

Public Attitudes towards Wolves and Wolf Management in Wisconsin

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

August 2014



Based on the summary of this report, many news outlets (primarily in Southern WI) reported that WI residents had mixed feelings towards wolves, with a relative balance between those that wanted more and those that wanted less.

What they didn't report was who wanted more and who wanted less.

Following are the numbers, but generally speaking, those that wanted more wolves didn't have to deal with them, while those that were directly affected by wolves wanted fewer, far fewer or no wolves.

*All data is footnoted to the page of the DNR survey

Residents in wolf range

Want:

fewer, many fewer or no wolves	more, or many more wolves	About the same number of wolves
--------------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Rural residents

47%

16%

24%

Deer hunters

71%

8%

15%

Farmers

63%

14%

18%

Even non-hunters in wolf range, urban and rural deer hunters statewide, and rural residents in non-wolf range favored fewer, many fewer or no wolves over any other alternative.

Where should wolves be located ?		
P 67		
"Which areas would you support <u>allowing wolves to exist</u> in WI":		
	Respondents in:	
	Wolf Range	Non-wolf Range
Primarily forested areas with large blocks of public land	59%	66%
Primarily forested areas that are largely privately owned	32%	42%
Anywhere they become established on their own	39%	42%
Areas with a mix of forest and farms and ranches	12%	20%
Areas that are primarily farmland	4%	7%
Rural areas	5%	8%
Nowhere in Wisconsin	16%	6%

Attitudes towards wolves - conclusions

"As people start to report seeing wolves more often, their willingness to live near them declines" p. 41

Town residents are more similar to urban respondents than rural respondents in many of their wolf attitudes p44

It should be noted that more than half (52%) of all respondents in wolf range are from towns or urban areas p42

49% of rural residents in wolf range said they were not willing to have wolves where they live p40

66% of deer hunters in wolf range are not willing to have wolves where they live p52

44% of wolf range residents consider wolves to be abundant or very abundant in the county where they vacation p39

SAFETY

Personal safety

44% of respondents in wolf range were worried for their personal safety in areas where wolves live. P55

51% of respondents who live in rural areas within wolf range are worried for their personal safety p55

40% of respondents who live in urban areas within wolf range are worried for their personal safety p55

54% of deer hunters in wolf range agreed they would worry for their personal safety while outdoors in areas where wolves live p55

41% of non-hunters in wolf range worried about their personal safety in areas where wolves live p55

Children's safety

64% of respondents in wolf range would worry about the safety of children who are outdoors in areas where wolves live p57

63% of respondents outside of wolf range would worry about the safety of children who are outdoors in areas where wolves live p57

76% of deer hunters both inside and outside of wolf range would worry about the safety of children who are outdoors in areas where wolves live p57

75% of hikers in wolf range would worry about the safety of children who are outdoors in areas where wolves live p57

60% of hikers in non-wolf range would worry about the safety of children who are outdoors in areas where wolves live p57

66% of non-hikers in wolf range would worry about the safety of children who are outdoors in areas where wolves live p57

74% of non-hikers in non-wolf range would worry about the safety of children who are outdoors in areas where wolves live p57

Pet safety

72% of urban respondents in wolf range would worry about the safety of their pets while outdoors in areas where wolves live p58

80% of rural respondents in wolf range would worry about the safety of their pets while outdoors in areas where wolves live p58

82% of deer hunter respondents in wolf range would worry about the safety of their pets while outdoors in areas where wolves live p58

71% of non-hunter respondents in wolf range would worry about the safety of their pets while outdoors in areas where wolves live p58

70% of urban respondents in non-wolf range would worry about the safety of their pets while outdoors in areas where wolves live p58

79% of rural respondents in non-wolf range would worry about the safety of their pets while outdoors in areas where wolves live p58

80% of deer hunter respondents in non-wolf range would worry about the safety of their pets while outdoors in areas where wolves live p58

68% of non-hunter respondents in non-wolf range would worry about the safety of their pets while outdoors in areas where wolves live p58

The less abundant all respondents felt the wolves were, the less concern they have for personal safety, the safety of children and the safety of pets p60

The more wolves people in wolf range see, the more they are worried about their personal safety p62

"About 6% of wolf range residents reported having an animal attacked by a wolf p36

"A majority of hunters in wolf range agreed (54%) that they worry for their safety around wolves, but when it comes to bears, only 37% of hunters worried" p64

EVEN IF THESE WEREN'T THE MAJORITY OPINION (ALMOST ALL OF THEM ARE) ARE WE OK WITH SUBJECTING OUR RESIDENTS TO THIS MUCH PERCEIVED RISK???

And for those that say these people are just uninformed, and once they start living with wolves their tolerance will increase and their perception of risk will decrease:

This survey shows very dramatically that just the opposite is true: the rural residents in wolf range, who have had to live with them, have the lowest tolerance and highest perception of risk.

"As people start to report seeing wolves more often, their willingness to live near them declines" p41

SURVEY SUMMARY STATEMENTS

P 148 "Several notes of caution should be taken when interpreting past, positive survey results:"

#1 "Much of the apparent support for wolves is not rooted in direct experience with wolves and is therefore superficial"

#2 "Those most supportive of wolves are often the least impacted by the risks and effects of living among wolves"

#3 "Many of these (past) studies took place when wolf populations in representative sample areas were recovering, and therefore may not reflect how people evaluate recovered wolf populations"

#4 "The positive relationship between education level and support for wolves may suggest a false promise that we can 'educate' our way out of wolf conflict"

P 149 "Social conflict over basic value systems occurs when rural people see urbanites trying to force values on their livelihoods and cultural norms."

P 149 "Residents within wolf range are more negative towards wolves, regardless of direct contact or experience with wolves."

P 46 "we found much higher rates of people raised in urban areas and in towns moving out into rural areas than we did rural people moving to more metropolitan areas" "often bringing their cultural values with them"

P 150 "Hunter attitudes towards wolves appear to be becoming more negative" (Perhaps because we were lied to when we supported a sustainable population??)

P 150 "Wolf Social Carrying Capacity is a risk-benefit analysis" I agree, so what are the important benefits that offset all the risks confirmed in this survey?

The two cited as significant were:

"Because they have a right to exist" - Where? Downtown Madison or Milwaukee? Wolves exist in great abundance in Canada, Alaska & northern Asia - always have

"Because they are important members of the ecological community" - Again where? Which ecological communities? What isn't an important member of the 'ecological community'?

At this point the DNR says their survey shows opinions are balanced, but who should they consider first?

Those in the south or urban areas where a large population of wolves has little to no impact on them...

OR

Rural residents in the wolf range and farmers, hunters and vacationers whose livelihood, activity and perceived safety are often negatively affected by proximity to wolves

