

Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill - Summary of responses: short survey

The Rural Affairs, Islands, and Natural Environment Committee ran a call for views on the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill between 1st April and 13th May. The public could respond to a short survey on the general principles of the Bill or share detailed views on specific provisions in the Bill. This summary, produced by the Participation and Communities Team (PACT), presents the findings of the short survey. Detailed submissions have been published and are available on [the Call for Views website](#).

The Committee received 2,692 submissions.

The nature of the debate around Hunting with Dogs meant there was a possibility for participants and campaigns to amplify their views by encouraging multiple similar submissions.

Therefore, data gathered from this exercise is not intended to be a representative sample of the population, but rather give a snapshot of some of the experiences, opinions, questions, improvements, comments and concerns the public have about the Bill.

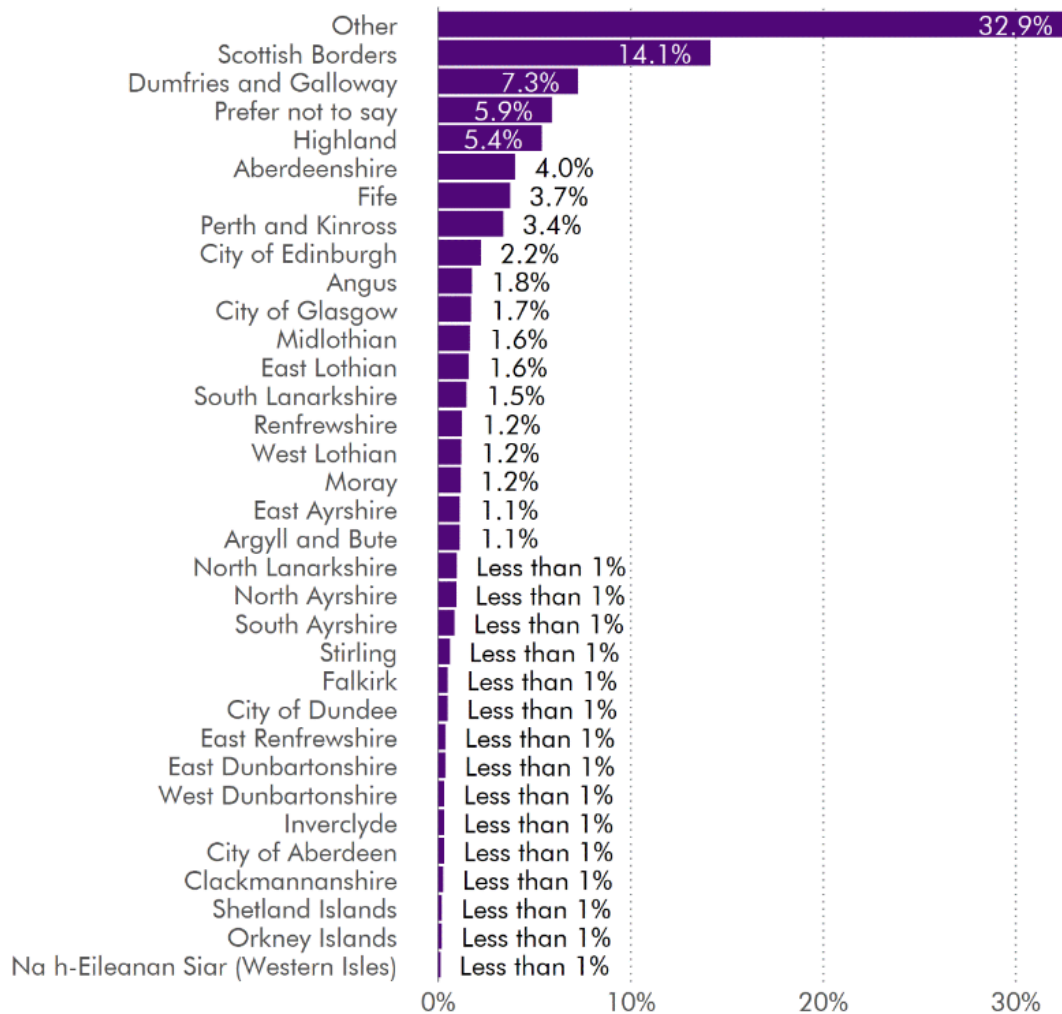
[Where did respondents come from?](#)

While the data is not intended to be representative, the engagement activity achieved strong levels of participation with users from every Scottish local authority area taking part. There was significant interest from respondents in the Scottish Borders, Highlands, and Dumfries and Galloway. The data also shows significant interest in the Bill from outside of Scotland with over 32% of respondents indicating that they lived outside of Scotland.

Detail of the location of participants is outlined below:

Which local authority area do you currently live in?

Proportion of responses



Results: Summary of Comments

Respondents were invited to provide further comments about the provisions in the Bill. We received 453 comments from those who were in favour of the Bill, and 855 from those who were against the Bill.

SPICe carried out automated textual analysis of all comments to identify key themes and words used by respondents in favour of and against the Bill. These are outlined below:

- The Bill provides an opportunity “to rectify the problems with the Protection of Wild Mammals act 2002”
- The Bill will allow wild “animals to be treated with respect”
- Those in favour strongly agreed with the intentions and principles of the Bill

Those in favour of the Bill also made comments to **improve the Bill** such as:

- While the “overall intention of the Bill is correct” “amendments are needed to ensure it is not full of loopholes” and “open to abuse.”
- “Several sections may be used as loopholes by those wishing to cause harm to wildlife. For example, 1,3, 4, 5, 7, 8.
- Concern that the Bill will provide exceptions that would be “exploited” and used “as a smokescreen for conducting activities in which “wild mammals are torn apart by dogs” and the opportunity to “claim that they believed they were acting lawfully under the exception as a defence.”
- “Several terms in the Bill rely on subjective opinion such as ‘no other solution which would be effective’, ‘serious damage to livestock or crops’, ‘spread of disease’, ‘human health’, ‘environmental benefit’ and ‘reasonable steps’.”
- Many respondents did not agree “with any licensing scheme for more than two dogs but if any are to exist, the licensing scheme must be robust and follow ethical principles”.
- Any granting of a license must “require evidence that substantial harm is being caused and there are no other solutions available.”
- The Bill is “better than nothing” but “it does not go far enough to stop wildlife crime.”

- The provision to limit the number of dogs to flush out predators to two is "ineffective" "making (predators) impossible to manage"
- Hunting with a pack of dogs is "more effective" especially in "large woodland" and "vast fell ground." The use of only two dogs would take a long time, less likely to be successful, and prolong distress to the animal being hunted
- Other predator control methods "are not selective" and newer technology does not fit into the "natural order of how the ecosystem works".
- Predators such as foxes, badgers and mink need controlling in order to protect other wildlife such as "capercaillies, curlew, mountain hare and many of the suite of ground nesting birds" and "red list wader species".
- Efficient predator control is required to protect "livestock and pets"
- Predator control with dogs is "an essential part of rural life."
- The Bill "will harm the rural economy"
- An "obtainable and workable licensing system" is required as there is concern about whether the "licensing system will be able to work effectively as currently drafted". "The need to continually apply for license and giving the same explanation each time is a waste of huntsman and magistrates time" and "a waste of public money"
- Rats and mice "should not be included in the Bill" as they "carry disease" and are "vermin, not wild animals."
- Those who are in favour of the Bill are from "largely urban populations who have no insight into how the countryside really works or have no experience of hunting" and don't understand that "working with dogs is a passion borne out of a genuine love and respect for the whole cycle of nature."
- The Bill is "discriminatory against rural communities and enacted by urban based legislators who do not have full understanding of countryside life, and agricultural and rural economy"
- The Bill is "poorly drafted", includes "ambiguity" and is "open to interpretation."

Results: Multiple choice questions

Respondents were asked seventeen questions about provisions in the Bill, each with the options of Yes, No, Neutral, and Don't know available. An outline of the results is available below.

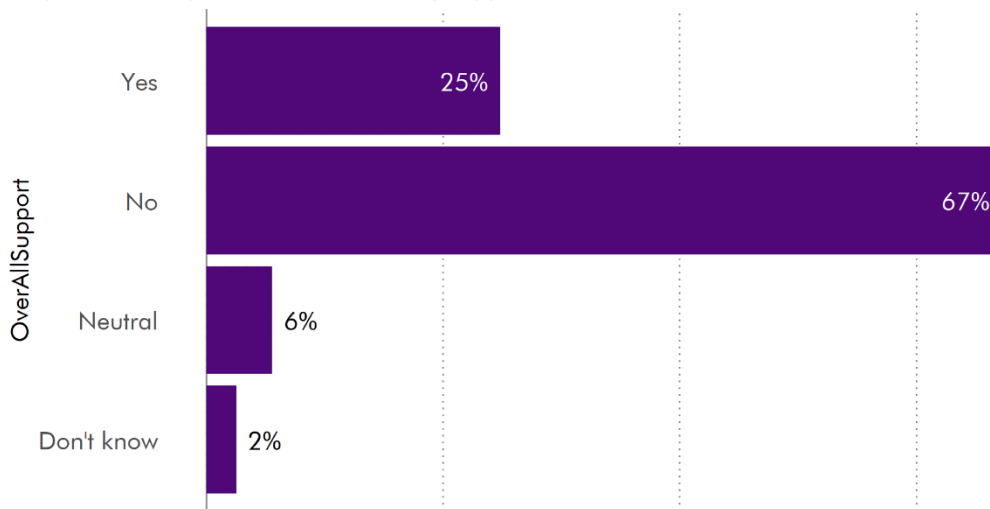
This survey data is based on 2,692 self-selecting respondents and is not intended to be representative of public opinion.

Results outlined below show that 67% were against the Bill, 25% in favour and 8% were neutral (6%) or were unsure (2%).

Overall support

Do you support the Bill?

Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



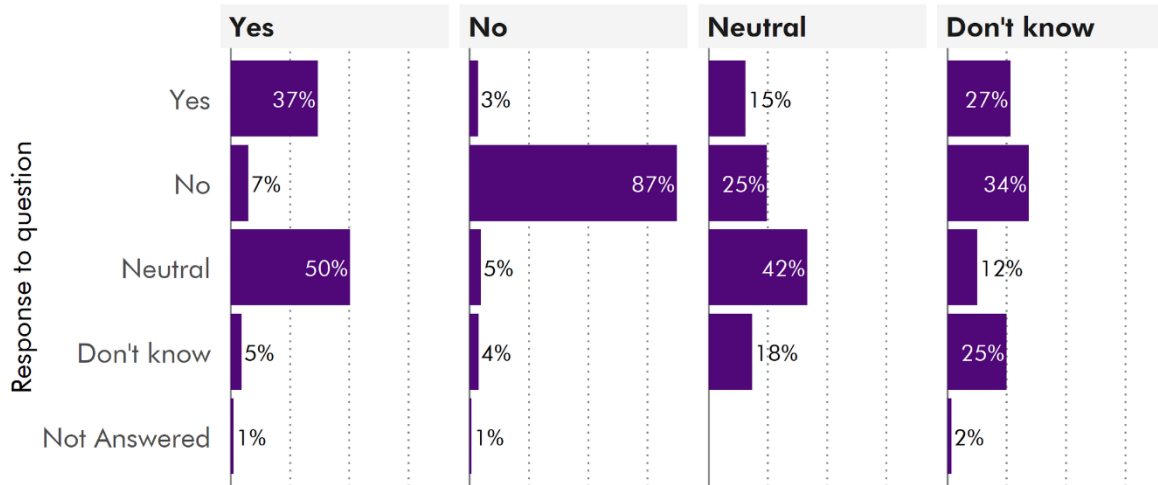
Opinion on provisions in the Bill compared with overall support for the Bill

The results from the survey revealed that many of the provisions in the Bill were opposed by those in favour of the Bill and supported by those against the Bill. This highlights, for example, the debate amongst respondents who are particularly concerned with prohibiting fox hunting between whether the exceptions in the Bill create “loopholes” or whether they signify “compromise” Some provisions, such as a ban on trail hunting or the ability of courts to disqualify convicted individuals from dog ownership, were generally supported by those in favour of the Bill, and opposed by those against the Bill.

The columns in the charts displayed below refer to how respondents answered the question around overall support for the Bill.

Will the bill make the law easier to understand and enforce the offence to hunt a wild mammal using a dog in Scotland?

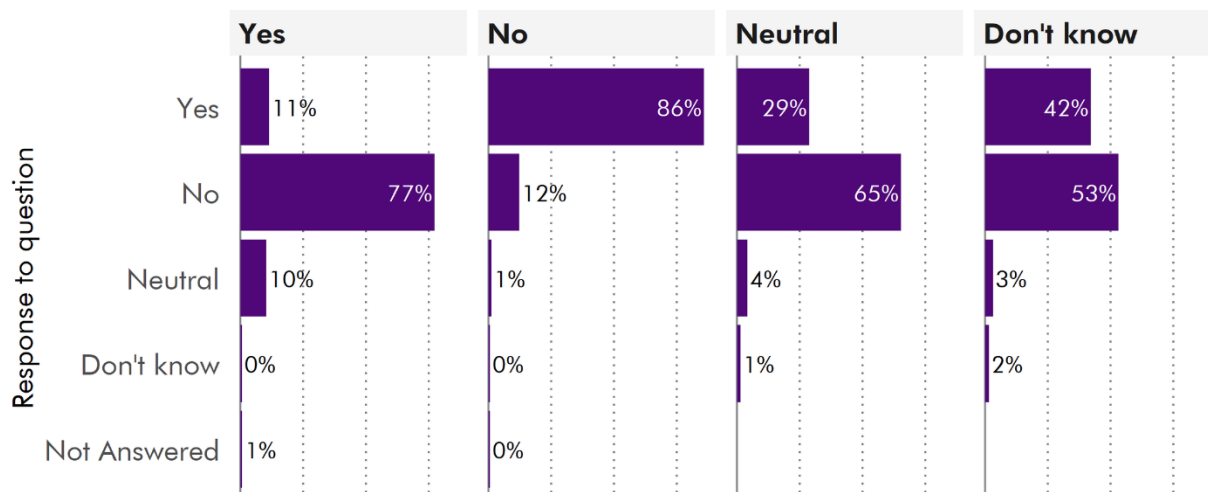
Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Section 3: allow hunting with dogs to manage wild mammals above ground for specific purposes

Do you agree with section 3?

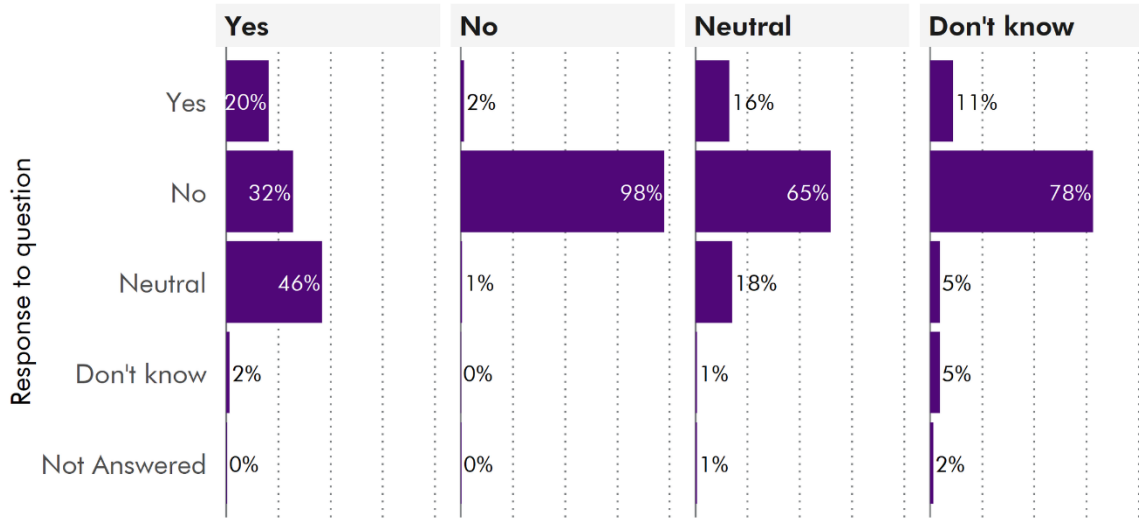
Section 3 would allow hunting with dogs to manage wild mammals above ground for the purpose of preventing serious damage to livestock, woodland or crops, preventing the spread of disease and protecting human health | Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Limit of two dogs to manage wild mammals above ground

Do you agree with the limit on two dogs to manage wild mammals above ground?

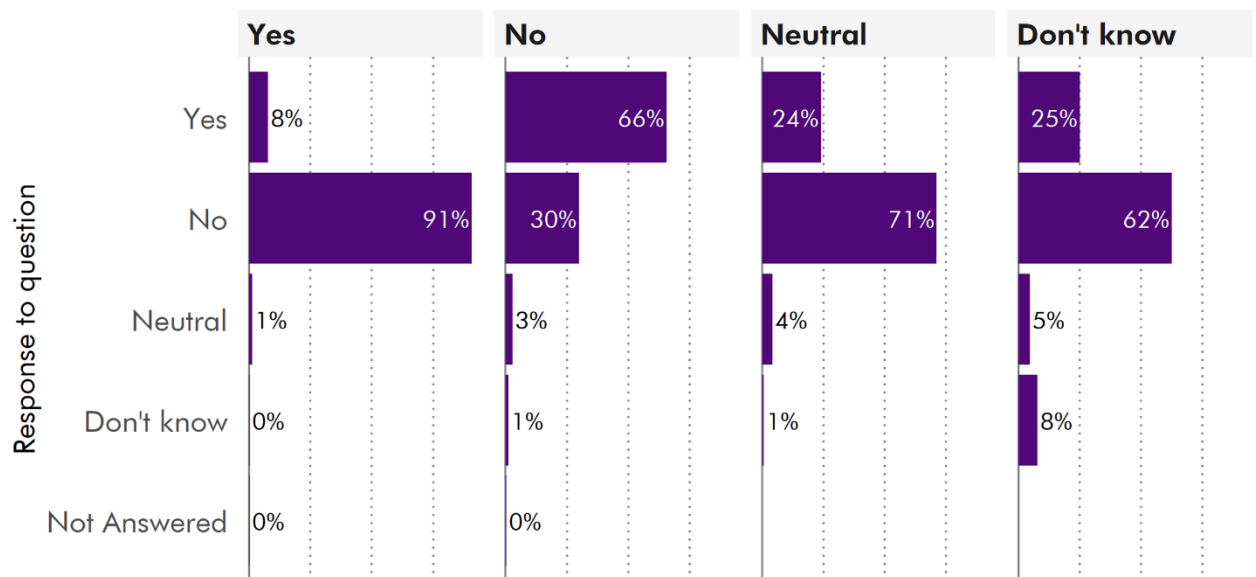
Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Section 4: License to use more than two dogs

Do you agree with section 4?

Section 4 would allow people to apply for a licence to use more than two dogs to manage wild mammals above ground | Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill

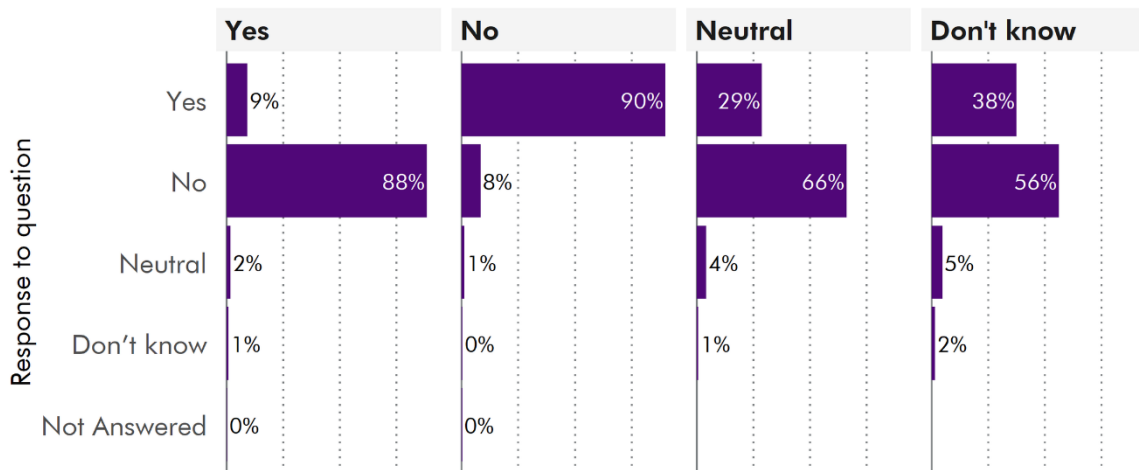


implementation of a license scheme for those who wish to use more than two dogs, similarly those who were neutral on the Bill tended to be against Section 4 as they would prefer that dogs are not used to hunt wild mammals. Two thirds of those against the Bill were in favour of the introduction of a licensing scheme, 30% were against the introduction of a licensing scheme.

Section 5: use of dogs to manage foxes and mink below ground

Do you agree with section 5?

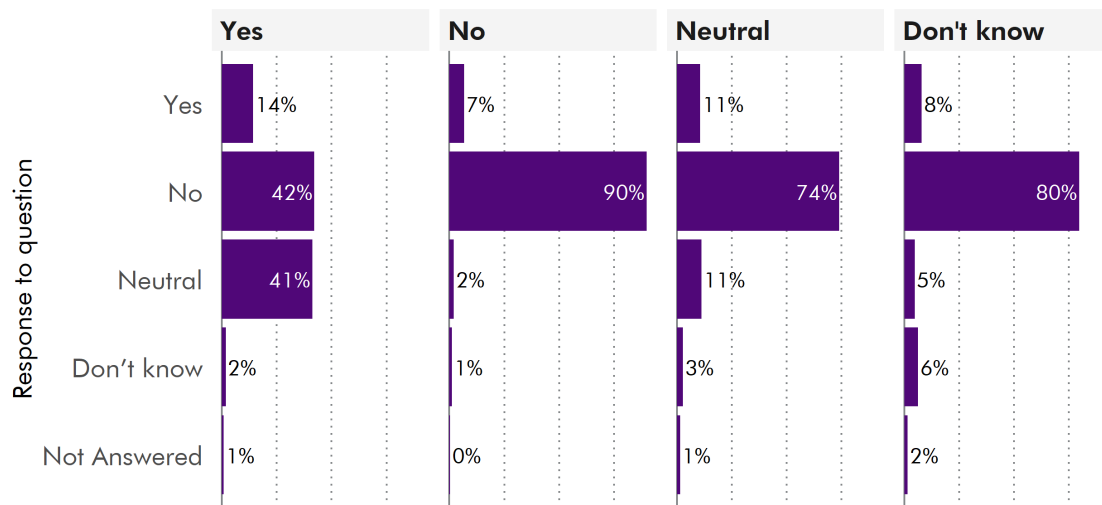
Section 5 would allow hunting with dogs to manage foxes or mink below ground for the purpose of preventing serious damage to livestock, woodland or crops, preventing the spread of disease and protecting human health or for ending the suffering of an injured or dependent fox or mink | Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Limit of one dog being used to flush foxes from below ground

Do you agree with the limit on one dog being allowed to flush a fox from cover below ground?

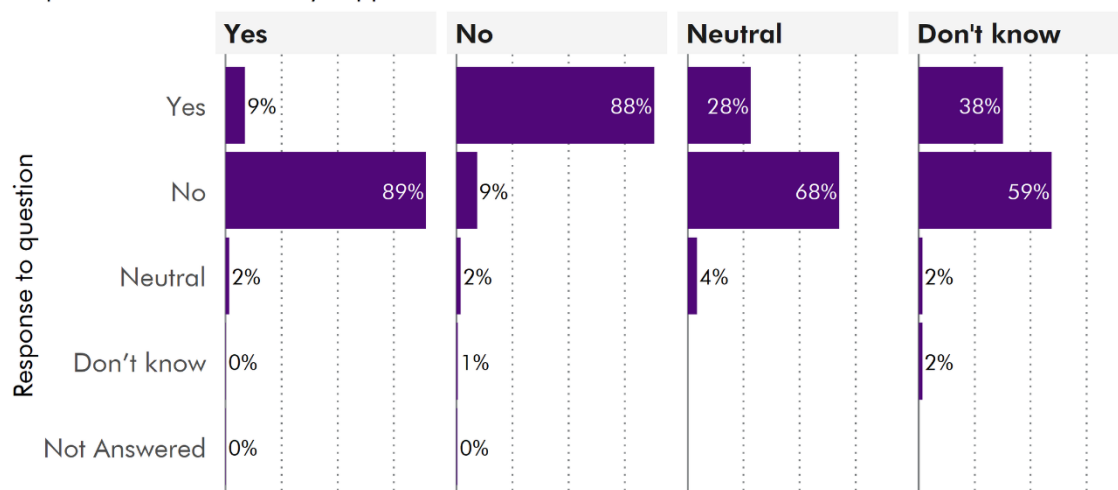
Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Section 6: allowing hunting with dogs for falconry, game shooting or deer stalking

Do you agree with section 6?

Section 6 would allow hunting with dogs to search for, stalk or flush from cover a wild mammal with the intention of providing quarry for falconry, game shooting or deer stalking | Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



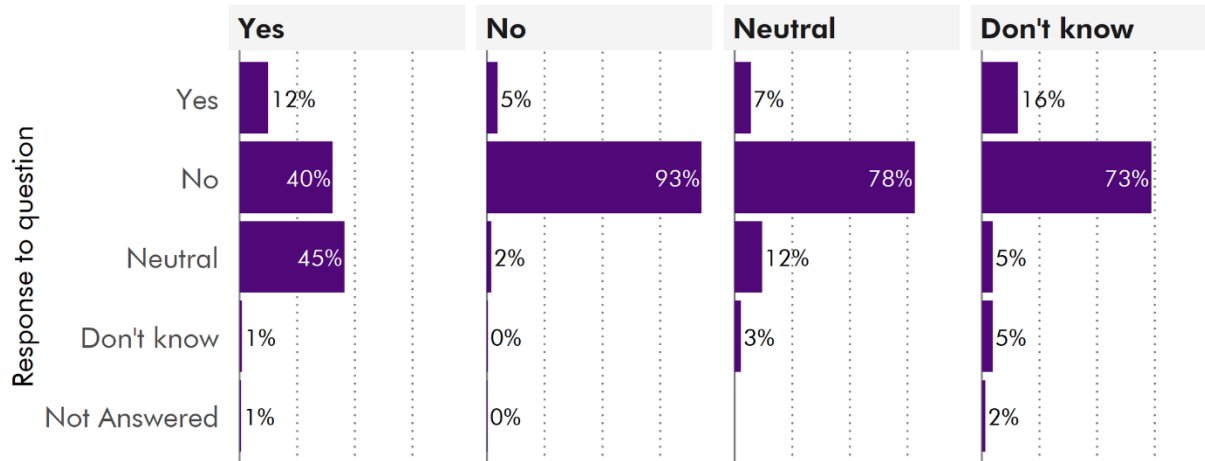
Again, those who supported the Bill overall, tended to disagree with Section 6 (89%), whereas those who are against the Bill overall, tended to support the provisions in Section 6 (88%). As with other answers, a majority of those who had a neutral

stance on the Bill tended to be against the provisions in Section 6 as they indicated that they would prefer no dogs to be used in hunting.

Limit of two dogs for falconry, game shooting or deer stalking

Do you agree with the limit on two dogs to search for, stalk or flush from cover a wild mammal with the intention of providing quarry for falconry, game shooting or deer stalking?

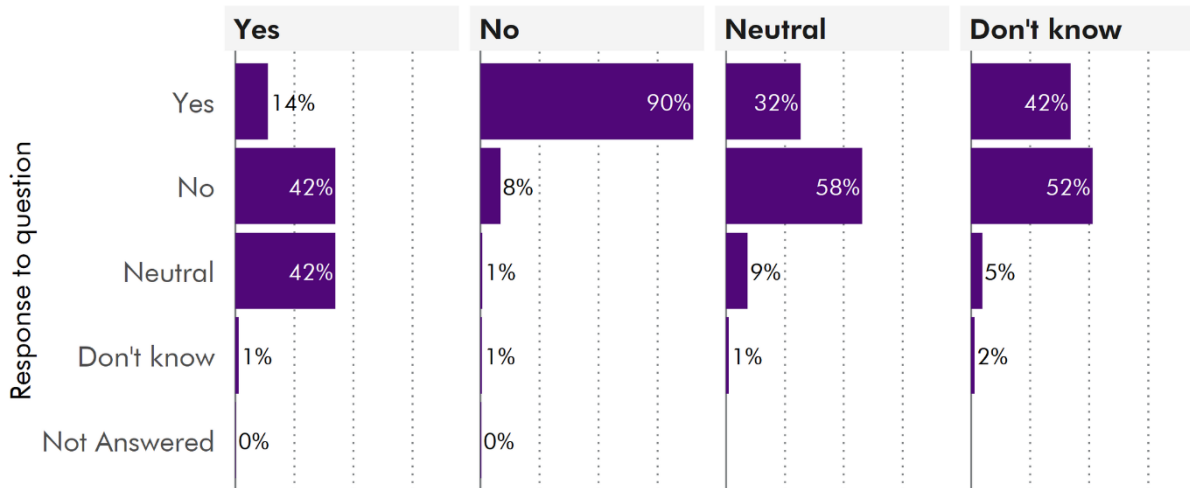
Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Section 7: allowing hunting with dogs for environmental benefit

Do you agree with section 7?

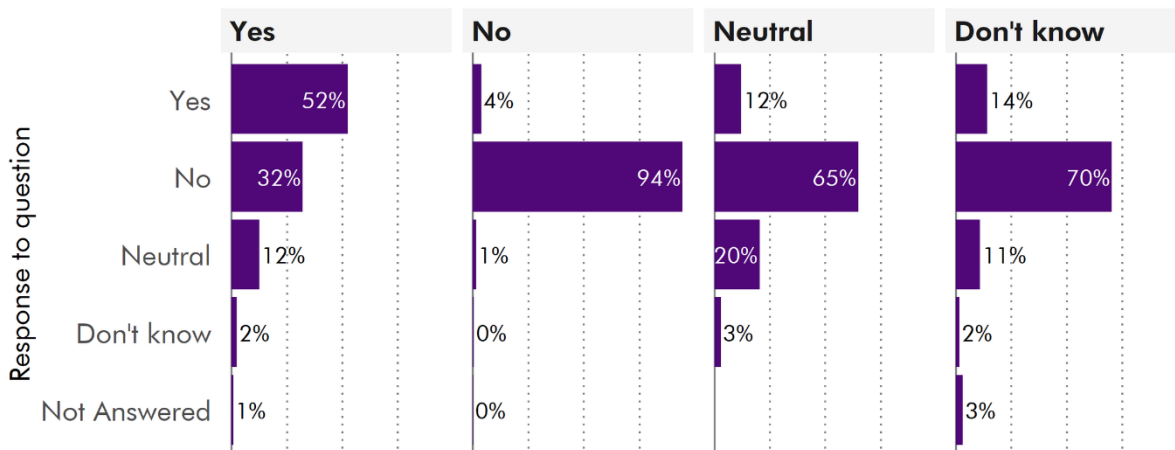
Section 7 would allow hunting with dogs for environmental benefit for the purpose of preserving, protecting or restoring a particular species, the diversity of animal or plant life, or eradicating an invasive non-native species | Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Limit of two dogs when hunting for environmental purposes

Do you agree with the limit on two dogs for the purpose of preserving, protecting or restoring a particular species, the diversity of animal or plant life, or eradicating an invasive non-native species?

Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill

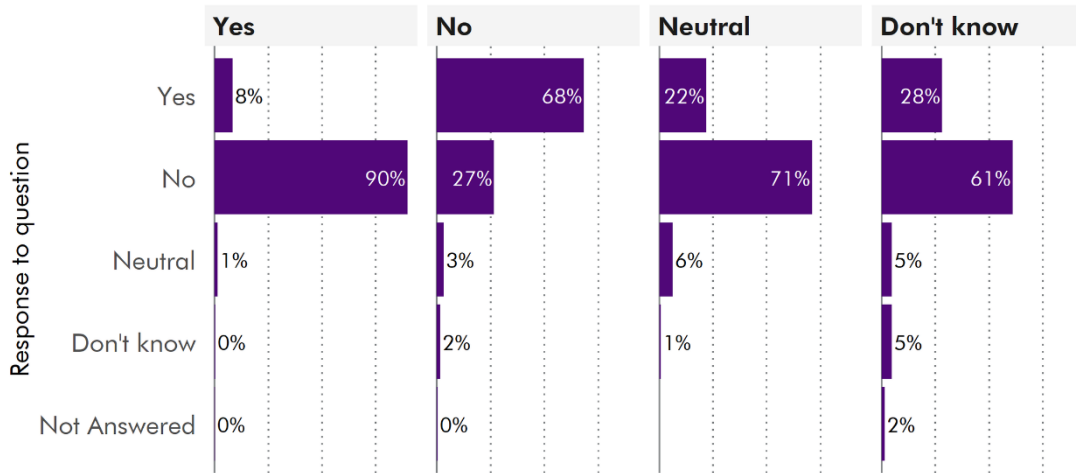


limit when hunting with dogs for environmental purposes. Just under two-thirds of those who hold a neutral stance on the Bill indicated that they were against the two-dog limit but this tended to be because they were against the use of any dogs for hunting purposes.

Section 8: License to use more than two dogs for environmental purposes

Do you agree with section 8?

Section 8 would allow people to apply for a licence to use more than two dogs to manage wild mammals for environmental benefit | Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill

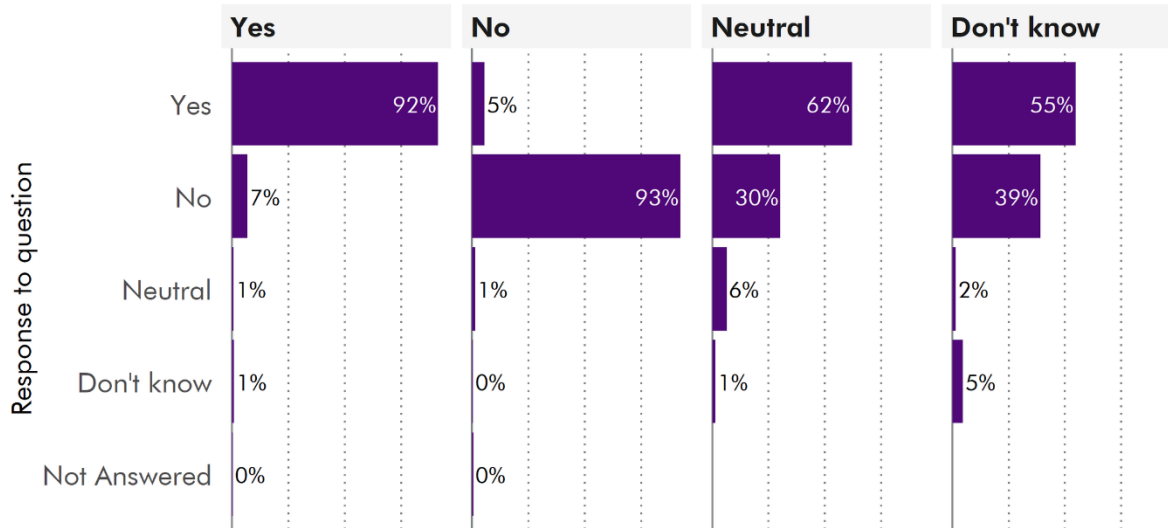


90% of those in favour of the overall purpose of the Bill were against the implementation of a license scheme for those who wish to use more than two dogs for environmental purposes, similarly those who were neutral on the Bill tended to be against Section 8 as they would prefer that dogs are not used to hunt for any purpose. Just over two thirds of those against the Bill were in favour of the introduction of a licensing scheme, 27% were against the introduction of a licensing scheme for environmental purposes.

Section 11: Ban on trail hunting

Do you agree with the section 11 proposed ban on trail hunting?

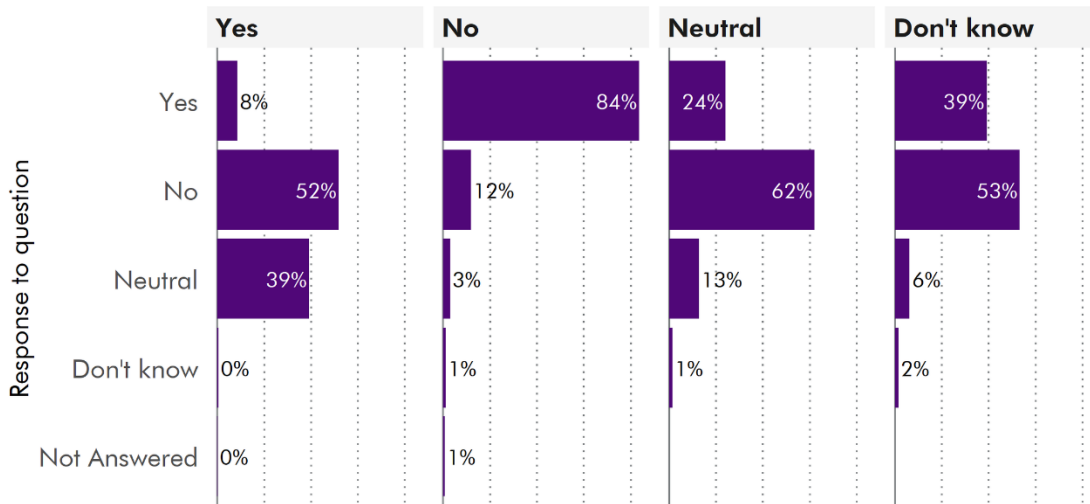
Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Section 12: allow trail hunting for training a dog to follow an animal scent

Do you agree with section 12?

Section 12 would allow trail hunting for the purpose of training a dog to follow an animal-based scent | Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



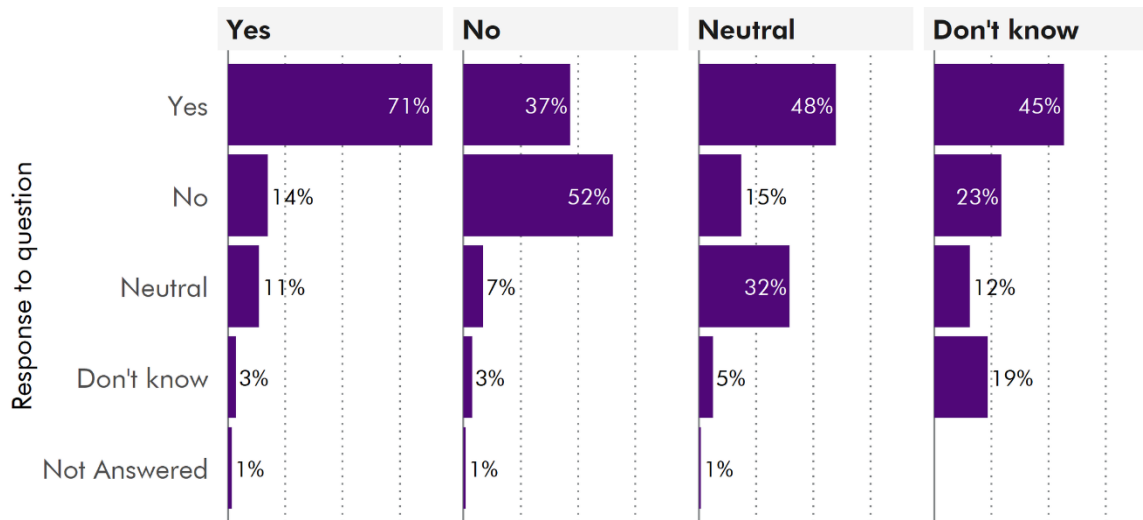
84% of those against the overall purpose of the Bill agreed with the provisions set out in Section 12 of the Bill. 52% of those in favour of the overall purpose of the Bill

were against the use of trail hunting to train dogs to follow an animal-based scent, 39% of those in favour of the Bill indicated a neutral stance on Section 12 of the Bill.

Definition of a wild mammal

Do you agree with the definition of 'wild mammal' in section 1(3) of the bill?

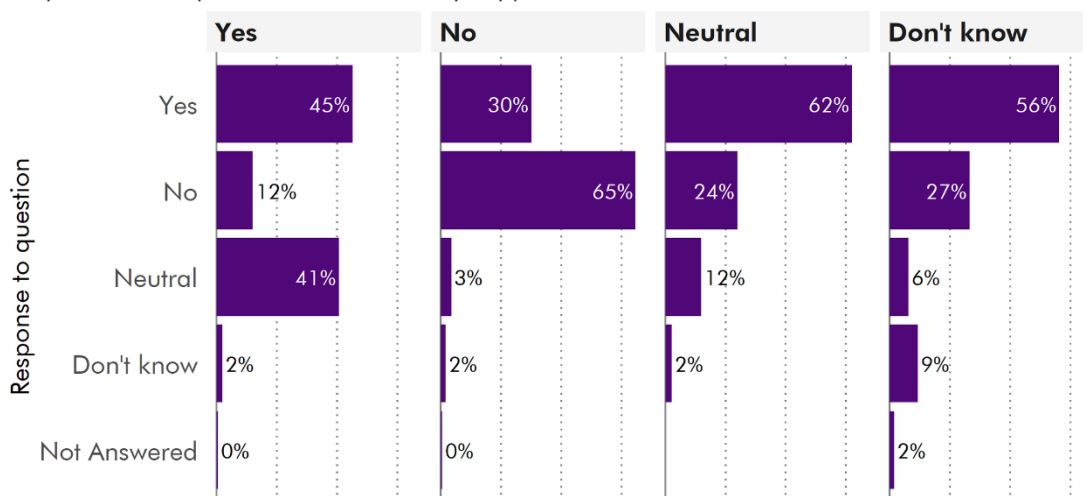
Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



Rats and mice included in definition

Do you agree that rats and mice should be included in the definition of a wild animal?

Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill



45% of those in favour of the Bill agreed that rats and mice should be included in the definition of a wild mammal, 41% were neutral on the matter, and 12% were against the inclusion of rats and mice. 30% of those against the Bill agreed that rats and mice should be included in the definition, but 65% disagreed with the inclusion of rats and mice in the definition.

Court powers to disqualify a person from dog ownership if convicted under this Bill

Do you agree that the court may disqualify a person from owning, keeping, or managing a dog for a given length of time, or deprive them of the dog or horse used in the offence, if convicted of an offence under this Bill?

Proportion of responses broken down by support for the bill

