

Sustainability Literacy Survey



The Sustainability Studies Program September 2013

Based on the "Assessment of Sustainability Knowledge"
survey instrument developed in July 2013 by
The Environmental & Social Sustainability Lab
The Ohio State University
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Introduction to the Survey

Thank for you taking a few minutes of your time to complete this sustainability literacy survey for the Sustainability Studies (SUST) Program at Roosevelt University. **Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.** The survey should take you approximately 15 minutes to complete.

This is not a graded test, but rather an educational tool designed to gauge the degree of environmental / sustainability literacy among college students. The survey was designed in 2013 by researchers at Ohio State University and subsequently adapted by the SUST Program for use here at Roosevelt. All data from this survey will remain anonymous, and will be used by the faculty of RU's Sustainability Studies Program to assess SUST course objectives and program-wide learning outcomes. Our goal is to improve and quality and rigor of our courses over time.

We appreciate your helping us in this important work! If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact Prof. Mike Bryson, Sustainability Studies Program Director, at mbryson@roosevelt.edu or 312-281-3148.

Sustainability Literacy Questions (circle the best answer)

1. What is the most common cause of pollution of streams and rivers?
 - a. Dumping of garbage by cities
 - b. Surface water running off yards, city streets, paved lots, and farm fields
 - c. Litter near streams and rivers
 - d. Waste dumped by factories
 - e. Don't know

2. Ozone forms a protective layer in the earth's upper atmosphere. What does ozone protect us from?
 - a. Acid rain
 - b. Climate change
 - c. Sudden changes in temperature
 - d. Harmful UV rays
 - e. Don't know

3. What is the name of the primary federal agency that oversees environmental regulation?
 - a. Environmental Protection Agency (the EPA)
 - b. Department of Health, Environment, and Safety (the DHES)
 - c. National Environmental Agency (the NEA)
 - d. Federal Pollution Control Agency (the FPCA)
 - e. Don't know

4. What is the primary benefit of wetlands?
 - a. Promote flooding
 - b. Clean the water before it enters lakes, streams, rivers, or oceans
 - c. Keep the number of undesirable plants and animals low
 - d. Provide good sites for landfills
 - e. Don't know

5. Which of the following is an example of sustainable forest management?
 - a. Setting aside forests to be off limits to the public
 - b. Never harvesting more than what the forest produces in new growth
 - c. Producing lumber for nearby communities to build affordable housing
 - d. Putting the local communities in charge of forest resources
 - e. Don't know

6. In the U.S., what do we currently do with the nuclear waste generated by nuclear power plants?
 - a. Use it as nuclear fuel
 - b. Sell it to other countries
 - c. Dump it in landfills
 - d. Store and monitor the waste
 - e. Don't know

7. Which of the following is the most commonly used definition of sustainable development?
 - a. Creating a government welfare system that ensures universal access to education, healthcare, and social services
 - b. Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
 - c. Setting aside resources for preservation, never to be used
 - d. Building a neighborhood that is both socio-demographically and economically diverse
 - e. Don't know

8. The wealthiest 20% of people in the U.S. own approximately what percent of the nation's privately held wealth?
 - a. 20%
 - b. 35%
 - c. 50%
 - d. 85%
 - e. Don't know

9. Over the past three decades, what has happened to the difference between the wealth of the richest and poorest Americans?
 - a. The difference has increased
 - b. The difference has stayed about the same
 - c. The difference has decreased
 - d. Don't know

10. Higher levels of education generally lead to...
 - a. Lower levels of voter turnout
 - b. Greater annual earnings
 - c. Larger family size
 - d. Higher self esteem
 - e. Don't know

11. Many economists argue that electricity prices in the U.S. are too low because...
 - a. They do not reflect the costs of pollution from generating the electricity
 - b. Too many suppliers go out of business
 - c. Electric companies have a monopoly in their service area
 - d. Consumers spend only a small part of their income on energy
 - e. Don't know

12. Which of the following countries has now passed the U.S. as the biggest emitter of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide?
- China
 - Sweden
 - Brazil
 - Japan
 - Don't know
13. Which of the following is a leading cause of the depletion of fish stocks in the Atlantic Ocean?
- Fishermen seeking to maximize their catch
 - Reduced fish fertility due to genetic hybridization
 - Ocean pollution
 - Global climate change
 - Don't know
14. Which of the following is the most commonly used definition of economic sustainability?
- Maximizing the share price of a company's stock
 - Long term profitability
 - When costs equal revenue
 - Continually expanding market share
 - Don't know
15. Which of the following is the primary reason that gasoline prices have risen over the last several decades in the U.S.?
- Growing percentage of gas stations owned by large corporations
 - Increasing oil discoveries overseas
 - Higher rates of state and federal gasoline tax
 - Increasing global demand for oil
 - Don't know
16. What are the potential effects of global climate change?
- Loss of habitats
 - Less severe weather
 - Loss of ozone layer
 - Decrease in sea level
 - Don't know
17. Living in the Great Lakes region, we are cognizant of various environmental pressures on the biodiversity and water quality of this remarkable fresh water resource (which represents 18% of the world's available surface fresh water). Which of the following is the greatest pressure leading to the degradation of the Great Lakes ecosystem? **(see next page for answers)**

- a. Dredging for sand
- b. Litter that flows from streams and rivers into the Lake
- c. Application of fertilizer on lawns and farms
- d. Gas-powered boats
- e. Don't know

18. Imagine you are one of the many fishermen who rely on the fish you catch from Lake Michigan as your main source of income. The Fisherman Council determined that each fisherman must limit his/her catch to 5 tons per year to maintain the fishery. You decide to catch 6 tons of fish this year.

What could be the results of your decision?

- A. You make more money this year than you would have if you caught 5 tons of fish
- B. You make less money this year than you would have if you caught 5 tons of fish
- C. The total number of fish that are available to catch each year could decrease
- D. Fishermen, including you, could go out of business

- a. B, C, and D, but not A
- b. B and C, but not A or D
- c. A and C, but not B or D
- d. A, C, and D, but not B
- e. Don't know

19. The most significant driver in the loss of species and ecosystems around the world is...

- a. Overhunting/overharvesting
- b. Conversion of natural spaces into human developments (farmland, cities, etc.)
- c. Acid rain
- d. Breeding of animals in zoos
- e. Don't know

20. Which of the following is the best example of environmental justice?

- a. Urban citizens win a bill to have toxic wastes taken to rural communities
- b. The government dams a river, flooding Native American tribal lands to create hydro-power for large cities
- c. All stakeholders from an indigenous community are involved in setting a quota for the amount of wood they can take from a protected forest next to their village
- d. Multi-national corporations build factories in developing countries where environmental laws are less strict.
- e. Don't know

21. Of the following, which would be considered living in the most environmentally sustainable way?
- Recycling all recyclable packaging
 - Reducing consumption of all products
 - Buying products labeled "eco" or "green"
 - Buying the newest products available
 - Don't know
22. What factors influence the human population's impact on Earth?
- Size of the population
 - Amount of materials used per person
 - Use of technology that lessens our impact
- A, B, and C
 - A and B, but not C
 - B and C, but not A
 - A, but not B or C
 - Don't know
23. Using resources, like fossil fuels, can create economic growth. However, future generations may be disadvantaged if the current generation overuses these resources. Which of the following principles can we follow if we do not want to disadvantage the next generation?
- Renewable resources such as fish, soil, and groundwater must be used no faster than the rate at which they regenerate.
 - Nonrenewable resources such as minerals and fossil fuels must be used up quickly to encourage the development of renewable substitutes.
 - Pollution must be emitted at current levels so that natural systems can maintain the ability to absorb them, recycle them, or render them harmless
 - None of the above are true
 - Don't know
24. The best way to support a local economy, such as the economy of Chicago, is to buy goods (groceries, clothing, toiletries, etc) ...
- At large chain stores that may employ workers from the local community
 - Online from discount retailers
 - From stores that sell locally-produced goods
 - From second-hand/thrift stores
 - Don't know

25. Which of the following statements about water is true?
- Globally, water for personal use such as washing dishes, doing laundry, and bathing is the major user of water resources.
 - Globally, underground freshwater reserves (aquifers) are used faster than they are replenished.
 - Floods and severe weather will increase the availability of clean drinking water.
 - Because water is a free and abundant resource, it is not a major concern for most countries.
 - Don't know
26. Imagine that we had to pay for all the costs associated with the goods we use every day. What would go into calculating the true costs of a product?
- The cost of raw materials to make the product
 - The cost of environmental damage caused by production
 - The cost of health care for employees who manufacture the product
 - All of the above
 - Don't know
27. Put the following list in order of the activities with the largest environmental impact to those with the smallest environmental impact:
- Keeping a cell phone charger plugged into an electrical outlet for 12 hours
 - Producing one McDonald's quarter-pound hamburger
 - Producing one McDonald's chicken sandwich
 - Flying in a commercial airplane from Washington D.C. to China
- A, C, B, D
 - D, A, B, C
 - D, C, B, A
 - D, B, C, A
 - Don't know
28. Workers around the world face a variety of social injustices, including low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of access to education. To help improve conditions for these workers you can:
- Support corporations that do not allow workers to join labor unions
 - Buy the newest products to keep factories around the world open
 - Purchase products from companies that conduct business in a socially responsible manner
 - Support large corporations because they generally have more money to pay their workers
 - Don't know

Demographic Questions

29. What is your current classification at Roosevelt?
 - a. Freshman / first year
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Unclassified

30. What is your sex?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female

31. Thinking about this current academic term, how would you characterize your enrollment?
 - a. Full-time
 - b. Less than full-time

32. Please indicated the group that contains your age:
 - a. 18-23
 - b. 24-39
 - c. 40-64
 - d. 65 or older

33. Are you a transfer student?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

34. If you are a transfer student, how many hours did you transfer in?
 - a. Less than 30 hours
 - b. 31-59 hours
 - c. Greater than 60 hours
 - d. Don't know

35. What is your **major**? Select the best fit from the list below.
 - a. Sustainability Studies
 - b. Undecided
 - c. Natural science (biology, chemistry, math, etc.)
 - d. Social science (psychology, sociology, political science, criminal justice, etc.)
 - e. Humanities (English, communications, journalism, foreign language, philosophy, history, etc.)
 - f. Business (finance, human resources, marketing, accounting, etc.)
 - g. Education (elementary ed, secondary ed, etc.)
 - h. Professional (hospitality management, organizational leadership, paralegal studies, etc.)

36. What is your **second major**? Select the best fit from the list below.
- None
 - Sustainability Studies
 - Undecided
 - Natural science (biology, chemistry, math, etc.)
 - Social science (psychology, sociology, political science, criminal justice, etc.)
 - Humanities (English, communications, journalism, foreign language, philosophy, history, etc.)
 - Business (finance, human resources, marketing, accounting, etc.)
 - Education (elementary ed, secondary ed, etc.)
 - Professional (hospitality management, organizational leadership, paralegal studies, etc.)
37. What is your **minor**? Select the best fit from the list below.
- None
 - Sustainability Studies
 - Undecided
 - Natural science (biology, chemistry, math, etc.)
 - Social science (psychology, sociology, political science, criminal justice, etc.)
 - Humanities (English, communications, journalism, foreign language, philosophy, history, etc.)
 - Business (finance, human resources, marketing, accounting, etc.)
 - Education (elementary ed, secondary ed, etc.)
 - Professional (hospitality management, organizational leadership, paralegal studies, etc.)
38. Indicate which SUST classes, if any, you are taking **this semester**. Please check all that apply.
- 210 The Sustainable Future
 - 220 Water
 - 230 Food
 - 240 Waste
 - 310 Energy & Climate Change
 - 320 Sprawl, Transportation & Planning
 - 330 Biodiversity
 - 340 Policy, Law & Ethics
 - 350 Service & Sustainability
 - 390 Special Topics in Sustainability
 - 395 Sustainability Studies Internship

39. Indicate which SUST classes, if any, you have taken **PRIOR to this semester**. Please check all that apply.

- 210 The Sustainable Future
- 220 Water
- 230 Food
- 240 Waste
- 310 Energy & Climate Change
- 320 Sprawl, Transportation & Planning
- 330 Biodiversity
- 340 Policy, Law & Ethics
- 350 Service & Sustainability
- 390 Special Topics in Sustainability
- 395 Sustainability Studies Internship

40. Have you taken in past semesters one or more non-SUST courses that focused on environmental science, policy, ethics, etc.? Please choose the best answer.

- a. None
- b. 1-2 courses
- c. 3 or more courses

Thank You!

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