

Spring Turkey Harvest Report -2024

Performance Report
A Contribution in Part of Pittman-Robertson
Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration
Grant W-39-R-30

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE and PARKS

Chris Kennedy
Secretary

Stuart Schrag
Assistant Secretary Wildlife, Fisheries, and Boating

Jake George
Wildlife Division Director

Prepared by:

Jeff Prendergast
Upland Gamebird Program Coordinator

November 2024



PERMISSION TO QUOTE

Persons wishing to quote from this report, for reproduction or reference, should first obtain permission from the Chief of the Wildlife Section, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Avenue, Pratt, KS 67124.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, or if you desire further information, please write to:

**The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Diversity and Civil Rights Programs- External Programs
4040 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 130
Arlington, VA 22203**

INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

Kansas turkey harvest is managed utilizing 6 management units (Figure 1) and an adaptive harvest strategy to guide permit allocations on a per unit basis. In 2024 residents could purchase a permit over the county that was valid in Units 1,2,3,4,& 6. Non-residents permits were available via unit specific quotas through a draw for units 1,2,3,5,& 6 (Table 1). The Unit 4 quota was set at 375 permits. These permits were available only to residents through a limited draw (Table 1). Resident youth permits are available over the counter and valid statewide including unit 4. No additional game tags were available this year for any hunters. The spring 2024 season ran 61 days (Figure 2) and the total number of permits issued was 24,834 (Table 2).

The spring wild turkey harvest survey has been conducted annually by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism (KDWPT) since the first regulated season was established in 1974. However, the survey methodology has changed over the years to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and improve accuracy of estimates. The survey is currently conducted by selecting a random sample of hunters from all the people who provided e-mail addresses when they purchased their permit. The number of individuals that was drawn was equal to 10% of the total number of people who purchased a permit for the spring season ($n = 2,793$). An e-mail was sent to those individuals shortly after the close of the season asking them to complete an online questionnaire about their hunting activity and harvest during this hunting season. Non-respondents were sent up to two subsequent follow-up e-mails on 7 and 21 days after initial request respectively.

Results from the harvest survey were used to develop statewide estimates of the number of hunters participating in each season, harvest (by weapon and property ownership), perceived hunting pressure on publicly owned land and walk-in-hunting area (WIHA) tracts, hunter effort, harvest distribution, hunter success, and hunter satisfaction with Kansas turkey hunting and management. Many of these parameters were also calculated for each of the 6 turkey management units (Figure 1).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the selected sample, a total of 2,743 e-mails were deliverable and 1,308 usable responses were provided, resulting in an adjusted response rate of 47.7%. An estimated 87.5% of the 24,834 permit buyers hunted turkeys during the spring season resulting in 21,737 active hunters (13,303 residents and 8,551 non-residents; Figure 2). Those hunters spent an average of 3.9 days (95% CI = 3.6 – 4.1) in the field. The estimated numbers of people participating in the early season as archers, youth, and disabled hunters were 3,363 (95% CI = 2929 – 3850), 912 (95% CI = (691 – 1,201)), and 209 (95% CI = 117 – 373), respectively. The estimated number of people to hunt with a crossbow during the regular turkey season was 918 (95% CI = 707 – 1222).

Total harvest during the spring 2024 season was 11,134 turkeys (Figure 3 & 4). The age and sex structure of the 2024 harvest was 87.2% adult gobblers, 12.5% jakes, and <0.01% bearded hens. The percentage of turkey hunters filling their permit was 51% during the 2024 season which is the highest success rate since 2015. Prior to 2015 hunter success was routinely >60%. This season, 5.3% of the total harvest was taken on opening day of the regular season (Figure 5). Prior to the creation of the archery-only season in 2007 the percentage of total harvest taken on opening day was typically >10%. The special early seasons not only provides a unique opportunity, but also spreads out the harvest and helps to reduce hunter crowding during the regular season. By the end of the first week of the regular season an estimated 52.6% of the total 2024 harvest had already occurred and by the end of April that percentage was estimated to be 77.8% (Figure 5).

The greatest number of hunters and harvest occurred in the northeast management region where >7,000 hunters harvested nearly 3,500 birds during the spring 2024 season (Figure 6). The number of hunters and harvest have generally been decreasing since its peak in 2015. Hunter success was greatest in Unit 2 where an estimated 60% of all active hunters harvested their bird (Figure 7). Hunt success was lowest in

the Unit 3 this spring where an estimated 47% of active hunter harvested their bird. Hunt success was generally improved across most units which may be in part do to the reduction in Non-resident hunters through the quota. However, resident success has still not reached levels outlined in the turkey harvest strategy to stabilize harvest regulations in any unit and resident participation continues to decline (Figure 2). With improved production the last 2 years we anticipate that success rates will increase again this coming spring.

Public hunting access is limited in Kansas with over 97% land being privately owned. Public land is supplemented with a Walk in access program (WIHA) that provides some additional public access to private lands. Despite the limited amount of public access this land is relied upon disproportionately for turkey hunters with over 30% of hunters using either WIHA or Public Land. Hunters in the Unit 1 had the greatest reliance on public access with only 55 % of hunters utilizing Private land, while Unit 5 had the least reliance on Public access with 81% of hunters utilizing private lands. While over 30% of the hunting pressure occurred on public access only 14% of the harvest reported occurred on public access.

Table 1. Draw statistics for 2024 spring turkey permit applications.

Unit	Resident			Non-Resident				
	Authorized Permits	Applications	Total Draw	Authorized Permits	1 st Choice Application	2nd choice Application	Total Draw	Leftover Permits
Unit 1		NA		700	740	427	700	0
Unit 2		NA		2,400	2,017	1,888	2,320	80
Unit 3		NA		2,800	4,627	1,174	2,801	0
Unit 4	375	542	375	Resident only				
Unit 5		NA		900	1,106	1,191	900	0
Unit 6		NA		2,900	3,348	1,741	2,900	0

Table 2 Total permits issued and estimated harvest.

Year	Spring			Fall				
	Permits & Game		Success	Permits & Game		Total	Hen Harvest	Success
	Tags	Total Harvest	(%)	Tags	Harvest	(%)	(%)	
2019	56,388	23,568	47	4,570	487	29	35	
2020	32,324	13,404	46	3,459	506	45	20	
2021	45,263	17,611	45	2,779	313	51	16	
2022	39,692	13,830	40	2,984	318	44	16	
2023	39,742	14,989	45	No Season				
2024	24,834	11,135	51	No Season				

Table 3. Unit specific resident harvest success rates since 2014.

Spring turkey season resident hunter success (%)

Year	Northwest (Unit 1)	Northcentral (Unit 2)	Northeast (Unit 3)	Southwest (Unit 4)	Southcentral (Unit 5)	Southeast (Unit 6)	Statewide
2014	48.2	55.1	50.5	54.5	52.4	42.7	49.3
2015	60.0	50.9	52.9	56.0	50.5	43.7	46.9
2016	34.5	54.1	48.7	40.7	44.6	41.2	43.0
2017	50.0	58.3	45.1	65.0	48.9	44.3	44.4
2018	37.8	41.8	37.3	37.5	44.3	35.5	36.9
2019	56.3	56.0	40.7	57.1	47.1	42.9	42.9
2020	61.1	58.2	45.7	69.6	44.8	37.7	45.6
2021	43.8	43.4	41.3	52.4	40.5	35.6	39.1
2022	25.0	39.2	39.9	50.0	39.1	34.2	35.9
2023	44.4	41.8	47.3	31.6	36.8	42.6	40.9
2024	45.4	47.6	39.8	50.0	49.3	40.5	42.7

Figure 1. The spring wild turkey hunting and management units in Kansas.

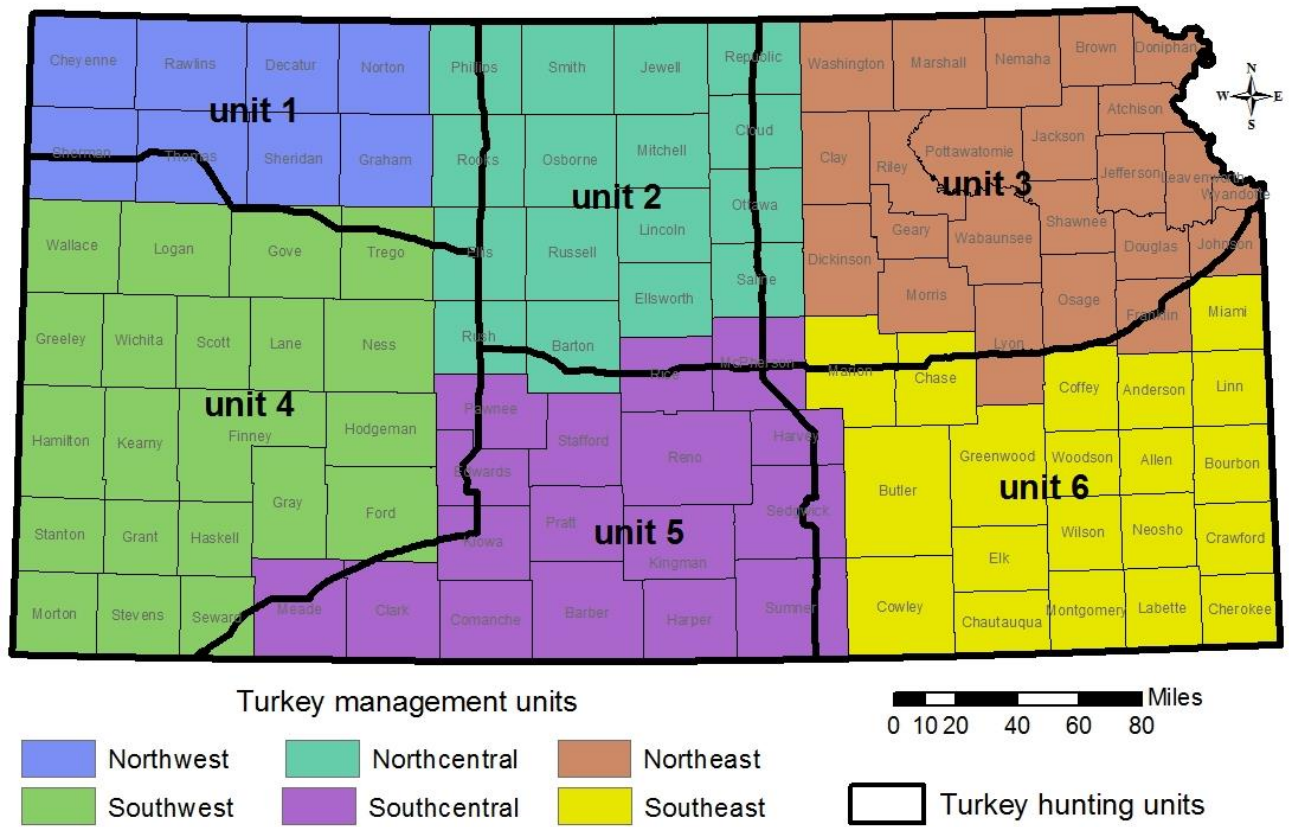


Figure 2. Total Kansas Spring Turkey permits issued by residency.

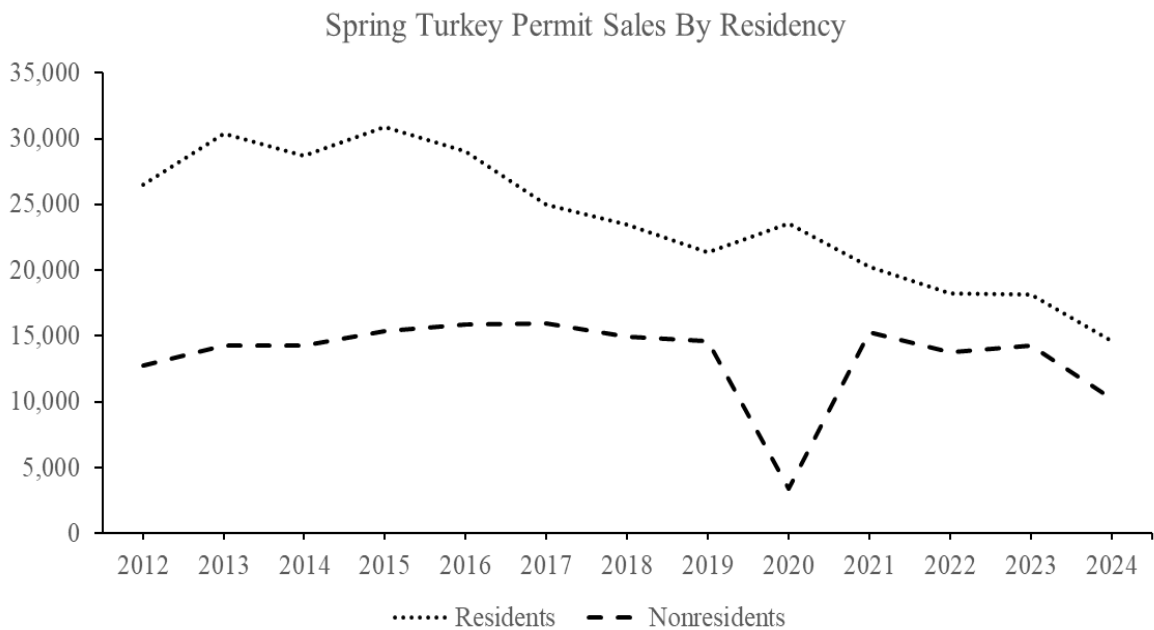


Figure 3. Total Kansas Spring Turkey harvest by residency.

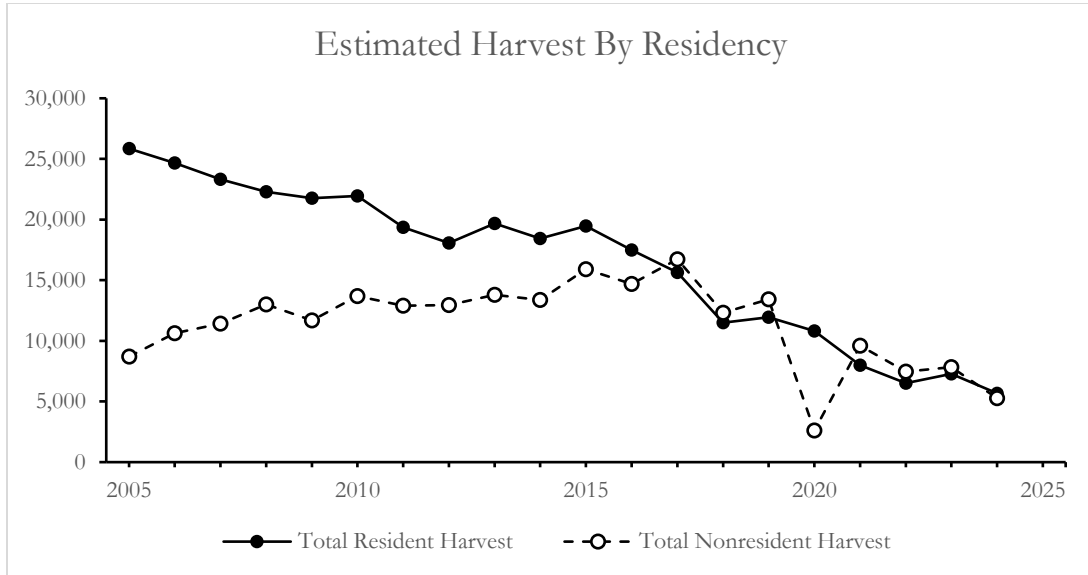


Figure 4. Total Kansas Spring Turkey harvest.

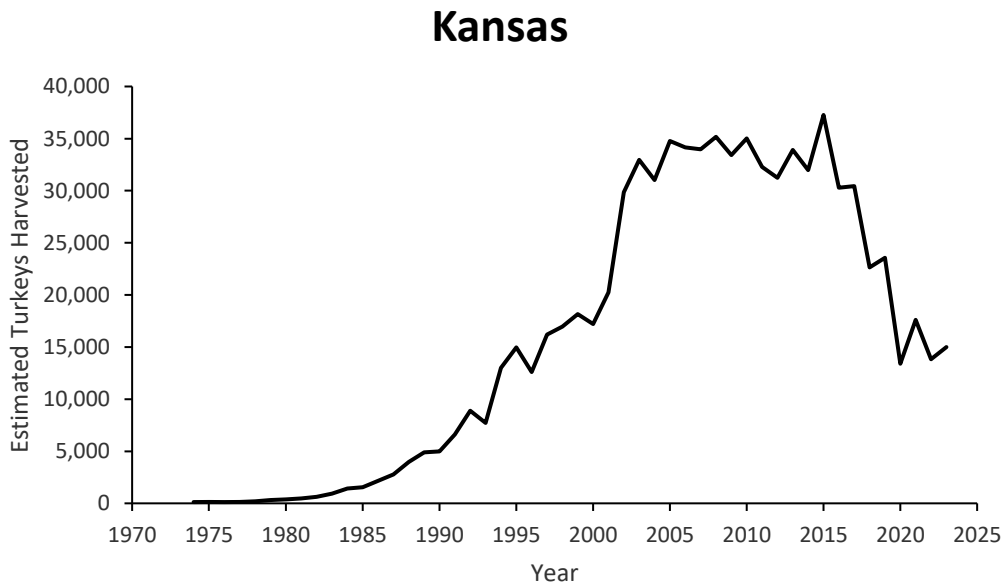


Figure 5. Daily and cumulative harvest distribution during the spring 2024 spring wild turkey seasons in Kansas.

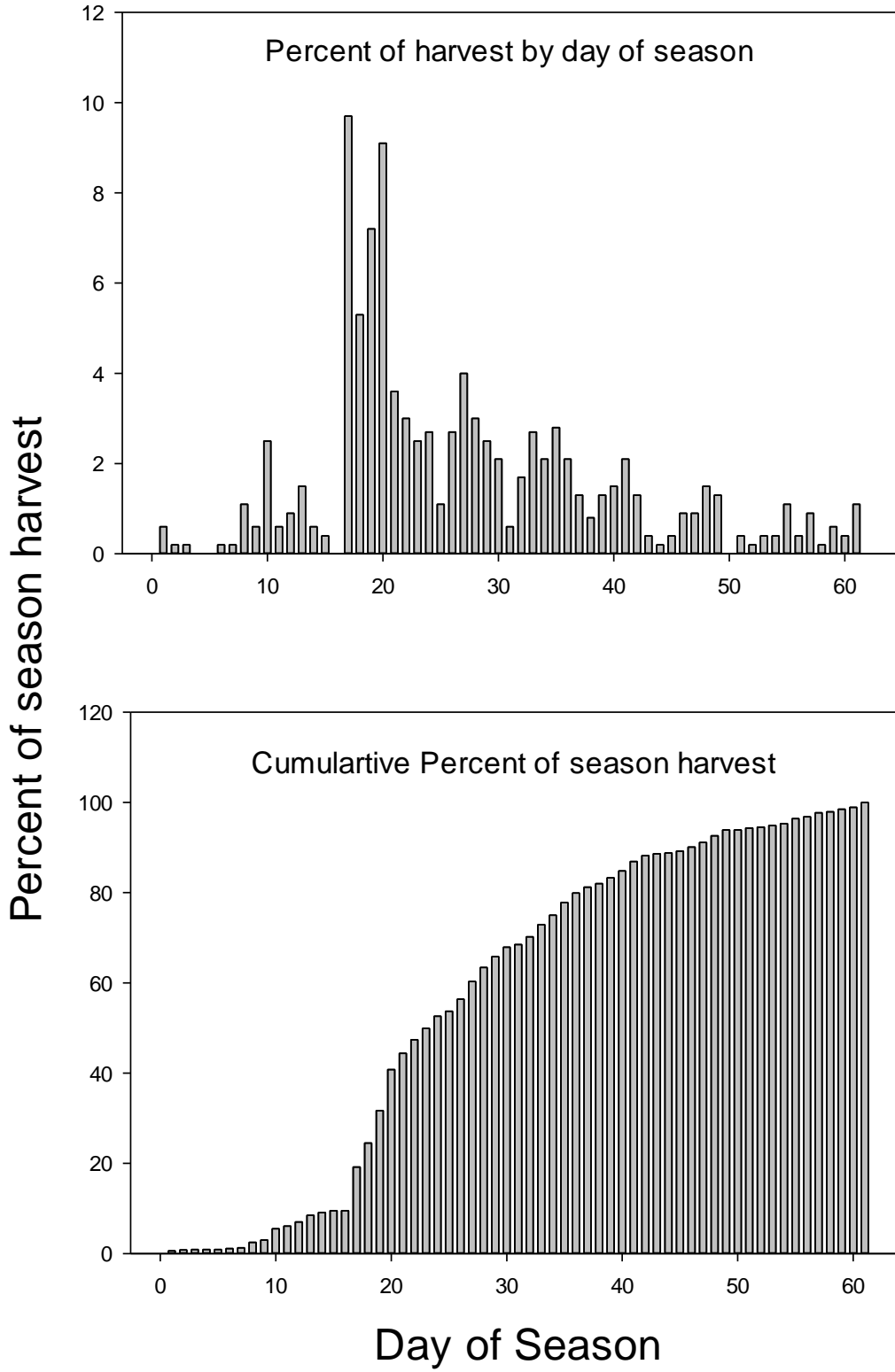


Figure 6. Estimated turkey hunters and harvest by unit for 2024 Kansas Spring Turkey season

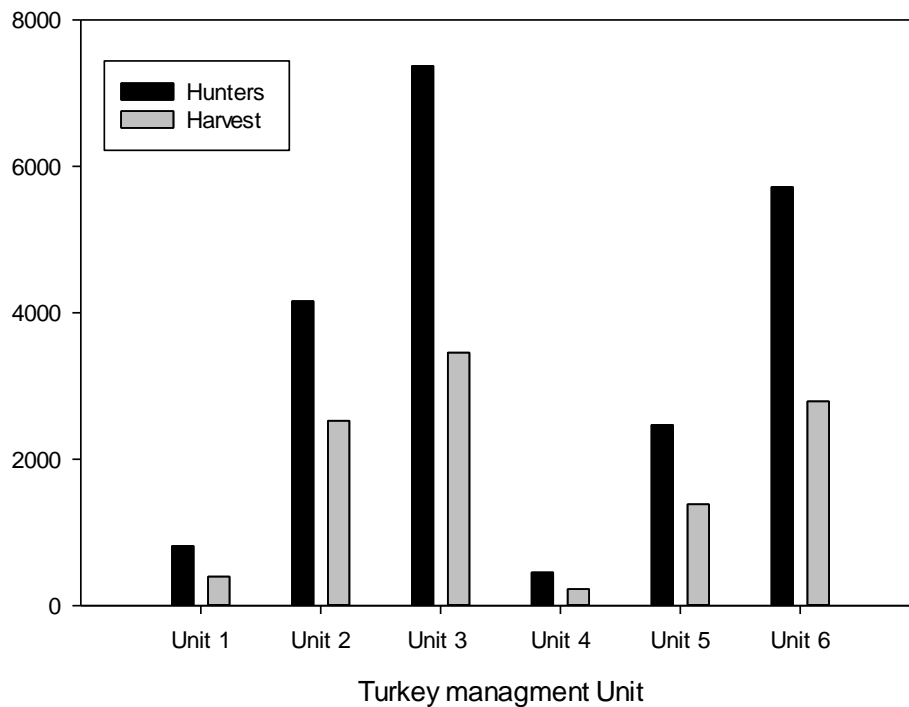


Figure 7. Estimated overall turkey hunter success rate by unit for 2024 Kansas Spring Turkey season

