

Animal Tracker – Wave 4

An HRC-Managed Research Study, March 2011



Report in Brief

This report summarizes results from Wave 4 of the *Animal Tracker* annual survey of U.S. adults regarding their attitudes and behavior toward animals. The first survey (Wave 1, 2008) included sixteen questions; this most recent Wave 4 survey repeated five of the original questions to understand how public opinion and behavior are changing over time. In summary, the most recent survey continues to show strong support for humane education and many other advocacy tactics. However, support for all tactics is lower than it was in 2008 and there appear to be fewer people engaging in animal-friendly behaviors, perhaps in part due to the economic downturn.

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HRC Information

The Humane Research Council is a nonprofit organization dedicated to maximizing the effectiveness of animal advocates by applying professional, cost-efficient, and informative consumer and market research methods.

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Overview and Discussion

WAVE 4 RESULTS IN BRIEF

- ❖ Of the listed activities, U.S. adults were most likely to have watched wildlife or consumed a meat/dairy substitute during the past year. The least common activities during the past year were volunteering for animal organizations and going to circuses.
- ❖ Regarding actions that they have ever taken out of concern for animals, U.S. adults are most likely to report spaying and neutering their companion animals (about half of respondents have done so). A fourth also report adopting animals, while one fifth of U.S. adults voted for an animal-friendly law and one fifth have signed petitions for animals.
- ❖ Nearly three quarters of U.S. adults believe that humane education for K-12 and college levels is “very” or “somewhat” important.
- ❖ A strong plurality of U.S. adults supports each of the advocacy tactics described in the survey, with most support for anti-cruelty investigations and using the media for outreach. There was least support for demonstrations/protests, boycotts, and state ballot initiatives.

SUMMARY RESULTS BY TOPIC (WAVE 4 ONLY)

- ❖ **Personal Behavior (yes/no) [Q3]** – Respondents were asked which of a list of nine animal-related activities they have done in the past year, if any. A majority of respondents have watched wildlife (54%) and nearly half have consumed a meat/dairy substitute (47%), representing the most frequent behaviors. These were followed at some distance by visiting a zoo/aquarium (31%). The lowest-incidence behaviors were volunteering for an animal group (5% did so within the past year) and “going to a circus with animals” (6%). Slightly more people adopted (11%) than purchased (9%) a companion animal in the past year.
- ❖ **Personal Behavior (frequency) [Q4]** – As a follow-up to question 3, respondents were asked the frequency for each activity they had engaged in (resulting in sub-samples). Given the diverse nature of the activities described, they should not be compared, but they do provide interesting benchmarks for each behavior. In summary, very large majorities of respondents who have done so at least once in the past year say they often/sometimes consume meat or dairy substitutes (84%) and watch wildlife (82%). Small minorities of people who have done so at least once in the past year say they often/sometimes go to circuses (4%), adopt an animal (2%), or purchase an animal (10%). The other activities fall in between these extremes.
- ❖ **Actions Taken for Animals [Q6]** – When asked if their concern for animals had specifically prompted certain actions, “spay or neuter your pet” received the largest “yes” response (48%). The least commonly noted behavior was “boycott a store or a product” (10%), followed closely by voting for an animal-friendly candidate (12%) and buying meat/dairy products labeled “humane” (13%). Other noteworthy behaviors included “adopt an animal from a shelter” (25%), sign a petition for animals (21%), and vote for an animal-friendly law (22%). Note that this question also yielded fairly large “do not know” responses (3-19% depending on the specific behavior).

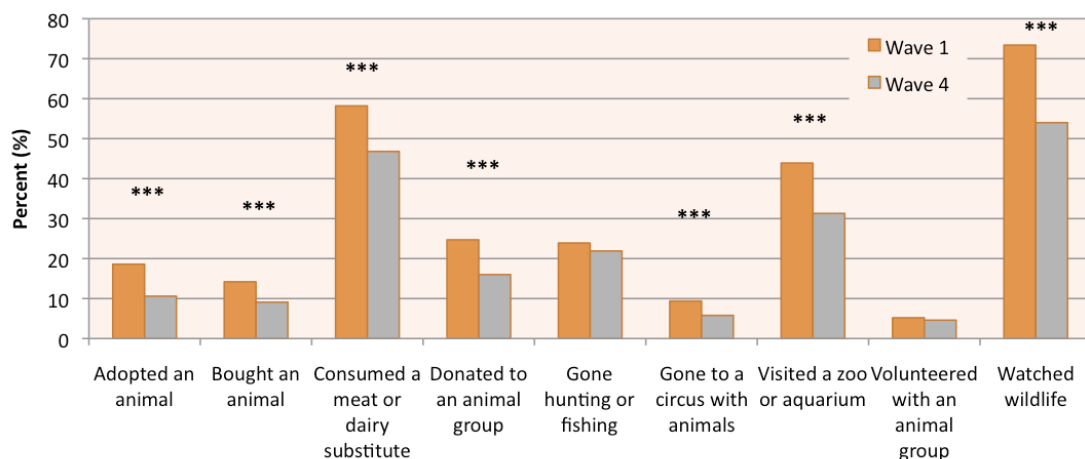
- ❖ **Humane Education [Q10]** – Regarding humane education, respondents are very supportive of incorporating animal topics into educational curricula at Kindergarten-12 and college levels. Overall, nearly three in four respondents say doing so is important, including 31% of adults who say “very” important and another 41% who say “somewhat” important. About one in six respondents (18%) say that incorporating humane education is “not very important,” while 6% say it is “not at all important” and 4% say they do not know.
- ❖ **Advocacy Tactics [Q11]** – Majorities or strong pluralities of U.S. adults either strongly or somewhat support all of the tactics listed in the survey. Among the most supported tactics, 73% support anti-cruelty investigations, 71% support using the media, and 60% support speaking in schools. However, only 42% support demonstrating and protesting (30% *oppose* it), only 43% support product boycotts (25% *oppose* them), and only 43% support lobbying government officials (26% *oppose* it). This question had “do not know” and “no opinion” rates of 19-33%.

CHANGES FROM WAVE 1 TO WAVE 4

The overall perspective provided by the Wave 4 results is generally consistent with the findings from the Wave 1 baseline survey. However, there are also substantial – and potentially worrying – trends that are reflected in the Wave 4 findings. These are outlined below by subject area. Note that the asterisks refer to significant differences between Wave 1 and Wave 4; one asterisk (*) indicates $p \leq .05$, two asterisks (**) indicate $p \leq .01$, and three asterisks (***) indicate $p \leq .001$.

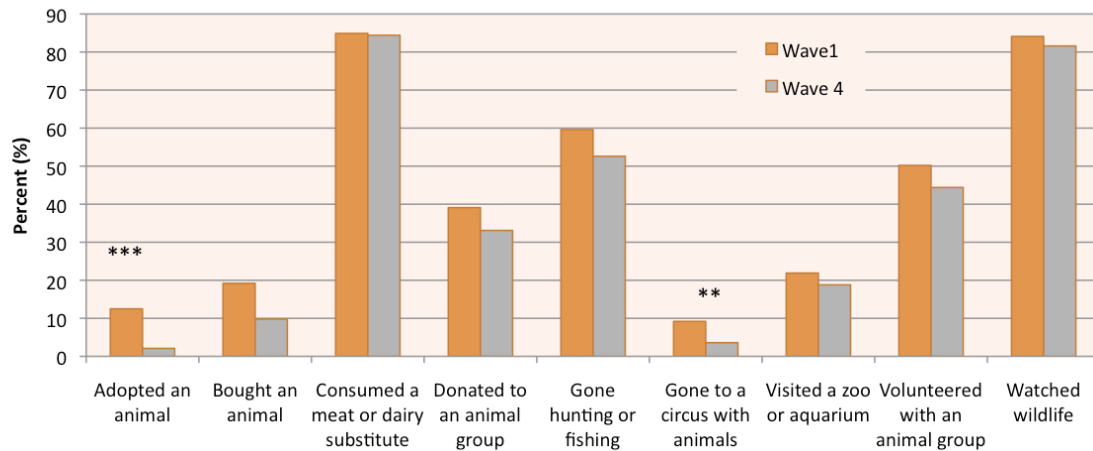
- ❖ **Personal Behavior (yes/no) [Q3]** – Compared with 2008, respondents to the 2011 survey are significantly less likely to engage in all but two of the animal-related activities addressed in the survey. This includes both pro- and anti-animal activities and may possibly reflect less participation given the economic downturn in the U.S. There were significantly fewer people who visited a zoo (down 13% from 2008), bought an animal (down 5% from 2008), or went to a circus (down 4%). However, in 2011 significantly fewer people also report watching wildlife (down 19% compared with 2008), consuming a meat/dairy substitute (down 11%), donating to an animal group (down 9%), or adopting an animal (down 8%).

In the past year, have you personally done any of the following? (% saying “yes”)



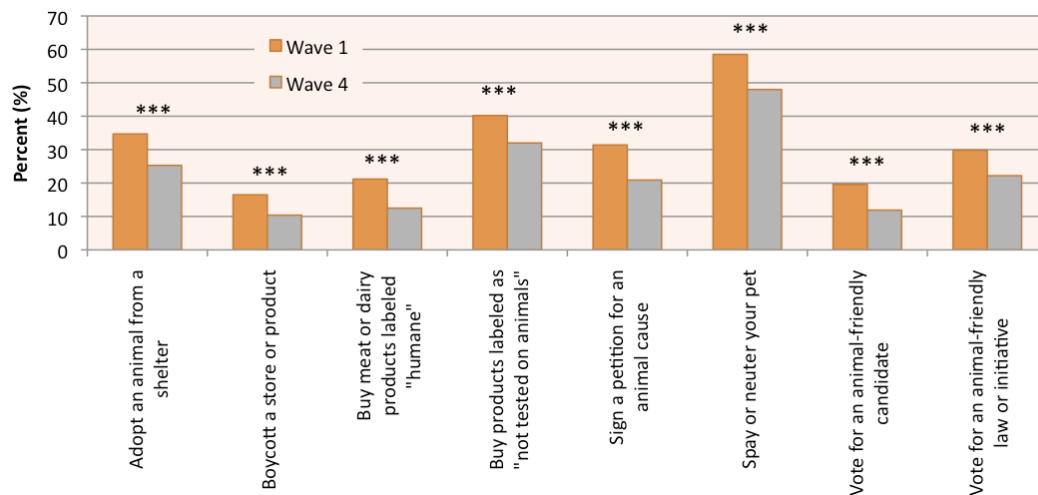
- ❖ **Personal Behavior (frequency) [Q4]** – While respondents also engaged less *frequently* in the activities described in question 3, the only significant differences pertain to animal adoptions and going to circuses with animals. Specifically, in 2008 about 13% of respondents said they “often” or “sometimes” adopted an animal over the past year. In 2011 this number declined to only 2% of U.S. adults. In 2011 frequent and occasional attendance at circuses with animals declined as well (by 6%).

In the past year, roughly how often have you personally done each of the following?
(% saying frequently/occasionally)



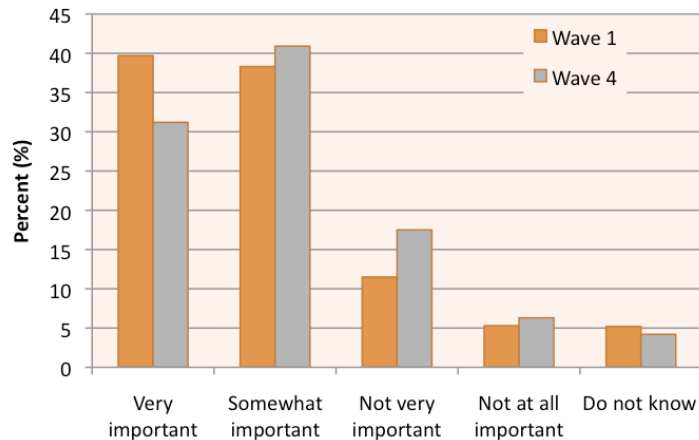
- ❖ **Actions Taken for Animals [Q6]** – When asked if their concern for animals had “ever” caused specific behavior, there were also significant declines in Wave 4. In fact, the drop was significant for all of the actions listed in the survey. Among the most substantial changes: Fewer people spayed/neutered their pet (down 11%), signed petitions (down 10%), or adopted an animal from a shelter (down 9%). Buying meat or dairy products labeled “humane” was down 9%, buying products labeled as “not tested on animals” was down 8%, and voting for animal-friendly candidates and laws were each down 8%. Boycotting a store or product was down 6%.

Has your concern for animals caused you to do any of the following? (% saying “yes”)



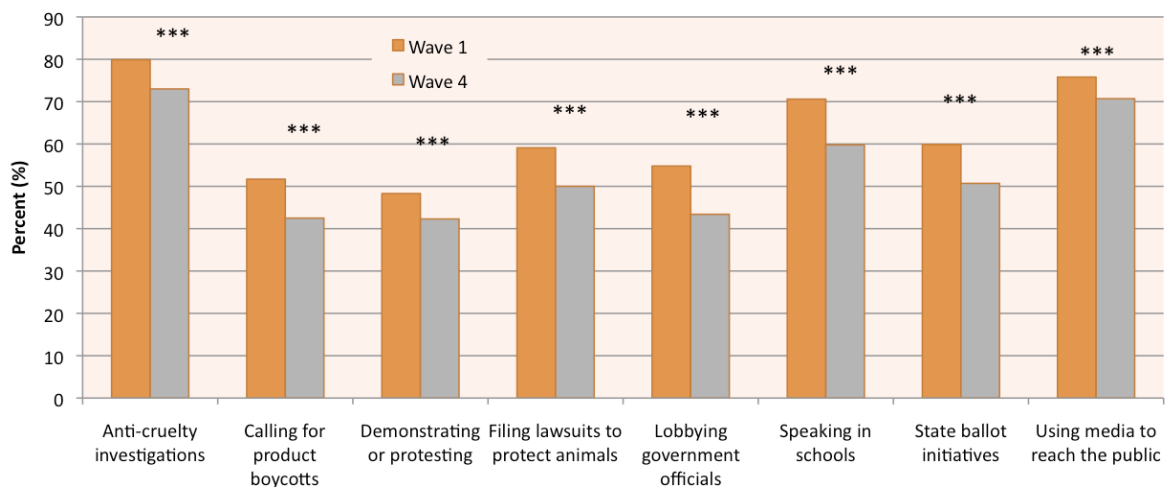
- ❖ **Humane Education [Q10]** – Changes between 2008 and 2011 regarding humane education were significant, but the overall picture remains the same -- most respondents clearly believe that humane education is important. There was some erosion among the strongest supporters who believe humane education is “very important” (down 9%) and an increase in those saying “not very important” (up 6%). However, there was also a slight increase in those saying “somewhat important” (up 3%).

How important is it that schools and teachers (K-12 and college level) incorporate humane education, including animal welfare topics, into their lessons?



- ❖ **Advocacy Tactics [Q11]** – Compared with 2008, respondents to the 2011 survey are significantly less supportive of all of the advocacy-related tactics listed in the survey. The differences are greatest when it comes to support for lobbying government officials (down 11%), speaking in schools (down 11%), state ballot initiatives (down 9%), calling for product boycotts (down 9%), filing lawsuits (down 9%), and conducting anti-cruelty investigations (down 7%).

How much do you support the following tactics? (% supporting strongly/somewhat)



Key Implications for Animal Advocates

The *Animal Tracker* is designed to be a longitudinal study and the results will be most meaningful after we have collected multiple waves of survey data. Once we have collected at least three or four data points for each survey question, we will be able to make long-term comparisons and understand how public opinion is changing over time. The implications from Waves 1-4 are therefore somewhat limited because we do not yet have sufficient data for each question. Please refer to the Wave 1 report for general implications; the following are focused on changes from Wave 1 to Wave 4.

1) Pro-Animal Behavior Was Less Common in 2011 than 2008

As indicated, all animal-related behaviors (or activities) covered in the Animal Tracker survey were less common in 2011 than in 2008, including anti-animal behaviors. The fact that fewer people are engaging in pro-animal activities is a concern, however, and warrants further discussion. HRC believes the most likely reason for the apparently decreasing frequency of pro-animal behavior is the downturn in the U.S. economy. This has likely led to restricted spending including fewer animal adoptions, fewer outings to watch wildlife, fewer donations, etc. It is worth noting that having fewer people engage in these behaviors does not necessarily indicate any erosion of general support for animal protection.

2) Some Behaviors Are Still Surprisingly Common

Despite the significantly fewer people engaging in pro-animal behavior from 2008 to 2011, some specific behaviors are quite common when asked in the context of one's concern for animals. For instance:

- 48% have spayed or neutered their animals
- 32% have purchased products labeled “not tested on animals”
- 25% have adopted an animal from a shelter
- 22% have voted for an animal friendly law or initiative
- 21% have signed a petition for an animal cause

3) Some Support for Tactics Has Shifted to Ambivalence

Regarding advocacy tactics, the apparent erosion of support for all tactics does not indicate a substantial increase in *opposition* to these tactics. Rather, it reflects more people having “no opinion.” In 2008, the average “no opinion” response for all eight tactics was 12%, while in 2011 it was 21%. Taken at face value, this suggests that people are becoming increasingly ambivalent about these tactics. In addition to ambivalence, “no opinion” can represent simply not caring about the issue, or not being sufficiently engaged in it to answer the question.

Background and Methodology

STUDY BACKGROUND

The *Animal Tracker* is a collaborative research project that provides animal advocates with an accurate and consistent understanding of the opinions and behavior of U.S. adults over time. The initial *Animal Tracker* survey (“Wave 1”) was completed in June 2008 and included a large sample size (N=1,500) for baseline analysis; Wave 2 was completed in March 2009 with a sample size of 1,000; and Wave 3 was completed in March 2010 with a sample size of 1,020. All waves of the survey were fielded using the Knowledge Networks panel, which combines offline random digit dialing techniques with online panel research capabilities. This results in a true probability sample and survey data that are more accurate than most other online surveys.

The Wave 4 sample size is 1,252 respondents, although this number is slightly lower for most questions due to refusals, which were 2.2% or less for all survey questions. This sample size yields a maximum margin of error of +/- 2.8% for the entire sample at a 95% confidence level; the error margin is larger for subgroups. Note that the possible answers were randomized for all survey questions except number 10. Additionally, the results have been weighted 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 United States.

WAVE 4 VITAL SIGNS

- ❖ Field period: 3/17/2011-3/24/2011
- ❖ Total number of surveys fielded: 1,992
- ❖ Total number of surveys completed: 1,252
- ❖ Survey response rate: 62.9%
- ❖ Median completion time: 3.7 minutes
- ❖ 5 questions (#s 3, 4, 6, 10, and 11 from the Wave 1 survey)

SURVEY LIMITATIONS

It should be noted that the use of online research methods could be subject to limitations given that some groups are not fully represented online; this typically results in under-representation of non-white, lower-income, and elderly individuals. Weighting the survey results reduces this bias considerably, but does not eliminate it entirely. Another caveat to these results is the reliance on self-reported data. Respondents’ answers may differ from their actual opinions or behavior for a variety of reasons, particularly for questions involving predictions of the respondents’ changes in the future.

Sponsorship Information

The *Animal Tracker* (Wave 4) was generously sponsored by a consortium of animal advocacy organizations including Alley Cat Allies, American Humane Association, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Animal Legal Defense Fund, Animal Welfare Trust, Born Free USA, Farm Sanctuary, the Humane Society of the United States, and World Society for the Protection of Animals (USA). The Humane Research Council initiated the collaborative study and provided consulting services related to project planning, survey design, research, and analysis.

Wave 5 of the *Animal Tracker* will be fielded in the first quarter of 2012 and will repeat the questions asked in 2009. The next wave will cover overall opinions and credibility of animal advocates, amount of discussion of animal protection topics, the perceived importance of protecting animals in specific situations, and the perceived adequacy of laws protecting different animals.

The cost of sponsorship for Wave 5 is expected to be in the range of \$500 to \$1,000 per sponsor. The benefits of sponsorship are significant, including access to more detailed survey results (including “cross-tab” data for all key demographic segments) and permission to use the results publicly with the media, in reports, etc. New sponsors for Wave 5 will be considered through January 15, 2012.

Please contact the Humane Research Council at (206) 905-9887 or info@humaneresearch.org if you and/or your organization are interested in learning more about the recently completed Wave 4 or sponsoring the upcoming Wave 5 of the *Animal Tracker*.

Wave 4 Data – Topline Percentage Responses

NOTES ABOUT THE WAVE 1 AND WAVE 4 SURVEYS

- The question numbers below correspond to the numbering used during Wave 1 (to make tracking easier between survey waves). For the complete Wave 1 results and to see all 16 original questions, please visit <http://www.humanespot.org/node/2901>.
- The numbers in parentheses show the change from the previous wave, if the difference is significant.
- Missing data (blanks/refusals) have been omitted from the analysis; however, these represent at most 2.2% of the response for any individual question or element.

[Q3] In the past year, have you personally done any of the following? Please provide an answer for each item.

	Yes	No
Adopted an animal	11% (-8)	89% (+8)
Bought an animal	9 (-5)	91 (+5)
Consumed a meat or dairy substitute	47 (-11)	53 (+11)
Donated to an animal group	16 (-9)	84 (+9)
Gone hunting or fishing	22	78
Gone to a circus with animals	6 (-4)	94 (+4)
Visited a zoo or aquarium	31 (-13)	69 (+13)
Volunteered with an animal group	5	95
Watched wildlife	54 (-19)	46 (+19)

[Q4] In the past year, roughly how often have you personally done any of the following?

Note that this question is asked only of those who say “yes” in Q3, resulting in sub-samples.

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Do not know
Adopted an animal (N=131)	1% (-4)	1% (-7)	85% (+6)	4% (-2)	9% (+6)
Bought an animal (N=112)	1	9	81	4	6
Consumed a meat or dairy substitute (N=574)	62	23	12	2	2
Donated to an animal group (N=196)	5	28	65	1	2
Gone hunting or fishing (N=269)	11	41	44	2	1
Gone to a circus with animals (N=68)	1 (-4)	2 (-1)	84 (+4)	4 (-7)	8 (+8)
Visited a zoo or aquarium (N=384)	1	18	80	1	0
Volunteered with an animal group (N=57)	20	25	40	9	7
Watched wildlife (N=657)	42	40	17	0	1

[Q6] Has your concern for animals ever caused you to do any of the following? Please mark “yes” only if your motive was animal welfare or protection.

	Yes	No	Do not know
Adopted an animal from a shelter	25% (-9)	72% (+13)	3% (-3)
Boycott a store or a product	10 (-6)	84 (+9)	6 (-3)
Buy meat or dairy products labeled “humane”	12 (-9)	68 (+10)	19 (-1)
Buy products labeled as “not tested on animals”	32 (-8)	56 (+9)	12 (-1)
Sign a petition for an animal cause	21 (-10)	73 (+13)	6 (-3)
Spay or neuter your pet	48 (-11)	49 (+14)	3 (-4)
Vote for an animal-friendly candidate	12 (-8)	70 (+8)	18
Vote for an animal-friendly law or initiative	22 (-8)	66 (+11)	11 (-3)

[Q10] How important is it that schools and teachers (K-12 and college level) incorporate humane education, including animal welfare topics, into their lessons?

Very important	31% (-9)
Somewhat important	41 (+3)
Not very important	17 (+6)
Not at all important	6 (+1)
Do not know	4 (-1)

[Q11] Social and political movements use a variety of tactics to create change for their issues. In general, how much do you support or oppose each of the following tactics?

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	No opinion	Do not know
Anti-cruelty investigation	35% (-13)	38% (+6)	6% (+2)	3% (+1)	15% (+7)	7% (-3)
Calling for product boycotts	12 (-6)	30 (-3)	18 (-1)	7	28 (+13)	5 (-3)
Demonstrating or protesting	11 (-3)	32 (-3)	19	11 (+1)	22 (+7)	5 (-2)
Filing lawsuits to protect animals	17 (-7)	33 (-2)	15 (+1)	9	21 (+9)	5 (-2)
Lobbying government officials	15 (-4)	29 (-7)	14 (+1)	11 (+2)	25 (+12)	6 (-4)
Speaking in schools	19 (-14)	41 (+3)	10 (+2)	7 (+3)	18 (+8)	4 (-2)
State ballot initiatives	13 (-8)	38 (-1)	11	6 (+1)	25 (+11)	8 (-3)
Using media to reach the public	28 (-8)	42 (+3)	6 (-1)	3	17 (+8)	3 (-2)