



Project Name : Proposal for designated times for small and large dogs at the Port Lincoln Dog Park

Consultation Summary Report

03 October 2024 - 25 October 2024

Report generated on 25 October 2024

Project Overview

As part of our ongoing commitment to creating a safe, enjoyable, and inclusive environment for all residents and their beloved pets, a survey was created aimed at gathering valuable feedback on the proposal to introduce designated time allocations for small and large dogs at the Port Lincoln Dog Park.

The survey was open from Thursday, 3 October 2024 to 10am on Friday, 25 October 2024.

The intention of the survey is to ensure that the dog park is a space that accommodates the needs of all dog owners while promoting the well-being of both dogs and their humans. With the increasing popularity of dog ownership in our community, it has become evident that a structured approach to time allocations for different dog sizes may be necessary. This initiative aims to minimise conflicts between dogs of varying sizes and temperaments, ensuring that every dog has the opportunity to play, socialise, and exercise in a safe environment.

The proposal includes the establishment of specific time slots for small and large dogs, allowing owners to choose the best times for their pets to enjoy the park. By providing designated times, if that is the community's preference, we hope to create a more harmonious atmosphere where dogs can interact with others of similar size and energy levels. This will not only enhance the experience for our canine companions but also provide peace of mind for their owners.

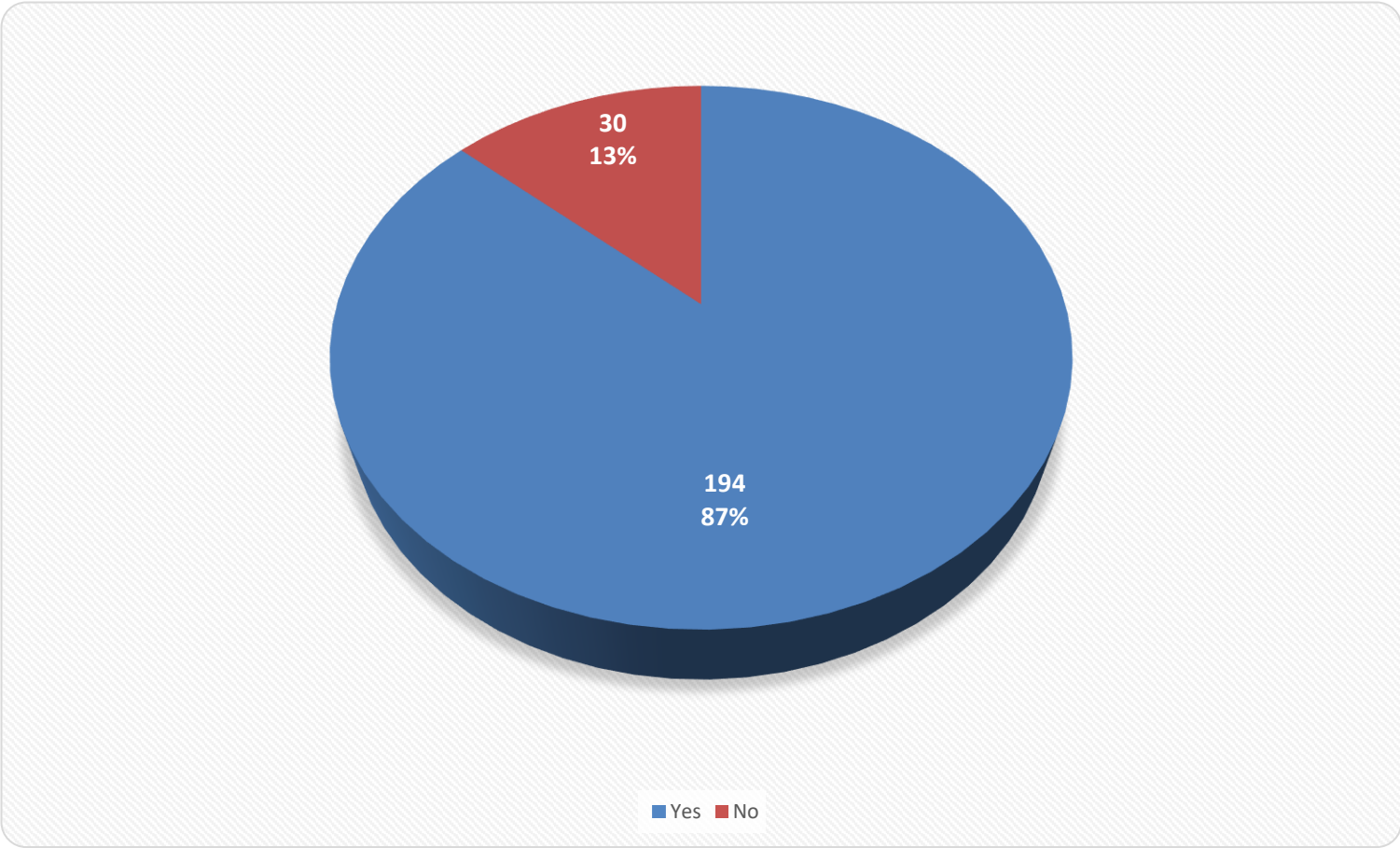
The outcome of this survey will guide Council in developing a structured schedule, if that is the community's preference, that reflects the needs and expectations of our community. We aim to implement time allocations, if required, in a way that maximises user satisfaction and safety, fostering a sense of community among dog owners.

Council thanks the community for taking the time to complete the survey.

Hardcopies of the survey were available at the Council Office and Port Lincoln Library during the consultation period.

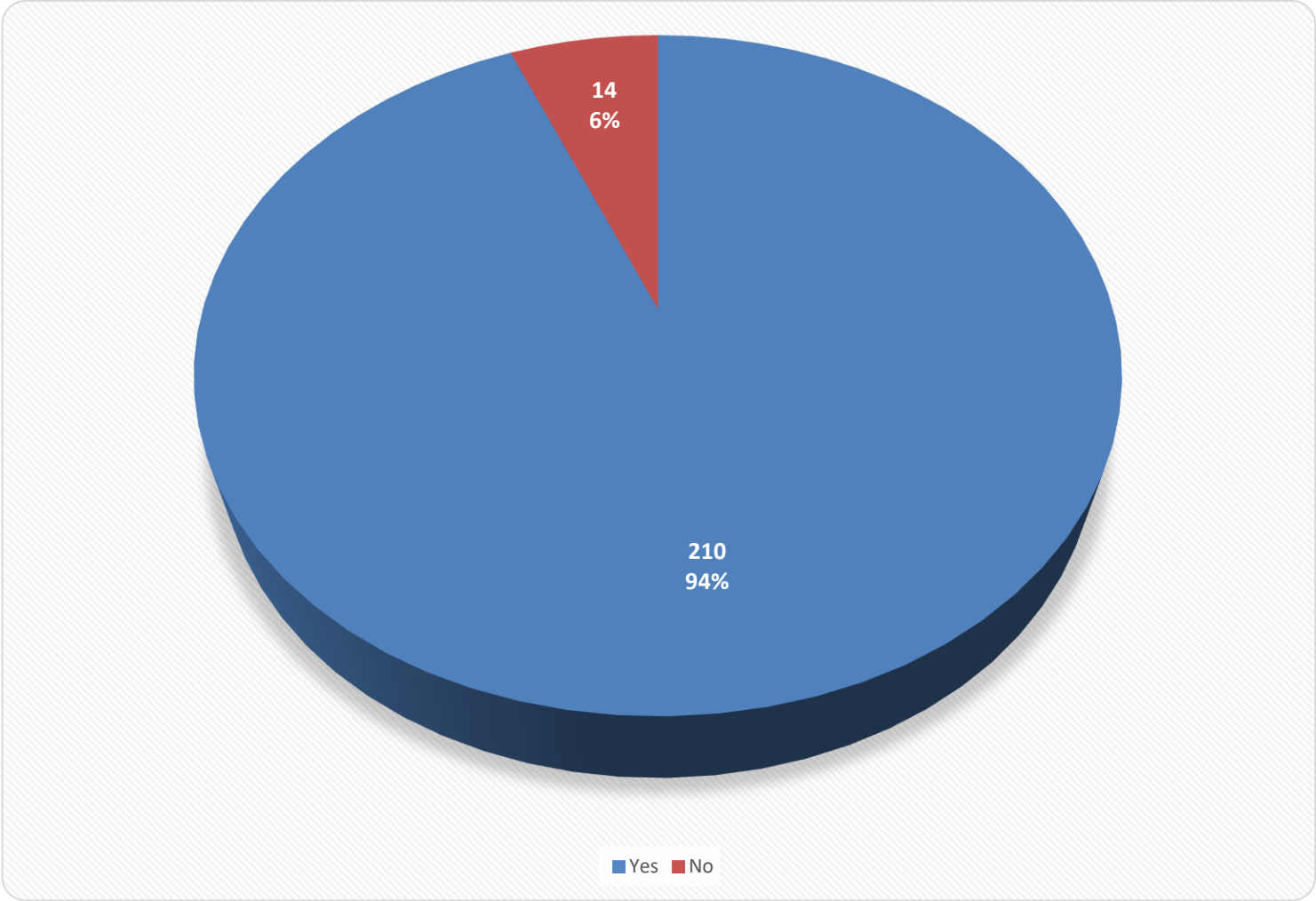
Survey Title : Proposal for designated times for small and large dogs at the Port Lincoln Dog Park

Q1: Are you a resident of City of Port Lincoln?



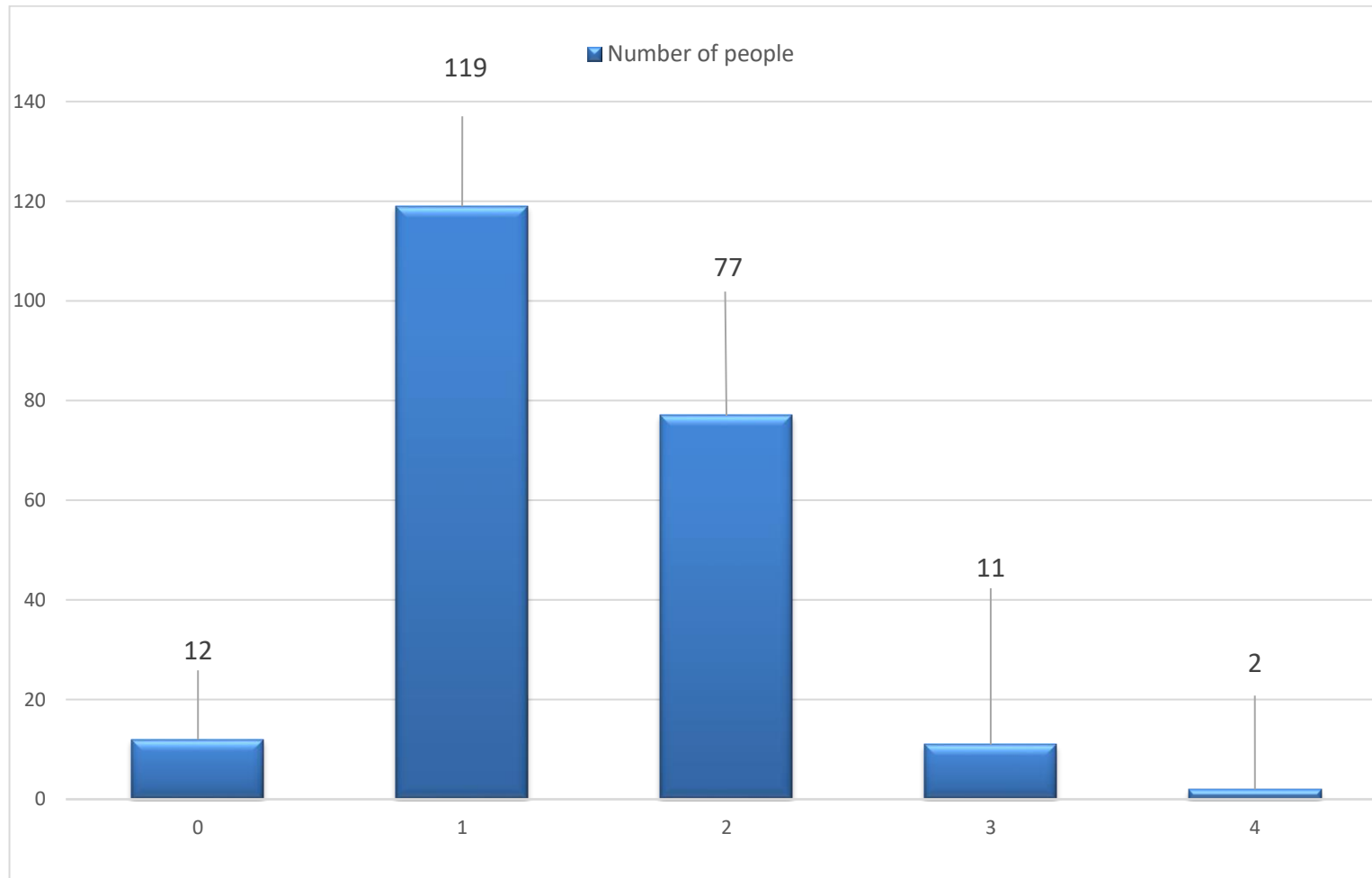
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Q2 : Are you a dog owner?



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Q3 : Please enter the number of dog(s) you own.



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Q4: How often do you visit the dog park?

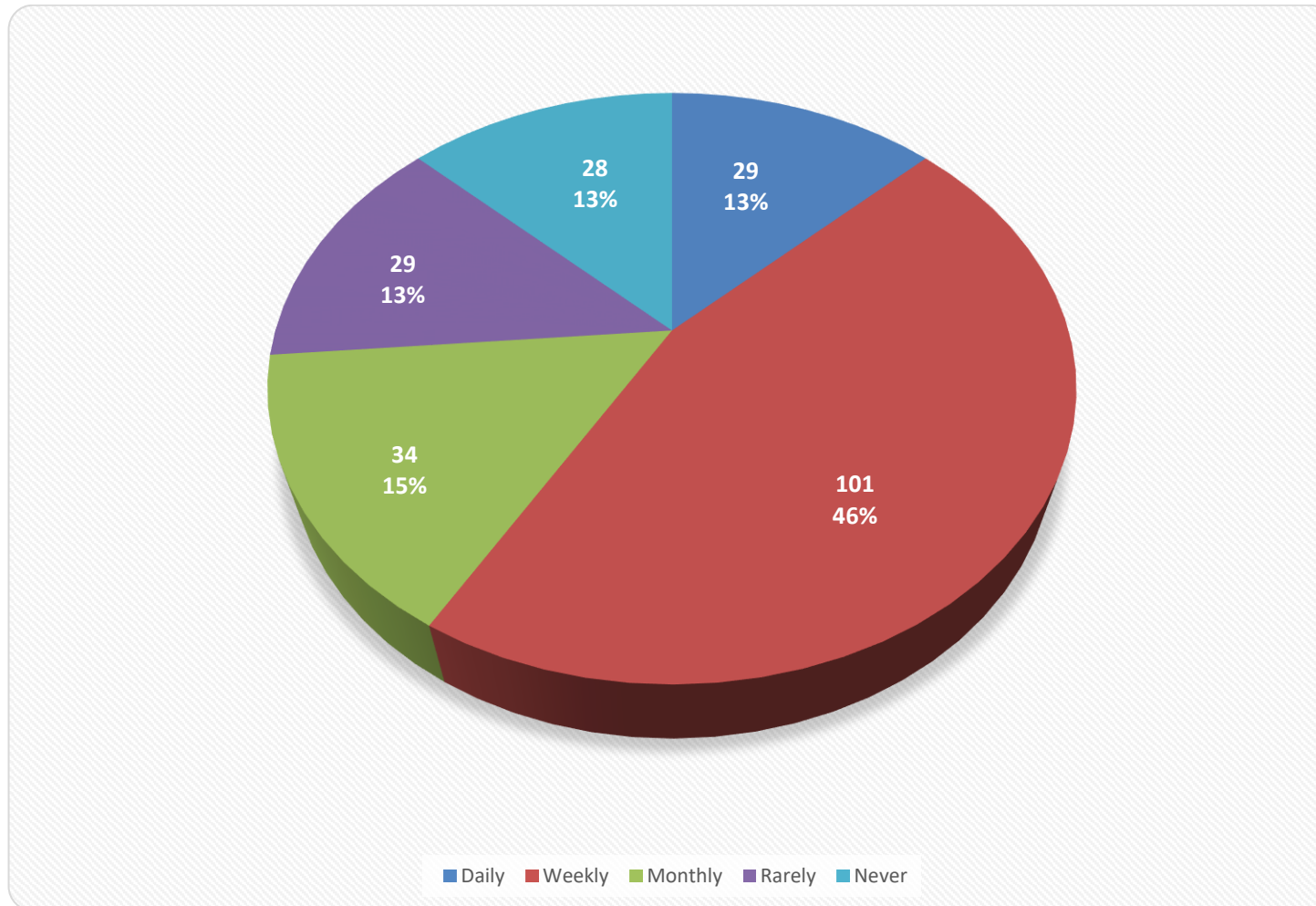
Daily: 29

Weekly: 101

Monthly: 34

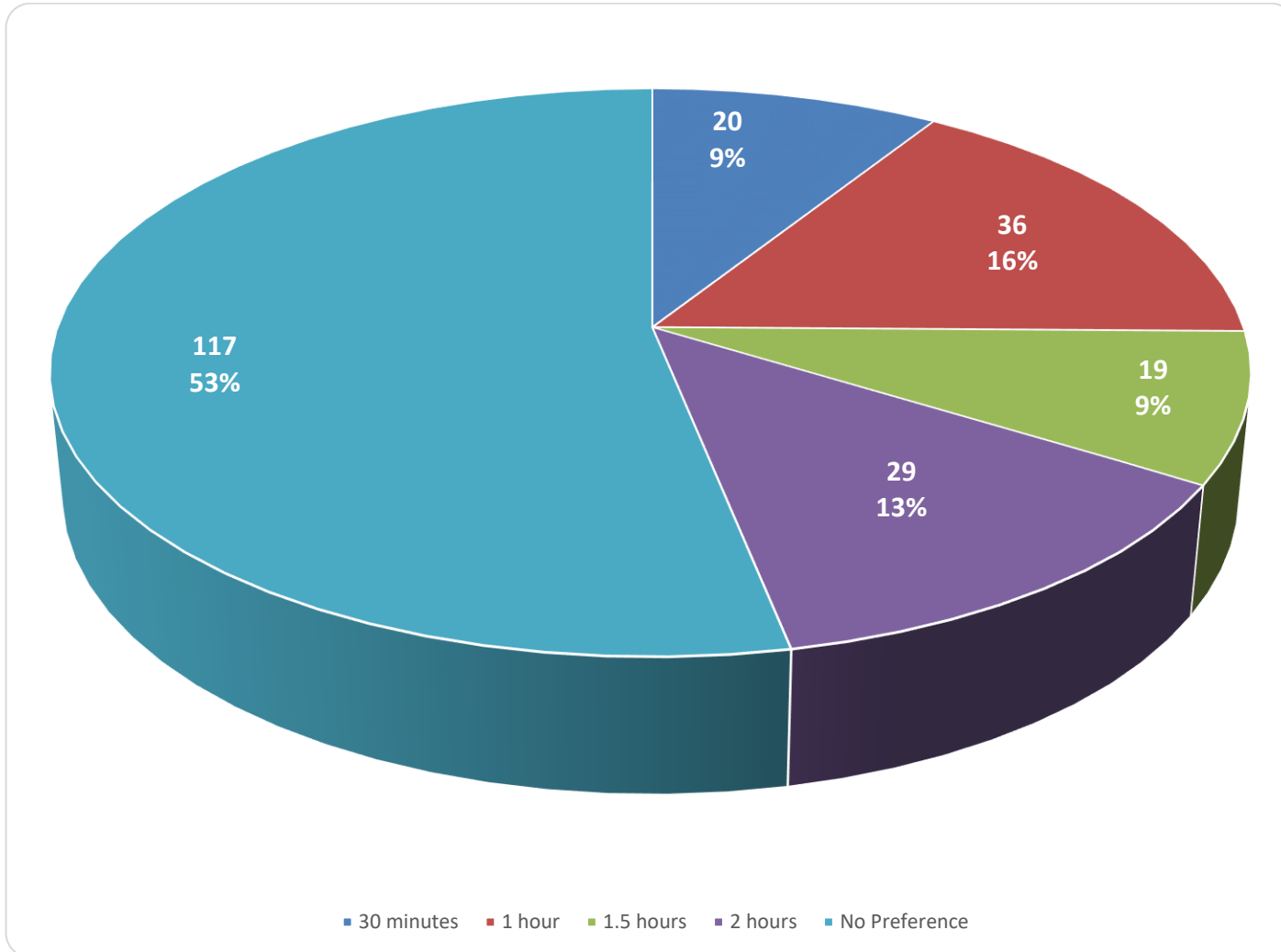
Rarely: 29

Never: 28



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Q5: What length of time do you consider suitable for each designated session for small and large dogs?



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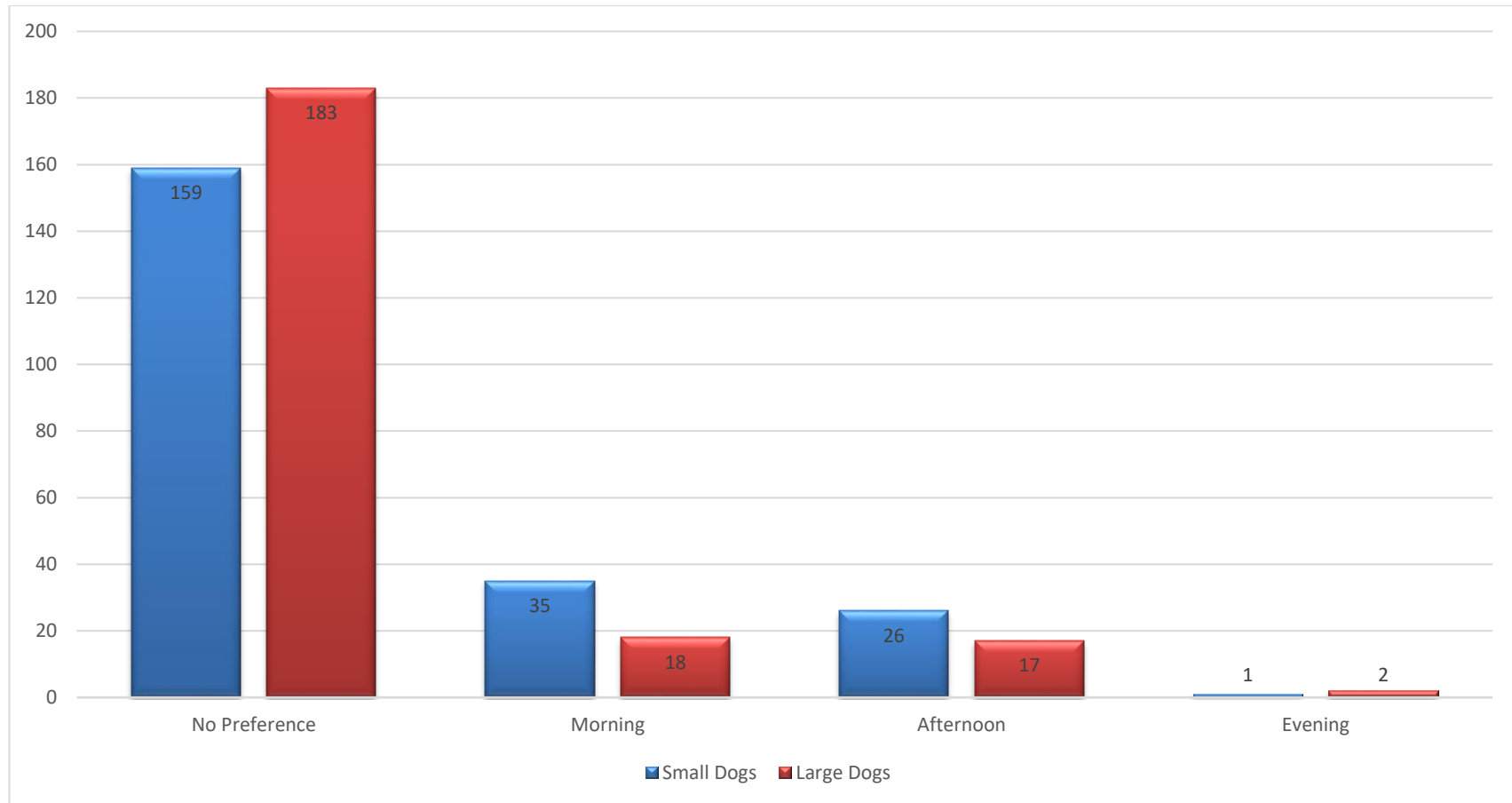
Q6: What specific time slots would you prefer for the following: (e.g. 9.00AM – 10.00AM)

Small Dogs (under 14 kgs):

No Preference: 159 Morning: 35 Afternoon: 26 Evening: 1

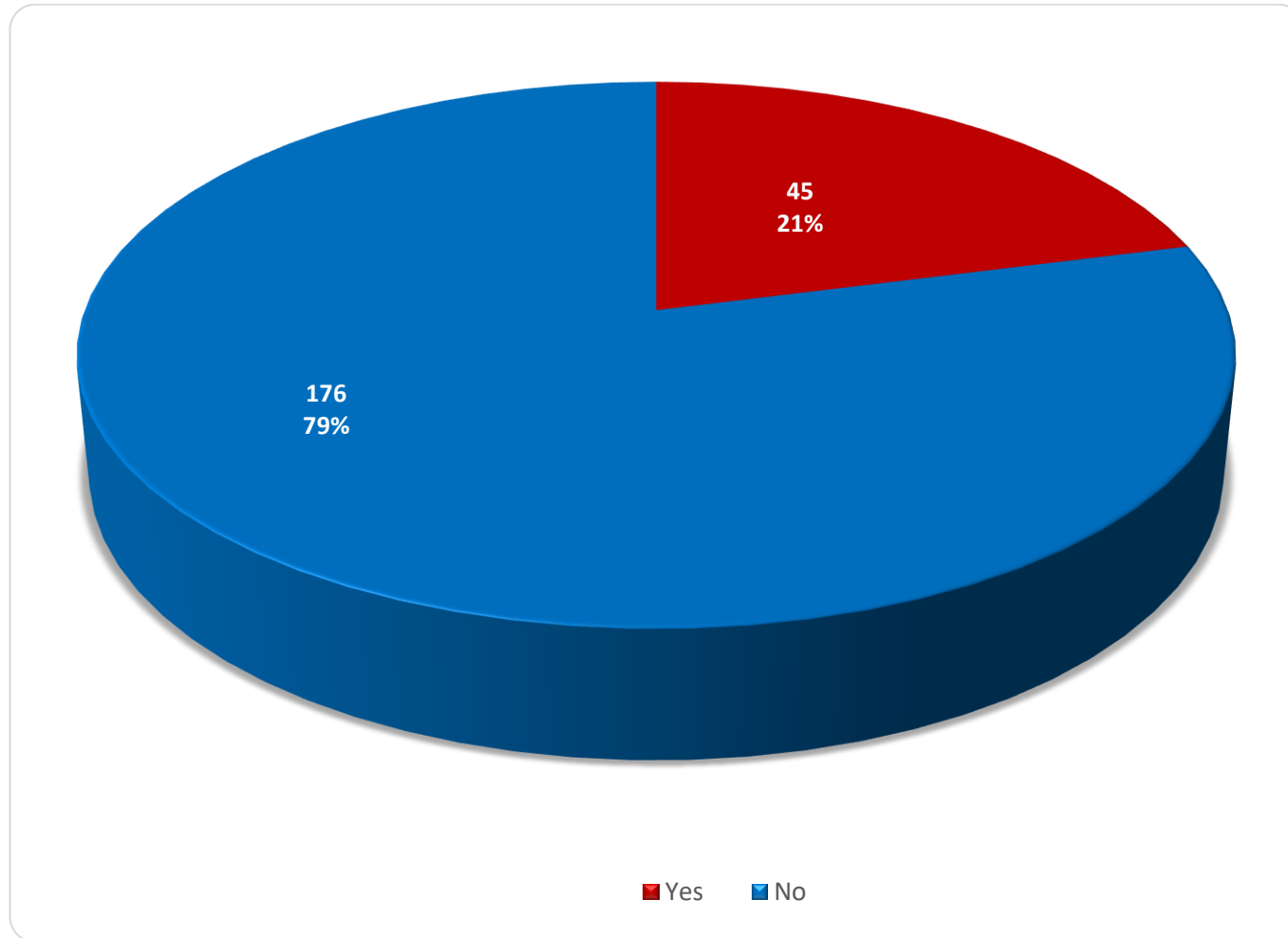
Large Dogs (more than 14 kgs)

No Preference: 183 Morning: 18 Afternoon: 17 Evening: 2



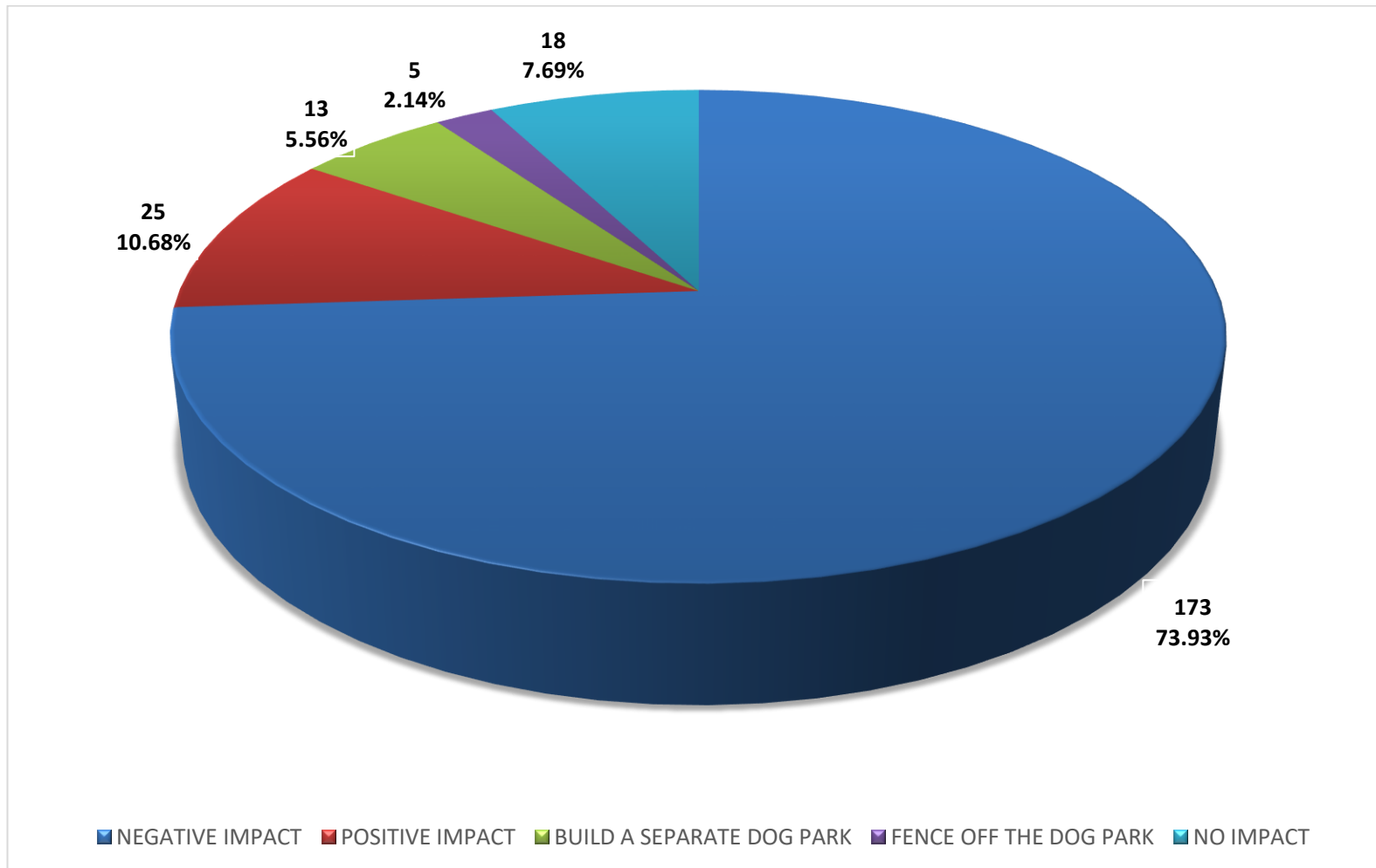
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Q7: Do you believe that designated times for small and large dogs would enhance the experience?



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Q8: How do you think the proposed time allocation would impact your experience at the dog park?



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Q8. Impact of Proposed Time Allocations

Most respondents expressed their views on how the proposed designated times at the dog park would impact their experience:

- **Negative Impact (73.9%):** A significant portion of respondents felt that the designated times would have a negative impact, primarily due to reduced accessibility and restrictions affecting park visits. Concerns centered around how work, school schedules, and fixed time slots might lead to exclusion or inconvenience.
- **Positive Impact (10.7%):** Some respondents welcomed the idea of designated times, highlighting potential benefits such as improved safety for smaller or less social dogs and the opportunity to enjoy the park with less concern about dog conflicts.

Alternative Suggestions:

- **Separate Dog Park (5.6%):** Several respondents recommended building a separate dog park to accommodate varying needs without restricting times.
- **Division of Current Park (2.1%):** A few suggested dividing the existing park into sections based on dog size or behavior.
- **No Impact (7.7%):** A minority stated that the proposed changes would not significantly impact them if time slots were flexible and considerate of varying needs.

Key concerns and suggestions were voiced consistently throughout the responses:

- **Inflexibility and Scheduling Issues:**
Many respondents indicated that having designated time allocations for different-sized dogs would complicate their ability to visit the park. They noted that work hours, family obligations, and other commitments do not align with schedules. This would especially affect shift workers, people with busy lifestyles, and those who visit the park as a flexible, recreational activity.
- **Divisiveness and Inequity:**
Respondents repeatedly mentioned that the proposed changes would segregate the community and their dogs. They stressed that the park is meant to be an inclusive public space, where dogs of all sizes should be able to interact freely. Many community members expressed frustration with what they perceive as catering to a small group pushing for the change.
- **Challenges for Families with Multiple Dogs:**
Many pet owners expressed concern over the difficulty of managing multiple dogs of different sizes. Families with both large and small dogs highlighted the inconvenience of visiting the park at separate times, which they felt was unreasonable and impractical.

- **Negative Impact on Dog Socialization:**

The community fears that size-based separation would hinder dogs' natural interactions and social development. They emphasized that well-socialized dogs should be able to adjust to playing with different-sized dogs, and it is the owner's responsibility to monitor and manage behavior rather than enforcing rigid rules.

- **Concerns About Enforcement:**

A common question raised was how these rules would be enforced effectively. Many respondents mentioned that confrontations between dog owners could arise, leading to unnecessary conflict and disputes. There is also skepticism about whether enforcement efforts would be consistent or practical, potentially leading to more complaints and workload for the council.

- **Inconvenience for Tourists and Visitors:**

Community members also pointed out that the time allocation could negatively impact tourists and visitors, who may not have flexibility in their schedules to adhere to specific time slots. They fear this change would make City of Port Lincoln less appealing to pet owners traveling to the area.

Suggestions for Alternative Solutions: Several respondents proposed alternative ideas, including:

- **Creating a Separate, Fenced Section:**

Rather than implementing time slots, respondents suggested creating an additional fenced-off area within the park for smaller or more timid dogs. This would allow owners to choose where to take their dogs without restricting access based on size.

- **Investing in Additional Facilities:**

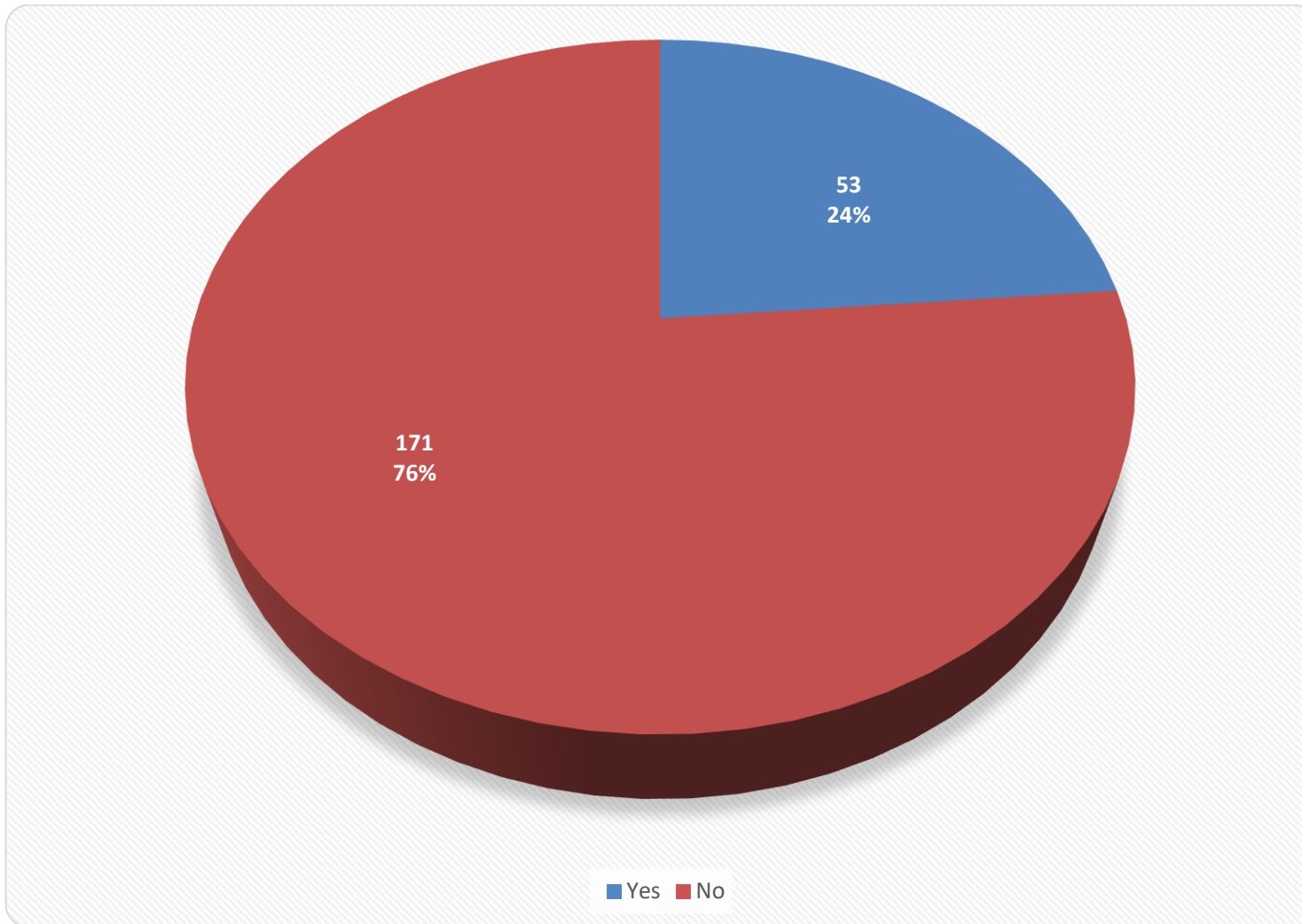
Suggestions included turning underused spaces, like old tennis courts, into dedicated sections for different-sized dogs, thereby offering more options while maintaining flexibility.

- **Concerns About Prioritizing a Minority:**

Many responses expressed frustration that these changes seemed to be driven by a small group of residents. They highlighted that most dog owners handle conflicts by supervising their dogs responsibly, and that current arrangements work well for the majority.

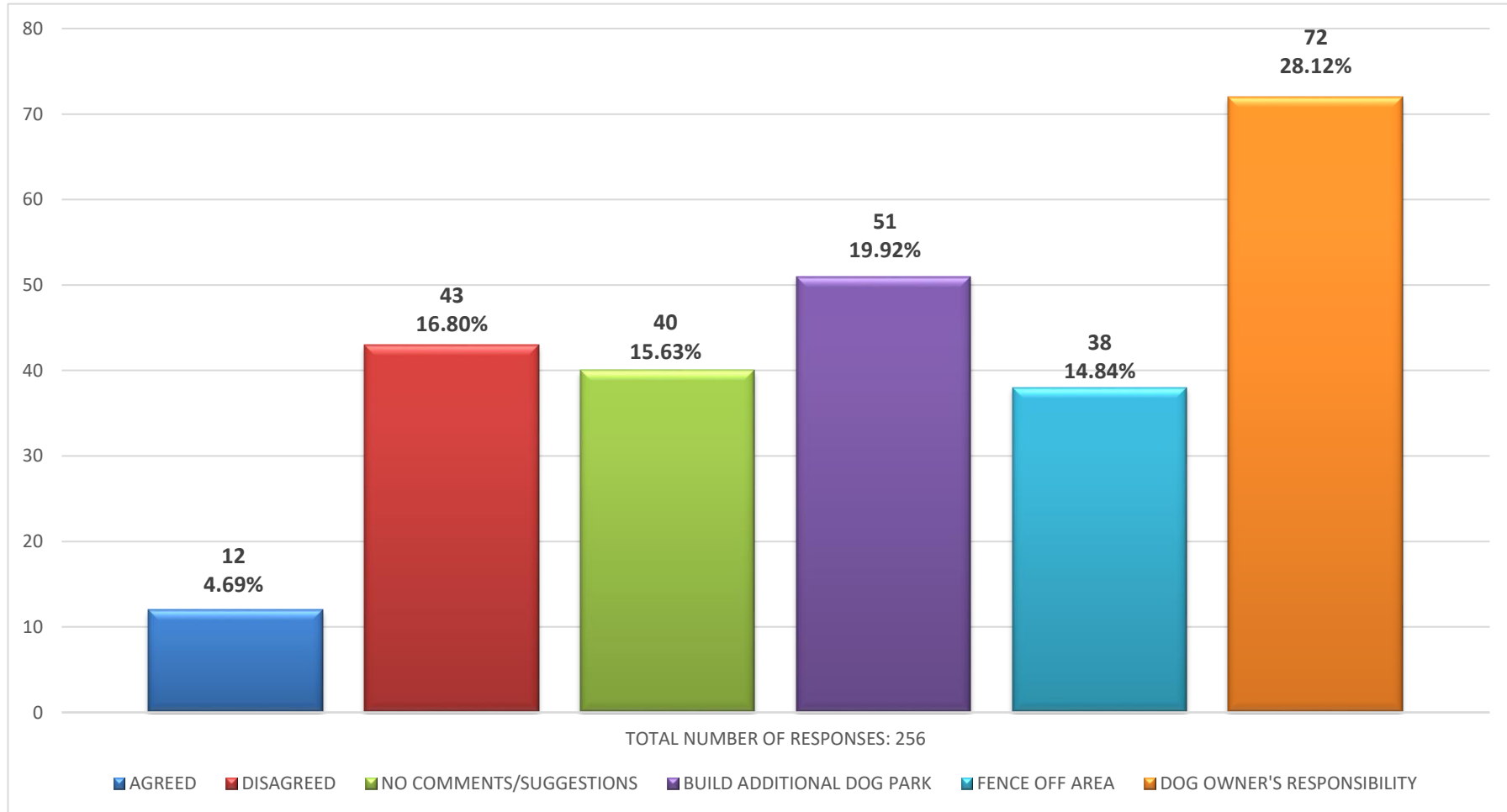
The feedback indicates that the proposed time allocation is seen as counterproductive, impractical, and divisive. Community members overwhelmingly prefer maintaining a flexible, open-access policy that allows all dogs to use the park together. They advocate for alternative solutions that address concerns about specific dog behaviors while preserving the park's inclusive nature.

Q9: Do you think the proposed change would encourage more people to use the dog park?



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Q10: If you do not agree with the proposed designated time allocations, what alternative suggestions do you have?



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Q10: Community feedback revealed several alternative suggestions to the proposed designated times:

- **Agreed with Proposal (4.7%):** A small percentage agreed entirely with the proposed designated times.
- **Disagreed (16.8%):** Many respondents expressed disagreement with the proposed time allocations, citing various reasons such as concerns about accessibility and practical challenges.

Alternative Suggestions:

- **Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs (19.9%):** A common suggestion was to create designated areas within the park for small and large dogs, reducing the need for strict time allocations.
- **Dividing the Park (14.8%):** A significant number of respondents proposed dividing the dog park into separate sections.
- **Dog Owner Responsibility (28.1%):** There was a strong emphasis on the responsibility of dog owners to manage their pets and avoid conflicts.

This question focuses on the consistent concerns and alternative suggestions voiced by respondents regarding the introduction of having designated time allocations at the dog park.

Key Concerns:

- **Accessibility Issues:**
Many respondents expressed concern that the designated time allocations would limit accessibility for dog park users, particularly those with varying work and school schedules. There was a worry that fixed time slots would be too restrictive and could lead to certain groups being unintentionally excluded.
- **Flexibility and Park Use:**
Several respondents noted that having designated times might complicate the spontaneous use of the park, which many dog owners appreciate. They voiced concerns that time restrictions would impact the flexibility and convenience that the park currently offers.
- **Dog Conflicts and Safety:**
While some respondents acknowledged that designated times could help in managing conflicts between large and small dogs, many felt that such an approach wouldn't fully address safety issues. They argued that conflicts arise more from improper dog behavior management rather than simply from mixing different dog sizes.

Key Suggestions:

- **Separate Areas for Small and Large Dogs:**

A frequently mentioned suggestion was to create separate sections within the park for small and large dogs. Respondents believed that this would reduce the need for strict time allocations and allow more inclusive access while enhancing safety.

- **Dividing the Park:**

A significant number of respondents proposed dividing the park into separate areas based on dog size or behavior traits. They suggested physical barriers or dedicated zones to mitigate conflicts without needing time restrictions.

- **Dog Owner Responsibility:**

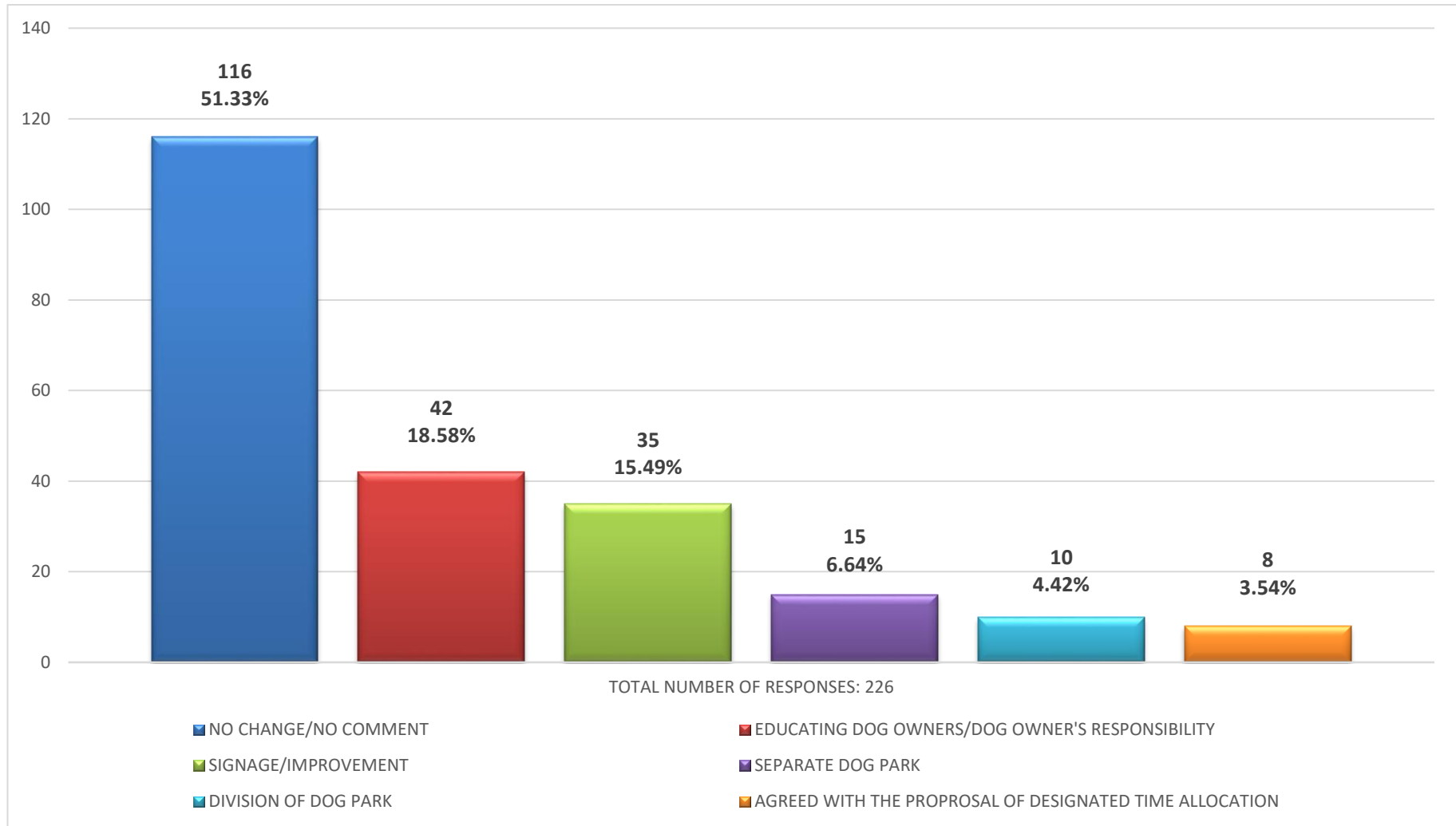
There was a strong emphasis on the importance of educating and holding dog owners accountable for their dogs' behavior. Respondents felt that improved education and stricter enforcement of rules regarding aggressive or unsupervised dogs would be a more effective solution than designated times.

- **Improving Signage and Communication:**

Some respondents recommended enhancing park signage and communication of rules, making guidelines clearer for all users. This included setting clear expectations for dog owner behavior and reinforcing safe practices at the park.

The primary concerns revolved around restricted access, reduced flexibility, and skepticism over the effectiveness of designated times in preventing conflicts. Key suggestions consistently highlighted the need for physical separation based on dog size and emphasized responsible dog ownership and improved communication of park rules.

Q11: Do you have other comments or suggestions regarding the dog park?



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Q11: Additional Comments and Suggestions:

Respondents provided general comments and suggestions regarding the dog park:

- **No Change Necessary / No Comment (51.3%):**
Over half of the respondents felt that no changes were necessary or did not have additional comments.
- **Dog Owner Responsibility (18.6%):**
Many respondents emphasized the importance of educating dog owners about their responsibilities, especially in managing aggressive or reactive dogs.
- **Signage and Improvements (15.5%):**
A considerable number of respondents suggested improvements in park signage and other infrastructural enhancements.
- **Separate or Divided Dog Park (11%):**
Several respondents expressed support for creating separate sections within the park or having dedicated areas to accommodate different needs.

Key Concerns:

- **Dog Owner Responsibility:**
A significant concern raised by respondents was the need for better education and enforcement of dog owner responsibilities. Many mentioned that irresponsible behaviour by dog owners—such as not managing aggressive dogs, failing to pick up after their pets, or not adhering to park rules—was a recurring issue impacting everyone’s experience at the park.
- **Safety and Dog Conflicts:**
Respondents expressed concerns over safety due to conflicts between dogs of different sizes and temperaments. There was a common belief that better management and understanding of dog behaviour by owners could mitigate these conflicts more effectively than physical changes to the park alone.
- **Park Signage and Rules Communication:**
A number of respondents highlighted that the existing signage and communication of rules were inadequate. They felt that clearer, more prominent signs indicating park rules, behaviour expectations, and areas of use could improve safety and overall park experience.

Key Suggestions:

- **Better Education for Dog Owners:**
Respondents emphasized the importance of educational initiatives to inform dog owners about responsible park use, conflict prevention, and dog behaviour management. Suggestions included workshops, awareness campaigns, and reminders at the park to reinforce proper conduct.
- **Separate or Divided Park Sections:**
There was a recurring suggestion to create separate sections within the park for different dog sizes or activity levels. Respondents believed that this could help minimize conflicts and ensure a safer environment for dogs and their owners.
- **Improvements in Park Signage and Infrastructure:**
Many respondents recommended upgrading park signage to clearly communicate rules and responsibilities. Suggestions included installing additional signs at entry points, marking designated areas, and providing clear instructions on expected behavior.
A few respondents also mentioned potential infrastructural improvements such as better fencing, seating areas, and waste disposal facilities to enhance the overall park experience.
- **Maintain Existing Park Setup with Minor Adjustments:**
Some respondents believed that the current park setup was generally effective but suggested making minor adjustments rather than implementing major changes. This perspective included maintaining the current shared space while improving signage and owner education.

The feedback consistently highlighted concerns about dog owner responsibility, safety issues due to conflicts, and the need for clearer communication of rules. Key suggestions focused on increasing education, separating, or dividing park sections, improving signage, and making infrastructural improvements to address the recurring issues without drastic changes.

Recommendations for Consideration:

- Evaluate the feasibility of dividing the current park or creating separate areas for different dog sizes.
- Strengthen educational initiatives to promote responsible dog ownership and conflict management.
- Consider improvements to park signage and facilities based on the feedback received.

This report aims to provide an overview of the community's perspectives to support informed decision-making regarding the proposed changes at the dog park.