or fishing, or buying clothing. The situation in which people are least likely to believe in the importance of animal protection is when they go to dog/horse races (46%).

Attitudes – Questions that asked respondents to agree or disagree with various statements about animals yielded mixed results. Strong majorities of respondents agree with these statements: “some animals are capable of thinking and feeling emotions” (78%) and “protecting endangered or threatened species should be a global priority” (77%). However, 63% also agree that “using animals for food is necessary for human survival.” Additionally, half (50%) agree that “research on animals is necessary for medical advancement” and that “dissecting animals is a vital way for students to learn about anatomy.” Only 22% of respondents agree that buying real animal fur is ethically acceptable. More than half (54%) say that farmed animals deserve the same consideration as pets, and about the same (53%) say that people have an obligation to avoid harming all animals.

Movement’s Impact – U.S. adults are currently pretty divided in their opinions about the magnitude of the impact that the animal protection movement has had on the country’s policies. Only 9% say that the movement has had a “significant” impact, while 33% say the impact has been “moderate.” Over 4 in 10 respondents (41%) say that the animal protection movement has had “very little impact” or “no impact” on the nation’s policies. About a sixth of respondents (16%) say “do not know.”

Closer Look Into Questions About The Animal Protection Movement's Perceived Impact And Support For Its Goal

In the sub-sections that follow, we cover two questions that were included in the Animal Tracker 2019 survey. They relate to the perceived impact of the animal protection movement and support for the movement's goal. Below is the actual wording we use for each of these survey questions.

Regardless of your personal opinion about the animal protection movement, how much of an impact do you think it has had on our nation's policies?

Scale: Significant Impact, Moderate Impact, Very Little Impact, No Impact, Do Not Know

Do you personally support or oppose the animal protection movement's goal to minimize and eventually eliminate all forms of animal cruelty and suffering?

Strongly Support, Somewhat Support, Somewhat Oppose, Strongly Oppose, Do Not Know

For both questions above, the proportion of U.S. adults saying they “do not know” was 16% in the 2019 survey results. This is a meaningful percentage of the population that does not know what impact the movement is having or how they feel about the movement's goals.

The question about perceived impact has consistently produced mixed results, with approximately 4 in 10 respondents (43%) saying the impact has been “significant” or “moderate” and about the same proportion (41%) saying there has been “very little” or no impact. There have been some interesting changes in the response to this question over time (see below).

Once again this year, about 7 in 10 respondents (68%) expressed strong or somewhat strong support of the animal protection movement's goal with opposition at only 16%.

In the following sub-sections, we explore the demographic differences when it comes to perceived impact and support for the movement's goals. We also take a look at trends by comparing our latest results with past years of the Animal Tracker, going back to 2008.

Demographics

Below we focus on the most recent Animal Tracker results (from April 2019) and differences by gender, age, level of formal education, ethnicity, geographic region, and whether or not people have companion animals in the household. To simplify our analysis, we combined significant/moderate and very little/no impact for the question about impact, and we combined strongly/somewhat support and strongly/somewhat oppose for the goal-related question.

Gender

- Impact: Slightly more men than women (44% to 41%) think the animal protection movement has had a significant or moderate impact.
- Goals: Women are more likely than men to support the overarching goal of the animal protection movement as stated in the survey. Specifically, 75% of women and 61% of men support the goal.

Age

- Impact: The likelihood of recognizing the impact of the animal protection movement increases with age. Only a third (33%) of the youngest group (18-29 years old) and 36% of those 30-44 years of age think the movement's impact has been significant/moderate. Almost half (46%) of the next oldest group (45-59) recognize the impact. Those in the oldest (60+) age group are most likely to perceive the movement's impact as significant (53%).
- Goals: Support for the movement's goal also increases with age. Specifically, 59% of 18-29-year-olds support the goal compared with 68% of 30-59-year-olds, and 75% of those age 60 and older.

Education

- Impact: The perceived impact of the animal protection movement increases as one's level of formal education increases. People who say the impact has been significant/moderate include 37% of respondents with less than a high school education, 39% of those with a high school education, 43% of those with some college, and 47% of those with Bachelor's degrees or more education.
- Goals: Support for the movement's overarching goal does not vary much above the level of a high school diploma. Most (68%-70%) of those with a high school education or higher support the goal, compared with 62% of those with less than a high school education.

Ethnicity

- **Impact:** The perceived impact of the animal protection movement does not vary much by ethnicity. Around 4 in 10 of White, Black, and Hispanic/Latino respondents (44%, 41%, and 40%, respectively) say that the animal protection movement has had a significant or moderate impact on the nation's policies.
- **Goals:** Support for the overarching goal of animal advocates also differs little by ethnicity. The support rates of White, Black, and Hispanic/Latino respondents are all 68-69%.

Region

- **Impact:** Regional differences in perceived impact are modest. There is some indication that those in the U.S. Midwest think the movement has had more impact than those in other regions.
- **Goals:** Differences by region are also very slight when it comes to support for the movement's goals. While 72% of those in the West support the stated goals, 66%-69% of those in the three other regions of the country express the same sentiment.

Companion Animals in Household

- **Impact:** There is virtually no difference in perceived impact when comparing those who live with companion animals and those who do not (43% and 42%, respectively).
- **Goals:** Those who live with companion animals are more likely to support the movement's overarching goal than those without companion animals. Specifically, 70% of people with companion animals support the goal, compared to 64% of those without companion animals.

Trends

The Animal Tracker questions covering perceived impact and support for the movement's goals have been asked five times, most recently in 2019, but also in 2016, 2013, 2010, and 2008. Overall, the trends indicate an upswing in belief about the impact of the animal protection movement after several years of decline, and continued steady support for its overarching goal.

Regardless of your personal opinion about the animal protection movement, how much of an impact do you think it has had on our nation's policies?

Movement Impact: Over the course of the Animal Tracker, the percentage of those saying the movement has had “significant” or “moderate” impact had been decreasing from 2008 (43%) to 2016 (38%). But in 2019 the proportion jumped back up to 43%. Those who believe that the movement has had “very little” impact or none at all reached the highest level (47%) in 2016, but dropped to the second-lowest level (41%) in 2019.

Do you personally support or oppose the animal protection movement's goal to minimize and eventually eliminate all forms of animal cruelty and suffering?

Support for Goals: Public support for the overarching goal of the animal protection movement (“to minimize and eventually eliminate all forms of animal cruelty and suffering”) is quite strong in 2019, at 68% for all U.S. adults. That level of support has remained essentially unchanged over the course of the Animal Tracker. While the numbers have declined very slightly over time – from 70% support in 2008 to 69% in 2010, 68% in 2013, and 66% in 2016 – these very modest declines are well within the survey’s margin of error.

Study Methods

The initial Animal Tracker survey was completed in June 2008 and included a larger sample size (N=1,500) to help establish a baseline of attitudes and behavior. Subsequent surveys have been completed annually since then, with each year asking a subset of questions. The samples after year one have all included at least 1,000 U.S. adults, with an error margin ranging from +/- 2.8% to +/- 3.1%. The 2019 survey was fielded from March 15 - 17.

The 2019 sample included 1,000 respondents. The actual number is slightly lower for most questions due to refusals, which were less than 2% in all cases. The results have been weighted using a variable provided by the data collection company. This is to account for differences between survey respondents and the population being studied, in this case all non-institutionalized adults (ages ≥ 18) currently living in the U.S. The answer options were randomized for all survey questions except those that present answers in a logical order.

All years of the Animal Tracker survey have been fielded using the GfK/Knowledge Networks panel, which combines offline, address-based sampling with online panel research capabilities. This results in a true probability sample and survey data that are much more accurate than most other online surveys.

It should be noted that the results are subject to several limitations, including issues with self-reporting. Respondents' answers may differ from their actual opinions or behavior, particularly for sensitive questions or those involving intentions or predictions of the future. Interpretation of some terms may also vary from respondent to respondent. Another limitation is nonresponse bias; it is possible that non-respondents have different opinions and behavior than survey respondents.

Sponsorship Information

The Animal Tracker is generously supported by our partner organizations, most recently including the American Anti-Vivisection Society, Animal Legal Defense Fund, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Best Friends Animal Society, Farm Sanctuary, the Humane Society of the United States, Maddie's Fund, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the National Anti-Vivisection Society, the Summerlee Foundation, and Tigers in America.

Knowledge of Animal Issues

Only connect. ~ E.M. Forster

In this section, we focus in on the question of knowledge. Specifically, how knowledgeable people feel about different animal issues.

Knowledge is important because most people need to be aware of an issue before they change their opinion or behavior. If people don't know about the plight of animals in shelters or on farms or in laboratories, they are unlikely to be motivated to do anything about it. Tracking knowledge over time and comparing it by issue also helps animal advocates understand where awareness is increasing or decreasing.

The Animal Tracker gauges self-reported knowledge. Essentially, we ask people how knowledgeable they feel about different issues, a method that has limitations. A better approach to gauging knowledge would be to give people an actual test to measure what they know. This more in-depth approach is outside the scope of the Animal Tracker, but self-reported knowledge still provides insight into the minds of U.S. adults.

Following is the question that we ask every three years, most recently in April 2019:

How knowledgeable do you feel about issues that affect the welfare of animals in the following circumstances?

Scale: Very Knowledgeable, Somewhat Knowledgeable, Not Very Knowledgeable, Not at All Knowledgeable, Do Not Know

- *Animals in circuses and rodeos*
- *Animals in laboratories*
- *Animals in pounds and shelters*
- *Animals in zoos and aquariums*
- *Animals kept as companions/pets*
- *Animals raised for food*
- *Endangered species*
- *Horses and dogs used in racing*
- *Wildlife on public lands*

The majority of people do not feel knowledgeable about issues that affect the welfare of animals, with one exception. When it comes to animals kept as companions or pets, almost three-quarters of respondents (74%) reported being knowledgeable (“very” or “somewhat”) about these animals’ welfare issues. Next highest was issues affecting animals in zoos and aquariums, with 50% of respondents asserting themselves as knowledgeable.

Only about 4 in 10 claim knowledge relating to issues affecting animals in pounds and shelters (46%), animals raised for food (45%), endangered species (42%), and wildlife on public lands (37%). The three lowest categories were issues affecting animals in circuses and rodeos (30%), horses and dogs used in racing (27%), and animals in laboratories (25%).

Below we explore demographic differences when it comes to self-reported knowledge of animal issues. We also take a look at knowledge-related trends, comparing our latest results with past years of the Animal Tracker. We will also be updating our graphing tool with 2019 data and releasing the full dataset combining twelve years of Animal Tracker results in SPSS and CSV format.

Demographics

Below we focus on just the most recent Animal Tracker results (from April 2019) and differences by gender, age, level of formal education, ethnicity, geographic region, and whether or not people have companion animals in the household.

Gender: For most of the animal types included in this survey, the gender difference is small. For three types of animals, women are more likely to be knowledgeable (very or somewhat) than men: animals kept as companions/pets (77% of women vs. 68% of men), animals in zoos/aquariums (55% vs. 44%), and animals in circuses/rodeos (33% vs. 27%). The gender difference flips when it comes to welfare issues related to wildlife on public lands, where 39% of men claim to be very/somewhat knowledgeable compared with 34% of women.

Age: The youngest and oldest age groups most often stand apart from the overall average on self-reported knowledge of animal issues. People 18-29 years old are less likely to say they are knowledgeable compared with the overall average in five categories: animals kept as companions/pets (66% vs. overall average of 74%), animals in zoos/aquariums (45% vs. 50%), endangered species (35% vs. 42%), animals in circuses/rodeos (23% vs. 30%), and horses/dogs used in racing (19% vs. 27%). Conversely, a larger proportion of people aged 60+ described themselves as very or somewhat knowledgeable compared to the overall average in three categories: animals kept as companions/pets (80% vs. overall average of 74%), animals in zoos/aquariums (56% vs. 50%), and animals raised for food (52% vs. 45%).

Education: Level of education does not appear to be related to knowledge of issues for most types of animals. But four categories of animal issue showed differences of 10-12% between some educational groups. In two of those categories, those with less than a high school education had the highest percentage of self-reported knowledgeable respondents: animals in circuses/rodeos (38%) and horses/dogs used in racing (36%). In two other categories, those with “some college” reported the highest knowledge: animals kept as companions/pets (80%) and wildlife on public lands (41%).

Ethnicity: Differences in knowledge by race or ethnicity consistently show that Black people report being less knowledgeable than average, with Latino/Hispanic and White people reporting a level of knowledge of most animal issues that is right around average. Specifically, Black respondents rated their own knowledge lower than the average U.S. adult for all of the issues

covered in the Animal Tracker. This difference was most pronounced for animals kept as companions/pets (55% of Black respondents said they were knowledgeable vs. overall average of 74%) and animals in zoos/aquariums (37% vs. 50%). Latino respondents reported being more knowledgeable than average for animals in laboratories (34% vs. overall average of 25%). Finally, White people make up the majority of the U.S. population and also the majority of survey respondents; their knowledge levels closely match the overall U.S. population.

Region: Self-reported knowledge is relatively consistent regardless of one's geographic region. When comparing subgroups by region with the overall sample, there were few differences larger than +/- 5%, within the error margin for the subgroups given their smaller sample sizes. However, those in the Midwest reported being less knowledgeable of many animal issues, particularly horses/dogs used in racing (20% vs. overall average of 27%).

Companion Animals in Household: Those who live with companion animals report being significantly more knowledgeable about all animal-related issues than those who do not. This difference is most pronounced for people who consider themselves knowledgeable about companion animal issues (83% vs. 60%) and issues pertaining to animals in zoos/aquariums (57% vs. 39%). But it is also true of other issues, most notably animals in pounds/shelters: nearly half (49%) of people with companion animals are very/somewhat knowledgeable about issues for animals in pounds/shelters, compared to 40% of those who do not live with companion animals. The same holds for endangered species: 46% of those with companion animals are very/somewhat knowledgeable, compared to 35% of those who do not have a companion animal. This disparity in self-reported knowledge extends to all other issues areas as well, though to a lesser degree.

Trends

How knowledgeable do you feel about issues that affect the welfare of animals in the following circumstances?

(percent saying “very” or “somewhat” knowledgeable)

Interestingly, in 2019 relative to 2016, self-reported knowledge went up in every category except one, where it remained the same. In one case, the increase was 9 percentage points, a sizeable lift. Several trends are worth noting and are covered below by subject area.

Animals in Circuses/Rodeos: 2019 saw a small uptick in self-reported knowledge from 2016, but the increase of 3% is just within the survey’s error margin. However, the 30% level of those who reported themselves to be very/somewhat knowledgeable in 2019 is higher than all previous years. One could speculate whether the spate of state laws banning wild animals in circuses over the last year might be related to this upward trend.

Animals in Laboratories: The long-term trend from 2008 to 2019 is essentially unchanged for this category of animals. The dips in 2010 and 2013 were within the error margin

Animals in Pounds/Shelters: Knowledge of animals in shelters has remained essentially flat from 2010 to 2019, hovering around 45%. Note that we do not have data for this category for 2008.

Animals in Zoos/Aquariums: This category saw the largest jump in 2019, a full 9 percentage points above 2016 (50% vs. 41%) and 13 points above 2013 (37%). There has been a lot of media coverage of the plight of whales and dolphins in marine parks in the past three years, which might contribute to the increase, but this explanation is speculative.

Animals Kept as Companions/Pets: The previous downward trend in self-reported knowledge of companion animal welfare issues rebounded in 2019, back to a level comparable to 2008 and 2010. There was a 6% increase from 2016 (68%) to 2019 (74%).

Animals Raised for Food: 2019 registered another modest uptick in knowledge, bringing self-reported knowledge to 45% of the population, the highest level of all 5 years of this survey question.

Endangered Species: While the most recent change from 2016 to 2019 shows an uptick of 5%, the long-term trend from 2008 to 2019 shows that knowledge is still down 5% from the first time the survey was given.

Horses/Dogs Used in Racing: The long-term trend from 2008 to 2019 is essentially unchanged for this category. Knowledge may have increased slightly from 2016 to 2019, but the difference (3%) is just within the error margin.

Wildlife on Public Lands: The most recent change from 2016 to 2019 shows an increase of 4% (from 33% to 37%), but the long-term trend from 2008 to 2019 indicates that self-reported knowledge is down 5%.

Importance of Animal Protection

The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated -- Mahatma Gandhi

Anyone who studies animal issues recognizes that there is a disparity between people's attitudes on the one hand and behavior toward non-human animals on the other. People also have widely varying levels of concern for different animals and different circumstances. For twelve years, animal advocates have relied on the Faunalytics Animal Tracker survey to understand those differences more deeply and follow how they're changing over time.

In this section, we take a closer look at how important animal protection is to U.S. adults when it comes to certain animal-related behaviors. Following is the actual question that we ask every three years, most recently in April 2019:

How important to you is the protection of animals when it comes to making the following personal choices?

Scale: Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important, Not at All Important, Do Not Know

- *Attending circuses or rodeos*
- *Buying clothing*
- *Buying food (i.e., meat, eggs, dairy)*
- *Buying consumer products*
- *Getting a new pet*
- *Going hunting or fishing*
- *Going to dog or horse races*
- *Voting for a political candidate*

This question is useful for a variety of reasons, including gaining an overall understanding of how important people think it is to protect different types of animals during various activities. It's also useful to look at differences by demographic subgroup (see below). On the other hand, the usefulness of this question is limited by several factors. Most notably, the respondents are a mix of people who actually engage in these behaviors and those who do not.

Complicating things further, some of the behaviors are very "high-incidence," meaning that a lot of people engage in them (e.g., buying meat, dairy, or eggs) while others are relatively rare or "low-incidence" (e.g., attending circuses). That limitation adds to the general caveats of the survey, which include self-reporting, social desirability biases, and nonresponse bias.

With those caveats aside, the 2019 results are consistent with past results. They show that, in the minds of U.S. adults, not all animals deserve the same degree of protection, or even the same type of animals in different situations. For example, while 80% of the respondents believe

it is very or somewhat important to protect animals when buying a new pet, only 46% believe the same when going to dog or horse races—meaning that almost twice as many people believe dogs deserve protection when they are pets than when they are racers.

After pets, the next three highest levels of importance ratings were found in relation to protecting animals when buying animal-based food (72%), buying consumer products (64%), and buying clothing (59%). For all of the remaining activities, only about half of the respondents said they believed in the importance of protecting animals: going hunting or fishing (56%), voting for a political candidate (56%), attending circuses or rodeos (53%), and going to dog or horse races (46%).

In the following sub-sections, we explore demographic differences in these reports of importance. We also take a look at trends by comparing our latest results with past years of the Animal Tracker, going back to 2008.

Demographics

Below we focus on just the most recent Animal Tracker results (from April 2019) and differences by gender, age, level of formal education, ethnicity, geographic region, and whether or not people have companion animals in the household.

Gender: Protecting animals is more important to women than to men – this is true for every behavior covered in the Animal Tracker survey. The gender disparity is greatest when it comes to going to dog/horse races and attending circuses/rodeos. Around 6 in 10 women (57%-61%) say protecting animals is “very” or “somewhat” important when engaging in these behaviors, compared to fewer than half (36%-45%) of men. There are also smaller but significant gender differences when it comes to buying consumer products (71% of women vs. 57% of men), buying clothing (65% vs. 52%), buying food 78% vs. 65%), and getting a new pet (85% vs. 75%).

Age: When it comes to age, there are a few significant differences among Animal Tracker respondents. First, concerning dog/horse races, 48% of 18-29-year-olds considered animal protection important vs. 40% of adults aged 60+. And for attending circuses/rodeos, the respective levels were 57% for 18-29-year-olds vs. 46% for 60+-year-olds. Both of these differences suggest that younger people may be more concerned about animal protection than older people. However, at the same time, 18-29-year-olds are less likely to place importance on animal protection when buying food (66% vs. all other groups above 70%) and 30-44-year-olds are less likely to think protecting animals is important when getting a new pet (72% vs. all other groups above 80%). Other age-related differences fall within the survey’s error margin.

Education: There are few significant differences when it comes to one’s level of formal education and belief in the importance of protecting animals. While the differences are small, there is some indication that those with the least and the most education rate animal protection the highest. For those with less than a high school education, the proportion who say protecting animals is very/somewhat important averages 62% across all of the behaviors presented, and

for those with a Bachelor's degree or more, the average proportion is 62%. For those with a high school education the average is 58%, and for those with some college it is 55%.

Ethnicity: Examining differences by race or ethnicity is subject to higher error margins given that some ethnic subgroups are relatively small. With that caveat, there are only a few meaningful differences when it comes to ethnicity. Most notably, Black respondents report that animal protection is significantly less important to them when it comes to getting a new pet, attending circuses/rodeos, going to dog/horse races, and going hunting/fishing. Using getting a new pet as an example, while 86% of White people and 72% of Latino/Hispanic respondents say animal protection is important, this was true of just 63% of Black respondents. On the other hand, Black respondents report significantly higher importance of animal protection when it comes to buying food and consumer products. Hispanic/Latino respondents' reports of importance were also lower than White respondents' when getting a new pet, going hunting/fishing, and going to dog/horse races. However, Hispanic/Latino people expressed more importance than the two other groups in the area of buying clothing. White people are the majority of the U.S. population and also the majority of survey respondents; their importance ratings closely match the overall U.S. population.

Region: For many of the activities, where one lives in the country appears to have little influence on one's belief in the importance of animal protection. However, for two activities, those in the West attributed less importance to animal protection than the overall average: attending circuses/rodeos (47% in the West vs. 53% overall) and going to dog/horse races (41% in the West vs. 46% overall). For two other activities, those in the Northeast attributed less importance than the overall average: buying food (65% in the Northeast vs. 72% overall) and going hunting/fishing (52% in the Northeast vs. 56% overall).

Companion Animals in Household: In our last post discussing knowledge of animal issues, those with companion animals reported being much more knowledgeable than those without companion animals on a variety of topics. The same is true of the importance of animal protection. The largest differences are found in relation to going hunting/fishing (61% of those with a companion animal consider animal protection important vs. 47% of those without a companion animal), getting a new pet (84% vs. 73%), and going to dog/horse races (50% to 40%).

Trends

How important to you is the protection of animals when it comes to making the following personal choices?

(percent saying “very” or “somewhat” important)

The Animal Tracker importance question has been asked five times, most recently in 2019, but also in 2016, 2013, 2010, and 2008.

Overall, the importance ratings for most of the behaviors went down in 2019 compared with 2016, in two cases to their lowest point ever. Over the long term from 2008, beliefs about the importance of animal protection seems to have peaked in 2013. Levels of importance declined from there in 2016, and, with only a couple of exceptions, the levels went down further in 2019.

Because these questions are skipped by people who say they never make these choices, we examined whether the number of respondents has changed over the years of the survey. In general, the percentage of people answering each question was slightly higher in 2019 than in previous years, but the differences were not large so the years can be compared without much difficulty of interpretation.

Attending Circuses or Rodeos: Belief in the importance of protecting animals when going to a circus or rodeo decreased by 7% from 2016’s level. Those saying the protection of these animals is very/somewhat important was 56% in 2008 and 2010, increased to 63% in 2013, declined slightly to 60% in 2016, and declined more significantly to 53% in 2019.

Buying Clothing: There has been no long-term change in the importance of protecting animals when buying clothes. While there were modest upticks for this question in 2010 and 2013, the level of importance declined in 2016, and bounced back in 2019 to 2010 levels (59% saying it was very/somewhat important).

Buying Food (i.e., meat, eggs, dairy): From 2008 to 2013, those saying it is very/somewhat important to protect animals when buying food increased significantly from 67% to 75%. More recent trends are less clear, however, and levels have stagnated in 2016 and 2019 (73% and 72%, respectively).

Buying Consumer Products: There was a slight decrease from 2016 to 2019 in the proportion of people saying it is important to protect animals when buying consumer products, from 67% to 64%. The difference is inside the margin of error, however, and the overall trend (since 2008) shows little change.

Getting a New Pet: In the early Animal Tracker years, from 2008 to 2010, the proportion of respondents saying it is important to protect animals when getting a new pet increased significantly, from 76% to 86%. However, the number was unchanged in 2013 and declined slightly (by 3%) in 2016 and another 3% (to 80%) in 2019.

Going Hunting or Fishing: The long-term trend from 2008 to 2016 showed an overall increase in the perceived importance of protecting animals when going hunting/fishing, but this level dropped in 2019. The importance rating went from a low of 55% saying very/somewhat important in 2008 to a high of 66% in 2013. This proportion then declined significantly, dropping by 5% to a level of 61% in 2016 and again in 2019 to 56%, a return to 2008 levels.

Going to Dog or Horse Races: The long-term trend indicates an increase in the perceived importance of protecting animals when going to dog or horse races that peaked in 2013 followed by recent decreases in 2016 and 2019. This level went from a low of 47% saying very/somewhat important in 2008 to a high of 59% in 2013. This proportion dropped by 4% in 2016 and another 9% in 2019, to 46%, its lowest level in all the years of the survey.

Voting for a Political Candidate: This behavior shows a long-term trend of declining importance. Those saying animal protection is very/somewhat important when voting for a political candidate was highest in 2013 at 61%. The 7% drop in 2016 (a presidential voting year in the United States) is especially noteworthy, and 2019 saw the level stay about the same as 2016 (56%).

Contradictions In Public Opinion

The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them. ~ George Bernard Shaw

In this section, we're turning our attention to people's agreement with the final Animal Tracker question for 2019, which is arguably the most interesting and informative. We gauge the degree to which U.S. adults agree with practices like buying fur clothing, eating animals, and classroom dissection. We also look at how much people agree that animals have thoughts and feelings, that farmed animals are similar to companion animals, and that people have an obligation to avoid harming animals. Here is the survey question:

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Scale: Agree, Disagree, No Opinion, Do Not Know

- *Some animals are capable of thinking and feeling emotions*
- *Buying clothes made of real animal fur is ethically acceptable*
- *Dissecting animals is a vital way for students to learn about anatomy*
- *Farm animals deserve the same consideration as pets and other animals*
- *People have an obligation to avoid harming all animals*
- *Protecting endangered or threatened species should be a global priority*
- *Research on animals is necessary for medical advancement*
- *Using animals for food is necessary for human survival*

This set of statements as a whole helps us understand and describe the divide between people's goals to treat nonhuman animals well on the one hand, and beliefs we have about "necessary" practices that harm animals on the other. For example, two statements that align with animal welfare goals met with agreement from over three-quarters of the respondents: "some animals are capable of thinking and feeling emotions" (78%) and "protecting endangered or threatened species should be a global priority" (77%). However, at least half of our respondents agreed with three statements about practices that harm animals:

- "Using animals for food is necessary for human survival" (63%)
- "Research on animals is necessary for medical advancement" (50%)
- "Dissecting animals is a vital way for students to learn about anatomy" (50%)

Another important difference revealed by this set of question is the difference between beliefs about protection and care for farm animals and for endangered species. While 77% of respondents agreed that endangered or threatened species should be protected, only 54% agreed that "Farm animals deserve the same consideration as pets and other animals."

Finally, just over half of the respondents (53%) agreed with the bottom-line statement that “People have an obligation to avoid harming all animals.”

As a note, we offer both “no opinion” and “do not know” as response options in our surveys because we know from experience that many people do not have well-formed opinions of animal issues. Across the statements, those saying they had no opinion ranged from 8% to 26%; those saying they did not know ranged from 5% to 13%. Therefore, there is a substantial proportion of U.S. adults who neither agree nor disagree with each of the statements. As usual, our analyses focus just on rates of agreement for each statement.

In the following sub-sections, we explore demographic differences when it comes to level of agreement with these statements. We also take a look at trends by comparing our latest results with past years of the Animal Tracker, going back as far as 2008. At the end, we provide links to the complete details for all years of the study and all demographic groups. We also provide a link to the updated graphing tool with the full dataset, which combines twelve years of Animal Tracker results. We hope others will analyze the data and find helpful insights to guide work in support of animals.

Demographics

In this sub-section, we focus on Animal Tracker results (from March 2019) and differences in responses between people of different genders, ages, levels of formal education, ethnicities, and geographic regions. We also look at differences based on whether people have companion animals in the household.

Gender: Women exhibited a more favorable attitude toward animals than men on every statement. This finding is consistent with previous years. Notably, most women (64%) agree that “farm animals deserve the same consideration as pets and other animals,” while less than half of men do (44%). 61% of women compared to 45% of men agree that “people have an obligation to avoid harming all animals.” Most men (58%) agree that “dissecting animals is a vital way for students to learn about anatomy,” while only 44% of women agree. Similarly, most men (57%) agree that “research on animals is necessary for medical advancement,” while only 43% of women do.

Age: There were only a few age differences that fell outside of the survey’s margin of error. In response to the statement “people have an obligation to avoid harming all animals,” 47% of 18-29 year olds and 46% of 30-44 year olds agreed, compared to 54% of those 45-59 and 64% of those over 60. But those in the younger groups were also less likely to agree that “research on animals is necessary for medical advancement” than average (44% vs. 50% overall). Those 60 and above showed an opposite pattern of results, and were much more likely to agree that “people have an obligation to avoid harming all animals” (64% vs. 53% overall), but also that “research on animals is necessary for medical advancement” (56% vs. 50% overall).

Education: Those with fewer years of education held more positive attitudes toward animals on most of the statements. For example, while only 31% of those with less than a high school education agreed that “research on animals is necessary for medical advancement,” 63% of those with a Bachelor’s degree or more education did. A similar disparity existed when in terms of to dissection. In addition, while 67% of those with less than a high school education agreed that “farm animals deserve the same consideration as pets and other animals,” only 49% of those with a Bachelor’s degree agreed. Education level appeared to make no difference in agreement with the statements “some animals are capable of thinking and feeling emotions” and “protecting endangered or threatened species should be a global priority.”

Ethnicity: Differences in opinions based on race/ethnicity were quite large in some cases. White people were significantly more likely to agree that dissection is vital for students (54% vs. 50% overall), that animal research is necessary for medical advancement (53% vs. 50% overall), and that using animals for food is necessary (68% vs. 63% overall). Black people were *less* likely to agree that using animals for food is necessary (48% vs. 63% overall), that animals are capable of thinking and feeling (66% vs. 78% overall), that protecting endangered species should be a global priority (69% vs. 77% overall), and that medical research on animals is necessary (43% vs. 50% overall). Latino/Hispanic respondents were less likely to agree that dissection is vital for students (37% vs. 50% overall), that research on animals is necessary (37% vs. 50% overall), and that using animals for food is necessary (52% vs. 63% overall). This group was also *more* likely to agree that some animals are capable of thinking and feeling emotions (86% vs. 78%), that farm animals deserve the same consideration as pets and other animals (61% vs. 54%), and that people have an obligation to avoid harming all animals (60% vs. 53%).

Region: Those in the Western part of the US generally had more positive attitudes toward animals, while those in the Midwest had less positive attitudes. The greatest difference in attitudes was on the statement “research on animals is necessary for medical advancement:” while 59% of those from the Midwest agreed, only 46% of those from the West agreed. Similarly, 57% of those from the Midwest agreed that dissecting animals was important for students, compared to only 46% of those from the West. People in the West also expressed more animal-friendly views than people in the Midwest on the statements “using animals for food is necessary for human survival” (60% agreement vs. 69%) and “people have an obligation to avoid harming all animals” (57% agreement vs. 48%).

Companion Animals in the Household: Those who live with companion animals consistently showed more positive attitudes toward animals, which was consistent across most Animal Tracker questions. The largest difference was on the statement “Some animals are capable of thinking and feeling emotions:” While over four-fifths (84%) of those who live with companion animals agreed with this statement, only two-thirds (68%) of those without companion animals agreed.

Trends

Percent of respondents who agree with the following statements

The Animal Tracker agree-disagree question has been asked five times, most recently in 2019, but also in 2016, 2013, 2010, and 2008. As a note, in order to simplify analyses, we focus on the proportion of respondents who agree with each statement; therefore, we do not include “disagree” responses in our analyses. In addition, we exclude “no opinion” and “do not know” responses, although these answers are meaningful and might be treated as an indication of a lack of awareness of or engagement with a particular issue.

Overall, the long-term trend since 2008 indicates meaningful differences for five of the eight agree-disagree statements. Short-term differences between 2016 to 2019 also indicate some significant changes. In general, these are positive changes for animals, although some results are mixed. The trends that fall outside of the survey’s margin of error and are therefore likely meaningful are outlined below by subject area.

Some animals are capable of thinking and feeling emotions: Agreement with this statement increased significantly from 2016 (72%) to 2019 (78%). Agreement in 2008 was 71%, suggesting the new high of 78% is a meaningful long-term increase.

Buying clothes made of real animal fur is ethically acceptable: A minority of U.S. adults (22%) agrees with this statement in 2019, and the trend seems to be downward from the 27% agreement reported in 2008, suggesting there is lower acceptance of fur clothing. This baseline proportion declined significantly to 21% in 2010, edged back up to 23% in 2013, back down to 21 % in 2016, and currently sits at 22%.

Dissecting animals is a vital way for students to learn about anatomy: Half of survey respondents (50%) agreed with this statement in of 2019. Agreement with this statement has shown little change since 2008, with the level of agreement hovering around 50% each year.

Farm animals deserve the same consideration as pets and other animals: The percent of people who agree with this statement has moved up and down within a 7-percentage-point range over the course of the Animal Tracker. In 2008, 56% of U.S. adults agreed with the statement, but in 2010 the proportion dropped to 52%. The agreement level then rebounded to 57% in 2013, declined again to 50% in 2016, and rose again to 54% in 2019.

People have an obligation to avoid harming all animals: There has been very little change in the agreement level for this statement, with just over half of the respondents in agreement; all changes over time are within the error margin.

Protecting endangered or threatened species should be a global priority: The level of agreement to this statement in 2019 (77%) was higher than any previous year. In the earlier Animal Tracker years (2008 and 2010), agreement was close to 70%, and in 2013 and 2016, 73% agreed. The 77% rate of agreement in 2019 suggests a meaningful long-term trend and an increase in support for protecting endangered species.

Research on animals is necessary for medical advancement: Agreement with this statement was unchanged at 55% in 2008, 2010, and 2013. In 2016, the agreement level declined significantly to 47%, but in 2019 it rebounded to 50%. This is a notable improvement, but is still lower than the earliest years of the survey.

Using animals for food is necessary for human survival: The long-term trend since 2008 shows declining levels of agreement with this statement. In 2008, 70% of U.S. adults agreed with that animals were necessary as food, while in 2019 that proportion had declined to 63%. In fact, percent agreement on this item has declined each time the Animal Tracker has been run, perhaps reflecting the growing media coverage of plant-based and vegan diets, including information on the health benefits.

What's Next For The Animal Tracker?

2019 is the twelfth and final year of Faunalytics' longest-running research project. But don't say goodbye to the Animal Tracker just yet! For one thing, the data and graphing tool will always be available on our site (details below).

And for another, we're excited to announce a **capstone analysis** drawing on all twelve years of Animal Tracker data, which will be coming in the fall of this year! This analysis will answer several questions, including: What demographic and other features define and categorize people as animal advocates, allies, or opponents? What do attitudes toward animal welfare look like across the U.S.? And how have those attitudes changed or stayed the same over the past twelve years?

How To Get More Information

We provide all Animal Tracker data publicly. Depending on your interests and goals, you can get the summary data, download the complete dataset, or explore the data with our graphing tool. To see our analysis of the 2019 Animal Tracker results, please visit the set of blogs mentioned in the intro above. To see the analyses of past years of the Animal Tracker, please visit our [Open Science Framework Animal Tracker page](#).

Crosstab Data: This [Google spreadsheet](#) provides the topline Animal Tracker results for all years (see separate tabs), including the detailed results for different demographic groups. Results are weighted.

Full Dataset: Our full Animal Tracker dataset is available in CSV and SPSS formats, providing respondent data at the individual level for analysis purposes. [Access all 12 years of data on our Open Science Framework Animal Tracker page](#).

Graphing Tool: Our [Animal Tracker graphing tool](#) lets you visualize all years of the Animal Tracker data to explore differences by group and over time. The tool was generously developed by [Animal Visuals](#).

How to Cite this Information

We're excited to have you share the Animal Tracker results! You are welcome to share our blogs freely. If you are citing the results in a more formal setting, we recommend you follow research best practices. Ideally, you would provide all of the following information and a description of the methodology:

- The full verbatim questions for all results that are being shared (provided in each blog)
- The dates during which the survey was conducted (for 2019: 3/15/2019 – 3/17/2019)
- Note that Faunalytics designed and manages the study using the GfK KnowledgePanel for data collection
- Note that results were weighted to key demographics of the U.S. adult population including gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, income, and region

We recommend using the following standard language when sharing Animal Tracker results: “The Animal Tracker survey was conducted by Faunalytics using the GfK KnowledgePanel. The survey was fielded March 15, 2019 to March 17, 2019, with a total national adult sample of 1,000 respondents. For results based on the entire sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 3.1 percentage points. The data has been weighted to key demographics of the total U.S. adult population. Note: In addition to sampling error, question wording and other factors can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.”