U.S. and Kansas Winter Wheat Yield Outlook for 2026

Week 20 - (5/18/26) -

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May 20, 2026

0.1 This week's prediction

U.S. wheat estimate for week 20 (May 20, 2026)
Yield range from 44.8 to 50.1
Predicted yield of 47.5
Predicted acres of 22,015 (1,000 acres) This is the USDA estimate
Production range from 986 to 1,103 million bu
Predicted production of 1,045 million bu
Total U.S. is 25% below last year

0.2 Introduction

On Tuesday, May 12, at noon, the USDA released its May Crop Production Report. My yield prediction was within 0.1 bushels per acre of the USDA estimate, though my acreage projection proved somewhat optimistic. In this report, I rely on USDA acreage estimates rather than deriving acreage from crop condition data, as acreage estimates based on condition reports tend to be less reliable. As a result, harvested acreage ranges are not included in the tables.

While Kansas wheat yield estimates continue to decline, the overall U.S. estimate remains largely unchanged from the previous week, decreasing by only 0.07 bushels per acre.

The USDA collects weekly crop condition data throughout the growing season, rating crops on a scale from very poor to excellent. For winter wheat, these ratings are reported in late fall and resume again in the spring. In this publication, Ibendahl estimates U.S. winter wheat yields, harvested acreage, and total production using NASS crop condition data for week 20 (May 20, 2026). National estimates are based on data from the 18 leading winter wheat–producing states, with adjustments made to account for remaining states.

For a detailed explanation of the methodology and modeling approach, readers are encouraged to consult **Kansas Wheat Yield Outlook for 2026**. This publication outlines the procedures used to estimate both yields and acreage. While USDA crop condition reports provide useful signals, wheat yield models are generally less reliable than those for corn and soybeans. Wheat in poor visible condition can still produce strong yields, complicating forecasting.

0.3 Results

Figure 1 presents a Likert-style graph of U.S. crop conditions over the past 30 years. The chart is centered on the "fair" category to facilitate year-to-year comparisons. Values on the left side represent the combined "very poor" and "poor" categories, while values on the right represent the combined "good" and "excellent" categories.

Figure 2 provides a similar Likert-style visualization for the current year. It is important to note that not all states reported data for week #13, which may affect the reliability of the national estimate for that period.

Figure 3 shows estimated harvested acreage for the leading wheat-producing states, with the U.S. total adjusted to account for other states. Estimating harvested acreage remains challenging, as reflected in the relatively low R-squared values for many states. These estimates represent the proportion of planted acreage that is ultimately harvested, rather than total planted area. Beginning in week 20, USDA harvested acreage estimates replace the model-based estimates.

Figure 4 displays estimated yields for each of the leading wheat-producing states, and Figure 5 presents estimated total wheat production. Because state-level yields cannot be directly aggregated, the national average yield is calculated by dividing total production by total harvested acreage. U.S. wheat production is derived by scaling output from the 18 leading states based on historical relationships with total national production. Figure 6 tracks historical in-season predictions of national yield.

Figures 7 and 8 focus on Kansas, showing crop conditions and estimated yields for the current growing season. Typically, estimated yields begin to converge with final outcomes at this stage of the season. However, this year, the estimates have not yet shown the expected convergence.

0.4 Contact

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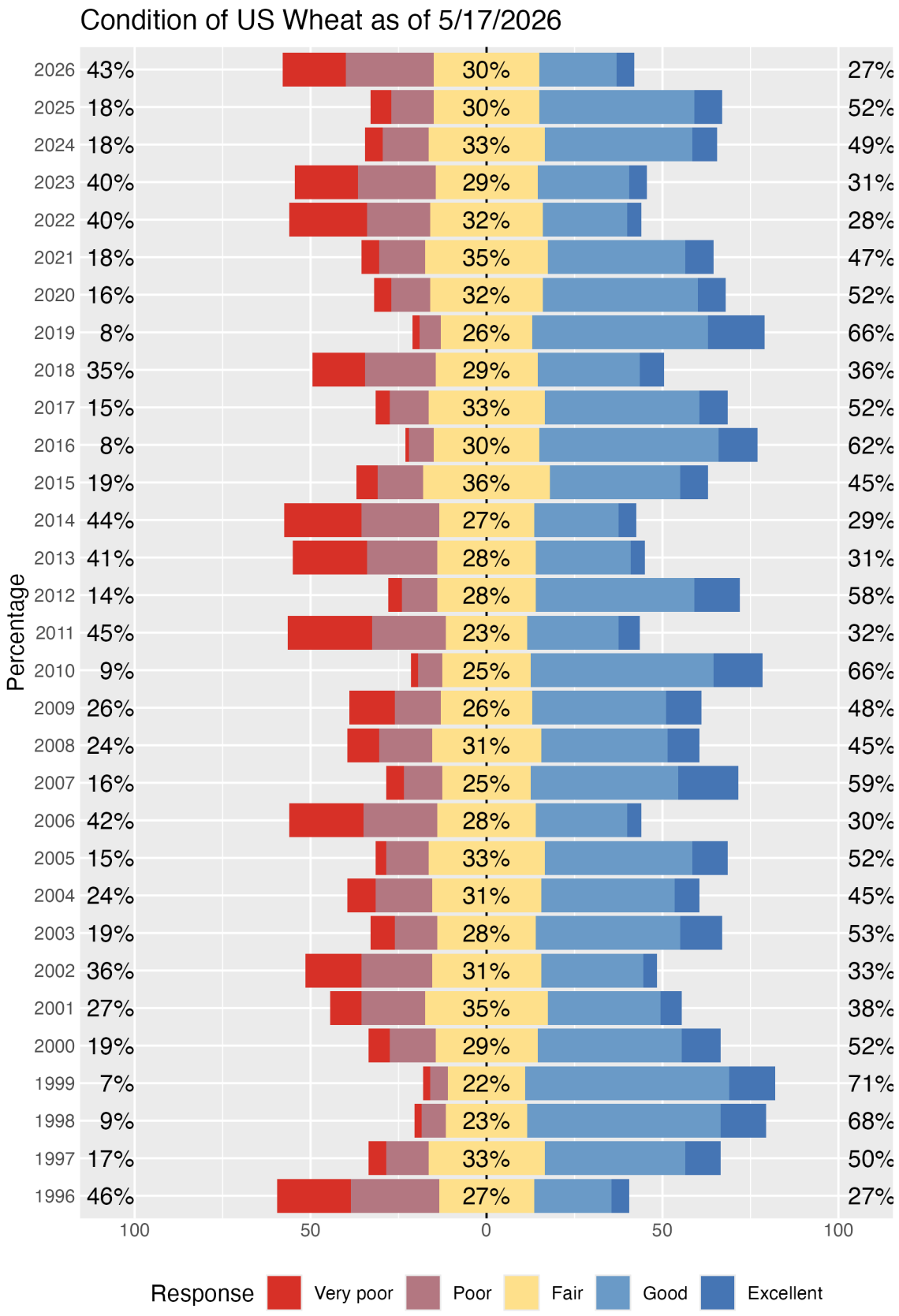

Figure 1: Historic Wheat Crop Conditions for U.S. for Specific Week

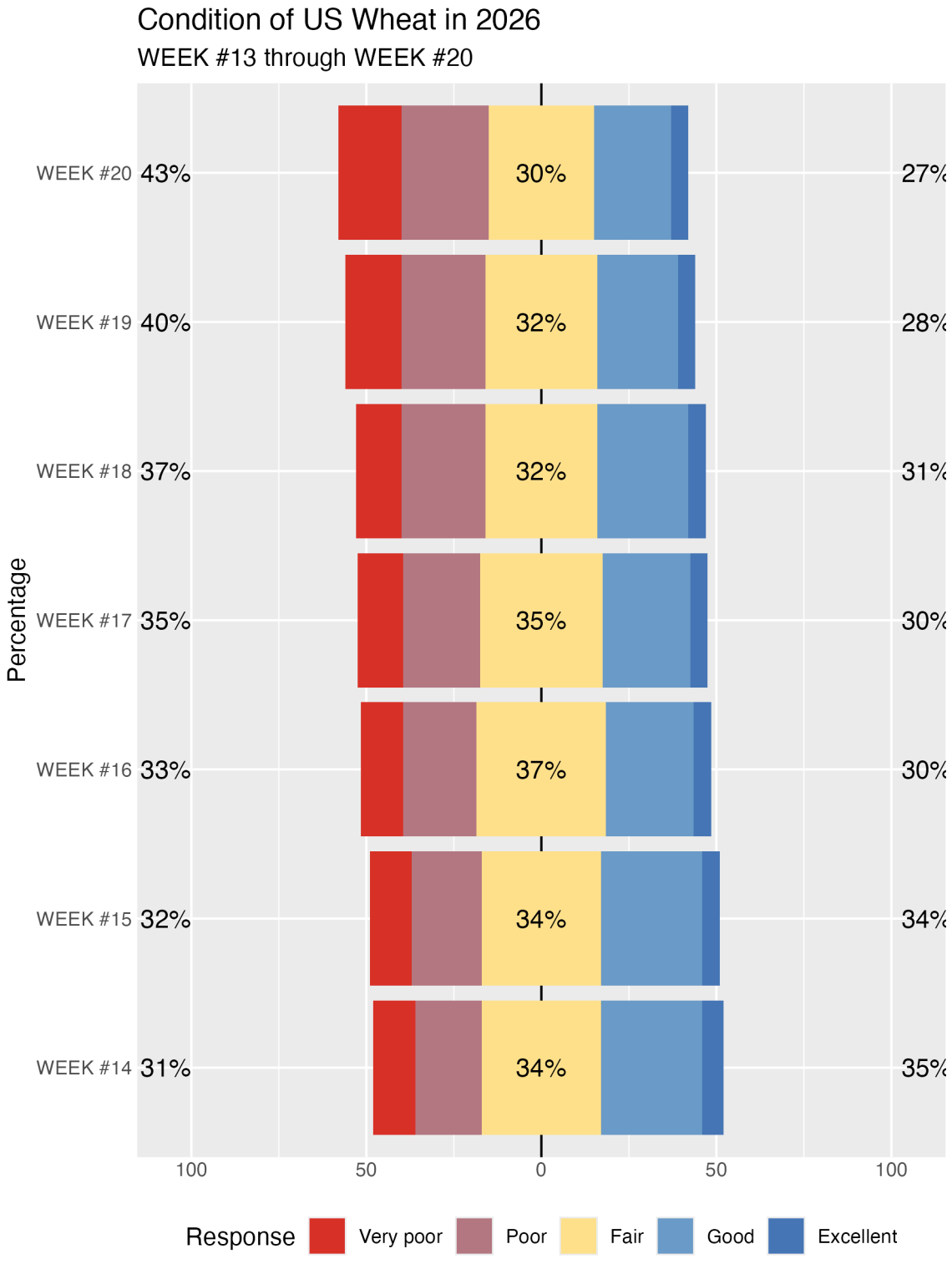

Figure 2: U.S, Wheat Crop Conditions for Current Year

Wheat Harvested Acres by State - 5/17/2026

1,000 acres

			2026 harvest estimate			
State	Last year	Planted acres	Lower CI	Predicted	Upper CI	R squared
Arkansas	70	110	50	50	50	−0.01
California	110	290	110	110	110	−0.04
Colorado	1,870	2,050	1,600	1,600	1,600	0.58
Idaho	720	810	720	720	720	−0.04
Illinois	700	720	620	620	620	0.71
Indiana	240	300	230	230	230	0.02
Kansas	6,800	7,000	5,800	5,800	5,800	0.57
Michigan	490	520	475	475	475	0.33
Missouri	460	610	430	430	430	−0.04
Montana	2,120	1,900	1,750	1,750	1,750	0.76
Nebraska	805	900	580	580	580	0.60
North Carolina	270	330	245	245	245	0.11
Ohio	530	540	480	480	480	0.25
Oklahoma	2,800	4,400	2,300	2,300	2,300	0.34
Oregon	740	750	740	740	740	0.08
South Dakota	630	690	530	530	530	0.54
Texas	2,300	5,700	1,700	1,700	1,700	0.51
Washington	1,790	1,850	1,800	1,800	1,800	0.20
US	25,508	32,410	22,015	22,015	22,015	NA

Figure 3: Estimated Harvested Acres by State

Wheat Yields per Acre by State - WEEK #20 - 5/17/2026

Bushels per harvested acre

			2026 prediction					2026 USDA estimate
State	Last year	Yearly trend	2026 trend yield	Lower CI	Predicted	Upper CI	Model R^2	USDA estimate
Arkansas	57.0	0.2	56.9	56.6	58.3	59.9	0.40	55.0
California	86.0	0.3	78.6	77.9	83.3	88.8	0.20	65.0
Colorado	38.0	0.2	37.9	25.4	29.1	32.9	0.55	21.0
Idaho	99.0	0.4	89.8	87.6	90.1	92.6	0.27	97.0
Illinois	88.0	1.1	82.1	81.6	83.7	85.9	0.80	84.0
Indiana	89.0	1.0	84.8	83.7	85.7	87.7	0.80	85.0
Kansas	51.0	0.2	44.2	32.9	35.4	37.8	0.75	37.0
Michigan	90.0	1.0	87.5	85.8	87.5	89.1	0.84	90.0
Missouri	80.0	0.9	69.8	70.6	73.0	75.5	0.75	73.0
Montana	47.0	0.5	47.9	42.6	45.4	48.2	0.46	47.0
Nebraska	47.0	0.3	47.5	25.6	31.3	37.0	0.64	28.0
North Carolina	60.0	0.6	62.0	40.5	45.8	51.1	0.75	44.0
Ohio	86.0	0.8	81.5	79.2	81.2	83.2	0.74	85.0
Oklahoma	38.0	0.1	33.7	27.1	28.9	30.8	0.70	28.0
Oregon	71.0	0.2	62.9	60.7	63.2	65.6	0.55	67.0
South Dakota	50.0	0.6	54.0	48.1	50.7	53.2	0.61	48.0
Texas	37.0	0.1	32.9	29.2	30.7	32.2	0.44	28.0
Washington	68.0	0.0	65.8	67.9	71.1	74.3	0.46	67.0
US	54.9	0.3	51.9	44.8	47.5	50.1	NA	47.6

Figure 4: Estimated Yield per Acre by State

Total Wheat Production by State - WEEK #20 - 5/17/2026

1,000,000 bushels

State	Last year	2026 prediction		
		Lower CI	Predicted	Upper CI
Arkansas	4	3	3	3
California	9	9	9	10
Colorado	71	41	47	53
Idaho	71	63	65	67
Illinois	62	51	52	53
Indiana	21	19	20	20
Kansas	347	191	205	219
Michigan	44	41	42	42
Missouri	37	30	31	32
Montana	100	75	79	84
Nebraska	38	15	18	21
North Carolina	16	10	11	13
Ohio	46	38	39	40
Oklahoma	106	62	67	71
Oregon	53	45	47	49
South Dakota	32	25	27	28
Texas	85	50	52	55
Washington	122	122	128	134
US	1,402	986	1,045	1,103

Figure 5: Estimated Wheat Production by State

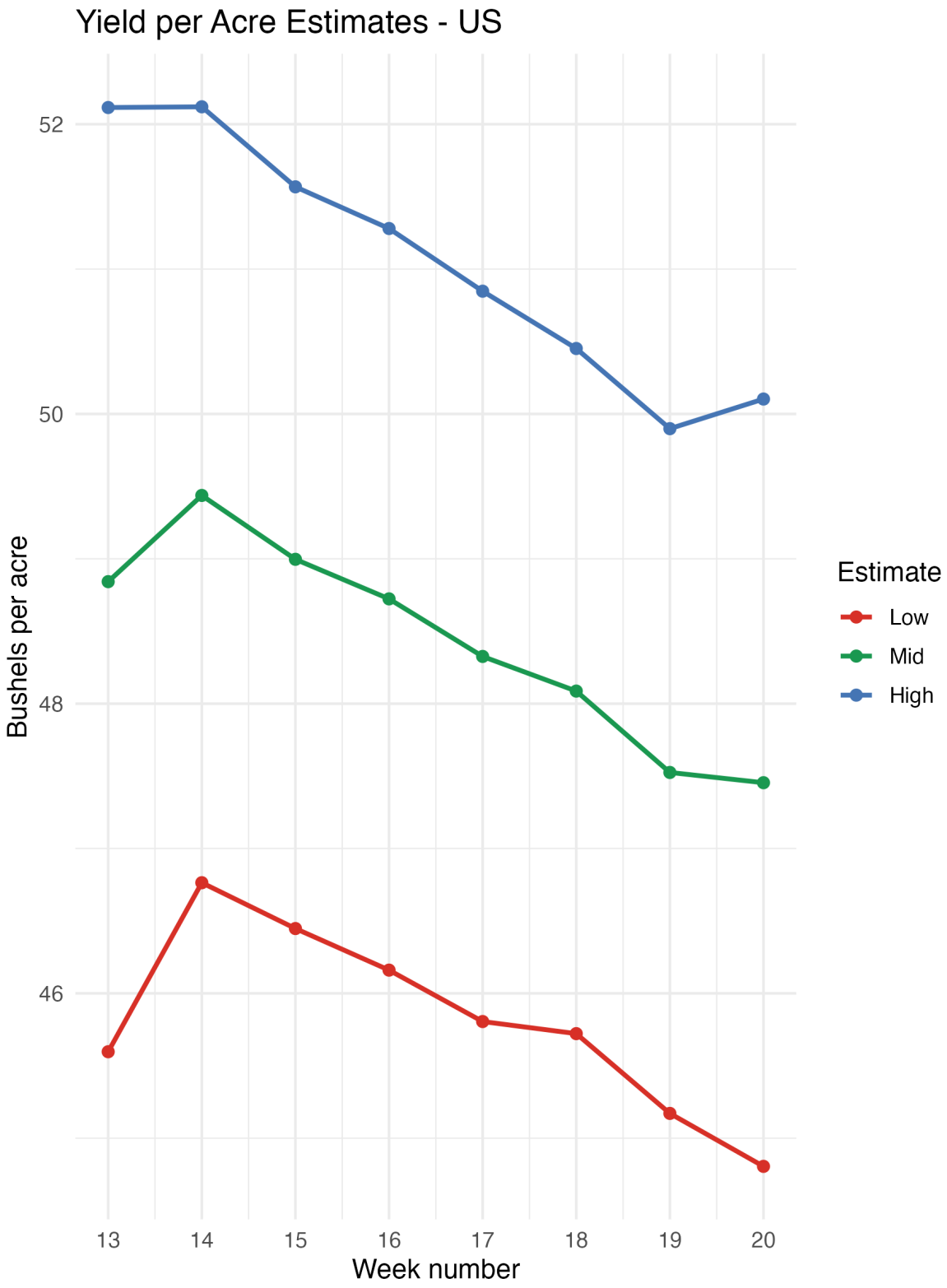

Figure 6: Estimated U.S. Yield by Week of Estimation

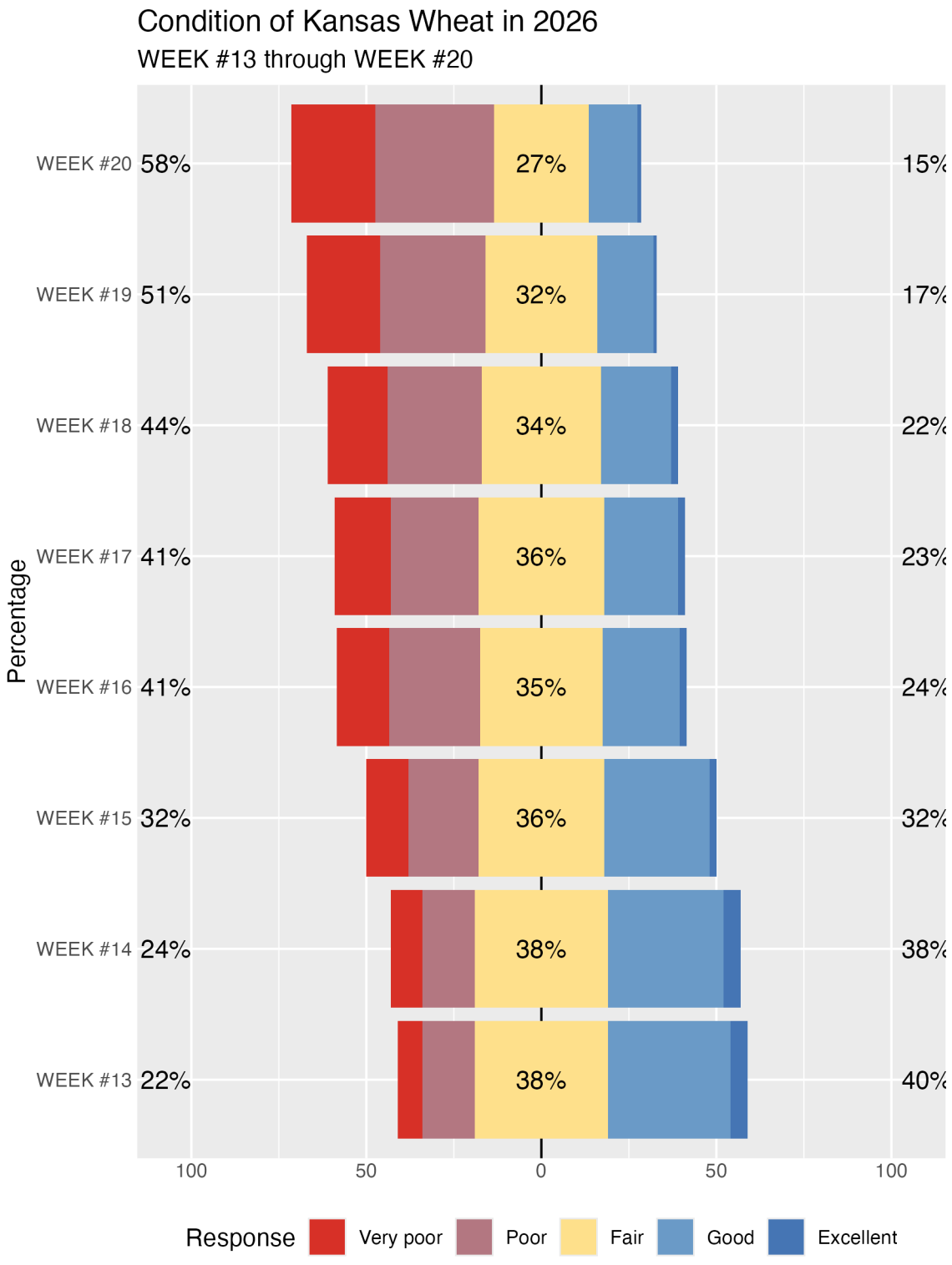

Figure 7: Wheat Crop Conditions for Kansas for Current Year

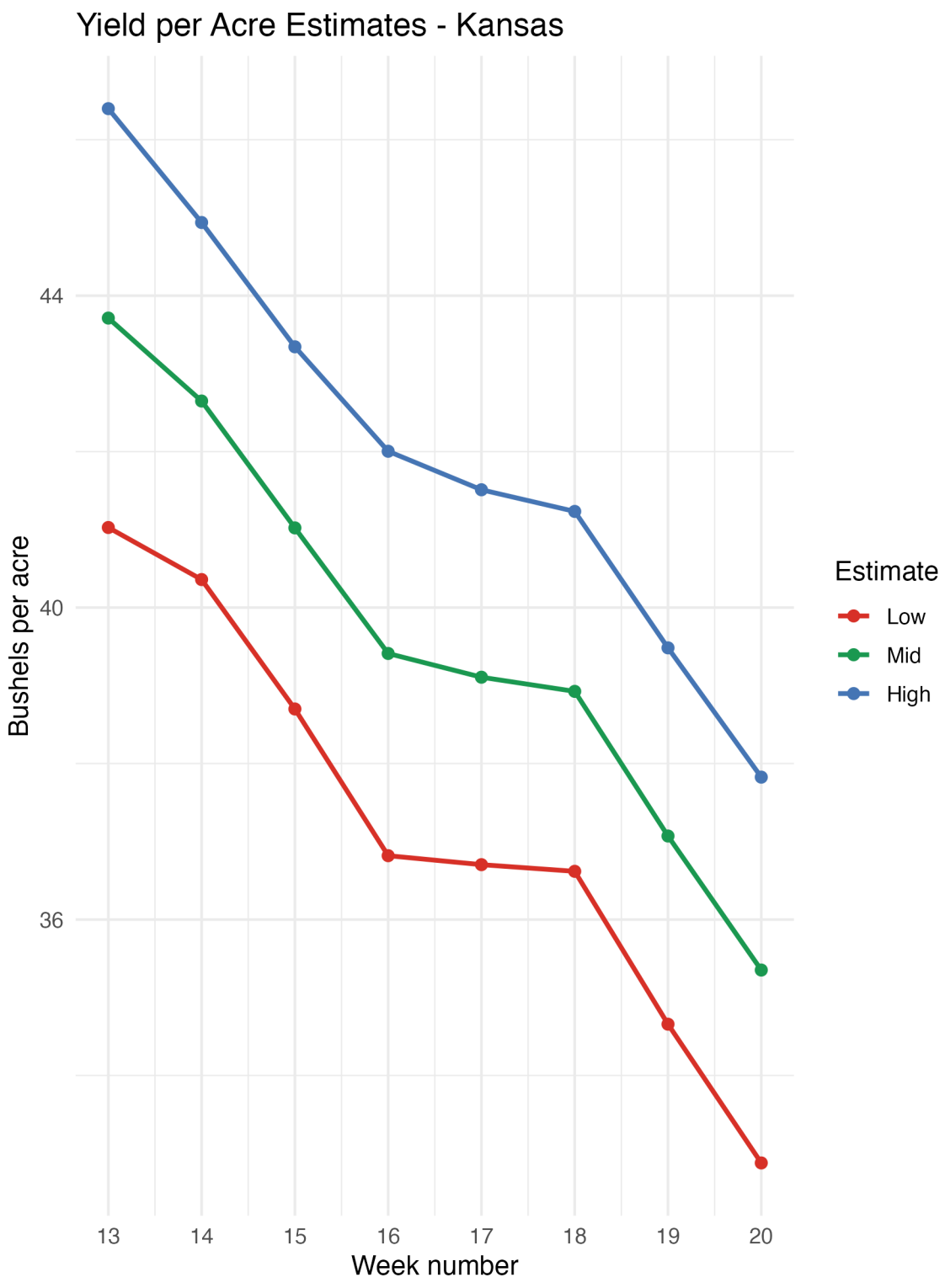

Figure 8: Forecast Yields for Kansas at Estimated Week